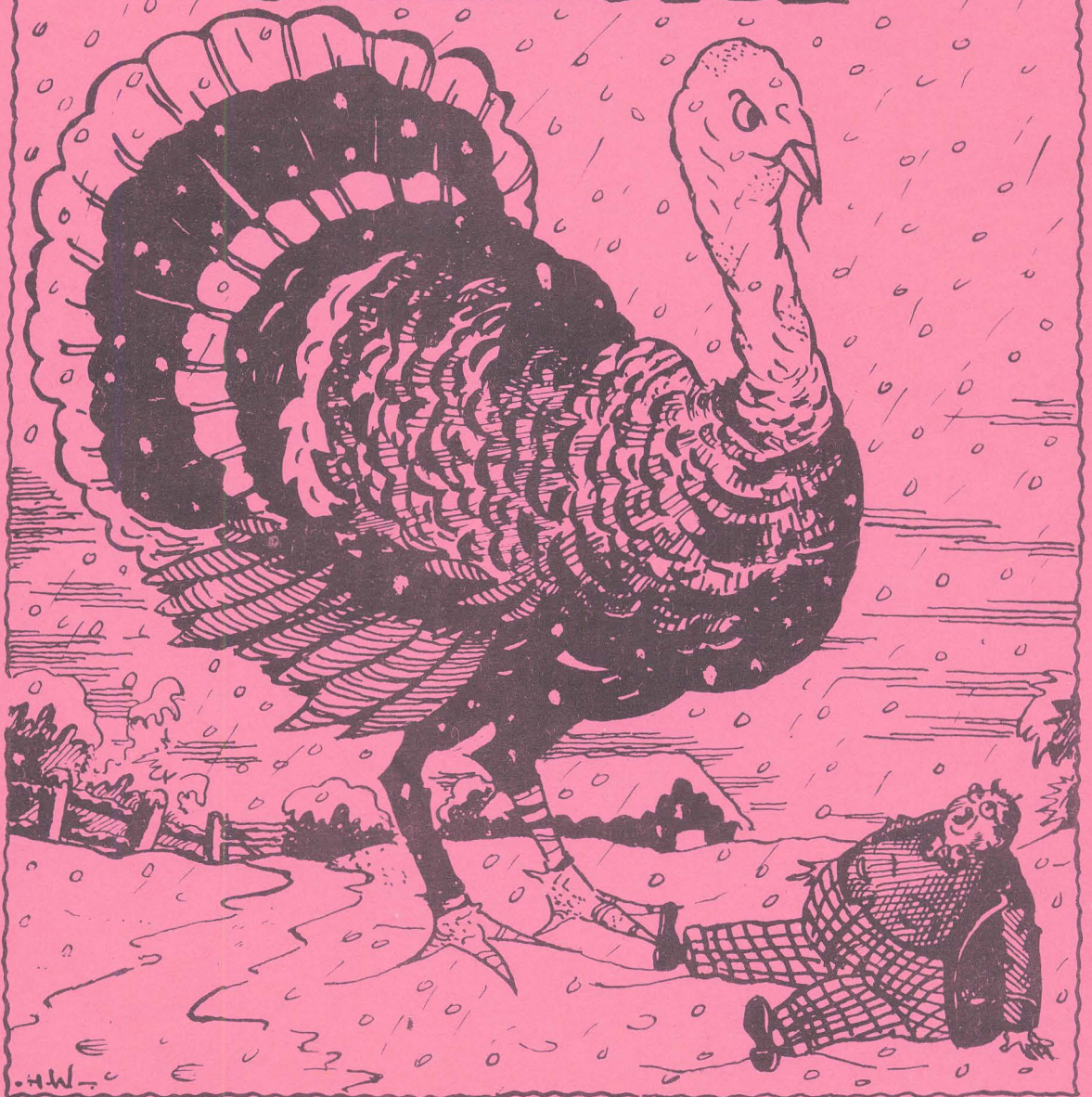


# COLLECTORS 1972 DIGEST 1972 ANNUAL



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# Collectors' Digest CHRISTMAS 1972 Annual

TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR

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Nr. Aldershot, Hampshire, England.

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## INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Nostalgia is fashionable to-day. No longer do the critics claim that we are trying to re-live our childhood, or even more caustically, that we are in our second childhood.

To look back is to be "with it" in odd modern parlance. Anything ugly from the past is valuable and will fetch far, far more than its original cost; and anything beautiful from the dear, dead days beyond recall is a pearl beyond price.

The old hymn says "Change and decay in all around I see." Whether it was true when the hymn was written it is hard to say. It is assuredly true of our land as we know it now. And most of us don't like change for the sake of change, or decay due to the slipping of moral values, or the planned ugliness which is prevalent everywhere.

So we enjoy nostalgia. Nevertheless, nostalgia did not give birth to Collectors' Digest Annual. When the much-loved Herbert Leckenby produced the first C.D. Annual, it was not the result of nostalgia. Collectors' Digest and its Annual were produced as a living and permanent memorial to something worth-while - the periodicals which existed before 1940, the papers with which we grew up, to the men who edited them, the authors who wrote for them, and the artists who illustrated them.

And that is why, twenty-six years later, Collectors' Digest Annual is still going on, coming round regularly every December, and is healthier and more popular than ever.

A nostalgic craze will die, for all crazes die. But the Annual is something very different, for its roots are strong and sturdy and everlasting. I hope that you will find as much pleasure in this latest Annual as I have found in preparing it.

May the year 1973 bring you all everything you wish yourselves, and, in the words of a great pre-war band-leader: "Here's to the Next Time."

Your sincere friend and editor,

# CONTENTS

Page	1	-	Foreword				
Page	2	-	Contents				
Pages	3 - 5	-	Magnet Memories	..	..	..	T. M. Cockburn
Pages	6 - 13	-	Marjorie	..	..	..	Mary Cadogan
Pages	14 - 19	-	This Week's Rover	..	..	..	R. Hibbert
Pages	20 - 32	-	A Greyfriars Calendar - Being a Diary of a Year that never was kept			..	Les Rowley
Pages	34 - 37	-	How a St. Frank's Story Came to be Written				W. O. G. Lofts
Pages	38 - 47	-	Honest Johnny	..	..	..	Harold Truscott
Pages	48 - 50	-	A Sexton Blake Anthology	..	..	..	S. Gordon Swan
Pages	51 - 53	-	Cliveden	..	..	..	Chas Baker
Pages	54 - 70	-	The Spirit of Slade	..	..	..	Eric Fayne
Pages	71 - 78	-	E. S. Brooks - The Struggle is Ending The Magnet and Gem			..	Robert Blythe
Pages	79 - 88	-	The Progressive Phase of G. H. Teed	..	..	..	Christopher Lowder
Pages	89 - 94	-	The Fifth Form in Hamiltonian Schools	..	..	..	Roger M. Jenkins
Pages	95 - 97	-	It's A Small World	..	..	..	Jack Overhill
Pages	98 - 101	-	From Football to the Boys' Favourite	..	..	..	Len Wormull
Pages	101 - 114	-	Sub-Standard	..	..	..	Laurie Sutton
Pages	115 - 119	-	Some thoughts of an Amateur Archivist	..	..	..	W. T. Thurbon
Pages	121 - 122	-	Christmas Festivity from The Boy's Friend of exactly fifty years ago				
Pages	123 - 125	-	Treasure Trove	..	..	..	L. Morley
Page	126	-	Western Desert - 1914	..	..	..	J. Yorke Robinson
Pages	127 - 128	-	Greyfriars Removed	..	..	..	E. S. H. Holman
Pages	129 - 130	-	Those Good Old Stories	..	..	..	Guy N. Smith
Pages	131 - 132	-	"... By Any Other Name ...?"	..	..	..	Gordon Hudson

# MAGNET MEMORIES

by T. M. Cockburn

I wonder how many old boys' book collectors and hobbyists realise that there is some significance in the date 21st August, 1972. On that day, we shall have passed from under the shadow of THE MAGNET, that grandest of all grand old papers.

THE MAGNET's first issue was dated 15th February, 1908, and its last appeared on 18th May, 1940 - 32 years, 3 months and 3 days later. Now, on 21st August, 1972, we shall be another 32 years, 3 months and 3 days on! In other words, the time that has elapsed since the untimely demise of THE MAGNET equals its entire life-span before that!

I was never a reader of THE MAGNET. Indeed, I was not even born when it passed away!

My first experience of Billy Bunter was from the strip cartoon featured in the old KNOCKOUT COMIC - which, funny and well-drawn as it was, bore as much resemblance to the original as did FILM FUN's portrayal of the events in the lives of such as Laurel and Hardy, Old Mother Riley, or Joe E. Brown. I remember tales told at my father's knee of a more legendary age when he was a boy in the late 1920's and early 1930's - an era of blue-and-yellow covered MAGNETS and of thick-papered bumper GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUALS.

Later, as I grew up, I was introduced to the postwar Bunter books - my first was BILLY BUNTER AMONG THE CANNIBALS - and

## THE GIANT OF GREYFRIARS!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



### ONE-TWO-THREE! BILLY BUNTER'S BATH

(An Entertaining Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

soon I was a regular at the local public library counter, eagerly devouring tales of Banknotes, Barraging-outs, Benefits, Postal Orders, Blue Mauritiuses, Doubles and Bolts.

But schooldays ended and I lost touch with the Greyfriars scene. Until one fateful day in the Autumn of 1964, when I found an entry in WILLING'S PRESS GUIDE about COLLECTORS' DIGEST and wrote to Mr. Eric Fayne of Excelsior House, who promptly sent me a complimentary copy and invited me to open a subscription, which I have maintained ever since.

Soon, my interest and knowledge deepened. I came by an Easter, 1938, pink-covered MAGNET (No. 1574 - On the Texas Trail); bought the early Armada and Merlin Bunters; acquired the 1967 HOLIDAY ANNUAL and a 1937 original; purchased odd copies of THE MAGNET, including the last issue of all.

Then came the facsimile No. 1 MAGNET, the BEST OF MAGNET AND GEM and eventually the Howard Baker reprint volumes.

A new, or rather an old, world opened to me. I became intrigued by the whole saga. Knowledgeable articles by COLLECTORS' DIGEST'S talented and learned contributors were eagerly devoured and a continuum built up in my mind of an evolutionary progression all the way down the years from the Edwardian, gas-lit, hansom-cab era to our own jet-speed, colour television, moon-reaching age.

From the first words of MAGNET No. 1 -

"Send Master Harry to me!"

Colonel Wharton filled his glass from the decanter, held it up to the light and then slowly sipped the contents, a dark shade of thought upon his bronzed face the while.

- to the last words of the last postwar Bunter book (No. 38 BUNTER'S LAST FLING) -

... Here - take this!" The Bounder's father produced a five-pound note.

"Oh, lor! Oh crumbs! Oh thanks! I-I'll see - if - if Mrs. Mimble will change it. There's - there's just time before dinner."

Bunter vanished through the doorway.

- we have had over sixty years of pure enjoyment, fascinating studies of public-school life; characterisations often subtle, always believable; humour, drama, adventure, interaction between schoolboys and masters, between masters and masters, between boys and boys.

There have been many high points along the way. Nugent's entrance (in the first MAGNET) as a train passenger, kindly Dr. Locke's first words -

"He is awake." ... "Are you better, my brave lad?" The first mention of Bunter in page 6, column one of that No. 1, and in column two his first entrance -

Harry did not reply or rise from the carpet. He was too dazed by the shock. As he sat there, another junior belonging to the Lower Fourth came hurriedly into the study and ran right into him. The newcomer was a somewhat stout junior, with a broad, pleasant face (SIC! - Author) and an enormous pair of spectacles.

"Ker-woosh!" ejaculated the junior, as he sprawled on the floor over Harry Wharton's legs.

"What's that in the way? What do you mean by having a dog in the study, you silly bounders, for a short-sighted fellow to fall over?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter looked round as he rose and peered at Harry through his big glasses. It was pretty clear that big as his spectacles were, they did not assist his vision very much, for he had to put his head within a foot of Harry's to make him out.

"My word, it's the new kid! Well, what does he mean by sprawling on the floor? I say, you new fellow ..."

The last words of the last MAGNET before Dunkirk (No. 1683) and oblivion for so many of the old papers -

"Come on!" roared Bob, and he grabbed Johnny and rushed him off.

The other three followed, laughing.

It was a cheery party that went up to Study No. 1 in the Remove to tea. That spot of trouble had blown over and all was calm and bright - for the present, at least; though, had the chums of the Remove only known it, they were at the beginning of what was going to be a rather exciting term.

How exciting a term it was to have been, we shall never know. No more weekly episodes of the saga of Greyfriars were to be forthcoming, but, thanks to Skilton, Cassell, Armade, Merlin, Howard Baker, Mandeville, Collectors' Digest, the artists and above all to Frank Richards himself, though the song has ended, the melody lingers on and our memories of Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; of Billy Bunter, Lord Mauleverer, Vernon-Smith, Coker, Wingate, Loder; of Mr. Quelch, Mr. Prout, M. Charpentier, old Gosling and Sir Hilton Popper; of the Remove, Friardale, Courtfield, Bunter Court, Wharton Lodge, Mauleverer Towers; of the Tuck Shop, Wapshott Races, boating on the Sark, walks to Cliff House, footer at St. Jim's and Rookwood; of tea in Hall and of spreads in the Study, of high-days and half days and holidays in Egypt, in caravans, or on the long, rolling roads of England - grand memories all, will, like a journey down an English lane in the high noon of summer and like the memory trace of the fragrance of an English rose, last for ever, till the end of time itself.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Marvels 925, 926, 929, 930, 940, 942, 943 (Mapleton Rovers) by Richard Randolph (Ryle), Blue Crusader Yarns, by Arthur S. Hardy, BFL 745, 753, 757, 761, 733, 360, 717, 97, 245 - Flower of Gloster Temple Thurston - BFL School and Sport - ALL VERY URGENT.

HARRY BROSTER, KINVER, STOURBRIDGE, WORCS.

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ALL THE VERY BEST FOR XMAS AND THE NEW YEAR TO ALL OLD FRIENDS AND NEW IN THAT LITTLE ISLAND OF AUSTRALIA: Jerry Slater, George Davidson, Mrs. D. Scott, Ernie Darcy, not forgetting Jim Cook of New Zealand - to name just a few. BEST WISHES TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE O. B. B. C.

JIM SWAN, 3 FIFTH AVENUE, PADDINGTON, LONDON, W.10 4DJ.

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WANTED: 1947, 1948, C. D. ANNUAL. 1920 HOLIDAY ANNUAL. CHAMPIONS, numbers 1 to 9, 78 to 130. POPULAR 469 to 523, also 601 and 618. UNION JACK prior 1926. MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL.

H. VERNON

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=====

# Marjorie

by MARY CADOGAN



Marjorie Hazeldene.

Charles Hamilton has written many excellent stories about the friendship of one boy for another and he also creates vividly the special quality which exists in friendship between boy and girl. There is an enthusiastic whole-heartedness in all the encounters between the chums of the Greyfriars' Remove and Marjorie Hazeldene of Cliff House School. Marjorie comes into the Greyfriars saga early in its history, as the sister of Peter Hazeldene, the weak-willed and easily led removeite who constantly turns to stronger characters to extricate him from the consequences of his own stupidities.

But Marjorie is the opposite of her brother - she has courage, integrity, gentleness and strength. She also has an immediate affinity with Harry Wharton & Co., particularly with Harry and with Bob Cherry, each of whom responds to her tremendously. The following extracts from MAGNET 14 (18th May, 1908) describe preparations made by the boys for one of Marjorie's visits:-

Hazeldene came out of his study with a letter in his hand, and an extremely pleased expression upon his face, as the chums of the remove walked down the passage. "Come into a fortune?" asked Bob Cherry pleasantly. Hazeldene laughed. "No."

"What's the good news, then?"

"I've had a letter - from my sister."

"Have you really?" The chums of the Remove were interested at once. All but Hurree Singh remembered the visit of Marjorie Hazeldene to Greyfriars. The girl had been great friends with the removeites.

"Yes. And she says she's coming over on Wednesday afternoon."

"Good news!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "Rather," said Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said the nabob, in his purring voice. "I have not had the honourable pleasure of meeting the charming miss and I am looking to it forwardfully with all my heart."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "If there's anything we can do to help to make it jolly you've only got to tell us so." "Rather!"

"The ratherfulness is great." "We'll do anything," said Bob Cherry. "We are yours to command, Vaseline - and don't you forget it."

.... It was a half holiday, a glorious May afternoon. Bob Cherry was dressed with unusual care. His cap was straight on his curly hair for once, his collar quite clean and his necktie neatly tied. "Hallo Nugent, I see you've got a new necktie on!" Nugent joined him under the elms. He coloured slightly at Bob Cherry's remark. He certainly had a new necktie on and he was wearing his silk hat instead of a cap and his clothes were nicely brushed. "What's the row, Nugent? You look as neat as a new pin."

"Well, you're looking rather tidy yourself," said Nugent, glancing at Bob. "Your cap is on straight and your boots are not muddy." They strolled down to the great gates of Greyfriars. "What do you think about my cap?" asked Bob a little doubtfully. "Think I had better run in and change it for a topper?" Nugent hesitated. "Say what you think, old chap," said Bob Cherry. "It won't take me many minutes. I was rather doubtful about it when I put the cap on, only a fellow feels so much more comfy in a cap." "Well, Bob, old man, a topper does look a little more - more attentive," said Nugent. "A fellow looks better raising a topper than snatching a rag off his head."

Harry Wharton joined them. Harry was always remarkably clean and tidy in his person and his clothes were always in good order; but he also showed a little improvement on the present occasion.

His collar had evidently just been taken out of the box, his necktie was correct as a die and a gold pin glimmered in it.

"I say Wharton, what do you think about changing my cap for a topper?" asked Bob Cherry anxiously. "I see you've got a straw." Harry Wharton smiled. "You look alright, Bob."

"Here's Hurree Singh! Let's have his opinion."

"My hat!" murmured Nugent. "What a giddy toff!" Hurree Singh was indeed arrayed in a really striking manner. As Bob Cherry remarked aside, "Solomon in all his glory wasn't in it with Hurree Jampot just then."

The nabob's clothes fitted like a glove all over, his top hat was shining in the May sun, but not more brightly than his nicely polished boots. He had a high white collar and a pair of gloves in his hand and a diamond gleamed in his necktie. His coat was adorned by a big rose. The nabob's dusky face glowed with pleasant anticipation.

"I see you are waiting at the gateful entrance for the beautiful miss," he remarked. "Do I look nicely resplendent, my chums?"

"You do," said Nugent. "You look nicely resplendent and resplendently nice. I never saw such a black-and-white picture before."

...."What do you think about my changing my cap for a topper?" asked Bob Cherry. "Nugent thinks it would look a bit better." The nabob looked thoughtful. "The topperfulness would probably be regarded as more attentiveful, as making the unusually fussfulness on the great occasion," he remarked. "Thusly it might have the gratifying effect of pleasing the charming miss."

"Hazeldene joined them. "What do you think about changing my cap for a topper?" asked Bob Cherry. "Do you think your sister would notice?"

"No, I don't suppose so," said Hazeldene gravely. "Marjorie never notices a detail like that. She'll be pleased to see your chivvy!"

"Will she?" said Nugent, looking at Bob Cherry's features. But Bob gave him a dig in the ribs before he could get further. "I think I'll stick to the cap," he remarked. "It feels more comfy, anyway, and Hurree Jampot is splendid enough for two."

"Hallo, I can hear wheels on the road!" said Hazeldene. Several of the juniors made a quick forward movement to meet the coming vehicle outside the gates ....

"Here's the trap." A vehicle halted in the road and a slim, girlish figure came into view - a sunny charming face, shaded by a wide hat. And Bob Cherry assisted Marjorie Hazeldene to alight.

The above extracts, by the way, are in marked contrast to the atmosphere at Cliff House School when a visit from Peter Hazeldene is expected. (From the hard-back book, BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL, 1949):-

"Won't it be jolly!" said Marjorie. Clara Trevlyn glanced at her chum with an amused glimmer in her eyes; and then winked at Dolly Jobling with the eye farthest from Marjorie. Dolly contrived to turn a giggle into a cough.

"Hazel will be here soon," added Marjorie. The three juniors were walking in the quad after dinner. It was a bright sunny day and Marjorie Hazeldene's face, which was often grave and thoughtful, was as bright as the sunshine and the blue sky. Marjorie was always pleased when her brother came over to Cliff House on a half holiday. In the innocence of her heart she probably fancied that Clara and Dolly were equally pleased.

Which was not the case at all! The news that Hazel was coming over that afternoon did not exhilarate Clara and Dolly .... In fact they would have liked that half holiday much better without him. But they were prepared to play up, like good pals.

"What is he coming for?" asked Clara.

"To see me, I suppose," answered Marjorie, with a faint touch of reproach in her voice. "I've hardly seen him this term ...."

Marjorie's forthright chum, Clara Trevlyn, though full of unsentimental admiration for the Famous Five, has no illusions about the character of Peter Hazeldene, who constantly takes advantage of his sister's generous nature.

In the early days of Greyfriars, Harry Wharton's devotion and protectiveness towards Marjorie are well illustrated in MAGNET 12 (2nd May, 1908), HARRY'S SACRIFICE.



In this story it becomes obvious that Hazeldene has taken half a sovereign from Hurree Singh and Wharton & Co. intend to challenge him with this. On the way to Hazeldene's study Wharton realizes how Hazeldene's action may affect Marjorie:

Wharton came to a stop near Hazeldene's door and looked seriously at his chums. "I say, kids, I've been thinking about this. We shall have to go easy on Hazeldene."

"How do you mean?"

"I'm thinking of his sister Marjorie .... She's a really ripping girl and she's fond of that rotten brother of hers. If - if Hazeldene were expelled from Greyfriars, think what it would mean to Marjorie. She's proud of him, you know. She doesn't know his as we do." Nugent nodded thoughtfully. "Quite right, Harry. But a thief - ."

"I couldn't stand being the one to let her know that her brother was a thief," said Harry, with a clouded brow.

"That's how I feel about it," Bob Cherry observed. "Vaseline ought to be kicked out of the school if he's a thief and jumped on into the bargain; but - ."

"Perhaps a certain amount of lickfullness with a cricket-stump might improve the worthy beast, but let there be no more talkfulness on the subject," said the nabob.

"Inky's right," said Nugent; "so are you, Harry. Let's keep it all dark, and deal with the matter wholly by ourselves. Come on!" And the chums of the Remove knocked at the door of Hazeldene's study and entered.

When Hazeldene is tackled he admits to taking the half-sovereign and explains that he has handed it in part payment of an overdue debt to a money lender, Mr. Isaacs, who is now threatening to expose him to Dr. Locke unless full payment is made. This, naturally, would mean expulsion.

Hazeldene dropped his face into his hands with a groan. "I don't care what happens. I'm sick of it all. I'd be glad to be expelled and have it all over if it weren't for - ."



"I say——" said a fat voice. Marjorie Hazeldene was holding out her hand to Bob Cherry, when a fat figure rolled into view. "I say, I hope I'm not too late for the picnic," said Bunter. "I suppose you've only just got here, Marjorie, as you're shaking hands with Bob!"

He did not finish. But the chums of the Remove knew of whom he was thinking. Before their eyes seemed to rise the sweet, innocent face of Marjorie .... What look would that face wear when Hazeldene came home - expelled, disgraced, as a thief!

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Harry Wharton, in a low, hard voice. "When you were borrowing this money, why couldn't you think of your sister then?"

Harry and his friends leave Hazeldene convinced that he has borrowed money from Isaacs for some shady purpose - but in fact for once he has landed himself in this wretched position through not wholly selfish motives - but to raise money to buy a watch bracelet for Marjorie's birthday present. Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, who also has a penchant for Marjorie, worms this information out of the money lender who visits the school trying to get the money from Hazeldene.

Bulstrode offers to give Hazeldene the much needed £2 to clear this debt, if he will in return invite him to the Hazeldene home during the holidays, so that Bulstrode can 'improve his acquaintance with Marjorie.' This enrages Hazeldene, who tells Bulstrode he is not fit to breathe the same air as his sister - and of course the £2 is not accepted! Bulstrode, upset by Hazeldene's insulting manner, later jeeringly mentions the subject of the debt to Wharton, taking it for granted that Harry knows Hazeldene borrowed the money to buy a present for his sister. Harry impressed by the knowledge that Hazel's debt was incurred for this purpose and not for gambling, urges Bulstrode to be silent when he threatens to tell other members of the form about Hazeldene's predicament. Harry says:-

.... "It ought to be kept quiet."

"Why?" said Bulstrode sneeringly.

"It's not a pleasant story - Marjorie may be down at the school again some time. It would be rotten if the story were generally known in the Remove. Vaseline has acted badly, but not so badly as a fellow who made a girl's name the talk of the Common room."

Bulstrode laughed mockingly. "Rats! It's too good a story to keep."

"Then you mean to make it the joke of the Form?"

"Why not? If Vaseline had accepted my offer I should have shut up. He threw it in my teeth and I'm under no obligation to keep his secret."

"You are under an obligation not to say anything that would make a girl unhappy if she came to hear it .... I want you to understand how the matter stands."

.... "What are you driving at?" demanded Bulstrode uneasily.

"This," said Harry Wharton with flashing eyes .... "If you utter a single word that might cause Marjorie Hazeldene pain if she knew it I will thrash you within an inch of your life." Harry's face was dark; he eyes blazing. He meant every word he said and the one-time bully of the Remove knew it.

So we see with what passion Harry will protect Marjorie! Under this threat Bulstrode keeps his own counsel. Wharton decides to help Hazeldene out of his desperate position - and he pawns his own silver watch, also using money he has set aside for a much-needed new cricket bat, in order to pay off Hazel's debt to Mr. Isaacs. In doing so Harry retrieves Hazeldene's I. O. U. and gets a receipt for full payment. Typically, Hazeldene comes across this by stealth, when searching Wharton's desk in hopes of stealing something valuable to enable him to pay off the money-lender!

The long terror was over! Here was his paper! He was safe - saved! .... Harry Wharton had saved him! A change came over Hazeldene's face. A strange warm gush came to his eyes .... "God bless him!" he muttered.

Peter Hazeldene was indeed grateful in those early days - forty years later he was still getting himself into shameful situations through weakness, and being rescued



THE FOURTH FORM AT CLIFF HOUSE



KEY TO PORTRAITS.—1. Phyllis Howell. 2. "Olive Wayne" (Augusta Anstruther-Browne). 3. Marcia Loftus. 4. Lorna Grey. 5. Philippa Derwent. 6. Marjorie Hazeldene. 7. Bridget O'Toole. 8. Bessie Bunter. 9. Lucy Morgan. 10. Gwendoline Cook. 11. Clara Trevlyn. 12. Barbara Redfern. 13. Nancy Bell. 14. Mabel Lynn. 15. Freda Foote. 16. Dolly Jobling. 17. Meg Lennox. 18. Agnes White. 19. Katie Smith. 20. Peggy Preston. 21. Vivienne Leigh. 22. Cissy Clare. 23. Annabel Hichens.

by Marjorie, Wharton and Bob! But by then he had become so blunted by the drearily repetitive pattern of his own inadequacies that he accepted salvation from the sacrifices of others with resignation, rather than joy or gratitude! But, to go back to 1908 -

"God bless him!" he muttered. Strange words from the lips of the cad of the Greyfriars Remove. But Hazeldene had learned his lesson. From that day forward a new course was marked out before him.

Alas! We know, sadly, that in fact Hazeldene's efforts to reform were doomed!

In many stories Charles Hamilton shows Bob Cherry's eager desire to please Marjorie and Marjorie's appreciation of him. In MAGNET 1350, 30th December, 1933, Bunter is in hiding over Christmas at Wharton Lodge (unable to make his presence there known, having heavily insulted Colonel Wharton by telephone, thinking he was speaking to Harry). For the Boxing Day Fancy Dress Dance, to which some of the Cliff House girls are invited, Bob Cherry is wearing a blue domino and mask; Bunter manages to kit himself out in an identical costume, hoping to be mistaken for Cherry so that he can attend the dance, thus enjoying the lavish delights of the supper table! Bunter pushes people ruthlessly aside, dances disastrously with Marjorie, who has to be rescued from him by Vernon Smith and generally behaves atrociously, knowing he is being mistaken for Bob (whom he has hoaxed away with a false telephone message). At length his ruse is discovered when Bob returns to the dance - and Marjorie, with her customary affection for Cherry, pours oil on troubled waters by saying:

"I ought really to have guessed that it wasn't you Bob."

"Well, he was got up just like me - you wouldn't really - ."

"I mean, because he danced so badly!" said Marjorie sweetly.

And all was calm and bright!

And all was indeed calm and bright for the Famous Five as long as they were on good terms with Marjorie and her friends from Cliff House. Their friendship survives and ripens over the years, in spite of ups and downs, including temporary alienation when Ponsonby of Highcliffe strands Marjorie and Co. on an island, managing to blame the Greyfriars chums by leaving Bob Cherry's cap near the spot where the mooring rope of their boat had been cut.

On many occasions Wharton and his friends helped Marjorie to save her brother from his scrapes and one of the last times Charles Hamilton wrote on this theme was in BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL (published by Charles Skilton Ltd., in 1949). This time Hazel is unjustly accused, largely because of his past reputation of stealing money from Mr. Quelch's study. Too weak to face things out he runs away, seeking refuge at Cliff House, where, in hiding, he expects Marjorie to look after him. Bob Cherry visits Marjorie to tell her the background of the affair and to try to console her.

"Bob! You wouldn't believe that Hazel - ?" Marjorie faltered. Bob coloured uncomfortably. In a rather timid, boyish way he thought the whole world of Marjorie; but he would not have liked to tell her what he thought of her brother. "Hazel's been an awful ass," he said awkwardly.

"I know he's often in trouble, Bob, and he's thoughtless - and - and wilful, but he wouldn't - he couldn't - you couldn't believe - ." Bob's colour deepened. He did not speak. Marjorie's face

hardened a little. "If you think that Hazel did what they suppose, Bob, it's not much use talking," she said quietly. "I'll go and join my friends."

"Hold on," said Bob. "I - I don't believe it, Marjorie. I don't - anyhow, I won't. I - I think it can be explained somehow though goodness knows how. It looks bad, but - but - " he stammered. Marjorie smiled faintly. Bob wanted, at least, to believe as she believed and he was doing his best. "You've seen Hazel, of course?" said Bob.

"Yes I've seen him and he's told me" ....

"I guessed that," said Bob. "I was sure of it, really. When he was missed, it came into my head at once that he'd cut across to see you. He's the sort of chap to - !" Bob checked himself just in time. He had been going to say that Hazel was the sort of chap to land his troubles on a girl!

"What were you going to say?"

"I - I mean, he knows you've got more sense than he has and I was sure he would come to you," amended Bob. "I thought you'd advise him to come back, but he never came."

"I know."

Marjorie then asks Bob to prove Hazel's innocence and he cannot resist her plea.

"Leave it to us," said Bob. "I'm not fearfully bright myself, Marjorie - but Wharton's as brainy as you like and old Inky's as sharp as a razor. If there's anything to be rooted out you can bank on it that we'll root it out. Marjorie, perhaps I'll have some good news for you next time." Marjorie stood and watched him career away on his bicycle and when he was gone, she went in at the gates with a glimmer, at least, of hope to comfort her.

The Famous Five set to work seeking evidence to clear Hazeldene, though they all feel that when Bob says he believes Hazel to be innocent he is simply influenced by his great regard for Marjorie. Clara, Marjorie's chum, is pretty sure that Hazel is guilty and when Marjorie confides to her the hope that Bob will clear him she is not impressed! Marjorie says:

"Bob's doing all he can to find out who it really was, for Hazel's sake - ."

"Oh, my summer sunshade!" said Clara. "I can guess exactly how much Bob is doing it for Hazel's sake! You're the limit, Marjorie! And Bob! Bob's a dear old lad, as nice as a Newfoundland dog, but fancy him setting up to solve mysteries ...."

But later, when Hazel is cleared:

"And it was really Bob Cherry who worked the oracle."

"If he hadn't helped Marjorie - ."

"Thank goodness he did!" said Marjorie with a deep breath.

"Sherlock Holmes of the Remove!" said Clara, with a chuckle.

So we see that throughout the long history of Greyfriars, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry are always ready to make sacrifices for Marjorie's sake. And these seem without end - but let us end this nostalgic assessment of their relationship with Marjorie by sharing their 'au revoir' to her, when she leaves Greyfriars after the visit in 1908, the boys' preparation for which was mentioned at the beginning of this article.

Marjorie rose from the table. "I think it is about time I said 'goodbye.' Thank you very much for this nice tea," said the girl, with a bright smile. "It is very jolly to have tea in a study. I wish I lived at Greyfriars."

"By jove, that would be ripping!" said Bob Cherry, so heartily that Marjorie coloured and laughed.

"Well, I will run away now. I shall say goodbye at the gate, then."

The chums of the Remove gathered round Hazeldene and bestowed a series of hearty smacks upon his back. Hazeldene staggered. "What the dickens - ."

"Don't be alarmed," said Bob Cherry reassuringly. "My dear chap, a fellow who has a sister like that ought to be encouraged. That's what it means."

"Well you can encourage me without busting by spinal column next time," said Hazeldene, rubbing his shoulder.

The chums of the Remove went down to the gates and a few minutes later Marjorie came down in the trap. She shook hands all round with the chums and kissed her brother affectionately, the other fellows looking on with envious eyes. "Goodbye, my dear friends," said the girl waving her hand as the trap moved.

"Goodbye, Marjorie!"

The juniors took off their caps and Bob Cherry, in the exuberance of his spirits, waved his round his head. The trap drove off and the dusk hid Marjorie. The juniors returned towards the house .... "It's been a jolly afternoon, hasn't it?" said Harry Wharton, with a laugh.

"It has," said Bob Cherry, with a half sigh. "I say, Hazeldene, when is your sister coming down again?"

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Our illustrations show a marked contrast in the way the girls are portrayed. The composite picture is by G. M. Dodshon, who illustrated the School Friend for many years. The single picture of T. E. Laidler and the typical Chapman specimen both come from the later thirties. The Dodshon picture is of 1920 vintage.)

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A MERRY XMAS, AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR, TO ALL -

LEO P. HYNES

40A MULLOCK ST., ST. JOHNS, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA.

=====

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR to all O. B. B. C. friends! WANTED: B. F. L. 457, "Soldiers of Fortune."

IAN BENNETT

20 FREWEN DRIVE, SAPCOTE, LEICESTER.

=====

YULETIDE GREETINGS to friends old and new from BILL WRIGHT. Still need pre-war Knockouts and postcards. Albums, any condition. Exchanges welcomed.

147 ST. HILDA'S WAY, GRAVESEND, KENT, DA124AZ.

=====

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to Club Members everywhere and a hearty Yuletide welcome awaits you all at the Christmas Meeting on 10th December, at "Friardale," from -

BOB AND BETTY ACRAMAN

AND THEIR THREE SONS

=====

A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year is the time honoured wish of yours truly STUART WHITEHEAD, to all collectors everywhere. Still need one or two EARLY Magnets and Gems, Daredevil Aces, G8 - and his Battle Aces.

WANTED: Monthly C.D's, 1 to 6, 8, 9, 16, 18, 21. Greetings to all Hobby Friends.

MAURICE KING, 18 BARTON ROAD, SLOUGH, BUCKS., SL3 8DF.

=====

# This Week's ROVER

by R. Hibbert

I think it's time we got with it.

After all it's over thirty years since Robert Graves chided us for being old fuddy-duddies. You remember what he said in Chapter 4 of 'The Long Week-end' (published by Faber and Faber in 1940).

Remember! Who could forget? Cut to the quick we were at the time. It was a very bad beginning to World War II.

He said,

"The chief readers (of the Gem and the Magnet) were secondary schoolboys, errand and shop boys and a large number of elderly, sentimental stamp collectors who had been reading this sort of fiction for fifty years or more."

And he spoke well of the Champion and the Wizard and described them as "advanced boys' magazines."

Well, I'm an even more advanced boy now than I was then and the Gem, the Magnet, the Champion and the Wizard have all died.

However, there's one stories-in-words boys' magazine still surviving. It's from the same stable as the Wizard so I expect Mr. Graves would recommend it to us. It is, of course, the Rover (born 4th March, 1922) and, although it's older than I am, it's a modern, living magazine bought every week by modern, living boys. So I think we ought to study it from time to time. We can hardly pretend it's a fly-by-night publication; it's in its fiftieth year. The Magnet clocked up thirty-two years; the Nelson Lee Library eighteen. It looks as though the Rover's here to stay.

So . . . .

Stuff your stamp collection back in the old album - don't tell me you don't know a Mauritius Blue from a Rhode Island Red; it's the attitude of mind Mr. Graves was going on about - and let's look at this week's Rover.

The Rover, 7th August, 1971. Every Monday. Price 2½p.

There are thirty-two pages.

The front and back covers are in colour.

The front cover shows an incident from a 'New Fun Story. Starting Today. The Congo Canary.'

A red shirted, solar topeed big game hunter is sitting on a boulder in a jungle clearing. He looks amazed and well he might, for an ostrich is standing in front of him and falling from under its flapping wings are one revolver, two saucepans, a spoon, two vases, a bowl, a small carved idol of native workmanship, a gold bangle, a necklace and nine precious stones - diamonds, rubies, emeralds and one topaz by the

look of them.

The back cover shows 'School Team Colours' - the football 'strips' of twelve schoolboy teams. The names and addresses of the boys who sent in details of their team colours appear on page 15. I note that the lads of Stephen Gardner's team, Highfield's Under 13 XI are dressed in eyeball searing red while Christopher Dobson's mates of Kendray Junior School wear black shirts, white shorts and white socks.

'School Team Colours' appears every other week and has done for a long time. It's the Rover's unique contribution to the pictorial history of clothes. If in 2171 a student of costume wants to know what British schoolboys wore when they played football in our day and age he'll get more information from bound volumes of the Rover than he will from the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Inside this week's Rover are: six stories in words; one picture story (comic strip) two pages long; one page of sports information - four items - three of them illustrated; one page devoted to this week's anniversaries - seven items - all carefully and accurately illustrated. The Sopwith Pup in which Squadron Commander E. H. Dunning is making the first ever landing on the deck of a ship on 2nd August, 1917, looks like a Sopwith Pup. The picture of Emile Berliner's first gramophone - he died 3rd August, 1929 - has been carefully copied from a photograph of Emile's first gramophone. One page of Readers' Letters - 'and every letter published on my page wins a prize, boys.' Paul Waller's letter wins him a POCKET CHESS WALLET and he writes:-

"Only a few days ago I was ill in bed. I wanted something to read so I bought three boys' papers, the price totalling 7p. I read them in about an hour. Next day my Rover came. That took me nearly two hours to read and it only cost 2½p. That's what I call value."

Two full page adverts - one for 'Zzzoom-its' which seem to be some kind of mechanically propelled tops and one for what is nowadays called The Royal Naval Careers Service. There's a 7½" x 7" photograph of Honest Jack - and you wouldn't know he was a sailor if it weren't for the tattoos on his brawny fore arms - at the controls of one of our nuclear submarines. Fill in the coupon and you might be in the co-pilot's seat.

There are several small advertisements - our boys still collect stamps - and six Picture Facts. Each one consists of a paragraph of fairly useless information and a neat little picture to go with it. Sample: "Ahead of its Time. Rear engined racing cars are thought to be a modern development, but the first appeared in 1923. This 2-litre Benz took part in the Grand Prix de Europe at Monza, Italy, that year, but unfortunately the German car did not finish."

On page 2 we have the last episode (about 5,500 words) of a five part serial, 'The Blue Hawk of Kabul.'

We are in Afghanistan in 1879. "The tribes are in revolt and British forts are being knocked over like nine-pins." The tribes are united under the infamous Blue Hawk (by Red Shadow out of Wolf of Kabul?).

Sergeant Fortune (Agent No. 7) and Corporal Scott make up a team which has



no equal in the Military Intelligence Branch in Afghanistan. Colonel Brandon is their chief.

The Afghans believe that they are going to drive the "British back into India and place the Blue Hawk of Kabul back on his rightful throne. It is the will of Allah."

It is also a load of baloney.

Whoever wrote this tale of the North West Frontier in the brave days of old took a lot of liberties with historical fact. Now I know that as soon as you introduce fictional characters into what was once a real situation you're taking liberties. I know Napoleon never really had dealings with a gallant hussar called Etienne Gerard and that Louis XI of France never had a Scotsman called Quentin Durward in his entourage, but so long as the writer keeps to the main historical facts and takes trouble with his details it doesn't matter.

But the writer of 'The Blue Hawk of Kabul' does what he likes with history. His Afghanistan is as fictional as his characters. In the story Afghanistan is part of the British Empire. British soldiers man a chain of forts. Kabul and Jellalabad are garrison towns. These things aren't true. In 1879 the British did 'have trouble with the tribes.' In 1878, afraid of what the Russians might do rather than what the Afghans had done, Britain invaded Afghanistan, an independent country. By 1880, the British army had withdrawn to India. Afghanistan was never ruled by the British Raj. We couldn't afford to occupy the country - not even in the palmiest days of the old far-flung, when the pound in your pocket was worth God knows how many New Pence.

And yet the whole plot of 'The Blue Hawk of Kabul' depends upon Afghanistan being under British rule and these non-existent British forts have to be there and have to be taken by the Blue Hawk's men. Why? Because the Blue Hawk is a renegade Briton and he and two other Britons - army officers I'm sorry to say - have engineered the whole Afghan War so that they can systematically loot the British forts and sell the contents on the Kabul black market. When Napoleon said the English were a nation of shop keepers he'd got blokes like the Blue Hawk in mind.

When the tribesmen say, "What about our share of the loot then? Why are these Al British blankets and boot polish being shipped to that big warehouse in Kabul?" the poor benighted heathen are told the money's needed for the war effort. Actually the proceeds of this army surplus fiddle go into a bank in Delhi where the traitors have a joint account.

It comes as a great surprise to our heroes Brandon, Fortune and Scott when they are told that the Blue Hawk is a Mr. Stevens, an English trader of Abdur Rahman Street, Kabul. His is an old established business and as no Englishman was allowed to live in Kabul between 1842 and 1879, even British Military Intelligence ought to have regarded him as a doubtful character from the word go.

There's a lot of local colour and detail - mostly unreliable, I should think. We hear a lot about Gatling guns which the British did use in the second Afghan War, our soldiers wear khaki, the tribesmen speak Pushtu, but there are a lot of anachronisms as well. The Military Foot Police - not raised till 1885 - patrol the streets of Jellalabad and a Colonel White is a man ahead of his time because he wears

the D. S. O. - introduced in 1886.

On pages 7 and 8 we have the comic strip, 'Mick Muggins, Britain's Worst Boxer.' He's a likeable pug who gets K. O'd every week, but somehow he and his trainer-manager George Barnes manage to make a living.

Starting on page 10 is the new story, 'The Congo Canary.' It's about 4,000 words long and is a lighthearted yarn about a veteran hunter, Jim Harrison. I have a feeling that this story might be a reprint, in which case Jim's a veteran in more ways than one. In any case his habit of wearing a doeskin waistcoat puts him in the Allan Quatermain class.

