

COLLECTORS 1967 DIGEST 1967 15 ANNUAL



W. H. W. 1967



Collectors' Digest

CHRISTMAS 1967

Annual

TWENTY - FIRST YEAR

Editor: ERIC FAYNE, Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey, England.***

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Way back in October, Collectors' Digest came of age. Now Collectors' Digest Annual reaches its 21st edition. It was in December 1947 that Herbert Leckenby offered us the first edition. It is very probable that, had someone suggested to him that twenty years on the Annual would see its 21st edition, he would have been mildly incredulous. He would have been amazed at the idea that, twenty editions later, the contributors to the Annual are still able to provide new subjects for thought and discussion, new slants on old themes, new points of appeal.

As the various editions of the Annual have slid away to provide milestones down the years, an avenue into the past, that first edition of 1947 has become a valuable collectors' piece while the Annual has lived on to become a legend in its own lifetime. And, most remarkable of all, the Annual is even more popular today than it has ever been.

We have happy, grateful memories of Herbert Leckenby and of those people who worked so hard at the start of it all.

Coming back to the present, we offer sincere thanks to our contributors who have made this 21st edition possible, giving us their time and the skilful use of their pens. We warmly thank our advertisers who have supported us so substantially and so loyally. If you can help any of our advertisers to obtain some items they are seeking, you will be expressing materially your appreciation and our own.

We thank York Duplicating Services who put unstinted hard work, skill, and artistry into producing a finished volume of which we can all be proud. This wonderful firm has served us with splendid devotion as the years have slipped by.

Last, but not least, we thank our readers for whom nothing can be too good. The 21st edition of Collectors' Digest Annual is due, in no small way, to the affection and encouragement of its fine band of supporters.

Before you start on your long browse through this book, I only have to wish you all the loveliest Christmas in your memories, and the most prosperous of New Years.

Your sincere friend,

Eric Fayne

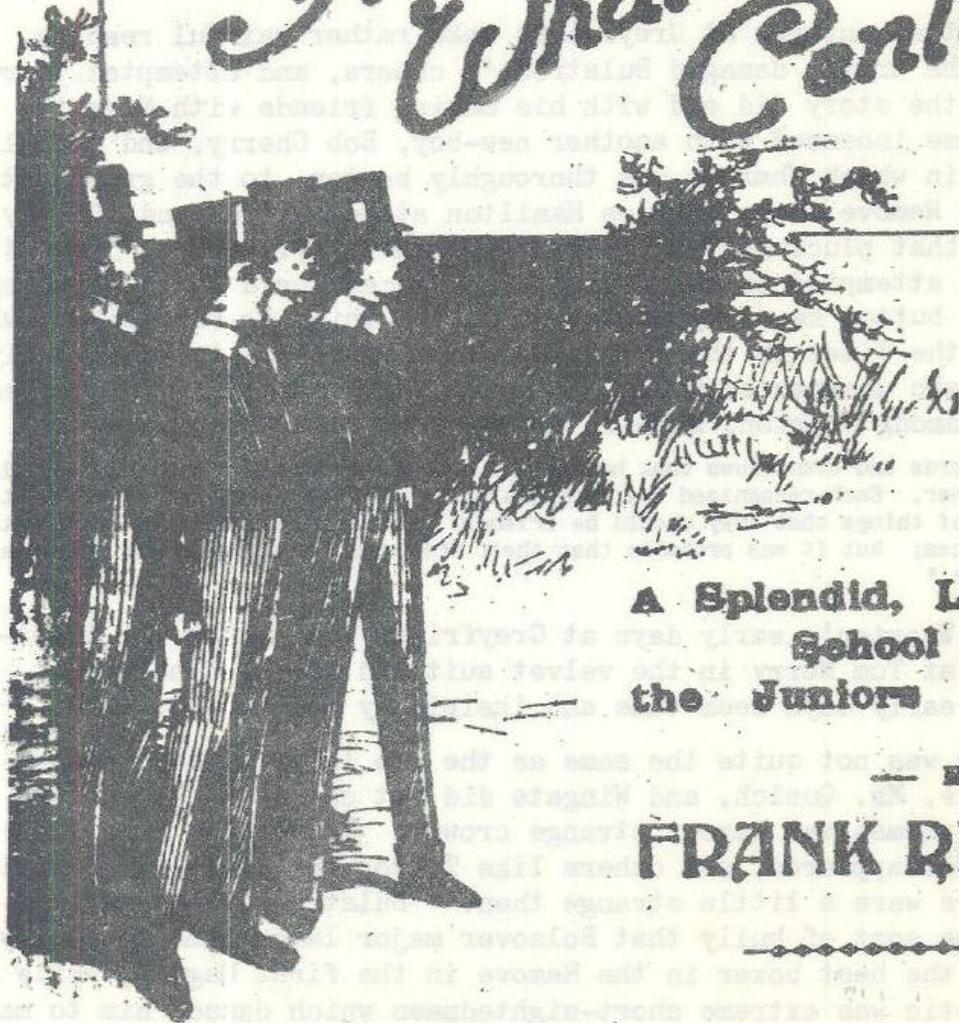
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The Editor will be obliged if you will hand this book, when finished with, to a friend.

Harry Wharton's Century



A Splendid, Long, Complete
School Tale of
the Juniors of Greyfriars.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

The Making of Harry Wharton

A review of early Magnets

By Roger M. Jenkins

* * * * *

Since the reprinting of Magnet No. 1, the famous opening words of Colonel Wharton - "Send Master Harry to me" - have deservedly achieved another wide audience. Similarly, the first description of Harry Wharton himself has been recognised as a just forecast of future events:-

"A handsome, well-built lad, finely-formed, strong and active. Handsome indeed was the face with its well-marked features and large dark eyes. But there was a cloud upon it, a cloud that seemed habitual there, and in the dark eyes was a glint of suspicion and defiance."

This was a far call from the carefree Jack Blake of St. Jim's and Tom Merry of Clavering College. It was a hero with a difference, a hero who was destined never to be pushed into the background by more arresting characters. It was almost a pre-view of the modern anti-hero.

Harry Wharton's first adventures at Greyfriars make rather painful reading. He fought with Nugent on the train, damaged Bulstrode's camera, and attempted to run away from school (though the story did end with his making friends with Nugent). The following week he became incensed with another new-boy, Bob Cherry, and the climax of the story was a fight in which Wharton was thoroughly beaten, to the great satisfaction of almost all the Remove. As Charles Hamilton stated at the end, "Harry Wharton had yet to learn that pluck must be allied with chivalry." Nos. 3 and 4 dealt with Hazeldene, who attempted to ruin Wharton's chances for a Latin prize by cutting off the waistcoat button he always toyed with when thinking (an episode which led to correspondence in the Times in the 1950's). When Bulstrode tried to bully Hazeldene it was Wharton who unexpectedly came to Hazeldene's rescue, which helped to cement the friendship among Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry:-

"In spite of hot words and even blows that had passed between them, the three juniors felt themselves drawn together. Each recognised sterling qualities in the others, and it seemed to be just in the fitness of things that they should be friends. Probably more than one storm still lay ahead in wait for them; but it was probable that their friendship would grow all the same, and become a lasting one."

There is a realism about Wharton's early days at Greyfriars that makes the light-hearted mockery directed at Tom Merry in the velvet suit and the good-natured pranks of Jimmy Silver's early days seem tame and insipid by comparison.

The Greyfriars scene was not quite the same as the one later readers became accustomed to. Dr. Locke, Mr. Quelch, and Wingate did not change much over the years, but the Removites themselves were a strange crowd. There were ones like Hughes and King who soon disappeared, and others like Trevor who became nonentities, but even famous characters were a little strange then. Bulstrode, the leading light in the form, was the sort of bully that Bolsover major later came to typify. Nugent was introduced as the best boxer in the Remove in the first Magnet, while Bunter's main characteristic was extreme short-sightedness which caused him to make offensive remarks to juniors under the impression that he was addressing some-one

else - thus giving rise to his catch-phrase "I'm sincerely sorry." Hazeldene was nick-named Vaseline because of his slimy ways, and indeed he was stated to be indifferent to people's opinions of him, but generally cowardly in action, though ever ready to create mischief, rather like Skinner of more recent times. It was probably Bob Cherry who appeared to change least over the years, for right at the beginning we were told:-

"He was a finely-built, nimble lad, with shoulders well set back, and head well poised. His hair was thick and curly, and he wore his cap stuck on the back of it. His face could not be called exactly handsome, but it was so pleasant that it did you good to look at it."

Incidentally, it was Bob Cherry who saw Hazeldene's photograph of his sister Marjorie in Magnet No. 2, and was smitten with admiration.

Wharton was recognised as leader in No. 5 when he took charge after Marjorie was kidnapped by gipsies in a somewhat far-fetched episode, and in the same number he also made his peace with Mr. Quelch:-

"I knew there was good in that lad from the beginning, in spite of appearances,' Mr. Quelch murmured to himself. 'I was right! Unless I am greatly mistaken, he will be a credit to Greyfriars.'"

The following week Hurree Singh arrived with the rest of the aliens, but before the somewhat tedious tales of rivalry and ragging took over, Wharton succeeded in defeating Bulstrode in a fight. As a result Bulstrode left study No. 1 to the Famous Four and Bunter.

In Magnet No. 9 came the famous meeting with Nadesha the gipsy, who told Harry Wharton's fortune. He was stated to be proud and reserved and hot-tempered, not always just, and sometimes taking offence for a trifle. She went on:-

"Hot and wilful and reckless,' murmured the gipsy, half to herself; 'but sound at heart, high-spirited, a born leader of boys, and then of men. Yet your life may be wrecked, and, if so, the danger will come from yourself - from your own temper and impatience.'

The map of Harry Wharton's future was being unrolled before the reader's eyes, but it is likely that very few readers of the Magnet in 1908 would still be taking the paper in the 1924-35 period when Nadesha's prophecies were being fulfilled to the letter.

The next important stage in Wharton's career was the election of a form cricket captain in Magnet No. 10. The junior team had been largely under Temple's control previously, and the Remove had not had much of a look in. Wharton suggested that the Remove should form its own team to play outside fixtures, and for the captaincy three candidates emerged - Bulstrode, Wharton, and Cherry. Wharton, who had had to be dragged down to the football field in his early days, made a fine cricketer:-

"You'll do,' said the captain of Greyfriars. 'If the Remove don't make you cricket captain, Wharton, it won't be because your cricket is wanting.'

Harry flushed a little. He understood what was implied by the college captain's words. His cricket was all that could be asked, and if he had taken a little more trouble to make himself popular, he would have been sure of the captaincy."

Bulstrode had few supporters, and it was agreed that Wharton and Cherry should captain a team against each other, the captain of the winning team to become cricket captain of the form. Needless to say, Wharton won, but the situation held the seeds of many future troubles, Cherry being more popular but too easy-going, and Wharton being more determined but too inclined to be sensitive, proud, and resentful.

The Magnet being a halfpenny paper in 1908, the stories were of course far

shorter than those in contemporary Gems. With only nine or ten chapters at his disposal each week, it was difficult for Charles Hamilton to keep each story self-contained, and, though series as such were rare in those early days, there were often occasions when little episodes were mentioned one week and cleared up later on. One such episode was Hazeldene's financial troubles. This was to be a familiar theme in later Magnets but in No. 12 it showed Wharton in a completely new light. For Marjorie Hazeldene's sake, Wharton gave up the idea of buying a new cricket bat, and had two unpleasant interviews with Mr. Isaacs the moneylender as well as pawning his watch, in order to settle Hazeldene's debt. This was the first time that Wharton went out of his way to do someone a good turn.

Wharton's love of music was stressed in No. 15, when he described how his uncle took him to London:-

"And last evening we went to the opera."

"My hat!"

Wharton coloured a little.

"You know I am a little bit musical," he said modestly; "as a matter of fact, that night at the opera was a greater treat to me than anything else I saw in town."

This all resulted in a Remove performance of "Carmen," and interest in dramatics was sustained the following week when a play was rehearsed to be performed at Wharton Lodge. The importance of Wharton Lodge as a holiday centre was stressed right from the start, and here Charles Hamilton avoided the mistake he made in the Gem. Huckleberry Heath, Tom Merry's home, was run by two elderly eccentric spinners, Miss Fawcett and Hannah, and it was all amusing in its way, but the reader had no feeling of cosy intimacy such as Wharton Lodge provided. Eastwood House was the nearest approach to a real holiday centre that the Gem possessed; but it had the disadvantage that it was not the home of the hero of the stories or even of one of his study-mates. As the Terrible Three were always guests there, this led to a feeling of vastness and remoteness. Wharton Lodge was ideal, and it kept the stories centred on the hero from the beginning to the end. Incidentally, it is interesting to note Charles Hamilton's comment in No. 17 when the Removites chucked the brake as it rolled off:-

"Harry Wharton had won the affection and the respect of his comrades. He had won it by first winning a victory over himself. Sometimes, perhaps, the old obstinacy, the old uncertain and wayward temper, showed itself, and seemed to hint that the passionate nature was still there, but slumbering. But Harry was popular now, and was hailed almost unanimously as captain of the Remove."

Charles Hamilton had too sound a knowledge of human nature to show a complete change of character: his characters who reformed always did so over a period of time, and they always retained some of their earlier characteristics.

So far, it was other people who had been obliged to put up with Wharton. Now, in Magnet No. 18, with the arrival of Ernest Levison, a completely new twist was given to the situation. The Ernest Levison at Greyfriars bore little resemblance to the Ernest Levison that later turned up at St. Jim's, although they were intended to be one and the same character. Levison's main characteristic at Greyfriars was one of suspicion and a delight in making taunting remarks. Harry Wharton's attempt to go out of his way to show the new boy a kindness surprised Nugent:-

"Fetch him in by all means, Harry, if you like."

Harry Wharton coloured a little.

"It's not so long since I was a new boy myself," he said.

"I wasn't the easiest fellow to get on with myself, then, but there was a chap here who stood by me like a Briton."

Standing by Levison, however, was an uphill task. Harry Wharton suffered a series

of rebuffs which often made him lose his temper, but he persisted in his self-appointed task. One of the most astonishing incidents was in No. 21 when they rescued Levison from the gipsies, and instead of receiving gratitude they were reproached for letting the gipsy get clear with his watch and his money.

Wharton's first real challenge as leader of the Remove took place when Mr. Chesham became form-master in Nos. 23-25, the first series in the Magnet. Mr. Chesham was a faddist, who believed that boys should exist on a spare diet, and he had other odd ideas, such as wearing night-caps in bed. The series was a most interesting development of a situation which was neither trivial (like the horse-play with the aliens) nor melodramatic (like the episodes about the gipsies). The matter was complicated by the fact that Mr. Chesham was not a tyrant and was essentially kind-hearted, though mistaken in his ideas. Wharton's attempts to lead the form's resistance were determined, but not invariably successful, and Mr. Chesham's regime collapsed by accident and not as a result of Wharton's opposition. It was a situation which was in its way very true to life, and Wharton's failure to achieve a complete victory made it all seem very credible and realistic.

Wharton's character was now etched quite clearly in the reader's mind, though the picture was still being filled out with small details. In No. 53, for example, Bunter's mastery of ventriloquism made it appear that Wharton was bidding £110 for a schooner at an auction, and at that price it was knocked down to him. A hasty trip to Wharton Lodge was sufficient to persuade the Colonel not only to pay up but also to agree that the vessel be used for the Greyfriars sea-cadets. Wharton's wealth was never really stressed in the Magnet, but Colonel Wharton's implicit faith in his nephew was made clear to all.

By this time the various facets of Wharton's character were fully displayed, and, unlike Bunter for example, his personality soon developed to its final state. It was a novel development in school stories for the hero to have such a flaw in his character, and when I put this point to Charles Hamilton some years ago he wrote to me as follows:-

"Harry Wharton's character was drawn from life: and to tell the truth I was a little dubious about it at first, but finally decided to depict him just as he was: for after all, there were plenty of faultless heroes about, and real human nature has an appeal. It certainly is possible to be very much attached to a friend who may have quite serious faults which may sometimes cause rifts in the lute. Moreover there was, in Wharton's character, one of those moral lessons which Frank Richards simply couldn't help passing on to his young readers. Everybody, I suppose, has known a fellow who has a slight disposition to sulk, and mistake it for righteousness. This tendency can be cured if taken early enough: and it seemed to me that Wharton's little weaknesses might be more instructive than the complete goodness which, I fear, generally fails to ring the bell. There is the same idea, though in a very different form, in the character of Lovell in the Rockwood stories. Are there not many fellows who, being assured that they know best, are liable to be a little overbearing?"

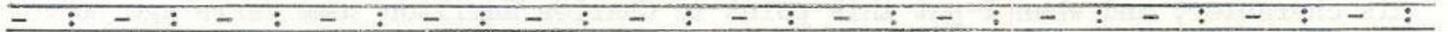
There can be no doubt that Wharton's touchiness, his bad temper, and his pride, though only occasionally manifested, were sufficient to bring a depth of feeling to the Greyfriars stories that was never engendered in any other Hamilton school. The relationship of the Famous Five to one another was more solid because it recognised the complex nature of life and human contacts. Tom Merry in his velvet suit arrived at St. Jim's accompanied by his freakish guardian, whereas Harry Wharton was full of resentment and ill-temper, though he travelled alone, because his uncle knew he could trust him to keep his word. Much about the St. Jim's cast seemed trivial when compared with Greyfriars. Why was it, then, that the blue Gem was so superior to the red Magnet?

The answer lies first of all in the length of the stories. When the Magnet began as a halfpenny paper, the Gem began a new series as a penny paper, and there

is no doubt that the blue Gem was given prior attention. The short Magnet stories of 1908 gave the author little room to spread himself or to develop a secondary plot. Secondly, after the early character study of Wharton was completed, the Magnet seemed to lose much of its impetus, and get marooned in backwaters, publishing inconsequential, episodic stories that had a certain amount of charm but no real drive. Very few red Magnet stories ran over into a series, whereas the blue Gem abounded in such long tales.

The complicated relationships between Wharton and Hazeldene (and later with Vernon-Smith), which had such dramatic promise, were in being in quite early days, but oddly enough their potential was never properly realised until the nineteen-twenties, and if Rookwood had not ended and the Gem had not been handed over to the substitute writers, it is doubtful whether the personal feuds at Greyfriars that made such fine reading would ever have been written at all.

So we are left with the early Greyfriars cast possessing great potential but not very often being called upon to act to the limit of their ability, whereas the St. Jim's players have a limited talent but a full range of dramatic material on hand - a very paradoxical situation indeed. This is why I said, some years ago, that the red Magnets are mainly of historical interest, and that few people would be bothered with them today if the Magnet had perished in those far-off times. As it is, however, those of us who are familiar with the fascinating tales of the Golden Age can look back on the early stories with an added interest, to see how skilfully Charles Hamilton laid the foundations of the later stories. It is, indeed, a tribute to his genius that he took such pains in presenting characters who were originally intended to feature in merely a second-rate production. In later years, when Greyfriars flowered so magnificently, he must surely have been extremely thankful that he had taken so much trouble in depicting the Making of Harry Wharton.



DO NOT MISS :-

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by

Geoffrey Jaggard

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The Boy's Magazine

By Frank Lay

The Boy's Magazine or "Pink 'Un" as it was affectionately known to its admirers (not to be confused with the racing paper perhaps even more affectionately known as the "Pink 'Un") was one of the most popular Boys' papers of its day. Its bright attractive cover printed in Red and Blue on Pink paper made it stand out on the magazine racks and its size, smaller than a Magnet but larger than the Nelson Lee was a most convenient one. The first issue was dated 27 Feb. 1922 and it ran for 620 issues until 20th Jan. 1934. It was first published by Edward Hulton and as far as I know was their only publication in the boys' market until its success emboldened them to issue a companion paper called Pals. No. 1 was dated 9th Oct. 1922. Although the contents of this latter paper were very similar it did not catch on and only lasted until No. 17 of its second series (19th Nov. 1923). Possibly its size which was at first similar to the Boys Friend was a drawback, as I well remember as a lad always regarding the size of the Boys Friend as a nuisance and if it was a question of what to spend spare coppers on the Boys Friend was seldom the choice. The reduction to a smaller size with No. 43 (No. 1, 2nd series) came too late and no doubt the success of the rival Champion which started on 28th Jan. 1922 was partly responsible as at this period the Champion had the largest circulation of any paper, only to be beaten in later years by the School Friend. This girls' paper I believe holds the record for the largest circulation of any boys'/girls' paper.

Although many of the contributors to both papers were anonymous sufficient were named to give an idea of the quality of authors employed. The mainstay was undoubtedly John Hunter. Hardly an issue but contained either a serial of his, or a short story but it was no doubt the success of many of his serials which made the paper.

At this time competition was fierce. The Amalgamated Press was leading with the Champion and the new papers from the house of Thomson, Adventure, Rover and Wizard were all competing for the weekly coppers, and it was a lucky boy who could afford to buy more than one paper each week. The policy of the Boys' Magazine, as I remember it, seemed to be a bit more mysterious, more weird and macabre, more fantastic than the others and this suited John Hunter's unusual talents down to the ground. He was never better than when he was allowed to give free rein to his undoubted imagination. Some of his efforts in this direction make James Bond seem very small fry indeed. In my humble opinion if John Hunter had persevered more on the adult market he could have been a very serious rival for Edgar Wallace. Their style of writing had a lot in common and one of his best yarns "The Three Crows" serialised in The Detective Weekly could well have been written by Wallace at his best.

Hunter's first serials were "The Lure of the Lost Land" (Nos. 1-13) and its sequel "Secret of Crossbones Island" (Nos. 14-27) and these stories had everything - a marvellous submarine, a lost civilization, real blood-thirsty pirates (I even remember the name of the pirate-in-chief Captain De'Ath) mediaeval tortures - everything to gladden the hearts of the blood-thirsty young rips we were. I well remember the joy of walking five miles to get my copy of the paper on a Friday when it was not supposed to appear until Saturday just so long as I did not have to wait

so long to read the next instalment.

Another popular author was John Chancellor whose racing serials Top-Speed (Nos. 9 - 30) and Break-neck Barrington (commenced No. 40) were real hum-dingers. Mention must be made of a serial "The Wireless Pirates" by Robert Blake. I do not know who this author was but there is a strong resemblance to that very famous "Scout" serial by Rupert Chesterton "The Phantom Battleship."

In 1927 Edwy Searles Brooks contributed his famous story-serial The Planet Schoolboys (Nos. 278-291), which was later revised and published under his pen-name of Reginald Brown by Gerald G. Swan Ltd. as "The School in Space." I think there are other writings of his as when tackled on the subject he replied "he believed he wrote quite a bit for them but couldn't remember the details." There was certainly plenty of room for his vivid imagination and at this time he was at the height of his powers in so far as the fantastic school-story went.

One of the most popular features was Falcon Swift the monocled detective and his assistant Chick Conway. As these stories ran through almost from start to finish it is possible that they were written by several authors as no authors' names were ever mentioned and there is considerable variation in style between many of the stories. We do know one of them was H. Wedgwood Delfield a regular B.M. contributor. Falcon Swift was possibly the most versatile of all the detectives of fiction - a real super-man - equally at home in the boxing ring as he was "out West" fighting Indians and breaking in bucking bronchos! In his 600 odd appearances there is very little he didn't succeed in doing - I cannot remember him making a voyage into space but wouldn't like to take any bets that he didn't! Anyway he always managed to be topical with Cup Final mysteries, Boat Race mysteries, Election scares, and on one occasion I believe he played in a Test Match. I remember being amused at seeing him fighting in the boxing ring for the heavy-weight championship still sporting his monocle!

Another popular series were the stories of the Famous Four by Ross Harvey - one of the leading characters was a Hindu called "Inky" and others were Algernon Lamb and the Hon. Jimmy Etherington. They can scarcely be said to be "original" creations.

At some date I have never been able to ascertain exactly Hulton's disposed of their interest to Allied Newspapers of Withy Grove, Manchester, and it was finally taken over by the Amalgamated Press but never published under their imprint. In the last issue readers were asked to buy the Champion the following week. Later we find some of the serials turning up in the Boys' Friend Library; for instance Dare-devil Trent by Stanton Doyle (No. 169 2nd series) originally published in Boys Magazine Nos. 1-18.

One other factor that undoubtedly helped in its early success was the series of photo-cards presented each week. At that time card collecting was extremely popular and many of the papers were using it as a sales-promotion gimmick. I have before me as I write a photo-card No. 46 Famous Football Captains presented with No. 46 of the Champion Dec. 9th, 1922. As I recollect the cards given with the Boys Magazine were very good indeed and I kept for many years cards of Jack Hobbs, Jack Dempsey, Charles Carpentier, Jimmy Wilde, Joe Beckett, Kid Lewis and Cecil Parkin.

In 1932 when one imagines things were beginning to be difficult there was a series of five Boys Magazine Wonder Books as follows:- 1. Football Hints and Information, 2. Working Model Making, 3. Armies of the Ages, 4. Ships of the Seven Seas and 5. Explorers and Adventurers. One imagines this idea was taken from the

very fine series of booklets given with the Boys Friend in 1924 and 1925 which I think were the best of their kind ever done, but perhaps we'll talk of these another time.

From time to time when copies of the Boys' Magazine have come to me I have attempted to recapture from their pages some of the old magic that used to hold me so enthralled but, alas in vain - it is no longer there for an adult mind to appreciate. They were boys' stories written down to boys' levels, full of excitement and daring but completely unbelievable now. There is none of the magic of Hamilton and Brooks and Talbot Baines Reed and as stories they are best forgotten save in so far as the nostalgia for past joys will live in our minds for ever.

* * * * *

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO CLUB MEMBERS EVERYWHERE FROM ALL AT "FRIARDALE."
 Current wants are: MAGNETS 1527, 1541, 1543/4, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1579, 1581/2, 1590, 1610/1, 1627/8, 1658/9. POPULARS from 19th May 1917/1918; Nos. 241, 244, 252, 256/8, 262, 264/5, 268. NELSON LEE 1927 Nos. 41/43; 1930 No. 28; 1931 No. 93.
 Any old Collectors' Digests in reasonable condition.

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A MERRY XMAS to all C.D. Readers everywhere, especially ye Editor and Collectors who have helped "swell" my collection! Still require Black Bess 2d. Library; Early Magnets; Boys' Friend; Gems; Populars.

STUART WHITEHEAD, 12 WELLS RD., FAKENHAM, NORFOLK.

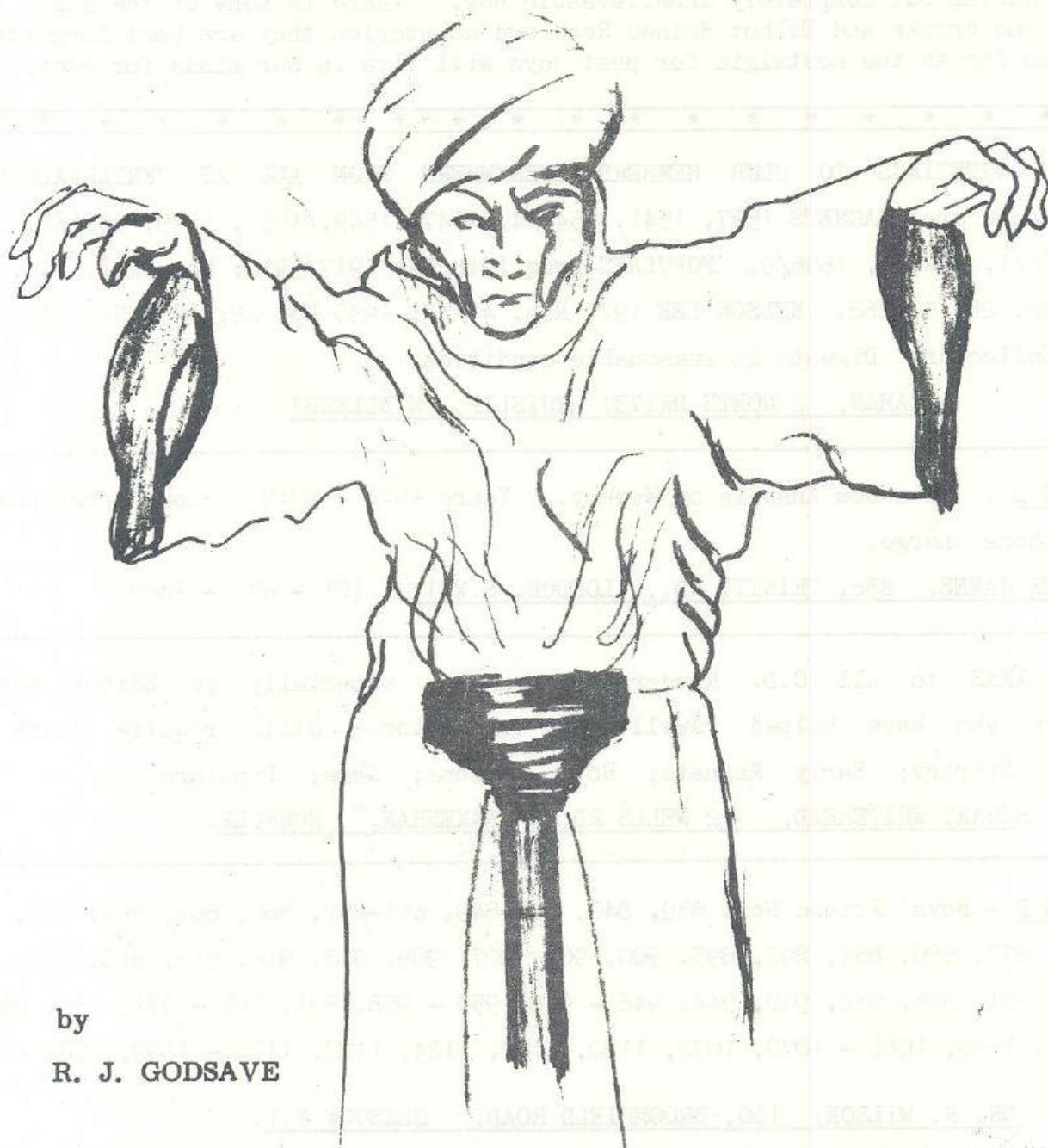
W A N T E D - Boys' Friend Nos. 839, 840, 842-849, 851-857, 860, 862, 865, 871, 872, 874, 877, 880, 884, 892, 893, 900, 903, 907, 909, 913, 914, 916, 919, 925, 929, 930, 931, 935, 936, 940, 944, 946 - 948, 950 - 958, 961, 965 - 971, 986, 992, 996, 1048, 1050, 1066 - 1070, 1072, 1120, 1122, 1124, 1127, 1194 - 1199, 1201 - 1203.

DR. R. WILSON, 100, BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW N.1.

W A N T E D - Early copies of "Sun" and "Comet" (up to 1956); early copies of "Super Detective Library" (Nos. 1 - 60) and "Thriller Comic Library" (Nos. 1-50); and early S.B.L. 3rd series (Nos. 1 - 80) in good condition only. Preferably excellent.

LOWDER, "EYETHERMES," CRADLEY, near MALVERN, WORCS.

Dr. Karnak



by
R. J. GODSAVE

The Dr. Karnak series like that of Ezra Quirke is one of the highlights of the Nelson Lee saga. In the writing of occult phenomena E. S. Brooks excelled.

This series commenced with No. 448 o.s. "The School Museum Mystery" early in January 1924. The recent discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb by Lord Carnarvon

and Mr. Howard Carter was fresh in the public's mind, making this series extremely topical.

As one of the leading authorities on Egyptology, Dr. Karnak had been appointed curator and librarian of the museum at St. Frank's. Many valuable relics from Egypt were on exhibition including a splendidly preserved mummy, complete in its sarcophagus - this latter being an elaborately carved stone coffin, in a wonderful state of preservation. The mummy itself, that of an ancient Egyptian prince or king, was one of the finest to be seen.

Hitherto, the museum had been just a private collection and hobby of the Head's. But now it was taking on a greater importance, and even had a curator of its own.

On the first day of the new term many of the St. Frank's scholars would arrive at Victoria Station in London to take the morning express down to Sussex. Cecil De Valerie of the Remove was one of these, but owing to it being a foggy morning he soon got lost in the side roads near the station. With the fog hemming him in on all sides, he paused uncertainly as he stood there, wondering if he had taken the wrong direction by mistake.

Something soft and warm rubbed against his legs. Dimly through the mist he beheld a cat - but a cat of unusual size and colour. It was a kind of yellow with black spots. De Valerie walked away a few paces hoping to get rid of this unwelcome companion. But as he walked away the strange cat walked with him continually rubbing against his legs, its tail raised, and was purring loudly. Bending down he could see that the creature was no ordinary cat, but more like a small leopard, or some such specimen of the feline tribe. Suddenly, the cat gave a sudden leap and landed firmly on the junior's chest - its two front paws clawing at his shoulders.

The animal's purring was tremendously loud now that it was at such close quarters. It clung there, a dead weight on De Valerie's chest. He felt, somehow, that in spite of the cat's affection it was deadly dangerous in reality.

He was so alarmed that he shouted for help, and was relieved to see a man loom out of the fog making curious sounds with his mouth. The stranger uttered a cry of joy as he towered over the junior. And then with the breath hissing between his teeth, he gave a sharp, swift command - in a tongue that was foreign to the junior. The effect on the cat was magical, without a second's hesitation it dropped on the ground and crouched on the pavement at the stranger's feet.

De Valerie found himself looking at the man and saw at once that this newcomer was a foreigner. He was dressed smartly, his face was clean-shaven, but his skin was swarthy, and he had a cast of features that was new to him.

Apologising for the cat's behaviour, the stranger glancing at De Valerie's cap badge introduced himself as Dr. Karnak the new science master - also librarian and curator of the St. Frank's museum.

Owing to the fog both Dr. Karnak and De Valerie found it necessary to catch a later train. At Dr. Karnak's invitation De Valerie accompanied the new science master to his rooms which were close by. As Dr. Karnak put it, they would spend the time interestingly. A quick summons to the Serval cat caused it to give one leap and nestled inside Dr. Karnak's coat.

St. Frank's hummed with activity on the first day of the term. After tea, Dr. Karnak was in attendance in the museum. He affected a curious style of dress, wearing black sombre garments, with a great flowing necktie, and a turban. He spoke to the juniors who were in the museum - mainly from curiosity - and hoped they would become keen students of Egyptology, and with him delve into the subtle depths of ancient Egyptian magic and sorcery.

Such fellows as Nipper & Co. Handforth and Pitt were indignant that Dr. Karnak should believe in magic and witchcraft. He informed the boys that the relics from Egypt were not to be lightly regarded, and that it was against his wish that the mummy of Baal was brought to the school.

Dr. Karnak explained that the mummy was the corpse of a great and wondrous Egyptian sorcerer who lived many thousand years ago, and was actually, the reincarnation of the moon god - Baal of Harran - and he was possessed of such powers as were not dreamt of. As the mummy was at the school he could only give a warning, but told the boys that he feared disaster, and advised that they should look but once upon the face of Baal, for the face was evil. There was something about Dr. Karnak's personality that gripped the boys and they now regarded the mummy with secret awe.

Although De Valerie appeared to be his usual self, it was noticed that when he was by himself he was liable to drift off into deep and silent reveries. As was usual in the dormitory on the first night of the term, a certain amount of latitude was allowed. After a time the voices died down and all was still.

Some slight movement awakened Nipper - something different from the ordinary sounds of the dormitory. Being a light sleeper, he had become aroused at once. The moon was now shining into the dormitory and he recognised De Valerie who was getting out of bed, taking his dressing-gown from the hook and donning it.

"De Valerie" whispered Nipper. "I say, old man! Val!"

De Valerie made no movement - he apparently did not hear Nipper's call, although, if awake, he must certainly have done so. The strained expression on his face was rather horrifying. With steady steps he opened the door and passed out of the dormitory.

Jumping out of bed Nipper sped swiftly to the door and opened it. He glanced quickly up and down the corridor, but De Valerie had vanished. Not wishing to arouse Nelson Lee unless the matter was really serious Nipper decided to do nothing. Glancing out of the corridor window he was astonished to see an extraordinary shape leap down from one of the windows - that angle of the building being in direct view from where he stood. And with a sudden start he realised that the window was that of the museum. To his mind the strange, sinister shape seemed enormous - much larger than any normal human being - with enormously long legs, with a misshapen body, and no distinguishable head. But the most astonishing thing of all was that this shape bounded over the wall in a series of leaps, and with one spring it cleared the high stone wall - to vanish in a flash.

Nipper shivered, feeling cold, and went quickly back into the dormitory. He was just about to get into bed when De Valerie returned. He closed the door behind him, walked swiftly to his bed and removed his dressing-gown. The strained expression had left his face although his eyes were still open and staring. He got straight into bed, laid down, and this time it seemed his sleep would not be further troubled.

The following morning Nipper met De Valerie in the lobby and reminded him that he would be playing in the football team on the Saturday. Casually, he asked De Valerie if he had slept well, and received the reply that he had had a bit of a nightmare. Nipper wasn't sure whether De Valerie remembered his "nightmare" or not, but he came to the conclusion that he was strongly under the influence of Dr. Karnak.

All of those who came in close contact with Dr. Karnak were struck by his impressive, gripping personality, but it was mainly those fellows who were of a studious nature that fell under the Egyptian's thrall. Thus, it was not long before those fellows were drawn together as though by a common bond. De Valerie was making friends with Timothy Tucker - although he had not cared for Tucker's society hitherto. There were others including Skelton, Ellmore and Clifton. At De Valerie's suggestion these juniors formed a club with the object of investigating Egyptian magic and witchcraft.

On the Saturday afternoon De Valerie turned out in the St. Frank's colours, and played his usual game until towards the end he unexpectedly got possession of the ball. Seeing his opportunity he seized it in a flash and beat the half-backs and backs, and the open goal lay in front of him. De Valerie steadied himself to kick, and at that very second he paused. A shudder seemed to pass through his frame, and for some unaccountable reason he stopped dead. And he stood there like a figure turned into stone.

A second later it was too late. One of the startled visiting backs rushed in and booted the leather far up the field. A perfect roar of anger rose from the St. Frank's juniors round the ropes. The crowd jeered disgustedly, and De Valerie passed a hand over his brow. And Nipper, gazing at the ropes - grim and angry, saw Dr. Karnak standing there. He had noticed that De Valerie had stared straight in that direction as he made his fatal stop. What strange mystic influence had this Egyptian over the unfortunate Removite!

The first real meeting of the sorcery club was held in the museum, presided over by Dr. Karnak. An attempt was to be made to get in touch with the spirit of Baal. Eight members sat in a circle, squatting on cushions, and holding hands. A blank sheet of paper and a lead pencil were placed in an empty casket which stood on a stone slab in the centre. Suddenly the lid of the casket raised itself slightly, then fell into place again. Again the lid of the casket raised itself, and it slowly fell as though something within was vainly attempting to emerge. The juniors almost ceased to breathe as the lid raised itself for the third time. This time, however, those who watched were prepared to swear that a grisly hand appeared - a brown, bony, mummified hand. In it was grasped the slip of paper. The latter fluttered down to the stone slab. The hand disappeared, and the lid of the casket snapped down.

The juniors were utterly startled. Two or three of them had turned deathly pale - for the sight of the thing had been unnerving.

"There is nothing to be afraid of" purred Dr. Karnak. "The spirit of Baal has answered - and we have seen a manifestation that is denied to all but true believers.

"We all believe." said De Valerie, his voice sounding dull. "And no harm will come to us. We are convinced of the great truth."

Fullwood gave De Valerie a sharp look, for somehow, it seemed to him that De

Valerie was not speaking his own words, but was giving voice, in a mechanical way, to the words of another.

Fullwood was no great believer in the occult, and had only joined the so-called Sorcery Club in order to obtain a new thrill.

The hieroglyphics which had appeared on the sheet of paper were roughly translated by Dr. Karnak as a warning from Baal himself. Anyone - other than true believers - would be courting trouble if they were foolish enough to look deliberately on the face of the mummy.

With the meeting over De Valerie entered the common-room with the other members of the Sorcery Club. In answer to the many enquiries as to what had happened at the meeting, Gulliver, - in spite of De Valerie's protests - related everything that had occurred, and Bell bore him out. Fullwood stood by without making any comment.

For Handforth to be told that disaster would overtake anyone who looked on the face of the mummy was tantamount to be asking him to do so. Archie Glenthorne expressed his opinion as to the whole business being a lot of rot.

Both these juniors decided to show Dr. Karnak that they had scant regard for his warning, and with a party of others went into the museum. Deliberately they stared three times into the dried, shrivelled face for an appreciable time.

Although the museum was empty when the juniors had arrived, they were surprised to see Dr. Karnak, who had noiselessly entered, standing at the doorway, and had been a witness of both Handforth's and Glenthorne's action.

That night, Archie who slept in a separate bedroom, was visited by the shape, who gave him such a scare that he thought he had awakened from a nightmare. Nipper who had heard Archie's shout entered the room to find Archie in rather a shaken condition. Nipper remembered how Dr. Karnak had talked of the mummy. If the thing was capable of taking an earthly shape it must necessarily leave its sarcophagus.

Nipper shook himself, for the thought was ghastly-grotesque and horrible. He hurried quickly downstairs to the museum. An irresistible instinct told him to go and have a look at the mummy. For the idea of that dead thing coming out of the museum and roaming about in the moonlight was so frightful that he felt sickened.

When he reached the museum Nipper felt shaky and nervous. With an effort he pulled himself together and entered the library. He switched on the lights, and strode quickly across to the door of the museum. He decided he would get it over quickly before this moment of strength deserted him.

With one movement he opened the museum door and put his hand round for the switch. Owing to the shape of the museum, he could not see the mummy from the door, but had to walk along to the angle of the apartment.

Nipper had an almost uncontrollable desire to flee from the room. As he turned the angle of the room, he came to a dead stop. He caught his breath in with a gulp of sheer amazement and horror.

The mummy case was empty. The mummy itself had gone!

For a second he thought he was mad. He had come to prove that Dr. Karnak's talk was sheer rubbish, but the very fact of the mummy being absent seemed to prove

that the Egyptian's story was correct. Archie had seen that awful shape in his bedroom - and Archie was one of the fellows who had defied the curse of the mummy. And the sarcophagus was empty.

Nipper turned and sped to the door. Although he had only a yard or two to cover it seemed ages before he got into the library. He closed the door behind him and leaned against it dizzy and almost spent.

There was a slight sound and he opened his eyes to find Dr. Karnak in the library doorway, attired in a long, flowing robe, and upon his shoulders was perched the yellow, black spotted Serval cat. Although his appearance was so unexpected and so startling, the very fact that he was flesh and blood caused a wave of relief to pass over Nipper.

"What have you done with the mummy?" asked Nipper hoarsely.

Dr. Karnak advanced.

"You are unnerved, young man," he said, his voice smooth and impassive.

"There is nothing wrong here. Why are you out of bed at his hour of night?"

"The mummy! insisted Nipper. "It isn't in the museum! It has vanished out of its case!"

Dr. Karnak uttered a soft laugh.

"Rubbish!" he purred. "The mummy has not been touched, and is still in its accustomed place."

"The mummy isn't there, I tell you!" insisted Nipper. "What have you done Dr. Karnak? There's something horrible going on - "

"Let me convince you that you are suffering from a delusion," interrupted Dr. Karnak curtly. "Come!"

He strode to the museum door, flung it open, and walked inside - the cat clinging to his shoulders tenaciously. Nipper followed, although the very thought of entering that place again appalled.

"Well?" asked Dr. Karnak sardonically.

Nipper stared, almost unable to believe his eyes. For there, standing impassively in its case was the mummy - just as it always stood.

The following day Archie Glenthorne was found lying unconscious over his bicycle in Bellton Lane. Upon recovery he could only say that while cycling along he had been plucked as though by a hand from his bicycle.

Later that same day Handforth fell from the top of a flight of stairs to the bottom. He was badly bruised, though no bones were broken. All that Handforth could inform those who picked him up that something had plucked at his ankles and tripped him.

These incidents, however had a big effect on the Remove. All the members of the Sorcery Club, led by De Valerie, persisted in declaring that the spirit of Baal had caused both accidents.

It was Reggie Pitt who suggested to Nipper that they should keep a watch at night to see what Dr. Karnak was up to. After the rest of the juniors had gone to sleep both Pitt and Nipper left the dormitory and made their way towards Dr. Karnak's bedroom. Nipper led the way, and warned Pitt to be ready to flee in case Dr. Karnak suddenly emerged. Even before they arrived opposite the doorway they could hear Dr. Karnak's voice rising and falling. And once there came the plaintive cry of the Serval cat.

It was obvious that they would never know what was happening inside the room

by remaining in the corridor. The only thing was to look in at the windows which had a wide ledge running along the face of the building. Creeping into one of the bathrooms both Nipper and Pitt were able to climb onto the ledge and work their way to Dr. Karnak's window.

