HASH AND ROAST

BEEF

by

Charles Levy

A Griffin Publication
Fourth Edition 2013
Copyright 2013
by Charles Levy
All rights reserved
ISBN 978 0 9783610 4 4

For Button
who married me November 3, 1956
in St. Dunstan's Chapel
Jamaica College.

"If I ever become a rich man,
Or if ever I get to be old,
I will build a house with deep thatch
To shelter me from the cold …
I will keep my house in the high wood
Within a walk of the sea,
And the men who were boys when I was a boy
Shall sit and drink with me."

\- *Hilaire Belloc*

Simms House (1948)

FOREWORD

It was a pleasant surprise indeed when my old school mate, Charlie Levy, asked me if I would read the script of Hash and Roast Beef and write a foreword for him. We have gone quite separate ways since the end of the 1940s, and I do admit to having felt flattered that he should have made this request of me.

For me, this book was quite literally a turning back of the pages of time. As much as one may feel that they have a good recollection of one's school days, reading Charlie's script reminded me of so very many incidents that took place during our careers at J.C. that had completely escaped my recollection. His own recall of people, events and circumstances I found to be quite amazing.

As one might imagine, Jamaica College has changed dramatically since the days of the 1940s. I wish I could say all these changes have been for the better. As someone who remained in Jamaica, and whose two sons themselves attended J.C., I of necessity, am much more aware of the Jamaica College of today and much better able to measure the changes that have taken place.

I can think of no J.C. Old Boy who would not wish to read Hash and Roast Beef, and sincerely hope that when it is published, it will be available to readers in Jamaica.

To my old friend Charlie, my thanks for asking me to write these few words, and to afford to Jamaica College Old Boys a chance to revive perhaps long forgotten, but nevertheless fond memories.

Herbert A. Hall,
Kingston,
Jamaica.
March 1995.

The Assembly Hall and the Chapel with Holy Ground in front.

PREFACE

"Rank by rank again we stand,
From the four winds gathered hither,
Loud the hallowed walls demand
Whence we come and how and whither..."

Those are the opening words of one of the two hymns that we would sing in Chapel at the first morning service of every term at Jamaica College. They were stirring words that acted like a clarion call assembling us for three months of study, play and comradeship. There was a companion hymn for end of term by the same author and composer; regrettably, I have no record of those hymns and have been unable to find a copy of the hymnal that we used when I was at school. However, snatches of the words and music, such as the stanza above, are indelibly inscribed on my mind.

The other first day hymn used was the more familiar "Lord behold us with thy blessing, Once again assembled here ..." to the tune "Dismissal", with its companion hymn for end of term "Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing, Thanks for mercies past receive ... " What has never failed to impress me, and more particularly in retrospect, is the verve and heartiness which even the most boorish boys in the school would display in the singing of these hymns. I know that personally, I always sang them with all the fervour at my command.

Two other rituals that never changed, were the lessons read at first day and last day services. The start of term was heralded by a passage from Proverbs 4. I feel sure that many of the lines remain with thousands of other boys just like they do with me, whether or not they had or retain any religious leanings. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding ... Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her: for she is thy life."

And at the end of term, a reading from Philippians 4 with words that sound like a benediction or like Polonius's advice to his son: "... Finally, bretheren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things ..."

All these memories keep coming back to me, more so now it seems that I have entered retirement. At this time of life, one is impelled to

look back and assess the various stages through which one has passed. For me, this period covering nearly all my teenage years, is in its way one of the happiest of my life. Although I neither regret nor have any wish to repeat my experiences, I find that with hindsight, there are certainly things that I would have done differently. I record those experiences now, because it gives me pleasure to recall them. This is not an autobiography (I have neither the ego nor the material to justify such an exercise!) but it occurred to me that my memories might jog similar pleasant recollections for many of the colleagues who shared those happy years.

If my memory of any event is hazy or even faulty, put it down to the aging process. If those memories wrong or offend anyone who might recognize himself from the context of my writings, pray forgive me. Boys can be the cruelest of creatures to their fellows, but they bear no grudges and most enmities are forgotten as quickly as they arise. I know that I feel no ill will towards any fellow student from those happy days. As it says in a fragment of the end of term hymn that comes to mind:

"Brothers, whom the wider life
Summons to a man's endeavour,
Face the conflict and the strife -
Comrades once and comrades ever ..."

I
A NEW BOY

"O, there are those will tell us of flowers across the sea,
Of daffodils dancing upon a northern lea,
Well, manifold is beauty, so far we may agree;
I love the gold that glitters on the lawns of Liguanea."
- Reginald M. Murray

"What's your name, boy?"

I smiled in response and eagerly introduced myself. "Charles Levy. What's yours?"

"You trying to be funny, boy?"...

In January 1943, I started life as a "new boy" at Jamaica College – the beginning of one of the happiest periods of my life. By the time I left J.C. at the end of 1949, I was as content with my lot in life as it was possible to be. I was a prefect (Vice-Captain of the school), surrounded by good friends, reasonably well-educated, confident of the future and sure that I was immortal.

But it was not always thus.

The world of Jamaica College was, like Caesar's Gaul, divided into three parts: there were "Old Boys", former students who had achieved nirvana; there were "present boys" who enjoyed the legacy left behind by their predecessors; and then there were "new boys".

"New boys" were the lowest form of life on earth, but unfortunately I didn't know this, and it was a traumatic experience discovering my mistake. I had so looked forward to joining my new school and making new friends that I naively supposed it was as easy as enrolling in the Boy Scouts.

Ha!

Enlightenment came early when the first strange boy asked my name. It was a faux pas to try and find out who my inquisitor was! Nay, more than a faux pas, an error that had to be paid for by a couple of smart cuffs to the back of my head and an enquiry as to whether I would like a "bus' ass".

This really shook me up, and for the first time I had a brief moment of terror, fearing that I had fallen foul of the school bully in my very first encounter at J.C. ... I had a lot to learn!

The sad truth was that no one was happy to meet me

– not even other new boys who were fully occupied with their own troubles.

By the time I had my fourth encounter with a present boy, I had learned a little caution. I gave my name meekly and waited in silence for whatever torture might follow. This was an older boy, and his second question was one with which I was to become all too familiar – "Do you have a sister?" At first I wasn't aware of the implication behind the question (my prepubescent period seems to have lasted longer than most other boys) but I found that when I admitted to being the eldest of four male siblings, I either received the obligatory cuff or was promptly ignored.

Too ingenuous to lie, I finally came up with a compromise that actually worked with one Fifth Former:

"I haven't got a sister," I admitted, "but I have a cousin who is a few years older than I am."

This was true, and I actually "fixed her up" with this boy who was something of an athletic hero, and they did go out on one or two dates together. It didn't last long – but I did make an ally of a "big boy", which stood me in good stead on more than one occasion.

Meanwhile, I began to despair of escaping the miserable lot into which I had fallen. Some of my new boy colleagues soon established themselves by dint of having older brothers at J.C. or because they possessed some athletic skills which brought them quick acceptance. Unfortunately, I was not particularly good at sports, despite my great enthusiasm for them. Worse still, I was a bit of a "brain" and had won a place in the Open Scholarship exam; this didn't win me any points among my peers.

There were two boys in particular who used to pick on me. In fact, not to put too fine a point on it, they took delight in bullying me regularly. What made it all the worse was that one of them was an old acquaintance from my prep school days who I used to think was my friend. I think I almost came to hate him, so miserable did he make life for me. Yet, ironically, long after leaving school we met up once more and became great friends again!

I used to plead with my tormentors to know when I would no longer be a "new boy", but it was certainly well into the second term before the more persistent petty tyrants dropped the opprobious tag; I came to dread school and long for the weekends.

I survived it, but hundreds haven't and it sometimes leaves a scar that lasts all their lives. It was a short but horrible period I never

forgot, and when I became a prefect, I made it my business to deal harshly with any signs of bullying, particularly of new boys.

My father was the best of parents, and despite his modest circumstances, he did everything he could to provide his children with the finest equipment and clothes for school. It was ironic that this very caring attitude should prove to be the source of the most humiliating experience of my first year at J.C.

He had a pith helmet custom made for me!

Amazingly, I remember that I was inordinately proud of it when I received the finished product. I saw myself as a Big Game Hunter or a military hero from India's Northwest frontier, straight out of one of the Boys' Own Papers that were among my favourite literature. It never occurred to me that my Dad intended me to wear it to school! Even I wasn't that naïve.

But that's exactly what he had in mind. I tearfully pleaded to leave it at home and use it only when on some extra-mural jaunt, but to no avail. He insisted that it was the best kind of headgear as well as a good protective cover when riding my bike. Besides, it had cost a pretty penny, and I certainly couldn't let that go to waste by leaving it sit on the rack.

Well, I had no illusions as to what I was in for. I tried to take it off before I arrived at school on my bike, but it was far too large and cumbersome to hide. Even today it is difficult for me to recall the anguish I had to undergo when the rest of the class saw it. Of course it was taken from me in the first minute, and became a plaything to be thrown from one person to the other as I vainly tried to intercept and recover it. Naturally, I did not have the sangfroid to ignore the horseplay: I was convinced that it would either be destroyed or otherwise disposed of, and that I would then have to face my father's wrath. As it was, when the boys tired of their sport, they simply hid the thing, and I spent most of the rest of the day tearfully searching for it.

In retrospect, I am astonished that I persevered in wearing it to school for a whole week before I finally rebelled and refused to do so any longer. I can't recall what finally became of the wretched thing, but I believe that my mother interceded on my behalf and got my father to agree that it should be quietly put aside.

I have a thick skin ... I must have, because no sooner had I survived the pith helmet affair, than I became enmeshed in a very similar situation. For my birthday, my parents gave me a splendid brief case to

carry my books. Now, there is surely nothing wrong with a brief case, even at a macho boys' school. A brief case is above reproach. It is utilitarian. There is nothing "nerdish" about it. BUT ... no one else at school used one! It was not in vogue, and I was not yet nearly in a position to start a new fashion that would have any chance of being adopted by anyone else.

For the next few weeks the brief case became the object of entertainment for the bully boys. It was thrown about, it was hidden, it was smeared with chalk (the level of degeneracy had not sunk any lower than that in those days). For a week, I tried hiding it in some bushes at the school gate and retrieving it in the afternoon on my way home, but this plan was foiled when the gardener found it and (since my name was inscribed on the inside) was able to return it, and to demand a reward for his honesty and trouble. It was back to square one. I forget how this particular problem was solved, but no doubt the brief case went the way of the pith helmet.

The garden behind the Chapel was particularly beautiful, and became a private haven for me whenever I wanted to escape from the threat of persecution by some bully or other. Or if I just wanted a breather from the trivial (nevertheless hectic) round, the common task. I was headed there one day when from behind me came the dreaded summons:

"Come here, boy".

I turned slowly, my heart pumping suddenly with a furious rhythm as it received a large dollop of adrenalin. What was I in for now? And yet, even as I trembled, my brain registered the fact that there was no menace in the voice which itself was no louder than a conversational tone. It was a big boy whom I recognized as a prefect. In fact, he was my House Captain.

"Yes, C?" I responded meekly.

"Where you are is out of bounds ... that's Holy Ground".

"This is holy ground?" I repeated with a puzzled frown. I didn't quite get the significance of what he was saying.

"That's right," C explained gently. "Only prefects are allowed to walk on Holy Ground."

It turned out that he was referring to the thirtty foot wide strip of grass in front of the Assembly Hall, that ran alongside the driveway from the ficusberry tree outside the dining room to Top Gate, and which was bounded by the wire fence on the eastern side of the playing fields. I learned that only prefects and one master – the Head – had the

privilege of walking thereon. Not even a Housemaster shared that prerogative! The grass was lovingly cared for and was always beautifully manicured. In time of drought, the gardener could be seen from time to time watering it by hand using discarded washing-up water. It never looked as if it needed cutting, and I don't think that I have ever seen a weed anywhere within its borders. It was the preferred route for prefects on their way to chapel.

I was really impressed to learn about this tradition, and I can remember that I looked forward to the day when *I* would become a prefect and be able to exercise the privilege. I also clearly recall that doing so was my first act on being appointed to that lofty eminence five years down the road! I still look back on it as being one of the most precious and jealously guarded perks of the position. I wonder if the tradition has endured ... I dearly hope so!

I believe it was in my second term that an event occured which in a way proved to be a precursor of future political activity. A lot of what happened remains a vague memory, but some of it is as vivid as if it had taken place yesterday.

I am not certain how it all began, but I remember that one day during the lunch interval, it seemed that the whole school had gathered in front of the Main Building, and that there was a lot of muttering about something cataclysmic that was taking place. We Second Formers were not in the know, but there were rumours that a Sixth Former was going to be caned by the Head!

Then as clearly as if I'm seeing it happening in front of me now, I remember that a large black, chauffeur-driven car pulled up to the gate of the Headmaster's Quarters, and out got a man whose face and name was as familiar to every Jamaican as that of the King of England, whose head was on every coin in those days. The man was a famous, very popular politician and the father of a Sixth Form prefect whom I shall call M. The man smiled and gave a small wave to the assembled crowd before going up the steps and into the Head's house. Our response to his salutation was a loud cheer, and as he disappeared a buzz of excitement ran around the throng.

Less than half an hour later M's father reappeared, and still smiling, but without a word, entered the car and was driven off to more enthusiastic cheers. Soon after that, the bell summoned us to our class rooms, but there remained an air of unease and uncertainty. Rumour now had it that M had thrown a book at a master, and that the

Headmaster was intent on punishing him with “six of the best” despite his age and status as a prefect. The meeting with M’s father had not changed the Head’s decision.

I have never been able to ascertain the facts of the story, and I have no way of knowing how much of my speculation of what lead up to “the event” was true. Be that as it may, I can vouch for what happened next – even though I had not the foggiest idea of why I was doing what I did along with every other boy in the school. Memory of how it began is hazy, but I do know that I found myself in company with the whole student body, deserting the class room in the middle of class and joining in a mass march towards Top Gate (the iron gate at the entrance near the Chapel). M had been expelled, and we were seeing him on his way. Not silently, but with loud cheers! First it was our own school cheer:

“Hash and roast beef,
Mince and pie.
N-O-M-E-R-C-Y
Are we in it?
Well, I guess.
Rah, Rah, J.C.
Yes! Yes! Yes!”

