COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL

Christmas 1980

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR

EDITOR: ERIC FAYNE, Excelsior House, 113 Crookham Road, Crookham Hampshire, England

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Our Annual seems to be understudying Tennyson's brook. "Men may come and men may go, but I go on for ever."

The very thought is breathtaking that this is our 34th year. If we are spared, God willing, next year we shall reach what is called, though the reason eludes me, our Coral Jubilee.

My very grateful thanks to all our contributors who turn up so many wonderful articles every year and make it all possible, and to you, dear readers, whose love and loyalty make worth while every ounce of effort in its production.

Our thanks, too, to York Duplicating Services, and, especially to Mr. Gore-Browne, for their superlative work in printing C.D. and its Annual during an association which has continued between us for well over thirty years. We are so lucky with our good friends.

1980 has been a year of sunshine and shadow. The response to our 400th issue, way back in the Spring, brought the very highest degree of happiness. The shadow was cast by the passing to a higher life of a number of our loyal readers and friends - a few reaching advanced age, but some in the prime of life. At this time our sympathetic thoughts go out to all those who have lost dear ones in the past year.

It only remains for me to wish you all a very Joyous and Peaceful Christmas, and may the New Year see all your brightest dreams come true. Madam joins me in these Christmas thoughts to you all, and our purr-fect office girl, the Princess Snowee, sends her special greetings to all your lovely pets.

God bless you all,

Your sincere friend.

Eric Fayne

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A Rich Four Hundred

by ERNEST HOLMAN

Four hundred issues of Collectors' Digest set me pondering on the possibility of a similar run of quality within the Hobby. Well, 400 will have to be 'approximate', for I have chosen the Magnet period from December 1924 to December 1932.

The first 'Wharton the Rebel' series gave full reign to Harry's character; there was the unusual holiday quarrel that saw him spending Christmas with Jimmy Silver (in the Boys' Friend he rescued Lovell from a haunted Tower); the series ended with the wisdom of Dr. Locke over-ruling the annoyance of Mr. Quelch and saving Wharton from expulsion. 1925 was well forward when this splendid series closed - it was still a year in which Hamilton's contributions were mixed up with substitute stories. All the same, there were some interesting singles - Bunter annexing Coker's Theatre ticket, Bunter with visions of aristocracy, Smithy turning out for Temple's eleven. The final half of the year, however, saw C.H. in full swing with the 'Ragged Dick' series, followed immediately by the highly entertaining events surrounding 'Bunter Court'. At the end of the year, Gerald Loder had his spell as School Captain - with poor old Wingate having a 'Whartonish' bad time before all came right.

The substitute writers had their last long fling in a continuous spell in January and February, but then the 'real McCoy' was back with a vengeance. Some short series, featuring James Hobson and his circus cousin, Bunter's Barring Out and Cecil Ponsonby, were followed by the India series. Colonel Wharton and his party went to Bhanipur - with several exciting adventures plus an interesting sidelight on Inky's character - and, of course, the meeting with the Moonshee. (By now Leonard Shields was established as illustrator.) Later in the year, Bob Cherry was playing the reluctant part of a Swot and the year finished with the kidnapping of Coker.

1927 produced the Game Kid and Roger Quelch series and that famous (more-than-once reprinted) single of Bunter's 'Brainstorm'. Then a splendid series, with the Bounder well to the fore and showing the nastiest side of his personality, dealing with Mr. Vernon-Smith's befriending of Paul Dallas. Not the least noteworthy in this series was the breaking-up of the Redwing-Smithy friendship, which caused the former to return to the sea. Smithy was to play his part quite a lot this year - he found himself 'One Against the School' in the Captain Spencer stories - and, later, he performed a good deed that turned sour. Tom Redwing returned to Hawkscliff soon afterwards and then one of the finest of all Magnet holiday series was afloat. This was the search for Black Peter's treasure, with the first introduction to that 'great' rascal, James Soames.

Tom returned to Greyfriars only to come up against Edgar Bright and a misunderstanding with Quelch. This series brought Ernest Levison back to his old school for a while (with some additional reading on the matter in 'Gem'). The year's end brought that 'out-of-character' portrayal of Bunter under the influence of Charles

Dickens; he was soon back to normal, however, and startled Greyfriars by his insistence that the new Second Form master was an escaped convict. A really excellent single followed, with Coker as the 'Boy Who Wouldn't Be Caned'. The excellent quality of the lengthy series was now becoming established and the substitutes were finding it much harder to get in. This was amply seen in the 'High Oaks' stories, with interesting sights into the behaviour of such diverse characters as Harold Skinner, Lord Mauleverer, Mr. Quelch and Dr. Locke.

The 'Crum' short series was, like the Bunter 'Dickens' story, a little out of the usual. The schoolboy hypnotist was able to make Bunter drop his aspirates; a very amusing incident in Quelch's attempt to put this right, with Bunter thinking the Remove Master 'off his nut' when the latter informs him that 'Horace Hung His Hat in the Hall'. Bunter next had a brief skirmish with the Caterpillar's bike and then came two excellent series - the dramatic story of Wharton's enemy from the East, Arthur Da Costa, which featured some absorbing cricket matches; then the very delightful 'Whiffles Circus' series. Back at school, Carboy the joker turned up; the masters had their spell for a while, with Coker punching Prout and loggerheads developing between Quelch and Hacker. Soames made his first re-appearance at Christmas as the 'Phantom of the Cave'.

In the New Year came that very long Hollywood series, with various adventures for Fishy, Bunter, Wharton, Mauly, Coker and Smithy. Back to Greyfriars and Loder was feuding with both Wingate and the Remove. The summer was soon upon the Magnet but the holiday of 1928 was a mixed one. The four weeks with Bob Cherry's Trike was sheer delight; the next four weeks at Ravenspur Grange (minus Bunter!) could not have been a greater contrast, with a succession of murders until Ferrers Locke settled things. Monty Newland was to the fore in the 'Devarney' series and then followed several very readable singles and doubles (including Prout being blackmailed).

At the end of the year, came another very fine series, with the arrival of the Courtfield Cracksman. The Golden Age was now under way; we had Hiram Fish cornering pork, Hilton Popper losing his moonstone and, later, revealing himself as uncle of a new boy who wished to return to circus life. A six weeks' series featured the Brander Rebellion and then came the very dramatic and absorbing visit to China with Wun Lung and Ferrers Locke. Prout was punched yet again in the Autumn and the year ended with Ferrers Locke and the Cavandale Abbey affair.

The 'Tatters' series at the start of 1931 was in typical Hamilton vein and after three singles and a double, Easter and Dick Lancaster arrived. This splendid series brought the Sixth into prominence - with Ferrers Locke again turning up. The very last substitute story followed and then came several singles and doubles before the summer was round once more. This holiday was a trip to Kenya with Smithy and his father, with some exciting incidents at the finish. October was well advanced when the holiday makers returned. A few varied and interesting yarns appeared before the Christmas visit to Mauleverer Towers. This was a three issue series, with hidden rooms and passages and the usual 'all right' ending. The close of the holidays led to the meeting with Flip. There followed a fine series, with the waif entering the Second Form as a 'Terror' and identifying the temporary Remove

master as a former crook.

1932 was to be a troubled year for Harry Wharton. A mistaken impression regarding his relationship with Colonel Wharton, who was finding himself in less satisfactory financial circumstances than previously, eventually led to a sequence of events that saw Herbert Vernon-Smith installed as Junior Captain. This series, although good reading, was nevertheless a thing of 'patchwork'. The misunderstanding with the Colonel was put right but the return to Greyfriars was rather mixed. Vernon-Smith's captaincy was not always apparent in stories really unconnected with the series - in the end, Smithy's captaincy terminated after a scene in which Quelch marched on to the St. Jude's cricket pitch and ordered the Greyfriars team back to school. The 'Mystery of the Green Satchel' occurred next before yet another foreign holiday series came along. The destination this time was Egypt with Mauly and occupied an adventurous eight weeks.

The 400 issues have now come up and the whole of the Autumn Term was covered by the second 'Wharton the Rebel' series. It ran for twelve issues and, as in the first 'Rebel', it was Dr. Locke's influence against Quelch's convictions that often saved the day for Wharton.

So there we have it - a period covering a little over 400 issues, in which were contained (to my mind, at any rate) the cream of the Magnet saga of Greyfriars. True, the Golden Age was not over and many fine stories were to follow. Nevertheless, in selecting this 'Rebel' to 'Rebel' period, I would borrow from the Nabob in stating that 'the richfulness was terrific'.

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Seasonal Greetings and a Healthy 1981 to all collectors. Don't forget that the London Club's Nelson Lee Library facilities are offered to all Clubs' Members. Literature still available - The St. Frank's Jubilee Companion and The E. S. Brooks Bibliography; £3.50 each including postage.

BOB BLYTHE, 47 EVELYN AVE., KINGSBURY, LONDON, NW9 0JF.

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HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL.

ROSEMARY KEOGH, 78 GREENVALE RD., ELTHAM S.E.9.

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Seasons Greetings to hobby enthusiasts everywhere, especially to all members of the Northern Club, Eric Fayne, and Bob and Betty Acraman.

KEITH ATKINSON, BRADFORD.

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WANTED: School Friend 1919-1920, 174, 196, 203, 258-268; Holiday Annual 1922.

LACK, 4 RUSHMERE ROAD, NORTHAMPTON.

Some thoughts on the Adventure Story

by W. T. THURBON

"To all the big and little boys who read it". Thus runs the dedication of "King Solomon's Mines", the book that won Sir Henry Rider Haggard a "five bob" bet from his brother, and launched him on a literary career. Incidentally, providing material for many writers of boys' tales of adventure in the publications we read in the long ago days of our youth.

But what is an "adventure story"? Martin Green in his recent book 'Dreams of Adventure and Deeds of Empire" argues that the adventure story began with Defoe, particularly with "Robinson Crusoe". In a book which contains as much of the opinions of various critics on the adventure story as on the adventure stories themselves, Green includes among his writers of "adventure stories" Scott and Conrad, as well as chapters on Mark Twain, Fennimore Cooper and Kipling, and on boys' adventure stories. Like Guy Arnold in his recent book on Henty, Green makes use of the modern "in words" that form part of the ritual of present day writers: "racist", "imperialist", etc., which to some of us with longer memories of the early years of this century seem a symptom of a more degenerate present. To quote one example, a comment on Kingsley runs "the hero now embodies racist and atavistic energies".

Green is not above the occasional slip. He argues that in "Robinson Crusoe" "Friday" was a kind of "black prince" figure, who appears in many forms as the faithful native follower of the white man. But he then goes on to say "'King Solomon's Mines' introduced, as well as an old hunter, a Black Prince Umslopogaas". More careful reading would have shown that while Umslopogaas appears in a number of Rider Haggard's stories, for example "Alan Quatermain" and "Nada the Lily" the native servant, who does in the end prove to be also a chief, in "King Solomon's Mines" is Umbopa/Ignosi. Nor do I agree with Green that John Buchan "was the last of the old style adventure writers", and surely also "Hodson's Foot" should be "Hodson's Horse".

Leaving Green for the moment, it is when we come to define "adventure story" that our difficulties of classification appear. Science Fiction is now a class of its own (with a sub-species of "sword and sorcery"), but among the early writers of what is now classed as science fiction, we find some of the best known stories are also adventure stories. Without going back to Lucian or Cyrano, if we begin with Jules Verne we see at once that "Five Weeks in a balloon", "Around the World in Eighty Days" and "Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea" are all primarily adventure stories. While the other "father of science fiction", H. G. Wells wrote Science Fiction in "The First Men in the Moon" and "War of the Worlds"; "The War in the Air" is as much adventure as science fiction.

Erskine Childers's "The Riddle of the Sands" falls into three categories: one of the great sea stories; a spy tale never out of print since its first publication in 1903 - about how much is fact and how much fiction being still a cause of conjecture

and argument - as I well know from experience; it is also a first-class adventure story.

To return to Green, his classification of Scott as an adventure story writer is surely to forget that Scott is the father of the Historical Novel. But to disagree with Green on this is not to deny that many so-called "historical stories" are merely adventure stories in period costume. Jeffrey Farnol, Justin McCarthy, Stanley Weyman, Warwick Deeping all wrote stories in an historical setting, but these are "period pieces" rather than true historical novels.

To find that latter, apart from the masterpieces of the past, we must turn to the writers who know their period, and have a feeling for and mastery of it. Such writers for children include Rosemary Sutcliffe, Ronald Welch, Geoffrey Trease, Mary Rae and many others; while among writers of adult historical novels, we find Cecilia Holland's great study of the Mongol successors of Genghis Khan "Until the Sun Falls", Edith Pargetter's four volume saga of Llewellyn, last native prince of Wales, and Dorothy Dunnett's long sequence on the Scotland and France of the early sixteenth century. Henty, of course, is regarded as a writer of historical stories, but apart from "Out on the Pampas" and "Redskin and Cowboy" - which Guy Arnold describes as a pure "western" a close study of the main series of Henty's historical tales shows them to be really adventure stories with a pastiche of history. Kingsley was an Historian, and a Cambridge Professor, but shows such stupid bias against Roman Catholics in "Westward Ho" as to rank it merely as an historical setting for an adventure story.

I cannot follow whether Green thinks the age of the adventure story is finished, but in fact the adventure story is still very much alive today. Frederick Forsyth's "Day of the Jackal" and "Dogs of War" are pure adventure; so are Paul Erdman's stories, for example "The Crash of '79". The modern vogue of the spy story brings us to another type of story. Television's "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" has been a huge success - and added a new definition to the word "mole". The craze for James Bond seems to have died down, and Len Deighton temporarily abandoned the spy story, but John le Carre is still writing, and many spy stories are equally adventure stories.

Leaving aside the Detective and the Western as distinct classes in their own right, we find in the American R.W. Chambers, adventure stories which are really costume romances, but he also wrote genuine historical novels in his series of stories of the American War of Independence; while "The Whistling Cat" is a clear reconstruction of the Northern Military Telegraph Corps in the Civil War. The historical background is most carefully researched, as a writer in the Journal of the Royal United Services Institute found, but it is also a fine adventure story.

Conan Doyle's "Lost World" was of great use to Reginald Wray, as also was Haggard. If Haggard, in particular, had received royalties for all his ideas copied in boys' papers, he would have been a very rich man indeed. Edgar Wallace's "Sanders of the River" series is also adventure. He also supplied Cecil Hayter with ideas; I said in an early "Annual" that "Lobangu" began as Umslopogaas and ended as Bosambo.

How far one author influences another, perhaps unconsciously, is hard to say. The climax of perhaps the greatest of Dorothy Sayers's detective stories "The Nine Tailors" is a catastrophic flood; was she unconsciously influenced by the flood that causes the tragic ending of "The Mill on the Floss"?

Conan Doyle's "Professor Challenger" of "The Lost World" provided Reginald Wray with the prototype of his "Professor Kendrik Klux" in a subterranean "lost world" - perhaps an echo of Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs - and in that fine "Chuckles" series of 1915 "Phantom Gold", with its echoes of Haggard. It is said that Doyle founded his "Professor Challenger" on Rider Haggard's "Professor Ptolomey Higgs" in "Queen Sheba's Ring", and Wray used ideas from this story in "Phantom Gold".

The desert island theme of Robinson Crusoe has produced a whole school of what are known as "Robinsonnades": Ballantyne's "Coral Island", Marryat's "Masterman Ready", and also "The Children of the New Forest", which though set in the forest is thematically a crusoe type story, and also many serials in both the papers and comics of earlier years, culminating in another fine "Chuckles" series, "Adventure Island".

Adventure stories appeared in the "bloods", such as "Boys of the Empire", as well as in the periodicals that replaced them: "B.O.P.", "Chums", "Captain". We should not leave the earlier Victorian writers without recalling Captain Mayne Reid, a very popular author in his day, whose "Rifle Rangers" was based on his experiences in the U.S.A.-Mexican War.

Rider Haggard ranks high among the writers of adventure stories; "King Solomon's Mines", "Alan Quatermain"; his Zulu tales such as "Nada the Lily", as well as "She" and other similar stories which showed that Haggard possessed what C. S. Lewis called "The mythopoeic gift pure and simple". American writers have not forgotten Africa, among them several big game Hunters; Hemingway wrote factually of his African adventures, but will always be remembered for his story of the Spanish Civil War "For Whom the Bell Tolls". Stewart Edward White wrote of his African expeditions, but also a good tale of Africa in the First War "The Leopard Woman", and C. S. Forrester wrote of the same war in "The African Queen". Robert Ruark, Sportsman, writer, and big game hunter wrote two novels of Africa in transition: "Uhuru" and "Something of Value", dealing with the Mau Mau rising.

The imaginary war stories form a genre of their own; from Chesney's "Battle of Dorking" to Hacketts "Third World War". This brings to mind "Blackwoods Magazine", sadly now ending its career after 150 years. This contained, among many true stories, fine stories of "outposts of empire", of exploration, warfare and of the sea.

Among many adventure stories of later colonial days one can recall as an example Wilfrid Robertson's "Storm of '98" about the Mashona rebellion in what was Rhodesia, in the days of the Frontiersmen. The two world wars naturally produced many stories, in which the adventure element was obvious. Among flying stories pride of place must be given to the immortal "Biggles", not forgetting "Worrals" of the Girls' Own Paper.