The scene within the apartment was remarkable. The light was dim - a shaded electric globe overhead, in the centre of the room with the rest of the place in gloom. Under that light there was a small brazier, and the smoke from incense was curling up. Dr. Karnak himself was no longer the staid, impressive science master that the boys knew.

He was in there, attired in flowing Eastern robes, and he was capering round and round the brazier in a sort of wild dance of frenzy. Squatting on a pedestal was the Serval cat - watching her master with a curious impassive look.

Perhaps he was invoking the aid of the evil spirits, in his own peculiar way. In any case the scene was very different from what Nipper had anticipated.

Pitt, in Nipper's rear, was creeping along the ledge when suddenly he was plucked off the ledge by a great awful form. Nipper sensing something was wrong could do nothing. If he shouted then Dr. Karnak would know that he had been outside his windows.

Nipper's one thought was to get to the ground as soon as possible. As he flung himself through the bathroom window he found Dr. Karnak standing before him. Startled by his sudden presence Nipper accused the Egyptian of being responsible for Pitt's disappearance.

"I know nothing of what has happened to any companion of yours" he said.

"Pitt was on the ledge, just outside the window, and some horrible object came along and grabbed hold of him," exclaimed Nipper hoarsely.

Dr. Karnak gave a husky cry.

"What-what was this thing like?" he asked curtly.

"I can't tell you - I only know that it was a monstrous looking creature," replied Nipper. Perhaps Pitt's lying down there, mangled and - "

"There is only one way in which Pitt can be aided," interrupted Dr. Karnak.

"And I am the only man who knows the way. Pitt has been seized and carried away by the earth form of Baal. Yes! It is true!"

"I don't believe it!" said Nipper thickly. "It can't be true!"

"He can be saved only by my efforts!" persisted Dr. Karnak. "Go! Go to the dormitory - But wait!"

He turned on his heel and walked swiftly to his room. Nipper followed. The Egyptian went across to a little wooden stand that stood against the wall. Upon it was a stone figure of Baal, the moon god - a relic from one of the Egyptian tombs.

And Dr. Karnak took a cushion, and kneeling on it appeared to go in a kind of trance. Nipper stood by, impatient and uneasy. It seemed to him that this was a criminal waste of time.

"Go to your dormitory!" droned out Dr. Karnak in a far away voice. "Tap on De Valerie's shoulder, he will lead the way to the spot where Pitt has been taken. But hasten! Lose not a second! The peril is deadly!"

The extraordinary nature of the affair did not strike Nipper at the time. He was too worried and too upset. If he had more time for thought he would have wondered how on earth Cecil De Valerie could possibly help in this affair. He had

been asleep ever since lights-out.

Like the wind Nipper flew along the passages, reached the dormitory, and found everything quiet and still.

He bent over Cecil De Valerie, and detected at once that he was breathing heavily and laboriously. But the instant Nipper tapped him on the shoulder he sat up, his eyes wide open. His breathing became more regular and without saying a word he commenced dressing.

"Val!" whispered Nipper. "Do you know what you have to do?"

De Valerie did not answer. Indeed, it seemed as though he had not heard. He dressed quickly and passed out of the door, attempting to close it behind him - just as though he was alone.

Out in the Triangle, De Valerie walked towards the school wall, shaking off Nipper's grip who had expected him to go to the scene of the terrible incident. He reached the wall, sprang to the top, and jumped down into the lane. In a moment Nipper followed him.

Reaching the stile which led into Bellton Wood, De Valerie crossed it and took the footpath. Arriving at a steep gully he walked along to a spot where a steep natural descent led into the very depths of the gully.

Nipper who was close behind De Valerie saw Reginald Pitt lying mauled, dishevelled, and only just conscious. The relief of seeing that help was near soon brought Pitt round. De Valerie who had come out of his trance wondered how he came to be in Bellton Wood. Nipper's explanation of the affair caused his thoughts to be deep and intense.

On their return to St. Frank's Nipper went straight to Dr. Karnak to thank him for his efforts in saving Pitt. Dr. Karnak denied all knowledge of the incident.

Although Nelson Lee was well aware of Dr. Karnak's strange activities, there was no tangible evidence to substantiate any charge. He had witnessed both Nipper and De Valerie leave St. Frank's at night and return with Reginald Pitt. The following morning he was told the whole story of Pitt's terrifying experience by Nipper.

The following evening the Shape caused Walter Church to swoon in his chair while the three occupants of Study D were engaged in prep. Looking up Church saw it looking through the window and such was the effect on him that he swooned right away without informing Handforth and McClure what had happened.

After some excitement Nipper left Study D and went outside and found in the soft earth underneath the study window footprints which seemed to suggest a mixture of human and animal.

The first sign that the spirit of Baal in its earthly shape was far from being supernatural was when Nipper and Pitt having been chosen as the hares in the forthcoming paper chase decided to go over the course prior to the chase. Deep in Bellton Wood they came across a crude hut under the tall trees. As they entered the doorway to investigate, something tore past them and fled.

Both the boys saw the thing hazily - a curious shaggy monster that leapt through the doorway in one bound. The most amazing thing of all was that the

strange creature had bounded upwards in an almost impossible manner to any animal that one had ever heard of.

The monster had apparently only travelled a few yards, for the crashing of twigs and branches suddenly ceased, and the boys thought they heard a curious groan.

Taking only a moment to seize two heavy pieces of wood, they advanced in the direction the monster had taken. Moving cautiously, Nipper, with Pitt in the rear, suddenly found themselves face to face with the fearsome denizen of the wood.

With thumping hearts the boys found themselves gazing upon a creature of horrible aspect. At the first glance Nipper knew that it was human - but had never beheld a specimen of humanity as this before.

He was obviously a black man, and Nipper believed him to be a native of Africa. His head was covered in a mop of shaggy black hair. His face itself was be-whiskered to such an extent that the hair seemed to sprout from every inch of him - with two gleaming eyes in the midst of the tangle. He was clothed in roughly made furry skins, with his legs bare, and his feet unshod. Without a doubt, the man was a monstrosity.

For the grotesque freak was unlike any ordinary man in build and general appearance. His head was set straight on his shoulders, with practically no neck. His arms appeared normal, but his legs were startling.

They were at least double the length of any ordinary human legs - lanky, bony legs with two deformed feet. Standing, the man must have been well over eight feet in height - the majority of this space being occupied by legs.

He lay there, among the dead leaves, with his great legs hunched up, regarding the two juniors with fear in his small glittering eyes.

"It's all right - we're not going to harm you" said Nipper, approaching cautiously. "Can you speak English?"

The black man shrank back muttering in a manner that was incoherent to the boys.

Nipper moved a step nearer, and the black man crouched further back. He saw him wince, and a low moan escaped him as his foot caught against a jutting root. And then, in a flash, Nipper understood.

For he transferred his attention to the foot. He could see that it was badly swollen and puffed. On the side of it, near the heel, was an ugly, highly inflamed sore.

Sending Pitt for some water from a brook two or three hundred yards away, Nipper was able by signs to convey to the man that he would give the wound his attention. With a small "first-aid" tin which he was carrying on this occasion, Nipper was able to prepare a bandage, with lint and ointment. In a few minutes Pitt returned carrying a baked-bean tin full of water.

Once the monster allowed Nipper to grasp his foot, the rest was easy. Their strange companion must have felt easier for he was grinning and chattering away like a pleased child. Finding another sore on the other leg, Nipper took his turn to refill the tin. On his return he found Pitt was alone. From what Pitt told him it appeared that he seemed afraid of Pitt and had jumped up and ran through the wood.

"So this unfortunate freak is Dr. Karnak's precious Elemental - the earth

shape of the moon god!" said Nipper grimly. "What a despicable trickster! Stuffing the chaps up with that yarn."

"We knew it, too - but we lacked evidence" said Pitt. "We still lack it, as a matter of fact, the man's gone, and we have no proof even now."

Many things were now explained. Archie Glenthorne had been chased by a mysterious shape and pulled off his bicycle. The African with his enormous legs, could easily have done that.

Both Nipper and Pitt decided to say nothing for the time being to others of their discovery.

That night the deformed African presented himself outside the window of the museum. Dr. Karnak opened the lower sash and the creature stepped in. Using a curious clicking language the Egyptian gave the black man some instructions which he appeared to understand. In the middle of giving these instructions Dr. Karnak broke off and pointed to the bandage on the creature's foot. Try as he could Dr. Karnak was unable to get any explanation whatsoever from him.

This act of kindness by Nipper to the African bore fruit when Nipper, skating with Doris Berkeley of Moor View School, was chased by a mad dog on the ice on the River Stowe with the result that they both fell through the ice. The dog suddenly snapped at Doris's scarf and upset Nipper's equilibrium. Having taken Doris in his arms in order to gain more speed, both crashed down on the ice and slithered to where a heavy clump of trees overhung the ice. As a consequence the ice was generally weak, and both Nipper and Doris plunged through the ice. Nipper had a fleeting glimpse of the dog plunging with them, although there was no sign of it now.

Being smaller the dog was caught in the current, and dragged beneath the ice. Doris had fainted and Nipper wondered how long he could support her with the current under the ice trying to pull him down. Nipper's limbs were becoming numbed, and he didn't seem to care what happened. His one desire was to give up the struggle, and to sink back.

At that moment a great ungainly figure plunged into the water beside him. Nipper caught a glimpse of a black face, an appalling face covered with coarse, matted hair. And then he felt a grip - an iron grip - upon his shoulders. Although still numb and chilled Nipper began to recover somewhat. As through a mist, he caught sight of figures speeding to the rescue.

Supported by the African Nipper was able to regain his senses and help the rescuers to take hold of Doris who was first out of the icy water. All three were rushed up to St. Frank's where they were soon put into blankets. Mrs. Foulter taking charge of Doris.

In gratitude to the African, who had undoubtedly saved the lives of Nipper and Doris, Nelson Lee promised to take care of him and to make arrangements to send him back to Africa.

The first direct clash between Nelson Lee and Dr. Karnak came the following evening. At a meeting of the Sorcery Club, Dr. Karnak produced a small dead snake which he claimed would come to life, in plain view of the circle, should they succeed in communicating with the spirit of the deathless snake of Ancient Egyptian mythology.

Such was the heavy strain on some of the juniors who attended these meetings

that it was beginning to show its effects. In the middle of this particular meeting, Skelton who was in a highly nervous state, could no longer remain in the room. With Dr. Karnak's permission, and a warning to say nothing to others, he was let out of the museum and the door again locked behind him.

And it so happened that Willy Handforth of the Third turned a corner at the end of the passage at that moment. He gave Skelton one glance and dodged into an alcove with the intention of jumping out suddenly and giving him a scare.

Skelton drew opposite the recess, and just as he was passing, a form suddenly leapt out - clutching at him, and giving a wild whoop.

The effect on Skelton was startling.

He staggered back, his already pale face turning to the colour of putty, and his expression was one of extreme terror.

And Skelton screamed - a wild, terrified cry. He sank to the floor in a shuddering moaning heap. And the Third Former stood there, trembling himself with alarm.

Willy Handforth felt rather relieved when Nelson Lee turned the corner a few seconds later in order to find out who had uttered that outcry.

This incident caused Nelson Lee - in his capacity as Housemaster - to forbid any further meetings of the Sorcery Club to take place. So much did Dr. Karnak resent his interference in his activities that he appealed to Dr. Stafford for redress. This, of course, was the worst thing he could have done, as the whole affair was dragged out into the open.

The Headmaster had not even heard of the Sorcery Club, and it came as a shock to know that such things were happening under the roof of St. Frank's. Nelson Lee could not complain to the Head under ordinary circumstances, but Dr. Karnak had precipitated the enquiry himself.

The threat by Nelson Lee to send for the members of the Sorcery Club to confirm what he had told the Headmaster put Dr. Karnak on the spot. Under no circumstances could he allow the boys to tell all that had happened at the meetings of the Sorcery Club.

If Dr. Karnak persisted in the preposterous teaching, then, as Dr. Stafford informed him, he would be compelled to ask for his resignation.

For the first time since he had arrived at St. Frank's, he had been soundly rebuffed by the Headmaster. And Nelson Lee was the cause of it. But for his intervention no trouble would have risen.

In the privacy of his room the Egyptian's rage was fearful to witness.

"By the gods of my ancient faith, I will have vengeance! May the curses of all evil be upon him, the interfering fool!"

And then at last he calmed down and found De Valerie had entered the room. De Valerie knowing that Dr. Karnak had gone to the Headmaster had been hanging about, anxious to know the result of the interview.

"I want you, De Valerie - you are necessary. Yes, quite necessary. For to you will be entrusted the fulfilment of my plan."

The gaze he bent upon De Valerie was one of intense, fierce concentration. The junior, already under the Egyptian's influence, was now a literal slave to his

will.

For some little time Dr. Karnak talked. And while doing so, he brought to bear the full strength of his will-power on the boy. He lowered his voice, and it now had a gloating mocking note.

"You understand?" he asked at last. "You will obey?"

"I will obey!" said De Valerie mechanically. "You have but to command, Dr. Karnak, and I will serve!"

"Yes, you are mine-mine!"

"I am yours!" said De Valerie dully.

That night Cecil De Valerie presented himself at Dr. Karnak's bedroom. The Egyptian requested De Valerie to repeat the instructions he had previously been given. He next handed him a kind of long needle. The junior handled it with extreme care, although he had never seen it before. He instinctively knew that the needle was deadly. Moreover, Dr. Karnak had previously warned him.

"I am to go to Mr. Lee's bedroom," said De Valerie tonelessly. "I am to creep in, and I am to bend over him as he lies asleep and to prick him with the point of this needle."

"Just that!" murmured Dr. Karnak.

"A prick - nothing more."

"It shall be done!" said De Valerie.

Without another word, he walked along the corridor, leaving Dr. Karnak standing there. The junior went along without hesitation until he arrived outside Nelson Lee's door. Here he paused, and now went about his task with even greater caution than before. For, without a doubt, it was a delicate task to catch such a man as Nelson Lee asleep, and to enter his bedroom.

But De Valerie accomplished this.

It was Dr. Karnak's brain that was driving him. For there, right at the end of the other corridor, the Egyptian was concentrating upon his task. He sat in a chair, gripping the arms, and he was concentrating every ounce of his will-power on De Valerie.

De Valerie got inside Nelson Lee's bedroom, and then paused for a moment, watching. He crept to the bedside, and there for a second or two, he stood looking down upon his intended victim. He was to give one prick - one tiny puncture. The tip of the needle was coated with a deadly poison, and death, indeed would be practically instantaneous. A touch, a mere prick, and all would be over. And in the morning the famous detective would be found dead in bed, and the most careful post-mortem would reveal practically nothing. For, as Dr. Karnak well knew, all trace of the poison would be eliminated from the system within three hours after death.

De Valerie raised his hand in order to snap the thread of Nelson Lee's life.

Dr. Karnak still sat in his chair, attired in the flowing robe of his. His sheer concentration of mind was tremendous. And it was then, at this crucial moment that an interruption occurred. The sound was very slight, but it was sufficient to save Nelson Lee from a swift, deadly annihilation.

The sound came from the window - a curious scraping sound, as though something had passed over the face of the glass. Insignificant though the sound was, it was like the bursting of a cannon to Dr. Karnak's acutely sensitive mind. And coming at that moment it took him unawares.

For in a flash, his mind left De Valerie, and he gave a sharp keen glance at

the window. And he saw there a face pressed against the glass - a dark swarthy face. Two gleaming eyes gazed at Dr. Karnak balefully.

And in that instant the spell was broken.

He recognised the face as that of one of his fellow-countrymen - a member of the sect that Dr. Karnak too had once belonged, and who had vowed vengeance against the renegade.

In the meantime, the effect upon the junior was instantaneous. Even as he had been about to plunge the point of the needle into Nelson Lee's throat, he seemed to shrivel as he stood, and his whole frame shuddered.

It was at that moment that Dr. Karnak's will-power ceased to order his movements.

De Valerie started back, apparently coming out of his trance. He stared at the needle, and a gasp of horror arose to his lips. For although it was his own mind that directed him now, he knew exactly what he had been about to do.

With a gasp of horror, De Valerie flung the needle into the heart of the dying fire, and reeled back uttering a long piercing scream that brought Nelson Lee jumping up in bed. He was just in time to see Cecil De Valerie writhing on the floor in a kind of fit.

Picking the boy up, he quickly laid him on his own bed - for the junior was in nothing but his pyjamas.

"He forced me!" he said, his voice cracked and strained. "The needle - the needle! Drive it in - but lightly! Oh! I can't do it! Where am I? Why are you holding me like this? Let me go!"

And so De Valerie continued to rave, sometimes incoherent, sometimes almost lucid. And Lee's efforts to calm him were in vain. Suddenly Cecil De Valerie uttered a sobbing moan, and fell back upon the bed in a state of unconsciousness. But the detective was under no misapprehension regarding De Valerie's condition. De Valerie was showing all the symptoms of dangerous brain fever, and he needed medical attention at once.

Arousing Mrs. Poulter and the Head, Nelson Lee 'phoned Dr. Brett who promised to come right away. Half an hour later four grave and anxious people were gathered round the bedside of Cecil De Valerie.

Dawn had come, and the cold February day was already brightening when a powerful motor-car turned into the Triangle of St. Frank's. De Valerie's people had answered Nelson Lee's urgent call promptly.

Within a few hours it was known that De Valerie had passed the crisis and with care and attention would make good recovery. It would be quite a few weeks before De Valerie returned to St. Frank's to take his place in the Remove.

Although there could be no evidence that Dr. Karnak was responsible for De Valerie's action, Nelson Lee knew that he was capable of deliberate murder. An attempt by his enemies to kidnap him from the school itself was frustrated by Nelson Lee. In these circumstances it was difficult for Dr. Karnak to remain at the school. In order to assist him in getting away from St. Frank's Nelson Lee had engaged a bodyguard in order that he would not be molested by the Egyptians who were still in the neighbourhood.

Such was the determination of his enemies that with the help of Fullwood who

Warwick Reynolds - Great Artist

by W. O. G. Lofts

"I first saw Warwick Reynolds in the very early days of The Gem when he came into my office seeking work. A tall, rather gaunt figure who looked as if he could do with a good meal, he was extremely polite and obviously was by his manners a gentleman in every way.

As soon as he showed me copies and examples of his work, I knew that here was an artist of unusual ability, and that this was one illustrator that we had to have for our papers. His work was really outstanding, and I knew well that in time he would go on to far greater things. My judgment proved quite correct in later years, but such was the kindly disposition of Warwick Reynolds, that - always remembering that I gave him work at a time he needed it badly - he submitted work for our HOLIDAY ANNUALS years after he had ceased illustrating for boys' papers. Obviously he could have commanded in other fields a far greater fee than we could afford to pay him."

C. M. Down. Editor of
The Magnet and Gem.

* * *

"Warwick Reynolds? Now you are talking about an artist. What a wonderful illustrator he was! I had hanging on my cottage wall an original painting of his for years and years, until it was so badly damaged in an air-raid during the second World War that I had to replace it by something else, much to my sorrow. Amusingly enough, I was so interested in his work that once on a GEM cover (featuring Skimpole, I believe) I noticed that Warwick Reynolds had drawn a pair of large pincers wrongly! But apart from this trivial mistake his work was so interesting that one studied it simply for the sheer brilliance of a true artist."

H. W. Twyman,
Editor of the Union Jack.

* * *

"I never could quite understand the man Warwick Reynolds. After all, we artists who drew for boys' papers could hardly be classed as great illustrators in the world of art. Yet here was a really brilliant artist who was, in a way, wasting his great talent in what was one of the minor fields of art work."

C. H. Chapman,
Famous Magnet Illustrator

* * *

"Warwick Reynolds was a very clever artist. Certainly something out of the ordinary in A.P. boys paper illustrators."

Eric Parker,
Famous Sexton Blake artist.

* * *

"Although I always regarded my father, Leonard Shields, as a clever illustrator, he just could not draw horses correctly. He always had to refer to text

books to be sure of getting the correct position. This often used to vex him, and he wished that he had had the ability of Warwick Reynolds, who was a wonderful animal illustrator."

E. Shields, son of the clever Magnet artist.

* * *

The above quotations are only a few of the tributes I have heard about Warwick Reynolds, best known to us for his GEM illustrations mainly during the first World War. Indeed, I could go further and say that, in interviewing old artists or editors connected with our hobby, the name of 'Warwick Reynolds' always seems to be the magic password which brings the personality involved into interesting conversation.

Kenneth Brooks, for example, the Nelson Lee (and later GEM) artist, could talk for hours on the merits of Warwick Reynolds. Both, incidentally, were fellow members of the Sketch Club.

Apart from the above quotations, such was the demand for the original drawings by Warwick Reynolds, after the editorial office had finished with them, that there was almost a queue of office staff waiting for when they became available. In all my years of contact with personalities connected with our hobby, I only know of one original still existing at Fleetway - this hangs on the office wall of a group editor and shows Tom Merry in sports gear. No amount of money would tempt the editor in question to part with it, such is the high esteem accorded the art work in this drawing.

Bound copies of magazines in the twenties in the British Museum, which contained Warwick Reynolds illustrations, have (to my horror) been mutilated by some over-zealous admirers unable to resist tearing out pages of his animal drawings. The enthusiasm shown to Warwick Reynolds work exists far beyond the interest in our own circle.

With the possible exception of Tom Browne of Weary Willie and Tired Tim fame in CHIPS, Warwick Reynolds was probably one of the greatest artists ever to work for the Amalgamated Press. Unlike R. J. MacDonald, Leonard Shields and Eric Parker - who, by all accounts, were the first artists in their particular families - Warwick Reynolds simply could not help being an artist. A family tree I have seen going back to the 18th century shows dozens of artists who were a success in the commercial world. One side of the family included Henry and Walter Tidey, who painted both well-known water colours and miniatures.

Warwick Reynolds was born in London in 1880, and was the son of another Warwick Reynolds who was, of course, an artist - drawing for Victorian papers and boys magazines of such titles as BOYS STANDARD, YOUNG BRITON, SONS OF BRITANNIA, who signed himself as a rule "W.R."

Strangely enough, Warwick Reynolds Senior did not want his son to become an artist, but was anxious for him to enter the Civil Service. Young Warwick, having no less than six brothers and four sisters, thought otherwise however, and when in early boyhood he showed a keen desire to become an artist, his father did not oppose him any longer.

In his teens Warwick developed a passion for drawing animals and with the aid of a friend who was a member of the Zoological Society, he managed to get an artist's pass to visit the Regents Park Zoo regularly. For hours on end he watched the movements of the animals and made rough sketches of them - the swish of a monkey's tail, the graceful stretching of a lion. The tremendous value of

these early drawings can be realised by the fact that when he became England's leading commercial animal artist in the twenties, he referred to many of his old boyhood sketches.

His father died quite young - which was, unfortunately, a general characteristic of the Reynolds family. In 1894, when he was fourteen, Warwick started to attend the Grosvenor Studios, Vauxhall Bridge, Victoria, London, spending half his time there and the other half at the London Zoo. About the time he was sixteen, he had his first work accepted by Mr. Gilbert Dalziel, who was running the famous ALLY SLOPER, so recently mentioned in the 1967 Collectors' Digests. Mainly his work was of comic animal figures, and certainly far different to his work in later life.

He studied for a while in an art school at St. John's Wood, London, and then moved up to Glasgow, where he worked for five or six years on the staff of the Glasgow Weekly Record as an illustrator of serial stories. Moving then to Paris, he painted at Julien's for some time, gaining much valuable experience in the meanwhile.

Like many other artists, however talented, Warwick Reynolds found the early going very hard indeed. For nearly a year he did practically nothing except fruitlessly visit almost every well-known publishing firm in London in an effort to get his work accepted. As related by Mr. C. M. Down at the beginning of this article, it was the Amalgamated Press who first recognised his great talent and gave him work when he badly needed it.

Strangely enough, the GEM in the early days had a great variety of artists. Unlike the MAGNET, who fixed on Hutton Mitchell/Arthur Clarke/C. H. Chapman in strict rotation, the St. Jim's tales had been illustrated by J. Cummings/H. M. Lewis/Val and W. Reading brothers/Leonard Shields/W. Watts/Hutton Mitchell/E. Briscoe and Phil Swinnerton at different intervals. Warwick Reynolds's first drawings appeared about September 1908 (GEM 1d series No. 31) for a short spell, but apart from this his work appeared in many other papers including comics (the serials) such as Jester and Puck.

With that other fine artist, R. J. MacDonald, drawing his first Gem cover in November 1909 (1d series No. 91) and taking over the St. Jim's illustrations almost completely, Warwick Reynolds - although still drawing for the Amalgamated Press papers EMPIRE LIBRARY, BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY, DREADNOUGHT, etc., widened his scope and after visiting the Publicity Department of the old North British Railway, he submitted ideas for a couple of posters, which won him the large sum (large for those days!) of no less than £52, plus other work to follow.

With the coming of the first World War, however, R. J. MacDonald was called up for the R.N.V.R. in 1916 and Warwick Reynolds filled in the breach for almost three years. Undoubtedly this was his best drawing period, as it included the famous St. Jim's gallery, written by John Nix Pentelow, the war-time editor. One could write pages of the various covers and technical details involved, and a true art lover could distinguish easily between a real artist and an ordinary boys paper illustrator - which, much as I dislike to say it, the majority of A.P. artists were.

Warwick Reynolds had a rare talent for depicting happy boys - which he loved doing. The St. Jim's juniors came to life and actually looked like real boys, with individual characteristics, manners and clothes, which remained the same week after week. I shall always remember the astonishment on the faces of Basil Reynolds, Warwick's nephew (who is a friend of mine) when - perusing a copy of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL - he saw that his uncle had pictured his two brothers (both of whom

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BONNY LAD CLAIMED BY HIS OWNER!

unfortunately died when young) as Tom Merry and Levison minor.

1918 saw the greatest tribute to Warwick Reynolds's work, when he was included in a series of England's best commercial artists, published by Percy V. Bradshaw of the Press Art school. His work, shown in various phases of development, is something - in terms of sheer technical skill - which has to be seen to be believed.

Even when R. J. MacDonald returned from war service and took back the GEM illustrations, Warwick Reynolds was not short of work. His illustrations were in great demand by all the leading magazines of the day - WINDSOR, PASSING SHOW, BYSTANDER, LONDON, NASH'S, PEARSONS, to name just a few, plus illustrating books mainly on nature subjects. The famous H. Mortimer Batten wrote of him ...

'His work appeals to me because when he draws the things about which I happen to know, he is accurate to the uttermost details. His trees are real trees, his flowers and leaves almost convey the scent of the country. The otter, the fox, the hare are to me creatures of flesh and blood, of characteristic poses and individual temperaments, each weaving its own life-history, which the turning of a stone, the rising of a stream may decide for good or ill; and I value the work of Reynolds because he strikes the keynote of that individual temperament.'

Moving to Glasgow, where he set up a studio in the eyrie of a high-class apartment, Warwick Reynolds continued apace. His workroom was unusually tidy for an artist, containing several Japanese prints, reference works, several oil paintings and a large drawing board. He was a tall, lean, dark-featured man with a Beatle-style fringe - the origin of which came from Phil May and, later, one of the Three Stooges in comedy films. He was something of a hermit, who took life very seriously, and deeply religious. But he was a good mixer and could talk about art for hours on end.

Exhibiting at the Royal Academy, and also having work shown in the leading countries of the world, he was a member of the Royal Scottish Water Colour Society and the Society of Graphic Arts. Such was his growing reputation that he could command very high fees for work in oils.

But in December of 1926, Warwick Reynolds died suddenly, when only 45 years of age, and England lost one of her greatest potential animal illustrators. He left over three thousand pounds - which, considering the fact that he had not long been in the 'big money' - was a large sum for those days - probably worth six times that amount today.

Warwick Reynolds also had a son who, dogged by the family curse of early death, died when he was only fourteen; alive, he had shown the same talents his gifted father. His two daughters were also gifted and both studied at art schools; however, they married and did not practice art commercially.

Some years ago our editor wrote: "If everyone thought alike, what a dull place this world would be," and how true this statement is of the work Warwick Reynolds did for the GEM. Some collectors do not care for his illustrations, mainly because of the rather over-drawn or larger-than-life figures - which stand out when compared with the work of R. J. MacDonald. But there, every collector has his own image of how their favourite characters should look - and I know of an editorial Director of Fleetway who would not entertain any other artist for the MAGNET than C. H. Chapman, despite the brilliance of Leonard Shields. Arthur Jones and Kenneth Brooks were thought to be the best Nelson Lee artists, and no

other artist ranked higher than Eric Parker in connection with SEXTON BLAKE.

But critics of Warwick Reynolds would be doing him an injustice if they judged his work solely on his GEM illustrations. His animal and nature-study drawings were, I think, his correct vocation and certainly these were to bring him fame in his regrettably so very short life.

In the locality of Botley, not far from Chesham in Bucks, and at the 'Manor' house as it were, lives Basil Reynolds, Warwick's nephew, and of course an artist himself, being the last editor of that old favourite comic for youngsters, TINY TOTS. Here it could be said is the Warwick Reynolds Museum, as in his studio reposes the largest collection of originals in the world.

In a prominent position in Basil's study is a large self-portrait of Warwick Reynolds, painted in oils. This was done (as most self-portraits are) with the aid of a mirror, when Warwick was only twenty. Also in the 'museum' is a large Newton Display Cabinet, which was so large when brought into the house that it had to be sawn in half and then reassembled. This contained all Warwick Reynolds's painting materials, with the brushes and oil paints still in its drawers.

Although it is over forty years since his death, the artistry of Warwick Reynolds lives on, and his fine art work will still give great pleasure to many for years to come.

* * * * *

DR. KARNAK (continued from page 24)...

gave a Captain Dodge, a seaman who had deliberately got in touch with Fullwood, the information of Dr. Karnak's departure from St. Frank's that he was kidnapped from the car which was taking him away. Taken to Caistowe he was put on board a ship which was to take him and his enemies back to Africa. Leaving Caistowe the ship struck a derelict and with the water entering the engine room blew the ship up, carrying Dr. Karnak and the Moon Worshippers to their deaths.

Retribution had at last fallen upon Dr. Karnak.

* * * * *

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Riding my Hobby-Horse

By Don Webster

According to Miss Ngaio Marsh, the famous authoress, the Hobby-Horse was very popular in the Middle Ages as part of the ritual practised by teams of Morris Dancers, but that is another story....

Meanwhile, I shall continue to ride my own particular Hobby-Horse - regarding the most fascinating Hobby that I know - and that is to express annoyance at the apparent lack of knowledge concerning it by the Press and its correspondents.

There are two matters concerning this Hobby of ours which make me indignant. One is to have our periodicals described as "Penny Dreadfuls" and the other is to go the extreme and call them "Comics." It is even more exasperating when old readers and others interested in the old Companion Papers rush into print without having "done their homework" (or should it be "Prep"?) and even turn it to their financial advantage.

I remember on one occasion, the local Press attending a meeting, of which I was Chairman; and after thoroughly explaining our Hobby, I was surprised to read the report in the paper afterwards. The reporter didn't even bother (do they ever?) to confirm if his report was accurate before submitting it to his Editor. On another occasion I wrote to The Amalgamated Press suggesting a revival of "The Magnet." The reply shook me! The Editor stated they didn't need to revive Billy Bunter for he had been appearing for some time now in "The Knock-Out" Comic, and suggested I should purchase a copy and see for myself. I also approached my M.P. to endeavour to obtain some recognition for the late Charles Hamilton. His secretary replied he hadn't heard of him, but he believed he had read of Sexton Blake!

I think we all are fed up with the choice of various re-prints. "Best of the Magnet and Gem" my foot. Not even a semblance of the next-best. We would have liked to have read a story about Smithy, Gussy or Talbot for example, from the pen of "The Master." We, the O.B.B.C. know the answers, yet none of us are even consulted. In one instance I believe we were, but the choice had already been made by then. The B.B.C. T.V. and Press couldn't care less!

Some of the Press articles over the past 15 years relating to our Hobby have amused me, and so have some of the letters written to the Editor concerning them. I remember Uncle Ben, our Hon. Secretary, putting one correspondent in his place when Cardew the Cad got confused with Carthew of Rookwood.

Here are a few anomalies over the years, which I have taken as examples of people not getting their facts right, but the first reply is from one who did:

RADIO TIMES:

Wrong College

"The crossword set by Peter Wood.
On the whole was rather good.
But when we came to clue twelve down
The answer there raised quite a frown.
Unless the story-books are liars

Tom Merry wasn't at Greyfriars.
The hero at that famous College
Was Harry Wharton, you'll acknowledge.

(Reader - Liverpool).

"NEW CHRONICLE" Dec. 1951

Mr. Ian Mackay writes "The first castigation for my error came from the Head of Greyfriars himself. "Wretched youth," he wrote, "take one hundred lines."
Signed Henry Quelch, M.A.

"WALLASEY NEWS" Feb. 1952

"Come back to Billy Bunter days again! Slip across the quad into Study No. 1. - dodge the cricket stump aimed by Gussy - ignore Billy's buns and let's plan a day on the River or a midnight prowl to "The Out of Bounds."

"DAILY MIRROR" Feb. 1953

"But, like Cardew the cad of the Shell, he found the way of the transgressor was hard."

"LONDON EVENING NEWS" Nov. 1959

In an interview Miss Bernadette Milnes said "There are hundreds of Billy Bunter Clubs throughout the country and all the members are men."

"LIVERPOOL ECHO" Oct. 1954

"Harking back to "Magnet" days, it would be more fitting to cite Vernon-Smith of the Fourth Form or Loder, Bully of the Fifth Form, as counter-parts of the present "Teddy Boy."

"THE PEOPLE" Jan. 1963

"The first issue of "Sexton Blake" which cost 3d. when it was published is worth £5. today and a first issue of "The Magnet" would fetch £10."

"SUNDAY CHRONICLE" May. 1952

"When I took a ballot in March last, the response in favour of a revival of Billy Bunter was - as Ramsit Jam Singh would say - "tereefic." "

"RADIO TIMES" Feb. 1952

"There are many Greyfriars Clubs and Billy Bunter Clubs."

"LIVERPOOL EVENING EXPRESS" Feb. 1961

"Mr. Frank Richards, who lives at St. Leonard-on-Sea."

"MORETON GAZETTE" June 1953

"Let's drop in at "The Green Man" with Bully Bulstrode, but mind Billy Bunter, the sneak of the Remove doesn't see us."

One could go on giving further extracts from newspapers, but I'll restrict myself to a few excerpts from "Readers' Letters".....

A.C. "Mr. Quelch's niece, Marjorie

W.J. "One week Nelson Lee was a Detective, the next a Schoolmaster.

Advert: "Remember Gussy Handforth & Co. (Possible comma missed).

L.G.W. "Handforth was the Bully of St. Franks, if I remember"

D. Lee. "Then there was "Mawly" who was a bit of a bounder"

"Mac." "Those old favourites, Harry Wharton, Frank Nugget, Bob Cherry, Tom Merry, Figgins, Billy Bunter, Fatty Trimble etc."

S.F.H. "Tom Merry, Harry Wharton & Co., who appeared in print as long ago as 1907, followed by Billy Bunter and D'Arcy in 1908."

"Paddy" (Belfast)

"There were so many boys' papers and comics just before the first World War. One couldn't afford to buy more than two or three. I preferred "The Boys' Friend" with Jimmy Silver and "Comic Cuts" with Weary Willie and Tired Tim.

"Old Reader" (To "Derby Times Pictorial") Sept. 1950

"The Magnet" and "The Marvel" dealt largely with life at Public Schools. Who does not recall with affection the names of Tommie Merry and Billie Bunter. There was an incredible boy named Skimpole whom we all hated - he was the cad of the Form. He sometimes smoked cigarettes. There was also a young Indian who piled up colossal scores at cricket, but I've almost forgotten his name. I think it was Lal Singh."

N.B. (I suppose the authors of this article should read Don Doyle and Brian Webster, for Brian and the writer were perusing my collection of cuttings one evening, which finished up with the pair of us chuckling over the many "faux pas" made in the Press. We thought that readers of the C.D. Annual might like to share the joke.)

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The Comic Papers of Yesteryear

(A comprehensive survey based upon articles previously written for the Collectors' Digest Annual 1954, Collectors' Digest (Feb.) 1955, and Story Paper Collector (Oct.) 1958, (Jan. & Apl.) 1959.)

By Leonard Packman

It has always been my ambition to write a reasonably complete history of the Comic Paper. Maybe when I have finally retired from Government Service I shall be

able to achieve that ambition. Meanwhile, for those who are interested in the subject (and I am sure there are very many) the following pages provide a fairly extensive coverage on the subject.

Opinion as to the definition of a 'true' comic paper is wide and varied. I have listed only those which appear to me to be most appropriate. As to the 'time' factor, it is quite possible that there are other comic papers earlier than 1873 (see FUNNY FOLK) - and there are several good ones still being published. My own interest in them faded in 1940 (although even now I occasionally buy BEANO and DANDY), and it is for this reason my records do not go beyond that date.

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No. 691. Our Tramps Dine on their own Produce. September 15, 1961.



1. "Thanks all alive for... I should thank the... all alive... I'll take care to... before the sanitary inspector comes along."



2. "Well, they weren't so bad at all that. With those passages way out the... around a deal, and took the buses down their coats, head by Boggar's... where was a... Ah well."



3. "Surely they haven't cut up the... and stuck a... and surely they are not... to sell them to the... as... you, you don't know how... they are!"



4. "Well, and get the money!... by... and stroled off... when up... who... it was that..."



5. "Well, my, boys, I've... I'm a great... I'll... they..."



6. "Our... didn't stop to talk, but... this... the..."

Poor Polite PHicoddy!



Here, then, are the details of 70 papers, in alphabetical order.

ALLY SLOPER'S HALF HOLIDAY: One of the early papers from which the idea of the juvenile comic crystallised. The original series ran for 1788 issues (3.5.1884 to 9.9.1916). There was a later shorter series which I remember buying in the 'twenties. Originally published by Dalziel Bros.

BIG BUDGET: One of the best of the early papers. Many issues contain long stories by Maxwell Scott featuring Kenyon Ford, detective. 614 issues (9.6.1897 to 20.3.1909). Published by C. Arthur Pearson. Characters: (year 1901) Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy; Topsy Turvey Land. Stories: The Rivals of Ranthorpe School; The Serpent's Coil.

BIG COMIC: A very good paper, but suffered considerably on its reduction to only four pages prior to amalgamation with SPARKS. 207 issues (17.1.1914 to 29.12.1917). Continued as BIG COMIC AND SPARKS (Nos. 208 to 246). 39 issues (5.1.1918 to 28.9.1918). Published by Henderson. Characters: (year 1915) Ginkland; Gay Gus and Shrimp; Topsy and Tommy (the Terrible Twins); Salmon and Cucumber; Mike (the Muddle-Puddle Porter); Professor Potash; Perservering Percival. Stories: The Blue Tunic; Buffalo Bill and the Slayer from Sononora; On Service of the State; The Master of the Mitts (Norman Keys, Boxing Detective).

BUBBLES: A very good "junior" coloured comic and enjoyed a big circulation. 1024 issues (16.4.1921 to 24.5.1941). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (year 1934) The Bunty Boys; Peter (the Paleface Brave); Georgie Porgie; Mr. Croc's School; Bubbles (the Boy Clown); Nippi & Rosebud (the Happy Japs); The Little Piccaninnies; Piggy & Wiggy (the Porker Twins). Stories: Dick, the Boy Inventor; Chums at School; Jack & Jill (the Castaways).

BUTTERFLY: One of the most popular papers of the time. Originally printed on green paper, but finished as a coloured one. First series 656 issues (17.9.1904 to 31.3.1917). Second series (incorporating FIREFLY) 1206 issues (7.4.1917 to 18.5.1940). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (year 1916) Portland Bill; Dicky Doenut; Beatrix Buttercup (the Cheerful Charlady); Flossie; Gussy Goosgog; Inspector Spot (Always on the Spot); The Brothers Eggbert & Philbert. (Year 1918) Butterfly Bill; Tommy Dodd (the Tricky Traveller); Andy (the 'Andy Man'); T. E. Dunville; Maisie (the Messenger Girl); (Year 1919) Alfred & 'Erb (Ad. Agents); Bertie & Babs; Tilly, Tom & Tinker Topnote (the Tricky Trio). (Year 1922) Roland Butter & Hammond Deggs; Obadiah Priceless; Buckshee Bunce (the Balmy Bard); Marmaduke Marzipan (the Merry Major). (Year 1933) Molly & Mick (the Terrors of Little Tittering); May & Milly (the Merry Twins); Our Horace; Allsorts Stores; Smiler & Smudge (at Carraway College). Stories: (Year 1916) The Doings of Dr. Dread; Daring & Co; Cheerful Charlie Brown (the Original Boy Ventriloquist). (Year 1922) Crackers & Co (Detectives). (Year 1933) The Green Man (Robin Hood); A Prince in Peril (Ray Keen, detective, and his assistant Jimmy Smith).

CHAMPION COMIC: More of an adult paper than juvenile, but a very good publication of its kind. Printed on pink paper. 106 issues (9.1.1894 to 11.1.1896). Published by Greyfriars Publishing Co.

CHICKS OWN: A 'junior' coloured paper comparable with TINY TOTS. A good paper enjoying a long run. 1605 issues. (25.9.1920 to 9.3.1957). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: Betty and Billy; The Jolly Jumbos; Billy Pot & Percy Pan; Dickie Duck; Mr. Golliwog; Phillip Fly; Robert Rabbit.

CHILDREN'S FAIRY: A very good coloured paper, but only ran for a short period before amalgamation with BUBBLES. 76 issues (1.11.1919 to 9.4.1921). Published

by Amalgamated Press.

CHIPS (ILLUSTRATED): One of the most popular comic papers of all time - if not THE most popular. First series 6 issues (26.7.1890 to 30.8.1890); Second series 2997 issues (6.9.1890 to 12.9.1953). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1915) Weary Willie and Tired Tim (the World-famed Tramps); The Casey Court Nibs; Sunbeam (Our Innocent Little Imp); Homeless Hector (the Tail of a Lost Dog); Tom Bowline (Our Jolly Jack Tar); Toddles (the Big-Booted Comedian); Our Artful Allies. (Year 1922) Pa Perkins (and his son Percy); Our Artful Eskimos; Dr. Canem's College. (Year 1935) Laurie & Trailer (the Secret Service Lads); Milly (the Military Mascot); Winnie & Skinny. Stories: (Year 1911) The Flying Detective (George Gale of Scotland Yard); (Year 1916) The School Bell; The Blue Lamp (Tug Wilson, 'tec, and P.C. Harry Screams; The Silver Queen (Sylvia Royal, Woman of Mystery); (Year 1922) Catch-as-Catch-Can (Marshall Hawke, detective). (Year 1935) The Tolling Bell (Clive Markham and Dane, the Dog Detective). Mi Kollum, by Phil-pot Bottles (Chips Office Boy), was also a popular feature for many, many years. Much of his free time was spent with his two pals, Horatio Pimple and Sebastian Ginger (of Funny Wonder and Comic Cuts fame) in "Sally Slapcabbage's 'ot drink saloon" or with his girl Miss Sharlot Skroggins.

CHUCKLER: Spoken of amongst comic paper collectors as one of the "Bath publications." A good black-and-white paper, and very hard to obtain. 238 issues (31.3.1934 to 15.10.1938). Published by Target Publications, Bath, Somerset.

CHUCKLES: In my opinion the best-ever halfpenny coloured comic. Became a minor war casualty in 1917, and although carrying on was much smaller in size and format until after the war. The Christmas number for 1917 was, however, a special treat, for the publishers produced a bumper, full-sized paper with all the grand colours of earlier years. From 1921 the age group catered for was the very young. 517 issues (10.1.1914 to 1.12.1923). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1915) Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy; Boxo (the Muscular Marvel); Mustard Keen (and his Terrible Terrier); Little Tommy Treddles (and his Toy Aeroplane); Little Loo Lummee (and his Lucky Lamp); Chuckles Coloured Cinema; Dozey David. (Year 1920) Pongo the Monkey; Milly the Mermaid; Playland Flats; Sally (the Sunshine of Our Alley). Stories: (Year 1914) Complete stories of Greyfriars School ran for 37 consecutive issues commencing 10.1.1914. Nearly every story introduced Dick Trumper & Co of Courtfield Council School. (Year 1915) The Adventures of Captain Custard (and his nephew The Nib); Teddy Baxter & Co (at St. Jim's and Claremont Schools); A Trip to the Stars. (Year 1920) Chums of the Sea.

COLOURED COMIC: A good paper of its period. Probably produced with the idea of capturing the juvenile market, but never succeeded. 415 issues (21.5.1898 to 28.4.1906). Published by Trapps, Holmes & Co.

COMIC BITS: A very short-lived paper that deserved better. 10 issues (19.2.1898 to 23.4.1898). Published by Dalziel & Co. Ltd.