Then we went into the longer version, which was the same thing with an introduction sung to the tune of the West India Regiment’s March (“So early in the morning”):

“Fervet opus in campis*
When we shoot we never miss.
When we cheer we cheer like this:”

after which we’d launch into “Hash and roast beef...”

By this time there was a huge crowd massed at the gate. Other cheers were added to our repertoire. At first, we used the cheer of our country cousins at Munro College; but then I seem to remember breaking into a rather crude rendition of a scurrilous cheer concerning our North St. friends at St. George’s College sung to the tune of “Mademoiselle from Armentieres”:

“Before we let St. George’s win, Parlez-vous,
Before we let St. George’s win, Parlez-vous,

* Fervet opus in campis – J.C.’s motto.
Translation: Work is burning on the plains [*of Liguanea*]

Before we let St. George's win
We'll open our arse and let them in,
Hinky, dinky, parlez-vous!"

And so it went on for at least an hour. Speaking for myself, at the time, I didn't even know who M was (though of course I knew who his father was) but for the first time I was one of the boys – not just a "new boy" – and besides, it was time out of school! So we stayed there till we were all cheered out and M caught a bus or a tram home while we strayed back to our class rooms in little groups.

The next day, Chapel was held as usual, and as the morning service progressed in normal fashion, we began to entertain hopes that "the event" would pass off without retribution being taken. Fat chance! When the time arrived for the daily announcements to be made, the Head went to the lectern, and his face suddenly assumed the appearance of Nemesis. I cannot at this distance recall everything that he said, but I do remember him starting by expressing his disappointment in us and observing that he had very nearly decided not to worship with us that morning. Now, it seems laughable that he would think such a revelation would have a crushing effect on us, but it is a measure of my timidity and earnestness at that stage of my life to realize that I did indeed feel badly.

The Head went on to say that we were mistaken if we thought that he was unable to punish the entire school. If memory serves me correctly, he then suspended all sports activity for a fortnight, and inflicted what amounted to an hour's detention for all boys, to be served every day after school for one week.

M went on to become a popular labour leader and politician, and was twice Prime Minister of Jamaica. Earlier, I observed that "the event" was a precursor of future political activity. The next time I saw M was in the late fifties when as Chemist, I was in charge of the laboratory at New Yarmouth Sugar Factory; M, as leader of the union representing the workers there, confronted me on their behalf. The next day he led the entire factory out on a strike that lasted for two weeks!

The Prefect's stall at the back of the Chapel

II
COMING OF AGE

"A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man's wit may wander ere he die."
- The Idylls of the King (Tennyson)

"What's your name, boy?"

All through the Christmas break of that first year I had practised the salutation. I had experimented with different tones of voice and different levels of sound, till I had got it down just right ... I thought.

"What you want to know for?"

I felt as if a jolt of electricity had hit me. This boy hadn't read the script. He was ad libbing, and I didn't know what came next. As I think I have made plain, I am not usually an aggressive person, and I had never even considered that I might have to administer a cuff to the head or to inflict the normally threatened "bus' ass". Still, I made a quick recovery by adopting a conciliatory tone:

"My name is Levy, and I was wondering who you were."

The potential storm blew over and I was able to make my retreat in fairly good order. Although I was shaken by the incident, I was determined to satisfy my year long ambition to intimidate a new boy. I have never been a bully by nature, but it did seem prudent to seek out someone who was demonstrably inferior to me in age and build. My second target co-operated beautifully. He meekly answered my question about his name, so I was encouraged to continue.

"Have you got a sister?" "Yes ... two of them."

"What are their names?"

He told me … and that was that. I felt like the proverbial dog who having chased a car and caught it, hasn't a clue what to do with it. Somehow I broke off the interview and decided that it had satisfied honour; I could quit now, for I had established the fact to my own satisfaction at least, that I was no longer that specimen of primordial ooze - a "new boy". As far as I was concerned, others had inherited the degrading title of "new boy", and I had been elevated on the evolutionary ladder.

But the experience underlined for me the fact that I just wasn't cut out to be a "tough guy". I was big for my age, and as the saying goes, I stripped well, even though I wasn't particularly muscular. The school's Captain of Boxing saw me in P.T. and ordered me to turn out for a

trial. This was exciting, and I had dreams of making the boxing team in one of the lightweight divisions.

Alas for my visions of glory! I was quick enough on my feet, and I pummelled the light bag well enough for a beginner, but when it came to actually boxing an opponent, I simply lacked any killer instinct. The Captain started sparring with me and instructed me how to jab, hook and cover up. Technically I did fine, but then my trainer dropped his guard and ordered me to hit him on the chin ... and I froze! Try as I might, I just could not throw a punch that I was convinced might seriously hurt him. I can remember really trying to go all out, but at the last moment I would take enough off the blow to ensure that it would do no damage. It wasn't long before a disgusted Captain of the manly art became fed up with me and sent me to the showers. My career in the ring was over.

Even outside the gymn I ran into problems. One day I got into an argument with another boy out in the yard and he soon wanted to start fighting me. He was a year or two older than I, but very fat, and I honestly felt no fear of being beaten by him. He was excruciatingly slow on his feet, and I had no trouble evading his clumsy rushes and wild swings. *But I couldn't hit him!* He was such an easy target that I truly believed that I could really inflict a lot of damage if I didn't pull my punches. So I simply kept dancing out of his reach and begging him to stop lest I hurt him. Naturally, during all this there was no shortage of supporters on both sides egging us on and urging both parties to commit mayhem on each other. . I don't know how I managed to get out of the situation, but it didn’t enhance my reputation any. It wasn't that I was seen as a coward, but in today's parlance, I was definitely somewhat soft.

I got into another fight that year, this time in the class room (between classes of course!). As there was little room to manoeuvre in the aisles, this fight became a wrestling match, not a boxing bout. Despite the fact that my opponent was a lot fitter and stronger than my previous antagonist, I acquitted myself far better, and I believe that after about five minutes (though it seemed much longer at the time) we were separated, and honour satisfied, we both tacitly agreed to call it a draw. (Today he and I are the best of friends!)

The only other "fight" I can remember having was similar to the first. My opponent was an obnoxious little fellow who thought I was easy game even though he was quite a bit smaller than I. Well, he was dead right. I simply could not pluck up the determination to hit him hard,

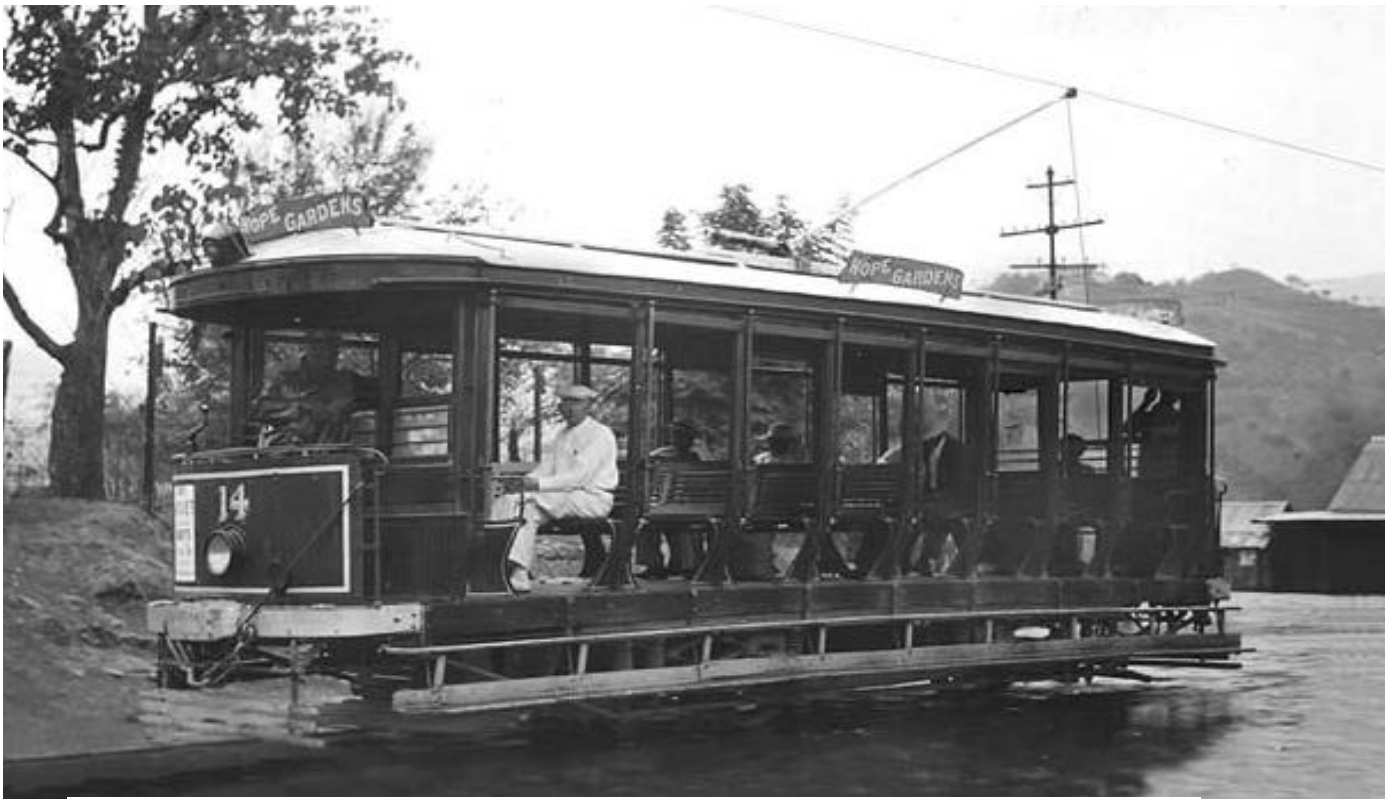
and so most of the time I just tried to hold him off with my longer reach. To have done otherwise would have seemed like bullying him, but this aspect was unfortunately lost on my colleagues who thought I was running scared.

And that, thank goodness, was the extent of my pugilistic career during my entire time at J.C.

One of the rites of passage for a boy at Jamaica College, was to participate in at least one raid on the mango orchard that grew on the south side of Hope Road. There are alas, no signs today that such a place ever existed, but once upon a time, before the extensive housing estate that now stands there, even before there was a University of the West Indies or a dam that leaked, acres of land at Mona were planted out in Bombay mango trees. I have no idea who owned the place, but from time to time rangers on horseback could be seen on patrol, guarding against praedial larceny. Those were gentler times, and there were no large outbreaks of theft by professional villains, but certainly the local youngsters delighted in pitting their piratical skills against the keepers.

More than once I planned to make a hasty foray to try getting hold of some "stolen fruit" to see if it really was sweeter. As many times I would get as far as the barbed wire fence and chicken out at the last minute. There was a story (probably apocryphal) of two boys who were caught by the rangers and taken to Matilda's Corner Police Station. There, the desk sergeant called the Headmaster, Reggie Murray (of whom more anon) and duly escorted the miscreants back to the school. It is said that the Headmaster caned the two perpetrators and then asked them if they realized why he had done so; they replied that they supposed it was because they were stealing mangoes. Not so, he informed them - but rather, because they were *caught* stealing mangoes.

Well, one day, I finally screwed up enough courage to nip through the fence, run to the nearest tree, and start to "stone it". It seemed to take forever to bag a mango, mostly because my nervousness caused me to hurry my throw and thus spoiled any chance of aiming accurately. Eventually, more by luck than by skill, I got a mango to fall, scooped it up and high-tailed it for safety with a ranger hot on my heels. At least, I thought there was one after me, but on diving almost headlong through the fence (and tearing my shirt in the process) I turned around to see no sign of anyone at all. The mango I had won



Hope Gardens tramcar running between King St. and Papine (in background)

was badly scarred by the huge stone I had used , and was not even fully ripe - just what we called "turn". No matter: I had done the deed, and from that day I could stop worrying about having to prove myself.

There was another practice that every red-blooded J.C. boy was supposed to become proficient in as soon as possible. Readers of the author's generation will recall a time when tramcars once plied the streets of the Corporate Area. There was a line that ran from Half-Way Tree up Hope Road, past Jamaica College to a terminus at Papine. Trams were electrical trolley cars that were open on both sides with long wooden steps to permit entrance and egress. There were vertical bars at both ends of each bench on the outside which the conductor would hold on to as he walked up and down dispensing tickets while the tram was moving. When a car was full inside, some passengers would stand on the steps and hold on to these bars, hanging on precariously for dear life.

No boy worth his salt would board a stationary tram. That would be like an ablebodied seaman using the lubber's hole to reach the crow's nest. It was obligatory that he should wait until it had started to roll and then "hop the tram" by holding on to one of the bars, running beside the moving vehicle, and finally jumping on to the step. What was just as important, he should also alight from the tram before it came to a full stop. This involved not only nice timing, but also the ability to preserve one's balance as one's feet hit the ground running. It was miraculous indeed that there were no serious injuries, let alone fatalities, ever recorded as far as I know.

In those days, trams were not the only means of public transportation. There was an omnibus company that operated a franchise on several lines which included Parade to Papine via Hope Road and Old Hope Road. There were also a couple of buses owned and operated by individual entrepeneurs in much the same way as today's minibuses are. One of these was a huge green monster with the name "Mars" painted on both sides. It seemed that Mars was always available following the final whistle at Manning Cup fixtures, and would pack them in with incredible efficiency. It was fortunate that there were no initiation rites requiring us to board the buses like we did the trams. Nevertheless, there was a practice that was just as dangerous and foolhardy of which we were often guilty - holding on to the rear window of the bus with one hand while steering one's bike with the

other in full flight up Hope Road! It is truly remarkable that we survived such a stupid, reckless and ill-advised custom.

Although I was not an aggressive boy, I certainly wasn't a "sissy", but there is no doubt that I had my fair share of timidity. The swimming test was a case in point. Before a boy was allowed to take part in swimming activities, he had to pass a swimming test. This, as I recall, was relatively simple, consisting of being able to swim two lengths of the pool. I had learned to swim from an early age, but I was not a strong swimmer, nor an adventurous one.

