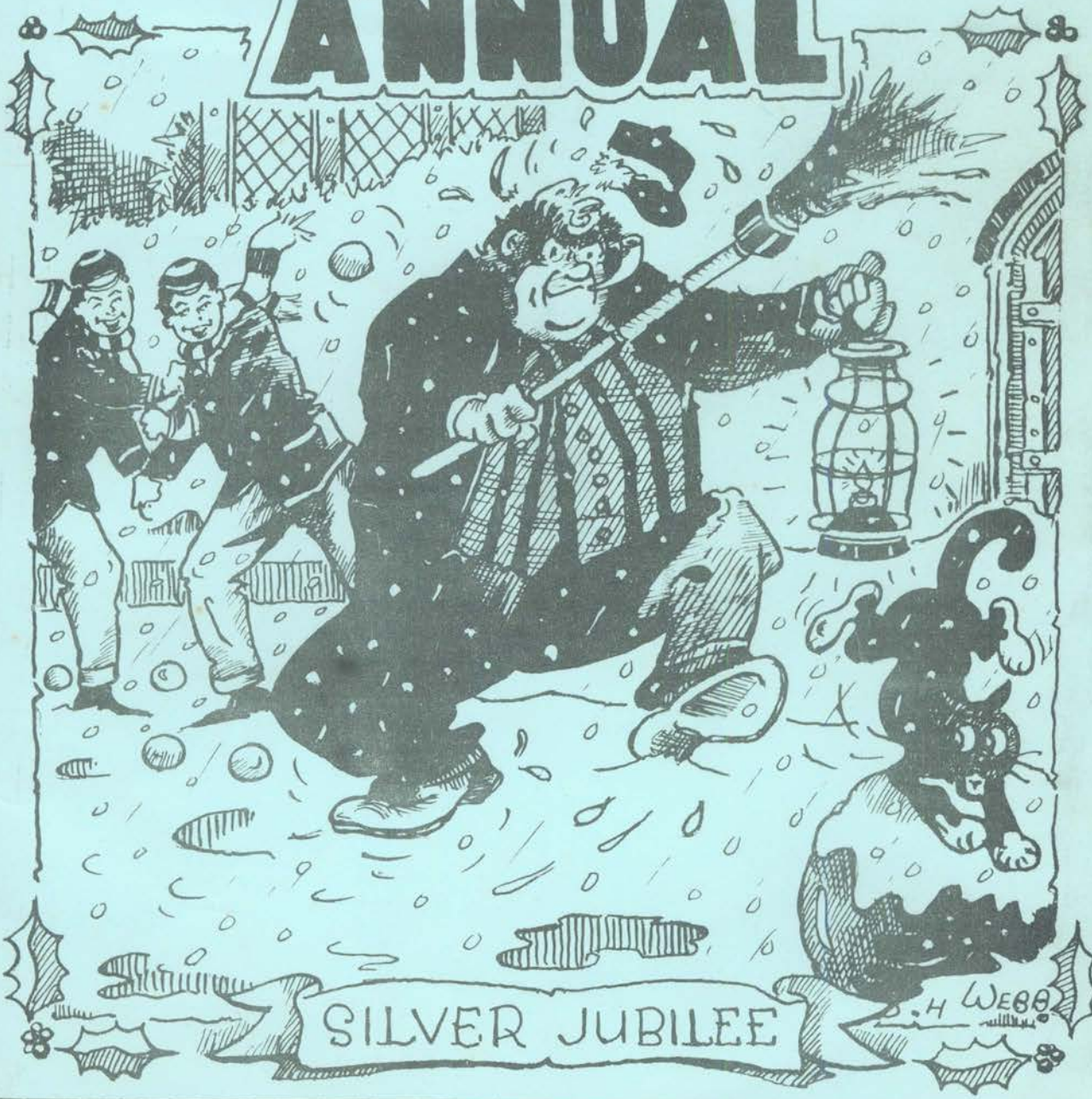
COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL

1971 1971



Collectors' Digest Annual

CHRISTMAS 1971

TWENTY-FIFTH YEAR

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INTRODUCTION

It is hard to realise that 25 years have gone by since our Founder, Herbert Leckenby, sent out his first edition of this Annual to his band of enthusiasts. No matter what the weather or the government or the bank rate or what the militant minority is rioting against - C.D. Annual has turned up in its pristine freshness, year after year, for 25 years. Just before Christmas, like the old Christmas Numbers of bygone days.

I wonder just how many hundreds of thousands of words are collected together in 25 Annuals.

The remarkable thing is that the enthusiasts are as enthusiastic as ever; they have never grown jaded; their loyalty has never tarnished. The interest is as keen as ever.

One might expect that, after 25 years, the contents of the 25th Annual could be stale and stuffy. Yet they are not. If anything, this Silver Jubilee Annual is brighter and better than ever before. At least, I hope confidently that you will all think so. My feeling is that our bonny contributors have risen to the great occasion, and are more sparkling than ever.

It just remains for me to thank our superlative contributors, our splendid printers who work so magnificently to produce a first-class job, and our happy band of readers who make it all so worth while.

God bless you all.

Eric Fayne

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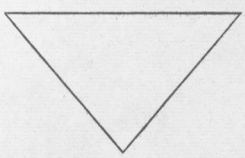

EARLY STRUGGLES

BREAKING INTO FILMS

by ROBERT BLYTHE

We pause for a while to explore a by-way along E.S.B's literary career - scenario writing. In so doing, we take a look at the film world, as it was in 1913-1914, as seen through the eyes of various members of the family.

Late in 1913 the Brooks family had acquired a cinema, the New Standard Cinema (changed by them to the Standard Playhouse Cinema) in Croydon, which opened its doors under the new management in January 1914. Later in the year, as we shall see, E.S.B. was to attempt to cash in on this entertainment by writing a film script.

How the family became interested in cinema management is obscure, but it is a fact that the eldest son, Edward Oswald (does that name sound familiar? R.B.), had been manager of the Grand Theatre, Swansea, for some years, and another son, Arthur, was editor of the Theatre magazine. At the time of the family's involvement with the cinema in 1914, Edward was in America, acting as agent for various film companies, Gaumont and Hepworth among them.

Various letters between the family and friends have survived, and from them we can form a picture (no pun intended!) of what it was like to run a small cinema, and what the thoughts were on films in general in those early years.

Extract from letter. Edwy to his brother Edward. Dated 9 Nov., 1913.

"I'm jolly glad you've left Canada and that worrying theatrical agency

business. I've thought all along that you were working the best years of your life away to no advantage. I'll bet you'll do big things in the picture world.

"But Gaumont is a French company. (Edward was Gaumont's agent in six American states at this time. R.B.) Are they French in New York, or absolutely American? I mean, do they produce picture-plays in America? If so, I've never seen one. All the Gaumont films I've seen are French.

"I don't care for French films as a rule, but Gaumont's are always good. I've said to Leonard many times that Gaumont's stuff is as good as anybody's. I've seen both the 'Fantomas' dramas that have been released here, and thought they were very good. But I think the best Gaumont I've seen is 'In the Clutch of the Apaches.' It's splendidly produced, well acted, and the photography is perfect.

"Have you noticed how absurdly green some of the film companies colour their night scenes? Selig's for example, are bright green - not a bit like night. Gaumont's seem to have got the exact right tint - a kind of pale bluey-green colour. Another good film of theirs is 'The Robbery at the Inn.' I don't care for the 'Simple Simon' piffle. Some of these films are absolutely rotten, and I've been surprised at Gaumont for making them. But I suppose they go down all right with the French public.

"Do you see any British films in New York? Such as 'The Battle of Waterloo' — B & C, 'East Lynne' — Barker, and 'David Copperfield' — Hepworth? Most of Hepworth's stuff is very good. Clarendon and Crick's films are second-rate as a rule.

"Which, in your opinion, are the best films? I think that Edison's want a lot of beating. You never see a dud Edison.

"I'm aware that the composition of this letter is pretty rotten, because I'm shoving it down just as I think of it. I told you that I should write any old stuff, didn't I?

"It's beastly cold today. Not freezing, or anything like that, but drizzly, chilly and generally shivery. As soon as I've finished this letter I'm going to get busy on an instalment of a 'Sexton Blake' serial.

"And now we're on the subject of stories, just a few questions, old son. If you don't answer 'em I'll send you a letter ten times as long as this one as a punishment.

"What boys' papers are there in New York? Are they anything like ours — 'Boys' Friend,' 'Union Jack,' 'Boys' Journal,' 'Chums,' and 'Scout,' etc., etc.? Of course, I've seen American boys' papers in newsagents shops, but surely they are not a sample of the regular publications? I mean those gaudy-coloured things — regular 'dreadfuls.' Can you buy the English boys' papers in New York? And if so, how much?"

Extract from letter from Leonard Brooks (this is, of course, the L. Brooks of the disputed U.J. and S.B. stories. R.B.) to friends, dated 30 Dec., 1913.

"All last week I hadn't time to even look at a paper, and this week I'm busier than ever. I suppose mother and father told you that we're taking over a Picture Hall, and, of course, we want to get to know everything possible in connection with it before we finally take over. By 'we' I mean Arthur and myself, as Edwy will, of course, have no active interest in it whatever. You've no idea what a tremendous lot of work there is in the picture business. I've been there every day for the past three weeks, taking a hand at all sorts of things, including operating the projector and bill-posting! One mustn't be too particular in this business, you know! The main thing is to get the work done. When we get fairly running you must both come over one evening and see our show. Don't forget that you'll always be more than welcome, and that we shall be only too delighted to see you at any time. But don't come on Saturday night if you want to be comfortable. As a rule we're so packed that one can hardly move. Any other afternoon or evening will do, and you'll be sure of a good seat."

As this, and the next letter shows, Edwy did not take a very active part at this period, and yet he must have at some time, for we find that the letter heading for the Standard Playhouse correspondence bears the words "Searles and Leonard, Lessees."

Extract of letter from Edwy to friends. Dated 6 Jan., 1914.

" - - - The reason Leonard is unable to come is this. Mother, Leonard and Arthur have just taken over a picture palace in Croydon. Last night, in fact was the opening. (Jan. 5, 1914 was a Monday. R.B.) Of course the place has been running for years, but last night was the first night of the new management. Leonard is doing practically all the operating work for the first week or so, so that he will become thoroughly conversant with the business. In fact, it would be absolutely impossible for Leonard to be away, as the show could not run without him. The theatre opens at three in the afternoon, and goes on continually until 11.0 p.m. Perhaps Leonard might have been able to come on a Wednesday — but on Thursday morning the new films arrive for the second programme of the week, and there's a tremendous amount of work to be done. So much, in fact, that it is a struggle to get through before opening time. He is terribly disappointed that circumstances prevent him coming, as he would have liked to see the last of Willie as a bachelor.

"Mother and I are coming however. I myself, am in the midst of hard writing, but I shall let stories 'rip' for Thursday. - - -"

The months that followed must have meant much hard work for the brothers, as the following extract indicates.

Extract from letter. Leonard Brooks to friend. Dated March 8, 1914.

" - - - To put the matter more plainly, Arthur and myself are running a picture theatre, and the work connected with it is something awful! We're at it from morning until after midnight, and occasionally all night. We took the place over on Jan. 5th. Of course we started without capital, and have had to do four men's work between us. Arthur looks after the office business, and I look after the

film department. I do all the operating, with an occasional bit of help from an electrician, who looks after our motor generator — the machine which manufactures our 'juice.' Electricity is always termed among us as 'juice.' The place we're running is the New Standard Cinema, Surrey St., Croydon. (Is it still there, I wonder? R.B.) The chap who had it before us lost a lot of money there, but as we started with nothing, we can't lose much. But we're going to make the bally place pay — it's simply got to pay. We give 'em thundering good shows, and conduct the place in a proper manner, and do everything as it should be done, and a darned sight better than it was ever done there before, and yet we haven't so far 'clicked.' But we're just beginning to feel the benefit of our labours, and we have hopes of a speedy improvement in 'biz.' I enclose you one of our bills for tomorrows and Thursday's attractions. Both are absolutely great films, and we ought to do well with them. --"

In spite of this optimism the cinema was not a profitable concern. Apparently, their licence to operate was for six days a week only, and in an endeavour to make ends meet they injudiciously decided to open on Sunday. This, of course, led to them being summoned. This was in July 1914, and when their application for the renewal of their licence was discussed by the licensing authorities in October 1914 the following comments were made. This extract from the proceedings is taken from the Croydon Advertiser for Saturday, 17 Oct., 1914.

" - - - Mr. Harris then applied for the renewal of nine cinema licenses and for what he might call a new licence for the Standard Picture Playhouse, Surrey St. The Standard licence, he said, was abandoned. Mr. Brooks, the applicant, his mother, a married brother and family and two or three other persons had been trying to eke a living out of the theatre. He thought Mr. Brooks had owned the theatre, either partly, or wholly, for about eighteen months, and during that time they had simply eked out a bare existence, one of the reasons being that the theatre could not be opened on a Sunday. Eventually he opened it on Sunday, having taken advice - and whether that advice was wrong or right ought not to be put down to him. He was advised that he had the right to open on Sunday with non-inflammable films, in spite of the fact that the licence forbade him to open on a Sunday, as to open with non-inflammable films did not come under the act. It was quite clear that if non-inflammable films were used the local authority would have no power to interfere. He assured the council that Mr. Brooks had not flouted their decision. --"

After some deliberation the council granted a licence for six days only. A further comment was made that the representative of the Standard refused to accept the licence.

The subsequent history of the cinema during 1915 is obscure. It continued to operate, but whether under the Brooks' management or not, I cannot say. According to the next letter written by Edwy in November, they were still going strong, and I should imagine that E.S.B's reference concerns the licensing proceedings. However, one thing is certain, and that is that the licence was not applied for in 1915, and in fact the cinema isn't mentioned in that year's applications, and so we must conclude that the Brooks family's venture into the cinema world ended in failure.

We now come to that point in our story where Edwy has a brief flirtation with the film world. The war had now been on for a few months and you will notice the patriotic fervour of part of his letter. This, I am sure, is indicative of most people's feelings during the first year of the war.

Extracts from letter. Edwy to his brother Edward. Dated 18 November, 1914.

" - - - I don't suppose the stories I'm writing would interest you very much, as they're mostly school stories in the GEM and MAGNET, and other yarns of the same sort in other papers. I've written three short stories for YES OR NO recently, however, and I enclose them herewith for you to read — if you feel inclined to waste valuable time in doing so. I've cut them out of the papers, as you will see, in order to save postage.

"I got a letter from the producer of Cunard Films (a new English brand, and jolly good, I think) the other day, asking me if I would let him use incidents in SNAKES IN THE GRASS for a picture. I couldn't comply with his request because I'd sold the copyright of the story to Shurey's, and the dirty dogs wouldn't allow me to do anything — and I might have made a quid, too, out of it. I'm going to see about writing some cinema plots, now, for Mr. Waller. J. Wallet Waller is the name he goes to bed with; the Cunard chap I mean.

"Being in the picture business yourself I should think you would be able to write some plots and get them taken. I suppose you don't happen to have a scenario of somebody's that would serve as a guide for me — because when I send a plot in, I want to do it in the proper style.

"Talking about fillums, what do you think of the Trans-Atlantic stuff — it's called Universal in America, of course? Did you see anything of the 'Lucille Love' serial, in fifteen parts? I saw most of it in Croydon, and the bulk of the instalments were absolutely and distinctly rotten. Some were very good, but most were drawn out and padded. Grace Cunard as 'Lucille' wasn't bad, but Francis Ford, as Hugo Lobeque, was poor. Leonard and I went and saw a trade show of the new serial of Universal's a day or two ago — 'The Trey of Hearts' by Louis Joseph Vance. They only showed six instalments, and they were infinitely better than 'Lucille Love,' very improbable and far-fetched, of course, but interesting.

"Some of the English films, nowadays, are better than any of the Americans. The London Film Co. are turning out some splendid stuff, and Pathe's Big Ben films (English) are jolly fine. I saw 'A Study in Scarlet' the other day, produced by Samuelson Film Co., and it was packed with interest right through it's six reels. Hepworth's, too, have filmed some of Dicken's works in a masterful manner — better than any American firm would have done. I suppose you're seeing a decent few British films out there now?

"What do you think of the war? The Germans are getting fearfully whacked. Of course, they'll do terrible damage yet, and I don't think they will be easily beaten. They're making strenuous efforts to break through to Calais, but I don't think they'll succeed. The British have held them back all along the line, and I think very soon

the Germans will be in retreat until they are driven into their own beastly country. The Russians, too, are invading Germany, and they'll want a lot of checking. On the whole, Germany has bitten off more than she can chew, and the toughest chunk of them all is the British Expeditionary Force. I was speaking to a soldier the other day, and he said that he had just been talking to wounded men home from Belgium. They said that the French are good soldiers and good fighters, but they're ten times better when they have the British Tommies with them. Once they have got some of our chaps to lead them, they'll do anything. And the Germans thought that our soldiers were only for show! Why, if it hadn't been for General French's army, the Germans would have been in Paris long ago.

"How do the Americans generally regard the war? Are they in favour of the Allies? I can hardly imagine it possible that they could side with Germany against England. When you write, don't forget to answer these little questions, will you?

" - - - The Standard Playhouse is doing fairly well now; but I expect Arthur has told you all about it. There's quite a lot to tell regarding the Standard, but if Arthur has already written I should only be repeating the yarn. If I find he hasn't told you of the recent happenings, I'll make a point to tell you in my next letter.

" - - - Everybody here is all serene, but money, as per usual, is by no means in abundance. Mother hasn't been very well lately, but this last week or two she's improved wonderfully, and is now almost her dear self again. Father's as hale and hearty as ever, and so are we all — with, perhaps, the exception of George. George has got a rotten cold, and when he speaks he sounds like a fog-horn. However, he'll soon be all right, for his voice, after taking a short holiday, is returning to him. He's working at the Standard, you know. He's assistant operator (Leonard's chief ditto), bill-poster, and any old thing you like. And he earns every penny of his money. Of course, he doesn't post bills around the town; only shoves up the lithos outside the theatre. Neale, the doorman, goes round with the double-crowns. - - -"

Edwy's short-lived attempt at scenario writing began with this letter from J. Wallett Waller, a film Producer.

3 Adelaide St., Strand, W.C.

9 Nov., 1914.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to ask if you would have any objection to my using one or two incidents mentioned in your admirable story "Snakes in the Grass," in a cinematograph picture?

Yours faithfully, J. Wallett Waller

E.S.B. promptly wrote to the editor of "Yes or No," with the results described in his letter to his brother.

However, Mr. Waller must have thought highly of this story because, in spite of Shurey's (the publisher of "Yes or No" R.B.) refusal he still wanted to use it, and sought to find ways around it.

3 Adelaide St.

19 Nov., 1914.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Sorry I was out when you called. I should be so glad if you could make an appointment so that we could discuss a project I have in mind. I think we could arrive at something that would not hurt the susceptibilities of Shurey's. Should you be up in town any evening I am to be found at the Wyndhams Theatre, Charing X Rd. (Stage Door) from 8 p.m. to 8.30 p.m., after that I am busy until 11 p.m. Perhaps you would drop me a line there or give me a call. Of course, any suggestion you might have I should be happy to fall in with.

J. Wallett Waller

Edwy must have met Waller shortly after this, and a plot discussed.

The Mount.

26 Nov., 1914.

Dear Mr. Waller,

I enclose scenario herewith. If you should wish to see me, just drop me a line, and I will run up any evening you like. I have written it as we arranged, and I think it is all right.

E.S.B.

From here on it reads like some of Edwy's earlier experiences when trying to get a story accepted.

3 Adelaide St.

30 Nov., 1914.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Just a line to acknowledge scenario. Afraid it will be the end of the week before I shall be able to lay it before the firm, but as soon as anything definite is settled will let you know.

J. Wallett Waller

3 Adelaide St.

9 Dec., 1914.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Have not yet been able to fix up an interview with Mr. Edge. I wrote to him again and am still awaiting his pleasure.

Will let you know directly I have seen him anyway. I could not start the production until after Xmas as I am fully occupied at the theatre rehearsing "Raffles."

J. Wallett Waller

In December, Edward, in America, complied with Edwy's wish for help with film scripts.

Hotel Normand, New York.

29 Dec., 1914.

Dear Edwy,

Re. Scenario's. Here's a guide such as you asked for in a previous letter. Don't forget when dividing up into scenes, that the rule this side is reels of 1000 ft. each, each taking 15 to 16 minutes to run. Your bally English reels are much longer and have to be adapted for this market - - -

The scenario that Edward had enclosed was entitled "The Sins of the Mother," a soul stirring drama of a mother's attempts to save her convent brought up daughter from the perils of card playing!

By February the next year, Edwy was getting impatient, and he wrote to Waller asking - what was the situation?

Wyndhams Theatre.

11 Feb., 1915.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Sorry to hear that you have been seedy. Any evening at the theatre about 8 p.m. you care to call am always on the spot. The Cunard Company are still chopping and changing that plot, but think I have arrived at what they want now. Am afraid you won't recognise it! I think it has worked out fine.

J. Wallett Waller

However, Edwy was not to be left long in suspense.

Wyndhams Theatre.

23 Feb., 1915.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Re. "Unfit"

I am enclosing you the Cunard Co's letter to me re. the above - this after nearly six weeks!

I have great hopes, however, of placing it with another firm and will let you know immediately I am successful in placing it.

J.W.W.

Cunard's letter reads as follows.

Cunard Films, Mayfair.

17 Feb., 1915.

Dear Mr. Waller,

I return scenario "Unfit" as promised and am sorry we cannot see our way to entertain it just now. You have my suggestions for the alterations and you are perfectly welcome to these if they are of any use to you.

L.F. Director.

There is now a gap of seven months between this and what is the last letter on this subject in the archives. Whether Mr. Waller succeeded in finding a market for "Unfit," I cannot say. For all I know this may be the same scenario that he's talking about in this final letter.

Wyndhams Theatre.

8 Sept., 1915.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Sorry have not been able to write sooner re. scenario, it was not until last Wednesday that I was able to read same to my directors. They thought very favourably of it, but not enough incident and detail in it as it stands to make a two-part feature. They made one or two excellent suggestions, such as introducing some wireless episodes and also some war scenes. I am now working on it and will let you have a copy of the finished article as soon as completed.

It is a little premature to suggest fees until the scenario is definitely accepted. (E.S.B. it would seem, is still hard up! R.B.) Should you be up in town one evening, look me up at the theatre. We might have a pow-wow and a glass.

J.W.W.

And that is "curtains" for Edwy's attempt to write film scenarios. However, as a postscript I can add the following information for what it's worth.

There was a film called "Unfit," and it did contain scenes of a wireless operator at work, together with several war scenes. Two snags, though. It was issued in 1914 by Hepworth. Edwy's scenario was turned down by Cunard in 1915 - -. Pity!

What happened to the scenario mentioned in Sept. 1915? Well, Waller was a producer for Cunard films, but they went out of business late in 1915, when the owner, a gentleman who delighted in the name of Gobbett, died. And that is when Edwy's interest in scenario writing died too, I should imagine.

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MY HEART HAD THE HUNGERFULNESS

AN APPRECIATION OF HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH

by MARY CADOGAN

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat on the study table and watched Bob Cherry's operations with the necktie with friendly interest.

India in the early days of the twentieth century - fabulous country of contrasts, her princes boasting arrogant splendour whilst thousands of her people suffered poverty and disease unimaginable to western minds! This was the seething sub-continent administered ably but uneasily by the British Raj, where native Hindu and Moslem ideologies bitterly opposed each other: where intolerance and intrigue flourished, side by side with the astounding riches of India's cultural heritage, and the transcendent mysticism of her true religious teachers and gurus. This was the India which produced Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, a Prince born to a position of great power and wealth, his indisputable place in the hierarchy of Hindu India, according to the traditional right of hundreds of centuries!

As we know, all this magnificence was translated into the much-loved 'good

old Inky' of the Greyfriars Remove. What an inspiration it was on the part of Charles Hamilton to bring Hurree Singh to England, first to Netherby School, and Beechwood Academy ***, and then to Greyfriars. In 1908 when readers of the early MAGNET made the nabob's acquaintance, India still very much represented the 'mysterious East.' Nowadays our children probably number amongst their friends Indian school-mates; they may well have been introduced to ancient Hindu systems of Yoga, as presented twice weekly on television programmes, and they may even join in the chants to Hindu deity Krishna, when the appropriate record happens to be Top of the Pops. But to schoolboy readers of 1908 I am sure that Hurree Singh must have held the fascination of a truly rare character. Publisher Charles Skilton said that '..... the terrificfulness of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was drawn from an Eastern gentleman met by Charles Hamilton in the course of social life,' and one imagines that Hamilton's acquaintance with the Indian gentleman in question was not necessarily very deep or long-standing. Nevertheless Hamilton seems to have been most accurately inspired in his presentation of the lithe and inscrutable Hindu junior, who has all the keen assurance of his high-caste, together with its characteristic charm and fascination.

Charles Hamilton has said, 'I liked the idea of making a coloured boy a friend on equal terms with the other boys, and a valued member of the Co. I thought it would have a good effect.' Certainly Hurree Singh's arrival is described in one of the most satisfying chapters in the early part of the Greyfriars' saga, leaving the reader in no doubt about Hamilton's sympathy with the character of the young student from India.

(EXTRACTS FROM MAGNET No. 6, Aliens at Greyfriars, 21/3/1908):-

"He's not coming into this study!" ..... exclaimed Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove at Greyfriars, raising his voice. "It was bad enough to have that rotter Wharton pushed in here with us, Nugent - "

"Oh, shut up!" said Nugent.

Harry Wharton raised his eyes from his books, and looked at Bulstrode.... Bulstrode met Harry Wharton's glance with a sneer on his lips.

"Yes, I mean it," he exclaimed. "I say it was bad enough to have a sulky rotter like you shoved into the study without having a nigger to follow."

"He's not a nigger," said Nugent.

"I don't care whether he's a nigger or not. I won't have him in this study."

Harry Wharton's lip curled scornfully. "You're talking out of your hat, Bulstrode, and you know it," he said quietly. "If this Indian boy is assigned to our study, you will have to have him here, whether you like it or not. And you know it."

Bulstrode scowled savagely.

"Right enough!" said Nugent. "You can't argue the matter with the Form Master, Bulstrode. I'd like to see you do it, at all events."

"I know I can't," said Bulstrode, setting his lips. "....But I can make him want to get out again in a hurry, and I will."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows. "Do you mean that you are going to bully the new kid, simply because he's a foreigner and you don't want him in the study?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, that's about the size of it!"

"Then you're a cad!"

"Mr. Quelch wants us to treat him well, as he's an Indian, and ought to be made to feel at home here at Greyfriars," (said Nugent).

"Rats! I'll make him feel like a fish out of water if he sticks himself in my study," growled Bulstrode. "Why, is there room for more than four! ...I'm not going to be crowded - by a nigger!"

*** See C.D. ANNUAL 1968, page 92.

"Look here, Bulstrode," said Nugent earnestly. "Don't act the pig, now. This Indian chap is new here, and he's bound to feel a bit out of place and off colour. I don't know whether he has been to a public school in England before, but anyway, he will feel lonely, and we ought to make him welcome."

"Rot!"

"It would be a dirty, mean trick to make the Indian uncomfortable here simply because we shall be crowded," said Harry Wharton.

"Perhaps you will interfere," sneered Bulstrode.

Harry Wharton's eyes flashed. "Perhaps I shall!" he exclaimed.

Bulstrode laughed. He was the biggest fellow in the Remove ... and as old and as well grown as most of the fellows in the Upper Fourth and the Shell. He was the bully of the Remove, and feared no one in his own Form, unless, perhaps, it was Bob Cherry.

"Well, I'd like tc see you try," he said grimly. "You've been asking for another licking lately, and it's time you had one."

..."I say you fellows," broke in little Billy Bunter, the fourth occupant of No. 1 Study, blinking at the disputants through his big spectacles. "It's no good having a row; it would be a much better idea to have a feed - "

..."Oh shut up, Billy! There's somebody knocking at the door," growled Bulstrode. "Come in, fathead, whoever you are."

The door quietly opened. The four Removites looked towards it, and their gaze became fixed upon the individual who entered. He was certainly a striking-looking lad. His complexion, of the deepest, richest olive, showed him to be a native of an Oriental clime, and though he was clad in the ordinary Eton garb of a schoolboy, there was a grace and suppleness about his figure that betrayed the Hindoo.

Slim and graceful as he was, however, there was strength in the slender form, and although the lips and the dark eyes were smiling, there was resolution in the chin, and a keen observer would have seen that the Indian was no mean antagonist, if put upon his defence.

The four juniors stared at him, and he made a deprecating bow. "Have I correctfully found the study of which I was in search?" he asked, his English perfect as far as accent went. "Is this the Number First?"

Nugent grinned. "This is No. 1 Study in the Remove," he replied. "Are you the new kid - Hurree Singh?"

The Indian bowed again. "Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, my esteemed acquaintance," he replied politely.

"My only pyjama hat!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "What sort of a giddy lunatic have they sent us? ...You're in the wrong shop. You ought to have taken the other turning for the lunatic asylum."

"If I have made a mistake, the apologise is terrific," said the Indian lad, in his soft purring voice. "But if this is not a lunatic asylum, what are you doing here, my esteemed friend?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "There's a conundrum for you, Bulstrode."

"He, he, he!" cackled little Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton smiled. In spite of his extremely soft appearance, it was possible that the youth from the Far East had all his wits about him.

Bulstrode turned red with rage. "You confounded nigger!" he roared.

"Shut up, Bulstrode!" said Wharton sharply.

"Suppose you make me shut up," sneered Bulstrode.

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet. "And I will!"

"Come on, then, and take another licking."

"My worthy friends, do not fight on my behalf," exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, looking greatly distressed. "It would cause me extreme painfulness."

"I will cause you extreme painfulness if you don't get out of this study!" roared Bulstrode.

The Indian looked surprised. "But I have been sent here by the Form Master sahib," he exclaimed.

"Tell the Form Master sahib, from me, to go and eat coke."

"Certainly!" said Hurree Singh, turning to the door again. It really seemed as if he were going with the message, and the bully of the Remove turned quite pale at the thought of its being delivered to Mr. Quelch.

"Come back, you idiot!" he shouted.

Hurree Singh turned back again. "Yes, what do you desire?" he asked.

"I desire you not to be a silly ass!"

"You do not wish me to take your message to the Form Master sahib?"

"No, you silly cuckoo."

"Then why did you give it to me?"

"Oh, you silly nigger!"

The dark eyes of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a flash in them now. "Did you call me a nigger?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, I did call you a nigger!"

"I have a great respect for negroes, as much esteemfulness as I have for other persons," said Hurree Singh. "But if the intention is to insult - "

"Oh, rats!"

"It is impossible for a Nabob of Bhanipur to allow anyone to treat him with the great disrespectfulness," said Hurree Singh. "The apologise is necessary."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you will express your regretfulness - "

"Catch me!"

"Otherwise I shall become angry with you - "

"That will be really terrible," sneered Bulstrode.

"And eject you roughfully from the apartment."

"Ha, ha, ha! I'd like to see you do it!"

"Shut up, Bulstrode," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You know he's no match for you, and I tell you I won't have you picking on him like this."

"Get out of my way, Wharton!"

"I will not!"

Harry had planted himself directly before the bully ... his fists clenched and his eyes flashing.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth. "Are you going to stand aside and let me get at that nigger?"

"No!"

"Then I'll jolly soon shift you!" And the bully rushed furiously at Harry Wharton. Harry faced the attack coolly; but he was not allowed to meet it. A hand on his shoulder from behind twisted him aside, and the Indian stood in his place and faced the bully. Before Harry could interfere further Bulstrode was upon the Oriental.

Hurree Singh went backwards in the burly Removite's powerful grip, and it seemed as though he would be but an infant in the grasp of Bulstrode. But that was only for a moment.

The Hindoo straightened up suddenly, and somehow Bulstrode's feet left the floor, and he was whirled round like a sack of coal, and the next instant he was flying headlong through the door. He dropped in the passage with what a novelist would describe as a dull, sickening thud.

Huree Singh, breathing rather hard, but showing no other sign of undue exertion, turned to the staring juniors with a sweet smile. "I hope you will forgive me for creating the disturbfulness in the sacred apartment of a study," he said in his soft, purring voice. "If I have exasperated you, the apologise is very great."

The juniors could only stare at the amazing Indian, and wonder where, in that slim, graceful form, the strength came from that he had just displayed.... It occurred to the chums of the Remove that in Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the sleek and graceful youth from the Orient, they had a valuable addition to the study.... Hurree Singh still wore his deprecating smile. "Your kindness overpowers me," purred Hurree Singh. "May I shake hands with you?" And he extended a small olive-skinned hand. Harry Wharton smiled, and shook hands with the Hindoo. Nugent followed suit.

So we see that the nabob is well able to look after himself. Indeed, in his early days in England, he shows a sense of his own superiority which is only gradually modified as he learns more and more to respect the judgement, strength of character, and leadership of Harry Wharton. At Netherby School, when he and his chums are faced with removal to Beechwood Academy, where opposing French and German nationalist groups strive for master, Hurree Singh feels that he might well become leader of the whole school.

"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," (said Redfern).

"British," purred Hurree Singh. "A fellow citizen from the Indian Empire would make a very good head."

And, at the beginning of his life at Greyfriars, he again expresses a strong consciousness of his superiority and powers of leadership, as shown in the following extract from MAGNET No. 6:-

The four delinquents entered the house, and in a few minutes were in the Doctor's study. They did not seem very much alarmed, though they knew that the matter might turn out seriously enough for them. Harry Wharton was calm and quiet as usual, Bob Cherry and Nugent looked stolid, and Huree Jamset Ram Singh wore the expression of elaborate politeness and cheerfulness that never departed from his dusky countenance.

"You were in the village, I think, when the foreign boys from Beechwood arrived at the railway-station?" said the Head severely.

"Yes, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"We had the pleasurefulness of welcoming them to Greyfriars, respected and venerable instructor sahib," said the nabob.

The Doctor smiled in spite of himself. "And you greeted them, I understand, with a volley of eggs?"

....."You see, sir - "

"I shall have the pleasurefulness to explain - "

"It was like this - "

"Under the regretful circumstances - "

Dr. Locke raised his hand for silence. "One at a time, please. I suppose one of you is leader. Let him speak."

"With great pleasurefulness, sir. Although I am not yet the leader of the worthy youths who belong to my study, yet I have the anticipatefulness that in a shortful time I shall become so, from the superabundance of my superiority in the various abilities," said the nabob. "Therefore - "

"Therefore shut up," growled Bob Cherry, "and let Wharton speak!"

The amiability of the nabob is often mentioned in the Magnet. 'Inky was the soul of good nature.' 'His good nature was as boundless as the floweriness of his language.' 'He was the best tempered and most placable junior at Greyfriars, but he could be firm, and he was always especially firm upon his knowledge of the English language and the works of the British poets.' Hurree Singh's confidence in his unique use of the English tongue is illustrated again and again, in statements like the following, which he makes more in sorrow than in anger when Bob Cherry challenges the teaching imparted by the celebrated native instructor of English from Bengal, which is so different from the 'King's English' generally known at Greyfriars. "I have studied the English under the rippingest native master in Bengal!" said Hurree Singh. "The causefulness of the differentiation is that the English tongue has degenerated, and the English I speak is in the old, original, ripping good English."

As we know, the nabob's peculiar and delightful English furnishes endless food for fun in the Greyfriars remove. He talks readily, and his language, flowing and picturesque, has often to be checked by masters, and by other Removites. On

his first day at Greyfriars his expressive and unusual speech almost disturbs even Mr. Quelch's equilibrium in class.

> Mr. Quelch turned his head towards them. "Were you speaking, Hurree Singh?"
>
> "Yes, sir," said the Nabob, among whose virtues truthfulness was prominent.
>
> Mr. Quelch coughed slightly. "You must not speak in class."
>
> "I have great sorrowfulness - "
>
> "That will do."
>
> "Certainfully, sir."
>
> Mr. Quelch turned away, with his lips twitching.

Many, wonderful, and varied are the examples which could be given of Hurree Singh's English, including his powerful and often twisted proverbs and metaphors:-

> "The ancient and ludicrous flame of friendship burns undimfully in my breast."
>
> "The honourable cupboard is in the same condition as that of the esteemed Mem-sahib Hubbard when she proceeded there to obtain a boneful morsel for her canine companion."
>
> "The masterful sahib," and "the worthy instructor sahib." (Mr. Quelch)
>
> "The popping sahib" (the local pawnbroker) who of course runs "the popping establishment," etc., etc., etc.

Hurree Singh's character becomes modified and more mellow during his long years at Greyfriars! At first he is described as a strict vegetarian, as would be fit a high-caste Hindu, and he eats bananas and bread whilst his chums and study-mates tuck into a meal of ham, sausages, etc. But later on I feel sure that he eats as they eat, and no emphasis is laid on any differences which might be expected to crop up between those brought up as diversely as Christians and Hindus; as conventional English boys and a fabulous oriental prince! In spite of his good nature, Hurree Singh occasionally shows a hint of the underlying pride in his nature - and we realise also that he is, of course, 'as keen as a razor,' in spite of his serene and often inscrutable exterior. Both his pride and his shrewdness are well illustrated in the brilliant Da Costa series (Magnets 1059 - 1067). Mr. Quelch asks Hurree Singh to welcome to Greyfriars another student from India, Da Costa, the Eurasian, - who is sent to Greyfriars with the secret intention of discrediting Harry Wharton, and bringing about his expulsion. The nabob's response to Da Costa is largely that of his Hindu caste conditioning, though he is also influenced by the Greyfriars' philosophy of 'he's all right, so long as he plays the game.'

(FROM MAGNET No. 1059):-

Hurree Singh, at a little distance, gazed at the Eurasian. In his own country he had seen many Eurasians before, and he had no great liking for them. Even Mr. Quelch, with all his stores of learning, did not quite grasp matters affecting race and caste in the great Empire of the East. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh belonged to the hill country of the North, and was as different from Da Costa as a Scotsman from a Portugese or Spaniard. Da Costa came from the South.

India, with its widely different races and climates, is more truly a continent than a country - in race, in language, and in other things there was nothing at all in common between Hurree Singh and Arthur da Costa.

To the nabob Da Costa was simply a half-caste - and not one of the races from which he drew his mixed descent was in any respect 'pukka.' Huree Jamset Ram Singh proceeded, his dusky face showing no sign of what he was thinking on the subject. Politeness came before most other considerations with the nabob. He was a prince in his own country; and to a prince of India, a half-caste is little more than one of the pariah dogs that howl in the streets of the cities. But Hurree Singh had been long enough at Greyfriars to unlearn many of the prejudices of his native country, and what remained of them remained hidden behind an invariable courtesy. Anyhow, Da Costa was now a Greyfriars man, on equal footing with any other Greyfriars man, and India was a long way off.

The Remove master evidently expected the two to shake hands; and Hurree Singh extended a dusky

hand to the new fellow. He had to remember that he was not in India now. "The pleasantfulness to meet the esteemed Da Costa is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh politely.

"You boys will be friends, I hope," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainfully, sir," said Hurree Singh.

"You will have much in common, as the only boys at Greyfriars from India," added Mr. Quelch.

Hurree Singh marvelled at the abysmal depths of ignorance that were possible in a very learned gentleman. But his polite, dusky face expressed nothing. "The wishes of the esteemed sahib are commands," he answered.

Later, the nabob's increasing suspicion of the Eurasian implants fear into Da Costa's heart.

'Da Costa knew too much of his own country to trust to the smiling and suave exterior of the nabob. He was quite well aware that no Oriental's face indicated his thoughts, unless he chose that it should do so. He felt, rather than thought, that if there was danger for him at Greyfriars - danger of discovery, danger of defeat, that danger lay in the direction of the polite and smiling nabob... The dusky face of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh haunted him with a sense of terror. Only too well he knew the impassive, implacable astuteness of the East.'

One of the strongest feelings nourished by the nabob is his friendship for Wharton, and when he realizes the full extent of Da Costa's treachery against his chum he confronts the Eurasian with all the controlled intensity of a tiger, waiting to pounce on his prey:-

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came into the study. The Nabob of Bhanipur closed the door behind him and stood looking at the Eurasian with a very curious expression on his dusky face. Da Costa looked up at last. "What do you want? Wharton and Nugent are down at the cricket."

"Quitefully so!" assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "That is whyfully I have come to this esteemed study. I have to make a few remarkable observations to your honourable self .... The ludicrous banknote belonging to the esteemed fathead Mauly has not been found ... There is going to be an official search of the Remove passage. The ridiculous Quelchy is very much in earnest about this execrable matter." .... Da Costa bent his head to hide the glitter of triumph in his eyes. It was a success after all! The banknote must still be in Wharton's possession. Where else could it be? If it was found upon him the Eurasian's scheme had succeeded.

"Beforefully the excellent search takes place," went on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in a low and very distinct voice, "I have a few remarkable words to say .... Perhapsfully you have forgotten, my esteemed Da Costa, that on the day you came to Greyfriars the respectable, spyful Bunter heard some talk between you and the honoured Mr. Gedge in a railway train .... It was a story of a plot in which you were concernfully moved to disgrace my esteemed pal Wharton and get him turned out of the school."

Da Costa felt a chill of ice at his heart. Always he had feared the nabob, the only fellow at Greyfriars whose penetration he dreaded....

"The watchfulness has seemed to me the proper caper since then, my esteemed Da Costa. I am from India, and I know the Eurasian better than fellows here .... I have observefully noticed that you, and you alonefully, have kept up this business of the missing banknote. It has occurfully come into my head that the banknote may be found ... in Wharton's desk, or in Wharton's pockets," said the nabob grimly. "In which case; my esteemed Da Costa, the matter will not end at that esteemed point. The excellent jawful Bunter will be called upon to tell his preposterous story to Mr. Quelch; and the inquiry into the banknote will go deeper than you may have supposefully reckoned on."

