

## Chapter 4

### Commentary on School Life

*I can never understand why so called educationalists think that they can set down hard and fast rules concerning the schooling of children as a child's mind is such a complex mechanism. I personally found that sympathetic teachers brought me along twice as fast. I wanted to learn and the teachers who knew what they were about, understood.*

*Schooling at the Payne Smith was, except for Miss Brown, no fun at all and directed only to turning out boys to pass scholarships. Corporal punishment was the only answer to indiscretion, thus the timid, not so bright boys must have been miserable and frightened.*

*The Council School was different. The boys in general were all rough but had more fun. A typical example was when the police sent a ticket for boys of eleven to attend a party. Our class spent all one afternoon engaged on a competition to see which boy would go. Mr Bridgeman dreamed this one up. Whether it was because he knew I could attend properly dressed or whether it was an honest result, I do not know but I won and, although I was easily the best fed boy in the class, I went and enjoyed myself; no-one appeared to be jealous as I remember it.*

*I could run very well, but could not fight so when we played Cowboys and Indians, I could never be a cowboy because I could not fight, however I could be an Indian Chief because I could run; the cowboys had lots of fun chasing me. When it came to fights, I took part because I was afraid to walk away. I wore glasses at that time to prevent headaches, but pride stopped me taking them off to fight so I broke them, or had them broken, at frequent intervals.*

*The advocates of Corporal Punishment should remind themselves that it should be very selective in order to be effective and not a general cure all.*

*With regard to sex, I cannot recall anyone talking about it or, as far as I know, even thinking about it at that stage. There was no instruction and we would not have known the word Biology.*

*The language used at the Council School by a large proportion of the boys was dreadful but it was only what they had heard at home and no-one thought any less of those who did not swear.*

*I never regretted going to the Council School. I developed there a love of painting, a sound basic knowledge of algebra and got to rub shoulders with kids from very poor homes. More of that in later chapters. Neither did I seem to lose anything by being kept away from school for long periods as previously mentioned.*