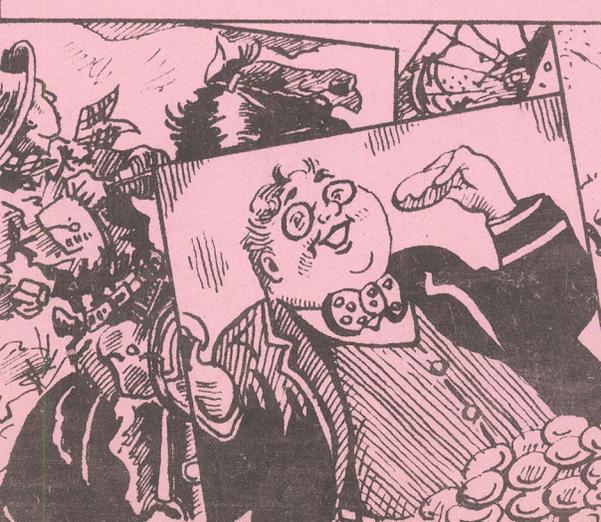
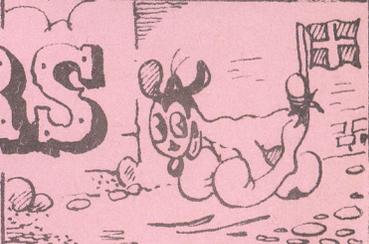


**COLLECTORS**  
**DIGEST**  
**ANNUAL**  
**1968**  
PRICE 16/-





# Collectors' Digest

## CHRISTMAS 1968

# Annual

TWENTY-SECOND YEAR

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

### INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

When, nearly 22 years ago, the first Collectors' Digest Annual reached the warmly-welcoming hands of the small band of loyal enthusiasts of that far-off age, nobody would probably have dared to imagine that - 22 years on - the Annual would be going stronger than ever, firmly entrenched in the hearts of readers all over the world.

If anyone had envisaged such an unlikely happening, it would have been assumed that the main difficulty might be that the supply of original material would have long been exhausted. Such a thing has never happened nor even seemed likely to happen. This year, I'm sure, we are bringing you just as many original items and new slants on old ideas as ever before. Such worry as exists in producing a Year Book like this - one which is in preparation from early summer - is not in filling the book with fascinating items. It is in the instability of values in this modern age, and the fact that ten shillings today will certainly be only worth nine-and-six tomorrow. We have to take it in our stride.

At this time of year, as always, we think of the dearly-loved character who started it all - Herbert Leckenby.

We offer sincere thanks to our loyal team of writers who toil unselfishly to give us pleasure throughout the year - and to York Duplicating Services for whom nothing is ever too much trouble - and to our wonderful readers who make everything so very worthwhile.

I wish you all a joyful Christmas and the best of New Years.

Your sincere friend,

*Eric Fayne*

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# Henry Samuel Quelch

-----Observed From The Shadows

By Les Rowley

When I began this little series of articles two winters ago it was my intention to avoid the major characters and to concentrate on the secondary ones. It was my opinion then - indeed, it's my opinion now - that a study of Mr. Quelch would properly be written by a more masterly contributor than myself. However, one or two friends whose hearts are greater than their heads have asked me to write about Quelch. Let Mr Editor deny them if he wants; I cannot!

In company with a great number of you I have been a member of the Remove Form at Greyfriars for many years. True it is that our names are not called at Roll; that Quelch never orders us to construe; nor are we requested to stand forth and take six of the best. Nevertheless we are there, "lookers on in Vienna" watching from the shadows as the Remove Form-master performs his duty. And what a performance it is! No-one is left in any doubt that Quelch intends to play the leading role on this particular scholastic platform. Like the conductor of an orchestra he controls those around him. One glance and Bunter will hastily swallow a chunk of plundered toffee; one word and Robert Cherry will stop shuffling his feet; one freezing glare and Skinner, Snoop and Stott postpone their discussion on the chances of Nobbled Nick for the three-thirty. The Seasons come and go; open windows give place to open fires but otherwise the scene seldom changes, neither does Quelch. Which is just as well for a changing Quelch would have



meant a changing Greyfriars and that we wouldn't have liked at all. But if the scene and Quelch are unchanging the same cannot be said of the events with which the passing years have surrounded them and with which Quelch has more than held his own.

The master of the Remove is an awesome person; angular features gimlet eyes and severe countenance and a Presence oft likened to the dread figure that drew the curtains of Priam's tent at dead of night. The glare of the fabled basilisk owes nothing to the facial expression of a Quelch on discovering a rag in the French set or a near riot in the Remove corridor. The "fearful, frantic frown of the Lord High Executioner" fades into insignificance against the look of intense displeasure on the Quelchian face. A Royal Bengal Tiger deprived of its cubs is like water unto wine when a certain author is deprived of a certain manuscript. He is a schoolmaster from an earlier age when there was no nonsense about the value of corporal punishment; no member of the Remove has been spoiled by the sparing of the rod. Discipline is necessary if one is to exercise any authority over a form like the Remove; let us observe this discipline enforced. What the boys are pleased to call "a bit of a rag" and what authority condemns as an "outrageous riot" is in progress: Monsieur Charpentier is 'in charge,' Mr. Quelch has been interrupted in one of those happy little interludes with his "History of Greyfriars." Quelch has just given the Form a look in.....

"I fear, Monsieur Charpentier, that my form are rather out of hand," said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry for this. I will see that they give you no further trouble." ..... "I require to know," continues Quelch in a grinding voice, "how the blackboard happened to fall over in the first place! That boy will stand forward."

"That boy" happens to be Herbert Vernon-Smith who promptly receives "six" the cane coming down as though Quelch was beating a carpet. Further sentences follow; the whole form being detained for the following half holiday and Wharton receiving a bonus of five hundred lines.

Mr. Quelch turns to the French master.

"I apologise sir, for the trouble my Form have given you," he says very politely. "I think they will give you no more. In the event of further disorder in this class I shall detain them for six half holidays."

He leaves silence and dismay behind.

It is not only in his Form that Quelch inspires dread. Many and varied are the visitors to Greyfriars who "tread ways that are dark and paths that are treacherous." Quelch is the man to protect his boys from the unscrupulous adventurer. Cyril Rackstraw is a case in point. Mr. Rackstraw was out to deprive a new boy, Cholmondely, of his inheritance. Like other villainous gentry that seem to haunt the purlieus of the School, Mr. Rackstraw comes off second best as Quelch plays him like a fish. The meeting ends with Rackstraw white in the face listening to a grim warning.

"You know what will happen then, Mr. Rackstraw! I warn you to abandon this dastardly scheming against your cousin, an innocent lad. Take one more step in that direction, sir, and the law will be set in motion. Now go - and I need not add that you will never visit Greyfriars again."

Rackstraw rose and moved slowly to the door.

He gave the Remove master one venomous look and was gone.

Playing rascals like a fish on the line saw Quelch at his best; he shone where no other master at Greyfriars - or elsewhere - could hope to shine, proving again and again that the way of the transgressor is hard!

If Quelch inspires awe, however, he also inspires respect. He is a just man, a fact recognised by all his Form - with the possible exception of Harold Skinner who has no respect to waste on anyone including himself. Quelch believes that it is better for the guilty to go unpunished rather than that the innocent should suffer. This does not mean that the guilty are going to be allowed to get away with their sins - at least not if the persistent Quelch can help it! But Quelch prides himself on his sense of Justice especially when his Form or a member of it is reported by another master. Prout and Hacker should by now know where to draw the line, and when they don't Quelch is the man to remind them. The trouble with the other beaks is that they just do not know when to mind their own business! The voice of Hacker is heard.....

"You refuse to carry this matter further, Mr. Quelch?" he asked.

"No sir," said Mr. Quelch. "I insist upon carrying it further! I insist on questioning the Shell boys who were present--"

"That is quite unnecessary! Boys in my form do not act in this lawless and insubordinate manner!" yapped Mr. Hacker. "I am quite assured that Hobson, Hoskins and Stewart would not venture to do anything of the kind."

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. He was quite as angry as Mr. Hacker now.

"Do you refuse to send for the boys of your own Form, Sir?"

"I do," said Mr. Hacker firmly.

"Then say no more on the subject. And I request you to leave my study, Mr. Hacker!"

"If those young rascals --"

"Silence, sir!"

"Wha-at?"

"Silence! I will hear no more!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I have requested you to leave my study! Do so at once!" .....

Quelch's defence of his form to his colleagues adds considerably to his stature - at least as far as the Remove are concerned. In fact, it is not unknown for the boys to make use of their Form master by deliberately fostering the interference of Hacker and Prout so that those two interfering busybodies get "their hair curled by old Quelchy."

How does Quelch really make out with the other masters? Discourse is carried on in an almost frigidly formal way - "Prout," "Sir," etc, with perhaps a slight relaxation to "My Dear Prout!" when old Pompous has suffered some slight misadventure such as being smothered in tar or whitewash from a carefully planned booby trap originally intended for Coker of his form!

This formality is maintained in Master's Common Room. The daily monologue by Prout rolling inexorably along, regardless of yawns from the others and a freezing glare from Quelch. From time to time a suspicious glance is

thrown in the direction of the Remove Form-master, but Quelch's expression registers only casual boredom; perhaps it is just as well that he does not speak his mind. But Quelch, if he says little and thinks more, is not invulnerable to Common room atmosphere. He in his turn has been the target of barbed sympathy and of insinuating innuendo and then he does not stay for long, an unfinished manuscript awaits him in his study and soon he is lost in his authorship of deathless (and seemingly endless) prose. Quelch the author is a different being from Quelch the form-master; the petty gossip he has left behind is soon forgotten and a crusty smile lightens the severe visage as the keys merrily tap out another instalment of the "History of Greyfriars." Sometimes a paper finds its way into a periodical such as the "Public School Review".....

"Buzzz!"

The raucous buzz of the telephone bell was not welcome to the ears of Henry Samuel Quelch as he sat in his study in morning break. Mr. Quelch was in an irritated mood: and he was seeking calm and solace in a reperusal of that masterly article in the columns of the "Public School Review."

The buzz of the telephone interrupted that perusal.

Mr. Quelch lifted the receiver.

"Hallo!" he barked into the transmitter.

"Is that Mr. Quelch of Greyfriars?"

"Speaking" barked the Remove master.

"Good morning, Mr. Quelch. Dr. Wyatt speaking from St. Jude's!" came a rather pleasant, deep voice over the wires.

"Oh! Good morning!" said Mr. Quelch, ceasing to bark. He was acquainted with the headmaster of St. Jude's and had a considerable respect for that gentleman.

He wondered, however, what the St. Jude's headmaster could possibly have to say to him over the telephone.

"I trust I am not interrupting you, Mr. Quelch?"

"Not at all, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, more politely than veraciously.

"I have been looking at the "Public School Review" ----"

"Oh!" A pleased smile dawned on the frosty countenance of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"I conclude that the article signed 'H. S. Quelch' is your work, sir?"

"Quite" said Mr. Quelch

"I have been interested - extremely interested by this article, Mr. Quelch!"

"You are very kind, sir!" There was no trace of irritation in the Remove master's face now. He beamed.

As a Form-master, Mr. Quelch was a severe, almost grim, gentleman. As an author, he was gentle as a cooing dove. It was the author, not the Form-master, who was now grinning like a good tempered gargoye over the telephone...

.....and so we have a glimpse of the human side of Quelch. It is comforting, perhaps, to know that he has his weaknesses too.

But it is not only in his authorship that the master of the Remove shows his human side. When he befriended Jim Valentine that Christmastide near Wharton Lodge, his friendship went the whole hog as it were. Regardless of the drainage of his own slender resources, he paid the lad's fees at Greyfriars

(and, even in 1933, those fees would have amounted to £250 per annum!) and saw the boy properly outfitted and with pocket money. Perhaps it is as well for the sake of those slender resources that Valentine was not at the school for long! A human and manifestly generous act but one that was not out of character with the man.

On more than one occasion the Famous Five have confessed a misdemeanour to their master in order that an injustice to another may be averted. Quelch fixes them with a far from benevolent eye and his hand reaches toward his cane. Then suddenly, to their surprise, he simply says "You may go!" And go they do, before he changes his mind again; and go they do, we hope, to sing Quelch's praises in the Rag!

There have been occasions when certain members of his form have regretted the human touch! The master of the Remove has a grim, almost ferocious sense of humour as William George Bunter can bear testimony when the fat and fatuous youth decides to play the giddy goat and hide a volume of Seneca belonging to Quelch. Unfortunately for Bunter, Quelch has followed him into the form-room and caught him red-handed..... Mr. Quelch advanced into the form-room.

"Well," he said grimly.

He said "well" but that was only a figure of speech. His look did not indicate that matters were going well - for Bunter at least.

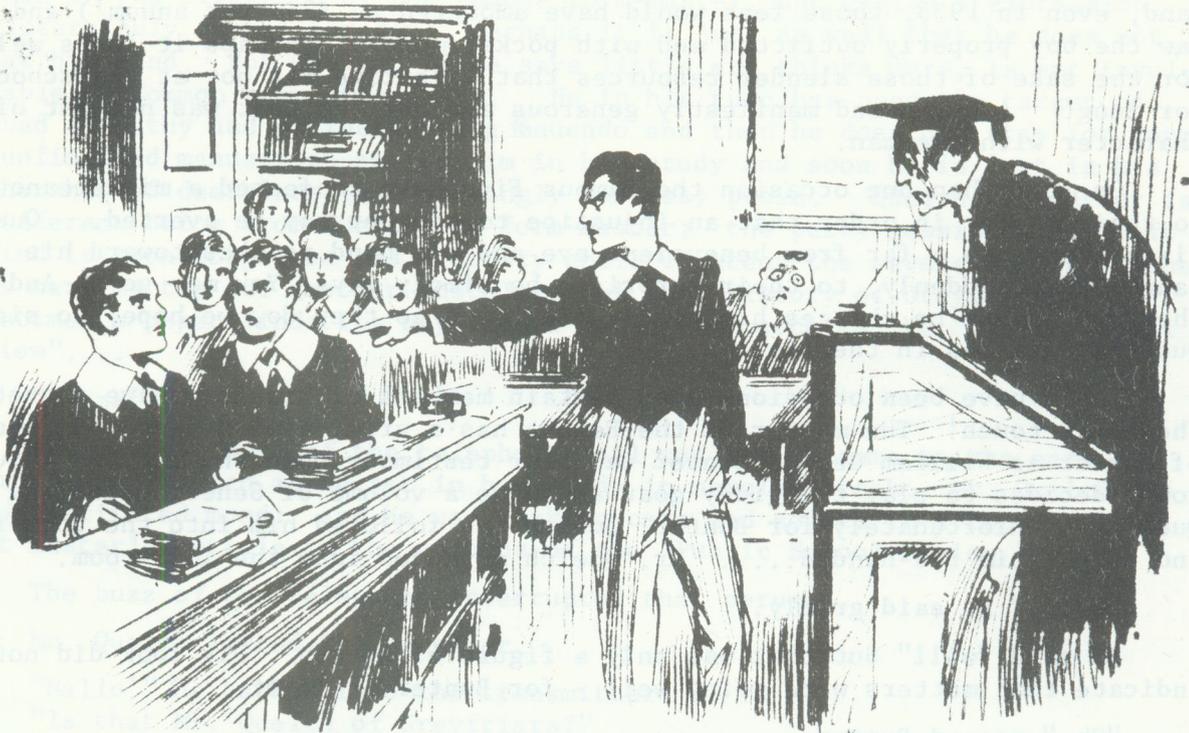
"Oh," moaned Bunter.

He wished that he was anywhere but in that Form-room under the deadly glint of Quelch's gimlet eyes. His fat knees knocked together in sheer funk.

"Well!" repeated Mr. Quelch grimly. "What are you doing with that volume? I presume," said Quelch with devastating sarcasm, "that you were not intending to read it, Bunter."

Quelch had a sarcastic tongue. He could wither a fellow with sarcasm. This was one of his best efforts. Bunter who skewed in Caesar and had difficulties even with Eutropius, was not likely to have pinched Seneca for the purpose of reading him..."

Experience, which is said to make fools wiser may not have had that effect on William George Bunter; but Quelch, who is far from being a fool, saw to it that his personal experience increased the wisdom that he already possessed. The passing decades have seen a never-ending stream of new boys enter the Remove. Circus performers, hypnotists, skilled forgers, pugilists and practical jokers, to mention but a few, have had their brief moments in the history of the Remove. They bring with them unscrupulous legal johnnies, boxing promoters, and gangsters. Quelch could be excused if he faltered at any one of the many problem scholars that were benevolently thrust upon him by Dr. Locke (who must surely rank as one of the most accommodating of all headmasters), for Quelch already had a fistful of trouble with the regular members of his form. Mr. Quelch must, however, be given his due. He accepted each and every challenge - some time with doubt, some time with opposition - but he accepted them. Even when Putnam van Duck the American boy was accompanied by a gunman named Poker Pike, Quelch at least tried to make the most of it much to the annoyance of the kidnapping gentry who had been sent to 'cinch' the boy. Threats could never deter the Remove master from his duty and many a rascally schemer has found this out to his cost.



"If you know who abstracted the watch from my study," said Mr. Quelch, "you will point out the culprit to me." Da Costa raised his hand. "There's the thief!" he said. And with a steady forefinger he pointed at Harry Wharton,

But if there was much in the way of excitement in the School life there were always those pleasant spells of leisure when Quelch could dig in the school library for black print manuscripts or repair to the study of his chief to while away a bewitching hour over some obscure passage in the classics. There were opportunities, too, for a game of chess with the Rev. Lambe or a brisk walk over the Kentish countryside with a puffing, panting Prout for company. From such excursions a fresh and eager Quelch returns to quell a near riot in the Rag or a noisy game of 'passage football.' Pausing only to tuck an ashplant under a bony elbow, the master would join battle with his pupils at much sad cost to the latter.

We have observed Quelch from the deep and dusky shadows at the rear of his form-room, the Rag, the various corridors and box rooms, the studies of pupils and colleagues and in doing so we have often wondered what Quelch is like and what he does once he is away from the surroundings so dear to him and to us. Apart from the odd appearance (much to the indignation of fellow-guest W.G.B.) at Wharton Lodge and elsewhere, we must assume that Quelch will visit nephew Roger and niece Cora though it is doubtful if those visits will be of long duration. Most likely Quelch seeks some quiet countryside or seaside resort from which he can do a daily "grind," one of those well-thumbed pocket volumes as his only companion. We are sure that with a vacation drawing to its close, the Form-master will eagerly head for the School as will a homing pigeon for its loft! And we as eagerly await his return. Greyfriars without Quelch is like a wine without a bouquet and on those sundry occasions when Quelch has not returned at the beginning of term, I for one have viewed the Greyfriars scene with a sense of frustration and of loss! Those temporary masters who have sometimes taken his place, be they false or genuine, detectives on the scene or

rogues on the run, can never fully compensate for the genuine article.

Greyfriars is steeped in history and who better knows that history than Henry Samuel Quelch? In this present century the name of Quelch has been connected with the saga of Greyfriars perhaps more than any other one character of the many we know and love. As the dusk falls on another day, Quelch gazes from his study window hearing the merry chatter of a group of juniors returning from Little Side - his boys - and again a crusty smile passes across the severe visage and perhaps, for a moment, the expression softens in those gimlet eyes. Memories of the highlights of a remarkable scholastic career come crowding through his mind and if we hear him utter some slight sound of self-approbation, we can excuse him. It is small enough reward for all the pleasure that has been given us when observing Henry Samuel Quelch from the shadows.

\* \* \* \* \*

W A N T E D : Wizards, Skippers, Rovers, Adventures, Hotspurs, Beans, Dandys, 1935 - 1938. Also Supplements to the above 1930 - 1939. Odd copies also wanted of following: Scoops, Tootla, Tally-Ho, Juggler, Magic, Jack-in-the-Box, Coco-Cubs, Dazzler, Rattler, Target, Bouncer, Joyfull, Jungle Jinks, Chuckler (yellow). Particularly want Wizard (498) 18-6-32. Cash paid or will exchange for interesting pre-war duplicates I have in Comic and Magazine line. Please write: Box G 68, c/o Collectors' Digest Annual. Kindest Regards and Seasonal Greetings to all Thomsonians and particularly to Brinscall Bill in Aussie. GERRY CUNLIFFE

No luck last year - any luck this? Thriller Comic Library, Super Detective Library - early and mid 1950s - Nos. 1 - 50 of each, preferably in fine condition. Aw, come on - there must be some about! And - (gulp) dare I ask? - Any early Marvel Comics, circa 1961-1964, for sale? Only very good condition. Finally, Best Wishes to all for 1969.

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER, "EYETHERMES," CRADLEY, Near MALVERN, WORCS.

W A N T E D : School Friend 1919 - 1921; Schoolgirls' Own Libraries 1st series; Holiday Annual 1922, 1934 - 1941; early Film Magazines/Books.

LACK, 4 RUSHMERE ROAD, NORTHAMPTON.

The Thriller, Detective Weekly, S.B.L. 1st series, C.D. Annual 1948, novels by Gunby Hadath and John Mowbay. ALL WANTED by

REG GUEST, 35 THORNSETT ROAD, ANERLEY, LONDON, S.E.20.

W A N T E D : Gems, Magnets, Lees, B.F. Libs. E X C H A N G E S : Magnets Gems, Lees, Science Fiction, Girls papers. S.A.E. please:

J. COOK, 178, MARIA STREET, BENWELL, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, 4.

# YES, I REMEMBER THE CHAMPION

By Albert Watkin

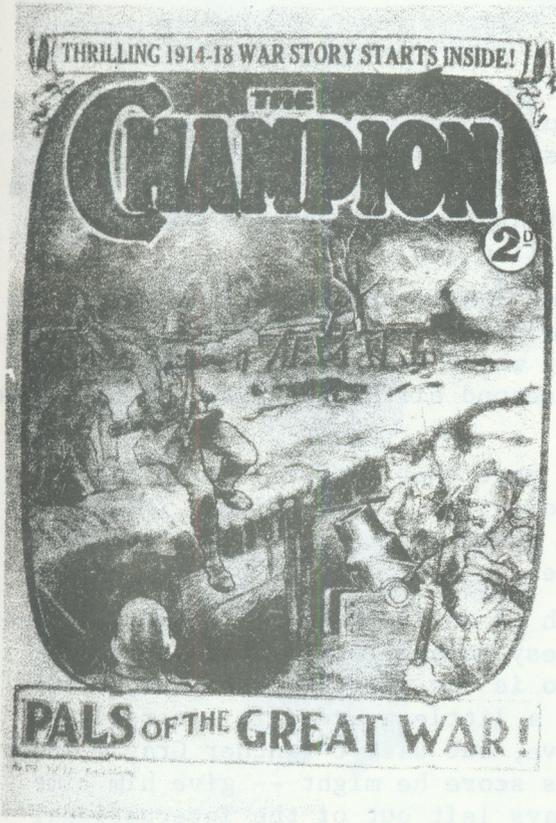
Nowadays, it seems that I can never get into a conversation about the papers of the old days but that sooner or later the question arises: "Do you remember the Champion?" Yes, I remember the CHAMPION. I was an avid reader of it just when I was at the right age to be reading it in the early 1930's. At that it would appear that I was just a bit too late to catch it when it was really at its peak in the twenties.

The CHAMPION came into being on the 28th of January 1922 a product of the Amalgamated Press and probably ranked as its most popular and best-selling paper ever. Its claim to be the "Finest Fun, Football and Adventure Weekly Paper" would be hard to dispute. Its line-up of the leading story writers of the day included Sidney Drew, Hartley Tremaine, Captain Malcolm Arnold, Geoffrey Rayle, John Ascott, Eric Townsend, Henry St. John, Ernest Scott, John W. Wheway, Stephen Hood, Norman Taylor, Allan Blake, Victor Nelson, Rupert Drake, Leslie Beresford, Howard Steele, Draycott Dell, Richard Randolph, Michael Poole and Sidney and Francis Warwick who of course wrote in conjunction. As these pioneer writers gradually passed from the scene, they were replaced by others equally capable - though in not such great numbers - the hand of Dick Shaw, Herbert Macrae, Donald Dane, Cecil Fanshaw, Geoffrey Gunn, Duncan Sterne, H. Wedgewood Bellfield, Peter Lang, Douglas Dundee, Hal Wilton, E. R. Home Gall - with his prolific output under the pseudonyms of Rupert Hall and Edwin Dale and later editor E. L. McKeag, who worked under the guise of Jack Maxwell, Pat Haynes and Mark Grimshaw. Editorial policy was to supply authors names with the stories. The first issue of the CHAMPION also contained a Sexton Blake story, Paid To Lose by A. S. Hardy, followed by another in issue No. 7, The Golden Wolfe by Hartley Tremaine, but no more appeared, and it could well be that the CHAMPION decided that it did not need Sexton Blake to keep it floating. The CHAMPION'S own detectives, Curtis Carr, Panther Grayle and Colwyn Dane, lived to achieve fame in their own sphere.

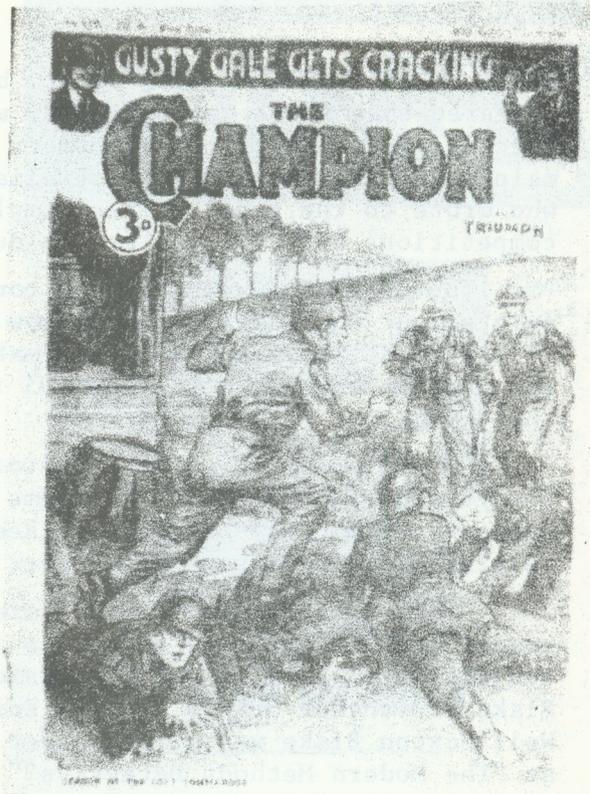
The CHAMPION covered all fields in the boys' realm of literature including the school story despite the competition from the Magnet, Gem and Nelson Lee. Two of the early efforts, The Outcast of St. Basils (Henry St. John) and Val of St. Vincents (Sidney Drew) were worthy of hard cover editions. Val of St. Vincents carried the label "The finest school story ever written," which wasn't disputed, not in those days anyway.

Another editorial policy, and an extremely good one too, which was seldom used in other papers, was the supplying of the illustrators' names with their work, so as we turn some of the pages of the early CHAMPIONS today we see a gallery, all signed, by Fred Bennett, Fred Holmes, Henry Lane, J.H. Valda, R. Macdonald, L. Gunnis, Cyril Blake, Joseph Lee, T. W. Holmes, Cecil Glossop, L. Roberts, George Dixon, E. R. Spencely and Leonard Shields. This enables one to easily study the various styles and a lot of knowledge can be gained from a perusal of its pages.

"Specials" were a big feature of the CHAMPION. There were Special Adventure, Sport, Historical, School Story, Football, Cricket, Colonial etc. Numbers. Sales promotion was first class, well up to that of the commercial 1960's. A cursory glance at the paper seemed to reveal a collection of



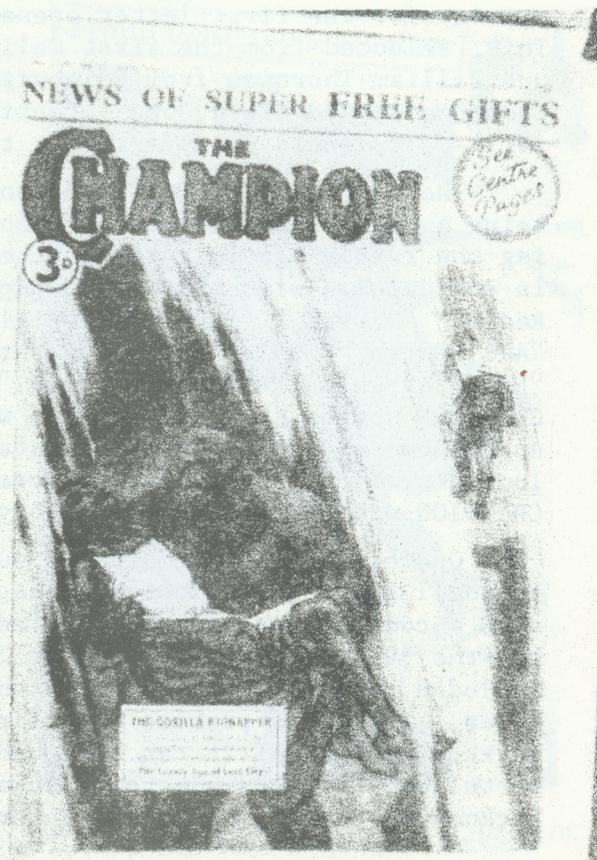
THE FIRST WORLD WAR



THE SECOND WORLD WAR



Superior Long REGIMENTAL SPORTING VARN Complete



stories, one following the other, but on closer investigation it usually appeared that there was one story which you got for nothing. The Colonial Specials were for the large number of overseas readers, purportedly hailing mainly from Egypt, India, Australia, South Africa, Italy, America and Belgium who wrote to the paper, often complaining that they were unable to enter the competitions and this matter was duly rectified.

The CHAMPION was also very conscious of its birthdays. In No. 53 it was pointed out that 52 issues had now passed and the paper was one year old. No. 99 reminded that one more would make a 100, which was also a special number and then it was on to 104 and 105 for the second birthday and the start of the third year.

"Champion Chat," by the Editor, was a page that was well worth reading for it contained useful news items and information. The Editor, (Mr. F. Addington Simmonds) believed in keeping in touch with his readers, and in helping and advising them whenever possible.

"The pages of the CHAMPION are 1/350th of an inch thick." he advised one reader. "Does 1922 see a decline in courtesy towards women?" was another subject which came in for discussion. "Who is the greater detective, Sexton Blake or Panther Grayle?" The Editor was a little guarded in his reply -- Well Sexton Blake was a much older detective, but wasn't Panther Grayle known as "The Modern Methods Detective?" On this score he might -- give him time -- outdo Blake. "Why are Chelsea players always left out of the International teams?" The editor recorded the protest without comment.

The editor's mailbag was apparently always heavy and of course there was a prize for the first letter opened after the paper was initially launched. This, selected from the first delivery of many hundreds, turned out to be from one William Thornton from Edinburgh, a fortuitous choice, because William Thornton stated his avowed intention of buying the CHAMPION every week without fail - a splendid example to set to all readers.

The CHAMPION'S £500 Grand Football Competition was run weekly, such a sum being a fairly large amount of money for those days, and consisted of forecasting the results of 10 games in the Football League. The competition was run in conjunction with other A.P. papers, "Answers," "Answers Library," "Boys Realm," "Marvel," "Penny Pictorial," "Football Favourite," "Football Special," "All Sports," "Union Jack" and three papers for women -- "Family Journal," "Home Companion," "Women's World," but where a winning entry turned up from a CHAMPION coupon the photo of the winner usually appeared in the paper and one such shows a snapshot of a Private W. H. Smith of Eastbourne, a soldier who looked as if he had served in foreign climes, and a sort of proof that the CHAMPION was not read by young boys alone.

One of the most remarkable outcomes of the CHAMPION was the Champion Football League -- a football league run for boys' teams. One could imagine such a competition being conducted in London without a great deal of trouble, but the 59 acceptances from over 250 applications for admission to the league included teams from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham and South Wales. There was promise of a larger league for the following season but no further mention of it can be found after 1922-23. Whatever became of Portslade Shamrocks, Jarrow Blackett Juniors, Holdon United, Clapton Comrades, Hackney Parochial, Stoke St. Peters, Hendon Argyle, Tinsell Rangers and top-



of-the-table Olympian Sports?

With the outbreak of the Second World War the CHAMPION was very privileged to be able to remain in circulation when so many of the other boys' papers went to the wall. Throughout the long years of the war Rockfist Rogan R.A.F. (Hal Wilton) and The Lost Commandoes (Wallace Tyson) carried on a ceaseless battle against the Germans -- certainly doing more than their share. With Germany defeated, Rogan swiftly transferred to the Japanese front to hasten the end there. Rockfist Rogan has lived to become a latter day legend among boys' fictional characters. In the years after the War the CHAMPION continued to carry its war-time look and seemed quite unable to pull itself out of it. It limped along until March 19th 1955 when it merged with the LION. Rockfist Rogan was still with it but had been relegated from the R.A.F. to run a civilian airway -- Star Airways. Its other great character, Colwyn Dane was likewise still there solving The Case of the "Big Top" Rivals which could have also well been called Colwyn Dane's Last Case. Thus the CHAMPION passed from the scene though leaving us with the thought that perhaps there was more than an atom of truth in its great early-day slogan "All the best writers and artists contribute to the CHAMPION."

\* \* \* \* \*

## Comments on a volume of The Jester

By S. Gordon Swan

1903 seems a lifetime away; since that year we have had two major wars and many minor ones, and incredible changes have come to pass in social conditions and scientific achievements. A volume of the Jester and Wonder commencing with No. 53, dated Nov. 15 1902 and ending with No. 104 dated Nov. 7th 1903, enables us to obtain a glimpse of that vanished world.

The comic pictures are of the kind peculiar to the period, plentifully endowed with tramps and young "swells," equipped with monocles. The girls wear the enormous hats and voluminous dresses of the time; one wonders what their reaction would have been to the hatless, mini-skirted era in which we are living. The humour is of a kind that appears laboured and cumbrous to us in these modern days of the brief joke and sometimes captionless cartoon.

In the illustrated section, pride of place is given to the Bunsey Boys, an imitation of the Katzenjammer Kids, who appear on the front page, though in later issues they are relegated to a subordinate position. Usually involved with them in their adventures is Happy Ike, a disreputable individual wearing a tiny hat that looks like a small cylindrical growth on the top of his head.

Other allegedly humorous characters are Mr. Hubbub, and two young dudes known as Cholly and Gawge, who vie with each other for the favour of a fickle charmer called Miss Tootsie. In some of the drawings the Bunsey Boys, Happy Ike, Cholly and Gawge and Mr. Hubbub all appear together. It does not necessarily follow that the same artist drew all these strips, as many of the drawings featuring other characters show a similarity of style.

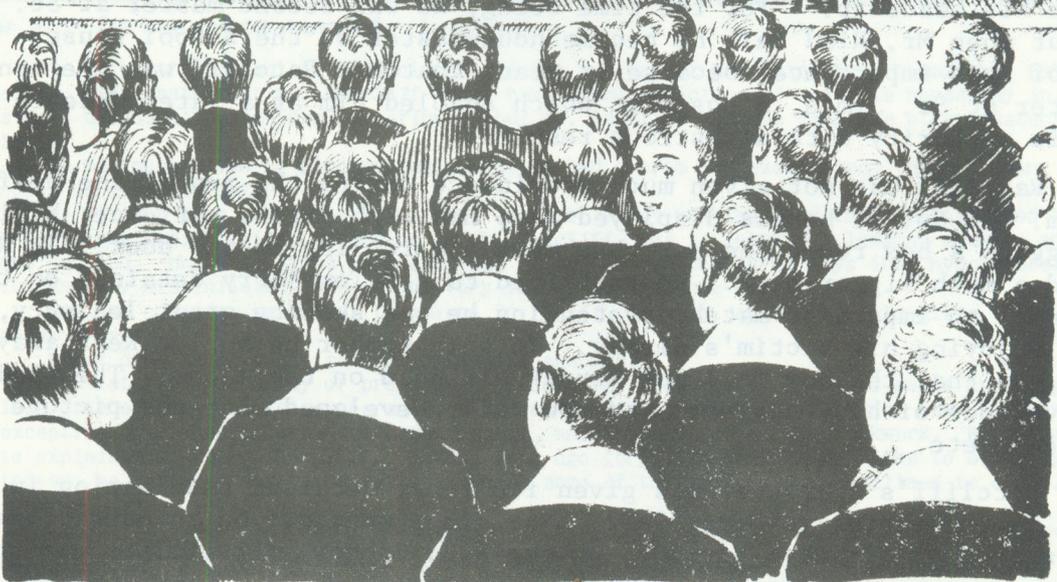
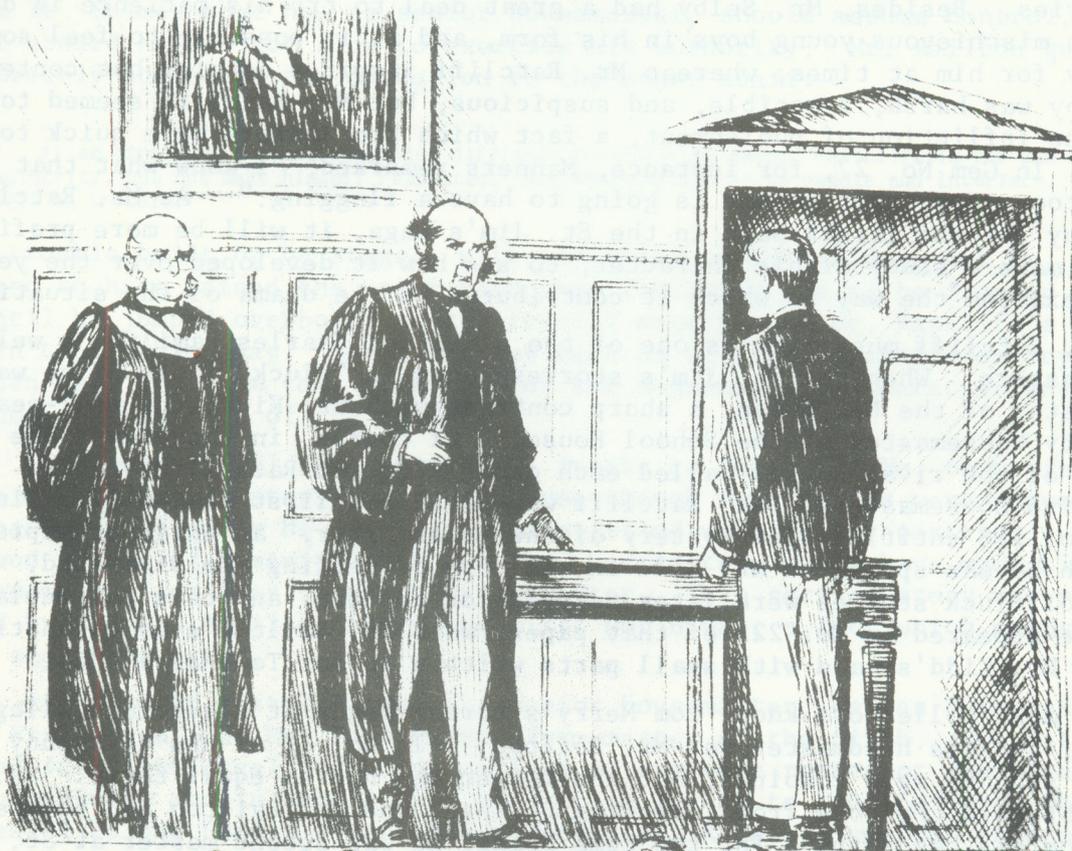
In a number of the issues a whole page is devoted to a set of illustrations by Jester artists, among whom one finds Bert Thomas, who was later to become famous for his World War One Cartoon -- " 'Arf a mo, Kaiser;" Fred Bennett and G. E. Studdy.

# Mr. Horace Ratliff

A STUDY IN SADISM

By Roger M. Jenkins

## THE HOUSEMASTER'S APOLOGY!



School stories depend upon conflict for their motivation. The conflict may be between the boys themselves, or between them and an outside character, or between them and a master. All the Hamiltonian schools possessed at least one master who had a personality strong enough to generate such conflicts, and St. Jim's had two, for good measure. Mr. Selby, the master of the Third form, was somewhat similar to Mr. Ratcliff, the housemaster of the New House, though they did have points of difference: as a form-master, Mr. Selby had less power than a housemaster, and it was confined to the domain of the Third form, which meant that he did not come into contact very often with the heroes of the stories. Besides, Mr. Selby had a great deal to try his patience in dealing with mischievous young boys in his form, and it is possible to feel some sympathy for him at times, whereas Mr. Ratcliff inspires nothing but contempt. Mr. Selby was harsh, irascible, and suspicious, but Mr. Ratcliff seemed to enjoy the infliction of punishment, a fact which the juniors were quick to notice. In Gem No. 27, for instance, Manners remarked, "I know what that smile means, too. Some poor rotter is going to have a flogging." As Mr. Ratcliff played by far the larger part in the St. Jim's saga, it will be more profitable to make a study of his character, to see how it developed over the years, and to examine the way in which it contributed to the drama of the situation.

