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Devonport High School
for girls

Behind that pitted wall that skirts the way
With signs and slogans, blight to greet each day,
There in his noisy palace, placed to rule,
The pale headmaster manages his school.
A man remote he is and hard to view;
Few know him well, still fewer wish to do.
Gone are the fears of truants, gone the cane,
No sanctions bind, no measures serve to rein
Their straying footsteps; (strange, that with no zest
They roam the town for pleasure - painful quest).
But still the busy staffroom rings with sound,
And paper silts up tables, lists abound;
The staff are kind, or if severe, they curse
Society's dead hand - or stingy purse!
The parents manifest each point of view -
Care, worry, apathy, and loathing too.
Meanwhile, advisers write official notes;
The councillors are mindful of their votes;
Administrators fill their files with facts;
Inspectors make pronouncements - but the axe
Pursues its ruthless, ministerial way.
"This school to close." Now fury! Now dismay!
"Unite to save ..." this school? (by Fate chastised)
Which almost all had covertly despised?
But still are all those tongues. The very spot
Is sold to Commerce - and the past forgot.

With acknowledgements to Goldsmith,
who, in harder times, took a kindlier view.