

# The Gatesgill Chronicle and Raughton Gazette.

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SEPTEMBER, 1883

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## (DIS)ORDER IN THE CLASSROOM

*Who says disruptive pupils are a 21st Century phenomenon? Here's an account of 19th Century schoolboy 'japes' that first appeared in the **Gatesgill Chronicle and Raughton Gazette** of September 1883. No clue as to the author's identity exists apart from his nom de plume, Rip Van Winkle. So be it, he has a delightful turn of phrase and was clearly taught something at school, although respect for his Elders and Betters wasn't one of them. Incidentally, as this essay was written well before any thought of political correctness had entered people's heads, readers of a sensitive disposition may not wish to proceed beyond this point*

## A SCHOOL EPISODE

*By an old Boy*

Gentle reader (of ye OLDEN time) and most excellent Editor be merciful unto me a Sinner; for this MS is likely to prove - voluminous. My tale relates to the first year of tuition (?) at Carmalts; a true, most veracious history, which plants me in a great difficulty of condensation. One month precedent to our Midsummer Holidays two of the former School Pupils obtained high honours at Cambridge; I was informed that they *wrangled* better than other candidates: why do not the women try? An entire holiday was always accorded on such occasions, but Carmalt happening to be in an ill humour refused our application and a "Barring out" was instantly determined on. Unanimity prevailed. The first classes took the initiative; an experienced Teacher was elected, and it indeed required a cool head to conduct such a serious campaign. The first three Classes deliberated and it was resolved (nem con) that when the French Master was next on duty, the row should commence. This Johnny could not understand one word of English. Hence our decision. One Edward Shaw (fifth class) commonly called Daddy Shaw (an Elder in looks), was detailed as forlorn hope. He was directed (as the clock struck 8 pm) to shy his slate at the master's head, signal for the pioneers to barricade all entrances after the frog's exit; and here I must remark that the most perilous business always devolved on the lower forms. The eventful Evening arrived -at half past seven prayers began as usual- a Boy, in mid-School, read out the accustomed matter,-when a sudden freak occurred. From every form at conclusion of the first prayer came-Amen! H'Amen, &c. &c., and so general was the outburst that no delinquent could be fixed. But the Frenchman was equal to the occasion. He summoned one L'Etang (a colored boy) to his aid, and directed him to

tell the School, if they persisted in interrupting prayers, -he would immediately inform Monsr. Carmalt. L'Etang executed his orders as follows "Messieurs-that is to say-Ladies and Gentlemens (tremendous guffaw) Monsieur instructs me to inform you; that if you continue these Amens he will certainly inform Monsr. Carmalt, signed A J Jericho-Westry Clerk (Clerk to the Parish-*Ed.*) The roar of laughter had hardly subsided when the fated hour arrived and Shaw's slate went sheer at the Frenchman's *Caput*, a slate *sans* frame, and had not Johnny Frog ducked low, he would never have done the state more service. He escaped and fled with a howl to the upper regions, while we barricaded instanter. One Snookes (a carpenter's son) was very clever at this business. The School held pupils from a Lord's to a Butcher's son. It will be necessary to describe our Scholastic fortress. The School formed a lengthy and lofty structure with ventilators above. Three double doors were the only means of access or Egress. One opened on the School ground-a Second led directly to the dining room, and a third opened into the washing room or Lavatory. This last was instantly secured as water is essential to existence.. A small door opened from this into the dining Hall, but Snookes so glued and puttied this up that Artillery would have hardly reopened it. The next step was to elect a Grand Council of War-The first Class nominated three members-Second Class 2 members and third Class 1 member, an odd member being deemed advisable. The Vote was by ballot. On its instant assembly-they proceeded to name a Generalissimo or Dictator, their choice falling on one "Gomm"-to the instant disgust of his senior L'Etang, and also of Hulks (my quondam Guardian). They next appointed a commissariat, as boys must live. We had previously secured two large baskets of bread. A subscription was decreed, which indeed became a forced loan, repayable at doomsday. The Council ordered a general shell out, and Tax Collectors inspected all pockets-from Fourth class downwards. I believe that the Head Boys bore a fair proportion of Expenses, but they were careful to seize all the best of the purchased Commodities, while we of the lower forms came near to Starvation point. Three boys of the fifth (perils again) were chosen as purveyors. They were directed to proceed down town and to buy the best advantage (as per list.) In case of failure a tremendous thrashing was promised. At this moment-came-a thundering kick at the School door-so violent-that we feared its downfall. Carmalt-a large tall man of gigantic strength had arrived in a towering passion, and demanded instant admission to "*His Premises.*" The boys were too clever to reply, and after a second kick; he condescended to ask "What was the matter?" A paper was drawn up concise and to the purpose "Whole Holiday and a general pardon to be signed by himself and witnessed by ushers." Thrust under the door I will not sully my page with C's Expletive as he flew up stairs to his study. We lowered our purveyors by ropes from the School wall and they made a fairly successful forage *on this occasion*. By a careful self denial we could clearly hold out for a week,-longer perchance, but that the three first classes had such exceptional appetites. The rebellion proceeded. We had various palavers with the under Masters and on one occasion with *Mrs C---* a School favourite: This was too dangerous and a ukase was issued, that no further communication should pass. I have already mentioned that jealousies and heart burnings arose on the elevation of General Gomm; Boys-I fear are naturally cruel. One "Wade" of the first class (called Cocky Wade) a sort of Game Cock-began the fray. He positively declared before the whole school that he knew the Christian name of Gomm's Sister! Let not the reader smile at this distance of time, I confess to astonishment at a charge so trivial; and I have often endeavoured (but in vain) to found an argument hereon. The Offence however was then scholastically High Treason: Gomm of course gave the lie direct without an "if" and Wade being called