COMIC CUTS: One of the best-known comic papers of all time. 3006 issues (17.5.1890 to 12.9.1953). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1908) The Mulberry Flatites (Frowsy Freddie, Bachelorboy, Miss Olemaid and Oofbird Esq.); Sammy Salt; Fun on Board the Mary Ann; Our Merry Mannikins; Chuckles the Clown; Gertie, the Regimental Pet. (Year 1915) Tom, the Ticket of Leave Man; Ruff and Reddy. (Year 1918) Tom (the Menagerie Man); Waddles (Our Whimsical Waiter); Pansy Pancake (the Comical Cook); The Comic Cuts Colonists. Stories: (Year 1908) Martin Steel (and his Twelve Lady Detectives); The Aeroplane Girl (Stella Falconer). (Year 1915) The Amazing Island; The Heart of No Man's Land. (Year 1917) The Red

Rovers; The Shadow Man. 'Mi Wurd' by Sebastian Ginger, contemporary with 'Mi Kollum' in CHIPS, ran for many, many years.

COMIC LIFE: Originally "Pictorial Comic Life" and printed on pink paper. As a red and black paper, printed on white background, ran for many years and was a great favourite of the 1914-18 period. 1543 issues (14.5.1898 to 21.1.1928). Originally published by Henderson but taken over at a late date by the Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1913) Burglar Bertie; Uncle Gooseberry; Gip (and his Giraffe). (Year 1915) Butterball and Tall Thomas; Pyjama Percy and Balmy Bill; P.C. Neverwait; The Red Lion Scouts; Scientific Silas. (Year 1919) Tot and Ted; Topsy and Tommy (and their Jungle Pets). Stories: (Year 1913) Don Zalva the Brave; The Fateful Football; The Monarch of the Air; Tufty & Co's Christmas. (Stories of Tufty Kingham appeared every week for some time. Tufty stories were also in NUGGETS.) (Year 1915) Peter Flint, detective (and his assistant Jack Nugget); The Fighting Footballers. (Year 1919) The Sporting Pierrots; Tim the Cheapjack.

COMIC HOME JOURNAL: Printed on pink paper, and a very good production. 488 issues (11.5.1895 to 10.9.1904). Published by Amalgamated Press.

CRACKERS: A very nice coloured comic of twelve pages. A paper of high standard and quality. Copies are most difficult to come by today. 615 issues (23.2.1929 to 31.5.1941). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1932) Wildflower and Little Elf; Absent-minded Annie; Professor Noodle; Terry and Trixie (the Stars of the Circus); Little Sunshine; Kitty Clare's Schooldays; Crackers (our Funny Pup). Stories: A Prince of Britain; The Orphans of 'K' Ranch; Little Dick Nobody.

DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL: Produced at the time when Dan Leno was at his best on the "Halls." The publishers were obviously trying to "cash in." 93 issues (26.2.1898 to 2.12.1899). Published by The Proprietors of Dan Leno's Comic Journal, 28 Maiden Lane, London, W.C.

DAZZLER: Another Bath publication - and a very good one. Printed on yellow paper, it contained a full-sized four-page inset, THE OVALTINEY'S OWN COMIC. This inset was printed on pink paper. 294 issues (19.8.1933 to 8.4.1939) Produced by Target Publications.

FAVOURITE: Companion paper to BUTTERFLY and MERRY AND BRIGHT, but became a First World War casualty. 324 issues (21.1.1911 to 31.3.1917). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1911) P.C. Diddle 'um; Pretty Polly Perkins; Happy Horace; Tiny and Tinkle (the Terrible Twins); Willie Winkle (Messenger Boy); Bertie Brightboy and Wee MacHappy. (Year 1916) K. N. Pepper (King of the K-nuts); Tommy Tippit (the Terror of the Town); Ragtime Rex; Flossie and Phyllis; Sally Cinders (the Slavey). Stories: (Year 1911) The Mysterious Adventures of Barbara Brown (and Bob the Bulldog); The Girl Outcast. (Year 1916) London; In the Shadows; Victor Brand (detective).

FILM FUN: 2225 issues (17.1.1920 to 8.9.1962) To those of us who remember the old screen stars, the early issues of this paper will bring back memories! Characters: "Winkle" (Harold Lloyd); Larry Semon; Baby Marie Osborne; Mack Swain; Earle Montgomery & Joseph Rock; Ben Turpin; James Aubrey; Slim Summerville. Stories: "Fatty" Arbuckle's Schooldays; Screen Struck. (All the above are featured in Number 1.) Published by Amalgamated Press.

FIREFLY: Companion to BUTTERFLY and with which it was amalgamated in 1917. Printed on green paper. 111 issues (20.2.1915 to 31.3.1917). Published by

Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1915) Gilbert the Filbert; Syd Chaplin; Timothy Touchwood; Inspector Joe-Kerr (the Pride of the Force); Mr. Sharp (the Smart Shop Keeper). (Year 1916) T. E. Dunville; Lazy Leonard & Lively Laurence; Grabben and Pinch (the Comical Coppers); Professor Pip (and his Marvellous Hat); Rushing Rupert (the Reckless Reporter); Tommy Dodd (the Tricky Traveller). Stories: (Year 1915) The Drama of Life; Cast Adrift. (Year 1916) Friendless; The Convict Heir; Abel Daunt (the King of Detectives).

FUNNY CUTS: One of the early papers that had a long run. 1st series 958 issues (12.7.1890 to 10.11.1908); 2nd series 608 issues (17.11.1908 to 3.7.1920) Published by Trapps, Holmes & Co. Characters: (Year 1915) Josses & Co. Bouncer; Benjamin Bodger (Benefactor to Mankind); Woozy William & Artful Alf. Stories: The Adventures of Harley Staines (detective).

FUNNY FOLK: Can be considered one of the foundation stones upon which the juvenile comic was built. Commenced in 1873 and ran for at least 848 issues. (Number 848 is dated 21.2.1891). Published by Henderson. This was a black and white paper, and quite good for its particular period. Specialised in illustrated jokes.

FUNNY WONDER (and WONDER): Under these titles there were three series. 1st series 47 issues (10.2.1912 to 28.12.1912), 2nd series 64 issues (4.1.1913 to 21.3.1914). 3rd series 1760 issues (28.3.1914 to 12.9.1953). There was also an earlier series which will be found under JESTER AND WONDER. Companion to COMIC CUTS and CHIPS and forming what was known as 'the big three.' Finished as WONDER. Had several changes of colour during its long life - black and white, pink, and green. Characters: (Year 1915) Charlie Chaplin (on front page); Uncle Poppem's Pop-Shop; Willie and Wally (Our Funny Wonder Boys); Ned (the Navvy); Denny O'Dowd. (Year 1919) Annie Seed (the Belle of Bullseye Buildings); Punch & Judy (Our Perky Piccaninnies); Idle Jack (the Lazy Apprentice); Jingle's Circus; I. Mitt; Our Kinema Couple; Milly (the Merry Maid of All Work); Ben & Bert (the Kid Cops); Daft Dan (the Prairie Piecan). (Year 1937) Little Elf; Marmy (and his Ma). Stories: (Year 1915) The Golden Fang (Paul Sleuth, detective); All On His Own. (Year 1919) Pat O'Keene (Ventriloquist detective). (Year 1933) The Black Glove (Derek Lawson, detective); (Year 1937) The Three Film Clues; Brigands of the Black Tents. Also "Ho, I Say!" by Horatio Pimple, the FUNNY WONDER Office Boy. This feature ran for many years and was contemporaneous with "Mi Kollum" and "Mi Wurd." (See CHIPS and COMIC CUTS.) Horatio had a column right up to the final issue. ("My Story").

GOLDEN COMIC: Originally a two-coloured paper but finished as an all-colour publication. Contained nearly all serials and picture strips. 135 issues (23.10.1937 to 18.5.1940) Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1937) Lieut. Daring and Jolly Roger; Golden Picture Palace; Bruno, Lionel and Percy Piggins. Stories: Peril Trail; The Seven Stars; The Boy Clown. Picture stories: The Golden Eagle; The Secret of Smugglers Castle; Little Brother.

GOLDEN PENNY COMIC: A well-produced paper deserving a longer run. Many of the story illustrations were by Eric Parker. 276 issues (14.10.1922 to 28.1.1928). Published by Fleetway Press Ltd. Dane Street, High Holborn, W.C. Characters: (Year 1923) Daniel Dole and Oscar Outofwork; Happy Harold (the Van Boy); Bingo & Bones (the Dud Detectives); Cyril Sirloin; Katie (the Cat); Micky the Middy & Gussy the Goat; Nathaniel Nodd (the Dozey Nightwatchman); Oswald (the Odd Job Man). (Year 1926) Spaghetti (and his Monk Jacko); Harry Weldon; Randolph Rendall (the Railway Porter); The Smith Family. Stories: (Year 1923) The 'Ghost' of Fenton House

(the General's daughter); Smiler and Smirk (Mirth Merchants). (Year 1918) 'Appy Ann (the Lady Tramp); Unlucky 'Erbert. Stories: (Year 1913) Springheel Jack; Five Years After; Queen of Hearts. (Year 1918) Dr. Duval - Detective; Into the Unknown.

JINGLES: Enjoyed a good circulation and had a long run. 741 issues (13.1.1934 to 29.5.1954). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1934) The Tiddleywink Family; Jolliboy's School. Stories: Smugglers of Wreckers Rock; Val and his Pal.

JOKER: One of the Amalgamated Press lesser known but best comic papers. Originally black and white but changed to green paper. 655 issues (5.11.1927 to 18.5.1940). Characters: (Year 1936) Alfie (the Air Tramp); Bert & Daisy; Midge & Moocher; Buck Tupp (and Flannelfoot); Spot & Speedy (the River Cops); Dicky Duffer (the Dunce).

JOKES: On the lines of JESTER but did not 'catch on.' 22 issues (20.1.1898 to 16.6.1898). Published by Greyfriars Publishing Co.

JOLLY: Another good but short-lived paper. Had at least three different colour changes. 250 issues (19.1.1935 to 28.10.1939). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1939) Johnny Green & Alec Smart; Will Hay (the Master of Mirth); Binky & Gran'pop; Professor P. Nutts (and his Marvellous Mixtures); Dusky Dinah; Jolly Joe (and his Fun Show); Stories: The Mystery of Marshpoint Manor (Frank Harker and Spike, the Fighting Tecs); The Fearless Three; The Boy Who Bought the School.

KINEMA COMIC: Companion to FILM FUN and in my opinion the slightly better paper of the two. For some unknown reason, however, it never reached the circulation figures of Film Fun. 651 issues (24.4.1920 to 15.10.1932) Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: Ford Sterling; Fatty Arbuckle; Louise Fazenda; Chester Conklin; Mabel Normand; Polly Moran. Stories: Peg of the Pictures; The Amazing Exploits of Houdini (written by Harry Houdini). All the above are featured in Number 1 dated 24 April 1920.

LARKS: Mainly cartoon jokes. Copies are sought today for the stories written by Charles Hamilton. This paper was later incorporated with WORLD'S COMIC. 239 issues (7.6.1902 to 29.12.1906). Published by Trapps, Holmes & Co. Characters: (Year 1902) Mr. & Mrs. Bunchowder (and 'Nice Little Horatio.') Stories: The Heart of Africa; The Perils of the Pampas (by Charles Hamilton).

LARKS: Another nice pink paper enjoying a long run. 656 issues (29.10.1927 to 18.5.1940). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1939) Dad Walker and his son Wally; Peggy (the Pride of the Force); Luke and Len (the Odd Job Men); Piccaninny Pets; The Happy Family. Stories: Lumberjack Dan; Tales of the Wild West; Jennie (the Little Flower Girl); The Boys of Boffin's Estate; Picture Story: Son of an Outlaw.

LITTLE SPARKS: An excellent junior coloured comic paper. According to the publishers A PICTURE PAPER FOR CHILDREN. RUN BY CHILDREN. 124 issues (1.5.1920 to 30.9.1922) Published by Amalgamated Press.

LOT-O-FUN: Many consider this even better than its companion COMIC LIFE. In any case both were wonderful value for money - especially the monster Christmas numbers. 1196 issues (17.3.1906 to 16.2.1929) Published by Hendersons. Characters: (Year 1915) Weggie and Wonald; Pneumatic Peter (the India-rubber Man). (Year 1917) Dreamy Daniel; Patriotic Paul; Shipwrecked Sam and Marooned Mike; Lionel the Lion Tamer (and Lollops the Lively Lion); Tarpot and Tickler. (Year

1919) Winkle and Binkle; Professor Potash; P.C. 49; (Year 1921) Harry Weldon; Plum Duff (Our Wee Waiter); Dickie and Darkie; Willie Evergrow (the Merry Midget).
Stories: (Year 1915) The Young Charioteer; The Temple of Tootama; The Exploits of Marcus Brayne; The Golden Ladder; The Adventures of Pontifex Shrewd (Scientific Detective). (Year 1917) The Isle of Gold; Sons of the Sea; Jimmy Speed - Taxi Driver. (Year 1919) The Island of Wonders; The Scarlet Sign; Three in Thrillingland. (Year 1921) Tuckaway Jack; The Fighting 'Ts' (Tom King and Ted Bright).

MERRY & BRIGHT: One of the finest and most popular papers of yesteryear. Style very similar to BUTTERFLY: also - like the BUTTERFLY - enjoyed two series, the first being a bluey-green paper and the second a pinky-mauve. 1st series 337 issues (22.10.1910 to 31.3.1917) 2nd series 928 issues (7.4.1917 to 19.1.1935). Published by Amalgamated Press and 'Companion' paper to BUTTERFLY and FIREFLY.
Characters: (Year 1911) Curly Kelly; Touchwood & Whistle (the Tricky Twins); The Boys of Coffdrop College; Pa Petrol (and his son Sebastian); Percy Pickle (the Pavement Artist); Gussy I. Dontthink (the Terrible Toff); The Shirkwork Brothers; The Merry & Bright Entertainers; Harry Hothouse and Archie Iceberg. (Year 1915) Reggie (the Rollicking Rajah); Nicky Nick-Nock (the Perky Postman); Cyril Slapdab (the Champion Billposter); Larky Mark (the Merry Mirth-monger). (Year 1916) Phil Ray; Little Tich; Will Evans; George Robey; Harry Tate; T. E. Dunville; Fred Kitchen. (Year 1919) Sleepy Sidney; Percy Popit (the Punch & Judy Person); Bounding Billy; Sheerluck Bones (the Dud Detective). Stories: (Year 1911) Gentleman Joe (and his Four Urchin Detectives); Jolly Jack Johnson (the Boy Mesmerist); Ragged Jack (the Tramp Detective). (Year 1919) Clues Ltd; The Man with the Rubber Face; Sylvia Power (the Girl in the Iron Muzzle).

MERRY MIDGET: A very good provincial publication. Printed on green paper. Did not have a very long run, although it certainly deserved it. The exact number of issues not known, but there were at least 17 numbers, this being dated 2.1.1932. Published by Provincial Comics Ltd. Characters: Micky Midge; Wurzel Farm; Sammy Spry; Horace Hawkeye (Super Sleuth); Corney Beef and Percy Pickles; Saucy Sue. Stories: Ronald the Smith; Peril (or The Food of the Giants).

MERRY MOMENTS: Quite a nice 'junior' coloured paper. 194 issues (12.4.1919 to 23.12.1922) Published by Newnes. Characters: Cyril & Gladys (the Happy Twins) and Professor Crazy Klew (the Dud Detective); Dick and Daisy in Lollipop Land; The Zoo-Zoo Folk; Ho Ping & Foo Ling; Jimmy and Joan; The Adventures of Johnny Stout. Stories: Dick Dare of St. Sunstan's; The Richest Boy in the World; The Adventures of the Kinema Kids.

MICKEY MOUSE WEEKLY: One of the most superb coloured publications ever produced by any publishing firm. The original series ran to 920 issues (8.2.1936 to 28.12.1957) and was published by Odham's Press. It was succeeded in January 1958 by WALT DISNEY'S MICKEY MOUSE with a different publisher.

MONSTER: Companion paper to GOLDEN PENNY COMIC and equally as good. 383 issues (23.9.1922 to 25.1.1930). Characters: (Year 1923) Wireless Willie & Bertie Broadcast; Ferdinand (the Firefighter); Clara (the Cleaner); Tishy (the Twister) and Steve (his Pal); Bertie Bright (the Bootblack); Basil the Beaver. (Year 1926) Jerry (the Jester); The Kids of Cushy Court; Felix and Bozo (the Terrible Twins); Happy Snapps, his daughter Gretchen and their Dog Poloni; Sir Horace Horseradish (and his Horse Hector). Stories: (Year 1923) Ned and Ted Twain (the Twin 'Tecs'); The Mystery of Convict 69; Mystery House; Doped to Win; The Sleuth of the Seas (Harvey Grayton, detective). (Year 1926) Billy Buttons (Assistant Resident Detective).

MY FAVOURITE: A well-produced coloured junior paper. Considering it was rather

an expensive paper at 2d in those days, it had quite a good run. I am sure it would have gone on longer but for the price. (Very few children had twopence for a comic paper in the 'twenties!) One of the few comic papers edited by a girl - Sylvia Clarke. 351 issues (28.1.1928 to 13.10.1934) Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1928) Aboard the Jolly Roger (Captain Hearty and his pretty daughter Molly); I. Knowall; Winnie (the Waitress); Dreamy Dick (the Perfect Office Boy); Cheery Charlie (the Comical Cowboy); Cole & Coke (the Merry Nigs); Ali Baa-Baa (the Bey of Biscay). Stories: Paul Daring, detective; Mystery Manor; Cowboy Joe; Mick of the Motor Works. Picture Story: The Rustlers (featuring Strongheart the Wonder Dog).

MY FUNNYBONE: Similar to the early LARKS. Mostly cartoon jokes. Did not achieve the same popularity, however. 86 issues (4.9.1911 to 22.4.1913). Published by Belvedere Printing and Publishing Co. Characters: (Year 1912) The Good Ship Funnybone; Bowrie Bill (the Broncho Buster).

PICTURE FUN: Printed on pink paper. One of the very best of the earlier comics. Contained stories by 'Frank Drake' (Charles Hamilton) and much sought after on that account. 595 issues (16.2.1909 to 3.7.1920) Published by Trapps, Holmes & Co. Characters: (Year 1911) The Happy Alleyites, Billy Bashful; Sammy Barleycorn (the Farmer's Boy); Dandy Dick (and his Dapper Old Dad); Natty Niblet (the Boy Wonder); Ginger Coleman (and his dog Hot Stuff); Jack the Sailor and his pal Bill Huggins. Stories: The Branded Hand (by Frank Drake); The Chums of Friarswell (by Harry Gregory).

PLAYBOX: A coloured paper for the young. Had a well-deserved long run. I could never make out why such a nice paper with the good circulation it had should be 'axed' - and this applies to a number of others. 1279 issues (14.2.1925 to 11.6.1955). Published by Amalgamated Press.

PUCK: Until about 1917 this was one of the finest coloured productions of all. Wonderful value - even at one penny! The giant Christmas numbers were really superb! In 1918 the paper was much thinner, and the colouring deteriorated considerably (probably due to the scarcity of dye). Bill Lofts wrote a fine article on PUCK in the Collectors' Digest No. 178 (October 1961) and I recommend those who haven't read it to do so. 1867 issues (30.7.1904 to 11.5.1940) Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1908) The Casey Court Boys (Willie Wagstaff & Co.) Professor Radium; Billy Smiff; The Newlyweds; Percy the Page; Dr. Stork's Academy; Monty the Merry Middy. (Year 1913) Dan (the Menagerie Man); Jolly Joe Binks (and his Pocket Pierrots); Monty's Moving Pictures. (Year 1918) Angel (and her Merry Playmates); Jack & Jill; The Merry Mischiefs; Billy Bunny; Dr. Jolliboy's School; Sammy Smiles (and his Scooter); Tommy Traddles; Jungle Land. Stories: (Year 1908) The Puck Pierrots; Paul Dane's Detective Academy; Britain in Peril; The Prisoner of the Forest; The Boys of St. Kitts; Three Chums in a Car; France v Germany; Paying the Piper; (Year 1913) A Trip Through the Sky; Round the World for Pictures; Twinkle (the Little Star). (Year 1918) Val Fox (and his Pets); Charlie Prince.

RAINBOW: Considered by many to be the finest comic paper ever produced. I call it the "King of Juvenile Coloured Comic Papers." Had a wonderful long run, and maintained its high circulation almost to the end. 1898 issues (14.2.1914 to 28.4.1956). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1914) The Bruin Boys; The Rainbow Colony Cats; Sam the Skipper and his Little Son Jack; Sing Hi and Sing Lo (the Chinese Twins); The Brownie Boys; The Wonderful Wagtails; The Dolliwogs Dolls House; Susie Sunshine (and her Pretty Pet Poms); The Two Pickles (and Fluff); Marzipan the Magician (and his Magic Wand). Stories: Bobby; The Island of Wonders;

(No. 16 dated 26.12.1931). Characters: Wurzel Farm; Tom Trotter and Harry Hoofit; Alfie and Auntie Annabel; Tall Ted and Tiny Tom; Oliver Offside and Tommy Touch-line; The Muckabout Family; Spot and Spink; Minnie Ha-Ha (the Charming Cherokee). Stories: The Body that Vanished. (Malcolm Deen, detective, and his assistant, Waxey); Birds of Prey (No connection with Maxwell Scott's story with the same title).

SPARKLER: Published by Amalgamated Press. A coloured production. Mainly picture-stories in serial form. 251 issues (20.10.1934 to 5.8.1939).

SPARKS: Very good value for a halfpenny. To my mind one of Henderson's best comic papers. 198 issues (21.3.1914 to 29.12.1917). Characters: (Year 1916) Lemon and Dash; Ram and Rod (the Enterprising Tommies); Pushful Perkins; Lark-heeled Jack (the Coughdrop); Economical 'Enery; Algernon and Horace (the Pals of Pie Court). Stories: The Terror of the Crimson Cloud; The Treasure of the Deep; The Isle of Surprises.

"SPRING" COMIC: A coloured paper of amazingly good value, priced at twopence. I have only ever seen but one issue, which is undated - and probably the only one of its kind.

"SUMMER" COMIC: Companion to "SPRING" COMIC. Everything said of the latter applies to this one. Undated but pre-war. Both were published by C. Arthur Pearson.

SUNBEAM: Coloured paper similar to MY FAVOURITE but had more appeal, for it had a longer run. 1st series 173 issues (7.10.1922 to 23.1.1926). 2nd series 747 issues (30.1.1926 to 25.5.1940). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1922) Fun in Funny Folks Forest; Mrs. Blossom (and the Little Blossoms); Funland Farm; Marvo (the Magician); Jenny and Jacko; The Troublesome Tots (and their Pets). Stories: Harry Norton's Schooldays; Waifs of the Wild.

SUNSHINE: Another Bath publication. Exceedingly hard to find today. Printed on pink paper, it deserved a much longer life. 39 issues (16.7.1938 to 8.4.1939). Published by Target Publications.

TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY: Second only to RAINBOW in 'junior' comic papers. Enjoyed a wonderful circulation - and deservedly so. 1st series 94 issues (31.1.1920 to 12.11.1921). 2nd series 965 issues (19.11.1921 to 18.5.1940). Published by Amalgamated Press. The first series was a smaller size, with pink printing on white paper. Characters: (Year 1921) The Bumpy Boys & Cinderella; Mrs. Bruin's School; The Tiny Toy Boys; Jimmy and Jane; The Merry Mice of Squeaky Town; Goldilocks (and the Three Bears); Pinkie and Patsy; Tales of Tinkle-Bell Tree. Stories: Jackie (A Story of Merrie England in the days of Good Queen Bess); Nobody's Boy.

TINY TOTS: The ideal coloured paper for the very young. Had a wonderful long run. 1334 issues (22.10.1927 to 24.1.1959). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1930) Tiny and Tot; The Funny Bunny Boys; Peter and Peggy; The Piggywigs; Little Snowdrop; The Ten Little Nigger Boys. Stories: Toy Shop Tales; Little Tom Thumb.

TIP-TOP: I call it a 'modernised JESTER.' It had a fair run, but lacked really good material. 727 issues (21.4.1934 to 29.5.1954). Published by Amalgamated Press. Characters: (Year 1938) Dinkum, the Dog Detective. Stories: The Council Estate Mystery (Donovan Lyle, detective); Never Say Neigh. Picture Stories: In Search of New Lands (Ken Maynard); The Adventures of Jerry, Jenny and Joe; Singapore Jim, and Billy; The Call of Adventure.

WORLD'S COMIC: (Incorporating LARKS). An early publication of Trapps, Holmes, and ideal for those who liked cartoon jokes. Very good value for a halfpenny and enjoyed a long run. 855 issues (6.7.1892 to 10.10.1908). Characters: (Year 1908) Birdie and Napoleon. Stories: Dead-Shot Dick; Through the Poles in a Submarine.

* * * * *

Here are the available details of three other papers which I lack. Indeed, I have never even seen a copy!

BO-PEEP: 235 issues (19.10.1929 to 14.4.1934). Published by Amalgamated Press. Considering the fact that this paper ran for nearly five years - and I am told it had a fine circulation - it seems almost unbelievable that copies are so rare!

BOUNCER: 9 issues (11.2.1939 to 8.4.1939). Published by Target Publications. In view of the very short life of this paper, the scarcity today is understandable.

JUNGLE JINKS: 62 issues (8.12.1923 to 7.2.1925). Published by Amalgamated Press. This I believe to be a coloured 'junior' comic.

In conclusion, I would like to express my thanks to Bill Lofts and Derek Adley for their help in the compilation of the data.

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hilary marlow's humorous characters

By Ray Hopkins

The name Hilary Marlow disguises that of Reginald Kirkham, one of the known MAGNET substitute writers. He lived in the Bromley, Kent, area and during the twenties and early thirties, wrote many humorous serials for the weekly papers aimed at the schoolgirl trade. Serials by him appeared in *The School Friend*, and *The Schoolgirls' Own*, but the main bulk of his work is found in the pages of *The Schoolgirls' Weekly*. His first known work for these periodicals appears in serial form in 1921 in the famous Morcove paper, *The Schoolgirls' Own*. For that paper, he wrote adventure serials set in exotic locations. Some of the early titles are *IN SEARCH OF HER FATHER*, *THE AMAZING QUEEN*, and *IN A MYSTIC LAND*. These stories were written under the pen-name of Joan Vincent. Kirkham also used this same by-line when he turned up as a writer of comedy in 1923 with *THE TROUBLESOME TWINS*, the first of what was to become a long series of stories about Jill and Phyl Greenhill, who were identical in looks but not in nature, for Jill was cautious and Phyl was scatter-brained. Jill and Phyl appeared in no less than four consecutive serials in *The Schoolgirls' Weekly*, each one running approximately 13 weekly instalments. Possibly for editorial reasons it was not a good idea to have a continuous string of stories of the same type appearing by Joan Vincent, and so Kirkham used the name Hilary Marlow when he invented another double pair of heroines in May and June Reece, June being the cautious one, and May the scatterbrain. They first appeared in *The Schoolgirls' Weekly* in 1924 in *THE GUARDIANS OF THE CASTLE*. This again was the beginning of a long series of stories featuring sisters. Later, there were to come, in 1927, *Laughing Lily Lane*, the ventriloquist, and *Pen Holliday*, the conjuror and sleight-of-hand artist, in 1928. He next invented *Sadie and Joy Temple*, who first appeared in 1929 in *RIVALRY OF THE RIVERSIDE*. The Temples differed from the Greenhills and the Reeces in that *Sadie* was lugubrious and *Joy's* nature could be inferred from her name. For all these characters, Kirkham used the by-line of Hilary Marlow, and right up to 1933 in *The Schoolgirls' Weekly*, there was one Hilary Marlow serial followed by a Joan Vincent, and all of the humorous variety. I don't suppose any reader realised that all these fine "laughter stories," as they were called when reprinted in *The Schoolgirls' Own Library*, were written by the same author. However, when the two names appeared as the joint writers of a single story which appeared in one issue of *The Schoolgirls' Weekly* under the title of *SIX TO SOLVE A PROBLEM*, and which featured May and June, Jill and Phyl, *Laughing Lily* and *Pen*, the reader may have suspected momentarily that Joan Vincent and Hilary Marlow were one and the same. But a quick think would have made one dismiss this as impossible. No author could turn out a constant stream of stories with instalments appearing in every consecutive issue, for so many years. Or could he? The reader in those distant days didn't know that Charles Hamilton had been doing the same thing for many years prior to the 1920's.

An important aspect of these serials, which especially charms the younger reader, is that the heroines get away with something the child reader of the twenties was not allowed to do. That is, they are able to confound adults and best them in a battle of words and wits. The author is careful to make the

heroines in the right: the adults thus bested deserve the heroine's ire. They are not the nice adult characters, of course, but rather the villains or villainesses whose plotting and cunning are the mainsprings of the stories. The heroines come off best in the battle of words, and finally the major conflict of the story. These nimble heroines specialize in being just a little bit sharper than the adults whose villainous paths they cross in their adventures, and as the adults in question are eminently hateable, the child reader enjoyed reading of their being vanquished by mere slips of girls.

The humour of the Twins' stories depends to a large extent on the villains not knowing that they are up against two of them. Phyl tends to rush into things and gets caught more easily than the cautious Jill; so having disposed of Phyl, and while rubbing their hands with glee, the villains are suddenly confronted by Jill, and are thrown into utter confusion. In some cases the humour is increased by the fact that Jill is unaware of Phyl's predicament, and so cannot see the reason for the villains' consternation.

In the case of May and June, whose speciality is dressing up as improbable old ladies, June is always having to don difficult disguises at breakneck speed, in order to extricate May from some fearful predicament in which she suddenly finds she has plunged herself. In their case, the villains, or plotters, as they are often referred to, are confounded by not only two spirited girls of whom they are aware, but also by an incredibly large number of elderly females who are May and June in disguise at various points in whatever adventure they happen to be a part.

When Mr. Kirkham got around to the single person heroines, Laughing Lily Lane and Pen Holliday, he had to leave in the resource, but cut out the scatterbrain bit which is so large a part of the charm of Phyl Greenhill and May Reece. But there was still much to laugh at in the way Lily and Pen outwitted the plotters. Their other capabilities - the clever voice throwing and the sleight-of-hand, make up for the loss of Phyl and May's blundering mistakes.

To make the resourcefulness of his heroines plausible, Kirkham has them "of no fixed address." They are independent agents. They are without mothers and fathers, or perhaps their parents are overseas. The reader is clued in to their status by the titles. LAUGHING LILY - ALL ALONE, and PEN LOOKING AFTER HERSELF, introduced the heroines whose names appear in the titles. Their own problems solved, they are then free to champion others. Again, the titles are explicit: PUTTING THINGS RIGHT FOR TRIxie, a 1929 May and June story, and the 1931, LEAVE IT TO LAUGHING LILY.

The heroines tend to have to act out their adventures in similar locales repeated after a lapse of time. Running a shop features in THE TROUBLESOME TWINS' TUCKSHOP, in 1924, and MAY AND JUNE IN CHARGE, in 1927; waxworks shows in LAUGHING LILY'S TRAVELS, in 1928, and a hilarious series of short stories which appeared in the weekly Schoolgirls' Own in 1930 under the general title of WITH THE HELP OF MAY AND JUNE, in which they rescue Mr. Pullar's waxworks from various shop windows whose owners had bought them for a song from the rascally Mr. Gratz, who had taken them from Mr. Pullar in lieu of an unpaid debt. In 1927, an ancient monument was involved in LAUGHING LILY AT THE CASTLE, and in 1929, in THE TWINS AT THE TOWERS. The movie industry is used as background in THE MIRTH-MAKER OF THE MOVIES, a 1931 Joy Temple serial, and in 1933, in PEN'S QUEST IN FILMLAND. Fairgrounds were the colorful locale of CONNIE OF THE FAIR, in 1927, and THEIR HAPPY VALLEY HOLIDAY, a May and June story of 1933.

Circuses, riverside tea-rooms, boarding houses, and summer cruises all contribute interesting backdrops to Reginald Kirkham's battlefields. The ivied walls of educational establishments appear in only one title which was not a serial but a "New

& Original Story especially written for The Schoolgirls' Own Library" in 1933, entitled MAY AND JUNE AT SCHOOL. As far as I know now, this is the only non-serialized long story that Kirkham wrote for the schoolgirls' papers. It may have been one of his last writing efforts, though reprints of earlier stories continued to 1935 in the Library.

Reginald Kirkham's laughter stories, using the Hilary Marlow and Joan Vincent pen-names consecutively, appeared in The Schoolgirls' Weekly until approximately 1933. The last of them were reprinted in the Library in 1935. From then on, these two familiar names which had appeared so regularly since 1924 disappear from the list of regular authors in the Library until 1939 when one title by Hilary Marlow and one by Joan Vincent appeared. Neither story featured any of his most popular early characters. Why this mysterious four-year break after an eleven-year continuous run? Did he continue to write stories using other pen-names, or did he then give up writing altogether? The two 1939 reprints may have been editorial holdovers from earlier years, but in general The Schoolgirls' Own Library reprinted serials which had appeared two years earlier in the weekly papers. At this point in time, I doubt that I shall ever be able to solve this mystery, but one does know that when Mr. Kirkham gave up writing, he went in for fruit growing in Kent, and managed to leave a sizable fortune of £32,000 when he died. As far as I am aware, the AP, and later, Fleetway, have never used either of this writer's pen-names since.

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I COULDN'T DO IT MYSELF

By Frank Shaw

(author of Lern Yerself Scouse, The Gospels in Scouse etc.)

DID GREYFRIARS OR ST. JIM'S have any specialists on do-it-yourself, or, for that matter did St. Frank's (if that was the name of the school) or any of the other academies in the popular boys' papers?

I hope I shall not be burnt in effigy if I say that these papers were mainly aimed at the working class boy up to grammar school level. Most of us, of course, also read the periodicals professedly intended for the public school boy, like the Captain and the great B.O.P. (with all its pi-jaw and jingoism - maybe we could do with more religion and patriotism). These publications and Chums, a sort of "comprehensive," had an almost unhealthy obsession with instructing us how to make canoes or canary cages. But I don't recall Talbot Baines Reed or the young Wodehouse or Desmond Coke letting the hobbyist stray into the fiction pages.

"Our" periodicals were ready-made for a funny do-it-your-selfer, Coker, Prout, Handforth and Bunter, who was so many, many things; he might even have been a competent do-it-yousef and be able to knock up a couch strong enough to bear Mauly all, like the boat made of wood by the kid in Chuckles, "all made out of my own head;" after all if he could become a ventriloquist---! More likely a desk for Quelchy which would collapse when he sat down at it.

I don't mean mad inventors of the Skimpole type, by the way. But youthful versions of these men, deadlier even than the golfers, the gardeners, the car-owners even, who bore us on the morning bus with miraculous tales of four-by-two and a pound of nails.

When the papers were in their heyday do-it-yourself would not have been quite the thing. To do what a glazier, carpenter or painter was trained to do would be contrary to nobless oblige. Therefore it was, for the middle class, infra dig. And few of the working class after a day of manual toil wished to pass an evening ditto. "Nay, lad, ivry man to his job. Ah'm botton-topper, ah gets bricklayer in to lay bricks" (not very good at the accent, I'm afraid).

Less money all round and the shortness of good tradesman - and often the over-charging by the few there are - changed this. Most men Do It Themselves now. Most. I don't. My wife still has to get a man in or do it herself, and she is pretty good (can even repair school boots).

I could never emulate the old Lancashire comic and make a 'en-pen for t'pig. I never swear, like the dad in Comic Cuts, when I hit my thumb with a hammer; I never use a hammer. In the old parlour game in which one picked one book to take on a desert island Chesterton, shunning the usual Bible or Complete Shakespeare, picked How To Build a Boat. But put me on a desert island with the book and I'd be there for ever (as I suspect G.K.C. would have been).

There were hobbyists in the old days who made fretwork letter-racks and one-string fiddles from cigar-boxes and poker-work mottoes for office walls (work like Helen B. Merry) and there was the female pastime, making passé partout picture-

frames. But nothing useful.

Oddly enough I read Hobbies and the Meccano Magazine (oddly enough I even had a Meccano set) but then I read besides Magnet, Monday, Gem, Wednesday, and the rest, Peg's Paper, The Pink Un, Christian Novels, All Sports and The Meat Trades Journal (which has outlived them all). They meant as little to me as a treatise on Einstein's theory would have meant to Dicky Nugent. (Likewise I never got beyond, or completed the first model in the Meccano set, a crane. I kept losing screws.)

From an early age I edited family and form magazines, all closely related to my beloved Greyfriars Herald. Most died very quickly, not from the usual trouble of lack of material, or of readers; I had literate helpers and a circulation, in any case I could fill a whole issue myself and be my own circulation. I kept losing the bits of type out of the John Bull Printing Set. (I note, incidentally, just as the hobbyist magazines are much brighter than they were, though still, to me, incomprehensible, Meccano and old John Bull are kinder to the gammy-handed lad but still not easy enough for me.)

When a capable teacher roneoed Form II's Utopia, edited Frank Shaw with illustrations by F.S., it ran for a year and made money. We had a class picnic on the takings and I can still taste the strawberries and cream.

Though my father, no handyman himself, my mother doing the washer-fixing, fuse-mending etc. round our house as my son's mother does round her's, kept buying me fretsaws and Little Carpenter's Tool Sets and How To Make a Shilling Camera and Meccanos (second one swopped at once for Holiday Annual Number One, rubiest of red letter days) the signs had been there from an early age.

Rainbow and (I think) its posh relation Puck used, much in the fashion of the needlework patterns in women's papers, have pages devoted to cut-outs. You cut out the pattern, no mean feat for me, in itself, stuck it on a sheet of cardboard (talk about 'when father papered the parlour' - "Frank, how did this gum get in your father's slippers/your father's pipe-rack/my wash-basin?") Then it was a matter of minutes to fold this, and twist that, and gum this and there you had, already for painting if you were really mad, or your mother was, a model fort or aeroplane or motor-car. Or my pal Jimmy Daly had. What I had was a fort after severe bombardment, a jettisoned plane, a motor-car which had been over a cliff. Jimmy's father used to show his son's models all round the neighbourhood. Dad just looked sadly at me, as my mother fixed the doorknob.

Part of the joy in reading the old papers came from identification, of course, and more from our finding someone worse at something than oneself, say Bunter and spelling. But I do not recall any stories in which I could either identify with or deride a fretworking fool, a mucker up of models. I've no doubt someone like Mr. Lofts will be able to name a dozen but, before even examining the evidence, I at once declare they were substitute stories (boo, boo). I don't believe the Great Man himself would be able to do more with his hands than type and fill his pipe. How many of us writers are any good in that way? I'll bet the lads in Chums with the canary cages only wrote about them.

Were the boys even taught simple carpentry and the like. They did so much, if only briefly. I don't know if they had a woodwork class. Could it have been like the one I attended for two years and all I made in that time was a spill-holder for an unmarried uncle who did not smoke - fair enough, the holder wouldn't hold spills - and, allowed to make anything I like, a gallows? This would have

CUT IT OUT

By COMICS

CUT IT OUT

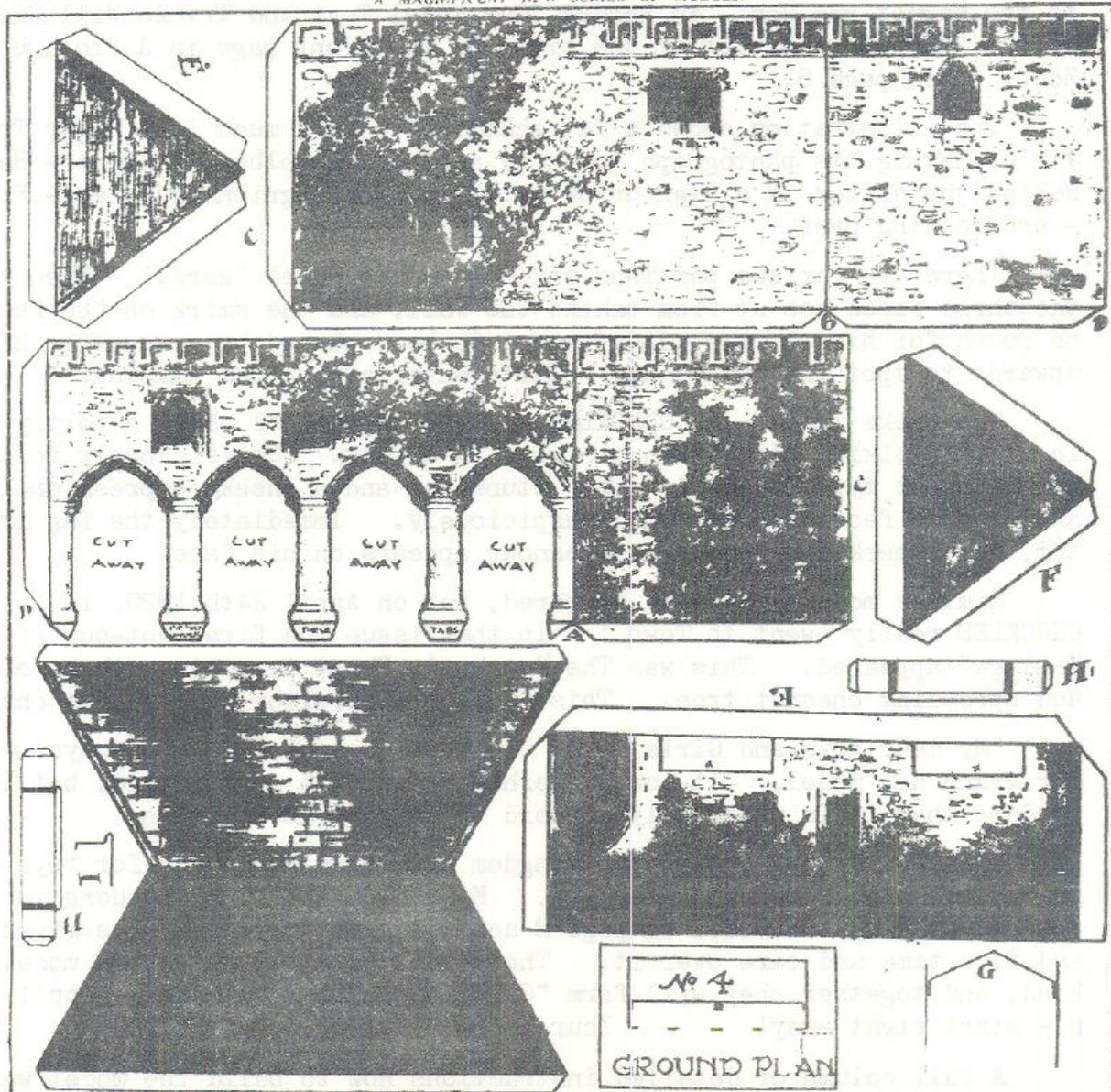
BY COMICS



SAFETY FIRST!—ORDER YOUR "CHUCKLES" FOR EVERY FRIDAY!

Part 4. "Chuckles" Model of Greyfriars School. (For Full Particulars See Page 5.)

A MAGNIFICENT NEW SERIES OF MODELS.



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TURNING the pages of PUCK No. 899 for October 15th, 1921 recently, I found a chunk of the Val Fox story on page 9 was missing. A section of columns 2 and 3 had been neatly clipped out. Before I turned the page I knew what to expect.

The Editor's Weekly Page always had a toy, game or model, with the well known instruction - PASTE THIS PICTURE ON TO THIN CARDBOARD, AND, WHEN QUITE DRY, CUT IT OUT!

Almost every coloured comic had one of these models to cut out. Very few of my collection of comics however, have been mutilated in this way, and I rather fancy the various editors over-estimated the popularity of this feature. When I looked through PUCK No. 900, I found The Pirate's Half Holiday - the model for October 22nd - was still there. Perhaps the cut-out in No. 899 was a particularly ingenious one.

However, I thought I would look at other comic papers, and see what other clever models had been invented for the amusement of the young readers.

The most elaborate series of these constructive toys, of course, appeared in CHUCKLES from 1919 onwards. No. 306 of that coloured comic - a companion paper to the Magnet and Gem - is headed "Our Model Toys and Tricks Will Give You Heaps of Fun," and to the left of the title on the front page is A Picture of This Week's Model - see page 8.

The illustration shows a fat schoolboy - very much like Baggy Trimble of St. Jim's, having his photograph taken by another schoolboy in Etons - Harry Manners? Behind the sitter is a high brick wall, and three grinning faces - Figgins & Co? - are looking over.

There are various portions which make the model 'work.' When you pull Tab A, the three faces bob up from behind the wall, and the smirk on the face of Baggy, as he poses for his picture, disappears, to be replaced by a scowl as his eyes flash upwards to spot the onlookers. Quite entertaining and amusing.

