Tirocinium Imperii:
Public School Education in the Victorian Era,
the Classical Curriculum,
and the British Imperial Ethos

by

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Source: Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie: The Phenomenon of the English Public School* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), 16. Harrow, Westminster, and Merchant Taylors’ are the only schools under the jurisdiction of the Clarendon Commission (1862) that are not depicted on this map. These three are situated within greater London.
Introduction

Quo semel est imbuta recens, seruabit odorem testa diu.
—Horace (Epistles 1.2.69–70)

This thesis examines the relationship between the British Empire and elite Victorian public schools—roughly similar to wealthy private schools in the United States—during the second half of the nineteenth century, when imperial fervor experienced an exponential increase as the British Empire expanded and diversified. It is sometimes considered a historical given that the British public schools trained future imperialists, simply because of the large number of schoolboys who later served the Government and their empire. The primary debate among historians is whether the schools deliberately trained boys to become imperialists or whether applying a more unintentional, de facto model of imperial propaganda to the schools provides a better explanation of why these institutions were so conducive to the propagation of empire. Rupert Wilkinson, an expert on the schools’ internal government who takes a utilitarian view, asserts that the schools were designed to mold boys into model political servants, representing political institutions that deliberately and directly prepared boys for empire. In contrast, Bernard Porter, although fully acknowledging the strong correlation between receiving a public school education and future involvement in empire, argues that nineteenth-century

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1 A fresh earthen jar will preserve for a long time the scent with which it once was steeped [translation is my own]. I express my gratitude to Professor Michael Roberts for drawing to my both this quotation and the title of this thesis, the latter of which he translates as “apprenticeship for empire,” modified from the phrase tirocinium fori, “apprenticeship for public life.”

Britons, including public schoolboys, were simply swept along by an imperial society. This thesis will add nuance to this debate by combining factors that have not previously been considered together in detail, seeking to determine how boys were influenced by their superiors and society and to what degree they created their own imperial culture. Specifically, this thesis will address reform and curricular evolution in the schools, focusing on the role of the classical curriculum in terms of the Latin texts boys were asked to read and the supposed character-building benefits that these assignments, and the discipline as a whole, entailed.  

3 School life and the ways boys shared political and other knowledge among themselves, and the impact of athletics on the schools’ imperial tenor, also merit further study, as does the subtle pressure placed on boys by the Government, their schools, their peers, and Victorian culture to serve the Queen and the empire.  

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*I was fortunate enough, thanks to funding from the Wesleyan History Department’s White Prize, to conduct research in England in the summer after I finished my junior year abroad in Oxford in 2007. I traveled to three of what are termed the original Nine Great Victorian Public Schools, as defined by the Public Schools Act of 1868.  

5 They are Rugby School in the town of Rugby, founded in 1567; Charterhouse, which was founded in 1611 in London and moved in 1872 to its

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3 This emphasis on classics in relation to the schools is relatively new within the field.  
4 Readers may, when embarking on a study of these independent boarding schools, anticipate some discussion of the boys’ sexuality, a subject traditionally attended to in accounts of the schools. This thesis, necessarily limited in scope, will address this topic only briefly in Chapter Five.  
5 See Appendix One for the schools’ founders, dates of foundation, and current web addresses; see Chapter One for a discussion of reform in the public schools during the nineteenth century.
present location in the town of Godalming; and finally Eton College, founded in 1442, in the town of Eton. I worked with archivists who kindly provided access to many volumes of school magazines, which included articles, letters, and records of school debates. Only one of the secondary sources I have used, Bernard Porter’s *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2004), even remotely references the school magazines as a source, and he does not do so at length. These neglected primary sources will add depth to this study by allowing the boys’ voices to emerge, and I will use these texts to help determine the boys’ political inclinations, their daily life, and how they understood the limits of their empire.

This thesis will be divided into six chapters, the first of which will discuss the origins and evolution of the public schools, from their medieval beginnings through the end of the Victorian period, it being necessary to show in what ways the schools’ Victorian elitism was the product of their long history of increasing exclusivity. In the 1860s, Queen Victoria established the Clarendon Commission to investigate the economic, academic, and disciplinary workings of the nine leading public schools. The Commission determined, among other points, that how the classics were taught was inefficient and indicative of decay in the classical discipline, findings that prompted the schools to implement a number of reforms of debatable consequence. Françoise Waquet, foremost historian of the classics, whose history of the Latin language in Europe includes Britain as a major case study, suggests that the classics were resilient despite late-nineteenth-century reform and remained at the forefront of the public school curriculum, even though the predominance of classical studies may

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6 It is probable that other sources have utilized the school magazines, but these appear to be few in number.
eventually have been diluted by the introduction of other subjects, such as biology and English literature. This thesis will seek to answer why the classics remained so prominent and the classics’ implications, if any, for schoolboys’ future careers.

It can be argued that the classical curriculum, by virtue of its centuries-long pervasiveness in the schools, must have had some influence, however small, on the boys’ status in Victorian society and their attitudes toward empire. Chapter Two will focus on Latin teaching and texts. Greek texts are certainly of interest, but within the limits of this study, which concerns itself with the relationship between the British and Roman Empires, the thesis topic has been confined primarily to the boys’ study of Latin. An investigation of the texts boys were required to read will prove relevant to the connection between the schools and the empire. The historical writings of Livy (59 B.C.–17 A.D.), for example, who lived during the time of the Emperor Augustus Octavian, were assigned uniformly across the schools and are laden with imperial themes. This Chapter will analyze contemporary justifications for the prominence of the classics, including the argument that the rote memorization and hours of toil required by classical study conferred character-building benefits. Chapter Two will also address a theory, suggested by Christopher Stray, a Fellow at the University of Swansea in Wales and an expert on the evolving classical curriculum, that those educated in the classics were automatically inducted into the upper echelons of society. Finally, even in the nineteenth century, there were Victorian critics of classical study who often stressed the impracticality of learning the ancient languages.

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7 Neither of these subjects really took hold in the public schools before 1900, according to Dr. Christopher Stray, in an email (March 20, 2008).
8 As is also noted in Chapter Two, Latin was considered—and may indeed have been—a gateway language for studying Greek.
It is likely, however, that this very impracticality held a dual appeal for the elite schools. First, it may have been understood that a language requiring rigorous study yet yielding no pragmatic value must have been character building. Second, the classics were cherished by virtue of their impracticality directly in regard to class: it is often considered a luxury to devote oneself to a study offering no direct financial or occupational benefits. The classics may also have been of interest in regard to the comparison between the Roman and British Empires. An 1871 lecture at Cambridge University by Professor J. R. Seeley, a classicist, modern historian, and staunch imperialist, provides a Victorian perspective on the perceived relationship between the ancient and modern empires.\(^9\) Analyzing empires in general—and by implication the British Empire—Seeley offers his own reasons for Rome’s fall, attributing it to overextension of resources. He asserts the necessity of recruiting sufficient men to govern, a contemporary issue in Britain as the empire found itself steadily expanding and in constant need of men able and willing to govern.

In order to explain why the schools should be needed to sustain the imperial effort in the late-nineteenth century, it is necessary to examine the broader imperial context. Chapter Three will address the economic, political, territorial, and ideological aspects of the British Empire and the increasing complexity of British activity across the globe in the late-nineteenth century. Although this thesis will incorporate Indian, African, and other British imperial relationships, within the limits of this small study, India will factor more prominently than other regions, partly

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because there is more information available for India in regard to this topic and partly because it is arguable that much of British imperial activity was motivated by the desire to preserve Britain’s status in India. This Chapter’s treatment of the controversy surrounding modes of recruitment to the Indian Civil Service should begin to reveal how elites—and public school graduates in particular—laid claim to the governing roles necessary for administering Britain’s growing empire.

The schools’ structure and organization will be the topic of Chapter Four. The prefect system, in which the boys governed other boys and were afforded the authority to administer often-brutal punishments and enforce rules, shaped boys’ character and theoretically prepared them for their future duties as imperialists. Another aspect without which no inquiry into the schools is complete is the “games mania,” a term ascribed to the exponential increase in sports in schools during the late-Victorian period. Historian Brian Stoddart asserts that the games were exercises in conformity and self-sacrifice. Others, such as Bernard Porter, argue that the games fostered school loyalty. The games may also have conferred some leadership benefits in addition to the other more passive character traits. This disagreement over the role of athletics in shaping boys’ future comportment suggests that this topic requires further investigation.

Chapter Five will scrutinize what boys knew or taught each other about the empire, through an examination of school debating societies, and of novels and

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magazines boys read outside of the classroom, many of which were jingoistic and promised adventure to any who traveled abroad. School debates ranged from such academic topics as “That the teaching of Latin and Greek in the present system of School education is preposterously prominent,” with some students arguing for the “precision of language” to be gained from classical studies and others calling alternatively for curricular breadth, to the more topical “That immediate peace with the Boers is desirable,” in which students asserted the necessity of retaining national prestige and of fulfilling moral obligations to colonial subjects. The recurrence of imperial topics in the public schools, and the evidence of the substantial background knowledge of current affairs students must have had to participate in such debates, are just two of the many components of this study.

The final Chapter will define the direct connections schoolboys had with the British Empire, both tangible and emotional, and will evaluate the degree to which boys were compelled to serve their empire and their Queen, incorporating a comprehensive study of peer and societal pressures on the boys to do so. Old Boys, or the schools’ alumni, many of whom formed school-affiliated clubs abroad, often reached out to a school’s student body, imparting their colonial experiences of battles in South Africa or dinners with public school graduates in Bombay, and urging students to serve the empire in various—and often unconventional—ways.

The public schools were undeniably linked to the empire in that a substantial number of governing posts overseas were staffed by their graduates. What is less immediately apparent is the nature of the schools’ role in convincing these boys that

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13 *The Meteor*, no. 28 (June 3, 1869); *The Meteor*, no. 160 (March 31, 1881). Both of these debates occurred at Rugby School.
their futures would be best spent serving the British Empire. On the one hand, this thesis will investigate how the schools were mirrors of their Victorian society, and how the *mores* of the time were reflected in the school curriculum and daily life. On the other hand, it will seek to show the degree to which the schools were crucial to the furthering of empire, not only officially and unofficially urging boys to serve their country after graduation but also preparing boys for their life of service by regulating their behavior, requiring them to complete rigorous and allegedly character-building academic exercises and encouraging them to self-govern in a male-dominated environment.

*A Point of Clarification*

Whether the British Empire was a good, neutral, or evil force is not the subject of this thesis, and the schools would not provide a means of wholly and authoritatively tackling this controversial subject. The purpose of this investigation is, rather than to glorify or make light of the empire, to examine the schools as a component of the empire and to assess how fully they live up to their stereotype as suppliers to imperial government. Readers may come to their own conclusions regarding the degree to which the schools were a convenient, effective, or even benign system for providing elite young men to fulfill governing roles throughout the empire. Britain’s imperial machinations no doubt hold irreconcilably differing connotations for different readers, some asserting that Britain’s imperial behavior was motivated by altruistic impulses, others seeking to isolate instances of imperial greed and subjugation of reluctant subjects. It can perhaps be argued that the schools are of
all the more interest as a relatively innocent medium for developing potentially ruthless and self-serving imperialists.
Chapter One
Public Schools: Medieval Origins, Development, and Patronage

What an individual ought, and often does, derive, from the feeling that he is born of
an old and illustrious race, from being familiar, from his childhood, with the walls
and with the trees that speak of the past no less than of the present, and make both full
of images and greatness,—this in an inferior degree belongs to every member of an
ancient and celebrated place of education.
—Headmaster Thomas Arnold (1834)14

Public schools virtually guaranteed that wealthy boys received the type of
education required in order for them to become familiar with—and later to serve—the
British Empire.15 The classics were taught continuously throughout the schools’
history, possibly serving to solidify the schools’ reputations as elite fortresses, and
were complemented by the moral education first instituted by Thomas Arnold,
headmaster of Rugby (1828–1842) and perhaps the most influential public school
reformer. Rather than admitting a diverse array of students and offering subjects that
met the practical needs of a modernizing empire, British public schools from the sixth
century to the end of the nineteenth century represented a trajectory of rising elitism
and exclusivity, in which Britain’s privileged youth received an education that was
broad in moral emphases but narrow in curricular scope. It is necessary to examine
the schools’ history in order accurately to place them in their Victorian context.

14 T. W. Bamford, ed., Thomas Arnold on Education: A Selection from His Writings with Introductory
15 This will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six, respectively.
1a. From the Church to the Empire

Although the church-affiliated public schools gained ascendancy with the growing influence of Christianity during the early Middle Ages, these institutions did not decline with the Church’s eventual fall from prominence as might have been expected. Up until the fourteenth century, public schools in England were designed to provide clerical training for the expanding middle class. The earliest such independent school is King’s School in Canterbury, founded by St. Augustine of Canterbury in 597 A.D. Established as part of St. Augustine’s mission to “evangelize England,” the school admitted boys based not on their disposable wealth but rather on an assessment of their academic abilities. The sixteenth-century break with Rome necessitated a new raison d’être for founding independent schools, beyond the need to provide a steady supply of clergymen to English monasteries. The lure of prestige, rather than religious considerations, soon compelled private individuals to found new schools, and likely motivated William of Wykeham to found Winchester College in 1382, a school often attended by his own descendants. In 1440, Henry VI founded Eton with dual religious and prestige considerations. His impulses were charitable insofar that the school was designed to provide seventy scholars with a free

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20 *Eton College* ([cited April 14, 2007]); available from http://www.etoncollege.com/default.asp; Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 25; *Winchester College History*. Wykeham later founded New College, Oxford, which, along with Winchester College, provided a model for both Eton and King’s College, Cambridge, in the fifteenth century. King’s College was intended as an educational extension for Eton scholars.
Nevertheless, Henry VI may have founded Eton, as Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy cynically asserts, “to sing masses for Henry and his father,” perhaps giving lie to Henry VI’s selfless motives. The schools experienced a counterintuitive evolution from institutions founded with charitable intentions to nineteenth-century bastions of elitism, a process facilitated, in part, by the shift to fee-paying in the schools from the fourteenth century onward.

It was evident by the end of the eighteenth century that the survival of independent schools was dictated almost solely by their ability to secure endowments and to educate fee-paying students. Although wealthy families dutifully paid fees that subsidized costs for poorer students, fee-payers outnumbered the poor after the fifteenth century. At Eton, for example, approximately seventy “King’s Scholars,” who lived in a special house in college and received merit-based financial assistance, were distinguished from “Oppidans,” fee-paying boys who could afford to live in town. The scholarship boys, having been accepted on the basis of academic talent, may have been held to more rigorous academic standards, and it can be argued that what the King’s Scholars potentially lacked in wealth, they regained in academic prestige, thus allowing both sets of boys to contribute to Eton’s elitism. The shift to fee-paying not only elevated the status of those able to attend expensive public

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21 Eton College.
22 Gathorne-Hardy, The Old School Tie, 25. Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy is a foremost expert on the history and function of the public schools in Britain.
23 Ibid., 27.
24 Richard Faber, A Chain of Cities: Diplomacy at the End of Empire (London: Radcliffe Press, 2000), 19–20; William E. McSweeney, “British Perspective: Where the King’s English Is Still Taught,” The English Journal 67, no. 5 (1978): 14. Faber reminisces of his days as a scholarship boy at Westminster School: “I boarded with other scholarship boys and could talk to them about the things that I found interesting. Like Eton and Winchester, Westminster is an old foundation, having a special house, known as ‘College’, for scholarship holders. We were called ‘King’s Scholars’ and wore short gowns on top of our black morning coats or Eton jackets. We had to get used to people looking at us in the streets. An old man once growled ‘Sybarite’ at me. I suppose he looked on me as a spoilt sprig of the aristocracy; I felt anything but sybaritic in my stiff collar and heavy clothes.”
schools but also, on a practical level, facilitated the transition toward boarding rather than day schools, a shift that likely granted the schools free rein in instructing and disciplining their pupils.\textsuperscript{25} The shift to fee-paying, beyond simply enabling the schools pragmatically to maintain their livelihood, conferred on these institutions their defining independence and prestige, and probably facilitated their nineteenth-century rigidity in curriculum despite societal impulses toward breadth.

1b. Reforming the Schools from Within and from Above

Internal reform in the nineteenth century caused the schools to evolve into the form that came to define them: institutions seeking to integrate moral education into the academic curriculum. Rapidly falling attendance rates in the schools, perhaps partly a reaction against rumors of un-Christian immorality in these institutions, prompted Thomas Arnold, appointed Headmaster of Rugby School in 1828, to institute moral reforms.\textsuperscript{26} These were designed to improve boys’ souls as well as their minds: “First religious and moral principle; secondly gentlemanly conduct; and thirdly intellectual ability.”\textsuperscript{27} Arnold’s ardent moral convictions manifested themselves in strict discipline, which he promoted not only by raising teachers’ salaries so that they might focus more closely on their pupils than on their financial woes but also by reinforcing the character-building role of the prefects—the boy

\textsuperscript{25} Gathorne-Hardy, \textit{The Old School Tie}, 27–28. Self-funded schools were responsible only to fee-payers, a reality that invested these schools with “great and independent power” to select which aspects of Victorian morality they wished to instill.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 70–71.

leaders. Other public schools espoused some of Arnold’s methods, some of which were introduced by teachers who, having taught at Rugby under Arnold, later transferred to a different institution. Historians have, however, reasonably argued that Arnold’s contribution to the schools’ nineteenth-century flourishing has been exaggerated, in part because Arnold was merely an avid proponent of the evangelical Christian spirit that was becoming ever more welcomed across the schools.

Nevertheless, Arnold’s legendary status is indicative of the moral emphases in Victorian school reform: the schools in Britain distinguished themselves by offering a combined academic and moral education, over the course of which boys would be equally exposed to peers’ classroom recitations of Greek dramas as to sermons from headmasters preaching bodily purity. Although it may be unnecessary to place Arnold on so high a pedestal—considering that his views may also have been reflections of Victorian society as a whole—Arnold should nevertheless be understood as a starting point for a defining trend in shaping the public schools’ moral climate.

Thomas Arnold helped forge the connection between Victorian society’s reinvigorated interest in Christianity and public school religious life—a development seemingly inevitable when one considers a culture so saturated with religious impulses. Arnold directly speaks to the religious function of Rugby School: “It is not
necessary that this should be a school of 300 or 100, or fifty boys; but it is necessary that it should be a school of Christian gentlemen.”

Over the course of Arnold’s tenure, more boys than in previous years presented themselves for confirmation and for taking communion, indicative of Arnold’s success in endeavoring to reinvigorate his school’s religion, which was manifested, in Arnold’s eyes, by moral purity.

Arnold seems to have been acutely aware of the Church’s unifying potential, in particular asserting that the upper classes were to be the leaders of the flock. It is arguably the case that Arnold recognized a link between the “means” and the “end,” religion instilling morality in boys, and morality, in turn, promoting religious purity.

Public schools in England were expected to form boys’ characters as well as to provide academic instruction, arguably in large part because these learning institutions served as boys’ second homes when they were not living with their families. In *Tom Brown’s School Days* (1857), Thomas Hughes’s highly influential, fictional account of public school life at Rugby, Hughes asserts the necessity of multifaceted education: “The object of all schools is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys, but to make them good English boys, good future citizens.” “Self-knowledge” was seen as a major component of public school learning because to uphold Victorian morality required the separation of personal desires from public duties. William

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32 Thomas Arnold in Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 72.
33 John Raymond de Symons Honey, *Tom Brown’s Universe: The Development of the English Public School in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1977), 26. The confirmations ostensibly would have been voluntary, though it is probable that a number of boys were motivated more by the desire to please Arnold than by religious devotion.
34 Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 72.
35 Honey, *Tom Brown’s Universe*, 151–52. Honey further asserts, “[W]hat the parent clientele of the public schools wanted for their sons above all was not scholastic certification but status.”
Johnson Cory, a writer and Eton Master from 1845 to 1872, declares his conception of self-knowledge in 1861:

[Y]ou go to a great school, not for knowledge so much as for arts and habits; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment’s notice a new intellectual posture, for the art of entering quickly into another person’s thoughts, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms, for the habit of regarding minute points of accuracy, for the habit of working out what is possible in a given time, for taste, for discrimination, for mental courage and mental soberness. Above all, you go to a great school for self-knowledge.37

The school, according to Cory, facilitates a boy’s ability to operate as a functional, diplomatic member of society. There is no particular emphasis here on the well-roundedness that Arnold extolled, but Cory does recognize that there were many facets of developing “self-knowledge.” This self-aware, self-knowing individual, later to become a Victorian “gentleman,” ideally “epitomized toleration for others” and respected his fellow men, virtues “derived from Roman humanity, moderation, endurance and restraint.” 38 It seems that the quest for immaculate and ideal character permeated education during this period, largely because the minds of influential men such as Cory and Arnold were so preoccupied with morality.39

Although the British Government sought to implement reform in the schools in the mid-nineteenth century, it is likely that reform was successful mainly because the public and the schools themselves recognized the need for change. The British Government felt compelled to intervene in response to public outcry over degraded conditions in the schools—including poor quality of life for students, who frequently

39 Ibid.
endured punishments most severe, and the mismanagement of school finances, including an Eton provost’s hoarding of ill-gained money—for which schools could claim only the stagnancy of tradition as an excuse.\textsuperscript{40} In 1861, Queen Victoria assembled the Clarendon Commission to conduct research on the great public schools.\textsuperscript{41} The Commission’s findings, published in 1864, called for reorganization of school government as well as curricular changes, and “overhauled . . . the whole educational and disciplinary system of nine of the leading public schools.”\textsuperscript{42} An excerpt from Lord Clarendon’s interrogation of Eton Fellow Rev. E. Coleridge, in regard to the predominantly classical curriculum, is similar to a number of the interviews throughout the Commission’s investigation:

\textit{Rev. Coleridge}: I believe that modern history has now been introduced as a lesson, but probably others would be able to give you more accurate information on details of that kind.

\textit{Lord Clarendon}: You think that they have attempted to introduce more subjects than they can possibly teach, while at the same time they have greatly enlarged the scope of the classical teaching?

\textit{Rev. Coleridge}: Yes; but I do not think that they do actually teach the classics so well as they used to.\textsuperscript{43}

It is of interest that Rev. Coleridge criticizes the existing educational practices at Eton, voluntarily alluding to the poor quality of the subjects taught in schools. This particular interview is not anomalous within the scope of the Commission’s report as a whole, and it is evident that there was a need for reform, both academic and

\textsuperscript{40} Gathorne-Hardy, \textit{The Old School Tie}, 96–97.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 97. These schools included Eton, Charterhouse, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Winchester, Westminster, St. Paul’s, Merchant Taylors’, and the recently founded Cheltenham, Marlborough, and Wellington, the last five of which will not be mentioned elsewhere in the body of this thesis; see Appendix One for more information.
\textsuperscript{42} Rev. H. Montagu Butler, "Harrow School: 1829–1889," in \textit{Great Public Schools} (London: Edward Arnold, 1893), 81–82. According to Butler, the Report was as “popular as a novel” for some time.
administrative. In schools seemingly resistant to change, there are two probable reasons for their impetus toward reform. The first of these is genuine concern that boys’ quality of life was low. The second, more likely explanation is that school administrators desired to satisfy the public that there was no need for outcry or further investigation. Although the latter reason would suggest self-preservation as a simple motive, reform could only have enhanced the schools’ status: what may have been seen as a stopgap measure was actually essential to the schools’ continued existence. It is unclear, however, whether the boost in prestige was a happy accident or whether it was foreseen by those capitulating to governmental reform.