upon to name-gave “Arabella.” It eventually transpired that he was correct, but a grand Ring was instantly formed, the Seconds and an Umpire chosen, and at it they went ding-dong. My young blood ran cold as I heard and saw the fearful blows inflicted. In the course of the Combat, a strange noise was heard in the Chimney, on which L’Etang ordered an immediate fire, as he felt a chill (hot Midsummer!) The disturbance however died away.-The spark (it seemed) flew upward, and we never discovered its cause. At the 20th round Cocky Wade surrendered, but positively declined to withdraw his “*Arabella*”, and the General, who was a dismal object, graciously waived the delicate point. About this period-the Daddy and Comrades executed a grand foray. One Beale a confectioner attended once a week with two huge baskets of Buns &c. &c.-and dispensed his delicacies to the Wealthy. The poor man was unaware of our position and he entered the dining hall with his accustomed bland Smile, but he left-a wiser, perhaps-a Sadder man, for the Daddy and Co.-seized and secured the whole safely in School. The Younkers met-however-with the usual fate, for the Head Class Cormorants devoured the entire convoy. True they passed great encomiums on Shaw and his Confederates, but fine words butter no Parsnips. I grieve to say that an ill fortune now began to lower-the Sun no longer shone. Our last purveyors failed! *failed* in obtaining fresh provisions and were moreover-captured by the authorities. The wails from the upper regions were heartrending. A Boy must eat or die. One last resource remained. We scaled (at Midnight) the garden wall and carried off the whole of Carmalt’s fruits. I shall not forget the prodigious grapes, but the sortie (tho successful) was unfortunate, as the Garden men,-laying purdue, listed the names of all the foragers. On the very next morning-fell the final and astounding blow. Carmalt had cut off the *Water*. There ranged the melancholy basins and somewhat dirty towels. The blow was crushing, and, after a futile attempt at parley, we surrendered. C. was a despot-no mercy on the vanquished. A Drumhead Court Martial was held-at the which he figured as General, Colonel and Counsel. As usual the most prominent Culprits escaped, and many a comparative Innocent was swished. This swishing was no joke-It took place somewhat below the small of the back, and I have seen more than one boy *faint* under the pain and loss of blood. On a review of this curious Campaign (60 years since) I conclude -that had Liebig’s tinned Meat and Zoedone then obtained; we might have postponed our Surrender sine die. Boys are exceedingly clever and cunning. Luckily for the Nation our Scholastic System (revolutionized by Arnold) is so vastly improved that no fear of revolt need be entertained for the future.

1883 RIP VAN WINKLE

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Note-The Editor need hardly repeat that Rip Van Winkle disapproves the conduct of his schoolfellows and does not recommend them as models.