Da Costa sat like stone.

"That is all," said the nabob amiably. "A nod is as good as a wink to a pitcher that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb says. If that banknote is found in Wharton's possession, my esteemed reptile, the inquiry will not end - it will begin!" With that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh left the study and closed the door after him. Da Costa did not move. Terror chained him to his seat.

The nabob's wholehearted friendship for Wharton seems to have begun in his first moments at Greyfriars, when Wharton was prepared to defend him against the bully of the Remove. It always continues, with only rare and superficial

misunderstandings. In MAGNET No. 7 the nabob is leaving Greyfriars to return to Beechwood, which has re-opened:-

"I am departfully sorry to leave the esteemed Greyfriars and my worthy and respectable chums. I shall always regard you rememberfully, and I shall correspondingly write to you from Beechwood."

And the chums of the Remove shook hands with him, and the nabob hugged them one and all before he got into the train. And then he leaned out of the carriage window, and shook hands with Harry Wharton again, and left a small object wrapped in paper in his palm .... "A parting gift from a nabob.. I give it to you, and give it with all my heartful esteem.... You will keep it for my sake, Wharton, you who have been my bestful friend."....

The train rolled on.... The chums of the Remove turned to leave the station. Wharton had for the moment forgotten the little package in his hand, but Bob Cherry called his attention to it. "What the dickens is it, Harry?" he asked. Wharton unfastened the little package. "My hat!" exclaimed he. "I can't keep this. But - I said I would - I shall have to keep it now! But what on earth am I to do with it?"

For it was the nabob's diamond that glimmered in the palm of his hand!

Hurree Singh finds that he cannot, after all, accept separation from Wharton and his other Greyfriars chums, and he returns in secret to a disused wing of the building. When he eventually confronts Wharton & Co. again, Hurree Singh describes in his usual, expressive and colourful speech his yearning to be once more amongst them. "My heart had the hungerfulness for the respected school where I was happy in the attachfulness of my chums." He is of course reinstated as a member of the Greyfriars Remove, to the joy of all.

I feel sure that this "hungerfulness" would remain with Hurree Singh all through his life, in whatever circumstances he might find himself; also that the warm, kindly and democratic values which influenced him at Greyfriars would always be ready to offset the harder, fatalistic standards of the Hindu caste-hierarchy which formed his original background.

Long live Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, Jewel of the Orient - "Good Old Inky" of Greyfriars!

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WARMEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to everyone and special thanks to Eric Fayne for C.D. STILL WANTED: School Friend Annuals 1933, 1934, 1939, 1940. Also hard-backs by Dorita Fairlie Bruce, "Nancy Calls the Tune," "Nancy in the Sixth," etc.

MARY CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM, KENT.

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"NO XMAS IS COMPLETE," HE SAID, "WITHOUT ME 'AMILTONIA." OLD NICK, HE LAUGHED, PUT DOWN THE TOYS, AND REPLIED, "DON'T WRITE I'LL PHONE YER." — Anon.

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WANTED: School Friend 1919-1920; Schoolgirls' Own Libraries 1st Series; Boys' Cinema 1919-1922; Picture Show 1919-1921.

LACK, 4 RUSHMERE ROAD, NORTHAMPTON.

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Once there was a War

by TONY GLYNN

The second world war! To older collectors, it marks the descent of the long, dark night. It brought restrictions and paper rationing which killed off the "Magnet" and "Gem" and many another of the favourite old papers and, when it was over, the world had changed for ever.

But perhaps it is all too little realised that many comics and papers flourished through the war years and, as one who grew up amid the rigours of the home front, I look back with affection to the publications of the time.

I was almost ten when war broke out. I well remember the pre-war order of things and am one of the last generation to know the old order at first-hand. Through 1938 and 1939, I took the "Magnet" - encouraged by parents who remembered it from their yough and thought it wholesome. The Crocker series and the Mr. Lamb series remain in my memory, as does the Greyfriars "night prowler" mystery (writing wholly from memory, I think that was part of the Crocker series). I saw the arrival of new comics from the A.P., shortly before the war: the "Knock Out" and "Radio Fun," the A.P's reply to the small-format challenge of Thomsons of Dundee, who had produced "Dandy" and "Beano" then, on the very eve of the war, the "Magic Comic," which became a war casualty.

With the coming of the war, all weekly comics and boys' magazines went onto a fortnightly schedule and, in many cases, the titles of those which had closed up were absorbed into those which continued - the inference was that they would emerge in their own right when hostilities ceased. How many people to-day remember that the "Magnet" did not actually finish in 1940, but was absorbed into the "Knockout Comic?" The only concession to Hamiltonia, however, was a comic strip of Billy Bunter, amusing but, in every way, a far remove from the genuine article.

The "Knockout" was a good bargain in the war years, however. In the earlier part of the war, it was still associated with a library, similar in format and presentation to the S.O.L. and called the "Knockout Library." Thinking back, I can recall only one title: "Screever's Western Wonders" by George E. Rochester.

Among the comic strip offerings of the "Knockout" was "Deed-a-Day Danny," the boy scout; "Stonehenge Kit the Ancient Brit" and the irrepressible Lancashire lad, "Our Ernie," who always made it home in the last panel - usually as the result of an explosion or some such dire occurrance - with the query: "What's for tea, ma?" His dad, who always smoked a clay pipe upside down, was invariably on hand to observe: "Daft, I call it!"

Looking back, there was much about the "Knockout's" comedy strips which foreshadowed the Goons by more than a decade.

Another firm favourite in the "Knockout" was "The Gremlins," drawn by

Fred W. Robinson. Newer generations may not know that gremlins were mythical little creatures which were blamed by R.A.F. air crews for mechanical mishaps in aircraft. The anti-hero of "The Gremlins" was Pilot Officer Plonk, who had a full share of trouble from the horde of gremlins on his station.

Eric Parker, the illustrator of Sexton Blake fame, did a considerable amount of work on the "Knockout." I remember his illustrations for a long-running serial "Bert and Daisy, the Happy Vaccies." "Vaccies" was a short form of "evacuees" and the names of Bert and Daisy were a play upon those of "Gert and Daisy," the music hall act - in real life, Elsie and Doris Waters, the sisters of Jack Warner.

I can remember following the adventures of Bert and Daisy with some enthusiasm. At the time, the serial seemed to be particularly good. I recall reading it in the wonderful summer of 1942, when my personal world was highly enjoyable and, from the same period, I recall Eric Parker drawing a "Knockout" comic strip about two young cowboys who were drastically reduced in size - perhaps a steal from the film "Dr. Cyclops," which was current about that time.

Speaking of long-running serials, I remember that "Radio Fun" had one entitled "Over Enemy Lines," a story of the R.A.F. which seemed to run throughout the whole of the war. The wireless favourites of the period were featured in "Radio Fun" in comic strip form, among them Tommy Handley and Bebe Daniels, Ben Lyon and Vic Oliver - performers who became symbolic of a light-hearted approach to the miseries of the long, drawn-out war years.

The war, of course, provided the theme for many of the adventure stories of the time, particularly in the Thomson papers. From very early in the conflict, I have a memory of a gripping serial, "The Boy Who Broke the Siegfried Line" and I can still see the pictorial heading of the young boy, crawling through the tank-traps of that line of German defence to search for his father, missing in enemy territory. I think I am right in stating that it was featured in the "Skipper," which eventually became the only war casualty among Thomson's string of boys' story papers.

From the early part of the war, too, I remember a serial called "Breakneck Patrol," featured, I think, in the "Wizard" and dealing with a team of ace British motor cyclists who were on tour of the continent when the war broke out. Acquiring German army uniforms, they wrought havoc in the enemy's territory, passing as a squad of Nazi motor cycle troops - the Germans never seemed to notice that they were riding British machines!

Many of the Thomson favourites, established in the pages of the "Wizard," "Adventure," "Rover," "Skipper" and "Hotspur" in pre-war years, became involved in the fight against the Germans, Italians and Japanese.

There was the "Adventure's" cowboy, Solo Solomon, for instance. He was captured by the Nazis, who had the audacity to brand a swastika on his forehead. The serial was called "They Branded Solo Solomon" and it dealt with Solo's campaign of vengeance against the Nazis. Strang the Terrible, that skin-clad he-man of the "Adventure," also came up against the Nazis and there was the never-to-be-

"The Fighting Fooeys," typical of the work of an artist whose tough characters squinted and wisecracked their way through dozens of adventures in the wartime comics published by Gerald G. Swan. As in this case, they were often in American settings which did not ring true because of cloth caps, mufflers and the frequent employment of Cockney idioms.

forgotten Iron Teacher, the robot schoolmaster, who first made his appearance in the wild west. Relying purely on memory, I think the serial in which the Iron Teacher sailed into the forces from Berlin was called "The Iron Teacher Fights the Crooked Cross."

Actual events from the unfolding story of the war were sometimes incorporated into stories, as in "The Spy on the Graf von Spee," which dealt with a mysterious hunchback who managed to sail aboard the famous German pocket battleship. He was, in fact, an Allied agent and the dummy hump on his back concealed a radio transmitter.

Meanwhile, back at home, life continued at the Hotspur's Red Circle School, remarkable for the fact that, of all fictional schools, this was the only one in which the cast changed because boys grew up and left. A memorable Red Circle series from about 1942 concerned "Cripple Dick," a boy who, for his own good reasons, pretended to have been disabled in an accident. He returned to Red Circle in a wheelchair and nevertheless had some furious adventures. The stories, as ever, featured Mr. Smugg and his brother, Weepy Willie and those who can recall Red Circle will probably agree this was a school story series which had an enjoyable quality.

But the Thomson story which truly caused a sensation was "The Truth About Wilson," that athletic yarn which, I see, is now being reprinted. Normally, it has to be an exceptional sports tale which draws any enthusiasm from me, but I remember spending the whole of a break period leaning against a wall in the school yard and simply devouring the first instalment in the "Wizard." It was special. It was longer than the average story for a start and it was written in the first person, supposedly by a sports reporter named W. S. K. Webb - I have not seen the story since that time and I think the year was 1942 when I was approaching 13, but it remains a vivid memory. Probably, I was just gullible enough to almost believe that W. S. K. Webb was a real man and this was a real story. Certainly, there was a quite unusual style about the yarn.

It was the element of fantasy which really caught my imagination, for I could devour science fiction where tales of football and cricket meant nothing to me. But here was a sporting journalist coming across a young man, living in isolation and performing astonishing feats of athletic prowess. His clothing was archaic, so was his speech and, slowly, it came to light that the mysteriously young Wilson had, in fact, been an accomplished athlete - at the time of the Napoleonic Wars!

This story must have proved a great circulation booster for the "Wizard" because it seemed every boy I knew was reading it.

A series of publications which seemed to belong almost entirely to the war years was the string of comics put out by the London firm of Gerald G. Swan: "Slick Fun," "War Comic," "New Funnies," "Topical Funnies" and "Fresh Fun."

The first one I ever saw was given to me by a school friend in 1939 when the war was only a matter of days old. Young as I was, the conscious striving for an American flavour made its impression. It struck me that it was a move which

didn't come off.

These comics came out at regular intervals throughout the war years, sometimes printed on indifferent paper because of the shortage of newsprint. They copied the American style of comic book in using only picture-stories, with no letterpress other than the speech balloons of the characters.

Looking at some examples which I have, I now see that most of the art was extremely poor. The most proficient of the Swan stable of artists was "Bang," whose style was that of the orthodox British funny strip and, indeed, his work can be seen in A.P. comics such as "Chips" from the early thirties onward. "Bang" had a gallery of comic creations and must have been busy over his drawing board throughout the war, supplying the Swan comics.

There was another artist, un-named, whose characters were mostly roughnecks, with jutting cleft chins and they squinted one-eyed at the world, all very reminiscent of Popeye. This artist drew comedy strips and adventure sequences. He was fond of American settings, but his characters would sometimes use such un-Transatlantic expressions as "Gor!" and "Blimey!"

Most of the artwork in the Swan comics would have been rejected by the comic papers with longer established traditions, but many of the strips were signed, so the names of their creators have been handed down to posterity. Among them were Murdock Stimson, Glynne Protheroe and D. Lovem West - where are they now?

The Swan company also produced periodicals of schoolgirl and schoolboy stories and tales for very young children. The schoolboy publications included the stories of Whitelands and Westchester, written by "Edward Thornton" and "Reginald Brown," both of which we now know to have been pseudonyms of no less a star performer than Edwy Searles Brooks.

I particularly remember a series of small booklets of fairy stories which the Swan company published because I used to read them to my young sister, who suffered a severe illness in 1943 and who was bedridden at home for a time after leaving hospital.

I remember the names of two of the authors of these short children's stories. One was I. Clay Jones and the other was Elleston Trevor, now well established as a popular novelist.

Another writer whose early work was found in the Swan publications was Miss Norah Burke, whose name was to be seen on the covers of the women's romances produced by the company and who was later to become an accomplished short story writer and the author of at least one book on India, where she was born, the daughter of a soldier.

The Swan comics were produced regularly, but to no specific schedule, it seemed. So were those published by the smaller company of A. Soloway Ltd.

These, too, seem to belong wholly to the wartime period and, like the Swan

"Stoogie," one of the many creations of "Bang" to appear in the Swan comics in the war years. "Bang" was certainly the company's best comic artist, working strictly in the English tradition. He worked for the Amalgamated Press comics in the 1930's and drew the front page of the first issue of the short-lived "Magic Comic," published by D. C. Thomson in 1939. He was still cartooning in the early 1950's.

comics, they followed the smaller, comic-book format. Artwork here varied from one extreme to the other. There was one adventure strip, "Argo Under the Ocean," illustrated in strong and highly finished fashion, but others were of less high quality.

Among the comedy strips were some by Louis Diamond, mentioned by Bill Lofts in a recent Digest article, who seemed to fall back on stock situations I recalled him using from the old peace-time days, when his work was found in what Bill calls the Bath school of comics. Another artist in the Soloway comics was Alan Frazer, whose work had a frantic quality and whose characters had long vertical slits instead of eyes.

Perhaps it is little realised to-day that a performer who first emerged in these comics was a youngster named Bob Monkhouse. Bob was selling strips - all strongly influenced by American cartooning - to the Soloway comics when he was still at school. Another young cartoonist was Denis Gifford, whose name I last saw on a book dealing with old movies which I picked up in a store in Hollywood. The blurb described Gifford as "a lapsed cartoonist" who had once worked on the "Knockout."

And another schoolboy cartoonist who tried to break in, but who had his work rejected by these comics was myself!

Looking back on them, they had an engaging amateurish aspect - although some of the work was slick and professional - and they seemed hardly fit to stand the competition of a stable peacetime society. Which, of course, they didn't.

* *

WANTED: Union Jacks 161, 206, 244, 366, 458, 504, 933, 936, 949. Halfpenny Marvels 385, 387, 389. Penny Marvels 164, 230, 244, 299, 479, 481, 482, 483, 655. Boys Friend Library, First Series 231 Kaiser or King, 233 Conquest of London.

THURBON, 5 ALL SAINTS PASSAGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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WANTED: Marvels 925, 926, 929, 930, 940, 942, 943. Mapleton Rovers B.F.L. by Richard Randolph (Ryle). West of Pecos by Zane Grey. Flower of Gloster by Temple Thurston. Blue Crusader Yarns by Arthur S. Hardy.

HARRY BROSTER, KINVER, STOURBRIDGE, WORCS.

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"SEASONAL GREETINGS" to Editor, staff, friends and readers everywhere.

BERT HOLMES, 13 ST. LUKE'S STREET, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, LANCS.

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Please will somebody lend me B.F.L. "THROUGH THICK AND THIN"? Care taken. — DON WEBSTER.

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Do you remember "Chuckles"?

by HAROLD F. GRIFFITHS

When I was a small boy in my homeland of New Zealand, during the Great War, I read a serial in the comic paper "Chuckles." It was called "Adventure Island" and one of the illustrations showed a grisly picture of a man fully dressed, seated at a table in the attitude of writing complete with pen in hand. But the figure was a skeleton and it transpired that he was a lonely planter on a South Sea island who had been murdered by a party from a German raider.

More than fifty years were to elapse before I saw this picture again. When I visited London in 1969, I made a visit (call it a pilgrimage, if you will) to the British Museum Newspaper Library at Colindale, and asked for the file of "Chuckles" for 1916. There it was - in No. 111, dated February 9th - the first instalment of a new serial called "Adventure Island" by Harry Revel, the story of a party of Britishers shipwrecked in the South Seas.

Turning the pages from week to week I finally was confronted with my long-remembered picture of the dead man, and suddenly all my love for this comic of my childhood returned in an upsurge of nostalgia. I there and then decided to give up some of my precious time to examine every issue of "Chuckles," and in the following pages I have set out some of the features that made it so endearing to me, and, I should imagine, to thousands of other boys.

The authors of the "Penguin Book of Comics" have stated that it was "one of the best of the coloured comics" and they instance the adept way that "artists and engravers had of securing complex overlay patterns, ensuring complete colour register," unlike some of the other "coloureds" like "Comic Life" where the colour overlay was often crude.

"Chuckles" was a true children's comic both in picture and story. The serials were usually of school and adventure and were not slanted at an adult readership, as was the case with those in, for instance, "The Jester."

"Chuckles" made its debut on January 10, 1914, and consisted of eight pages priced at one-halfpenny. The coloured front page was devoted to the adventures of Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy and they occupied this position for 281 issues, from No. 95 their exploits taking place on Jungle Island. On page two there was a complete story called "The Stolen Document," dealing with Ferrers Locke the famous detective and on page three a serial by Arthur P. Hardy called "Fighter and Footballer," made its initial appearance. It was the story of Jim Lancaster in the ring and on the football field, but perhaps the most interesting item in that first issue was the initial story in a series by Frank Richards called "The Founder of the Feast," a tale of school life, introducing Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars School and Trumper & Co. of Courtfield Council School.

This series ran through the first thirty-seven numbers and because of the

tremendous interest that attaches to Frank Richards and his writings I have listed the titles of each of the stories.

No. 1 The Founder of the Feast
2 Japing Aunt Jemima
3 The New Boy
4 Asking for It
5 The Raided Raiders
6 The Courtfield Challenge
7 Running the Gauntlet
8 In Armour Clad
9 The Cliff House Football Match
10 Caught on the Wire
11 Condemned on Suspicion
12 Spoofing the Scouts
13 The Silly Six
14 The Hot Bun Raiders
15 Bunter's Day Out
16 Good Old Trumper
17 Bunter's Revenge
18 The Greyfriars Ventriloquist
No. 19 Trumper's Trophy
20 In the Enemy's Camp
21 Fairly Done
22 Tit for Tat
23 Trumper's Trap
24 The Spoofer
25 Out-Manoeuvred
26 To the Rescue
27 A Shocking Affair
28 Paid Out
29 Retribution
30 Shunting Bunter
31 Soft Sawder
32 Bunter the Scout
33 The Ventriloquist's Trick
34 The Maid of Athens
35 The Yankee's Race
36 Mauly's Mistake
37 Slightly Mixed

In No. 3 there commenced the first of a picture series "Mustard Keen and his Terrible Terrier" and "Little Tommy Treddles and His Toy Aeroplane" started in No. 28.

No. 40 saw the first instalment of a new serial "The Secret of the Thames," by John Tregellis, the story of two young Britishers against German spies. No. 51 dated December 26, 1914, was the first Christmas number, and the following week saw yet another new serial "The War Lord," by Michael Clifton, the story of two British boys in a grim struggle against German intrigue preceding the Great War. Further serials followed quickly; in No. 63 "Tried and True" by Craven Gower, a tale of city life, and in No. 80 Reginald Wray's "Phantom Gold" commenced, this being a story of adventure among an unknown people in the heart of Africa. In No. 82 the picture series, Little Loo Lummee and his Lucky Lamp started a long run and No. 91 saw yet another serial "A Trip to the Stars" by Fenton Ash, this time adventures among the Martians.

No. 96 is of special interest because in this number commenced a new series of complete school tales by Prosper Howard, dealing with Teddy Baxter and his chums at Claremont School. Besides the hero there were Dick Merivale, Aubrey St. Clair and Jack Marsh, "Loyal chums all." Prosper Howard is something of a mystery, as it is believed that this is another pen-name for Charles Hamilton, who, however, in after years stated that he did not know the name.

As I have already said the serial Adventure Island commenced in No. 111 and this story, illustrated by J. A. Cummings, ran till No. 278 - a total of 167 instalments!

The Christmas number for 1916 was No. 151, an issue of twelve pages for one penny, which besides double page instalments of the regular features also included a two-page "complete" dealing with Ferrers Locke, the famous detective.

With No. 172 dated April 21, 1917, the pages were reduced in size because of the need to conserve paper and the coloured front page was printed in red and black only. This number also commenced a new series of "completes," "Figg the Funmaker," the "screaming exploits of a schoolboy ventriloquist, Tom Figg."

Two issues later, No. 174, May 5, 1917, the price was increased to one penny, but a return to normal size was made with No. 194 and the coloured front page was reinstated.

The Christmas number for 1917, dated December 8, was a big sixteen-page issue priced at two pence. Besides all the regular features there was a long complete story The Shame of St. Cyprians, a tale of Ferrers Locke and how he met his boy assistant, Peter.

I specially remember No. 206 because in it Tom Figg unmasked a German spy hiding in a farm barn, and the illustration shows the German with his arms raised crying "Kamerad" as a snowball flung by Tom hits him squarely in the face!

A further price increase was made with No. 223 dated April 13, 1918, the cost being raised to one and a half pence.

Adventure Island concluded in No. 278 but the following week a new serial commenced called "The Middies of the Dauntless" also by Harry Revel. From No. 265 the Teddy Baxter series was replaced the following week with a new series dealing with Dick Royle and his cronies at Belminster School.

From No. 282, "Chuckles" assumed a more juvenile aspect as the front page, which had for so long featured Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy, was now given over to "The Adventures of Pongo the Monkey and his Merry Playmates."

Further new serials appeared. Chums of the Sea by Harry Revel started in No. 323 dated March 13, 1920, and in No. 370 the same author's short serial "That Boy Nelson" made its bow. This was a tale of the boyhood of the Little Admiral, and was continued from No. 382 under the title of "Shipmates Three," again by Harry Revel. This author was again to the fore in No. 394 with yet another serial story with the unoriginal title of The Coral Island.

Again in No. 407 dated October 22, 1921, Revel was the author of The Boys of the Polar Star, and in No. 423, The Treasure Ship by Gilbert Chester had its first instalment. With No. 456 the price was increased to twopence and Chester's new serial Cockatoo Island commenced.

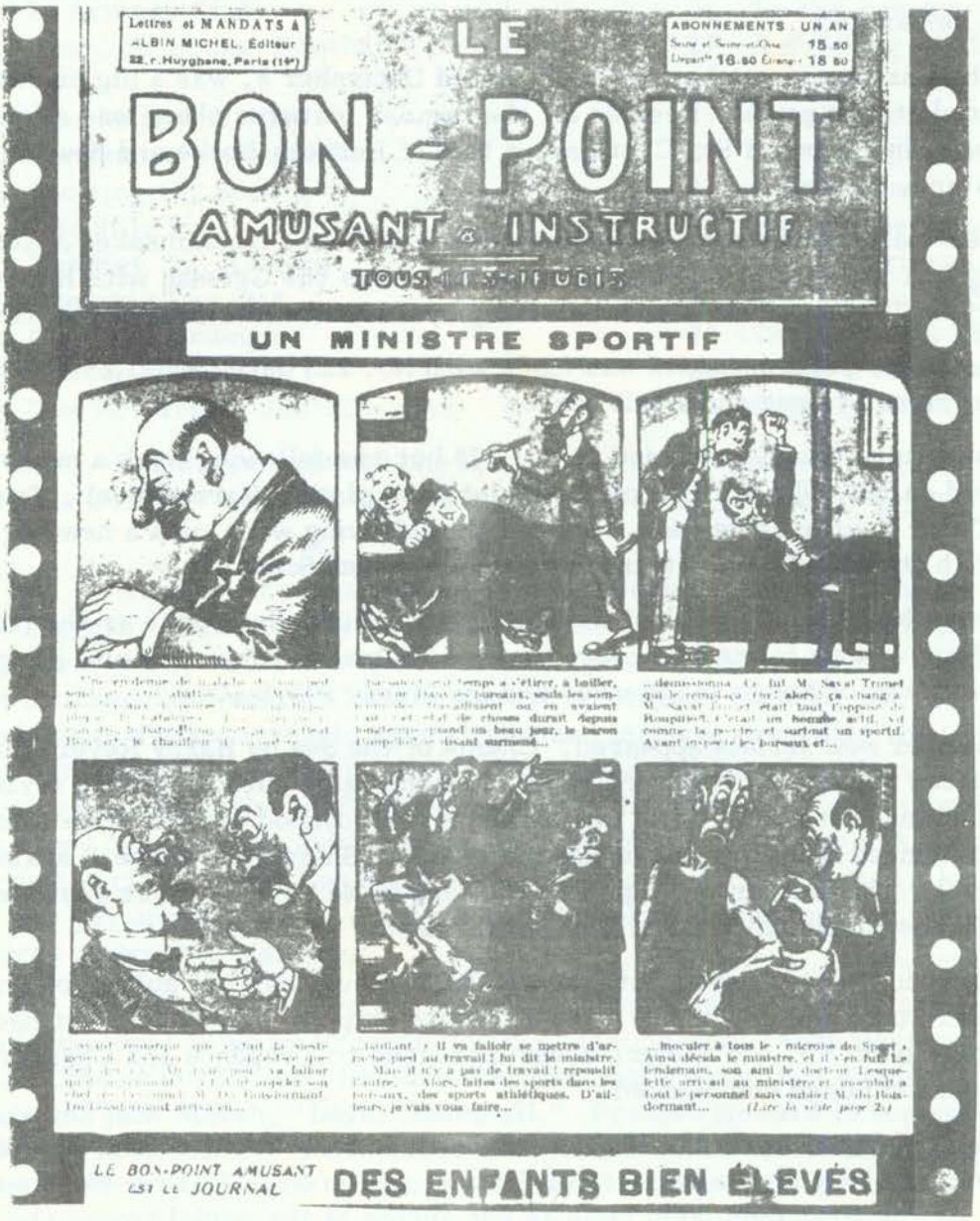
No. 484 dated April 14, 1923, saw the first instalment of The Blue Wolf by Jack Drover, a story of the far west of Canada, and in No. 512 Eric Wood's name appeared for the first (and last) time as the author of the serial Wongo the Witch Doctor.

No. 517 dated December 1, 1923, saw the end of "Chuckles," as it was

announced that the following week it would be continued under a new name Jungle Jinks.

So after a run of ten years my favourite comic bowed out, but by this time I had moved on to more adult fare, so the blow was not hard to take. But during its lifetime it provided me with many happy hours of enjoyment and I shall always look back on "Chuckles" with affection.

* *



The cover of a famous French comic paper. The issue depicted was no. 567, dated January 1926. It was loaned to us by Mr. Wright of Gravesend, Kent.

Michael Poole

by HAROLD TRUSCOTT

The number of writers of school stories in this country's boys' (and girls') fiction is uncountable. Naturally, I have not read all of them; I have, however, read a considerable quantity of the work of a very large number. Some (not many) were frankly bad - largely in their handling of language, grossly melodramatic treatment (Edwin Brett's publications, with anonymous authors, come to mind here - although the Ned Nimble stories had some good things as well) and failure to bring characters alive; most were good, and rewarding. Some few are the cream. These are distinguished by restraint, by the invention of individual new plots, or by individual treatment of an old one, adroitly handled and the reverse of cumbersome, by the kind of smooth movement which is so often taken for granted because it does not draw attention to itself, but which is in any art the most difficult to produce, usually requiring preliminary sketching and drafting apparently out of all proportion to its final utterly spontaneous effect, by masterly characterisation and, more than anything else, the possession of a style. As with the best in any literature, they are, to a man, these few I have called the cream, stylists and masters, to a considerable degree, of a personal use of language.

Of the six writers who form for me the cream, Michael Poole is one of the most fascinating. Born at Northwich in 1885, and christened Reginald Heber Poole, he was educated at Manchester Grammar School, where his penchant for writing, plus a biting, rather sardonic accent, first showed itself. This sardonic quality he toned down later into something no less potent, but gentler, with more understanding, although the old bite (or should I say the young bite?) could still make itself felt at times. It is not strange that he should have gravitated into writing as a career, and he seems to have written consistently for a fair number of boys' papers. His first published story, "Washington's Minor," appeared in "The Captain" in 1907, under his real name, and it is strange that, all told, he wrote very little for this paper; his style was admirably suited to it. Among the magazines for which he wrote fairly regularly are "Chums," "Union Jack," "Scout," "Modern Boy," "Boys' Magazine" (for which he wrote one of the most brilliant and successful of all school stories, "The Blot of Berrisford"), "Boys' Own Paper," and on occasion "The Sexton Blake Library."

Much of the work Poole wrote for these papers is adventure story writing and, as such, does not greatly appeal to me. The "Mystery of Tonga Island," which appeared in "Chums" during 1932, is a fair sample of this type of work in a short story; for a longer story, "The Hypnotised Cricketer" in the "Boys' Friend Library" No. 579, in 1937, which featured a bald-headed villain called the Vulture. The style here, as in others of his adventure stories, is clear and direct, with some melodrama (a form of art which has been too much associated with bad effects, but which had a lot to recommend it), with everything devoted to action and, for one endowed with so much ability in this direction, little attempt at any real

character drawing. In fact, one could read a Poole adventure story and follow it with one of the school stories, and not realise from the style, that one was reading the same author. I do not wish to be unfair to this side of his writing, which is very good of its type, but, not, I should say, better or, more important, more distinctive than that of many other writers in the same field. He showed a real flair for detection of a fascinating type in some juvenile mystery novels, and this is a characteristic which crops up simply but effectively in some of the school stories. It is undoubtedly in this department of his work that he really found himself, with a style at once personal, scintillating, cool and sympathetic, ironic yet restrainedly warm-hearted, drawing the reader with it, capable of expansion or contraction and of very easy adaptability in allowing first one and then another character, each quite different from the other, to reveal himself by what he says and does - plus some of the most discreet yet admirably functional conveying of a character's thought I have ever encountered; equalled, I should say, in this respect, only by Wodehouse and Frank Richards among school story writers, and by not so many others among novelists in general.

The list of his school stories is too long for me to consider all of them here. He is at his best in the St. Katie's stories as I know them: three short stories and three longer ones; the two Broxton novels "The Cross Roads at Broxton" and "Broxton's Silver Spur," and "The Rebellion at St. Biddy's." This group of nine stories, plus "The Blott," which I have already mentioned, contains some of the most accomplished and individual writing in the history of the school story. Although the St. Katie's stories are probably the best known, appearing as they did in "Holiday Annuals" for 1922, 1925 and 1926, I propose to examine here two equally fine but much less known tales: "The Rebellion at St. Biddy's" and "Broxton's Silver Spur." But first one or two general remarks on Poole's methods and style.

There are one or two pitfalls: Poole also has a school called Croxton, not to be confused with Broxton; the two are different, and certainly Poole never confuses them. He also has a fondness for certain surnames. For instance Mostyn appears in both Broxton stories. In neither is he given a Christian name, but has a nickname "Punch," not a reference to a belligerent nature, which he has not got, but to his propensity for practical jokes and other manifestations of humour. But there is at least one story of Croxton, "Mr. Wrexham's Way," in which a Mostyn, Christian name Tom, also appeared - but nothing like the Broxton character. Similarly, there is a Hallam (also no Christian name given) who is captain of Broxton in "Broxton's Silver Spur," and a Bill Hallam who is captain of the Remove in "The Duffer of Danby" (another of Poole's schools), while "Big" Hallam is captain of St. Katie's in "'Katie's' Wedding March;" on the other hand, while no captain is mentioned in "St. Katie's Big Splash," Smith (again with no first name) is captain of the school in "Lincoln Beck's Farewell."

In Poole's school stories there is a group of schoolmasters who are among the finest portraits in this kind of fiction. They share certain vital qualities and yet, ultimately, are quite different people. It would be quite wrong to say that they came from the same mould. No two human beings ever came from the same mould. But they do have similar ideas and ideals, and a like understanding of human nature;

masculine, at any rate. I doubt if any of them would have claimed to understand the feminine mind and nature - and, in fact, Roger Blunt of St. Katie's, is the only one who essayed to do so - in one of Poole's stories, that is. And it is partly because he failed that Lincoln Beck had to say farewell to St. Katie's in the story the title of which records that event. In any list of outstanding schoolmasters of fiction, Roger Blunt, Peter Mornington and Samuel Glyn, along with Richards' Mr. Quelch, Mr. Railton, Mr. Prout and Mr. Dalton, would come very high indeed. And yet, alike in a certain understanding of a great profession though they are, they are all individuals. There are no carbon copies among them.

As with Wodehouse, Richards, Warren Bell and, for that matter, writers like Conrad, Henry James, Dickens, Trollope, Poole's writing, his style, is distinguished by a masterly use of words. Like many of those I have listed too, Poole has a fondness for certain words, a fondness which, I am convinced, is indicative of much in his own personality. One such word is 'gentle,' with its various derivatives and associate words, and for this I shall use a few examples from a story I am not examing in detail. In the little argument that opens "St. Katie's Big Splash," Lincoln Beck, at the very moment he is intentionally irritating the Kid and Curtis into action, has a 'gentle' grin on his face, and 'murmurs' a reply that is even more calculated to stir things up. The Kid 'breathes' his indignation. The captain of St. Katie's is not overtly indignant when Roger, the Head, asks that there shall be no violence in their welcome; he expresses 'dignified surprise.' And the further comment is "As if the gentle lads of St. Katie's," etc. This "gentleness," in all its aspects, is the opposite of weakness; it breaths strength, as the germane events show. But there is a passion for orderliness. It is striking that in all the various processions, marches, etc., which are a feature of so many of Poole's school stories, the accent is on order, discipline, self-imposed discipline, constructive discipline. And this all grows from the potent atmosphere generated by the use of 'gentle' and all its concomitants. No schoolmaster, in any school story by Poole that I have read, ever thundered, as we know that Mr. Quelch, for instance, could on occasion. This is not a derogatory comparison, but indicative of a difference in outlook. Jolly Roger is not, nor is any one of Poole's masters, of the type we all abhor, who loves to let loose his sarcastic wit on a boy who cannot, without fear of reprisal, answer back. But Roger, the angrier he is, becomes the quieter and speaks softly, breathing his anger in what is, mostly, a far more intense atmosphere than if he let his temper get the better of him. Quelch, except in extreme moments, does not lose his temper, but he uses it to the full. On the other hand, I cannot recall any incident in a Poole school story involving soot or water descending on a master. Maybe this gives the impression that Poole's schoolboys are goody-goodies. Reading one story is enough to dispel that impression. But I think that this atmosphere, which is so persistent, tells one a lot about Poole. It is so much a part of his writing and his style in this genre that it must, to a great extent, reflect himself. It may seem to be too 'idealistic,' but at least it is concerned with an ideal, and one must be concerned with such a thing when it does not exist if it is ever to exist.

Along with this goes something else. In a later quotation we shall find the

boys of St. Biddy's vociferating that "there are no sneaks at St. Biddy's!" And it is true; not only is it true of St. Biddy's, it is true of every school story by Michael Poole that I have read. There are misguided youths, youths who do foolish things, but there are no sneaks of the Skinner, Crooke, Racke type. The most interesting aspect of this absence of the traditional bad character is that one does not miss him, so masterly is Poole's writing in every respect. It is a fact that this aspect of his work had not so much as occurred to me until I had begun to write this essay - and I have known a fair amount of Poole's work for over forty years.

A similar mastery shows itself in Poole's way of wringing the utmost implication from a single use of a word. His work is full of instances, and I am sure that those who take the trouble to read some of his stories will find them in profusion; I will give one quotation, a favourite of mine: 'There were two cars behind, each packed carefully with first-class people.' Think about that word 'carefully,' coupled with 'first-class,' and I think you will have an idea of why I call Poole a master. It is a master who can say so much with so little, but that little placed just where it will tell most potently.

"The Rebellion at St. Biddy's," Poole's only story on this theme so far as I know, is an unique example of its kind. Of short novel length, it has many of the attributes of the St. Katie's stories, but yet a different atmosphere in an essentially different school. One of the characteristics it shares with the three short St. Katie's tales is Poole's love of a procession; there is one in "'Katie's' Wedding March," as well, and there are, in fact, two of quite different kinds in the account of the St. Biddy's rebellion. There is also a quite different one in "Broxton's Silver Spur,"(militant where the others are triumphant). They all obviously spring from their author's delight in chronicling such happenings, but no two are alike in anything but the basic formation of a procession or march; type of detail is different in each case. Poole simply loved to describe a huge crowd of boys, not out of control but doing something in orderly and highly organised, corporate fashion.

The St. Biddy's rebellion springs from an exchange of headmasters, Dr. Mott of St. Biddy's going to a university for a period, Dr. B. Lister (one can guess the nickname he quickly earns) coming from the university to the school. Dr. Lister has for a long time been "giving lectures and writing special articles to tell teachers how to teach and masters how to master," and has been for some time writing a monumental book on the training of youth. He feels it is time he had an opportunity to try some of his very latest theories on the modern schoolboy. "It was twenty years since he'd done anything but lecture grown-ups." Stuart, school captain, puts up the team-list for an important football fixture with Moorhouse, a list which includes a number of players from forms below the Sixth. The boys go wild with excitement, in the midst of which the Blister appears, shocked and horrified at such "disgraceful rowdyism." He gives detentions for a week, which seriously interfere with the Moorhouse match, and refuses even to consider relenting or even transferring punishment to another time for the purpose of allowing boys to play in the match. In fact, the very suggestion makes him more adamant in his original intention. And this is where Farraday Farr, of the Remove, usually known as Giglamps, comes on the scene. He is the son of a well-known scientist, Lord Farr,

and has inherited a good deal of his father's ability. He uses a concoction called Farranodyne, an invention of his fathers with improvements of his own, on the Head, and it has the effect of mollifying him to the extent of causing him to revoke his earlier edict. Naturally, the stuff wears off eventually and the Head discovers that Farr has left a tube in his room; he is furious, tries to stop the game, and expels Farr and Stuart, the latter for disobedience in refusing to stop the game.

This is the beginning of an almighty row - governors are called in, and a high old time is had by all. Two things stand out in the plot: one is that a clergyman, Mr. Devereux, one of the first two governors to arrive at the school, suggests, "Perhaps if I addressed the boys kindly first of all?" and is pooh-poohed by the Head and ignored by the other governor, General Sir Hector Blaize, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., "and a lot of other oddments from the alphabet." At the end:

> "A very regrettable affair altogether," said Judge Fothergill, when the captain had finished.
>
> "Very," chimed in Mr. Devereux. "From the beginning I said a few kind words would ---"
>
> "Umph!" ejaculated Sir Hector Blaize. "Strikes me the whole kettle of fish could have been put right without any disturbance."
>
> "And if Mr. Samuel Glyn had been consulted doubtless the affair would have been nipped in a nut-shell," remarked Lord Wrenbury. "I always had a high opinion of Glyn."
>
> "A few kind words ---" began Mr. Devereux.

Very true, and the General is quite correct in his summing-up; the only thing he has omitted is that it was he who first ignored the fact that the boys might have a case.

This whole situation is illustrated by a parable told by G. K. Chesterton in the introduction to his book, "Heretics." He assumes a tremendous commotion about a street-lamp, and the general desire to pull it down. A monk intervenes, exhorting the people first to consider the value of light. He is knocked down, the street-lamp pulled down; and then, different people having different reasons for wanting the lamp destroyed, they aregue and there is war in the night. And gradually they begin to realise that the monk was right. The philosophy of light is the starting-point. Only what could have been discussed in the light must now be discussed in the dark. So with Mr. Devereux' few words of kindness. But if Mr. Devereux' desire for kindness had prevailed at the outset we should probably have been deprived of a magnificent story.

The other outstanding point, and this helps to make the story unique among tales of school rebellion as I know them, is that twice a promise is made to the boys, and twice a promise is broken. The first promise is from the General, that all will be forgiven and forgotten, plus a whole day's holiday, and this is recanted the following morning; but since he made the promise under the influence of Farranodyne, of which he had been warned by the Head, the General can hardly be held culpable for breaking it when the influence has worn off. The boys nonetheless hold him culpable. Giglamps is taken to the station by the General and Lord Wrenbury, the boys get word of this, race to the station and reclaim the young scientist. Here occurs the procession from the station. Lord Wrenbury and the General arrive back at St. Biddy's before the boys, who find the doors locked against them. A notice is posted on the door instructing them to assemble in the

court at 3 p.m. They do, and ask if a deputation will be received. The answer is a straight no, whereupon they right wheel in perfect order and move off across the playing fields to the road. They march four miles to Rossleigh House, which belongs to the school, in which Dr. Lister has incarcerated, in the care of Mr. Glyn, certain boys who are studying for examinations. These boys feel themselves to be banished. Rossleigh is taken over, Mr. Gordon, who is in charge in the absence of Mr. Glyn, retiring to his room. He agrees to take a message to the school. Food is brought in in large quantities, and a siege prepared for.

A raid is made on the school, partly to get football gear in order to play a match with Wrattesley, and the boys fall into the hands of the General. They are taken to the police station (it is the General's idea to frighten them, and the police are in the know). Giglamps offers his defiance of the General in these terms:

"Very good, sir!" Giglamps' sharp voice could be heard all through the room just as clearly as the General's. "You are a brave and gallant soldier, and I trust you will receive another medal after you've got over this affair - from the N.S.P.C.C.! I believe they give them for kindness to children!"