Jim's in trouble. The same trouble that every safari I've ever been on runs into. You waken up in the morning to find that the trackers, the bearers and all the stores have disappeared. If I had five New Pence for every time that's happened to me I should be a rich man.

However, Jim does a service to Rumtapa, witch doctor chief of the cannibal Barambos, and Rumtapa is so grateful he gives Jim a magic ostrich.

Jim is inclined to look the gift bird in the bill and tries to get rid of it. He christens the creature Caruso because its call consists of two honks and a whistle.

But Caruso won't leave Jim and when the veteran hunter finds out that the ostrich has not only brought with it half the treasures of the Barambo, but can catch small game and carry him on its back he decides that the Congo Canary is an asset.

On page 13 we once again take up the saga of 'Braddock - Master of the Air.' In about 3,750 words ex-steplejack Sergeant Matt Braddock, V. C. is currently helping the Yanks in their Pacific war against the Japs. In this episode he fits his brand new Mosquito with a six pounder gun, shoots down a Zero and blasts a Kaya class destroyer.

"Steam gushed from the ship amidships.

"I yelled that he must have got the boiler.

"'Yep, either that or the main steam pipe,' roared Braddock."

Then he makes a hazardous landing on Midway Island.

Now, this is a reprint. The last time Braddock went through all these actions was on 30th June, 1956. Now he's going through it all over again for new generation of readers.

The Braddock stories are always packed with expertise. Aeroplanes are carefully described, we're told what sort of engines powered them, what speed they could do at what height, how they compared with similar machines in other air forces.

The writer seems just as much at home with the ships of the U. S. Navy and a few weeks ago he described the fuelling of an aircraft carrier at sea in great detail. It seemed authentic enough to me. Twenty-six years ago I was on a warship that was refuelled at sea and I've only the vaguest memories of the operation. Sergeant George Bourne, who always writes the Braddock stories, knows a lot more about it than I do.

As a character Braddock himself has hardly developed since his earliest days. He's tough, taciturn and hawk-eyed enough to see planes before they turn up on other fellows' radar screens. He doesn't like authority, he's as solemn as a coffin lid and he's always right.

Still, when Braddock's about there's always action.

On page 19 there's a serial school story. No-one in it says, "I say you fellows," no-one rags anyone else's study, no-one nips off for a quiet smoke in the old grey cloisters. This is a Rover school and they were never what you'd been brought up to expect. This particular school is in fact an approved school and the story's title is 'His Number's 99.' Our hero, who has the truly heroic name of Jim Hawkins, is number 99 in Drake House.

Jim lad is a hard case - although decent enough at bottom - and when he's encouraged by Mr. Patch, the school drill master, he takes up boxing. He is entered for the A. B. A. Championships and, in this week's episode - after we've been agonising over whether Jim really is an amateur, having earned a bob or two fighting at a fun fair boxing booth - a change comes over Jim. "He wanted . . . . to box cleanly . . . . and, for the first time in his life, he blushed."

The reformatory background may or may not be authentic. Ashfield Approved School is run on military lines. Bugles and whistles are for ever blowing. They even blow whistles at dinner time. First of all the 400 lads stand behind their forms, then the dining hall master waits for them to shut up, then he says grace and then he blows a whistle. Talk about old time religion.

"All the boys jumped over their wooden seats, sat down and snatched forward at the piles of bread."

But all the masters are good men. There's no nonsense about them but they understand juvenile delinquents and most of the bad lads respect them. Jim gets over the wall nearly every week for his own good reasons and the authorities always find out, but no action seems to be taken. They're a lot more understanding than Quelch ever was with Vernon-Smith.

There's a lot of expertise in this story too. I reckon that after reading it over the last few weeks I've learnt enough about boxing to enter for the A. B. A. Championships myself, so, if there's a short, over age, over weight contestant in next year's finals, don't be surprised.

Pages 25 to 29 are taken up with this week's 'Send for Sergeant Morgan.' (4,500 words.)

Morgan is a World War II Welsh Guardsman - immaculate and two yards high the way guardsmen should be. He's never with his own unit. He's a trouble-shooter, a khaki clad detective. Speaks German, Arabic - and Welsh, I suppose - and like Braddock is an expert on matters military.

In this week's episode our lads are trying to take 'Castel di Monte in the wilds of the Italian Appenine Mountains.' The place is being held by the 3rd Fallschirmjaegers, so we have a tough fight on our hands.

Hauptmann Linder is firing his mortars from hidden gun pits in the rubble of the old fortress when he becomes aware that things are not as they should be. There's poison gas in the air. Chlorine! The British swine are using filthy, poison gas!

But, of course, we wouldn't do a thing like that. But how can we prove it to Linder?

Send for Sergeant Morgan.

Morgan disguises himself as a German engineer officer, gets into the fortress, reports to Linder - who throughout is depicted as a decent honourable soldier doing a good job - there's none of the brutal, square headed Hun about him - and solves the mystery.

It was all the fault of the Eye-ties: Sometime after the Abyssinian War of 1935 - 36 they'd stored their chlorine gas in the cellars of the fortress. Being Eye-ties they hadn't thought to mention it to their German allies. All unknowing Linder has sited his mortars somewhere above the cellars. Every time his nebelwerfers go off the vibration causes a certain amount of gas to leak from the tanks. It's as simple as that.

It all ends happily. The Germans abandon the fortress, our lads take it and Morgan gets a medal - "awarded only to German paratroops for valour in the face of the enemy."

It's the story I enjoyed most in this week's issue. Morgan always has a mystery to solve midst shot and shell, the mysteries are always mysterious and the explanations are always ingenious.

The last story (about 2,000 words) is on pages 30 and 31. It's a straight forward tale of cops and robbers and is called 'What made the Cop stop?'

It's in the classic short story form as we understood it in the 20's and 30's. It's cleverly written and there's a neat twist towards the end. Flash Harry, Fred and Ted have committed the perfect bank robbery and yet they're arrested by a young p.c. before they can get away.

Flash had left the get-away car's engine running while he was being handed the bag of bank notes and the policeman got them for that. The moral of the story is

"It is an offence to leave a car engine running whilst the driver is away."

So that's this week's Rover.

Oh, I forgot - at the top of each page there's the usual encapsulated irrelevant information. The one I like best this week is at the top of page 14 - 'Jigsaw puzzles were invented by a convict.'

There's no doubt about it. Reader Waller's right. At 2½p a copy the Rover really is value for money.

I look forward to next week's Rover.

\* \* \* \* \*

St. Frank's sends compliments of the season to its faithful followers and wishes you all the very best for 1973.

# A GREYFRIARS CALENDAR

by Les Rowley

Being a Diary of a Year  
That Never Was Kept

The rain spattered against the windows and made the small room feel less remote from the world outside. I was tired of contemplating the white ceiling and the single light shade suspended from it. If only my books were by my side instead of being miles away at home. Then I could lose myself in the many tales of Greyfriars and a charm that had existed since boyhood.

The post had brought the current issue of Collectors' Digest and I had read it through from end to end but as usual there was not enough! The articles the magazine contained had only served to whet my appetite an appetite that would have to wait.

The 'Digest' had fallen open at a page on which Roger Jenkins was enquiring "Do You Remember?" I wondered just how much I did remember and was soon lost in speculation to which was soon added a flight of fancy. What would be happening at Greyfriars if those marvellous stories had continued through to the present day and beyond? It was an interesting exercise and, whilst no substitute for the real thing, worth recording. What follows is a transcript of a tape I made that rainy afternoon with no other aids but memory and imagination . . . .

## JANUARY

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" A voice that Stentor of old might have envied but which belonged to an exuberant Bob Cherry, heralded the arrival of the train at Courtfield Junction. That flaxen haired member of the Famous Five leaned out of the carriage window as the train steamed to a standstill.

"Less noise, there, Cherry," came the magisterial voice of Coker of the Fifth. "You fags are a disgrace to the . . . ."

Bob Cherry reached, and before Coker realised what was happening, his silk hat was sent flying from his head. For a brief moment it was airborne, but, as the law of gravity so ably demonstrated by Sir Isaac Newton asserted itself, the topper finally came to earth - at the feet of Temple, Dabney and Fry who promptly proceeded to play football with it. They disappeared up the platform with Coker in hot pursuit.

Sighting his friends in the distance, Bob Cherry hastened to join them. They had spent the vac together at Wharton's place in Surrey but the last few days of the holiday had seen them scattered to their own homes in other parts of the country.

To Bob's surprise his pals had another fellow with them. A rather handsome lad with a cheery face and humorous, sparkling eyes. As he was dressed in the School uniform and as Bob had never seen him before it seemed that this was one of those peculiar creatures - a new boy.

"Who's the stranger?" Bob enquired.

"Oh, some innocent babe we met on the train and who we decided to take under our care," laughed Harry Wharton. "Meet Ronald Skinner!"

"S-s-Skinner. No relation to Harold of that ilk, I suppose?" Certainly the happy, cheerful countenance before him bore no resemblance to the rather narrow and spiteful features of Harold Skinner of the Remove.

"Sort of cousin twice removed," smiled the new boy in reply. "Harold is a distant relative but we haven't seen each other for years, and, if I recall correctly, we don't have much in common."

Bob Cherry looked from one to the other of the faces of his four closest friends. They grinned back and in that grin Bob read approval of Ronald Skinner - an approval that the Famous Five had certainly never bestowed on his namesake.

He linked arms with the others and they made their way through the boisterous throng of schoolboys making their way toward the ticket barrier.

"I say, you fellows!" The stout form of Billy Bunter pushed its way toward the. "I say, I've lost my ticket. What's going to be done?"

"British Rail, I should think, knowing you," grunted Johnny Bull. "Come on you chaps. Can't be late for Roll on first day of term."

(from the "Skinner's Cousin" Series)

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## FEBRUARY

"Great Pip!"

"How does he do it?"

"Mobby to the life!"

"The Mobbyfulness is terrific!"

Wibley almost allowed himself to smirk. Praise was food and drink to that particular Removite, but Wib' was playing a part and was too good an actor to do anything out of character.

"My dear Ponsonby," he had Mr. Mobbs' falsetto voice to a 't'. "My dear Ponsonby, this will not do. You promised me an introduction to your uncle the Duke and it has failed to materialise. You will take five hundred lines, my dear Ponsonby, and bring them to me before tea."

"But Wib, you can't walk into Highcliffe like that. It's too risky, besides . . ." began Harry Wharton.

"Of course I can walk into Highcliffe dressed as Mobby. I could walk into the House of Commons dressed as Edward Heath or Harold Wilson and nobody would spot the difference." Modesty was not one of Wibley's besetting sins!

"Gee whiz."

"And when I get there," continued Wibley, "when I get there I'll teach that cad such a lesson that he'll think twice about setting on a chap three to one. Pon's my target but Monson and Gadsby will get their share!" The schoolboy actor picked up an ashplant, "All three of you will bend over. You first, Ponsonby!" Wibley had retreated into his "Mobby" character again.

The Famous Five chuckled. The mere thought of Wibley entering Highcliffe in the guise of Mr. Mobbs almost took their breath away. If it came off it would be the jape of the term. But the 'if' was a very big 'if' indeed. Perhaps they did not share to the full the enormous amount of confidence that Wib' had in his own ability!

Tap!

"Come in, fathead!" called Wib' in his natural voice.

The door opened. Mr. Quelch stood on the threshold.

"Wibley! You have not brought me your lines. If you have not finished them . . ." Mr. Quelch paused. As Wibley of his form had answered his knock he expected to see that member of his form in the study. Instead he saw Harry Wharton & Co. and a Highcliffe master - a master whom he disliked intensely! He proceeded to enquire.

"Mr. Mobbs," he asked in a voice that seemed to come from the depths of a refrigerator. "Mr. Mobbs, what business brings you to Greyfriars and to this study of a boy of my form?"

Wibley took a deep breath.

(from "Wibley's Wonderful Wheeze")

\* \* \* \*

## MARCH

"Well?"

It was one of those rare occasions when Mr. Quelch did not really mean what he said. He said "Well" but that was merely a figure of speech. The expression on his face as he confronted Fishy indicated that things were far from well.

"Well -."

The sly American brain of the transatlantic junior was working overtime. Fishy didn't mean to give in without a fight. The profits from his one-armed bandit already exceeded the initial outlay by several pounds thanks to the adjustments that had been made to the mechanism that spun the colourful miscellany of fruit symbols. He shuddered when he thought of what would happen to those profits if Quelch became aware of their existence.

"I kinder reckon there's no harm done . . ."

"Fish, listen to me." Mr. Quelch's voice was deep but not loud. "Unless

you have something to say in mitigation of your offence I shall order the destruction of this wretched machine . . . ."

"Ow."

". . . . and will take you to your Headmaster and demand your immediate expulsion . . . ."

"Wow."

". . . . and will recommend to him that he administer a severe flogging before your departure . . . ."

"Wow."

Mr. Quelch beckoned to Wingate.

"Wingate, kindly arrange for that - that contraption to be opened and any money found therein to be placed in the hospital box. The machine should then be given to Gosling to destroy with his coal hammer."

(from "Fishy's One-armed Bandit")

\* \* \* \*

## APRIL

"'Old on old covey!'"

Mr. Hacker stopped in his tracks.

A silvery shaft of moonlight emerged from behind the clouds and illuminated the unprepossessing features of Mr. Jagers. Above the stubbly chin and broken nose a pair of close set eyes glittered evilly on the Shell form-master. Hacker took a close grip on his malacca walking cane.

"Perhaps you can help a covey on his way," suggested the footpad making a menacing gesture with the heavy club in his hand. "Perhaps you might give a covey that watch and chain, perhaps you . . . ."

"I will give you nothing," answered Hacker bitterly, "Stand aside and let me pass on my way."

Mr. Jagers had chosen his venue well. At that time of night the road across Courtfield Common was deserted. There was no help at hand. No inquisitive gentleman in blue was within miles of the spot.

"Ho we'll see about that," said Mr. Jagers with confidence, his attitude becoming even more threatening. "Now look 'ere, you old bag o' bones. If you don't 'and over that watch and your pocket book I'm going to 'ave to persuade you." He swung his club to add impact to his words.

Mr. Jagers knew from experience that old coveys had a rooted objection to having their skulls cracked. His erratic and rather precarious living depended on that knowledge. But there was something that Mr. Jagers was not in a position to know!



He did not know, for instance, that a fat ventriloquist had sent Hacker on a wild goose chase from which Hacker was now returning, having had to walk many a weary mile after his humiliating reception of Redgrove Grange. He was not to know that Hacker was seething with rage and anxious - only too anxious - for an excuse to vent that rage on someone. Hacker, would, of course, have preferred that 'someone' to be the perpetrator of the hoax. But that was before the sudden advent of Mr. Jagggers. Mr. Jagggers did not know all this - but Mr. Jagggers was about to find out!

Before the footpad realised what was happening, Hacker had raised the malacca and brought it down on the battered bowler that rested on Mr. Jagggers' frowsty head.

Swipe!

All of Hacker's pent up feelings, all of Hacker's bony energy was behind that terrific swipe. The malacca broke the crown of Mr. Jagggers' headgear. By the string of oaths that went up from Mr. Jagger, it appeared that it had almost broken Mr. Jagggers' head as well!

"'Ere, give over! Let a bloke go," pleaded Mr. Jagggers.

Mr. Hacker did not give over. He followed up his advantage.

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe!

(from "The Hoaxing of Hacker")

\* \* \* \*

## MAY

"Silly lot of fatheads!"

Thus Horace James Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars School.

Sad to relate, Coker was referring to Her Majesty's Government in Parliament assembled. For good measure and because he was non-partisan in such matters Coker generously included Her Majesty's Opposition as well.

Coker had little time for politicians. Normally they were beneath his lofty consideration and on those rare occasions when Coker accorded them his consideration Coker found them sadly lacking. What they lacked most of all, in Coker's opinion was a leader and Coker's appreciation of a leader was someone cast rather in the mould of the great Horace himself.

"Bumbling lot of foozlers!"

For once Coker was considering politicians.

It was highly probably that the Prime Minister had never heard of Coker. And if he had it is doubtful whether he, in his turn, would have considered Coker. After all, no one man can consider everything. It was well known that the P.M. would consider an organ console or even a full orchestra. It was known, too, that he would consider a fine sailing yacht and his chances of the Admiral's Cup. But consider Coker? No!

Likewise the Leader of the Opposition, as he puffed contentedly at his pipe and

thought of the next Five Year Plan that would be executed under his leadership when his party was returned to power, and as he considered his chances thereof, considered many things. But Coker. No!

For once, however, Coker was considering them.

Before him lay a copy of the 'Daily Wail,' the political columns of which Coker had been perusing. He had found the going difficult for not only had the reporter used several words of more than one syllable but the subject of the debate had been complicated. The business of the House had been Britain's entry into the Common Market.

Now Coker, as we have already remarked, had little time for politicians. At school he had little time for the Sixth, now he found he had little time for politicians. But least of all had Coker time for foreigners.

Coker had had difficulties with foreigners. He found that they did not understand their own language - as Coker spoke it. They did not accept that Coker's disregard for their laws was right and proper. They were likely to cause him to suffer great indignity such as that time when a group of gendarmes had arrested Coker in Paris.

Coker was British. And because Coker was British there was no other nation worth its salt. Had Coker been French then the same would have been true of the French and the same line of reasoning applied to any other nation. It was just their loss that Coker was not of them and they were not of Coker.

But we digress. Coker was considering politicians.

"Stupid lot of idiots!"

(from "Coker's Common Market")

\* \* \* \*

## JUNE

He turned off the main footpath and took a direction that would lead him deeper into Friardale Wood. The branches of the trees reaching above him all but cut off the rays of the setting sun. It had been a warm day even for June, but the night was coming with a coolness which only added to the chill of fear that he already felt.

In his pocket were two five pound notes that were not his. His conscience - never a strong one - told him that what he had done amounted to theft. Try as he could he failed to convince himself that the money was only borrowed and that he would be able to replace it long before Mauleverer missed it from his study.

Mr. Lodgey had arrived early to keep his appointment with the wretched Hazeldene. He stood, with his back to a tree the purple smoke from a cheap cigar rising hazily about him.

"Good evening, Master Hazeldene!" He looked at the junior enquiringly, there was something about the boy's demeanour that he could not place. "I take it you've come to settle. I've had some 'ard luck myself so the money'll come in useful. A tenner I think it was."

Hazel looked at the bookie. Perhaps he had hoped - even at this late minute - that Lodgey would agree to waiting for his money. Now it was obvious that that hope was ill-founded. He had to settle with the man or face exposure and expulsion from

the School. Slowly he took his hand from his pocket. In it was clenched the money he had taken. A moment later it had changed hands.

"Now give me my I. O. U.," he breathed.

Mr. Lodgey pocketed the two notes but he seemed in no hurry to hand over the incriminating piece of paper.

"No 'urry Master Hazeldene," he took another puff at his cigar. If a school-boy could get hold of ten pounds Mr. Lodgey reckoned that he could get hold of more, much more. "I reckon that there pice of paper is worth more than a tenner. Maybe twenty or even fifty quid. Perhaps as 'ow you've got some more about you now. If so, hand it over . . . ."

"T-that's all the money I have. I have paid you what I owe now give me my I. O. U. and let's have done with you . . . ."

"Done with me? 'Ave you now?" Mr. Lodgey adopted an even more menacing attitude. "I reckon that your 'eadmaster would be mighty interested in that piece of paper. Of course I don't mean to be 'ard. You just trot along 'ere on Saturday afternoon with another ten quid and all will be well. But if you don't. Well I reckon that . . . ."

There came a sudden interruption!

(from "His Sister's Burden")

\* \* \* \*

## JULY

Mr. Prout stirred himself from his armchair with reluctance. It was a substantial armchair - it had to be to accommodate Prout. To the Fifth Form master it was more than a piece of furniture, it was an old and trusted friend.

In that chair Prout had taken his post-dinner nap for more years than perhaps he cared to recall. In that chair Prout had smoked innumerable cigars; toasted his toes against the fire in winter or cooled his brow in summer. In it he had dreamed dreams of a distant past when, if Prout was to be believed, Prout had been a fearless hunter in the Canadian Rockies. In it he had dreamed of an elusive headmastership which Prout felt - if no-one else did - should have been his reward long, long ago. Ture, Prout had held an acting position on occasions when Dr. Locke had been absent but Prout preferred not to remember those occasions - neither, did it seem, did the Governing Board!

That chair had shared all Prout's confidences. It had listened, in silent sympathy, to his mutterings about that obtuse member of his form Horace Coker. It had shared, in an equally silent fashion, Prout's suspicions of two members of his form, Hilton and Price. It had supported Prout in those long winded perorations which had bored any member of the staff that he had managed to entice into the study for a chat.

Prout sighed. The passing years had not eased the effort that it took him to rise from his old and trusted friend. But the sigh was not entirely one of exertion; not solely one of effort. It was, in the main, a sigh of reluctance such as comes when friend must part from friend!

Yes, Prout was reluctant to leave that chair - just as he had been reluctant to leave it at all those times that had gone before.

Prout would probably have been even more reluctant if he had been aware that this parting was to be the final one! But Prout was ignorant of what evil designs were afoot. Designs that were to rob him for all time of that old and trusted friend, his armchair.

He reached for his mortar board and placed it on his shiny bald pate. He shook the folds of his gown and adjusted the sleeves. He was once again a picture of dignified corpulence!

He walked to the door with the majestic tread that was almost his trade mark. Before he stepped into the passage he turned and gave one last regretful look at the armchair.

Then he rolled on, blissful, in his ignorance, of the fate that was about to fall upon that old, that trusted, that most faithful of his friends!

(from "Prout Pays the Piper")

\* \* \* \*

## AUGUST

"More Lemonade, anyone?"

"The more Lemonade is terrific!"

"Pass the jolly old glass."

The little party of Removites were in happy mood. The yacht, "Golden Spray" was making good speed down the Channel. A few short hours ago they had said their farewells to relatives and friends and their cruise to the Mediterranean had begun.

Besides Lord Mauleverer, whose uncle had provided the yacht and who had planned the cruise, there were the Famous Five, Herbert Vernon-Smith and his chum Tom Redwing and Redwing's father who had charge of the party.

It was eleven o'clock on a fine sunny morning. The sea was as calm as a millpond. The boys had just come down from the deck and were taking some light refreshment whilst considering what to do for the rest of the day. The saloon rang with the sound of cheerful chatter and happy laughter.

"Jolly good idea of Mauly's uncle!"

"Much better than lessons with Quelch."

Bob Cherry rose, a glass of lemondade held aloft. "Gentlement of the Remove, a vote of thanks to Mauly's uncle!"

The boys raised their glasses and drunk the toast to their benefactor. Possibly Sir Reginald Brooke would have been flattered had he been there.

"Anything to oblige," responded Mauly. In his guardian's absence he felt that some reply was due from him.

"Just fancy," observed the Bounder, "no more grinding out construe; no more maths with Lascelles; no more Roman history with Quelch; but best of all no more William George Bunter!"

His companions chuckled. Billy Bunter was more to be honoured by his absence than by his presence.

"I dare say the purser would be relieved. The ship's prog wouldn't be safe with Bunter around. There's nine of us and ten crew. Food for nineteen is hardly enough for one Bunter."

"I wonder where the fat cormorant is now. Probably entertaining one of the

princes at 'Bunter Court.'"

"More probably trying to stick someone for the hols. Thank goodness the podgy scrounger didn't stick to us."

"The thankfulness is the proper caper, as the . . . ."

"I say you fellows!"

Eight heads turned in sudden amazement. They knew that voice!

(from the "Golden Spray" series)

\* \* \* \*

## SEPTEMBER

"Ware Beaks!"

"Man the giddy barricades!"

Dr. Savage strode up the corridor leading to the Remove dormitory, his gown billowing behind him, a birch clenched almost convulsively in his right hand. Behind him, somewhat reluctantly, followed Loder, Carne and Walker - the only prefects upon whose services he could rely. Further behind, and even more reluctantly, trailed Gosling the porter and Mible the gardener, the former carrying a ladder and the latter dragging a hose.

"Stand by to repel boarders."

"Here, let me get him with this rotten orange!"

The temporary headmaster of Greyfriars approached the barricade but halted at a respectful distance. Very much he did not want the rotten orange, but he was determined to bring the present state of rebellion to an end and was prepared to go to any lengths to achieve that object.

"Listen to me," he demanded, "this riot must cease. Wharton, Nugent, Bull, Huree Singh, Cherry, Vernon-Smith will pack their bags and be prepared to leave the School this morning. The remainder will report to my study for a severe flogging."

"Got it, Savage old bean!" came the voice of the Bounder, his hand raised in preparation to throw the decaying orange.

"Silence, Vernon Smith! You no longer belong to this School. You are expelled. You will . . . ."

Whizz! The orange flew with unerring aim.

"Hurrgh! Groo-ooh!" Every bullet has its billet and the orange found its way to Dr. Savage's mouth and lodged there, cutting him off in mid-speech.

"Plenty more where that came from."

"Hoof it, Savage. You're not wanted here!"

The Head's complexion rivalled that of a turkey cock. He choked not only with orange but with rage. He backed hurriedly and joined the three prefects who were waiting on the sidelines as it were.

"Loder, Carne, Walker!" he almost babbled. "Don't stand there doing nothing. Remove that furniture. You have my permission to thrash every boy into submission. I expect my prefects to assert the authority I have placed in them. Otherwise they will no longer remain prefects."

The prefects looked at each other. For long they had enjoyed the privileges of their position. But under Dr. Locke the going had been easy. Under Dr. Savage things had changed. They looked at the barricade and the host of Removites behind it

most of whom were brandishing cricket bats, cricket stumps, hockey sticks and other weapons. They did not like what they saw!

"We resign, Sir!" they said in one voice.

(from the "Savage Rebellion" series)

\* \* \* \*

## OCTOBER

The Bounder entered the study, quietly closing the door.

"You sent for me, Loder?"

"Yes, Vernon-Smith, I sent for you," Loder could hardly keep a note of gloating from creeping into his voice. "It's the sack for you, my pippin! I've waited a long time for this chance and at last it has come. Greyfriars will be all the better without you. You've sailed pretty near to the wind many times and still managed to scrape through. But this time . . ."

The Bounder faced the Sixth-form prefect with a coolness that Loder couldn't understand.

"Think so, Loder?" Vernon-Smith replied with a calm insolence that made Loder feel a trifle uneasy. "Too jolly bad that you are about to be disappointed. Of course, you can go to Quelch - or the Head for that matter - and say that you saw me coming out of the gate of the "Three Fishers." Maybe, you'll be believed - it's your word against mine . . ."

"That chicken won't fight," snarled Loder. "With your record it's the high jump. What chance do you think your word has against that of a prefect?"

"On it's own, very little chance indeed," calmly admitted the Bounder. "But you see, my word will not be entirely unsupported. I shall tell the beaks that you are accusing me to save your own skin. They'll be jolly interested that one of the jolly old prefects, a trusted member of the high and mighty Sixth, makes regular visits to the "Three Fishers" and that when he is found out by a little innocent like me," a smile played on his lips, "that the prefect makes accusations when he cannot prove . . ."

"You're forgetting one thing," hissed Loder, "you've got no proof either. Do you think that Quelch or Dr. Locke would listen to such a story for one moment. You'd probably earn yourself a flogging in addition to the sack. If that's what you want, go ahead. I'll be there when Gosling takes you up!"

"D'you know, Loder, you're rather rich. Too bad I've got to wake you up from such a beautiful dream." The Bounder took a folded paper from his jacket pocket. "If I go, Loder, then I go in company. How d'you fancy catching the early train home yourself? For you can take it as a dead cert that you will once the Head sees this . . ."

He held the paper in front of him. Even from where he stood Loder could recognise his own hand writing. It was the I. O. U. that he had given Joey Banks the night before. He knew the Bounder's game now. He could not - he dare not - haul the Removite in front of the Headmaster whilst that incriminating piece of evidence remained in existence.

"Like to think again, Loder?" the Bounder mockingly enquired, "or shall we toddle off to the Head. I'm willing to take a chance - after all I can claim to have been led astray by a bigger rascal than myself, and I stand a chance of getting off with a flogging. But for you there is no chance at all. How about it Loder?"

"Get out!"

(from "Bounder versus Bully")

NOVEMBER

Slap!

Frank Nugent reeled back, his hand going instinctively to the cheek on which Wharton's blow had landed.

"That for your friendship," sneered Wharton. "In future I shall take greater care in whom I chose to make my friend. I shall make sure, for one thing, that it is someone who can take my word; and for another I'll be certain that he isn't a chap who is going to accuse me of pub-crawling and smoking and betting on horses." He turned and swung away down Friardale Lane, leaving his former chum rooted to the spot.

The dusk was already thickening and the road was deserted but the ex-Captain of the Remove paid no heed to the lengthening shadows and the air of solitude. Wild thoughts ran through his head as he strode angrily on. Now all the school was against him. The master who had trusted him; the form that had followed his lead; even his friends, even Nugent who had befriended him on his first day at Greyfriars and with whom he had shared so much.

All that was over! And who was to blame? As he asked himself that question the inner bitterness that he felt answered it for him. They were to blame. He was the same person they had all trusted last term; what had made them turn against him now? What had earned for him his present bad reputation - so bad, indeed, that the Bounder despised him.

Wharton reached the seat under the great oak and flung himself angrily upon it. In front of him, in the distance, glimmered the lights of the village; behind him the dark of evening had already swallowed the outlines of the school at which he had known such happiness, at which he had shown such promise. Already the school would be assembling for Roll and Prout's voice would be heard booming out each name. Wharton smiled sardonically. Old Pompous could call until he was blue in his fat face.

The night, already cold was growing colder. Now that he had left the School he had to find some alternative shelter for the night. His thoughts turned to home. But Wharton Lodge was too far to reach that night. Besides what would his uncle and aunt say? The grizzled old colonel who had faced the perils of the Somme would have little time for a headstrong nephew who had run away from School. 'Run away,' he muttered to himself. From what was he running? The injustice of a form-master and the duplicity of his friends? Certainly not the colonel, nor even Aunt Amy who always took his part, would believe that of a master that was just and friends that were loyal.

For a moment a vague and fleeting doubt entered his mind. Could it be he, and not they, who was in the wrong? Had his temper and pride played their part in his downfall? It was too late to think of that now; and now that it was too late he was thinking of it.

(from the third "Wharton the Rebel" series)

\* \* \* \*

DECEMBER

"Beasts!"

William George Bunter made that observation with emphasis, but he made it

to himself as he crawled, with all the speed of a tired and weary snail, up the drive of Wharton Lodge.

The train on which Bunter had travelled had been subject to a railway 'work to rule' and it had deposited him cold and hungry - very cold and very hungry - at Wimford station well after the witching hour of midnight.

With his usual casual disregard for such trivialities, Bunter had dispensed with the formality of purchasing a ticket. He belonged to that fraternity which believed all regions of British Rail fair game for free transport. He was, in short, a bilk - the sworn enemy of all servants of rail transport.

The solitary official on duty at Wimford station had displayed that enmity when Bunter had failed to produce his ticket. Because of the lateness of the hour and perhaps because he preferred to continue his 'work to rule' during normal hours, the official had not detained Bunter. He had, instead, seized the fat owl by the neck, spun him round on his fat axis and assisted him halfway up Wimford High Street with several kicks on a fat rear.

A more considerate guest, let alone an uninvited one, might have given some thought and consideration to his hosts when arriving unheralded and unsung at two in the morning. Bunter had no time for this; he was accomplished both at arriving late and arriving uninvited. Any thought and consideration that Bunter had was fully directed at William George Bunter himself!

"Beasts!"

Bunter climbed, exhausted, up the steps and into the porch. In the darkness his fingers sought and found the door bell and the next instant its strident peals could be heard echoing in the distance.

Bunter waited impatiently. He pulled the bell again - and again.

After what seemed ages he heard the sound of footsteps, the drawing of bolts, and the door was opened slowly. On the threshold, holding a candle aloft, stood the portly form of Wells the butler clad in night attire.

The fat Removite fixed Wells with an indignant stare.

"You've kept me waiting, Wells. I shall have to speak to Wharton about this and ask him to get his uncle to sack you!"

Wells surveyed the unexpected visitor but made no move to admit him.

"Indeed, sir! I am very much obliged I am sure sir!"

This was sark! Bunter's face took on an aggressive look. He would show this insolent menial who was master - later, when he had had a hot meal and had toasted his fat toes before a cosy fire.

"Enough, Wells. Wake up those other beasts and tell them I am here and get me something to eat - a chicken or two, a few pies, a cake perhaps . . ."

"If you are referring to Master Harry and his friends," said Wells impeturbably, "I am unable to comply with your request as they are not here . . ."

"N-n-not here?" stuttered Bunter, "what do you mean Wells? If they are not here then where are they? And what about the old fossils? Tell Colonel Wharton that I am here and sharp about it!"

"I am afraid that that will not be possible, sir." Wells' manner was almost as freezing as the weather. "The Colonel and Miss Wharton are spending the holidays away from home. As for Master Harry and his friends . . ."

"Yes, yes, get on with it man."



".... I am not at liberty to divulge either their whereabouts or their future plans. They had, however, foreseen the possibility of your arriving here and Master Harry instructed me to enquire from you ...."

"Yes, what?"

".... whether you had ever been had, sir!"

"Oh lor.!"

The snow that had been gently falling all day had now increased almost to blizzard proportions. A sudden swirl brought a host of dancing white flakes into the shelter of the porch. One landed on the tip of Bunter's fat nose.

Wells looked at Billy Bunter with just a touch of compassion on his otherwise expressionless features. Perhaps it was the spirit of Christmas that prompted the offer he now made.

"The weather is rather inclement, sir, and the last train will have left long ago. Young Thomas' room is aired, sir, and you are welcome to use it for the night. But I must ask that you leave after breakfast, sir."

It was on the tip of Bunter's tongue to ask what Wells meant by offering a public school man accommodation intended for a house boy. The sheer cheek of it almost took Bunter's breath away. He smothered his pride.

"Alright, Wells," he replied almost cheerfully, "you're on!"

(from "Bunter's Christmas Ghost")

\* \* \* \*

The year is ending and so is my imaginary diary. January is on the way. At Courtfield station the juniors will soon be foregathering, pausing only to kick Coker's silk hat further along the platform.

The new term will bring with it fresh adventures touched with the magic of yesterday's memories. For the characters we have loved for so long in the past will be with us in our futures for as long as we can dream and remember.

\* \* \* \* \*

BEST WISHES to Eric Fayne and all Hobby Chums not forgetting absent friends your memory will always be cherished -

MCPMAHON, HOZIER CRESCENT, TANNOCHSIDE.

=====

Yuletide Greetings and a Happy Prosperous 1973, to Editor, "Staff," Readers, Contributors and Friends everywhere (and a thought for our absent friends).

H. HOLMES, BARROW-IN-FURNESS.

=====

The Seasons Greetings to all, may there be many more. Special wishes to all new Hobbyists. Good luck. Good hunting.

LAURENCE S. ELLIOTT

=====

# PERILS OF THE FOREST. IN FROZEN SEAS.



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# How a St. Frank's story came to be written

by W. O. G. Lofts

When as far back as 1957 I wrote in an article that Fred Gordon Cook, a prolific writer of Magnet and Gem substitute stories "had written several St. Frank's tales exclusively for The Nelson Lee Library in the 1921 period," I never imagined what a controversy it would arouse. Many readers wrote me to the effect that Edwy Searles Brooks had written every St. Frank's story, whilst others - in far stronger vein - replied through the columns of the C.D. that Mr. Cook should substantiate his claim and name the actual stories in question.

On being further interviewed, Mr. Cook found it impossible to recall the titles (after all, some thirty-five years had elapsed! - during which time he had penned probably over a thousand stories of all kinds). The only thing he was certain about was that he wrote them on the instructions of W. H. Back, a director, and that he was paid for them. He also recalled that although he was well steeped in Greyfriars' and St. Jim's lore, he had never read a St. Frank's story, consequently he had to 'swot up' details of the boys and the general atmosphere of the school. He stated that as he had been paid for the stories at the time, it was logical to assume they had been published.

At a later date Edwy Searles Brooks was approached on the matter and stated, more diplomatically, that "stories were commissioned by other authors at that time (1921) but were not used in the Library. They were, however, used in other A.P. papers such as The Boys' Realm (where it had been established that substitute tales were used) and The Nugget Library.

In The Nelson Lee Library No. 66 (New Series) of April 1931, in his weekly column 'Between Ourselves,' Brooks stated that "every St. Frank's story which has appeared under my name has come from my pen." As stories had appeared anonymously in the Library, this could have been taken to imply that some had not been written by him; although in 1949 when he made his first visit to the London Old Boys Book Club, he said quite firmly that he had written every St. Frank's story which had appeared in the Nelson Lee Library.

A few years later, when I met a former sub-editor of The Nelson Lee Library, he promised to look up some old records he had of the stories, although he was certain that during his period of office, Mr. Brooks had written all the tales. The result of his search seemed to confirm this; but, above all, he completely vindicated Mr. Cook. His records showed that he had indeed written several yarns for the Library, featuring Handforth, along with such writers as E. J. Murray (better known as Sydney Drew) and Balfour Ritchie, editor of The Boys' Friend Library, but they had not been used - simply because Mr. Brooks was always well up to schedule with his stories. These substitute stories had eventually been 'written off' and were probably

destroyed during moving around of departments in the old Amalgamated Press buildings and changes in the editorship of the Nelson Lee Library.

At a later date, when engaged on a completely different project, I discovered by accident in a A. P. Juvenile Publication file, that a certain E. S. Holman had at very short notice written a story for The Nelson Lee Library. This was No. 43 in the Second New Series, in 1930, and was entitled 'Saints versus Friars.' I made several attempts to trace this mysterious Mr. Holman - who, according to my records, had not written any stories before this - and established that he could be living in the Leytonstone district. Then the trail went cold. More important research projects came up, and my search was halted, but the name of E. S. Holman remained always at the back of my mind. Obviously he would have an interesting tale to tell of how he came to write this solitary story for The Nelson Lee Library.

Whilst I have always had the greatest admiration for E. S. Brooks, I must confess that his attitude towards his old stories was, at times, baffling. On occasion he could be most charming and he did, after all, make two visits to the London Old Boys Book Club, where he impressed everybody with his friendliness and readiness to answer any questions. Yet at other times he could be most abrupt and his replies to letters were, to say the least, disconcerting! I well remember, in the early days of the hobby, sending him a copy of the Gem substitute story 'Misunderstood,' which even Roger Jenkins had praised, the identity of the substitute writer not being known. Mr. Brooks replied that "it was certainly not his, and how the blazes did I think he could possibly remember it?" Later I was able to establish from official records that he had indeed written this story. On the other hand, to be fair to Mr. Brooks, he was writing in a new adult world of fiction and it was unrewarding to him to keep dwelling on the past. It is also possible that, like Mr. Quelch at breakfast-time, he had his 'off' days.

The large amount of old manuscripts, paperback books, letters and other records, found in his attic after his death were, to a researcher like myself, equivalent to discovering Aladdin's Cave! Thanks to the generosity of the late Mrs. Frances Brooks and, on her death, to her son Lionel, all these records were made available to the London Club. This enabled Bob Blythe - that expert on Nelson Lee lore - to almost double the length of his original bibliography on Brooks; and if only this information had been made available earlier by E. S. B., it would have saved Bob and myself endless hours of research in the British Museum! Amongst the many valuable documents discovered was a personal list of all of Brooks' work in the Nelson Lee Library, and alongside the story SAINTS VERSUS FRIARS were the words: 'Not by E. S. B.'

One of the most welcome sights to come through my letter box is the monthly C.D. and the February 1972 issue was more welcome than most, for on the Letter page was the name E. S. H. Holman, writing from Leigh-on-Sea, concerning his St. Frank's story! I immediately wrote to him and through correspondence gradually learned the whole story of how he came to write this tale. And what an interesting story he has to tell!

Ernest S. H. Holman was born at Leyton in the early part of the First World War. He read all the usual juvenile papers, starting with Rainbow, Tiger Tim's

Weekly, The Wizard, Rover, etc. , before turning to the A.P. papers, around 1926. He would exchange his Magnets, Lees, Gems, S. O. L. , etc. , with other boys and - as in most places during those early days - there was usually a second-hand dealer in old books who sold Magnets for a 1d. and bought them back later at a ½d. Later, as Mr. Holman 'matured' he added Union Jack, Thriller, Sexton Blake Library to his reading. As his father was also an avid reader of all the popular magazines such as Titbits, Pearson's Weekly, Answers, Ideas, his newsagents' bill must have been large. But it seemed he raised no objection, for by that time young Ernest was in employment and paying his own way.

It must have been late 1929 or early in 1930 that a Thriller Writers' competition was inaugurated in the 'Thriller.' Ernest always wanted to write, and his English essays at school balanced the marks he lost on maths. So when the Thriller contest came up he decided to have a shot. His father bought him a second-hand typewriter and he eventually completed a 30,000-word Thriller. Details of the story are now, naturally enough, hazy in Mr. Holman's mind, although it was written in the accepted 'who-dun-it' tradition, with a Scotland Yard detective hunting down an individual known as The Jackal.

The story received neither an award nor publication, but young Ernest did receive a letter from Mr. P. Montague Haydon, the controlling editor, asking him to get in touch with him. He spoke to Mr. Haydon on the telephone (at his employer's expense!) and was asked a number of questions about what books he read. Mr. Haydon then suggested that he tried writing further and perhaps shorter stories. He did so, producing two of roughly 10,000 words each on a detective theme but they did not, alas, come up to the required standard.

In view of his interest in the school stories Mr. Haydon then suggested that he should try his hand here, and the result was 'Saints versus Friars' the title being Ernest's own and which the editor retained. Mr. Holman had no idea that a similar title had appeared in the Magnet in 1913 - before he was born! He introduced Greyfriars in 'Saints versus Friars' simply because it was his favourite school and he believed the idea to be original. He had never read of Greyfriars, St. Jim's or Rookwood characters being featured in stories of schools by writers other than Hamilton, apart of course from the recollection of Handforth moving temporarily from St. Frank's to St. Jim's, in The Gem.

After writing the above story, Mr. Holman was informed by 'Monty' Haydon, as he was affectionately known, that it was now in the hands of C. M. Down, controlling editor of the Companion papers such as Magnet, Gem Modern Boy, S. O. L. and Holiday Annual, etc. , and who had eventually taken over the Nelson Lee Library. In November 1930, there was an announcement that the next week's story in the Nelson Lee Library was called 'Saints versus Friars.' And so, on the following Wednesday, there it was in print. It was probably inserted by Hedley O'Mant, who was working under C. M. Down. Even more important was the fact that on the Friday night of that week (when there were at least six postal deliveries a day!) young sixteen-year-old Ernest S. H. Holman received a cheque for ten guineas.

At this time Mr. Holman was corresponding fairly regularly with E. S. B. - in the full flush of youthful enthusiasm he told him - about his submitted St. Frank's

Story and - about several of his activities, football, cricket, films, etc. When he heard from Haydon that his story was shortly to be published, he promptly informed Edwy how thrilled he was - and also the fact that he had received ten guineas for his story. Although Mr. Holman's memory is not very clear on this point he seems to recall that Brooks, in commenting, remarked "you must have been very thrilled."

