

# **SCHOOL AND SOCIETY IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN**

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Joseph Payne and the New World of  
Education

Richard Aldrich

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EDUCATION



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RICHARD ALDRICH

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# SCHOOL AND SOCIETY IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

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*Joseph Payne and  
the New World  
of Education*

Richard Aldrich

THE COLLEGE OF PRECEPTORS

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## Illustrations

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8. The Mansion Grammar School, Leatherhead: An engraving of the rear upon writing paper in the possession of G. D. Powell.
9. Rodney House Academy today.
10. Grove Hill House today.



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With respect to the illustrations, John Waite most kindly brought to my attention the photographs of Joseph and Eliza Payne in his family album and allowed me to take copies. Sir Christopher Booth, Harveian Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians of London, graciously granted permission for the reproduction of the portrait of Joseph Frank Payne. G. D. Powell supplied me with copies of the Mansion Grammar School

writing paper. Preparation of these and other illustrations owes much to the photographic skills of Robert Lawrence.

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Since the publication of the hardcover version of this book, further information kindly supplied by John Waite has confirmed that Payne's father was, indeed, named Joseph, while his mother was Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Leader. Their marriage took place in Bury St. Edmunds on 30 March 1807.

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## Series Preface

Garland's Studies in the History of Education series includes not only volumes on the history of American and Western education, but also on the history of the development of education in non-Western societies. A major goal of this series is to provide new interpretations of educational history that are based on the best recent scholarship; each volume will provide an original analysis and interpretation of the topic under consideration. A wide variety of methodological approaches from the traditional to the innovative are used. In addition, this series especially welcomes studies that focus not only on schools but also on education as defined by Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn: "the transmission of culture across generations."

The major criteria for inclusion are (a) a manuscript of the highest quality, and (b) a topic of importance to understanding the field. The editor is open to readers' suggestions and looks forward to a long-term dialogue with them on the future direction of the series.



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## Introduction

In 1988 Sheldon Rothblatt began a substantial and incisive essay review with a series of major criticisms of “much of the historiography of English (and European) education,” which he characterized as:

future-oriented, even whiggish, as historians flirt with policymaking. The historiography is pointed toward the development of centralized state systems of education, with governments as the principal suppliers of schools, colleges, and universities. It is often concerned with the builders of such systems, the proto-bureaucrats of the great period of change in the mid-nineteenth century; and it just as often assumes that state provision for mass education, with particular regard to the improvement of life chances for working-class groups, is far and away the most important of all themes in the history of education. Private or independent sectors of education are generally viewed with suspicion or dislike as obstacles to political democracy and wider social opportunity, and the historiography implicitly favors their removal or curtailment by a vigilant state bureaucracy empowered with the necessary parliamentary authority. . . .

Historians must also take into direct consideration the play of market forces in the history of education, for it is precisely in the market that so much of real educational interest occurred. Experiment, innovation, and change took place in accord with new trends and ideas, including ideas that a number of historians would regard as “progressive.”<sup>1</sup>

The main purpose of this book is to provide a series of insights into school and society in Victorian Britain through an

examination of the life and work of Joseph Payne. This would be a worthwhile activity in its own right but, given Rothblatt's criticisms, it may also serve the larger purpose of helping to redress some of the perceived imbalances in the historiography of British education. Such redress may achieve not only some modification of current interpretations of school and society in Victorian Britain, but also (given that historical study can never be concerned solely with the past) of current and future educational policymaking. For no assumptions are made in the following pages as to the superiority, or otherwise, of centralized (or indeed localized) state educational systems. This study is concerned neither with systems nor with systems builders. It does not focus upon mass education for working-class groups. Its principal subject is a private schoolteacher who was struggling daily with market forces, supply and demand, and who was strongly committed to wider social opportunity and political democracy. After years of toil and hardship, however, he achieved some recognition both as a scholar and a gentleman. In educational terms he was always a "progressive."

This introduction is divided into two parts. The first provides a brief context: the nature of society in Victorian Britain; a survey of existing interpretations of the relationship between school and society. The second is concerned with the construction and shape of the book.