However, Giglamps, once the boys are untied, manages, through another of his pet ideas, to make the policemen helpless with laughter and the boys return to Rossleigh. Surprise No. 1 for the General when he goes to the police station in the morning to collect the boys.

The governors, now swelled by several others, including Judge Fothergill, take advantage of Smiler Glyn's popularity with the boys and their trust in him to get him to go to Rossleigh and induce the boys to return, with the information that there will be no expulsions and no punishments. But first Judge Fothergill phones Lord Farr and gives such a picture of how the boys generally are afraid of and intimidated by his son that Lord Farr agrees to come and remove him from the school. And here a definite piece of trickery is practised, with Smiler as an innocent tool. The Judge's reasoning, and that of the rest of the governors, is:

They told him (Glyn) the exact position, but didn't mention Farraday Farr because, strictly speaking, they didn't know anything about him now. If his father came for him - well, the governors couldn't help that, could they?

But once the boys get wind of this trick, as they do when Lord Farr appears in the study and tells his son to get ready to go with him, they stage a demonstration in the quadrangle, with Giglamps shoulder high, and yells and calls:

"Giglamps for ever! Gig-gig-gig-lamps! Three cheers for Farraday Farr!"

And then came a weird chant:

"We won't let Giglamps go!
We won't let Giglamps go!
Old Blister and Blaize --
We'll run 'em in a maze --
But we won't let Giglamps go!"

Lord Farr is convinced that he has been misled, and is even more convinced by a talk with Smiler, and refuses to remove his son. Not only have the governors deceived the boys, but they have deceived Giglamps' father and, worst of all, they have made Smiler appear a liar to the boys; this makes Glyn furiously angry. He manages to disabuse the boys of this idea, but the fact remains that it has been

done: he has been used as a tool.

Consciously or unconsciously, Poole has here echoed on a smaller scale the trickery practised on the boys of Winchester in the second of that school's major rebellions in the nineteenth century. And yet the governors are not monsters; they are tackling a difficult problem, with the disadvantage of having no experience of handling boys, and with no idea but that of backing up the Headmaster, without taking a moment's thought as to whether his was a defensible position. Their mistake was in not realising that the boys have a case, too, and in ignoring the masters. The General had realised that boys as well-drilled and orderly in their rebellion as these were could not simply be rated rowdy hooligans, but he had not reasoned further than this. From force of habit blind obedience was what he required and, in his eyes, one became more or less of a malcontent to be summarily dealt with according as one withheld or yielded that obedience. In fact, it proves to be the case that Dr. Lister needs a long period of rest, and was in no fit state to take over a school. He was run down and near a breakdown, and his experiences at St. Biddy's have completed the work. Smiler is asked to take on the temporary headmastership until Dr. Mott returns.

Among other things, Poole here illustrated a very interesting point. Frank Richards has on more than one occasion remarked very acutely that in many human conflicts it is not a question of right against wrong, but of a conflict between two irreconcilable rights. Poole has, in fact, inverted that truth in this story, and Smiler Glyn sums it up, after Lord Farr has witnessed the demonstration in his son's favour, and Stuart has cleared up the misunderstanding with Sammy:

> Never in his life had Sammy Glyn felt quite so upset. The governors were wrong, the Headmaster was wrong, and the boys were wrong; the discipline of many years was being thrown away. He didn't agree with what the boys had done, but then he didn't agree with the Head's decision in the first place, and he certainly didn't agree with the idea of ignoring the masters and bringing in first one and then the other governor to try his hand at "smashing" the rebellion.

Three well-nigh irreconcilable wrongs - not quite, though, for Smiler does succeed in reconciling them; but only by dint of extracting a certain amount of climbing down on the part of the governors; the Head is too ill for that or anything else.

Poole loves to highlight human contradictions - in this he differs from many writers of school stories, whose characters tend often to be all white or all black; and this last is a trait one may note in the novels of more than the humble school-story writer. For instance, Glyn, in the quotation I have just given, reflects that the discipline of many years is being thrown away. One sees his point, and the justification for his anger with those, the governors and the Head, who are causing this. And yet the boys show more than once in this story that they are excellent disciplinarians to themselves: and it is perhaps harder to be oneself disciplined than to exact discipline from others. Even the General is a witness to this when the school marches off in a body to Rossleigh:

> General Sir Hector Blaize was for a time simply filled with admiration as well as a certain amount of vindictive amusement. He couldn't help smiling at the beautiful manner in which Biddy's lads had taken the wind out of Thatcher's sails. And a certain touch of the same feeling came to Lord Wrenbury's mind when he saw Sir Herbert stamping furiously up and down.
>
> "Don't tell me they're an undisciplined lot, Lister!" the General rapped out. "Look at them!

Splendid! Rebels they may be, but undisciplined - never!"

It is not only between the governors, the Head and the boys that things are wrong; they are wrong between some of the adults, also:

General Sir Hector Blaize was not only a brave man, he was a wise man.

When you think of it, that's one of the queer things about this row at St. Biddy's. Dr. Lister was a clever man, and he wasn't lacking in courage; the Rev. Vivian Devereux was a perfectly charming man, who was a first-class expert at pouring oil on troubled waters and all that sort of thing. Mr. Sammy Glyn, as everybody knew, was one of the soundest, safest, most sensible men who ever knocked sense into the youth of Britain.

And yet these four were absolutely all up against everything and everybody at that moment when Sammy Glyn wrenched the command from Sir Hector Blaize.

The General is himself one of the most humanly contradictory of all Poole's characters, and in some ways the most interesting in the story:

If there was one man in the whole of Britain who knew how to deal with rebellions, mutinies, risings or riots, it was Sir Hector Blaize.

"Rebellion!" The fierce light of battle was in the eyes of General Blaize as he stood upright. "Good! Glad you sent for me, Lister. We'll settle this out of hand - right now! I'll speak to them tonight! I shall stay the night, too. I will deal with this!"

His first mistake, then, is in failing to realise that he is dealing, not with Afghans, or other rebellious members of the Empire, but with schoolboys. He is used to standing fearlessly against raiding tribesmen; as a soldier, and a brave one, he is accustomed also to using all the paraphernalia of war - scouts, spies, including everything that in civilian life would be called underhanded. He is, in addition, an old public school boy, and has at some time learnt the best lessons that tradition has to teach. And, like many real-life soldiers of this type, he has never realised that there is here a contradiction. He is enraged and insulted when the boys accuse him of not playing the game:

The uproar broke loose again.

"Boo-oo-oo-oh! Bo-oo-oo-oh!" they groaned. "Play the game, sir - play the game!" And again: "Stick to your promise! There are no sneaks at St. Biddy's!"

The face of General Sir Hector Blaize went purple. Until that moment it had never even entered his mind that this was not playing the game. Even now - ridiculous!

And he really thinks it is. But, although he sees himself as playing the game, the boys do not. And he has also imbibed, since he left school, the doctrine that all is fair in war (as to love, we have no knowledge of the General's views). These are the tactics he has automatically used since he arrived at St. Biddy's. One has more sympathy with the Head. Mistaken he may be, but at least he leaves one in no doubt as to his attitude. Oh, but the General is very human - not least in his inability to see himself as others see him.

And this is where we must leave St. Biddy's and her rebellion, which Sammy Glyn sorted out eventually. To end this very inadequate survey of Michael Poole's art as a writer of school stories, we come to "Broxton's Silver Spur." Once more Poole is commenting on the world as he sees it, once more he is doing so through his most potent medium, the world of the public school. But this is all the connection there is between this and St. Biddy's, or his other school stories, barring one or two personal habits of thought, the presence of which distinguish any writer worth his salt. "Broxton's Silver Spur" springs from Commemoration Day, one of

the busiest of the year, the intrusion of one Augustus Littentop, a journalist, his being passed rapidly from the Head to Mr. Mornington, from him to Mostyn and Hallam, two Sixth formers, and, last and most important part of this springboard, his conversation with Challis of the Remove. To the first four Littentop is an irritation in the midst of a desperately busy day - someone they can do without, and his insistence on referring to bullying, an activity he is convinced exists powerfully in all public schools, brings forth some only slightly veiled leg-pulling in which neither Mr. Mornington nor Mostyn and Hallam would have indulged at a normal time, under normal circumstances. Littentop, however, is so convinced of the truth of his belief that he swallows the lot, unfortunately. On none of these four does he leave an impression which lingers for more than a few minutes. Challis' is a different case; to begin with, he is completely ignorant of Littentop's connection with the Press, and is put on his mettle by the journalist's representing himself as an uncle with a nephew, Cyril, who might be coming to the school. He would like Challis to be his nephew's guide, or mentor. Challis, naturally, is horrified at the idea and ready to do anything to nip this in the bud without delay. Let us first get some idea of Challis, and note, in passing, as one of the most potent arrows in Poole's artistic quiver, the piling on of one cliché after another - to a beautifully incongruous result:

> Kind smiles had come to the eyes of granite-hearted men when they looked at him and they rather flattered themselves by imagining that when they were very young they looked just as sad and sorrowful as Gerald Challis did. Womenfolk could rarely resist speaking to him and they nearly always led off with some question about whether he was happy at Broxton. Many women had been known to say openly that they would like to kiss him. They felt he was in need of their affection and some of them wondered whether his parents should have sent him to Broxton.
>
> Challis was built that way and had that sort of face. It is no exaggeration to say that Gerald's face was one of Nature's first-class jokes. It was the sort of face the great artists away back in the Middle Ages used to paint among white and blue clouds: a milk-and-roses complexion, a cupid's bow type mouth which often turned down at the corners and gave him a gently pathetic look, while his eyes were luminous pools of blue, and his hair was the colour of ripening corn.
>
> He was, indeed, almost too good to be true - in looks. But he was nothing like his looks in character, as quite a lot of people, including several masters, knew full well. Despite the pathetic droop of the lips, Challis had enjoyed himself quite a lot today, partly because it was a sort of holiday and partly because he had been very interested in a curious experiment he had been making. Challis was very fond of making experiments.

This particular experiment, in fact, gives the book its title - Challis has fixed a needle from inside his shoe, so that its point projects very slightly outside, at the toe of the shoe. With this he has been amusing himself by putting his foot quickly round and pushing the needle-point into the calf of the fellow next but one to him:

> To one with a nice sense of humour such as Challis had, it was most amusing to observe the way the fellow jumped, turned round quickly, rubbed his calf, and possibly gasped out threats against some unknown person. By that time, of course, Challis had both feet on the ground together and was taking the deepest possible interest in somebody else's conversation.

And, since we need the fullest possible picture of Challis:

> Challis was just over fifteen, but looked about twelve, judging by his stature; judged by his sweet and innocent expression, he was about two and a half years old. Challis would have made any normal four-year-old youngsters look like young hooligans if he had sat by their side.

Challis is, unknowingly, a "problem" in the Remove. His report rarely pleases at home, and on one occasion a special letter was sent to his father:

His father had spoken sternly to him on the subject. At least, he had begun firmly and sternly, but after hearing his son's explanations the serious talk had ended up with gentle admonitions.

All such talks usually did. Strong-minded and fierce-spoken masters who had every intention of making Challis sorry for himself had ended up on what they knew to be a weak note: "Yes, Challis. I know. But - well, don't let it occur again. That's all!"

"Thank you, sir!" Challis would murmur gratefully and with a pathetic note in his voice. Five minutes later he would be giving his own version of the interview to his admiring friends, who were quite aware of the fact that Challis could get away with anything. How he did it they never quite understood, because they had got used to Challis' pathetic face when they were too young to be impressed.

And here is some of the conversation which, most of all, precipitates the crisis at Broxton:

"And do you like being at Broxton?" Mr. Littentop asked.

"I - I'd rather not say," Challis bleated. "I mean, after all, it doesn't really matter what I like, does it?"

"I see. No. I suppose not." Mr. Littentop seemed to be pondering on the question. "They don't bully you at all, do they? Some of the older boys, I mean?"

This was the cue! Challis had been wondering what line to take, and here was Mr. Littentop playing right into his hands. If there was one subject about which Challis really knew quite a lot it was bullying. Purely theoretical, of course, but he had read many books, from TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS to THE BOUNDER OF ST. MARK'S, and what he didn't know about bounders, bullies, braggarts and bad boys generally was not worth knowing.

"Yes - no! I mean, I don't suppose it is really any worse here than anywhere else," Chally said. "Of course, if your nephew is a big fellow, it wouldn't be so bad."

"He's not," said Mr. Littentop definitely. "I don't think he's quite so tall as you are."

"Oh!" Chally's voice had a hopeless note in it, but he did his best to sound more cheerful when he went on:

"Of course, in a way you get used to it after a time."

From here the thing grows. Having established the existence of blanket-tossing, running the gauntlet, etc., at Broxton, Mr. Littentop notices the needle point still projecting from Challis's shoe, and asks about it. "He (Challis) disliked Mr. Littentop more than ever." For he had forgotten about the wretched needle, but now the reporter has asked about it he is equal to the occasion, and invents a really horrific game in which seniors tie up two juniors so that they can only hop in a crouching position, each with a needle fixed in his shoe, and they are made to kick at each other. Littentop also gathers some visual evidence, for the boy, Malone, Challis has been prodding with his needle goes for his tormentor, and the reporter promptly intervenes to protect the sad-eyed Challis from this bullying aggression.

Some days later Mostyn, Hallam and Mr. Mornington are confronted in the Head's study with three papers, in each of which there is a marked article, each article featuring bullying in public schools. For various reasons, there is no doubt that the specially featured but unnamed school is Broxton; a number of "sympathetic" correspondents of the Head have also informed this busy gentleman of the fact that they have spotted this. The three deny all knowledge - Littentop has faded from their mind, as he has from the Heads. Nonetheless, the lurid headlines are not pleasant. This is bad enough - the attack from without, based on a canker within; at least, this is how it seems at first. Not that the Head or anyone else believes, at this stage in the existence of bullying - not a single boy can be found who has any personal knowledge of it - although later the Head has some bad moments when he wonders if indeed all this has been going on without his knowledge; and,

as it proves, boys are not slow to believe what is in the papers, in spite of having never met any bullying themselves, or knowing anyone who has. And there happens to be at Broxton just the boy to fan the flames. Jimmy Sprott, in Challis's study, is a type, on a more manageable scale, of the rebel without a cause:

> "It's all wrong - there ought to be a change," was his motto.

and:

> "A ghastly farce! The whole thing is rotten! The system is wrong! That's the trouble! It's the system that's wrong!" Sprott said to Winkworth.... Miles away, Mr. Littentop was saying much the same thing as Sprott. The whole system was rotten, and Mr. Littentop was going to tell the world about it.

And this ready made cause is too good for Sprott not to make full use of it. He is, naturally, in a Poole school story, an organiser; he begins by organising Remove barracking of a senior cricket match with another school, picking mostly on Mostyn, whose first match as cricket captain it is. When ordered off furiously by Hallam, Sprott sees to it that the barrackers move off in orderly fashion, the rebel making the most of the opportunity to hint at bullying on the part of the Sixth. Sprott also organises a procession for the following evening, with banners (Challis is a very unwilling banner carrier); further confusion has also been caused by Mr. Littentop, in his articles, referring to his having gained much of his knowledge of the most brutal aspect of the bullying from a frightened Third former - and one can excuse his having mentally placed Challis in this form. But this is what the school disciplinary section is looking for: a frightened Third former, or at least, a Third former who posed as frightened, and gave so much false information to the stranger. And Sprott, like a good general, makes good use of what the gods send. He has two Third formers as the centre piece of his procession; neither of these had been bullied, but with flattery and cajolery Sprott gets both to allow it to be said that they have. True, he genuinely believes they have, putting their reticence down to fear - further evidence against the Sixth, in fact; heads I win, tails you lose.

A point Poole makes here is very interesting:

> In one way Sprott could not have chosen a better time for his great campaign for wholesale reforms at Broxton. It was not that the school was ripe for rebellion or seething with a sense of injustice. It was really just the opposite. Everything was running too smoothly; it is doubtful if anyone from the Third upwards had anything at all to complain about, unless of course you happened to be one of those people who complain about monotony when they can't find any other cause for complaint.

In the meantime, by sheer accident, memory has come flooding back to Mostyn, and he recalls the funny little man who persisted in talking about bullying on Commemoration Day; he reminds Hallam, and the two of them remind Mr. Mornington, who takes the blame, for having been so careless himself:

> "It will broaden our minds and make us more sympathetic towards youngsters who have allowed their sense of humour to run away with them. It is a long, long time since I felt like a Fourth former with a guilty conscience who is trying to think out the best excuse, and has a horrible feeling that whatever excuse he makes, it will all sound most hopelessly feeble."

Naturally, this information is conveyed to the Head, and, unconsciously, the foundation laid for a shock for Sprott.

Neither Malone nor Challis are enthusiastic about Sprott's activities;

Challis would prefer to retire to a dark corner and stay there, while Malone, inoffensive and with no aspirations whatever to leadership, has the sort of appearance which always marks him out as the one responsible, who has led innocent Challis into bad ways; he fears the worst. He has, however, cheered Challis by reminding him that Quackers, the nickname for the present Remove master, has called Gerald 'a thorn in the flesh;' "but he didn't know about the spur in the toe of your shoe then. He will be pleased! For once in his life old Quackers will laugh at one of your jokes!"

The procession proceeds to the Sixth form passage, where Sprott hopes to make so much noise that Mostyn will be forced from his study, confronted with the accusing banners, and Sprott can make his speech for the prosecution. Unfortunately, it is not Mostyn but Mr. Mornington who comes from Mostyn's study; shock No. 1 for Sprott and his followers; the Housemaster is followed by the Head, Dr. Fairmyle; shock No. 2. But still more is to come; this time the shock is for a banner carrier whose heart is just not in his work. For behind the Head, as the latter moves aside, is seen another figure, and one that brings palpitations to Challis's heart: the elusive Mr. Littentop.

Things do eventually get themselves sorted out, Broxton does at last settle down to normal, but not before Challis and Sprott, both, have learned extremely valuable lessons. As to whether they profited by them, and how much, you, and I, are left to guess.

If anyone ever doubted that the school story could achieve a serious result, one that can be measured without fear of the comparison against what is called "serious" literature, such a story as "Broxton's Silver Spur" is there to end that doubt; the one drawback is that those who most hold this derogatory opinion of school stories are just the people who never read them. Nonetheless, there is literature - good, middling and indifferent (and some downright bad) in no matter what category; and there is some little that is unusually outstanding. As with so-called adult literature (and some of this today should make any adult blush to want to read) there are good writers and some few that are superbly outstanding artists. To this select band belong Frank Richards, Wodehouse, and certain others; and, most emphatically, the subject of this essay, who, like his colleagues, treated serious issues through the eyes of young people and in the milieu in which youth and adult come most into contact - the school. And, being an artist and treating of serious issues, it is not surprising that he emerges also as an outstanding artist.

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Apart from wishing everyone the usual compliments of the Season - a Dickensian Christmas, a successful New Year, bags of plum duff, etc. - I'd also like to say Happy Birthday to the Digest and the Annual. 25 years is a sustained effort that is, I think, unique in the history of non-professional magazines. In the circumstances, there seems nothing more to be said but to wish both monthly and yearly another 25 years of prosperous and active life. CHRIS LOWDER

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THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL

by ROGER M. JENKINS

The publication of the first number of the Holiday Annual in the autumn of 1919 (dated 1920) was one of the greatest acts of faith that the Amalgamated Press ever undertook. When it is remembered that the Magnet, Gem, and Boys' Friend were each selling at 1½d a copy at the time, it was a very bold venture indeed to launch an annual selling at six shillings, which represented a year's subscription to any one of those three papers. Audacity sometimes pays off, and the Holiday Annual began a twenty-two year run, which only the paper shortage in the second world war brought to an end.

"The object of the Holiday Annual," said the editor in the first number, "is primarily to give amusement and entertainment, by means of cheerful, healthy fiction and verse, to the boys and girls of Britain." There are a number of amusing anecdotes about parents presenting the volume to their children at Christmas, at the same time expressing the pious hope that it would provide more elevated reading than that to be found in the Magnet and Gem and other penny dreadfuls. Whether any parents could have been quite so imperceptive is doubtful, but it makes a good story, and underlines the fact that the Holiday Annual was certainly a quality production.

It would have been a very churlish schoolboy indeed who could have found fault with the 1920 volume which is now a collector's item. Charles Hamilton wrote new Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood stories, illustrated by C. H. Chapman, Warwick Reynolds, and W. W. Wakefield respectively, with Shields and others lending a hand. Warwick Reynolds undertook the cover picture (a scene from the Rookwood story) and all his illustrations are noteworthy for the character and individuality of the features. "Ructions at Greyfriars" told how Bunter inveigled the Famous Five into assisting him in a rather risky impersonation, a story which was echoed later in Magnet 1136. "The Wandering Schoolboy" told how Gussy retired from St. Jim's for a while and visited Greyfriars and Rookwood. At the end he promised the Head never to behave in such a manner again, but sad to say he did, in Gems 753-8. "The Rivals of Rookwood School" dealt with Lovell's unreasoning dislike for a new boy, Loring, an idea later used in the Gem Torrence series and the Magnet Carlow series. (Never did Rookwood again merit an 18 chapter story in the Holiday Annual.) For good measure there was also a reprint of the Heath series from Magnets 173-4, but what some collectors may find more interesting is a futuristic story of St. Jim's in 1950 entitled "Out of Bounds" in which Smith minor is annoyed because the Head puts the moon out of bounds, and he takes the ether plane to Mars.

The 1921 annual was "The Greyfriars Holiday Annual," and this change became permanent. To emphasise the point, there was an account of the editor's visit to Greyfriars, the first of a long run of such fantasies. There were also

extended lists of the characters in each of the schools which, if not always accurate, were certainly well illustrated. Three more specially written stories appeared, the first entitled "Billy Bunter's Butler" being one of the most hilarious stories to appear in the Holiday Annual. Chunkley's magnificent stores had just been opened in Courtfield, and Bunter invited some friends to take tea with him there. The bill came to £12.10s.6d., and all Bunter could contribute was a humble tanner. He postponed the inevitable ragging by saying that his father would be sending a butler from Bunter Court with the money, and he then phoned Chunkley's and hired a first-class butler for a few hours. "Jimmy Silver's Rival," explaining why Jimmy Silver decided not to fight Tommy Dodd was an unusual and not particularly enjoyable story, whilst "All Gussy's Fault" was used to advertise the Benbow stories in the Greyfriars Herald. The reprint on this occasion was "The Master's Secret; or How Tom Merry Came to St. Jim's." This story came from ½d Gems 11, 13 and 14, telling how Tom Merry left Clavering College and arrived at St. Jim's in a velvet suit. The St. Jim's stories were all illustrated by Macdonald who was back from the Navy.

1922 saw more echoes from the Benbow, this time in the Greyfriars story "The Rivals of the Remove" in which Drake and Rodney, now at Greyfriars, pretended they couldn't play cricket and then blackmailed their way into the team, a story with a pleasant air and a dramatic ending. Equally entertaining was "The Two Heroes," Gussy the genuine one and Baggy Trimble the counterfeit. St. Jim's again commanded a massive reprint, no less than 35 chapters from Gems 361-3, telling how Marie Rivers appeared on the scene and how the Professor returned to attempt to co-erce Talbot into rejoining the gang. There was also a third St. Jim's tale, "Glyn's Latest," which was specially written. The Rookwood story, "Who Did It?" was, alas, by a substitute writer, but other attractions were a Ferrers Lord story, a tale of life on the Bombay Castle, and one of Michael Poole's St. Katie's stories, this time about the wedding of Mr. Blunt, or "Jolly Roger," as he was called. Michael Poole had a carefully contrived atmosphere at St. Katie's, but little idea of story-telling - the boys' plot was successful at every turn, and consequently it all seemed quite pointless.

1923 had quite the nastiest Greyfriars story ever to appear in any Holiday Annual. "A Shadow Over Greyfriars," the only story to be specially written by Charles Hamilton in this year, told how there was a cricket week at Greyfriars, with teams from Rookwood and St. Jim's staying at the school. Bunter was in a spiteful mood, and set about removing articles from jackets in the changing room in order to arouse mutual hostility and suspicion among the teams. It was Drake, now only a visitor to Greyfriars, who solved the mystery. Rookwood and St. Jim's were represented by reprints, "The Mystery of the Priory" being taken from the famous double number of the Boys' Friend, No. 810, an account of Private Silver's desertion from the army, and "The Captain of St. Jim's" from Gems 317-8 being an account of the celebrated occasion when Tom Merry was voted into that high office for a short but memorable career.

The Greyfriars story in 1924 was a most unusual contribution: "A Great Man Visits Greyfriars" told how Martin Clifford visited the school, and the surprising

consequences of this visit. It is of interest to collectors as an insight into Charles Hamilton's own views about himself as an author:

"I've read a lot of his stuff," said Wibley. "There's no doubt that chap is clever. The way he strings a story together shows the dramatic gift. Some men write a story as if it were a furniture catalogue or an almanac. This man Clifford has an eye to a situation - he makes the characters explain themselves - before you've got a dozen lines into the story you know the fellows as if you'd met them. He ought to be writing plays really, but I suppose a man has to live!"

Even more cutting were the remarks of people like Hacker who began by discussing Martin Clifford's works and then turned the subject to his own, and remarked that he too would have become an author if only he had the time, but would have written on more serious topics. There is no doubt that this is the sort of conversation Hamilton must often have endured, and collectors can see this story as fascinating, though it is possible that youthful readers would not have appreciated its ironies and would have preferred a more conventional tale. Also specially written was "Morny's Master-Stroke" which related the trouble Jimmy Silver encountered when he threw a snowball into Tommy Dodd's study, thinking what a happy surprise it would be if it landed on his tea-table. A different sort of surprise occurred, as it landed on Manders who was snooping around. St. Jim's was represented by a reprint. "The Schoolboy Treasure-Hunters" was one of the many reprints of Gems 173-5, dealing with the famous trip to the South Seas searching for Spanish doubloons. Cedar Creek was represented by a reprint of "How Father Christmas Came to White Pine" (which bears more than a slight resemblance to a Bret Harte story) and P. G. Wodehouse contributed a tale of school life. Finally, it is worth noting that the success of Billy Bunter's Weekly in the Popular led to the introduction of Billy Bunter's Annual as a sub-section of the Holiday Annual itself.

1925 saw Bunter in a more amusing aspect once again. Mr. Bunter had made some money on a Stock Exchange deal and presented the "Bunter Cup," a fifty guinea solid silver item, to be played for by the junior teams. The awkward stipulation was made that Bunter himself had to play in every match. The descriptions of comic football matches and the way in which Fish, Skinner, Snoop and Stott flattered Bunter so long as his money lasted were written in Charles Hamilton's most sparkling vein. Unfortunately, "Getting Quits With Greyfriars," a Rookwood story, was one of the worst types of imitation. There were also two reprints, "The Rival Editors" from Magnet 306 about the Greyfriars Herald, and "The Bishop's Medal" from Gem 313 giving an account of the way Cousin Ethel persuaded Figgins to enter for a difficult examination, and the hostility he encountered as a result, a story in Charles Hamilton's best dramatic vein. It is interesting to compare P. G. Wodehouse's story, "Jackson's Dip," with Michael Poole's "St. Katie's Big Splash." The first story was only a brief episode, but it was written in a limpid amusing style that carried the reader easily through it, whereas Michael Poole's story was composed in a turgid style, which was scarcely improved by the way the author himself repeatedly commented on the events he described so that his obtrusive remarks robbed the story of all involvement and interest.

1926 was a year in which Charles Hamilton exercised his rarely-used vein of fantasy in a story entitled "Lucky for Parkinson." Parkinson, who shared a study with Trevor, was one of the great scholars of the Remove, but his one ambition was

to play in the junior eleven. He was reading in German the story of Peter Schlemihl, who was offered all the treasures of the earth in return for signing his soul away to the Man in the Grey Coat, and Parkinson began to see a way to achieve his life's ambition. Although he was not, in the end, called away to the nether regions, he was in point of fact never mentioned again. The other Greyfriars story, "The Form-Master's Substitute," was a reprint of Magnet 389, dealing with Wibley's impersonation of Mr. Mobbs: Ponsonby & Co. were more than astonished at the changed attitude of the master who had always toadied to them hitherto. The Rookwood tale, "Pulling Carthew's Leg" was an imitation, but there were two genuine St. Jim's stories again, "Grundy's Great Idea" being a reprint of Gem 465 about an anonymous letter which was sent to Mr. Linton, and "The Scientist of St. Jim's" being specially written: this was an account of Glyn's latest invention, the death ray. In addition there were also Cedar Creek and St. Katie's stories, a school yarn by P. G. Wodehouse, and contributions by Sidney Drew, Alfred Edgar, and others.

1927 was an annual with some endearing features. The only new item contributed by Charles Hamilton was "What Happened to Bunter," relating how he threw a small portmanteau at Mr. Quelch in mistake for Walker, and then decided to visit St. Jim's and later Rookwood to escape the inevitable flogging. Even if the theme was similar to the series in Magnets 737-9, it was a fine display of Bunter's character in the mid-twenties, and a most readable story. Equally entertaining was "Lord Eastwood's Experiment" from Gem 127 telling how Gussy's noble father decided to give him a cheque book and a bank balance of £50 to teach him the value of money, an experiment that ended in sad failure. Much more dramatic was "Nugent Minor's Bad Start," a reprint of Magnet 100, a famous double number which gave a vivid account of the trials and tribulations faced by a spoilt boy at a public school. The P. G. Wodehouse story "Out of Bounds" was too long and discursive to be successful: there was little humour in it, and the machinery of the plot creaked ominously at times. The two Rookwood stories were by substitute writers, but there was a Cedar Creek reprint, and Dr. Birchemall featured in Billy Bunter's Annual.

1928 was the last and funniest of the early thin paper Holiday Annuals. "Battling Bunter" was an account of the trouble that ensued when Bunter annexed a theatre ticket belonging to Bob Cherry, while "The Arm of the Law" related how Messrs. Gammon and Gobble, solicitors of Wayland, threatened D'Arcy with legal proceedings, being unaware that he was a minor. Both these stories were specially written for the Holiday Annual. For the first time since 1924 there was a Rookwood story by Charles Hamilton: "Tea With Manders" was from No. 815 of the Boys' Friend, and told how that pleasant gentleman invited the Fistical Four to tea in order to keep them out of a football match; it was a party that ended with the host chasing his guests down the corridor with a cane. This was an early Rookwood story, but the remarks of Mr. Bootles were attributed to his successor, Mr. Dalton, in order to bring it up to date - an unsatisfactory device that was often resorted to. The other Rookwood story was an imitation, but "How Horace Coker got his Remove" was, of course, by Charles Hamilton, being a reprint of Magnet 145. This was an historic occasion, and the story had many amusing incidents, but it did not wear quite so well as some others chosen for reprinting; perhaps it had

dated a little, and Coker's character had altered as well.

From the collector's point of view, the Holiday Annual lost most of its interest after the 1928 issue, which was the last of the thin paper numbers. After this, all issues were printed on thick, almost cardboard-like paper which made them look fat and promising volumes, but in point of fact the amount of reading matter was considerably diminished. Henceforth it was to be impossible for one school to be represented by two really long stories.

1929 added insult to injury by reducing the number of pages from 360 to 280, a deprivation which the use of thicker paper no doubt concealed from all but the most enquiring readers. Its main attraction was the specially written Rookwood story "A Rift at Rookwood." By the time this was written (probably early in 1928) Owen Conquest had not lost his touch with the Hampshire school, and this story, telling how Lovell refused to recognise that his gammy leg must keep him out of a football match and how his refusal to face facts led to a rift in the end study, was a splendid character drama which represented the finest Rookwood story ever to appear in the Holiday Annual. The main Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories had to be represented by reprints. "When Billy Bunter Forgot" was taken from Magnet 160, and was the classic account of how he lost his memory after diving into an empty swimming-bath and became truthful for a while, while "Tom Merry's Minor" - a monkey - was a reprint of Gem 296. The oddity was "Chequemate," a three chapter storyette about a cheque for £50 which Mr. Bunter sent to Billy to display and then return - Bunter borrowed considerable sums on the strength of it before the truth came to light. It is a possibility that this amusing story was a left-over from the days of the Greyfriars Herald in the early 'twenties.

1930 was the beginning of the second decade of the Holiday Annual, but the gilt was wearing off the gingerbread. The only specially written story was "Gussy's Latest Stunt" which started off well. Skimpole had given up Socialism and Determinism in favour of extremism, and had given away the spread in the study cupboard and D'Arcy's new spring overcoat to a passing tramp, on the basis that all jam tarts, ginger pop, and coats would soon be nationalised anyway. In order to appease D'Arcy's continuing wrath, he began to convert him to the new creed, after which the story ceased to be amusing and turned a little sour. "The Greyfriars Adventurers" was a reprint of Magnet 179, better known as "Bob Cherry in Search of His Father," a rather eventful single story, while "Pleasing Dear Thomas" featured that ineffable ass Clarence Cuffy. It was taken from Boys' Friend 1083, at the fag-end of the Rookwood saga, a triviality of only four chapters. It was by the real Owen Conquest, but it could not hold a candle to the previous Rookwood story.

1931 was even more disappointing. The two main schools were represented by reprints of the very early days. "Troublesome Tom" was from ½d Gem No. 5, and "Mark Linley at Crossroads," telling of his anxiety about winning a money prize at an examination, was from Magnet 180. The Rookwood story "French Leave," featuring Lovell in one of his obstinate moods, was probably specially written and seemed contemporary, with Carthew on a motor-bike. "Sturgis Forgets," a tale of Greyfriars in the future, was another of Charles Hamilton's intermittent series of

science fiction stories.

If 1931 was disappointing, 1932 was a wash-out so far as Hamiltoniana was concerned. The Rookwood and St. Jim's stories were imitations, and the Greyfriars piece, "The Vanished Eleven," was an old red Magnet story, No. 338, written in a most sombre vein: the Remove cricketers were kidnapped, and Vernon-Smith stopped the driver by pushing a pen-knife into his neck towards the jugular vein. The only consolations were an amusing fantasy at the beginning about an old boys' re-union when they were middle-aged; "A.D. 1999" about St. Jim's in an electronic age; and for Brooks fans there was "Rivals of St. Frank's," an amusing little tale about a stolen picnic hamper. It is interesting to note that eton jackets were "out," as both the Magnet and Gem had given them up in illustrations.

1933 was rather like 1931, being based on uninspiring reprints. "Saved from the Sea" was from Magnet 301, dealing with a mysterious boy with a strange secret whose ship foundered on the great rocks beneath the Shoulder, and "A Yankee at St. Jim's" was from Gem 294 dealing with Fisher T. Fish's visit to the Sussex school. Neither reprint was worth writing home about, and to make matters worse both Rookwood stories were by substitute writers. Considering that the Rookwood saga ran for eleven years in the Boys' Friend, it is one of the mysteries of the Holiday Annual why such little use was made of this enormous mass of material.

1934 represented a turning-point in the career of the later Holiday Annual. First of all, its price was reduced from six shillings to five (how attractive those days of deflation appear nowadays!) though it is true that the number of pages fell from 280 to 256. The Hiking series in the Magnet was a very topical piece of advertising for the Holiday Annual in question, and although the main schools had only reprints to represent them, both stories were outstandingly good for a change. "A Schoolboy's Honour" from Magnet 303 was about the triangle of Wharton - Hazeldene - Marjorie Hazeldene: Wharton came to Hazeldene's assistance for Marjorie's sake, and then Hazeldene deserted him when trouble arose. This was character drama of a high order. The Gem reprint was from No. 799, the first from the Indian Summer period. "Spoofed" related how Trimble pretended he was leaving the school in order to avail himself of the opportunity to auction his belongings for the high prices which it was the custom to pay at such leaving sales. Both Rookwood stories were imitations, but Ken King turned up for the first time, by way of a change.

The Hamiltonian section of the 1935 Annual saw a further upward trend. The reprint from Gem 751 "The Stony Seven" was the last of a very amusing series in which the juniors attempted to raise the wind, the climax being when Gussy donned false whiskers and attempted to pawn his gold watch. Lord Eastwood, who was visiting St. Jim's that day, had the gratifying experience of seeing his son escorted back to the school by a police sergeant. This was one of the really classic moments in the Gem. Magnet 992 provided the Greyfriars story "The Footprint in the Sand," an average sort of tale, but at least not too old, whilst Boys' Friend 987 was the reprinted Rookwood story, "The Boy Who Wouldn't Budge," a tale of the Bootles era, describing how Mornington refused to own up when his friend Erroll

was being punished for his misdeeds. The specially-written story, "Billy Bunter's Booby-Trap," has special memories for me. Some years ago, when an anthology of school stories was being published, Charles Hamilton was looking for a short Greyfriars story as his contribution, but he could not find one short enough to suit the editor of the volume. I suggested "Billy Bunter's Booby-Trap," and this was in fact adopted. It is only an episode, and the Famous Five are mere foils for Bunter; in fact, it is very similar to the plots of the T.V. series in this respect, but it goes with a swing and there is an irresistible hilarity about it, even though Bunter ends up with a flogging. Incidentally, it was the first time since 1928 that Charles Hamilton had written a Greyfriars story specially for the Holiday Annual.

1936 saw a long Greyfriars story specially written, entitled "The Dunce of Greyfriars." The 1928 annual had related how Coker was promoted from the Shell to the Fifth form. This time Coker exasperated Prout so much that a demotion took place, and Coker had to attend English lessons with the Second form. The Rookwood story was by a substitute writer, but there were two reprints. "The Spoofer" from Gem 765 was about Baggy Trimbles's pretence of having lost his memory, and was as entertaining as the Coker story. "Billy Bunter's Bust-Up" was from an unhappy period of the Magnet so far as Bunter was concerned: his character was almost at its worst when this story first appeared in Magnet 148. He wrote to the Christmas Dinners Association attempting to swindle the charity of money to finance his own spread, and though there were amusing parts in the story it was not a happy episode. The only other items of note were a Rio Kid story and "Handforth's Windfall," three chapters by E. S. Brooks in one of his happier veins about furniture that got smashed up in Study D during one of Handforth's fights. This constituted his second and final contribution to the Holiday Annual. Possibly the fact that St. Frank's stories were appearing in the Gem brought Brooks into the world of Hamiltoniana for these two occasions.

1937 was a bumper number of the Holiday Annual, since apart from a short nature story by Clive Fenn it was filled with Hamiltoniana from beginning to end. It was perhaps a pity that the Greyfriars story was dredged up from red Magnet days: "Squiff of the Remove" was from Magnet 343, and dealt with the arrival of the boy from Australia who pretended that he did not know how to play cricket, an amusing enough story. "Mr. Ratcliff Has a Busy Day" was specially written, and bears some resemblance to "Morny's Master Stroke" of 1924: both dealt with a severe housemaster who refused to rescind a sentence of detention on the afternoon of an important match, and how tricks were played to keep the housemaster too busy to notice that the detention was broken. "Mr. Ratcliff Has a Busy Day" brought the Rookwood juniors into the plot, and was a noteworthy contribution to the annual. "Carthew Goes Too Far" was reprinted from Boys' Friends 1257-8, and provided a good long Rookwood story with a complicated plot and plenty of dramatic action. The Rio Kid and Packsaddle enabled two western stories to be added to fill up the complement. It was good to see the substitute writers confined to short items, many of which they handled satisfactorily.

1938 continued the emphasis on Hamiltoniana. An old Magnet reprint was used once more, "Mutiny on the Spindrift" being from No. 267. It was of course set

at sea, and possibly it was not a very happy choice. To make up for this, "Jack Drake's Capture" was specially written and the setting was Greyfriars; this nine chapter story was a neat piece of deduction, though not particularly distinguished. The Gem double number No. 724 "The Shadow over Eastwood House" made a very seasonable story: it dealt with Lord Eastwood's secretary, Bloore, who was poisoning his master. (There is no doubt that the noble earl was very unlucky with his staff over the years.) Another pair of Boys' Friends reprints made up the quota of school stories, "Lovell on the Warpath" coming from Nos. 1232-3 of that paper. Lovell had a half-crown with a hole in the middle, to which he attached a piece of elastic. When dishonest people bent down to pick up the coin, Lovell jerked it away. One of the coin's claimants was an unpleasant man who later turned out to be a temporary mathematics master, and from the episode many events flowed. The Annual had Cedar Creek and Rio Kid tales as well, by way of contrast.

1939 had two Magnet reprints, the only time this occurred. "Billy Bunter's Fearful Affliction" was from Magnet 715, a classic story about his pretence of blindness, while "The Mystery of the Christmas Candles" was from Magnet 723, a Christmas double number revolving around Hurree Singh. The Gem reprint was also from this era, "Grundy's Gunpowder Plot" being from No. 717: tales of the St. Jim's parliament were never very interesting to most readers, one suspects, and this was counterbalanced by a specially written tale, "They Called Him a Funk" showing D'Arcy on his high horse. Geo. E. Rochester had a long tale in this annual, and there was Cedar Creek too, but the vintage Rookwood story showed Owen Conquest at his best. "Algy Silver's Pal" came from Boys' Friends 879-90 and told how he fell under the influence of a new boy in the Third form until an unexpected occurrence made him view his new pal in a fresh light. Worries about young brothers and cousins are not the best material for stories as a rule, but this particular Rookwood tale was well constructed and told with conviction. The only disturbing note was struck by a third reduction in the number of pages, from 256 to 232. Since the 1939 annual was published in the autumn of 1938, the war-time paper shortage can have had no connection with this.