After this, Mr. Holman had one or two attempts at Sexton Blake stories, and although they did not make the grade, 'Monty' Haydon asked him if he would be interested in joining the A. P. staff, pointing out that it would mean a lot of 'hard grind' in starting at the bottom. At that time, Ernest was in his first year of employment as a shorthand-typist and Court notetaker with a firm of London solicitors. As his interests were wide, encompassing sport as well as reading, he decided he did not want to change and eventually became a member of the teaching profession - or, as he humorously described it - 'in the chalk business.'

It was only the excellent arrival of the Howard Baker reprints which revived his interest. He had read all the various Merlin/Armada paperbacks (repeats of the S. O. L. ) but found them rather annoying, as they were obviously abridged. He was not very keen on the Bunter Books and found the St. Jim's Goldhawke Series more in keeping with the Master's old style of writing. Despite not choosing professional journalism as a career, he enjoyed writing occasionally, mainly restricted to short articles in private, amateur, educational, military magazines and broadsheets. He has often wondered whether he would have obtained the same pleasure if he had regularly written stories, and what might have happened if this particular link in his chain had been forged differently.

The true merit of Saints versus Friars (the only story which ever appeared in The Nelson Lee Library which was not from Brooks' own pen) does not really matter. The achievement of having the story published is unique, and the name of E. S. Holman played no small part in the history of the famous Nelson Lee Library.

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# HONEST JOHNNY

by Harold Truscott

One often gets the impression that Johnny Bull was either a grunting chorus to the Famous Five or, at times, a grunting or growling dissentient voice. It can be with genuine surprise that one realises that he was a member, the last to join up, of possibly the most famous group of schoolboys in fiction. When he is not grunting approval or disapproval, he seems to be mostly background. He does not, as a rule, initiate action; rather, he tends to put the brake on the actions of others; he acts as a drag. But if he is background, he is so very potently. He affects numbers of stories more than one is often aware as one reads, without doing anything very much except grunt or growl, or say "I told you so" in his infuriating way. He is, in fact, a superb example of a character playing a leading part without being a leading character;

there are other characters who fulfil a similar function in Richards' work, but none are quite so effective in this way as Johnny. However much he might seem to be superfluous (and there have been MAGNET specialists who have suggested this about him), I think one could say, in the Essex Marshland parlance that has now largely disappeared, that one would feel the miss of him if he were not there.

He made his first appearance in MAGNET No. 151, in a story peculiarly titled considering that it introduced a new and very important character; it was called THE GIRLS' SCHOOL'S CHALLENGE, and in it Johnny was found in the study playing his concertina - his first appearance. This was followed up the next week in JOHN BULL, JNR. Thereafter, apart from a story called JOHNNY BULL ON THE RUN, he settled down to his featured background role. But, in spite of expressed expert opinion as to the lack of importance

"DOWN ON THE FARM!" Amazing Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. on Holiday.

## The MAGNET<sup>2</sup>



Work & Co. on Holiday. MAGNET, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1917

of this character, I could never agree. I can recall that very early in my MAGNET reading I had a definite reaction to Johnny; in other words, my opinion of Johnny Bull goes back, in its roots, to my boyhood. I could not have put my feelings about this boy very coherently into words at that time, and I hope I can now; they have not changed much over the years, except perhaps to intensify.

A word about the Famous Five as a group. I have seen doubts raised at times as to whether boys ever do find such firm, close friendship in so large a group. Boys, it has been said, more usually hunt in couples or, at the most, in threes. There is, perhaps, some truth in this, but not enough to put such a group as the Five outside credibility. I can only speak from my own experience; I was myself a member of a group of five boys who were as nearly inseparable as the conditions of a day-school allowed. The friendship was very real and deep; two of those boys I still know, and the friendship is quite unshaken; the other two were killed during the 1939 war.

Johnny Bull's one of the few characters I've ever encountered in Frank Richards' work whom I heartily and thoroughly dislike; this feeling is so strong that I cannot believe it is inspired by an unimportant nonentity. Even the sneaks and bullies I have more patience with than I have with the Yorkshire boy. His creator often described him as being like the tyke of his native Yorkshire. Until fairly recently I had simply accepted what I had understood to be the meaning of this term - I cannot think how I got it - which is a type of mongrel dog. But recently I took the trouble to look it up in the Oxford English Dictionary, and found that its first meaning is precisely what I thought it was, except that the dictionary gives it as "cur"; the second meaning is "low fellow"; and then it adds "Yorkshire tyke - Yorkshireman," which seems a little unfair to me. I have spent the last fourteen years of my working life in Yorkshire and, although I have met a few people in this area who more or less fit this description, it is only a few; and, although it was shown differently, I have met the same qualities in people in many other parts of England.

Now, Johnny's obviously not a low fellow - but he does have one particular quality of the tyke. Like the bulldog, the tyke will hold on like grim death to whatever it fastens its teeth into, and Johnny has an equal tenacity. This tenacity, we are usually told, is an admirable quality. Richards, who seldom obtrudes himself blatantly into his stories, sits on the fence rather, but leaves one a pointer by the slightly satirical manner in which he usually mentions this one of Johnny Bull's qualities. I have some doubts, myself, as to the admirable nature of this tenacity - having met some of it. Ideally, I suppose, it is neither good nor bad, in itself. It depends entirely on what one is holding on to so determinedly; just as in these days when qualities like efficiency and tendencies like progress are repeatedly spoken of as admirable and desirable in themselves, I am spoiled enough to want to know "Efficient in what?" and "Progress to what?" I think these questions are important, their answers, which most who talk at length about these things seem very shy of stating, even more so. One can be an efficient smash-and-grab artist or an efficient basher-in of old people's brains, as well as an efficient abstracter of their money. Progress can be, and often seems to be today, to hell. Little things like this interest me. And before I praise anyone for holding on tenaciously, I want to know that is being held in such a vice-like grip. So often it turns out to be quite the wrong thing.



There have been occasions when Johnny has put a spoke in the wheel to some purpose - usually when there has been a rift in the Co. Probably the best of these, and the best known, is the second Wharton the Rebel series of the early thirties. But it is far too long for my purpose here, and so I have chosen another which I consider a very powerful piece of work on Richards' part. This is the post-war Bunter book, BILLY BUNTER BUTTS IN. In it, as in many of these post-war books, Richards is using an old plot, basically, and I know many of his admirers who do not like these books very much, mainly for this reason. I have a different view. Admitted that some of them are on the weak side - BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, for instance, which is, I think, the weakest Bunter story of any length that I have ever read, although it has some good things - the majority show most of Richards' prime qualities at their best. It has been said that there are only twelve different plots and authors have been ringing the changes on these for centuries; after all, Shakespeare was not a fount of individuality when it came to plots. Nonetheless, it is possible to give such individual twists that the result seems like a new plot. Richards' high period of such investiveness was, in my opinion, during the twenties and thirties. In the later post-war books his invention was in treatment - of character and situation, and this fascinated me just as much. I do not know of an instance of his treating the same basic plot twice in the same way. Details always differ, and mostly those details are determined by the different characters he is using.

BILLY BUNTER BUTTS IN concerns Wingate misguidedly but honestly censuring Wharton for bullying Bunter. In fact, Wharton's trying rather forcefully to prevent Bunter from taking a message to The Three Fishers for Stephen Price. But, since Wharton cannot explain this to Wingate, one can hardly blame the school captain for believing what he thinks he has seen. Wharton does not make things better by telling Wingate not to talk rot. Wharton is sent to Wingate's study and gets a stiff six. Wharton, however, chooses to believe he has been punished for nothing and it is not surprising, when he tells his pals, that they are sceptical. They are not sceptical when he tells them what he said to Wingate. They know Wharton has rather got his back up. However, they believe that it is only the punishment talking when Wharton says he is going to make Wingate sit up and they tell him not to be a chump, and try to dismiss it from their minds. Wharton hasn't forgotten it; he has decided to ship Wingate's study, and makes the attempt that evening, not successfully. So he leaves it until after lights out.

So far Richards has managed to get sympathy for Wharton, since Wingate did misjudge him, although unintentionally. But he has managed also to show Wharton in the wrong. Johnny does nothing to improve matters. One of Richards' own descriptions of him in his story is this: "Johnny did not speak again for a moment. He was a direct and plain-spoken youth, with little use for subtleties. He seldom or never spoke without thinking: but having done his thinking, he would speak what he thought: not always with happy results." This is a very subtle account, far more so than Johnny Bull could ever be, consciously - but far more to the right point than Johnny was most of the time. The punch is in the last five words, but still more in the fact that Richards has left it open whether or not what Johnny thought was right.

Wingate has his suspicions that someone is breaking out at night. He thinks it's Price. He arranges with Gwynne that they shall watch on the landing on alternate

nights, and Wingate goes first. He is sitting there in the dark when he hears a sound of a stealthy footstep. As the person is passing him Wingate grabs him, and gets knocked down for his pains. Further, he knocks his head on the oak floor as he falls and is knocked out. At a distance Wharton hears the fracas and the sound of a fall, and hurries as fast as the dark will allow him to help whoever it is. He gets there just as Wingate's coming round; the captain grabs him, convinced that he has got hold of his assailant, and when Gwynne puts on the light a moment later, to their surprise it is Wharton he has got, not Price. However, Wingate is convinced that the one he grabbed was the one who hit him, since he does not realise that he was actually unconscious for far more than a second or two. Mr. Quelch is convinced, too, when he hears what has happened, and is unmoved by Wharton's passionate denials. Naturally, Wharton has to explain the reason for his breaking dormitory bounds (although, had he been inclined, he need not have confessed to the intention of shipping Wingate's study, but could have substituted something far less serious), but continues to deny his responsibility for the more serious crime. He is taken to the punishment room, and Mr. Quelch tells the Remove in their dormitory that Wharton has punched Wingate. Many find it hard to believe, but accept it since Quelch has told them. So, too, do Wharton's pals, for the same reason, although with great dismay.

In the morning Wharton is taken to Dr. Locke. The Head withholds judgment, declaring the case to be not proven; he will wait until there is more evidence. And because of this, Wharton does not as yet receive punishment for what he has done.

Once more his own foolishness has landed Wharton in trouble, and this he realises. But he does expect his particular friends not to accept easily that he hit Wingate. Richards balances things backwards and forwards without apparent effort, and tips his readers' feelings backwards and forwards at the same time - and this is masterly story-telling.

This is the setting, then. And Wharton's pals have, however sorrowfully, so far accepted Wharton's guilt, because they believe Mr. Quelch knows what he is talking about. Only their ways of accepting it are different. Nugent is still mainly worried about Wharton:

"I-I suppose he's gone," said Bob. "They'd turf him out while we were in class, without a fuss."

"He asked for it, as hard as he could," grunted Johnny Bull.

Nugent's eyes glittered. Whether or not Wharton had 'asked for it,' all he felt was the loss of his best chum.

"You can pack that up, Bull," he snapped. "He was the best chap in the Remove, whatever he may have done when he lost his temper. If you're going to run him down like the others ...."

"Steady the Buffs," murmured Bob Cherry. "Ragging won't mend matters."

"I said that he asked for it, and you know he did, as well as I do," said Johnny Bull calmly. "But I'm as sorry as anyone that he got what he asked for. He was my pal as well as yours, Nugent."

They all accept the fact, for the moment, but Bob and Inky are depressed, Nugent positively cast down. Bull, in spite of the fact that Wharton "was my pal as well as yours, Nugent," speaks quite calmly, and is primarily concerned with maintaining the rightness of what he has said. There's a lot of his character shown in just this short speech, and the manner in which it is delivered.

Later, Wharton is waiting in his study, as the Head has told him to, when the other four come in, surprised to find him there:

"Blessed if I can make you out, Wharton," said Bob Cherry, at last. "Everyone expected the Head to come down on you like a ton of bricks."

"Why?"

"Why!" repeated Bob, blankly. "Did you say why?"

"Yes, I said why?"

"Well, if you don't know why, it's no use my telling you," said Bob, rather gruffly. "If you think that a Lower School fellow can go about punching prefects' faces, and nearly cracking their nuts, you've got something to learn."

"Harry ...!" began Nugent.

"Well?"

"We all know that you never meant to hurt Wingate as you did. Some of the fellows think that you went out of the dorm specially to get him in the dark, but we know that's all rot ...."

"Some of the fellows think that, do they?" said Wharton. "Well, it's a free country - they're welcome to think what they like."

"We know that's all rot," said Johnny Bull, "but we'd better have this clear, Wharton."

"By all means," said Wharton, agreeably, "let's have it quite clear. You haven't heard a word that I might have to say - you haven't asked me what happened - you've made up your minds without that. Go ahead and get it clear."

Up to now things have been fairly even; but Wharton has now stated enough to make one suppose that his friends at least would query what he means, even if, boy-like, they can be forgiven for having so far accepted what Mr. Quelch has told them, no matter how well they know Wharton; even at that, they were puzzled, but they did not doubt the truth of what they were told. Now, they could have done, and probably would have done, but for Johnny, concerned as usual with being right:

"All the school knows what happened," said Johnny. "We're sticking to you just the same, but if you fancy we're going to stand up for what you did, you've got another guess coming. Every man at Greyfriars is down on what you did, and we as much as anyone else. If it had been a bully like Loder, or a meddling ass like Walker, there might be some excuse, though that would have been pretty thick: but to knock out a splendid chap like Wingate, in the dark, too, was a rotten thing to do: and if you can't understand it, it's just because you won't, and don't choose to."

Wharton's lip curled.

"That's putting it clear!" he assented. "You were always the man to put things clear, Bull. You fellows all think the same?" he added, with a glance round at the other members of the Co.'

Perhaps, if Bull had not said his piece, at just the wrong moment the others would have queried their assumption of Wharton's guilt. But Bull has effectively diverted their attention to his own rightness, and Wharton now inadvertently helps him. They do not want to say it outright, but, pushed by Bull's speech and Wharton's insistence, they do, the last one and the most reluctant being Nugent:

"That's that, then," said Harry.

He stood looking at his friends, for a long moment. Then, with his hands in his pockets, he strolled carelessly to the door.

"The Head told me to stay in this study," he remarked, "but he can't want me to stay here forever. I think I'll ask Quelch." He paused in the doorway, and glanced back, with a bitter sneer on his lips. "Just a word - and we needn't trouble to speak to one another again. I never touched Wingate last night. Somebody else knocked him out, and I stumbled over him on the landing, and he grabbed me, thinking I was the man. You can believe me or not as you like - it cuts no ice with me either way."

He walked out of the study, and along the passage to the stairs: leaving a dead silence behind him in the study.'

Maully, as usual, butts in to help Wharton, having made it clear that he does not believe that Wharton did this thing:

'Wharton laughed.

"You're the only man in the Remove of that opinion, Maully," he said.

"Yaas, at present," admitted Maully. "You see, the thing seems to speak for itself - clear as daylight if there's anything in evidence. But evidence, of course, is only bunk."

Maully shook his head again. "A chap doesn't do what it isn't in him to do, and it's not in you to do a thing like this. So I've not much use for the evidence."

Maully begins to put his mind to who did do it. But a little later in the same conversation:

"I suppose it isn't much use givin' you a word of advice ...." He paused.

"Probably not, but I'll hear it, all the same."

"Well, what's the use of rowing with your friends?" said Maully. "Jolly good chaps, and ...."

"I haven't any friends in the Remove, unless you're one, Maully. Friends are fellows who stand by a man when he's down." Wharton's face set hard. "Don't say anything more about that."

Later again, the rest of the Co. are standing on the landing, wondering what to do, and again Johnny gives of his wisdom:

"Oh!" grunted Johnny. "We're to blame, are we? Did we ask Wharton to play the fool last night, and land himself in the soup? We were ready to stick to him, after what he did ...."

"He did nothing," said Frank. "He told us this morning what had happened. Don't you believe him?"

"It wants some believing," answered Johnny.

"That's rot," said Bob. "Wharton would no more tell lies than he would pick pockets, and you know that as well as we do, Johnny. It's awfully steep - but it's true."

"It's true," said Nugent. "We never knew what happened, and could only take what Quelch said - he had no doubt about it, and we supposed that he knew what he was talking about. But ...."

"Wingate got the wrong man in the dark, and Quelch could only go on what Wingate told him," said Bob. "We never dreamed ...."

"We couldn't guess all that, I suppose," grunted Johnny.

"Well, we couldn't," said Bob. "And even now, we can't expect other fellows to swallow it, if we do. We're believing what Wharton said, simply because he's our pal - not because it sounds likely."

"I know! But - we hadn't heard what he had to say, and never thought of asking him. We took it for granted, after what Quelch said, and never even fancied that Wharton might have a different version. He thinks we've let him down - and so we have."

"I don't see it," said Johnny. "I believe what Wharton said, if you come to that: though I don't expect anybody else to believe a word of it. But he brought the whole thing on himself with his silly temper, and he's only got himself to thank. He wouldn't have been on the spot at all if he hadn't gone down to ship Wingate's study - a rotten cheeky thing to do. If a fellow asks for it, it's up to him to take what he asks for, without doing a song and dance about it."

Here we have the basis of my dislike of Johnny Bull. Johnny's very grudgingly believing Wharton's explanation of the events of the previous night, although he still seesaws back and forth a bit (which is, in itself, rather surprising in a fellow who never spoke until he had thought and made up his mind), so let us see what this amounts to: a) Wharton intended to ship Wingate's study - from the official point of view, a grave offence, from the juniors' point of view, as a rule, only serious if one were caught. Prefects' studies have been shipped before. Johnny characterises it as "a rotten cheeky thing to do." But Johnny's sturdiness has not prevented him from being cheeky to prefects in the past, including Wingate; and, something which I think much more serious than shipping a prefect's study, he has taken part not only in

snowballing Gosling, the elderly porter of Greyfriars, but in rolling him in the snow, which could be serious for a man of Gosling's age. Also, it has so far been lost sight of, certainly by Johnny, and by most of the others, that the whole affair originated in a piece of injustice on Wingate's part, however unintentional; it would be interesting to know how Johnny would have reacted, had he been similarly accused of bullying. But Johnny, somehow, certainly to my very great regret, seemed never to find himself in this sort of situation; he confined himself to telling others calmly what they ought to have done: the typical armchair critic. I will agree that Wharton should, ideally, have allowed his perfectly understandable wrath to die down before he took any action against Wingate, when, of course, he would not have taken it. If this is what Johnny means by "song and dance," he is this far right, being the ideal youth he is; but, having regard to the whole set up, I think it must be taken to mean more than this - a good deal more.

b) Wharton's made no attempt to avoid just punishment for being out of his dormitory, nor has he attempted to hide what that was for. Some of the boys were not slow, of course, to point out that he had admitted to something he could not avoid, which was also less serious than the offence of which he is accused. He could not hide the fact that he was out of his dormitory, of course, but otherwise this conclusion is incorrect. Had he chosen to lie, he could have offered a reason for his absence from his dormitory far less serious than the shipping of Wingate's study.

But Johnny has now uttered the first of two key-phrases in this story: "If a fellow asks for it, it's up to him to take what he asks for, without making a song and dance about it." If one studies all of Johnny's last speech: "I believe what Wharton said, if you come to that;" etc., up to this final remark, that remark comes as something perfectly logical and certainly absolutely in character for Johnny. And yet this whole paragraph, "If a fellow asks for it," etc., is all but absolute nonsense on Johnny's part, or it is cunningly designed to push the rift still further adrift. Remember that Johnny, however grudgingly, on his own showing accepts Wharton's version. Therefore, he does not believe that Wharton hit Wingate. If we allow the tiny grain of truth in this "song and dance" reference, which concerns Wharton's initial anger over being unjustly accused, his admittedly disrespectful remark to Wingate, and his punishment, there is still much that it does not cover. Apart from this, what song and dance has Wharton made? Is Johnny also referring to the fact that Wharton has his back up because his particular friends, who know him as no-one else, except Mauly, knows him, never even questioned what they had been told, however distressed about it they may have been? British justice, we are told, always allows the accused to give his story. Wharton's back will eventually come down, we may be sure of that, but, at the moment, I think we may understand his rather inflexible attitude towards his friends; friends, he has said, "are fellows who stand by a man when he's down." These are not just words; Wharton has in the past proved his belief in them, and his right to them now. There was the occasion, for instance, when everybody, including Nugent, from whom the postal order was stolen, and, of course, sturdy Johnny Bull with his tenacious grip, believed Bob Cherry guilty of theft, so that Bob was expelled. Everybody except Wharton and Mark Linley, that is. But Linley, loyally believing in Bob, was stumped and simply did not know how to begin to prove his friend's innocence. Wharton was away on a week's

leave at the time this happened, but when he got back and found Bob thrown out, he simply said, in effect, "Rubbish!" and got to work, with Marky, to get to the bottom of it, which he succeeded in doing, against uphill opposition, from Nugent as strongly as from anyone. So that he has a right to say what friends are. Other than this, what is there to justify Johnny's remark? Wharton's denied that he hit Wingate, truthfully, as we know, and as a result the Head has stayed execution, pending investigation. The only sense, other than that I have already discussed, that I can make of that final speech of Johnny's is that since Wharton got himself accused through his admittedly foolish behaviour, he should naturally and quite calmly admit to doing what he did not do and take the appropriate punishment - a Head's flogging at the least, expulsion at the most. From its very position, not only in the discussion as a whole, and its position in that final speech of Johnny's, it seems to me that this remark means all of this - as it comes it gathers up the whole of this implication and dumps it in our lap; it is inescapable. And, this being so, its meaning is far more unreasonable than any conduct of Wharton has been as yet.

"I'm a bit fed-up," says Johnny a little later. It does not occur to this pillar of Yorkshire righteousness that it is he, now, more than anybody, who is widening the rift. His sole contribution has been to maintain his dignity, his hardheaded common-sense and divert the others from any possibility of getting things straight, as well as very reluctantly saying that he believes Wharton's explanation, but still talking on the basis that it is too steep to believe, and generally suggesting that he does not really believe Wharton. He has also strongly suggested that, having got himself, through his own folly, into a position where he is accused of a serious misdemeanour (which carries very serious consequences and of which Wharton is innocent), Wharton should accept the blame and the punishment presumably to save Johnny Bull any further trouble - "If a fellow asks for it, it's up to him to take what he asks for, without doing a song and dance about it." What else can this mean? He has previously said in the same speech "I believe what Wharton said," however equivocal he may be about this, so what can he mean by "what he has asked for" but the trouble Wharton is in? It cannot mean what Wharton intended to do in Wingate's study, or the fact that he was out of his dormitory, for Wharton has made no secret of his intention, nor has he made any "song and dance" about it. It cannot, now, fairly be held to concern Wharton's initial wrong step over Wingate's punishing him, for what is before the Co. now is Wharton's back up - this is what Johnny is a "bit fed-up" about. But Johnny, sturdy Johnny, surely believes in justice? And what justice have either he or the others given Wharton? The "song and dance" can, must, now, only refer to Wharton's repeated denials of any guilt in the matter of Wingate's being punched; and to Wharton's somewhat inflexible attitude towards his pals' failure to be pals. Maybe it is this, really, that niggles at the back of Johnny's mind, and causes him to assert his rightness so strongly and calmly and confidently - the outward confidence against the inward feeling of inadequacy, which is gall to him? The others do not fail to admit that they have failed; Johnny is the one who finds it, not difficult, but impossible, to admit this. And this is a fundamental weakness of character. The whole implication of Bull's speech is that Wharton should stop protesting his innocence, even though he is innocent, take the consequences for what he did not do, and allow Johnny Bull to be comfortable. And we may remember that this is not the only occasion when Johnny has stood in this place and played this same cool, calm, judicial

part. It has happened innumerable times; he has been wrong innumerable times, with the same air of being right, and he has never once admitted that he was wrong. He simply switches opinions, and clings as tenaciously to the new one.

This is why I dislike Johnny Bull. This selfishness, this preoccupation with his being right and his own comfort, is usually the implication behind his "common-sense." His entire conduct of these scenes with Nugent and the others has been to bully them into agreeing with him and, intentionally or not, to widen the rift between these four and Wharton. Johnny is no bully: that is, he does not bully physically. He does it in this way. Also, his reliability has a breaking-point, and here it is: Mauly insists on trying to get Wingate to consider the possibility of someone other than Wharton being responsible for the blow. He gets six for cheek, but what he says lodges in Wingate's mind. It occurs to him that possibly the bound breaker he was trying to catch may after all have come down that night. At any rate, he lets it be known that if the culprit, supposing that he is other than Wharton, will own up he (Wingate) will do his best to get the punishment remitted. At this, Price plucks up courage to confess:

"We never thought of Price," Bob Cherry was saying. "We might have ...."

"Just the sort!" grunted Johnny Bull.'

He has been quite convinced that Wharton, his friend, who he knows is most definitely not "the sort," has done this thing, he is very grudging in his acceptance of Wharton's version of what happened, but when he learns that it was Price, as different a fellow for the worse in every respect from Wharton as he could be, who is not only the sort to do just this thing but also to allow a fellow he knows, for the best possible reason, is innocent, to be accused in his place - when Johnn learns that it was this fellow who delivered this ugly and cowardly blow he says (or, rather, grunts) "Just the sort!" Wharton does not perceive it, and perhaps Johnny is too obtuse to realise it, but he could scarcely have offered Wharton a bigger insult than to grunt this remark. It is worth noting, too, that even then, when Price's guilt is known, Johnn does not admit he was wrong. He simply switches opinions - and is just as dogged about the new one. Of what value is such tenacity?

Johnny is a key-figure in Richards' conveying of schoolboy psychology (and also in a good deal else). Admittedly, we are confronted with story manipulation - this is looking at it from a completely detached point of view; but are we not in any work of fiction? I do not claim that this particular story is great - I claim only the facts. One of the facts is definitely that if Johnny Bull had not worked his stolid delaying action - was he not noted for stonewalling as a batsman? - the story would have been over well before it is; and yet it does not seem, to me, to be a word too long. And this is only to say that, supposing this to be a real life situation rather than fictional, things would have cleared themselves much sooner if it had not been for Johnny. How many times have we come across this type of situation in fact? - the one person who prevents things being put right? It may be story manipulation, but it is true to life, too. Nowhere does Johnny act or speak out of character: everything about him is consistent. Art of any kind is contrived, or it is not art, as distinct from life; and it is one of the contrivances of great fictional art to appear to be like life - whereas, if it really were, it would be so shapeless that we should

never get much beyond the first or second page. I recommend anyone to read Henry James' preface to his novel THE SPOILS OF POYNTON on this subject. Of course Richards contrives, as any other writer does. The art is in the fact that at his best he does not appear to do so. I can detect no reaction in this story that is untrue. And Johnny is part of this; he is part of Richards' contrivance, but he is so, first and foremost, by being a consistent and believable character; believable, because I, for one, have met only too many Johnny Bulls, types exactly like him who have sometimes caused estrangements to continue for years, that would normally and without their interference, their perfectly judicial interference, been put right in a matter of days. Johnny lives, like every other character in these stories of the three major schools. And it is the character of Johnny Bull that I dislike. His sturdy commonsense is a mask for selfishness, for persisting in his own way, and points at times to an especial weakness: an inability to admit himself wrong, even when he has been proved, without any doubt and to his face, to be wrong. I always hoped that Johnny would one day find himself the victim of circumstances - and console himself with his commonsense, applied to himself! Unfortunately, this never happened, or else I never encountered the story in which it did happen.

Because he is outwardly a decent fellow, does not have the common schoolboy faults, Johnny is a far more insidious character than the admitted sneaks. The good and the bad of the Bounder (not that he was a sneak) speak for themselves; Skinner is openly vicious - no-one is deceived by him, unless through thickheadedness. The weakness of Snoop, which he has on occasion overcome, is patent; the criminal talents of Ponsonby need no microscope to detect them. But Johnny, who, misunderstanding the word as so many do, "has no use for subtleties," is very nearly the subtlest character Richards ever drew. He is certainly the most deceiving - plain-spoken, honest Johnny. The plain-spoken speeches Richards puts into his mouth are masterpieces of double-thinking - and this, of course, would have earned him Johnny's contempt. The reactions of the other characters are just as true and consistent, and dovetailing of them in these scenes is as masterly and economical as the separate handling.

I mentioned economy, and a good deal of what I have been quoting and writing about depends on Richards' having found exactly the right word and, having found it, leaving it - not gilding the lily. His style has in the past been attacked as unnecessarily verbose, as taking a couple of hundred words to say what could be said in fifty, which is true, on the surface, if one is prepared to sacrifice what his admirers read him for: his personal flavour. But close examination shows Richards to be one of the most economical writers in my experience. How he did it at the speed at which he wrote most of his stories in his heyday I cannot explain, but rarely does he fail to capture exactly the right word that says as nothing else will what he wants to say. Writers like Flaubert, Conrad and Henry James were noted for the amount of care they could expend on hunting for exactly the right word - a habit James even irritatingly carried into his private conversations in later life. They would have recognised in Richards a member of the same club - although, if it had taken the MAGNET author as long to find the right word as it took Flaubert, the MAGNET would not have lasted thirty days, let alone thirty years. But the principle is the same.



# A SEXTON BLAKE ANTHOLOGY

by S. Gordon Swan

From time to time there are published anthologies such as *The 20 Best Spy Stories*, *20 of the Best Sea Stories* and so on. I have often speculated on selecting a similar number of the best Sexton Blake stories, but the saga has endured for such a number of years and during that time so many excellent tales have been written that it is a difficult matter to sort out those of superlative quality.

However, I have compiled a list which comprises twenty splendid stories in which twenty different authors have been represented. This schedule is only in rough chronological order and covers a period of more than sixty years. Some may recall a few or all of these yarns with nostalgic affection, as I do, and regret that most of those who wrote them have passed on. Here is the list:

*The Kaiser's Mistake*, by D. H. Parry. (U. J. No. 271.) One of the few Blake tales written by a master of historical adventure. The scenes are laid in England and Constantinople and Sexton Blake has romantic interludes with an enterprising German girl.

*A Woolwich Arsenal Mystery*, by E. J. Gannon, better known as Beverley Kent. (B. F. L. First Series No. 27.) The Kaiser also figures in this fine tale by one of the early contributors to the Blake Saga. The descriptive background is sometimes reminiscent of W. Murray Graydon.

*Sexton Blake, Foreman*, by E. W. Alais. (B. F. L. First Series No. 172.) In spite of the trite title this is a fine story which works up to an exciting climax. The author was one of those who helped to make Blake famous in the early days of the century.

*The Black Chrysanthemum*, by Andrew Murray. (S. B. L. First Series No. 15.) A mystery story with Japanese associations. The author did not have a faultless literary style but there was some quality of humanity and feeling in his writing which is sadly lacking in to-day's literature.

*In Triple Disguise*, by W. Murray Graydon. (S. B. L. First Series No. 20.) Sexton Blake's adventures as a spy in Berlin during World War I. Murray Graydon was at his best when writing this type of story, and the German backgrounds are authentic.

*When Rogues Fall Out*, by E. J. Murray - more familiar to us as Sidney Drew. (U. J. No. 724.) This tale introduces us to an engaging master-rogue named John Baydon Arbour, who escapes justice at the end. One would like to have heard more of him.

*The Mystery of the Living Shadow*, by W. W. Sayer - Pierre Quiroule to his fans. (S. B. L. First Series No. 141.) An eerie mystery story which features those two favourites, Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie. One of the best by an author who wrote many fine tales and maintained a high literary standard.

*The Case of the Sexton Blake Bust*, by Jack Lewis. (U. J. 1169.) A straight

detective story of superior quality. The author excelled himself in this tale of sheer deduction and logical reasoning with a surprise ending.

The Riddle of the Amber Room, by H. Gregory Hill. (S. B. L. Second Series No. 102.) An old friend of Sexton Blake, Detective-Inspector Rollings, who battled with him against the sinister Gunga Das, is found dead in a locked room, an apparent suicide. Blake investigates to clear his friend's name and bring a murderer to justice.

The Fatal Pit, by John W. Bobin. (S. B. L. Second Series No. 103.) A George Marsden Plummer story which contains a deep mystery and its surprise solution.

The Secret of the Monastery, by S. Gordon Shaw. (S. B. L. Second Series No. 132.) This story has an unusual setting, a Trappist monastery in Quebec, where the monks live under a seal of silence. Here Blake engages in a battle of wits with a formidable adversary, Janssen the Moonslayer.

The Man From Australia, by F. Addington Symonds. (S. B. L. Second Series No. 137.) An excellent mystery story that contains several surprises and holds the interest.

The Striking Shadow, by Ladbrooke Black. (U. J. serial in 1927 from No. 1220 to No. 1231.) A thrilling mystery which reveals something of the influence of Edgar Wallace's play, *The Ringer*, in that the villain is working throughout in close co-operation with Scotland Yard. Derogatory comments have been made on the work of this author but, though he may have turned out routine stories afterwards, this - which I believe to be his first contribution to the Blake Saga - was a splendid effort.

The Black Abbot of Cheng-tu, by G. H. Teed. (Another serial in the U. J. which followed *The Striking Shadow* and ran from No. 1236 to No. 1254.) A fine Oriental yarn with all the atmosphere which G. H. Teed could convey so well. It formed a sequel to a set of four Chinese tales which Teed wrote for the U. J. and introduced that master-schemer, Prince Wu Ling. One of the notable features of this story was the use of television years before it became a household amenity.

The Case of the Grey Envelope, by Anthony Skene. (U. J. No. 1276.) A Zenith story written in the impeccable style of the author, which leaves nothing more to be said.

The Red Swordsman, by Robert Murray Graydon. (U. J. No. 1460.) The author was chiefly noted for his series - *The Criminals' Confederation*, Dr. Satira and Paul Cynos - but this is an independent yarn and one that formed the basis of several T. V. episodes.

The White Black, by R. Coutts Armour. (U. J. No. 1462.) This writer gave us many splendid stories of his popular character, Dr. Ferraro, but this again was an independent tale, gripping from start to finish and with no anti-climax.

The Man I Killed, by Rex Hardinge. (D. W. 20.) One of the best detective stories ever written, given in the murderer's own words.

The Harem Mystery, by Anthony Parsons. (S. B. L. Second Series No. 671.) This author was responsible for so many good Sexton Blake tales it is hard to make a choice from his work. This one ranks high among his literary achievements and is a

story laid in India, introducing another author's creation, Gunga Dass.

The Sea Tigers, by W. Howard Baker. (S. B. L. Third Series No. 400.) An outstanding tale in the "modern" Blake era, dealing with one of Blake's wartime adventures, better-written even than the noted Last Days of Berlin.

It is a pity that some of the foregoing stories were printed in the minute type which was employed as an economy measure in the First World War and persisted until the late 'twenties. Many of these tales are worth preserving in a better format.

Would some enterprising publisher please note and bring out an anthology of the best of Blake? There are plenty of other good authors who are not represented in my list - Maxwell Scott, Gwyn Evans, E. S. Brooks, Jack Trevor Story and others.

\* \* \* \* \*

MAGNETS WANTED: 1123-1137; 1157-1174; 1189-1208; 1223-1245; particularly 1309, 1330. Good prices paid. Magnets, Marvels, Plucks, Trueblues Libraries, etc., for disposal.

J. de FREITAS, 29 GILARTH ST., HIGHETT, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, 3190.

=====

WANTED: 1922-50 Champions, Triumph, Rover, Wizard, Adventure, Hotspur, Champion Annuals 1927, 31, 35 and 40. Champion Library, Boys' Cinemas, Boys' Cinema Annuals, Boys' Friend Libraries. Books by E. R. Home-Gall, No. 1 to 21 Boys' Favourite Library.

Merry Xmas to all my friends both home and abroad. Special Greetings and thanks to Bill, Jim, Jack, Frank, Sam and E. R. H.

ERN. DARCY, 47 FISHER ST., MAIDSTONE, VICTORIA 3012, AUSTRALIA.

=====

WANTED: Hard backs and B. F. L., by George E. Rochester, also Historical Stories, B. F. L's, Parry, Pike, Armitage, etc. A very Merry Christmas to all my dear friends in the London Club and to Eric Fayne, who provides us all with so much pleasure all through the year.

THURBON, 29 STRAWBERRY HILL RD., TWICKENHAM, MSX.

=====

Happy Christmas, Josie, Bob, Stan, Vernon, Mollie, Bill, Norman. Yours CYRIL ROWE. Wanted Chuckles 1917-1923; Harry Revel Serials.

ROWE, LINDENS, HORSFORD, NORWICH, NOR 84X.

=====

WANTED Mystery/Thrillers by Berrow, Connington, other British Mystery writers of thirties, forties. All offers promptly answered.

4533 WEST 13th AVENUE, VANCOUVER, B. C., CANADA.

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# Cliveden

by Chas Baker

In his Autobiography Frank Richards mentions . . . . (about 1907/8) he was not only writing a double-length Tom Merry story for the enlarged 1d. Gem, and a Greyfriars tale for the new ½d. Magnet, but was also engaged in producing 10,000 word long school tales of Cliveden for the Boys' Herald, every week and to top all this he had a serial running in the Boys' Realm.

By the year 1907/8 Charles Hamilton was already an established writer, for, as well as contributing stories in one form or another to all the Amalgamated Press publications, he wrote for Pearsons and Traps and Holmes and others, and if this was not enough for any one man to do, he found time to write complete school stories of 60,000 words dealing with Tom Merry & Co., for the Boys' Friend 3d. Library.

The Cliveden series of school stories consisted of 10,00-word complete tales and came out weekly in the Boys' Herald, they recorded the adventures of Poindexter & Co. of the Fourth Form, and their rivals Pankhurst & Co. of the same form. These tales were written in a humorous style, there was nothing highly dramatic in any of them, such as a missing-heir turning out to be the school boot-boy or of cracksmen taking up duties disguised as Form-masters. Perhaps Hamilton Edwards the controlling editor of the Boys' Herald and many other papers, considered there were already enough dramatic incidents in the two school serials then running in the paper at the same time as the Cliveden stories. These were "The Terror of the Remove" by David Goodwin, and "Sexton Blake at School!" Both serials were highly charged with dramatic events.

In the Cliveden stories Charles Hamilton introduced names that were later to be given by him to other more famous characters.

The school-porter at Cliveden was - Bunter!

There was a junior named - Trimble!

To introduce Cliveden to the readers of the Boys' Herald, Hamilton Edwards wrote the following in his "Your Editor's Advice" page two weeks preceding the first story: -

Boys' Herald, No. 221, Vol. 5 - Week Ending 12th October, 1907

Mr. Charles Hamilton's New School Tales

"It is with great pleasure that I am able to inform my chums that I have made arrangements with Mr. Charles Hamilton to write a series of complete ten-thousand word school stories for the Boys' Herald.

The first story, entitled "The Cliveden Combine," will appear in a fortnight's time. I have read this story and laughed over it till the tears trickled down my face,

for believe me, my friends, no-one enjoys a really humorous school story with greater zest than I do. Every one of these stories will be humorous, and they will deal with an American boy - Lincoln G. Poindexter is his name - who will speedily win his way in your affections.

There are four other characters who play important parts in the stories, and in their way each is excellent. Mr. Charles Hamilton and I have had several long talks over these complete tales and I think we have hit upon something entirely new. As I have said, each story will deal with school life, but they will principally deal with the sports and hobbies in which boys are interested."

A second article appeared on the same lines, the following week, in No. 222. But the above is sufficient to introduce the subject.

Complete list of titles of the Cliveden series

by Charles Hamilton, published in the  
Boys' Herald from 26th October, 1907 to

11th April, 1908

Illustrated by Arthur Clarke

Boys' Herald Number	Title	Date
223	The Cliveden Combine	Oct. 26th 1907
224	The Fourth Form Football Club	Nov. 2nd 1907
225	The Cliveden Hobby Club	Nov. 9th 1907
226	The Fight with the Fifth	Nov. 16th 1907
227	Christmas at Cliveden	Nov. 23rd 1907
228	The Captain of Cliveden	Nov. 30th 1907
229	The Cliveden Paperchase	Dec. 7th 1907
230	The Fourth Form Reformers	Dec. 14th 1907
231	The Fourth Form Match	Dec. 21st 1907
232	The Cliveden Waxworks	Dec. 28th 1907
233	Philpot's Plot!	Jan. 4th 1908
234	The Cliveden Diabolo Match	Jan. 11th 1908
235	Champions on the Ice	Jan. 18th 1908
236	The Cliveden Toffe-Makers	Jan. 25th 1908
237	Pondexter's Ghost	Feb. 1st 1908
238	The Cliveden Sweepstakes	Feb. 8th 1908
239	The Cliveden Valentines	Feb. 15th 1908
240	Snowed Up!	Feb. 22nd 1908
241	"Bravo Cliveden!"	Feb. 29th 1908
242	The Cliveden Detectives	Mch. 7th 1908
243	The Cliveden Redskins	Mch. 14th 1908
244	The Cliveden Sports	Mch. 21st 1908
245	Pondexter's Peril!	Mch. 28th 1908
246	April Fools	Apl. 11th 1908
247	The Cliveden Minstrels	Apl. 18th 1908

cont'd ...

248	Cliveden's Little Mystery	Apl. 18th 1908
249	Cliveden's Opening Match	Apl. 25th 1908
250	The Cliveden "Rag!"	May 2nd 1908
251	May-day at Cliveden	May 9th 1908
252	The Cliveden Wheelers	May 16th 1908
253	The Cliveden Gardeners	May 23rd 1908
254	Empire Day at Cliveden	May 30th 1908
255	The Cliveden Derby	June 6th 1908
256	Flynn the Golfist	June 13th 1908
257	(No Cliveden story in this issue)	June 20th 1908
258	The New Boy at Cliveden	June 27th 1908

Note:- No. 249 The Opening Match:- (Cricket match v Redclyffe).

### Special 250th Number of the Boys' Herald

To celebrate the great occasion of the 250th number, the Editor, Hamilton Edwards arranged for all the star authors and artists to say a few words to the readers and a page has been set aside for these gentlemen to do this and sign their signatures in their own handwriting, so that those members who collect autographs will be able to obtain the signatures of the most famous authors and artists living to-day.

Among those is one from Charles Hamilton, that reads as follows:-

#### A GIFTED WRITER OF HUMOROUS SCHOOL STORIES

"My dear lads, I am very glad to take this opportunity of greeting you. We have known each other, through The Boys' Herald for a very long time. Some of the pleasantest hours of my life have been spent in writing for you. That our acquaintance may long continue is the sincere wish of your friend."

CHARLES HAMILTON

(Signature in his own handwriting)

The Boys' Herald, No. 250, Vol. V - Week Ending 2nd May, 1908

We can only make a guess as to the reason why the Cliveden series came to a sudden stop in June 1908, but it may well have been that having to write school tales every week for both the Gem and Magnet Charles Hamilton had to drop the Cliveden series.

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\* \* \* \* \*

Merry Christmas to all - and may the New Year bring you those missing Magnets - Gems - Lees - Union Jacks - that you are searching for.

Can anyone help me? I wish to purchase any of the following ... complete series ... or odd copies ... Da Costa - Brander Rebellion - China - Wharton Rebellion No. 1 - Whiffles Circus - Bright (Toad of Remove). Correspondents welcomed.