## Context

Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837. Her reign, the longest in British history, lasted until 1901. She ruled not only over a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, but also over the largest empire the world had ever seen. In 1876, the year of Payne's death, she assumed the further title of Empress of India. In 1851 British commercial and industrial supremacy was confirmed by the Great Exhibition held in the Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park, but thereafter that supremacy was strongly challenged, principally by Germany and the United States of America. Commercial and industrial development was accompanied by population explosion. In 1841 the population of

Britain stood at some 18.5 million and that of Ireland at 8 million. By 1901, while the population of Britain had doubled to 37.5 million, Ireland's population had fallen to 4.5 million. Given the small size of Britain, such a population explosion led to increased urbanization. By 1851 one-half and by 1901 three-quarters of the population lived in towns.

A variety of factors, both internal (railways, cheap postal services and national newspapers) and external (imperialism and foreign wars) helped to forge modern British society and the British state, but substantial divisions and inequalities remained, and in some cases were increased. These were based not only on the separate "nationality" and culture of the Scots and Welsh (in spite of the Act of Union of 1800 the Irish were never absorbed into the "British" nation), but also upon differences of sex, class and religion. For example, although Britain was ruled by a queen, throughout the nineteenth century women were not allowed to vote or to stand as candidates in parliamentary elections. Girls were excluded from the most prestigious schools, and not until the 1870s did women begin to make modest inroads into the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Though the male franchise was gradually broadened, both Houses of Parliament, Lords and Commons, remained aristocratic in composition and in temper. There were no revolutions, as in other European countries, and members of Parliament received no salary, so that only a few working men could gain admittance. One indication of differences in wealth and the several gradations of social class were the hordes of servants. Service, indeed, constituted by far the largest single category of paid employment for female workers. Their numbers showed the continuing economic ability of the few to employ the many for personal, rather than productive, functions.

Religion was another distinctive and divisive feature of Victorian society. In 1851 a Religious Census conducted by Horace Mann in conjunction with the General Census of that year indicated that there were no fewer than 35 different religious sects in Britain. Although the Census figures must be treated with considerable caution, it would appear that on Census Sunday, 30 March 1851, the combined total of those who attended Protestant Dissenting or Roman Catholic places of

worship was greater than the number who attended services of the established Anglican Church. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that its adherents might be in a minority, both among those who attended places of religious worship and more significantly in respect of the population as a whole, the Anglican Church remained, indeed remains to this day, the state church. Queen Victoria was not only head of the state, but also head of the Anglican Church. Archbishops and bishops were nominated by the government, often on political grounds. These prelates sat in the House of Lords and changes in Church liturgy and law had to secure the approval of Parliament. Not until 1828 were Protestant Dissenters (for example Baptists, Congregationalists or Independents, Methodists and Presbyterians) and from 1829 Roman Catholics, allowed to enter Parliament and to hold other public offices. Numerous other grievances remained. For example in 1833 Protestant Dissenters were still required to register births in the parish church; to be married in the parish church, to be buried in the parish churchyard, and to contribute to the upkeep of the parish church. It was not until 1868 with the abolition of compulsory Church rates that the last of these grievances was removed.

In Victorian Britain education was seen first and foremost as being the responsibility of churches and of parents, rather than of the state. Anglican control of the country's principal educational institutions, which had been reestablished in the 1660s at the time of the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, remained strong. It was not until 1860 that endowed grammar schools were formally opened to the children of Dissenters and not until 1871 were posts at Oxford and Cambridge, except for the Regius professorships in divinity, opened to non-Anglicans. Even when government grants in aid of elementary schools were introduced in 1833, some 80 percent of the money was given to Anglican schools. Such predominance resulted partly from the fact that between 1843 and 1867 some Protestant Dissenters, mainly Congregationalists and Baptists who were known as Voluntaryists, refused government money for their schools for fear of state control.

