

Collectors' Digest

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Annual

Christmas 1959



Bob Whiter

The Collectors' Digest Annual

THIRTEENTH YEAR

CHRISTMAS 1959

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Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

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Dear Friends,

I find myself in a strange position - an Editor writing a foreword to introduce a publication about the contents of which he knows very little. In a way, that is a false picture, for this, the Thirteenth Collectors' Digest Annual, is Herbert Leckenby's last work for us all - his final labour of love.

Herbert spent the closing weeks of his life in preparing this book. When he was suddenly called to a higher life, practically everything was gathered in, all ready to entertain you this Christmastide.

So, though I have read but little of the contents, I know that there is something for everyone, and that it is good. For only the best was good enough for Herbert when he had your Annual in hand.

This, Herbert's last Annual, will remain with you always as a memorial to our late Editor whom we all loved.

Due to the fact that all Herbert's records were in the hands of the solicitors at the time of going to press, it has been found impossible to include the "Who's Who" this year. I feel sure that all subscribers will understand the position.

My grateful thanks to Mr. Jack Wood and to Mr. Kenneth Gore-Browne, the director of the York Duplicating Services, for the trojan efforts they have made to ensure that the Annual appears as usual. Without their mighty work, this would have been a disappointing Christmas. As Herbert himself might have said: "The star is unable to take the stage, but the show must go on." We have tried to do things as he would have done them.

May this Yuletide bring happy memories to you all.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Fayne

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THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY and other papers featuring Nelson Lee and St. Franks

BY E.C. CARTER

PART 1

RISE AND SUCCESS

The Nelson Lee Library was probably the smallest weekly ever to be issued from the Amalgamated Press. It first appeared on the 12th June, 1915, about the same time as the Sexton Blake Library was issued. The price was a 1d, the book measured 7" x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and contained 52 pages. It was under the editorship of Mr. Harold May; authors were G.H. Teed, Maxwell Scott, A.S. Hardy, Wm. Murray Graydon and Edwy Searles Brooks and the artists Val Reading and Arthur Jones.

The Library was to be an entirely detective paper similar to the Union Jack with Nelson Lee and Nipper as the central characters.

With No. 16 an important event took place. The title was Twenty Fathoms Deep and the very first story Edwy Searles Brooks wrote for the new paper. This was a new author who in a couple of years later would take over the writing of the stories entirely.

As the Nelson Lee approached its 100th number, circulation figures began to drop, detective stories were losing their appeal, which may have been due to the competition of the Union Jack and Sexton Blake Library, and it appeared obvious some alteration would have to be made in the stories if the Nelson Lee were to survive.

It was decided to introduce school stories. This was to be a gradual change - one detective story and a school story every second week. By this method the editor would find out what readers preferred. He now looked around for a suitable author. Teed, Graydon and Hardy had little or no experience in school stories. Scott was apparently busy elsewhere.

Brooks was the logical selection as he had been a keen reader of the Gem and Magnet and had already written a few stories for the Gem.

May told him what was required. Brooks then created one of the best known schools in the history of the Old Boys' Papers - St. Franks. The first St. Franks story appeared on 28th July, 1917. Perhaps the success of the Magnet and Gem inspired him. Now up to this time the illustrations of Arthur Jones were very good but on the advent of school stories an amazing deterioration was noticed in his work. It made one think whether he had a grudge against illustrating school stories. His work in the Sexton Blake Library of the same period is excellent.

With the introduction of St. Franks, Brooks started to create his immortal

characters. Although he did not create Nelson Lee and Nipper all the St. Franks characters were his: Tommy Watson, Sir Montie Tregellis-West, Edward Oswald Handforth (only a slight resemblance to Coker of Greyfriars, not so much alike as some critics allege), Church and McClure, Fullwood, Gulliver and Bell, Archie Glenthorne, Reginald Pitt, Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi etc.

In the new set up a place had to be found for Nelson Lee and Nipper so they arrived at St. Franks to escape the activities of a Chinese tong. Lee became "Mr. Alvington", Housemaster, and Nipper a pupil in the Remove. Now another problem arose. Could school stories have a detective interest? Brooks apparently disagreed on this. But in the years that were to follow this appeared an advantage as it gave the author more scope and some readers preferred the school and detective stories to either the Gem or Magnet.

In the 120's the fate of the Nelson Lee was sealed. School stories were to be featured. Now the Lee commenced its long career for sixteen years of St. Franks stories (1917-1933).

In those early years between 1917 and 1921 some famous series were featured. Some of you may recall them - Hunter the Hun, The Serpent (Reginald Pitt), The Boy from Bermondsey (Jack Grey), Colonel Clinton, Holiday Trip to Africa, Martin series, The Spendthrift (Hon. Douglas Singleton), White Giants, Solomon Levi, Dick Goodwin, Jerry Dodd (Cricket), Reggie Pitt (Football), Trip to Wild West, Mr. Foxe.

In November 1921 the number of pages was increased to 40. The price became 2d. The sizes of the pages were the same. The series featured were the famous Communist school stories. Dr. Stafford played an important part in the series which told how Mr. Trenton, the Science Master, tries to have the Headmaster dismissed by the use of a drug which sends him into rages.

Due to the success of St. Franks in the Nelson Lee Library between the years 1919 and 1922 other papers began stories of the famous school. The papers were the Boys' Realm, Pluck (1922), Nugget Weekly, Nuggett Library, Boys' Friend Library. One story even appeared in the Union Jack at this time (No. 777 The Flashlight Clue). There is still a doubt whether Brooks wrote the Boys' Realm stories. This also applies to the Nugget Library. In No. 1 of the Nuggett Weekly a serial commenced entitled "The Honour of St. Franks," Edgar Fenton, the captain, playing a prominent part. The mark of Edwy Searles Brooks was there in this case, and also in the serial in Pluck, entitled the "Kidnapped School".

The Boys' Friend Library featured reprints of earlier Nugget Weekly stories and later on reprints of Nelson Lee Library series.

Now, back to the Nelson Lee. With the Communist School, Series No. 1 of Nipper's Magazine was introduced, portraits of famous footballers were given away, and opening chapters of a serial named Tom Tartar at School was described as the World's most famous school story (Shades of Tom Brown's Schooldays and Fifth Form at St. Dominics). To top this feast off, a short football story by the famous Charles Hamilton, entitled "The Corinthian" appeared. This apparently was the only contribution Hamilton ever made to the Lee. In the number 348 "The Downfall of the Snake", on page 20, the first full length photo of Nelson Lee appeared giving a brief history of his career. In No. 352 (4/3/22) an important event took place - the arrival of that amazing character Archie Glenthorne. Previously with No. 350 (18/2/22) the first

illustration of St. Franks appeared by E.E. Briscoe (later to be followed by the famous sketches of Public Schools of England). With the start of the South Seas series in No. 366 (10/6/22), Tom Tartar, the serial concluded to be followed the following week with a sequel entitled "The New Usher".

In No. 370 (8/7/22) short detective stories were introduced featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper, entitled "The Ivory Hand".

The Lee could never get away from the detective flavour.

With No. 379 there came a surprise to Lee readers, a character was introduced well known to Sexton Blake readers, Zenith the Albino. The story was "The Strange Case of the Thurlingham Hall Robbery" in two weekly parts. Now, was this story by Anthony Skene as Zenith was his character?

The serial, "The New Usher", concluded the adventures of Tom Tartar in No. 383 (7/10/22). In No. 391 another important event that took place was the introduction of the Detective Story Section, no doubt inspired by the Detective Supplement in the Union Jack.

In No. 433, the first illustration by E.E. Briscoe of English Public Schools appeared, No. 1 being Eton College. I know a chap who was so impressed by these drawings he collected the entire set. In No. 443 (1/12/23), the author's name, Edwy Searles Brooks, was mentioned for the first time. The stories were previously related throughout by "Nipper". This was revealed in a chat to the Editor. Brooks had just returned from America and suggested to Mr. May, the editor, if he could start "His American Notebook" series which was to prove very popular. Brooks was horrified when the editor suggested that readers might like to see his portrait. This, however, did not appear until No. 485 (20/9/24).

Now with the School series themselves. These series have been dealt with thoroughly in the Collectors Digest Annual. So I will not dwell on these but will deal with other aspects of the Lee.

I will just mention some of the series that appeared from 1921 to 1926 (end of first series). Who cannot recall some of these - The Flood at St. Franks, Yung Ching the Chinese, South Seas, New Anglia, Miss Trumble, Alf Huggins, American Visit, Buster the Bully, Barry Stokes, Second African Series, Dr. Karnak, Mr. Smith, Third South Seas, Ezra Quirke, Moat Hollow, Barring Out, Schoolboy Actors.

Famous features appeared, such as "Between Ourselves" and the formation of the St. Franks League. The Lee in those days had the personal touch.

By the end of 1925, a further publication appeared featuring St. Franks called "The Monster Library". The first number appeared in November of that year entitled "The Schoolboy Treasure Seekers", a reprint of early Nelson Lee series which appeared in 1918. This time J.H. Valda was the artist not Arthur Jones. 19 copies of the Monster Library were issued and these have been given in an earlier C.D. Annual by Jack Murtagh.

If the reprints had started from the beginning of the Old Paper or the first St. Franks story, the paper perhaps would have had a longer life for no doubt it was a fine book.

It was the biggest monthly of school stories ever to be issued from the Amalgamated Press, once more proving the popularity of St. Franks.

As 1926 approached, circulation figures continued to rise and St. Franks continued with its success. Sales were higher than all its rival papers. In May 1926 it was decided to enlarge the Lee. The pages were to be bigger. The size was still not quite as big as the Magnet, Gem or Union Jack but slightly smaller than the Boys' Magazine.

No. 1 of the first new series was entitled "Sports Mad at St. Franks" and a short detective yarn featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper entitled "The Clue of the Crimson Dust" appeared.

The Nelson Lee was now in its heyday. Famous series appeared up to the end of 1928, such as "The China" series, Handforth Captain of the Remove, St. Franks on its Honour (Stand up figures of famous film stars were given away with this series - Harold Lloyd, Douglas Fairbanks Snr, Buster Keaton, Tom Mix, Charlie Chaplin), The Northestria series, Flood series, The Funk (Harry Gresham), Foes of St. Franks, Castleton, Church the Stricken Schoolboy (Jones disappeared with this series), Handforth's Barring Out, Fresh Air Fiends, St. Franks in the Congo, The Boot Boy Baronet.

In 1928 sales started to decline for some unknown reason as the stories at this time were excellent.

Halfway through that year there was to come a change in the Lee which was to affect its future and to begin its downward path.

PART 2

DECLINE AND FALL

After 13 years as editor of the Nelson Lee, Mr. Harold May retired. This was about June, 1928 and Alfred Edgar took over (who as Barre Lyndon became famous later in Hollywood as the creator of Dr. Clitterhouse, featuring Edward G. Robinson in the role).

Brooks and May had apparently got on very well and their relations were excellent. With Edgar, however, disagreements cropped up as to the policy of the Old Paper. He was full of new ideas which he wanted to introduce despite protests from Brooks. Figures further declined in the sales.

The series were still good such as St. Franks School Train, Australian Series, Downfall of Nipper, St. Franks in Arizona, Waldo the Wonder Boy, Return of Bernard Forrest, The Fu Chang Tong, Fenton's Uncle.

About this time, the Popular started to feature reprints of St. Franks stories starting with the Reggie Pitt series.

With the coming of the second new series on January 25, 1930, another editor apparently took over this time, Jimmy Cauldwell.

We now come to the worst period of the Lee from 1930 to end of 1931. With No. 1

"Rogues of the Green Triangle", St. Franks was destroyed, the Schoolboy Detective Academy was formed and the Lee became a shadow of itself. Kid's stuff was introduced, the illustrations were bad, and the whole paper was badly set up. It slowly reverted back to what it was in 1915, a detective paper but this time there were no Scott, Graydon, Teed or Hardy to assist. Brooks wrote under many names. With No. 15, St. Franks appeared being allotted only 8 pages. Brooks seemed to have lost interest as the stories were very poor. With No. 29 full length stories of St. Franks were introduced and up to the end of 1931 the stories were very weak.

With the commencement of a series called "The Whispering Peril", Brooks seemed to recover his form and apparently took more interest.

But with No. 112, a truly bad sign appeared, The Silver Dwarf series was featured for the third time. The Green Triangle was resurrected. The Editor now apparently was at his wits end as to what to give readers. The Lee fluctuated between school and detective stories week after week. At one period, reprints were introduced from the Sexton Blake Library. In these Sexton Blake became Nelson Lee, Tinker, Nipper, The Hon. J. Lawless, Lord Dorrimore. When reprints are introduced it is usually a sign that a paper is in jeopardy. The second new series concluded on February 18, 1933.

To inject new life into the Old Paper, still another new series appeared on February 25, 1933, again with reprints of an early St. Franks series; in fact the first, Nipper's Arrival at St. Franks in 1917. A truly bad omen. After this series finished, further complete stories, then a reprint of the China series of 1926 appeared. Why the reprints jumped from 1917 to 1926 is beyond understanding. The Editor seemed confused with no fixed policy. Now the old Lee was in dangerous waters. Circulation was poor, figures were dropping rapidly.

The writing was on the wall and the end was near.

The China series never finished. To wind up in the middle of a series, the position must have been hopeless.

With No. 25, third new series, saw the finish of the Lee, a paper which had appeared for over 18 years, a run to be proud of. It was amalgamated with the Gem.

Imagine Brooks' feelings. He saw the paper he had built up fall away to ruin. He was allotted a few pages at the back of the Gem. It was no wonder soon after he left the Amalgamated Press never to return except for a few detective stories of Sexton Blake he wrote later.

But although the Lee had gone, St. Franks was not yet finished. Three years later in 1936, due to many requests to the A.P. a third issue was added to the monthly Schoolboys' Own featuring St. Franks. These were reprints of the Nelson Lee commencing with "Fire at St. Franks" series in 1919. These stories continued right up to the demise of All Old Boys' Papers in 1940.

Was St. Franks a success?

Judging by the number of publications which featured St. Franks, which are listed later, it must have been for no firm will publish stories which do not have a popular appeal.

Whatever happened in the end, we can look back to the Nelson Lee's happier days and keep the memories of those good times when we looked forward to meeting the boys of St. Franks week by week.

It must be some consolation to Brooks and May to see that their efforts were not in vain and that the paper they had done so much to build up, the Nelson Lee, is as much sought after by collectors as any other Old Boys' Papers today.

NELSON LEE LIBRARY

FIRST SERIES	:	June 12, 1915 to April 23, 1926	568 copies
FIRST LARGE SERIES	:	May 1, 1926 to January 18, 1930	194 "
SECOND " "	:	January 25, 1930 to February 18, 1933	161 "
THIRD " "	:	February 25, 1933 to August 12, 1933	25 "

EDITORS

Mr. Harold May	1915 to 1928
Mr. Alfred Edgar	1928 to 1930 (approx.)
Mr. H.T. Cauldwell	1930 to 1933

AUTHORS

Maxwell Scott	(Early Detective only)
G.H. Teed	" " "
A.S. Hardy	" " "
W.M. Graydon	" " "
E.S. Brooks	(Detective and all St. Franks)

ARTISTS

Arthur Jones	(Detective and St. Franks)
Val Reading	(Detective)
E.E. Briscoe	(Nipper's Magazine, Public Schools)
R.J. Macdonald	
Kenneth Brookes	
Saville Lumley	
Fred Bennett	(Adventure only)

OTHER PAPERS FEATURING ST. FRANKS

- Boys' Realm
- Boys' Friend Library
- Pluck (1922)
- Nugget Library
- Nugget Weekly
- Popular
- Monster Library
- Schoolboys' Own
- Greyfriars Annual
- Union Jack (The Flashlight Clue No. 777)
- Gem

AUTHORS OF "FUN AND FICTION" AND "BULLSEYE"

BY W.O.G. LOFTS

Foreword

This article is intended to reveal the authors of the above papers for the very first time. Practically all the tales in "Fun and Fiction" were anonymous, and none were given in the "Bullseye" at all. I do claim that the data in this article is 100% authentic, as it has been my pleasure to meet several times the former Editor of "Fun and Fiction" and a former member of the "Bullseye" staff, now a senior Editor at the Amalgamated Press. Also, this article I hope answers all Eric Copeman's queries which arose out of his most interesting article in the 1958 C.D. Annual.

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"Would you like to meet my good friend Captain A. Donnelly Aitken?" asked a well-known writer of boys stories some time ago. "He was Editor of the old 'Fun and Fiction' and could give you some very interesting information on this paper".

Knowing of the keen interest shown by many collectors, and especially Bill Gander in his S.P.C. on this old periodical, I certainly met Captain Aitken several times down Fleet Street, and during our conversation the following facts came to light.

"Fun and Fiction" grew out of an idea of Fred Cordwell who was a controlling editor at the Amalgamated Press in the 1911 period. He had under his control such comics as "Butterfly", "The Favourite Comic", "Merry and Bright" etc. There was an editor in charge of each of the papers, and Captain Aitken had the new "Fun and Fiction" under his command. This paper was not, I repeat not, considered to be a juvenile paper - it was meant to cater for readers of all ages.

Now the author who created the series of tales about "The Woman with the Black Heart" was a Walter Purchase, who was a member of the editorial staff, later he became Editor of that wonderful coloured comic "Puck". Later tales of this series were written by Harold Mansfield, Captain Aitken, and other writers on the staff. Now, some explanation is needed here, as my good friend Len Packman made a statement in the January C.D. to the effect that the late Hugh Fennell had created this series of stories. In contacting Captain Aitken to confirm his information, he confessed that he had never heard of Hugh Fennell before! and he most certainly knew every writer connected at the A.P. during this period. Captain Aitken also emphasised that all his data must be correct, as he has at home in his library all the original file copies, with authors names etc.

"His Convict Bride" which was the chief serial, was written entirely by Herbert A. Allingham, father of the present day famous crime authoress Marjorie Allingham. He was also the highest paid writer at the A.P. in those days.

The "Adam Daunt" detective series was started by Harold Mansfield, and later

written by a team of writers including Captain Aitken.

"The Firefighters" series was written by a member of our own circle Sir Frederick Bowman of Liverpool, though in those days he was called just H.U. Bowman.

"Kiss, the Iron Beetle" series written mostly by W.B. Home-Gall; later tales by the editorial staff.

"The Sign of the Twisted Tooth" a series on the lines of the "Four Just Men" started by E. Newton Bungay, later ones by Captain Aitken.

"No Mother to Guide Her" the series written by Walter Purchase.

"Behind the Scenes" series. Film adventures. Written by H.U. Bowman. (Now of course Sir Frederick).

"Footlight Favourite" series of music hall interviews started by Captain Aitken, later other writers, and lastly the comic story weekly was written by Alec Kemp a member of the staff.

These were the principal stories and serials, other data I can let any reader have on request. Towards the end of its run for some reason or other some authors' names did appear, and they included such names as "Christopher Beck", "Clive R. Fenn", "Henry St. John" and several others, all of whom are known to me.

Now of the artists. Two principal ones illustrated most of the tales and covers, foremost was J. Louis Smythe, an Irishman, who in my opinion was really far superior in art work than most of the other artists working at the A.P. at that period. A small slight figure, he was very much a lone wolf, and was considered by many to be wasting his talent on the 'blood' papers. One of Captain Aitken's jobs was to make a very rough sketch of an incident he had devised for the cover, and Louis Smythe used to make the finished product.

The second artist was George William Wakefield, whose style to my mind is unmistakable by the cherub faces he puts to his characters; many readers of Rookwood tales in the "Boys Friend" will remember his drawings. A very big man, he was a clever boxer in his younger days, and must have had the most unusual style ever for the way in which he used to illustrate. Captain Aitken who watched him many a time said that he "drew all the background first, penned it in with ink, then drew the central figures last"!

Bill Wakefield died some years ago, and has a son with a very similar style illustrating in "Film Fun".

That was most of the information I gleaned on the old "Fun and Fiction". Captain Aitken served with great distinction in the first World War, and despite a very severe disability on the loss of an arm, returned to Fleet Street and later became Editor of "Chums". Later still he joined the Newnes group where he has stayed now for over 35 years.

* * * * *

Twenty years later Fred Cordwell was still at the Amalgamated Press and in charge of quite a few papers. These now included such new ones as "Film Fun", "Kinema Comic" and others of that ilk. Always on the lookout for new ideas he suddenly thought of a new paper for the boys market to be called "Bullseye", whereas the old "Fun and Fiction" was aimed at the general public, this new one would be for boys, and the stories to have more of a boyish flavour. The style and presentation would be very similar to that of the old "Fun and Fiction" and with several of the staff, and the two principal artists, Bill Wakefield and Louis Smythe still there it was not to

be wondered at that they would be chosen to illustrate most of the contents - like they had so done before.

This I think answers Eric's question as to the "mixture as before". The plain fact was that Fred Cordwell was the controlling editor of both the "Fun and Fiction" and "Bullseye". With quite a number of the illustrations and stories retouched, so to speak, which was paid for I imagine at a cheaper rate, one cannot in a way blame the A.P. for producing a new paper at very low costs. After all, this was to be a new paper for boys, many if not all, were not born when the old "Fun and Fiction" ceased.

We must remember that we are collectors of many of the old papers, and can compare rehashes of old tales at our leisure; I can't really imagine any Editor thinking of a boy say of 14 buying a "Bullseye" and saying "This was done twenty years before".

"I was sick" said the editor. "I was real sick - believe me. I shall always remember the time the first "Bullseye" came out, as I was a junior sub-editor at the time, and we had piled up in the office copies of the No. 1. Inside each copy was a bar of toffee, given away free, to draw boys attention to the paper. I don't think that there were many free bars of toffee left shortly afterwards in the office! but that is really my most vivid recollection of the "Bullseye"."

Now the principal authors of "Bullseye" were Alfred Edgar and A. Carney Allen, the former author writing no less than three different tales each week.

"The Phantom of Cursitor Fields" was written entirely by Alfred Edgar - who also started off the famous "The House of Thrills" which was later written by Fred Cordwell and other writers. "Octavius Kay" or "O.K." was also one of Edgar's yarns in the series in which they illustrated with photographs. "Out of the Past" a serial, was written by Vincent Price, of whom I know very little. "Fetters of Fate" written by Herbert Allingham was of course a rehash of the old "His Convict Bride".

From the runs achieved by many boys papers, I don't suppose that one could call the "Bullseye" a success, most certainly it ran for just after a year longer than the old "Fun and Fiction", but I don't think the A.P. did so badly out of it, with very cheap production costs etc.

In closing I would like to answer some of Eric's queries, which may of course be interesting to other readers of his article.

The ideas of the illustrations came from the editorial staff in both cases. As already explained in the fore of this article - Captain Aitken used to draw a very rough sketch of a happening in one of the tales, and the artist was requested to illustrate it. Fred Cordwell used to do the same for the "Bullseye".

The gripping new serial "Fetters of Fate" an obvious rehash of the old "His Convict Bride" was I suppose fairly called 'new' to a new generation of readers.

This I hope will clear up the mystery for all time surrounding the two papers, and any points which are still uncertain to the reader I would be pleased to answer.

heard in Magnet No. 2., but as a direct contrast the advent of Mark Linley (Magnet No. 45) was reminiscent of those earlier school stories in which the new boy was beset by all manner of trials and tribulations, but fortunately at Greyfriars the majority of his form-mates were decent types. With the later introduction of Dick Penfold (Magnet No. 194) it was a case of "this is where we came in". Strange how many "new kids" had a fight on their hands first day!

Outside the Greyfriars Remove, the only other notable "regulars" appear to be Dicky Nugent of the Second Form, a spoilt child who caused his brother Frank and others much anxiety before he finally settled down, and Aubrey Angel who retained his supercilious attitude throughout.

One could go right through the arrivals of the boys in the Greyfriars Remove, each individual being an interesting character study, but in the writer's humble opinion only three of the remainder are worthy of mention. They are "Squiff" (S.Q.I. Field), Tom Brown and Tom Redwing. Perhaps one could also say that Kipps, Dick Rake and Sir Jimmy Vivian were worthy of inclusion, but in the latter case I am rather sceptical of these poor boys who eventually turn out to be relatives of the aristocracy. So much then for Greyfriars!

What about St. Jim's. Shades of Talbot and Ralph Reckness Cardew! Their arrival did much to boost the circulation of "The Gem". Perhaps the one new boy whose appearance on the scene seemed to stand out above all the rest was Reginald Talbot, "The Toff" to you). He certainly entered the school in dramatic fashion (the theme only to be later repeated in "The Lancaster Series" in The Magnet) and he reminds one of the famous film caption "Retained by popular demand". The entry of the whimsical Cardew was indeed a master-stroke on the part of Martin Clifford for "The Gem" then seemed to have every type of boy represented. What a character is Cardew! His actions, nonchalance, perverseness, and even insolence are a delight to read; to say nothing of those clichés and expressions used by him. However, I will not dwell upon the manner of his arrival as all this has been described before by a fellow contributor.

Of course Tom Merry with his velvet suit, doting guardian, and his gullibility made for the perfect type of "new kid", but the way in which Tom overcame all his early difficulties made most interesting reading. Far different was the arrival of Wally D'Arcy in Gem No. 37, for here was a lad full of self-assurance.

In the case of Harry Noble (Kangaroo) it was a matter of "Nobody's Study" for him for he was not made very welcome and actually shared three studies before being eventually fixed up with Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, (both fairly new boys at the time).

A little propitious was the arrival of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, but he was an old hand - no new boy nerves about him. I often thought it was a mistake to neglect him - he might have given "The Bounder" a good run for his money - but perhaps we can't have too much of a good thing. We certainly had too much of a bad thing when Baggy Trimble arrived on the scene. We already had Fatty Wynn, and as a counterpart of Bunter Trimble was a failure in the writer's opinion. We had to have scholarship boys at St. Jim's, so the New House fraternity of Redfern, Owen and Lawrence filled the bill.

The St. Jim's saga would not be complete without the introduction of George Alfred Grundy ("I used to whop 'em at Redcliffe"), but he savoured too much of Horace Coker for my liking, and perhaps the only new boys worthy of mention may be "Harry

Hammond" (good series this), Koumi Rao, and Kit Wildrake, the latter being renowned for his sagacity). To complete the picture let us have the two Minors - Reggie Manners and Frank Levison, both typical examples of "new kids".

Thus we come to the end of those destined to remain until the end of our Companion Papers, but I hardly think the list would be complete without a mention of Frank Courtenay's arrival at Highcliffe. Here the "new kid" had to face snobbery in all its worst forms, (Boys' Friend 3d. Library No. "The Boy Without a Name"). Although this yarn is reminiscent of the school tale by Dean Farrar entitled "St. Winifred's", it is considered by many to be one of Frank Richards' finest. The sequel story was almost as good.

Rookwood has very little to offer in the way of new boys, for in the cases of Kit Errol, Jimmy Silver and Valentine Mornington it seems to be a case of repetition. The same applies to Clarence Cuffey. Nevertheless I am a great admirer of Rookwood, for we haven't so many characters to deal with and I like the setting.

What then of the "temporary" new boys? There were so many of them, particularly in "The Magnet", that one hardly knows where to begin, and whom to include or leave out. Quite a few of them were allocated to Study No. 1 and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent must have despaired every time a newcomer joined the Remove. Perhaps the greatest of these "intruders" was Ralph Stacey, whose likeness and enmity of Harry Wharton produced one of the finest of all Magnet Series to flow from "The Master's" pen (or should it be Remington). How different a character was Gilbert Tracy, who loathed being at the school, and tried to leave it. Now we have Smithy with a "double" - one Bertie Vernon - and like Stacey a good cricketer. Oh, and Tom Merry had to have a "double" (Reggie Clavering), but we overlook the improbable fact that they were not even twins in any case, because we enjoyed the "situations".

Then we had "Flip" and "Skip", "Tatters" and Mick the Gipsy, to say nothing of "Ragged Dick", all characters with a lowly background. I admit that Frank Richards suffered from repetition here, but how was he to guess that the same readers would continue to revel in his fine school tales for so many years.

Cousins appeared on the scene, such as Arthur Carter, who tried to get Billy Bunter expelled, Edgar Caffyn who tried unsuccessfully to do the same thing to Horace Coker. Form-masters had nephews thrust upon them, but none were much good except perhaps Eric Wilmot (Mr. Hacker's nephew) and Victor Cleeve (Mr. Railton's nephew).

Bullies and pugulists, such as Burkitt, Drury ("The Game Kid") and Oliver Lynn were numbered amongst new boys, but none made such an impact as Valentine Outram in "The Gem". (Martin Clifford at his dramatic best).

In lighter vein we have Clarence Carboy, the joker of the Remove, Pedrillo of the Circus, who wasn't exactly "Hobson's choice". Sidney Troop who owned a racehorse, Horace Barber the conjurer and Roger Quelch, another practical joker.

We had twins, the Castletons (one at St. Jim's and the other at St. Franks); the Wraysons (one at Rylcombe Grammar School and the other at St. Jim's). We also had Handforth at St. Jim's, Jack Drake at Greyfriars, Lacy at the Grammar School who tried to expose Cardew in a bad light on leaving his old school (Wodehouse), and we also had Babbington of Rookwood who was ragged on arrival by Pankley & Co. There were even three new boys named Lee, (Len, Jim and Angelo) but they had nothing in common except

their surname.

Perhaps the most outstanding of the remainder were Da Costa and Dallas who had feuds with Harry Wharton and the Bounder respectively, and Dick Lancaster, the school-boy cracksman who featured in a fine series. Although similar in theme to the Talbot stories in the Gem, he was a more probable character, being a senior.

New Kids! There seemed hundreds of them!

I haven't mentioned Jim Valentine, Devarney the Jew, Crum the hypnotist, Jim Warren, that toad Edgar Bright, Beauclerc, Valentine Compton, Eric Lorne, Carlow (who had a feud with Frank Nugent) and others. Personally I had no time for Archie Howell, Putnam Van Duck or Cyrus P. Handcock for obvious reasons, and here comment would be superfluous.

To sum up. New Kids were always interesting, and I expect on arrival were bombarded with such questions as:

What's your name?
 What Form are you in?
 Is this your first Public School?
 Got any tuck?
 Got any cash?

Doubtless many of them were relieved of most of their financial resources (particularly if Bunter was around) on their first day.

Having dealt with so many "new kids" I feel like Mr. Chips, and can only crave the reader's indulgence if I've missed any out or made any errors or omissions in my facts. You and I, dear reader, may have forgotten our first day at school, but after all we were "new kids" ourselves once. I wonder how we felt at the time. Alas, the days of our youth are gone too soon!

Perhaps it is only fitting to conclude with the title of another Harrow School song ... "Forty Years On". There will still be "New Kids" then going to Public Schools for the first time.

HOLIDAY ANNUALS WANTED - 1920 - 1921 - 1922 and 1923

MAGNETS WANTED - 14, 17, 19, 20, 28, 33, 34, 35, 40, 49, 59, 95, 352, 367, 368, 392, 395, 402, 403, 406, 418, 422, 423, 433, 437, 438, 456, 461, 496, 497, 513, 515, 516, 520, 525, 526, 540, 576 to 612: 1169 to 1174: 1354 to 1358 and 1659 to 1675.

GEMS WANTED - 167, 168, 297, 298, 299, 349, 351, 359, 375, 407, 441(?) Too Closer by Half, (?) Barred by the School, (?) A Pal in Peril, (?) Looking for Trouble, 510, (?) The Schoolboy Hun, (?) Cardew's Chum, (?) Son of a Sailor. All letters in reply to advert will be answered.

F.S. CATTERALL, 17, ADRIAN STREET, PALMYRA, W.A.

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"Tom Merry CAVALCADE"

"This is the paper my own lad
loves, Mrs. Venner."

Grand, Complete School Tale.

THE GEM LIBRARY $\frac{1}{2}$ P. PRICE

ST. JIM'S CURATE.



THE CURATE
GAVE FOUR
BOYS A HAND
A SQUEAL THAT
PROVED THAT MOR-
GUEAN DEVELOP-
MENT WAS NO
BOODS STRONG
POINT.

SOLD AGAIN!
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NO. 61 VOL. I.

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

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A RAIDER DOWN!

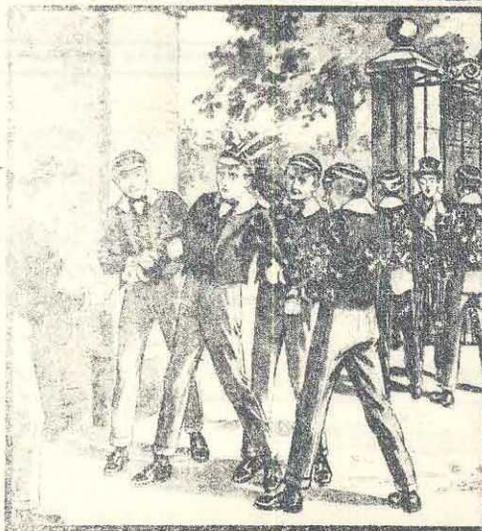
"Blake catches a Boche near
the school. Not bad - but
not up to the old standard."

"See that picture, ma'am! Those
boys are sticking white feathers
all over Outram."

UNDER CUSSY'S PROTECTION!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life at St. Jim's.

THE GEM LIBRARY $\frac{1}{2}$ P. PRICE



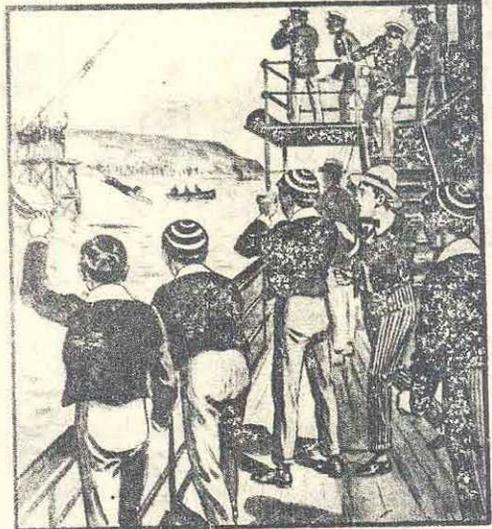
WHITE FEATHERS FOR THE FUNK!

(An Exciting Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale in this issue.)

"A Game with Time"

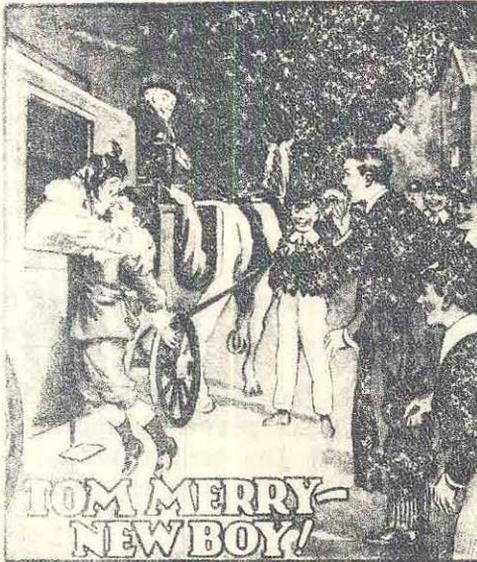
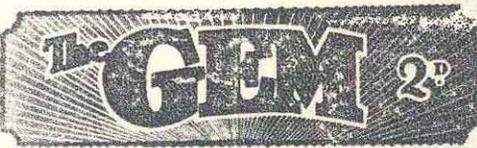
There it was to-day, its white cover showing a crowd of boys on a steamer.

SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY INSIDE!



TOM MERRY'S ATTEMPT TO SWIM THE CHANNEL!
(An incident from the grand long complete story of the Boys of St. Jim's.)

TOM MERRY GOES TO SCHOOL IN VELVETEENS! SEE INSIDE!

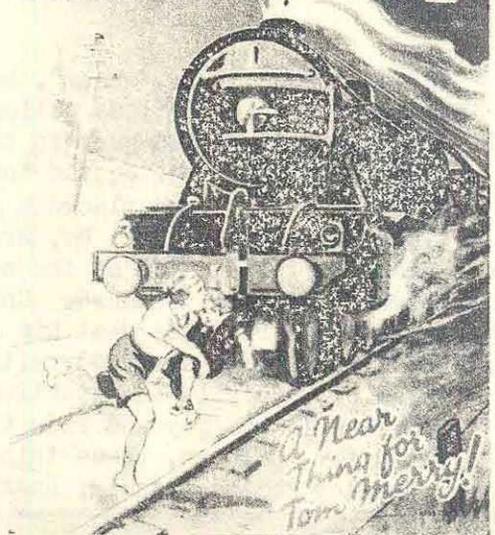


TOM MERRY - NEWBOY!

"This week's story is 'Tom Merry - New Boy,' and I first read it in 1907."

8 SCHOOL YARNS AND GRAND FREE GIFTS INSIDE!

8 FREE GIFT PICTURES



"A Near Thing for Tom Merry!"

"Do you remember this story, Lizzie? It was once called 'The Scamps of the School.'"

A Game

By Eric Fayne

with Time

TOM MERRY
CAVALCADE

1907

The gaily-decorated tram-car slid to a halt outside the shop of Leslie Chadley, newsagent and bookseller. A lady and a small boy alighted, and, with a mellow sound from its gong, the tram was away again, moving smoothly and quietly over its new, even tracks.

Mrs. Venner clasped the child's hand, and moved towards the newsagent's shop, pausing only to stroke the sleek neck of the horse which was harnessed to a baker's cart against the kerb. The animal blinked at her over the top of the nosebag from which it was munching contentedly, and swished its tail to disturb the flies which had been attracted to its sweating back in the warm June sunshine.

Leslie Chadley, seated behind his counter, looked over-dressed for the heat of the summer afternoon, though his Norfolk jacket was unfastened, showing the dark waistcoat which he wore underneath. A bow tie adorned the high stiff collar which encircled his neck. At thirty, Chadley had built up a prosperous little business, and he attributed much of his success to the fact that he paid attention to his personal appearance. In Chadley's view, to have dispensed with his jacket, even with the temperature over seventy, would have been slovenly. He rose to his feet as his customers entered the shop.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Venner", he said.

The small boy, in spotless sailor suit and a straw hat which bore the insignia 'H.M.S. Dreadnought', darted over to the counter.

He announced: "We rode on the top of a new tram, Mr. Chad".

His mother smiled, and placed a gloved hand on the child's shoulder. She said: "What a blessing the trams will be, Mr. Chadley - and how splendid they look to-day, all decorated for the opening of the service!"

"You're right, Mrs. Venner". Chadley glanced through the window as another flag-bedecked electric car hummed past his shop. "I hear the Mayor drove the first tram this morning. I suppose everybody will be riding now, though there is some complaint that the fare of $\frac{3}{4}$ d a mile is extortionate".

"I shall walk one way and ride the other", said Mrs. Venner, practically. "Even with $\frac{1}{2}$ d fares for children, these things mount up".

Mr. Chadley smiled broadly, as though the idea were absurd that any of his

customers should find it necessary to count their coppers.

"And what can I get for you, Mrs. Venner?"

"I don't know whether you can help me, Mr. Chadley, but Chris is beginning to read a little. I thought that perhaps you would recommend a paper which I could buy for him regularly". She scrutinised the periodicals displayed on the counter, and added hastily: "Nothing - nothing at all which his father, if he were home, might think nasty". She shook her head, and the artificial cherries rattled on her huge hat.

"Well--" Chadley rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Some kiddies like comics - 'Chips' or 'Comic Cuts' - but I hardly think ----"

"I am sure my husband would not approve of comics, Mr. Chadley".

"No?" Chadley drew a blue-covered periodical from a stack on the counter.

"This is the paper my own lad loves, Mrs. Venner".

Mrs. Venner took it, scanned the cover, and read out the name: "'The Gem'. A ha'penny paper, I see". She shook her head again dubiously. "Can so cheap a production be suitable for a gentleman's son, Mr. Chadley?"

"The contents are not cheap, I can assure you, madam", said Chadley, mildly.

"How old is your lad, Mr. Chadley?"

"Ronnie? He's ten".

"My Chris is not yet seven. I fear this 'Gem' would be far beyond him, Mr. Chadley".

"Maybe". Chadley smiled. "If you could spare the time, Mrs. Venner, you might read it aloud to him. You'd find that he'd be so keen on it that in next to no time he would be reading it for himself. One way to make the youngster anxious to read, madam".

"A school story, I see. Do you think the moral tone of such a story is good, Mr. Chadley?"

"Excellent! Ronnie models himself on Tom Merry, the chief character, and I'm delighted that he does. Chris would do the same".

"Stand still, darling. Don't suck your lanyard, dear - you'll spoil your suit". Mrs. Venner eyed the Gem once more. "I see this story is entitled 'The St. Jim's Curate'. Does that sound rather like high Church, Mr. Chadley? We are strict Baptists, though it may not matter a lot".

Mr. Chadley laughed.

"A mere detail, Mrs. Venner. The stories are not religious, though they teach a fine moral code to all boys. In that tale, it just happens that a clergyman is a splendid cricketer". Chadley turned over the cover of the Gem, and indicated an illustration showing a handsome young man hitting out with a cricket bat.

"I'll take it, Mr. Chadley. There's your 'Gem', darling - if you like it, you shall have it every week". She opened her purse. "And a penny bar of Fry's chocolate, Mr. Chadley. Can you change half-a-sovereign?"

As Mrs. Venner left the shop, with Christopher clutching the blue-covered periodical, Chadley heard the child's voice raised shrilly: "Let's tram it home, Mummy".

1908

The buxom young woman with the threadbare coat which she had fastened high in the neck to keep out the chill October wind, placed a penny on the counter.

She said: "I've called for Master Christopher's 'Gem', Mr. Chadley".

The blue-covered paper was placed before her, and Chadley said: "It's called 'D'Arcy Minor' this week, Lizzie. Gussy's young brother has come to St. Jim's".

"That Gussy!" Lizzie giggled. "I love him. He'll be the death of me. The way he talks, too".

"I thought the 'Magnet' was your paper, Lizzie".

"Oh, yes, I buy the 'Magnet' meself, but I read young Master Chris's 'Gems'. I really like the 'Gem' best, Mr. Chadley, but I can't afford to buy a penny weekly. Not on £15 a year, living in!"

Chadley shook his head, in silent agreement.

"Course, £15 a year is not to be sneezed at, Mr. Chadley", went on Lizzie. "Mrs. Venner's a nice lady to work for, too, and the kid's not too much of a handful. The Major's a bit of an old faggot, but he's away in India. He's coming home next year".

Chadley opened his mouth to make a comment, but the garrulous young woman gave him no chance. "The Missis is so pleased the Liberals are back in power again, Mr. Chadley. 'Dear Mr. Asquith', she says, all the time, 'dear Mr. Asquith!' Are you a Liberal, Mr. Chadley?"

Chadley said, diplomatically: "That's a leading question, Lizzie. I always say the only man who went to parliament with good intentions was a Mr. Guy Fawkes".

Lizzie looked doubtfully at him for a moment, and then burst into a peal of laughter. "You're a proper caution, Mr. Chadley. Is young Ronnie better? He's had measles, hasn't he?"

"Whooping cough! Yes, he's better now, Lizzie. He didn't mind staying at home from school. It gave him time to read his old Tom Merry tales over again".

The incandescent gas burner over the counter flickered as the door opened and another customer entered. Lizzie turned away.

"I must be off, Mr. Chadley. I shall get the sack if I stand here talking to you. Good night, Mr. Chadley".

Another moment and she was gone. The latest customer stared as Chadley grabbed up the blue-covered paper, dashed round the counter, and tore the door open.

"Lizzie", he shouted, "you've left 'D'Arcy Minor' behind".

1909

Major Venner strode into the newsagent's shop. He was a tall, thin man, sporting a small black moustache. The way he wore his curly-brimmed bowler hat, perched on the back of his head, suggested that he was unaccustomed to wearing such mundane headgear.

Mary Chadley was in charge of the shop this morning in mid-summer, and she looked enquiringly at her customer.

"I am Major Venner. I understand that you supply the newspapers to my home in the Avenue".

"Yes, sir". The newsagent's wife smiled politely. "You have called for your small son's 'Gem'? Here it is, sir. One penny".

"I have not called for my small son's 'Gem'", said Major Venner, grimly. "My son will be reading no more blood and thunder rags. I have called to instruct your husband that if I ever learn that he again sells periodicals of this class, either to my son or to any member of my family, we shall cease to be customers at this shop. Will you kindly make that clear to your husband?"

"Really, sir!" Mrs. Chadley bristled. "The 'Gem' is not a blood and thunder paper - it is a good-class magazine. My husband encourages our own son to read it, and we know it does him nothing but good".

"What is adequate for your son, madam, is not good enough for mine", said Major Venner.

"Your wife has always approved of the paper, sir".

"With all respect to you, madam, women have no literary appreciation. You know my wishes - my commands. You will carry them out, or lose the custom of my family".

As he turned away, Mary Chadley said: "Major Venner, have you ever read the 'Gem'?"

"Read the 'Gem'? Certainly not!"

Mrs. Chadley sighed deeply. She said: "Gentlemen have a sense of justice - that is why they are so superior to weak women. I know that you, Major, would never condemn a paper unless you had read it".

"I have already told you, madam, that I have never read a paper of this description".

"But you will read it, Major". Mrs. Chadley fluttered her eyelashes in a way that had conquered stronger men than Major Venner. "You are fair and honourable, and you believe in justice. You will read the 'Gem', and if you like it, as I believe you will, you won't prevent your young son from enjoying it. But, if you don't like it, I promise you that we will never supply it again to any member of your family".

Major Venner breathed hard. Before he could speak, Mrs. Chadley placed the blue Gem on the counter before him.

He read out the title of the story: "'The Terrible Three's Air Cruise'". He glanced at her sharply. "The Terrible Three! What are they? Brigands? Cut-throats?"

"No, no, sir. They are schoolboys, and real terrors they are in a way, though they are the soul of honour. Really fine lads, just like Master Chris will be when he reaches their age". Mrs. Chadley continued, drawing freely on her imagination: "'The Terrible Three's Air Cruise' is topical, sir. You know a Frenchman flew the Channel yesterday ----"

"Bleriot? Of course. People are talking of little else".

"The 'Gem' is always topical, sir, so boys who read it learn a lot while enjoying a first-class story. Actually, my husband does not think that the regular writer, Martin Clifford, wrote that tale. I suppose even authors have to take a rest sometimes, though they do their work sitting. But I have here a copy of last week's story, 'Skimpole's Discovery'. That is more like the usual run of story in the 'Gem'. Please take them both, Major, with our compliments".

Major Venner placed twopence on the counter.

"I will take them both, madam, but not with your compliments --- and if I do not like them, madam ----"

"You will", Mrs. Chadley said, demurely. She fluttered her eyelashes again, and the army man's face crumpled into a crusty smile as he left the shop.

1910

"They caught him as a result of a wireless message", said Mrs. Venner.

"Truly wonderful", agreed Mr. Chadley. "Wireless will make crime unpopular - and will take all the peril out of sea travel".

"Do you think he will be found guilty, Mr. Chadley?"

Chadley shrugged his shoulders.

He said: "I see they expect the verdict to-night. There's not much doubt that he will hang".

"Poor little man". Mrs. Venner shook her head sadly. "It was a terrible thing to do - to kill his wife and cut her up, though it seems she was a dreadful woman. That Le Neve girl was to blame, and men are so weak - so very weak".

Chadley coughed. He drew a Gem from the pile, and laid it before his customer. He said: "A grand St. Jim's story this week, Mrs. Venner - 'A Shadow in the School'. It's very sad indeed. Lumley-Lumley dies at the finish, and Tom Merry cries. We never thought that Tom would ever cry over the Outsider, did we?"

"Oh!" Mrs. Venner's voice was hushed. "The Major will be sorry. Lumley-Lumley was a bad boy, but the Major says he had a lot of good in him. What a pity he had to die!"

She slipped the blue-covered paper into her muff, and went out into the October

sunshine.

1911

"My daddy was marching in the procession", said Chris. "The Queen waved at me as the coach went by, and the King smiled at me. It was a ripping procession".

Ronnie Chadley grinned. He said, with all the superiority of his fourteen years: "I bet the King smiled at everyone - not at you in particular. Don't you think that our shop is the best decorated in the whole road, Chris? My father spent a sovereign on hunting".

"It's pretty good", concurred Chris. He picked up the Gem, and placed his penny on the counter. "'Coronation Day at St. Jim's' - I bet Tom Merry and Gussy spent more than a sovereign on decorations, Ron".

Ronnie sniffed.

"They got their money when they went to the South Seas - they found a treasure out there, and saved the reward for their Coronation party". He leaned over the counter. "My father is taking mother and me to America next year. Perhaps I'll find a treasure in America".

"Will you be able to buy the 'Gem' in America?" asked Chris, curiously. "I wouldn't want to go anywhere where I couldn't buy the 'Gem'".

1912

"A real thriller this week", said Mr. Chadley. "Right up your street, Major. A Hindu comes to St. Jim's and tries to kill Tom Merry".

Major Venner exchanged his penny for the Gem, and glanced through the paper. "'Tom Merry's Peril'", he said, quoting the title of the story. "That fellow Clifford certainly knows his geography. A remarkable man - I'd like to meet him". He folded the Gem, and slipped it into his pocket. "I hear we're losing you, Chadley".

The newsagent smiled self-consciously.

"I've been saving up for years, Major. My wife has a brother in New York, and at last I've saved enough for us to go out and join him there. I shall miss England, but America is the land of opportunity, so they say".

Major Venner grunted non-committally.

"Mrs. Chadley and my boy sailed yesterday, Major. Maiden voyage of the largest and most wonderful ship afloat". Chadley chuckled and rubbed his hands. "Third-class, of course, but third-class on the Titanic is better than first-class on most of the others. I shall follow on in about a month - I've got to wind up the sale of this shop during the next few weeks".