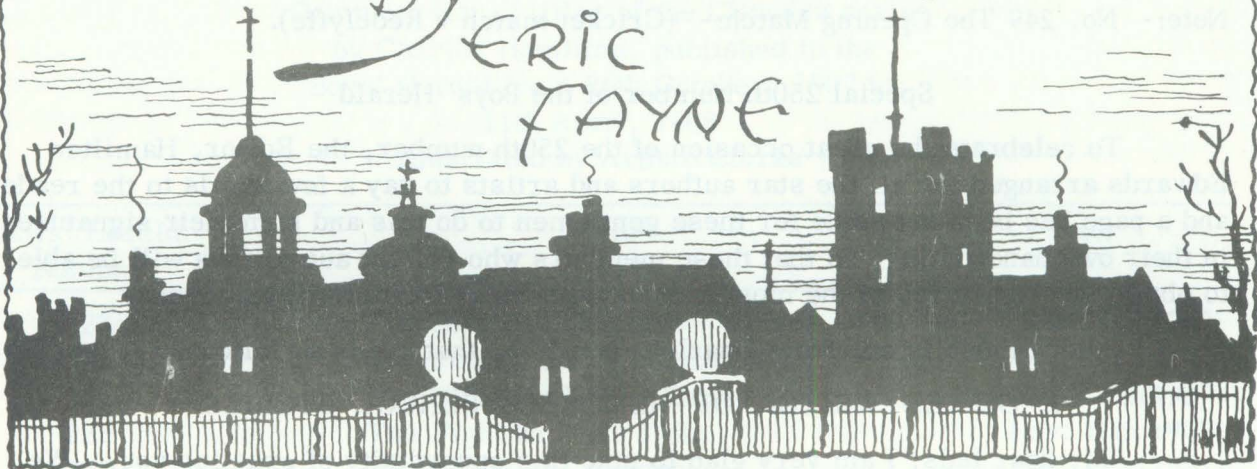
CEDRIC RICHARDSON, MILL HOUSE, THE RIDE, LOXWOOD, WEST SUSSEX.

# THE SPIRIT

# OF SLADE

By

ERIC  
FAYNE



It was misty and it was cold. This was to be expected in Devonshire in the late afternoon of a day early in December.

A car drew up at the gates of Slade, and a man, wearing a thick overcoat and a floppy trilby hat, left the vehicle, slamming the door behind him.

The lights on the pillars on each side of the big gates had been switched on as dusk fell. They cast a ghostly glow all around in the gloom. Beyond the gates, on the far side of the quadrangle, stood the school buildings, with lights gleaming out from scores of windows.

The man tried the main gates and found them locked. He moved across and tried the small gate by the

side. That opened as he turned the handle. An illuminated notice on the wall against the small gate read PLEASE RING FOR LODGE KEEPER, and the visitor pressed the bell-button.

After a moment or two, Parmint, the porter at Slade, came out from his lodge. He looked at the visitor in the light from the pillar lamps.

"I wish to see the Headmaster," said the man in the floppy trilby. His voice was high-pitched.

"Have you an appointment, sir?" asked Parmint.

"Appointment? No, I haven't. I don't need an appointment. Take me to the Headmaster. I have come to remove my son from this school."

"I see, sir." Parmint sounded

unimpressed. "The Headmaster and the Housemaster are both away to-day, sir."

"Away?" There was outrage in the visitor's voice. "What kind of a school is this with the masters away in the middle of term? Where are they?"

"The Headmaster did not confide in me, sir," said Parmint.

"Who's in charge, then? I suppose somebody is in charge. Take me to him."

"Mr. Buddle is in charge during the Headmaster's absence, sir," said Parmint stolidly. "If you don't mind waiting here for a moment, I will get through on the 'phone and see whether he can see you."

"He will see me," said the visitor grimly.

"Probably, sir. If you will wait here a moment ... What name did you say, sir?"

"I didn't say my name. It's Sh'vell. Tell Mr. Buddle that Mr. E. Lisle Sh'vell is here to see him and that the matter is urgent."

"Shervell, did you say, sir?"

"Sh'vell," repeated the gentleman testily. He spelt out the name. "S-H-O-V-E-L."

The porter screwed up his face as though in a mental effort.

"I see, sir - yes - Mr. Sh'vell. I will tell Mr. Buddle that you are here. I will try to get him on the 'phone. I won't keep you a minute or two."

"I hope not," snapped Mr. Shovel.

The porter turned and went into his lodge. A few minutes passed, during which time Mr. Shovel walked up and down in the gloom. When Parmint returned, Mr. Shovel spoke impatiently.

"Well?"

"Mr. Buddle will see you, sir. You are to be taken to the Headmaster's study. I will get a servant to show you the way, if you will walk across to the

School House. If you would like to drive your car in, I will open the gates --"

"My car will be all right where it is," said Mr. Shovel. "I don't want to waste time. The fog will come down later on. Take me to Mr. Buddle, if he is the man in charge."

"Very good, sir," murmured Parmint. "If you will follow me, sir --"

He walked away across the quadrangle towards the brightly-lit porch of the School House, and Mr. Shovel followed him.

. . . . .

Mr. Buddle stood in thought beside the table in his study, his hand still on the telephone which he had just been using. He wondered what Mr. Shovel wanted. It was unusual for a parent to call at the school to see the Headmaster without a previous appointment. Parents are a necessary evil in any schoolmaster's life. An interview with one can be pleasant or unpleasant according to the personality of the particular parent. Mr. Buddle already knew a little about Mr. Shovel, and felt it likely that this interview might be one of the less pleasant kind. It was unfortunate, from Mr. Buddle's point of view, that Mr. Shovel had decided to make his unscheduled call on the very occasion when the Headmaster was absent and Mr. Buddle was left in charge.

The little schoolmaster moved across to his armchair by the glowing electric fire. He picked up the book which he had left, open, in that armchair when the ring of the telephone had called him away from the realm of fiction to the more prosaic everyday duties of life.

He ran his fingers tenderly down the spine of the book. It was a



volume of Gems. It had been loaned to Mr. Buddle by Mr. Meredith, the father of one of Mr. Buddle's boys. There was a very genuine friendship between the schoolmaster and the Merediths, who, Mr. Buddle guessed, were very different types of parents from Mr. Shovel whom he was soon to meet.

Mr. Buddle had acquired an affection for the Gem as a result of his friendship with Mr. Meredith. A taste for the Gem was undignified in a schoolmaster, of course, but Mr. Buddle did not bother unduly about that side of the matter. He did not have a great deal of spare time, but he spent a few happy hours every week in the company of Mr. Meredith's Gems.

Mr. Buddle placed the volume of Gems carefully on his table. He looked forward to returning later to the joys of that bulky tome.

There was a tap on the door, and Mr. Buddle called out an invitation to the tapper to enter. A plump lady in a dress of black bombazine looked in. Mrs. Cleverton was the Housekeeper at Slade.

"There's a gentleman to see you, sir. Parmint has just brought him across from the lodge. Parmint said I was to take him to Mr. Scarlet's study. A Mr. Sheller --"

"Mr. Shovel. Yes, Mrs. Cleverton. Thank you very much for attending to the matter for me. I will go to Mr. Shovel."

The housekeeper withdrew, closing the door as she went.

Mr. Buddle switched off his electric fire, and was just moving across to the door when there was another tap on it.

It opened. This time it was a youngish man, probably in his middle thirties, with a shock of fair hair and horn-rimmed spectacles which gave him an owlsh appearance.

He said, nervously: "Can you spare me a minute, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"Not just now, Mr. Crathie. Come back later, will you? I have a parent to see in the Headmaster's study.

Mr. Crathie was science master at Slade. He slipped into the study, closed the door, and stood with his back to it.

He said breathlessly: "That's what I wanted to speak about. It will only take a second. This parent you're seeing. It's young Shovel's father, isn't it?"

Mr. Buddle looked curiously at the science master.

"Yes, it is. What about it, Mr. Crathie? Do you know Mr. Shovel?"

"I don't know him," said the younger man wretchedly. "I heard Parmint turn him over to the housekeeper down in the hall. I'm not surprised that he's called. I expected him to. I've been on the look-out - the boy said he would tell his father."

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows.

"Tell his father what, Mr. Crathie?"

Mr. Crathie ran his tongue over dry lips. Then he spoke fast:

"I thought I ought to tell you. After all, you're acting as Head in Mr. Scarlet's absence. Shovel's father has come to see the Head about me. I belted young Shovel."

"Belted him?"

"Hit him! He's not a bad youngster - no harm in him - but he was insolent in class yesterday - very insolent. I hit him and knocked him down --"

"Knocked him down?" echoed Mr. Buddle in astonishment.

"Well, he went down, at any rate. I smacked at him - a hefty smack. He may have tripped, but I really hit him.

He knocked his head on something, I think. He lay there, and all the boys crowded round. He may have been stunned for a few moments - I thought he was playing up and pretending. I still think he was. But I hit him and made him fall."

Mr. Buddle looked grave.

He said slowly: "This is news to me, Mr. Crathie. I suppose you lost your temper."

Mr. Crathie said defensively: "I couldn't help it. That boy would try a saint. Some of the others, too. Meredith is another. I know I ought not to have lost my temper, but I was provoked --"

Mr. Buddle stood in silence for a few seconds. He gnawed his lower lip in perplexity.

He said at last: "This could be serious for you, Mr. Crathie. There's nothing to be gained by not facing the facts. The boy seems to have communicated with his father. Parmin told me on the house telephone that Mr. Shovel said he had come to take his son away with him. It looks --"

"It's the end for me," muttered Mr. Crathie.

Mr. Buddle spoke briskly with a confidence he did not feel.

"I will see Mr. Shovel. He may have come here for some entirely different reason. I will hear what he says."

"I'm ruined," moaned Mr. Crathie.

Mr. Buddle grimaced.

"For heaven's sake don't dramatise yourself," he said impatiently. "Don't meet trouble half way."

"I'm ruined," repeated the science master. "I'm ruined. What shall I do, Mr. Buddle?"

"Do? Do nothing, of course. Make yourself scarce, and keep out of

the way. We'll talk about it again after Mr. Shovel has left."

"I can't face the man to-night," mumbled Mr. Crathie.

Mr. Buddle said coldly:

"I will see that you don't have to."

Mr. Crathie opened the door.

He looked back at Mr. Buddle.

"I thought it best to let you know," he said.

Mr. Buddle nodded without speaking, and the science master took himself off.

Left alone, Mr. Buddle stood in thought for a moment. His eyes strayed to the volume of Gems on his table. He had been reading a story in that volume - a story entitled "At The Eleventh Hour." It featured a schoolmaster named Mr. Lathom, a man who was fluffy and easy-going, and a poor disciplinarian. In real life, masters of that type have a hard time. Boys, who can be thoughtlessly cruel, make sure of it.

Mr. Buddle himself was easy-going, like the fictitious Mr. Lathom, but Mr. Buddle was a sound disciplinarian. In his view, a schoolmaster who found difficulty with discipline was in the wrong job. Mr. Crathie, as Mr. Buddle knew, was a rather indifferent disciplinarian; a man, in fact, who could only assert himself when he was in a bad temper. A schoolmaster needs to show bad temper on occasion, in Mr. Buddle's belief, but a schoolmaster who lets his temper get the better of him has mistaken his vocation. Mr. Buddle wondered whether Mr. Crathie was such a man.

Turning out the light, Mr. Buddle left his study, and walked up Masters' Corridor. He entered the Headmaster's study which was the last one in the corridor.

Mr. Shovell, who had been seated in a leather armchair, nursing

his floppy trilby hat, rose to his feet.

Mr. Buddle held out his hand.

He said: "Mr. Shovel, isn't it? My name is Buddle. Your son is a member of my form."

Mr. Shovel dragged off a glove, and placed a limp hand in Mr. Buddle's.

"I have been kept waiting, Mr. Buddle. My time is valuable, and I have to drive to Plymouth. I don't want to be caught in the fog if it comes down. I have called to see the Headmaster."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"So I understand. Mr. Scarlet and Mr. Fromo are both away till tomorrow, attending an educational conference in London. I am in charge in their absence. If I can help you in any way I will do so."

Mr. Shovel grunted.

He said grimly: "It is immaterial whom I see. I have come to remove my son from this school."

"Indeed?" Mr. Buddle, suitably surprised, raised his eyebrows. He moved behind the Headmaster's desk, and sat down. Mr. Shovel stared at him with hostility. Mr. Buddle went on: "Please take a seat, Mr. Shovel. The Headmaster left me no instructions that Shovel of my form was going home before term ends in three weeks' time."

"Of course he didn't. He didn't know. All I wish you to do is to have Mervyn brought here, and I will take him and go. It won't be the last you will hear of me."

Mr. Buddle placed his fingertips together on the desk in front of him.

He said mildly: "Please sit down, Mr. Shovel. If you wish to remove your son from Slade, there is nothing to stop you. I shall be glad if you will kindly explain your reasons, so that I can inform Mr. Scarlet when he returns tomorrow. A few minutes more of your time won't make so very much

difference."

Mr. Shovel shrugged his shoulders.

"You are entitled to know why I am removing my son from Slade, though I daresay you know well enough already," he said.

He sat down again in the leather armchair.

Mr. Buddle adjusted his glasses, and peered thoughtfully at the irate parent. Mr. Shovel had light hair which was receding seriously. He had a small light moustache. He had rather a weak chin and a very prominent Adam's apple. He looked very, very ordinary. Perhaps, thought the shrewd Mr. Buddle, his visitor was a man with an inferiority complex, and one who used a blustering rudeness in an effort to overcome that inferiority complex.

Mr. Shovel crossed one leg over the other.

Almost parenthetically he said: "I do not approve of school uniform such as my son is required to wear here. School uniform is made compulsory by an establishment simply for advertisement purposes. It should be banned by law."

"You are entitled to your own opinion," conceded Mr. Buddle. "There are certain boys who might be anything but a good advertisement for the schools whose uniforms they wear. You are not, I presume, removing your son on account of a school uniform of which you were aware when you entered your son at Slade a year ago?"

"That is a detail," admitted Mr. Shovel. "I made it quite clear to Mr. Scarlet, when Mervyn first came here, that I do not approve of corporal punishment. It is brutal, degrading, and archaic."

"Corporal punishment is rarely used at Slade," countered Mr. Buddle.

"Only in very exceptional circumstances, in fact. The Headmaster of Slade stands in loco parentis to every boy here. Corporal punishment is only used as a sensible parent would use it."

"I have never raised a small finger to my son," said Mr. Shovel brusquely.

"I see."

"No. I discuss matters with my son. I talk to him at great length. From the time Mervyn was six or even less I discussed every step with him before I took that step. Whenever he wanted his own way in any particular direction, I always discussed the matter with him fully before I let him have it."

Mr. Buddle said nothing. He felt there was little he could say.

"When Mervyn committed an offence at home," went on Mr. Shovel, "I discussed the matter with him. And when he repeated the offence --"

"Oh, he repeated the offence?" murmured Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Shovel spoke firmly.

"When he repeated the offence, I discussed the matter with him again. And when he offended yet again, I asked myself where I was wrong. I shall never forget the time when he threw a dart at my Watteau --"

Mr. Buddle jumped.

"A - a dart at your - your --"

Mr. Shovel inclined his head.

"Indeed yes. I discussed the matter with him for some time. I explained to him that it was a very valuable picture, and that it was a possession in which I took great pride. When, a few days later, he threw another dart at my Watteau --"

"What did you do then, Mr. Shovel?"

"This time I realised that I was to blame. I removed the Watteau to a locked room until Mervyn should be old enough to appreciate it as I did. I

would never chastise him, or, in fact, raise my voice to him. When Mervyn was younger he would pour golden syrup over the chairs in the bedrooms. This was really artistic. In the discussions which followed, it emerged that Mervyn enjoyed seeing the patterns which were made as the syrup went through the cane-bottoms of the chairs and fell on to the carpet. To have punished him would have been to stifle his boyish imagination and talent, and I would never do it."

Mr. Buddle was drumming his fingers lightly on the Headmaster's desk. When Mr. Shovel ceased talking, Mr. Buddle ceased drumming. He leaned back on his chair.

"Mr. Shovel," he said very quietly, "if you disapprove so much of our methods here, why did you enter your son for Slade at all?"

Mr. Shovel scratched his small moustache. Then he pressed it flat. After a pause for thought, he said:

"It was my wife, sir. Women have most foolish ideas. I am a blunt man, Mr. Buddle. I call a spade a spade."

It occurred to Mr. Buddle that, though Mr. Shovel might call a spade a spade, the common or garden shovel he called a Sh'vell. Mr. Buddle overcame the temptation to put his thoughts into words.

He contented himself by saying "Quite!"

"My wife persuaded me to enter Mervyn for Slade. She likes, as they say in modern parlance, to keep up with the Joneses."

Mr. Buddle made a clicking noise with his tongue, which may have denoted sympathy with Mr. Shovel.

"I tell my wife that we have no need to keep up with the Joneses," stated Mr. Shovel. He spoiled that worthy sentiment by adding: "We are

superior to the Joneses."

"That is fortunate for you," said Mr. Buddle. "You have not yet told me why you propose to remove your son before the end of term. I presume that there is some reason beyond the school uniform and the corporal punishment of which you knew before you made application to enter the boy and he was accepted." Pointedly, he glanced at Mr. Scarlet's clock on the mantelpiece. He hinted delicately: "I have further duties at six o'clock."

Mr. Shovel flushed with annoyance.

He said, angrily: "I shall not need to detain you any longer than it takes you to send for my son. Against my own instincts, I allowed the lad to come to a school where corporal punishment is practised. It did not occur to me that brutality to the unhappy boys was involved. Mervyn is going home with me to-night. This, however, is not the last you will hear of me, Mr. Buddle. Tomorrow I shall instruct my solicitor to institute proceedings against the governors of this school, against the Headmaster, and against a master you have here named Crathie."

Mr. Buddle became tense. He said acidly:

"On what grounds, Mr. Shovel?"

"Assault! Assault on my son," barked Mr. Shovel.

Why, thought Mr. Buddle, did something like this have to happen on one of the rare occasions when the Headmaster was absent and Mr. Buddle was in charge of Slade? Mr. Buddle had often thought that he was sufficiently endowed with the gifts which make a good Headmaster. Dealing with irate parents, however, was clearly one disadvantage of occupying that exalted office.

"If you will kindly explain," said Mr. Buddle stiffly.

Mr. Shovel drew a folded sheet of

paper from his breast pocket. He unfolded the sheet, leaned forward, and placed it before the little master.

Mr. Buddle took it and scanned it. It was a letter, and the furrows in his brow deepened as he read it.

Dear Mum,

Thank you for the tuck parcel which was just what I needed. The food we get here is hardly enough to keep body and soul together. I seem to thrive on it, but I've heard fasting is good for you as it stops you getting overweight and getting a stroke. Sometimes I think we get too many strokes here. Ha, ha. Joke!

We licked Kingsbridge Col by one goal. Meredith got the goal. He is like a bit of india-rubber.

A fearful thing happened in science class this afternoon. Crathie, our science beak, got his rag out over something or other. He was like a maniac and gave me a desprit shove. Then he biffed me and I went down like a log. In fact, I went out like a light. When I came to, Crathie was fearfully waxy with everyone, but he apologised to me. It doesn't make the suffering and shock any less, does it?

Dear Mum, it would help me to get over this fearful thing very quickly if you would kindly send me a remittance. £2 would heal my bruises at once, but even £1 would be useful as I have many expenses. So please send something substantial to cheer me up.

This is quite confidential between you and me, dear Mum. Be sure not to tell Dad. Just send me along the cash yourself.

We are just off to rehearse "The Merchant of Venice" with the Gump, so no more for now from

Your loving son,  
MERVE

Mr. Shovel was watching Mr. Buddle as he read. As the schoolmaster finished reading, and placed the letter on the desk in front of him, Mr. Shovel spoke.

"Well, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle pursed his lips. He said slowly:

"On the strength of this letter, with no further enquiry into the rights and wrongs of the matter, your propose to remove your son from Slade immediately. Am I right?"

"Exactly!" exclaimed Mr. Shovel. "That letter was received by my wife this morning. Very properly, she showed it to me when I returned

home this afternoon. It is quite clear that an innocent boy would not write to his mother in such agonised terms unless something serious had happened. My wife was horrified. I, too, am horrified. There can be no doubt that my son has been assaulted by this man who is unfit to be a master in any school."

"Surely the term assault is far too strong," remonstrated Mr. Buddle.

"No term could be too strong," retorted Mr. Shovel. "We shall see what a court of law decides about such treatment of a defenceless lad. This school, and its Headmaster, and the guilty man will be exposed for what they are. The name of Slade will be smeared across the front page of every newspaper in the land."

"Is that your desire? To smear the good name of Slade?" Mr. Buddle spoke a little contemptuously. "Do you believe that that would help your son?"

"It is not only my desire. It is my duty!" said Mr. Shovel. "I shall be surprised if Slade is not compelled to close its doors for good."

Mr. Buddle gave a hard smile.

He said: "You are mistaken, Mr. Shovel. A case of this kind would not harm Slade or the Headmaster. If Mr. Crathie lost the case - and I have no doubt at all that he could present a sound defence - his career might be jeopardised. You would have that satisfaction. I cannot pass an opinion without hearing Mr. Crathie's version of the affair."

"I believe my son entirely," said Mr. Shovel. "I know him far better than you do."

"I doubt it," muttered Mr. Buddle.

He lifted the house telephone on the Headmaster's desk, twisted the dial to a certain number, and turned the handle at the side of the instrument. He waited in silence, and Mr. Shovel got up, moved over to the Headmaster's bookcase,

and inspected the titles on some of the book spines.

Evidently somebody answered the telephone. Mr. Buddle said: "Is that the prefects' room? Ah, yes, Antrobus. Mr. Buddle speaking. Can I trouble you to ask a prefect to find Shovel of the Lower Fourth form - he is probably in his study at this time - and tell him to come to the Headmaster's study at once. Yes - Shovel of the Lower Fourth! I am obliged to you, Antrobus."

Mr. Buddle replaced the receiver on its rest, and Mr. Shovel turned round from the bookcase.

"Send for the man Crathie," he said sourly.

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"I have no authority to allow you to see Mr. Crathie this evening. If you desire, it is probable that you will be able to interview him in the presence of the Headmaster, if you make an appointment."

"I would not demean myself," said Mr. Shovel. "You won't send for the man because you know he is guilty."

"I know nothing of the sort, nor do I credit it," said Mr. Buddle. After his brief encounter with Mr. Crathie earlier, it was not entirely a veracious reply.

Another brief silence fell. Mr. Buddle broke it.

He said, very quietly: "If you are misguided enough to invoke the law, Mr. Shovel, you will not harm Slade or Mr. Scarlet. You might, conceivably, harm Mr. Crathie, though I doubt it. But there is one whom you would harm irreparably."

"And who is that?" demanded Mr. Shovel.

"Your own son. Even if you won your case, your boy would never again

have any respect for authority, your own included. He would become obsessed with his own importance. You would be making a rod for your own back."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Shovel.

There was a tap on the door.

"Come in," called out Mr. Buddle.

The door opened, and Shovel of the Lower Fourth entered. At fifteen, he was tall for his age, and sturdy. His hair was untidy. For the moment he did not see his father standing against the window. The boy said, a little nervously, his eyes on Mr. Buddle:

"Irony told me to come here, sir."

"Close the door, Shovel," said Mr. Buddle, and the boy obeyed. As he turned again, he saw his father, and ejaculated:

"Dad!"

Mr. Shovel moved forward. He clasped his son's hand, and put an arm round his shoulder.

He said: "I have called to take you home, Mervyn."

The boy looked startled.

"To take me home, Dad? Dad, what is it? It's Mum - she's had an accident - she's ill --"

"No, no," said his father soothingly. "Nothing of the sort. I'm sorry I scared you."

Mr. Buddle stood up. He picked up the letter from the desk, and held it out.

"You sent your mother this letter, Shovel. Presumably you wrote and posted it last evening. As a result of it, your father has decided to remove you from Slade immediately."

Open-mouthed, the boy swung his gaze from Mr. Buddle to his father. He found his voice.

"Remove me from Slade," he said.

He took the letter, and glanced at

it. A glance was enough. He gasped: "Oh!" A crimson glow rushed into his face.

"Well!" yapped Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Shovel said: "You are finished here at Slade, Mervyn. I shall not leave you here another night. Go, Mervyn, get your cap and coat, and return here. Your box can be sent on after you."

Mechanically the boy backed a couple of paces. His father and Mr. Buddle were watching him. Red in the face, the boy stood in silence, gaping at his father.

The father smiled his reassurance.

"There is nothing to worry about, Merve. Nobody will hurt you now. Get your things quickly. We have to get home."

Shovel of the Lower Fourth gazed at his form-master.

"Do as your father says, Shovel," said Mr. Buddle icily.

Shovel uttered a gasp. He stammered:

"I didn't -- I never -- I only wrote this to Mum. I didn't mean you to see it, Dad. I asked her not to tell you --"

"I know you did," said his father grimly. "Your mother was alarmed and anxious. Very properly, she showed it to me."

Mr. Buddle spoke. He was looking curiously at his embarrassed pupil.

"You must have known, Shovel, that your mother was bound to show such a letter to your father."

"Of course!" snapped Mr. Shovel.

"I didn't!" protested the boy. "I never dreamed that my mother would show it to my father. Mum and I have had heaps of secrets all my life. I've told her things before, and she never told Dad."

Mr. Shovel knitted his brows.

"Not serious things like this. Naturally your mother told me, and I am taking action. I am doing my duty as a father."

"What action are you taking?" cried Shovel of the Lower Fourth.

"For one thing, I am removing you from this school at once. Get your coat and don't waste time. The fog --"

The boy interrupted.

"You can't take me away from Slade. I don't want to leave Slade."

Mr. Shovel turned indignantly to Mr. Buddle.

"How loyal the boy is! He takes after me. I was always capable of the blindest loyalty. Merve, my dear boy, your loyalty is misplaced. Say no more."

The boy panted.

"You don't understand, Dad. I can't leave Slade. What would the fellows say? What about the footer and the cricket? What about so many things? I must go to school. Where would I go?"

"Somewhere better than this," replied his father heatedly. He added, a trifle wildly: "Maybe to Charterhouse or Harrow."

"I don't want to go to Charterhouse or Harrow. I should hate Charterhouse or Harrow. I'm a Slade man," said the boy shrilly. Mortification and alarm were evident in his face.

"Grant me patience!" gasped Mr. Shovel. "Are you out of your mind, Mervyn. You cannot stay at a place like this where the masters are incompetent and brutal --"

Mr. Buddle started to protest, a gleam of anger in his eyes, but before he could utter his protest, the boy burst out:

"Don't say things like that, Dad. Mr. Buddle will have you up for slander. Old Pink - I mean Mr. Scarlet - is the best Headmaster in the world. Everybody says that Mr. Buddle is the greatest

master on earth - they've built a sports pavilion in his memory - we all cheered like mad. Mr. Buddle has caught criminals in his time, and he teaches like an angel. I won't leave Slade."

"Mervyn!" shouted his father.

"I don't care. What about the games? I'm the juniors' goalkeeper. I'll play for the school one day. And we're rehearsing for a play -- I'm Bassanio --" The boy's voice broke.

Mr. Shovel stood, speechless. This had been the last reaction he could possibly have expected. His face was dark with suppressed annoyance.

Mr. Buddle spoke. He said, quietly:

"Shovel! If you love Slade, and if you do not wish to leave Slade, why did you write to your mother in a strain which was bound to cause anxiety to your parents?"

"Oh!" The boy stared down at the letter which was still in his hand. He crumpled it into a ball and thrust it into his pocket. "I didn't mean --"

Mr. Shovel spoke in suffocated tones.

"You wrote to your mother that you have been brutally assaulted by a master here - a man named Crathie. That man shall answer for what he has done. I cannot sue a master for assault and at the same time leave you as a pupil in the place."

"Obviously not!" murmured Mr. Buddle. His lips were twitching.

"Your loyalty does you credit, Mervyn, but it is absurd" said Mr. Shovel. "You cannot remain here, and by tomorrow, in the safety of your own home, you will comprehend that your father knows best. There is a law in this country to prevent brutality to boys, and I intend to invoke that law." He turned to Mr. Buddle, and added, in staccato accents, "You may tell Mr.



Scarlet, sir, that I shall claim damages. Very heavy damages indeed."

Mr. Buddle did not reply.

"Now, my son," said Mr. Shovel, briskly, "fetch your coat and cap and we will leave."

Mervyn Shovel did not move. He sniffed, he rubbed his chin, he shuffled his feet, he opened his mouth. He said nothing.

Mr. Shovel gazed at his hopeful son in increasing astonishment. He raised his voice:

"Do you hear me, Mervyn?"

Presumably Mervyn heard his father. He turned to Mr. Buddle and said huskily:

"Sir, can you please make my father see sense? Tell him that I can't leave Slade. He'll understand if you tell him."

"What!" roared his father.

Mr. Buddle passed a hand across his mouth. Schoolmasters do not grin. It would be undignified for a schoolmaster to grin, and dignity is important to a schoolmaster. But Mr. Buddle felt like grinning. This interview had taken an entirely different course from what he had feared.

He said, gently: "Your father knows his own business best, Shovel. You must obey him. Do as he tells you. Fetch your coat. You need not bother about your cap. You will not need a Slade cap again, and your father does not approve of school uniform, in any case."

Horror-stricken the boy stared at his form-master. His body sagged. He looked at his father. Suddenly words tumbled from his lips:

"I'm a Slade man. I belong here."

Mr. Shovel's eyes were glittering with anger. Glaring at Mr. Buddle, he said, with considerable indignation:

"This boy of mine is cowed. That is what this school has done for him. He

is cowed."

"Do you think so?" enquired Mr. Buddle, with dry interest.

Mr. Shovel addressed his son again, his voice trembling.

"Are you beside yourself, Mervyn? You wish to stay at this school where you have been felled by a master - knocked to the ground unconscious - rendered senseless? Answer me. Are you beside yourself?"

The boy was fumbling constantly with the white braid on his mauve blazer. He said in a low voice:

"It wasn't true."

Mr. Buddle scratched his nose thoughtfully. He regarded this surprising pupil curiously through his glasses.

"Wasn't true?" ejaculated Mr. Shovel, in utter astonishment. "What do you mean? What wasn't true?"

"I made it up," said Shovel miserably. "I wasn't felled by a master - I wasn't knocked to the ground unconscious - I wasn't rendered senseless. I was fooling about over the experiment. When I saw Crathie coming, I hopped back and tripped." He took a sideways look at his father. "If you take old Crathie to court, I shall be a witness for the defence."

Tragedy had suddenly turned to farce comedy. Mr. Buddle detected a sly, defensive expression in the boy's face as he looked at his father.

Mr. Shovel's countenance was a study. A deep shade of sunset was spreading into his cheeks from his neck up.

He said, in muffled tones: "You are telling me that you wrote your mother a pack of lies? That you have been wasting my time, and making me look a fool before your form-master here --?"

Shovel lowered his eyes.

"I exaggerated a bit, Dad. There

was no harm in it. I was just pulling Mum's leg."

Mr. Shovel stepped forward and thumped on Mr. Scarlet's desk. It made Mr. Buddle jump. The father turned a basilisk glare on his son.

"You accuse a man of assaulting you. You admit it is a false accusation. Now you say there is no harm in it. Is my son a lunatic?"

Mr. Buddle said, calmly:

"Why did you write to your mother as you did, Shovel?"

A faint smile flickered on the boy's face. It had gone in a moment, but an impish gleam remained in his eyes. He twisted a foot over the pile of the carpet.

"I thought my mother would send me some cash, sir. A kind of a reward. She always has done. If my father ragged me over something, Mum would always give me a reward for listening to him patiently. If I tell my mother I've been in a spot of bother at school, she always sends me something to make up for it. I needed the cash. We're having a form Christmas party before school breaks up, and we want to do it in style --"

His father interrupted him. Mr. Shovel was a very angry man.

"Mervyn, I can scarcely believe my ears. You told your mother lies in order to squeeze extra money out of her. You have worried us both greatly. I cannot imagine where you have acquired these near criminal tendencies. Your mother's father was a canon, and my own family lived in the same street as a member of parliament. I play golf, and am highly respected. You have been well brought up. I myself taught you to keep your eyes on the stars while you hit the nail aright and ploughed a straight furrow." With a flourish of mixed metaphors, Mr. Shovel changed course.

He said tartly: "I suppose that some evil boys in this school have put you up to this wicked prank --"

"No, Dad, it was all my own idea," said Mervyn ingenuously. "I've got the brains in our study. Nobody else would have thought of it."

Silence fell. It was such a silence as a novelist might have described as deafening. Mervyn fidgeted again with his blazer braid, and passed a tongue over his lips.

Mr. Shovel broke the silence with a barked order:

"Stop fiddling with that blazer!"

Mervyn's hands dropped to his sides.

"Mr. Buddle --" Mr. Shovel turned towards the form-master. "I am at a loss for words. What can I say? I can only apologise for wasting your time. It seems that I shall be leaving my son at Slade, after all --"

"Oh, no, Mr. Shovel." Mr. Buddle sat down again in the Headmaster's chair. "I must point out that it seems nothing of the sort. You came to remove your son from Slade, without making any enquiry into the facts of the matter. I am within my rights in insisting that you take him away with you as you originally intended."

There was a wail from Shovel of the Lower Fourth.

"Oh, sir, it isn't fair. You can't send me away from Slade just for writing a private letter to my mother. It isn't fair to punish me for something my father has done."

Mr. Shovel said fiercely: "I have never heard such nonsense, Mr. Buddle. You are not the Headmaster of Slade. You cannot tell me to remove my son --"

Mr. Buddle interrupted. He ignored the protesting father, and addressed the son.

"Wait outside, Shovel. Close the door behind you. I will speak to you again in a few minutes. I have something to say to your father."

Sulky and dogged, the boy left the study. The door closed behind him.

"Now, Mr. Shovel," said Mr. Buddle pleasantly.

Mr. Shovel folded his arms. He unfolded them again. He thrust his hands into his overcoat pocket. He withdrew them again. He was ill at ease. His tones were less bombastic when he spoke.

"I think I misunderstood you, sir. I am prepared to leave my son at Slade."

"I am not prepared to allow you to leave your son at Slade."

"This is ridiculous," snapped Mr. Shovel. "You have no authority to tell me to remove my son."

"I have every authority. I am acting Headmaster." Mr. Buddle added softly: "I assure you, Mr. Shovel, that Mr. Scarlet will fully support my action when I tell him why the boy has not been allowed to remain."

"I want him to remain," hissed Mr. Shovel.

"That is immaterial. Ten minutes ago you were insisting, in the most offensive terms, that he should leave. You cannot chop and change like that."

Mr. Shovel almost ground his teeth.

"I cannot take him with me, now I know what has happened. It is quite absurd. What will his mother say? She will never forgive me. What will our neighbours say? They might even assume that Mervyn has been expelled from the school."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"That is possible."

"I have never heard of such a preposterous situation. I will wait for

the Headmaster's decision. Mr. Scarlet will not wish to lose a pupil. No school ever wants to lose a pupil."

There was a granite smile on Mr. Buddle's lips.

"Sit down, Mr. Shovel. There are things you do not fully comprehend. Sit down."

With a grunt Mr. Shovel dropped into the armchair beside the desk.

Mr. Buddle said seriously: "You are mistaken in thinking that Mr. Scarlet would not wish to lose your son as a pupil. So far as Slade is concerned, there are far more boys seeking entry than ever we can accommodate. A vacancy will be filled immediately. If we doubled the size of Slade tomorrow, it would be filled to capacity next week. The size of Slade will never be increased, in the interests of the boys themselves. Slade is comparatively small in size - and that is partly the reason it is a great school."

"Yes, yes," ejaculated Mr. Shovel. "I see your point. I wish my son to remain here."

"I have told you that he cannot remain here, after what has happened. This is not due to his shortcomings, but to yours. I am acting Headmaster, in the absence of Mr. Scarlet and Mr. Fromo. Mr. Scarlet will wholeheartedly support my refusing to allow you to leave your son here, for the simple reason that the Headmaster was averse to admitting the boy in the first place. Candidly, he will not be sorry to see him go."

"I don't believe it," protested Mr. Shovel.

"I assure you it is true," said Mr. Buddle. "It was I, Mr. Shovel, who persuaded the Headmaster to accept your son at Slade against his better judgment."

Mr. Shovel sat back. He

regarded the other incredulously. After a brief pause, he asked:

"May I enquire why you did that, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle straightened an ink-pot in front of him, and, absently, smoothed the surface of the blotting pad.

"Mr. Scarlet discussed the matter with me, before your son was accepted here a few terms ago. You had expressed to the Headmaster your views on various matters. Mr. Scarlet did not believe that you would be a co-operative parent. He thought that Slade would be better off without your lad. I persuaded him otherwise. I had not then met you or your lad, but I felt sorry for the boy."

"Sorry for the boy?" echoed Mr. Shovel.

"Sorry for him," stressed Mr. Buddle. "It seemed to me that a boy, brought up in a household where discipline of any kind was frowned upon, would be heavily handicapped when he came to face the world. I thought that Slade might be the making of him. Mr. Scarlet came round to my point of view, and your application was accepted. I believe that I was right, and that time has proved me so. Your son is troublesome occasionally. Most normal boys are. But, in so many ways, he has improved enormously. He has made great headway with his studies, but he would probably have done that in any good school. Slade has given him independence, and a pride in his own achievements. It has developed his personality to a remarkable extent. At Slade he has become one of a team instead of a lad on his own." Mr. Buddle added shrewdly: "I would venture a guess that this improvement has been noted in his home circles - that people have commented on that improvement. I have no doubt that the Joneses, compared

with whom you are superior, have been impressed."

Mr. Shovel sat in silence for a moment or two. He gave Mr. Buddle an old-fashioned look, and broke the silence.

"You have been candid. A lesser man than myself might feel very offended." He paused again. "I don't see how you know, Mr. Buddle, but what you say is right. People have commented - we have been so proud of Mervyn --"

"Quite so!" said Mr. Buddle gently. "So you will appreciate that, when I tell Mr. Scarlet of the purpose of your visit to Slade this evening, he will fully agree that I was right to insist that you remove your son at once."

There was a faint but unmistakable note of dismissal in the last words, but Mr. Buddle did not expect the other to rise and leave, and he was right. Mr. Shovel made no move to take his departure.

He said slowly: "I am an impetuous man, Mr. Buddle. I apologise to you for what I said earlier --"

"Thank you," said Mr. Buddle. "I accept your apology in the spirit with which you make it. But when I tell Mr. Scarlet --"

"Is there any need for you to tell Mr. Scarlet?" demanded Mr. Shovel.

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows in shocked surprise.

"Any need for me to tell the Head of Slade of what has passed in this study this evening? Really, Mr. Shovel --"

Mr. Shovel rose. He regarded the form-master earnestly.

"Will Mr. Scarlet know of my visit, if you do not tell him?"

"Probably not."

Mr. Shovel cleared his throat, and took the plunge.

"I ask you not to tell him, Mr. Buddle. Let things go on as though my

visit had never occurred. Forget everything. Nobody will gain if Mervyn is compelled to leave Slade, but the boy will lose a lot. You take an interest in my boy, Mr. Buddle --"

"I take a keen interest in all my pupils."

"I know that. I ask you, as a favour, to allow my son to remain at Slade."

Mr. Buddle looked grave. He shook his head doubtfully. He stood up behind the Headmaster's desk.

"This is irregular, Mr. Shovel." He added, as though very reluctantly: "I don't know that it would be ethical for me to neglect to tell the Headmaster of what has passed between us."

"Are the ethics of the matter so important?" asked Mr. Shovel. "I ask you to consider my boy's future. I regret my visit here this evening. I was under a misapprehension and I acted hastily. As one gentleman to another --"

Mr. Buddle changed an involuntary chuckle into a cough. He was reminded suddenly of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus always made Mr. Buddle chuckle. Mr. Buddle conquered the impulse to answer "Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Say no more, sir," said Mr. Buddle cordially. "If it is your express wish that I do not report to the Headmaster --"

Mr. Shovel held out his hand, and Mr. Buddle took it. It was not a hearty handshake. Mr. Shovel was not a man possessed of a hearty handshake, but the gesture was sincere.

"We understand one another," observed Mr. Shovel.

He crossed the room, and opened the door. Mervyn Shovel was standing there, looking depressed. In response to his father's motioning hand, the boy entered the study.

Mr. Shovel eyed his son a trifle uncomfortably. He said, sternly:

"Mervyn, I have persuaded Mr. Buddle to allow you to remain at Slade. He has agreed to my request that your Headmaster shall not be told of your wretched conduct. It is likely that Mr. Buddle may decide that you deserve corporal punishment. I hope he does. Don't write to your mother and ask her for half-a-crown per stroke."

Mervyn Shovel looked gratefully at Mr. Buddle.

"Oh, thank you, sir," he said.

Mr. Buddle nodded gravely.

"The matter will be forgotten, Shovel. I hope you have learned your lesson. Perhaps your father would like you to walk with him to the school gates, but do not be long."

Shovel of the Lower Fourth was smiling happily.

"I won't be long, sir. I've got my prep to finish, and then we're doing some sparring under Mr. Crayford in the gym --"

For several minutes after father and son had left the study Mr. Buddle stood in thought. He had the impression that he would make a good Headmaster, but he realised that the lofty position held its own drawbacks. It is not exactly a sinecure to be "The Chief."

"Uneasy lies the Headmaster that wears the crown," murmured Mr. Buddle. He chuckled. He was not sure that he had not made a rather good joke.

. . . . .

It was nearly an hour later that a nervous Mr. Crathie presented himself in Mr. Buddle's own study. Mr. Buddle was reading by his fireside, and he closed the book - Mr. Meredith's volume of Gems - as the science master entered.

"Shut the door, and draw up a chair to the fire, Mr. Crathie," said Mr. Buddle.

Crathie did so. He ventured:

"I saw Mr. Shovel leave. Shovel went with him, but the youngster came back."

Mr. Buddle leaned back in his chair, clasped his volume up against his chest, and stretched out his slippered feet to the fire.

He said, conversationally: "The matter is settled, Mr. Crathie. Mr. Shovel came here this evening to remove his son. The father believed that you had assaulted his son --"

"I did assault his son," said Mr. Crathie miserably.

Mr. Buddle smiled wryly.

"You are mistaken, Mr. Crathie. Shovel of the Lower Fourth wrote to his mother that you had attacked him. The boy has confessed to his father that he wrote an untruth in his letter to his mother. The boy takes all the blame, and the father has apologised for his unworthy intentions."

Mr. Crathie's mouth opened in surprise. He said nothing for a while, and Mr. Buddle regarded him whimsically.

Mr. Crathie said, at last: "The boy lied to his father. I can't make it out. The boy told his mother the truth, but he lied to his father."

"That would seem to be evident," agreed Mr. Buddle.

"Why?" demanded Mr. Crathie.

"Why did he tell his father lies? It wasn't to protect me. He doesn't like me. None of the boys like me --"

"That is surely unimportant," remarked Mr. Buddle gently.

"Was the boy trying to put me in a false position - to make me beholden to him --?"

"I think you can abandon that idea. Shovel is not a devious lad. His mother

indulges him, and he tried to impose on her sympathy. Plenty of boys impose on their mothers. He had nothing more sinister than that in mind --"

"But his father took the matter up --"

"He did, indeed."