Anyhow, I made an appointment with the Captain of Swimming to take the test. I swam my two lengths easily and got out with a satisfied smile on my face. Then the Captain pulled an unexpected trick out of the blue: he took me to the deep end and told me to jump in! This I had never done before, and I had no faith that I would not sink like a stone and drown. I demurred. Several times he repeated the order to jump in, and each time I refused. Angrily, he suddenly grabbed me and threw me in bodily. Panic stricken, I sank to the bottom all right, but *mirabile dictu*, I also rose like a balloon full of air, albeit gasping for breath. This really was something marvellous to me, and on coming out of the pool, I jumped in again of my own free will to show that I could do it. To my dismay, the Captain dismissed me in disgust, ordering me to return in two weeks to repeat the test. It was a salutary lesson to me, and it had the beneficial effect of encouraging me to improve my swimming skills to the point where I became a fairly strong swimmer, though I never did become a particularly outstanding performer.

Most of my triumphs in the lower school tended to be of an academic nature. I had always loved English, and for the first time was getting a formal introduction to the classics. Before coming to J.C., I had spent one year as a student at Excelsior College, and there I had studied Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar". For the first time in my life, I had been obliged to commit large portions of blank verse to memory ... and I loved it! (To this day it gives me great pleasure to reel off speeches by "the noble Brutus", "loyal Mark Antony", "spare Cassius", or "mighty Caesar" himself.) Now, however, my horizons were rapidly expanded to include Dickens, Wells, Trollope, A Midsummer Night's Dream and King Lear.

It was at this time also that I began a lifetime love affair with the works of Rudyard Kipling. I wanted to write like him, and I entered a school competition that was held each year for essay writing. On my

first try I won the Moody Competition Prize, Class II, for which I received a book I still treasure - A.J. Cronin's "The Keys of the Kingdom". For coming first in my class in English Language that term, my parents gave me a copy of the complete poetical works of Kipling, a prized possessions to this day.

Latin was also a thrill for me, my introduction to the literature of that language coming through the historian, Livy. But we were soon doing Virgil's Aeneid, and the stories of the Trojan Wars were every bit as exciting to me as any Hollywood movie. The trouble with being an academic was that it attracted the unwelcome attentions of the less ambitious, more rambunctious members of our scholastic society. A small group of us eggheads used to meet after lunch in the Chapel to tell stories that we made up as we went along. All rather ambitious for Third Formers, and pretty heady stuff at that age. Unfortunately, one of the reigning bullies got wind of our activities and invited himself to one of our meetings. He gave us a pretty rough time - nothing physical actually, but plenty of mockery, and lots of threats. To our shame, we allowed him to frighten us off, and our "literary club" was dissolved. If we had stood up to him, between the three or four of us, we could surely have run him off. As it was, we gave up without a fight and a promising school of future authors was lost to the world. But some seed must have fallen on fertile ground, for all the members of that little cabal have to my certain knowledge enjoyed various degrees of success and acclaim as communicators in their chosen fields. W.S. Gilbert said it nicely in "Patience":

"Though the Philistines may jostle,
You will rank as an apostle
In the high aesthetic band …"

Scotland House and the Assembly Hall (1994)

III
MIDDLE SCHOOL

"Then wilt thou not be loth
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A paradise within thee, happier far."
- Paradise Lost (Milton)

My year in the Upper Fourth was what one might call a watershed for me. I started to come into my own, and began to cultivate a little self-confidence. I had not made much headway in sports as far as representing the school was concerned, but I *was* now making a useful contribution to my House. When I started at J.C., there was no segregation between day boys and boarders, but this was changed shortly after my arrival. Two day boy Houses – Drax and Cowper – were established, and I belonged to the latter. The boarding Houses were Scotland and Simms (my first House). In my era, there was also a Musgrave House, but my recollection of where it fitted into the scheme of things is vague. Later still, two more Houses were created for the younger boys – Murray and Hardie, named for two past Headmasters.

There was a fierce rivalry between boarders and day boys, which intensified when the House system was changed. In sports, it was abundantly obvious that the boarders were the better athletes, and this was generally thought to be because they had greater opportunities and more time to practise. Among the day boys, there were certainly some individual stars who shone in any company, but it was indisputably true that the teamwork and team statistics of the boarders were vastly superior.

Lunch and after school refreshments were provided for all students. There were two sittings in the dining room, with the younger boys being served first. The menus were not usually particularly appealing, but the food was nutritious. Wednesday was a popular day because ice cream was served for dessert. Each course was served to everyone at the same time, and a boy learned very early that if dessert was put down before he had finished his main course, the only way a slow eater could protect his ice cream was to spit on it in a conspicuous fashion; this, sad to say, was not a completely fool proof measure!

Masters or prefects sat at the head of each table, presiding whenever a course (like soup for example) needed to be shared out for the boys. Prefects and other senior school boys sat at a head table on a raised dais. Meals for the most part were eaten in fairly good order, although there were occasions when things got out of hand, particularly at night with only boarders present after some notable triumph like an Olivier Shield victory.

There were two characters who were very closely identified with life at J.C. when I went there: Campbell (known to everyone simply as C) and Melody. C was a big, grizzled man of middle age who sold oranges, coconuts and coconut drops every recess from a handcart that he parked under a large poinciana tree near the Biology Lab. He wielded a cutlass with enviable dexterity both to provide a drinking hole in a coconut or to split the empty nut so that one could get at the jelly, and his sharp knife could peel an orange without the peel ever breaking. When customers weren't being served by C, his face wore a perpetual scowl, for he had to wage a running battle against idle schoolboys with nothing better to do than to tease him by trying to sneak an orange while someone else diverted his attention. C knew it was a game, for he never lost any fruit by theft, but he played his part well, and to a stranger, he seemed to be a fearsome antagonist as he lashed the air with his machete. Melody was a paraplegic. I never learned what caused his condition – probably an accident involving a car – but he had broken his neck and also had a useless leg. He sold sweets and packets of biscuits out of an old school desk that had been discarded (or perhaps he had captured it!) Between recess breaks, he could be seen dragging himself around on crutches, a large bag in one hand and a stick with a nail on the end in the other, spearing any bits of candy wrapper that had been carelessly thrown away by his customers as well as any other refuse that he could find. Although he was perpetually smiling, he was obviously a martyr to pain, and I have often seen him in Papine on a Friday night, almost completely inebriated and swearing like a sailor.

Even though he was in direct competition with the school's Tuck Shop, no one begrudged Melody his patch under the ficus trees. Sometime during my third year at J.C., Melody passed away, and the Headmaster devoted his normal morning sermonette to a moving eulogy. A humble person, he truly was an example of courage and self

respect. And like C, Melody was as loyal a supporter of J.C. as there ever was.

The choir was comprised entirely of boarders. Looking back, it is amazing what type of boy was attracted to this aspect of school life. They invariably pretended that the big drawing card was the half-holiday that only members of the choir received each term. However, this was patently not the case, and there were choristers from every form represented, all of whom sang with great gusto and even polish. Outside the choir, many of them might behave with unbecoming crudeness, but once in their stalls, their voices sometimes seemed positively angelic!

The other pastime that was extremely popular among the boarders was the Sunday afternoon visit to Hope Gardens under the supervision of a master or a prefect. A detention was a far more acceptable punishment than being deprived of this weekly outing. Not being a boarder, I don't really know exactly how these outings were scheduled, but I believe it was on a staggered basis, members of each House going on alternate Sundays.

Ostensibly, the reason for the excursion was to hear the weekly concert put on by the band of the West India Regiment. In fact, it was one of the few opportunities that boarders got to mingle with the outside world, particularly those of the female persuasion. Many an assignation was carried out on Sunday afternoons in the exquisite setting provided by Hope Gardens. In those days, the place was a proud, well-maintained example of one of the finest botanical gardens in the West Indies. Little enough of its former glory remains, but thousands of Jamaicans remember with great nostalgia that bygone era.

Hope Gardens was also the scene of a traumatic incident in my early adolescence. It happened when I was in the Fifth Form, and still a year away from legal entitlement to hold a driver's licence. An older friend, G, had just acquired his permit, and would occasionally be allowed to drive his mother's small Austin car to school. Naturally he was the envy of his colleagues, particularly as there were only about three other boys who could boast of their own motor-driven transport, and they were lordly Sixth Formers.

Peer pressure can be a terrible thing indeed, and even less influential individuals like myself can exert it to fearsome effect. Somehow I persuaded him to teach me to drive! We at least had the sense to do it off the highway itself, and, under the mistaken belief that the roads

inside Hope Gardens didn't count as public thoroughfares, that is where we headed to begin my course of instruction. There used to be a long straight avenue lined by magnificent trees on both sides leading from the main gate to the gardens proper. It was along this stretch of road that I was first introduced to the mysteries of "letting in" clutches and changing gears.

I was an apt pupil at first, and picked up the general fundamentals with commendable swiftness. Too soon (on the first lesson, no less) G decided that I was ready to learn how to reverse. All went well to begin with, and at snail's pace I accurately steered the little car in reverse down the avenue of trees. Alas! Overconfidence took over; convinced that this reversing was a piece of cake, and under the delusion that speed was a measure of expertise, I firmly increased the pressure on the pedal under my right foot. Inexplicably, the car began to sway from side to side, I naturally panicked, and before either of us knew what was happening, the back of the car had smashed into one of the large trees on the verge of the road.

We sat there stunned for an eternity. Then, realising we were still alive (and me wishing that I wasn't) we dashed out of the car to survey the damage. I can now confidently assert that "they don't build cars like they used to", and really mean it. There was a deep indentation in the middle of the back bumper, and a smaller corresponding dent in the bottom of the trunk, but there was no sign of the complete devastation that I had expected to see. There were no leaking fluids or broken glass. There might well have been structural damage done to the frame – for it had been a solid collision – but if so, this was not immediately apparent. Without a word G went to the driver's seat and slowly drove the car forward. There was deep scarring on the bark of the tree, but no other obvious damage to it.

We looked up and down the road, but no one else was in sight. G was in a quandary: if he admitted to his mother how the accident had really occurred, he would undoubtedly be in all sorts of trouble, while if he claimed to be the one who had had the accident, he would in all probability lose his driving privileges. In the latter case, however, he could only be faulted for lack of skill, not for illegal behaviour, and without too much soul searching he opted for that course.

My sense of relief was overwhelming. When I went home, however, I spent the most uncomfortable evening imaginable. I was certain every time the phone rang that it was G's mother; that he had changed his mind, broken down and confessed all, and that my father would be

getting into the act. But either G was made of sterner stuff, or his mother's sympathetic reaction was not enough to trigger a precipitate response to any feelings of guilt on his part. I checked with him the following day and learned that his bad news had been received with maternal understanding, and all was well. Nevertheless, I steered clear of him for weeks afterwards lest one of us should make some unthinking reference to what had taken place. I did not breathe easy again until he once more appeared behind the wheel of the newly-repaired Austin – and I never again went near the car!

There comes to mind another incident that occurred involving a Sixth Former's car. While still in the Upper Fifth, I had become friendly with a boy in 6A – well, not so much become friendly as having fallen under his patronage. C used to drive his father's huge black Buick to school on occasion, and as he lived on the street next to mine, he would sometimes give me a lift. Since he was actually in a car pool, sometimes another Sixth Former, R, would drive his car, and courtesy of C, I might be allowed to travel with him also.

On one of these occasions when I was travelling in R's car, I remember that I came in for some good- natured ragging from the older boys, and I was cheeky enough to answer them in kind. I must have gotten a bit above myself, for suddenly I realized that they had become serious. Unwisely, I continued to hold up my own end, and was threatened with being chucked out of the car. We were just about where I think airplane pilots call the "point of no return", that is, a little over half- way between school and home – roughly three miles either way. Confidently I told them that they could do no such thing. Mistake! I was in an area which was not served by either bus or tram, and I wound up trudging the whole weary way home after a hard day at school!

About this time I suddenly discovered girls. At first I would meet up with them at Manning Cup matches, and later at house parties which I had now begun to attend. The back rows of the balcony at Carib cinema was the accepted trysting place on Saturday afternoons or at Wednesday matinees. Once again I made a hash of my first effort in a new endeavour.

A complete innocent at fifteen, I fell under the spell of a veritable siren. She was a looker, and one of those girls who, it was rumoured, "did". I had no clear idea what it was she "did", but I was anxious to discover this for myself. It took me a long time to screw up enough

courage to arrange a date, but I finally succeeded. Sort of. I didn't buy her ticket or anything, but one Saturday afternoon, by tacit and apparently mutual consent, we found ourselves sitting together in the second to last row of the balcony at Carib. It was pleasant enough talking to her before the picture started, but when the lights dimmed it was "panic stations" for me. I wasn't completely clueless, in that I knew what to do (sort of), but I was dead scared to initiate action.

It must have been a good fifteen minutes into the trailers and cartoons before I timidly reached for her hand. To my utter amazement – and relief – she made no objection. I had no idea now what was transpiring on the screen, for I was busy planning my strategy: when I should slip my arm around the back of her chair, when I should lean forward and try to peck her cheek, and when, hopefully, I might try for the lips. All the while, the action – or lack of it – was not going unnoticed by those of my colleagues who were not similarly occupied. Coarse comments and crude suggestions were heard from time to time in the darkness that surrounded us.

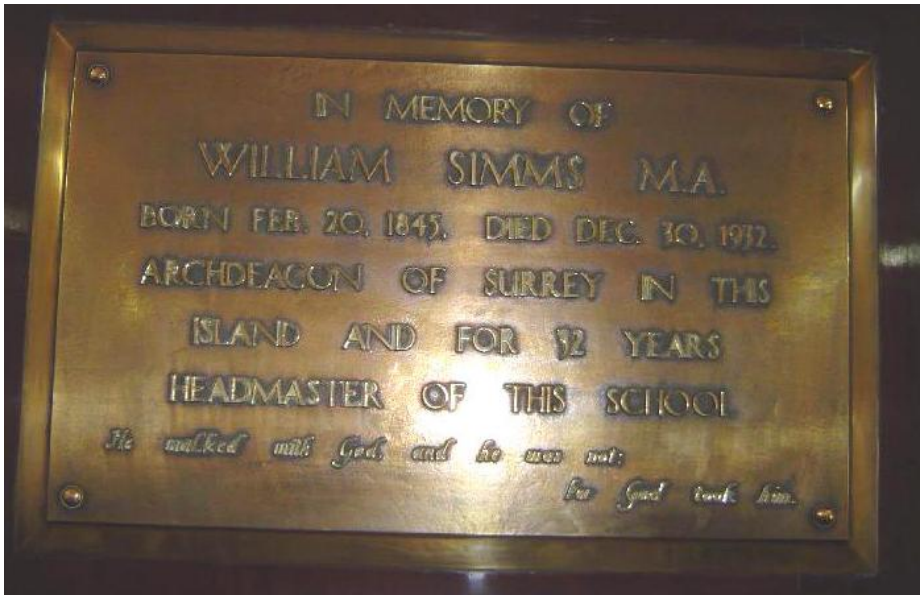
Procrastination is not only the thief of time – it is also the cause of lost opportunities. I had just worked up the courage to make my move when humiliation struck. A well-known Lothario who was also a jock of some renown, climbed over the back of the empty chair on the other side of my "date", and in no time the two of them were locked in an amorous clinch. I tried to avert my eyes and pretend to be oblivious to what was happening, but inside I was dying! Time, the great healer has mercifully erased any memory of how that afternoon ended, but I must have been a pitiful sight indeed. The only feeble straw I was able to clutch at was that she really had not formally been my "date", and that was the story I stuck to until the whole thing finally blew over.