Two weeks later - in CHUCKLES No. 308, the model shows a portly Form-master a la Prout, walking along with his nose in a book. He is closely followed by a Dicky Nugent type, with his tummy stuck out and a cheeky expression. Pull Tab A, and Prout's face glances round suspiciously. Immediately the fag draws in his tum, and a meek and innocent demeanour appears on his face!

Similar models to these appeared, but on April 24th 1920, in No. 329, CHUCKLES really 'went to Town.' In that issue the first cut-out of "A Grand Model Village" appeared. This was The Butcher's Shop, complete with butcher, customer, and spreading chesnut tree. This is what the editor says in his chat:-

"My dear Boys and Girls, - On the back page of this issue, you will have seen our grand new model. It looks, perhaps, a little complicated, but I assure my readers that it is not nearly so hard to make up as it looks.

"Readers from all over the kingdom have been asking me for toys and larger models, as they amuse considerably. My advice to all my readers is this. Start now and make up the model on page 8 according to the directions given on this page, and take time and care over it. There will be at least TWELVE models of this kind, and together they will form "CHUCKLES'" MODEL VILLAGE. Don't start with No. 6 - start right away! Your sincere friend, THE EDITOR"

A full column of detailed instructions how to build the model was given, and on the front page was a picture of a boy and girl - about 12 year olds - admiring

the finished model village, which is as near to an ideal representation of Friar-dale as one could wish to see.

Besides the Butcher's Shop, there is The Village Store - Uncle Cleggs; the Newsagent's Shop; Police Station & P. C. Tozer?; The Post Office; The Village Inn (Cross Keys!); The Church, The Squire's House; The Village Smithy - not the Bounder; A Windmill, Rows of Cottages; A Farm with Barns etc., and other items such as the village pump, etc.

When completed the whole village would occupy a fully extended dining table, and must have presented a charming appearance.

The success of this series was perhaps the inspiration of the next one, which began in CHUCKLES No. 344 for August 7th 1920. This was no less than a complete representation of GREYFRIARS SCHOOL! One wonders why this superb series of cut-out models has not been reprinted in THE BEST OF THE MAGNET & GEM! Imagine what the sales would have been then amongst Hamiltonians all over the world - with the necessary publicity.

Of this series - alas - I have only No. 4 "THE CLOISTERS," which perhaps our Editor will be able to reproduce as an illustration. The series ran for many weeks, and I feel sure that the reason for the scarcity of copies of CHUCKLES for this period is because so many readers 'cut it out.' Perhaps other collectors have copies of these CHUCKLES and a full model of Greyfriars may be possible. I would willingly contribute my copy of CHUCKLES 347 with THE CLOISTERS to this good end.

My next run of CHUCKLES commences at No. 383, which contains Part 2 of another working model "The Magic Room." Shades of Ezra Quirke! Following this is "Jolly Joey" in four parts. So presumably the readers of CHUCKLES were pleased with these cut-outs which had so long a run, and took up nearly a full page of the comic.

Perhaps the most popular of all coloured comic papers was the RAINBOW. In No. 4 of that delightful children's comic - dated March 7th 1914, a free toy model theatre was presented. The characters were to cut out and to colour - following the pictures of Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys on page 1. At that time these were drawn by J. S. Baker, and they present a different appearance from those of Foxwell who was perhaps the most popular artist to portray Tiger Tim & Co.

A series of plays for presentation at the Tiger Tim Theatre were presented on page 11 of RAINBOW. These remind me of the fine RONUK PANTOMIME presented by the makers of Ronuk Polish. If you have a copy of CHATTERBOX ANNUAL for 1913, you will find an advertisement for this pantomime on the first page of the ads. Upon receipt of a penny stamp, the proprietors of the polish sent the Ronuk Pantomime, "consisting of Complete Stage and fourteen characters, in beautiful colours, to play "Snow White," "Cinderella," "Puss in Boots" and "Red Riding Hood." That was one of the best 'Cut It Out' bargains ever offered. Happy days!

To get back to RAINBOW, hundreds of different toys and models were given with this comic over the many years of its publication. Here are just a few: "The Rainbow Whizzer," "The Boatrace," "Bonny Bluebell and her Holiday Wardrobe," "Tim's Donkey Ride," etc.

Following the success of the RAINBOW, Number 1 of that lovely little booklet TIGER TIM'S TALES appeared in June 1914. A reprint of the cover of this No. 1 appeared in Collectors' Digest No. 174. This issue included a full page cut-it-out of a Necks & Tails - a game similar to Snakes and Ladders. My grandchildren have spent many hours playing with this page - which they were forbidden to cut out,

needless to say! No. 2 of "T.T.T." had "The Bruin Boys' Raft," and this was followed by "Off for a Ride," "Punch & Judy Show," etc.

On January 31st 1920, No. 1 of TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY appeared to replace T.T.T. Once again a Snakes and Ladders game was given with this first issue, complete with picture-counters and tee-to-tum. TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY was a delightful comic. On page 1 appeared the Bumpy Boys, the serial was "Nobody's Boy," and there was a long complete story - not in pictures - of the Bruin Boys each week.

There was a cut-out toy each week in Tiger Tim's Weekly, such as 2. "A Feast for Mother Goose." 11. "Rat-a-tat-tat!" 12. The Changing Picture. 82. "Fun in the Sea" - the Bumpy Boys play peep-bo with a sea-serpent. etc. etc.

But what about the MAGNET? Oh yes, Hamiltonians all, the Magnet in its 'golden' days also catered for cut it out connoisseurs, and in one instance must have done very well out of it! Commencing in MAGNET No. 200 - the Xmas Double Number for 1911, there appeared the first of a series of midget reprints of MAGNET No. 199, "The Downfall of the Fifth." Four miniature pages per week. Quoth the editor:- "FIFTY MONEY PRIZES FOR MAGNET READERS. Printed below is a miniature reproduction of pages 1 and 28 of No. 199 of "The Magnet." On the next page you will find miniature pages 2 and 27 of the same issue. Next week four more diminutive pages of the same number will be given in the same way, and so on until a complete miniature number - including cover - of "The Magnet" has been printed."

"When the whole of this miniature number has been reproduced, competitors will be asked to CUT OUT each set of midget pages, fold and bind them up, thus making a Real Miniature Issue of our Popular Story-book. To the reader who sends in the neatest and cleanest effort a money prize of 10/- will be awarded, and forty-nine other miniature copies purchased by the Editor at 1/- each."

"NOTE - Readers who enter this competition would do well to take in an extra copy, as on no account will competitors have their copies returned."

Thus, for an outlay of 59/- in prize-money, the cute Editor of the Magnet, must have sold thousands of extra copies, and obtained a pile of these midget Magnets. Wonder what he did with 'em?

Some years later - in 1914 the Magnet contained a series entitled; "Our Winter Evening Problem Corner," when small jig-saw puzzles of Greyfriars characters - for cutting-out and reassembling, were printed "Bolsover busts Brown's Ball." "Bunty, Bunty had a Great fall" were two titles. These are only a few of the many kinds of cut out games printed in old boys and girls papers between 1900 and 1940.

I have sent the editor a number of comics with cut-outs, with which he may be able to illustrate this article. Somehow, there has got amongst them a cut-out from today's paper. This shows the Yorkshire County Cricket team leaving the field at Harrogate after winning the Championship. Perhaps this picture should be used for the "Lets Be Controversial" series in the Digest. But to me - a Yorkshire-man - it is the finest cut-out of all. "It's just my opinion. What's yours?"

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: We would have loved to reproduce the picture of the Yorkshire Cricket Eleven leaving the field after they clinched the championship. Unfortunately, the picture which "Comicus" sent us was a press cutting, and it was not suitable for reproduction.)

* * * * *

The Horror of Hamiltonia

By Philip Tierney

* * * * *

When, at the advanced age of sixteen or thereabouts, I mistakenly supposed that I was becoming too old to read about Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, I developed a fascination for horror stories instead, and became a keen reader of books by Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker, M. R. James, and similar writers.

I have never lost this taste for "creepy" fiction although my enthusiasm for Charles Hamilton's stories returned when I was in my twenties - and with it a much keener appreciation of their qualities. But strangely enough the first story I read which can really be described as horrific was written by Charles Hamilton.

It is, so far as I am aware, his sole excursion into the macabre but in my opinion it bears comparison with anything written by acknowledged masters of this particular craft.

I never forgot the impression which the strange case of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley made upon me as a child but was surprised to find on re-reading it over thirty-years later, having read such a vast variety of weird and spine-chilling stories in the meantime, that it impressed me as much as before.

The surprise element was missing of course. This can be experienced only once. And it is necessary to be a Hamiltonian reader to appreciate fully the impact of such unprecedented and frightful happenings on the normally bright and cheerful St. Jim's scene.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley in his early days at St. Jim's was very similar to Herbert Vernon-Smith on the latter's arrival at Greyfriars. They were both extremely unpleasant sons of indulgent millionaire fathers. They both possessed a certain wild-cat courage but this appeared to be the only thing to be said in favour of either of them. And Lumley was known as the Outsider of St. Jim's as Smithy was known as the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Eventually of course they both changed considerably but the partial reform of Vernon-Smith made him a more interesting character than before whereas the complete reform of Lumley-Lumley had the reverse effect, and he eventually faded into obscurity at St. Jim's.

His rascality made very interesting reading in many early "Gems." In some ways he was unique amongst Charles Hamilton's cads. Twice he attempted to kiss Ethel Cleveland - a most unusual brand of caddishness in Hamiltonia. It was fortunate for him that Figgins knew nothing of these episodes. Also, unlike so many of the other gamblers who almost invariably lost their money (thus providing readers with a useful lesson on the folly of gambling) Lumley could gamble and win. He could out-sharp the sharpers.

On one occasion he showed real gallantry by saving a child from drowning at the risk of his own life - although he cynically admitted afterwards that this deed was inspired, not from any consideration for the child, but only by a desire to impress Ethel.

Eventually came "A Shadow Over St. Jim's" in which events take a startling and tragic turn. And, as in the story of Bulstrode Minor at Greyfriars which I wrote about last year, the tragedy is made more shocking by the fact that it is not in any way foreshadowed. There is no gloomy build-up. No indication whatever that anything awful is liable to occur.

Rivalry between the Fourth Form and the Shell is the theme of the early chapters, and the Fourth decide to try to oust Tom Merry from the junior captaincy. Who would suppose that sudden sadness will develop in a story which commences like this:

No Admittance

Tom Merry, the leader of the Shell Form at St. Jim's stopped.

He had to stop because Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries of the Fourth were standing in the doorway of the Junior Common-room, and they had their arms linked, and filled the doorway from side to side.

They showed no disposition to move as the Shell fellow came down the passage, but rather stiffened up to meet him, and they regarded him with cheerful smiles.

So Tom Merry stopped.

"I want to come in," he remarked.

Blake shook his head.

"Can't be did," he said.

"But I want to come in," said Tom Merry looking puzzled. "I suppose you Fourth Form bounders haven't taken possession of the Common-room, have you?"

"That's exactly what we have done," said Blake with perfect coolness.

"What!"

"We've taken possession of the Common-room," said Blake.

"Exactly," said Digby.

"Precisely," corroborated Herries.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was standing behind his chums, and regarding Tom Merry through his eyeglass, chimed in:

"Yaas wathah!"

"Oh, don't rot!" he exclaimed. "I want to come in. I've left my Latin dictionary on the table in the corner, for one thing. And I'm coming in, anyway, for another."

"Rats!"

"Yaas wathah! Wats!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Tom Merry exasperated. "A joke's a joke - now chuck it! Let me come in!"

"Rats!"

The hero of the Shell breathed hard through his nose.

"You see, we're holding a Form meeting in the Common-room," Blake explained.

"There's no room for the Shell bounders. Only the Fourth admitted."

Tom Merry fairly crimsoned with indignation.

"You're holding a meeting in the Common-room," he shouted. "Go and hold it in the form room. Hold it in the woodshed, hold it on the roof! You can't hold meetings in the Common-room, and turn other Forms out, you fatheads!"

"That's just what we're going to do," said Blake, with provoking coolness.

"We're doing it."

And his comrades chuckled.

"I give you one minute to clear," said Tom Merry. "Then I'm going to charge."

"Stand by to repel boarders," chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry receded a few paces to get room for a rush. To be excluded from

the Common-room by the Fourth was a little too rich - he, the head of the Shell, the Form above the Fourth, and, in fact, almost a senior - in his own opinion at least.

Digby, Blake, and Herries stood fast.

"I'm coming," said Tom Merry.

"Come on, then."

"Yaas wathah."

Tom Merry charged.

He came for the Fourth Formers at top speed, and hurled himself upon them like a stone from a catapult.

Blake staggered back with Tom Merry's arms round his neck, the force of the rush tearing him from his hold upon Digby and Herries.

"Back up!" he gasped.

"Yaas wathah! Collah the boundah, deah boys!"

Herries and Digby had hold of Tom Merry in a twinkling.

He was dragged off Blake, and the three of them together grasped him and hurled him back into the passage.

He landed there in a sitting posture, gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of Fourth Formers were behind Blake & Co now, and they greeted Tom Merry's fall with a roar of laughter.

"Bai jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into his eye, and regarding the hero of the Shell. "I wegard that as wathah funnay."

Tom Merry jumped up.

"You bounders -"

"Come on," said Blake cheerily. "Try another rush."

"Manners, Lowther. Rescue, Shell!"

Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's chums in the Shell, came dashing up. The Terrible Three charged together at the blocked doorway.

The charge of the three champion athletes of the Shell sent the Fourth Formers whirling back.

Blake bumped against D'Arcy, and he went staggering, his eyeglass fluttering to the end of its cord.

"Bai jove!" he gasped. "Weally, Blake -"

"Back up!" roared Blake.

"Weally, you know -"

The Terrible Three rushed into the room, over Digby and Herries, who were sprawling on the floor.

"Here we are!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Sock it to 'em!"

"Back up, the Fourth!"

"Yaas wathah!"

The Fourth Formers backed up their leader manfully. A dozen or more piled upon the heroes on the Shell. The Terrible Three hit out valorously, but the odds were too great.

They were collared, and dragged to the doorway again, and hurled forth ignominiously into the passage.

The doorway was jammed with Fourth Formers, yelling with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Outside!"

"No admission for bounders!"

The Terrible Three picked themselves up. They were very dusty and very rumpled. But they did not charge again. They might as well have charged a brick wall as that crowd of grinning juniors.

The events between this cheerful opening chapter and the very different final one can be described very briefly. After their meeting the Fourth Form announce their intention of replacing Tom Merry with Blake as junior captain. The Shell respond by challenging the Fourth to a football match, the captaincy to be decided by its result.

Then Lumley's villainy enters into the picture. Having shown considerable improvement as a footballer he is given a place in the Fourth Form team. But the chance of winning the match by fair means does not appeal to the Outsider. He prefers to make it a certainty by foul means. So he plans to treat the Shell team with drugged lemonade before the match. The plot is foiled, though not for very creditable motives, by Mellish, and Lumley is turned out of the team in disgrace.

Then Lumley's courage shows itself again. He saves Herries' dog, Towser, from being run over and is knocked down and injured in doing so. At first his injuries are not regarded as serious and Herries, that not over-intelligent youth, is more concerned about Towser than Lumley.

But soon it becomes known that Lumley's condition is far more serious than had at first been supposed. Complications set in and he becomes rapidly worse.

"Danger!"

To the St. Jim's boys, happy and careless so lately occupied with their boyish pursuits, it was a terrible shock to know that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley might never leave his sick bed - that he might die.

Here is the conclusion of the story which began so lightheartedly:

"Nurse!"

The gentle kind-faced woman turned to the bed. From the coverlet a face looked out that was as white as the bandage on the forehead.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley lay very quiet.

The Outsider, the fellow whose keenness was a proverb, who was never deceived, knew only too well that he was in danger.

Those strange attacks he had suffered from, which he had so obstinately kept secret lest he should be considered "soft" - he had always had a lurking fear that they meant something serious.

The terrible shock of the motor accident had done the rest. He knew - or thought he knew - that this was the end and he did not fear.

The boy who had led so strange a life, whose experience in strange places amongst strange people exceeded that of many men, had looked death in the face before, though not in the same way.

And he did not fear the terrible visitor.

Fear was not in Jerrold Lumley's composition. Regret, anger, yes - but not fear.

"Nurse!"

His voice was so faint that he hardly recognised it himself and perhaps his hearing was growing a little dulled.

"Yes dear?"

"What time is it?"

"Seven o'clock!"

"Monday evening?"

"Yes."

"I shall not see the sun rise tomorrow," said Lumley.

The nurse made a gesture.

"You must not think such thoughts," she said. "You must -"

He laughed silently. It would have been his old mocking laugh if it had been audible.

"I guess I know," he said. "I guess I've got some sense to see it, nurse. I'm at the end of my tether."

"No, no!"

"You don't know," said Lumley coolly. "But I know. Do you know, Nurse, that I have no feeling whatever in my leg?"

"My dear -"

"I shall not last out the night. This must be death."

"I will call -"

"Don't call the doctor. There's no need. He can't help me and he can't deceive me. I know I'm going."

The nurse was silent.

"I'm not afraid," said Lumley quietly. "I never was afraid - of anything. I suppose I ought to be. I've not led a good life - and I'm only fifteen. What a fool I've been!"

"You must not speak any more my dear lad!"

"I guess I'll do as I like, nurse. I want to see Tom Merry."

The nurse hesitated and then stepped into the next room and spoke with the Doctor, and Dr. Short came to the bedside. For the last twenty four hours he had not left the school except for a short drive in the afternoon to see his other patients.

"You must be quiet, my dear boy," he said.

"I want to see Tom Merry."

"Nurse. Will you take the message?"

The nurse quietly left the sick room.

"I want to see him. I've treated him rottenly."

"I am sure he will forgive you then."

"I want him to say so."

The door opened softly. The nurse reappeared, and the Head came in with her, with a grave and solemn face. Tom Merry followed the Head into the room. Outside in the passage there was a faint sound of whispering voices. Other fellows had come with Tom Merry - Blake and D'Arcy and Lowther and Manners and some more - but they waited outside, not to disturb the sick lad unless he asked to see them.

Tom Merry's face was very pale. He knew the truth - he knew that Lumley was dying, and that he had come to look upon a lad from whose face the light of life was departing.

Lumley made a slight movement as he came in.

"Is that you, Merry?"

"Yes, Lumley old man."

"Come here."

Tom Merry approached the bedside.

Lumley's hands lay outside the white coverlet, and he made a feeble groping motion with one of them.

Tom Merry understood, and he took Lumley's hand in his. It struck a chill to his own warm palm as his fingers closed upon it. But his face gave no sign of that.

"I cannot feel your hand," said Lumley. "But you are holding mine."

"Yes."

Lumley's eyes sought his face. There was a strange expression in them - something of the old mocking light mingled with strange emotion.

"I'm glad you've come, Merry," he said. "It was good of you to come!"

"It was little enough for me to do," said Tom with a catch in his voice. "I

only wish I could help you, old fellow."

"Too late for that" said Lumley.

Tom Merry was silent.

"I'm going," said the Outsider in a weaker voice. "I may be dead within an hour."

"Oh!"

"I'm not afraid. But - but I want to ask you a favour, Tom Merry."

"What is it, old chap?"

"You know how I treated you - "

"Don't speak of that now."

"I guess I must speak of it. You know how I've treated you rottenly - like a cad. But - but I want you - "

"Yes."

Tom Merry bent down to catch the faint words.

"What is it - anything?"

"I want you to stay with me till - till the end. It makes me feel better somehow to have you here."

"I shall be glad to stay Lumley." Tom Merry's voice choked a little "Lumley, old man, I wish I'd treated you better too."

"Stuff" said Lumley. "I only got what I deserved but not enough of it. I guess it's all right but if you can look over what I've done - "

"Of course - of course."

"I know you're not the sort to bear malice, Tom Merry. But it makes me easier to hear you say it, all the same."

"I've said that I guess. I've never had as much as I deserved. Sit down, Tom Merry. There's a chair there."

Tom Merry sat in the chair by the bed side. Even in that little matter he marked a change in the Outsider. Lumley was not wont to be so considerate to others.

There was silence in the room.

Dr. Holmes had spoken a few words to Lumley-Lumley, but the boy had not answered. He hardly seemed to hear.

A strange and terrible expression was coming over his face - an expression that Tom Merry, unversed as he was in such matters, thought he knew the meaning of. The hand of the Outsider lay like a mass of lead in his own. Was this the end?

Lumley was very still and silent.

In the stillness of the room, even the faint barely audible ticking of the clock sounded oppressive.

The branches of the elms without swayed and creaked, and every faint sound was heard.

Lumley's head stirred on the pillow.

His eyes turned towards Tom Merry.

Outside in the passage a group of juniors waited and watched in deep anxiety. They could not go. They felt that they must remain till they knew the worst. They were very silent; only occasionally a faint whisper was audible.

In the sick room the stillness was heavy. There the watchers of the sick bed waited. The shadow of death had been hovering over the school; they were waiting for it to fall. To fall and blot out the young life. To fall and drive out the gleam from those eyes which had always been cynical and mocking, but which were very soft now.

The boy's lips moved.

Tom Merry bent nearer.

"Merry - Tom Merry!"

"Yes!"

"I - I'm sorry," said Lumley, low and faint - "sorry - for - what - I've done amiss, Tom. I've been a waster and a wanderer all my life. Now - I'm - going - home."

His lips were still.

His eyes closed.

Tom Merry still held his hand but it felt like ice in his grasp. The junior was blind with tears.

"Lumley - Lumley old man!"

But the voice of the Outsider did not reply; his eyes did not open.

The Head took the still hand and laid it gently on the coverlet. It lay there like a stone.

"Merry, it is over. Go now, my lad."

One last blurred look; but there came no answering look from the still face.

Tom Merry turned blindly away, and stumbled to the door. He passed from the sick room like one in a dream.

Outside in the passage the juniors were waiting - waiting with heavy hearts and shadowed faces. Blake grasped Tom Merry's wrists.

"Tom Merry, is it over?"

The hero of the Shell nodded in silence.

Jack Blake pressed his hand. He did not speak. What was there to say?

With silent footsteps the juniors moved away.

And, within the sick chamber, with closed blinds and lowered lights, lay what had been Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, - now.

"A thing

O'er which the raven flaps his funereal wings."

The end.

It was not really the end of course and Tom Merry could well have spared his tears in the light of future events. But considering "A Shadow Over St. Jim's" on its own merits, apart from its hair-raising sequel, it is remarkable how expertly Charles Hamilton could write a sad story if he wished - though I am sure we are all glad he did not use this particular talent very often. I think I am right in saying that the original story was regarded as so sad that, when it was re-printed, the more touching passages were omitted. These extracts are from the re-print, so whatever must the original have been like?

At the beginning of the following story St. Jim's is naturally in a very subdued mood with the recent tragedy still in everyone's mind.

"A shadow still hung over the old school. The boys still could not forget the vault where Lumley-Lumley had been laid to rest.

Lumley-Lumley had been called the Outsider of St. Jim's. He had earned the dislike of all the best fellows in the school, and even those least particular in their ways had thought Lumley-Lumley "the limit." But that was all forgotten now.

Death wiped out all stains.

The fellows only felt regret for the boy who was gone, and the painful shock from the horrible and unexpected happening in their midst."

At such a time the arrival of a new boy provides a welcome diversion and Tom Merry & Co and Blake & Co meet him at the station. The new boy is that very interesting fellow, Ernest Levison, a far from pleasant Levison at this period so long before his eventual reform.

I think some readers regret that he ever did reform - on the grounds that the

loss of his fascinating - at times almost admirable - brand of rascality made St. Jim's less interesting.

But his most interesting qualities were retained throughout - his iron nerve and his keen penetrating mind. Both are needed shortly after his arrival at St. Jim's, and they do not fail him.

Recently expelled from Greyfriars, (a fact which does not emerge until the last chapter) he shows no intention of amending his ways at his new school.

His generally unpleasant manner soon makes him unpopular, but what is particularly repugnant to Tom Merry & Co is his apparently morbid fascination with the subject of Lumley's death and his desire to know all the details.

He had known him previously and had been anxious to renew the acquaintance at St. Jim's - for reasons probably not unconnected with Lumley's wealth. But this does not explain his persistent and objectionable questions which eventually become utterly revolting.

Typical Hamiltonian humour is not absent even in this grim story - particularly when Levison's conjuring tricks cause consternation during tea in Tom Merry's study. Then the atmosphere suddenly changes again. This is another example of humour giving way to something very different.

"Do you usually keep dead mice in your jampots?" asked Levison.

"What?"

"Bai jove!"

"What do you mean, Levison?"

Levison's slim white fingers went into the top of the jar, and reappeared, holding a little brown mouse, which was evidently not alive, for it made no motion in his grasp.

The juniors stared at it with horror. Manners, who had helped himself to jam, pushed his plate away. D'Arcy, who had eaten a considerable quantity of it, assumed a very sickly expression.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"I - I didn't see it in the jar!" exclaimed Manners.

"Did you look?"

"Well, no; but -"

"Bai jove! I feel wathah wockay inside, you know! I - I think I will wetiah fwom the studay, deah boys."

Levison made a motion of tossing the mouse into the fire.

"Well, that settles it," he said. "I think I'll have some jam. After you, Blake!"

Blake shook his head.

"I don't think I'll have any," he said.

D'Arcy rose to his feet. His face was very pale.

"I - I think I'll wetiah, deah boys," he stammered. "I - I feel wathah seasick, you know."

And he rushed from the study. The other juniors sat looking very uncomfortable, with the exception of Levison, who helped himself to jam and ate it with a good appetite, as if the discovery in the jampot did not affect him in the least.

Tom Merry was looking and feeling very uncomfortable.

The jamjar was placed on the shelf. No one but Levison felt inclined to touch it. The juniors contented themselves with toast. Fortunately there was plenty of that.

"Do you have many mice in the school?" asked Levison.

"I've never seen any," said Tom Merry. "I simply can't understand it, but it must have been in the jam when it came here."

Levison laughed, showing his teeth in the curious way he had whenever he parted his lips at all.

"Well, after that, things seem to have a peculiar flavour," he remarked. "Do you notice anything curious about the tea?"

"What's wrong with it?" asked Lowther, rather warmly; for he had made the tea, and he rather prided himself on the way he did it.

"Oh, nothing," said Levison - "unless it has a rather curious flavour! But if you fellows don't notice it -"

"I don't for one!" said Lowther.

"Nor I!" said Digby.

"Nor I!" growled Herries.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

He lifted the lid of the teapot, and looked into the steaming opening. Then he uttered an exclamation:

"Ah! I thought so!"

His slim fingers went into the teapot, and he drew forth a mouse, dripping with the hot tea.

The juniors were amazed.

"Great scott!" exclaimed Digby.

"Hang it all, Tom Merry, this is too bad!" exclaimed Blake, turning quite pale. "I've had three cups of tea and that - that - Ow!"

Monty Lowther's eyes seemed to be about to start from his head as he gazed at the mouse in Levison's hand.

"It - it wasn't in the pot when I made the tea!" he stuttered.

"Rats! It must have been!"

"I tell you it wasn't!"

"Then how could it have got in?"

"Blessed if I know."

"I - I remember now the tea had a taste," stammered Digby, very white in the face. "I - I - Excuse me, you fellows. I think I - I'll go."

And he almost staggered from the study, with a curious sound in his throat.

Levison's hand swept towards the grate again.

"There goes the second one," he said. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, this study is swarming with mice."

"I can't understand it," was all Tom Merry could say.

"I'd like another cup of tea, please."

"What!" ejaculated Blake. "You don't mean to say that you're going to drink the tea, all the same?"

"Yes," answered Levison.

"Well, I'm not squeamish, I hope," said Blake; "but I wouldn't touch that tea again. What I've drunk already makes me feel qualmy. I think I'll go into the open air a bit, Tom Merry, if you don't mind. I feel as I did the first time I got on a channel steamer."

And Blake left the study. Herries followed him without a word. He did not feel so qualmy as Blake, but he was glad to get away from the new boy.

The Terrible Three looked at each other in dismay.

They had intended that little tea-party to cheer up themselves and their friends in the Fourth, but it was having the reverse effect.

Levison alone seemed undisturbed. He ate and drank quite cheerfully, and as the Shell fellows fell silent, he chatted away.

His talk was chiefly about London, and about a long holiday he had had abroad.

He did not mention his former school. Tom Merry tried to rouse himself from his gloom for the sake of courtesy to his guest. The Shell fellows would have been glad to see Levison leave, for they were feeling very qualmy themselves. But the new boy showed no signs of hurrying over his tea.

He turned the conversation upon Lumley-Lumley at last - a subject which the chums of the Shell would have been glad to avoid. But Levison, having told them he knew Lumley-Lumley in London, might be excused for wanting to know some of the details of his life at St. Jim's, and the gloomy end of his career there.

"I hear he was called the Outsider here," he remarked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"You didn't like him?"

"I don't care to say so, considering he's dead!" said Tom Merry sharply.

"Well, you could hardly have given him that name if you'd been fond of him," Levison remarked.

"I don't know that I gave him the name."

"I suppose he wasn't easy to get on with?" suggested Levison.

"I'd rather say nothing about him. We made it up before the end, and I don't care to talk on the subject."

That would have been enough for most fellows, but Levison did not seem in the least rebuffed. The chums learned later, when they knew Levison better, that he was not easily turned from anything he had set his mind on.

"Well, you see, he was a friend of mine, in a way," said Levison. "Do you know what he died of?"

"He had an illness - something he had been keeping back for a long time. There was a motor accident, and the shock brought on a severe attack," said Tom Merry, compelled to reply on the distasteful subject.

"But the malady - what was that?"

"I don't rightly know - some curious nervous complaint which had an effect on the heart."

Levison nodded slowly.

"That's right. He had an attack of it while I was in London with him," he said. "It was in a restaurant at lunch, and he had been taking more wine than perhaps he should have. He turned white and cold and lay like a dead chap in his chair for five minutes or more; but he recovered before a doctor could be brought and he was in a furious temper at my sending for one."

"That was just like Lumley," said Monty Lowther.

"He came round and we parted jolly good friends," said Levison. "I was looking forward to meeting him here. I met him just after leaving - my old school."

"What school were you at?" asked Tom Merry to change the subject.

It was an ordinary enough question to put to a new boy and there was no trace of inquisitiveness in it, but Levison did not choose to answer it.

"I was speaking about Lumley," he said. "I hear that his father is expected at the school, and the funeral's not to take place until he comes."

"That is so."

"Where is Lumley now?"

"The coffin was placed in the vaults under the chapel," said Tom Merry.

"Would it be possible to see him?"

The chums of the Shell stared at Levison.

"I suppose you can't want to see him," said Tom Merry abruptly. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, he was my friend you know," said Levison coolly. "Why shouldn't I see him?"

"It wouldn't be allowed. I don't suppose the coffin will be opened, even when his father comes, unless he comes very soon. Hang it all, what a ghoulish you are, Levison!" exclaimed Tom Merry irritably. "I wish you'd get off the subject."

"Then you think I shouldn't be allowed to see him if I asked the Head?"

"I think you'd very likely get your ears boxed."

Levison laughed.

"Then I shan't ask. Look here! Is it possible for a chap to get into the vault without raising a row?"

"No. Taggles keeps the key."

"The school porter?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly.

"Is the vault entered from inside the chapel?"

"Yes; but there's an outside entrance too."

"And Taggles has the key of that?"

"Yes."

"Look here! Are you thinking of getting the key and entering the vaults without permission?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Suppose I am."

"Then you'd better not."

"I may have a reason."

"No reason but morbid curiosity, I suppose."

"Perhaps - perhaps another reason. I certainly shan't explain what it is - yet. Still, if I can't get the key - where does Taggles keep it?"

"He keeps it on his bunch," said Tom Merry. "But you won't be able to get hold of it. And, look here! If I find you nosing round the chapel vaults, I'll jolly soon stop you."

"Do you always talk to your guests in this polite way?" asked Levison blandly.

Tom Merry turned crimson.

"I-I'm sorry. I forgot. But really, Levison, you're enough to provoke anybody," he said.

"Curious. The fellows used to say that at - at my old school."

Levison rose, and with a careless nod to the chums of the Shell, passed out of the study.

Levison is successful in obtaining Taggles' key and, when the rest of the form are asleep, he leaves the dormitory with Mellish who has agreed to accompany him to the vaults. Their absence is soon discovered and Blake & Co, horrified by the knowledge that Levison's seemingly ghoulish plan is being actually carried out, hurry to try to prevent it. But by that time, Levison and Mellish have reached their destination.

The chapel, with its old grey walls heavy with ivy, loomed up before them. Grim and ghostly it looked in the dimness, with the ivy shaking and rustling in the wind.

Levison's nerves were of iron; but Mellish started at almost every sound, and even in the darkness Levison could see his face, it was so white.

They exchanged few words. In a few minutes they stopped before a dark low porch, covered with ivy in clinging dark masses.

"Is this the place?" asked Levison.

"Yes."

"Good! Show me the door."

Under the porch it was as black as pitch. Mellish showed no readiness to enter the chilly portal. He was looking back towards the School House with a startled face. Levison muttered impatiently.

"What are you stopping for? Are you afraid of the shadows?"

"Hush! You can see the windows of the Fourth Form dorm from here."

"What about it?"

"Look! I saw a light."

Levison followed his startled glance. In the distant gloom from the dark mass of buildings, a light glimmered at a window. It was only for a few minutes, and then all was plunged in darkness again.

"They're awake!" said Mellish.

"Are you sure that's the dormitory window?"

"Yes. They've missed us."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care. I don't suppose they'll take the trouble to come after us."

"You don't know them," said Mellish with a shiver. "Blake will come. Most likely he'll call Tom Merry and half a dozen of them will come here to see if we are in the vaults. They're up against this."

"I don't care. I shall have time to finish before they come."

"Finish?"

"Yes."

"In - in Heaven's name, Levison, what are you going to do?"

"That's my business. Show me where the keyhole is?"

They entered the dark porch, Mellish trembling in every limb. He felt over the low oaken door, banded with iron, that was set in the thick stone.

"Here's the door, and here's the keyhole. Feel it."

The key grated in the lock.

"All serene" said Levison.

"You're as cool as ice!" muttered Mellish, his trembling hand touching Levison's and finding it quite firm.

"Why not?"

"You know what's in there!" muttered the other. "Lumley - dead!"

"Well, if he is dead, he can't hurt us."

"Oh, I can't talk to you! What did you bring me here for?" muttered Mellish hoarsely. "I shan't come in!"

"Please yourself about that."

Levison pushed open the door he had unlocked.

"There's a flight of stairs inside," muttered Mellish. "It goes right under the chapel. Mind you don't fall."

"Good!"

A match flared out and Levison, shading it with his hand, lighted a lantern he produced from under his coat. A shaft of light pierced the black opening before him.

"Wait here!" he whispered. "If those fellows should come you can call out."

"All right."

Levison descended into the vault.

Mellish stood alone in the deep, dark stone porch, shaking in every limb. He was terrified; he hardly knew why. After all, what was there to be afraid of? If Tom Merry & Co came to stop that visit to the chapel, which they regarded as desecration - well, they would not hurt him.

He had no cause to be afraid of them. As for the vault he was not called upon to enter it. Even if he had, what was there to fear? A dead youth, who had been his friend in life. There was nothing to fear.

He knew it, yet he was shaking like a leaf in the wind. It came into his mind that it was Levison whom he feared more than anything - Levison, that junior

with the cold icy voice, the cool determined brain, the penetrating eyes that missed nothing.

Mellish stood trembling in the darkness.

What was Levison doing?

He listened.

In the dead still silence, broken only by the distant whisper of the wind in the trees, the faintest sound was audible.

With straining ears close to the half open door he tracked Levison through the vault.

He heard him descend the steps with feet that did not falter - a steady tread, as steady as if he were strolling in a garden in the sunlight. At the bottom of the steps he halted, and Mellish knew that it was to flash the lantern to and fro, and ascertain his bearings. A gleam or two of light came from below as the lantern moved and glimmered in the dark vault.

Then the footsteps, fainter now, went on.

Levison was moving round the vault in search of what he had come there to see - the coffin on its trestles.

Mellish shuddered.

Would the new junior dare to approach it, dare to touch it? There was nothing to fear true but -

But Mellish knew that he would have fainted with terror if he had descended alone there in the darkness.

What was Levison doing now?

The footsteps had ceased.

Mellish strained his ears.

He remembered Levison asking if the coffin had been screwed down, and his satisfaction at hearing that the lid had been left unfastened, so that if Mr. Lumley-Lumley arrived soon enough he could look upon his son once more before he was consigned to the earth.

Did he intend to open it, then, and gaze upon the features of the dead?

Why? He had known Lumley-Lumley - known him slightly. But he had not been his friend. If anyone ever had been Lumley-Lumley's friend, it certainly was not Ernest Levison.

Then why should he wish to gaze upon the dead face? Was it possible that mere morbid curiosity could gain such ascendancy in such a cool calculating nature as Levison's.

It was not likely.

Yet -

Mellish strained his ears to listen. What was Levison doing? He could hear nothing now.

Twice the junior approached the open door, tempted to descend and see what the junior inside the vault was doing, and twice he receded in fear. Then, setting his teeth, curiosity overcoming terror, Mellish pushed the oaken door wider open, and stepped inside upon the stone stair.

Below, in the gloom he caught the glimmer of the lantern. Its light fell in a shaft across the blackness of the vault. He could not see Levison. The latter was not standing in the light of the lantern; he was swallowed up in the blackness but the shaft of light fell across something - something that stood upon trestles - the coffin of Lumley-Lumley.

Mellish could see part of the coffin, where the light touched it, and his head swam with horror as he saw it. For he saw that the lid was removed.

The coffin was open.

Mellish stood upon the steps, clinging to the oaken door, his heart beating

like a hammer, his eyes dancing.
 What was Levison doing?
 The question seemed to shriek in his ears. What was that sound he heard?
 What was it? With creeping flesh he listened.
 "Lumley - Lumley old man!"
 Levison's voice, soft and eerie and creepy in the darkness. He was speaking to the dead boy.

Mellish stood rooted. What horror was this? What did it mean? Was Levison mad?
 That was the explanation surely. That was all it could be. He was mad - mad to penetrate into the gloomy vault at midnight and speak to the boy who was dead as if he were still alive!

Low as Levison's voice was, the deep hollow vault seemed to boom with echoes of it. The echoes died away and there was silence - stony silence.
 Mellish listened with a heart almost ceasing to beat.

Silence!
 Then a sound! What was the sound? A sound of cloth rustling - the body that was raised.

Mellish clung to the door. His tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth; his eyes no longer saw.

Levison was mad - mad!
 Again through the hollow arches of the vault that eerie whisper:
 "Lumley!"
 "O Heaven!" muttered Mellish.

He would have fled but his limbs refused to stir. Horror and deep unreasoning fear kept him chained. He was like one in a nightmare, unable to stir hand or foot, - helpless, fascinated.

What was Levison doing?
 What was that?
 A voice - low, faint tones, not Levison's! Who else was in the vault? Nobody else, nobody except the dead boy!

Yet there was another voice - a voice Mellish knew.
 He broke from the grip of terror. With a wild shriek that rang through the vault in thunderous echoes Mellish turned and fled up the stairs again and out into the porch - out into the cool night air, his brow streaming with sweat.

He shrieked again unconsciously as he ran - shrieked and shrieked. He ran into a group of dark forms and hands closed upon him and grasped him, and he fought and struggled in unreasoning fear, striking and clawing and shrieking.

"Hold him!" cried a voice. "It's Mellish! What's the matter with him? Mellish, are you mad?"

Am I right in my opinion that this story is worthy of comparison with any of the famous horror classics?

Or is it that the vividness of that childhood impression so long ago causes me to overrate it?

* * * * *

W A N T E D : BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY 39, 89, 91, 94, 101, 106, 113, 123, 165, 187, 199, 212, 216, 222, 223, 234, 246, 248, 256, 261, 163, 164, 265, 271, 283, 286, 294, 295, 300, 311, 318, 325, 339, 381, 387, 389, 412, 425, 531, 560, 617, 624, 625, 637, 662, 716, 717, 755. NEW SERIES 1, 6, 8, 60, 198.

ROWE, "LINDENS," HORSFORD, NORWICH, NORFOLK.

THE LIGHTS THAT FADED AT ST. FRANK'S

by James W. Cook

It was inevitable that some juniors and seniors would take turns at fading into the background while others, perhaps because of novel characteristics or some special attributes, would keep in the limelight each week. But this point did not deter readers from making a continual request for the return of old favourites and now in our more settled moments we can easily see just what Edwy Searles Brooks was up against.

But nevertheless it was hard on the regular and faithful reader who took a fancy to any particular character who occupied a position in a series to miss him as new stories came along with the central characters drawn from a different depth. I often wondered at the wisdom of this for each St. Frank's character had sufficient interest to maintain the weekly story as was shown in the early St. Frank's tales in the Nelson Lee Library.

There you would find the usual set of juniors each week forming the background to the story and such names spring to mind with instant clarity:- Nipper & Co., Handforth & Co., Study A, Tom Burton, Owen major, Arthur Hubbard, Augustus Hart, Timothy Tucker to name only a few. But the majority of these names were only mentioned later in moments which fitted the general background; other juniors fell away from the scene altogether.

And the loyal reader felt hurt. So hurt perhaps that he may have ceased buying the periodical and taken interest in another publication. Those who have often asked why the Nelson Lee Library died when it did may care to ponder this suggestion as a reason for its death. Perhaps it wasn't so much the type of story that led to its demise - since several well meaning judges have declared their findings - but that it may well be the absence of juniors in the tales that we grew to love and look to each week.

Some juniors dominated a whole series like Tom Burton in Nos. O.S. 136-139. Cecil De Valerie also claimed the limelight in O.S. 140-141 and who will forget Reggie Pitt when he first came to St. Frank's? Jack Grey who began life at St. Frank's as Jack Mason was the central figure for some time and I don't think a week went by unless Bob Christine & Co., were mentioned. But I think the latter Co., were superseded, or rather supplanted by John Busterfield Boots. Yet we didn't mind this for Boots was a wonderful character but gradually the old Timers were being edged out by the ever-increasing new boys. Now we ask ourselves was it really necessary? Did these new boys really have to appear on a scene that was well brimful of character data to ensure very many more weeks - and years - of story telling?

Somehow we didn't mind the new masters coming along with their mysteries, for if they were good they stayed and anyway, as St. Frank's grew bigger so did the personnel. This also applied to the juniors, for with a new St. Frank's of four Houses and a separate School House more characters were important to fill in the scene. And if we are looking again for a reason why the N.L.L. died off perhaps it lies somewhere about that period when St. Frank's threw off the old yoke of two Houses and blossomed forth into an up-to-date modern college.

But what a great pity those favourites we loved so much faded out long before they should have done. We must blame change for most of it for everything changes and as a commercial proposition change had to come to St. Frank's. Brooks had to keep up with the times and perhaps his idea of slaughtering some of the old timers to make way for newer and attractive juniors was either due to editorial policy or just change.

But I don't think we ever got over this breakaway. Readers would write in from time to time asking why so-and-so was not mentioned, and quite a number of juniors and seniors were suddenly found to have left the school altogether.

We were told that Salter of the Fifth had left. Gordon Wallace we found after diligent enquiry had returned to the River House School. The famous Tich Harborough had also left St. Frank's although it was news to all readers. But apart from these discrepancies in the junior and senior population of St. Frank's I feel sure Edwy Searles Brooks never for one moment thought that such issues would be argued over nearly forty years later. For we must remember, and remember always, that these tales of St. Frank's were not written for posterity. They were written to meet a weekly demand for a publishing company who had even less thought of them being written for perpetuity.

All the same, if we had been a trifle more loyal, we could have seen to it that our favourite characters were kept in the limelight and not relegated to a mysterious background. It was very annoying not to see your well-liked junior week after week in the story; it wasn't so much that he always fitted in but that week after week no mention was made of him until you wrote to Edwy and if he decided to have him left St. Frank's well, that was that. The junior John Martin - later John Willard - was treated like this. Brooks explained that John's leaving the school wasn't of sufficient interest to describe it. This may well be but why create a character only to dismiss him so off handed?

Sessue Yakama occupied the front page at one time, but he really tailed off into the unknown. The Trotwood twins were so popular that they dominated the Colonel Clinton series. And the Hon. Douglas Singleton's arrival at the school was the basis of a very fine series. And do you remember Dick Goodwin, Solomon Levi, Yung Ching, Alf. Brent? Why, they dominated the Nelson Lee Library at times and even as background characters were well drawn. But all these and a few more just faded into silence in the latter years of the Nelson Lee Library.

There were some who never left the scene. Some were comparatively newcomers but Brooks kept them to the fore and may well have damaged the lovable impressions we had retained of the old juniors. It didn't matter whether the juniors were cads or otherwise we somehow missed them. Teddy Long irked most readers but you missed the fat worm. Timothy Armstrong blossomed forth in the Dr. Stafford's Madness series but later he too fell by the wayside. And dear old Fatty Little. What a character! And even if Brooks used him to the limit I feel sure the reader would have put up with Fatty for a long time afterwards.