The Major regarded the newsagent with a new respect.

"It's something to be proud of - getting your family passages on the Titanic", he said. "There's an article on the ship in to-day's 'Morning Leader' - man claims that even God couldn't sink the Titanic".

"It'll be a bit of an anti-climax if she springs a leak when she gets to New York", suggested Chadley.

And both men laughed heartily.

1913

"I'm a suffragette, Mr. Chadley", said Lizzie Bland.

"Are you, Lizzie? Good for you!" said the newsagent.

"Militant, of course! I speak at meetings on my afternoons off - and I once threw some flour at a policeman". Lizzie giggled reminiscently. "Mind you, I wouldn't

do anything like that woman who chucked herself under the King's horse at the Derby last week. That sort of thing is proper daft, don't you think?"

"Poor soul!" Chadley ran his fingers through his grey-flecked hair. "She gave her life for no purpose, Lizzie. People do not get what they want by hysterical actions of that kind".

"What's Tom Merry up to this week, Mr. Chadley? Young Chris is away at boarding school, and I've got to save the 'Gem' for him every week so that he can read them all when he comes home for his holidays".

Chadley took the proffered penny, and handed over the blue-covered Gem. He said: "A fine tale this week, Lizzie - 'The Scamps of the School'. The Terrible Three get up to all the pranks under the sun. They nearly get landed for a flogging - and they deserve it - but Tom saves a wee kid from being run over by a train, so they're all let off punishment".

"Good old Tom". Lizzie tucked the Gem in her enormous black handbag. "I'll read that to-night, wasting the master's gas, as the old sausage pleases to call it". She sniffed. "Well, I'm off to the pictures, Mr. Chadley. I always go in the afternoon, when they give you a free cup of tea and a Thin Lunch biscuit. It's Henry Edwards and Chrissie White in a drama - I forget what it's called - and there's a Keystone comedy. Those Keystone comics fair make me split my sides".

1914

"I'm recalled to the Colours", said Major Venner, "so you won't be seeing me about for a time. I report at Aldershot tomorrow".

Leslie Chadley lowered the blind in the window of his shop, and turned out one of the gas burners. It was ten-thirty, and closing time. He turned and regarded his last customer of the day.

He asked: "Do you think there is really going to be a war, sir?"

"I don't know, Chadley". The Major's face was grave. "Germany has been preparing for years - the whole country is a giant arsenal. They may be mad enough to start something. If they do, they will be committing suicide. We shall whip them in six months at the longest. At any rate, England is mobilising - and anything may happen. Give me a late 'Star' - and the 'Gem'".

"Another Talbot story this week - 'The Parting of the Ways' - the title's quite appropriate to the international situation, isn't it?" Chadley smiled faintly. "It says at the finish that St. Jim's won't see Talbot again. I'm not really sorry. I liked the Toff tales, but enough's as good as a feast".

"I must admit that I like the Toff", said Major Venner. "I hope we haven't seen the last of him". He held out his hand, and the newsagent gripped it. "Good-bye, Chadley, in case I don't see you for a long time. Let's hope a war won't come, though it will be a bit of mild excitement if it does".

"Good-bye, sir - and good luck", said Chadley.

He locked the shop door after his customer, tore the date, July 31st, off the large calendar behind his counter, and then moved slowly into his silent sitting-room to prepare his lonely supper.

1915

"Do you like the 'United Kingdom' series, Mr. Chadley?" asked Chris Venner. Nearly fifteen years old, he was an attractive youngster in his straw hat and his dark blue blazer with the light blue piping.

"Oh, it's pretty good", said the newsagent. "'A Son of Wales' this week - all about Fatty Wynn. Whom do you reckon they'll have to represent England, Master Chris?"

"Tom Merry for England, of course", said Chris, stoutly. "Who else?"

"Well, Tom Merry has been rather in the background lately", observed Chadley.

"All the same, I bet you it will be Tom Merry for England", said Chris. He picked up the blue-covered paper. "That train crash near Gretna Green was awful, wasn't it? They say that hundreds of soldiers were killed, though it's been hushed up".

"Terrible", agreed the newsagent, "but terrible things happen in war-time, Master Chris. The sinking of the Lusitania last week, for instance. That might even bring America into the war".

Chris grimaced. He said: "Nothing will bring the Yanks into the war - they're too proud to fight. Aren't you glad you didn't go to America after all, Mr. Chad?"

Chadley said, in a low voice: "If Ronnie had lived, he might have been fighting the Germans by now".

A young woman, a paper flag in her hand and a look of determination on her face, strode into the shop.

"Good afternoon", said Chadley. "What can I get for you, Miss?"

"Nothing!" The young woman glared at him. "But you can answer a question for me. Why aren't you in khaki?"

Chadley's jaw dropped, and Chris gazed at her in astonishment.

"I have a present for you, Mr. Bookseller", the young woman added. She threw something down among the pile of papers on the counter. Then, deliberately, she spat on the floor, and flounced out of the shop.

Chadley stood staring at the small object which she had dropped upon the illustration of Fatty Wynn on the cover of the blue Gem.

It was a white feather.

1916

Lizzie Bland, once a housemaid in the Venner home, slipped a placard under the wire of the frame outside the newsagent's shop. She stood back, and read the announcement in large black print on the white paper: "H.M.S. Hampshire sunk at sea. Lord Kitchener Drowned".

Lizzie, face sombre, was turning to enter the shop, when she felt a touch on her shoulder, and she found Mrs. Venner by her side.

"I thought it was you, Lizzie", said Mrs. Venner. "How surprising! Surely you're not working in Mr. Chadley's shop?"

"I'm in charge here", said Lizzie, diffidently, but with lurking pride. She went through the door, and round to the other side of the counter. Mrs. Venner waited while Lizzie served another customer with ten Woodbines and a Magnet.

Then she said: "Chris and I have only just returned from Bournemouth, where the Major is in hospital. The Germans used gas at Ypres, you know, and my husband has been very ill. I thought you were going into munitions when you left me. You said you could earn big money in a munitions factory".

"So I could have done". There was a shade of defiance in Lizzie's voice. "But Mr. Chadley would have had to close his shop when he joined the army. He had nobody to run it for him. So I offered, and he jumped at it".

"I see". Mrs. Venner was watching her thoughtfully. "Do you know anything about this kind of business, Lizzie?"

"I didn't - but Mr. Chadley taught me the ropes for a few weeks before he joined up, and I can carry on till he comes back. I felt so sorry for him. People were so beastly".

Mrs. Venner extracted twopence from her purse.

"Well, I hope you do well, Lizzie. You may give me 'Answers' and the 'Gem'".

Lizzie picked up the two papers,

"It's the last blue 'Gem' - they can't get the blue dye any more. The Editor says it's 'Good-bye to the old blue cover'".

"Time changes all things", murmured Mrs. Venner.

"It's a grand tale, all about a new boy called Outram. Title is 'Under Gussy's Protection'". With a shaking finger, Lizzie pointed to the illustration on the cover. "See that picture, ma'am. Those boys are sticking white feathers all over Outram. See what it says underneath the picture - 'White feathers for the funk'. That's the kind of thing those awful women did to Mr. Chadley. They sent him white feathers by post, and stuck them on his shop window. He's not a young man, either - he's forty or more. He wanted to do his bit, but there was nobody to run his shop ---"

Mrs. Venner took the two periodicals. She said, softly:

"You're a good girl, Lizzie. You keep the flag flying till Mr. Chadley comes home".

As she left the shop, a barrel-organ was playing "God Send You Back to Me". Lizzie sniffed, and wiped her sleeve across her eyes.

1917

"Fourteen days' leave", said the man in khaki behind the counter. "I go back the day after Boxing Day".

"I hear you're in the R.A.M.C.", said Major Venner.

Chadley nodded. "Stretcher bearer", he said.

Major Venner smiled ruefully. He said: "You don't know how lucky you are. I'm invalided out. Gas, you know - at Wipers. The war is over for me".

"It's over for the Russians, too, sir", commented Chadley. "They signed a cease-fire with the Germans to-day".

"Thank God the Americans are in at last", said Major Venner. "New blood - new life. It will make all the difference".

Chadley shrugged his shoulders.

"They come in at the eleventh hour - to win the war".

"Don't be bitter, Chadley. We've much for which to be thankful. What's in to-day's 'Gem'?"

The man in khaki took a thin, white-covered paper from under his counter. The name 'Venner' was pencilled in the corner.

"'Jack Blake's Hun'", he said. "Blake catches a Boche near the school. Not bad, but not up to the old standard. How do you like the artist Reynolds, who draws the pictures now?"

"Not bad", said Major Venner, in his turn. "But give me Macdonald any day. He can really draw schoolboys". He paid three-halfpence, and took the Gem. "Good-bye, Chadley, I must hurry. I'm taking Mrs. Venner and the boy to see 'Seven Days' Leave' at the Lyceum, so I mustn't linger. A peaceful Christmas, Chadley. I shall think of you on the day after Boxing Day".

1918

At eleven o'clock that November morning Lizzie Bland had hung out a few flags. Moth-eaten and faded though they were, they made a brave show, and they were Lizzie's contribution to the celebration and thanksgiving which were apparent on every hand. Now, as the autumn dusk was falling, she lit every gas burner in the shop, and in the rooms over the shop.

Tramcars clattered past, gongs ringing to clear the tracks of the crowds - every car packed with excited, cheering passengers. All day long fireworks had banged, or shot out sparks, or whizzed up into the sky. No fireworks had been manufactured for

years, so it was amazing where they came from, but the supply seemed endless.

Groups of young and old went up and down the street, singing "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "Roses of Picardy" and "How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm", and as the evening grew older the singing became more vociferous and less tuneful.

Lizzie did not close the shop, though there was no business to be done on this, the first Armistice night. She did not join the fun and enthusiasm outside, though occasionally she looked up from her book and smiled as a firework exploded outside or someone put a head in the shop door and yelled "The war's over, missis!"

Lizzie was reading the current Gem. It was entitled "Called to Order", and told of Cardew's experiences in a gambling den run by a crook named Tickey Tapp. All Lizzie's favourites played their parts in the story, and she was happy, and asked for nothing more at that moment. All that mattered to Lizzie was that the war was over, and Leslie Chadley would be coming back to his shop - certainly, and the blue cover would be coming back to the Gem - perhaps.

1919

The wholesome young man who entered the shop raised his bowler hat, and smiled.

He asked: "Do you remember me, Mr. Chadley?"

Chadley removed the glasses which he needed now for reading, and gazed at the newcomer. In a moment he was on his feet, and holding out his hand.

"God bless my soul, as Dr. Holmes says - it's young Mr. Chris. It must be years since I saw you".

Chris shook hands warmly with the newsagent.

"I'm training to be a doctor, Mr. Chad, and I'm away at college most of my time. I'm not often at home - that's why you haven't seen me around".

"Still read the 'Gem', sir?"

Chris laughed. "When I get the chance. Should I be ashamed of myself at my age? I'll take a copy now, if you have one. What's Tom Merry up to this week?"

"A man can never outgrow the 'Gem'", said Chadley, with assurance. He placed the white-covered paper before Chris. "This week's story is a tale about the Whitsun holiday. Called 'Heart of a Hero'. Racke locks Doris Levison in the vaults under the castle, and Cardew rescues her".

"Do you like Doris Levison so well as Cousin Ethel?" queried Chris.

"I do not", said Chadley, emphatically, "but it's a good yarn".

Chris turned over the pages of the paper. He asked: "What do you think of Alcock and Brown flying the Atlantic yesterday?"

"Fine work!" Chadley rubbed his hands. "A grand British achievement. Remember the fuss there was when Bleriot flew the Channel?"

"I was too small to remember much about that", returned Chris. In the doorway, he looked back, and asked: "What's the building that's going up next door, Mr. Chadley?"

"A luxury cinema, Mr. Chris. This town keeps abreast of the times".

Outside, a tramcar rattled past, plunging and groaning on its worn and neglected tracks.

1920

"I'm glad the shop hasn't closed yet, Lizzie", said Mrs. Venner, panting a little. She had been hurrying through the November mist. "We've been to see the Cenotaph unveiled by the King, and then Chris took his father and me to the matinee of 'The Luck of the Navy' at the Duke of York's theatre".

"Lovely", said Lizzie Bland. She still looked youthful, even though her first

bloom had passed. "Here's your Gem, ma'am. It's called 'For Freedom and the Cup'. It's a Talbot story, but Mr. Chadley says it's not by the original writer. I don't see how he knows. It reads all right to me".

Mrs. Venner took the paper in exchange for three-halfpence.

She said: "Mr. Chadley is right, Lizzie. Many of the Gem stories have been well below standard lately. I think they must be written by a different author". She paused. After a moment, she continued, speaking slowly, as though choosing her words with care: "I have something personal to say to you, Lizzie. Mr. Chadley is obviously keen in his discrimination of school stories. Is he so discriminating about his own behaviour?"

Lizzie folded her arms, and stared with grim disapproval at her late mistress.

"May I ask what you mean, Mrs. Venner?"

Mrs. Venner glanced round to make certain that no new customer had entered the shop. She went on: "I have taken an interest in you, Lizzie, ever since you first came to me from the orphanage. I feel some responsibility for you now. When you first took over the management of this shop during the war, you did a kindly act, and you did well. But Mr. Chadley has been home for nearly two years -- and you are still here".

"I'm his housekeeper", said Lizzie, defensively.

"Quite so! But you are also an unmarried woman, living alone with a widower. If Mr. Chadley values your reputation, and his own, he will put an end to this state of affairs at once. Why don't you marry Mr. Chadley, Lizzie?"

Lizzie rested her elbows on a pile of 'Modern Boys' on the counter, and looked up into the older woman's face. Her voice was soft as she said: "Mr. Chadley has no love for anything but the memory of his wife and son who were drowned long ago. I'd marry him to-morrow if he asked me - but, in any case, I shall stay here unless he orders me to go".

1921

The gay sunblind was shielding the shop window from the August glare and heat. The newspaper placards read 'Fierce Fighting in Dublin'.

Through the glass, the passer-by could see a neat window-display of dozens of periodicals - Magnet, Boy's Friend, Popular, Nelson Lee, Union Jack, School Friend, and the like. Every week, whether by accident or design, the shop proprietor always gave pride of place to the Gem, right in the centre. There it was to-day, its white cover showing a crowd of boys on a steamer, all watching a boy who was diving off a pier some hundreds of yards away. The title of the story was "The St. Jim's Swimmers" - the caption under the picture, "Tom Merry's Gallant Attempt to Swim the Channel".

But the shop was not open. On the door was a typewritten announcement: "This establishment will be closed all day on Friday, August 6th, when the proprietor, Mr. Leslie Chadley, is being married to Miss Elizabeth Bland. The shop will re-open as usual at 7.30 on Saturday".

1922

A few weeks to Christmas, and Chadley's shop was decorated with paper garlands, chinese lanterns, and artificial frost which glittered under the electric lights.

Faith Lessing was serving a customer when Chris Venner entered the shop. After the customer had gone, Chris said:

"You're new here".

"I've been here a month".

"I mean you're new since I was last in the shop. That's six months ago".

Faith did not reply. She spread out her varnished finger-nails and regarded them thoughtfully.

"The 'Gem', please", ventured Chris.

"Sold out. I'm sorry". She did not look sorry.

"Mr. Chadley saves a copy for us every week. Venner is the name", persisted Chris.

Miss Lessing turned round, and pressed a bell button on the panel behind her. A moment later Lizzie Chadley came behind the counter.

Faith said: "Mrs. Chadley, this young man says you reserve a copy of some paper for him every week".

"Why, it's Mr. Chris!" ejaculated Lizzie. She turned to Faith. "The reserved copies are under the counter, as you know quite well, Miss Lessing. Get Mr. Venner the 'Gem'".

With knitted brows Faith obtained the Gem, and took twopence in exchange.

"Thanks", she said.

"Do you like the new red, white, and blue covers, Mr. Chris?" asked Lizzie.

"I do - they're very smart indeed. I hope to catch up with a bit of reading this week-end. I've been neglecting Tom Merry".

"It's called 'The Cup-Winners' this week. Last story of the Cardew Cup series. Very good!" Lizzie informed him.

"Give me an 'Evening News'", said Chris. "I want to see how they're getting on at Luxor - the excavations at Tutankamen's tomb, you know".

"I don't hold with disturbing graves", said Lizzie. "I'll jog along with Tom Merry, Mr. Chris, and leave King Tut to you".

After Chris had gone, Lizzie spoke sharply to Faith.

"I've told you before, Miss Lessing, to say 'sir' when you speak to a customer".

"I forgot", said Faith, sulkily.

"You shouldn't forget. That gentleman is training to be a doctor, at Guy's Hospital. His family are amongst Mr. Chadley's oldest customers".

"I daresay I'm as good as they are", replied Miss Lessing.

Later that evening, Lizzie confided to her husband: "Those flappers are all alike, Leslie. No breeding - and paint and powder where their brains ought to be. How the world's changed since I was her age!"

1923

"We got back from Deal yesterday", said Mrs. Venner. "We always spend the last two weeks of August in Deal".

"Very nice, too", observed Leslie Chadley. His eyes twinkled. "I can think of only one better way of spending a holiday".

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Venner. "Not, I hope, visiting Japan, where they've just had that shocking earthquake at Yokohama".

"Shocking", agreed Chadley. "Appalling loss of life. No, I mean sailing the Thames in the 'Old Bus', with Tom Merry and Co. Second story of the new series here, Mrs. Venner". He tapped the current issue of the Gem, containing 'Trouble on the Thames'. He added: "The best holiday series that Martin Clifford has ever given us".

Mrs. Venner paid for her Gem, and bought ten cigarettes for fivepence. "I smoke a cigarette now and again, Mr. Chadley", she confided. "Not in public, of course".

They chatted inconsequentially for a few minutes, and then Mrs. Venner asked: "How is Lizzie?"

"Fairly fit, madam, thank you".

"And have you decided on the name for that lovely baby?"

Chadley burst into a laugh. He said: "Her Mum and Dad are both 'Gem' fans -

and you have to ask me that. We've called her Ethel, of course".

1924

The chara-banc, open to the sky, snorted along under the golden July sunset. Leslie Chadley was holding his baby daughter in his arms, and Lizzie sat beside him, a blissful expression on her face.

"It was the most wonderful experience of my life", she said to her husband. "When Ethel grows up, she will be able to tell all her friends that she went to the Wembley Exhibition".

"Yet she won't remember a thing about it all", commented her husband, "while I shall have corns on my feet for the remainder of my life. Still, it's been worth it".

The 'charry' stopped by the wayside, and the driver drew the attention of his passengers to some object of interest in the distance. He laid down his megaphone, the vehicle jerked into motion again, and the two dozen travellers resumed their conversation.

"Take Ethel for a while, and I'll read a bit of the 'Gem'", suggested Chadley to his wife.

"It's a peach of a story", said Lizzie, as the sleeping infant was transferred to her arms. "It's called 'The Housemaster's Mistake'. Figgins hides a ten-pound note in Ratty's Livy, and Ratty accuses Cutts of stealing the money. Later on, Cutts ---"

"Elizabeth Chadley", said her husband, sternly, "will you kindly refrain from your usual pernicious practice of telling me the details of the plot before I read it?"

1925

"It's the first really good story for months", said Leslie Chadley. "It's called 'The Mystery of Holly Lodge', it stars the Terrible Three, and Monty Lowther's uncle is kidnapped".

Major Venner frowned. He said: "Don't tell me the story, Chadley - it will spoil it for me". He lit his pipe and puffed at it contentedly, while the newsagent served a couple of customers.

After they had gone, the Major said: "The last good 'Gem' was that April fools story - 'Fooled on the First', wasn't it called? I read it the night Madame Tussaud's burned down".

"Tussaud's burned in March", reminded Chadley.

"It's not important". The Major picked up the 'Gem'. "My boy has qualified, Chadley. He can call himself Doctor Venner now. It's been an expensive business, but worth every penny we spent on him".

"Wonderful news, sir", said Chadley.

"We're celebrating to-night. Going to see 'Ben Hur' at the Tivoli in the Strand".

"I hear it's a fine film", said the newsagent. "The orchestra and the sound effects are wonderful, too, so they tell me. Lizzie and I will have to wait till it comes to the Picturedrome next door, if it ever does. It looks as though it will run at the Tivoli for ever".

1926

The three men who entered the shop were bent on mischief - Chadley could see that at a glance. He resolved to humour them. After all, discretion is the better part of valour.

"Yes, sir", he enquired of the man who was obviously the leader. They were all

young men, probably no more than twenty, but they had the term loafer written all over them.

"Paper - and quick about it", said the leader. The other two stood a foot behind him, on either side of him, grinning.

"There are no papers during the General Strike", said Chadley, mildly.

"Then what's this? Ask him if he's a strike-breaker, Charley-Boy", jeered one of the followers. He picked up a copy of the 'Gem', and waved it in the air.

Charley-Boy snatched up a second copy of the periodical.

"Yes, what's this, while the strike's on?" he shouted.

Chadley drew a deep breath. He said: "Don't make a noise, please - you will frighten my little girl. That paper is the 'Gem'. Papers like that are printed many weeks in advance - they were delivered to me before the strike began".

Charley-Boy read out the title of the story:

"'Figgins' Sacrifice'. Who's Figgins?"

"He's a character in the story".

"What's his sacrifice?"

Chadley compressed his lips. With an effort of self-control he said: "Money was stolen in the story. Figgins believed that his girl friend had taken it, so he tried to take the blame himself".

There was a burst of laughter from Charley-Boy.

"This bloke's a strike-breaker all right - a real blackleg. This is for you, Mr. Blackleg".

He produced a brick from under his coat, and hurled it at the shop window. There was a crash as the glass shattered into a hundred pieces. The second man swept papers and boxes from the counter to the floor. The third picked up the shop chair, and swung it round, smashing the electric light bulbs and fittings.

When, ten minutes later, two policemen entered, Chadley and his wife were forlornly collecting broken glass into a zinc bath.

"Who did it?" asked one of the officers.

Chadley shook his head.

"Strikers, perhaps. More likely hooligans, not strikers at all - louts just out to cause destruction. I'd never seen them before to the best of my knowledge".

The second officer said: "We'll get 'em".

He spoke without conviction.

1927

With a squeal of brakes, a Morris-Cowley drew up outside Chadley's shop. Dr. Christopher Venner alighted, and entered the shop.

Lizzie Chadley, who was behind the counter, threw up her hands and gave a cry of welcome.

"Mr. Chris - we haven't seen you for ages". She giggled with embarrassment.

"Oh, dear, I'm sorry, sir - I should say Dr. Venner".

Chris laughed.

"You should say Mr. Chris - it wouldn't sound right for you to say anything else. We're old friends, Lizzie - or should I say Mrs. Chadley?"

Lizzie fluttered with pleasure and placed the current Gem on the counter.

"Are you still at the hospital, sir?"

"Yes, Lizzie, I'm still there. I came home last night, and early this afternoon I drove my father and mother to Cannon Street. I saw them off on the two o'clock express for Deal. They're there by this time, enjoying the sea breezes".

"You're a good son, Mr. Chris. Your folks must be very proud of you". Lizzie eyed him for a moment affectionately. "Tom Merry is still in Canada with Wildrake.

It's called 'The Dollar Trail', this week. Our Gussy plays a big part in it".

"I'll read it to-night in bed", said Chris, laughing.

After he had driven away, Lizzie went into the sitting-room behind the shop, where Leslie Chadley had just finished his tea. Ethel was sitting on the carpet, playing with her dolls.

Chadley strolled into the shop to serve, and Lizzie washed up the soiled crockery. That duty done, she switched on the wireless set, and sat down with some socks to darn.

Several crackles came from the loud-speaker, shaped like a giant question-mark, and then the voice of the news-reader came over the air:

"The Southern Railway Company regrets to announce that the Deal express, which left Cannon Street at 2 o'clock this afternoon, has been wrecked near Sevenoaks. The engine was derailed as the train emerged from the Polling tunnel at sixty miles an hour. All might still have been well had there been no obstruction, but unhappily the tender struck a bridge, the engine turned over on its side, and the following carriages piled up over the engine. Rescue operations are in progress, but it is feared that the casualty list will be very heavy ----"

With pale face, Lizzie walked unsteadily into the shop. Her husband gave an ejaculation of concern as he saw her.

"Lizzie, old girl, what's the matter?"

"The Deal express has been wrecked near Sevenoaks". Lizzie's voice faltered. "Major and Mrs. Venner were on that train".

1928

"Summer rain brings the roses again... After the clouds roll by", sang the ex-service men in the street.

The white-haired woman, who walked with the aid of a stick, paused to drop a piece of silver into the hat on the pavement, and then entered the shop.

"Lovely day, Mrs. Venner", said Chadley.

"Perfect!" Mrs. Venner sank gratefully on to the chair which he placed for her against the counter. "I have come in to pay for the week's papers - and to say good-bye. I'm leaving the district".

"That's bad news". Chadley looked quite distressed. "We shall miss you a lot after all these years".

Mrs. Venner sighed involuntarily. "In a way it's a wrench to leave. Since my husband lost his life, I've been unsettled, and my house is far too large for me now, in any case. Chris is to be married before Christmas - a bonny girl, and I like her - and he is going into partnership with a doctor at Paignton. I have bought a bungalow there to be near him".

"I see". Chadley took the pound note she proffered, rang up the amount on the cash register, and gave her the change. "Please congratulate your son from me on his coming marriage".

"I will". Mrs. Venner rose, and leaned on her stick. "My future daughter-in-law took me to the talkies last evening. We saw 'The Broadway Melody' at the Empire, Leicester Square. Quite an experience!"

"Talking pictures!" Chadley took up a copy of the Gem. "I haven't heard any yet. A passing craze, of course. People like to watch the pictures in peace, and listen to a nice orchestra. What about a 'Gem', Mrs. Venner?"

"I don't take the 'Gem' now, as you know, Mr. Chadley. The stories are not what they were. The original Martin Clifford is dead, of course ----"

Chadley chuckled like a schoolboy. He said: "The original Martin Clifford has certainly written this latest series, Mrs. Venner - he's very much alive. This story

'A Schoolboy's Secret' - all about Mr. Railton's nephew, Victor Cleeve - is as good as anything the 'Gem' ever published. Maybe Martin has been ill, but he's back now in the 'Gem' - for good, I hope".

"Let me have it". Smiling, Mrs. Venner extracted twopence from her purse.

"There's a metal model of the world's largest airship - the R100 - inside. What about a 'Magnet', too? Billy Bunter's having fun and games at Whiffles' Circus". Chadley's eyes were twinkling.

* * * * *

1929, 1930

The March of Time went on. As the roaring twenties faded into the uneasy thirties, twilight settled over the Gem - the R.101 crashed at Beauvais - the world economic depression forced Britain off the gold standard - Gracie Fields shone in the music halls, Greta Garbo was queen of the films, Henry Hall brought distinction to the radio.

And as the sun rose again over the Gem, twilight was gradually to fall over a troubled world.

The earth went spinning on down the corridors of Time.

* * * * *

1931

"We're going to the noozoo", Ethel Chadley had informed countless customers that Wednesday morning.

"What on earth's the noozoo?" countless customers had asked.

"Whipsnade!" Chadley had explained. "They've just opened a new, open-air zoo in a giant park, right out in the country, where you can see the animals roaming around in natural surroundings. My wife and I are taking Ethel to Whipsnade by motor-coach this afternoon".

After the shop had closed at 1 p.m., Chadley slipped the current Gem into the picnic-basket they were taking with them.

"Do you know, Lizzie", he said to his wife, as they walked towards the bus station, "they're re-printing the old Tom Merry tales in the 'Gem'. This week's story is 'Tom Merry - New Boy', and I first read it in 1907".

"I know - I read it last night", said Lizzie. She added, innocently: "I suppose you won't want the paper any more, for you've got all the old stories packed away in your cupboard".

"We're going to the noozoo", chanted Ethel.

1932

As silent as a skater in one of the ice shows which were becoming popular, the trolleybus slid to a halt outside the shop of Leslie Chadley, newsagent and bookseller. A lady and a boy alighted on the pavement.

As they entered the shop, Lizzie Chadley regarded the woman, and screwed up her eyes in an effort of memory.

"How do you do, Mrs. Chadley? Remember me?"

"Faith Lessing".

"You're behind the times. I'm Mrs. Fortescue. Book the name, please, and take down my address. I want a daily delivery of papers".

She gave the details, and Lizzie jotted them down in a ledger.

"My husband is an engineer. I've been out in Australia with him". Faith removed the scarf from her head, and shook out her bush of red curls. She had been a brunette in the old days, Lizzie recalled. "You may have read that the wonderful new bridge over Sydney Harbour was opened yesterday. My husband practically designed it - at least, he worked on the bridge".

"How nice!" murmured Lizzie.

"I came home ahead of him to get our house ready, but he will be sailing shortly. Tell your newsboys not to knock when they deliver the papers - I don't rise till ten. You'd better give me a paper for my boy. Leave those pencils alone, Sidney. There, you've upset them all, and now Mrs. Chadley will have to pick them up".

"Never mind", said Lizzie, hastily. "What paper would the child like? 'Tiger Tim's Weekly'? 'The Modern Boy'? The 'Gem'? That's a good one. This week's story is called 'Priscilla, the Peacemaker'".

Lizzie did not add that Chadley had said that the story had been entitled "Miss Priscilla's Mission" in 1908.

"Give me a selection - three different ones", replied Faith, impatiently. "Anything, so long as they will keep the little devil quiet".

1933

"Penny, meet Mr. and Mrs. Chadley, two old friends of mine", said Dr. Venner. His wife, a couple of years his junior, shook hands with the Chadleys.

"Is this just a flying visit, sir?" asked the newsagent.

"We're back for good", said Chris. "I've taken over Doctor Thurnell's practice. Had you heard that my mother died a couple of years back in Paignton?"

"No, we didn't know". Lizzie spoke in a low voice. "Your mother was a kind and gentle lady, Mr. Chris".

"Penny, these are the good folk who introduced me to the 'Gem' - oh, so long ago". Chris spread his hands wide to denote the passing of time. "I still read it when I get the chance, which isn't often".

"He's almost made me a Tom Merry fan, too", put in Penelope Venner, with a bright smile.

"Have you a copy of this week's 'Gem'?" asked Chris.

Chadley's face fell. "Bother, sir, we're sold out".

Lizzie turned to her husband. She said: "Don't be daft, Leslie. Let Mr. Chris have your copy. You can order yourself another".

"That's an idea", said Chadley, before Chris had time to protest. He disappeared into the sitting-room, and came back a moment later, bearing the paper with the red, white, and blue cover.

"Here you are, sir - 'The Cowboy of St. Jim's'. Tom Merry has just come home from a holiday in the Wild West, and has brought an American boy back with him".

Chris took the periodical, and glanced inside. Above the title of the story, Chadley had written, cryptically, in pencil: "The Ragging of Buck Finn. No. 51".

"Many thanks, Mr. Chad". Chris placed a square of pasteboard on the counter. "Here's my card, with my local address. I've written on the back a list of the papers that I want you to deliver to me regularly".

"Including the 'Gem'?" queried Chadley.

"What do you think?" interposed Penny.

After a few more minutes of conversation, the Venners made their farewells, and

turned to go out to their car, gleaming white under the late-January snowfall.

"Wait, sir", called out Chadley. "Here's our telephone number. If you want any special delivery at any time, just give me a ring".

He scribbled the number in the blank space of the Stop Press column of a newspaper which was lying on the counter. Tearing out the column, he handed it to Chris.

Chris nodded, and cast an eye over it as Lizzie opened the door, admitting a flurry of snow. Above the pencilled telephone number was the newspaper's printed Stop Press item:

"Last night Adolf Hitler, ex-architect and leader of the Nazi party, was made Chancellor of the German Reich by President Hindenburg, following the failure of Herr Von Papen to form a government".

1934

Ocean Guest House,
Blackpool.
July 19th, 1934.

Dearest Leslie,

We are having a wonderful holiday. I feel much better for the change, and Ethel is brown as a berry.

Yesterday, Mr. and Mrs. West, the Proprietors here, took us to Liverpool in their car, and we saw the King open the new Mersey tunnel. It is a wonderful affair, and the longest of its kind in the world.

Did you like "Wally's Wily Wheeze" in this week's Gem? I have an idea it was called "Well Played" when it was first published, but you would know more about that than me. I always like cricket tales, and stories which bring in Tom Merry's Weekly.

I suppose you received Ethel's card. She chose it herself. Some of the cards here are dreadfully rude - if we sold cards like that, they would close us up.

Look after yourself, dear. See you on Saturday.

Your loving,
Lizzie.

P.S. Have you read in the papers that there has been a second trunk murder in Brighton? Isn't it shocking? I'm glad I came to Blackpool and didn't go to Brighton.

1935

Every available bit of space on the exterior of Chadley's shop was hung with bunting and flags. Red, white, and blue prevailed everywhere. The contours of the little shop were picked out with coloured electric lights, which even now, early in the summer afternoon, had been switched on. The brilliance of the sunshine killed the lights, and to-night, when darkness fell, Chadley's display would still be overshadowed by the magnificence of that of the cinema next door.

But Chadley and his wife did not care. They were doing their small share to brighten the road, and to show their loyalty to the King and Queen who were celebrating their glorious reign of twenty-five years.

Chadley and his twelve-year old daughter stood back on the edge of the pavement, and admired their handiwork. The newsagent's gaze dwelt with satisfaction on the row

of red, white, and blue Gems on the other side of the gleaming glass. "Jubilee Day at St. Jim's" announced the cover of that patriotic-looking journal.

"Don't tell anyone, Ethel", said Chadley, softly, "but that story was once called 'Coronation Day at St. Jim's', and it was written to mark the coronation of King George and Queen Mary. Now it's back again to grace their Jubilee. Don't believe people when they tell you that history doesn't repeat itself".

1936

"The King's life is moving peacefully towards its close".

Quietly, unemotionally, the measured voice came from the radio. Outside, the January night was bitterly cold and unusually still. From the distance came the sound of a church clock striking half-past nine.

Lizzie Chadley leaned forward and dropped another log on the fire. She shivered a little as she lay back again in the comfortable arm-chair. Tears were trickling down her cheeks.

She muttered: "It's stupid of me to cry. It's not like a personal loss - it's not like losing your own ----"

Leslie Chadley stretched out his slippered feet to the blaze.

He said: "When a great man dies, the whole nation is bereaved... and when it's the King ----" He did not complete his sentence.

The Gem lay unopened on his knee. The title of the story was "Getting Even With Ratty". The cover picture showed Tom Merry saving "a wee child from being run over by a train". A chord was touched in Chadley's memory.

He said: "Do you remember this story, Lizzie? It was once called 'The Scamps of the School'. I talked to you about it, long before we ever thought that one day we should marry". He lapsed into silence, but his thoughts ran on. That story, with a similar picture on the cover, drawn by the same artist, had been published soon after the crowning of the great monarch whose life, even now, was 'moving peacefully towards its close'.

Chadley rested his hand on the picture. He said, very quietly: "Tom Merry has lasted through two reigns. I wonder how far into the reign of King Edward the Eighth we can expect old Tom to live".

1937

They had waited for hours to see the procession pass; they had stood outside Buckingham Palace and shouted "We want the King"; they had walked down Pall Mall and through the West End, admiring the lavish decorations; and, when dusk fell, they had wandered again, with Ethel gaping in ecstasy at the brilliant illuminations.

Now, weary to the bone, but gloriously happy, they were seated in the train, and heading for home. Lizzie was asleep in her corner, but Ethel, with all the resilience of the very young, was wide awake, and gazing with shining eyes at the cover of the Gem - a cover which bore the portraits of King George the Sixth and his Queen, superimposed on the Union Jack - a fine effort enhanced by the printing in red, white, and blue.

Ethel snuggled up to her father, and opened the Gem. She read aloud the title of the story: "He Wanted to be Expelled". Looking up at her father, she asked: "Have you read it, Daddy?"

"I read it before you were born, my dear", he said. He put an arm round her shoulder. "It was called 'Brought to Book' then, way back soon after the war started. A fine dramatic tale about Tom Merry being kidnapped, and his double taking his place". He smiled at the memory. "Wake your mother up, Ethel, we're nearly at our station".

1938

Chadley served a few customers, and after they had left he strode up and down continuously between the shop door and the counter. His hands were clasped behind his back, his fingers twisting and untwisting.

He stood still for a few moments, listening. There was the sound of a tread in the room overhead, a further sound of a chair being moved.

Chadley approached the counter, and thumbed a newspaper. He glanced without interest at the headlines: "Chamberlain Flies to Munich", "The Queen Mary Gains the Blue Riband of the Atlantic", "Chaplin's 'Great Dictator' to be Shown in London Shortly".

Again Chadley strode the shop floor, and then he picked up a Gem from the counter - a buff-coloured Gem, a pocket-sized Gem. Time changes all things, thought Chadley, and not always for the better. He opened the journal - "Ructions on the Road", a caravanning story, dating from 1919 or thereabouts. An excellent yarn, too, but it held no fascination for Chadley now.

Footsteps on the stairs at the back of the shop; the ting of the telephone in the sitting-room as someone lifted the receiver; the deep voice of a man in conversation.

The door behind the counter opened, and Christopher Venner came through into the shop. As he noted the expression on the doctor's face, Chadley felt old, spiritless, hopeless. He sank down on the chair placed for the use of customers.

"How is she, doctor? How is my little Ethel?"

Chris ran a hand through his hair; his cheekbones looked gaunt and high. He said: "Chadley, why in Heaven's name didn't you and Lizzie send for me before? Why? Why?"

"We didn't know she was really ill. She had a sore throat yesterday, but seemed better this morning. Then, this afternoon, her breathing was bad. Doctor, what is it? Is she dangerously ill?"

"Diphtheria, without doubt", said Chris, tersely. "She must have an injection at once. I have telephoned for an ambulance to rush her to the isolation hospital. Pray God we are not too late".

"My little Cousin Ethel I used to call her". Chadley was speaking almost to himself.

Chris gripped his shoulder, and turned away.

Chadley said, wearily: "You must save her for us, Mr. Chris. Time eased things when I lost Ronnie and his mother. A hundred years will never make any difference if we lose Ethel".

From the distance came the warning bell of the speeding ambulance.

1939

"Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?" sang the youngsters who, only a week earlier, had been singing carols with saintly looks on their faces. The sound of their youthful voices reached Leslie Chadley in the sitting-room behind his shop.

There was a big fire in the grate, but Chadley, in his armchair, looked cold, pale, and shrunken. He was sixty-two -- not really old at all - yet somehow he felt old age creeping on him, stooping his shoulders, dimming the keenness of his eyes.

"We're going to hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line", sang the boys outside in the pitch-dark street.

"Can I come in?" said a voice at the door.

Chadley looked up and smiled.

"Come in, doctor. Shut the door, will you? The draught shifts the black-out

curtains.

Chris closed the door, and sat in the other armchair. He unfastened the heavy coat he was wearing.

"How are you feeling to-night, Mr. Chadley?"

"Better, doctor, better. I'm taking the tablets regularly".

"Good". Chris regarded him appraisingly. "You'll be all right if you take things easily for a time. I mustn't stay, for Penny is alone. I had to pop along and wish you and Lizzie a Happy New Year... and to say good-bye. I'm going in the R.A.F., Chadley - every doctor on the youngish side is needed in the forces. While I'm away, Penny is going to Cornwall to stay with her parents".

Chadley did not speak. He stared into the fire.

"How's the old 'Gem', Mr. Chad?"

Chadley turned his head, and gave him a twisted grin.

He said: "This week's story is 'Silverson on the Spot'. The 'Gem' is on the spot. It's finished, Mr. Chris - the last issue this week. That quirt of a white-washer has done something that Kaiser Bill never achieved. He's killed the 'Gem'".

"Gosh, that's bad news". Chris sat in thought. Then he went on: "It'll be out again - after the war. You'll see".

"It will never be out again, Mr. Chris. It's dead. The world that Lizzie and I knew is dead. After the war, another world will be born - maybe a better world. But our world is like the 'Gem' - dead!"

Lizzie entered the room, carrying three cups of steaming coffee. For twenty minutes or so the three of them chatted, and then Chris took his departure, Lizzie seeing him out through the shop into the dark road.

"Are we going to sit up to see the New Year in?" Lizzie asked her husband, an hour later.

"I suppose we should - maybe we'll listen to the radio. They'll be ringing the bells, and singing 'Auld Lang Syne'. You and me, Liz, we've not got much left, except each other". Leslie Chadley kissed his wife. He looked down at the dying fire, and wrinkled his brows. He said: "Liz, old girl, the shop won't half seem funny without the 'Gem'".

* * * * *

1959

Up on the platform, Mr. Prong, the auctioneer, rapped sharply on the desk with his hammer. The Spring morning was warm, sales had been disappointing, and he was anxious to get home to the well-cooked lunch which his dutiful wife would have prepared for him.

"We now come to the last Lot of the day - a large collection of old Boys' books", he said.

There was a movement for the doors. The crowd in the hall had not been large all the morning, and now it thinned considerably. The majority of those who remained did so out of curiosity.

Mr. Prong leaned across the desk, poising himself on his finger-tips.

"Most of you know the Supermarket in Castle Street", he said, brightly. "Some of you will remember the cinema which was demolished in order that the Supermarket could be erected on the site. Few of you, perhaps, will recall that adjoining the old cinema was a small shop - a newsagent's shop".

More people left the hall. Some of those remaining yawned or started to chat

among themselves.

"That shop", went on Mr. Prong, "was opened by a man named Chadley, about the turn of the century. He was a tradesman in this town for many years, and was a respected citizen".

"Come to the point", called out someone.

Mr. Prong ignored the interruption.

"The paper I am about to offer you was called the - er - 'Gem'. Yes, the 'Gem'. Mr. Chadley appears to have saved every copy of this - this intellectual paper for the young. The rare collection on display in this hall covers a period from 1907 till the end of 1939 - a total of about seventeen-hundred copies. Such an amazing collection will be a fabulous acquisition for any connoisseur". Mr. Prong cleared his throat, and continued: "Mr. Chadley has been dead many years. His widow, a dear old lady, is still living, but in straitened circumstances. Only as a last resort has Mrs. Chadley been persuaded to part with this prized collection, which her husband amassed with such loving care. I shall invite you, ladies and gentlemen, to bid generously, and thereby do a charitable act as you acquire this remarkable - this fantastic collection".

There was an uneasy stir in the audience, and a few more slipped away. They had not come to the Auction to bid charitably.

"These - er - 'Gems' are displayed in piles of about two hundred copies per pile, on the table below this platform. I request you to glance over them before making your bids", said Mr. Prong.

A dozen or so people moved over to the table and strolled round it, one or two whispering one to the other.

Three teenagers - a youth wearing soiled jeans, soiled shirt of violent check pattern, and who seemed to have forgotten the existence of the common-or-garden barber; another youth whose hair was made alarming by a crew cut; a girl who wore a tight black jumper to accentuate her figure and pink jeans which passed tightly over plump hindquarters and stopped short at her calves - gazed with lack-lustre eyes at the blue-covered papers on the left of the table.

"'Tom Merry's Legion of Honour'", read out the girl, with some difficulty. She glanced up into Crew Cut's spotty face. "What's a Legion of Honour, Perce?"

"I haven't a clue and I couldn't care less", replied Crew Cut.

"No int'rest to me", said the young man who disdained barbers, a soggy cigarette wobbling between his lips. "I only read pitchers".

Mr. Prong banged on the desk with his hammer.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I now invite you to bid for this unique Lot".

"A dollar", called out a humorist, and there was a titter.

"Two pounds", said a pompous little man.

"That's the bloke from the second-hand book shop", whispered the young lady in the tight jumper.

"If you like to split the collection, I will offer three pounds for the items with blue covers", called out a florid man in a grey suit.

Mr. Prong rubbed his chin. He said: "I do not wish to divide the collection, if possible. It is obviously worth more as a complete unit".

"Four pounds for the lot".

"Four-ten".

"Five".

Bidding became brisker, though the increases per bid were small. At twelve pounds, bid by the pompous little man, it hung fire, and he looked around him, a triumphant gleam in his beady little eyes.

"Gentlemen", said the auctioneer, helplessly, "there is no reserve, but I hope that this sale may bring something fairly substantial to this elderly woman who needs

the money".

"Fourteen pounds".

The pompous little man leaped on to the platform. He shouted: "Make your best offers, any of you, and I will top it. I intend to have these old papers. Offer what you like, and don't waste time". His voice rose, angrily: "Twenty pounds. Top that, you fools".

He descended from the rostrum as the auctioneer eyed him with grim disapproval.

"Twenty pounds, I am offered".

"Guineas".

"Twenty-five pounds", shouted the pompous little man.

"Twenty-six".

"Thirty", screamed the little man.

"Six hundred pounds".

A new voice, quiet but clear, came from the rear of the hall. Dead silence fell for a moment, and then every head was turned to look at the new bidder. He was a man of about sixty, tall, grey-haired, neatly-dressed, ascetic. He had stood at the back ever since the sale opened, two hours ago, but this was the first time he had spoken.

"Wotseemuckinabartat?" demanded Crew Cut.

"Six hundred quid for a stack of ole books without pitchers?" muttered the youth with the long hair.

"Candidate for the looney-bin", said the jean-clad young woman.

Mr. Prong gazed doubtfully down the hall.

"I did not catch what you said. Will you kindly repeat your bid?"

"Six hundred pounds".

"Is that a serious bid? It is not a hoax?"

"It is a serious bid".

The few dozen people made for the door; the pompous little man stamped away, red with anger.

"Six hundred pounds I am offered. Going for six hundred pounds. Going -- going --"

The tall, grey-haired man walked up to the platform, and Mr. Prong regarded him thoughtfully.

"This is generous", murmured Mr. Prong. "Do you happen to know the vendor personally, sir, may I ask?"

"I knew her, very many years ago".

The grey-haired man drew a cheque book and a card from his pocket.

He said: "The papers, carefully boxed and insured, are to be sent to this address". He placed his card before the auctioneer. "I will add three pounds to my cheque, to cover packing, carriage, and insurance. Is that satisfactory?"

"Very satisfactory, sir", said Mr. Prong, rubbing his hands.

The grey-haired man wrote out his cheque, took his receipt, and then slowly left the deserted hall.

"Now who the hell is he?" muttered Mr. Prong.

He eyes the cheque he was holding.

It was signed "Christopher Venner".

Wanted to BEG, BORROW or BUY - B.F. 3d. Libraries, Rivals and Chums, School and Sport, Through Thick and Thin. Would also welcome any gifts for Merseyside Club Library.

D.B. WEBSTER, 7, GLENWYLLAN ROAD, LIVERPOOL, 22. (New address)

The Masters of St. Frank's

BY CHARLES H. CHURCHILL

* * * * *

In the 1957 C.D. Annual I wrote of some of the early pre-St. Frank's detective adventures of Nelson Lee and his able assistant. This year, after some "encouragement" by Messrs. Wood and Leckenby, I offer a review of the professional staff of the famous old college. I would like to emphasise that in this article I am only reviewing the old original small series of Lees. As I was never very much taken by the first and second new series, I have very few of these in hand. I always thought that except for a few series here and there, they were never in the same class as the earlier tales. Dare I say there was too much Handforth and not enough Nelson Lee and Nipper?

The characters of the Masters of St. Frank's, invented by Mr. Brooks, are, in my humble opinion, quite on a par with any others in schoolboy fiction and in some cases superior. They always seemed to be much more "human" figures, furthermore, those who went to extremes were always sent about their business at the end of the series in which they were involved.

Anyway, I trust these notes will prove to be of interest to my fellow admirers of E.S. Brooks, so here goes, to commence with, a list of the various masters.

Heads: Dr. Malcolm Stafford, Howard Martin, Dr. William Beverley (Barry) Stokes (later Housemaster), Ponsonby Small.

Housemasters: Thorne, Peter Alvington (Nelson Lee), Nelson Lee, Kennedy Hunter, Col. Howard Clinton, Arthur Stockdale, Ralph Smale-Foxe, Barnaby Goole, Simpson Wrott (Nelson Lee).

Form Masters: R. Langton, W. Pagett, J. Crowell, A. Suncliffe, Trapps, Clement Heath (Arthur Kirby), H. Pycraft.

Others: M.H. Leblanc, Dr. Karnak, Prof. Tucker, Hugh Trenton, Harold Clifford.

Dr. Malcolm Stafford:

In the Headmaster, we had a very fine character. An upright scholastic, elderly gentleman, he was most highly esteemed by all the boys, except of course, the cads, for, although most kindly, he could be very firm and strict when the occasion demanded. The depth of his popularity was shown to the utmost in the "St. Frank's in London" series of Sept./Oct. 1919 and also the "Mr. Martin" stories which followed. In the former, the College House was burnt out, owing to the machinations of that unhappy Greek junior, Titus Alexis. The school governors, led by their militant chairman, General Ord-Clayton, decided that Dr. Stafford was really responsible, owing to lax discipline. The school was to be transferred to the Turret College, London, while rebuilding was in force and the governors considered that Mr. Howard Martin would be a more suitable Principal. However, a great spontaneous surge of loyalty for the Head and revulsion for the unfairness of the governors arose in the school. This, together

with action by the juniors forced the Board to retract and Dr. Stafford went to London. Sometime later, when on return to St. Frank's, the school found Mr. Martin installed as Head, a barring-out resulted. In the end the governors were forced to submit and Dr. Stafford was reinstated. In No. 236 "Exit the Tyrant" is described his triumphant return to the almost delirious delight of the boys. We read that "the cheering could be heard in the outskirts of Bannington".

