COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL 1975

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TWENTY-NINTH YEAR

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INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

In some ways, the realisation that this is the 29th year of the Annual is a sobering thought in the rather heady atmosphere created by the knowledge that, next year, all being well, we shall celebrate our Pearl Jubilee, our 30th birthday. It's a very, very long time, and, in the natural course of events, those of us who have known the Annual from the beginning must be losing something of our pristine bounce by now. The Annual does not show its age, but some of us find ourselves taking the stairs with puffs and grunts, like Baggy Trimble, instead of two at a time as of yore.

Still the object of the Annual is to keep us young in heart, and my bulging letter-bag seems to indicate that it succeeds.

Those who have, on their shelves, 29 years of the C.D. Annual, have a veritable encyclopaedia covering all that is worth knowing about the old papers. It's a world of knowledge, all on its own.

I wish you all the warmest Compliments of the Season, and offer my sincere thanks to our stalwart contributors who turn up trumps, year after year, - to our loyal and enthusiastic printing firm at York who have given us such sterling service for so long, - and, to you, my readers, for your support and your constant encouragement without which none of it could be done.

See you all next year, for our Pearl Jubilee.

Your sincere friend and editor,

Eric Fayne.

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Some Autobiographical Notes with Interruptions from Charles Hamilton

by ROGER M. JENKINS

I have no clear recollection of my first Magnet story because I was the youngest in a household of avid readers. We were on friendly terms with the local newsagent, and my sister was always despatched on the day before publication to obtain our copy at the earliest possible moment. When a series was particularly exciting, a special procedure was adopted: as soon as my father had finished reading the first page, he tore it off and handed it to my sister, and soon there was a circle of four of us all reading loose pages. Charles Hamilton wrote to me in 1951:

> I was very greatly amused by your description of the dissection of the old Magnet during the Stacey series. I should have been very pleased at the time, could I have known that the series had such eager readers.

and later in the year he adverted again to this topic:

> I am glad to hear that he used to look forward to Saturday and the Magnet: just, I suppose, as I used to look forward to the Strand Magazine and Sherlock Holmes, in much earlier days.

This dissection of the Magnet was the reason why so few copies of the paper remained in our house, despite the fact that we had a huge attic where I hoarded everything I could possibly lay my hands on.

As for the Gem, well that was an entirely different affair. My first St. Jim's story was a reprint of an old blue Gem in the 1929 Holiday Annual, and I have vivid memories of the impact Tom Merry made upon me as a boy of eight in 1933, and the delight with which I greeted my sister's assurance that I could read St. Jim's stories every week in the Gem. The Gems of this time were of course reprints of the old blue Gems and so they harmonised well with the story in the 1929 Annual. As the Gem was purchased from my own pocket money and was by no means as popular in the house as the Magnet, I was able to preserve my copies and still possess them today.

When the Magnet and Gem ended I was fifteen and rather ashamed to be still reading them. I thought it was time I put away childish things, but a chance remark at school about Museum libraries a year or two later set my thoughts running on the old lines once more, and I determined to visit the British Museum before I joined the R.A.F. It is a shameful confession for a schoolteacher to have to make, but I was more interested in this trip to London than in the pending results of my Higher School Certificate.

Luckily for me, I had relatives in Wimbledon and in 1943 there was a lull in the bombing of London, which made my mother reluctantly agree to let me visit my aunt. I remember walking daily to Wimbledon Broadway and waiting for the first tram offering cheap mid-day fares, at about 9.30. A threepenny transfer ticket took me via the Kingsway Subway to Southampton Row in about an hour, and I had to be as

careful as Cinderella about going home to time, before the cheap fares ended at 4 p.m. A shilling lunch in a Lyons teashop kept my daily expenses down to one and sixpence, no small sum for a schoolboy in those days.

My first visit to the British Museum came to a climax with an awe-inspiring interview with the Secretary himself. He read my letter again, peered over his spectacles at me, and informed me in precise scholarly tones that my desire to read some Gladstonian pamphlets could be satisfied at the London Library and he could not justify the grant of a reader's ticket at the British Museum for that purpose. "But the Magnet and Gem - well, that is a different matter," he remarked, and his features seemed to lose their severity in a moment of far-away abstraction. I like to think that I had given him cause to recall his own lost youth for a brief period. "No other library possesses sets of these publications," he went on, "and I shall therefore grant you a temporary ticket for one week." One of the assistants led me to a dusty room where I was to sit alone for one glorious week, filling in requisition forms daily. I fancy the Reading Room was closed during the war, but it might be that they thought I was too young to be admitted into those sacred precincts. No matter - that dusty room seemed like heaven to me at that time.

I am not quite certain what I expected, but when I asked to see the Magnets for 1908 I was indeed surprised to see a dusty brown-paper parcle tied up with coarse string. "Number one is missing," grunted the attendant and when I opened up the package little flakes of red paper which had been worn away from the covers fell all over the place. Charles Hamilton wrote to me later in the same year (1943) as follows:

> I am very interested indeed in what you tell me of your visit to the British Museum. Of course I was aware that all publications are filed in that institution: nevertheless, it had not occurred to me that the Gems and Magnets were there with the rest. I think the Secretary was right in concluding that they have the only complete sets in the world, since my own collection went West. But I am sorry to hear that they lack the first number of the Magnet. If I ever come across a specimen, I think I shall send it to them. There must be a few still in existence somewhere. You are the only reader who has told me of such an expedition: it is very flattering to Frank Richards that anyone should take so much trouble.

Of course, I was not the only person who had ever requisitioned for Magnets, and number 1 was not the only copy missing from the British Museum. The complete parcel for 1917 was also gone, and it is quite clear that theft was perfectly simple for unscrupulous people in those days. My despatch case was never searched as I left my little room twice daily, and I doubt whether the attendant ever counted the number of copies in each parcel when I had finished with it. It was also rumoured that during and immediately after the war large numbers of unreliable temporary staff were employed at the British Museum and some of them supplemented their wages with selling the stock on the side. It was a great pity that binding had fallen into such arrears, though all the Schoolboys' Owns, oddly enough, were decently bound in marbled covers with four to a volume.

That feast of reading, alas, ended all too swiftly, but the next re-awakening of interest came a month or two later, when a little paragraph in the Evening Standard

revealed, for the first time, that Charles Hamilton was the real name of Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest, etc. A letter sent via the editor of the Evening Standard brought the first of many of those long replies on several sheets of quarto paper in that familiar purple typing. They were all headed "Mandeville, Kingsgate, Kent." As he said:

> Actually, I am not in Kingsgate at present, but I still use the address for postal purposes as it is known to so many.

As a matter of fact, the Daily Mirror had mentioned in the nineteen-thirties that Frank Richards lived there in connection with a projected film about Greyfriars, but it was not until 1962 that I discovered that "Mandeville" was the bungalow opposite "Rose Lawn" which he gave to his sister in order to preserve at "Rose Lawn" the peace and quiet that an author must have. If any Greyfriars fan had managed to discover where "Mandeville" was, Charles Hamilton would still have been safe from intrusion over the road. I still wonder how such a vague address ever enabled the Post Office to deliver letters addressed to so many different pen-names.

My chief interest was to increase my Magnet collection, and Charles Hamilton was most helpful. (Incidentally, at that time I lived in a house called Calpe.):

> Back numbers of old papers cannot be obtained from the publishers, but there are various means. Many of my old readers consult a paper called the Exchange and Mart, in which they are sometimes advertised for sale. But the prices asked are generally more than I think the old papers are worth. I used to have a mountain - - - almost as big as that celebrated rock Calpe - - - of Magnets, Gems, Boys' Friends, Populars, 4d, books and so on: but early in the war when the Government appealed for paper, I handed over most of them for salvage. I did not like parting with them: but I did not feel that I could keep back stacks and stacks of old paper when the material was so much wanted. However, I retained a number of Gems and Magnets, for the sake of auld lang syne, as it were. I have sent a good many of these to different readers: but still have a number of them: and if there is any special number you want, and I happen to have it, I will send it to you with pleasure.

I received a generous gift of the Caffyn series, and then began a series of Exchange and Mart advertisements which were so fruitful in war-time days. I received a copy of Bill Gander's Story Paper Collector, and began a correspondence with Herbert Leckenby, as well as obtaining large numbers of books. I well remember John Medcraft apologising for having to charge tenpence each instead of sixpence for Golden Age Magnets. His assiduous searches amongst the stocks of salvage merchants rescued thousands of copies of the old papers, and a tribute to his memory is long overdue. In an advertisement I stated I would pay a shilling each for Schoolboys' Owns, and when the first two hundred were offered to me by someone who had bought them and kept them as new, I remember knocking him down to sixpence each for the early 64-page numbers on the grounds that there was not so much reading matter in them! I got away with it, but looking back I feel astonished at my own temerity. I still possess the vast majority of them, handsomely bound a few years later at six shillings a volume.

Fortunately for my collecting activities, I was transferred to the Air Ministry at the end of the war, and travelled up daily by rail like a civil servant. The sixty-six mile journey from the coast cost just under two shillings return on a season ticket in those days. As I was living at home, I was in a good position to continue

advertising and I was also well placed to be the projected victim of the monstrous frauds that were perpetrated by two most remarkable confidence tricksters. The hobby has always had its quota of slippery customers but they all pale into insignificance when compared to this most famous couple of swindlers.

These events all arose from advertisements in the Exchange and Mart. The first letter to raise my eyebrows was one from a Miss Pearson of Leicester who had just been left in a will a house containing about six thousand books, among which were Magnets complete from 1908-32 as well as Nelson Lees, Gems and Dreadnoughts. The good lady had been offered £40 for the lot and invited me to top this offer. As she wanted a quick sale, she invited me to telegraph the money. I still don't know why I didn't do this (perhaps I had read too many stories about Fisher T. Fish) but instead I sent her a registered letter containing a post-dated cheque for £12 for some of the books and I also sent a reply-paid telegram at the same time. The reply came that evening, terse and to the point - "Telegraph money not cheque." My collecting mania fought with my native caution, and eventually when I went over to the Post Office I found it was closed. The following day (Sunday) I phoned another telegram to say I would come by car on the morrow and on the Monday I made the 160 mile journey to Leicester by taxi through the snow and ice of early 1947. There were no heaters in cars those days, and rugs and hot-water bottles were only partially effective in combating the sub-zero temperatures. As the car lurched and skidded along the icy roads I was buoyed up with thoughts of completing my Magnet collection in one fell swoop. When I eventually arrived at the house of the heiress I was astonished to find the door opened by a blowsy-looking woman who lolled in the doorway as she informed me that no Miss Pearson lived there, but a Mr. Pearson did and he had gone off to Nottingham on business and would not be back until midnight. In a daze, I later phoned home and a letter from Mr. Pearson was read out: he had sold the books to a Leicester dealer - "so therefore the journey to me by car will not have to be made by you."

While I was still licking my wounds (and stopping payment of the cheque) another fantastic offer came through the post. Mr. Roger Anthony Carstairs of Southsea sent me a Gem as a sample and said that he had an old oak chest containing Magnets 1-1382, Gems 500-1037, and Schoolboys' Owns 1-380. They had given him great pleasure in the past, and he wanted them to go to someone who would appreciate them as much as he did. In short, they were to go to a good home and mine was the one he had selected. They were on sale at fourpence each, and he had a good strong tea-chest to pack them in. His only stipulation was that he didn't like crossed cheques (as he had once been defrauded in this way) and he requested an open cheque or cash. Fortunately for me, Southsea is only nine miles away, and once again I arrived in a taxi, and once again I experienced a surprise. The address was a boarding-house, and the proprietor told me that Mr. Carstairs was arriving by train from Bristol that evening and had asked him to sign for any registered letters that might arrive in the meanwhile. I began to wonder how an old oak chest (to say nothing of a good strong tea chest) could travel by rail so easily with over two thousand old papers, and my wonderings led me to the local police station. A C.I.D. man visited the boarding-house but he was just too late: Mr. Carstairs had arrived, scented trouble, and left immediately.

Of course, I was not the sole victim selected by these two swindlers. Pearson continued quite brazenly, operating under his own name from the same address, and was eventually sentenced to three years' penal servitude for seventeen offences involving £265. Roger Anthony Carstairs never returned to Southsea: he preferred Bristol and London and presumably lived in boarding-houses. He had a string of distinguished aliases including Lancelot Percival Merrivale, Gerald St. Clair, and Hugh Montgomery. When collectors began to write him reminding letters he used to fob them off by writing back as brother Spencer and saying that Lancelot or Gerald or Hugh, as the case might be, had gone to Harrogate to take the waters, but Spencer knew that the books were packed up and ready to be posted when the water cure was finished. In this way he no doubt bought a little additional time and saved himself the necessity for having to move on again too soon. A West Country collector replied to one of his letters mentioning all these aliases, and it must have given that particular gentleman quite a fright: at all events, he was never heard of again in collecting circles.

In a letter to the Collectors' Digest Charles Hamilton said:

> I was very shocked to read about collectors coming up against the underworld. I could never have dreamed that the old Gems and Magnets would have attracted the attention of racketeers.

Nevertheless it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and Herbert Leckenby told me that the swindlers couldn't have operated at a better time. They were a godsend to the Collectors' Digest which had just then been launched. Each month brought further revelations, and the usefulness of the magazine as a protection to collectors was made crystal clear.

They were hectic but exhilarating days, full of discovery and zest. Perhaps collectors have now settled down to a humdrum existence and we need some more zany criminals to shake us out of our complacency. I often feel like paraphrasing the closing lines of 'King Lear' - "Those that are young will never see so much or live so long."

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Adult School Stories

by HAROLD TRUSCOTT

In the dust jacket blurb for a story called THE NEW HEADMASTER, by Alan Ker, published in 1956, it is stated that most good school stories are about schoolmasters rather than about schoolboys. My own experience has been exactly the opposite, that school stories written from an adult point of view, bad ones as well as good ones, are extremely rare. For this reason alone, those I do know that are good I prize highly. Hamilton, at times, would shift the viewpoint to certain masters and away from the boys, and he usually produced some of his best work when he did this, but obviously he could not do so often, since he was writing for youngsters. As it is, there are many passages which must have gone over the heads of most of his young readers. But there are writers who have produced a story of school life which is slanted mostly, if not entirely, from the adult point of view, and some of these are richly rewarding. I would like to mention, and examine to some extent, two in particular.

The first is THE LANCHESTER TRADITION, by G. F. Bradby, which was published by the long vanished firm of Smith and Elder only a few months before the outbreak of war in 1914; naturally the foolishness of nations eclipsed the emergence of this modest volume, and it soon went into an undeserved oblivion. However, a belated reprint in 1954 brought it a certain fame, although it is still not so well-known as it deserves to be. It is possible still to find secondhand copies, where one can still find a reasonable secondhand bookshop. Godfrey Fox Bradby was born in 1863, son of Dr. E. H. Bradby, who was assistant master at Harrow and later headmaster of Haileybury. Godfrey went to Rugby and Oxford, gained a first in Classical Moderations and a second in Greats, and a blue at Rugger. He returned to Rugby in 1888 as a master and became a housemaster in 1908, a post he retained until his retirement in 1920. He died in 1947. He had, therefore, a long experience of public school life, and this he puts to remarkable use in THE LANCHESTER TRADITION.

During the last fifteen or twenty years it has become a habit to write stories debunking the public school system, and some of the results have been extremely unpalatable and exaggerated, and not so very well written. Bradby, way back in 1912 and 1913, realised that there were faults which needed remedying and chose a method of pointing out some of them which resulted in a little work of art. It is a book which could be read in a couple of hours, 141 pages in all, but that would be only for the surface. After that, it can be read and re-read to dig gradually deeper and savour the devastating subtlety of Bradby's writing. The book goes further than any other I have encountered in dealing with school life from the adult standpoint; so much so that one reads half the book, at least, without having learned a single boy's name. Only three are mentioned from beginning to end, Le Willow, Cheeney and Dennison, and not one of these for more than a few lines, in spite of the fact that Le Willow sparks off one of the prime incidents in the story. And yet, so cleverly is the book managed

that one is never aware of any sense of incompleteness.

Bradby's story concerns the retirement of a longstanding Headmaster of Chiltern, Dr. Gussy, and the appointment of a new one, plus the effect of the new Head on the staff. Not a very individual theme, but the resulting book is a very individual achievement. It is not a story of tyranny; the new Head, Dr. Septimus Flaggon, in young middle age, is not a Mr. Carnforth or a Mr. Brander; nor is he all-wise, with a panacea for all ills. He is an intelligent man, with a very observing eye, ready to note good qualities as well as faults, but with the idea that some faults in particular badly need remedying. His problem is "how?" - and, not being omniscient, he can only use his common sense and experiment. It is his experimenting which puts the staff really against him. They already resent his being appointed at all, before they have met him, because there was an Old Chilternian among the candidates who should have been appointed, in their eyes. Who was Flaggon? No one had ever heard of him. As Mr. Pounderley said, with clenched fist, "It's an insult, a deliberate insult, aimed at the whole staff. I say a deliberate insult." Exactly why the Governors should wish deliberately to insult the staff he did not explain. The two things which mainly recommended Dr. Flaggon to the Governors, who included a Bishop in their number, were that he was in orders and also had a reputation for unorthodox methods. But the appointment of Dr. Flaggon is an insult to Mr. Pounderley, and to most of the rest of the staff, because of The Lanchester Tradition.

"When Abraham Lanchester became Headmaster, at the end of the eighteenth century, he found the place little more than a county grammar school; he left it an institution of National, almost Imperial, importance. Chiltern has lived ever since on the memory of Dr. Lanchester ... The Lanchester Tradition permeates the place like an atmosphere, invisible but stimulating. It is difficult to analyse, for, like all great truths, it states itself in different terms to different minds and has a special message for each." To the masters it is a licence for laisser-faire, for preserving the method, or lack of method, which has, by tradition or, more likely, by convention, not to mention a certain laziness, become the way of life at Chiltern. Even the alteration of a time on a timetable is regarded as an attempt to undermine the Tradition. The school, in fact, has made Lanchester in its own image, rather than Lanchester making the school in his.

The staff is varied, as any random collection of human beings is bound to be. Apart from the insulted Mr. Pounderley, with his shaking clenched fist, there is Mr. Bent, the cynic - pseudo, as it turns out, Mr. Cox, the Nestor of Chiltern, Mr. Black, the senior mathematics master, and Mr. Chase, the moderate man ("every staff possesses at least one moderate who reads The Spectator"); there are others, the juniors, but these will do - plus Mr. Chowdler. Mr. Cox was the only one to make a positive protest about the new appointment; he resigned. He had been in the habit of resigning in the past whenever he was voted down or his advice ignored, and Dr. Gussy had found no difficulty in persuading him to reconsider. Whether Dr. Flaggon could have succeeded similarly we shall never know, for he did not try. Mr. Cox found himself taken seriously and, regretfully, his resignation accepted. "Dr. Gussy merely said, 'I no longer count', and forwarded the letter to the Headmaster elect. And the Headmaster elect, unfamiliar with Mr. Cox's idiosyncracies and much impressed by his age, which was seventy-five, accepted

the resignation in a courteous and gracious spirit."

Mr. Chowdler had for long been the power behind the throne and, while resenting Dr. Flaggon's appointment as bitterly as any other member of staff, entertained no misgivings as to his being able to rule the new Head as he had ruled Dr. Gussy. "At golfing centres, in the holidays, he was not always a very popular figure. But his confident manner impressed parents, and his was considered the house at Chiltern. People often wondered why he had never stood for headmasterships or sought a wider scope for the exercise of power. In reality he had never felt the need. He had so completely identified himself with Chiltern that it had never even occurred to him to leave it; and his had for many years been the master mind that shaped the destinies of the school." In plain words, although he would be shocked if he could ever realise it about himself, Mr. Chowdler was a bully; a lowering, brow-beating bully; hence his domination over the quiet, much gentler Dr. Gussy. Hence, also, maybe, the latter's decision at last to resign. Charles Hamilton said that life at Greyfriars was a life of innocence; not things as they are, but things as they should be. But Bradby is writing of a real world, not a world of innocence. In the Greyfriars or the Rookwood stories, Mr. Prout or, even more accurately, Mr. Greeley, are Mr. Chowdler accorded innocence, with no guile. Mr. Chowdler is Mr. Greeley in the real world. Or, to use another analogy, in his brilliant study of Dickens, G. K. Chesterton wrote that Harold Skimpole, in BLEAK HOUSE, was the dark underside of Mr. Micawber in DAVID COPPERFIELD. Mr. Chowdler is the dark underside of Mr. Greeley. And Mr. Chowdler, more than anyone, was the guardian, self-appointed, it is true (but who would dare to say him nay?), of the Lanchester Tradition.

Obviously, Mr. Chowdler and Dr. Flaggon clash. It could not be avoided. Knowing nothing of the Tradition, the new Headmaster sees deficiencies, particularly in scholastic attainments, and sets about putting forward suggestions for remedying them. Naturally, all such suggestions strike at the heart of the Tradition. Also, during the holidays, and before he actually begins his reign, the new Head visits the school and examines it, with no guided tour. "Amongst the buildings visited was Mr. Cox's old house, which was undergoing extensive repairs for its new proprietor, Mr. Chase; and there, on certain walls, Dr. Flaggon found writing which, though he did not fully understand it, made him glad that he had accepted Mr. Cox's resignation."

On the other hand, Dr. Flaggon makes mistakes. One of them is Mr. Tipham, replacement for Mr. Cox. The new Head brought him in because he felt that the existing staff needed some fresh air. But Mr. Tipham is a little too fresh. He is supercilious and manages to get the back up of the entire staff without being particularly clever, simply by raising his eyebrows and murmuring "How so?" or "Ought one to be amused?" Dr. Flaggon has asked Mr. Tipham to encourage invention in the boys' English lessons and essay writing, but he scarcely meant that they should be encouraged to produce a school paper in which every member of staff except the head is ridiculed, Mr. Chowdler especially, to the point of giving the latter near apoplexy. Mr. Tipham has to go, and his sole achievement is to have weakened Dr. Flaggon's position to some extent.

It can be seen from this that THE LANCHESTER TRADITION is no ordinary

book, with all the aces on one or the other side. However, Mr. Chowdler eventually hangs himself - not literally, but in effect. He is full of the Lanchester Tradition, and the wonderful effect, with his own fatherly training, that it has on the boys of his house - not so much on those of any other, for, of course, they have not got Mr. Chowdler - and because of this he will take nothing from the new head in any spirit of equanimity. When Dr. Flaggon, noting that there was a clear break on Sunday from lunch at 1.30 p.m. till Chapel at 8 p.m., and believing that this could be dangerous, Satan making work for idle hands, makes a move towards filling this gap by ordering a preparation for 4.30 p.m., Chowdler takes this as a first step towards abolishing the Tradition - "tampering with Sunday", he calls it - and flatly refuses to obey. As a result, regretfully Dr. Flaggon sends him a note requesting his resignation. Mr. Chowdler appeals to the Governors, but, after a rather stormy session, the Chairman gives his casting vote against the appeal.

Dr. Flaggon is a superb character study, of a man feeling his way, often knowing, or feeling sure that he knows, what should be done, but trying hard to find a way of doing it that will upset fewest people - a little like treading on glass. The final blow to the esteem of Chowdler and many other members of staff is Mr. Bent's discovery of a great many letters written by Dr. Lanchester, which reveal him as by no means the man he has been supposed to be, but as very much a rebel in matters of education, who would have taken "the Lanchester Tradition" by the scruff of the neck and dropped it in the sea.

The book is full of fine touches of character; one in particular of Dr. Gussy, who, as we know, resigned of his own volition. But that was before the appointment of Dr. Flaggon. "As for Dr. Gussy ... he was completely prostrated by the blow. Scarcely could he bring himself to make the official announcement in the Great Hall; and, when he did so, it was with the voice and gestures of the Roman praetor announcing after Thrasymene, 'We have lost a great battle'. For several days he affected to regard himself as superseded, set aside, and sulked like Achilles in his tent."

The story is so quotable that it is difficult to know where to stop. But here is one final gem: "Chiltern at the present moment is rich, because rich men are content to pay large fees in order that their sons may have the privilege of being educated, exclusively, with the sons of other rich men. The junior masters are of opinion that these fees should be made still larger, and the salaries of the junior masters raised in proportion; but the senior masters scout this proposal as mercenary. The senior masters at Chiltern are popularly supposed to be better paid than the senior masters at any other school. Whether this is so or not, it is impossible to say for certain; for the senior masters at Chiltern only talk of their salaries to the surveyor of taxes, and, even then, they do so reluctantly."

The other book is particularly written from the adult point of view, for it is narrated by a teacher. It is not so much a single story as it is a collection of episodes around a central character. This is explained by the fact that it appeared first as a series of papers in PUNCH; these were later published in two books, one in 1949, the second in 1962, and the two combined into one Penguin volume in 1964, with the title, THE WORLD OF A. J. WENTWORTH, B.A. The author, H. F. Ellis,

was born in 1907, educated at Tonbridge School and Magdalen College, Oxford, and was for a time an assistant master at Marlborough, before he branched out into a writing career. It would appear that Arthur James Wentworth wished certain papers to be presented publicly, partly to clear his name, which had been besmirched in an ungentlemanly way owing to an unfortunate incident in which he was accused of throwing a HALL AND KNIGHT at Hopgood II, who was asleep, in order to wake him; that and perhaps other incidents as well. Included also are some extracts from Wentworth's wartime diary, and certain incidents from his retirement, to show something of the range of his interests and activities. Wentworth's own explanation of the HALL AND KNIGHT incident is perfectly clear, and should scotch the false reports spread abroad by malicious slanderers; because it is characteristic of the man I shall give it fairly fully in his own words. The book was not intended for Hopgood II but for Mason, a boy, in Wentworth's own words, "of ungovernable insolence." But what has hurt him most is the assertion, made by several irresponsible persons (I quote from Mr. Ellis's introduction), that in no circumstances is a master justified in throwing books, etc., at his boys. This monstrous misconception he has long wanted to clear up, and one can easily understand this, in a man who has been for many years an assistant master at Burgrove Preparatory School, Wilminster; Headmaster: the Rev. Gregory Saunders, M.A.

In Wentworth's words, "It has been suggested that the book was intended to hit Hopgood II. This is false. I never wake up sleeping boys by throwing books at them, as hundreds of old Burgrove boys will be able to testify. I had, inadvertently, worked a problem on the assumption - of course ridiculous - that I was twice my father's age instead of half. This gave the false figure of minus 90 for my own age. Some boy said, 'Crikey!' I at once whipped round and demanded to know who had spoken. Otterway suggested that it might have been Hopgood II talking in his sleep. I was about to reprimand Otterway for impertinence when I realised that Hopgood actually was asleep and had, according to Williamson, been asleep since the beginning of the period. Mason said 'He hasn't missed much, anyway!' I then threw my HALL AND KNIGHT. I intended to hit Mason, and it is by a mischance which I shall always regret that Hopgood was struck ... It is indeed an accepted maxim in the Common Room that physical violence is the only method of dealing with Mason which produces any results; to this the Headmaster sometime ago added a rider that the boy be instructed to remove his spectacles before being assaulted. That I forgot to do this must be put down to the natural agitation of a mathematics master caught out in an error; but I blame myself for it ... I did all I could for the boy when it was discovered that Hopgood had been rendered unconscious. I immediately summoned the Head and we talked the matter over. We agreed that concealment was impossible and that I must give a full account of the circumstances to the police. Meanwhile the work of the school must go on as usual; Hopgood himself would have wished it. The Headmaster added that in any case the school must come first."

A. J. Wentworth is a man with the good of the boys in his charge at heart, and with a strong sense of his own dignity as a schoolmaster, as well as of that of his profession as such. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that he lacks a certain sense of humour, and that Fate, possibly resenting this, tends to place him in situations that assail that dignity which is, rightly, so precious to him. It is, also, an added twist

of Fate that the majority of the boys in IIIa - Wentworth's class - have a superabundant sense of humour, perhaps to counterbalance his lack. While perhaps not all of the incidents which surround Wentworth would, as a rule, happen to the same person, most of them, in essence, have happened to school teachers at some time - many of them fairly frequently. I have known, in fact, taught next door to, a teacher who was frequently surrounded by a mob of uncontrollable (or, at any rate, uncontrolled) boys; one might almost say that he was submerged by them. I have known a teacher who, on a hot afternoon, with the windows open, had two of his boys brought in by the Head. They had slipped out of one of the windows and the teacher had not seen them go; the Head had, though. I have certainly known the quell-them-with-a-look type of teacher; this always happens in their reminiscences, rarely in fact. These are all Wentworthisms.

It can happen to anyone with the care of from 25-30 energetic youngsters to say firmly, with a view to quelling that energy and preventing it from taking a wrong course, something that proved to be either ridiculous or impossible because an important fact had been forgotten. This happened more than once to Wentworth: "'This morning', I remarked, taking up my HALL AND KNIGHT, 'we will do problems', and I told them at once that if there was any more of that groaning they would do nothing but problems for the next month. It is my experience, as an assistant master of some years' standing, that if groaning is not checked immediately it may swell to enormous proportions. I make it my business to stamp on it. Mason, a fair-haired boy with glasses, remarked, when the groaning had died down, that it would not be possible to do problems for the next month, and on being asked why not, replied that there were only three weeks more of term. This was true, and I decided to make no reply. He then asked if he could have a mark for that."

As a man devoted to order and method - and what great enterprise has ever been achieved without them? - Wentworth is naturally put out by other people's lack of these qualities. This is admirably shown in the episode of the blotting-paper. A temporary master, Major Faggott, for whom Wentworth has, perhaps justifiably, conceived no ordinary dislike, is in charge of the 'stationery commissariat'. Requiring some blotting-paper, Wentworth sent Etheridge to Faggott with a note, stressing the urgency of the case - spilled ink - and could hardly believe his eyes when the boy returned without blotting-paper but with a brief <u>unsealed</u> note from Faggott which read "Soak it up yourself". Let Wentworth take up the tale: "I put the note in my pocket without a word and went straight along to Faggott's classroom. I found him with his feet up on the desk, reading to the boys, I was quick to notice, from Green's HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE, though I know for a fact that Rawlinson uses Oman. 'Hallo!' he said, not troubling to alter his position. 'Anything wrong?' I was boiling with rage but controlled myself in front of the form and simply said that I was sorry to disturb him in any way (with a meaning glance at his feet) but I must have blotting-paper at once, as there had been an accident. 'Well', he said, 'the cupboard's open.' I turned on my heel and left the room. It was quite obvious that it had never entered his head to come along with me and hand out the blotting-paper himself in the proper manner. Not that I minded fetching it myself, but that the stationery cupboard should be left like that, <u>unlocked</u> on a <u>Thursday</u> ...

I shall not, of course, allow the matter to rest there."

Anyone can mistake the room or the day, or both - I have done this myself. Wentworth could, too, twice within a few minutes, and, not wishing to disturb the Head a second time, closed the door quietly, having noted, with disapproval, that the Head had the dangerous habit of allowing a lot of boys to cluster round his desk, and heard his superior say, "See who that was, Briggs". In desperation, again quite naturally, Wentworth dodged into the boot-room, tripped over a basket of boots left right in the middle of the doorway, but just inside, and inadvertently sat down in the basket, unkind reflections concerning the bootboy passing through his mind. This is where Briggs found him, having heard a suspicious noise from the boot-room. "No explanations are necessary, Wentworth," said the Head kindly, "I have no objection to your visiting the boot-room whenever you wish, providing that it does not interfere with your work. The school must come first."

An unkind Fate, presumably still pursuing that absent sense of humour, continues to make misunderstanding and confusion for Wentworth out of the most ordinary matters, so that it is difficult, for instance, for him to convince the Head that it was because it was a fine night that, worried as to what had happened to his umbrella, he came down to the school from his lodgings, and looked into the games cupboard, where Gilbert had no business to keep his fishing-rod all set up as though he were about to catch a fish. If it had been raining, obviously he would not have come down to the school and would not have got his coat hooked on the fishing-rod, there would have been no clatter, and the Head as well as some of the boys would not have been awakened, thinking there were burglars about. One can feel for Wentworth. On the other hand, it was perhaps not wise of him to insist on showing the Head exactly how it happened - not merely catching his coat on Gilbert's hook but trailing it along to the boot-room, in order to put on a light (all downstairs lights in the school are controlled by a master-switch behind the boot-room door). "'If you would let me show you exactly what happened, Headmaster?' I suggested. He turned away and stood with his back to me for a while, looking out over the playing fields. 'You mean,' he said at last, turning round with an expression I could not quite fathom, 'you mean - go in the cupboard again?' I nodded, and he at once agreed to come and watch my demonstration after lunch. 'Half-past two, Wentworth', he said, adding rather inconsequently, 'I'll send the school for a walk.'"

The rest comes from a note supplied by Mr. Charles Gilbert, he who owned the fishing-rod. Wentworth refused to comment on what happened. Rawlinson and Gilbert were present - as the Head said, it was Gilbert's rod and he ought to be present, although the Head seemed to have some difficulty in controlling his voice, which was odd, for he was not an emotional man. "Wentworth began with a long rigmarole, which I cannot attempt to follow, about his umbrella. The upshot of it seemed to be that as he didn't want it the sensible thing to do was to come up in the dark and look for it in the games cupboard ... Then he went into the cupboard, still talking." They all crowded into the cupboard, which, with the door closed, was pitch dark - this, as Rawlinson put it, 'to reproduce as closely as possible the actual conditions.' Having trodden first on the Head's foot, then on Rawlinson's, Wentworth was about to proceed with his demonstration when - "the door opened, from the outside, and we heard the indignant voice of Miss Coombes (our music lady) demanding

'What are you boys doing in there? Come out at once!' I doubt if a more sheepish lot ever trailed out of a cupboard than the Headmaster and staff of Burgrove Preparatory School."

This is not the end; the demonstration proceeded, but with unrehearsed effects not in the original script. Wentworth managed to get his umbrella between his legs and hooked himself over on to the floor. "'I am all right, thank you', he said, struggling to get up, 'but I am worried about my umbrella.' 'You said that the first time,' cried the Headmaster, and rushed off hooting, I regret to say, like a madman. We could hear him, far off down the corridor, beating his knees with his hands and repeating at intervals with a kind of incredulous awe, 'He's worried about his umbrella! Oh, my aunt, he's still worried about his umbrella!'"

Wentworth's sincereity, integrity and dignity, as well as his keenness on preserving the right thing in the face of others' carelessness, were taken into the army in 1940, and later into retirement, with the same results from unfeeling and, at times, coarsely impertinent colleagues and neighbours. However, he eventually returned to Burgrove, to help out during enforced staff reduction, and there is little doubt of the Head's appreciation of Wentworth's services at an awkward time. "'Temporary assistance is devilish hard to come by these days. I wouldn't dream of asking you if I knew where else to turn.' And though the sentiment was clumsily put" (continues Wentworth) "I know very well that he was thinking only of the sacrifice of well-earned leisure that my acceptance would entail." And I am sure Wentworth was right; after all, the school must come first.

* *

MY FAVOURITE TOMBOYS

by MARY CADOGAN

Without exception the characters I admired most in the girls' papers and books which I read as a child were those who could be classified as tomboys. Just after the middle of the nineteenth century a few enterprising writers for girls had introduced boisterous heroines, realizing that their readers were unlikely to find entertainment in the sedate and moralistic characters which most early Victorian authors had created in their girls' books. The vogue for lively hoydens - firmly established by Louisa M. Alcott in 1867 with Jo in LITTLE WOMEN - continued well into the twentieth century, when perhaps its most satisfying expression has been found in the characterization of Clara Trevlyn. In my case it was, I suppose, a case of like appealing to like, for according to my long-suffering mother I was every bit as tomboyish as the fictional schoolgirls whom I so much enjoyed. Her assessment - coloured by the task of mending dresses and stockings which regularly disintegrated as a result of my participation in street games, tree climing, etc. - was not intended to be complimentary. However it never seemed to me that there was anything abnormal about the way in which I and my fictional heroines behaved. According to the dictionary a tomboy is a wild romping girl: George Bernard Shaw in his preface to St. Joan was perhaps more accurate when he spoke of the type of girl who refused to accept what society considered woman's specific lot to be. Jo March, Clara Trevlyn and all their kindred spirits in fact and fiction have actually demanded nothing more than the right to enjoy, as much as their brothers, a healthy and uninhibited childhood.

No. 3 of our delightful series for Your "Cliff House Album."

CLIFF HOUSE CELEBRITIES

Clara Trevlyn

BOYISH, boisterous and blunt! Those three "B's" are the index marks to the character of Cliff House's tomboy captain of Junior School sports, and, next to Barbara Redfern, the leading light of the Fourth Form.

Passionately fond of sport, Clara is essentially an open-air girl. A fearless leader, a fiercely loyal chum, one of Babs' most staunch admirers, and the idolised heroine of half the younger girls in the Lower School, Clara can count her friends by the score.

A girl who will never admit defeat; who scoffs at clothes and, despite the fact that her greatest chum in the Junior School is gentle Marjorie Hazeldene, despises all the gentler arts.

A girl who can be led but never driven, who always plays the game and is passionately fond of all animals.

But in spite of all her virtues, Clara has many failings. She is untidy. She is obstinate. She has a temper. She is inclined to do reckless, adventurous things and is a rebel by nature. She usually acts first and thinks afterwards, and though by no means a duffer, is impatient of learning.

A great champion of the weak, however, an inveterate fighter against forms of tyranny and unfairness, with a stubborn belief in her own impulses, whether right or wrong.

She is not pretty in the same way as Babs. Her face, like her nature, is frank, open and rugged. Her clear grey eyes, her untidy wind-blown bob and her commanding height make her a conspicuously athletic figure in the school. She has rather large feet, about which she is unduly sensitive, and a clear healthy skin whose only blemish is a line of freckles across the forehead.

Clara comes of a fighting family. Her father, still so young-looking, that he has often been mistaken for her elder brother, was a V.C. in the war. Her dare-devil brother Jack, at present in Nigeria on government service, has played many adventurous parts, and has travelled the whole world. Her mother, however, is a rather frail little woman, who has to take to her bed for long periods at a time.