Many of the facts of schooling in Victorian Britain, for example those connected with Acts of Parliament and Royal

Commissions, with numbers of schools and prescribed syllabuses, with the establishment in 1839 of a Committee of the Privy Council to oversee education, and the legislation of the 1870s to introduce local boards for elementary schools, which enabled such schooling to become both compulsory and free by the end of the century, are well known. There is no intention to repeat them here, although background information is supplied, as necessary, at appropriate points in the book. But if the facts of schooling and society of Britain in the nineteenth century have been broadly known and agreed upon, nevertheless, there have been many differing interpretations and emphases in respect of those facts, five of which are outlined here.

In a book first published in 1960, but subsequently retitled and reissued in 1974, Brian Simon employed a Marxist analysis of British schooling and society to question the general belief in progress in matters educational from the 1830s. The first volume in his history of education in Britain from 1780 to 1990, *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure, 1780–1870*, emphasized the extent to which nineteenth-century schooling was firmly organized along lines of social class. Simon argued that by the 1850s, the descendants of the educational reformers of the later eighteenth century, the Enlightenment figures of Birmingham and Manchester, of Edinburgh and Glasgow, had lost their humanism and breadth of interests and emerged

as a class whose characteristics had changed, whose purposes were narrower, and who were engaged in a sharp struggle on two main fronts—against the landed aristocracy on the one hand, and against the emerging proletariat on the other.<sup>2</sup>

Simon concluded this volume with the judgement that

in the period 1850–70 a conscious effort was made to establish a closed system of schools; so to divide and differentiate the education given to different social classes that privilege could for ever withstand the pressure of the working masses.<sup>3</sup>

Though Marxist interpretations have naturally focused upon changes in production—the advent of industrialization and urbanization and its economic and social consequences—in

*Schools for the Shires: The Reform of Middle-Class Education in Mid-Victorian England*, David Allsobrook argued that schools for the children of the middle classes, as reformed in the 1860s and 1870s, were not cast as might have been expected in an urban and industrial mould, but rather in that of traditional rural Classicism. He concluded that as a result, "a gentlemanly, liberal tradition in secondary schooling long eclipsed the claims of practical and useful forms of secondary education."<sup>4</sup> This interpretation was consistent with that of Martin Wiener, in his wide-ranging book, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980*. Wiener began his study with the statement: "The leading problem of modern British history is the explanation of economic decline."<sup>5</sup> He rejected Marxist explanations based on the inherent weaknesses of capitalism, and the conclusions of those economic historians who argued that there was no real decline in the second half of the nineteenth century but simply a natural change in the balance of economic power with the emergence of larger and more powerful states in Germany and the United States. Instead, Wiener posited a cultural explanation. He attributed Britain's economic decline to the continued commitment of the ruling classes to the ideal of a "green and pleasant land," and to the concept of a Victorian gentleman. A gentleman was, by definition, one who did not have to work for a living. Were he to do so he would not sully his hands in the common business of manufactures. A gentleman's wealth might be based upon land or dealings in the financial world, even employment in public service or the professions, but not in industrial occupations. Wiener, in common with Allsobrook, argued that the reformed boys' public and grammar schools of the second half of the nineteenth century, together with the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, were key elements in socializing the sons of the middle and upper classes into Classical, aristocratic and rural values, as opposed to a culture of modernity, democracy, urbanization and industrialization.

Neil Smelser, another transatlantic observer of the British educational scene, concentrated not upon the education of the élite but of the poor. His recent book, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century*,

published in 1991, was distinguished by three particular features. The first was his analysis of the similarities and differences between educational provision in the separate parts of the United Kingdom of that time: England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. This was an important set of distinctions, and it must be acknowledged that, on occasion, the use of the terms "Britain" and "British" in the pages of this volume masks considerable variations in educational provision and practice. For example, at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were more universities in Scotland than in England, and none at all in Wales. The second feature was Smelser's identification of "certain starting and ending points in historical sequences (labelled *moments of change* to signify their transient character and *truce points* to underscore that they are usually established as the result of a political process)."<sup>6</sup> Such analysis led Smelser to identify five arenas of social change which shaped the evolution of working-class education in Britain in the nineteenth century. These were class hierarchy, consciousness and conflict; economic forces affecting parents and children; religious contests, particularly between the established Anglican Church and Protestant Dissenting; the political scene of governments, Parliament and administrators; and the internal politics of the educational system—including pupils, pupil teachers, teachers, inspectors, and managers.