The series in which Dr. Stafford figured most prominently was undoubtedly the Trenton series - Nov. 1921 to Feb. 1922, Nos. 338/348. Hugh Trenton came as a Science Master. He was backed by a syndicate of wealthy, clever men, who, however, were imbued with dangerous views. They possessed a dangerous drug called Zaxzol, which caused any victim dosed with it, to turn into a brutal savage for a time. Trenton managed to dose Dr. Stafford's throat tablets and caused the Head to break out into uncontrollable rages, during which he behaved in a most tyrannous manner. In the earlier stories, we read of Dr. Stafford, his kindly personality submerged by the drug committing acts of which, normally, he would be ashamed, and of his terrible distress afterwards, when, in his normal senses, he realises what he has done. We read how he gradually sank to the depths of despair, his only hope lying in Nelson Lee's efforts to solve the problem. Brooks surely had an enchanted pen when he wrote so vividly of all these events. I have read in the C.D. that some people consider this series very far-fetched and unrealistic, but how can this be so when we think of all the modern drugs considered commonplace today?

Dr. Stafford frequently figured in other series, but this, surely, is the one in which he is painted in the most diverse of colours.

Howard Martin:

This "gentleman" appeared as Headmaster in Nos. 229/236 dated Oct. 25 - Dec. 13, 1919, when St. Frank's returned from London. He was of a rather violent disposition and inclined to enjoy inflicting punishments. His real name was Martin Horley and some time earlier he had committed a crime, faking the evidence so that his brother, Robert, was incriminated and imprisoned. In this series, Robert escapes and Martin conceals him locally. The Head then plans to rob St. Frank's and flee the country, forcing Robert to accompany him. His rough treatment of the boys, however, resulted in a barring-out by the Remove. This, together with Nelson Lee's activities, upsets all his plans, and results in his departure for a spell in the "stone jug".

Dr. Beverley Stokes:

Dr. Stokes arrived at St. Frank's in No. 471 - June 1924 - "The Schoolboy Headmaster". He masqueraded for a few hours at first as a new boy, being of very slight built and of a youthful appearance. Later, his wife came to reside at St. Frank's and a mystery resulted from her activities. Unfortunately she was a mild drug addict, owing to a severe illness, and a chinaman appeared with supplies of the drug and we read of Dr. Stokes' efforts to protect his wife from the lures of the yellow man's terrible concoctions. All ended well, however, and Dr. Stokes became exceedingly popular with all, owing to his very friendly attitude and modern outlook on how to control boys and gain their respect.

One other series in which Dr. Stokes starred was from No. 553 to 560. Rather than break his word of honour in a certain private matter he was forced to submit to blackmail by Guy Sinclair of the East House. We read of Dr. Stokes' mental anguish when the rascally prefect transferred to the West House and caused chaos by his activities. A revolt resulted and later rioting by all the cads and hotheads when all

the masters had left. Dr. Stokes, temporarily suspended, was the only man left at St. Frank's and by great tact and force of personality quelled the rioting. His name had been smeared by the rumours spread around by Sinclair, but, of course, he was fully vindicated in the end and became even more popular than ever.

Ponsonby Small:

This gentleman was a stooge of "Cyclone" Smith and was appointed Headmaster by reason of the latter's blackmailing of the school governors. Small was a miserable specimen of humanity, knock-kneed, pigeon-chested and entirely devoid of what is known as backbone. He toadied to all the sons of wealthy or titled people and in other words was an utter snob. The series in which he appeared was Nos. 455-463 dated Mar./Apl. 1924.

Thorne:

One thing can be said about Nelson Lee's predecessor in the Ancient House, which I think cannot be claimed for any other master at St. Frank's. It is that he only actually appeared in the last chapter of No. 112 and never spoke. He was merely quoted as having muttered in delirium. His christian name was never mentioned, and of his character, all we heard was of his rather slack disciplinary methods and that he was inclined to toady to the rotters and anyone with money or a title. In other words he was another snob.

Peter Alvington (Nelson Lee):

As we all know, Nelson Lee first came to St. Frank's to escape the vengeance of a Chinese Tong. He adopted the character of Peter Alvington, Housemaster of the Ancient House. Later, of course, when danger had passed, he reverted to his own name and appearance. As a schoolmaster he proved to be extraordinarily successful. He had the knack of being on very friendly terms with all, while, at the same time, commanding the highest respect. Dr. Stafford came to rely on him as being his "right hand", on whom he could depend for support and advice when any unusual situation arose, as it did so often. I consider Nelson Lee rose to his greatest height as a schoolmaster in the Trenton series, when, through the machinations of the science master the Head became thoroughly unpopular and disliked. How Lee supported the bewildered and unhappy Dr. Stafford at that time and so lost the respect and affection of almost all the boys was, I think, a very fine character study.

Kennedy Hunter:

Hunter the Hun, as he was known, came to St. Frank's as temporary Housemaster of the Ancient House while Nelson Lee was called away on a government investigation. This was in 1918, during the first World War. The events are described in Nos. 149-157 dated Apl./June 1918, and reprinted in the third new series Nos. 9-18, Apl. - June 1933.

Hunter was a small man of very mild appearance and with a beaming smile. But the boys learnt to dread that smile, for it hid a most tyrannous disposition. He managed to intimidate practically everyone against him so much that he was undoubtedly the most despised master ever to be at St. Frank's. His favourite method of punishment was to impose sentences with no explanations of what supposed offences they were for, and any request for elucidation was met with increased impositions.

Retribution overtook him in due course in the shape of Nelson Lee, and Hunter retired to prison life as an enemy spy.

Colonel Howard Clinton:

This ex-Army Officer came as Housemaster to the College House in No. 187, Jan. 4th, 1919 and lasted to Feb. 22nd of that year. He was obsessed with discipline of a military nature and endeavoured to run his house under these lines, to the abject misery of the occupants. He even imported a drill instructor, Sgt. Donnell, another "old school" army bully. In his spare time, with the help of a man named Hardy, he was endeavouring to invent a new type of gas mask. One day, Hardy was killed by the Colonel's car. The latter had that day been publicly dismissed by Dr. Stafford, owing to his ridiculous antics in the College House and he was almost mad with hatred against the Head. He engineered a fake murder of himself, by dressing the dead Hardy in his clothes and leaving clues pointing to the Head as the murderer. Nelson Lee soon unmasked this plot and Clinton took refuge in a nearby cottage. He held out here in a siege against the police but was eventually overcome and removed to an asylum.

Simpson Wrott:

When Mr. Martin, as he claimed, "sacked" Nelson Lee, the latter's place was taken by Mr. Simpson Wrott (see No. 231 - Nov. 8, 1919). He quickly appeared to be of the same class as the Head, showing a violent temper and administering punishments right and left. However, the boys soon found that his bark was worse than his bite, for he seemed happy to accept a token twenty lines or so, instead of the 500 or 1,000 inflicted and his canings lacked all sting except in cases where they were deserved. At the end of the series this gentleman turned out to be Nelson Lee in disguise, not very surprisingly.

Arthur Stockdale:

The Housemaster of the College House, later known as the Modern House, only played a minor part in the Nelson Lee Library, although we did frequently read of him over the years.

His heyday was probably in the Hunter series when he stood up to the bullying Head on several occasions. Once, when Hunter was administering floggings in the Triangle, he interfered and tore the birch from Hunter's hands and was so enraged that the latter succumbed and retired to his house. Stockdale also stood up to that other nice character, Mr. Martin, and when threatened with dismissal, retorted that if he left, so would every remaining master. These events proved him to be of the highest integrity with plenty of moral courage. As a result, a vote from his boys would undoubtedly show that they thought him "a decent old stick".

Ralph Smale-Foxe:

The Smale-Foxe series started on Jan. 22, 1921, and ran for 11 weeks (Nos. 294-304). Ralph Smale-Foxe secured the temporary post of Housemaster of the College House during the absence of Mr. Stockdale on holiday. He was a mild and somewhat inoffensive man. His twin brother, James, although exactly alike in appearance, was entirely different in mental make up. He had had a junior appointment at St. Frank's many years earlier and had been dismissed owing to an indiscretion. Over the years he nursed a grudge against the school and on his brother's appointment saw a way of obtaining revenge. Being a much stronger character, he forced Ralph to agree to their switching places, thus enabling him to be in a position to influence events. His plan was to bring St. Frank's into disrepute. He nearly succeeded in this by giving the boys freedom from all rules and regulations. All sorts of unruly behaviour by the cads and weaklings took place. He also attempted to blackmail Ernest Lawrence in the matter of the latter's boxing adventures and at the end even resorted to housebreaking. Nelson Lee cleared all this up while Christine & Co. aided by Nipper & Co. "took care"

of the cads and rotters. The last we heard of James was the literal kicking out be received at the hands of the boys, while Ralph resumed his Housemastership temporarily.

Barnaby Goole:

He arrived in No. 537 when St. Frank's was enlarged to five houses, and assumed control of the East House. He was a very thin man with exceedingly narrow shoulders and was a very strict vegetarian. He became known as "The Food Crank" as he attempted to convert all in his house to vegetarianism by forbidding any meat or meat dish to be served. Somewhat naturally he was unsuccessful in this. He was slightly involved in the plot about Eustace Carey which was unfolded in this series, but from then onwards, we only read of him occasionally.

Robert Langton:

The Master of the Sixth Form was undoubtedly a quiet reserved gentleman. We read but occasionally of him and, as a result, know practically nothing about him, other than that he was a master of long-standing and a noted teacher of Latin.

William Pagett:

The Fifth Form Master was another who was only mentioned at odd times, but we do know that he was rather short-tempered and not very popular with his form. As Chambers once put it (in the Martin series - sotto voce, of course) "You old rotter, you're nearly as bad as Martin". Very much to the fore in the arrival of the famous William Napoleon Browne series when he was interested in working in sealing wax. A keen photographer and lecturer.

Trapps:

At the height of Hunter's brutalities, Mr. Crowell became so disgusted that he left the Ancient House and took residence in the College House with Mr. Stockdale. Hunter then imported Trapps as Remove Master. The latter, while of the same calibre as Hunter, has one claim to fame in that he had the shortest stay at St. Frank's of any other master. He only lasted for two stories, then the boys forcibly put him on a train for London and we heard of him no more. Like Mr. Thorne, we knew not his christian name.

James Crowell:

Apart from Nelson Lee and the Head, we read more of Mr. Crowell than any other master. Being the Remove Form-master, this was only natural as the stories dealt mainly with the activities of the Removites. In the early days, we read of many Form Room episodes, and so were able to judge his character to a nicety. He was a strict disciplinarian and inclined to be a little short-tempered. Nevertheless, he was on the whole highly respected by his boys as was shewn in No. 274, Sept. 4, 1920, when he returned to take charge of the Remove, after his illness of the previous term. He was given a welcome cheer and all were pleased to see him back again. This illness was described in No. 256, May 1, 1920, in which story "The Remove Master's Delusion", he was starred. He had become most interested in astronomy and had spent all his spare time for weeks in writing a heavy scientific work on the subject. This work, together with the onerous task of guiding the Remove in its scholastic labours, resulted in an illness nigh to brain fever. He became very mixed in his thoughts, often imposing punishments of two million lines or detention on Mars, to the amazement of his class. Due to the machinations of Nipper & Co. he suffered a severe shock which brought him "down to earth" again, and he departed for a long leave, which resulted in the arrival of Mr. Clement Heath.

Mr. Crowell certainly had many of the characteristics of Mr. Stockdale. He was always prepared to fight for the welfare of his class, as was shewn when he stood up to the notorious Messrs. Hunter and Martin. I consider "old Crowsfeet", as he was nicknamed, was certainly a very good and plausible character.

Clement Heath:

Mr. Heath spent nearly one term at St. Frank's in charge of the Remove, when Mr. Crowell departed on sick leave, as mentioned previously. He was a young man, who had served in the R.A.F. during the war. His experience of boys extended little beyond his own schooldays. This produced in him a certain shyness in dealing with them at first. However, he soon found his feet and proved to be fairly popular. His diffidence led him to fall under the sway of a smooth rogue, the Comte de Plessigny. This "gentleman" blackmailed Heath into spying on Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore regarding a forthcoming trip of theirs. Heath, however, prompted by Nelson Lee, eventually stood up to the Count and all was well. He turned out, incidentally, to be Handforth's brother-in-law, his real name being Arthur Kirby. He had used a pseudonym when applying for the position at St. Frank's, as undermasters were required to be unmarried. We thus saw that, although rather mild and diffident on the surface, he had underlying qualities of pluck and quiet determination. The series in which he appeared was numbered 257-263 dated May-June 1920.

Austin Suncliffe:

To be master of the Third Form is something of which no one would be envious. To be in charge, day after day, of a crowd of inky unruly fags is no sinecure - therefore we are not surprised to know that Mr. Suncliffe is very short-tempered and irritable. In the Nelson Lee Library he only appeared occasionally but did play a large part in S.O.L. No. 120 - "The Rebels of St. Frank's". We learnt there, that his chief hobby was cricket, and that he spent most of his summers scanning the daily press for County and Test match scores, and his winters in looking forward to the next cricket season.

Horace Pycraft:

I would say that Mr. Pycraft was easily the most unpopular permanent Master at St. Frank's. He first appeared in No. 485 "The Scandal at St. Frank's" dated Sept. 20th, 1924. We read of him in the first chapter and learnt that he was thin, weedy, sour-faced, and wore very thick spectacles. Later, he proved that his appearance did not belie his character. He loved to interfere in any little incident between the boys, in the hope of discovering a misdemeanour whereby he could inflict punishment. As a result, his hastiness in this respect often led him into a "mare's nest". He came to St. Frank's when the College House was renamed the Modern House and the Remove broken up into two parts and henceforth called the Fourth, Mr. Crowell to direct the Ancient section and Mr. Pycraft the Modern.

Harold Clifford:

The sports master was another personality receiving only brief mention. He arrived in No. 396 "Jack Grey's Temptation", but starred in the next number "The Boxing Unknown". Before coming to St. Frank's, he had, for some time, been engaged professionally in boxing and was known in the ring as Tony Lennox. He had avoided recognition by a gift which enabled him to alter his expression and keep it up almost indefinitely. Naturally he was an expert at boxing as well as other sports, and proved to be very popular with the boys. Apart from the above, we know nothing about him. He contributed football chat to Nipper's Magazine.

M. Henri Leblanc:

I cannot find that the French Master ever took part in any event. He was only referred to on various occasions. The first of these was as far back as No. 156, and he really is an unknown character.

Hugh Trenton:

He came to St. Frank's as science master in No. 336 "The Fifth at St. Frank's" - Nov. 12th, 1921, and starred in the subsequent series Nos. 338 to 348. To avoid repetition, please read all about him in my notes about Dr. Stafford. At the end he was dosed with his own drug and was wheeled out of Big Hall ranting and raving, a victim of his own plotting.

Dr. Karnak:

Dr. Karnak starred in a series dated Jan./Feb. 1924 (Nos. 448-454). Brooks really went to town here and gave us hypnotism, monsters at night in Bellton Lane, mummies coming to life, ditto stuffed lions, kidnapping and a host of unaccountable eerie events. It all boiled down to the fact that Karnak had incurred the enmity of a band of eastern fanatics, who sought to eliminate him.

Professor Sylvester Tucker:

On Nov. 22nd, 1924 we were introduced to one of the most amusing characters ever to grace the pages of the Nelson Lee. "The Secret of the Old Mill" in No. 494 brought us Timothy Tucker's uncle as the new science master. He was a distinguished-looking man of about fifty, although he carried himself as a much more elderly person. Tall, thin, with stooping shoulders, his face sallow, he was unfortunate enough also to possess prominent teeth. The dome of his forehead, however, amply compensated for the other shortcomings. It was the forehead of a man of unusual brainpower. The main thing in his life was astronomy and he was almost without fail extremely absent-minded. Due to the latter, we were caused endless amusement by the various contretemps which befell him.

On his very first journey to St. Frank's, he alighted at the wrong station, lost his ticket, forgot his destination, lost his way and found himself on Bannington Moor and then became confused with an escaped lunatic. The Professor, becoming enthralled with the stars, completely forgot all about St. Frank's, and the lunatic went along in his place to the consternation of Dr. Stafford. However, the Professor eventually arrived and all was explained.

The Mistresses:

From Jan. 20, 1923 to Mar. 24th, we had a unique series (Nos. 398-407) - Mistresses at St. Frank's! Miss Jane Trumble, a thin, elderly spinster, with very strong views on education, managed to domineer the governors to the extent that they appointed her as Chairman. She descended on St. Frank's, insulted Dr. Stafford who resigned, then succeeded in antagonising the other masters, who, in turn all walked out on her. She imported mistresses, who proved to be most unsuitable as teachers for boys, and a revolt ensued. At the end, Miss Trumble was forced to resign and conditions reverted to normal. I think this series was a real brainwave on the part of E.S. Brooks, as I do not remember any other school having such a situation thrust upon it. The only lady teacher I can recall is Miss Meadows of the famous Cedar Creek.

To those of you who have kindly read my article as far as this - thank you, and the compliments of the season. May 1960 bring you the best of luck and also some of those elusive numbers you still require for your collections.

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE MAGNET: 1938 - 1940

BY ROGER M. JENKINS

The last few years of the Magnet's life have to a large extent been neglected by many collectors. It is true that the delightful style of writing that epitomised the Golden Age had long since departed, but even so the style of the salmon-covered days was always competent and could at times be exceptionally pleasing. A more cogent reason for this neglect is probably the plots of the period. They tended to be new versions of old themes, and later versions usually suffered by the comparison so naturally evoked.

Many writers have followed the same sort of development as Shakespeare, and Charles Hamilton was no exception. The red Magnets could be compared with "The Comedy of Errors", "The Taming of the Shrew", and "Love's Labours Lost", all of which exhibited a fresh and youthful approach to life. Even the sombre stories had romantic overtones, like "Romeo and Juliet". With the 'twenties came the more confident approach, the more well-knit plot, and the discarding of irrelevancies. To continue the comparison, the Bunter Court series would form a "Midsummer Night's Dream", the Loder captaincy series a "Julius Caesar", and the Rebel series a "Hamlet". Finally, just as Shakespeare ended on a note of mellow tranquillity with "The Tempest", so Charles Hamilton in the last years of the Magnet brought his ship home safe to calm harbour.

It should not be supposed, of course, that any claim is being made that Charles Hamilton is another Shakespeare. The sort of comparison made above could be applied to any prolific writer of merit. Nevertheless, just as critics admire "The Tempest" but refuse to allow it pride of place over the great comedies and tragedies of the Middle Period, so do many collectors admire the salmon-covered period of the Magnet but refuse to concede it superiority over the stories written around 1930. At all events, let us now examine the "Tempest" era of the Magnet, and see what virtues and blemishes it possesses.

1938 - Triumph and Tragedy

Some of the first day of term scenes on the railway station were often worked most ingeniously into the plot of the Magnet story, and No. 1560 entitled "Bunter's Big Blunder" was no exception to this rule. Bunter's blunder was his belief that it was Mr. Quelch who had snowballed Dr. Locke. It need hardly be added that this egregious belief was mistaken.

It is idle to profess to like Greyfriars if you do not like Billy Bunter: you might just as well claim that "Hamlet" would be improved if the Prince of Denmark were omitted from the cast. Most Magnet readers, however, have always admired the Carter series in Nos. 1561-1572, in which Bunter played so prominent a part. Arthur Carter was a distant relative who had offended his uncle Joseph, and Bunter was likely to

become the new heir if Mr. Quelch gave him a satisfactory report. The plot of the series did not develop at all in the manner that plots of Greyfriars stories had done in the Golden Age: each number was simply an account of how Carter tried to disgrace Bunter. Nevertheless, although the plot was repetitive, the style of writing was superb. A polished, scintillating humour pervaded most of the series, and much of this humour was entirely novel and most of the situations were extremely well-contrived. For these reasons the Carter series stands out as one of the best of the latter-day Magnet stories. In a way it was like the echo of the glories of yesteryear. Incidentally, although Carter was expelled, Bunter never seemed to inherit the favour or the fortune of uncle Joseph. According to a Bunter book it seems that after the war, at least, uncle Joseph's means were very moderate indeed.

The magic of the Greyfriars stories lay mainly in the tales with a school setting, though some of the English holiday series ran them very close. Foreign holidays in strange parts could not rely on nostalgia to hold the reader's interest: such stories had to stand or fall on their own merits. There were only four great foreign holiday series in the Magnet: the Sahara series of 1924, the India series of 1926, the South Seas series of 1927, and the China series of 1930. Each of these series was superior to all earlier ones, and the success of each lay in the convincing manner in which Charles Hamilton portrayed a scene he had never witnessed himself. These successful series were not Greyfriars stories at all in the strict sense of the term: they were really astonishingly good adventure stories into which the Greyfriars juniors seemed to have strayed by accident. The Texas series in Magnets 1573-1582 was, unfortunately, not a good series by any sort of yardstick. If the Carter series was a triumph, the Texas series was a tragedy.

The Texas series was really two successive stories. The first one dealt with Barney Stone, the crooked manager of Mr. Vernon-Smith's ranch, and the second one introduced the Rio Kid, but to those who remembered the original series in the Popular he was but a pale ghost of his former self. The scene was set in Packsaddle, itself taken from yet another set of stories. Perhaps it was the curious admixture of so many different characters that caused the Texas series to jar somewhat, but there is no doubt that the spectacle of Vernon-Smith handling a gun like a seasoned campaigner was a little too incredible to ring true. When Jimmy Silver and Co. had gone out west in the previous decade they had not been made to behave as anything but schoolboys. Vernon-Smith in the Texas series was too good - or too bad - to be believable. Despite this it would not be fair to the Texas series to leave it without paying tribute to the power of some of its descriptive passages, which were of a type now becoming rare in the Magnet.

The summer term was extremely short in 1938, since deep inroads were made into it at both ends by excessively long holiday series. Though it was short, it was quite entertaining, and began with two amusing single stories, which were both new versions of an old theme. No. 1583 entitled "Bunter the Hypnotist" related how Coker was deceived into thinking Bunter possessed that occult power, while No. 1583, "Walker on the Warpath", featured Tom Brown by way of a change.

The remainder of the term was occupied by four stories rather loosely linked but curiously satisfying in that there was a great deal of referring back to past incidents. Nos. 1585 and 1586 dealt with a rag on Loder by Ponsonby and Co., the blame for which fell on the Famous Five. The title of No. 1587, "Punishing Ponsonby", spoke for itself, while No. 1588 was an odd collection of unrelated incidents, one of which was a sequel to the earlier tales. On the whole, these stories were well above

average.

1938 was unique in that there were two foreign holiday series in one year. Magnets 1589-1598 dealt with a trip to the South Seas to enable Lord Mauleverer to find his missing cousin Brian. Brian had been the villain of the piece in No. 776, many years ago, and this perhaps explains why the juniors did not recognise him when they saw him in the South Seas. There was plenty of action and inventive imagination in this story, which was one of the best holiday series of later times. Most collectors probably prefer the 1922 Congo series for reading about Bunter as head of a cannibal tribe, and the 1927 South Seas series was a much superior tale. Nevertheless there is plenty of good reading in this 1938 series, and, as with the Texas series, the chance was not missed to introduce a character from the Modern Boy - in this case, King of the Islands.

The new term did not commence until October, and so it was not surprising that the Tracy series in Nos. 1599-1608 occupied all that was left of the autumn term. The Tracy series was equally as good as the Carter series earlier in the year, and was also far less repetitive: the plot developed with some pleasing twists and turns that brought to mind some of the plots of the Golden Age. Gilbert Tracy was, like Angelo Lee in the Gem, a boy who wanted to leave school. Mr. Quelch was equally determined that he should not leave school, and there were many novel situations arising before the plot was finally resolved in a typically Hamiltonian manner.

It would be interesting to know exactly why Charles Hamilton resuscitated the character of Soames for the Christmas series in Nos. 1609-1612. Soames had been a striking success in the late 'twenties, but he had not been heard of since, and there could be few Magnet readers in 1938 who remembered his earlier appearances. Soames was now but a faint shadow of his former self, and the series about the message in Greek which was scratched on a silver cigarette case was not one of the major Christmas series in the Magnet.

1939 - Twilight

The new term commenced with an agreeable pair of stories in Nos. 1613 and 1614 about a blackmailer named Squidge who used his talents when he found juniors out of bounds. A postscript appeared in No. 1617, which was really intended to follow immediately, but for some reason the publication of this story was delayed.

"How about a series featuring an Old Boy with a grievance?" is what the editor might well have said when the Crocker series was mooted. Such a slender theme could not, of course, have sustained a whole series, but there was more than met the eye at first glance in this series, which ran in Nos. 1615, 1616, and 1618-1625. Jack Drake was brought back to solve the mystery in the guise of a new Removite called James Duck, and Mr. Quelch's continual loss of faith in him which was always followed by a renewal of confidence tended at times to grow a little wearisome in its repetitiveness. The identity of the Greyfriars prowler was obvious, and so the series was perhaps unduly prolonged, but nevertheless it was always bright and entertaining, and no one could have had any substantial objection to it.

In the late 'twenties and early 'thirties there was a certain indefinable charm about Vernon-Smith that made him quite an attractive character, no matter how badly he behaved. As time passed, however, he became hard and rather callous. In 1938 he certainly showed up very badly, especially in the Blackrock Island series in Nos. 1626-

1629, in which he invited Bunter and the Famous Five to spend the Easter holidays on an island off the North Devon coast. Once they were stranded there they found that a small cottage was the only habitable dwelling on the island.

"Fool's Luck" in No. 1630 was by way of comic relief, and related how Coker was caned, and how he tried to put paid to Prout in return. This was followed by the Bertie Vernon series in Magnets 1631-1642 which featured Vernon-Smith at his very worst again, this time when confronted with his identical cousin.

The idea of building a series around the double of one of the famous established characters was an old one. The Wally Bunter and Stacey series in the Magnet were both constructed on these lines, though the old Clavering series in the Gem was the nearest comparison, in that Tom Merry was to have been defrauded of his fortune there, just as the Bounder was here, though the means to be employed were somewhat different. Vernon-Smith was so detestable throughout the Bertie Vernon series that the reader's sympathy was strangely divided. Nevertheless it must be admitted that the plot was finely wrought - indeed, it was by far and away the best story of the year.

Odd things were happening to the Magnet at this time. With No. 1639 the chapter numbers were omitted, leaving just titles. This was only a small thing, but it represented a break with the tradition of 31 years. The reason for this became clear in No. 1643, when a large style of print was adopted. The stories then gradually grew shorter, a fact which was thus not so readily apparent. Although these were only minor matters, they were disturbing to the knowledgeable reader. A chill wind was beginning to blow from the East.

It is sad to have to say that the Water Lily series in Nos. 1643-1650 is over-rated. It must be freely admitted that it represents the high-water mark in holiday series in the final period of the Magnet. There was something very nostalgic and evocative in this last pre-war holiday which constituted the final glimpse of a vanished world, but the series does not really qualify for all the praise it has been given. The journey up-river from Kingston could have been the Gem series of 1923 all over again, and other parts could have been the 1929 Thames holiday series in the Magnet all over again - but, alas, they were not. Good as the Water Lily series was it could not aspire to the glories that were gone. Shifty Spooner was too persistent a pursuer and Ponsonby was far too ubiquitous: as a result the inconsequential charm of the older stories was discarded in favour of a more tightly woven plot that could at times seem more than a little repetitious. The Water Lily series was very competently written, like all the post-war Bunter books, but it lacked the divine spark which had glowed so brightly a decade previously. Good but not outstanding is perhaps the fairest judgment that could be passed.

The stories of the autumn term were a sparkling selection of tales, nearly all of them being written in Charles Hamilton's best humorous vein. It was Vernon-Smith who was "Condemned without Evidence" in No. 1651, as a result of certain incidents arising on the first day of term. The following week Billy Bunter, with the help of Wibley in disguise, almost managed to convince Mr. Quelch that "Grunter of Greyhurst" was Bunter's double, at whose door all misdeeds could be laid. Billy Bunter was "The Bounder's Dupe" in No. 1653, a story of ventriloquism, while Bunter was also "The Black Prince of Greyfriars" in No. 1654, in which he assumed a temporary disguise in order to escape a Head's flogging. The last of the run of single stories was "The Tuck Hoarder" in No. 1655. Reference had been made to gas-masks and A.R.P. before, but this issue dated 4.11.39. was the first one to mention the war. It was Fisher T.

Fish who was hoarding food - but it did not last long once Bunter had chanced upon it.

Coker was destined to feature prominently once more in the Magnet - in Nos. 1656-1658, in which he was wrongly suspected and expelled. How he took a job as Uncle Clegg's errand boy and haunted the school until the truth came to light was told in a most amusing manner. The last single story in the Magnet was No. 1659 entitled "Billy Bunter's Bargain", which was Lord Mauleverer's bicycle repainted by a thief and sold to Bunter on credit.

No voice is ever raised to contradict the universal assertion that the Lamb series in Nos. 1660-1675 was too long. This condemnation is indeed well-founded, for apart from the Wally Bunter series no Magnet story had lasted so long. Yet the part of the series which appeared in 1939 was very lively, varied, and interesting. The kidnapping of Mr. Quelch, and the Wharton Lodge Christmas with its concomitant Moat House mystery all represented some of the best of Charles Hamilton's latter day writings. The year ended on a most promising note with Bunter sharing Mr. Quelch's incarceration.

1940 - Night Must Fall

With the Near Year it became apparent that the Lamb series was far too long. Vernon-Smith's feud with the new master was interesting enough, but Ferrers Locke's continued series of failures became just a little too patent a device for spinning out the story. On balance, therefore, the Lamb series was not a success, but it had some very entertaining moments.

The last holiday series was spent at Eastcliff Lodge in Nos. 1676-1682. Sir William Bird, Loder's uncle, was on Secret Service work, and Wibley was engaged to impersonate him and so give the impression that Sir William was still in England when in fact he was on the continent. Soames made yet another appearance, this time in the guise of a patriot, though he did not disdain to feather his own nest. The war-time background of food-shortage, air-raids, and petty restrictions - to say nothing of an advance peep of the Battle of Britain - makes rather odd reading at this date, but the series was well-written and up to average.

With the justly celebrated "Shadow of the Sack" in No. 1683 the Magnet ended its remarkable career. This story was the first of a series in which Wharton was suspected of another's misdeeds, and it promised very highly indeed, with Mr. Quelch determined to uphold Wharton despite all the evidence against him: "There was an occasion, once, when I lost my trust in you, partly owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding, partly to your stubborn temper. This misunderstanding was cleared up, and I resolved never to be misled in the same way again." This might well have been one of the great Magnet series: we shall never know for certain now, but at any rate we can feel thankful that the Magnet ended with a bang and not a whimper.

The ending of the Magnet

The titles of four subsequent stories were to have been as follows:-

- 1684 "The Battle of the Beaks"
- 1685 "Bandy Bunter"
- 1686 "What Happened to Hacker"
- 1687 "The Hidden Hand"

and there were at least two more stories in hand, which were not connected with the series.

Why the Magnet ceased publication in such an abrupt manner is one of those mysteries the explanation of which can, at this stage, only be guessed at. The paper shortage which was so suddenly precipitated by Hitler's invasion of Norway was undoubtedly a very cogent factor, but there seems to have been no other Amalgamated Press publication which stopped in so curious a manner, in the middle of a series, without warning, still advertising next week's issue, and of course without advising readers to buy some similar paper like the Triumph. It seems certain that the paper shortage was not solely responsible for the permanent eclipse of what had once been so brilliant a star in the constellation

Under different circumstances it seems possible that the Magnet might have carried on during the war (perhaps appearing fortnightly, like some other boys' papers), and have continued for some time thereafter. This possibility raises many interesting questions. For instance, for how long would Charles Hamilton have been able to write regularly? Even the most active septuagenarian might tire of weekly writings of such a length. Again, how many people would have turned to the Old Boys' Books Clubs if the Amalgamated Press had continued to publish the Magnet or the Schoolboys' Own Library? One eminent dealer has stated that 75% of his customers want only Magnets. This urge to collect back numbers would never have gained any momentum at all unless current stories had become non-existent. It is somewhat paradoxical to reflect that the lamentable demise of the Magnet really inaugurated today's country-wide fellowship of collectors.

Conclusion

I have often been asked to state the order of merit in which I would place the various periods of the Magnet. I am accordingly listing them beneath, adhering to the dates selected for the series of reviews written for the C.D. Annual since I began in 1953. By the side of each period I have listed briefly the quality for which it is most noted:-

- 1930-1934 for the incomparably fine writing.
- 1922-1929 for the remarkable development in characterisation.
- 1938-1940 for extremely well-knit plots.
- 1935-1937 for general competence.
- 1908-1915 for inconsequential charm and freshness.
- 1915-1922 for development of writing series.

The Magnet is undoubtedly the most famous of all boys' papers. Others may have had a wider circulation or a longer life, but none succeeded so triumphantly in etching such an indelible impression on the minds of its readers. It says much for its consistent appeal that the Greyfriars story always occupied the major part of the paper: no serials or other counter-attractions (the sure signs of a flagging circulation) were ever allowed to impinge upon what was always the main, if not the whole, attraction of the paper.

Because the Magnet was so consistent, its sudden end was all the more of a blow to readers and author alike. In 1943 Charles Hamilton stated, in a letter to me, that "perhaps, after so long a run, it was time for Harry Wharton & Co. to make their final bow and retire from the scene." This was no doubt the philosophical view to take, but in those dark days of war the old reader might well have recalled the plaint of Browning:-

"All things are taken from us, and become
Part and parcel of a dreadful past."

THE WYCLIFFE SAGA

BY W.J.A. HUBBARD

* * * * *

I should imagine that there have been few authors of boys' stories who have provoked more criticism than Mr. John Nix Pentelow and quite a number of copies of both the "Collectors' Digest" and the "Story Paper Collector" over the past ten years have contained articles of this nature. Admittedly these articles have been mainly aimed at Pentelow in his capacity as a "Substitute" writer to Mr. Charles Hamilton in the "Magnet" and "Gem" mainly during Pentelow's occupation of the editorial chair of both papers during the period 1916/19. They have however, rather tended to obscure the fact that Pentelow was a fine writer in his own sphere and quite capable of producing a school story of a very high standard to satisfy all but the most exacting critic.

I do not, however, in this article, intend to pass any further remarks on Pentelow's "substitute" work in the "Magnet" and "Gem" but to confine myself to a description of some rather remarkable stories written by him under one of his numerous pen-names - Jack North. These stories were of Wycliffe School and had Pentelow written nothing else during his long career as a boys' editor and author, I think they would have been sufficient to establish him as a writer of more than ordinary interest and power.

The Wycliffe stories originally appeared in "Pluck" some time towards the end of 1907 and according to my information were numbered as follows:-

No.117, Title not known; No.122, Jack's Enemy; No.126, Title not known; No.128, Facing the Music; No.131, Prefects of Bowker's House; No.134, At Half-Past the Eleventh Hour; No.136 Big Billy's Transformation; No.140, The Shooting Box in Borden Wood; No. 142, Brothers of Borden; No.144, The Mystery of Sports Day; No.146, Cock House at Wycliffe; No.148, Sixteen of Them; No.151, The Hittites; No.153, The Captain of Wycliffe; No.157, Rival Captains; No.161, The Scamp of Wycliffe; No.166, The Commander's Birthday; No.169, The Secret Seven; No.172, In Open Rebellion; No.178, The Schemer; No.181, Wycliffe's Ghosts; No.186, Merry Minor's Chum.

There were also a number of Boys' Friend Libraries (3d.) that were original stories that fitted into the main pattern of the yarns. These were:-

No.53, Chums of Wycliffe (Published in August, 1908); No.73, Larry and Co; No.82, The Runaway.

Then, in 1921, the "Pluck" stories were reprinted in the B.F.L. (4d.) 1st Series and for the benefit of the Collector who is interested in such details I give below the order in which I consider the yarns should be read, although I would stress there is some dispute among followers of Pentelow's stories about this.

No.532, Jack Jackson's Enemy; No.535, The Rise of Bowker's House; No.539, The Prefects of Bowker's House; No.542, The Staunchest of Chums; No.547, The Wycliffe Scholarship Boy; No.550, The Brothers of Borden; No.555, Birds of a Feather; No.558, The Rival Captains; No.588, Prefect and Fag; No.593, In Open Rebellion; No.598, A

Troubled Term; No.53, Chums of Wycliffe; No.73, Larry and Co; No.82, The Runaway; No.604, Alexander the Great.

As portrayed by Jack North, Wycliffe School was apparently situated somewhere in the South of England like the vast majority of fictitious schools. It had seven houses, all, with the exception of the School House, named after masters, and had something like 500 pupils. The usual neighbouring town was Wickham, the county town of Wicksire on the river Wyvern and some five miles from the school and spoken of by Jack North as "a big place, with considerable manufactures, though by no means to be classed as a manufacturing town purely and simple." * The School colours were Green and Silver and there were also house colours.

An interesting and to my mind pleasing feature of the stories was the fact that the boys grew up and there was undoubtedly something rather fascinating in following their careers through the school to the dignity of the Sixth Form. It was this feature that made the character work so important in the yarns and enabled the author to present such a realistic picture of school life. Let us then deal with all the leading actors of the Wycliffe stage.

First of all we have Jack Jackson and his chums, Donald MacDonald, David Davies and Patrick O'Hara who in the first story arrived as new boys and were placed in the Upper Fourth Form. They were portrayed as being about 15 years of age. Jackson, a fine example of a typical English boy and the son of a famous explorer, was one of the four leading characters in the stories. A frank, healthy though trifle irresponsible boy with brilliant all-round sporting ability he was a most interesting study. Donald MacDonald was as typical Scots as Jackson was English; dour, canny, with excellent mental powers he was also possessed of considerable sporting ability being a good cricketer and a first class footballer, chiefly at right back and a fine long distance runner. David (Taffy) Davies was the youngest and smallest of the four. Extremely clever, with ability as a female impersonator he was not shown as a particularly outstanding sportsman in the early yarns but later improved greatly especially at Cricket where he became the 1st XI wicket-keeper. Davies was probably the most lovable character in the whole of the Wycliffe Saga. Patrick O'Hara was a fine specimen of the Irish race, full of fun and fight too when it was needed, and a good sportsman.

To these four boys there were allied two others. Harry Merry was already at the school when Jack Jackson and his chums arrived. An Australian, with considerable powers of leadership, a great schoolboy all-round cricketer and a brilliant rider, he was also a member of the Upper Fourth. Later he was Chairman of the "Brothers of Borden", a schoolboy Club or Association formed by the leading characters in the stories and the school Cricket Captain. Beiram Singhji, who also arrived as a new boy in the opening yarn was a real attempt to portray an Indian boy at a English Public School. A Rajput Prince and a nephew of the great cricketer, Ranjitsinghji, he was presented as a quiet, intelligent boy to whom his friends were devoted. It is hardly necessary to say that he was shown in the yarns as a brilliant batsman and wonderful slip field. He also possessed considerable hypnotic powers.

In opposition to Jackson and his friends in the opening yarns were four other boys, Harris, Wicks, Porson and Saunders. Charles Horace Harris was a fine character indeed. Rather overbearing and a bit of a bully in the early stories he later reformed and became one of the outstanding boys in the school. A first class all-round sportsman, Harris was shown as older than the rest and in the Fifth Form.

* No.53 B.F.L. (3d.) "Chums of Wycliffe"

Harris' friendship with his three Upper Fourth chums was presented in a most convincing manner. His chief friend, Reginald Robert Riddlesden Wicks was shown as a long-legged, English boy, with typical curly hair and considerable sporting ability. Percival Porson, a rather stout amiable boy and a steady and thoroughly reliable chum and Arthur Saunders, a small clever boy, were the other two.

As the yarns proceeded four boys from the School House appeared on the scene, Bob Merritt, a scholarship boy round whom the "Wycliffe Scholarship Boy" was mainly written and his three chums, Tom Blencowe, rather a bully of the Harris type at first, but later Bob's close friend, and Conway and Charles Cartwright. Reginald Hardy, of Morants House, the Cock House at Wycliffe at the beginning of the series, was another close friend of Jack Jackson and Co., also Harry Crosswell.

It was these sixteen boys who formed, at the suggestion of Bob Merritt, a Club within the School called the "Brothers of Borden" whose meetings were held at a shooting box in Borden Wood, near the School, the property of Squire Feltham, a local landowner who adopted Bob as his son. Later on membership of the "Brothers" was extended to most of the Prefects and other leading characters and to be a "Brother" became a distinction that was prized among all Wycliffe boys.

Jack North used a very large number of characters in the Wycliffe yarns. There were, perhaps, too many of them, and the stage became a trifle crowded despite the fact that the boys grew up and left enabling the author to gradually dispose of certain of them in a plausible manner. In compiling this article, I have so far come across, including those just merely mentioned, over one hundred characters. He was, however, extremely natural in dealing with the relations between the Senior and Junior boys of the School and the character of Walter Raleigh, Captain of Wycliffe in the early yarns stands out most prominently for this reason. A wonderful all-round sportsman and a boy loved and respected by both masters and pupils Raleigh was, despite his perfections, one of the finest characters at Wycliffe and in some ways it was a great pity that Jack North had to have him leave the School at the conclusion of "Birds of a Feather". William Rawson, who eventually succeeded him as Captain was another interesting study, never loved as Raleigh was perhaps, because his character was too cold, but respected for his attention to duty. A first class sportsman, Rawson figured very prominently in the stories which Jack North wrote in the middle of the Wycliffe series featuring the dispute in the School over the Captaincy after Raleigh's departure.

I have already spoken of Bowkers', afterwards Williams' as the house at which the leading characters resided, although later Harris and his chums transferred to Whiteman's House about half way through the series. The Captain of Bowkers' at the beginning of the stories was George Barham. Transferred to Bowkers' from another house in an effort by the Headmaster, Dr. Anderson, to rescue the House from the state of decline in which it had fallen, Barham succeeded in a not inconsiderable task in which he found opposition, not only from the "bad hats" of the house but from the Housemaster as well. A quiet, modest and clever Senior, but a boy of considerable determination and a good sportsman, Barham was helped in every way by Jack Jackson and his chums and had the satisfaction, before he left, of seeing his house "cock" of the School. Other prominent Seniors were Algernon Carver, one of the "bad hats" who, like Harris, was in the Fifth Form in the early yarns, Snow, an opponent of Harris at the beginning but later a good all-round sportsman who succeeded Barham as House Captain and Victor Laringa, a boy of mixed blood who was a character of the worst type.

Wilfred Duncan, another fine type of Senior was the original Captain of Gazman's House while Paddison, an excellent all-round sportsman who eventually captained both the School Cricket and Soccer teams succeeded Raleigh as Captain of Morants.

Rawson was the original Captain of the School House while Arthur Warden was Head Prefect of Leighs'. Warden, not a bad chap at heart, but rather inclined to be influenced by others was a prominent character in the stories written round the fight for the captaincy of the School. Dalrymple, another Prefect and a close friend of Warden and Raphael, a Jew, but a fine chap and eventually a Prefect and a "Brother of Borden" were other Senior boys who played parts in the stories.

As the stories developed, Whiteman's House played a more distinguished part mainly because of the transfer of Harris and his friends. It was made clear by the author that Harris' transfer was at the request of Mr. Whiteman, who had a strong liking and respect for him.

Another leading Whiteman's House Senior and one of the most splendid characters in the Wycliffe Saga was Arthur Dangerfield. Proud, headstrong and with great powers of leadership Dangerfield later became the mainstay of the opposition to the "Brothers of Borden" in the School, and his death, an action typical of Jack North, was in some ways a considerable loss to the stories as he left a gap that was never really filled. Dangerfield's best friend was Bulstrode, another Senior, who later became one of the "Brothers" after his chum's death.

One of the most determined opponents of the "Brothers" in the School was Witley, a School House Senior whose enmity was a prominent feature in quite a number of the Wycliffe yarns. An associate, but never a friend of Dangerfield, Witley was a very interesting character study. Butcher, known to his friends as "Slaughterhouse" and White, known as "Doggy" were two other Seniors who were Witley supporters.

A boy who played a leading role in the final story of the series was Alexander Alexander. A senior from Eton and a fine cricketer who had already featured at Lords he returned to his old school at the end of the yarn which was, in my opinion, rather a pity as the author might have made more of him.

Like all fictitious schools, Wycliffe had more than its share of "bad hats". I have dealt with most of the seniors and we must now consider those who were mainly in the Middle School when Jack Jackson and his chums arrived. Prominent among them was Augustus Thwaites, an arrant "funk" who was known as "Spider" to his schoolmates. Associated with Carver in an attempt to bring Harris and Wicks into disgrace by making it appear that they had cheated in an examination, Thwaites was eventually expelled from the School. Two other "bad hats" were the Solomon twins, Aaron and Moses, Jewish boys with all the worst attributes of their race. Then there were a number of Witley's supporters, Bates, Spring, Good, Cornelius Dando and Mimmack. Neither Spring or Bates, who were close chums, were bad chaps at heart. Good was a thoroughly vicious character and one of the worst boys in the School which he was eventually asked to leave. Dando and Mimmack were merely hangers-on.

A boy of Harris' type, who has reformed and who dominates by sheer force of physical strength, character and will power always succeeds in making enemies among other boys who in the ordinary run of events would not take exception to him, and Baird, Webber and Wilderspin figured among the opponents of the "Brothers" mainly for this reason. Baird, indeed, kept up his dislike to the very end of the series as in the

final story, along with Bond, Canton, Powell and Rogers of Ray's House, he helped in the formation of the "Macedonians" the Association started by Alexander in rivalry to the "Brothers of Borden".

One of the leading characters in "Chums of Wycliffe" was Ram Ghosh, an Indian boy. Actually he was really Bhedwar Singh, Beiram Singhji's cousin and mainly for that reason a deadly enemy of the "Brothers" who played a prominent part in foiling his evil plans.

In the early Wycliffe stories, the Junior boys were only mentioned occasionally and played rather ornamental parts. Durward, who was originally Rawson's fag, Snider and Simpson were the most prominent of these characters but with the appearance of Larry Merry, Harry Merry's brother on the scene in B.F.L. No.588 "Prefect and Fag", the limelight was switched to some extent on the boys in the lower forms. Larry Merry was one of the best of Jack North's creations, an irresponsible boy with great charm and powers of leadership. Larry's chief chums were Durward and Ewbald from the School House; Simpson, who owed allegiance like Larry to Williams; Frank Fisher and Tommy Tidd, from Whitemans' and Wood Minor from Morants. The exploits of these Juniors, who were known to themselves as the "Secret Seven" were featured in quite a number of the yarns.

Tommy Tidd, the son of a local greengrocer who was killed in Jack Jackson's father's employment, was the most interesting of Larry's friends. He was, however, not a Cockney character, but a perfectly normal boy in habits, manner and speech, a most refreshing change to the usual procedure. Ewbald, a boy with no less than six Christian names and so for obvious reasons known to his friends as "Bill" was another good character. He was a cousin of Arthur Dangerfield. The author's presentation of these seven junior boys was of a high standard for all the lads seemed to enjoy a most distinct separate personality.

In the later yarns other Junior boys came on the scene and of these the most prominent was Claude Arthur Coningsby Wilder. A boy who had been brought up in India, Wilder found himself at loggerheads with the other juniors right from the start.

Another leading Junior who came on the scene later was William Ambrose Hamilton (Bull) Barrance. Burly and aggressive, and in many ways rather like Harris, Barrance figured not only as an enemy of Wilder but as a rival of Larry and his chums.

Larry's popularity at Wycliffe earned him quite a few enemies as well as friendly rivals and among these we must include Dark and Henry Mighell Golding. Dark's nature was like his name and his dislike of Larry and his chums was presented in a very realistic manner in the stories. He quickly realised that Larry and Barrance were marked out as natural rivals and did all he could to make trouble between them and succeeded for a time. Golding was an overgrown lout of a boy whose lack of brain power kept him in the Junior School. He was considerably under Dark's influence and an associate of older boys whose company he should have avoided.

The Headmaster of Wycliffe at the beginning was Dr. Anderson. A stern but firm and just man in the tradition of Messrs. Locke and Holmes of "Magnet" and "Gem" fame, and liked and respected by the whole School, Dr. Anderson retired from the stories to become the Bishop of Culverbourne.

There were no less than eight Housemasters - Messrs. Bowker, Dunford, Gazman,

Leigh, Morant, Ray, Whiteman and Williams. Mr. Bowker, an M.A. and also Master of the Sixth Form was a scoundrel with a weak nature and vicious temper who was killed in the early stories. Mr. Dunford was also Master of the Upper Third. Mr. Richard Timothy Gazman, M.A., was one of the most important adult characters. Known to the whole School as "The Gasman" and a fussy interfering man with a considerable sense of his own importance he was a very fine character study. Master also of the Upper Fourth he succeeded Dr. Anderson as Headmaster. Mr. Leigh, a rather absent-minded individual, succeeded Mr. Gazman as Master of the Upper Fourth.

Mr. Morant was probably the best liked Master at Wycliffe and a most brilliant sportsman while Mr. Ray succeeded Mr. Gazman as Housemaster. Mr. Whiteman eventually took Mr. Gazman's place as Headmaster of Wycliffe in the final yarns. A good sportsman who took a personal interest in many of his boys, his popularity was almost as great as that of Mr. Morant.

Mr. Benjamin Inchbald Williams was another interesting character study. Known to his boys as "Big Billy" he succeeded Mr. Bowker as Housemaster and played a prominent part in quite a number of the yarns. Another Master who played a leading part was Mr. Malcolm Kaghman Waters, the Junior Science Master. A rather despicable type who did not hesitate to actually spy on the boys, Mr. Waters was disliked both by them and his colleagues.

Two other Masters mentioned were Mr. Lymbery, the Senior Science Master and the Revd. Theodore Williams, known to the boys for obvious reasons as "Little Billy".

Other adult characters I must reluctantly leave out owing to considerations of space.