Clara is 5 feet 4 inches tall; 14 years and 7 months old. She was born in Surrey, and lives in the rambling old mansion of Trevlyn Towers on the Surrey-Sussex border.

Her Alsatian dog, Pluto, is the apple of her eye, and it is no exaggeration to say that Clara would lay down her life for him if necessary.

Miss Bullivant is her pet aversion among the mistresses; Connie Jackson among the prefects.

Her favourite flower is the peony, her favourite author Jack London.

Fond of the cinema, she ranks Ronald Colman as her hero, though she has no particular heroine.

Position in class last term, 17.

'Topsy Turvy' Joe, with her coltish figure, boyish slang, whistling and contempt for affectation, went so far as wanting to be a boy. In the beginning of the book she is rebuked by elder sister Meg:

> '"You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks and behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl; but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady."
> "I ain't! and if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty!" cried Jo, pulling off her net, shaking down a chestnut mane ... "I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy, and it's worse than ever now for I'm dying to go and fight with papa, and I can only stay at home and knit like a poky old woman," and Jo shook the blue army-sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room ...'

One great consolation in Jo's life is the friendship of the boy next door, lively Theodore Laurence, 'Laurie', who - until he eventually falls in love with her - treats her like a 'boy chum': '"What a good fellow you are, Jo!"' However in spite of the pride which she takes in her 'gentlemanly' behaviour, Jo is not above some feminine vanities. When her father is severly wounded in the American Civil War, she cuts off and sells her abundant chestnut hair to provide money for her mother's fare to the Army Hospital in Washington. In spite of her bravado -

> '"A crop is so comfortable I don't think I'll ever have a mane again"' - Jo later disturbs her sister when they are in bed by her stifled sobs.
> '"Jo, dear, what is it? Are you crying about father?"
> "No, not now."
> "What, then?"
> "My - my hair!" burst out poor Jo, trying vainly to smother her emotion in the pillow ...'
> as she has her famous 'little private moan for my one beauty'.

After Joe, more and more tomboys and madcaps were introduced into nineteenth century girls' stories - although some of them were pretty uninspiring, created mainly to show how their wild spirits ought eventually to be forced into more passive and domesticated moulds by repressively large doses of religiosity, crippling accidents or bereavement.

At the same time as Charles Hamilton was creating Clara Trevlyn, Angela Brazil in the first decade of the twentieth century was pepping up girls' books with her 'harum scarum schoolgirls', whose hockey and lacrosse sticks symbolized their liberation from out-dated Victorian primness. Her 'rosey, racey, healthy, hearty, well-grown set of twentieth-century schoolgirls, overflowing with vigorous young life and abounding spirits' matched the exuberance of their contemporaries - the Cliff House girls. Typical of Miss Brazil's heroines is THE MADCAP OF THE SCHOOL, Raymonde Armitage, whose 'irrepressible spirits were continually at effervescing point' and whose mission in life was to enliven her school: '"If you don't have a jinky term I'll consider myself a failure."' She expressed her intrepidness by starting secret societies to put down swanky and self-complacent new girls, and by outwitting prim teachers, as well as organizing illicit botany rambles in which she climbed trees and waded through swamps in search of rare specimens: botany rambles were the stuff of life for Miss Brazil - '... covering almost the entire surface of the water was a mass of the gorgeous pale-pink fringed blossoms of the

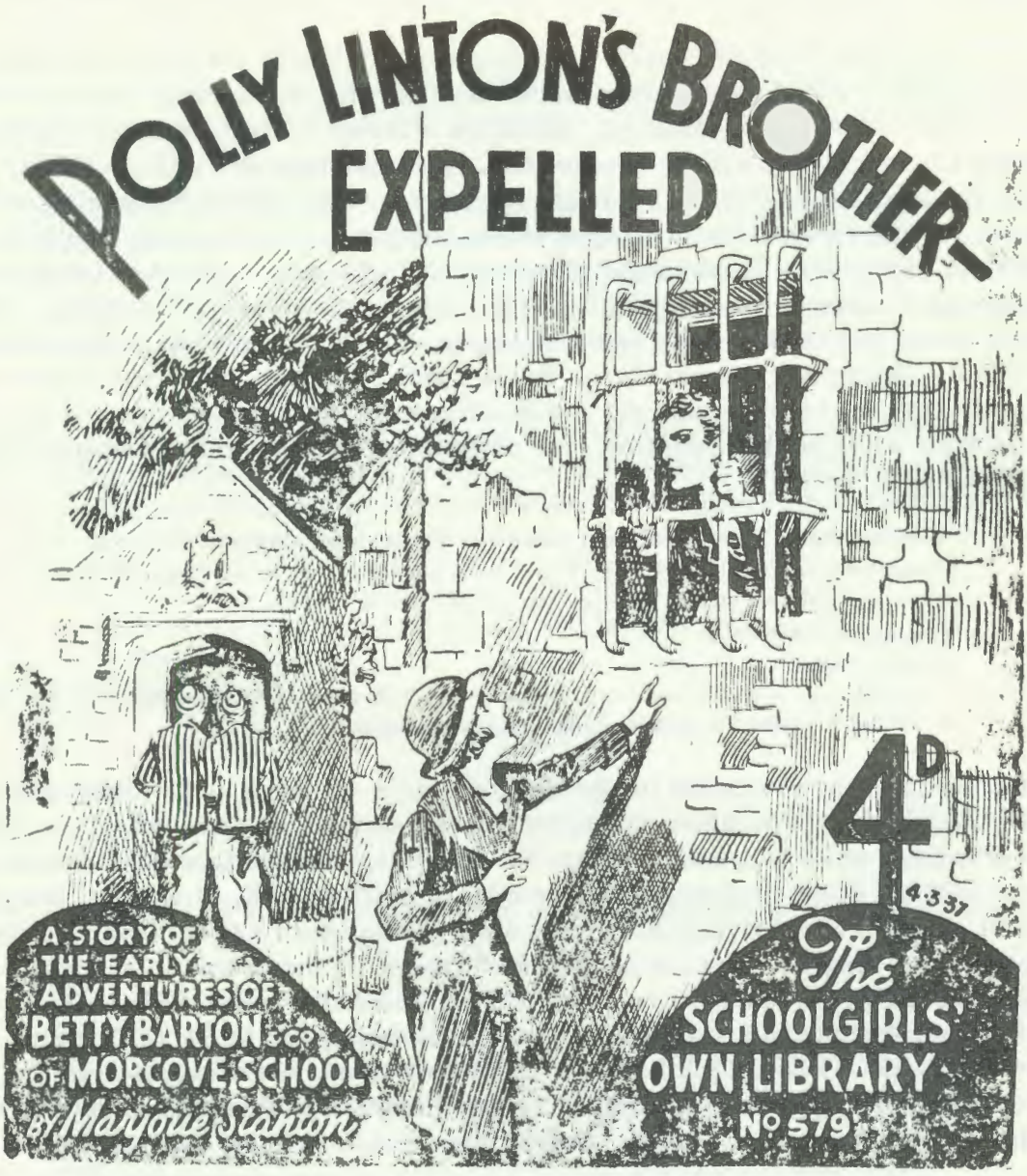
bog bean ...' She wrote to entertain, rather than to instruct her readers, and her stories were full of 'blossomy ideas', 'the most chubby aspirations' and girls and teachers who were voted 'absolute mascots'. The character I most responded to in Angela Brazil's books was Peggy Vaughan, heroine of A TERRIBLE TOMBOY. Peggy endeared herself to me by fighting a big bully boy who had been terrorizing her younger brother Bobby. One day waiting for her brother after school Peggy witnesses Jones minor tweaking Bobby's ears and pulling his hair.

> 'Peggy flew on to the scene like Diana on the war-path ... she looked carefully round to see that no one was near, flung down her books with a bang on the pavement, and - simply went for Jones minor.'

Apparently she had 'the spirit of a Coeur de Lion and the courage of a Joan of Arc. Readers must have been gratified to learn that though her method of boxing was unscientific it was so punishing that she was able to roll Jones minor over like a ninepin, close both his eyes, punch his head, tweak his ears and hammer the soft portions of his body before he realized what had hit him! 'Like all bullies he was a coward at heart' soon roaring for mercy when Peggy 'with her foot on her foe's chest and her fist at his swollen nose' politely asks if he has had enough. The thrashing is witnessed by two senior boys from the Grammar school who are so full of admiration for 'the victorious Peggy ... with split gloves, scarlet cheeks and wild-flying curls' that they swear to put down all forms of bullying at their school. This episode particularly appealed to me, because once I too fought a boy for bullying on my way home from school: my efforts were neither so successful nor so glorious as Peggy's, and in fact the fight was stopped by a passing teacher - to the great disappointment of participants and audience - but I did achieve a moral victory!

As well as appealing tomboys, Angela Brazil was adept at creating dedicated and understanding teachers - '"Let them fizz, poor dears," said Miss Birks, smiling to herself as a special outburst of mirth was wafted up from below' (on the first night of term after the Christmas vacation). This type of teacher found an echo in Charles Hamilton's benign Miss Primrose. Miss Brazil's more belligerent schoolmistresses, like Miss Todd who 'on the first day of the new term ... moved round the school with the satisfaction of an admiral reviewing a battleship' were almost as strongly drawn as Hamilton's Miss Bullivant (games, maths and drill mistress at Cliff House). 'The Bull' is perhaps a sombre warning of what could happen to the juvenile tomboy who did not undergo transformation to womanly gentleness as she achieved adult status!

Vera Desmond, the Madcap Schoolmistress of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL, was another sporty, strong-minded teacher, but more attractive and balanced than her hefty predecessor. Created by Joan Vernon in the early days of the paper in 1935, dimpled Vera Desmond, B.A., remained popular with readers for about two years. The first story made the point that 'The Sportiest Girl at St. Kilda's was - The Fourth Form Mistress'. Whether she is rushing around on her bicyle, skating and snow-balling with her pupils, climbing the ivy clad school walls, driving teams of horses across the hockey field, or simply putting 'dummies' in her girls' beds when they are out of the dormitory at night, the 'Madcap Mistress' always looks fetching, wearing her mortar board at a jaunty angle over unruly blonde curls and her gown in a casual, dashing way. St. Kilda's is a dismal place when she first joins it, because the Head,



Miss Angela Catchpole, M.A., B.sc., disapproves of her girls' participation in any form of organized games. Vera Desmond puts things to rights in a jiffy, and with one twinkle of her blue eyes, by throwing out a hockey challenge to the neighbouring sports-mad High School, even before she sets foot inside the precincts of St. Kilda's. Vera's own form, and even the ghastly and familiar assortment of toadying, bullying prefects which all Amalagamated Press schools inevitably attract, are soon eating out of the hollow of the madcap schoolmistress's hockey-strengthened hand. They are unable to resist the persuasiveness of her breezy manner, Mary Pickford curls and roguishly determined charm. Needless to say Miss Desmond becomes an object of instant adulation to the members of her form, as the closing paragraph of the first story in the series suggests:

'Seated on her desk, legs swinging (Miss Desmond) cut the iced cake with high-spirited vigour and

passed it round the adoring Form. The lemonade was voted delicious, and drunk to a merry toast - "The Madcap Form-Mistress" - who blushed happily, knowing her work was well begun.'

The Amalgamated Press's madcaps were of course not quite so boisterous as their tomboys, and Horace Phillips must have decided in the early days of his Morcove stories that Polly Linton, Madcap, should be a rather more restrained character than tomboy Clara who was adding zest to the Cliff House saga in THE SCHOOL FRIEND. Polly was a bright star in the Morcove firmament, and Horace Phillips's stories often opened vigorously with his madcap erupting happily on to the scene: 'Polly Linton came out of Morcove Schoolhouse like a shot out of a gun.' She was certainly boisterous in comparison with Betty Barton, her more sedate study mate. 'Polly Linton threw her hockey-stick into the corner, and Betty put hers on the table.' Polly is always teasing her languid chum, Paula Creel, who like Hamilton's Gussy endeavours to be the 'glass of fashion and the mould of form': Paula spends most of her time being 'pwostwate' after hockey practice, and constant rumpling and dishevelling from Polly and Naomer's 'romps':

'"Bai Jove! Pway don't look at me, deah geal! I'm tewwibly disweputable."
"You never could be", said Norah, "You look a perfect picture in anything you wear. It doesn't matter how old your clothes are, you always look - well, a lady."
"A muggins!" said Polly.
"Weally, Polly!"
"Don't take any notice of her!" laughed Norah. "Polly never looks anything but a mud-heap, do you Polly? Still, I think I'd like your good spirits sometimes."'

In fact Polly - like every one of the Morcove girls - always looks impeccable in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN illustrations, in which Leonard Shields made them the prettiest and trimmest of all fictional schoolgirls. Madcap Polly's light-heartedness is sometimes clouded by the problems which overtake brother Jack, at nearby Grangemoor School. Both Polly and Jack are lively adolescents, with a great deal of strength of character. They are loyal to each other through all the dramatic reversals of fortune which abound in the Morcove stories. 'THE MADCAP REMAINS LOYAL' is the title of one story, and a recurring theme, best expressed in the 1927 series, POLLY LINTON'S BROTHER EXPELLED. The other strong male influence in Polly's life is Dave Cardew, Jack's 'quiet chum', whose modest and veiled declarations of affection Polly is always healthily deflecting:

'"As for me ... But I am not going to say anything about that - "
"No, don't please!" laughed Polly.
Nor did he - ever.'

But in fact he <u>does</u> - often, in spite of Polly's unresponsiveness.

I liked Polly Linton, but she never impressed me half as much as Clara Trevlyn - who stands head and shoulders above all the other contenders for the title of My Favourite Tomboy. She was indeed the 'friend and companion of my youth'. I loved Clara as much as any of my real-life friends, and at least until I was twelve I tried to model myself upon her. I first encountered Clara in the 1936 SCHOOLGIRL, and large-hearted, honest, but quick-tempered and stubborn, she seemed to me the most believable and rewarding fictional character I had ever known. Her creation

was an inspired act on the part of Charles Hamilton, though reading his Cliff House stories in later life I regret that he never fully developed Clara, who in the MAGNET stories from 1909 to 1940 is delineated only superficially. Subsequent Cliff House writers (L. E. Ransome in THE SCHOOL FRIEND and John Wheway in the SCHOOL-GIRL) rounded her out while retaining the attractive attributes with which Hamilton had endowed her.

She was always 'boisterous Clara of the windswept bob' - which by the later 1920's had become an eton crop - and there was a persistently 'straying curl from her unruly hair which would persist in drooping over her forehead'. Actually in T. E. Laidler's illustrations of the thirties Clara is easily recognizable by that wayward lock of hair, but it is represented as an upward, curling quiff rather than a drooping wave.

Clara is passionately loyal to her friends, particularly 'the gentle Marjorie Hazeldene' and Babs (Barbara Redfern). She protects 'duffer' Bessie from the results of her own stupidity, and from persecution by mean-minded members of Cliff House. However Clara always comes down heavily on Bessie's boasting and coneited ways:

> 'Clara sighed.
> "Girls, shall we bump her, just gag her, or throw her into the snow?"
> "I refuse to be thrown into the snow!"
> "Well be quiet, then!"
> Bessie glowered. But she knew that tone of voice. When Clara spoke like that, it behoved one to be very careful.'

Clara also takes with a pinch of salt Bessie's celebrated postal order (which has been quite as long in the post as Billy's!).

'"You don't mean to say that Sir Dustbin de Dishwater de Bunter has turned up trumps at last!"'

Clara hero-worships her brother Jack, who is a few years older than herself. Towards the end of the Cliff House saga he is a handsome, wartime R.A.F. officer, trembling on the brink of a love affair with another of Clara's 'idols' - Dulcia Fairbrother, who is the Captain and Head Girl of the School (having replaced Stella Stone, an early Charles Hamilton character, who left Cliff House sometime during the 1930's). The other really strong influence in Clara's life is Pluto, her 'magnificent' alsatian pet - who matches his mistress in courage, loyalty and intelligence. Stories which feature Clara and Pluto, in spite of their robustness, contain moments of unbearable poignancy: THEY THREATENED TO TAKE AWAY HER PET, etc. Pluto endeared himself to thousands of readers, and was in fact inspired by an alsatian dog owned at one time by 'Hilda Richards' (John Wheway).

Clara is intrepid, if somewhat impetuous. In SCHOOL FRIEND No. 1 (1919) she is ready to give Billy Bunter the thrashing of his life because - according to Bessie - he has referred disparagingly to Clara's 'big feet'. She is ready to protect Marjorie when they are faced with death in darkest Africa: trapped in a cave by the wild and hostile Intombi tribe the girls know there is a fire at one end, and the lair of several lions at the other. As the lions move towards them, growling and hungry,

'Fiercely Clara stood in front of Marjorie ...' We are often told that ' ... a dare of any description was never allowed to go unchallenged where tomboy Clara was concerned.' She does not allow herself - or other juniors - to be bullied by Cliff House's unpleasant prefects - Connie Jackson, Rona Fox and Sarah Harrigan. On one occasion in a 1933 SCHOOLGIRL story, Clara is supposed to be fagging for Sarah Harrigan - under duress - and her response typifies her independence and integrity.

> 'Sarah went out, slamming the door. Clara, a grin on her face, got to work. She was nothing if not energetic. With Sarah's best duster, she picked up the coals, dusting each piece before carefully placing it between the sheets of Sarah's bed. Then she ... removed the pictures, placing those beneath the bed also. A few hairs from the broom furnished a giddy if reluctant moustache for the head of a plaster figure standing in the corner. In the cupboard she found a jug of milk, and thoughtfully transferred it to the lemonade bottle standing alongside it ...'

Just as determinedly, Clara puts down any bossiness and arrogance which she comes across in boys, however exalted they might be in their school hierarchies. L. E. Ransome, who successfully developed Clara's tomboyish tendencies, gives an example of this in the 1927 SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL. Bell, a bullying fifth former at Lanchester College has insulted the Cliff House girls: ' "What - girls playing cricket! I say, make it easier you know. Pat-ball, isn't it? A bunch of flowers on the stumps, I suppose, and pretty little crocheted mats all down the middle of the pitch." ' Readers are assured, however, that 'Clara wouldn't let a full pitch hit her in the eye. She'd lift it over the roof!' Bell deliberately splashed Clara when rowing past her, as she and her friends are picnicking beside the river:

> 'He then laughed aloud. "Get wet?" he asked pleasantly.
> Clara did not reply. She was a young woman of action, not words. She picked up the large water jug they had brought with them, and oblivious of the fact that it was all they had for tea-making shot the contents straight at him. It smothered his head and shoulders and made him yell.
> "Get wet?" asked Clara lightly.'

Shortly afterwards she has the satisfaction of rescuing Bell when - unable to swim - he falls into the river. She had apparently 'gained medals for life-saving, and she knew that there were kind ways and unkind ways of rescue'. In this case Clara favours the latter: 'she just ... grasped George Bell's hair in a tight grip, then she struck out for the shore ...' Humiliated before onlookers from Cliff House, and his own school, 'his eyes smarting with the pain caused by Clara's energetic rescue', the arrogant Bell has to thank Clara, and apologize for previous insults. ' "We'll call it quits" said Clara, and held out her hand, "only don't go about saying that girls are soft."

Well Clara certainly wasn't soft. She was perhaps occasionally too tough and uncompromising. I prefer to remember her as the fair minded Junior Sports Captain, frequently declared 'a giddy heroine' by her schoolmates, who hoist her shoulder high after the repeated triumphs of her dazzling leadership on the hockey field:

> ' "Whoops!" '
> Up, laughing and protesting, Clara was hauled. Bubbling with excitement her victorious team-mates carried her to the touchline ...'

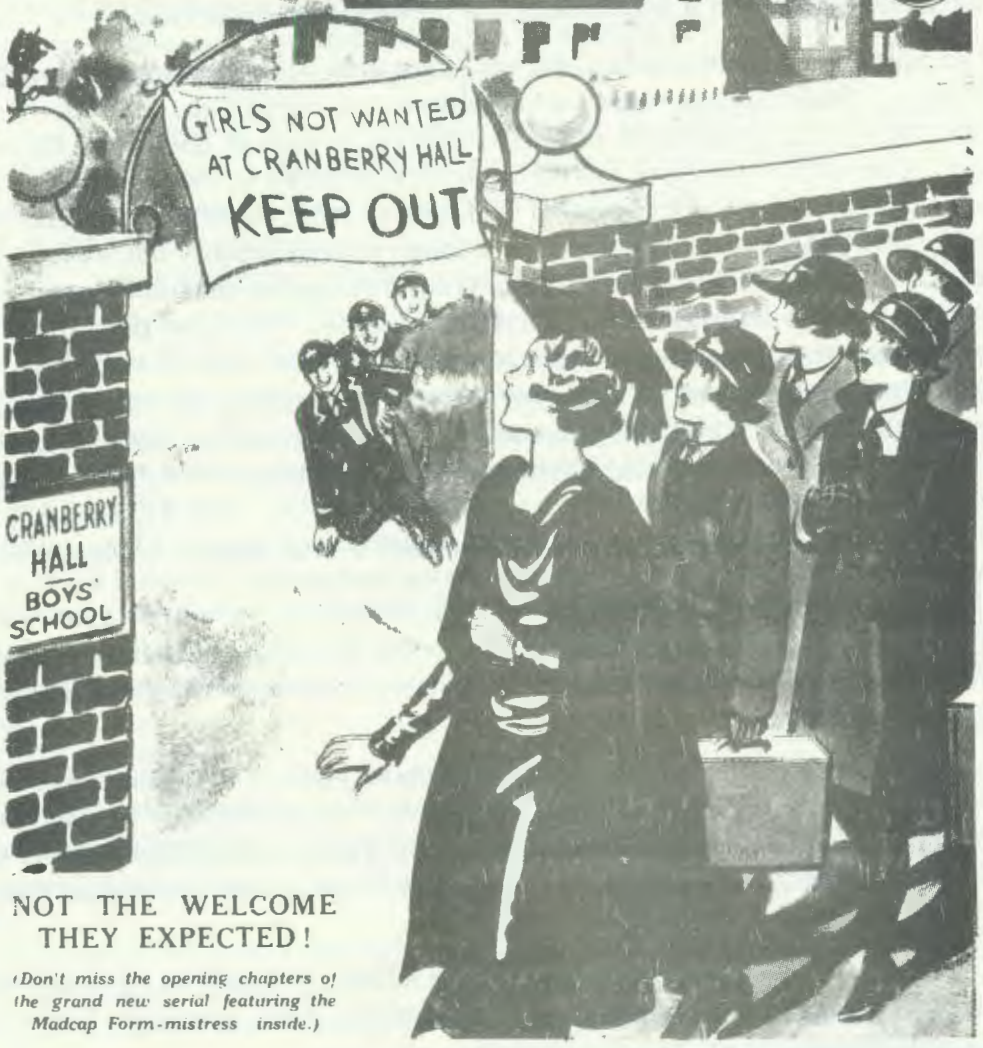
and like us they know that 'She's a jolly good fellow - and so say all of us!'

No. 59 Vol. 3 EVERY FRIDAY Week Ending December 5th, 1936.

SHE HAD TO RACE IN SECRET ONE OF THE FINE STORIES INSIDE

GIRLS' CRYSTAL

WEEKLY



NOT THE WELCOME THEY EXPECTED!

(Don't miss the opening chapters of the grand new serial featuring the Madcap Form-mistress inside.)

A Sexton Blake Scrapbook

by JOHN BRIDGWATER

Blake stories were published continuously over a period of some seventy years. Just as fashions in clothes changed between the 1890's and the 1960's so did fashions in detectives. Frank Ferrett is as different a detective from Mike Hammer as the clothes he wears. The Blake of the 1890's dresses very differently from the Blake of the 1960's. Is he, then, as different a man as Frank is from Mike? So many authors have written about him it would be reasonable to expect this to be so. A direct comparison between the early and the late Blake can be misleading, as the quotations below will show. But first a word about the quotations themselves.

The authors of Blake stories did not, as a rule, spend much time writing about Blake himself. They concentrated on his cases, and rightly so, leaving the man to be pictured by the vivid imaginations of their readers. This is not to say there is insufficient material available to enable a picture of Blake at various stages in his career to be sketched. The expanse of Blakiana is vast, however, and like the prospector of old, the seeker must travel a long, though happily not weary, way before the nuggets are found. It is rather like looking through an enormous photograph album hunting for snap-shots to illustrate a particular theme. Because they appear in this way in the stories the quotations are presented here rather like verbal snap-shots. Where they are lengthy in the stories they have been "refined" to extract only that necessary to present the clear, sharp, uncluttered snap-shot. They are not necessarily the best examples that could be found but had to come from a very modest pile of Blakiana, all that was available, so, unfortunately, some authors are not represented by their best work and many not represented at all. The sources of the quotes are given elsewhere, each quotation being numbered, to avoid a lot of footnotes and, perhaps it would add to the interest to try to identify the author and story before looking up the source. To add a little spice to the proceedings there is a spurious quotation from outside the saga, like the sixpence, somewhere in the pudding, for those who like a puzzle.

There is little doubt that the picture of Blake seen in the mind's eye by most readers is greatly influenced by a favourite artist's illustrations. Consequently when seeing a different representation or reading a description which does not fit the preconceived likeness, the immediate reaction is "That is not my Sexton Blake". Is this your Sexton Blake?:-

"... a remarkably smart-looking young fellow, dressed in cycling costume, and wearing very large dust glasses ... a very sleek, agile specimen of the up-to-date young gentleman ..." . . . . . (1)

No? Well, how about this chap then:-

"He was tall, lean-built but with broad shoulders, erect but relaxed, giving an impression of controlled strength. He was dressed in a lightweight speckled brown

suit of subtly casual cut, the trousers slim and slightly flaring over tan suede shoes. His face was longish, clean chiselled, alert with a strong chin and nose; lightly bronzed under the crisp, very dark brown - almost black - hair that grew to a point in the centre of his high broad brow. It was a face that spoke dynamically of concentration, intelligence and sternness, modified by the humour that lurked at the corners of his mobile lips." . . . . . (2)

Not really so very different are they? The first was in 1899 and the second 1969. So if these do not fit your mental picture try this one from 1904:-

"He was a man of about thirty years of age, rather above the middle height, and spare, thin and wiry. His broad high forehead, combined with an habitually thoughtful expression, seemed to mark him as a scholar, perhaps a bookworm; but then his strong mouth and chin implied the man of action and his frame, which suggested great muscular strength, appeared to denote the trained athlete. His eyes were a constant puzzle to those who knew him, for at one moment they gave the impression of sleepy, dreamy dulness, and the next they were looking through you like a pair of X-ray lenses ... the top of his head was bald ..." . . (3)

Now compare that with a picture from 1933:-

"... in the prime of life, grey-eyed and just six feet tall ... Spare, athletic figure ... distinction of his lean and intellectual face, from the high brow of which his dark hair is brushed back. His normal expression is serious and thoughtful, but the suggestion of the gaunt ascetic in his face is often belied by a spontaneous smile that discloses even, white teeth and a side to his nature poles apart from that of the grim man-hunter which his criminal quarry knows." . . . . (4)

Similar to another, from 1939 this time:-

"Spare, lean and somehow giving the impression of great power held on a tight leash ... the pleasant but precise voice of the criminologist, whose summing-up of the situation would have done credit to a learned judge ... Blake was a barrister as well as a detective." . . . . . (5)

Before making up our minds have a look at a later picture, from 1963:-

"He was a tall man, reaching reluctantly towards the middle years. His dark hair cut down his forehead in a deep V. He had blue-grey, somewhat humorous, sceptical eyes which penetrated disturbingly deep into the minds of those whom he interviewed." . . . . . (6)

And this one from 1965:-

"... tall, slim and yet with an implicit sinewy strength beneath his well-cut pepper-coloured tweed suit. Dark brown hair plunged down his forehead in a deep V which emphasised the clean lines of a lightly bronzed face and a pair of piercing blue-grey eyes." . . . . . (7)

Is it not possible to trace the development of the 1969 Blake through these snap-shots from the 1904 Blake? Is not the 1969 Blake but a mature version of the 1899 Blake? To say "This is not my Sexton Blake" when confronted with any one of these pictures is to treat Blake as though he were one of those fictional characters who remains fixed in time, never growing any older, never changing or maturing and completely lacking in that vital fourth dimension in time. It is because he has grown and matured, developing with the times, that he has become the amazing phenomenom he is.

Any scrap-book which makes even a pretence of covering the life of such a man as Sexton Blake should include many other items besides a series of snap-shots of the man at various stages in his career. Such items should include information about his youth. We are fortunate here as a very full account of his young days has been published. Here is an extract showing what sort of a boy he was:-

"He was tall for his age and though slight, which made him look smaller than he really was, tough as whipcord. He could stand cold and exposure without turning a hair ... self-reliant and observant to a degree which would have been surprising in men three times his age. He had known hardships ... his master had made him live at times, for weeks at a stretch, on such animals as he could trap or snare ... and generally fend for himself ... he had been made to go without sleep for forty-eight hours, to cover his forty miles a day on an empty stomach, to endure pain stoically without giving a sign, and to keep a cool head in the most sudden emergencies." (8)
As a young man at university:-

"... his face was thinner and paler than in his schooldays. There were tense lines about the mouth and his dark eyes burnt with an almost feverish brilliance." (9)
It is easy to imagine this young man growing into the 1904 Blake.

The scrap-book must also have the opinions of others. How did he appear to his housekeeper, what did she think of him?:-

"A more perfect gentleman there never was ... of course there's some things I would alter ... There's that dressing-gown of his ... it was red ... but now its like Joseph's coat of many colours, all stained and torn ... And then again, there's his pipe and the mess it makes about the place with ashes in all the corners and the smell of his cigars fumigating all the curtains. He's a real gent ... but a terror to thieves and murders ... grim and conserved, but to them who obeys the letter of the law there was never anybody more genial ... and he's generous ..." (10)

A quiet interlude with the great man relaxing with his assistant highlights an aspect of his character rarely seen. It is interesting to speculate when this incident may have occurred:-

"There was a frown of perplexity and uneasiness upon the face of Tinker as he peered down at the checked board before him ... something in the quaint array of those black draughtsmen ... made him fearful for the safety of his yellow pieces ... Blake's features ... were masklike in their lack of expression ... After a long pause he placed his hand on one of the men ... almost moved it ... withdrew and fell into cautious pondering once more ... with a grunt of impatience, he ... shifted a man ... making the move with the manner of a man who chooses the lesser of two evils ... Tinker quietly chuckled ... it was some achievement to cause Blake even a moments anxiety ... without hesitation he shifted a man ... an obvious counter move ... Blake ... relapsed into inscrutability ... tendering a king to the sacrifice ... Tinker accepted with a sudden sense of impending disaster ... With exasperating calmness Blake took a man and quietly ploughed ... through Tinker's defence, alighting finally in the back row ... leaving the corpses of three men and two kings behind ...

' "It was a wangle, guv'nor! ... a barefaced wangle ... a diddle ... a have ...

you ... led me up the garden ..."'

'"I haven't attempted to deny it, Tinker, it's only another term for tactics ... Draughts gives unique opportunities for honest cheating!"' ..." . . (11)

Here are two snap-shots of Blake out for a stroll; first in 1923:-

"It was a sunny spring afternoon, and, as he strolled up the world-famous thoroughafare, clad in well-fitting morning coat, striped trousers, shining silk hat and pale grey gloves and ebony stick, he was a very distinguished-looking figure, even among the ultra-fashionable crowd which was also wending its way towards the Grand Palais ..." . . . . . (12)

The second in 1950:-

"... a tall, elegant stranger ... strolling in the town square. He had obviously nothing to do and seemed amused and contented with what he saw about him. He wore a thin, summerweight overcoat, a soft hat, and he whirled a walking-stick as he went. He regarded the soft, still evening sky above the trees and houses of the square, and nodded, as if that too met with his approval ..." . . (13)

There is a minor surprise at the end of this stroll which merits a place in the scrap-book:-

"He took off his hat ... and revealed a smooth head of silver hair, perhaps a premature greyness, for the keen, amused eyes were certainly not those of an old man ...

'"Are you Sexton Blake? Why the disguise? Your hair, it's silver."'

'"That is not deliberate. It is the interesting effect of a slight explosion following a dangerous chemical experiment. I am assured that the colour will return within a few days. The chemicals merely bleached the pigment from the hair."' ..." (14)

A Saturday evening stroll in 1912 which ended in tragedy supplies the scrap-book with a fine illustration of Blake's ability to act in an emergency with selfless heroism:-

"'"You may go home if you like, Tinker, ... I'm just beginning to enjoy myself."' ...

Blake and Tinker were pushing their way through a dense mass of salesmen and shoppers in one of the narrow lanes off the Mile End Road ... A keen student of human nature, he never tired of watching the various types of humanity that congregated round the barrows ... He halted before the gold-and-white door of a small cinematograph theatre ...

'"The charge is only a penny and twopence here ... Just the thing,"' said Blake smiling. '"We shall save money here. Always economise, Tinker. It's a good habit."'

Tinker grunted and followed ... through the dingy curtains ... The tiny room was packed almost to suffocation ... no seats were to be had but by dint of laborious pushing and wriggling the two managed ... to secure a stand in the centre

of the hall where a good view of the sheet could be obtained. It was ... Blake's first visit to a very cheap picture show and he watched the pictures with interest ...

The picture ended abruptly in the middle of a scene and the hall was plunged into darkness ... the film appeared again at first hazy, and then more brilliant until the picture vanished in a dazzling flare of light ... a tongue of flame lept from the small operating box ...

'"Fire!"' roared a voice.

The detective was able to save more than one woman from falling ... A man ... hugging a small child ... collapsed ... Blake was just in time to snatch the infant before it fell ...

'" ... take this child... I must go back to help the women and children ..."'..." (15)

So far the scrap-book has no examples of the master at work. Here is a snippet from 1916 showing him tackling a problem:-

"A clock chimed the first hour of the morning as the taxi drew up ... Mrs. Bardell had kept in an excellent fire ... there was no sleep in Blake's eyes. When coffee was made he emerged from his bathroom, clad in the old negligee dressing-gown, his feet in soft slippers, and reached down his tobacco-jar. Tinker read the signs. Before he turned in he drew his master's chair up to the fire, bringing the table up beside it with coffee and tobacco. He poured out coffee, black and strong. Blake turned down the lamp ... He took his place in the chair ... sipped the coffee letting it play upon the back of his palate. His face showed up white and vivid in the flare of the match as he lit his pipe. Then the face seemed to fade away in a cloud of smoke ... thus he settled down to concentrate. He sat thinking ... smoking, sipping. When Tinker rose, a little after seven, he found his master as he had left him, smoking steadily ... gazing into space abstractedly ... the fire had gone out ... the tobacco-jar was half empty. Blake stirred and shivered ... got up ... drew the gown about him ... moved ... towards the bathroom ... Tea and toast were ready when he emerged.

'"I have formed a theory, Tinker"' Blake said ..." ... . . (16)

The mention of pipe-smoking in the last item offers a lead-in to a small but vital sub-section. For many years Blake was well qualified to be "Pipe Smoker of the Year"; the earliest entry in this sub-section is from 1905:-

"It was a night in November, cold, clear and blustery ... a bitter wind swept the Embankment ... ice was forming on the lake in St. James's Park ... It was the kind of weather that Sexton Blake liked, as a rule; but when he came stamping into his cosy sitting-room ... he stepped at once to the fire place and held his hands over the flaming ... coals. His nose was blue, his coat was spattered with mud, and his boots looked as if he had been walking through a freshly-ploughed field after rain ... He disappeared into his bedroom, and emerged a few minutes later in smoking-jacket and slippers. Sinking into a big chair by the fire, he stretched his legs to the flames and lit his pipe ... a bell was heard and the detective wondered if he was to

be called away from his warm fire." . . . . . (17)

Three years later, in 1908, at the beginning of a case:-

"Blake advanced to the mantlepiece, mechanically picked up his pipe and tobacco-pouch and smiled down pleasantly at the count ... he sank into an armchair on the opposite side of the fire ...

'"I'm sorry ... you have been kept waiting ..."' . . . . (18)

Far in time and distance from that cozy chat with the count, Blake is in India and it is 1929. He is disguised as an Indian soldier but still manages to enjoy a quiet pipe:-

"He took off his big turban and extracted pipe and pouch and matches from its interior. Then, with his audience of two listening attentively, he told the story of his evening's investigation." . . . . . (19)

The last picture in this sub-section comes from 1950:-

"... tall, thin, ascetic-looking man ... was knocking out his pipe against the grate. He was clad in an old red dressing-gown, and was plainly taking his ease ..." (20)

It is, perhaps fitting that this series of snap-shots should close with Blake knocking out his pipe against the grate. All the pictures of the sitting or consulting room have been of a comfortable, cosy place. There was a notable occasion on which it was very different and the scrap-book could not possibly omit an entry recording what happened on that evening in 1920:-

"... Blake took from his pocket the key of the consulting room, which ... when they both went out, he had locked, and laughing together over some reminiscent remark Tinker had made concerning the show they had seen, they passed up the stairs. With the lad at his elbow, Blake inserted the key in the lock of the consulting room door ... From inside there came a ... deafening explosion that shattered the door ... and was accompanied by a blinding flash of flame ... the wrecked door ... the detective and Tinker were hurled backwards down the whole flight of stairs ... by the concussion ... the windows were blown out and fell into the area ... and the house was shaken to its foundations ... Blake and the lad lay where they had fallen ... Shrieking "Anarchists!" and "Murder!" Mrs. Bardell came running from her kitchen, Pedro, who was with her, setting up an excited baying ... the policeman ... gave an imperative rat-tat-tat upon the front door. Mrs. Bardell ... weeping hysterically ... pulled herself together ... to ... answer his summons. Pedro remained by the two detectives, whining ... and running from one to the other to sniff ... and lick their faces ...

'"Anyone hurt?"' the constable asked ...

'"Poor Mr. Blake! Poor, poor lad! They're dead - dead! ..."'

Blake stirred ... with a hand pressed dazedly to his temple, struggled to a sitting posture.

'"Tinker?" he said feebly ... "What's happened to him?"'... the constable answered, raising Tinker's head ...