Further intervention by the British Government had the presumably unintended effect of uniting the public schools against official external encroachment, which lead to interschool standardization and increased playful competition between the institutions. The Crown’s establishment of the Taunton Commission of 1864, part of a plan for centralized control over those public schools not included in the Great Nine, sparked passionate dissent among leaders from schools both within and outside the Taunton Commission’s jurisdiction. The plan proposed that Parliament control the schools, and that the schools both implement a national exam system and adopt a more scientific curriculum. This threat of Government interference, although subsequently weakened, contributed fundamentally to the nineteenth-century trend toward standardization of the schools by prompting the establishment of a

44 Gathorne-Hardy, The Old School Tie, 97–98. Charterhouse’s willingness to move from London to Godalming at the Commission’s suggestion indicates the school’s receptivity to administrative reform. The Commission’s investigation of the leading primary schools led to a nationwide survey of other educational institutions as well.
45 The schools also theoretically would no longer be so stratified with regard to class, because poor boys would be permitted to attend free of charge.
Headmasters’ Conference in 1869. Emerging as a response to the recommendations of the Clarendon Commission and the Headmasters’ Conference, standardization manifested itself in curricular changes as well as in the realm of school life. This evidence of the “growing self-consciousness of the public schools as a sector with common characteristics and interests” enabled boys to transfer between schools without serious detriment to their studies. Just as standardization caused each school’s curriculum to conform to that of other schools, so too was there evidence for interschool conformity in daily life. Jocular interschool rivalry is evident in school magazines, which contain numerous accounts of sporting contests between the schools, and in such poems as “The Eton Boy” in Charterhouse’s Carthusian, which mocks the typical student of that most-elite institution:

For his highly polished topper,
And his dress so smart and proper,
And his beautiful silk mopper,
     Are the story-writer’s joy.
But I view with animosity,
I loath with all ferocity
That odious precocity,
     The model Eton boy.

Competition, however, must have not only facilitated communication between students from different schools but also helped each school to distinguish itself in

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46 Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 98–100. “So the elders met, and so the tribes were unified into a nation,” as Gathorne-Hardy poetically describes the new cooperation between schools’ headmasters. The Conference, which continued to meet for years following its foundation with increasing representation from the schools—Eton and Harrow joined in 1874—provided a forum through which headmasters could contrast, compare, and offer advice on various aspects of school life, from Latin pronunciation, to their responses to “the moral problem,” which encompassed cultivating boys’ religious lives, as encouraged by Arnold, and ensuring that the boys’ sexual urges were sufficiently restricted. It is unclear how openly the latter of these concerns would have been discussed, and it seems probable that discussions were limited to innuendo rather than frank conversation.

47 Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830–1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55–56. It is probable that transfers between schools were fairly common, as boys’ families must occasionally have relocated within England and sought to send their sons to schools closer to home.

48 *The Carthusian*, vol. VII, no. 232 (June 1898).
comparison with others. This arguably helped boys to visualize the public school
community beyond the limits of their own schools and to recognize themselves within
a certain elite class of young men—a process that solidified and secured their lifetime
loyalty.49

1c. Curricular Tradition Preserved

The schools’ counterintuitive retention of the classics beyond the limits of the
discipline’s practical value suggests that Victorians were willing to suffer the cost of
educational stagnation for the sake of maintaining time-honored tradition.50 Rev.
Canon Wilson, a former Assistant Master at Rugby School, points out that Latin
became the primary discipline in British education as a practical “language of
[European] diplomacy,” and asserts that “boys did not learn Latin in order to read
Cicero; they read Cicero in order to write Latin.”51 Although many of the schools
founded before the end of the fourteenth century, such as the early medieval St.
Peter’s in York, had a fairly wide curriculum that included rhetoric, law, music,
astronomy, natural history, mathematics, and the Scriptures, Latin was the primary
subject.52 The Renaissance thus may be seen as the point at which education in

49 This ongoing relationship would become necessary for maintaining the peer networks between Old
Boys and current members that are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.
50 Françoise Waquet, Latin of the Empire of a Sign: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries,
trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 2001), 19. It is just one indication of classical prominence that the
term “Latin school” is often synonymous with “grammar school” when referring to secondary
education throughout modern Europe.
51 Rev. Canon Wilson, “Public School Education and Its Changes During the Last Fifty Years,”
52 Gathorne-Hardy, The Old School Tie, 22–23; Wilson, "Public School Education and Its Changes
During the Last Fifty Years," 688–89. Wilson outlines the pre-Reformation curriculum in grammar
schools: “The curriculum of the Grammar Schools consisted of the well-known trivium of dialectic,
graham and rhetoric, all taught orally and in Latin, along with the quadrivium of music, arithmetic,
geometry and astronomy; and the whole of this course was taught in schools, and even embodied in
Britain—and throughout Europe, because Latin had a diplomatic function—most significantly narrowed toward a predominantly classical focus. After 1660, when Latin’s diplomatic practicality waned, the discipline remained strong.\(^\text{53}\) Waquet argues that instead of a decline in classics in response to eighteenth-century opposition, there was “a substantial humanist revival: the ancient languages were honoured everywhere, and everywhere they were the distinguishing mark of educational establishments for the elite.”\(^\text{54}\) The classics thus endured throughout British education, perhaps retaining more universal emphasis than Greek simply because of its diplomatic origins, with “schoolchildren everywhere” completing the same Latin assignments, despite the absence of any clear pragmatic value.\(^\text{55}\) It can be argued that regardless of the impetus in the Victorian era toward curricular breadth and reform, tradition—among other factors addressed in Chapter Two—encouraged educational stagnation in the form of a primarily classical curriculum in the public schools.

Despite eventual upper-class recognition of the value and practicality of science, educational authorities sought to suppress and ultimately weaken the teaching of the sciences in elementary schools rather than to introduce the discipline into the public schools. Upper-class fears of being academically outperformed by the lower classes are evident in a “country gentleman’s” response to the expanding scientific curriculum in elementary schools after 1825:

\[^{\text{53}}\] Wilson, “Public School Education and Its Changes During the Last Fifty Years,” 689.
\[^{\text{54}}\] Waquet, \textit{Latin or the Empire of a Sign}, 689, 26–27, 32.
\[^{\text{55}}\] Ibid., 33.
If the working classes are to be taught the sciences, what are the middle and higher classes to learn, to preserve the due proportion? The answer is obvious enough. There is nothing they can be taught by which they can maintain their superiority.\textsuperscript{56}

Yet the response to these fears—which may have stemmed from both a predicted loss of prestige and the fear of an upset to Britain’s class stratifications—does not appear to have been increased interest in the sciences on the part of the public schools. Instead, after 1860, the sciences were no longer taught in elementary schools. Their reemergence twenty years later manifested itself as a “watered-down version of pure laboratory science, [which] had become accepted as the correct view of science.”\textsuperscript{57}

The position of the sciences in non-elite schools provides a case study of privileged Victorians’ resistance to change and of their class consciousness with regard to education. Elites perceived the public school curriculum to be immutable, despite recognizing the value of the sciences in times of technological innovation and inter-European competition. Even in this inert system, however, it is surprising that the suppression of the sciences did not spark greater outcry in either lower-class or public schools.

The public school curriculum appears to have changed less substantially in the second half of the nineteenth century than some have argued, reform on paper failing to translate into discernable change in reality. The Clarendon Commission’s investigative reports, collected in 1862 and published in 1864, generated, in addition to the standardization and reorganization of governance in the public schools, a new interest in curricular reform—both in how masters taught their subjects and in what


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.: 71. This inadequate version of laboratory science apparently had become the expected standard by the end of the nineteenth century.
courses the schools offered. The Commission determined, for example, that the way the classics were taught was inefficient and emblematic of decay in the classical discipline, noting that excessive repetition and memorization were not conducive to true understanding of the subjects in question.\(^\text{58}\) Integral to learning Latin is memorizing noun forms—the vocative case, for example, being used in direct address. After having memorized six cases of the word *mensa*, or table, Winston Churchill, a student at Harrow in 1888, is befuddled:

> ‘Mensa, O table, is the vocative case,’” [the master] replied.
> ‘But why O table?’ I persisted in genuine curiosity.
> ‘O table—you would use that in addressing a table, in invoking a table.’
> And then seeing he was not carrying me with him, ‘You would use it in speaking to a table.’
> ‘But I never do,’ I blurted out in honest amazement.
> ‘If you are impertinent, you will be punished, and punished, let me tell you, very severely,’ was his conclusive rejoinder.\(^\text{59}\)

Churchill’s account of his lessons reveals how memorization does not always translate to genuine comprehension. Although adequate learning of Latin or Greek would be nearly impossible without extensive memorization of vocabulary words and the continual recitations of the verb conjugations necessary for expressing time and agency in the ancient languages, advancing to textual analysis and interpretation of the figures of speech and symbolic imagery in, for example, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, is also necessary for a well-rounded education in classics. Rev. Canon Wilson, who advocated for increasing curricular breadth in British education, claims that as a direct consequence of the Clarendon Commission’s investigation, boys at Rugby began to be instructed in natural science, and other subjects such as French, German,

\(^\text{59}\) Winston Churchill in Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 141.
history, and English literature were given new attention.\textsuperscript{60} In the final two-thirds of the nineteenth century, however, the curriculum did not shift substantially.\textsuperscript{61} Françoise Waquet provides evidence for this: “At Eton, admittedly one of the more conservative institutions, 26 masters out of a total of 31 were wholly devoted to teaching the classics in the 1860s; half of those on the teaching staff were still classicists in 1905.”\textsuperscript{62} It appears that the classics were resilient in the face of reform, and, though their prominence may have been diluted by the introduction of other subjects, they remained at the forefront of the public school curriculum. It might also be speculated that the schools would have embraced their classical nature even more proudly, once the curriculum was a point of public contention.

\textbf{1d. Conclusion}

Although there is little scholarship that looks back to the schools’ origins in order to understand these institutions within their eventual imperial context, the schools’ unique trajectory helps to explain their eventual rise to a late-Victorian zenith. By the second half of the nineteenth century, British public schools were poised to assume their positions as the only institutions seemingly fit for educating the leaders who would represent Britain throughout its empire. The shift to fee-paying necessitated that most successful applicants to public schools possess elite backgrounds, but the schools’ prestige was increasingly secured by more than their elite student body. They represented an interconnected network that had the power to

\textsuperscript{60} Wilson, “Public School Education and Its Changes During the Last Fifty Years,” 689–91.
\textsuperscript{61} Gathorne-Hardy, \textit{The Old School Tie}, 136.
\textsuperscript{62} Waquet, \textit{Latin or the Empire of a Sign}, 27.
dictate a narrow curriculum and indeed to define what sort of studies an elite boy required. What is more, the combination of education and morality, initially introduced by Thomas Arnold in the early nineteenth century, allowed the schools to evolve into the ideological imperial strongholds that they eventually became, although it would be of interest to examine further the discrepancy between Arnold’s intentions for the schools and the reality of the years that followed his tenure. Those few scholars that devote any attention to the schools and the empire have neglected thus far to take the bigger picture approach—which this thesis has attempted to do by tracing the schools’ history from their origins to the Victorian imperial period—that is necessary for contextualizing the schools’ unique position as unofficial suppliers to imperial service.
Chapter Two
Memorization, Recitation, and Ancient Rome

The classical curriculum arguably affected schoolboys’ elitism and attitudes toward empire, even if only to a small degree. Although one may not discern immediately a practical reason for British public schools’ centuries-long retention of a predominantly classical curriculum, the discipline nevertheless served to enhance the schools’ reputation as an interconnected academic network with an elusive mystique, and to solidify class disparities between the public schools and other institutions. The correlation between the classical curriculum and empire manifested itself in imperial-themed set texts universally assigned, and in Britons’ evocations of the Roman Empire, connections that must necessarily have made their way into schoolboys’ collective consciousness. Although modes of teaching the classics underwent distinct changes, and Britain’s imperial circumstances shifted constantly, Victorians persistently maintained that the classics, by requiring arduous feats of memorization and through repetitive modes of learning, instilled in boys the mental capacity and diligence they would need to be effective imperial leaders.

2a. No Need for Change (Justifying the Schools’ Classical Tradition)

It is indicative of the schools’ resistance to change, and of the degree to which they were steeped in the classical tradition, that the classics remained as strong as ever, despite receiving much criticism during the nineteenth century in regard to the discipline’s impracticality. Nearly identical debates occurred at Rugby School and Charterhouse in the second half of the nineteenth century: “That the teaching of Latin
and Greek in the present system of School education is preposterously prominent” (Rugby, 1869, majority of nine for the motion), “That preposterous prominence is given in modern Public School Education to classical studies” (Rugby, 1875, majority of seven against the motion), and “Undue attention is paid to Classics” (Charterhouse, 1892). Headmasters and officials, as well as the boys themselves, were apprised of the criticisms against—and supporting arguments for—the narrow classical curriculum, and for the most part seem to have guarded the subject jealously. Debate speakers were not particularly concerned that the discipline lacked the immediate practicality of a vocational or scientific subject. Arguing in support of continued classical study, Mr. Wilson of Rugby brings this pressing issue to the forefront of the debate: “The cause [of opposition to classical studies] was the modern utilitarian spirit: that same spirit which would fain break down the carved work of our great cathedrals to erect in their place the commodious swimming baths.” Although Mr. Wilson’s argument is primarily rhetorical, the pragmatic impetuses he condemns were likely perceived as the most difficult to combat. Mr. P.J.G. Pipon at Charterhouse suggests that the debate should “avoid the mercenary side of the question, giving as his reason for so doing that he did not think Classics was ever intended to be a study to earn a living by.” Mr. Pipon’s reticence to discuss the financial prospects for a classical scholar suggests that he perceived the utilitarian arguments against the classics to be insurmountable. Despite the claims that the

63 The Meteor, no. 28 (June 3, 1869); The Meteor, no. 96 (November 30, 1875); The Carthusian, vol. VI, no. 182 (November 1892).
64 Boys may have appreciated the classics all the more for their controversial position, embracing the ancient languages as an act of rebellion against critics of the classical discipline.
65 The Meteor, no. 96 (November 30, 1875)
66 The Carthusian, vol. VI, no. 182 (November 1892).
classics were nearing obsolescence, however, they did not actually experience a debilitating recession, which suggests that it was no longer considered necessary for the subject to serve a practical purpose.

Those arguing in favor of the classics seem to have been concerned with defending the subject more for its academic than vocational practicality, seeking to establish that the classics were broad enough in scope to render the teaching of other disciplines superfluous. Mr. Warrington at Rugby argues that

the precision of language and superiority of mental culture of the ancient Greeks made their tongue a supremely instructive study. Even in the art of [military] strategy the Greeks had much to teach.\(^{67}\)

Six years later, in 1875, the president of the debating society at Rugby employed a similar argument, asserting that “we should know something of everything and everything of something. This he thought could be attained by a study of the classics, since various classical authors taught science, mathematics, \(\&c.\)\(^{68}\) Both Rugbeians argue that the classics became more than simply a labor-intensive study by complementing the Victorian ethos with the *mores* of ancient civilizations and by serving as a medium for teaching other subjects. This latter argument likely arose in direct response to calls from the Clarendon Commission and elsewhere for a curriculum not dominated by classical studies, as classicists scrambled to legitimize their discipline among more modern subjects. It would be useful to determine to what degree, if any, Latin masters used the classics to expose boys to other subjects, for it

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\(^{67}\) *The Meteor*, no. 28 (June 3, 1869).

\(^{68}\) *The Meteor*, no. 96 (November 30, 1875).
is difficult to believe that boys would have learned much about science, for example, from Latin textual references to ancient medicine.\textsuperscript{69}

Classical studies, which Victorians perceived to instill order, discipline, and flexibility of mind, may have been seen not merely as vital to boys’ moral and intellectual development but also as necessary for training future imperialists.\textsuperscript{70} The classical discipline, Rev. E. Coleridge answers to Lord Lyttelton of the Clarendon Commission, is conducive to boys’ development as individuals:

\begin{quote}
[The Eton boy] must have some common places to fall back upon, some classical forms of expression out of Horace or Virgil and other good Latin poets, so as to enable him to grapple with his own ideas.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}

In other words, the study of the classics was allegedly designed to aid a boy in his intellectual—and, in the Victorian context, moral—development.\textsuperscript{72} Victorians may well have believed that the classics, a study that offered no visible, real-world rewards yet had been cherished and valued for centuries must, if nothing else, build character.

The argument that classical backgrounds were beneficial to future imperialists can be divided into three separate subarguments that may have been present, consciously or subconsciously, in Victorian thought. First, the classics provide students with the logical and organizational skills necessary to become effective leaders. Second, the sense of rigidity and structure inherent in the classical discipline may have seemed ample preparation for the grueling conditions boys would face.

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid. The Carthusian reports: A. H. Webster “then made a few remarks about the stars being discovered by classics because of their classical names, which astounding statement received a just rebuke from P. N. Pollock.”

\textsuperscript{70} As long as public school headmasters, administrators, and students believed that the classics guided boys in their moral and intellectual development, it may not have mattered if the discipline actually had this power in regard to retention of the subject.


\textsuperscript{72} Thomas Arnold in Waquet, \textit{Latin or the Empire of a Sign}, 187.
\end{footnotes}
abroad. Third, the process of learning the classics develops “flexibility of mind” such that boys are prepared for the challenges and unpredictability of future work in the empire—an argument to which many scholars allude but on which few have elaborated. 73 Waquet argues,

Such a quality was valued highly by public schools in the Victorian era: at a time when it was necessary to produce civil servants and imperial administrators, the study of Latin, favouring suppleness of mind, seemed an ideal way of giving children the ‘adaptability’ they would need in their future posts. 74

Her argument is a reiteration of the “gymnastic” theory of classics, referenced in an 1875 Rugby debate, which suggests that continuous exposure to the rigors of classical study lends itself to a heightened intellectual capacity that would allow young men to adapt to new situations and environments. 75 Although it seems unlikely that the actual correlation between classical study and governing talent was as great as some contemporaries asserted, it was arguably less necessary that any of these arguments hold true than that Victorians perceived them to be true, for the classics to be retained in a period of mounting imperial enthusiasm.

The omnipresence of the classics in all aspects of life and the abundance of classical allusions in the schools suggest that the classics had the power to influence boys’ characters beyond the academic realm. 76 If the schools embraced the rigorous mental exercises of the study of Latin for their own sake, the boys lamented their classics-induced woes with quiet pride at every opportunity. Even the poetry in the

73 Ibid., 187–88.
74 Ibid.
75 The Meteor, no. 96 (November 30, 1875). Mr. Barkworth at Rugby, however, counters this as a misconception, calling it a “rare thing for students to aim really at self-improvement; as rare as for schoolboys to learn their lessons conscientiously.” Mr. Barkworth’s criticism, however, is not necessarily of the classics themselves but of the boys’ work ethic in general.
76 Waquet, Latin or the Empire of a Sign, 23. Waquet depicts “the astonished John Waldegrave, aged seven, on his arrival at Eton: he judged it a ‘very odd place . . . full of boys and Latin.’”
school magazines is laden with classical themes, such as the untitled poem by “As You See” in an 1889 issue of the Carthusian:

When weekly Elegiacs come,  
These are the books to aid us:  
The English-Latin Dictionary,  
And the ad Parnassum Gradus.

And when the Latin Prose comes round  
And we need inspiration,  
We seek again that good old friend,  
And find it with elation.

And when there comes Greek Prose, and wit  
Must find some fresh resources,  
The good old stilted English-Greek  
Renews our failing forces.

In imitating Æschylus,  
In spite of all reverses,  
Iambicome a manic  
Composing would-be verses.77

Classical study, although mocked in poetry, studied halfheartedly in lessons, and made dull, at times, by constant memorization, nevertheless infiltrated the minds and hearts of public schoolboys such that their characters must have been influenced by this ubiquitous discipline. The classics thus represented the Arnoldian ideal of moral education, extending into the realm of character development, beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge.

77 The Carthusian, vol. V, no. 155 (November 1889); Hughes, Tom Brown's School Days, 144. In Tom Brown's School Days, Hughes confirms this Latin mania: “Young gentlemen of all ages, from nine to fifteen, were to be found [in the lower-fourth form], who expended such part of their energies as was devoted to Latin and Greek, upon a book of Livy, the Bucolics of Virgil, and the Hecuba of Euripides, which were ground out in small daily portions.”
2b. The Classics Imply, the Classics Confer

It can be argued that the classics possessed more societal influence than would be expected of an academic discipline, both elevating social rank and indicating wealth and power. The constant “parental demand for the classics” in schools because of their its symbolic status attests to this. Latin’s apparent lack of practical application greatly enhanced its prestige, insofar that only the wealthy could afford to engage in studies of no inherent vocational value. It follows, then, that an upper-middle-class family might have felt a strong incentive to have their son schooled in ancient languages in order to secure his privileged status in society. The Earl of Chesterfield, for example, writes from London to his son in 1748: “Classical knowledge, that is, Greek and Latin, is absolutely necessary for everybody, because everybody has agreed to think and to call it so.” It would certainly be incorrect to suggest that classical studies possessed no intrinsic academic merit, but it is possible that a version of the “Emperor’s New Clothes” was in place: possessing classical knowledge was a mark of elitism because few were likely to question that the subject embodied high status. The Clarendon Commission’s report assesses the state of conservative classical interests in the 1860s:

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78 Stray, Classics Transformed, 183. Stray argues, “In general . . . classics persisted in the late Victorian public schools because of expanding market demand for the social status it continued to symbolize.” The prestige factor would not have been the only reason for the continued classical tradition, but it was likely a primary impetus.

79 Waquet, Latin or the Empire of a Sign, 221.

80 Ibid., 2. Waquet argues, “Latin may have derived its authority and duration not so much from what it said or could say, but from what it wanted to say: from what it meant [italics in original].”


82 Waquet, Latin or the Empire of a Sign, 2, 215.
Among the other subjects, the classics were often seen as the only one truly suited to the “gentleman,” as John Locke argues in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). The classics would, therefore, have been desirable to anyone seeking either to preserve (in the case of aristocrats) or forge (in the case of the *nouveau riche*) such a reputation. The classical scholar thus embodied the ideal of the educated elite in the Victorian period, knowledge of the classics apparently representing a vital commodity for any gentleman.

The classical curriculum appears to have functioned as a subtle tracking device of class. Classical training became, in some cases, a *sine qua non* for entry into public schools. Waquet reveals what might be constituted as an insidious ploy on the part of the schools to filter who was able to attend:

Some schools were required, under the terms of their foundation, to educate a few local boys free or for reduced fees; by eliminating their elementary classes, the schools ensured that only boys who had been privately tutored, or attended a paying preparatory school, had sufficient basic Latin to meet their entry requirements.