Mr. Ratcliff must rank as one of the oldest of Charles Hamilton's well-known masters. When the St. Jim's stories began in "Pluck" in 1906, he was housemaster of the New House, a sharp contrast with Mr. Kidd, the well-meaning but hasty housemaster of the School House. Of course, in those days the juniors of the rival houses called each other Kids and Rats after their respective housemasters. Mr. Ratcliff was given his first star billing in Pluck No. 118 entitled "The Mystery of the Housemaster," an unsavoury episode in which he was spying on Mr. Kidd in the hope of getting him dismissed. A number of Pluck stories were later adapted for the Gem, and this particular story re-appeared in No. 225 of that paper, with Mr. Railton's name substituted for Mr. Kidd's, and with small parts written in for Tom Merry & Co.

As most collectors know, Tom Merry's career began at Clavering College in the Gem, and his headmaster was Mr. Railton. In No. 11 of the halfpenny Gem, the two schools were combined, but the merger was not on equal terms: St. Jim's absorbed the boys from Clavering College, and Mr. Railton had to step down from his headship. For the time being, he was second master at St. Jim's, but when Mr. Kidd left he became housemaster of the School House. All this is of some importance, because it meant that Mr. Ratcliff was the senior Housemaster at St. Jim's, a position which enabled him at a later date to assert his authority with disastrous results.

Mr. Ratcliff was not given much prominence during the run of the halfpenny Gem. In No. 31 he was displayed as a man with little patience, having given Figgins a box round the ear that sent him reeling to the door. In No. 43 he had a much bigger part: he contrived to get Tom Merry detained on the afternoon of an important match, pretending he was showing great leniency, but secretly enjoying his victim's dismay. In this number he hurled Kerr away from him, so that the boy fell and struck his head on the floor. The violence and malevolence of his character was now fully developed, but the picture was not yet complete.

Mr. Ratcliff's character was given its first detailed examination in the Floating School series in Gems 27-32. St. Jim's went off on an educational cruise in the far-off days of 1908, on the S.S. Condor. Dr. Holmes was unable

to sail with the party, but he had talked it over in advance with Mr. Railton. Mr. Ratcliff was not consulted until it was more or less settled, and the feelings of the New House master were clearly expressed:-

Mr. Ratcliff spoke quietly, but there was bitterness in his heart. Whenever the Head wished for counsel upon any point, Mr. Railton was always the man he turned to. It was probable that in the course of time Mr. Railton would succeed the doctor as Head of the school. Mr. Ratcliff always felt that he was in a secondary place, and that gave a keener edge to his dislike of the other housemaster. Mr. Railton knew very well how he felt, but the good old doctor was quite unaware of it.

Before they embarked, however, Mr. Ratcliff had secured a reluctant agreement from Dr. Holmes that he, as senior housemaster, should assume control, and once aboard he was not slow to exercise his authority. Mr. Railton quite accurately summed up the situation to the other staff:-

"I am afraid the situation is too difficult to last," he said. "Ratcliff is the man to assume authority, but not make himself respected. His whole system is to meddle and interfere. There will be trouble."

The trouble built up by stages, with victories on both sides, but Mr. Ratcliff seemed to have gained the upper hand when Tom Merry was to be flogged in public - until he jumped overboard at the crucial moment, and Mr. Ratcliff's power began to crumble away. These stories were as taut and dramatic as any in the Golden Age, and from this time onwards the housemaster's character was firmly etched in the minds of the readers.

There were still some outlandish freaks to come. In No. 66 he fell in love with Glyn's sister, Edith, and even though some tricks were played on him - the box of flowers he took her became filled with mouldy pastries - he showed traces of humanity that, if they had lasted, would have made him a pleasant but far less interesting character. This sort of story was never used by Charles Hamilton after the first world war, a fact which makes this one seem very dated.

Although Mr. Ratcliff was the senior housemaster, he was form-master of the Fifth form, and Mr. Railton was form-master of the Sixth. Mr. Ratcliff found it a little galling being obliged to exercise restraint when dealing with seniors, and in Gem No. 212 he went so far as to cane Lefevre, who then appealed to the Head. After this episode, Mr. Ratcliff was not in a mood to show any forbearance towards juniors:-

Mr. Ratcliff looked at the juniors, and the juniors at Mr. Ratcliff. Dismay had fallen upon the study. Any master but Mr. Ratcliff would have taken no notice of a little horseplay in a junior study, unless it became really serious; but Mr. Ratcliff was not like the other masters at St. Jim's.

He was much given to finding fault, and he had a prim and exact mind; he hated any kind of noise or irregularity.

He did not like boys at all, but his ideal of a boy was the kind that approximated to a machine. A boy's business in life, according to Mr. Ratcliff, was to learn his lessons meekly, and sit down and be good. Mr. Ratcliff's influence was of the kind which turns boys into hypocrites; but fortunately his influence did not go very far with Figgins & Co.

But the culprits knew that they were in for it, as they caught the cold glare of Mr. Ratcliff's stony eyes.

"What does this mean?" said Mr. Ratcliff sharply.

Mr. Ratcliff had a way of propounding riddles of that sort. He would seize upon the most harmless outbreak of youthful exuberance, and demand what it meant. It did not mean anything at all, excepting that the juniors were human beings, and not made to go by clockwork. But it was useless to explain that to Mr. Ratcliff. He had long ago forgotten what it was like to be a boy - if, indeed, he had ever been a boy at all, which some of the juniors were inclined to doubt.

Gem No. 212 in its sixteen chapters was quite eventful, for it related the beginning and the end of the first barring-out story - something that would

have been extended to a series in later times. In the end, Mr. Ratcliff, having had his nose blistered by a dab from a red-hot poker, left the school for a while, and peace was restored.

Gem No. 227 saw Mr. Ratcliff to the fore again, and in the first part of the story he was in his usual form, deliberately causing trouble between Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. by making Redfern believe that Figgins had informed on him. Half-way through, however, Mr. Ratcliff's character was filled in a little more when we learnt that he was something of a hypochondriac, with a medicine chest of powders and potions that he regularly swallowed. He had a long, thin nose, with a red tip, which indicated that his digestion was at fault, and he was having recourse to his indigestion powders when he noted that they tasted a little unusual. This was, of course, the beginning of an outrageous joke that had hilarious consequences. The comic potentialities of Mr. Ratcliff were again developed in No. 240, when Kerr masqueraded as the housemaster's deserted wife. Mr. Ratcliff was so upset that he had to take another holiday from school.

Never was the housemaster of the New House displayed in such an abject and humiliating light as in Gem 345, entitled "The Fighting Prefect." Generations of boys had left St. Jim's vowing to come back and wreak their vengeance on Mr. Ratcliff, but only one actually did so - Stoker, who had taken up employment as a professional boxer in a travelling exhibition. When the housemaster was trapped in his own study and told to hold out his hand, he jumped out of the window and fled to the School House, eventually taking refuge in Darrel's study. Although Darrel came to Mr. Ratcliff's rescue, it did not stop the mean-minded man from complaining to the Head that Darrel had not detained Stoker so that he could be arrested, and so began a fascinating story based on the triangular relationship between Mr. Ratcliff, Darrel, and Stoker.

Bartholomew Ratcliff, the nephew of the housemaster, arrived at the school in No. 586 at the beginning of a four-week series. He was sharp-featured, like his uncle, mean, selfish, and happy to act as tale-bearer in chief. If nothing new was discovered about Mr. Ratcliff through his own actions in this series, his tolerance of his nephew's odd ways suggests that inferences can be drawn. For instance, the house dame provided a special supper for Bartholomew, and he was allowed to take Redfern's ration of coal for his own use. Mr. Ratcliff's obvious partiality towards his nephew and his malevolence towards those who opposed him were excessive indeed, but there was a limit to the bounds of his indulgence, and it was not long before Ratty minor left St. Jim's for good.

For one brief period, Mr. Ratcliff became headmaster of St. Jim's, in Nos. 720-722, when Dr. Holmes was drenched with water in mistake for his senior housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff gave an exaggerated testimony which threw suspicion on Tom Merry until Figgins & Co. owned up. As Dr. Holmes had to go away to recover, Mr. Ratcliff became headmaster, and he at once began to take his vengeance. In one highly dramatic scene Mr. Railton thrust him aside as he was boxing Tom Merry's ears. It all ended in rebellion in the New House, though it was one that came to an end in a completely novel manner. Mr. Ratcliff's tenure of high office came to an ignominious conclusion.

Perhaps the finest single story concerning Mr. Ratcliff was in Gem No. 858 entitled "The Housemaster's Mistake." Charles Hamilton was then in the process of switching his main attention from the Gem to the Magnet, which perhaps makes the few genuine St. Jim's stories shine all the more brightly.

Certainly Horace Ratcliff could never have had a more appropriate swan-song. He was checking the house accounts, trying to trace a missing eighteenpence, when a telephone call came, apparently from the Head, asking him to go over and explain why he had rapped some Fifth-formers over the knuckles with a pointer in class that day. The phone call was in fact a hoax perpetrated by one of the victims, Cutts, but it seemed to take a more serious turn when Mr. Ratcliff later discovered that a ten-pound note was missing from his study. The Head and Mr. Ratcliff began to question various forms, and many of the answers revealed a state of affairs in the New House that caused the Head to raise his eyebrows. Eventually, Cutts was discovered to have made the telephone call, and the Head suspended judgment on the question of the theft:-

It was not a happy evening for the black sheep.

Neither was Mr. Horace Ratcliff happy that evening. He was satisfied that the guilty party had been discovered. He flattered himself that he had shown considerable astuteness in bringing the truth to light so promptly and effectively. But the tenner was still missing. The expulsion of Cutts of the Fifth was all very well. It was a passing gratification. But Mr. Ratcliff was thinking chiefly of the tenner. That was the most important consideration. He would rather have pardoned Cutts than have lost the tenner.

Restitution had been demanded. But Cutts could not restore what he had not taken. Sacked from the school, he would go with Mr. Ratcliff's tenner in his pocket. So it seemed to Horace Ratcliff. It was a most exasperating thought to Mr. Ratcliff. He slept badly that night, and when he slept he dreamed of his lost ten pounds.

Generally speaking, it is not the function of the critic to reveal how stories end, but as endings were often Charles Hamilton's weak point and as this story has such a perfect climax, it may perhaps be forgivable on this one occasion:-

He opened the volume.

A crisp slip of paper fluttered out before the class. The draught from an open window caught it, and fluttered it in the sight of all the Fifth.

It dropped to the floor at the feet of Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth.

Mr. Ratcliff stared at it, startled.

The Fifth form stared at it.

Cutts gave a jump.

In the midst of a dead silence, Lefevre stopped and picked up the crisp slip of engraved paper.

Mr. Ratcliff found his voice.

"What- what- what is that, Lefevre?"

"A banknote, sir!"

"A -a -a banknote!" stuttered Mr. Ratcliff.

Lefevre's look was grim. His manner was openly contemptuous as he answered:

"A banknote for ten pounds, sir. Is this the banknote which you have accused Cutts of stealing?"

"Bless my soul!"

With trembling fingers Horace Ratcliff took the banknote from the captain of the Fifth. He blinked at it, and blinked again, as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

Cutts rose to his feet. His eyes glittered at the New housemaster.

"Is that the ten-pound note, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"Dear me! It -it certainly appears so!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, utterly taken aback by this unexpected happening.

"You have accused me of stealing it. It was in your own Livy all the time. You put it there and forgot. And you accused me!"

"I -I -I -" Mr. Ratcliff spluttered.

"Apologise!" snapped Cutts.

"What - what?"

"I demand an apology!"

"You insolent rascal, sit down!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

Cutts did not sit down. He stamped across to the door.

"Where are you going, Cutts?"

"I'm going to fetch the Head!"

"I command you -" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

Cutts did not heed. He strode out of the Form-room, leaving the Fifth in an excited buzz, and Mr. Ratcliff in a state of utter dismay and apprehension.

And apologise Mr. Ratcliff had to, in the Hall before the assembled school, though you must read the story yourself to discover how the banknote found its way into the Latin text-book. Of course, more was heard of Mr. Ratcliff, notably in the Secret Passage series in Nos. 1635-40, but somehow those 1939 stories were pale shadows compared to the best of those in the previous decade,



# Fragrant Memories

By Mackenzie Davidson

Half a century ago I was given the freedom of a small country school library during my summer holidays and there, one rainy afternoon, I discovered a treasury of school stories which I have never forgotten. This was a volume of Dean Farrar's Three School Tales - "Eric (or Little by Little);" "St. Winifred's (or the World of School)," and "Julian Home - a Tale of College Life."

I am now led to write this article because recently I became re-possessed of the first two yarns through the generosity of a C.D. advertiser who practically gave them to me out of his private collection - having sold his advertised books long before I saw his notice. (Such generosity fairly overwhelmed me and must be almost unheard of!)

"Eric" ran to countless editions but has suffered much denigration and has been seriously maligned principally for its alleged unnatural characterisation, its sloppy sentiment, and its obsession with religion.

Well, the book was written in 1858 when Farrar was 27 and a young master at Harrow, and, as most of us have gone through the sentimental stages why should he have been immune to the weeping and the laughter of our fleeting youth. And, anyway, I have often felt that the book may reflect something of the author, for if you take his full name FREDERIC WILLIAM FARRAR you find only minus the final 'S,' the chief character of the book. So it may indeed be just a shade biographical.

Obsession with religion: Well, after all Farrar was a clergyman - and doubtless a fundamentalist - and religion was his job. "Eric" was meant to be a moral tale, and, really, what is so very wrong about that? From every pulpit in the world 'moral tales' are being declaimed all the time!

Unnatural characterisation: On the whole not really. Perhaps Edwin Russell is rather too good - and yet how can one tell. He might easily be the alter ego of the author himself. Still, certain accusations on this point can be fairly justified for it is highly unlikely that normal boys would have had at their command the poetical quotations and the Latin and Greek phrases which seem to roll so fluently from their lips - especially as the ages of these boys must have been around fifteen!

Sloppy sentiment: Yes, this occasionally is disturbing - but did not Charles Dickens - whom I revere - pen some awful slush at times? Taken as a whole, however, and considering the period, I think the boys of Roslyn School behaved more or less like our Magnet friends, and, indeed, Charles Hamilton must have soaked himself in the old tales, for, in No. 1, there are "hot rushes of tears running down Harry Wharton's cheeks" and his frantic exclamations when he finds Nugent might have come straight out of Farrar's inkwell!

However, should "Eric" prove too much for this age - and what a dreadful age it is! - "St. Winifred's" and especially the manly "Julian Home" can be recommended with few reservations to those who love good yarns exceedingly well told - for Farrar's detractors have never to my knowledge written one condemnatory word on either the plotting or the telling of his Three School Tales.

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# The "Halfpenny Marvel"

By S. Gordon Swan

ON PAGE 15 of No. 252 of the above periodical one finds an important announcement:

The "Marvel" Scores Again.

GORDON GRAY SECURED AT LAST!

A Perfect Klondike of Enthralling Adventure.

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Special and Important Announcement.

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There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in scores of editorial offices to-day, and if any of my readers are desirous of seeing the "green-eyed monster" in all his glory, I advise them to pay a visit to the editorial sanctums of some of my contemporaries. Shall I tell you why? Because Gordon Gray, the foremost detective of the century, has granted to the MARVEL the exclusive right of publishing the histories of all his past and future triumphs!

For the past three years the attention of the whole journalistic world has been fixed on this brilliant young detective, for it is an open secret that his career has been a perfect Klondike of unique and enthralling adventures, and it has long been admitted that a series of stories dealing with some of his most famous cases would prove one of the greatest attractions which an editor could secure for his paper.

We are not overstating the fact when we say that there is scarcely an editor in the country who has not tried his level best to secure the right of publishing such a series; but to all their blandishments Mr. Gray has hitherto turned a deaf ear, and though princely sums have been offered him for the privilege of reporting his cases, he has steadfastly declined to be drawn.

Where others have failed, the Editor of the MARVEL has succeeded! It is more than six months ago now that I first determined to enter the lists, and make a bid for the coveted distinction. The fact that others had failed did not discourage me, nor was I in the least affected by the cheap sneers of some of my rivals who pretended to be amused at the idea of a halfpenny paper being able to pay the enormous sum which would be required to secure the great detective's consent. I simply made up my mind to secure Gordon Gray, no matter what the cost might be, for "the best and nothing but the best" has always been the principle I have acted on in editing the MARVEL; and to-day I have the utmost pleasure in asking my readers (and also my unsuccessful rivals) to cast their eyes over the following letter:

WHARNCLIFFE CHAMBERS,  
HOLBORN, E.C.

August 1st, 1898.

Telegrams:

"Sphinx, London."

"Telephone No. 20176."

"Dear Sir,

In confirmation of arrangements made by previous correspondence, and subject

to such conditions as are therein imposed, I hereby agree to give you the exclusive right of publishing such of my cases as you choose to select. If you will send your representative to my office any afternoon between two and four I shall be glad to place my notebooks at his disposal, and to assist him with all the information in my power.

Very sincerely yours,

Gordon Gray.

"To the Editor of the MARVEL, 24, Tudor Street, E.C."

As soon as I received the above letter I immediately set to work to decide upon the author to whom I should entrust the task of weaving Mr. Gray's adventures into story form. I knew a dozen of hack writers, such as are employed by certain papers I could name, who would have gladly undertaken the task for the merest pittance; but I was determined to carry the thing through in Royal style, and to employ none but the best available talent in the market, regardless of expense. Under these circumstances, my choice was soon made, for there is no possible room for doubt that the finest writer of detective stories at the present day is MAXWELL SCOTT, whose thrilling stories of Nelson Lee (now appearing in "Pluck") have given delight to thousands of readers at home and abroad. To Mr. Scott, accordingly, I wired, instructing him to proceed at once to Gordon Gray's chambers, and examine the great detective's notebooks, with a view to selecting such of his cases as seemed most suitable for publication. At the present moment the work of selection is still going on (for there are hundreds of volumes to be perused). The first of the series will be published in the MARVEL on Wednesday next, and nowhere else.

One word more before I conclude. The services of a great detective and a famous author are not obtained in these days of keen competition without an enormous expenditure of money. I am starting the series more or less as a speculation, and, unless my readers back up my efforts, it will be absolutely impossible for me to carry it on. I don't mind telling you that there is a clause in my agreement with Mr. Gray and Mr. Scott which provides that, unless the series results in a largely-increased circulation, the bargain is "off." If, therefore, you wish to read the adventures of THE GREATEST LIVING DETECTIVE, cast into story-form by THE MOST FAMOUS AUTHOR OF THE DAY, spread the good tidings amongst your chums, and get them to promise to take in the MARVEL regularly every week. Tell them that the first story of the "Gordon Gray, Detective" series will appear in the MARVEL next Wednesday.

Don't forget that the first of this enthralling series appears next Wednesday. It is entitled:

"THE LEAGUE OF THE CRIMSON STAR,"

and deals with Mr. Gordon Gray's first big case.

The signature under Gordon Gray's letter purported to be in the detective's own handwriting.

After this editorial effusion it seems a pity that Gordon Gray faded out of the scene, while Nelson Lee, an earlier creation, survived him by many years. A few of the stories were reprinted in the Detective Library more than twenty years later, but that was the last heard of Gordon Gray, I believe.

However, the Editor had more reason to be proud of Maxwell Scott than of some of his other contributors, who remained mercifully anonymous. Scott

generally could be relied on to turn out a solid piece of workmanship.

S. Clarke Hook was closely associated with the Halfpenny Marvel. He wrote No. 1, "Dead Man's Land," and No. 5, "Tracked Down." No. 2 was "The Gold Fiend," by Hal Meredeth, and No. 4 was "The Black Pirate" by the same author under his real name of Harry Blyth. No. 5, "The Slave King," was by Major Daring, no doubt a pseudonym; and as for Nos. 6 and 7, all Sexton Blake fans should be aware that their favourite detective was introduced in these two stories.

One suspects that names such as Ewen Monteith and Owen Monteath also covered the identity of S. Clarke Hook, who likewise wrote several serials for the paper. His stories were, I think, more acceptable than the slapstick Jack, Sam and Pete tales which he wrote for so many years in the Penny Marvel. Actually, these three famous characters first made their appearance in the Halfpenny Marvel, and the first story of them, as far as I can judge, is to be found in No. 385, "The Eagle of Death," published 23/3/1901; this was quickly followed by No. 387, "The Death Sentence," No. 389 "The Black Horseman," and No. 392 "The Leap for Life." These yarns were more serious than the later ones, and Jack Owen seemed to have a cloud hanging over his life, which does not seem to have been referred to afterward.

There were two good serials by Paul Herring, "Buffalo Bill's Chum," and "The Further Adventures of Buffalo Bill and His Chum," also some good complete tales by this author. But some of the complete tales by other writers, mostly nameless, were scrappy and even downright ridiculous. Some stories took up only half the book, and the rest was a fill-up of short items, some of which seemed unsuitable for juvenile consumption. The worst story was No. 204, "The Fatal Button," by John Herbert, a vile, sadistic effort which should never have appeared in a boys' paper, or anywhere else, for that matter.

In 1900 we were treated to a series of Boer War stories, in most of which the Boers were treacherous cads and the heroes gallant young British officers with a wistful sweetheart in the background. (There were quite a number of heroines in this periodical, by the way; girls with names like Edith, Dora and so on, who were sweet and loyal. But occasionally an Arab or a "native" girl appeared, who put a little more zip into the proceedings.) Many of the war stories were by a writer called Anstey Kaye; there was one by Mark Darran; and No. 335 "The Heroes of Mafeking," was by our old friend A. S. Hardy.

In this connection, an earlier story about a French criminal was credited to an E. S. Hardy. One suspects the first initial was an error.

Following the Boer War tales came several yarns about China, inspired, no doubt, by the Boxer Rebellion.

A noteworthy point about No. 373, "The Trail of the Spectre Chief," by G. Wells Campbell, was the fact that the story began in 1650, and two characters engaged in a fight produced bowie knives. As Jim Bowie, who invented this knife, didn't appear on the scene till the eighteen hundreds, this was anticipating events. But I suppose the author may be excused, as few of us knew much, if anything, about Jim Bowie until the talkies came along.

On the back cover of No. 377, dated 26/1/1901, there is an advertisement for "The Boys of Calcroft," by Sidney Drew, which was appearing in The Boys' Friend New Century Double Number. This was about eighteen years before the series of Calcroft tales appeared in the later Marvel of 1919. A year or two

ago a contributor to the "C.D." implied that Sidney Drew borrowed his idea of the Fighting Four from Charles Hamilton. But Fane and his friends were on the stage as far back as 1901!

One of the serials in the Halfpenny Marvel, most of which seemed to run to inordinate length, was "The Path of Guilt," a story about Charles Peace. No author's name was appended, but it was probably by somebody like Stanhope Sprigg, who was contributing complete stories to the paper at this period. Or there is a possibility that it was by Ernest Treeton, who later wrote a remarkable serial about Charles Peace's boyhood for the Boys' Realm.

An interesting announcement in one copy of the Marvel is the statement that, in issue No. 421, which was to be the Christmas Number for 1901, would commence a new serial, "The Real, True and Astounding Adventures of Sexton Blake." I possess several instalments of this epic, which introduces another assistant for Blake, by name Wallace Lorrimore, but whether I shall ever be privileged to read it in its entirety is on the knees of the gods.

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COMMENTS ON A VOLUME OF THE JESTER (Continued from page 14)...

In the fiction department there are several serials and a long complete story, as well as an occasional one-page story. One finds several serials already under way, having commenced in the previous volume. "The Land of the Boomah" is an adventure tale of a lost race found in a hidden valley in Western Australia. The people were descended from a party of Englishmen that had been shipwrecked on the north-western coast a hundred years before. These survivors had found their way to the valley and mated with the women of a local tribe.

In order to frighten away hostile natives, a machine had been erected which gave vent to a terrible cry which sounded like "Boomah!" Australian readers might have been amused by the name given to the heroine, Princess Wooloo-Mooloo. There is no indication as to who wrote this tale.

Another serial nearing its completion is "London Life" by Colin Collins, author of "The Blue Room Mystery."

Running through the main part of this volume is "Twice Round The Globe," a very long story by Sidney Drew (the name is spelt Sydney throughout), for it had already begun in an issue previous to the first in this book. This is a tale of Ferrers Lord, Ching Lung, Gan-Waga and Co. and deals with Lord's conflict with another millionaire named Nathan Gore over the possession of a valuable stone.

The narrative is quite interesting, but obviously the story is spun out to inordinate length by the inclusion of slapstick episodes. Sometimes three instalments in a row are devoted to the facetious exploits of Maddock, O'Rooney and the rest, and one loses sight of the main plot in these meanderings.

Another serial is entitled "Thou Shalt Not Kill!" by the author of "Frank Harvester, Convict." This is of a melodramatic nature, but quite absorbing if it had not been marred by a number of errors. The name of a manservant is changed at least twice, and another character's name is spelt in three different ways. One of the villains, a Dr. Sylvester Fang, suddenly becomes Sylvanus Fang, and besides these irritating mistakes there are two definite flaws in the story itself.

A further story by Colin Collins begins and ends in this volume. It is

(Continued on page 31)...

## THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE

A light hearted look at one of Charles Hamilton's excellent, though not very well known characters by Ron Hodgson

Not Jack Drake, late of St. Winifreds and Greyfriars, as might be expected, but a young Fifth Former of the name Len Lex, who made his first appearance in Modern Boy number 452, dated 3rd October, 1936.

The Modern Boy was somewhat of a hotch-potch of a boys' paper and may not be much in demand, but during its eleven years life it had some very good stories by first class authors, amongst whom, of course, was the incomparable Charles Hamilton.

In the excellent article by Eric Fayne on "The Development of the Modern Boy and the part that Charles Hamilton played in it" which appeared in the C.D. Annual for 1954, Eric had this to say about one of the series:-

"There was nothing very outstanding in the Len Lex series, the stories of the schoolboy detective, which began in 1935 in No. 452 and continued for 36 issues. They were typical Hamilton mystery yarns and, as such, were charming and very pleasant reading. But the plots would have been familiar to any Gem or Magnet fan."

Three years later in the 1957 Annual another excellent article, this time by Jack Wood, was "Browsing in Hamilton Byways" and during its course, Jack had this to say:-

"In the Modern Boy we heard of two other Hamilton schools, one of which is forgotten (Oakshott) and the other the School for Slackers, High Coombe."

These seem rather short, if not sweet, words to say about some very good school yarns which were published under the authorship of Charles Hamilton as serials in 24 issues of the Modern Boy and which were reprinted in an abridged form in SOLs 353 and 371 and in the 1941 Greyfriars Holiday Annual.

The stories were school and detective in content and like the High Coombe series, dealt with the seniors of the Fifth Form, unlike Hamiltons three more famous schools which were mainly about the juniors.

In the High Coombe series of 1934, which were also in the Modern Boy and SOLs, a great deal of description was given to the school and its surroundings and a good character study of the Fifth Form Master, Mr. Chard. But in the Oakshott stories very little descriptive detail was given and the stories were nearly all action. This was probably why some of the above remarks were made. All we seem to know about the school itself was that it was ivy covered, like most of the Hamilton schools. In the Modern Boy, Len Lex used this to climb back into the dormitory after being locked out, but this whole episode was chopped out of the SOL. Near Masters' Gate grew a clump of oaks. The Fifth Form Master's Study, which adjoined his bedroom had a large casement window, which was on the ground floor in a spot quite screened by trees and at the end of a rather dusky passage that branched off a big corridor. This dusky passage led to the two rooms and nowhere else. These were about the only details given.

Perhaps, because of the lack of background details, this is one of the

reasons why the stories do not seem to be so well known as Hamilton's other schools where one has a mental picture of the whole area. The stories, of course, were short and only lasted for a few months where the more famous schools ran for years.

The first ten stories which all appeared under the collective title of "The Schoolboy Detective" dealt with the trailing and capture of the Sussex Man - a mysterious burglar who, for nearly two years, had prowled and plundered undetected. When these were reprinted in SOL 353, for some reason or other they were given the rather horrible title of "The Schoolboy 'Tec."

In passing, it is interesting to note that Charles Hamilton placed Oakshott in his favourite county of Sussex, along with his other great school.

The series opened with Peter Poringe of the Fifth, more commonly known as Pie, leaving the dormitory for the purpose of a rag on his Form Master's Study, as retaliation for a "six" administered in prep. An interesting point this, as the Fifth at Oakshott were caned quite often by their Form Master and the prefects. Before Pie could leave the scene of the crime after distributing a quart of ink around, he was surprised by a figure entering the casement window and, before he could stir, a swift blow laid him on the floor, stunned and senseless.

Detective-Inspector William Nixon of Scotland Yard was a worried man over the failure of the police to put a stop to the activities of the Sussex Man. Even the latest attempt at the school had been foiled by pure chance and not even the porter's mastiff, which now ran loose at night, had raised any alarm.

Len Lex, his orphaned nephew, who was looked after by Bill, realising how worried he was, decided to put his Uncle Bill in the picture with his own observations. As Len explained:-

"About two years ago, the silver was lifted from Greenwood Manor, in Sussex. That was the first shot. Since that time, at intervals, there have been mysterious burglaries, all within a radius of about thirty miles, from Greenwood in the north to Lowcroft in the south, Baye in the east to Woodway in the west - all of them performed in the neatest possible manner by a joker who never left a trace. Not the remotest clue to his identity - they call him the Sussex Man for want of any other name. Now, for the first time, two jobs on the same night - one at Oakshott School, the other at Woodway Court, eight miles away."

Len carried on and explained that all the cribs were cracked in Sussex because the man was tied down to the quarter where he lived and that he had now as good as handed the police his card. Poor Bill still could not see, so Len gave all the dates of the robberies and stated that all these were between the beginning and end of an ordinary school term. A further sketch map by Len showed that Oakshott School was in the centre of the beat. A thirty mile beat from end to end - but when worked from the centre, never outside fifteen miles.

"And finding a school in the centre of the beat," said Len, "doesn't it look as if the Sussex Man worked round from Oakshott, Bill? Now he's put his foot in it, and told you so."

"Has he?" said Bill dubiously.

"Woodway Court was robbed that night, Bill. The man that Poringe saw getting in at the window was not after a crib. He was a nightbird coming home to roost. He knocked the boy out, not to clear his way to a crib, but to

prevent recognition. The boy might have had a flashlamp - very likely had! He couldn't run the risk. He tapped him hard and quick."

"But - ."

"And the proof is, what the mastiff did!" answered Len.

Bill Nixon blinked.

"The mastiff did absolutely nothing!" he answered.

"That's the proof," said Len. "The dog knew him and did not bark!"

Perhaps a slight pinch from Sherlock Holmes but, as a result of all this, Len Lex entered the Fifth Form at Oakshott and was placed in Study No. 8 in the company of Pie Porringe, Cedric Harvey and Banks.

Charles Hamilton may have been cashing in on the popularity of Horace James Coker with the creation of Pie Porringe, who was an exact copy. Harvey and Banks being his Potter and Greene. Pie's mind worked like that of the great Horace, he always knew what he was doing and he was always right. His spelling too, was on a par with Coker's. His attempt to put gum into the tank of his Form Master's motor bike resulted in the only other bike in the shed, that of the games master, being made immobile and that, of course, resulted in a form ragging for Pie. He tried to swamp Len Lex with a bag of soot and succeeded in bagging Rance of the Sixth. A six from Champion, the Head Prefect, was the reward for this. But Pie, like Coker never learned and one could carry on with his misfortunes which, in due course, all helped Len Lex in his task of unmasking the villain of the piece.

Coker was one of Charles Hamilton's great creations and, in my humble opinion, so was Pie Porringe.

The other Fifth Formers mentioned in the series were Cayley, Bird, Fane, Simpson, Worrall and Hobbs although they did not influence the action in any way.

Of the Sixth Form, Oliphant the School Captain was mentioned on occasions, as was Devereux and Champion, the head prefect. Rance, the dingy black sheep was introduced into a number of chapters and took a couple of thrashings from Len Lex, so it was obvious that Rance had a later part to play.

The junior room was known as the Lair but the juniors themselves were hardly mentioned apart from Albert Root who, unknowingly, helped Len on a number of occasions in his quest for the various villains he unearthed at Oakshott.

Len had not been long at the school before he soon had four suspects lined up. This was rather more than usual in the Hamilton saga, but I suppose the idea was to spin out the interest over the ten weeks whereas, in the Gem or Magnet the whole series could have been published in two issues.

The first suspect was James Bullivant whom Len had spotted in the dark in Mr. Silverson's study and who had displayed unmistakable terror at being found there. Bullivant was the games master and was described as being stocky, red faced and with rather bulging light blue eyes.

Len's attention was then turned onto his form master, Vernon Silverson, who was dark, slim and handsome and had a slightly sardonic smile which made the Fifth Form men refer to him often as a sarcastic beast. He was also a secret backer of horses and the owner of the study which Len knew was the mystery man's way of egress and ingress, when the Sussex Man was on the prowl.

The next suspect was Ralph Surtees, the Master of the Fourth who was sturdy, boyish in looks, the youngest beak at Oakshott, a keen footballer and

very popular. He had been recognised prowling in the silent and sleeping house after one o'clock in the morning.

The final suspect was a rather tall, shadowy figure who never showed his face.

To cut short a long story, Len soon discovered that Bullivant was after some money from Silverson's desk to help his young brother Roger who, being a bank clerk at the County and Provincial Bank, Bristol, had been dipping into the till to the extent of £400 and was therefore, on the run. Acting on information from Len, Bill Nixon soon stopped young Roger's jaunt.

The prowlings of Surtees turned out to be the result of Surtees turning amateur detective as he, unlike the police, had worked out that the centre of the Sussex Man's beat was Oakshott.

The fourth mystery prowler turned out to be the Sixth Former Rance who was caught by Surtees as he was once more breaking bounds to make the usual trip to one of the local hostelries to place his money on another of Charles Hamilton's also rans.

The net was now closing on the Sussex Man as only one suspect was left - Vernon Silverson. He had received an invitation to dine with Lord Trant at Trant Elms and Len Lex assumed that Silverson had spied out the land and the next burglary would, therefore, be at Trant Elms. And with only two chapters of the story left, the assumption turned out to be correct and Detective-Inspector Nixon's hand dropped on Silverson's shoulder while he was in the very act of lifting Lord Trant's bonds and other valuables from the safe.

One thing that caused a bit of thought was that although Silverson had a motor-bike he was unable to take this from the school at night and had to use Shanks' pony for his nightly visitations. And with some of the cribs fifteen miles from the school he had to cover thirty miles on foot, which meant quite a goodly number of hours walking, or running would probably be a better word, each time; especially as he was usually back at school round about one o'clock in the morning.

Authors licence, no doubt!

The next series consisting of four stories dealt with the disappearance of Harvey's uncle, Sir Lucian Jerningham at the Old Moat House. A typical Hamilton Christmas story, excellent in every way, with snow, a ghost complete with rattling chains and the villain turning out to be the Secretary, Mr. Chard, who was hoping to make his employer part with his signature to a transfer of bonds. Chard needed the cash to recoup the losses he had sustained at roulette. As usual, he was foiled in the attempt and was led away with the handcuffs on his wrists, by Inspector Shute, the local police inspector.

One cannot help feeling that had Lord Eastwood been called in, he would probably have been of very great assistance, as he was quite used to seeing his secretaries being led away by the police.

A break of thirteen weeks followed and we next met the Oakshott fellows in Modern Boy No. 479 returning to school and were introduced to the boy who was "Asking for the Sack." This was Eric Tunstall who had been sacked from Higham School in Yorkshire. Len Lex, at the request of his Uncle Bill, was asked to give very particular attention to find out whether Tunstall was a young rascal who got no more than he deserved or whether he had been the victim

of unscrupulous scheming, with more to follow. He had been expelled for breaking out, betting, pub haunting and black-guardism generally. Tunstall, of course, denied all this and put the whole thing on his cousin Herbert Varney - another Higham boy - although he could not offer the slightest jot of evidence. Once again the root of all the trouble was money. If young Tunstall was a disgrace to his name, his grandfather would disinherit him and the money would go to the other grandson, Herbert Varney. Both the boys were orphans. The amount involved, and remember this was in 1937, was twenty thousand pounds a year. Quite a nice tidy little income! And no-one seemed to have the slightest idea that anything fishy was afoot! As Len said reproachfully to his Uncle later in the story:- "I begin to doubt whether you'll ever be Chief Commissioner at Scotland Yard, even with my assistance." It seemed more likely that Bill would finish up as Chief Commissionaire.

Needless to say, Pie Porringe pointed the way and the real Eric Tunstall was discovered as a prisoner. The rascally Varney who was acting his part at the school had finally been caught by the Head Master, Dr. Osborne, smoking in the billiards room of the disreputable "Peal of Bells" and sentenced to expulsion. All Charles Hamilton's pubs seemed to have billiards rooms but I must admit, I've never come across one that has.

All turned out fine at the end - the real Tunstall was reinstated in his grandfather's good books and returned to his old school, duly cleared of any suspicion. Herbert Varney disappeared and his accomplice, his tutor by the name of Stacey who was supposed to be abroad with young Varney, finished up in the cells on a charge of kidnapping.

We found in this series that Oakshott had first roll, second roll and lock up roll, so that the school must have spent a considerable part of each evening going to and from the Hall to answer their names. No wonder that on the occasion Chowne, Master of the Shell was taking roll, he was described as curt and irritable and snapped off the names almost as if he were biting them off.

Probably in those days, tranquillisers were unheard of.

The final series of four stories dealt with the Mystery Master - Mr. Egerton Young - who came to the school for a few weeks to take the place of the games master, Mr. Bullivant.

Len Lex & Co. having slogged up Trant Hill on their push bikes, refusing to dismount until the old gentleman in front of them did the same, were relaxing with ginger beer and cakes at a little table under the spreading oak outside the Rotunda tea house when they heard revolver shots from the Sussex and Southern Bank and saw the old gentleman run out, mount his bike and ride away like the wind. No doubt the description of the old johnny rings a bell. He was complete with bushy silvery hair, white brows, grizzled moustache and beard, and looked sixty if he was a day. The same character seems to have appeared in Magnet yarns and was, quite often, pursued by the Bounder.

Pie Porringe voiced strange suspicions of the temporary games master and set Len Lex thinking hard. He later informed Bill Nixon that he ought to pay a call at an office in Regent Street known as Hodgson's Scholastic Agency which supplied temporary masters to schools when required. Although a number of Oakshott names appeared in other Hamilton yarns this is the first time I have come across my own. The office, however, does not appear to be in existence at the present time. If Bill were to obtain a list of posts held by

Mr. Young during the last few years and then compared this with a list of bank hold-ups where the man had not been caught, some light should be seen.

It seemed to be a good thing that Bill Nixon did have the help of his young nephew if he expected any further promotion.

The bank robber, as might have been expected, duly turned out to be Mr. Young and Bill Nixon led away another wrong-doer, complete, once again, with handcuffs on his wrists.

The end of another successful case and also the end of the exploits of the Schoolboy Detective as, unfortunately, no further stories ever appeared.

The illustrations throughout were by Savile Lumley. In the first four episodes in the Modern Boy and the second SOL he showed the Fifth Formers in Etons, though later in the Modern Boy and the Holiday Annual reprint they were in lounge suits.

As mentioned earlier, all these plots would have been familiar to any Gem and Magnet fan of long standing, but not to the new readers who kept joining up, when they would have been completely fresh. And, dare I say it, not every-one was a Gem and Magnet fan.

Of all the grand stories Charles Hamilton wrote for the Modern Boy, only two were school yarns - High Coombe and Oakshott and I defy anyone to read of Pie Porringe & Co. and not admit that they have just enjoyed an excellent and entertaining school story, in the best Charles Hamilton tradition.

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COMMENTS ON A VOLUME OF THE JESTER (Continued from page 25)...

called "Step by Step" and is an exceedingly good story. Yet another story of which all the instalments are available is "His Dad's Good Name," by Henry T. Johnson. This seemed to me to savour of F. Anstey's "Vice Versa," as during the course of the yarn a youngish man masquerades as a boy.

Other serials which one would have liked to read in their entirety are:-  
 (1) "The King's Highway," a story of Dick Turpin by Henry St. John. The first part of this is complete, but as it is immediately followed by a sequel, "Stand and Deliver!" which is still unfinished at the end of the volume, one is left frustrated. (2) "The Fight for Canada," by Morton Pike, begins in No. 93 but is still running in No. 104. Towards the end of the volume commences a serial by Stanhope Sprigg called "The Master of Mystery." So in all this collection of 52 issues in sequence there are actually only three complete serials!

Of the long complete stories quite a few are by Arthur S. Hardy and several of these are laid in the Australian bush. Others are by Mark Darran and Tristram K. Monck. To my mind the best are those dealing with Dr. Messina. No name is appended to these yarns, except in one instance, when Alec G. Pearson is credited with their authorship. Several years later shorter stories of Dr. Messina were to appear in the "Boys' Realm."

As an afterword, though it has no connection with this particular volume, Sexton Blake fans may be interested to know that, in a loose copy of the Jester for 1906, I found an instalment of a serial called "Sexton Blake" by Maxwell Scott. This shows that the creator of Nelson Lee penned quite a fair number of words about the Baker Street detective, as in addition to the serial above quoted, he wrote the Scorpion tales in the "U.J." and a serial of Blake and Lee, "The Winged Terror."