' "Only stunned" ' . . . . . (21)

Blake survives many a severe knocking-about, sometimes getting off quite lightly for various reasons, but the reason given in this incident from 1896 is sufficiently unusual to merit a place in the scrap-book:-

"Sexton Blake helped by his habit of wearing the closest woollen clothing, escaped with nothing worse than a variety of painful bruises. He ... who had run across the road ... had drawn a strong cord tightly from side to side. This ... caught the knees of Blake's horse ... the steed lay ... with two broken legs ...

' "That's wicked work!" cried he ... "those who were guilty ... deserve something worse than hanging! If I could get hold of the scamps there would not be much left for the law to tackle!" '..." . . . . (22)

This snap-shot has the added attraction of showing Blake the animal lover. Many times it is just quick thinking that saves him. A snippet from 1933 illustrates this:-

"Standing in the french windows was a tall man, wrapped to the chin in a dark ulster. He held his hat in the same hand as gripped the leash on which strained an immense bloodhound ... Mrs. Barry gripped a 12-bore shotgun, her fierce eyes on the intruder ...

' "... you can't shoot me" insisted the stranger, "because that's a hammer gun, and the hammers are at half-cock ..."

Mrs. Barry looked down at the hammers, and in that brief moment the tall man lunged forward and twisted the gun from her hands. As he did so her fingers squeezed on the trigger, and a charge of shot ploughed into the ceiling." (23)

A tricky situation well handled, but the scrap-book would be incomplete without an example of a really difficult predicament which shows Blake as an escape artist. Such a situation arose in 1917:-

"A long bare room ... empty ... void of light, save for the faint glow from feeble outside lamps ... filtered through the dirty window ... on the bare ... boards ... a man ... lithe, strong-framed ... robbed of all power by the cords about his wrists and ankles ... the gagging cloth drawn tight across his mouth ... at last his senses ... ebbing back ... he opened his eyes ... he was conscious of ... a great aching all over his bruised body ... his temples throbbing violently ... breathing difficult owing to the gag ... Heedless of his aching limbs he rolled across the room until he lay right beneath the window ... supporting himself against the wall, he slowly and laboriously raised himself until he stood upright ... pressing ... elbows against the pane ... Snap it went ... Blake held his breath and listened ... no-one came ... he felt for a jagged piece of glass ... and ... began to saw through the cords ... it was ... slow ... and ... resulted in more than one nasty cut ... in twenty minutes he had sawn through ... he was able to draw his hands apart ... it was ... the work of a minute to rid himself of the bonds ... turning to the window he unlatched it and lifted the sash ... silently the door ... was thrown open and two men entered ... two revolvers covered him ... he vaulted over the window-sill, and hurled himself into space ... two bullets whizzed close past his ears ... a rush and a roar were in his ears ... a train (Underground) was passing immediately beneath

him ... quicker than it can be told he had fallen with a crash right on to the roof of one of the carriages and in a moment stunned and bruised he was being borne away to be lost to view in a black tunnel ... Half an hour had passed. The ... detective lay upon a seat in the waiting-room ... after being found on top of the carriage ... in a fainting condition ..." . . . . . (24)

There are some notable exceptions among the authors represented in the scrap-book so far. Being a scrap-book it is possible to include a miscellaneous section which need not follow any set plan so some of the omissions have been made up in this way. In the usual scrap-book fashion the items have been added just as they came along and are in no particular order of subject or time. Can you put a date to any of them? Or name the author or give the title before looking them up in the list of sources?

"... Blake sprawled at his ease in his usual indolent attitude in the chair before his consulting room fire, smiled affectionately at his assistant. He had arrived an hour before, after a tedious journey ... now he luxuriated at his ease in his tattered red dressing-gown, his familiar briar gripped between his teeth ...

'"You say nothing of any interest has transpired lately?"' he added, half wistfully. The great criminologist hated inaction ... stagnation affected him almost to the point of morbibity ..." . . . . . (25)

"... he emerged the living image of everything he was supposed to be. Blond-haired, sun-tanned and carelessly dressed in a large-check suit, Swedish nylon shirt and Danish shoes, he had fingers newly-stained with nicotine from the American cigarettes which were now his supposed addiction, and a face still smarting from Swedish after-shave lotion whose smell mingled with a lingering odour of Scandinavian schnapps. He looked every inch a Swede." . . . . (26)

"... a well-groomed, athletic-looking man with clean-cut features and of distinguished presence." . . . . . (27)

"He boarded the pinnace and stood there tall and erect in his not-so-new Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander's uniform...

'"... he looks a capable man ... he'll do even if he is a stiff-necked Englishman ..."'

'"... Another of them by the look of him. Another True-Blue Limey. Another stuffed shirt ..."' . . . . . (28)

"Amont the first of the passengers to come down the mobile stairs that had been run into position against the great silver hull was a tall, wide-shouldered, thin-hipped man with a deeply bronzed aquiline face - a man who glanced about him as he left the plane with a look of very obvious satisfaction, as though the cool of the English morning at the London airport was something he had been looking forward to savouring for a long while." . . . . . (29)

"In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during intervals of torpor; ... his chin ... had the prominence and squareness which mark the man

of determination ... sometimes he had a pleased critical face ... He also had, when he so willed it, the utter immobility of countenance of a Red Indian ..." (30)

"... there entered a big quiet-looking man in tweeds, with a dripping macintosh draped over his arm ... He had a weather-beaten face, flanked by mutton-chop whiskers. The stock which he wore about his neck was ornamented by a horse-shoe pin. He might have been a cattle dealer. At any rate, the look in his twinkling eyes was agreeable ..." . . . . . (31)

I wonder how many you guessed? By the way, did you find the sixpence in the pudding?

LIST OF SOURCES OF ITEMS IN "A SEXTON BLAKE SCRAP-BOOK"

1 1/2d. Union Jack, No. 283, pages 1 and 12, "Shadowed by Sexton Blake", by C. Stevens.
2 "Driven to Kill", by Rex Dolphin, pages 47 and 48 (Published by Howard Baker).
3 Union Jack No. 53, pages 2 and 5, "Cunning Against Skill", by Herbert Maxwell.
4 Detective Weekly No. 1, page 2, Editorial introduction.
5 Sexton Blake Lib. 2nd series, No. 666, page 17, "The Great Air Swindle" by John Creasey.
6 Sexton Blake Lib. 4th series, No. 526, page 5, "The Last Tiger", by W. A. Ballinger.
7 Sexton Blake Lib. 5th series, No. 1, page 29, "Murderer at Large" by W. A. Ballinger.
8 Boys' Friend Lib. 1st series, No. 102, page 4, "Sexton Blake at School" by C. Hayter.
9 Boys' Friend Lib. 1st series, No. 107, page 1, "Sexton Blake at Oxford" by C. Hayter.
10 Sexton Blake Annual 1939, page 18, "Mrs. Bardell at Home" by H. W. Twyman.
11 Union Jack No. 662, pages 1 and 2, "The Mystery of Martin Esher", by J. Lewis (1916)
12 Union Jack No. 1033, page 9, "The Hyena of Paris" by G. H. Teed.
13 Sexton Blake Lib. 3rd series, No. 213, page 15, "The Secret of the Sixty Steps" by John Drummond.
14 Sexton Blake Lib. 3rd series, No. 213, pages 16 and 21, "The Secret of the Sixty Steps" bt John Drummond.
15 Union Jack No. 430, pages 1 to 3, "The Case of the Cinematograph Actor", by W. A. Williamson.
16 Union Jack No. 646, page 21, "The Case of the Missing Airman", by J. Lewis.
17 Union Jack No. 115, pages 1 and 2, "In Double Disguise", by W. M. Graydon.
18 Union Jack No. 234, page 1, "Sexton Blake at Court" by E. J. Gannon.
19 Sexton Blake Lib. 2nd series, No. 189, page 47, "The Secret of the White Thug" by R. F. Foster.
20 Sexton Blake Lib. 3rd series, No. 207, page 30, "The Riddle of Prince's Stooge" by Anthony Parsons.
21 Union Jack No. 855, page 6, "The Case of the Rival Promoters" by J. W. Bobin.
22 1/2d. Union Jack, No. 194, page 9, "Twixt Gallows and Gold" by H. Blyth.
23 Detective Weekly No. 27, page 7) "Sinister Cliff" by Rex Hardinge (Note the error in
Sexton Blake Annual 1941, page 110) both D. W. and the Annual illustration)
24 Union Jack, No. 691, pages 9 and 10, "The Mark of the Thumb", by W. J. Bayfield.
25 Union Jack, No. 1272 (1928) page 8, "The Coffee Stall Mystery" by Gwyn Evans.
26 Sexton Blake Lib. 4th series, No. 508 (1962) page 11, "Moscow Manhunt" by Philip Chambers.
27 Sexton Blake Lib. 1st series, No. 363 (1925) page 2, "The Mystery of the Lost Battleship" by W. W. Sayer.
28 Sexton Blake Lib. 4th series, No. 400 (1958) pages 11 and 13, "The Sea Tigers" by Peter Saxon.
29 Sexton Blake Lib. 3rd series, No. 332 (1955) page 19, "The Riddle of the Green Cylinder" by Warwick Jardine.
30 "My Life with Sherlock Holmes" by John H. Watson, M.D., Edited by J. R. Hamilton (Published by Murray).
31 Union Jack, No. 1505 (1932) page 4, "The Rainmakers" by Anthony Skene.

* *

Seasonal Greetings to OBBC Members everywhere from DON WEBSTER.

A Letter from St. Frank's

by NIPPER

How do you organise a rebellion? How do you maintain its continuity to ensure its success?

For reasons which should be obvious the River House School has never in its comparable short history seen a revolt within its walls. And the obvious reason should be that there are only thirty-three boys at that academy.

A sudden downpour had stopped a recent football match between Hal Brewster's team and my own junior eleven and Hal and his men had consequently some spare time after tea to talk on this and that. And it was during the conversation the subject of rebellions had cropped up and the questions asked about running one.

St. Frank's had plenty of experience. But Hal was intrigued since the River House had never found cause to revolt.

The following is a record of the explanation I gave to Hal and his two study chums, George Glynn and Dave Ascot, that rainy afternoon in Study C at St. Frank's.

First and foremost every channel and every venue must be explored before embarking on the drastic action of staging the rebellion. And above all the reason must justify the action. Most of you will recall the causes that led up to those revolts that have been chronicled by myself and others concerning St. Frank's and each time the events had their origins in misrule and bad management by the school authorities. Thus the spark was begun and it eventually flared to open rebellion. Brewster asked which was the biggest barring-out that had happened at St. Frank's and Tommy Watson and Sir Montie and myself replied at once ... the William K. Smith episode. This was a fantastic event that will live forever in the annals of St. Frank's for although there were revolts before and after that dangerous time for us other rebellions pale in comparison. For it concerned not only our Alma Mater but the whole district and it brought in the Territorials at the finish. But I don't want to dwell on any particular rebellion.

The preliminaries are very similar for each campaign. After every attempt has been made to prevent taking such a drastic step as open rebellion and the die has been cast then the commander-in-chief must pick his most trusted generals. And to give an idea of the type needed for those positions fellows like Reggie Pitt, DeValerie, Christine Fullwood, etc. These juniors are the thinkers. Others like Handforth, Armstrong, Boots and a few more are the first line of defence as it were for they are the fighters.

But the onus of it all falls on the leader. He is the first to be expelled if the revolt fails.

In every rebellion there are always the noisy few who want to assume the role

of leader and that is the time when a good general proves his worth. His motto is not "Do good and disappear" but to see the fight through to the bitter end.

It has always struck me as strange why some juniors seek the captaincy of the Remove at St. Frank's. They know very little of the ups and downs of a form captain. He has to try and please everybody; give all a place in sport fixtures; control the behaviour of the cads and the rotters and be generally responsible for his form.

I think it was Ben Jonson who said, 'Great honours are great burdens'. I wouldn't say a junior school captain is worthy of great honours, but certainly he has great burdens.

But there will forever be pretenders to that respected position. My association with Mr. Nelson Lee over the years has fitted me with the qualities necessary for a leader and one has only to read of my early efforts at St. Frank's to realise how very urgent I was needed. It seemed to me St. Frank's junior school was a country of the blind where the one eye was king. But after I had gained the confidence of most of the juniors our very first and real test at a barring-out came with the arrival of Mr. Kennedy Hunter. Unfortunately in all my narrations of the records I could give only summarized versions.

The next important item after selecting your staff is your 'battleground'. For much will depend on the outcome where your site is chosen.

The Ancient House has often been the modus operandi for such operations although not always successful. On these occasions the 'war' was transferred to another area because of foresight and good planning.

But let us assume a barring-out has taken place and the Ancient House has been 'taken over' by the rebels and the building is under siege. All entrances such as doors and windows are sealed and barred. Food stocks are assured. Extra mattresses have been obtained in case of a sudden increase of supporters from other Houses including the seniors. Duty guards have been allocated to their posts and a council of war held for eventualities. Above all and before the declaration of Revolt took place the avenue of escape had to be considered and found.

The Ancient House could be stormed and taken by a determined crowd and the rebellion would collapse. Thus a way out to a second line of defence is very necessary.

From the point of view taking the Ancient House as the headquarters there is another outlet other than through the doors or windows. There are underground passages that I and my study chums found when we explored one rainy afternoon. And these lead out to the monastery ruins. We did use those ruins on an occasion as our second line of defence.

But whatever fortress is used planning ahead is most important. Failure must always be borne in mind. Strikes by schoolboys in many instances have come a cropper simply because of bad organising and indifferent accord. But if failure can be averted then success is assured.

Another point to remember is having your manifesto set up that states your demands for the return to the status quo order of things prior to the strike.

Ammunition is, of course, as vital to schoolboy rebels as it is to soldiers fighting a war.

Although the enemy - in this case those who attempt to force us to succumb - descend to use dangerous weapons against you, I would advise not to act in a similar manner.

In the past we have always relied on the old fashioned soot and water methods. Hard peas shot out with maximum force can sting and cause disruption, and while water is still available the hose pipes can be very effective too.

It is a good plan to obtain the sympathy from local people, for any action against authority is usually frowned on unless the truth is known. During some of the St. Frank's rebellions local roughs were employed to remove us from our positions. And on some occasions our main water supply was cut off and our food stocks used up. Had that second escape route not been available we surely would have surrendered - have been forced to give in.

It may be days even weeks before the battle is decided. But always make very sure, first that you are striking for what you think is right, and second that should you lose then you are prepared to suffer the consequences.

You, the ringleader as you will be called, will bear the brunt and the responsibility for the revolt against authority. Most probably your expulsion will be the first to be announced. You will be sent down. Oxford will be closed to you.

So you must always seriously consider what failure will bring. Rebellion is the last resort but there are times when no other course seems sensible.

It has always been my policy to wait and see when a new Head chooses to change the rules at St. Frank's. But when these changes impinge on the old order and bring discomfort and disharmony and appeals fail then that is the time to prepare for a barring-out. But make very sure it will succeed. I simply cannot envisage a strike taking place at the River House, but if ever it does you can count on the support of the Remove of St. Frank's.

Yours to a cinder,

Nipper

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THE SCOUT

Founded by Gen. Baden-Powell.

HOW I STARTED SCOUTING.

By LIEUT.-GENERAL BADEN-POWELL.

I HATE compared starting on a good thing for boys because I began it myself when I was a boy, and I know that if you want to enjoy life and

Portion of Inside Front Page, *The Scout* No. 1, April 18th, 1908

THE BOYS OWN PAPER

No. 1.—Vol. 1. SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1879. Price One Penny.

MY FIRST FOOTBALL MATCH.

By an Old Boy.

I could have knighted him on the spot. To be one of the picked "fifteen," whose glory it was to fight the battles of their school in the Great Close, and been the leading exhibition of my life—I suppose I ought to be ashamed to confess it—ever since, as a little chap of ten, I entered Parkhurst six years ago. Not a whiter Saturday but had seen me either looking on at some big match, or otherwise still actively engaging myself with a score or so of other juniors in a scratch game. But for a long time, do what I would, I always seemed as far as ever from the coveted goal, and was half despairing of ever rising to win my "first fifteen cap." Latterly, however, I had noticed Wright and a few others of our best players more than once lounging about in the Little Close where we juniors used to play, evidently taking observations with an eye to business. Under the awful gaze of these heroes, need I say I exerted myself as I had never done before? What cared I for hacks or bruises, so only that I could distinguish myself in their eyes? And never was music sweeter

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Reflections in a Deserted Study

by LES. ROWLEY

I have been familiar with this room for over half a century. The large desk, with its candlestick pattern telephone and wide-shaded lamp; the tall bookcase, its many volumes visible behind the glass paned doors; the walls of panelled oak almost blackened with age. All these as I have pictured them through the years but which I have not seen until this winter evening.

Doctor Locke was not easily persuaded in giving his consent for me to spend an hour or so in the study of his dear friend Quelch. The drawers of the Remove master's desk have been forced and the contents pilfered on more than one occasion and the dear old Head has no wish to see history repeated. But I am sincere in my love for this great school and I suppose some of the sincerity has shown through sufficiently to place at rest the Headmaster's misgivings.

Mr. Quelch had left on his Christmas vacation before I had arrived - a fact which I reviewed with mixed feelings. Nice as it would have been in other circumstances to have had a chat with that gentleman, I could but feel relief that I had avoided the piercing scrutiny of those gimlet-like eyes.

Quelch is only physically absent: he is very much present in every other sense. A cane lies diagonally across the clean blotter as though it had been thrown there a moment ago and is now ready to hand when the new term begins. On the side table a volume of Seneca keeps company with the Remington now covered and silent. In the waste paper basket lies a discarded sheet of draft paper on which the Remove master has neatly written notes for his "History of Greyfriars".

Outside, the darkness of night is settling in and snow gently falls, its white flakes softly protesting against the window pane. The wind is gradually rising and stirring the branches of the trees in the Elm Walk from which the ponderous tread of Prout on his night prowl is absent. The great building is still and its very silence helps to waken the echoes and ghosts of the past. This very room seems to stand on tip-toe with expectancy as I draw up an armchair to the fire which Trotter had lit when I arrived. I sink back in comfort and watch the reflection of the flickering flames as they dance idly on the panelled walls.

In this room, perhaps in the very chair in which I now sat, Cyril Rackstraw had faced Mr. Quelch as that gentleman warned him what he could expect if he continued his attempts on Arthur Cholmondeley. Rackstraw was not the only person to listen, his face as white as chalk, his eyes starting from his head and terror in his heart, as Quelch spoke in icy tones. The interview with Rackstraw stands out as one of those fine occasions when the formmaster played his victims as an angler would an elusive fish. As I sit by the fireside now and look across the study it is no trick of the imagination that recalls that tense scene. Rather it is the sure knowledge that

Quelch was the man to defend a boy of his form in a manner that would have done justice to a lioness defending her cubs. Grimly he addresses the villanous Rackstraw

"I shall draw up a statement of the facts of the case, as they are known to me, and this will be dated and witnessed. In the event of any attempt, from any source, being made on the boy Cholondeley, either at school or at home, that statement will be placed in the hands of the police, to act upon as they think fit."

He pauses.

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

Rackstraw moves slowly to the door, pauses and gives the Remove master one bitter, venomous look, and is gone.

Even on occasions such as this Quelch's voice is not loud but deep. There is, however, a clarity behind his warnings that a mere trio of exclamation marks cannot convey. In due course Rackstraw has occasion to regret that he did not heed them.

Our dear friend Quelch is quite a hand at giving the icy stare and the frozen word. At times his voice appears to come from the depths of a refrigerator and sometimes it conveys a message of dread to ears that are younger than Rackstraw's.

Mr. Mobbs gasps helplessly. His brief defiance has crumbled away; he fairly crumples up before the steady, steely eyes of the Remove master of Greyfriars.

"Sir!" he gasps. "Sir!"

"You aver," says Mr. Quelch, in a voice of iron, "that Bunter and Wharton have concocted a tale together - you decline to withdraw your accusation of theft. Very well, sir! I, in my turn, accuse Ponsonby of having secretly and treacherously conveyed a diamond pin into a desk belonging to a Greyfriars boy, and having followed up that iniquitious action by an accusation of theft against the boy in question. On this charge I shall request a police officer to take him into custody."

"For mercy's sake, sir!" pants Ponsonby. "I-I-- For mercy's sake sir, don't---don't---oh, don't!"

The cool insolence of the rascal of Highcliffe has deserted him now. He is as white as a sheet, and trembling with fear.

But if I feel any regrets they are not for Ponsonby or his fawning form master Mr. Mobbs. No! my regrets are that the notorious Captain Marker, having used first Da Costa and then Ponsonby as catspaws, is not present to receive a few chosen words from Quelch himself.

The figures of Mobbs and Ponsonby follow that of Rackstraw into the shadows from whence they had come. The fire has burned low and the light in the room has darkened.

Philip Darke, hypnotist, adventurer, swindler, and last of all, thief, gazes fixedly at his relative Quelch. His hands make their hypnotic passes that give him control of the form master's mind. With four thousand pounds illegally in his

possession Darke is in need of a safe haven until the hue and cry have died down, and Greyfriars will suit him admirably. Under the 'fluence Quelch is forced to arrange shelter for the rogue. For a change it is the villain that has the ascendancy over Quelch, short lived though that ascendancy is due to last!

Equally short lived, but in its way perhaps even more dramatic is the confrontation of Mr. Quelch by Sylvester Snaith, the pretender to the Mauleverer estates. Quelch, a 'downier bird' than most, has fathomed the evil scheme that will, if it succeeds, deprive the schoolboy earl of his birthright if not of life itself!

If Mr. Quelch feels any fear from the menacing automatic his face does not betray it. Never has death been so close to the master of the Remove as it is now but a slight tightening of the lips and trifle more steeliness in the glitter of the eyes only adds determination to his expression.

"You have chosen, Mr. Quelch, to interfere in my plans, and you have only yourself to thank that your interference is to cost you dear. Neither you nor a whole horde of interfering busybodies like you will be allowed to come between me and my goal. You have chosen to concern yourself with the welfare of Mauleverer. Very well, you shall join him when he leaves these shores on this evening's tide. Needless to say, neither of you will be heard from again!"

"Wretch! Do you think that such an evil scheme enjoys even a remote chance of success? Even if you are able to abduct Mauleverer and myself, do you not realise that there are others who will seek you out and ensure that your only reward is the severest punishment that the law can devise? Do you dare ----"

"Silence!" Snaith tightened the pressure of his finger on the trigger. "You will leave this room and I shall be close behind you. Should you dare utter any word or make any sign to any person you know what to expect. I am not often a man of my word, Mr. Quelch, but on this occasion I can ----"

Tap!

The sudden rap on the door distracts the unscrupulous rogue's attention only fractionally, but for the wary Remove master it is enough! He snatches the cane that still lies across his desk ...

Swish!

Often enough had members of his form wondered where Quelch packed the muscle when he wielded the cane. They would have wondered still more if they could have witnessed the terrific swipe that now descends on Snaith's arm, causing him to drop the weapon from his hand.

"Yar-oop!"

Even Bunter on his top note could not rival the howl of pain forced from the rascal's lips! It is a startling scene that Wingate beholds as he throws open the door.

Not that Wingate - or anyone else - should be surprised at what one was con-

fronted with as one threw open a door at Greyfriars. Kidnappers, forgers, cracksmen, rogues ancient and rascals modern, all found a happy sanctuary within the confines of the School.

Peter Todd may have been credited with the suggestion that the following disclaimer should appear as a preamble to the School prospectus

> "The Board of Governors cannot accept responsibility for any acts of arson, fraud, bodily harm, abduction or impersonation to which any pupil may be subject from whatever quarter and through whatever agency that may at any time prevail."

Of course, the disclaimer never saw print and the suggestion that it should was probably borne solely out of Todd's obsession for legal niceties.

But rogues and rascals there undoubledly were, and they brought with them a multiplicity of talents the like of which were not to be found within the lesser precincts of schools such as Eton and Harrow. The Head had only to lift the telephone and ask Leggett and Teggers, the scholastic agents, to supply a temporary master and the vast legions of the underworld would be tapped and there would duly arrive a gentleman of the light fingered variety. One, who took the place of Quelch, was Rupert Lagden, Master of Arts, and with a less academic title of 'Jimmy the One'.

Shortly before Lagden's appointment there was another new arrival at Greyfriars, a waif called 'Flip'. It is not known for what reason Dr. Locke was moved to waive the usual entrance examination which would have been well beyond the competence of the lad but his fees had been guaranteed by Lord Mauleverer so perhaps cash was short at Greyfriars that year! Flip and Jimmy the One had known each other in earlier, less affluent, days at the equally less imposing address of Puggins Alley. The confrontation between master and pupil is easy to recall ...

> Flip steps into the study slowly.
>
> "Shut the door!"
>
> Flip does not heed the new master's order.
>
> Mr. Lagden strides past him and carefully closes the door. He turns to the Greyfriars waif. There is a brief silence as their eyes meet until Flip breaks the silence.
>
> "What are you doing here Jimmy --- Jimmy the One?"
>
> It is a strange name to be spoken in Mr. Quelch's study, but it does not seem to surprise Lagden, the new master of the Remove.
>
> "You been a schoolmaster afore," continues Flip. "I know your game! I 'eard plenty of talk in the old days, Jimmy. Your game is to get into places and make it an inside job. I knows. You been a secretary to a M.P. you 'ave and the silver was missing while you was there!"

From hereon I know that the little waif is not safe - neither is the valuable School silver and a long and interesting history is to unfold before Flip is claimed by his long lost father who just happens to be the Scotland Yard officer investigating

Jimmy the One!

Old rogues ... and young rascals and who could be more of a young rascal than Arthur Carter, a distant relative of Bunter's. Turfed out of St. Olaf's, his previous school, for 'blagging' and in ill favour with a wealthy uncle (yes, apparently someone was wealthy in the Bunter clan) he arrives at Greyfriars to find that Bunter is now a possible contender for the old man's money. Carter sets about to discredit the fat Removite but cannot avoid having a fiver on Tip Cat, one of a long line of failed 'dead certs' that is interwoven with the history of Greyfriars. He now owes Joey Banks seventeen pounds and has to find the money or face expulsion. Carter enters the study with one object in mind.

> His face is white, his heart beating unpleasantly. But his mind is made up and the time for hesitation is past.
> On the morrow Mr. Banks would receive the sum that Carter owed. Not till days later - perhaps a week or more - would anything be missed from the drawer. Before that time Quelch would know that Bunter had his keys and what had happened would be attributed to the hapless Owl.
> He knows the drawer that he wants; swiftly he slips the key into the lock and the drawer has opened to his touch! A watery shaft of sunlight from the window makes the perspiration glisten on his fevered brow as his nervous fingers search among the contents of the drawer. His hand trembles as he lifts the bundle of banknotes and then he counts seventeen of them and detaches them. This is the sum he needs; somehow it seems to salve what conscience he might possess that he only takes the exact sum he requires to settle with Banks.
>
> Carter turns and leaves the study as stealthily as he has entered it. But the money he has stolen is not destined to reach Mr. Banks. Tomorrow, in form and with thirty pairs of startled eyes upon him Carter will be exposed for the thief he is.

There are other boys who have entered Greyfriars for the charitable purpose of discrediting a relative already there and the names of Bertie Vernon and Ralph Stacey come readily to mind. Both Vernon and Stacey were aided in their deception because of the incredible resemblance they had to Vernon-Smith and Wharton respectively, but whereas Vernon was more or less the dupe of an unscrupulous uncle Stacey was an unmitigated young scoundrel in his own right. It is midnight and the School is silent; the last light has long been extinguished and the last door closed ...

In the starry glimmer from the window I can see the shadowy figure of Stacey at Quelch's desk. In his hand is a bottle of ink, the contents of which he is pouring over the Remove Master's books and papers. He has opened some of the drawers.

> Stacey dripped ink into each one of them in turn but one of the drawers is locked. In that drawer Mr. Quelch keeps the manuscripts of his celebrated "History of Greyfriars" - a lengthy literary work that has occupied Quelch's leisure hours for many years.
>
> There is a sharp crack as the lock parts and the drawer is forced open and the indelible ink streams over the pile of manuscripts it contains.
>
> Stacey's work is done. Some ink yet remains in the bottle. He has a use for that. Quietly he leaves the Remove Master's study.
>
> In the morning there will be a terrific uproar when the outrage is discovered and there will be a rigorous search for the reckless ragger. And a stain on

a fellow will be considered an infallible clue. Stacey intends to provide that clue on the clothes of the sleeping Wharton.

There must be many occasions when Mr. Quelch has wished that Nature had been a little less generous in making so many of his boys carbon copies of each other in appearance if not in character especially in the case of Harold Skinner. Roger Pentecost had the misfortune to look very much like his cousin the cad of the Remove and in addition to sharing their looks they also shared a wealthy Uncle Frederick. Skinner has given adequate cause for distrust to be aroused in the avuncular breast and poor relation Roger has been given a chance to prove himself at Greyfriars (how much would we ourselves give for a similar opportunity). Skinner, a proven calligraphist of some merit has turned that gift to the dubious enterprise of forgery by which to disgrace his relative.

"Wretched boy, what have you done?"

Mr. Quelch's voice is deep but not loud as he faces the stricken Pentecost. That any boy in his form should be so lost to honesty and trust that he could forge the name of another seems incredible to the master of the Remove. Yet how can he otherwise regard the evidence of the paper that he holds in his hand.

"I--I--I know nothing about the matter," stammers the bewildered and confused junior. "You have no right to accuse me of forging my uncle's name or the name of anyone else, I tell you. You are ---

Quelch taps the incriminating piece of paper with the bony forefinger of his other hand.

"I warn you, Pentecost, that it is useless to persist in denial of the wrong that you have done. Prevarication cannot save you now either from expulsion from this School or from the more terrible consequences that may follow. Only a full and frank confession can mitigate your offence and I urge you to make it now before a constable arrives to take you into custody. Only if ---"

A torrent of words burst from the lips of the threatened schoolboy.

"How can I confess to something that I have not done? Mr. Quelch, I appeal to you. You used to trust me and accept my word ..."

"And how have you repaid that trust?" demands Quelch coldly. "How have you repaid the generosity of your guardian? You will leave the School within the hour and the law must take its course. Had it been possible to avoid a scandal involving the School I may have decided upon another course of action but the matter is so serious that no other way is open to me. Confess your guilt and ..."

Tap!

Quelch glares toward the door. Now is not the time to welcome interruption, but welcome or not interruption there is going to be.

The door flies open and a reluctant Skinner is thrust forward by the hefty arm of Bob Cherry.

"What is the meaning of this interruption, Cherry! How dare you force Skinner into my study like this. Take two hundred lines and go!"

"Yes sir. But before I go I think that Skinner has something to tell you, sir." The usually cheerful face of Bob Cherry reflects nothing but contempt as he looks at the miserable Skinner.

"Get on with it, you cur!"

These four walls may have witnessed high drama but they have also seen the lighter side of life but the comedy never has been low. It is doubtful, extremely doubtful, whether Mr. Quelch was ever amused to find gum in the inkwell or drawing pins on the chair. He was not pleased when Coker shipped his study in mistake for Prout's. The joy did not enter his soul when Walker brought Bunter to him having found the fat Owl with a copy of "Sporting Tips" in his possession.

"Bunter, I command you to tell me in what Remove study you found that paper!"

"Oh dear! It--it wasn't a Remove study, sir!" groans Bunter. "Not a Remove study at all, sir! Oh crumbs!"

"If that is true I am very glad to hear it," says Quelch obviously relieved, while Walker shrugs his shoulders with a very perceptible sneer.

"Now, Bunter, I shall not deal with you severely for having looked at a paper you happened to find. But I must hear the facts - you must tell me in what study you found that paper. You have nothing to fear."

"Oh! Haven't I?" groans Bunter.

"I repeat that I shall not punish you, Bunter! What are you afraid of," snaps Mr. Quelch.

"Woo-woo-woo woo--"

"What?"

"Woo-woo--Walker, sir!" stutters Bunter.

"Walker!" repeats Quelch. "You have no reason to be afraid of Walker, Bunter! Walker only desires you to state the facts, as I do. Bunter, if you do not answer me at once I shall cane you with great severity."

"Oh! crikey!"

Quelch picks up his cane.

"Bunter for the last time, in whose study did you find that disreputable racing paper!" he thunders.

It has to come out!

"W-W-Walker's, sir," gasps Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?" stutters Quelch.

"What!" roars Walker.

"I aint going to be caned," gurgles Bunter. "I got it from your study! If you go and look you'll see that your copy of "Sporting Tips" aint under the cushion in your armchair, Walker. That one's yours."

"Upon my word!" Mr. Quelch's jaw shuts like a vice. He looks at Bunter and then at Walker.

"Do you still desire this matter to go before the Headmaster, Walker?" he asks in a grinding voice.

Walker's pal, Loder, is even more unlucky as he appears at the study dragging with him a protesting French master!

Mr. Quelch jumps up like an india rubber ball, his gimlet eyes almost popping from their sockets. He gazes, with unbelieving eyes as Loder drags in a crimson, breathless, spluttering, gurgling Monsieur Charpentier!

"Loder!" gasps Quelch. "What-what is this? Are you insane? Are you out of your senses? What are---"

"Here he is sir," replies Loder, coolly. "I caught him fairly in the act! He resisted, sir. He has been struggling all the way; but I was determined that you should see him in this get up - and here he is!"

"Laissez-moi -ze help, mon cher Quelch---"

"Loder, how dare you lay hands on Monsieur Charpentier? How dare you lay---"

"That's not Monsieur Charpentier, sir!"

"Not Monsieur Charpentier!" stutters Quelch, "I fear that you cannot be in your right senses, Loder, and ---"

"It's Wibley, sir!"

"You utterly stupid blockhead, it is not Wibley---"

"I caught him in his study, sir---"

"You--you incredibly foolish, stupid, absurd--ridiculous-idiotic--"

"Laissez-moi. Keep zat madman away. Zat Lodair - he is mat--"

"It's Wibley," roars Loder indignantly. "He's trying to keep it up to pull your leg and get off! I'll jolly soon show you that that beard comes off, and then you'll see!"

Loder charges at the spluttering Frenchman and grabs at the little black beard. He gets a good grip on it and tugs!

The shriek that Monsieur Charpentier utters wakes most of the echoes of Greyfriars School. Any false beard would have certainly come off under that tug! But Mossoo's doesn't. It sticks there! It dawns even on Loder that it grows there!

"Oh!" gaps Loder.

He lets go of that beard as if it burns his fingers!

Having mentioned Walker and Loder it would seem somewhat less than charitable not to give Carne a paragraph or so.

Carne is not at his best - decidedly not!

Prefects at Greyfriars are not expected to burst into master's studies as Carne has just burst into Quelch's. Still less were they expected to present themselves

before authority in the state that Carne now appears before Quelch!

Carne is not a happy sight! From head to toe he is covered in a thick, messy substance of a sticky and gruesome nature. As he gouges it from his eyes he gurgles it from his mouth. Quelch rises from his seat in concern and anger.

"Is that - can that be Carne? How dare you come into my study in such a state. How dare----"

"Wurrgghh! Groogh! Ugh!"

"You should not have come into the House at all. You----"

"Groogh! Look at me. Those young rascals. Look at me I say!"

"I am looking at you Carne and never have I seen a Greyfriars boy in such a disgusting state. Have you no sense of propriety! Have you no regard for the dignity of the position you hold? You are unsightly! You are unclean! You are--pah!" for once Mr. Quelch seems at a loss for words to describe the wretched creature before him.

"They have done this! Wharton and his friends!" babbles the unfortunate prefect. "I demand that they be taken to the Head! They should be flogged! They should be expelled! They should be ---- Wurrggh!"

"Explain yourself at once, Carne! What do you mean when you say that Wharton and his friends are responsible? What has happened to ...."

"They fixed up a booby trap over the door. They knew I was going to their dorm! They wurrgh! Groogh! Wow!"

"And for what reason have you been visiting the Remove dormitory in mid-afternoon?"

"They keep smokes in their boxes. I was going to catch them out, the brazen young hypocrites ..."

"Listen to me, Carne!" There is a keener edge to the asperity in Quelch's voice as he views Carne with great disfavour. "Listen to me! Only yesterday I had occasion to speak to you about previous groundless accusations you have brought against these very boys. I told you then as I tell you now that your attitude to these boys of my form amounts to persecution. I shall listen to no more ..."

"Look what they've done. I've a right to see them severely punished!"

"On the contrary, Carne, you have no rights in the matter at all! If you choose to go spying - for that is what I shall tell Dr. Locke I consider it to be - you have only yourself to blame. Whilst I cannot - ahem - approve of the boys taking the law into their own hands yet I can well understand the motives that prompted them to take these measures - drastic though they may seem. The boys will not be punished severely - they will not be punished at all! Now go and clean yourself before you soil my carpet further!"

The figures of Quelch and Carne follow the others into the recesses of the imagination from which they had been recalled. More memories are crowding the doorway of the mind but the fire in Quelch's grate has burned out and the time has come to go. On the window frame the snow has gathered in the ledges and the tracery of frost has already begun to form upon the panes. One last look round before I go.

The cane still lies across the blotter; Seneca still keeps company with Remington and the candlestick telephone stands sentinel over all! The shaded lamp casts a circle of light beyond the desk to the waste paper basket behind. As I bend over to ring for Trotter to show me out I notice again the discarded draft on which Quelch had written notes for his "History of Greyfriars". I retrieve the single sheet of paper and hold it close to the lamp, all the better to read the small, neat and precise

writing of the Remove master.

... "by this time Greyfriars had already claimed for itself a corner in the history of the nation as it had claimed a place in the affections of its scholars - many of whom had left its cloistered shades to become household names in many fields.

Some of those names prevail today ... there is a Wynnegate or rather Wingate still in the Sixth Form. There was a Brooke in the Remove form and, of course, it is well known that Brooke is the family from which the Mauleverers sprung. A boy named Wharton fell from favour with the master of the Remove of that day, a Mr. Creech. But no parallel should be drawn between Wharton and myself and our two predecessors for the present Wharton is an honourable lad and I trust that my own name has some small merit for being a fair and just man.