1940 witnessed, for the first time, the inclusion of two Rookwood stories by the genuine author. From Boys' Friend 1194 came "The Amazing Proceedings of Timothy Tupper," relating how the page cheeked everyone from the Head downwards when he thought his father had come into a fortune, while "Public Benefactor Number One" was a highly entertaining idea Lovell thought up for evading preparation for good: a crib on a disc of cardboard, on elastic, which could be jerked into the palm of the hand when required and would return out of sight when not needed was a brilliant idea, but unfortunately Mr. Dalton was not so green as Lovell thought. This came from Boys' Friend 1138. Magnet 776 provided "Sir Fulke's Warning," the first Christmas at Mauleverer Towers, while Gem 695 provided "Fighting the Flames," a mediocre tale of the school fire brigade. "The Case of the Beak's Black Eye" was the last school tale to be specially written for the Holiday Annual by Charles Hamilton; an eight-chapter piece, it dealt with the way Ferrers Locke came to St. Jim's to save D'Arcy from being expelled for giving Mr. Selby a black eye, a crime of which he was not guilty. Like the previous year's story about Jack

Drake, the mystery was perhaps solved too quickly to make the tale very memorable. "The Ferndale Recruit" was by Charles Hamilton, and dealt with a football match between working lads in Lancashire, a rather unusual subject. Cedar Creek and the Rio Kid filled the bill this year.

1941 was the end of the line, so far as Charles Hamilton's continuous association with the Amalgamated Press was concerned. The paper shortage caused the Magnet to close down in 1940, and the Schoolboys' Own Library followed a month later. The 1941 Holiday Annual, which of course appeared in September 1940, thus outlived all the other Hamiltonian publications by a few months. No doubt there had been an early purchase of the thick, cardboard-like paper, probably of no use for any other publication, and this saved the Holiday Annual for one more year. By way of consolation, the contents were nearly all by Charles Hamilton. "Jimmy Silver Does the Trick" was from Boys' Friend 830, a more juvenile type of story, in which Jimmy Silver forced Hansom to give written admission of the superiority of the Fourth form. "Billy Bunter's Busy Day," on the other hand, was more mature fare, coming from Magnet 942 and telling how Bunter locked himself in the Head's study and used his power of imitating voices to cause quite a bit of trouble. Equally amusing but witty as well was "Skimpole the Star Gazer" from Gem 976, in which some wondrous sights were seen through his telescope before it was taken back on the mercenary grounds that the instalments were unpaid. A very long Oakshott story as well as the usual Rio Kid and Cedar Creek tales completed the volume. Charles Hamilton's severance of all connections with the Amalgamated Press after the Magnet ended probably prevented a specially written story for the 1941 volume. No doubt also the readers were aware that for the first time in twenty-two years they were not invited to renew their acquaintance with all these schoolboy characters within the pages of the weekly and monthly publications of the Amalgamated Press.

Why the Holiday Annual was not continued after 1941 with the old thin paper is one of those mysteries we shall never be able to solve. The stock of stories to reprint was practically inexhaustible; The profits from the Holiday Annual were magnificent (each artist received a cheque running into three figures for his contribution to an annual); and the demand was great, as the letters that arrived in September 1941 showed - there were hundreds begging for a 1942 annual. Perhaps it was decided that the annual could not be maintained without the ballast of the weekly and monthly papers in which it could be advertised; perhaps it was thought that the stock of available paper could be used even more profitably elsewhere; perhaps the summary dismissal of the editor and artists when the Magnet ended prevented any more annuals from being assembled. Whatever the reason, the sentence of doom was pronounced, and the Holiday Annual disappeared quietly, though not without its mourners.

It had some unique features: the gossip about the characters and the schools; the amusing poems, many of them parodies of famous works and bearing the mark of Charles Hamilton himself; and, especially, the mock histories of the schools which induced the youthful reader to believe that they were genuine ancient foundations, not fictitious ones. It is touches like these that the post-war Mandeville annuals so lamentably omitted. There was another unique feature of the

Holiday Annual: it was the only Hamiltonian publication of the Amalgamated Press issued in permanent form, and many collectors must have blessed the stiff covers that preserved the books so well and for so long.

The article began with a quotation from the editorial of the first number. Perhaps it would be appropriate to look at the editorial in the last number. This was in verse, and the last two stanzas ran as follows:

Of Greyfriars, its heroes and glories,
I deal in the Editor's Chair;
St. Jim's has its share in the stories
And Rookwood must also be there;
Three schools with a fame of their own,
All over the world they are known!

Again new adventures pursuing
They're here for your special delight!
And if you would see what they're doing,
Read on - and I wish you good-night!
For now I've a moment to spare
To sleep - in the Editor's Chair!

The unconscious irony in the metaphors about night and sleep makes it a sad proceeding to lay down the last Holiday Annual and return it to the bookcase. The annual had enjoyed a long innings, and perhaps it is consoling to reflect that nearly every performance had been a creditable one. Towards the end there was a definite attempt to appeal more strongly to the Hamiltonian faithfuls, and in 1941 it ended with a bang, not a whimper. In many ways it may prove to be Charles Hamilton's most enduring epitaph.

* *

UNION JACKS WANTED: 1105, 1130, 1141, 1148, 1157, 1169, 1179, 1208, 1265, 1283, 1313, 1337, 1338, 1350, 1443, 1456, 1460, 1480, 1484, 1485, 1486, 1488, 1489, 1492, 1521, 1526, 1529, 1531.

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A MERRY CHRISTMAS and A HAPPY NEW YEAR to the Editor, and All Collectors.

BASIL ADAM, 28 DERWENT STREET, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

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Over (and under) The Himalayas

WITH EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

by R. HIBBERT

I see there's another Everest expedition down at the bottom again (June 1971). An international one this time. And before that there were two Japanese expeditions; one on skis! Show offs; it'll be North Koreans on pogo sticks next. And before that there was an Indian expedition, a U.S. expedition, a Chinese expedition - they left a bust of Mao Tse Tung on top - another Indian expedition and a Swiss expedition. Up and down, up and down all the time these foreigners.

"The expedition leaving Katmandu is the 4.30 Sino-Albanian. Stopping at Camps 2 and 4 and arriving at the summit well before the monsoon. Will all climbers carry their alpenstocks at the high port until clear of the built up area?"

I remember the day when Everest was regarded as a British mountain and it was only Britons and Sherpas (honorary Britons, so long as they stayed in Nepal and didn't have any ideas about colonizing the foothills of Wolverhampton) who stumbled and slipped up and down its icy slopes. And there was always a decent interval between expeditions while our climbers got their breath back and the Royal Geographical Society saved up for a fresh supply of ropes and pemmican.

It was like that right up to 1953, but after that, of course, the Chinese had got Tibet back into the Celestial Empire and, as everyone knows, you only need a long ladder to get to the top of Everest from Tibet.

Our lads always did it the hard way. In fact, in this year's expedition which has just come to a miserable close, the two Britons, who were picked to make a quick ascent of the South Face after the main attempt up a much more difficult path had been abandoned, ran true to form. They decided not to bother. If they couldn't do it by the impossible route it wasn't worth doing. Good lads.

That was the spirit of all our expeditions up to and including the never-to-be-forgotten Coronation Year ascent. And when Edwy Searles Brooks sent up his expedition - it was called the Gordon Everest Expedition, but it was Edwy's idea and he told us all about it - the same spirit prevailed.

The reports of this climb first appeared in 'The Modern Boy' (Old Series) numbers 432 - 435 (18.5.36 - 6.6.36). Later, in 1941, a fuller account, 'The Lost World of Everest' was published by Collins. The short 'Modern Boy' serial was called 'The Hidden World of Everest.'

It was the first E.S.B. story I ever read - I was 12 at the time, firmly convinced that 'The Modern Boy' was the boys' paper - and I didn't read any more E.S.B's until last year. That was when I started borrowing them from the library of the London Old Boys' Book Club. Bob Blythe has taken me in hand, he makes careful selections for me and guides me along the right paths and what he has done for me he can do for others. Note this address: Bob Blythe, 47 Evelyn Avenue,

Kingsbury, London, NW9 OJF. Say Hibbert sent you. You need never watch telly again.

'The Hidden World' starts off with a typical E.S.B. weather report. Very good on the forces of Nature is our Edwy. Remember what the weather was like around Bellton, Sussex where St. Frank's is situated? When it rained, it rained; when it snowed, it snowed; when it fogged, it fogged. I've got a guide book to Sussex which states - it's there in print - that the county's climate is mild. It might be over most of Sussex, but in the E.S.B. country anything can happen and always does. Two nights steady rain and the River Stowe's lapping over the bedroom window sills, a B.B.C. announcement that ground frost can be expected throughout the British Isles and Bellton railway cutting is filled to the top with driven snow, the inhabitants of Bannington are building igloos and the boys of St. Frank's are arranging to drop emergency food supplies from Lord Dorrimore's airship. Well, if Edwy can write about Sussex like that, imagine him when he's describing the weather on the Roof of the World.

At 28,000 feet Captain Jim Gordon, Clive Burgess and Hal Proctor - on the very last lap of their climb, with victory almost within their grasp - are struck, God help 'em by a Brooks' blizzard.

"A current of air, like something tangible and solid, struck Jim like a bludgeon. He slithered over the edge of the ridge, the safety rope twanging, and a moment later all three climbers were shooting down the mist-hidden ice slope, gathering speed like a fighter plane in a power dive."

And down and down they go. Faster and faster for another 200 words (4 column inches).

They find themselves in a valley where the air is warm, but they are still on the uppermost slopes of Everest! At the bottom of the valley which has trees and vegetation of "a curious sickly green" there's a great hole, a thousand feet across, and down one side are - wait for it - steps.

"And those steps were not natural formations - they were hewn - and only man could have hewn them."

Fancy that. Naturally - heroes can't help themselves - they go down the steps to find that the inside of Everest is honeycombed with caves. The caves are inhabited by the Tunnel Men and the Tunnel Men are "a pale brownish-yellow in colour - a sickly repulsive shade, as though the very skin and flesh beneath it was dead. Their faces were coarse and cunning and cruel, and suggestive of both Tibetan and Indian blood."

Tibetan and Indian readers of 'The Modern Boy' must have felt a bit uncomfortable when they got to that bit, but Edwy goes on regardless.

"And their eyes glowed like red fires! Eyes which enabled their owners, it seemed, to see in the dark! As though Nature had not made them sufficiently grotesque, their hair, tangled and matted and profuse, was a dead flat white. Such were the strange creatures who lurked in the subterranean tunnel of Everest."

Actually, there's more to the Tunnel Men than that. They were an active lot; the fact that they wore skirts of "a coarse matting" tells you they didn't sit down much. When you got near them you had a sensation of "pins and needles." Nearer still and you were paralyzed. Later on when Captain Gordon learnt something of the history of these characters he decided they were radio-active. That shows how modern we Modern Boys were; we knew about radio-activity 35 years ago.

2,000 feet below the dark and gloomy caves where the Tunnel Men lurk - there's a monster too, "its body at least a dozen feet in diameter," and our heroes were at its mercy until Gordon whipped out his automatic pistol and shot down a huge stalactite which brained the beast - 2,000 feet below the dark and gloomy caves there's another great cave. This is a "world of its own. Where the air is crystal clear and full of a bright sun-like glow. A world of trees and fields and rivers and human habitation! Wooden houses! Brick houses!"

In other words one of your E.S.B's Lost Civilizations.

It is populated by the descendants of the survivors of the Great Massacre of Yaru which took place during the Indian Mutiny (1857-59). Several white families were fleeing from the murderous, mutinous sepoys. The refugees were led by "a supposedly faithful old fakir, but he was a traitor, and his plan was a diabolical scheme to destroy the hated whites."

He very nearly succeeded. The crafty old fakir bottled them all up in a "black and dismal cavern." He blasted the cavern entrance with gun powder and the opening was blocked for ever. Then off he went - chanting Hari Krishna I suppose - little knowing that when he blasted in the front of the cavern he blasted out the back and the surviving refugees were able to stagger into the Hidden World of Everest. They called it Innerland and, being White and British and Victorian and Indomitable, they cleared it and farmed it and what had been " a state of primeval wilderness" became a little bit of old England. There were small hedged fields, two fair sized towns, two villages (cloth weaving and the hand manufacturing of linen were the principal industries of Nortonstown and Sanderstown) and a good many scattered farms.

Messrs. Gordon, Burgess and Proctor reached this Shangri-la just in time. Minutes later the Tunnel Men were invading by the thousand, and, if it hadn't been for our heroes, things would have gone badly for the Innerlanders.

But the Tunnel Men were routed. Thanks mostly to Big Jim Gordon. And, as a bonus, he worked out a way of escaping to the Outer World. Balloons filled with a poisonous gas "four times as light as hydrogen." Up went Jim - and out - back to his base camp and in no time at all he'd organised a gigantic relief operation; "every living soul of the Lost People of the Hidden World was rescued - and brought to the greater world they had heard about and dreamed of."

Just in time for World War II.

Things turned out happily for what was left of the Tunnel Men; Edwy must

have been in mellow mood. They got the Great Cavern with "its towns and farms and all the livestock" and there, I suppose, they'll live in peace - not much linen manufacturing going on in Sanderstown these days, I'll bet - until some Japanese come shooting in on his skis.

* *

HAPPY XMAS AND 1972 to all readers of "C.D." and the books and authors which inspired it, "S.P.C." and the great Hobby.

LAURENCE S. ELLIOTT

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EXCHANGES WANTED for S.O.L's, Magnets, Gems, Lees, Bunter Books, etc. Wants list with s.a.e. WANTED: Nuggets, B.F. Libs., Greyfriars, St. Jim's, St. Frank's.

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I would welcome any new St. Frank's readers in the Hobby. Please write.

J. W. COOK, 18 DOUGLAS ROAD, MT. EDEN, AUCKLAND 4, N.Z.

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Advice on Budget Holidays

by W. G. BUNTER

(translated from the original by LES ROWLEY)

"Why," asked Mr. Bunter through a mounthful of doughnut, "why stay at an hotel?" He glared indignantly around before removing a smear of jam by drawing the sleeve of his jacket across his mouth. Hotels are a waste of good money; the service is good but they don't believe in credit. Take Trust Houses - actually gave me a bill because I was staying at one of their hotels! Trust House indeed! Wouldn't take the word of a gentleman when he told them that he had left his cash behind at Bunter Court. Fat lot of Trust about them.

The thing is (continued Mr. Bunter) to approach the problem with fore-thought and consideration and if you'll just pay Mrs. Mimble for a dozen of those eclairs I'll give you some sound advice on how to have a low budget holiday.

About three weeks before the end of term you invite some of the chaps to stay at your ancestral home. You haven't an ancestral home? How sad it is to be poor! Never mind; still invite them but be careful to add the proviso that if they can't come with you then you'll go with them. Then a week later tell them that you cannot take them home after all because your pater has the decorators in; there is scarlet fever in the house or you've heard from home that the pater and mater are going to spend the vac at Margate - that is Cannes. It doesn't matter which you use as long as you succeed in stuffing them. If after all that they still say they'll come to Bunter Court (suspicious beasts) you'll have to say that it has been burned down. You then revert, with practised ease, to the other half of the arrangement about going home with them.

Your best bet for this tactic is a chap like Mauly. Someone who hates to go back on his word or is too lazy to do so anyway. Avoid chaps like Smithy who are likely to kick you the length of the Remove corridor. I find Wharton pretty 'easy' but give Johnny Bull a miss. Really it's surprising how difficult some fellows are - after all I've done for them!

It is important, too, to remember one's own social standing. Take Sir Jimmy Vivian, for instance. Bit too common for me. Of course, I know he's a baronet, not that I think much of baronets myself, with so many higher titles in my family. But his training you know. Really, Vivian is a bit thick. Of course it wasn't his fault that he was left an orphan in a slum, or something, without any money, and was brought up like a hooligan. I'm no snob, but Vivian's no class is he? The same goes for Penfold and Linley. A gentleman in my position cannot

afford to take up the sons of cobblers and mill labourers. It just wouldn't do! So take my advice. Try and fasten on to the upper class chaps.

Providing the fellow you've chosen to honour with your company is resigned to the fact, you next have to borrow the fare to his place (unless, like Mauly, a car is sent for him). I find that people are quite prepared to advance me the cost of my fare once they learn I'm not coming home with them. If you cannot find the fare in this way try other means. But let me counsel you against bilking on the railways. With the passage of the years and the re-designing of seating it is no longer possible to squeeze under the seats and suspicious ticket collectors never believe you when you say that you've lost your ticket. Really, it's scandalous what the lower classes are allowed to do these days and you are likely to find yourself pitched out on your ear or handed over to a bobby.

No. If you are resolved on bilking someone try a cabbie. Have him drive you to, say, Wharton Lodge. On arrival you simply instruct the butler to pay the fare. Now, a word or two about menials. Don't let them bandy words with you; you must remain the master of the situation. Look them up and down with a freezing glare and don't stand for insolence. They are servants and when you say jump they are there to jump smartly. I have experienced difficulty with Wharton's butler in the past. I never can remember the names of menials but Wells can be insufferable at times, he told me once that he couldn't take the liberty of paying my debts for me. Cheek!

If you think that the taxi dodge won't work, try packing yourself inside a large trunk belonging to the chap you're going home with. But be careful. I did this once and those idiots Gosling and Trotter let it fall down the stairs and it burst open. However, with a little care one can arrive at one's destination without having to buy a ticket with the fare money the pater has sent you. Naturally enough this money should be spent on a snack to be eaten en route instead of frittering it away on a railway ticket so this should be considered only as a last resort.

So far we have considered the problem from the point of view that you are the accepted guest at the home of the chap you have managed to stuff. Alas, old chap, the fellows are beastlier on some occasions than they are on others and simply refuse to take a chap along. Do not dismay. If you will just pass me one of those large plum cakes I will tell you how to get yourself in to a house to which you haven't an invite.

Most houses have a weak spot. Take Wharton Lodge. On one occasion, when Wharton threatened to kick me all the way to Wimford station if I dared show my face, I climbed the steps from the garden to the balcony outside Wharton's den. Keeping a careful watch through the window I saw Wells come in to draw the curtains. Staying out of sight and using my wonderful gift of ventriloquism I yelled out in a voice like Wharton's that I'd been hurt. When Wells came out of the french windows to see what was up I gave him a push in the back and sent him flying down the steps. In a minute I was in Wharton's den and had locked the windows and doors. Masterly, don't you think? Of course there was a bit of a row afterwards, but once you are in they will have a hard job of getting you out.

Mauleverer Towers has a secret passage running from a disused well to the turret room, a fact which I discovered when dodging a cab driver one Christmas. A more straightforward means is to watch the house until the beasts have left it and roll up to the front door as though you have been invited. Once inside, a bit of soft sawder to a guardian or relation will see you through. This has worked with the aunts of both Wharton and Bull and there is nothing the chaps can do unless they kick up a row. There is one fault to this plan: you must keep in sight of the aunt concerned for as soon as they get you on their own the nephew will rag you unmercifully.

Circumstances will often facilitate a chap being invited in the beginning. If you use your own eyes and the keyholes in other people's study doors you can usually pick up useful information, or a letter addressed to someone else may come open accidentally in your hand and provide you with the material for suggesting that an invite is the only acceptable reward for keeping one's mouth shut. Far be it from me to suggest anything improper old chap but these days one simply has to look after number one you know. A word of warning here. I managed to get myself invited to Hilton Hall one Christmas simply by reading a letter in which the butler told dear Master Cedric that he couldn't lend him £15. Hilton not only invited me but Wharton and his pals when I tactfully explained how matters stood. Unfortunately that beast Price came too and spent a lot of time trying to make me give the letter up.

There is always the risk of a beak turning up. We have too much of Quelchy during term time without having him during the vac as well but that old fossil of a fool, Colonel Wharton, has to go and invite Quelch on occasion. I told Wharton that it simply would not do and either Quelch or I would have to go. All the beast did was to order the car to take me to the station. Another beak, who called himself Smedley, turned up at Wharton Lodge one vac and boxed my ears just because I told him that he had got the push and wouldn't be returning to Greyfriars the next term. One would think that the beaks would find something better to do than turn up at homes of gentlemen cadging a few days holiday for nothing. Despicable, I call it. I think I'll try those jam turnovers now. Six will do to start with.

So a chap must be careful to find out whether a beak is to visit the same house during the hols. If so, there are various ways of putting the beast off. You can send a telegram saying "Family and staff down with plumbago. Touch someone else. Wharton." (pretty good, what?), or just ring up the beast and tell him not to barge in where he isn't wanted. I did this once and it nearly worked only Wharton found out. If the beak walks from the station, meet him on the way and tell him that there has been a mistake and that the house is closed for the duration of the hols due to staff shortage or the bubonic plague or the murder of the host. Anything will do but make it plausible.

Yes. Do make it plausible, old chap. And when you've decided on your story stick to it like glue. Sometimes I get confused and mix up two or three different stories. Quelchy isn't the only downy bird, so watch it, or you'll end up with a booting or six on the bags.

I recommend that you travel light. I always do! One cannot afford to be encumbered with cases of clobber when one visits under the kind of conditions I have outlined. You cannot hide quickly, old fellow, if you have a half a dozen suitcases with you. Arrive in what you stand up in and, if you have to depart with someone's boot behind you, you may get clear if the need arises. Besides allowing one a freedom of movement, travelling light has certain other advantages, economy in the wear and tear of a chap's own clothes not being the least of them. Of course, one has to keep up appearances, so it is of prime importance to make a selection of togs from the wardrobe of your host. I cannot emphasise too much the importance of making your selection with care. Choose only the best - after all a host should expect a guest to appear at his best. Some slight improvisation may be required if your host has a skinny figure like Wharton's and you have a more manly figure like mine. Waistcoats can be modified by slitting up the back and the sides held together by pieces of tape; jackets should be left un-buttoned and cardboard can be fitted in the lining of over-large top hats. Be ruthless, dear fellow! You must look your best, regardless of cost - to your host.

So far, so good. You are in and your wardrobe is provided. It is now up to you to stay in. It is surprising the amount of bad manners one encounters during such visits. If you go out for a drive in a motor car with chaps like Wharton and I fear even Mauly - keep awake. I went to sleep once and when I woke up it was dark and when I got out I found I was back at Bunter Vil-- Court and the car was on its way before I could climb back in. Underhand, I call it. On other occasions it has been necessary for me to keep to my room and make out I am ill. Any illness will do - plumbago, shooting daggers of pain in the spine, pneumatica - anything that has the ring of truth about it. Whichever you choose make sure that it is one that doesn't restrict your eating. Soon enough the beasts will be tired of banging on your door and will leave you to scoff in peace.

You will need funds during your stay. It is not always easy raising tin when there are so many beasts in the house. Postal Orders, delayed in the post, are seldom cashed in advance these days. I don't know why but it is a sad fact. But there is a way, especially at Christmas time. All you need do is to borrow some of the presents that the other beasts have received and take them to a local second-hand dealer. If you do this you should avoid such things as gold watches and cameras which might arouse suspicion. Besides it might be called dishonest and no-one wants to go to chokey. Stick to things like books which no-one is likely to make a fuss about.

Speaking of presents, make sure the other chaps know what you want beforehand; simple things like a new bike, a fur lined coat, a cinematograph. Drop your hints tactfully but not so tactfully that they will misunderstand and give you a bar of soap and scrubbing brush like they did me some years back.

The food that is provided at table may not be sufficient if you have a healthy appetite like mine. Arrange for a cake to be placed by the side of your bed in case you feel peckish in the night. A flashlight is a useful accessory in case you need to find your way down to the kitchen when everyone is asleep. Normally,

however, one can get enough simply by ringing the bell in the servant's quarters.

I must again mention the subject of menials, but before I do I must have some ginger-pop as I feel rather dry and you'd better get some of those peppermint creams to save time.

One has to be firm with menials. I believe in showing them who is master. Keep them busy supplying your every need. Make sure that you know where every bell push is and who it will bring when you press it. Sometimes they are cheeky enough to disconnect the wire - watch this and threaten that you will ask for them to be sacked if they don't buck up.

The behaviour of the lower classes leaves much to be desired these days. Wells, the butler at Wharton Lodge, is a case in point. I have always felt that a good booting would teach Wells his place but somehow I haven't got round to it. You can get your own back by pretending that you were going to tip servants and because of their impertinence you have changed your mind. Treat them with lofty scorn, but nothing else.

Follow the advice I have given and you will have a jolly good vac at little or no cost. In addition to which you can leave places like Wharton Lodge or Mauleverer Towers with the assurance that your distinguished presence has added tone to the celebrations. Now, did I mention that I was expecting a postal order? Beast! Don't walk away when a chap's talking to you.

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ON FIRST READING

The Yellow Tiger

by CHRISTOPHER LOWDER

To write this article, I did something I normally never do. I borrowed a book.

As a general rule, the only books I read are my own. This is mainly because I have a lot of books, and the sum-total rises steadily week by week.

Five years ago I had a lot of books yet could say, with truth, that I had read them all - and some two or three times over, if not more. Two years ago, I could say that I was perhaps somewhat behind in my reading but that, with a little effort, I could get back to par. Now, the awful truth is that of the books in my possession a quarter are unread.

I have two courses open to me. Either I drop everything, shut myself off from the world for a couple of months, and read solidly during that time - or I simply stop buying books. Both courses seem pretty far-fetched to me.

Not, I hasten to assure you, that I simply buy books for their value, or for the look of the thing. These both seem to me to be very sterile attitudes to take. Books are meant to be read and enjoyed and relished. And that's what I do with them.

On the other hand, if you were to ask me what my interests are, I could only reply - the sky's the limit. This makes for complications, where the buying of books is concerned. And these complications are added to by the fact that I'm a fast reader. Your average 25-bob thriller, for instance, I can whip through in three hours of a wet Sunday afternoon.

Thus, I am always ready to replenish my stock. Not because that stock is dwindling to any great extent, but simply because the possibility is there, lurking in the background like some indeterminate but menacing shadow. My God - a wet Sunday afternoon without a book!

Which is why I have no time to read anyone else's books. It's a full-time occupation simply coping with my own.

However, this present case is a special one. If I had not borrowed a book, you would not be reading this article now.

For who, of the readers of this Annual, be they ever so ardent in their following of this "poor man's Sherlock Holmes," Sexton Blake, will ever read, let alone see, a copy of the very first issue of the Sexton Blake Library, G. H. Teed's "The Yellow Tiger?"

Not many, I'll be bound. It is a true collectors' item. It is as rare as Poe's 1846 "Tales," M. P. Shiel's "Prince Zaleski," or the true First Edition of

Hume's "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab." As far as I know, only half a dozen copies of "The Yellow Tiger" exist - or, at least, are known to exist, a somewhat different matter. Perhaps hundreds lie forgotten in attics - but I doubt it. You are more likely to come across Nos. 2-20 of the First Series S.B.L. in mint condition, at 10p each, than you are to find a battered, tattered copy of No. 1.

It is also somewhat unique in first issues of any successful and/or long-running magazine in that it is a great story.

In our own sphere, who would trade in the "Harry Wharton - Rebel" series for Magnet No. 1 (going, that is, on the actual story-content, and the quality of the writing)? Who would swap the "Ezra Quirke" Nelson Lees for "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach?" Who would exchange "The Mervyn Mystery" or "Rivals and Chums" for the two Jack, Sam & Pete yarns that kicked off the old Boys' Friend 3d Library? No one in their right mind, surely.

Yet one would have to be slightly unhinged to even have to think about trading in a hefty slice of one's own Blake collection for "The Yellow Tiger."

Teed's magnum opus of his early years was written during wartime, what I like to call "the dawn years" of the Sexton Blake saga. The years from around 1912 to around 1920 (a magical year for the Blake enthusiast, this latter, it would seem - most Blakiana written prior to this is usually considered to be unreadable, which is a great mistake) showed a marked rise in the quality of the writing done for the Union Jack. Most of the great writers of the Golden Age (the 1920's and 1930's) were recruited during this period - Teed, E. S. Brooks, Lewis Jackson, Anthony Skene, Robert Murray - and their work can be seen to be markedly different from that of the relative old-timers like John Bobin, Norman Goddard, Cecil Hayter, and so on.

The dialogue was crisper, the plots tighter; the pace of the New Look writers' stories was faster, and there was much more action. The most important difference, however, was the amount of detective interest in each story. At last, during these "dawn years," writers were getting away from the dire mid-to-late-Victorian detective story characteristics which in many ways even pre-dated "A Study in Scarlet," so hopelessly antiquated were they. There was action in the old-timers' stories, certainly - but precious little detection.

The seeds that were planted during this eight-year period flowered during the 1920's in an atmosphere that was heavy with tear-gas, cordite fumes, and murky river fogs (usually around Limehouse Reach or Wapping Old Stairs), when a book that had only the faintest connection with crime was an instant best-seller. One is reminded of the famous Punch cartoon of the time which showed a hard-bitten publisher talking to a rather owlish-looking client and saying: "I liked your book on butterflies immensely - but couldn't you inject a little detective interest into it?"

Of the new recruits to the Sexton Blake writers' circle, Teed was by far the best. Indeed, there is a lot to be said for the view that he was the very best Blake writer ever. He was a natural. Whatever locale he was describing - from the streets of Bideford, Devon, to Dutch Joe's gin-shop in the East Indies - sprang

instantly to the mind's eye, so authentic was it, and so accurate his use of words.

With Teed, one knew instinctively that one did not need to suspend one's disbelief (willingly or otherwise), as with most writers. For Teed had been there, wherever it was, and his reporter's eye had locked on the salient features of the place, and his reporter's mind had translated these features into cunning words that tugged the reader on and on into the thread of the yarn he was spinning.

Teed was that rare bird, a tale-teller (the species is almost extinct now) - the kind of writer who writes as though he were yarning to you over a camp-fire blaze. His copy is enthralling, hypnotic. The flow of his narrative is such that one wouldn't care if it never stopped, and when it does finally roll to a halt, one feels the silence, so to say.

And Teed, more than most other writers of this period (including those who were engaged in the business of writing straight 7/6d detective novels as opposed to those who were hovering on the Sexton Blake borderline) knew the importance of keeping a good character going.

Once the public has become accustomed to a fictional character it is almost impossible to kill that character off, however tired the writer may have become of him. Conan Doyle versus Holmes is the most obvious example of this, but Holmes only springs to mind so quickly because we know that Doyle tried to get rid of him.

We pass lightly over John Creasey's Roger West, Sapper's Bulldog Drummond, Dorothy Sayers' Lord Peter Whimsey, Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, or Leslie Charteris's the Saint, for instance, forgetting that the reason why these characters have remained in the public consciousness for so long is that their creators decided to concentrate their efforts, so to say, rather than diversify. And they had too much regard for the golden eggs to kill off the goose that laid them.

Charteris is a prime example of a writer who realized just where his own best interests lay. "Meet the Tiger," the first Saint novel, was a fairly run-of-the-mill 1920's thriller. But when The Thriller (the weekly paper) came along in 1929, and Charteris began to write for it, he used Simon Templar as a character in a piratical syndicate called the Five Kings. The Five Kings soon dropped by the wayside, however, and Templar became, more and more, the central character. Indeed, when the stories were put into hardback form, all reference to the Five Kings, as such, was cut out, and the Saint truly came into his own. Charteris, in fact, knew the value of a strong character.

Edgar Wallace was the first writer I can think of whose powers of invention were so great that one main character was simply not enough. First there was the by turns philosophical, by turns belligerent Smithy who did for prose what Kipling's Tommy Atkins did for verse. Then came the Four Just Men; then came T. B. Smith; then came Sanders (not to mention Ham, or Bones, or Bosambo); then came Mr. J. G. Reeder, whose antecedents are somewhat confused (is the John Gray Reeder of "Room 13" the same character as the mild, owlish, pince-nezed little man of "Terror Keep" or "Red Aces?"); then the Ringer; then Educated Evans; then ... Oh, a lot more.

Teed thought along the same lines. He was never so happy as when he was putting a new character on to his dazzling roster of crooks and lovely ladies.

First there was the beautiful Yvonne, who had such a crush on Blake, and Huxton Rymer, the brilliant doctor who turned bad, wasn't very far behind. Then Baron Robert de Beauremon, and his Council of Eleven, Wu Ling, the reincarnated Prince Menes, the Black Rat, Marie Galante, the Three Musketeers, the Black Eagle, Mathew Cardolak, Muriel Marl, Mary Trent, Uncle Graves, Baron and Elsa von Kravitch, Vali Mata-Vali - the list seems endless.

And not content with creating characters, Teed could take over an already established felon and transform him into the most popular villain in the whole Blake mythos. Plummer, of course.

The mysterious Ernest Sempill created Plummer in 1908, and when he disappeared Norman Goddard took the character over. Goddard died in the trenches in 1917, and John Bobin carried on writing about him. Teed's first Plummer story was "The Thousandth Chance" (U.J. No. 1000) but this, for obvious reasons, was a special issue, in which he also brought in Anthony Skene's Zenith and Andrew Murray's Professor Kew. However, he must have enjoyed the experience as he next teamed Plummer up with his own Huxton Rymer ("The Mystery of the Moving Mountain," U.J. No. 1020). After that it was Plummer solo in one of the most brilliant yarns Teed ever wrote, "The Hawk of the Peak" (U.J. No. 1041).

For a while, Walter Shute wrote Plummer stories, but Teed soon gained the upper hand, so to say, and from the mid-'20's onwards the ex-Scotland Yard detective was his property, to do with as he would. And Teed certainly missed no chance to feature the character, and extend his personality in some way or other.

Whereas Sempill's Plummer was a moustache-twirling, beard-tugging cardboard Victorian villain, Teed's was a living, breathing human being - ferocious when angered, murderous when double-crossed, a human wolf who plundered and preyed on society simply to satisfy his own greed ... yet capable of loyalty to his woman, Vali Mata-Vali - that is, when he was not gallivanting off with Muriel Marl.

This is another reason why Teed is such an admirable writer: his characters were not simply black and white cut-outs, but three-dimensional. The devil of human nature was in them, even Blake... and they become more and more real to the adult eye when one realizes, from subtle hints not caught by the Editors of the '20's, that the relationship between Plummer and Vali, for instance, or Rymer and Mary Trent, was not as clear-cut or innocent as one supposed.

Alas, Plummer doesn't feature in "The Yellow Tiger" - for obvious reasons. One character who is omitted, however (and this is quite inexplicable, not to say unforgivable!) is the villain who lasted almost the full course of Teed's career in Blake circles - Dr. Huxton Rymer.

Rymer first appeared in February, 1913, in U.J. No. 488, "When Greek Meets Greek," and made his final bow in 1935, S.B.L. No. 474, "The Martello Tower Mystery." For nearly a quarter of a century he plagued Blake, and Blake plagued

him. Of the two, Blake was the more successful, but this certainly didn't detract from Rymer's essential charisma. As with most of Teed's major villains, one couldn't help admiring him. He wasn't simply a criminal (he certainly wasn't a common thug), he was an outlaw. He lived on his wits, took risks; he sometimes won and he sometimes lost. He was cunning and sometimes merciless. But he was clever, too, and courageous even when faced with the most appalling odds. He was also a man of his word, and a man of remarkable loyalty (especially to his woman, Mary Trent). And it is of course these latter qualities which we admire in the man - since we know that they are largely absent in a real-life villain.

Why Rymer was left out of the cast of "The Yellow Tiger" is beyond me. Of the 40 stories Teed wrote for the U.J. up to the time of this first issue of the S.B.L., the good doctor was first feature in ten, so he was an established star. Possibly Teed feared over-exposure. Whatever was the case, however, Teed threw everyone else in.

Here, it might be interesting to speculate on the actual origins of the S.B.L. The Nelson Lee Library had been going for some three months, and must have been quite successful. But Blake was by far the more popular character and had been featured regularly in the U.J. for just over ten years, whereas the appearances of Nelson Lee had been spasmodic, to say the least, being largely confined to serials and short stories in the Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, Boys' Herald group of papers.

It seems clear that the Lee Library was a try-out. The Boys' Friend Library - 120 pages for 3d - was a regular seller, featuring mostly reprint serials cut down into one long story, interspersed with original novels.

With the War on, those at the helm of the old A.P. were probably loth to try out an entirely new 120-page Library, just in case (a) it didn't sell, and/or (b) there was a paper shortage. The Nelson Lee - 52 pages for 1d - was an admirable compromise. If it did go under, for one reason or another, the loss wouldn't be so great.

Blake was obviously a much more commercial proposition, and when the Nelson Lee experiment succeeded (helped, admittedly, by its amazing giveaway bicycle competition), it was felt that a Sexton Blake library, with 120 pages, was a viable proposition.

Ironically, the paper shortage cut it down within two years anyhow, first to 72 pages, and then to 64, and it was only some 15 years later that the S.B.L. was fleshed out once more.

Teed was the natural choice to start the series off, and he must have been expected to keep the ball rolling. Again ironically, he was only to write three novels before joining up, and didn't return to the Sexton Blake fold until 1922, five years later.

I say that Teed was the natural choice to start the series off, but there were a number of writers who were just as capable, E. S. Brooks and Andrew Murray amongst them.

However, it is clear that even then Teed was by far the most popular author. This is easily seen by the fact that he was given the job of writing every Double Number from Easter, 1913 (only four months after his very first story was published) to Christmas, 1916 (a run of 11 issues) and he'd have probably written the Christmas, 1917 issue if he hadn't been in France at the time. The fact was that Teed was an exceptionally gifted writer, and the A.P. Editors knew it. What was far more important, however, the readers knew it, too.

And so, in the middle of September, 1915 "The Yellow Tiger" was published. A copy lies in front of me as I write. It is not that most perfect of collectors' items, a mint copy. To be honest, it is rather battered. The top right hand corner of the cover has been ripped off at some time or other, and there are numerous tears to it. Cellotape has been used to mend it, though now almost dry and peeling away from the repaired patches. Dust is ingrained in the paper, and what used to be pure white is now a dirty brown.

And yet even as an inanimate book (and rather a grubby one at that), it has a certain aura about it. As like as not I shall never lay my hands on another copy for as long as I live ... though it won't be for any lack of trying.

I said earlier that it was a great story. Really, I can say no more, and give it no higher praise. It is what used to be known as a rattling good yarn. It contains all the elements that have excited children and adults since Cro Magnon hunters told their stories round the tribal fires 35,000 years ago.

It is, naturally enough, of its time. There is the Yellow Peril, in the shape of Prince Wu Ling and his Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle; there is the great criminal combine - the Council of Eleven; there is the aristocratic master-crook, Baron Robert de Beauremon. There is the Great Detective, and there is his plucky young assistant. And there is a beautiful young woman.

There are thrilling scenes in the air, and on the sea. There are mysterious Chinamen lurking in the Cardiff dockland, opium dens, a kidnapping, and eerie ceremonies in the heart of the jungle on a secret island off the China coast. There is a marvellous chase that takes the reader from England across half the world, and the climax of the book sees a savage battle with all the odds against the heroes, who win through by sheer guts and concentrated fire-power - and then only by the skin of their teeth.

It would be interesting to learn Teed's early influences. It is difficult to make much of an assessment from his style, since it is a very personal one - but I would wager that he learnt a lot from Edgar Wallace's early novels.

Not in style, nor yet in attitude. Teed was a tough writer. There was steel in his villains, and even in his heroes. The men, and women too, who flit across his stage think nothing of sliding a knife between the ribs of someone who crosses them. They can be grim and pitiless. Life, in a Teed novel, is generally pretty cheap. Wallace, by comparison, is almost light-hearted.

And whereas Teed's characters were imbued with life - were, in fact, red-

blooded to a degree - Wallace's were rarely so well developed. One always has the idea that the author is a puppet-master, reading Wallace's thrillers. On the other hand, Teed's heroes and villains are, one feels, definitely Masters of their Fate.

This is not to denigrate Wallace, however, who, when he felt like it, could surprise even his critics. "Captains of Souls" (a very un-Wallacelike book) is a case in point, as is also that splendid novel from his latter years "The Coat of Arms." In these two, and a few others (notably the Sanders stories) the characters come alive, become truly three-dimensional.

But "The Yellow Tiger," and other early Teed stories, bears a great resemblance to the type of thriller in which Wallace was specializing in the years before the Great War - e.g. "The Nine Bears" - where the plot centres on a vast criminal conspiracy, engineered by fanatics of one sort or another, who are so far above the law that they need not stoop to petty criminal acts to carry their fell schemes through. Their plans go like clockwork; they can call on untold thousands of minions to bedevil the Law for them. There is generally a swift-paced chase, and the hero, using almost Godlike powers, can summon the Army, the Navy, and whatever represented the Air Force, to finally bring the villains to book.

Wallace was the first of the streamline thriller writers, and it seems fairly likely that Teed deliberately followed in his footsteps in this respect.

It is hard, looking at this faded, rather dirty, rather tatty paperback book that lies in front of me now, to be entirely objective about it. It is not a great work of literature (indeed, it's not even the greatest story Teed ever wrote), and having read it I found myself suddenly brought up with a fairly hefty jolt.

The first Sexton Blake story I ever read was "The Case of the Wicked Three" by Anthony Parsons (S.B.L. 3rd Series, No. 322). It was lying around in a neighbour's cottage, and I picked it up and went right through it. This would be, I suppose, around 1955. At the time, I was 10 years old.

As a book I didn't particularly enjoy it. Edgar Wallace was much better, and so were Leslie Charteris, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Sapper, Baroness Orczy and so on (my mother had an extensive library). Possibly it was the well-endowed young woman on the cover that interested me - the actual story didn't.

A couple of years later, whilst grubbing through a second-hand bookshop in Worcester I came across a stack of books in the same format, but with covers by a different artist. The name "Sexton Blake" rang a bell, and my attention (I had just started collecting for real) was drawn to the fact that each had a serial number on it - 230, 235, 253, 254, and so on. There were about 15 in all, and I bought the lot for 2d each. On reflection, it seems about the best half-dollarsworth I ever invested in.

Not that the stories are all that good when compared to pre-war Blakiana. But on the other hand I didn't know about pre-war Blakiana, and these mid-3rd Series novels were an excellent taster for what was to come in later years.

The stories (a couple by Anthony Parsons, a couple by Walter Tyrer and

Rex Hardinge, three from John Drummond - John Newton Chance; later to become one of my favourite writers - assorted titles by Hilary King, W. J. Passingham, et al.) were all readable; the cover art was, I thought, terrific (Parker, of course - those covers really turned me on; I've been a fan ever since); and since these issues were numbered in the 200's, it was obvious that seeking them all out would keep me occupied for some years - a blissful prospect for a budding collector!