THE JESTER, 1½D.

"The Dauntless Three," The Favourite War Story, *On* Page 3

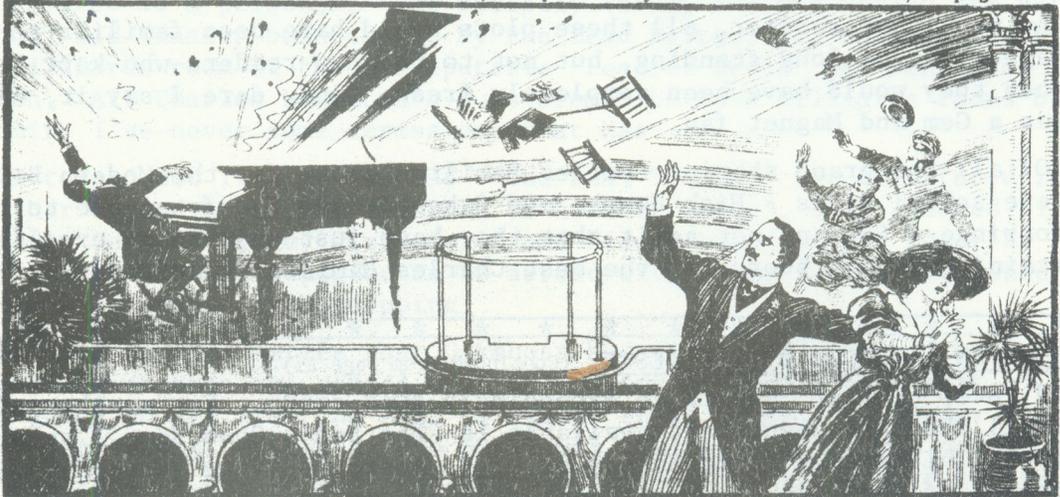


No. 865.

EVERY FRIDAY.

JUNE 1, 1918.

"THE FATAL CHORD." A Fine, Complete Story of Dr. Duval, Detective, on page 2.



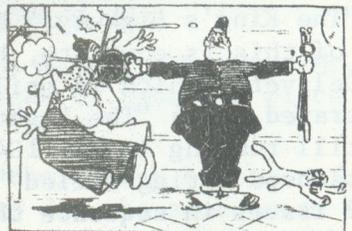
THE MUSIC CEASED AS THERE CAME A BLINDING FLASH AND A DEAFENING EXPLOSION.  
THE COMICAL CAPERS OF CONSTABLE CUDDLECOOK.



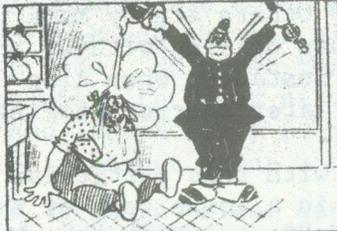
1. Dear Mr. Editor, most excellent Sir.—Yesterday afternoon, at thirty-three minutes past three to be exact, I called upon Carrie Cokernit, the comely cook of the Carnacle.



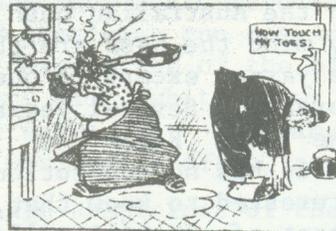
2. Would it like me to tell thee how I taught the Specials Swedish drill? says I. "Indeed, I would!" cooed Carrie. "Right," says I. "I'll just give 'em an illus."



3. Well, young sirs, I hadn't any dumb-bells, so I picked up a kettle and the fireiron. "Watch this carefully," I says. "Extend the arms to the fullest, as thus."



4. "See the giza?" I says. "Number two movement—raise wings over dome like so!" And, though I wasn't aware of the fact, Carrie got a shower bath of warm water. I paused for applause, but got none.

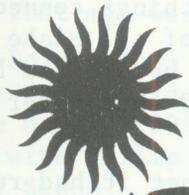


5. "Quite simp, old dear!" I chirped. "Now to touch toes. This is the brace button-busting movement!" "Mps! This is a bone-busting movement!" screamed Carrie, and she did not wait and see further, sir.



6. "Biff! Crash! Wallop!" The next thing I remembered was sitting in the garden with a saucepan on me head and a lot of stars around. "Stumpy!" I says. "Carrie seems to be annoyed about something!" —ANON. P. O. C. C. C. C. C.

# THE MAN FROM BAKER STREET (Blakiana)



## 'The Base of the Pyramid'

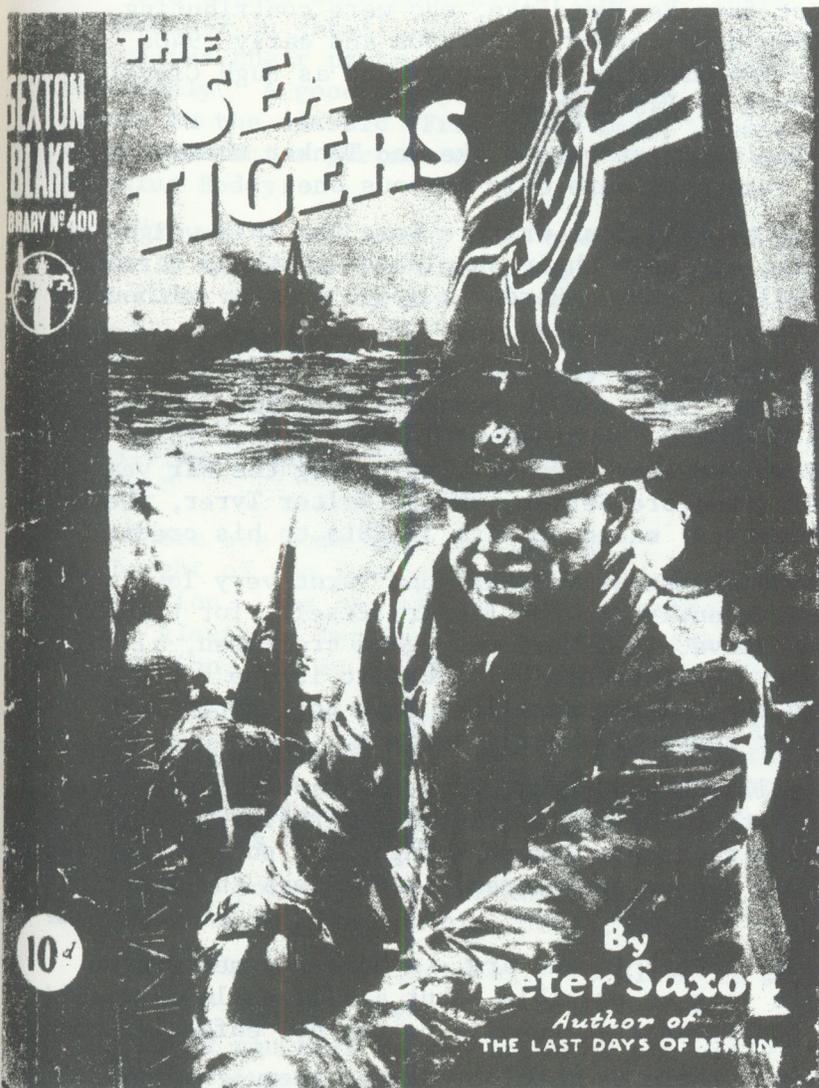
By Christopher A. J. Lowder

I have called this article "The Base of the Pyramid" because, in it I intend to discuss the 14 novels which introduced the modern, "New Look" Sexton Blake to the world in the latter months of 1956.

They were all undoubtedly very good thrillers. They were, again undoubtedly, the starting-point for a great deal of controversy and dissent amongst the ranks of the faithful followers of this unique fictional detective.

But, if they had not been written, a legend would surely have ended there and then. That it did not was due almost entirely to the efforts of one man - but we will come back to him later.

At the time of which we speak, the Sexton Blake Library was stagnating; it had reached the dead end of a cul-de-sac. The latter half of the 3rd



Series (and, by this, I mean from around the 250 mark up to No. 358 - since we are now in the 5th Series, we can count Nos. 359 to 526 as being the 4th Series) is cluttered up with dead wood; the plots, with one or two notable exceptions, are sterile and hackneyed; the characters are mostly cardboard figures; the atmosphere is unreal; in point of fact, the only memorable things connected with this period are the inimitable covers by that greatest of all Blake artists, Eric Parker - and even he faded from the scene long before the New Look was inaugurated, only contributing the odd cover now and then after the 320 mark.

What had happened to the S.B.L? The simple answer is that it had run itself into the ground. Gone were those supreme "name" villains of Blake's heyday - Plummer, Kestrel, Rymer, Waldo and Zenith - their creators being either long since dead or just too old to write about them. The only survivor of the 1930s was John Hunter's Captain Dack - a splendid survivor, true, but to the Blake connoisseur the 1930s are not even the Golden Years, but only the Indian Summer, so to speak, of that fabled period in Blake lore that stretches from the early 1900s to the late 1920s.

And the only writers, apart from Rex Hardinge, who were contributing novels to the S.B.L. in the 1950s were all of late 1930s and early 1940s vintage - excluding comparative newcomers to the saga, such as Hugh Clevely, Hilary King (J. G. Dickson) and W. J. Passingham.

The only links with the glorious past were Blake and Tinker themselves - and, at times, it seemed as if even they were only tenuous ones.

From the late 1940s onwards to 1956 four writers bore the full weight of keeping Blake alive in a changing age upon their shoulders - Anthony Parsons, Rex Hardinge, John Hunter and Walter Tyrer. Hardly a month went by without at least one of those names appearing in the lists.

During these years Parsons was easily the most prolific, turning out a total of 89 novels from No. 2 to No. 357, and in second place came John Hunter, with just over half that score with 46. Hardinge would have beaten this, I am sure, but for the fact that he stayed away from writing during the War years and only contributed 40 novels to the 3rd Series, whilst Walter Tyrer, the only newcomer to this post-War period, ended up with 37 SBLs to his credit.

It is no wonder that by 1956 the creative spark had burnt very low indeed in these four writers, and, consequently, in the Library itself, for they had born the brunt of keeping Blake alive. All were very good craftsmen, all had written at least one masterpiece - give credit where credit is due - but the effort had proved too much, and their later thrillers lack the spirit, the power, the inventiveness of their respective early periods.

So - identifiable "name" villains had ceased to wreak havoc in the lives of Blake and Tinker; the main authors of the stories had mercilessly driven themselves into the ground trying to keep a legend going; and public interest, as a result of these factors, was waning considerably. Such was the position in 1956.

What was needed was not just a shot in the arm - a half-way measure to eke out Blake's existence for as long as possible - but a full-scale surgical operation to cut out the dead parts and restore life to the now enfeebled body.

Whatever his detractors - and there seem to be many of them - may say,

one man did just that, almost alone and unaided. He wielded the knife with such skill in fact that Blake emerged from the operation as a driving force, full of action, ready and able to take on any adversary, and fully restored to all his former glory.

That man was W. Howard Baker.

Before I am accused of deifying Mr. Baker, let us look at the facts. 19 times in the 3rd and 4th Series did Baker's name appear on the masthead of a Blake novel - 19½, if one includes No. 517 (or No. 159), written in collaboration with Philip Chambers. Plus 15 thrillers written under the pseudonym of Peter Saxon. Plus another 9 under the names of William Arthur and W. A. Ballinger. And who can number the Desmond Reids and Richard Williams that hid the Baker identity - full novels, revisions, or collaborations? All in all, Baker must have had a hand in well over half of the Blake novels from No. 359 to No. 526 (Nos. 1 - 168).

Of the 14 thrillers to which we must now turn, Baker wrote exactly half - under his own name, and under that of Peter Saxon.

Two things were noticeable from the start - greater characterization, and an emphasis on detail, however small. Characters (even the most minor ones) who played their parts in the plots were skilfully portrayed and analysed thoroughly. A good example of this, so to speak, non-cardboard approach occurs in the classic "Frightened Lady," where, in Chapter Five, Blake interviews the senior partner of Boddy, Blackman and Boddy, solicitors - one, Aloysius Boddy.

"It was a tall room, tall and narrow, with a window which faced out across a street barely wide enough to permit the passage of a very small car. From floor to ceiling were stacked black deed-boxes, each bearing the name of some honoured and distinguished family. Cowering under the shadow of the boxes, as though at any moment expecting them to descend and crush it to match-wood, there was a small, low, oaken desk - simple and unornamented. Behind the desk sat the senior partner, who now looked at Blake over the tops of steel-rimmed spectacles, coughed wheezily once or twice, and rustled some papers."

There are some nice touches here. The word "cowering" perfectly conveys the height of the room while correlating with the antiquity of the gentleman in question. The use of the word "spectacles," too, instead of the more usual "glasses," implies his age much more succinctly than any detailed description. As it is, Baker uses both methods.

Mr. Boddy has "palsied fingers" which "quiver over the papers on his desk;" his eyes are "blue and kindly, if rather remote from worldly things;" he has "wrinkled hands," and he "smooth(s) back the skin on each finger;" he calls the detective "young man" continually; he has a "thin-lipped, shrunken mouth" and his voice "rustles."

At one point during the interview Blake gets the impression that the old man has gone to sleep on him. But....

"The old man said nothing. To Blake it seemed more than likely that he hadn't even heard

'Could you tell me the terms of the will?' he repeated more loudly.  
'Could you give me a hint?'

'What are you shouting for, young man? I can hear you!' Mr. Boddy leaned over and glared at Blake over the tops of his spectacles."

Mr. Boddy, in fact, is not as decrepit as he makes himself out to be.

"What do you want the information for?"

The question came out clear and strong. Its directness surprised the detective."

It surprises the reader too. But this is Baker's way - always the unexpected, the unanticipated, the unforeseen.

Boddy gives Blake the information he is seeking - but in his own way and in his own time. The character is clearly and excellently drawn, and the whole chapter is beautifully written, carrying with it the Baker hallmark of professionalism tinged with a non-treacly sentiment, which shows itself time and again in his novels.

"As (Blake) walked down the long and dusty passage...he thought that Mr. Aloysius Boddy might be old; he might even be enfeebled; but his mind and his heart were both in the right place."

While Baker clearly saw the need for a new, more radical approach to the Blake mythos as a whole, yet still he retained - retains, in fact, to this day - a nostalgic regard for the past, for the Golden Years. He realized that Blake had to change with the times (e.g. his oft-quoted reference to Upton Sinclair's Lanny Budd), yet still remain true to those principles laid down by Harry Blyth, Blake's maker, as long ago as 1893: "...if there is wrong to be righted, an evil to be redressed, or a rescue of the weak and suffering from the powerful, our hearty assistance can be readily obtained."

It is interesting to note that the "tough" qualities in Baker's prose style first came to light under his pseudonym of Peter Saxon. In parenthesis, it is also interesting to ponder on this pseudonym - a natural one, really, in view of Baker's fiery pro-British sympathies. As evidence of which, we only have to read any of his War thrillers in the Blake Library, or that apotheosis of Anglophilism (is there such a word? If not, there ought to be) "The Violent Ones" which concerned the Cyprus troubles, pugnaciously presented the philosophy "My country - right or wrong," and caused a great deal of controversy long after it was published. There is also Eustace Craille, the embodiment of everything English. But, about him, I will have more to say later.

Back to the Baker/Saxon split personality. Let us take two pre-New Look examples - "The Man Who Knew Too Much" (No. 350) and "Danger Ahead" (No. 353, written under the Saxon pen-name.) The differences are easy to see. Whereas the former is a more-or-less conventionally written, rather dull novel, saved in the last few pages by the Baker compassion, the latter is a fast-moving, hard-hitting, essentially tough thriller, where no holds are barred, and words which, for instance, Parsons or Hardinge would never have used in the same context are blythely tossed about in the course of the narrative, causing, I am sure, not a few raised eyebrows amongst the ranks of the faithful.

Let me put it this way: although both stories are written by the same man, "The Man Who Knew Too Much" is a tale of the musty past, whilst "Danger Ahead" is as fresh as a March gale.

It is only when we read the classic - again I must use that word, for it

perfectly describes the subject - "Frightened Lady" that we realize that Baker, when his name appeared on the cover of a Blake novel, had previously been labouring under the strain of writing out of his style.

It is obvious that Baker, then, was of the "new order" of thriller writers, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by, in order of seniority, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James Hadley Chase and possibly Mickey Spillane.

But there is one name, one influence, that overrides all the rest. There is one man who, I think, contributed more to Baker's personal style - and this, of course, does not mean to say that Baker is a carbon copy of the author in question; far from it, in fact - and to the general presentation of the Library at that time, than any other. That man was Peter Cheyney.

Cheyney gave to the British detective story what Hammett, Chandler and the rest of the "Black Mask" school of the early 1930s had given to its American counterpart - another much-needed operation. In the person of Slim Callaghan we have one of the greatest examples of the British "private eye" - cynical, worldly, tough (at times even brutal), yet, at the same time, compassionate, with a stubborn desire that justice should be seen to be done, and, about certain things, an intense moral uprightness.

This, then, was the model for the new Blake. As Baker himself wrote in his now-famous Editorial in Nos. 367 and 368 (Nos. 9 and 10): "Sexton Blake moves with the times! This must always be the case..."

Indeed, it must. A fictional character who has had the tenacity to survive for 70-odd years must not be allowed to stagnate or die.

But Cheyney, or his influence, was the *primum mobile* behind Baker. In the latter's earlier New Look thrillers this influence is blatantly obvious - whole passages of description have the Cheyney hallmark. It is true to say, without denigrating Baker in any way, that a few of his early Saxons could have been written by the Master himself - just as, in the mid-1920s, some of the early detective tales of Donald Stuart (Gerald Verner - curiously enough, a friend of Cheyney) might easily have been written by his particular mentor, the great Edgar Wallace.

The Cheyney style is a curious kind of terse repetitiveness in narration, fused with an immense amount of soliloquization. Baker found it fascinating. Two examples will show what I mean.

"...It took a trembling hand three times to make the receiver stay down.

Blake thought about that.

He thought about it with his telephone still held in a slim, strong hand...

Blake thought about the trembling hand of the person who had called him. He thought about the note of fear in the voice. He thought he would like to know more about the inhabitants of 116, Exeter Square." (SBL No. 361 - No. 3 - "Dark Mambo.")

"Her mouth ran with bitterness and sweetness intermingled. The cherry was sweet, cloyingly so. The drink in which it rested was bitter. Hildegard thought that you couldn't have the one without the other; bitterness and sweetness went hand in hand, and both must be paid for. That was a drink, and that was life.

"She told herself that she was quite the philosopher." (SBL No. 369 - No. 11 - "Woman of Saigon.")

One example, picked at random, from the Cheyney canon will suffice:

"Callaghan was thinking about Effie Perkins. He was also thinking about himself, the five hundred pounds - and Cynthia Meraulton.

He wondered about Effie. He wondered if she would be sufficiently nasty to throw a spanner into the machinery. She could - very easily. Callaghan thought that Effie was probably like that. Somewhere or other he had read something about 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.' Well, Effie had been scorned all right." ("The Urgent Hangman" - Collins, 1938.)

But, as I said, Baker was not a carbon copy of Cheyney. He took the latter's style and adapted it to his own needs. Out of this amalgamation came a purely personal style that was undoubtedly the fountain-head of and inspiration for Sexton Blake's modern chroniclers.

The next Blake author of importance is, without a doubt, Arthur Maclean, and here I must confess a personal bias. For of all the Blake titles that were published until the Library folded in 1963, the 14 or so novels written by Maclean seem to me to be entirely without blemish. I can read them again and again - and frequently do so.

Whoever Maclean was - or is, for that matter - he was an excellent writer, with a sharp, trenchant style of writing, and a neat line in dialogue unequalled (except by Jack Trevor Story; but he was rather different) by any other modern Blake writer.

If I were asked to choose my favourite Maclean novels, I would unhesitatingly pick "Night Beat" No. 365 (7); "Dark Frontier" No. 368 (10); "Final Curtain" No. 411 (53); and "Pursuit to Algeria" No. 470 (112) - a shocker, a spy story, a detective tale, and a serious novel. To say the least, an interesting progression.

But it is obvious that Maclean is an all-rounder, the sort of writer who can turn his hand to anything. Indeed, the only type of popular novel that he did not attempt for the Library was the Western - and doubtless this omission was not his fault.

In Maclean, we have another example of the Cheyney-influenced writer, but not to such an extent as Baker. In fact, Maclean was probably more an admirer of the Hammett/Chandler school - violent, but, at the same time, literate.

To Maclean went the honour, if you like, of introducing two important new characters into the Blake mythos - Arthur "Splash" Kirby, the irrepressible, and irresistible, journalist from the "Daily Post" (and, incidentally, an extension of Gwyn Evans's "Splash" Page), and the enigmatic, almost inhuman Eustace Craille, that shadowy figure at the top of the Secret Service tree, answerable, seemingly, only to the reigning monarch.

Probably both characters were Editorially created, but it is significant that Maclean should be given the task of first bringing them to the notice of Blake readers.

The first Craille story is a classic by any standards, and here again one can see the Editorial/Cheyney influence. Not in the writing of the story itself, of course, but in the name of this "Supremo" of the Intelligence service. For Craille, read Quayle - Peter Quayle, the tired, cynical hero of

Cheyney's superb "Dark" series.

Incidentally, it may be that le Carre and Len Deighton are far more realistic in the treatment of spy stories as such than Cheyney, yet I have always thought that the latter's "The Stars Are Dark" is the finest spy-thriller that I have ever read, or will ever read. It is the perfect combination of what is and what is not. The "dark heroes" who people this book are not the cardboard figures of le Queux or Oppenheim, but nor are they wholly devoid of those social advantages that made such as Duckworth Drew and Peter Ruff so admired by pre-1930 standards.

Baker, in his editing of the S.B.L., followed Cheyney's lead, and Maclean became the best chronicler in the genre that Blake ever had.

Spying is a dirty, inglorious business - but necessary. Craille is a passionate patriot - and accordingly completely ruthless.

Craille is not averse, when the need arises, to go out into the field himself - unlike those pre-War Heads of Department who meandered through the Times deep in Club armchairs and were tediously omniscient puppet-masters. Craille is a human being - his patriotism is human in that he will brook no argument against it. "My country - right or wrong" is probably engraved on his heart.

Again, in the older type of spy story, murder, as such, even for that so-called "good cause," is never fully condoned. The villain dies either in a fair fight (usually by way of a handy cliff top or 10th floor window) or through his own carelessness (by pressing the button that will blow the hero to kingdom-come without first checking that the hero has not tampered with the wires in some way - well, that's pretty careless, isn't it?)

Craille, on the other hand, is convincingly implacable - revenge is an integral part of his make-up. "Kill, or be killed" is another old saw that he has adapted to his needs.

All this is shown to us in "Dark Frontier," especially in that thoroughly convincing Chapter 9, "So Perish All Traitors." Lambton is a traitor - to his monarch, his country, and his country's way of life. The solution to the problem is simple - and effective.

Although Craille, as a character, has developed over the years since that first story, it was Maclean who laid the ground-work, and it is to Maclean that the credit must go for one of the most believable and interesting characters ever to have come out of the Library, or even the mythos as a whole.

Of the remaining three authors who made up the quintet of first chroniclers of the "New Look" Sexton Blake, little need be said.

Not, certainly, because their work was bad in any way - two of them, James Stagg and Jack Trevor Story, went on to become regular writers for the Library, while the third, Arthur Kent, only contributed a few novels - but because the first 14 "New Look" Blakes are so dominated by Baker and Maclean (the latter wrote four of the 14) that all else rather pales into significance.

My own view is that each of these three writers wrote better books than their first offerings - James Stagg "Desert Intrigue" (SBL No. 444 - No. 86); Jack Trevor Story "Assault and Pepper" (SBL No. 472 - No. 114) and "Danger's Child" (SBL No. 487 - No. 129); and Arthur Kent "The Weak and the Strong" (SBL No. 502 - No. 144).

Yet even these first three thrillers were well above average for their time, since all three writers were professionals.

Indeed, professionalism is, as they say nowadays, what it's all about when one comes to consider Blake authors as a whole. And this quality shines in the 4th more than in any previous Series. Whatever one's taste in thrillers, it cannot be said that the modern writers lacked craft simply because they were modern.

The 4th Series, under Baker's guiding hand, went on from strength to strength, but these 14 novels, before the Library cut down the size of its pages, laid down an intelligent law as to the direction Sexton Blake should take in a modern age. In fact, these novels can be read today without one feeling that one is delving into a dim and misty past - Maclean's "Dark Frontier," for instance, reflects the horror of the recent Czechoslovakian occupation just as much as it reflected the terror and the tanks of Budapest in 1956, when it was first published.

I know, from reading the Collectors' Digest, that many people abhor the "New Look" Blake because it represented a variation from the previous norm. But change is one of life's laws, and it is only by change that the human species survives.

And, whatever one may say about the "New Look" Sexton Blake, it is only because of major surgery in the mid-1950s that a unique fictional character has survived into the 1960s and not become an anachronism.

\* \* \* \* \*

BIBLIOGRAPHIC - A list of the 14 thrillers from the Sexton Blake Library discussed in this article, plus a selection of titles from the pre-New Look era, for the purposes of comparison.

- 344 The Trail of the Suspect Scientist - A. Parsons
- 345 The Strange Affair of the Widow's Diamonds - W. Tyrer
- 347 Without Warning - W. H. Baker
- 349 The Case of the Legion Deserter - H. Clevely
- 350 The Man Who Knew Too Much - W. H. Baker
- 351 The Clue of the Pin-Up Girl - W. Tyrer
- 352 It Happened in Hamburg - W. H. Baker
- 353 Danger Ahead - W. H. Baker (P. Saxon)
- 354 Gangster's Girl - A. J. Hunter
- 355 Devil's Can-Can - W. H. Baker
- 356 By Whose Hand? - R. Hardinge
- 357 Hotel Homicide - A. Parsons
- 358 Decoy For Murder - W. H. Baker (P. Saxon)

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- 359 (1) Frightened Lady - W. H. Baker
- 360 (2) Flight Into Fear - W. H. Baker (P. Saxon)
- 361 (3) Dark Mambo - W. H. Baker
- 362 (4) Broken Toy - A. Maclean
- 363 (5) Front Page Woman - W. H. Baker (P. Saxon)
- 364 (6) Inclining To Crime - A. Kent
- 365 (7) Night Beat - A. Maclean
- 366 (8) Requiem For Redheads - W. H. Baker
- 367 (9) Assignment In Beirut - J. Stagg
- 368 (10) Dark Frontier - A. Maclean
- 369 (11) Woman of Saigon - W. H. Baker (P. Saxon)
- 370 (12) Canvas Jungle - A. Maclean
- 371 (13) Battle Song - W. H. Baker
- 372 (14) Murder - With Love! - J. T. Story

# HURRAH for the 'Twopenny Dreadfuls!'

By Len Wormull

THE PAPER EVERYBODY IS TALKING ABOUT!

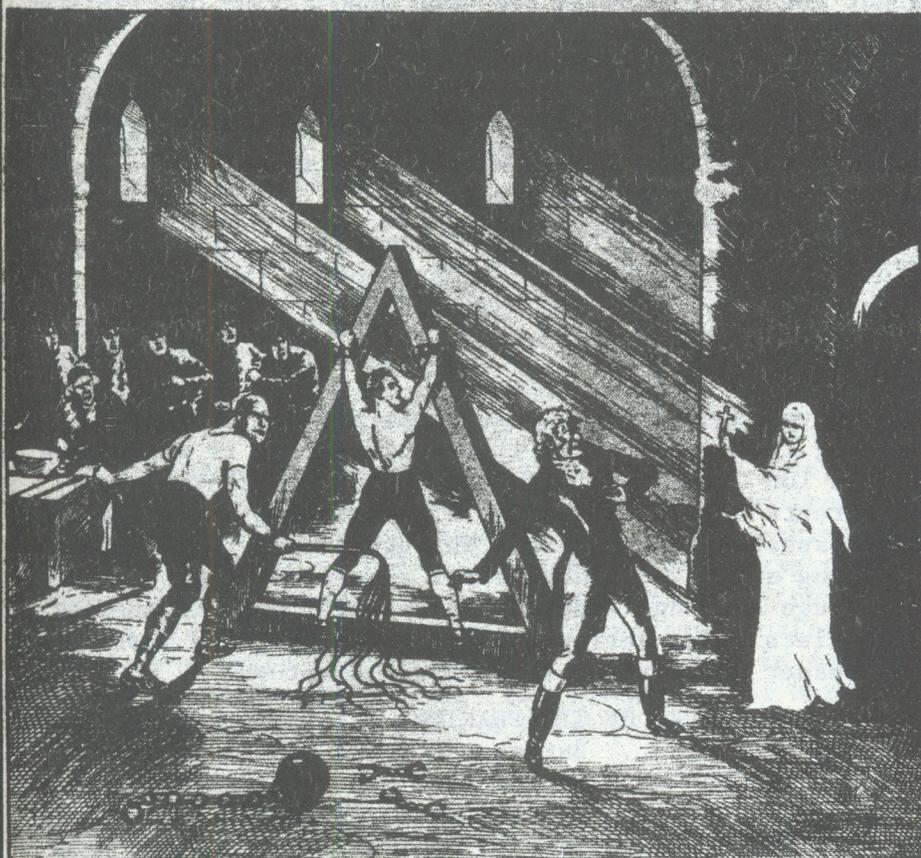


No. 40. Vol. 2

Week Ending October 24th, 1931.

TWOPENCE

## SECRETS OF STONEMOOR!



In the very act of using his whip for the first lash, the warder stayed his blow. A figure had appeared in the doorway—and it was the ghostly figure of the White Nun! From head to feet she was garbed in purest white, and in one hand she held a crucifix which glistened in the sunlight that came through the narrow windows. (See page 3.)

My introduction to the world of horror fiction began with what I regard as two of the most exciting events in boys' weeklies: BULLSEYE and SURPRISE.

Although addicted to the more wholesome reading of E. S. Brooks and Charles Hamilton, I must confess that I enjoyed every gruesome minute with these new-styled papers. The last of the "bloods," they out-thrilled the thriller papers of the day and contained some of the most fantastic stories every written for boys. Both were enhanced by brilliant artistic work in keeping with their style, two of the better known illustrators being G. E. Wakefield and Leonard Shields.

BULLSEYE opened on the 21 Jan. 1931, and ran for 183 issues. Like its

predecessor FUN AND FICTION, from which many of the stories originated, it had a short but startling career. Its rather drab blue cover struck just the right note for this macabre package of "shockers." During its reign the Cinema enjoyed a great boom in horror films, many of which were to become classics - Dracula, Dr. Jekyll, Frankenstein, to name but a few. My early impressions of the paper were in fact closely linked with film actor Lon Chaney. Many of the stories might well have been written for the master of make-up, two notable examples being LONDON AFTER DARK and THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND FACES. Issue No. 1 gave an eerie foretaste of the things to come.

THE HOUSE OF THRILLS made an arresting opening story and became one of its main attractions. It remained a favourite to the end, the only story to run the whole course. It told of John Pentonville, a disabled ex-adventurer, who takes residence at Gaunt House, an eerie and derelict mansion overlooking a London prison. He makes it known that any story-teller who could 'quicken the blood through his veins' would be rewarded with £100. When strangers came to tell their tale the elements either raged, or the night was strangely still. Almost invariably, the hour was midnight or just after. The relater always got the money, proof that a nerve-shattering time was had by all. In the last episode we see him being cured of his disability. Conveniently knocking over an oil-lamp, Gaunt House is soon a blazing inferno. Cured at last, the intrepid explorer seeks fresh adventures in Uganda.

THE NIGHT PATROL, a story of River Police fighting the Red Shadow Tong in London's Chinatown, caught the right mood in the days when a kind of 'sinister atmosphere' was associated with the Limehouse district. It was at this time, too, that the Fu Manchu films with Warner Oland were doing good business at the cinemas. SCARBAND had the hideous Uriah Strange, a deaf and dumb barber playing the head of a band of criminals. THE SIGN OF THE CRIMSON DAGGER employed a Secret Society theme, always a sure winner with schoolboys. These formed some of the opening highlights of the paper.

Ghost stories were a Bullseye speciality and had an advantage over the Yuletide affairs so beloved by school writers. Ghosts roamed its pages in and out of season playing a variety of roles - you name it, they could do it. No. 14 saw the ghost that was to become the most famous of them all: THE PHANTOM OF CURSITOR FIELDS.

Whatever success Bullseye enjoyed was almost certainly due to this absorbing thriller. Reading it through again it struck me that it would have made an exciting film, with Lon Chaney again in the lead. The stories were set against the cobbled streets of Old Cheapside, with swirling mists and fog and a labyrinth of secret passages and tunnels. Through it all the Phantom plundered and struck, leaving a trail of black terror. Week after week readers thrilled to its maniacal laugh echoing along the alley-ways, and its seeming immunity to policemen's bullets. The series ended with No. 41, the mystery still unsolved. But the reader could sense that it would return.

This came with No. 72, THE RETURN OF THE PHANTOM, a series that was to prove even more exciting than the first. But as the weeks went into months the suspense became unbearable. Who was the Phantom? Would it never be caught? Readers had to wait till No. 104 for the answer. Meanwhile, tension mounted when the Commissioner of Scotland Yard, Sir Gilbert Martin, was held to ransom by the Phantom for 1000 guineas in gold. Suspicion fell on Solomon Ely, the barber of Cursitor Fields, in whose shop the Commissioner had disappeared (shades of Sweeney Todd!). The climax came at last when the Phantom,

wounded and leaving a trail of blood, is tracked to its lair - to be exposed as the barber's twin brother. Both had conspired in the plot and both went to prison. The bullets? This Phantom wore armour-plating!

In my opinion Bullseye reached its peak with this story and was never able to repeat the success. It tried again with THE PHANTOM HIGHWAYMAN OF LONDON FIELDS, but this ghost lacked the substance of the Master. Plenty of shocks remained in the kitty, however. THE INN OF A 1000 SECRETS and WHO, WHY, WHERE, WHEN? were undoubted winners. There was the EERIETANIA, a drama-doomed ship sailing the Atlantic, with never a normal moment. THE WITHERED HAND showed a touch of originality. Stolen from ancient Egypt, it was said that 'he who held the hand of Rathos, when darkness cloaked the earth, could gain his heart's desire - but not always as he hoped!' LADY BOUNTY - SPY was, I believe, the only story with a female lead. Prison stories were fashionable, probably the best being MY RECOLLECTIONS OF PRISON LIFE, by Warder Blake, a photo of whom was seen. Almost the only light relief was provided by the editor's "Chat, Chuckles, and Chaff" and Willy and Wally, the Bullseye Back-Chat boys. Doubtless inspired by the early success of the paper, Fleetway House launched its twin companion on March 5th, 1932.

SURPRISE was destined for a life-span of only 89 issues, during which time it more than justified its title. It was an attractive-looking paper with red, white, and blue cover. Although less horrific than Bullseye, there was enough blood and thunder to make it a 'chip off the old block,' but certain modifications were seen as the paper progressed. Discarding the sinister beginnings of its companion, Surprise opened with a theme that just couldn't miss - MONEY. It seemed that writers in those days had an overwhelming passion for the stuff (no comments!) as they always wrote in terms of millions. For some unknown reason, detectives were nearly always singled out to be millionaires.

Strictly speaking, THE RED TRIANGLE, a drama of the Underworld, was meant as a tour de force. But it stood little chance against its omnipotent neighbour, THE MAN WITH 1000 MILLIONS. The author of this story, Octavius Kay, conceived what was undoubtedly the most improbable story ever to see print. Beneath the title, and directed at juveniles mark you, was this breath-taking caption: "Flung to penniless tramp. What would you have done with so vast a sum? What will the tramp do with it? Learn how he used it."

The tramp in question, played by Martin Holt, comes by the wealth in this wise: Six miserly and enfeebled multi-millionaires are seen squabbling round a table piled with securities in Turkey. A casting vote is needed and a passing tramp is called in. A sudden earthquake puts paid to the millionaires, but not so the tramp. In their dying moments they bequeath their all to him. How he distributed the money in subsequent stories made fascinating reading. In later stories, and because of his talents in deduction, the hero is seen in MARTIN HOLT - DETECTIVE. The adventures of Martin Holt provided the backbone to the paper, as did the Phantom in Bullseye.

Almost unbelievably, a few stories away was MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING! about a poor boy who inherits a vast fortune, but didn't want it. Another was CHUMS OF FORTUNE, this time a London newsboy changing places with a millionaire's son. Interspersed with all this lolly was the eerie WHEN MIDNIGHT CHIMES and HAUNTED HOMES. Not forgetting THE PHANTOM THIEF, by day a benign old invalid doing charity. Two stories which stood out were THE MONK OF IRONSTONE PRISON and DAN DARE OF "D" DIVISION, rather like a younger version of Dixon of Dock

Green.

New innovations were pretty girls, school stories, and Westerns - two of each in fact. First on the scene was Kiddie Wix the blonde flapper as THE ACE OF 'TECS, an Avenger-type lass in some hair-raising adventures. The other lovely young damsel always in distress, but entirely self-possessed, was THE GIRL IN THE IRON MUZZLE, a story of Cromwellian times. The muzzle, in the form of a charm, was a punishment meted out by the Roundheads for helping a witch to escape. Two well-written and nicely illustrated school stories were CHUMS OF CRANWORTH and ONLY A COUNCIL SCHOOLBOY. The Westerns were TEXAS TRIO and HANK OF THE PLAINS.

Without warning the lights went out and the paper ended on the 11 Nov. 1933. Readers were told that Surprise would in future be known as The Bullseye. MARTIN HOLT - DETECTIVE was added to the paper, but the sands were already running out for Bullseye. Towards the end it experimented with real-life photographs, with strangely super-imposed faces. The effect was at once false and shattering. This fiction WAS stranger than reality! Something seemed to be wrong, and the final curtain came suddenly on the 21 July, 1934. The editor took his leave, advising readers to watch out the following week for No. 1 of FILM PICTURE STORIES, featuring Tim McCoy, Buck Jones, Richard Dix, Victor McLaglen.

As an adult looking over these one-time favourites, I find myself sadly echoing the words of Roger Jenkins who once said of Bullseye (equally applicable to Surprise): 'For years I wanted to get hold of some copies again, but when I did I saw it for what it was - rather trashy excitement, not without some originality, but certainly nothing that would bear re-reading. It was pleasant to have seen the old papers again, but I did not want to keep them - the mental feast had become a surfeit.'

But I shall never forget the spell they cast over me in those early impressionable years, when the names BULLSEYE and SURPRISE meant everything there was to be had in thrills and excitement. Yes, sir, they hit the mark every time with me. They were the "tops" in "Twopenny Dreadfuls."

\* \* \* \* \*

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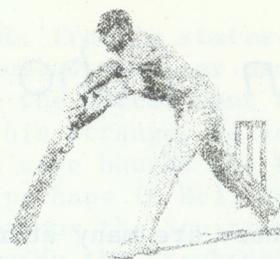
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of Greyfriars School!

# An Echo from the Past

by Jim Cook

There are many startling and memorable incidents in the history of St. Frank's that have a habit of being revived merely by reference to a place or a certain time of the year. A name mentioned perhaps out of context would form a topic in the Junior Common room that immediately sparked off a discussion or a reminiscence of a long forgotten chapter in the school's records. Most of the subjects related to former masters who came surrounded in mystery and of juniors who were unusual enough to create a diversion from the ordinary routine of school life.

As an example, Tommy Watson will always be reminded of his imprisonment at Moat Hollow whenever that infamous old house is mentioned; and Reggie Pitt winces at the direction a conversation sometimes takes when it concerns gambling and counterfeit money. Ralph Leslie Fullwood is so often reminded of his doubtful past when Forrest & Co., get up to some of their caddish tricks. But these trips down memory's lane soon merge again into the dim past and nothing more is said of them. Except one. This report deals with a follow up enquiry that had its origin when the moon was full and Mrs. Poulter's cat mistook Mr. Crowell's spectacles as glaring eyes of a strange animal!

The Ancient House matron's black cat was browsing on the steps of the Ancient House enjoying a nocturnal inspection when Mr. Crowell ascended the steps on his way to his study. The full moon reflected in his glasses must have appeared to the cat as two huge eyes and a split second later the Ancient House form master was alone. For the cat had scurried back into the House straight into the path of Willy Handforth who was at that moment on the point of colliding with Crowell.

What occurred after this is rather obscure since the incident was one of no consequence in that Old Crowell dismissed it from his mind by the time he reached his study. But Willy in rescuing the cat from under his feet and taking it out in the moonlit Triangle suddenly thought of another cat that had dominated a period at St. Frank's. Dr. Karnak's cat! What had happened to it after Dr. Karnak had been killed in the explosion?

It was all so long ago and almost forgotten but Willy was forcibly reminded of the time Dr. Karnak, the new curator of the school museum, had arrived bringing with him all the mysteries of the strange Cults and theories of Ancient Egypt. For Karnak had belonged to a Sect that worshipped the Moon god Baal and the Egyptologist had come to St. Frank's to escape the penalty of backsliding. From a later enquiry Nelson Lee was able to state that this Sect of Moon worshippers were a breakaway division of the Sun Worshippers when the sky-god Horus united with the Sun-god Re in the Second Dynasty.