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85 Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe*, 136–37; Stray, *Classics Transformed*, 60, 180. A scientist may have been viewed as “a sort of mechanic.” Honey argues that “in general the status and rewards of the mathematics master in the Victorian public school were lower than those of his classical colleagues,” and mathematicians were sometimes even prevented from wearing a gown. He notes, however, that there were exceptions to this generalization, such as at Harrow, where mathematician J. W. Colenso was Housemaster in 1839; Thomas Gaisford, the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford (1831–1855), famously asserted that Greek “not only elevates above the vulgar herd, but leads not infrequently to positions of considerable emolument.”
These exclusions may have been as much for the sake of conserving expenses as for consolidating an elite student body, as conducting science experiments, for example, would require a certain monetary expenditure on the part of the schools.86 The status component of the classical tradition begins, nevertheless, to throw into sharp relief the elitism imbedded in the British public schools. The effect was that of an “established élite,” one far removed, culturally and intellectually, from all deprived of classical knowledge.87

2c. The Latin Tongue Confined to the Page

Latin instruction in ancient Rome offers a surprising analogy to classical studies in Britain, both systems combining the teaching of language with building character and each using Latin as a means of preserving elitism in a culturally threatened group. Young Romans, like British schoolboys, at one time needed to learn Latin, their native tongue. As Caro Lynn quips in her article tracing the teaching of Latin grammar over the centuries, “[A]ccording to Tacitus the battles of Latin Grammar were won in the nursery schools of Rome.” Just as British schoolboys were instructed in the ways of gentlemanly comportment, Roman children were left in the care of an “elderly and honored kinswoman” assigned to train them in their own language and charged with “the molding of mores.”88 To carry the comparison between Roman and British education further, British public schools sought to

86 Waquet, *Latin or the Empire of a Sign*, 213.
88 Caro Lynn, "The Descent of Grammar," *The Classical Journal* 29, no. 2 (1933): 104. Although an easy parallel may be drawn between Victorian public schoolboys’ and Romans’ combination of character and language training, it was not until the second century B.C. that Crates, a Greek scholar from Mallos, revolutionized the official teaching of “philology and grammar” and formally taught Greek and Latin.
preserve their elite status by means of traditional classical study in the midst of shifting class structures in Britain and imperial expansion abroad; so too did Romans protect the Latin tongue in order to consolidate Roman power. Lynn emphasizes the magnitude of cultural peril in the third century A.D., when Rome came into contact with Spanish, Asian, and other tongues, and colonial vernaculars often obscured the pure form of the Latin language: the “guards who manned the walls of Rome against the encroaching barbarians were the unsung grammarians, defending the speech of Romulus.”\(^8^9\) Latin survived imperial expansion—what Lynn rightly considers a major Roman achievement—as a symbol of Roman authority, and its teaching evolved to suit new nations and new eras.

There was a gradual shift away from spoken Latin from the eighteenth century, ostensibly in response to Latin’s waning practicality but perhaps also because the change further distinguished Latin from other subjects.\(^9^0\) Learning the universal Latin language had once been necessary to maintain one’s diplomatic viability, and it is thus no surprise that learning to speak, read, and compose in Latin was once a priority.\(^9^1\) Over the course of the eighteenth century, however, Latin was decreasingly taught as a spoken language, a change accordingly reflected in the makeup of Latin textbooks.\(^9^2\) Stripped of much of its practicality and abandoned as a

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\(^8^9\) Ibid.: 106–07.
\(^9^0\) Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 137. Gathorne-Hardy cleverly argues, “Because gentlemen were supposed to be too rich to work the criticism that practically undiluted classics did not prepare someone to earn his living became a powerful recommendation.” Victorians apparently cherished having no emphatic pretence of Latin practicality. Also, information from Dr. Christopher Stray in an email (March 20, 2008).
\(^9^1\) See Chapter One.
spoken language, Latin could all the more play the part of the gentleman’s subject: little could prove to be of such small pragmatic use as composing Latin texts only comprehensible to the elite community of classical scholars.93

There was rigidity in how the classics were taught, with the greatest emphasis placed on the grammar and syntax of the Latin and Greek languages as opposed to classical history and literature, despite the arguments of defenders of the classics that Latin represented a sound means of studying other disciplines.94 At the beginning of the nineteenth century, early levels in some of the public schools consisted only of grammar instruction, then known as the “gerund grind,” later defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the 1890s as the “grammar grind.” Latin also served as a gateway language to the learning of Greek, as is evidenced by the use of Latin in Eton Greek grammars.95 It seems ironic that Latin, a supposed jumping-off point for other modern disciplines, was mainly a passage to yet another ancient language. Stray offers one convincing reason for the schools’ seemingly inevitable curricular stagnancy:

> The entrenchment of this pervasively classical culture was reproduced through the tendency to recruit to a school’s staff from its former pupils. Thus the boy who went from Eton to King’s [Cambridge], or from Winchester to New College [Oxford], would often return to his old school to teach.96

Although some Latin instructors undoubtedly found inventive means of helping young boys struggle through hours of parsing noun declensions and memorizing countless principle parts of irregular verbs, most boys who later became masters often

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93 Suggested by Professor Michael Roberts at Wesleyan University in a conversation (October 2007).
94 Stray, *Classics Transformed*, 185. Stray asserts, “The dominance of linguistic classics is suggested by the official category ‘classics, with history and literature’.” This point is of interest, considering that the arguments in favor of the classics, mentioned earlier in this Chapter, relied heavily on the point that Latin could enlighten boys in other fields of learning.
95 Ibid., 48.
96 Henry Nevinson in Ibid., 47.
taught in the style to which they had become accustomed as pupils. It can be argued, as Stray does, that this inbred system of classical instruction resulted in the oft-criticized, unimaginative means of teaching the classics that may, at times, have robbed classical studies of their inherent vitality.

Masters and boys may have found individual ways to hone their methods of teaching and learning, respectively, but repetition and extensive memorization appear to have been the dominant modes of study. Young boys were provided with amusing ways to learn their Latin, as was the case with “Latin without Tears” (1877). Although the introduction ends seriously, discussing the necessity of reading the “story of Jesus,” written in Greek and the Latin, meant to be “sung in ALL LANGUAGES by some of ALL NATIONS,” the actual content of the book is lighthearted, as its title suggests.97 For the conjugation of the verb *calcare*, “to kick”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Phrase</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Calco ranam</em></td>
<td>I kick the frog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calcas vaccam</em></td>
<td>Thou kickest the cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Agricola capram calcat</em></td>
<td>The farmer kicks the she-goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calcamus balaenas</em></td>
<td>We kick the whales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calcatis gallinas</em></td>
<td>You kick the hens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ancillae pantheras calcant</em></td>
<td>Maids kick the panthers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calcabam poetam</em></td>
<td>I was kicking the poet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calcabas gallinam</em></td>
<td>Thou wast kicking the hen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calcabat columbam</em></td>
<td>He was kicking the dove98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such silly and distinctive modes of learning, requiring little of the students beyond minimal vocabulary knowledge and rudimentary verb recognition, were likely employed through all levels of instruction, a tradition continued in classical instruction today. In the Clarendon Commission, Rev. Richard Okes, the Provost of King’s College, Cambridge, testified to the “deterioration” of the classics—a theme

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97 Favell Lee Mortimer, *Latin without Tears or, One Word a Day* (London: Hatchards, Piccadilly, 1877), vi.
throughout the Commission’s report—citing too much emphasis on repetition.  

Winston Churchill’s account of blind Latin memorization, included in Chapter One, is just one testimony to the emphasis on memorization over deep understanding. It would be incorrect to suggest that memorization and mnemonic devices were not without their merits, and without these, learning the classical languages would be all but impossible. Nevertheless, the schools appear to have dwelled excessively on memorization.

It may be the case that masters, particularly those with little faith in their younger pupils’ innate intellectual abilities beyond rote learning, were hesitant to entrust boys with tasks much more demanding than memorization. The *Times* of London in 1866 published this cynical response from “A Grinder of Small Boys” in regard to a controversial textbook, discussed below, by Headmaster Benjamin Kennedy of Shrewsbury:

> Dr. Kennedy is a name very dear to classical scholars, but his experience in dealing with the stupidity of little boys beginning to learn Latin is perhaps as doubtful as the fitness of a Hampton Lecturer to write seriously for ignorant rustics. Little boys cannot be philosophers, and therefore if you attempt to teach them philosophically you only bewilder and dishearten them. The philosophy must come afterwards—something short, pithy, and practically useful.

It is difficult to determine whether there was the common belief among masters that little boys were slow witted, or whether the writer of this disdainful letter was merely mocking Dr. Kennedy for a poorly constructed text. Such an attitude, however, may have persisted even into the more advanced levels of learning. Boys, taught through

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100 Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 140–41.

101 Stray, *Grinders and Grammars*, 16.
the centuries that memorization and grammatical accuracy were paramount, may have become accustomed to such modes of learning. The “philosophy” that theoretically was to follow rote learning appears to have come second to memorization and repetition throughout boys’ classical careers, thus perpetuating the cycle of rigid learning.

Rebellion against the evolving Latin grammars, which were part of the trend toward standardization across the schools, may have been as much about genuine grievances with flaws in the new texts as about masters’ frustration at Government interference and waning independence. As early as 1835, Thomas Arnold had called for standardized textbooks, and by the 1840s, Kennedy’s Latin grammar replaced schools’ individual publications. William Johnson, Assistant Master at Eton, testifies to the Clarendon Commission regarding the need for improvement of Latin textbooks in the 1860s, criticizing the Eton texts *Scriptores Romani* and *Scriptores Graeci*. Lord Clarendon asks Johnston the leading question,

[Do you] think on the whole that from the mode in which the publication of the books has been conducted, and the moral obligations in which the school is involved with respect to their publication, the education of the school has been affected injuriously by the introduction of bad books?

To this, Johnson conceded, “Yes.” The Clarendon Commission, dissatisfied with the state of Latin textbooks, commissioned Dr. Kennedy of Shrewsbury to edit and

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102 This standardization began in the 1830s and was solidified with the Clarendon Commission’s call for curricular reform; see Chapter One.
103 *Stray, Grinders and Grammars*, 8. By the 1860s, according to Stray, three of the great public schools favored Kennedy’s grammar, and four preferred Christopher Wordsworth’s.
104 “Report of Her Majesty’s Commissioners: Evidence,” vol. III, part 1. London (1864), 98, 148, 319. Rev. E. Balston, Headmaster of Eton, also expressed dissatisfaction with the current status of the Eton grammar, which had undergone alterations from 1834 to 1853. Balston declares, “I prefer the plan of the old Eton grammar to the syntax part of Wordsworth’s grammar, the rules of which are long and difficult for boys to learn by heart, especially for young boys.” It is surprising that the schools, even though proudly independent, would make Government personnel privy to degraded conditions of learning.
write the controversial *Public School Latin Primer* (1870), which was met with
general outcry yet espoused in almost all public schools and nine-tenths of
preparatory schools.¹⁰⁵ This appears to be the first institutionalized example of
deliberate standardization of texts across the public school spectrum.¹⁰⁶ A letter from
“A Public Schoolmaster” to the *Times* reads:

> I could give hundreds of similar instances of rules needlessly obscure [in
Kennedy’s *Primer*], of explanations which explain nothing, and of definitions
in which nothing is defined. Besides this, the books bristles with a *bizarre*
terminology, and innocents of 12 or 13 years will have to acquire familiarity
with ‘factive or *quig-quale* verbs.’¹⁰⁷

Rebellion against this text, which was utilized nevertheless, was certainly in response
to dissatisfaction with the book’s content. Resentment toward Government
interference in general, however, and the steady pressure of standardization on
schools with unique traditions and ways of life, must also have catalyzed outcry
against the text. It was not, then, merely the book’s inadequacies that sparked anger
and criticism, but governmental encroachment, albeit recognized as necessary by the
schools themselves.

2d. Over and Over Again (Romans Almost Always Agree)

Public schoolboys may have discovered similar themes running throughout
their assigned Latin texts that they could use as points of reference for understanding
their own civilization and the British Empire. It seems that not only in Britain but also

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¹⁰⁶ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, 55–56. Eton grammars were the main source used, before the
intervention of the Clarendon Commission.
¹⁰⁷ Stray, *Grinders and Grammars*, 24. Stray explains, “*Quig-quale* is a mistake for *quid-quale*. In
1878 Kennedy substituted *factive* for *factive verb* in his Glossary.”
across Europe, young classicists were assigned the same texts, the natural outcome of
there being a limited supply of ancient authors suitable for developing minds.108
Chronologically, Aesop, Cato, Terence, Caesar, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, and Ovid are
just a few of those authors taught universally throughout Europe.109 An Eton book of
set texts, *Scriptores Romani* (1891), contains a number of extracts from Livy, such as
“The Beginning of the Republic” and “Behavior of the Colonies,” and from
Suetonius, including “An Emperor Should Die Standing.”110 Two of the more
prominent themes boys encountered were “blind patriotism and the glorification of
death in battle”—elements certainly present in any classical epic. John Honey, who
offers a fairly holistic study of the schools, even argues that World War I may have
been all the more catastrophic due to the influence of these war-trumpeting texts.111
From a wider perspective, it seems that, throughout Europe, an impetus for studying
classics was this transfer of ancient cultural values. Waquet draws attention to a
French Latin grammar that emphasizes the moral value of Latin, and an Italian
grammar that asserts

> [t]he importance of studying the Latin language as a means of putting new
generations in direct contact with the eternal and irreplaceable fundamental
values of the classical world and Roman civilization.112

Rome is remembered, first and foremost, as a great imperial power, and Greek as a
foundation of democratic civilization. Thus it is not surprising that each was used as a
point of comparison, the former most directly in the public schools as an imperial

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108 Waquet, *Latin or the Empire of a Sign*, 32.
109 Ibid.
111 Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe*, 131. Honey adds, however, “Admittedly, against these [values]
must be counted the ideal of disinterested public service which classical literature undoubtedly helped
to foster.”
112 Waquet, *Latin or the Empire of a Sign*, 183–84.
reference. There is little doubt that these texts were read long before the British Empire gained global ascendency, yet many Latin texts probably coincided with current imperial thinking.

Horace’s *Odes* 4.4, assigned in 1876 as part of an upper-shell exam at Charterhouse, provides a fine example of how boys and masters may have applied an ancient, political text to Victorian Britain’s powerful empire. This “victory ode” is ostensibly dedicated to the Emperor Augustus’s stepson, Drusus, who had conquered the Alps along with brother Tiberius, later to become emperor.\(^{113} \) Although the entire poem may have held meaning for imperially minded schoolboys, lines 29 to 36 of the poem are of particular note:

\[\textit{Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis; est in iuvencis, est in equis patrum virtus, neque imbellem feroce}\]
\[\textit{progenerant aquilae columbam.} \]

Brave men are born from the manly and good: courage of their fathers is in heifers, in horses and fierce eagles do not beget the peaceful dove.

\[\textit{Doctrina sed vim promotet insitam, Rectique cultus pectora roborant; Utcumque defecere mores, Indecorant bene nata culpae.}^{114} \]

But learning advances innate power and good customs strengthen hearts; and whenever mores have failed sins disgrace what is naturally good.\(^ {115} \)

These lines, which address innate versus learned qualities in youth—alluding to the worthlessness of good birth in the face of bad behavior—may have had particular resonance for boys born of high standing but constantly indoctrinated with character-building messages.\(^{116} \) Their high birth did not guarantee impeccable character: diligence was required to succeed as gentlemen, however well born.

\(^{113} \) Daniel H. Garrison, ed., *Horace: Epodes and Odes. A New Annotated Latin Edition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 348. It bears mention that Horace’s body of work is by no means confined to political poems and that schools would have had a number of different genres of Horatian texts from which to choose.

\(^{114} \) Horace in Ibid., 145.

\(^{115} \) Translation is my own, with assistance from Professor Michael Roberts at Wesleyan University.

\(^{116} \) Garrison, ed., *Horace*, 349.
Odes 4.4 seems more than simply patriotic drivel, and may even have been understood as a cautionary tale from Horace to Augustus. John W. Ambrose Jr. convincingly subverts the conventional assessment of this poem:

[T]o read Odes 4.4 as an imperial assignment, a praise of war and of the martial achievements of the emperor's stepson, is to misunderstand the ironic message of the poem. Rather, through a subtle blending of myth and metaphor, of implication and association, Horace produces an elusive but persistent pattern of warning to the princeps and to Rome against embarking upon a foreign policy of imperial expansion in Germany.117

To cast doubt in the reader’s mind that Horace meant simply to praise Augustus in accordance with his duties as a court poet, Ambrose uses such examples as the simile Horace establishes early in the poem, of Drusus and Tiberius as a young eagle and lion, preying on sheep and a deer, respectively. Horace’s imagery, according to Ambrose, invokes feelings of affection for the young eaglet and cub, but later “terror and abhorrence” at the violent animals of prey they become.118 Although it is not clear how Victorian schoolboys would have read this text, they may well have identified with the young heroes of Odes 4.4, the text plausibly having been assigned as a note of warning about the potential for violence and brutality in the name of force of character, that of the Romans or the Britons.119

Although the classics had been studied in the schools centuries before the British Empire came into being, themes apparent in classical texts may have been used to explain and rationalize imperial ideas already prevalent during the Victorian period. Honey attests to Victorians’ reliance on ancient thinking:

118 Ibid.
119 If one takes into account the standardization among the schools in the nineteenth century, it seems likely that this particular ode would have been read by boys in nearly all of the public schools.
It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the Victorians valued classical studies because they looked for, and believed they found, in them a values-system which helped to explain their own situation, and thus acted as a guide in matters of taste, of politics, and of morals.\textsuperscript{120}

It seems just as likely, however, that the value of classics in the public schools, even more than the discipline’s service as a “guide,” lay in its ability retroactively to justify imperial thinking in the late nineteenth century. Provost Warre of Eton (1893–1916), for example, explicitly refers to the classics as crucial to an “understanding of ‘Colonial affairs,’” and according to Porter, classical comparisons with modern times were frequently utilized in schools:

\begin{quote}
[T]he ideal of ‘imperial federation’ [was] compared to ‘Delos in its early days’ by an Old Harrovian writing to his school magazine in 1869, for example, and to Athens by a Haileyburian in a school debate in 1890.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

Comparisons between the ancient civilizations and Britain were drawn, but once again, the main purpose classics served is unclear. Rev. E. Coleridge told the Clarendon commissioners that Latin texts allowed the schoolboy to “grapple with his own ideas,” but perhaps the texts allowed boys even more to “grapple with” Victorian society’s perceptions of empire and other issues of the day.\textsuperscript{122} Classical texts, by depicting civilizations far enough removed from the Victorian empire for boys to mull over the similarities and differences among ancient Greek civilization, the Roman Empire, and modern Britain, offered an ancient context within which boys could conceptualize the empire they would inherit.

\textsuperscript{120} Honey, \textit{Tom Brown’s Universe}, 130. According to Honey, Sir Richard Livingstone, educated at Winchester College (1893–1899) and later a Master at Eton (1917–1918), asserted that Christianity and Hellenism were the “only sources of values in Western civilization.” Richard Winn Livingstone, born in 1880, was a particularly successful student at Winchester and later won a scholarship to New College, Oxford in 1899. Information regarding Livingstone was kindly provided by Suzanne Foster, archivist at Winchester College, in an email (April 3, 2008).

\textsuperscript{121} Porter, \textit{The Absent-Minded Imperialists}, 59.

2e. Evoking the Roman Empire

Victorians drew comparisons between the British and Roman Empires, seemingly to avoid mistakes that led to the Roman Empire’s fall as much as to glorify and justify their own imperial voracity. The reasons Victorian contemporaries gave for the fall provide insight into Victorian thought about the dangers their own empire might encounter. J. R. Seeley, Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge and the author of a work concerning British expansion, argues vehemently in 1869 for his own explanation of the Roman Empire’s fall. In a lecture titled “The Proximate Cause of the Fall of the Roman Empire,” Seeley establishes his argument by mitigating what he considers common explanations for why an empire might crumble. One factor he includes in the theoretical imperial model is that “[s]ooner or later government breaks down, overborne partly by its insurgent subjects, partly by [viceroys appointed throughout the empire] shaking off its authority. This, then, is the regular process of dissolution in empires.” Seeley later dismisses this model in the case of Rome, arguing that “Rome disarmed her formidable viceroys, as she had subdued and pacified her subject nationalities.” Seeley also waves away the argument, apparently considered valid by some of his contemporaries, that “moral degeneration in the Romans, caused by luxury and excessive good fortune” contributed to the Empire’s fall, asserting that there is no

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124 Ibid., 393.
125 As mentioned in the Introduction, Seeley was appointed both Professor of Latin at University College, London in 1863, and Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University in 1869.
126 J.R. Seeley, Roman Imperialism and Other Lectures and Essays (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871), 37–38.
127 Ibid., 47.
evidence of this “decay of spirit.”\textsuperscript{128} The dismissals of these possible explanations for Rome’s downfall are of interest in that they are those Victorians might have feared would arise in the case of the resplendent British Empire.\textsuperscript{129}

It seems that Seeley may have sought to aggrandize the British Empire by criticizing the Roman Empire, making use of the Victorians’ appreciation of the latter dominion for the sake of imperial propaganda. After having rejected so many possible causes of the fall, Seeley declares:

Whatever the remote and ultimate cause may have been, the immediate cause to which the fall of the Empire can be traced is a physical, not a moral, decay. . . . Men were wanting; the Empire perished for want of men.\textsuperscript{130}

Seeley’s 1860s lecture arguably provides a plain connection between the shortcomings of the Roman Empire and the need for more men to serve the British Empire, even though Seeley was speaking when Britain’s territorial acquisitions were minimal compared to those of the late-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{131} Seeley also praises Britain for its ability to civilize “creatively” rather than “destructively”:

One main reason why civilization in modern times is favorable to the growth of population is that it is industrial. The Anglo-Saxon subdues physical nature to his interest and convenience. Wherever he comes, he introduces new industries. . . . But Roman civilization was not of this creative kind. It was military, that is, destructive.\textsuperscript{132}

It is unclear whether Seeley set out to assuage certain fears regarding the British Empire’s fragility, to call for more men to serve, and to applaud Britain’s flourishing industry, or whether he was merely stating his views of Roman civilization. In either

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{129} Even if public schoolboys did not hear Seeley’s lectures, former public school pupils studying at Cambridge during Seeley’s tenure undoubtedly would have. Also, it is probable that boys were exposed to similar arguments by speakers invited to address their schools.
\textsuperscript{130} Seeley, \textit{Roman Imperialism and Other Lectures and Essays}, 54.
\textsuperscript{131} This will be discussed in Chapter Three.
\textsuperscript{132} Seeley, \textit{Roman Imperialism and Other Lectures and Essays}, 59.
case, however, his words exemplify the power of evoking the Roman Empire as a cautionary tale for Victorian Britons, the magnificence of Rome starkly contrasted with the gravity of its destruction. Seeley’s criticism of Rome would not necessarily have been recognized as a pessimistic foreboding of the British Empire’s collapse. His explanation for Rome’s fall may instead have been understood as a careful critique of empire that, if heeded, would help to prevent Britain from meeting a similar fate.

Public school masters may have assigned classical texts intended even more to alert boys to the superiority of the British Empire over the Roman than to instruct them in the dangers inherent in imperial expansion. In a debate at Rugby School in 1888, for example, “That the modern world owes more to Greece than it does to Rome,” Mr. Guedalla, in arguing for Greece’s pre-eminence as a harbinger of the modern world, asserts, “Rome showed an oppressive spirit at all times. Although we may owe our laws to Rome, yet without cultivation laws cannot be appreciated.”