Cecil Hayter was a writer influenced greatly by Haggard. He wrote serials in the Boys' Realm, the Boys' Friend, The Boys' Journal, Pluck, in which appeared as a serial - twice I believe, as well as in the B.F.L., "The Red (or Ruby) Scarab", which included one of his two Zulu characters "M'Wama". His long series of tales of Sexton Blake, Sir Richard Looseley and Lobangu in the Union Jack were primarily adventure stories, and showed heavily the influence of Rider Haggard (and of "The Lost World") in "The Long Trail". His later Lobangu showed touches of Wallace's "Bosambo". But "Lobangu" is one of the immortals of the Sexton Blake saga. Hayter used Ian Flemings device of inserting a touch of "expertise" into his story: in U.J. 795, "Moon of the East" Blake comments on one of Sir Richard's friends:

> "He struck me as being a trifle mad and possessing an unhealthy knowledge of China - the real China - and Chinese customs. I should say he knows as much as Dr. Morrison, or Hart himself".

The point of this comment is that Morrison and Hart were real people, one being for many years the "Times" Correspondent in China - he was in the Legation Siege during the Boxer Rising - and Hart was for many years Head of the Chinese Customs Service.

Hesketh Pritchard, who wrote a classic of exploration in 1901, "Through the Heart of Patagonia" wrote a long series about a Spanish bandit in Pearson's Magazine "The Adventures of Don Q."

"The B.O.P.", "Chums" and the "Captain" contained many adventure stories. Captain authors included Herbert Strang, and John Buchan, who wrote for it his African tale "Prester John". "Chums" included many well-known writers, including its first Editor, Max Pemberton, who wrote for it "The Iron Pirate". Among later writers Captain Brereton wrote "Scouts of the Baghdad Patrol", but "Chums" will always be remembered for S. Walkey and his series of Pirate and other tales. Equally famous writers made up the long roll of the B.O.P. contributors. "The Scout" also in its long career included many adventure stories, apart from scouting tales; among its early authors being Percy F. Westerman, Robert Leighton, whose tales included "Kiddie of the Camp" and several stories of the "Mounties", notably "The Red Patrol", and Basil Norman's "In Quest of Millions". ("Basil Norman" was a pen name of E. S. Brooks.) From Sidney Drew came many fine adventure stories. An early airship story in "The Boys' Herald", later in the B.F.L., was "Wings of Gold", while many of his later stories were about Ferrers Lord, the Millionaire owner of the submarine "Lord of the Deep", and his friends Rupert Thurston and Prince Ching Lung.

Among adventure stories we must not forget Fennimore Cooper, to whom Green devotes a whole chapter; "The last of the Mohicans" and "The Pathfinder" must find a place in any list of adventure. Kipling ranks high in any list, and in many categories; "Stalky" is probably the greatest school story ever written; many of his best short stories are adventure tales, while "Kim" must rank among the "greats" in the adventure genre. Among "moderns" Lionel Davidson has written two first-rate stories in "The Rose of Tibet" and "A long way to Shiloh", while among Gavin Lyalls stories "The Most Dangerous Game" is particularly good. No list of adventure stories for children can omit Fritz Muhlenweg's "Big Tiger and Christian", a

splendid story of adventure in the grand manner of the tremendous journey of two boys, one British the other Chinese, across the Mongolian Deserts. One of those boys' stories, appealing equally to the adult reader, it is based partly on Muhlenweg's two or three visits to Mongolia. I cannot understand how Green seems to have missed this excellent story.

"Of the making of books there is no end."

But is this true of the readers' patience?

So let us turn to what were in their heyday probably the A.P's most loved characters, and their great moneyspinner before Hamilton.

S. Clarke Hook was orginally a Victorian writer. He wrote the first story for the Halfpenny Marvel in 1893. Rather late in the Halfpenny series he introduced his three famous characters. Pete the Negro, Jack the Oxford man, and Sam the American hunter and crack shot. When he wrote "The Eagle of Death" Hook can scarcely have dreamed that these three characters were to dominate the Marvel for many years, continuing to appear until 1922, and be for many years best sellers. The Boys' Friend Library began as a "Jack, Sam and Pete Library" to supply more of the stories. Hook wrote a number of stories in the Halfpenny Marvel. When in January 1904, it changed to a Penny Paper Hook wrote the first story, a J.S. and P. tale, "The Isle of Fire". The three appeared irregularly in the first twenty numbers of the Marvel, then they settled down as a permanent series, at one time being full length stories. At this time J. A. Cummings became the regular artist, and proved an admirable partner for Hook. The late John Medcraft said of the early stories in the Penny Marvel "The stories in the new series were as adventurous as the earlier ones, and even better reading, for Clarke Hook had divested his writings of some of their earlier crudities". "The Wraith of Dismal Swamp" and the "Phantom Chief" were excellent examples of the earlier stories, and many fine series followed; notably the balloon, the submarine and the steam man series - the latter probably owing something to the Frank Reade Dime novels.

Possibly the influence of Hamilton led Clarke Hook to introduce the boy, Algy, who gradually took over the series, with Pete as "stooge" and Jack and Sam merely lay figures. Almost to the end, however, Clarke Hook could still produce good stories. In the ten year period, however, from 1901 to 1911, Jack, Sam and Pete were supreme. Hook wrote to the great effect and by the sheer excitement of his best stories carried the reader over improbabilities of plot or setting, and kept the "slapstick" within reasonable limits.

Clarke Hook also used Pete in early stories to show that colour did not matter, and his assorted three were always "Comrades True". Clarke Hook wrote for too long, but at his best was a master of the adventure story, sweeping from incident to incident, leaving the reader no time to notice anachronisms, and he made his three characters patterns of chivalry and generosity.

So, now, at the end we still ask, how does one define the "adventure story"? We really have found no clear answer; but we can still enjoy the adventure tale.

How far the Welfare State, however idealistic its inception, has deadened

the spirit of adventure and led to a decline in national spirit and character, is for each of us to judge for him or herself. Perhaps we prefer comfort now to adventure, and the day of the frontiersman is done. But the S.A.S. showed in the recent ending of the siege of the Iranian Embassy, that the spirit of adventure is still not dead among us, and that men can still rise to the occasion when needed, as much as they could when Roger Pocock wrote the Frontiersman's Pocket Book in 1902. If the scope for personal adventure is now more limited we can still find it vicariously in the "Adventure Story".

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Miscellaneous books and magazines	

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Christmas Greetings to Josie, Norman, Bertie, our grand Editor Eric, Chris Lowder, Laurie Young and all who read this ad. Can anyone end fifty years of waiting to find out how Bullseye "Scarbrand" serial ends? Buy, borrow, or photocopy, Bullseye Nos. 15 and 16, all expenses paid. Also want Boys' Magazine 276, 278, 317.

JOHN BRIDGWATER, 58 SPRING LANE, MALVERN
WORCS., WR14 1AJ.

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ANY books with illustrations by J. Louis Smyth or information about artist urgently required. Seasonal Greetings to my many C.D. friends.

LEN HAWKEY, 3 SEAVIEW ROAD, LEIGH-ON-SEA, ESSEX.
(SOUTHEND 79579)

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JOHN BARTHOLOMEW, 77 EDINGTON STREET, NORTH ROCKHAMPTON, QUEENSLAND 4701, AUSTRALIA, sends Christmas Greetings all hobby friends in Australia, New Zealand, England and Happy New Year 1981.

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Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to Bob Wilson, Norman Shaw, Josie Packman, and the Editor, from -

J. ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRES., FAREHAM, HANTS., PO15 5AN.

Set fair for Greyfriars

by LESLIE S. LASKEY

The rain has stopped, and the sun has come out again, as I reach for my pen and draw a blank sheet of paper from my desk drawer.

Throughout the whole of my life, save for the first ten years, I have observed and studied and recorded the weather. For almost exactly the same length of time I have been a lover and collector of those fine old boys' papers, the "Magnet" and the "Gem".

The weather makes a daily impact on all our lives. It often played a vital part in the events at Greyfriars, and St. Jim's, and Rookwood, as chronicled by Charles Hamilton. I always used to read the author's descriptions of weather events with particular interest, trying to relate them, in my own mind, to the real weather types and sequences which I observed taking place over the south-eastern corner of England as the seasons advanced.

It soon dawned on me that the climatic regime of Greyfriars country, and also of the St. Jim's and Rookwood districts, differed in one fundamental way from that of my own experience.

The weather at the famous schools of fiction was more ordered and reliable than the weather in real life. It was bound by certain rules, whereas our own weather is so often unruly and unpredictable.

It never rained, for example, during an important cricket match. What a disappointment it would have been for us, the readers, to have reached the final chapter, with Greyfriars requiring only five more runs to beat Rookwood, and having only one wicket left, and then to have been told that the heavens had opened and that the match had been abandoned.

Such things simply didn't happen in that happy, make-believe world.

They couldn't!

It may be that the cricketing giants of the past were sometimes inconvenienced by the weather. Even the great Sir Jack Hobbs and Wally Hammond have been driven away from their wickets in this fashion. In more recent times a surly summer shower has occasionally attempted to ruffle the placid Colin Cowdrey, or to upset the iron concentration of Geoffrey Boycott. No such interruptions spoiled that summer afternoon when Dick Lancaster scored his brilliant century on the Highcliffe cricket ground. Over on the junior ground, at Greyfriars, the rascally Ralph Stacey always seemed able to display his skills with bat and ball under genial blue skies, which was more than he really deserved.

Likewise, the winter rains and snowfalls, at Greyfriars, were never allowed to mar the main football fixtures. Otherwise, however could the once sulky and rebellious Gilbert Tracy, finally brought to heel, have kicked four goals in an after-

noon to overwhelm Tom Merry's Junior Eleven from St. Jim's?

Mention of snow brings me to the most reliable and regular feature of the Greyfriars [illegible]er scene.

It always snowed at Christmas-time.

How the Meteorological Office would like to have Charles Hamilton's weather to forecast! Answering that perennial query about the chances of a "white" Christmas would be made so much more easy.

Of course there would be a white Christmas!

Whereas, in our own harsh world of reality, most of Southern England has enjoyed only three or four really snow-smothered Yuletides since the "Magnet" first appeared on the bookstalls in 1908.

Skating frosts have also been regular visitors in Greyfriars winters. Harry Wharton and Co. were, of course, good skaters. Sooner or later, however, the rotund figure of Billy Bunter would be seen to venture out upon the ice. Inevitably, a damp and chilly disaster of some sort soon followed.

There was a time, in my early days, when I believed that there was nobody else at Greyfriars who could possibly perform as hopelessly on a pair of skates as Billy Bunter.

However, that was before I saw Fisher T. Fish perform on a pair of skates.

The weather was not always fine and genial on half-holidays, of course. Sometimes it would go its own wilful way. In fact, the rain on one "half" led the Famous Five to make a startling discovery.

They were returning on their cycles, after watching a football match at Lantham, when the rains suddenly descended. The juniors sought shelter in a wood-cutter's hut where, to their astonishment, they stumbled on the forlorn figure of young Frank Levison, who had run away from St. Jim's. This dramatic discovery led to the return to Greyfriars, for a time, of Ernest Levison. Frank Richards related how the former Greyfriars boy fell out with his old associates there, who then set out to vent their spite on him.

It was on a bright, cold January half-holiday, in a later term, that Harry Wharton and Co. went for a ramble along the cliffs with their girl friends from Cliff House. When the wintry sunshine gave way quickly to a leaden sky and steady rain, the party looked for shelter at the cliff-top chalet, "Sea View", where they encountered the unpleasant caretaker, Mr. Parker. Little did they know that, just a few yards away, in a dugout in the garden of the chalet, was their kidnapped form-master, Mr. Quelch. The Famous Five returned to the bungalow a few days later. This time they were accompanied by the sharp and astute Vernon-Smith.

Thus did the sudden rain of the half-holiday first draw the attention of anyone at Greyfriars to the mysterious bungalow and its secrets. It was the Bounder himself who eventually discovered the missing master at "Sea View", while Ferrers Locke captured and unmasked the criminal, "Slim Jim", who had posed as a Greyfriars

master.

Thick sea-mists, drifting in off the North Sea, have been another common feature of Greyfriars weather, and they have provided cover for some furtive and unlawful acts upon the school precincts.

It was a misty late autumn evening when the egregious Coker set out to dash a can of whitewash over M. Charpentier. Heedless of the almost frantic pleas from "Skip", the former pickpocket whom Coker had befriended, to desist from this reckless course of action, the great Coker duly went ahead with it. Rather remarkably, Coker made no mistake on this occasion, and he got his man! In most similar ventures, Coker could have been relied upon to make some hideous blunder and to assault the wrong victim - with or without a fog to assist him.

Like most coastal localities Greyfriars has always experienced a good deal of windy weather. A mischievous March morning bluster once removed the top-hat from Dr. Locke's venerable head, in the Quadrangle.

This was the only occasion upon which the dignified Head was ever heard to utter the exclamation "My hat!". In the circumstances a very natural, if uncommon, remark from Dr. Locke.

The unfortunate Mark Linley once found himself in a horrifying predicament.

A chain of circumstances had led to his being suspected of stealing a bank-note belonging to Stewart, of the Shell. It all began when a strong wind from the sea blew the note away when Stewart was showing it to his form-fellows. When Harold Skinner eventually found the banknote, by chance, lodged in the ivy in the old tower, he was tempted to say nothing about it and let Linley go to his fate. Fortunately Skinner's sense of honour eventually triumphed over his innate meanness, and he spoke up and cleared the Lancashire junior's name.

Progressing up the weather scale from mere windy weather to stormy weather, perhaps the greatest storm ever chronicled at Greyfriars was the one that struck the coast on the night that the steamer "Adler" was driven on the rocks in Pegg Bay. Half the school was assembled on the shore as the stricken vessel foundered in tumultous seas, with vivid flashes of lightning illuminating the wild and dramatic scene. Adding to the excitment and horror of the situation was the knowledge that the ship was bringing a new boy for Greyfriars, Clive Cholmondeley, travelling from his home in India.

Eventually the school welcomed the boy who had been rescued from the wreck that night. But Clive Cholmondeley never saw Greyfriars, for the new boy in the Remove was an imposter, a ship's boy named Tom Handley. However, he had aroused the compassion of Bob Cherry when the deception was exposed, for the two had become good friends. Cherry's timely warning enabled Handley to make his escape before the hand of the law could fall upon him. The real Clive Cholmondeley had been picked up by the crew of a Russian vessel, and his rescue had not become known for some time afterwards.

Storm and ice; hot sun and cooling breeze.

The natural elements have for long influenced and inspired human endeavours - and often interfered with them.

For as long as the earth continues to spin through the heavens on its annual journey round the sun, so the interplay of the changing seasons will go on. The rays of the setting sun will continue to glisten across the mellow rooftops of Greyfriars on summer evenings. The winter winds will drive the wild waves ceaselessly against the steep rocks of the Shoulder.

Greyfriars is as timeless as the restless sea itself, and its masters and boys have already become immortal.

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Seasonal Greetings to our Editor and all readers. Best wishes to all at Northern O.B.B.C. and the Greyfriars Club at "Courtfield". My special thanks to all my hobby friends for another year of happy meetings and for their correspondence. Always glad to hear from hobby enthusiasts - replies guaranteed. Bunter, William, Tom Merry and Baker reprints for sale. Magnets wanted for years before 1930.

DARRELL SWIFT, 22 WOODNOOK CLOSE, LEEDS, LS16 6PQ.

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Warmest seasonal greetings to our esteemed Editor, bless him; to Tom and all Midland Club friends, Uncle Benjamin and all the London Club; to Cyril Rowe, Albert Watkin (New Zealand) and all world-wide who love our hobby; and especially to Henry Webb and family.

STAN KNIGHT, CHELTENHAM.

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WANTED: Union Jacks: 894, 898, 949, 1016, 1025, 1188, 1229, 1488; some early U.J's and Magnets for disposal.

J. F. de FREITAS, 648 STUD ROAD, SCORESY 3179, AUSTRALIA.

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A.C.E!. Denis Gifford's Club for British Comic Collectors! Monthly Magazine "Comic Cuts": subscription £5 (Airmail £8).

80 SILVERDALE, LONDON S.E.26.

= =

WANTED: "Union Jack" for years 1920 to 1929, especially Crim, Con, Wu Ling, 1225 Temple, many visions still required, all letters with offers replied to.

BUSH, 9 ARMSTRONG SQUARE, STUDD HILL
HERNE BAY, KENT, CT6 8AF.

Christmastide has come Again

by RAYMOND CURE

To a world hungrey for good news, I am happy to announce that Christmas has come again. Not that this will be a "big deal" for some of the youth of our day, but, I can rest assured that those who remember the Christmastides of days gone by will be of good cheer.

Mind you, the difference between a 1980 and a 1925 Christmastide can be assessed by the fact that in the twenties you could enter a newsagents shop to find it laden with Christmas fare in the form of Christmas numbers of every type, single or double numbers, be they men's or women's magazines or the popular Answers or Titbits. The display to delight the eye of any O.B.B.C. enthusiast would include, above all, the Union Jack, Nelson Lee, Magnet or Gem.

A veritable panorama of seasonable literature that the eye did not see in 1979 nor will it this year of 1980. Magazines, their covers resplendent with plum-puddings draped in white sauce, jolly Father Christmases, heaps of snow and sparkling icicles, the margins laced with holly and mistletoe. Never was so many Christmas scenes covering so many papers, we shall never see their like again.

Contesting for its place among the galaxy of seasonable literature of Christmas 1925 would have been the Union Jack entitled "Nirvana's Christmas", No. 1159, and dated 26th December. Billed by the editor thereof as "A Christmas Nirvana Story" and backed up by a splendid seasonable cover depicting the aforesaid Nirvana and a gentleman friend enveloped in a king-size snow-storm; to tickle your Yuletide tastebuds.

Now this Nirvana was some girl, so far as I know Tinker fell for her at first sight and inspite of Sexton Blake coming the heavy-handed father and warning young Tinker of the danger of such females. Sexton Blake eventually thought the better of it as time rolled by, in any case it did not put Tinker off. This young lady appeared on the stage of the Union Jack in No. 1149, 17 October, 1925, in "Tinker's Secret", by courtesy of G. H. Teed, followed by "Loyalty of Nirvana", U.J. No. 1150, and "Vendetta", U.J. No. 1156, which are the four tales before me now.