Willy reflected on the sensational episode as he approached the Pet Quarters. The learned Egyptian had certainly brought with him ghosts from the ancient legends of Old Egypt, but what Willy was thinking about now was Dr. Karnak's Serval cat. This strange animal, this large, long-legged short-tailed tiger cat, was Dr. Karnak's pet and it was very seldom seen except when perched on the doctor's shoulder.

Records relating to the time Dr. Karnak was at St. Frank's states that the cat was last mentioned having left Dr. Karnak's custody for her usual quarter-hour exercise one moonlight night just before the doctor went to bed. From that time on nothing more was seen or heard of this strange, yellow cat. And as Willy Handforth made his way to where his pets were housed the thought that the cat may still be somewhere in the district, perhaps in Bellton Wood, persisted in his mind. And long after he had fed Septimus the Squirrel, stroked Sebastian the Snake, fondled the ear of Lightning the Greyhound, made sure of Priscilla the Parrot, looked at Ferdinand the Ferret, Rupert the Rat, Marmaduke the Monkey and Henry the Hedgehog, and saw them snugly settled down for the night he still wanted to know the fate of the Serval cat.

For it had been generally assumed that some mischance had befallen the animal at the time an attempt on the life of Dr. Karnak had been made by his enemies. And the doctor's last thought on the cat was that it was lying somewhere outside, stark in death. But the cat's body had never been found. And on the principle that cats have many lives Willy decided to make a thorough search in Bellton Wood where, if the cat was still alive, it would most probably exist.

The next day being a half holiday Willy mustered the full Third form and like a general deploying his troops Willy sent the Fags into Bellton Wood with instructions to cover every inch and every bush and hedge and climb every tree. If any strange cat was seen lurking in any place it was to be reported to him immediately. And since the yellow cat with its black spots was so well remembered by the boys its identification would be all the more easier.

It is to be regretted that the Fags weren't keen at all on the idea of giving up their half holiday to search for a cat that probably wasn't there, but Willy Handforth ruled the Third with a force usually attributed to tyrants and since in this case the operation was for humane purposes and for showing kindness to all animals the Fags in most of their hearts went about their appointed tasks with only half feelings towards their leader. One or two had full feelings which they dare not show Willy, but on the whole the great search was carried out with an interest heightened by the novelty of the situation.

And to keep the record in its proper order the poor cat was found in an emaciated condition after it had been cornered by Jack Blythe and Tommy Hobbs. The two Third Formers had discovered it lying under the hedge near the stile bordering Bellton Lane. A pre-arranged whistle brought Willy and the rest of the party to the spot at once.

This strange animal with its glossy, yellow coat had existed in the Wood ever since Dr. Karnak had been captured by members of a Sect of which the doctor had once been an adherent. But it was no longer the formidable creature it once was when it perched on Dr. Karnak's shoulder at the Spiritualist meetings and of the Sorcery Club seances where the Egyptian had trained the cat to assist him. Now it was just an ordinary cat and Willy's eyes softened as he picked it up and held it close to him.

And today, it lives with Willy's other pets. There is probably not another cat like it in all England and certainly not one in all the world with such a strange history.

Dr. Karnak had always called it Eswit but I doubt if Handforth minor will be satisfied with such an outlandish title for its name. He may pursue his form of alliteration which he has applied to his other pets' names but up to

the time of writing I don't know if he has.

The poor animal must have led a terrible existence in Bellton Wood since it had been so thoroughly domesticated by Dr. Karnak; but Willy tells me all animals can revert back to their former predatory habits providing the food is there to hunt. As far as I know Bellton Wood can offer only birds on which the cat could have lived but judging from the condition the cat was in when Willy found it he doubts whether the poor animal could find anything at all.

And because of the finding of the cat the strange affair of Dr. Karnak was discussed in the Common rooms by both juniors and seniors. But it was to Willy Handforth's way with animals that the cat came back to St. Frank's from its exile to survive and join his other pets.

Dr. Karnak's Serval cat will suffer no more its doubtful existence in Bellton Wood. For Willy has saved it from a dreadful fate. If the ghost of Dr. Karnak hovers at night at St. Frank's it may see the cat enjoying its remaining days in the care of Handforth minor. For in the evening, after prep, Willy takes the animal for a stroll round the school buildings and if Mrs. Poulter's black cat happens to be in her usual place on the Ancient House steps at such a time Willy asserts both cats nod as they pass each other.

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W A N T E D : ALL TYPES "Boys Papers," Comics, Annuals, Bound Volumes 1870-1945.

J. SWAN, 3 FIFTH AVENUE, PADDINGTON, LONDON W.10.

Best Wishes to Fellow Collectors especially Jim Swan and Bill Lofts. Always interested to hear of pre-war comics and magazines for sale or exchange.

JACK PARKHOUSE, 74 THE OVAL, BATH. B.A.2. 2.H.E.

Early MAGNETS, GEMS, POPULARS, NELSON LEE (Old Series), S.O.Ls., MONSTERS wanted to purchase or will exchange. List available.

PAT FEELEY, 1 DEACONS CLOSE, ELSTREE, HERTS.

WISHING ALL OUR HOBBY FRIENDS A REALLY HAPPY CHRISTMAS - from Australia and New Zealand. Victor Colby, Arthur Holland, Stan Nicholls, Syd Smyth, Tom Dobson, Ernie Carter, Harry Matthews, Bette Pate, Jim Cook.

W A N T E D : Boys' Friend Weekly 951-958, 961, 965-971, 986, 992, 1066, 1068-1070, 1120, 1122, 1124, 1127.

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

SEASONS GREETINGS to ALL HOBBY FRIENDS. JOHN and GILL BECK, LEWES, SUSSEX.

OUR BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY CHRISTMAS and A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR TO ALL OLD FRIENDS.

JIM AND LAUREL ROBINSON, HERNE BAY.

# I WANTED A TUCK HAMPER

By Jack Overhill

I was disappointed in the appearance of the GREYFRIARS HERALD when I paid a ha'penny for the first number in November, 1915. A small paper, with a picture-puzzle competition on the front page, it had a lifeless look about it; I couldn't see myself enjoying its stories. That proved to be true. Compared with the many ha'penny comics, chief among them CHUCKLES, with its fine school stories of Teddy Baxter & Co., of Claremont, and CHIPS, with its magnificent serial THE SCHOOL BELL, it was a washout. But the stories of Herlock Sholmes made me laugh and as it's good to laugh, perhaps I had my money's worth. Even now, more than fifty years later, I chuckle over: "Sholmes was an experienced seaman. His voice rang out from the bridge: 'Hoist the main deck overboard, reef the top-gallant sails down into the engine-room.' These orders were instantly obeyed." That was enough to make a cat laugh, let alone a twelve-year-old schoolboy.

The picture-puzzle competition was the real attraction of the GREYFRIARS HERALD. First prize £1, Second Prizes 5/-, Third Prizes Tuck Hampers, lured me. Every week I had a go at the competition; sometimes, if I was flush, two or three goes. In doing so, I wasted money. I thought every entry should be sent in a separate envelope and I spent many extra pennies on postage.

Oddly enough, I hadn't got my eye on the first and second prizes. It was a tuck hamper I wanted. Obviously, the reason was the tuckhamper spreads in Friardale and Rylcombe woods - and the Greyfriars and St. Jim's dormitories after lights out. I'd shared off-scene in the picnics of the various Co's - and in the dormitory feeds. So, just think what it would be like to have a tuck hamper to myself. The thought made my mouth water.

Well it might. The German U-boats had become a menace - the Q-boats that beat them hadn't yet got under way - and a food shortage was in sight. I did the shopping and punting round the shops became a hard job. Sunday dinner was the dinner of the week and as we were poor and could not buy favours, the time came when it was only bread and jam.

Earnestly, I kept at the competition, trying to win a tuck hamper. When the GREYFRIARS HERALD closed down after a few months, I hadn't pulled it off and as the competition was transferred to the BOYS' FRIEND, which I was taking every week, I continued doing it.

At last, a letter came. I had won a tuck hamper in Competition number 13. Sky high went the superstition that 13 was an unlucky number!

Filled with excitement and eager to know what a tuck hamper contained, I called on a boy named Reg Cruden, who had won two in the Boys' Friend competition. He had left school and I didn't know him very well. He didn't enlighten me much, but he made a significant remark: the second tuck hamper was smaller than the first!

There was a delay in the tuck hamper coming. Impatient, I wrote to the editor of the Boys' Friend, saying I hadn't received it. When I had no reply, I said it was all a swizzle. But though I said that, I didn't really mean it;

more likely the tuck hamper had got lost in the post. In that case, I should certainly ask for another one.

Day after day, I ran home from school with the inquiry: 'Has it come?' It hadn't. I kept on hoping.

One wet afternoon when I entered our kitchen-workshop and said: 'Has it come?' my father, a journeyman shoemaker, pointed under the table. I went down on my hands and knees and looked. Under the table was a tuckbox, not a tuck hamper, but not minding that, I gloatingly pulled it out. It was packed by Selfridge, made of stout cardboard, green in colour, about eighteen inches square and the same height.

I opened the tuckbox and unpacked. It contained: an oblong blue-labelled tin of biscuits (I think Peek Frean's), a plum pudding, a pot of honey, a tin of butterscotch, a jar of fish-paste, a tin of sardines - . My memory gives out here but there were other things and looking at them I was delighted. Fish-paste and sardines were not in our line and I straightway took them round to the house of a mate.

The tuckbox has always presented me with a problem. I had two mistakes in the picture-puzzle competition and it was one of the third prizes. The second prizes were five shillings. Money has greatly fallen in value since 1916, but prices were then increasing because of the war and it is difficult to square the contents of the tuckbox, plus the postage, with a sum less than five shillings.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here's hoping you get to know more about St. Frank's during 1969. JIM COOK

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FOR SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 1921, 1922, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941. "Greyfriars Prospectus," "Tom Merry's Own," Turner's "Boys Will Be Boys," Billy Bunter Stories (hard-backs). WANTED: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Sexton Blakes, Union Jacks, Magnets, Gems.

JAMES GALL, 1, CHAPEL COURT, JUSTICE STREET, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

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FOR SALE: 100 Boys' Friends Sept. 1903 - May 1904; July 1909 - Sept. 1910: £12.10.0. 100 Boys' Heralds July 1909 - June 1911. £12.10.0. Volume Marvels 105 - 136 £3.10.0. Postage extra. 1931 Holiday Annual 25/-.

S. WARD, WOOD END, BLUNTISHAM, HUNTINGDON.

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WANTED URGENTLY: Magnets 1193 and 1194.

D. SPIERS, ROSE COTTAGE, TUNWORTH, BASINGSTOKE, HANTS.

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WANTED: Sky Devils BFL 314 by Bernard Buley or Boys Mag. having same as serial circa 1932 1933 Roundhead and Cavalier by Alfred Armitage BFL circa 1935 or hard back.

HUGHES, 33 FOUNDRY ROAD, WALL HEATH, BRIERLEY HILL, STAFFS.

Leslie Rowley invites you to ---

## Tea in the Master's Commons

William George Bunter who has been known to invite himself to tea in a Sixth Form study has never been tempted to barge into Master's Commons at meal times. It may well be that he considers the prize not worth the risk for the food, like the company, is austere and the penalty for such a trespass dire indeed! Thin bread and butter and dry biscuits are hardly an entrancing reward for such enterprise. Even Herbert Vernon-Smith is reluctant to encounter beaks en masse and, keeping clear, contents himself by commenting that they are there "cackling like a lot of moulting hens." This description may not be a faithful one but it can be said that the masters give full exercise to their vocal chords which range (and probably exceed) the extent of any known chromatic scale - from the booming bass of Prout to the twittering treble of M. Charpentier.

It is, then, with some hesitation that I proffer my invitation. You would, no doubt, prefer an invite to a gargantuan spread in a Remove study where sosses, poached eggs and cream pastries abound and where the conversation, like the grub, is much more to your taste. But, dear friend, you have only to turn the pages of your 'Magnets' to find that you have been there before - not once but many times. You have seldom, if ever, witnessed the beaks at feeding time and this new experience may not be without its compensations. Time enough afterwards for you to treat yourself (and others) at the tuckshop if you are still hungry.

Master's Commons, on Master's Corridor, should be approached much in the same manner as one would approach a den of man-eating tigers. It is meant to inspire one with awe of the intelligentsia that foregather within its walls of dark panelled oak. Here, like inquisitors of old, assemble the academic might of Greyfriars School. Prout, obscuring all of the fireplace and most of its surrounds, regards the rest of his colleagues with genial eye and gives us a friendly nod as we enter. He is, of course, talking.

A well built, good looking young man shakes us by the hand and leads us to a couple of chairs. Larry Lascelles gives us a re-assuring smile; he is obviously content with his youth and physique and has no envy for his colleagues' greater age and greater learning. Introductions must come later, but we can see, standing by the window, the dapper form of the French master. Mosoo has one hand in the pocket of his well-worn jacket. That hand, we may suppose, is holding some photographs of his beloved nephews and nieces across the channel and will be produced at the earliest opportunity for all to inspect. Mr. Hacker is almost viciously buttering some toast, his expression indicating that he would prefer to use the knife for some less innocent purpose. A heavy breathing informs us that the bitter winter winds have not improved Mr. Capper's asthma, whilst in the background sit the urbane Mr. Wiggins and mild Mr. Twigg. Half hidden in a deep armchair, Mr. Quelch is unconcernedly opening a small buff envelope.

A peaceful scene o'er which drones the voice of Prout inexorable as the ocean waves upon a stormswept shore. The subject is bears and is one which seems to excite small interest among the audience as Prout narrates the story of his hunt for unlucky grizzlies at a point in North America some seventy miles from human habitation. Most present are wishing that the bears could have had more

luck and Prout less or, alternatively, that he had remained in that same remote spot.

"Iniquitous!" suddenly exclaims Quelch, regardless of Prout.

The others are on the ball at once: no opportunity must be lost that can halt Prout's flow in mid-stream.

"You spoke, my dear Quelch?"

"My dear fellow, you were saying ----"

"Is anything wrong, Quelch?"

"The monster, its hot fetid breath caressing my cheek --"

"Mon cher Quelch ----"

"Not bad news, I trust Quelch?"

"My faithful Winchester lay useless at my feet ----," Prout's words trail off like the notes of an organ when the bellows have failed. The competition is too great; obviously Quelch has captured the interest.

"Gentlemen," Quelch's voice is deep but not loud, "whilst the rest of the country is in a position to send messages to the other end of the world by Telstar; whilst a subscriber in London can dial a number in Aberdeen, we at Greyfriars have to rely upon the vagaries of the local, manually operated telephone exchange. For every call we make we are given at least five wrong connections - a call to the Courtfield bookseller will involve speaking to the Academy cinema, Chunkely's catering department, Mr. Mobbs at Highcliff, Dr. Pillbury and - on occasion, I fear - Sir Hilton Popper. Such is the service we have to expect. I have here," a bony finger taps emphatically upon a printed form, "my quarterly telephone account, evidence that the system of accountancy employed is as incompetent, as archaic as the exchange itself. In this account I am charged for fifty three calls to Courtfield 123 - a subscriber I do not know and have certainly never called!"

"Are you sure of that, my dear Quelch," Mr. Wiggins leans forward, a gentle smile on his face. "I think that I have mentioned before - or have I? - the little tricks that the human memory plays upon one. I remember the other day that Tubb of my Form - or was it Paget? - came up to me in Quad and handed me the key of the form room door. I cannot quite recollect where he said that he had found it, but its loss had delayed my taking my form in Second School by some fifteen - or maybe it was even twenty minutes. I suppose I must have forgotten where I had left it. Perhaps you Quelch, have forgotten making those telephone calls."

"Do you infer, Mr. Wiggins, that I suffer so completely from absence of the mind as to forget making these calls, fifty three in number?" A gimlet eye is turned on the humorous but forgetful Wiggins. "My memory was not at fault and in any case I keep a record of each telephone call I make. It is the exchange, sir, not I, whose error of judgement this is ----"

"In France, ze system telephonique--" Monsieur Charpentier eagerly seizes the opportunity to join the conversation. With true Gallic fervour he is ready - only too ready - to expound in detail - great detail - on the advantages that the French communications system has over all others. Alas, he is quickly intercepted by the wheezing Mr. Capper.

"Monsieur, it is the local telephone organisation, not that of France, which is under discussion. I certainly subscribe to Quelch's view that local facilities are much open to question. As you know, I am subject to not

infrequent attacks of asthma; the slightest change in the weather brings on this troublesome complaint. The other day I tried to contact the herbalist at Lantham and was connected to the undertaker. It took a considerable time to make clear that I wanted to check a cough and not a coffin! They say it is an ill wind etc., for by lucky chance the undertaker was asthmatic himself and was in a position to recommend an entirely new remedy - Dr. Potts' Perfect Pastilles. I have since tried these for myself and if any of you would care . . . . ."

"Let us keep to the point Capper," interrupts Mr. Twigg, "we must approach the problem with firmness. The same firmness, I might add, that I find necessary when dealing with the boys of my form. This very morning, Nugent Minor, this very afternoon, George Gatty - both boys of my form, were discovered sliding down the bannisters of the main stairway. I took immediate and definite steps to dissuade them both from this very dangerous and...."

"Yes, yes, Twigg," comes an acid remark from Hacker, "you observed that we should keep to the point. It is my opinion, Quelch, that some members of your form are so lost to all sense of discipline that they have been using your telephone in your absence and without your permission."

"May I point out, Mr. Hacker, that my telephone is equally accessible to the boys of other forms as it is to those of the Remove?" Quelch's voice has a bite to it. "Furthermore have you examined your own telephone account? If not, I would counsel you to scrutinise it with care. In fact I would recommend all of you to do like-wise."

Little buff envelopes are withdrawn from the folds of four gowns. They are opened and their contents examined. Quelch regards his colleagues - especially Hacker - with a baleful and questioning glare.

"Well," he enquires but it is soon clear that all is far from well!

"Seventeen calls to Courtfield 123," wheezes Capper

"Twenty two!" admits Twigg

"Sixteen!" confesses Wiggins

"Thirty one!" hisses Hacker

"And you Mr. Prout," persists Quelch.

"My account is on my desk, Quelch. I will go to my study at once and fetch it." The door closes on Prout. The pregnant silence that follows is broken by the quiet voice of Lascelles.

"It would be interesting, perhaps, to discover the name of the subscriber at the end of Courtfield 123," he says with a smile. "You may care to enquire, Mr. Quelch, whilst I make some effort to entertain the visitors in our midst."

Quelch nods and moves across to the telephone and is actively, if not frantically, engaged at that instrument whilst Larry talks to us about league football. He is an engaging conversationalist but we are really interested in the results of Quelch's enquiries. When, finally, he turns away from the telephone, his brow is thunderous.

"I have ascertained that Courtfield 123 is the telephone number of that disreputable haunt "The Three Fishers" public house and I was informed so by an insolent rascal who owns to the name of Banks!"

"My dear Quelch, you cannot be serious," remarks Twigg horrified.

"I mean what I say. There is at this school some wretched boy so lost to all sense of the proprieties, so devoid of all laws of decency that he is in

constant communication with card sharps and bookmaker's touts. The fact that the Lantham racing season is in progress accounts, no doubt, for the large number of telephone calls. Who is it that can be so corrupt beyond his years ....?"

The Common-room door swings open to reveal a striking tableau. Prout, majestic and victorious, has returned; he is not alone for with him - his collar gripped by a firm and podgy hand is one whom we recognise as Herbert Vernon-Smith. It seems to us that Quelch's question has already received its answer.

"Mr. Quelch!" booms Prout, "I have brought this boy of your Form to you for judgment...."

"I can well believe the evidence of my own eyes, Mr. Prout," Quelch's voice has a definite edge to it, "but why you feel it necessary that Vernon-Smith should be brought here and with your hand upon his collar is beyond my understanding."

"In view of this young rascal's character generally, in view of his impertinence to me personally, I decided to keep him under restraint...."

"If Vernon-Smith has been impertinent, Mr. Prout, you may be assured that he will be severely punished," snapped Mr. Quelch. "What were the boy's actual words?"

"On commanding him to follow me here he ventured to inquire whether the Head had appointed me to be master of the Remove and had the additional effrontery to say that if I had not been so appointed the Fifth Form was the place to which I should direct my attentions. I am sure, Quelch, that you will not for the moment condone such insolence...."

"On the contrary, Prout, the boy had a right to query your authority in a province where it is well known not to exist. If this is all you have to say against this boy I will dismiss him. There are more serious matters awaiting discussion. Since your absence it has been determined that the subscriber of Courtfield 123 is no other than the licensee of the "Three Fishers" tavern."

"Very well Mr. Quelch," it is Prout's voice that has the bite in it now, "ignore if you will the insolent and insulting words that this boy of your form has addressed to a senior master. Let me counsel you sir to question this boy closely - very closely - as to why he was discovered a few moments ago replacing the receiver of your telephone. Let the young reprobate deny that I caught him in the very act as I was passing your study on the way to my own. Let him...."

"Vernon-Smith, you will follow me to my study." The door closes on Form-master and pupil; Prout resumes his post as fireguard.

"One of Quelch's boys," observes Hacker acidly.

"Quite so!"

"The Remove, of course!"

"I have ventured, not once, but many times," Prout once more addresses the happy throng, "to offer Quelch advice on matters appertaining to discipline in a junior form. He has thought fit to spurn those offers and to spurn them, I might add, in a manner less correctly than what one might expect from a colleague. In my form is to be found an example to others, based I believe on a mutual trust between master and pupil. A trust that...."

Really, with visitors present, Prout's discourse is in most dubious taste.

Perhaps, if we rise, he will recall that there are strangers in the camp. We do so, and observing us, Prout is gracious enough to change the subject. Soon, perhaps too soon for the other masters, he has reverted to the matter of bears in the great North West. We cross the floor and introduce ourselves to the French-master. The recent appearance of Vernon-Smith reminds us of an occasion when 'Mossoo' kept to his word and saved that member of the Remove from disgrace and disinheritance. We feel we owe something to that little gentleman from across the Channel and so we politely enquire after le petit Henri. M. Charpentier is gratified and soon we are inspecting the likenesses of his many nephews and nieces. It is difficult not to confuse Lucette with Henriette; we try to distinguish between Albert and Jean. We may not remember them again, perhaps, but we will hardly forget the pleasure we have given to their uncle! Only the return of Mr. Quelch diverts our attention. Mr. Prout addresses the Remove master. Prout is curious, Prout wants to know!

"May one enquire," Prout is coldly polite, "may one enquire, my dear Quelch, what action you propose in the case of Vernon-Smith of your Form? Not expulsion, I trust. A flogging - a severe flogging - perhaps may be sufficient. Only the most condign punishment will, of course, meet the case. An example must be made. There is also recompense for the cost of the telephone calls. I see that I myself have been charged for twenty-five---"

Quelch regards the master of the Fifth complacently.

"No action at all will be taken against that boy of my form, Sir."

"N-n-no action at all?" exclaims Prout indignantly, "I am sure that your colleagues will be interested - very interested Sir - to learn why no action is to be taken."

"I have questioned Vernon-Smith who has informed me that he was in my study for the purpose of delivering lines, when he heard the telephone and, thinking to save me some inconvenience, he took the call. The caller, sir, was the Reverend Lambe who asked that I be informed that our weekly game of chess must be postponed due to the indisposition of Mrs. Lambe. That call, sir, I have already confirmed. Vernon-Smith is therefore exonerated. Indeed, suspicion must now point to another, for on my arrival at my study I found it occupied by another boy, not a boy of my form, who was in the act of using my telephone!"

"This is interesting Quelch. You have no doubt questioned this boy - did I hear you say that he was a boy of the Shell?"

"No, Mr. Prout," replies Quelch in a quiet, deliberate voice, "you did not hear me say that he was a Shell boy. Neither did I question him. That is a duty that falls within your province, sir, as the boy's form-master."

"No Fifth Form boy would be capable; no member of my form, sir, could be guilty of such...."

"Price is a boy of your form, I believe, Mr. Prout." Unconsciously perhaps, Mr. Quelch parodies Prout's own words, "Let me counsel you sir to question this boy closely - very closely - as to why he was using a master's telephone."

"Doubtless Price will have an adequate explanation to offer," blusters Prout.

"Doubtless he will - if he is given time to think of one," remarks Quelch drily, "and doubtless more than one boy is involved. I have sent Trotter in search of a prefect so that enquiries may be made without delay." He turns to

us with outstretched hand. "I am glad to see that you have not been neglected gentlemen. Unfortunately a small matter has come to our notice which requires our urgent attention. I will join you as soon as I have spoken to one of the prefects. Ha! come in Loder."

The senior boy who has entered is rather handsome in an arrogant sort of way. He looks questioningly at Quelch.

"Yes, Loder! I wish you to assemble the prefects. You will tell Wingate and the others that masters studies are to be kept under observation and that any boy, junior or senior, who is found there at any time and without just reason is to be taken at once to his form master...."

"May I enquire, sir, the reason for this surveillance?"

"Yes, Loder, you may. There is reason to believe that some boy is using the master's telephones for the purpose of communicating with a notorious individual known as Banks at a place of low repute - the "Three Fishers" inn. It is suspected that the boy is engaged in placing bets with bookmakers. Mr. Prout has already been given the name of a senior boy and.... Why, Loder, what is the matter? Are you unwell? You look quite pale. Perhaps you should see the Matron!"

Gerald Loder certainly looks green around the gills as he stutters some reply and leaves the room.

"Now, gentlemen, I am at your disposal," Quelch has rejoined us. "You know my colleagues, I believe. Perhaps you would care to know something of the history of the school. In the days of the first Abbot who was a confidant of Bede himself....." The Remove master chats happily on. It is just possible that we are interested in the more modern history of the school but we are wise enough not to mention it!

Outside the dusk is already settling in the Quad. Our visit is drawing to its close and we are preparing to take our departure when a polite tap on the door heralds the arrival of the headmaster. There is an expression of perplexity and concern on the face of Doctor Locke as he comes across to say a few words.

"My dear Quelch, I have just passed Loder in the passage. The boy looked positively ill. I do hope that he has not been over-exerting himself at his studies." He turns to us. "As you see, gentlemen, we have to keep a close guard on the health of the boys. Perhaps Loder is taking his prefectorial duties too strenuously. Duty can make hard calls on one's stamina."

We mutter the usual courtesies but cannot help thinking how strenuous Loder will be in carrying out his latest duty! Neither we - nor anyone else - will probably ever know, but as we take our leave we cannot help realising that there is more than meets the eye when one goes to tea in Masters Commons!

\* \* \* \* \*

Sincere Christmas Greetings to all collectors and friends everywhere also wishing you all a successful "Hunting" year in 1969! Still need early Magnets, Gems, some Populars of the 20's and 30's, Boys Friends, Union Jacks of 20's (especially Xmas issues) Black Bess etc.

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

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR to ALL LONDON CLUB MEMBERS

BUSH, 34 DOUGLAS AVENUE, WHITSTABLE, KENT.

# George Alfred Henty

BOYS WRITER

1832 - 1902

By E. Markley

MANY male readers of the older generation will probably remember that famous weekly magazine THE BOYS OWN PAPER which after a phenomenal run of over eighty years ceased its long life in Feb. 1967. To those who read this in the news it was like the death of an old friend, for such was the B.O.P. to the numerous young readers who scanned its pages week after week. Many of the contributors to this fine weekly have become household words, for what reader can forget the immortal stories of Jules Verne, Alexandre Dumas, H. G. Wells, Conan Doyle and the school stories of Talbot Baines Reed. These had a great following and are still popular to this day, but other writers made numerous contributions to the B.O.P., who while very popular in their day seem to have dropped into forgetfulness. Two need only be mentioned, R. M. Ballantyne for his great little book The Coral Island, and George Alfred Henty the subject of this short essay.

Literature in the early and mid-Victorian period for young people consisted mainly of goody-goody pious tracts that must have bored any active boy (or girl) to tears. With the coming of the Boys Own Paper however a new trend set in, and in the pages of the writers mentioned, the "active" side of young people's lives came more to the front, courage and self-help being stressed in preference to a negative goodness that must have made the reading of the young Victorians intolerably dull.

Of the many writers for the B.O.P. Henty was a favourite with me, and after reading some of his yarns again one finds it difficult to account for his decline for he certainly wrote some stirring historical tales for boys that are in my view among the best ever written. He was a man of strong and virile personality, being for some years a newspaper War Correspondent, a dangerous occupation that took him into many "tight corners" beside supplying him with ample material for his most active pen. His life indeed reads like a romance in itself.

George Alfred Henty was born at Trumpington near Cambridge, on December 8, 1832, his father being in business as a stockbroker. During his early years he was confined to his bed with poor health the tedious hours being whiled away with the aid of books - a never failing standby if one may say so. With careful nursing however his condition improved, so that later he was entered as a scholar at Westminster School, where with a promptitude that was his outstanding trait, he began to learn the art of boxing. In those days schools had the reputation of being really rough, which in fact they were. Here he witnessed the street fights that took place between the "town and gown" boys, black eyes and broken noses being handed out freely on both sides. This experience he used in a fine school story Captain Bayley's Heir, one of the best of its kind. He then moved on to Cambridge to further his studies, but a breakdown in health caused him to leave without obtaining his degree. This was a serious setback for him as one can imagine, and he was thus compelled to turn his mind to the serious question of earning a living.

The year 1854 saw the outbreak of the Crimean War and Henty with his

brother joined the supply staff of the British Army, the following year both being drafted out to the Crimea.

The story of the Crimean War is too well known to need repeating here, but suffice to say that Henty was quite disgusted with the terrible conditions under which the serving men were expected to live. The hospital treatment of the sick and wounded roused his ire so much that he expressed his indignation in a series of letters home that were published in the English newspapers. We do not know if he met that great lady Florence Nightingale, but one can be quite certain he shared the general admiration for this wonderful person. While in the Crimea the fighting before Sebastopol came under his direct observation, and once more he was able to use the thrilling experience in another fine story, Jack Archer, the only historical novel to my knowledge dealing with the Crimean War. The following year his brother died and Henty himself was invalided home with an attack of fever. On recovery he continued his army service in Belfast and later at Portsmouth, but growing restless again he joined his father in Wales where the elder Henty owned a small coal and iron business. While here a strike broke out which he promptly put down by a bout of fisticuffs with the trouble maker. In those days trade unions had hardly been heard of, so this was probably the best method available of settling the dispute. Yet again he began to be restless, and he now began to toy with the idea of writing for a living.

A conflict had now broken out between Austria and Italy, and to his unbounded delight he was offered a post on the staff of The Standard an English newspaper which gave him the job of reporting the struggle between these two countries. Once on the soil of Italy he was in his "element," and again he was able to witness an engagement between the fighting forces of the rival combatants. A naval action was fought off Lissa, a spot which does not seem to be marked on our modern maps, and Henty was on the spot when it took place. He also met the great Italian patriot Garibaldi and his gallant band of freedom fighters. Then came a real thrill that almost ended in disaster. He was mistaken for an Austrian spy, and had not an Italian officer vouched for his identity his career would have ended on the spot. From this piece of foreign warfare he penned another good yarn, Out With Garibaldi, which portrays the struggle in vivid colours. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 gave him scope for his pen, and likewise the Ashanti Campaign under Sir Garnet Wolseley, both of which provided him with material for two good yarns. These were followed by what must have been to Henty the red-letter day of his truly active and romantic career. He was to accompany The Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, on the royal tour of India. From this never to be forgotten episode two more books followed, With Clive in India and The Tiger of Mysore. And here let me say that his Clive is much more readable than many of the school manuals that do service in our school history classes. Henty wrote many other books for boys apart from those mentioned and with the readers permission I would like to refer to a few more in order to show his versatility. In 1868 appeared Out on The Pampas, his first book. He then takes his readers to Ancient Egypt in an unusual mystery tale The Cat of Bubastes. The bitter struggle is shown between the Roman and the Jew in For The Temple. For this fine tale Henty used the great historian Josephus, and undeniably he is the greatest authority for this period. Dealing with America we have True to The Old Flag, which is a rousing tale of the American War of Independence. Perhaps the most popular of all yarns is the Western, and even in this field Henty was quite good. In Redskin and Cowboy he takes his readers to Cedar Gulch Camp in New

Mexico in the early days of the American West. This story is based on fact, yet among the piles of Westerns that lie in our book shops Henty's little "classic" is never seen.

The Napoleonic Era produced a vast literature, and at the risk of boring the reader may I mention four which any reading boy who likes a good historical tale would be happy to have on his book shelves. Two are exciting tales on the Peninsular War, the hero Terence O'Connor galloping through the pages in the service of the great Duke of Wellington.

The titles are Under Wellington's Command and With Moore at Corunna, and in the latter the hero of the story is in the thick of Sir John Moore's gallant retreat where the great commander lost his life. And finally we have Through Russian Snows dealing with the terrible retreat from Moscow, and One of The 28th which takes us to the final overthrow of Napoleon on the field of Waterloo.

As a writer Henty did not attempt to weave subtle plots, but wrote in a straight simple manner while not neglecting the chief details of the story. His main interest lay in the field of history, taking care to make his historical background as accurate as possible, as one can see from the many prefaces he wrote to his historical stories. One of our critics Harold Nicholson described Mr. Churchill as writing in a "rattling G. A. Henty style," a real compliment to Henty's penmanship. Like most of his contemporaries Henty mixed his stories with a little moralizing, his critics pointing out that his lads are sometimes a little too good, always brave, always kind, always honest, and the very soul of chivalry. This of course is true, but Henty knew as we do that it is these qualities that make our world bearable to live in. The value of discipline in education is stressed in all his books, for he was clear sighted enough to see that without this no education worth the name is possible. He used to say that the aim of a boy is to become a man, and using the term "man" in a broad sense one would find it difficult to find a higher ideal to put before a growing youth. The sex or love element is almost negligible in his stories, being confined mainly to sober conversation between sweethearts who have separated through force of circumstance. This is no great loss to the story, for as our author pointed out these things usually find their own level.

One only wishes that some of our modern expounders of education shared this view - some of our young people would probably be spared the pain of early disillusionment.

It is the fashion nowadays to sneer at writers like Henty as over fond of sabre rattling and "Jingoism" yet without them this country today would probably be under the Nazi jackboot. Like all sensible people Henty hated war - he also believed that patriotism is not always the last refuge of a scoundrel - in spite of Dr. Johnson. Whether interest in Henty will revive among our young readers one cannot say. Fashions in books come and go, but he may yet find readers among a generation whose fathers fought with their backs to the wall against the vilest tyranny the nations of Europe had ever seen.

Henty was tall and muscular in build with a smiling eye that betokened the boyish spirit within. He sported a beautiful beard that gave him the look of an old grizzled sea captain. His likes were simple - an old clay pipe, his dogs, six in number I believe, and his fine yacht "Egret" which often lay at anchor in Weymouth Bay, and where he often went through the proof sheets of his next book. In the winter of 1902 while on board he was taken ill very suddenly and passed quietly away, his death lamented by his readers both here and abroad.

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whose amusing portrayals in various well-known parts during the last 12 years have firmly established his reputation, and Katharine Harrington, whose sweet interpretation of the Princess in W. J. Locke's beautiful play *The Beloved Vagabond* has lately brought her into prominence

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**2/6 PER DOZEN.****LADIES PHOTOGRAPHED in FANCY DRESS by Appointment****THE PLAGUE OF WEED.****Swansea's Darkest Page of History.**By **EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.****CHAPTER I****THE SOWING OF THE SEED.**

Crash!

"Good heavens!"

Professor Raikes leapt to his feet, his face working excitedly. The large quart bottle, securely corked and sealed, which a moment ago had been on the bench beside him, now lay on the tiled floor of the laboratory in a thousand pieces.

The Professor never could tell how he did it, but accidentally—he was a clumsy man—he had swept it off, and the valuable and terrible contents were now evaporating into the atmosphere, causing a most unpleasant and pungent odour.

In that bottle had been the result of months of work. At last Professor Raikes had solved the problem which had been troubling him for so long.

He had discovered a liquid which, when applied to a flower or plant, would cause that flower to grow to immense proportions—and very swiftly.

He had intended to startle the world with his marvellous discovery, and now, as it was, the world would be startled in a very different manner!

For this liquid was of such a strength that one drop—only a tiny drop—placed in a gallon of water, would be enough to make a large bed of flowers grow to the size of trees in a month's time. In addition to that, if some of the water be placed on a clear piece of ground, in a very short time the clear place would be covered with thick and rank weeds.

But the most terrible thing of all was that the stuff evaporated in no time, and when in the air, it had the same effect as if on the ground.

Half-an-hour after the breaking of the bottle, the vapour was hovering all over the large town of Swansea. Then, to

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A page from the Magazine Programme, about 1909, showing one of E. S. Brooks' very early stories. Brooks's brother was the manager of the theatre, and the producer of the Magazine Programme.

# The Headmistress of Cliff House School

by Gerry Allison

In Magnet No. 5 entitled "Kidnapped," Marjorie Hazeldene visited Greyfriars for the first time. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent had heard a great deal of Hazeldene's sister, and had seen her photograph - that of a bright-eyed laughing girl of fifteen. Harry Wharton, who had only just arrived at the school, now heard of her for the first time.

The story tells how Marjorie was kidnapped by gipsies, and was rescued by the Removites, led by Wharton. Harry was not popular in the Remove at Greyfriars - even with his chums he sometimes had little difficulties. But they unconsciously realised that his was the strongest character there, and in moments of doubt and difficulty they instinctively turned to him as the leader.

It was getting towards evening. "You won't see much of Greyfriars today, Marjorie," Wharton remarked. They were all calling her Marjorie now, at her own request. "When we get to the school it will be quite dark."

"But I have to go home by the six-o'clock train," Marjorie exclaimed. "Mother will be worried."

Because, you see, this was before Cliff House School had been opened. We first hear about that charming establishment in Magnet No. 59, "The School Dance." Let me tell you how Miss Primrose and her school made their appearance. I quote from the opening chapters of Magnet No. 59.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Nugent!"

Bob Cherry uttered the words as Frank Nugent came scorching up the road on his bicycle.

It was a bright April afternoon. Nearly a dozen juniors belonging to Greyfriars School were gathered in a group on the road that lay between Greyfriars and the sea. They were all looking anxiously down the road towards the village of Friardale, when the speeding cyclist came in sight.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove jumped up at once. The juniors all belonged to the Remove - the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars. Their expectant looks showed that they were out that sunny half holiday upon an important mission.

Nugent raced up on his machine and jumped to the ground.

"They're coming!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "I saw 'em come out of the station. "They are coming along with Miss Penelope."

It was an important and really unprecedented occasion. The Greyfriars juniors had received with mingled feelings the news that a girls' school was to be opened at Cliff House, almost within a stone's throw of Greyfriars. Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove had declared his intention of making things unpleasant for the new neighbours of Greyfriars, but the greater part of the Lower Fourth followed Wharton's lead, feeling that they were called upon, at least, to be civil to the newcomers.

The discovery that Hazeldene's sister was one of the pupils of Miss Penelope

Primrose made a difference, too. Marjorie was very popular with Harry Wharton & Co.

After much discussion the leaders of the Remove had agreed to give a public welcome to the girls' school. It unfortunately happened that Miss Primrose and her pupils were to arrive on Wednesday, the half-holiday, so Wharton had a good opportunity of carrying out his scheme. Hence the party of blushing juniors, waiting on the Friardale Road.

Billy Bunter now tells Wharton that he saw Bulstrode buying Mrs. Mible's old stock of fireworks left over from November Fifth, and Nugent recalls that he saw Bulstrode among the trees up the road when he passed on his way from the station. Wharton divines Bulstrode's plan, and rushes off. He finds Bulstrode with a lighted oil-lamp and a box-full of fireworks. Wharton stamps on the lighted lamp, and Bulstrode attacks him in a fury. The episode continues:-

There was a sudden exclamation from Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, look there!"

There was no need for Bunter to speak. The fellows were looking. Down the road two figures, struggling desperately, had reeled out from the trees, and Wharton and Bulstrode were fighting like tigers in the middle of the road.

At the same moment, round the curve in the road came the future pupils of Cliff House. Very fresh and pretty they looked too. There was something pleasant, though severe, in the features of Miss Penelope Primrose, the head-mistress of Cliff House, who walked at the head of the party, talking to Marjorie Hazeldene and a stoutly built girl of German features.

But Miss Penelope broke off with a gasp, at the sight of the two fighting juniors in the road.

"Goodness gracious!"

The Cliff House pupils came to a halt and stared at Harry Wharton and Bulstrode.

Miss Penelope put up her glasses and looked at the fighting juniors as though she could scarcely believe her eyes. Wharton and Bulstrode, too deeply engrossed in the fight to notice anything else, remained unconscious of the new spectators for some moments.

"Boys!" said Miss Penelope in an awful voice.

Wharton started and suddenly dropped his hands.

"Hold on!" he muttered. "Stop!"

"I don't care for the old cat!" said Bulstrode savagely. "I'll stop if you give me best, not otherwise!"

"I don't - I -"

"Then come on!"

Wharton gritted his teeth hard. To fight before the horrified lady and the girls was impossible.