Let me now give details of the actual stories.

B.F.L. No. 552 Jack Jackson's Enemy: Not particularly outstanding for an opening story in my opinion. Jack Jackson and his chums arrive at Wycliffe and are placed in Mr. Bowker's House which they find to be the worst House in the School. They make friends with Harry Merry and Beiram Singhji and together the six boys present a united front to Harris and his friends, Wicks, Porson and Saunders, to whom are allied Carver and Thwaites and other "bad hats" of the House. A feud develops between the two rival groups but the chums gradually contrive to earn the respect of Harris and his friends as well as Barham, the House Captain who has been transferred to Bowker's by the Headmaster in an attempt to improve matters. They find, however, that they have incurred the enmity of Mr. Bowker who does little to conceal the fact that he dislikes them intensely.

Jackson's father, a famous explorer, is lost in the wilds of Tibet and has not been heard of for a long time and the boy is under the guardianship of a rascally solicitor who plans to put him out of the way in order that he can enjoy the Jackson property and fortune. His attempts, however, arouse the suspicion of Jack's chums and they are put on their guard.

B.F.L. No. 535 The Rise of Bowker's House: The chums continue their feud with Harris and his friends. They forget their differences, however, when they band together in an effort to raise the sporting standards of their House. The House Football XI, under the captaincy of Harris, who proves himself an excellent leader, wins two rounds of the House Football Cup competition and this despite Mr. Bowker who does all he can to spoil their efforts. Jackson, Merry and MacDonald indeed show such form that they

gain regular places in the School 1st XI. Harris now begins to break with Carver and becomes a finer boy in the process, while his friends, who have never been particularly keen on either Carver and Thwaites, follow his example and join up with Jackson and Co. Encouraged by Barham, five of them represent the House in the Overbourne Run, a fifteen mile cross country race which they win despite the fact that the cup for the first runner home goes to Walter Raleigh, the School Captain, for the third successive time.

Captain Jackson is still missing, and Hallford, the murderous agent of Jack's guardian, makes two attempts on the boy's life, both of which are unsuccessful. Jackson and his friends, however, find their efforts to trace the assassin frustrated by Mr. Bowker. Worried by his increasing gambling debts and hating the boys for their interference into his matrimonial affairs, the Housemaster succumbs to drink and the persuasions of Hallford and agrees to help the latter to put an end to Jack Jackson's existence.

B.F.L. No.539 The Prefects of Bowker's House: Trouble develops in the House between the Prefects and considerable ill-feeling commences between one of them, Snow, and Harris, whose rather burly aggressive manner and influence as House Football Captain he bitterly resents. Harris shows Carver in a very plain manner that he wishes to have nothing further to do with him and from now on Carver becomes an enemy of all the chums.

Victor Laringa, another Prefect of Bowker's House now appears on the scene. He has some queer hypnotic power and "Taffy" Davies, the youngest and most inexperienced of the chums falls under his evil influence, and commits certain thefts while in a trance like state for which he is "cut" by all his friends, only Harris standing by him.

The attacks on Jack Jackson's life continue and he is in peril more than once.

B.F.L. No.542 The Staunchest of Chums: The climax of the attempts against Jack Jackson's life is reached when Mr. Bowker and Hallford make an attempt to blow the boy up. He is saved by the devotion of his friends and Messrs. Bowker and Hallford meet a well deserved end by being hoist with their own petard and departing for other realms.

Mr. Williams now takes over as Housemaster and a new atmosphere develops in the House whose members, well led by Barham, who does everything he can to encourage them, become more and more a power in the School especially from the sporting point of view.

Jackson and his chums and Harris and Co., are now the closest of friends and the stage is set for the founding of the "Brothers of Borden".

B.F.L. No.547 The Wycliffe Scholarship Boy: This story marks the arrival of Bob Merritt. He is placed in the School House and has a pretty awful time of it at first. Championed by Harry Crosswell, a Senior from Dunford's House, he manages to win through despite the dislike he incurs from Tom Blencowe, a rather bullying Middle School boy who he gradually turns from an enemy into a staunch friend. He becomes friends with two other School House boys, Conway and Cartwright, and eventually all four become firm chums. They join up with Jack Jackson, Harris and Co., and prove themselves a force to be reckoned with.

Squire Feltham, a local landowner of late middle age now adopts Bob as his son. Bob persuades the Squire to lend the chums a shooting box he owns in Borden Wood near the School and this they turn into a Club House when at Bob's suggestion they form the "Brothers of Borden".

B.F.L. No.550 The Brothers of Borden: Mr. Williams plays a considerable part in this story which is on rather familiar lines. His son, a fugitive from justice, turns up at the School. The "Brothers" find out what is happening and do all they can to assist the Housemaster by hiding his son in their Club House. Matters become more and more complicated and Harris is kidnapped but is rescued by the "Brothers".

The services of Mr. Middleton Moore, a famous private detective are eventually engaged and thanks to his efforts and those of Beiram Singhji the whole matter is cleared up.

B.F.L. No.555 Birds of a Feather: A fine story indeed with plenty of dramatic action but divided into two parts. The first half of the yarn tells of the efforts of Carver and Thwaites to get Harris and Wicks accused of cheating in the end of term examinations. The final House Cricket Match is now due but Dr. Anderson decides that until the matter is cleared up Harris and Wicks will not be allowed to play. As they are two of the best all-round players in the team this causes great concern but Raleigh and some of the prefects, who have recently been elected "Brothers of Borden", have an interview with the Head and finally persuade him to change his decision.

Thanks to Singhji's hypnotic powers, Harris and Wicks are cleared and Carver and Thwaites expelled from the School. Free from anxiety, Harris and Wicks play a great part in the match both scoring not out centuries in the second innings when Williams' defeats Morants' by seven wickets and this despite the brilliant all-round play of Raleigh who is really the hero of the match.

The first part of the story closes with Raleigh's moving speech of farewell to the whole School.

The second part concerns the adventures of the "Brothers" when on holiday at Stenfield Hall, the home of Jack Jackson. Their enjoyment of some country house cricket is spoilt by the re-appearance of Victor Laringa, expelled in a previous story, who joins with Carver in an attempt to bring about the deaths of Captain Jackson and his son.

B.F.L. No.558 The Rival Captains: The Brothers return to school to find, with the exception of Blencowe, that they have all obtained their remove to higher forms. In order to fill vacancies not available in Williams' House, Harris, Wicks, Porson and Saunders all transfer to Whitemans' where Harris, who is now in the Sixth, becomes a Prefect. He incurs, however, the enmity of Arthur Dangerfield, a fellow senior. Deprived of his prefectship by Dr. Anderson for a nasty "rag" on Harris' study and disliking the "Brothers" intensely, Dangerfield joins another senior, Witley, in founding the "Hittites", a schoolboy association which includes most of the "bad hats" of the Upper School in rivalry to the "Brothers of Borden". The election for the school captaincy is now due and the "Brothers" strongly support Rawson, the Head Prefect of the School House. The Hittites do all they can to try and discredit him but their efforts are defeated and Rawson is elected Captain. Mr. Gazman has now become headmaster in place of Dr. Anderson, who has been appointed a Bishop, and Rawson's difficult task is not made easier by the dislike the new Head has for him and many of his

fellow prefects. The Hittites refuse to accept their defeat and do all they can to embarrass Rawson by electing Dangerfield as an "unofficial Captain". Their efforts split the Upper School into two rival parties and culminate in a large scale disobedience of Mr. Gazman's orders that the School Guy Fawkes celebrations will not be held. Rawson, aided by the "Brothers" manages to foil their plans, however, and the story ends with a temporary truce between the two rival parties.

B.F.L. No. 588 Prefect and Fag: The second of the two stories featuring Dangerfield as the central character and in the opinion of many of Pentelow's admirers the finest Wycliffe story.

The feud between the "Brothers" and the "Hittites" is still smouldering and it breaks out once again in the course of a football match between Williams' and White-mans' when Dangerfield, who is only too conscious of his behaviour, is guilty of some foul play. He challenges Harris to a fight and is badly beaten but refuses to be reconciled.

He now begins to go downhill, and joins Witley and the latter's associates, Butcher, Tranter and White in visiting a near-by house where gambling for heavy stakes with two professional gamblers take place. In a contrary mood Dangerfield does all he can to be insulting to the gamblers. They are busy "plucking" a young man named Roydell who has recently come into a considerable sum of money to whom Dangerfield takes a liking. Larry Merry now arrives at the School and develops a great admiration for Dangerfield who saves him from serious injury or worse in an encounter with a bull. Larry learns of Dangerfield's visits to the house and tries his best to save the senior when Mr. Gazman and certain other masters come on the scene. The masters arrive just after a serious quarrel has broken out between the gamblers and Dangerfield. One of the gamblers tries to shoot the senior but Roydell in trying to help him is badly wounded instead. Witley and his friends manage to get away but Dangerfield remains to help Roydell and is caught by the masters. He is saved from an accusation of murder by another member of the gambling party but refuses to betray his associates and is expelled from the School.

Dangerfield returns home in disgrace with his family and is ordered by his father to stay by himself for Xmas. The "Brothers" are to spend the festive season at Stenfield Hall, which is quite close to where Dangerfield lives. Proceeding there by train, on which they meet a curious youngster who is a cousin of Dangerfield's, named Ewbald, they are caught in a terrible blizzard and the train is derailed in a drift. They are rescued from this awkward predicament by Dangerfield and the whole party eventually go to Stenfield Hall. While there, Dangerfield, who has exposed himself recklessly in helping the "Brothers", and who is really none too strong, develops symptoms of consumption, and the story closes with his death and burial in the church near Stenfield Hall after a most moving reconciliation with his father and Harris and all the "Brothers of Borden".

B.F.L. No. 593 In Open Rebellion: The leadership of the "Hittites" has now been taken over by Witley who is strongly supported by certain other seniors, such as Tranter and Butcher. They do all they can to keep up the feud with the "Brothers" and the School becomes more and more divided between the two rival clubs. They eventually start a barring-out but although this is stopped by the prefects and the "Brothers" a good deal of ill-feeling between the rival parties still remains. Larry Merry and his chums play a most prominent part in this story.

B.F.L. No.599 A Troubled Term: Mainly the continuation of No. 593 and the final round between the "Brothers" and the "Hittites". Tranter is expelled and Witley forced to leave the School.

B.F.L. No.53 Chums of Wycliffe: The first of the original B.F.L. stories and one of the very best of the Wycliffe yarns.

Another Indian boy named Ram Ghosh arrives at the School but is apparently not related to Singhji although he does seem to bear at times a most curious resemblance. Singhji takes an instant dislike to him, however, which is eventually shared by his chums.

Unknown to the chums Ram Ghosh is really Bhedwar Singh, Singhji's cousin and his presence at the School is part and parcel of a plot to kidnap Singhji in order to get his uncle, the Jam of Mowanger, to change the succession to his principality. Ram Ghosh is assisted in his efforts by Victor Laringa and Carver while the Indian end of the plot is directed by Victor's father, Louis Laringa.

Singhji is kidnapped as planned but Ram Ghosh, whose part in the proceedings is to impersonate his cousin, fails to carry out his task as his nerve falters at the critical moment. He therefore pretends to be mad but thanks to clever work on the part of Arthur Saunders, who has the makings of a real detective, and the "Brothers" his efforts are foiled.

Ram Ghosh manages to escape from the confinement in which he has been placed, however, and reach a house near the School where Singhji is being kept a prisoner. In trying to get away with his captive his car breaks down and he is intercepted by a party consisting of a number of the School prefects and the "Brothers" under the leadership of Rawson and Harris. After a desperate struggle Ram Ghosh and his associates are overpowered but in endeavouring to escape for the second time Ram Ghosh meets with a rather typical Jack North fate when he is killed in a motor cycle accident.

B.F.L. No.73 Larry and Co: Mainly a pleasant holiday yarn with Larry Merry and his chums the central figures.

The second half of the story deals, however, with events of the new term and marks the first appearance at the School of both Wilder and "Bull" Barrance. Wilder, who has been saved from death by drowning by Larry, and Barrance have taken a dislike to one another which culminates in a scene in which Barrance is pushed out of a window by Wilder who has lost all control of himself.

Barrance, whose fall has luckily been broken by Mr. Williams who was passing underneath the window at the time, bears no malice, but Wilder is "cut" not only by Larry and his chums, who have more than one grudge against him, but by nearly the whole School.

B.F.L. No.82 The Runaway: This is a sequel to No. 73 and a story with a pronounced adult flavour. It deals with the further adventures of Larry and his friends and the curious duel between Wilder and Barrance.

Shunned by the other boys owing to his attack on Barrance, Wilder runs away from Wycliffe. Larry and his chums and Barrance go after him but they gradually drop out one by one until only Larry is left. He catches up with Wilder and eventually

persuades "the runaway" to return. Wilder now becomes more friendly with both Larry and his friends and Barrance although his curious nature prevents them all becoming on really intimate terms. The other juniors, however, refuse to forgive Wilder, and Dark, a despicable and cunning little rascal who has been trying hard to create trouble between Larry and Co., and the two new boys, is mainly responsible for a terrible "ragging" that Wilder is put through despite all that Barrance can do to save him.

He finally redeems himself when he is responsible for the capture of two notorious poachers who have taken to hiding in the shooting box in Borden Wood, used by the "Brothers" as a H.Q. The yarn, however, closes on a rather sad note for in the struggle to capture the poachers, the Club House is burnt down.

B.F.L. No. 604 Alexander the Great: The final story of the Wycliffe Saga and a good one with the accent mainly on the original characters, now all Sixth Formers and in some cases Prefects, and cricket.

Harris is now Captain of the School while Mr. Whiteman has succeeded Mr. Gazman as Headmaster. A new boy named Alexander Alexander arrives. He is rather curiously a Sixth Former and has previously been at Eton. A fine cricketer he has already featured in the famous match against Harrow at Lords.

Alexander is perhaps rather inclined to think that he is even a better cricketer than he really is and expects to go into the Wycliffe 1st XI straight away. As all the leading "lights" of the School are also "Brothers of Borden" he expects this honour as well. Harry Merry, now Captain of the 1st XI thinks otherwise and a feud develops mainly between him and Alexander.

Looking round for support Alexander finds the remainder of the "Hittites" to hand and forms them into an organization called the "Macedonians". Mainly from Mr. Ray's House the "Macedonians" are pledged to opposition to the "Brothers" and it seems as if the School is going to be split into two rival parties once again.

Alexander, however, is really a decent chap at heart and like Dangerfield considerably better than the large majority of his supporters. He finally becomes friendly with the "Brothers" and eventually returns to Eton at the end of the story having figured in the Wycliffe XI.

Conclusion

Now actually what are we to make of these Wycliffe stories? That they are well written and interesting cannot be denied but what actually is the cause of their popularity among many collectors.

I think that a very important reason for this popularity is the marked adult tone of the stories. In his article "There were Other Schools", Mr. Herbert Leckenby speaks of the "Ravenscar" stories in the B.F.L. being of the adult type. I think the same remark, to a somewhat lesser extent may be applied to the Wycliffe yarns. The very language employed by the author shows this and I am of the opinion that these stories would have earned even more fame had they been published, not in the B.F.L., but in the "Captain" or possibly the B.O.P. I think it is generally agreed that most school stories were intended mainly for boys of roughly 10 to 15 years of age. The Wycliffe stories on the other hand are quite obviously meant not only for an older reading audience but a Grammar and Public School educated one.

In support of this contention I would point out that there are many references on the stories to matters and events generally only fully understood by very mature boys and adults. I would like to quote two others among a number that can be cited in support. They are rather too long to be given in full but they are, I think, strong evidence in support of my theory.

The first example is a passage at the beginning of the "Rival Captains" when the "Brothers" discuss Dr. Anderson's possible elevation to the dignity of Bishop of Culverbourne. The references to "livings" and the Headmaster being "ordained" in the conversation has a marked adult ring and the whole passage is obviously intended for the understanding of mainly senior readers.

The other example is in "Chums of Wycliffe", I think, when Jack North refers to the fact that certain of the "Brothers" had recently taken to shaving but were keeping their razors concealed from one another. A most amusing paragraph this but really only fully understood by adults for obvious reasons.

Jack North was an expert on sport and particularly on cricket and this was plainly shown in the description of the various matches that took place in the stories. Pentelow was never afraid to make his leading characters fail at the game and never afraid also to make a "bad hat" a successful and highly competent sportsman. There were quite a number of incidents where the leading characters dropped catches, had none for plenty and were cleaned bowled first ball. Incidents of this kind are appreciated by adult readers and they undoubtedly added to the realism. I can think of only two School stories that featured cricket which equalled or possibly surpassed the Wycliffe yarns in this respect.

It would be idle, of course, to pretend that the stories had no defects at all, there is at times rather an air of over sentiment which is annoying, particularly to the adult reader and this is inclined to spoil some of the dramatic scenes.

Another fault, and a serious one, was the author's habit of disposing of quite a number of his characters by death. Mr. Bowker, Hallford, Jabez Tidd, Tommy Tidd's father, Dangerfield and Ram Ghosh were all dealt with in this way and while unfortunately such things do happen one has the feeling that Jack North rather overdid it at times.

Did Pentelow intend to write any further Wycliffe yarns. Actually I have been told by a great Pentelow admirer that the author himself confessed he had "dried up" on Wycliffe and had to start all over again with the Haygarth stories. I have not read any of the Haygarth yarns, but the same authority tells me that although quite good they suffer from a fault common to nearly all repeats of the same theme; they fall short when compared to the standard of the original.

Personally I think that Jack North could have carried on with the Wycliffe Saga. It is true that he would have had to dispose of Jackson and many of the original characters as the time had come for them to leave, but Larry Merry and his chums would have filled the gap perfectly adequately, and, of course, the author could have introduced fresh characters as and when necessary. It is possible, of course, that this might have spoilt the completed picture as we see it today so let us then leave the Wycliffe stories with very pleasant memories of school yarns that, while they had their faults, were possessed of a charm and realism that reflected considerable credit on the fine author who created them.

THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

BY ROGER M. JENKINS and JOHN R. SHAW
Assisted by GERRY ALLISON and JACK WOOD

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Abbreviations:

F - St. Frank's G - Greyfriars J - St. Jim's R - Rookwood
* - A Substitute Story
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| 1. The Greyfriars Players | G | Magnet 374 (Double Number) |
| 2. The Waif of St. Jim's | J | Gems 165 (1357) and 166 (1358) |
| 3. The Greyfriars Business Man | G | Magnets 383 and 381 |
| 4. The Fighting Form of St. Frank's | F | Original |
| 5. The Schoolboy Caravanners | G | Magnets 704, 705, and 707. |
| 6. The Captain of the Fourth | R | Boy's Friends 785, 788, 789, 790, 791. |
| 7. The Kidnapped Cricketers | G | Magnets 487-490 |
| 8. His Brother's Burden | J | Gems 494-496 |
| 9. A Schoolboy's Honour | G | Magnets 660-664 |
| 10. Jolly Roger's Way | | |
| 11. The Duffer of Greyfriars | G | Magnets 125 and 137 |
| 12. Expelled | R | Boy's Friends 801-805 |
| 13. The Tyrant of Greyfriars | G | Magnets 501-505 |
| 14. The Outcast of St. Jim's | J | Gems 486, 488, and 489 |
| 15.* Football Heroes | G* | |
| 16. Rebellion at St. Biddies | | |
| 17. Surprising the School | G | Magnets 682, 640, and 364 |
| 18. The Millionaire Boot-Boy | J | Gems 145 and 147 (1344) |
| 19. The Taming of Harry Wharton | G | Magnets 1 and 2 |
| 20. The Vanished Schoolboys | R | Boy's Friends 906, 907, 908, 910, 911. |
| 21. The Greyfriars Journalists | G | Magnets 158 and 159 |
| 22. D'Arcy of St. Jim's | J | Gems 139 (1373) and 144 (1343) |
| 23. The Schoolboy Balloonists | G | Magnets 111 and 126 |
| 24. Wake Up, Katies | | |
| 25. The Invasion of Greyfriars | G | Magnets 68-70 |
| 26. Sacked | J | Gems 84 and 85 |
| 27. The River House Rivals | F | Original |
| 28. The Boy Who Was Soft | R | Boy's Friends 929-933 |
| 29. The Faddist Form-Master | G | Magnets 23-25 |
| 30. Tom Merry's Trust | J | Gems 82 (1321) and 83 (1322) |
| 31. A Mill Lad at Greyfriars | G | Magnets 45, 88, 89, and 90 |
| 32. A Schoolboy's Temptation | R | Boy's Friends 843-847 |
| 33. The Schoolboy Actors | G | Magnets 15-17 |
| 34. The Sneak of St. Jim's | J | Gems 586, 587, and 589 |
| 35. The Boy from China | G | Magnets 36-38 |
| 36. The Shadow of Shame | R | Boy's Friends 882-886 |
| 37. The Outsider of Greyfriars | G | Magnets 29-31 |

38. One of the Best	J	? Gems 251 and 252?
39. Aliens at Greyfriars	G	Magnets 33, 34, and 40
40. The Mystery Schoolboy		
41. Billy Bunter's Christmas Pudding	G	Magnets 95 and 98
42. The Boy From Nowhere	R	Boy's Friends 969,971,972,973, 974.
43. The Scapegrace of the School	G	Magnets 43 and 46
44. The Devices of Dickie Dexter		
45. Boss of the Study	G	Magnets 141 and 142
46. School House v. New House	J	Gems 261 and 262 (1450)
47. The Greyfriars Hustler	G	Magnets 150 and 153
48. The Colonial Co.	R	Boy's Friends 812,813,814,819,820.
49. Rolling in Money	G	Magnets 154 and 156
50. Tom Merry's Enemy	J	Gems 159 (1393) and 160 (1394)
51. Harry Wharton's Downfall	G	Magnets 170 and 176
52. Under Roger's Rule		
53. Driven From The School	G	Magnets 173 and 174
54. Buying the Remove	F	N.L.L. 381 and 382 (O.S.)
55. A Rank Outsider	J	Gems 129 (1367) and 130 (1368)
56. The Terror of the Third	F	N.L.L. 386 and 388 (O.S.)
57. Barred By His People	G	Magnets 177 and 178
58. The Butt of the School		
59. The Greyfriars Sailors	G	Magnets 52, 53 and 56.
60. The Scapegrace of Rookwood	R	Boy's Friends 996-999, 1001
61. Wingate's Chum	G	Magnets 162 and 167
62. The Drudge of St. Jim's	J	Gems
63. The No-Surrender Schoolboy	G	Magnets 297 and 298
64. Parted Chums	St. Kit's	School and Sport 1921 (reprinted and amended, Boy's Friend, 1924)
65. The Schoolboy Millionaire	G	Magnets 184 and 243
66. The Eastwood House Mystery	J	Gems 302 (Double Number) (1504 & 1505)
67. The Captain's Minor	G	Magnets 265 and 269
68. Sir Japhet's Heir	R	Boy's Friends 981-986
69. A Disgrace to his School	G	Magnets 147 and 149
70. The Boy Who Found His Father	St. Kit's	Boy's Friend (1924)
71. The Outlaws of the School	G	Magnets 190 and 203
72. The Swell of the Circus	J	Gems 106 (1333) and 107 (1334)
73. The Man From South America	G	Magnets 114 and 115
74. The Blott of Berrisford		
75. Taming a Bully	G	Magnets 103 and 128
76. The Fighting Form-Master	R	Boy's Friends 1030-33, 1037-40
77. Alonzo the Great	G	Magnets 129 and 132
78. The Tanglewood Twins		
79. Schoolboys Abroad	G	Magnets 123 and 124
80. D'Arcy's Cricket-Week	J	Gems 123 (1374) and 124 (1375)
81. Cock of the Walk	G	Magnets 182 and 195
82. The Schoolboy Scientist		
83. The Fool of the School	G	Magnets 134 and 136
84. Chums on Tramp	R	Boy's Friends 1103-1110
85. A Traitor in the School	G	Magnets 220 and 222
86. The Conspirators of St. Katies		
87. The Schoolboy Cup-Fighters	G	Magnets 199 and 300
88. The Cockney Schoolboy	J	Gems 304 (1459) and 305 (1460)
89. Harry Wharton's Christmas Number	G	Magnets 296 and 306

90.	The Ghost of St. Jim's	J	Gems 41 (Double Number) (1296)
91.	The Schoolboy Ventriloquist	G	Magnets 140 and 304
92.	The Freak of St. Freda's		
93.	The Get-Rich-Quick Schoolboy	G	Magnets 284 and 242
94.	The Rookwood Rebellion	R	Boy's Friends 1074-77, 1079-82
95.	Wibley's Wonderful Wheeze	G	Magnets 322 and 419
96.	Berrisford's Liveliest Term		
97.	The Greyfriars Clown	G	Magnets 164 and 169
98.	Tom Merry & Co. in Monte Carlo	J	Gems 111 (1336) and 112 (1337)
99.	The Bounder of Greyfriars	G	Magnets 166 and 168
100.*	His Own Enemy	R*	
101.	Not Wanted at Greyfriars	G	Magnets 329 and 330
102.	The Schemer of St. Jim's	J	Gems 278 (1465) and 279
103.	The Tyrant Head	G	Magnets 171 and 172
104.	Dropped From the Team	R	Boy's Friend 1094-1100
105.	Just Like Coker	G	Magnets 325 and 327
106.	The Rival Patrols	J	Gems 76 (1318) and 78
107.	Bunter the Blade	G	Magnets 366 and 474
108.	Facing the Music	R	Boy's Friends 848/9, 853-855
109.	The Schoolboy Juggler	G	Magnets 268 and 475
110.	The St. Jim's Inventors	J	Gems 64 (1309) and 80 (1320)
111.	The Impossible Four	G	Magnets 271 and 286
112.*	For the Honour of Rookwood	R*	
113.	The Shylock of Greyfriars	G	Magnets 272 and 237
114.	The Kid at St. Katies		
115.	The Kidnapped Schoolboy	G	Magnets 117 and 318
116.	Smuggled to School	J	Gems 60 (1307) and 61 (1308)
117.	War With Highcliffe	G	Magnets 311 and 138
118.	Jimmy Joins Up	R	Boy's Friends 715-718
119.	The Boy from New York	G	Magnets 328 and 320
120.	The Rebels of St. Frank's	F.	Original
121.	The Greyfriars Hypnotist	G	Magnets 157 and 294
122.	St. Jim's at Sea	J	Gems 30 (1281) and 31 (1282)
123.	Rival Japers	G	Magnets 223 and 229
124.	Gunner Gets Going	R	Boy's Friends 1088-93, 1101/02
125.	The Schemer of the Remove	G	Magnets 196 and 274
126.	Glyn's Mechanical Marvels	J	Gems 220 (1430) and 182
127.	The Fighting Form-Master	G	Magnets 324 and 331
128.	Backing up Jimmy	R	Boy's Friends 723-726
129.	Barred by the School	G	Magnets 194 and 277
130.	No Surrender	J	Gems 211 (1405) and 212 (1406)
131.	The Moonlight Footballers	G	Magnets 292 and 293
132.	Under False Colours	R	Boy's Friends 1112-1118
133.	That Guy Fish	G	Magnets 290 and 465
134.	True Blue	J	Gems 213 (1407) and 214 (1408)
135.	The Bounder's Feud	G	Magnets 613-615
136.	Who Shall be Captain?	St. Kit's	Boy's Friend 1924
137.	The Complete Outsider	G	Magnets 546-548
138.	The Ghost of the Priory	R	Boy's Friends 1125-1132
139.	The Broken Bond	G	Magnets 553-556
140.	Kicked Out of the School	J	Gems 221 (1417) and 222 (1418)
141.	Stand Firm, the Rebels	G	Magnets 743-745
142.	Chums of the Backwoods	Cedar Creek	Boy's Friend 847 onwards

143.	Billy Bunter's Barring-In	G	Magnets 956 and 957
144.	Saints versus Grammarians	J	Gems 200 and 195 (1402)
145.	The Nabob's Peril	G	Magnets 964-966
146.	Jimmy Silver & Co. out West	R	Boy's Friends 1140-1145
147.	Harry Wharton & Co. in India	G	Magnets 967-969
148.	The St. Jim's Showmen	J	Gems 210 *226*
149.	The Snob	G	? Magnets 749-752 ?
150.	Pals of the Ranges	R	Boy's Friends 1152-1155
151.	The Joker of the Remove	G	Magnets 994 and 995
152.	Seven Schoolboys and Solomon	J	Gems 698-701
153.	Black Peter's Treasure	G	Magnets 1017-1019
154.	The War Trail	R	Boy's Friends 1161-1165
155.	The Rival Treasure Seekers	G	Magnets 1020-1023
156.	The Worst Form at Codrington		
157.	The Greyfriars Castaways	G	Magnets 1024-1026
158.	Chums of the Ranch	R	Boy's Friends 1169-1174
159.	The Fool of the Fifth	G	Magnets 981 and 982
160.	The Fighting Schoolboy	J	Gems
161.	Coker's Christmas Party	G	Magnets 983 and 984
162.	Trailing the Phantom	R	Boy's Friends 1175-1180
163.	Barred by the Form	G	Magnets 975-977
164.	Rivals on the Warpath	J	Gems 713-715
165.	Nobody's Chum	G	Magnets 978 and 979
166.	The Fourth Form Rebels	R	Boy's Friends 1183-88, 1191

The following numbers each had 96 pages

167.	The Bruiser of Greyfriars	G	Magnets 985-987
168.	The Cardew Cup	J	Gems 768-772
169.	The Call of the Ring	G	Magnets 988-990
170.	Prefects on Strike	R	Boy's Friends 935-941
171.	Condemned by the Form	G	Magnets 997-1000
172.	The Trail of Vengeance	J	Gems 647-661
173.	The Bounder's Lesson	G	Magnets 1001, 1002 and 1004
174.	Living a Lie	R	Boy's Friends 1043-1051
175.	One Against the School	G	Magnets 1007-1009
176.	Gussy the Runaway	J	Gems 753,754,756,757 and 758
177.	The Cruise of the Silver Scud	G	Magnets 755-759
178.	The Outcast of Cedar Creek	Cedar Creek	Boy's Friend 866 onwards (?)
179.	The Toad of the Remove	G	Magnets 1031, 1032 and 1034
180.*	Chums Afloat	J*	Gems 966-968
181.	The Gypsy Schoolboy	G	Magnets 819-823
182.	The Terror of Rookwood	R	Boy's Friends 743-748
183.	The Boy with a Secret	G	Magnets 781-784
184.	On the Western Trail	Cedar Creek	Boy's Friend 897 onwards
185.	The Phantom of the Highlands	G	Magnets 1005, 828, 829 and 830
186.*	The Secret of Drere Manor	J*	Gems 982-984
187.	His Majesty King Bunter	G	Magnets 768,770,771,772 and 773
188.	Up the Rebels	St. Kit's	Boy's Friend 1924
189.	The Schoolboy Hypnotist	G	Magnets 1050-1052
190.	The Boy from Bootleg Ranch	J	Gems 677,678,680,679 and 683
191.	The Greyfriars Rebellion	G	Magnets 1043-1045
192.	For His Brother's Sake	St. Dorothy's	Boy's Realm 370 (1909) onwards

193.	The School without a Master	G	Magnets 1047-1049
194.	The Captain's Enemy	St.Dorothy's	Boy's Realm (see 192 above)
195.	The Foe from the East	G	Magnets 1059-1061
196.	A Schoolboy's Sacrifice	J	Gems 906-909
197.	The Schemer of the Remove	G	Magnets 1062-1064
198.*	The Rookwood Secret Society	R*	? Boy's Friends 1009 and 1011
199.	Rivals for a Fortune	G	Magnets 1065-1067
200.*	St. Jim's in the Soup	J*	Gems 1001-1003
201.	Billy Bunter's Circus	G	Magnets 1069-1071
202.	The Rookwood Gipsies	R	Boy's Friends 891-96, 898/9
203.	Billy Bunter's Bodyguard	G	Magnets 1073-1075
204.	The Missing Schoolboy	J	Gems 919-921
205.	The Joker of Greyfriars	G	Magnets 1079-1082
206.	Masters on Strike	R	Boy's Friends 920-924, 928
207.	Who Punched Prout?	G	Magnets 1042, 1084, 1085
208.*	The Siege of St. Jim's	J*	Gems 998, 999
209.	Bunter the Benevolent	G	Magnets 996, 1036, 1037
210.	The St. Jim's Ghost Hunters	J	Gems 92 (1555? and 93 (1556)
211.	Billy Bunter's Convict	G	Magnets 1039-41
212.	The Boot-Boy Baronet	F	N.L.L. 1st N.S. 90-93
213.	The Secret of Pengarth	G	Magnets 810-12
214.	The Toff's Sacrifice	J	Gems 988-991
215.	Harry Wharton & Co. in New York	G	Magnets 1092-4
216.	The Wizard of St. Frank's	F	N.L.L. 542-549 (O.S.)
217.	From School to Hollywood	G	Magnets 1095, 1096, 1098
218.	Cousin Ethel's Chum	J	Gems 951-4
219.	Billy Bunter on the Films	G	Magnets 1099-1101
220.	Son of a Cracksman	R	Boy's Friends 831, 833-37
221.	The Schoolboy Sheik	G	Magnets 1102-4
222.	The Boy Who Hated St. Jim's	J	Gems 1070-2
223.	A Film Star's Vengeance	G	Magnets 1105-7
224.*	Handforth at St. Jim's	J*	Gems 1059, 1060, 1062
225.	The Tyrant Prefect	G	Magnets 1113-15
226.	The Fifth Form Rebellion	R	Boy's Friends 1246-1252
227.	The Trail of the Trike	G	Magnets 1118, 1119, 1121
228.	Seven Boys in a Boat	J	Gems 812-15
229.	The House of Terror	G	Magnets 1122, 1123, 1125
230.	The River Adventurers	J	Gems 816, 817, 818, 808
231.	The Boy Without a Friend	G	Magnets 1126-28
232.	The Rebel of Grimslade	Grimslade	The Ranger (1931)
233.	The Phantom of the Cave	G	Magnets 1087-89
234.	A Christmas Barring-Out	J	Gems 776-9
235.	Coker Comes a Cropper	G	Magnets 1129, 1133, 1134
236.	The Rebels of St. Jim's	J	Gems 780, 782, 783, 784
237.	Bunter the Bad Lad	G	Magnets 996, 1137, 1016
238.	The Fourth Form at Grimslade	Grimslade	The Ranger
239.	The Shylock of Greyfriars	G	Magnets 1110, 1161, 1162
240.*	Tom Merry's Enemy	J*	Gems 985, 986, 987
241.	Kidnappers at Greyfriars	G	Magnets 1163-5
242.	Sammy the Boy Tamer	Grimslade	The Ranger
243.	Pop o' the Circus	G	Magnets 1166-68
244.	The Trail of Adventure	J	Gems 1014-16
245.	Down with the Tyrant	G	Magnets 1169-71

246.	The Secret of the Lone Pine	J	Gems 1017,1018,1020,1021
247.	Victory for the Rebels	G	Magnets 1172-74
248.	High Jinks at Grimslade	Grimslade	The Ranger
249.	The Call of the Desert	G	Magnets 863-6
250.	The St. Jim's Hikers	J	Gems 864-7
251.	Foes of the Sahara	G	Magnets 867-9
252.	The Cheerio Castaways	Grimslade	The Ranger
253.	Ragged Dick	G	Magnets 906-09
254.	Chums of Castaway Island	Grimslade	The Ranger
255.	The Star of the Circus	G	Magnets 945-8
256.	The Grimslade Crusoes	Grimslade	The Ranger
257.	Bunter the Mischief Maker	G	Magnets 879-881
258.	Captain and Slacker	J	Gems 824-7
259.	The Rebel of the Remove	G	Magnets 882-4
260.	The Stick at Nothing Schoolboy	J	Gems 828-31
261.	The Downfall of Harry Wharton	G	Magnets 885-888
262.	The Fistical Four	R	Boy's Friends 769-72, 774-76
263.	The Boy Without a Name	G	Magnets 1195-97
264.	Baggy Trimble's Reform	J	Gems 1000, 927, 928
265.	The Voice of the Tempter	G	Magnets 1198-1200
266.	Chums of Toppingham		
267.	The Amateur Rogue	G	Magnets 1201-1203
268.	The Rookwood Barring-In	R	Boy's Friends 778-783
269.	The Menace of Tang Wang	G	Magnets 1175-77
270.	Japers of St. Jim's	J	Gems 844-7
271.	The Terror of the Tong	G	Magnets 1178-80
272.	Taming the Bully	R	Boy's Friends 785/6/8/93/8/9
273.	The Mandarin's Vengeance	G	Magnets 1181-83
274.*	Camp and Caravan	J*	Gems 914-16
275.	The Beggar of Shantung	G	Magnets 1184-86
276.*	Nippy from Nowhere	J*	Gems 917-8

From this point there were always three issues per month

277.	The Scallywag of the Third	G	Magnets 923-5
278.	Follow Uncle James	R	Boy's Friends 787, 794-96
279.	The Great Fire of St. Frank's	F	N.L.L. 221-224 (O.S.)
280.	Captain and Tyrant	G	Magnets 926-8
281.	St. Jim's in Revolt	J	Gems 858,720,721,722.
282.	The Mystery of St. Frank's	F	N.L.L. 225-228 (O.S.)
283.	The Worst Form at Greyfriars	G	Magnets 929-31
284.	Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party	R	Boy's Friends 809-11/16/17
285.	The Tyrant Head	F	N.L.L. 229-232 (O.S.)
286.	Billy Bunter Gets the Boot	G	Magnets 874-7
287.	Tom Merry & Co. Declare War	J	Gems 729-32
288.	Rebels of the Remove	F	N.L.L. 233-236 (O.S.)
289.	Harry Wharton's Rival	G	Magnets 1255-58
290.	The School for Slackers	High Coombe	Modern Boy 371-380
291.	The Spendthrift of St. Frank's	F	N.L.L. 240-242 (O.S.)
292.	The Swot of the Remove	G	Magnets 1259-61
293.	For Honour's Sake	J	Gems 836-9
294.	The Boy Who Bought a School	F	N.L.L. 243-246 (O.S.)
295.	The Fugitive Schoolboy	G	Magnets 793-6

296.	The Fourth Form at Rookwood	R	Boy's Friends 821/2/4/5
297.	The Spendthrift's Lesson	F	N.L.L. 247-249 (O.S.)
298.	The Boy With a Bad Name	G	Magnets 796-9
299.	The Live Wire Head	High Coombe	Modern Boy 384-393
300.	The Mystery Master of St. Frank's	F	N.L.L. 256-259 (O.S.)
301.	Bunter of Bunter Court	G	Magnets 910-12
302.	Raising the Wind	J	Gems 748-51
303.	The Schoolmaster Spy	F	N.L.L. 260-263 (O.S.)
304.	Goodbye to Bunter Court	G	Magnets 913-16
305.	The Packsaddle Bunch	Packsaddle	Gem 1405 onwards
306.	The St. Frank's Explorers	F	N.L.L. 264-267 (O.S.)
307.	Coker the Champion Chump	G	Magnets 1209-11
308.	Jimmy Silver Resigns	R	Boy's Friends 944-949
309.	The Lost Land	F	N.L.L. 268-270 (O.S.)
310.	The Schoolboy Cracksman	G	Magnets 1212-14
311.	The Boy Who Wanted the Sack	J	Gems 970-972
312.	The Battle of the Giants	F	N.L.L. 271-274 (O.S.)
313.	The Boy Who Knew Too Much	G	Magnets 1215-17
314.	The Schoolboy Airman	J	Gems 973-974-976
315.	The Kidnapped Schoolboy	F	N.L.L. 275-279 (O.S.)
316.	The Boy From The Underworld	G	Magnets 1217-19
317.	No Good as Captain	R	Boy's Friends 951, 953-6, 958/9
318.	The Schoolboy Inventor	F	N.L.L. 280-283 (O.S.)
319.	The Phantom of the Towers	G	Magnets 1244-46
320.	A Lion at St. Jim's	J	Gems 708-711
321.	The Ghost of Bannington Grange	F	N.L.L. 287-290 (O.S.)
322.	The Terror of the Form	G	Magnets 1247-49
323.	The Six-Gun Schoolmaster	Packsaddle	Gem (see above)
324.	The Schoolboy House-Breakers	F	N.L.L. 291-293 (O.S.)
325.	Bold Bad Bunter	G	Magnets 1250-52
326.	Harry Manner's Feud	J	Gems 882, 883, 807, 822
327.	The Schoolboy Boxer	F	N.L.L. 295-298 (O.S.)
328.	Detective Bunter	G	Magnets 1253-4
329.	Rebellion at Packsaddle	Packsaddle	Gem (see above - ending 1434)
330.	The Housemaster's Revenge	F	N.L.L. 299-301 (O.S.)
331.	The Downfall of Harry Wharton	G	Magnets 1285-7
332.	The Mystery of Holly Lodge	J	Gems 895, 897, 898, 899
333.	The Crook Schoolmaster	F	N.L.L. 302-304 (O.S.)
334.	Harry Wharton Declares War	G	Magnets 1287-9
335.	Under False Colours	R	Boy's Friends 1201-1204
336.	The St. Frank's Castaways	F	N.L.L. 305-308 (O.S.)
337.	The Worst Boy at Greyfriars	G	Magnets 1290-92
338.	The Price of Loyalty	J	Gems 1006, 1007, 1162.
339.	The Terror of the Tagossa	F	N.L.L. 309-311 (O.S.)
340.	Nobody's Pal	G	Magnets 1292-5
341.	On Fighting Terms	R	Boy's Friends 1133-1136
342.	The Demon Cricketer	F	N.L.L. 312-315 (O.S.)
343.	Harry Wharton & Co's African Adventure	G	Magnets 1228-30
344.	The Saving of Selby	J	Gems 797, 923, 924
345.	The Schoolboy Test Match Player	F	N.L.L. 316-319 (O.S.)
346.	The Slave Trader's Vengeance	G	Magnets 1231-33
347.	Chums on the Open Road	R	Boy's Friends 1211-1218

348.	The Mystery of the Roaring Z Ranch	F	N.L.L. 320-323 (O.S.)
349.	The Schoolboy Slaves	G	Magnets 1234-6
350.*	Grundy Takes the Lead	J*	Gems 1026-7
351.	The Valley of Gold	F	N.L.L. 324-327 (O.S.)
352.	The Boot-Boy's Lucky Break	G	Magnets 1239, 1240, 1238
353.	The Schoolboy 'Tec	Oakshott	Modern Boy 452-456
354.	Tyrant and Sport	F	N.L.L. 338-340 (O.S.)
355.	Billy Bunter's Christmas	G	Magnets 1140-42
356.	The Boy Who Walked by Night	R	Gems 1449-1459 (Serial)
357.	The Christmas Rebels	F	N.L.L. 341-343 (O.S.)
358.	The Mystery Master	G	Magnets 1143-5
359.*	The Shanghaied Schoolboys	J*	Gems 1144-46
360.	The Brotherhood of the Free	F	N.L.L. 344-346 (O.S.)
361.	The Master from Scotland Yard	G	Magnets 1146-8
362.	Manders on the Spot	R	Gems 1460-1469 (Serial)
363.	Nelson Lee's Comeback	F	N.L.L. 347-349 (O.S.)
364.	The Greyfriars' Cracksman	G	Magnets 1149-51
365.	The Boy Who Came Back	J	Gems 1031, 1034, Magnet 1034
366.	The St. Frank's Cadets	F	N.L.L. 350-352 (O.S.)
367.	Billy Bunter's Cruise	G	Magnets 1312-14
368.	Rookwood Calling	R	Boy's Friends 1219-1225
369.	Hidden Gold	F	N.L.L. 353-355 (O.S.)
370.	Greyfriars' Tourists	G	Magnets 1315-17
371.	Asking for the Sack	Oakshott	Modern Boy 479-484
372.	The Yellow Menace	F	N.L.L. 360-362 (O.S.)
373.	The Fighting Form-Master	G	Magnets 1321-3
374.	The Boy They Couldn't Trust	J	Gems 852,853,855,856
375.	The Fiends of Fu Chow	F	N.L.L. 363-365 (O.S.)
376.	The Greyfriars Hikers	G	Magnets 1331, 1332, 1334
377.	The School Squadron		
378.	The Schoolboy Crusoes	F	N.L.L. 366-368 (O.S.)
379.	The Kidnapped Hiker	G	Magnets 1335-7
380.	The Rookwood Ragers	R	Boy's Friends 1255-6, 1268-70
381.	The Cannibal Invaders	F	N.L.L. 369-371 (O.S.)
382.	The Secret of the Holiday Annual	G	Magnets 1338-40
383.	The Great Grundy	J	Gems 842, 413, 1220
384.	The Island of Terror	F	N.L.L. 372-374 (O.S.)
385.	The Tough Guy of Greyfriars	G	Magnets 1344-6
386.	Put to the Test	J	Gems 766-767, 773, 774
387.	The Secret World	F	N.L.L. 375-377 (O.S.)
388.	The Schoolboy Samson	G	Magnets 1347, 1348, 1342
389.	Rival Guys of Rookwood	R	Boy's Friends 1272-1274
390.	War in the New World	F	N.L.L. 378-380 (O.S.)
391.	The Mystery of Wharton Lodge	G	Magnets 1349-51
392.	The Sneak of Rookwood	R	Boy's Friends 1275-1283
393.	The Ghost of Somerton Abbey	F	N.L.L. 392, 394 and 395 (O.S.)
394.	A Dupe of the Underworld	G	Magnets 1297-99
395.	A Gunman at St. Jim's	J	Gems 1192, 1198, 1197
396.	Petticoat Rule at St. Frank's	F	N.L.L. 398-400 (O.S.)
397.	The Schoolboy Forger	G	Magnets 1300-02
398.	Told in the Tuckshop		
399.	Rebellion at St. Frank's	F	N.L.L. 402-404 (O.S.)
400.	The Boy with a Past	G	Magnets 1303-05

401.* Cock of the Walk	J*	Gems 1151-4
402. The Rebels' Victory	F	N.L.L. 405-407 (O.S.)
403. The Man From the Sky	G	Magnets 1306-1307, 1311
404. The Secret of the Silver Box	G	Magnets 1159, 1157, 1158
405. The St. Frank's Caravanners	F	N.L.L. 415-417 (O.S.)
406. Southward Ho	G	Magnets 1277, 1278, 1289
407. The Mystery of Study No. 1	G	Magnets 1271-3
408. The Touring School	F	N.L.L. 418-420 (O.S.)
409. The Lure of the Golden Scarab	G	Magnets 1279-81
410. Hidden Loot	G	Magnets 1273-5
411. The St. Frank's Tourists	F	N.L.L. 421-423 (O.S.)

STATISTICS

184 Greyfriars stories; 81 St. Jim's stories; 53 Rookwood stories;
52 St. Frank's stories; 41 miscellaneous stories.

First two issues dated April 1925: Last three issues dated June 1940.

N.B. The asterisk (*) means a substitute story.

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A MYSTERY OF WHARTON LODGE

BY GEOFFREY H. WILDE

* * *

The First Chapter

"Supper in my den when we get in, what?" said Harry Wharton, cheerfully.

Three members of the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove - Wharton, Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull - were trudging up the Wimford road. One of them, Johnny Bull, was carrying a suitcase. It was a dark, clear evening two days before Christmas. The Co., who had parted for their separate homes when the old school had broken up, were together again for Christmas at Wharton Lodge. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent had arrived earlier that day. So, too, at Wharton's invitation, had Lord Mauleverer, whose guardian was abroad on a diplomatic mission. So, also, had Billy Bunter - not at Wharton's invitation! Johnny Bull, the fifth member of the famous Co., was a later arrival. Heavy falls of snow had meant delays on the long journey from distant Yorkshire. The thick dusk of a December evening had already fallen when Wharton and Nugent had set out for Wimford to meet Johnny's train.

The snow, too, meant slogging it on foot. The whirling flakes had ceased now, and the evening was still and clear; but underfoot the going was hard. Deep drifts of snow lay banked and piled by the roadside and the juniors were obliged to walk in the icy ruts left by earlier traffic. Wharton's cheery remark came after a mile of steady tramping.

"Ripping!" said Johnny. "I fancy I can do something to a spot of supper after this."

"The fellows will have something waiting for us," said Harry.

"If Bunter hasn't scoffed it!" remarked Nugent, with a chuckle. Johnny Bull paused. "Bunter?" he said. Nugent grinned.

"Hem!" said Wharton, a little awkwardly. "Y-yes. The fact is, old man -"

Johnny strode on with a grunt. "The fact is Bunter knows a soft-hearted ass when he sees one. I suppose this means we're stuck with him for the - yarooooop!" Johnny Bull made this rather surprising conclusion to his observations as he suddenly felt his feet slither from under him and he fell heavily in the snow. He sat up ruefully as his chums came to his aid.

"All right, old chap?" asked Wharton. "Ow! Blow! Yes - all serene," gasped Johnny. "Skinned my elbow, I think."

"It's pretty dangerous here," remarked Nugent, scanning the road. "Freezing fast, too."

"Look here, you men," said Harry Wharton, pointing across the road, "this is my uncle's park here. How about the short cut? I know pretty well every step of the way, and we have a flash-lamp." The suggestion was obviously a good one. Deep though the snow lay across the silent parkland, it was firm and even underfoot. There was a slight sense of adventure, too, in journeying through the blackness of the snowbound wood that appealed to boyish hearts at Christmas time. The juniors clambered the fence, and with Wharton in the lead, guided by occasional beams from the torch, they were soon making steady progress under the frosty stars.

The Second Chapter

Colonel Wharton paused.

The Colonel had been out - one of those neighbourly calls at the festive season that are perhaps more an obligation than a pleasure! Returning, he had looked in to speak a few words to his nephew's guests before retiring to the warmth and solitude of his study.