This point not only elicits the danger of overbearing laws but also implies that modern Britain had honed its laws to avoid Roman-style tyranny. A poem by “Prompter” in the *Eton College Chronicle* in 1897 quotes Tacitus, a Roman historian often viewed as critical of Roman emperors, in its final line:

> Next Calgacus his Highland host bids fight,  
> And now to die or break the Roman’s might,  
> Whose lust of Empire wide will never cease,  
> ‘Who make a wilderness and call it peace.’

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133 *The Meteor*, no. 261 (November 1, 1888).
135 *The Eton College Chronicle*, no. 763 (June 4, 1897). Tacitus lived from approximately 56 B.C. to 117 B.C.
The final line is a reference to Tacitus’s *Agricola* 30: “To seize, to slaughter, to plunder in the false names of empire, and where they make solitude, they call it peace.” Here Rome is portrayed as ruthless in its imperial quest and destructive in its expansion. Such a message, combined with others glorifying the empire, may have allowed students to believe that they possessed a balanced perception of empire: boys hesitated to embrace fully the Roman civilization they studied and defended, seeming to recognize the Roman Empire’s fragility—even in the midst of its greatness. It is thus unsurprising that boys sought to prove themselves cognizant of Rome’s shortcomings, not seeking naively to glorify the miscalculations of Roman leaders in a flawed, ancient system.

2f. Conclusion

Although it is difficult to imagine that the classics did not have some sort of impact on boys’ characters, it is nearly impossible to determine the exact degree to which the classical curriculum prepared boys for imperial service, if indeed it actually did so. Victorian contemporaries certainly justified the classics by citing character-building benefits that would, naturally, translate to boys’ future careers, and few historians have spent time refuting this assumption—let alone addressing it at all. It seems that, at the very least, the study of the classics intrinsically possessed the following elements that would have contributed to a sustained imperial drive among its students. First, the diligence required in rote memorization, however ineffective the method for some in terms of long-term retention of facts, would undoubtedly have

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136 *Auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*; translation is my own.
instilled in boys a degree of self-discipline that they could apply to the paperwork and
menial tasks governmental service abroad might require. Second, pupils’ awareness
that other boys across the public schools were learning the same grammatical rules
and reading the same texts would arguably have provided a common bond between
former students when they met at imperial posts abroad. Third, even if classical texts
that addressed empire were not assigned deliberately to indoctrinate boys or inculcate
the imperial spirit, students would surely have recognized the connection between
their own and the ancient empires. They arguably would have allowed their readings
and translations to shape their imperial thinking, even if only to a very small degree,
boys applying what they learned from Horace or Livy to their lives abroad, perhaps
even on a daily basis. Further analysis of set texts, both Latin and Greek, would be
useful for gauging the broader trends in what the boys were asked to translate and
determining how these assignments relate, if at all, to the Victorian political climate.
Historians have previously neither questioned Victorian conjectures about the
character-building aspects of learning Latin, nor gone into great detail about the
discipline’s relation to the empire. The case remains, however, that any study of the
connection between the schools and the empire cannot be divorced from an
examination of the classical curriculum.
Chapter Three
The Empire: Britain, Victorian Events, and the Leaders

The basic trends in British imperial circumstances throughout the Victorian period help to reveal why youth were necessary for the continuance of empire. The empire expanded with the “new imperialism” of 1870 to 1902, during which time Britain acquired 4,750,000 square miles of territory and 88 million new subjects. More and more men were required to govern—men who possessed suitable backgrounds to maintain British tradition and dominance in the foreign colonies. The Indian Civil Service seemingly strove to recruit “public schoolboy types,” often to the exclusion of other potentially viable candidates. Thus a paradox emerges as one examines Britain’s imperial needs in relation to its recruitment of civil servants: the Crown presumably required increasing numbers of men to govern in order for Britain to remain competitive against other European powers and to maintain its territories, yet there was rampant exclusivity in the modes of recruitment.

3a. Passive Control, Direct Control

Although Rudyard Kipling’s allegedly jingoistic concept of the “white man’s burden,” the obligation to civilize the inferior people and places of world, was coined in 1899 and inextricably linked specifically to late-Victorian imperialism, Britons had been claiming reluctance toward the onerous task of governing an empire for

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centuries prior. Even as the British Empire approached its zenith in the Victorian period, Britons continued to feign indifference to territorial acquisition for its own sake. In 1923, Ramsey Muir, Professor of Modern History at the University of Manchester, argues,

[T]raders who made [the empire in the eighteenth century] never at any time planned it or wanted it. They struggled against it. They regarded it as a burden to be avoided, a distraction from their true business of buying and selling. Muir’s words suggest that the empire was declared to be a “white man’s burden” long before Kipling wrote his famous poem. This purported disaffection toward imperialism seems contrived, however, and British claims of reluctance to become embroiled in imperial expansion may well have provided British imperialists with a greater sense of moral justification for their “unwanted” roles as leaders of the British Empire: acquiring valueless, ostensibly burdensome imperial subjects would not have seemed as abhorrent to Victorians as obtaining territories for the sake of monetary or prestige-related gains.

The foundation of the “Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading into the East Indies” in 1600—later known as the British East India Company—arguably marks the elusive inception point of the British Empire. Queen Elizabeth was a personal shareholder in the Company, a joint-stock venture compelled by competition with Portugal, Spain, and Holland for control of Indian,

and later some Chinese, markets.\textsuperscript{141} The Company’s high status became evident in 1668 when it assumed control of the lucrative Indian port of Bombay, Britain having gained this trade mecca from Portugal from the terms of Charles II’s marriage.\textsuperscript{142} Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Company covered routes between England and Asia, leaving private English traders and Company servants to trade among and between Asian ports. By allowing this “country trade,” the Company enabled and encouraged Britons to invest their lives and fortunes on the Indian continent.\textsuperscript{143} The sheer longevity of the empire and the vast numbers of Britons whose occupations were eventually to be associated with Britain’s holdings help to reveal not only the deep connection between Britain and its empire but also just how many men were required to maintain Britain’s expanding territorial mass.

Conflict with France and the loss of the American colonies in the eighteenth century were developments that ironically pronounced Britain’s ascension as an imperial power, competition and frightening territorial losses intensifying Britain’s imperial drive. The Treaty of Paris, signed at the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War with France in 1763, ceded to Britain the territory east of the Mississippi in North America, African Senegal, and French India.\textsuperscript{144} The loss of the American colonies in the years that followed, rather than crushing Britain’s imperial aspirations, instead compelled future empire building. Linda Colley forges a surprising connection between American colonial loss and the British outlook on imperialism when she


\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 280.

\textsuperscript{144} Anthony Pagden, Peoples and Empires: A Short History of European Migration, Exploration, and Conquest, from Greece to the Present, 2nd ed. (New York: Modern Library Chronicles, 2003), 90–91.
outlines the major outcomes of the American War. First, she suggests that Britons emerged with fewer scruples about existing imperial holdings upon realizing how fragile these assets might be. Second, she argues that a new patriotic and imperial zeal manifested itself in such reforms as the India Act of 1784, which brought the East India Company under control of the British Government.\textsuperscript{145} After experiencing vulnerability in the American colonies, Britons felt new enthusiasm for an increasingly consolidated and powerful British Empire, recognizing the need to proceed with audacity in light of their previous losses. In response to British territorial annexations inciting Indian princes’ dissent and sepoys’ perception of mistreatment, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 resulted in the dissolution of the East India Company by the British Government in 1858, at which point Queen Victoria assumed direct control of territories previously under the East India Company’s jurisdiction. This transfer of power precipitated significant policy and ideological shifts: the India Office was established, the civil service was reformed, and many Britons recognized India “for the first time as a great national asset to be developed.”\textsuperscript{146} The Indian Mutiny of 1857, which forced Britain to approach imperial governance differently and represented a shift from\textit{de facto} to actual empire, was pivotal in the British Government’s consolidation of its imperial control. It may be the case that Britain thrived as an imperial force precisely because of this ability to gain strength from major and potentially debilitating setbacks.

\textsuperscript{145} Linda Colley, \textit{Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 144.

3b. Victorian International, Economic, and Ideological Interests

Although some economists and historians have downplayed the connection between the Industrial Revolution (dated roughly from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth century) and propagation of the British Empire, industrialization contributed to sustaining and increasing Britain’s imperial drive by both advancing technology and helping to solidify and expand Britain’s economic relationships with regions abroad.\textsuperscript{147} Improved technology facilitated British activities in India and industrialization reflected Britons’ desire to establish efficient systems of trade and government, as evidenced by the five thousand miles of railroad track laid in India by 1870.\textsuperscript{148} Britain’s economic relationship with India, in particular Britain’s cotton export industry, for example, which new agricultural technology enhanced, merits attention in that it helps to reveal the breadth of Britain’s imperial trade networks.\textsuperscript{149} Britain’s target regions for exportation of cotton appear to have shifted substantially in the nineteenth century: in 1820, 60.4 percent of cotton exports were sent to Europe and the United States, by 1860, 19.0 percent, by 1880, 9.8 percent. By 1900, 7.1 percent of cotton was shipped to Europe or the United States, while 86.3 percent went to what distinguished economic and social historian E. J.

\textsuperscript{147} E. J. Hobsbawm, \textit{Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750} (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968); J. R. Ward, "The Industrial Revolution and British Imperialism, 1750–1850," \textit{The Economic History Review} 47, no. 1 (1994): 44–46. Some scholars have downplayed the Industrial Revolution in the history of the British Empire because of Britain’s imperial activity and success before large-scale industrialization. In his article asserting the British Empire’s role in studies of the Industrial Revolution, Ward argues “that both the gentlemanly capitalist and Indianist perspectives underrate the industrial revolution’s role in British imperialism between 1750 and 1850.” Ward further asserts that the “non-industrial ethos and rhetoric of imperialist elites” had been granted “disproportionate” attention.


\textsuperscript{149} Ward, "The Industrial Revolution and British Imperialism, 1750–1850," 60.
Hobsbawm terms the “underdeveloped world.” Hobsbawm elaborates on how India became so receptive to British goods:

[I]n the first quarter of the nineteenth century British policy destroyed the local textile industry [in India] as a competitor with Lancashire. In the second place India controlled the trade of the Far East through its export surplus with that area; the exports consisting largely of opium, a state monopoly which the British fostered systematically (mainly for revenue purposes) almost from the start.

This example is useful not only for its explanation of Britain’s economic relationship with India but also for drawing attention to Britain’s indirect connection with the Far East through Indian markets. Although Britain’s interests throughout the empire were not wholly economic, it nevertheless is necessary to recognize the concurrence of industrialization and British imperial expansion.

Nineteenth-century British involvement in Africa was arguably the result not only of Africa’s intrinsic value but also of the British imperial obsession with securing the route to India. A hundred years before the occupation of Egypt in 1882, Britain had seized Cape Town for the sake of “safeguarding” these precious routes. Debate still rages whether the incentives propagating the “new imperialism” of the Victorian period were “economic” in terms of trading and acquisition of resources, “strategic” with regard to India, or both. Historians consistently ask whether the points along the route to India were intrinsically alluring to British adventurers, or whether the more voracious “new imperialism” simply

150 Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750*, 121.
151 Ibid., 123.
152 Much of the discussion in this thesis of the route to India and the European balance of power is adapted from an essay titled “The African Route to India,” originally submitted for Mr. G.H.L. Le May, Emeritus Fellow at Worcester College, Oxford (October 31, 2006).
153 Moore, “India and the British Empire,” 68.
“happened” because of the need for easy passage to India. Although British imperialists must have recognized the potential for wealth and power in the “Dark Continent” beyond the preservation of the route to India, it seems to have been accepted at the time that one of Africa’s primary functions was to provide a clear passage to India. It is likely that Britain defended its status in India by jealously guarding the parts of Africa located along the route to India—Egypt and the Cape in particular. In this way there emerged a domino effect of expansion that begins to explain Britain’s rapid territorial annexations after the mid-nineteenth century.

Although an examination of Britain’s relationship with India and Southern Africa is necessary for explaining the land grab in Africa, the theory that British imperialism was spurred by the desire to maintain the European balance of power also helps to elucidate a possible motive. Foreign Secretary Derby summed up the tangled relationship among Britain, Africa, and the competing European powers in 1875: “The question for us is not one of establishing an exclusive interest, but of preventing an exclusive interest from being established as against us.” The “balance of power” thesis convincingly draws attention away from imperialism for economic reasons. Historian Ronald Robinson argues, “[Land in tropical Africa] was acquired at the end of the last century to exclude foreign powers from these territories, but without positive intentions of developing them economically as imperial estates.” Although it seems that Robinson may be incorrect to dismiss

154 E.g., Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher.
156 Sturgis, "India and the British Empire," 101.
completely all “positive intentions” toward imperialism, the colonial process in Africa must surely have been accelerated by intra-European competition.

Ideological considerations help to distinguish Victorian imperialism from British imperialism before and after the second half of the nineteenth century. Edward Said’s theory of “Orientalism” represents one prominent view of the Victorian imperial mindset. Said suggests that the Orient—and, to take the theory further, any of the lands within the British Empire—represented a great “other” against which European culture was defined. Another fundamental component of Said’s theory is the power conferred onto Europeans by their Orientalism. Contrasting with Said’s theory is that which David Cannadine proposes in *Ornamentalism*, a work arguing that the British Empire was founded not on the creation of “otherness” but on the construction of mutual affinities between Britain and foreign lands. This model includes an element of reciprocity, in which, for example, Indian rulers visited London, and Queen Victoria’s children visited the colonies, each recognizing the other’s royal status. Britain may have viewed India as an “other,” within this theory, but there was nevertheless a cultural exchange, however unbalanced, bridging the divide between the two countries. Essential to Cannadine’s view is the construction of power hierarchies, in both Britain and India, which he claims served to define the empire and to help Victorians make sense of what might, in Said’s theory, be simply classified as the “other.” It seems that a synthesis of both historians’ arguments—perhaps with a greater emphasis on Cannadine’s assertion of imperial hierarchies,
which were evident in strictly defined ranking systems throughout the empire—is best for comprehending Victorian imperial ideology on a basic level.\footnote{159}

Beyond the economic considerations no doubt present in the relationship between India and Britain, Victorian ideology toward India included elements of apprehension, admiration, and faith in India’s potential to confer nearly mystical power on any who could tame it.\footnote{160} Britons’ fascination with India, according to Colley, was rendered all the more potent by their fear of the unknown:

Apprehension and astonishment in the face of the huge risks involved in what they were doing, can be seen among Britons at home, as well as in India, and were expressed indirectly as well as explicitly. From the 1750s onwards, tigers stalk the British imagination. . . . To a degree that was deeply revealing, the tiger became synonymous in British minds with India itself, and an image through which shifting ideas and apprehensions of the subcontinent could be expressed.\footnote{161}

Britons’ obsession with its Indian empire may have resulted not only in this symbolic fascination but also in territorial acquisition. Just as explorers searched relentlessly for the elusive source of the Nile, so did British imperialists idealize the wealth and power that the passage to India embodied. James Sturgis argues,

To those who say that strategy was but one remove from economics, [Robinson and Gallagher’s reply] is that India was more than an assured market but also a means of maintaining Britain’s credibility and capability as a great power.\footnote{162}

\footnote{159 Discussion of Said’s theory of Ornamentalism is largely adapted from an essay titled “The ‘Orientalisms’ of Edward Said and Ussama Makdisi,” originally submitted for Professor Bruce Masters at Wesleyan University (October 25, 2007).}

\footnote{160 Linda Colley, Captives: The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How Its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy, 1600–1850 (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002). Colley’s work is a fine source for exploring this topic further.}

\footnote{161 Ibid., 263–64.}

\footnote{162 Sturgis, "India and the British Empire," 101.}
This sense of “credibility and capability,” enhanced by the omnipresence of India in Victorian minds, may have inspired ideology-driven imperialists to capture further Indian territory.

Britons experienced what seems an unprecedented increase in imperial fervor between the near disaster of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the end of the Victorian period, their frenzied desire for expansion clashing with anxiety over Britain’s ability to maintain control of its imperial holdings. This imperial avarice manifested itself domestically and internationally in numerous ways at the end of the nineteenth century, from the obsession with Indian tiger imagery, to myriad and increasing public school debates on contemporary colonial policy, to fascination with discovering the source of the Nile in Africa, as exemplified in David Livingstone’s 1866–1871 expedition. Britain also sought to protect its spheres of influence against other strong European powers hungry for empire, such as France and Germany, by steadily advancing its weapons technology as the end of the nineteenth century drew near. Further, Britain’s progressively deeper involvement in colonial affairs in India and Africa during the Victorian period appears to have resulted in exponential territorial expansion as the nineteenth century progressed.

Territorial expansion in the nineteenth century, coupled with rising imperial zeal, appears to have formed a self-perpetuating cycle of imperialism that created the need for innovative solutions to the problems of governmental administration in colonial regions. Under direct control of the British Crown after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the empire expanded rapidly, setting the stage for the imperial policies and strategies that would characterize the early years of the twentieth century.

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163 The Carthusian, vol. VI, no. 197 (July 1894); Colley, Captives, 263–64; Porter, ed., The Oxford History of the British Empire, 712–41. In 1894, for example, Charterhouse held the debate “That a mutiny is imminent in India; and, if such be the case, the military force there is insufficient to cope with it.”

1857 catalyzed the dissolution of the East India Company, India required a refined system of British governance to maintain order in the midst of the potential chaos of native rulers, the East India Company’s structural residue, and administrative challenges. The system of indirect rule for the princely states of India, which were to be governed by Indian princely rulers and monitored by British political officers, was but one organizational mechanism the British Government employed to maintain its “paramountcy” on the Indian continent. Exploration and territorial acquisition in Africa also characterized this period, with Cecil Rhodes, arguably the most influential figure in African imperialism, emerging as a symbol of headstrong, capitalist British control. As Britain grew stronger and the empire became ever more vast, however, new complexities of administration required more and more men to govern.

3c. Delegating the Burden (Classical Administrators)

Nineteenth-century British government at home and throughout the empire may best be understood as a system of hierarchies that did not necessarily emerge along specific class lines, aristocratic and elite outposts being the standard. David Cannadine’s theory of Ornamentalism revolves around the concept that hierarchy “flourished and flowered” by the 1870s, and he argues that there were intricate ranking systems in Britain and throughout the empire. Cannadine’s explanation for India’s appeal relies on the point that aristocrats, whose prominence at home was

166 Antony Thomas, Rhodes: The Race for Africa (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996). Rhodes became Prime Minister of Cape Colony is 1890.
being challenged, recognized prestige in India to be “attractive aristocratic security.”¹⁶⁸ In regions of indirect rule in India, the Gold Coast in Africa, and elsewhere, where “indigenous royal splendor matched . . . imported proconsular pomp,” British administrators may well have gleaned an enhanced sense of hierarchical superiority by granting authority to indigenous leaders.¹⁶⁹ In this way, educated elites may have considered indirectly ruled states abroad to be particularly ideal locations to convene and to revel in the comfort of their secure status.

Recruitment to the Indian Civil Service was traditionally closed to all but those with personal connections to the Service, a policy that arguably formed and strengthened the elite connotations of colonial government. The East India Company had implemented a system in which future civil servants were nominated by directors to a writership, during which, after a perfunctory examination, students were admitted to the East India Company’s training college at Haileybury.¹⁷⁰ Phiroze Vasunia, who examines the classical backgrounds of British civil servants in India, concisely outlines the early prerequisites for appointment to the Indian Civil Service:

[T]he official petitions [for nomination] include such reasons as friendship, kinship connections, business relationships, Company service, political recommendation, and recommendation of the Board of Control. In short, this was a system of patronage, and it remained in the hands of about fifty or sixty interconnected and commercial families and landed groups in Scotland and the south-east of England.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), 27; Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 56–57. Cannadine argues, “Perhaps, too, . . . the flowering of formal, belligerent, jingoistic imperialism was connected with the need of the old titled and territorial classes to indulge overseas their atavistic longings for plunder, for glory, and for domination, at a time when their wealth, their status, and their power, and thus their sense of purpose and identity, were being so massively undermined at home.”


Although students had to complete further studies in such subjects as political economy and Indian languages, they were still only considered for the Indian Civil Service on the basis of an initial nomination.\(^{172}\) Tensions among efforts at good government, challenges to traditional systems of patronage, and the persistent need for more and able men to govern the empire eventually sparked controversy over the means of recruitment to the Indian Civil Service. John Armstrong, historian of the British Government, argues, “Obviously treatment of an administrative office as a family possession violates the principal of universalism, usually accepted as a criterion of ‘modernity.’”\(^ {173}\) That the system of patronage, “disgraceful to our country and corruptive of public morality,” survived as long as it did may be explained in part by the argument that British “imperialism was essentially élitist,” with Britons situated above other races and the ruling classes comprising British gentlemen.\(^ {174}\)

The example of the Indian Civil Service, which provides a fine case study for examining the family and social backgrounds of those who governed the empire, reveals a tendency toward favoring those from higher social ranks for recruitment to the services throughout the nineteenth century. The trends in appointment must be examined in three parts: the period before open competition, the years immediately following the introduction of open competition, and the later years of the nineteenth century, each stage representing a new form of élitist recruitment. In the East India Company years, 1600–1858, there may have been some distinction between those

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\(^{172}\) Compton, "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854–1876," 265.


\(^{174}\) Compton, "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854–1876," 266; Girouard, The Return to Camelot, 294. The first quote is from Sir Charles Trevelyan, a nineteenth-century “reformer” of recruitment methods to the Indian Civil Service; the second is from Compton.
employed by the Company and those employed by the British state, the army officers who served the East India Company being of “lower social origins than the generality of regular army officers.”**175** In Haileybury’s last five years under the East India Company (1853–1858), approximately 45 percent of nominees had an “Indian connection,” many with fathers already in the Indian services—and a great number of those in the army. The rest of these appointees with direct connections to India were likely “sons of directors and employees at East India House.”**176** The aristocracy and gentry, and the clergy, were the other prime sources of Haileybury nominees, which left only about eighteen percent of positions open to those from other social backgrounds.**177**

Despite the ostensible abolition of nepotistic policies of recruitment to the Indian Civil Service, the system’s elitist infrastructure remained. The Victorian notion that only gentlemen (such as those who passed through the public school system) were capable of running India persisted even after open competition was introduced in 1855, and may help to explain why informal systems of patronage remained throughout the nineteenth century. In 1872, George Birdwood of the Bombay Medical Service argues:

In India efficiency is quite of secondary importance; it indeed bores the natives desperately. But a high tone, down to the drummer-boys, is everything, at least to the stability of the British Government in the country.**178**

Whether or not this was actually the case has little bearing on Victorian sentiments. Indeed, it appears that even those in favor of competition nonetheless agreed that

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177 Ibid. Eight percent of these “others” were sons of parents from legal and medical professions.
178 George Birdwood in Ibid.: 269.
gentlemen were required for governing colonial outposts. William Gladstone, for example, allegedly maintained that even with open competition, the aristocracy would still emerge most qualified to rule in India, and open competition would “strengthen and multiply the ties between the higher classes and the possession of administrative power.”

Although a number of those calling for gentlemanly rulers may have been opposed to abolishing the patronage system, their fears were eventually assuaged: public schoolboys had increased to half of the Indian Civil Service recruits by the mid-1870s, as part of a trend that continued upward. In any case, egalitarian motives do not appear to have provided much of the impetus toward open competition, neither opponents nor defenders of patronage appealing to inequality of recruitment as a reason for ending patronage.