What I didn't know was that the S.B.L. was still being published. I was still rummaging through market stalls and old bookshops for more copies when I spotted the familiar Parker style adorning the covers of two rather more modern-looking books - Christmas, 1959. "A Cold Night For Murder" and "Guilty Party" (Nos. 441 and 442), with their marvellous seasonal atmosphere, and their letter columns full of stuff about pre-war favourites, Collectors' Digest, and like matters knocked me out. I was a regular reader from then on.

Thus, here I am, 12 years later, still reading about Sexton Blake, and still eager for more. And I find it an odd experience. Odd that I, a product of the post-war world, should immerse myself to such an extent in something that is so blatantly pre-war in concept.

And it is not as though I am seeking some sort of refuge from the stresses and strains and complications of modern life. On the whole, one's life is as one makes it. Our society is neither better nor worse than previous societies... our acts of violence are basically the same as those done 500 years ago, 1000 years ago, 3000 years ago, 30,000 years ago ... we are neither more civilized, in the long run, nor less civilized. The whole thing is relative. Thus, though I will cheer on the Revolution, I am not so dissatisfied with today's society that I would wish to bury myself in yesterdays.

And it is not even as though pre-war boys' and adults' papers are my sole literary diet. As I said earlier, I read a lot, and I have wide interests. I even read, and write for, comics - and if any smart alec sneers at this, my usual response is to ask him if he's ever read "Finnegan's Wake" through to the end.

And yet Sexton Blake occupies a special place in my library, and in my heart. I know that if I pick up a story about him to while away the time, that time will, more often than not (much more often), be whiled away to my satisfaction. I know that I can rely on a dozen or so writers from the canon to give me pleasure, and excitement, and a sense of well-being. More than anything else, I know that I will end up with the feeling inside me of a good story well told. And that is a splendid feeling, worth much.

So it is not so odd after all. The Sexton Blake mythos is truly timeless, and I am grateful to have read "The Yellow Tiger" if only because it has straightened out a part of my personal philosophy. For Teed's book is a good story well told, and if this battered copy in front of me is worth a lot of money, it is also worth a lot more in terms of the human condition.

You will have noticed that I have not given you much of an idea of what actually happens in "The Yellow Tiger." This was deliberate. Why should I spoil

your enjoyment?

One day, perhaps, you will, by some miracle, come across a copy. There may not be hundreds hidden away in trunks or dusty attics, but there must be a couple knocking around, somewhere. Most things come to he who waits.

Speaking personally, I've changed my mind since starting to write this piece. One of these days, I'll come across a copy of this very first issue of the Sexton Blake Library. It may not happen for ten years, or 20, or even 50 - but it'll happen, and I can wait. I've got an instinct for these things.

Meanwhile, all that remains for me is to express my gratitude to my good friend Josie Packman for putting that day nearer by showing me what I've been missing - and thus strengthening my resolve!

* *

COMPANION PAPER containing football poem "Play Up You Fellows, Play Up." Your price paid.

WARK, 15 HARPERLAND DRIVE, KILMARNOCK, SCOTLAND.

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CHRISTMAS and NEW YEAR GREETINGS to all readers of C.D. and to all those who have corresponded with me during 1971.

WILLIAM LISTER, BLACKPOOL.

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HOTSPURS, ADVENTURES, WIZARDS, CHAMPIONS, 1946 to 1949. 25p each. 100 for £22.

JOSEPHS, 39 VALLEY ROAD, HENLEY-ON-THAMES, OXON.

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FOR SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Magnets, Marvels, Bunter Titles, etc. State wants.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

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MUSEUM PRESS, 30 TONBRIDGE ROAD, MAIDSTONE — Copies still available Billy Bunter Picture Book, Boy Without a Name, Rivals And Chums, The Housemaster's Homecoming. Price £1 each, including post and packing.

WANTED: Magnets 872, 942.

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SALE: Complete Series Holiday Annuals 1920-1941. Offers.

ERIC LEYLAND, "PIPPINS," LITTLE LAVER, ONGAR, ESSEX.

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Aldine's Lusty Libraries

by O. W. WADHAM

While Fleetway published a large number of boys' and girls' story papers and comics, the Aldine Publishing Co. Ltd., based in Crown Court, Chancery Lane, London, was active only in the story paper field.

Buffalo Bill and Robin Hood were the main money-makers from the Aldine stable. Besides regular weekly or monthly story papers devoted to those famous characters, Aldine issued at least ten well-bound books, priced at 3/6 each, five dealing with Buffalo Bill and five with the Sherwood Outlaw.

Those books were edited by Wingrove Willson and were well illustrated with coloured plates and black and white drawings.

For younger children the Aldine people published about twenty other bound books, priced at 1/6 each. Among them were "Wonder Tales of World Heroes," by Rev. J. Crowlesmith, and "Billie Bouncer's Half Holidays" by Leslie M. Oyler.

Other writers were Robert Finch, P. Mortimer-Evans, Rowland Walker and Ernest H. Robinson.

It was, however, in the field of regular library fiction that Aldine were best known. Their peak period, I should say, would be just after the first World War.

Most of their numerous libraries, two titles monthly, were at that time priced at 4d. Two, Aldine Football Novels and Aldine Boxing Novels, were sold at 4½d.

One of Aldine's most popular series was the Dixon Brett Detective Library. Brett had two clever "assistants;" one was a man who looked like a boy. A sort of Wee Georgie Wood character, modelled in the mode of Sexton Blake's Tinker.

Aldine War Stories had a good run for a time. E. L. McKeag and Ex-Private Rex wrote most of them.

Aldine's Adventure Library was popular. Reid Whitly and Anthony Thomas were among the contributors.

Aldine Thrillers, "two new volumes, on the last day of every month," were a mixed bunch, with detective Dixon Brett appearing in several of them.

Aldine also ran a Household Series. At least four volumes on everything from making sweets and puddings to dream and fortune telling books.

In fact, there seems to be only one field of fiction or fact that Aldine did not venture into to any extent, and that was the school story. Maybe they felt it would be foolish to compete with the Magnet or Gem, then at a peak of popularity.

Without doubt it was a very wise decision.

Serials in the Union Jack

Year	Title	Author	Original or Reprint
1903	The Chums of Ashbourne School	A. Blair	Not known
1904	With the Colours	R. Wray	" "
1904	Captain of the Guard	H. St. John	" "
1905	The Streets of London	M. Hamilton	" "
1905	Ned Kelly	C. Hayter	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 44, 1908
1905	Trooper & Bushranger	C. Hayter	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 45, 1908
1906	The Pride of His School	C. Hayter	Not known
1906	Spy & Conspirator		" "
1906	The Black Assegai	S. Pound	" "
1907	The Hidden City	B. Kent	" "
1907	The Slapcrash Boys	E. H. Burrage	" "
1907	Ching Ching at School	E. H. Burrage	" "
1908	Ching Ching Abroad	E. H. Burrage	" "
1908	Battle & Breeze	H. St. John	" "
1908	For England, Home and Beauty	H. St. John	" "
1909	Sentenced for Life	A. Blair	Reprinted in B.F.L. ? No. 653, 1923
1909	Convict 99	H. St. John	Not known
1909	The School Against Him	H. St. John	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 219, 1913
1912	Charlie Gordon's Schooldays	H. St. John	Not known
1913	Dick of the Highways	D. Goodwin	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 256, 1914
1913	The Tragedy of the Oklahoma	C. Hayter	
1913	Mike Langton's Vow	C. Hayter	
1914	Orders Under Seal	L. Carlton	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 291, 1915
1915	The Bogus Policeman	M. Darren	Original B.F.L. No. 198, 1912
1915	The Diamond Dwarfs	H. St. John	
1916	His Little Lordship	L. Carlton	
1916	The Boy Who Wasn't Wanted	D. Goodwin	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 349, 1916
1916	The Seawaif	D. Goodwin	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 531, 1920
1917	The Aristocrat of the School	?	?
1917	In the Hands of the Headhunters	C. Hayter	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 433, 1918
1918	The Red Raiders	W. M. Graydon	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 451, 1919

Year	Title	Author	Original or Reprint
1918	A Conspiracy at Sea	M. Scott	
1918	The Headless Robin	M. Scott	
1918	The Professor's Gold	M. Scott	
1919	From School to Sea	C. Hamilton	
1919	A Dead Man's Secret	M. Scott	
1919	King of the Bush	M. Scott	
1919	The Red Raider	A. S. Hardy	
1919	The Cinema Athlete	W. Edwards	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 574, 1921
1920	The Four Shadows	?	?
1920	Curtis of the Fifth	E. S. Brooks	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 568, 1921
1920	The Fighting Scot	W. Edwards	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 556, 1921
1921	The Luck of the Cup	W. E. Groves	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 575, 1921
1921	In Peril at St. Elmers	R. W. Comrade	
1921	The Worst House at St. Wolstans	E. S. Brooks	
1922	The Vengeance of the Tong	G. H. Teed	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 669, 1923
1922	Tinker's Boyhood		
1923	Treasure Island	R. L. Stevenson	
1923	The Wire Devils	F. L. Packard	
1924	The Atom Smasher	L. H. Robins	
1924	Slave Island	G. Chester	
1924	The Mystery of the Marshes	H. W. Twyman	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 52, 1926, 2nd Ser.
1925	Captain Blood	R. Sabatini	
1926	A Son of the Plains	A. Paterson	
1926	From Prisoner to President	S. Blake	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 272, 2nd Series
1926	The Three Just Men	E. Wallace	
1927	The Striking Shadow	H. Scott Hedley	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 258, 1930
1927	The Fox of Pennyfields	L. Jackson	Original
1927	The Black Abbot of Cheng Tu	G. H. Teed	Original
1927	Dead Man's Rock	A. Quiller-Couch	
1928	The Silent House	J. G. Brandon	Story of Stage Play
1928	The Devil's Mantle	F. L. Packard	
1928	The Isle of Strife	S. Blake	Reprinted in B.F.L. No. 256, 1930
1929	Scissors Cut Paper	G. Fairlie	
1929	The Seven Sleepers	F. Beeding	
1930	The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh		
1930	The Crooked Billet	D. M. Dell	

Year	Title	Author	Original or Reprint
1931	Chains of Fate	P. Lewis	
1931	The Blue Envelope Mystery	F. L. Packard	
1931	Death on the Air	H. Landon	
1932	The Lives Between	P. Lewis	
1932	Five Dead Men	A. Skene	
1932	The Gyrth Chalice Mystery	M. Allingham	
1932	The Next Move, concluded in U.J. 1529, February, 1933	R. Murray G. H. Teed A. Skene and G. Evans	

Tinker's Romances

by S. GORDON SWAN

TINKER'S PENCHANT for the opposite sex has been a feature of the Sexton Blake Saga since time immemorial: it is not an innovation attributable to the modernising of the stories, although it has been overstressed in recent times. In days long past a pretty face was enough to urge the lad to usher its owner into the famous consulting-room and sometimes the bestowal of a kiss was the young assistant's reward.

Many years ago, the guv'nor delivered a homily to Tinker on the subject of girls:

"There is a warning for you in this case," he (Blake) went on. "When you marry, my boy, be sure to choose a domesticated, simple-minded girl, who will look after her home and you, and will have no extravagant tastes or love of finery; one who will be content with her lot in life, and will not want to be gadding about all the time, and will not envy her neighbours if they should be better off than she is."

"That's just the kind of a wife I'll pick out," replied Tinker, "if I get married. I don't know that I ever shall, though. I have seen a lot of girls that I like, guv'nor, but somehow or other, they don't seem to take a fancy to me."

The rather Victorian sentiments expressed by Blake emanated, not surprisingly, from the pen of W. Murray Graydon. (U.J. No. 355, Sexton Blake, Bathchair-Man.) There is no evidence that Tinker paid much attention to this advice in the ensuing years.

Tinker's most publicised romance was with Nirvana, the dancer, and it was also the most long-enduring as it ran altogether to thirteen stories. Nirvana was associated with crooks - Marie and Philippe the Fox - who involved her in their criminal schemes. The girl herself seemed rather a colourless character compared

with others that Tinker met, and in the second series of stories, which ran consecutively for six weeks, she was definitely overshadowed by the master criminal known as the Mysterious Monseigneur. This individual, whose real name was Prince von Wadstein, had an epic battle with Sexton Blake on the edge of a precipice in true Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty style. In the course of this episode Nirvana found her father.

She made her last appearance in U.J. No. 1208, The Adventure of the Two Devils, which was the Christmas number for 1926. This was an odd story on two counts: One was that Nirvana was destined to make her final bow in its pages, though there was no indication that this was to be the case. Either G. H. Teed or editorial policy, or a combination of both, had decided that Tinker's romance with the dancer had gone far enough and could go no farther without upsetting the Baker Street ménage. At any rate, no further mention was ever made of Nirvana.

The other odd feature was that the story introduced a new criminal in the person of Dr. Jourgens, the Black Magician of Ghent, and it seemed that the obvious intention was to weave a further series of stories about this character. Yet we heard no more of him. G. H. Teed later repeated this process of leaving a series unfinished in the case of June Severance and the Orchid.

Some years later, in the pages of the Detective Weekly, Tinker met another girl, a brunette this time, who likewise was involved with crooks. Her name was Estelle Morrow, though in reality it was Estelle Kent, and she was trying to clear her father of a murder charge. In this story (Detective Weekly No. 9, Wanted, by Mark Osborne) Tinker himself was wanted for murder, as evidence pointed to his being responsible for the death of a blackmailer. Altogether, Tinker gave Blake a lot of worry in this case and caused a rift between the detective and Inspector Martin, who deemed it his duty to bring Tinker to justice.

Eventually, when matters were put right, Estelle Morrow went off to Switzerland with her father, who suffered from tuberculosis, and Tinker was left with nothing but a photograph of his girl friend to remind him of a hectic interlude.

These stories may be well-known to the long-term Blake reader, but it is possible that a later tale may have been overlooked or forgotten in the stress of wartime conditions. This was S.B.L. (Third Series) No. 66, Previously Reported Missing. Now . . . .? by Gilbert Chester. It appeared during the dark days of the World War, and it may be that many are not aware that in this adventure Tinker actually promised to marry a girl! True, he did so with the purpose of saving Blake's life, yet he had a definite crush on the young lady concerned and would have gone through with it, but . . . .

It is not necessary to detail the complicated story here. Sufficient is it to say that, in the course of an investigation, Tinker encountered Tanis Reverton, one of those hard-boiled teenagers who frequently figured in Gilbert Chester's tales. One is inclined to think he was ahead of his time in these portrayals of tough girlhood. At any rate, Tinker gave his pledge to marry the girl, but Fate willed otherwise. While protecting another woman's child from Armorel Reverton, her

criminally insane mother, Tanis Reverton was shot and fatally wounded. She died in Tinker's arms, thus saving the long-lived partnership of Blake and Tinker from sudden dissolution.

It is certain that, if Tinker had married Tanis Reverton, he would not have found the domesticated, simple-minded girl that W. Murray Graydon envisaged for him in the early part of the century!

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WANTED: Any Nelson Lee's, No. 1 1915 to No. 50 1916: Sexton Blake Library 1915-18: Dixon Hawke Case Books, any: Richard's "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House": Tom Merry Annual, No. 3, 1951: Boys' Friend Library No. 4, 1905, title "Birds of Prey": Greyfriars Holiday Annuals 1923, 1924, 1925.

N. C. RAVENSCROFT, 5 DARLINGTON ROAD, LONGROCK, PENZANCE, CORNWALL

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BEST WISHES for a **HAPPY XMAS** and **PEACEFUL NEW YEAR** to the Editor and C.D. Members everywhere.

F. W. BENNETT, STATION HOUSE, NORTON, RUNCORN.

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A Survey of THE ROVER

SEPTEMBER 1967 TO DECEMBER 1969
by RAY HOPKINS

Never having been a reader of the D. C. Thomson papers in my youth, it was only natural that, the contrariness of human nature being what it is, I should not only observe but purchase a copy of the ROVER, dated 2 September, 1967, which contained the banner headline:

NEW SCHOOL STORY BEGINS TODAY

Not just purchase the one issue, however, but get so hooked into buying a copy every Saturday, that I only came to my senses a couple of years later and realized I was spending more time on the ROVER than on the MAGNET, GEM, and NELSON LEE, my main interest in the Hobby.

During the period I read it, the cover of the ROVER stated "5d Every Monday" but one was hard put to locate a copy anywhere on Monday. To get there early enough on a Saturday to be sure of a copy was difficult enough, but this is no proof that the paper was a howling success. I've been present when the VICTOR and HORNET have been racked and while they are piled up in their sixes or twelves, when it's the turn of the ROVER you're lucky if there are more than two copies. The reason, so I'm told, is that the shopman can be sure of selling a dozen of the picture story papers, but he is often left with copies of the ROVER, and there are no returns, so the newsagent is stuck with any papers that don't sell. The amazing thing is that, these days when IPC can put out something called COR!, and D. C. Thomson can revive an old title like the WIZARD to run picture stories in, an old-fashioned paper like the ROVER has lasted as long as it has.

It's worth going through the ROVER, which has only stories to read (but not to read it for two solid years, unless you have lots of other reading time) just to see what makes it tick. I'm still wondering why it has survived this long since its beginnings in 1922 and have come to the conclusion that the reason is that its main readership is not boys at all, but old boys who read it as youngsters in the 1930's and 40's and just kept on as they aged. Some evidence for this lies in the characters who throng its thrill-packed pages every week. They aren't boys at all but young men who must have shaved for several years. It isn't wise to generalize, but in the main they are people who are not tied down by living at home with parents or relatives, but who are forced to live in digs because they are part of a football team (if you don't care for football, DON'T read the ROVER!), or are in the Services, or have jobs which move them around, as in the Secret Agent or Spy stories. Army and Air Force stories are very popular, action being laid in both the 1914 and 1939 wars. Navy stories are, in the main, very short and complete in one issue. The feminine sex doesn't exist in the pages of the ROVER except in brief walk-on parts for landladies. The femme fatales of those oddly adult serials that used to run in Film Fun and Kinema Comic (remember Judith Hate?) just do not appear in the

ROVER and there is never a little woman waiting to greet the hero in the final paragraph before "The End."

To return to the reason for my buying the ROVER, namely the advertised school story, entitled "Smith of the Lower Third." In the 2 September, 1967 issue of the ROVER this story has this headline above the title: THIS IS ONE OF THE GREATEST SCHOOL STORIES EVER WRITTEN. IT STARTS TODAY. A nice pre-war flavour about that but it would have been more impressive were there an author's name appended to it. However, the stories in Thomson's boys' papers have never had any by-lines. Here is a resume of the events in the first few instalments:

Tom Smith, aged 13, a grocer's son, arrives at Lipstone College from a Council School. Lipstone has five houses named after the original housemasters of a 100 years ago. He is assigned to Clay's House, consisting of 120 boys, and his housemaster is Mr. Gull, known as "The Squawker." Not knowing any of the don'ts peculiar to Junior Boys at Lipstone, Tom quickly gets hauled up before the prefects when he turns up his coat collar upon being caught in the rain. A bullying prefect, T. A. K. Simmerson (nicknamed TACKS) wants to beat him anyway, but he is let off by Clive Mitchell, the House Captain. Upon Tom's first turning out for soccer, Simmerson gets his wish and gives him 12 lashes for wearing stockings of College First Team Colours despite the fact that it was a mistake of the school shop and not Tom. However, Tom plays a good game despite his pain, and Clive Mitchell compliments him on his playing. Tom hopes he will be able to fag for Mitchell but finds himself assigned to TACKS. Tom's boxing earns another commendation from Mitchell but he is again licked by Simmerson for transgressing a law which says that only Sixth Formers can walk across the grass.

Simmerson orders Tom to obtain a ham from his grocer father to celebrate the bully's winning his First Team colours, but the request from Tom causes his father to read between the lines and write to the Headmaster of Lipstone, Dr. Royd, complaining that his son is being bullied by a prefect. This letter causes Simmerson to not be awarded his colours due to the fact that he took the winning of them for granted, a form of "side" not tolerated at Lipstone.

Tom wins the Junior Steeplechase but though the rest of the Junior Team are presented with their Red Silk Roman Numeral "V" (5), Tom is not. He has to report to the prefects instead to face Simmerson's charge that he stole a ten shilling note left by the bully in his study - a revengeful ploy to get back at Tom for his father's letter to the Head. But Tom reveals that Simmerson has for the past three weeks been sending him to buy goods and not reimbursing him for them. The total comes to 13/6d and Mitchell tells Tom to keep the 10/- and insists that Simmerson pays Tom the remainder. He is also relieved of the duty of fagging for Simmerson and finally presented with his Roman Numeral "V" for his running singlet. Tom's new fagmaster is A. P. E. Carewe (nicknamed APE), an easy-going Senior and things begin to look brighter for Tom Smith. Tom wins the next Junior Steeplechase and Clay's House seems certain to get the Flag held for a year by the winning House.

Tom is cleared of a charge of a deliberate foul in a soccer match by APE's

checking with the groundsman who was near enough to see that the other player involved had tripped and fallen over the ball.

Tom discovers that APE is in debt to the tune of £11 owed to a betting shop. He observes Carewe climbing back into his study through the window and later hears that Mr. Gull is missing £11 intended for servants' wages. Tom fears the worst and to save his fag-master, he takes £11 from his own Post Office Savings and secretes it in Mr. Gull's study. But the Squawker's own £11 turns up hidden among some exam papers and Carewe tells Tom he had pawned his watch and other items to pay off the debt. Tom's money has gone beyond recall and Mr. Gull is puzzled to know why he has £11 more than he should have. By the end of the first series, Tom has won his cricket tassel. That will give you an idea of the type of plotting that went into the Lipstone tales.

There were two series, one of 12 weeks' duration, from 2 September, 1967 to 18 November, 1967, and a second, much longer series, using the same title, running for 28 weeks from 27 January to 3 August, 1968. I felt this to be quite an achievement inasmuch as we keep hearing that the school story is finished and has been since the war. But as it turned out I was being hoodwinked.

Quite by chance, while leafing through Charlie Wright's voluminous scrap-book, I discovered a story of this same title had been running in the WIZARD in November 1949.

All my detective instincts aroused, I hied me to the British Museum Reading Room to discover that the 12 issue "Smith of the Lower Third" series ran not in 1949 or 1948 but from May to October 1947 in the WIZARD, Nos. 1133-1149. The second series followed on without a break. I ran into a problem checking the second series because the Museum is unfortunately missing the issues between 10 April, 1948 and 8 January, 1949. However, Tom Smith was apparently a continuous feature of the WIZARD because in issue 1232, 24 September, 1949, the story carried the title "The Hundredth Story about Tom Smith." Discrepancies in number and dating of these 100 stories (you will note that while the issue numbers cover 100, the dates May 1947 to September 1949 cover one year four months) can be explained by the fact that the WIZARD was not published every week in those days. The 28 week second series reprinted in the ROVER in 1968 had a much longer run 18 years earlier for in the WIZARD issue 1294, 2 December, 1950, appeared the final story entitled "Smith of the Lower Third." The following week's issue contained "Smith of the Fourth Form," which ended in issue 1348, 15 December, 1951, a continuous run of four years and seven months; however, during its final four months, the Tom Smith story was alternated every other week with another story called "The Boy who Sings to Horses." This, as the Editor explained, gave readers six stories to read instead of five. One noted the WIZARD was raised in price from 2d to 3d with issue 1336, 22 September, 1951.

The 1952 WIZARDS were also contained in the package I was researching (the paper was very thin as to number of pages in those days), so I went ahead and discovered that "Tom Smith of the Lower Third" started all over again in issue 1357, 16 February, 1952, surely a quick reprint, only nine weeks after the end of the

first printing. But proof no doubt of the extreme popularity of this particular school story at that time. However, Tom Smith appeared only every other week, so the first series didn't finish until issue 1381, 2 August, 1952, and the second series which followed on only became weekly with issue 1400, 13 December, 1952. A headline on the cover told me so. It said, "There's a Tom Smith story every week now." I didn't go any further in quest of Tom Smith after the final December issue of the WIZARD for 1952.

However, during this page flipping through the old issues of WIZARD I noted two familiar titles: "The Yellow Jersey," a 14-week serial which ran in the ROVER in 1969, a story of the Tour of Britain Cycle Race in which a mystery champ called Tearaway Tetford is hypnotized into performing superhuman feats by his manager, Van Vonder. "The Red Rangers," an 18-week serial, also running in 1969 in the ROVER in which Sir Herbert Foster, an eminent Doctor of Chemistry, attempts to apply scientific principles to the playing of the Penstone Rangers, a football team he has fallen heir to. This was a football story in lighter vein. After all this I am now convinced that D.C. Thomson do reprint quite extensively, so the A.P. is not alone.

To return to the late sixties from the early fifties, the serials and series that appear in the ROVER are all different lengths, which leads one to think that the least popular stories are curtailed. I note a serial about motor racing with fantastic overtones called, "The Coiled Cobra" (1967) ran for only eight weeks. Fantastic? A mad Eastern potentate drugs star racing drivers (any nationality) in order to have them race on his private track - this to keep his downtrodden people content and to stop them revolting against him. The losers of the races are put to death - publicly!! In another six-week serial, "The Valley of the Mask" (1968), a Uranium prospector, who is also a helicopter pilot, stumbles across a zombi-like tribe in New Guinea who are controlled by a death mask which has paralytic powers when gazed upon. The briefness of these two serials may be due to the fantastic ideas behind the plots - difficult to string out for too long a period - or they may be something whipped out in a hurry while another story which may have a longer run is being written. And some yarns do appear to run forever.

The longest run while I took the ROVER was a 54-week flying story laid in the early 1940's called "Braddock - Master of the Air," which ran from July 1968 to August 1969. This was immediately proceded by an 11-week story called, "Braddock Flew By Night," and in fact an earlier Braddock story using the same title as the 54-week run was already in progress when I first bought the ROVER in 1967. I have also come across him in picture stories in other Thomson papers and in that rarity, a D. C. Thomson hardback.

Sergeant Matt Braddock, V.C., D.F.M. and Bar, to give him his full name, rank and medals earned, is a very compelling character as he encompasses several attributes admired by the small boy reader. He's a very sloppy dresser, wearing a uniform but not in a correct military manner, and often with jacket buttons missing. He doesn't wear a hat and refuses to wear the meritorious service medal ribbons he has been awarded. However, he is most meticulous in his job: he is a

superb fighter pilot, is able to take over the role of an exacting mechanic to get his craft airworthy when all but he have failed, and stands no nonsense from his superiors, especially if they are cowardly pretenders to heroism. But even if they are not, he will countenance no bulldozing from the Brass Hats if he feels their orders are not directly concerned with winning the war. He knows he can get away with this heroic stance because there is a high government official available instantly to him via telephone who will back him up to the hilt.

Braddock's constant brushes with authority on the ground provide some highly amusing moments to counteract the sometimes grim events that take place in the air. Braddock is well in the tradition of the Charles Hamilton "good" character in that he neither smokes nor drinks. His every upright move is faithfully chronicled by his navigator, Sergeant George Bourne, who matches Braddock's laconic dialogue with a quiet brevity of his own which accentuates the thrill of the aerial encounters. It is probable that Braddock is a very popular character who has been featured in the ROVER for many years judging by the frequency with which he occurred in the short period I read the paper.

During the two years I read the ROVER, there were no less than fifteen football serials, sometimes two running at the same time, the shortest being of only five-weeks' duration ("Those Goals that Jackson Scored" - 1969) and the longest 28-weeks, from October 1967 to April 1968. Entitled "Bouncing Briggs - Roughneck of the Rangers," the title character is a young junk man who lives in a homemade shack on a piece of waste ground. He retrieves bits and pieces on an old push bike with a bath slung at the side. He also happens to be the best goalie that Darbury Rangers has ever had and has so much pride that he won't accept payment for his time in goal and insists on travelling to and from matches on his push bike, collecting pieces of junk on the way. He also has reservations about accepting meals as gifts. Bernard Briggs is very hot on the Highway Code, and his brushes with careless and belligerent drivers give him the opportunity to haul out the Code and read aggressively from it. A painless and rather clever way of bringing road sense to the attention of the reader! Quite by chance, while seated one day at the barbers, I happened to see a picture story featuring the same character in another D. C. Thomson paper of an earlier vintage. This leads to the interesting assumption that after an appearance in one of the Thomson picture story papers, the strip story is then transformed into a story to read and printed in the ROVER. Certainly a money-saving attitude on the part of the publishers, having a ready-made plot that only needs to be filled out with words.

Football looms very large in the format of the ROVER. Not only in fictional form but in a question and answer column; a bi-weekly feature called "Top Teams" which prints letters from readers with accompanying photos of their school teams; various listings of great feats of the past in football history; reproductions in colour of the "strip" (uniform colours) of readers' school football teams and, beginning with the 10 August, 1968 issue, every other week the cover featured "Famous Goals," illustrated by drawings, not photographs. On the inbetween weeks, cigarette-card-size photos (heads only) of sportsmen, mainly footballers, but also swimmers, cricketers, and other athletes adorned the cover. Prior to

this, the cover of the ROVER contained illustrations from interior stories, very eye-catching in the main, but all to no purpose due to the way children's periodicals are displayed in most newsagents with nothing but the title in view.

A football serial with a curiously old-fashioned flavour was entitled, "The Son of the Lost Centre Forward" (1968/69). I rather enjoyed this, not having read a "long lost father" story for many years (if ever). This had rather a strong "Les Miserables" flavour due to the fact that although the owner of the Football Club was a well-respected gentleman, he was also a famous footballer incognito who many years before had killed a man but had escaped the clutches of the police and was still being hunted by the retired Scotland Yard Detective Inspector who had handled the case. This serial ran for eleven weeks.

A longer serial, running 18 weeks in 1968, entitled, "The Team of Mystery Marvels" contained plenty of football along with a fantastic element. The Black Aces Football Club is composed of several players who, while brilliant on the field, are not allowed to mix with the rest of the team between games, and who have a trance-like appearance. Brian Keen, 'Tec, attempts to find the reason why and has his assistant Jimmy Ransom join the Black Aces. The mysterious footballers are revealed to be star players from other Clubs, stolen and treated with drugs so that their appearance changes, their former Clubs being convinced they are dead by the finding of dead bodies closely resembling them soon after their disappearance. The madman in charge of the drugs, however, is unable to mask the idiosyncracies in the style of playing of the drugged stars and it is this which gives the detective's assistant the clue to what is happening.

There were many ramifications of the football story in the ROVER during the period in which I read it, one of the most original being entitled, "There was Once a Game Called Football" (1969). Laid in the year 2169 it presupposes that Soccer was banished in the year 1985. And in case you wonder why, here is a quote from Hansard, the report of Parliamentary proceedings, from the year 1999: "It was in the economic crises of 1985 that the Government of that time had to place a general ban on all sports, and since then there has been no demand for the revival of football." Lawrie Hill (aged 16) and his friends at Birmingham College play games called Riposta and Skate-Ball, and while researching for a paper on ancient sports and pastimes, he comes across a reference to Football and decides to unearth all the facts he can in order to bring back the ancient game. He locates an old, yellowing encyclopedia which gives him the rules, and his efforts include reproducing a ball in metal until he discovers that the originals were made of leather. The story culminates in a grand match between Birmingham College and Sikang Rovers, Sikang being a province on the border of Tibet and China. In 2169, everyone gets about by private helicopter or Air Train, the public transport of that time, so that the boys of Birmingham College are able to play matches against teams from any country in the world, at any ground in the world.

Football is an all-the-year-round sport in the ROVER but presumably in the old days when it was the cricket season, the great summer game took over. I seem to remember a 13-year-old cousin some 20 years ago enthusing over one called

"It's Runs that Count" (a companion football one being entitled, "It's Goals that Count" - still going strong - or being reprinted - in 1968/69). Apart from two short stories in July/August 1969, cricket was never featured in the ROVER while I read it. And one of these had a high science-fiction content as its title shows: "What was the Thing at Square Leg?" What it was was an invisible being from another planet learning the game so that it could be played in outer space. It however became visible when viewed through a television camera. Sensation!

Science-fiction itself was not well represented in the ROVER during this period. There were two short serials of seven and six weeks' duration, called "The Lost Ranch on the Whirling Planet" (1967) (cowboys versus well-intentioned outer-space creatures), and "The Purple Cones from Outer Space" (1969), a sort of minor H. G. Wells "War of the Worlds" with London in danger of complete devastation, and one longer 16-week serial which I found quite imaginative and oddly compelling, called "The Year of the Shark Men" (1969). I.F.F.O.R. (the International Federation for Oceanic Research) is the cover name of the organization set up by the United Nations to investigate reports of the existence of Mermen who are believed to be living underwater in the Persian Gulf. They are known as Shark Men because of the shape of the undersea craft they use to travel in, and are oxygen-breathing sea people who had evolved in the sea as had humans on land. Former Royal Marine Commando, Jack Sutton, having escaped death at the hands of the Shark Men, joins the I.F.F.O.R., discovers the Shark Men are able to talk - in English! - and learns that they plan to melt the ice at the North and South Poles by nuclear power in order to destroy the human race. Excitement galore!

There was a break of 13 months between the ending of "The Lost Ranch on the Whirling Planet" and the beginning of "The Year of the Shark Men," signifying that the science-fiction story was not one of the most popular in the ROVER.

There were five ground warfare stories laid in the 1939 war and two others worthy of a longer mention. "The Scarlet Streamer" (1967), a 1914 war story of a motor-cycle messenger in France, contained much trench warfare and a solid leading character in Private Harry Hardy who had to contrive to stay alive despite being a slowly moving target for the enemy throughout. The Streamer of the title is a flag which he was awarded when his hard-bitten Section Sergeant considered he had earned it by an act of heroism during which Private Hardy had recrossed the German lines to destroy vital British code books. He hadn't been threatened by the Germans but had had to subdue a Royal Navy Rating who refused to obey a command emanating from the Army! The more original of the two was called "He was Only a Private Soldier" (1968) and covered the Zulu Wars of 1878, giving an immense amount of detail about the actual battles and containing a well-drawn main character in Joab Clay, a Carter's grandson from Leicester who learned soldiering and compassion for the African native during the long campaign. These stories were 13 weeks and 15 weeks in length respectively. I also include the latter story under the heading of Historical Stories.

The earliest period covered in this category was in "The Castle Breakers" (1968) which went right back to the days of King John. Four well-differentiated

Anglo-Saxon types: a swordsman, a lock-picker, a tunnel digger, and a climber band together in order to force open Norman Castles so that they can be raided by English foot troops.

What I thought an original theme for a boys' story paper was contained in "The Sky-High Warpath" (1968), laid in 1890, and telling of Indians from Canada who travelled south to take part in the big surge of bridge building that was going on in the latter part of the 19th Century in the United States. The interesting part of this story was the relationship between Indians and white men, the Indians being admired because of a trait peculiar to them that they could walk narrow girders at great heights, at speed, with no danger of falling because they possessed a complete lack of vertigo.

"Tom Cribb - Man of Iron" laid in the early 1800's in the Regency period, had a prize fighting background and ran for 13 weeks (February - April 1969). This was an interesting case of one story advertising another because the man who discovered and trained Tom Cribb, Captain Robert Barclay, became himself the leading character in an unusual sequel-in-reverse in "The Great Barclay - Seeker of Strong Men," a nine-week serial which ran five months later during September-November 1969. The events in this story preceded those in the Tom Cribb yarn.

Possibly to jump on the then popular Secret Agent bandwagon as exemplified in the adult James Bond/Man from U.N.C.L.E. stories, the ROVER printed four serials of this type. "Brand of B.O.O.M.A." (1967), which stands for the British Organization of Master Agents, contained a lot of gun and fist-fighting and one exciting encounter with the Ku Klux Klan, and ran for 11 weeks. The main object of B.O.O.M.A. was to vanquish I.N.C.A. (The International Criminal Associates) a "world-wide organization of thieves, confidence tricksters, spies and murderers, operating only for money and with no political or national affiliation." Concurrently with Brand ran, "Ivan the Terrible - Extra Special Agent" (1968) which had a run of 16 weeks and started off like a comic send-up of the Secret Agent type story. Ivan Flinders, a wrestler, is also a member of Section 9(B) of British Military Intelligence, in other words, M.I.9(B)! On his first mission he had to smuggle a roll of micro-film containing "vital secrets" out of Egypt and swallowed it to prevent its falling into the wrong hands. Unfortunately, when Ivan is operated on to recover the micro-film, it is found that he has digested the film "absorbing without trace every one of those vital secrets." Hence, no doubt, the "terrible" of the title. Later on, Ivan lost some of his comic charm, but never his ineptitude, and the story became a series of slapstick episodes which tended to nullify the more subtly humorous opening sequences.

When Brand finished and Ivan was still running, "The 13 Quests of John Landon" (1968) erupted. Landon was yet another Secret Agent whose ultimate mission was to retrieve the hidden 13 symbols of State of the throne of Abustan, a Far Eastern State near India and China, without which the heir to the throne, Jeddas Koor, could not be crowned. This restoration of the monarchy would cause the fall of the Council of Rule led by Boris Bey, a villain and enemy of Britain, "hostile to the cause of peace in South-West Asia." This ran, as its title implied,

for 13 weeks. The 13 Quests finished in May 1968 and the next Secret Agent story didn't appear for another 13 months in June 1969. This was the best of the lot, combining an intriguing mystery (Which one of the team belongs to the Opposition?) with the thrills of mountain climbing and espionage. Its title was, "The Shadow Men on the Mountains" and in it, Jake Jeffords, top field agent of X-Section of the British Secret Service, is loaned to U.S. Army Intelligence in order to retrieve the formula to the Schlaker Process by which memory and skills are transferred from one brain to another. Thus an Adjusted or Shadow Man, who has had another person's skills transferred to his own brain becomes a sort of superman while the original owner turns into a human cabbage, for the Schlaker Process also removes all his other knowledge. It is believed that two unknowns who are entering for the Big Four hard climbing contest are Adjusted Men. The winners of this climbing contest will be presented with The Madison Trust, worth 15 million dollars, and it is believed that whoever stole the Schlaker Process formula has transferred into these Shadow Men the necessary ability to climb and reach the top of the four peaks located in Patagonia, Alaska, Pakistan and Peru. Jake Jeffords, an expert Mountain Climber, is called in to find the stolen Schlaker Process and to win the Madison Trust prize, but whoever stole the Process will obviously not allow Jeffords to win. Thrills galore up the mountains!

From all I have said thus far, you can see that the fiction program in the ROVER covers a very wide range and contains plots and ideas one would not expect to encounter in the pages of a boys' story paper.

When I first bought this paper in September 1967, its name was ROVER AND WIZARD. With the issue dated 16 August, 1969, its title became a single one, retaining ROVER and dropping WIZARD. As is now known, this was done so that a separate paper called WIZARD could be published in early 1970. This famous boys' story paper name dates back as far as 1922; however, the WIZARD that began again in 1970 is a picture story paper. You will note I have mentioned no issue numbers in connection with this review of the ROVER. This paper retained serial numbers until issue 1855, 4 January, 1961, when it became an un-numbered periodical called ROVER AND ADVENTURE. I presume ADVENTURE was dropped and WIZARD added to the name when the old WIZARD ceased publication as a story paper sometime in 1963.

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WANTED: Boys Friend First 183, 199, 216, 222, 261, 263, 281, 283, 286, 295, 325, 425, 451, 624, 625; Second 6, 60, 64, 115, 190, 245. Union Jack 357, 878, 896, 912, 920, 933, 936, 960. Green 'Un 893, 917, 919, 920, 952, 955, 957, 958, 966, 1175, 1261, 1265, 1267, 1269, 1273, 1275, 1277.

ROWE LINDENS, HORSFORD, NORWICH.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS JOSIE, STAN, VERNON, BILL!

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My Favourite, Bubbles, Sunbeam, Rainbow comics dated 1931 to 1933 required. 85p per copy. — MR. LINFORD, 115 ALLPORT STREET, CANNOCK, STAFFS.

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A Famous "Puck" Artist

Scene of the Story: MARSDEN MANOR SCHOOL.

by O. W. WADHAM

In the year 1916 that famous comic, PUCK, was running a school serial entitled "Mystery Manor," by Hugh Doyle, a story of Marsden Manor school. The yarn was illustrated in the Greyfriars tradition by one Arthur H. Clarke. The boys are so like the ones drawn by Arthur Clark of MAGNET fame, who illustrated the Charles Hamilton stories in 1910 and 1911 that I am wondering if they could be one and the same person.

"Hold him safe, Podgers!" "Stick to him!" "Good old Podgers!" cheered the boys.

Some time in 1911 C. H. Chapman took over the Magnet drawings, so it is reasonable to assume that Arthur Clark was free-lancing in other fields. Just why he wanted to tack an "H" and and "e" on to his name is a mystery.

Could be, of course, that the PUCK artist was a different person - does any of our learned friends have the answer?

(Editorial Comment: The pictures are obviously by the Magnet artist. As he died in 1911, it looks as though "Mystery Manor" of 1916 must have been a reprint, unless the editor dug out some old pics to suit a new story. And what's an "E" between friends?)

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FOR SALE: Robin Hood Libraries. 4 Vols. Boys Friend Library (24 copies Jack, Sam and Pete). Bound Vols. Scout, Prize, Pip, Squeak and Wilfred, Captain. Volume Chips year 1916 (1322-1374). Penguin Book of Comics.

MRS. M. ALLISON, 3 BINGLEY ROAD, MENSTON, ILKLEY, YORKSHIRE.

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WANTED: B.F.L's 314, Sky Devils; 477, The Rocketeers; 351, Black Battleaxe. Boys Mags. 475 to 488. Modern Boys 299 to 305 and 396 to 406. Chips 1930 Red Rover Serial. Comic Cuts 1930 Jim The Gunman Serial.