A glance in Harry Wharton's den revealed, however, that all was not as usual in that cheery apartment. The Co., were looking thoughtful, while his nephew's face was frowning and a little flushed. The Colonel's unspoken question was soon answered.

"The fact is," the Remove captain explained, "there's been rather an odd incident, and one way or another I seem to have made a fool of myself. Coming back from Wimford, Johnny, Frank and I cut through the park, and we ran into some sort of prowler hanging about in the wood. He made off like a shot when we spotted him and ran back towards the house. We lost him by the gardens until we tumbled that he'd cut up to the balcony and slipped into the house by the french windows."

"The deuce he had!" exclaimed the Colonel.

"Only when we collared the blighter," Harry wound up ruefully, "he turned out to be a perfectly respectable traveller who'd chanced a short cut and got the wind up. At least -" he glanced at his chums with set lips. "Well, I'm not convinced!" he burst out. "Oh, he was extremely polite and apologetic, and gentlemanly. That's just it. He was - well, too smooth, somehow. I still have the feeling he's pulled our legs in some way."

"I take it you satisfied yourself he had done no mischief?" asked the Colonel.

"That was easily done," said Harry. "He insisted on our making a search. Nothing came of it, of course. There was nothing incriminating on the man himself, and nothing is missing from the house. Everything supported the fact that he was a Mr. Robinson on his way to spend Christmas with a brother in Wimford, just as he said. So I saw him to the gates and let him go."

"You did the right thing, my boy," said Colonel Wharton quietly. "Whatever we think of his story the man offered no violence and we can bring no charge against him except a harmless trespass - and after all it is Christmas. And should further facts come to light we can contact the police. I should forget all about it."

And Wharton's face cleared as his uncle departed for that quiet half-hour in his study.

"I say, you fellows," remarked Billy Bunter, "I must say I think Wharton treated that chap jolly rottenly."

"Dry up, you fat frog!"

"Not my style, you know," continued the fat Owl, blinking through his spectacles. "Setting on an innocent stranger at Christmas -"

"You fat idiot!" hissed Wharton. "Oh really, Wharton! I -" "Supper, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry, hastily. "Come on! Race you to the nutcrackers!"

And under the soothing influence of supper and cheery conversation Wharton dismissed his doubts from mind, and forgot all about the man in the park.

The Third Chapter

"What the thump - "

The muttered exclamation came from Johnny Bull.

It was all Bunter's fault in a way. It was of that fatuous youth that Johnny Bull had been speaking when he had taken his tumble on Wimford road.

As a result of that tumble Johnny had a bruised and nastily skinned elbow. For awhile the alarms and excursions of the evening had given him something else to think

Later, Johnny was reminded of that elbow. It was not a pleasant reminder!

Successive attempts to woo slumber had finally proved vain. Wherever the unfortunate Johnny turned, something seemed to make contact with that sensitive and fatally protuberant spot! In the end, he had turned out in search of a dressing. It was as he reached the landing that a faint sound reached him from below.

"What the thump - !" muttered Johnny to himself. He tiptoed cautiously across the landing and peered over the old oak banisters into the dark well of the hall below. A tiny circle of light was creeping round the great hall of Wharton Lodge. It floated, seemingly disembodied, here and there pausing, then continuing its uncanny movement. For a few seconds Johnny watched, spellbound, his heart beating. Then he took a grip of himself. Obviously some person was down there, and that person was making a careful scrutiny of the hall with the aid of a tiny pocket torch. And it was no member of Colonel Wharton's household! His thoughts flashed back to the mysterious Mr. Robinson.

Silently, Johnny Bull began to creep down the stairs.

As he reached the bottom he could make out the shadowy outline of a human form. Next moment he leapt. Johnny's spring took him clear over the banister, and his knees struck the intruder full in the back. As he felt the man crumple beneath him, he opened his mouth and yelled.

"Rescue!" roared Johnny. "Wake up, you fellows! Rescue!"

Doors opened above. Lights flashed on. Scantily-clad figures turned out, among them Colonel Wharton in his dressing-gown, carrying an army revolver.

"What the deuce -" stuttered the Colonel.

"Great pip!" yelled Bob Cheery.

"Johnny, old man!" gasped Harry Wharton.

The intruder, more than half-stunned, was made secure. The stately Wells - not quite so stately in his nightwear - phoned for the police. A rapid inspection revealed that a pantry window had been forced. Otherwise nothing seemed to have been touched.

The intruder, a smallish, rat-like man with shifty eyes, glowered upon his captors like some cornered animal, and snarlingly refused to answer all questions. He was later removed in the same state of savage silence.

"Lucky you skinned that elbow, old bean!" chuckled Bob Cheery, as the juniors prepared to turn in once more. "But it's a rum go," he added thoughtfully.

"Yes," agreed Harry Wharton. "It seems too much of a coincidence, two of them in one evening. But Robinson's a different sort from that dingy rat Johnny collared. And what the dickens are they after, anyway?"

"Give it up!" said Nugent, with a yarn. "Perhaps the police can sort it out."

And the juniors gave it up, and turned in.

The Fourth Chapter

The following morning Inspector Stacey of the Wimford police called at the Lodge, where Colonel Wharton showed him into the library. A few minutes later Wharton, Nugent and Johnny Bull were sent for.

"Well, young man, you certainly landed a beauty last night," the Inspector remarked, as he shook hands with Johnny Bull. "The man is well known to us," he continued. "He is a ruffian known as Ratsey Parr - a jackal and scavenger of the underworld. And when the jackal turns wolf," said the detective, a gleam coming into his eye, "then I become interested. In particular, I am interested in this other man, who, I gather, gained access to the house for a while. I believe you boys are the ones who can give me the full story."

Harry Wharton proceeded to furnish a full account of the episode of the enigmatic Robinson, interrupted occasionally by some careful question from the

Inspector.

"Do I take it, Mr. Stacey," enquired Colonel Wharton, "that you have some explanation of these occurrences?"

Mr. Stacey smiled. "I think so," he said, with a hint of complacency. "You see - " he paused impressively - "the Flowers came out last week."

The juniors stared at one another in frank amazement. They began to wonder if the official gentleman was off his rocker!

"You may recall them," continued the Inspector. "Barney and Joshua Flower."

"Ah, quite!" gasped Colonel Wharton hurriedly. "Er - they came out?"

"Of Prison. Last week."

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

"Here is an official description of Barney Flower," said the detective, handing a sheet to Harry Wharton. "You may recognise it."

"Robinson!" said Harry, grimly, when he had read the description. "But what was the man's game? Theft - "

"It was not theft, Master Wharton. Quite the opposite. I suggest he came here not to take but to leave something."

"To leave something?"

"To be precise," said Inspector Stacey, "the Curren pearls!"

As his audience stared in utter amazement, he went on: "We suspected the Flowers when the necklace vanished near here a couple of years ago, but we lacked proof, and the pearls were never recovered. Since their release we've had them watched, without result until yesterday, when they suddenly parted. Obviously, Barney slipped down here to recover the pearls. When you lads stumbled on him he had only one course - to hide them again. Hence his entry of the house - and that of Ratsey Parr who had followed him, hoping for his own chance at the necklace."

"But a search was made at the time," said Colonel Wharton, "and proved without result."

"Quite so, sir," said the Inspector indulgently, "but a search with a different purpose. Now we know what to look for. Resourceful rogue as the man is, he was sorely pressed for time; I am convinced the pearls are within a few feet of us. With your permission, Colonel, I will order an immediate search!"

But if the Curren pearls were indeed secreted in Wharton Lodge, a most thorough search failed to unearth them. It was a sorely baffled Inspector Stacey who retreated with his minions some hours later.

The Greyfriars fellows, of course, threw themselves with gusto into the hunt. Even Billy Bunter joined in until it was discovered that his chief idea of a likely hiding-place was the larder. But their labours were in vain. Not a clue, not a trace of the fabulous necklace came to light, and as the sun sank on that frosty Christmas Eve, the mystery remained unsolved.

The Fifth Chapter

"Don't go, you fellows."

Five fellows stared at Lord Mauleverer. The hour was late. It had been a really jolly and festive Christmas Day, and every member of Harry Wharton's party had partaken to the full of good fare and merriment. A few minutes before, with a little assistance and a lot of grumbling Billy Bunter had rolled his formidable cargo of Christmas delicacies to bed. The rest were preparing to follow suit when Mauly thus surprisingly intervened.

"Anybody keen on staying up?" asked Bob Cherry, sarcastically. "Mauly's got insomnia - "

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" "Don't rot, you men," said Mauly. "This is serious. I've been to quite a bit of fag spottin' those dashed pearls - " Five fellows jumped.

"Doing what?" yelled Frank Nugent.

"Gammon!" growled Johnny Bull. "You've hardly stirred out of that armchair all day."

"Yass, that's right," said Mauly, innocently.

"You've spotted the pearls, just sitting there?" shrieked Bob Cherry, who the previous day had hunted till he was weary.

"Yaas. I suddenly noticed them, you know. But then I'd been thinkin' about it a bit," explained Lord Mauleverer kindly, "so I'd half an idea what to expect. You see," said Mauly patiently, "the hiding place had to be somewhere quite simple. Our floral friend just hadn't time for anything else. So I decided he's put the thing in such a thunderin' obvious place that nobody had noticed it." Five pairs of eyes glanced in bewilderment about the room.

"Just get me one of those chairs, Wharton, old man, will you?" asked Mauleverer. "Bung it down there, under that bunch of mistletoe."

"This is some new game, I suppose?" asked Wharton, staring. "You want to sit under the mistletoe?"

"No," said Mauly. "I want to stand under it. Interesting stuff, mistletoe," he went on, rising from the armchair with a yawn. "Somethin' to do with the Druids and all that. Cherry's been bangin' the stuff up like a man possessed since he heard the Cliff House girls are comin' for New Year." "Ha! Ha! Ha!" "You silly ass!" bawled Bob, flaming crimson.

"Boweever," said Mauly placidly, "I'm sure he won't mind if we thin it out a bit." And he stood up on the chair and with a pair of pocket scissors cut down a large bunch of mistletoe hanging from the chandelier. "My esteemed and wheezeful Mauly!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur a slow smile of appreciation lighting up his dusky features. And the next moment the rest of the Co., saw what the keen eyes of the oriental had spotted. With a snip of the scissors Lord Mauleverer cut loose two clusters of berries. He held them out in the palm of his hand - strangely clear, white berries that caught the firelight with a lustrous sheen.

"The pearls!" gasped the Co.

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton. "Mauly, old man! Crumbs! I'd better get through to the police straight away."

"Hang on!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I fancy we're not done yet. Let's clear things up properly - Greyfriars style. We'd better bag brother Joshue while we're about it." The Famous Five could only stare. Mauly's noble intellect seemed to be working overtime! "I fancy they'll try the same stunt on," said Mauly, thoughtfully. "They know there'll be an eye kept on our Robinson, so he'll study bein' good while the other blighter nips round here to collect the stuff."

"But how can you be sure he'll try it tonight?" asked Wharton.

"My dear chap! When else? What other night of the year will he find half the bobbies off duty and householders full of charitable thoughts?" "Now," said Mauly, looking round the room, "if you'll put that light off, Inky, we'll make the fire up and park ourselves down to wait in a few strategic spots. I'll take this armchair - " "Ha! Ha! Ha!"

And so it was arranged. Mr. Joshua Flower, paying his informal call in the early hours, was surprised to find a full reception committee awaiting him. So, too, was Inspector Stacey when his totally unexpected Christmas present was delivered to him.

And when the Greyfriars fellows returned to the old school for the new term they agreed it had been the best Christmas ever - thanks to their success in solving the mystery of Wharton Lodge.

HIGHLIGHTS OF CHARLES HAMILTON

BY GERALD ALLISON

* * *

I am not quite satisfied with the title of my article. The dictionary defines 'highlight' as "the most brilliantly lit portion of a picture", which rather suggests that the other parts of the picture are dull and comparatively uninteresting. Well, this is certainly not the case with the writings of Charles Hamilton. I think a better name for what I have to say would be 'Facets of the genius of a Great Writer'.

One can regard the work of Hamilton as a diamond, with a hundred different facets. Each of these is perfect, but gives out a different coloured gleam of light from the others. Already, scores of these different angles have been examined carefully, and discussed at our meetings, or in the pages of the 'Collector's Digest', and other hobby magazines. Here are a few of the many titles in question.

"True Ease in Writing. Reflections on the Style of Charles Hamilton."

"The Rookwood Stories in the Schoolboy's Own Library."

"The Career of Mr. Quelch."

"The Story of Jack Drake."

"The Leading Men at the Hamilton Schools."

"The First and the Best - St. Jim's."

"Claude Hoskins, the Mad Musician of Greyfriars."

Etc. etc. etc.

It becomes obvious that there is unlimited material for all kinds of talks, articles, debates, and discussions, in the pages of the Magnet, the Gem, the Holiday Annual, the Greyfriars Herald, the Boy's Friend, and the Boy's Friend Library, all of which contain the original work of our distinguished author, to say nothing of the many reprints, or the post-war Bunter Books, etc. The main problem is where to begin, and where to stop. However, in the space at my disposal I would like to deal briefly with three of the facets I mentioned, to illustrate the many sided genius of Charles Hamilton. The first one shows him as a humorist; example number two reveals his brilliant portrayal of character; and finally I wish to give an incident which illustrates his power of dramatic narrative.

It would, of course, be quite easy to take these three examples from one school, or even from a single story. For the sake of variety however I am drawing upon a different school in each case.

My first picture comes from Rookwood, a school which is very dear to me. Roger Jenkins once said that one has sometimes to get into the right mood for Greyfriars or St. Jim's, but that one can always enjoy a Rookwood yarn. I, personally, find this perfectly true. The main reason, perhaps, is the comparative brevity of the Rookwood stories. But also there is such a light-hearted atmosphere at Rookwood, and Jimmy Silver is such a happy boy. It seems really appropriate that he should be called 'Uncle James'; whereas no one could think of Wharton as 'Uncle Harry', or the leader

of the Shell at St. Jim's as 'Uncle Tom'. Also, Jimmy's motto, 'Keep Smiling', has helped me many times in periods of strain and stress.

So now, over to Rookwood. It is a half-holiday in the month of April, 1917, and for once the Classics and Moderns of Rookwood are not at loggerheads. For on that half holiday, the Fistical Four and the three Tommies had agreed to unite their forces for the purpose of paying off some old scores against their rivals of Bagshot School.

But alas, when Jimmy Silver enters Tommy Dodd's study, he finds that the expedition is 'off'. Tommy Dodd has received a letter.

"What's that?" said Jimmy. "A letter from home? Chuck it into the fire, and come on. We're waiting!"

"Wait, then!" grunted Dodd.

"What about the Bagshot Bounders?"

"Blow 'em!"

But Tommy explains that his Uncle has asked him specially to meet a new boy who is arriving at Coombe Station that very afternoon at three o'clock. The letter reads:

"My Dear Nephew, -- You will remember meeting Clarence Cuffy, the son of my old friend and neighbour, Obadiah Cuffy, when you were staying with us last vacation. You will be pleased to hear that Clarence has been entered at Rookwood, and will arrive at the school on Wednesday. He will belong to the Modern side, and you will, of course, see a great deal of him. I am sure, my dear Tommy, that you will do everything you can to help Clarence on, and make a special friend of him. He will arrive by the three-o'clock train at Coombe on Wednesday, and I am sure you will meet him at the station, and take him to the school, and make his reception at Rookwood as pleasant as possible. Your affectionate uncle, "John Dodd".

P.S. Currency note for £1 enclosed."

"Well, that's a jolly nice postscript, anyway!" said Jimmy Silver. "I don't see anything to grumble at in that!"

"I'm not grumbling at the postscript, ass! But of course, I can't refuse Uncle Dodd. He's a good sort, and always whacks out a tip," groaned Tommy Dodd. "But - but - but that ass, Cuffy ----"

"What's the matter with Cuffy?"

"Oh, he's a born idiot!" groaned Tommy. "The howlingest ass you ever saw! When I was staying with my uncle, I saw him every day, and I was pulling his leg all the time. He never knew it, either! He's got the brains of a bunny rabbit, and not a very intelligent bunny rabbit. His father intends him for the Foreign Office when he grows up, and that's exactly the place for him. Meanwhile, he ought to be in a home for idiots!"

"Well, it amounts to the same thing, if he comes into the Modern side here," said Jimmy Silver comfortingly.

This remark led to Jimmy Silver being well and truly bumped by the three Tommies, and before he left the Modern Side, he also got a caning from Mr. Manders for causing a disturbance.

However, his fertile brain soon schemed a plan of retaliation. So, when Tommy Dodd and Co. were walking down Coombe Lane on their way to the Station they were met by six Classical youths, namely, Conroy, Pons, Van Ryn, Flynn, Oswald, and Jones Minor, and were persuaded to go for a walk in quite the opposite direction.

When, therefore, at three o'clock, the train pulled into the sunny station at Coombe, the Fistical Four were there, awaiting the arrival of the newcomer.

Only one of the passengers who alighted could, by any possibility be the new fellow for Rookwood. It was a youth of their own age, in Etons and an overcoat. He had a round, open, innocent face, with big blue eyes that looked almost like saucers. They looked all the larger, because he wore big, round spectacles. His cheeks were plump and rosy, and his person was also quite rotund. There was an innocent and expansive smile upon his face, which beamed like a full moon.

"My hat," said Lovell, in an ecstatic whisper, "that must be the merchant! You can almost hear the hayseed growing in his hair!"

Jimmy Silver stepped towards the guileless stranger, and raised his school-cap, very politely.

"Master Cuffy?" he asked.

The youth blinked at him.

"That is my name," he said. "Are you Thomas Dodd?"

"Ahem, not exactly." But we've come to meet you, and welcome you to Rookwood," said Jimmy.

Clarence Cuffy beamed at him.

"How exceedingly kind of you," he exclaimed. "My dearest auntie will be so pleased when I tell her of this!"

Lovell, and Raby, and Newcome, turned their faces away. But Jimmy Silver smiled gravely.

"Our chief object is to please your dearest auntie, Cuffy," he said. "By the way, does your aunt know you're out?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! She saw me off at the station," said Cuffy innocently. "I understood that Thomas Dodd would meet me here, but"

"You haven't heard?" asked Jimmy sadly.

"Goodness gracious! I hope that nothing has happened to Thomas Dodd." exclaimed Clarence.

"Don't be alarmed! He's quite well." said Jimmy. "Only --- perhaps I'd better tell you at once -- he's just a little -- You understand!" Jimmy tapped his forehead significantly.

"Oh, gracious!" said Clarence.

"You mustn't think he's violent, or anything like that." said Jimmy reassuringly. "Only a little bit potty in the crumpet, you know. I'm warning you so you'll know how to deal with him, when you see him. At present he's actually being held by force to prevent him from committing a violent assault upon me. His best - ahem pal."

"Good gracious me!"

"But he's only like it at times. You'll find him quite calm when you get in. He always calms down at tea-time. You simply have to humour him. You don't mind my giving you a tip?"

"It is exceedingly kind of you."

"Right-ho! Well, Tommy Dodd's chief mania is a desire to be treated very affectionately." Jimmy watched the simple face of Clarence Cuffy keenly as he made this statement. But there was no sign of suspicion there. "When you see him, don't simply shake hands with him. Put your arms round his neck, and kiss him."

"How very odd!" ejaculated Clarence.

Lovell, Raby and Newcome seemed to be suffering pains, but Jimmy Silver was as grave as a judge..

"Unless you do this, he might think you unfriendly." You don't mind my telling you?"

"I am exceedingly obliged, my dear, kind friend," said Clarence gratefully.

"My dear auntie will be so ---" He paused, and blinked at Lovell. "Have you a cold, my dear fellow?"

"Not at all!" gasped Lovell.

Jimmy then introduced himself and his friends.

"Now, this way," he said. "You can leave your box with the porter. Better shake hands with him. You don't mind?"

"Not at all, my dear James. I shall call you James. Is it a custom here to shake hands with the porter?"

"Well, if you don't mind. We're rather socialistic here, you know," said Jimmy calmly. "But of course, if you object --"

"Oh, no. Not at all."

Clarence Cuffy crossed to the porter, who was trundling away his box on a trolley. The Fistical Four watched him as if fascinated.

"Please have my box sent to Rookwood School, my good man," said Clarence, blinking at old William.

"Yessir."

Clarence held out his hand, and William, supposing that it meant a tip, stretched out a horny palm to take it. The new junior clasped his hand, and shook it cordially. The expression on old William's face at that moment was extraordinary!

By now it was obvious to the Fistical Four that Clarence Cuffy was a gift from the Gods! As they walked down Coombe High Street they gave him various hints of what to expect at Rookwood. In particular they described the character of Mr. Manders, as Clarence was to enter the Modern Side under that gentleman.

He was described as a proper Tartar, although it was agreed that there was no truth in the story that Mr. Manders had once slaughtered a Fourth Form chap, and had hidden his body in the water-butt.

To make certain of getting into Mr. Manders' good books from the start, Jimmy advised Clarence Cuffy to give him a present when he arrived at the school. He even offered to provide the tin to pay for it.

"Now, Mr. Manders simply dotes on cauliflowers," said Jimmy Silver. "But owing to the food economy, he doesn't get all he would like. A new kid couldn't do better than take him a really first-class cauliflower -- as a present."

"I am sure it is exceedingly kind of you," said Clarence, beaming; "I shall certainly expend two-pence on a cauliflower for Mr. Manders."

Jimmy coughed. "Ahem! Cauliflowers have gone up you know. You may have to spring a tanner for a good one."

"Dear me!" said Clarence. "They are only two-pence each at Gander's Green."

"Eh? Where?"

"That is my dear native village" smiled Clarence Cuffy.

And so, a really handsome cauliflower was purchased, and was neatly wrapped up in paper. Jimmy Silver suggested that Clarence should bow twice to Mr. Manders, when presenting him with the cauliflower, with his hand upon his heart.

"I will remember," promised Clarence.

"Oh, and just to show that you mean to be friendly, asked Mr. Manders in a civil way, why he isn't in khaki. He will take that very kindly."

"Certainly, certainly, my dear James. I will do that."

It was now an interesting question exactly how far the cheery Clarence could be 'stuffed'. Certainly, a fellow who would present his master with a cauliflower on his arrival at school, might be supposed to be capable of anything.

"By the way, what about your school colours?" asked Jimmy, suddenly, as they walked down the lane to Rookwood.

"Goodness gracious, what is that?" asked Clarence.

"You know the sides at Rookwood have different colours -- red for Classical, and blue for Modern. And the School colours, pink and white. You have to show your

colours when you arrive. I don't suppose you have any coloured ribbons about you?"

"Nunno!"

"All serene. I've got some crayons in my pocket. You see, it doesn't really matter where you show the colours, so long as you show them," explained Jimmy. "On your face is best."

And Clarence allowed Jimmy to decorate his face with the Rookwood colours. He crayoned his nose bright blue, the Modern colour, and then made his cheeks a brilliant pink, and his chin a glaring white, for the School colours.

They then explained that they had a call to make, and watched Clarence walk along to the School gates. They had controlled themselves admirably so far, but now they threw themselves into the grass by the roadside, and kicked up their heels, and roared.

Before turning in, Clarence saw them rolling about, and laughing.

"My dear schoolfellows appear to be in a somewhat merry mood this afternoon," Clarence remarked to himself.

We will stop there, I think. That farcical episode is taken from The Boy's Friend No. 829. The story is entitled: "Greener than Grass".

My second example is a brief episode from Gem No. 951, "Cousin Ethel's Chum". It illustrates in a marvellous way how Charles Hamilton's characters really live.

It is very rare that Ralph Reckness Cardew loses his savoir-faire. He is usually completely cool and insouciant. But for once, in this story he is thrown off balance - for a moment. The School House were playing their New House rivals at cricket. Cardew had watched the match as long as he could, but he soon became bored. So he drifted into the School House, and decided to console himself with a cigarette. As he did not want to scent his own study with smoke, as Levison and Clive would object, he grinned, and walked along to Study No. 6.

All the members of that celebrated study were on Little Side, and he would be safe from interruption. Cardew closed the door, and sat down in D'Arcy's comfortable armchair, and lighted a cigarette. He leaned back in the chair, with his feet on the table, and blew little rings of smoke to the ceiling, his eyes lazily half closed. As I said, he did not expect to be interrupted. But, as a matter of fact, he was destined to be interrupted in a very unexpected manner. This is what happened.

TAP!

The door of Study No. 6 opened, after that quiet knock.

Ralph Reckness Cardew jumped.

He was smoking his third cigarette, and there was a blue haze in the study.

The House match could not be over for a long time yet, and Cardew had had no fear of interruption.

But, as the door opened, it rushed into his mind that some member of the study had come in for something; and it rushed into his mind at the same moment, that he was booked for a scrap. Whether it was Blake, or Herries, or Digby, or D'Arcy, no member of Study No. 6 was likely to allow his cool cheek in smoking in the study to pass unpunished.

Cardew jumped --- but he did not rise.

If he was booked for trouble, he was booked for trouble, and that was all there was about it! Certainly he was not going to show any sign of alarm. And so, as the study door was pushed wide open, and a girlish figure entered, Cardew was lounging back in the chair, his feet on the table, the cigarette in his mouth sending a trail

of blue smoke ceilingwards.

For a second or two Cardew sat as if rooted in the armchair.

He had not even heard that Ethel Cleveland was expected at the school, or if he had heard, he had forgotten. The sight of Cousin Ethel's bright young face gave him a distinct shock.

Into his own face the colour rushed in a crimson flood.

His attitude, which would have implied a cool and impudent disdain of what Study No. 6 might think of him, had Blake and Co. entered, suddenly became ridiculous in his own eyes as a girl's surprised face looked at him.

He jumped up from the chair, and threw the half-smoked cigarette into the grate. For once in his life, the cool, nonchalant dandy of the Fourth was overwhelmed with confusion.

"Miss Cleveland!" he stammered.

Ethel nodded.

She was surprised to find Cardew in Study No. 6, and she had not failed to note how he was occupied when she entered. Indeed the atmosphere of the study made her cough a little.

"I expected to find my cousin here," she said.

"He's---he's playing in the House match this afternoon," stammered Cardew. "His friends are all in the team."

Never had he felt so uncomfortable. He was conscious that his face was red, and that consciousness made it still redder. What evil spirit had worked upon him to smoke that afternoon? He did not really care for smoking -- it was only a pose -- one of his many affections. He knew that it made him look ridiculous to Ethel, and he hated looking ridiculous.

Ethel hesitated just within the study.

She had not known whether Arthur Augustus would be there, but she had intended to wait for him, if he had not come in. She had already been to the Head's house, and had had tea with Mrs. Holmes there, and it was now past the usual tea-time for the juniors. But with Cardew in the study she decided not to wait.

"My cousin is playing cricket, then?" she asked.

"Playin' no end of a game," said Cardew, his coolness returning a little. The scapegrace of the Fourth was never out of countenance for long.

"Then Arthur will be in the field?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But the match can't last much longer," said Cardew, with a glance at the study clock. "If you'd care to walk down to Little Side and see the finish, I'd be no end honoured to take you there, Miss Cleveland."

"Thank you very much, but-----"

Cardew winced a little.

"But you intended to wait here for D'Arcy, and I'm in the way?" he said. "All serene, I was just goin'."

"Not at all! But-----"

Cardew picked up a sheet of paper and waved it in the air, opening the window.

"Smoky, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes," answered Ethel rather dryly.

"If I'd known that ladies were expected I'd have given that fag to Mellish or Trimble," sighed Cardew. "I suppose you think me every sort of a silly ass, Miss Cleveland?"

Ethel smiled faintly.

"If you do, you're right on the wicket," said Cardew. "Never was such an ass --- even Gussy isn't such a one! When the door opened I fancied it was D'Arcy comin' in. He would have punched me for smokin' in his study. Serve me right - what?"

Ethel did not answer.

As a matter of fact, she wanted Cardew to go, so that she could wait in the study for her friends to come in. She did not care to wait there in the company of a fellow with whom her acquaintance was so slight.

Cardew quite understood. Having cleared the study of smoke as well as he could, he closed the window again, and crossed to the door. Being quite aware that he cut an absurd figure in the girl's eyes, he was as keen to go as Ethel could be to see the last of him.

"I leave you in possession, Miss Cleveland," he said. "Try the armchair; it's quite comfortable. Like me to light up the figure?"

"Thank you, no."

"Anythin' I can do?"

"Nothing, thanks."

"Except clear?" grinned Cardew. "Quite so! Miss Cleveland. I have the honour to take my leave!" And, with a deep bow, the dandy of the Fourth retired from the study.

He was smiling as he left; but as he went down the passage towards the stairs he gritted his teeth, and his brow darkened.

"Fool! Fool!" he muttered, addressing himself. "Goat! Triple Ass! Caught smokin' -- like a silly little fag of the Third! She must think me a thumpin' duffer!" He shrugged his shoulders angrily. "After all, what does it matter what she thinks?"

But somehow it did seem to matter, for Cardew's brow was dark as he swung out of the School House and tramped away moodily towards the cricket-ground.

That vivid little scene brings the living characters right out of the pages of the Gem. They are there in front of you. And that is only one example of thousands which could be given.

Finally, I want to give an example of our author's skill at dramatic narrative, which leaves one almost breathless with excitement.

This comes from the book which Charles Hamilton has himself stated to be his finest work. See the article "Off the Beaten Track" in C.D. No. 8, for August 1947. The story is "The Boy Without a Name" and was printed once only, in B.F.L. 288.

The story takes place at Highcliffe, and tells of the coming of Frank Courtenay, under the name of Arthur Clare. He is a Scholarship boy, and his real name is unknown. The Highcliffe scholars consider that the school is disgraced by admitting such a boy, and under Ponsonby, decide to make Clare's life unbearable. He is met at the station, and directed to Greyfriars by Pon & Co, instead of Highcliffe. At last the mistake is put right, but it is dark when he gets to Highcliffe, and is severely reprimanded by Mr. Mobbs.

The following scene is from Chapter 8, entitled 'A Dormitory Ragging'.

Ponsonby and Co. came into the dormitory at bedtime, and found the new boy there. Clare had finished with his things, but he had not ventured downstairs again. Plucky as he was, he felt a deep shrinking from facing the mocking and scornful eyes of his Form-fellows. On the morrow it must come, but now he was tired and dispirited, and he wanted to see as little of Ponsonby & Co. as possible. He had taken a book from his box, and was seated on a bed, conning over Latin, when the Fourth-formers came streaming in.

Langley of the Sixth looked in at the door.

"Five minutes," he said, and walked away.

"Blessed if that fellow isn't sitting on my bed!" exclaimed Gadsby, in tones of thrilling indignation. "You awful rotter, get off my bed! Anybody got any disinfectant?"

There was a laugh. Clare got off the bed.

"Mugging up Latin!" said Monson, with a sneering grin. "Good old swot!"

"Will someone tell me which is my bed?" said Clare.

"Your bed!" said Ponsonby. "I should think your bed's in the garret, along with the boot-boy. That's where it ought to be, at all events."

"Or in the coal-hole," said Gadsby.

The juniors proceeded to undress, chattering the while. Clare got into his pyjamas. As no one would tell him which was his bed, he decided to wait till the others were all in. He looked at de Courcy, but the Caterpillar was very busy with his finger-nails, and had no attention to bestow on the new boy. A shock-headed youngster made a sign to Clare, surreptitiously, as it were, as if afraid of attracting the attention of Ponsonby & Co. But Ponsonby's eyes were upon him instantly.

"Smithson!" he rapped out. "What are you grimacing at that cad for?"

"I - I - I -"

"You know what we've arranged, Smithson."

"Ye-es, Pon."

"Don't call me Pon, you worm."

"N-n-no, Ponsonby."

"Smithy is sucking up to the new cad," said Ponsonby, as Clare went towards the bed Smithson had good-naturedly indicated. "Smithy has got to have a lesson. Bring him here."

"I-I say, Pon," -- pleaded Smithson. "I-I didn't tell him anything, really."

"Bring him here," said Pon, magisterially.

"And --- I'm sorry," mumbled Smithson. "I don't mean to have anything to do with him, Pon, -- I don't really. I wouldn't you know."

But Gadsby, and Drury, and Vavasour seized the wretched Smithson, and marched him towards Ponsonby, who had taken up a slipper. Clare looked round. His eyes were gleaming. He could not understand Smithson taking his punishment unresistingly, but that was evidently what the wretched junior meant to do. Clare's hands clenched hard. The boy had brought upon himself a 'slippering' for showing Clare good-nature for one moment, and Clare felt that it was up to him to stand by his helper.

Vavasour and Drury dragged Smithson across a bed, and Ponsonby lifted the slipper to smite, the other juniors gathering round, laughing at the scene.

Clare strode forward, pushing his way through the surprised fellows, and grasped Ponsonby's arm before the blow could fall.

"Stop that!" he said quietly.

Ponsonby spun round upon him, transfixed with surprise and rage.

"You - you put your dirty paw on me!" he gasped. "Take your hand off my arm at once you beast!"

"Drop that slipper first!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Drop that slipper!" said Clare.

Ponsonby did not drop the slipper. He could not use his right arm, upon which Clare had a grip like a vice; but he raised his left, and dashed his clenched fist full at the face of the new boy. But Clare's left came up in time, and knocked it away, with a rap on the wrist that made Ponsonby gasp with pain.

"By Jove!" sang out the Caterpillar, looking up from his finger-nails. "Bravo, Board-School! Go it, County Council! Pon, my dear boy, you've woke up the wrong passenger!"

Some of the juniors laughed. The Caterpillar had his following in the Fourth

Form at Highcliffe as well as Ponsonby. The latter gave a yell of rage.

"Collar the cad!"

Gadsby and the rest closed in. Clare did not shrink. He looked them over with gleaming eyes.

"Keep your distance!" he said, in a low determined voice. "If you touch me I shall hit out -- and I shall hit hard!"

"Blessed wild beast!" yawned Vavasour, backing away a little. "I vote that we don't soil our hands on him, by Jove."

"Collar him, you funk!"

Smithson had slid off the bed, glad enough to escape the slippering, but apparently not inclined to back up his rescuer. He slipped away to his own bed quietly, and turned in. Ponsonby & Co. were fully occupied with Clare now.

Langley looked in at the door as the Fourth-Formers were on the point of making a rush.

"Hallo! Ragging there?" he exclaimed. "Can't you keep order in this dorm?"

"It's that new cad, Langley," said Monson. "He's making the row. He fancies that he's back in Seven Dials."

"Absolutely," chirped Vavasour.

"You'd better keep out of rows, if you know what's good for you, Clare," said the Captain of Highcliffe. "Tumble in, now, all of you, and don't let's have any more of it!"

Clare turned in without replying. He did not wish to attempt to justify himself, and he knew that Langley did not want to be bothered with the rights and the wrongs of the matter, anyway. The Highcliffe captain seemed to be a good-natured fellow in his way, but as slack as the rest of the school.

Langley turned the light out, and, after admonishing the juniors to keep quiet, he quitted the dormitory and closed the door.

Clare did not think of settling down to sleep. He lay waiting for what was to follow, for he knew that there was more to come. Ponsonby & Co. were not done with him yet.

The cool cheek, as they regarded it, of the scholarship boy in intervening between Smithson and his punishment, 'Put the lid on' so to speak. He had laid hands on the great Ponsonby himself, and the more Ponsonby thought of it, the more surprised and enraged he was. It was barely five minutes after Langley's departure that Ponsonby jumped out of bed.

"Up with you, you fellows!" he called out.

"Better draw it mild!" came the sleepy voice of the Caterpillar, "Have you forgotten what Langley said, my tulips?"

"Hang Langley!" said Ponsonby.

"That's all serene," said Vavasour. Langley and Roper and their set are playing bridge by this time, and they wouldn't leave it unless the house was on fire."

"One of the prefects might drop in," suggested Benson.

"Blow the prefects!"

Ponsonby's word was law. The Fourth-Formers, nearly all of them, turned out, and candle-ends were lighted. They did not venture to turn on the electric light.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth," said Ponsonby, "the new cad has been planted on us, in spite of our objections. Not content with being generally objectionable, he has had the effrontery to chip in without being asked. Sending such a cad to Coventry, isn't enough! He's got to have a lesson."

"Go it, Pon!"

"Yaas, go it, Pon," drawled the Caterpillar. "Let's see you give him a hiding, Pon!"

Ponsonby took no notice of that suggestion.

"The nameless cad has chipped in, when we were going to slipper Smithson," he continued. "Well, we'll make him slipper Smithson himself, and then make Smithy slipper him."

"Hear, hear!"

"Get up, Smithson!"

"I - I say, Pon," muttered Smithson, miserably.

"Get up!" roared Ponsonby.

Smithson crawled wretchedly out of bed.

"Clare! Get up! Do you hear? You're going to slipper Smithson."

Clare sat up in bed.

"I'm going to do nothing of the sort," he said.

"We'll see! Drag him out if he won't come!"

Half a dozen juniors rushed towards Clare's bed. Clare stepped quickly out. They closed round him and hustled him towards Ponsonby.

"Take the slipper, Clare, and pay into Smithson till I give the word to stop!" said the Captain of the Fourth.

"Rats!"

"What?"

"Rats!" said Clare coolly. "I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"Then you'll have your dose first. Take that slipper, Smithson!"

Smithson took the slipper.

"Get across that bed, Clare!"

"Go and eat coke!" said Clare.

"Shove him across the bed, you fellows!"

"I shall hit out!" said Clare, clenching his hands.

There was a laugh, and the Fourth-Formers closed in upon him. Clare kept his word, and he hit out -- hard. His right came full in Gadsby's face, knocking him backwards; his left landed on Ponsonby's chin, and the captain of the Fourth flew across the bed, and dumped down on it breathlessly. Vavasour and Monson went to the floor in another couple of seconds. Then the new boy was the centre of a struggling mass of juniors.

The Caterpillar sat up in bed and clapped his hands.

"Go it, County Council! By gad, sir, that's ripping! Four down, by gad! Hurray!"

"Shut up, you silly idiot!" shouted Ponsonby. "What don't you come and lend a hand, you cackling jackanapes?"

"Too much fag, dear boy."

"M-m-my hat, it's a strong beast! gasped Drury, as Clare struggled hard in the grasp of a crowd of fellows. Pile in!"

"Pile on the cad!"

"Got him!"

The odds were too great for Clare, tough as he was. He was dragged to the bed in the grasp of a dozen pairs of hands and dragged across it, face downwards. They held him there in spite of his fierce resistance. But half-a-dozen of the ragers were showing very plain signs of conflict.

"Now then, Smithson, go it with the slipper!"

Smithson advanced, slipper in hand. Clare set his teeth to endure the ordeal he could not escape.

"Why don't you begin, Smithy you fool?" gasped Gadsby.

"Go it, Smithson, or we'll jolly well slipper you!"

"I - I won't!" Smithson flung the slipper on the floor. "I'll be dashed if I do, and you can slipper me if you like!"

"My hat!"

"Yaroooh! roared Smithson, as Ponsonby sent him flying with a heavy back-hander.

The captain of the Fourth picked up the slipper, and sprang towards Clare. His arm swung up, and came savagely down, and the blow rang through the dormitory. Clare struggled furiously, but he was held too fast. Ponsonby's arm went up again, but at that moment a pillow whizzed through the air from the Caterpillar's bed, and smote Ponsonby fairly under the chin, and carried him off his feet.

Bump!

Ponsonby sat up dazedly.

"What - who - who threw that pillow? I I I'll ----"

The Caterpillar strolled elegantly on to the scene, his hands negligently thrust into the pockets of his silk pyjamas.

"Sorry to interrupt," he remarked pleasantly; "but this isn't good enough. Let that kid go!"

And there I will end my example of dramatic narrative. I hope you have enjoyed it!

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* * * * *

On a grey November morning a frail, bent man stepped uncertainly from a small wicket gate that was set in a massive framework of iron-studded wood and surveyed the world he hadn't seen for ten long, never-ending, years. The stone-walled edifice reflected its grim desolation in his ashen face as he glanced back at the prison which had incarcerated him by order of a judge - a judge who had since succumbed to an overfed existence and was himself waiting to go on trail by a higher authority. But he had lived on, had forced his way through the dreary round, day after day, his fine brain almost debauched by the desultory intelligence of the inmates of the prison - but now he was out. Out in the fresh, clean air of freedom.

The judge had described him as a scientific lunatic at the trial and the entire court was in complete agreement. The Press had proclaimed on its front pages its consent to the sentence of fourteen years imprisonment. They declared a public menace had been removed from society, and that people would breathe more easily now that one of those mad scientists had been put away. And the prisoner stepped down from the dock with a fierce resolve to seek out every one at the end of his term who were in that court and vaporise them!!

From Pentonville jail to Grays Inn road is but a short distance by bus, and as he rode he smiled cynically at the time he had driven a bus. Only for a few yards, but he could truthfully state he had driven a London bus! He recalled the moment when, as Scientific Adviser to the Ministry, he had startled a staid Cabinet Minister by announcing he had produced an atomic bullet! And he had followed this amazing disclosure to add he also was able to divert the implosion burst and create the terrible vaporisation effect which, as the world already knew, made total destruction. All this havoc was available in one small cartridge which could be fired from a rifle! He remembered how the Minister had reacted to his alarming news and he chuckled when he, as a famous scientist, working night and day almost to present the government with a cheap form of armament, had discovered this mighty power in a bullet, only to be classed as mad. Every country was groaning under the weight of colossal expenditure on protection and he had found a very cheap way of manufacturing a device equal to that of an atomic bomb's destructive power, but they had laughed at him, imprisoned him, because, to prevent even owning such a fearful weapon, they had denied its existence by stealing his plans.

His wild outburst in the Minister's study had brought butler and footmen running. He was whisked away into a room to calm him, but he broke away and flashed out into Whitehall, his mind on fire, as he ran through the crowds.

A bus had made a temporary halt, and he jumped on the step and sat down in the

seat. But the moments ticked away before the bus could continue its journey, and fuming at the slight delay, he jumped out again, ran round to the front and yanked the driver from his driving seat. As the driver sank to the ground the event was still clear in his mind as he drove the bus haphazard along Whitehall. He felt no sorrow in the picture of the bus mounting the pavement and crushing the life out of seven pedestrians. He had paid for all that now. His fourteen years had thinned to ten for the good conduct afforded quiet prisoners. Of his invention nothing had been mentioned. Even when he tried to bring it out at the trial the court laughed and his counsel directed him to be silent.

After he had settled down to the grim routine of prison life he began to think of revenge, and this took so many different forms that he never really had any clear cut method to repay a country that had turned its back on him - but he was determined to make an extensive search for his notes when he was released. As a scientist he was now finished, both mentally and physically, but he was still a power and a formidable one with those notes. If he could reclaim his discovery from the mass of his old working theories and calculations he had set down on paper, the atomic bullet would be presented to a country whose sympathies were directed to understanding his mind. England would be very sorry they had put him behind bars, locked up like a common criminal. He had come to the conclusion his invention had been confiscated on the orders of the Minister, who had probably kept them himself for bargaining purposes. Well, just let them see who was master once he was able to start thinking clearly again with the data he had put away in the secret compartment in his desk.

As the bus arrived at the junction where Grays Inn road ends at Kings Cross he alighted and hurried down that famous thoroughfare to his home where a faithful house-keeper stayed on till the day her master came home again.

But she was destined to wait a while longer for he never reached his house. In the full activity of Grays Inn road he was kidnapped. A car, crawling alongside, had spilled two men who ran to him, grabbed him and hustled him into the car. It was sudden, and usual. Two friends giving a weak, old man a lift in their car. But the action was going to culminate in one of the most frightening episodes St. Frank's in far away Sussex had ever experienced!!

* * *

A cold, northeast wind had justified the official weather forecaster's warning of a snowfall, and as the first flakes began to descend on the tired office workers as they made the nightly dash for bus and tube the City of London prepared to accept with dignity once more the solitude of the night. With their coats turned up at the collar the never-ending stream of men, and an umbrella sheltering a woman here and there, scampered pass the ornate building and quickly invaded the bus stops and the underground stations with a speed that would have got them to the office much earlier had they adopted it in the fresh of the morning. The sons and daughters of industry were hurrying home to their firesides hungry and tired, and the mighty task of battling with the London rush hour was their first consideration.

Nobody gave the imposing building a glance as they pushed and shoved their way pass it, not that it would have made any difference to their set ideas. But had they peeped inside to where an important meeting was being held they might, had they listened, gone home with fear in their hearts.

As the crowd thinned out to a mere trickle giving the falling snow a chance to

settle and fill in the pattern of many footprints, a light from an office opposite fell upon the stone letters above the great, ornamented doors. The words were in Latin and read: "Domine, dirige nos!" which is the motto of London. Lord, direct us! A greater anachronism that evening would have been difficult to locate. For the men in that building, sitting round the gleaming, polished table were planning the greatest holocaust in history. Every man, woman and child in every country of the world were being written off if the needs of the moment made it necessary. And these planners were not just thugs, not spoilt rulers of policy, not defeated government officials. They had been fired with an idea, and of all the countless methods put forward daily by the world's leaders for the comfort and well being of people with which they had rode into power, these men now sitting round the table in the City of London had outstripped them all with the plan of plans. In their scheme for delivering the earth's slaves to prosperity they would cancel all divisions, all separate countries and boundaries and make it as one. Thus, there would be no necessity for piling up armaments against each other, spying on each other. The thousands of millions spent on defence would be utilised for the comfort of the people. That was the first consideration. There were many more. Of course, the individual governments were not as one on this plan, therefore, the world would have to be subdued. And that process was being drafted now as the workers wearily drifted home.

The men assembled round the table suddenly sprang to attention as though animated by a lever at the arrival of a small, sharp featured, man with a great domed head. His striking personality descended on all with powerful force. In his great presence these hard, ruthless men were subdued into abject submission. For this was Professor Cyrus Zingrave, arch-crook, controller of vast organisations in the criminal underground, self styled King of the World!!

Two footmen, like tall sentinels, took up positions behind him as he sat down. He picked up the agenda which had been placed ready for him and glanced down the list. Next he looked up and motioned the others to be seated.

Again he dropped his eyes and studied the agenda. Items one to eight dealt with a similar number of reports dealing with the writer's appreciation from different countries and capitals of the world. These were satisfactorily accepted and item nine was headed 'Nelson Lee'.

The domed head of Professor Zingrave joggled.

"Nelson Lee? Where does he come into all this?" His sharp piercing eyes bored into the man sitting on his left.

Up jumped the man.

"Lord, I had that name put on the agenda because we failed to find the original plans of the scientist, Pollard!"

"Yes, No. 2, but what has Lee to do with that mistake on your part? You have assured me, you have given us your definite word, that the atomic cartridge has been produced by this ex-convict scientist. Come, I want to know where Nelson Lee fits in this!"

"Yes, Lord" quailed No. 2. "But when we arrived at Pollard's flat to obtain the working notes of his formula Nelson Lee was leaving the building. We have since learned that Pollard never actually lost the original plan of his invention. Nelson Lee found it where Pollard forgot he hid it!"

And the trembling deputy went on to explain the outcome of the ex-scientist's many weeks of intensive development of the scanty material afforded by the rough calculations he had jotted down many years ago for an ungrateful government. And under the

brainwashing treatment from a special instructor the man who spent ten long years in Pentonville jail was brought round to their way of thinking, and the Party was now in the possession of an atomic bullet that could be fired from an ordinary rifle, do an amazing amount of damage by vaporisation, and was very cheap to make. But the information did not spare him the wrath from his master.

"The atomic bullet is useless to us while the secret is with Nelson Lee!" he shouted, jumping up. "Are we to lose all just when we were ready to conquer the world? At the moment all our plans are made. No. 2, I want the body of Nelson Lee and the original formula in three days from now, brought to my headquarters, or your own life will be forfeit!"

There was a general muttering of consent round the table and the meeting broke up.

But after three days Professor Zingrave was informed that Nelson Lee was still alive, and No. 2 committed suicide!

And so the war was brought to Nelson Lee, to St. Frank's and the juniors. This was to be the turning point in Zingrave's continuous battle with the schoolmaster detective.

The Professor took up his headquarters in the old stone quarries on Bannington Moor. With him came a small army. And they came in secret, and so vast were their resources that in no time a ring of armed destructive force surrounded St. Frank's. Strong points were set up at Bellton, The River House school, Moat Hollow, Holt's farm, the meadows at the back of the playing fields and all main roads. It looked as if the end of St. Frank's was imminent and certain. After which, Professor Zingrave would get his life long dream and become Master of the World.

* * *

It was the comparatively quiet period after dinner when the juniors stood around in small groups, chatting, before the unwelcome clang of the school bell would summon them back to their Form rooms that the luxurious saloon car glided into the Triangle and came to halt at the steps of the Ancient House. In a matter of seconds the footman riding beside the chauffeur had jumped down and was holding the open door for the occupant to emerge. Several fellows stared in idle curiosity. Large, expensive cars of this type were not unusual at the school. But they stared fascinated at the figure that got down. Looks of amazement spread over the faces of the boys who were watching at the strange sight of the man who quickly mounted the steps and disappeared inside.

There was no mistaking that slight figure with the drooping shoulders and the massive head. The black, piercing eyes. For it was Professor Cyrus Zingrave who had left the car. Not only was he about the last person St. Frank's expected to see that day, but he was the least of all people who should have entered the school. The boys had cause to remember Zingrave. He hated everything and everybody connected with St. Frank's; Nelson Lee had wrecked his plans so often that after the arch crook's attempt to utterly destroy the school some time previously Lee had begun to think this clever but unscrupulous scientist had broken off his fanatic desire to rule the world.

The juniors fell away as he marched through into the Ancient House, accompanied by the footman, and unerringly made for Nelson Lee's study where he paused. In answer to his quiet knock he entered, and his guard remained outside, alert and strong.