"Very well, Bulstrode; I give you best."

"Good!"

Bulstrode stepped back. Wharton faced Miss Primrose. There was a cut on his cheek, and a trickle of red from the corner of his mouth.

"Boy," said Miss Primrose, "how - how can you fight in this savage fashion?"

"I am sorry, madam!"

"I am glad," said Miss Primrose, "that you are sorry! It is dreadful - disgusting!"

Wharton turned crimson. Bulstrode, grinning, shoved his hands into his pockets, and whistled as he strode away through the trees, to show that he, at least, did not care for the opinion of Miss Primrose.

Wharton would gladly have escaped, but he could not walk away rudely whilst Miss Penelope was talking to him.

"My dear little boy," went on Miss Penelope, apparently unconscious of the fact that Harry was not a little boy but a sturdy fellow, "how can you fight in this dreadful way? What would your mother say?"

As Harry Wharton did not remember his mother, who had died when he was a baby, he could not very well answer the question.

"What would your teacher say?" resumed Miss Primrose, who evidently felt herself called upon to improve the shining hour by administering a little moral instruction to the culprit.

Wharton was crimson. He would have given a term's pocket-money for the earth to open and swallow him up.

"Let dogs" said Miss Penelope, "delight to bark and bite, my dear boy! But you -- Repeat those touching lines Clara, and they may have a softening influence upon this unfortunate boy!"

The young lady addressed as Clara was a golden-haired, blue-eyed, rather mischievous-looking young person. There was a glimmer of fun in her eyes, as she recited the lines in a sing-song voice for the edification of the unhappy Removite.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,  
It is their nature to;  
Let bears and lions growl at night ---"

"And fight, ' my dear," corrected Miss Penelope.

"Let bears and lions growl at night and fight," went on Miss Clara demurely. "'They've nothing else to do.'"

There was a slight sound of laughter among the pupils of Cliff House as Clara concluded her somewhat original version, but a glance from Miss Penelope restored an almost preternatural gravity.

"Remember those lines, little boy," said Miss Penelope, patting Wharton on the head. Wharton wriggled. "When you are tempted to raise your hand in anger, remember those lines. Marjorie! I am surprised at you smiling at such a moment!"

"I - I'm sorry!" stammered Marjorie.

"I hope so. Remember my words, little boy. And now run away."

Wharton stood aside for the girls to pass. He looked as if the whole of the blood in his body had been pumped into his face. Marjorie gave him a compassionate glance, but most of the other girls were smiling.

The girls walked on.

That is our very first sight of Miss Primrose whose charming personality and establishment for young ladies were to become very familiar to readers of

the Magnet. She was always slightly a figure of fun, but was beloved by all the Cliff House girls, and respected by the boys of Greyfriars and even those of Highcliffe.

After leaving Wharton on the present occasion, the school met the rest of the Remove. Bob Cherry made a speech of welcome and presented Miss Primrose with a bouquet. The good lady was so pleased that she invited the Remove to a fancy dress dance at Cliff House which was a great success. Doctor Locke attended, and his sister Miss Locke was also present. We were told that Miss Locke was henchwoman to Miss Primrose.

Cliff House School now became an established feature of the Greyfriars scene, and Magnets appeared with such titles as "The Cliff House Party," "The Girl's School Challenge," "The Cliff House Guest," etc.

In one such story, Miss Penelope figured in an amusing scene. Magnet No. 118. "Alonzo's Plot."

Skinner and Bulstrode of the Remove, persuade Alonzo Todd that Mr. Quelch and Miss Primrose are deeply in love with each other, but that both are too shy to speak, or to make an opportunity of getting the matter settled.

"It's a shame," said Skinner. "Two loving hearts disunited ----"

"For want of a friend to bring them into - into loving unison," said Bulstrode.

Todd nodded slowly: "It seems very hard" he agreed.

"We've thought it over," said Bulstrode. "We feel that we ought to do something. We all like and respect Mr. Quelch, and we like Miss Primrose very much. But I feel - and Skinner feels - that we're not the chaps to do it. A fellow of great tact and good judgment is really wanted.

"Just so!" assented Alonzo.

"As a matter of fact, you're the chap," said Skinner.

Alonzo agrees to do his best to bring the two loving hearts together. Skinner and Bulstrode notice a cloud of thought on Alonzo's brow, and in class Alonzo watches Mr. Quelch very earnestly. Suddenly Alonzo utters a sharp ejaculation.

"Good!"

Every eye in the class turned upon him at once. Mr. Quelch lowered his pointer, and stared at Todd.

The Duffer's face went crimson. He had uttered the exclamation quite involuntarily as a thought had darted into his mind, and he now sat blushing in confusion.

"Todd!" exclaimed the Remove-master.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" faltered Alonzo

"What do you mean?"

"Mean, sir?"

"Yes; what do you mean by exclaiming like that?"

"Exclaiming, sir?"

It was an old habit of Todd's to repeat what was said to him, when he was startled or frightened. Some found it an irritating habit.

Mr. Quelch took a tighter grip on his pointer.

"Yes, Todd. Explain yourself."

"Explain myself, sir?" stammered Alonzo.

"Yes, at once!"

"At - at once, sir--"

"TODD!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-e-es!"

"Is that meant for deliberate impertinence?"

"D-d-deliberate impertinence, sir?"

"Boy! Take fifty lines!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

Mr. Quelch turned from him with a heated brow, and Bulstrode grinned at Skinner, and whispered:

"He's got it, Skinny!"

Todd's idea is to send both Mr. Quelch and Miss Primrose a telegram each, saying that someone who loved them would be waiting in a certain spot. They would both go - recognise each other - and the trick would be done.

He explains his idea to Bulstrode and Skinner, but the wily Skinner - knowing that Mr. Quelch would suspect such a message, suggests that the meeting place should be the summer-house in the Head's garden, where Mr. Quelch goes on fine half-holidays, with his manuscripts of his History of Greyfriars.

"First chop!" says Bulstrode. "That's right! Let the telegram to Quelchy simply say that one who loves him will see him today, and the one to Miss Primrose can tell her that her adorer waits for her in the doctor's summer-house. She'll come like a shot!"

Alonzo sends the telegrams from the Friardale post-office.

The scene which followed can best be told in the words of Frank Richards himself. Magnet No. 132. Chapters 17 and 18.

Miss Primrose did not really like receiving telegrams. They threw her into a flutter. She passed a very quiet existence, and a telegram was like the noisy world knocking at the door of her quiet life.

She opened the envelope with fluttering fingers.

Then she adjusted her glasses, and read.

The astonishment Mr. Quelch had shown on receipt of his telegram was nothing to that Miss Primrose displayed.

But mingled with astonishment there was another emotion, absent in Mr. Quelch's case.

A simpering smile came over the calm, middle-aged face of Miss Primrose, and her eyes beamed a little.

Her whole attitude bore a resemblance to that known as "bridling," as she read the telegram through for the second time.

"Bless me!" she murmured.

Miss Penelope was considered "awfully good" by her youthful pupils. But the good lady, like most of us, grew older outside than inside. Time had written its wrinkles upon her, certainly; but her heart was still young, her spirit cheerful and somewhat romantic.

It is a thing the young find it difficult to understand; and many a lad of fifteen would be greatly surprised to find that his old uncle was really quite a gay young fellow at heart, only a little crusted outside with years. Miss Primrose, at twenty, had dreams like most of us, and they had not left her yet, though many and many a year had passed since then.

"Bless me!" said Miss Primrose again.

She toyed with the telegram, and a soft pink blush overspread her cheeks. Miss Primrose looked very pretty then.

For a third and a fourth time she read the telegram. It ran as follows:

"I must see you and tell you all. Dare I hope that you will be in the summer-house at Greyfriars this afternoon?"

That was all.

There was no signature; even Alonzo Todd had stopped short of that. But Miss Primrose had little doubt as to who the telegram was from.

The good lady rose at last, and went into the house.

She did not emerge for more than half an hour; and when she did, she was clad in her sweetest gown and a wonderful bonnet.

Miss Locke, the second mistress at Cliff House, glanced at her as she went out. Miss Primrose gave her an embarrassed smile, but no explanation.

The good lady walked over to Greyfriars like one in a dream. She reached the school, and entered the Head's garden without going to the house.

Miss Primrose was an old friend of the Head's, whose sister was her assistant-mistress at Cliff House, and visits were often exchanged. Miss Primrose knew the garden from end to end.

Mr. Quelch was busy with his manuscripts when the gate clicked.

But the Form-master had succeeded in dismissing the matter of the telegram from his mind, and had concentrated his thoughts at last upon the work before him.

He did not notice the click of the gate, nor hear the sound of footsteps and a rustling dress in the garden. Neither was he aware that two young rascals belonging to the Remove were watching him with keen eyes.

Miss Primrose reached the open doorway of the summerhouse.

She stood there, framed in the thick clusters of creepers that formed the doorway, and her shadow fell across Mr. Quelch's table.

But he was so busily occupied that he did not observe it.

Miss Primrose stood silent, watching him.

Mr. Quelch worked on.

Miss Primrose's face softened very

much. Poor fellow - he was so anxious about his fate, that he had brought papers with him, to work and occupy his mind during the period of suspense, while he waited for her coming.

That was clear to Miss Primrose.

And naturally it touched her heart.

As she thought of it, she felt that she liked Mr. Quelch better than Mr. Phipps.

But the waiting was growing irksome. She wished that Mr. Quelch would look up.

She wondered if she could venture upon a slight cough.

The good lady made several little attempts, but she was too timid to let them become audible, and Mr. Quelch did not look up.

Miss Primrose moved slightly at last, and there was a rustle of the wistaria. Then the Remove-master raised his eyes from his papers.

He started at the sight of the form standing before him.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Miss Primrose!"

The lady blushed and nodded.

"It is I!" she said.

"I did not hear you."

"No?"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet and stood regarding the lady. His look showed surprise; he wondered what she had come to the summer-house for, concluding naturally that she was at Greyfriars on a visit to the Head.

But Miss Primrose attributed the surprise in the Form-master's face to another cause. She thought he was surprised at her kindness in coming in person in answer to his telegram.

She smiled sweetly.

"Yes," she went on, with a nod. "I had your telegram."

"My telegram?"

"Yes."

Mr. Quelch stared at her.

"M'm' my telegram?" he murmured again.

"Yes. It was so sweet of you."

"Sweet?"

"So sweet."

And Miss Primrose smiled and blushed. She rather expected Mr. Quelch to

advance and hold out his arm to her. She was debating what she should do if he did. But he didn't.

He stood and stared.

Mr. Quelch felt very embarrassed.

He had had to deal with all sorts and conditions of boys in his time, and men, too, but a middle-aged lady with a wandering mind was a new experience to him.

What to do he had not the faintest idea.

And Miss Primrose was blushing and smiling on in the most embarrassing manner.

"It was a surprise to me," added Miss Primrose.

"Indeed?" stammered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, indeed. But a pleasant surprise."

"Oh!"

"And I came."

"Ah - yes - I see you have come," murmured Mr. Quelch. "How very kind of you to - to come."

Miss Primrose beamed.

"But I am very pleased to come," she said softly. "And you are really glad to see me, Horace?"

Mr. Quelch jumped.

Horace!

Miss Penelope had never called him by his Christian name before, and she simply astounded him by doing so now.

Horace!

He could hardly believe his ears. Was he dreaming?

In spite of himself, he coloured, and Mr. Quelch's blush made Miss Primrose think that Horace was really very handsome when he had a little colour.

"You may call me Penelope, if you like," she said.

Mr. Quelch gasped again.

Penelope!

Certainly, if Miss Primrose called him Horace, there was no reason why he should not call her Penelope; but --

The Remove-master felt like a man in a dream.

"You do not speak!" murmured Miss Primrose.

"Really, madam --" stammered Mr. Quelch.

"Madam - to me?" murmured Miss Primrose reproachfully.

"Madam!"

"Horace!"

Mr. Quelch looked round helplessly.

"May-may I take you to the Head!" he murmured.

"The Head!"

"Yes-yes!"

"Horace!"

"Dear me," murmured Mr. Quelch, "she is certainly out of her mind. What a dreadful situation."

"So-so kind of you to send me the telegram," said Miss Primrose. "But why did you not write?"

"Write?"

"Yes. You could have said more."

"But - "

"But the telegram was very gratifying - "

"But-I-I did not send you a telegram, madam," gasped the unhappy Remove-master. "There-there is some mistake!"

Miss Primrose took the telegram from her bag.

The Remove-master looked at it. He felt as if his head was going round and round.

She held it out to him.

He read it.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Quelch!"

"I did not send that, madam!"

Miss Primrose turned quite faint.

"You did not send it?"

"Certainly not!"

"But-but-"

"It is not signed, madam!"

"But - "

"It is from someone else - "

"But - but you are here - "

Mr. Quelch wiped his damp brow.

"Madam! I-I am sorry - it seems to me that we are both the victims of a joke," he said stammeringly. "A - a cruel and practical wicked joke. I also have received an absurd telegram this afternoon."

"Oh!"

"Some villainous practical joker is at the bottom of it," said Mr. Quelch. "I never sent that wire, and never thought of doing anything of the kind!"

"Oh!"

"The matter shall be inquired into and the culprit severely punished," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

Miss Primrose swayed, and Mr. Quelch stepped quickly forward and caught her as she fell. She had fainted.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

He held the unconscious lady in his arms, almost distracted, and wondering what to do. There was a step on the path, and a majestic figure paused before the summer-house.

"Mr. Quelch!" exclaimed a surprised and shocked voice.

It was the Head.

Dr. Locke stopped, and stared in amazement at the Remove-master.

The last sight he would have expected to see was Mr. Quelch supporting a female in his arms in the open doorway of the summer-house.

For a moment he did not see that Miss Primrose had fainted.

The doctor stared at Mr. Quelch.

"Mr. Quelch!" he repeated severely.

The Remove-master gasped.

"Dr. Locke - "

"I must ask you what this means, Mr. Quelch."

"Sir - "

"Most unseemly - "

"Dr. Locke - "

"My wife, sir, or my little daughter might have passed at any moment," said Dr. Locke, "and to see you embracing this lady - "

Mr. Quelch turned scarlet.

"Doctor!"

"I repeat it, sir, embracing - "

"Miss Primrose has fainted."

"What!"

"M-m-m-m-m!" murmured Miss Primrose faintly.

"She is coming to, thank goodness."

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"What does this mean, Mr. Quelch? I did not know that Miss Primrose was here - and what reason can she have had to faint?"

"I-I don't know, sir. I-I mean - a practical joke has been played."

"Eh?"

"A telegram was sent to Miss Primrose, hinting that I - I-I wished to propose to her, sir!" said Mr. Quelch with a scarlet face.

"Bless my soul!"

"I need not say that there was not the slightest foundation for it," said Mr. Quelch hurriedly.

"I - I presume not."

"Now Miss Primrose has fainted -"

"M-m-m-m!"

"Pray help her into the house," said Dr. Locke, "Mrs. Locke will look after her. This is a most extraordinary occurrence, Mr. Quelch."

"Most extraordinary, sir."

"A practical joke, you say."

"And a very wicked and cruel one."

The Head frowned.

"The practical joker shall be made to feel sorry for it, if it is within my power to punish him," he exclaimed. Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Yes, sir; I shall look into the matter at once."

"Pray help Miss Primrose to the house now."

"M-m-m-m-m."

Mr. Quelch hesitated.

"Perhaps the sight of me m-m-may increase Miss Primrose's distress when she recovers," he suggested nervously. "Perhaps you would not mind taking charge of her."

The Head backed away.

"I-I have had no experience in dealing with fainting ladies," he said hastily.

"Neither have I, sir."

"However, you - "

"But you - "

"No, you, Mr. Quelch - "

"But you - "

"Really - "

"I must say - "

"M-m-m-m-m-m," mumbled Miss Primrose "Where am I? What has happened?"

She opened her eyes.

Mr. Quelch promptly placed her upon a seat, and backed out of the summer house. He even forgot his precious manuscripts on the table.

Dr. Locke made a movement to follow him.

But it was impossible to leave the unfortunate lady alone.

"Mr. Quelch!" he called out feebly.

But Mr. Quelch either did not hear or did not heed. He hurried on through the shrubbery, and was gone in a few seconds. Dr. Locke resigned himself to his fate. Mr. Quelch breathed more easily as he escaped from the garden.

He went into the house for his coat and hat, and then strode away to the village of Friardale, with a grim and determined expression of countenance.

He knew that he could learn from Mr. Coots who the sender of the telegrams was, and he meant to find out at once.

And if the sender of the telegrams belonged to Greyfriars, there was a reckoning in store for him.

Mr. Quelch was not long gone to the village.

Mr. Coots, as mentioned before, had remarked Alonzo Todd at the time that he took in the telegrams to be sent, and he was quite willing to give information; all the more because of his grudge against the Duffer of Greyfriars.

In a few minutes talk with Mr. Coots, the Remove-master elicited Todd's name, and then he strode back to Greyfriars in vengeful mood.

He came back looking for Alonzo Todd, and if Todd had seen the expression upon his face, he would have done his best to keep out of the way.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Eddie Polo

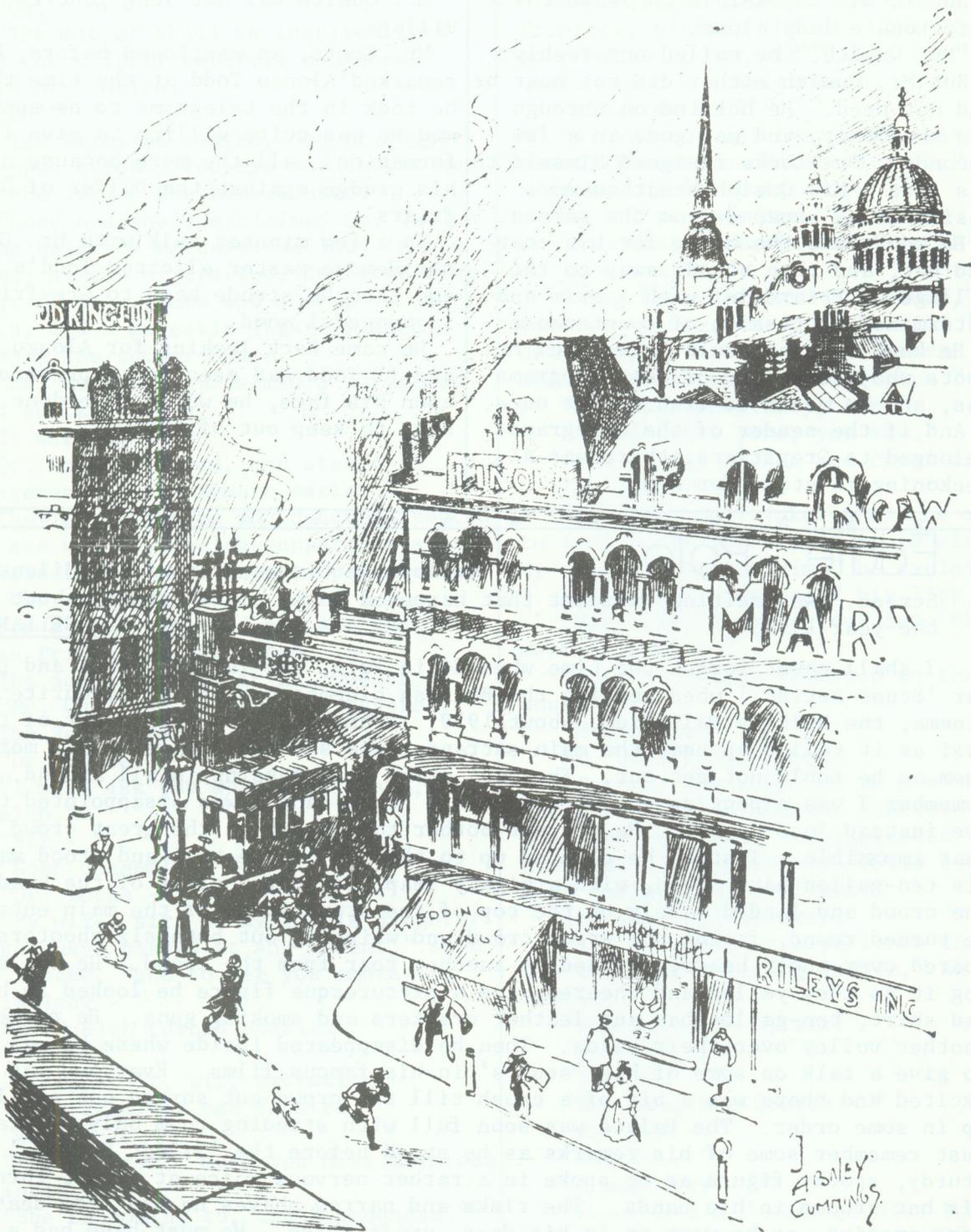
- Cowboy and Circus Star of the Silent

Screen. An exciting incident that happened in my old district, about the year 1919.

By G. SELLARS

I shall never forget the time when Eddie Polo, the famous Cowboy and popular 'Stunt Artist,' when touring the British cinemas came to my favourite cinema, the Walkley Palladium, about 1919. A bronzed face popped out of the taxi as it rolled up near the main entrance, and shouted out for a bit more room as he could not get out. The vast crowd was pressing in all around. I remember I was expecting to see him on his horse, and I was disappointed to see instead just a taxi. He did not bother to get out as the great crowd made that impossible. Instead he climbed up to the top of the taxi and stood waving his ten-gallon hat. Then, with a mighty leap, he jumped clear of the heads of the crowd and landed safely on the top of the stone steps of the main entrance. He turned round, facing the great crowd and whipping out both six-shooters they roared over their heads, echoed by another roar from the crowd. He was enjoying it as they yelled and cheered, and a picturesque figure he looked in his red shirt, ten-gallon hat and leather crackers and smoking guns. He roared out another volley over their heads. Then he disappeared inside where he was going to give a talk on some of his 'stunts' in his famous films. Everyone was very excited and there was a bit of a crush till the crowd got sorted out and lined up in some order. The Palace was soon full with standing room only. I can just remember some of his remarks as he stood before the 'Silent Screen,' a sturdy, stocky figure as he spoke in a rather nervous voice at first, turning his hat around in his hands. The risks and narrow shaves he had from death were amazing, as he went on in his deep, gruff voice. He must have had a hundred bones broken in his body through a lifetime in his sensational adventures. To sum up Eddie Polo was a very tough and strong man and he was one of my favourites.

Eddie Polo died a few years ago at the age of over 80 and will not be forgotten by those who saw him on the grand old 'Silent Screen.' One of the best. Maybe dear old Danny remembers him, and if he does we shall know in his famous diary. Eddie Polo never used any substitutes or dummies in any of his daring 'stunts,' and that is why he was injured so many times. He was an amazing man of great courage and pluck.



J. ABNEY CUMMINGS

A well-known part of the City of London as seen by one of the A.P. artists well over 60 years ago. The artist was J. Abney Cummings who illustrated most of the Jack, Sam, and Pete tales. At the time of this picture, about 1905, Cummings had not long been illustrating the popular series.

# SPORTS FUN

By W. O. G. Lofts

The collector who would imagine that, after over twenty years of COLLECTORS DIGESTS and ANNUALS, almost every paper has been written about, would be so greatly mistaken. There are dozens that I could name never even mentioned in a collecting magazine, and this includes some published by that great firm of juvenile and boys papers the Amalgamated Press.

After the first world war, and when the restrictions and shortage of newsprint eased, quite a large number of new papers appeared on the scene. Many are of course familiar with collectors; but a group which seems neglected for some reason, maybe because they are so scarce, are what was called 'The Sporting group for Boys.'

Football Favourite; All Sports; Sports for Boys; Sports Budget; reprints from all the above in Football and Sports Library; and the subject of this article Sports Fun. Football seems to have taken a sharp rise in popularity after the 1914/18 war. No doubt everyone wanted more relaxation after four years of grim struggle, and with this of course went the papers to cater for the soccer-minded. To my knowledge the group editor of these papers was Arthur S. Hardy and what man was better qualified than he? Born in Regent Street, London (real name Arthur Steffens) and the son of a Polish master tailor, after appearing on the stage he took up sports writing and boys stories. A first class all-round sportsman, he could knock up a hundred at billiards before anyone could finish ordering a round of drinks!

Sports Fun appeared on the 11th February 1922, published of course by the Amalgamated Press. It was of Magnet size roughly, and priced 2d. Its aim obviously was to cater for boys (and adults) who had humorous tastes, as the contents could only be described as slapstick in presentation. The idea of its format probably came from the highly successful Film Fun, when famous comedians were presented in humorous situations in strip cartoon form. Only this time famous sports stars were shown, mainly from the world of soccer. Cartoons appeared on the front page by that clever cartoonist, Tom Webster of the Daily Mail, which were continued on an inside page. The inside cover was filled with a sort of cross-talk patter entitled "The Comical Adventures of Poot and Tayke - the P.C. Sports." Pages 3 and 4 were taken up by full page cartoons by that popular artist of Rookwood, George William Wakefield, with his unmistakable style of cherub faces.

"My Funniest Experience on the Field" by S. C. Puddefoot the famous West Ham and English centre forward. Here 'Puddy' bet a friend that he could score a goal. So wearing a bowler hat with a large dent on the top, he landed the football on the top, weaved his way through the opposition, and won his 5/- bet! These situations were made up by office staff and 'Puddy' probably received a small fee for the use of his name.

The opposite page had this time Fanny Walden the famous Spurs and English wing half in another amusing situation, where his unusual christian name came to the fore. A friend's wife, on hearing that her husband was going to meet 'Fanny,' played merry hell until matters were clarified. Probably in the cricket season they could have done the same with Patsy Hendren the famous Middlesex player.

Then there came the mystery story, anonymously entitled "Mystazedd" where

a great detective footballer undertook to solve sporting mysteries. This was illustrated by J. Louis Smythe, whose brilliant art work has often been mentioned in our hobby. A small Irish American who died years ago, he was quite a cheery character, and by nature nothing like the serious, mysterious themes that he drew.

"Mystazedd" a well known sportsman who hides his identity behind this pseudonym is prepared to undertake any investigation connected with sport so long as the case is interesting. The fee is immaterial. Consult me on all matters of SPORTING MYSTERIES. Apply: Raglan Chambers, Victoria, London.

These complete stories were obviously based on the popular Film Fun detective tales, Mr. E., and later and more widely known, Jack Keene stories. "Mystazedd" was in reality Mickie Might the old Amateur International, who made no attempt to hide his nom-de-plume when meeting clients.

More cartoon pages followed. "Is Football too Rough?" A few hints by Jock Rutherford, Arsenal and English Centre Forward. "The Mascot Craze" by W. H. Walker the Aston Villa and English Centre Forward. Then another story by the uncrowned King of Sports story writers, Arthur S. Hardy, in serial form. "Jack Briton" it was entitled and 'Jack' was a footballer and fighter.

Still more slapstick pages followed. "What I'd like to do to the referee when we win" by Stanley Fazackerly of Everton. And the direct reverse. "What I'd like to do to the referee when we lose" by T. Browell of Manchester United. "Is Goal Scoring Easy?" by Tim Williamson the Middlesborough Goalkeeper, and "I Don't think so" by Joe Smith, Captain of Bolton Wanderers.

Two more humorous slapstick cross patter pages completed the issue of Sports Fun. "The Chronicles of Clarence" and the "Misadventures of Marmaduke Muddleton."

Thirteen has always been regarded as an unlucky number, and with this issue of Sports Fun it was no exception. Next week would start a new series beginning at No. 1 again on May 13th, 1922, this time more attractive looking with a coloured red cover. A lot of the slapstick material would go, and more stories, and interesting sensible football articles and statistics would be included, including in the first issue a team photo - only one of a series of famous football teams.

The idea maybe was an interesting enough experiment, but it had been proved a flop. The Film Fun and Kinema Comic, although slapstick, had people acting as they actually were in their field of entertainment, and were to speak 'true to life.' Football, although an entertainment, was a serious business, and obviously readers liked the subject to be treated in a serious fashion. So these changes were justified, and they saved the paper from an early death.

With the new series Percy and Steve two mythical famous sporting cartoon characters appeared, plus a story featuring them by "George Robey" the famous comedian. Sporting stories in serious vein were plentiful and these included Down On Their Luck by Captain Malcolm Arnold. A Mug and His Money by Steve Nelson. Motor Bandits by the well known T. Arthur Plummer. Night Hawk an anonymous serial of a flying man, which I suspect was an old serial by W. B. Home-Gall. The Convict Boxer by Paul Urquhart. Dashing Dick Steele by Geoffrey Gordon. King of The Cannibal Islands (anon). Nobbled, a series which featured Martin Trackman crime expert (who appeared in Football Favourite) and

I think was written by Robert Murray Graydon, and Hat Trick Hilda a girl footballer by Charles Malcolm.

Players at a Glance was a most interesting series of features, where almost every footballer player had his statistics mentioned, and one or two small cartoons completed the weekly issue of Sports Fun. Unfortunately, it was so like Football and Sports Favourite in format, that it probably became a rival, and after No. 29 dated 25/11/22 it finished, and was incorporated into the above paper. Although I now can boast 300 odd number one boys' papers in my collection, Sports Fun is not one of them. In my collecting career never have I seen one volume in collectors' hands, or a loose issue. I found it most fascinating to peruse the firm's file copies of Sports Fun.

\* \* \* \* \*

Have Boys Friend Libraries for exchange only. The Fighting Fifth (Nipper) at St. Ninian's), The Red Hand also by Maxwell Scott. King of Canals by David Goodwin, Schoolboy Champions by Robert Murray, Carden of Cardenshire by Richard Randolph.

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THE LOST ADVENTURES OF  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES**

by Derek Smith

At half past eight on the morning of July 7th, 1930, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did not die: he set out upon the last great journey for which he had been preparing all his life.

Sir Arthur had been a giant among men. He had been knighted for services to his country and - in the words of Coulson Kernahan - "the Order of Knighthood was honoured as well as he." He had defended two innocent but imprisoned men in the face of official indifference and downright hostility. In the last decade of his life he had championed the unpopular cause of psychic religion, or Spiritualism, and he had fought like the doughty old warrior he was, with blazing sincerity and unshakeable courage.

In seventy-one fruitful years he had been doctor, author, detective, prophet, sportsman, and patriot. He had been all these things, and more, but to the man in the street he was one thing above all others. He was the creator of the greatest detective that the world had ever known.

Sherlock Holmes! The very name was magic. The living spirit of an era - a clarion call to romance and high adventure - the invocation is as powerful today as it was in 1887.

Some readers believed that the Sage of Baker Street was an actual, breathing human being. Many more like to pretend so - and have written books to prove it. In sheer quantity, memorabilia to Sherlock Holmes has long outweighed the sixty tales that Sir Arthur left for the joy and instruction of posterity.

When Hesketh Pearson's biography, "CONAN DOYLE," was published in 1943, it was to the chapter inscribed with the magic name that aficionados turned most eagerly. Few could have dreamed of the shock awaiting there.

Mr. Pearson had enlivened a competent account of the Holmesian myth with a detailed analysis of a scenario for an uncompleted tale which he had found among Sir Arthur's papers. Having whetted the appetites of his readers with this tasty morsel, he then proceeded to rouse them to a state of ravenous hunger with the glimpse of a complete, unpublished Holmes adventure entitled "The Man Who Was Wanted."

To be fair, one must admit that there had been reports of more important literary discoveries: The Lost Books of Livy, for example. That "find" had proved to be a false alarm - much to the relief of Walker of the Greyfriars Sixt who had said he would like to give the discoverer a good one on the solar plexus

This reaction was extreme, but it is quite probable that any Holmes admirer would take the Livy manuscripts, throw in the nine books of Sappho and the eleven missing comedies of Aristophanes, and swop the lot for a chance to examine the contents of "a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch box with (the) name, John H. Watson, M.D., Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid." This box, vide "Thor Bridge," contained all that remained of the lost adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

Those papers, unhappily, were purely fictitious. Hesketh Pearson's discovery was not. The pressure to publish was enormous; but Sir Arthur's fami

hesitated. Perhaps the tale was not up to the usual high standard. Perhaps like the case of the Matilda Briggs and the giant rat of Sumatra, it was "a story for which the world (was) not yet prepared."

There was another unpublished manuscript in the possession of the Conan Doyle family. It was a three-act play called "Angels of Darkness," contained in five cardboard-covered exercise books of which the first was to be displayed in the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition held at Abbey House, Baker Street, from May to September 1951. This tantalizing glimpse of the original holograph manuscript, signed "A. Conan Doyle, M.D., Bush Villa, Southsea," was all we were ever granted. The play, unpublished and never performed, is likely to remain so. It was written in 1889-90, and is largely a dramatization of the Utah scenes in "A Study in Scarlet." Sherlock Holmes is conspicuous by his absence. Doctor Watson, however, strides centre stage, amorously entangled with a lady of famous name. This much has been revealed; for the rest, our curiosity remains unsatisfied.

Another such play was written in 1897. This time Sherlock Holmes was indisputably the star, and Charles Frohman of New York accepted it on behalf of actor-author William Gillette. The play fired Gillette's enthusiasm and he set about adapting it to his own requirements. The script he brought back to England for Conan Doyle's approval had been so thoroughly adapted that it bore little or no relation to the author's lost original.

"SHERLOCK HOLMES: A Play; wherein is set forth The Strange Case of Miss Alice Faulkner, by William Gillette" was not really very good. It was mainly a patch-work of several short stories, topped off with an absurdly inappropriate romance. Nevertheless it was a magnificent starring vehicle for Holmes-Gillette, and as such it gave sterling service for more than a quarter of a century.

"THE SPECKLED BAND" was written and staged by Sir Arthur in the spring of 1910. H. A. Saintsbury was Sherlock Holmes, and the title role was played by a fine rock boa, the pride of the author's heart. The snake, however, was no great actor, and the stage carpenter had to pinch its tail to make its entrance more lively. Eventually it was replaced by an artificial serpent which everyone, including the stage carpenter, agreed was more satisfactory.

"A Study in Scarlet" had formed the major part of Beeton's Christmas Annual for 1887, and "The Sign of the Four" had been specially commissioned for Lippincott's Magazine for February 1890. The other adventures of Sherlock Holmes from 1891 to 1927 all made their initial appearance in the Strand Magazine. There were, however, two significant exceptions.

A belated addition to "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes" entitled "THE FIELD BAZAAR" was published in 1896. It was the first intimation that Holmes was alive and no longer immured in a watery grave at the foot of the Reichenbach Falls. As such, it should have been greeted with wild rejoicing and dancing in the streets. In fact, it attracted no attention whatsoever.

This was hardly surprising, since it was published exclusively in Edinburgh University's magazine, "The Student," November 20th, 1896. Conan Doyle had written the piece in aid of a bazaar to enlarge his old University's cricket-ground - "next to churches and cavalry ensigns ... the most debt-laden things upon earth."

It was not exactly a short story, but it was much more than a parody. It began, like the best adventures, at the breakfast table, with Holmes confounding

Watson in great style. "You will not, I am sure, be offended if I say that any reputation for sharpness which I may possess has been entirely gained by the admirable foil which you have made for me. Have I not heard of debutantes who have insisted upon plainness in their chaperones? There is a certain analogy."

The core of the tale was a thought-reading episode in the manner of the opening sequence to "The Cardboard Box." "The fact is, my dear Watson, that you are an excellent subject ... You respond instantly to any external stimulus. Your mental processes may be slow but they are never obscure, and I found during breakfast that you were easier reading than the leader in the Times in front of me."

Sir Arthur's second essay in parody-pastiche was in the nature of a Command Performance. "HOW WATSON LEARNED THE TRICK" was one of the two hundred hand written little volumes which made up the famous Queen's Dolls' House Library.

Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, R.A., this magnificent mansion in miniature - scaled at one inch to a foot - was a gift of the nation to Her Majesty Queen Mary in 1924, and was the great showpiece of the British Empire Exhibition. A Library for the Dolls' House was an obvious necessity. An invitation from Princess Marie Louise soon filled the shelves with contributions from contemporary men of letters. Each request was accompanied by a tiny, sumptuously bound blank book, to be filled with original work in the author's own hand.

The Library was soon to be graced with an irreplaceable First Edition, a unique adventure of Mr. Sherlock Holmes that readers of the Strand were never to encounter. Fortunately, the text of the tale has been preserved in "The Book of the Queen's Dolls' House (Library), Volume Two, Methuen (1924) in an edition limited to 1500 copies.

"HOW WATSON LEARNED THE TRICK" began again at the breakfast table, with the good Doctor in an uncharacteristically critical mood. "Yes, Holmes, I was thinking how superficial are those tricks of yours, and how wonderful it is that the public should continue to show interest in them!"

His friend's methods, Watson continued severely, were easily acquired. He then proceeded to give an example of that method of reasoning, with Holmes himself as the guinea pig. In conclusion:

"I have no doubt that I could find other points, Holmes, but I only give you these few, in order to show you that there are other people in the world who can be as clever as you."

"And some not so clever," said Holmes. "I admit that they are few, but I am afraid, my dear Watson, that I must count you among them."

Once again, poor Watson was wrong in every particular. "But go on, Watson, go on! It's a very superficial trick, and no doubt you will soon acquire it."

One feels that Holmes was unnecessarily severe; but the piece was a good joke, and deserves a wider circulation.

Writing about his most famous creation in "Memories and Adventures" (1924), Conan Doyle commented: "He shows his powers by what the South Americans now call 'Sherlockolmitos,' which means clever little deductions, which often have nothing to do with the matter in hand, but impress the reader with a general sense of power. The same effect is gained by his offhand allusion to other cases. Heaven knows how many titles I have thrown about in a casual way, and

how many readers have begged me to satisfy their curiosity ..."

Indeed, the tales abound with references to bizarre mysteries that exert a compelling pull upon the imagination. And these lost adventures are an indispensable part of the magic and the myth. One such - perhaps! - is to be found in the scenario for an uncompleted tale which Hesketh Pearson discovered amongst the late author's papers.

Baldly headed: "PLOT FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY," it begins with the murder of an old man who is found shot in an upstairs bedroom, lying beneath an open window. In great distress, the victim's niece calls in Sherlock Holmes - her lover has been arrested for the murder, mainly because he possesses a light ladder, the only one in the village, and there are the marks of the foot of such a ladder on the soil below the bedroom window.

There is an alternative suspect - a rejected suitor of the girl's - but an inquest fixes the guilt upon her lover. Holmes, however, after inspecting the marks on the soil, insists upon exploring a disused well. An assistant is lowered into the well and brings to the surface - a pair of stilts!

Holmes had, of course, expected this. He explains why. "Because the marks on the garden soil were made by two perpendicular poles - the feet of a ladder, which is on the slope, would have made depressions slanting towards the wall."

It only remains to entrap the real murderer. Another assistant is transformed by disguise into "the living image of the murdered man, wizened body, grey shrivelled face, skull-cap, and all." Mounting the stilts, he stalks up to the killer's bedroom window, crying out in a ghastly sepulchral voice. "As you came for me, I have come for you!"

This elicited a confession, which was fortunate. It might as easily have induced a heart attack.

The tale remained unwritten. Perhaps, as Hesketh Pearson remarked, Sir Arthur felt on reflection that the episode of the stilts was rather tall

And so we return, by circuitous route, to the strange affair of THE MAN WHO WAS WANTED."

"My father apparently withheld publication of 'The Case of the Man Who Was Wanted' because he did not consider it to be up to his usual standard. His family took the same view and for that reason have withheld publication until now, but public interest in this story has been so great that we have finally yielded to pressure and decided to allow it to be published in the SUNDAY DISPATCH." So wrote the author's son, Mr. Denis Conan Doyle, when the tale was finally serialised in January 1949.

This was not its first appearance in print. For the initial publication we have to thank our cousins across the Atlantic. Not for the first time, they had come to Holmes's rescue. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Holmes owed both his perpetuation and his resurrection to the friendly interest of American magazine publishers. The U.S.A. has always loved and honoured Holmes, and the strong, ruggedly handsome Sherlock of the Frederic Dorr Steele illustrations is as familiar a figure to Americans as the Sidney Paget image is to us.

The story appeared in "Cosmopolitan Magazine," August 1948. The Sunday Dispatch secured exclusive rights to bring the tale to British readers, and

serialised it in three parts.

The adventure began in splendid style. It was the autumn of 1895, and Watson had sent his wife away on a Swiss holiday. He, of course, headed for Baker Street like a homing pigeon.

"Holmes was stretched upon the couch with his back towards me, the familiar old dressing gown and old briar pipe as much in evidence as of yore.

"Come in, Watson," he cried, without glancing round. "Come in and tell me what good wind blows you here?"

"What an ear you have, Holmes," I said. "I don't think that I could have recognised your tread so easily."

"Nor I yours," said he, "if you hadn't come up my badly lighted staircase taking the steps two at a time with all the familiarity of an old fellow lodger: even then I might not have been sure who it was, but when you stumbled over the new mat outside the door which has been there for nearly three months, you needed no further announcement."