HUGHES, 33a BLAZE PARK, WALL HEATH, BRIERLEY HILL, STAFFS., DY6 0LR.

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DISPOSAL:- "Fleetway" Libs. from No. 1. "Lone Rider." "Valiant." "Air Ace." "War at Sea." "Battle." "War." Thomson's:- "Commando."

DETAILS:- J. SWAN, 3 FIFTH AVENUE, PADDINGTON, LONDON, W10 4DJ.

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WANTED: Gems before number 1325. I offer 32½p each. Also can anyone tell me how many Merry Hardbacks are in the set?

W. SETFORD, 155 BURTON ROAD, DERBY.

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SEEKING "Magnets" (1930): "Hotspur," "Wizard," "Adventure," "Champion," "Triumph" (pre-1934). Also any matter relating Sydenham, London, 1919-1934.

MARTIN, 3 SOMERSET ROAD, ORPINGTON, KENT.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS to Frank Lay, Eric Fayne, Bob Blythe, Roger Jenkins, Tom Parker, Ben Whiter and all Club Friends.

TOM SHERRARD, POTTERS BAR.

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Mr. Buddle's 'Locum'

by ERIC FAYNE

It was very pleasant that sunny afternoon in May in the summerhouse in the private garden of the Headmaster of Slade.

Mr. Buddle, with his bound volume of blue Gems, had enjoyed himself immensely. For two hours he had sat reading in his basket-chair with a colourful cushion behind his head. As a teacher of English at Slade, Mr. Buddle was a well-read little gentleman, and there was very little that anyone could tell him of the English classics. But for relaxation, Mr. Buddle always turned to the pages of the Gem.

It had been a quiet and peaceful afternoon, but four chimes had now sounded from the clock tower, and noises in the nearby school buildings indicated that classes were over for the day. Mr. Buddle closed his book, and thought over the story which he had been reading.

He was not quite sure whether he had approved of it or not. It had been entitled "The Fighting Prefect," and it had starred an irascible schoolmaster named Mr. Ratcliff. Though Mr. Buddle was fond of the Gem, he did not care a lot for Mr. Ratcliff. Of course, in real life, Mr. Buddle had met all types of schoolmasters - a few very good, a few very bad, and many of them mediocre. At best, Mr. Buddle thought of Mr. Ratcliff as "unlikely."

However, Mr. Buddle always accepted Mr. Ratcliff as part of the Gem's normal scene. It was the plot of "The Fighting Prefect" which caused Mr. Buddle to ponder now on the worth of his afternoon's reading. In the story, an old boy named Stoker had returned to his school with the intention of laying a cane round his former schoolmaster. To Mr. Buddle, it did not ring true, though he had enjoyed the tale. Mr. Buddle knew that, in real life, boys would boast of the hair-raising things they would do to their schoolmasters in later life, but, in Mr. Buddle's opinion, malice never lasted nor did boys remember old grudges. Old boys who came back to the school did so in pride, and never to get their own back. Grievances faded as maturity replaced boyhood. In an adult world, old boys never wished for revenge for something that had happened at school many years earlier. At least, so thought Mr. Buddle.

Lost in reverie, Mr. Buddle had not heard the click of the latch of the gate in the old wall, its bricks hidden in Virginia Creeper. He looked up now as a shadow passed across the sun which was streaming in at the open front of the summerhouse. A large gentleman in a dark-grey suit gave Mr. Buddle a frosty smile.

"Do not rise, Mr. Buddle! You have had a pleasant afternoon, I hope?"

"Very enjoyable! It is kind of you to give me the use of your garden, Headmaster."

Mr. Scarlet, the Head of Slade, plumped heavily into a second basket-chair, which squeaked in protest.

"I am happy for any member of my staff to enjoy the beauty and solitude of my garden," said Mr. Scarlet. "You are fully recovered now, Mr. Buddle?"

"Fully recovered, sir!" concurred

Mr. Buddle. "I am anxious to resume my duties."

Only a few days before the present term commenced, Mr. Buddle had gone down with gastric influenza. Normally he enjoyed exceptionally good health, and it was anathema to him to miss even a few days of term through illness.

He added: "I regret that you felt it necessary to obtain a temporary master while I was indisposed."

Mr. Scarlet nodded, and rubbed his chin.

"These things happen, Mr. Buddle. Though the doctor assured me that you would be fit to resume your duties within a week, I still felt it wise that we should allow rather more time to elapse before you again took classes."

"It was good of you," rejoined Mr. Buddle, a trifle drily. "I am looking forward to getting into harness again next Monday. I take it that my locum-tenens will be departing this week-end."

"I wished to speak to you on the subject," said Mr. Scarlet. "Mr. Linley has proved quite satisfactory in the fortnight he has been here --"

"Mr. Linley!" echoed Mr. Buddle. "Mr. Mark Linley?"

"Mark Linley?" Mr. Scarlet raised his bushy eyebrows. "I think not. I believe his Christian name is Martin or Clive or Horace, or something similar. Why Mark, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle smiled wryly.

"An association of ideas, I suppose. The names seemed to connect in my mind, for some reason. At any rate, I am glad that he has proved satisfactory."

"I have decided," said Mr. Scarlet ponderously, "to allow Mr. Linley to continue on the staff of Slade, at any rate for the time being. Till the end of this term, undoubtedly. After that I shall decide whether or not to make his engagement a permanent one."

Mr. Buddle stared in surprise at his Chief.

He said: "I should have thought that the staff of Slade was more than ample already, Headmaster. In what capacity could Mr. Linley be offered a permanent post here?"

Mr. Scarlet cleared his throat. He spoke a little defensively:

"Mr. Linley is a specialist in English. Naturally he will continue to teach English."

There was a pause. Mr. Buddle sat very still.

He said at last: "I do not quite follow your meaning, Headmaster. I am the English master at Slade. Am I to understand that you are appointing some new man in my place?"

Mr. Scarlet waved a hand deprecatingly.

"Certainly not. I feel that, possibly, we have expected a little too much of you, and the strain of your work may have caused your recent illness. Therefore --"

"My recent illness was a mere attack of influenza. It was not caused by strain, but by my catching a germ somewhere. I was ready to resume my duties in less than a week, but you insisted that I should take a fortnight to recover completely."

"Quite, quite!" exclaimed Mr. Scarlet soothingly. "Mr. Linley will merely give you more free time by taking certain English classes off your hands. You will, of course, be the senior English master."

"I should hope so!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle.

"Mr. Linley will take the Third Form in English from now on," explained Mr. Scarlet.

"Oh!" said Mr. Buddle. "I see!

Mr. Drayne will not object to that, I think. He is not particularly energetic. But up till now it has not been considered necessary for the Third to receive specialised attention in English."

"Mr. Linley will also be responsible for the instruction in the English Language and Literature for the Lower Fourth," added Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Buddle sat bolt upright. He almost bristled.

"The Lower Fourth is my own form, sir," he said. "I object strongly to anyone but myself teaching English to the Lower Fourth."

Mr. Scarlet smiled frostily.

"You will teach English to the Upper Fourth, the Fifth, and the Sixth, Mr. Buddle. The Lower Fourth will remain your personal responsibility, and you can, if you wish, supervise Mr. Linley in the English instruction he gives. We are, in fact, really making a post for Mr. Linley. He would dearly like to be permanently on the Slade staff --"

"No doubt!" said Mr. Buddle grimly.

"Nevertheless, his position will be temporary until I come to a definite decision at the end of term. It will be a kindness to the young man to allow him to finish the term with us, at any rate, as you will agree."

Mr. Buddle did not agree, and he was looking gloomy.

"Mr. Linley," hinted Mr. Scarlet delicately, "is a first-class performer on the cricket field."

"Cricket?" echoed Mr. Buddle in astonishment.

"I understand that Mr. Linley is a most exceptional batsman," murmured Mr. Scarlet.

"Really, sir --" Mr. Buddle was a little breathless. "It is surely something new when a member of the Slade teaching staff is appointed because he excels at cricket."

Mr. Scarlet remained patient.

He said: "The sports master and the senior boys are excited at Mr. Linley's possibilities. This year, for the first time, Slade meets two of the minor counties on the cricket field. The sports master has arranged a fixture with the Devonshire eleven, and it is also hoped that Slade will play Lincoln when that county comes this way for several important fixtures. Antrobus would naturally have Mr. Crayford in his eleven, and the presence of a player of the quality of Mr. Linley would add greatly to our chances. If Slade can do well against two county sides, it will add immensely to the prestige of the school."

"I see!" said Mr. Buddle coldly.

He thought the whole set-up quite preposterous, but he could hardly say so to the Headmaster of Slade.

. . . . .

That evening, Mr. Buddle felt disturbed. Some masters, no doubt, would have been pleased to have less work to do. Mr. Buddle was a conscientious man who took a personal interest in every one of his boys. He felt a sense of grievance that some of his pupils, and members of his own form at that, should have been taken out of his hands. Mentally he cursed the short bout of influenza which had made such a state of affairs possible.

He did not meet his new colleague on the Slade staff until the Saturday afternoon. The new man, like some others on the staff, was not resident at the school, but lived in "digs" in the little town of Everslade.

On the Saturday afternoon, Mr. Buddle walked into Everslade, did a small amount of shopping, and then called at Ye Olde Devonshire Tea Shoppe

for a quiet tea. The little restaurant had a balcony at the back, overlooking the river. A few tables were in service on the balcony for the benefit of any customers who might like a meal in the open air. Mr. Buddle passed through the shop on to the balcony, and took possession of one of the tables. He ordered tea, scones, jam, and cream from a pretty waitress, and then sat gazing pensively over the river while he waited for his light meal.

"Mr. Buddle, I presume!" said a voice with a mocking intonation, and the schoolmaster looked up to find a presentable young man, with a gaudy flowing necktie, standing before his table.

"Yes?" said Mr. Buddle.

The young man smiled pleasantly. He said: "My name is Linley."

"Is it?" said Mr. Buddle.

"Clive Linley!" supplemented the young man. He drew out a chair at Mr. Buddle's table and sat down. "You do not mind my joining you, I hope?"

Mr. Buddle looked round the balcony pointedly. As his was the only table occupied on the balcony at present, he thought that the young man was possessed of sublime cheek.

Mr. Linley went on, as he stretched out his legs easily:

"I hope you are better Mr. Buddle. Of course, your indisposition was lucky for me. I was out of a billet and I was glad to get a temporary post."

Mr. Buddle felt he could hardly remain silent.

"I hope your stay at Slade has been pleasant," he said stiffly.

"Very pleasant. You know, of course, that the Headmaster has liked my work, and has offered me a permanent position," said Mr. Linley.

"I know that the Headmaster has offered you a trial until the end of the present term," amended Mr. Buddle. It was rude - but Mr. Buddle felt rude.

Linley was still smiling.

"It is practically a certainty that it will be permanent," he remarked. "At present I am staying in accommodation which the Headmaster recommended to me in the village. I hope that next term I may be resident at the school."

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows.

"That is unlikely. All the rooms on Masters' corridor are occupied. I know of no resident master who is leaving, but, even if that happened, the vacant room would almost certainly be offered to one of the visiting masters who has been on the staff far longer than yourself."

Mr. Linley smiled again, his bronzed cheeks dimpling. He did not pursue the subject.

He said softly: "You do not remember me, sir?"

"Remember you?" Mr. Buddle stared at him. "To the best of my knowledge I have never met you before."

"Oh, but you have," said Mr. Linley. "I'm Clive Linley. I was at Farnley. You haven't forgotten Farnley?"

"Linley of Farnley." Mr. Buddle sat back in his chair and gazed thoughtfully at the other. Mr. Linley was still smiling as the pretty waitress placed Mr. Buddle's tray before that gentleman. She put a cup of tea and a cream pastry before Mr. Linley, and took her departure.

Mr. Buddle poured himself out a cup of tea.

He observed, as he covered a scone with jam and cream: "When I heard your name from the Headmaster it seemed familiar. But I did not associate you with the Linley I knew

when I was a master at Farnley. It is a long time ago. I had forgotten you."

He took a bite at the scone.

"I hadn't forgotten you," said Mr. Linley. "My last post wasn't a comfortable one, and I turned it in at Easter. When I was offered a temporary job at Slade I jumped at the chance. I remembered that you were a beak at Slade."

"Indeed!" murmured Mr. Buddle, going on with his tea.

Linley toyed with a piece of his cream pastry.

"You didn't like me much at Farnley, did you, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle dabbed his lips with a paper serviette.

"Didn't I? As I said just now, it is a long time ago."

"Quite a while," agreed Mr. Linley. "When the Headmaster of Farnley was thinking of making me a prefect, you recommended against it. You said - and my memory is obviously better than yours - that my temper was uncertain and that I was no stickler for truth."

"Did I?" Mr. Buddle smiled faintly, as he stirred his tea. "I hope I did you justice."

"I thought you were an old devil," said Linley pleasantly. "Some years later, when I applied for entry to the teachers' college at Winchester, I had to name four references. Your name was one that I gave. The authorities at Winchester wrote to you at Slade, and you refused to act as a reference for me."

"Ah!" Mr. Buddle's brows were knitted. He drank his tea, and then sat back eyeing the younger man. After a pause, Mr. Buddle said:

"I recall that occasion now, though I had long forgotten it."

"It meant nothing to you," murmured Linley. "It meant a lot to me."

"The matter comes back to me now," said Mr. Buddle calmly. "I was surprised that you should have given my name as a referee for yourself. I had not seen you for a number of years, and you had never bothered to keep in touch with me. I had known you as a schoolboy. I could not speak for you as a man. I recollect that I wrote the authorities at Winchester that I had not seen you for some years --"

"Seven years," interpolated Linley.

"Yes," concurred Mr. Buddle. "I recall that I said that, in the meantime, I had heard of nothing to your discredit, but I considered it wiser that they should refer to people who knew you after you left school. As I remembered you at school, you were none too reliable. You might have improved, but I could not know."

"You could have stretched a point."

"When I am asked to give a reference, I cannot stretch a point," said Mr. Buddle. "I was surprised that you gave my name. You must have known many influential people, long after you ceased to know me."

"I did - but the good opinion of a master on the Slade staff would have meant a lot to me then. Obviously, Mr. Buddle, you did not believe that a rather wild schoolboy could become a worthy man."

"You are mistaken," said Mr. Buddle mildly. "I am well aware that some of the finest men in Britain today were very naughty schoolboys. I still think it odd that, if you had other influential contacts, you should have given my name after the passage of a number of years." He added tartly: "There must have been a shortage of people with a high opinion of your

character and gifts."

Linley said softly: "You're insulting. You may regret it when I bag your job at Slade."

Mr. Buddle started.

"You have a distorted sense of humour, Mr. Linley," he said. "I have no intention of resigning my post at Slade, and, even if I did, I very much doubt whether the Headmaster would offer the post to you."

"We shall see," said Mr. Linley. He was smiling grimly. "It would give me great satisfaction to step into your shoes."

"I believe it would," exclaimed Mr. Buddle incredulously. He regarded the young man steadily. "It must be unusual to find a malicious schoolboy becoming a malicious man. Just why do you imagine that Mr. Scarlet would wish to dispense with my services in favour of yours?"

Linley leaned forward. He said:

"You're getting long in the tooth, and I daresay your system of teaching. English is as old-fashioned as you are. Schools nowadays like to adopt modern ideas. I'm young. My system is modern."

Mr. Buddle nodded. He spoke calmly, though he felt annoyed.

"You interest me, Mr. Linley. Just how would you modernise the teaching of English Language? Normally, modern methods of teaching simply mean doing less real work, while the unfortunate students learn less and less. Is that your plan?"

Linley was about to speak, but Mr. Buddle went on:

"When I was a lad, analysis had been abolished as part of English instruction. It was considered old-fashioned. Today, almost every examination paper in the English Language contains a question on analysis. But perhaps you are thinking of English literature - you would abolish the study of old-fashioned writers like Shakespeare and Milton?"

Mr. Linley rose to his feet. He placed a half-crown beside his plate.

He smiled down at Mr. Buddle.

"Let's leave it that the best man will win, shall we?" he said. "I'm young. I have the modern outlook. Schools like to get go-ahead young men on their staffs. You'll find that the chief beak will give me more and more of your work to do. Pay the waitress for my tea, will you? I'm in a hurry. So long, sir!"

He turned and strode from the verandah. Mr. Buddle shook his head dubiously.

"What a very conceited young man!" he observed to the empty tables on the verandah. "He has a lot to learn. I wonder --"

That evening Mr. Buddle browsed again over the old blue Gem which had, long ago, been entitled "The Fighting Prefect." Somehow, the capers of the unpleasant Stoker of that old tale did not seem so far-fetched now.

. . . . . .

It was not a very happy summer term for Mr. Buddle. With the new man taking the Lower Fourth in English, Mr. Buddle found himself with more free periods. An increase in his leisure would have pleased a rather lazy master like Mr. Drayne. It did not please Mr. Buddle who enjoyed his work, and was always happiest when his nose was to the grindstone.

With Mr. Linley accommodated in the village, Mr. Buddle rarely came into contact with him. Though their paths did not cross, the young man's remarks in the Everslade cafe lingered

in Mr. Buddle's memory. Mr. Buddle did not seriously believe that Mr. Linley would supplant him as English master at Slade. But Linley undoubtedly had youth on his side, if the Headmaster should ever decide to weigh it in the balance against dedication and experience. It seemed to Mr. Buddle that the handing of the Lower Fourth English to the newcomer might be a thin end of the wedge. Another term might see another class drop into Linley's lap, and that Mr. Buddle would find intolerable. If, later on, matters went that way, Mr. Buddle knew that he would resign, and that would be just what Linley hoped for.

Though no longer teaching English to his own form, the Lower Fourth, Mr. Buddle kept an eye on the English they were doing. He quickly saw that Linley was careless and incompetent with his marking. It worried Mr. Buddle who liked to see progress made. A master who is slack with his marking will soon have a slack and lazy set of pupils.

Linley was popular with the seniors. He did not meet them as a teacher, but he played cricket with them. And his cricket was first-class. He was a superb middle-order bat, and, like Mr. Crayford, the gamesmaster, he played in several fixtures in which the Slade First Eleven met adult teams. In the past, it had been rare for Slade to win in these games. Now, with the assistance of Mr. Linley, they did win. Antrobus and Scarlet were enthusiastic over the master's prowess on the field. With the fixtures against the minor county sides drawing near, Antrobus was confident that, even if Slade did not win, they would give a good account of themselves.

With the Lower Fourth, to whom he now taught English, he was not so popular. First Eleven cricket meant little to them. Their interest was in their own fixtures. So they were unimpressed by the new master's exploits with the willow.

One evening, soon after half-term, there was a tap on Mr. Buddle's study door, and Meredith and Pilgrim, two of the boys in the Lower Fourth, presented themselves.

Mr. Buddle was seated at his table, marking exercises, and he regarded them enquiringly.

"What is it, boys?" he asked.

Pilgrim, Mr. Buddle's head boy in the Lower Fourth, came to the point at once.

"We don't like Mr. Linley taking us in English," he said.

Meredith added: "He can't teach, and he's got a rotten temper."

Mr. Buddle frowned. He raised a hand.

He said sternly: "You must not come to me and talk like that. You are well aware that I cannot listen to you."

"There's nobody else we can talk to, sir. You're our real form-master." Meredith spoke quickly before he could be silenced. "When are you coming back to teach English to us, sir?"

Mr. Buddle smiled faintly.

"Next term, I hope, boys. We shall see."

Meredith grunted.

"Mr. Linley takes it for granted that he will be taking the Lower Fourth for good, sir," he said sulkily. He added: "We don't want him."

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"The main thing is that you do me credit for the instruction I have given you in the past," he said mildly. "There is one way you could both come under my instruction again very speedily."

Both boys spoke at once.

"How, sir?"

"It's simple. Work very hard and earn your remove to the Upper Fourth. I still teach English to the Upper Fourth."

"Oh, that --" Meredith sniffed. "Mr. Linley thinks he will be taking the Upper Fourth in English next term --"

Mr. Buddle compressed his lips.

"You cannot know anything of the sort, Meredith. Do not exaggerate."

"He's hinted it at any rate," said Meredith. "He's got a rotten temper, too. He slapped my face this morning. A real clout, sir."

Mr. Buddle sighed.

"I expect you deserved it. I cannot listen --"

Meredith's innocent face crumpled into a grin.

"I made a little joke. He didn't like it. He hasn't got a sense of humour."

"You would never smack a fellow's face, sir," put in Pilgrim. "It isn't done."

"I think," said Mr. Buddle sternly, "that you boys had better go. It will soon be bed-time for the Lower Fourth."

Back in their study on the Lower Fourth corridor, the two boys found their study-mate, Garmansway, seated at the table, working a mathematical exercise. He looked up enquiringly.

"How did it go?" he asked.

"So-so!" replied Meredith. He said sombrely: "That new beast is trying to bag the old Gump's job, mark my words. I reckon the Gump knows it, too."

"Could be!" said Pilgrim. "I suppose there's nothing we can do about it."

. . . . .

As the term grew older, Mr. Linley earned further golden opinions among the seniors. His cricket was the password to his popularity. Even some who did not like him a lot personally, had to admit that he was a great cricketer. Slade drew with Devonshire, which was an achievement.

After tea, one golden evening in early July, Mr. Buddle was enjoying fresh air on the wooden seat which ran round the mulberry tree in the Mulberry Walk which separated the main school building from the gymnasium. He had only been there a minute or two when he was joined by Vanderlyn of the Sixth.

The tall, gangling senior with the unruly shock of flaxen hair was looking bright and cheerful.

"Can I speak to you a moment, sir?" asked Vanderlyn.

Mr. Buddle tapped the seat beside him.

"Sit down, Vanderlyn."

The senior sat down.

"I'm playing cricket for the Sixth, sir," he said. "Tomorrow afternoon. Antrobus has picked me for a try-out. I knew you'd be glad."

Mr. Buddle smiled.

"Congratulations, Vanderlyn," he said warmly. "That's great news. I always wanted to see you get into the games."

Mr. Buddle took a keen interest in Vanderlyn. The boy had always been something of a misfit at Slade. Mr. Buddle had long realised the handicaps. Vanderlyn made few friends. He had always been hopeless at sport, and had made no effort to improve himself. He did not shine as a scholar. He was the type of fellow who would probably be more successful when the time came for him to enter the adult world than ever he would be at school.

"The skipper says that I'm a natural spinner," said Vanderlyn. "Pinky-Mi has helped me a lot, too. I've put in a good deal of time at the nets. Next year I might even play for the school, Antrobus says."

"I hope you do," said Mr. Buddle. "The game on Wednesday isn't a very important one, of course. It's the Sixth versus the Fifth, but Mr. Linley and Mr. Crayford are both playing for the Fifth, so the opposition will be strong. Some of the First Eleven are in the Fifth, so the Sixth will have a tough time. It should be a great game. I'm tickled pink that Antrobus should give me a chance."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Buddle. "I hope that you will make plenty of runs."

Vanderlyn laughed ruefully.

"I shan't make many runs, sir, if any. But I might get a wicket or so, especially as the pitch may be a bit dampish. Are you doing anything on Wednesday afternoon, sir --"

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"Nothing so important as watching you take a wicket or so, Vanderlyn." His eyes twinkled. "I shall come along and watch the game, if you would like me to."

"That's what I wanted to ask you, sir." Vanderlyn rose to his feet. "If I know you're watching, it will make me put my beef into the game. Keep your fingers crossed for me, sir."

"I shall certainly do that," said Mr. Buddle smiling.

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So Wednesday afternoon found Mr. Buddle in possession of one of the iron seats on top of the Senior Pavilion. Access to the roof of the pavilion was obtained by way of stone steps at the rear of the building. Broad steps went down to the parapet of the pavilion, after the style of the circle of a theatre. The iron seats would accommodate something like fifty spectators if required, though on this afternoon there were only about a dozen people on the roof.

Only seniors and adults were permitted to rise thus in the world. When a big school match was in progress, old boys and parents and some of the locals of Everslade would come in to see the game. The match today in which the Sixth and Fifth were competing was not an important one in the fixture list, but a fairly large crowd of Slade fellows had gathered in front of the pavilion and round the ground to see the match.

Mr. Buddle had his binoculars with him to help him follow the game, and had thoughtfully brought a book in case the play should prove boring.

However, there was plenty of incident during the next couple of hours. The afternoon was overcast, with only a very occasional burst of sunshine, but it was warm and humid. The Sixth batted first, nobody got settled in, and wickets fell steadily. The score was only just past the hundred mark when the last wicket fell. Vanderlyn, the last man in, was not out, without scoring.

During the tea interval Mr. Buddle went to the tea tent for refreshments. It was crowded with chattering Slade boys, but Miss Prue, the lodge-keeper's daughter who was in charge of refreshments, quickly found Mr. Buddle a seat at a small table and brought him a tasty tea.

Listening to the chatter that was going on around him, Mr. Buddle found that everybody was expecting the Fifth to win. With two masters, both sound cricketers, in the team, it was considered that the Fifth would knock

up the required runs without much difficulty.

When Mr. Buddle returned to his seat on the top of the pavilion, the Fifth's innings was already in progress.

Mr. Crayford, the games master, had opened with Lorch of the Fifth. Runs did not come very quickly, but, with Lorch acting as anchor man, Mr. Crayford had acquired a careful 40 out of the 50 on the board when he was caught in the gully by Irony of the Sixth.

Antrobus changed his bowlers frequently, and succeeded fairly well in preventing any other batsmen getting too settled in, but when the fifth wicket fell, and Mr. Linley went out to start his innings, the scoreboard showed a total of 76. Mr. Buddle felt that it was all over bar shouting.

Mr. Linley always insisted on batting fifth wicket down. He explained that he was a master of spin, which was more likely to be employed at that stage of the game. Some seniors uncharitably suggested, privately, that going in at fifth wicket down he was more likely to carry his bat and thereby improve his average.

The batsmen had crossed when the fifth man fell to a catch, so now Carslake, the Captain of the Fifth, batted out the over without increasing the score.

As Mr. Linley took middle and leg, and looked around confidently while the fieldsmen went to their new positions, Antrobus tossed the ball to Vanderlyn.

"That's either suicide or a shrewd bit of captaincy," Mr. Buddle heard a nearby spectator on the top of the pavilion comment.

Mr. Buddle focussed his glasses on Mr. Linley. There was a contemptuous smile on the latter's face as he took guard. Evidently he regarded as suicide the move of the skipper of Slade.

Mr. Buddle switched his glasses to Vanderlyn. The tall, gangling senior looked serious. He was gnawing his upper lip. An ungainly walker at normal times, he was also an ungainly and awkward looking bowler. He certainly did not look like a man capable of taking a star wicket. He took only a few steps before his left arm came over.

Mr. Linley blocked the ball, with a careless smile. From the whirling arms the second ball came down, almost a full toss. Once again the batsman blocked it.

The third ball was quicker, and on the leg. Mr. Linley swept it aside, and the batsmen ran. Only a burst of speed by Restarick saved the boundary while the batsmen ran two.

The fourth ball was the last that Mr. Linley was to receive. It was slower, and, as Linley went to repeat the sweep, it turned wickedly, and the leg stump flew. There was a terrific roar from the spectators.

Mr. Buddle was watching Linley through his glasses. He saw incredulity and then fury in the man's face. While the Sixth Formers ran to Vanderlyn to clap him on the back, Mr. Linley turned and walked towards the pavilion. Still watching him through the glasses, Mr. Buddle scanned the face, - a face angry with disappointment and chagrin. As Linley neared the pavilion steps beneath, Mr. Buddle saw the expression change. The man was smiling now, with careless indifference.

It was the turning point of the game, for the Fifth collapsed. Bogged down, the batsmen lost the initiative. Vanderlyn took one more wicket in his

second over, and then Antrobus brought back his quickies to finish off the tail. The Fifth folded up for a total of 90.

After the game, Mr. Buddle went down from the top of the pavilion. He chatted with one or two spectators on his way, and then sauntered in at the front of the pavilion with the intention of congratulating Vanderlyn. Mr. Buddle was really very happy for the senior.

Had he known what was to happen, he would have kept as far away from the pavilion as possible, for he was just in time to play a leading part in a minor drama.

Vanderlyn, with Antrobus and two or three other First Eleven men, were standing near the soft-drinks bar, some of them with glasses in their hands. Vanderlyn looked cheerful and very delighted.

Mr. Buddle smiled to himself with satisfaction. He had never seen Vanderlyn so animated and happy before. The afternoon's success was just what the senior needed to give him confidence in his own ability.

Mr. Buddle was about to go forward to add his quiet congratulations when the door of one of the dressing rooms opened, and Mr. Linley came out. The chatting seniors were still in their whites, but Linley had changed and was carrying his cricket bag. Mr. Buddle remained standing in the doorway.

As Linley was passing, Vanderlyn spoke to him eagerly.

"Sir, Antrobus is playing me in the match against Sutherby Seniors next Saturday. In a way I owe it to you, sir."

There was a chuckle among the seniors. Mr. Linley stopped. He turned round, a steely glint in his eyes. He spoke in a drawl:

"So you've got a place in our First Eleven because you took my wicket. I really feel flattered. I haven't lived in vain, have I? I hope you do well."

Vanderlyn flushed. There was something vaguely unpleasant in the other's tone.

"I'll do my best," said Vanderlyn, his animation diminished.

"Of course you will." Linley smiled. "It's possible that your skipper is being a bit reckless, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," said Vanderlyn lamely.

Antrobus stepped forward from the counter of the soft-drinks bar.

"Excuse me, Mr. Linley," he said. "Perhaps you'll tell me why it's reckless. On Van's performance today he deserves his chance."

Linley laughed.

"Of course he does. Say no more about it."

Pinky-Mi, the Headmaster's son, said with gentle persistence:

"Didn't you think it was a pretty good ball that got your wicket, sir?"

Linley did not answer. He smiled and made to pass on.

Mr. Buddle from the doorway was watching with interest.

Vanderlyn spoke impetuously.

"Why don't you answer Scarlet's question?"

"My dear boy," said Linley, with an exaggerated show of tried patience. "Yes, it was a pretty good ball - a magnificent ball, if you like. Marvellous! Does that satisfy you? But I think your skipper shouldn't read too much in it. After all, your Sutherby opponents are unlikely to get themselves out just to give you a bit of encouragement."

More fellows had come out of

the changing rooms now. They were all looking on. There was a quickening of interest as Linley made his last remark.

Several of the Sixth-formers were frowning. Some of the Fifth were grinning.

Vanderlyn spoke.

He said huskily: "Do you mean that you went soft in the match today, just to give encouragement to me?"

Linley put out his hand and patted the senior's shoulder, and Vanderlyn drew back.

"Let us say that it wasn't a very important game, so it wasn't necessary to try very hard," Linley explained seriously. "I always like to do all I can to help any man who is on the fringe of the eleven and who is anxious to do well. I shouldn't tell you this, perhaps, but you have insisted. I didn't bother about making a big score this afternoon. It was much more satisfactory that you should do well. I'm sure we all agree on that."

The colour had drained from Vanderlyn's face. He was breathing hard. Disappointment and embarrassment were evident in his expression. As he stood in silence, Linley turned away, but he had only moved a pace when Vanderlyn caught his arm.

Linley stared at him in artificial surprise.

"Mr. Linley, are you saying that you threw your wicket away this afternoon so that I should think I had done well?" Vanderlyn demanded.

Linley shook off the senior's hand.

"Don't be a fool, Vanderlyn!" he said. He paused. After a moment, he said harshly: "You don't suppose that a bowler of your class could take my wicket unless I let him do it, do you? Don't be as stupid as you look."

Vanderlyn said in a low voice: "You're asking the fellows to believe that I didn't bowl you fairly - that you threw your wicket away?"

Linley gave a short, uneasy laugh.

"Of course not. No batsman throws his wicket away. You're trying to make a scene to draw attention to yourself, Vanderlyn. Let's say that I wanted you to do well - so I didn't try very hard."

There was a low murmur among the watching seniors. The little crowd had increased to a dozen or so fellows.

Two words dropped from Vanderlyn's lips:

"You liar!"

The murmur among the seniors died away. The man, after all, was a master, although he had been playing cricket with senior boys.

Unostentatiously, Antrobus took a pace or two forward and stood by Vanderlyn's side. The Captain of Slade looked contemptuous.

A flaming red rose in Linley's cheeks.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" he said angrily.

Vanderlyn was about to reply when a restraining hand was placed on his shoulder, and Mr. Buddle's voice cut in.

"Calm yourself, Vanderlyn!"

Vanderlyn, fighting to control his emotions, spoke in a choking voice:

"That man - I got his wicket, and he says - he says --"

"I know what he says! I heard him!" said Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Linley spoke sulphurously:

"Mr. Buddle, that boy called me a liar. You heard him, I imagine."

Mr. Buddle nodded. Inwardly he was seething with anger and

mortification. He remembered the man's face when his wicket had fallen - a face blazing with surprised fury and frustration as Mr. Buddle had seen clearly through his binoculars. But Mr. Buddle forced himself to speak calmly and sedately:

He nodded.

"I heard him, Mr. Linley. He was foolish to lose his temper in that way. Everybody knows that the ball was a splendid one which took your wicket," said the little master, who knew little or nothing about cricket but plenty about human nature. He went on deliberately: "If you cannot be a good loser, Mr. Linley, you might, at least, try to be a dignified one."

There were murmurs of approval, a ripple of delighted chuckles, a few handclaps, and a soft call of "Good old Gump!" Vanderlyn was not exceptionally popular, but Slade men, in general, were sticklers for fair play.

Mr. Buddle gripped Vanderlyn's hand reassuringly, turned on his heel, and strode out of the pavilion. Five minutes later he was tapping on the door of the study of the Headmaster of Slade.

Mr. Scarlet looked up from a number of papers he was sorting at his desk when Mr. Buddle entered. The English master closed the door, and faced the Head of Slade.

"I regret to trouble you, Headmaster," said Mr. Buddle. "I have practically called a member of your staff a liar before a number of Slade boys. In doing so, I have placed myself in an impossible position, and I confess that I did it deliberately. If you desire it, my resignation is at your disposal."

Mr. Scarlet almost gasped. He stared at Mr. Buddle in astonishment, as well he might.

"Really, Mr. Buddle --"

Mr. Buddle nodded seriously. He folded his arms and waited.

Mr. Scarlet leaned back in his chair, and said nothing for a moment. Possibly he was counting up to twenty.

At last he spoke: "What on earth are you talking about, Mr. Buddle? Please sit down, and compose yourself."

Mr. Buddle sat down.

"I am quite composed, Headmaster! The matter is simple. I have watched a cricket match on Big Side this afternoon. After the game, Mr. Linley --"

"Linley!" ejaculated Mr. Scarlet.

"Quite! After the game, Mr. Linley told an untruth and showed himself as a poor sportsman. I, personally, accused him of those faults."

Mr. Scarlet looked worried.

"In public, Mr. Buddle?"

"Very much in public, Headmaster. The faults were paraded in public, so I accused him in public. So my resignation --"

Mr. Scarlet held up his hand.

"Do not talk of resignation so prematurely, Mr. Buddle. You and I are old friends and colleagues. Whatever you may have done, I am sure you would not act without provocation. If it is necessary for me to enquire into the matter --"

The Headmaster of Slade was interrupted by a thump on the door. Without awaiting an invitation, Mr. Linley strode in. He looked flushed and angry.

Mr. Buddle and the Headmaster of Slade stared at him in amazement.

Linley threw out his arm and pointed an accusing finger at Mr. Buddle.

"I guessed you'd be here. You've

come crawling to the Head to make your tale good. You're not going to get away with it."

Mr. Scarlet rose to his feet.

"Mr. Linley, please --" he began.

Linley interrupted, discretion thrown to the winds.

"I know the tales that Buddle has been telling you - that I was his worst pupil when he was a master at Farnley - that I've got a rotten temper - that the Head of Farnley asked my father to remove me from the School. Buddle wants to get me out of Slade because he thinks I'll bag his job --"

The voice of the Head of Slade cut in like a pistol shot.

"Stop!"

Silence fell for a moment, and Linley panted.

Mr. Scarlet said sternly: "Mr. Linley, stop making a fool of yourself!"

Linley fought to regain control of his anger. He said huskily: "I'm sorry, sir, but it's so unfair. That man is a mischief-maker --"

"You are, in any case, mistaken," said Mr. Scarlet coldly. "I was quite unaware that you and Mr. Buddle were acquainted before you came to Slade. You have leaped to conclusions, Mr. Linley. Mr. Buddle has never discussed with me your reputation as a schoolboy, which, in any event, must be quite a number of years ago and is beside the point. Mr. Buddle came to me just now to inform me that he had accused you of untruth, and to offer me his resignation on account of his indiscretion."

Linley's jaw dropped. He floundered.

"I'm sorry, sir - I was misled - I'm afraid I lost my temper --"

"Obviously!" snapped Mr. Scarlet. "A loss of temper may be overlooked in a schoolboy, but it is inexcusable in a schoolmaster."

Linley tried to look contrite, but he darted a venomous look in Mr. Buddle's direction.

"I hope you will excuse me, Mr. Scarlet. I'm terribly sorry --"

"If you will kindly withdraw I will discuss the matter with you later," said Mr. Scarlet. "At present I am engaged with Mr. Buddle."

Red in the face, Linley left the study.

As the door closed behind him, Mr. Scarlet mopped his brow. He moved over to the window.

"An impetuous young man," he ejaculated. "Perhaps you will tell me what led to this unfortunate scene, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle stood up and faced the Headmaster who was standing with his back to the window. The schoolmaster cleared his throat, and commenced his little tale of Vanderlyn being selected to play cricket for his form. He had only been speaking for a few moments when the noise of a scuffle, accompanied by loud yelling, came from the quadrangle.

Mr. Buddle broke off, and the Headmaster turned quickly and looked out.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the Headmaster of Slade.

Just beneath the window in the quadrangle, Mr. Linley was cuffing a boy violently. The boy was rolling on the ground and yelling at the top of his voice. Two juniors were standing and looking on, lending their own voices to the confusion.

Mr. Scarlet flung up the sash of his window, and put his head out.

"Mr. Linley -- Mr. Linley --"

he called loudly.

Linley straightened up, ceasing his attack on the junior. He stared for a moment at the Head of Slade, and then turned and hurried away.

. . . . .

That evening Mr. Buddle sent for Meredith of the Lower Fourth. When the fair-haired youth presented himself in Mr. Buddle's study, the schoolmaster eyed him severely.

"Meredith," said Mr. Buddle in a deep voice, "will you kindly explain to me that extraordinary scene under the Headmaster's window a couple of hours ago."

Meredith looked remorseful.

"Oh, sir. We went for a walk - Pilgrim, Garmansway, and me were there --"

"And I!" corrected Mr. Buddle.

"Yes, and you!" agreed Meredith. "We went for a walk, and I didn't look where I was going. I was a careless boy, sir. I bumped into Mr. Linley --"

Mr. Buddle knitted his brows.

"Was that the reason Mr. Linley was - er - chastising you?"

"I trod on his foot, sir," explained Meredith apologetically. "He seems to have an awful temper, but perhaps he's got a corn."

"Hm!" murmured Mr. Buddle. He added: "For such a thing to happen under the Headmaster's window --"

Meredith nodded gravely.

"Yes, sir. Wasn't it awful?"

Mr. Buddle regarded the boy thoughtfully.

"I trust it was an accident, Meredith."

The boy's blue eyes were turned on him reproachfully.

"Oh, sir. Of course!"

Mr. Buddle stood for a moment or two, gazing dubiously at the picture of innocence before him. There was really only one thing for Mr. Buddle to say - and he said it.

"Very well, Meredith. You may go. Good-night, my boy."

After Meredith's departure, Mr. Buddle busied himself about his study. He was humming a happy little tune.

. . . . .

Mr. Linley did not secure a permanent post at Slade. In fact, he did not even remain for the closing weeks of that summer term.

The following morning, after breakfast, Mr. Buddle's telephone rang, and Mr. Buddle answered it. It was Mr. Scarlet, calling from his private house adjoining the school buildings. His voice sounded precise.

"The Headmaster here, Mr. Buddle! Mr. Linley has been obliged to leave us suddenly. For personal reasons, shall we say? I have already informed Mr. Drayne. May I ask you to resume your English tuition of the Lower Fourth, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle smiled into the telephone.

"Certainly, Headmaster! It will be a pleasure. I will take the Lower Fourth in English this morning."

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Scarlet courteously.

On Saturday Vanderlyn played for the First Eleven against Sutherby. He bowled a half-dozen overs with great economy, and he took a wicket. And, as the skipper said to him appreciatively, what more could his captain ask for? At any rate for what was left of the summer term, Vanderlyn was happier than he had ever been before in his

school life.

. . . . .

That week-end, Mr. Buddle wrote to Mr. Meredith. Mr. Meredith, the father of Meredith of the Lower Fourth, was the owner of the volume of Gems which Mr. Buddle had been enjoying in his leisure moments during that term.

After a few days, Mr. Buddle had a pleasant reply from Mr. Meredith. In the course of his letter, Mr. Meredith wrote:

"... I am very interested in your comments on the story 'The Fighting Prefect.' I am intrigued that on first reading you thought it far-fetched, but that, later on, you changed your mind. Some time you must tell me what made you waver.

"Really, you know, I think that Stoker in the story was a little larger than life. A man doesn't bear malice over something that happened when he was at school. The farther away we get from our schooldays, the rosier they become; those mighty mountains become pleasant hills. I recall that I always intended to thrash a master whom we all disliked when I was at school. I forgot all about it when I left. It's too late now. Poor man, I expect that we were harder on him than he ever was on us.

"Have you ever come across Greyfriars in your reading? There was an occasion once when Coker set out with the intention of making Mr. Prout 'Bend Over' ....."