My next experience with women was somewhat happier. In fact, it probably saved me from taking monastic vows after the debacle at Carib. About two weeks after that event, I was invited to the birthday party of a rather plain girl who was the daughter of a very unpopular master at Wolmer's. About a dozen of us – six girls and six boys – gathered in her apartment for the affair. At first there was some dancing, but this was not a success for two reasons. First of all, her parents remained in the room; but even worse, half of those present belonged to a "Youth for Christ" movement that considered dancing to be sinful, and they simply sat on the sidelines to watch the rest of us heading for perdition.

It was soon realized that the dancing was a mistake – even those of us dancing were not enjoying ourselves – and then someone suggested parlour games instead. At that point, some of us began to edge towards the door, when someone else suggested that we start with “Postman’s Knock”. Well, the situation suddenly had possibilities! Amazingly, the Youth for Christ crowd saw nothing wrong in participating, and there was no objection from the parents either. A large walk-in closet was designated as the Post Office, and the game began.

I can only remember receiving the one letter, but it was, so to speak, definitely first class mail! I was summoned to the Post Office by one of the non- dancers, a really beautiful girl whose father was a colonel or a major in the Salvation Army, out from England on a tour of duty in Jamaica. Expecting a peck on the cheek, I closed the door behind me, and received the fright of my life! My “postman” gave me the first “deep kiss” I had ever received. It was a long, passionate kiss that I didn’t want to end. As she prepared to leave the closet, I boldly embraced her and succeeded in obtaining an encore! I never saw her again after that party, but, bless her heart, she restored my damaged pride and probably saved my manhood!

In the Fifth, even the more incorrigible slackers among us began to buckle down to some serious academic effort. The Christmas term brought with it the spectre of Cambridge Senior School Certificate exams. The majority of the boys would be graduating – or at any rate, leaving school – and would be thrown on the job market. Fortunately, the scourge of unemployment that has plagued the majority of the free world in the last couple of decades, was not nearly as serious in those days, and consequently not as frightening. Nevertheless, that little slip of paper from Cambridge would make all the difference in determining the quality of job that could be obtained. Those who left it too late had an awful lot of cramming to do.


IN MEMORY OF
WILLIAM SIMMS M.A.
BORN FEB. 20, 1843. DIED DEC. 30, 1932.
ARCHDEACON OF SURREY IN THIS
ISLAND AND FOR 32 YEARS
HEADMASTER OF THIS SCHOOL
He walked with God, and he was not;
for God took him.


IN MEMORY OF
HUGO CARL WINSTON CHAMBERS
O.D., B.Sc.
APRIL 1901 - FEB. 1968
HEADMASTER OF JAMAICA COLLEGE
1946 - 1960
SOLDIER, SCHOLAR, ATHLETE, EDUCATOR
FREEMASON & GENTLEMAN
HE LIVED RESPECTED
HE DIED REGRETTED
AF & AM

IV
HEADMASTERS
AND OTHER FAMOUS MEN

"And we all praise famous men -
Ancients of the College;
For they taught us common sense –
Tried to teach us common sense –
Truth and God's own common sense,
Which is more than knowledge!"
- A School Song (Rudyard Kipling)

While I was at J.C., I had the good fortune of having two outstanding Headmasters, J.W.S.(John) Hardie and H.C.(Hugo) Chambers.

John Hardie started in the same term as I did. He was about forty years old, the son of the Bishop of Jamaica - which led us to confer upon him with brilliant originality, the nickname of "Bishop". He was English (or perhaps Welsh), a Cambridge man with a crisp Oxbridge accent and a hoity-toity upper class manner. This trait did not endear him to the boys, and I don't think that he was too popular with the majority of the great unwashed.

I attribute his lack of popularity to three main reasons. First of all, he was a stern disciplinarian, and his superior manner did not help matters. Secondly, right at the start of his tenure as Head, his confrontation with M and his subsequent expulsion of that popular hero won him no friends. But most telling of all was the fact that he had big shoes to fill - his predecessor, R.M. Murray, was a dominie of great renown, who was beloved by several generations.

"Reggie", as he was familiarly known to one and all, was as the cliche puts it, a legend in his own time. A Rhodes Scholar in 1904, he had a distinguished war service record in World War I with the 3rd British West India Regiment. Following the war, he was appointed Headmaster of Wolmer's Boy School in 1920 and served there till 1933 when he became Headmaster of Jamaica College, retiring at the end of 1942. He was an accomplished marksman in rifle shooting and a good cricketer, but one of his greatest loves was hiking (or as he called it, rambling) in the Blue Mountain and John Crow Mountain ranges. Both Wolmer's and Jamaica College vied with each other for the greater claim on his affection, but we knew that his heart was at Hope, for he was a J.C. Old Boy.

The stories about him are legion. Long before I went to J.C. I would hear tales from my father and his friends about his acumen, his quirks and his unique way of dealing with boys, all of whom accorded him a status comparable to some ancient Greek or Trojan hero. When I went to J.C., I heard many more stories in the same vein. He had a distinctive, somewhat nasal voice, and everyone who told these stories would imitate it, convinced that they had captured his essence completely.

So great was his reputation, that almost all my contemporaries who had just missed coming under his tutelage, bemoaned that fact purely on the evidence of these hearsay references. One of the stories I recall hearing illustrates the happy knack he seemed to have, not only to maintain discipline, but to do so with a gentle humour that commanded the respect of the victim.

The story goes that Reggie had set his class an assignment to write an essay entitled "A cricket match". The compositions were duly handed in and taken away to be marked. Next day in class, Reggie returned them, retaining only one which had been written by a boy whom we shall call Jones.

"Jones has written an interesting essay that I should like to read for the class," Reggie announced. "It is quite brief. Here it is: 'A cricket match, by A. Jones. Rain - no play'" There was of course great hilarity at this bit of schoolboy humour, and Reggie allowed the boys to give full rein to their mirth. However, when order was finally restored, he quietly added his own comment: "Jones will be delighted to hear that there will be a replay in my study at 5 o'clock today after school." A much louder outburst of laughter greeted this announcement.

It would not have been easy for anyone to follow the act of such an inspired and inspiring teacher, but the fact that Hardie was such a martinet certainly did not contribute to his popularity. Still, as I have said, I liked and respected him. I have a couple of personal stories about him, which while not putting him in the same class as a Reggie, do help me to remember him not unkindly.

On one occasion when I was still a small boy, I was walking alongside him, being addressed on some subject which does not now come to mind, but which was not in the nature of a scolding for any misdeed. Bishop was talking to me in his usual crisp, almost clipped tones, and I was trying to keep up with his rather long hurried stride while paying full attention to what he was saying. All of a sudden he farted. Without breaking stride, without so much as a change in the

cadence of his voice, he paused in his address to me to utter a brisk "Pardon me" and continued what he had been saying as if nothing had interrupted his flow of speech. Now, a small boy's composure is absolutely no proof against the crude humour of such a situation, but although I neither heard nor understood one word of what was said thereafter, I managed by dint of a severely bitten lip and some clearing of the throat to repress any outburst of giggling until I was safely away from him. I still count the feat as one of my more successful efforts of self control.

Bishop used to teach us French and Religious Knowledge. On one occasion, when he was taking us in a class on the latter, he interrupted what he had been saying to tell a story illustrating some point that he had been making. He told us about a group of men in a small fishing trawler off the coast of Newfoundland who were being entertained after the day's work by one of their number, a burly, foul-mouthed sailor who was telling dirty jokes one after the other. Everyone was highly entertained except an older man who quietly smoked his pipe but took no part in the general laughter. The comedian finally took notice of him, commenting on his lack of reaction, and asking if he thought he could do better. The old man said that he could, and was invited to try. Whereupon he told this story:

"On a bitterly cold winter's day in the far north, a hunter had been searching for something that he could shoot and take back to camp for food. All day he had hunted without sighting any prey, and was ready to return empty-handed. It so happened that there was a bird with a similar problem; no where had he been able to find the smallest crumb of food since that morning, and he was growing more despondent by the hour. Suddenly he spied a pad of moose droppings and dived down to make a feast of them. He gorged himself, and when he could eat no more flew up into the nearest tree. For the first time that day he was happy enough to sing, and he whistled cheerfully in contentment. His singing attracted the attention of the hunter, who immediately shot him and took him back to camp for his supper."

The old man stopped speaking and went on smoking his pipe. After a moment's silence, the first storyteller asked if that was the end, and on being told that it was, he expressed his contempt for it as an entertaining anecdote. "Well", said the old man, "perhaps it's not funny, but it does have a moral: 'If you're full of shit, don't sing about it!'"

Bishop finished the story and was going on with the lesson when we (uncertainly at first) broke out laughing. Although it was a good story, it wasn't really a joke, but we were stunned by three things - first that the Headmaster (son of a bishop at that!) should use the word "shit"; that he should have used it in front of us; and that all this was in a class on religious knowledge! For the rest of the period, everyone was concentrating mightily on suppressing fits of giggles. It probably wouldn't even cause a First Former to raise an eyebrow today, but then, those were far more innocent times.

"H.C.", as Hugo Chambers was known to the boys, took over as Headmaster in 1947. He was as different from Bishop as it was possible to be. He had come up "through the system" as a master, a Housemaster, Second Master and eventually Headmaster. He taught mathematics and geography and was a very precise person.When he drew a circle on the blackboard freehand during a geometry class, he would stand back and wait for us to assess its artistic merit; on our part, we took delight in expressing our appraisal with cheers or groans.

He was what might be call "laid back", never getting worked up unecessarily over any situation. He was in charge of the Cadet Corps, and even when not on parade, he invariably dressed in khaki shirt and shorts with knee high khaki stockings. He had excellent carriage, and walked with a ramrod straight back, head held high. Where Bishop used to walk across Holy Ground to the Chapel (which was his right of course) I don't think I ever saw H.C. use it. It was as if he was saying that this was the prefects' peculiar privilege, and that not even the Headmaster would usurp it. This was the sort of gesture that the boys appreciated.

I don't really remember any amusing anecdotes involving H.C. My clearest memory of him was that he was a good teacher, fair-minded and popular with the boys. He always commanded respect without having to resort to any harsh disciplinary measures. It was H.C. who appointed me Vice-Captain of the school when I was in Form 6A, and it was an office of which I was very proud indeed.

* * *

I consider that I was extremely lucky for the most part in the masters who were at J.C. when I was there. Certainly there were some who were absolute disasters, but fortunately they never seemed to last very

long. A couple that I recall were real wierdos. There was Nick - a self-proclaimed born again Christian from British Guiana I think. He used to live in the Crow's Nest, an attic room in the Annex, and one night, it is said, he saw a vision at two o'clock in the morning, dressed and left, never to be seen again. The story has it that he had suffered a nervous break-down, but at all events he never returned to his job.

He was not the only master to make a dramatic nocturnal exit. However, Mac, an alcoholic Scotsman with a hearty manner and an obnoxious personality, did not go gentle into that good night - he was pushed. Apparently, returning late one night from an evening of debauchery, he attempted to break down Matron's door and foist his unwelcome attentions on that portly and rather prim middle-aged widow. Or so the grapevine reported next day. Whatever the truth of the matter, he was also never seen again.

I remember one personal encounter with Mac. Having had occasion to visit the Staff Common Room one day to leave an assignment for another master, and finding the room deserted, a natural schoolboy's instinct prompted me to look around. On the notice board was a Report Form such as is sent to parents at the end of each term to record term marks, exam results and comments by form masters, Housemaster and Headmaster. The form had been completed in Mac's handwriting, with amusing comments for each subject. I can only remember two of these comments: for Physics - "No personal magnetism", and a general one from the Housemaster, "He tries hard - a very trying boy".

The next day during a recess, Mac happened to join a group of us and began to tease one of the boys for something or other. It was an out-of-school bit of ragging, and we all jumped in on Mac's side to enjoy the discomfiture of our colleague (boys really are beasts!). I threw in one of the comments that I had seen in the Common Room, and watched Mac's reaction; there was none, so I slipped in a second. This time he looked at me sharply, but said nothing.

Now, a more mature boy would have stopped there, having pulled the tiger's tail and made him snarl, but I was feeling heady with success, and chanced a third comment. Well this time he not only snarled, he roared: he lashed into me for reading something personal that was none of my business and made all sorts of threats. Terrified, I stoutly maintained that I had no idea what he was talking about, and since he could prove nothing he contented himself with stern warnings, and strode off leaving me really shaken. For a long time after that I trod very warily around him!

My Housemaster in Cowper House was also the school's Sportsmaster. The Major, as he was known, was an English ex-army officer who had once played football for the famous Corinthians. Under his training, J.C. excelled at football, more than once extending their record (at that time) of most Manning Cups. He taught History, which was one of my better subjects. As a result, I got along very well with him. This relationship spilled over into the realm of sports, and he gave me more chances to represent the house and the school than my talents probably merited. He had a very nasal voice and was easily imitated, some boys being much better at it than others. He had red hair with a large forelock that he was always pushing out of his eyes with the palm of his hand. He always wore shorts and knee high stockings that were probably a holdover from his army days.

Two amusing incidents involving him come to mind. There was the day when he was sitting watching a game of cricket when a passing bird dropped a load on his arm. He looked up with an exclamation of annoyance; from behind the voice of a well-known wag intoned: "Is a good ting cow don' fly!" It was probably a good thing also that the Major was the only one who couldn't understand what was being said in a very broad Jamaican accent!