After some further "Sherlockolmitos," the two friends set off to Sheffield on the trail of one Jabez Booth, a forger who had swindled several banks. With Inspector Lestrade's assistance, they located the wanted man on board the Empress Queen, bound from Liverpool to New York. At this point, Holmes was rather ungratefully dismissed from the case, and Lestrade took passage to America to intercept and arrest the forger. With the New York police chief he boarded the Empress Queen before the passengers had been allowed to disembark, only to find that Jabez Booth had inexplicably vanished. "Mr. Booth certainly was on board the Empress Queen up to and at 11 o'clock on the morning of the 10th, and although he could not by any possibility have left it, we are nevertheless face to face with the fact that he wasn't there at five o'clock in the afternoon."

The solution of the mystery was ingenious, and both Holmes and Watson were in fine form. Nonetheless, many readers felt a vague sense of dissatisfaction with the tale, and a few critical letters appeared in the Sunday Dispatch. The Editor noted defensively: "We are aware that there are several inconsistencies in this story. We have not tried to correct them. The story is published exactly as it was found except for minor changes in spelling and punctuation."

There had certainly been one or two surprising grammatical errors ("the greatest evil of the two," for example). More importantly, Watson had perpetrated one monumental howler that no student of the canon could possibly ignore. He had claimed that his wife, the former Mary Morstan, was alive and well in 1895, though the most casual reader knew that the good Doctor had been bereaved before Holmes's return in 1894.

Still, imperfections and all, the story had been given to the world; and that, it seemed, was that. But the last act of the drama was still to be played, and the principal actor was waiting in the wings.

A shadow was taking substance, and a "ghost" was about to walk.

The time was early 1949. Enter now, Mr. ARTHUR WHITAKER - mild of manner, retiring by nature. Aged 66, he was slim and grey-haired, with a healthy weather-beaten face. Living in retirement at Longridge, near Stroud, he was spending his time collecting ornithology reports from bird-watchers in the

county of Gloucestershire. Customarily dressed in country breeches and knee-length stockings, he might almost have stepped from one of those fascinating nineteenth century stories that Sir Arthur had so often penned for the Strand Magazine.

In January, 1949, he picked up his copies of the Sunday Dispatch and read them with mixed feelings. And then he put pen to paper and sent off a letter to the Conan Doyle family. He didn't want money, and he didn't want publicity, but he thought he should tell them that he - Arthur Whitaker - was the sole author of "The Man Who Was Wanted!"

A solicitor was sent to investigate. He was followed by Mr. John Bingham, representing the Sunday Dispatch. Both were quickly convinced that the unbelievable was indeed true - Mr. Arthur Whitaker was solely responsible for this lost adventure of Sherlock Holmes. In fact, he still retained possession of an exact carbon copy of the tale.

Sir Arthur, of course, had never been driven to the recourse of employing a substitute writer. Here is the explanation of the mystery, in Mr. Whitaker's own words, as reported by John Bingham:

"In 1911 I was a young architect, married, and living in Barnsley. I thought I might earn a little more money by writing detective stories, so I wrote five or six. One was 'The Man Who Was Wanted.' I sent it to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, asking him whether he ever collaborated in story-writing, and if he would like to collaborate with me.

"He replied that the story was not bad, but that he did not collaborate; he sometimes paid ten guineas, however, for an idea which he later worked up in his own way. He advised me to change the names in the story and get it published myself. However, I accepted the ten guineas, and he retained the typescript."

This was the typescript, of course, which Lady Conan Doyle had placed in a deed box with other documents after Sir Arthur's death. Since it lacked any other identification, there was nothing to indicate to the family that the ms. was not a genuine "Conan Doyle." So everybody concerned had been led astray.

Immediately the error was discovered the Conan Doyle family offered to return the money they had received for the tale. In fact, the whole affair had a rather happy postscript, as appeared in an Editor's Note. "Mr. Whitaker's wife is seriously ill and temporarily blind, a fact which is naturally a strain on his resources. In these circumstances, the Editor has decided that certain monies which Mr. Denis Conan Doyle at once suggested should be returned to the 'Sunday Dispatch' could appropriately be paid instead to this author of a story which has provided so much varied interest to the public."

One can imagine Sir Arthur's great head nodding in kindly approval of the decision, which could have come straight from his own generous heart.

And so Arthur Whitaker, having written this odd but unforgettable footnote in the history of the detective story, retired into obscurity once more. But I, for one, would rather like to read those other stories he mentioned! Alas, they, too, are "lost adventures."

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Schoolgirls' Own Libraries by Hilary Marlow. 238 Laughing Lily's Travels; 278 The Trials of Laughing Lily.

HOPKINS, 129, SHARDELOES ROAD, LONDON, S.E.14.

## Mr. Dorien's Missing £2,000

A REPRINT OF EDWY SEARLES BROOKS' FIRST PUBLISHED STORY

IN "YES OR NO" No. 174 dated JULY 13, 1907

In an article I wrote some time ago I stated that E. S. Brooks' first published story was "The Phantom Volcano," which appeared in No. 244 of "Yes or No," 1908. This I have learned since is incorrect - owing to my misreading of a sentence in a letter of Edwy's to his brother Arthur.

When E.S.B. gave that interview to Marjorie Norris, he stated that the very first story he ever had published was "Mr. Dorien's Missing £2,000." In view of the letter I've just mentioned, I assumed that his memory was at fault.

Now, however, I know that E.S.B.'s memory had not let him down, for I have now got a copy of the "Yes or No" in which the story "Mr. Dorien's Missing £2,000" appeared - and it predates "The Phantom Volcano" by one year and four months!

Thanks to the extra space that the Annual affords (and which Eric has made available) you can now read that same story, which I'm quite certain has never been read by any of E.S.B.'s many admirers.

After this story appeared there were a good few years of struggle and hardship ahead before Edwy finally established himself. Whatever you may think of the style of writing or the plot - remember it was written sixty one years ago by a boy in his teens!

Bob Blythe

### MR. DORIEN'S MISSING £2,000

By Edwy Searles Brooks

The rain was coming down in torrents. I could hear it rattling against the window panes. I drew a little closer to the fire, for it was chilly. The novel I was reading was confoundedly dry and uninteresting, and I had already almost fallen asleep more than once. I was just dozing off again when there came a tap at the door.

"Come in," said I.

The door opened and admitted my portly landlady.

"A gent says as he wishes to see you, sir," she announced.

"All right, show him in," I answered, yawning.

I rose from my chair and tried to make myself a little more presentable, for my hair was ruffled and my tie lopsided. I wondered who the deuce it could be at that time of night. I was not left long in doubt, however. Someone was coming heavily up the stairs. The next moment my door opened and I gave a cry of surprise.

"Max Kerr, as I live! Well, this is unexpected," I cried.

"I thought it would be," he laughed, shaking hands cordially, for he was one of my oldest friends. "I was just passing this way, and as it was raining pretty heavily, and I happen to be without overcoat or umbrella, I thought I'd pop in for a few minutes."

"I'm delighted to see you," said I. "Sit down and we'll have a chat. Been far to-day?"

"Not very. Just come down from Ipswich."

I guessed for what reason he had been there. He was a private detective by profession, and his extensive business took him everywhere. "Another case, I suppose?" I queried.

"Well, yes. Only a trivial affair, though. If you have nothing else to do I'll tell it you. What?"

"I should be delighted to hear it," I answered, getting out whisky-and-soda and cigars. He took a little whisky, lit a cigar, and settled himself comfortably in his chair. I took a seat opposite to him.

"It was just about three o'clock this afternoon the landlady showed a gentleman into my office," he commenced. "I looked at the card and read the name, 'Mr. Merrick Dorien.'

"He was a middle-aged man of about the average height. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and his whole appearance gave me the impression that he was fairly well-to-do.

"'Mr. Maxwell Kerr?' said he, glancing at me.

"I bowed. 'Pray, take a seat, Mr. Dorien,' said I, 'and state your business as briefly and quickly as possible.' I have to speak like that you know. Some fellows that come to me for advice keep me waiting half the day before they get to the point.

"'It is a matter of some little importance that I have come to consult you on,' said he, 'and it is also very mysterious.

"'Last night there was a serious robbery at my house. Jewels to the value of £2,000 were stolen from the safe. But the police, I am thankful to say, have secured the thief. He is Martin Ratcliff, my secretary. I must tell you that yesterday he got leave to be away to-day. It is plainly obvious why he wanted to go. The keys of the safe are kept only by him and myself, and it would be the easiest matter in the world to take the jewels out and then get away this morning before I went to it. But being anxious as to their safety I looked as soon as I came down. They were gone. I gave Ratcliffe a job in another part of the house, and then without his knowledge sent for the police.

"'After the usual amount of unnecessary questions and so on, the inspector noticed some footprints leading from the landing outside to the safe, in the library, which, by the way, is upstairs. They were made by a pair of boots that had been out in the mud. Not being dry the mud had left clear marks on the carpet. It was raining, pouring, last night at Ipswich, and the only person out in it from my household was Mr. Ratcliffe. The inspector procured one of his boots and, comparing it with the footprints, it exactly corresponded. After this, of course, there was little doubt about the matter, and my secretary was arrested.'

"'If that is the case, then,' said I, 'why have you come to consult me upon the matter?'

"'I am just coming to that point,' replied Mr. Dorien. 'After Ratcliffe's arrest we searched in his room for the jewels, but we could not find them. Then we asked him where he had put them. He denied all knowledge of them and swore that he was innocent. Finding that we could get nothing out of him we commenced a thorough search. After going over the whole house we failed to see the least sign of them. Being anxious I again pressed him to reveal where he had put them, but with the same result as before. After another fruitless search I resolved to put the matter into your hands and came up to London by the first train possible.'

"'I am rather glad you did,' said I, 'for the case appears to be somewhat interesting. Now, Mr. Dorien, if you will allow me, I will ask you a few questions. Did your secretary appear at all agitated at the breakfast-table?'

"Not in the least. That is the peculiar part of it."

"And when he was arrested. Did he seem to expect it?"

"No. In fact, he was fairly staggered. But, of course, that was all make believe."

"Most probably. Had you any reason to suspect that he was capable of the crime?"

"I can't say I had. He has always proved himself to be strictly honest up to the present time."

"And the servants. How about them?"

"They are quite above suspicion. I have had all of them for years, and I can vouch for their honesty."

"Thank you, Dr. Dorien," said I. "I think that will do for the present." And I picked up my A.B.C. and looked up the trains.

"There is one at 3.40 from Liverpool Street," I said, "which arrives at Ipswich - the station for Clifton House, I believe - at 4.58. That leaves us just twenty minutes to get to the station," I added, glancing at my watch.

"That will do admirably," said my client.

"Well, I just got my handbag, which I always keep packed, and slipped on my coat and hat, and in a few minutes we were bowling along in a hansom to Liverpool Street.

"We caught the train all right and arrived at Clifton House, which is about a couple of miles from Ipswich, at half-past five.

"It was a large house standing back from the road, with an extensive garden, which, I could see, was kept in splendid condition.

"Penner, that's Mr. Dorien's butler, answered the door to our ring and showed us into the dining-room. Inspector Stormby, from Ipswich, who was sitting there, rose to his feet on our entrance.

"Ah, Mr. Kerr," he exclaimed, "so you have come down to help us to clear up this mystery?"

"Yes. I fancied the case looked rather interesting, and as I have nothing particular on hand just at present I've run down with Mr. Dorien."

"I suppose nothing has been touched, Stormby," inquired my client.

"Nothing, sir. I expected you to bring Mr. Kerr with you, so I gave orders for everything to remain as they were.

"Good. And now, if you are ready, Mr. Kerr, I will accompany you to the library."

"Just half a minute, please," I answered. "I wish to ask a few questions of the inspector here."

"Certainly," said Stormby. "But I expect Mr. Dorien has already told you all I know."

"Very probably. But it will refresh my memory. At what time was the robbery discovered?"

"When Mr. Dorien first opened the safe. That was about - let me see - about nine o'clock.

"And he immediately sent for you?"

"Yes, I was in the house at ten."

"The footmarks about the safe. Did they exactly correspond with Mr. Ratcliffe's boots?"

"Exactly. There is not the least doubt that they were made by him."

"Thank you, inspector," I said. "Now, Mr. Dorien, I am at liberty to accompany you."

We made our way upstairs to the library. It was a decent sized room, expensively furnished. The furniture had been shifted about to leave a clear space in front of the safe, a small one of the ordinary common type, let into

the wall on the farther side of the room.

"Well, I made a thorough search. It was clear that the safe had been opened with a key, for there was not the least scratch or mark on it. The footprints were quite distinct on the carpet leading from the door straight to the safe, and fainter ones back again. I was down on my knees examining them intently when I noticed a very peculiar thing. Only the solemarks of the boots could be distinctly seen. Behind them was a faint line just as if the heels had been dragged along. In fact, it was plain that the boots were too large for the person who had worn them.

"Is it absolutely certain that these boots are Mr. Ratcliffe's?' I asked, for I had been comparing them and found that they exactly corresponded.

"Absolutely,' replied Mr. Dorien. 'I am certain of that.'

"Were they at all loose-fitting, do you know?"

"I don't think so; at any rate, I have never noticed it.'

"I was puzzled, fairly puzzled. The boots, even if they had been unlaced, would not have dragged along like that, provided that they were worn by the person they belonged to.

"Well, I went on with my examination, and just as I was about to get up from the floor I noticed a half-spent wax-vesta lying near the safe. I picked it up and examined it. It had a wood centre. 'A valuable clue, most likely,' thought I, and slipping it into my pocket I rose to my feet.

"You say that Mr. Ratcliffe, when he was arrested, was utterly flabbergasted?' I asked of the inspector.

"He was that! He thought I was joking at first. Then when he knew I was in earnest he swore that he was innocent and knew nothing of the crime.'

"Well,' I said, 'I think it very likely that he spoke the truth. I don't believe he took the jewels!'

"Eh? What's that?' broke in Mr. Dorien. 'My dear Mr. Kerr, just look at the proof. There's no getting over that.'

"Proof! What is it after all?' I exclaimed. 'Simply that he had arranged to be away to-day and that these marks were made by his boots. And it doesn't follow that because of that he wore them. Another thing. Is it likely that anyone wishing to be quiet and to leave no trace would put his boots on, which, by the way, are all muddy and could not fail to leave distinct traces. Is it likely?'

"Well, now that you put it in that light I can't say it is,' admitted my client. 'But who else could it have been?'

"That I can't tell you yet,' I answered. 'I have an idea, but it is only an idea.'

"Just then I thought of something. I got out a cigarette and pretended that I had not got a match.

"Could you oblige me with a light?' I asked of Mr. Dorien.

"Certainly,' said he, and handed me a box of matches. I struck one and lit my cigarette. Before throwing it down I absent-mindedly pulled it to pieces. It was one with a wood centre!

"That set me thinking. Mr. Dorien had some matches of the same sort as that I had found by the safe. I turned to him.

"Did you happen to strike a match near the safe this morning?' I asked.

"Not that I know of.' He thought for a moment. 'No, I'm certain of it. But why?'

"Oh, nothing much,' I answered. 'I was curious, that's all. Now let me see. These footmarks go right out of the door,' I added, following them, 'and suddenly stop against this door. Why is that?'

"That is my secretary's bedroom," Mr. Dorian answered.

"Opposite to this door was a small box-ottoman with a polished wood top. I did not take much notice of it, except that it was covered with dust.

"Your housemaid seems to have neglected her duties," I observed.

"Yes. She has been away for a few days, and the other servants have forgotten it, I suppose," said Mr. Dorian.

"As I looked at it I suddenly noticed something, and a sudden thought flashed through my mind. On the edge where the lock was were the marks of someone's fingers. Farther towards the middle a square mark could be seen, evidently made by a small box of some sort, out of which a piece had been chipped. I could see this by the impression on the dust.

"The jewels were in a case?" I queried.

"Yes."

"And out of the bottom of the case a small piece was chipped, was it not?" was my next question.

"Precisely. But how on earth did you know?" exclaimed my client.

"It is my business to know more things than other people," I replied, smiling. And that was all the answer I would give him.

"Who has the key of this box?" I inquired.

"Oh, I keep that in my room. But there is no need to look in there."

"It would do no harm" I answered. "Kindly fetch the key."

"Oh, very well, if you wish it," replied Mr. Dorian a trifle crossly. And he went and fetched it.

"I was kneeling down putting the key in the lock when I saw some spots of candle-grease on the oilcloth. They had been dropped from one of those ornamental candles, you know, one of those twisted things. This one was red.

"Do you keep a candle in your bedroom?" I asked, turning to my client.

"Yes."

"Is it a fancy one - red?"

"Yes," he said again. "But I can't imagine how you knew it."

"Does Mr. Ratcliffe have one in his bedroom?"

"No. Nobody but myself."

"I had the solution of the thing in my hands now, and I felt satisfied with myself. Of course it was Dr. Dorian himself who had taken the jewels. I had absolute proof of that. The candle-grease, the matches, and the footmarks. His feet are much smaller than Mr. Ratcliffe's, and not knowing what he was doing - for, undoubtedly, he was asleep - he must have put them on.

"I unlocked the box, Mr. Dorian and Inspector Stormy looking on indifferently. I pushed open the lid. It was full of old papers and all sorts of old rubbish, but on the top of these was the jewel-case.

"I took it out and handed it to my client. 'There, Mr. Dorian,' said I. 'It hasn't proved such a difficult job after all!'

"It took all the puff out of him when he saw them, and it was some time before he calmed down.

"But how the dickens did the scoundrel manage to put them in that box when it was locked and I had the key?"

"It was as I first thought," I answered. "Mr. Ratcliffe had nothing whatever to do with the robbery."

"Nothing whatever to do with it?" said Mr. Dorian in amazement. "Then who the deuce did take them?"

"I expect it will surprise you when I tell you."

"Not at all," said he, "tell me who he is and I will have him arrested immediately."

"I think not," I said smiling, "the person whom you would have arrested and who took the property, Mr. Dorien, was yourself!"

"Myself!" Mr. Dorien gasped. "Is this a joke, Mr. Kerr?"

"Not at all. I assure you it is the perfect truth," I laughed.

"Then, of course, explanations followed, and I learned that some years ago he had been cured of somnambulism, but it appears that he is starting his sleep-walking again.

"Of course Mr. Ratcliffe was instantly released, and my client apologised to him for any inconvenience.

"Well, I stayed to dinner, and I may say that before I left I received a fat little cheque in return for my services."

\* \* \* \* \*

Christmas Memories Charles Hamilton, Edwy Brooks, Gwyn Evans, Arthur Hardy, Safe in God's Care; thanks for beautiful memories.

LES FARROW, FYDELL STREET, BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

Please, Please, Please, can anyone supply the following:- Modern Boy - 461, 479, 521, 523, (new series) 1, 4, 23, 26, 44, 45, 65, 66, 70, 73.

R. HODGSON, "BLUE CABLES," 47, GORDONDALE ROAD, MANSFIELD, NOTTS.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to CLUB MEMBERS EVERYWHERE from all at "FRIARDALE."

Current wants are: Magnets 1527, 1541, 1543/4, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1581, 1610/1625, 1590 and 1664. Populars from 19th May 1917/18; Nos. 241, 244, 252, 256/8, 262, 264/5, 268. Nelson Lee 1927 Nos. 41/43; 1930 No. 28; 1931 No. 93. First 24 Collectors Digests in reasonable condition.

ACRAMAN, 2 NORTH DRIVE, RUISLIP, MIDDX.

My warmest greetings and grateful thanks to Eric Fayne, to Harry - Ian - Ivan Jack - Tom and all Midland Club Members - to Uncle Benjamin, Frank, Len, and all London Club Members - Albert Watkins, Cyril Rowe and especially to Henry Webb and family. Best wishes to all. STAN KNIGHT

Season's Greetings all Old Boys' Book Collectors especially Howard Sharp, James Swan, Austin Paynter, Jim Belton, Geof. Harrison, Vernon Lay, our celebrated Editor Eric Fayne. Hoping New Year will bring all more nostalgic discoveries. Am still interested in Lee's, Blakes, Union Jacks, D. Weeklies etc.

A. G. DAVIDSON, 193 RAE ST., FITZROY NORTH, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.

SEASON'S GREETINGS to All Old Boys, and acknowledgement of kindnesses received from individual Hobby correspondents, who have become warm personal and family friends. Thanks to all C.D. contributors, and Very Special Appreciation for our incomparable Editor's year-long efforts. Happy and Successful 1969 Everybody, particularly the Merseyside Club.

DAVID HOBBS, SEATTLE, U.S.A.

# SERIOUS OR FUNNY?

by W. O. G. Lofts

Probably one of the greatest surprises I ever experienced in my life was when I learned that Will Hay, my favourite comedian, was in actual fact an extremely serious person, also a very clever one. To have attended one of his lectures on astronomy and expect laughs would have been out of the question. It would seem impossible that the man talking was the same man who portrayed the buffoon on the screen in so many films.

Jack Benny classes himself as the meanest man in the world, but he is in fact a very generous person off-screen. Bob Hope emphasises his deadly enmity with Bing Crosby, yet two closer friends it would be difficult to find. Frankie Howerd and Benny Hill are much less happy off-stage than on, and the recent tragic death of Tony Hancock, one of our greatest comedians, shows what an unhappy man he was, for apart from his broken marriage, he worried incessantly about his work.

Who could have believed that Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy's meek, downtrodden partner, was married five times and something of a 'terror' in real life? Gilbert and Sullivan, far from being close friends, did not speak to one another for years. To sum all this up and give one truly classic example - did not Paganini, the tragic clown of the opera, show one face to the audience full of laughter and another face showing sorrow and sadness?

All this leads up to a discourse on our favourite authors and artists. Without ever meeting them, or having any true knowledge of their characters or outlook on life, many collectors probably assumed that they resemble their individual stories and illustrations. Some humorous writers are, of course, humorous in real life, their own personal nature being reflected in their work; but others are very different.

Having had the good fortune to meet many artists and authors in the flesh, and spend many pleasant social hours with them, I have been able - to some extent - to judge whether they are seriously or light-heartedly inclined in real life. Of course it is possible, as in the case of Paganini, that a different face is shown in their intimate home and family life, but it is fairly safe to say that one can usually tell after a few meetings whether a person is serious or humorous in outlook.

In my opinion, both Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks were seriously inclined. Both could write serious and amusing stories with equal facility. Personally I believe that Hamilton had the greater sense of humour, whilst Brooks excelled in mystery stories. I never met Hamilton, but I did meet Brooks. C. H. Chapman, the MAGNET artist, is - as many collectors can confirm - a very jolly person indeed, bubbling over with good humour, always read to laugh. His humour is unmistakably expressed through his drawings.

Leonard Shields, however, who drew the Greyfriars boys slightly younger and merrier, was a very dour man indeed! He did not mix socially with other artists and authors, or get on with them well; nevertheless, he was a conscientious man who thought deeply about his work all the time.

Warwick Reynolds was another serious man, and a portrait of him clearly

reflected his personality. He was a Quaker and a deeply religious man, and I have always thought that it would have been difficult for him to illustrate an amusing situation. R. J. MacDonald was once described to me as being a dour Scot, which may be unfair to our Scottish collectors, as most of them are jolly people. His son told me that 'his father did not care for his work on the GEM,' which I find rather hard to believe. An editor once described 'Mac' to me as quiet and very dignified.

George Samways, who did such noble work in his amusing bits and pieces in the MAGNET and GEM, must be regarded by many as an amusing man. Yet, my own opinion after several meetings, was that he was very seriously inclined and perhaps took life too thoughtfully. Extremely goodnatured and with a boyish spirit, looking at least twenty years younger than his age, Greyfriars made a tremendous impact on his mode of life. I always found it difficult to believe that this was the man who made generations of readers laugh by his depiction of St. Sam's and other amusing contributions.

Fred Gordon Cook, Kenneth Newman and Rossiter Shepherd, other substitute writers, were however very light-hearted in manner. Kenneth Newman especially told me to 'kick him' when we first met! He was referring to one of the most amusing school stories ever written by Charles Hamilton - the MAGNET's 'LAME BUNTER' - which he could recite almost by heart after nearly forty years.

The first author I ever met was the late John Hunter of Sexton Blake fame. At that time Mr. Hunter was accused of being far too brutal in his stories. Although a large man, one more gentle or quiet it would have been hard to find, and he had a great sense of humour. I can recall how shocked he was to learn from me, at first-hand, of the Jack Spot 'gangster' affair in the next block of flats to where I lived. He was married, with sons and daughters and grandchildren to whom he was devoted, and I always found it difficult to understand from where he got the brutal facts he incorporated in his stories!

Anthony Parsons, although he wrote serious Blake stories, was a very amusing man and the life and soul of all Fleet Street gatherings. Likewise Pierre Quirroule (W. W. Sayer) who had a Cockney sense of humour - I can still visualise him now; tall and with extraordinary light blue eyes. His beautiful English was far above the standard laid down for stories in those days and it seems incredible that he was once told that he 'wrote too good English.'

Gwyn Evans, of course, wrote amusing Blakes, and probably was the most colourful SEXTON BLAKE author of all time. Gwyn died before my time, but there is no doubt that his modern counterpart is Jack Trevor Story. An evening with Jack is something to be enjoyed; there was never a dull moment when Jack was around.

Wilfred McNeilly is also an amusing man, as is the fabulous Hank Janson (Steven Francis). Martin Thomas and Arthur McLean are of the serious type, while W. Howard Baker (Bill Baker to his friends) - who writes both serious and amusing stories - is extremely good-natured. I have sometimes thought that his personality is akin to that of Jimmy Silver of Rookwood.

George Hamilton Teed, with his Canadian foghorn voice and his bottle of whisky a day, was described by many of his contemporaries as a serious and harsh man, but he wrote tender love stories. Robert Murray Graydon was completely colourless, according to one of his editors, though this was probably due to a severe stomach complaint, which resulted in an early death.

Ladbroke Black (Paul Urqhart) was a very amusing man and totally unlike

his stories. Walter Tyrer and Francis Warwick (Warwick Jardine) were serious by nature, like the stories they wrote.

In a recent meeting in Fleet Street, Eric Parker told me that he had no time for comic artists - meaning in the sense of discussing their work. Eric, who probably can be called the Sexton Blake artist, only draws serious art work, especially historical stuff of the time of Napoleon, yet in real life he is a very amusing person. Although he is now seventy, his outlook on life makes him appear many years younger.

John Nix Pentelow was also a very serious man, weighed down with financial troubles. Unfortunately he was also very deaf, which made conversation with him something of an ordeal. Horace Philips, the man behind the 'Marjorie Stanton' pen-name of Morecove Girls' School, was so serious in outlook that he was nicknamed by other writers 'The Rev. Phillips' - which may be unjust to the majority of clergymen, who can laugh as ably as anyone.

Such was the seriousness of Horace Philips's writing that when he took over the SCHOOLFRIEND Cliff House stories from Charles Hamilton, another writer was called in to give some humour to occasional stories. This writer was Reginald Kirkham - 'Kirks,' as he was called, was a very amusing and popular writer and his humour is best described in Bessie Bunter's essay on a 'Cat':

'The Catt walks and runns about. It playes with mouses. Little girls do not play with others and eat them. Catts stele foode a lot. The catt is always taking grubb from my studdy. It robbes all the studdy's and I am blamed. I do not like catts for that reason and bekos they scratch.'

J. Louis Smyth, whose illustrations of mysterious men and women lurking in shadows and sinister exploits, did a lot to boost the sale of FUN AND FICTION, BULLSEYE and FILM FUN, was far from being serious in real life. He was a small man, an Irish-American who delighted everyone with his good humour and his singing of comic songs, and was a 'must' for any party.

George William Wakefield, who - apart from his Rookwood illustrations - could have been described as a comic artist for his work on Laurel and Hardy in FILM FUN, was, I am told, serious by nature.

On the whole, however, I think that comic artists usually conformed to type. A. W. Brown (Bert), who drew countless sets of characters for dozens of comics in over forty years - including Homeless Hector and Moonlight Moggie, as well as Dad Walker and Pa Perkins, was a very jolly man indeed. He was over eighty when I met him, but as in the case of Eric Parker, his humorous approach to life made him look many years younger.

John L. Jukes, of Alfie the Air-Tramp fame is also in the 'jovial type' class. To see John is a 'must' whenever I am down Bournemouth way.

Another comic artist friend, Basil Reynolds (nephew of the great Warwick) is far from being a serious person. 'A very good companion to be with' is how another friend describes him.

In the space of this article I have only touched on a few of our favourite authors and artists, but it is worth closing on the following note: When in a Fleet Street tavern I often saw a man, dressed completely in black, sitting by himself at a table with a truly miserable expression on his countenance. Nobody ever spoke to him; he never spoke to anybody, that I recollect.

One evening I asked an editor friend who he was, and he replied: "Why,

that's ----- , who was 'Happy Eddie' the editor on FILM FUN for many years."

P.S. As mentioned in this article, it was never my pleasure to meet the late Charles Hamilton, but our editor who met him, told me that he was 'chuckling, and bubbling with humour, and obviously in his old age he was greatly enjoying life to the full.' I do know also that Mr. Hamilton was an exceedingly generous man, and very fond of children. I think that this may well answer Frank Parker's query in the September C.D. on 'what sort of man was Charles Hamilton.'

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE LAST DOUBLE NUMBER

By O. W. Wadham

It was most fitting that the last ever Christmas Double Number of an English comic paper should be produced by that long-lived and very popular pink production, CHIPS. It appeared on Dec. 4th, 1937, and its stories, drawings and decorations were quite up to the standard of the many Christmas issues that had gone before. Ten pages of letter-press, and six of drawings; all for twopence. That cheerful doggie, Homeless Hector, got the biggest bone in the festive feast - a full half-page, ten panels, in place of his usual four. Weary Willie and Tired Tim, after carrying a huge trunk up a long hill, found it contained Mr. Chips, and they were invited in to share his Christmas dinner. All the stories had a seasonal atmosphere. Two full pages of the opening chapters of "Rogues Marsh." Outlaws on the King's Highway in a stirring Christmas Eve romance, "Lord Midnight." Thrills in a rambling mansion in "Mystery of Mordaunt Manor," and Dane, the Dog Detective in a Christmas adventure, "Wreckers of the Air."

"Offis boy Bottles" wrote a half-page effort, "The Ghost of Gumdrop Gully," which was even better than his usual weekly "kolumn." There was a full page of games and jokes, and other stories and pictures. In fact, that 1937 Christmas Double Number could have been better value than any previous issue because given free with every copy was a gift of a Silverine Pencil. It surely was the last great effort for a humble two coppers. No other comic paper has ever turned on a treat like it since.

\* \* \* \* \*

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# A WIZARD *at the* WICKET

*by John Dyer*



THE MYSTERIOUS WAYS OF THE A.P.

On the opposite page we reproduce two covers for you. One is of Boys' Friend Library No. 716. The story is "Smith of Rocklandshire" by Richard Randolph, who was, of course, J. N. Pentelow. The date was then May 1924. Much earlier the yarn had been run as a serial in the Boys' Realm.

The other cover is of Football & Sports Library No. 518. The story is "A Wizard at the Wicket" by John Drake. The date was then June 1937.

In fact, both stories are the same. One wonders why the A.P. felt it necessary to give it a new title and credit it to a new pen-name in 1937. True, the writer, Pentelow, had been dead several years by that time, but, even so, "Richard Randolph" had been famed for his cricket tales, and surely the name might have helped to sell the book

\* \* \* \* \*

To Gerry Allison - Eric Fayne - Jim Swan - Lang may yer lum reek

From John McMahon

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# HURREE SINGH —

## INKY TO YOU — AND THE BOYS OF BEECHWOOD

It is not very well known that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, was by far the oldest of the characters who made up the world-famous Famous Five. He was created several years before the Magnet was born and before Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry went as new boys to Greyfriars. Well over sixty years ago, the author wrote a series of stories about the boys of Netherby School. The heroes were Third Formers; they were Owen Redfern, Lawrence, and Hurree Singh. Eventually Netherby was closed, owing to an outbreak of scarlet fever, and some of the Netherby boys, including Redfern, Lawrence, and Hurree Singh went to Beechwood Academy. Most of these stories were published under the name of Charles Hamilton, but some appeared under the name of Martin Clifford (as this one did). There is little excuse for any boys of that far-off age not realising that Charles Hamilton, Martin Clifford, and Frank Richards were one and the same man. Very few of these old tales are still in existence today. They have never been much sought, for the simple reason that very few readers knew of their existence in the way that some readers knew of and coveted the Jack Blake stories before Tom Merry was created. In 1908, in Magnet No. 5, some of the boys of Beechwood, including Hurree Singh, went for a temporary stay at Greyfriars. Hurree Singh alone became a permanent and much-loved member of the Greyfriars cast. It is an odd freak of Hamiltonia that Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence (the names now used for 3 boys) turned up as scholarship boys at St. Jim's in 1912. Only the names were the same. They were clearly not intended to have any connection with the Netherby boys.

The following 60-year old story is the last of the Netherby series and the first introducing Beechwood Academy. For reasons of space it has been accorded slight shrinkage which, we assure you, does not harm it in the least. We feel sure it will not mar your enjoyment of another real novelty item.

When Hurree Singh featured in the Greyfriars Gallery in the Magnet in 1917, it was mentioned that he had come originally from Beechwood Academy. There was no mention of Netherby, which strongly suggests that Pentelow was unaware of the existence of that school. He was in the same boat as most Magnet readers.

(Note: The artist was Hutton Mitchell)

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# THE BOYS OF BEECHWOOD.



*A Splendid, Complete  
School Tale.*  
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

"What do you think of it, kids?" said Owen Redfern, of the Third Form at Netherby, with the gloomiest expression that had ever been seen on his usually sunny countenance.

And Reggie Lawrence said, emphatically: "Rotten!"

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, known throughout the length and breadth of Netherby as "Inky," nodded his head in assent.

"The contretemps is indeed full of rottenness," he said. "It is great annoyance for the crimson fever to break out in the school --"

"The scarlet fever, Inky."

"I fail to perceive any exaggerated difference between the two," said Hurree Singh. "But your beautiful language is full of fine extinctions --"

"Distinctions, I suppose you mean," grinned Redfern. "Well, it's rotten and no mistake, kiddies. The school's going to break up for a bit till it's over, and I wonder where we shall go."

"Home, I suppose," said Lawrence.

"Yes, duffer, home first; but if

this lasts long, we shall be sent to some other school, and then --"

"We'll be sent together," said Reggie Lawrence. "As your governor is my guardian, there won't be any difficulty about us two; but as for Inky --"

"I shall accompany you wherever you go," said the nabob. "I have the influential voice in the management of my affairs, although I have not yet attained the respectable age of great ripeness. Wherever we go, sahibs, we all go together."

"Good!" said Redfern with satisfaction. "It will be a bit of a wrench, leaving old Netherby, especially if it is for good. But so long as we're together we can stick it. It's rough, though. We were expecting to get our remove, and when we were in the Fourth we should have had a study to ourselves, instead of hanging round in the Third Form-room, with a set of youngsters --"

Knowles, the cad of the Third, came into the room.

"Are you off to-day, Knowles?" asked Redfern.

"You don't think I'm going to stick

in the beastly place, do you, and catch the beastly fever?" said Knowles. "My idea is that Dr. Lisle has been very much to blame --"

"Oh, rot!" broke in Redfern testily. "How could the Head help it?"

"Well, he ought to have taken more care," said Knowles. "Not that I shall be sorry to leave Netherby. I never liked the place."

The chums gave him a glance of disgust.

"And you can't say the place likes you!" exclaimed Redfern. "It will be a comfort not to see your chivvy any more, at all events."

"Same to you and many of 'em!" said Knowles carelessly. "I shan't be sorry to lose sight of you two bounders, and your inky friend. I suppose he'll go back to the zoo, won't he?"

The dusky cheeks of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh became red with anger.

"I am sorry to quarrel on the day of busting up," he exclaimed; "but I cannot overlook such an insult to a Nabob of Bhanipur. Knowles, you must express the contrition for that remark, or I shall visit you with severe castigation."

"Oh, keep your wool on!" said Knowles. "No good rowing today. I'm going straight from here to Herr Rosenblum's Foreign Academy at Beechwood in Sussex."

"Never heard of it," said Redfern. Knowles grinned.

"It's run by a German on the lines of a Continental boarding-school. My pater wants me to go strong on languages for commercial reasons, and that's why I'm going. More than half the fellows there are French and German."

"I wouldn't mind going there just for the experience," Redfern remarked thoughtfully.

"Well, they've got all sorts there," said Knowles. "I don't know whether they bar niggers --"

Hurree Singh jumped up.

"Knowles, it is the second time you have made the insulting allusion to my person," he exclaimed.

Knowles looked at him coolly.

"Keep your wool on, Inky!"

"That remark is also derogatory, implying that my hair partakes of the nature of the African's," said Hurree Singh. "I am called upon to castigate you, Knowles."

"Oh, rats!" said Knowles, rather uneasily, for he did not exactly want to come to close quarters with the lad from the Orient. Since coming to Netherby, the nabob had learned to box, and he was by no means a slight opponent for any fellow in his own form.

"Make the complete retraction in the immediate swiftness of time, and I will pardon the presumptive cheek of your utterance --"

"Doesn't he speak lovely English?" grinned Knowles.

"I studied English under the best native master in the University of Bengal," said the nabob.

"I wonder what the worst native was like then!" grinned Knowles. "Keep your wool on --"

Hurree Singh's patience was exhausted, and at the fresh mention of the objectionable word he let out with his left.

Knowles received the dusky knuckles full upon his thin and rather prominent chin, and he sat down on the floor of the Third Form room with a sudden jar.

An expressive cough at the doorway drew the attention of the juniors. A stout gentleman, with a pleasant face and a white moustache, was looking in.

Owen Redfern gave a shout.

"Pater!"

He ran to the door. Mr. Redfern shook hands with his son, and then with his ward, Reggie Lawrence. Hurree Singh coloured a little, as the old gentleman's quizzical eye turned upon him.

"This is Hurree Singh, dad!" exclaimed Redfern. "He's our chum from India, and he's black but comely. This is my pater, Inky."

Mr. Redfern shook hands with the Indian.

"I am truly glad to acquaint myself with the esteemed progenitor of my

worthy chum," exclaimed Hurree Singh. "I trust the sahib will not consider me guilty of the hooliganic roughness in chastising the presumptiveness of Knowles."

Knowles scowled, and swung out of the room.

"I am the most peaceable person extant," said Hurree Singh; "but the provocation was like the scarlet flag to the insane bull, as you English say."

Mr. Redfern smiled.

"I suppose you've come to take us away, dad," said Redfern. "Are we going home?"

"No. You're going straight to your new quarters. I have found a new school for you which will, in some respects, suit you much better than Netherby."

"This old school suited us down to the ground," said Redfern.

"Rather!" said Lawrence.

"You know, Owen, and you, Reggie, that you will both be placed in my business when you go out into the world," said Mr. Redfern. "For that purpose it is essential that you have a sound knowledge of French and German. You have studied those languages here, I know, but in your new school you will study them under much more favourable conditions. The academy I propose to place you at, at least for the present, is a foreign boarding-school, situated in England."

"My hat!" said Redfern.

"The headmaster is an acquaintance of mine, and he is here with me" said Mr. Redfern. "Other lads from this school are going to him. Ah, here is my friend!" A fat little gentleman, in a white waistcoat, was coming along the corridor. "Herr Rosenblaum, this is my son!"

.....

Herr Rosenblaum was short, and fat, and rosy. His fat face beamed with good-nature and kindness, and his eyes beamed mildly through the pince-nez that were perched on his fat little nose. He had a scanty circle of flaxen curls surrounding a bald head, as

smooth and shiny as a billiard-ball.

"Ach! I am blessed to meet te young gentlemens," he said shaking hands with Redfern and Lawrence. "Is te oder young gentleman coming also?"

"Yes, sir," said Redfern and Lawrence together.

"I certainly shall accompany my worthy chums to the halls of their new establishment," said Hurree Singh. "The ripeness of the friendship and the extremity of the mutual esteemfulness forbids our separation."

"Very good," said Mr. Redfern. "We are lunching with the doctor, Owen, and after lunch I wish you to be ready to start."

"Certainly, dad."

Mr. Redfern walked away with Herr Rosenblaum. Redfern grinned.

"Looks a jolly old boy," he remarked. "If all at the excellent academy are like the Head of it, it will be a curious sort of a Noah's Ark. But I say, Hurree Singh, can you get permission to come with us so quickly?"

"I shall speak to our worthy headmaster, and wire to my solicitor," said the nabob. "The arrangements of the matter will be satisfactorily easy. Then it would be advisable to pack the boxes."

"That's so."

By the time Mr. Redfern and the Herr had lunched with the doctor, the chums of the Third were ready to start. Knowles of the Third and Robinson of the Fourth were in the same party, going directly to the Rosenblaum Academy with the German gentleman. Others of the scattering Netherbyites were coming to the same place later.

"N-n-nice go this, ain't it?" said Robinson, who was afflicted with a stutter, as he met the chums of the Third at the station. "I wonder what the place will be like."

"We shall see when we get there," said Redfern.

"Yes, I k-k-know that, b-b-b-but --"

"It's a funny show, I believe," said Knowles. "But we're rather a funny crowd going to it, too. A nigger, and

a chap who talks on the instalment system."

"If you m-mean me, Knowles --"

"Good-bye, lads!" said Mr. Redfern, coming up. "I leave you here. Mind you do your best to get on well at Beechwood, and let me hear good reports of you. Good-bye!"