Although Smelser's book incorporated both a modest comparative dimension (a brief consideration of education in New York) and a survey of theories of nineteenth-century schooling—for example as an accompaniment to an industrializing society and the production of a disciplined factory work force, or as an element in the building of a nation—the most substantial recent comparative treatment of these issues is contained in Andy Green's book, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA*. In spite of the Scottish Enlightenment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain's success in the first industrial revolution seems to have taken place in a country many of whose formal educational institutions, for example its grammar schools and universities, were in a comparatively moribund state. It is possible that this situation, coupled with the exclusion

of non-Anglicans from educational and civil rights, was instrumental in diverting many of the best brains and talents from scholarly and political into economic activity. Such success was widely attributed, both by contemporaries and some later observers, to natural ingenuity, a lack of government intervention, and to the doctrine of free trade.

Other commentators, for example such promoters of popular education as Matthew Arnold, Henry Brougham and James Kay Shuttleworth, warned, however, that in spite of Britain's successes, a state-directed system of national education was urgently required. Green supported this interpretation and showed that other countries, notably France and Prussia, created national educational systems in advance of Britain

to provide the state with trained administrators, engineers and military personnel; to spread dominant cultures and inculcate popular ideologies of nationhood; and so to forge the political and cultural unity of burgeoning nation states and cement the ideological hegemony of their dominant classes.<sup>7</sup>

Such efficient national educational systems which might, as in the United States, actually be organized at the local level, were better fitted to cope with the demands of the second and subsequent industrial revolutions. Green accordingly welcomed recent measures introduced in Britain, principally under the aegis of the 1988 Education Reform Act, to establish some form of national curriculum and national testing, although he rejected the market element in these reforms. His conclusion was:

If the past has any lessons at all it is that the mechanisms of the market and the ideology of *laissez-faire* serve education very ill indeed. It would be a sad irony if the country which was last to create a national education system, and which never quite completed the job, should be the first to dismantle it.<sup>8</sup>

The final interpretation to be noted here is that of E. G. West, an interpretation which in many senses has underpinned the educational philosophy of Conservative governments in Britain since 1979. West argued that the Elementary Education Act of 1870, which introduced the first local school boards into

England and Wales, should be seen as an extension of bureaucracy and producer control, rather than as a true extension of education. Its chief function was not, as was stated, to "fill up the gaps" in school provision, but rather to displace the private working-class school for which parents had readily paid school fees, and to bring schooling under unnecessary, and ultimately retrogressive, bureaucratic control.<sup>9</sup> Supporters of this interpretation, rather than deploring the market element in recent government reforms, argue for more consumer, and less central and local government control in educational matters, not least in the hotly debated area of the national curriculum.

Each of these five interpretations—Marxist, Classical-rural, truce points, state formation and free market—is of interest in its own right and contributes important insights into schooling and society in Victorian Britain and more widely. But, valuable though they are, none of these interpretations and none of these books, whether by Simon, Allsobrook, Wiener, Smelser, Green or West, provides any strong sense of education as such, whether with respect of individuals or of groups. Of course numerous references are made to individuals and to schools and other educational institutions, but the purpose of such references is invariably to substantiate the general patterns of such themes as educational policy and administration, social organization and culture. In sharp contrast this book provides an entry into the actual educational world of Victorian Britain, its teachers and pupils, through the experiences of a quite remarkable, but hitherto-unremarked learner and teacher.<sup>10</sup>

## Construction

Some would argue that there is such a thing as history; others that there are only histories. I incline towards the former position, while acknowledging the force of the latter. Such acknowledgment requires some explanation of the construction of this particular piece of history. Historical writing involves at least three processes: the identification of a subject, collection of evidence, and the ordering, analysis and presentation of that evidence in written or other form. These processes require an

interaction between the past and the present. At each stage the historian must make choices. The purpose of this section is to make explicit some of the choices involved in the construction of this book.