On the second occasion, the Major was supervising a long jump competition as part of Sports Day. The pit was quite near to the divi-divi tree on the road from Bottom Gate, and the whole area was crowded with onlookers - fortunately mostly boys. Suddenly an agonized cry went up from someone in the divi-divi tree: "Do, John T, leggo me balls!" Two disreputable characters had been having a friendly set-to up in the tree; the infamous John T, who had never even heard of the Marquess of Queensberry, had grabbed Z by the short and curlies (or thereabouts) and was making him cry "uncle". Once again, fortunately, the Major was the only one who missed the full import of the agonized cry that rent the air.

D. B-J's proudest boast was that he was a Briton. Call him Welsh if you prefer, but *never* English! Ironically, however, he was our English teacher. I think he was definitely over the hill by the time we got him in the Fifth, and those of us who did well in that subject in the Cambridge Senior and Higher School Certificate exams, probably owe more to the solid grounding that we had received earlier as well as to our love for the language, than to anything that he taught us. He was at least in his sixties (although he looked much older), was very

deliberate in speech and slow of movement, and was a complete eccentric. The one thing that he inculcated in us was a love of English literature, and I am eternally grateful for his zeal in making us commit to memory so many of the great poems of the masters. It didn't help us with the exams, but being able to recall them to this day, still affords me enormous pleasure.

My two best friends at school, although not related to each other, shared the same surname; so they were differentiated by their initials, H.A. and S.M. We three invariably alternated as head of the class each term, with the other two right behind. As English was also our best subject, we were highly favoured by D. B-J. On one occasion he told us that there would be a special test the following day on some set book we were doing, and gave fair warning that we should prepare for it. Now, I clearly recall that he told us this on a Wednesday, because that was matinee day at Carib cinema, and a new film starring the reigning Hollywood hero - Richard Widmark - was due to debut that afternoon. Well, H.A. (who was always very organized) was up to date on his preparation, so he was going for sure; S.M. (who was always very conscientious) was not up to date, and so decided to stay away and do the work. I, who was neither prepared as H.A. was, nor as conscientious as S.M., decided that I was going anyway.

The following day we received the promised test. To put it bluntly, I didn't have a clue. I didn't even know enough about the work to fudge it and bluff my way through. Then I had a brainwave: when the papers were collected at the end of the class, I simply didn't give in mine. My plan was that when the results came back, I would stoutly declare that D. B-J. had lost my paper, and I figured that there would be no way for him to prove otherwise. I would not receive any mark of course, but I wouldn't get into any trouble. The next day D. B-J. gave back the papers, and, as was the custom, when he called the roll each boy announced his mark to be recorded.

"H.A."

"Nine (out of ten) sir"

"S.M."

"Eight, sir"

"Levy"

"Sorry, sir. You didn't give me back my paper."

"Oh! I must have left it at home. But I remember, you did very well ... you got nine."

Three mouths fell open in a gasp of surprise, but S.M.'s gasp was tinged with resentment. So much for justice that would reward indolence with triumph over industry!

Weif was Second Master when I first went to J.C. and was in charge of the school's Science Department. His strange nickname was derived from the fact that he had a breathing problem (no doubt from the copious numbers of cigarettes he smoked) and a hissing inhaling noise habitually interspersed his speech. He was also my first Housemaster. His wife was one of two women who were on the teaching staff; her subject was Latin.

Weif was fond of his own jokes, and one day I blotted my copybook with him through not speaking distinctly enough. He told some silly story illustrating a point that he was making in Physics, and this included some reference to the word jail. Everyone of course laughed at his little joke, but he went on to embellish it by using two or three synonyms for jail - "The nick ... the pokey ..."

Stupidly, I had to add my two cents worth: having recently learned the slang from an army friend of the family, I contributed "Jug". Weif looked at me long and hard, and suggested with annoyance that I smarten up. I was hurt and puzzled until after the class my colleagues asked me how I had had the temerity to mock Weif by saying, "Joke" - as in "Big joke!" Trembling, I returned to explain myself to Weif. His only response was to tell me that I talked too much in class and should watch my behaviour. We became good friends after this, however, and when he was appointed Headmaster of a secondary school in the country, and after I had left school myself, I visited him more than once and enjoyed being entertained to tea by him and his wife.

E.V., alias Grass Quit, was an Old Boy who had won the Rhodes Scholarship and had taken Chemistry at Oxford. He understudied Weif at first, then took over the department when the latter left J.C. He had a very slight build, but for all that was an excellent cricketer and a good tennis player. Although he was a brilliant scientist, he had strong classical leanings, and was well up on his Latin. He was also an accomplished organist who played for the Chapel services and trained the choir.

He loved to "put on" airs with tongue in cheek, and following a one year fellowship at Cambridge, came back spouting Latin graces before the midday meal, or pretending to adopt what he claimed to be unique

Cambridge styles of pronunciation (e.g. “ridi-cu-lous”, with the accent on the third syllable). Another affectation was that he insisted that his home town of Maggotty was pronounced "Motty" ("the 'agg' is silent" he would say). S.M., who had the gift of swift repartee, put him in his place nicely on one occasion. E.V. was posturing in his cricket whites, a symbol, so he claimed, of his chastity; shot back S.M.: "Is that why the trousers are so stained?"

He delighted in the old Arthur Rank British movies. He would commit to memory quotes from actors like his favourite Francis L. Sullivan, and use them on his students at every opportunity. He particularly liked schoolboy movies and it was he who introduced me to one of my favourite films of that genre, "The Browning Version". It starred another of his favourites, Wilfred Hyde White, and was the source of several good quotes. "Ah," he might say in Hyde White tones while standing on the verandah outside the dining room as the tea interval at a cricket match was taken, "I see we're strategically placed for the tea marquee." And he always addressed H.C. as "Headmaster" - never by name!

As we grew older, he became more chummy with the bigger boys, and in the holidays we would play endless rubbers of bridge. He really wasn't that much older than we were and fitted in very well with us. Some years after this when I was at the Imperial College in Trinidad, I got the stunning news that he had been fired from J.C. for making homosexual advances to some of the boys. I know that I was always somewhat naive until quite late in life, but I was more than a little amazed for two reasons. Firstly, in those far more conservative days, we were somewhat homophobic, often making cruel jokes about homosexuals, and I could recall us doing so quite often during our bridge sessions that had included him.

Also, in my last term at J.C., my Dad had hired him to give me some extra coaching in Chemistry, which was one of my majors in the Higher School's Certificate exam. On E.V.'s suggestion, we had spent the weekend prior to the exam at Kintyre Scout Camp for some cramming, and there had been a lot of horseplay in between studying. He never made any overt advances to me (and being a lot bigger than he was I could and would have probably knocked him about if he had) but in retrospect, he probably enjoyed himself anyway. He became a brilliant research chemist and lecturer at the University of the West Indies, and some years later was tragically murdered in his apartment

in very unpleasant circumstances - a waste of a very talented and vivacious character whom I remember with fondness and sadness.

Carl was a Bajan. He was a big bow-legged man who spoke in a drawl flavoured with a heavy Barbadian accent that gave him an ominous aura. Latin was his subject, and he was an excellent teacher. I know that after dropping Latin for two years on going into 6B, I took it up again in my last year as a subsidiary subject in Higher School's Certificate and he guided me to a respectable B+ in the exam.

He was anathema to boys who smoked and would deal very harshly with them. Not being caught red- handed was no help to guilty suspects, for Carl would instruct them to "breathe into my face, boy" - and nor mint nor chewing gum could fool his infallible olfactory organ!

I ran afoul of him on one occasion when I was in the Sixth. He had sent a small boy to me to enquire about the status of some assignment that I owed him. Having recently learned the phrase, I instructed the small boy to "give him my compliments" and inform him that he would have my paper in the morning. Mistake! The wretched small boy actually delivered my message verbatim, and was promptly dispatched to "invite" me to Carl's room immediately. There I was told in no uncertain terms what I should do with my compliments if I ever again felt moved to send them to him. It is kinder to draw a curtain across the rest of the interview!

O.C. came to us from St. George's College, and loved to tease us by suggesting that we were inferior to his former students. One day, he was in charge of a swimming party, but no one could find the key for the gate to the fence around the pool. While we waited for someone to go and fetch the spare key, O.C. commented that any St. George's boy could have picked the lock with a hairpin in thirty seconds. A sharp-witted Fourth Former riposted: "Perhaps, but at J.C. we don't wear hair pins." The roar of laughter effectively squelched that sally, and he had the grace to murmur: "Touche!"

He wasn't with us very long, but I had reason to remember him, because he administered the only caning I ever received during my school career - and illegally so! It happened on this wise. I had been given an hour's detention by him for some misdemeanour or other during the last week of the Christmas term. As everyone can appreciate, that was a particularly inconvenient period for a teenager to

have his freedom curtailed, so I decided to see if a bit of crawling could get my sentence commuted. O.C. proposed an alternative: accept three strokes of the cane and the slate would be wiped clean.

Now, there were only certain people who were allowed to give corporal punishment: the Headmaster, the Housemasters, and - surprisingly - the prefects. O.C. did not fall into any of these categories. It was a completely unexpected proposal, and I had to give it some thought. I was quite frankly daunted by the prospect of a caning, but it somehow seemed unmanly to go through my whole school life without experiencing one. In a few weeks I would be a member of the Upper Fifth, and then it would be too late, for although Fifth Formers could be caned, it was only the most incorrigible ones who at that stage of the game had to be dealt with in such manner. So I gritted my teeth and accepted the offer.

From somewhere O.C. produced a cane (which made me think that this had happened before) and he invited me to "assume the position." I bent over the chair behind his desk and held on to the seat. Three mighty whacks and it was over. Lip trembling, eyes watering and bottom burning, I made my way to the nearest washroom to examine the damage. I could barely see - but could clearly feel - the welts that were beginning to appear. Then I suddenly remembered that I was taking part in a Reading Competition that afternoon, and wondered if I could make it. Well, in the event, I did participate and won second prize in my class. This went a far way towards easing the pain, and by the time I had embellished the story (falsely upgrading the punishment to "six of the best") I was feeling decidedly chipper. Best of all, the incident went a long way towards dispelling the somewhat goody-goody reputation I had unfortunately acquired. I felt that the experience had been definitely worth it!

I remember Cho Cho - a tall, spare figure who taught Geography. I don't think he imparted much to us in the way of knowledge about the subject, being more interested in us turning out neat and colourful maps. Nothing seemed to ruffle him; he spoke in low, measured tones and moved (or floated really) in a slow, majestic fashion like some ghost. Once when he was very late for class, general bedlam had developed when all of a sudden a loud but sepulchral voice was heard from the doorway above the din as he entered unobserved proclaiming: "Cho Cho is here."

An even more unflappable character, however, was Iceberg. He was a tubby, dour Englishman with ginger hair and a small ginger moustache who apparently never smiled. He taught French after the departure of the late unlamented Mac, and was a complete contrast to that unworthy. Iceberg coolly did his thing, paying no attention to whether anyone else was paying any attention to him. No disorder in the classroom was able to put him off his stride, and if you had no desire to take advantage of his tutoring, that was entirely up to you - like Gallio, he cared for none of these things.

Once, just prior to his arrival in the class room, the resident artist decorated the entire blackboard with a drawing of a ship named after him (his *real* name), in a sea of icebergs. On his arrival, Iceberg cast only the most cursory of glances at the blackboard before starting the lesson as usual. Ten minutes later, having occasion to write something on the blackboard, he erased just enough of the picture to provide the space he needed, completely ignoring the rest of the board. We groaned in frustration; there is such a thing as being *too* cool.

These were just a few of the men who had a hand in helping to mould my character and equip me for life in the world beyond carefree adolescence. I hold most of them in great affection, and from this distance, even the duds can be appreciated, for they too were part of the tapestry that was life at Jamaica College.

There is a memorial plaque at the back of St. Dunstan's Chapel to the memory of William Cowper, one of the school's early Headmasters. His epitaph includes a quote from Cicero that I have always thought to be most apt: *"No greater gift can a man give to the state than to care for its youth."*

V
THE SPORTING LIFE

"How is this reason (which is their reason)
To judge a scholar's worth,
By casting a ball at three straight sticks
And defending the same with a fourth?"
- Kitchener's School (Rudyard Kipling)

I was always dead keen on sports. Alas, I was not one of those gifted persons who effortlessly excel at games. To be honest, I was at best mediocre. But I *was* dead keen! I loved all sports, but cricket was far and away my favourite, and remains so to this day.

My two heroes in my early days at J.C. were George Headley (but then he was everybody's hero!) and Denis Compton. Later, when the three Ws came on the scene, most people deified Frank Worrell ... but *my* idol was Everton deCourcey Weekes. I can never forget my first sight of him, savaging the England bowling on the way to a magnificent 141 in the fourth test in 1948 at Sabina Park. It proved to be the first of a record breaking five consecutive test centuries - the next four against India starting later that year. The same match also saw the debut of another local hero of mine, Ken Rickards, who contributed a sparkling 67.

In those days before television, we all used to follow overseas tests with ears glued to our radios - and most of us didn't have portable transistors at that time. I recall that we used to have favourite commentators just as we had favourite players, and I am sure that far and away the most popular must have been that English *non pareil* among commentators, John Arlott.

I have one clear, undying memory of a particular commentary by Arlott describing an Everton Weekes square cut off Bedser. To convey the full beauty and vividness of his description, I must use direct speech, even though at this distance I naturally cannot vouch for the exact words: "And Bedser comes in to bowl ... and that's way outside the off stump and Weekes throws his bat at it. That ball was a yard outside the off stump; every other batsman in the world would have left it alone, but not Weekes! He stepped right across the pitch and clouted it past point to the boundary for four runs!" Goose bumps still greet the memory! I remember too ... But I digress.

As soon as I was old enough to do so, I tried out for the Colts Team, but I couldn't even make twelvth man. My best shot was to get on to

The playing fields with Simms House (centre) and Scotland House (right) in the background against a backdrop of the Blue Mountains.

the House Second Eleven where I performed adequately among the other rejects like myself. There was one friend of mine who was a lot worse than I was, but whose love of cricket was unequalled by the most zealous fan of the game. His claim to fame was that he had a photographic memory and his computer brain retained the most trivial statistic from every West Indies test ever played, plus many England and Australia matches as well. If a copy of Wisden wasn't to hand, reference to V was sufficient to settle any dispute about cricket to the complete satisfaction of both parties. His powers of retention were remarkable! He was also a natural as a Scorer!