Whoever it was Lee expected to see come through that doorway will never be known

as all thoughts died within him as he stared at the small, imposing figure framed in the entrance to his study. The great detective was not easily shocked, but the presence of the world's most hated man standing there in his study came as a bolt from the blue. Lee was momentarily at a loss.

"Good afternoon, Lee," said the professor in his soft, silky voice. And closing the door gently behind him, he advanced and placed his well manicured hand on the head of Lee's favourite easy chair.

"May I?" he smiled.

Lee nodded. The audacity of the man shook him.

"To what do I owe the honour of this visit, professor?" Lee was himself now. Ready for anything. "To tell you the truth, I thought you were dead."

"My dear Lee. I am far from granting you that pleasant thought, yet," he answered, still smiling.

"Then surely you haven't made this visit in the hope of joining Dr. Stafford's staff? I understand there is a vacancy owing to the temporary indisposition of Professor Tucker, our science master" said Lee lightly. "But I doubt if the school governors would consider you a suitable candidate...."

The oily smile dropped from Zingrave's face instantly.

"Lee," he rapped out as he bent forward. "I want those papers. I have come for the original plans that you stole from Pollard's flat about ten years ago. No, do not argue!" he added when the other was about to speak. "My organisation has searched high and low for them, and you know how thorough I can be, and now it has been finally decided that you are the only person who can have them. I have had every high place ransacked, every official hiding place searched, but those plans which the Minister ordered you to locate in Pollard's flat were never found. I want them, Lee. And you are going to give them to me!"

Nelson Lee ignored the question. "So you are back in harness once more, professor? What are your plans this time?"

The great domed head gently swayed. "Lee, I am in possession of Pollard's atomic bullet -- have produced it, in fact. Ah, I see you start! That invention is a masterpiece. After Pollard came out of prison my men collected him in your own road, and we soon got him round to my way of thinking. This country will never learn. Some of the finest brains are decaying in routine jobs..... Now you are a sensible man. You must agree that whoever has the power to use this atomic bullet as I have called it, can hold the world to ransom. But, I shan't do that. I desire to rule the earth my way. For too long it has been in the hands of incompetent fools dictated by Party dogma. Just think what I would do with all the millions spent on armaments which goes on year after year, governments storing up arms and a slight spark could start one gigantic explosion that will help nobody. Now my scheme....." In his excitement Zingrave had been carried away.

"But I have no papers, professor. I certainly abstracted Pollard's formula and handed it over to the Ministry. That was because Pollard had declared he had found a way to create a nuclear fission in a cartridge. But he overworked himself to such a degree that he forgot where he hid the plans. He was almost deranged when he accused the Minister of stealing them."

"Almost, Lee, but not quite." smiled the professor. "You see, I had great faith in him. So we got in touch with him in Pentonville and tried to get him round to my views. He refused every time, so when he was discharged we picked him up in Gray's Inn Road and since then he has been working for me. We restored to him his old working notes and from that jumbled mass the atomic bullet has emerged. But I must have the originals! Without them I can expect counter measures as strong as those I adopt. I want those papers, and I am going to get them. My information is that you did not place them with the Ministry. That they are here in this school."

Nelson Lee rose.

"I am sorry, professor, but you have been misinformed. I have not got those original plans here," Lee said decisively.

"But you know where they are kept." rapped out Zingrave.

Lee shook his head. "If you do not mind I have an important lecture to deliver at 2 o'clock. Perhaps we shall meet again."

Zingrave rose from his chair so violently that it brought the bodyguard outside instantly through the door. But the professor waved him back. "Lee, I have ringed this place with armed forces. All the roads are blocked and my men are stopping everybody coming into the area. I will give you twelve hours from now to find those papers. If by that time I do not receive them I will direct an atomic bullet at St. Frank's and the school will be vaporised!" The world's most hated man paused at the door. "Lee, I warn you, I'll dust these building if you ignore me. You are no fool. You must know what power I control."

"What is to prevent me killing you now, professor? For the last few moments I have covered you with a gun. I am certain the whole world would congratulate me."

"Tut, tut, man," the professor rebuked mildly. "You should know me by now. Your assistant was captured early this morning and he is now sharing the same room as Pollard over in the old quarries on the Moor."

"If you harm that boy, Zingrave, I'll personally see to it....."

The black, piercing eyes flashed with a smile. "He is quite safe, Lee, providing you find those papers. If not, none of you will be alive this time tomorrow. Pollard, I have thrown on the rubbish heap. He no longer interests me. He and Nipper had better say their prayers unless you bring the papers to me at 2 o'clock in the morning."

"Well, professor, since I cannot produce the necessary papers either tomorrow morning, or any morning, you had better take me with you. There is no need to put the rest of this big school in peril because of me."

Zingrave chuckled evilly. "No, my dear Lee, you are my trump card. You are going to stay here until you die." And with that he marched quickly out of the room and left the school.

Now that Zingrave had departed Nelson Lee sat down. He felt that the greatest test he had yet endured had been presented to him, and he was not quite sure if he would escape this most terrible of all trials.

It was decided a council of war was necessary, so all the masters were quickly summoned and a meeting was held in Master's Common Room. Lee stated the facts and spared nobody the full quota of dangers that had come about from Zingrave's visit. It took some time for the full realisation of their position to be understood. That only a very little while ago the school had awakened to a day that differed in no way with any other day, and suddenly and dramatically the threat of a terrible death was hanging over them like the sword of Damocles was really fantastic, but Nelson Lee with all the gravity he could show made it very obvious that he would not go to these lengths if there was the slightest chance on the whole thing becoming unfounded. It was manifestly true that Nipper had been captured. He had been missed by his chums, Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson soon after he had left the dormitory. But they never dreamed he had been kidnapped. This fact alone was sufficient to bring the issue to a sense of urgency. The school were collected in Big Hall where Mr. Lee told the boys the full facts. He spared nobody, and to the amazement of everybody disclosed the threatened atomic attack Professor Zingrave had promised. He explained that the professor had demanded some papers that he had handled some years ago. He added that as he no longer possessed these papers the chances were that Zingrave would carry out his threat and destroy St. Frank's. It was a time for frankness, and Lee was blunt and to

the point. He had offered his own life in exchange for the removal of the peril to the school, but this had been turned down.

If ever there had been consternation in Big Hall before, it came nowhere to the startling announcement Lee's words had. Some of the fellows stood grim and resolute, but juniors like Snipe, Teddy Long, and Merrell, were showing signs of panic. In fact, when Mr. Pycraft and Mr. Goole began displaying nervous tension, a few of the Fifth and Sixth weaklings sided with them. Pycraft dashed out into the Lane and some others followed him. But at the ends of Bellton Lane military-looking men with shotguns pointed them in their direction, and they flew back into the school. Big Hall was still crowded for Nelson Lee was still talking about the strange new device that a scientist had developed after spending ten years in jail. Mr. Pycraft shouted that all the military-looking men out in the lane were carrying shotguns, but Lee pointed out that as far as his knowledge of the new invention went shotguns were the only type of weapon necessary for the initial thrust to fire the bullet.

"But what's all this about, sir?" shouted Handforth. "And what do you mean about Nipper being kidnapped?"

"What's all this about an atomic bullet?" asked somebody.

"Nipper kidnapped? Come to think of it he wasn't at breakfast.."

"Quiet! quiet!"

The masters and prefects had great difficulty in maintaining order, but when Dr. Stafford rose to speak they listened attentively. The Head looked drawn and tired. But his voice was firm. He told them it was his greatest wish to be with his boys at a time like the present, and he fervently hoped that courage and restraint would be shown. St. Frank's had seen many dangers and threats before, and the old school had lived up to that tradition that made it so famous throughout the land. Dr. Stafford expressed his entire ignorance of this sudden and deadly peril which had come upon them from nowhere, but the silence from outside, the absence of communications everywhere, the breakdown of all the services, telephones and broadcasting, had brought home the very situation he thought that one day might happen in this country. Such fantastic periods were usually prevalent in far away places. Nelson Lee then said a few words, and the boys were advised to remain in their studies until they heard the bell ring that would call them in Big Hall once more. This order brought many startled glances. It could have meant they would spent their last hour together.

Nobody thought of sleep. Nobody gave food a thought. As the last hour approached the bell clanged out like the ringing of a death knell. St. Frank's was a place of the dead; and the fellows spoke in whispers and walked quietly along the passages as though afraid to disturb the ceric darkness outside. As the school possessed its own lighting arrangements, electricity was available.

Some of the maids had entered the school chapel to pray. Even to those juniors and seniors who normally gave it little thought, the chapel was a refuge for their tormented minds. But the bell had now been answered, and the whole school, domestics, gardeners, masters, boys, were all there, while on the platform waited Nelson Lee and Dr. Stafford. It is impossible to portray that scene and not understand the thoughts that were probably passing through the minds of them all. Perhaps because Lee had tried to escape and found it impossible had tempered the frantic breakaway his mind had ordered. He knew Nipper was beside him in spirit. Of that he was certain.

And so the clock began to show that half an hour was all that was left of everything. Many of the boys began to blubber as they waited. There was no panic. The thing was definite and sure. Even the small noises of the night could be heard in the silence that hung over the school. Some thought of running out but those that attempted to enter Bellton Lane were thrown back. To this last few minutes Professor Zingrave

still had the school surrounded.

Big Hall that night reverberated to the thoughts of the condemned host of St. Frank's. In the little village of Bellton this scene was probably being enacted in the small houses of the folk, was, in fact, very similar all over the country. All were waiting for the end. In homes, in schools, and most of all in churches.

Nelson Lee sat and hoped and prayed. The last minutes were running out as he glanced at the boys he knew so well. It was very quiet now, the great crowd in the hall were ready.

Suddenly, from out of the solid silence, a voice was heard, somebody was shouting. It came from the direction of the Triangle. Several boys fainted for the noise was so unexpected. Gradually as the voice drew nearer to Big Hall, commotion broke out and then, a figure appeared in the doorway at the entrance to the hall. It was Nipper!! His face flushed with excitement. As he rushed past the boys and masters and mounted the platform the watch in Nelson Lee's hand showed 2 o'clock. The ultimatum had expired and Professor Zingrave was going to destroy St. Frank's! He stood up and his arms went limp as he looked at Nipper running towards him.

"We are safe, we are safe!" shouted Nipper, exultantly. "The atomic bullet cannot be fired!!" He sank down beside the Head, utterly exhausted, overcome.

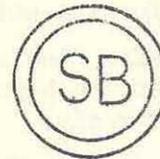
A great wave of activity rippled through the ranks as Nipper's message began to take effect. What happened afterwards that night nobody exactly knew. But the thought uppermost in everybody's mind was that they were safe. The old world would go on living again. And after Nipper was able to speak he told Nelson Lee and the Head his story. From his cell where he had been locked in with the scientist, Pollard, he learned that the ex-convict had miscalculated one important point in his discovery. It was that the bullet within the cartridge was useless unless recharged, and since those being used by the Professor were manufactured weeks ago not one of them was alive. Their atomic power had begun to lessen from the moment of construction, and, unless re-fused, and triggered within a certain time, their destructive power ran down to zero. When this fact became evident, Professor Zingrave's threat vanished. His organisation melted and disintegrated. It was some time before things settled down again, but it will be a very long time before St. Frank's forgets Professor Zingrave!

Nobody went to bed that night....the boys could not remain in one place at a time. Many went out, some to Bellton, others to various points of no special interest. They were not stopped....Dr. Stafford may just as well tried to halt a steamroller. Of Professor Zingrave's army there were no signs; it had vanished. Undoubtedly some provision for such an event must have been arranged, for very little of the organisation fell to the police and military.

Of Pollard, the man who really started it all, Nipper opined the man was still around the locality. After the gang had abandoned their stronghold in the old quarries on the moor, the improvised cell that kept Nipper and the ex-convict prisoner had been left unattended and after Pollard had told the Remove captain his stupendous discovery that the bullet was defunct by reason of the fuse running down, they smashed down the door and Nipper ran one way towards the school while the other made for the other side of the moor.

The Easter holidays being so near, St. Frank's were all given permission to go home. And the next day, with things looking more normal, the boys were once more looking their old selves. Nobody gave a thought to that arch villain Zingrave, but Nelson Lee is acutely aware that while Zingrave exists there can be no let up, no slackening for there must come a moment when the professor will strike again.

THE MAN FROM BAKER STREET



THE EIGHTH ANNUAL FEATURE

compiled and contributed

by

MEMBERS OF THE SEXTON BLAKE CIRCLE

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN

THE ROAD TO BERKELEY SQUARE.....	by Walter Webb
THE SEXTON BLAKE AUTHORS WHO'S WHO (REVISED).....	by Bill Lofts and Derek Adley
THE OPENING PLAY.....	by Victor Colby
SEXTON BLAKE - TWERP!.....	by Margaret Cooke

* * * * *

The sad death of Herbert Leckenby has deprived the Sexton Blake Circle of much of its pleasure in the presentation of this year's feature. Herbert was a true Blake devotee for more years than I have lived (I am fifty-four!); he was also a member of the S.B.C., although - typical of his kindly, retiring nature - always keeping himself in the background.

I do not propose to say anything about the contents of this, the Circle's eighth feature, but merely say that we hope our efforts to please and interest you will meet with the same success as in the past.

It will be seen that the feature is slightly lengthier than usual. For this reason I am shortening my introductory remarks, thereby conserving space for more valuable material!

The Sexton Blake Circle extends cordial greetings to you all. To this I would add my personal wishes for the best of Health and Happiness throughout the coming year to each and every one of you.

LEN PACKMAN, Chairman,
The Sexton Blake Circle,
East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

* * * * *

THE ROAD TO BERKELEY SQUARE

By WALTER WEBB

* * *

Foreword

An article which sets out to recapture something of the atmosphere of those olden days, when a young private investigator named Sexton Blake, on setting up office in the heart of a London slum, set his eyes towards a goal which not even the rapid and bewildering changes of a speed-crazed world could prevent him from accomplishing.

Re-introducing some of those personalities who gave him the necessary momentum in that first rocket-like burst to fame, some who were not quite so closely connected, and several other well-known names in fiction who have - or had - ties of a remote nature with our famous character, such as Edgar Wallace, Winston Churchill (see notes on "The Lancer Lad"), and others.

* * * * *

"Mr. Frank Ellaby wishes to see you, sir."

"Good!" answered Mr. Sexton Blake. "Let him come up, and at once."

The clerk withdrew, and his master gazed thoughtfully at the grimy window of his office in New Inn Chambers.

"So," he muttered, "my wealthy client has come at last, thanks to the influence of my friend Gervaise of Paris....."

Thus were published on the twentieth day of the last month in the year 1893 the very first words uttered by the first mentioned character in the very first Sexton Blake story ever written!

Frank Ellaby, having become a wealthy man by striking it rich in Australia, had gone to Melbourne on a celebration spree, when his elation had been doused by the discovery of his sister dying in the house in which she lived with a four-year-old child. Ellaby's sister had promised the mother that she would protect her child until she came of age, and before breathing her last begs her brother to take the same oath that she may die in peace. Faced with no alternative, Frank Ellaby promises his dying sister that he will do this. He had got mixed up with two other gold prospectors, a man named Calder Dulk, and his wife, a tall, handsome woman of French extraction, whom he instantly mistrusted. What occurred to Ellaby during his stay in Australia formed the basis of Sexton Blake's first recorded case, in which he was partnered by his friend, the French detective known as Jules Gervaise.

New Inn Chambers into which Blake's first client stepped was not destined to be much longer used by the two detectives, for they soon moved into an office, or offices, in Wych Street, a northern tributary of the Strand, from where they were to solve the mystery of "The Black Grange". At the time of writing little about this story is known, except that Sexton Blake fell not for the first time in his career in love with a most presentable young woman, the victim of kidnapers from whose clutches it was his pleasant duty to rescue. The arch-criminal and Blake fought a do-or-die battle in the basket of a balloon drifting over the Channel, and so desperately was Blake pressed

that he had to puncture the silk of the balloon with a bullet from his revolver. Overcome by the released gas, both detective and criminal were rendered unconscious, and when he came round, Blake discovered he was in the comfortably furnished cabin of a steamer. Blake fell quite heavily for the charms of Lillie Ray, far heavier than Lillie fell for him, apparently, for despite her half-promise that she would one day yield to his desire, Blake remained a bachelor, so she obviously had second thoughts on the matter after all, and, equally obviously, Blake's feelings soon tempered down.

Wych Street!

Amongst Londoners today who follow the assignments of Blake in the faster tempo of the New Order, how many recall that thoroughfare of ill-repute as it was way back in the 1890's? If any, a strictly limited number, and to them it means something much more than just another London street; for then, Wych Street, Drury Lane, was a slum, and it was in such environs that Sexton Blake, under the guiding hand of his creator, accepted his second recorded commission, which was published in the MARVEL during Christmas week of 1893.

It was in a narrow street off Wych Street that the infamous Jack Sheppard served his apprenticeship to Mr. Wood, the carpenter; and in White Lion Passage stood the hostelry of the same name, scene of many of the escapades in the career of the prince of cracksmen of whose adventures W. Harrison Ainsworth has written to considerable length. These were abruptly terminated in 1882 when the famous novelist died at the age of 77 years, though other writers, including several destined to join the celebrated band of Blake chroniclers, were to continue to relate his exploits in the various periodicals distributed at that period.

Wych Street certainly had many interesting associations, and history has it that in 1554 an unfortunate bishop named Hooper was taken from the Angel Inn, which was situated at one end of that thoroughfare, and taken to Gloucester to be burnt at the stake, though a much more pleasant and not so distant recollection is that the tavern known as The Shakespeare, still standing at the time of Sexton Blake's occupation of chambers in Wych Street, was once kept by Mark Lemon, who afterwards became editor of PUNCH. In adjoining Clare Court was a certain beef-house patronised as a boy by no less a person than the celebrated Charles Dickens, who, whilst employed as a drudge at Hungerford Stairs at the tender age of 10 years, purchased a small plate of beef to eat with his daily supply of bread. This was in 1822-4, some 70 years before the advent of Sexton Blake in that vicinity. Alas! that beef-house, like Hungerford Stairs, so well known to the jolly Thames watermen of old, is no more, nor is the once familiar semi-circular sign over the Shakespeare Head to be seen, for they and the narrow thoroughfare which was once old Wych Street were swept clean away during one of London's whole-hearted attempts to obliterate its slums many years ago.

From Wych Street to Berkeley Square! Truly, Sexton Blake has climbed high the social ladder since his first published assignment in the MARVEL in those distant Victorian days.

On taking over from Harry Blyth, who created Blake and died five years later from typhoid fever, the author whom we know as William Shaw Rae must have decided that Wych Street with its impure reputation was no place for a young and promising crime investigator to set up headquarters, and promptly whisked him off to the more select Norfolk Street in the Strand.

Of the fifty odd stories of Blake which appeared in halfpenny form it was obvious that there was a great deal of indecision amongst the various editors of the papers who accepted them as to whether the author's name should be given or not. In Shaw Rae's case his name was invariably given, but the identities of his colleagues who supported him in the production of Blake's early commissions were mostly not divulged.

Who were these men, now long since passed to the other side? In one or two cases when a minor character used in an anonymously-written story appeared later in another story, of which the author's name was given, it was instrumental in identifying the former, but in the majority of cases one can only indulge in theory. To get a clearer picture of the situation as it was in those early days and in the knowledge that many of the contributors to ANSWERS, which had begun publication just over five years earlier, also wrote later for the Blake papers MARVEL and UNION JACK, it will be interesting to give a list of some of the names of the men and women who were in at the very beginning, for amongst them some of the anonymous writers may be unconsciously hit upon.

Let us imagine ourselves back in the days of 1893, when ANSWERS' office was situated at the top of No. 24 Tudor Street, reached by means of a very steep and narrow staircase with the door of the room occupied by the editor opening directly on to it. At the head of the concern was the 28 year-old Alfred C. Harmsworth, about whom so much has been written that it would be futile to try to add anything of an original nature. He was assisted by his brothers - Harold, Leicester, Cecil, St. John and Hildebrand, Cecil being in fact the editor of ANSWERS at that particular time and Harold being in charge of the financial side of the business. CHIPS, into which pink pages Sexton Blake was occasionally to find himself, was already a successful comic papers though by no means attaining the high circulation of COMIC CUTS. Staff members and outside contributors to the Harmsworth papers at this time included Lord Mountmorres, Hugh Tuite, Montague Haydon, Henry J. Garrish, Arthur Birnage, G.J.B. Anderson, the brothers Ernest and Norman Goddard, Gilbert Floyd, Somers J. Summers, Houghton Townley, Hamilton Edwards, S. Clarke Hook, Dr. J.W. Staniforth, Major Arthur Griffiths, Max Pemberton, Robert Leighton, Stanhope Sprigg, Saxon Jude, Herbert Lomax, Sidney Gowing, T.C. Bridges, Cecil Hayter, Arkas Sapt, Henry Leach, Lawrence Clarke, B.W. Young, William Benjamin Home-Gall, J. Harwood Panting, William Maas, C.L. McCluer Stevens, and Randall Roberts, the majority of whom were eager, moustached young men, some in the future to become editors, managers and directors of the world-famous firm. It is interesting to recall that at the age of 22, a young journalist named Herbert George Wells earned a few shillings by contributing to ANSWERS in its first year. In 1897, nine years later, he was to make his name with the world-famous novel "The Invisible Man". An up-and-coming young writer named A. Conan Doyle was also an outside contributor, as was C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne, who struck up a friendship with Cecil Hayter, a staff member. Educated at the grammar school of Bradford and at Cambridge, he rowed in the winning University Trial Eight in his 21st year. An aspiring young journalist still not yet out of his teens was already casting eager eyes towards a goal which would ultimately bring him to the notice of the man responsible for the introduction of Sexton Blake to the reading public. He was Edgar Wallace, most famous of all crime writers. William Le Queux was another to be enrolled as a contributor, and wrote a serial for ANSWERS, "The Poisoned Bullet", immediately on giving up the sub-editorship of the GLOBE in 1891 to concentrate on novel writing.

Looking back over this list of colourful personalities, one immediately identifies ten writers as having written Blake stories at various periods of their career.

One, Lord Mountmorres, by no means enjoyed the financial independence one would assume by his title. He had succeeded the Irish peer of that name who had been shot by gunmen twelve years previously at Clonbur, and on leaving Oxford had been sorely in need of money. An amusing story is told of him prior to his joining ANSWERS staff when, doing his bit towards boosting the circulation, he went into the streets got up as one of the paper's vendors and found himself under arrest on suspicion of having burgled his own chambers. His friend and confidante, Cecil Hayter, is of course well known as a Sexton Blake writer. One of the dandies of Fleet Street, Hayter subsequently accompanied Alfred Harmsworth on a tarpon-fishing expedition to Florida in the role of secretary-companion. It has been said that Hayter was always fond of relating his experiences of such travels abroad, but that more often than not there was more imagination than fact about them. Anderson is slightly better known under the pseudonym of "Melton Whyte", as is Norman Goddard under the tally of "Mark Darran". Houghton Townley is identified as the author of one S.B.L., but probably wrote shorter stories of Blake in the very early days of anonymity. Townley had a long association with the Harmsworths, but little is remembered about him. He was given the editorship of COMIC CUTS when that paper first appeared on 17 May 1890, its appeal being so great that, according to the circulation figures, it sold 118,864 copies. Up to that time Townley had been on ANSWERS staff and it was claimed that such was the effect of the sudden responsibility placed on his shoulders that he was made sick with apprehension and spent one night sleepless in fear that the paper would fail to click, though, no doubt, he was much relieved when in a matter of only a few weeks the circulation figure passed the 300,000 mark - and within two years was making more money than ANSWERS. The mighty success of COMIC CUTS surprised even Fleet Street and naturally paved the way for CHIPS, or ILLUSTRATED CHIPS as it was first called. Some fourteen years later Townley was to write an angry and embittered letter to Sir Alfred Harmsworth (he was made a baronet in 1904), protesting at the continual withholding of a promotion he had been encouraged to expect. The unfair methods of some of the departmental heads being an established fact, one can feel little doubt that Townley's wrathful protestations were not without their justification. One who knew him and published some of his work in the early days remembers him as being a quiet, cultured gentleman, not a great writer, but a sound craftsman who was a good stopgap and always dependable for a readable yarn.

Lomax, Sprigg, Bridges, Staniforth (Maxwell Scott) and Home-Gall (Reginald Wray) are proved Sexton Blake writers, but what of the others? Sapt and Young are the names of two remote Blake authors, but there is no proof forthcoming that they were actually the men of those names listed earlier on, though the name of Sapt is uncommon enough to form a solid foundation for the supposition that Arkas Sapt did indeed write a Blake story featuring Lobangu and Sir Richard Losely for the U.J. in 1922, when the original creator of the characters, "Tuppy" Hayter, left off writing. Arkas Sapt was a well-known Fleet Street character, and is remembered as the man who saved the DAILY MIRROR from extinction, so earning the respect and gratitude of its founder, Alfred Harmsworth. B.W. Young was the former ANSWERS office-boy, who rose to the exalted position of secretary to the aforementioned when he became Lord Northcliffe, but as there were so many Youngs in journalism at that time, the odds against that particular Young being the Blake writer are long indeed.

Tuite, Floyd and Gowing are possible early Blake chroniclers; indeed, it is difficult to believe that Gowing, one of the most famous boys' authors of them all under the pen-name of "David Goodwin", did not, at some time in his long career, write a few tales of the famous character, at least. As a rule, authors who wrote serials for the U.J. were enrolled under the Blake banner and Gowing wrote quite a few in the

days of the pink covers. At eighteen, at which period of his brilliant writing career he was to be found on ANSWERS staff, he was the owner of a trim five-tonner, which yacht he kept at Burnham-on-Crouch, a circumstance which suggested that he was comparatively free from financial want. He was only a slim youngster in those days but gained weight considerably in subsequent years, and in the words of one who knew him well when he - Gowing - lived on the coast in Suffolk "looked like a prosperous gentleman farmer". There is a difference of opinion as to whether he died in Kenya or at his country home in Suffolk, but, whichever way it was, it occurred round about the time of the beginning of the second world war.

Floyd held several editorial posts, but in so far as boys' fiction was concerned did little apart from passing it for publication. Tuite, aged thirty, tall, elegant, with a thick moustache, rather unimaginative, but generally liked, and a one-time captain in the Norfolk Fusiliers, began writing after he had retired on a small pension from the army. Heir presumptive to a baronetcy he never lived long enough to claim, his best known story was called "The Secret of the Blue Vase", which had a very distinctive Irish flavour and introduced a most unusual private detective, named Mr. G.J. Shout. It is high probable that he was one of the anonymous Blake crowd, and there is a strong theory that he wrote the very first serial ever to appear in the UNION JACK. This was entitled "Peter Slim" (The Wonderful Young Ventriloquist), and was published under the name of Captain Spencer. Prefaced with his army ranking, Tuite's full name was Captain Hugh George Spencer Tuite.

Robert Hamilton Edwards, a fairly tall, 21 year-old financial journalist, who had just thrown in his lot with the Harmsworths after having served his apprenticeship on the staff of Sir George Newnes, was closely connected with the Sexton Blake stories for a time, not perhaps, in the actual writing of them but certainly in their output, for like several other boys' periodicals of the Harmsworth group, the UNION JACK - Blake's own paper, as it was to become recognised in later years - was under his control. As Chief Editor of all the boys' papers, Hamilton Edwards succeeded Leicester Harmsworth, and had as his assistant editors, William Back (who eventually succeeded him), and Major Arthur Griffiths. As one of the principal editors of the famous publishing concern, Hamilton Edwards was not always fair towards the authors who contributed to his papers. Only recently, one old-timer recalled that Edwards was a man of many moods and after he - the writer - had stopped writing for him, he received an appealing letter asking him to send in more work as his papers "were in a parlous state", then kept the mss so long that he - the writer - got disgusted and sent no more. Relations between Edwards and his chief were far from cordial and criticism of his department by Lord Northcliffe resulted in continuous threats on Edwards' part to resign. By 1910 the latter had attained the position of Managing Director of the Amalgamated Press Ltd., then, in March 1912, precipitated a near crisis by again threatening to resign with demands for heavy compensation. What eventually transpired out of all this friction in the Amalgamated Press is not quite clear. There were threats of legal action being taken, but whether Edwards actually resigned or was bought out, it is definitely established that it was during this year - 1912 - that he left after twenty years service with the firm to help in the development of Venezuela industries. As a director of the Venezuelan Oil Concessions Ltd., he was seen frequently in Knightsbridge during the early days of the first world war.

Major Arthur Griffiths, much older than the majority of the staff, of somewhat forbidding appearance, with thinning hair and a fierce moustache, was a one-time inspector of Her Majesty's prisons, and an ex-governor of Millbank Prison, in London. As the author of several books on crime and the criminal, he would have been well

qualified to write about Sexton Blake and may well indeed have been responsible for some of the early stories. Little is known about him apart from the fact that on 29 September 1894, he visited Chelmsford Prison in company with Alfred Harmsworth to interview the Prittlewell murderer, James Canham Read, in order that the EVENING NEWS should be first in the field with its reports of the trial, which concluded on 15 November.

In the midst of that humming hive of youthful endeavour and tremendous enthusiasm tragedy inevitably lurked around the corner. Somers J. Summers, a brilliant young journalist, who had moved into the editorship of ANSWERS, died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1905, the result of mentally and physically overtaxing his strength in making a success of his job. The young editor's death cast a shadow over his colleagues not soon dispelled, and revived memories of some five years previously when another young and brilliant journalist on the staff - a war correspondent - had succumbed in Ladysmith, South Africa, whilst covering the Boer War for the DAILY MAIL. And thus, having dealt with some of the personalities who were connected in varying degrees of proximity with the output of the earliest Sexton Blake stories, some interesting facts connected with the said stories can be commented on.

Of "Doctor Zebra's Doom", by Herbert Maxwell, published in the UNION JACK in November 1895, this can be said - it would be almost impossible to find a worse Blake story. However, despite its shortcomings, it did contain one or two little items interesting to the connoisseur, as for instance, in the introduction of a man named Kennedy, described as Blake's valet, a dim-witted domestic help simply named Sarah Ann, and a Mrs. Bulstrode, who was said to have been a former housekeeper in the family of Sexton Blake, one of the rare instances in which Blake's ancestors were ever mentioned. Earlier on it was mentioned that a minor character in an anonymously written story could furnish an important clue in the identification of authorship when that same character appeared again in a story in which the name of the author was given, and here is a case in point, for the story, "Nalda, the Nihilist" (August 1895), featured two of the characters in the previously mentioned story. Mrs. Bulstrode and Sarah Ann both appeared in the August yarn, which, by the way, was written in "Blake's own words". Comparing the styles of the two yarns, it is obvious that Maxwell wrote both.

Another little point of interest is that just prior to Shaw Rae whisking him off to Norfolk Street on taking over the reins from the original creator, the unknown author of "Tracked Round the World" (U.J. February 1895) put Blake as living in "a cosy little room in one of the bijou houses off Shepherd's Bush". In a story which had a strong flavouring of the Emerald Isle, it told how Blake tracked down the murderer of a government official when the latter sought sanctuary in the ruins of a once stately castle on the western coast of Ireland. Important government secrets which the murderer stole were the incentive which spurred the youthful detective in exercising all his skill and resource in tracking down his quarry. Author unknown, but it is probable Mountmorres wrote it.

Another author - Arnold Grahame - author of "The Clue of the Dead Eyes" (September 1895), left a very important clue, for he sometimes referred to Blake by his Christian name of Sexton only, an almost unheard of proceeding; in fact, only one other author - Paul Herring - was ever guilty of doing this in the long history of the stories.

In view of the fact that Shaw Rae's name was given under the Blake stories that

he wrote, it was surprising that "The Living Picture" (December 1895) appeared anonymously, but that it was Rae's work there is no doubt, for his style is unmistakable and his fondness for unusual and little used words produced vital clues to his identity. For example, how many writers would use the word "perdu" for the much more commonly used word of the same meaning - "lost"? Yet "perdu" was a pet word of Rae's, which he used often, and it brings this record of the early days to a very interesting point. Some years ago, the late Mr. H.J. Garrish, in all sincerity, informed me that Shaw Rae was, in reality, Ernest A. Treeton, a crime journalist. At the time, this data was accepted unquestioningly, but since then comparison of Treeton's style with that of Shaw Rae has disclosed many flaws; so many, in fact, that grave and positive doubts have arisen as to the reliability of the disclosure. I believe now that the gulf in years has resulted in a quite understandably incorrect exchange of information being made, and that Mr. Garrish should have named Stanhope Sprigg, and not Ernest Treeton, as the man who wrote as "W. Shaw Rae". All the gimmicks Shaw Rae used in his stories are to be found in Sprigg's - the ultra melodramatic style and dialogue, the use of little used words such as "saturnalia", "quondam", "legerdemaine" and, of course, "perdu", very rare in those halfpenny issues, for the boys for whom the stories were written could not have been expected to understand their meaning; indeed, it is highly probable that well over fifty per cent of the U.J. adult following at that time needed to consult their dictionaries in order to get a clearer definition of some of the words. A significant point, though, of course, not necessarily a positive one, is that Sprigg's work appeared in serial form in the U.J., and, as already stated, serial writers were often engaged to write Blake stories also, whereas Treeton's name never once appeared in the entire history of the paper.

One of the most interesting announcements ever written by a Harmsworth's boys' editor appeared in U.J. No. 11 (July 1894) and prompts the question: Just what part did women play in the boys' papers? As a rule, the editors who controlled them preferred it not to be known that they were accepting work from the opposite sex, yet in the issue mentioned above containing the story "The Diamond Thief" came this historic announcement from the editorial sanctum:

"Having read the story in this number, which, in my opinion, holds its own with anything yet published in the "U.J.", I wonder how many of my readers would guess it was written by a woman? Such is the case, however. This is the first time a lady has contributed to these columns, and I think readers will appreciate the innovation. Our other authors will have to look to their laurels when they have to compete with such feminine writers as "Wilton Mordaunt" - which, by-the-by is a nom-de-plume."

Who was the lady who hid her identity under the name of "Wilton Mordaunt", later to become "Wilford Mordaunt"? Some of those zestful, starry-eyed aspirants to fame are by no means completely forgotten despite the gulf of some sixty odd years, although she who may have been the one to have written as "Wilton" and "Wilford Mordaunt" will most likely remain unknown, since no records are available in connection with those halfpenny issues.

Was she the "Tempestuous Petticoat" herself - Marie Connor Leighton, whose gifts as a writer had been commended to Alfred Harmsworth by the novelist Hall Caine in 1888? Or was she Mary Howarth, of ANSWERS staff, first a capable writer and then promoted by Harmsworth to the editorship of the DAILY MIRROR, his newest undertaking - with disastrous results? None the less likely is that she may have been Maud Bown, who later came to edit HOME CHAT, the women's magazine, which first appeared in March

1895. There may, or may not, have been significance in the fact that the first four letters of "Mordaunt" had the same spoken sound as Miss Bown's christian name. Since a pretty girl has always been the object of man's voiced and silent approval, one visualises that whenever Alice Livingston walked into the various departments which went to make up the house of the Harmsworths, there was a general turning of moustaches of varying hues and sizes in her direction, all topped with ingratiating smiles which their particular owners hoped would catch the eye of she who had inspired them. For Alice Livingston, in my opinion the most likely claimant of all to the identity of "Wilton Mordaunt", could, according to one or two distant colleagues who remember her, not only lay claim to very good looks but to an exceptional amount of charm and intelligence as well. Endowed with these qualities, she met and fell in love with C.N. Williamson, a 33 year-old journalist and author, who, three years earlier, had started BLACK AND WHITE, and in the year we are at present concerned with - 1894 - they married, and so commenced the famous literary partnership of A.M. and C.N. Williamson. Born in Livingston Manor House, which nestled on the banks of the Hudson River near Poughkeepsie in the United States, she was the great granddaughter of Chancellor Livingston.

It is interesting to follow the U.J. during its earliest years and see to what extent the Sexton Blake stories popularised it in comparison with its older and longer established companions. With but one Blake story published, the circulation figures for one week in July were 132,000 which were 12,000 less than the MARVEL figures for the same week. Yet even their combined figures failed by no less than 149,000 copies to reach the weekly output of COMIC CUTS - proof indeed of the enormous popularity attained by that grand old comic in those early days. A few weeks later the U.J. circulation figures had risen to 140,000 weekly copies, and its progress thereafter was such as to cause its proprietor the highest satisfaction.

From time to time in his editorial columns the editor was moved to admit that detective stories, particularly of Sexton Blake, were in consistent demand and that on his part he was doing his best to supply them, though it was a pity that in some of them the authors had to put in such shoddy and thoughtless work. Take the writer of the story of "'Twixt Gallows and Gold", the first U.J. story of 1898, for instance. For purposes of his own, Blake had rented a quiet little villa in a well-known London suburb, built close to the main line of a certain railway. The engine of a heavy train left the rails and hung precariously over the embankment immediately above the roof of the house Blake had taken over. People are dragged out of the wreckage and taken into - of all places! - Blake's house. And this, mark you, with the engine hanging over it! Added to this bit of craziness was the editor's fatuous comments in his editorial: "A masterly picture of life at the Klondyke goldfields", he praisingly observed - an absolutely and deliberately incorrect statement since the action took place entirely in London, and, obviously, due to the author's strictly limited knowledge on the subject, the goldfields were only given a passing mention. The author's name was withheld, which was a kindly gesture on the editor's part towards his contributor. Apart from preserving Blake's reputation somewhat, it would have been an even kindlier gesture to his readers had he withheld the story as well. For the record, the yarn introduced yet another young assistant to swell the ranks of those whom Blake employed in the early days - one oddly named Nipperty Chris, "a broad, bright, snub-nosed little fellow, with short, yellow hair, who, like some of his predecessors, had been rescued from gutter-life for his shrewdness", who, fortunately, disappeared into the blue after that one yarn and was never heard of again.

Subsequent stories took Blake to Berwick-on-Tweed on the home front and Majorca, in the Balearic Islands. One of the highlights in the former story ("The Phantom Photographer" - April 1898) was an omnibus accident in London, in which Blake was involved during his chase of a notorious forger. The bus-driver, endeavouring to turn too sharply, drove against the kerb, rim and spokes collapsed under pressure, and, with all the weight flung on to one side, the horses went frantic with fright, and some of the upper deck passengers were thrown on to the pavement like stones from a catapult. From which one gets some idea of the hazards of bus travelling in those days - not to mention the discomforts that went with them.

There was a remarkable proviso connected with a large estate in one of the English counties ("The Dagger of Dunloe" - July 1898). The lands were held by the heirs only so long as they retained possession of a dagger which was handed over with the title deeds. Every year the owner of the estate was required to produce the dagger before the Lord Chancellor in London. Loss of the knife meant the losing of the estate. When it was stolen the perturbed heir called on Blake, who, in his quest for it, went to Majorca, became a bull-fighter, and saved the life of an "espada feminina", the pretty Senorita Leonora Dorez. He also became lost in the historic Dragon caves of Arta in his chase of the thief, which led him also to the Cathedral of Palma to the tomb in which lay the earthly remains of his Serene Majesty Don Jayme of Aragon, saviour of his country and conqueror of the Moors - according to the text - "free to the gaze of the public at 9½d per head!"

Even in those days Blake got about quite a bit, for other stories at that time featured him in Russia, the United States, Holland, Belgium, India, Egypt, Persia, Tunis, Malta, Valparaiso and Java - those set in Persia and Tunis by Shaw Rae being quite good novelettes, giving the impression that the author had visited those places at some time during his career. One imagines that the story "Dead Man's Hand" (August 1897) drew some caustic comments and adverse criticism from readers whose imaginations could be stretched - but only so far. Here was Blake engaged in the puzzle of a disappearing iron foundry, somewhere in the north of England. The publishing of "Under the Smuggler's Flag" (November 1897) did bring in one criticism at least, and this reader's letter to the editor was passed on by him to the author, Shaw Rae. The reader - a Mr. George McLean - took exception to the topography of Dublin where part of the story was laid and accused the author of inaccuracy in his description of the position of Carlisle Bridge and also of the presence of "corner boys" in Sackville Street (rebuilt after being severely damaged in the rebellion of 1916 and now known as O'Connell Street - renamed in honour of Daniel O'Connell, the patriot), which Mr. McLean avowed were neither no longer permitted nor were now to be seen in that thoroughfare. The apologetic letter from the author was, in whole or part, reproduced in the editorial columns, in which he confessed that his recollection of the city "which he used to know pretty thoroughly" may have been somewhat dimmed since those days as a result of travels which had carried him far beyond the limits of Europe. Perhaps the most interesting comment by Shaw Rae was contained in the concluding paragraph wherein he stated that he was "a Scotchman, who, loving both the Irish and their beautiful land, would not say a word in disparagement of either".

Rae is of course a good old Scottish name - there was an author of that name, W. Fraser Rae, who only the previous year had had a book published entitled "Biography of Sheridan" - but there was nothing at all in the writings of Shaw Rae to suggest that he was other than an Englishman with a most commendable knowledge of the English language and the ability to set it down to the best literary advantage, and I remain unshaken in my belief that the author who used that pen-name was Stanhope Sprigg,

writer of about a dozen fine serials for the Harmsworth group, who, for a time, was one of their principal editors before leaving to join the DAILY EXPRESS as literary editor. And the word "Scotchman" in relation to its use as a means of describing a true son of Scotland seems not quite genuine, as, whilst the word is used frequently outside the Scottish border, it seems to me that a true Scot would refer to himself as a "Scotsman", which is the proper definition. On the other hand, although Sprigg was born in Dublin, his uncertainty of the topography of the city might have been due to the fact that he spent only the very early days of his life there, for he received part of his education at Cathedral School, Worcester.

"Such are my instructions; see that you fulfil them", commanded the peppery and arrogant Squire Breakspere to Sexton Blake ("The Lancer Lad" - April 1899) after sending a peremptory message to him at his chambers in Norfolk House, after which he explained the nature of the commission he wanted Blake to carry out for him. In later years an incensed Blake would have told the irate old squire just where to take his instructions, but these were the days of his immaturity, when, on the threshold of his career, he was eager to take on any case that offered excitement and a modest fee, so he accepted the commission without demur. In one of the best stories of the halfpenny era, here was Blake taking part in a glorious chapter of British history, when, joining the heroic 21st Lancers at Undabiya, he assisted the Sirdar, Major-General Kitchener, in his conquering campaign to free the Soudan against the fanatical resistance of the Khalifan Army and so avenge the martyred Gordon. It goes without saying that when the author wrote his narrative he had no idea that a certain 24 year-old soldier attached to the 21st Lancers who took part in the great victory about which he wrote would become both a great statesman and a future British Prime Minister; yet it was so, and that young soldier, Winston Churchill, must be one of the very few survivors who can still look back on the glory of that expedition - apart, of course, from our old friend, Sexton Blake! Shaw Rae's description of the great battle of Omdurman on 2 September 1898 was a heart-warming tribute to the valour of those soldiers, and was really rousingly told. Unhappily, it had a tragic sequel sixteen months later.

Accompanying those 21st Lancers was a 29 year-old war correspondent named G.W. Steevens, who, inspired by what he had witnessed on the battlefield, wrote one of the most stirring stories for boys ever written, entitled "With Kitchener To Khartoum", which contained a graphic description of the charge of the 21st Lancers at the battle of Omdurman. Such was the genius he revealed in all his writings on a wide variety of subjects, that a brilliant career was forecast for Steevens. He was a foreseeing man, and as early as 1897 forecasted German aggression in Europe. As a war correspondent on Harmsworth's DAILY MAIL, Steevens was a colleague of a 24 year-old ex-private soldier, named Edgar Wallace, a well-built, dark-haired man with an enormous black moustache, who was threatened with punishment by Mr. Brodrick, then Secretary of State for War, for reporting Boer atrocities at Vlaktefontein. Later he was to gain fame with his "The Four Just Men", to be reprinted later in the UNION JACK, but Steevens, his equal in the literary sense, died in Ladysmith on 15 January 1900, from enteric fever. "No braver or more devoted life was sacrificed for the Empire", wrote a fellow journalist. A simple white cross over his remains, some four feet by three, erected on a strip of rude soil surrounded by long, coarse grass was all that visibly remained to remind his once beleaguered companions of one who would undoubtedly have shared the fame enjoyed by Wallace in later years. The pall of sadness and gloom which settled over the house of the Harmsworth at the news of the death of its young contributor was not dispelled for many months afterwards.

"Shadowed By Sexton Blake" (September 1899), an anonymously published story, contained a strong clue to the author's identity. The narrative introduced a cab-driver named Jiggins, who was featured in the capacity of assistant to Sexton Blake. In "Griff, the Man-tracker", a serial which ran in the U.J. between February and June 1901, this cab-driver appeared again, and although the name was slightly changed - it became Jiggers in this story - both character and the style of writing was the same. In the serial the author's name was given as Christopher Stevens, enquiries of whom have failed to elicit either any information concerning his activities, or whether that was actually his real name. An old survivor of those times, who was a great friend of Edwin Pugh's, believes that he was the son of Charles McCluer Stevens, the war correspondent, who once edited BLACK AND WHITE, and later contributed to the Harmsworth's boys' papers. At that time Stevens lived in Clovelly Mansions, Gray's Inn Road, at which address the survivor was sometimes a welcome guest, and recalls that Mrs. Stevens "was a marvellous cook," he having sampled some excellent dishes, the result of her savoury handiwork. Many years ago McCluer Stevens wrote his autobiography, a perusal of which would probably prove whether he had a son named Christopher or not.

One of the last of the halfpenny stories of Sexton Blake was, in my view, the best of the bunch and obviously written by the hand of a top-class author, who, I strongly suspect, was Henry St. John, one of the best boys' and adults authors of his decade. "The Clue of the Freckled Hand" (May 1902) described how a certain Dr. Barton Joyce, experimenting with a new poison, accidentally pricked a finger with a needle envenomed by it. With but little confidence in its ability to combat successfully the power of the poison, the doctor prepared an antidote, and knowing he was a doomed man he wrote down what had occurred. In the street he collapsed into the arms of a passer-by - a notorious forger named Gideon Flint, much wanted by the police. His features made unrecognisable by distortion, Dr. Joyce died, and then, to cut a long story short, Flint took over his identity, and the story related how for a time he enjoyed immunity from arrest as a result of his deception. But, from the moment Sexton Blake found the doomed doctor's rolled-up umbrella in the gutter near where he died, Gideon Flint was also a doomed man.....

Looking back, it seems a far cry indeed to those depressing days of the dying nineteenth century, when after first seeing the light of day in a modest house in Peckham Rye, Sexton Blake stood, a youthful and lonely figure, looking out of the grimy window of his office in a London slum, his future uncertain but with confidence in his ability to make good unimpaired, so that today the scene before him as he looks out of his luxurious offices in Berkeley Square presents a vastly different panorama from the squalor of the past. The breaking free from the narrow and stuffy confinements of his old Baker Street apartments, the comradeship and devotion of Paula Dane, his secretary - and, of course, Tinker as well - has transformed Blake into a much happier and more realistic figure. To the author who had the happy inspiration of introducing Paula to our perennial favourites we should extend our warmest thanks, for who can deny that it is her presence in the stories that have made them so much the brighter, the fresher, and the more interesting, all in consequence of which Blake himself has become more of this world than something out of it.

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THE SEXTON BLAKE AUTHORS WHO'S WHO (Revised)

By W.O.G. LOFTS and DEREK ADLEY

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We were both very gratified at the many letters of appreciation received and interest shown at our joint effort last year, and this made it felt that our efforts were worthwhile in producing a list of every Sexton Blake author known - plus pen-names if used.

Strange as it may seem, shortly after our lists were published we had so much fresh information, and authors hitherto unknown to us identified, that we wished that we had waited a little longer before producing our statistics. Rather than just give a list of additional data - which to the reader who has not last year's Annual means nothing at all - we have decided to reproduce our list brought up to date, and as complete as it is ever possible at the moment to get. Only in the event of an official early 'Union Jack' list coming to light do we feel that we could add to it, for in our opinion many more unknown authors will then be brought to light who have the honour of penning a Sexton Blake story!

As already stated above, additional data has been gleaned since the publication of last year's list, and it is classified as follows:-

(A) Through the co-operation of Mr. W. Howard Baker, editor of the Sexton Blake Library, we have been enabled to compile a complete official list of every author who has ever written a story in the Library - plus, of course, the stories they wrote. This is the 1st, 2nd and 3rd series - and also includes the real identities behind the editorial pen-name of 'Desmond Reid'. This is a tremendous 'scoop' on our part, for it means that for all time there can be no more queries whatsoever in connection with authors of the Library, and we are sure that all Blake enthusiasts owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. W. Howard Baker for clearing up authors identities in this sphere.

(B) By tracking down old Amalgamated Press authors - and often in personal contact with them. Many authors have been identified in this manner.

Now, after much thought, and a real headache at times, we have come to the conclusion that despite the fact that ALL our articles are founded on research and factual statements made to us, we ourselves have made the same mistake (unintentionally) as others, and that is to quote and use the authors pen-names when, in fact, a story has been published anonymously!

To elucidate further, and to quote several examples regarding the last paragraph: in last year's article we gave the names of 'Cedric Wolfe' - 'Earle Danesford' and 'Reginald Wray' - plus 'Barre Lyndon'. Now we have since discovered that all of these were actually pen-names of authors - E.W. Alais (Cedric Wolfe), F. Addington Symonds (Earle Danesford), W.B. Home-Gall (Reginald Wray) and Alfred Edgar (Barre Lyndon). Having discovered this, and taking into consideration the fact that the stories were published anonymously, to get an absolute correct record we both take the view that the authors real name should be given. How can one presume that if a name was used the author would have given preference to one particular pen-name?