As yet, Joseph Payne is an unknown figure in respect of British histories of education. He has little or no place in general accounts of nineteenth-century education. Indeed, apart from references in Chapman's study of the College of Preceptors,<sup>11</sup> it would appear that the only substantial study of Payne was a lengthy article, written by Miriam Fitch and "Contributed by the College of Preceptors," which appeared over five issues, from February to June 1934, in the pages of the *Journal of Education*.<sup>12</sup> That article was prompted by the 1933 inauguration, 60 years after Payne began his duties as professor, of the Joseph Payne Memorial Lectures. The series was initiated by the College of Preceptors to mark the change in status of the London Day Training College into the Institute of Education of the University of London. The lectures were held in the Institute's building in Southampton Row, London, just a few yards from the College's own premises in Bloomsbury Square.

My choice of Joseph Payne was dictated by a number of factors, many of which were pure coincidences. Payne's first school post was in Southwark, in south London, the home of my parents and grandparents. Indeed, a block of flats named after my maternal grandfather, Albert Barnes, stands on the other side of the New Kent Road from the Rodney House Academy where Payne taught. For several years I lived in Leatherhead in the county of Surrey, and there regularly used the local library without realising that it was the very building, The Mansion, in which for some 19 years Payne had lived and carried on his final schooling. Like Payne I began working for the College of Preceptors in connection with examinations for teachers. Like Payne I became involved with the historical study of education and with the promotion of an enhanced professional status for teachers. A growing sense of identity with the subject, therefore, was the prime reason for my choosing to study Joseph Payne. Clearly such identification brings dangers: biography may all too easily slip into autobiography.

The survival of evidence in respect of Payne has also involved strong elements of chance and choice. Some has been destroyed on purpose. Some has been saved from destruction. Some has survived through foresight and the normal processes of conservation. Other material may yet come to light. The greatest tragedy was when Evelyn Murphy, in October 1964, upon depositing four diaries of John Dyers, Joseph Payne's father-in-law, in the Angus Library of Regent's Park College, Oxford, informed its principal, Ernest Payne,<sup>13</sup> that although she had kept these four as an example of Dyer's minuscule handwriting, other family papers in her possession, including other diaries, had been deliberately destroyed. Evelyn Murphy, then a 79-year-old widow living in Headington, Oxfordshire, was the granddaughter of Joseph and Eliza Payne, one of the four children of their second son, Joseph Frank. Although she had two daughters, her reason for the destruction was that there were no grandchildren to whom she could pass on these family archives. She acknowledged this action as "an unaccountable lapse of judgement."<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, in the summer of 1991, much historical material relating to the College of Preceptors was rescued from the loft of its premises in Theydon Bois, where it had long been subject to the depredations of birds and assorted rodents.<sup>15</sup> In addition, in 1993 a collection of manuscript material which included three of Payne's journals, a commonplace book, and more than 50 letters, was offered for sale and purchased by the author. As a consequence, the first section of the book draws upon previously unknown manuscript sources, while the second is based upon a wide range of unused and underused materials, both manuscript and printed. As to the third section, which is concerned with Payne's educational ideas, evidence comes principally from his lectures and writings. The greater part of these were collected and edited by Joseph Frank Payne and published in two volumes after his father's death.<sup>16</sup>

In seeking to impose shape upon evidence, the historian must choose between the demands of chronology and themes. This book is organized into three thematic sections, of which the first two are broadly chronological in treatment. The first employs a brief survey of Joseph Payne's life in education as a