As I was saying, by this time Greyfriars had already claimed for itself a corner in the history of the nation and many of its scholars had left its walls to win fame in wider spheres. It is no exaggeration to record that the name of the school was known far beyond the confines of the beautiful county in which it stands. Perhaps it still is today. But that is for some other historian of the future to chronicle and I wish him the same joy of his labours as it is now mine ..."

I follow Trotter from the room to the long, dark corridor without. I do not look back for there is no need for I have been familiar with that study for over half a century. Neither do I doubt that it has been equally familiar to you ... and you ... and you. And that all of you would have had your own reflections in that deserted study.

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Around the World in 80 years

by JOSIE PACKMAN

On a long forgotten day in 1893, Harry Blyth sat down to write a detective story and created our well-loved Sexton Blake. Five years later he died after writing only a few more Blake stories, but eighty years later the name of his now famous character is still a "household word". It is understood that Harry Blyth wrote the first story to send Blake on his travels - Union Jack ½d. series, No. 43.

Earlier this year I saw a repeat in colour of that rather wonderful film "Around the World in 80 Days" starring David Niven as Phineas Fogg, a marvellous piece of transportation, so that when I received a letter from Don Harkness of Australia only a few days after seeing that film, and he asked me to write an article about Sexton Blake's travels, there sprang to mind the above title - Around the World in Eighty Years, with thanks due to Jules Verne and Mr. David Niven who did the trip in 80 days. But on with our journey - first of all we must remember that in those early years of the century it was possible to travel to the Continent at least, without a passport, but the possession of a British Passport opened all doors in those days, Blake and Tinker had them, nothing like the miserable apologies for a passport of today. It was something to be proud of and to own, and in one story Sexton Blake and Tinker, and incidentally, Pedro, went twice round the world and got their man in the end with the help of the various Consuls, etc., in many lands. Their journey took them through Russia and the snow-bound wastes of Siberia, an impossibility in these so-called progressive modern times.

In the course of all these journeys Sexton Blake travelled by many kinds of transport and conveyance, more so than Phineas Fogg. From the Hansom cab, with its jingling bell and clip clop of horse's hoof which took him many times to Charing Cross Station, to the most modern of Superjet aeroplane to Hawaii, he and Tinker experienced the joys (or otherwise) of the old horse buses and trams, fast trains specially ordered (and obtained at the drop of a hat, or a glance at Blake's Passport) luxurious liners, private yachts, banana boats sailing boat, Chinese junks and Sampans, native coracles and dugout canoes, airplanes, airships, even a Zeppelin, balloons, cars of all makes and anything else one can think of, as well as horses, donkeys, camels, mules, etc. Yes, 80 years can cover very many forms of travel.

In the course of our travels with Blake down the years we find that both Blake and Tinker became expert drivers of their many cars, especially Blake's Grey Panther Rolls Royce, also they were experienced airmen and many were the times when Tinker piloted his and Blake's own aeroplane to distant lands. One only needs to look through the Sexton Blake catalogue and read the titles of the various stories to note just how often Blake went on his travels. It would be no use my attempting to list all these tales as they would be almost as long as the Catalogue itself, so let us wander back in time to the beginning of the Saga and pick out some of the most exciting tales.

An author named W. Shaw Rae took over from Harry Blyth and his first venture into foreign parts took Blake on a journey through China. No. 147 of the ½d. Union Jack called "Chased Through China". He also write No. 104 of the 2nd series U.J. entitled "Twice Round the World". By this time several other authors had taken up the Saga and soon there were a number of tales of Blake in such countries as Africa, Australia, China, Zululand, Patagonia, to say nothing of Gibraltra, Jamaica and Java. Alas I do not have copies of all these old pink-covered Union Jacks so I am unable to give any details of the stories concerned, but from 1912 onwards I have nearly a complete run until 1933, but I am sure no one wants to read pages and pages of titles, etc., about the various trips of our favourite trio. It's very strange how often Pedro was taken on these journeys. No one seemed to know anything about Rabies and the need for quarantine for all dogs entering this country, Pedro just came and went with his famous master. It was only in later years that Pedro was not heard of so much, no doubt due to this very quarantine business. However, to many of these foreign countries Pedro went and that was that. Especially did he go with Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu on their jaunts into Africa.

Then came the year 1913 which began with what must be the most exciting adventures to be written about Blake's travels. Mr. G. H. Teed, one of the finest of Blake authors, wrote many of the exciting stories about China, the first one entitled "The Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle", this tale appeared in U.J. No. 507. But prior to his Chinese tales Mr. Teed wrote the fascinating tales of Mlle Yvonne Cartier which took her and Blake from Australia to many far away places. However, I have been asked to tell you briefly what that first Chinese tale was about. The Manchu Prince Wu Ling was head of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle and his aim was to dominate the world, his members of the Brotherhood being sent to all the main cities, but chiefly to London, to infiltrate and cause the downfall of our Government. (Obviously the Communists copied his style.) But when he came up against Sexton Blake he met his match and for many years these two men were sworn enemies. The plot of this story is far too involved for me to tell it in a couple of lines, suffice to know that Wu Ling was chased back to China there to start plotting all over again. The last story of Wu Ling called "The Blood Brothers of Han Hu" appeared nearly thirty years later when the Sino-Japanese war was at its height. The Sexton Blake tales were always topical.

From 1913 onwards Mr. Teed gave us a string of beautiful tales of adventure and detective work in foreign parts. As he himself had been twice round the world working at different jobs, the background of all his stories was authentic and this made his tales particularly interesting. His descriptions of the Eastern cities, such as Saigon, Singapore and Shanghai, were superb, and no doubt many of us could have learned, and did so learn quite a bit of geography from these tales. In some cases maps accompanied the text of the story in the Union Jack. Several times Blake travelled to some of the lesser known places in such exotic islands as Java, Borneo, etc. Teed seemed to know quite a lot about Benjemasin in Dutch East Indies, as this place is mentioned in a number of Blake's Eastern travels. I well remember a tale about Dr. Huxton Rymer, in the Sexton Blake Library, when he was holed up in Benjemasin for some months waiting for his partner Mary Trent to send him enough money to get him to Sydney. He landed in Bengemasin after a particularly fierce

battle with Sexton Blake in New York.

As is well known Mr. Teed was born in New Brunswick, Canada, and travelled around that country after leaving home at the age of 16, so he was well able to write those superb tales of the Canadian backwoods, two of which come to mind. Both were in double-number Union Jacks, full length stories which gave him the chance to develop the plots properly. The first one was called "The Sacred Sphere" about Wu Ling and his efforts to get illegal immigrants into America, by way of Canada. This story is based on the truth because it was written at a time when the new Immigration laws excluded the entry of Chinese into the U.S.A. altogether, for some unknown reason now, but probably the reason behind it was the thought of the Yellow Peril which existed in those days. (It's the Communists now, how those copy cats do keep turning up.) Wu Ling also had a lucrative trade in white girls going at the same time and had kidnapped the daughter of an old enemy - once the Consul in Pekin. She is taken aboard a vessel loaded already with illegal immigrants which is leaving Cardiff for Canada. Blake is called in to help find the girl and in so doing meets Yvonne again who offers to help. They both find means of travelling on this same boat, Yvonne as a prospective white wife for a Chinese Mandarin and Blake disguised as a coolie. For good measure Dr. Huxton Rymer is also aboard as second mate, he having fallen on hard times. I leave the readers to guess what the final outcome will be.

The second full length novel was about adventures in New Brunswick, called "Bribery and Corruption". Blake and Tinker are on holiday and become involved in local affairs. It's such a long story that I cannot do justice to it and would suggest that anyone wanting to read it should borrow the copy I have in the Sexton Blake Lending Library. It's Union Jack, No. 616. So on with the journey.

Another prolific writer of travel and adventure tales concerning Blake and his friends Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu, was Cecil Hayter. But there is no need for me to say very much about him here the subject has been very well and thoroughly done in the past. You will find many articles written by at least two of our well-known contributors to the C.D. Mr. W. Thurbon and Mr. Cyril Rowe who are both Cecil Hayter fans.

During 1928 another author joined our galaxy - Mr. Rex Hardinge - who wrote the most wonderful tales of Blake's adventures in the modern African state of Kenya. Alas, the country is nothing like it was in those days. Mr. Hardinge had personal experience of the country and brought all his knowledge to bear when writing a Sexton Blake tale. His first story for the Union Jack was "The Black Cloud" which appeared in Union Jack No. 1265. It was a truly prophetic title, because the plot of the story was the small black cloud in the distant sky which spoke of approaching trouble in that land, trouble which finally led to the atrocities of the Mau Mau in the early 1950's and the present troubled state of the country. But at the happier time when Blake was visiting there he had been invited to stay with an old friend who had prospered with his orange plantation. Prosperity which the best of the white men gave to the African but which the black man will never be able to appreciate in the way it was meant.

Blake's friend seemed to have contented workers, but like all workers, both black and white, the contented can be "got" at, so the trouble began. Sexton Blake was able to track down the man who was the cause of the original trouble and for a

while peace came to that particular part of Africa.

Mr. Hardinge was a most prolific writer and gave us many a tale of foreign parts.

Another author who took Blake abroad was Anthony Parsons whose Indian tales in the Sexton Blake Library are well known. I prefer them to his tales of London. He took over the old character of Gunga Dass and wrote some fine adventures for Blake and Tinker to get involved in. By this time our intrepid travellers were going mostly by aeroplane to the main cities but in the course of their investigations had to go on Safari with bullock carts and trek through jungles in Africa and by ghastly Indian trains and other means of transport in India.

Many other tales were written of Sexton Blake's travels overseas, which included journeys to such far away places as the South Pacific, French Guiana, Central America, the Caribean and Mexico, not to mention California, Arizona and Alaska. It's really a case of "You name it and Blake has been there". A particularly fine description of Egypt comes to mind, that in the S.B.L. story "The Great Canal Plot" and also the tales of Prince Menes with a description of the Temple of Ra hidden in the desert.

I could go on for ever writing about these different countries but no doubt the article would then be too long to go in the Annual, it would become a book.

To bring us up to the 80th year of our friends travelling, although no new stories are being written, some of the old ones are still being published in foreign countries. Only a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of seeing two of the last Penguin series of the Sexton Blake Library reprinted in an American edition of recent date, so I think we can well carry on saying that "Sexton Blake went around the world in 80 years".

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A Nugget in Search of Gold

by LEN WORMULL

NUGGET WEEKLY was not so much a new event as a rescue operation for the Prairie, Detective, and Robin Hood Libraries. Having lost their separate identities, they now combined for a new lease of life in what was initially described as "Three Papers In One". In reality it was not much bigger than the old-style Nelson Lee, but with No. 15 it was enlarged to about the size of Marvel. No. 1, dated 17 July, 1920, began in a customary mood of optimism: 'I am confident that Nugget Weekly will soon become the brightest and most attractive journal of its kind bought for money.' Pictures in colour and black and white were exclusive to the paper, it was said, and certainly these made a most attractive contrast. The thought occurred how nice this arrangement would have been with papers like the Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee. How the old schools would have lent themselves to the colour scheme! Although the paper gave full publicity to its contributing artists, nearly all the stories were anonymously written. A most inconsiderate gesture to authors and historians alike! Nevertheless, the facile pen of E. S. Brooks is detectable throughout, a sufficient reason in itself to dust off this long-forgotten and most rare of boys' weeklies. The other consideration, and a unique feature of the paper, was that it combined the skills of both Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee under one cover. The other double treat was Buffalo Bill and Robin Hood. Like many another well-meaning project, it was killed off through lack of support, in this case after a run of only 34 weeks.

St. Frank's

Before the arrival of Nelson Lee proper, the St. Frank's boys took the stage for the first eight weeks in what was described as 'one of the finest school-detective serials ever published.' Called "The Honour of St. Frank's", and narrated throughout by Nipper, the story focuses on Sixth Form cricket and a diamond robbery involving Edgar Fenton. Readers must have puzzled over Fenton's irrational behaviour in this one. He could easily have reported taking the wrong bag at the station in which the diamonds were found. Instead, he totes them around mysteriously, his nerves become frayed, and his cricket goes to pot. By the end of episode six he is the number one suspect: 'Is the honour of St. Frank's to be smirched by having a burglar for its Captain?' Thanks to some clever detective work by Nipper, ably assisted by Nelson Lee, the real crooks are run to earth, leaving St. Frank's to go its unsullied way. The story was published complete soon afterwards in Nugget Library No. 35.

Stories by the same author were also to be found in the Nelson Lee, ran the ad. At this point in time the St. Frank's adventurers were making history in the unexplored regions of South America, discovering the lost city of El Dorado. With the party were Nelson Lee, Lord Dorriemore, Umlosi, Captain Burton.

Running simultaneously with the serial was a St. Frank's Portrait Gallery, in

this order: Nipper, Handforth, Fatty Little, Walter Church, Tregellis-West, Tommy Watson, Fullwood, Reginald Pitt.

Nelson Lee and Nipper

An important announcement came with No. 7 to the effect that hundreds of readers had asked for the return of Professor Zingrave, thus paving the way for a follow-up to the school story. He was back with No. 9, looking very evil on the cover against a green diamond background, drawn by Arthur Jones. Inside was the start of another great battle of wits called "Nelson Lee versus The Green Triangle" - specially written for Nugget Weekly by the original creator of Professor Zingrave and the Circle of Terror. Strange, that history should repeat itself years later in the Nelson Lee. The old St. Frank's as we knew it went out on a story spotlighting Edgar Fenton, followed by the return of Zingrave.

The first story finds Nelson Lee and Nipper "In the Hands of the League", decoyed by Zingrave who is arranging the theft of half a million in gold bullion. Did you know there were such things as parachute overcoats? Luckily for the detective, he happened to be wearing one when thrown from a tall chimney-shaft to certain death. Fantastic to be sure, and just one of many thrilling moments in this long and varying series of thrust and counter thrust. In the final story, 'The End of the Trip', Lee smashes the League, while Zingrave vanishes to fight another day.

Artist Arthur Jones produced some outstanding work for the paper and series, quite the best examples being his cover portraits of the principal players ...

No. 28 Nelson Lee, seated. The archetypal detective; composed features, square chin, dressing gown, pipe and tobacco pouch: 'The prince of modern detectives and the man who, with his famous assistant, Nipper, is fighting the massed forces of the largest criminal organization in the world - the Green Triangle.'

No. 29 Professor Zingrave, standing. Evil incarnate, mad genius, flowing hair: 'Chief of the largest, richest, and most powerful criminal organization.'

No. 31 Nipper, seated. Easily the finest of all Nipper portraits. Well-groomed and handsome, young man-about-town, intellectual. In sharp contract to his early background: 'The hardly less famous assistant and protege of his famous master, Nelson Lee. When the detective first made his acquaintance, Nipper - or rather Richard Hamilton, as he was then known - was a ragged London street urchin, a seller of matches and runner of errands. Becoming Nelson Lee's pupil, he showed such marked ability that at last none of his teacher's cases were complete without him.'

Sexton Blake and Tinker

The rather more famous duo appeared regularly between Nos. 1 to 20, a total of four stories comprising two serials and two singles. When I came to summarize them I found I was fifteen years behind schedule! Vic Colby had already beaten me to it, and his fine description of these tales is to be found in the 1960 Annual.

I shall therefore run over them briefly.

In Nos. 1 to 6, and before the Lee-Zingrave affair, Sexton Blake and Tinker were already tackling another criminal organization called "The Crescent of Dread". Through its leader, known as the "Dictator", they run a kind of "protection racket", demanding large sums of money from various companies throughout the land, with the threat of ruin if they failed to pay up. Blake gets his man, who turns out to be none other than Jim the Penman, real name Douglas James Sutcliffe. Known also to Nelson Lee, he pays a parting tribute: 'I have had a good many dealings with a talented friend of yours - Mr. Nelson Lee. I shall be infinitely obliged if you will convey my best respects.' Although gaoled for twenty years, it was hinted that no prison could hold him for long.

A neat little ghost story appeared in No. 7 called "The Grey Phantom of Beechwood." Stranded at a remote country station on a wintry night, Blake and Tinker take refuge at Beechwood Towers. They learn of visitations upon the owner and his cousin in the shape of a grey spectral figure with glaring eyes. Blake makes certain arrangements with his host for the next visitation. It results in the owner giving chase to his tormentor, but the reason for the hauntings soon becomes clear. When some distance from the house, the mystery intruder turns on his pursuer and makes a vicious attempt on his life. Blake and Tinker come to the rescue in the nick of time. The 'phantom' is exposed as the cousin of the owner in disguise, who was trying to murder him for the inheritance.

The next issue contained "The Tudor Rose Nobles", in which Sexton Blake and Tinker are again lost, this time on the Yorkshire Moors. They seek shelter at a house occupied by a poor widow and her son. During the night an intruder is heard searching an empty room, but is disturbed and makes off. Blake and Tinker investigate and find a hidden cellar beneath the room, though it appeared to contain nothing of consequence. Blake arranges with the widow to vacate the premises while a watch is kept. Unbeknown to the occupant, the cellar had been previously used as a hiding place for coins stolen from the valuable Tudor Rose Nobles collection. The thief, having served a prison sentence for the robbery, returns with an accomplice to collect the loot. They prove easy prey for the detectives. The substantial reward for the recovery of the coins is given to Blake, who generously donates it to the widow.

Issue Nos. 9 to 20 presented "The Fakir's Secret", in my opinion the best of the Blake stories. Sexton Blake and Tinker spend an evening off watching a music-hall magician named Ram Lallah, whose show-stopping act is to turn a boy's face into glass, afterwards changing it back to flesh. The boy is kidnapped in revenge for the trick, said to be a sacred secret of fakirs. He would be returned unharmed only if the trick was discontinued. Ram Lallah reveals to Blake that his real name is George Hipwell, and that the boy is his son.

Mid-way through the story readers were invited to solve the mystery, the first correct solution winning a prize of 2 guineas. The questions were: (1) Who kidnapped the eight year-old son? (2) Why did they kidnap him? (3) How is the "Glass Face" trick done?

After some perilous adventures, Blake and Tinker capture the kidnappers,

who were themselves a famous act in the world of magic. Their performance had been dwarfed by the "Glass Face" trick. Blake discovers the secret formula for the illusion, though surprisingly not from the fakir.

The prize-winner was a Master Joe Battyre, of Bradford, Yorks. One reader was censured by the editor for sending a correct solution - after the secret was made known! The story was illustrated throughout by H. M. Lewis.

Sexton Blake bowed out with this story, making room for "The Quest of Diamond Mountain", a tale of peril and adventure in the heart of unknown Africa. The author was W. Murray Graydon, and the first to be named. It was later published in Nugget Library No. 60.

Buffalo Bill and Robin Hood

I got the impression that Buffalo Bill was the winner in this periodical. Stories of his Wild West Show appeared in every issue, taking the lead from Robin Hood in cover honours. The travelling circus had a wide variety of colourful characters, and the tales were mainly woven around them. The Redskins attached to the show, headed by Sioux Chief Lone Bull, played a prominent part. One story relates how the famous Deadwood Coach came to be stolen, and how the thief afterwards joined the show. Each issue printed a portrait of the central character from the story, with a short description. Facts relating to the great scout were given alongside the stories, one special article being 'The Personal Reminiscences of James Granger,' who was for some years in daily contact with William Cody. The series was notable for the fine artistic work of Fred Bennett, its main contributor. No less notable was the second featured artist, H. M. Lewis. The final issue went out with a fine picture of Buffalo Bill, drawn by Arthur Jones. The nearest the reader got to the authorship was that they were written by 'one of the foremost of boys' authors.'

The Robin Hood saga was modelled on the same lines, except, of course, that the setting was Merrie England. He did stray abroad for one story called "Robin Hood in France!" 'The players had their own portrait gallery, and notes on the life and deeds of the famous outlaw were scattered around. Friar Tuck and Thom Cure All, doctor to Robin's band of outlaws, were well to the fore. Stories were suspended with No. 20, but were brought back in the last issues as a result of 'readers' protest.' The main artist serving the series was H. M. Lewis, with other contributions from A. Jones, Harry Lane, Gillingham, 'Val'.

Along the road the paper was much enhanced by the larger size, with some space devoted to a picture competition called "Filblanks", a type of puzzle much in vogue at the time. First prize was a Connaught miniature motor-cycle, catalogued at £62, with other cash awards. Recalling my own parents' fruitless endeavours with similar competitions, I was always dubious about them. This one was certainly genuine, the winner coming from Baisall Heath, Birminham. His photo appeared in No. 32.

No. 23 was the one and only Christmas number, with all stories capturing the festive spirit: "Buffalo Bill's Yukon Christmas", "Robin Hood's Sherwood Yuletide", and Lee and Zingrave in "The Spectre of Fenning Hollow." No. 30 opened with the serialization of Rider Haggard's "King Solomon's Mines". Artists were Fred

Bennett and Arthur Jones.

The first signs of trouble brewing came with No. 25. In his column, "You & I", the editor made a long and impassioned appeal for readers to recommend the paper to their friends: 'It is a great pity that a paper so attractive as the N.W. should be so little known ... the number of readers is not half enough for a paper of its quality.' The cover contained words of praise from a Hendon reader, a rare event indeed. Two weeks later a questionnaire appeared, giving readers a say in the destiny of the paper - "If I were editor of the N.W. I should ..." One guinea was offered for the best answers.

The results were never made known. Nugget Weekly suddenly folded on 5 March, 1921, with the message that the reader could continue to read King Solomon's Mines and Robin Hood in the Marvel. The editor's remarks says it all: 'These are very competitive times ... it cannot be produced simply for the satisfaction of a few.'

* *

Seasonal Greetings and warmest thanks to Eric Fayne and the Old Boys' Book Club, for helping to bring back such happy and nostalgic memories. Very sincerely yours,

ERNEST AND IRIS SNELLGROVE

15 WEST DUMPTON LANE, RAMSGATE, KENT.

= =

Bunter Books, £1 each. Captain, 1905, £2.25. H. Baker "Gem", No. 3, £3. Champion, 1458, 90p. Five Sexton Blakes, £1.50. Holiday Annuals. Wanted: Monsters, Holiday Annual, 1920, Magnets, S.O.L's, Collections bought.

JAMES GALL

49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL READERS

= =

WANTED: S.B.L's, 2nd series, 690 & 697; The Gangster Film by John Baxter, Zwemmer's edition Nero Wolfe Tales by Rex Stout as follows - Prisoner's Base, Triple Jeopardy, Three Witnesses, Three For The Chair, The Rubber Band, The Red Box.

JOSIE PACKMAN

27 ARCHDALE RD., LONDON, SE22 9HL.

= =

Sending Xmas Cards this year? "No mate, find it's far too dear". "Well, Happy Xmas anyway?" Shame that habits fade away.

JOHN BURSLEM

= =

Bookworm

by JACK OVERHILL

1909. Six years old, I stood beside the desk of the headmistress (we called her 'The Governess') of the Infants' School. Trying to teach me to read, she kept on pointing at the picture in a book and the letters under it and saying 'The cat sat on the mat'. I could see what the cat was doing, but not the relationship to the letters. Losing her temper, she cuffed me. My head sang and I felt tearful, but I daren't cry, all the class, boys and girls, were looking at me. Told to go back to my seat, shamefaced, I went.

That ding must have smartened me up. A few months later, I was reading Reynolds, the weekly newspaper, to my father, who couldn't read or write. The date is fixed in mind by the Crippen murder, which coincided with my seventh birthday in February, 1910. I read the case to him from start to finish.

To clear away some brushwood. My parents had separated. There were thirteen children. The girls lived with mother, the boys, except one who was married, lived with father, a shoemaker. Our home was a four-room cottage in a Cambridge cul-de-sac. My three brothers, all older than I, read haltingly, and my father was glad I was able to take up where mother had left off when they parted. I read T. P. O. Connor's political article first; then, the other news - murder, rape, divorce, arson, burglary, robbery, embezzlement, fraud ... I read the serial, "Peg O' My Heart", to myself. The story was about a young man named Jerry, a pretty girl named Peg, and a wicked woman who tried to make out that Jerry had given her a baby. I liked it.

Alone, abed at night - changes in the home soon brought that about - murderers came creeping in the room after me, and when I raised my head above the bedclothes and saw my shadow on the wall in the light of a street lamp opposite, afraid of it, I quickly ducked under them, again.

In April, 1910, two months after I was seven, I was marched with the boys' section of the class to an elementary school two streets away. I dreaded going there. The headmaster was reputed to lay on the cane. We were put in Standard One in a back room. The teacher was stern and down on a boy who hadn't moved up with the class the previous year. There were scenes of a startling nature. Had out in front to be caned, Noaksey went down flat on his back, spun round like a top and lashed out with outsize boots to keep the teacher at bay. All the while, he shouted in a shrill voice what his father would do when he came up to the school - a bloodthirsty catalogue that chilled me.

The reading book in Standard One was "The Butterfly's Party". I quickly read it while other boys were reading aloud to the teacher, many of them so badly that he got angry with them. The reading lessons were then dull.

I moved up into Standard Two the following year. In the same room was Standard Three. Only heated by a tortoise stove, it was freezing cold in winter. When the gas was lit on dull afternoons, the naked jets flared like the oil-lamps on the market-place on Saturday nights. The reading lessons were confined to "Bunny and Furry", "The Travels of Buzz and Fuzz", and "Wilful Willie". Not inspiring to an eight-year-old ready to read an almanac rather than nothing.

In Standard Three the reading lessons expanded to a large, illustrated book, "Little Folk In Many Lands". "Faithful Unto Death" (Roman soldier at his post), a mackerel-sky and people travelling high in the air on a Persian carpet were three of the pictures. In Standard Four there were story-books about Hereward the Wake, Robin Hood, Beowulf, and other real and imagined heroes.

Two books came my way: "Swift Arrow", a tale of Red Indians, which I didn't like, tales of Red Indians not being in my line, although films were, and "Dick Trevanion", a long, exciting story of Cornish smugglers, which I read by the dim light of the little swing oil-lamp in our kitchen-workship. Occasionally, I got hold of old comics and there was a time when I read bits and pieces in a fat magazine that was on the seat of the water-closet - how exasperating when I came to pages torn out!

I liked learning, but I didn't like school. Sitting under the eyes of a teacher from nine till twelve and two till quarter-past four, less a quarter of an hour for playtime morning and afternoon, there was nothing to like about it. School was a place to creep in and bolt out. At ten o'clock every morning, except Sundays and bank holidays, a green-grocer stopped with his barrow at the top of the cul-de-sac and shouted, 'Large apple o' tater'. His shout always thrilled me - I wasn't at school!

Trouble cropped up. Furious at my being stayed in for half an hour, my father stormed into the school and threatened to knock the headmaster down. A man of moods, as belligerent as he was affectionate, he would have done it had not the headmaster skipped out of the way. Compulsory education was a sore point with him.

Set on not sending me to that school, again, he told me to find another. I found one in a different district. Judging from the tales I'd heard, it was a place where the boys knocked one another about, and the teachers knocked them about.

The headmaster questioned me, said I could attend the school and put me in Standard Four. The school was a rough one, the boys raggedy - a number of them, wearing the uniform of the Town workhouse, were marched there under supervision every morning. Boys were allowed to settle their quarrels out of sight of the teachers at the back of the school and I saw many of the older ones, looking grown up in long trousers, hammer each other with bare fists like old-time prize-fighters.

There were long playtimes - Release was the favourite game - and lessons finished at four. Discipline was strict, the cane used without mercy. I saw thrashings that made my flesh crawl. I prepared for the worst. Instead, I was quickly made a monitor, running errands for the teacher and marking sums.

The class had no reading-books; English was merely composition and learning by heart Southey's poem "The Inchcape Rock". The boys derided poetry and resented learning it. Fortunately, they were rarely asked to recite aloud.

On a sunny autumn morning as I walked up the school lane on the way home, a boy ran up to me waving a story-paper. He'd bought it from a nearby newsagent for his elder brother who took it every week. Apparently, he'd read parts of it, for giggling, he said: 'Oh, this is good. It's all about an old man who says and does funny things. You can't help laughing at him. You ought to read it.' By way of encouragement, he told me highlights of the story. The weekly was folded between printed pages; I didn't see its name; but it was then I missed the chance of reading the Gem. Years later, I came across Number 295, "At The Eleventh Hour", dated October 1913, and was able to relate the story to it. Mr. Lathom is a fossil-hunter. The chums bury an old tramp very carefully and arrange for Mr. Lathom to find him. The story had an amusing little rhyme in it:

I am the prehistoric man,
I was here before the world began,
I played among the trees,
With my friends the chimpanzees,
And my little pre-historic Mary Ann.

Seemingly, I was going to mark time at the school till I was fourteen. Then, one morning, I was told to go to the headmaster. Wondering, I went to his room. He was brief. Ask my father if he wanted me to sit for a scholarship.

I did so.

My father wasn't particularly interested. 'You can go in for it,' he said; 'I don't want to stand in your light. Not that you'll get it,' he added. 'Your hair ain't the right colour.'

A week or two later, I went to the Higher Grade School and sat for the examination. The school, newly built, was centrally heated, had well-ventilated classrooms, seats round elm trees in an asphalt playground, clean lavatories, and a press-button drinking-tap and bowl. I hoped I got there.

We had moved out of the cul-de-sac into an old six-room house in the little street at the top and on a Saturday evening, I sat beside the fire reading a coverless but complete copy of The Boys' Own Library called "Sailor Jack In China". A swop for cigarette cards, it was the first book of its kind that I'd read and thrilled by the story, I was startled by the rat-tat of the broken knocker on the front door. I went to it. The upper half of the door had two frosted-glass panels through which shone the light of a postman's lamp. I took the letter to my father.

'Open it,' he said.

I did so and withdrew two forms - one a copy - headed Borough of Cambridge Education Committee.

'It's my exam,' I shouted. 'I've passed.'

He listened while I read the terms of the Agreement. When I had finished, he said: 'Read it, again.' He held up his hand at Clause 3. 'Stop at school till you're fifteen. I've always thought fourteen too long - but fifteen!' I waited anxiously. He suddenly made up his mind. 'You can go. I ain't scared of the education

committee. If I want you to leave at fourteen, you'll leave.'

I almost whooped aloud.

The time didn't drag when my father was out that night. The dare-devil doings of Sailor Jack, the scholarship agreement form to read and re-read, I was so happy I whistled and sang and beat the hob with the poker.

The Higher Grade School cap bearing the Cambridge Borough crest in yellow cost one shilling and sixpence.

'Daylight robbery,' said my father. 'Sixpence-ha'penny is the price of a boy's cap.'

He had reason to complain. A bootmaker for high-class bespoke shops, he only got five shillings for making a pair of boots.

I had to delve into my money-box to buy a cloth satchel.

I started at the Higher Grade School on the 1st April, 1914. The headmaster was a Cambridge M.A. and several teachers were studying for university degrees and, although they wielded the cane, there was companionship with the boys of a kind I had never known at school. There were Houses, a Scout troop, and School magazine. The boys were well-dressed - in summer, many wore cricket-shirts, flannels, and blazers. There was no serious fighting (boxing took place in the Hall) and the strongest expression was 'You rotter'.

I was put in the Upper Fifth. The reading-book for the first year was one of extracts - "John Halifax, Gentleman", "Uncle Tom's Cabin", "Feats On the Fjord", "Rip Van Winkle" ... I got no change out of them. There was a lending library; I didn't make use of it; instead, I borrowed books from the Cambridge Public Library, which I was permitted to join by payment of one penny at the age of eleven. I bought a fiction catalogue, made a list of titles and handed it to assistants at the lending library counter. Going to the shelves, they often brought the last book on the list when I was dying to read the first - perhaps, they had Chinese blood in them. Titles led me astray. "Under The Greenwood Tree". Aha, Robin Hood! It was a sickly love story. "Dormitory Flag", "With Shield and Assagai", "Life In The Eagle's Nest", "Tom Graham, V.C." were books to remember. So was one about the charge of the Light Brigade, in which a young Irish soldier named Larry was killed. I grieved for days when he was found dead on the battlefield 'his sightless eyes staring up at the night sky'. I never cared for Henty and Ballantyne - even the latter's "The Coral Island" and "The Gorilla Hunters" fell flat with me.

War broke out in August 1914. It was the beginning of dark days in the home - my father fell out of work - and as the nights drew in, I took to creeping into the reading-room of 'The Institute' a quarter-mile away. The reading-room was open to persons over fourteen years of age and it depended on the mood of the custodian, a retired City of London policeman, whether I was allowed to stay. Generally, he turned a blind eye, but there were times when he ordered me out, even flourishing a whip. Once or twice, finding me asleep over a book on a table at closing-time, half-past nine, he woke me up with the remark that I ought to be in bed.

I went systematically through all the weekly and monthly magazines. The Graphic and Illustrated London News were full of war pictures, soldiers and guns on the Western Front, battleships fighting at sea; artists' impressions of bayonet charges by the London Scottish, and angel bowmen helping the British forces at Mons. The Strand and Wide World magazines were interesting and the Lady so fascinated me with pictures and drawings of women in underclothes, especially, knickers and corsets, that I lingered long over it, hastily turning the pages to less enchanting scenes when anyone passed by me. I disliked Punch because of the ugly picture of him on the cover and cartoons inside. The Captain and Chums had little attraction: the school stories misfired, the adventure stories seemed dull. In a bookcase was Captain Marryat's "Poor Jack". I read it and was filled with horror at a dying sailor's story of how he and several other shipwrecked men had cut the throat and drunk the blood of the only woman in an open boat at sea to keep alive. Strong stuff for juveniles.

When I was ordered out of the Institute, I sometimes walked over a mile to the reading-room of a branch library of the Cambridge Public Library. My age was no bar, but they were particular there. The first time, asked to show my hands, they were declared dirty and I was turned away. Not to be beaten, I went to the public urinal opposite, piddled on my hands, waited a little while to pretend I'd been home, returned, showed the attendant that I had washed them and was allowed in.

On the lookout for good school stories, at last I found them. Towards the end of 1914, on a bleak, wintry day on the way home from school, I went in a newsagent's and asked the dreamy-eyed girl behind the counter for a penny weekly. She handed me a Gem. I read it that evening and entered a new world. I was soon taking the Magnet and when a new series of school tales about Jimmy Silver and Co., appeared in the Boys' Friend, I promptly became a new reader. A class-mate bought the Dreadnought for the adventures of Bill Stubbs, a London bus-driver with the army in France; he told me there was a school story in it - the early adventures of Harry Wharton and Co.; I became a regular reader of the Dreadnought - and before long the Penny Popular for the early adventures of Tom Merry and Co. It was hard to find the money for them. I solved the problem by letting out on hire for a ha'penny a time, an old girl's bike I had. There were squabbles between me and my customers - they would keep the bike longer than they should have done - but that was worth putting up with to have the money to buy my favourite weeklies. (My glee on a spring evening in 1915 as I pocketed the ha'pennies with thoughts of buying "He Would Go To School", a Boys' Friend 3d. Library the next day!)

I had earned odd coppers delivering parcels for a tailor and goods for a greengrocer and now, although it conflicted with school homework - somehow I managed - I got a job as errand-boy out of school hours for a chemist: one hour at dinner-time, five o'clock till eight o'clock in the evening (I rarely finished till nine) and all day Saturday for three shillings a week. I delivered goods on a box-tricycle. It was hard work riding the trike, especially against a head wind, but I got along on it. Many of my journeys were to big houses in spacious grounds on the outskirts of the town. I couldn't understand the amount of medicine and pills rich people seemed to take. They must always be ill. Puzzled, I questioned my father.

'Ah, boy,' he said, 'you can't abuse nature without pay'n for it. You can be

too rich as well as too poor.'

The country was at war and all sorts of things frightened me on lonely roads and along winding drives at night-time - trees creaking, leaves rustling, dogs barking, owls hooting - worst of all my thoughts. Years of newspaper reading had done their work and I pictured with horror all that might happen to me in quiet places on dark nights. Thank goodness, Tom Merry and Bob Cherry were there beside me.

I read, or tried to read, all the juvenile fiction published by Northcliffe, Newnes, and Henderson while I was at school. The Aldine Robin Hood and Dick Turpin libraries were still on sale, so were the Diamond Library (Kettle and Co.) and the Nugget Library (Tufty and Co.) and I rated them highly. Chips, Comic Cuts, Funny Wonder, and Chuckles were my favourite comics. It was the stories about stalwarts like Tug Wilson - Tec and Jack Hinton of the Red Rovers that urged me to buy them. But, to me, the Companion Papers reigned supreme and I was filled with dismay when the covers of the Magnet (red) and Gem (pale green) changed to blue and white. To a less extent my feelings were similar when two-column pages gave way to three. Neither weekly ever seemed the same again. (A teacher confiscated a Magnet he found me reading under cover of my desk, tore it in halves and tossed it in the wastepaper-basket. Later, I retrieved it. The tear was straight down the middle of the two columns.)

The war brought changes at the Higher Grade School. Teachers went in the army - some were killed - and women, mostly young and pretty, took their places. Resenting petticoat government, the boys ragged them to despair. In contrast, a B.Sc. of London University, a saturnine sort in his thirties, took over the class. He puzzled us by his mysterious knack of knowing who was fooling about behind his back when he wrote on the blackboard. A large picture on the wall above him acted as a mirror! In the Upper Sixth and Seventh there was silent reading and boys were encouraged to take their own books and exchange them with one another. He had a habit of strolling round the room and seeing I was reading "The Fifth Form at St. Dominics", he talked reminiscently to me about "The Cock House at Fellsgarth", "Reginald Cruden", "The Willoughby Captains" and other books of Talbot Baines Reed with a wistfulness I found hard to reconcile in him.

True to his word, my father refused to send me to school when I was fourteen. Threats of prosecution had no effect on him. Eventually, he was summoned to appear before the borough education committee. They ended the matter by letting me leave.

For years, machinery had been crippling the highly skilled trade of bespoke bootmaking and the war making things worse, much against the grain because of pride in his craft, he had to turn to boot-and-shoe repairing for a living.

He put me to the trade. A disappointment. I was hoping to go in an office.