In football, I was hopeless in front of the goal, but I finally achieved some success keeping goal for my House XI. I eventually made the school Second XI which led to a single undistinguished (nay, humiliating) experience filling in for the First XI keeper in a friendly match (fortunately!) against Calabar at Hope. We had by far the stronger team, but we were using several second stringers. Even so, we pressed them for most of the match, but just couldn't convert near misses to actual goals. With most of the play in the last five minutes way down in the enemy's goal area, I got bored and wandered beyond our penalty area.

Mistake!

There was a sudden break away, and a Calabar forward dashed towards our goal with the ball at his feet. I back- pedalled furiously. As the opposing forward crossed the centre line, our gallant full back bore down upon him and he panicked. Desperately he toe punched the ball towards me. I watched it soar over my head, and before I could get back to my crease I turned to see it bouncing into the back of the net to a chorus of indignant jeers from the onlookers. Naturally, as Murphy's Law would have it, the goal we were defending was on the north side in the shadows of the ficus trees where the whole school gathered to watch.

This devastating experience reminds me, however, of an occasion when I was privileged to witness the swiftest, neatest, classiest and most satisfying "bus' ass" I have ever seen administered. What made it all the sweeter was that the recipient was a bully who had given me and my friends many an uncomfortable going over. The punishment occurred at the end of a Manning Cup match at home, when we had been given a good drubbing by the other team - something like 4:nil. Our keeper, K, was one of the finest in Manning Cup history, but every

footballer, even Stanley Matthews (who?), had off days, and K was certainly having one on this particular day.

As the two teams left the field after the final whistle, darkness was beginning to close in, for this was sometime in November. A Fourth Former, P, accosted the J.C. keeper under the ficus tree as he was heading for the showers.

"K," he asked in an innocent voice, "did you see the game?"

It was a good line ... but fool-hardy! Quick as lightning, K "draped" him up by his shirt front in one hand, and with the other slapped him across the face several times using the palm and the back of his hand alternately. In less than fifteen seconds it was all over and K strode off leaving P in tears and complaining bitterly to an unsympathetic crowd of onlookers.

"You're lucky that's all you got," was one heartless comment. Lucky indeed! K was the undisputed Inter- Scholastic heavyweight boxing champion!

The greatest fun I had during the football season was watching our power teams of that era and cheering them on. If one hadn't lost one's voice, or at least sounded a touch huskier than usual at the end of a match, it must have been a disappointing contest indeed. As I grew older and reached what Kipling called "the years of indiscretion" however, I gave up this pleasure in favour of chatting up the girls from the local female secondary schools who attended all the matches as keen football supporters. (Or did these camp followers have ulterior motives?)

Very early on in my school career, I wisely accepted the fact that athletics was definitely not for me. Funnily enough, my brother (who is two years my junior, and who like my other two younger siblings attended our father's alma mater, Wolmer's) turned out to be a champion athlete, establishing records at Schools Champs for the sprint events both as an under 16 and an over 16 runner. Again, my participation was limited to cheering myself hoarse on the sidelines.

There was, however, one sport in which I was able to participate, that required no great talent. It was a game without rules, with no official teams, with no team captains and with no qualifications of age or social status to be met. It was called "Rugger Buggy", but the etymology of that title completely escapes me. It was similar to football but played with a tennis ball. As I recall, the object of the game consisted entirely of trying to keep possession of the ball for

oneself or attempting to get it away from the person who had it. The use of hands was forbidden, but everything else was permitted. The playing field was any piece of available open space, but the preferred venue was that bit of ground between the Assembly Hall and the Annex. No one - as far as I knew anyway - ever organized a game of rugger buggy. It always seemed to begin completely spontaneously. Anyone could play, and anyone usually did. Even lowly new boys, if they had enough spunk, would occasionally get involved and find themselves literally rubbing shoulders with lofty Fifth Formers: it was a great leveller. I wonder if it still survives?

As I grew older and advanced through middle school to Sixth Form status, my love for sports grew stronger. Unfortunately, my aptitude for them did not keep pace with my enthusiasm, and I fear that I cannot claim that my performance ever rose above the level of mere mediocrity. In my final year at J.C. though, the Major appointed me Captain of the school's cricket Second XI, despite my lack of outstanding talent. Nonetheless, after a desultory start, I did manage to achieve what I think of as a brief shining hour in my last two games on the team, "carrying my bat" on both occasions!

The first of those games was against Calabar at Hope. I lost the toss and they decided to bat first, amassing an impressive total of well over 100 by tea time. Following the interval we went in to bat, with me opening the inning. We made a disastrous start, and in a short time I had lost four or five partners. Further details escape my memory, but I do know that the tail - well, not exactly wagged, but put up enough enough resistance to stonewall its way to a draw at close of play. Of the 70 odd runs scored for the loss of 9 wickets, I had contributed 25 not out! I do not think it too immodest of me to claim this performance as a true Captain's innings.

The following week we had another home game, this time against Wolmer's. Incidentally, their side included my future brother-in-law, who fancied himself as a left arm slow bowler. Once again I lost the toss and had to lead my team on to the field. It was a different story on this day, however. We trundled them out for something like 80 runs, myself collecting a bag of 5 wickets for 25 and two excellent slip catches. My normally innocuous off spinners were on an immaculate length, and were breaking as if the wicket was a crumbling disaster. When we went in to bat though, we had no trouble in knocking off the runs for the loss of about 5 wickets, with my score being 32 not out!

You may wonder, gentle reader, how I am able to recall the details of two such trivial encounters. Well, you have to understand that I had never before - and alas! would never again - put on such a satisfying show while playing what I have always thought of as the finest game ever devised by the mind of man. My crowning moment came during the following week when the First XI Sunlight Cup side for the next weekend's game was posted on the notice board in the Main Building, and there was my name in its alphabetical position under the Ls. And, no ... it wasn't as twelvth man!

My first outing with the Sunlight team was an away fixture against Wolmer's. I don't recall the outcome of the match, but I do remember my part in it. Watched by my Dad, himself an old Wolmerian and torn between two loyalties, I went in at either No.7 or No. 8. I remember playing two or three scoreless strokes with what I hoped was impeccable style, then getting off a superb cover drive to the boundary for 4 runs. The next ball had me leg before and I was headed back to the pavilion. Not an auspicious start.

However, I retained my place on the side for the last three Sunlight games of the season, neither improving my position in the batting order nor managing to score over 10 runs. I wasn't called upon to bowl at any time, but I did take one or two catches, and my fielding generally was beyond reproach. In fact, in his end of term report on the school's cricket record, the Major commented that I had won my place on the team by my efficiency in the field. (And there was I thinking that it was by virtue of my heroics with bat and ball while skippering the Second XI … *Sic transit gloria mundi!*)

My final appearance for the First XI was in a friendly match against a visiting team from Munro. I found it memorable for two reasons: first of all because, on the morning of the game, I had developed a terrible case of laryngitis and had almost completely lost my voice; secondly, I was promoted in the batting order to No.1. Things went very well for me, and for the first time since joining the First XI, I got into double figures. Meanwhile, at the other end, three wickets fell, and in came F to partner me. F was a genius of a slow bowler, not a batsman; but, this being the last game of the season and one of no great importance, like me he had been elevated in the order to enjoy a chance at making a few runs. We were doing famously, and I had reached 15 when I found myself at the non-striker's end. F edged the ball to fine leg and set off without any hesitation. It was *my* call ... but I had no voice! Any other player would have stood his ground and let F pay for his own folly -

but not Muggins! I scrambled to reach the other crease, and the wicket keeper had all day to remove the bails casually with a gloved finger of the hand holding the ball that backward square leg had retrieved and thrown to him.

I just kept on running to hide my frustration till I was off the field. I had, as the saying goes, been seeing the ball like a grapefruit, and had been thinking that there was a chance for me to "get among the runs" and wind up my career with a half decent score. Instead, I had to bite my lip in disappointment and be satisfied with a paltry 15 runs. There is a sequel to this sad tale. I made only one more trip to "the middle" at J.C. The following year, having left school the previous December, I turned out for the Old Boys in the annual match against the present boys. When it was my turn to go in, I went to the non- striker's end, the last wicket having fallen at the end of an over. F, who was still in school, was the bowler, and he was still as dangerous as ever.

"Look," I said to him, "Whatever happens, you've got to let me break my duck. You owe me!"

F said nothing, but smiled cryptically. My partner soon called for a run and I found myself at the other end taking guard. I looked around the grounds, putting on the dog a bit and pretending that I was looking for holes in the field that I could pierce with scintillating drives. Then I took my stance and faced F. He lazily went through his short run-up and delivered a well-flighted ball. To this day, I don't know if he honestly intended it as a gift - soup to be firmly punished - or if it was one of his super specials. Whatever the case, the ball completely mesmerised me: I went forward, and I came back, never certain where or when the ball was going to pitch. I made some sort of stroke at it and missed completely. Behind me I heard the death rattle, and turned to see that I had been what is called "comprehensively bowled".

Life being what it is, I was the only player to make a duck, and worse, the match was the only one whose statistics were published in that year's issue of the school magazine! F apologized profusely after the game, but he couldn't seem to stop smirking, which somehow took the edge off his sincerity. I am truly surprised that he never ended up playing for Jamaica at least, if not for the West Indies. He went on to a life of politics, however, and today is a high-ranking member of the Cabinet.

Hockey and basketball were both introduced during my time at J.C. and were quite popular. Hockey became part of the inter-scholastic

competitive programme, but I do not know whether basketball is still extant. I made the school Hockey Team in my last year, but my contribution was completely unremarkable and I have no special memories of the season - except one. The team travelled by two station wagons to play a fixture at Munro, and I remember that we made a stop at Mandeville where the father of one of our players owned and operated a very successful bakery that has since gone island wide. As we alighted from the vehicles to stretch our legs, D.D. (an irrepressible character and what we used to call a trencherman where food is concerned) uttered this unforgettable exhortation: "Come fellows, let's go eat out the whole of Mr. H's bakery!"

There was one sport at which, given the chance, I might very well have excelled. (Easy to say, so I'll say it.) This was Rifle Shooting. My Dad, who had himself represented Wolmer's in the sport, had always been keen for me to do it. Unfortunately, until I reached the Sixth Form, Rifle Shooting had been the exclusive preserve of the Cadet Corps. I had always been in Scouting, and it had not been practical for any number of reasons to belong to both organizations. So to my chagrin and my Dad's disappointment, I was never able to participate in Shooting. Then, in my last year, for
reasons which I do not recall, it was thrown open to all who wished to take part. I jumped at the chance, and I must have had an excellent eye for it, because I quickly picked up the technique and did very well indeed.

This was all the more remarkable, because we used to hold practices at 7.00 a.m. on Saturday mornings, and I used to ride my bike 6 miles to get to school for these exercises. After such a long ride resting my hands on the handlebars of a bike, I should have been tense and unable to achieve any accuracy. This was not the case however, and at the end of the season, I found myself on the School Team competing for the Perkin's Shield. Our shoot, supervised by H.C. was held as usual on Saturday morning, and I was in good form. I know that I had a "possible" at the fifty yard range, and for the rest, my score was in the high nineties. One other boy had done even better, and had nudged me into second place.

Unfortunately, the rest of the team turned in an abysmal performance. To my great disappointment, H.C. was so upset with the results that he decided to scratch our entry for that year's competition. I thought that what he had done was most unsporting and completely

unlike him - but of course, I admit that my view of the matter was by no means objective. I also deeply resented the fact that because of the circumstances, I was not awarded full colours in Shooting which I felt I fully deserved.

One final, fond memory of sports concerns the spectators. The smaller boys formed the core of a powerful cheering section, whatever the sport was, and whatever the success of our team. At home, we were also keenly supported by the local citizenry from the nearby settlements in the area, who faithfully filled Ackee Tree Pavilion on every occasion. This is what we used to call the ackee tree that grew just outside the fence behind the cricket nets near Top Gate, which was usually dangerously loaded with spectators during Sports Day or at football games.

One disreputable rascal who boasted the unlikely name "Custos" comes to mind. Once, my father was taking a party of four of my friends and me on a long weekend hike to the Peak. We got off the bus at Papine and prepared to begin our expedition when Custos saw us there, and on learning where we were headed, begged to accompany us. My Dad agreed, and in a very short time, given half an hour to run home and pack a few clothes, he proudly joined us on this spur-of-the-moment trip. Four days later, it was a footsore, tired young man who returned wearing a pair of donated puss boots on swollen feet full of blisters, his own sadly worn shoes having given up the ghost within hours of reaching Mavis Bank. He never forgot that trip, and often mentioned it to me in later years with a smile of pleasure.

It can be seen that I enjoyed a most undistinguished sporting career. But I feel that the key word is "enjoyed". No one had more fun than I did, and no one was a more fervent supporter of Jamaica College teams. It was a happy-go-lucky age, when the game was more than the player, and sport had not yet become a business. It was a time when there was no pejorative connotation to the title of amateur, and professionals did not think that they were in the game to become millionaires. It was a time when the term "good sportsman" didn't refer to athletic ability.

It was a golden age.

The Assembly Hall seen through one of the ficusberry trees (1948)

VI
LORDS OF THE EARTH

"Here's to us!
For who's like us?
Damn few an' they're a' deid."
- Old Scottish Toast

It wasn't until I was an undergraduate at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture that I learned that toast, but it might well have been written for me and my colleagues in J.C.'s Sixth Form. The best of two worlds opened up to us, for we were on the threshold of early manhood, but having few of its attendant cares and responsibilities. A quote from Wordsworth (in a rather different context admittedly!) accurately covers how I felt –

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!"

I went into 6B at the beginning of the 1947 Easter Term, and was immediately appointed a prefect. By the end of the year, I had become House Captain of Cowper House, and at the start of my second year in the Sixth, I was made Vice-Captain of the school - my two proudest achievements while at J.C.