Why the Duke of Somerton was ignored for such a long time until he became a nonentity is a mystery. The last few years of the N.L.L.'s existence never mentioned him at all and I shall always wonder why some characters were always in the current story. Archie Glenthorne, the ever present Handforth, Jimmy Potts were not forgotten when conversation was recorded yet Brooks could have included some of other favourites quite easily by attributing a remark from them now and again.

I sometimes wonder if there were too many characters at St. Frank's. Too

many finely drawn characters. The fact that Brooks kept the regulars to the fore-front for so long proves that he didn't think it necessary to juggle with them as a whole yet how one can reconcile this with the fact that he used most of the latter day nonentities as the main vehicle for a whole series in the early days I don't know. As a case in point Jack Frinton of the 6th made the Mysterious X series possible yet for a very long time Frinton was pushed into limbo; in fact, I can't recall his name in any story for many years afterwards.

Justin B. Farman was severely left alone after Brooks had used him to fill a series. But few were expelled. Edwy Searles Brooks may have forgotten a host of juniors and seniors to us but they were never sacked. Oh except Walter Starke. Which I think was a pity for he was really a bad hat and well worth keeping at the school and the type to create a good story. After all, Bernard Forrest was brought back - perhaps by public demand - and he was very similar in rascality to Starke.

I always felt a glow of pride whenever Brooks mentioned a character of long ago that had held us enthralled during the whole series. It seemed to me that Brooks had also remembered and I can always recall feeling that what had happened in the past at St. Frank's was not just dead and-gone but actual history. For instance, Hunter the Hun was referred to by Handforth a good time after the series ended and Nipper in a moment of crisis when Nelson Lee's popularity was being questioned mentioned the many times Lee had got the juniors out of trouble and even saved their lives on occasions. And Jane Trumble, the one time headmistress of St. Frank's, was quoted at a later date but perhaps Brooks gave us a real touch of authenticity in his Mordanian series when the adventure party had returned home only to be in greater danger with their enemies who had followed them.

Perhaps it was asking too much to have the stories running just our way, but if only the old characters were brought up to date now and again and not thrown on the heap I think we would have been much better off in that the Nelson Lee Library would have carried on much longer.

It is a fact that advice came freely from the editorial chair when it was not needed for it came when the N.L.L. was in its heyday, but I shall always feel that something happened to that popular paper; I shall for ever maintain the Lee, somewhere about 1925, was an unwanted child at the A.P. That it continued to be published long after that we all know but if I live to be a thousand I shall still say a sudden change took place that affected the Old Paper; a change that may have been editorial or general management. I wrote very often to the Fleetway House and to Edwy those days but from the former a marked change was apparent to me yet I was never able to pin point what that change was.

During the periods when the school magazine was published we were delightfully entertained by the contributors who included juniors we had almost forgotten. Fellows like Hubert Jarrow, Clarence Fellowe, Bob Christine etc., rose from the depths as it were and reminded us they were still at St. Frank's. It was a great shame the school magazines were so temporary for they appeared only at intervals.

The palliative which Edwy afforded us by writing and asking him if a certain junior or senior was still at the school was a very unsatisfactory remedy since one reply he gave to an enquirer was that he had completely forgotten a certain character, and on other occasions ardent admirers were informed that the junior of their particular enquiry had left St. Frank's. But if this was an unreasonable finish of a character it was at least official. If Mr. Brooks laid it down that certain juniors or any of his characters had left St. Frank's then it was so. The

compilers of the Nelson Lee Library catalogue had no right at all to assume that the junior Lincoln had left the school simply because he had been mentioned "once or twice." It is definitely wrong for persons other than the author to make changes or alterations to a set scene which is copyright. More than that now that Mr. Brooks has passed on his way it wouldn't be fair.

It wasn't very often that Edwy took complaints seriously from his readers sufficiently enough to bring two juniors back into the light but he did with Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West.

He had been receiving letters of protest about Watson and West being relegated to the background and the outcome was a series which was a talking point for a long time to come. It was "The Moat Hollow," series and Tommy Watson was the central character; as Sir Montie was his study mate it was only natural that Montie would enjoy the publicity as well.

This may have been one of the few times the author fell in with the wishes of his readers to this extent, but he certainly welcomed letters from them. He was very surprised to know some readers were averse to reading about the Moor View School girls. So was I. I couldn't see anything about these girl characters coming into the St. Frank's district that was wrong; in fact, it made a pleasant change and uplifted the stories to greater heights.

But it was obvious these schoolgirls had to take a back seat now and again and we missed them. But when I mentioned to Mr. Brooks once that it was bad policy to leave some of these characters out of the tales indefinitely he asked me what was the alternative. He was aware of the harm to the loyal readers who were losing their favourite juniors and seniors through neglect but it was silly to mention a certain person for no reason at all whereas one had only to write to Edwy and he would enquire whether the person was still at the school. Thus it was that Between Ourselves and Gossip About St. Frank's were instituted as a means of keeping everybody up to date with events at St. Frank's.

It was a very good idea for you didn't have to search the pages of the Nelson Lee Library for information but you just wrote and asked Edwy for it. And it was official. It was fact. But how I wish those readers who persistently clamoured for the two things that I feel sure altered the entire structure of the N.L.L. It was for Nipper to be removed from writing the story each week and Nipper's full name to be Dick Hamilton. Evidently some notice was taken of these idiots for I well remember a letter I received from the editor about that time which informed me of certain changes taking place one of which would be Nipper's step down from reporting the narrative.

Although Nipper became "Dick Hamilton" the old and faithful band of readers must have registered their dislike of Nipper's new name for after a while "Nipper" crept back under his old name although he never again told the story.

Nipper, like a few more favourite characters, was never far from the St. Frank's scene. Rarely a week went by without Handforth & Co. being mentioned, and unless the story was woven round a particular new boy you still met the hard core of the school's pupils. And this applied to the masters too. Some series were mainly devoted to a master now and again and James Crowell the Remove master recalls to mind the pre El Dorado series. Arthur Stockdale, Barry Stokes, Mr. Pycraft all featured in the main story at one time or another but both Mr. Langton and Mr. Pagett of the 6th and 5th Forms respectively rarely were highlighted.

As I said in the beginning it was inevitable some juniors and seniors would

fall behind from the weekly scene and if Edwy drew one up from the deep now and again we were very satisfied. He did this with Skelton in the Dr. Karnak series. We very rarely heard of Walter Skelton and his study chum Eugene Ellmore but because they were lesser lights they were "needed" as weak characters for Dr. Karnak. How very much like life itself. The blustering Handforth was always to the fore, but quiet and studious juniors like Larry Scott, George Holland and Julian Clifton seldom took part in the weekly adventure.

Of the Third Form Willy Handforth & Co., constituted any real threat to removing the Greats from the picture. Stanley Kerrigan did however occupy an important role in the El Dorado series and George Fullerton got a mention now and again because he was a rascal, but for the rest of the Third they only popped up at intervals and we never really got to know them.

In the Old Series the domestics enjoyed more popularity than they did later on when St. Frank's enlarged. In the early days of the N.L.L. Mary Jane, Josh Cuttle and even Tubbs the Page contributed articles to the St. Frank's magazine. Those old days were quite cosy and comfortable for us and the St. Frank's crowd all round were very intimate. Thank goodness we can revert back to those times by just reading about them. Guard these old books with your life for you will never see their like again. They belong to an era that is past and in the years to come people may wonder what we saw in them for the future that is to come will hold no place for such literature. The beauty that is St. Frank's will not be recognised as such for beauty is already forsaking us to conform to present day trends.

I COULDN'T DO IT MYSELF (continued from page 50)...

worried a psychologist (I wish there had been one of those at Greyfriars or St. Jim's!) but it was simply a clumsy lad's way out: just three bits of wood - even then it wouldn't stay upright.

Yet I can remember the rules for tackling a job. First plane the working face, second plane the working edge, third gauge the two - and so on. But what was the working face and what is a gauge --? Likewise I can recall Latin mnemonics like a, ab, absque, coram, de which did something, but I could not get beyond Quelchy's "arma virumque cano;" I still recall the French mnemonic about plurals or something, bail, corail, emaix, travail, vi -- but when I was last in France and kept asking a hotel porter for an extra pillow he kept bringing up the gardener's wife.

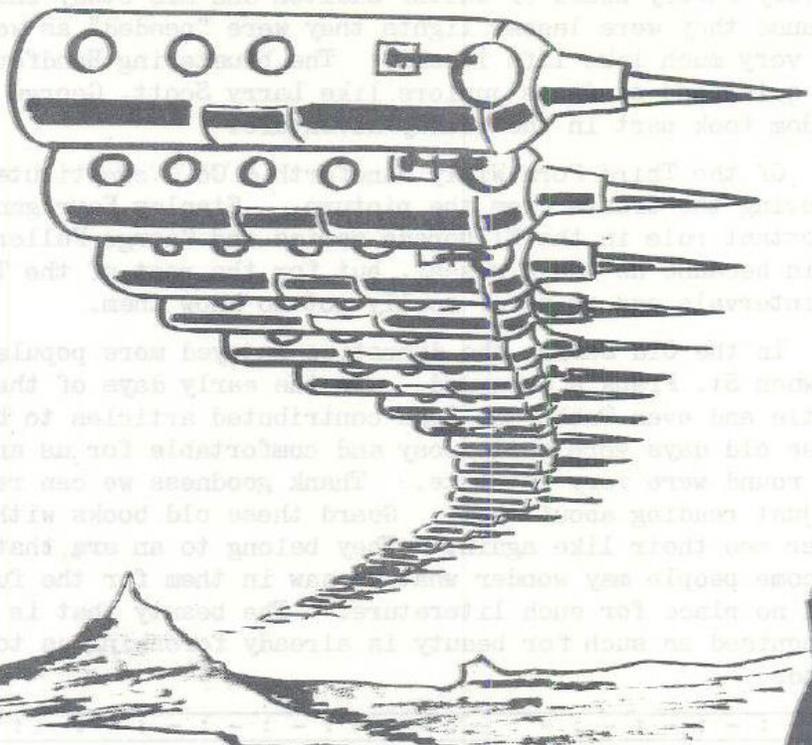
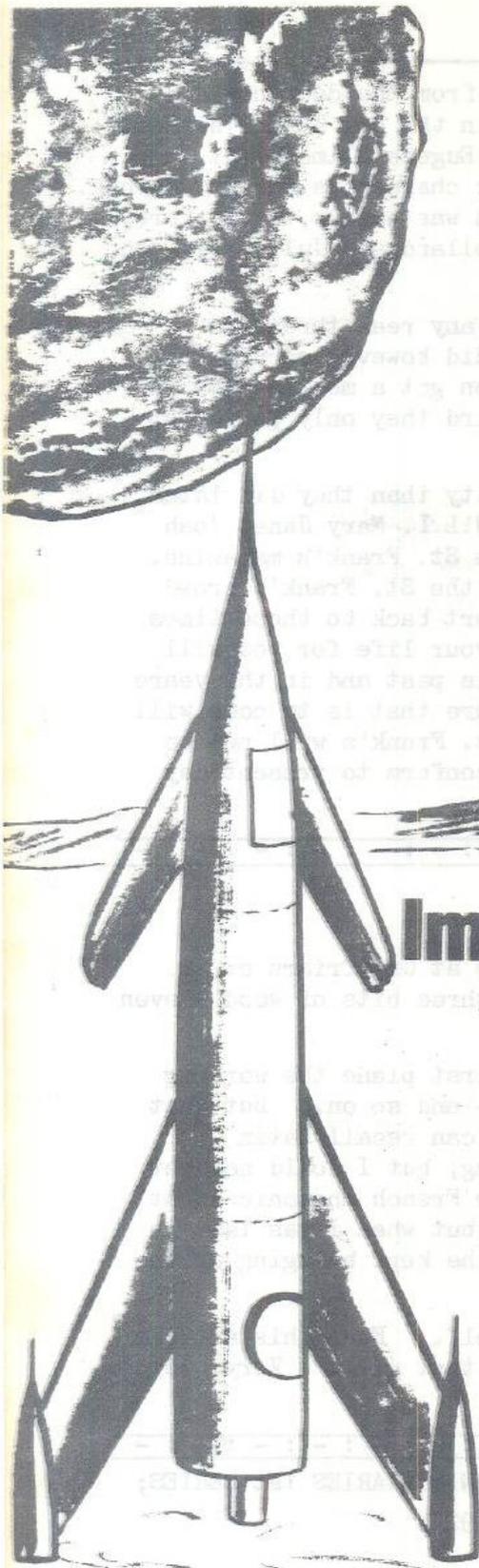
No, I could never make anything except a fool of myself. Even this article my daughter had to type for me. Something strange about that girl. Very, very handy. Must take after her mother.

W A N T E D : SCHOOL FRIEND 1919 - 1921; SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARIES 1st SERIES; HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1922, 1934 - 1941; FILM MAGAZINES BEFORE 1922.

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Imagination Unlimited

by RAY NORTON and VERNON LAY

Scene - a rocket station in Scotland. A young woman falls from a window and is terribly injured.

Sexton Blake on the scene bends over her and wiping the blood from her face with his handkerchief, gets some on his sleeve.

The woman is taken inside the research station where the director, recently recovered from an illness, demands the handkerchief from Blake, who without thinking hands it over.

Later, after several mysterious events, Blake's suspicions are aroused, and he analyses some of the blood that was on his sleeve, and.. to quote ..

"An hour later they knew.
'Incredible! Utterly unbelievable!
the Doctor sagged back - on his

RAY NORTON

stool, the microscope square before him.

'I've never seen anything like it before. Never! Given time and unchecked growth and these organisms will totally occupy a body! Did you see how they seemed to engulf everything within their reach?

Blake nodded. He had seen.

'Fantastic!' the Doctor whispered. And it was. For on the evidence of their own eyes they had been able to reach only one firm conclusion.

What they had seen was a parasite - with this difference. It was a parasite unknown to this world."

Later Blake contacts Craille and to quote again ..

"A clock ticked loud in the stillness. It seemed a chill entered the air. They both felt it.

'I believe,' Blake said, 'Kilbreck houses a grave threat to this country, perhaps to the world.'

Now Craille stared. 'A threat of what kind?'

'An invasion - of aliens.'

'From what country? What nation?'

Blake's answer fell into silence.

'From no country - no nation. But from space!'

A rocket had been fired into space, the nose cone dropped back to earth by parachute. It was hit by a meteor which remained embedded in the cone, an alien virus instead of being burned up by the atmosphere, was brought gently to earth.

The invasion had begun.

Arthur Maclean's story "Touch of Evil" (S.B.L. 5th No. 438) from which we have quoted the above extracts, is obviously a product of the last decade, and one is left at the conclusion, with the feeling, this is close to reality, this could happen.

A common error of the early writers of science-fiction from Verne to Wells and Doyle and right the way through the list of lesser knowns, was having a scientist capable of inventing and building a space-ship, submarine, earth-borer or what have you, and then taking it, with the help of a few friends on its maiden voyage. Present-day writers have evidence of the impossibility of this, whereas the earlier writers were working in the dark.

Two thousand years ago Plato wrote of a continent which was supposed to have sunk beneath the Atlantic. Since then hundreds of writers have discovered "lost Atlantis" in all sorts of peculiar places!

Evidence of vampirism can be found in Homer's "Odyssey" and the ancient Egyptian "Book of the Dead." One of the first time-travel stories must have been Louis Mercier's "Memoirs of the year 2,500" which appeared in 1771.

So it can be seen that science-fantasy-weird fiction has been around for quite a long time, and why not. The human mind is forever seeking and looking for answers to all sorts of mysterious phenomena and demanding to know the reasons for life and for consciousness itself. And it is natural that this longing should be reflected in fiction. True it is an escapist theme, one that takes the reader right away from his everyday life. Yet at the same time, it can have a meaning and a purpose.

It is not so long ago that the yarns of Verne and Wells were dismissed as impossibilities, yet to-day many of their prophecies have not only been fulfilled,

they are out-of-date.

And so, right from the very beginning of fiction for boys, we find this escapist literature flourishing. The early popular leaders of the genre, such as Poe, Verne, Wells, Conan Doyle and Haggard, later followed by Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. P. Lovecraft and many others have had their well-known plots plagiarised time and time again, and at one period it was hardly possible to read a boys' paper without coming upon some variation on one of the stock themes. Some ingenious writers even managed to incorporate them into school stories, generally with more emphasis on the theme than the school.

Edgar Allan Poe was an American and, as may be expected, exerted an early influence on American boys' stories and in particular those that we call to-day Dime Novels.

Probably the first science-fiction dime novel was *The Steam Man of the Prairies* published in August 1868, No. 45 of Beadle's American Novels, and written by Edward F. Ellis, generally considered to be the greatest dime-novelist and the most prolific. Ellis was mainly a writer of Westerns and he used the Steam Man in this setting, engaging it in a series of running fights with the Indians. It is worth noticing that the main characters were a heavily accented Irishman, a Yankee in top-hat and a veteran trapper. It seems probable that the idea for the Steam Man derived from Poe's mention of a chess-playing robot in "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scherherazade" from Godey's Lady's Book for February, 1845.

Ellis's story was reprinted as "The Huge Hunter; or, The Steam Man of the Prairies" in Beadle's Pocket Novels No. 40, Jan. 4, 1876 and aroused such interest that a competitor, Frank Tousey commissioned dime novelist Harry Enton to imitate it. The result was "Frank Reade and His Steam Man of the Plains" serialised in Nos. 28 to 36 of *Boys of New York*, Feb. 28 to April 24, 1876. Enton wrote three more of the stories before leaving Tousey for another publisher.

Tousey looked for a replacement and selected Luis P. Senarens as he had already shown considerable scientific aptitude in earlier Tousey stories.

Senarens retired Frank Reade to a farm (completely run by steam-driven mechanical tools) and introduced his son, Frank Reade Junior as the new hero.

The first story was *Frank Reade Junior and His Steam Wonder*, with Pomp, an ex-negro slave and the broad Irishman Barry O'Shea to provide comic relief. It would seem very probable that these characters provided S. Clark Hook with his inspiration for Jack, Sam & Pete, who were so popular in publications of the Amalgamated Press for so many years. Especially when one recalls that he also used the Steam Man idea for a long series in the *Marvel*.

Senarens was born in 1865 and was thus only 14 years of age when he commenced writing. In 1879 Tousey published an anonymous story "A Journey to the Center of the Earth" in *Boys of New York*, obviously a plagiarism of Jules Verne's earlier story. Verne became aware of the Frank Reade stories and, in 1881, he wrote to the author c/o Tousey. To reverse the procedure Verne himself plagiarised the Frank Reade Steam-man idea in his novel "The Steam House," which used a steam-elephant to transport hunters to India! (Serialised in *The Union Jack* Nos. 41 to 86 1880-1).

Verne's "Clipper of the Clouds" was also taken from "Frank Reade Jr. and His Air-ship," "Frank Reade Jr. in the Clouds," and "Frank Reade Jr. with his Air-ship in Africa."

Not to be outdone Senarens retaliated with a long serial in Boys of New York, "Frank Reade Jr. and His Queen Clipper of the Clouds!" Senarens finally answered Verne's letter and they corresponded from time to time and exchanged ideas without any thought or rancour on either side!

The popularity of Frank Reade Jr. was noted by competitors and many imitators appeared. In 1892 Tousey called upon Senarens to work still harder (shades of Charles Hamilton here) and he produced yet another "inventive" hero whom he named Jack Wright.

Our purpose in mentioning these stories at some length is because in 1894 the Aldine Publishing Company started to reprint them here under the title of The Romance of Invention, Travel & Adventure Library - Jules Verne Outdone at 1d. This library ran until December 1905 a total of 272 numbers with very attractive coloured covers. To No. 170 they were all Frank Reade stories but from then on these alternated with Jack Wright, and with No. 180 the Frank Reade's were reprinted from No. 1 on. With No. 202 the covers were redesigned for the worse. Two later attempts to reprint the stories (2nd series 1910 32 issues, 3rd series 1913 12 issues) were both failures, possibly due to the most uninspiring covers ever used on boys papers. Jack Wright stories also appeared in the Aldine Cheerful Library 1894-1911 at intervals and then a third series called Aldine Cheerful Library was started, all being Wright reprints. This lasted for 27 issues.

The first science-fiction magazine to put the genre on a regular publication basis in America was "Amazing Stories" in 1926: there was an earlier attempt when Harold Hersey launched "The Thrill Book" in 1919, but this only ran for 16 issues. 1930 saw the publication of "Astounding Stories of Super Science" and under its new title of "Analog" this magazine is still published to-day.

It is not our province to discuss American science-fiction in this article or to establish its origin, but it is necessary to provide this background because, although the writers in the boys papers were seldom original, neither did they to any extent, copy the American magazines. In fact one of the mainstays of the American science fiction scene in the 1930's was a British writer, but more of that later.

One of the most popular themes to be found in the boys' magazines is the "lost world theme" made so popular by Conan Doyle's famous story of that name. And stories of battles with prehistoric monsters crop up frequently. Into this category can be placed John Hunter's "The Quest for the Leaping Death." The hidden land in this case is to be found in the wilds of Mongolia and the Leaping Death turns out to be a tyranosaurus a hundred feet long! The same theme, with variations, is found in "The Monster Maker" by H. Wedgwood Belfield. A search for a professor who, while experimenting on the disintegration of the atom, has disappeared mysteriously. The search takes us to a hidden land, this time beneath the Himalayas.

"The Menace of the Monsters" by John Hunter, has the monsters being brought from "The Place of Mists" to civilisation, the ship runs aground in a storm, the monsters escape, and the inevitable battle begins, this time in a city. These three stories are to be found in the "Boys' Magazine" a paper very rarely without a science-fiction story.

The "Champion" had its share of hidden lands and weird creatures. "Secret of Lost River" by Sidney and Francis Warwick, and "Zara of the Earth Men" by Earl Danesford. The latter story involves "Q" the Solver of Mysteries and an expedition who investigate the mouth of an extinct volcano.

Leslie Beresford's "People of the Ice" has an Antarctic setting.

"Chums" featured stories occasionally, of science fiction interest and some of these were of a remarkably high standard. "When the Sea Rose Up," by Frank Shaw, is a good example. An earthquake destroys Britain, and there are only a few survivors. The seas rise and countries disappear beneath the waves, and new islands rise up to take their place. The survivors, after many adventures settle down to start a new community.

"The Robot Fleet" by Stanton Hope, has an unusual theme. A fleet of battle-ships are sent against Britain by a foreign power. There are no human beings on board, the ships are controlled by radio.

This theme was extended by an American author twenty years later, in a short story, where every weapon of war is radio-controlled and run by machines. The planes land on cracked runways, some of them crash, the others are loaded with bombs, they take off and the war continues; all this and humanity had been wiped out years before!

In "Master of the World" by John Sylvester, a scientist invents a flying submarine which gives him mastery of the world. He uses it however in a fight against evil.

Earl Danesford's "The Nightmare Planet," deals with the first trip into space, when the space craft lands on the Moon. The author disregards a scientific fact here. He has his crew venture onto the Moon's surface without breathing apparatus.

"Voyage into Space" by John Sylvester, has earth-men land on Venus, to find the planet at war. There are plenty of fights with weird creatures, and the ray guns are well in evidence.

"The Master of the World" by Geoffrey Meredith, although the title is the same as the story by John Sylvester, there is no other similarity. This one has a city of the future on an island, with a super-scientist in control. There's plenty of action and men who go into battle by strapping wings on their backs and flying like bats!

When the Germans were defeated in 1918, they nursed their hatred of us for over forty years before they decided to get even. Or so Leslie Beresford would have us believe in his fine story "The War of Revenge" which appeared in the "Champion" in 1922. A new kind of explosive drops on London, and the reign of terror begins. Ray guns, a deadly red gas, and terrifying walking machines 18 feet high are used against us, but the Germans are defeated in the end by an invention which dissolves metal. The illustrations are very good, but an incongruous note is struck by the artist, by depicting open top buses in the street scenes.

Worth mentioning are "The Wireless Terror" and "Z, the Unknown" by Henry Hessel, both stories about a radio-wave capable of reducing cities to rubble. Arthur Brooke's "Rivals for Atlantis" deals with the search for and the eventual finding of the mythical continent, this time in the Sargasso Sea.

The "Jeffrey Darke, Ghost Hunter" series should not be overlooked as their weird eerie atmosphere is so well-done but really they hardly qualify due to their rational explanation.

"The Moon Pirates" by Clifford Rayne, a landing on the Moon, where there is found a creature very much like an elephant is also interesting.

Another pet theme found in great abundance is the invasion from outer-space, nearly always the Martians being responsible!

Into this group comes "The World Destroyer" by H. Wedgwood Belfield and "Raiders of the Red Planet" and "The Camp in the Clouds" both anonymous, and "The Monster of Mars" by John Chancellor. The week previous to the commencement of "The Monster of Mars" the Editor has this to say.

"I can assure you, you will not be disappointed. I sought long for the man who was to write this stupendous new serial for you. Such names as Edgar Wallace, Edgar Rice Burroughs and John Chancellor came to my mind and after deep consideration I decided to invite the last named to take the job."

"The War in Space" by Raymond Quiex had a fight for world domination by a mad scientist, who sends a small world of magnetic metal hurtling towards the earth. This story had everything! A gigantic man-made magnetic web in space, giant spiders, men flying through the air (it couldn't be space, could it?) on huge propellers, and a city under glass on an alien planet.

Fantasy is not without its humour, and "The Flyaway Twins" provided it. A series about two schoolboys and a wonder liquid, an injection of same and people start defying gravity, plenty of scope for fun here. Rather reminiscent of the famous "Invisible Dick" stories in the early Rover that were so popular, more for their humour than anything else.

An anonymous story "A Visit to the Moon" is one of the very few stories to appear in the "Boys' Magazine" that can be classified as pure science fiction. There are no villains and no real danger, but a lot of attention to detail such as the speed on passing through our atmosphere and the possibility of burning up, the pressure felt in pulling away from earth's gravity etc. It is also very strong on descriptive detail.

From a journey into space we take a journey to the centre of the earth, where can be found forest of fungi and were-men, in "The Secret of the Underworld" by H. Wedgwood Belfield.

The title of "At Grips in the Sargasso Sea" anonymous speaks for itself.

H. Wedgwood Belfield turns up again, this time with "The Time-Ship Treasure Hunters." He takes you on adventures in Egypt 4000 years ago, and with pirates in the 16th century. The villain eventually gets transported to the year 2000 A.D. and is unable to return!

"Power of the Iron Invaders," "Iron Host in Africa" and "The City of Steel," anonymous series. The Iron Men, invention of Professor Krons, are intended for the benefit of mankind, but control of them is taken by a couple of the professor-associates in an attempt at world domination.

Not at a loss for diversity of theme the anonymous writers for the "Boys' Magazine" gave us "The March of the Weed Men;" these could well be the forerunners of the Triffids!

"Professor Bill, Science Tec" had for an opponent in one of the series The Master of Lightning. "The Visitation of Doom" puts the earth in the path of a runaway planet.

"The Cosmic Cone" has as its theme a killing on the planet Neptune. The scientist with his suspect travels back to earth faster than the speed of light 186,000 miles per second. The scientist then focuses a telescope (of his own invention) on Neptune. After careful adjustment a picture appears on a screen and the killing is seen to take place, the suspect is cleared of the crime and the professor explains thus -

"It's simple" interrupted the doctor, "Light takes about four hours to travel here from Neptune. It is just about that length of time since these things happened. You see, we've got back here swifter than the light, and so we are able to see ourselves through the telescope as though we are still there!"

Taking time off from St. Frank's Edwy Searles Brooks wrote "The Planet School-boys" in 1927. Fourth Form boys while on a tour of a space ship get accidentally sent into space and land on Venus where they find forests of nettles, giant ants and bat-men.

"Mystery House" by John Hunter, is a weird story in the old tradition. An old old house with a sinister atmosphere lit with a pale blue light from an unknown source and vague shapes just beyond the range of vision; an old man who practises black magic, his rival the hunchback criminal in a wheelchair. Plenty of thrills and violent death.

"The Mechanical Monster" by W. B. Home-Gall is a story with most of the action taking place under the ocean in a wondership called The Kraken. The Kraken is capable also of delving into the depths of the earth, or flying like some gigantic bat above the clouds.

"The Boys' Journal" had a run of 72 issues between the end of 1913 and the beginning of 1915. A perusal of its contents reveals only one story with a mild futuristic slant.

"300 miles an Hour" by Walter Hope, deals with the first trip of a new train, one capable of very high speeds, as the title suggests. This train shaped like a huge cigar is titted off the ground and rests on a bed of electricity. It is then propelled from arch to arch (dotted at intervals on the route) by magnetism.

Even the respectable "Young England" at one time featured a Martian adventure by that clever writer Fenton Ash. The Boys' Own Paper, apart from its early Jules Verne reprints had several highly imaginative stories by George Rochester and Modern Boy is of course remembered best by the highly adventurous exploits of Captain Justice, many of which were certainly science-fiction, albeit more fiction than science. Mention, too, should be made of the only boys' magazine that can be said to be solely science-fiction, namely Scoops published by Odhams in 1934. Alas, it ran for only 20 issues, lacking just that something that a successful paper needs. And "Modern Wonder" remembered best to-day for its cartoons of Flash Gordon. This paper was marred by its cumbersome size but contained some very worthwhile material and its editor Mr. Judson certainly knew his stuff. It ran for several years, changing its name in the early days of the last war and finally becoming a war casualty. But for the war it would have had a reasonable chance of survival; surprising numbers of copies of it have been retained and to-day it is one of the easiest and cheapest of the old boys' papers one can acquire.

And now to the final story to be dealt with in detail. "The Warriors of Space" by S. P. Marshall, appeared in Chums 1930-31 and is so outstanding that it deserves an article devoted entirely to it.

The story is science-fiction on a cosmic scale and is so well told that it would not be out of place in a magazine devoted to that genre. A brief summary of the plot is as follows.

Huge green globes are seen over New York, rays emanate from them and large areas of the city are destroyed, many people are victims of the ray and are entirely consumed except for some articles of gold that they had on their persons. The importance of gold is soon realised by coating weapons of war, and making large

mirrors of it, they are able to defeat the invaders, who come from Dione, one of the moons of Saturn. Thirty years later another attack is made and they are driven away again, but this time they take with them large quantities of gold.

The professor, responsible for the aliens defeat thirty years before is asked to go to America to meet the heads of the World Council. With his 26 year old son, he sets out and makes the 3,000 mile journey in 8 minutes, in a space-craft of his own design, capable of utilising gravity as its source of power.

Realising the next attack may well be the end of earth, the professor's son has an idea. He talks to his father., quote

At last the professor pushed back his chair. "My boy," he whispered, "what have you shown me? I am a scientist, Donald. I have trained myself to believe that which is supported by proof. But this! It is almost unbelievable..... For a long time he sat silent, while the shadows of the evening gathered in the library. "I will call the powers, Donald and you shall tell them your plan, but remember, my boy, it will be hard to make them believe. It will be your task to convince them."

At the meeting the professor after talking at length on the weapons the aliens might have has this to say: "There can be but one way that will absolutely guarantee a lasting peace - and that way we must choose! We must destroy that star! by destroying Saturn and her eight moons."

From the babel of voices that filled the room one rang out sharply. "Hear me! Hear me! In God's name, are you mad?" It was a European astronomer who cried the word. "We are separated from a planet by millions of miles, a planet that is vastly larger than our own world - and you propose to destroy it! You cannot! You must be mad! The whole planetary system depends on its units as a whole to give it stability. Destroy one of its members and you have destroyed the equilibrium of the whole! Would you attempt to wreck the universe?"

And so the argument continues, the professor and his son reveal the rest of the plan. They intend dragging Saturn from its orbit by building a fleet of 20,000 spacecraft to the professor's design and powered with the gravity power unit. By taking the fleet into space they hope to send Saturn and its moons into the Sun.

Permission is granted and the project is put into operation and it is successful... quote

"Across the boundless emptiness of space the helpless planet sped towards the sun. Millions of miles were whirling by each hour, and adrift within the field of the sun's full force, already moving with a velocity so great as to be unrecordable, it rushed straight toward the heart of that fiery mass, carrying with it the eight moons. Dazzling rays of even brighter hue seemed to leap from the sun, hang quivering and then die."

On Earth the changes are noted and

"Overhead shone the moon, more than three quarters full. Ever since the beginning of recorded time, that moon had lighted the night world, presenting always the same face, but now it was changing. Slowly it rotated on its unseen axis. New lines and shadows came into view. The familiar contours were slipping from sight.

'They have done it.' 'The whole universe is changing!' The professor crossed to where his son's fiancé Louise stood clutching the window frame. 'Do

not be afraid,' he murmured. 'It is only to be expected, but I wonder where it will end?'

For days the sensation of a strange disturbance in the world continued, while the fury of the wind and waves hardly abated. News came to them of the inundation of villages along the shore near them and along the coast line in every country. The reports also came of the sweeping of the sea over entire lands and the removal of the sea from others. The entire geography of those areas had changed.

Then one day as they were standing fearfully at the telescope watching fascinated, the strange motion of the earth to which they had almost become accustomed, ceased. The moon, too, became still, a new face shining down on the awe-struck world. A strange calm stole over the world."

John Russel Fearn, the British contributor to many American magazines, mentioned earlier in this article only contributed to our knowledge to one British boys' paper, the aforementioned Modern Wonder, but this story is so much his type of writing, could he, I wonder, have added yet another pseudonym to his already large number?

In post-war years the few papers that remained continued to produce much the same type of story, perhaps a little more realistic in the light of better knowledge.

We all know of Dare Dare in the Eagle. Already he has his own coterie of fans, and his early adventures promise to be the rareties of tomorrow.

Interesting twists were "There was once a Game called Football" a story in the Wizard of 1948 of a school in the year 2148, learning once more to play football what had been dropped and forgotten about years before! "The Sun Turned Blue" Wizard Nov. 1950 to March 1951. Flying Saucers landed on earth from Venus. "Bull Raiders from the Red Orb" a serial in Adventure Apr. 1945 to Oct. 1945. A space machine lands on ranch land. Four dead men are found in it. Disease from the machine causes cattle to die. A professor repairs the machine and a group of men travel with him to the planet to find out the cause of their cattle dying off. "Raiders from the Black Beyond" Adventure 1950 tells of a space ship from the planet Hespia which lands on Earth, kidnaps two hunters and takes them back to Hespia which is reputed to be dying! "Mr. Mystery Jordan" in Adventure 1951 relates how a man comes to Earth from Planet 'X' and takes up residence as a new master at Highwood College with very funny results!! Adventure 1952 had "The Amazing Avenger" the strange mission of the Mystery Man from Nowhere and in 1952 we had the start, in the same paper of the front page picture strip "Nick Swift of the Planet Patrol" and "Britain Invaded" Invaders from another planet dressed like the old Roman centurions and riding horses with wings!

The above are a very small selection from hundreds, nay, thousands of stories scattered over the years. We have not mentioned the early space-epics of Professor Gray and Franklyn Wright in the old $\frac{1}{2}$ d Marvel as owing to their scarcity we do not have copies available for comment or Charles Hamilton's early science-fiction adaptation from Jules Verne "The Heart of the World" the story of an expedition to the centre of the Earth in $\frac{1}{2}$ d Union Jack 239 19 Nov. 1898. Frank Aubrey's outstanding "The Devil-tree of El Dorado" published in the Boys' Friend Library and reprinted from an American hard-back first published in 1897.

So there we leave it. There are omissions, there are bound to be, and perhaps your favourite story in this field has not been mentioned, but they are not

The School in the Backwood



A Grand
School Story
by Marlin Clifford.

Nº 465
The Boys' Friend
Library



THE BOYS' FRIEND 3D. LIBRARY

Fifty years ago, at the end of 1917, a change was imminent for the Boys' Friend Library. For one thing, the price was very soon to be raised to 4d, and, for another, from December 1917, the stories were printed crosswise on the paper, with 3 columns, instead of lengthwise with 2 columns. Clearly this latter change was made so that more words could be got on to a page. I have done no counting, but it would seem to me that the increase in the number of words cannot have been substantial.

At first sight, the crosswise-printed books give the impression of being inconvenient in use, and I have been surprised to find that the format really makes for much easier reading of the small print than in use. This format actually lasted for about a year, and there seems to be but few of these copies about nowadays. Our picture (blown up beyond the actual size) shows one of the B.F.L.'s in this style.

There were a couple of stories - one "Scamed by the School" in the old format (November) and "The Cad of the School" (new format, December). I feel sure that I have these copies tucked away somewhere, but have been unable to find them. They are the stories of twins - the good twin and the bad twin. They changed schools, passing under each other's names. Somehow I had the impression that the tales were by Henry St. John, and that one of the twins was at St. Basil's. Nevertheless, the contemporary advertisements of the stories give no author's name, and, ten years later, E. S. Brooks' stories of the Castleton twins (going to St. Frank's and St. Jim's respectively) were so very much like them that I cannot help wondering whether Brooks actually wrote the B.F.L. tales. If not, I think he certainly based the Castleton series on them.

Earlier still, of course, Charles Hamilton had used the same idea in connection with Billy and Wally Bunter.



TOM BROWN CERTAINLY STARTED SOMETHING....!

By Brian Doyle

Tom Brown has a lot to answer for, one way and another. He started a whole new branch of fictional literature when he arrived as a timid new boy at Rugby School during the time of the great Dr. Arnold in the 1830's. Since that momentous first day of term, described so graphically by Thomas Hughes in TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS (1857), countless new boys have arrived at thousands of fictional (and thinly-disguised factual) English public schools by means of stage-coach, motor-car, train, 'bus, foot - even, in more than one instance, by aeroplane.

There had been occasional, moral-laden stories of public school life published before TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS (notably Harriet Martineau's THE CROFTON BOYS in 1841), but Thomas Hughes' novel was undoubtedly the archetypal one which set the almost unswerving pattern for future successors. There was the first journey to school (anticipatory and queasily exciting), the inseparable friend, the quarrel, the new-boy baiting, the bullying, the trespassing, the football and cricket (and, less often, the rowing and swimming), the great fight, the rags and pranks, the classroom episodes (less common than one might suppose), the moralising, the stern, but just Headmaster, the terrifying ultimate punishment (expulsion) and the final triumph of the hero as Captain of the Eleven (or Fifteen) and the eventual, nostalgic return as visiting Old Boy. Practically the only recurring element which gradually disappeared as the years went by was the religious one.

Hughes was writing of his own time as a pupil at Rugby in the 1830's in TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS and later recreated some of his own experiences at Oxford University in a sequel TOM BROWN AT OXFORD (1861), which was a comparative failure. He subsequently lived up to the idealistic standards of his beloved Tom Brown and went on to become a Liberal M.P. and a county court judge. And Tom Brown went on to become the world's most famous schoolboy.

Frederick William Farrar enjoyed a highly-distinguished career. He was a schoolmaster at both Marlborough and Harrow (later becoming Headmaster at Marlborough), Chaplain to Queen Victoria, Archdeacon of Westminster, and finally Dean of Canterbury. It is as the author of the infamous ERIC, OR LITTLE BY LITTLE that posterity remembers him however. Published in 1858, ERIC told of a boy's temptations into evil while a pupil at 'Roslyn School' (which was actually based on Farrar's old school, King William's College, Isle of Man). The book was a huge popular success, achieving thirty-six editions in its first forty-five years. To modern eyes it appears sentimental, morbid, over-religious and cloying and, indeed, was regarded as something of a joke by the late-nineteenth century (Kipling even pokes fun at it in his STALKY AND CO. in 1899). In all fairness it should be recorded that ERIC has several well-written scenes and a powerful narrative style which often carries all before it. Farrar's later books included JULIAN HOME (1859), a story of Cambridge University life, and ST. WINIFRED'S, OR THE WORLD OF SCHOOL (1862), a further essay into the pitfalls of contemporary public school life, which was almost as successful as ERIC. One of Farrar's grandsons, incidentally, is Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery. It is uncertain whether or not the reading of his grandfather's books in childhood had any marked influence upon the later life of this great soldier.

In 1882 came what remains to this day one of the funniest and most entertaining school stories ever written: F. Anstey's celebrated VICE VERSA. This hilarious tale of a pompous father who magically and accidentally exchanges bodies with his schoolboy son, Dick Bultitude, has never been out of print since its publication and has been broadcast, dramatised, serialised (twice) on television, and brilliantly filmed by Peter Ustinov in 1947. 'F. Anstey' was Thomas Guthrie Anstey, a London lawyer who was to become one of the leading humorists of his generation and who served on the staff of PUNCH for over forty years.

Not long before VICE VERSA exploded on the literary scene, a young author named Talbot Baines Reed wrote a short piece called "My First Football Match" for, appropriately enough, the first number of the famous BOYS OWN PAPER, which made its bow in 1879 and only ceased publication in early-1967. By 1881 he was contributing a full-scale public school serial called "THE FIFTH FORM AT ST. DOMINIC'S" (published in book form in 1887) and future stories such as THE WILLOUGHBY CAPTAINS, THE MASTER OF THE SHELL, THE COCKHOUSE AT FELLSGARTH and TOM, DICK AND HARRY played no small part in shaping the traditional school story, by now becoming so popular with youthful readers. It would probably be accurate to say that the public school story was originated by Hughes and developed by Reed.

The ironic fact about Reed (who was the son of Sir Charles Reed, M.P. and Chairman of the London School Board), an excellent and reasonably authentic describer of public boarding school life, was that he received his own education at the City of London School - a day establishment! He was an expert in typography and wrote a standard text-book on the subject. He also played a large part in starting the Bibliographical Society, of which he became Secretary. After spending most of his career writing about youth he died at the early age of forty-two, whilst hard at work on a new book.

"A more odious picture of school life can seldom have been drawn," was how Somerset Maugham described Rudyard Kipling's STALKY AND CO., which appeared in 1899 and, indeed, for people who enjoy the more conventional type of school story, STALKY can be hard to take. It is one of those books you either love or loathe. Kipling based the incidents upon his own experiences at the United Services College, Westward Ho!, Devon, and portrayed himself in the character of 'Beetle,' one of the leading trio of boys. The book glorified the rebel schoolboys in their various floutings of authority and condoned such questionable acts as hiding an unfortunate dead and decaying cat above the ceiling of a rival's study. Stalky, Beetle and McTurk were the complete antithesis of Eric and, some might say, just as irritating. But it must be admitted that their joyous and triumphant chorus of "We gloat, we gloat!" after a successful sortie has been accomplished, rings in the memory rather more vividly than the weeping Eric.

As the twentieth century got into its stride, so did the public school story. H. A. Vachell's THE HILL (1905) gives a somewhat sentimentalised picture of life at Harrow, with the hero, John Verney, depicted as a sort of up-to-date Tom Brown. The story gets away from Harrow quite often with nocturnal adventures in London and a cricket match at Lord's. The basis of the book is Verney's fight to save his friend 'Caesar' Desmond from the corrupting influence of the 'bad hat' Scaife. Apart from the obligatory vices of drinking, smoking and cribbing, the chief downfall of Desmond is his Scaife-inflicted addiction for playing - wait for it - bridge! He refuses to play on Sundays though, so we know he has at least a chance of redemption in the final chapter. THE HILL was the first good 'straight' modern novel about public school life and, though inevitably dated today, still has some excellent things in it. Vachell, who was himself educated at Harrow,

died in 1955 at the ripe old age of 93. A fine bridge-player too, so I once heard....

In the same year of *THE HILL* came another realistic school novel, this time about life at Wellington College: Lionel Portman's *HUGH RENDALL*.

In 1906 Desmond Coke's 'instant classic' *THE BENDING OF A TWIG* was published. This was set at Shrewsbury, where Coke (pronounced 'Cook,' by the way) had himself been School Captain and also Editor of "The Salopian." The story was outstanding, with many warmly humorous touches, and had the quaintly-named hero, Lycidas Marsh, arriving at Shrewsbury full of preconceived ideas of public school life, gleaned from reading the batch of fictional school yarns his fond mother had presented to him a few weeks earlier. Several of his illusions were, needless to say, speedily shattered. Particularly fine details in the book are the realistic account of Lycidas's feud with his erstwhile friend Russell, and the exciting descriptions of rowing matches. Coke dedicated *THE BENDING OF A TWIG* to his own Housemaster at Shrewsbury, the Rev. C. J. S. Churchill. Desmond Coke became a notable schoolmaster and Headmaster himself and also wrote prolifically. His subsequent stories of school life include *THE HOUSE PREFECT* (1907), *THE WORST HOUSE AT SHERBOROUGH* (1913), and a trio aimed at a maturer readership: *WILSON'S* (1911), *THE WORM* (1927) and *STANTON* (1931). The last was of particular interest inasmuch as the reader saw the hero both as schoolboy and later schoolmaster at the same school.

