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The Westminster Play.

Two things there are which a Westminster never forgets—a "tanning" and the "Play." As to the former, how well I can remember, when a "Junior," having once, in my hurry to get home on a Saturday, forgotten to make provision of a certain necessary article for Sunday consumption, and being summoned on Monday morning, after twelve o'clock school, to appear before an outraged "Senior." Taking off my gown at the door of the Upper Election Room (no Junior is allowed to enter it with his gown on), I usher myself into the presence of the Captain, Mr. —, the Senior, who had sent for me, and two or three other "Upper Elections." A *wire* lies ominously on the table; the Captain smiles and turns his back to the fire, lifting the tails of his gown so as not to impede the heat in its progress to his person—a heat somewhat different from that which was to shed its kindly (?) and correcting rays upon my own person!

M. — speaks, demanding the reason of such criminal negligence. "I—I—I thought"—"You thought! Di Superi!! He thought!!!" glancing round the group with indignation in every feature, "Don't you know, sir, that a Junior should never think?" I am dumb. The Captain shrugs his shoulders, mutters something and nods in reply to the inquiring glance of M. —.

"Touch toes, sir?" says the latter in a voice of thunder. Down goes the luckless Junior and down comes the *wire*!

Had you ever experienced, in the position described as "touching toes," and with a jacket which reached no further than the band of your breeches, half-a-dozen strokes dealt with the handle of a "wire" by a man somewhat over six feet, whose arm reached well down towards the knee, you would agree with me when I say that a "tanning" is not to be forgotten. I never thought again!

Those experiences formed part of our training as much as the Play, and it came to be play after we got well versed in arranging *foveas* in such a manner as to escape detection!

Four of Terence's plays used to be acted in succession. *The Eunuchus*, *The Phormio*, *The Andria*, and *The Adelphi*. Latterly, *The Præsumptus* of Plautus was substituted for the first mentioned, as a concession to public taste, though by no means its equal either in plot or spirited dialogue. The play for 1873 was *The Phormio*, but before we examine into it let us see what are the preparations.

The play of the year forms a subject of study in the school for that term,—September to Christmas—and, the parts having been duly assigned to the different Seniors (for it is they who act the play), and such Third Elections as are necessary to complete the caste, numerous rehearsals are held by the masters.

Lively times have the prompter and call-boys during the months of preparation, and not a little abuse if they do not come up to the mark. After much trouble all is ready and the Dress Rehearsal comes off. All the masters are present, and little or no work is done in College that night. But I am anticipating.

Let us go, in imagination, to the school about four weeks before the Play is presented to the public. Crossing the Broad Sanctuary, we pass the elegant monument erected to the memory of the Westminster scholars who died in the Crimée,—a noble list of names with the motto, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*"—in under the arch to Dean's Yard, where we shall probably find a game of football going on in "green." Let us stop and watch for a moment. No "Rugby Rules" there—no hand but the goal-keeper's ever touches the ball—no tripping or hacking, only "shunting" with the shoulder. "A dull game!" Not at all. A very pretty game and exciting withal. Could you but see the great match of the year against Charter House. There is L——, one of the best of the Eleven, with the ball; see how skillfully he "dribbles" it past fifty pairs of opposing legs and as many ready shoulders, and makes a periously straight kick for goal. But "Farmer," the goal-keeper of the Eleven, is there and catches it cleverly and sends it spinning toward the other end of "green!"

Turning to our left we enter Cloisters, pass the Dean's house, College Hall and the Jerusalem Chamber, then by "Milling Green," as we call the green in the middle of Cloisters where all the fights take place under the sacred shadow of the "Abbey(!)"; up to the right, past the Choristers' school, and Little Cloisters into Little Dean's Yard. Here are the masters' boarding-houses—"Grant's" and "Regaud's," as they are called—and the racquette courts. That arch to the left with so many names deeply cut in the stones, is the school door—the long building against whose side they are playing "wires," is College. Crossing the "wooden" * court we enter College, and glancing into the Upper and Under Election Rooms, where we sit and study, ascend to the Dormitory, a long, lofty and rather narrow room divided by wooden partitions into forty "houses," twenty on a side. Up the passage, it is said, our predecessors could pour water and make a slide during the winter; now, however, it is well warmed with hot-water pipes. The walls are covered with names, some of them famous, and on black tablets are the names of the Captains of the school, and the dates of their years. No small honour and only won after a year of tough work and weeks of examinations called "Challenges."

Here then they are preparing for the Play. The "houses,"

*These are the names of racquettes. The "wire" has a blade made of gut, tightly stretched over a light wooden frame, the handle being long and slender. The "wooden" is solid and shorter, and larger balls are used with it.