So, therefore, one can now substitute, as an example, (not given above) E.J. Gannon (real name) for Beverley Kent (pen-name) in our list.

We both realise that often in conversation, or in actual reading of the stories, an author is known by his pen-name more than his real name, but we are only doing our best to get the records straight. It may be true of course that F. Addington Symonds submitted his stories for the Sexton Blake Library with a pen-name added (Earl Danesford), but it is also a fact that the name on the actual official list gives his real name. Taking also into consideration that the pen-name of 'Earl Danesford' was used by other authors, one can see why we are so strong on this point! Only in two instances have we shown an actual pen-name against an anonymous story - and this is for a very good reason as explained last year. 'Anthony Baron' who wrote U.J. 1107 (Reprinted in DW 266 under the name of 'John Baron') was known to the Amalgamated Press under this name - because of his connections with a rival firm. His real name was Augustus Baker - an editor in charge of the 'Tubby Haig' Library. The second instance is with Victor Fremlin (U.J. 1348) but unfortunately we are unable to publish the true facts.

Here, then, are the details of the mysteries we have solved regarding authors names not discovered in last year's annual.

E.W. Alais: Real name as proved by the official A.P. records. It has also been discovered from this source that he was 'Cedric Wolfe' author of the Kit and Cora detectives featured in the 'Union Jack' these were published under this name at times - but anonymously when featuring Sexton Blake. The name of 'Cedric Wolfe' is therefore deleted from our list in our policy of only crediting the real name of the author when the stories appeared anonymously.

Stephen Blakesley: Real name of this author was F. Bond. This information was gleaned from the official Sexton Blake list. No details are known about this author. But how strange that a former editor of Blakiana should have a namesake as a Blake author!

Francis Brent: By correspondence with Mr. Jackie Hunt former editor of the Detective Weekly - he was able to reveal that this was a pen-name used by our old friend John Hunter! Mr. Hunter was able to confirm that he probably wrote a story under this name - and did not remember it in previous correspondence with us.

R.C. Elliott: Real name of the author whom I have since met (W.O.G. Lofts). Knew and lived at times with those great Blake writers G.H. Teed and Gwyn Evans. Only wrote one Sexton Blake story; mainly wrote for romantic type of novels.

Lewis Essex: Real name as revealed by the official Sexton Blake Library list. Also known very well to other A.P. editors of whom we have been in contact. We are also very grateful to Mr. E.V. Hughes of Bognor for writing to us and confirming that he knew the man personally many years ago.

Anthony Ford: Real name as confirmed by the A.P. also confirmed by Rex Hardinge who knew him personally.

C. Vernon Frost: Real name of author as revealed by the official S.B.L. list. This of course disproves Walter Webb's theory as given in last year's list.

Edward Holmes: Real name of the author as revealed by himself - we must confess that he has been rather unco-operative regarding information about his writings. Former editor of 'Everybody's'.

Roland Howard: Whilst interviewing Mr. W.L. Catchpole - writer of 'Magnet', 'Gem',

'Holiday Annual', and vast other Hamiltonian stuff he admitted that he had used the name of 'Roland Howard' for tales in the 'Detective Weekly' - There will be an article on Mr. Catchpole in the New Year in the C.D.

Beverley Kent: Real name E.J. Gannon as revealed by official A.P. records. Mr. Samways remembers him as far back as 1914, a biggish man with a flowing moustache.

Hilary King: Real name James Grierson Dickson as obtained from the official S.B.L. list. Well known of course for his detective novels - his Blake stories were noted for being well written and having very good plots.

Derek Long: Real name as revealed by the official S.B.L. list - no other details are known about this author.

Allen Maxwell: A pen-name used by William J. Bayfield (Allen Blair) in rewriting S.B.L. 555 (2nd series) previously written by W.M. Graydon. Bayfield had a big hand in rewriting many of the old stories.

Barry Perowne: Real name Philip Atkey as revealed by correspondence with the author - most willing to co-operate.

John Purley: Real name Reginald George Thomas as revealed by official S.B.L. list. Now deceased he was said to be one of D.C. Thomson's star writers.

Richard Standish: Real name Richard Goyne given to us by his widow - he was well known for his novels under the names of John Courage, Richard Goyne, and Paul Renin.

William Paul Vickery: Authors real name as revealed by the official S.B.L. list - no further information available.

George D. Woodman: Author's real name confirmed by the author himself during correspondence following the publication of a paper back novel bearing his name.

Here is a classification of official information known:-

S.B.L. 1st series.	}	All published anonymously but we have documentary proof as to the authorship of all stories.
S.B.L. 2nd series, 1 to 240		
S.B.L. 2nd series, 241 to end of series and all S.B.L.	}	Authors names, either real or pen-names given on stories.
3rd series to date.		
U.J. 1st series.	}	Names given occasionally to stories.
U.J. 2nd series, 1 to 106.		
U.J. 2nd series, 107 to 1360	}	All published anonymously. 906 to 1347 authors are known officially to us.
U.J. 2nd series. 1361 to end Detective Weekly.		
		Authors names were given.
		Authors names given in most cases.

Where an asterisk is shown before the name of a paper this means the stories were published anonymously but we have proof of authorship.

Where the symbol (A) is shown in front of a paper then it is only assumed that the author wrote a Sexton Blake yarn for that paper. Now we feel that although we have stated that we have tried to steer clear of assumptions and theories we have covered ourselves by the use of this prefix - for we are stating that this is an assumption and

not at this stage definitely proved. We can say however that we have not used this prefix unless we have pretty firm grounds for the belief.

<u>Name penned to story, or real name if anonymous</u>	<u>Real Name</u>	<u>Papers and Issues pertaining to Authors work (in full if Author - so far as known - only wrote 3 or less stories)</u>
Alais, E.W.	E.W. Alais	* SBL 1st (A) U.J. 2nd. (A) Dreadnought.
Ames, D.L.	Delano Ames	SBL 3rd/29.
Andrews, John	Editorial Stock Name (to cover reprints of various authors stories)	B.F.L. 2nd.
Armour, R. Coutts	R. Coutts Armour	* SBL 1st. * SBL 2nd. * U.J. 2nd. * D.W. 373.
Arthur, William	William Arthur Howard Baker.	SBL. 3rd/387.
Ascott, John	John William Bobin	SBL. 2nd/288.
Baker, W. Howard	William Arthur Howard Baker	SBL 3rd.
Baron, Anthony	Augustus Baker	* U.J. 2nd/1107.
Baron, John	Augustus Baker	D.W. 266 (reprint of above)
Bayfield, William J.	William J. Bayfield	* SBL 1st. * U.J. 2nd. * SBL 2nd. * D.W. 374.
Bidston, Lester	Lester Bidston	SBL 2nd.
Black, Ladbroke	Ladbroke Lionel Day Black	SBL 2nd/249,259,701. * U.J. 2nd. * D.W. 280,345.
Blair, Allan	William J. Bayfield	SBL 2nd.
Blakesley, Stephen	F. Bond	SBL 3rd/253,274,278.
Blake, Sexton		U.J. 1st/43,62.
Blake, Stacey	Stacey Blake	* SBL 2nd/202. SBL 2nd/257,410. * U.J. 2nd/1247,1273,1274. * D.W. 327. D.W. 331.
Blyth, Harry	Harry Blyth	* U.J. 1st/2. Marvel 1st/11.
Bobin, Donald	Donald Bobin	* D.W. 344.
Bobin, John William	John William Bobin	* SBL 1st. * SBL 2nd. * U.J. 2nd. * D.W. 350 (A) Boys Journal.
Bowman, G.M.	Gerald M. Bowman	SBL, 2nd/584. D.W.
Brandon, John G.	John G. Brandon	SBL. 2nd. D.W. /56,65.
Brearley, John	John Garbutt	BFL. 2nd/655,671. Pilot(serials) Chums (New Zealand).
Brent, Francis	Alfred John Hunter	D.W. /116.
Bridges, T.C.	Thomas Charles Bridges	SBL. 2nd/487. (A) U.J. 2nd. (A) BFL. 1st.
Brisbane, Coutts	R. Coutts Armour	SBL. 2nd. D.W.
Brittany, Louis	George Heber Teed	D.W. /63,84.
Brooks, E.S.	Edwy Searles Brooks	* SBL 1st. SBL. 2nd. SBL. 3rd/6 U.J. 2nd. D.W.
Brooks, L.H.	Leonard H. Brooks	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd. *U.J.2nd.
Brown, Campbell		U.J. 1st/285.
Burke, Jonathan	Jonathan Burke	SBL. 3rd/385.

<u>Name penned to story, or real name if anonymous</u>	<u>Real Name</u>	<u>Papers and Issues pertaining to Authors work (in full if Author - so far as known - only wrote 3 or less stories)</u>
Carlton, Lewis	Lewis Carlton	SBL. 2nd/359,395. *146. (A) U.J. 2nd. (A) Pluck. (A) Dreadnought.
Chaverton, Bruce	Fred Gordon Cook	D.W. /67.
Chester, Gilbert	H.H. Clifford Gibbons	SBL. 2nd. SBL. 3rd. U.J. 2nd. D.W.
Clevely, Hugh	Hugh Clevely	SBL. 3rd.
Cooke, Percival	Percy C. Bishop	U.J. 1st/396.
Cooper, Henry St. John	Henry St. John Cooper	* U.J. 2nd.
Creasey, John	John Creasey	SBL. 2nd/561,666,737. SBL. 3rd/17,39.
Darran, Mark	Norman Goddard	U.J. 2nd/89.
Davies.	Davies	* SBL. 2nd/231.
Davis, Arnold	Editorial Stock Name	U.J. 2nd.
Dilnot, George	George Dilnot	SBL. 2nd/598,613,642.
Dix, M.B.	Maurice Buxton Dix	SBL. 2nd. SBL. 3rd/54.
Dolphin, Rex	Rex Dolphin	SBL. 3rd/426,437.
Douthwaite, L.C.	Louis Charles Douthwaite	SBL. 2nd/242,344,738. SBL. 3rd/41.
Drew, Sidney	Edgar Joyce Murray	SBL. 2nd/248,300,311. Detective Lib. N.L.L.
Drummond, John	John Newton Chance	SBL. 3rd.
Dudley, Ernest	Ernest Dudley	D.W./318,325.
Edgar, Alfred	Alfred Edgar	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd/185. * U.J. 2nd.
Edwards, Walter	Walter Shute	Boys Realm 2nd (series) SBL. 2nd.
Elliott, R.C.	Robert Coward Elliott	SBL. 2nd/244.
Elliott, William J.	William James Elliott	U.J. 2nd/1470.
Essex, Lewis	Lewis Essex	SBL. 2nd/256.
Evans, Gwyn	Gwynfil Arthur Evans	SBL. 2nd. U.J. 2nd. D.W. S.B. Annual.
Ford, Anthony	Anthony Ford	D.W./114,122,130.
Ford, Quentin	Raymond Potheary	Knockout Fun Book, 1953.
Foster, R.F.	Rev. Reginald Frank Foster	* SBL. 2nd/189.
Frazer, Martin	Percy A. Clarke	SBL. 2nd/524,560,725. SBL. 3rd.
Fremlin, Victor	George Norman Philips	U.J. 2nd/1363. * 1348.
Frost, C. Vernon	C. Vernon Frost	SBL. 2nd/574.
Gannon, E.J.	E.J. Gannon	(A) U.J.2nd. (A) BFL. 1st.
Gates, Clifford	Clifford Gates	SBL. 2nd/735.
Gibbons, H.H. Clifford	H.H. Clifford Gibbons	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd. * U.J. 2nd. * D.W.
Goddard, Norman	Norman Goddard	* SBL. 1st/24. (A) U.J.1st/370 (A) U.J. 2nd. (A) BFL. 1st/131
Gordon, Stanley	Stanley Gordon Shaw	U.J. 2nd/1466
Goyne, Richard	Richard Goyne	SBL. 2nd/392,460. * U.J. 2nd/1034,1058.
Grahame, Arnold		U.J. 1st/72.

<u>Name penned to story, or real name if anonymous</u>	<u>Real Name</u>	<u>Papers and Issues pertaining to Authors work (in full if Author - so far as known - only wrote 3 or less stories)</u>
Gray, Berkeley	Edwy Searles Brooks	SBL. 2nd/641. D.W. (serial 310 to 321)
Graydon, Robert Murray	Robert Murray Graydon	* SBL. 1st/41,85. * SBL. 2nd/ 162,236. * U.J. 2nd. * D.W. (all reprints)
Graydon, W. Murray	William Murray Graydon	* SBL. 1st. SBL. 2nd. * U.J. 2nd (A) BFL. 1st. (A) B.F.W. (A) Boys Herald.
Gregory, Hylton	(Harry Egbert Hill Reginald Heber Poole Jack Lewis Alfred Edgar Harry Egbert Hill)	SBL. 2nd. SBL. 2nd/676. SBL. 2nd/704. SBL. 2nd/520. SBL. 3rd/10.
Hadfield, R.L.	Robert L. Hadfield	U.J. 2nd. D.W./37.
Hamilton, George	George Heber Teed	D.W./329,338.
Hardinge, Rex	Rex Hardinge	SBL. 2nd. SBL. 3rd. U.J. 2nd. D.W.
Hardy, Arthur S.	Arthur Steffens Hardy	* SBL. 1st. SBL. 2nd. D.W. Champion/1. * U.J. 2nd/1176. (A) many other U.J. 2nd.
Harrison, Edwin	Eric Allen Ballard	SBL. 3rd/406,414,423
Hayter, Cecil	Cecil Hayter	* U.J. 2nd. Boys Realm 2nd serial. Boys Herald, serials. BFL. 1st.
Herring, Paul	Paul Herring	U.J. 1st/336,450. (A) U.J. 2nd/141
Hill, Harry Egbert	Harry Egbert Hill	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd/11. * U.J. 2nd.
Hincks, C.M.	Cyril Malcolm Hincks	* SBL. 2nd/223. U.J. 2nd. D.W./80,88,129.
Holmes, Edward	George Edward Holmes	D.W. (serial starting 371)
Home Gall, W.B.	William Benjamin Home Gall	* SBL. 1st/195. (A) U.J. 2nd.
Hood, Stephen	Jack Lewis	SBL. 2nd/292.
Hope, Stanton	William E. Stanton Hope	SBL. 2nd. SBL 3rd/21,103,309.
Howard, Roland	W.L. Catchpole	D.W./58,89,109.
Hunter, John	Alfred John Hunter	SBL. 2nd. SBL 3rd. S.B. Annual.
Hyde, D. Herbert	Derek Chambers	SBL. 3rd/424.
Jackson, Lewis	Jack Lewis	SBL. 3rd. U.J. 2nd/1457. D.W.
Jago, W.H.	Dr. William H. Jago	* U.J. 2nd/1055.
Jardine, Warwick	Francis Warwick	SBL. 2nd. SBL 3rd. D.W./251,328
Jones, J.G.	J.G. Jones	* SBL. 1st/345.
Kent, Arthur	Arthur Kent	SBL. 3rd.
King, Hilary	James Grierson Dickson	SBL. 3rd.
Lelland, Frank	Alfred McLelland Burrage	D.W./34,106.
Lewis, Jack	Jack Lewis	* SBL. 1st. * U.J. 2nd. * D.W./377
Lomax, Herbert	Herbert Lomax	(A) U.J. 2nd. (A) BFL. 1st. (A) BFW. 2nd. (A) Boys Realm.
Lomax, M.	M. Lomax	* U.J. 2nd/1060.

<u>Name penned to story, or real name if anonymous</u>	<u>Real Name</u>	<u>Papers and Issues pertaining to Authors work (in full if Author - so far as known - only wrote 3 or less stories)</u>
Long, Derek	Derek Long	SBL. 3rd/133,224.
Maclean, Arthur	Arthur George Maclean	SBL. 3rd.
Macluire, David		U.J.2nd/1408,1429,1515. D.W./23
Maitland, T.G. Dowling	T.D. Maitland (as shown in the official A.P. records although he also used other initials such as S. Dowling Maitland).	(A) U.J. 2nd/59,77.
Malcolm, Charles	Cyril Malcolm Hincks	Sports Budget
Maxwell, Allan	William J. Bayfield	SBL. 2nd/555.
Maxwell, Herbert	Herbert Lomax	U.J. 1st/82. U.J. 2nd/53.
Meredith, Hal	Harry Blyth	U.J. 1st/15. Marvel 1st/6,7.
Meriton, Peter	Alfred John Hunter	SBL. 3rd/57,116.
Merland, Oliver	Oliver Merland	* SBL. 1st.
Miln, H. Crichton	H. Crichton Miln	* SBL. 1st/349.
Morris, Patrick	Viscount Mount Morres	Chips. BFW. 1st.
Murray, Andrew	Geoffrey Andrew Murray	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd/142,167.
Murray, Edgar Joyce	Edgar Joyce Murray	SBL. 2nd/656. * U.J.2nd. *D.W.
Murray, Robert	(Robert Murray Graydon H.W. Twyman John William Bobin	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd. *U.J. 2nd/1003. (a)many other UJ.2nd. U.J. 2nd. D.W./123,127.
Osborne, Mark		U.J. 2nd/1484.
Palk, Arthur J.	John William Bobin	SBL. 2nd. D.W./9,68.
Parry, D.H.	D.H. Parry	U.J. 2nd/1525.
Parsons, Anthony	Anthony Parsons	(A) U.J. 2nd.
Passingham, W.J.	William John Passingham	SBL. 2nd. SBL 3rd. S.B. Annual
Paterson, Arthur	Arthur Henry Paterson	SBL. 3rd/288,298.
Pearson, Alec G.	Alec George Pearson	* U.J. 2nd.
Pentelow, J.N.	John Nix Pentelow	U.J. 1st/426. (A) 411.
Perowne, Barry	Philip Atkey	(A) U.J. 2nd.
Philips, George Norman	George Norman Philips	* SBL. 1st/369. *SBL.2nd/95,101 * U.J. 2nd/1108.
Poole, Michael	Reginald Heber Poole	SBL. 2nd/577,601,669.
Poole, Reginald Heber	Reginald Heber Poole	* SBL. 1st/156,255,370.
Purley, John	Reginald George Thomas	* SBL. 2nd. * U.J. *D.W./267, 343,372.
Quiroule Pierre	W.W. Sayer	SBL. 2nd/251.
Rae, W. Shaw	Ernest Treeton	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd/116.
Rees, George	George Rees	* U.J. 2nd/840. (A) U.J./845,900
Reid, Desmond	Editorial Stock Name. see note 1.	SBL. 3rd/43.
Reynolds, W.	W. Reynolds	SBL. 2nd. D.W./60,83,263.
Rochester, G.E.	George Ernest Rochester	U.J. 1st.
Sapt.	Sapt.	SBL. 3rd/302,324.
Saxon, Peter	William Arthur Howard Baker	SBL. 3rd.
		* SBL. 1st/316.
		SBL. 3rd/104. D.W.
		* U.J. 2nd/988.
		SBL. 3rd.

<u>Name penned to story, or real name if anonymous</u>	<u>Real Name</u>	<u>Papers and Issues pertaining to Authors work (in full if Author - so far as known - only wrote 3 or less stories)</u>
Sayer, W.W.	W.W. Sayer	* SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd. *UJ.2nd
Scott, Hedley	Hedley O'Mant	SBL. 2nd/648,695.
Scott, Maxwell	Dr. John W. Staniforth	Boys Herald 329 to 349. Jester
Shaw, S. Gordon	Stanley Gordon Shaw	* SBL. 2nd/132. * U.J.2nd. * Detective Library, 32 to 50. * SBL. 2nd. * U.J. 2nd/1068, 1079,1093.
Shute, Walter	Walter Shute	SBL. 2nd. SBL. 3rd. U.J. 2nd. D.W. (A) U.J. 2nd/69.
Skene, Anthony	George Norman Philips	SBL. 3rd. SBL. 3rd/51. SBL. 3rd/85. (A) U.J. 2nd. * U.J. 2nd/1223,1232. U.J. 1st/serial 356 to 373. * U.J. 2nd/222. (A) many other U.J. 2nd. (A) BFL. 1st/248. SBL. 3rd. SBL. 2nd. U.J. 2nd. D.W. SBL. 3rd/47. * SBL. 1st. * SBL. 2nd/47,96, 137. * U.J. 2nd. U.J. 2nd/1439. * SBL. 1st. SBL. 2nd. U.J. 2nd D.W. S.B. Annual. (A) BFL. 1st/228. SBL. 3rd. * SBL. 2nd/91. Champion/7 (A) U.J. 2nd/1351. * U.J. 2nd/1073. * U.J. 2nd/1095. SBL. 3rd. SBL. 2nd. D.W. * SBL. 2nd. SBL. 2nd/324. D.W. 342 (1½ page playet) U.J. 2nd/1403. U.J. 2nd/1502,1514. D.W./90. * U.J. 2nd/1080. U.J. 2nd. D.W./30,52. U.J. 1st/75,172. * SBL. 1st/119,143. * U.J. 2nd/430,441. D.W./79,103. S.B. Annual * U.J. 2nd/1124,1253. * U.J. 2nd/1146,1330.
Sprigg, Stanhope	William Stanhope Sprigg	
Stagg, James	James Stagg, see note 2.	
Stamper, Joseph	Joseph Stamper	
Standish, Richard	Richard Goyne	
Staniforth, Dr. John W.	Dr. John W. Staniforth	
Stenner, Tom	Thomas R. Stenner	
Stevens, Christopher		
Storm, Michael	Michael Storm	
Story, Jack Trevor	Jack Trevor Story	
Stuart, Donald	Gerald Verner	
Sylvester, John	Hector Hawton	
Symonds, F. Addington	F. Addington Symonds	
Taylor, Norman	Noel Wood-Smith	
Teed, G.H.	George Heber Teed	
Thomas, Martin	Thomas Martin	
Townley, Houghton	Houghton Townley	
Tremayne, Hartley		
Tremellan, Wilfred		
Twyman, H.W.	Harold W. Twyman	
Tyler.	Tyler	
Tyrer, Walter	Walter Tyrer	
Urquhart, Paul	Ladbroke Lionel Day Black	
Verner, Gerald	Gerald Verner	
Vickery, William P.	William Paul Vickery	
Wallace, Bryan Edgar	Bryan Edgar Wallace	
Warwick, Francis	Francis Warwick	
Webber, Stawford	Stawford Webber	
Wheway, John W.	John W. Wheway	
Whitley, Reid	R. Coutts Armour	
Whyte, Melton	G.J.B. Anderson	
Wignal, Trevor C.	Trevor C. Wignal	
Williamson, W.A.	W.A. Williamson	
Woodman, George D.	George D. Woodman	
Wood-Smith, Noel	Noel Wood-Smith	
Young	Young	

NOTES

1. Desmond Reid. Stories rewritten by Arthur Maclean. Original authors as follows:-

SBL. 3rd/378.	G. Sowan.
SBL. 3rd/379.	Brian McArdle.
SBL. 3rd/384.	Lee Roberts.
SBL. 3rd/386.	A.L. Martin.
SBL. 3rd/389.	F. Lambe.
SBL. 3rd/405.	J.F. Burke.
SBL. 3rd/434.	Noel Browne.

2. Rewritten by James Stagg. SBL. 3rd/377.
original author:- Jacques Fendower.
3. Rewritten by Arthur Maclean. SBL. 3rd/438.
original author:- E.C. Tubb

4. Another Blake author who can certainly be added to the list is that of the famous pen-name of "Frank Richards". (See December S.B.L. mailbag feature) for Sexton Blake was featured a great deal in Magnet 818 entitled "Disgraced by his father".

The actual identity of this "Frank Richards" is unknown at the time of compiling this article but his real identity will certainly be revealed when our official "Magnet" authors list is published next year.

Sexton Blake authors still to be identified

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Sexton Blake. | |
| 2. Campbell Brown. | Believed by Walter Webb to be W. Shaw Rae. (Ernest Treeton) |
| 3. Arnold Grahame. | |
| 4. David Macluire. | Probably real name. |
| 5. Arthur J. Palk | Probably Arthur Paterson |
| 6. Frank Richards. | |
| 7. Christopher Stevens. | Probably C.L. McLuer Stevens. |
| 8. Hartley Tremayne. | Probably R. Coutts Armour. |
| 9. Wilfred Tremellen. | Probably Stawford Webber. |

Possible Sexton Blake authors

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|------------------------|-----------|---|
| 1. Alfred Barnard. | U.J. 2nd. | Theory of Walter Webb. |
| 2. Cecily Hamilton. | U.J. 2nd. | It is a theory of Walter Webb's that Max Hamilton wrote Blake yarns, as stories would have been anonymous then the real name Cecily Hamilton is the name to be included in this list. |
| 3. Sidney Warwick. | U.J. 2nd. | Based on information given by Allan R. Warwick although Sidney Warwick (the father) did in his later years deny this. |
| 4. Allan Ross Warwick. | U.J. 2nd. | Based on information supplied by this author, nothing really definite has come to hand. |

Some names on our list do not have the authors christian name(s) this is because

only the surname has been shown on the official list - they are as follows:-

1. Davies.
2. Sapt.
3. Tyler. Believed to be Charles W. Tyler, with a likelihood of this middle name being Walter. Work can be found in the U.J. supplement by this man.
4. Young. Believed to be Will Young. Stories will be found in the Boys Realm by this author.

* * * * *

THE OPENING PLAY

By VICTOR COLBY

(A Study of the Sexton Blake Library Story Openings)

"To Ridley Gaunt Esq., Profiteer,
The Blue Orient Diamond Co.

Sir,

We beg to advise you that for some time past you have been under close observation. We now have to request you without fail within 24 hours to make over to War Charity the sum of £50,000, the same being a very modest proportion of the blood money you have wrung from a suffering people in the hour of your country's need."

That is how Lewis Jackson commenced his story in S.B.L. 91st series) No. 95, and I for one, having read this much, could not put it down. Likewise, the first few lines of "The Red Dwarf" S.B.L. (1st series) No. 211, made equally insistent demands on my attention:

" The dying rays of the guttering candle threw fitful shadows round the drab and murky interior of the apartment, seemingly rousing innumerable ghosts of the past from their sepulchral repose, and causing them to dance grotesquely along the ugly brick walls and over the cracked stone flags which did cold duty for the floor. "

The opening paragraphs of a Sexton Blake story, like the first moves in a game of chess, have a profound effect upon the construction and flow of the unfolding story, and upon the success or otherwise of its conclusion.

But equally important is the reaction of the reader himself, who subconsciously decides that he will or will not steadfastly pursue his way through the maze of the story, after reading those first few all important lines.

After all, if one is confronted with dozens of books, what is the basis of selection of one to read? The cover and author's name play no inconsiderable part in the choice, but having opened the book, is it not the first few paragraphs of text

that determine whether the book is read or not?

I think so. The quickening of interest on perusal of the first few lines prompting one to read on without conscious effort is indeed the art of effective story opening.

Let us look then, at the application of the story opening in the books of the Sexton Blake Library, commencing with *The Master*, George Hamilton Teed.

S.B.L. (1st) No. 271: "Well equipped expeditions, both scientific and military, have at different times, made attempts to penetrate the wild and unknown jungle country that lies on the eastern border of the Republic of Colombia, in South America, and which for centuries has been a savage "no man's land" between that country and the neighbouring Republic of Venezuela. Without a single exception, these attempts have ended in failure."

S.B.L. (1st) No. 360: "Sexton Blake and his assistant, Tinker, stood on the promenade deck of the big eastern liner "Sphinx", watching the flat, mangrove choked banks of the Mekong River, as they steamed slowly up the 40 odd kilometres of reddish-yellow water that stretched from where the Mekong emptied its sluggish mess into the China Sea and the port of Saigon."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 25: "Li Fu, fat, placid, tea soaked and opium tinted, was sitting on an upturned box close to the bamboo curtain at the back of his ship-chandlery shop in the Street of Many Lanterns in Singapore, trying to catch what was being said on the other side."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 41: "It was a ten word message that altered the plans of Sexton Blake, and sent him, and his youthful assistant, Tinker, off into the South Pacific on the most dangerous and adventurous expedition of Blake's whole career. The message was: 'The man you want is on Maunea, in the Solomons.'"

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 134: "A sound that cut through the roar of the winter's gale with the staccato brevity of a gunshot, caused Sexton Blake to lay aside his book and listen.

Outside, the storm beat against the ancient stone walls of the mill house with a fury that showed no abatement. On the contrary, this night it seemed to be rising to a greater pitch than ever, as if it would force asunder the ancient flints and stones of the building that stood grimly in its path."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 144: "The Monastery stood on a cliff-girt pinnacle of naked rock six thousand feet above the Mediterranean. Behind and above it the Sierra Nevadas of Spain rose in tumbled masses of rocks and snow, lined with jagged, gloomy chasms, until the glittering peaks stabbed the blue a full twelve thousand feet aloft."

As will be seen from these quotations, Teed is wordy, but what beautiful words they are!

When one commences to read a story by the immortal Teed, the impressions received are of (*) exciting atmosphere (2) graphic, detailed information regarding customs and geography of the "Far away places" (3) sheer delight in the savouring of the beautiful, classical unhurried English with its smooth intimate style.

Teed does not cater for the person in a hurry. He does not rely on terse, crisp utterances or staccato sentences. One approaches him expecting to be transported on a magic carpet, not a jet-propelled plane. For this reason Teed is soothing as well as exciting, and is satisfying rather than sensational. If he takes us to Costa Rica, we come away knowing its inhabitants, famous streets, buildings, history, customs, climate and industry. One finds one's self reaching for the atlas, the better to appreciate his vivid descriptions.

Andrew Murray, an author who contributed frequently to the S.B.L., but about whom, unfortunately, little is known, produced some really first-class work, as is evident from the following opening paragraphs:

S.B.L. (1st) No. 64: ".....and the dark birds of prey
They will carry us away

And you'll never see your sweetheart any more."

"From the lighted portholes of the great saloon of the Orlivar, a baritone voice, rich and musical rang out. There is a touch of the true pathos in that grim ballad, and to hear it at its best, one must either sit at a glowing camp fire where the circle of dark faces are only dimly revealed, and the flames flicker and fall, or at sea, where the throb of engine and the mystery of the restless ocean links with the song, and weaves its double spell."

S.B.L. (1st) No. 68: "Into that part of London which most Londoners know next to nothing about; that region close to the docks where streets bear strange legends, and quiet furtive figures in robes move in and out of the shops; where quaint odours meet the nostrils, and the ear is perplexed by the sound of a language that seems to be half-bird, half-human; into Limehouse there turned one evening three individuals whose appearance anywhere would have excited interest."

Andrew Murray had a style far in advance of his time, and is still quite readable. I have always felt that he was at ease in writing Blake stories, and although never distinguished, his smooth, cheerful, lighthearted style made his stories easy and pleasurable to read.

Edwy Searles Brooks produced a characteristic opening in S.B.L. (1st) No. 6: "Tinker grunted disgustedly. 'How much longer is this rotten lane going to be?' he grumbled. 'We seem no nearer Romford, gov'nor, than we were 20 minutes ago. It's my opinion we're on the wrong road altogether.'

Sexton Blake laughed softly. 'Cheer up, Tinker,' he exclaimed."

Typical Brooks; straight into it. Main characters featured right at the start, and in an intimate way. Bright and breezy, and deliberately designed to attract attention,

Here's another sample of the fun-loving E.S.B.

S.B.L. (1st) No. 33: "Colonel Malcolm Basil Deane gave an expressive snort. I don't know whether all colonels on the retired list snort; but Colonel Deane was in the habit of making sounds which were suspiciously like those indulged in by certain small animals which are usually served up at breakfast time, in slices."

Delicious, is it not?

Then, in stark contrast, comes the offerings of that Master of Melodrama, William Murray Graydon. Here we enter a world of swooning maidens, noble, virtuous youths with lumps rising in their throats as they contemplate the wickedness of the world, and of wronged heirs living in abject poverty because of the machinations of a mixed bag of evil step-brothers, uncles and usurpers generally.

Let's examine his handiwork.

S.B.L. (1st) No. 30: "Villainy was afoot that night. Human passions were waiting the spark that was to send a soul into eternity, and stain another soul with blood guilt. Sinister, skulking forms were abroad in the deep woods, moving with stealth and care."

S.B.L. (1st) No. 36: "It was the month of April in Russia, and the time was shortly before the flaming torch of Mars, ignited by a mad Despot, brought the British Lion snarling from his lair to fling himself into the fray for humanity's sake, and to call to his side from distant fields of empire, the loyal cubs he had reared."

William Murray Graydon is one author whose works are easily identified. Pointing unmistakably to his authorship, were his melodrama, his known characters (Inspector Widgeon, Fenlock Fawn, Basil Wicketshaw, Cavendish Doyle, Laban Creed, etc.), his story titles ("His Father's Crime", "The Ordeal of Alick Hillersdon", "Shadowed Lives", etc.) and his frequent use of a prologue.

Pierre Quiroule (W.W. Sayer) favoured the picturesque. His openings are tense, vivid, graphic, gripping.

S.B.L. (1st) No. 151: "A sullen sky hung like a lowering pall above the valley of the Thames, reflecting in its turgid, murky depths, something of its sombre gloom and depression. Along the winding banks of the river sprawled the great city of London, a hotch potch of bricks and mortar, a miscellany of buildings, monuments and church spires, a rabbit warren of human endeavour - expensive, grand, and yet so puny and insignificant."

S.B.L. (1st) No. 221: "The fierce rays of the tropical sun beat down upon the limitless ocean, coruscating its mottled surface so that it resembled a vast desert of glistening quicksilver. The monstrous waste of waters extended to the rim of the earth; to the north and south, to the east and west, it was all the same - an enormous, dazzling mirror framed by the huge sweep of the horizon. And on the broad bosom of the sea, floated one solitary ship - becalmed, with every inch of canvas spread in mute appeal to the unstirring air."

Grand, bold descriptions, aren't they? One just has to read on and on. How fortunate Sexton Blake and Tinker were, to have such chroniclers.

Gwyn Evans, whatever his fans may claim to the contrary, was a bad racehorse. He would get away to a good start, but tire and lose interest towards the finish, making his way finally to the post erratically and behind the field. In the language of chess, his Opening Play was sound, but he would lose himself in the middle and end games. He receives full marks for the following very excellent opening.

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 164: "In the sunlit garden of Craven Manor, a girl in white moved gracefully among the roses. Like a rose herself was she, with her slender,

graceful figure and the radiant bloom of youth in her cheeks. Her piquant little face had a shy, half wistful gravity as she leant over a magnificent rose bush and inhaled the intoxicating perfume of the fairest English flower."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 271: "It was the chill, grey hour before dawn - that mystic hour when Nature seems to turn in her sleep ere waking to the clamour of another day.

In the Cafe de l'Hirondelle, a red-faced burly man sat and sipped his hock and glanced across the roadway into the Place Villette, to where the gaunt arms of the insatiable 'Red Widow' were lifted to the leaden sky.

M. Dobler wiped his wet moustache and smiled with approval as one of the pale rays of sunrise gilded the gleaming blade of the guillotine with a crimson smear."

Gilbert Chester. Here we have a Sexton Blake author of prolific production, keen student of astrology upon which some of his best stories were centred, creator of several interesting characters, including Gilbert and Eileen Hale, and whose stories were characterised by hard-bitten, vitriol-tongued women, the characters spending an inordinate amount of time in argumentative talk. It is therefore not surprising that Gilbert Chester's stories commenced with the spoken word in a surprisingly large number of cases. Let's look at some of these.

S.B.L. (1st) No. 304: "'Wiseley murderer - 'Ome Seckert'ry's decision!'

The newsvendor's raucous voice awoke the echoes of the Tube station as Sexton Blake stepped out of the lift and made for the exit."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 14: "'Well?'

Peter Vane bent forward, his hands on the table edge, while he gazed intently at his companion."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 29: "'What was that, guv'nor?'

Tinker clutched his employer's arm suddenly and pointing through a gap in the thickly growing trees, pulled up tersely."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 107: "'Your bill, madam.'

The waiter laid a slip on the table before the pale-faced fair-haired little customer, and waited pointedly at her elbow."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 220: "'Lint - bandages - antiseptic. Needles - swabs - towels. Yes, everything's here.'

Sister Smart completed a swift, systematic count of the surgical requisites before her."

One of my favourite authors, Donald Stuart (Gerald Verner), endowed his openings with a good measure of atmosphere.

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 143: "Sexton Blake, the famous detective of Baker Street, had just finished his breakfast, and, having poured himself out a third cup of coffee and lit his favourite old briar, was engaged in leisurely running through the pile of correspondence that had arrived by that morning's post."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 157: "It was a night of storm and rain; a night when it is pleasant to gaze out upon the streaming, mud-splattered streets from within the sanctuary of a warm room and be thankful that one is not abroad. A night when the cheerful crackling of a fire becomes almost one of the chief pleasures of life, and the sound of

the rain rattling on the window-panes and the howling of the wind causes one to draw one's chair closer to the leaping flames, and in slippered ease, think sympathetically of the people whose business necessitates their being out in such inclement weather."

That's a beaut, isn't it? A long paragraph, but loaded with delicious atmosphere. Good stuff, this. Powerful writing, Donald Stuart.

One of the authors whose work was destined to lighten and brighten the pages of the S.B.L. for many years was Coutts Brisbane. And I do mean brighten; for few authors possessed his bright, breezy style and gripping, absorbing narrative. His Dr. Ferraro was a sterling character and ranked with the great.

S.B.L. (1st) No. 202: "The telephone bell shrilled as it had done a thousand times before. Sexton Blake, stretching a hand to the receiver, wondered for the thousandth time what he was about to hear. Was that sharp tinkling the prelude to an invitation to lunch, or the beginning of some adventure in which he would escape death by a hair's-breadth - or perhaps not at all?"

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 64: "There were kidneys, bacon and eggs and mushrooms for breakfast that morning, so Tinker, who had always a weakness for good things, still lingered at the table, chasing the last fragments across his plate when Mrs. Bardell entered. She nodded approval of Tinker's workman-like finish of the food she loved preparing for him."

Good humour comes bubbling up through these Coutts Brisbane openings, doesn't it?

Ladbroke Black had humour also, but with him it was more irony than irrepressible good spirit. Nevertheless his work is remembered and valued still. Here's a sample.

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 259: "Trigg's garden, from one point of view, was very like that Holy Roman Empire which one cynic once declared, was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire. If there ever had been a Trigg, he must long have abandoned the pleasant task of horticulture; and as for the garden, not even the most imaginative man could have detected the shadow of such a pleasance in the two narrow alleys, the verminous courtyard, and the teeming decrepid hovels to which the name still clung."

Whilst on the subject of sarcasm, let's mention this one of Anthony Skene.

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 246: "Mesopotamia Oilfields Ltd. was a going concern. Men who knew their way about said that it was going rapidly. They did not say in which direction."

I like to think of Anthony Skene as the man who preferred for his openings, not supercharged suspense sentences, but statements of fact. Here are two examples of his bald, thought-provoking statements of fact.

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 317: "The persons who entered the consulting room of Sexton Blake the famous private detective of Baker Street, had perhaps only two things in common: they were in difficulties, and they had faith in his ability to help them. Strangeness was a characteristic which belonged to almost all of them."

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 393: "Sexton Blake, the celebrated private detective of Baker

Street, was the despair of would-be clients because of his indifference to money. His success in crime investigation had brought him so many rewards that he had enough money for his needs, and was able to indulge his passion for the investigation of out-of-the-way cases without worrying whether they brought him in large fees or in some cases none at all."

John G. Brandon is typified by the following free and easy, devil-may-care opening of S.B.L. (2nd) No. 417.

"That peripatetic world-wanderer, the Honourable Ronald Sturges Vereker Purvale, better known amongst the aristocracy of England and the anything-but aristocracy of a lot of other places as R.S.V.P., meandered slowly down Marseilles Avenue in that never-to-be-sufficiently-dammed sweat-hole, Saigon, and cursed the principal port of French Indo-China in a language quite unfitted for repetition in a moral story such as this."

Anthony Parsons had a way of commencing his opening sentence with the name of one of the chief characters in the story. Evidence? Herewith:

- S.B.L. (3rd) No. 62: "Captain Maurice Hope, Military Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of the United Provinces, spat the sand from his parched mouth and cursed."
- S.B.L. (3rd) No. 67: "Captain Jarman did not like Bizerta."
- S.B.L. (3rd) No. 87: "Colonel Count von Halstadt lifted his glasses."
- S.B.L. (3rd) No. 151: "Fenner Loeb blotted the cheque he had written."
- S.B.L. (3rd) No. 167: "Richard Kyle paused in the writing of his report."
- S.B.L. (3rd) No. 175: "Joan Ridgeway awoke to find the sun streaming in."

Rex Hardinge varied his openings, but one particular form impressed itself indelibly on my mind - cause, and resultant effect. Something simple would happen on one side of the world, and would lead to serious consequences somewhere on the other side. For example:

S.B.L. (2nd) No. 518: "A girl ran along an English country lane; a village parson trumped his partner's ace during an evening's bridge; a busy financier actually found time to read a local newspaper - and from these beginnings grew a maze of mystery and murder which spread between a lonely gold mine in Rhodesia and a house on the outskirts of London, linking many people and places in between, and providing Sexton Blake, detective, with one of the strangest problems of his career."

S.B.L. (3rd) No. 172: "Martin Denver took a photograph of his new orange orchard. A simple action, but it lead to the death, far away in England, of a man he had never met."

S.B.L. (3rd) No. 252: "Carrion birds gathered over a remote spot in an African desert, and, as a direct result, a strange mystery spread to distant England."

In conclusion, let us examine the openings of John Drummond (John Newton Chance). We find that this author frequently used time and the elements to set the stage for his story. Wind, fog, darkness, night, etc., were pressed into his service to provide the appropriate setting, as the following examples reveal.

S.B.L. (3rd) No. 75: "A high wind tore through the leafless shadows of high elms, sighing and shrieking through the outstretched fingers of their naked branches. Dead leaves were suddenly drawn up from fields and ditches, and sent scuttering round

in a devil's dance, rattling faintly in the screaming air."

S.B.L. (3rd) No. 82: "The thick grey folds of an icy fog hung in the narrow streets of the town. It clung everywhere, like a damp blanket, killing all sight and sound."

S.B.L. (3rd) No. 190: "The streets were dark, narrow, twisting canyons of black brick where only stray cats lived. Occasional gas lamps, jutting out on iron brackets from the corners of hovels, cast yellow pools of light, which only made the darkness around blacker. The cobbles of the streets gleamed in bumpy, rain-washed lumps."

S.B.L. (3rd) No. 266: "The fog was thickening. The morning was grey, and the shapes of the trees in the dripping park came and went like ghosts through the swirling tendrils of mist."

So there we are. Openings by various Sexton Blake Library authors, all reflecting something of the men themselves. Hallmarks, as it were, of each man's handiwork. Descriptive, sentimental, light or tragic, wordy or crisp. Each with its own characteristics, varying in effectiveness, but most of them contriving that indefinable something that leads the reader on and on until he feels constrained to finish the book.

Perhaps it is less of a science and more of an art, but whatever it is, it is just as much a selling feature as the cover, title and author's name, and must stand or fall on its ability to capture the reader's imagination in those first few seconds, when he gazes for the first time on another story opening.

* * * * *

"SEXTON BLAKE - TWERP !"

By MARGARET COOKE

Life, they say, is full of surprises; hopes and fears, successes and failures, laughter and tears treading on each others heels as hour follows hour. If, like myself, you are one of those people to whom things happen, Life may be one darn thing after another but it is seldom dull.

For many years now I have enjoyed reading the history of one Sexton Blake - detective. This great saga has helped me to escape from troubled reality in times of stress; has amused or informed me, has interested me at all times; and has brought me the sincere, understanding friendship of kindred spirits in other parts of the world. I have a great affection for it and for all those connected with it. I welcome letters from fellow fans with joyful anticipation of news and views courteously expressed.

Imagine my feelings, therefore, when I received the following reply from someone whose interest in Sexton Blake's affairs I had assumed would equal my own:-

"Please do not take Sexton Blake so seriously. With so many good books in the world to choose from, it makes me sad to see an intelligent person like you wasting time with the adventures of a pulp magazine detective of perennial virility. Even if the stories and writing are good, the compass is so severely restricted that the possibility of meeting realistic problems in a realistic way is remote. Crime must always

be 'nice' crime and dear Sexton must always triumph, not only triumph but never be made to look a twerp, which is what he is."

My first reaction to the above was one of shocked surprise, my second, one of grudging admiration for the conceit of this young man who dared to suppose that my reading was confined to the S.B.L.; who supplied a list of "good books" which he "would feel happier to know" that I had in my hands; and who ended his letter by calling me a "frustrated writer", advising me to begin to "write a long novel, keeping it going bit by bit every day, like a piece of knitting."

I realised, however, that as I had enjoyed a reputation for calling a spade a spade for many years, I had no right now to complain if I, too, had been handed an unadorned shovel. The writer's remarks about myself amused me, those about Sexton Blake amazed me. Are courage, loyalty, courtesy and strength of purpose the attributes of a twerp? Is it despicable to devote one's time and talents to resolving other people's troubles?; to want a society in which the individual is safe from want, fear and injustice?

Of course I take Sexton Blake seriously. He is far more than a mere pulp magazine detective. For sixty-five years he has been the symbol of human decency fighting the forces of evil, and since the welfare of the human race depends on the existence of justice, kindness, self-control and respect for the rights of others, why shouldn't he triumph over those who would deprive their fellows of these things?

He is also the outward, visible sign of the creative genius of a long line of writers tackling the serious, often heart-breaking task of making a name for themselves in a world which gives precious little encouragement to young, unknown artists. "Only by writing for the bound-book market can a writer hope to make a name for himself - only by writing pulp, meanwhile, can he hope to live." I am pleased to think that by reading the S.B.L. for many years I have helped to keep open a doorway to success. I appreciate the fact that whilst their ambitions were hitched to the stars, the authors used every ounce of their ability and imagination to create characters, plots, and stories to interest all those who, like myself, are not ashamed to follow the adventures of a pulp magazine detective, though we may, perhaps, envy his perennial virility. They invented great criminals to commit crime on a grand scale and to deal with these 'star' crooks, they created a super 'tec - a brilliant intellect allied to an intense love for suffering humanity and a hatred of crime. They were not reporters relating the sordid little crimes of every day, nor were they reformers seeking to expose and solve social evils. They were authors, originators, composers of literary works, giving of their best in return for the price of their daily bread as their modern counterparts do today. I would not insult them, or their Art, by giving their work less than my most serious consideration.

Despite my young friend's complaint that "dear Sexton must always triumph", I can remember quite a few occasions when he did not, especially when dealing with Zenith, George Marsden Plummer, Huxton Rymer, Ezra Maitland, Doctor Ferraro, and the Syndicate. As for crime being 'nice' crime; - greed, spite, arson, murder, rape, fraud, political intrigue, brutality and malicious lies are the realistic problems of every age, human nature being what it is, and all these have had their place in the annals of the S.B.L. whether they were treated imaginatively, as in the old days, by writers who left some things to the readers imagination, or with every gory detail faithfully recorded in the name of Realism, as in these new-look times. Rogues,

thieves, blackmailers and murderers have rubbed shoulders with the victims, the unjustly accused, the mugs, and the representatives of the law in books which managed to incorporate the topics of their day and age to an astonishing degree despite the 'restricted compass' mentioned.

Blake's character has changed a little since his early days. The modern Blake is a man of action allied to love of mankind but he still retains his hatred of crime. Criminals have changed too. This is the age of the thug - of teen-age gangs, armed with knives, studded belts and coshes, who worship violence for its own sake; the age when the old unwritten laws of behaviour are flouted by a small section of the community reared on sex-ridden, brutal, horrifying films and books which glorify the hard-drinking, over-sexed, batter-and-be-battered, cheat, lie, but muddle-through-to-the-top-in-the-end-type-of-hero. Their creators, I believe make much money quickly; - they and their heroes are as quickly forgotten.

Is Blake a twerp because he is not of this type? He is in good company. The literary detectives who have endured and will endure the test of time, Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Poirot, Mr. Campion, Inspector Alleyn, Sir Henry Merrivale, Inspector Littlejohn, Inspector West and his fellows created by John Creasey live godly, sober and righteous lives too. Through them their creators have won success and fame.

Literary characters, having no life of their own merely reflect the best and the worst things imagined by the authors. Whilst those who fashion Blake are themselves men who value integrity and honour, how can he be a twerp?

THE FERRERS LORD SAGA - continued from Page 144...

Ferrers Lord made herculean efforts to save his vanquished foe, but to no avail.

And so, with only mopping-up operations to complete a well-deserved and hard-won victory, and with honours and plaudits being heaped upon them by the deliriously rejoicing populace, the curtain rings down on Lord, Thurston and Ching-Lung, not forgetting those two redoubtables, Prout and Maddock. But such was their popularity with the thousands who had followed their exploits that their creator soon plunged them pell-mell into adventures even stranger and more breathless. Would that we could tell of their race to the Pole - their trek through unknown Tibet to the Forbidden City - the amazing adventures which befell them in a race twice around the world - their quest for the legendary floating island, Mysteria, and for the fabulous blue orchid - the cruise of the flying submarine "Unconquerable" and the strange quest for the "ghost ship" - all these, and others, we can only briefly touch upon here. Then, too, many new characters were introduced in these later stories - characters which were to become, as were Lord and his companions, household words in the realm of boys' fiction, such as the comical Eskimo, Gan-Waga, and Hal Honour the dauntless engineer. New villains, too, pitted their cunning against the wits and heroism of Ferrers Lord and his tried and trusted company, and new and breath-taking situations engrossed readers the world over. Surely, there will never again be such a trio as these - or such an author as Sidney Drew, whose genius conceived them and a host of other characters whose adventures, grave and gay, are as absorbing today as they were in those far-off days when they first saw the light in the pages of one of the most famous of boys' papers - now, alas, no more, but affectionately remembered - "The Boys' Friend".