means to explore some unfamiliar aspects of school and society in Victorian Britain. Attention is focused upon his role in the foundation of two private schools. References to other members of his family, particularly the relatively well-documented lives of his father-in-law and two eldest sons, provide glimpses of the varied worlds of Dissenting missions, literary life, and the professions of public school teaching and medicine. The second section is concerned with Payne's interaction with the educational establishment of his day. He was a fierce critic of educational inefficiency and privilege, whether in the ancient boys' public schools or in the new state-supported elementary school system. But he also proposed solutions, for example the extension of educational opportunities and rights to girls as well as to boys, and the establishment of a trained and certificated teaching profession. He was prominent in such groups as the Women's Education Union and the Social Science Association, but the main body through which Payne pursued his reform campaign was the College of Preceptors. He was present at its foundation in 1846; in 1873 he became its first professor of education, and the first such professor in British history. The third section examines Payne's educational ideas. He was a true pioneer in the science and art of education and provided his own analysis of fundamental educational issues. In so doing, he drew not only upon his long experience as a practising teacher, but also upon a deep understanding of the historical and comparative dimensions of education, with particular reference to continental Europe and to the United States of America. Payne's analysis of educational issues, many of which are as central today as they were a century and more ago, has a timeless quality. The final chapter draws together some conclusions and considers the enduring value of Payne's work for a new and better world of education. Thus the book presents three frames of reference in which the overall topic of school and society in Victorian Britain may be considered. The first is personal, the second institutional, and the third intellectual.

## NOTES

1. Sheldon Rothblatt, "Supply and Demand: The 'Two Histories' of English Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 28, 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 627–8. For a collection of other comments on British history of education see Peter Gordon and Richard Szepter (eds.), *History of Education: The Making of a Discipline* (London, 1989).

2. Brian Simon, *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure, 1780–1870* (London, 1974), p. 70.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 366.

4. David Ian Allsobrook, *Schools for the Shires: The Reform of Middle-Class Education in Mid-Victorian England* (Manchester, 1986), p. 264.

5. Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 3.

6. Neil J. Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1991), p. 347.

7. Andy Green, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA* (London, 1990), p. 309. For an introduction to Marxist and feminist perspectives upon the role of the state see Pavla Miller, "Education and the State: The Uses of Marxist and Feminist Approaches in the Writing of Histories of Schooling," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'Histoire de l'Éducation* 1, 2 (Fall 1989).

8. Green, *Education and State Formation*, p. 316.

9. E. G. West, *Education and the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1975). For the private working-class school see Phil Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England: The People's Education* (London, 1984).

10. But see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London, 1987) for an excellent introduction to families in the contexts of religion, ideology, gender and economic opportunity; and, with specific reference to education, Barbara Finkelstein, "Redoing Urban Educational History," in *The City and Education in Four Nations*, eds. Ronald K. Goodenow and William E. Marsden (Cambridge and New York, 1992), pp. 172–92.

11. J. Vincent Chapman, *Professional Roots: The College of Preceptors in British Society* (Epping, 1985).

12. Miriam G. Fitch, "Joseph Payne, First Professor of Education in England," *Journal of Education* 66, 774–9 (January-June 1934). Fitch drew upon her University of London M.A. thesis of 1931, entitled "The History of the Training of Teachers for Secondary Schools in England."

13. For Ernest Alexander Payne, 1902–80, see W. M. S. West, *To Be a Pilgrim: A Memoir of Ernest A. Payne* (Guildford, 1983).

14. Evelyn Murphy to Ernest Payne, 2 October 1964. See also Murphy to Payne, 27 September 1964, and Payne to Murphy, 28 September 1964. Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

15. I am most grateful to my coworkers in this enterprise—Averil Aldrich, Mary Haynes, and the indefatigable Sue Lickfold.

16. Joseph Frank Payne (ed.), *Lectures on the Science and Art of Education, with Other Lectures and Essays, by the late Joseph Payne* (London, 1880); Joseph Frank Payne (ed.), *Lectures on the History of Education, with A Visit to German Schools, by the late Joseph Payne* (London, 1892). Hereafter referred to as Payne, *Works*, I, and Payne, *Works*, II.