Every day, after dinner, he went for a long walk for the sake of his health. During his absence, I tidied up the workship and read. On sunny days, I looked at the shimmering leaves of a silver birch tree across the street and daydreamed of the South Sea Islands. That had its origin in the books I was reading. The best of them were: Herman Melville's "Types", Jack London's "South Sea Tales" and "The Cruise of the Snark", Frank Bullen's "Cruise of the Cachalot", H. de Vere Stacpoole's "The

Blue Lagoon", Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Ebb-Tide", Lewis Becke's "By Reef and Palm", and the novels of William Clark Russell. The cover-picture of a blue sky, coral reef, lagoon, and palm-fringed beach on a book in a shop window would lure me in to buy it. "Bully Hayes - Blackbirder", a 1916 Newnes Threepenny Adventure Library was a first-rate story. It kept close to fact, the famous - or infamous - Bully Hayes having his skull crushed by the ship's tiller wielded by one of his crew as it had happened in life. Sometimes, for a change, on hot, summer days, I sat in our little cement-surfaced backyard surrounded by high brickwalls to read and dream there.

Night schools were few and far between. There was one at the school where my father had threatened the headmaster with physical violence, and plucking up courage I went there in the autumn. He welcomed me and I enrolled for the four subjects: English, shorthand, book-keeping, commercial arithmetic. The classes were a two-man band: the shorthand teacher and the headmaster. Charles Dickens was his favourite author and The Pickwick Papers his choice of book for the English lesson. I borrowed a copy from the public library. In the street I stopped and looked at the illustrations. Tony Weller ducking Mr. Stiggins in a horse-trough, made me laugh out loud. (A calendar in a shop window depicting Mr. Pickwick on the ice and bearing the words 'Keep the pot a-bilin', sir,' said Sam, urged me to splash eightpence on it.)

I was still buying the Magnet and Gem but it was simply a habit, as I had given up reading them. In January, 1918, just before my fifteenth birthday, a Magnet called "A Very Gallant Gentleman" impelled me to read it. Courtney, a sixth-former at Greyfriars, had died saving the life of Valence, also a sixth-former, whose sister Violet had been his close friend. It was the last year of the first world war. Call-up at the age of eighteen and eight months, the battlefront at nineteen, was the prospect of youth - dying in thousands. Mothers and wives running hysterically in the streets, fatal telegrams in their hands, was a searing sight. I had always admired Courtney; he inspired affection; and though the circumstances of war had hardened my nature, the story shocked me. Death had no place in the Magnet. The atmosphere at Greyfriars had been light and airy. It had been a place of sun and shade, of life and laughter, for though wrongs often had to be righted, things shaped themselves happily in the end. All that had changed. Greyfriars had become like the public schools of Victorian fiction - grim places where boys went in healthy and happy and came out in coffins. Tales of that sort had never appealed to me. I wanted fun in the form-room, fights in the gym, football and cricket matches, japes, study feeds, trips to the tuck-shop, picnics in Friardale Woods, boys breaking bounds after lights out, mysterious goings-on in the old priory and the tower, an occasional barring-out, and holiday adventures at home and abroad. In short, I wanted the fullness of life, not the inevitability of death. For me, Greyfriars could never be the same, again, it had been transformed into the reality of the living world - how could it be the same, again.

A few weeks later, I bought my first copy of Pitman's Shorthand Weekly (2d.). "The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard" was the serial. A fine introduction to the works of Conan Doyle. About that time, I began reading the Nelson Lee Library for the barring out series in it. That was followed by a South Sea series beginning with

"Captain Burton's Quest" and ending with "A Bid For Gold". I liked it so much I kept it, but, alas, one copy is now missing. The Union Jack, which I had shunned for so long, beckoned me and with keen interest I followed the fortunes and misfortunes of George Marsden Plummer, Sir Richard Loseley and Lobangu, the Zulu, the Honourable John Lawless, Count Carlac and Professor Kew, and a host of other intriguing characters.

After working for my father for fifteen months, I was able to become a journeyman shoe-repairer for a small shop. I got tenpence a pair for women's soled and heeled, one shilling and fourpence for men's. For a time, I worked like my father, repairing one pair of boots or shoes at a time. Then, to save changing tools, I unknowingly put into practice the principle of Division of Labour, first enunciated and elaborated by Adam Smith. I took all the boots and shoes to pieces (the trade term) that formed the day's work, fixed the leather, rounded it, riveted it, knifed it, rasped it, buffed it, inked it, ironed up, and finished the lot together. My father disliked that method, which he thought was slapdash. He disliked it even more when I got up just after six in the morning and worked all out to finish for the day at two o'clock. I was then free to wash, change and go out, the afternoon and evening gloriously in front of me. When the weather was fine, I went to the River Granta, only two or three hundred yards away, to swim and sunbathe. Sometimes, I hired a boat for a couple of bob and rowed far upstream to read in the shade of the willows along the banks. One of the places was called Paradise. I was really in it.

The war ended and in March the following year, I thought I'd have a look at London. To avoid spoiling an unbroken record of attendance at night school on Mondays and Wednesdays, I went, with only the clothes I stood in, on Thursday morning. An aunt in Lewisham found me a bed and for five days I roamed at will. Whitechapel thrilled me - Sam Weller or Mr. Jingle might pop out of one of the old inn yards at any minute! In Baker Street, unable to locate the house Sexton Blake lived in, disappointed I turned away - to have the strange feeling that I was going to meet him. Sixteen years old, I knew the feeling was irrational and absurd, but it persisted until I left the neighbourhood. Although I only dropped in cafes for a cup of tea and a bun and looked twice at every penny before I spent it (my aunt would take nothing for putting me up), the two pounds I had set out with was nearly gone on Monday afternoon when I returned home. I'd got to sole and heel forty-eight pairs of women's shoes to make that up. But I'd had my money's worth.

There was a men's club over the reading-room of the Institute I'd crept in as a boy. I joined it. The custodian, the old retired City of London policeman, became a friend. He'd sailed seven years before the mast before joining the police force and the tales he told me of his life at sea and elsewhere - true, I'm sure - equalled the best I'd read.

Old weeklies and monthlies came to life and new ones with them in 1919. I sampled them all. Young Britain and the Marvel I liked well enough to take every week.

Determined to better myself (the phrase then), I went to evening classes three years without missing a lesson and studied a variety of subjects at home, and at

seventeen I leapt the gulf - a wide one in those days - between workshop and office by getting a job as shorthand-typist-bookkeeper-telephonist at fifteen shillings a week (half what I was earning as a shoe-repairer). Gone were the golden afternoons and many of the evenings, as I sometimes worked, without extra pay, till nine o'clock. I walked the mile-and-a-half journey to and from work four times a day (for seven years!). Passing a bookshop, I saw Jeffrey Farnol's "Beltane the Smith" in the window. Smitten by the dustjacket, I went in and bought it. The price, seven shillings and sixpence, was half my week's wages! I then read all he'd written - and what he was to write - all the historical novels of Sabatini, Weyman, and Merriman and many of Dumas.

During the next two or three years, I went regularly to the secondhand bookstalls on the market-place to buy paperback French novels at sixpence each. They were closer to reality than English novels and never laboured the point with abstractions when it came to the physical union of men and women. Full-blooded in their approach, the authors did not hesitate at the hem of a woman's skirt and pause at the bedroom door. Far removed from the exploitation of sex in the modern sense, that suited me and engrossed in a story, I often read, with the help of a French dictionary, far into the night. Zola's "La Terre", reputed to be un peu sale, I found earthy, not dirty. Flaubert's "Madame Bovary" was a disappointment. The author and publisher prosecuted for the book's alleged immorality suggested it was hot stuff instead of a simple drama of domestic life. Maupassant's books were often illustrated with pictures of full-bosomed women and I had a compulsive urge to buy them. I liked some of the stories, but soon looked on him as splenetic. "Le Horla" cast a shadow over me for days. After reading it I turned with relief to Company Law, a dry-as-dust subject that helped me to return to reality.

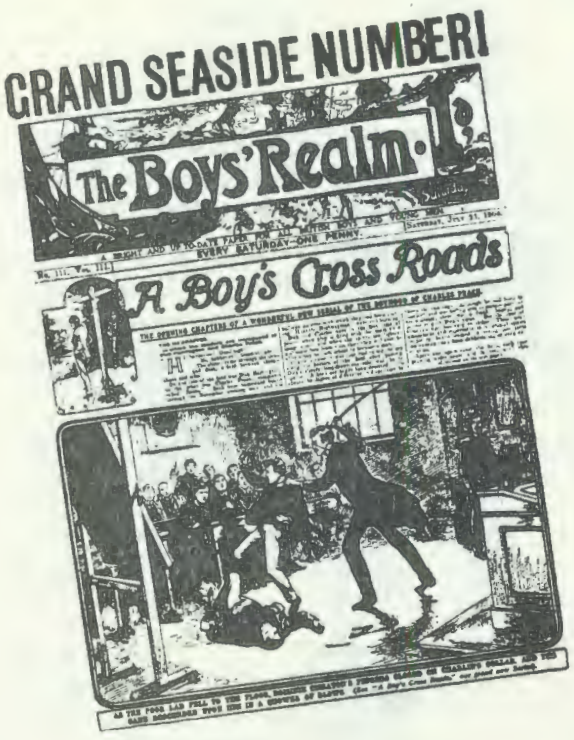
In 1922, my employer handed me A. S. Neill's "Carroty Broon". 'I think you'll like this,' he said. It was the most realistic story of a boy that I had read. He lent me two other books of Neill's, saying he didn't care for them, but I might. The two books, "A Dominie's Log" and "A Dominie Abroad" were light introductions to psychology. The dominie's ideas were new and strange to me and not altogether convincing, or acceptable.

Reading the novels and sociological writings of H. G. Wells caused the dust to fall from my eyes and with clearer vision I was better able to judge the value of my reading. On top of the two little cupboards in our sitting-room - once the workship - in place of juvenile fiction there were piles of books that had cost me thirty pounds - a small fortune in those deflationary, hard-up days - and though many of them were encyclopedias, manuals, and textbooks, undoubtedly, I had read mainly for entertainment and not instruction. I tried to make amends with a self-imposed course of English literature. It was a failure.

I didn't escape unscathed. There lingered the feeling that I lacked ability to appreciate works of recognized merit.

A natural bookworm, I got over it.

* *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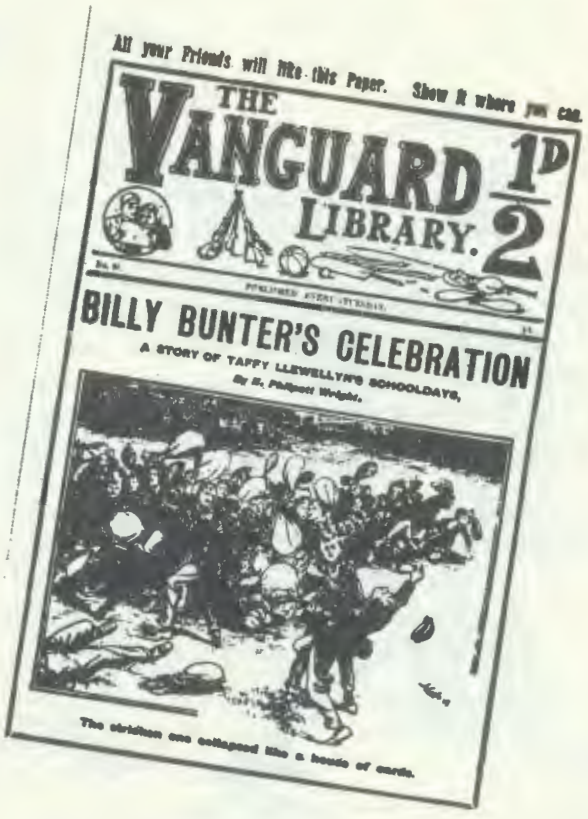
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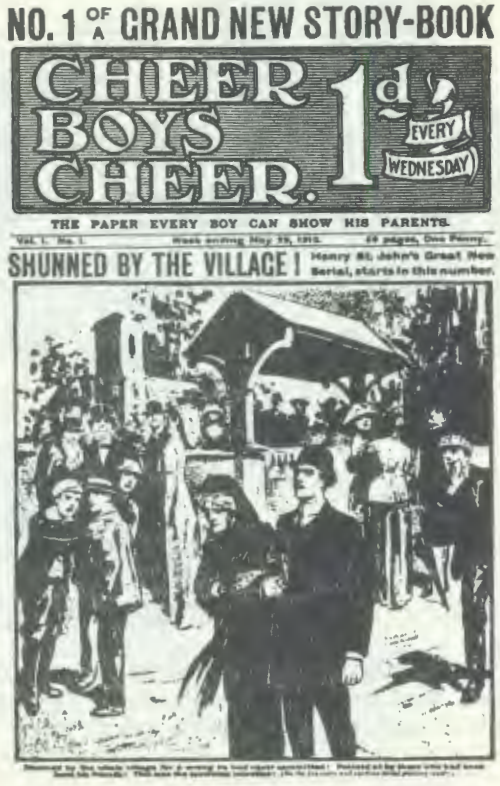
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PRICE ONE HALFPENNY

Just Thomas Henry....

by BRIAN DOYLE

Around 1950, artist Thomas Henry - who illustrated all the much-loved WILLIAM books by Richmal Crompton, from the first in 1922 (and before that in their original form in HAPPY MAGAZINE) up to the 34th in 1964 (when he died whilst working on a William drawing), which was completed by Henry Ford, who also illustrated the remaining titles in the series - was asked by publishers Newnes to 'modernise' his original pictures which, they felt, smacked too much of the 1920's and might 'date' them in the eyes of young contemporary readers. He accordingly re-drew his illustrations for the first few titles in the popular series.

It is amusing and fascinating to compare Henry's original drawings with his later ones. Here are some examples ...

" WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE MOST IN THE WORLD ? " HE SAID SUDDENLY. " WHITE RATS ! " SAID WILLIAM WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION.

"WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE MOST IN THE WORLD?" HE SAID SUDDENLY. "WHITE RATS!" SAID WILLIAM WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION.

WILLIAM FELT THE FIRST DART OF THE LITTLE BLIND GOD. HE BLUSHED AND SIMPERED.

WILLIAM FELT THE FIRST DART OF THE LITTLE BLIND GOD. HE BLUSHED AND SIMPERED.

MRS. DE VERE CARTER PRESSED WILLIAM'S HEAD TO HER BOSOM.

MRS. DE VERE CARTER PRESSED WILLIAM'S HEAD TO HER BOSOM.

H. A. Hinton and Children's Pictorial

by W. O. G. LOFTS

I was always under the impression until quite recently, that the controversal editor H. A. Hinton founded SCHOOL & SPORT immediately after his departure from the MAGNET & GEM in 1921. Later still he edited a Children's Newspaper, and finally Dalton's Weekly at the time of his sudden death in a rail accident in 1945. The Children's Newspaper editorship actually came first, and, when he moved over from Amalgamated Press to Odhams a rival publisher, who no doubt thought it a great feather in their cap to gain such an important experienced, and famous editor. Curiously, it was about this time that the great man himself, Charles Hamilton (and in answer to a query of mine in post-war years) told me that this reminded him of the time in the early twenties, when he nearly broke away from Fleetway House to write for Odhams the Long Acre firm.

Odhams had no doubt their eyes on the lucrative boys market, and Hinton was the ideal man to reap the rich rewards. So on the 12th March, 1921, a completely new style newspaper format juvenile paper hit the bookstalls entitled CHILDREN'S ZOO PICTORIAL, its contents as the title suggests dealing with all aspects to pets, wild animals, and general zoo topics. In the opening number was a photograph of Hinton looking distinguished as he did in the BOYS' FRIEND when in a short editorial chat he stated ...

Your Editor
The Man with More
than a million
Friends

"A million friends? It sounds a lot, but since for years he conducted that popular group of school weeklies, wherein appear the adventures of such characters as Harry Wharton, Tom Merry, Jimmy Silver, Billy Bunter, and Bob Cherry, he feels he is on safe ground in saying that he has more than a million friends ...
Tell your friends about the Zoo Pictorial and by whom it is edited. That is all!"

Quite plainly Hinton wanted to poach his old readers from The Magnet & Gem, as he later wrote similar editorials in School & Sport.

Curiously, also in the first issue were three clever picture puzzles drawn in the unmistakable style of C. H. Chapman the Magnet artist. Whether these were original, or spare copy that Hinton had taken with him on his departure from Fleetway House, and then conveniently used in his new paper is not known. Certainly this is the only contribution I have ever seen from Mr. Chapman outside his A. P. scope since his Ally Sloper days. At least the most interesting features in Zoo Pictorial were the

serials - all dealing with the boy and girl castaway on the desert island theme. Titles were "The Island School" and "Cloud Island" by "Duncan Fear" whom I may suspect as being "Duncan Storm" (Gilbert Floyd) a friend of Hinton's and famous for his Bombay Castle tales in the Boys' Friend, though an expert on his style could tell for sure. Another serial on the same theme being "Lost Treasure" by Michael Pendennis.

Children's Zoo Pictorial ran for thirty-one issues, was then renamed BOYS' PICTORIAL. Another twenty-four issues saw it renamed yet again to SPORTS PICTORIAL when after a run of ten weeks it closed down altogether. Hinton had long left the firm by this time, no doubt seeing the writing on the wall for a rather dull uninspiring paper, and was preparing his own boys' paper, SCHOOL & SPORT, and fresh details of this venture never fail to interest readers, and new ones are really fascinating.

Hinton went into partnership with a Charles Richard Scriven and the editorial office - if one can call it that, was at 154 Fleet Street. One small dingy room with Hinton the sole staff! A would be contributor cir. 1921 can recall visiting him there, and seeing Hinton sitting on a packing case with no furniture in the room. Smoking a cigar Hinton airily explained the bare surroundings, with an explanation 'that the furniture was on its way' and that 'staff was being recruited and they were moving to more luxurious offices, as soon as they had got under way'. Alas for Hinton, his words as usual were bigger than his actions. SCHOOL & SPORT lost £5,000 and creditors were trying to hunt Scarlet Pimperal Hinton for years after.

* *

Bill Wright wishes Christmas good cheer to all, with special thanks to Eric Fayne, Mary, Bert, Jack, Norman, Alan and Laurel ... all interesting ephemera connected with the cinema(s) of Great Britain still avidly sought. Welcome trade in Film Mags. All dates, drop a line to

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

= =

WANTED to purchase - Black Box Series, Silverson Series, Gem 1939, for Exchange Gold Hawke Series, St. Jim's Stories by Martin Clifford, No's. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11. Hard backs - Captains Of Dukes by Hylton Cleaver, All Clear by Gunby Hadath. Hotspur Book for Boys, 1942-43.

MR. C. OLIVER

34 BELFIELD AVENUE, MAY BANK, NEWCASTLE, STAFFS.

= =

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all O.B.B.C. Friends! STILL WANTED: B.F.L. 457 - "Soldiers Of Fortune".

IAN BENNETT, 20 FREWEN DRIVE, SAPCOTE, LEICESTER.

The Guns they Used -

AN ASPECT OF THE ADVENTURE STORY

by W. T. THURBON

One of the usual attributes of the hero of the adventure story is weapon mastery - whether bow of Robin Hood, sword of D'Artagnan, rifle of Alan Quatermain, or the armoury of 007.

Early Victorian adventure story heroes usually seemed to be armed with muzzle loading guns, and indeed it was not until the second half of the 19th century that the breech loader really developed, although as early as the American War of Independence Major Ferguson had invented an excellent breech loader, which Louis L'Amour has used as the basis of a good "Western".

It was Samuel Colt with his famous pistol who first introduced the idea of mass production into the gunsmith's trade, when his revolver, after a first comparative failure, made its name in the U.S.-Mexican War. Colt not only invented the assembly line for his firearms, he was also a master of publicity, and the name of Colt dominated the West, as later did Winchester when they publicised the Winchester 73 as "the gun that won the West". Although the idea of revolving firearms dates back several centuries it was Colt of whom it was said "he found the pistol a single shot weapon and made it a six-shooter" (usually in fact a five-shooter, for the wise man rested his hammer on a single empty chamber). So the early writers of "western" stories thought in terms of the Colt "Peacemaker" and the Winchester. (Writers like John Edson know better and introduce into their stories a variety of firearms, Sharps, Spencers, Henry rifles, and Smith and Wesson, Le Mat, Webley and other revolvers.)

Apart from the Winchester-Colt publicity the second influence on the adventure story writers for the boys' papers was Rider Haggard, especially in "King Solomon's Mines". That list in the early chapters beginning "three heavy breech-loading double eight elephant" rifles, and continuing to the "three winchester rifles, not carbines" and the colt revolvers, is noticeable in a great number of pre-1914 adventure stories, particularly those of Cecil Hayter and Reginald Wray.

The Victorian story tellers of the eighties and nineties were generally much out of date over their arms - Clark Hook, originally a Victorian writer, although destined to become one of the Harmsworth leading writers before the rise of Charles Hamilton, showed the Victorian influence in his early Jack, Sam & Pete stories of 1903. He originally armed the comrades with single shot rifles, although soon switching to repeating rifles, and spoke consistently of "rifle balls".

Until 1914 the Winchester seems the most frequently named rifle; Robert Leighton in "Kiddie of the Camp" in "The Scout" of c. 1911, correctly armed his Pony Express hero with a Winchester: "Tom watched him as he flitted from trunk to trunk, waiting a chance to bring him down with a shot from his winchester." Cecil Hayter

introduce the Winchester frequently into his stories: especially the "Lobangu" tales in the Union Jack:
In U.J. No. 171, there is a reference to "Winchesters"; in 206, Sexton Blake, Whaler. Blake and his party take with them when escaping from the whaling ship four martini rifles from the ship's armoury, because the ship has no ammunition for their "two sixty guinea expresses and three Winchester repeaters". Incidentally the artist illustrating this story draws a very clear picture of Tinker with a Martini. In No. 404, "The Flying Column", Blake and Tinker are fighting a rearguard action - "The two Winchesters chattered and rippled". They also have with them weapons captured from the pursuing slavers "heavier calibre than their own, but good weapons of the magazine type." In No. 504, "The Long Trail" the guide Jose carries, and uses a Winchester, "The little man swung round on his heel, raised the Winchester and fired, all in the same fraction of a second." Correctly Hayter says that Jose is using a "heavy .450 bullet with a long cartridge". This story owed much to Conan Doyle's "Lost World" and something to "Alan Quatermain". In this tale Blake and his party in general seem to be using long Lee Enfields, since Lobangu speaks of "My rifle that speaks ten times" and the artist certainly shows a long bolt action rifle. In No. 592, a first war tale, the type of rifle is not referred to in the story, but the artist has drawn the long Lee Enfield. In No. 696 "Treasure of Sonora", soldiers of an unnamed South American republic are using old Manlichers. In number 752, again a Great War tale, Blake and his party are opposed to a gang of Germans in Africa. Blake is under fire "Kaufmann was spotting him through a pair of binoculars and ten to one he was using one of the new Boche sniping rifles with an opthalmic sight and the new alternating lens". Later in the same story Trott, a Mining Engineer in Blake's party is getting reading to shoot; "Then he tried his lock action a couple of times, easing down the hammer with his thumb"; presumably Trott was using a Savage or a Winchester. In U.J. 795, of January 1919, Sir Richard Loosley and Blake are in China, and are using "modern express rifles and Winchesters". Hayter was very good at giving verisimitude to his stories by his asides, showing "expertise" of the kind that Ian Fleming did in his James Bond stories. There is a good example of this in "The Moon of the East" (U.J. 795) where Blake is made to refer to "Morrison and Hart". Dr. Morrison was the "Times" correspondent in China for many years and was wounded during the Boxer siege of the Legations: Hart was for many years head of the Chinese customs. In an early story of the Great War, Blake and the Hon. John Lawless find a secret store of German Mauser rifles hidden on a Medway Island. For pistols Hayter in his early tales gave Blake a Smith and Wesson; later he armed them with automatic pistols.

As a final Blake contribution to our armoury there is a fine piece of nostalgia for a "gun buff", in S.B. Library, 5th series, No. 14, "The case of the Stag at Bay", by Wilfred McNielly. The scene is the gunroom of a Scottish castle, where Blake is staying and a murder has been committed: "There were, of course, a number of shot guns, 12 bore for the most part, though there was one massive old eight bore, single barrelled hammer gun for ducks and geese. They were good guns. Purdeys, Cogswells, and a pair by Blake's own client ... But Blake only glanced briefly at the guns, the rifles were what interested him. As he had expected, most of them were old double barrelled expresses, better equipped to stop an elephant in its tracks than a deer. But there were modern rifles as well; Mannlichers, Mausers, Remingtons,

Harrington and Richards, Savage U.S.A., apart from custom made small bore weapons." Here is an author who knows his subject. Incidentally the murder weapon proved to be an icicle shot from a crossbow!

To return to Hayter, his story "The Red (or Ruby) Scarab", published several times in Pluck, as well as in the B.F.L., again owes much to Rider Haggard. The party led by Crawley Stern, a character who appeared in one or two Hayter pre-1914 tales, appear to have been armed with Winchesters. In a fight with Arabs, Eric, the hero, works the lever of his rifle, and then, hard pressed with an empty magazine "gave back a pace, thrusting in new shells with fevered fingers; thirteen, fourteen, the spring of the magazine closed with a click", pretty clearly a Winchester. In a serial in the 1914 "Boys' Friend", "Through Unknown Africa", introducing Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu Sir Richard has a different rifle from the Winchester: "Sir Richard snatched up his Lee Metford and fired quickly at point blank range, heedless of the arrows that came flicking past him." He is looking (as so often in these stories) for a lost friend, and has taken refuge in a cave: "There were a pile of empty and discoloured brass cartridge cases on the ground near the cave mouth, and a shattered Marlin rifle had been tossed in a corner, the barrel bent and the stock splintered into bits". Sir Richard recognises his friends rifle. "He always did swear by the Marlin with its side ejector." Incidentally the only other reference to a Marlin that I recall is from a "Chums" story of the 1920's. Incidentally, also, in a Chums serial of the 1920's, "Scouts of the Baghdad Patrol", both author and artist make it clear that the lads are using S.M.L.E's. The Mannlicher was the rifle used by the heroes of a very good pre-1914 "Boys' Journal" serial, "The Sunstone".

Curiously enough, the well-known Remington is not often mentioned; but in a serial by Gordon Stables in Vol. 12 of the B.O.P., No. 584, dated 22 March, 1890, occurs the passage, "A minute after, the order to fix bayonets was given - every rifle we had was a Remington".

Colt not only invented his revolver; he also developed a revolving carbine. This was used by the early Texas Rangers, but Trevelyan says it was used by Garribaldi and discarded, because it leaked fire at the breech. However, Henty armed the heroes of his first story, "Out on the Pampas" with Colt's carbine; and both Clarence Mulford in "Beckoning Trails" and John Edson have used it in "westerns".

Reginald Wray knew his rifles; he also knew his Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle's "Lost World"! In the series of Red Indian stories in "Pluck" in 1912 and 13, beginning with the "Queen of the Prairies" serial, when a wagon train, crossing the prairies is attacked by Indians we are told that the "quick firing Winchester was only just beginning to replace the clumsy muzzle loader". Wray remained faithful to the Winchester. In a good serial in the 1915 "Chuckles", "Phantom Gold" appears the passage "bitterly he regretted not having armed himself with one of the service pattern .303 rifles, of which the expedition possessed two --- the Winchester with which the explorers had been armed by his advice possessed greater stopping power at the comparatively short distance at which they would most often be required." The point of the incident being that a cartridge jammed in the Winchester when Lord Algernon Manley (a character based on Doyle's "Lord John Ruxton" - was firing at a treacherous Arab guide who escapes before the jam is cleared. In a later scene - some-

what obviously "lifted" from Rider Haggard's "Queen Sheba's Ring" - two of the party are trapped in a lion pit, and their rescuers are led by the Professor armed with an elephant gun firing explosive bullets.

In those pre-1914 war and invasion stories by "John Tregellis" and F. St. Mars, we do not hear much about the rifles, evidently the authors expected the readers to realise the soldiers had service rifles. Generally 'John Tregellis's' armies in "Britain at Bay" and its sequels, so often reprinted in the Boys' Friend, the B.F.L., the "Gem" and the "Marvel" were Boer War Armies; Tregellis being mainly interested in machine guns, maxims and "pom-poms". Stephen Villiers in the "Britain at Bay" series uses a Martini carbine, and once Tregellis slips into referring to a Martini "repeater" - an error repeated many years later in an article on Custer's disaster in "History Today" when by error Henry Repeaters were referred to as "Martini Henry's". In the later "Kaiser or King" series one of the boy scout heroes is firing a heavy service rifle "that jerked back his shoulder at each shot" - it looks as if Tregellis had confused the kick of the Martini with that of a Lee Enfield. F. St. Mars referred to the Mauser. In the Pluck serial, "Britain's Defender" we read "Quite slowly Reggie raised the neat, lean Mauser, but very quickly he aimed. There was a flash, a quick smacking report, a faint haze about the muzzle of the rifle as Reggie lowered it, and the German fell flat on his face." Further in the stories we find Reggie Horton using a Webley Automatic pistol, and in "Pluck" No. 275, "The War Maker's Plot" Reggie and his friend obtain from a private armoury "One Winchester .303 repeater each" - I am not sure that Winchester ever made any rifles in that calibre! Again in Pluck 295, Albanian pirates are attacking a stranded liner; "Martini Henry rifles if I know anything" gasped Reggie, "switch the searchlight on there."

To turn again to Henty, the hero of "By Sheer Pluck" is advised "Now you want a revolver, a Winchester repeating carbine, and a shot gun."

In the early "Scouts", generally speaking, the rifles were both described and drawn accurately (the only bad error I recall is the illustration to a short story in 1913, the artist illustrating an incident when "The Lee Metfords rattled out a blind aim", makes his rifles look more like Martinis with a double breech - perhaps he had tried the liquid counterpart. A serial by Percy F. Westerman in 1913, "Building the Empire", set on the North West Frontier, showed Tribesmen using black power Martinis; both the Martinis and the service Rifles of the Ghurka's are drawn very accurately. The artists who illustrated a number of true stories by soldiers, frontiersmen, etc., drew the rifles, whether Lee Enfield, Martini or sporting rifles with much care and accuracy. Certainly in a story in 1909, by Carr Thompson, the hero is hunting with "a heavy snider sporting rifle", very much an anachronism, but this was an exception. On the cover of the issue for 22 April, 1916, a character is carrying a "sporting Martini", and another cover later showed a very good drawing of a Winchester. In the issue for 20 May, 1916, in a story by Westerman, the hero "pointed to a couple of sporting .303 Lee Enfields with Magazines to take five cartridges", and in a story of the first Boer War in the issue for 3 June, 1916, we are told the Boers were extremely well armed "many had double express rifles". After 1915 the S.M.L.E. was, as one would expect, drawn very accurately.

An interesting problem is what rifles did Jack, Sam & Pete use? Sam, of

course, is the pattern hero of the adventure story; like Fennimore Cooper's "Hawkeye" or Robin Hood ("I will notch his shaft for him, however," replied Locksley (Robin Hood in "Ivanhoe"). And letting fly his arrow with a little more precaution than before, it lighted right upon that of his competitor, which it split in shivers.) he never misses his aim. In the very early J.S. & P. stories the comrades used single shot rifles (B. F. L. 79, "Pete's Strange Expedition", Sam warns attacking soldiers 'I have twelve shots in my brace of revolvers and one in my rifle'), but very soon they are using repeating rifles. (B. F. L. 652, "Bandits of the Bush" - 'You do the firing Sam' said Jack, 'when your magazine is empty I will hand you my rifle'.) The early repeating rifles the comrades carried were six shot repeaters, and Clark Hook frequently referred to Sam emptying the "six chambers" of his rifles. In the early Halfpenny Marvel, "The Deathless Horseman" after firing one shot Sam fires "the remaining five chambers of his rifle." In the very late stories the comrades used magazine rifles. J. A. Cummings illustrated most of the tales until his death in 1919; although he was a good illustrator, with a gift for drawing pictures of "far away places with strange souding names" his guns were very often very poorly drawn. In the cover picture of Marvel 456 of 1916, Algy is clearly working the bolt of his rifle, but the rifles are very heavy in outline, more like American automatic shotguns.

The comrades in the course of their travels shot most varieties of game, including both soft and thick skinned dangerous game. One of the great controversies among big game hunters has been whether they should use high velocity small calibre or big, very often double rifles. Some of Africa's best big game shots preferred .256 or .375 calibre rifles. Others have called these small calibre weapons suicide guns. But there can be no doubt that the comrades belonged to the small calibre school, for in B. F. L. No. 92, "The Call of the South" where the comrades are hunting elephants, "Then the comrades repeating rifles rang out. Again and again they fired, for their bullets were small for such game."

An interesting problem in detection is posed by the comrades early "repeating rifles". Clark Hook has been described as a cheerful man, who cared little for the probabilities, and doubtless referred to "six chambered rifles" because revolvers had six chambers - but to treat the problem as a real one for the moment. Is there a rifle that meets the requirements? The only real rifle that can be described as "six-chambered" is Colts revolving carbine; but this was obsolete by, or soon after the American Civil War. Apart from the single or double rifles, the most powerful rifles until recently were bolt action. But until the great war the Americans, and Sam was an American, disliked bolt actions. Among slide and lever action rifles few were strong enough to tackle dangerous African game; of the few, one seems to suit our problem. In the late 1890's Savage introduced their high power "pattern 99", capable of using a high power cartridge, and with a six shot spool magazine (Clark Hook's "chambers"). Until around 1914 they switched to bolt action rifles presumably Jack, Sam & Pete used the Savage; a rifle still being recently manufactured.

Have we wasted time on these thoughts: perhaps? But to look back through the misty years to the days of our youth; to see again those pictures conjured up of veldt and prairie, of mountain and forest, and to see again in imagination the glint of sunlight on rifle barrels, is to live once more for a few moments in that glorious

kingdom when we, too, spurred our horses and carried our guns and were at one with the heroes of our stories in the golden days of youthful dreams.

* *

GREETINGS to the Editor, Staff, and all Readers. Could anyone help with titles of Irish Smuggling Story in "Sunday People", 1912; and School Story (hard back); also Smugglers, commences, "It was a hot sultry day in July - ." O.B.B. given for thanks.

7 ASH TERRACE, ASHMORE GREEN, NEWBURY, RG16 9EU.

= =

William books wanted (paper jacket essential), "Still William", "The Fourth", "In Trouble", "Happy Days".

HUGHES, 160 CHARTERS TOWERS ROAD

HERMIT PARK, TOWNSVILLE, AUSTRALIA 4812

= =

WANTED: C.D's 1, 3A, 16. Greetings to all friends.

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

= =

STILL WANTED BADLY: In top condition, your price paid, or generous swap of plenty of Hamiltonia, etc. Magnet 1117, 1125-26, 1129, 1131, 1133-36, 1184, 1190-94. Gems 600, 720, 721, 722, 816, 822, 839, 935, 936, 952, 953, 1020, 1034, 1035. My copy back to you if needed. Christmas best wishes to all readers from Golden Hours Club, especially Bill Lofts, Ben Whiter, Ron Hodgson, and, of course, our Editor.

SYD SMYTH, 1 BRANDON ST., CLOVELLY, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.

= =

A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year to our worthy Editor and all Old Boys everywhere is the wish of STUART WHITEHEAD

12 WELLS RD., FAKENHAM, NORFOLK.

P.S. Still looking for early Magnets, Gems, etc.

= =

WANTED: 1950's comics. WANTED/FOR SALE: Anything Sherlock Holmes! (Free lists available.)

HERTZBERG, SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL.

= =

WANTED: Scoops, Nos. 5,10,11,12,16,18,19,20.

DALTON, 8 OXFORD ROW, LEEDS LS1 3BD.

THE BOY WITH A LANTERN

BY ERIC FAYNE

Mr. Buddle stopped suddenly.

Pilgrim and Thornton, of the Lower Fourth at Slade, who had been walking with their form-master, stopped also, and waited.

The remaining twenty members of the Lower Fourth, who had been walking some distance ahead, followed the example of Felix, and kept on walking.

Mr. Buddle had taken his Form, that afternoon, to a matinee performance at the Palace Theatre in Plymouth. They had watched the Old Vic Players in "Julius Caesar", and had enjoyed it. A Friday afternoon at the theatre was decidedly an improvement on a Friday afternoon in class.

When they left the Palace, the December dusk had fallen. It was bitterly cold, and the stars looked like icy fragments in the clear sky above. The streets of Plymouth were decorated with festoons of coloured lights arranged round the lamp-posts, indicative of the nearness of Christmas. The shops, brightly dressed and illuminated to attract the Christmas trade, looked gay and inviting.

Now Mr. Buddle's party was on the way to the railway station, not hurrying as there was plenty of time to catch a train back to Everslade, the station for Slade.

As the party passed along Princes Street in Plymouth, something in a shop window caught Mr. Buddle's eye, and it was this which caused the

form-master to stop suddenly.

He spoke to the two boys who had been walking with him.

"Go on to the station, boys. I will catch you up. You, Pilgrim, will see that there is no horseplay at the station before I join you. If any of you want refreshment at the buffet, you will have ample time. Remember the train leaves at five-thirty."

So Pilgrim and Thornton hurried on to join the rest of their Form, and Mr. Buddle gave his attention to the shop window.

It was an antique shop, small and neat. In the window there were several items; an ormulu clock, a chair which might have been Chippendale, a dinner service which might have been Dresden, a Toby jug, a circular music-stool, a pair of silver nutcrackers, and a gate-legged table. But what had attracted Mr. Buddle's gaze was a smallish picture which stood at the side of the window at the back, almost giving the impression that it had been placed there temporarily while the owner decided where would be the best spot to put it.

The picture struck a chord somewhere in Mr. Buddle's memory. His brow wrinkled as he strove to decide where he had seen it, or something very like it, before.

The background of the picture was a dark blue colour-wash, representing night. White spots over the dark blue made it evident that snow was falling. There was one figure - a schoolboy wearing a school cap, bending forward, a lighted lantern in his right hand. At his feet a dog of some indeterminate breed was scratching at the base of a wall. In the subdued lighting of the shop window, the picture looked eerily three-dimensional.