And Mr. Redfern's train bore him away, and a few minutes later Herr Rosenblaum marshalled his party to their carriage in a train going the opposite way.

"I have order a lunch-basket mit mainself," said the Herr, beaming, and rubbing his little fat hands. "It is te long journey, mein poys."

They had a first-class carriage to themselves, and in the afternoon the lunch-basket was opened, and it was found that the Herr had made ample provision. The youngsters did it ample justice, too.

"This is fuf-fuf-fine!" said Robinson. "If they treat us as well as this at Beechwood, I shall be sat-sat-sat --"

"You will be sat upon?" asked Knowles.

"Satisfied!" jerked out Robinson. "I shall be satisfied, for one. Hallo, the Herr is asleep!"

Herr Rosenblaum had been reading a German newspaper in his corner seat, and now he had leaned back on the cushions, and his mouth was ajar, and a melodious snore was proceeding from him.

Knowles grinned, with a wicked gleam in his eye.

"I say, here's a chance for a jape!" he muttered.

Redfern looked at him inquiringly.

"What's the wheeze?"

"Why, I've got a box of coloured crayons in my pocket, that's all, and ---"

Redfern shook his head. He caught on to the idea at once, and it made him smile, but he was not inclined to "jape" the kind-hearted Herr.

"Not good enough," he said decisively. "He's been good, and he's treated us well. We ought to keep our

little jokes for somebody who treads on our toes."

"You are quite right, my respectable friend," exclaimed Hurree Singh. "The gratitude due to the kindheartedness forbids the japery suggested by the esteemed Knowles."

Knowles sneered.

"You can please yourselves, and your little lily consciences," he replied. "But I'm going to jape the German, and I suppose even you won't sneak."

And he drew the crayons from his pocket.

He poured a little water into a cup from the lunch-basket, and moistened the crayons. Then he leaned towards the sleeping German, and with a light touch marked a red circle round each of his eyes. The effect was so ludicrous that the chums, in spite of their disapproval, could not help grinning.

Herr Rosenblaum was a sound sleeper. He showed no sign of awakening, and Knowles, encouraged by his success, proceeded further.

A blue patch on the end of his little fat nose, and a green spot on either cheek, finished the beautifying of Herr Rosenblaum.

Then Knowles pitched the crayons out of the window. He did not intend to retain any incriminating evidence about him.

The German slept on, unconscious of it all.

The dusk was thickening over the landscape. The lights of a station appeared down the line, and the train slackened in speed.

"Beechwood!" exclaimed Redfern, catching sight of the name on a lamp as the train rushed into the station.

The train stopped with a jerk.

Herr Rosenblaum started, and awoke.

"It's Beechwood, sir," said Knowles.

"I think we get out here, don't we, sir?"

"Ja, ja!" exclaimed Herr Rosenblaum.

"I tink tat I close my eyes for one moment."

"Yes, sir. You haven't been asleep."

"Oh, nein, I not sleep; I just nod for te moment," said the German. "Open te door, mein poys. Ve are arrived at

te destination."

The boys swarmed out of the carriage, and the German followed.

"Vere is te porter? Ach! Porter, take te --- Mein Himmel, vat is te matter mit te man?"

The porter had stared at Herr Rosenblum blankly for a moment, and then he had burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

As Herr Rosenblum gave up his tickets the collector gave a gasp.

Herr Rosenblum marched on with a very red face.

They emerged from the station into the street. The lamps were alight in the High Street of Beechwood village, and the German's appearance created quite a furore. People stared at him, and giggled and chuckled. Herr Rosenblum was beginning to wonder whether he was on his head or his heels.

"Vat is te matter?" he muttered.

"Te beoples have all gone mad mit demselves, I tink. I cannot see meinself vhy for tey laugh. Come along."

They marched on through the village street, the German's curious countenance exciting attention from every passer-by, and turned into the lane leading up to the gates of Beechwood Academy.

A pair of ponderous iron gates gave admittance to the school ground, and through the bars the lads could catch a glimpse in the dusk of a huge, red-brick building, and rows of lighted windows.

The gates were opened by the school porter, with a lantern in his hand, and he flashed the light on the new-comers.

Crash! The lantern went to the ground, and was instantly extinguished.

"Mein gootness! Vat is te matter mit you, Stump?"

"N-n-nothing, sir. Your face, sir --"

"Mein face!" roared Herr Rosenblum. "Vat is te matter mit my face?"

"Your - your face, sir! It startled me --"

Stump, the porter, was more startled still the next moment, for Herr Rosenblum, whose patience had been

quite exhausted, gave him a violent push that caused him to sit down upon the broken lantern.

The juniors, giggling among themselves, followed Herr Rosenblum across the playground, to the great entrance of the school buildings.

The door was opened, and they entered a wide, paved hall, upon which a passage, a staircase, and a good many doors opened.

A tall, thin gentleman, with a decidedly Gallic cast of countenance, came out of a study on the right, and started back as he saw the Herr.

"Who - vat --"

"I have come pack, you see, Monsieur Morny," said Herr Rosenblum. "Tese are te new poys from Netherby. Tere are more to come. Mein gootness, vat is te matter mit te man? Have he gone mad like all te rest?"

"Herr Rosenblum! Is it really ze Herr Rosenblum, or do I dream? Vat is ze mattair viz ze face?"

The German turned scarlet.

"Monsieur Morny, vat you say? Mein face --"

"Oui, vat is ze mattair - ze mattair --"

"Te matter? Dere is noting te matter."

"But ze red, and ze green, and ze blue --"

"Te man has been drinking. He is drunk mit himself --"

"Look!" screamed Monsieur Morny, pointing to a mirror in the hall.

"Look at your own face viz your own eyes, zen."

The alarmed German rushed to the looking-glass.

"Mein gootness!"

He gave a terrific yell as he caught sight of his face in the glass, with the red circles about the eyes, the blue patch on the nose, and the green spots on the cheeks.

For some moments Herr Rosenblum remained quite still, staring at the amazing apparition.

"Is tat mein face?" he murmured. "It is vun frightful dream - vat tey call te nighthorse. Tat is not mein face."

"Zat is it," said Monsieur Morny.

"It is ze choke of ze poys."

Herr Rosenblaum turned to the juniors. Unable to restrain themselves any longer, they were yelling with laughter. The German turned as red as a turkey-cock.

"Ach! I gomprenhend now. Tat is vy for te beoples laugh mit demselves. I see! And vun of you blay dis joke on your master, hein! I vill - no, I vill not now! Monsieur Morny, I leave tese poys in your charge till I have clean mein face mit meinself."

And the Herr rushed off for the nearest bathroom.

.....

Monsieur Morny looked severely at the boys, but a smile was lurking round his thin lips. He, too, could not help seeing the comical aspect of the affair, though it was quite lost on Herr Rosenblaum.

"Come viz me," he said. "I may tell you zat I am ze second master of ze academy, and you vill do vell to stop ze laugh. Follow me."

Redfern grinned.

"Seems to be an academy of all sorts, and no mistake," he murmured. "A German Head and a French second. I wonder whether there are Italian ushers and a Greek house-keeper."

Monsieur Morny opened a big oak door, which gave admittance to a large and lofty apartment. A loud din was audible the moment the door was opened, but it died down as soon as the master looked in.

The Netherby boys glanced into the room curiously enough. There were about forty boys of various ages present, and the apartment was evidently a common room to the whole school.

There were a few English boys, but most of them were French and German.

There was a babel of several languages when the French master opened the door. Curious stares were turned towards the newcomers.

"Zese are ze boys of Beechwood," said Monsieur Morny, with a wave of the hand. "Garcons, zese are ze new boys to ze school."

With that brief introduction, monsieur left them.

The big door closed behind them, and the five newcomers found themselves the centre of attraction to a motley crowd.

The boys of Beechwood, varied as they were, at least possessed one quality in common with boys at all schools - they were curious to know the names and histories of all newcomers.

Questions were showered upon them in French, German, and English. But most of the talk was done in a kind of broken English, which seemed to be a sort of Lingua Franca at Beechwood.

"Who are you, ain't it?" asked a big, broad-shouldered German lad, who seemed to be the leader among the boys of his own nationality.

"I?" said Redfern politely. "Oh, I'm me! Who are you?"

The German boy looked puzzled.

"I am Fritz Hoffmann," he said.

"Vat is your name, ain't it?"

"Oh, Owen Redfern. I --"

"Vere come you from?" asked a French lad. "Answer ze questions to me, please; I am ze captain of ze school."

"Mein gootness!" exclaimed Fritz Hoffmann. "You vas noting of te sort. Take no notice of him, Crimsonfern; I am te chief of te school."

"It is ze untruth."

"Bah! Hold te tongue mit you!" said Hoffmann. "Be silent, Adolphe Meunier, while I speak."

"Be silent yourself, Fritz Hoffmann."

"Oh, go and row somewhere else!" said Redfern. "You're like two silly cats."

Meanwhile, Hurree Janset Ram Singh came in for a great deal of attention. Varied as the boys of Beechwood were, there was not yet an Oriental among them, and so the coming of the Indian caused some excitement.

A dozen boys were surrounding the Nabob of Bhanipur, plying him with questions, which the Indian answered to the best of his ability.

Hurree Singh was always obliging, but the boys of Beechwood Academy were

not all polite. While Hurree Singh was answering one set of questioners, another set lost patience, and a fat German lad poured some ink down the back of his neck. Hurree Singh had the sweetest temper in the world, but he could not stand rough hands being laid upon his pricely person.

He turned round like lightning, as the clammy ink oozed down his back and stuck to his collar. The ink-bottle was still in the hands of Karl Lutz, and he was grinning hugely over the joke. Lutz had a most expansive grin, and he seemed to be enjoying himself, and the fellows round were laughing heartily. But Karl's enjoyment came to a sudden end.

"I have always striven to exercise the accomplishment of the politeness," exclaimed Hurree Singh, "but the contact of the wet ink to the back of the person is the greatest of exasperations."

And the Indian lad let out with his left, and Karl Lutz sat down with surprising suddenness upon the floor.

There was a shout.

Lutz was half a head taller than the Hindoo boy, and he had not looked for resistance to his little pleasantries in that form. His face went red with rage as he realised that he, Karl Lutz, had been knocked down, in the presence of his schoolfellows, by the slim, little, olive-skinned Indian.

He jumped up, and rushed at Hurree Singh like a bull.

But Redfern sprang into the way. His push sent Lutz staggering back, and in a moment Redfern and Reggie had lined up with the boy from Bengal.

"Keep your wool on, kiddies," said Redfern, in his cool way. "If you want a fight with Hurree Singh, he will oblige, but we'll have it all square and above board."

"I will castigate the insolent person soundly," exclaimed Hurree Singh. "I feel it an encumbrance upon me to teach him the lesson of the courtesy to the stranger within the gates."

Redfern motioned the eager crowd back.

They were not much inclined to obey the English boy, but Fritz Hoffmann backed up Redfern, pushing his fellows back to form a ring.

"It is te fight!" he said. "Lutz vill trash te Indian for a start, and ten I tink I vill trash te Scarletfern poy meinsel for his sheek."

"All right, old cock!" said Redfern cheerfully. "I don't mind giving you a licking; if you feel yourself badly in need of one."

"Let me get at him!" roared Karl Lutz.

"All in good time," said Redfern. "Off with your coat."

"I not vant to take off te coat to trash tat vhipper-snapper."

"Just as you like. You'll peel, Hurree?"

"Yes, certainly I shall remove the outer garment," said Hurree Singh.

The jacket was soon off, and Reggie Lawrence held it, while the Indian lad turned up his sleeves.

In spite of Hurree Singh's slimness, he revealed some very well developed muscles on his dusky arms, and it was seen that he would not be a mean foe even for the bulky German.

Karl Lutz disdained to peel for the contest, fully believing that he would overbear and crush the Indian at the first rush.

The fellows formed a ring round the combatants, looking on eagerly.

"I'm Hurree Singh's second," said Redfern. "Who's looking after that chap? He'll need looking after, I assure you."

"I am!" said Hoffmann. He spoke in German to another lad, who hurried out of the room, and quickly returned with a bowl of water and a sponge. "Now we are ready."

"All tat is not necessary," exclaimed Lutz.

"It is as vell to be retty, ain't it?"

"I shall smash te plack boy in tree minute."

"Rats!" said Redfern. "We're all ready on our side, so suppose you toe the line, instead of doing so much gassing."

"Good idea!" said Reggie Lawrence.

Karl Lutz gave a disdainful sniff, and speedily toed the line.

Hurree Singh squared up to him in a decidedly scientific fashion, which showed that the nabob had not failed to avail himself of his opportunities of studying the noble science of boxing.

"Time!" exclaimed Robinson, who had assumed the office of referee and time-keeper.

Karl Lutz made a rush straight at the Indian. His fists swept the air like flails, and if his blows had taken effect, Hurree Singh would certainly have been considerably hurt.

But the Hindoo was well on his guard, and his guard was perfect. He swept up the German's heavy and rapid blow, countered smartly with his left, and Lutz received a tap on the chin that made him stagger backwards.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Adolphe Meunier, who was evidently the chief of the French faction "Zat is good."

"What do you know about it? asked Redfern politely.

Karl Lutz panted as he reeled under the blow.

Hurree Singh did not follow it up, and the German boy had time to recover; and then he came on a good deal like a wild bull.

But his furious attack made little impression upon the boy from Bengal.

He defended himself with ease and skill, and only a few of Karl's wild blows got home; but Hurree Singh's counters were "frequent and painful and free," to borrow an expression from a poet.

Karl Lutz's fat, ruddy countenance gradually assumed the appearance of freshly-boiled beef, and his eyes almost disappeared, looking like little black currants amid the swelling, red face.

Finally, a crushing right-hander sent him fairly spinning into the arms of Hoffmann. He collapsed on the bosom of his friend, gasping like a newly-landed fish.

Hoffman gave him a glance of sympathy.

"Are you finish, ain't it?" he asked.

Lutz nodded with a groan.

"Ja, ja! I am not able to trash te Indian."

Hurree Singh advanced towards the defeated German with a beaming smile and an outstretched dusky hand. Lutz was bathing his bruised and swollen face with a sponge, and he stopped and looked up inquiringly at the Indian.

"I shall be much pleased," said Hurree Singh, in his soft, purring voice, "if the sahib will accept the hand of the sincere friendship."

"Mein gootness!"

"I have great regretfulness for the necessity of castigating my esteemed and respectable friend!" exclaimed Hurree Singh. "The malice does not dwell in the breast. Let us shake hands, and forget the hostility "

"Tat is goot!" said Hoffmann. "Shake him py te hand, ain't it?"

Lutz hesitated a moment. His pride had had a cruel fall by his defeat at the hands of an Indian, and a fellow so much smaller than himself.

But at bottom he had a kindly German heart, and after that brief moment he gave Hurree Singh his hand. The Indian prince shook it with great cordiality.

"I have the trustfulness that we shall be large friends!" he exclaimed. Karl grinned faintly.

.....

Redfern looked up and down the big table with a great deal of interest. He observed that one side of it was occupied by the French boys and the other by the Germans, the few English fellows being together at the lower end.

Whenever the masters were not on the alert there were signs of hostility between the two parties, and it was easy for the newcomers to observe that the two nationalities at Beechwood Academy were on terms of keen rivalry.

The rivalry was keen enough, but, to judge from the good-natured expressions of most of the faces, it was not at all bitter.

It was natural that the two races should gather into opposite camps, as

it were, but there was more fun than anything else in the matter.

The native born lads were probably too few in number to have much weight in the school, though the accession of the Netherby boys would, of course, add to their importance.

Some ideas on this subject were already working in Redfern's mind.

"That chap Hoffmann seems to be head-cook and bottle-washer here, Reggie," he remarked to his chum, sitting at his side at the long table.

"The French chap, Meunier, claims to be captain," said Reggie Lawrence.

"They dispute it between them, I suppose; but, of course, it's all rot for a foreigner to expect to be the head of the school."

"Well, it's a foreign academy, you know."

"But it stands on English soil," said Redfern obstinately, "and therefore a Britisher ought to be at the top."

"Quite right!"

"If there's going to be a head, it ought to be an English chap."

"British," purred Hurree Singh. "A fellow citizen from the Indian Empire would make a very good head."

"British, then," agreed Redfern; "but I really think that I'm the most suitable to be top dog in the concern."

"That's like you, Reddy."

"Well, I only take facts as they are," said Redfern. "I was cock of the Third at Netherby, and why shouldn't I be the same here?"

"Oh, yes, certainly; we'll back you up."

"We will furnish the heart-whole backing to our respectable chum!" exclaimed Hurree Singh. "Reddy shall be the great chief."

"Who vas talk mit demselves down here?" came Herr Rosenblum's voice from the top of the table.

And silence fell upon the juniors. Talking was evidently prohibited at meal-times in the dining-hall of Beechwood, but after a few minutes the conversation was resumed in cautious whispers.

Supper over, the boys were free for a short time before they were marched up to bed, and in the interval Hoffmann came up to Redfern, with a friendly grin.

"You haf quarrel mit Adolphe Meunier," he remarked.

"Oh, only a little skirmish," said Redfern.

"You not like him?"

"Well, I haven't seen enough of him, so far, to be able to say," replied Redfern, rather cautiously. "I dare say he's all right."

"I wish to propose to you --"

"Oh, no, George!" said Redfern, with great seriousness. "I'm too young. You must speak to my father first."

Hoffmann stared at him.

"Speak to dein vater," he said. "I not comprehend, ain't it?"

"I'm coy, too," said Redfern.

"I rather like you --"

"Thanks awfully!"

"And I wish to propose to you to join mein barty."

"Oh, you've got a barty, have you?" said Redfern. "What is it like, and where do you keep it, and what do you feed it on?"

The German looked puzzled again.

"Mein barty!" he exclaimed. "Tat is mein barty! Ve are divided into two barties at dis school, ain't it - de German barty and te French barty."

"I see. You mean party. Go hon."

"I like you to join mein barty. Ve are te heads of te school. Ve peat te French poys hollow, same as ve peat tem at Sedan and Waterloo."

"Hold on there!" exclaimed Redfern warmly. "Where did you beat them?"

"At Sedan and Waterloo."

"You may have beaten them at Sedan," said Redfern. "I wasn't there. But my grandfather was at Waterloo, and the Germans didn't have a look in."

"I tells you --"

"And I tell you that we won the Battle of Waterloo, and the Germans only came up in time to see the Frenchmen run," said Redfern. "I know all about it, and you can't come it over me. Rats!"

"I tells you --"

"Rats! More rats! Many rats!"

Monsieur Morny had come into the room.

"It is pedtime," said Hoffmann.

"Pedtime is it?" said Redfern grinning. "Then we had petter go to ped. Come on, my infants!"

.....

The English boys looked with some curiosity round their sleeping-quarters. There were three dormitories, and the smallest of the three was occupied by the English pupils, who were the fewest in number. It was the middle one of the three, and on either side were the sleeping-quarters of the French and Germans.

The high, white-washed walls, the windows set near the ceiling, and the row of white beds, reminded the juniors of Netherby.

There was a fourth sleeping apartment further down the passage on the other side, which was occupied by the senior boys, of whom there were few, most of the scholars at Beechwood being of about Redfern's age.

Things were evidently destined to be very different from what the public school boys were accustomed to, but there was a charm in the novelty of the surroundings at Herr Rosenblaum's curious academy.

"I dare say we can be very comfortable here," said Redfern, looking around.

Hurree Singh nodded.

"Yes; we shall repose in the serenity of the balmy slumber," he remarked.

"Oh, you'll do something balmy, I've no doubt!" said Redfern. "Lemme see, there are only about a dozen English here. Never mind, we shall have to hit all the harder when we come to having rows with the other lot."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"We must be top dogs; there must be no mistake about that."

"I s-s-s-say, ain't it likely that

those fif-fif-foreign bounders may try to work off some jape on us new kids?"

Refern looked thoughtful.

"Well, yes; I should call it very likely," he said. "New kids at a big school generally have to go through something, and as we're foreigners to that lot, they'll be all the more anxious to take us down a peg or two."

The boys tumbled into bed, but they retained most of their clothing. Monsieur Morny looked into the dormitory, and glanced along the row of beds.

The youngsters were all in bed, and apparently settling themselves to balmy slumber. The French master was satisfied.

"Good-night, mes garçons!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The light was extinguished, and the long, lofty dormitory plunged into darkness. The door closed, and the Frenchman's receding footsteps died away in the distance down the corridor. Then Owen Redfern sat up in bed.

The moonlight glimmered in through the high windows of the dormitory and gave quite sufficient light for moving about.

"Up with you, kids," said Redfern -- "up with you, and follow your leader! We've got to look out for squalls."

Lawrence and Hurree Singh rose from their beds, and Robinson followed their example. Knowles did not move.

"You've not gone to sleep, Knowles?"

"No, I've not!" snapped Knowles.

"I'm not going to join in any rows, though. You can do as you like."

"Rats! Get up and stand shoulder to shoulder with us, and we'll soon make those rotters wish they hadn't come!"

"Sha'n't!" said Knowles. And he turned over on his pillow.

Redfern shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, you can do as you like, Knowles; but if you don't stand in with the rest of us, you'll have to take your chance by yourself."

"Rats! I don't care."

"You think you'll get us to fight your battles for you, you skulking rat!" exclaimed Redfern hotly. "Well, I tell you what. If you don't join in, I'll tell the bounders they can handle you if they like without our interference, and we'll see how you'll fare then, you rotter!"

That was putting it in a way that Knowles had not expected. He rose slowly and unwillingly from his bed, and took his place with the others. The boys were knotting towels and getting pillows from the beds to use as defensive weapons. Elliott and several of the other fellows had got out of bed to lend their aid - partly from a natural feeling for their fellow countrymen, partly because they knew that if either the Hoffmannites or the Meunierites started japing in the dormitory, the old boys were no more likely to escape rough handling than the new ones.

Redfern found himself the head of a party of ten, all keen and ready for the fray. They were likely to have long odds against them if the enemy came in force, but Redfern did not care for that.

"What the dickens are you doing, Reddy?" asked Lawrence, as Redfern was dimly seen stooping before the chimney.

"Only getting something for our friends when they come," replied Redfern, without turning his head.

Lawrence went quickly towards him. Then he burst into a laugh. Redfern had a washstand-basin at the grate, and was filling it with the soot he was raking down the chimney.

The basin was about half full when Redfern ceased his raking, and he picked it up and carried it back to his washstand. There he poured half the contents of the water-jug into it, and stirred up the whole of it with a slipper.

"My hat," gasped Lawrence, "are you going to chuck that stuff over them?"

"What a question! There'll be odds against us, won't there?"

"Pretty certain."

"Well, then, we must use such

weapons as we can get. Man to man, I dare say they'd be something like our match."

"I suppose so."

"But with stuff of this sort to face they will think twice about it, I fancy," giggled Redfern. "This will be a sort of pleasant surprise for them."

"It will be a s-sup-sup-sup ---" Robinson began to stutter.

"Oh, no; it's not for their supper, Robby!"

"I did-did-don't mean that. It will be a sup-sup-surprise for them; but as for the pip-pip-pleasure --"

"Well, so long as they get the surprise, that's good enough," said Redfern, stirring away industriously with the slipper. "Pour a little more water in, Reggie."

"Hush!" exclaimed Hurree Singh excitedly. "I heard something! It is the footprints of the walkers; they are approaching!"

"Ha, ha! They're coming; Inky has heard their footprints!" grinned Redfern. "Get ready for the giddy fray!"

"We're ready!"

And then silence fell in the middle dormitory. The boys waited with bated breath.

What the quick ears of the Indian lad had caught was soon audible to all. There was a sound of cautious, stockinged feet in the passage, and the sound stopped at the door of the middle dormitory.

"They're here!"

There was a faint sound at the handle of the door. Then the big door swung inwards, and a score of dim figures shadowed faintly forth in the doorway.

A whisper in French - the visitors were evidently Meunier and his band from Dormitory No. 1 - then silence!

The English boys crouched quiet in the shadows, keeping out of sight. The night visitors came quietly in.

"Allons!"

It was a whisper from Meunier. And the French party rushed to the attack.

.....

Redfern sprang to his feet from the

shadow of a bed.

"Go for 'em!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Smite them with the powerfulness of the right arm!"

So shouted the three chums as they headed the boys of the middle dormitory.

The invaders stopped suddenly in their rush towards the beds. They were taken utterly by surprise. The quietness of the dormitory had deceived them, and they had expected to have only sleeping boys to deal with, and hardly any resistance.

They found out their mistake now. As they halted in astonishment and dismay, the English party rushed upon them. The basin was swung high in Redfern's hands, and ere the French lads could guess what was coming, or guard against it, the sooty liquid splashed over them.

Meunier received the worst of it, and he was changed into a nigger minstrel in the twinkling of an eye. But at least a dozen of the invaders of the middle dormitory came in for a share, and there was a yelling of amazement and disgust.

Meunier rubbed the sticky stuff out of his eyes with his knuckles. He was too enraged for words, and he could only stammer.

"Ciel! I vill - vill - I - moi --- Ma foi! ---"

"Give 'em socks!" roared Redfern, in stentorian tones. And he gallantly led the charge.

Right among the French boys they dashed, hitting out right and left, with the motley weapons they had armed themselves with for the fray.

Pillows and bolsters and stuffed stockings swept the air, and did instant execution, the French lads reeling and staggering right and left under the doughty blows.

There was a rush to escape, and the French boys went pouring out into the corridor, followed by derisive shouts from the English lads.

Chuckling, Robinson caught Redfern by the arm.

"What a p-pip-pip-pip --"

"What does he mean, I wonder? What pip? Is that all, Robby, or is there any more at home like that?" asked Redfern anxiously.

"What pip-pip-pip-pip --" stammered Robinson, turning red in the face with the effort to get the obstinate word out; but it would not come.

"He means that he's got the pip," said Knowles, "and no wonder! He'll give me the pip if he keeps on like that, I know!"

"What pip-pip-pip-price the German bib-bib-bounders?" Robinson got it out at last. "What price the German bounders, Reddy? Suppose they come for us?"

"I fancy they won't," said Lawrence. "It's getting pretty late, and if they were coming, they'd have chummed up with the Froggies to rag us, I should think."

"I should think so," said Knowles. "I'm going to bed, at any rate, for one."

And Knowles tumbled into bed, and drew the clothes up about his ears. Owen Redfern was looking thoughtful, however.

"Hoffmann and his little lot may be intending to pay us a visit," he remarked. "It's hardly likely, after waiting all this time, but they may. I'll tell you what; one of us had better stay awake and keep watch, and wake the others instantly if there's danger."

"Good idea! But which one?"

"Oh, we'll take it in turns. Robinson first."

"I'll see you ha-ha-ha-hanged first!" said Robinson, going towards his bed.

"I'm sis-sis-sis-sleepy."

"Well, you can do it, Elliott."

But Elliott was already in bed. Redfern looked rather perplexed.

"Well, I suppose we shall have to manage it," he said. "I'll take the first watch, Reg, and I'll call you at half-past ten."

"Righto!" said Lawrence.

"And Hurree Singh shall take the third. After eleven there couldn't be any danger of the Dutchies coming.

Good-night!"

And the juniors tumbled into bed, and soon all, with the exception of Redfern, were sleeping the sleep of the just.

Redfern had got into bed to keep watch, for it was cold in the dormitory. He sat up, pulling the clothes about him, but he found it cold for his shoulders. Then the excellent idea struck him of lying down and covering himself up, but sternly keeping his eyes open, so that he should not fall asleep.

He did so, and a few minutes later nodded off. His slumber was all the sounder for having been postponed. When once his eyes closed, they did not open again, and he slept on soundly, deeply, unconscious of cautious sounds in the corridor without, of faint footfalls and whispering voices, and of the click as the door of the dormitory was cautiously opened.

.....

"Ow-ow-wow!"

It was a sudden yell from Owen Redfern. He started up suddenly from his slumber, shivering, as the bedclothes were torn from the bed, and the winter cold rushed in upon him.

Dim figures were moving in the gloom of the dormitory, and the deep German chuckles showed where the aggressors were.

"Mein gootness! Tat is vunny!"

"Gif it to tem, ain't it?"

"Go for te pounders."

Redfern scrambled out of bed. He knew Hoffmann's voice, and Karl Lutz's. The Germans had come, after all, and the watchman had fallen asleep at his post. The dormitory had been taken by surprise!

Two pairs of hands seized Redfern as he scrambled up, and he was dragged upon the floor with a bump.

"Gollar him!"

"Don't let the pounder get away!"

"I'll bounder you!" yelled Redfern, struggling vainly in the grasp of his captors. "Come one at a time! Fair play's a jewel!"

The whole dormitory was wide awake. Everywhere the German boys had dragged off the bedclothes, and were yanking the English juniors out of bed. As they were two to one, and had the advantage of the surprise on their side, they met with little resistance.

Hoffmann and Lutz were hard put to it to hold Redfern, and Hurree Singh and Reggie Lawrence gave a good account of themselves also, but the English lads had no chance.

The Germans carried all before them.

"Shut the door," panted Hoffmann, "and light te gandle!"

The dormitory door was shut, and the candle lighted. It showed the leaders of the middle dormitory writhing vainly in the clutch of their captors, and the rest of the boys shivering in a group, with the Germans watching them, ready to jump on them at once if they attempted to go to the aid of the captives.

"Let me get up!" shouted Redfern. "I'll pulverize you."

"Ha, ha, ha! Now Herr Redfern --"

"Get off my chest, you Dutch beast!"

"I speaks mit you mit meinself. I, Fritz Hoffmann, am te captain, of tis school, and I did offer to let you join my barty --"

"I wouldn't be found dead in it," said Redfern promptly.

"And you say tat you makes a party of your own, ain't it?"

"That's what I'm going to do."

"Mein gootness! I teaches you not to have so much of vat you call nerve. Vill you take pack all you said, and agree to follow te Sherman, and do as you vas told --"

"I don't think!"

"Or else ve teaches you a lesson."

"Teach away, you rotter! We'll do some teaching tomorrow!" growled Redfern. "Get up, you fat Dutchman, and fight fairly, and I'll send you home to your dormitory in little pieces!"

"I fights you tomorrow, if you likes," said Hoffmann, unmoved; "but now I fight not. I bunish you."

"Rats, and many of 'em!"

"You refuse vat I asks --"



"Ach! Vat is vas? Treacle! Ach!"  
cried the German master.

"Yes, I do; a thousand times, if necessary! Take your fat carcass off my chest! I'm not particular, but I object to having Germans too close to me."

"Ach! Tat poy have more sheek tan two or tree of te French poys. Ve vill give him a lesson to know his place, ain't it?"

"Ja, ja!" grinned Karl Lutz. "Schmidt, pring te treacle here."

Redfern gave a gasp. He had no desire to be anointed with treacle, which was evidently what the German jokers intended.

"Look here!" he protested. "Play the game, you know."

"Hand ofer te treacle," said Hoffmann. A jar of cheap, black treacle was

handed to the German leader. Redfern began to struggle violently, but Schmidt sat on his legs, and Lutz held his wrists in a vice-like grip. Reggie Lawrence and Hurree Singh were too tightly held by their captors to be able to come to his aid.

"Now ten," grinned Hoffmann, holding the jar of treacle over Redfern's upturned face - "now ten, vat do you say, Redfern?"

"I say rats!"

"Vill you take pack all you have said?"

"No, I won't!"

"Vill you opey orders vich I give?"

"Not for Joseph!"

"Mein gootness! He is as obstinate as nefer vas, ain't it? I tinks tat te

treacle help him to come mit his senses. Tell me ven to stop, Scarletfern, ain't it?"

And Fritz Hoffmann calmly inverted the jar, and the thick, sticky substance slowly but surely streamed down upon the face of Owen Redfern.

Redfern spluttered and gasped and struggled, but he could not escape.

The treacle thickened on his features, and he kept his eyes tightly shut to keep it out of them.

"Now ten, ain't it?" said Hoffmann's relentless voice. "Now ten. VILL you take your proper place and follow --"

"M-m-m-no!" mumbled Redfern, through the treacle.

"Ten you have te rest of it --"

"Cave!" came a sudden whisper through the dormitory.

Hoffmann jumped up so quickly that the jar of treacle went with a crash to the floor. He knew what that warning meant.

"Vat - who vas it?" he exclaimed.

"Rosenblaum!"

"Ach! Run for it!"

The German boys crowded out of the middle dormitory in next to no time. Equally swift were the English lads in tumbling into bed.

With the exception of Owen Redfern. He did not care to get into bed with the mass of treacle adhering to him. He went towards his washstand to sponge it off, and as he did so a lamp flashed into the dormitory, and the fat figure of Herr Rosenblaum appeared in the light behind it.

The headmaster's eyes swept up and down the long room, and rested upon Redfern. He frowned, and came into the room towards the junior.

"So it vas you, Redfern?"

"M-m-m-m-m-m --" mumbled Redfern, through the treacle.

Herr Rosenblaum stared at him in amazement.

"Vat for you answer me in tat vay, Redfern?"

"M-m-m-m-m-m --"

"Tat is te impertinence!" Herr Rosenblaum turned the light of the lamp full upon the boy. "Look at me,

Redfern! Look me in te face! Mein gootness!"

The Herr started back in amazement as he saw Redfern's treacly countenance.

"Poy! You -- OW!"

Redfern could not help grinning. The Herr had stepped fairly into the treacle on the floor. Hoffmann had left the overturned jar just where it fell, and the treacle had flowed out on the floor. Herr Rosenblaum had stepped into a sea of it.

"Ach! Vat it vas? Treacle! Ach!"

Herr Rosenblaum dragged his foot away, but his slipper adhered to the treacle, and brought away a long trail of it. Wherever he put his foot down the Herr stuck to the floor. His fat face was very exasperated.

"Redfern! Tat is too mooch! You vas a greedy peeg! You get up in te night to devour te treacle, and put your head into te basin, and ten -- Ach! I vill bunish you for being so greedy!"

"If you please, sir --"

"Vash yourself at vonce," shouted the angry Herr, "and get pack into ped!"

"But, sir, I --"

"Anoder vord, Redfern, and I cane you now!"

Redfern gave it up. He washed his face, and got into bed. The Herr watched him wrathfully, and then strode from the dormitory, shutting the door with unnecessary vigour.

"My hat!" said Redfern, sitting up in bed the moment the door had shut. "My only pyjama hat! What do you think of that, kids?"

"Hard cheese!" said Reggie Lawrence

"Truly, the cheese partakes of the millstone hardness," said the nabob sympathetically. "My heart is sad for the woes of my respectable friend."

Redfern grinned. He jumped out of bed, righted the treacle-jar, and scraped up the spilt treacle with the lid of a soap-dish.

"What are you up to now, image?" demanded Reggie Lawrence, staring at him. "Got a sudden fit of industry!"

"Oh, no; this is for Hoffmann."

"I say, with old Rosenblaum nosing about, it won't be safe --"

"Precisely; and for that reason the Dutchman won't be expecting me," grinned Redfern. "I'll put a little water to this treacle to thin it, and a little soot to thicken it, and then I'll see how Hoffmann likes a taste of his own medicine."

"We'll come with you --"

"Only as far as the door of their quarters. I shall have to do a very sudden guy when I have given Hoffmann his dose."

Redfern soon had the concoction ready. They left the dormitory chuckling from end to end as they stole to the door, and passed out into the corridor.

There all was dark and silent.

The three chums stole along to the door of the German dormitory, and Redfern, with infinite caution, opened it without a sound.

Muttering voices from the darkness fell upon their ears. Hoffmann and his merry men had gone to bed, satisfied with the raid upon the middle dormitory, and not in the least expecting a return visit now that the Head was on the alert. They were talking over the affair in subdued tones with many chuckles.

"Tat Engleesh poy have too much sheek," said Hoffmann. "I take it out of him, I tink."

"Ach!" said Lutz. "Tey all have too much sheek, and I tink tat tat lesson very mooch needed. Redfern will be more in his place tomorrow."

"I tinks so, ain't it? He -- Ger-or-or-or-oooh!"

It was a suffocating gasp from Hoffmann.

Suddenly from the shadows a form had started, and a jar was inverted over his face, and the sticky contents slopped down upon him.

And as he roared and started up, a pair of hands seized him, and the bed-clothes were mopped about his head, and he was rustled and hustled to and fro till he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels; and there was an indistinguishable heap of bed-clothes and Hoffmann and treacle.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Redfern.

"How's that for high?"

"It is te English poy!"

Redfern darted to the door. He rejoined his chums, and the three of them, bursting with merriment, raced back to the middle dormitory.

There was the sound of an angry voice on the stairs. Monsieur Morny looked into the dormitory a minute later, but only a chorus of snores greeted him, and he retired baffled. Redfern chuckled as he turned over on his pillow.

"I think we had the best of it after all, kids! And I fancy that Hoffmann and Meunier will find that the third party in this school has come to stay! Good-night!"

.....

Redfern was called into the study of Herr Rosenblaum the following morning. He went there with rather painful anticipations, but he found the German gentleman in an unexpectedly good humour.

"Mein poy," said Herr Rosenblaum, wagging a fat fore-finger at him. "Mein poy, I find tat you are a leetle poisterous, but I am nefer hard on te new poy. I oferlook all tat happen yesterday, as it vas te first day at Beechwood. But remember mit yourself tat I have an eye on you now. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Redfern demurely.

And he left the headmaster's study, very glad to escape so cheaply. His chums met him with eager inquiry as to how he had fared there.

"It's all right," announced Redfern. "The old boy has got his eye on us, that's all. All the same, I think we're going to become top dogs in this coll. What do you think?"

And Reggie Lawrence and Hurree Singh replied with one voice:

"Rather!"

\* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*

# MASTER OF THE MACABRE

By C. H. Churchill

One of the many facets of the writings of Mr. Brooks was his gift of portraying atmosphere, especially when describing eerie or ghostly adventures. It is almost true to say that he was at his best when dealing with such subjects. The Ezra Quirk and the Dr. Karnak series were two supreme examples of this type and many Leeites consider the former to be one of the best penned by their favourite author.

When one browses through the Lee catalogue it is amazing to find how many stories he wrote with a ghostly flavour. Most of them at Xmas of course. There were a number of Xmas stories, tis true, that did not contain this element but mostly he did not let us down in this respect. We always looked forward to a ghostly affair at Xmas, just the same as we expected an adventure series in the summer holidays.

Prior to the St. Frank's era he wrote several of this type, the first of all being "The Terror of Troone Towers" in No. 21 dated 30-10-15. This told the story of Sir Richard Troone, 21, an undergraduate at Oxford. His father, a widower, dying, he inherits Troone Towers in Yorkshire and leaves Oxford to go to live at the Towers. He finds the old place very weird, lonely and desolate. A visitor soon calls, introducing himself as Norman Tatton and claims to be the nearest neighbour. In the course of conversation he tells Sir Richard that, as a spiritualist, he must warn him that an elemental was haunting the Towers and that his life would be in danger if he continued to reside there. Sir Richard, of course, scoffs at this and later, after Tatton had left, went to bed. Now let me quote verbatim an extract from the story -

"How long he slept he did not know, but it must have been some little time. For when he suddenly awoke he found that the room was no longer dark. A weak moonbeam streamed in through the window, and formed a patch on the carpet close beside the bed - Sir Dick had raised the blinds just before turning out the lamp.

Why he had awakened he did not know, but he instantly sat up in bed, and caught his breath in sharply. He had a creepy feeling within him that he wasn't alone - that some other presence was in the room with him. The air was cold and chill, and he shivered, a feeling of unknown, intangible horror creeping over him. And even as he prepared to lie down in bed again, that same awful rank smell, which had preceded the appearance of the hand in the library, stole through the bedroom.

It caught in Sir Dick's throat and filled his nostrils.

"Good heavens!" he whispered hoarsely. "What's coming over me? Bah, my nerves are like raw shreds!"

He paused, and clutched at the bedclothes. Something had moved in the far corner of the room.

Had his eyes tricked him, or had he actually seen a dim, shadowy outline? He sat rigid, unable to move a limb. It seemed as though unseen hands had grasped him and were holding him as in a vice. His throat was dry, and he felt his breath coming and going in short, sharp pants. He closed his eyes for a few moments, to try and regain his self-control. In a measure, he succeeded, for in a few seconds he fell back on to the pillow and breathed freely. Then, with an

effort, he opened his eyes again, hardly daring to conjecture what he would see.

He stared up, and there bending right over him, within a yard, was some huge shadowy object; and now, ten times stronger, that awful animal smell entered his nostrils. Sir Dick's heart seemed to cease beating for a few moments. He felt the perspiration wet, cold, and clammy on his forehead.

What was this thing? It made no sound, it did not touch him, but simply hovered there, menacing, ghastly, and terrible.

Something seemed to snap in the young baronet's brain, and he found himself possessed of the power to use his voice, to use his limbs. He roared out an imprecation, and sprang up.

"By heavens, if you've got life in you I'll find out what you are!" he shouted fiercely.

Like a shadow the Terror faded away from the bedside, and for one second Sir Dick saw a huge knotted hand in the moonlight. Of the face of this awful thing he saw nothing, for it passed out of the moonbeam into the black shadows beyond. Sir Dick leapt from the bed, reached the mantelpiece in two strides, and groped for the box of wax vestas he knew to be there.

