

By Lewis R. Farnell† (From *The Times*, October 18, 1926).

As one who had the high privilege of being trained at the City of London School under Edwin Abbott, I would like to pay to his memory the tribute of a few grateful words; for when a great man passes, the few who know how great he was should speak out.

Your excellent obituary conveys sufficient impression of his extraordinary achievement in varied lines of work — literary, scholarly, theological, and educational. One may say that he was not only the greatest headmaster of his day, but also that no headmaster ever produced so much for the world of letters. His greatness as an educator was partly that of the organizer and the originator of new methods and systems. He was the pioneer of many new departures in school curriculum. Having a reverence for physical science not often found among the classical scholars of his day, he made an elementary acquaintance with chemistry compulsory through the Upper School. Caught by the enthusiasm then prevalent at Cambridge for the study of comparative philology, at that time in its interesting and easy-going youth, he provided better teaching in it for the scholars of his sixth form than they could find for many years afterwards in the lecture rooms of Oxford; for this purpose he even introduced his advanced classical pupils to the study of Sanskrit, and thus started on his life career the distinguished Sanskritist Professor Cecil Bendall, a contemporary of mine. Perhaps his greatest special achievement as an educator was that in his devotion to the master-works of English literature he made these an integral part of the form teaching from the Lower School upwards; and his sixth terminally studied a play of Shakespeare as they studied a Greek play; and thus the language and the soul of one great world helped to interpret those of the other. It was Abbott's enthusiasm for English studies, his masterful exposition of the secrets and principles of style, that opened to many of us a treasure-house that has enriched our lives and inspired pupils such as A. H. Bullen and others who have won fame as English scholars and men of letters.

But apart from any of his special interests and reforming ideas, it was his whole personality that inspired and controlled us. The strong soul-power within him he could impart to others; and this is the mark of the spiritual leader. He was aflame with intellectual energy, and he kindled those who were under him. He never drove us or overtasked us; but he made intellectual effort a kind of religion for us, and his deep and serious reprobation of intellectual slackness and unveracity was such a spur to us that his sixth form became a most stimulating palaestra for the eager and receptive spirits, while for some, perhaps, the tonic

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† Lewis R. Farnell was Fellow and Rector of Exeter College, and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University in 1920. He attended the City of London School, 1866–1874, and was Captain of the School, 1872–1874.

was an overstrain. But he was by no means what is called an ‘intellectualist;’ for he believed indeed in intellectual honesty as a religious ideal; he was also a great and gifted moral and religious teacher; he had the eyes that looked straight through you and the strong voice that could both charm and command. One of the rarest and most delightful experiences in life is hero-worship, and he was one of the few who could evoke it.