Mr. Buddle made up his mind. He entered the shop, and a tall man, wearing a smoking jacket and a welcoming smile, came forward.

"Ah, Mr. Buddle, isn't it? It is nice to see you again."

Mr. Buddle loosened the muffler in his neck. He said:

"You have a good memory - Mr. Goffin, isn't it?"

"I always remember my customers, sir." Mr. Goffin rubbed his hands in appreciation. "You bought - let me see - a Boule cabinet, was it not? And I delivered it to you one evening at Slade School. You were pleased with the cabinet, I hope?"

"Very pleased," agreed Mr. Buddle. "That must be over six months ago." He pointed towards the curtain which divided the window display from the shop. "You have a picture in your window, Mr. Goffin. A painting of a boy with a lantern."

"A painting?" Mr. Goffin looked puzzled for a moment. Then his expression became one of comprehension. "Ah, yes, the boy with the lantern and the dog. An unusual combination, is it not? It only came in this morning, and I really popped it into the window out of the way."

The antique dealer moved across to the curtain, and withdrew the picture from its resting place. He adjusted the curtain, and passed the picture to the schoolmaster.

Mr. Buddle took it, and gazed thoughtfully at it. Its dimensions were about 30 inches by 20 inches. The frame was nondescript and narrow. The glass was in need of a wash.

"It's unusual to see a painting glazed," mentioned Mr. Buddle.

"You're thinking of oil paintings", said Mr. Goffin. "That's only a

water-colour. If it got soiled, it could not be cleaned."

"I see what you mean. Do you know who painted it?"

"Not a clue!" confessed Mr. Goffin. "If, as a young master, you are seeking an Old Master, then that painting is not for you." He chuckled at his witticism, and Mr. Buddle smiled politely.

"What are you asking for it?"

The antique dealer shrugged his shoulders.

"It's nothing in particular. To most people the price would be five pounds. To you, Mr. Buddle, two pounds."

Mr. Buddle, wondering what he had done to earn such a stunning reduction, extracted his notecase.

"I cannot remember where I have seen that picture before. It may have been on the cover of a magazine," he said, as Mr. Goffin wrapped up the picture in brown paper, and tied it into a neat parcel.

"Maybe one of your pupils was the model for it," suggested Mr. Goffin. "The boy is wearing a school cap."

Mr. Buddle left the little shop, his parcel under his arm, and hurried down Princes Street to rejoin his boys at the station.

. . . . .

It was nearly a couple of hours later that Mr. Buddle unpacked his parcel in his study. He had safely brought the Lower Fourth back to the school and sent the boys to do their evening preparation.

Now the schoolmaster stood in his study, with the newly acquired picture in his hands. He gazed at it, a puzzled expression on his face. After a few moments he stood the picture at the corner of his mantelpiece, and moved back a few paces to scan it anew. He could see now that it represented the interior of a hut of some kind. The door of the hut was open, and the snow could be seen falling through the dark night outside. The boy, wearing a school cap and a brown overcoat, was bending forward with his lantern, the light from which showed a dog scraping at the base of the wooden wall of the hut.

Mr. Buddle shrugged his shoulders and gave a frosty grunt. It was an appropriate picture for a cold, December evening in the last week of term.

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" called out Mr. Buddle.

One of the young fellows on Mrs. Cleverton's domestic staff looked in. He was smart in his blue suit with its brass buttons.

"There's a Mrs. Wade to see you, sir."

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows.

"Who is Mrs. Wade, Thilthorpe?"

"Never seen her before, sir," said Thilthorpe. "Parmint brought her over from the lodge gates. She's waiting in the hall. Will you see her, sir?"

"I suppose I shall have to," remarked Mr. Buddle, with a sigh.

"She said it was something personal, sir, and she would only keep you a few minutes. Shall I bring her here, sir, or will you see her in the visitors' room?"

Mr. Buddle glanced at his warm electric fire with its comforting glow. He said: "I'll see her here, Thilthorpe."

The young fellow turned to go.

"Thilthorpe, will you please find Meredith of my form - he should be in his own room doing preparation at this time - and tell him that I wish

to speak to him in my study. Tell him to come to me after the lady leaves."

"I'll do that, sir."

Thilthorpe departed, and Mr. Buddle folded up the brown paper which had enclosed his parcel, wound the string round it, and slipped it under the cushion on his armchair.

A minute or two passed, and there was another tap on the door. It opened, and Thilthorpe looked in again.

"Mrs. Wade, sir," he said, and took his departure.

The woman who entered was dark and of average height. She was wearing a coat, which she had unbuttoned revealing a pleated green skirt and a warm black turtle-neck sweater. A knitted little hat of red looked chic, but the general effect was of slight shabbiness. Mr. Buddle was no judge of a lady's age, but, if he had thought about it, he would have assessed her as being on the shady side of thirty.

"Mrs. Wade?"

"I am sorry to trouble you, Mr. Buddle." The voice was husky and nervous. "No, I won't sit down, thank you. I will only keep you a moment."

"Well, Mrs. Wade, how can I help you?"

"It's difficult. You will think me impertinent --" She was ill at ease, and her eyes travelled round the room. They became fixed on the picture of the boy with a lantern which Mr. Buddle had recently placed on the end of his mantelpiece. Mr. Buddle was aware that the picture had caught her attention, and he himself glanced at it.

Mrs. Wade was speaking, and his eyes went back to her.

"This afternoon, Mr. Buddle, you bought a picture in a shop in Plymouth. That picture!" She pointed to the water-colour.

Mr. Buddle was surprised.

"I bought that picture this afternoon, certainly."

Mrs. Wade fumbled with the small handbag she was holding.

"It's so awkward. I feel embarrassed. I want you to let me buy that picture, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle stared at her. He said, in some astonishment:

"If you wanted the picture, Mrs. Wade, why didn't you buy it from the shop? And how did you know that I had bought it?"

"Perhaps I had better sit down." Mrs. Wade sank on to a chair, and breathed heavily. "I must explain the circumstances, and when you know what happened I am sure you will let me have the picture. My brother, several years younger than myself, painted it. He and I were devoted to one another. He was talented, but his work never received the recognition it deserved. He was drowned in a boating accident, and his wife sold off all his paintings. Just by chance I happened to see that one in the antique shop today. It was a favourite of mine. I knew the model for the picture - the young son of a dear friend of mine. So you will see --"

"You knew the model?" Mr. Buddle regarded her thoughtfully. "Then it was not a copied picture?"

Mrs. Wade shook her head.

"My brother always painted from life."

There was a brief silence. Mr. Buddle broke it.

"Why did you not buy the picture when you saw it in the shop, madam?"

Mrs. Wade had previously spoken hesitantly. Now the answer came with more confidence.

"Foolishly I had gone out without any money. I hurried home to get

some. It took me an hour to return to the shop. The dealer told me that it had been sold. He gave me the name and address of the purchaser - your name and address."

Mr. Buddle was a tender-hearted man, but he was not convinced by his visitor's story.

"There was no price on the picture," he said casually. "Mr. Goffin did not tell me that he had a prospective purchaser, yet I presume that you enquired the price yourself, Mrs. Wade. It was £2. Why didn't you ask Mr. Goffin to reserve it for you while you went home for your money?"

Mrs. Wade flushed. There was an almost imperceptible pause before she answered.

"I did. He told me the price was £2, and he promised to keep the picture for me, but when I got back he had sold it to you. I was very upset."

"I see."

Uncertain what to do, Mr. Buddle turned and regarded the picture again, as though seeking an answer there to his problem.

Mrs. Wade said: "Naturally I do not expect you to sell me the picture for what you paid for it." She opened her handbag. "I am willing to pay £5 for it."

"Are you, indeed?" murmured Mr. Buddle. "I bought the picture because I wanted it. It is not for sale."

Mrs. Wade rose to her feet.

"The picture can be of no real value to you, Mr. Buddle. My brother was gifted, but he was not well known. To me it has a high sentimental value, that is all."

Mr. Buddle stood in silence. Once more he turned his gaze on the boy with the lantern.

Mrs. Wade said, impetuously: "I do not haggle over the price. I will give you £10 for the picture."

The schoolmaster turned to her.

"Ah, that alters matters."

She spoke eagerly - too eagerly.

"Then you will let me have the picture?" She fumbles in her handbag.

Mr. Buddle spoke quietly.

"No, Mrs. Wade, I will not let you have the picture. It is not for sale. I will ring for a servant to see you to the main gates."

Mrs. Wade shut her handbag with a snap.

"That is not necessary. I can find my way easily." She turned to the door. Mr. Buddle moved across quickly, and opened it for her. She was pale, and trembling slightly. She said: "Will you reconsider the matter? Will you be kind and generous? It means so much to me -"

"The picture is not for sale," repeated Mr. Buddle, feeling despicable.

Her eyes - smoky grey eyes, as he suddenly noticed - filled with tears.

"You are a kind man. You will change your mind. I will ring you tomorrow."

"Good-night, Mrs. Wade!" said Mr. Buddle.

After she had gone, Mr. Buddle stood for some moments, his face troubled. He came out of his reverie as there was a tap on the door, and Meredith of the Lower Fourth looked in.

"You sent for me, sir?"

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"Come in, Meredith. Close the door." Meredith did as he was bid, and waited politely.

Mr. Buddle indicated the picture on the mantelpiece.

"I bought that picture in Plymouth this afternoon, Meredith. It seemed to ring a bell in my memory. Does it mean anything to you?"

Meredith regarded the picture.

A second or two passed as he studied it. He turned to his form-master, surprise in his eyes.

"Surely it's a Gem cover, sir?"

Mr. Buddle nodded in satisfaction.

"You recognise it as a picture from a paper in one of your father's volumes? I thought the same, though I could not place it exactly."

"It's a Gem cover all right, sir," said Meredith. "Could I look at it closer, sir?"

Mr. Buddle handed the picture to the boy, and Meredith placed it on the table and examined it.

"It's a Christmas Double Number, sir, I'm sure. The title will come to me in a moment." He ran his fingers through his flaxen hair. "It's a Warwick Reynolds picture, sir, so it must have been in the war period. Reynolds took Macdonald's place, while Mac was away at the war." He paused, and Mr. Buddle watched him. Meredith gave a chirp. "I've got it now, sir. I fancy it was the story where Outram went back to St. Jim's. And you saw the picture and remembered it, too. Oh, sir --"

Mr. Buddle coughed.

"I felt that I had seen that picture somewhere in one of your father's books, Meredith. So I bought it --"

"It can't be the actual picture, can it, sir? But it's a wonderful copy."

"It is well-painted," admitted Mr. Buddle. He smiled graciously. "Well, that is all, Meredith. Good-night, my boy!"

Meredith turned to the door, but he paused. He said, diffidently: "That lady who was with you before I came in, sir. I thought I recognised her."

Mr. Buddle regarded his hopeful pupil curiously.

"Oh, indeed? You mean Mrs. Wade!"

"Mrs. Wade? No, that wasn't her name, sir. I thought it was Miss Stone, who was my father's private secretary a couple of years ago. I haven't seen her since that time, of course."

"Miss Stone might have married a Mr. Wade in two years, Meredith. She had a brother who was an artist. In fact, Mrs. Wade says that he painted that picture of the boy with the lantern."

Meredith looked surprised.

"Warwick Reynolds painted the original of that picture, sir. I suppose her brother might have copied it."

"Possibly!" admitted Mr. Buddle.

"I remember that Miss Stone was an artist herself, sir, but I never knew she had a brother. Of course, I never knew her very well. I was only a lad at the time."

Mr. Buddle's lips twitched.

"A coincidence, I expect, Meredith. One person often reminds us of another. You may go, Meredith."

And Meredith went.

. . . . .

There was a disturbance in the night. Mr. Buddle, who was a light sleeper, awoke to the sound of voices in Masters' Corridor. He switched on his bedside light, and looked at his clock. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning.

Two men were talking in the corridor near his study door. He rose, slipped on his dressing gown, and walked from his bedroom into the adjoining study. He opened the door and looked out.

The corridor light was burning, and Mr. Buddle observed two of his colleagues, Mr. Crathie, the science

master, and Mr. Drayne, the master of the Third Form. Both were clad in pyjamas.

Mr. Crathie occupied the next room to Mr. Buddle, and on Mr. Crathie's other side was Mr. Drayne's bed-sittingroom.

"Is anything the matter?" enquired Mr. Buddle.

The two masters turned to him. Mr. Crathie was flustered and upset, and Mr. Drayne looked irritated.

"A boy came into my room to play tricks on me," said Mr. Crathie. "I shouted at him, and he took himself off."

Mr. Buddle compressed his lips. Mr. Crathie was a weak disciplinarian. His science classes took advantage of that weakness, but really this, in the middle of the night, was the limit.

"Mr. Crathie's shouting out woke me up," said Mr. Drayne, disagreeably.

"I have told you I am sorry," said Mr. Crathie with dignity.

With a sniff, Mr. Drayne stalked down the corridor, entered his own room, and closed the door. Had it been daytime, he would possibly have slammed it.

"Did you see who the boy was?" asked Mr. Buddle.

"I did not. I woke to hear him fiddling round in my room. It was not very dark - there is almost a full moon, though it was cloudy. I saw his outline against my window. I fancy it was a senior boy, though it might have been a big junior. I shouted, and he cleared out quickly. Lucky that I woke up. There's no telling what tricks he would have played in my room."

"Very odd altogether," observed Mr. Buddle. "You had better ask Antrobus to set up an enquiry tomorrow. I advise you to lock your door in future."

"I will!" said Mr. Crathie earnestly. "Good-night, Mr. Buddle."

"It's morning," returned Mr. Buddle tartly.

He went back to bed with cold feet, and it was some time before he slept again.

At breakfast, the talk at the staff table, led by Mr. Crathie, was mainly on the subject of the night invasion of the science master's room by some senior, or large junior, unknown. Mr. Buddle did not join in. There was some contemptuous chuckling among members of the staff.

"It is a pity when a master cannot win the respect of his boys," commented Mr. Greenleaf as he cracked his second egg.

"He doesn't clout them enough," remarked Mr. Crayford, the Games Master.

In the midst of it all Mr. Buddle heard Mr. Crathie's piping voice.

"The boy took my Aunt Mary's portrait from my mantelpiece. Why on earth should any boy want to purloin my aunt's picture?"

Mr. Crayford gave a loud laugh.

"You'll find it pinned on the notice-board in the hall with a pipe and a moustache added to it in ink," he suggested.

After breakfast, Mr. Buddle sought out Mr. Crathie in the latter's study.

"Did I hear you say that your night intruder took a picture from your mantelpiece?" asked Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Crathie regarded his older colleague dolefully.

"Indeed, yes, Mr. Buddle. I am most distressed about it, and I hope I will get it back undamaged. My aunt had her portrait painted by Dolphin of Kensington. When she visits me she always expects to see

her portrait in evidence. I have certain future hopes of my aunt, Mr. Buddle. I am her favourite nephew --"

Mr. Buddle interrupted him.

"How large is this picture of your aunt?"

Mr. Crathie spread his hands apart to indicate a width.

"About so large! My aunt had it framed and gave it me for my birthday, together with a cheque. Naturally, I valued the picture more than the cheque. And now it has been taken."

"And it stood on your mantelpiece?"

"It did! Over there!"

Mr. Buddle stood in thought. He said at last:

"You are certain it was a senior boy?"

"I'm not certain of anything. I only saw a shadow in the moonlight."

"Could it have been a man?"

"A man?" Mr. Crathie looked surprised. "No member of the domestic staff would come into our corridor in the middle of the night, and it would be absurd to imagine that a master would play such a trick. Crayford is fool enough, but his room adjoins the gymnasium and is not in the School House at all."

"I am not suggesting it was a Slade master," said Mr. Buddle, impatiently. "Could it have been an intruder from outside the school altogether?"

"You mean - a burglar - in my bedroom?" Mr. Crathie's eyes opened wide. "Nobody from outside the school could get in, surely? And why should a burglar want to steal my Aunt Mary?"

Mr. Buddle had no ready answer for that one.

He said: "A man could scale the school walls. Windows on the lower floor are not always kept fastened, and, in any case, a determined man could effect an entry if he so wished. He might even have climbed the ivy to your window --"

Mr. Crathie looked incredulous.

"I have heard of ivy being climbed," went on Mr. Buddle, with fond memories of a Gem story in which a boy climbed the ivy and fell from it. He added: "I think you should mention the matter to the Headmaster, Mr. Crathie."

Mr. Crathie sniffed.

"Really, Mr. Buddle, it's absurd. Mr. Scarlet would be most sarcastic if I suggested to him that a burglar climbed the ivy to my room in order to steal my aunt's picture."

"The burglar might have thought he was getting something else in the dark, especially as you seem to have disturbed him."

"Getting what?" demanded Mr. Crathie.

"I hardly know," confessed Mr. Buddle. "He might have thought he was getting a picture of a boy with a lantern."

"I'm due in class," snapped Mr. Crathie. "And this is no subject for joking, Mr. Buddle."

. . . . .

Saturday was a half-holiday at Slade. Mr. Buddle had only one teaching session that morning, an hour which did not commence till half-past ten. With time on his hands, he returned to his own study, and took down the picture of the boy with the lantern. He sat at his table, the picture before him.

After a while, he turned the picture over. The frame had brown paper pasted carefully over the back to prevent the penetration of dust.

Carefully, with a knife, he peeled the brown paper away. This disclosed a sheet of brown cardboard which he hooked out. He turned it over in his hands. He thought of a hidden message written on the card; the plan to a buried fortune, perhaps. After all, Tom Merry had once come on a map to a concealed treasure. But that was fiction. Still, fact was stranger than fiction, according to all accounts.

But there was nothing on the card. It was grubby, but there was nothing remotely resembling a map or a message of any sort. Mr. Buddle was disappointed. He was a romantic at heart. There was nothing to be found in the backing of the picture. Not even a Will, bequeathing a large sum to a missing heir.

Now he drew out the picture. It was a piece of canvas. He turned it over. Though the close-up view was not so striking, it still had an appeal beyond that link with the Gem which had occurred to Mr. Buddle when his eyes had first lighted on it the evening before in Mr. Goffin's shop.

Mr. Buddle had no artistic gifts, but he knew what he liked. The boy in the picture, in his overcoat, the lantern held low, as the dog scraped at the base of the wooden wall of the hut, had an elusive appeal.

Again Mr. Buddle reversed the picture, and scanned the back. He remembered a story in which a valuable stamp had been stolen and hidden beneath the paper on the wall of a schoolboy's study. Mr. Buddle smiled wryly. The back of the canvas was smeared with old paint, but obviously no stamp of any kind was hidden there.

He rose, leaving the picture on the table. For a while he stood at his window, gazing out into the misty quadrangle. Then he took up a telephone directory from his desk, and looked up the number of Mr. Goffin's shop in Plymouth.

In a couple of minutes he was speaking to the antique dealer.

"Ah, Mr. Buddle," came the voice of Mr. Goffin over the wire. "What can I do you for this morning? You are pleased with the picture you bought, I hope?"

"Thank you, yes," said Mr. Buddle. "Did you give my name and address to a Mrs. Wade last evening?"

"I gave your name and address to a lady - I didn't know her name." There was a slight change in the facetious tone. "No harm done, I hope. She wished to buy the picture. I told her it was sold. She asked me who had bought it - she was persistent - and so --"

Mr. Buddle cut in.

"It did not matter. She came to me, but I did not sell her the picture. Had you seen the lady in your shop earlier, and promised to keep the picture for her?"

"Oh, no! I had never seen her till she came in my shop just before I closed last evening."

"So you gave her my name and address as the purchaser?"

"Yes, I did. She seemed so extravagantly upset when I told her it had been sold less than an hour earlier --

"I think you had better tell me from whom you yourself purchased the picture," said Mr. Buddle.

There was a pause.

"I don't feel inclined to do that, Mr. Buddle," came Mr. Goffin's voice. "Where I obtain my items for sale is my own business."

"I thought," hinted Mr. Buddle gently, "that you might prefer to give me the information rather than be

obliged to disclose it to the police."

"The police!" ejaculated Mr. Goffin, and Mr. Buddle smiled involuntarily.

"I have reason to believe," said Mr. Buddle smoothly, "that a burglar broke into the school last night with the intention of stealing my picture. He failed, but that is beside the point."

"Why on earth should anyone want to steal a water-colour picture that is practically worthless ---?"

"I believe the attempt was made. If you prefer to give your information to the police, Mr. Goffin --"

Mr. Goffin's voice sounded subdued.

"I bought it from a Mrs. Fry. I collected a number of pieces from her home yesterday morning, and that picture was among them. When I buy stuff, I send the junk to my second shop near the dockyard - the best items I keep here. I kept that picture as it seemed attractive --"

"You know Mrs. Fry's address? Good! I will jot it down. 24 Medina Lane, Plymouth. Thank you, Mr. Goffin."

Mr. Buddle rang off. Ten minutes later he donned his gown, and made his way to his Form-room.

. . . . .

Before he left Slade, after lunch, Mr. Buddle carefully placed his picture of the boy with the lantern under a bath-robe in his suit-case. The suit-case he put under a blanket in the bottom of his wardrobe. There he felt the picture would be safe from any intruder. He did not really believe that anybody would try to get hold of his picture in the day time, but it was better to be safe than sorry.

With reckless extravagance he rang for a taxi to take him to Plymouth, and in mid-afternoon he found himself on the door-step of No. 24 Medina Lane. It was a semi-detached property, built probably early in the century.

Mrs. Fry was a pleasant-faced, buxom woman of about sixty.

Mr. Buddle raised his hat. He said:

"I would like to ask you, madam, about a picture which you sold yesterday to an antique dealer, named Goffin, in the town."

"What, another of 'em?" exclaimed Mrs. Fry. She eyed him warily. "What about the picture?"

"I am a schoolmaster, and my name is Buddle. I bought the picture from Mr. Goffin. Last evening a young woman tried to buy the picture from me, and, during last night, someone tried to steal it. I understand that you sold the picture to Mr. Goffin in the first place. I would like a few particulars about the transaction."

Mrs. Fry said sourly:

"I haven't anything to tell you. I sold the picture for a few shillings - but I don't know anything about it."

She was closing the door, but Mr. Buddle checked it with his foot. He tried the line which had proved persuasive in the case of Mr. Goffin.

"If you prefer to answer questions from the police --"

Mrs. Fry stared at him hard for a moment. Then she opened the door wide.

"Come into my sitting-room," she said.

Mr. Buddle found himself in an over-furnished room. He sat down in a faded red armchair, and Mrs. Fry sat in another armchair facing him.

Mr. Buddle said: "So far as I know, there is no question of any trouble for yourself, madam. I would just like the history of the picture

which you sold to Mr. Goffin."

Mrs. Fry leaned back, clasping her hands together.

"There's not much to tell. I'm a widow, Mr. Muffle --"

"Buddle!"

Mrs. Fry nodded agreement.

"When my husband died, this house was too big for me. He died three years ago, and he didn't leave me much, apart from the house. So I let two rooms."

"Yes?" murmured Mr. Buddle encouragingly.

"Two gentlemen I took. Mr Blake has been with me ever since I started letting. He's no trouble. The other room has changed hands several times. The last was a young fellow named Binney. He came several months ago, but he was always a bad payer, and soon owed me weeks and weeks of rent. Then, all of a sudden, he didn't come back any more. I heard that he'd gone inside."

"Inside?" echoed Mr. Buddle. "Inside what?"

"In prison," explained Mrs. Fry.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Buddle.

Mrs. Fry nodded.

"No chance, after that, of my getting the rent he owed me. So I felt entitled to gather together the bits and pieces he'd left behind --"

"You let the room unfurnished, then?"

"No, I let it furnished. Good, solid furniture, too. But there were a few bits belonging to Binney - nothing of value, mind you! A gramophone, an eiderdown, a suit of clothes, a suitcase, and that picture of the boy with a lantern. I got Mr. Goffin to collect them, and he gave me four pounds for the lot. You will agree I was entitled to that."

"I don't know the legal aspect," admitted Mr. Buddle. "It's only the picture I'm interested in. Do you know anything of its history?"

"I don't know anything about it," said Mrs. Fry emphatically. "Binney had it on the wall all the time he was here. He didn't seem to bother about it, and I'm sure it wasn't worth anything. Goffin allowed a few shillings for it. That's all I know about it."

At the front door, Mr. Buddle pressed a ten-shilling note into Mrs. Fry's hand.

"Thank you for the time you have given me," he said.

"Thank you, sir, I'm sure. You're welcome."

Mr. Buddle turned again on the doorstep.

"One thing more. Your first words to me were 'What, another of them!' What did you mean by that, Mrs. Fry?"

Mrs. Fry shrugged her ample shoulders.

"You were the second one to come enquiring about that darn picture. A woman came yesterday afternoon. Asked about Binney, and wanted to know whether he had left a picture behind. Said it was hers and he'd stolen it from her. I told her that I'd sold it in the morning of that very day. She asked who I'd sold it to, and I told her. Then she cleared off."

"What was she like to look at, Mrs. Fry?"

"Youngish woman. About thirty, I'd say. Well-spoken. An educated person. A bit dowdy, but a lady who had come down a bit in the world, I reckoned."

When Mr. Buddle's taxi drove away, Mrs. Fry stood on her doorstep, staring after it till it turned a corner.

. . . . .

The misty December evening

had closed in. It was cold and very dark.

Mr. Buddle paid off his taxi under the light shed by the lamp over the school gateway. He entered by the small gate at the side of the main gate, and crossed the quadrangle.

In the brightly-lit school hall, he was intercepted by Mr. Crathie. The science master seemed excited.

"The picture has been found, Mr. Buddle."

"The picture?" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. He spoke without thinking. "The boy with the lantern--"

"My Aunt Mary," explained Mr. Crathie. "Lyme of the Third found it in a ditch opposite the school wall. The ditch was dry, but Aunt Mary is damp and looks a bit odd. I hope she'll dry out all right. Lyme took it to Antrobus, and the school captain brought it to me. I've told Antrobus to continue his enquiries and find out which boy took my Aunt Mary and dropped her in the ditch."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"I hope he'll be found," he said. He added, as he turned away: "I shall be surprised if he is."

Pilgrim, the Head Boy of Mr. Buddle's form, was pinning a paper on the notice-board. Mr. Buddle tapped him on the shoulder.

"Pilgrim, please find Meredith, and tell him to come to my study."

"Certainly, sir," said Pilgrim.

Back in his study, Mr. Buddle divested himself of his overcoat, and replaced his walking shoes with warm, carpet slippers. Then he went to his wardrobe to make sure that his painting of the boy with the lantern was still safe and sound. It was.

After about five minutes there was a tap at the door, and Meredith entered.

"Pilgrim said you wanted me, sir."

"Yes, sit down, Meredith." Mr. Buddle indicated a chair near the fire, and Meredith sat down self-consciously. Mr. Buddle sat in his large armchair. He drummed his fingers on the arm-rests.

"The lady who called to see me last evening, Meredith. You believed it might be a person who was once in your father's employ?"

Meredith looked surprised.

"Her? Oh, yes, sir. She reminded me of Miss Stone who was my father's secretary at one time. I might have been wrong. I never saw a great deal of Miss Stone, but I do remember something of her."

"I take it that Miss Stone was not resident at your home in Taunton?"

Meredith shook his head.

"Oh, no, sir. My father's office is at Bristol, and she was there. I think she lived in Bristol." Meredith eyed his form-master questioningly. "Is it important, sir?"

"Probably not, Meredith. So Miss Stone was never at your home at Taunton?"

"She called occasionally, sir, in connection with my father's work. She might drop in two or three times a month for an hour or two, if my father happened not to be going to his office on any particular day. Oh, there was one time when she lived at the Grange for a fortnight. She didn't mind being alone in the house. It was all due to Pumpkin --"

"Pumpkin?" Mr. Buddle smiled reminiscently. "Your family cat?"

"Yes, sir. It was in the summer vac, sir. Dad had to go to the Lake District on business, and said that my mother and I could go

with him for a fortnight. But Debbie - you remember Debbie, sir? ---"

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"I remember Debbie. Mrs. Camp, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, that's right. Debbie and her husband had already arranged their holiday for that fortnight. We didn't like the idea of putting Pumpkin in a cats' home for two weeks. My mother thought he would pine and get fleas, and he was not much more than a kitten then. I expect my father mentioned it at the office. I know that Miss Stone offered to sleep at the Grange for the fortnight and look after Pumpkin. Afterwards, she said that she had enjoyed it. It was about a couple of months after that when she left my father's employ. I heard him say he was sorry to lose her."

Meredith was eyeing his form-master curiously. Mr. Buddle rose to his feet, and Meredith followed suit.

"Is that all, sir?"

"I think so, Meredith. One thing more. Has any valuable painting been lost from your home in recent times?"

Meredith grinned.

"I haven't heard so, sir. We haven't any valuable paintings. There's a Constable in my father's library, but I don't think it's worth much."

"I recall the Constable," said Mr. Buddle. "I meant a smaller picture."

"No, sir. We had a fake Rembrandt once. Mother never liked it, but Dad kept it because it had belonged to his grandmother or something or other. Mum used to have it in one of the spare rooms. We never knew what became of it. Nobody could remember what had happened to it, and nobody bothered. It was an ugly old thing, showing a stout cook in her kitchen --"

There was an odd light in Mr. Buddle's eyes.

"How big was that picture, Meredith?"

"Not very big, sir. About so big --" Meredith held his hands apart.

"About the size of the picture of the boy with the lantern which I showed you last evening, perhaps --"

"Yes, something about that size, sir. We knew it wasn't a real Rembrandt, and I think it was a joke of my father's because there was once a Rembrandt in a Gem tale. Dad used to say that we must take care that Captain Mellish didn't come along and pinch it, and Mum said that, if he did, we'd give him a bag of flour to take with it as a bonus. All a joke, sir."

"It was just a joke. Yet you lost the picture?"

"We didn't exactly lose it, sir. Just missed it one day when somebody happened to notice that it wasn't about any more. Nobody knew what happened to it, and nobody really bothered. Maybe my mother sent it to a jumble sale some time, and then forgot it. Mum's a bit vague sometimes --"

Mr. Buddle knew all about the vagueness of Mrs. Meredith. She was a sweet personality, but the most featherbrained woman he had ever met. She would be quite capable of sending something to a jumble sale, and then forgetting what she had sent or that she had sent anything.

After Meredith had gone, Mr. Buddle sat near his fire, lost in deep thought for a time. At last he stirred himself. He spoke aloud.

"It's too fantastic," he said, to the bust of Shakespeare on his mantelpiece. Shakespeare's marble expression did not change.

Suddenly the telephone rang. In the silent study, the noise, cutting

into his thoughts, made Mr. Buddle jump.

He moved across to his table, sat down, and lifted the instrument.

"Slade College. Buddle speaking."

A woman's voice came over the line. He recognised that slightly husky, slightly nervous, voice.

"This is Mrs. Wade. You remember me, Mr. Buddle?"

"I remember you, Mrs. Wade."

There was a pause, so prolonged that Mr. Buddle thought they had been disconnected, and he said "Hullo!"

Mrs. Wade spoke again.

"I told you I would ring you again. It's about the picture of the boy with a lantern. I would pay your price for the picture. Anything I could afford --"

"If I sold you the picture, Mrs. Wade, it would be for the price I paid for it. Two pounds!"

The reply came eagerly.

"Then you will let me have it?"

"I did not say so," said Mr. Buddle tersely. "You say that your brother painted the picture. How old was he when he painted it?"

"How old?" Mrs. Wade sounded disconcerted. "In his twenties. He was a good many years my junior. He died young. He was only in his twenties when he died. That picture was his last work. He had talent --"

Mr. Buddle came to a decision.

"I cannot promise anything, but if it will be convenient for you to call on me tomorrow afternoon --"

"Oh, yes." Mrs. Wade sounded relieved, happy, and excited. "You will sell me the picture --"

"I did not say that! Call on me tomorrow, Mrs. Wade. Here at Slade College at three-thirty. You will be punctual? My time is of value, even if the picture isn't."

"I will be with you at three-thirty tomorrow, Sunday afternoon. Good-bye, Mr. Buddle - and thank you."

Mr. Buddle replaced the telephone in its cradle. He ran his fingers abstractedly into his scant hair. Then, for a while, he remained sitting at his table, staring straight ahead, his chin resting in his cupped hands.

Some fifteen minutes later he lifted the telephone again, and put through a call to a Taunton number.

. . . . .

"You were surprised at my request?" queried Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Meredith, the father of Meredith of the Lower Fourth at Slade, leaned back in Mr. Buddle's favourite chair, held out a hand to the warmth from the electric fire in Mr. Buddle's study, and regarded the English master quizzically.

"Very surprised. You asked me to come over to Slade from Taunton, and to get here in the early afternoon, yet you tell me that Cedric is in no trouble."

"The matter is only very indirectly connected with your son," admitted Mr. Buddle.

"I know that you would not ask me to drive here on a December afternoon without what you consider a sound reason," remarked Mr. Meredith. "I hope, though, that I can make my tale good to my wife. Doreen and I like to go to church on Sunday mornings. This morning we could not go, as I had to have an early lunch, to allow me to leave in good time for my trip --"

"It was good of you," murmured Mr. Buddle. "I think you will be interested in my story. I will endeavour to be brief. On Friday I happened to see a painting in an antique shop in Plymouth. It reminded me very

strongly of a picture which I had seen in one of the books you have been kind enough to lend me from time to time. I was, in fact, so intrigued, that I bought the picture for £2."

"A picture from the Gem, do you mean?"

"I thought so. Back here at school, I showed the picture to your son. He, too, recognised it as a picture copied from the Gem."

"You have it here?" asked Mr. Meredith.

Mr. Buddle went into his bedroom, and emerged a moment later, holding the canvas. He held it up, several feet away from Mr. Meredith.

Mr. Meredith stared at the picture of the boy with the lantern. In the gloomy light of the December afternoon, it looked alive.

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Mr. Meredith. "It's a copy of a Warwick Reynolds picture from the Gem's last Christmas Double Number. That was in colour, too. What was the title? I've got it! 'The Shadow of the Past', the story which brought back the old character, Outram. Not a particularly good story, but strong on reminiscence. You recall that one, Mr. Buddle?"

"Now you mention it, I do." He switched on the electric light. "It looks less real under artifical light, but it is still striking."

Mr. Meredith rose to his feet. He took the picture, and gazed down on it with something like affection.

He murmured: "It was Reynolds all right. He left the Amalgamated Press after the war. A fine artist - very fine. This must be a copy. A long time ago, Mr. Buddle."

"I agree that it is a copy of that old picture," said Mr. Buddle.

"You have more to tell me of this picture," hinted Mr. Meredith.

Mr. Buddle nodded his assent.

"On Friday evening a young woman called on me. She gave her name as Mrs. Wade. Said that her brother, now dead, had painted the picture." Mr. Buddle related the story, told by Mrs. Wade, of how she had come to miss purchasing the picture from the antique dealer.

"I was inclined to sell her the picture, in view of what she said. However, like so many people presenting a case, Mrs. Wade had too much to say. She added that her brother always painted from life, and that she knew the model for the picture. I asked myself why she should tell lies in order to secure that canvas."

Mr. Meredith was listening with keen interest now.

"Curious, indeed!" he said. "It is impossible that her brother can have been Reynolds, or that Reynolds used models in the execution of his illustrations for the Gem."

"Quite!" agreed Mr. Buddle. "Mrs. Wade offered me £5, and then increased the offer to £10, for a picture which she knew had cost me but £2."

"Did she indeed?" muttered Mr. Meredith. "Odd, to say the least."

"There was a sequel to the matter, in my opinion. In the early hours of Saturday morning, Mr. Crathie, whose bedroom is next to my own, woke to find someone moving about in his room. He called out, and the intruder made off through the door. Mr. Crathie believed, and, indeed, still believes, that it was some boy playing a trick. Actually some of the boys do rag Mr. Crathie, as they call it. He is easy-going. I might have thought that this was a boy's prank, but for one thing. A painting was removed from Mr. Crathie's room - a picture of about the same size as this one. That

was later found in a ditch outside the school wall."

"And you believe --?"

" believe that Mrs. Wade took note of the position of my study in the School House, and passed on that information to some male accomplice. In the night, someone scaled the wall, broke into the school, and landed himself in Mr. Crathie's room in mistake for my own. He found a picture in that room, and made off with it. Back in the lane, he found his mistake, and discarded Mr. Crathie's picture. It is, of course, just possible that Mrs. Wade herself may never have left the school precincts after she left my study on Friday night. She refused my offer of an escort to the gates. In a place like this, she could have found a place of concealment, and waited till the entire school was sleeping. I shall never know for certain, I expect."

Mr. Meredith coughed.

He said gently: "It sounds a little far-fetched, Mr. Buddle." He chuckled, and added: "You have been reading too many Gems."

"Is it far-fetched?" Mr. Buddle spoke sternly. "Not so far-fetched if the picture is really valuable. When I bought it, the painting was framed and glazed. I thought there might be something hidden in the backing of the frame, but there was not. We are acquainted with the original of the painting, so any idea of a hidden message in the picture itself seems unlikely. I am coming to the conclusion that there is only one explanation."

Mr. Meredith lifted the picture and gazed at it for a while. He shook his head, a sceptical look on his face.

Mr. Buddle sat down at the table. He looked up at the other man.

"My explanation," continued Mr. Buddle, "is the only one which makes sense. I think Mrs. Wade believes that the picture painted on this canvas is valuable. No, I don't mean the boy with the lantern. I mean whatever is underneath. If my idea is right, the Warwick Reynolds picture can be cleaned off, leaving underneath --"

Mr. Meredith looked incredulous.

He said: "You mean that one painting has been put over the top of another more precious work. It sounds preposterous to me. Would it be possible? In the second place, why would it be done?"

Mr. Buddle said: "I can answer both your questions. Yes, it would be possible. I sat up late last night studying a book on old paintings which I obtained from the school library. In the Iron Days of Cromwell, many valuable paintings were saved from destruction because another artist painted a new, cheap picture over the top of the old one ... And some, well, shall we say erotic pictures were made inoffensive to the Roundheads by having an innocuous shepherdess painted over the top. The same thing occurred during the French Revolution - and, in modern times, it is not unknown in the case of big Art thefts."