The majority of boys left school after taking the exams for Cambridge School Certificate in Fifth Form, but those who were planning to go on to university stayed to sit for their Cambridge Higher School Certificate after two years in the Sixth. The boy who came first in the island in that exam was awarded the Jamaica Scholarship. If one was not successful on the first try, but was considered to have scholarship potential, one might come back for a third year to have a go at it. Among those few of us who repeated, H.A. won the Scholarship on his second try; S.M. returned for an almost unprecedented fourth year and subsequently won a Rhodes Scholarship; my own more modest achievement was a scholarship offered by the Sugar Manufacturers' Association to study Sugar Technology at I.C.T.A.

Sixth Formers were of course, the aristocracy of the school, while prefects were indeed little lower than the angels. We had our own Common Room, which at first was a small closet-size study on the ground floor of Scotland House - the building to the north of the Assembly Hall. Then in my second year we were moved upstairs,

directly above, to a room that had once served as a dormitory and later as the Staff Common Room.

The appointments were luxurious, including several very comfortable armchairs. The room was at the end of the building, and was bounded on three sides by a balcony. It was an ideal place to watch cricket matches or House football games from the comfort of one of the three lounge chairs provided, a soft drink from the Tuck Shop in hand. It was far too remote for Manning Cup games though; the only acceptable vantage point for those was on the sidelines. Of course, prefects had to preserve a certain dignity and would not normally join in the numerous choruses of "Hash and Roast Beef"; but when called for by a highly emotional occasion - as for instance, if the home team should score a tie- breaking goal - then, like the ranks of Tuscany, even prefects could scarce forbear to cheer.

As I have indicated, prefects had the authority to administer corporal punishment. I seem to recall that they could give no more than three strokes, three prefects at a time sharing the job. Although there was the occasional bad egg among them, prefects seemed to assume a creditable sense of responsibility on appointment. I don't think anyone ever took advantage of the system, though modern thinking has condemned all forms of corporal punishment in schools as being in the category of child abuse. In my three years as a prefect, I can only remember caning two boys, both times for bullying.

My favourite perk as a prefect though, was the distinction of being allowed to walk on Holy Ground at will. It may seem trivial to some that we made such a big deal out of this, but as a symbol of authority it *was* very important. This was particularly so because even the masters (except for the Head) were denied this privilege. Though I don't suppose any action would have been taken against any master who had the temerity to trespass on it.

There were two Chapel services each day, morning and afternoon. No one was excused except Jewish boys, and they were obliged to wait in the Assembly Hall during services; either there were no atheists, or else liberal thinkers of the day did not consider this a curtailment of anyone's civil rights.

A warning bell ("First bell") followed five minutes later by a second, summoned the boys to Chapel. The prefects would stroll languidly across Holy Ground and forgather on the driveway outside the Chapel while the rest of the school hurried in to take their places. The Head usually waited outside also, and when he had decided that there had

been sufficient time for everyone to have reached their seats, he would enter and go to his place at the end of the choir stall immediately in front of the organ. His entry was our signal to go in also, and our seats (which we shared with those masters who wished to attend Chapel) were in two stalls at the back of the building that were slightly elevated above the body of the Chapel.

Morning Chapel would start with a hymn, at the end of which the Duty Prefect would walk to the lectern and read the Lesson selected for that day. When Bishop was Headmaster, he used to deliver a five minute homily at this point, but when H.C. took over, the custom lapsed. The Head would then lead us in prayers taken from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Afterwards, the day's announcements were read, and morning Chapel was brought to a close with the singing of a second hymn. At the end of this hymn, the choir would file out of the Chapel followed by the masters and the prefects, and then each pew would empty in turn starting from the rear. Afternoon Chapel was much simpler, consisting only of at most two short prayers, a hymn, and any announcements that needed to be made; it was a lot easier - and safer - for anyone who wanted to "skip Chapel".

Another "good thing" about being in the Sixth, was belonging to the Sixth Form Association. This was a loose organization (perhaps not the most felicitous phrase!) of Sixth Formers from all the secondary girl and boy schools in the Corporate Area. Originally for the purpose of academic get-togethers (like debates and such intellectual pursuits), I can't say that I recall ever attending anything like that. What I remember with great nostalgia are the moonlight walks on Friday nights to places like the mineral baths at Rockfort after leaving the tram terminus on Windward Road, or from Papine to Kintyre Scout Camp via the Hope River. How amazing - and how marvellous - to think that there actually was a time when anyone could walk in such places after dark without any fear of danger! It is indeed tragic to consider that nowadays no adult, let alone youngsters at school, dare venture into some of those areas in the daytime, much less at midnight. In those days, the only concern we entertained was the fear of parental wrath if we missed last bus or last tram!

Even more popular were the end of term "socials" that were held at a different school each time. "Social" was the prevailing jargon for "dance". We had no live entertainment, of course, but either the host school or one of the Sixth Formers would provide a radio and

turntable, while many of us would bring large numbers of our personal (78 rpm) records. What memories the titles of those old discs conjure up! Frenesi, Begin the Beguine, Tuxedo Junction, String of Pearls ... One particular memory of those socials however, (fortunately unwitnessed by anyone) still makes me blush: the night at Wolmer's Girl School when I found myself in the washroom looking for the urinals!

My father had always been involved in Scouting, and I became a keen scout myself. At first I had to belong to an outside Troop as Scouting at J.C. had become defunct; however I was instrumental in reviving it when I got into Fifth Form, and under the leadership of an expatriate American Scoutmaster, our little group flourished. I became Troop Leader when I got into the Sixth, and I have many happy memories of hikes in the Blue Mountains and summer camps at the Roaring River estate on the north coast.

Once we reached the Sixth, a very definite sea change took place. This was even more evident once we went into 6A or became prefects. There was a difference in the attitude of small boys towards us, and interestingly, a difference in our attitude towards them. It was as if we had acquired an aura commanding respect with a corresponding compulsion to protect the younger boys that was really rather touching. There was also a marked difference in the way we were treated by the masters. It was a foretaste, though we didn't know it then, of the relationship that those of us who moved on to higher halls of learning would shortly establish with the professors and lecturers in those places.

When I first went into the Sixth, the time came for me to choose the subjects that I would take for my Higher School's Certificate. This presented an awkward problem, for to coin a phrase, I was neither fish nor fowl. From the age of seven, it had been drilled into me by my grandmother and a grand aunt that I should become a doctor, and that's where I was headed, for better or for worse. This was ridiculous, for although I might have had the ambition to be a great surgeon, I certainly didn't have the stomach for it.

No matter: I was going to do medicine, *ergo* Chemistry had to be one of my two majors. Obviously, Biology or Physics should have been my other major, but therein lay my dilemma. English was certainly my *forte*, and I had won first place in that subject in my Fifth Form year. Moreover, my love for the language was such that I had no intention of

giving it up, whatever the cost. And so it came to pass that I prepared for Higher Schools majoring in English and Chemistry, with History and Maths as my subsidiary
subjects. At the time, I liked to think of my choice as being ecclectic; now, I realize it was just weird! Even more weird was the fact that for my second try, this would-be physician dropped Maths in favour of Latin! The truth is that I was a classicist masquerading in a scientist's body, and it wasn't until I relinquished the pursuit of this path a dozen years too late, that I found contentment in my career and a small measure of success.

Meanwhile, however, I began to revel in a newer, more mature appreciation of English literature. For the first time I was on intimate terms with Milton, Tennyson, Keats. I began to devour the less celebrated but just as important authors like Fielding, Thackeray, Collins. I moved on to contemporary literature with some disdain, but growing appreciation for Maugham, Hemmingway, Lawrence. (But I must admit I baulked at Joyce; I did try, but I will have to accept that his talent is genuine as an article of faith in more knowledgeable critics that myself - not through conviction.)

By the time my three years in the Sixth came to an end, I would have been happy to have become a student of the classics for the rest of my life. Perhaps this was partly due to a naturally indolent disposition, but certainly I would have been thrilled at the prospect of spending a lifetime in the fields of Academia.

This of course, was not to be. At the end of 1949, the curtain fell on my school career, and, the antithesis of Shakespeare's whining schoolboy "creeping like a snail unwillingly to school", I reluctantly said goodbye to the institution that would forever hold a very special place in my heart.

The annexe with the Crow's Nest on the right and Hardie House in the background.

VII
LAST DAY

"And we go - go - go away from here!
On the other side the world we're overdue!"
- The Feet of the Young Men (Rudyard Kipling)

And so it came to pass that I was finally to go out into the wider world.

So many clear memories of my last day at school flood back. A mass assembly of the whole school at the steps of the Main Building, where in the shadow of the Tower, colours were handed out to those who had achieved the honour of representing J.C. in the field of sport on the first division teams. My heart swelled with pride to receive "half colours" for cricket, hockey and shooting. So it wasn't the top-of-the-line award - what matter? I could now legitimately replace the gold coloured griffin on my blazer pocket with the school's full coat of arms!

The two massive ficusberry trees formed a fitting backdrop to these ceremonies. Their gnarled roots ran all over the place, and the thick foliage gave a welcome shade from the hot midday sun. I think of those trees often. In fact, they spring to the mind's eye whenever any mention of the school is made. An old legend has it that Jamaica College will flourish as long as the ficus trees last, but with their demise, the school's fortunes would suffer. I believe some time ago, the trees did indeed perish, and there were reports of the school's reputation being sadly blemished; perhaps there is some truth in the legend. However that may be, it was heartening for me to observe on a recent visit to the island, that two young ficus trees have sprung anew and give promise of one day reaching the same giant proportions of their predecessors. I am as certain that J.C. will recapture her former pride and glory, and from all accounts, she is well on the way to doing so!

I remember that last day observing with disdain, a boy openly smoking a cigarette under the ficus trees, secure in the knowledge that in a couple of hours he would be beyond the reach of any disciplinary action. H.C. passed by within two yards of him without so much as a glance in his direction. Now *that* was cool!

I remember too, taking a final walk throughout the whole compound, drinking in the sights and sounds in every part of the school, as if I could store them up to last me for the rest of my life.

There was the gymnasium: a magnificent hall full of exercise equipment like medicine balls, a pommel horse, parallel bars, boxing bag – the lot. And just outside, the lovely swimming pool which was so popular especially after games in the evenings. Of course, while in the vicinity, there was the chance to drop in to the Tuck Shop in a groundfloor room at the eastern end of the annexe for a final taste of that best of all treats – the tuppence bar of chocolate-vanilla fudge!

Next, a quick visit to the "new buildings" down by the Lower Fields which housed the majority of the Lower School form rooms. A look in at the Biology and Chemistry Labs, and the small Infirmary tucked away to the north of them near the viaduct running behind the school. Then it was back to Simms House where I made a special trip up through the trapdoor entrance into the Tower to spend a wistful minute or two looking down on the place I had learned to love so passionately.

But I had another, more romantic reason for visiting the lofty garret. During the previous year, I had written a poem of what *I* considered epic proportions, in which I described J.C. as I expected to see it "forty years on". I was inordinately proud of it, and so was my Dad. He submitted it to the local British Council, and they in turn passed it on to the B.B.C. On April 3, l949, excerpts of it were read on the programme "Caribbean Voices" in the World Service of the B.B.C. Two weeks later, I received a cheque in the mail for the magnificent sum of three guineas - my first ever publication fee! Such was my conceit, that I secreted a copy of the poem atop a beam in the ceiling of the Tower, imagining that some future generation would uncover it and treat it with the reverence they might give to the contents of a time capsule! Alas for my dreams: I am certain that the paper on which it was written has long since fallen prey to termites or rodent predators. Or perhaps it still lies hidden and undiscovered ...?

And finally, my last stroll across Holy Ground, observing with patronizing forbearance the eager, holiday-anxious small boys jostling each other in the rush to get to their places for the final Chapel Service of the term and the year. I can remember the mellow tones of the organ as E.V. played some ambitious prelude he had learned during his last post-graduate course at Cambridge, while the boys and masters trooped in to take their places.

I remember thinking what marvellous recollections of the Chapel I would take with me. (For no particular reason, a memory from Third Form days springs to mind: at the first Chapel service of the new term when announcements were being made, I suddenly had an unexpected moment in the spotlight. The Head instructed all boys to advise their parents that the item on their bills charging sixpence opposite the entry "Levy", indicated that a “levy” was being imposed for the purpose of paying for all the unattributable breakages during the previous term - not to start a benevolent fund for Levy!)

Seven years on, I was to return to St. Dunstan’s Chapel to exchange marriage vows with the girl who became my wife. Little did I dream at the time that this would have been the case, but for me it proved to be the perfect venue.

From my place in the prefects' stall at the back of the Chapel, I sang more lustily and fervently than I ever had before, notwithstanding the dichotomy I was experiencing - eager to go forth into a brave new world, but wishful to return to the happy one I was leaving.

The last verse of the final hymn was never more meaningful for me:

"Let Thy Father-hand be shielding
All who here shall meet no more;
May their seed-time past be yielding
Year by year a richer store;
Those returning
Make more faithful than before."

Valete!

The Karl Hendrickson Auditorium

- Photo by T. Evans

The Herbert (Chabba) Edwards Memorial Library

Main Building – Simms House

JAMAICA COLLEGE REVISITED

Say! Do the griffins yet bestride the Tower?
And do they yet retain their ancient power?
Is work still burning on the plains below,
Spreading far and wide its cheery glow?
Ah, yes! Still stands the College, still I see
Each hedge, each shrubbery and each verdant tree.
No signs of ruin here, no bald decay,
Though scores, nay, thousands all have passed this way.
Unchanged the old school stands the test of age,
Of Nature and her elementary rage.
Here still good Virgil may a refuge find,
And all who share with him the classic mind.
Here dwell the spirits of the poet-bards
Of whose great fame we are the jealous guards.
A Chaucer or a Spenser yet may rise
From this fair place. Mayhap there dormant lies
A mighty talent in some teeming mind,

And though unrecognized by this unkind
And vulgar world, yet may there come a time
In some bright sphere or some ethereal clime
Wherein that soul may claim a place among
A noble and elite immortal throng.