For the present we are only concerned with Nirvana's Christmas capers, this being, according to Charles Dickens of "A Christmas Carol" fame, the happiest season of the year. As a Yuletide cover this issue is really something, it's all one could wish for of a Christmas number, unfortunately the story does not in my opinion, live up to its promise, don't get me wrong, it is a good tale only Christmas cheer is rarely mentioned and there is more snow on the cover than in the whole of the tale. In fact there is more snow on the incident illustrated than in the incident mentioned - thanks to the artist. If the reader has a copy of this Union Jack let him compare the cover with the following quotation:-

"Nirvana shivered slightly, a raw, damp atmosphere chilled her and

there was a flurry of snow in the air." A flurry of snow? The cover depicts a veritable snowstorm. A fact which sells me this Christmas number rather than the tale itself, one we would have dubbed a "tear-jerker" in the old days. Come with me and Nirvana and friend through this cold December night to their destination; a poor hovel of an upstairs room. Lying on the floor covered with rags, hungry, shivering, emaciated, gaunt, was an old lady - Nirvana had found her mother at last. It reminds me of an old hymn our church soloist used to sing in the early thirties,

"Spoken by a lonely woman
Lying on a garrett floor
Having not one earthly comfort
I have Christ, what want I more"

This was the chorus sprinkled among six or more verses, always brought a tear to my eye that soloist did. But enough of this, it's Christmastide.

Let me say that having enticed a matter of 2d. from our pockets with the more than Christmassy cover, the editor, knowing the seasonable content of the number was thin, to say the least, hastens to greet us on the first page with a picture of himself giving us all a toast with his raised wine glass; and how's this for a toast:

"Here's to the reader of youthful fifteen
Here's to the reader of fifty
And here's to our popular Baker Street pair
Who track down the villains so shifty
Here's to the critics as the weeks pass
I'll warrant they'll grant our yarns as first-class."

I wonder why the editor limited his age readership to fifty? Maybe, if he is still alive, which I doubt, he would realise that Christmas 1980 finds the Union Jack with more readers of 60, 70 and 80 years than the teenage class.

Well! once again Nirvana's Secret - a good tale as such, but hardly a five-star Christmas one. However, the first sentence reads "Christmastide had come again" so take it from there.

At the time of writing I have no idea of the length of the life span of Nirvana, or if Tinker's love-life existed till the last tale of these four. Maybe one of our fact finding readers of Collectors' Digest could provide the answer.

POSTSCRIPT

There were thirteen stories of Nirvana all told and the love affair continued to the last one. The numbers of the Union Jacks involved are:-
1149, 1150, 1156, 1159, 1161, 1168, 1198, 1199, 1200, 1201, 1202, 1203, 1208.
All these are available from the Sexton Blake Lending Library. J.P.

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To all at The London and Somerset Clubs, our Seasonal Greetings. Still need many S.O.L's.

VALE & JOYCE, 33 IVY HOUSE PARK, HENLADE, TAUNTON, TA3 5HR.

THE WHEELS OF FORTUNE

by JACK OVERHILL

No man in the street I lived in earned more than fifteen shillings a week when I was a boy. Some had large families. The rent of the four-room cottages was four shillings and twopence a week, firing and lighting was tenpence a week; one shilling the Old Man for a drink and a smoke, left nine shillings to feed, clothe, and boot the family and pay all the other expenses of the home. Poverty was the dominant note, so the children rarely had money to buy sweets. As they grew up, boys worked out of school hours, girls ran errands and minded babies and young children for odd coppers.

Slumming was fashionable and gentlewomen visited the sick and old with food, clothing, and bed linen. One of them indulged in little treats for the children which led to her name becoming almost sacred. One year, she invited all those that lived in the street to her house early on Christmas morning to give each of them a present. Unfortunately, I wasn't among them. Although only seven, I shared in the housework and that delayed me so much that I arrived when they were all coming away. Had I plucked up courage and gone to the house alone she would have given me something, but that seemed like begging and wouldn't have suited my father - a Radical who stood four-square in an avowedly Tory neighbourhood. Instead, I tagged on the chattering crowd. If only I'd gone early, I could have joined in with all they'd got to say and show. Grievously disappointed, I felt right out of it. But not for long. It was Christmas day. At home, there was a fire in the front room, decorated with paper chains I'd helped to make, nuts and oranges, mince tart, fruit cake - both yearly treats - and I might get one of the threepenny-bits in the plum pudding. With so much to look forward to, I could have shouted with joy.

Every year Christmas started the same way with me. About the middle of December, the little general stores at the top of the street had in the window a boxful of farthing sugar novelties decorated with coloured pictures of Father Christmas, church bells, holly and mistletoe. Sometimes, the window was frosted over, or steamed up and I could only dimly see them, or the cat of the old lady who kept the shop was sprawled asleep across the box and I couldn't see them at all. But whether I could see them or not, I longed to have the money to buy one - better two! Then, I went window-shopping to make my choice of the toys, crackers, Christmas stockings and other things the shops were full of. That led to carol-singing, which might or might not be rewarding. A man or woman would come to the door and give you a ha'penny, even a penny, or the frenzied barking of a dog would send you scampering for safety. You could end the evening with the feeling that the world was full of nice people, or that it was full of nasty ones who deserved to have their doors kicked and bells rung. Whatever happened, hope spurred you on.

Drawing blank at several houses with a mate one evening, I pointed at the open gateway of a big house partly hidden by a shrubbery.

'Let's try here,' I said.

We made our usual slow and cautious approach through the garden to the front porch. A light in the hall shone through the frosted glass of the door and in its glow we began to sing. Suddenly, we stopped. A shadow had appeared in the hall. Someone was coming to the door - and not with money so soon. We got ready to bolt.

The door opened and a small, grey-haired, grey-bearded man was looking at us. 'Come in,' he said, smiling, and made way for us to enter.

We hesitated, looked at each other, then stepped into the house.

He closed the door. 'Now, sing,' he said.

We looked at each other again. To be invited into a big house to sing carols was something new.

'Go on,' he said, encouragingly.

We took heart from his benevolent manner and began to sing, shakily at first and then gathering courage, with gusto.

He listened, his head slightly on one side.

I spotted a woman, dressed in black, standing in an annex, nearby. That was disconcerting, but I kept on singing.

After we'd sung several carols, or as much as we knew of them, he praised us, patted us, gave me sixpence, wished us a merry Christmas, opened the door and showed us out. We darted through the shrubs into the street and then cooed gleefully. A tanner! What luck!

We headed straight for the fish-and-chip shop, where we each had a ha'penny cornet-shaped bag of fat, juicy chips, sprinkled with salt and vinegar and split the remaining fivepence. While eating the chips, I decided to buy a ha'penny lucky-bag. I had wanted one for a long while, but their worth depended on the surprise items in them rather than the little assortment of sweets; if you got something like a whistle or top that you didn't like, it was almost as bad as losing the ha'penny down a street drain. It was a case of trust your luck and I did so. The lucky-bag had in it beside sweets, a metal compass, the size of a shilling. I was delighted as I'd never seen anything like that come out of one. It's beyond me now how that came to be in one. Even in those days of cheap quality goods, the cost of producing a miniature compass, perfect in make and action, must have greatly exceeded a ha'penny, to say nothing of the selling side of it. I refused all offers - and there were many - to swap it. I looked on the compass as a lucky charm. And it was - more or less - until I lost it!

My father had little education. He was at a Dame's school until his father learned that the Dame only taught her pupils to make mats, which she sold to her benefit. There had been a gap till the Education Acts of 1870 caught up with him; then, 13 years old, he had nine months' schooling. He'd never mastered reading and writing, but he could do simple sums and being a shoemaker, he did them with a stump of pencil on the back of a piece of sandpaper. They were all to do with the weekly budget to make ends meet so that he didn't get in debt. As I was good at

arithmetic, he sometimes gave me sums to do - how many eighths of an inch from Cambridge to London - 53 miles according to the signpost on the main road near where we lived. I took the long route in doing them, reducing yards to feet, feet to inches, inches to eighths of inches, by which time the sum covered the page of a school exercise-book (I've still got one of them!). He nodded knowingly when I told him I could do decimal sums at school and the teacher had given me an answer-card and set me to marking the sums of the other boys, some of whom tried to bribe me with sweets and toffee to mark their sums right when they were wrong to avoid trouble with the teacher, a fiery Welshman who, alas, was killed a year or two later in the first world war. That led to his giving me tuppence to go to the local Hippodrome to try and win a £5 prize for stating the correct number of stars flashed on a screen. Half-way through the performance, of a theatrical nature, the stars were shown for a few seconds; impossible to count them, so, like the rest of the audience, I guessed the number, wrote it on the piece of paper provided and handed it to a collector. As I did so, I repeated the number aloud. A man in front of me looked round. 'That's the same as me,' he said. I said: 'What did you put?' - a bit of Stan Laurel far away in the future for which I couldn't forgive myself. I didn't share in the five-pounds prize, but I enjoyed the show, the first I'd seen of that sort. One 'turn' was a man riding full speed on a motorbike inside a rapidly revolving wheel, so big and heavy it made the building shake. That was more exciting than the much-boosted 'wall of death' motor-cycling at Cambridge Midsummer Fair twenty years later.

My father didn't mind speculating a 'thrummer' on a lottery-ticket, but he thought backing horses was a fool's game - you only lost money at it - but there was a time when he doubted his own wisdom. Out for a constitutional walk one afternoon, he got talking to an actor on the stage at the local theatre that week. (He never had 'conversations' and 'dialogues' were still in the realms of Plato.) The topic was horse-racing and the actor tipped him Jackdaw to win a race. He marked time on the horse and on the day it ran, he was as eager to know the result as a backer sitting tight with his worldly wealth staked on a horse in the Derby. Jackdaw won at 8/1. That led to wishful thinking on his part. If only he'd had a shilling on it! He mentally increased his stake. A quid on the horse and he'd have won eight quid - as much as he earned in two or three months! Before long he imagined himself travelling round the world on a bookmaker's money and finally he retired on it. Ah, he'd lost his chance over Jackdaw - indeed, he had!

A newspaper competition cropped up. All you had to do to win a big prize was to solve a series of picture-puzzles representing the names of railway stations. My father encouraged me to have a go. I set to work and found it harder than I'd thought. But there was no need to worry; I'd only got to look up Bradshaw's Railway Guide, which contained the names of all the railway stations of the picture-puzzles - the rules of the competition plainly said so. I went to the public library and asked to look at Bradshaw's Railway Guide. There was no beating about the bush because of my age; an assistant promptly handed me Bradshaw's Railway Guide, not, as I thought, a pamphlet, but a book, almost the size of a family bible. I sat down at a table, opened it and looked at the names of thousands - or was it millions - of railway stations. Hopeless from the start. Knowing it, I shut the book, returned it to the

assistant and went home to report failure. My father wasn't surprised. They knew who'd win the competition! (He was right if Horatio Bottomley had the running of it.)

I became a regular reader of the Companion Papers and other weeklies. Some of them offered half a crown for jokes published. I sent several without success. My final fling was:

The overseer of a trading-post in the Sudan received a telegraph message from a black foreman two hundred miles away. It read: White boss dead, shall I bury him? He replied: Yes, but make sure he is dead. After a delay back came the message: Hab buried boss. Made sure him dead. Hit him on the head with a large shovel.

I had laughed loud and long over that joke when it appeared in the Boys' Friend and I thought it could do with another airing. I sent it in again. My wheeze (I use the word as Chambers classify it as 'a cunning plan') didn't work.

The Greyfriars Herald was launched with a weekly picture-puzzle competition on the front page. First prize £1, second prizes 5/-, third prizes tuck-hampers. Every week I had a go, sometimes two or three. A tuck-hamper was the draw. After eighteen weeks, the Greyfriars Herald closed down and the competition was carried on in the Boys' Friend. I continued doing it. At last, a letter came. I had won a tuck-hamper in competition number 13. It was the middle of the first world war, German submarines were making things hard on the home front, and I welcomed the tuck-hamper for what was in it, but what counted most, it seemed to bring nearer Greyfriars and St. Jim's - a feeling worth having in those dark and depressing days.

A boy I knew named Reginald Cruden won two tuck-hampers in the competition. A year or two later, I read Talbot Baines Reed's Reginald Cruden - A Tale of City Life. Ever since, I've mentally associated Reginald Cruden (fact and fiction) with tuck-hampers - and tuck-hampers with Reginald Cruden (fact and fiction).

I joined a men's club when I was sixteen. It was free and the club-room was open from six till ten in the evening. The attractions were billiards, bagatelle and cards. I had no interest in cards, quickly dropped playing bagatelle, but I liked billiards - played on a three-quarter table which, later, made a full-sized table look like a 40-acre field when, occasionally I played on one in a billiard-room in the town. The custodian, a retired London policeman, was usually sitting alone, smoking a pipe beside the fire when I went there early. He'd 'sailed before the mast' for seven years before joining the police force and I was a ready listener to the tales he had to tell. Sometimes, they were near the knuckle, but two of a different kind stood out to reveal his character.

There were places in the East End where it wasn't safe for a policeman to go alone and they were patrolled in pairs. One night he happened to be on his own in a rough quarter when he saw several men sitting on a wall where they had no right to be. They'd have got off sharp had there been two policemen approaching, but as he was alone they didn't budge. Knowing how to maintain law and order he'd brought his heavy police gloves together and clubbed them off the wall one after the other as he

passed. There were no repercussions, there would have been had he shown fear.

Talking about the Ripper murders, he said: 'I nearly had him one night. I heard a woman scream, ran to the place and saw a man running away in the light of a street lamp. A woman lay dead on the ground.' He named the place and the woman, a prostitute. He nodded regretfully. 'I missed my chance that time. Money would have rolled in.'

I reminded him that Jack the Ripper had a knife.

'That wouldn't have stopped me in those days,' he said. 'I'd have had him.'

His manner was convincing and I believed him.

The war over old and new weeklies came to life. Among them was Young Britain with the offer of Peace and Victory medals for the best essays on indoor sports. I responded with one on billiards and received a medal with St. George and the Dragon and a female paragon on one side and flowers and shields with the words To Commemorate The Victorious Peace Of Great Britain And Her Allies 1919, on the other. Made of brass, the medal was and always has been a mystery to me. A few weren't struck specially for a competition in a boys' story paper. Where did the editor dig them up? I'll have to ask Bill Lofts.

My billiard-playing ended when I was eighteen. Two years later, I married. The cupboard was never bare, but there were times when it could do with more in it. My wife Jess and I turned hopefully to the competitions in Answers, Titbits and Pearson's Weekly. For months there was speculation with anticipation and we waited expectantly every day for the postman. A pocket-knife came from Answers, a letter from Titbits. The letter was addressed to Jess. Excited, she opened it, looked at a cheque and shouted, 'Twenty-six pounds.' She had another look and called out, 'No, two pounds six.' She looked again and said in a low and disappointed voice, 'No, two and six,' which was the correct amount. The shock over - and it was a shock, even a number of them - we thought it a sign of winning something substantial and it seemed on the way when she got nine out of ten right in Answers £1,000 free football competition. The competition was sometimes won with nine correct results and she stood a chance of winning the prize, or a share of it. Then, the office-boy at the place I worked came back grinning from Lloyds Bank, where he'd been depositing the firm's cheques. One of the staff, who had been treating the others on the strength of a correct forecast in Answers £1,000 free football competition, had received ten shillings and fivepence as one of nearly two thousand entrants with correct forecasts. What was a joke to the office-boy was no joke to us.

Crosswords became a craze. The Evening News offered ten-pound prizes to readers who solved one of their puzzles and made one. Solving a puzzle was of moderate difficulty, making one was hard work. To charm the judges of the competition, I used the letters E N as the design for the puzzle. Dredging an encyclopedia and a dictionary for a week (actually, it was thirty-three hours), I completed the puzzle and sent it in. The charm didn't work!

A bit of luck was near. I bought Jess a sixpenny ticket in a Derby draw. She drew a runner Sansovino. The News of The World cartoon showed Lord Derby, the

owner, naked in a zinc bath, reaching for a bar of soap labelled Sansovino, on the floor. A good tip as the horse won. Jess received five pounds. She danced with delight round the kitchen.

Backing horses wasn't in my line, but I had a feeling that a 100/1 shot would win the Lincolnshire Handicap in 1926, so I had a shilling on each of the five horses that started at that price. King Of Clubs, the winner, was one of them. The money market, national and personal, was in a bad way and four pounds sixteen shillings wasn't to be sneezed at.

Coincidence urged me to back a horse three years later. I told our grocer I was going to buy two three-year-old cherry trees. He said he could supply them - 2/6d. each. The next day when I got home from work, they were outside the back door. It was the third week in March, late for tree-planting, and I went down the garden and put them in. They were ticketed White Hart and Elton. The next morning while reading the newspaper, I saw Elton was in the Lincolnshire Handicap to be run that afternoon. The horse was a rank outsider. Thinking of King Of Clubs, I put half a crown on it. Elton won at 100/1. Twelve pounds ten shillings was a small fortune. (Shortly afterwards, I bought a six-year-old Morris Oxford 13.9 car in good condition for twelve pounds.) While having a walk down the garden with me the following year, my father pointed at the Elton and said, 'That tree's dead'. 'I know it is,' I said, 'but I've had my money's worth out of it.' The White Hart also died - perhaps, in sympathy.