"Wouldn't the original picture be ruined?" asked Mr. Meredith.

"Apparently not. The second painting can be cleaned off by experts and leave no trace. As to why it should be done - well, the answer is clear. The valuable painting remains covered, in some cases for many years, until any hue and cry over a theft has long ended. And, in other cases, until the cheap-looking picture has passed through the Customs at some port."

There was a tap on the door. Hastily, Mr. Buddle pushed the canvas into the centre of his table, crossed the room, and opened the door.

"A Mrs. Wade has called to see you, sir," announced Mrs. Cleverton, the Slade housekeeper. "She is waiting in the hall."

Mr. Buddle smothered an exclamation of irritation.

"Mrs. Wade is early. It is barely ten past three. No matter. Show her up here in a couple of minutes or so, please, Mrs. Cleverton."

The housekeeper departed, and Mr. Buddle closed the door. Mr. Meredith looked at him enquiringly.

Mr. Buddle said: "Will you please wait in my bedroom, through the door over there? Leave the door ajar, and listen. I shall call you back to meet my visitor very soon."

Mr. Meredith seemed about to make a rejoinder, but he did not do so. He disappeared into the adjoining room, and Mr. Buddle noted that the door was left ajar.

After a very short while there was a tap on the door, and the housekeeper announced Mrs. Wade. Mr. Buddle held the door wide, and Mrs. Wade entered. She looked nervous, and her face was pale. She was wearing the same outfit as on her previous visit.

Mr. Buddle closed the door, and stood with his back to it.

"I hope I am not too early." Mrs. Wade's voice was firm, though her agitation was apparent. "You will let me buy the picture, Mr. Buddle. You have it there, I see. You have taken it out of the frame --"

Mr. Buddle spoke quietly.

"You shall have it as a gift, if I am satisfied that you have any moral right to it. But, first, I would like you to meet a friend of mine --"

It was the signal for Mr. Meredith to emerge. There was a gasp from Mrs. Wade as she saw him. She sagged, and lowered herself into a chair against the table.

There was a look of utter astonishment on Mr. Meredith's face.

"Monica!" he exclaimed. "What on earth ---?"

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

"You recognise this lady, Mr. Meredith?"

"Recognise her? Of course I recognise her. She is Miss Stone who was my private secretary for a while. She left my employ over two years ago --"

"So your son was right. He is a sharp lad," murmured Mr. Buddle. "You have not forgotten Mr. Meredith, I expect, Mrs. Wade?"

With an effort Mrs. Wade pulled herself together, but the pallor of her face had accentuated.

She said, in a low voice: "I know Mr. Meredith."

Mr. Buddle addressed Mr. Meredith. He said conversationally: "I take it that Miss Stone left your employ before your son was entered at Slade. She did not know that your son is a student here?"

Mr. Meredith was still looking surprised.

"Miss Stone did not know that Cedric was coming to Slade, though I cannot see what difference that should make to her visit. But in her time, I know, we talked of sending Cedric to Shrewsbury or Stowe. Finally, we decided on Slade."

"Naturally, you wanted the best for your son," agreed Mr. Buddle seriously. "If Miss Stone had known that your son was a resident pupil here, she would not have risked coming to Slade to claim your picture."

"My picture!" exclaimed Mr. Meredith. "What nonsense!"

Mrs. Wade had risen to her feet. She did not speak. She stood watching Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Buddle said: "I will tell you what I believe happened, sir. If I am wrong, I will apologise to Mrs. Wade, and give her this picture of the boy with a lantern. Mrs. Wade, you claimed that this picture was painted by your brother from life. You could not guess that I was already acquainted with the original of the picture, painted long ago by an artist named Warwick Reynolds. This picture was not painted by your brother, Mrs. Wade. I am told that you have artistic talent, and I believe that you yourself copied it from the original."

He turned towards Mr. Meredith.

"You had in your home an old painting that had belonged to your grandmother. You used to laugh about it, if you bothered about it at all, though you seldom did bother about it. Nobody liked the ugly old painting, though, for sentiment's sake, you never got rid of it. You kept it out of the way in one of your spare rooms. Your secretary was interested in paintings, and often talked Art, most likely. One day, perhaps, you mentioned your own old picture. You told her that, for years, your family had joked that it was a Rembrandt. Miss Stone was very interested. So, on one occasion when she went to your home in Taunton, you showed her the picture. With her knowledge of painting, she felt fairly sure that it was, indeed, a Rembrandt - and valuable. That knowledge she kept to herself."

Mrs. Wade spoke huskily.

"It's not true."

Mr. Buddle went on:

"Miss Stone saw that nobody in your household attached any value at all to that picture of, I think, a stout cook. But there was still the problem of getting the picture into her own possession without arousing suspicion. Her chance came when your entire family, along with your servants, found themselves booked to go away on holiday at the same time. With everybody away, there would be nobody at home to look after your cat which is precious to you all. You happened to mention your problem to your secretary, maybe, and she saw her chance. She offered to live at the Grange for the fortnight while everybody was away. An offer which was gratefully accepted."

Mrs. Wade said nothing. Mr. Meredith was staring now, through the window into the gloom of the darkening December afternoon.

Mr. Buddle continued:

"Miss Stone had plenty of time to put her plan into action in those evenings at the Grange. She took the Rembrandt from the spare room. It probably would not be missed for a time - maybe, not for a very long time. But the picture had to be disguised in such a way that, should the eventuality occur of her belongings being searched, it would be successfully hidden. She decided on the old trick of painting a second picture on the top of the first one. She searched in your books, Mr. Meredith, for a suitable picture for her to copy. She found it in that Christmas cover of the 1917 Gem. She copied the old Warwick Reynolds picture over the top of Rembrandt's painting of the Dutch cook. And, being a gifted artist, she did her work well.

"She then took the picture away with her to wherever she was permanently living at the time. She was in no hurry, of course, to dispose of the picture. Several years, at least, must go by before she would put that Rembrandt on sale, and, I guess, somewhere abroad."

Mr. Buddle fell silent for a moment. The clock ticked. Out in

the dusky quadrangle one boy could be heard calling to another.

Mr. Buddle resumed: "Somewhere - somehow - that picture fell into the hands of a man named Binney." There was the slightest gasp from Mrs. Wade as she caught her breath. Mr. Buddle said: "Binney did not know the secret of the picture of the boy with a lantern, I assume. He kept it at his lodgings, and eventually his landlady disposed of his possessions to the dealer named Goffin --"

Mrs. Wade spoke at last, in a strained voice.

"You've been doing a lot of sneaking around, Mr. Buddle, but it's a tissue of lies."

Mr. Meredith turned round at the window. There was a cold edge to his tone.

"You mean well, Mr. Buddle, but you must be wrong. This cannot be that old painting of ours which, just for a family joke, we used to call a Rembrandt. You see, that old picture of ours was tested and examined by experts, and it was proved to have no worth at all. And Miss Stone knew that it was worthless. I recall showing her the letter I had, from an independent and reliable tester of old paintings, telling me that the picture was no Rembrandt, and that it was indifferently painted by an obscure artist, and of no value at all. You are suggesting that Miss Stone stole my picture, and I hope that she will accept an apology from you in due course. She would hardly have wished to steal from my house an entirely crude and valueless canvas."

Mr. Buddle looked startled. His confidence seemed shaken for the first time. Mr. Meredith and Mrs. Wade were watching him. He cleared his throat.

He said, slowly: So Miss Stone knew that the canvas was no Rembrandt - that it was worth nothing. That alters the case. She could have no possible reason --"

He paused. There was a strange expression on his face.

"Mr. Meredith," he said briskly, "can I trouble you to go into my bedroom where you will find a tumbler beside my wash-basin. Fill that glass with water, and bring it to me here."

Mr. Meredith set his lips. After a moment's hesitation, he walked into the adjoining room.

Mrs. Wade moved across to the door.

She said: "I have no further time to waste. If you will not sell me the picture --"

She turned, with her fingers gripping the handle of the door.

"This door is locked. How dare you!" she exclaimed, colour rushing into her face.

"I turned the key when you came in," explained Mr. Buddle. "That key is now in my pocket. I will not detain you much longer."

Mr. Meredith had returned with the glass of water. Without a word, he placed it on the table.

Mr. Buddle drew the picture of the boy with the lantern towards him. He jerked a white handkerchief from his breast pocket, crumpled it into a ball, and inserted a small portion of it into the water at the top of the glass.

"Let us just try a corner --" he said softly.

He bent forward, and rubbed a lower part of the picture with the wet linen. In spite of an obvious repugnance, Mr. Meredith bent forward to watch.

For a moment or two, as the wet part of the handkerchief was rubbed over the corner of the picture, nothing happened. Then the dark

colours smeared, and, as the form-master persisted, they formed into something which looked muddy on the surface of the canvas. Mr. Buddle turned over the handkerchief, and, with the dry section of it, wiped away the muddy mixture. Instantly, a startling scarlet was revealed. It was a clog - a scarlet clog. And, above the clog, an ankle - flesh-coloured, and in oils.

An agonised voice cut across the study.

"Stop! You will ruin the picture!"

The two men straightened up, and turned towards Mrs. Wade.

She said, harshly: "The top picture must be removed by an expert. It will need treatment with weak alcohol."

Mr. Meredith was looking dazed. He passed a hand across his forehead. Mr. Buddle addressed him:

"You say that your picture was examined by an expert. Who suggested that examination?"

Mr. Meredith knitted his brows in an effort of thought.

"I can't remember. I think I did. I sent the picture to the Monet Galleries in Bath for expert appraisal --"

"And who took the canvas to the Monet Galleries in Bath?"

"Miss Stone took it," replied Mr. Meredith.

Mr. Buddle nodded with satisfaction.

"So that is the explanation."

"But they sent the picture back to me from the Galleries," said Mr. Meredith helplessly. "They had given it every test. Their expert wrote me a letter, telling me that the picture was not a Rembrandt - that it was nothing at all - worthless ---"

Mr. Buddle turned to Mrs. Wade.

"Somehow or other you got to know that expert very well, I think, Mrs. Wade. You were friendly with him, were you not ---?"

"I married him," said Mrs. Wade.

Mr. Meredith dropped into the armchair against the fire. He was thunderstruck.

Mr. Buddle crossed to the study door, took a key from his pocket, and unlocked the door. He moved back to the table, and gazed down at the picture, the secret of which was a secret no longer.

Mrs. Wade spoke again. Her voice was bitter. She was staring at Mr. Meredith.

"You had a painting - a real gem - and you had no idea what it was. You showed it to me one day when I called at your house in Taunton for office instructions. You knew that I had been an artist - that I dabbled in painting - that I had studied Art under good instructors. You told me about the old picture which had been a joke in your family for years, and, when I called at the Grange, you showed it me. I felt sure that it was a Rembrandt. You did not know, you did not care, you left it hanging about in a dirty old attic - you were a Philistine --"

Her voice broke, but she regained command of herself, and went on speaking.

"I suggested to you that you should have it valued. I proposed sending it to the Monet Galleries, which have a high and unassailable reputation for such testing work. Their chief testing artist was a friend of mine. It is a Rembrandt, of course - a lovely little gem ---"

Mr. Buddle wondered idly why she had to keep using the word 'gem'. "We talked it over, Gerry Wade and I. At first we had no idea of cheating --." She paused for a moment. "But the

idea came to us. We each knew what the other was thinking - and we planned ---. It was risky, in a way, but only slightly so. After all, Mr. Meredith, you are a fool where paintings are concerned. It was unlikely that you would see beyond your nose. Eventually, Gerry returned the picture to you, with an official letter from the Monet Galleries - at least, it was on official notepaper, and signed by their chief testing artist, Gerald Wade himself.

"You showed me the letter. You laughed, and said that you had known all the time that the picture was a dud. It went back into the attic, or somewhere out of sight. Your stupid wife didn't like it.

"I waited for my chance. It came. I offered to sleep at the Grange and look after the cat, while you were all away on holiday. I had plenty of time to prepare the picture. I found something suitable to copy in one of your own books. The boy with a lantern! I copied it carefully on top of the Rembrandt, giving it a thick base in water-colours. I did my work well. It was the best copy I had ever made. I destroyed the original frame, and bought a new, glazed one for my picture. After a few weeks I made an excuse to leave your employment. It was all straightforward. You gave me an excellent testimonial --"

The two men were listening - Mr. Meredith in his chair by the fire, Mr. Buddle standing, head downcast, at the table. Neither interrupted.

The voice went on, sounding now like a teacher instructing a class.

"Gerry made an excuse to leave the Monet Galleries. They were sorry to lose him, and said so in a brilliant reference which they gave him. We married. He was older than me, but we loved one another. We were in no hurry to sell the picture. Gerry reckoned we should wait five years. Time made little difference - the picture could only increase in value with the passing of time. We went north - to Leeds. Gerry took a post as an art master in a school, and I took secretarial work.

"But Gerry got impatient. He didn't like teaching. We decided to sell the painting in the States, and that Gerry should get a post there similar to the one he had held in Bath. We came south by car. Near Southampton a lorry hit us. I woke up in hospital. I had concussion for several days, but soon recovered. My husband received spinal injury. He is still in hospital, and may be an invalid for the rest of his life --"

Mr. Meredith stirred uneasily in his chair. Mr. Buddle seemed about to speak, but did not utter a word.

The woman's voice went on.

"I stayed at a small hotel near the hospital where Gerry was. I got acquainted with a man named Binney, a kind of casual cleaner at the hotel. One day he cleared off with all our belongings including the picture. That was several months ago. I traced him to Plymouth, where he had got into trouble with the police over forging a cheque. I found out his most recent lodgings, only to get there after the picture had been sold to the man Goffin. And when I got to Goffin, he had just sold the picture."

There was silence at last in the study. Mr. Buddle picked up the picture from the table. He looked at it for a while. Then he spoke.

"How much is the painting worth, Mrs. Wade?"

The woman shrugged her

shoulders.

"It was valued at two thousand pounds in this country. It would fetch three times that sum in the United States." She laughed without mirth. "Well, I've made a muddle of everything, and soon I shall have to face Gerry and tell him so. If you are sending for the police, I will wait. If not, I'll be getting on my way."

Mr. Buddle said:

"I do not think that Mr. Meredith will wish to call in the police."

Mr. Meredith said awkwardly: "There is no question of our calling in the police."

Again Mrs. Wade shrugged her shoulders.

She said: "It doesn't matter a lot to me now, either way. Good-night, Mr. Buddle. I hope I never see you again."

She opened the door.

Mr. Meredith called out:

"Monica - one moment --"

"Well?"

Monica Wade turned in the doorway, and regarded him coolly.

Mr. Meredith crossed the study. There was compassion in his face.

"Monica, where can I find you? I should like to help you and your husband."

"Would you?" She spoke scornfully. "Why should you want to help me or Gerry? I cheated you all along the way. I'm not sorry. I'm only sorry that I ever came across this schoolmaster here. He's a fake. He should be a detective."

Mr. Meredith said: "I should like to help you. Perhaps for old times' sake. Perhaps because it's Christmas time. Where can I get in touch with you?"

Mrs. Wade's expression softened a trifle. She stood in silence as the moments passed. Then she said: "Yes, it's Christmas. I'm staying at the Queen Anne Hotel in Ivybridge for a few days. After that, well, I don't know. My husband is still in hospital."

She added: "Let an expert restore that picture for you, Mr. Meredith. My work will clean off perfectly."

The door closed, and she was gone.

Mr. Buddle was seated against the fire. He was staring at the glowing bar. He leaned forward and switched on more heat.

Mr. Meredith said: "What are you thinking, Mr. Buddle? That I am a fool to want to help Monica?"

"Oh, no." Mr. Buddle sighed. "You are generous, and I am glad that you are going to help Mrs. Wade, if she will let you. I feel sure she will. She is clever, cunning, and a rather treacherous person, but all the same --" He smiled. "It's Christmas, as you say. That makes a difference. But I was wondering --"

"Yes?"

"I was wondering whether someone did break into the school and try to steal the picture in the early hours of Saturday morning. Was it a boy, playing a trick on Mr. Crathie, or was it an accomplice of Mrs. Wade - or was it Mrs. Wade herself? I don't suppose I shall ever know for certain." He paused, and then asked gently: "What will you do with the picture, Mr. Meredith?"

"I shall do nothing with it. The picture is yours. You bought it!" protested Mr. Meredith.

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"You know better than that, my dear friend," he said. "In law, your ownership is not changed by the

fact that the picture was stolen from you. I bought stolen property, and the loss is mine. In fact, I don't regret it. I enjoyed the brain exercise it gave me."

"It provided another successful case for the Nelson Lee of Slade," suggested Mr. Meredith slyly.

And Mr. Buddle was sufficiently modest to blush.

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Some days after Slade had broken up for the Christmas vacation, Mr. Buddle had a long letter from Mr. Meredith. It ended as follows:

"The Rembrandt is being restored by an expert in such matters. Monica was right. It would fetch about two thousand pounds if sold in London, and several times that sum if put on the market abroad. But money isn't everything, and worth-while things should be kept in our own lovely land.

I have promised the Wades a percentage of the valuation. After all, Monica was the means, however unwittingly, of letting us know the picture's worth.

You will be amused to hear that I have given Monica a commission, before I say good-bye to her for good. She is painting, (on a new canvas, needless to say), another copy of the boy with the lantern. Doreen and I will ask you to accept it as a souvenir.

By the way, Doreen will want you to tell her the whole story, over and over again, as we sit round the Christmas fire and eat muscatels and almonds. But, please, don't let that little warning put you off coming to us on Christmas Eve.

Yours sincerely,

LIONEL MEREDITH

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Their Names spelt Adventure

by ROBERT C. BLYTHE

Two names which were guaranteed to give the readers of the Nelson Lee Library a thrill of pleasurable anticipation were those of Lord Dorriemore and Umlosi. Each summer holiday the favoured ones of the Remove could look forward to being transported to some remote part of the world, ostensibly for a pleasure trip, but invariably enough thrills and adventure would come their way to last most people a lifetime. Not for Lord Dorriemore's guests the leisurely sightseeing trip of the average holiday maker, although that may have been the intention, but wars, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and skullduggery by various villianous types invariably followed within a week of sailing. Sometimes it all started before the holidays began!

Considering what a large part Lord Dorriemore and Umlosi played in the St. Frank's saga, it is surprising that so little is known of their background. Literally, I suppose, they owe their origin to Rider Haggard. It seems to me, at any rate, that there are many points in which there is more than a passing resemblance between Allan Quartermain and Umslopogaas and E.S.B's characters. It is true that Umslopogaas dispatched most of his enemies with an axe, and Umlosi did things more delicately with a spear, but these are minor points.

I can find no trace of the parentage of either Lord Dorriemore or Umlosi, but then, they were both so tough that they were probably quarried! Apart from the lack of an established parentage, Lord Dorriemore had a married sister, and Umlosi, who was a chieftain of a Zulu tribe called the Kutana, had a half-brother (whom he dispatched to the happy hunting grounds in the very first story).

Lord Dorriemore was very rich, a millionaire in fact, although how he got his money, whether inherited or earned, was never specified. I cannot picture Dorrie making enough wise investments to enable him to live the life he did, so we must conclude that he inherited a vast sum and was living on the interest. Mind you, enough treasure and booty came his way to make him independent. After all, you don't have to discover many hidden treasures, gold mines or pearl fisheries to become wealthy; and it was a poor holiday if something of this nature didn't turn up. Invariably Dorrie shared the finds with everybody, so, in theory, everyone should have become independent.

Anyway, we first meet the pair of them in O.S. 105 - "The Ivory Seekers". Nelson Lee and Nipper, having finished a case, find themselves at a loose end in Mombassa and decide to look up Lord Dorriemore, who is described as an old friend, in Nairobi, then part of British East Africa. This happened in 1917 and E.S.B. took great pains to explain why Dorrie wasn't in the army. The impediment was never referred to again.

> "We found him sprawling in a hammock, which was slung between two of the veranda posts of the hotel. He was lying on his back, with a cigarette in his mouth, and was apparently doing his level best to gaze into heaven. At all events, he was gazing at the sky dreamily and languidly, just beyond the roof of the veranda."

And to introduce Umlosi -

> "... for Umlosi was a giant of about six feet eight. I don't think I've seen many finer natives.
>
> He was wearing nothing except a "moocha" round his middle, and a fine necklace of lions' claws. His skin was dark and shone like burnished copper. Here and there I spotted long scars - the relics of past battles. Assegai-wounds I suppose. I saw, too, that he was what the Zulus call a "Keshla". That means a ringed-man.
>
> A ringed-man means a chap who has attained considerable dignity and power. The ring was worn on the head, and was worked up with the hair, and made of gum, polished with fat."

There is no doubt but that everyone bore charmed lives on these adventures. By rights nearly everyone should have been killed several times over. Certainly, no matter how perilous the situation, all the boys and girls would emerge unscathed, although the boys would perhaps have a minor nick or two. Lord Dorriemore and Nelson Lee might occasionally have a bullet through an arm or leg, but invariably the worst casualties would be sustained by the crew of Dorrie's ship the "Wanderer", but the worst of all would always be poor Umlosi. One thing is certain, he had the constitution of an ox. (I believe an ox's constitution is considered superior to all others.) For example, during a trip to the South Seas in 1918 (they had gone there to find some treasure) a tribe of cannibals objected to their presence on the island. At one point, Umlosi is captured and tied to a post in the middle of a pool. The

object being to provide the occupant of the pool with his dinner. Umlosi objected!

Another tentacle appeared, and it wound itself round one of Umlosi's legs like a steel rope. The pain was tremendous, and Umlosi caught his breath in involuntarily. At the same moment something huge and black rose to the surface of the pool.

Umlosi knew in a moment that his danger was appalling. For the thing was an enormous octopus!

It seemed as though Umlosi was entangled in brambles or ropes. It was hideous, and the ropes flickered and wound themselves round him grimly. And just for a second the face of the octopus was visible.

It was a horrible, awful face, almost impossible to describe. The eyes were as wide as saucers, their expression stony and absolutely steadfast. The thing was like a creature out of the Pit itself.

How Umlosi managed to free himself was more than he could explain afterwards. His strength was enormous, as everybody knew, and, by sheer determination and brute force, he tore the clinging tentacles from him and reached the bank. Once there, he hauled himself up, but was dragged back again. The fight recommenced, and Umlosi's hoarse cries and heavy breathing told a story of diminishing strength. It was telling even upon this black Hercules.

Umlosi's great strength was spent. He staggered and fell full length, laying like a log upon the ground. Nelson Lee took a deep breath.

"The man is a wonder!" he exclaimed. "Upon my soul, I should never have believed it possible."

Dorriemore was an overgrown schoolboy in some things, particularly when it came to battling against heavy odds. In this he was very like Edward Oswald Handforth - he never bothered to count the cost. However, in one respect he was cautious. He never left anything to chance where weapons of offence were concerned. Whenever he set off with a party of schoolboys and girls, no matter how innocent the trip he'd always have a perfect arsenal of weapons stored away. This forethought stood the party in good stead on many an occasion as for example when they went to the city of El Dorado, lost in the wastes of the Amazon. The city is occupied by the Arzacs who are the goodies and they are about to be attacked by the baddies who delight in the name of Ciri-Ok-Baks. Nelson Lee, Dorrie and Umlosi are helping the Arzacs, and they and a party of men are manning the walls of the city when they are bombarded by huge chunks of rock from a form of ballista.

The ballista which menaced Nelson Lee and his little party on the battlements near the gates, was working at full pressure, and the great stones were hurtling up one after another.

"This won't do," said Nelson Lee grimly. "You'd better send a volley into the crowd, Smithson."

The machine gun spluttered and roared.

And from below there came many shrieks and yells of terror. And after that the ballista was quiet. Not another stone came up for some considerable time. But other men were now upon the instrument of war, and the stones were again hurled up to the battlements.

But the machine gun was now going almost continuously, sending a devastating rain of bullets down among the mud men.

The battle in fact was growing fierce at all points.

Nelson Lee watched, and he was working overtime. He had taken the machine gun himself. And now, with keen eye and steady hand, he was operating the gun to the best advantage.

Lord Dorrimore, on the battlements on the far side of the gateway, was working just as hard. So far there had been no towers coming to this particular section of the wall. There had been no

hand-to-hand fighting.

And then Nelson Lee went down.

He had been struck by the fist of one of the mud men. The fellow had taken the great detective from behind, and Lee had not been able to turn in time to defend himself. He went down, and a terrific axe was whirled aloft.

Smithson uttered a shriek of warning, which was really a cry of terror. It seemed as though nothing could save Nelson Lee from destruction. The axe was wielded by a towering giant, and he was intent upon killing the detective in one blow.

But a black figure rushed forward, roaring at the top of his voice. It was Umlosi, and he grasped the mud man round the waist, whirled him aloft, as though he had been a mere child, and sent him flying over the battlements.

The giant went down like a stone, screaming wildly.

"Wau!" roared Umlosi. "This is indeed a fight, my master!"

Nelson Lee staggered to his feet, and gripped Umlosi's hand.

"Thanks, old man!" he said huskily.

Brooks has had many things said about his writings by his denigrators, but of one thing he cannot be accused. In the realm of the adventure story he was supreme and the many events that occurred all happened in the most natural way possible, whether it was fighting hordes of Chinese, as in the China series of 1926, denizens of the jungle as in the Congo series of 1927, or in combatting the elements of fire and water such as volcanic eruption and hurricanes as in the South Seas of 1922.

It may be a cliche, but it is true today as it was in those days between the wars, that the story, once started, was impossible to put down, and how we managed to wait another week for the next episode is beyond me.

Many and varied were the adventures the St. Frank's juniors shared with that inimitable pair in many parts of the world and I have been able to touch on only a few of them. I should have liked to tell you about the strange things that befell on the visits to those strange countries, Northestria - where the inhabitants were descendants of people incarcarated behind impenetrable mountains since medieval times. (Did you see the film "The Island on top of the World" and did you think that the plot reminded you of E.S.B's Northestrian Series?) And again the people of New Anglia in the South Pole region. Then there were the descendants of the Roman legions lost in the Sahara for generations all waiting to be discovered by Lord Dorriemore and the juniors. In each case I need hardly add they sided with the goodies in a war with the baddies, and in which it goes without saying the baddies come off rather badly.

As a last glimpse of our heroes in action, here is an excerpt from the China series. An attack on Dorrie's yacht has just been beaten off.

Umlosi met the hurrying party as they neared the causeway. He was a spectacle. Gashes were bleeding on every limb - two or three of them ugly wounds which would need drastic attention. The black giant was limping, too, and he was half blinded by the flowing of blood from an ugly scalp wound.

"Good heavens, Umlosi, you're in a terrible state!" exclaimed Nelson Lee. "Man alive, we shall never patch you up!"

Umlosi showed all his teeth in a wide, happy laugh.

"Callest thou these scratches serious, Umtagati?" he rumbled. "Wau! What are they but the trifling hurts of battle? 'Twas a fight, N'Kose!" he added, turning to Dorrie. "'Twas a fight after

mine own heart!"

"I hope you're satisfied, then," said his lordship. "You look perfectly awful! It'll take us a month to get you well!"

"Full three score of these pigs did I slay with my spear!" declared Umlosi. "Perchance thou wilt think I am boasting? But nay! I am modest in my estimate of numbers!"

"I believe you!" declared Lord Dorrimore. "We haven't got time to look at your wounds now, but we'll soon have you aboard, you gory old reprobate!"

They hurried down towards the quay, and were just passing a jutting portion of rock, when Dr. Foo Chow himself abruptly stood out. There was such an expression of fiendish hatred on his face that the leaders of the party paused. Instinctively, Lee drew his revolver.

"Now, gentlemen, I will settle my account!" snarled Foo Chow.

Well, there it is. At the end of the life of the Nelson Lee Library, Dorriemore and Umlosi were still going strong, and, in fact, there were still some adventurous doings to be retold in the Gem after the merger, but that was all. Nevertheless, I'm sure that somewhere in their Peter Pan world both Dorrie and Umlosi are battling their way forward on the side of the angels against the forces of evil.

Long may their spirits roam!

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The Scribe

by JIM SWAN

The other evening I came across a pile of old note-books among my souvenirs. The sort of books we got for a penny or twopence down at the local newsagents, years ago. Old money, of course!

All that time back I had filled those books, and a lot more like them, with stories and drawings of my own. Now they had come to light again, and I sat down and had a browse through them - and also a chuckle or two.

The earliest I could find contained 100 pages. I had split it into 10 copies of a paper I called "The Favourite" - 10 pages for tuppence.

Everything among the contents was done in pencil - the date was September 1927. I had them all there - Front Page, stories, a picture serial, an Editor's Chat,

Blake, as fans knew him in 1905

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everything!

Funny thing, this. I can well remember sitting and writing it, all those years back. I just had to do it, though there was only myself who would read it. There was an occasion or two when I would read some of it out to my mother and father to see what their re-action might be. They would give me an indulgent look, and say "It sounds as if you are reading from a story book, son!" And that was as far as it went.

I wrote of a cowboy and his chum, mixed up with a gang of bad lads, going through several spots of bother, to come out triumphant in the end. I had a picture serial. The drawing was not all that hot! People would have had difficulty in making out the copper from the crook.

Of course, it was the influence of all the boys' papers I bought each week. We didn't have a lot to live on, but my parents were pretty good to me, and there was a market not far away where I could pick up old papers at three for 2d. So I got ideas for my own stories.

When I scribbled "The Jesting Three", a school story, I must have had, on my mind, "The Stormy Orphans", the three tricky lads in the Wizard during the late twenties and early thirties.

Another thing. I invented all sorts of authors names for my stories. Substitute names were easy to manufacture, or perhaps I liked to put the blame on somebody else. I don't think I invented a name for the artist. I don't blame myself for this, either. Those pictures were proper crude!

I see I had a Special Guy Fawkes Number; all that sort of thing, in fact. Then, one time, I altered the paper from a weekly to a monthly. Twenty pages for 6d. Didn't seem much for that sum of money, seeing that the A. P. and Thomson's were putting out twenty-eight big pages for 2d. Weekly, at that!

But I just went on and on, writing and drawing issue after issue. I had a Horrific Serial, and a "Special Summer No." with a Coloured Plate - done with a blue pencil. All the rest of the pictures were done in ink.

Then I announced that the title of the paper would be changed. (Where have we heard this before?) From the next issue it would be called "The Boys' Best Paper".

And so I lived those hours of my childhood, playing the publisher, the editor, the author and the artist all rolled into one. I should like to hear from anyone else who may have had that sort of inclination for writing and sketching as I had. The results may have been crude, but what a glorious and innocent world of make-believe it all was.

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Mr. Bunter

by R. F. ACRAMAN

FRANK RICHARDS! What a wonderful old man our Frank was! How well he understood and wrote and commented on the various facts that surround us in our daily lives. His remarks concerning politicians showed that he had no great reliance or trust in them, any more than in solicitors, who were usually shown as mean men with sharp faces, in frock coats, usually representing a dubious client or shady organisation. I never seem to remember one described as, say, Lord Conway, or Mauleverer's uncle. Always mean little men in the stories I have read. If I am wrong, a reader will correct me, for, after all, here and there, there must be some decent solicitors about, if not politicians, regardless of their policies.

Peter Todd's father I have never met, and he may be the exception. I say this because there are certain aspects of Frank's stories where I sometimes feel he does an injustice, either to the character or to the reader. And certain points stick.

One such character assassination is our old friend Mr. Bunter. Here is a man who, in every story in which he appears, is either maligned or made to look some shady sort of dubious bounder.

Let us look closer into his character, beyond the superficial dressing that Frank gives him. Mr. Bunter is portrayed as a rather pompous, silk-hatted and frock-coated man, who does legal, but rather dubious, dealing on the Stock Exchange, and who is never averse to making a little extra by these means. As a result of this, he maintains a wheezy, battered old family saloon Ford car, and manages to scrape enough together to send his three children to good public boarding schools.

His wife is portrayed as a kindly, sincere woman with a real affection for her eldest son Billy (who returns her affection), and she also loyally supports her husband in his work and his home environment. There we have the complete picture. Is it a fair one by any standards outside the story which is, presumably, depicting an attitude true to life? No, I say it is not a true or a fair picture of Mr. Bunter. It is my opinion that he deserves much more credit than he is ever given. Although Frank could paint him as black as he liked, the author never really exceeded a certain point. Some respectability was left to Mr. Bunter -- but not much.

Mr. Bunter was apparently a member of the Stock Exchange who bought and sold shares. To be a member, he must have had to satisfy some very high standards of integrity and honesty. This alone is commendable, but look further. Is there not a certain degree even of bravery, with possibly a dash of enterprise attached which many folk today could not show? One stakes one's all on buying shares which are rapidly falling in value, and holds them at risk in the hope that the fall will end and the shares will rise again.

Consider! Some huge and solid Insurance Companies, Rolls Royce Cars Ltd., and washing machine companies have shares on the Stock Exchange. To take a plunge and buy up sufficient to make a worth while gain takes a reasonable amount of nerve, knowing that if one could not unload in time, and at sufficient return, bankruptcy could be the result. And, with three children at public schools, one is staring ruin in the face at nearly every venture.

It is not a game for weak or timid people. Experience is required. Mr. Bunter must possess the qualities I have mentioned, and deserves credit for it that he does not get.

According to my Public Schools Year Book, Greyfriars would rate today as on a par with St. Paul's School (what a beautiful school that was! Every time I passed it in Hammersmith, it was my Greyfriars. What a pity it was scheduled for demolition after the school had moved to Barnes!) or Haileybury (not in appearance, though) with fees at £660 p.a. and £567 p.a. respectively. (Fees are, of course, much higher now, but in those days would have been in proportion.)

Such is Mr. Bunter's moral character that, rather than use these fees to buy, say, a Rolls Royce, or a larger house, or employ more servants, he prefers to spend the money on his children's education. Preferring to use the old Ford chariot, and to keep his servants to a minimum number. Does he not deserve some credit for this? I would say that his actions in this regard were commendable.

Mr. Bunter's attitude when Billy enticed his friends to stay at the big country house he had acquired (though Bunter did not tell the Famous Five how he had "acquired" it) was praiseworthy. Mr. Bunter was annoyed, if my memory is right, and corrected Billy, but the real villain of the piece was Billy Bunter for not telling his friends, on another occasion, that they were "paying guests".

Consider Mr. Bunter's children. Three were fat, two of them lazy and greedy, yet he considered the money he spent to give them a good start in life a necessary item and not a luxury. Surely, it was a commendable view.

Mr. Bunter, in addition to all his other expenses, ran a staff of several servants with full board. He would surely have to pay more than the standard rate to keep his staff, for they would be in contact with the younger Bunter clan comprising young people who were rude, dirty, and snobbish. And modest Bunter Villa must surely have been large enough to accommodate them all, thereby meaning substantial rates. We all know Mr. Bunter's views on income tax, but, after all, he could only complain (and which of us does not when we see our money so misused?) if he was paying tax. The amount of heavy tax paid must surely carry a heavier degree of protest.

Heavy income-tax payers are the salt of this country, and, if Mr. Bunter pays a lot of tax, it follows that he must be clever, able, and competent to be in this class in a competitive business city world.

I feel that Frank has been a trifle unjust to make Mr. Bunter a figure of scorn or even contempt, by superficial dressing of descriptive words. More so when he has three fat, greedy, rude, ignorant, selfish children, though Sammy, possibly, has

more redeeming features than Billy or Bessie. I would suggest that Mr. Bunter accepts the challenge of life, despite all that Fate has placed on his doorstep, rather well. I feel that Mr. Bunter's real character in the things that really matter - providing for his family and his servants - comes shining through. He receives no help from his children when times get hard so that Billy is requested to help in the garden, in one episode, as the gardener had had to be "laid off". I suggest that Mr. Bunter's character does him real credit. How many of us could equal Mr. Bunter's achievements?

So, do not forget. Spare a kindly thought the next time you pass Mr. Bunter, and do not believe everything you hear said against him by anyone. Like Royalty, he cannot answer back.

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These we have loved

by "MADAM"

So many readers write to Eric and tell him of their much-loved pets (he always reads out to me letters like this, for he knows how very much I love animals, too) so I thought you might like to hear of his very first pet of all.

War-time brought many changes to my husband (The Captain) and me, so, along with Vincent, we went to help Eric with the school at Surbiton. But the Battle of Britain brought yet another change. With the fifty resident boys we were evacuated to Peasmarsh, a pleasant hamlet near Guildford. It was a lovely house, set in acres of land. There were lawns running right down to the River Wey, an orchard, and a wonderful wild garden in the centre of which was a big natural lake, very deep in the middle, where the boys could swim in the summer months.

Eric, however, continued teaching at Surbiton, and drove every day of the week to Surbiton for that purpose. One morning (it was Eric's birthday) the Captain of the School presented him with a basket (at Surbiton) saying "A happy birthday from us all at Surbiton and at Peasmarsh." When the lid was opened, out jumped a beautiful little Tricolour Spaniel puppy, straight from the famous Ware Kennels.

That evening, at Peasmarsh, the resident boys were all waiting for Eric's return with the puppy, and what a welcome the little one received!

The following evening, when Eric returned, I took the puppy out to the car to greet him, putting it on the rear seats while I stood chatting. Alas, in his excitement the little one fell off the seat on to the floor of the car. He whined, and we could see that his back leg was broken.

We took him straight off to the vet who shook his head.

"He really ought to be put to sleep," he told us.

"Oh, no," we protested. "We all love him, and the boys saved their precious pocket-money to buy him for their Headmaster."

"All right! I will put a splint on. See how you manage."

So we arrived home at last with a small puppy wearing a large splint - and his name, Mr. Splinter.

Manage we did! Six weeks of day and night nursing. Toilet times almost became a nappy problem, but, with careful washing and powder, we kept him comfortable.

One day, along came a stray kitten, which became devoted to him, and lay beside him in his basket, helping to pass the long hours. This started his deep love for cats (not always returned, later on).