Although “special crammers and grammar schools and the clergy” were greater suppliers to Haileybury than the public schools in the early years of the nineteenth century, the public schools provided a consistent supply of boys to the Indian Civil Service, likely because the “schoolboy type” fit the ideal of the ruling gentleman. Just before the implementation of open competition, parliamentarian Thomas Macaulay foreshadowed the public schools’ eventual imperial monopoly:

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179 William Gladstone in Ibid.: 266. Gladstone was British Prime Minister four times, 1868–1874, 1880–1885, 1886, and 1892–1894.
181 "Effects of Competitive Appointments in the Civil Service of India," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 24, no. 4 (1861): 586–87. An 1861 letter from “Friend of India” asserts that open competition was necessary for supplying sheer numbers to the Indian Civil Service, citing evidence of officials in India constantly being moved from station to station to fill needed roles. Open competition is portrayed as a measure to revive the service rather than as an egalitarian impulse or, conversely, as a move to fill the governing positions in India with elite gentlemen. One naturally questions the author’s sincerity, it being probable that his advocacy for open competition was motivated by one of these latter two impulses.
182 Vasunia, "Greek, Latin and the Indian Civil Service," 39.
Men who have been engaged, up to one and two and twenty, in studies which have no immediate connection with the business of any profession, and the effect of which is merely to open, to invigorate, and to enrich the mind, will generally be found, in the business of every profession, superior to men who have, at eighteen or nineteen, devoted themselves to the special studies of their calling.  

A boy who received character-based training in the public schools embodied the ideal of the “cultivated English gentleman” civil servant in India. No doubt included in the elite group Gladstone saw fit to rule India were any who passed through the public school system in England, even those not born into the traditional, landed aristocracy, as these schools’ reputations relied on producing able men of the “gentleman” variety. It seems likely that this public school dominance could only continue as the images of the civil servant in India and the public schoolboy converged. In this way, the schools arguably represented a boon to the British Empire: there was no need for a draft to military service or imperial governance, as long as boys were implicitly instructed to serve their Queen and their empire.

The strong classical tradition in the Indian Civil Service that only subsided with the removal of Greek and Latin from the entrance examination following nationalist strife in India in 1922 suggests that open competition closed off

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184 Compton, "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854–1876," 280–81. As mentioned previously, by 1876, half of the entrants to the Indian Civil Service were graduates of elite public schools—part of what was, apparently, an upward trend that may have been helped, according to Compton, by cramming for the examination.
185 This is discussed in Chapter One.
186 Boys’ perceived obligation to serve and their direct connections to the empire are discussed in Chapter Six.
possibilities for nearly all but classicists.\textsuperscript{187} An 1804 report concerning the proposed curriculum at Haileybury justifies the prominence of the classics:

Classical Learning which usually forms the basis of a liberal education may be reckoned as a thing of course in that rank of society to which Persons destined for the service will generally belong, and the advantage or rather the necessity of it will be evident upon the slightest survey of the many important functions they have to perform.\textsuperscript{188}

The report vaguely alludes to the classics as theoretical preparation for performing “many important functions,” yet clearly states that the allure of classical knowledge lay in the “rank of society” that possessed it. By the end of the nineteenth century, two-thirds of candidates for admittance to the Indian Civil Service demonstrated abilities in Latin and Greek.\textsuperscript{189} The content of the entrance exam for the Indian Civil Service from the 1830s onwards may have ensured that most civil servants would have been classically trained. This impetus stems from Macaulay and Benjamin Jowett’s hopes that Oxbridge graduates would succeed on examinations, thereby “increas[ing] the number of ‘gentleman imperialists’ in the ICS.”\textsuperscript{190} In response to Lord Salisbury’s inquiry in 1875, civil servants and others in India weighed in on the prominence of these classical elements in the entrance requirements, with differing positions emerging. Despite Haileybury’s inclusion in the curriculum of Oriental languages and “the principles and Duties of Religion and Morality,” and although one could eventually gain entrance to the service without demonstrating classical proficiency, exhibiting sufficient abilities, for example, in a variety of modern

\textsuperscript{187} Vasunia, "Greek, Latin and the Indian Civil Service," 66. It is likely that many of these classicists would have been trained in the public schools.
\textsuperscript{188} Report by the Committee of Correspondence for the British East India Company in Ibid.: 38.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.: 53.
\textsuperscript{190} John Jones, Balliol College Archives and Manuscripts: Masters of Balliol (2008 [cited April 14, 2008]); available from http://archives.balliol.ox.ac.uk/History/masters.asp; Vasunia, "Greek, Latin and the Indian Civil Service," 44. Vasunia, "Greek, Latin and the Indian Civil Service," 44. Jowett was appointed Regius Professor of Greek at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1855.
disciplines such as Mathematics or Arabic, it can hardly be denied that there was an overemphasis on Latin and Greek.\textsuperscript{191}

The value administrators placed on Latin and Greek resulted in exclusion of Indian applicants to the Civil Service, the majority of whom lacked sufficient classical training.\textsuperscript{192} Phiroze Vasunia plainly asserts this connection:

The Greek and Latin taught in the public schools and the British universities were too far ahead of anything that students could obtain in India. Unlike the case with the modern languages, no amount of cramming or prior preparation would enable natives to overcome the superior training of the British candidates in these fields. . . . Greek and Latin sustained a mechanism that was notionally liberal and open but was in practice configured along racial axes.\textsuperscript{193}

In referring to an “open” system configured on “racial” lines, Vasunia perhaps means that although classical languages had the potential to be universal, Latin and Greek were not readily available to Indians. It seems that the classics, just as they were a subtle tracking device of class in the public schools, were also a racial tracking mechanism in the Indian Civil Service.\textsuperscript{194} It is not the racial exclusionary tactics themselves that are surprising in this case, but that the classics should be the \textit{modus operandi}: if, indeed, the classics were used intentionally to repel Indian applicants, one may surmise that Britons genuinely feared arousing the ire of Indian subjects, instead seeking a roundabout way of preventing the admittance of those non-Britons who sought inclusion.\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{191} Vasunia, "Greek, Latin and the Indian Civil Service," 46.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.: 66–67.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} Latin as a tracking device of class is discussed in Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{195} It should be noted, however, that this may not be simply a deliberate assertion of British dominance, as Vasunia’s article implies. The educated, elite classes in Britain may have continued to emphasize the classics in order to solidify British class hierarchies as much as to maintain British dominance over Indians in the Indian Civil Service.
3d. Conclusion

To begin to explain why the public schools became so integral to the empire during the final decades of the nineteenth century, it has been necessary to explore a broader overview of the British Empire’s evolution from a series of trade networks to a dominion of global prominence with an amalgamation of holdings throughout India, Africa, and elsewhere. The schools were of value to imperialists both on pragmatic and psychological levels in regard to the changing needs of the expanding empire—including the desire to appoint more men, perceived as necessary to govern complex systems of administration abroad, and the aspiration on the part of those seeking to preserve Britain’s prestige in the colonies to uphold the “British ideal” amid non-British “others.” With respect to the practical “need” for the schools in the late-nineteenth century, as will be addressed in the following chapters, these institutions represented what may be considered imperial training grounds that fed the multitude of men needed to govern abroad. It is perhaps the psychological explanation, however, that best helps to elucidate why the schools were perceived as vital to the continuance of empire in the Victorian period. The educated, wealthy, and very “English” “schoolboy type” was considered best suited, for example, to the role of civil servant in India, and with Britons’ pervasive fear of losing control of the empire only increasing with the territorial acquisitions of the nineteenth century, it is likely that the comforting and sturdy figure of the “gentleman ruler” became all the more appealing. Among elite circles, the empire may have enhanced the schools’ prestige, an argument to which scholars have not adequately attended. As for the general public, whose opinions of the schools would make a compelling study, they might at
least have assumed that the schools were integral to the empire, even if they
themselves were separated from institutions that were unofficially yet universally
recognized as necessary for the sustained imperial drive.
Certain aspects of public school government, organization, and daily life may be considered instrumental in providing early training for boys’ future imperial leadership. Boys, entrusted with self-government, learned both the hard lessons and the personal satisfaction that came from inter-peer hierarchies. Their daily athletic activities provided another form of informal training: the sports with which schoolboys were obsessed—as were Britons in general—instilled qualities of leadership and subservience alike, teaching boys how to fulfill societal roles essential to governing the empire.196

4a. The Prefects Rule with Questionable Restraint

Public schoolboys would probably have considered themselves, rather than their headmasters, to be in charge of governing their schools, having established their own systems of rank. Although it is the headmaster of a school whom history remembers, the boys themselves were at the forefront of hierarchical systems of school governance. Sixth-form boys appointed as heads of houses, or of the school, were considered fit to rule the schools. This type of system could be combined with, or abandoned for, a prefect system, to be discussed shortly. Cyril Connolly, a student at Eton in 1917, describes the system set in the late nineteenth century:

196 Portions of the discussion in this Chapter and in Chapter Five are adapted from an essay titled “Public School Education and the British Empire,” originally submitted for Mr. G.H.L. Le May at Worcester College, Oxford (October 24, 2006). This essay was the starting point for the development of this thesis.
The whole school ruled in theory by sixth form and the captain of school, was governed by Pop or the Eton Society, an oligarchy of two dozen boys who, except for two or three ex-officio members, were self-elected and could wear coloured waistcoats, stick-up collars, etc. and cane boys from any house.197

As Connolly suggests, Eton was effectively controlled by Pop, the debating society started in 1816 that eventually assumed “monitorial duties.” Connolly considered this system to be uniquely democratic in comparison with those of other schools, despite the self-selection entailed in gaining membership to this in-school governing elite.198

Rupert Wilkinson, an historian asserting the prefect system’s role in training Britain’s future leaders, argues that school tradition “sanctioned the privileges of rank,” and the advantages afforded certain boys made them all the more aware of the realities of status hierarchies.199 It can be argued, as Wilkinson does convincingly, that the promise of privilege and ascendancy within the schools served to shape schoolboys’ thoughts and behavior by encouraging them to “equate private desires with public loyalties.”200 It is likely that high status within the school became a goal to which many boys aspired, strengthening the boys’ ties to their school while encouraging them to impose their own self-discipline: in being entrusted with responsibility, boys supposedly learned firsthand how to direct their subordinate peers, and were thus that much more prepared for assuming leadership roles in the future.

Participation in the prefect system, which assumed its traditional form during Thomas Arnold’s tenure and granted certain boys what was essentially free rein within their schools, arguably represents the most obvious connection between a

197 Cyril Connolly in Gathorne-Hardy, The Old School Tie, 117–18.
198 Ibid.; "Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners: Evidence," vol. III, part 1. London (1864), 92–93. Testimony of the Provost of Eton in 1861, Rev. C. O. Goodford, suggests that the prefect system, at least at that point in time, was less important at Eton than at other public schools.
200 Ibid., 39.
boy’s role in the schools and his leadership abilities in a future career. Mark Girouard, in his study of “chivalry” in the Victorian period, describes Arnold’s concept of school organization:

Not only did [Arnold] carefully collect together a staff in sympathy with his aims; he selected sixth-formers with equal care, inspired them with his ideals, and aimed to form their characters by giving them the responsibility of running the school out of class.

By 1880, the prefects were entrusted with the security of “unshakeable tenure,” once nominated by a master or elected by peers, and were expected to organize house activities; administer punishment; and draft legislation, through such a medium as the prefects’ courts. Although it may at first appear to be stating the obvious that the schools were modeled after the British Government, the longevity of the “boy rule” tradition, existing long before the Crown even possessed an empire, must be taken into account: it is indeed improbable that the structure of the public schools would not have influenced that of the empire at large. British imperial systems of government and organization, designed and molded by graduates of elite schools, were arguably modeled on the schools as much as the schools took guidance from the greater government of Britain. The schools’ internal systems of government—and the hierarchical prefect system in particular—may be seen as a microcosm of the colonial services, which, according to Wilkinson, carried on the “public school-type tradition of emotional detachment and deference to senior office”; and public schoolboys, in

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201 Gathorne-Hardy, *The Old School Tie*, 61, 118. Arnold is discussed in Chapter One. The prefect system may have existed before the seventeenth century. According to Gathorne-Hardy, the prefect system was a form of “bribery,” in which the ruling boys gained free rein and elevated status in exchange for their loyalty to the headmaster’s “disciplinary aims.”


their capacity as self-governors, must have become indirectly aware of the functionality of a hierarchical society and empire.\textsuperscript{204}

Although the prefect system may have taught prefects the virtues of competence and self-reliance, it may also have instilled a sense that contempt for and violence toward “inferiors” was acceptable. Gathorne-Hardy explains how hierarchies within the schools informed schoolboys’ conceptions of societal organization:

> [Public school life] was rigidly conventional, and organised in minutely graded steps of social rank. . . . [I]t taught all its pupils their places in the social hierarchy: at the top. They were expected to lead. This was quite explicit.\textsuperscript{205}

It is plausible that the prefect system helped to teach boys of a relatively young age that pleasure comes from self-reliance and polished management skills. The degree of authority conferred upon the prefects was remarkable, and it is highly probable that it was this absolute power that shaped prefects’ superior attitudes toward their peers of lesser in-school status. Gathorne-Hardy further notes a case taken up by the \textit{Times} in 1854, in which “senior monitor” Platt at Harrow beat fellow-student Stewart such that the latter needed medical attention, asserting the dangers of “boy rule”:

> Although a good master and responsible prefects would clearly try to see that these boy tyrannies were not too tyrannical, a system of such independence gave many opportunities for abuse.\textsuperscript{206}

\textsuperscript{204} Wilkinson, \textit{The Prefects}, 46, 52. Wilkinson argues, “Public school loyalty entailed moral obligation to inferior social ranks as well as deference to those in senior office and co-operation with colleagues.” This can easily be associated with the “white man’s burden” trope of the nineteenth century, even if Wilkinson is here talking about moral obligation to lower ranks in general. The schools should perhaps thus be understood as institutionalized, miniature versions of British society as a whole, the lower classes within Britain almost equally separated from the upper classes as Indians were from the British in India.

\textsuperscript{205} Gathorne-Hardy, \textit{The Old School Tie}, 120.

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 119; Christopher Tyerman, \textit{A History of Harrow School, 1324–1991} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 258.
Boys learned, it would seem, not only that it was acceptable to hold contempt for those beneath them but that violence was, to some degree, an appropriate form of response. Rupert Wilkinson has suggested that boys, once achieving the intrinsic satisfaction of a high position of authority, would not have abused their power, and his point may well be valid in certain cases. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the hardly anomalous case of Platt and Stewart, it is equally, if not more, probable that the system alerted some to the pleasure and satisfaction that can come from bullying and brutality, behavior that also, unfortunately, must have had its part in imperial leadership.

4b. Fighting for Victory (the “Games Mania”)

The nature of the ideal “hero” appears to have evolved during the Victorian period in response to the changing needs of the empire. Stefan Collini differentiates between the “mid-Victorian” hero and the later “imperial hero,” the former living in “spiritual isolation” and combating his own impulses toward spiritual transgression. Thomas Arnold, who often flogged his students, may have perceived his own role to be that of a fellow-warrior against his pupils’ inner struggles. Arnold refers to the presence of six evils in the schools that needed to be combated: “sensual wickedness,” “practice of falsehood,” “systematic cruelty,” “active disobedience,” “general idleness,” and “prevailing spirit of combination in evil and of companionship.” “Let these six things exist together,” Arnold argues, “and the

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207 Wilkinson, *The Prefects*.
profanation of the temple is complete,—it is become a den of thieves.”

If the mid-Victorian hero battled within, the imperial hero faced the world without, living in “physical isolation” and braving the forces of the wild. Schoolboys, in accordance with this impulse, faced “Spartan hardships” that may have prepared them for their future careers. Wilkinson argues that this “would apply especially to the colonial service where physical discomforts and family sacrifice had their public school counterparts in unheated dormitories, cold baths, and monastic isolation.”

It seems likely that even if rough conditions in the elite schools were not explicitly intended to prepare boys for empire, they certainly were aligned with Victorian societal impulses toward braving adversity and privation.

The Victorian obsessions with manliness and heroism were arguably responsible for the fixation with and mounting emphasis on athletic prowess in the schools from the 1870s onward. According to Collini, “manly” in the schoolboy sense was not necessarily opposed to “feminine,” but rather opposite to “bestial,” a distinction that is consistent with the Victorian emphases on human decency and altruism. Collini asserts that a Victorian gentleman of irreproachable character exhibited self-restraint, perseverance, strenuous effort, and courage against adversity. The concept of “muscular Christianity” emerged in the latter part of the century, renouncing excessive intellectualism and “fashionable fop,” and revering patriotism,

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213 See Chapter Six for a discussion of Victorian society’s concepts of altruism and the schools’ application of such impulses to charitable works.
athleticism, and Spartan discipline.\textsuperscript{214} It may be that in addition to the surging games cult in the universities, the concept of muscular Christianity was a crucial factor in the games mania.\textsuperscript{215} There appears to be an ironic connection between the games phenomenon and “the potential anti-intellectualism and philistinism which Mill, Arnold, and others had protested against in the ideal of character.”\textsuperscript{216} In efforts to build character, something that Arnold assiduously sought to do, late-Victorian schools made what Arnold might have considered concessions toward philistinism. To a headmaster concerned solely or primarily with building character in his students, however, the games may have seemed a promising, if un-intellectual, avenue for boys’ healthy development.\textsuperscript{217}

Surprisingly, the sensational aspects of the games mania, such as boys’ neglect of work to satisfy their cravings for sports, do not appear to have been exaggerated. For example, scholars often draw the parallel between sports and the continuance of empire. Niall Ferguson argues,

What made public school products capable of heroism on the Empire’s behalf was not what they learned in the classroom, but what they learned on the games field. Viewed from this angle, the British Empire of the 1890s resembled nothing more than an enormous sports complex.\textsuperscript{218}

This increased interest in sports was part of the greater character-building exercise that was the public school institution, and part of the trend toward conformity among

\textsuperscript{214} Collini, \textit{Public Moralists}, 180.
\textsuperscript{215} Girouard, \textit{The Return to Camelot}, 165.
\textsuperscript{216} Collini, "The Idea Of "Character" In Victorian Political Thought," 47.
\textsuperscript{217} Girouard, \textit{The Return to Camelot}, 164–69. Thomas Arnold was uninterested in games, and athletics appear to have been out-of-school activities—pastimes that headmasters might even have sought to discourage.
\textsuperscript{218} Niall Ferguson, \textit{Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World} (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 260. Ferguson is a modern historian who confines much of his work to the study of empires.
British public school students as the nineteenth century continued.\(^{219}\) Noting the visible increase in athletic activity, A. P. Thornton argues that the games mania was “a product of the imperialist age, and the destruction of individuality. . . . [T]he regimentation that it was assumed to bring in its train caused alarm in those who recalled the idly attractive, unorganized leisure of, say, Eton in the 1840’s.”\(^{220}\) The increased games mania may have evolved along the lines proposed in Professor Seeley’s lectures published in *The Expansion of England* (1883), in which, according to C. C. Eldridge, Seeley “was aiming to effect a change in attitudes among his young student elite, presumably the coming generation’s leaders, by creating an increased imperial consciousness.”\(^{221}\) It does not seem that these historians are overstating the effectiveness, and the very reality, of these forms of indoctrination, particularly in the face of this new “imperial consciousness” of the late-nineteenth century. It might be speculated, however, that the games have drawn attention away from other less obvious changes wrought by or contributing to Victorians’ heightened interest in empire.

When one considers the volume of sports-related articles in public school magazines and the boys’ seeming inability to criticize athletics, even in the context of school debates, it becomes apparent that sports, perhaps even more than academics, were integral to schoolboys’ lives. In *Tom Brown’s School Days*, Hughes writes joyfully of Tom’s induction into the world of sport:

\(^{221}\) C. C. Eldridge, "Sinews of Empire: Changing Perspectives," in *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 186. Seeley’s lectures on the fall of the Roman Empire are discussed in Chapter Two.
Prisoner’s-base, rounders, high-cock-a-lorum, cricket, football, he was soon initiated into the delights of them all; and though most of the boys were older than himself, he managed to hold his own very well. He was naturally active and strong, and quick of eye and hand, and had the advantage of light shoes and well-fitting dress, so that in a short time he could run and jump and climb with any of them. 222

Some Victorian issues of Rugby’s student journal the *Meteor*, for example, are entirely devoted to news of various sports, including boating, raquets, and rifle corps. The student debating society at Charterhouse attended to the subject of rampant athleticism in 1899 with the motion, “That undue prominence is given to Athletics at the present day.” The debate was significant among others reported in the *Carthusian* in that the magazine reporter himself criticized the entire debate:

[T]he large company that assembled had the unpleasant impression of assisting at a failure. The house showed no willingness to support the motion, all the speakers concurred in praising athletics, and it proved too fine a point to decide the measure of esteem that ought to be paid to them. 223

Sports seem to have been so dear to Carthusians that debaters could not muster even the slightest form of valid criticism against the games. Mr. Longworth is reported to have made a “luminous and convincing” argument:

Discussing athletics from a broader point of view than paltry reproaches against private schools, he found them food for the state and food for the individual; good for the former by improving the race, and for the latter by improving his person. 224

From the overall proceedings of the debate it seems that Longworth’s argument was the most compelling in regard to reconciling sports with work. The debate shies from overtly valuing sports over work, as is suggested by the reporter’s comment that “J. G. Matthew in a few words showed a magnificent disdain of brains, and in equally

222 Hughes, *Tom Brown’s School Days*, 51.
224 Ibid.
few words was proved by the President to have none.”\textsuperscript{225} Even if intellectualism was not the most valued aspect of a public school education, to admit this publicly would likely have drawn unwanted attention from pupils and masters: sports may well have trumped work, as archivist at Eton Penny Hatfield argues, but it seems that the boys hesitated to say so explicitly.\textsuperscript{226}

The late-nineteenth-century open debate over whether or not to implement compulsory games in the schools appears to have been superfluous, considering the high degree of peer pressure to play sports and the games mania already in full swing throughout the public schools and greater Britain. A somewhat facetious letter to the \textit{Meteor} in 1881 theatrically begins:

\begin{quote}
I wish to draw your attention to an evil which is growing up amongst us, and which threatens to become worse as time goes on, if no remedy is applied. What I allude to is the fact that so many fellows in the School do not play cricket.\textsuperscript{227}
\end{quote}

The author of the letter proceeds to call for a compulsory, schoolwide games program. The leading article of Charterhouse’s \textit{Carthusian} in November 1899, also joining the debate over compulsory games, argues that students were already inclined to participate in some form of sporting activity, thus making compulsory sports unnecessary. The article concludes with a playful warning and

\begin{quote}
the expression of a sincere hope that the number of loafers will never here increase so much as to render necessary a system which we are sure would at least not deepen the interest in footer or anything else, and would also tend to lessen the liberty which a schoolboy ought to have during his hours of freedom from the restraint of the classroom.\textsuperscript{228}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{226} Information from Penny Hatfield in a conversation (June 2008).  
\textsuperscript{227} \textit{The Meteor}, no. 163 (June 9, 1881).  
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
The conclusion of this article suggests that the peer pressure to exhibit athletic prowess was even more powerful than a compulsory sports program had the potential to be, and that the debate over whether sports should be compulsory was primarily semantic.