I had a cut at a competition called Roundabouts in the News of The World. Apt phrases of no more than four words to be made from given examples. Here are some of mine:

Example: Strictly Confidential
Roundabout: Old Wives' Tale

Example: Marriage Lines
Roundabout: Hard Lines - Sometimes

Example: Much To The Point
Roundabout: Cupid Stops To Argue

Example: Courting Disaster
Roundabout: Bigamists Contract Marriage

Example: Turns Many Heads
Roundabout: A Good Round Figure

Example: The Wheels of Fortune
Roundabout: Slow Uphill - Fast Down

I didn't catch the judge's eye and gave up competitions - for good. Jess had long since done so.

To complete the story.

In the 1920's, I read an article in a French magazine about the pari-mutuel system of betting on French racecourses. The stake money was pooled, so much was deducted for expenses and the rest returned to those who backed the winners and

placed horses. I thought about that in relation to football betting in England which was conducted on the fixed-odds system. I felt that given the opportunity of picking, say, six correct results out of a score or so of matches, with a chance of scooping the pool, football backers would be likely to have a go. Turnover was all that mattered to the promoters. A fellow clerk at the place I worked was a football fan. We talked it over. Like me, he thought there was money in it. That led to a partnership and the production of a specimen copy of a coupon headed CAMBRIDGE PARI-MUTUEL, which I sent to the Duke Bar Printing Company in Burnley.

There were two pools on the coupon:

Pool No. 1: 6 winning teams to be selected out of 33 teams.
Pool No. 2: 1 home and 2 away teams to be selected out of 12 teams.

The Duke Bar Printing Company were specialist football coupon printers and they selected the teams.

On the back of the coupon were the rules under which the system worked. Eventually, they numbered twenty-two.

We started issuing the coupons at the beginning of the football season in 1925, paying 2/- in the £ commission to men who worked in offices, laboratories, shops and small factories. It was on a very limited scale, but a few shillings a week was worth earning in those hard-up days. He was a lucky man who earned £2 a week.

The pari-mutuel system of betting was novel and few backers risked more than a shilling or two on the pools. Our total takings only amounted to £20 (the same as Littlewood, who had started up in a cellar two years earlier, though we knew nothing of him).

Learning from experience we carried on until the end of the season when, in the matter of pool betting, we were much wiser but little richer. We still felt there was money in it - if only backers didn't drop off as fast as we made them. The reason for that was apparent. Backers wanted a big draw when they won on the pools. For the bob they laid out they wanted £100, better £1,000. When they saw there was no hope of that, they gave up. Why try, anyway, when they could have a go on the free-entry football coupons in Answers and similar weeklies and the Sunday newspapers, to win £1,000.

To extend the pair-mutuel system of football-betting was a problem. Advertising wasn't done on the scale that it is now and we were married men with only our wages to live on and couldn't afford to spend money on it. The next best thing was for me to get busy at the typewriter. I did so, sending coupons to the winners of the competitions in Answers, Titbits, Pearson's Weekly and John Bull every week. There were lists of names and addresses and the postage to send a coupon was only a halfpenny. Envelopes were cheap: half a crown a thousand at Boots. This we could do without breaking ourselves.

On the whole, the response was good. So it was from the people I picked out from the local directory and sent coupons to. The drawback was that as fast as we made clients, they dropped off. That seemed fatal to expansion. Apparently, we were flogging a dead horse and after three seasons - 1925/26 - 1926/27 - 1927/28 we

packed up.

The fixed-odds coupons and the 3d. and 6d. weekly tickets for the two teams having the highest score each week held sway. Pool-betting was something backers' minds had to become attuned to. That came in a rather unexpected manner.

In 1929 football competitions in newspapers were made illegal by a decision of the High Court that such competitions infringed the Ready Money Football Betting Act. The free football competitions in the 'weeklies' and newspapers had been the snag with the CAMBRIDGE PARI-MUTUEL. While people could have a go on them every week, only the enthusiastic would pay to have a go on the pools. Deprived of one of their pastimes, people were driven from the competitions to coupons and with everybody, or nearly everybody, out to win a small fortune, there was a boom in pool-betting. Firms started up all over the country. They grew so fast it proved what I and my partner had thought - that there was money in football pools. Had we carried on for another season, doubtless we would have been rich, but once out of it we didn't go back to it. I had no regrets at the time and I have none now. Indeed, I'm glad. It would have changed my way of life too much.

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The best of all possible Christmases to all our many friends in this most wonderful of hobbies. WANTED: B.F.L's 1, 18, 35, 154, 225, 272; Marvels - any from 102 - 151 and 215 - 250. Interested in any good condition Jack, Sam, Pete material. SALE or EXCHANGE: ½d. Marvels, 130 - 132 (£1 each); 20 assorted William Books (70p each); 3 Jennings (with covers) ---School, ---Diary, ---Thanks (£1 each). Postage extra.

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Sexton Blake's Library No.1's

by JOHN BRIDGWATER

First issues of the old papers are particularly interesting. Not only did the editor select the contents to attract as many readers as possible, he established the character of the new publication as well. Changes may have been made in the contents during the life of a paper but the main characteristics of number one persisted throughout. The ending of a run usually indicated that the formula no longer had sufficient power to draw enough readers. Such a loss meant either amalgamation with another paper or the starting of a fresh one with different characteristics.

This generalisation did not apply to the Sexton Blake Library. One may speculate as to why without coming to any definite conclusion and an examination of the various "Number ones" does not help much, but it provides a great deal of enjoyment. Loss of popularity could hardly have been the reason for the ending of the first series as the early numbers of the second series showed little or no change. The third series differed from the second mainly because the long-running character series disappeared; Zenith and Kestrel only appeared once to be heard of no more, for example, and many other favourites fell by the wayside. By contrast however, when major changes were made, was a new series started? Oh no! Changes such as revealing the names of authors after fifteen years of anonymity, adding 32 pages to each volume, introducing covers in full colour and a 'small' thing like moving the centre of operations to Berkeley Square and taking on an office staff, the S.B.L. took in its stride and carried on with the same series that happened to be running at the time. The ending of the last two series was, sadly due to the old cause which cut down so many fine old papers, but why did the first and second end when they did?

Looking at the various number ones reveals some surprising similarities. A brief outline of each will serve to show some of them. The almost legendry No. 1 first series, "The Yellow Tiger" by G. H. Teed, gave the Sexton Blake Library a really splendid start. Today it would make the first two volumes of a long series of novels. It is virtually two stories in one, the first being the crime and its frustration, and the second the long chase after the criminals. Blake is in great form and there is an abundance of adventure. Appearing in 1915 it is naturally a war story, or rather, a war-time story. Prince Wu Ling (The Yellow Tiger) and Baron Beauremon join forces to strike a blow against Britain's war effort. They abduct the Minister of Munitions. That new weapon of war, the aeroplane, is used for the abduction but Blake is equal to this challenge having his own private monoplane, designed by himself, called The Grey Panther. The abduction takes place near Westward Ho and the Minister is kept captive on an island of the Pembrokeshire coast. Tinker discovers this hideout whilst flying the Grey Panther and Blake makes a successful assault on it to release the Minister. The criminals retire to Wu Ling's headquarters in Cardiff. Blake follows and penetrates the Yellow Tiger's lair disguised as a chinaman only to be captured. To safeguard against this possibility he has instructed Tinker to arrange

with the police to raid the place at midnight. Wiling away the intervening time in the dock area Tinker is attacked by one of Wu Ling's men. In the struggle they fall into the water. He is picked up by a yacht which turns out to be the Fleur de Lys belonging to Yvonne. She insists on accompanying the raiding party but they are too late, the birds have flown, leaving on a tramp steamer, the Boca Tigris for Kaitu Island where Blake is to be sacrificed to Wu Ling's God Mo. However, Blake has contrived to leave a message so the Fleur de Lys sets off to follow. In the Indian Ocean Blake manages to escape in an open boat. A hurricane blows up and Blake is nearly drowned. Teed's description of Blake adrift in the storm is an enthralling piece of writing. Drifting, weak and delirious he is picked up by the Fleur de Lys. Whilst he is being nursed back to health by Yvonne the Boca Tigris searches for him, comes upon the Fleur de Lys and gives chase. The yacht is captured when a German submarine surfaces in front of her. During the ensuing fight Blake sends a radio S.O.S. which is answered by a Royal Navy TBD. Blake is rescued but Yvonne and Tinker fall into Wu Ling's hands. They are about to be sacrificed to Mo in Blake's place when he arrives with the Naval contingent. A grand battle drives Wu Ling and his men into the hills. In a final struggle, rather than be captured, Wu Ling throws himself into a lake. Blake thinks he is drowned but there is an underwater escape tunnel and the Yellow Tiger lives to fight on against the hated Westerners.

Number one of the second series appeared in 1925. This is also by Teed: it is called "The Secret of the Coconut Grove". It has a very novel plot involving the production of cultured pearls by coconuts. Teed gives comprehensive notes on the method, etc., in an introduction and an appendix. Once again there is an exciting sequence at sea. Dr. Huxton Rymer and Mary Trent are on a leaky schooner laden with sugar and manned by a mutinous lascar crew. They are sailing off the south coast of Malabar when the crew attack Rymer. They find him more than a match for them so they desert the ship. Rymer, determined to make a profit out of the ship and cargo which he had won in a dice game, successfully runs the schooner single-handed into Cochin. He strikes a bargain with a native dealer, Bamjee Haridee, selling his cargo and getting his ship repaired. It is here that Rymer comes upon a rotten coconut containing a pearl. This reminds him of what he was once told by a tropical mycologist concerning the artificially induced production of pearls in coconuts. With the aid of Bamjee he hatches a plot to use the Cochin coconut groves as a "pearl" factory. Production is going well when Blake comes on the scene; not to put a stop to Rymer's activities but to investigate the copra and coconut oil question on behalf of a soap company in which he is a substantial shareholder. He and Tinker are en route home from a case in India. However, Rymer makes the mistake of deciding that Blake must be got rid of, imagining that the local coconut growers, having become worried about the mysterious disease which has struck their groves, have brought Blake in to investigate. Blake does find out what is going on but not before Bamjee has "got rid of him" in a most unexpected and effective way. No-one would have suffered any harm either if Bamjee's favourite nephew had not got himself killed in the process. Bamjee's method of disposing of Blake's unwelcome attentions is to have his nephew secure a small owl on the roof of the house where Blake is staying. The owl is a very powerful tabu and once it is placed over Blake no native will have anything to do with him. He will not be able to get food or any-

thing else and so have to leave. Unfortunately the nephew wakes Tinker up when getting on the roof and in the ensuing struggle in a tree beside the house the nephew is killed. Blake knows the tabu cannot now be broken so he and Tinker make a show of leaving. They return secretly, but one of Bamjee's many spies spots them. Rymer decides to "handle" Blake himself and gets thoroughly trounced. After this the whole business is cleared up by Blake. Bamjee tries to double-cross Rymer and steal his share of the pearls but Mary Trent has forestalled both him and Blake by sending the pearls home by post as soon as she knew Rymer was to have a show-down with Blake. Blake, thinking Rymer has lost his share allows him and Mary to leave in their schooner. Afterwards he realises what has happened and how neatly he has been tricked, but as it is by a woman we leave him chuckling over a defeat he can enjoy.

Number one of the third series is "Raiders Passed" by John Hunter. For the third time some of the action takes place at sea. As in number one of the second series Blake is not there and like number one of the first series it is a war-time story. This story appeared in 1941. Blake takes no part in most of the story, spending the time trying to survive in a remote part of Abbyssinia after the aeroplane in which he was travelling was shot down. Captain Dack is the chief character and this book would have made an excellent number one for the Captain Dack Library.

What is known as the fourth series did not have a number one. No. 359 of the third series which appeared in 1956 is considered to be the start of the fourth. As it is not a number one it hardly qualifies for mention here, but it is the start of great changes that sweep away the old order of things and is such a turning point in the saga that it cannot be left out. The story is "The Frightened Lady" by W. Howard Baker. Blake has now expanded operations and has a suite of offices in Berkeley Square. He has a pretty receptionist and Tinker has become Edward Carter calling the beloved guv'nor "chief". (Somewhere about this time a cat, Millie, has joined the organisation. Whatever must Pedro have thought!) Blake also has a honey-blond secretary, one Paula Dane, but before this happens he has to save her from being killed by a remote cousin of hers, Simon de Coursy. Simon is due to inherit the family estates and wealth, but to do so he must produce the de Coursy gold pendant at the reading of the will. The pendant was given to the family by Henry Tudor for services at Bosworth and has been passed to each successive son on his 18th birthday. Simon is a bad lot and pawned the pendant to pay gambling debts long ago. He has had a copy made of the pendant which he thinks will fool the old family solicitor but Paula has seen the original and will know the fake when she sees it, and Paula will be at the reading of the will. She had already repulsed his amorous advances so being the chap he is he decided to have her killed. Blake saves her from an attempted abduction and on hearing of other attempts made on her he decided to find out what it is all about, because Paula has no idea as to who or why. His investigations lead him to Simon whom he tricks into showing him the pendant. He has already found out about its history and knowing he has been shown a fake all becomes clear. Simon sends his gangster friends to get the original pendant from the pawnbroker but he has sold it and is killed without revealing where it has gone. Simon is now driven to liquidate Blake as well as Paula. He lures Paula into the hands of the gangsters and

Blake follows, they are taken on Simon's motor cruiser out to sea to be drowned. (A sea episode again.) Blake gets free and the gangsters are killed in the fight. Tinker, who has been shadowing Simon whilst trying to establish an alibi is able to tell the police just where to find him. This is an exciting story which sets the trend for the "New Look" so very different from the earlier series.

Now we come to the fifth and last series. Number one came out in 1965 and with the appearance of this book Blake entered the standard paperback format. It is called "Murderer at Large" by W. A. Ballinger. This is the only real who-dun-it in the whole of the number ones. A TV series dealing with unsolved murders triggers off a fresh series of murders. The programme researchers have started on what was called the Primrose Ballet Case, the murder of a young dancer. They are warned off by anonymous telephone calls. Later, one apparently commits suicide by fixing the exhaust pipe of his car so that it comes up through the car floor. After another warning, the second researcher, Gregg Archer, consults Blake. His girl friend disturbs the murderer searching his flat and is killed. Superintendent Venner and Sergeant Belford investigate this murder and Venner wants to arrest Archer. Blake gathers all the suspects together in the studios and goes through the classic routine of eliminating one after the other in the presence of everyone. When he names the murderer there is a short sharp chase and a rather novel death for the culprit.

There were further books published after the end of the fifth series. These were hardbacks but not a numbered series so do not qualify for inclusion.

In conclusion here are a few of the surprising similarities:-

Abduction - 1, 2, 3, 4.
Blake in hand-to-hand combat - 1, 2, 3, 4.
Blake captured and taken to sea to be killed - 1, 4.
Mutiny at sea - 2, 3.
Overseas location - 1, 2, 3, 5.
A criminal organisation - 1, 3, 4.
Submarine encounter - 1, 3.
The sea - 1, 2, 3, 4.
Major characters which appear in other stories - 1, 2, 3, 4.
Blake called in by a Government Department - 1, 3.
The same author - 1 and 2; 4 and 5.
War stories - 1, 3.

There are probably others, but I have left the most important till last and that is:- Very enjoyable and got the series off to an excellent start:- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

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Seasonal Greetings to our Editor, all readers, and, especially, our dear friends in the London O.B.B.C. BILL and THELMA BRADFORD

5 QUEEN ANNE'S GROVE, EALING, LONDON W.5.

THE VISUAL AND AURAL IN HAMILTON

by HAROLD TRUSCOTT

I hope I may be forgiven if, for a while, I understudy Phil, Mr. George's limping assistant in Bleak House, who "has a curious way of limping round the gallery with his shoulder against the wall, and tacking off at objects he wants to lay hold of, instead of going straight to them". I hope I shall not limp, but I am certainly going to shoulder round the walls for a while, before I tack off to my object.

All literature, I imagine, vividly realised by its author, has a visual appeal to the reader. Certainly it has for me. A good deal of my acceptance or rejection of fiction, especially, is decided by whether or not I can see happening what is being recounted, without having to screw up my imagination to an unnatural level to do so. The greater the effort, the more knots I have to make in my imagination to arrive somewhere near the state of seeing, the more uninterested I am in what I am trying to read. That book, in other words, does not hold me. This, I must admit, does not happen to me very often, but it does happen, and sometimes with what is called good literature; nor would I deny that when it does it could well be due to a fault in me. I would blush to admit to some of the authors concerned here; one in particular who is, it seems, revered by everyone, readers and writers alike. But one instance I will give: it happened not so long ago when I made an attempt (my fourth or fifth, I think) to read Conan Doyle's The Firm of Girdlestone. This is, I suppose, what is called well-written, but I found, as I had with previous attempt to get to grips with it, that again it failed to do more than drag my imagination along sufficiently for me to get even the, roughly, tenth part of the way through the book, which is where I left it once more. I know now that I shall never reach the end of that particular adventure. Strange, because this is not true of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, the Professor Challenger books, Sir Nigel, Brigadier Gerard, or a number of others among Doyle's books.

And yet books which would win no medal in the literature stakes for style, for fine thought, for all the things which make lasting literature, can nonetheless hold me by incident, competently told. Such things as Erle Stanley Gardner's perennial Perry Mason books, for instance. Certainly these have a style, even if it consists, to borrow a phrase from Sir Donald Tovey, mainly of indications of places where style ought to be. To be fair to Gardener, who has given me hours of pleasure, the Mason books do attain a high standard of vivid velocity which carries them through sticky places in the writing. And, to be even fairer, their author did achieve a notable literary style in certain books which are not fictional adventures, such as The Court of Last Resort and Hunting the Desert Whale.

