

The School-Master in Literature
Louise Caroline Frederick.

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The school master plays an important part not only in real life but in literature, for it seems that the best writers vie with one another in drawing clear portraits of school masters.

Besides being interesting, these pictures have served to raise the standard

of schools in England and America. Dickens, realizing the deficiency of the English schools and their masters, portrayed the teacher of that time, of course exaggerated to a certain extent, in order that the eyes of the people might be opened to the inferior methods of discipline and instruction pursued in the common

schools of the day. He drew the picture of how poor little David Copperfield fared in the school at Salem House in the hands of Mr. Creakle, who declared himself to be a Tartar and proved by his actions to be no less. Dickens showed the public clearly that there could be no justice in such cruelty as the placing on little David's

back the placard with the inscription "Take care of him. He bites". In Nicholas Nickleby, Mr Drackford Squeers is principal of "Do-the-boys Hall"; again Dickens places a thoroughly incompetent man at the helm and shows the school, as well as the master to be frauds. Dickens varies his schools in "Old Curiosity

"Shop" by giving a "small day school for young ladies of proportionate dimensions". The general duties of instruction in this establishment were thus discharged. English grammar, composition, geography, and the use of dumb-bells, by Miss Melissa Drake; writing, arithmetic, dancing, music, and general facination,

by Miss Sophy Wackles; the art
of needle work, marking and
samplery by Miss Jane Wackles,
corporal punishment, fasting
and other tortures and terrors
by Mrs. Wackles." Another
school master is pictured in
this book, a teacher in the
village school; a pale, simple
looking old man, with a kind,
mann heart.

The school of Mr. Blimber in
Dorby and Son also called forth
his condemnation in no
unmistakable terms. It was
a boarding school for small
boys; and the pupils were
constantly reminded of their
defects by Mr. Blimber's maiden
sister, who took delight also
in discouraging them. Six
year old Paul Dorby entered

this school, and at this tender age was assigned for one lesson several pages of Latin to be memorized. There was one custom of the school, however, which if followed at the present day, might prove disastrous to many fond hopes. It was to issue at the end of the term an analysis of each pupil's char-

acter, given on the standard
 of ten. Suppose the retiring,
 modest Wesleyan girl should
 have an analysis sent to her
 ambitious parents, and
 amaze them with-

Love for studies - 3

Love for gymnasium - 2

Love for midnight feasts - 8

Love for April Fool Fun - 10 -

The poor girl may well thank
 Mr. Dickens for the great reform

he effected in the school system
of that day. In contrast to
the stern, cruel Mr. Blimber
is Ichabod Crane, the school
master portrayed by Washington
Irving in the charming sketch
of Sleepy Hollow. "He was tall,
but exceedingly lank, with
narrow shoulders, long arms
and legs, hands that dangled

a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together.

His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather cock perched upon his spindle neck to tell which way the

mind blew. To see him striding
along the profile of a hill on
a windy day, with his clothes
bagging and fluttering about
him, one might have mistaken
him for the genius of famine de-
scending upon the earth, or some
scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.
He was a good combination,
for besides being the school master,
he led the choir on the Sabbath,

was instructor in psalmody
and was also the village gossip.
After school hours, he visited
the old Dutch wives as they sat
spinning by the fire, and
delighted in startling them
with the "alarming fact that
the world did absolutely turn
around, and that they were
half the time topsy turvy!" On
the whole, Ichabod Crane was

an "odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity":

Thackeray, in his own inimitable style, slyly poked fun at Miss Pinkerton, the principal of a Seminary for young Ladies in *Vanity Fair*. Some idea of the character of the school can be gained from the following extract from a letter written to Amelia Sedley's parents -

"In geography, there is still much
to be desired; and a careful and
undenialing use of the black
board for four hours daily
during the next three years,
is recommended as necessary
to the acquirement of that
dignified deportment and carriage,
so requisite for every young lady
of fashion. Goldsmith, in

the Deserted Village gives a good
description of the school master.

"Beside your straggling fence that
skirts the way
with blossomed fuge unprofitably
gay,
There in his noisy mansion
skilled to rule,
The Village master taught his
little school.
A man severe he was, and
stem to view,
I knew him well, and very
truant knew,
Well had the lodging tremblers
learned to trace
The days disaster in his
mourning face,
Full well they laughed with
countersited glee

At all his jokes, for many a
 joke had he;
 Full well the busy whisper,
 circling round,
 Conveyed the dismal tidings
 when he frowned
 yet he was kind, or if severe
 in aught,
 The loss he bore ~~to~~ learning
 was in fault.
 The village all declared how
 much he knew
 'Twas certain he could write,
 and cipher too:
 Lands he could measure, tenners
 and tide passage,
 And e'en the story ran that he
 could gauge.
 In arguing too, the parson
 owned his skill,
 For e'en though vanquished,
 he could argue still
 While words of learned length
 and thundering sound

Amazed the gazing rustics
ranged around.
And still they gazed, and
still the wonder grew
That one small head could
carry all he knew.

Battle Massey in Adam Bede
was instructor of a night school
and wasted most of his energy
in trying to instil into the
minds of his pupils the principles
of addition. Rev. Walter Sletting
also came from the fertile
brain of George Eliot and appeared
in "Mill on the Floss". He was a

minister and at the same time
private tutor of Tom Tulliver. There
is much humor in his sayings,
and he was continually teasing
his timid pupil by asking such
questions as - "Now, Tulliver, which
had you rather decline, roast
beef or Latin?" and then delight
in laughing at Tom's embarrassment.

Whittier gives a good
picture of the "Brisk wielder
of the brick and rule, the master

of the District School" in Snow-Bound describing him as a perfect athlete as well as a good scholar.

So writers have portrayed all kinds of schools, but no where is the ideal school portrayed so well as in J. K. Holland's Arthur Bonnicastle - In The Bird's Nest, we find the model or perfect school. Mr. and Mrs. Bird conducted the school for small boys, but on ~~an~~ altogether a different plan from the schools

of Dickens's novels. Mr. Bird was the father, friend and adviser of his pupils. There was a high standard of morality existing in the school, and as in some of our present colleges, there was an "Esprit du Corps" among the pupils, and the ideal was so high that no immorality was tolerated. Nor did Mr. Bird lose sight of his pupils after their graduation, but on the other hand, we find him Arthur