Gaming language was at times employed in non-athletic contexts, such as violent accounts of battle, possibly in order to make potentially disturbing subjects more palatable. One sports allegory of particular note appeared in the *Carthusian* in 1899, “The Battle of Dundee: An Account by an Eye-witness.” The writer’s description of the battle is reminiscent of a report of a sporting match, the actions of each side presented with excited detail:

> An absolutely unconcerned feeling seemed to possess me, and it was like a game; but I dare say if their shell had been like ours, one might have felt different. The Boers fired about twelve rounds, and then our end commenced. . . . The third shot pitched clean under one of their guns, and blew it to pieces. 229

The use of sports-related language here may serve the dual purpose of keeping students interested in foreign affairs and, more significantly, of masking the brutality necessarily present in an account of a battle against the Boers, considered by the British to be chief adversaries of peace in South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. The article concludes with the writer’s thoughts on the battle’s outcome:

> Anyhow, [the infantry] arrived on top, and, just as they were going to give the Boers blazes, [the Boers] put up the white flag. Well, we [the artillery] did not stop for that, so they put up the Red Cross, whereat we ceased firing. It was a great shame, and our men should have cut them to pieces, as they would have done. 230

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230 Ibid.
Cruelty toward the Boers may have been considered completely appropriate, the battle having been presented, from the start of the article, as a sort of game. Familiar sporting language might have had an intended effect of assuaging the discomfort of those readers less inclined to violence, thereby rendering difficult subjects innocuous, be they accounts of war, reports of fallen peers, or details of violence against imperial enemies.

The export of the games from Britain to the rest of the empire was arguably a form of cultural—as distinct from territorial—imperialism. Brian Stoddart, an historian concerned with the proliferation of British games throughout the empire, asserts that sports were a primary medium for the transfer of British influence. He notes the ceremonial nature of sporting competitions, the “patterns of participation and exclusion, [and] competition against both the imperial power and other colonial states,” as exertion of British dominance abroad.231 A letter to the Charterhouse magazine in 1883 from Old Carthusian “W.H.S.” of the 49th regiment in Cairo, Egypt, reveals how easy the proliferation of British culture must have been:

There are some very good cricketers out here, and among them Capt. White, of the 53rd, who played for Kent in its palmy days. They had inter-regimental lawn tennis matches on asphalt courts, which have been made. Sir Evelyn Wood played amongst others.232

W.H.S.’s words might have been reassuring to boys hoping to continue their cricket careers after graduation. Lord Harris, governor of Bombay in the late nineteenth century, saw cricket as an optimal means of instilling social responsibility in Indians, going so far as to assert that Indians might be ready to undertake some form of self-

government once they had learned to play and follow the rules of cricket. Stoddart asserts,

> It was largely this subconscious element . . . which rendered sport so powerful a factor in the maintenance of and reaction to British control throughout the empire. It was this subtle indoctrination that allowed the persistence of the view that the ‘invaluable trait of give and take’ in sport ‘enabled the progress of civilisation’.  

It appears, then, that sports throughout the British Empire, on both conscious and subconscious levels, were a major component of cultural imperialism: sports appear to have represented an effective form of imperial coercion throughout the empire.

4c. Training for the Civil Service (Teamwork)

Playing games in the public schools may have served as training for future imperialists, not necessarily because sports built physical stamina, but because they instilled patriotism, group loyalty, and, arguably, leadership skills. Sport—and identifying with a team—urged the boys toward a localized school patriotism, pushing them to exhibit “House spirit.” Girouard extracts the athletic themes from Tom Brown’s School Days, having received the impression that “Young Rugbeians . . . will learn from the doctor [‘Thomas Arnold’] and the cricket field how to be wise and strong, and go out to rule the Empire properly.” The games may have inculcated the traits most desirable in the future leaders of empire, but there are two opposite approaches to understanding just what the games represented. In Stoddart’s model, one that is prevalent among many scholars, the social values directly tied to

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234 Ibid.: 660.
236 Girouard, The Return to Camelot, 168.
sports in the public schools were teamwork, deference to authority, courage, loyalty, and “respect for the rules.” Stoddart, in other words, argues that the games were exercises in conformity. A letter from British soldier Evelyn Wood to the Eton College Chronicle in 1897 asserts the role of sports in obtaining obedience:

I might write to you at great length on the advantages which I hold are acquired by boys joining Cadet Corps. The habits of prompt obedience and interdependence are in themselves valuable. Boys themselves realise that in games such as cricket and football, success can only be obtained by subordinating one’s own inclinations at the will of a leader. Soldiers who have served in the Army as long as I have, are still more impressed by the importance of acquired habits of obedience, regularity, and self-abnegation, in a man’s character. I need not dilate on this point, for probably all who are engaged in teaching boys accept generally these opinions.

The likelihood that the boys themselves would have seen this letter suggests that to some degree they must have accepted a drive toward conformity and acknowledged that they were being primed to serve their country later in life. It should be noted, however, that although sports required teamwork, they also necessitated that some boys direct individual ingenuity and leadership toward the achievement of a team-based goal. Although teamwork was probably the value administrators cherished most in their students, a number of Britain’s imperial leaders arguably found their footing on the playing fields.

4d. Conclusion

Although historians have long troubled themselves with the games mania, Victorian conceptions of manliness, and the prefect system in public schools as an

238 The Eton College Chronicle, no. 756 (March 18, 1897).
239 Girouard, The Return to Camelot, 167.
exemplary form of student government, they have yet to consider these elements together under the single, umbrella concept of “self-mastery.” Schoolboys, in harnessing their physical agility and stamina in the name of school spirit, fighting spiritual battles against sin and animalism, and establishing hierarchies in their school in which they sought to restrain one another, practiced a rigid form of self-mastery that should not be discounted as a factor in defining the “schoolboy type.” In regard to the schools’ role in the empire, it is of interest that the games rose to prominence in an upward arc paralleling that of the British Empire in the expansionist final quarter of the nineteenth century. One may conjecture that, just as the brutality some boys may have employed against their fellow students likely transferred over to violent tendencies throughout their lives, so too would the diligence boys applied to their school endeavors have translated to perseverance in any imperial and governmental careers they chose to pursue.
Chapter Five
Education, Inference, and What the Boys Knew

Although it is tempting to assert that boys’ imperial perceptions were influenced solely by indoctrination from their schools, it is likely that pupils discovered their own means of learning about their empire to supplement the values their headmasters sought to instill. Outside reading, for example, would have informed their notions of race, class, and imperial obligations. Boys then redistributed their knowledge and opinions among themselves through debates and magazines, establishing a system conducive to the elite solidarity and firmness of ideological conviction that many of them would retain throughout their lives.

5a. Every Boy Knows Something About the Empire

Despite the official trend away from nepotistic appointments to imperial service, public schoolboys were probably influenced from an early age by their fathers’ careers. If, for example, a boy is the son of a colonial officer, he not only will know something about the nature of colonial service but also may assume that his path will be similar to that of his father. Bernard Porter asserts the dynastic nature of imperial service, arguing that the “imperial classes were remarkably cohesive; almost a caste within a class.”240 Family pressure is likely to have been a major factor in shaping boys’ attitudes and knowledge about the empire. Mark Girouard details the types of occupations appearing in Thomas Hughes’s famous schoolboy novel:

240 Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialists, 41.
[R]ugbeians are heading for jobs in ‘country curacies, London chambers, under the Indian sun, and in Australian towns and clearings.’ Tom himself is the son of a Tory squire; Browns have been soldiers, lawyers and clergymen. Trade and industry are never mentioned in connection with either the Browns or Rugby boys.241

There is, at least in Hughes’s novel, this sense of dynasties in career fields. It becomes evident in Tom Brown’s School Days, as perhaps would be expected, that it was the class status of his father’s work, rather than the specific occupation itself, that may have determined a boy’s estimation of his own future.242 Further investigation might indeed reveal that a boy’s conception of the paths open to him became clearer as he approached the end of boyhood, possibly inspiring him to structure his daily activities such that they would prepare him for the years after graduation.243

The magazines and novels a boy read outside of school arguably would have influenced his perception of his own role within the British Empire. Stories within the “public school genre” were read by men and boys from various backgrounds. Fictional public school accounts may have set and modified certain standards in their real-life counterparts, and students arguably would have modeled some of their opinions about their fellow students after the boys in their books.244 Tom Brown’s School Days, for example, helped to combat the schools’ “image of dull, unchallenged brutality and tyranny,” instead substituting “a public school life in

241 Girouard, The Return to Camelot, 168. Hughes’s novel may, perhaps, seem an unconventional source. It can be argued that although Tom Brown’s School Days is, indeed, a work of fiction, both Hughes’s public school background and the novel’s widespread popularity suggest that this source is valuable for its depictions of school life.
242 Ibid.
243 By this it is meant graduation from a public school and, possibly, from a university.
244 Adults’ conceptions of the schools also could have been shaped by fictional accounts, possibly even those publications intended primarily for schoolboys.
which juvenile politics and particularly juvenile sports were preeminent." Public schoolboys and their parents (along with readers from the general public) may thus have understood the schools within this fictional context and, either consciously or subconsciously, sought to pattern their own lives and daily activities after those depicted in fiction.

Late-Victorian publications took deliberate advantage of wide readership to instill peer-based patriotism in their readers, a tack both unsurprising and, it would seem, effective. As the empire became inextricably linked to “national pride, international prestige, and military power,” inspiring patriotism became a greater and greater priority. Peer-fueled patriotism emerged in the form of contests in periodicals, such as in an 1898 issue of Chums (1898), which asked readers to respond to the prompt, “Are you proud to be a Briton?” The writers of the following responses won copies of Hugh Arnold-Forster’s The Queen’s Empire (1897):

Yes! . . . [f]or we have a past studded with glorious deeds. . . . Yes! Because the chief characteristic of a Briton is his untiring energy and indomitable courage. . . . Yes! Because Britain has an empire on which the sun never sets.

Boy readers indubitably learned something about their peers’ political leanings from such public contests. Boys’ publications arguably fostered a sense of community, which may have supplemented schoolboys’ already existing social structures, and

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247 Ibid.: 184; David Seed, ed., The Coming Race (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005). Dunae also discusses the Boys’ Empire League, established in 1900, which “endeavored to foster patriotism and Christian manliness in the young. . . . The league was designed primarily ‘for the purpose of promoting and strengthening the true Imperial instinct in British-born boys.’” The phrase “an empire on which the sun never sets” originates from Professor John Wilson of the University of Edinburgh, who referred to “His Majesty’s dominions, on which the sun never sets.” This saying, coined in the pre-Victorian years of empire, was employed long after its first utterance.
which allowed the British Empire to become even more vivid, if highly romanticized, in their minds.

The evolution in content of boys’ literature during the nineteenth century reflects the correlation between imperial sentiments and the fictional works themselves, ensuring that boys’ imperial perceptions evolved continuously over time. Boys probably seized any opportunity to read about the heroes—“typical public schoolboy types”—in any adventure stories they could lay their hands on. Patrick Dunae, an authority on boys’ literature in the Victorian period, argues that this outside reading influenced boys’ outlook concerning the British Empire, asserting that boys could not help but “be aware of their imperial heritage,” particularly with the popularity of these empire-related publications. It is arguably the case that boys’ literature not only reflected sentiments already prevalent at the time but also inspired imperialism in boy readers eager for adventure outside of the classroom.

As late as the 1870s, imperial fervor in “wholesome” books was minimal, and the British Empire, “regarded casually[,] . . . provided a dramatic background for adventure or, as often happened, spiritual enlightenment.” In the final, expansionist years of the nineteenth century, however, boys’ publications—such as the renowned *Boy’s Own Paper* (1879–1967), released by the Religious Tract Society—assumed a

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248 William Thackeray in Reed, “The Public Schools in Victorian Literature,” 62. William Makepeace Thackeray’s novel *Pendennis* (1849–1850), in which the Charterhouse protagonist learns more from independent reading than from class work, suggests that public school students were avid readers outside their classes: “[young Arthur Pendennis] had a natural taste for reading every possible kind of book which did not fall into his school courses.”


251 Ibid.: 106–07. Reed argues that in “pernicious penny dreadfuls,” the low-grade adventure stories of which public schoolboys may only rarely have partaken, “The Empire was simply a bizarre backdrop for their quixotic escapades.”
zealous, nationalistic tenor. Works published early in the twentieth century throw into even sharper relief the particular mood of late-Victorian publications, the earlier works being “assertive and confident, while the latter were insular and xenophobic,” possibly due to “social tensions in Britain, political unrest in Europe, and the growing naval and military strength of Germany.” Victorian overconfidence and the subsequent transition to reactive discomfort in Britain were thus reflected in boys’ literature, indicating that this fiction was mirroring reality.

5b. The Boys Talk Among Themselves (Diffusion of Knowledge)

Public schoolboys appear to have been fairly well apprised of Britain’s position in the world, possessing knowledge of politics and the empire that they arguably gained not from their masters or parents, but rather from their reading materials and their peers. In-school debates, the minutes of which were often reported in student magazines, reflect boys’ familiarity with current affairs. The Charterhouse debate in 1894, “That a mutiny is imminent in India; and, if such be the case, the military force there is insufficient to cope with it,” reveals that boys were aware of the breadth of the empire. The Carthusian reports that H.E. Haig Brown,

in opposing the motion, held that vast improvements had been made in India since the Great Mutiny. Railways, roads and telegraphs had been opened up

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254 It should be noted that these jingoistic publications would not necessarily have countered or added anything new to other imperial influences boys faced, discussed further in this Chapter and in Chapter Six. It is possible, however, that without these sources, boys would not only have taken less of an interest in the empire but also have had a reduced awareness, on any given day, of Britain’s activities abroad.
all over the country, and these, together with a few quick-firing guns, would effectually prevent any risings.\textsuperscript{255}

Brown’s understanding of improvement in transportation and communication in India is complemented by G.J.F. Tomlinson’s recognition of Indian sub-groups:

[Tomlinson] proceeded to deal with the question of the ability of the troops to cope with a mutiny. If only the Sepoys and Sikhs could be counted on as faithful, the chances of a mutiny were absolutely nil. The Bengalese also were bitter foes of the English Government.\textsuperscript{256}

Tomlinson’s knowledge, though not necessarily extensive, suggests that he was not categorizing Indians within one uniform group. A less informed individual would not have known or cared to recognize subdivisions among Indian groups. Other debates, such as, “Does the Government deserve censure with regard to the Zulu war?” at Eton in 1879, reflect boys’ firm grasp of political machinations. According to the \textit{Eton College Chronicle}, speaker Thomson, after defining the Zulus’ relationship to the colonists,

then took each of the causes for the war, and dealt with them separately, with numerous references to the dispatches, affirming that the stoppage of the firearms trade and the premature preparations of Sir Bartle Frere combined with the terms of the ultimatum, frightened Catewayo into a war which he knew would be disastrous to himself. He declared that the British have no right to dictate laws, or order the reduction of the army of another tribe, comparing the case to that of European nations.\textsuperscript{257}

The report of the speech not only implies Thomson’s in-depth knowledge but also may reveal something about those students not included in the debating society: as is the case for most reports of the debates, the magazine editors assume that the reader

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{255} The Carthusian, vol. VI, no. 197 (July 1894). The motion was lost by four votes to twenty-six; Sydney Lee, ed., \textit{Dictionary of National Biography: Second Supplement}, vol. 2 (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2001), 183. Brown was, incidentally, the son of William Haig Brown, Headmaster at Charterhouse (1863–1897).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{256} The Carthusian, vol. VI, no. 197 (July 1894).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{257} The Eton College Chronicle, no. 292 (March 22, 1879).}
possesses a high degree of background knowledge. It appears that the schools, regardless of the classics-based curriculum, had some students who were sufficiently informed of current events.

Although public schoolboys are typically portrayed as merely sport-crazed youth, boys seem to have expressed interest in politics, finding means to share and debate contemporary political and moral issues and gleaning new information from their peers while showing off what they already knew. The school magazines—one such forum for boy-to-boy discussion—include letters from students and old members alike, as well as accounts of sporting matches, school debates, and news from abroad. It is probable that boy journalists were “subject to strict supervision and censorship from above,” their masters or peers editing for grammar and for suitability of content, but the magazines still help to illuminate boys’ priorities.258 The British Empire was periodically referenced, often in the context of a debating society meeting, but also in Old Boys’ communications from abroad, such as W.L.W.’s letter to Rugby School’s Meteor (1875) concerning Rugbeians abroad in Bombay.259 Bernard Porter asserts that before 1880, imperial references in the magazines were few and far between, arguing that the “empire clearly came low on most public schoolboys’ scale of priorities until the time of the South African War.”260 Porter seems to understate the pervasiveness of empire in these magazines, perhaps because he wishes to maintain his overarching argument that Britons were “absent-minded

258 Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialists, 52.
259 The Meteor, no. 90 (May 15, 1875). Old Boys’ means of connecting from abroad with their former schools is discussed in Chapter Six.
260 Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialists, 53. It should be noted that the increased documentation of imperial events as the century progressed suggests that in-school imperialists felt the need to constantly reassert their positions. This may have been due to an increasing fear that, as the empire expanded, Britons’ grasp on their holdings would become ever more tenuous.
imperialists,” rather than active proponents of empire. It can be argued, however, that these topics’ infiltration of school publications and dialogue is indicative of the boys’ imperial concerns. When one considers that a schoolboy will probably have a greater affinity for sports and social life than for politics, the number of political references seems quite large.

Although public school debates no doubt had the propensity to degenerate into semantic battles between politically indifferent students, the emergence of party delineations among members of the societies suggests instead that boys possessed a more-than-cursory knowledge of the complex issues over which they argued.261 Apparently in response to critics of Rugby’s debating society, who claimed that they came “to this school not to talk but to be taught,” a spokesperson for the society writes passive-aggressively in 1872,

We [the Debating Society] ask no sacrifice of the games, for which Rugby is so justly first of schools; we ask no real sacrifice of time or work, only for a little of that intellectual energy and thought which is at present wasted, five evenings out of seven, upon the green-backed novel. Perhaps after all, this is too great a sacrifice to demand.262

At Rugby, as was probably the case at other schools, the debating society sought prominence in school life, and subsequent issues of the Meteor report the society’s success. A nineteenth-century account of life in the schools reveals the political divisions of Eton’s debating society:

[A] political propensity is much promoted by the existence of house debating societies (now general in Eton), which meet once a week and discuss every

261 The former president of Rugby’s debating society states the aims of the society in The Meteor, no. 91 (June 10, 1875). In response to a scathing letter against the debating society, the former president declares: “[The goal of the society is to] encourage fellows to take a general intelligent interest in current events, to read the papers, to understand and discuss with each other the many interesting and important questions which the world’s daily life inevitably raises.”
262 The Meteor, no. 59 (April 1, 1872).
conceivable subject. A house . . . debative society is a curious and amusing institution. It generally consists of about twelve members (not, as a rule, elected for any talent in oratory), of whom perhaps ten are conservatives and two liberals. Various kinds of speakers are to be found in the society— the violent “Jingo” and the equally violent Radical. . . .

It appears that such was also the case in Rugby’s debating society. In the 1881 debate regarding British policy in Afghanistan, “That England ought to retain Candahar,” one Mr. Aitkin refers to another speaker as a “confirmed jingo [who] appealed to the members’ sense of honour and duty not to agree to the motion.” These societies arguably provided opportunities for boys to test out their growing political partisanship and to influence each other in the process.

Debating societies covered a wide range of topics, from discussing the classical curriculum to arguing over military mismanagement in Egypt, and rather than seeking simple and purely semantic battles, the boys showed themselves to be hungry for complex, often empire-related subjects. “Expectant Orator” at Charterhouse, for example, published a plea for more exciting topics in 1890, writing belligerently to the Carthusian:

    How does anyone expect to wax eloquent on such a subject as ‘vivisection’? . . . I am afraid it would be out of place to suggest any subjects, but I am sure the talented committee can, if they will but exert their boundless brain power, hit on some more congenial subjects.

Imperial topics for debate included, for the sake of example, “The consolidation of the Colonies is desirable” at Charterhouse; “That in the opinion of this House, it is

264 The Meteor, no. 158 (February 19, 1881); in Charterhouse’s The Carthusian, vol. IV, no. 113 (March 1885), the report contains the following preface: “Upon learning the news of the capture of Khartoum, on Thursday, February 5th, the Conservative faction of the Debating Society at once arose in arms.” This suggests that official political divisions among debaters was common in a number of the public schools.
desirable for England to occupy Egypt” at Rugby; and the Europe-oriented “That the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany would be an obstacle to a firm and lasting peace,” also at Rugby. 266 Porter observes that, particularly from the 1880s onward, the “imperial side” in the debates “generally w[on] handsomely.” 267 This is unsurprising, particularly when other factors in the boys’ lives are taken into account, such as the steadily greater number of imperial publications boys read outside of class that undoubtedly provided fodder for debate. The boys’ nearly unwavering defense of empire, it may further be argued, reflects, above all, their awareness that their futures would likely be imperial in nature, whether serving as a resident in an Indian Princely State or corresponding from London with British military units in South Africa. Though their schools were not vocational, boys’ interests suggest that they may, to some degree, have considered their occupations predestined.

5c. The Implicit Curriculum

It is worth mentioning here that not only did the schools fail to emphasize intellectual development within their educational philosophy, they even, to some degree, avoided it. Edward Mack, in his study of the schools and British opinion, argues that the moral took precedence over the intellectual in the schools, noting that the Edinburgh Review in 1897

266 The Carthusian, vol. IV, no. 110 (November 1884); The Meteor, no. 118 (December 1, 1877); The Meteor, no. 45 (October 27, 1870).
267 Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialists, 55. Although it is difficult to trace what semantic failures on the part of the critics of empire may have led to their lack of debating success, it is possible that the most clever boys would have favored the pro-empire stance if they predicted that side would be the winner.
felt, indeed, that too much relative emphasis on intellectual activity might lead to conceit, irreverence, prize-hunting, and priggishness, and that ultimately character, not scholarship, must be the test of leadership.”

It is difficult to determine how complete the suppression of intellect was and, if it was great, how deliberate. The stereotype of the un-intellectual schoolboy was certainly present in British culture. In *Tom Brown’s School Days*, Hughes fondly describes Tom’s family:

In the first place, the Browns are a fighting family. One may question their wisdom, or wit, or beauty, but about their fight there can be no question. Wherever hard knocks of any kind, visible or invisible, are going, there the Brown who is nearest must shove in his carcase. And these carcases for the most part answer very well to the characteristic propensity; they are a square-headed and snake-necked generation, broad in the shoulder, deep in the chest, and thin in the flank, carrying no lumber.

The Browns, who are not an academic family, are portrayed as almost stupidly headstrong—yet respectfully resilient to any obstacles that they might face. Novelist Howard Overing Sturges takes a critical view of the schools in his public school novel *Belchamber* (1904) that further speaks to this de-emphasis of intellectualism in the schools. In his analysis of this novel, John Reed, an expert on the public school genre, argues,

Superficial savoir faire replaces innocence; the healthy, active boy is also the least thoughtful. He is not maimed by his public school . . . but he is stunted by it. The aim of the public school education appeared to have backfired, for in trying to create manly youngsters out of boys, it produced childish men neither innocent nor wise.

As can be seen from their interest in political debates, boys were often eager to exercise their intellectual faculties, but the argument cannot easily be dismissed that

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building “character” took precedence over molding great minds, and it is possible that this suppression of intellectualism was hailed as a preservation of the gentleman ideal rather than as a betrayal of boys’ mental development.

