



On April 26th, 1927, about 90 little boys, "wick", inquisitive and a bit bewildered, assembled in part of a former Sheffield workhouse to start a new Grammar School. Our acting Head governed another School a mile away; the present writer was in charge on the spot, sharing most of the teaching with H.E.C., F.P. and C.H.B. (later, City Organist). We occupied a mere fraction of the premises; and, as we 'plied our trade', listened to the clanging, thudding or scraping of hammers, picks and shovels "and all kinds of music", including the sweet strains of a concrete-mixer and the crash of an occasional falling tree. F.P. carried round on his shoulder, a thing like a young 5-barred gate, hung with mechanics apparatus; he also raised seedlings, for Nature Study, in the Common Room. Luckily, the merry spring-time favoured his labours. H.E.C., energetic and resourceful, was invaluable in getting things done. Small wonder that, in after years, he directed, successively, a Training College, a Grammar School and a 'Comprehensive'. At the end of term, we concocted reports and drew up a mark-list; and the Chief came down and read the latter to the multitude — causing palpitations by beginning at the bottom!

We had no piano, alas; and so, I listened apprehensively, each morning, to my 'naked' undistinguished voice leading the hymn. I had never comfortably topped 'D' — yet I 'soldiered on', casting despairing glances at my colleagues' well-controlled countenances, in which sympathy vied with unmistakable relish! An earnest child said, one day: 'Please, sir, shall we have *perfects* in this School next year?' I protested that they didn't show signs of being as good as all that! Our first full-time Head arrived; and turned out to be my own former School cricket captain, L.S. He reigned agreeably and understandingly amongst us before rapid promotion elsewhere. W.R. succeeded him. Short, sturdy in body, and mind, a fine chemist and practical



organiser, (described by a friend as a 'regular little lion'), he completed our first shaping and saw us through our first General Inspection in 1932. But he died suddenly, in August 1935, just after receiving plans for new buildings. These were twice post-poned and finally "killed" by the War. Rather astonished I found myself succeeding him — not hoping to equal his administrative ability and worldly experience, or his predecessors intellectual powers or insight. I had, however, 'grown up' with the School and the Staff; and was not disappointed in their wonderful support and friendship. Impossible to acknowledge fittingly what they achieved in those cramped surroundings. A.H., brilliant language teacher, whose direct-method lessons to backward forms I watched as one watches a copywriter; G.W.W. a scholarly, yet intensively practical, mathematician — whom 'sinners' always found 3 moves ahead of them; fertile in ideas, and spreading unity in School and Common Room by his unshakeable good humour and blunt, lively comments. What a joy for me, on retiring, that he could succeed me; and that A.H., so comparable with him, could take command of another School in the old buildings, "When Nether Edge went to Abbey Dale!" I could mention so many more — but the line would "stretch out to the crack of doom"!

The War tossed us about, of course. Turned out of our buildings by the military, we 'set up' in the helpful Montgomery Chapel and taught little groups all over the City. There was, one day, a wholesale Removal to the Chapel. It was like Noah's Ark all over again. O.R. remarked to me drily how sadly reduced was the importance of *The Subjunctive* in such days as these". Reaching the top of the staircase together, amid soldiers, boys, floating furniture, what-not, we saw, with wonder, a high-ranking officer of the usurping unit go full-length over a cloakstand! The air filled with brimstone; but when the august tread had died away, a humble head appeared round a near-by door. "'As 'e gorn?" We nodded, breathless. "Ah wish 'e'd brokken 'is (some sort of) neck!"

What can I say of the crowds of boys who flowed through the School in those days? We still meet some of them and yearn to recognise them without having to be told their names. A few have won academic, or high professional, status; some are known in municipal work; others - "salt of the earth", go on in those vital 'ordinary' jobs, without which the bottom would drop out of things. What a pleasure to recognise in a new boy his well-marked family features! "Can you put a name to *this*, Mr. Smith?" "Oh, yes, it can only be C"! How we relished the sight of the first son of an Old Boy amongst us; (accompanied, too, by his father!). How real the satisfaction of finding scope for abilities better than one's own; or for some character of sterling value. How one remembers, too, boys whose school performance was very limited, but whom one liked and respected. Such a one was A.D., repeatedly bottom in his year, who met us again after the war, a sensible young man, usefully and responsibly employed and with a quiet and charming wife. Finally, how splendid to see the School as it is, well housed and equipped, still staffed by keen and friendly colleagues and led by a gentleman whose kindness to me I must always acknowledge. I shall say nothing of 'comprehensiveness'. One must be cautious about arguing with a river in spate!

This is, I fear, a most inadequate screech, marked by yawning, ragged gaps. But one feels baffled by the surge of events and memories over those years which one cannot condense into a neat shape. But one far greater than most of us called himself "a citizen of no mean City"; and I rejoice to have been a member of this live and ever-developing community — whose days I once shared; and memories of which will still give joy to me when, perhaps, only a few things can.

H. S. Smith.