**School and  
Society in  
Victorian Britain**



## From Bury St. Edmunds to Grove Hill House

### Bury St. Edmunds

Joseph Payne was born on 2 March 1808 at Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. His beginnings were humble; his origins obscure. His entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, for which information was supplied by his second son, Joseph Frank Payne, simply stated that he was "born of poor parents." Diligent searches in the parish records of Bury St. Edmunds and those of the surrounding areas, and in the local newspaper (the *Bury and Norwich Post*), have failed to reveal any conclusive information either in respect of his baptism or of the marriage of his parents. All surviving records of the churches of other denominations in the neighbourhood have also been searched without success. Both of Payne's parents, however, appear to have been alive in the 1820s, when he recorded correspondence with them and visits to the family home. In 1837 on the occasion of his own marriage Payne gave his father's name as Joseph and his father's trade as that of "Builder." One piece of evidence may give some clue to the character of Joseph senior and serve as a reminder of some of the cruel elements of the society into which the young Joseph was born. At the rear of a commonplace book used by Joseph Payne there is an entry dated 28 November 1801 which refers to three reports of bull baiting, including one particularly horrific instance where the bull's hoofs were cut off and he had to fight the dogs perched on his mangled stumps. The signature below the account deploring this barbarous

practice, is that of "Joseph Payne, Bromley, Middlesex."<sup>1</sup> The only other entry at the end of this book, and in a different hand, concerns the purification of casks, a procedure taken from the *Monthly Magazine* of 30 May 1803.

Similarly few details have been discovered of Joseph Payne's early education. In 1833, when Payne's name was placed on the books of St. John's College, Cambridge, he was described as having been "privately educated."<sup>2</sup> That might have meant that he was educated at home or self-educated, or at one or more elementary or private schools. In the first half of the nineteenth century there were many private schools both for the children of the working classes as well as for those of the wealthier portions of society. Unfortunately very few records of such schools have survived, in contrast to those of the public elementary, endowed grammar and public schools. Although the compiler of the *Biographical List of Boys educated at King Edward VI Free Grammar School, Bury St. Edmunds from 1550 to 1900* suggested that a "Payne" listed in the second form in 1822 as a "Royalist" (a boy living at home in Bury) might have been Joseph Payne, no other evidence has been found to support this hypothesis.<sup>3</sup>

The fullest information hitherto known about Payne's schooling was given in 1876 in Charles Mason's obituary of Payne, which stated:

His early education, was very incomplete and it was not till he was about fourteen years old that, at a school kept by a Mr Freeman, he came under the instruction of a really competent teacher. This advantage, however, he did not enjoy very long. At a comparatively early age he was under the necessity of getting his own living, which he did partly by teaching, partly by writing for the press. His life at this stage was laborious and not altogether free from privations. He found time, however, for diligent study, and numerous extract and common-place books testify to the wide range of his reading in the ancient classics and in English literature.<sup>4</sup>

Though as yet it has not been possible to identify with certainty the "Mr. Freeman" referred to above, Payne's recently discovered journals provide other details of his youthful years. Thus a journal of 1824,<sup>5</sup> when Payne was a mere 16 years old,

indicates that he was then furthering his own education, and possibly acting as an assistant, at a boys' school at Olney in Buckinghamshire. At that time Olney was particularly associated with the name of the eighteenth-century poet, William Cowper, who had lived there for much of his adult life. Payne took great delight in walking in the surrounding countryside and in visiting Cowper's own favourite haunts.

The major theme of this journal, however, was Payne's ferocious devotion to duty. He rose early, on one occasion at 4.30 in the morning to write a letter home, read on his own account a variety of authors in Greek and Latin, French and Hebrew, ploughed through works on English grammar and syntax, attended prayer meetings on weekday evenings and devoured three sermons each Sunday. Nevertheless there were some lighter moments. On 19 August he "read a book through called *Adelaide or the Intrepid Daughter*," and on 27 August he "took the boys for a short walk—In the afternoon all had a holiday and went to the National School in Olney where there was a sale of Fancy Articles for the benefit of Olney School and I bought a puzzle and Whitlock gave me an article which he bought with lavender in it." Not all was sweetness and light, however. The young Joseph suffered regularly from toothache and was also subject to boils, at one time having four on his face, "one of which was as big as an egg." There were also occasional differences with a member of staff, and it appears that Payne's parents took the decision that he should leave Olney at the end of 1824.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was quite common for people as young as 16 to be engaged in teaching. For example, Joseph Lancaster, pioneer of the monitorial or "mutual" system of instruction, himself taught in schools from the age of 14 and, six years later in 1798, set up his own school in Southwark in Borough Road. When, in 1846, the government devised a system for assisting the provision of teachers in elementary schools, the foundations of that system (the "sinews" as Matthew Arnold called them) were the pupil teachers. Pupil teachers began their five-year apprenticeship at the tender age of 13. They taught in the school during the day

and received instruction from the master or mistress after school hours.