The young Hugh Walpole published his powerful *MR. PERRIN AND MR. TRAILL* in 1911. He had spent a year on the staff of Epsom College after he left Cambridge, but did not find the job at all to his liking. All the petty jealousies and rivalries of the common-room were portrayed vividly in this story of the tragic feud between two public schoolmasters. Later came Walpole's popular *JEREMY AT CRALE* (1927).

Over the next few years several notable and entertaining novels of school life appeared, nearly all by either established authors or writers at the threshold of successful careers. They included *FATHERS OF MEN* (1912) by E. W. Hornung (creator of 'Raffles'), Arnold Lunn's *THE HARROVIANS* (1913), the first part of Compton Mackenzie's *SINISTER STREET* (1913), in which St. Paul's School was thinly-disguised as 'St. James,' *THE YEARS OF PLENTY* (1913) by Ivor Brown (later to become a distinguished theatre critic), *THE LANCHESTER TRADITION* (1914), G. F. Bradby's fine study of conflict among schoolmasters, E. F. Benson's *DAVID BLAIZE* (1916), Alec Waugh's controversial *THE LOOM OF YOUTH* (1917), which raised a storm of protest from Waugh's old school, Sherborne, Beverley Nichols' *PRELUDE* (1920), which pin-pointed Marlborough, Eric Parker's *PLAYING FIELDS* (1922), set at Eton, Shane Leslie's *THE OPPIDAN* (1922), another Etonian subject, *YOUNG WOODLEY* (1929) which John Van Druten wrote from his own successful West End and Broadway stage play, John Connell's *LYNDESAY* (1930), D. Wynne Willson's *EARLY CLOSING* (1931) and Ian Miller's Scottish-based *SCHOOL TIE* (1935).

In 1934 came what still remains probably the second-most-famous single school story: James Hilton's moving and memorable *GOODBYE MR. CHIPS*. This sensitive study of a schoolmaster from youth to old age at Brookfield School was made into a fine film in 1939 and is soon to be the subject of a big-scale Hollywood musical. Three years before *MR. CHIPS*, Hilton had published, under the pseudonym 'Glen Trevor' a 'Detective Fantasia' called *MURDER AT SCHOOL*, which told of a series of murders at a traditional old English public school called Oakington.

Three more titles remind us how much school story writers owe to Tom Brown: *A MODERN TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS* (1937), by Michael Scott (a modern story of Rugby

School life, introducing certain characters from Thomas Hughes' book brought up-to-date!), GEORGE BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS (1946), by Bruce Marshall (another modern 'realistic' story, in which the boys are described as 'squalid and greedy' and the masters as 'bored, pedantic and sarcastic'), and Gladys Mitchell's TOM BROWN'S BODY (1949), a mystery story about a murdered junior master at Spey School).

Two more recent school novels have been THE FOURTH OF JUNE (1962), a story of Eton by David Benedictus (dramatised on the West End stage two or three years ago), and MR. OLIM (1961) by veteran best-seller Ernest Raymond. MR. OLIM is a superbly-drawn portrait-in-depth of an actual, much-beloved Remove schoolmaster at St. Paul's - the Rev. Horace Elam, an eccentric, eloquent, dedicated character joyfully remembered by several generations of Old Paulines. A larger-than-life 'Mr. Chips,' Elam was also 'fictionalised' by Compton Mackenzie in SINISTER STREET and by boys' school story writer Hylton Cleaver in a whole series of books about 'Mr. Dennett,' a housemaster at 'Greyminster.'

Mention of Hylton Cleaver brings us to the massive field of school stories written primarily for schoolboy readers (though their sisters often enjoyed them too). Many of the titles mentioned above are enjoyed by young readers, of course, but they are largely of a much higher standard than the rut of general, run-of-the-mill juvenile school fiction. Up until World War Two, boys' school stories enjoyed a phenomenal run of popularity (girls' too - but that's another story!). This had probably begun during the late nineteenth century, following the spread of education and 'build-up of people who were able to read as a result of the School Board Acts of 1870 and after. Readers were 'introduced' to public school life in fiction (if they were not actual members of the real-life equivalent) by the aforementioned Tom Brown, Eric, etc., not to mention the proliferating 'penny dreadfuls' which contained wildly colourful school serials such as JACK HARKAWAY'S SCHOOLDAYS and TOM WILDRAKE'S SCHOOLDAYS. Serials of a rather higher quality ran in such excellent boys' magazines as BOYS OWN PAPER, CHUMS and THE CAPTAIN and these entertaining periodicals played an important part in the development and popularisation of the school story. THE CAPTAIN (1899-1924), which was aimed specifically at public school readers ('boys and old boys' as the title-page had it) had a particularly high standard and introduced the young P. G. Wodehouse's first school stories (one of which featured the diverting Psmith, later to become a favourite Wodehousian character). THE CAPTAIN also featured fine tales by such authors as R. S. Warren Bell (the magazine's founder and also editor for its first ten years), Richard Bird, Hylton Cleaver (who wrote vividly of Harley as well as of Greyminster), Gunby Hadath and Harold Avery.

All these popular authors' school stories sold well in hard-cover reprints and the genre was perhaps at its peak between 1905 and 1930. Perhaps a word or two about some of the most successful authors of boys' school stories during this period might be of interest - and may well bring a nostalgic gleam to the eyes of certain mature readers of today who were avid school yarn addicts of yesterday.

Harold Avery (educated at New College, Eastbourne) had only been writing for two or three years when he 'hit the jackpot' with his school story THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE, which ran as a serial in BOYS OWN PAPER in 1896, and later went into many editions in book-form. From then on he concentrated on school stories, many intended for the younger reader. Nearly forty years later, in 1933, he wrote an outstanding account of Scott's last expedition to the Antarctic, NO SURRENDER.

R. S. Warren Bell (educated at St. John's College, Leatherhead, Surrey), a law-student-turned schoolmaster, became founder-editor of THE CAPTAIN (also taking on the guise of 'The Old Fag' for the editorial pages) at 28, leaving in 1910 to

write several successful West End plays. He wrote chiefly of Greyhouse and was especially adept at the humorous yarn with a twist in the tail.

Richard Bird (real name: William Barradale-Smith) was another schoolmaster-author and wrote his stories from first-hand knowledge. One which particularly remains in the memory was *QUEER DOINGS AT ALDBOROUGH* (1927) which told the entertaining experience of a public schoolboy who suddenly became invisible!

Hylton Cleaver (educated at St. Paul's) wrote of two schools, Harley and Greyminster, and was especially good at sporting descriptions. This was hardly surprising since he wrote on rugby, riding and rowing for over 20 years for the London "Evening Standard"....

Popular Gunby Hadath was a real-life school story hero. He was Captain of St. Edmund's School, Canterbury, and brilliant at practically every sport. At Cambridge he not only won a Classical Tripos M.A. degree but also his college colours for rugby, soccer and cricket, later playing for the Gentlemen of Surrey. He became Senior Classical Master at Guildford Grammar School, subsequently coaching pupils for the Bar. He was also the composer of several hundred popular songs. Many of his 60-odd books brought real-life social problems into the public school world (e.g. a lone council schoolboy pitchforked into public school life - this particular theme anticipated Warren Chetham Strode's controversial play *THE GUINEA PIG* by 35 years!) Hadath wrote a series about a clever, if eccentric, schoolboy named Sparrow, as well as such titles as *CAREY OF COBHOUSE*, *REVOLT AT FALLAS*, *LIVING UP TO IT* and *MAJOR AND MINOR*. He usually had a strong, tolerant hero and a pair of chirpy junior boys underlining the main action of the story with light relief.

No survey of the public school story, however brief, can omit mention of one man who was without doubt the doyen of them all: Charles Hamilton. Most readers know him better under his famous pen-names of Frank Richards, Martin Clifford and Owen Conquest, to name just three of his numerous pseudonyms. Under those names he created Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton and Co. of Greyfriars School, Tom Merry and Co. and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, and Jimmy Silver and Co. of Rookwood. He introduced St. Jim's in *THE GEM* in 1907, Greyfriars in *THE MAGNET* the following year, and Rookwood in the *BOYS' FRIEND* in 1915.

Hamilton was a remarkable man. Throughout his long and busy life (he died on Christmas Eve, 1961, at the age of 85) he turned out many thousands of words a week and wrote of numerous other characters under many names. He chronicled the doings at over fifty different schools. He was probably the most prolific author of all time.

When the last war 'killed off' *MAGNET* and *GEM* everybody thought that Bunter, Wharton, Bob Cherry, Vernon-Smith, D'Arcy, Tom Merry and the rest had made their positively last appearances. But soon after the war ended an enterprising publisher named Charles Skilton began a series of brand-new Bunter books, in hard-covers - and found a sensational success on his hands. Subsequently, the series was taken over by Cassell's (in 1953) and finally ended in the Autumn of 1965 (Hamilton had stock-piled three or four titles for publication after his death) with the 38th story.

Another prolific writer of weekly school stories was Edwy Searles Brooks, whose tales of St. Frank's appeared in the *NELSON LEE* paper. Brooks was fond of dramatic effect in his stories, which often involved crooks, spooks, near-deaths and explorations into 'lost' lands. He had a nice turn of humour, too, and some of his yarns were hilarious.

Also worth mentioning are the stories of Red Circle School which appeared weekly in THE HOTSPUR, most notably in the 'thirties and 'forties. The original point about these yarns was that the boys grew up as the years went by, even leaving and being replaced by new characters. School captain at Red Circle was 'Dead Wide' Dick Doyle and the most memorable character probably the nasty, pompous master, Mr. Smuggs. The emphasis, as in most of the Thomson papers' school stories, was on slapstick humour and mystery.

In the 1960's, the traditional public school story seems to have had its day. Anthony Buckeridge's JENNINGS is as popular as ever - but then he is at a preparatory school and the stories are aimed mainly at younger readers. The boarding school story is rare in today's children's literature. The new trend is towards comprehensive and day grammar schools. But why should this be so? It has always been tacitly agreed that the vast majority of readers of public school stories were themselves 'working-class,' day-school boys, anxious to enter a world they secretly yearned for - a cosy world of tuckshops, japes, studies, friendships, dormitory spreads at midnight, and winning hits at cricket with a minute to spare. Do these readers no longer exist? Perhaps in this busy, affluent society they don't. Pop music, TV, dancing and ready money tend to make the world of the public schoolboy slightly old-fashioned and certainly not 'with it.'

This is, I think, to be regretted. The public school novel and story, though perhaps a minor backwater of fictional literature (and one that is peculiarly British) is nevertheless a fascinating and rewarding one, which repays study. An absolutely authentic and accurate study of school life would be one in which nothing happens. The day-to-day routine of school life does not normally include spies disguised as masters, boys being expelled every other week, midnight feasts in the 'dorm,' exciting finishes to every sporting fixture and thefts from the Head's study. But there have been more than one of these authentic portrayals and they have usually proved well worth the reading, if only for the presentation of the atmosphere and character inherent in a good British public school.

Anyway, there they are, in brief. Eric rubs shoulders uneasily with Bunter, and Stalky wouldn't perhaps be the most congenial companion for John Verney; but Tom Brown, Tom Merry and Harry Wharton would doubtless form an inseparable friendship if they met; Scaife and Flashman would share a few 'noggins' together; David Blaize might well have something to talk to Young Woodley about - and Messrs. Chips, Quelch, Perrin and Traill would surely make a no-holds-barred quartet at a hand or two of bridge....

But however well or otherwise all these characters get along together in fiction life, one thing is certain. The reader just can't lose. For they all make highly entertaining, absorbing - and often nostalgic - reading.

* * * * *

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My Greyfriars Wall Plaque

By D. R. W. Clutterbuck

My Greyfriars wall plaque measures eleven inches across. Just left of its centre the school building, faithfully reproduced to the last clearcut little buttrees, stands solid in its miniature world. Beyond the tapering pinnacles of the tower gleam white cliffs and the sea. Small puffs of cloud race across a pale sky of early summer. A splash of green behind the school is part of Little Side, where Wharton is noting the performance of his men in the first practice match of the term.

The intervening Kent countryside is cunningly foreshortened to include the shining ribbon of the Sark. The effect of depth is uncanny, persuading me that if only I could shrink to the appropriate size, I could plunge through those tiny trees into Frank Richards' Land.

My plaque owes its existence to a brief reference in Collectors' Digest (December 1966) to Mr. Bob Blythe's map of St. Frank's.

But this item did not immediately suggest a plaque. At first it caused me to consider afresh the possibility of making a big coloured map of Greyfriars. Afresh, because this idea used to haunt me during my Magnet-reading years. Many other readers must have toyed with the same notion, for maps were a recurring theme in letters to the Editor.

But as I brooded over the project, difficulties began to bristle. Was it to be a map of Greyfriars and the surrounding district or a plan of the school building? Obviously the environs of Greyfriars could be included only at the cost of reducing the scale.

It became clear that, ideally, three maps were necessary to supply the topographical background of some Greyfriars stories. One: a detailed plan of the school with labelled formrooms, numbered studies, etc. This would permit, say, Bunter's path to be traced from the Remove dormitory to the kitchen; or Coker's from his own study to Study No. 1 in order to sort out 'the fags.' Two: a map of the school grounds, in which the school buildings would shrink to mere outline blocks. Three: a map of the district, involving a further reduction in the size of the school itself.

But the main difficulty was more serious. There is no lack of published pictures and maps of Greyfriars. I know of three different pictures and three different maps and am prepared to learn from Hamiltonian specialists that more have been published down the years.

However, even among these six items there are discrepancies. Taking the pictures first, one artist gives us an ancient building perched on the Kentish clifftops. The others place Greyfriars a mile or so inland (as I for one have always visualised it). Again, according to an aerial view of Greyfriars by Ogilvy of the Remove (1922 Holiday Annual) the school building encloses the quadrangle. This, too, agrees with my own mental picture. But other versions do not show a quadrangle - at least, not as an integral part of the school layout.

For example, a picture in the 1921 Holiday Annual appears to lack a true

quadrangle. A coloured picture in last year's Billy Bunter's Holiday Annual, because it is based on the 1921 picture, repeats the omission.

The B.B.H.A. version (appearing presumably for the first time in that annual) is interesting in a number of ways and is the result of some thought and imagination. Firstly, it modifies the H.A. 1921 version in order to achieve consistency with a third picture which is also reproduced in the B.B.H.A. This depicts the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Greyfriars in 1564.

Secondly, the B.B.H.A. version of Greyfriars has dispensed with those 'old grey stones' which George Orwell affected to despise. This seems to be in accordance with an included 'potted' history of the school, which may have been prepared for the B.B.H.A. (And in the light of which, incidentally, consistency with the 'Royal Visit' picture is unnecessary. But now we are in deep waters).

At all events, disregarding the historical note, the B.B.H.A. picture shows a Greyfriars comprising two main buildings: one, it seems to me, pseudo-Gothic in red brick and possibly a century old; the other featureless and functional and possibly forty years old.

Nevertheless, it must be said that the B.B.H.A. version is not unattractive and may have a worthy end in view: namely, to make Greyfriars acceptable to youngsters of the present day by giving the school an all-purpose look equally suggestive of grammar and secondary modern. Though some may feel that the end does not justify the means.

Perhaps we should not object to any artist's conception (as such) of Greyfriars. Our own personal conceptions are not harmed by other versions, and may even be enriched. We need accept only what we approve. The cliff-top version, in particular, is a charming one, and I am grateful to the compilers of The Best of Magnet and Gem for having included it (together with the Ballad of Greyfriars which it graces).

All the same, the differing versions of the school layout implied by these pictures do not help the would-be map-maker. Can he then turn with relief to the official map-makers of the Magnet and Holiday Annual, finding in their work more consistency than the pictures show? A few comparisons provide the answer.

One: a landscape-type map in the B.B.H.A. (which I seem to have seen before) shows Highcliffe School and Cliff House School at opposite points of the compass relative to Greyfriars - approximately north-east and south-west respectively. The aerial view already mentioned indicates that both these schools lie roughly to the north-east of Greyfriars.

Two: a map published in the Magnet (March 2nd 1940) shows Greyfriars between Friardale and Pegg. The aerial view, although not including these two villages, indicates that both lie to the south.

Three: the landscape-type map (B.B.H.A.) shows the boathouse beyond Highcliffe School. The Magnet map shows it a hundred yards or so from the Greyfriars School grounds.

These three examples are sufficient to show that utter confusion reigns on the subject of Greyfriars topography. To my mind this is regrettable from the point of view of the children who followed the Greyfriars saga for a quarter of a century and more. Children are literal-minded and feel let down when confronted with conflicting data. It would have been quite possible to have published a series of consistent maps during those years. These should have been approved by

Hamilton and, in fact, based on any sketch-maps he may have used himself.

It was chiefly these difficulties which caused me to abandon the idea of making a map. But there was a second reason. Another idea came. A model of Greyfriars! Either a model of the school building only, or one to include the school grounds.

The attractions of the latter were many: it would take in the cloisters, the elms, the tuck shop, the porter's lodge (from which a tiny Gosling would be stumping to the gates).

On the other hand, the former alternative had possibilities. I elaborated a mental picture of a model of the school building based on the aerial view drawing. This I was able to do in some detail, having made a large toy castle for my two boys some years ago. The Greyfriars model (as I saw it in my mind's eye) stood on a base board about three feet square. The quad was about eighteen inches across. The construction was of wood and hardboard. A fairly loose Polyfilla mix, rolled onto the walls with a nylon saucepan-scraper, had simulated the irregularities of age. Carefully blended plastic poster colours captured the tints of stone and ivy. The Greyfriars coat of arms gleamed bravely above the main entrance. The Remove boxroom window was there, and below it the dull grey leads across which Smithy was wont to flit at night. The verdigris on a copper cupola showed up bright green. The golden divisions glittered on the clock face in the tower. It was the best thing I had ever done and it stood -

Where? Where, in a house like ours (the sprawling brainchild of a crazed Edwardian architect and desperately short of useful space) was there nine square feet to spare for my Greyfriars model?

Pessimism set in, reinforced by another thought. It would take me months to make the model. My wife was not likely to stand silently by as I happily sawed and sandpapered - not while the outside of the house badly needed repainting!

(It has always been a mystery to me that my wife remained unaware of the world of Greyfriars during her formative years. It is true that she comes from South Wales, but the wand of Charles Hamilton reached even into those sad valleys, touching ordinary folk and the future famous alike. Aneurin Bevan was an avid if surreptitious reader of the Magnet and Gem. Orwell has recorded having seen the Gem perused underground by a young Welsh collier.)

What now, then? A picture of Greyfriars? This idea seemed an anticlimax. In any case (inconsistencies apart) who could improve on the pictures already in existence? One could make a large copy, perhaps, of a favourite picture, but even so ...

I was on the point of forgetting the whole thing when there came a flash of inspiration. A wall plaque! - the perfect solution! - a compromise between a picture and a model. More 'artistic' than a model but having the advantage of depth over a picture.

Happily I made a rough sketch. A further advantage soon became apparent. A plaque permits liberties to be taken with distances and perspective. This enabled me to include in my eleven-inch circle the school, the coastline, the Sark, the boathouse, the Three Fishers and Popper's Island - at the same time making all these features large and detailed.

At this point a difficult confession has to be made. Now should follow a description of the making of the plaque - the material used ... the tools ... the

cunning sculpting for full three-dimensional effect.

But my Greyfriars wall plaque was never made - for two reasons. The first: I haven't the foggiest idea how to go about it, and have been unable to find any books on the subject. The second, and perhaps the real reason: I doubt my ability to mould the clay to my heart's desire.

I see the plaque as it should be very clearly in my mind's eye. I see it on the chimney breast in the dining-room - on a section of wall that is blank to everyone else. But I shall never make it. I know I would not feel that I could run between the trees.

* * * * *

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CREATOR OF CONAN

By W. J. A. Hubbard

* * * * *

Robert Ervin Howard, the well known American writer of what are now termed "Sword and Sorcery" tales was born on the 22nd January, 1906, at the small town of Peaster in Texas, U.S.A., the only child of Dr. & Mrs. I. M. Howard. Shortly afterwards the family moved to Central Texas where the author spent the remainder of his life. For some years before his death he lived with his mother and father at Cross Plains, near Brownwood, situated in probably one of the last pioneering areas of what was originally known as the Lone Star State.

Howard was of Scotch/Irish descent, with ancestors settled in both Georgia and South Carolina in the 18th Century, mainly as Cotton Planters. He was old enough to have seen some of the last of the old pioneering days of the South/West of America; indeed his father was one of the first physicians in Central Texas. It is not surprising, therefore, that steeped as he was in the frontier day atmosphere, the author became an early devotee of its virile homeric tradition. His knowledge of Texas history and folklore was both extensive and profound and is often reflected in many of the excellent Western tales he produced during his all too brief career as a popular writer.

He was given a good education but does not seem to have done much while at school. He attended several area schools and eventually went to Brownwood High School, which he left in 1923. Like many authors Howard's first assay in writing was for his school magazine, "The Tattler." After leaving Brownwood High School he took several higher education courses, and it was while he was a student at the Howard Payne College, also in Brownwood, that he began to write for various American pulp magazines. Howard was eventually to make story writing a full time career but like many struggling young authors he originally had to work, as an Assistant in a Drug Store, and with a Surveying Team, before his income from writing made it a full time proposition. He was never married.

The author's first story, "Spear and Fang" (which brought him in the princely sum of 16 dollars) was published in the well known American pulp magazine, "Weird Tales," in July, 1925. The story was nothing really remarkable, but with the publication of a much longer tale "Wolfshhead," a yarn of a vampire possessed man at a trading post on the West Coast of Africa in the 17th Century, in the same magazine in April, 1926, Howard began to attract attention as a writer of more than ordinary power. Then in August, 1928, with the tale "Red Shadows" began a splendid series of yarns, the central figure of which was one Solomon Kane, an English Puritan of relentless purpose who made it a practice to redress wrongs in many strange parts of the world, which often included the demon haunted ruins of cities buried deep in the African jungle. These yarns showed Howard as a writer capable of highly effective atmosphere and his description of vast megalithic cities of the Elder World around whose crumbling walls and towers there lurked unseen brooding horror has been matched by few authors of the fantasy type story. The "Solomon Kane" series brought Howard into notice as one of the most popular writers ever to figure in "Weird Tales," and he began to be compared, not unfavourably with such writers as H. P. Lovecraft, August Derleth, Clark Ashton Smith and Otis A. Kline - all writers of fantasy and the macabre - whose work was at that time appearing in the same publication and other pulp magazines covering fantasy and science fiction tales.

From then on series featuring what became very well known fictitious characters came thick and fast. A keen interest in history, particularly that of the Celtic period, and in other remote phases of the past, led Howard to write various series of stories about the prehistoric world for which he afterwards grew so famous. The earliest stories featured the dawn world, when Atlantis and Lemuria flourished - the central figure round whom a number of splendid stories were written was King Kull of Valusia. Then came the Brak Man Morn series centred round a Pictish Chieftan who lived about the time of the withdrawal of the Romans from Britain. One of these yarns, "Worms of the Earth" - published in "Weird Tales" in November, 1932 - is considered to be one of the most outstanding stories that Howard ever wrote. Another splendid series of Celtic tales were those about a terrifying fighter named Turlogh Dubh O'Brien who figured in a number of bloody and fantastic adventures during the Viking Age in the time of King Alfred.

In 1929 Howard began to write stories outside the fantastic genre. A keen interest in athletic sports - particularly in boxing - led him to create the character of Steve Costigan, an American sailor whose adventures mainly in ports of far eastern countries appeared in "Action Stories," "Fight Stories" and "Jack Dempsey's Fight Magazine." He also wrote a number of excellent historical adventure stories, mostly about the Crusades, for "Oriental Stories," a companion magazine to "Weird Tales." Like many authors Howard also wrote Detective stories, modelled on Sax Rohmer lines and owing much to that author, but these yarns were not successful and it soon became obvious that Howard was not a master in this sphere as he was of the fantastic tale. For the magazines "Top Notch" and "Thrilling Adventures," Howard wrote oriental adventure stories on the lines of those of Talbot Mundy and Harold Lamb. He also tackled a number of sex-type stories for "Spicy Adventures" but for these yarns used the pen name of Sam Walser. They were not particularly good.

By the early 1930s Howard was firmly established as a popular writer and selling 20 to 25 stories a year to various American pulp magazines. He was an interesting and voluminous correspondent, particularly with fellow authors in the fantasy field and especially with H. P. Lovecraft, under whose influence he wrote at least three stories of the Cthulhu Mythos. He was also a useful poet, although his main devotion was to the ballad and the epic, generally marked by a pulsing rhythm and strong imagery of the extreme distinctive cast. Much of Howard's poetry - weird, warlike and adventurous as it is - appeared in the form of supposed quotations from ancient writers and served to head the chapters of his stories. A Collection of Howard verse, compiled by his literary executor, Mr. Glenn Lord, appeared under the title of "Always Comes Evening," published privately, I think, in 1957.

In December, 1932, the greatest of all Howard's fictional characters appeared in the pages of "Weird Tales." The story "The Phoenix on the Sword" featured Conan, a barbarian from mythical Cimmeria, who fought, drank and wenched his way across the length and breadth of the "Hyborian Age," a "world" situated in the same geographical area as the present day continent of Europe that flourished, (according to Howard), about 13,000 B.C. These stories caught on so much with the readers of "Weird Tales" that Howard was to write only a few fantastic stories outside this particular series from now on.

It cannot be denied that the "Conan" stories show some of the influence of Edgar Rice Burroughs. There is much evidence that Howard was very familiar with E.R.B.'s work and particularly that appearing in the famous American magazine, "Argosy." His literary agent was, incidentally, the very well known Burroughs

imitator and writer, Otis A. Kline. The Conan stories can be enjoyed by all admirers of Burroughs as they contain many similar elements to the Martian (and Tarzan) yarns. Both Burroughs and Howard created a "world" as a stage on which their characters play out their adventurous and fantastic roles. Swordplay and skullduggery abound in both worlds and the hero triumphs by superior physical attainments and the skill of his sword play. Martian science is replaced by sorcery and other supernatural happenings in Conan's world. John Carter (and Tarzan) and Conan are often different and yet in some ways have the same heroic attributes. All are great fighters and mighty warriors who battle their way to leadership and supreme power in their respective spheres. John Carter (and Tarzan), however, are unmistakably gentlemen in their approach to the fair sex but Conan, a thief, murderer, pirate, mercenary, adventurer and last of all king, is far from being a gentleman in his relations with his various "girl friends," although in the final story of the saga he does get married. Before beginning the Conan tales Howard actually wrote an article entitled "The Hyborian Age," which purported to give the "history" of the age and its peoples in order to lend the stories a greater aspect of reality. It is interesting to note that Howard used this "history" as a guide in all the stories of the series. No less than 18 Conan stories were published in Howard's lifetime. Not all of them are outstanding, but the standard kept up was by no means a bad one.

A long series of humorous western stories about a Pecos Bill type of character named Breckenridge Elkins, whose adventures are often larger than life, appeared in 1934. According to at least one of Howard's admirers, these western tales are among the finest stories that the author ever wrote, apart from some of the early fantastic tales and some of the historical adventure yarns that were published in "Oriental Stories." I have not had an opportunity of reading all these particular tales but feel there is considerable truth in the contention, at least from the literary point of view.

Towards the end of his life Howard's popularity as a writer was continually on the increase and he began to receive commissions to write for more superior magazines and attract attention from publishers of hard cover books. By 1936 stories by him were appearing in "Argosy" and publications controlled by such well known American firms as Street and Smith and Popular Publications. A British firm prepared to bring out a hard cover volume of the Breckenridge Elkins tales.

In mid 1936, however, Howard's mother was taken seriously ill with little hope of recovery. He had always been a very devoted son, and when he was told that she would never speak to him again he went out to his car, took a gun from one of its pockets and shot himself in the temple. He died about eight hours later on the 11th June, 1936. His father died some years afterwards and all three, mother father and son, lie buried in the same grave in Brownwood Cemetery.

R. E. Howard as a writer:

Robert E. Howard was first and foremost a magazine writer. One feels, however, that he was more than that for he had in him the promise of becoming an important American regionalist, as such stories as "Pigeons from Hell" and "Black Canaan" clearly indicate. With the history of folk lore and legend and the history and background of his own corner of Texas at his disposal, he was beginning to write of them seriously, only to have this promise cut short by death, when he was about to begin those middle years during which he might have been at his best as a writer.

Howard was, however, a writer whose sole aim was that of entertainment. He was a story-teller, a rare attribute these days and with him story was always

primary, with atmosphere, which he could do well, in close attendance. Character work and all else were simply secondary and he had none of the flights of Freudian fancy which are considered so important by present day writers of all kinds. He was, above all else, a lover of the simpler, older world of barbarian and pioneer days when courage and strength counted instead of subtlety and lying stratagem. His admiration was for athletic prowess instead of intellectual attainments and all his stories reflect this philosophy and receive from it a vitality which is to be found in only a few of his contemporaries. No one could write more convincingly of violence and gore and his battle passages reveal a marked aptitude for military tactics which might have brought him distinction in a time of war. In the tales concerning Solomon Kane, Brak Man Morn, Turlogh O'Brien, King Kull and above all, Conan, there is more blood letting and lusty carnage than in any other group of popular stories that appeared in magazines in the 1930s, both in Britain and the U.S.A. Two authors, who are similar to Howard in many respects are the British writers, E. R. R. Eddison (who wrote "The Worm Ouroboros") and J. R. R. Tolkien (of "Lord of the Rings" fame). While Howard is inferior to these two in literary grace or philosophical skill - to some extent I think, a matter of a much superior and classical education - he is at least their equal in pace, action, colour, excitement and headlong drive. In reading the Conan stories, in particular, one gets the allusion that the mighty adventurer himself is perhaps sitting before a fire and reeling off tales of his exploits. It is sometimes difficult to describe what Howard actually infused into his stories; perhaps the secret is that he himself is personally in every yarn. And despite all the blood and thunder, Howard's heroes had a code of moral behaviour that set a pattern of correct conduct, particularly to the teen-age reader.

My personal opinion is that "Worms of the Earth," "The Black Stone," "The Valley of the Worm," "Black Canaan," and "Pigeons from Hell" are among the finest stories that Robert E. Howard ever wrote. Of the tales written in series form my choice rests with "The Shadow Kingdom" (King Kull), "Wings in the Night" (Solomon Kane), "The Scarlet Citadel" and "The Tower of the Elephant" (Conan), "The Dark Man" (Turlogh Dubh O'Brien) and "Worms of the Earth" and "Kings of the Night" (Brak Man Morn). It is interesting to note that King Kull also makes an appearance in "Kings of the Night" as a visitor from the past, the only occasion, to my knowledge, that Howard ever used a character from one series in another.

Conclusion:

The volume of Breckenridge Elkins tales, "A Gent from Bear Creek," duly appeared in 1937 after Howard's death. No doubt the author's old admirers remained faithful for new stories by Howard were published in "Weird Tales" up to 1939. However, it was not until the publication of an omnibus volume of his stories in 1946 by the American firm of Arkham House of Sauk City, Wisconsin, that public interest again became fixed on Howard's work. This omnibus which appeared under the title of "Skull-Face and others" contained a large number of the best Howard stories and is still eagerly sought after by Collectors. It was followed, in 1950, by the publication, by Gnome Press, another American firm specialising in tales of fantasy, of the first of a series of books containing the entire Conan Saga. Six of these tales appeared during the years 1950 to 1955 and they aroused such interest that a further volume of Conan stories, written by two substitute writers - Bjorn Nyberg and L. Sprague de Camp - in the Howard manner, was brought out in 1957.

A Literary Club, which called itself "The Hyborian Legion" was formed in 1956 and this organization began to issue a magazine called "Amra," so called because

that was the name Conan used while he was a pirate. "Amra" originally appeared as a duplicated newsheet, but with the second volume was produced as a first class lithoed journal with well written articles and other features on Howard, his chief character, Conan, and to some extent on other sword and sorcery characters and themes created not only by Howard but by other writers in the genre. Then in 1961 Mr. Glenn Lord (Howard's Literary Executor) began to issue "The Howard Collector," a de luxe printed journal which featured stories, verse and other material by Howard as well as articles and indexes on all phases of the author's work. These two fan magazines have a large and loyal following and are still going strong at the present time.

Stories by Howard have appeared since his death in many anthologies and collections of fantastic and horror tales. Arkham House produced another omnibus in 1963 under the title of "The Dark Man and Others," which met with a most favourable reception from admirers and collectors. Incidentally over 30 unpublished stories are known while about 95 have appeared in magazine form only.

The last two years have seen a good deal of activity by publishers in America in connection with Howard's work. In 1966, Donald M. Grant of West Kingston, R.I., issued a first class reprint of "The Gent from Bear Creek," which was shortly followed by a further collection of Breckenridge Elkins tales which had never appeared in hard cover form, entitled "The Pride of Bear Creek." The same publisher is also planning the issue of a collection of the historical adventure tales which appeared in "Oriental Stories," while the Solomon Kane yarns will be published in two volumes, together with certain unpublished Kane material which has recently come to light among the Howard papers.

Oddly enough the most popular stories of Conan have been slow in appearing again in print, despite an enormous demand, mainly due it is understood, to legal complications with Gnome Press, the publishers of the hard cover tales. The position, however, has been partly resolved and Lancer Books of New York recently announced the issue of 8 volumes of Conan material, in paperback format, arranged in reading order, with excellent coloured covers and also containing complete bibliographical information, an authentic map of the countries of the Hyborian Age, and introductory paragraphs to each story. I have obtained four stories of the series that have been published to date and can confirm they have been presented and produced in a first class manner. Two of them contain stories of Conan hitherto unpublished and discovered among the Howard papers in the form of a synopsis, with about half the story written up. The text has been edited and the stories completed from the synopsis by a writer associated with Howard's work for a good many years - L. Sprague de Camp. And it has been announced that further unpublished Conan stories written entirely by Howard or completed from his part text and a synopsis by L. Sprague de Camp are to appear in various American magazines.

What are we to make of the present day popularity of this writer of heroic fantasy who has been dead for over 30 years and whose work originally appeared in magazine form, which made its survival an ephemeral matter. Well in the first place I think some of the great demand for Howard's writings is a re-action to the continual production of stories of sex and so-called realism that have appeared primarily since the end of the last war. The main reason, however, is simply because R. E. Howard was a very good writer of "sword and sorcery" tales who never lost sight of the fact he was first and foremost an entertainer and story-teller to an appreciative reading public.

BIBLIOGRAPHYBooks by Robert E. Howard

<u>Title of Book</u>	<u>Published by</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
A Gent from Bear Creek	?	1937	Western stories of Breckenridge Elkins.
Skull Face and Others	Arkham House	1946	Long and short stories, verse and an essay.
Conan the Conqueror	Gnome Press, N.Y.	1950	A complete novel of Conan.
Conan the Conqueror	Ace Books, N.Y.	?	Paperback reprint.
The Sword of Conan	Gnome Press	1952	Long and short stories of Conan.
King Conan	Gnome Press	1953	- do -
The Coming of Conan	Gnome Press	1953	- do -
Conan the Barbarian	Gnome Press	1954	- do -
Tales of Conan (with L. Sprague de Camp)	Gnome Press	1955	- do - (collaboration)
The Return of Conan (by Bjorn Nyberg & L. Sprague de Camp)	Gnome Press	1957	- do - (by "Sub" writers)
The Dark Man and Others	Arkham House	1963	Further long and short stories.
Almuric	Ace Books	1964	Interplanetary story - paperback.
A Gent from Bear Creek	Donald M. Grant	1966	Reprint of above.
The Pride of Bear Creek	Donald M. Grant	1966	Further B. Elkins tales.
Conan the Adventurer (with L. Sprague de Camp)	Lancer Books N.Y.	1966	Paperback reprint of Sword of Conan with additional material.
Conan the Warrior (Edited by L. Sprague de Camp)	Lancer Books N.Y.	1967	Paperback reprint of stories from Sword of Conan and King Conan.
Conan the Conqueror	Lancer Books N.Y.	1967	Paperback reprint of Conan the Conqueror
Conan the Usurper (with L. Sprague de Camp)	Lancer Books N.Y.	1967	Paperback reprint of stories in King Conan with additional material.

Short stories by Howard are also to be found in the Ace Pocket-books, "Swords and Sorcery," "More not at Night," "Dark Mind, Dark Heart," and "The Macabre Reader" and in other Collections and Anthologies of fantasy and horror stories that are too numerous to mention here.

Outstanding Stories of R. E. Howard in "Weird Tales"

<u>Title of Story</u>	<u>Month and Year</u>
In the Forest of Ville Fere	August, 1925
Wolfshead	April, 1926
The Dream Snake	February, 1928
The Hyena	March, 1928

cont'd...

<u>Title of Story</u>		<u>Month and Year</u>
Skulls in the Stars (Solomon Kane)		January, 1929
Rattle of Bones (Solomon Kane)		June, 1929
The Shadow Kingdom (King Kull)*		August, 1929
The Mirrors of Tunzun Thune (King Kull)		September, 1929
Skull-Face - 3 parts	Beginning	October, 1929
The Hills of the Dead (Solomon Kane)		August, 1930
Kings of the Night (Brak Man Morn)		November, 1930
The Children of the Night		April, 1931
The Gods of Bal-Sagoth (Turlogh Dubh O'Brien)		October, 1931
The Black Stone*		November, 1931
The Dark Man (Turlogh Dubh O'Brien)		December, 1931
The Thing on the Roof*		February, 1932
The Horror from the Mount		May, 1932
Wings in the Night (Solomon Kane)		July, 1932
Worms of the Earth (Brak Man Morn)		November, 1932
The Phoenix on the Sword (Conan)		December, 1932
The Scarlet Citadel (Conan)		January, 1933
The Tower of the Elephant (Conan)		March, 1933
The Man on the Ground		July, 1933
The Slithering Shadow (Conan)		September, 1933
The Pool of the Black One (Conan)		October, 1933
Old Garfield's Heart		December, 1933
Rogues in the House (Conan)		January, 1934
The Valley of the Worm		February, 1934
Queen of the Black Coast (Conan)		May, 1934
The People of the Black Circle (Conan) 3 parts	Beginning	September, 1934
Jewels of Gwahlur (Conan)		March, 1935
Beyond the Black River (Conan)		May, 1935
Shadows in Zamboula (Conan)		November, 1935
The Hour of the Dragon (Conan) 5 parts	Beginning	December, 1935
Black Canaan		June, 1936
Red Nails (Conan) 3 parts	Beginning	July, 1936
The Fire of Assurbanipal		December, 1936
Dig me no grave		February, 1937
Pigeons from Hell		May, 1938
Almuric 3 parts	Beginning	May, 1939

* Stories of the Cthulhu Mythos.

S A L E : Holiday Annual 1932, excellent; Bunter at Butlin's (hard), Bunter's Beanfeast (paper) 25/- three. Pip Squeak Annual 1923 7/6. Strand's 1912 (Doyle's Lost World) - Wodehouse - 15/- post extra. Film Annuals 1933 - 1959 s.a.e.
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THE STRANGE CASE OF THE AUTHOR WHO DIED TWICE

By Walter Webb

To what did men and women owe the urge to write in Edwardian days? Money? That was the primary inducement, of course; though one would be wrong in assuming it to have been the only one. There were other incentives. For example, a man named Sidney Gowing, of independent means, who was better known to collectors under the nom-de-plume of David Goodwin, a brilliant writer at eighteen and the owner of a small five-tonner, the "Penguin," which he kept moored at Burnham-on-Crouch, wrote because he did not like the idea of being idle. Members of the fair sex, such as Lady Helen Emily Forbes, Lady Troubridge and Eveline Louisa Michell (the Hon. Mrs. Walter Forbes), whose titles suggested financial security, nevertheless supplemented their incomes by contributing to the leading magazines and periodicals of the day. In much earlier times, De Sade, the notorious pervert, whilst imprisoned in the Bastille, occupied his time by writing what is generally acknowledged to be sheer and unadulterated pornography. Until recently no publisher either here or in Europe would have dared to print the poisonous matter which dripped from his pen in the 18th century, and there is no clearer indication of the way morals have deteriorated in this country than by pointing out that the works of the sex pervert, De Sade, who died in the insane asylum at Charenton as Napoleon's empire was collapsing at Fontainebleau, can now be obtained, quite legally, in cheap, paper-backed form.

Did a lady of title write boys' stories for the Amalgamated Press in the early days? Or, more interesting still, did such a person write Sexton Blake stories? During research of the old boys' periodicals, and those who contributed to their success covering a period of nearly 20 years, many interesting tit-bits of information have resulted through the agency of those who sponsored them. Not the least interesting was a claim made by a correspondent in 1948, to the effect that a titled lady was known to have been responsible for a number of the very early stories though, unfortunately, he could neither recall the lady's name nor the masculine nom-de-plume she adopted to conceal her identity. Despite persistent enquiries, I was not able to obtain verification of this at the time, in fact, in face of vehement denials from some of the more knowledgeable Blake editors, I abandoned trail. But temporarily, however, for in recent months verification of my 1948 correspondent's claim has come in a dramatic and unexpected manner. Another correspondent, although not remembering the lady's name, or, perhaps considering it judicious not to disclose it, was able to give the nom-de-plume she used, and it is this name which sheds a brilliant light on one of the most puzzling aspects of the whole Blake Saga. The name given was Michael Storm. Evidence was forthcoming at the time to prove the truth of this, but it was never admitted and the secret has been kept to this day.

It may be felt by some collectors that this question of Michael Storm and the part he played in the chronicling of some of the Sexton Blake yarns has been given a sufficiently long airing and that the whole subject should be dropped. But to do so at this stage with the mystery practically solved and with so much data still

undisclosed would be to create a totally wrong impression of how those stories came to be written. On the incontestable evidence that the name has been signed in two separate and distinct sets of handwriting, one in the rather cramped but firm calligraphy of a man and the other in the frailer, somewhat hesitant stroke of a woman, it is obvious that the name of Michael Storm was used by two people. Enquiries in France have shed much light on the subject.

Bill Lofts has written that the real name of Michael Storm was Ernest Sempill. But no male person of that name was living in France at the time the Michael Storm stories were being received at the editorial offices of the Amalgamated Press, and the only Sempill who can be traced as having lived in France at that time was a woman. The Storms - Captain Duncan Storm, late of the 3rd Hussars, and his wife (the Hon. E. Sempill), - lived in a chateau at Maine - et - Loire, in Western France, which, at that time, boasted a population of 513,490 residents, and it was from here that the early Plummer stories were probably penned. The long promontory of Brittany, seen above the mouth of the Loire, with its dim memories of half - Druid saints, has its own memories for the old Blake fan too, for it was in this province that that most famous of all the old chroniclers, G. H. Teed, passed many years of his life. How Teed came to meet the Storms can only be guessed at, but it now appears obvious that it was in these parts that contact was established, thus leading to the old warrior becoming one of the greatest favourites in the history of Blake writings.

How did the name "Michael Storm" originate? There is an interesting theory which I like so much, and which seems so feasible, that I cannot resist the urge to record it. The name is believed to have been suggested by the sugar-loaf rock of Mont St. Michel, about a mile off the Normandy coast, where just a thousand years ago Benedictine monks founded a monastery. In those days the only way to reach the Rock was to either walk or ride across the wet sand. Druid priestesses established a sanctuary there and conducted mystic rites, decorating their heads with wreaths of vervain and carrying quivers of golden arrows which it was believed would disperse the fiercest storm if shot into the clouds. If a sailor was successful with a storm he could demand from the Druid priestess one of the loveliest of her maidens as his reward.

To go back briefly to what has already been written about the elusive Michael. It has been stated that he lived in Boulogne and that, according to several editors and fellow contributors, he died suddenly in 1910, so putting his editors in something of a furore by failure of expected copy. But not a tittle of evidence has been forthcoming to this day to support such claims. Obviously, if you know that one of your contributors has died you know something of the circumstances; but not one of these claimants was able to say where, how, or why it was that a man in apparently good health and in the prime of life should expire suddenly in the process of writing stories.

That a great deal of trouble was taken to conceal the identities of the Storms is clear, and the reason why it was taken is equally so. Captain Duncan Storm was a very well-known personality in other fields, wrote only for the Amalgamated Press, as far as can be ascertained, and then for only a brief period, and dropped out when it was convenient for him to do so. He was an extremely well-educated man, with a distinguished army career behind him, a fluent speaker, as befitted a member who adorned Parliament for some years, and a J.P. The name "Duncan Storm" which a man named Gilbert Floyd took over, or was persuaded to use, was, I strongly suspect, a red-herring intended to confuse anyone who may have evinced interest in the bona fides of "Michael Storm." The big question of course is; who was the

principal writer of the two - the husband, or the wife? Or, for that matter, why they had occasion to write for such an unremunerative market at all? That Mrs. Storm possessed some degree of writing ability seems evident from Horace Phillips's confession that he published some stories by her during his editorship, and it is worthy of comment that one other member of the family, at least, wrote one or two books at a later period. Another point worth recording is that the family at one time owned land - some 16,000 acres of it - in New Brunswick, and here again memories of G. H. Teed are revived, for it was here that the popular old Blake author was born.