To stay with Gardner for the moment, whatever else the Mason books may lack, one thing they possess in abundance is strong characterisation. Mason himself, Della Street, Paul Drake, Hamilton Burger, the various judges (beautiful little cameos these) and, in many cases, the clients themselves, are etched vividly and, one feather in Gardner's stylistic cap, in a few strokes, as a rule. Most of it comes

from dialogue put over with great rhythmic pace; maybe this is partly a result of his dictating his books rapidly, possibly as rapidly as the action moves in these books. And consideration of dialogue brings me to the second part of my title - the aural aspect. For, just as one sees (understanding as well as sight), so one hears also. The reading of fine literature, or, as in this case, racy dialogue, is equivalent to eavesdropping on other people, and it is precisely this seeing or hearing that presents one very big snag. It has often been argued that, because there is this element in literature, one has only to assemble a good cast, an understanding and able director, etc., for the particular story to become even more vividly actual. And, as we know, this is an assumption doomed to be contradicted, in most cases. In a life in which a good deal of my time has been probably misspent in watching films, I have seen three adaptations only of novels, plus one TV presentation, which came close to realising what those books meant to me. For anyone else I cannot speak. The films are David Copperfield (the 1935, Hollywood, version, I hasten to add), the 1940 film of Conrad's Victory (spoilt only by its false ending), with Fredric March, Betty Field and Cedric Hardwick, and, finest of all, William Wyler's near perfect realisation of Henry James' Washington Square, from Ruth Goetz's play The Heiress, with Ralph Richardson, Olivia de Havilland and Montgomery Clift; the TV presentation was of Arnold Bennett's Clayhanger (which included Hilda Lessways also). Each of these presented the characters as they had always appeared to me (and still do), as well as the atmosphere imparted in each case by the respective authors. One thing not even these could convey was the actual fine writing of each of the books, other than the dialogue. Basil Rathbone, fine actor though he was, suffered, so far as I am concerned, through David Copperfield. Every later part I saw him play suggested that Mr. Murdstone was really playing that part.

Now, all of us must have had a severe problem in watching the TV Bunter series, and any of the Christmas Bunter stage shows. I saw, with dogged persistence, most, though not all, of the TV episodes, and one of the stage shows. I say "dogged persistence", because most of the time I was trying to see as right what persisted in appearing to me as off centre, to say the least. "See", of course, includes "hear", as well. I have read of Hamilton fans who liked, approved, these shows and TV episodes, and thought them adequate. But, and this I find suspicious, I have not actually met one. Everyone I have actually spoken to on the subject was disappointed and thought them, if not as bad as the TV Sexton Blake with which we have been regaled (what could be quite so bad as that?), far below what they had hoped for. Their mistake was in hoping, I suspect. I came to them not really knowing what I expected, but I was not hoping for much; having seen one episode, I knew that that was not what I wanted, and that I had been right not to waste much energy hoping. Some I have spoken to have put it down to a certain amount of miscasting, but I do not think that, for me, that was the real problem. Obviously, there was some miscasting; John Stuart, fine actor though he has been, was as much like Hamilton's Dr. Locke as Margaret Rutherford was like Raquel Welch.

On the subject of miscasting, every so often there seems to be a wave of films, big screen or otherwise, made from a particular author's books, or using that author's characters, in which not only is likeness to those characters apparently not considered necessary, but displaying them as unlike the originals is regarded as a

definite and positive principle. One such case is the series of films based on Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, with Margaret Rutherford pretending to be Miss Marple. Hugely entertaining, I thoroughly enjoyed them (which, I suppose, should be sufficient justification for their existence), but I believe they could have been even more enjoyable if one had been watching someone with a relationship to Miss Marple as her creator envisaged her. I was left wondering whether the casting supervisor had ever read one of these books, and equated the original character with Margaret Rutherford's lampoon. A quiet, sedate, grey-haired elderly lady, slim, too, who spoke quietly and to the point, even if she seemed to ramble? Margaret Rutherford? Another such case was the TV series of Perry Mason stories, tailored for Raymond Burr, an actor I have admired ever since I saw him as the murderer in Hitchcock's Rear Window. Gardner's lawyer was tall, slim, incisive; the only physical qualification Burr had was that he is tall; but this was countered, and almost an opposite impression given, by the fact that he is tall sideways, too. Della Street, played by Barbara Hale, was fine for looks, but had nothing to do - whereas in Gardner's novels she was very active. William Hopper was a beautiful dandy, which is just about the last charge that could be laid at Paul Drake's door. Lieutenant Tragg, again tall, the reverse of fat, matching Mason, whereas Ray Conolly, unlike Burr, was only tall sideways. William Talman was of medium height, but slim, and very gentlemanly in his handling of witnesses, even in his remarks to Mason, whereas Hamilton Burger was big built, bull-necked, tending to charge in like a bull at a gate, and always ready to rend Mason to pieces. This is as it struck me. Others who knew the books may have thought it fine, but no-one could pretend that the characters projected on to the TV screen bore any relationship to Gardener's originals, apart from the fact that they used the original names. I have seen quite a few attempts to be Perry Mason, and only one was absolutely right, for me. This was an actor who, in the mid-thirties, appeared in film versions of four of the cases: The Howling Dog, The Curious Bride, The Lucky Legs and The Velvet Claws. So uncannily like Gardner's written description of Mason was this actor that the writer might well have drawn his lawyer from the actor, who was Warren William.

Now, I have stressed more than once that my criticisms apply to how these things appeared to me. It is important to stress this. When we read, we form a definite mental conception of the characters we read about - if those characters are really alive in their author's hands. Doubtless, no two people will get quite the same conception, and so it becomes impossible for any actual film or theatre realisation to satisfy all - or even many. Where they are good films, and well-made, we will enjoy them, and never mind the fact that the characters are not our characters. I have had to do this with all but one film presentation of Sherlock Holmes, from those I have seen. There was one who, for me, and for a good many others who had the luck to see these films, was Sherlock Holmes stepped off the pages of the Strand Magazine, and his name was Arthur Wontner, in five beautiful films made in England in the thirties. He made the famous portrayal by Basil Rathbone look like a caricature, which, in part, it was. But this is the trouble - if we are looking for likeness to what comes to us from the printed page. Not only do we form a definite mental visual conception, but, if other readers are like me, and I am far from unique, an aural one, too. And this is where the trouble starts. It is not that the characters,

as written, are not definite enough. It is that they are too definite for any actor, no matter how gifted, and with very rare exceptions, to match our own very definite mental conception. The mistake is in the attempt to pin them down to actual flesh and blood. As Marjorie Fleming once said "I can understand perfectly well so long as you don't explain". And I can grasp my characters so much better if there is no attempt to realise them for my physical senses of sight and hearing. I am convinced that, in general, films and plays should stick to stories and characters conceived directly for those media.

Like limping Phil in Bleak House, having sidled sufficiently along the walls, I can now tack off towards my object; and the object, as they used to say in Animal, Vegetable or Mineral? is Hamilton. The no doubt laudable attempts to put Bunter and Greyfriars on the small screen may have pleased some; especially, I suppose, those who had no prior knowledge of Hamilton's very real school worlds. There were, I imagine, far more who were disappointed. Nor was it because of lack of ability on the part of the actors, or even in the production as a whole, although there was, for me, a strong claustrophobic atmosphere about the series - far more so than has been claimed for the post-war Bunter books, where there was, in any case, an artistic justification for the restriction. Hamilton by then simply was not writing from the Magnet standpoint, and what he did was positive. It may not have pleased everybody (what does?) and I imagine that there were quite a lot of Hamiltonians who took a fair time to adjust, and some who never did. With the TV series I felt a certain parsimony in the air. For me the Famous Five never came alive, leaving aside that, mostly, there was no attempt to match players with individual characters. As I have said, this is not because these characters are not definite, but because the opposite is true: they are far too definite, in one's mind.

I have no criticism to make of Gerald Campion's acting ability. No doubt he did as well as anyone could with WGB. He was given a Herculean, an ungrateful task. It was not his fault that he was not my Bunter. My Bunter, and, I imagine, that of almost anyone else, via Hamilton, is unrealisable, except in the passage from Hamilton's writing to our mind, and through illustrations; and even these, brilliant as many were, were sparked off (where they are attentive, a matter in which Shields was sometimes deficient) by Hamilton. It is no reflection on Campion that he could not realise this real Bunter. The casting that came near to the ideal was that of Kynaston Reeves as Mr. Quelch. This was almost there; even then, I did sometimes wonder whether Felix Aylmer might have come even nearer. The drawback here was that the stories never placed the Form-master in any of the situations which, in the Magnet, drew the best from him.

My conclusion, then, is that the visual and aural aspects of Hamilton's art - Bunter's squeak, his fatuously grotesque attempts at lofty disdain, etc., Smithy's tempers, Hazeldene's ill-tempered and vicious whining, Skinner's sneering, Coker's dictatorial hectoring, Bob Cherry's stentorian voice, all these and a lot more - will come vividly alive for us only if there is no attempt to represent them physically; given that, they are alive for ever. There is a partial connection here with the matter of sound and the silent film. The showing of silent films on TV (rare occurrence!), or extracts from the same, is accompanied, as a rule, not only by a

fatuously idiotic commentary (my much loved Tommy Handley was involved in doing this for some Chaplin films) which "explains" what is happening in feeble attempts to be funny about what is already funny enough (a sufficient indication of how far out of touch today is with yesterday's art of silent film - there are many people I know who genuinely regard the silent film as a maimed art form patiently waiting for the addition of sound), but with sound effects to help along what can be legitimately "heard" by being seen; as though the performance of a ballet were to be accompanied by an invisible commentator laboriously explaining the steps and other convolutions taking place, along with weak jokes at the expense of the dancers. No-one who does not understand that silent films provided their own sound, built into the technique of the film and depending upon the mental response of the viewers, has the slightest chance of understanding or appreciating this great art of the cinema - which, after all, was named because of its visual quality of movement. Emil Jannings, for instance, as Paul I of Russia, running half-crazed through the corridors of the palace in The Patriot, shouting "Pahlen! Pahlen! PAHLEN!" like a terrified child; a soundtrack would have removed all the imaginative impact of the mental sound, by its very actuality, an impact which hit one between the eyes. Or Warwick Ward, in Dupont's Varieté, listening at his door for Lya de Putti's footsteps along the corridor. The camera, handheld, zooms in on his ear, in a shot which is mixed with one of her feet as she comes, and the tap, tap of her shoes is vividly audible to one's mind - as it comes to Ward's ear. Silent films were made of such things, and the cinema lost far more than it gained when it added physical sound to a movement which became more and more restricted. Directors knew how to extract such sound suggestion; nearly all the great names among directors grew up in the school of the silent film, and learned their craft and, with the best, the natural element of their art, in it: Griffith, Stroheim, Lubitsch, Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Murnau, Leni, Allan Dwan, Dupont, John Ford, Wellman, Wyler, Buchowetski. There are numbers more. And Hamilton's art conveys its sound to us just as silent film did: it makes us conceive it.

There is another way in which Hamilton's work at times has a relationship with film. In the earliest films the camera stood stock still. But movement was not for long confined to the actors. The camera began to move as well, mainly, at first, through the innovatory work of D. W. Griffith, with his responsive cameraman, Billy Bitzer. Gradually, it began at times to "pan", as in "panorama"; that is, a slow, widely ranging shot in circular motion, something that could not be achieved in the theatre. This was one real aspect of what film is, that made it different from almost anything else. I say "almost", because it is possible to achieve something like this effect in literature. One such case that comes to my mind is the beginning of Conrad's novel Nostromo. I first read this book in 1935, and was struck, in the opening chapter, by the way Conrad writes as though a camera is slowly panning round the whole prospect from the harbour of Sulaco, across the gulf, over the "towering and serrated wall of the Cordillera, a clear-cut vision of dark peaks rearing their steep slopes on a lofty pedestal of forest rising from the very edge of the shore. Amongst them the white head of Higuerota rises majestically upon the blue". There is more, in one great panning shot in words. Conrad was, in fact, anticipating, without knowing it, what was to come from the film within the next ten years, for he says that Nostromo "took the best part of the years 1903-04 to do";

and it was in 1903 that Edwin S. Porter, having made a very brief (about five minutes) elementary sort of documentary, The Life of an American Fireman, the previous year, made the first story film, The Great Train Robbery, with plenty of character movement but an absolutely still camera. I was delighted when, during the nineteen-forties, I read a fine book on Conrad by Edward Crankshaw and found that he had the same filmic impression of that opening chapter of Nostromo.

Now, such panoramic views occur at times in Hamilton's work. I'll give two instances. They are of different kinds; the first, indeed, is not of the type of panoramic view of which I have just written, but is of the snowball variety, with one small event breeding another, and that one another, etc., until an inevitable motion is set going of the kind that film can convey so well by judicious cutting, mixing and fading. It is the beginning of the second Wharton the Rebel series, from its innocent start on the platform at Courtfield to Mr. Quelch's finding Wharton and Loder locked in a scuffle in the form-master's study. The whole thing is visual and aural, like a film. Up to that moment in Mr. Quelch's study the story is getting in motion, and we have not reached anything like a climax. But with the second example we do, and that climax is sound conveyed as I have described it for the silent film, with a mental impact that has a stunning effect. This is the opening of the St. Jim's Christmas Barring-Out, December 1922. Here it is almost as though Hamilton had written a film script, so vivid is the silent film effect, from the beginning on the slide, Manners taking photographs, Mr. Ratcliff striding to stop the juniors sliding, getting caught on it himself, unable to stop until the end of the slide, his fury, his demanding the camera from Manners, Manners offering the film, Ratcliff again demanding the camera, until the moment when he snatches it from Manners' hand and dashes it to the ground. Everything is felt by visual perception, even to the juniors standing round, scared. Their fear can be felt, until the whole thing reaches its climax with that vivid smash on the ground - which we hear as no soundtrack could convey it. It is difficult not to believe that such things were conceived visually in Hamilton's mind, and only afterwards translated into words.

These are no more than samples of the visual and aural aspects of Hamilton's art. Those interested can certainly find numbers of other instances which have the same unmistakable effect.

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A Happy Christmas to you dear Editor, Bob Blythe, Ben Whiter, Josie Packman and all readers. God bless us all.

E. HUBBARD, SHEFFIELD.

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Avid reader. Born on Isthmus. Found Digest Annual. From last Christmas. Ordered Annual. Deserted Isthmus. Now in Wopping. Awaiting Christmas. Happy Yuletide.

JOHN BURSLEM

The man who died twice & the man of many Authors

by D. HARKNESS and JOSIE PACKMAN

Back in U.J. No. 1093, dated 20 September, 1924, Walter Shute wrote a Sexton Blake story entitled "Plummer's Death Ray" and concluded the story thus:- "The Ray of death has claimed its fourth victim" said Sexton Blake quietly. "And its last Guv'nor". "And its last" echoed the Baker Street detective. "George Marsden Plummer is dead - a traitor to the end!". Such was Plummer's epitaph.

As is well known, Plummer made his debut in the Union Jack No. 222, in "The Man from Scotland Yard" written by Michael Storm. As we all know, he was a Detective-Inspector at Scotland Yard, but his love of expensive living and the subsequent need for extra money caused him to turn to crime. Michael Storm continued with the Plummer tales for a while then Norman Goddard took over the character in U.J. No. 365 with the story "The Cotton Corner" and continued writing the series until his death in France in 1916. Mark Osborne continued with the character (his real name was J. W. Bobin) in U.J. No. 630 and wrote the Plummer stories intermittently.

In U.J. 1000, G. H. Teed made his first contribution to stories featuring Plummer and had written three more stories about him, when Walter Shute wrote the story in U.J. No. 1079, entitled "Plummer's Missing Million" and then for reasons best known to himself, decided to kill off Plummer in his next story "Plummer's Death Ray". Why the Editor condoned this event is anybody's guess but the story was printed in U.J. 1093. Walter Shute only wrote a few more tales for the Union Jack and then dropped out of sight.

"Union Jack" readers of that time must have been very surprised when G. H. Teed featured Plummer (apparently risen from the dead) in U.J. 1105, twelve weeks later. No doubt this story had already been prepared before the one of Walter Shute's but suitable additions must have been made to overcome the anomally. In this story "Sexton Blake's Xmas Truce" we are told that:-

"Tinker gripped Blake's arm with convulsive fingers, then burst out, almost shouting - 'At the window guv'nor - at the window, Plummer's face - and Plummer is dead.'"

Tinker had to agree with Blake that they had both seen Plummer killed by the Death Ray yet he was sure it was Plummer he'd seen. Later, Dr. Huxton Rymer who was also in the story, tells them he had seen and spoken to the presumed dead man, thus confirming Tinker's story. However, no explanation was vouchsafed by Teed for this renaissance and there the reader was left to figure it out for himself.

Teed made good use of the late Scotland Yard man turned crook for many years until he recorded Plummer's second death in the Detective Weekly No. 31, dated 23 September, 1933. The story, "The Secret of the Slums" ends with George Marsden Plummer going down with a bullet through the lung during a shoot-out, but does not definitely say that he dies. It is the Sexton Blake Catalogue that says this.

Reprints of Union Jacks dealing with Plummer continued to appear later in the Detective Weekly until the end of the paper's run.

The Man of Many Authors

To add to the above information about George Marsden Plummer, I should like to say that of all the criminal characters in the Sexton Blake Saga he appears to be the one written about by more authors than anyone else. As we know these authors were Michael Storm, who created the character, Norman Goddard, Mark Osborne (real name J. W. Bobin), Walter Shute and G. H. Teed. In all there were 105 stories about Plummer in the Union Jack and the Sexton Blake Library not counting those which appeared in other publications.

At the time the Catalogue was being printed in 1965 it was generally agreed by members of The Sexton Blake Circle that we could take it for granted that Plummer was definitely killed off in the Detective Weekly tale. It was felt that Plummer had had a very long run which the Editor thought should now really come to an end, and yet in the last part of the run of the Detective Weekly many of the early tales were reprinted howbeit rather chopped about.