## The New Kent Road

By 1827 Payne was teaching in London. In that year he was employed as an assistant master at a boys' private school, Rodney House Academy, at 3, Rodney Buildings in the New Kent Road. Payne, no doubt, lodged in the school itself, although the family home was in the vicinity. On Sunday, 4 March, after morning attendance at church, he walked there in the afternoon, pondering as he went his debt to his parents:

those dearly beloved friends—whose affection *ad mortem* is undoubted. . . . Time can never witness the dissolution of the ties which bind them to our hearts. . . . In the gay scenes of childhood and in the thoughtless levity which these scenes inspire we are not sufficiently grateful to the kind friends who watch over us with such unwearied attention. Selfishness prevails generally over every other passion and we receive all acts of kindness as if they were richly merited and as if it would be unjust to deprive us of them. . . . I found all at home tolerably well, at least not worse than usual, Amelia looked very languid and M appeared weak and infirm.<sup>6</sup>

The school at which Payne taught was run by John Gowring, who was also resident at 3, Rodney Buildings, a school which Payne later described as "A private school—a small boarding and large day school," attended principally by "the sons of the tradesmen of the neighbourhood."<sup>7</sup> The only question at issue is whether it was originally at 3, Dover Place and then moved to Rodney Buildings, was carried on simultaneously at both addresses, or whether some error or change in the designation of the buildings had occurred.<sup>8</sup>

Fortunately the house, in contrast to many others in the New Kent Road at that time, has survived. It is a substantial property on some four floors with a subbasement. A coping stone to a new brick pillar which stands at the entrance to the property still bears the legend "Rodney House Academy."

Though the house remains in private occupancy, as do many of the surviving properties of what was then Dover Place, others of Rodney Buildings have made way for commercial premises. For example, part of the original number one is still, as it was in Payne's day, the Crown and Anchor public house, but the rest of the ground floor has been transmuted into the Five Star Fish Bar!

Around 1830 Rodney Buildings and Dover Place constituted a continuous line of some 30 properties which occupied the south side of the New Kent Road, from Garmouth Row and Rodney Place in the west to Paragon Place in the east. Rodney Buildings was to the west of Dover Place. Both fell within the parish of St. Mary, Newington, but Paragon Place and the turnpike which stood at the east end of the New Kent Road, where it joined the Old Kent Road and Bermondsey New Road, were in the parish of St. George. At the back of the long gardens of the houses in Dover Place and the even larger plots of the more substantial houses in Rodney Buildings, was the rapidly disappearing open space of Lock's Fields. Just beyond the eastern edge of the Fields, between Townsend and Mason Streets and fronting on to the Old Kent Road, was the substantial building and extensive grounds of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum. Lancaster's Borough Road School, which by 1830 had become the training institution for the British and Foreign School Society, was a short walk away to the northwest.

The inhabitants of Rodney Buildings were engaged in a variety of callings. In addition to Gowring's academy, the Crown and Anchor public house stood at number one and, at the time of the 1841 Census, other occupants included a solicitor, a clerk, a merchant, a tobacco manufacturer, a tea dealer and a street merchant. Pigot's *Directory* for 1838 recorded that by then John Robinson was master of the day and boarding academy at 3, Rodney Buildings. The 1841 Census shows that in addition to the 45-year-old Robinson, his wife Augusta, who was born in Greenwich, and their four children, the establishment included two teachers—John Laxton, a Classics master, aged 35; and a young assistant, William Crook, aged 17—and two lodgers—George Boyce aged 20 and employed at the Ordnance Office; and an 18-year-old medical student Richard Warren. There were 20 resident pupils (all boys): four aged 14, one of 13, seven aged 12,