The Ferrers Lord Saga

By GEOFF. HOCKLEY

* * * * *

"A wet, misty night had followed a day of blustering wind and rain. The great city slumbered beneath its grey canopy of smoke, and the huge clock at Westminster sent the chimes reverberating sullenly across the wilderness of roofs and chimneys. The tide was racing out, gurgling and hissing weirdly against the pillars of the dark bridge. A few lanterns glimmered upon the moored barges, and the narrowing lights of the Embankment glistened dimly on the oily stream. It was no night to tempt stragglers abroad. The few belated wayfarers and merrymakers turned up their collars and hurried on doggedly."

How many of our fraternity, I wonder, could name the story of which the above lines were the commencement? Not many, perhaps, for more than half a century has passed since it first saw the light of day in the pages of one of the most famous of boys' papers. Both paper and author are no more, but the story lives on. And deservedly so, for of all the famous writers who filled the green-tinted pages of the affectionately-remembered "Boys' Friend" with clean and thrilling reading for the young and the not-so-young, Sidney Drew was perhaps the most celebrated, and "Wolves of the Deep" - the first story in a series introducing some of the most colourful characters and fantastic adventures in fiction - was a tale which ensured its author lasting fame.

How and when Sidney Drew first conceived the saga of Ferrers Lord, the multi-millionaire genius whose feud with his arch-enemy, Prince Michael Scaroff, spanned oceans and continents, we of course have no means of knowing. Certainly there seems no real-life precedent on which Drew might have based his Ferrers Lord stories, nor is there to be found in any prior fiction any plot remotely resembling them, so we may take it that they were evolved solely in the author's fertile brain - to bring fame to himself and even more popularity to the "Boys' Friend".

It was in 1900 when "Wolves of the Deep" made its appearance. One may picture the rush for the issue containing the first instalment, for the astute Hamilton Edwards had whetted his readers' curiosity by his usual pre-publication announcements of the forthcoming masterpiece - "the story of a grim battle of life and death between two of the wealthiest men the world has ever known", was how he described it. Now let us see what greeted the readers who clustered around newsagents and bookstalls throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, eager to exchange the humble ha'penny for the voluminous green pages of their favourite periodical, the "Boys' Friend", then five years old and firmly established in the affections of its readers.

Well, before outlining the plot with its innumerable twistings and ramifications, let us take a look at some of the principal characters, starting with Rupert Thurston, not solely because he happens to appear first in the story, but because we have a handy thumbnail sketch of him in the shape of a dossier compiled by the villainous Prince Michael Scaroff and produced by him, to Thurston's astonishment, at a time when the latter was in the clutches of the relentless Russian aristocrat.

"Thurston, Rupert. Meredith Mansions, St. James St., London, W. Height 5ft. 11½, age 21, dark hair, clean-shaven, grey-blue eyes. Remarks: youngest son of the late Sir Royton Thurston, Bart., of Thurston Hall, Suffolk. Has an income of £800 per annum, and no profession. Unmarried. Is next heir to the baronetcy after the present baronet's crippled son Julian."

And what of Ferrers Lord himself - "tall and thin, his crisp curling hair shot with grey, and with eyes black and piercing", wealthy beyond the wildest dreams of man, inventive genius and fervid patriot, who in the intervals between probing the ocean's secrets in his amazing submarine vessel, the "Lord of the Deep", resided in a stately mansion in Park Lane - "a museum of wealth and wonder, filled with the treasures of East and West, of every age and from every land" - of which his niece, Lady Violet Westermore, was the charming chatelaine. This strange combination of sybarite and scientist seems to have been a person of very definite views, and he never hesitated to express them, as the following random samples of Lordisms will indicate.

"Money! It works miracles, my friend!"

This seems to have been the basic Lordian philosophy. However, he also seems to have been no believer in the boarding of wealth, as the following would seem to indicate.

"When a man tells me that the British workman who gets two pounds a week is extravagant because he does not save, I know that man is a fool!"

A sentiment with which the British workman of those times heartily agreed, I would say! But in spite of F.L.'s. apparent soft spot for the proletariat he could sound off in no uncertain manner when an underling (in this case a footman) didn't step lively enough to suit him.

"What has become of the fool? I hate to be kept waiting! Go and see what the idiot is doing!"

But after all, for two pounds a week, or thereabouts (we are not told what the flunkey's wages actually were) one should be entitled to expect snappy service.

As we previously remarked, Lord was a fervid patriot, but some of his utterances might seem a trifle florid to-day. Here he is discoursing to Thurston.

"Look at our British workman and our British soldier! The first can do as much as any foreigner, and the second can fight as well as half-a-dozen put together!"

Alas! Automation, ballistic missiles, nuclear bombs and other amenities of our present civilisation tend to make the human element count for little as compared with the palmy days of 1900!

Lord was no sentimentalist, either - he had no compunction in ordering fifty lashes with "Russia's most horrible implement of torture, the knout", to be administered to a couple of Scaroff's hirelings caught in the act of sabotaging the "Lord of the Deep". "Take them away!" said the millionaire grimly, his face stern and remorseless.

Well, these little illustrations of Lord's make-up would indicate that he was no

man to trifle with (as indeed, he wasn't). However, in Prince Michael Scaroff he met no mean adversary - it was almost a case of when Greek meets Greek, except that in this instance Briton met Russian. Lord did not under-estimate his opponent, as witnessed by his reply to Thurston's questions after Scaroff had stolen the plans of the "Lord of the Deep".

"My friend, you are young and inexperienced. Michael Scaroff comes from the East, and the East has always been a land of mystery. Even the Great White Tsar, autocrat of all the Russias, dare hardly call him a vassal, for Scaroff can summon a hundred thousand fierce Tartar horsemen to his banner with a wave of his hand. Rich? He is a modern Croesus - lord of a million acres and a thousand villages! For what has happened tonight, I claim a heavy price - Michael Scaroff's life!"

Of Scaroff's personal appearance, all that we have to go on is that he was "tall, with a long grey beard, wore riding breeches, and carried a hunting-crop" - a rather scanty description. He also possessed a peculiarity in the shape of an artificial left arm (or probably a stock of them, as they seemed to have a habit of becoming detached from his torso at awkward moments). When Scaroff escaped from Lord's apartments with the stolen plans, his arm came adrift in the course of a struggle with a servant who he left dead on the floor of Lord's study, and he apparently was too pressed for time to retrieve it, thereby administering a severe jolt to Thurston's nerves when the latter burst in the door of the death room. "He staggered towards the gruesome thing - a severed human arm, with a diamond ring gleaming and sparkling on one of the fingers of the hand!" Thurston breathed a sigh of relief when closer examination showed it to be an artificial limb.

For a little comic relief from this grim character, we turn to Ching-Lung, the Chinese boy who helped Thurston to escape from Scaroff's clutches and who later became a sort of general factotum aboard the "Lord of the Deep", complete with his tame rat, Shakespeare Willyum, and Billee Buttonee the magpie. A downy bird was Ching-Lung, who numbered conjuring and ventriloquism among his several accomplishments and whose craze for practical jokes caused his popularity among the crew to drop steeply at times, but he was a likeable character. Full of "ways that were dark and tricks that were vain" was Ching-Lung, but a bright and breezy character withal, though the pidgin English in which he habitually conversed became a trifle wearing at times.

Besides these four there were several other characters among the "cast of thousands" with which Drew was fond of filling his stories who should be briefly referred to - Prince Paul Scaroff, younger brother of the villainous Michael, and lacking some of his elder's traits - Ned Horton, the diving expert employed by Ferrers Lord, a bluff and courageous type who was as much at home wandering over the ocean's floor as an ordinary man would be walking the street - Nathan Trethvick, the sinister, vile-tempered dwarf who was second-in-command of the giant submarine, and who seemed to have some mysterious and unexplained hold over Lord - Tom Prout and Ben Maddock, a couple of crew members who were perpetually on the receiving end of Ching-Lung's little japes.

Upon the scene so graphically described by the author, and which we selected as the commencement of our Ferrers Lord story, Ruper Thurston makes his bow. Picture this young man, then, in impeccable evening dress, a cigarette between his lips, leaning back and gazing out at the dark and cheerless scene as his hansom bears him at a brisk pace along the gloomy Embankment. Then, echoing above the clip-clop of the horse's hoofs, the cry for help from the murky, half-seen river, his dive into the dark,

oily water in a gallant but fruitless attempt at rescue, his own despairing struggles as, chilled by the icy tide and weighed down by his sodden clothing, he lapses into unconsciousness, unaware of the strong hand which grasps his collar as he is about to sink for the last time.

When Thurston opened his eyes after struggling back to consciousness, he gazed about him in bewilderment. He was lying in a hammock, swathed in blankets, in a strange room. A man sitting writing at a table turned and regarded him quizzically. "You are awake, I see, Mr. Thurston," he said in a deep voice.

Such was Thurston's first meeting with Ferrers Lord - a meeting which was to form the basis of an undying friendship and which was destined to carry him through strange adventures by the side of the grim and enigmatic millionaire in times to come. It was in the stateroom of Lord's fabulous submarine, the Lord of the Deep, that Thurston found himself, to his amazement, and wonder upon wonder was revealed to him before the ship finally surfaced off the Essex coast and he accompanied Lord to the shore and the two set off to London. ("We shall be just in time to catch the 2.30 from Burnham back to Town") comfortably ensconced in a first-class carriage. Upon arrival at Liverpool Street the pair were conducted by a footman in livery to "an elegant carriage drawn by a pair of superb bay horses" and wafted to Lord's Park Lane mansion, where they were admitted by a silk-stockinged footman. (Lord's wages bill for his household help must have been staggering - there seemed to be footmen, butlers, valets and assorted male and female servants of every rank at the rate of about one to the square yard of floor space in the Park Lane establishment. Ah, for the dear dead days beyond recall - in our own enlightened age he would probably be trying to keep up with the Inland Revenue boys by conducting sightseers through the mansion at half-a-crown a head, and washing up the dinner dishes to boot). However, we must not prolong our musings upon Lord's domestic organisation, for no sooner had he and Thurston arrived than it became evident that dirty doings were afoot. There had been a caller in Lord's absence, who had refused to give his name - "a tall man with a long grey beard, with a queer habit of catching hold of his left wrist with his right hand", and who had been shown into the library to wait but who now could not be found. It seems peculiar that the butler's description of the unknown caller didn't ring a bell with Lord, for he told Thurston later that he had met Scaroff at Marseilles "when we were both present at the trials of a miserable tub which the French called a submarine boat", but he dismissed the incident by observing off-handedly that it was probably a crank of some kind, or somebody begging - "it is a millionaire's fate to be pestered by such people". Alas! as was soon to be revealed, the caller had been no crank, nor yet somebody soliciting a donation for the Little Puddlecombe Home For Stray Cats. On entering the study, a startling state of affairs met their eyes. Stretched out upon the floor lay a footman (there were, as we have remarked, so many of his kind in the house that probably the unfortunate fellow's absence had gone unnoticed), "with eyes glazed and staring, and face ashy white and hideously distorted". Thurston, somewhat concerned, rushed to his side to find that the man was beyond human aid. Lord, however, was made of sterner stuff and made a dive for the safe in which he kept the model of the "Lord of the Deep". It was empty!

"Stolen!" he shouted. "My model of the "Lord of the Deep" - stolen - by the man who held his wrist! Spy - traitor - thief! I know him now, Thurston - Michael Scaroff, the Russian!"

When Thurston picked up an artificial arm from beside the dead footman (it gave him a decided "turn" until closer examination disclosed that it was made of wax)

identification of the thief as Scaroff was beyond doubt. An examination of the corpse disclosed no injury except a tiny puncture on one hand - "one of Scaroff's strange weapons, Thurston - he is of the mysterious East and I have known death to lurk in a handclasp there". Lord didn't want any publicity over the episode. "This matter must be hushed up. I suppose it is our duty to have a doctor, so I will send for my own - Sir Anthony Holden - but I will wager my last penny that he will not discover a trace of foul play. Let him examine the body and make his report. I shall not be able to attend the inquest."

It must be nice to possess enough influence to be able to brush off even such trifling embarrassments as finding a corpse in one's library, but naturally, Lord was impatient to get on Scaroff's track. A hasty telephone call disclosed that the Russian had left Charing Cross for Dover in a special train only a quarter of an hour previously, so in less time than it takes to tell Lord and Thurston were in a brougham being driven post-haste to Charing Cross where a special train was awaiting them. As they roared through the night, watching the lights of stations flash past, Lord lay back luxuriously in his seat and amused himself by blowing smoke-rings from his cigar. "We are making excellent time," he observed. "My yacht will be waiting under full steam - I wired long ago."

However, his complacency (and the carriage window) were both shattered simultaneously by a bullet, fired by an unseen sniper as the train passed through a cutting, which missed him by a hair's breadth. Worse was to come, though, for a few minutes later "there was a fierce crash, a grinding roar, and the whole train seemed to spinter into fragments. Thurston was pitched forward like a stone from a catapult. A cry broke from his lips, and then all was silent." Scaroff was not the type who did things by halves!

Lord's rather short temper was not improved by this incident. After pulling Thurston and the battered driver and fireman from the wreckage, he could hardly contain himself while a wrecking crew cleared the line, and a railway detective investigating the accident got short shrift when he tried to quiz him regarding the smash. "We are pressed for time," he said coldly, as he escorted Thurston aboard the relief train. The latter was somewhat the worse for wear, having "a broken arm and a nasty rap on the head - nothing very bad for a young fellow in good form," but he was speedily patched up and the pair eventually reached Dover without further mishap and boarded the "Violet", Lord's steam yacht. Fate, and Scaroff, still dogged them, however. The "Violet" took a battering in a howling gale and was fired on by a mysterious craft, and to crown everything, when at last she limped into Calais, Lord was arrested on a charge of "forging the name of one Michael Scaroff to a cheque for £15,000 on the Anglo-Russian Bank." So back to Dover they went, with Lord handcuffed to a French detective! Scaroff had scored all along the line!

Back in London, the faked charge was speedily investigated and Lord was released with apologies from the police (even Scotland Yard wired regrets) and in no time were speeding to Scarborough in the Great Northern train, arriving to find a dogcart awaiting them, in which they drove furiously to Ferrers Grange, another residence of Ferrers Lord, where, at the open gates, the lodgekeeper and his family ("dressed in their best clothes") welcomed them as they drove up the winding avenue to the lordly Grange. "Twenty-five or thirty servants" (presumably also attired in their best clothes) crowded the steps, but the only acknowledgement they seem to have received was "a curt nod" from their employer, which seems rather discouraging.

Now, Ferrers Grange held a secret. In its cellars was the entrance to a subterranean passage leading to a cave on the coast, in which the "Lord of the Deep" lay moored. Fortunate it turned out to be that Lord arrived when he did, for two of Scaroff's hirelings were just placing a dynamite charge alongside the submarine when they were surprised by Lord and his crew. The miscreants received short shrift. "Tell the fiend that hired you that I will scar his back as I am going to scar yours. Forty lashes each, Field, and do not spare your strength!"

Later that evening the giant submarine glided from its lair. The voyage of vengeance had commenced!

But before we follow the travels of the "Lord of the Deep", let us turn back to London, where villainy of the deepest dye is afoot. We will imagine that we are (ahem!) peeping into the dainty boudoir of Lady Violet Westover, Ferrers Lord's charming niece. The hour is late, the servants have retired, and the great mansion is silent. Lady Violet stifles a delicate yawn as the silver clock on her dressing-table struck midnight. But hist! Was that a footstep? She turns, and shrinks back in terror at the sinister figure which has appeared seemingly from nowhere. "Petrified with horror, dumb, grey to the lips, she stared at him." Well, we can sympathise with Lady Violet - a midnight intruder in one's boudoir is hardly calculated to be soothing to the nerves! More Scaroff skulduggery? Right!

But it was not the master-villain himself who had so unceremoniously made a midnight entry upon Lady Violet's privacy. Being at this moment busy supervising the construction of the "Tsaritsa", as he had christened the submarine which he was building from the purloined model, he had sent a worthy deputy in the shape of Scaroff minor, who was not at all averse to doing a bit of dirty work on Big Brother's behalf, especially as Michael had promised him £10,000 if he successfully carried out the job, which was to abduct Lady V. and rush her to Russia (pardon us, that was unintentional) to be held as a hostage. We have referred to Prince Paul Scaroff previously. He seems to have been another thoroughly nasty piece of work and there was still another brother, Ivan, who does not appear very frequently but who seems also to have been a worthy scion of the Scaroff household. Anyway, Paul had no compunction in carrying out this little chore and adding to his pocket-money in the process. He "twirled his dark waxed moustache" (the hall-mark of the villain) and bowed to Lady V. She shrank back trembling in her chair.

"Have you no mercy?" she panted.

But it was useless appealing to Prince Paul's chivalrous instincts, especially as he had recently taken a bad trouncing at the gaming tables and needed that ten thousand to pay his grocery bill. In less time than it takes to relate, Lady V. was gagged, bound, and lowered from her window into the arms of brother Ivan, and five minutes later a carriage rolled swiftly away in the direction of Oxford Street. Scaroff had struck another stunning blow!

Temporarily leaving Lady V. to her fate, we again pick up the trail of Ferrers Lord & Co., who had been combing the Baltic ports for news of Scaroff (as it transpired, the Russian hadn't left England at all, but, under an assumed name was having his submarine built secretly on the Clyde). Lord's suspicions were aroused when, having stopped the "Lord of the Deep" for a valve-grind and tune-up on the bed of the Atlantic, he received news of a mystery submarine seen in the English Channel. (Incidentally, if you are ever in a similar position and are yearning for the latest racing results, all you have to do is to slip into your diving-suit, take a stroll

along the sea-bed to the nearest cable, plug in a couple of wires and get the latest news hot off the press - at least, that was Ferrers Lord's method. The news item concerning the mystery submarine made him lose no time in getting the "Lord of the Deep" under way and headed for home, and we next see him and Thurston stepping ashore at the Old Swan Pier by London Bridge. Thurston gripped Lord's arm and pointed to a newspaper poster.

"LONDON EVENING NEWS"
 "STRANGE STORY FROM DOVER"
 "SUBMARINE BOAT SEEN IN THE CHANNEL"
 "DISAPPEARANCE OF LINER"
 "STRANGE RUMOURS OF FOUL PLAY"

The pair boarded a passing hansom and drove post-haste to the Russian Embassy, from which Lord presently emerged "looking white and grave" - and considerably annoyed, for Scaroff had left a letter for him at the Embassy to inform him that his niece was being held in Russia as a hostage and would come to a sticky end unless Lord called off the pursuit. To add insult to injury, the impudent Russian had completed building his submarine on the Clyde in secret while Lord had been away on his wild goose chase, and had been indulging in a spot of piracy to offset the drain on his coffers by sinking and looting the liner "Fidelia" carrying bullion to London.

Lord's reaction to this calamitous news rather leaves us with the impression that poor Lady V's. fate was a secondary consideration to him as compared to getting even with his rival.

"Thurston shuddered as he gazed at the millionaire. The white face was like marble, and the dark eyes glowed with hate. 'I love my niece, Rupert, but I love my vengeance more. Let him threaten what he likes - I will not budge an inch. Were she to die tomorrow unless I renounced my revenge, I should still say no!'"

Yes, a really tough type was our Mr. Lord! However, he unbent slightly on seeing Thurston's shocked expression. "I am not really heartless, Rupert, nor am I mad. I love Violet and will move heaven and earth to free her from the Russian's grasp. But she must take her chance for a time. They dare not harm her!"

If Thurston thought that this was wishful thinking on Lord's part he didn't venture to say so, and within an hour they were on board the "Lord of the Deep" once more ready to scour the ocean for the elusive Scaroff. It was during this second voyage that Thurston got himself into a nasty jam. Having stopped the submarine for some slight engine repairs (they were on the bed of the Baltic Sea at the time) Lord proposed to his friend that they don diving-suits and try some undersea big-game hunting, using the latest Lord invention, an electric gun. Other than it was "a long steel tube, something like an Arab's rifle", and that it ejected "lightning bolts", we haven't any data on this weapon. However, it was certainly effective, but Thurston soon tired of picking his way around corpses of electrocuted fish and wandered away by himself to explore a submarine forest, in which, of course, he promptly lost his way.

We can imagine the unfortunate Thurston's feelings as he realised his predicament. It is unpleasant enough to find oneself well and truly lost in bush or jungle, but to be in the same plight on the ocean's floor is too unpleasant to contemplate. It was with a heartfelt sigh of relief, then, that Thurston at last discerned the brilliantly-lighted ports of the submarine glowing through the murky undersea twilight, and he plodded painfully towards it over the oozy sea-bed. Then, as he at last reached

his goal, he stopped as if petrified. For a figure appeared, silhouetted against one of the lighted ports - the figure of a man with one arm!

Thus it was that Thurston found himself on the "Tsaritza" as the unwilling guest of Michael Scaroff, for with his air supply on the point of exhaustion, he had no alternative but to beg admittance. The Russian treated him with every courtesy, but Thurston sensed that he was being played with as a cat plays with a mouse and that Scaroff was aware of his real identity. But it was not until he was rash enough to peer into the Russian's private compartment that he realised the depths of villainy of the "Tsaritza's" owner. For, stacked one upon another, were massive, iron-bound chests, each bearing the words

"BAR GOLD
£12,500.
LONDON, per R.M.S. FIDELIA"

The missing liner which had caused so much consternation in London! So Scaroff, this wolf of the deep, had robbed her of her treasure! What had become of her passengers and crew? Perhaps only Scaroff and his cut-throat Mongol crew could tell the story! Thurston shuddered at the thought and turned away - to find himself held in a grip of steel.

"You cursed spy!" snarled the Russian. "You are unmasked, and in the lions' den!"

Scaroff lost no time in displaying his true colours and instead of sampling his host's choice wines in the "Tsaritza's" stateroom, Thurston found himself a shackled prisoner in a dank and gloomy compartment in the bowels of the giant submarine, pondering on what was to be his fate. But, as the old saying goes, the darkest hour is just before dawn, and it was not long before a veritable beam of sunshine made its appearance, in the form of the one and only Ching-Lung.

Meanwhile, Ferrers Lord was having troubles of his own. Returning to the "Lord of the Deep" after fruitlessly searching for Thurston, he was given the staggering news by Ned Horton (who had also been for a stroll on the sea-bed) that not only was the "Tsaritza" nearby, but that Thurston was on board her, Horton having watched Scaroff's craft from a place of concealment and seen the luckless Thurston forced to beg admittance. Lord ordered all lights to be extinguished and the giant submarine moved slowly through the murk until he discerned the lighted ports of the Russian vessel. With his eyes "gleaming with hate" Lord trained his electric cannon (apparently an oversize version of his fish-electrocutor) on the "Tsaritza" and pressed the firing switch - but nothing happened! No lethal bolt rent his enemy asunder (which was fortunate for Thurston) and almost simultaneously, the "Lord of the Deep's" lights went on! A second later, a torpedo from the "Tsaritza" exploded almost under her bow. The millionaire's wild shout rang through the ship. "Betrayed!"

Yes, there was a traitor amongst the crew - a traitor who had tampered with the gun, and who had betrayed the submarine's position by switching on the lights - but who was he? Well, we must confess that we were surprised that such a No. 8 hat as Ferrers Lord couldn't seem to even guess at his identity, and even more surprised when honest Ned Horton was denounced as the culprit. However, the real miscreant was duly unmasked, as we shall see later. When order was finally restored (fortunately the "Lord of the Deep" and her crew had escaped with nothing more serious than a severe shaking-up) Lord remembered something that his blind rage had caused him to forget - Thurston was on board the Russian vessel! "Thank heaven!" he muttered fervently. "I had forgotten,

blinded as I was with my lust for vengeance!"

Yes, it was indeed fortunate for Thurston that the saboteur had succeeded in drawing the "Lord of the Deep's" sting. Let us now return to friend Rupert, languishing in durance vile aboard the "Tsaritsa", and listening in amazement at what seemed to be a horse trampling about in the next-door compartment. (It was a horse, too, though the author neglects to explain why Scaroff was carrying one around with him. However, recalling the servant's description of the Russian's attire on the occasion of his fateful visit to Lord's mansion - "riding breeches, and carrying a bunting-crop" - we can only assume that Scaroff was an enthusiastic horseman who couldn't bear to be parted from his steed even when cruising in the depths of the ocean. We can find no reference to an equine diving-suit which might have enabled Scaroff to take a canter on the sea-floor, so perhaps the nag was taken along as a convenient means of transport at the times when Prince Michael went ashore.) Anyhow, just see how things work out - having his horse on board Scaroff required a groom - and luckily for Thurston the groom was Ching-Lung, who introduced himself by hoisting himself up to the gap on the top of the intervening bulkhead and announcing, "Hello, Mr. white foreign debbil! Me Ching-Lung. Give me cigallete, savvy? Chuck, and I catchee!"

It wasn't long before Thurston found that he and the comical young Chinese had at least one thing in common - a hearty dislike of Prince Michael Scaroff. From Ching-Lung, too, he obtained the disquieting news that Lady Violet was on board and he managed to send her a note artfully delivered by Ching-Lung between two slices of buttered toast. And it was the Chinese boy, too, who first broached the topic of an escape attempt. They laid their plans carefully - and one night when the submarine had surfaced to re-charge her batteries, and the lights of some unknown port glittered on the horizon, they made their bid, unnoticed amid the confusion of a fire started by Ching-Lung, and started their swim to freedom. Hours later, chilled to their bones and almost spent, they struggled ashore on the wharves of Hamburg. A few days later, Thurston and Ching-Lung boarded a liner for London and in due course stepped ashore at Southampton - where, to Thurston's amazement, the "Lord of the Deep" lay moored!

Little remains to be told - for we are nearing the end of Round One of the Lord-Scaroff duel. Thurston and Ching-Lung were welcomed aboard (the latter, on Thurston's recommendation, joining the crew of the "Lord of the Deep" in the capacity of mess-boy and general factotum, the obtaining of which position he promptly celebrated by substituting cayenne pepper for Tom Prout's snuff, thus causing that worthy seaman to nearly expire in a paroxysm of sneezing.) Much had happened aboard the submarine in Thurston's absence. The villainous Nathan Trethvick had been exposed as a traitor in Scaroff's pay, and in addition to being considerably the worse for wear as the result of a fight with honest Ned Horton, was about to be given his marching orders (Thurston was mildly surprised at Lord's leniency, but, as we have remarked, it seemed to us that Trethvick was in possession of some secret concerning Lord's past, which may have accounted for him being let off lightly). Thurston was amazed, however, to learn that Lord had negotiated a truce with the arch-villain Scaroff, and did not disguise his surprise. But Lord only "yawned lazily."

"I was quite aware that Scaroff was at the bottom of the mystery of the missing liner," he said. "Of course, my dear fellow, you have seen the gold stolen by this sea-wolf, and Ching-Lung having actually witnessed the affair, it would not be difficult to make the world too hot to hold the Russian. Granting this, what do you expect me to do?"

Rupert stared. "What do I expect you to do, Lord? What a question to ask. Is this human wolf to be allowed to scour the seas, to harry and murder and rob, when a

word would outlaw him and put a price on his head? Let me swear to the horrible story at once, and every nation will join in helping to hunt him down!"

To which Lord replied (rather patronisingly, we thought) that though his friend possessed ample pluck and grit, "his brain was not of the brightest" (which no doubt annoyed friend Rupert, but he forbore to comment on that one). "Have you thought of the panic which would ensue, the paralysis of the shipping trade, and the loss of scores of our best ironclads, which would stand no chance against such a tremendous fighting-machine as the "Tsaritza"? No, Rupert, Scaroff and I must finish this between us - it is the only way!"

Thurston stared moodily at him. The argument was unanswerable. But he was fairly electrified when Lord announced that he had come to terms with Michael Scaroff.

"What!" he gasped. "Come to terms with that murdering --"

Lord "smiled lazily" (a habit which we must confess annoyed us). "Gently, my dear fellow! Your escape, and the secret you carried with you, has brought him to his senses. He does not want the whole civilised world against him, and so he came to terms. My niece has been released and is on her way to London. In return for this, and a pledge that he will respect all vessels, no matter what they carry, I have promised to keep his secret for a year. It makes no difference to the quarrel between ourselves - that can only end with the death of one or the other of us!"

And so the first round of the Lord-Scaroff vendetta ended. Thurston wondered what the future would bring, and it was as well that he could not see the perils which lay ahead, when these two implacable foes met in what might be the final death-grapple. Would it come on land, or in the ocean depths? Time alone would disclose the answer, for even then, unknown to him, mighty forces were gathering and the coming struggle was to be contested not only by individuals, but by nations - Lion against Bear!

PART TWO

Rupert Thurston, one-time clubman, man-about-town, and well-to-do dilettante, now commander of the submarine "Lord of the Deep" in the absence of its millionaire owner, Ferrers Lord, peered through a lens at the engraving on the gold ring which Lord had sent him at the commencement of the voyage. What he saw is reproduced hereunder:

26 16 N.
125 12 E.
70 Fathoms.
Watch for the Crimson
Hill.
Watch well.
Show me.
Enter.

Thurston's brows knitted as he gazed at the instructions - for instructions he knew they must be - and wished that Lord had chosen some less cryptic form of conveying what were apparently "sealed orders" as to the destination of the giant submarine. He frowned in perplexity, and pressed the bell. Ching-Lung, the Chinese boy, appeared in answer to the summons.

We have previously endeavoured to provide a thumbnail sketch of this mercurial character, so he needs no further introduction. It will be recalled that it was largely due to Ching-Lung's resourcefulness that Thurston had escaped from the clutches of Michael Scaroff, and in consequence had obtained the young Chinese a post on board Lord's craft. He must have wondered more than once what sort of imp of mischief he had

introduced among the submarine's crew, several members of which had been singled out as targets for Ching's insatiable propensity for practical jokes. Leaving Thurston for a moment as he puzzles over the enigma of the ring, let us consider the martyrdom of Thomas Prout, A.B., who seems to have been on the receiving end of Ching's little japes even more than his crony Ben Maddock, or Pierre Bovrille the French cook. Hard upon the heels of the cayenne-pepper episode which had signalled Ching's advent as a crew member, the worthy Tom, going to relax in his bunk on his watch below, had found his cosy nest chock-a-block with potato-peelings, oyster-shells and superannuated meat-pies - a sample of the latter causing Thurston to beat a hasty retreat when the irate Prout produced it as evidence of Celestial depravity. The worthy seaman, departing from his commander's presence muttering dire threats to all little yellow so-and-so's, felt in his pocket for his pipe and tobacco-pouch with which to console himself, and uttered a fiendish yell as his hand emerged with an outsize in rat-traps clamped firmly to his finger-tips. Alas! even this was not to be the end of his tribulations! Nursing his fingers he lowered himself, after a careful inspection, into his bunk, and endeavoured to forget his woes in his favourite recreation of working himself in a "cauld grue" by the perusal of the most hideous murder cases which the more sensational London papers could provide for the edification of their readers.

Yes, there certainly was never a dull moment with Ching-Lung aboard, and though his victims breathed sulphurous threats in the heat of the moment, everyone regarded the cheerful young Chinese with affection. Thurston surveyed him quizzically as he answered the bell, noting that Ching's snub nose was swollen and somewhat out of shape - the result of an argument with another Chinese member of the crew. "Bring me the Admiralty chart of Chinese waters, please, and then ask Mr. Horton to join me at breakfast in the saloon," Thurston told Ching-Lung.

Horton was the diver employed by Ferrers Lord. It is an amusing sidelight upon the somewhat rigid class distinctions of sixty years ago to find that Thurston had spent some time pondering over whether he was doing the right thing in inviting Horton to breakfast with him. "He admired Horton's sterling qualities, but he was considering how he should treat the diver." However, we are glad to say that Thurston's democratic instincts ultimately prevailed, as he felt that Horton "was not the sort of man to presume in any way". So we find the couple breakfasting in the luxurious surroundings of the submarine's saloon, and after the table had been cleared and cigars ignited, Thurston produced the strangely-inscribed ring for Horton's inspection. (We suspect that Rupert's dislike of dining alone was not his only reason for inviting Horton to breakfast - he was probably glad to have a little co-operation in solving the little puzzle with which Lord had presented him). And the old adage of two heads being better than one was proved correct - for a few calculations and measurements of latitudes and longitudes proved that the mysterious "Crimson Hill", whatever that might be, lay at a spot in the Yellow Sea and accordingly a course was set which would lead them to the locality. The voyage was not to be without incident, however. Flying along under water, the "Lord of the Deep" had passed up the Mozambique Channel, turned east on her way to China, and had left the Seychelle Islands behind her, when engine trouble compelled her to surface for repairs. (Ching-Lung seized the opportunity of trying his luck at fishing and succeeded in hauling aboard a giant conger eel, which he let loose in the galley to the consternation of Pierre Bovrille, the French cook). Then a raft was sighted, the occupant of which told an amazing tale of being the only survivor of a tramp steamer carrying a cargo of munitions to China. The ship had been fired on by a submarine, the cargo transferred, and the ship sunk by gunfire. ("Michael Scaroff, for a thousand pounds, sir!" cried Horton). Next, the "Lord of the Deep", lying surfaced while the engineers frantically toiled over the engine repairs, was attacked by Chinese pirates, who were finally beaten off after a desperate struggle. Repairs being finally completed, the

submarine submerged once more and proceeded on her way, in due course reaching the spot named in Lord's instructions. At seventy fathoms, she crept along, her searchlights boring through the undersea gloom, until Thurston uttered a cry and pointed forward. "There it is!"

The searchlights shone crimson on something ahead. It was a long, low mass, rising about twenty fathoms from the golden sand of the sea-bed. Two great flashing white eyes glared from its crimson sides. Well, the Crimson Hill (so named on account of a reddish weed growing thickly upon it) was a huge rock formation containing an enormous cavern to which admission was gained by an ingenious system of water-tight locks, and ventilated by colossal tubes rising to the surface, and also, needless to say, furnished with all mod. cons. - a typical Ferrers Lord retreat. Thurston & Co. were escorted through a maze of rocky galleries to a gigantic vaulted cavern, where Ferrers Lord greeted them. He gave his hand lazily to Thurston - and if the latter was expecting any congratulations, he was soon disillusioned.

"My dear fellow, you have made confoundedly bad time! What have you been doing? Why, you are days late!"

Poor Thurston! After coping with breakdowns, fighting off Chinese pirates, and enduring sundry other vicissitudes, as well as racking his brains unravelling cryptic messages which (it seemed to us) could just as easily have been written in plain English on paper, he must have felt rather annoyed at Lord's rather cavalier reception of him. But he forbore showing any annoyance, except for "answering curtly" that the engines had given trouble - "a bad breakdown". To which Lord's comment as "So I presume". Rather difficult, at times, was Mr. Lord! But if Thurston felt piqued, he soon forgot his grievances for fresh surprises awaited him. Lord ushered him into a lofty room, in which sat an old man of patriarchal aspect, whose long, silky beard, white as snow, fell far below his waist, and whose long white hair framed a dark and curiously wrinkled face. He turned at the sound of their entry and Rupert realised that Lord's strange guest was blind.

"Who is the stranger you bring with you, Ferrers Lord? I know by his step that he is young. Tell me is he brave?"

"As a lion, chief!"

"Good, good!" said the old man. "Then he shall hear. But tell me - what news do you bring?"

"Little, chief. Russia is plotting for herself. She wants China. Also, Scaroff is in these waters, and that means no good. It must be lion against bear! We must grapple with the bear, my father!"

The old man mused, stroking his beard. "Yes, yes. But you are too impetuous, my son. This young man, then, is your friend and ally. Is he worthy to have our confidence?"

"More than worthy, chief!"

"Then show him all, my son, and tell him all."

Rupert (who must have felt somewhat mollified at Lord's complimentary references) obeyed Lord's gesture and followed him from the room, wondering, no doubt, at Lord addressing the venerable personage as "chief". As the pair leaned over the gallery railing and lit cigars, Lord began his strange story.

"The man you have just seen, Rupert, is Ivan Scaroff, uncle of our friend Michael. Twenty years ago he was master of the vast estates and wealth which Michael now holds. He was one of the greatest men in Russia - the cleverest, and the most honourable. He chafed under the cruel tyranny of the Government and longed to free the miserable serfs, for he had lived in England, where every man is free and equal. Consequently, the Government hated and distrusted him.

"Michael was only twenty-one then, but he was greedy and shrewd. He plotted against his uncle - in fact, he headed a Government conspiracy against him. The base plan succeeded. Forged proofs were brought forward, showing that Ivan and his only son were plotting to murder the Tsar. The son was executed, but, fearing an uproar - for the people worshipped him - Ivan was sent to Siberia for life. Two years ago, he escaped into China and reached Peking. I met him there. The story of his terrible wrongs made me swear a vendetta against misgoverned Russia. He helped me with the plans of the "Lord of the Deep" - without his aid I might have failed. The Russian Government has a price on his head, but he is safe here. I never make a move without consulting him, for his knowledge is so great. He is the head of the largest secret society in the world and its aim is to put down oppression. In Russia alone, there are six million sworn members."

Thurston listened fascinatedly to Lord's narrative. Probably he was also mildly surprised to learn that at least one person existed whom the omnipotent Lord admitted as being his superior in some respects!

Meanwhile, Michael Scaroff was hard at work devising plans for Lord & Co's. destruction. We next see him hob-nobbing with the rascally Nathan Trethvick in the saloon of the "Tsaritza", cruising in the vicinity of Lord's undersea citadel. Trethvick, it will be recalled, was the one-time captain of the "Lord of the Deep" - a traitor in Scaroff's pay. The two worthies were awaiting a signal from a stooge who had been cunningly "planted" among the company of the "Lord of the Deep" - the supposed castaway who Thurston had rescued from a raft, and whose mission was to signal the location of Lord's craft to Scaroff. And the signal came - a second before Tom Prout had caught the traitor in the act and stretched him senseless with the blow of an iron fist. Shortly after, Scaroff launched an all-out blitz in the shape of a torpedo attack, but again the "Lord of the Deep" narrowly escaped. It was a nerve-racking ordeal, and when the danger had passed Thurston was glad of a stiff whisky as he sat with Lord in the saloon. Suddenly a sharp report echoed through the ship and Rupert started to his feet in alarm.

"What is that?" he cried.

Lord calmly examined his cigar.

"Oh," he answered with a lazy yawn, "I presume they have just shot your friend the castaway. Let us have a game of billiards."

Just like that! No mucking about for Ferrers Lord - though we could never quite fathom why the treacherous Nathan Trethvick escaped a similar fate.

Another surprise was awaiting Thurston when Lord off-handedly mentioned that his new submarine, the "Destroyer", was picking him up at midnight, and sharp at that hour he departed, telling Thurston to lie off Shanghai and wait for further instructions.

For several tedious days the "Lord of the Deep" lay off the great Chinese port and Thurston became more and more bored. Against his better judgement, he had yielded to the entreaties of Ching-Lung, Prout and Maddock and had given them shore leave, from which they had not returned, and he had uneasy visions of the trio painting the town red. Then the long awaited instructions from Ferrers Lord arrived.

"Ball at Russian Embassy tonight nine o'clock," (ran Lord's note). "Show your card, and you will be admitted. Bring six armed men to escort you back at midnight. Evince surprise at nothing you see or hear."

More mystery, thought Rupert! However, anything seemed better than cooling his heels on board the submarine, so giving orders that his dress suit be pressed and brushed, Rupert prepared for an evening of tripping the light fantastic. What the armed escort was for, he could not imagine, but at eight-forty-five the launch deposited the

party on the quay, where a carriage emblazoned with Lord's monogram waited in charge of a liveried servant, who escorted Thurston to the vehicle and informed him that his escort was to wait for orders from Ferrers Lord.

It was a gay and sparkling scene which greeted Rupert's eyes when he stepped out of the carriage in the beautiful gardens of the Russian Embassy. As he ascended the steps leading to the great ballroom he was surprised to see that two armed sentries guarded the door - and to his amazement he recognised one as Tom Prout. Before he had time to speculate on the oddness of Prout's presence the footman had taken his card and announced him, and he found himself in the ballroom in the midst of a gay throng of distinguished guests. Thurston was astonished to see the beautiful Lady Violet Westover, Lord's niece, but before he could approach her he was waylaid by the wife of the Russian Ambassador, who welcomed him effusively.

"I am charmed to meet you, M'sieu Thurston! Any friend of Prince Tu-Li-Hoan is not only my friend, but the friend of Russia! Ah, the dear prince - how he must love you! He called you his dear Rupert in his letter. He will arrive later, but we shall not wait for him before we begin dancing. Let me introduce you to Lady Deloraine - a fellow-countrywoman."

Thurston did his best to conceal his perplexity. How, he wondered, had the lady come to assume that he was a friend of this Prince Tu-Li-Hoan, whoever that gentleman might be? And why was Lady Violet Westover apparently sailing under false colours? And - good heavens! - who was the man who whirled past to the strains of a waltz, glancing over his partner's shoulder with a sneering smile at Thurston? It was - yes - it was none other than Michael Scaroff!

"Evince surprise at nothing you see or hear," Lord had said in his note. Thurston hoped that he wasn't appearing too astonished as he was introduced to "Lady Deloraine", and as they joined the throng of dancers Lady Violet Westover smiled at his evident puzzlement. As they whirled down the floor, Scaroff passed them with a mocking smile.

"What on earth does all this mean?" Rupert whispered. "It is all I can do to keep my hands off that fellow! How does he --"

"I had better explain to you while we dance," Lady Violet murmured. "We are almost the only English people here and we have been only invited as a blind. The rest are either French or Russian. This is not really a ball but a conspiracy. You know, perhaps, of the seething unrest in China, and that the life of a foreigner there is not worth a moment's purchase? But perhaps you do not know that Russia and France have secretly agreed to seize a large portion of Northern China, and that even now their invasion troops are waiting for the signal. Only one thing holds them back. The enormously rich and powerful Prince Tu-Li-Hoan, overlord of the Northern Provinces, has so far kept his provinces quiet through this terrible unrest, and has so far refused to join either the Empress or the Russians and their French allies, and is waiting to see which side bids highest for his support. We know, however, that the Russian Ambassador succeeded a few weeks ago, by the promise of payment of a colossal sum into Tu-Li-Hoan's coffers, in enlisting the Prince's support. He is arriving here tonight to ratify the agreement."

"Great Heavens!" Thurston gasped. "Then - all is lost for Britain in China!"

"Not yet - until the arrival of the Prince," replied his partner, with an enigmatic smile. "And he will arrive at any moment - and yet he will not arrive!"

As Thurston gazed at her in bewilderment, the music stopped. A hush descended over the crowded room and a voice announced in stentorian tones:

"His Highness Prince Tu-Li-Hoan and suite!"

There was a burst of cheering and clapping as the magnificently-attired dignitary was assisted from his litter by armed slaves. Thurston's view was obscured by the throng, but he saw, rather to his surprise, that this all-powerful overlord was not obese and elderly, as for some reason Rupert had pictured him, but a short, wiry, active-looking young man with a boyish face. He was not unlike Ching-Lung, Thurston thought, as he watched Tu-Li-Hoan descend from his litter and look gravely around. Thurston looked again - and his heart almost missed a beat. He started forward but was restrained by Lady Violet's hand upon his arm. "Quiet!" she whispered. He looked down at her in amazement, his brain in a whirl.

Prince Tu-Li-Hoan, overlord of the Northern Provinces, who held the fate of China and the lives of millions in his hands, and who had apparently thrown in his limitless power and influence on the side of the despotic Russian Bear, was - Ching-Lung!

Thurston was dumbfounded. Was the cheerful, prank-loving Ching-Lung merely playing a part? Was this the jape to end all japes? Or, horrible thought! Had his cheery, fun-loving disposition been cunningly assumed, and had he been acting as a spy all the time he had been on the "Lord of the Deep"? Rupert watched spellbound as Tu-Li-Hoan walked towards the distinguished throng. From then on, bedlam reigned. To the amazement of the Countess Maravitch, wife of the Russian Ambassador, the Prince chucked that august personage under her chin, embraced her with gusto, refused her stammered invitation to partake of champagne and called for beer instead; decapitated one of his attendants with a sweep of his sword for spilling beer on the floor (the headless "corpse" immediately walked away, while the ladies fainted in dozens at the uncanny sight), then, calling for Tom Prout, he jammed a hat on that surprised individual's head, and removed it to reveal Tom's bald cranium sprouting a magnificent crop of carrot hair. Then, thrusting the flabbergasted seaman into the arms of the speechless Countess and menacing the pair with his sword, he commanded them to dance and called on the amazed guests to follow suit. Tu-Li-Hoan himself glided around the floor with Lady Violet and Rupert saw that the pair were deep in conversation as they whirled down the ballroom. He could not restrain a chuckle at the sight of the ambassador's wife puffing and panting as she was literally hauled around the floor by Tom Prout, who was protesting that he's never danced a step in his life. Then Rupert tensed as he saw the Prince deliberately trip Michael Scaroff, and the Russian measured his length on the floor, to arise livid with rage. Tu-Li-Hoan clapped his hands and in a flash four of his attendants grasped the Russian.

"Apologise, foreign devil! You have insulted a prince of the royal blood! Miserable scoundrel! Here, Fat-Fin-Yow - take this sword and cut off his head!"

In an instant the Countess was kneeling before him. "For mercy's sake, your Highness," she wailed "think what you do! Apologise, Scaroff, for Heaven's sake! It was an accident, your Highness."

Scaroff, trembling with fear and rage, mumbled an apology and stroke away, followed by the Countess. Thurston shrank back and concealed himself amongst the palms as the pair stopped near him.

"We must be wary!" Scaroff whispered. "Though he looks like a boy and acts like a mountebank with his insane juggling tricks, he is as cunning as a fox. We must put up with his foolery with as good grace as we can. Remember the limitless power he possesses. He must be swung our way at all costs. Your husband is only a few hours behind him - they dared not arrive together for the place swarms with British spies. He says he intends to return home at dawn. It is win or lose now!"

"Then you lose!" cried a deep voice. "You are fooled, my dear Scaroff! The Lion wins!"

The Russian spun round and then reeled back. Ferrers Lord stood beside him, with folded arms. He was in evening dress, and a tinge of colour glowed on his cheeks.

"Beaten - and at your own game!" he said with a laugh. "Prince Tu-Li-Hoan died a week ago. Here is his nephew and heir, Prince Ching-Lung. And remember, my vanquished foe, that Ching-Lung is no crawling, treacherous, corrupted Chinaman - though his skin is yellow, his heart is white and he is British to the core!"

Exit Michael Scaroff, gnashing his teeth and gnawing his moustache!

Yes, it was the grand finale to an amazing evening - and to top everything off, the irrepressible Ching-Lung forced the orchestra to strike up the British National Anthem. And so, to the strains of "God Save The King", Ferrers Lord, Thurston, and Ching-Lung departed, escorted by the armed party headed by Prout and Ben Maddock. It was a victory indeed!

However, they had no time to rest on their laurels. Awaiting Lord was a message which called for instant action.

"Ten thousand Russian troops making for Kwai-Hal to help crush rebellion. Many loyalists beginning to despair, thinking Ching-Lung dead. Rumoured Scaroff will meet Russian army at Kwai-Hal and take command. Strike at once, or lose all."

Well, it was obvious that unless Prince Ching-Lung speedily appeared on the scene to boost morale, things were going to be somewhat sticky. But the question was - how? Kwai-Hal was some hundreds of miles away. But Lord, needless to say, had the answer. Apparently foreseeing some such emergency, he had a balloon in readiness (we can hardly give him credit for arranging for the wind to be blowing in the direction of Kwai-Hal, but anyway, it was) and in about two pips of a bosun's whistle the giant gas-bag was soaring up into the night, with Lord, Thurston, Ching-Lung, Prout and Maddock in the basket. It was a nightmare voyage and it very nearly ended in the party vanishing in a whiff of incandescent gas when they missed dropping into the crater of the erupting volcano Kwailienhun by the proverbial hairsbreadth. On they flew, borne on the gale, grazing mountain ranges, drenched, frozen and buffeted, until finally, in the first dim light of dawn, the leaking balloon drifted slowly to earth many miles short of their destination. Fortunately they had landed near a railroad, and in no time they captured a train bound for Kwai-Hal, and before the forces surrounding the besieged city had recovered from the shock of being sprayed with machine-gun fire from the train, our adventurers were inside the town.

The days of bitter fighting which followed, culminating in the rout of the combined Russian and rebel Chinese forces, and the deaths of the treacherous Nathan Trethvick and Lord's arch-enemy, Prince Michael Scaroff - all this would take too long to record in detail here. The author's practice of describing every event in detail ("Lion Against Bear" occupies 120 pages of minute print in No. 33 of the old "Boys' Friend 3d. Library") is such that it is impossible to do more than attempt a summary of the story in an article such as this. But there are one or two highlights in the climax of this epic yarn which stand out - for instance, Ching-Lung's ascent in a giant man-carrying kite, bearing a bomb with which he destroyed a field-gun which was harassing the defenders (incidentally, since being elevated to the rank of a prince, Ching seems to have acquired a fount of English "pure and undefiled", which he probably possessed all the time but forbore to use while playing the role of a servant. Anyhow, he only occasionally lapsed back into pidgin English, which became somewhat tiresome on occasions - it must have irritated Ferrers Lord too, who told him tersely to "stop that confounded gibberish"). The end of the arch-plotter Scaroff, who met his fate by being sucked down into a whirlpool while attempting to cross the river in the retreat of his routed army, is a grimly descriptive piece of writing. Strangely enough, (continued on page 128).....