Nervously, Mr. Crathie twisted the stems of his glasses between his fingers.

He said haltingly: "Mr. Buddle, what can I do? Though the father may take no further action, the boy will know. He will talk about it among his friends. Every time he looks at me I will know that he despises me --"

Mr. Buddle spoke sharply.

"Mr. Crathie, please don't be an utter fool. Go on as though nothing has happened. The boys will forget it at once, and so should you. Never think of it again. The boys will treat you just as you deserve and expect to be treated."

"But when the Headmaster hears about it all," muttered Mr. Crathie.

"The Headmaster will not hear about it. Mr. Shovel especially requested me that Mr. Scarlet should not be told. I shall honour Mr. Shovel's request. Could I do less?"

Mr. Crathie heaved a very deep breath.

"You've worked it somehow, Mr. Buddle. You're a very clever man --"

"Oh, no." Mr. Buddle shook his head. "It was Shovel of my form who cut the ground from beneath his father's feet. He did that by claiming that he had lied to his mother --"

"He didn't lie to his mother - he lied to his father," said Mr. Crathie in wonderment.

"Probably he had his reasons for doing so," commented Mr. Buddle. "I certainly pulled the strings to cause Mr. Shovel to beg me not to report the

matter to the Headmaster, but I could not have done that but for what the boy himself had said. You are indebted to Shovel of the Lower Fourth, but it is a debt which, under no circumstances, must you ever acknowledge or ever pay. Both you and the boy will be happy to erase the matter completely from your minds. Do you understand, Mr. Crathie?"

"I understand," said Mr. Crathie, heavily. He rose to his feet. Impulsively, he held out his hand. "I shall not forget your kindness, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle stood beside him, still clasping his volume of Gems.

He said, dreamily: "I often read school stories, Mr. Crathie. This is a volume of them." He tapped the book he was holding. "I am particularly interested in the schoolmasters which feature in these stories. Some are good, some are indifferent, as in real life. Some apply discipline too lightly, some use it too strictly." Mr. Buddle

smiled. "It is essential, if a man is to teach successfully, that he should be able to discipline his charges. It is even more important that he is able to discipline himself." He clicked his tongue. "But I am giving a lecture, and I mustn't do that. Good night, Mr. Crathie."

In the doorway Mr. Crathie turned and spoke, with his head slightly on one side.

"Mr. Buddle," he said, soberly, "why do you think that Shovel lied to his father and saved my bacon?"

Mr. Buddle shrugged his shoulders.

He said: "Who can tell? I think we can be assured that it was not entirely altruism." He paused, and went on more slowly: "Perhaps I'm old-fashioned - perhaps those school stories have made me an idealist - but I should like to believe that Shovel was influenced by the spirit of Slade."

\* \* \* \* \*

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=====

# E. S. Brooks

THE STRUGGLE IS ENDING

THE MAGNET AND GEM

by ROBERT BLYTHE

In 1912, E. S. B. was not unacquainted with writing for the Gem, for although he had written only one St. Jim's story, "The Terrible Three's Sub," in 1910, he had been writing continuously in that paper for two years. His characters of Frank Kingston, and his girl friend Dolores, must have been as familiar to Gem readers as the inhabitants of St. Jim's. So much so in fact that Hinton, in an unusual request, asked E. S. B., - "When you send in your next Frank Kingston yarn will you just mention in your letter what you estimate were the lengths of the two Gem serials you wrote." To which Brooks replied, - "In answer to your query, I estimate roughly, the length of the "Iron Island" was 235,000 words, and the "Brotherhood of Iron" 175,000 words . . ."

This was in March 1912 and therefore it must have been rather disconcerting for him to receive this letter dated 2nd May:

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Thank you very much for your letter and story received this morning. I shall let "The Shadwell Opium Den" conclude the series. For the time being anyway, I'm afraid I cannot give you any more work.

Yours etc.,

H. A. Hinton

However, this was not the last Frank Kingston story. He was to write two more, although there was a five month gap between their appearances in the Gem.

This did mean that without the weekly cheque Edwy was once again going to be hard up. How much this contact with the Gem meant will be appreciated when it is realised that during the period 1910 until March 1912 (apart from the short stories which he had contributed to his brother's theatre magazine, "The Magazine Programme," for which he could hardly have received more than 10/- per story) he had no more than fourteen stories accepted by any other A. P. paper. Mind you, £2.2s.0d. per week at this time for a lad of 18, was not, I suppose, bad pay. Nevertheless something had to be done and so Edwy decided to submit a new St. Jim's story.

The correspondence dealing with the "Magnet" and "Gem" is extensive, over 170 letters in all, but, as I don't want to give our editor heart failure, I've pruned them drastically. What I have left in, will, I hope, make you wish that you could have had more. The letters themselves will tell the story, although I have added a few footnotes to clarify certain things.

The first letter dealing specifically with a Gem story is dated 19th March, 1912, and at this point he doesn't know that the Frank Kingston stories are going to be axed.

19th March, 1912.

Dear Mr. Hinton,

To get to the point straight away, I'm rather hard up. Except for your £2.2s.0d. cheques every week I am not drawing in much at the moment - though one or two stories in other editors hands are awaiting publication. I'm a little pressed for money and will be more so in a week or two's time.

The enclosed is the beginning of a Tom Merry story, which I thought of making into a 3d. book.



I thought the idea would do just right for a Tom Merry story, and so wrote up the first ten thousand words or so for your perusal. It is my hope, the yarn will be acceptable to you - and if so I will get ahead with it immediately.

Can you manage to look through the enclosed by Thursday morning? I shall be up in London on that day, and will call at your office. We could then discuss the matter. I hope you will not think I have taken a liberty in writing the enclosed, but I thought it best to write the first four or five chapters, just as a sample.

With kind regards,

The Tom Merry story mentioned here was eventually published as "Tom Merry's Promise," Gem 258.

The next two letters are addressed to Rex Haydon, the editor of the Boys' Realm, although for what purpose I'm not quite sure.

24th March, 1912

Dear Mr. Haydon,

As promised I herewith enclose a copy of the "Gem Library" containing "Tom Merry" story which I wrote. I also enclose the first chapters of another story of St. Jim's upon which I am at present engaged. These will give you an idea of my style of writing this class of school story. It is, of course, Mr. Hamilton's style, but I could write stories of another school in exactly the same way. I should very much like to do this, needless to say.

Yours sincerely,

26th March, 1912

Dear Mr. Haydon,

Just a line to acknowledge the "Tom Merry" MS. which you returned this morning - for which I thank you. As you didn't enclose a letter I presume you are writing me after you have glanced through the "Gem" I sent you.

Yours sincerely,

16th July, 1912

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I am now at work on the Tom Merry story - the commencement of which you have - and I'm not quite certain as to the length you wish it to run to. I should be glad if you can spare time to drop me a line some time this week, as I do not wish to make the yarn too long. 35,000 words is the length I have in mind. Is this correct?

Yours sincerely,

17th August, 1912

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I have been thinking for some time of another story on the lines of the BROTHERHOOD OF IRON, and today I have jotted the gist of it down on the enclosed sheet of paper. Of course, it would be quite fresh, and the incidents would be very different from those in the BROTHERHOOD. I am quite sure that I could write an exciting yarn from the plot - a better story than those which preceded it.

Although you told me when I saw you last that you had no opening for anything, I thought that if you saw the synopsis of this story I have in mind you might like it and decide to push it in the GEM or MAGNET.

Yours sincerely,

The "Brotherhood of Iron" story mentioned here was, in fact, accepted and appeared in Gem No. 250, dated 23rd November, and was called "The Hound of the Moor," but this was the last.

Now we come to the first mention of the "Magnet." The Gem story had been accepted and he had been asked to submit one for the "Magnet."

12th November, 1912

Dear Mr. Hinton,

With regard to the Magnet story (how would "The Greyfriars Pantomime" do for a title?) I shall be up on Friday afternoon, and I will bring an outline of the yarn with me. I can see my way quite clear to get to work on it early next week, and you can rely on the story being in your hands on Monday, 25th November, as I promised. This is, of course, provided the first ten thousand words are to your liking. I shall do my very utmost to finish the Tom Merry yarn and bring it up with me on Friday, but if I can't possibly manage it (as I have an instalment of the **Dreadnought** serial to do as well as a short story of a series) you shall have it in your hands by next Monday. But, as I have said, I am planning my work so that I shall have next week clear for the MAGNET yarn. I shall not disappoint you over this.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

"The Greyfriars Pantomime" was published without title change in Magnet 256.

24th November, 1912

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I enclose herewith MS. of THE GREYFRIARS PANTOMIME up to page 27. I shall, in accordance with my promise made to you the other day, bring the remainder of the story up tomorrow afternoon. I send the enclosed because I thought that you would, perhaps, like to have it in as early as possible. If you can find time to glance through it before I arrive I shall be glad, for I am anxious to know your opinion on it. As you will see, I have altered the episode of Coker changing places with the comedian - and I think for the better.

Yours sincerely,

Hardly had Brooks' Manuscript been accepted before Hinton sent the following telegram:

3rd December, 1912

Can you call morning eleven. Magnet yarn wanted urgently. Will give you full synopsis.

Hinton

8th December, 1912

Dear Mr. Hinton,

Sorry I am unable to enclose any of FISH'S FAG AGENCY herewith. I am, however, sending off 10,000 words tomorrow evening, and will, as arranged, let you have the remainder on Wednesday.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. I am confident that I can, by working hard and continuously, get the MS. completed in the time arranged - and that without letting it suffer in the least. But, in coming down here, I have lost practically a day, and I should greatly appreciate it if I had Wednesday to finish the story in. This way I could let you have about 22,000 by Wednesday morning, and the remainder on Thursday (brought up personally). I wish to impress upon you, however, that if you want the MS. in - entire - by Wednesday, according to the original arrangement, I will do it. But, as I said above, I should be very glad of the little extra time. Could you drop me a line upon receipt of this?

E.S.B.

Fishy's Fag Agency was published in Magnet No. 257. Hardly had E. S. B. digested that lot when Hinton wrote again.

Wednesday, 11th December, 1912

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Thank you for your letter and for the batch of Magnet yarn received this morning. I am relying upon seeing you on Thursday morning, as I want you to go ahead at once with a Gem yarn. You could use the plot you submitted to me for the Penny Popular St. Jim's story and make it a 30,000 word yarn.

I take it you are prepared to take it on. I shall want the complete yarn by today week.

Yours sincerely,

H. A. Hinton

15th December, 1912

Dear Mr. Hinton,

Thanks very much for your wire received yesterday morning, stating that you are sending the cheque tomorrow.

I enclose the first Chapter of TOM MERRY'S PROMISE herewith. On Friday my face caused me considerable pain and inconvenience again, and was still greatly swollen yesterday. During the evening, however, something "gave," and the pain was immediately conspicuous by its absence. I am very glad to say that I am now as "wight as wain!" I am getting ahead with the work at full speed tomorrow, and I again positively assure you that you will have the two yarns in your hands on or before Christmas Eve, according to our arrangement. I will post off a big batch of the Tom Merry story on Tuesday night, and the remaining few pages about Wednesday mid-day, so that it will reach you either in the evening before you leave, or by a later post for you to receive upon your arrival on Thursday morning. I am quite sure that this will be satisfactory to you. I am not coming up to town this week, as I wish to devote the time to getting ahead with the Greyfriars yarn.

Yours sincerely,

Thursday, 19th December, 1912

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I am sorry, after my promise, regarding the advance payment cheque, that you have been kept waiting for it so long; but I have got it at last, and enclose it herewith.

I received the second portion of "Tom Merry's Promise" this morning and like it alright. Am relying upon having the conclusion in the morning.

In a day or two I will send you another synopsis for another Magnet yarn which I shall want you to push on with at once. I shall be glad to have it as soon as possible after Christmas.

Kind regards, Yours sincerely,

H. A. Hinton

22nd December, 1912

Dear Mr. Hinton,

Thank you very much for your letter, enclosing the cheque. I note what you say about another Magnet yarn, but as I shall be up on Tuesday, perhaps there will be no necessity for you to write. I enclose the opening chapters of "The Schoolboy Domestics" herewith, and you can absolutely rely upon my bringing up the remainder with me on Tuesday morning. I shall arrive at your office at about eleven o'clock.

Yours sincerely,

"The Schoolboy Domestics" was an alternate title for "Fishy's Fag Agency."

1st January, 1913

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I received your wire this evening. I am sorry for the slight delay in despatching the opening pages of HARRY WHARTON & CO'S RESCUE. Unexpected visitors in the house have caused considerable stoppage of work, but now that the holidays are over (and I am thankful for it) I am able to "get busy."

I enclose the first 5,000 words herewith, and you will receive a further batch of about 10,000 by mid-day tomorrow - Thursday, 2nd January. The remainder of the story I shall bring up with me on Friday morning, without fail.

Yours sincerely,

"Harry Wharton and Co's Rescue" was published in Magnet No. 260. Hardly had this story been written before he was urgently requested for another. The story, "The Schoolboy Professional" was published as "Fatty Wynn - Professional" in Gem No. 264.

6th January, 1913

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I am sending off the synopsis of THE SCHOOLBOY PROFESSIONAL so as to reach you on Thursday. There is no advantage in sending it sooner than this, as I am coming up to see you on Friday morning, when you can discuss it with me, and point out any little alterations you may require. I shall make it 56,000 words in length.

Yours sincerely,

Friday, 24th January, 1913

Dear Mr. Brooks,

As a result of an after-thought, I have just sent you a wire asking you to write a still longer Tom Merry yarn. I think it will be a good thing to give them for once an all-story number. I am finishing the serial this week, so it gives me the chance of trying the experiment. Will you therefore write up the conclusion of the yarn so that it will run out to the foot of Page 27 instead of page 25, as previously arranged?

Yours sincerely,

E. S. B's father's health was not too good at this time, and Edwy's concern is reflected in letters apologising for the delay in submitting fresh copy for the new St. Jim's story.

9th February, 1913

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I enclose some more copy herewith. Owing to my father's grave illness, I have been unable to complete the yarn by tonight. You cannot tell how reluctant I am to send you the enclosed instead of the whole yarn - especially at a time when I had arranged to turn in the story within a limited number of days. Under ordinary circumstances this would have been simple - and I am quite confident that you will understand. I will come up in a day or two and bring the conclusion of the story with me together with another synopsis. I am glad to be able to add that my father is a little better today. Usually, I do not let private affairs interfere with work, but on this occasion it is a different matter.

Yours sincerely,

The yarn mentioned here as 'enclosed' was "Hidden Treasure at St. Jim's" and was published in Gem No. 268.

11th March, 1913

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I regret that I have not yet sent you the MS. of "The Informer," but there is more "meat" in this story, and is taking longer to write - to my satisfaction. I am taking considerable pains over it, and will bring up the complete yarn with me on Friday.

Yours sincerely,

"The Informer" was published under the title "The Schoolboy Informer" in Gem No. 273.

22nd April, 1913

Dear Mr. Hinton,

For the last four or five days I have been suffering from a very painful and troublesome boil on my neck, and it has had the effect of making me feel very much off colour. It is especially unfortunate, as I particularly wished to bring to you the completed MS. of the Tom Merry yarn today. Under the circumstances I have not been able to work properly, and if you can give me till Friday - or, better still, till Monday morning - I shall be greatly obliged and relieved. I had made up my mind to run up today and see you, but I am unable to wear a collar, and, indeed, do not feel well enough. I am happy to add, however, that the protuberance is on the decline.

May I ask you a favour? My story, THE SCHOOLBOY INFORMER, is, I think, being published next week. Could you see your way to let me have a cheque for it on Friday, 25th April - this week? I have a rather big cheque to meet, and you would assist me greatly by complying with my request.

With kindest regards, and apologies,  
Yours sincerely,

The Manuscript mentioned in the first paragraph was published in Gem No. 281 as "Coward or Hero?" Brooks own title was "The Coward of St. Jim's."

15th May, 1913

Dear Mr. Hinton,

As I mentioned to you when I saw you for a moment in Farringden Street last Friday, my brother has been home from Canada for a few days. He sails for New York on Saturday. His visit has necessarily put a stop to work during the holidays, but I have just completed "The Coward of St. Jim's," and am now getting out a synopsis for a "Magnet" yarn. I shall run up to your office with both on Monday.

Yours sincerely,

27th May, 1913

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I am getting information with regard to the proceedings at the annual meeting at Bisley, and will let you have a synopsis in during the next few days. By the way, I suppose the boys to take part in the meeting will be Harry Wharton & Co., and Tom Brown's Australian cousin? How about the seniors? And will the boys go as Boy Scouts or members of the Greyfriars Cadet Corps? These are all very minor points, but I should like to be clear about them.

Yours sincerely,

I'm not sure which story this eventually turned out to be for I do not have the relevant issue. The Magnet titles for the period do not give much help. I'm inclined to believe that it was Magnet No. 273, "Friars versus Saints."

Between May 1913 and January 1914, letters passed backward and forward concerning "D'Arcy's Mysterious Present," Gem No. 314, "April Fools All," Magnet No. 321, "Up Against It," Magnet No. 291, but they are merely notes mentioning the posting of sections of each story.

Some of the stories mentioned during this time have titles which I have been unable to trace, mainly because the subject matter contained in Brooks title is not carried over into the final title as printed. For example "Kerr - Detective" is mentioned in a February 1914 letter. As the manuscript was accepted in January, it may possibly be "The Housemasters Peril," published in Gem No. 319 of the 21st March, 1914.

In the next letter I wondered if I had got the date right but, February 1914, is given on the letter and this is interesting when you read what E. S. B. has to say in his third sentence. It is as though war was regarded as inevitable even this early in the year.

21st February, 1914

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I enclose a MAGNET synopsis herewith. Some months ago I submitted a synopsis on similar lines, but the enclosed is very much altered, and I think would be exactly suitable for a topical Harry Wharton yarn. When I say topical I mean it will be quite all right for any time during the period of the war. The first synopsis you regarded as being a little too dramatic - but, considering the strenuous times through which we are now passing, I believe the yarn would work up really well.

I shall be in town tomorrow, at about five o'clock, and will bring with me the GEM yarn upon which I am now engaged, and I hope you will have glanced through the MAGNET synopsis by the time I arrive.

Yours sincerely,

In view of the dates and what we know Brooks had written for the Gem and Magnet this letter must refer to the Magnet story, "Changed by Adversity" Magnet No. 347, and "Tom Merry's Find," (by a coincidence) Gem No. 347.

"Squiff's Fateful Purchase" was published under the title "The Great Bat Mystery," Magnet No. 448. "The Wrong Track," Magnet No. 495 was in fact the last Magnet story to be written by Brooks. It will be noted that although the letter is dated April 1914, the stories did not get published until September 1916 and August 1917, respectively. Obviously Hamilton was turning in stories regularly at this period (or other writers were), and Edwy's stories had been salted away for a rainy day.

8th April, 1914

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I enclose the remainder of "Squiff's Fateful Purchase" herewith. I am now working hard on the next yarn - "The Wrong Track" - the synopsis of which you passed last week. I will let you have it in, complete, next week, on Friday.

I'm sorry I'm a little later with the copy on this occasion and I am going to work extra hard for the next few days, and you can rely on my carrying out the following programme:

"The Wrong Track" - Friday, the 15th  
Another yarn complete - Friday, the 23rd  
" " " - Monday, 3rd May

and then the next story a fortnight later, and so on. I will let you have another synopsis early next week, so that you can decide upon it when I see you on the Friday. You can positively rely upon getting the copy in on time - for I'm devoting all my energies to these stories now, and wish to continue doing so.

Yours sincerely,

19th May, 1914

Dear Mr. Hinton,

If you can manage to send me a small cheque this week-end (a pound or two) on account of that GEM yarn - "The Mysterious Tenant" - I shall be very grateful. I am now getting ahead with "Maully, the Swot," and will turn in the first portion in a few days, and let you have the conclusion next week - as I promised Mr. Down.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

What these two stories eventually turned out to be I cannot say. No title quite ties up with Brooks. The same goes for the Magnet, although in this case it is probably "The Mystery of Maully," Magnet No. 451.

One of the most interesting of the letters is the two that follow. What a pity that the telegram followed so soon. It would have given us an interesting example of contrasting styles. I wonder if Edwy ever received any recompense for his efforts.

18th August, 1914

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I am sending you herewith about 15,000 words of a "Gem" yarn begun by Hamilton. The second half has never been received, having been dispatched from Austria at the beginning of the war. Will you get to work at once and finish the story as rapidly as possible. I want it about 25,000 words complete, so another 10,000 is all that is wanted - it should not take you long to polish that off.

Yours sincerely,

C. M. Down

20th August, 1914

Dear Mr. Down,

Your letter received, with the enclosed 15,000 words of manuscript, last night. You sent it to my old address (although I gave you my new one when I saw you last), and it was held up in the post for a whole day. Consequently, I have lost a day completely, for if I had received it yesterday morning I should have commenced work instanter. As it is I shall get busy the very minute I have posted this letter.

I will read the MS. carefully, and then continue on from the point where it is broken off. You can rely upon receiving it on Monday, completed. I cannot possibly promise it for tomorrow, Friday, owing to the lost day.

I have no definite work on hand now, and am quite prepared to devote all my time to writing

GEM and MAGNET yarns. Say the word, and I will turn in one complete yarn every week until further orders. I should do no other work whatever and so could centre all my attention upon your stuff. And you could rely upon me - for under such circumstances I would make it a point of honour to let you have the copy in promptly and regularly.

Try me - I should not fail you.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

25th August, 1914

Brooks, 181 Annerley Rd., S.E.

Hamilton's belated copy coming in. Do not continue with Secret of Airship story.

Down

The story mentioned in the next letter was not published until December, 1915, but those that follow eventually appeared in Gem No. 374, "A Wasters Reward:" Gem No. 391, "A Captured Chum:" Gem No. 411, "True Blue:" Gem No. 429, "A Mission of Mystery:" Magnet No. 347, "Changed by Adversity:" and Magnet No. 388, "The Mystery of the Gables." The letters give no indication and I haven't the books to compare the plots. It's good to know that whatever readers then and now think of substitute writers, the letters leave one in no doubt as to what the editors thought - as far as Brooks was concerned at any rate.

9th September, 1914

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Your synopsis for the story entitled "The Bounders Relapse" is pretty good, and you can get on with the story.

In the synopsis you have left all the explanation of the story till the end. I think this must be arranged differently in the actual story - otherwise the last chapter or so will be purely explanatory and rather dull.

Yours sincerely,

C. M. Down

25th January, 1915

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I approve the enclosed synopsis, which seems to have the makings of a very good yarn.

I think the blackmailing incident had better be toned down somewhat; and one or two light touches should be introduced to relieve what will otherwise be rather a morbid story.

Yours sincerely,

H. A. Hinton

28th April, 1915

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Thanks for your letter to hand this morning. I think you had better make the yarn 30,000 words. Talbot's name may be mentioned, but it would be wise not to do anything violent. Mr. Railton should not come into the story.

You have given me very short notice for a special pay-sheet. However, I will send one down today, but it will not do for you to rely upon getting the payment this week from the cashiers.

Yours sincerely,

H. A. Hinton

27th January, 1915

Dear Mr. Hinton,

Thanks for your letter of the 25th. I am glad you like the synopsis, and I will get on with the yarn at once, making the slight alterations you suggest. I am not quite clear about one point - is the yarn to be 25,000 or 30,000 words? And shall I bring Talbot's name in now and again? How about Mr. Railton - perhaps I had better refrain from mentioning him at all?

Can you manage an advance for me this week - about half the payment for "The Mystic Circle?" I am rather in a fix and a cheque this week-end would be exceedingly welcome. I sincerely trust you will be able to render me this little assistance - or rather, big assistance, for it will get me out of a hole.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

28th January, 1915

Dear Mr. Hinton,

Thanks for the letter of yesterday's date. You can rely upon receiving the GEM yarn on Monday, 8th February. As you are preparing a time-table for the next two months' stories the following are the

dates upon which I can send in yarns: One on 22nd February - another on 8th March - and another on 22nd March. This makes four stories during the period of two months. I have got no other work on hand, so you can positively rely upon receiving one yarn on each of the above dates. Of course, I will bring each story up myself, so that we can discuss the next synopsis - which I will submit, as usual, before starting on the actual writing.

I trust the above will be satisfactory to you - because, if so, I shall not look for other commissions elsewhere. As a matter of absolute fact, I would prefer not to seek other commissions, as it would suit me splendidly to do the work I have outline above.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

And with that the Magnet and Gem correspondence closes, with Brooks still having difficulty in making ends meet.

I have called this effort "The Struggle is Ending." I wish I could have called it "The Struggle has Ended" but unfortunately there are no more letters.

Later that year, in September, Edwy wrote his first Nelson Lee story and from then until the first St. Frank's story in 1917, he wrote a total of sixty-three full-length detective stories.

Although we must be very grateful that all this correspondence between 1907 and 1915 has been left to us, it is nevertheless, a very great pity that not one letter mentioning the Nelson Lee Library has survived. The explanation is, I'm sure, that they were lost during transit from Halstead in Essex, to London, sometime just before the last war. But, whatever the reason we shall never know under what circumstances Brooks was asked to write a detective story for the Lee, or how he was invited to create a new school. If we did, then I could truly call this article - "The Struggle is Ended."

\* \* \* \* \*

INFORMATION: Will anyone who corresponded with the late Walter Webb please get in touch with me. I'm particularly interested in letters which contained any information (however inaccurate it may appear to be in the light of current research) on 'MICHAEL STORM,' 'Mrs. STORM,' or G. H. TEED. Also any details and especially names of the rather more obscure members of the Amalgamated Press editorial staff who worked on AP papers during the period 1900-1930. For instance, can anyone tell me anything about a Charles Mander, who probably worked on either Pluck or Marvel around 1907? All letters answered, and any information gratefully received by:

CHRIS LOWDER

"EYETHERMES," CRADLEY, Nr. MALVERN, WORCESTERSHIRE.

Oh, yes - and **HAPPY CHRISTMAS!**

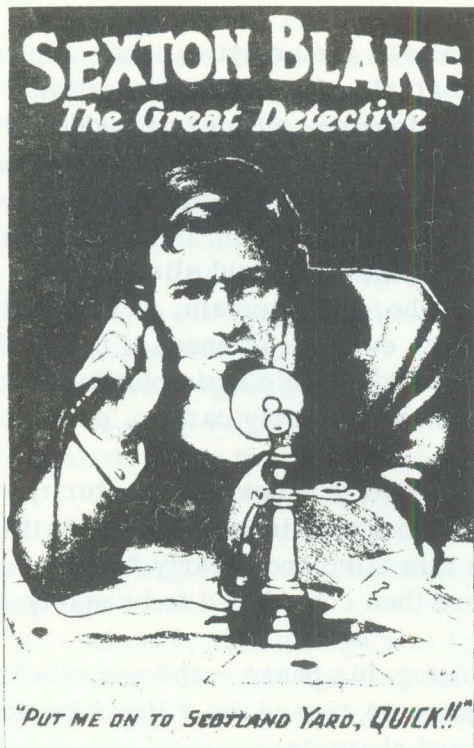
WANTED: S. O. L. No's 149, 151, 168, 169, 170, 177, 181, 185, 189, 207. Other S. O. L's and Magnets for exchange.

PHILIP TIERNEY

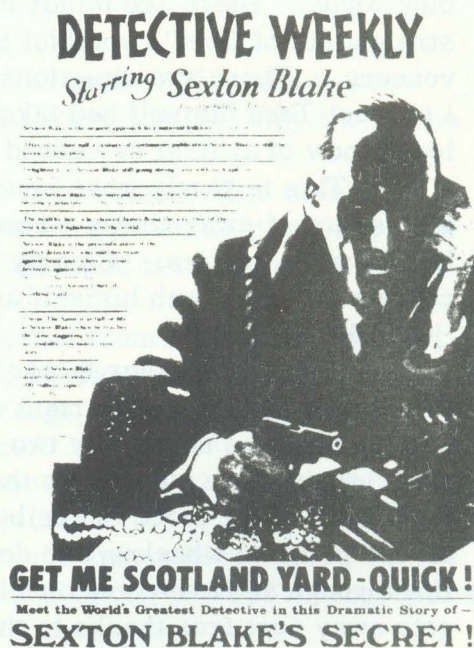
6 ABBEY PARK ROAD, GRIMSBY.

THE PROGRESSIVE PHASE  
**of G. H. Teed**

by CHRISTOPHER LOWDER



Advertisements for Sexton Blake  
 as used respectively in 1910 and 1932



With very little juggling, we can divide up the career of George Heber Teed (the 'Hamilton' was a personal fancy, added, it is thought, because the name Heber had unfortunate associations for him) as a Sexton Blake writer into five phases - Early, Progressive, Mature, Violent, Late.

The Early phase is self-explanatory. Although there is a certain amount of mystery attached to his first couple of years in the game, and although he did seem to leap into a prominence that very few other writers, in any other field of writing were far from assured.

One could tell that here was an extremely promising writer, certainly; but that promise was yet to be fulfilled. Teed was still learning his craft.

By 1915, however, a gradual change can be seen in his work, culminating in that extraordinary Summer Double Number of the *Union Jack*, "Bribery and Corruption" (see Note 1), in which, throughout the whole of its 80,000-word length, no-one is murdered.

To those who may not have read this particular tale, the idea of a detective story without a body may seem astonishing, not to say laughable. In fact, "Bribery and Corruption" is a tour de force in every way, and can be read on many levels.

It can be read simply as a good story, well told. It can be read as a fine political novel, in which one is given an extraordinary insight into the machinations



and motivations of an ambitious rogue who seeks political control over a whole town. It can be read as an intellectual exercise where one follows the analytical and deductive processes of a detective, and as a clever example of how to write a novel-length story around that detective without resorting to violence, murder or sudden death. And it can be read for its stunningly visual descriptions of a part of the world - New Brunswick, Canada - the author knew as a child, and which obviously affected him deeply.

Following on from this, it can also be read, I think, as a vivid slice of autobiography. There are minor characters in the story who, I am certain, were lifted straight out of Teed's youthful experiences and not given even the thinnest of fictional veneers. There are situations and incidents aside from the tale's main plotline that I suspect Teed himself had taken a part in at some time in his early career, or at least knew of at first or second hand.

This is partly what I mean by the term 'Progressive.' There is a maturity - almost a self-awareness - about "Bribery and Corruption" that is largely absent in his previous stories. Clearly Teed enjoyed writing this tale, and clearly he was coming to terms with himself as a writer of what were then considered to be solely 'juvenile' stories.

There is another factor worthy of note concerning this phase - and one which is possibly the most important of all. He was beginning to regard the villains he was writing about as not wholly two-dimensional, cardboard characters.

It is made quite plain that Hammerton Palmer, the crooked financier who is the villain of the piece in "Bribery and Corruption," is a sympathetic character, for all his political wheeling and dealing and general roguery. He saves a young boy's life through an heroic and unselfish action on his own part, and at the end of the story gets away scot free thanks to the intervention of Sexton Blake.

That this process of 'cleaning up' Palmer was a deliberate one on Teed's part is given added weight if one reads "The Prize Ship," a two-part, 40,000-word story by Teed, that was published in Pluck a month or so before "Bribery and Corruption" appeared in the Union Jack.

Here, again, Palmer is the hero/villain of the piece, and here, again, he gets away thanks to Blake - and with a sizeable slice of the loot (£8,000) gained by his financial trickery.

Compare this with Palmer's first appearance almost exactly a year before in the Summer Double Number for 1914, "The Death Club." In this story, he is nothing more than a cold-blooded murderer, and escapes the law, and the gallows, by the skin of his teeth, and with no help at all from Blake. (See Note 2.)

We see a gradual change in other Teed characters too in this period. Huxton Rymer is a good example of a ruthless killer who becomes far more appealing, and, indeed, 'real,' as time goes on. The Rymer of "The Diamond Dragon," "The Great Mining Swindle" or "The Case of the Radium Patient" is a far less sympathetic character than the Rymer of "The Two Mysteries" or "The Blue God."

Of course, giving fictional crooks a three-dimensional aspect, making them to a certain extent into sympathetic and appealing characters, was nothing new, and I'm not suggesting that Teed revolutionized detective fiction as a whole when he used this method. What he did do, however, was to give his particular characters much more depth than his fellow-writers in the same field gave theirs.

There is no redeeming feature in Andrew Murray's Professor Kew, for instance; Lewis Jackson's Kestrel remained an out-and-out murderous crook from "The Case of the Cataleptic" (1916) right through until "The Case of the Biscay Pirate" (1944) - and who could ever feel any sort of sympathy for Robert Murray's malignant Mr. Reece? E. S. Brooks made Waldo into a friendly enough type, true, but unfortunately Waldo remained, like Norman Conquest, stubbornly two-dimensional until the end of his days.

Only Zenith, Anthony Skeene's brilliant albino, aspired to any sort of depth character on the same level as Teed's best creations. But Zenith, alas, was a paradox, and very quirky.

This Progressive phase of Teed's lasted from 1915 until 1917, when it was cut short - one might almost say in its prime - with an abruptness that only those who were alive at the time would appreciate.

Quite simply, Rymer, Yvonne, Wu Ling and the rest became War casualties, and when they returned, after the War, when Teed came back to writing in 1921, they had all undergone a subtle change in their characters that made them not quite what they once were.

Mostly, this change was for the better. The period from 1921 until the late '20's is considered by most people, and with justice, to be Teed's best, happily coinciding with the true Golden Age of the Sexton Blake saga - which is why I term this period, from Teed's point of view, the Mature phase.

But one of his creations at least altered course so radically that he might just as well have been an entirely different, even new, character.

I refer, of course, to Prince Menes, 'the Man from Everywhere,' a character of great originality and easily the most skilful creation of Teed's Progressive phase.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that Prince Menes was created at a time (1917) when Teed was certainly refreshed as a writer of Sexton Blake stories, and I think this is why the character was such an original one.

The year 1916 saw Teed much more concerned with another market - the Nelson Lee Library. He had started writing for this market the previous year, but in 1916 he wrote nearly half the total output - seventeen stories, as opposed to the six (including one Library) he wrote about Sexton Blake. In 1917, the reverse was the case, as E. S. Brooks began to corner the market, so to say - six Nelson Lee stories, and sixteen Blakes (again, including one Library).

One of the main factors that caused Teed to concentrate on the Nelson Lee Library was probably simple economics. It's far easier in the long run to knock out seventeen novelettes than seventeen longer stories, and if the reward, in terms of hard cash, is proportionately easier to come by, then Teed (who, concerning his own money-making activities was fairly hard-headed - even if he did tend to lose it at a rather faster rate than it actually came in) probably didn't hesitate too much in his choice of markets.

Whatever the reason, he undoubtedly came back to the Blake fold full of new ideas and new courses for his characters to take.

It is a pity that the only real sign of this renewal of vitality shows itself in one single new series. True, 1917 was the year when the Black Rat made his first appearance, and also Marie Galante - but the former was a typical Teed character,

and the latter, since she was featured in only one story, never had time to develop.

Prince Menes, on the other hand, had plenty of time to develop, and he made the most of it.

There are four stories which concern us here - "A Case of Reincarnation," "The Secret Hand," "The Case of the Crimson Terror," and "The Invisible Ray" - and a brief synopsis of the background of the series might well be in order.

Ten thousand years ago, Egypt was a flourishing and mighty nation that ruled the known world. However, the country itself was ruled by the Order of Ra, the Sun God (remember, this is Teed's version of history) whose Supreme Master was Prince Menes, twin brother to the actual Pharaoh. In time, the Pharaoh grew jealous of Menes' power, and eventually the Order was betrayed by ten priests and priestesses, Menes was exiled, and the fortunes of Egypt sank, over the succeeding ten thousand years, because of this betrayal and banishment.

Before the original Menes died, however, he swore that in ten thousand years he would be reincarnated, and that his appearance on earth would coincide with the reappearance of those same ten priests and priestesses of Ra, who had betrayed their Order. Also, that during those ten thousand years, the spirit of Ancient Egypt would pass from one civilization to another, from one nation to another, and these civilizations and nations would rise up and fall again, just as Egypt had done, until this spirit would eventually pass to a nation that would rebuild the shattered Egypt, to make her great once more.

Then, in the latter half of the 19th Century, a son was born to a Russian Grand Duke and a Chinese princess. At the age of ten, he was placed in charge of a priest of the Greek Orthodox Church who later 'renounced his former faith and embraced the ancient beliefs of Egypt - the worship of Ra and Amen-Ra - the reverence of Isis and Osiris' ("A Case of Reincarnation").

This was Akbad the patriarch, who taught his young charge that he was the reincarnated Prince Menes, who had been born again to find the spirit of Ancient Egypt, and weld the modern Egypt into one mighty nation. But first he had to seek out those ten priests and priestesses of the Order of Ra, who were all now reincarnated and alive somewhere in the world, and exact a terrible vengeance on them for their original betrayal of the Order, ten thousand years before.

This, in essence, was the premise for Teed's new series, and the jumping-off point for the weirdest, most original set of stories Teed ever envisaged. The pity of it was that it was never finished.

However, in the course of the four stories that were written, Teed came up with some strange, not to say astonishing, angles, which, apart from anything else, give us a good idea of the state of his personal philosophy at the time.

It is dangerous to connect a man's fiction with the man himself, but sometimes, as in this case I think, it is largely justified by the intensity of the writing, and the esoteric knowledge that Teed obviously had at his finger-tips.

It is a well-known fact that Teed was what might be described as a hack - I use the word in its best sense; Charles Hamilton was a hack, so was Dr. Johnson. Basically, he wrote for money - and he wrote, in his time, a lot of words for a lot of money. He also spent a lot of money, owed a lot of money, drank more than was good for him, womanised more than somewhat, and generally racketed around the environs of Fleet Street behaving like just about every other writer who was (and,

indeed, still is) engaged in the business of making a living by writing stuff that will never come up for nomination in the literary section of the Nobel Prize awards.

That he was a better writer, per se, than the majority of his colleagues has nothing to do with the fact that his market was the lowest in Grub Street.

Strange, then, that this same hack should show such a wide-ranging knowledge of such rather esoteric subjects as: Freudian psychology, mysticism, metaphysics and physiological structurization - not to mention high finance and modern business techniques.

These last two, of course, are themes that Teed often used in his stories - "The Crimson Pearl," "Scoundrels All," "The Green Portfolio," "The Crook of Marsden Manor," to name but a few - and he showed a truly remarkable grasp of involved financial chicanery for a man who had lived most of his early life managing plantations of one sort or another.

That Teed knew something of ancient religions and beliefs, too, is fairly common knowledge and, indeed, obvious to anyone who has ever read any of his early Wu Ling tales. There is a graphic and totally authentic account of a pagan sacrificial ceremony in "The Yellow Tiger," and "The Black Abbot of Cheng-Tu" is packed with esoteric Buddhist lore and information.

But one has only to start into the first four Prince Menes stories to realize that Teed not only knew a bit about mysticism - the sort of 'bit' one can read up in any good encyclopaedia - but was a positive authority on it.

That his obvious enthusiasm for mysticism and the occult was mis-placed is an unfortunate fact, but it still does not detract from the immense amount of study he had plainly put into the matter.

I say 'mis-placed' since most of the premises Teed used as jumping-off points for his stories in the 'Man from Everywhere' series are false ones.

At some time or other, he had obviously come into contact with that extraordinary farrago of falsification and sheer downright nonsense The Secret Doctrine by Mme. Helena P. Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy.

Mme. Blavatsky, who, during the course of her life, had been a circus bare-back rider, a professional pianist, and a sweat-shop worker, amongst other things, largely created a pre-historic macrocosm and a gaudy panoply of gods and goddesses to people it.

The Secret Doctrine is supposedly based on an Atlantean treatise "The Book of Dzyan," which she said had been showed to her by the 'world-ruling' Mahatmas of Tibet. Mme. Blavatsky was a firm believer in Atlantis, Lemuria and other lost continents, some of which she even invented herself.

Unfortunately for her, an elderly Californian scholar, William Emmette Coleman, decided to dig rather deeper into The Secret Doctrine than Mme. Blavatsky cared for or, indeed, her misguided followers bothered to. He discovered that her sources (all unacknowledged) were the Indian Vishnu Purana, Alexander Winchell's World Life, Ignatius Donnelly's infamous Atlantis: the Antediluvian World (which, in turn, is a medley of inventions, misstatements of fact, errors of interpretation and downright lies), and other pseudo-scientific works. The crowning cheat of all was that most of the "Book of Dzyan" was cribbed wholesale from the "Hymn of Creation" in the ancient Sanskrit "Rig-Veda" (see Note 3).

Thus, it can be readily seen that anyone who relies on The Secret Doctrine -

and, indeed, the hundreds of Theosophical, mystical and occult tomes that have sprung, directly or indirectly, from it - as a cornerstone of his spiritual convictions is sadly deluding himself, and the only practical use to be made of it is either as kindling, or, as the fantasy writer Edgar Rice Burroughs did, a basis for a series of science fiction stories (i. e. , his 'Martian' novels).

It is doubtful whether Burroughs, who was something of a super-materialist, ever put any real faith in the occult, and especially The Secret Doctrine. Teed, on the other hand, for all his hard-headedness and general practicality, was obviously rather taken with the whole concept of lost continents, occult lore, and the 'wisdom of the ancients' at this stage in his development.

The 'Man from Everywhere' series is full of the sort of esoteric mystical lore that was packed into the books and pamphlets of Donnelly, Mme. Blavatsky, and others of their ilk.

"The Case of the Crimson Terror," for instance (the third in the series), contains an interesting synopsis of all that had gone before in the previous stories, and also a fascinating account of world history that owed a huge debt to the theories of the occultists.

Before the known civilizations there existed the continent of Atlantis, and also the 'Pacific continent' (see Note 4), which were the cradles of all learning and knowledge. When Atlantis supposedly disappeared beneath the waves, the survivors spread out through the world and colonized places as far apart as Egypt, India, South America, and so on. These colonists brought with them their crafts, advanced knowledge, and religious philosophies - the latter chiefly centring around the sun and the moon.

The colonists who reached Egypt found a wide and beautiful valley where the Sahara now lies, and there built a vast temple to Ra, the Sun God, in the massive pyramid of Zagwa, which was later covered over by the drifting sands of the desert when Egypt fell after the betrayal of the Order of Ra.

Though Egypt itself tumbled to the position of a vassal to nations, then as a slave, then as a barren desert, the Order of Ra survived and prospered, hidden in the secret underground temple, and through the ages gathered in the knowledge and scientific discoveries of other civilizations, so that at the time of the 'Prince Menes' series, the Order of Ra had at its disposal a vast fund of scientific knowledge and arcane lore (a mixture of the profane and the sacred), all of which was inculcated into the man who was said to be the reincarnation of the first Prince Menes, who had lived ten thousand years before.

The debts that Teed owed to the occultists are many and varied. In the 'Prince Menes' series, he has various characters arguing, favourably, such myths and theories as reincarnation, lost continents, ancient wisdom of the most sophisticated nature (he even mentions, at one point, 'men from the stars' as the bringers of advanced knowledge), hypnotism as a means of seeing back into the past, ESP, rejuvenation, and a host of other ideas, some of which, like ESP, have been found to have a factual and scientific basis.