A British education, in the process of influencing boys’ imperial inclinations and attitudes, may have greatly affected a student’s understanding of race, imperial propagandists seeking to promote the concept of “otherness” over the perhaps more expected “inferiority” of non-Europeans. Porter reveals a race-related imperial justification Britons employed in regard to their African subjects:

A major argument for keeping Britain in control of her colonies was that their non-European populations would otherwise deteriorate and even disappear: either at the hands of unrestrained settlers . . . or because blacks were congenitally incapable of ruling themselves.  

It is probable that this argument would not have persisted for long, had certain racial attitudes not been instilled in British students from a young age, largely through their education. Textbooks proved an excellent, if conventional, medium for such racial propaganda, as can be seen in a Kipling and Fletcher textbook used from 1911 up until the 1930s. The authors claim that West Indians are

lazy, vicious and incapable of any serious improvement, or of work except under compulsion. . . . [A typical West Indian] is quite happy and quite useless, and spends any extra wages which he may earn upon finery.  

It would be difficult to argue that a pupil could have remained unaffected by such strong language. Porter asserts, “The trend now in geography books was to emphasize the differences between cultures and races,” conditioning that fundamentally shaped

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the way students interacted with the world around them. British historian Christine Bolt argues,

> When [public school graduates] went out to serve the empire or make their way, their strongly held values linked them to each other more firmly than uncomfortable exiles might normally have been, and made them peculiarly unresponsive to contrasting qualities in white ‘outsiders’ and ‘alien’ races.

This emphasis on “otherness” led to the lumping of all who were not British into groups seemingly indistinguishable from one another, and probably made it easier for Britons to swallow the crude racial language that cropped up frequently in imperialist propaganda.

> Although upper-class boys were often instructed to be patriotic and empire-minded, the lack of imperial education and interest in the lower- and middle-class schools suggests that non-elite students were not similarly groomed for serving the empire. For most of the nineteenth century, children from lower-class backgrounds were not instructed to be particularly interested in reporting for imperial service, and thus were not encouraged to become involved in the workings of the empire. Porter philosophizes on this de-emphasis of patriotism in lower-class education:

> Many imperialists, especially Conservatives, remained resistant to the idea of working-class children being given any kind of broader education, on the old familiar ground that it could give them ideas above their station, and so be socially destabilizing.

The patriotism for the “lower orders” was to include, according to the textbook *The Citizen Reader*, “kindness, truth, honour, and obedience [italics in original].”

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275 This can be reconciled with Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism, discussed in Chapter Three.
277 Ibid., 204–05.
278 Ibid.
Working-class youth were thus taught that they were to be cogs in the imperial machinery, working to sustain Britain’s newly industrial society, without having any guarantee of true agency. Members of the middle class received imperial education somewhat different in tone from that which the upper classes experienced. In the mid-nineteenth century, there was room in less elite schools for dissent against the British Empire, indicating the relative unimportance of the lower-middle classes to imperial propagandists.

A rejection of middle-class materialism certainly reflects snobbery in the public schools, even if some middle-class students were admitted to these institutions, but may also, to a greater degree, stem from headmasters’ desire to force boys to prepare for future hardships and imperial toil. Headmaster John Huntley Skrine of Glenalmond in Scotland, according to Porter,

saw the public school as a ‘fortress’, no less, for the idea of ‘chivalry’—this was a common way at this time of bundling together this whole collection of old-fashioned values—‘against the earthliness of money, fashion, luxury, selfish competition, sloth, cowardice, dread of pain, and all the other forces of materialism’; in order specifically to make Britain ‘fit to keep the marches of

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279 It bears mention that the lower classes did participate in empire, to the extent that they provided much of the material products of modern times. The discussion here, and indeed throughout this thesis, is primarily on leadership roles and governmental appointments throughout the empire, largely staffed by the upper class. See Chapter Three for a brief discussion of the Industrial Revolution in relation to the British Empire.

280 Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialists, 61. The issue of admitting poorer students to the public schools is addressed in Chapter One; Porter argues that upper-class antagonism to middle-class thought “pervades public-school literature, in ways we have met incidentally already: the prejudice at Winchester against even imperialists with commercial backgrounds, for example; the popularity of the ‘Fine Old English Gentleman’; even, perhaps, the stress on team games, which might be thought to run intrinsically against the individualist ethic that is favoured by capitalism pur (there are almost no reports of public-school golf).” Porter cites a specific example of Horace Vachell’s The Hill (1905): “The ‘cad’ of [this] Harrow story . . . is the son of a boot-manufacturer, and so predictably weak, greedy, and lacking in school ‘spirit’. He is also fat. Attacks on the materialism, selfishness, and vulgarity of the middle classes more generally are legion.”
an empire’, which clearly ‘money’ and all the rest could not be trusted to do on their own.281

It can be argued that this rejection of materialism helped prepare boys for hardship they might one day face abroad. By virtue of their being all-male institutions, the public schools prepared boys for possible isolation in the colonies, instilling an ethos compounded by this supposed, if temporary, rejection of materialism. It seems plausible that any dearth of physical comfort at their schools would have allowed boys further to identify with the imperial heroes in their novels and magazines, recognizing kindred spirits sent off to govern and explore desolate imperial wastelands.282

Although a discussion of homosexuality in the schools may appear, at first, to be somewhat tangential to this study, it is nevertheless possible that schoolboys’ sexual relationships both strengthened the bonds boys felt toward one another and primed some to appreciate the uniformity of all-male environments, the latter being essential for enduring certain forms of colonial service.283 Paul Fussell provides insight into the connection between sexuality in the male-dominated schools and boys’ preparedness for empire:

It was largely members of the upper and upper-middle classes who were prepared by public-school training to experience [crushes on other men], who ‘hailed with relief,’ as J.B. Priestley remembers, ‘a wholly masculine way of life uncomplicated by Woman.’284

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281 Ibid. Porter explicitly outlines this connection, noting the Victorian argument that public schoolboys “made the best colonial administrators precisely because they could rise above the sordid motives that were attributed to the commercial bourgeoisie, in practical ‘acquisitiveness’ and ‘competitiveness’.”
282 See, for example, any novel by M. Rider Haggard, a popular Victorian adventure novelist.
283 The topic of boys’ homosexuality is one of those most covered and, at times, sensationalized in the historical and fictional literature concerning the public schools.
It is unlikely that homosexuality in the schools would have influenced boys’ leadership styles or changed their ways of thinking about imperial governance, but it no doubt enhanced the sense of “boy culture,” allowing some boys to become further immersed in their schools through relationships—of all forms—with other boys. This closeness would not necessarily have translated to greater solidarity among public school graduates stationed at imperial outposts abroad. At the very least, however, boys who found some sexual comfort in their schools would have been less likely to abhor the idea of spending years abroad in a colony with a potential shortage of available women.285

5d. Conclusion

If the public schools had required students to take courses on imperial governance or uniformly mandated military exercises with the aim of forcing students to enter lives of imperial service, this study would be a case of glorified indoctrination, and would be less conducive to uncovering anything of interest in regard to the cultural forces, subtle at times, of life in Britain during the period of the empire. School magazines and debates, as well as records of the literature boys devoured during the Victorian period, reveal that something in the schools—and in Victorian society—induced boys to seek out, for themselves, what amounted to propaganda more valuable than any imperial diatribe that administrators might foist on them. In other words, by debating the pros and cons of military invasions in Africa or by seeking out adventure novels featuring schoolboy heroes, the boys designed,

285 Undoubtedly there were women in the colonies, but a British male could not have been guaranteed any substantial interaction with the female sex, particularly if he worked at a remote post.
perhaps unknowingly, their own culture of empire—an argument that historians have not stressed. Although it is necessary to bear in mind the forces external to the boys, within and outside the schools, that shaped their attitudes toward empire and helped form their literary tastes, one must not deprive boys of agency in developing their own imperial interests.
Chapter Six
The Schools and the Empire

[O]ur country spreads forth her arms so widely that the scattering of the members of an English school, by the various circumstances of life, is literally a scattering over the whole habitable world; there is no distance so great to which it is not within probability that some of our congregation may betake themselves.
—Headmaster Thomas Arnold (1842) 286

Now having reviewed the ethos and inner workings of the public schools, it is necessary to travel beyond the schools’ walls to examine the connection between the boys and the empire. Public schoolboys, prepared by their teachers and peers to face imperial challenges with fortitude of character and firmness of mind, sought outlets on their own for fulfilling their perceived obligations to Queen and empire. Boys also were courted for the imperial promise their elite education guaranteed, and active recruitment increased with mounting urgency in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, boys’ outlook and behavior reflected changes in British imperial policy and prestige. It is probable that boys sensed an intimate connection with the empire through their public school networks: because of their peer connections, which were reinforced by relationships with Old Boys and current pupils alike, perhaps even those boys who lacked genuine patriotism would often have fulfilled their imperial obligations regardless.

6a. Old Boys and New Faces

Although Old Boys may have distanced themselves from Victorian society upon returning from colonial service, they nevertheless sought to maintain contact with current pupils and other Old Boys from their former schools.\textsuperscript{287} In high postings scattered throughout the British Empire, public school graduates found ways to maintain solidarity not only along lines of race or social rank, as would be expected, but also on the basis of the public schools they attended. Rupert Wilkinson argues that the schoolboy type was in high demand abroad:

> Among the different branches of government, the public schoolboy’s accent and social poise probably carried most weight with the Foreign Office; but if so, the military ran it a close second. Many units engaged in heavy rounds of social entertaining and, besides, the military profession wanted men who could inspire emotionally as well as make rational decisions.\textsuperscript{288}

These men, perhaps recognizing themselves to be of a similar ilk, sought forms of camaraderie at every possible opportunity.\textsuperscript{289} British clubs abroad arguably would have helped cement “racial solidarity,” and helped Britons to feel they had a base of support even in the deepest wildernesses.\textsuperscript{290} Although the public school graduate was likely to “acquire new loyalties and new communities,” he also sought to foster a

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\textsuperscript{287} Porter, \textit{The Absent-Minded Imperialists}, 43–44. Porter argues, “Most returnees [from the Colonial Services] made little attempt to bridge the gulf. . . . [They] spent their leisure huddled together, typically in oak- and leather-bound London clubs, comfortably reminiscent of the Adyar Club in Madras, for example; public school Old Boys’ reunions; Oxbridge senior common rooms; and the members’ enclosures at Twickenham and Lords.”

\textsuperscript{288} Wilkinson, \textit{The Prefects}, 56. Wilkinson also asserts, “Other spheres of government, too, rewarded the gentlemanly graces. During the nineteen-twenties, an oral interview that weighed these qualities heavily, though not exclusively, counted for about one-sixth of the Civil Service entrance examination.”

\textsuperscript{289} It is not clear whether or not boys who had attended the public schools scholarships would, in colonial situations, have felt isolated from those who had paid in full for their public school education. It seems likely that scholarship boys would indeed have found their way out to the empire and that once there, they would have been treated little differently from anyone else who possessed a public school background.

\textsuperscript{290} Wilkinson, \textit{The Prefects}, 52.
relationship with his former institutions. Thomas Hughes, for example, visited Rugby in order to connect with current members. The *Meteor* reports:

> It was a great pleasure to the School to see [Hughes] in the flesh as he stood up with his back to the organ to give his account as to why he had taken the name Rugby for his colony in Tennessee. Indeed it was not necessary for him to explain!  

It appears that Hughes’s reason for visiting the school was to emphasize the values he perceived as necessary in the moral development of upstanding young gentlemen. It can be gathered from the rest of the *Meteor’s* account that Hughes used his unique position as an Old Boy to exert his moral influence on the boys in the audience:

> He concluded a powerful and hearty address by advocating the simple earnest life, combining bodily exercise with mental culture, as the one life that would make present boys look back forty years hence with happiness on the past, and finally brought down the house by reminding the gallery that he himself had been head of football and cricket in his time.

There is a cyclical nature to the connection between Old Boys and their schools: as pupils they were influenced by their school’s graduates and as graduates they arguably sought to become sources of influence themselves.

Old Boys, helping current members better visualize what can be constituted as an “imagined community” of alumni, sought to inform current students of conditions abroad, at times using language that might have influenced boys’ opinions of other races and expanded their general imperial knowledge. At Clifton College in 1880, just on the cusp of the expansionist and enthusiastic “new imperialism” phase of the

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291 Ibid., 61.
293 Ibid.
British Empire, Headmaster Rev. John Percival preaches the necessity of nurturing the school community:

Boys cultivate this common life, which we hope will be our stamp and mark, when they look well to the force of their own example, walking blameless, and upright, and true; and when besides they remember that public life means public spirit, if it is to have any virtue in it.295

Old Boys found that school magazines, which they no doubt avidly read while schoolboys themselves, provided a convenient medium by which they might inform students of their adventures abroad. The Meteor, for example, fondly reports on Rugby reunion dinners in Calcutta, such as in an 1882 issue:

The dinner broke up with unanimous expressions of opinion that there was no school like the dear old school, and that the most enjoyable evening of the whole year in Calcutta was that on which the Rugby dinner was held.296

Such reports not only would have revealed to students that the ties of scholarly brotherhood forged in school would carry over into their careers, but also would have alerted them that a future filled with hearty camaraderie awaited any who planned to enter into colonial service. An 1882 letter from Cairo to the Carthusian from H. H. Somers Cocks, an Old Boy, heatedly recounts a council of war:

They were to sail to London, and as England of course has no more troops than those in Egypt, they would loot London and fly the ‘crescent’ instead of the ‘cross.’ Then telegraph to India, and all the Mahomedans in India were to rise and Islamism was to be triumphant from one end of the world to the other!! Did you ever hear such a tirade of nonsense!297

Boys who read this letter would not only have learned of diplomatic machinations abroad but also arguably have altered their own notions about Mohomedans, having

296 The Meteor, no. 175 (May 18, 1882).
“heard” an Old Carthusian call the rise of Mahomedans a “tirade of nonsense.” An 1886 letter from East Central Africa to the *Meteor* from W. J. Stevenson, an old Rugbeian, hints at perceived British obligations abroad:

> I have come out here as an elephant-hunter and trader, and hope, besides, to be a little civilizing to the natives with whom I come in contact. The directors of the African Lakes Co. want to take the district under British protection, and I have had to sound the Chiefs to see how they take it.298

Stevenson’s tone is patronizing toward “natives” of Africa, and further explains the process of boys’ formation of racial and socio-hierarchical ideas. He also may be exaggerating the direct connection between himself and the African chiefs in order to bolster the power of his position. In this way, through anecdotes and belligerent tirades against Egyptian coups, Old Boys managed to exert influence on current members, undoubtedly with a large degree of success.

Old Boys often seized opportunities to urge pupils toward imperial service, and the sustained intensity of their exhortations is perhaps a strong indicator of the persistent fear—particularly on the part of those aware of conditions abroad—that there would not be enough men to sustain the imperial effort.299 In a speech at Eton in 1890 titled “Eton and the Empire,” Old Etonian Geoffrey Drage demands of his readers,

> Strive to be ready when the call shall come, to whatever duty, to whatever sacrifice, in whatever part of Her Majesty’s dominions. For you shall leave father and mother and wife, and children for your Queen, your country or your faith. You shall conquer and rule others as you have learnt to conquer and rule yourselves.300

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298 *The Meteor*, no. 225 (March 11, 1886).
299 The perceived need for more men to sustain the imperial effort is discussed in Chapter Three.
It is of note that Drage draws an explicit parallel—with a slight twist—between schoolboys’ constant Victorian task of self-mastery and their duties throughout the Empire. Old Harrovian Charles Bruce also encourages current pupils to participate in imperial service, seeking to preserve Harrow’s elite status, perhaps even in comparison to other top public schools:

I take courage to hope that the ancient foundation of Harrow may find an appropriate place in the Empire, and continue to give in the future, as it has given in the past, famous men to the service of the State. 301

Throughout his article, Bruce takes a very blunt tack, openly writing of molding boys to serve the Empire. The urgency of his words reflects panic that imperial fervor, so great in the final years of the nineteenth century, was waning, and that the loyalty of Britain’s subjects—perhaps those without the Old Boy connection to encourage their spirits—was in danger of being lost.

6b. Local Missions from Foreign Models

The two facets of Victorian character that stand out most prominently are morality and altruism, the former engendering an unwillingness to see beyond a black-and-white spectrum of truth and the latter often employed as a motivation for imperial expansion. Collini establishes an excellent comprehensive framework for understanding Victorian morality, a “system of obligations” in which the Victorian man’s personal inclinations and temptations are to be reconciled with, and possibly sublimated for the sake of, his duties as a member of British society. Collini’s related argument that the Victorians deemed there to be only one moral right answer for any

given problem is perhaps his boldest assertion. “Altruism” may best be understood as the desire to help “others,” broadly defined. Theoretically, according to Collini, the “others” included all external to the individual—all incorporated in humanity. Collini later claims, however, that the Victorians had subtly, yet significantly, altered their sense of altruistic duty: one was now obligated specifically to help those from lower social strata. If correct, this assertion raises two related points of interest. First, it reveals a mindset shift from “individual in relation to humanity” to “social group in relation to other social groups.” Second, one must wonder whether civilizing missions throughout the British Empire emerged in response to this modified sense of altruism, or whether the new altruistic sense was a response to—or even a justification for—imperial expansion.

Boys’ attention to famine in India, for example, a humanitarian crisis evidently of much discussion in the Victorian period, begins to reveal not only that political and humanitarian issues abroad found their way into the schools but also that the boys’ altruism was formed from an unexpected amalgamation of racism and sincere compassion. At Eton in 1897, for example, boys contributed to an “Indian Famine Fund” for the sake of alleviating strain in India. Boys at Rugby in 1879

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303 Ibid., 60–63.
304 Ibid., 83.
305 Percival, *Some Helps for School Life*, 26. In sermons titled “Our Attitude and Influence” and “Manliness,” delivered at Clifton College in the 1870s, Headmaster Rev. John Percival seeks to solidify the view that public school graduates should develop good character and one day fulfill their obligations to those less fortunate than they: “[A]mong the very worst and most depraved communities there are sure to be some guileless and pure spirits who live in them untainted and pass out of them unsullied.” This appears to have been a common Victorian impulse—the urge to evangelize the diamonds in the rough throughout foreign lands.
307 *The Eton College Chronicle*, no. 752 (February 25, 1897).
also hotly contested the issue of Indian famine in a debate, “That famine and pestilence, being the result of natural causes, should be left to do their work.”

Although Mr. Keep claims, “If more die [from famine], we shall secure the greater happiness of the greater number,” and Mr. Wise argues, “If the lower orders were fewer, we could grapple with them easier,” altruistic spirit prevailed—as is evidenced by the defeat of the motion, twelve to four. In this debate, Mr. Hopkins refers to “the power of alleviating misery” as “our greatest happiness,” and Mr. Sadler, after referring to a soup kitchen as “the saddest and yet best sight in the world,” noted the possible reciprocal benefits of famine relief if England should ever require similar help from India. Although these are prepared arguments that may not reflect each speaker’s personal sentiments, it is likely that theirs are, at the very least, representative of prevalent opinions in the school. The Meteor’s report of Mr. Story-Maskelyne’s contribution to the debate is perhaps the most telling in regard to boys’ propensity toward genuine altruistic impulses: “After attacking Mr. Bateson’s idea of happiness, ‘More subsistence for the rest of us,’ and of the law of inheritance, [he] remarked that the whole notion was a jest, but it was an unholy one.” Mr. Story-Maskelyne’s contempt for the motion itself, if sincere, suggests that at least some of these boys felt authentic compassion for those in need, rather than simply espousing altruistic principles that they believed were expected of them.

Public schools fostered connections between boys and foreign missions, and it is probable that the boys thus perceived their participation in these imperial outposts to be an altruistic extension of school spirit. Even without their schools’ influence, boys would have been exposed to missionary currents through such publications as

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308 The Meteor, no. 134 (April 9, 1879).
the widely read *Boy’s Own Paper* (1879–1967), released by the Religious Tract Society, an organization involved in missions overseas. Some schools had direct associations, often through Old Boys, with missions abroad. Charterhouse, for example, kept boys’ interest in the missions alive by encouraging participation from afar and hosting the 1881 “annual Offertory” for the Central African Mission, established in 1859 by the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, and Dublin. The *Carthusian* regularly published articles on that topic, and boys were able to remain apprised of the mission’s welfare. Although a number of boys may well have taken little genuine interest in the missions, at most donating small amounts to monetary collections in order to escape the frowns of more charity-minded peers, it is likely that some were swept along by that missionary spirit instilled in them from their earliest years at school. Rev. Chauncy Maples, an Old Carthusian oft-quoted in the magazine, proselytized from Zanzibar in 1876:

> Englishmen are *crossing* Africa, and sailing away from the other side. You must pray for us, that we may have strength and health to remain in it. We see here, on the edge of the wide harvest field, how vast and plenteous the harvest is. Do what you can to encourage the reapers to come out.\(^\text{311}\)

According to a circular from Rev. Haig Brown to Old Carthusians, Rev. Chauncy Maples’s connection to Charterhouse inspired the sentiment “that this Mission has a special claim on the sympathy and support of Carthusians.”\(^\text{312}\) Charterhouse was not

\(^\text{309}\) Dunae, "Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870–1914," 108. Dunae discusses the Boy’s Own Paper’s swift coverage of the Berlin Conference of 1885, and asserts that “the paper stressed the humanitarian clauses of the Berlin Act and declared that because of the Great Powers’ agreement the African people would ‘be led out of the dense darkness in which they have for so long been contented to live.’”

\(^\text{310}\) *The Carthusian*, vol. III, no. 80 (July 1881); *The Carthusian*, vol. II, no. 56 (November 1878). The missions were established in response to the urging of Dr. Livingstone.

\(^\text{311}\) *The Carthusian*, vol. II, no. 36 (August 1876).

\(^\text{312}\) *The Carthusian*, vol. II, no. 50 (March 1878). Rev. Brown was the father of debater H. E. Haig Brown, a Carthusian debater mentioned in Chapter Five.
the only school that aligned itself with foreign missions, Eton College giving special
attention to the Melanesian mission, and Rugby supporting the Rugby Fox Mission at
Masulipatam, designed to do “work” in India under “Rugby’s name.”313 By doing
this “work,” young men could remain connected with their schools, even from
wildernesses abroad. At the same time, boys could feel as though they were reaching
out to foreign missions from the comfort of their schools, practicing a safe and, to
some degree, noncommittal form of altruism.

It can be argued that the public schools’ interest in establishing or
participating in local missions was sparked by the boys’ interest in missions abroad.
Although such local missions undoubtedly existed long before public schoolboys took
an interest in their charitable works, boys’ missionary zeal appears to have mounted
significantly in the later years of the nineteenth century. At the Rugby School Home
Mission, the school would “subsidise a club or clubs” with these and other conditions:
“[T]hat regular biblical instruction or a Sunday service form a part of the work of the
Club to be assisted, and that such prayers and hymns as may be approved by our
Committee are used.”314 It should be noted that there was arguably a further
connection between missions at home and abroad. The Meteor, addressing the
question of whether the Rugby School Home Mission would draw attention away
from crucial foreign missions, reports:

Notting Hill will not quarrel with India, nor India with Notting Hill. Such is
the nature of all work for the kingdom, that it is matter of universal experience
that fresh efforts in new paths stimulate rather than choke old efforts on time-
honoured lines. May it be so with us, and make us give to India the more,
because we are ready to give something to our Notting Hill at home!315

313 The Eton College Chronicle, no. 426 (June 25, 1886); The Meteor, no. 277 (November 30, 1889).
314 The Meteor, no. 268 (May 21, 1889).
315 The Meteor, no. 273 (November 1, 1889).
Missionary zeal at home and abroad arguably fed on itself, sustained by mutual interest and calls for more men and more money for each.\textsuperscript{316} Boys’ familiarity with domestic and foreign missions may have contributed to their conceptualization of the Empire: a mission in India, for example, may have been made less foreign by the existence of a similar institution much closer to home.