Late copy from their authors - and, in many cases, no copy at all - gave many an editor endless headaches, and the indications are that the Storms were no exception to the rule. In fact, the erratic publishing of the first few Plummer stories pointed to them being amongst the worst offenders in this respect, and no concrete evidence is yet available to explain the inexplicable hold-up of the second story in the Plummer series, which was either revised or entirely rewritten a year and a half later by Cecil Hayter, who seized the opportunity to bring his well-known character, Sir Richard Losely, into the narrative. There is a theory that the original story contained defamatory references, and that certain characters in the text could have been identified with persons of prominence living at that particular time. In stories dealing with the Peerage and Baronetage, particularly any written by members of that fraternity, careful scrutiny of the text is obviously needed, and it is quite likely that the lengthy hold-up of the second Plummer story was the result of objections being raised to certain passages in the first. Casting one's eye briefly over the synopsis of the Plummer stories, it can be readily understood why they had to be so carefully scrutinised before being released for public consumption.

To George Marsden Plummer it is a matter of considerable aggravation that two lives stand between him and an earldom with a rent-roll of £60,000 a year. If Allan Audley, present earl of Sevenoaks, dies and his death is followed by that of Horace Jenkins, coastguard to Fairlight Coastguard Station, Hastings, who is in love with Helen Lennox, the earl's adopted daughter, then Plummer will inherit the property for the following reasons :

In 1850, George Audley, cousin of the late Earl of Sevenoaks, engaged by a man named Plummer as cowboy, married the said Plummer's daughter, took Plummer's name and with it the Plummer estates. He died in 1871, leaving a son also named George. This particular George, a spendthrift, played havoc with his heritage, married, was borne a son in 1875, who was also christened George, and he, the present George Marsden Plummer, set sail for England with his widowed mother, eventually settling down in Dawlish.

Here, unaware of his wealthy relations, he enters the police force, and, by means of his extraordinary intelligence is subsequently promoted to Scotland Yard as detective-sergeant. Discovering his nearness to wealth, he sets out to remove the two frail lives which stand between him and assured comfort for the rest of his life. He strikes, and the death of the Earl of Sevenoaks is the result; but in attempting to throw Horace Jenkins, the coastguard, over the cliffs at Hastings, he fails due to the timely intervention of Sexton Blake and Tinker, who are winding up a yachting trip in the vicinity at the time of the attempted murder.

A disagreement on policy between editor, William Back, and controlling editor, Hamilton Edwards, is the official reason given for the rejection of two Plummer stories which should have appeared in the UNION JACK between the second and fifth stories in the series. With their love-making and other implications,

Back obviously regarded them as being unsuitable for the edification of the Edwardian juvenile. Apart from Blake's uncharacteristic amorousness, the idea of two ruthless specimens of the criminal fraternity like Plummer and Rupert Forbes abducting the beautiful Lady Marjorie Dorn, and an equally attractive actress, and imprisoning them aboard a submarine in order to force them into marriage, must have appealed to Back as being more suitable matter for the women's papers. That Edwards, whose comments in his editorials gave the impression that his views ran on similar lines, should have published the stories as a complete novel in the BOYS' FRIEND 3d. LIBRARY seems surprising, but it was well known that he was most impressed by anyone who had a title, and could overcome his scruples quite easily when it suited his book to do so.

That the Storm's had different views of Blake's character and appearance is clear. One, obviously the male member, drew him accurately enough by describing his eyes as grey; but the other showed little knowledge of him when she described him as having dark, compelling eyes and of being a confirmed amorist where beautiful titled ladies were concerned. It may be that in writing the love passages, the titled author was enacting the role of Lady Dorn herself. If so, I can only observe that the lack of restraint and decorum shown by her ladyship seemed quite unassociated with the popular view of what transpired from a strict Edwardian upbringing. Back was obviously correct in refusing the stories publication in what at that time was more a juvenile weekly than an adult one, for the innuendos were unmistakable and may have extended beyond the story to embrace certain living persons. One character in the text - Rupert Forbes - was a strong suspect. It is significant that, for no apparent reason, Forbes was killed at the end of the story, and that in the last few paragraphs an attempt was made to whitewash his character. Blake, who prior to Forbes's demise had shown quite the reverse of affection for him, was portrayed as being visibly upset by his death, and confessed to Tinker that the criminal had once been his - Blake's - fag at school and hoped that those responsible for placing his feet on the road to crime would live long enough to regret their villainy. Sensitive writing, but false. For why was not the reader acquainted with these facts when Forbes was first introduced? It was the height of absurdity to suggest that Blake recognised only in death something which escaped him in life, and whilst the author can be said to have succeeded in obtaining the effect she strove for, it was at the expense of making Blake look something of an idiot to those readers who had read the previous stories of Rupert Forbes. Of course, such situations are bound to occur when two authors write about the same character, for without each other's copy before them as they write, the risk of a clanger being dropped is always a possibility.

Entries in the SEXTON BLAKE CATALOGUE relating to the abridged versions of the Michael Storm stories in the UNION JACK are both interesting and illuminating. These drastically curtailed narratives, published in the PENNY POPULAR around the year 1913, show "E. Semphill" as the author, whereas in the U.J. it is Michael Storm. Apart from the inclusion of the letter "h," which seems to have been a thinly disguised attempt to conceal the writer's real name, it is strange that since both original and reprinted versions were published anonymously a departure from uniformity should have been considered necessary by giving the nom-de-plume to the original and the real name to the reprint. Strange, and vastly intriguing too, for if E. Sempill did indeed write the stories originally credited to Michael Storm, then we are faced with the highly probable fact that one of the most popular crook characters in the Blake Saga - George Marsden Plummer - was both conceived by and first written about by a titled Edwardian lady. If true, it has been the best kept secret since another famous lady - the playwright, Cicely Hamilton -

was discovered to have written Blake stories in the same era.

There is no doubt that by the time the PENNY POPULAR reprints were published Captain Duncan Storm was no longer on the scene. Like many men who have served overseas and seen much fighting on the various battle-fronts, domestic life would obviously lack the excitement to which many years in the army had accustomed him, and a restlessness would probably have caused him to seek excitement elsewhere. Although he and Mrs. Storm had addresses in London and France, it was questionable whether he could have been found at either of them. His activities between 1910 and the time of his death in the 1930's are obscure. He travelled extensively, and it seems that all Europe was his hunting ground. Consequently, contact with him was always difficult, and it was for this reason that so few people ever saw him at the A.P.

Writing in the late Tom Hopperton's short-lived OLD BOYS' BOOK COLLECTOR, Jack Lewis, the Blake author, described Storm as a colourful character whom he could have written quite a lot about. I have no doubt that he could; equally, I am quite sure that he wouldn't! And, as things turned out, he didn't. Obviously, Jack Lewis knew more about the elusive Michael than he was prepared to tell, as was proved by his reference to the wife as Mrs. Duncan Storm, as he rightfully described her in a letter not long before his death.

In 1912 those in the editorial offices of the U.J. were puzzled over the origin of certain stories which were drifting in. They featured a feminine character named Mademoiselle Yvonne, and, according to Mr. Lewis, were bought from Mrs. Storm, who said that her husband had written them. Which raised an interesting point on policy. In my own lists, based on the principle that credit must always be given where credit is due whether the author was paid for the work or not, G. H. Teed is correctly given as the originator and author of all the early stories of Yvonne. But in the SEXTON BLAKE CATALOGUE, which has based its policy on the principle that the person paid for a story must be accepted as the author, the entry is obviously quite wrong, and the name of M. Storm, to whom the Yvonne stories were paid, should have appeared. It would have been wrong of course, but the critics cannot have it both ways; having adopted such a policy they should have adhered to it.

Clearly, Captain Duncan Storm was the stepping-stone G. H. Teed used to gain employment as a Blake author at the A.P., and nobody will deny the excellent way in which he seized upon the opportunity afforded him. Having launched Teed on his career, Mrs. Storm seems to have retired to the background, and her subsequent activities - if any - in the interests of the A.P. are untraceable. She and her husband vacated their London address during the 1914-18 war, and, having shaken the dust of the A.P. from their feet for all time, spent most of their time in the twenties at Maine-et-Loire. The puzzling thing about them is not so much what they wrote as why they wrote, for their background suggested that they were quite well off financially. The theory that they may have been agents for other writers seems logical in view of Teed's emergence, though this was never confirmed. In their brief careers as Blake writers, they made a bigger impact in two years than did many of their contemporaries in twenty; and, whilst the quality of the Edwardian boot as a whole was not very good, some of the studs supplied by the Storms were best quality produce. "The Blue Room Mystery," "The Master Anarchist," "The Man From Scotland Yard," all printed in the U.J., circa 1908-9, and "The Mervyn Mystery," the rejected U.J. stories, published as one long complete novel in the BOY'S FRIEND 3d. LIBRARY, in 1909, were all exceptionally good efforts at a time when Blake was in sore need of new blood in the chronicling of his adventures.

The feminine hand was first observed by me way back in 1956, and mentioned in an article, published in the COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, 1957, (see pages 98-100). Blake's romance with Lady Molly Maxwell, related in about half-a-dozen short stories in the PENNY PICTORIAL, were also the work of the Storms, and it would be interesting to know just how he kept his other little romance with the Lady Marjorie Dorn from the ears of that jealous and impetuous young lady sleuth.

There is little more to add. The Storms, who appear to have been heard of by many but known by a comparative few, amongst whom Hamilton Edwards was undoubtedly the most intimately informed, died within three years of each other in the early thirties. Michael, the man, died in January, 1931, age 72; Michael, the woman, died in March, 1934, age 66. This probing into the mystery surrounding them has been a most exacting and exciting experience, involving patience, disappointments, anticipation, and often despair; but now, with every piece of the jig-saw having fallen into its allotted space, I am satisfied that, after all the years devoted to its solution, the correct one has now been established.

* * * * *

W A N T E D : "Comic Lives" 1922-23. Old Comics for exchange. Also wanted "Story Paper Collector" 1 - 50.

PAT CREIGHAN, 25 BELGIUM SQ., MONAGHAN.

W A N T E D : 1935 Holiday Annual. Price to :-

R. HODGSON, "BLUE CABLES," 47, GORDONDALE ROAD, MANSFIELD, NOTTS.

W A N T E D : Sexton Blake Library, Second Series 211, 276, 296, 347, 482, 525; Third Series 21, 103, 309.

D. A. LIDDELL, DUNEAVES, SACHEL COURT AVENUE, BISHOPTON, RENFREWSHIRE.

THE SCHOOL FRIEND issues dated 1927 and 1928 required. Details and price to :-

MR. LINFORD, 115, ALLPORT STREET, CANNOCK, STAFFS.

W A N T E D : PUCK 1933, 1935-1936; SUNBEAM 1933-1935; MY FAVOURITE 1933-1935. Exchange Puck, Rainbow, Tiger Tim, Jingles, Pilot.

HEARN, 191 ARBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.

SEASON'S GREETINGS - ESPECIALLY TO ALL FRIENDS IN MIDLANDS AND NORTHERN CLUBS - IAN BENNETT (Leicester).

RECOLLECTIONS OF CHUMS

By LESLIE CHARTERIS

That old English boys magazine, CHUMS, from which we recently facsimiled an 1893 sampling expressly intended to confuse would-be biographers who are always trying to pinpoint my precise date of impact on the literary scene, was in truth one of the mainstays of my youthful reading. Singapore, where my age climbed from single to double figures, was in those pre-BOAC days a six-weeks voyage from what the expatriates persist in calling Home, so to buy it weekly as it came out would have been a cumbersome and uncertain business; but each Christmas the red-bound annual volume of a whole year's issues was one of the most eagerly awaited treats on my list.

It was bigger than a metropolitan telephone directory and seemed to weigh about ten pounds, and the joy of it was that one could read the serials straight through, in the same way that I often wished I could see the movie serials which teased my imagination from week to week.

(I remember the end of one episode of one of those flickering cliff-hangers, where the Valiant Hero was in the clutches of the Wicked Foreigners, who were threatening him with Fearful Tortures unless he told them where to find the secret Plans. "You'll never get them," said the Hero in the subtitle. "I carry them -- Here!" And he tapped his forehead with a defiant forefinger. I never did see the next instalment; but for years afterwards I can recall being awed by the bravery of such a Hero, who in his Country's service had suffered his skull to be drilled and had the Plans sealed into the hole in his head.)

The CHUMS serials, of which there were always two running at the same time and overlapping, reflected a very clear editorial pattern in their rotation of themes. You could count on the Pirate story, the Lost Civilization Story (in Darkest Africa or Darkest South America), the Interplanetary Story, the Historical adventure (in such perilous periods as the Crusades, the French Revolution, or the Cavaliers and Roundheads), and the Wild West or Northwest Frontier story, amongst others. Frankly derivative as they may have been from the classics of Robert Louis Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard, Baroness Orczy, or Rudyard Kipling, they kept alive a romantic world in which villainy was unmistakably wicked, maidens were loyal and beautiful, heroes were fearless and unselfish, the good guys always triumphed in the end despite temporary setbacks and casualties, and a boy could join in the fun and dream of having similar adventures himself when he grew up.

They were gorgeously gory, too. Dozens of minor characters were tenderized in Iron Maidens or walked the plank to feed the waiting sharks, were sacrificially eviscerated on weird altars, gobbled up by dinosaurs or Martian gzxlpks, vivisected by mad scientists, flogged, stretched on racks, guillotined, hung, drawn, and quartered. The horrors were not dwelt on with lingering sadism, if my memory serves me, but they presented with a forthrightness that would give conniptions to the modern mental dieticians for the young. In spite of which, it is now a matter of statistical record that the percentage of "juvenile delinquency" in those days was an insignificant fraction of what has been achieved in this present era of official and pressure-group censorship, designed to protect the Young for as long as possible from the horrible facts of life.

I am inclined to theorize that these phobias could only have been spawned in the minds of neurotic seniles. Because, having been fairly young myself once, I am still aware of no left-over trauma from all the printed violence and savagery which I loved to lap up in those impressionable years. They cannot even be said to have contaminated my writing; although the greater part of my stories have been devoted to battle, murder, and sudden death, they have always been handled in the same spirit of romantic adventure that lightened my early reading. I have never emphasized cruelty, brutality, and slaughter for their own sake, like some other writers whose childhood reading may have been more tenderly supervised than mine.

Nor did it occur to my parents to shelter me from the pictorial mayhem of the silent movies of that golden age before Hollywood weakly succumbed to the threat of censorship and undertook to police itself. There was enough gruesomeness in the dungeons of the Ungodly, in that era, and rape and massacre above ground, to give a modern Sunday school vigilante the vapors, but it didn't seem to do my generation any great harm. To adore the spectacle of Douglas Fairbanks (Senior) skewering dozens of minor knaves on his flashing blade, with a laugh and a flourish, did not seem to mean that many of us in the cheering audience would go out and try it on the kids next door.

After Fairbanks came Errol Flynn, who was a good swashbuckler while he lasted, and Louis Hayward (who played the SAINT a couple of times) did several passes with the cloak and sword, but the last major gambol in that field that I remember seeing was Burt Lancaster's *The Crimson Pirate*, in which he proved, doing his own stunts, that he could have done everything that Fairbanks did, and with the same flair. But Burt decided to become a serious actor and producer instead, and who shall blame him? — except, perhaps, the superannuated adolescents like me who would still like to see more of that joyous brawling on the screen. Since then, the genre seems to have been surrendered almost exclusively to Italian producers of cut-rate chromatic epics whose stars are as musclebound as their scenarios.

About the only English-language producer who still seems to sympathise with us die-hard juveniles is Walt Disney, who has ploughed several of his cartoon millions back into regular features with live actors in stories that make no pretence of being overly adult. I saw one recently *The Scarecrow of Romney Marsh*, which struck me as being just the kind of film that one of those old CHUMS serials might have made; and rattling good fun it was, too.

I was brooding idly about all this when I came upon an editorial in the PALM BEACH TIMES in which the writer was scratching his head over the strange phenomenon of the late Edgar Rice Burroughs' vintage creations — Tarzan; John Carter of Mars, and Carson of Venus — who are enjoying a comeback today which bewilders the publishing experts. "Why," he asked, "the revival of Tarzan when 'darkest Africa' is merely another crisis factory on the front pages of our newspapers? Why the revival of the other characters when we know now that Venus is too hot to support life and that Mars does not hold the teeming civilizations the Burroughs imagination peopled it with?"

"Partly it is explained as middle-aged men wishing to recapture their childhoods by re-reading the books they read then, or buying them for their children to read." In other words, personal nostalgia. "But could there be such a thing as supremacy nostalgia? Could it be that people will always be suckers for stories of man over nature, man over man, man over animal or man over plant-man...?"

Could be. And for the sake of my old age-pension, I can only hope for more of those nostalgias.

The only thing I object to is the invidious word "suckers." It will be a grey world indeed when the mere word "adventure" no longer stirs our tired sophisticated blood.

And as for regressing to our childhood reading; what other escape is there from the well-ordered gadget-infested dreariness we live in? The writers of today are chiefly obsessed with sordidness and dirt, but as sterile in their approach to it as laundromats. I am myself just about the last souvenir of a school of writing which believed that a story-book hero should not only have muscles and a flashing sword or a fast gun, but that he should also have that quality which the French call 'panache' -- the defiant plume, the gay bravado, and the sense of destiny that makes you seem to hear trumpets when he enters.

This, I know, is what created the Saints following, and what still holds them. And may they never get less nostalgic....

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is reprinted from SAINT MAGAZINE by kind permission of Leslie Charteris to W. O. G. Lofts.)

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W A N T E D : Early Detective Weekly; Early Thomson Dandy; S.B.L. 3rd 24-50.

MATHIESON, R.A.F., N.S.U., No. 3 J.S.C., B.F.P.O. 18.

 XMAS GREETINGS TO ALL. YOUNG FOLKS TALES WANTED. I HAVE PLENTY OF
 MAGNETS, GEMS, S.O.Ls. and COMICS FOR EXCHANGE.

W. HALL, 16, WALDER ROAD, HAMMONDVILLE, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.

 W A N T E D IN REASONABLE CONDITION MAGNET NO. 446. U.J. GREAT JAMBOREE
 MYSTERY.

A. PARSONS, 4, PARK ROAD, TRANMERE, B-HEAD, CHESHIRE.

 W A N T E D : B.F.L. 314 Sky Devils; B.F.L. Roundhead and Cavalier; Armitage
 Circa 1935; B.F.L. Captain Justice on Mars Circa 1934; S.B.L. 258 and sequel.

HUGHES, 33, FOUNDRY RD., WALL HEATH, BRIERLEY HILL, STAFFS.

 WANTED TO PURCHASE: Novels by Baroness Orczy, Sapper, Jeffery Farnol,
 Rafael Sabatini, Sax Rohmer.

ROBERT W. STORY, 34, ABERDEEN CRES., BRAMALEA via BRAMPTON, CANADA.

Mr. Buddle's Christmas Case



BY

ERIC FAYNE

Mr. Buddle sat in his study at his table. It was early evening. The schoolmaster's brows were knitted in thought. In his hand he held a letter which he had already perused several times.

He read it again now. The heading to the sheet was neatly printed; THE GRANGE, Frome Rd, Taunton. Absurdly small type informed the reader that the telephone number of "The Grange" was Taunton 303.

The letter itself was written in a small straggling hand.

"Dear Mr. Buddle,

We were so pleased to see you on Prizegiving Day at the school. The entertainment given by the boys was very good indeed, especially the little play in which Cedric appeared. He seems to be a born actor."

Mr. Buddle frowned and shook his head. He himself had produced "the little play in which Cedric appeared." It had comprised several scenes from "Macbeth" and Cedric had been the second witch. Dancing round the cauldron with more gusto than skill, Cedric had knocked over the cauldron and smashed the red electric bulb which had been glowing therein to add to the effect on the darkened stage. The bulb had disintegrated with a loud report, and after that mishap the rest of the "play" had been presented in an atmosphere of hilarity which Mr. Buddle, the producer, had never intended. Such accidents were frequent in activities in which Cedric took part, as Mr. Buddle knew to his cost.

Mr. Buddle read on.

"I am writing to say that my husband and

I would be delighted if you could find it convenient to spend Christmas with us at the Grange. It was simply lovely having you with us last year, and we often talk of your heroism on that occasion. Please come if you can. Come when you like, and stay as long as you like. Cedric joins with me and his father in urging you to say 'Yes.'

Will you give me a ring on the telephone and let me know whether we can expect you?

Yours sincerely,

Doreen Meredith."

The wrinkles relaxed in Mr. Buddle's brow as he smiled faintly. Mrs. Meredith's reference to his "heroism" amused him. Last Christmas he had spent a few days with the Merediths at their home on the outskirts of Taunton, and he had been involved in an exciting little sequence of events. He had not felt particularly heroic at the time, but he would have been less than human had he not been pleased with Mrs. Meredith's comments.

Term had ended several days ago, and Christmas was near. The day after tomorrow would be Christmas Eve. Mr. Buddle had arranged to spend his Christmas at an hotel at Bristol. There would be substantial Christmas fare, there would be parties, and there would be outings. The hotels laid on elaborate programmes for those people who liked to spend their Christmas in such establishments. Mr. Buddle, however, was a light eater, he did not like parties, and outings left him cold. He went to hotels at Christmas for the simple reason that he had nowhere else to go.

Last year he had enjoyed his happiest Christmas for many years when he spent his few days with the Merediths. He had half-

wondered whether, just possibly, they might invite him again. They had done so. Mrs. Meredith's invitation could hardly have been more cordial. So far, though the letter had arrived yesterday, Mr. Buddle had not replied.

It was not an easy matter for him to decide. He felt the strongest urge to accept the invitation. He liked the Merediths, he liked their comfortable home, and he knew that they were sincere folk who would not have invited him had they not hoped that he would accept.

But Mr. Buddle knew that Mr. Scarlet, the Headmaster of Slade, would strongly disapprove of any member of his staff accepting hospitality from the parents of any of the boys. Mr. Scarlet would regard such an acceptance as likely to cause complications, and prejudicial against school discipline. Mr. Buddle was not disloyal to his Chief, but he still considered himself entitled to make up his own mind on such a matter in vacation time. But beyond that, there was the question of the boy, Cedric. Mr. Buddle was a kindly, sensitive little man, and it seemed to him to be unfair that Cedric should have to put up with his schoolmaster in his home at Christmas time.

However, Mr. Buddle had made up his mind. At last he took up his telephone, and put through a call to Taunton 303. It was Mrs. Meredith who answered, and she gave a little squeal of pleasure when she learned the identity of the caller.

"Oh, Mr. Buddle, how nice of you to ring! I hope it is to tell us that you will be joining us for Christmas --"

"I feel that I shall be imposing on you and your husband," said Mr. Buddle.

"Oh, quite the reverse, Mr. Buddle," came Mrs. Meredith's voice. "We shall be so disappointed if you don't come."

"You and Mr. Meredith are very kind," said Mr. Buddle. "If I may, I will join you either tomorrow or on Christmas Eve, and stay with you till the morning of Boxing Day as I did last

year. I am looking forward to it very much."

"Come tomorrow, of course," said Mrs. Meredith decidedly. "May we have you for lunch?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Meredith. I will leave Everslade on the 11.30 train, and should reach Taunton about one o'clock. I have a little shopping to do in Taunton, so I will have a quick meal at the hotel facing Taunton railway station."

"The Stag!" said Mrs. Meredith. "Very well, Mr. Buddle. My husband will collect you in the car from the Stag. What time shall we say?"

"I could not possibly trouble Mr. Meredith --"

"It will be no trouble, Lionel will be only too happy. Just say the time, Mr. Buddle."

"Well, soon after two --"

"Lovely!" chirruped Mrs. Meredith.

"I shall be bringing back the volume which Mr. Meredith kindly loaned to me. Perhaps you will tell him that, Mrs. Meredith."

After a further brief exchange of pleasantries, Mr. Buddle rang off.

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The next morning it was misty and bitterly cold. After taking his breakfast in lonely state in the staff dining room, Mr. Buddle telephoned for a taxi to call for him at the school in time to catch the 11.30. He packed a Gladstone bag, and addressed it to his hotel at Bristol. Then, in a smaller case, he packed together his few requirements for his short stay with the Merediths at Taunton. He took down a handsome volume, bound in blue, from his bookshelf. For a few moments he turned the pages affectionately. It was a volume from Mr. Meredith's vast collection of Gems, and Mr. Buddle had passed many happy hours in its company since Mr. Meredith had brought it to him on loan on the Slade Prizegiving Day.

Now Mr. Buddle wrapped the volume in tissue paper, wrapped it yet again in brown paper, and then deposited it

carefully on top of his suitcase. He clicked the case shut, and sat down to await the arrival of his taxi.

Soon after eleven o'clock, Mr. Buddle was at Everslade station. He deposited his Gladstone bag at the parcels office and arranged for it to be sent on to his Bristol hotel. Then, accompanied by his light suitcase, he took his place in the local train, the engine of which was panting spasmodically.

On his journey to Taunton, Mr. Buddle had to change twice. He left the local train at Brent, where he joined the London express which carried him to Exeter. From Exeter he was carried by another train across country to Taunton.

It was still not yet one o'clock when Mr. Buddle reached Taunton, and he congratulated himself on the speed of his journey. Considering the mist and the frost, the railway had excelled itself.

At Taunton the fog was really thick, and Mr. Buddle viewed it with some concern. Leaving the station, he crossed the road and turned right. He passed a number of shops, brightly decorated for the season, and finally entered a chemist's establishment. There he purchased an expensive bottle of perfume, which he felt sure Mrs. Meredith would appreciate as a Christmas gift. He paid for his purchase, and then carefully placed it in his suitcase.

With that little piece of business completed, he thought about lunch. He retraced his steps till he came to the Stag Hotel, which was situated immediately facing the railway station.

He went into the hotel. Spotting a telephone booth in the hotel vestibule, he entered it, and put through a call to the Meredith home. It was answered by Cedric Meredith of Mr. Buddle's form at Slade.

"I rang, Meredith, to beg your father not to bring his car out in this

fog," said Mr. Buddle. "I am speaking from the Stag where I am about to have my lunch, and I will then catch a bus without difficulty."

"I'm glad you rang, sir," came Meredith's reply. "My father can't come, anyway, sir. He drove to Yeovil early this morning, and he rang us a little while ago to let us know that his business associates have been delayed by the fog. Unless the weather clears, he will come back by train. But I'm coming straight down into Taunton, sir, and I will call for you at the Stag."

"Do not come out in this fog on my account, Meredith," said Mr. Buddle severely.

"I've got to come, sir. There's a parcel to collect from a shop for my mother. Wait for me at the Stag, sir. You might lose your way in this pea soup."

Smiling faintly, Mr. Buddle rang off. Picking up his case, he left the booth, and made his way into the hotel dining room. It was well-filled, but not crowded, and the head waiter escorted Mr. Buddle to a vacant single table in a window recess. There was one other table, a larger one, in the recess, and two men were dining and talking together. Mr. Buddle hung up his coat among several other coats on a nest of pegs, and placed his case on the window-seat which was already occupied by one other case and a bag of shopping. A printed notice, attached to the window frame, informed customers that the management accepted no responsibility for the safety of coats, parcels and umbrellas.

A waiter approached, and Mr. Buddle ordered lunch. Mushroom soup, followed by roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, creamed potatoes and sprouts made Mr. Buddle feel very much better. The dining room was warm and cosy with red-shaded lights, and sprigs of holly made everything look festive. The foggy daylight through the windows looked grey and depressing, by contrast.

One of the men at the adjoining table was on the move. He rose to his feet, donned his overcoat, and claimed a

case from the window-seat. Mr. Buddle, waiting for his peach melba, regarded him without much interest. The man was square and strongly built, with a muscular neck and powerful shoulders. He would have been good-looking if his face had had more life in it. Not that Mr. Buddle paid him more than casual attention.

The restaurant was clearing, and it was quiet now. Mr. Buddle heard the standing man say to the other: "I'll tell him you'll come over Sunday and bring the rest. It's wiser not to write the address down. Are you sure you'll find the place?"

The man who was still seated - an older individual - answered: "Trust me! I'll think of apple pie!"

Mildly curious, Mr. Buddle watched the man with the case leave the dining room. The schoolmaster was wondering vaguely why anyone should think of apple pie, but, with the arrival of his peach melba, he dismissed the matter from his mind.

Ten minutes more, and Mr. Buddle was sipping coffee from one of those preposterously small cups in which the best restaurants specialise. He noticed that the adjoining table was now vacant, and a waiter was brushing crumbs from the white cloth. Apparently the second diner had paid his bill and taken his departure.

"Here I am, sir!" said a voice.

Mr. Buddle turned his head. A boy stood at his side. It was Meredith of Slade with a parcel under his arm. He was wearing a grey overcoat, the Slade woollen muffler twisted round his neck, and the Slade cap of mauve and white on the back of his head. He looked wholesome and healthy, and Mr. Buddle smiled his approval.

"It is good of you to call for me, Meredith. I'm afraid it hasn't been very pleasant for you to come out in this weather."

"No hardship for me, sir," said the boy. "I like the fog. It's fun."

Mr. Buddle shook his head. He rose to his feet, and took his coat from the nest of pegs. Donning it with the assistance of the polite Meredith, he took up the suitcase from the window-seat.

"I am ready, Meredith. Just a moment's delay now, while I settle my bill."

Outside in the street, Mr. Buddle shivered a little. The fog was thicker than ever. The cold was penetrating. The lights from passing vehicles glowed a dull yellow through the murk.

Mr. Buddle looked at Meredith.

"Can we get a taxi, do you think, Meredith? Or is there likely to be a bus available?"

Meredith grinned.

"Let's hope for the best, sir. If we have to walk, it's a fair distance on foot."

In the station yard they found a taxi. The driver did not seem keen to accept passengers, but, after looking Mr. Buddle up and down for a moment, assessing the likelihood of a good tip being forthcoming at the end of the journey, he announced with bad grace that dogs shouldn't be out in such weather but he was willing to oblige a gentleman.

Even so the journey was slow, the vehicle edging its way through the fog. It was nearly fifteen minutes later that Mr. Buddle and Meredith alighted in the drive of the Grange, and the taxi turned to go back to the town.

The door was opened by Mrs. Camp, who, with her husband, comprised the resident domestic staff of the Meredith household.

Mrs. Camp liked Mr. Buddle, who gained an added lustre in her estimation from the fact that he was her "cherub's" schoolmaster, and her little cry of welcome brought Mrs. Meredith on the scene. There, in the hall tastefully decorated for Christmas, Mr. Buddle was left in no doubt that his visit gave much pleasure to his kindly hostess and her servant.

"You are sure that you have lunched?"

enquired Mrs. Meredith anxiously.

"I had an excellent meal at the Stag," Mr. Buddle assured her.

Five minutes later, he found himself accommodated in the same bedroom which he had occupied on a previous visit. The Merediths called it 'The Painted Room,' though, as Mr. Buddle knew well, the name was merely a sentimental connection with Mr. Meredith's beloved Gems.

A bright fire was burning in the grate, and the room was far more attractive to the little schoolmaster than any in an hotel could have been. He had left his hat and overcoat in the cloak-room downstairs, and his immediate intention was to freshen himself up and then to take a rest after his journey. Mr. Meredith was not expected back for an hour or two, but Mrs. Meredith was in her kitchen, busily preparing for Christmas.

After standing at his window for a couple of minutes, looking out into the damp gloom, Mr. Buddle turned to his suitcase which he had placed on the luggage rack at the foot of his bed. He turned the case flat, preparatory to opening it, and then gave a surprised start.

In the middle of the side of the case was a label. It showed a colourful picture of an obviously Mediterranean scene, and it was overprinted, in flowing characters: HOTEL GRAND BRETAGNE, SAN REMO. The label was travel-stained, but it still made a bright splash against the brown of the case.

Mr. Buddle stood stock-still, staring at the label. He had never been to Italy, and he knew that there should be no labels at all on his case. There was only one conclusion to be drawn. This was not Mr. Buddle's case at all.

"Calamity!" exclaimed Mr. Buddle to the Painted Room.

Hastily he tried the catches. They flew up on rusty springs, and he lifted the lid. If he had had any doubt before,

he was left with none now. Instead of pyjamas, a change of linen, a toilet bag, a razor, and Mr. Meredith's precious volume of Gems which Mr. Buddle had carefully placed in his own case, this one was packed, on the top at least, with a number of folded newspapers.

Mr. Buddle was conscious of great anxiety. His personal items were of no substantial value, and their loss would cause him only minor inconvenience. They could be replaced. But Mr. Meredith's Gems, if lost or damaged, could not be replaced.

Mr. Buddle stood in troubled thought. At last, he left his bedroom and made his way down to the hall. Nobody was about, and he stepped quietly over to the door at the end of the hall. He knew, from his previous visit to the Grange, that this was "Cedric's Den." He tapped on the door and after a moment it opened.

"Hullo, sir," said Meredith cheerily.

Mr. Buddle spoke in lowered tones.

"Meredith, I am much disturbed. I have lost my suitcase."

"Lost your suitcase, sir?" Meredith looked at him in surprise. "I took your suitcase up to your room when you came in, sir."

"You took a suitcase up, Meredith, but it did not belong to me. Somehow I have got somebody else's case, and he has got mine. Very unfortunately, my suitcase contained one of your father's valuable books which he loaned me."

Meredith puckered his lips momentarily in a whistle.

"Do you know where it can have happened, sir?"

"It must have happened while I was lunching at the hotel. I had my own case when I reached Taunton, for I bought a small article in the town and placed it in the case. Two men were having lunch at the table nearest to me, and one of them must have gone off with my case instead of his own. The cases are very much alike, though mine is less worn."

"Probably he's found out the mistake by this time sir. He may have gone

back to the hotel. Would you like me to ring the Stag and make enquiries, sir?"

"I should be glad if you would, Meredith. That idea had already occurred to me. I hope that I may be able to get your father's book back before your parents become aware of my utter carelessness."

Meredith nodded.

"We'll do our best, sir. My father won't be in for some time, and Mother is busy in the kitchen. When she and Debby get cooking, an earthquake wouldn't disturb them."

Mr. Buddle smiled in spite of his anxiety. He had wondered before at the change which came over Meredith in his own family environment. This Meredith at the Grange was very different from the tiresome youngster to whom Mr. Buddle was accustomed at school.

Meredith hurried across to the telephone in the hall, while Mr. Buddle mounted the stairs and returned to his Painted Room.

The schoolmaster crossed to the suitcase, and, closing it, examined the exterior. Apart from the label for the San Remo Hotel, there was nothing at all to give any indication of its owner. Opening the case again, Mr. Buddle felt over the newspapers which lay inside. There seemed to be at least a dozen of them. They were national newspapers, as Mr. Buddle noted as he picked out one after another. He examined each one, in case an address might have been pencilled in a corner by some newsagent for delivery purposes. There was no sign of any name or address.

He wondered why anyone should have been carrying a load of old newspapers in a suitcase, but suddenly he realised that the papers had merely been used for packing purposes. As he lifted out the last paper, a number of small booklets were disclosed. Mr. Buddle picked up one of them, and surveyed it. The little book had a thick black cover, with one small window cut out at the top and another at the bottom. In the centre of the cover, embossed in gold,

was the Royal Coat of Arms. Printed above this were the words BRITISH PASSPORT, and, beneath it, UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND.

Mr. Buddle turned over a page or two. With a puzzled expression on his face, he took up one or two more of the passports and glanced over them.

There was a tap at the door, and Meredith entered.

"I got through to the hotel, sir. Nobody has made any enquiry so far. The manager has taken our phone number, and will ring us if he hears anything."

Mr. Buddle compressed his lips. He looked very worried. He pointed to the suitcase, and to the little black books.

Meredith's eyes opened wide.

"Passports!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"Two dozen of them, Meredith, under a lot of old newspapers. I felt entitled to examine the contents of the case in the hope that there might be something to indicate the owner's name and address."

"It wasn't locked then, sir? Isn't that odd?"

"I don't think so, Meredith. My own case wasn't locked. When you are carrying a case from one place to another on a short journey, you don't expect it to be out of your sight at any time. Even if it were stolen, these locks would present no barrier to a thief."

"But why on earth is anyone carrying around a pile of passports?" asked Meredith in wonder.

Mr. Buddle shook his head in bewilderment.

"They are not passports which have been issued, Meredith. They are all new - unused."

The master and his pupil stared at one another.

"Possibly," said Mr. Buddle, "the owner of this case is a civil servant." He spoke a little doubtfully.

"A civil servant!" echoed Meredith.

"It seems reasonable that it would be a civil servant," argued Mr. Buddle.

"Passports are issued from a government department."

He replaced the newspapers in the case on top of the black books, and closed the lid. He turned the case over.

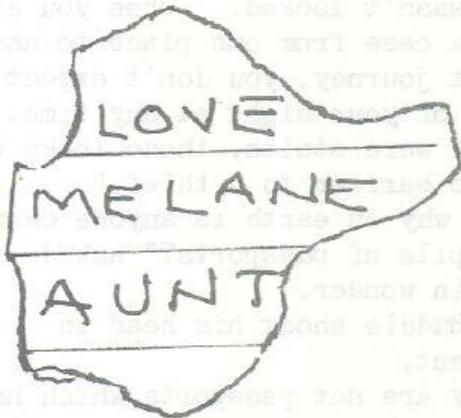
"There is nothing on the case at all to show whom the owner may be. Just this label for a San Remo hotel, and that looks like an old label. It means nothing."

Meredith moved forward, and ran his fingers over the San Remo label.

"There's another label under this, sir," he said. "I can feel it."

The label crackled under his fingers. Gently, he inserted a fingernail beneath a corner of the label, and raised it. As he pulled slowly on the lifted corner, the whole label came away without difficulty. It had been stuck over a portion of another label. It was just the centre of an old label which was now revealed. Someone, sometime, had tried to tear it off, but the centre had been stuck too securely for removal, so only the outer edges had been torn away.

Mr. Buddle uttered an exclamation, and bent forward to examine the fragment of label. There was printing on it, in faded ink, and he read as follows:



"What do you make of that, Meredith?" enquired Mr. Buddle.

Meredith chuckled, in spite of the seriousness of the occasion.

"Melanie is a girl's name, sir. It reminds me of things you see chalked on walls and trees. It might be I Love Melanie's Aunt'."

"Don't be absurd, Meredith!" snapped Mr. Buddle irritably. "This is not a wall or a tree. It's a suitcase. Why should anyone write 'I Love Melanie's Aunt' on a suitcase?"

"Why should anyone write it anywhere?" murmured Meredith.

"It's not 'Melanie,' in any event," said Mr. Buddle. "The name 'Melanie' is spelt with an 'i'."

Meredith was serious again.

"Don't you think, sir, you should let the police know?"

The worried grooves deepened in Mr. Buddle's brow.

"I don't know, Meredith. It is merely a matter of an accidental exchange of cases. There is no question of theft. We have notified the hotel where the mistake occurred, and we can assume that the owner of this case will do the same thing. I'm sure it is only a matter of time before the matter is put right, but, all the same, I should very much like to get your father's book before he returns home. The value of my personal items in the case is trifling, but your father's book is priceless. I feel acutely responsible."

Meredith nodded.

"You're fairly certain, sir, that your case must have been taken by one of the two men who were having lunch near your table. Can you remember what they were like, sir?"

Mr. Buddle stood in silent thought for a moment or two, but at last he shook his head.

"I cannot, Meredith. I am not a very observant person. The man who left first, carrying a case, was under thirty, I should say. The other man was older. I might know the younger man if I saw him again, but I did not take enough notice of him to be able to describe him. There was just one thing —"

"Yes, sir?"

Mr. Buddle rubbed his chin meditatively.

"The younger man left before his companion. Before he left, and I am sure he took the case with him, he said something to his companion which suggested that the latter man would be coming over with

something on Sunday. He enquired whether this man was sure he would find the place. The older man made a very strange reply, which was the reason that I noticed it and remembered it. He said 'Trust me! I'll think of apple pie!'"

"Apple pie?" Meredith looked incredulous. Then he grinned. "Perhaps he was going home to his mother who's a wonderful cook."

"I had the impression," said Mr. Buddle, "that apple pie would make him keep the name of some particular place in mind. A kind of association of ideas, Meredith."

Meredith looked interested.

"It's possible, sir. Like my mother, sir. She knows a woman named Filmer, but she was always forgetting and calling the woman Fillett or Fisher or Fidget. So my mother says that when she meets the woman now she always thinks of Clark Gable. He makes her think of a cinema, and a cinema makes her think of films, and so she lands on the name Filmer."

Knowing Mrs. Meredith, Mr. Buddle could well believe it.

"It doesn't help us at all, Meredith. What could one associate with apple pie? Apples! Pastry! Crust! Juice! Oven! Sultanas, perhaps! What else?"

"Cloves!" said Meredith. He laughed. But suddenly he stopped laughing. He moved across to the suitcase and stood staring for a moment or two at the fragment of label on the lid. He turned to Mr. Buddle, an excited gleam in his blue eyes.

"Wait a tick, sir! I believe I've got it!"

Taking a pencil from his pocket, he added a number of letters to the torn label. He caught Mr. Buddle's arm.

"Look, sir!"

Mr. Buddle bent forward. With Meredith's pencilled additions, the label now read:

the cLOVE
fRoME LANE
near TAUNTON

Mr. Buddle looked puzzled.

"It now seems to make sense as a possible address," he admitted. "Is there a Frome Lane, Meredith?"

"Yes, sir! We live in Frome Road, as you know. About a mile up the road there is a turning off which leads out to the Bishops Lydeard road. It's a long, narrow winding way which the locals call Frome Lane."

Mr. Buddle spoke a little more hopefully.

"But 'The Clove,' Meredith! Do you think it might be the name of a house?"

"It's the name of an old inn, sir. I've often passed it when I've been out cycling in the vac. It's a lonely place, and I'm sure it hasn't been licenced for years. It's frightfully old, and I suppose, long ago, it might have catered for the cider apple pickers on some of the farms. But I'm sure it's called 'The Clove,' sir. There's still an old swinging sign outside."

Mr. Buddle caught some of the boy's excitement. He drew his watch from his pocket and noted the time.

He said swiftly: "You are an ingenious lad, Meredith. It is certainly a chance. I suppose it is possible that 'The Clove' may be on the telephone, but it would be hard to trace the number. Possibly one could obtain help from Directory Enquiries, but that could mean delay, with no certainty at the end. It is only half-past three, and a walk to 'The Clove' is worth while if it brings back your father's book. Will you please tell your mother that I shall not be in for tea?"

"I'm coming with you, sir," exclaimed Meredith.

"No, Meredith! It is not very pleasant for anybody to be out in this weather, but I am responsible for your father's book, and if there is just a chance that I can get it back -- well, the walk is worth while in any weather. You can direct me the way, and that will be sufficient."

Meredith looked oddly at his form-master.

"It's a very lonely walk, sir - and it's beginning to get dark. Night is

coming on —"

"That is of no consequence, under the circumstances, Meredith."

Mr. Buddle picked up the case and hurried out of his room, and Meredith followed him.

The fog had lifted, but a mist still hung over the countryside. To add to the discomfort, flakes of snow were now falling steadily. The last of the daylight had gone, but it was not very dark. Somewhere above the clouds, a crescent of moon had risen, and it relieved the blackness. The thin layer of snow on the road, on trees, and on bushes did its share in preventing absolute darkness. It was very still. There was hardly a breath of wind.

Mr. Buddle guessed that he had been walking for about half an hour now, and he fancied that his pupil, in reckoning that the Frome Lane turning was only a mile from the Grange, had considerably underestimated the distance.

Mr. Buddle was well wrapped up against the cold. In one gloved hand he carried the suitcase whose owner he was seeking; in the other he had an electric torch, thoughtfully provided by Meredith.

Very occasionally a car passed, going in one direction or the other, with headlights stabbing into the mist and showing up the tumbling snowflakes. Once or twice Mr. Buddle had thought he heard footsteps behind him, but nobody had overtaken him on foot. It looked like being a white Christmas, and, on a day like this, people had obviously made their way early to their homes.

Mr. Buddle came to a standstill, and flashed the electric torch around him. A narrow lane branched away to the left of the main road, and he peered up at a signpost. In the beam from his torch he could read the name "Bishops Lydeard," and, underneath the name, the further information "Unsuitable for lorries or large vehicles."

This, obviously, was the Frome Lane, to which Meredith had referred.

There was a pattering of feet in the road behind him, and Mr. Buddle turned round, swinging the beam of his torch. Meredith, his face rosy red between his Slade cap and his muffler, grinned at his form-master.

"This is it, sir!" said Meredith.

Mr. Buddle spoke severely.

"This is deliberate disobedience, Meredith. I distinctly told you that you were not to accompany me. Your mother will take a very poor view of my bringing you out in these circumstances."