It would take more than my allotted space to fully go into the occult sources (and, too, the fictional sources - see Note 5) that Teed plundered to construct this fascinating series. Indeed, a complete exegesis would probably fill a medium-sized novel.

The most curious part of all is that Teed undoubtedly more than half-believed what he was writing about, when he was setting down all the background data and mystical information for the series. It wasn't simply a case of mugging it up in the local reference library, for again and again he warns the reader not to scoff at the weird happenings or startling psychic occurrences he is describing. And there is a basic integrity, an intensity, as I have said before, about the tone of his writing that, it seems to me, has nothing whatsoever to do with the fiction writer's normal 'warning to the curious' that is written purely as a realistic effect.

The stories themselves - apart from all the mystical angles which must have puzzled his younger readers, as well as excited their imaginations - were extremely adult in other ways, too.

Although "A Case of Reincarnation" contains some fairly heavy occult philosophy (far more sophisticated stuff than one gets in the lost-race type of novel that Rider Haggard, for instance, was busily churning out around this time, and which would have found favour with the same type of readership), there are some extremely abstruse stock market and financial convolutions in the story that even I had to read twice. In the end, Menes ruins the 'villain,' Lord Roncote, because Roncote it appears is the reincarnation of one of those priests who betrayed the Order of Ra so many thousands of years before.

"The Secret Hand" contains perhaps the strongest meat of all. Here Blake acts as King-maker in a political drama that exceeds even "Bribery and Corruption" in its scope and sophistication. We learn that Blake is a supporter of the government in power (see Not 6), and that out of 'sheer party loyalty' he takes the case offered to him, by an M. P. of the Opposition party, to stave off a political crisis that might force a general election, the outcome of which would run against his own political views.

During the course of the story, it comes out that the wife of the M. P. is a murderess, and also the reincarnation of one of the traitorous priestesses of Ra. In the end, Menes exacts a terrible vengeance by deliberately driving her insane.

As an incidental point to this story, it is interesting to note that Teed was by no means totally wrapped up in matters occult. Blake makes use of a sophisticated type of lie-detector at one point, and Menes goes one better by employing what can only be described as a pocket tape-recorder.

In "The Case of the Crimson Terror," Teed sets out his Atlantis theories, and we learn that Blake has written a monograph on the Rosetta Stone and made 'some little study of Egyptology.' Menes employs his vast scientific know-how to good effect by sending his intended victim half-crazy by using his knowledge of oxydization.

If "The Secret Hand" is the most dramatic of the quartet, the fourth story, "The Invisible Ray," is certainly not far behind it in that respect, and has, to a certain extent, an even more adult subject-matter - modern psychology. At one point in the story, we are given a description of Blake's knowledge of the subject that is extremely advanced ... including, as it does, a theory of Blake's that criminals cannot simply be cured by terms of imprisonment, but by a training of the sub-conscious mind.

Teed also tells us that Blake's monograph on the "Psychological Relation of the Human Physique to the Mentality" is acknowledged by a distinguished authority on the subject as being 'a very able treatise.' This might come as something of a shock

to those who only know of Blake's various papers on tobacco ash, firearms, and the rest of the rather mundane subjects that other writers foisted on to him.

Taken as a whole, there is no doubt that the "Man from Everywhere" series is the culmination of Teed's Progressive phase, and one of the very best sets of stories he ever embarked upon. The fact that it was cut short when it hadn't even reached the half-way mark is a tragedy of the first water. In any case, if Teed was using themes like this, what on earth would the next series have been like? To what new heights would he have raised the Sexton Blake mythos?

The mind, as they say, boggles, and any speculation we might make on the subject would be mere wishful thinking. Teed didn't go on with the series, and, in fact, he didn't return to the Blake fold for nearly five years.

A lot can happen in that time, and, quite obviously, a lot did. In 1923, Teed was writing 'Blake was no believer in the occult' ("The Hyena of Paris"), and when Menes returned in 1924, in "The Mummy's Twin," he was no longer the embodiment of mystical power but, as S. Gordon Swan so rightly put it once, just 'a sinister Easterner working against the West, a Wu Ling of Egypt, but a rather inferior Wu Ling' (see Note 7).

As I have said, I consider the phase from 1921 to the latter part of the same decade to be Teed's very best - his 'Mature' phase. And, indeed, "The Mummy's Twin" is a terrific yarn on all counts, and a marvellous example of this 'very best.' But it is not Prince Menes - or, at least, the Prince Menes that Teed originally envisaged. (See Note 8.)

What actually changed his mind about mysticism and the occult is by no means clear. It is certain, however, that his attitude towards figures such as Menes and Wu Ling and even Marie Galante had hardened over the intervening period when he had not been writing. Where before they had been romantic figures - characters that had more kinship with 19th Century fantasy heroes; brooding figures of myth and legend - now they presented a definite threat to Western civilization. Each character now headed a coloured organization that had as its basic aim world domination.

And although this basic aim was the jumping-off point for some marvellous stories, something within G. H. Teed had been lost in the change-over process from Progressive to Mature. A spark of youthful idealism, perhaps, that, though based on a mis-placed enthusiasm for an assortment of ill-considered and largely illogical occult theories, is still to be regretted - as the quenching of any youthful flame is to be regretted.

#### NOTES:

1. Stories mentioned in the text are as follows: "Bribery and Corruption" (UJ No. 616 - Summer Double, 1915); "The Prize Ship" (Pluck, Nos. 555/556 - 1915); "The Death Club" (UJ No. 558 - Summer Double, 1914); "The Diamond Dragon" (UJ No. 493 - Easter Double, 1913); "The Great Mining Swindle" (Boys' Friend 3d. Library, No. 228 - May, 1913); "The Case of the Radium Patient" (UJ No. 548 - Spring Double, 1914); "The Two Mysteries" (SBL 1st 11 - June, 1916); "The Blue God" (UJ No. 685 - Christmas Double, 1916); "The Case of the Cataleptic" (UJ No. 620 - 1915); "The Case of the Biscay Pirate" (SBL 3rd 65 - February, 1944); "The Crimson Pearl" (UJ No. 564 - Holiday Double,

1914); "Scoundrels All" (UJ No. 613 - 1915); "The Green Portfolio" (UJ No. 1066 - 1924); "The Crook of Marsden Manor" (SBL 2nd 224 - January, 1930); "The Yellow Tiger" (SBL 1st 1 - September, 1915); "The Black Abbot of Cheng-Tu" (UJ Nos. 1236-1254 - 1927); and "The Hyena of Paris" (UJ No. 1033 - 1923).

2. There seems no evidence at all for the theory mooted by E. S. Turner, in the chapter devoted to Sexton Blake in his classic "Boys Will Be Boys" (Michael Joseph: 1948, 1957), that Hammerton Palmer was modelled on Sir John Hammerton, a senior executive and Editor of the Amalgamated Press around that time. Apart from anything else, Palmer wasn't 'quietly dropped' as Turner says. He was a leading character in "The Blue God" (see Note 1) and "The Great Ivory Swindle" (SBL 1st 325 - 1924). He was also mentioned on numerous occasions, in such novels as "The Case of the Courtlandt Jewels" (SBL 1st 253 - 1922), etc.
3. L. Sprague de Camp & Catherine C. de Camp: Ancient Ruins and Archæology (Doubleday, 1964). Chapter XI, "Nan Matol and the Sacred Turtle."
4. There may indeed have been such a place as 'Atlantis,' though the very fact that its location has been shunted about the globe by such a variety of enthusiasts, eccentrics, and downright madmen tends to make one very sceptical. Best location seems to be either somewhere in the Mediterranean, or around the tip of southwestern Spain. Flying machines made out of unknown metals and cities built out of solid gold can be crossed off the list of the sort of activities the 'Atlantean' went in for, however. The myth of the 'Pacific continent' can be exploded far more easily. Due to the geological structure of the earth's crust in that area, there never has been, nor is, nor ever will be a large land-mass in the Pacific.
5. Teed's third wife, Mrs. Inez Teed, said that her husband used to enjoy the novels of Sax Rohmer. This figures. I would guess that he had delved fairly deeply into Guy Boothby's stories, too, especially the 'Dr. Nikola' series. I would also suspect that he read quite early on in his life two fantasy novels that were extraordinarily popular at the turn of the century - Phra the Phoenician by Edwin Lester Arnold (Chatto & Windus, 1891), and George Griffith's Valdar the Oft-Born (C. Arthur Pearson, 1895), the latter a rather tedious plagiarism of Arnold's book.
6. This would be Lloyd George's wartime government. In the story, it is implied that Blake (and, presumably, Teed as well) is an opponent of Asquith, whom Lloyd George toppled from power in the December of 1916.
7. S. Gordon Swan: "Character Changes" - Collectors' Digest No. 208; April, 1964.
8. For readers who are interested in following the 'Prince Menes' series through to the bitter end, the entire sequence (1917 and post-War, in chronological order) is as follows: "A Case of Reincarnation" (UJ No. 722 - 1917); "The



Secret Hand" (UJ No. 723 - 1917); "The Case of the Crimson Terror" (UJ No. 728 - 1917); "The Invisible Ray" (UJ No. 731 - 1917); "The Mummy's Twin" (UJ No. 1067 - 1924); "The Adventure of the Blue Bowl" (UJ No. 1112 - 1924); "The House on the Cliff" (UJ No. 1113 - 1924); "The Great Canal Plot" (SBL 2nd 19 - 1925); and "The Case of the Mummified Hand" (SBL 2nd 35 - 1926). I use the term 'bitter end' advisedly - in "The Case of the Mummified Hand," Menes takes poison. About the only instance I can recall of a major Teed villain ending it all by his own hand. Teed villains were usually a pretty hardy lot.

\* \* \* \* \*

## *The Sexton Blake Circle*

I am pleased to be able to report that during this past year there have been several new members added to our Sexton Blake Circle. All Blake fans are welcome to join and enjoy the use of the large number of Union Jacks, etc., in the Sexton Blake section of the Old Boys' Book Club.

May I take this opportunity to wish everyone, not only Blake fans, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and many thanks for your support in providing material for Blakiana.

JOSIE PACKMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

HAPPY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE AND WARM THANKS TO ERIC FAYNE FOR COLLECTORS' DIGEST. Always wanted: Hard Back Books by Dorita Fairlie Bruce, especially Nancy In The Sixth, and Best Bat In The School.

MARY CADOGAN

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THE FIFTH FORM IN  
**Hamiltonian Schools**

by ROGER M. JENKINS

Charles Hamilton almost consistently drew his heroes from the middle school, and whether it was the Greyfriars Remove, the Rookwood Fourth Form, or the St. Jim's Shell, they were always about fifteen years old. Of course, not all writers focused on this age group: "The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's," "Stalky & Co.," and many P. G. Wodehouse stories revolved around the senior end of the school. As the average age of the readers of the Companion Papers was about twelve, the heroes might just as well have been seniors as juniors, since the age-gap between reader and hero was still there, and using seniors would have had the advantage of extending the scope of the author's material. Charles Hamilton must have felt this at times, because some of his lesser schools did have senior heroes, from Fernley in the first decade of the century to Oakshott in the fourth decade.

In his famous schools, however, the Fifth Form had quite a different function to perform: too young to be prefects and too old to indulge in horseplay, the Fifth-formers represented an uneasy state of dignity, in which the juniors had to be kept at a distance. The situation was displayed completely as long ago as No. 7 of the halfpenny Gem. There were three candidates for the captaincy of Clavering School - Wingate of the Sixth, Devigne of the Upper Fifth, and Tom Merry of the Shell. Mr. Railton, the headmaster, persuaded Tom Merry to withdraw, with the result that the Fifth-form candidate was supported by only his own form. Here in a nutshell was the eternal dilemma of the Fifth, the fact that they were too old for some things and too young for others, and were always in a position to be out-manoeuvred by an alliance of other interests.

As a matter of fact, it was not until 1913 that Charles Hamilton made much use of the Fifth Form in the Gem, but it was well worth waiting for. Gerald Cutts in No. 266 persuaded Tom Merry to lend him some club funds until Friday, and Tom agreed to keep the matter a secret. It was something of a surprise for Tom to discover that repayment depended upon the ability of another horse, which also lost. Again, in No. 287, Cutts obtained a place in the cricket team by trickery, in order to ensure that St. Jim's lost and that he won a large bet. A sequel came in No. 291 when Cutts used Digby as a pawn to extract money from his uncle, Major Cutts, in order to pay the debts incurred a few weeks previously. These stories reached a very high standard, as did the story of Cutts' captaincy in Nos. 317-21, and they all represent a Hamiltonian technique that was peculiar to this period, using a theme of complicated trickery to provide a most convincing atmosphere of plot and counter-plot. Only the long stories in the blue Gem gave sufficient scope for this technique: once the St. Jim's stories were reduced in length, the nature of the stories underwent a subtle change.

It was Cutts who was "Too Clever By Half" in Gem No. 441, though it was St. Leger who was in trouble, having been caught gambling by a governor of the school. Cutts thought up an alibi for St. Leger, to persuade the fatuous Trimble that he was

helping St. Leger out of the river at the time the gambling was interrupted. All went well until Trimble began to blackmail St. Leger, who showed up in this story as a rather weak-willed character. Later on, though still friendly with Cutts, he became more independent and stood aside from most of Cutts' rascality.

Occasionally Cutts played an important part in a story but the reader was kept almost completely in the dark about his activities. In Gems 737-9, the main interest was the Founder's Latin prize of £50 which Darrell was anxious to win for a special purpose. It also became clear that Cutts wanted to win as well, and shortly after it became known that neither was the prizewinner £50 was missed from the Head's study, and Darrell was convicted on circumstantial evidence. Cutts' part in all this was not revealed until the very end of the series. Here he was the dark horse, not the favourite, and the revelation of his guilt was too abrupt and surprising to be altogether satisfactory.

By the time of the coloured covers, Cutts had become slightly less sinister and more an object of fun. In Gem 813, part of the Old Bus series, the juniors ran foul of Cutts and his elegant companions, and there was much horseplay and merriment, though Charles Hamilton still portrayed him as a complete rogue:

The five were playing poker, and Gerald Cutts was having a run of amazing luck. Perhaps he was helped by the long practice he had had in dealing from the bottom of the pack and keeping a valuable card or two pinned between his knee and the table till wanted. Perhaps he was also helped by the circumstances that Gilmore generally passed very soon, and would then stroll round the room with a cigarette, with one eye open for Algy's and Bertram's cards; but if Gilmore made signals, Algy and Bertram did not observe them.

It is significant that St. Leger, who was not in the plot, was nevertheless uneasy, and went to bed soon afterwards. A sequel took place in Gem 822 when, back at school, Cutts decided to take revenge on the seven juniors, a story which well displayed his vindictive and unscrupulous character. This was one of Cutts' last star parts in the Gem before the reprints began, No. 1205 being only a pale echo of his strong character. Martin Clifford did not feature Cutts very often, but he undoubtedly made use of him in some first-rate St. Jim's stories.

It is pleasing to note that on one occasion, at least, the St. Jim's Fifth Form were unanimous in their sentiments, and it was of course their ill-tempered form-master, Mr. Ratcliff, who united them in opposition to him. In Gem 858 he rapped Cutts over the knuckles in class, and having found some consolation in this he proceeded to do the same for St. Leger and Gilmore, leaving the whole form on the verge of mutiny. Cutts was later accused of stealing a banknote from Mr. Ratcliff's study, and the climax of the story came in the form-room when the banknote fluttered from the master's copy of Livy:

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

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

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

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

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

"Apologise!" snapped Cutts.

"What - what?"

"I demand an apology!"

"You insolent rascal, sit down!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. Cutts did not sit down. He stamped across to the door.

"Where are you going, Cutts?"

"I'm going to fetch the Head!"

"I command you -" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

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

Cutts did indeed get an apology, in public, and on this triumphant note we can conclude our investigation into the Fifth Form at St. Jim's.

In contrast with the St. Jim's Fifth Form, the Rookwood Fifth presented an atmosphere that was humorous to a degree. Hansom, Lumsden and Talboys were full of their own dignity and importance and were always doomed to disappointment in their pretentiousness. Things might seem serious, but comedy was always round the corner. In No. 940 of the Boys' Friend, when the prefects were on strike, Dr. Chisholm appointed the Fifth Form as prefects, and Hansom was quite overwhelmed with his own magnificence - until he found the old prefects wouldn't vacate the Prefects' Room and the Fourth Form refused to take any notice of him, whereupon Dr. Chisholm lost no time in removing the Fifth Form from their new office. Again, in Nos. 948-9, Hansom decided to make the Fourth fag for him, and though Jimmy Silver proved recalcitrant he found that Muffin could be cajoled by a judicious mixture of threats and bribery. It was not until Hansom was captured in the dark and some of his hair was snipped off that he agreed to give up his claim.

Perhaps the only jarring note in the Rookwood Fifth was struck by the character of Jobson. Tobias Jobson was one of the poorest fellows at Rookwood, and was said in the early days to be argumentative and unacademic (though later he was portrayed as intellectual and weak-willed). His shabby clothes were notorious all the time and for this reason, in No. 969, when Jimmy Silver was issuing fake invitations to tea in Carthew's study, he included Jobson among the guests. When he turned up, Carthew remarked that if he wanted to invite a scarecrow to tea he would have got one out of a field. The readers were apparently intended to find this situation amusing on the grounds that Jobson was too sensitive about his shabbiness, but poverty is not in itself a joke, and one could hardly imagine Mark Linley, for example, being placed in this situation.

No doubt the character of the Form-master bore some relationship to the atmosphere in the form. Mr. Ratcliff acted as Fifth-form master at St. Jim's, whereas at Rookwood it was the ponderous, self-important Mr. Greely, surely one of the finest character sketches among the masters at that school. In the famous series 1246-52, he was dismissed rather hastily by Dr. Chisholm owing to a misunderstanding:

"For several days you have presented an aspect utterly unbecoming in a Rookwood master. I accepted your story of an accident. Now, sir, I find you have been fighting again. You have the temerity, sir, to walk across the quadrangle with blackened eyes; to parade yourself, sir, in the sight of all the school with the appearance of a prize-fighter. This is too much, Mr. Greely."

"Sir, I will explain."

"No explanation is necessary or adequate. You may have your own reasons for this extraordinary conduct. I do not dispute it. I only say that such proceedings cannot be tolerated at Rookwood. I shall be glad to receive your resignation, Mr. Greely."

"Sir!"

"On the spot!" said the Head grimly.

"Sir," Mr. Greely spluttered, "I refuse to resign! I refuse! I will explain I protest! I - I -." He grew incoherent.

"Then you are dismissed, sir," said the Head icily. "Not a word, sir! There is no occasion for words, and I decline to enter into a dispute. You are dismissed, Mr. Greely!"

Modern headmasters might envy Dr. Chisholm his dictatorial powers, but fortunately for Mr. Greely Sir George Hansom (who had been a student at Oxford when Mr. Greely was a tutor there, and on whose behalf Mr. Greely had incurred his injuries)

decided to instal him as headmaster in a new school he was founding nearby, with his son as a pupil. Dr. Chisholm's autocratic ways soon sent Rookwooders over to the new school in droves, and all might have prospered had not Hansom shown a contempt for Mr. Greely that led to an impossible situation. This was almost the last Rookwood series to be written in the Boys' Friend, and it shows a mellow humour and acceptance of life's ironies that make us wish we could have seen more of the Rookwood Fifth and their pompous but likeable form-master.

Of course it was at Greyfriars that Charles Hamilton made the fullest use of the Fifth Form, both dramatically (to assist the development of the plot) and stylistically (to add a rich and amusing commentary on the situation). Coker was the most celebrated member of this form, but when he was first in Magnet No. 143 he was in the Shell:

Coker was a big, well-grown fellow, and ought, as a matter of fact, to have been in the Fifth Form. Idleness and slacking had kept him back. But he was bigger than a good many Fifth Form fellows, and that fact made him a bully in the Shell, and in the lower forms he was greatly feared ... Coker was a slacker, and he was not over-gifted with intelligence, but he had a very great idea of his own importance.

A fortnight later Aunt Judy was seen for the first time at Greyfriars, dressed in Victorian attire with a poke bonnet and an ancient umbrella. In a passage of arms with Dr. Locke (which reads very much like one of Mrs. Nickleby's effusions) she succeeded in getting Coker promoted to the Fifth Form. In early days Charles Hamilton had a certain fondness of depicting elderly females in a freakish fashion. Miss Fawcett was nothing but a handicap in the Gem but Aunt Judy was quite an appropriate appendage for a comic character like Coker, and, to do him justice, he was always fond of his aunt and never ashamed to kiss her in public. Coker was also attached to his younger brother Reggie, mild, frail, and scholarly, who was placed directly into the Sixth Form when he arrived at Greyfriars in Magnet No. 241.

As time went on Coker lost his more unpleasant traits and gradually turned into the ineffable fool that everyone loved to read about, hopeless in class, useless at games, maintaining a firm belief in having a short way with fags, yet withal honest, generous, and good-natured in a rather overbearing fashion. Potter and Greene were, most of the time, blatant hangers-on who were continually interested in having meals or trips at Coker's expense. Their regard for Coker went no deeper than the bottom of Aunt Judy's hamper. Times without number Coker found that they had stupidly gone the wrong way when he was leading them on a mission of vengeance to the Remove passage, though they never seemed to disappear when Coker was taking them to tea in the Pagoda at Lantham.

It is impossible to mention all the Magnet series in which Coker played a star part, but it is an obvious fact that his activities brought him into conflict with his form-master far more than any other Hamiltonian Fifth-Former. Charles Hamilton once told me that Magnet No. 1042, "The Fellow Who Wouldn't Be Caned," was one of his two most amusing stories. Coker retired from the Fifth Form classroom to avoid this threatened indignity, and both he and Mr. Prout then spent some time waiting for the other to come to his senses. It is not so much the slender plot as the style which sets this story apart from previous numbers as showing in beautifully balanced antitheses a new type of ironic detachment:

Once upon a time, if his memory had served him well, Mr. Prout had been a mighty hunter of big game, a terrific climber of Alpine cliffs. Grizzly bears had rolled over before his deadly rifle; though, for one reason or another, Mr. Prout had not brought home their skins. Unnumbered buffaloes

had perished under his withering fire, though various trifling circumstances had prevented Mr. Prout from adorning his walls with their horns. Mr. Prout had climbed the Matterhorn; though, owing to some petty incident, he had not reached the top.

The present is brought out before our eyes as vividly as the past:

Those mighty hunting days - if any - were over now, at all events, and Mr. Prout was now rather an irritable old gentleman, who had not seen his toes, let alone touched them, for years and years. Years had touched his form to a ripper grace, as a poet has expressed it poetically. It was considered, in the Fifth, that it would have been a good exercise to walk round Mr. Prout.

The single Magnet story concerning Coker and Prout that rivals No. 1042 is No. 1129. Mr. Prout requested the Head to chastise the most irresponsible member of his form. Once the caning had taken place, Prout dismissed the matter from his mind, but Coker had a longer memory. Prout was extremely surprised when a bearded man of Coker's height entered his study shortly afterwards and told him to bend over:

"Amazing!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "My dear Prout, are you sure he uttered those words?"

Mr. Prout grasped his rifle, fully convinced he was dealing with a madman, and Coker's programme of revenge somehow became unstuck.

Quite apart from its plot, Magnet No. 1129 found time to shed further light on Prout's effect on the other inhabitants of Greyfriars. We were told that his Form likened him to the "Huge earth-shaking beast" mentioned by Macaulay, and the sheer boredom of his conversation is tellingly related:

Henry Samuel Quelch was a man of few words, and those were not always pleasant words. Chattering was not much in his line. Prout, on the other hand, was a chatty gentleman. Prout would take a colleague by the arm and walk him from the Common Room to his study for a chat; and the expression on the victim's face at such a time might have moved a heart of stone. Prout would drop into the games study to chat with members of his Form. He believed in keeping up a spirit of free and friendly confidence between master and pupil. What the Fifth Form men felt like on these occasions Prout never knew, and never suspected. Sometimes, in a chatty mood, he had found the games study deserted at an hour when it was usually full of the Fifth; but he never guessed that that was because he had been espied from afar, and warning given in time that Prout was coming for one of his talks. He did not know that Fitzgerald of the Fifth had suggested having a fire escape fixed to the window of the games study, so that fellows could escape by the window when Prout got to the door.

It was only during the Magnet's Golden Age that Charles Hamilton was able to add these ironic touches to a lively story. In the later nineteen-thirties there was a more business-like approach to story-telling, and most of the humour lay in the verbal exchanges. The exquisite descriptive passages like those quoted above are the hallmark of his finest period in the Magnet. So the Caffyn series, the Skip series, and the 1939 expulsion of Coker series all display Coker and Prout in their varying moods, and at greater length, but nothing can compare with the little jewels of the Golden Age.

The richness of characterisation in the Greyfriars Fifth Form was almost sufficient to allow it to become the centre of attraction in its own right, to the exclusion of the Remove. Apart from Coker, Potter and Greene, there was Fitzgerald who could be relied upon for a humorous commentary, while Blundell and Bland stood for sound common sense, a necessary contrast with Coker. In addition to all these there was the famous pair Hilton and Price, who had a unique status in Hamiltoniana. Price was a furtive rascal, while Hilton with his elegant dandified manner was often indecisive, sometimes influenced by Price and at other times by Blundell.

Hilton's character was well displayed in the Dury series in Magnets 985-90.

A momentary act of kindness on the part of Hilton had earned him the loyalty of the Game Kid, and it proved to be a loyalty that Hilton eventually lost in a selfish action that was equally thoughtless and impulsive. Hilton and Price played many parts over the years, and there was even a Christmas series at Hilton Hall in 1934, but it was Price who had the dubious honour of making significant contribution to the plot in the very last Magnet of all, when his weak and cowardly nature nearly brought about Wharton's expulsion from Greyfriars. This was one of the occasions when even Hilton was ashamed of his friend's attitude.

Mr. Prout was one of Charles Hamilton's finest character studies among the masters, and so it is not surprising that the Greyfriars Fifth Form had such a large part to play in the Magnet saga. Scenes in the form rooms of the Shell or Fourth were practically non-existent, but Mr. Prout's domain was often described in great detail, and the exchanges between Coker and his Form-Master were a favourite theme in the Magnet. The Greyfriars Fifth Formers were used much more frequently in the Magnet stories and more widely in other school stories than were their contemporaries at St. Jim's and Rookwood. Tom Merry & Co. and Jimmy Silver & Co. during their summer holidays would often come upon Coker, Potter and Greene in some predicament with a caravan or horse, but Harry Wharton & Co. never came across Cutts or Hansom in similar circumstances, which seems to prove that Charles Hamilton himself realised the superiority of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

At all three schools the stories would have been impoverished by the absence of Fifth Form characters. Conflict is the essence of drama, and the Fifth Forms provided seniors who were not invested with authority as prefects and who could therefore become a source of opposition for the junior heroes, and to defeat the Fifth Form was an achievement all the more noteworthy because of the disparity in age. Whether it was Cutts or Hansom or Coker or Hilton, a new dimension was added to the tales, to bring additional drama or comedy to the reader. Perhaps the last word should be left to Coker, in an extract from a story written specially for the 1936 Holiday Annual:

"I suppose Quelch teaches you fags to spell in the Remove! Prout doesn't, in the Fifth! The man's an igoramus, you know! I wonder Dr. Locke keeps him on! I'd sack him if I were the Head! Making out that I can't spell -"

In this story Coker was relegated to the Second Form to learn spelling, an ignominious transition which was typical of the type of comedy in which he featured, and the extent of his indignity was in itself a sure indication of the importance of the Fifth Form in Hamiltonian writing.

\* \* \* \* \*

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# It's a Small World

by JACK OVERHILL

It was the beginning of a new life when I bought a penny GEM - Tom Merry's War Fund - on a wet autumn afternoon in 1914. The world was transformed from humdrum reality to the kingdom of the mind, where I shared the adventures of Tom Merry and Co., of St. Jim's and, shortly afterwards, in the MAGNET, Harry Wharton and Co., of Greyfriars. Home, school, town, all took on different aspects. I lived and worked in them the same, but they were not the same, they were coloured by the thoughts and feelings aroused in me by the MAGNET and GEM and - before long as they had in them the early adventures of my favourite characters - the DREADNOUGHT and the PENNY POPULAR. Even that wasn't enough. I hunted all over Cambridge for back numbers. A little grocery shop in a back street, kept by an old lady, a mile-and-a-half from where I lived, had stacks of them as a sideline, and as I made the journey, sometimes, on Sunday mornings, I was filled with gleeful anticipation of what I might find there. A five-year-old MAGNET, The Fifth At Greyfriars, gave me as much delight as the Earl of Caernarvon and Howard Carter got when delving into Tut-ankh-Amen's tomb. Five years, nearly half my lifetime, was as far away in the past as a couple of thousand years are now.

I read about Greyfriars and St. Jim's at all times in all places: by the dim light of the swing oil-lamp in my shoemaker-father's workshop; by the flickering light of a candle in bed; under the lid of a desk at school; in shadowy corners of shops I worked for as errand-boy; at meal times; in the water-closet; in the street, stumbling over kerbs and bumping into lamp-posts. In summer, wearing only bathing-slips, I read beside the river, diving in to keep cool when I was hot. That was a place to enjoy a picnic with the different Co's in Friardale and Rylcombe woods. In winter, I liked best to read in my father's workshop. There, beside a blazing coal fire I read Nobody's Study, a double-number GEM 'find' in the little grocery shop. The ghostly scenes of the story thrilled me.

I learned of the Rookwood stories of Jimmy Silver coming out in the BOYS' FRIEND and took it every week. Until then, I had centred on school stories, but that introduced me to serials of sea, sport and adventure.

A little storm blew up. Buying the BOYS' FRIEND on a hot summer evening while out shopping, I became so engrossed in it that I lost a two-shilling piece. My father was furious. And no wonder - he only got five shillings for making a pair of boots for high-class, bespoke shops. He knew why and how I'd lost the money - my eyes glued to a book as I walked along not knowing what I was doing! He'd stop me reading the damned things! How he carried on. How I quaked. He got over it and I wasn't forbidden to read them. Indeed, he gave me a copper or two to help me buy a BOYS' FRIEND THREEPENNY LIBRARY, The Boy Without A Name, no longer on sale in the shops and costing fivepence by post - a lot for me to splash out.

Gradually, my range of reading increased and there wasn't a boys' book or comic that I didn't buy. The MAGNET, GEM, and BOYS' FRIEND remained my favourites. CHUCKLES, CHIPS, COMIC CUTS, and FUNNY WONDER were my choice of comics. Some of the stories, especially in CHUCKLES, were first-rate.



I left school at fourteen in 1917 and started to learn my father's trade. He said I'd never learn it, my mind wasn't on my work. He knew what it was on - the piles of boys' books on the low cupboard beside me. That was true, but for all his gloomy forecast, to his surprise, I learned the trade.

Maurice Everard's serial Polruan's Millions started in the BOYS' FRIEND soon after I began reading it. Other stories about the old sailor, Joe Tremorne and the cousins Frank and Dick Polruan followed. I liked these tales of adventure. In one of them, The Luck of Polruan, Pieface, the son of an African king appeared. He often sang a song:

Gimme sugar, gimme cane,  
Gimme sunshine, too;  
Put me in de cotton brake,  
An' I will sing ob you.

Lulu is a nice, sweet gal,  
Lubs jest little me;  
Dusky Pieface is her pal,  
Come, an' you shall see.

Gimme sugar, gimme cane,  
Gimme sunshine, too;  
She is lubbed by Pieface true,  
My Lu-ly, Lu-ly Loo.

I was taken with this song and sang it to my own tune so lustily that it made my father laugh. 'You're a bloody Pieface, you are,' he'd say - an encouragement to me to keep on singing it.

The stories left warm memories and when I read in COLLECTORS' DIGEST that Maurice Everard's real name was Cecil H. Bullivant and that he was still alive, I felt I'd like to write and tell him how much I'd enjoyed them nearly sixty years ago. Helped by Mollie Allison of the Northern O. B. B. C. I got in touch with him. His wife wrote saying he was ill with bronchitis and pleurisy and he would reply to my letter as soon as he was well again. After a delay of several months, I heard from him. Nearly ninety years of age and almost blind, he had touch-typed the letter. Our correspondence brought remarkable things to light.

Cecil Henry Bullivant was born on the 14th October, 1882, the second son of Richard Bullivant and Ann Ives, eldest daughter of William Ives of Drivers Hall, Enfield, Middlesex. At the age of seven, he started to learn shorthand, passed a theoretical examination two years later and went on to speed. At fifteen he started night reporting on the Stratford Express and later, on the Leyton Advertiser. His first two stories were published by Harmsworth in 1898. In 1900, he won the Titbits Prize Novel Competition. He joined Harmsworth (the Amalgamated Press) in 1900 as sub-editor. He was later, editor, and remained with the firm for twelve years, during which time and later, he wrote the many Tales of Tremorne. (They were based on the real adventures of an Irish fisherman named Callaghan, who lived at Port Wrinkle, near Looe, in Cornwall. An old sailor, he had spent over forty years at sea in old clipper ships. Wrecked off Tahiti, he lived there for several years, married a chief's daughter, was a wonderful fisherman and sailor, a competent and

amusing liar, but a good story-teller with a flair for correct colour.) The money he made from the Tremorne tales enabled him to travel about Europe, to the West Indies, Panama and South America. He lived in Cornwall until the outbreak of war in 1914 and after service in the Navy, he returned there and started on his first full-length novel and wrote six or seven a year for the next ten years. For thirty years he was engaged in journalism and novel writing. He retired to pursue his hobby of collecting fine pictures, antique furniture, old silver, English and Continental china and Oriental porcelains of Ming and later periods down to the beginning of the 19th century. His pictures include those of Vandyck, David Cox, Old Crome, John Sell Cotman, T. B. Hardy, James Stark, Van der Banck, Joseph Highmore, Bill Cleverley, and James Webb. He has fine examples of period Chippendale, Sheraton, and Regency furniture. Early George the Third is his period for old silver. His main interest is in Chinese examples of Armorial porcelain of which he has a collection of five hundred pieces of the late Ming, the Yung Chen and the Kien Lung periods. For ten years, before his sight began to fail, he devoted himself to the study of genealogy and heraldry. Between 1960-70 he wrote twelve volumes dealing with his forbears and some ancient families of England. In 1904, he married Miss Copson of Linslade. She died in 1945, leaving one son and one daughter (now dead). In 1946 he married Miss Hudson of Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire. Her father founded the Hudson Brewery at Pampisford and owned Hinxton Hall and other Cambridge estates. He now lives in quiet retirement in Minehead.

Remarkable to relate, Little Shelford is only a mile and a half from my home and for twenty years he was constantly in Cambridge. To his comment: 'What a pity I didn't meet you then.' I can only say: 'Indeed, what a pity!'

Even more remarkable is an incident that cropped up while I was writing this article. I went with my wife and collie Jason to East Runton, a village near Cromer on the East Coast. On a walk with Jason, a man praised him. We stopped to talk. Our talk took on a personal note. He was a Mr. Parker, aged 72, a widower whose hobby was wood-carving. He invited me to his cottage to see his work. I went and admired his fine craftsmanship, which ranged from a miniature ducking-chair for scolds to the heads of Egyptian kings and queens. I read poetry he had written when a young man and he played little compositions of his own on the piano to me. Talking about himself, he told me he had been a maintenance electrician at Cromer hotels. He named the proprietor and mentioned his close friend - Cecil Henry Bullivant. The two men collected antiques and went abroad in search of them - Mr. Bullivant also for local colour of the novels he wrote about the East.

He was astonished that Cecil Henry Bullivant was still alive; had thought he died twenty-five years ago.

I was even more astonished at a chance meeting with someone who knew the person I was in the process of writing an article about.

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£3 each for following in EXCELLENT condition. MAGNETS 526, 530, 547, 817, 848, 862, 876, 1117, 1125, 1126, 1191, 1192, 1193, 1194. GEMS 334, 336, 337, 350, 461, 600, 704, 720, 721, 722, 816, 822, 839, 841, 845, 847, 920, 924, 935, 936, 1006, 1034, 1035. S. SMYTH, 1 BRANDON ST., CLOUELLY, 2031, N.S.W.

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# The Boys' Favourite

by LEN WORMULL

I think one would have to delve deep into the chronicles of boys' fiction to find mention of those papers specialising in the Sports' story. Harder still, no doubt, would be to find existing copies of this once popular by-way of reading. The now rare Boys' Realm almost certainly owes its privileged survival to early links with Hamilton and Brooks, but there were others of its kind equally as good and which have long since vanished. Sports Budget was my own particular favourite in the thirties, a most competently produced and readable paper; yet, as I remember it, a type of reading to be enjoyed for the moment and then discarded. Perhaps, like so many others, it lacked that vital spark needed for preservation. One of the most attractive papers in this field, and certainly the largest, was FOOTBALL & SPORTS FAVOURITE. After a long run which took in the twenties it announced a change of name to bring in a wider range of stories. Readers were urged to ask for the BOYS' FAVOURITE thenceforth and to watch out for a "Big Double" event. Thus ended a champion and the beginning of a new A. P. adventure paper on the 4th May, 1929, reduced in size and with a strong leaning towards the crime story. To keep past readers happy, the new package was to embrace their favourite star writers, amongst whom were Alfred Edgar, A. S. Hardy, Percy A. Clarke, C. Malcolm Hincks, Walter Edwards, Don Gray. Above all, a famous name in thriller writers was used to see it safely on its way. The "Big Double" was in fact the link with the new paper and Edgar Wallace.

Boys' Favourite played its trump card to the full, boasting that it was the only boys' paper to feature the famous author. Not strictly true as it happened since he had been at the opening ceremony of THRILLER a little earlier. His name was seldom off the front page, with several issues showing full cover pictures of him in typical pose: smoking jacket or dressing gown, with the inevitable long cigarette holder trademark. No. 1 even carried a potted description called The Amazing Case Of Edgar Wallace: "Private in the R. A. M. C. Concert Singer. Newspaper reporter who knew hard times before going on to a reputed yearly income of £40,000. Able to write a thriller in a weekend and work an eighteen hour day."

Two of his books were adapted as serials for the paper, the first being a tale of vengeance called JACK O' JUDGMENT - a mysterious white-masked figure by this name who hounds and haunts the world's most dangerous criminal, Colonel Dan Boundary. Showing allegiance to Boundary, and helping to unmask this menacing threat to their careers, are: Pinto Silva, crook; Maisie White, stage star; Mollie Marsh, beautiful adventuress. Minus one drug-pushing accomplice who, in the opening chapter, is found shot dead in a London gutter. There is a clue to the vendetta here, but the reader must wait. Judgment uses the novel and unnerving method of playing cards to announce his presence, with the Jack of Clubs a symbol of death. Hence his nickname, Jack O' Judgment. Thrills and false trails abound for twelve instalments before the final confrontation, revolvers in hand: "Stop!" cried Boundary hoarsely. "I know you, curse you! I know you." Two shots rang out together and the Colonel sprawled over the bed - dead. Mortally wounded, Judgment

is seen as Sir Stanley Belcom, head of the Foreign Office, avenging his son's death through drugs supplied by Boundary.

Issue No. 20 opened with his much heralded A KING BY NIGHT, first published in 1925. A more involved plot than the first, the story finds heiress Gwenda Guildford in search of her millionaire uncle, Oscar Trevors, reported lost in the heart of Africa. Selby Lowe is a dapper detective from the Foreign Office engaged to sort things out, a task of no mean achievement when confronted with the TERROR - 'a fearless shape that stalks its prey by night, more savage than a tiger, more stronger than an ox.' The terror is in fact a colossal white negro and paid hireling, roaming the country at large and striking down his victims with impunity. Of the two chosen stories, I think the first was the more satisfying and suited to the paper.

Second top billing went to Alfred Edgar, one of the most prodigious of boys' writers. Curiously enough, it took an adult interest in the hobby and C.D. to really discover how versatile he was, associating his name in early years with that of motor racing. But I daresay most of us in those days were more concerned with the story than the name of the author! One tit-bit of information to satisfy a long-felt curiosity was that he had anonymously written two Bullseye favourites of mine - The House Of Thrills and The Phantom Of Cursitor Fields. He had of course been one of the main sports writers for Football & Sports Favourite during its run, though his new assignment "credits" were given as 'famous author of "War." 1917 and "The Somme."' For Boys' Favourite he wrote two serials spanning its career, beginning with IRON HAGAN, a mystery and boxing yarn against a Steelworks background. Mike Hagan, strong-man and heavyweight boxer, sets out to solve the mystery involving workmen in a series of terrible accidents. The story evolves around a "ghost" rumoured to haunt the place, some fine boxing sequences, and a love interest. Hardly had the story ended when it appeared in the monthly Football & Sports Library.

A popular recurring theme in adventure papers was that of the power-mad dictator bent on world conquest. There were many variations, but easily one of the best of this type was Edgar's NAPOLEON OF 1960, a tour de force if ever there was one. This story of a world-war thirty years hence, with the emergence of an Emperor of the Earth, was remarkable for its near prophesy. It is doubtful whether anyone could have then foreseen a real-life monster soon to change the course of history. Britain is once more invaded, in a futuristic manner reminiscent of Boys' Magazine. The caption reads:

'Can you imagine what the world will be like in thirty years' time? Imagine a world of colossal speed, where electrically driven ten-wheeled vehicles sweep by at 200 m. p. h. Where gigantic, formidable ships of the air swoop down, where men become machine-like in the service they render to one great domineering chief - an Emperor of the Earth!'

The Emperor in this case is one Napoleon Berg, who sets his armies on the only country to defy him: Britain. He makes his conquest in a powerful yarn, though luckily enough the author had an ace up his sleeve. Britain always wins the last battle, so 'tis said, and in a continuing sequel called WAR DRUMS OF 1960 she recovers sufficiently to deal the conquering despot a mortal blow.

My first introduction to famed sports writer Arthur S. Hardy came,

surprisingly, with a non-sporting event in the NELSON LEE called THE ISLAND CASTAWAYS, one of the few serials I followed in that paper. With sport at a discount in the new set-up, his one and only soccer contribution was The Black Dale Sensation, about a footballer who shunned the limelight. Shortly after came a mystery tale called THE WATCHER, which seems to have been his total output for the paper. To complete the soccer line-up, there was FALSE COLOURS, by Malcolm Hincks. THE BLACK HOUSE, by Don Gray. SHOOTING BOOTS, by Walter Edwards and GOLIATH GRIGGS - GOALKEEPER, by John M. Howard. Cricket fans had a miserly coverage of only two stories. These were MILTON OF THE MOVIES, a tale of Test-Match cricket, by Frank Arnold, and MAD MURDOCH, about cricketers and crooks, by Don Gray. But there was compensation in The Life Story Of Jack Hobbs, which had a good run in the Sporting Celebrities feature. This interesting page also spotlighted footballers and speedway riders.