At last the day came for his splint to be removed. The vet pronounced him perfect. So Mr. Splinter started romping with the boys. However, our joy was shortlived. Two days later, when lunch was being served, in dashed Splinter, ran in between the legs of one of the staff who promptly sat down on the floor - and on Splinter. This time, alas, the puppy's front leg was broken, and the story began all over again. Back to the vet. He now became Mr. Splinters, for good, and got round surprisingly well with the splint on his front leg for the next six weeks.

Time passed, and he seemed very intelligent. He soon learned that he must not go into the Captain's vegetable garden (a large domain where he grew all the vegetables for about sixty of us, so we were able to live well despite the war). Splinters would always get out of the Captain's chair when he came in. Yet Splinters seldom came when he was called, and never got to know his name. We were puzzled by the lack of such response on the part of an otherwise alert and intelligent animal.

One day Eric was chatting about it with a friend who was a doctor. The doctor said: "Is he deaf?"

And then the penny dropped. Another visit to the vet, and he confirmed our suspicion, and gave the reason: Splinters was too highly bred. Nothing could be done. Could we live with a totally deaf dog? It was a question which needed no answer. We knew how very happy he was, romping about with the boys, joining in their rambles and their chalk and paper chases, being present at their cricket and football fixtures, and so on, in the safety of the country. He could understand every sign if he was facing us. And we all loved him so much.

The only sound he ever heard was the reverberation of the German bombers passing overhead, and he was always the first in the scamper to our huge air-raid shelter down on the river bank beyond the tennis-court.

As time went on, Splinters was joined by Billy, the orphaned Kid, whom we bought for five bob and fed from a baby's bottle. Billy got fatter each day until, investigating one day as to why our milk wasn't going round as it should have done, I discovered that boys were taking it in turn to go into the larder and carry away extra bottles of milk for Billy. I had to insist that he had his proper rations at meal-times like everybody else. Billy was a great favourite with us all until one morning he got into the Captain's garden, eating up all the lettuces and peas.

The Captain told us bluntly: "Either Billy Goat goes - or I go!" We thought it better to keep the Captain and our precious vegetables. So, after paying five bob for Billy, feeding him lavishly and looking after him for three months, we sold him - for five bob. He went to a kindly farmer who, we knew, would give our Billy a good home.

Billy's place was taken by a stray black kitten, Mr. Timoshenko, who loved to eat frogs in the wild garden. Mr. Splinters's favourite foods were porridge laced with sugar (or better still, when one could get it, golden syrup) and, above all, chocolate. We soon all learned to hide our precious chocolate, which, being on ration, was in short supply. We knew that if Splinters found it, we should be left with nothing but a sticky piece of paper.

His one hate - he could not bear to be left alone. If he could not see anyone, he would just sit and let out the most dreadful howls I have ever heard.

Splinters had five very joyous years at Peasmarsh. Then Peace came, and the time arrived for us to move from our beautiful country home and go back to Surbiton. Actually, the resident section of the school went to a large house just over the border of Kingston, in Surbiton Road, five minutes walk from the parent school in Surbiton.

Thinking that Splinters would be distressed by the hustle and bustle of the move, we placed him with kennels just outside Surbiton on the Portsmouth Road. He was to stay there for several days. But, after two nights, we had a frantic phone call. Could we, please, collect him, as he had never ceased howling day or night, in spite of the kind lady taking him to her own bedroom at night!

So off we went to collect Splinters. While still some distance from the kennels, we heard those well-known sounds. We knew whose voice it was. But what a welcome we got!

So we took him to his new home, but how different it was! What a change from the country to which he had always been accustomed!

The boys had to leave him daily to go for lessons now at the parent school. So, instead of spending every minute with them, he had to remain at home. His days were long enlivened now by Gorgeous Gussy, the ginger tabby from a house nearby, who would share all his meals, but rewarded all his attempts to lick her with a slap or a hiss.

Problems started for us all. In an ordinary home it is possible to watch a dog for most of the time, or, at any rate, to ensure that he is shut in and does not stray. But, with a school, doors and gates are always being left open. At Surbiton Road, we had large gardens, but there was still the problem of the often-open gates. When catching a bus we had to be careful or we might find ourselves being told by a not too-polite conductor to "Get off the bus and take your dog with you." Splinters would have followed on, and crept aboard the bus.

By hook or by crook he would defy all efforts to keep him in the grounds, but would go out into the middle of the road to await the return of his beloved pals. It was all right for oncoming traffic which he could see, but he could not hear anything coming up behind. One day Eric, looking from his study window, saw with horror Mr. Splinters sitting in the middle of the road with a huge lorry halted behind him. The kindly driver got down, lifted Splinters to the pavement, and returned to his cab, only to find that Mr. Splinters had returned to his old post in the road again. Once again the lorry-driver got down, and lifted him to safety. Thank God for one kind, thoughtful driver.

But at last, after much heart-searching, it really dawned on us that our deaf pet would cause an accident, killing himself or maybe even a human being. Out in the country, Mr. Splinters had been in his element. There was no place for him in safety in a busy town. So, sad at heart, we had to say Good-bye to our much-loved Mr. Splinters, our one and only dog.

We knew that it was the right decision, but we also knew that a house was not

a home for us without an animal. Ere long, Mr. Splinters was followed by Twinkle, Bingo and Jackie, all black cats belonging to staff members - and then our very much loved tabbies, Mr. Tail and Mr. Chips, known to many of you. And now - the champion, pure white Mr. Softee. What memories we have!

I was just thinking that if all the animal pals of the Old Boys Book Club could get together, what a meeting it would be! And what yarns they could tell!

A Happy Christmas to you all, and to your dear pals.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Our Surbiton Road school house, mentioned by Madam, was the scene of our earlier Surbiton meetings for the OBBC. The Club's third meeting of all time, was held there. Herbert Leckenby attended his first club meeting at Surbiton Road.)

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LODER

by J. WALLEN

Some time back "The Editor" described Gerald Loder as being "Too bad to be true".

It is certainly a statement of fact that one always knew where one stood regarding Loder's rather predictable character. However one thing we can credit to Loder is much of the senior form humour during the last ten years of the Magnet. Coker of course was responsible for much of the more obvious humour at Greyfriars. Loder however was a serious character, and so his humour possessed more subtlety.

The Cad of the Sixth was both a toady and a hypocrite. He held all the powers of Prefectship, and yet abused them all.

If it suited him, Loder would always toady to the power in the land while secretly despising the person who could be deceived so easily. An example of this appears in the "Greyfriars Secret Society" series where Mr. Prout has temporarily taken over the role of Headmaster at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch resigns, finding himself quite unable to give Mr. Prout the compliments and praise which he demands. Loder of course curries favour with Mr. Prout and gains his confidence to a point where Mr. Prout regards Loder as his right hand. However Mr. Prout's confidence is shaken in his Head Prefect when after being attacked by the mysterious "Secret Seven" Loder brings The Famous Five, Vernon-Smith, and Redwing, before Mr. Prout, claiming to have recognised their voices. Coker proves that this is not so, and Loder is left with an irate Mr. Prout to deal with. The following passage, taken from Magnet 1394, shows the humour of an embarrassing situation. The type of embarrassing situation which Gerald Loder so often found himself in.

"Loder remained. Great as was Prout's confidence in that trusty prefect, he was both startled and shocked by Loder's reckless statement which had been proved to be unfounded. He did not think that Loder had lied, but he did think that Loder had taken his own fancies for certainties, which was a rather serious thing for a head prefect to do. Prout talked to Loder for a solid quarter of an hour on that subject - a heart-to-heart talk that left the bully of Greyfriars perspiring.

"When Gerald Loder at last got out of the Head's study, he was longing to knock Harry Wharton and Co. into the middle of next week, and Prout still farther along the calendar."

This tragic comedy is completed the next day when Loder takes Dutton of the Remove to Mr. Prout after finding him in possession of a Guy Fawkes mask. Loder of course jumping to the conclusion that Dutton is one of the Secret Seven, who had worn such articles during their ragging of the previous day.

However it is discovered that Dutton has purchased the mask for Guy Fawkes

night which is close at hand. So Loder is once again left with an irate Prout.

The following extract is also taken from Magnet 1394.

Prout turned to Dutton.

"You may leave the study" he snapped.

"Loder said the same sir --"

"What?"

"But I'm not muddy --"

"N-n-not m-m-muddy."

"No, sir. I can't see any mud, anyhow. If I'm muddy, where is it?" argued Dutton.

"Go!" shrieked Prout. He had had enough of talking to Dutton, at all events.

"Go! Go!"

Dutton went.

Loder would have been glad to follow. But Prout had some more to say to Loder. There was another heart-to-heart talk for that zealous prefect. When he got away at last, Loder realised that he had better think twice, if not three times, before he took any fellow to Prout again.

Of course Loder never learnt his lesson, and he continued to make a fool of himself until the Magnets demise in 1940. But Loder was an inseparable part of the Greyfriars saga. And the "Old School" just would not have been the same without him.

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Xmas memories crowd thick and fast. God bless you all.

LES FARROW

FYDELL STREET, BOSTON.

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The O.B.B.C. Friends are always in my thoughts at Christmas. Greetings to you all.

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Write: ERIC FAYNE

Ramblings of a Greyfriar's Man

by CLIFF SMITH

I've been a subscriber to C.D. since 1950, and this is the first time I've put pen to paper to write an article for our beloved magazine, so bear with me whilst I wallow in a little selfish nostalgia.

I suppose most of us can remember exactly when and where they first read their favourite paper (mine incidentally is the Magnet), but I'm afraid it is not so in my case.

When I was about 11 years old, I was an avid reader of Film Fun and Kinema Comic plus Funny Wonder and Jester - the last two 1d. comics were what my brother and I were allowed to buy from our meagre spending money. A wealthier pal of ours bought the more expensive Film Fun, Kinema Comic PLUS the Magnet which he duly passed on to us in exchange for our not so pricey penny dreadfuls as his mother called them. Well for many months the Magnet just didn't interest us, and I'm afraid we only looked at the drawings which I thought very clever. We didn't read the stories (shame on us, we never knew what we were missing). However by sheer good fortune we were sent on holiday to an Aunt who lived in the Yorkshire Dales, and by a happy mischance, a Magnet was packed inside a copy of Film Fun. As it happened the village where we stayed didn't have a newsagents, so after I'd read my Film Fun from cover to cover I was at a loose end for reading matter. In desperation I picked up the Magnet and thought I'd give it a try. You can imagine what joys of delight unfolded in those magical pages - I can't remember the copy, but it was one of the Hollywood series in 1929 - needless to say from that day to this I've been hooked on Hamiltonia.

Gems, Popular, S.O.L's, Holiday Annuals, I never tired of any of them, and I acquired quite a stock in my youth, but like most things they have gone beyond recall.

I remember at school we had a Magnet Club, and naturally as most boys do, one associated oneself with a particular character - my favourite was Bob Cherry - mainly because I was keen on all sport like Bob and not too keen on school work, also like Bob, but I managed to get by, due to a lot to prodding from my father.

However, one fine day a new boy arrived in our form, he was tallish, very thin, had rather a large dome like forehead and wore spectacles. During break I went over to him and said, 'Hello Lonzo, how are you?' to which he replied 'not so bad Coker old bean!' Well my Bob Cherry ego was completely deflated pro tem. Fancy anyone associating me with Coker the champion chump. But all was forgiven for like the gentle Lonzo he was just pulling my leg. Needless to say it was a great start to a firm friendship, he turned out to be an excellent centre half at soccer - so I should really have called him Peter and not Lonzo, but sad to relate, his nickname of Lonzo still sticks - even his wife calls him that. I'm glad to say his allusion to

me as Coker died a natural death - mind you I don't think I looked a bit like a 'Coker'.

Throughout the thirties he bought the Gem and I the Magnet, which we exchanged, but always got our own copies back afterwards. Once again I was lucky with my real Hamiltonia because the Gem reprints came on the scene, (but I didn't know they were reprints at the time). I must admit however being confused by the character of Ernest Levison - to me it was like reading of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In the S.O.L's he was in the St. Jim's teams but in certain Gems he was a bounder and a cad. My enlightenment didn't come till much later on. Luckily my Magnet reading coincided with what has been called the golden age, up to approximately 1935, but I still found a great delight in later Magnets right to the end in 1940.

I can vividly remember that Saturday in May 1940 when my weekly copy didn't turn up. I toured all the newsagents for miles around searching for my beloved Magnet, but without success. Little did I realise that it was the end of an era.

Of course more important events were on our minds, and it was only a matter of weeks before I was called for service in the Navy, and I took three S.O.L's with me on that memorable (for me) journey, and they travelled all over the world with me until peace reigned once again. My selection was the Egyptian series (Kalizelos) but my three S.O.L's didn't complete the story because the fourth and final episode was never reprinted. I often wondered how the series ended, and it wasn't until after the war when I joined the O.B.B.C. that I purchased the complete series from the late Bill Martin (price 1/- each plus his stamp on each cover) then my curiosity was satisfied.

I've always enjoyed the Magnet stories for their escapism and entertainment value, and never tried dissecting them like a surgeon for purely critical reasons - I leave those niceties to the experts, but I most wholeheartedly agree with the findings of these experts concerning Hamilton's best period and his masterpieces. All I can admit to is that Charles Hamilton taught me a lot about human nature in his writings and many of his observations wouldn't come amiss today. But like many people of my generation I'm considered old fashioned because I like the gentler and more honorable way of life that used to prevail in these sceptred islands of ours.

Things were never the same after 1946, for me, at least, the Bunter books didn't quite catch on. The stories whilst well written, had lost a little of the magic. Nothing could replace the nostalgia one got when a clean copy of the Magnet smelling of printers ink, was delivered weekly. What great expectations one had of the adventures of H. Wharton & Co., not forgetting W.G.B. Happy days! Kids nowadays don't know what they are missing. Most modern teenagers (horrible word) could do with rectifying by a good dose of Quelchy's cane, which I'm sure would instil a little fear and a lot of respect and discipline into their "free and expressive carcases." Britain could then have a chance to recover from the unholy mess which is our lot.

May the earth rest lightly on the remains of my favourite author - Charles Hamilton - he would be very sad to see what has heppened to his beloved country if he were still here, but long may his memory live, and all the characters he created.

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For all fans of William ... here is

Penrod Schofield

by JACK HUGHES

Near 75 years ago, a young man invited a certain young lady to be his wife. She accepted. But by happy inspiration she made a condition -- that he, an established author, would write 'something about a boy'. Her insistence upon his living up to this contract became so pressing, that Booth Tarkington 'with a mind much misdoubting his knowledge of a dangerous subject' wrote his first Penrod manusacript and 'found it amused her encouragingly'. Published in a now perished magazine, Penrod appeared in book form in 1913, the title "Penrod".

In 1916 there was a second book, "Penrod and Sam". Although written at much the same time it was more than ten years later that the third and final book appeared, "Penrod Jashber". Soon the three books were combined and issued as "Penrod, His Complete Story", a new edition of which has just been published.

Little could Booth Tarkington know that the character he created would become somewhat of a figure in American folklore. And since imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Richmal Crompton would immensely flatter Tarkington in the creation of her inimitable William, whose character and adventures are often a carbon copy of Penrod.

Like William, Penrod inhabited a peaceful, secure upper-middle class environment (in a small mid-west town setting). Mother, father and pretty 19 year old sister Margaret, also Cook who is dedicated to frustrating Penrod's incursions into her kitchen. (But no older brother, only a succession of Margaret's beaus who in turn are utterly devestated by Penrod.)

William had his faithful ally, Ginger. And Penrod had Sam. Perhaps Penrod's gang was not as closely knit as were the Outlaws, but coloured boys Herman and Verman are staunch comrades in many an adventure when the followers of Maurice Levy (as unctious as Hubert Lane) are outwitted and outfought.

All who remember Joan, William's one true love in his earlier books, will find something of her in Marjorie Jones, except that Penrod's ardour was not returned -- at least not until the last chapter of all -

> 'In the grass between Duke's forepaws there lay a white note, folded in the shape of a cocked hat and the sun sent forth a final amazing glory as Penrod opened it and read:
>
> 'Your my bow'.

Penrod had his Jumble - a wistful dog called Duke:

> 'The dog's name was undescriptive of his person ... he wore a grizzled moustache and indefinite whiskers: he was small and shabby and looked like an old postman.'

It would be faithful Duke, sitting patiently outside the garden shed who would thus acquaint a wrathful Mr. Schofield where his erring son could be found.

'Mr. Schofield seated himself on the window-sill whence he could keep in view that pathetic picture of unrequited love. "Go on with your story Mamma" he said. "I think I can find Penrod when we want him." Again the faithful voice of Duke was heard pleading outside the bolted door.'

Mrs. Lora Rewbush, perhaps a little like Mrs. Lane, would present a children's 'pageant of the Round Table'.

Feebly the demoralised children sang:

'"Chuldren of the Tabul Round
Littul knights and ladies we,
Let our voy-sis all resound
Faith and hope and charitee."'

Penrod who had baulked at wearing the ghastly costume thought up for him by his mother and sister, made a last minute change of attire:

'At the appearance of Penrod as Sir Lancelot du Lake the Child, the great shadowy house fell into an uproar, and the children into confusion. Strong women and brave girls in the audience went out into the lobby shrieking and clinging to one another ...

Friends of the author went behind the scenes and encountered a hitherto unknown phase of Mrs. Lora Rewbush: they said afterward, that she hardly seemed to know what she was doing. She begged to be left alone somewhere with Penrod Schofield, just for a little while. They led her away.'

Penrod was the star of a number of movies. The first in 1922, another, 'Penrod And Sam' in 1923 (Joel McCrea made his movie debut in this). Again in 1931, 1937. In 1938 there were 'Penrod's Double Trouble' and 'Penrod and His Twin Brother'. Two Doris Day movies, musicals 'On Moonlight Bay' and 'By the Light Of The Silvery Moon' in the early '50's were lightly based on Penrod, although his name was changed to Wesley.

If you have not met Penrod before, now is your opportunity. A new edition of 'Penrod - His Complete Story' has been issued by Doubleday Publishers, 501 Franklin Stree, Garden City, New York, at US $5.95 plus 60c. postage on Mail Order. It is a delight from beginning to end.

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THE EDITOR WISHES ALL HIS

READERS & FRIENDS

A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS

A Clergyman in Disgrace

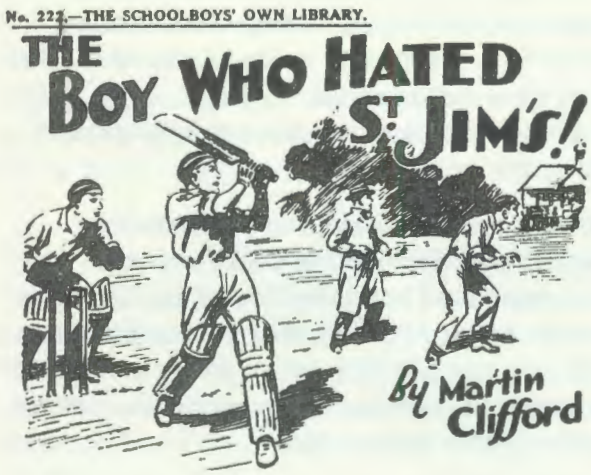
by S. GORDON SWAN

The Sexton Blake stories in PENNY POPULARS 142 and 143 were derived from U.J. No. 300, which contained a story entitled "Unfrocked" by W. Murray Graydon. The plot concerned a clergyman named the Reverend Lionel Stainer, whose sister Constance had contracted a secret marriage with Lowther Forbes, a worthless scoundrel. This man eventually deserted her and she had reason to believe that he had gone to British Guiana on board the mail steamer Kingston.

When she voiced this belief to her brother, the clergyman remembered reading in a London paper that the Kingston had been lost at sea and only one crew member had been saved.

"There can be no doubt that your husband has been drowned," Lionel Stainer told his sister. "You are free, Connie -- free!"

Four years later we find Lionel Stainer is now the vicar of Chase Norton, and in the little church his sister is being married to a Mr. John Hartland. Curiously enough, it was in this very church that she had been married under an assumed name to Lowther Forbes seven years before.



Inside Title Design, *Schoolboys' Own Library* No. 222

That night Lionel Stainer was sitting in his study when the French window was pushed open and a ragged tramp thrust his way in. It was no other than Lowther Forbes. He had missed the ill-fated mail steamer and gone out by another boat to British Guiana, where he had endured many vicissitudes, returning to England penniless. He had traced the clergyman to Chase Norton and allowed his wife's re-marriage to take place so that he could blackmail Lionel Stainer.

The latter gave Forbes a sovereign for his present needs and asked for time to consider the blackmailer's demands. After Forbes had left the clergyman was faced with a great temptation to remove the page recording his sister's first marriage from the church register. He overcame this temptation and stepped out into the night air. While in the garden he observed a moving light reflected in one of the stained-glass windows of the church, and recalled that he had forgotten to lock the church door on leaving.

Investigating, he found the vestry door wide open and, lighting a candle, made two discoveries. One was that there were some ashes of burnt paper in the fireplace, the other that the desk in which the register was kept had been forced open. Examining the book, he found that the page on which was recorded the marriage of his sister to Lowther Forbes had been torn out.

"Gone!" he cried. "Who could have done this thing?"

He was answered by a harsh voice which said: "You did it."

It was the voice of Lowther Forbes, who had come to the church intending to spend the night there, the village inn being closed.

The entrance of Sexton Blake into the case happened in this wise: He had come to Chase Norton to stay with Squire Sutton -- whose daughter Mabel was to marry Lionel Stainer -- and the squire had met the detective at Nottingham Station and was driving him in a trap to his home. On passing the church they heard sounds of an altercation and, entering the building, found two men struggling on the floor of the vestry. Blake separated the combatants and at first believed the stranger to be a thief who had broken in to steal, but Lowther Forbes quickly revealed the truth and accused the clergyman of destroying the entry in the register.

It would not have been to the advantage of Lowther Forbes to perform this action, and the circumstantial evidence against Lionel Stainer was very strong. Even Blake believed him guilty, and the squire announced his intention of informing the bishop of the clergyman's crime. The result of all this was that Lionel Stainer was tried before a Consistory Court, the witnesses against him being Forbes, Blake and the squire. He was found guilty and unfrocked; his sister's honeymoon came to an abrupt end; and his engagement to Mabel Sutton was broken off.

On leaving the Chapter House the squire and Blake were met by Joe Blackley, the ex-clergyman's gardener, who had made a hurried trip from France, where he had been attending the bedside of his son, the victim of an accident. When he heard the verdict the gardener collapsed, having suffered a stroke, and was taken to hospital.

Blake next encountered Lionel Stainer in the East End of London, where

Stainer was acting in a capacity which would today be described as social worker. Stainer's attitude to the detective was hostile, since Blake had borne witness against him. The unfrocked clergyman was living with his sister in Lilac Cottage, off the Mile End Road, and on his return here he found Lowther Forbes harrassing his wife. Stainer threw him out in the street and, in the presence of witnesses -- including Blake -- threatened to kill him if he continued to persecute Constance.

Meanwhile an uncle of Forbes suddenly died, leaving him £15,000 a year, and while he was confidently assuring himself that Constance would now return to him, he was confronted by another woman whom he had bigamously married and deserted. Having shaken her off, as he believed, he made his way to Lilac Cottage again, intending to tell Constance of his good fortune.

After a long interval, Joe Blackley had recovered from his stroke and was trying to find Lionel Stainer again. He was seen by Forbes who, guessing his purpose, savagely attacked him. Blackley avoided the blow but in doing so fell into an excavation, while Forbes fled from the scene.

The gardener was found by Blake and Pedro and, when he regained consciousness, confessed that he had torn out the page from the parish register after overhearing Forbes's attempt to blackmail Stainer. Then Blake, Tinker, Mabel Sutton and Blackley set off for Lilac Cottage to acquaint Stainer with the truth. Arriving there, they were amazed to find a crowd bending over the dead body of Lowther Forbes, who had been murdered.

Once more Blake had to bear reluctant witness against Lionel Stainer, this time on the count that he had heard him threaten the deceased, a statement which was corroborated by several onlookers who had been present on the previous occasion. Stainer was arrested for murder and the situation looked exceedingly black for him, but at the eleventh hour the other woman whom he had married and deserted admitted her guilt of the crime. Thus the Reverend Lionel Stainer was exonerated in both cases and reinstated in the church. His sister re-married John Hartland and all was well. However, the theme of this story raises a query. I have read several tales in which a page was torn from the church register to destroy proof of a marriage, but is this a valid belief? Wouldn't there be a record at Somerset House?

Lionel Stainer was briefly mentioned again in another story, as will be seen. Penny Populars 144 and 145 contained two stories based on the original U.J. No. 314, "Sexton Blake Playwright," -- again by the indefatigable W. Murray Graydon. For the purposes of this story Blake wrote a play which was produced at a London theatre. Among the audience were the Reverend Lionel Stainer, his sister and her husband; in another box was Mr. Morchard Penhaligon, with his nephew, Ulric Hammond and the latter's wife, Beryl; (probably these characters were featured in another story with which the present writer is not acquainted) and in a third box were Roger and Marjorie Blackburn (these two were often mentioned in Murray Graydon's tales, for the very good reason that they figured in that famous Christmas U.J. No. 165 of 1906, "Five Years After". This was subsequently dramatised and played in theatres around England, and later the story was reprinted in the S.B.L. Little Waldo Emerson Sheldrake came with his father, the American millionaire ...

The last entry is intriguing. Was it included in the original U. J., "Sexton Blake Playwright", and had Murray Graydon previously written a story about Waldo Emerson Sheldrake? The name bears a close resemblance to the one used by Andrew Murray in No. 478, "The Mad Millionaire", -- a story dealt with in another article. The mad millionaire of the title was named Sheldrake Emerson. This issue was published in 1912. Did Andrew Murray borrow the name from Murray Graydon and reverse it?

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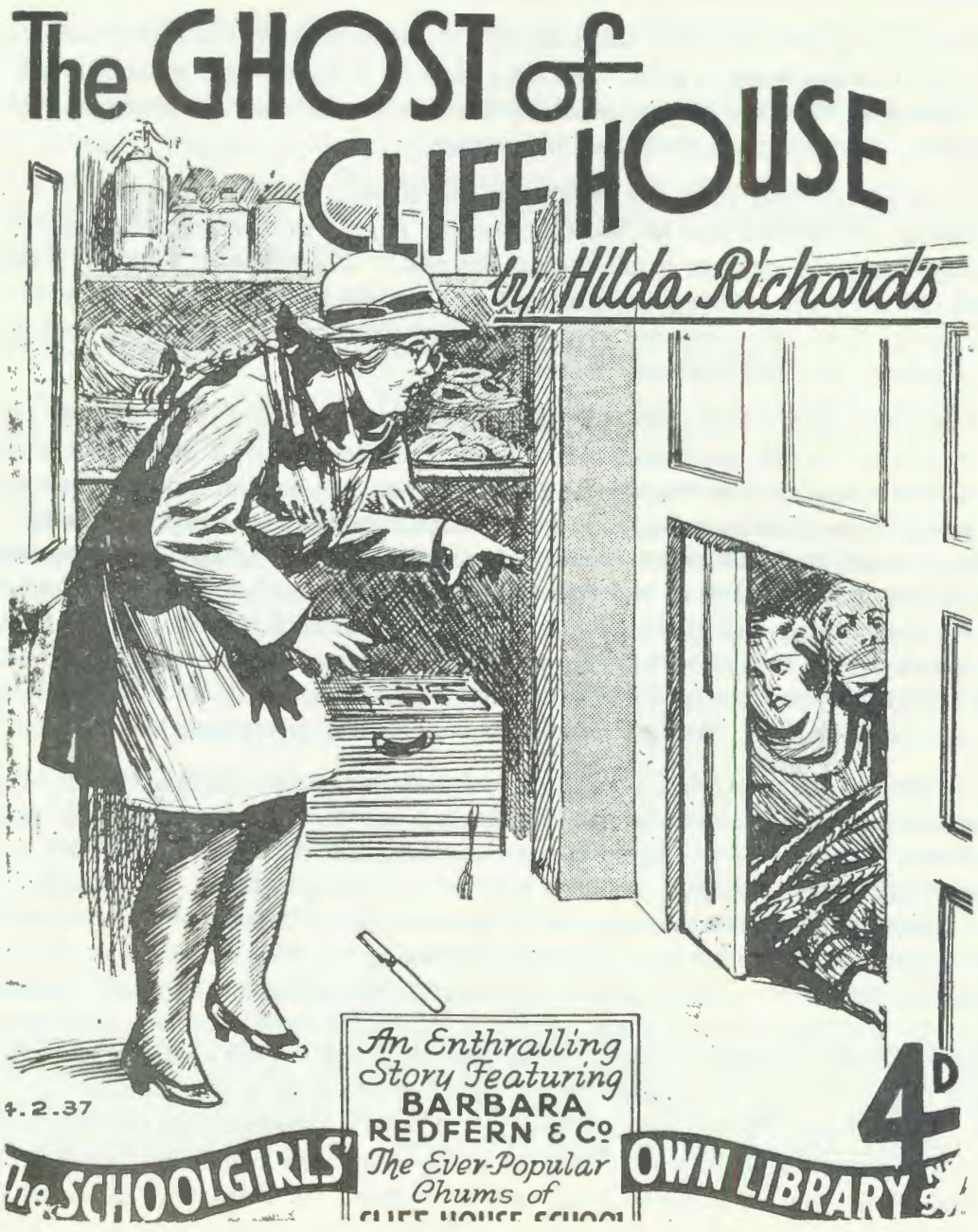

INQUEST

(An early item from the Let's Be Controversial series)

It is probable that when Charles Hamilton's "Popolaki Patrol" stories in the Popular commenced in the Spring of 1930 the star of the famous old paper was already beginning to fade.

As I have commented before, the collapse of the Popular seemed, at the time, to come about very suddenly. Way back in the early twenties, the Popular had been increased in size and price a good many months before the same improvements reached the Magnet and the Gem. For a good many years, the Popular had shown a method and orderliness plus the presentation of a long run of excellent stories which had put it on top of the world. But one can trace the decline from early 1930.

It is always interesting, if rather sad, to try to decide the reasons behind the collapse of papers which had obviously been in high favour for many years. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the foundering of periodicals like the Boys' Friend, the Popular, and the Nelson Lee Library must have been due to some specific shortcoming within themselves. It would be easy to suggest that tastes had changed, but such a suggestion would be merely an excuse for failure which came about as the result of mishandling of the papers on the part of someone. It is surely true that with all the papers I have mentioned there were definite signs of deterioration for some time before the final collapse came.

Often, deterioration must have been due to a change of editorial direction. A new editor, trying desperately hard to be clever, made changes which were really a break with tradition. Schoolboys, who used to be the most conservative of creatures, did not like breaks with tradition.

There are certainly indications of a change of editorial direction in the Popular of the Spring of 1930. The editorials became longer, and were loosely and facetiously written:

"Do you like yarns about the wild Congo? Yeah? About mysterious black tribes, roaring man-eating lions, and all that? Yeah? Good! Then get this into your noddles. Our new series deals with the wilds of the Congo. Yaroop! Oooooh! That's got you where you live, I bet!"

That sort of thing seemed foreign to the Popular. The editor spread himself more and more. The numbering of chapters was abandoned. Whole pages were given over to comic pictures. More whole pages were devoted to the ravings of Willie Wangle, the boy wizard. More and more space was given to more and more illustrations, though the old favourite artiste, with the exception of Chapman, gradually disappeared from the paper. Pages were devoted to competitions, to announcements of pseudo-free gifts, and to general advertisements. The entire system of presentation became less attractive to the more thoughtful reader, and only the editor can be blamed for this.

All the same, it must be admitted that, during many long periods throughout

the roaring twenties, far too much space in the Popular had been devoted to advertisements. The same thing happened for many years of Modern Boy, but for years Modern Boy comprised 32 pages and sometimes, when advertising was very heavy, 36 pages.

While I believe that slapdash editing helped to kill the Popular, it is clear that the editor had problems to face at this time. Since 1917, the paper had been a vehicle mainly for the presentation of the Hamilton schools. By 1930, it was proving impossible for this to continue. It has been pointed out that the Greyfriars tales continued until the end - and so they did. This is, however, no indication that Greyfriars was more in favour than either St. Jim's or Rookwood. It was just that Greyfriars tales were available, while the supply of St. Jim's and Rookwood had petered out.

The genuine stories from the Gem had been exhausted. Charles Hamilton had written but little for the Gem for a good many years past. A good many of the earlier Gem stories had appeared twice in the Popular - a few of them three times.

By the Spring of 1930, the supply of Rookwood tales from the Boys' Friend was running out. Charles Hamilton had written no new Rookwood stories for years. To eke out the few remaining Rookwood tales, the editor alternated them with some slapstick tales of Calcroft by Sidney Drew. It was not a happy or satisfactory solution.

Soon, the supply of Rookwood tales was exhausted. The editor went back to the Rookwood of 1915. Last year,* in Collectors' Digest we referred to the series about Gunter, the Head's nephew - a series which featured in the Boys' Friend in 1915. For some obscure reason, this series had been written up, with a great many alterations, into one story, entitled "A Bad Egg" for the Popular of 1920. It was a most astonishing occurrence, and why it was done is quite beyond the bounds of comprehension. In 1921, the series, in its original form, was published in the Popular.

In 1930, it was published yet again in the Popular. Also the series about Jimmy Silver's racketty Uncle John, who redeemed himself by joining the army. And other tales from 1915.

We have to remember that the old stories of St. Jim's and Rookwood had also featured throughout the twenties in the Schoolboys' Own Library. So, with St. Jim's and Rookwood unavailable, the editor of the Popular was clearly looking for fill-ups, and he was at his wits' end. He landed on the Cedar Creek tales, which had appeared originally in the Boys' Friend, and which had been reprinted in their entirety in the Popular. Plenty of them had also been reprinted in the Boys' Friend Library and in the Schoolboys' Own Library.

This time, in the Popular, they did not last long. It could be argued that by 1930, there would be a new generation of readers who would not remember a good deal of Cedar Creek. But such an argument would ignore the hard core, that largish group of readers who continued to take the paper for year after year after year. Also, the editor was suffering from that lack of method which can be seen in all this varying reprinting, when reprints were rushed out in various papers to meet the demand for the Hamilton schools.

* See Collectors' Digest 1965.

And now back to the Popolaki Patrol. Oddly enough, though the Popular had always been largely a Hamilton paper, none but the Popolaki Patrol ever appeared in that paper under the author's real name. At the time I never read the Popolaki tales, though I assumed that they were reprinted material. In 1966 I have found them entertaining reading, and I have come to the conclusion that they were specially written for the Popular. At any rate, I have never come on them elsewhere. Characterisation is good, and the dialogue and geographical backgrounds are convincing.

It is a series of this type, set by the Congo, which should bring home to all of us the very real genius of this amazing author. He was the most prolific, the most successful, and the most popular master of the school story. He was no mean hand at turning out a readable series of detective tales. But beyond that, and far more remarkable, he could write, with impeccable atmosphere of the Wild West, of the South Seas, and of Africa, in long series of tales where he seldom put a foot wrong.

This sort of thing was not entirely a matter of a sound education and a vivid imagination. It must have entailed long and constant study of the geography, of the peoples, and of the political dispensation of the many lands of which he wrote. Goodness only knows when he found the time for that essential study. Excellent, readable writing was by no means the only factor which made Charles Hamilton the most successful boys' writer of any generation.

The Rio Kid series, which had been running with great success since the start of 1928, ended in the Spring of 1930. It is impossible to decide whether they ended by the editor's or the author's wish. They were followed immediately by the Popolaki Patrol stories, which ran for three month. Then the Rio Kid came back for a spell. When the Kid finally departed from the Popular, it was time for the editor to shout: "Take to the boats. Editors and sub-editors first."

It was clearly impossible for the Popular to continue as a Hamilton paper. Here we have the reason for the change of name, and for the fact that the Ranger, which replaced the Popular, was in every respect not merely the old paper under a new name.

The result of the Inquest? Well, it is just possible that the main culprit was the Schoolboys' Own Library which had lapped up so much of the old material. And, of course, the fact that Hamilton had not written of St. Jim's or Rookwood for so long.

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ANNIVERSARIES

by C. H. CHURCHILL

During the life of the Nelson Lee Library, E. S. Brooks gave us many stories celebrating anniversaries. The most noticeable, of course, were the Christmas ones. Every December after the advent of St. Frank's we had a Christmas number and sometimes he made it a short series.

On a number of occasions we had a New Year number as well, such as in 1920, No. 239, "The New Year Heroes". This was a humorous tale about Handforth, Tregellis West and the Duke of Somerton endeavouring to keep to their New Year resolutions. These were taken on the spur of the moment and much regretted afterwards.

In No. 395 (30.12.22) "Archie's Pantomime Fairy", the St. Frank's party were in London for the New Year and of course patronised the Pantomime season. Another amusing story about Archie falling for a Pantomime Fairy.

Mr. Brooks gave us a Pantomime in verse in No. 500, "The Schoolboy's Pantomime", which, I should think, was something quite unique in school stories. Then in 1926 we had "The New Year Revellers" which was the start of a new series starring Sinclair and Barry Stokes.

We also had many Easter adventures to say nothing of Fifth of November ones practically every year.

April the First was nearly always remembered too. In April 1920 came No. 252, "April Fools, or the School without Servants". In 1925 we had the famous No. 513, "Fooling the School or the Greatest Jape on Record", introducing William Napoleon Browne.

As for Armistice Day, there were two stories with the same title, "Armistice Day at St. Frank's", one in November 1923, No. 440 and the other in November 1927, No. 80 First New Series.

The highlights of each summer were the holiday adventure series. As pointed out by R. J. Godsave in his article in the November C.D., these proved to contain many instructive and educational sequencies. A good instance occurred in No. 366, "The Schoolboy Crusoes" (June 1922). Here we had an excellent description of a journey through the Suez Canal. One wonders whether E.S.B. ever took a trip in that direction, he wrote so authoritatively on the subject.

All these anniversary stories coming along on the appropriate times gave added interest to the regular reader who could look forward with confidence to a first-class story or series of stories, come each Easter, Christmas or whatever season was looming.

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