

HEART

A SCHOOLBOY'S JOURNAL

BY

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY
ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

COMPLETE EDITION

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PREFACE

This book is specially dedicated to the boys of the elementary schools between the ages of nine and thirteen years, and might be entitled: "The Story of a Scholastic Year written by a Pupil of the Third Class of an Italian Municipal School." In saying, written by a pupil of the third class, I do not mean to say that it was written by him exactly as it is printed. He noted day by day in a copy-book, as well as he knew how, what he had seen, felt, thought, in the school and outside the school; his father at the end of the year wrote these pages on those notes, taking care not to alter the thought, and preserving, when it was possible, the words of his son. Four years later the boy, being then in the lyceum, read over the MSS. and added something of his own, drawing on his memories, still fresh, of persons and of things. Now read this book, boys; I hope that you will be pleased with it, and that it may do you good.

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

FAREWELL (last chapter)

----- Monday, 10th. -----

At one o'clock we all assembled once more for the last time at the school, to hear the results of the examinations, and to take our little promotion-books. The street was thronged with parents, who had even invaded the big hall, and many had made their way into the class-rooms, pushing up as far as the master's desk. In our room they filled the entire space between the wall and the front benches.

There were Garrone's father, Derossi's mother, the blacksmith Precossi, Coretti, Signora Nelli, the vegetable-vendor, the father of the little mason, Stardi's father, and many others whom I had never seen; and on all sides could be heard a whispering and a hum, that seemed to come from the square outside.

The teacher entered, and a deep silence ensued. He had the list in his hand, and began to read at once.

"Abatucci, promoted, sixty seventieths, Archini, promoted, fifty-five seventieths."—The "little mason" promoted; Crossi promoted. Then he read loudly:—

"Ernesto Derossi, promoted, seventy seventieths, and the first prize."

All the parents who were there—and they all knew him—said: "Bravo, bravo, Derossi!"

And he shook his golden curls, with his easy and beautiful smile, and looked at his mother, who waved to him with her hand.

Garoffi, Garrone, and the Calabrian promoted. Then three or four sent back; and one of them began to cry because his father, who was at the entrance, made a menacing gesture at him. But the master said to the father:—

"No, sir, excuse me; it is not always the boy's fault; it is often his misfortune. And that is the case here." Then he read:—

"Nelli, promoted, sixty-two seventieths." His mother sent him a kiss from her fan. Stardi, promoted, with sixty-seven seventieths! but, at hearing this fine fate, he did not smile, or remove his fists from his temples. The last was Votini, who had come very finely dressed and brushed,—promoted. After reading the last name, the master rose and said:—

“Boys, this is the last time that we shall find ourselves assembled together in this room. We have been together a year, and now we part good friends, do we not? I am sorry to part from you, my dear boys.” He interrupted himself, then he resumed: “If I have sometimes failed in patience, if sometimes, without intending it, I have been unjust, or too severe, forgive me.”

“No, no!” cried the parents and many of the scholars,—“You have ever been kind!”

“Forgive me,” repeated the master, “and think well of me. Next year you will not be with me; but I shall see you again, and you will always abide in my heart. Farewell until we meet again, boys!”

So saying, he stepped forward among us, and we all offered him our hands, as we stood up on the seats, and grasped him by the arms, and by the skirts of his coat. Many kissed him; fifty voices cried:—

“Farewell until we meet again, teacher!—We thank you, teacher!—May your health be good!—Remember us!”

When I went away, I felt oppressed by the commotion. We all ran out confusedly. Boys were coming from all the other class-rooms also. There was a great mixing and tumult of boys and parents, bidding the masters and mistresses good-bye, and exchanging greetings among themselves. The mistress with the red feather had four or five children close to her, and twenty around her, depriving her of breath; and they had half torn off the little nun's bonnet, and had thrust a dozen bunches of flowers in the button-holes of her black dress, and in her pockets. Many were making much of Robetti, who had that day, for the first time, abandoned his crutches. On all sides one could hear:—

“Good-bye until next year!—Until the twentieth of October!”

We greeted each other, too. Ah! now all disagreements were forgotten! Votini, who had always been so jealous of Derossi, was the first to throw himself on him with open arms. I embraced the “little mason,” and kissed him, just at the moment when he was making me his last hare's face, dear boy! I embraced Precossi. I embraced Garoffi, who announced to me the approach of his last lottery, and gave me a little weight of majolica, with a broken corner. I said farewell to all the others. It was fine to see poor Nelli clinging to Garrone, so that he could not be taken from him. All crowded around Garrone, and it was, “Farewell, Garrone!—Good-bye until we meet again!” And they touched him, and pressed his hands, and made much of him, that brave, noble boy. His father was perfectly amazed, as he looked on and smiled.

Garrone was the last one whom I embraced in the street, and I stifled a sob against his breast. He kissed my brow. Then I ran to my father and mother.

My father asked me: “Have you spoken to all your comrades?”

I replied that I had.

“If there is any one of them whom you have wronged, go and ask his pardon, and beg him to forget it. Is there no one?”

“No one,” I answered.

“Farewell, then,” said my father with a voice full of emotion, bestowing a last glance on the schoolhouse.

“Farewell!” my mother repeated.

I could not say anything.

VOCABULARY

1. Read the text and find out the words which mean the following:
 - Crowded:
 - Murmuring:
 - Award:
 - Hall:
 - Threatening:

- Mischance:
- Split:
- Unfair:
- Fuss:
- Dispute:
- Hugged:
- Mates:

2. From the following verbs find out the matching noun

- Assemble:
- Promote:
- Enter:
- Intend:
- Forgive:
- Remember:
- Deprive:
- Forget:
- Bestow:
- Fail:

3. The text is about a heart-breaking farewell. Find out words and phrases conveying an idea of regret, emotion, sadness.

COMPREHENSION

1. It's the day of the final results: analyse the different reactions of students and parents.
2. Focus on the teacher's final speech: its key words are self-critique, respect, affection. Why?
3. When the boys say farewell to each other a particular focus is on the boy named Garrone. Why?
4. Another important message is expressed by the father of the protagonist (Enrico). What are his conclusive recommendations?
5. In the last lines the main character is actually the school itself. Why?