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

WANTED: G.H.A. 1922, 1923, 1928, 1934, 1935; Monster Libraries, Sexton Blake Annuals, Pre-war Wizard, Hotspur, Rover, Adventure, Beano, Dandy, etc., or what have you? Please state condition and price wanted.

I have for exchange G.H.A. 1921, 1936, 1937, 1938, in excellent order.

MERRY CHRISTMAS to all enthusiasts.

ARNOLD MONEY, 77 FRENSHAM DRIVE, BRADFORD 7, YORKSHIRE.

==========

WANTED: Mickey Mouse Annuals - or Specials, 1936 to 1944, also Walt Disney's THUMPER Annuals 1952 to 1954.

R. HAYDEN, 36 HIGHFIELD ROAD, LIVERPOOL, 13.

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SILVER JUBILEE CONGRATULATIONS to our Editor and all who produce the Annual — here's to the next quarter century!

MERRY CHRISTMAS & PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR to O.B.B.C. friends.

WANTED: B.F.L. 457 — "Soldiers of Fortune."

IAN BENNETT

20 FREWEN DRIVE, SAPCOTE, LEICESTER.

==========

The Black Sapper

by W. O. G. LOFTS

One of the best remembered characters in the D. C. Thomson papers was THE BLACK SAPPER. Remembered possibly more than many others, that ran far longer, because of his fantastic burrowing machine. This could even cut through London's Underground railway!

The BLACK SAPPER first appeared in The Rover No. 384 dated 24th August, 1929, when he was described as being very short and slim. Dressed entirely in black, even his tight fitting sweater being of a similar hue. His legs even were encased in black tights. When his face could be seen, it was hawklike with cold eyes, and cruel thin lips. Roughly about 30 years of age, with closely cropped hair he spoke in a very harsh voice. Although on the slight side, he had muscles as strong as steel, and slippery as glass. His assistant MARCOT: a big sleepy mechanic was usually dressed in blue overalls, and was reputed to have been once a great actor.

His burrowing boring machine which was 15 feet long, and shaped like a monstrous torpedo, had diamond tipped screws at each end, and weighed about 3 hundredweight. This enabled it to travel like a mole under the ground, as its nose could cut through earth/steel/and stone like butter. There was also some ingenious device which filled in the earth after its wake. The BLACK SAPPER as featured in the early series was simply a crook, and a cruel one at that. The first two series related how he battled against Commander Ben Breeze R.N. a famed world war I submarine hero, and his young cousin Danny Blair - a fair haired 17 year old youth. Breeze who was a former champion boxer was a giant of a man, who had invented an air-replenishing machine apparatus which THE BLACK SAPPER had stolen. The Commander eventually recovered his invention, with the burrowing machine as well. The BLACK SAPPER retired to a place in South America. Later he returned once more to battle, with an even better machine called THE EARTHWORM. The end of the series saw The SAPPER plunging seemingly to his death down a deep pit. Of course he did not die, and probably the third series of stories were the most revealing of them all. Tired of battling against Ben Breeze (who then faded out of the stories) he switched his attentions to an Asian country. His real name was actually RICHARD DE HYEATH; rightful heir to a title and large estates. A younger brother Jerry, an explorer - and who was a giant of a man, had been captured, and imprisoned. Eventually rescued, The BLACK SAPPER then flew to Europe to resume his life of crime. No stories appeared in 1931, and only two single tales in 1932. He was then portrayed in a far better light, in one story recovering Radium from a crook, and returning it to a hospital which nearly closed down because of its disappearance. 1933 was the year of another series of adventures in London - this time against Scotland Yard. 1934 in a single solitary yarn saw him ridding a town of giant rats controlled by a 'human' rat. A gap of a few years, and then in No. 805 dated 16th

September, 1938, saw the reprinting of the very first series of stories, followed rather cleverly by a new series where being released from prison by the British Secret Service, he is promised a free pardon if he fights against a tribe of Moledites in Honader - a South American republic. In the end he of course wins - and receives a telegram from Ben Breeze in London thanking him on behalf of the British Government and a welcome in Britain at any time.

Whether THE BLACK SAPPER appeared in the post-war ROVERS I do not know at the time of writing. Certainly he was still alive, the last I heard about him. If you are ever on the platform of London's Tube railway, and the BLACK SAPPER does come through, I do hope that you give him a friendly wave for giving so much pleasure to so many in boyhood days.

BIBLIOGRAPHY — ROVER

384 to 402 24/8/29 to 28/12/29
411 to 430 1/3/30 to 12/ 7/30
432 to 440 26/7/30 to 20/ 9/30

510 23/1/32 Single story. THE BLOODHOUND OF THE UNDERGROUND
519 26/3/32 " " THE HEADMASTER OF THE UNDERWORLD
564 4/2/33 to 579 20/5/33
612 6/1/34 Single story. THE BLACK SAPPER AND THE GIANT RATS

805 to 829 16/9/37 to 5/ 3/38. BLACK SAPPER'S PRIVATE WAR.

Authors not known - but presumed to be several, and an editorial creation.

* *

THE E. S. BROOKS BIBLIOGRAPHY is still available, but won't be forever, as only a limited number were printed. With 90 pages, including 12 pages of illustrations. Price £1.25. Sets of these illustrations can now be obtained separately at 13p per set. Original Typescripts by E.S.B. also available.

BLYTHE, 47 EVELYN AVENUE, KINGSBURY, LONDON, NW9 0JF.

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SALE: Film Funs (49) 1961-2, excellent, many St. Frank's stories £3. Jack of the Circus, Frank Richards 50p. S.B.L. Crime at The Fair, Hilary King 20p. Annuals: Billy Bunter's Own 50p; Eagles 5, 6, 9, 1962 30p each; Picturegoer 1953-4 50p. Postage extra.

WANTED: Magnets, good condition; C.D's before 1952.

LEN WORMULL

245 DAGNAM PARK DRIVE, ROMFORD, ESSEX.

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The Red Arrow

by J. R. SWAN

This is one "Thomson" paper that didn't make the grade - it had a good try - but failed at the last fence.

Number One came out week ending Friday, March 19th, 1932, price 2d, 56 pages - size approximately 8½" x 6". A handy size for slipping it quickly under one's jersey while in the classroom!

It had the usual multi-coloured cover - enhanced by a big red arrow across the top and partly behind the heading of the paper.

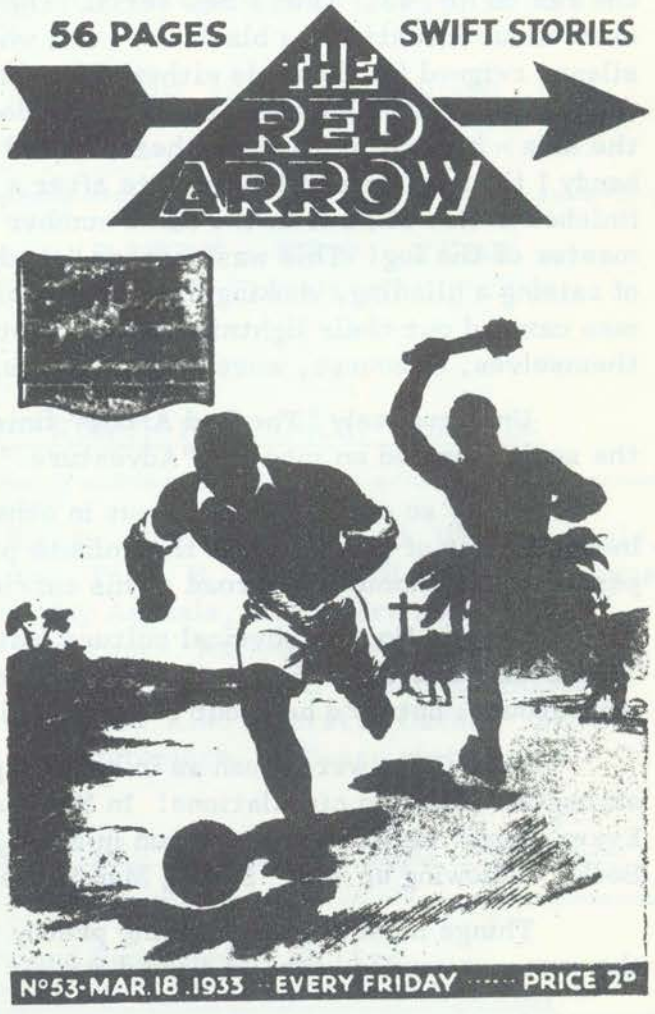
The first novel length story was called "Laughin' Jim," a Mountie who was accused of murder and his fight to clear himself. Then the first instalment of a serial story "Convict 66." You will notice that Thomson's had to be different! They had turned the usual "99" upside down! The story revolves around two escaped prisoners from a Dartmoor road gang and ended in No. 12

The "Red Arrow" also started in No. 1 a supplement in the centre pages called "The World's Weekly News," small paragraphs and photos of what was happening in different parts of the world.

There was, of course, the usual free gift - a booklet called "The Book of Training for Every Sport" Part 1; Part 2 came out the next week.

One thing I noticed there was no Editor's Chat welcoming readers to the new paper and hoping they would take it from there on! But in No. 2 he did manage a few words in the centre of page 41 and started off with - "A Note From The Editor!" - giving the usual spiel about the great stories in store, and make sure about ordering your copy, etc!

I will say though, they threw out every type of boys story they could during the paper's short life.



Yarns about Boxing, Cowboys, Football, Horse Racing, Pirates, Sea Stories, North West Mounted Police, Circus and Mystery Tales! Here's a few titles that might stir a few memories: "The Phantom Fury," "The Wolf Man," "Midnight Mack," "Tim's Night Out," "Fighters of The Circus," "The Cyclone Jockey," "Yellow Face," "The League of the Crimson Circle," "The Ten-O-Clock Raider," "The Terror of New York," "Pirates of The Clouds," "The River of Missing Men," "The Deep-sea Daredevil," "The Centre From Zambesi."

The serials were a mixed lot - the first one I've mentioned - so in Number 13 started "The Silent Tracker," another Mountie story of a trooper wanted for robbery and murder. Needless to say by the time the last instalment came round in No. 19 - the Mountie - (Jim Freeman) by name was a - wait for it! - a free man! Sorry about that!

In No. 20 the first instalment of "Black Morgans Gold" began. Two Canadians on a hunt for pirate gold aboard "The Ship of Terror." It took them up to No. 35 to locate the old buccaneers gold!

In the next issue the first chapters of "The Scarlet Man-Hunter" started - "a great swift action serial of air-adventure in the South Seas" - as it was put! This one ran to No. 43. Then a new serial "The Silent Smasher." A master crook has a marvellous invention - a black box - and when on pressing a button - complete silence reigned for 50 yards either side of the box. He could then do as much damage as he liked by smashing the bank doors in with an axe - and then blowing up the safe - but not a sound was heard! (Did it the hard way in those days!) Very handy I thought for sneaking in late after a night out with the boys! This serial finished in No. 51, but in the same number another story began, "Zorro The Slink," master of the fog! This was another "shady" character who invented a secret way of raising a blinding, choking fog of utter blackness, under cover of which he and his men carried out their lightning raids - looting and plundering as they liked. They themselves, of course, wore special goggles to see what they were doing!

Unfortunately "The Red Arrow" finished at No. 53, W/E Mar. 18th, 1933, so the serial carried on into the "Adventure."

Every so often Thomsons put in other items to get the readers' interest. In No. 8 "Wit of the World" a five minute page of fun - jokes taken from different periodicals at home and abroad - this carried on till the end.

Then in No. 9 a physical culture feature by the mighty young Apollon called "The Secrets of Great Strength," introduced by himself. I don't know whether he's still around, but he'd be about 68 now! This went to No. 22.

Free Gifts were given as in most papers - either to start them off - or to strengthen flagging circulations! In No. 1 and 2 as I said "The Book of Training for Every Sport" Parts 1 and 2. Then in No. 22 "The Red Arrow Junior Football Training Book," following up with "Strong Man Secrets."

Things must have been going pretty well until No. 43 when another shot in the arm was needed with "A Sealed Packet of Seven Foreign Stamps" was given away -

and also in Nos. 44 and 45.

There was one incident that always stuck in my mind every time "The Red Arrow" was mentioned. This was a paragraph in the paper at that time - either "The Star" or "News" I forget which - there was a case of a boy found hanging from a tree, and on being cut down, was found to have a copy of "The Red Arrow" in his pocket. He had been experimenting as lads will - but the way the paper put it - they intimated that it was the fault of the type of reading that the lad indulged in! Still you know as well as I do friends that the old papers have been blamed for almost everything since they started! There was a schoolboy who hung himself by accident in a roller-towel - and this was only a few months back!

It has been said that one of the reasons "The Red Arrow" failed was having one long story and serial and that boys preferred 5 or 6 different yarns for their money like the other Thomson papers gave. We wanted value for our 2d in those days!

* *

SEASON'S GREETINGS to all, not forgetting our hard working Editor! Specially Roger Jenkins our Librarian. His 'Parcels' are looked forward to very much. All the best for 1972.

BOB MILNE, 12 CARLTON MNS., RANDOLPH AVENUE, LONDON, W.9.
624-1696.

==========

A VERY MERRY XMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR to all "Old Boys" of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, St. Frank's and Highcliffe everywhere.

Still needed a few early Hamilton items, etc.

STUART WHITEHEAD, 12 WELLS ROAD, FAKENHAM, NORFOLK.

==========

SALE/WANTED: N. Lees, U. Jacks, S. Blakes, Magnets, Gems, D. Weekly, Eagle, Thomson Papers (1945-52), Thriller, F. Fun, Film, B. Bills, R. Hoods, C. Digests, Boys' Friends, S.O. Libs., Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Greyfriars Heralds, Popular, Marvels, Plucks, Chums, Boys Own Paper, Railway, Meccano Mags., Motor, M/cycle, Modern Boys, Chips, Scout, Comic Annuals, Children's Books, and hundreds of other types. Thousands in stock. Also Cigarette Cards. Best Wishes for Xmas to all fellow-collectors and customers. Please state exact wants. S.a.e. No Lists.

R. ROUSE, 3 ST. LEONARD'S TERRACE, GAS-HILL, NORWICH, NORFOLK.

==========

WANTED: Magnets, Gems, Populars and Hamiltonia S.O.L's.
DR. B. KELION, 69 FRIERN BARNET LANE, LONDON, N11 3LL.

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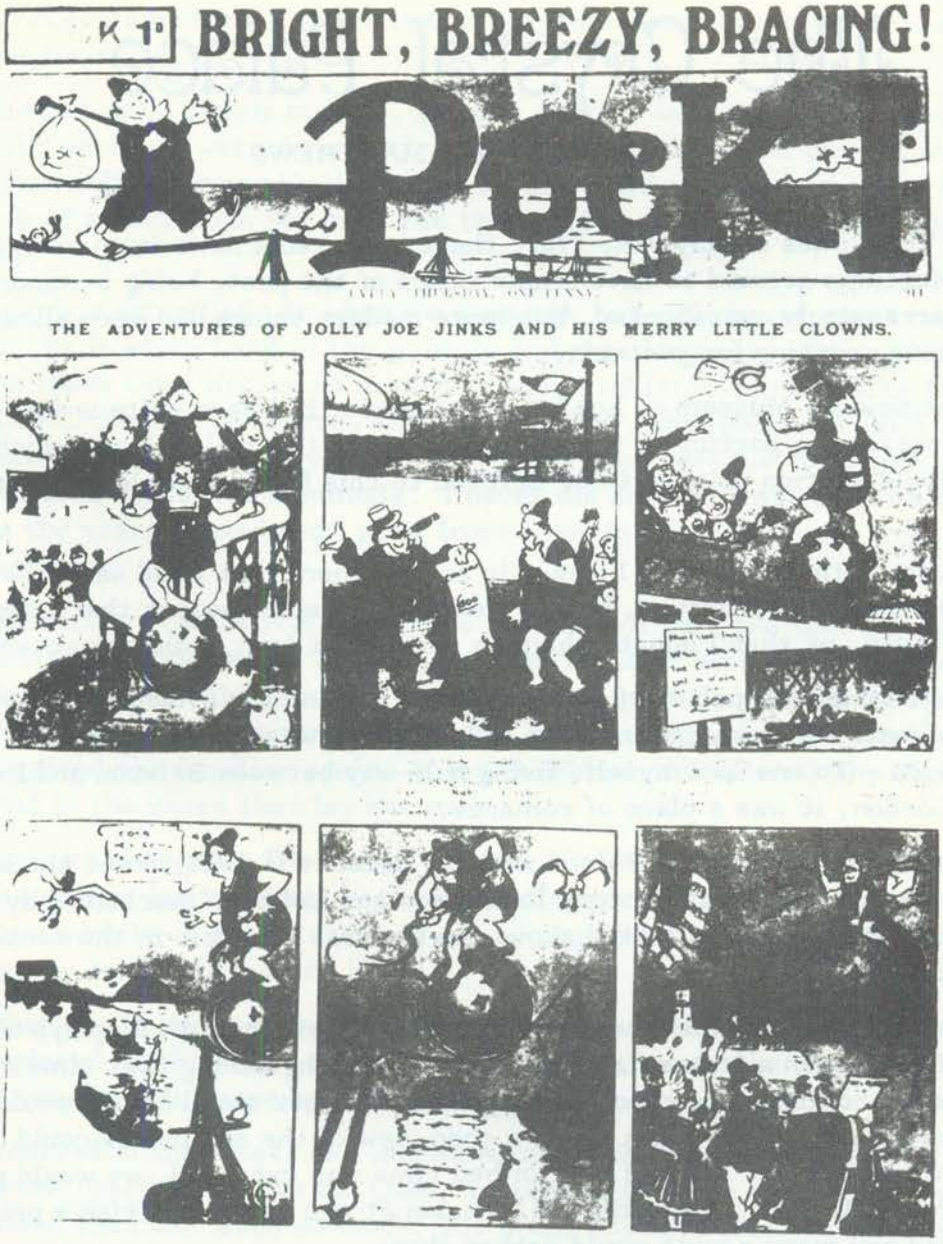
A Scene of Excitement in Jungle Park.—Mrs. Hippo Speaks Her Mind.



"PUCK" was probably the finest "quality" coloured comic paper in the world. It ran from the summer of 1904 till it became a war casualty in 1940.

It was published by the Amalgamated Press. The following were the main attractions in PUCK down the years.

Comic characters: The Casey Court Boys; Professor Radium; Billy Smiff; The Newlyweds; Percy the Page; Dr. Stork's Academy; Monty the Merry Middy; Dan, the Menagerie Man; Jolly Joe Binks and his Pierrots; Angel and her Merry Playmates; Jack & Jill; Dr. Jolliboy's School; Tommy Traddles.

Main stories: The Puck Pierrots; Paul Dane's Detective Academy; Britain in Peril; Val Fox and his Pets; Charlie Prince.

We suggest to the re-print people that a volume of PUCK would be a delight for all, old and young.

MEMORIES OF

The Crystal Palace

by CHARLES H. MATTHEWS

In The Times of May 9th, 1967, there appeared a news item to the effect that all Museums seemed to have ample relics of the past, being in some instances even embarrassingly overstocked, but more modern things had been allowed to disappear leaving nothing for posterity.

The Science Museum of London for example, had been quite unable to trace anyone possessing a portion of the structure of the Crystal Palace, which was required for a section planned to be devoted to this first example of prefabricated building.

Much to their surprise I was able to tell them that I had saved two recognizable parts of the structure, but to their subsequent request that I suggest a price for these, or that I donate them on permanent loan, I did not accede.

That wonderful palace of glass standing high on the Sydenham heights had been a landmark for many generations of Londoners whether they lived in North or South London. To one like myself, living half-way between Brixton and Herne Hill in South London, it was a place of romance.

I had first visited the Palace with my parents in 1923 to see the Imperial War Museum and the Great Victory Exhibition and had been fascinated by the Observation Balloon which floated above the Crystal Fountain in the section devoted to the Air Force.

Another early memory was the Thursday night firework displays which for sixty years had been a feature at the Palace. Nothing during that time could excel the grandeur and magnificence of these, and with other small boys I would congregate at any street corner from which a good view of the set pieces could be obtained. Later, as we grew older and the hour of bed time was extended, we would go into the nearby Brockwell Park. Near the old Mansion at the top of the rise a perfect view could be had and many people would gather there.

On other summer evenings - in retrospect always hot and sunny - we would again go to Brockwell Park, and from the fountain near the Band Stand, fill our bottles with water to which we added Eiffel Tower Lemonade Powder. Lying in the grass, after some energetic scuffling, we would drink this while we cooled off, and our gaze would inevitably be drawn towards the hills at Sydenham on which that vast palace stood, its glass so illuminated by the sinking sun, as to appear almost on fire.

Occasionally as a special treat, for money was scarce in those days, we would be given enough to spend a half day at the Palace, and what a wonderful time we always had. The interior arranged in various architectural courts was not aimed to appeal to the younger generation, but a lot of fun could be had playing hide and

seek behind the columns and figures in the Egyptian Court, or the statues of the Renaissance Court.

Satisfaction is rarely mutual, and our delight was in no way shared by the Keepers with whom we were constantly at war. In those far off days it wasn't the thing to cause wilful damage 'just for kicks,' and if we got a little out of hand, the distant view of a policeman, or even the threat of one, was sufficient to quell our high spirits.

When this fun palled, or when we were ejected, whichever came first, we would go to the Boating Lake in the grounds and gaze longingly at the islands in the centre. On these were life-sized models of such prehistoric animals as the Labyrinthodon, the Ichthyosaurus, the Plesiosaurus, the Iguanodon, and that curious winged creature the Pterodactyle. If only it had been possible to invade that island and clamber over those weird animals. I never did achieve this, and the desire to do so faded as the years passed and I grew from a boy into a youth, and from a youth into a young man.

On Saturday, the 14th March, 1936, it was not only the last day of the South London Exhibition at the Palace, but also my 21st birthday, and I went there with my girl cousin to celebrate the occasion. Going to the Palace that afternoon was also in the way of a sentimental journey, for I had not been for many years, and when I recognized the familiar scenes of my childhood, I wondered why I had neglected my old friend in the years that lay between.

It had not changed. The Palms were still there, and the marble statues too, clothed rather inadequately in their classical draperies. There too, were the glass encased models of paddle steamers, fire engines, and old locomotives waiting only for a penny to bring them to life.

Within the Palace, time had stood still while in the World outside the Cab had been replaced by the Taxi, the Horse Bus by the Tram, the phonograph by the radiogram, and the Bioscope by the modern cinema with its electric organ.

Preserved in that glass and ironwork frame the Victorian age still prevailed, and had it been possible for the old Queen to revisit in those middle 1930's, the Crystal Palace that she loved so much, she would not have felt that she had outlived her time.

In present days when dearly loved and familiar landmarks disappear almost over night, it seems incredible that the Palace of 1936 had remained unaltered since it was erected.

I really enjoyed that afternoon and as I listened to Younkman and his Czardas Band, I had no thoughts that this might be the last occasion that I would ever see the Palace as I had seen it that day. This was to be the case, however, for at the end of November in that same year, the B.B.C. rather unwisely announced that the Crystal Palace was on fire.

With thousands of others, I rushed to the scene thereby impeding the efforts of the firemen who were becoming increasingly aware that they were fighting a losing

battle. Fanned by a breeze from the North West the flames swept through the building, consuming the South Nave and Transept, the Central Transept, and the North Nave, and with their passing, passed too, a section of my own life. No more would I pass through those turnstiles to recapture in my visits the joys of childhood days.

Sadly I left the scene, but returned on the following day to find little left of that great building, for only the North and South Towers, and the skeletal structure of the North Nave remained. An earlier fire, long before my time had destroyed the North Transept thus impairing the symmetry of the building, for this section had never been replaced.

Many thousands of sightseers were thronging the Crystal Palace Parade and I resolved to return that same night when all was quiet and endeavour to get a photograph by moonlight.

During that day I made other plans and soon after midnight I climbed over the railings, and clambering over the debris towards the centre took a time exposure. This photograph I still have, and considering the circumstances under which it was taken, and the fear of being disturbed by the patrolling police, it is very good.

My ambitions went rather further than this, however, and as soon as I could, I contacted the Palace's General Manager - the late Sir Henry Buckland. I must have been very persuasive, for to my surprise he gave me permission to search the wreckage for souvenirs when, and as often as I wished, entirely at my own risk of course.

To say that I was delighted would be an understatement. To obtain such a permission was entirely unexpected and I couldn't rest until I had begun my self imposed task.

One of the first discoveries that I made was that I had been extremely fortunate in escaping injury on my nocturnal visit, for under the ground floor, ran a brick tunnel, twenty-four feet wide. This was used for a roadway for bringing coke and materials into the Palace.

After the floorboards had been destroyed by the fire, wreckage had dropped into this tunnel leaving many sections where pieces of the Palace's framework only partly spanned the gaps. At these points an unwary tread could have meant a drop to the floor some twelve feet below.

Throughout that winter of 1936/37, and in all weather conditions, I searched the wreckage for its whole length of 1,600 feet. The fire's intense heat had left very little unscathed but I did discover some most rewarding 'finds' which are as interesting to me now, as they were then.

From a stack of broken china near the site of the Mecca Cafe, I found just two plates that were undamaged. Each bears the Mecca Cafe's name. Close by, at what was once the Director's Dining Room, I rescued a damaged pewter tankard bearing the initials of the Crystal Palace Company.

From time to time at various parts, I found some of those wonderful mechanical models I had coveted so much as a boy. Near the battered remains were scattered heaps of pennies, vesicated and fused together by the heat. For brief moments each of these coins had activated wheels which would never move again. Many of these coins I have now, but why did I not think of taking away one of the least damaged models? Surely there might have been something that I could have salvaged - a driving wheel perhaps, a brass boiler or funnel, or maybe a paddle wheel - something in fact to remind me of a time when to possess one of these models was the height of my ambition.

From time to time, from the places where they had been stored, I found many of the office records, old posters going back to the 1860's, admission tickets of the same date, and various issues of the Palace Guide Book. Somehow in that huge furnace, these frail things had escaped direct damage except for scorch marks here and there.

With the aid of a plan I found the site of that wonderful Crystal Fountain and rescued one or two pieces of its glass structure, but to my regret a completely identifiable part,which I treasured, was lost during one of our moves.

I cannot recall now where I found the bunch of keys, but somewhere in that huge pile of wreckage I saw them. This was really a find - the keys of the Palace, with a brass tab bearing the name - Crystal Palace Trustees.

They hang on the wall now, together with pictures of the Palace as it was before and after the fire, to remind me of a time when I was young enough to enjoy climbing, painfully too at times, over piles of twisted girders and jagged glass in the bitterest of weathers.

In the summer following the fire the remains of the Palace were purchased by Thos. Ward Ltd., who took many weeks to clear the site, and later both the North and South Towers were demolished although I could never understand the reason for this, as neither received any damage.

The fire was an unmerciful disaster but perhaps it was as well that the old Palace went out in a blaze of glory. Such a passing at the height of a newly-found popularity was infinitely better than a slow decline unappreciated by a more sophisticated world.

I have always consoled myself by the thought had the end not come then for the Palace on that evening of the 30th November, 1936, its days were almost certainly numbered.

Blacking out those acres of glass adequately, was virtually an impossible task, and a vast landmark like the Crystal Palace would surely have fallen an early victim to the air raids of only four years later.

For the Fire Brigade, in 1936, the fire was a general alarm with engines coming from all districts, but in war time with other fires to attend, the conflagration might have spread, resulting even in the South Tower falling on the houses on Anerley Hill.

I returned to the site a few weeks ago after many years absence. There is little left to remind one of that great building except its name on a bus destination board, a football team, and the Crystal Palace Parade.

At the West Hill end of the Parade are some fine old trees and a short drive leading nowhere. Here once stood Rockhills in which the last and greatest of all the Crystal Palace Managers lived - the late Sir Henry Buckland - who fought unceasingly and untiringly for twenty-two years to popularise the Palace he loved, and after which he named his daughter - Crystal.

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SEASONAL GREETINGS to all fellow members and vale to so many of our late departed enthusiasts. May I wish all relatives of those departed my heartfelt sympathies. Greetings to our Editor; my friend "Howard Sharpe;" Mr. V. Lay; Lofts; Smyth; Miss Pate; Cook (Jim); Swan (Sir James); Mrs. Packman; Nicholls; Jenkins; Bob Blythe; Wadham; S. G. Swan; sorry to omit Christian names but trying to save dough. If I have missed any Digest friends please forgive as memory is slipping.

A. G. DAVIDSON, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.

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WANTED TO BUY: Sexton Blake Library, Union Jacks. Will exchange late thirties g.c. Gems for same.

VERNON, 5 GILLMAN STREET, CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS to all Club Members and Howard Baker. From all at "Friardale." Good or Mint copies G.H.A's 1929, 1932, 1934 urgently wanted; cash waiting.

BOB ACRAMAN, "FRIARDALE," 2 NORTH DRIVE, RUISLIP, MIDDLESEX.
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*** CHRISTMAS GREETINGS EVERYBODY ***

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FOR EXCHANGE — Schoolgirls Own Annual 1924, Boys Cinema 1947, Thriller 518, 542 (bound), Magnet Gift Album Test Cricketers 1930 completed.

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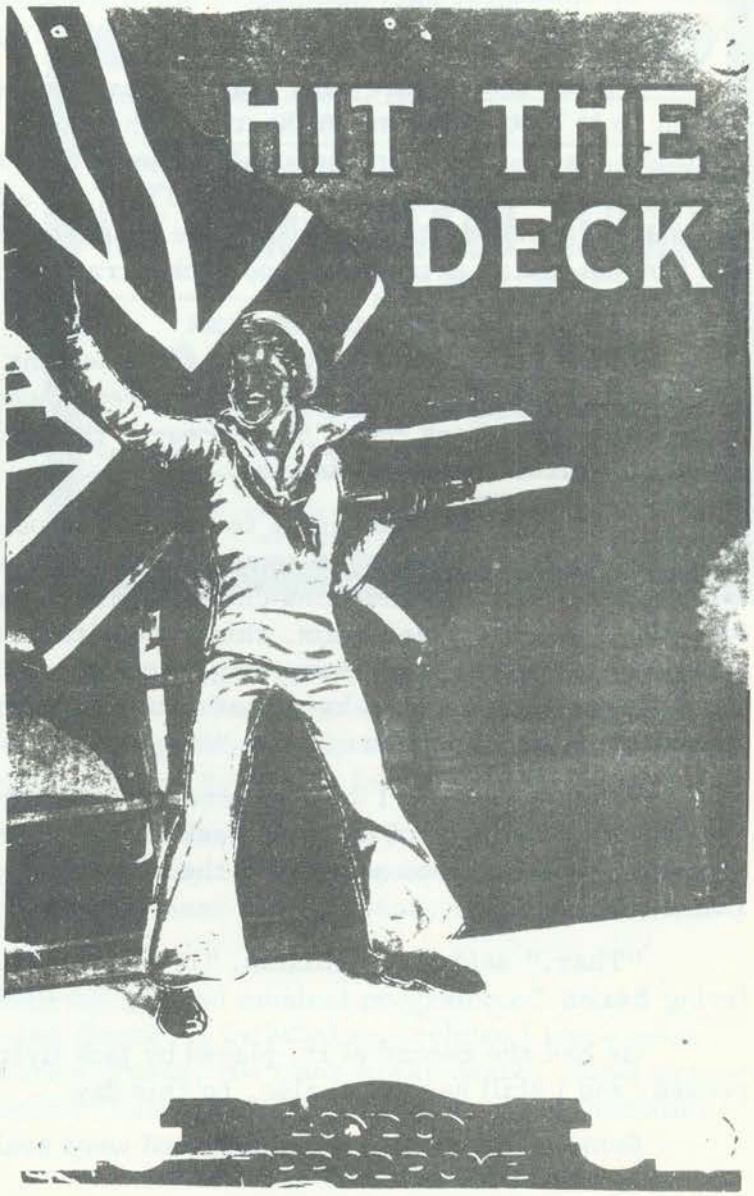
In the monthly S.P.C.D., Eric Fayne has been looking at the cinemas and theatres he knew in the far-off days of his youth. This article, specially written for the Annual, continues the series.

Tinkle, Tinkle, Little Star

I suppose that all boys have ambitions. I had a very great many, and, looking back on it now, I am happy that I realised all but one or two of them. Providing you want anything hard enough, you will always get it in time. That has been my experience.

Most people have ambitions to make plenty of money. That is not so easy. If, however, you merely want to do something for the joy of doing it, and the money side doesn't come into it, then it is much easier to realise ambitions as an amateur. And that, for the most part, is what I did.



I was not really so very keen on the silent films, but I loved the musical accompaniments - and they were surprisingly good. I often used to sit, watching and listening, and thinking how much better I could have accompanied the films.

As well as playing from music, I played by ear. After I had heard a tune once or twice, I could play it. My music teachers complained to my parents that I was doing too much playing by ear and not working hard enough at reading music. But improvising came in handy when I played for the pictures.

I dearly wanted to accompany a film on the piano. I had no wish at all to be a professional musician.

One Thursday evening during a school vacation I

dropped into the Cinema (later the Plaza) in Windmill Street, Gravesend. Looking back on it now, I can see that that simple action had a marked effect on the things I was to do over the next twenty years or so. Most of those things have nothing at all to do with the subject of this article.

The film I saw was "Shore Leave" and it starred Richard Barthelmess and Dorothy Mackaill. It was the film version of a play of the same name, written by the American playwright, David Belasco. It was a charming picture, and it was impeccably played by the cast. The story was simplicity itself. Connie Martin is the village dressmaker of the little seaport of Wautucket. She meets a lonely sailor, Bilge Smith, who is ashore from the fleet. All that Connie learns about him is that his name is Smith, but she has fallen in love with the sailor who goes back to the fleet without giving her a second thought. She has a sailing vessel which was the only thing left to her by her dead father. She sells the vessel, and then gives a party, on one of the battleships, to which she invites every sailor in the fleet by the name of Smith. So at long last she meets Bilge Smith again.

I loved the picture, and that was partly due to the excellent accompaniment played to it by the Cinema orchestra. The music to the silent films varied greatly from the single pianist in the small cinemas to the large orchestras in the larger picture theatres. The size of the band was not all that important. The quality of the players, plus the suitability of the programme they played, was. That Gravesend Cinema had an extremely good orchestra, and much trouble was taken to fit the music to the films.

It had become the fashion for a theme tune to be played during the film. The earliest use of a theme tune which I recall was to that delightful old masterpiece "Way Down East." In "Shore Leave" the orchestra played a theme, which teased me after I left the cinema.

That night the idea came to me that I would dearly love to play the accompaniment to "Shore Leave" in some cinema or other. With that idea running around in my mind, I went to the same cinema again on the Friday evening, and on the Saturday I was there yet again, this time with a notebook. In the semi-darkness of the cinema, I wrote down every single sub-title of the film, using a separate page for each sub-title. I still have that notebook among my souvenirs, containing every sub-title of the film "Shore Leave."

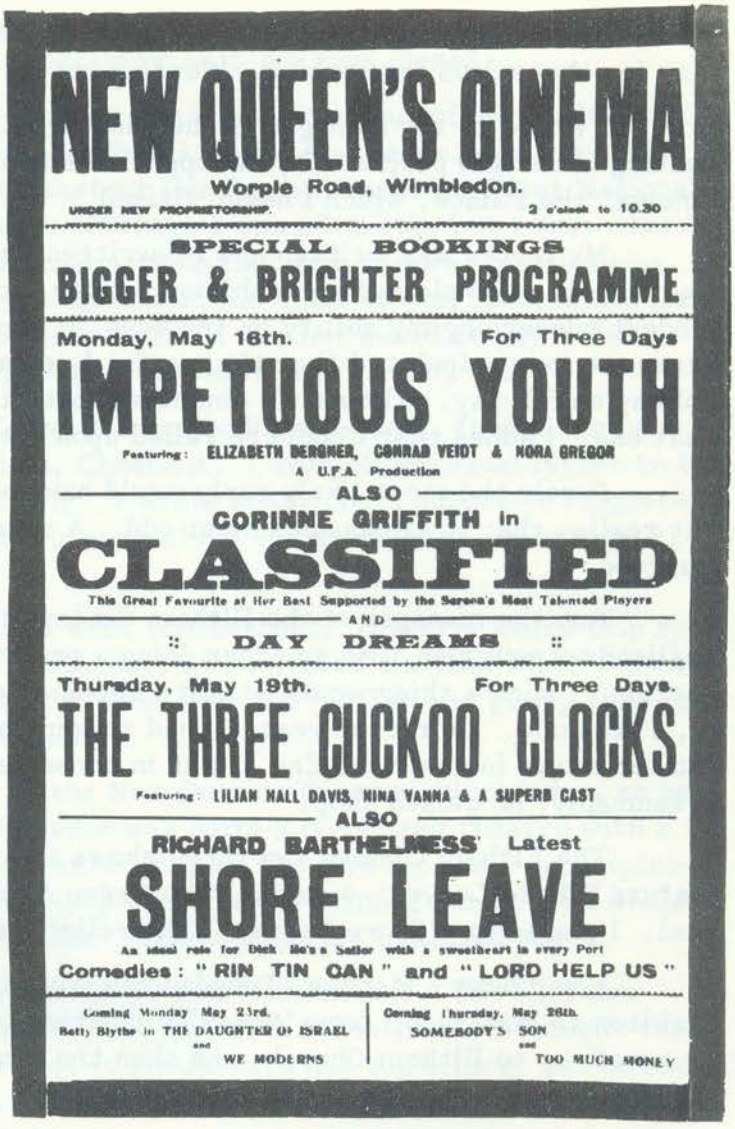
A few days later I dropped into a music shop in Surbiton. "Can you tell me the title of this piece of music?" I asked the proprietor, Mr. Williams. I sat down at one of his new pianos and played the tune I had heard used as a theme for "Shore Leave."

"That," said Mr. Williams, "is entitled 'Because I Love You,' a new song by Irving Berlin."

He had the record of it, played by Jack Hylton and His Band. I bought the record, and I still have that also, to this day.

Some of the events which followed were really rather remarkable.

I wrote to the renters of the film. They were First National Pictures who at that time had their office at 35 Oxford Street, London. I forget the reason I gave, but I asked them whether they would let me have a list of all the cinemas for which "Shore Leave" was booked. They might well have thought there was something suspicious in such an extra-ordinary request. Plenty of firms would have snubbed me vigorously.


NEW QUEEN'S CINEMA
Worple Road, Wimbledon.
UNDER NEW PROPRIETORSHIP. 2 o'clock to 10.30
SPECIAL BOOKINGS
BIGGER & BRIGHTER PROGRAMME
Monday, May 16th. For Three Days
IMPETUOUS YOUTH
Featuring: ELIZABETH BERGNER, CONRAD VEIDT & NORA GREGOR
A U.F.A. Production
ALSO
CORINNE GRIFFITH in
CLASSIFIED
This Great Favourite at Her Best Supported by the Screen's Most Talented Players
AND
:: DAY DREAMS ::
Thursday, May 19th. For Three Days.
THE THREE CUCKOO CLOCKS
Featuring: LILIAN HALL DAVIS, NINA VANNA & A SUPERB CAST
ALSO
RICHARD BARTHELMESS' Latest
SHORE LEAVE
An ideal role for Dick He's a Sailor with a sweetheart in every Port
Comedies: "RIN TIN CAN" and "LORD HELP US"
Coming Monday May 23rd. Betty Blythe in THE DAUGHTER OF ISRAEL and WE MODERNS
Coming Thursday, May 26th. SOMEBODY'S SON and TOO MUCH MONEY

First National did not. They sent me a list of all the bookings still to mature at that moment. They did better than that. For nearly a year, they sent me a list, every fortnight, showing the new bookings as they came in for "Shore Leave." (This first contact with First National was the start of an association I had with them, and with Warner Bros. Pictures which later swallowed First National, and which, though I could not guess it then, was to last for 25 years.)

I went down to Grays, in Essex, and saw "Shore Leave" at the Empire there. The musical director supplied me with his musical programme, which was good, though he used a different "theme." I was getting ready for the time when I hoped, somehow, to play the musical accompaniment to "Shore Leave" in some cinema.

My lists showed me that the film was booked to play the Atherley Cinema, Shirley. I went to Shirley, near Croydon, only to be disappointed. There was no Atherley Cinema there. It was the Shirley near Southampton, which was too far away for me to reach.

At long last, I had completed my planned musical programme. I used Berlin's "Because I Love You" as the theme. I included an Archibald Joyce valse "Autumn Leaves," a number of nautical tunes, the Cane Brake dance, some extracts from "Sunny," a delightful piece called "Valentine" (this was a Maurice Chevalier song) and dozens of other items.

And now it was time to find a cinema where the manager would let me play for three days for nothing. Wording my letter was quite a problem.

I wrote to the manager of the Cinema, Eltham. It was a nice little cinema, seating about 400 people. On the opposite side of the road in Eltham was a larger cinema, the Palace, which I never visited.

My letter was written and re-written a number of times before I was satisfied with it. I explained my ambition to play for a film. I don't suppose I was too modest concerning my ability on the keys. I explained that I wanted no payment or expenses, but stipulated that the pianist I replaced must be given the three days' holiday on full pay. Almost all cinemas booked their programmes for three days in that era. I added that I could be relied upon not to let them down.

Surely the most likely reply would have been a refusal. Even I could not help but realise that it all sounded most odd. A refusal might have damped my ardour for good.

But the manager of the Eltham Cinema did not refuse. He accepted, and I realised my ambition. An amateur doing a professional's job. To-day, almost certainly, such a thing would be quite impossible. The Musicians' Union would step in, I presume. (In recent years, I had to join the M.U. before I could play for the Bunter shows in the West End.) But in those days of silent films, there was, presumably, no closed shop.