"My father would take a poorer view, sir, if I let you come out here all alone," answered Meredith cheerily. "I've been following in your footsteps all the way. You know, sir — like Good King Wenceslas." He began to sing softly:

"In his master's steps he trod,

Where the snow lay dinted."

Mr. Buddle stood in uncertainty. He said frostily:

"I am displeased with you, Meredith."

"We're not at Slade now, sir," the youth reminded him.

"That is true." Mr. Buddle's frost melted a little. "Well, I must confess that your company is welcome, so long as you do nothing stupid."

"This is Frome Lane, sir. We turn left here." Meredith spoke briskly.

"I don't know exactly how far 'The Clove' is. About ten minutes' walk, I think — I hope. I've only cycled past it, of course. Let me carry the case, sir."

They left the main road, and strode along the lane. It seemed much darker here, and Mr. Buddle used his torch more frequently. Hedges were high on either side, and the lane was very narrow. Two cars would have been unable to pass one another, but, at intervals, as they walked, Mr. Buddle and Meredith found small bays cut away into the hedgerows so that two-way traffic would be possible for vehicles.

Mr. Buddle estimated that they had been walking along this lonely country lane for quite twenty minutes before he spotted distant lights and stopped.

"That's not the inn, sir. It's a house," said Meredith.

Mr. Buddle grunted. They moved on, and he could see that what the boy said was right. A large house stood, well back from the road, in its own grounds. Its lights cut into the gloom, and the sound of music was carried on the cold air.

The music died away as they progressed. Another ten minutes passed before they came to a large gap in the hedges on the right of the lane.

Meredith gave an exclamation.

"Here it is, I'm sure, sir. This is 'The Clove'."

Mr. Buddle shone his torch high, and the rays fell on an old sign at the top of a post. The paintwork was scarred and faded, but he could read the words it bore: "THE CLOVE INN."

There was no sign of a light, but Mr. Buddle could detect the outlines of the ancient hostelry, which looked grim and forbidding.

"Now we shall see!" muttered Mr. Buddle. He took the suitcase from his youthful companion, and gave him the torch in exchange. "I want you to wait here, Meredith, well away from the inn. I will make my enquiries alone, and I shall not be long. The place looks deserted, but we must hope for the best."

"Yes, sir," said Meredith softly. He did not query the orders he had been given.

He stood against the hedge on the lane, while Mr. Buddle, carrying the case, crossed the gravel forecourt of the inn. Peering through the snowy gloom, he discerned that the place was double-fronted. He found a door beneath a porch in the centre. He struck a match. There was no knocker on the door, but at the side was an old-fashioned iron loop which seemed to be a bell. Mr. Buddle seized the loop and dragged it down as the match flickered out. There was a startlingly loud jangle from somewhere within the

building.

Mr. Buddle waited. He glanced back towards the lane. Very dimly he could see the snowy outline of the tops of the hedges, but Meredith was invisible. A couple of minutes passed, and Mr. Buddle was about to give a second pull on the bell when he heard the sound of a bolt being pulled back. The door opened, and light streamed out, causing the schoolmaster to blink.

A man stood silhouetted against the light.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," said Mr. Buddle. "This afternoon I dined at the Stag Hotel in Taunton. Someone, inadvertently, took my case by mistake and left his own in its place."

"Oh?" The man whose face was in the shadows sounded startled. He said sharply "Who are you?"

"My name is Buddle, and I am a schoolmaster. I have here the case which was left behind in error, and I think the owner may live at this inn."

"This is not an inn. It hasn't been licenced for forty years. You are making a mistake."

Mr. Buddle was surprised at the other's attitude, but he recognized the voice. It was the man who, at the hotel, had said that it was unwise to write down an address, and whose companion had said "I'll think of apple pie."

Mr. Buddle said firmly: "I am aware that this is not a licenced inn, but I recognize you as the gentleman who dined at the table adjoining my own at the Stag Hotel. I have brought your suitcase, and I shall be glad to have my own in return."

The man stood silent for a moment. He moved forward a pace, and Mr. Buddle involuntarily took a step backward. Mr. Buddle sensed that the man was looking past him, scanning the forecourt to see whether his visitor was alone.

The man spoke again. "You had better come inside. I will speak to Mr. Bax."

Mr. Buddle felt his heart beating a little faster. He told himself that there was no cause for uneasiness. What possible risk could he be running in entering an old inn, deep in the heart of the Somerset countryside? No doubt, in daylight, it was a picturesque old building. But it was certainly lonely - and he was going among strangers.

He stepped in. He was in a stone-flagged corridor. From the shadowy ceiling hung an electric light bulb under a dirty white shade.

The door banged shut, and the man shot a bolt. The sound was not encouraging to Mr. Buddle.

He said: "I'm glad I have been able to find you. You must have been concerned at losing your case. I presume that you had discovered your mistake --"

The man said: "Wait here, please. I will tell Mr. Bax."

He was on the sunny side of thirty. He wore a dark suit. Good-looking though he was in an indeterminate way, he did not impress Mr. Buddle favourably. The schoolmaster watched him as he walked down the corridor and turned a corner.

The minutes ticked by as Mr. Buddle waited, shifting rather uneasily from one foot to the other. He put down the case. Then, changing his mind, he picked it up again. He was just debating whether to take his departure when the man came round the corner and approached him, his shoes clattering on the stone floor.

The man said: "Come with me. Mr. Bax would like to meet you."

Mr. Buddle said, a little breathlessly: "I must not be long. I have to be getting back --"

The man was walking away, and, with a slight shrug, Mr. Buddle followed him. At the end of the stone-flagged passage there was a flight of stairs leading up on the left. Mr. Buddle found himself mounting over threadbare

carpet. There was a carpeted landing at the top, with several doors leading from it. The man in the dark suit opened one, and stood back for Mr. Buddle to enter.

The room was over-furnished with heavy old-fashioned pieces. Thick velvet curtains hung across the window. The central light was shaded, so that, while the table beneath was well-illuminated, the rest of the room was in shadow.

Seated in an arm-chair before a bright coal fire was a plump man with a bald head. He reminded Mr. Buddle of the illustrations of Mr. Pickwick in his Dickens library, way back at Slade.

The Pickwickian gentleman rose to his feet. He gave Mr. Buddle a puckish smile.

"I understand from my friend Mr. Garth that you are the victim of the inexcusable mistake he made this afternoon at a Taunton hotel," he said. "My name is Bax."

Mr. Garth had closed the door and was leaning on it. Mr. Buddle looked at him and then back to the other man.

"I hope that we can put things right, Mr. Bax. My name is Buddle and I am a schoolmaster. My suitcase was taken from the Stag Hotel in Taunton, and this case was left in its place."

Mr. Bax, still with the puckish smile, took the case from Mr. Buddle. He placed it on a table and opened it. He lifted out the newspapers, and gazed down at the little black books at the bottom of the case.

"Yes, Mr. Buddle, this is certainly my case. I have already reproved my friend Mr. Garth for his idiotic carelessness." Moving across to an old-fashioned couch, Mr. Bax brought out from behind it another suitcase, very much like the one which stood on the table. Still smiling, he placed the second case on the table beside the other one. "This is the case which Mr.

Garth brought with him, Mr. Buddle. You had better examine it, hadn't you?"

"Yes, certainly!" Mr. Buddle opened it. No longer was it neatly packed as he had last seen it, but there, on the top of a pair of tangled pyjamas, was Mr. Meredith's precious volume of Gems.

Mr. Buddle breathed a sigh of relief. He turned a jubilant face to the smiling Mr. Bax.

"This is assuredly my case. I am really much obliged to you, Mr. Bax. The only thing which worried me was the possible loss of this volume --" Mr. Buddle indicated the Gems - "which belongs to the friend with whom I shall be spending Christmas. Fortunately, he was away from home to-day, and I hope that I may be able to return his book to him without his ever knowing it was lost. I feel very guilty about it all."

Mr. Bax laughed softly. The man at the door echoed his laugh, and Mr. Buddle glanced at him.

Mr. Bax said: "It is not for you to feel guilty. My friend Garth has admitted his guilt and also his stupidity. Did you report your loss to the police, Mr. Buddle?"

"I didn't!" Mr. Buddle closed his case and fastened it. "Candidly, I couldn't see that the police could do anything. I left my telephone number with the hotel manager. Did you yourself contact the hotel, Mr. Bax?"

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Bax genially.

"Definitely not!" said Mr. Garth.

"When anything like this happens it is safer to abandon everything and leave well alone," confided Mr. Bax.

"Safer?" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. A sixth sense warned him that he had walked into danger.

"Tell me, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Bax, "just how you managed to trace to me the case which my friend Mr. Garth so carelessly discarded."

Mr. Buddle tried to appear unconcerned. He pointed to the label which Meredith had found beneath the covering

one from San Remo.

"There was a fragment of label on the exterior of the case, as you will see. It seemed to indicate that the case, at some time or other, had been at the Clove Inn, in Frome Lane. So I took a chance."

Mr. Bax bent forward, and scanned Meredith's pencilled additions to the scrap of label. He looked up, a hard smile playing over his podgy lips.

He said: "You are an intelligent man, Mr. Buddle. Did you confide your discovery to anybody else?"

Thoughts were racing in Mr. Buddle's mind. Desperately he wanted to say the right thing.

"There was nobody else in whom to confide. My host was away from home. I asked his young son whether there was a Clove Inn in the vicinity, and he recalled seeing this building some time when he was out cycling. It's quite simple, really."

Mr. Bax said, blandly: "No doubt you have examined the contents of my case, Mr. Buddle."

"The case was not locked. I looked inside in the hope that I might find the owner."

"What did you think when you saw that this case contained a number of virgin passports? You must have been surprised."

Mr. Buddle tried to keep his wits. In spite of the smiling faces of the two men, he knew that he had placed himself in a position which might be perilous.

"Yes, I was surprised!" He spoke quietly. "I realised that the owner of the case must be a civil servant, conveying material from the passport office in London. I thought that your Mr. Garth might find himself in trouble if the passports were not restored to him."

"Yes, I should have been in trouble," admitted Mr. Garth.

Mr. Buddle felt his heart thumping. He picked up his case from the table, and turned to the door. Garth stood there,

blocking his way, a grim smile on his face.

"Not just yet!" said Mr. Garth.

Mr. Buddle felt his eyes twitching.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Mr. Garth means that you must join me in a drink before you go out into this Christmassy weather," said Mr. Bax.

"Oh!" Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"Thank you, but I do not drink. I must be getting along."

The man against the door did not move.

"So sorry, Mr. Schoolmaster," he said.

Mr. Buddle turned angrily to Mr. Bax.

He said, with dignity: "Mr. Bax, will you kindly instruct your friend to stand aside and to see me out. I have returned your case to you, and have taken possession of mine. Now I wish to leave."

Mr. Bax smiled his puckish smile, and clasped his hands behind his back.

"Do you know why we made no enquiries for our case from that hotel, Mr. Buddle?" he asked pleasantly.

"I don't know and I don't care," yapped Mr. Buddle. "Tell this man to stand aside."

"You must surely have guessed that these are forged passports, my dear sir?" murmured Mr. Bax. "They provide a very substantial income for myself and for others. People who require a passport but who are unable to get one through the normal channels come to me and get one - at a high price. Unfortunately you have drifted into the little set-up, and we cannot allow you to queer our pitch."

Mr. Buddle stared at the man. Somehow his instinctive fear had left him now, leaving him cool and collected.

"So you are criminals," he said heavily. "I somehow wondered --"

"Of course you did!" agreed Mr. Bax cordially. "These passports are supplied to me from an expert source in Plymouth. He makes a wonderful job of them, doesn't he, Mr. Buddle? They are

quite undetectable as forgeries to even experienced eyes. When I require a fresh supply, I contact my expert source, and our Mr. Garth goes to meet him at some hotel within a radius of sixty miles or so. A different hotel each time Mr. Buddle, so that nobody gets to know either Mr. Garth or my expert source. To-day they happened to meet at the Stag at Taunton. On this occasion, Mr. Garth slipped up. He met the expert source, the passports were placed in the case which Mr. Garth always takes with him - and then he came back with your case, my dear sir. Naturally we made no enquiries at the hotel. It was safer to cut our losses, Mr. Garth will not use the Stag again."

Mr. Buddle stood in silence, fascinated, as the Pickwickian little man droned on.

"Why are you telling me this?" demanded Mr. Buddle suddenly.

"It is only fair that you should know why you have to die," said Mr. Bax coolly.

"Die!" muttered Mr. Buddle huskily.

"Of course! You cannot be allowed to interfere with my source of income. It didn't matter when you knew about the passports, though it should never have happened. But you were too clever. You traced them to the Clove. You have seen both Mr. Garth and myself. You have become a menace to our safety. Even if you should promise to keep the secret --"

"I would give no such promise," snapped Mr. Buddle contemptuously.

"Of course you wouldn't - and I should not believe you if you did. The only solution lies in the fact that dead men tell no tales. They will find you somewhere out on the Taunton road early to-morrow morning. It will seem that you have been the victim of a mad motorist who did not stop. Even if they should connect you with the Clove, it will not matter. I shall say that you took your case and started to walk home."

Mr. Garth spoke again.

"Your dear friend will get that book of his. You needn't worry. Your case will be found lying near you in the road."

Mr. Buddle looked from one man to the other.

He said huskily: "So you would commit murder!"

There was the sudden jangle of a bell which rang through the old inn. Somebody, like Mr. Buddle earlier, was pulling the iron loop against the front door. All the three men in the room were startled by the sound.

"Who the blazes is that?" rapped out Garth.

He moved away from the door, and whipped the heavy cloth from the table, sending flying the case which had been resting on it. Mr. Buddle, gripping his own suitcase, made a hasty move towards the doorway, but he had only taken a couple of paces when he felt a hard grip on his shoulder.

"Stop where you are!" hissed Mr. Garth.

"You said you hadn't told anybody you were coming here," said Mr. Bax in a low voice. "You were lying - though it doesn't matter a lot."

"I was not lying!" Mr. Buddle was panting a little. "It is probably a lad who guided me to the inn. He lives locally and knows the district. He offered to guide me to the Clove. He is a child - a schoolboy. He knows nothing about you."

Mr. Bax stood for a second or two in thought, his eyes narrowed. Then he said:

"Who is he? What's his name?"

Thoughts raced through Mr. Buddle's brain, yet he was icy calm now. An inspiration came to him. He heard himself saying:

"His name is Punter. He is a junior pupil at my school. His father is Captain Punter who is to be my host over Christmas."

The bell rang again with a harsh

jangle, and Bax hurried to the door. He turned and rapped out:

"I'll see to him. You deal with this chicken. If he makes a sound knock him cold."

Mr. Bax hurried out of the room. For a second Mr. Buddle stood motionless. Then he made a dive for the door. At the same moment the velvet cloth descended over his head, blacking out the light in the room, and he was tripped. He was struggling and panting in the folds of the cloth as something struck him on the side of the head, and he saw a thousand stars.

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It was bitterly cold, and Meredith felt chilled through as he stood in the shelter of the high hedge on the lane, beyond the forecourt of the ancient inn. He had stamped his feet, and flung his arms about in an effort to keep his circulation moving, but the intense cold of the December night was beginning to numb his limbs. His ears felt like icicles, and he pulled his muffler up round them to provide a little protection.

Snow was still drifting down through the mist. From where he stood now, with his dismay increasing, he could just see the outlines of the inn through the gloom.

He was worried that Mr. Buddle had not yet returned. He knew that it must be twenty minutes since his master had left him, and that seemed a very long time when there was nothing involved but an exchange of suitcases. If everything was well, there seemed to be no reason for the delay. The boy was no fool, and he had felt all along that Mr. Buddle might be engaged in a risky enterprise.

He had watched Mr. Buddle ring the bell and eventually enter the inn, and now he himself moved forward, stepping softly in the snow, and found the front door in the centre of the building. He stood for a few moments in uncertainty, the bell hook in his hand. Then he made up his mind and pulled. He heard the

jangle of the bell within the inn.

He waited. There was no sound, no sign of a light. The very darkness seemed sinister. It seemed strange that any occupied dwelling should show no light at all.

Nobody came to the door. He could hear no sound from within. From somewhere in the forecourt he heard, incongruously, the mewling of a cat.

Meredith found his sense of disquiet growing. After waiting for a couple of minutes, he pulled the bell again, and once more the discordant jangle rang out within. Again he waited.

With a suddenness that startled him, the door opened, and light streamed out. Cautiously Meredith backed a pace. The man in the doorway was plump - a Christmas pudding of a man. The light was behind him, so Meredith could only see the side of his face. Certainly he looked harmless enough.

Meredith put on his most innocent expression - and nobody was more of an expert at personifying innocence than Meredith of the Lower Fourth at Slade. He said ingenuously:

"I'm sorry to bother you, sir. Will you please tell Mr. Buddle that I can't wait any longer? I must be getting home for my tea."

"Mr. Buddle?" The man had a pleasant, cosy voice, but he sounded puzzled. "Who is Mr. Buddle? You've come to the wrong house."

Wary to a degree, the boy still played up youthful innocence for all he was worth.

"Mr. Buddle had a case to bring to 'The Clove.' He didn't know where the place was, so I showed him the way. I saw him come in here about half an hour ago. I'm getting awfully cold."

"Ah!" The plump gentleman gave a happy chuckle. "So his name was Buddle. You must be Master Punter. Mr. Buddle mentioned that you had shown him the way. But he was only here a very short time.

He took his case and left a good fifteen minutes ago. You must have missed him in the dark."

Meredith stood staring at the man. To be called "Master Punter" surprised him, but to be told that Mr. Buddle had left was a knockout. Momentarily, it did not occur to him to doubt what the man said.

"I must have missed him," he said mechanically.

"You certainly must," said the plump gentleman kindly. "Mr. Buddle was in a hurry. He told me that your father, Captain Punter, was expected home this evening, and Mr. Buddle wanted to be there to welcome him. If you hurry, you may catch Mr. Buddle up."

Meredith backed away. The mention of the name "Captain Punter" was like the ringing of an alarm bell. The message, which Mr. Buddle had hoped to convey as a chance expedient, came through to the boy in stunning realisation. He said, trying to sound normal and unstunned: "Yes, sir. It's this mist. He must have come out while I was walking up and down in the lane. I'm sorry to have bothered you, sir. Good night, sir!"

"Good night, Master Punter," said the kindly plump gentleman.

Meredith turned. He walked briskly, his heart beating like a steam hammer. He drew the torch from his pocket and gripped it convulsively, ready to use it as a weapon if necessary. The light was blacked out behind him as the door closed.

Meredith broke into a run. A few moments later he slipped and almost went full-length on the snow-covered road. He switched on his torch, and ran again, his feet making little sound in the snow. Several times he looked over his shoulder to see whether he was being followed, but he saw nothing but the hedges and the ghostly outlines of trees against the mist.

It seemed to him that he had run for

miles when he reached the house which he and Mr. Buddle had passed earlier. Lights were shining in the house and Christmas carols were being played, possibly on a radio. The sight of the lights and the sound of the carols gave Meredith a feeling of security. He turned in at the drive and ran up to the house. A second later he was banging frantically on the door in the illuminated porch.

Mr. Buddle lay on his bed in the "Painted Room." A shaded light stood on the table beside the bed. A log fire blazed in the grate, and the room was warm and comfortable.

Mr. Buddle lay staring at the ceiling. He was pale. The little schoolmaster was wiry and fairly tough, but no middle-aged man could go through Mr. Buddle's experiences of that day without feeling some ill effects.

It was over an hour since the police had brought him and Meredith back to the Grange. In all the excitement which prevailed over their return, Mrs. Camp had taken charge. While Mrs. Meredith fluttered and twittered and Mr. Meredith talked to the police, Mrs. Camp had noted the signs of intense strain in Mr. Buddle's face, and had insisted that talking over the matter must be postponed until he had rested.

Mr. Meredith had returned during Mr. Buddle's absence. He and his wife restrained their curiosity, and the schoolmaster was taken to his room where he was left alone to rest for a spell. Mrs. Camp took him a cup of strong, sweet tea which he accepted gratefully.

Now that an hour had passed, he was feeling more his old self. At last he rose, switched on the main light, and washed his face at the ablution bowl. He was just using his towel when there was a tap at the door and Mr. Meredith entered.

Mr. Meredith was looking anxious, but he smiled with relief as he looked

at his guest.

"You are feeling better, Mr. Buddle?"

"Much better, Mr. Meredith!" Mr. Buddle folded his towel. "But very ashamed to have caused you and your wife so much trouble."

"Trouble!" Mr. Meredith laughed. "You have caused no trouble, Mr. Buddle. Quite the reverse. From what I can hear, not only have you saved my Gems which are more precious than rubies - you have also performed a national service. You must be prepared to be feted by my wife. It will be an ordeal for you, but you are used to worse ordeals, after what has happened today." He became serious. "Inspector Crome of the Taunton police is downstairs in my library. He has just dropped in to see you for a few moments. Do you feel sufficiently recovered to give him a little time?"

"Of course, Mr. Meredith! The whole thing was nothing really. I was just a little shaken, but the effects are passing. I will come with you."

Downstairs, in Mr. Meredith's pleasant library, the police officer greeted Mr. Buddle warmly. The two had met on a previous occasion.

"I came along specially to let you know that, through your good offices, we have stumbled on to a pretty little gang of passport forgers," said Inspector Crome. "I congratulate you, Mr. Buddle!"

"Passport forgers!" echoed Mr. Buddle. He sat down in a chair near the fire, and leaned back. There was a dreamy expression on his face. Many years ago he had been fascinated with the stories of Sherlock Holmes, and always rather fancied that he might have made a successful private detective.

"The man Bax is clearly the main distributor," explained Crome. "When a criminal wanted a fake passport to enable him to leave the country, or when someone else wanted to enter illegally, they would be put in contact with Bax. I have no doubt that vast sums of money

have been involved. Bax is a hard nut to crack. The other man, Garth, is a different type --"

"You got them both?" queried Mr. Buddle.

"We got them both," assented Crome, and Mr. Buddle nodded with satisfaction. "Garth is anxious to talk. He thinks he may serve himself by betraying the others. It is, perhaps, a question whether he really knows very much to give away, but, if we're lucky, we'll get the rest before they take alarm."

"The man who supplied Garth at the hotel is due to call at the Clove some time on Sunday," murmured Mr. Buddle. Crome nodded.

"We noted that, when you told us an hour ago," he said. "We'll be waiting for him. Let's hope he'll walk into the trap. We shan't let any of this get into the newspapers just yet."

"Mr. Buddle seems to have served his country well," put in Mr. Meredith.

"He has, indeed," said Crome. "We will keep in touch with you, Mr. Buddle. One of my sergeants will come over tomorrow at some time convenient to you, and take down your statement."

After a few minutes more of cordial chatting, the police officer took his leave.

Mr. Meredith picked up his volume of Gems which had been placed on the library table.

"This volume will be of special value to me now, Mr. Buddle," he observed. "It will indeed have a story of its own."

Mr. Buddle looked worried.

"I haven't examined the book, Mr. Meredith. I hope it is not damaged in any way. I can never forgive myself --"

"The book is still as perfect as it ever was," said Mr. Meredith, smiling.

"And now, Mr. Buddle, dinner is ready belatedly. Do you feel able to dine with us, or would you prefer to go to your room and we will have a meal sent to you there?"

"I assure you, Mr. Meredith," said Mr. Buddle seriously, "that I am looking forward immensely to joining you at

dinner. And if your son and I boast too much -- well, you must cut us down to size."

Mr. Buddle enjoyed an excellent meal at the Merediths' table, while Mrs. Camp bustled in and out occasionally with the dishes. She sent admiring glances in Mr. Buddle's direction, and she fussed round Meredith of Slade whom, as always, she called her "cherub." Before the meal began Mr. Meredith had insisted that Mr. Buddle should not be asked to tell his story until after he had dined. And, reluctantly, Mrs. Meredith agreed.

It was nearly ten o'clock when they gathered before the blazing open fire in the lounge. The room was delightfully decorated for Christmas, and in one corner a Christmas tree glittered with coloured lights and tinsel.

The two men occupied deep armchairs, one at each side of the fire, and Mrs. Meredith and her son sat on the settee which had been drawn up facing the blaze. Then Mr. Meredith rose and switched off the main lights, and they sat talking in the glow of the fire and the soft illumination from the tree.

Mr. Buddle told his story from the beginning, giving full credit to the blushing Meredith who occasionally put in a word.

When the story was told, Mrs. Meredith sighed.

She said softly: "I think you're a wonderful man, Mr. Gump."

Meredith coughed, and Mr. Meredith put in quickly:

"Mr. Buddle, Dor!"

Mrs. Meredith laughed.

"Oh, dear, it's Ceddie's fault. But Mr. Buddle doesn't mind. He knows I'm so excited."

"Tell me, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Meredith. "Did it occur to you, when you first saw those passports, that you had stumbled on some criminal activity?"

Mr. Buddle stared into the fire for

a few moment, and it was Meredith who answered.

"Of course it did!" he said sturdily. "You knew, didn't you, sir, that those passports must be either forged or stolen. You knew right from the first time you saw them."

"I could see no other solution," said Mr. Buddle gravely. "My only regret is that I took your plucky young son into danger."

"Oh, bosh, sir!" said the plucky young son. "It wasn't your fault. I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

"Two heroes!" murmured Mrs. Meredith. "Two wonderful heroes!"

Mr. Buddle stroked Pumpkin, the Merediths' large cat, which had sprung up on to his knee. Pumpkin purred loudly.

Mr. Meredith spoke slowly.

"Unquestionably, it would have been more prudent to have called the police, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"I knew that at the time, but my one desire was to regain your volume. I feared that if the police were active in the matter, the criminals, whoever they were, would take steps to destroy every particle of evidence."

"No book is worth such a risk," said Mr. Meredith.

"Mr. Buddle thought your Gems were worth it," retorted his son, and the proud father smiled.

"You might easily have been murdered," whispered Mrs. Meredith.

"I think I should have been murdered, but for your boy." Mr. Buddle drew a very deep breath. "Those men threatened me before the boy rang the bell. While Bax went to the front door of the inn, the other scoundrel threw a cloth over my head. I'm not sure whether he hit me, or whether I struck my head against the table as I fell. I was partially stunned, and when I was really alert again, I was tied up, with the cloth over me. I heard them talking. They would have

killed me, I believe, and then left me by the roadside somewhere. It would have been assumed that I had been knocked down by some hit-and-run driver in the fog while I was walking back to the Grange."

Mrs. Meredith shivered, and Mr. Buddle went on:

"I was afraid that they might get the boy. He was running a terrible risk. I mentioned the name Punter to them in the hope that, just possibly, they might repeat the name to him. I prayed that the mention of the name would convey to him a message of danger."

Meredith chuckled.

"It did that all right, sir. I was thunderstruck when that chap called me 'Master Punter,' but the penny dropped right away, as soon as he bleated something about 'Captain Punter'."

"It was a brilliant piece of reasoning on the spur of the moment, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Meredith quietly.

"You felt sure that if the name Punter was mentioned to my son, he would immediately think of that villain who attempted to rob me last Christmas. A criminal character like his namesake in the Gem."

"How shrewd of Ceddie!" put in Mrs. Meredith fondly.

Mr. Buddle nodded without speaking.

"I guessed at once that the people must be crooks of some sort," said Meredith. "I think I startled those people at the house along the lane when I banged on their door, but they let me use their telephone. The mention of a load of passports did the trick as far as the bobbies were concerned. A couple of police cars were along pretty quick, though it seemed a long time to me while I was waiting for them. They picked me up in one of the cars, but they wouldn't let me go with them when they surrounded 'The Clove.' It was all pretty exciting. Just like a film or a Sexton Blake Library."

"A little too exciting for Mr. Buddle, I'm sure," commented Mr. Meredith. Mr. Buddle nodded gravely, and fondled the neck of the purring Pumpkin.

"You know, sir," said Meredith,

"you ought to give up teaching and start a detective agency. I'm sure you've got a flair for it."

Mr. Buddle smiled reminiscently.

"You mean that I should be Sherlock Holmes, my boy?" he said. "Would you join me as my Doctor Watson?"

"Not a bit of it!" replied Meredith promptly. "You can be Nelson Lee and I'll be your Nipper."

"I think I prefer my own metier," confessed Mr. Buddle. "It has its moments - and it's less exacting."

Mrs. Meredith gave a joyful chirrup.

"Mr. Gump, this is the second year

you have given us a Christmas to remember. There's sure to be a third. These things always run in threes. Now I wonder what kind of a Christmas you are destined to bring us next year."

She sighed, and all four of them gazed pensively into the fire, wondering whether, just possibly, another Christmas might bring further excitement to join forces with the snow, the holly, and the Christmas pudding.

But that, of course, is another story.

* * * * *

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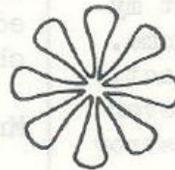
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NICK CARTER

— AMERICA'S SEXTON BLAKE

by Derek Smith

Issues of the UNION JACK appearing in 1911 bore the somewhat baffling inscription "This is NOT an American reprint." Regular readers must have found this self-evident assertion both puzzling and unnecessary: after all, nobody could have been more indomitably British than the paper's resident hero, Sexton Blake. But the notice was, in fact, a back-handed compliment to the master detective's greatest rival, Nick Carter, the idol of American's boyhood.

Nick Carter's astonishing career as the world's oldest practising crime-fighter began in 1886 and continues even today. He was thus Blake's senior by several years, but by 1911 he had only just succeeded in establishing a permanent base in Britain. Though he was a much translated detective, as befitted a man who "knows every country and speaks all languages like a native," his reputation in the U.K. depended at first upon transient publishers and "remainders" from the Nick Carter Publishing House in New York. But in 1911 the NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY gave him his forum, and in later years his adventures appeared under the imprints of both Pearson and Newnes.

Many authors were entrusted with the tales, and they served Nick faithfully, charting his career through dime novels, radio programmes, and the movies - where we last saw him in the Forties in the person of Mr. Walter Pidgeon.

Most of the stories appeared anonymously, or "by Nicholas Carter," writing about Nick Carter in the third person - a convention which still obtains today. It would be an impossible task to identify the hands that held the pens and pounded the typewriters throughout the years, but there is not much mystery about his origin or the men who propelled him into the Golden Age when he embodied all the virtues of probity and courage so unfashionable today.

Nick Carter's "onlie begetter" was the Street & Smith publishing house of America. In the mysterious way in which certain famous names float through previous fiction before affixing themselves to the characters for whom they seem almost divinely inspired - Billy Bunter, Lemmy Caution, Dick Barton, and James Bond are some cases in point - the name of Nick Carter had already appeared in a few dime novels of the Seventies. But the earlier holders of the name were mere shadowy phantoms who bore no relation to the heroic figure who sprang gloriously to life in Street & Smith's weekly on September 18th., 1886.

Nick's creator was John Coryell, a cousin of one of the firm's partners. A complete unknown, he assured the editors he could spin better yarns than any of their established writers. Half amused, half nettled, they printed his first story; and the paper's circulation soared.

Coryell was his own best audience, laughing and weeping as his carefully constructed tales took shape; and he communicated his own huge enjoyment to his readers. His were morality tales in the truest sense: he sincerely believed that Good would always triumph over Evil if courage and daring and the eternal virtues were held high in the hearts and minds of men. And in that uncomplicated and optimistic age, the youth of the world agreed.

Nick Carter's career began in a story called "The Old Detective's Pupil; or The Mysterious Crime of Madison Square." Nick was the protégé of one Seth Carter,

the old detective of the title. Once born, he was immortal; yet - ironically enough - his creator was soon to lose control of his destinies.

John Coryell never tired of Nick, but he had other work to do. He was deputising for a dead colleague by writing stories under the name of Bertha M. Clay, the nom-de-plume of the English novelist Charlotte M. Braeme.

Nick Carter was therefore in momentary danger of following his predecessors into the oblivion of dusty files in the Street & Smith offices; but fortunately salvation was at hand. It came in the form of a diffident young man with the splendidly improbable name of Frederick Marmaduke Van Rensselaer Dey.

One memorable day in 1889 he lunched with the Smith brothers, Ormond and George, and learned of their search for a writer to take over the series. Dey volunteered; and the Smiths paid for his lunch. It was probably the most profitable meal in publishing history.

For seventeen years Dey is reputed to have produced a 25,000 word story a week, and this killing pace established him forever as the dominant figure in the Carter archives. He died in 1922; but nothing could destroy the legend of Nick Carter.

Physical descriptions of the early Nick Carter are somewhat lacking, probably because he rarely seemed to appear in his own proper person during the adventures. Meagre details like "a fair, smooth face" were supplemented with the information that he was "clean-cut" and of medium build. His stature was relatively unimpressive, but his strength was Herculean. He thought nothing of taking on a saloon-full of toughs and was known, with good reason, as "the little giant."

Nick was a super-hero. He was St. George with a Transatlantic accent, and the dragons he vanquished were the crooks of five continents. No criminal was safe once Nick was on his trail; still, the cohorts of evil lashed back with diabolical resource.

Bruised and battered, mauled and manacled, Nick was subjected to appalling perils. When he wasn't being bitten by poisonous snakes or lashed to a whirling buzz-saw, he found himself cast into a den of wild beasts or the mouth of a blazing furnace. Involuntary dips in the ocean, always bound and sometimes encased in a trunk, were amongst the commonplaces of his existence.

It was all to no avail. Nick Carter slid in and out of death-traps with the debonair ease of a nineteenth century Norman Conquest. One example will suffice:

In "Nick Carter's Beautiful Decoy" (1900) the deadly young lady of the title had contrived to imprison the detective in a sub cellar with a kidnap victim, thereafter firing the chamber above. "In a few minutes the inflammable piles of lumber in the main cellar would be a mass of flames, making an oven out of the wine cellar. Death was thus sure to come, either by strangulation or roasting.

"Who are you?" asked Mr. Ward, when Nick turned to him and began to examine the chain which held the old man a prisoner.

"I am Nick Carter, the detective. And I've come to rescue you."

Nothing could disturb Nick's sang-froid. In a trice he had unshackled the old man with a picklock. A few minutes later, he had prised up a couple of flagstones and cut his way into the air-shaft of the furnace which ran conveniently beneath the floor.

It must be admitted that luck favoured Nick mightily. He could take a case

without a clue in the morning and by early evening be eating a meal in a beer saloon while two of the crooks were discussing their crime at a nearby table. On the other hand, he was quite capable of performing prodigies of deduction, as when (in 1896) he reconstructed the whole story of a murder from the discovery of a single horse-hair.

Nick had a variety of assistants and (in early days) a wife named Ethel. She, poor woman, was quickly dispatched, having fallen a victim to that editorial disapproval which has always been the deadliest hazard facing the wives of such heroes. The assistants, however, flourished - most of them sharing their employer's penchant for disguise.

This skill was Nick's strongest card. Older readers will need no reminding that the detectives of yesteryear were all Masters of Disguise. My own particular favourite was T. W. Hanshew's Hamilton Cleek, the Man of the Forty Faces, alias the Prince of Maurvania - the last being his true and legal identity. Cleek's speciality was absolute control of his facial muscles, the weird birth-gift of setting a living mask over his features without the aid of make-up.

Lacking this almost supernatural advantage, Nick Carter placed heavy reliance on false hair and greasepaint (and an artificial hump). He sometimes masqueraded as another detective, T. Bolt - "Old Thunderbolt" otherwise known as Joshua Juniper. He could thus take a case as one investigator and solve it as another, much to the bewilderment of his client.

He also liked to make up as another character in the case, sometimes the very man he was pursuing. His chief aide, Chick, sometimes doubled for Nick, thus rendering the confusion total.

Most of Carter's impersonations were done on the run. Watch him in "Nick Carter, Detective" (1891). Trailed by an adversary armed with a thuggee's strangling cord and a pet cobra in his breast pocket, Nick deems it politic to change identity. "Nick began making a rapid change. He had not gone twenty feet before his appearance was entirely altered. From a young man he was changed to a very old one. A light moustache had given place to a set of snow-white whiskers patterned à la Greeley. The derby hat that he had worn had disappeared - for it was of the 'crush' kind - and in its place was a broad brimmed felt. The jaunty cape that he had carried was taken apart and thrust into a pocket. A pair of spectacles adorned his nose, and he walked with the hesitation of one who has long suffered the tortures of rheumatism.

"The entire change had not occupied more than one minute of actual time."

Truly, he was the most remarkable quick-change artist in the history of fiction. And his dressing-room was his pocket. Since he usually carried two revolvers, handcuffs, picklocks, jemmies and a blackjack as well as enough material to provide for any imaginable disguise, his pockets must have been as capacious as those belonging to Harpo Marx.

It is unlikely that readers at the turn of the century bothered about such details. They responded joyously to the heroic ideal and their approval kept Nick flourishing through to the Twenties.

Nick Carter staged his first big comeback in 1933. The new NICK CARTER MAGAZINE saw him established in a house in Fifth Avenue with a fully armoured private aircraft nearby. He was very rich but as idealistic as ever. Having moved with the times he was now battling with gangster syndicates as well as the kidnapers and mad scientists of yore.

Readers of the magazine were enrolled in a Nick Carter Club, and members were pledged to uphold the law, resist intimidation, and flatly reject any demands from the underworld to withhold evidence and pay protection. It sounds like a much-needed code of conduct for the Swinging Sixties.

World War Two saw the complete collapse of Nick's supply lines and he withdrew to his native land - no doubt promising, like another famous American, "I will return."

Return he did, only a year or two ago, as Agent N3 for AXE, America's super-secret intelligence force.

It must reluctantly be conceded that those who think there is too much sex in the new Sexton Blake Library are unlikely to approve of Nick's latest incarnation. As KILLMASTER for AXE he murders, maims, and wenches his way through the adventures in a seemingly frantic effort to out-Bond 007. All in all, it's a far cry from the proud boast of Frederick Dey that he "never wrote a Nick Carter story that he wouldn't read to a Bible class."

But if his old idealism is lacking, Nick Carter is as indomitable and resourceful as ever. And he is still a master of disguise, though that artificial hump has been replaced by an inflatable rubber stomach.

And so it goes. The old heroes of boys' fiction can never really die, though they sometimes fade like wraiths into memory. A call can bring them roaring back to life. And I venture to predict that the year A.D. 2000 will see both Nick Carter and Sexton Blake battling the crooks of the Space Age with all their old verve and élan.

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TREASURE TROVE (cont'd from page 138)...

connection with the stories he wrote. As we already know St. Frank's itself owes its name to the christian name of his wife, Francis. From his correspondence we find that one brother was Edward Oswald! Another was the name given to his Scotland Yard detective - Leonard, who was another brother.

To round off what is really only an interim report, the club's library is richer by all his stories in the Thriller, and nearly all the Gerald Swan publications of the stories of Whitelands and Westchester, together with all the bound volumes of the Lees mentioned above, and a near complete set of the Monster Library, also dozens of his Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn novels. What more could any club librarian ask?

One thing more remains and this the most important. The club and all Brooks admirers everywhere owe Mrs. Brooks a deep dept of gratitude for allowing such a mass of material to be removed. What more can one say but - "Thank you, Mrs. Brooks."

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Wishing my many friends at home and overseas a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.
FRANK VERNON LAY, 52 Oakleigh Gardens, London, N.20.

TREASURE TROVE

The story of one of the greatest finds in the
history of the hobby

by Bob Blythe

Who has not at some time or another, dreamed of the discovery of an attic stuffed to the eaves with old boys books? - preferably Nelson Lees, Gems or Magnets, depending on ones interest. Well this is the story of just such an Aladdin's cave, albeit a somewhat dusty one!

It all started with a letter to Frank Lay from Mrs. Brooks, in which she offered to the London Club, on permanent loan, any books or manuscripts of her late husband's which we felt would be of interest. Frank accordingly passed the matter to me, as N.L. Librarian, to act upon. Which, as perhaps you can imagine, I did with alacrity!

It was arranged therefore, that I and my partner in crime, Len Packman (we two having been more intimate with Mr. & Mrs. Brooks in the past) should go along and collect what we wanted. Mrs. Brooks added that we should come in old clothes as the attic was rather dusty!

This, of course, was not our first visit, as you are probably aware. But how very different to the last time. Then we went to present Mr. Brooks with his copy of the N.L. Catalogue. Now he had gone and we approached our task with some trepidation. Mrs. Brooks, since her husband's death, has been very ill, though fortunately now much better. Our association with Edwy's past, through his books could we felt, have been rather painful to her, however we need not have worried for she was hospitality personified, and in many ways showed how pleased and gratified she was to know that such interest and affection is still being shown toward her late husband.

After the usual boisterous greetings from Penny her faithful collie, and a welcome cuppa, we went up into the attic, pausing a while to gape into a room where, apart from a 6ft. high pile of Victor Gunn and Berkeley Gray novels, bookcase after bookcase full of his novels met our gaze.

Our first impression of the attic was confusion - books, boys papers and manuscripts were piled in heaps in all parts. Further investigations showed books and papers in trunks, boxes and suitcases. And the whole covered with years accumulation of dust! As an example of this we had walked many times over an old carpet lying against one wall and thought nothing of it. Imagine our surprise, when we found that underneath were two or three hundred Old Series Lees all bound in the author's own bindings. This I think illustrates more than anything the nature of the finds we made that evening.

As it had taken me nearly three hours to get there across London during the rush-hour (and that's quite an experience I can assure you) and it was now 11 p.m. we decided to call it a day, (night?), with only half the attic cleared.

During the ensuing week a quick perusal of the manuscripts elicited the astonishing facts that when the N.L. finished in 1933 it was the signal for Mr. Brooks to really branch out and so we find stories by him in the Pilot, Buzzer, Boys Magazine, Dixon Hawke Library, etc. Then again other stories give us the

information that he wrote under several hitherto unknown pen-names. Girls stories by Pamela White, womens stories by Edwina Rivers, boxing stories by Walter Saxton, detective and Dick Turpin stories by Carleton Ross; I could go on and on - and this was only the first quick look-through.

Two weeks later on Saturday, at 3 p.m. we presented ourselves once again and for the next seven hours we were allowed the run of the house. We were permitted into all the rooms and as a result, once again filled the car to the brim with more books, manuscripts and papers. One important addition this time was the inclusion of a large box full of business correspondence between Edwy and various editors. Having thoroughly sorted and dated all letters, I find that we now have an almost complete record of his literary activities between the years 1909 and 1915, this is indeed a very important discovery, as you can well imagine, and one which far outweighs all else discovered, interesting and exciting though everything was. For example one finds the first correspondence between him and the editor of the Gem, Mr. Griffiths, regarding the Tom Merry Stories, also that with the editor of the Magnet, Mr. Hinton, regarding Greyfriars. Other editors whose names crop up are Horace Phillips, Hamilton Edwards, A. C. Panting, among many more. In one such letter he was asked to finish a Greyfriars story because only half the manuscript had been received from Mr. Hamilton, who of course was in Austria at the time. From these and other letters we learn that he had written for many papers. How's this for a list (by no means complete): Dreadnought, Cheer Boys Cheer, The Scout, Yes and No, The Nugget Library, Chums, The Boys Friend, Cycling, The Daily Mirror (!!), The Home Circle, The Boys Best, etc., etc. Details are now available as to the stories he wrote for these papers. Exciting isn't it?

All these and much more make fascinating reading. At the moment however only the various facts contained in the letters will be made known. Mrs. Brooks, quite rightly has asked to see all correspondence before the contents are made freely available.

It is now a couple of weeks later, and all the material has been sorted into its various categories. The knowledge to be gained from this mass of material will take some time to classify, also many manuscripts will have to be checked with the weeklies concerned to obtain proof of publication. I hope, eventually to include all fresh information in a new edition of the N.L. Catalogue. Among the items to be seen for the first time are the following: Edwy's first story, written at the age of 17, in 1906, giving the time spent in its writing (it ran to 8,220 words and took 17 hours spread over 4 days). There is also the manuscript of his very first Union Jack story - The Motor Bus Mystery, and a hand-drawn map of St. Frank's and district. Another item of interest is this - Mr. Brooks had always kept a copy of all his St. Frank's stories but during a move from Halstead to London, a considerable number were lost and so, like all of us, at one time or another, he compiled a "wants" list. This "wants" list still survives and from it we now know the answer to that perplexing problem - did E.S.B. write the story "Saints v. Friars" in N.L. 2nd N.S. 43, - the answer is no, as he has marked this item "Not by E.S.B." So that's that.

One fascinating detail I learnt was that during the early years of the first war Edwy and his brother Leonard were joint owners of a picture theatre called the Standard Picture Playhouse situated in Surrey Street, Croyden. I wonder if anyone who lives or used to live in this area remembers it? Some headed notepaper gives the following details - Prices 6d., 3d., 2d., Children - 3d., 2d., and 1d., Seating capacity 350, Plush tip-ups throughout. Lessees were Searles and Leonard.

Another interesting sidelight is Edwy's use of his family's names in

(concluded on page 36)..