Despite having five authors to chronicle his adventures Plummer changed very little basically over the years from 1908 till 1933, although he used each modern invention of the period to aid his criminal activities. The luxury loving Plummer remained the same.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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Greetings to all fellow collectors from Cambridge Club and thanks to Eric for keeping Digest going.

BILL THURBON

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Best Christmas wishes to all, especially those in the new O.B.B.C. S.W. Club.

SIMON GARRETT, BATHWICK HOUSE, BATH
AVON, BA2 6NX.

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Seaon's Greetings to the Chairman and Friars of the Courtfield Club, Midland Club, and Friars overseas.

LEN BERG, 20 BASING HILL, WEMBLEY.

= =

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR READERS FROM HOWARD BAKER AND THE GREYFRIARS PRESS

The Cliff House stories in the "Schoolgirl"

by ESMOND KADISH

If Tommy Keen's remark that only a handful of people seem to be interested in the Cliff House and Morcove stories is true - and it probably is! - then, surely there must be even less enthusiasm for the Cliff House stories written by John Wheway for the "Schoolgirl" in the 'thirties. In fact, I believe that Mary Cadogan once wrote that she and I seemed to be the only people who admired Mr. Wheway's work!

This lack of interest in Mr. Wheway's stories seems to me a great pity, because, as far as I am concerned, and with great respect to the other gentlemen who took over the writing of the Cliff House stories from Charles Hamilton, Mr. Wheway's tales in the "Schoolgirl" are the definitive ones, in spite of the fact that his "Golden Age" spanned a fairly limited period in my view. It lasted from the spring of 1932, when he commenced the new series of Cliff House stories in the "Schoolgirl", to perhaps, mid-1935. Certainly, his best work seemed to have been written by May 1936, when the "Schoolgirl's Own" was amalgamated with the "Schoolgirl". At their best, his stories - which, of course, were written primarily for girls - seem to incorporate all the best ingredients of successful writing for children. They have fast-moving plots, well-drawn characters, and colourful backgrounds and settings, in addition to Mr. Wheway's very individual style of writing.

As everyone knows, Charles Hamilton created the original Cliff House characters. Personally, I enjoyed his first few stories in the "School Friend", although some people feel that the presence of the Cliff House girls in the pages of the "Magnet" was intrusive and unnecessary. Horace Philips obviously made a success of his Cliff House contributions, when he followed Mr. Hamilton, but I feel that he was happier with his own Morcove characters when he introduced them in the "Schoolgirl's Own" in 1921. The stories written by L. E. Ransome have their admirers too. He is, indeed, an excellent writer, but, somehow, his Cliff House tales seem disappointing. To me, the plots don't move, there is too much conversation, too little action, and the characters - Jemima excepted - seem flat and rather colourless. Indeed, the girls seem frankly "bitchy" and unappealing at times. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that one story from the "School Friend" of 1927, "Forbidden to be Friends", was reprinted in the "School Friend Annual" of 1937, almost word for word, except that John Wheway's schoolboy characters, Jimmy Richmond and Co., have been substituted for Jack Tolhurst and Co., who were probably created by Mr. Ransome.

Someone, somewhere, painted a charming picture of Hilda and Frank Richards tapping away merrily, side by side, at their typewriters, and, I must confess, that this is pretty well how I imagined it, when I bought my first copy of the "Schoolgirl" in the summer of 1932, and eagerly linked up various Cliff House characters with their counterparts in the "Magnet", to which I had recently been introduced. There were Bessie and Billy, Marjorie Hazeldene and Peter (Hazel), and, perhaps,

Barbara Redfern was some relation to Richard Redfern of St. Jim's - maybe a cousin? Naturally, Hilda and Frank had to be brother and sister. How irritating it was, though, not to have the Greyfriars boys mentioned in the Cliff House stories - only some rather insipid characters called Jimmy Richmond and Co. of Friardale Boys' School.

The Cliff House story referred to was "The Cliff House Holiday Cruise", in which Babs and Co. were about to embark on the liner, "Plathian" for a trip round the Mediterranean. A voyage on a large liner always seemed the height of luxury to me in those far-off days, and I, who used to feel decidedly bilious, and turn a delicate shade of green simply going by bus up to the West End to take a music exam, would get a vicarious pleasure, as I fondly imagined myself rolling on the high seas with Babs and Co., or with Harry Wharton and Co. on the "Firefly". It was in this story, too, that John Wheway re-introduced Jemima Carstairs, the girl with the monocle, of whom Mrs. Cadogan has already written:-

> "Eyeglass in eye, she waved gaily. 'Babs! Still bloomin' - what?' she grinned. 'And Mabs! Oh, Mabs, what lovely hair you have as the spider said to Miss Muffett!' Haven't succumbed to the gold rush, I see, and sold the old curls for their price in sovereigns ...'"

Mr. Wheway's decision to re-introduce Jemima into his stories was, no doubt, a wise one, but his dropping of such established characters as Dolly Jobling, Augusta Anstruther-Browne and Cisay Clare was more controversial. Perhaps he felt that such christian names were not "trendy" enough for contemporary schoolgirls. Neither were names like Clara or Mabel, of course, but he could hardly "write out" essential characters like these. Most of the former characters still featured prominently in his stories. The ever-hungry Bessie still retained the characteristic self-centred vanity and obtuseness of the Bunter clan, but she developed a softer, more human image, manifested in kindness to children and animals, and, a loyalty and fondness for "Babs and Mabs". The last-named pair were probably not the most exciting of characters in the Cliff House coterie, but Mr. Wheway did succeed in giving them both more depth and interest. Tomboy Clara Trevlyn, too, became a more attractive character - less hoydenish and insensitive, and straight-as-a-die. Marjorie Hazeldene remained - just gentle Marjorie, a perfect foil for her forthright friend, Clara. Jemima has already been mentioned, and Mr. Wheway rounded off "the Co." by including some characters of his own:- Janet Jordan, whose only claims to fame were that her father owned a circus and she was the Lower School swimming champion; Marcelle Biquet, an excitable (naturally!) little French girl, Leila Carroll from the States, complete with horn-rimmed specs. and a semi-Eton crop and Sean Cartwright, a tall Scots lassie with an uncle who owned a castle in the Highlands and a wayward half-brother - both decided advantages in the Cliff House saga! Amongst the seniors was the school captain, Stella Stone, a sort of feminine version of George Wingate, who was somewhat arbitrarily replaced as Head Girl by Dulcia Farebrother when she left Cliff House in 1937. Miss Primrose continued to reign as headmistress, and is

pictured by Laidler, in his excellent drawings, complete with pince-nez tilted at a stern and ominous angle. However, she was always just and certainly not harsh, unlike Miss Bullivant, "The Bull", who could be distinctly unsympathetic to the girls. The Fourth Form mistress was, initially, Miss Jane Matthews, but she was replaced in 1934 by Valerie Charmant who was pretty and popular and friendly to the girls.

Mr. Wheway put in a fair proportion of black sheep or "baddies" into his stories, as well. There was Rosa Rodworth, described picturesquely as the "Stormy Petrel" of the form, who was one of those good and bad mixtures beloved of both author and readers. Lydia Crossendale was the form snob and leader of the "Smart Set" and various cronies included the "sneaks" like Fredia Ferriers, Marcia Loftus and Nancy Bell, the last two being eventually expelled. Among the unpopular prefects were the sour-natured Sarah Harrigan (how evocative some of these names are!) and her crony, Connie Jackson.

Finally, in late 1933, Mr. Wheway introduced what was said to be his favourite character, Diana Royston-Clarke. Complete with "platinum blonde" hair and aptly described by Mary Cadogan as a "pubescent Jean Harlow", Diana was a popular, but quite unbelievable character, rather like the Bounder in temperament, but impossibly flamboyant and acting as though she were in her twenties instead of as a schoolgirl. No wonder she was popular! She arrived in a "high-powered car"

> "From the dainty velvet fez on her head, decorated with a solitary diamond clasp, to the toes of her extremely shapely and expensive high-heeled shoes, she seemed to breathe opulence and expensive tastes"

Sighs of envy from thousands of gym-slipped schoolgirls!

Most of the characters referred to were introduced in "Bessie Bunter's 'Spectre'!" written for No. 140 of the "Schoolgirl" in April 1932. "It inaugurates our new series of extra long, complete Cliff House stories" wrote the Editor. There followed several single stories until September 1932 when Mr. Wheway started to use the form which I think suited him best - a series of three or four stories. This particular series was: "Babs' Fight for Stella", and was one of those "election" dramas in which Stella Stone is in danger of losing her captaincy owing to the plotting of Sarah Harrigan.

It would take too long to mention all the excellent short series which followed in the "Schoolgirl". Among others were "Babs and Co's Magic Christmas" (1932); "The Ghost of Cliff House", "Bessie Crashes into Films", "When Connie Captained Cliff House", "Baffled by Jemima", Babs & Co. in Hollywood", "Babs & Co's Old-Fashioned Christmas" (1933); "Babs and Co. and the Ghost Ship", "Mabs Must Never Know!" and "The siege of Delma Castle" from 1934 and early 1935.

In May 1936 came one of those cataclysmic amalgamations of two papers which seem to presage a slow, but inevitable decline. The Schoolgirls' Own was incorporated with the "Schoolgirl". This meant that the Cliff House story was reduced to about ten pages. The paper also contained a Morcove serial. I am told

that the Morcove serials were not, in fact, written by their creator, Horace Philips, although whoever has done so has imitated his style very well. They are not very satisfying, anyway, the best being "Her Secret at Swanlake". Also contained in the "Schoolgirl" were four pages of rather tame articles which I thought was a waste of valuable space!

A further disaster followed nearly two years later in February 1938 when the last of the Morcove serials was completed. It ended on this rather wistful note:

> "Some time, somewhere, the stage will be set anew, and Morcove and Grangemoor will be there to animate it, in their own team-like way."

They never did reappear, of course, and the following week, the number of pages in the "Schoolgirl" was reduced to twenty-four, without a word of explanation ever being given.

John Wheway continued to write good stories in the late thirties, but, as far as I am concerned, most of them don't compare with his earlier ones. That May 1936 issue was the turning point! Even a story featuring Diana, the "Firebrand of the Fourth", and a set of "real film-star autographs" did nothing to dispel the feeling that "the glory had departed from the land". With the exception of the Faith Ashton series in 1938, the single stories, which had become the norm, seem relatively uninspired and contrived. Miss Primrose or "The Bull" always seem to be lurking behind study doors ready to sweep in and dress-down some misunderstood unfortunate such as Clara Trevlyn.

The decline continued - inevitably - in war-time. The paper's cover became a monochromatic blue in late 1939. The final issue, No. 564, unlike the "Magnet", did at least, contain some explanation for its non-appearance the following week:-

> " ... with this issue the "Schoolgirl" has been forced to suspend publication ... the extension of the war to Norway has prevented supplies (of paper) from reaching England. In consequence, the shortage of paper has become acute ..."

"Real life" intruding with a vengeance!

Thus, like the "Magnet", the "Schoolgirl" became just a memory. John Wheway continued to write for girls in the pages of the post-war "School Friend" and "Girls' Crystal", mainly under the pen-name of Hazel Armitage. However, it is his Cliff House period that I recall with the strongest affection. A descriptive passage such as the following from "Babs & Co. and the Ghost Ship", for instance:-

> "Out to the west the sun was sinking in a purple-and-golden aurora of glory, sending spectrally beautiful shafts of dazzling light glittering over the sea.
>
> In the bushes the birds twittered and the boom, boom of the surf on the shore below the cliffs throbbed in the warm atmosphere like a distant lullaby."

Or this, from the same series:-

> "A woman it was - an old, wizened woman, whose wrinkled, parchment-like

face stared belligerently back at them. Her darting little eyes, glaring like two tiny red fires, beneath grey over-hanging brows, glared fiercely and surprisedly into the darkness.

She had on a striped blouse and some dark sort of skirt, but on her head was a peaked sailor's cap from beneath which wispy grey hair hung on straggling tendrils. In one hand she carried a thick crooked stick."

Or, finally, this description of a sandstorm from "Babs and Co. in Egypt":-

"The hot air darkened with flying, hissing particles of sand. A noise like the roaring of a million giants shrieked in their ears, making them gasp for breath, almost twisting them out of their saddles. Above them the moon became blotted out. They found themselves fiercely fighting in a moving wall of shrieking sand."

Truly an excellent writer and, in my humble opinion, an underrated one!

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A Happy Christmas to collectors everywhere and special greetings and thanks to Eric Fayne and Madam. Still required for my collection: Schoolfriend Annual 1943; Golden Annual for Girls 1939; Popular Book of Girls' Stories 1935, 1936, 1941; Girls' Crystal Annual 1940; also Mistress Mariner and Sally's Summer Term by Dorita Fairlie Bruce. Good prices paid.

MARY CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVE., BECKENHAM, KENT, BR3 2PY.

Tel. 01-650-1458

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Rex Hardinge's 'Sixpence'

by RAY HOPKINS

In "The Tree of Evil" (U.J. 1475, 23 Jan. 1932), Rex Hardinge introduced another stalwart to accompany Sir Richard Losely, Lobangu, Blake and Tinker on their African adventures: an endearingly comic character, one SIXPENCE by name who, though terrified at the thought of violence, can still give Lobangu valuable backup in a tight spot because of his great regard for the old Chief.

Blake is waiting for transport back to England from Osakos after concluding a case when a figure steps from the boat by which the detective is to travel to the liner waiting for him off-shore. It is an African boy from the Transvaal dressed in an old swallow-tailed coat and a battered bowler hat. Sixpence drapes a large, white apron around his middle and announces that he has arrived to fill the post of Blake's cookboy. Had not Sixpence delayed Blake's leaving for the liner, Lobangu, who materializes at this point in a Zulu canoe, would have missed his old friend from Baker Street. Logangu urges Blake to remain in Africa and give aid to Sir Richard Losely who, Lobangu's "snake" has told him, is in difficulties. The Commissioner has, in fact, had poison administered to him by Joseph, his cookboy, who is assisting a half-breed crook, who has a mad dream of becoming the white king of the black races. With the aid of an American ventriloquist (Mexican Rose) who threw the words into the receptive ears of the superstitious natives, he was able to sow the seeds of an uprising against the governing whites.

Many loyal chiefs were removed from office after 'Nyani', the name given to the whispering, bodiless voice, had told them an evil spirit lived within the body of a relative or friend and therefore it must be killed. The murder, which is what the spirit-killing had become, had to be punished and so the chief, loyal to the white lords, had to be put to death himself.

It is Sixpence who realizes Joseph is a traitor and, despite the fact that he has offended Lobangu deeply by substituting the Chief's "bubbly-water" for river water mixed with sugar, the old chief is the only one available to take immediate action. Sixpence had heard a conversation between Joseph and an emissary from the half-breed crook that Nyani had called a meeting to instruct those who were to dispose of others in which the evil spirit lived. Sixpence tells Lobangu where the meeting is to be held and Lobangu insists the frightened cookboy accompany him to break up the meeting. Nyani's voice urges the gathered chiefs to kill Lobangu. Joseph fires through the pocket of his white slacks, but Sixpence deflects the bullet by crashing the blade of his spear on Joseph's wrist. Lobangu finishes off Joseph by sticking his spear into him and tosses the body over his shoulder. Lobangu wounds many of those who attack him while Sixpence finishes them off. In time, Sixpence notices the wicked, steel nose of a machine-gun being poked through the wall of the hut and low-tackles Lobangu, thus saving them both, and leading to the eventual capture of the megalomaniac and his woman accomplice by Blake. Tinker and Sir Richard, restored to health after an antidote to the poison has been

prepared by the detective, who had taken his final exams to be a Doctor before deciding to become a criminologist.

In the following yarn, "The Ghost Hole" (U.J. 1511, 1 Oct. 1932), Sixpence has been elevated in rank by Lobangu, and is now described as his Prime Minister and general advisor. "He was a small man, who believed in big words in preference to big actions; but Lobangu had proved his real worth, or he would never have admitted him to the rite of blood brotherhood." Sixpence plays a much smaller role in this adventure because, due to plot complications, Sir Richard Losely arrests both Lobangu, Chief of the Etbaia and N'Raki, ruling chief of the Askari's, and insists on their accompanying him and Sexton Blake in the search for a white crook who is trying to begin a war between the two tribes by murdering Askaris and leaving Etbaia spears in the bodies and vice versa. The natives chosen to be murdered are also known misers, so that a nice haul of hidden gold is also collected by the white crook. Sixpence is detailed to help Tinker protect a white girl whose fiance is suspected of being the instigator of the opposing tribe murders. Tinker laughingly tells Sixpence he will be expected to cook for the white girl and the ex-cookboy, in high dudgeon, tears off his large, white apron. When they arrive at the girl's tent, it is to find her gone and the guards murdered. Sixpence follows the trail but only finds the unconscious body of the Kaffir girl companion of the white girl.