\textbf{6c. An Imperial Beacon and the Obligation to Serve}

Although motivated by the altruistic impulses encouraged by Victorian society, boys seem to have been compelled even more strongly by their sense of obligation to serve their Queen and, by association, the empire. In an 1887 address to Rugbeians, Queen Victoria proclaimed:

> The growth and reputation of the great Public Schools of England has been always a matter of the deepest interest to My Predecessors and Myself. I heartily commend the strenuous and successful efforts made by the Authorities of the Public Schools to maintain the high standard of learning and education now expected from these noble Establishments.\textsuperscript{317}

Victoria apparently strove to convey her formal connection with the public schools, a reciprocal relationship, with representatives from the schools adamantly confirming their loyalty. School captains Browning and Mitchell addressed the Queen in

\textsuperscript{316} Ibid. In regard to a letter from A. F. Walrond concerning new club buildings at Notting Hill, the \textit{Meteor} reports, “He then says (listen to this!) ‘clothes keep pouring in from members of the School and O.R.’s [old Rugbeians], \textit{for which we are grateful,} as you know, and \textit{can make use of any amount.}’ . . . Who will volunteer to help Walrond in his work? As mentioned before, ‘men’ is now the cry [italics in original].”

\textsuperscript{317} \textit{The Meteor}, no. 257 (July 26, 1887). Queen Victoria concludes her address with a call to serve: “I pray that God’s Blessing may ever attend their exertions, so that hereafter they may fulfill their duties as good Englishmen and loyal Subjects, and contribute to the Strength and Happiness of their Country.”
conjunction with the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, one of a number of nationwide
jubilees celebrating Queen and empire:

May we add to this the prayer of our hearts, that by the blessing of God your
Majesty may long be spared to us in the enjoyment of health and peace and
happiness, swaying the sceptre of a world-wide Empire, and reigning, as now,
in the affections of your people. 318

It is difficult to deny that the Queen and the public schools had an established
relationship with one another, which would have existed to a much lesser degree
between the Queen and other schools.

Even when not engaging in jubilee activities or other formal means of
communication with the Queen, boys probably had Victoria on their minds. 319 A
poem printed in the Eton College Chronicle in 1897, for example, reads:

Isled in purple state and splendour,
_Dei gratia, Faith Defender:_—
Empress, Star of mystic India,—
While from Western worlds they render
Filial homage to Victoria.
On far horizons of the Crown,
So never may the sun go down,
So shall the people echo loud—
_Salve mater Britonum!_ 320

Although this poem was admittedly in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee, it
would not have been published, had editors expected a collective groan from boy
readers exhausted by royal propaganda. In a debate at Rugby in 1887, “Motion
regretting the exaggerated attention attracted by the Queen’s Jubilee,” not a single

318 The Eton College Chronicle, no. 770 (July 13, 1897).
319 Girouard, The Return to Camelot, 228. Girouard describes the Queen’s elusive hold over British
minds and hearts, asserting, “It was an emotion at once mystical and personal; the Queen symbolised
the Empire, but she was also an individual whom her subjects longed to serve, and for whom they were
prepared to die.”
320 The Eton College Chronicle, no. 766 (June 22, 1897). This poem was not written by a current
student, but by E.V.B. of Huntercombe Manor. It should be noted, in regard to classical influences in
the schools, that purple was a color of royalty, as exemplified in the case of Carthage in Virgil’s
Aeneid.
boy on either side of the debate even hinted at disrespect for the Queen. Mr. J. M. Furness said that he wished to guard every one against the idea that this motion contained a disloyal spirit. The supporters of the motion had as much respect for the Queen as any one else. The desire to do something to congratulate the Queen on having reigned for fifty years is a very natural and very praiseworthy desire.321

It seems from this debate that the jubilees were often used as excuses to build unnecessary public works. Boys on both sides of the motion complained of these works’ frivolous nature, but none criticized the Queen herself. It is likely that the impulse to support rather than insult the Queen was sustained by both genuine affection toward Britain’s matriarch and the sense that to speak ill of the Queen would represent a social faux pas, at least in the public schools closely tied to Victoria.322

The disparity in dissent against the empire between elite schools and those designed for the middle classes is nearly sufficient evidence for the argument that elite schools served as fortresses of empire. Some textbooks, for example, which rarely mentioned Britain’s imperial holdings in the first place, spoke critically of the empire, there being a “crucial difference between the idea of the spread of liberty by peaceful means, and the forcible conquest and domination of other races: between the middle classes’ imperialism, in other words, and that of the upper classes.”323 It was not until the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the “new

321 The Meteor, no. 240 (March 19, 1887).
322 Dorothy Thompson, Queen Victoria: The Woman, the Monarchy, and the People (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 120.
323 Porter, The Absent-Minded Imperialists, 72.
imperialism,” that interest in imperial education revived for the non-elite sectors.\textsuperscript{324}

Public school magazines were not without their “pacifist, anti-imperialist and pro-Home Rule” segments, but these appear to have been relatively few and far between.\textsuperscript{325} In the \textit{Carthusian} in 1889, for example, a poem titled “The Fall of England” praises the empire, only to detail its fall:

\begin{quote}
The land which stood supreme a thousand years,  
Laughed at invasion and its myriad fears,  
Saw the rude spoiler stretch forth his ruthless hand,  
To lay exultant grasp upon her strand,  
From dreams of false security awoke—  
Her power was shattered at a single stroke.\textsuperscript{326}
\end{quote}

This poem may represent a cautionary warning to an imperially greedy Britain, however, rather than a complete denouncement of the empire in general. Further research into boys’ publications and memoirs might reveal that a greater number of boys raised subversive objections to Victorian imperial thinking than is suggested here. The rarity of dissent against the Empire in the elite schools, however, particularly when contrasted with that fostered in lower-class schools, is testimony to the rampant patriotism within public school walls and to the notion that education does have a bearing on the political opinions one will espouse.

The late-Victorian societal pressure to recruit men to govern the expanding Empire appears to have trickled down proportionally into the schools.\textsuperscript{327} As the desire to calm the Indian masses clashed with perceived difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers, attention turned to younger men—and the schools—as institutions whence

\textsuperscript{324} Ibid., 194.  
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid., 54.  
\textsuperscript{326} The \textit{Carthusian}, vol. V, no. 149 (March 1889). This poem is credited to “Whispers from Midhurst,” presumably not a current Charterhouse pupil.  
\textsuperscript{327} Chapter Three discusses the reasons behind the rise in imperial fervor and the resulting drive to recruit more men.
recruitment was possible.\textsuperscript{328} At the end of the Victorian period, the \textit{Times} of London inquires:

\begin{quote}
What harm would it do the classes from which officers are drawn so to modify their education and their amusement as to make them embryo officers? Drill for everybody, familiarity with a rifle for everybody, and higher education as applied to war for all who possess superior intelligence, would do nothing but good all round.\textsuperscript{329}
\end{quote}

It appears that some felt the need for a total war and for a complete imperial effort that naturally would require youth participation and preparedness.

Some boys received practical training for Empire that may have played a substantial role in their recruitment to imperial and military forces, particularly as the calls to serve the empire became steadily more urgent and explicit toward the conclusion of the nineteenth century. In a letter to the “Head Masters’ Conference Committee” in 1897, Lord Wolseley argues,

\begin{quote}
The training which young lads receive in Volunteer or Cadet Corps while at School is, in my opinion, well adapted to fit them for the duties of Officers in either the Regular or the Auxiliary Forces in after-life; and it is a matter of national importance that there should be an abundant supply of young men qualified by early training to undertake these duties.\textsuperscript{330}
\end{quote}

Lord Wolseley then urges the Conference to encourage the proliferation of even more cadet corps in schools on the basis of dire necessity. In a similar vein, Warre of Eton sought to institute compulsory military training in 1900.\textsuperscript{331} Even when not required, possessing army training and other forms of preparation, such as participation in organized sports, must have been perceived as a crucial background for imperial service. It is, therefore, difficult to refute that the distinction between athletic and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{328} Colley, \textit{Captives}, 257–58.
\item \textsuperscript{329} The \textit{Times} of London in Bruce, "Our Public Schools and the Empire," 79.
\item \textsuperscript{330} The \textit{Eton College Chronicle}, no. 756 (March 18, 1897).
\item \textsuperscript{331} Mack, \textit{Public Schools and British Opinion since 1860}, 218.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
imperial training—one that even schoolboys themselves may have failed to make—was blurred.\textsuperscript{332} An 1897 leading Trafalgar Day article in the \textit{Eton College Chronicle}, asserting that “if we gained our Empire by a victory at sea, by a defeat at sea we should most certainly lose it,” declares,

\begin{quote}
[W]e cannot expect to hold without another struggle the Empire which we gained more than 90 years ago. That such an immense effort should have been necessary (and there is no doubt that it was necessary) shows how important it is that all Englishmen should pay careful attention to the only true defense of the Empire, the Navy.\textsuperscript{333}
\end{quote}

This article does not attempt to veil the blatant call to arms throughout, and its position on the coveted first page of the issue indicates that the editor—or, perhaps, some overseeing faculty member—thought the matter of Navy recruitment to be of the utmost urgency. School magazines also provided a forum for recruitment to different and often unusual mediums through which to serve the empire. An 1872 article in the \textit{Meteor}, for example, titled “The Forest Service of India,” reads like a brochure for a life of leisure abroad:

\begin{quote}
Forest life in India presents attraction which few of the other services are capable of affording; healthy stations, unlimited sport, pleasant work, and abundant opportunities of scientific research. What a glorious field for the botanist, geologist, naturalist, or sportsman, do the vast, unexplored forest regions there present!\textsuperscript{334}
\end{quote}

The article later states explicitly that Rugby graduates should strongly consider this profession. It is difficult to imagine that boys, who absorbed recruitment propaganda for much of their youth, could have escaped these societal impetuses; and even though there were surely those boys who became disgusted by the jingoism and

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{332} Sports are discussed in Chapter Three.
\textsuperscript{333} \textit{The Eton College Chronicle}, no. 756 (March 18, 1897). The writer may be paying special attention to the navy because, as he says, the Navy “has been up till now one of the professions closed to the members of public schools.”
\textsuperscript{334} \textit{The Meteor}, no. 65 (November 1, 1872).
\end{footnotes}
imperial opportunities with which they had been constantly bombarded by the media, their peers, and their superiors, these imperial enticements often had a direct bearing on schoolboys’ chosen careers.

6d. Motivated by Fear of Imperial Fragility

Spoken and unspoken fears that Britain’s imperial status could become untenable—whether because of strife within the colonies or due to aggression from other imperial powers—compelled Britons to arms, an impulse reflected in militarization and industrialization throughout the British Empire. The first and second Boer Wars (1880–1881 and 1899–1902), in which Britons experienced unsettling close calls and defeats, rendered Britons uneasy and convinced them that a continuous supply of men was needed to sustain the imperial effort. Conflicts with other European powers forced Britons to remember their imperial mortality; disputes over violations of established spheres of influence, for example, led to such near-disasters as the Fashoda Crisis between Britain and France in eastern Africa in 1898.335 It seems that fears of impending crisis, made all the more pervasive by incidents such as these, from the Indian Mutiny of 1857 to the close of the second Boer War in 1902, agitated and propelled Victorian imperialism.

British conflicts with the Boers begin to reveal how developments in the empire had the capacity directly to affect the public schools, where boys apparently were unable to avoid news from abroad, including death tolls and reports of defeats. During the first Boer War, for example, Rugbeians held the debate, “That immediate

peace with the Boers is desirable” (1881), in which the fear of losing prestige loomed large. Mr. Aitken, according to the *Meteor*, “remarked that of all bad things the late Ministry had done, the Transvaal business was the worst. But now our military reputation was at stake; and we could not ask terms after a defeat.” Mr. Aitken’s speech advocates for the cessation of hostilities in exchange for some bargaining power, so that Britain might salvage as much remaining imperial clout as possible.

Even when not engaged political debates, boys would have found it difficult to avoid hearing about the war. An issue of the *Carthusian* from 1881, for example, contains an obituary of Second-Lieutenant F. H. Lucy, presumably an Old Carthusian, who died fighting the Boers at Majuba Hill. Given the connection between Old Boys and their public schools, discussed earlier in this Chapter, the war’s death toll in particular must have been keenly felt, possibly inducing some to feel guilty for any hesitance later to serve—and possibly die—themselves.

The second Boer War (1899–1902) had even greater repercussions throughout the schools than did the first, reflecting what may be constituted as widespread imperial panic, which the boys found their own ways to express. Boys’ literature accordingly responded to the war’s developments. *Chums*, for example, included regular “Flashes from the Front” to keep boys apprised of the tides of war. Well-informed schoolboys appear to have shown no lack of patriotic sentiment throughout

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336 *The Meteor*, no. 160 (March 31, 1881).
337 *The Carthusian*, vol. III, no. 78 (April 1881).
338 Dunae, "Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870–1914."
339 Ibid.: 114–16. It should be noted that, according to Dunae, the *Boy’s Own Paper* did not topically follow the war’s developments as might have been expected. He explains, “The General Committee of the Religious Tract Society [RTS] was dominated by Liberals whose sympathies lay with their so-called pro-Boer party members. Furthermore, although the RTS included representatives from several protestant denominations, the majority of its senior officers were Baptists—the only church group, as Richard Price has pointed out, that ‘presented a united front against the war.’"
this war, expressing particular excitement after the relief of Mafeking, a closely
matched Boer War battle, on May 18, 1900.\textsuperscript{340} There is even reference to this pivotal
incident in a contemporary poem from Gilbert Frankau in \textit{Eton Echoes, a Volume of
Humorous Verse}:

\begin{quote}
The boats were there, I could not swear,
My voice was still and numb,
My heart beat quick, I felt so ‘sick’
At what I knew must come,
Beat as some wight, on Mafeking night,
   Might beat a windy drum.\textsuperscript{341}
\end{quote}

Even in Frankau’s book of “humorous verse,” the poet makes nervous reference to
this Boer War event, taking pause, despite the lightness of his poetry, to depict an
unsettling image from the South African crisis. Mafeking night also instigated
adamant schoolboy “demonstrations.” Bernard Porter recounts Winchester’s
magazine’s report of Mafeking night: “The \textit{Wykehamist} . . . described the Winchester
pupils as a ‘mob’, rioting through the city streets before burning an effigy of the
Transvaal president Kruger, apparently with the blessing of the headmaster.”\textsuperscript{342}

Mafeking night and the Boer War itself may have represented, for public schoolboys
everywhere, a culmination and peak of the imperial frenzy that had been building
steadily in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

6e. Conclusion

Public schoolboys were uniquely connected to the empire—through peer
networks, their special relationship with the Queen, and the opportunities to engage in

\textsuperscript{340} Porter, \textit{The Absent-Minded Imperialists}, 52.
\textsuperscript{341} Gilbert Frankau, \textit{Eton Echoes, a Volume of Humorous Verse} (Eton: G. New, 1901), 32.
\textsuperscript{342} Porter, \textit{The Absent-Minded Imperialists}, 52.
imperial service that were thrust relentlessly upon them—in such a way as to explain the perpetual stream of elite boys setting out to govern and administrate in India. In fostering an environment conducive to Old Boys’ sustained communication with current members, the schools opened their doors to the wide, untamed empire, allowing boys to see beyond the confines of their daily lessons and debates. Domestic missions, too, allowed boys to “practice” for the future, testing out their altruistic abilities on what must have seemed lower-commitment iterations of missions abroad (which some boys undoubtedly planned eventually to found and operate). There is little question that further investigation would reveal more variation in boys’ attitudes toward empire than is depicted here, and additional evidence of dissent against headmasters, the curriculum, and empire—that which has not been buried or suppressed—would be a welcome addition to this study. It should at this point be apparent, however, that the schools were necessary for the longevity of the greater organism of empire, a constantly growing, changing, and evolving entity.
Conclusion

The reason for this study of elite Victorian public schools in relation to the British Empire has not been to determine whether the schools produced imperialists, the historical record being fairly uniform in its support of this point, but to draw together certain factors that have not been considered together previously: the classics, schools’ internal government, knowledge-sharing among pupils, and the degree to which Britain’s dealings in the empire affected the imperial tenor within the public schools. Given that the classical curriculum was a constant throughout the schools’ history, it is necessary to include the classics as a factor in shaping boys’ characters and outlook—particularly as one may tentatively argue that the imperial implications for the discipline contributed to its primacy in the public school curriculum. Much of the classics’ value, particularly for wealthy families seeking to prevent lower-class pupils from impinging on their sons’ school system, was in the discipline’s ability to solidify class structures. The lack of any classical background prevented lower-class boys from entering elite public schools, where they would have received the classical education necessary for entering, for example, the Indian Civil Service. The classics appear, however, to have had more relevance to the boys’ imperial interests than simply being a helpful asset on an entrance examination and it is necessary to analyze both the real and imagined consequences of preserving the classical curriculum in relation to maintaining an empire. The classical scholar arguably became a symbol, particularly through these exclusionary tactics, of the type of man who was to govern the British Empire (knowledge of the classics apparently being a prerequisite for a leader in the modernizing nineteenth century). And although
imperial-themed Latin texts may not have been assigned with indoctrination in mind, they no doubt contributed to the boys’ overall perception of empire as both majestic and potentially fragile, as was the case with the Roman Empire. It is a contention of this thesis that Victorian boys would have applied their knowledge of Rome, even if subconsciously, to current events. Thus it is likely that they would have been all the more concerned with protecting their empire from the dangers that befell Rome, such as failure to recruit sufficient men to rule the empire.

The public schools were both mirrors and engines, metaphors admittedly incongruous with one another, of the Victorian empire, reflecting and acting as proponents of the existing imperial system, respectively. Societal impulses such as altruism certainly found their way into the schools, and it must be acknowledged that boys’ opinions were greatly influenced by outside factors, including boys’ families, newspaper reports of imperial happenings abroad, and jubilee celebrations. Conversely, the schools, with their long history of educating—however inadequately at times—the future leaders of Britain, must have had their own, independent influence on the empire. Filled with Latin, and games, and a sense of solidarity that translated to clubs and reunion dinners abroad, the schools may have been the chicken, rather than the egg: it can be argued that the organization and government of the British Empire were informed by centuries of public school learning.

This study of the public schools, their classical curriculum, and empire is by no means complete. A broader study of the trends in classical texts and passages boys were assigned would help to answer the question of whether or not imperial themes were introduced in the classroom according to Britain’s imperial drive, and would
further elucidate the classics’ impact on schoolboys’ imperial mentality. Research should also include, if at all possible, an investigation into those cultural elements toward which public schoolboys were most drawn. For example, the Boy’s Own Paper was indeed popular, but it may not have been the primary source of entertainment for those who attended public schools, whose members might have preferred some other publication. It would be worthwhile to delve much more into schoolboy memoirs as a source, one underused in this thesis, to look for references to popular culture both within and outside the schools. This study, if broadened in scope, should also incorporate the universities’ close ties with the schools and with the empire.

It would be useful to trace public school graduates’ careers during and after imperial service in order to examine their leadership abilities abroad and lifestyles after returning home to Britain or elsewhere. One way to approach this might be to analyze communications between civil servants abroad, attempting to gauge their leadership and administrative styles. These civil servants might then be contrasted with those who did not attend a public school, which would sharpen the contrast between the public schools and other less elite institutions. How Old Boys readjusted to life back in Britain, and the people and activities toward which they gravitated, are also of interest, and might serve to answer the question, largely unasked in this thesis, of whether the public schools prepared boys adequately for life other than imperial service.

Finally, it is necessary, particularly for determining the degree to which battles and political decisions affected the schools, to observe the schools from the
years immediately after the Victorian period to the empire’s fall. It is necessary to ask, for example, what were the ramifications for the schools of Old Boy death tolls in both World War I and World War II. Further research should also investigate how the boys’ interest in empire, as manifested in their school magazines, either waned or increased, and examine whether dissent levels were higher in response to deaths or lower due to patriotic fervor of an even greater magnitude than that expressed in the Victorian period. It would also be worthwhile to investigate how boys’ leadership and other training in the schools affected their governance abroad, and the degree to which this contributed to—or, conversely, slowed—the eventual process of decolonization. By expanding the exploration of the schools, the classical curriculum, and empire in these ways, this subject, somewhat neglected outside of fiction and often-unsubstantiated stereotypes, would gain further depth—and the connection between schools and empire, and the ways in which the schools shaped how boys governed and contributed to their attitudes when abroad, would become even more lucid. Even if imperial fervor in the schools waned in subsequent years, just as Horatian jars retain for a long time the fragrance with which they were once imbued, so too would many Victorian schoolboys have remained steeped in empire to the end of their days.343

343 This mention of Horace alludes to the first quotation at the start of the Introduction of this thesis: *Quo semel est imbuta recens, seruabit odorem testa diu* (A fresh earthen jar will preserve for a long time the scent with which it once was steeped; *Epistles* 1.2.69–70).
Appendix One:
The Nine Great Victorian Public Schools, as Defined by the Public Schools Act of 1868

Listed for each school is the date of foundation, the founder, and the institution’s current web address.

St. Paul’s School (c. 1103; Bishop of London, in conjunction with St. Paul’s Cathedral)
http://www.stpaulsschool.org.uk

Westminster (1179; Benedictine monks of Westminster Abbey, under direction of Pope Alexander III to found a charity school)
http://www.westminster.org.uk

Winchester College (1382; William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor to Richard II)
http://www.winchestercollege.co.uk

Eton College (1440; Henry VI)
http://www.etoncollege.com

Shrewsbury (1552; Edward VI)
http://www.shrewsbury.org.uk

Merchant Taylor’s (1561; livery company)
http://www.mtsn.org.uk

Rugby School (1567; Lawrence Sheriff, spice liaison to Queen Elizabeth I)
http://www.rugbyschool.net

Harrow (1572; John Lyon, farmer)
http://www.harrowschool.org.uk

Charterhouse (1611; Thomas Sutton, wealthy investor)
http://www.charterhouse.org.uk
Appendix Two:
Reprints from the *Eton College Chronicle* (Eton, 1897), the *Carthusian* (Charterhouse, 1889), and the *Meteor* (Rugby, 1880)
The sources included in this bibliography are limited to those actually cited within this thesis.

Primary Sources

Selections from the following archival sources are used throughout:
Eton College’s magazine the *Eton College Chronicle*, no. 292 (March 22, 1879) through no. 770 (July 13, 1897).
Rugby School’s magazine the *Meteor*, no. 28 (June 3, 1869) through no. 228 (November 30, 1889).

From the Eton archives:

From Special Collections and Archives at Wesleyan University:

Works Originally Published Before 1914


Seeley, J.R. *Roman Imperialism and Other Lectures and Essays*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871.


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