Looking over the Western stories the paper had to offer reminded me that I had spent much of my time out West with the Thomson papers. When I was at school it seemed you weren't "with it" unless you read the WIZARD and ROVER, but I have to admit that they knew their stuff when it came to Cowboys and Indians. And when I wasn't reading about the goodies and the baddies, I was through the cinema door watching them, a little weakness of mine which has endured till this day. It was mainly my interest in Westerns which attracted me to BOYS' CINEMA, for here one could read up the story of the film and relive the moments. With 'Thomson' in mind, I am back in the saddle with three of my favourite heroes from this period - Fred Thomson (or was it Thompson?), William Boyd, and Tim McCoy. But all this is by the way. For the purpose of this record, here are a few to hitch their wagons westwards ... LAW OF THE ROPE, by John M. Howard. KID BUCK'S REVENGE, by John Bennett. GALLOPING VENGEANCE and NIGHT RIDER, by Don Gray. THE TAMING OF "MUCKER" BRANDT, COWBOY SMITH, THE TAMING OF THE TENDERFOOT, by Walter Edwards.

Fiction or film-wise, motor racing was a sport which completely disinterested me, but for those who liked this kind of fare, Franklyn Byrd was the man to supply the thrills and spills. This may well have been a pen-name of Alfred Edgar, already going strong under his own name, but this is only conjecture. For interested fans there were SPEEDMAN'S LUCK, THE ROGUE MACHINE, A DEVIL TO DRIVE, and THE SMASHER. On a different tack he wrote THE THUNDERING FREIGHT (Railroad), BLINDING TRAIL (Frozen North) and THE LONE POST (War Story). Whenever I see the "Biggles" tales on the bookstalls or in the libraries I think of my own luckless attempts to read them, and others of their kind, in the RANGER. Perhaps it all seemed so tame after seeing the real thing at the cinema, and who is ever likely to forget those mighty air battles in such film epics as "Wings," "Dawn Patrol," and "Hell's Angels?" But it takes all kinds to make an adventure paper, and I have no doubt that readers thrilled to those written by "ace" Jack Crichton. These were WINGED COURAGE, THE FLYING SPY, IN THE ENEMY LINES, and WHEN THE LUCK TURNED. Not forgetting SKY HIGH, by Stanley Hooper.

No. 1 saw the start of what was to be the paper's longest-running serial, THE SILVER QUEEN, by Percy A. Clarke. It dealt with the adventures of Tom Anderson and his friends, who discover the queen of a lost race in S. America, with an army of ape men holding her hostage. By the same author were THE DIAMOND TRAIL

and HAUNTED CARGO.

After the departure of Edgar Wallace the regular writers took over the crime department, most of the stories being in serial form. THE CRIME CLUB, by Walter Edwards, was a long series featuring Grant Swift, detective, battling his wits against ruthless gunmen. Others from his pen were THE SHADOW and THE HAND BEHIND THE GUN. A new-style detective was introduced by Arthur Catherrall called Dandy King, THE HOBO 'TEC. Mystery and intrigue were well woven into a Balkan state setting called THE STRANGE AFFAIR AT STRANSLAU, by Malcolm Hincks. Issue No. 32 presented THE AMAZING EXPLOITS OF DIGBY FANE, a young journalist turned gentleman crook, pursuing a vendetta against an unscrupulous millionaire. A sort of Raffles - cum - Robin Hood. With No. 38 came the last crime series, THE DEATH DOUBLE, by Malcolm Hincks. A case of mistaken identity, a man is condemned to death by the Bendetti, an Italian Secret Society. Two American gangster stories more or less completed the criminal line-up: DANNY GETS HIS SCOOP, by Don Gray, and SILENT SHOT, by John M. Howard.

Apart from the usual page of jokes and a cartoon strip, I saw only one attempt at comic relief. This was provided by a character known as Horatio Lancelot Coker who, not surprisingly, bore a resemblance to the famous Horace of Greyfriars. Another chump, this one had a failing for hair-brained schemes which somehow never worked.

To round off the picture, there were stories about lost treasure, boxing, the South Seas, Foreign Legion, Canadian Mounted Police, ghosts, smuggling - in fact, just about every type of story to keep youngsters happy. And if you wished for a particular story to be printed, the editor was good enough to ask you to send in. What more could one ask for? Yet, for reasons unknown, the combined talents of these fine writers failed to work the oracle for Boys' Favourite. For forty-three weeks it took its place on the bookstalls among the shining lights and other aspirants for stardom, only to fade quietly from the scene on the 22nd February, 1930. Printed throughout on an orange background, the final issue changed to the red, white, and blue cover of its successor-to-be: THE STARTLER.

\* \* \* \* \*

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# sub-standard

by LAURIE SUTTON

It is generally agreed that Charles Hamilton's writing is rich in humour.

However, the many substitute writers in the Magnet and Gem also provided their quota of humour. One difference, apart from the quality, was in the fact that in most cases the laughs we get from the sub writers were provided unintentionally.

That prolific writer, G. R. Samways, supplied a mixture of genuine and unintentional humour. One of his best efforts was in Magnet 905, "Alonzo, the Slogger." After seeing a newspaper advert, Alonzo Todd purchases a bottle of Prof. Skinnem's Staminoid Syrup, which will give him new strength. The amazing results are explained when the firm's representative visits the school.

"He was as strong as a horse," gasped Wharton.

"My firm," said Jonas P. Jones, "in addition to our wonderful Staminoid Syrup, puts out another mixture for weak dray horses, which is sold under the patented name of 'Kickitard.' The fact is, the labels got mixed in the bottling department and your friend, instead of taking the Staminoid Syrup, has been taking 'Kickitard' instead."

"Dear me!" murmured Alonzo. "And I have been taking double doses of it, in order to be on the safe side."

Samways gave us an amusing pun in M. 733, when Percy Smith informed Wally Bunter (his temporary Form-master) that the equator was a menagerie lion running across the earth. Another Samways pun, used several times, was in a character mentioning hallucinations, when Gosling, Taggles, etc., would say: "Lucy Nations - ain't never 'eard of 'er."

Samways appeared to make a private joke in M. 353:

"What sort of crowd are Harley?" asked Johnny Bull.

"They're supposed to be one of the finest school teams in the country," said Harry. "They've got a winger who's supposed to be the last word in speed. Hedley O'Mant, I think his name is. Irish Johnny, you know."

As most of us know, the name of Hedley O'Mant was later heard of as a writer of boys' fiction, including Gem and Magnet sub tales. We learn from Bill Lofts' book, "The Men Behind Boys' Fiction," that Samways and O'Mant were at the same school together, although Samways was the elder by some four years. At the time Samways wrote the words quoted above, he was only 19 years of age, and O'Mant only 15 and doubtless still at school! Presumably they were school friends, although four years is a formidable age barrier in schoolboy friendships.

Incidentally, another A. P. writer whose name suggested a character in a story was Capt. Malcolm Arnold. In M. 824 the winner of the National Gliding Championship was Capt. Arnold Malcolm!

Samways, like Hamilton, produced some witty names for solicitors, among them being "Seacombe & Fynde," "Have & Hookit," "Grabbit & Scoote."

In M. 449, Bunter ran away from school and joined a circus, where he was "blacked out" and billed as "Golly-Wolly, the man-eating savage." It is not certain who wrote this story, except that it definitely was not J. N. Pentelow, as given in the official lists.

In M. 801, after Bunter had been in a tea-table upset, Samways wrote that

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Which charges will include AFTERNOON TEA, to be served between 4 and 5 o'clock in the Fauteuils, Grand Circle, Stalls and Pit. Children Half-Price (except Balcony and Gallery), but Tea not included.

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"Harry Wharton & Co. stared at Billy Bunter's dripping hair and buttery face in amazement." It only wanted someone to call him "old lard-tub" and all the fat would have been in the fire. I wonder if the Co. could tell buttery Bunter from Marjorie Hazeldene?

Below are a few extracts from various authors that probably weren't intended to be funny!

G.725. A snow-ball, hot from Tom Merry's hand, caught the Grammarian leader.

M.855. The name of W. G. Bunter would, for the first time, carry weight at Greyfriars.

G.1209. "No ghost is going to frighten me," said Fatty stoutly.

G.1087. Figgins, Kerr and Fatty Wynn looked up from their books with fallen faces.

M.934. Coker did not eat himself; he was far too excited for that.

G.1217. "Go it, Figgy, old hoss," muttered Lowther rather hoarsely.

(I suppose Kerr might have said, "old bean," cannily.)

In Gem 1210, a new Fifth-former named Kent had remarkable hearing - "... he failed to hear a soft tap on the door behind him. But he did hear the door open silently."



Some amazing coincidences occur in the sub writers' efforts, one of the most remarkable being in M. 509. Jack Brown comes to Greyfriars as the new boot-boy. Skinner sees in a paper a photo of the Hon. Roy Hastings, who has disappeared from his ancestral home. As Jack Brown is the double of the boy in the photo, and has a cultured accent, the razor-sharp Skinner suspects that J. B. is really R. H. , especially when he finds a hanky of the boot-boy with the initials "R. H. " It turns out, however, that J. B. is really himself, and that R. H. had been on a visit to his uncle without telling his parents! Oh, the hanky with the R. H. initials? J. B. explains that it was sent to him in mistake by a laundry! (Samways doesn't tell us whether it actually belonged to Roy Hastings or to Rolf Harris.)

In Popular 97: "But how did you manage to catch Pon, when he was on a motor-bike?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Just as he was in the act of passing me one of his tyres burst," replied Linley.

A favourite of mine is in G. 1138, when Callao Garcia, son of the president of Rioquay, comes to St. Jim's. A mad bull had entered the quad, and everybody was terrified. But, the author tells us: "It was a lucky thing that old Taggles had spilt some tea over a red tablecloth that morning, and after washing it had hung it out on a window-sill to dry! Garcia had snatched up the crimson cloth - and he knew how to use it!" (Rather lucky Taggles didn't use the common working-man's red tablecloth - the "Daily Worker".)

Gosling was unusually careless in M. 451. "Half an hour before the rising-bell was due to ring out the junior was awake again. 'I'll tumble out,' he murmured. 'A dip in the sea will make me lively enough.' Then .. he strode across the quad and through the school gates, which Gosling, the porter, had inadvertantly left open."

That famous London street, the Strand, was apparently a place where missing persons displayed themselves for the benefit of school associates who went looking for them. In G. 671, Talbot, Crooke, and a party of juniors go to Lyndon House for Christmas. Crooke overhears Col. Lyndon discussing his will with his lawyer, and learns that he is to get practically nothing. He takes the will from the safe in the night to study it, but is unable to put it back. The safe, left open, is robbed of cash by a burglar. Talbot later agrees to replace the will for Crooke, but is caught doing so by Ferrers Locke at 3 a.m. Talbot is driven from the house in disgrace, and goes to London. Crooke later confesses, and goes to look for Talbot, and happens to spot him in the Strand in company with Tony Masters, a former gang member, whom Talbot happened to meet in the Strand. Masters takes Talbot to a cafe, where he is trying to persuade the Toff to return to his old life, but Crooke has followed them in, and is listening behind a partition. As Talbot wavers, Crooke stands up: "He will not!" came an exclamation, in ringing tones. (Sounds a bit phoney, that!) Crooke takes Talbot back to Lyndon House, and a merry Christmas is had by all.

In G. 625, Mr. Ratcliff was found in the Strand by Kildare, after losing his money and securities in a fraud. Kildare was in London to buy some sports gear, and found Ratty in rags. The author didn't tell us why Ratty left St. Jim's and wandered round London looking for work! Tom Merry & Co. get up an ice carnival in order to raise cash to send to Ratty.

There is a strange coincidence in Samways' wording of a sentence in Pop. 28 (June, 1919). "Hilary himself and a wizard named Lancaster made short work of the Greyfriars wickets."

Absurd and farcical episodes abound, and M. 659 must take a lot of beating. Quelch and three other Lower School masters go to Oxford for a week for Classics exams, and their places are filled by four Highcliffe masters, that school being conveniently under a 'flu epidemic. Mr. Hicks takes the Remove, and turns out to be a tyrant, as the following extracts indicate:

Mr. Hicks (to Fish): "Boy, what is your name? You, boy, with the long nose."

"F - five hundred lines, sir?" gasped Bob.

"Ha! You are disappointed, you noisy ragamuffin, then you shall do six hundred!"

"I think the worthy and esteemed sahib is a rotter," gasped the nabob.

"Oh, you do, do you, you young nigger. Take that then!" Mr. Quelch's deputy boxed Inky's ears right and left.

"Come along, boy," snapped Mr. Hicks, referring to his notebook. "You will all bring up your lines. I have amused myself by making a little mathematical calculation. Between you, you have done eight thousand, four hundred lines."

"Are you still hungry, Bunter? You have eaten six slices of meat, seven potatoes, eight slices of bread-and-butter, and two helpings of pudding!" snapped Mr. Hicks, referring to a note on his shirt-cuff. "You are evidently a regular pig with your food."

"Oh, dear! Pass the bread-and-butter, Wharton, will you?"

"You hadn't better, Wharton!" snapped Mr. Hicks.

Meantime, Mr. Hicks and the other masters from Highcliffe were chatting over their morning's work, and Mr. Hicks rubbed his hands together and gloated.

"This will teach the young scoundrels," he said. "During the whole time that I have been in this district Greyfriars have been the upper dogs, and have treated Highcliffe as though it was dirt. Now we are getting a little of our own back. Ha, ha!"

There was a chuckle from the four masters.

A celebrated incident occurred in Samways' M. 436, when Prout walked across the sight screen when Wingate was batting, and caused him to be bowled two runs short of his century. "You dolt!" roared Wingate (to Prout). "You insane imbecile! I was ninety-eight! A couple more and I should have completed my century! And then you go and expose your fat carcass in front of the bowling screen and put me off! Oh, you frabjous dummy!"

... "The next instant there was a startled gasp from all the cricketers.

Wingate had hurled down his bat, and actually squared up to Mr. Prout. Such a scene was almost without parallel in the varied and extensive history of Greyfriars."

Personally, I would leave out the "almost" and say - "UNPARALLELED!"

Another unlikely incident was in M. 550, when Mr. Vernon-Smith pretended to lose all his money, in order to put the Bounder's affection to the test. In his letter to Herbert, Mr. V-S. told him, "I am moving this week to No. 10 Plummers' Court, Bermondsey. It is a terrible come-down for me, of course."

Samways gave Coker an affection for Phyllis Howell, which was referred to in several stories. In M. 421, Miss Howell was playing in a hockey match, and Coker approached her at half-time:

"I say," said Horace Coker, lumbering up to Phyllis Howell, "you're a gem, Phyllis! The way you're bottling these chaps up is simply divine!"

"You're too flattering," murmured Phyllis.

"Not at all!" said Coker. "I think you're a real peach. I do, really!"

"Naughty, naughty!" said Phyllis reprovingly. And she gave the love-lorn Coker a playful poke in the ribs with her hockey-stick, while the crowd on the touch-line roared with unrestrained laughter.

There was a feeble and ridiculous joke in Pop. 81, when Quelch asks, "Who was Sir Walter Raleigh?" "Loder's patron saint, sir," said Dennis Carr. "What! Why

do you say that, Carr?" "Because he invented smoking, sir."

G. R. Samways has provided me with a good many clues in his writings, and G. 794, gives another. The subject of the story is the F. A. Cup Final, won by Belmont Rovers, led by their skipper Jimmy Renton. Renton had appeared earlier in the pages of the Gem, in a serial, "Renton of the Rovers," by Paul Masters (whom I had immediately identified as Samways). An interesting point is that Belmont Rovers were a 2nd Division southern team, playing in red-and-white stripes and black shorts. Knowing that Samways once lived in Southsea, it is not difficult to identify Belmont Rovers as Southampton, and to guess that Samways' soccer allegiance was to neighbouring Southampton rather than to local Portsmouth.

Incidentally, Belmont's opponents in the Cup Final were "the famous Loamshire County from Lancashire!" The story contains a typical Samways incident when Grundy forms a scratch band of musicians, and writes to the F. A. offering to play at the Wembley final. Due to an office-boy putting two letters in wrong envelopes, Grundy gets an acceptance that should have gone to a military band. The F. A.'s letter correcting the error fails to reach Grundy, owing to the fact that Taggles, wishing to save the postman from fagging across the quad, offers to take the letter to Grundy (it just happens that there is only one letter for St. Jim's that post!). This typically obliging and energetic action by Taggles has unfortunate results when he pockets the letter and forgets it until after the final. This gives Grundy the opportunity to take his band out on the Wembley turf and entertain the multitude until the military band comes on and takes over!

Samways adopted Redfern of St. Jim's as one of his favourites, and seemed to have a special affection for him. In G. 442, Marie Rivers says to Redfern, "Your home is in Hampshire - Southsea, is it not?" In this story Redfern runs away from St. Jim's and gets a job on the "Sussex Chronicle" (not his first venture into journalism). He returns to St. Jim's to report a swimming contest between St. Jim's and Claremont. In a relay race, the third man for St. Jim's is being beaten, with no prospect of the fourth (Manners) making up the leeway. Redfern dashes into a tent, changes into a swimsuit, and swims and wins the last leg for St. Jim's!

Another highly probably incident occurs in G. 580. Kerr stops a charabanc on its way to picking up Blake & Co., and tips the driver a quid to borrow the vehicle for the evening. A boy of 15!

There is a side-splitting incident in G. 511. Mr. Ratcliff has a safe delivered to him at St. Jim's, a legacy from a deceased uncle. The safe is supposed to be a special invention, worth a lot of money. Going down to examine the safe at night, Trimble is surprised by Ratty. Then Grundy, thinking Ratty a burglar, pushes him into the safe, where Trimble is already, and locks them in. The fun starts in the morning:

"Er - Taggles," said Mr. Railton. "Do you think you can open the safe for us?"

"I'll try, sir!" said Taggles. "I ain't a burglar, sir, but I'll do me best. It don't look very thick. I think this will do it."

And, groping in the sack, Taggles produced a tin-opener.

Fancy thinking a tin-opener can-opener safe! Anyway, Taggles achieved some success:

... But another couple of hours slipped by, and there was only a small hole made as yet. The Head wrinkled his brow.

"Kildare," he said, "fetch something hot for Mr. Ratcliff. We must try and supply him with a little nourishment through that hole."

In ten minutes Kildare returned with a steaming cup of beef tea, and a small glass funnel from the chemical laboratory.

Mr. Railton approached the safe. "I have some beef tea here, Ratcliff," he said. "Put your mouth to this tube and I will pour some in."

He inserted the tubular end of the funnel through the hole, and raised the cup of beef tea.

Mr. Ratcliff, unfortunately, did not catch the words, and thinking that the tube was intended to make conversation easier, applied his ear to it just at the moment that the hot beef tea came running through.

"Idiot!" he roared ungratefully, as he received a shower of liquid over his head.

An ingenious deduction was featured in M. 857. "The rotter!" said Bob to Harry Wharton and the rest of the Co. "I can see the game, Harry. Your shoes and mine are the only ones in the Remove dormitory bearing Phillips rubber heels. Skinner's plan was to rag the Head's study, and then upset some ink or something on the floor, and imprint the soles of our shoes in it." (The heels might have been better. In any case it might have been Fish - wearing Dover soles!")

Exaggerated cases of misplaced and omitted aspirates are common, but the author of M. 937 had Bolsover minor dropping silent aspirates, and holding the "sound" one - "I ain't told you any lies - 'onest I haven't - 'onour bright."

An absurd exaggeration occurs in G. 1175, by Francis Warwick. An American introduces himself as "Mr. Codd" and says he is considering sending his son to St. Jim's. When the Head addresses his visitor he says, "... Mr. - er - Herring." "Mr. Codd," corrected the other. Dr. Holmes then goes on to call the American, in turn, Mr. Fish, Trout, Spratt, Whale, Sole and Pike.

In G. 420, Tom Merry sees Dr. Holmes to suggest a soccer match against the masters. "All serene!" Tom exclaimed. "The Head's going to see to it. Matter of fact, he's going to play himself."

In Pop. 46 Prout goes out carrying a gun to volunteer for duty while the railwaymen are on strike. He speaks to the Famous Five. "Should any of the strikers interfere with me in the discharge of my duties, I shall be compelled to shoot. And when I shoot, I shoot to kill."

G. 1165 gives us another example of Francis Warwick's overdrawn situations. One of the school governors suggests to Dr. Holmes that some boys should take flying lessons, after his son has made a record-breaking flight to Australia. The project ends when Grundy crashes one of the two planes on the New House roof. One evening Kildare sends Tom Merry to Wayland for the doctor, as Dr. Holmes is seriously ill (the telephone is out of order!). Tom comes back in the doctor's car, and enters the Head's bedroom with the doctor, who says that Dr. Holmes cannot live unless an operation is performed within eight hours by a Paris surgeon, Dr. Rivoli. You've guessed it! Tom Merry does, indeed, fly the undamaged plane to Paris, and returns with Dr. Rivoli, who operates in the Head's room, with the local doctor giving the anaesthetic! (With a name like Rivoli, he ought to have had a theatre!)

One of the earliest farcical episodes occurred in M. 87, in a soccer match. Tom Brown picked the ball up and dashed along the touch-line - "I clean forgot I wasn't playing Rugger, you know." Perhaps Samways had read this story just before he wrote in M. 414: "Tom Brown was penalised shortly afterwards for accidentally handling the ball. The fact was, that before Tom Brown came to Greyfriars he had played under the Rugby code, with the result that he frequently forgot himself." In this same story, "Loder glared at the Removites. 'After this unparalleled

exhibition,' he hissed, 'you will each write me ten thousand lines.'"

It was Squiff who mixed up soccer and rucker in Samways' "School and Sport" (B. F. L. 319): "Squiff, who before coming to Greyfriars had played under the Rugby code, completely forgot himself, and handled in the penalty area."

In Pop. 92, "Mr. Quelch was in golfing attire, and a bag of clubs was slung over his shoulder."

There are dozens of cases where characters and places from the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories have been transposed by sub writers. We have Taggles, Dr. Short, etc., at Greyfriars, and Mrs. Mimble, Mrs. Kebble, P. C. Tozer, etc., at St. Jim's. In M. 634, Skinner went up to Knox's study to borrow the newspaper. In M. 685, "the juniors reached the gates just as Sir Hilton Popper was waiting for Taggles to open them." I don't suppose that wait improved his temper!

In Pop. 297, Mrs. Kebble is matron at St. Jim's. In G. 691, P. C. Tozer was standing by the crossroads. "Have you seen any St. Jim's juniors about this morning constable?" asked Dr. Grierson.

Perhaps the most careless error was that of Pentelow in M. 545, when he had the Greyfriars juniors walking to Rylcombe station. The illustrator took him at his word, and plastered a big "Rylcombe" sign on the cover illustration of the station platform. Incidentally, this was one of four stories of atrocious standard featuring a character named Spring.

Of course such mistakes were usually the result of carelessness rather than ignorance, but there are many examples of inexcusable errors. In M. 641, after writing Greyfriars stories for some five years, Samways could serve a sloppy double-fault like this: "'My pater's place is in Hampshire," said Harry Wharton.' In fact, Samways had perpetrated the same double error in G. 606, when Dr. Locke phoned Dr. Holmes and mentioned "Colonel Wharton, the father of one of my boys," and Samways later informed his readers that there were many attractions at and around Wharton Lodge ... and afternoon picnics in the Hampshire woods."

There were three instances when sub writers referred to Squiff as a South African, in M. 777, 817, 835. In M. 656, we read about Desmond Wibley and George Gosling.

Another of Samways' errors was to site Uncle Clegg's shop at Courtfield instead of Friardale. He did this first in "School and Sport" (1915), and repeated it in M. 405 and M. 451. This latter story is yet another wrongly listed in the official lists, being credited to E. S. Brooks, but actually written by Samways (not just because of the "Uncle Clegg" error, of course).

Evidently Charles Hamilton was not alone in being unsure of railway routes, for in Pop. 21 we are told that there was a train running right through from Courtfield to Southend. I imagine the passengers got a bit wet on that journey! In the same issue, Samways has this to say through Prout, to Blundell: "Of course, Coker will be leader of the expedition? If I know anything about boys, Coker is an ideal leader. In class, I find Coker somewhat dull of intelligence. But so far as sport is concerned, I certainly think Coker should take the lead. In fact, I shall only give my consent to the tour on the express condition that Coker captains the side."

A notable weakness of many sub writers lay in their inability to give the dignified speech appropriate to the status of the masters - and, particularly, to the headmasters. In M. 259 (not included as a sub in the official lists) Dr. Locke tells

Bunter: "Wretched boy, I have half a mind to expel you immediately." Dr. Locke later says to Trotter: "Trotter, my boy, I am very pleased with you, so pleased, in fact, that I shall give you double wages at the end of this week."

E. S. Brooks is at fault in M. 313 (a follow-up to M. 225, where Brooks established Hardinge's jam factory at Courtfield End). The manager of the factory asks Dr. Locke for assistance from the Greyfriars boys to oppose some strikers who are besieging the owner at the works. Dr. Locke, in giving a rather incredible assent, says: "Very well, I will do as you request. I will send a party of prefects, supported by the Cadet Corps, consisting chiefly of the Remove - the keenest fighting Form in the school, I imagine." This is particularly absurd, as obviously the senior Forms only would be sent, if one could imagine a headmaster putting his boys at physical risk in an industrial dispute.

In M. 349, Dr. Locke addresses Linley in quite a matey way: "It's just what I would expect from one of my boys, and I'm proud of you, Linley. And now you've got to look sharp and get well again." In M. 509, after licking Skinner, Snoop and Stott: "There," panted the Head, "I trust that will be a lesson to you, and a warning never again to slander a boy who is worth the whole of you lumped together."

M. 85 was correctly recognised as a sub story until Bill Lofts stated in a footnote to the official lists in the 1962 C. D. Annual that it was without doubt a genuine Hamilton story. I'm afraid I still beg to differ, and I imagine others will do likewise after reading the following, even allowing for the early date of the story:

"Take fifty lines, Bunter!" interrupted Mr. Quelch, "and if I have another word from you, you'll have a hundred and fifty."

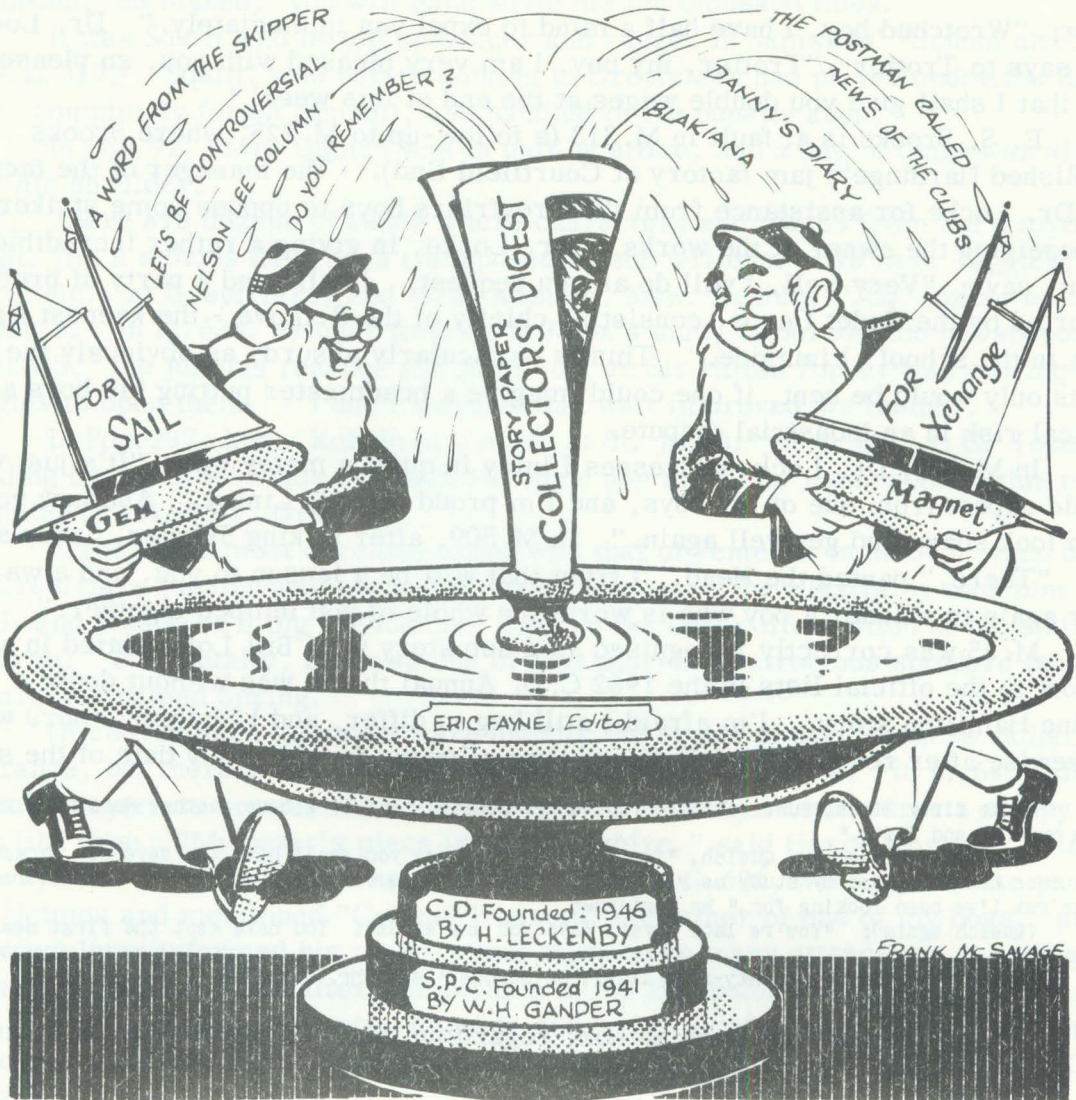
"Bunter," shouted Mr. Quelch, "for this impertinence you shall have the severest thrashing you've ever had. You use my study as your dining-room!" Mr. Quelch grew sarcastic. "I conclude you are the rat I've been looking for," he continued.

(Quelch again): "You're late boys! Have you any excuse! You have kept the first meal of the day waiting."

"Make those fifty, seventy-five lines, Bulstrode!" said Mr. Quelch.

In part extenuation to the author, regarding the "rat" reference, it must be said that the "plot" concerns an invasion of rats at Greyfriars.

As imitators of Hamilton, the sub writers were generally miles away from the master's tyle, let alone his ability. Now and again they would imitate the style for a short period of a story, such as Samways in M. 667, when De Courcy told Archie Howell: "My uncle at the War Office was the only chap in his department who couldn't sleep in the daytime. He suffered so much from insomnia that he was compelled to give up his job. A jolly remunerative job it was, too." As far as complete stories were concerned, the closest imitations came from the earlier E. S. Brooks stories when he really took the trouble to work hard on Hamilton's style (in his late 1920's stories he didn't need to bother with close imitation). Some of the early H. Clarke Hook stories were also fairly good imitations. Another author who came very close to Hamilton's style on occasions was Stanley Austin, a writer of some class and ability who, like Hamilton, was strong on themes of the sea, open-air and holiday yarns, and humour. A good example among many good japing yarns of Stanley Austin is G. 1104, "George's Aunt." After Figgins & Co. have been chipping Tom Merry following Miss Fawcett's visit, Monty Lowther overhears Figgy tell his chums that he also has an aunt like that, who visits his cousin at Wodehouse, but whom he himself has never seen. Monty decides that "Aunt Sophy" will visit Figgy on the next



## FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

THIS CHARMING CARTOON IS SPECIALLY DRAWN FOR C.D. ANNUAL BY  
FRANK McSAVAGE, OUR ENTHUSIAST IN THE STATES

half, and Digby gets his cousin in Hampstead to send Figgy a card, telling him of the visit. "Aunt Sophy" appears at Wayland station with a bathchair and two heavy bags. She insists on being wheeled the three miles to St. Jim's on a warm afternoon, to help her rheumatism. Figgy pushes the bathchair, while Kerr and Wynn struggle along carrying bags weighted by pieces of bricks. Arrived at St. Jim's, Aunt insists on Figgins & Co. having their planned pull up the river and picnic. Aunt then suggests a race by Figgins & Co. across a meadow and back, with a £1 prize for the winner. She starts them off from the edge of the wood, then hurries back and rows across the

Rhyl with the picnic basket, sharing the spread with the School House Co's.

The author of the St. Jim's story in Pop. 267 is not very convincing, when Henry Railton says, of the juniors: "And, by Jove, what bricks - what stunning little bricks!"

There was a rare example of bad taste in M. 840: "'Come back, boys! Come back.'" screeched the Tyrant. But Dicky Nugent & Co. were gone. With tin whistles and combs and paper blaring forth a murdered rendering of the famous "Colonel Bogey March," the fag strikers trooped through the gates and disappeared from view. Samways was also guilty of a tasteless line in Pop. 26, when he wrote, "... as cheerfully as Charles Peace on the morning he faced the hangman."

The two sub writers who had the greatest influence on the Magnet and Gem were G. R. Samways and J. N. Pentelow. Samways wrote some 110 Greyfriars stories for the Magnet, and some 60 St. Jim's yarns for the Gem. He was mainly responsible for the Greyfriars Herald, and the launching of the Greyfriars Holiday Annual, besides writing practically all the Greyfriars stories for the Popular over a long period. Samways also wrote two stories that appeared in the Boys' Friend Library - "School and Sport" and "The Pride of the Ring" - and one story for the Schoolboys' Own Library - No. 15, "Football Heroes." He wrote some editorials, "Replies to Readers," and countless snippets and short stories in the names of various juniors in the Companion Papers and their supplements.

Samways also had a hand in "Boys' Friend Weekly" editorials at one time. One of these was in B. F. 753 (18-12-15) and described how Owen Conquest took the editor on a Christmas shopping-spree, buying a dozen gifts to be drawn for on behalf of London Boys' Friend readers - the names coming from the B. F. Anti-German League forms! Samways lists the following names: F. Floggins (Bermondsey); Percy Tulip (Borough); Z. Harris (Mile End); T. MacWilson (Golders Green); W. H. P. J. Harvey-Pinkney (Dulwich); Miss Sylvia Carr (W. Kensington). C. D. readers may recall that Sylvia Carr was a Samways character featured in Gem stories 444 and 448. Incidentally, these two stories were published in reversed order. In 448, a junior eleven play a girls' eleven in a cricket week. Gussy loses a bet with Sylvia Carr, the girls' captain, who has agreed to let him have a kiss if the boys win. However, Gussy scores a not-out century in the main match against Lord Conway's team, and Sylvia gives him his kiss as a reward.

Bearing in mind this revelation that Samways had a hand in Boys' Friend and Gem editorials and replies to readers, I have do doubt at all that it was Samways who was responsible for the editorially concocted abusive letters that appeared in the Gem under the name of "Master Malpas," etc. These were previously thought to have been the work of H. A. Hinton, but they are quite in Samways style. Note this extract from M. 659, when Bunter tells Bob Cherry in a note: "I am a fellow of grate 40-tude." Compare this with the published letter from "Master Malpas" in G. 393: "I have bene a reeder of the Jem for the last fore years, and I must say that the toan of the paper has deterriorrated ... I and my frends have formed a Anti-Jem sosiety, and depend upon it, we shall not give in in the  $\frac{1}{2}$ -harted manner Master Robert Carlton did ..." A further pointer to Samways being "Master Malpas" is in the fact that he clearly wrote the editorial only six weeks later in G. 399, in which he informed "Lilian, Southsea:" "I have had many letters lately from Sunny Southsea, a town which will always have a warm place in my affections, since part of my boyhood was



spent there."

In the same issue, G. 399, Samways wrote in "Replies to Readers:" 'To Tom B. - So you like the yarns where Kildare gets some of the limelight, do you? What price Mason's Last Match?' (I need hardly mention that Samways wrote this story.) 'To DGBS: Yes, I do believe in a boy being religious, without any absurd priggishness. A splendid story on this subject appears in Magnet No. 400.'" (This refers to "The Sunday Crusaders," by - you've guessed it')

J. N. Pentelow also wrote prolifically for the Magnet and Gem. Pentelow had a unique style, and I am able to state the exact number of sub tales that he wrote - namely, 64 St. Jim's stories for the Gem, and 37 Greyfriars stories for the Magnet (subject only to a check on M. 426, included, but not confirmed, as I have mislaid my analysis-slip, and no longer possess this Magnet). Mention has been made in the C. D. of Pentelow splitting payments for stories. It is certainly remarkable that Bill Lofts official lists credit Pentelow with no less than 68 Magnet titles - nearly twice as many as he actually wrote! In addition to these main stories, Pentelow also wrote scores of short stories, like Samways, in the names of schoolboy characters, for the Greyfriars Herald, and the Magnet and Gem supplements, besides short St. Jim's stories for the Popular. Pentelow's last published sub story appeared after his death - the St. Jim's story in the 1932 Holiday Annual.

Pentelow's innovations included the Greyfriars and St. Jim's Galleries - biographies of practically every character even remotely connected with the Greyfriars and St. Jim's scene, and involving a colossal amount of research and statistical data. Another idea of Pentelow's was a column supposedly written by a girl, which he introduced in G. 678, under the heading of "Joy's Gossip," and which he wrote for several weeks. Pentelow edited the Magnet and Gem when he took over during the 1914-18 war until the return of H. A. Hinton. Although Pentelow did not take over again when Hinton left after a brief period back in the editorial chair, he continued to write the Gem and Magnet editorials on-and-off for several more years.

Some people claim that Pentelow was a first-class writer in other fields, but few would assert that he could write a decent Greyfriars or St. Jim's story. Because his style was so laboured and stodgy, he never remotely approached the true atmosphere of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, despite his painstaking research and consequent knowledge and experience of the Hamilton characters. I must confess to a prejudice against Pentelow, which has been built up through a close assessment of his stories and editorials, allied to Hamilton's criticisms, which I feel sure were not entirely groundless. Of course one cannot claim a complete knowledge on the evidence available, but views expressed in stories and editorials do give a fairly clear guide to some aspects of a man's character.

There is editorial evidence that Pentelow got very dignified and huffy over criticism, and his pen had a sharp point when dealing with obstreperous readers. He certainly gave the impression of having a very high opinion of his own writing, and on one occasion when the absurdly overdrawn character of his boy marvel, Johnny Goggs, drew criticism from a reader Pentelow blew a loud blast on his own trumpet in defending Goggs. This was in G. 623: "Goggs is only a fiction boy," says an Australian correspondent. "I have yet to see the boy who is a champion boxer, a fine ju-jitsu expert, and who talks like a professor of geology." Pentelow comments: "Of course that is all right, but Goggs is Goggs, and we are all a bit gone on him, for

he is clever, and his cleverness is made reasonable and fascinating by the talented writer who has the prodigy in charge."

Pentelow made an ill-judged comment in G. 682. In writing of Cardew's arrival at St. Jim's, he recalls how he would not walk to the school, or take the ancient hack. "No, he must have a motor-car! This was in the middle of the war, too, mind you!" As G. 684 appeared in March, 1921, this would take the reader back four years. As Cardew went straight into the Fourth, even a child reader might think it strange that he had stood still during that time. Reminders of actual times emphasise these things, which in the normal way readers don't really worry about. In G. 507, Pentelow made an offensive attack on Christian Scientists: "Somewhere at the back of Grundy's muddled mind there was a kind of notion that these colds could be made as nought by denying their existence. So Christian Scientists are said to believe. But it is not on record that any of them ever had any success in getting rid of a genuine case of toothache by denying it." During the war Pentelow attacked the conscientious objectors. Although this represented the general mood of the masses, Charles Hamilton, as usual, thought deeply and independently on this, as on other matters, and gave us the well-reasoned pair of stories featuring Hilary, the "conchie."

Pentelow was much given to sermonising, but G. 506 reads like a biblical lesson: "Then the frenzy departed from him, and he was greatly afraid of what he had done." "Then did Grundy take vengeance for terms of chipping at the hands of Monty Lowther."

Pentelow made a rather illogical reply to a reader in G. 625, with the information that Doris Levison's age was 15 years, 5 months. A lesson on the birds and bees seems called for, as Ernest Levison's age must have been within a few months of that, either side!

A common criticism of Pentelow has been of his excessive "mush" and sentiment, with three deaths to his account - Courtney (the very gallant gentleman,) a character named Gell, of Rylcombe Grammar School, in G. 684, and one of the Willesley twins in M. 805. Another mushy story is in G. 561, "In Honour of the Head." The Head gives the school a whole day's holiday in honour of his own sixtieth birthday! Practically all the scholars have contributed presents, and Tom Merry says, of Racke & Co., "Look here, it's rot to say that even they don't respect the Head; even if they don't - well, love the dear old boy as we do!" Just imagine Kildare making a speech, and telling Dr. Holmes, "We know that this is your sixtieth birthday ..."

The editorials and replies to readers certainly provided their share of laughs. In M. 331 "S. A. H." is informed: "The Christian names of Vernon-Smith, Bulstrode, Morgan, and Stott are Samuel, George, Owen, and Herbert respectively. Not a bad try, Mr. Editor - you got one right out of four! The "Magnet Story Competition" is mentioned in M. 416 - "No trace of name or address can be found in connection with the following two stories submitted: "The Anti-Footballers at Greyfriars," and "The Adventures of a Butcher's Lad at Greyfriars." (I bet those two were in real Hamilton style!) The Editor informed readers in M. 439 that J. Murray was forming a Gem and Magnet League, open to all the world, Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians and Turks excepted. Doubtless the editor was inundated with letters of protest from readers in Istanbul and Sofia!

No doubt the sub writers did their best. Occasionally they did very well, and I still have a few sub stories in my permanent collection. Considering that there are

quite a few Hamilton stories that I have read and not bothered to retain in my collection, I suppose that is quite a tribute to the better sub stories. One would like to say that the sub writers did a harmless and necessary job for the Magnet and Gem. In most cases this would doubtless be true, but one suspects there were occasions when it was not a necessary job - when Hamilton stories were deliberately held over to allow new writers to try their hand, perhaps to test readers reactions; or where the editor and his associates were itching to see their own efforts in print. We certainly know that the sub writers' efforts were sometimes harmful, and none more so than Francis Warwick's introduction of his own characters, Mr. Pilbeam and the appalling Cyrus K. Handcock, to alter the whole character and tradition of St. Jim's. What a blessing the Hamilton reprints came in time to give the Gem another eight wonderful years, without which my own boyhood days would have lacked their main joy and balm of contentment in troubled times.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 817, 826, 828, 832. BOYS' FRIENDS issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256 (inclusive). Good copies essential.

ERIC FAYNE

EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

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A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year to C.D. members everywhere: also a special thanks to all those who gave me such great pleasure during the past year through the C.D.

R. J. McCABE

16 ST. BOSWELLS TERRACE, DUNDEE, SCOTLAND.

=====

WANTED: Champion Annual 1937, Puck Annuals, Puck Comics, 1932, 1933, 1936. Sunbeams, Butterflies, Tip Tops, 1933-38. Will exchange or pay cash.

HEARN, 191 ARBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.

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FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Boys' Own Annual, Vol. 49 (1926-7); Vol. 52 (1929-30); Vol. 53 (1930-1); Vol. 56 (1933-4); Vol. 59 (1936-7).

S.a.e. to -

E. McCUBEARY

229 MILLBURN ST., GLASGOW N.

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SOME THOUGHTS OF  
**An Amateur Archivist**

by W. T. THURBON

Members of Old Boys' Books Clubs are aware that, generally speaking, when the Radio or T. V. , or, with exceptions, the Press take notice of our interests they usually treat them in a casual, light-hearted manner. They seem to find it amusing that "Comics," their all embracing name for the variety of books, papers and magazines in which we are interested, should attract the attention of adults, and find it inconceivable there should be anything of value in the study of these; they usually turn a condescending eye on what they seem to regard as a childish pastime.