Rex Hardinge has the distinction of writing the final issue of the Union Jack (1531, 18 Feb. 1933) and fans of African adventure are in for another treat, "The Land of Lost Men". An ambitious African, N'jovu, Chief of the Masimbi, educates himself in the United States and England, enough so that he wants to create for himself a civilized area in Africa, but he wants it now and enlists the aid of an intelligent but crooked white man into kidnapping several eminent men who are tops in their own field. In order that they won't be missed, mutilated bodies must be found, dressed in the clothes of those who have disappeared. A suspicion of foul play alerts Sexton Blake when he realizes that experts in mining, the cotton trade, automobile design, surgery, architecture, railroading and road engineering are the victims and the retrieving from an African river by Sixpence of a Moroccan leather pouch belonging to an eminent agriculturalist whose believed body was recovered from the Thames. In the opening chapter, Sixpence is used as comic relief in a frightening situation. Sixpence's exaggerated trembling causes Lobangu to caution him, "The music of thy teeth is over loud". But, despite his fear, Sixpence is close by Lobangu when the huge chief is in danger. After they penetrate N'jovu's territory with Sir Richard, Blake and Tinker, Sixpence tells Lobangu "You'um bloomin' big feller man, but you no lib for have educational brain like Sixpence, who'um savvy go mission school and learn white man's doings such being twice one is two, ABC, and God Save the King. You watch'um Sixpence find twenty'um detrimental soldier unicorns in'um stone-shed". So Sixpence also follows in the "Mrs. Malaprop" tradition of English writing. The big battle that climaxes this story and ends in the death of the white brain behind the native chieftain and the subduing of N'jovu, the specialists all decide to remain in Africa and finish the work they had been kidnapped to begin. They decide to form a company and "make a ghastly hole in the wilds into a thriving and prosperous colony."

Sixpence's final appearance is recorded in a very small role in "Marked Men" (Detective Weekly 15, 3 June, 1933). According to the listing in the Sexton Blake Catalogue, I believe this is also Rex Hardinge's last Sir Richard Losely adventure.

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WANTED: FIRST EDITIONS by the following authors - Gerald Verner and Donald Stuart, published by Wright & Brown during the 1930's; Leslie Charteris (1927-1939); Clifford Witting (1937-1960); Agatha Christie (1921-1942); Dornford Yates (1914-1940). Also: certain books by Edgar Wallace, to complete a First Edition collection: Smithy Abroad, Hultons (1909); Smithy's Friend Nobby, Town Topics (1914); Smithy and the Hun, Pearson (1915); 1925: The Story of a Fatal Peace, Newnes (1915, hardback and paperback); The Daughters of the Night, Newnes 1/- paperback; The Daffodil Mystery, Ward Lock (1920); The Three Oak Mystery, Ward Lock (1924); The Missing Million, John Long (with 1923 Catalogue at rear); The Face in the Night, John Long (with 1924 Catalogue at rear); Smoky Cell, Hutchinson (1935); The Mouthpiece, Hutchinson (1935); and Sanctuary Island, Hutchinson (1936). Also: Agents and Patients (Duckworth, 1935) and What's Become of Waring (Cassell, 1939) by Anthony Powell, and No Sky (Hamish Hamilton, 1934), by Nigel Balchin. Not to mention: SBL's (2nd Series) Nos. 4, 17, 21, 37, 78, 91, 105, 130, 143, 152, 161, 180, 189, 195, 201, 214, 220, 221, 231, 237, 244, 254, 255, 266, 274, 278, 286, 294, 302, 314, 324.

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER, 22 SUMATRA ROAD, WEST HAMPSTEAD
LONDON, NW6 1PU, ENGLAND.

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Nelson Lee, Nipper and the Boys' at St. Frank's, together with the Girls at Moor View, wish you all the compliments of the season and hope you are still enjoying their adventures.

JIM COOK AT ST. FRANK'S

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B.F.L. 319, School and Sport wanted. Happy Christmas to Roger Jenkins, Eric Fayne, Tim Salisbury and all S.W. members.

HOWARD M. PIPE, 23 STOKE LANE, WESTBURY-ON-TRYM
BRISTOL, BS9 3 DP.

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Happy Xmas and Propserous New Year to all my friends. Lots of stock! Look forward to your latest wants.

NORMAN SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE RD.
LONDON, SE19. 01-771-9857

Leslie Rowley conjures up impressions of an

End-of-Year Assembly

Recently I stood in the Assembly Hall of my old school, and my mind reached out to grasp an elusive memory of the last time that I had stood there - a half a-century ago - on Founders Day. Why it was called Founder's Day, I never knew. It marked neither the day on which he had been born or the one on which he had died; neither did it celebrate the date on which he had founded the school. It marked, instead, the final assembly of the school year, and was a kind of Speech Day and Prize Giving combined.

The atmosphere was redolent of carbolic soap and floor polish. And just as the hall was newly swept and garnished, so were - by imperial edict - the scholars! Our kind masters, resplendant in best cap and gown, were led on to the platform by the headmaster, followed by some local worthy whose job it was to deliver a dull and uninteresting speech and present the dull and uninteresting prizes. One such book I received was entitled "The Salvation of Cedric", the author of which preferred to remain anonymous - and I cannot blame him! The book was nicely bound with gilt title and page edges. As I carried it back to my place in Hall, I found myself wishing that the school authorities had shown more consideration and given me the Greyfriars 'Holiday Annual' instead. I cannot recall what happened to Cedric, but whatever fate was his I never kept him long!

As I stood in that Assembly Hall, dreaming my way back to boyhood, I found myself wondering about Greyfriars and whether and how that famous school had enjoyed such occasions. That there was a founder we know, because there was a founder's fountain in the Quadrangle. There were also founder's scholarships. So I argued with myself that there must have been some assembly at that school in fiction just as there had been at my school in real life.

What follows was a pleasing exercise for me. Once on Courtfield Common I let fancy run free. Come with me and let your's do the same!

* * *

There is a point amid the heather and gorse of Courtfield Common where one is at equal distance between the ruined tower of Greyfriars School and a magnificent oak. The tree has been known as Prior's Oak for centuries, longer even than the tower has been part of a great public school. It has spread the shade of its leaves in Summer and carried its burden of snow in Winter, and has been a meeting place for many a greater or lesser occasion. There is little doubt that Prior Hugh of Friardale looked out at that distant tree whilst imprisoned in the tower which at the time was part of the monastery in his care until Cromwell, Vicar of All England, came to carry out his royal master's command. It was from a branch of the oak that the courageous prior was hung as a final punishment for not revealing the whereabouts of the monastic plate, now referred to as the Greyfriars Treasure. A pen, other than my own, will be dealing with this story elsewhere.*

It had been a pleasant walk from the station at Courtfield. Rather warm for the time of year, and I had been glad of the refreshment that I had taken at Chunkleys in the main street of the market town. Ninepence had seemed a lot to have paid for

* See "A History of Greyfriars School" by H. S. Quelch - in course of preparation.

cup of tea and a bun in this enlightened year of nineteen thirty-two, but then the prices in the store's Palm Court were not to be related to those attaining at Lyons' tea shops in town. But I must not digress!

I rested awhile, and looked around me. To the right, above the trees of Friardale Wood, rose the tall chimneys of Popper Court, whilst even further away and to my right could be seen the tall walls and sloping roofs of Hogben Grange. Between them, and even more distant could be caught the occasional gleam of that blue ribbon, the River Sark. It was a pleasant spot at which to pause on a fine early afternoon, but I had it on good account - very good account indeed - that the lonely common was often the nightly haunt of rogues and footpads. Really, at eightpence in the pound, one would expect better protection from this iniquitous rate of income tax.

It was not part of my plan to loiter for nightfall and thus become prey for some enterprising gentry of the light-fingered variety! I had no wish for my hat or my scalp to be broken by the cudgel of some skulking ruffian! The local police, I had been told, were on the look-out for a rogue named Jobson with a known record of demanding by menaces!

So, my pause was brief! Without more ado I picked my way through shrub and bracken, crossed a plank over one of the small tributaries of the Sark, and found myself on the open highway that is the Redclyffe Road where it meets Friardale Lane. In front of me rose the large grey outline of Greyfriars School, the massive iron gates standing open between the stalwart stone pillars on either side. A moment later I passed between them and was being directed to Hall by an ancient and perspiring school porter by the name of Gosling.

From the high window, the sun picked its way through the stained glass depicting the school crest to send multi-coloured rays to fall upon the carved corbels and panels, the oak of which had known the masterly hand of Grinling Gibbons himself. Now and then, some flash of blue or gold - more wayward than its fellows - would find a temporary resting place on the bald pate of Sir Hilton Popper and be reflected in the single eyeglass clenched in the fierce old brow beneath.

Beneath the many pipes and mellowed framework of the Father Smith organ, Mr. Flatt the music master drummed his fingers impatiently on his knees. For months he had been practising some improvisations on the School Song and was anxious - very anxious - to cast the fruits of his labours on the ears of the Board of Governors, visitors, Staff and scholars.

Sir Hilton had been speaking for a mere fifteen minutes and already there were signs of unrest both in the Assembly before him and in the stately row of masters behind him. Sir Hilton's term as Chairman of the Governing Board was coming to an end with this close of the School Year and the irascible baronet was making the most of this last opportunity to air his controversial views on many matters. In that quarter of an hour he had managed to criticise - with reckless abandon - his fellow governors, the Headmaster and Staff, the seniors and juniors of his old school. Not only Mr. Flatt was showing signs of restlessness!

Dr. Locke tactfully disguising a yawn as a cough, looked furtively at the watch on his wrist. Had Popper really started speaking only that short time ago? As the large second hand of the watch continued its relentless sweep, he received confirmation that such was indeed the case. Yet the lapse of time seemed longer, much longer. More like fifteen hours than fifteen minutes! Stifling yet another yawn, the dear old Head tried to concentrate on what the lord of the mortgaged acres of Popper Court had to say. It was a losing battle, and the Headmaster found his mind going back over the events of the past year.

The question of his own retirement had arisen and he had been surprised, and a little pained, with the earnestness in which Prout had urged him to go. Perhaps the Fifth form master had ambitions to become Headmaster in his place for Prout had hinted more than once that there were near at hand, admirable candidates capable of carrying on the School's great traditions, candidates at the head of which was possibly the name of Paul Pontifex Prout!

If Prout had been earnest in urging Dr. Locke to go, then the rest of the Staff - headed by his dear friend Quelch - had been even more earnest in requesting him to stay! The Head's face softened as he recalled such loyalty. It would not have affected him so deeply had he known that they had measured the possibilities of Prout against the certainties of Locke and - whilst none would have dared to admit it - settled for the devil they knew rather than the devil they didn't. Or so it was opined by Herbert Vernon-Smith of the Remove!

Further along the row Prout was also thinking of that opportunity - an opportunity which, likened to the sunbeams of old, had passed him by! In fact, there had been an occasion when Prout had been temporary Head - long, long ago and it had proved an experience which the School, Prout included, chose to forget. Not, of course, in Prout's view, that the ensuing catastrophe could be attributed to any fault in Prout! If only those young rascals in Quelch's form had been successfully subdued, all would have been well. Given a second bite at the cherry, as it were, Prout felt that he would have excelled; that his headmastership at Greyfriars would have ranked with that of Arnold's at Rugby. Once again he would have been able to refer to "members of my Staff", "my prefects", and so on. Quelch, Hacker, Capper, and the rest, would have been allowed to remain, but on his - Prout's - sufference; and woe betide the first to step out line! Unfortunately, Dr. Locke had not heeded his advice to seek the repose to which a long and distinguished career entitled him. Unfortunately, Quelch and the others had induced Dr. Locke to stay. It was almost as though they did not wish to have Prout as their Chief, although Prout himself could find no justification for this.

The Fifth form master gazed before him with baleful eye. He had scarcely heard a word that Sir Hilton had said. But then, Prout was not a listener. When he addressed his colleagues in Masters' Commons on the intriguing subject of Prout at Oxford or Prout in the Rockies, he would sometimes pause in his peroration, but his pause was for breath, never for reply. As he sat uncomfortably in a chair too small for his ample frame, and listened to Popper babbling on; as he disengaged himself from the past and looked to a future with a form that contained such ornaments as Horace James Coker, Prout wondered at the injustice of it all.

As the Headmaster had controlled his yawns, so now did Henry Samuel Quelch stifle a snort! His time was of such value that he had little to waste on Sir Hilton Popper! There were so many important things to do - far more important than listening to a man for whom he had about as much respect as he had time. In his study lay the draft of the latest chapter to Quelch's interminable 'History of Greyfriars School'. A sheaf of some sixteen neatly written pages over which the gimlet eye had yet to travel in final approbation! Quelch, who found it impossible to put off to the morrow the things that he could do today, found it intolerable that he had to suffer Popper whilst that valuable MSS awaited his attention.

Still there was balm to be found in Gilead, so to speak! He had dissuaded the Head from retiring, and something remotely resembling a grin flitted across his crusty visage as he recalled the disappointment this had occasioned Prout. Mr. Quelch enjoyed an especial relationship with Dr. Locke, a relationship not enjoyed by other masters; a relationship that was often the subject for acid comment in Masters' Commons - when Quelch was not there to hear it, of course!

It was more than possible that Quelch could have been a candidate for the Headmastership himself, and that there was support for him on the Governing Board could not be denied. Colonel Wharton and Major Cherry, relatives of two of the boys in his form, held him in high esteem. If the matter had crossed Quelch's mind at the time, he had not followed it up. In fact Quelch was happy with the status quo that had attained before the matter arose, and well satisfied that it was to be maintained.

Not that being master of the Remove could be termed a sinecure. Quelch felt that he earned his pay and more than a little over so long as his form contained boys as lazy as Mauleverer and as slovenly as Bunter. As he thought of the fat Owl, Mr. Quelch frowned. Bunter had been the cause of much trouble during the past term; the sins of that ornament of his form seeming almost as numerous as the sands on the sea shore! There had been the case of the bill for the large iced cake that he had received from Chunkleys - or to be more accurate he had received the bill whilst Bunter had received the cake. Alas! Quelch had discovered all this too late for recovering the cake and he had had almost as much difficulty in recovering the amount due from an irate Mr. Bunter. Mr. Quelch would be the last person to claim that he derived any satisfaction from caning a member of his form; nevertheless, having administered a record whopping on this occasion, he had felt better, decidedly better, afterward. Bunter, on the other hand, had felt decidedly worse!

Sir Hilton droned on. Really, it seemed that he was emulating the brook in the poem and likely to go on for ever: or so it appeared to Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. Like the Staff on the platform, most of the Greyfriars men had long tired of Popper. Wharton found his mind going back over the cricket and footer; next term they would have to be very much on their toes if they were not to come a cropper when they met St. Jim's and Rookwood. He would have to keep his eye on Smithy, who was a good man when he was at his best. Smoking and breaking bounds coupled with clandestine games of nap played in the frowsty company of Pon & Co. of Highcliffe, took their toll, and the Bounder was not the easiest of fellows to bring into line. There had been a terrific shindy in Study No. 4 when Wharton and friends had called to counsel Vernon-Smith to mend his ways. For a while there had

been bad blood between Bounder and Captain, but the hatchet had eventually been buried after beating Tom Merry & Co. a week ago on Little Side.

Herbert Vernon-Smith scowled in the direction of the platform. Joey Banks owed him a fiver from the quid he had placed on Little Boy Blue and the Bounder was anxious to collect. It would have been easy, all too easy, to have slipped away that afternoon and paid a visit to the "Three Fishers", yet here he was having to listen to that old gasbag, Popper. It was not as though he was in need of that fiver, for his father kept him well supplied with that necessary item, cash. The Bounder found an excitement in visiting the back parlour of an inn that was out of bounds, whether in the afternoon or late at night when the rest of the school was asleep. There were other reasons for that scowl, too, for Sir Hilton had laid about the Bounder with his riding crop that day he had been discovered on Popper's island. Popper regarded the island as part of the Popper Court Estate, but he was alone in that regard! Even the Headmaster did not support the baronet's claim, but the island had been put out of bounds for the very purpose of avoiding confrontation with the irate lord of Popper Court. Being out of bounds made the island more attractive to the Bounder, although perhaps he did not quite expect the whipping he had received, a whipping all the more severe because the Removite had challenged Popper to trot out title deeds to prove his ownership. Now, as he scowled, Smithy vowed to pay his debt to Popper when next the opportunity arose.

There was a rustle of paper as Sir Hilton gathered the notes of his speech. Like the longest lane, his bark had eventually come to its end, and an audible sigh of relief could be heard echoing around the Hall. There came the sound of tepid applause, though whether this was because of what Popper had said or because he had, at long and weary last, finished saying it, was a debatable point. Mr. Flatt, with an eagerness which did him credit, had struck the opening chords before Sir Hilton had returned to his seat.

Bob Cherry's lusty voice, more than slightly out of tune, forced its way above the sound of three or four hundred others. That flaxen haired youngster had been the most restless of all. Even in class he was continually shuffling his feet. It was as though he was so full of exuberance that his body just wouldn't keep still. Many a time and oft those restless feet had proved themselves on Little Side - or in the Form room, bringing respectively a cheer from his schoolfellows and an acid rebuke from his form master.

Today, Bob was extra-exuberant! He found delight in simple things like sliding down the bannisters or giving Pon a hiding during one of those many confrontations the Remove seemed to have with the knuts of Highcliffe. But it was not of games, or japes, or adversaries, that Bob had been thinking. Later that day the girls from Cliff House were coming over to tea in the study and that meant that he would be seeing Marjorie again! In deference to which Bob might just run a comb through his towselled mop; might just possibly put on a tie that wasn't creased; and might just manage to keep those feet under control. On the other hand, he might not manage to do any of these things and, if he didn't, it was doubtful whether Marjorie would notice or mind if she did!

Earlier, Bob had helped other members of the Co. transport a mass of good

things from the tuck shop to the study. Doughnuts and eclairs; sausage rolls and tarts; and to top them all, one of Mrs. Mimble's extra large cakes - a masterpiece of fruit and nuts covered with a thick coating of marzipan icing! Under the influence of Marjorie's presence, it was doubtful whether Bob would have paid much attention to the spread - which was just as well for someone else already had!