The good years treasure up each memory sweet
Kept safe from cruel Time's relentless feet.
Each aging wall recalls old sights and scenes
Forever lost to human eyes. Still leans
The restless ficus boughs against the Tower,
Where shaded by the dark and leafy bower
The old grey ghosts of younger days still rove.
At dusk they flitter forth and silent move
Through all the long and gloomy passages
Like listless souls of long-departed sages;
There, ghostly laughter of an older set
And whispers through the darkness echo yet.
The murmuring breezes waft them here and there
Complaining softly in the haunted air.
All grey and stark the silent buildings stand
While up above them, like some giant hand,
Hover the sombre clouds whose threatening mein
Lend sterner aspect to the solemn scene.
Beyond, Blue Mountain's mighty ranges rise
Outlined against the darkening evening skies.
There the first symbols of the dawn appear –
From thence Apollo, leaping from his lair,
First rears his hoary head above the clouds
When day once more draws back the night's dark shrouds:
Fresh hopes and aspirations spring anew
To cheer us on, perchance, or make us rue ...
Meanwhile the west grows grey, a shadow falls,
And idly plays upon the scarred walls;
The shapes and phantoms flitter all about
And romp within the classrooms and without,
Where lately cut and swept the grass grows green,
Unheeded, umolested and unseen.

The term is out: now one and all have gone,
And only I am left to brood alone;
Alone, save for these spirits of the past,
And with them now my lot I gladly cast.

Here stands the Hall whose honoured walls display
The names of those who will, long after they
Have run their earthly course, remain to be
An inspiration to posterity -
To those who otherwise might be like some
Who thought their tasks too trying and tiresome,
And frittered by the few (now precious) years
While those achievements which might have been theirs
Go to the credit of more studious friends.
Alas! They missed the road which upward wends
Its way to dizzy heights of knowledge bright,
Where spring the streams of learning and of light.

The sound of speech and laughter all else drowns,
*And from his frame the old Archdeacon frowns.**
Succeeding generations here have shared
The joys of those on noble Virgil reared.

**** A portrait of former Headmaster Archdeacon Simms used to hang in the Hall***

Have not our minds, to flights of fancy fled,
Recalled the souls of heroes from the dead
And shared with them the doughty deeds of fame
Which with untainted glory crowned each name? –
Great Trojan Aeneas, and the brave Nisus,
Companion to the fair Euryalus;
Aletes, "ripe in judgement, bowed with years",
Moved by the daring of the two to tears,
Himself an able warrior and skilled;
Latin Volcens by Hertacides killed -
Or those who their delight in Horace found,
And Cicero with loudest praise have crowned;
Here too has Shakespeare's genius lived again,
And gems from the immortal Keats's pen
Have wasted been on youthful Philistines –
Save when some errant ray an aesthete finds.

Re-echo still familiar voices here,
Of those whose once dread mein we now hold dear,
Which often in correction they would raise,
Though sometimes softening they might sink to praise;
Their stinging satire passed unheeded by
Our undiscerning mind's ingenuous eye,
Until, maturing, we ourselves one day
The cynic's role endeavoured to portray;
Men of great wisdom, awesome dominies,
Who introduced us to the mysteries
Of Euclid's learned science; and he too,
Who tried our unromantic hearts to woo
Unto his own dear passions - Byron, Keats,
Wordsworth and Shelley, Tennyson and Yeats;
He whose stern visage chilled each trembling heart
E'en as we vainly strove to learn the art
Of conjugating French irregulars,
Or how to round our "o"s and roll our "r"s.
The rod which once belaboured our behinds
Have left their mark now only on our minds:
The tempered steel of character is made –

Forgotten now the fire and furnace fade.

Hardby the Chapel stands:
Its hallowed walls retain each fervent prayer,
And every voice in praise uplifted there.
At eve the air is filled with soothing strains,
Harmonious and sad, sweet soft refrains.
Hushed are the voices of the vulgar crowd,
And stilled the rude sounds of the day, whose loud
Notes have, as fades with setting sun day's light,
Merged with the sweeter noises of the night.
Within, a human choir its vespers sings,
Without, a nightingale with folded wings,
Perched high upon the eucalyptus tree
Pours forth his happy evening melody,
In joyful hymns and psalms of adoration
Unto the Lord and Master of creation.
Here learned we all the tenets of our creed,
Here came to know the life that's life indeed.

St. Dunstan's sanctuary

About, a garden grows - ah! blessed plot!
For here secluded and remote may not
The vagrant or uneasy mind find rest
And soothing balm to salve an aching breast?
Here sitting quiet on the pleasant sod,
Away from mundane things, alone with God,
A sweet respite the burdened soul may share,
And breathe a quickening breath of rarer air.

The aged ficusberry trees remain,
Their thick grey trunks unscathed by wind or rain,
Two mighty emblems of the grand old school -
A symbol of tradition and of rule,
Which through the years, unshaken and yet firm,
Endure from year to year, from term to term.
How many generations have they seen
Disport themselves upon the college green?
Those verdant grassy fields of play whereon,
Like Eton's, were great future battles won.
Betwixt the trees the Tower rises up,
Where, sitting sphinx-like on the very top
The griffins stand their never-ending guard,
Zealous as warriors of some regal ward;
By day and night their faithful watch they keep,
With cold stone eyes that never close in sleep.
On constant watch, below upon the ground
They see each day the common daily round.
The legend runs: while Tower and Griffins last,
And while the mighty ficus trees stand fast,
No harm Jamaica College e'er shall see.
But glorious thrive, victorious, noble, free!

Beneath the Tower the old main steps are seen.
Here we our colours have received, and been
Applauded by the noisy, cheering throng
Like heroes out of story or of song.
They lead into the vestibule, and there
Upon each wall the notice boards lie bare,
Save for one piece of paper left behind

That flutters idly in a gentle wind.
On either side there lies a dining room
And there our daily bread we would consume.
There shared the hash, the roast, the mince and pie
Famed for all ages in our battle-cry.
The clang of clashing cutlery one hears
Amid the clatter of the noisy chairs;
And too the ceaseless chatter of the crowd
Like buzz of bees, continuous and loud.
Here were the bonds of friendship firmly forged
E'en as our greedy appetites we gorged –
True comrades sworn no matter what befall:
Ever all for one and one for all!

Down through the years we hear the old school bell:
Its peal of welcome or its farewell knell
Just like some muezzein at close of day
Calling upon the faithful ones to pray;
Or like the horn of Cudjoe, at whose blast,
Across Blue Mountain's hills and gorges vast
Awakening eerie echoes, rallies round
Ten score Maroons, who summoned by the sound,
Prepare to fight, obedient unto death,
Unflinching even with their latest breath.
So doth each chime upon our hearts impress
Anew each time a sense of faithfulness,
Which bids us with contented hearts and proud,
Shout "Fervet opus in campis" aloud;
Urging us on the while, with might and main
To implement the motto we proclaim.

But now the Muse of Art perforce must pause,
As nearer now another figure draws:
It is the Seer of Science, cold and gray,
And both must join to sing a common lay.
For not alone a Plato casts his spells
About these precincts, for there also dwells
The ghost of Aristotle in this place
Urging us his calling to embrace.

Also beneath the spreading ficus leaves
The two laboratories one perceives.
Within their walls amidst a galaxy
Of all the elements of chemistry,
Amidst its pungent, evil-smelling fumes,
The young and vibrant flower of Science blooms.
Here many a future scientist was bred
By one whose hand has all unwitting led
So many students to devote their lives
To poor humanity where famine thrives,
Or dread disease takes such a fearful toll:
Their names are written on an Honour Roll.

Look! See the gymn where we were wont to sweat,
For therein were our double functions met:
"Mens sana in corpore sano." Health -
(Is that not greater far than worldly wealth?)
And Wisdom hand in hand combined conduce
A worthier type of citizen to produce.
Lithe figures, glistening with a beady sweat,
Their brows with healthy perspiration wet,
On agile feet hard exercises there
Performed with zeal and unaffected cheer.
Their carefree minds no troubles did beset,
Nor any outside cares or worries - yet.
The swimming pool also lies close at hand,
Where of an evening many an eager band
Would spend the sunny hours joyfully
In splashing there with unconcerned glee.
If only those sweet hours could return!
Nor any unpleasant memory would I spurn:
For what if prickles grow upon the briar?
Doth that the rose's lovely beauty mar?

O for a means by which I might transcend
These natural confines, and thus freed could wend
A path through time, and passing from this plane
Return to live those youthful days again!

I could once more adopt the former life
Unfettered by old chains of hate and strife;
Then would I be content when I behold
The bliss of man's estate, unlike of old
When adult joys and recreations too
Seduced the puerile hearts of striplings who
Could not perceive that underneath the gloss
There only lay an alloy, base and gross.
But soft! Why should I wish in vain; such things,
Such thoughts are merest fantasies on wings,
Which like the arrow sped does not come back,
And only empty memories to wrack
With a sadistic joy the hapless mind,
Alone are left in bitterness behind.
So I shall cease me now from vain regret
And shun these useless pinings which beget
The mockery of Fate, since no man can
Return and so resume where he began.
And yet my heart is full of gratitude
For this old school whose ancient walls and rude
Now rise before my sad and yearning eyes,
And from my lips involuntary sighs
Escape; for here within this small but happy world
My ship was launched with all its sails unfurled,
Equipped for life and set upon its way
Towards those shores where promised landfalls lay.

... And so, as darkness falls and starlight gleams
Upon the shadowed roofs, to me it seems
That old school songs come floating on the air
To wake the echoes ringing loud and clear,
And join with them to form a noble lay,
When night is past, to welcome in the day!

A SCHOOL SONG
FOR
JAMAICA COLLEGE
(Tune: St. Dunstan)

Once again we come together
In these halls of learning here,
Duty calls, and swift we answer
Voices ringing loud and clear.
Brothers who have gone before us
Join our chorus now we pray,
Help us to extol the glories
Of our cherished school today.

Refrain:
Onward and upward Jamaica College,
May your sons all fear dismiss,
As we proudly shout our motto:
"Fervet opus in campis."

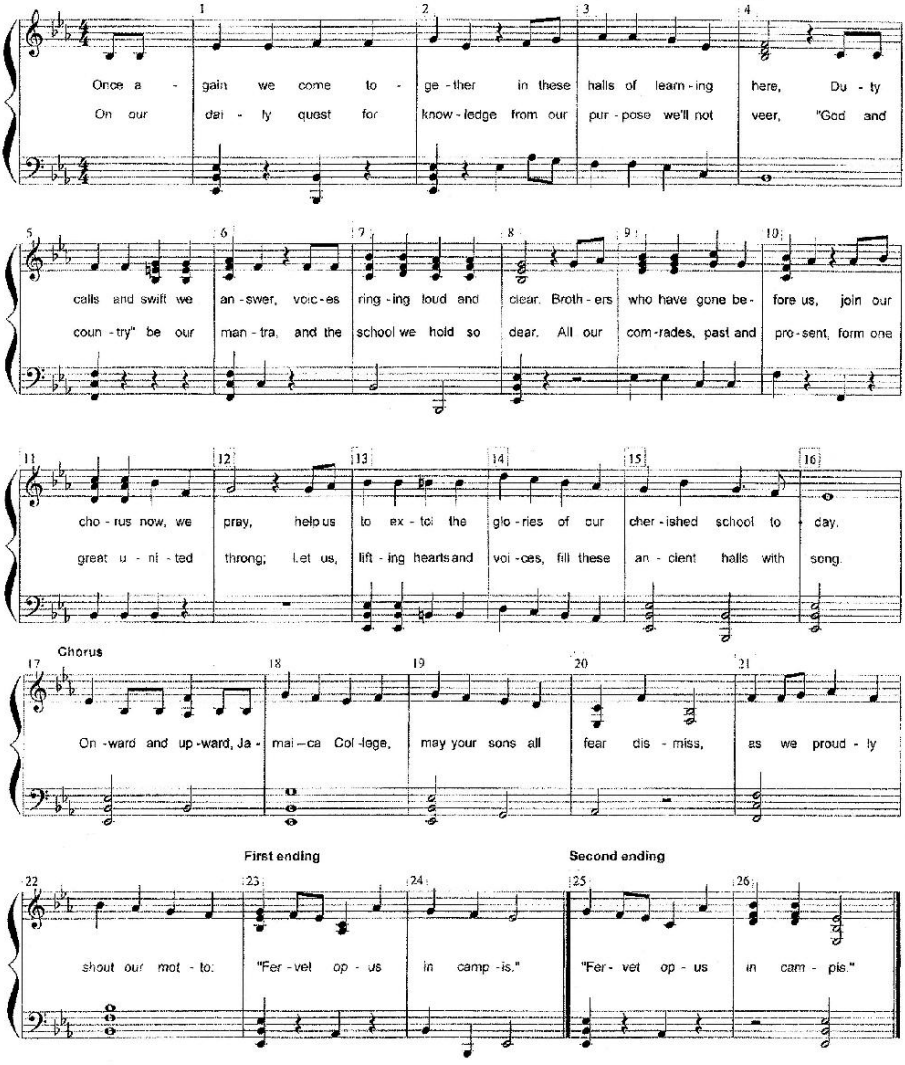
On our daily quest for knowledge
From our purpose we'll not veer,
"God and country" be our mantra,
And the school we hold so dear.
All our comrades, past and present
Form one great united throng;
Let us lifting hearts and voices
Fill these ancient halls with song.

Refrain:
Onward and upward Jamaica College,
May your sons all fear dismiss,
As we proudly shout our motto:
"Fervet opus in campis."

JAMAICA COLLEGE SONG

Tune: St. Dunstan

Charles Levy



Ottawa, ON, Canada. November 4, 2011

A SCHOOL HYMN

(Tune: Dimissal)

God of Heaven, be our Father,
Bless this school we humbly pray;
When before thy throne we gather
At thy feet our hearts we lay;
Be thou near us
In our work and in our play.

For this college, Lord, we thank thee
And for brethren gone before,
Praise thee for thy tender mercies,
Serve and love thee more and more;
For our Founders
Lord, thy name we do adore.

Guard our heritage we pray thee
And the ideals we uphold;
All who here have served and praised thee,
Father keep within thy fold;
Make thy servants
Ever faithful, true and bold.

Thus we pray thee, be thou gracious,
Teach our hearts to do thy will;
And when wider service calls us,
When our places others fill,
Then, O Father,
Bless Jamaica College still.

Mr. & Mrs. A. H. C. Packer

request the pleasure of the company of

---

at the marriage of their daughter

Vivienne Allison

to

Mr. Charles Ellis Levy

at

The Jamaica College Chapel ..

on

Saturday, November 3rd, 1956

at 5.00 p.m.

and afterwards to the reception at

"Chelstone"

37 Half-way Tree Road.

R.S.V.P.

37 Half-way Tree Road,

Cross Roads.