The Eltham Cinema ran three shows a day, continuous. There was the main feature "Shore Leave;" a serial "The Green Archer;" a 2-reel comedy, and a news reel. I played for "Shore Leave." The relief pianist played for the rest.

For 3 days - Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday - I went by train from Surbiton to Waterloo; from Waterloo Junction to Well Hall; from Well Hall a tram or a walk up to Eltham Church, and then the Cinema was up the High Street on the left.

I knew my entire musical programme by heart. Though I had my musical scores with me, I never looked at them. I played with my eyes on the screen the whole time, changing the music as the mood of the film changed. I remember having a whistle and a bell by my side in the pit, for use as effects. And I loved every minute of it.

When the three days were over, I was not satisfied. I still felt the itch to get tinkling again. Following the same plan, I found myself booked to play for "Shore Leave" at the Athenaeum Picture Playhouse in Muswell Hill. As cinemas went, this was a much larger and more elaborate theatre than the cinema at Eltham. The firm who owned the Athenaeum also owned another similar cinema in Muswell Hill - the Summerland.

The Athenaeum had an orchestra, but they ran "Shore Leave" as a second feature. Even yet, the double-feature programme was not common. I believe that, normally, the orchestra played for the main feature and for part of the second. For these three days, however, the orchestra played for the main feature, and I

accompanied the whole of "Shore Leave." I could hardly help but do well, by this time. I could have played my whole programme with my eyes closed.

The manager was very happy about it, and asked me, out of the kindness of his heart, if I would go back and put in another 3 days a few weeks later. I said I would, and arranged to play for "The Amateur Gentleman," another First National picture featuring Richard Barthelmess. Perhaps I was adequate, but I know that I was not very successful. The film offered nothing like such musical possibilities as did "Shore Leave." I arranged my programme, but I had to play from music for the most part, and my heart wasn't really in it. I was not asked to pay a third visit to Muswell Hill, but I don't suppose I would have gone, in any case.

Still on the track of "Shore Leave," I now had a set-back. It was due to show three days at the Central Cinema, Cheshunt. I sent off my usual letter to the manager, and he turned me down politely. I wrote again, and I suppose I suggested modestly that he was missing a golden opportunity. He wrote back, adamant. It was out of the question.

So that was that. One evening I went to Cheshunt; rather a weary trip by a slow train from Liverpool Street. I suppose, as I watched the film which I knew inch by inch of its footage, I fumed at the poor show the pianist was giving, and told myself how much better I could have done.

I now persuaded the manager of the New Queen's Cinema, Wimbledon, to book "Shore Leave." The Queen's at Wimbledon was quite a fair-sized theatre with a passable orchestra, but, naturally, I wanted to give the film my piano accompaniment. I told the manager that I would help with the advertising, and that I would take along a big party for one performance. These promises I carried out.

Unfortunately, he ran "Shore Leave" as a second feature. The film was getting old, of course, and it had already been shown in Wimbledon. I thought that "Shore Leave" was so good a picture that it should have had top billing, but he booked an involved German film "The Three Cuckoo Clocks" to head the bill. A long and tedious picture, it let down by pet subject.

As we had plugged "Shore Leave" in my special advertising, he thought that the orchestra should accompany part of that as well as playing for the Cuckoo Clocks film. He increased the salaries to his orchestra to pay for their extra time. I wasn't very happy about the arrangement, for, naturally, it spoiled my own musical programme. However, after the first day, he asked me to play for the whole of "Shore Leave" so all was well.

In addition to the Cuckoo Clocks film, the manager had booked two two-reel comedies. The result, though he meant well, was a far too long programme, in all of about four hours' duration.

Unconscientious operators in those days, and probably today in some places, had their eyes on the clock, with their knockoff time in mind. When a show was running late they would switch from machine one to machine two while there were still a hundred feet or two unscreened on the first machine. Doing this at every

changeover, they cut short a film by as much as half an hour. I knew quite a few cinemas, years ago, where dishonest operators would follow this plan, especially in the last showing of the main film.

When I took my first session on "Shore Leave" at Wimbledon, I found that the operator was severely cutting the film in this way, which also meant my making cuts in my musical programme. I complained to the manager, and "Shore Leave" was not cut after that, though goodness knows what happened to the rest of the programme.

The operators at the Queens were pretty inefficient. I had a large party in the cinema on the Friday evening, and I joined the party while "The 3 Cuckoo Clocks" was being screened. The operator showed reels 1 and 2, which were, of course, joined together. (The reels, until about 1948, were normally just under 1000 feet each, but projectors would hold 2000 feet. Hence the joining together of two reels). When the machine which had shown reels 1 and 2 finished, he switched on to machine two. There he had got reels 5 and 6. He showed these. Then he switched back and showed reels 3 and 4 which he found he had missed out. Then he again showed reels 5 and 6, and finished up with reels 7 and 8 and probably more. The film was hard to follow when normally shown. With the mix-up, it was chaotic.

Of interest, in later years the New Queens was demolished and the Wimbledon Odeon was built on the site.

The last three days of the following week found me going over each day to play for "Shore Leave" at the Sunninghill Picture House. This was quite a journey. It entailed a tram to Kingston railway station; a train to Twickenham, where I changed to another train to Sunningdale; and finally a walk of something like two miles to Sunninghill. The walk was along very lonely country lanes, unlit at night, and I am sure that, on the way back, late at night, I walked very fast, with, now and again, a nervous look over my shoulder.

I think I had my most enjoyable time of all at the Sunninghill Picture House. It was a delightful theatre, seating over 500 people, and large for a village. It was a family affair, owned by a family named Searle, who probably ran it more as a hobby than to make profit. Their programmes consisted of the one big picture, plus a few shorts, and they gave just one show each evening at 8 o'clock, with a matinee in addition on Saturday. There was just the one pianist for the whole performance. Mr. Searle would have kept his pianist on to play for the supporting items, if I had liked, but I would not hear of it. I played for the whole show, and the pianist's unexpected three-days' holiday was not spoiled. The Searles were charming to me, and, during the hours between the end of the Saturday matinee and the start of the evening show, they entertained me at their very lovely home.

The piano at Sunninghill was on a platform, curtained off, raised high to the left of the screen. It was much easier for the pianist than the usual position in the orchestra pit. Before each performance began, they had a slide thrown on the screen to inform the audience that "Eric Fayne has come especially to Sunninghill to accompany the main feature on the piano." After the show, many of the audience would remain behind for a few words, and many asked me the title of the theme I had

played.

The Searles, like the manager at Muswell Hill, asked me to make a return visit, and I agreed. I chose to go to play for "The Beautiful City," another First National film, also starring Richard Barthelmess and Dorothy Mackaill.

Once again I was not too happy at playing for a different film, which did not give the scope of the naval production.

Kindly enough, the Searles invited me to go again, but I never did. I was not being paid, the travel costs were fairly heavy on my pocket, and there was no sense in going unless I enjoyed myself.

That cinema in Sunninghill is still going strong in 1971, with a plentiful quota of X-certificate stuff. One thing is certain. The piano on which I performed will have long, long been silent.

Many moons had now risen and set since I played at Eltham, and by this time "Shore Leave" was getting towards the end of its booking life. And it was almost unknown, in those days, for any film to be re-issued.

The booking lists, still coming through from First National, were now a rarity, and when they did come along, they were mainly for very small village cinemas, far, far away.

One place that booked "Shore Leave" was the Invicta at Strood. (Each of the Medway towns - Gillingham, Chatham and Strood - had its Invicta Cinema.) Strood was too far away for me to go for 3 days, but I went down on the Saturday, and into the Strood Invicta. When "Shore Leave" came on I spoke to the usherette.

I whispered to her: "Ask the pianist if I can play her piano for this film." I remember her giggling, and she toddled off. In a minute she was back. "Come with me," she said.

She took me under the curtains into the orchestra pit, though it only contained a piano. The pianist slid off her seat, and I slid on to it, and played for the rest of the film while she sat near by, watching the giant picture above us. At the end, I thanked her, and toddled off. It all sounds quite incredible, but it really happened.

That was the end of my playing for "Shore Leave." Later on, I played for 3 days, for a nautical film entitled "Smiling Billy" featuring Billy Sullivan, at a little place called the Premier Cinema at Leytonstone. "Smiling Billy" was a nice little film (released by a small firm, Wardour Pictures), but it was very much a second feature, running for about an hour.

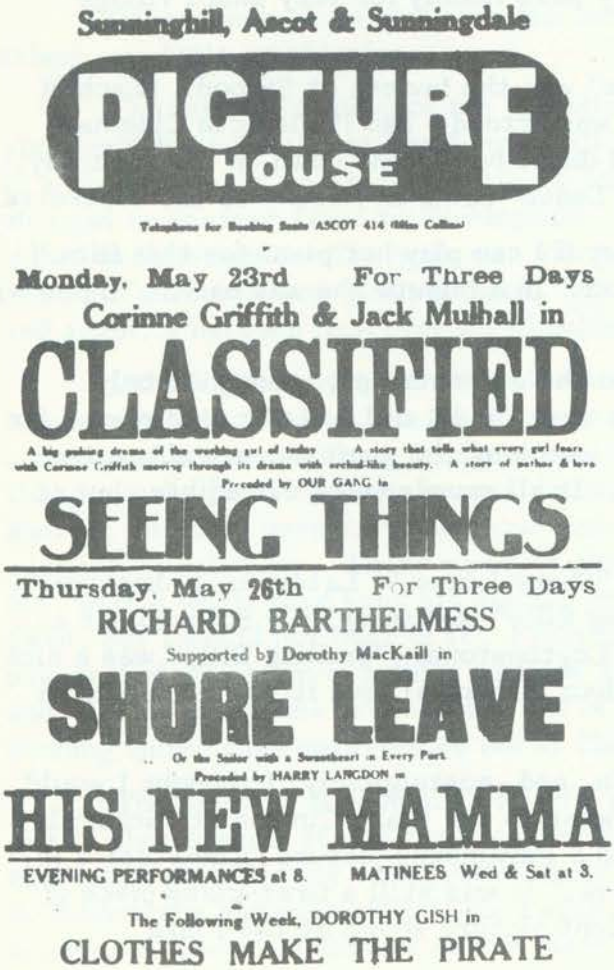
Talking pictures were now coming in, and, nostalgically, I thought I would have a shot at one more tinkle, tinkle. I went to the Plaza Cinema at Piccadilly Circus and saw Clara Bow and James Hall in a Paramount picture "The Fleet's In." Though it had not the charm of "Shore Leave," it was still a first-class piece of screen-craft. It was, I think, the last silent picture shown at the Plaza.

On release, it was shown at the Kennington Theatre, which I have already mentioned early in this series. Vernon Keith, the manager, had a most elaborate advertising display, as always at the Kennington.

There was a great banner, with the name of the film, spread right across the front of the theatre. There was a giant double frame containing various advertising plugs, which stood in the vestibule. And there was a big array of "stills." The night I went to see "The Fleet's In" at Kennington I asked Vernon Keith what he would do with all the advertising material once the run of the film was over. I forget what he said, but I asked him whether I could have it all, and he gave it to me.

Some months later, I played for "The Fleet's In," my final "go" at a cinema piano, at the Court Cinema at Hampton Court. The cinema was one of those which has closed in recent years, a victim of TV.

Way back, when they played "The Fleet's In," which I think was Clara Bow's last film, they had the greatest advertising display they were ever likely to have. The Kennington's great banner was draped all round the top of the building, and all the other advertising from the Kennington - Vernon Keith had been a great showman - made a big and striking display. Probably that was the main reason why I tinkled away on the piano to packed houses during the three days the film played there.



A thought on cinema pianos. All those I played on were remarkably good instruments, kept in tip-top condition. Far better than those I had to use in the West End theatres where the Bunter shows were presented. At the Queen's in Shaftesbury Avenue, in particular, the piano was a shocker.

While "Shore Leave" was running into the last months of its life, the musical comedy "Hit the Deck," the stage musical version of "Shore Leave," had opened and was playing nightly to big audiences at the London Hippodrome. The Hippodrome - a theatre under the Moss Empires banner - was one of my favourites in London, and I was sorry when it was converted into the Talk of the Town. The Hippodrome had a pink colour scheme - pink seats, curtains, and carpets - and it was a lovely theatre.

"Hit the Deck" kept fairly closely to the story of the film "Shore Leave," though the fleet went to China in order to provide the stunning musical number "Hallelujah." The mighty chorus, smashing over "Hallelujah," was a terrific experience, and I doubt whether it has ever been equalled on the London stage since.

It was an expensive show to stage, with not only a very large chorus of girls, but also a large one of men who were the sailors in the show.

Bilge Smith of the film became Bill Smith on the stage, played by Stanley Holloway, who, even all those years back, was too mature for the part. His singing voice was adequate, but he compared badly with the boyish Dick Barthelmess of the film.

Connie Martin of the film became Loulou Martin on the stage. (One of the big musical numbers was "Loulou.") She was played by Ivy Tresmand, who was just slightly on the mature side for the part, but less so than Holloway. The drawback of West End shows, at any rate at that time, was that the players were often out of their youth before they became stars.

Ivy Tresmand's understudy was a vivacious little thing named Anona Wynn. I remember seeing her appear one night when Tresmand was indisposed. I remarked to one of the cast that I thought her better than Ivy Tresmand. He was horrified.

"Oh, no!" he said in shocked protest. "Think of the class that Tresmand's got! She's a real star!"

The part of Bill Smith's pal, Battling Smith, was played by the great comedian Sydney Howard. It made him famous, comparatively late in his career, for he was no chicken then.

Also in the cast was Ellen Pollock, who was to appear many years later in TV's "The Forsyte Saga." Ellen Pollock produced "Billy Bunter's Christmas Circus." I had chats with her then, but never dared to tell her that I had seen her, so many years earlier, in "Hit the Deck."

Alice Morley was also a big hit in the Hippodrome show. She was a marvellous artiste, but I think she was probably an American, for I had never heard of her before and have never heard of her since, though she had star billing in "Hit the Deck."

"Hit the Deck" played for about 8 months at the London Hippodrome, and then Macdonald and Young sent out two companies to play it on tour for several years. One company played the No. 1 tour houses like Golders Green Hippodrome, Wimbledon Theatre, and the Kings Theatre, Hammersmith. Another played the best twice-nightly houses. The touring shows were first-class, and, though they were on a less elaborate scale than the west end show, they had the advantage of much more youthful players in the leading roles.

"Hit the Deck" was made into a technicolor film by Universal during the mid-thirties. Jack Oakie was rather miscast as Bill Smith, but the film was quite

entertaining, as a musical, with little of the charm of the original "Shore Leave." Since the war, "Hit the Deck" has been made yet again, this time by M.G.M. This film was impossibly bad, with no redeeming features. The story had only the very slightest link with the original "Hit the Deck," and none with "Shore Leave." If David Belasco, the talented playwright, was still alive to see it, I wonder what his feelings were.

Among my souvenirs, I still have the campaign sheet issued by the renters for "Shore Leave," two film trailers, two slides, many dozens of "stills" from the film, (coloured and black and white), a 6-sheet poster, and a 48-sheet poster. I have a play-bill from most of the cinemas where I played, the monthly programme from the Muswell Hill Athenaeum, and several programmes of "Hit the Deck." I still have many of the records of "Hit the Deck," and also the copy of the monthly book "Music for All" which was devoted to "Hit the Deck."

When we left Surbiton to go into a house a fraction of the size, my lady said, in a faint voice, as she eyed the souvenirs I was unearthing: "Are you going to get rid of this?"

And I answered in a faint voice: "Some of it - perhaps."

Many years before I played in those cinemas, Monty Lowther had the same itch in a delightful blue Gem story "The Call of the Cinema." Macdonald depicted Lowther at the piano in the cinema, with the screen above his head. So maybe even in this fantastic little bit of my life I was influenced by the old papers.

* *

BEST WISHES for Christmas 1971, and the New Year 1972, to all readers, and 'A HAPPY SILVER JUBILEE' to C. Digest Annual.

LEO P. HYNES, 40a MULLOCK STREET, ST. JOHN'S, NFLD.

WANTED: Champion Annual 1937, Puck Annuals, Puck Comics 1933, 1935, 1936 and other pre-war comics. Exchange or Cash.

HEARN, 191 ARBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 2JJ.

WARMEST GREETINGS to all my Old Boys' Book Club friends everywhere, especially Henry Webb and family.

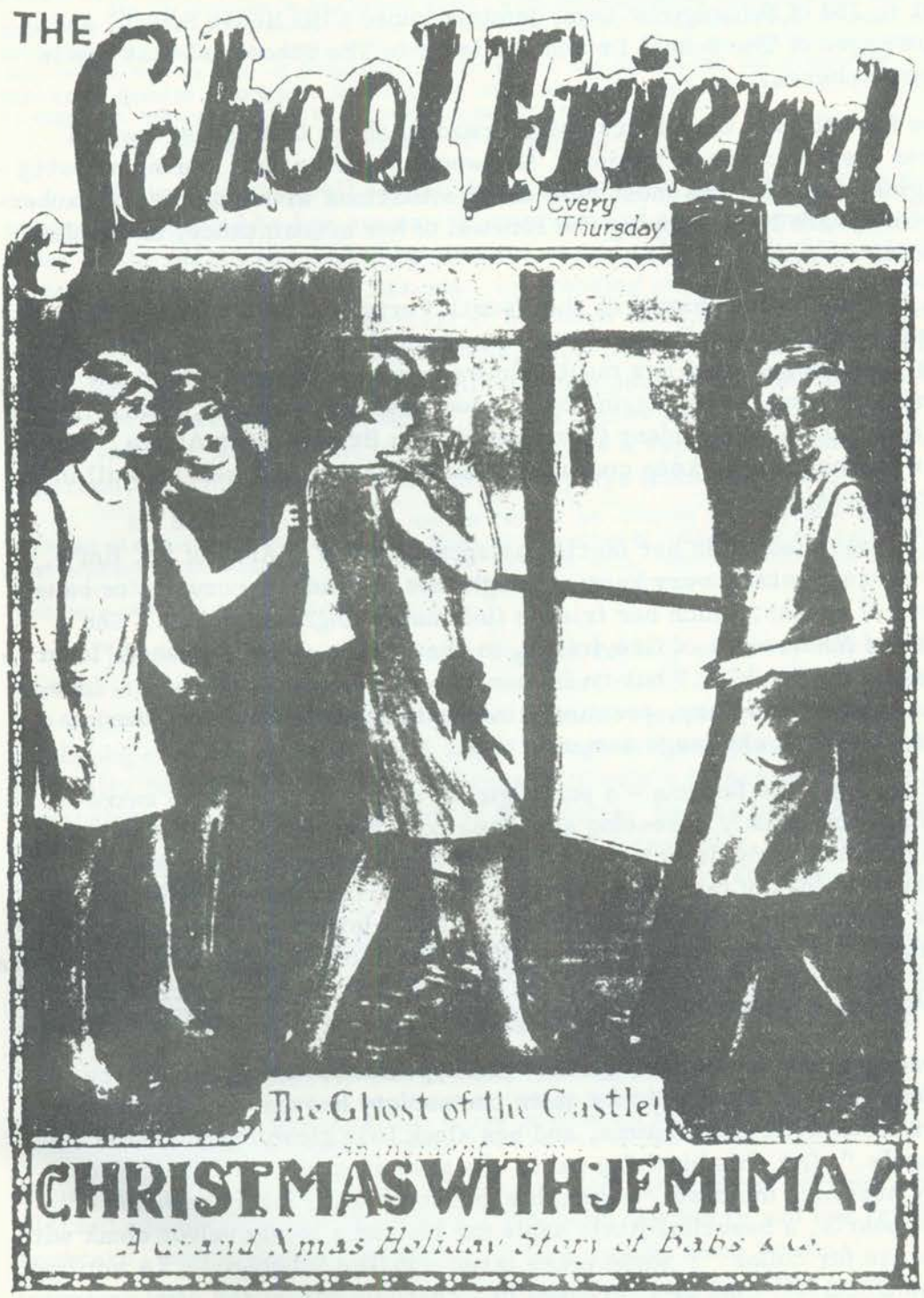
STAN. KNIGHT, 288 HIGH STREET, CHELTENHAM.

WANTED: "Union Jacks" 1225, 1246, 1326. Kennel, Dragon, Casino, Garden, Kidnap, Mother Goose, Winter Autumn, Murder Cases by Van Dine.

BUSH, 34 FORD CLOSE, HERNE BAY, KENT.

Oh, Jemima!

by MARY CADOGAN



Many favourite characters in the old papers went through a process of development, often taking several years, before reaching their full richness. But this was not really true of Jemima Carstairs! She began life in the (girls') Companion Papers as a new girl at Morcove School in November 1925, with a brilliance and panache that remained hers till the last Jemima story in The Schoolgirl, ('Jemima the Japer' - No. 420, 20/4/1940). After a brief but unforgettable career at Morcove in numbers 251 to 254 of Schoolgirls' Own, Jemima joined Cliff House School, and it is there, in the pages of The School Friend and later in The Schoolgirl that she is most vividly remembered.

In those far-off days when I first began reading about Cliff House I would like to have been a schoolmate of Jemima. She would never be dull, boring or petty - but always original, infusing the most hum-drum situations with a quality of exuberance. After many years I am enjoying the renewal of her acquaintance, and finding her as stimulating as ever.

Jemima is the elegant enigma of the Fourth Form at Cliff House - with eton cropped, brownish-red hair, and grey eyes, be-monocled; slim, immaculate and never at a loss. She takes after her much-admired widowed father, whom she calls "guv'nor" - a man of many parts, having been a successful playwright, then a Secret Service Agent and, lastly, a Resident Commissioner in British East Africa. From him Jemima has learned how to keep cool in all circumstances, as well as skill in detection and observation.

Jemima is reminiscent in her fastidious appearance of D'Arcy of St. Jim's, but unlike him she is mentally very keen - though this she hides by cryptic or banal or flowery habits of speech, which her friends find maddeningly enigmatic. She reminds one also of Mauleverer of Greyfriars, in that she is a distinguished "loner" - not really belonging to the "Co.," but on immensely good terms with them. Like Mauleverer too she affects a lazy, seemingly indolent, manner which can become amazingly vigorous when a challenge demands this.

How satisfying to be Jemima - a schoolgirl of nearly fifteen, with extraordinary capacities for quickly assessing any situation, blessed with courage, and shrewdness that immediately detects hypocrisy or malpractice: also, "she is familiar with the workings of fast cars, speed-boats, aeroplanes and most things mechanical," as well as possessing good-looks, unusual clothes and immaculate taste in all things! A strange passion in her life is her mongrel dog, Tramp. Jemima might have been expected to lavish her love on a pet of aristocratic distinction but, endearingly, in contrast with her glossy background, Jemima adores her plebian pup.

Many descriptions of Jemima's clothes and appearance are given. In the 1929 School Friend Annual... "She looks quite the society hostess in a little wisp of a black velvet frock with pink flowers, and her sleek hair gleaming in rivalry to her shining monocle." (At this birthday party she gave an exhibition Charleston, and her birthday presents included "a portable gramophone, a lovely necklace of darling wee seed pearls, a beautiful little sable fur tie and a lovely velvet cloak with a rich-looking white fur collar.") Some years later - in The Schoolgirl - "A smiling, cool-looking, immaculately clad girl, dressed in a costume cut on the very smartest

lines, and sporting a gleaming monocle, came strolling into the sunlight. She carried a light cane."

Her distinctive appearance registers strongly on Betty Barton and Polly Linton of Morcove School, when they go to meet Jemima, the new girl, at the Station. (From The Schoolgirls' Own, 251, 'AT LOYALTY'S BEHEST,' 21/11/1925):

She was dressed in the modern style, with beige-coloured stockings and shoes, a coat that did not reach much below her knees, a coat cut straight but cut well, and a hat that was made to the sleek, obviously shingled, head. That in itself was not amazing. True, one did not see many girls dressed like that in the country town of Barncombe, but in itself the fashion was not staggering. Perhaps the cut of the coat suggested France more than England, but even so it would not have caused Polly's jaw to drop. It would not have caused her to nudge Betty as she did.

"Oh, look, Betty!" she gasped. "A - a monocle!"

Jemima is soon well established at Morcove, though at first Polly and others are puzzled by her strange mannerisms of speech, and affectations. But most of the girls are amused by Jemima's wit, and strongly attracted to her. "Queer the girl was, but in her way, interesting and rather fascinating." Jemima somewhat flippantly on her arrival at Morcove tells Betty & Co. of her interview with their distinguished Headmistress, Miss Somerville, whose dignity does not ruffle Jemima's blandness at all. After being advised by the Head to wear clothes more appropriate for a schoolgirl, Jemima comes into class on her first day wearing a blue smoking jacket! She brings to Morcove a typewriter, which she calls Algernon, on which she types her father's plays from manuscripts.

She had a way of her own, and the fact of her wearing a horn-rimmed eyeglass would itself make her distinctive, even despite her peculiar mannerism of talking and her perpetually bored expression, counteracted so strangely by the keenness of her grey eyes. Wonderful hair she had too, so that many a girl found her eyes seeking out that head of hair in the Form-room, and many a girl was wishing that such hair had been hers to shingle and bob.

Jemima, though much preferring the society of Betty Barton & Co., is thrown into the company of the sneak of the Fourth Form, Ursula Wade, whose study she shares, as their fathers are close friends. Jemima soon realizes that Ursula is playing a double game in some way - though at first Jemima tries to befriend her, in loyalty to her father's wish. (Actually Ursula's father is working against Captain Carstairs, in spite of professions of friendship: he has instructed Ursula to get hold of the manuscript of Captain Carstairs' latest play, which Jemima is engaged in typing. Ursula's father then plans to sell this play to a Broadway theatrical producer as his own work.) Jemima begins to discover all this - but until she is sure she keeps the knowledge to herself. Ursula is discovered steaming open a letter addressed to Jemima, and is sent by her form-mates to Coventry. Betty & Co. warn Jemima that if she continues to speak to Ursula she too will be shunned by them.

"I shall be honoured," Jemima beamed ... "I am but Mary's little lamb, you know - Ursula's shadow, as it were. I shall be weeping most frantic tears at missing your bright conversation and childish chatter; but when you gather in your studies and mourn for the lost pearls that might have fallen from my wise lips, always remember the blame is on your hands."

Thus Jemima, despising Ursula, sticks to her, to find out further what is being plotted against Captain Carstairs. The next day Betty and her friends receive a postcard, postmarked 'Coventry.' It is of course from Jemima!

Weather nice, although the atmosphere seems a bit chilly. Still there is ample hot water for

one to get into. Having a jolly old time - Spartan, perhaps, but there! Cheerio, and all that merry old rot! Yours from the distant lands.

Jemima delights in baffling Ursula, and naturally eventually outwits her, though Jemima badly burns her own hand in trying to rescue her father's manuscript from a fire. At the end of the last Morcove story featuring Jemima ('A False Friend,' No. 254), appear these intriguing words: "Those readers who would like to continue reading of the adventures of Jemima should order a copy of next week's issue of our splendid companion paper, 'The School Friend, which contains a story featuring this popular character." Jemima leaves Morcove on the rather weak pretext that she could not abide seeing Ursula's face there every day, should she stay on.

What a continuing adornment Jemima would have been to Morcove! But instead she becomes a joyous addition to Cliff House - though that fortunate establishment already houses well defined characters like Babs, Clara, Marjorie and, perhaps most distinctive of all, Bessie Bunter.

Who was Jemima's originator? Although the pen-name of Marjorie Stanton is given to the four stories of Jemima at Morcove, their sparkling sophistication suggests a different writer from Horace Phillips, who was of course responsible for most of the delightful but slightly sentimental Morcove adventures. I understand that Jemima was in fact created by L. E. Ransome (E. L. Rosman) who was filling in for Horace Phillips in those four issues of The Schoolgirls' Own. (L. E. Ransome also wrote as Ida Melbourne, Elizabeth Chester, Stella Stirling and Evelyn Day - and for many years he produced exuberant serials, and series, about various lively personalities in Schooldays, Schoolgirls' Own and The Schoolgirl, throughout their long history. His stories continued in the post-World War II School Friend and Girls' Crystal until these eventually became totally picture papers.) Ransome was indeed prolific, and at the time he created Jemima, was also as Hilda Richards writing most of the Cliff House stories in The School Friend. He understandably lost no time in transferring Jemima there, featuring her immediately after she left Morcove in the School Friend Christmas number of 19/12/1925, 'Her Christmas Mystery.' In this, Jemima explodes into the Cliff House chummery with a bang!

Babs & Co., staying at Clara Trevlyn's home for the Christmas holidays, are informed by Clara's mother that Jemima, the daughter of Captain Carstairs the famous playwright, is coming to spend Christmas with them.

"Jemima! What a name!" murmured Clara faintly. "Oh, Jemima! Is she like her name?" "I really don't know" (said Mrs. Trevlyn). "I believe she's a nice girl, though, and I'm sure you'll be great friends."

(Shortly afterwards .....)

Bessie's idea of keeping her balance (on the bannisters) was vague and elementary in the extreme. She wobbled alarmingly and her eyes goggled wide behind her glasses. "Ooh!" she wailed. "Ooh! Help me someone! Help!"

Then the front door opened and through the doorway came a very fashionably dressed girl. She only just got inside the door before Bessie shot off the end of the bannisters. "Oh!" cried Barbara. "Look out!"

Too late! Bessie, with terrific momentum shot off the end and landed right at the girl who had just come in. That girl fell back with a gasp, and sat fighting for breath in the hall while Bessie sprawled in front of her ..... The hat of the visitor had been knocked off, revealing a gleaming head

of browny red shingled hair, beautifully waved, and her oval, evenly-shaped face was good to look upon. What amazed them most about her appearance, however, was the tortoise-shell monocle which she had screwed into her eye as they advanced.

"Oh dear!" said Barbara. "So sorry! Are you hurt?" The newcomer shook her head. "Hurt? Oh dear no! What is an earthquake more or less in life? Makes life chirrup away, what! All gaiety and freedom, and all that jolly old rot."

"Good gracious," murmured Marjorie.

"And anyway, I'm comfy! Rippingly comfy!" continued the newcomer, smiling blandly. "If my co-mate in disaster is also comfortable. Whose," she demanded, indicating Bessie, "is the air-cushion?"

A peal of laughter there was then as Bessie's red face blinked at the new girl. "I'm not an air-cushion. I'm Gertrude Elizabeth Bunter."

"Gertrude Elizabeth Bumper! Well named indeed." She held up her hand, and they assisted her to her feet. A pair of crinkly russian boots she wore, showing under the mannish cut short coat, which she smoothed down gracefully. (The cover picture by G. M. Dodshon reveals the short coat as being an exact midi-length by 1971 standards. Jemima is slim, sleek and glossy, sitting on the floor at the bottom of the stairs with Bessie, who is exactly the reverse - fat, untidy and rumpled looking. Jemima's long boots are also 'with it' by 1971 fashion decrees, as also the deep fur collar and cuffs of her 'Zhivago' coat.)

"I must say it was a glad welcome," she remarked. "Glad to meet you all, and nice of you to throw at me your choicest blossom."

"Blossom yourself!" retorted Bessie.

But further dispute was prevented by the arrival of Mrs. Trevlyn. "Oh Jemima, you have come!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, Jimmy, call me Jimmy!" implored the newcomer. "The guv'nor always calls me 'Jimmy, old man!'"

..... "That's an extraordinary girl," said Barbara Redfern. "A monocle, and then that coat. How boyish ---"

"H'm. Rather good," said Clara. "A bit affected, in a way. But she isn't a bit boyish, though she tries to be."

"Not like you," agreed Freda. And indeed there was no resemblance at all between Clara and Jemima. Clara was boyish, though she didn't dress boyishly. Jemima, with her close-cropped hair and monocle, had a distinctly masculine appearance, belied by her absolute femininity.

From then on Jemima was often featured in The School Friend of the later 1920's. And John Wheway, who took over the Cliff House stories in The Schoolgirl in 1932 gave her new life in many scintillating stories, presenting Jemima at her enigmatic, burbling best! From her portrait in the Cliff House Celebrities series (in Schoolgirl 424, 11/9/37) we learn that "Jemima possesses a wisdom far beyond her years and a way of tackling problems which is entirely her own. Jemima is perhaps the most unusual girl at Cliff House. She pretends to be lazy, though is one of the most energetic girls there; she pretends to be bored but is one of the most mentally alert. She is five foot tall and very slim, taking shoe size 4. Jemima has never been known to show even a flash of temper and has keen sympathies for girls less well-off, or weaker natured than herself, always being ready to lend them a helping hand. Her home is Delma Castle, a romantic old place in Yorkshire, on the moors. Her favourite author is Edgar Wallace (by whom perhaps some of her vocabulary is inspired), her favourite flower is the rose, and her favourite film stars (wonderful nostalgia!) Ronald Coleman and Myrna Loy." Her many interests include fossil collection and all stone age relics.

In John Wheway's stories, people often thought Jemima to be a harmless lunatic. Her inane babbling enabled her to put people off their guard and gave her time and opportunity, beneath the incessant chatter, to take in every detail of a situation.

Queer girl Jemima. And yet so smart and shrewd under her careless exterior that even now Babs marvelled at her. To many Jemima was an enigma. There were times when she had strange and surprising ideas. One thing was certain about Jemima - and that was she could always be expected to do things in an entirely original manner. In all things Jemima was different, indeed. She spoke differently, she acted differently: she had different tastes in food and clothes. She even thought differently.

And though there were some who said that Jemima was nothing but a fool, those who knew her well suspected the shrewd and clever brain tucked away beneath that sleek coiffure, and those who knew her intimately knew that that bland smile of hers, and that strange way of talking, held the shrewdest thoughts and wisdom that was at times staggering.

Jemima often chats to herself when making deductions, addressing herself as 'Jimmy Old Top,' 'Jimmy Old Spartan,' etc. When considering a weighty problem, or when in circumstances of extreme danger, Jemima would concentrate on polishing her already spotless monocle "as though that task were the most important on earth."

Examples of her colourful speech are that she never walked, but always 'tottered' or 'staggered'; of one of her brilliant hunches she would say, "Funny little tangles this old brain puddle of mine gets into at times" - or - "A rather feeble notion flickers across my cranial vacuum." An enquiry after her health might well bring the reply, "All merry and bright, and chirping like a row of trilling robins on a Christmas morn," and, to suggest a game of tennis - "After tea, perhaps, the cheerful and gay Ursula might help us to make up a four," Jemima said, "for we Britishers must do the right thing you know, Athletic Womanhood, budding Atalantas, and that dear old stunt!"

Jemima is always cool. When imprisoned in the old Tower of Friardale Priory she managed to signal to a passing schoolmate, Clara Trevlyn, by reflecting the sun's rays on her monocle, which she holds out through a narrow, slit-like aperture. When she is released, prepared for a race against time to prove the innocence of a friend, her response is as follows:

Jemima was blandly smiling, looking in fact as though she had just stepped out of class-room after lessons. She still had the monocle in her hand. "Good old Spartan!" she chuckled (to Clara), "What-ho! Providence hath not deserted little Jimmy, though, forsooth, we must get a move on - if it is not already too late. Useful things, monocles," Jemima murmured. "Not only make one see better out of a triflingly wonky eye, but make jolly good helio-what-you-call-'ems when the time is ripe. But action, old Spartan! Up guards and at 'em! Even yet we may foil the naughty old villain of the piece!"

Jemima's self-control is shown in the following extract from 'BAFFLED BY JEMIMA,' Schoolgirls' Own Library 605, a reprint of a 1933 series in The Schoolgirl:

Outwardly cool, urbane and unruffled, Jemima Carstairs stood on the platform of Friardale Station, as the train from Courtfield steamed in. Seeing her, nobody would have guessed the emotions tugging at Jemima's heart.

Not by a flicker of an eyelid did her face betray a sign. But inwardly Jemima was suppressing a fierce desire to give way, for Colonel Carstairs, that dear father, whom she so flippantly referred to as the guv'nor, was paying a flying visit, which might be his last for months to come. Jemima had heard all about the appointment before the receipt of the wire that afternoon, but, being Jemima, she had said nothing. Now the dear old guv'nor was coming to say good-bye - to vanish out of his daughter's life, perhaps for years. "Chin up, Jimmy!" Jemima muttered to herself.....

In the most calculatedly careless manner, she strolled along the platform, twirling her cane, her desire not to show emotion making her step almost jaunty.

... (And - a little later --)

A final kiss, a last firm handshake and Colonel Carstairs stepped into a compartment. Then for the first time Jemima's lips did tremble. But, spartan to the end, she gaily waved her handkerchief as the train departed. The last she saw was her father's anxious face peering at her from an open window as the train disappeared in the distance.

"Good old guv'nor!" Jemima muttered huskily. She stood awhile, regaining her composure on the platform. Then, with a shrug, she turned towards the barrier, making a flippant remark to the collector as she gave up her platform ticket. "Now what?" Jemima muttered, for it was still early. She halted. Outwardly her spirits were as high as ever. Inwardly she felt that a great gap had been torn in her heart. She was afraid to think of the guv'nor - travelling away, away, away. To Nigeria - Africa! The whiteman's grave - the land of burning sunshine and deadly fevers! The ill-famed Gold Coast!

"Oh, chin up - chin up!" Jemima muttered fiercely. "Chest out, old thing! Remember the old bulldog spirit. You're getting weak and girlish. Friends, Romans, companions - that's what you need! Go and join Babs and the other spartans, and forget your girlish troubles!" And Jemima whistling to herself, swung on her way.

Jemima's courage is illustrated from a further extract from 'BAFFLED BY JEMIMA.' She, together with Babs and Clara, is held prisoner by Alphonse Duprez, a ruthless and brutal international crook, who will stop at nothing to achieve his ends. The Cliff House girls led by Jemima have thwarted his attempt to steal a very valuable parcel of jewellery from the father of one of their chums.

"You have," Duprez said, "rather interfered with my plans."

"Annoying - what?" Jemima murmured.

"Very." He glanced at her oddly. "So annoying I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to help me in undoing all the mischief you have done. I address myself," he added, staring at Jemima, "particularly to you."

"Flattered," Jemima said imperturbably. "Fire ahead, old boy."

"My great regret," the man went on, "is that I did not know, until you told me just now, that you were the daughter of that Captain Carstairs with whom I crossed swords some years ago. I might have guessed that a daughter of an opponent so worthy of my wits would bring me further trouble ... However, I am not here to discuss questions beside the point."

"Well, that's something to be thankful for, at all events - what?" Jemima said.

....Duprez went on. "You have robbed me of fifty thousand pounds' worth of jewels. You have hidden those jewels somewhere. I want the jewels ... You understand?"

"Quite, thanks!" Jemima assented cheerfully. "There's a saying isn't there, 'Want must be your master?'"

"The jewels are my object," Duprez continued, ignoring Jemima's sally. "You may have heard from your estimable father that when Alphonse Duprez sets his mind upon anything, he never fails ... I want those jewels."

"Interesting!" Jemima yawned.

(And, slightly later .....)

"What are you going to do with us?" Babs asked quietly.

"Depends upon you - or, rather, upon Miss Carstairs," the man said. "The sooner you fall in with my wishes the better it's going to be for all of you. I don't suppose you want to remain here any longer than you can help, eh? Neither do we. I told you, I believe, my object is the jewels which

Miss Carstairs has hidden."

"Well?"

"Well, understanding that, you will also understand why you are here. Miss Carstairs, perhaps you will have the goodness to tell me exactly where you hid them?"

"And perhaps I won't - what?" countered Jemima

The man's eyes gleamed. "Perhaps you will," he said, "or perhaps one of the other girls will. Miss Redfern?"

"I don't know," Babs said, with perfect truth - for that, at least, Jemima had not yet told them.

"Miss Trevlyn!"

"Find out!" Clara growled.

"I intend to. If you know --"

"I don't!"

"I see," Duprez smiled measuringly. "So the secret rests with you, Miss Carstairs. You won't tell?"

"Guessed it!" Jemima said admiringly.

"I see!" He smiled again; then suddenly his hand shot out, fastening upon Jemima's wrist. Jemima gave a little gasp of pain at the cruel pressure the man exerted, and bit her lips. "Perhaps - now?" he said gently.

"You bully! No!" Jemima cried, white to the lips.

"Well, now, then?" There was a crack from Jemima's wrist. Her face turned deathly pale, but her teeth clenched. "Dash you - no!"

"Very well!" He smiled ominously. "I will hold this wrist. I will ask you a dozen times, 'Will you?' At each question I shall turn the wrist just a little more - so!" And Jemima winced, her eyes almost starting from her head.

"And at the end of that time you will probably have swooned from pain," he said mockingly. "So save yourself a great deal of agony."

"No!" Jemima gasped fiercely. "Oh, you brute!"

"Jemima!" Babs muttered.

"Will you?"

"No! Oh!" And Jemima sagged back limply. Babs clenched her teeth. From Clara came a hissing gasp. The man in front of her was kneeling, his face twisted into a cruel smile, his white teeth gleaming in the light.

His next 'Will you?' almost brought a shriek from Babs: but Clara, quickly seizing an advantage, acted. She reached out with her foot, catching the container of hot tea upon the rim. Before Duprez could scramble out of reach it heeled over.

Swoosh!

"Oh!" roared Duprez. He gave a yell. Spluttering, he went over backwards. Jemima, half-fainting, allowed her hand to drop limply by her side. But Babs, her eyes blazing with fury, now stood up. With the unfettered hand she grabbed hold of the iron container .... A yell of pain came from Duprez as the canteen crashed upon his head ....

(Needless to say, the story eventually ends with Duprez being foiled by Jemima and her chums.)

During her years at Cliff House, Jemima came to the aid of many girls, and solved many mysteries. She was unfailingly trustworthy and good-humoured, seeing life always through a veneer of mild amusement. Her rôle can suitably be summed up in the sentence which ended the last Jemima story ever written, and is therefore our farewell to her!

"Jemima, once again, after mystifying and baffling Cliff House, had turned up trumps!"

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