Let us be serious for a moment and consider the reply we should make to these criticisms.

What motives bring together members of Clubs such as ours? For some it is a nostalgic interest in the books and papers we read in our, in some cases far distant, youth. I suppose, indeed, nostalgia plays a part in all of us. But it is not nostalgia that causes a man to be interested in periods before his own youth, say the Victorian age. Again it may be the collecting urge; the desire to have that complete set of "Magnets," of No. 1's, or Sexton Blake Libraries, or the "jackdaw" instinct to hoard odd collections. Or, instead, it may be the researcher's spirit, the desire to know about the publishers, writers and artists engaged in these books, about the economics of the business, or about the readers themselves: who were they? what effect had these books on them? what was the object of the publishers, to entertain, to influence, or merely to make money?

Once we pass beyond nostalgia, and the purely acquisitive instinct, we are entering the realm of the archivist.

The function of the archivist is to search for, assemble, read, index and collate documents and records, and to make them available for the historian and sociologist. And this is very much what many members of our hobby are doing. Archives are in many forms, from the clay tablets in the library of an Assyrian King of 3,000 years ago to last night's Cambridge News.

It is easy to forget that the archivist is concerned not only with ancient manuscripts or medieval documents, Chronicles, Charters, Court Rolls, etc. , but also with ephemera, notes, novels, accounts, newspapers and suchlike things.

Consider for a moment the Greek Testament. When after the Renaissance and the Reformation the Greek New Testament became more freely available, the classical scholars of the 18th and early 19th Century became aware of a great difference in style between the Greek of classical literature and the Greek of the New Testament. They produced various theories to account for this, the favourites being either the fundamentalist belief that the New Testament was written in a special, sacred Greek dictated, or at least inspired by the Holy Ghost, or else that it was written by Jews who did not properly understand the Language they were using.

The world of the New Testament time used two writing materials: the permanent parchment, made from the skins of animals, and papyrus, made from the fibres of the papyrus reed. Parchment was long lasting, papyrus easily destroyed by

damp, insects and decay. The durable parchment was used for important documents, and survived to become the material available to the classical scholar. Then, towards the end of the 19th Century archaeologists found in the hot, dry sands of Egypt hoards of papyrus documents preserved by the favourable climate. These were not literary texts or religious works, but rather the equivalent of the contents of the modern waste paper basket; bills, letters, school exercises, notes, certificates, etc. The scholars found, to their surprise, that these documents were written in the same style of Greek as the New Testament, and realised that, far from being written in some sacred language the New Testament was written in the ordinary, common, everyday Greek spoken and written all round the Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire. That Roman world was tri-lingual; this everyday Greek was the lingua franca of trade and commerce, the common tongue, the "Koine." In addition men knew Latin, the official language of the State, and also the language of their country or province; for example the Jews of Palestine spoke Aramaic. So the contents of Egyptian rubbish heaps changed the picture of the New Testament world and the language in which it was written.

The Palaeographer, the Historian, the Sociologist studying Medieval or 17th or 18th Century documents and archives has mainly official documents or the letters of the relatively few literate people to work on. With the growth of literacy in the 19th and 20th Centuries there came a flood of material intended for the working man, and because of economic conditions these had to be cheap and aim at a popular market.

Now I suggest that this affects our hobby, because the books and papers in which we are interested reflect the opinions of the men and boys who read them, the propaganda to which they were exposed, and the general contemporary thought of the day and age in which they were written. What, asks the Social Historian, looking at these papers, did the readers think, and what did the publishers want them to think?

Colin Watson, in his book on the detective story, "Snobbery with Violence," says that history's most frustrating pages are the many left empty of record of the thoughts and beliefs of ordinary men and women. Evidence of what had common currency at this or that moment in the past is among the hardest to adduce. He goes on to say what a pity it is from the Social Historian's point of view there was no Ronald Knox in the Monastery of the Venerable Bede or Dorothy Sayers looking over Holinshed's shoulder as he whitewashed the Tudors. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writing of popular fiction of the 18th century, says "Perhaps you will say that I should not take my ideas of the manner of the times from such authors - but it is more truly to be found among them than from any Historian.

Dr. Walker in his recent history of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, refers to contemporary newspapers and illustrated magazines, saying "it is perhaps not generally recognised how valuable these sources of information may be - dates are automatically preserved and the reaction to the news is usually spontaneous." A remark that applies equally to the books and papers in which we are interested. These books and papers both served to frame and reflect what was contemporary opinion. For, to steal a phrase from a recent sermon in a Cambridge church, "Popular imagination is a fruit and mirror of national character and of the times."

The more literate the community becomes, the more important it is for the

social historian to study in width as well as in depth all the variety of writings available, and it is as important in compiling a complete picture of the period he is studying to use the "comic" and the newspaper as the Parliamentary Report or the Learned History.

What can he find?

Let him look first at the list of titles in the Sexton Blake Catalogue for the period before 1914. There he will find:

Sexton Blake, Aeronaut, recalling the balloon racing craze of the early 1900's.

The Detective Airman, recalling the round Britain air race.

Sexton Blake, Territorial and Under Canvas, the formation of the Territorial Army. In the Shadow of the Plague, the epidemic of Bubonic Plague in Manchuria in the first decade of this century.

The Problem of the Pageant and The Slate Club Swindle recall popular activities of the pre-1914 era.

The Old Age Pension Mystery reminds us of Lloyd George's introduction of social benefits; the harbinger of the Welfare State.

Arms for Ulster, the early stirrings of a problem very much before us today.

The Cattle Mystery recalls the outbreaks of cattle maiming and the Edjali case, in which Conan Doyle himself played Sherlock Holmes.

Let him turn next to all those war stories. Many of these were written for adults, by military men and others, who felt the nations defences were being neglected; books like Chesney's "Battle of Dorking," written in 1871, or William Le Quex's "Invasion of 1910," written for the Daily Mail in 1906. They fell into two categories, those prophesying disaster and those that foretold ultimate victory. It was scarcely to be wondered at that Lord Northcliff, who had parliamentary ambitions, jumped on the band wagon, taking up Lord Robert's campaign for national service, and supporting the cadet and scout movements. Naturally this interest was reflected in his boys' papers, where, equally naturally "we" always won in the end, in spite of being treacherously invaded. Serials were printed and reprinted in "Boy's Friend," "Boy's Journal," "Boy's Herald," "Gem," "Marvel," "Pluck" and the "Boy's Friend Library." Hamilton Edwards, writing early in the century, saw the enemy as France or Russia. But the expansion of the German Navy turned our fears in another direction, and after the entente cordiale it was Germany that became the bogey. "John Tregellis" began to write his series "Britain Invaded," "Britain at Bay" and its sequels, with their cadet corps heroes, worthy of G. A. Henty, and then the "Kaiser or King" series with its boy scout heroes. "Chums" and the "Captain" too, had their war stories, writings which not only reflected, but also served to increase fear and hatred of potential enemies; and the historian should not neglect to study also the inter-war years, with Biggles and many other heroes.

Then there are the sporting stories: football, cricket, boxing, etc., with the emphasis on sportsmanship and "playing the game" - the spirit illustrated by E. H. D. Sewell, writing in "The Captain," stressing that it is the game and not winning the game that matters.

Consider Jack, Sam and Pete - in their heyday among the most popular characters. Brave, loyal, chivalrous, rich, generous, always ready to risk their lives to save people in danger, always ready to help the needy and deserving with

money, or to get them up in business; no one resents this help, all are duly grateful. The good must be rewarded, the bad punished: but society remains unchanged. See how the atmosphere of the stories changes with the years. Clarke Hook was already an established writer when he wrote for No. 1 of the "Halfpenny Marvel." There is still a "blood and thunder" air about his early Jack, Sam and Pete tales in the Halfpenny Marvel. J.S. and P. will bet, drink whisky, shoot to kill. It is instructive to see how these tales have been toned down when they were reprinted some twelve years later in the "Penny Popular." By then in the "Marvel" J.S. and P. never drink or gamble, and Sam shoots only to wound. Notice, too, how these tales reflect contemporary happenings in the balloon, submarine and aeroplane series, and, after Scott's last expedition, antarctic exploration.

"Frank Richard's" schoolboys (the "goodies") are good sportsmen, they never tell lies, tell tales, smoke or gamble. They are meant to be our examples, and, in fact, to many young people they were, even if we today tend to find the "baddies" (or the "goodies" when, like Wharton, on occasion, they kick over the traces) more interesting as character studies. Charles Hamilton's schoolboy world was a fantasy one, far removed from real public school life, but there is nevertheless much truth in the claim made by the author of "The Classic Slum" for the influence for good of Hamilton's stories on the boys of the period. Here we see, in Roberts' book, a good example of a social historian using boys' stories and finding them significant for his researches.

Another important item of interest to the social historian is the illustrations, whether they be the plain illustrations of the stories or the caricatures of the true "comic." As a reflection of social conditions note in the latter the emphasis on food and money. (Incidentally, note also references to "tuck" and remittances in Hamilton's school stories; not only in the case of Bunter.) The story illustration is invaluable as showing contemporary scenery, costume, transport, etc. Even if the artist did not always possess photographic accuracy he still often captured the spirit of the age.

Equally we should not forget the advertisements, which throw a good deal of light on the times to which they relate.

And it is not only historical accuracy that helps the historian. He may know that the picture of Robin Hood, from "Ivanhoe" to the "Aldine Robin Hood Library," as the master archer, and the good outlaw, robbing the rich to help the poor, is quite impossibly untrue, and nothing like the real medieval outlaw, but he learns from these tales that the common man, feeling oppressed and exploited, found in the Robin Hood legend an expression of his longing for freedom and social justice.

To conclude; Archives:-

Such are the Cartulary of the Hospital of St. John in the Muniment Room of St. John's College or the papers of Archbishop Parker in Corpus College Library. Such is the College Rental of 1638 in which I traced the change of name of the old Bird Bolt Hotel, or the 17th and 18th century Leases and Title Deeds on which I have recently worked, but such, too, are "Union Jacks" and "Marvels" like:-

Sexton Blake, Scoutmaster, recalling the early days of the Scout Movement.

Sexton Blake in Zululand, recalling the rising of 1906.

Tom Sayers' Record, with its illustration of motor racing at Brooklands, and

Lost in the Antarctic, a J. S. & P. tale recalling Scott's expedition. Ephemera, yes, but, as Jack says, "don't forget the dustbin."

A royal letter from Philip and Mary or from Elizabeth 1st is a valuable source of information, but so too, is a private letter of 1644 from a son to his father, which suggests as you read it that there is after all something to be said for the National Health Service. And so, too, are the papers we collect.

Not only have we an absorbing hobby, but by collecting, recording and researching on these papers and their writers, we are making available to future historians material of great value. It should be our object to keep our papers and record our researches so that when we pass on they are not lost, but made available not only for collectors, but also for the social historian who in twenty, thirty, fifty or a hundred years time will scan them with a scholarly eye, and perhaps spare a grateful thought for us who have saved them for him.

\* \* \* \* \*

# COMIC LIFE'S LAST DAYS

by O. W. WADHAM

In the year 1924 and 1925, that once famous Henderson comic called COMIC LIFE was in its last days. All through its Henderson years it had been a paper of eight pages, and there is no doubt that those odd pair Butterball and Tall Thomas helped to get the customers to buy the once famous companion paper to LOT-O-FUN. In 1924 and 1925 the paper was from the Amalgamated Press stable and had plainly lost some of its appeal. Butterball and Tall Thomas had gone of course, and the merry boys of Dingle School had the front page. They could not have been so popular as those cheerful tramps. Also COMIC LIFE had twelve pages in those years. There were eight pages of stories and four of drawings. Patrotic Paul had gone from the back page, and only the titles there were coloured red. I forget just when the Amalgamated Press took over, but I presume that Paul and the Red Lion Scouts vanished from the first number. It was a pity, as they must have had quite an appeal. I do not know if at that time LOT-O-FUN was also giving twelve pages for two pence but the idea seems, these many years later, to be just a draw in a paper that had passed its best years. It was a great pity so many favourite characters had been done away with. COMIC LIFE was a great paper in its day!

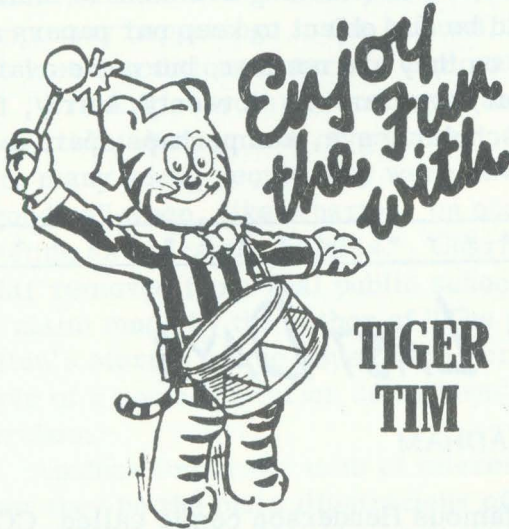
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YOUR EDITOR WISHES YOU AND YOURS  
A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND A JOYFUL NEW YEAR

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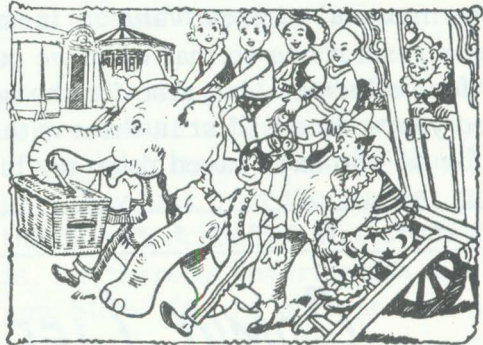
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# Puck

On Sale TUESDAY 2d.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITY FROM

## The Boys' Friend of exactly 50 years ago

We all trooped into a cosy room where dinner was spread, and Mr. Owen Conquest came up to me and shook my hand.

"Never sent you a card," he said, "for we thought you'd be too busy; but we are glad to see you."

It was a friendly gathering of the authors of the old "Green 'Un," with a few colleagues from the Companion Papers. They had gathered to dine, wish each other a Merry Christmas, and chat over future arrangements. Mr. Owen Conquest took the chair; he had Mr. Maurice Everard on his right; Captain Malcolm Arnold, looking at his radiant best, on his left. Lucky I had drifted in, or the facts would never have got out. Authors are weird, secretive birds. Here they were at home. They threw off all preoccupation. I dashed off a few shorthand notes on my cuff. Mr. Owen Conquest said he was delighted to welcome two young authors, not unknown to Magnet and Gem readers.

"I refer to Mr. Martin Clifford and Mr. Frank Richards, gentlemen," he said. "The three of us seldom meet - only at Christmas."

Mr. Maurice Everard made a rousing speech about the sea, wrecks, and the coral islands, and the strange ships stealing out of harbour, which he was putting into his new serials. Mr. Victor Nelson, straight from the sunny south, told the company many good stories; Mr. Gordon Wallace was in great form; so was Mr. Stanley G. Rattee, while Mr. A. S. Hardy obliged with a song.

It was good to see other old favourites. Harry Holdfast spoke quite early as he had to hurry off to solve the mystery of the lost cheese-cutter - so he said. Andrew Gray smoked quietly while Morton Pike told of the Great Fire of London. Others who contributed to the enlightenment of the company were Mr. Edmund Burton, Mr. James Mellanlieu, and Mr. Jack North. The last-named celebrity rolled out yarns about cricket which kept everyone in a roar. Mr. Walter Edwards returned thanks for Rollo Dayton and the Duke. Mr. Percy Longhurst made a racy speech about athletics.

The chairman had an immense reception. He said: "Gentlemen, I am a retiring person. I live alone in a shanty I built myself, and there is no telephone. You know why. We authors all know what editors are. They, poor fellows, cannot help being a nuisance. They have the printers behind them; behind the printers is the public. But, gentlemen, there is no ill-feeling. Some of you have heard of Rookwood. (Laughter.) Gentlemen, Rookwood has great times ahead. But that is not the point. We can leave to the editor all such matters. What I want to say is this: surely it is for us authors at Christmas-time to send our good Christmas wishes to our readers. (Prolonged applause.) We have a message. It is just this: that the readers of the 'Boys' Friend' all over the world may have a slap-up time this Christmas. May they get all they want - and a bit more. That's all I've got to say."

Mr. John S. Margerison was on his feet in a twinkling. He assured his

hearers that his next yarn would be the best ever. Mr. Everard followed. He dwelt on Christmas as he had passed it on board pirate ships sailing through uncharted seas. He had more Sargasso secrets.

Mr. Duncan Storm, smoking a well-coloured meerschaum, dwelt with the last cruise of the well-found ship, the Bombay Castle.

"Gentlemen all," he said, "this is our toast: Good cheer and happiness to the readers of the 'Boys' Friend,' for they are jolly good fellows; and so say all of us!"

It was a very distinguished evening.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: It was well-cooked, and it was cosy, and I daresay that readers loved it, that Christmas time of 1922. That gathering of authors, at least one of whom had three heads, must have been a memorable affair. When I was a youngster I was always running upon stories about the Bombay Castle. They went on for years. I never read one of them. It doesn't look as though anyone else did either, if we can judge by the fact that they are never - or hardly ever - mentioned in S.P.C.D. Poor old Bombay Castle. In its day I suppose they saluted it in every port. But somewhere on the seven seas - or down the heaving years - it seems to have been sunk without trace.)

\* \* \* \* \*

THE PINK 'UN

by Roy Parsons

Once, in an interesting letter to C. D., a reader commented on "the odd silence regarding the Boys' Magazine." He was surprised that no-one seemed anxious to trace old copies. I am as surprised that his comment elicited no more response than a remark by Bill Lofts in the following issue that "there is a demand" for the paper. What we obviously need is an authoritative article on the magazine with facts and figures. Unfortunately I am not equipped to carry out this task but I was prompted to look out my own collection of this forgotten paper.

On second thoughts "collection" is perhaps an overstatement of the position since I possess just 2 copies. However, these matters are relative and compared with most other collectors, perhaps my claim is justified! But only a certain amount of information can be deduced from them. It would appear that the Boys' Magazine started about February 1922, and continued until at least mid-1933, that is about 600 copies. In size it was rather unusual. It was slightly bigger than the C. D., and had 36 pages. Published by Allied Newspapers Limited at Manchester, what might have made it distinctive on the bookstalls was the pink paper on which its cover was printed in blue. There seemed to be no change in format between 1927 and 1933 at least. At one stage it incorporated another magazine called Pals.

A glance through the contents would suggest that it had a fairly standard mixture of stories - detective, western, sport, a few school stories, etc. Many of the stories were unsigned but some that were showed a few well-known names - particularly that of John Hunter. The one regular character who appeared in the magazine was a detective called Falcon Swift who combined sporting ability and detective powers to an incredible degree.

The paper ran the almost obligatory feature of the day too. There was an Editor's page, mainly devoted to plugging forthcoming stories, which might have come from almost any minor paper of the period. There was a Boys' Magazine League with those terrible cut-out coupons which must have ruined many a copy. In later years this seems to have been renamed the B. M. Redskin League and the paper also had a Detective club. Joke pages also made a regular appearance. Advertisements were

# TREASURE TROVE

by L. MORLEY

I have this recurring dream; in it I am travelling in the country with my young daughter; the locale is strangely familiar; but I just can't place it; could be Kent, Derbyshire, Surrey or anywhere. We drive into a small village, and my daughter decides she wants an ice, so I pull up at a small shop. It is a general store; you know the kind of thing; one of those places that sell everything; there is a little sub-post office attached to it. As is common with kids, my daughter takes a great deal of time in choosing the ice; there is quite a selection to choose from in a freezer stuck in the corner of the shop. I grow a little impatient and walk across to hurry her up a bit; suddenly my attention is caught by a tea-chest half-hidden behind the freezer.

Or should I say the contents of the tea-chest; surely those coloured covers look familiar; they can't be; but they are; a pile of "NELSON LEE'S."

I hurriedly looked through the books, making mental calculations; apart from "NELSON LEE'S" there are "GEMS," "MAGNETS," "BOY'S CINEMAS." Must be about 500 copies there. Turning casually to the shop keeper (my attitude would not have deceived a five-year old), I ask, "How much do you want for these old books?" He rubs his chin, blinks, mutters to himself and replies "Lord bless you, Sir, them books have been there for donkey's years; this here shop used to be a newsagent's; my old Dad kept it and his father afore him; I changed over some years ago; tell you what, how about five pounds for the lot?"

How about five pounds? I ask you. I hastily hand him the money before he changes his mind, "By the way," he says, "there's a lot more stuck up in the loft. Care to buy them as well?"

We ascend into the loft; there before me are hundreds - no, thousands - of copies of the old books: "MAGNETS," "GEMS," "PILOTS," "NUGGETTS," you name it. "Fifty pounds and you can clear the place," he says. Jumping into the car I hastily draw the fifty pounds out of my Trustee Savings Bank and rush back to pay the man. I cram the car with books and tell him I will return the following day to pick the rest up: on my way home I am making hasty calculations; besides keeping a good collection for myself, I will be able to sell the rest for a handsome profit - and buy a colour T.V., a holiday in Italy, a large deposit on a new car, or - and then the "TEASMAID" thing goes off and I am facing another boring day at "Hoovers."

Ah, dear readers, how many times have we dreamed of coming across a collection such as I have described: and how many times in our life time does this really happen: even on a far lesser scale: once or twice if we're lucky.

Speaking for myself, I must be one of the lucky ones: for in recent years I have come across one or two "lucky strikes." Some three years ago, I was strolling down the Portobello Road, early one Saturday morning. On a stall my eye caught some familiar-looking papers. I hurried to the stall and saw they were a small collection of "NELSON LEE'S" and "GEMS."

A lad of six or seven was in charge of the stall, and I enquired the price of the books.

"Dunno," he replied, "me Dad told me not to sell anytink until he comes back; he's gorn for a cupper tea."

Suffering the agonies of the damned in case any of the West End dealers would snap them up, I waited impatiently for the boy's father to return. At last he came. "Tanner each for the books," he said and dragging an old suitcase from under the stall, he continued, "There's a lot more in here for the same price." Anyway the outcome of it was I bought about 650 "MAGNETS," "GEMS," and "NELSON LEE'S" at sixpence each; a nice find you must admit.

A few years earlier than this; same venue, I bought about 500 copies of "ALLY SLOPERS HALF-HOLIDAY," for £3.10.0; they were done up in brown paper parcels, tied with string; I couldn't carry them, but dragged them along the pavement to the bus stop (they built the Pyramids this way). I paid a lad half-a-crown to help me.

On arriving at the bus stop I was greeted in a manner that has made London Transport conductors a by-word of civility and courtesy throughout the world: "You aint gitting on my bus with that lot," he snarled.

I had to take a taxi home, and you can imagine how pleased my wife was interrupting her Saturday morning cleaning with about a dozen dirty parcels dumped in the room. "Good Heavens, what ever have we got here?" she said or words to that effect, (only in Cornish).

I sold all the "ALLY SLOPERS" to an actor called Frank Pettingell, he bought the lot in bulk; and was quite pleased with them.

Until a year or so ago, one could pick up any amount of "HOLIDAY ANNUALS" at a nominal price; this also applied to "PICTURE SHOW ANNUALS" and "PICTUREGOER," etc.

I always find it wise nowadays, to buy anything you come across; even if you are a bit dubious about them; I will give you an example of an opportunity lost about a year ago.

I was with a bookseller friend of mine, a very knowledgeable man. We came across a barrow loaded with early "EDGAR WALLACE" paper backs, really early titles; 200 in all; the man was asking £5 for the lot.

My friend scoffed at the idea, - "Not worth buying, a drag on the market, dust collectors, the work of a hack writer," he went on; so I left them; a week or two later, Frank Lay told me he had been after some of those titles for years; I could have kicked myself, or rather kicked my friend for his good advice. Over a period of this last five years I have purchased many nice items from street markets; Jumble Sales; junk shops, etc., so it just shows you there is still some stuff around. All you need is a lot of time and patience. It may surprise readers, and then again it may not; (I never seem to surprise people nowadays,) that people not connected with our hobby, have fine collections. Some years ago, when living in Derbyshire, it was my habit to visit my "local" for a pre-lunch drink or two.

One Sunday, I was sitting there, and three men I knew quite well, sat down at a table quite near. It was obvious that one of them had just collected the Sunday papers as well as his child's comics; for he was chuckling over the latest exploits of "DESPERATE DAN," in the "DANDY." "By heck, he's a reight lad," he said; but an older companion said, "He aint a patch on Billy Bunter, ah were only reading him this morning, where he ran away from Greyfriars." Thinking he was referring to the then published BUNTER BOOKS, I joined in the conversation; and learned to

my surprise, he had a complete collection of "MAGNETS" at home; and the same amount of "GEMS;" he took me home to see them; they were in lovely condition, all laid out in their respective years; he would not dream of selling them however. "Nay, lad. Ah've had 'em over 40 years, I aint selling 'em now." The old fellow died some eight or ten years ago; and I have no idea what happened to his wonderful collection. At one time I worked for a garment dyeing firm; from time to time I would lend copies of the MAGNET to a fellow called Charlie Mathers. In return he would lend me copies of the "UNION JACK." I asked him where he got them from and he said he borrowed them from his father. We visited his Dad's house in Belper (Derbyshire), and it turned out he had a complete collection of "UNION JACKS" from the start to when it changed into "DETECTIVE WEEKLY." The old chap said he couldn't stand "DETECTIVE WEEKLY," like the other old fellow he would not dream of parting with them.

Finally to return to my original theme, may I wish fellow collectors the best of luck in hunting down the old papers; and maybe one of you will realise my dreams, and unearth a real "TREASURE TROVE."

Our talented enthusiast in the States, Mr. Frank McSavage, sends us his impressions of two of the characters in our Mr. Buddle stories.



Mr. Fromo

Meredith

# Western Desert – 1941

by J. YORKE ROBINSON

In 1941, I was somewhere west of Alex. with a Royal Artillery of thirteen blokes on a searchlight site "out in the Blue." Entertainment was mostly confined to sunbathing, reading, (and re-reading) our scanty stock of books and magazines, and conversation. For a long time we experienced air-raids by high-flying Italian planes every night, and we often "stood-by" all night. We exchanged all the jokes we remembered, talked of "Civvy Street" (gone and yet-to-come) and drank thermos tea.

In charge was a Bombardier Stockman - he had worked for I. C. I. before the war - and once astonished us all by going into Alexandria on a rare day's leave and cashing a small cheque at the Company's office there! A stolid sort of fellow, something like Bolsover, I would say and rarely spoke, partly from a natural reserve and partly from the elevating influence of the two tapes. One night, during a lull in a particularly heavy raid, I asked if any of the chaps remembered the old "GEM" and "MAGNET." Most of them did, of course, (we were mostly between 25 and 35) and all the old familiar names, Tom Merry, Gussie, Harry Wharton and Bunter and opinions and criticisms were passed. Suddenly, our Bombardier Stockman astonished us all by saying, "I can remember a lot of poems about St. Jim's and Greyfriars," and then went right through the one that goes - if I remember rightly ...

"The shades of night were falling fast,  
When through the quad at Greyfriars passed,  
A youth who bore with aspect bland,  
A post-order in his hand."

'Twas Bunter.

A postal-order had arrived,  
On postal-orders Bunter thrived, ... etc., etc."

and the other "classic" ...

"Take it up tenderly, lift it with care.  
Fashioned so slenderly, dainty and rare.  
Spread it out decently on the Hall mat,  
It arrived recently - Gussie's new hat."

(My versions probably vary from the ones Frank Richards wrote, but I write from memory.)

For a long time Stockman (why should I call him Bombardier now!:) went on, poem after poem and yarn after yarn - some I knew, some I'd forgotten and some I had never heard before. He must have been the only person to have given a "Reading" of Frank Richards' work somewhere between Alex. and the Western Desert!:

# Greyfriars Removed!

by E. S. H. HOLMAN

When I was still at school or alternatively, as the lawyers say, when I was just entering the 'Magnetic' field, I decided that Greyfriars was very near to 'Merry Margate.' This may have been because the family took the annual fortnight there. My mother would say, soothingly, "Is it?" when I put forward the theory. My father would moderate his reply to "I don't expect it's a real place, you know!" - which merely resulted in my refusing to play beach cricket with him for a whole day. I never was encouraged in my desire to make a search.

As the years progressed, I found myself moving Greyfriars, little by little, southward along the Kent coast. I think I got to somewhere near Sandgate before I stopped the constant movement. From 'Magnet' readings it eventually settled into its more or less accepted locality - a sort of Ruritania around that part of the map which contains Deal - a kind of insertion into Kent, broadening that County in all directions.

Of course, there were indications in the stories - and also discrepancies. Was it 10 - 15 miles from Canterbury? One definitely travelled south to Folkestone, although sometimes the distance was given as anything up to 20 miles. Ashford, I believe, was once stated to be about 30 miles away - which would have taken it right out of Kent.

The map in No. 1672 of the 'Magnet' showed roads north of Courtfield, leading straight up to Dover and north-westerly to Ashford. The recently published Howard Baker map puts Dover definitely south and this, of course, is the correct placing (although I am not at all happy about the coastline). I am, naturally, ignoring the due-north coastline that appeared in the 'Poor Man's Holiday Annual' entitled 'Greyfriars Prospectus.' I have never for a single moment - and I hope no-one else has done so - visualised Greyfriars more or less at the mouth of the Thames Estuary!

Now, I do genuinely accept the approximate placing of 'north of Dover, south of Ramsgate.' But - I do wish Greyfriars to be farther south - even below Sandgate. I would like to place Pegg Bay at what I can best describe as south-east Romney Marsh area (speaking mapwise). It would be on the east coast, bulging out the map somewhere around St. Margaret's Bay. Hawkscliff would be much lower still. Friardale would be just about a mile from Pegg, Greyfriars would be no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles from Pegg. The Pegg-Friardale road would lead into the lower part of Friardale Lane, not far from the school. Cliff House would be quite near to Pegg. Friardale would be south east of and below Greyfriars, not so very far from the coast. Courtfield would remain more or less to the north west of Greyfriars, not less than three miles above it. Courtfield and Pegg would, accordingly, be some distance apart and no one from Greyfriars would have to go through Courtfield to reach Pegg, obviously.

I would next take the liberty of shifting Lantham from east to west of Greyfriars and Courtfield. This would cut out that unfortunate habit of travelling east from Courtfield station, in order to come back in a westward direction to reach



London. Lantham would be on a railway line from (say) Rye, leading thence to Ashford and London.

And I am afraid I would want to alter the flow of the Sark. It would come from the west, by Highcliffe and under Courtfield Bridge, down to Popper Court and Island (these two, by the way, would be in sight of each other), down to and turning at Friardale, and finally taking its easy course to the Shoulder at Pegg.

Next, I come to the lay-out of the Remove studies. I know the studies were all on one side of a corridor, with no break until the end near the box rooms. Presumably, the wall opposite the study doors contained windows looking out into the grounds. I remember being stationed for some little while during my military service in a former Monastery (or it may have been a Convent) in Ostend. Here, just such a pattern existed - long corridors, windows looking out on one side, with many doors opening out opposite from many close rooms. At the time, I recall thinking 'This is like Greyfriars.' I do not think I said to myself 'I wish it was' - but, really, I should have!

Well, I accept the recognised lay-out. All the same, I wish I could change it. I would like the Remove corridor to be in a larger wing of the school, with studies on both sides, and a passage off, leading into the main building. My Remove corridor would be the cross of a letter T, with the passage off forming the down stroke. Study 1 would be at the landing and staircase end, next to Study 3 - Studies 2 and 4 would be opposite, and so on, up to 11 and 12. The passage off would be between say, 5 and 7 or 6 and 8. Study 13 would open directly on to the end of the Corridor, which would turn a corner, go past Study 14 and finish at the stairs leading to the box rooms.

The stairs by Study 1, across the landing (to me, always known as the Coker stairs, because of the number of times that worthy roared up and was rolled down) would lead straight down to the ground floor - there would be no right angle turn. Right angle stairs would lead upwards.

Well, there it is - none of these things ARE so, of course.

BUT - I do wish they were. Very much indeed I do!

\* \* \* \* \*

THE PINK 'UN continued from Page 122

at a fairly low level. Apart from advertising the following week's number they seemed to consist of the usual stamps and practical joke kits with some toy advertisements. The only other paper mentioned was one called The Athletic News. As far as I am concerned that is a real unknown.

It does seem strange that a paper which was successful enough to run for 11 years at least should be almost entirely ignored. The hobby seems to have polarised in one or two particular directions and the B.M. seems to have missed out. It certainly seems no worse a paper than many of that era and might well have been a lot better. Of course one doesn't know what size of circulation it had.

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# Those Good Old Stories

by GUY N. SMITH

Having been an established sporting and countryside writer for the past twelve years or so, possibly few of my readers are aware of the type of literary work which gives me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction of all, namely those good old-fashioned boys' stories which used to appear in the CHAMPION, the WIZARD, the ROVER, etc., etc. My greatest regret is that the boys of this present generation no longer delight in this type of yarn, but prefer instead, a paper filled with strip-cartoons, science-fiction crammed with technicalities, and 'ghosted' articles by their favourite footballers.

It is a very sad state of affairs in the eyes of one who once lived for the exploits of 'Wilson' the ageless athlete, Nick Smith and Danny of the Dazzlers. However, my own literary career began when I undertook to write weekly stories of this calibre for the teenagers' page of the "Tettenhall Observer," gratis, of course. I covered about every subject imaginable from pirates and highwaymen, to primitive space-travel. I received many letters from my readers who seemed to appreciate my stories and this served to encourage me to even greater efforts. Then, much to my dismay, this particular section of the paper was discontinued, due to shortage of space, and I reverted to my original 'bread and butter' writing.

During the next few years I submitted, from time to time, a few boys' stories to both Thomsons and the Amalgamated Press, but all to no avail. They were no longer interested in the exploits of public-schoolboys, and anything which might possibly have followed in the wake of Bunter, Ginger Nutt, or Smith of the Lower Third, was rejected at once, often without even being read. A great pity, for I had spent a considerable time at a public-school myself, and had a wealth of yarns and exploits on which I should dearly have loved to draw.

However, in between my regular literary pursuits, I had a germ of an idea, and set to work on a book. I say a book, but actually I hoped that someone, somewhere, might be interested in my work as an 18-part serial, in some paper that would rise up out of the ashes of those which had gone before. My story featured a callous, travelling 'gunman,' who carried a belt of Bowie knives, being deadlier with these than the conventional six-shooter of that period. He went through many adventures, including a spell with the famous Pony Express, and in the final chapter the reader was left with the doubt in his mind whether or not the ruthless 'Six-knife Solomon' had really perished.

I enjoyed writing this so much, that as soon as I had finished it, I began, almost immediately, a sequel. I resurrected this killer-hero, and entwined him in some American history, finding him a leading role in the saga of Sam Bass, and calling it 'Indiana Outlaw.' When this latter was completed also, I decided that I ought to try and market them somewhere. Alas, they too, were out-dated! A variety of book publishers praised them yet, at the same time, pointed out that it just was not a marketable proposition. They are still in my desk, waiting, whilst I

vainly hope for a revival in the literary requirements of modern youth.

Then, in 1970, I discovered 'Our Boys', an Irish boys' paper with a faint trace of days long gone. It is a monthly publication, containing written boys' stories, (a couple in Gaelic) but just what I was looking for. Consequently, I introduced Kincaid of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. However, Kincaid was not new to me, for fifteen years previously I had written these stories of the North West, using a blonde-haired giant Mountie by the name of Kildare. Since those days, though, Doctor Kildare had appeared on television, so I decided that my own rip-roaring, two-fisted hero, must have a change of name. As a result I was commissioned to write six of these, forming a series, beginning with "The Coming of Kincaid," and concluding with "The Scourge of the North West." In between, I also submitted other short stories, including "The Dive of Death" with a circus setting, and "Cannibal Island," a tale of the South Seas. It was a very refreshing change for me to write these 'favourites,' and I still have hopes that 'Six-knife Solomon' and 'Indiana Outlaw' will one day find a home.

I constantly ask myself why it is that today's growing boys have little or no interest in the type of adventure yarns which used to thrill my own generation. In many ways I blame television, and the growth of the cinema, for presenting them with this type of entertainment in a form which is much easier than reading. It is a great pity, all the more so to someone like myself who would be prepared to write boys' stories for any paper which was agreeable to publish them. I can only hope that this, like many other aspects of life, revolves in cycles.

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SPECIALIZED SERIES

by R. J. Godsave

There is no doubt that full marks must be given to E. S. Brooks in his endeavour to get close to the readers of the Nelson Lee Library. Under the heading of "Between Ourselves" he devoted the entire page to correspondence. Apart from letters he welcomed photographs from his readers which were reproduced opposite one of himself.

The series of the St. Frank's School Ship and School Train were also used as a means of making a closer contact. The visits of the School Ship to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand were of great interest and educational value to all of the readers of the Nelson Lee. The same interest may not have been shewn in the School Train series excepting those living in the towns which were depicted. The circulation would have undoubtedly been increased in these areas. The historical notes about the towns made them both interesting and descriptive.

The towns visited were, naturally, few and far between, which would have caused great disappointment to a lot of his readers.

A fictitious setting has the advantage of being a 'No man's land' which can be mentally transformed into one's own town, and can be visualized accordingly.

Whether these specialized series added to the circulation figures is problematical.

\* \* \* \* \*

# "... by any other name...?"

by GORDON HUDSON

Some years ago I purchased a book "The Guardians" by W. Howard Baker, solely because of his connection with the Sexton Blake Library. It was a story of Richard Quintain, Secret Agent, and although I had not read Quintain before the details seemed familiar. Several months later I obtained another Quintain story "Strike North." This I recognised as a re-written S. B. L. The original was "The Sea Tigers" by Peter Saxon, but the new story still contained Hazel, the Magnet-loving seaman.

Recently, I discovered a new series of paperbacks of Quintain, and these also appear to be mainly 4th Series S. B. L. with Sexton Blake as Richard Quintain, Tinker as Slim Mercer and Paula Dane as either Marion Wellesley or Julia Wellesley. As in previous decades Sexton Blake is still alive under a new name.

The following is a list of re-written S. B. L.'s which I have so far been able to identify with the originals:-

## "Richard Quintain"

- No. 393, 1957: The Violent Hours, by Peter Saxon, became The Guardians, by W. Howard Baker (Mayflower, 1967 and "The Dirty Game (Five Star Paperbacks, 1972).
- No. 400, 1958: The Sea Tigers, by Peter Saxon, became Strike North, by W. H. Baker (Mayflower, 1965; W. H. Baker, 1967).
- No. 413, 1958: No Time To Live, by W. H. Baker, became Destination Dieppe, by W. H. Baker (Mayflower, 1965, then W. H. Baker).
- No. 417, 1958: The Voodoo Drum, by Peter Saxon, became Drums of the Dark God, by W. A. Ballinger (1966 and 5 Star, 1972).
- No. 421, 1959: A Cry In The Night, by Peter Saxon, became No Place for Strangers, by W. H. Baker (In the First Quintain Omnibus, W. H. Baker, 1968 and separately 5 Star, 1972).
- No. 431, 1959: Passport Into Fear, by W. H. Baker, became Cry From the Dark, by Bill Rekab (1965 and 5 Star, 1972).
- No. 504, 1962: Studio One Murder, by W. A. Ballinger, became The Girl In Asses Milk, by W. H. Baker (1967 and 5 Star, 1972).
- No. 506, 1962: The Reluctant Gunman, by W. H. Baker, became Unfriendly Persuasion, by W. H. Baker (Mayflower, 1964; and in the First Quintain Omnibus, W. H. Baker, 1968).

No. 517, 1963: The Imposter, by Philip Chambers and W. H. Baker became The Inexpendible, by Bill Rekab (1966 and 5 Star, 1972).

The Rape of Berlin, by W. H. Baker (5 Star, 1972) formerly The Girl, The City and The Soldier (Mayflower, 1965) appears to be loosely based on The Last Days of Berlin, by Peter Saxon, No. 395, 1958.

Other "Quintains" not identified as S. B. L's

The Charge is Treason, by W. H. Baker (Lancer Books, 1968).

Take Death for a Lover, by W. H. Baker (5 Star, 1972).

The Dead and the Damned, by Bill Rekab (5 Star, 1972).

Treason For Truth (Not recognised as an S. B. L. ) by W. H. Baker (1964 and 5 Star, 1972) contains Richard Costain, Slim Mercer, Bill Kerby and Marion Wellesley.

The Big Steal, by W. A. Ballinger (1964 and 5 Star, 1972) containing Bill Simmons was originally No. 420, 1959, Appointment with Danger, by W. H. Baker.

Perhaps other readers (who will no doubt have realised that "Rekab" is "Baker" spelt backwards) will recognise these unidentified stories and other "new" stories which may be published.

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SEXTON BLAKE AND THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND NAMES

by William Lister

I am Edwy Searles Brooks man myself. I have said it before and I say it again. I caught the E.S.B. bug when I first read the "Nelson Lee." Now, with my 60th birthday looming on the horizon I am still under his spell.

Be it the name of Berkley Gray or Victor Gunn, or any other of his "thousand and one names." (If Lon Chaney was known as the man with a thousand faces, surely to read the list of pen-names Mr. Brooks used entitles him to be called the man with a thousand names.) After all, a story by E. S. Brooks is like the rose:- under any name, just as sweet. Which brings me to the subject of the three Union Jacks now before me. No. 1221, 1927 - "The Case of the Second Blackmailer;" No. 1258, 1929 - "The Death Snare;" No. 1530, 1933 - "Village Vengeance." The connecting link between these three stories is they were all by Edwy Searles Brooks and all feature Waldo the Wonder Man.

What a combination; Sexton Blake and Waldo, a man of super-strength, a gentleman crook, a chivalous man, a man who could make a fortune on the stage. A criminal for thrills, not for making money. Brought together by E. S. Brooks. I suppose no editor could resist it, 1927, 1928 and 1933, and no doubt Waldo before then and after. A wonderful character Waldo - created by E. S. Brooks in the far distant days of 1918 in U.J., No. 794, a grand Christmas story entitled "Waldo the Wonder Man." Not that Waldo ever stole Sexton Blake's thunder. Great as Waldo was, Blake was one better. In "The Death Snare," Waldo was well and truly framed; he was due for the gallows (remember it was 1929) and who unravelled the tangled skein and who delivered Waldo from the gallows? Sexton Blake!

Whether Sexton Blake, Waldo or all the supporting characters in our three tales, they all spring to life under the able pen of E. S. Brooks. Please do not misunderstand me, I like Sexton Blake from the pen of any of our famous authors, but when you have been bitten by the Edwy Searles Brooks "bug" you stay bitten. Ask all the other Brooks fans; don't just take my word for it.

Don't forget readers, look for the name Edwy Searles Brooks on the cover of the next U.J. or S.B.L. story you read and you will enjoy it; you really will.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Monthly C.D's, 1 to 6, 8, 9, 16, 18, 21. Greetings to all Hobby Friends. MAURICE KING, 18 BARTON ROAD, SLOUGH, BUCKS., SL3 8DF.