Scratch!

A light flared out, and he held it aloft, quivering and shaking. After the darkness the illumination from that single match was brilliant and penetrating, and Sir Dick swiftly swept his gaze round the whole room.

But he was alone - absolutely alone!

The next morning he sent for Nelson Lee. The great detective, with Nipper, proceeded to the Towers but on the way there from the local station by trap were run down by a wildly driven car, and thrown into the hedge. They escaped with a shaking up however. Lee immediately thought that someone was trying to prevent their interference in the case.

On arrival at the Towers weird events took place including a carved dagger hurled across the hall by unseen hands, uncanny laughter and an attack on Sir Richard in the middle of the night by the so called elemental. Lee became suspicious of Tatton and went to his home only to be captured there and imprisoned in a dungeon.

Later, Nipper, while in the library at Troone, accidentally discovered a secret door. On investigation he found a very long tunnel leading from it which he explored. To his surprise he eventually found the dungeon in which Lee was incarcerated. as the tunnel led from one house to the other. After many adventures far too numerous for me to detail here they succeeded in regaining Troone Towers just in time to rescue Sir Richard from another attack by the "elemental." Norman Tatton was, of course, the villain, acting on behalf of an unknown cousin of Sir Richard who lived in Australia. The plot was to have the young baronet killed by the "elemental" and so inherit the estates himself. However, thanks to the intervention of Nelson Lee and Nipper, the plot came to naught. The story was very good and contained some very gripping chapters.

The next story to contain a ghostly theme was No. 63 "The Spectre of Scarcroft" dated 19/8/16. It was one of the Eileen Dare series and a good one too. The Apparition in this case was a grim black "Executioner" complete with an axe which appeared at certain times to the occupants of Scarcroft Hall, or was said to do so. Miss Violet Verney, living at the Hall, received a visit from the "Executioner" and afterwards consulted Nelson Lee. He sent Eileen Dare to stay at the Hall and naturally all was cleared up in due course. The villain, needless to say, turned out to be one of Eileen's enemies who had

helped to send her father to his death.

No. 97 of the Nelson Lee dated 14/4/17 contained "The Manor House Mystery" being the second story in Nipper's Note Book series. It was all about a huge dark shape which chased people along the tree shaded drive of a big mansion outside Bristol. It was a thrilling story and included an account of an attack at night on the young occupant of the house by a huge 14 foot Black Mamba snake. This was undoubtedly one of the finest of E.S.B.'s "single" pre-St. Frank's stories and I strongly advise anyone to read it if they can obtain a copy from the Lee Library. That is, of course, if they do not possess a copy themselves. In later years when the Dr. Karnak "monster" was around, it always reminded me of this earlier adventure.

No. 130 of the Lee offered us "The Phantom of Tregellis Castle," the first St. Frank's Xmas number. It was a marvellous tale into which I will not go in detail as it was subjected to this treatment fairly recently in the Annual. I think, myself, it was the best Xmas story of them all and there was some excellent ones to follow, too. It featured Eileen Dare and Lord Dorrimore and described how Lee and Nipper revealed their true identities to Sir Montie and Tommy Watson for the first time.

The next really ghostly episode did not occur until Xmas 1922 when we had "The Ghost of Somerton Abbey" in No. 394. When the youthful Duke brought a party of St. Frank's juniors home for Xmas it coincided with the fulfilment of his 'ordeal.' This consisted of entering a secret room on his fifteenth birthday and was considered an ordeal by the family.

When the party arrived at the Abbey they found the servants upset by rumours of a ghost roaming the upper corridors of the north wing at night where this secret room was situated. Although this was regarded as servants' "nerves" nevertheless most people were rather chary in discussing the subject.

It fell to the lot of Fatty Little to meet the ghost on the first night. After going to bed he was assailed by the pangs of hunger and decided to go downstairs in search of 'grub.' In spite of the difficulties of finding his way around the various corridors and staircases instinct directed him to the sideboard of food. After a short snack he thought it better to return to the warmth of the bedroom which he shared with Nipper & Co. and finish his feed by the fire. Instinct might lead him to the food supply but would certainly not lead him back to his bedroom. Consequently he took the wrong turning, so to speak and lost himself in the maze of corridors in the North wing - the "haunted" wing, having ascended the wrong staircase at the start. He wandered around carrying his parcel of food, lost, so now let me revert to the words of Mr. Brooks to describe what happened next, 'just as the clock struck twelve thirty.

"He wandered on and on, passing from corridor to corridor until his legs ached, and his arms were stiff with cramp. But nothing short of absolute paralysis would make him drop his load. He had just turned one of the interminable corners when he came to an abrupt halt, frozen to the spot. And as he stood there his breath ceased to come - or so it seemed to him. His heart suspended action.

Right at the far end of the corridor - a long one with windows - there was a figure. It was so dim and indistinct that it seemed to have no body or form. It was just a filmy, whitish shadow, edging its way along the corridor towards him. There was not a sound - the Thing came along with absolute stealth.

For the life of him Fatty couldn't move. He tried to shout, but the muscles of his throat were rigid. He felt that his hair was standing on end. And a kind of cold gust swept over him. Something seemed to tell him that this whitish apparition was not human. It couldn't be human. It wasn't one of the fellows looking for him - although Fatty tried to convince himself for a moment that it was.

The object came nearer - and came to a silent stop just as it reached one of the windows. The moon came from behind a cloud and cast a full flood of radiance upon the mystic figure. And then Fatty Little nearly expired.

He had been scared once or twice in his life - but never to the extent that he was now. Wild and desperate panic seized him. There the Thing stood - with shadowy clothing wrapped round it, like winding sheets. And as the moon cast its light upon the ghost, Fatty could see that there was no face - only a ghastly skull, with grinning teeth and hollow eye spaces.

And then an arm was raised - a horrible, bony arm, without any real substance. The spell was broken, and Fatty uttered a wild, gasping shout. It was not loud, because his vocal chords would not function properly. But it was expressive of his sheer terror. He turned, pale as a sheet, and fled.

He ran as he had never run before. And the extent of his flight may be gathered from the fact that he absolutely forgot about his precious grub. He shed pastry and cakes as he ran.

He didn't drop the lot all at once, because he didn't even know - in that fearful extremity - that he had anything in his arms at all. He ran just as he was and shook off the good things as he rushed along. He left a trail behind him.

Cakes, fancy pastries, sausage-rolls, doughnuts, beef-pies, sandwiches, and all manner of other things were left lying in his wake - a perfect stream of excellent food along the dark and lonely corridors.

And then, almost before he knew it, he came to one of the staircases. It was a big one this time, and even in his panic he knew that he had seen it before. He had a feeling that the ghost was at his very heels - reaching out a bony hand to grasp his shoulder."

What a splendid passage this is. How cleverly Mr. Brooks mixed drama and comedy. Fatty, scared to death by the ghost and then fleeing, shedding confectionery all over the place. As regards the story, the ghost turned out to be an escaped convict who sought sanctuary in the Abbey. He was unmasked and captured by the St. Frank's party but to everyone's pleasure was declared innocent when Warders arrived for him. The real thief had confessed to the crime for which he had been imprisoned.

Another example of E.S.B.'s mixture of comedy and drama came in the next Xmas number "The Ghost of St. Frank's" in December 1923 - No. 447. The boys were staying at school for Xmas and one evening, after a session of telling each other weird stories the time came for bed. Let me now quote an excerpt from the story

I opened the door, and we all passed out into the cold, gloomy hall. Most of the fellows were talking rather noisily - the sound of their own voices evidently serving as a bracer.

"Ghost stories," said Archie, as we went along the hall, "ghost stories are rather priceless things to read on a summer's afternoon, lolling by the river. I mean to say, a chappie doesn't mind that. He laughs at the dashed things. But at Christmastime, in a big place like this, with dark corners

looming in the offing, and so forth, it's a bit on the foul side."

"Dry up about ghosts!" growled De Valerie.

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "Rather! I was only remarking that these stories about rattling bones, and what not, are calculated to make a chappie on the bally jump. What should we do, for example, if a headless spook suddenly whizzed forth out of the surrounding gloom?"

Archie's sheerful babbling did nothing to alleviate the general nervousness. And we had just got to the foot of the great staircase when Tommy Watson glanced upwards towards the blackness of the upper corridor.

He caught his breath in, went as pale as a sheet, and stood as though frozen.

"Look - look!" he panted hoarsely.

There was something in Watson's tone that made the other fellows nearly jump out of their skins. I caught Tommy by the shoulder, and he gave a great gulp.

"Steady!" I said sternly. "Don't be an ass, old man!"

"Something moved up there!" breathed Watson chokingly. "Some - something white! Oh! It's - it's coming down! Look out!" he added in a scream.

Before anybody could move, a streak of whiteness glided noiselessly down the staircase - a swift flash of something unaccountable. It was a white, silent glimpse of an intangible thing. It shot by, and was gone into the gloomy depths of the hall before we could recover.

"A - a ghost!" muttered somebody hoarsely.

"Oh! What - what was it?" said Watson, his teeth chattering.

"Well, you chaps must be in a rocky condition," I said grimly. "Don't be such blithering idiots. Fancy getting scared over a cat!"

"A cat!"

"Yes - Mrs. Poulter's white Persian cat!" I said, with a laugh. "It's just about time we all went to bed, I think!"

This story was again an excellent one with thrills galore. One chapter contained the first episode for the series to follow - the Dr. Karnak one. It told how a monstrous shape chased Willy Handforth up the lane to the school gates. At the end of the story when the identity of the "ghost" was revealed and the ghostly occurrences explained, we were told that this "monster" was a peril to come in the future. And what a future it was to be. The Dr. Karnak series showed E.S.B. at his very best. In last year's annual Reuben Godsave gave us an absolutely first class article on this series so I feel I cannot add anything to what he said.

The following Xmas we had "The Ghost of Glenthorne Manor" and its sequel. Quite a good Xmas effort but not so outstanding as some of its predecessors.

In the autumn of 1925 E.S.B. gave us the famous Ezra Quirk series, a big favourite with Leeites. I remember, when reading it at the time, I was so bemused with trying to see the explanation of the manifestations that I failed to see the true plot - that against Singleton. E.S.B. certainly went to town in this series and gave us all the thrills.

Regarding the first and second new series, I do not recollect many high class "creepy" series until the "Nerki" one which was right back again to E.S.B. as of old. What a relief it was to get this series so good after the glut of poor stuff we had to suffer. We had witches, fairies, bumps in the night, Umlosi flung around like a sack of coals, disappearances and everything else I should think. It was really the last of the weirdies and I could almost say

the best.

And now - just before you leave the cheery fireside for that dark passage and staircase outside, let me quote as a finale, a passage from "The Ghost of St. Frank's." Handy has just left his bedroom to go downstairs in search of a book he left in the breakfast-room, to prove to Church and McClure that ghosts do not mean a thing to him.

As he went down the hall, he fancied he saw mysterious figures crouching behind the various odds and ends of furniture. He had an overwhelming desire to look constantly over his shoulder. He wanted to squeeze into some recess, so that nothing was behind him but a solid wall. He had a feeling that ghostly hands would come out of the blackness and clutch at him.

He passed a half open door, and his heart nearly stopped beating. He caught a glimpse of the moonlight streaming into the room, and he was willing to swear that something had moved. Of course, he was wrong - his common sense told him so. But it was a trying experience.

After he had got past that doorway he wanted to whirl round, to be prepared for the awful thing that might spring out. Exactly how he reached the breakfast-room door he wasn't quite sure.

But reach it he did, and his heart gave a throb of thankfulness as he turned the knob and walked in. His first thought was for the electric switch. Light was what he needed - strong, brilliant light. The weird eerie moonbeams had wrought their work on the junior's nerves.

Click!

He pressed the electric light switch down, and again his heart nearly stopped beating. For there was no result! The light failed to come on! And if panic had been near to Handforth before, it was almost overwhelming him now.

He stood stock still, hardly daring to breathe. He knew that the Christmas annual lay on the small table against the fireplace, but he simply couldn't move. The failure of the electric light had proved too much. For he had been absolutely relying on that to steady him.

And then, solemn and clear on the night air, came the first chimes of the midnight hour!

Handforth stood there, his flesh feeling cold and shrunken. There was a most extraordinary sensation on his skin, and he was almost sure that his hair had become crisp.

He tried to move, but couldn't

And he listened to the chimes - and the following solemn strokes.

One-two-three-four-

It seemed to Handforth that those strokes would never finish. He was held by some uncanny grip. And then came a rustle - a distinct and unmistakable rustle from the other side of the room.

There was no imagination about it this time.

Perhaps it was the cat - perhaps a rat crawling along the wainscoting. But Handforth did not think of these things. His mind was running on ghosts. And that rustle was utterly terrifying.

Handforth felt more alone than he had ever felt in his life before. The booming of the school clock had ceased now - midnight was over. And he felt himself capable of movement again. And his one thought was to turn on his heel and run - run for his very life.

But he made a last effort.

"Any-anybody here?" he asked breathlessly.

He spoke in the merest of whispers, but his voice sounded like the roar of a cannon in his own ears. There came no reply. But once more there was

that faint, uncanny rustle - followed by a curious creak.

And by now Handforth was almost on the verge of collapse. The experience was the most terrifying he had ever passed through. From utterly nowhere a cold draught came to him - a sudden feeling of icy air.

He knew the window was closed - he knew there was no means by which any normal draught could blow upon him. But it came, and with it Handforth's nostrils were filled with a dank, horribly earthy smell.

In a flash, his mind went back to that ghost story - the one that concerned the earthy smell of crypt! The junior was certain that his imagination was not running riot. That odour was unmistakable, and it chilled him to the marrow.

And the climax came a second later.

For something soft - something utterly silent touched him. He felt it pressed against his shoulder. And then cold, bony fingers gripped Handforth by the arms. He staggered back.

And from his overwrought lungs there came a wild, shouting cry of fear. It rang out loudly - just that one great shout.

Handforth hurled himself back, tripped, and fell prone to the floor. A thousand flashes dazzled his vision, and he lay there motionless.

- - - - -

And now, my friends, it's time for you to go outside into that long very, very dark corridor and up that very, very gloomy staircase, and if you should see anything - a white unaccountable thing coming towards you - just try and think of Mrs. Poulter's pussy cat.

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Will pay good prices for 3rd Series S.B.Ls. by John Drummond: Nos. 71, 80, 82, 86, 91, 94, 100, 182. Also early Thrillers by John Newton Chance, published late 1930s to Mid 1940s by Gollancz and Macdonald. Both Libraries and Hardbacks must be in very good condition - the latter preferable in dust wrappers, but must be firsts. These are very urgent wants - needed, amongst other things, for background data for an article. If any right-minded collector wishes to part with any of these items, Christopher Lowder - who can be reached via "Eyethermes," Cradley, Nr. Malvern, Worcs. - will promptly nominate him/her for inclusion in the Collectors' Hall of Fame. So start queueing.

W A N T E D : Champion Annuals 1934, 1935, 1937; Champion Books 1938, 1939; Puck Annuals, Puck Comics 1933, 1935, 1936; Adventure, Hotspur, Rover, Wizard, Skipper Books 1936 to 1939; Tip Top; Butterfly; Sunbeam; Crackers; Film Fun Comics 1934 to 1936; Cash or Exchange.

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W A N T E D for London O.B.B.C. Library Nelson Lee's O.S. Nos. 105 - 110, 114, 116, 121, 129, 399, 402-406, 502, 506, 1st. N.S. 82-89; also B.F.L. 1st ser. 200, 403, 405, 504, 514, 568, 633, 649, 656, 2nd Ser. 244, 253, 257, 261, 265, 269, 277, 445, 615, 670, 674, also Brooks' stories in any other paper.

BOB BLYTHE, 47, EVELYN AVE., KINGSBURY, LONDON, N.W.9.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL ALSO HAPPY NEW YEAR - FROM UNCLE BENJAMIN, GREYFRIARS PRESS, TOWER HAMLETS, LONDON

FIFTY YEARS AGO Danny Penlerick was a boy with an avid taste for reading. He also went to the pictures a very great deal - more, perhaps, than was really good for him. In his spare time, he kept a diary. In Collectors' Digest, for some time past, we have been privileged to present extracts from Danny's Diary. Danny, in fact, has become a popular feature of our little world. Much water has flowed under Tower Bridge since Danny was a rather ingenuous youngster and kept his famous diary. To-day, mildly scarred with the ravages of Time, like most of us, Danny is a family man - one with a slight chip on his shoulder concerning the world around us. But, as he freely admits, he is old-fashioned. After a certain amount of subterfuge and a great deal of persuasion, we managed to get the mature Danny (the over-ripe Danny, he himself said) to write some of his modern views for Collectors' Digest Annual. So here is another peep at Danny - 50 years on. You won't agree with much that he says. You will think him churlish and unreasonable. But we hope you may be interested in spite of your irritation with him. He refused point-blank to give the article a name. So we have entitled it

## “That old-fashioned DANNY of ours!”

Editors are not very intelligent. That's my opinion, at least. Take that editor of yours, for instance. I've known him quite a long time though I don't often see him. He's got a name which always reminds me of Joe Frayne of St. Jim's. In fact, I always call him Joe. He told me once to think of oysters - you only eat them when there's an R in the month. There's no R in Frayne, he says. It didn't make sense to me, but I expect it did to him. Editors are not very intelligent. They don't have to be. They spend their time cutting up articles which other people have had the intelligence to write.

"Danny, I want you to write an article for the Annual," he said to me.

What nonsense! I can't write articles. I even hate writing letters. I've only written one thing for publication in all my life. A letter to the Daily Telegraph. They didn't publish it.

I wonder what kind of an Annual it is he wants me to write for. I don't suppose it's anything like the old Holiday Annual. I used to love that. Especially I loved the second Holiday Annual. I wasn't so keen on the first one. I expect it was because the cover was drawn by Warwick Reynolds, and he reminded me of all that was lost in the first world war. But the second one! How I adored that! (I'm beginning to sound like a pop-singer on the radio.) I hate pop-singers. They make me sigh for the Whispering Baritone, the Street Singer, and dear old Elsie Carlisle. And Gracie Fields singing "I'll be good because of you."

Yes, I loved that second Holiday Annual. Talking of pop, how kids eyes would pop if they could get a book like that in the shops now. I think they reprinted one of the early Gem tales in that second Holiday Annual. I expect that's why I loved it so much. Of course, the Holiday Annual went off as the years went by. Everything does. Even I do - and that Joe Frayne.

"I can't write articles, I don't want to write articles, and I don't intend to write articles," I told him.

Obstinate as a mule he is. A real Horace Coker. He kept on, and on, and on.

"If you can't think things out for yourself," he said kindly, "I'll send you some questions, and you can answer them. They'll give you a kind of framework. My readers will lap it up."

His readers! The conceit of the man. Like the Queen - God bless her - saying "My people!" Lap it up, indeed. Only kittens and pups lapped things up when I was a boy. I hate this modern jargon. "Danny, you're a square!" my brother Douglas said to me the other day. He made me see red. "And you're a burbling jabberwock!" I said to him, thinking of Martin Clifford. I think Martin Clifford got it from Lewis Carroll.

Joe Frayne sheered off. I thought he'd taken no for an answer. Within 24 hours I had a long questionnaire from him. He headed it: "The framework for your article." He put a fivepenny stamp on his letter. Two-tier post they call that new business. I hate it. Everything's going to pot. Not politicians. They went there long ago.

He started off his questionnaire like this:

1. What was your favourite paper? 2. Who was your favourite character? 3. How long did you keep entering your Diary? 4. Would you like to be young today?" And so on, for several pages.

What absolute rubbish! If I had any intention of writing an article, I shouldn't want old Joe Frayne to put up the scaffolding for me. The man's an ass.

How long did you keep on entering your Diary? I never stopped. Real diarists never do. Think of old Pepys and Mrs. Dale. I've always kept a diary. I don't put down reams and reams like I used to. I haven't the time or the patience. I put down just the main event of the day. I hardly ever look over my old diaries, for they make me sad when I see how things go from bad to worse. But when, just occasionally, I do open the Diary, it brings back floods of memories associated with just that one event which I have written down.

Would I like to be young to-day? No! No! It's easy to say no, but I really mean it. Even if I had the chance, I would not want to be a day younger than I am. Mind you, I'd like to go back in time, and have a look at things as I saw them as a boy. But I don't envy any youngster to-day. In spite of their youth.

You see, I have such loads of memories, such as they can never have. I'm old enough to have bowled a hoop when I was a kid. An iron hoop, with a skid. I wonder whether any kid today gets the same kick out of the family car as I got out of my iron hoop. I bet they don't.

What a dream of delight it was to go to the pictures, with my mother, or with my brother, or sometimes with quite a little party. Those local cinemas are all bathed in a golden glow in my memory. Kids don't go to the pictures any more. How can they? You can't imagine mum and dad saying: "Get ready, Danny! We're all going to see 'Sex in the Grass,' or 'Lust Under the Arches.'" There's no family entertainment any more.

I remember Lilian Gish and Richard Barthelmess in "Way Down East," and the haunting musical accompaniment which the orchestra gave it. I remember the Gishes in "Orphans of the Storm."

When they re-make anything nowadays, it's never so good as the original. They made a new "Ben Hur." It wasn't a patch on the old one with Ramon Navarro. They made a new "Mutiny on the Bounty." It just couldn't stand beside the old one which starred Laughton, Gable, and Tone. They've lost the art. They can't even reprint an old story without slashing it to pieces and sinking it before it gets launched.

I loved the old music halls with their red plush and their gilt, their sweeping velvet curtains, and the numbers in the little boxes beside the stage. Affectionately, I remember so many lovely old music hall acts. They didn't moan into mikes like the apologies for entertainers today. Think of dear old Lily Morris. What a personality! She always sang three songs. Never one more! Never one less. Up and down the stage, and every word she sang could be heard in every corner of the theatre. My favourite was "Don't Have Any More, Mrs. Moore," with "Why Am I Always the Bridesmaid?" coming second.

I remember the heyday of Jack Hylton and his band, and the marvellous scenic effects they used to get to illustrate the song that was being played.

I knew all the music halls, from the Coliseum and the Alhambra in the West End, to the Holborn Empire, Islington Empire, and Collins', way out to the north of London, and Finsbury Park Empire and Wood Green Empires, still further north, and Chiswick Empire and Putney Hippodrome and the Clapham Palace, and Camberwell Palace, and Penge Empire, coming to the south.

I loved so many of the acts, and have the fondest memories of them. But the loveliest of the lot was that of the Houston Sisters. It has never been equalled since. Rene was the girl, vivacious, snappy, witty, alive with youthful energy; Billie was the "boy," deep of voice, steady, and stern, a splendid foil to the irrepressible Rene. Goodness knows how many scores of times I saw their glorious act. They always topped the bill and always deserved to. An act that was clean as a new pin; bubbling with a joyousness which it did you good to see. I remember the last time I saw the Houston Sisters. It was at the New Cross Empire, the week that King George the Sixth died. I fancy that on that occasion they had a third sister with them, but I'm not quite sure about that.

Nothing's what it was any more. Some silly pompous ass tries to assure us that our summers are no worse now than they ever were. What a load of old rubbish!

An old Gem I remember affectionately was called "The Flooded School." I thought it a great tale, but I always thought it terribly far-fetched and impossible. I liked the bit especially where Tom Merry dived from a window and rescued Mr. Selby from the flooded quadrangle. I remember the description of the boys running from the great wall of water which was sweeping across the playing fields as the Ryll burst its banks. But I never believed in it. Till this year. So many times this autumn I went back over fifty years to recall "The Flooded School." When I saw Molesey with the flood water up to the name-board over Woolworth's shop I saw again Tom Merry diving into the quad. And when I saw seven feet of water sweeping down Dartford High Street I relived the episode of the wave of water driving towards the footballers.

So "The Flooded School" was not far-fetched at all. It was just that

Martin Clifford was 50 years ahead of his time.

They tell me that the old papers aren't numbered any more. That sounds impossible. Who ever was the nitwit who thought that such a step was progress? Goodness knows there's enough numbers in life nowadays. My telephone number is all numbers. I can never remember it myself, so I'm darn sure nobody else can. And in some towns they ask you to stick numbers on the end of their addresses when you write to them.

Someone recently asked me to be sure to add BZM 202 3 QQQ after his address, in order to aid the postal authorities. He didn't write very clearly so I'm not sure whether it was BZM or BSM. It wouldn't make any difference, of course. How could it? Just some stupid chap at the ministry throwing his weight about. If they can't find, for instance, a little place like Newcastle-on-Tyne without sticking VOW 121314 BUZZ at the end it doesn't say much for our postal services. Still, who can say much for our postal services?

Public opinion counts for nothing these days. When I was young, parliament existed to carry out the will of the people. Nowadays they never do what the majority of the people want. They do what a bunch of ninnies think the people ought to want. How else can you account for twenty-four hour clocks, summer time at Christmas, Centigrade temperatures, continental crossings, and the like. Not to mention the officials of British Railways being dressed up to look like escapees from a very, very shabby production of Gilbert and Sullivan.

Basic things, I suppose, get better, though even good things like social services get spoiled by the way they are abused. But most things get worse. The Gem always got worse, with an occasional St. Martin's summer in between the worsenings. The blue Gem was lovely, the white Gem was a bad dream, and as for the mustard Gem - WOW! The red Magnet was just fine; the Magnet with a mass of serials and bits and pieces, some of the serials spilling in pictures on to the covers, was something only the editor could love, and then the Magnet with cover-to-cover tales, chapter headings gone, and "modern" print - it saddened me. Think of what Chips and Comic Cuts were like in their heyday, and think of the same papers after the progressives had had their way with them.

There was once a paper called Modern Boy. Pretty good to start with, going soft in the middle, and pretty awful towards the finish.

They improved the Union Jack by making it the Detective Weekly? Or I suppose you thought so. I didn't.

Young people make me sad these days. After all, youth is such a wonderful time. Yet modern boys and girls spoil it all. They look such freaks with their long hair, their tight, shapeless breeches, and their beards. I'm not sure whether the girls wear beards or not. Usually I can't tell one from the other. I probably could if they had a wash.

All the same, I try to be tolerant. I'm much more tolerant than my brother Doug. The other day, when he and I were out together with our wives, we saw a bunch of sexless freaks coming towards us. Doug made some uncharitable comments about them, but I was in one of my tolerant moods.

I said: "Oh, well, I suppose that we were like them when we were their age."

I regret to say that Doug blasphemed.

He said: "My God! Did I ever look like that?"

I don't suppose that, all told, people are really any less religious now than they used to be. But they have cars and Forsyte Sagas and lots of money to put their thoughts elsewhere. I'm glad that I was brought up to go to church. Mind you, I was never particularly keen on going. I hated long sermons, for instance. I loved so many of the old hymns, and I've always been glad, glad, glad that my parents saw that I went to church once on Sunday.

In many ways, Sundays were Sundays then. We were rather proud of the British Sunday. The continental Sunday seemed a step down somehow. My mother wasn't narrow or bigoted. We had happy Sundays. I remember going with her one evening to St. James Church, and when the service was over we crossed the road and went into the Popular Picture Palace where we saw a long film called "The Life of Christ." It was a coloured picture, and I have an idea that it was made in Italy. That, of course, was long before pictures talked.

Cards were always taboo in our home on Sundays. My mother would turn a blind eye to other games, but never to cards.

I don't think the churches are quite blameless for the fact that their congregations have dwindled. At my own church they have modernised the hymns and given the old ones new tunes. That seems fatal to me. Reminds me how the old papers didn't last long after they had passed through a modernising operation. It astounds me that occasionally a clergyman has stood up in court to defend dirty books, explaining that he puts up with the dirt for the sake of the art. It doesn't do the church's image any good when folk suspect that he really puts up with the art for the sake of the dirt.

What spineless things trains have become! Remember how they used to change at Courtfield for Friardale, and at Wayland for Rylcombe? I always loved trains. Cousin Ethel was in a train smash once with Figgins, and Mornington was in a railway disaster with Lattrey. And I seem to recall a Christmas story in which the Famous Five were in a train accident and then went north to spend Christmas with the family of Kerr of St. Jim's. Or am I dreaming my time away?

When I was a boy my grandmother lived in Essex. A little village named Layer Marney. It took half a day to get there from Kent. In the winter we usually went on the South Eastern and Chatham to Charing Cross; then across to Liverpool Street by cab. Then on the Great Eastern, with their gleaming green locomotives, down to Kelvedon, where we changed on to the little branch light railway which took us on to the little fishing village of Tollesbury. Then, on to Layer Marney by carriage in early days and by motor car later on.

In the summer we would go by a roundabout route, and it was a marvellous journey - or so I used to think. Across the ferry from Kent to Tilbury. From Tilbury to Grays where one changed on to a branch line which ran through places with attractive names like Ockenden and Upminster. The stations were charming, spick and span, glittering with flower-beds.

This line from Tilbury to Romford via Grays was the London, Tilbury, and Southend line. It was the cheapest railway in the country, for the fares on the whole system were one halfpenny a mile as opposed to the penny a mile of all other companies. And when, later on, the London, Tilbury, and Southend was amalgamated with the Midland Company, there was an agreement that the L.T.S. should always be operated at half-price. I wonder how the government got over that one when the railways were nationalised. I bet they found a way.

At Romford, we left the L.T.S. and joined the Great Eastern. Romford was a sleepy little town then. Most trains didn't stop at Romford, and we always had two hours to kill before a train stopped there. We would go out, down the slope from the station, into a somnolent place which must have been something like Friardale. We would have tea in a baker's shop named Muskett's. It was always warm and bright, and smelt gloriously of newly-baked bread. Then strolling on, past a little silent cinema on the right. Into the Market Place where there was another cinema called the Laurie. Every cinema had its own character then. None of your battery-laid Odeons and Granadas.

Back to the train which came thundering in and stopped at last. Then, on, stopping at stations like Gidea Park, Harold Wood, Ingatestone, Shenfield, and Chelmsford, to Kelvedon, where we changed, crossing the bridge to the waiting little light-railway train.

Yes, a railway journey was really something to a kid in those times. I suppose that some of the services are better than they were, but, at least, in those days you knew that a train would come. Nowadays you can't go by the timetable even if you can understand it. It's quite on the cards that the train may not come at all.

While on the subject of railways, Doug was always far keener on the Sexton Blake Library than I was. He still has one named "The Station Master's Secret," and another called "The Only Son," the cover of which shows a man being shoved out of a train compartment while the train is dashing along.

I always loved the Christmas numbers, though, so far as I remember, they were never quite the same again after the first world war. It was the comic papers, so far as I remember, which were the real stars among Christmas Numbers.

I'm sorry for kids, in many ways, today. No real papers for them, and none of the sweets which used to make life worth living. Jelly babies, Packer's crispets, Packer's Alpine Mixture. Mellow Pieces, American Gums, Everlasting Strips, Liquorice cuttings, Sherbet dabs and Sherbet suckers. Broken chocolate cream - with pink and white insides - sold from an enormous heap at about 8d a pound. How we loved it!

This morning I was looking in a very ordinary sweet shop. Chocolate raisin clusters - 2/9 for four ounces. Toffee - 1/3 a quarter. Surely kids can't afford to buy sweets, even with the outrageous pocket money they get now. In my time, we bought 'em, and ate 'em, and loved 'em, and they did us good.

Fancy taxing kids' sweets! That's what they do. The Lollipop tax, the Opposition called it when it first came in. But when the Opposition became the Government, did they take off that shameful Lollipop Tax? Not on your life! They piled on a bit more tax, I shouldn't be surprised. Governments! I hate 'em.

I remember old Mrs. Tucker. She didn't give a bag if you bought less than a halfpenny worth. For a farthing, you had your coconut toffee in a spout of newspaper.

Do you go to the theatre? That's one of old Joe Frayne's questions. No, I don't. No longer. I should hate to pay good money to sit among a crowd of prurients, listening to foul-mouthed actors and actresses calling out obscenities. That's what they call entertainment in 1968. Besides, why should I go to the theatre? I can remember "Calvalcade," "Outward Bound," and "The Barretts of Wimpole Street."

I remember how thrilled to death I was when the Schoolboys' Own Library came out. I remember the first one - or was it the second - named "The Waif of St. Jim's." I kept that one for years and years. I daresay I've got it somewhere still. I loved that bright cover, with its royal blue background. And the old Magnet tales, too, though I recall that Doug said they altered the name of Levison and called him Langley in one yarn. Of course, Levison started off at Greyfriars, and then went to St. Jim's.

Do I like television? No, Joe, not much. We don't swear or talk smut in my home, so I don't see why I should let it come in by way of television. I like the cricket. Not so keen on the football, though. I don't understand the way they play - or don't play - the game, these days. I like the old films, but they make me sad. Stuff like "Captains Courageous," "Maytime," and "San Francisco." It's wonderful to watch, but it's another lost art.

Which was my favourite paper? At different times quite a number have come first with me. For a long while I drooled over the Boys' Friend. It was great, about fifty years ago. The real stars, I suppose, were always the Magnet and the Gem. Maybe my warmest corner is reserved for the Penny Popular. It always seemed such joy to be able to recapture old memories in the reprinting of the old stories.

I don't like modern music - if you can call it music. I hate modern songs - if you can call them songs.

As a boy, I loved England. I thought it the most wonderful country in the world. I thought it stood for all that was best. I thought patriotism was something to be admired. I believed in self-respect,

I still love England. But what a mess they've made of it. It's gone from the half-baked to the ridiculous. We had some silly gambling laws, long ago. So they scrapped them all, and made this country a glorified gambling den. All it needs is Tickey Tapp for Minister of Sport. We had some stupid censorship for the stage. So they scrapped it all. And now vice and beastliness have become entertainment.

My happiest memories are of Britain, when it was Great Britain. But then, I'm old-fashioned.

I hope your editor won't publish all this. I daresay he will. As I said before, editors are so stupid. I hate 'em.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE EDITOR

WISHES YOU AND YOURS

A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

# TOM PORTER

Telephone: CRADLEY HEATH 69630

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257 The Cad of the Crusaders 601 The Rio Kid's RevengeBOYS' REALM (1919) 22, 23, 25, 26, 28 to 44BOYS' REALM (1927) 1 to 6, 18, 21, 31, 34 to 80DETECTIVE LIBRARY (1920) 1 to 45 (especially 29 to 45)EMPIRE LIBRARY 3, 5, 6, 7, 17GEM 805N.L.L. (OS) 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 20, 52, 58, 61, 73, 77, 79, 81, 86POPULAR (1919) 34 to 39, 47, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56 to 59, 61, 64, 65 to 67, 70,  
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421, 422, 517, 530, 531, 537, 541, 542, 546 to 595, 598, 602, 611, 628.UNION JACK 777 The Flashlight Clue And any others featuring Nelson Lee,  
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# YOUNG ENGLAND 1880-1937

By Frank Vernon Lay

One of the most neglected periodicals until recently has been Young England, mainly, one suspects, because of the Sunday-school atmosphere of the earlier years. The revival of interest in Victorian and Edwardian reading material has led to a resurgence of interest in this, hitherto neglected, publication.

Starting life in January 1880 it ran as a weekly for two years, then switching to a monthly and finally finishing up as an Annual, it had much in common with its chief competitors Chums and Boys Own Paper although it is surprising to state that at one period its circulation was the largest of the three!

Young England was a direct descendant of a Victorian paper entitled "Kind Words" which started in 1866 under the editorship of Mr. Benjamin Clarke. On its amalgamation with Young England he edited the latter for ten years until his death in 1889, when it was edited by Mr. Thomas Archer who died in 1894. Copies of "Kind Words" are very scarce although volumes of a competitor "Good Words" are very common.

"Boys of our Empire" was a periodical that ran for three years and three issues at the turn of the century published by Andrew Melrose. In 1900 it formed the Boys Empire League with president S. F. Carruthers Gould and vice-presidents the Archdeacon of London and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and this League was taken over by Young England and was the most successful League ran by any paper with members in New Zealand, Western Australia, New South Wales and Brazil etc. Clubs were founded in many parts of the British Isles and were extremely active with a swimming section under the famous swimmer Mr. Montague Holbein, a physical training section under Mr. Eugen Sandow, and scholarships were offered to all members and winners were helped to emigrate to various parts of the Empire. Musical concerts under Royal patronage were held and social evenings and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave readings at several of these. Summer camps were held, medals given for deeds of bravery, and exchange columns conducted. It would appear that the publishing firm of Andrew Melrose was taken over by the controllers of Young England as a Mr. Melrose appears on the list of members of the executive committee as does a Mr. Chambers, a member of the famous publishing concern "W. & R. Chambers" of Scotland. When time permits of adequate research into the ownership of Young England it is expected to show that it was acquired at some date by W. & R. Chambers, as so many of the well-known serials in it were later published as hard-cover books by them.

In common with many of its competitors the rigours of the 1914-18 War caused a marked deterioration of the paper and the Annuals for 1917, 1918 were very thin and non-descript compared with their predecessors but, unfortunately, they never seemed to recover and the Annuals from this date on until its final year 1937 were very poor efforts indeed and hardly worth collecting.

In the Eighties the paper ran a supplement, "Young Englanders Journal" the contents of which were provided entirely by its readers and it is interesting to note that one of the winners of a short story competition was Miss K. M. Eady who later became a regular contributor to Young England and other papers of the period and who has many hard-cover books still extant in proof of her popularity.

Volume 11 (1890) Volume 13 (1892) and Volume 17 (1896) are much sought after by collectors of the work of G. A. Henty as they contain his stories, Joe Polreath the Hunchback, In the Grip of the Press Gang, and On the Spanish Main.

Other eminent authors who contributed were W. H. G. Kingston, R. M. Ballantyne, Ascott R. Hope, Dr. Gordon Stables, George Manville Fenn, Henry Frith, Rosa Mulholland, Frank T. Bullen, Fred Wishaw, C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, Robert Leighton and Harold Avery whose first school stories were published here in 1892. Among the well-known artists were Gordon Browne, Wal Paget, Alfred Pearse and Savile Lumley, Stanley L. Wood. Later we find the names of David Ker, Percy Longhurst, J. P. Lamb, Ross Harvey and H. Mortimer Batten, F. St. Mars, T. C. Bridges and F. Swainson, Rowland Walker and Percy F. Westerman. In Vol. 29 1908 appeared an unusual story "A Son of the Stars" a Martian serial by that famous author Fenton Ash. This later appeared as a serial in Chuckles (1915) but so far as I have been able to trace never appeared as a hard cover book, and should not be confused with his well-known book "A Trip to Mars"

I trust that this little article will do something to revive interest in this rather neglected paper and show that it is worthy of more study than it has received in the past.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yo! Ho! Ho!

By 'SOTON'

I have recently been reading for the severalth time that splendid book 'Boys Will Be Boys.' As always I enjoyed the chapters on Britain Invaded, Planets and Lost Cities, The Dundee School, and so on, but at the end I was left with a curious sense of incompleteness. Whereas every other common type of boys story is dealt with, there is almost no mention of - pirates.

It seems to me that an extra chapter is needed, which is why this article has its title. Far be it from me to try and assume the mantle of Mr. Turner but I would like to correct the balance a little. For in the Collectors Digest, too, people never seem to write about pirates.

Where pirate stories began I do not know; presumably there were some in the Victorian bloods. The first great story in the genre would appear to be, appropriately enough, 'Treasure Island.' Stevenson's story, first printed in "Young Folks" in 1881 as "The Sea Cook" reads as well today as it must have done nearly 90 years ago. Undoubtedly there were other stories in the intervening years, but perhaps the next significant landmark is 1892 with the publication of the first numbers of 'Chums.' These included Max Pemberton's serial 'The Iron Pirate' - modern piracy but piracy all the same.

The inclusion of this story in its first issues rather set the pattern for this magazine. In its pages are to be found some of the most memorable pirate stories of all. It was a bad year which did not contain one or even two long pirate serials and there were often a few short stories as well. Serials were better however. The long spread of a serial allowed the author to develop the characters and fill in plenty of colourful background, building up meanwhile several suspense endings to instalments. I can remember one hero being lowered into crocodile pits, and another tied to a stake with the incoming tide and a dozen or so sharks contending for the honour of removing

him from the scene. Ending the instalment surrounded by a horde of blood-thirsty pirates, armed to the teeth was a natural hazard.

Surely the master of the genre was S. (for Samuel) Walkey. His first story for Chums in 1895, was a standard adventure yarn. The next, however, was "Rogues of the Fiery Cross," the first of the many fine pirate serials he wrote up to 1940. He did not restrict his writing to this type of story, but wrote others - mainly historical adventures and/or sea stories. But it will be for his pirate yarns that he will be best remembered.

Other writers in Chums who wrote pirate stories over the years included D. H. Parry, Paul Corydon and Draycott M. Dell. Dell was editor of Chums for a long period but did not confine his writing to this magazine; some of his stories were issued in the Boys' Friend Library.

The Thomson papers were not slow to include this type of story in their papers - although with their tendency to mix types of story together the results may not always have been traditional. But they certainly kept the interest going.

All this is in the past. There does not seem to be any continuation of this type of story in modern boys' literature - or maybe the papers my children take are not typical. In any case it goes without saying that any modern productions could never be as good as the old favourites! So its back to Chums and Walkey and, with any luck the "bottle of rum."

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