Billy Bunter groaned inwardly. His usually ruddy cheeks had taken on a sickly green hue, and a shiny greasiness adorned his fat countenance. Wharton and his chums had carried out their purchase of that small mountain of grub with great secrecy. Unfortunately as long as doors at Greyfriars had keyholes very few secrets were safe from Bunter. The cargo of tuck that had been in Bob's study was now in Bunter's extensive carcase, and that cargo had begun to shift! With scant regard for his personal Plimsoll line, Bunter had devoured that mountain of tuck. Now he wished that he'd left some for the others!

It was fortunate, perhaps, that Mr. Flatt had pulled out all stops for his rendering of the School Song, for the protestations of Bunter's stomach gave voice through a series of harrowing groans from Bunter's fat mouth. It was doubtful, very doubtful, if Bunter was in the mood for reflection; but had he been, then he would surely have reflected that the way of the transgressor was hard - and it was likely to be harder still when Wharton and Co. discovered what had happened to their tuck!

From his position near the Remove rank and file, Gerald Loder gave Bunter a sharp glance. Apparently that fat pig had been gorging again. Loder kindly hoped that Bunter had been pilfering from a member of the Famous Five. Anything that brought distress to that quarter also brought joy to Loder's heart - not that there was much joy in it at the moment. A run of bad luck, due to the erratic performances of several dead certs, had accounted for all of Loder's rather generous allowance. Gay Goldfish, Pork Pie, Sonny Boy, and all the others had come in long after the rest had stopped running. The bully of the Sixth now owed Messrs. Lodgey and Banks a sum which he could not hope to pay this term, next term, or any other term. His pals, Carne and Walker, were unable to help him. Loder's one chance of salvation lay in the possibility of generous tips from his people at home but he had grave reason to doubt whether either Mr. Lodgey or Mr. Banks would be prepared to wait in horsey expectancy for that solution to his problem. Neither Lodgey nor Banks were known for their patience, but there was a chance - a very slim one - that they would allow Loder time to pay, bearing in mind that he represented a fruitful source of income when he was in funds.

The School Song - improvisations and all - came to a triumphant close. Not that Claude Hoskins of the Shell thought much of it! Hosky lived, moved, and had his being in a world frequented by such strange animals as Diminished Fifths and Perfect Sevenths (to which some wit had added Anguished Fourths and Tortured Ninths), and felt that he could have done better, much better, than Flatt. Next term, the musical genius of the Shell promised himself, he would compose a special arrangement of the School Song that would set the world by its ears. First, he had to re-write his Symphony Fantastique, a task that had become necessary because of the destruction by Hacker of the original manuscript. Hacker seemed to have a rooted objection to Hoskins composing in form time and had not only confiscated the offending work but,

being the Goth and Vandal that he was, torn it to shreds and thrown the fragments in the waste paper basket.

Horace Hacker, who only that morning had discovered thumb tacks on his study chair and gum in both of his inkwells, might with justification have fastened those heinous crimes upon Hoskins of his form. The master of the Shell, however, had a heavy hand when dealing out punishment and could have punished the whole form if he acted on suspicion alone! But even Hacker had to have more than mere suspicion on which to act. The Acid Drop, as Hacker was popularly known, had to wait - like Hoskins - for the beginning of the next term for his satisfaction. Now, he had to sit back and listen to Dr. Locke's closing address.

The Headmaster had spent a great deal of time on that address! Doubtless, there were many in his audience who would have been well pleased if he had spent less time on it! In its composition he had been aided and abetted by the faithful Quelch - much to the improvement of the original article in the opinion of the Remove master. In his quiet and measured tones the Head took his listeners through the successes of the past term. There were words of commendation of Wingate, the Captain of the School, and - much to the surprise and pleasure of Prout - a pleasing reference to Blundell of the Fifth. In sterner vein, Dr. Locke, voiced his disquiet at rumours that Greyfriars men had been frequenting out of bounds places of low repute. He warned - in the most solemn of terms - that there was no place at Greyfriars for the offenders. These words, falling on the ears of such celebrities as Loder, Carne, and Walker of the Sixth; Hilton and Price of the Fifth; and Vernon-Smith of the Remove, may have touched their target but it was extremely doubtful if they would be of lasting effect!

For the benefit of his more adult listeners the Headmaster dwelt, in passing, on some of the more unusual events of the past months. The discovery that a temporary master at the School had been a cracksman of almost international repute and an equally transient schoolboy who had proved to be a master forger. Perhaps the Head mentioned these matters to illustrate, as it were, that even from the criminal classes Greyfriars took only the best!

As though to balance the measure, Dr. Locke also called to mind several feats of selfless heroism performed by the juniors of that matchless form - the Remove! Not sparing the blushes of the Famous Five, he placed on record his pride in their courage in saving life at a Friardale level crossing and at a shipwreck off the Shoulder in Pegg Bay.

In conclusion, the Head paid tribute to the loyalty of his Staff, displaying a discerning use of words that left Prout feeling admonished and Quelch feeling satisfied. Dr. Locke sat down to a thunderous applause of such spirit and volume as had been denied the previous speaker.

The sun no longer lightened the golds and blues, the reds and greens of the stained glass. The dusk of late afternoon was already intruding into the Hall and darkening the shadowy recesses of niche and corner. From their gilt frames, the painted features of famous Old Boys still looked down. By a trick of the fading light it seemed as though their expressions had softened at this ending to yet another

Assembly. An ending that lengthened still more this day from their own.

The Great Doors opened and the Hall gradually emptied. Out into the grey of twilight to where Elm Walk made its gravelled way to the distant cloisters. The Sixth Form green, encroaching on buttress and arch of the grey School building, silent now from the pacing of the priveleged few. The clock, high in its tower, was already illuminated. The pallid light from its figured face almost welcoming the advancing dark when a more natural moon would add its fingers of silver and so caress both turret and table. Behind us, carried on the cooling air, came strains of music as the tireless fingers of Mr. Flatt coaxed a final voluntary from the organ.

I sighed as I left my beloved Greyfriars. A sigh that was to find its echo in the gently stirring branches of the leafless trees!

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Bunter of Greyfriars School wanted; also Sherlock Holmes, especially in comic papers and spoofs.

48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRALL.

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Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year to all collectors.

JOHN COX, "HARDEN FOLLY", EDENBRIDGE, KENT.

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WANTED: Dixon Hawke Case Books, Rookwood S.O.L's.

KEARNS, 35 BURNISTON ROAD, HULL, NORTH HUMBERSIDE, HU5 4JX.

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Happy Christmas and New Year to Eric Fayne, and all associated with "C.D."
Has any kind person spare copies: "Schoolgirl", 1929-31, 1934, or "Schoolgirls' Own", 1935-6?

ESMOND KADISH, 18 GROVE GARDENS, HENDON, LONDON NW4 4SB.

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Christmas and New Year Greetings to all O.B.B.C. members, readers of C.D. and kindred friends with whom I enjoy correspondence.

WILLIAM LISTER, 137 CUNLIFFE RD., BLACKPOOL, FY1 6RX.

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THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON TO ALL FRIENDS AND CORRESPONDENTS. BEN WHITER

"The Public School lives on"

or "FROM DR. ARNOLD TO SMUGGY"

by KEITH HODKINSON

After starting up the hobby of collecting old boys' papers again after many years, I eventually came round to considering reading some of the stories. First efforts with my favourite period in the D. C. Thomson papers of the mid-1940's were not very successful, as most of these stories seemed extremely weak and disappointing. I put this down to the inevitable result of an adult trying to read children's literature. In trying to recapture past joys I found myself spoiling those golden memories. Nevertheless a few did come through especially as I became more accustomed to this type of reading and brought my mind down to this level of appreciation.

I passed on to those rich and seemingly endless rows of volumes of the Boys' Own Paper which lined my shelves. I was determined not to be a collector who just stockpiled but one who was really familiar with the content of his papers otherwise it would be simply an empty hobby. The Boys' Own Paper, to my surprise, seemed to come up to expectations admirably, especially at first, as the adventure stories "In the Secret Sea", "Guardians of the Shield" and "On the Great Fur Trail" in that magnificent 1918/19 volume were devoured night after night. The one school serial in that volume, "Caught Out" by Kent Carr, whilst having a disappointing climax, was so beautifully written, the characters and the details so richly drawn that it proved something of a revelation to me. I continued to work through the Gilson stories and those of Argyle Saxby and others, but I found myself time and again coming back to the school stories. The works of Richard Bird, Frank Elias and Harold Avery followed in quick succession and whilst many were not outstanding I found the genre extremely enjoyable.

Eventually I felt I had read sufficient numbers of authors to be able to present a paper to the Cambridge Club and this article is based on that talk, though of course, the process has continued unabated since then and further authors works have been studied. The list seems endless however, of authors still untouched. To do the job properly it would entail solid reading for the next ten years. I wouldn't ask you to wait that long and there are certainly times when I feel like a break from this form of literature. The adventure tales of Geo. E. Rochester, J. Claverdon Wood, John Sylvester and Frank H. Shaw are there staring at me tantalisingly. Perhaps the 1990 Collectors' Digest Annual will have Part Two!

I arranged the authors originally into a list of a kind of top ten or so, which has since met with much criticism. I don't intend to defend this as these stories covered such different age ranges that inevitably many seem inferior to others from a literary standpoint and fail to meet the test of adult scrutiny. Others seem to form a general middle group, all more or less of a like style, nature and quality. The outstanding ones, however, seem to stand out clearly, and surprisingly these come from a very varied cross section of authors. We'll build up to those at the end of our

review. Again I hesitate because this choice is my own personal one and I acknowledge that what suits one person will not suit another. As I studied my list, I felt some people would react to the fact that Charles Hamilton was not at the top of my list, and judging by your editors comments on the original report of my paper and subsequent letters from subscribers my thoughts were not far out. Nevertheless, I feel I have to stick to my guns, but it is not my intention to decry any of the authors at all, only to give emphasis to others who seem to be continually ignored under the overwhelming patronage to Hamilton stories. So let us acknowledge that there were others in the field - many others - many who have never come into this hero-worship category. I was urged by Bill Thurbon to read the Wodehouse stories in the "Captain" and this author is now included, but Kipling's "Stalky & Co." is omitted as this was really a 'one-off' for this great writer. He didn't normally haunt this genre whereas the ones that follow specialised in this field.

The early school stories, of course, have at their centre Thomas Hughes' "Tom Brown's Schooldays", but soon after came the other Victorian stories of Ascot R. Hope, Henry Frith, Bernard Heldmann, Paul Blake, A. N. Malan and Talbot Baines Reed. These were vivid tales of public school life which set a pattern that lasted right through until World War Two.

The second wave brought Harold Avery, Burnett Fallow, W. E. Cule, Skelton Kuppard, Andrew Home, Percy V. Bradshaw, John Lea, P. G. Wodehouse, Clarke Hook, Fred Swainson, Jack North, Henry St. John, Sidney Drew, R. S. Warren Bell, Herbert Hayens, Cecil Hayter, A. Allen Brocklington, Basil Windham, Walter Edwards, Maxwell Scott, Harry Huntingdon and many others. They carried on the tradition but with the addition of some license and less Christian doctrine being pushed down the readers throat.

Some time ago Neville Wood wrote an article for the Digest on adult public school stories set in the 1920's and could vouch for their authenticity. Authors included Desmond Coke, Beverley Nicholls, E. F. Benson, Arnold Lunn, Eric Parker, Alec Waugh, Ernest Raymond, Michael Campbell, G. F. Bradby, Alaric Jacob, Ian Miller, Charles Turley, Richard Russell. They were far removed from the school tales offered to boys during that period though Charles Turley also wrote for boys as well. The First World War and after saw the rise of Frank Richards, Owen Conquest and Martin Clifford (all Hamilton, as we know), plus Frank Elias, Kent Carr, Hylton Cleaver, Richard Bird, A. G. Roper, Michael Poole, E. S. Brooks, Gunby Hadath, Geoffrey Trease, Burleigh Carew, John L. Roberts and Alfred Judd. They kept things going until after the Second World War.

Although school stories came forward again after the war it didn't last, despite an attempt at a new school story paper in 1953 called "The School Cap" which had a very short run. The only new ground was broken by Anthony Buckeridge in the late 1940's and during the 1950's with his characters Jennings and Rex Milligan and he is still popular. Although girls papers still run school tales (in pictures), the last of the boys school stories ended in the mid-fifties with the fade out of Red Circle in the "Hotspur", though Peter Ling still flew the flag for a little while longer in the "Eagle". Surprisingly in 1963 "Look & Learn" revived some Greyfriars stories but

otherwise there was nothing.

School stories appear to divide themselves into the serious, the light-hearted and the wild "Jolly Japes" type. It is remarkable how early the running of parallel themes began, that is chapters about the lower school alternating with those about the fifth or sixth formers. This was developed quite discreetly in those early Talbot Baines Reed stories but in the 1920's it was so blatant that it must have been deliberate design. I found it quite off-putting, even to the point of irritation. I can only guess that what started as an innocent view of the relationship of fags with their masters became a device for keeping a wide reading public - of stories appealing to both young and older boys. The stories of Richard Bird, Harold Avery and others seem to follow this pattern very regularly.

I have already mentioned the Thomson stories. To me, reading them as a boy, the "Wizard" of the 1946 period reigned supreme with the "Adventure" and "Hotspur" close behind. "The Rover" was there too but never to the degree of the others. Now I have a healthy respect for that particular paper so it shows how tastes change as you look back with an adult approach. "Smith of the Lower Third" in the "Wizard", later promoted to "Smith of the Fourth Form" started in the Spring of 1947 and continued without a break until 1952 when it eventually ran alternate weeks then finished suddenly. Within no time at all it was repeated (somewhat edited). Here was the new boy at Lipstone College, suffering under the hand of a hard fag-master, unwittingly breaking all Lipstone's fantastic array of school rules. It had even more customs, liberally introduced to keep the weekly tales going, but when it came to Charles the 2nd having hidden in a second oak tree - and that it was in Lipstones playing fields, I nearly gave up! The "Wizard" with its companion papers had only just been reduced from five stories to four due to the post-war paper shortages and a continuous slice of a paper suddenly being devoted to an endless school saga annoyed me. It was there already in the "Hotspur" with Red Circle but then this series had always been there right from the first issue of that paper. Red Circle was in the main humorous and far less serious than Smith of the Lower Third. The titles themselves are proof of that with such gems as:- "By Gum, old Smuggy's Stuck", "Are they Daft or is it Craft", "Smuggy's Vanishing Pants", "Numb Ned's Air Cruise Snooze", "The Day I Smacked Smugg's Smeller", "Who's Red Circle's Super Snooper", etc., etc.

In the early days these were often long complete stories dominating the paper in nearly the same way as Greyfriars dominated "The Magnet", but to a lesser degree. In the forties it usually ran in a series of four to six instalments. Occasionally, in between them would be the single episode tale, often at festive occasions. In the mid-fifties, after surprisingly little or no repeats, some of the earlier stories were reprinted as 'classics' or rather re-told as there was a somewhat drastic reduction in length. Then it became a picture story strip for a short period and then disappeared with all the other school stories behind the barrage of war tales. Plenty has been written already about Red Circle - its houses in a circle - Home House, Conk (Colonial) House, Yank House, Junior House, and its characters. My period had Mr. Smugg, of course, plus Dixie Dale, the oversize Mr. Barrel, Weepy Willie Smugg, Mr. Moon with his corns, and boys such as Rob Roy Macgregor,

Spike Dewey, Cripple Dick Archer, Jeep Jones, Young Butch, Numb Ned, Ralph Desmond, Spiv Ringer, and the villainous Deakin. Somehow it was all acceptable, but ridiculous fair, from Joking Genies to Zulu tribesmen kidnapping Mr. Smugg. Quite honestly these didn't stand up to adult re-reading very well. The stories seem weak now and too polite, not bearing up to the outrageous humorous titles and the hilarious illustrations. As a youngster, though, the Thursdays could never come quick enough for my ration of this school.

The other two papers didn't have regular series of school stories and "The Skipper" was before my time, but they used the school story often against the background of other story forms usually sport or westerns. The "Adventure" had two rattling good cricket yarns in "The Last of the Swiping Randalls" (later rehashed changed to 'Slashing Scarletts') and "The Scallywag of the Family" but best of all was an historical story with the terrible title "The Boy Who Licked Napoleon". This was superb. A youth is pressganged into the British Navy but his sea career is short lived when the frigate is torpedoed from some submersile off the coast of France. He survives and with a junior officer sets out to solve the mystery of the strange submersile. They trace it to a school for supermen with its merciless headmaster. The youth is smuggled in as one of the pupils and suffers many hardships and indignities before discovering the secret of the basement pool. The American inventor Robert Fulton is experimenting with a craft to rescue Napoleon Bonaparte from St. Helena! The rest of the story is involved in the race to outwit the insurgents and stop the rescue bid. Good stuff this.

The "Hotspur" in 1949 ran a very good off-beat school yarn in "The School Must Fight For 50 Days". Typical of Hotspur schools it was out west where in order to survive, the school has to remain open - with pupils - until a certain date or lose its land due to a legal tie-up. Gunmen empty the school to stop it functioning and the old head sends out calls for help to his old pupils. Only two respond - a gangster and a hobo, but together they fight off the gunmen and kidnap a host of boys to fill the school and keep them there. In 1944 I remember one Hotspur tale called "Our School flies a Hurricane" telling of a school in enemy-occupied France keeping a Hurricane fighter in a cave and a shot-down British pilot, hiding in their school takes it out at night and plays hell with the Hun. This was more a series than a serial.

The "Rover" had an unusual one in 1948 in "Behind the Invisible Wall", where an alien from space infiltrates a school as a master and eventually throws a force field around the place while the invading fleet lands. Many are the attempts to escape but all fail. Nevertheless, eventually the aliens are outwitted by the schoolboys.

There were hundreds of these tales, often quite sensational way-out tales such as "Donkeys don't have to go to School", "We've giants at our School", "His Teachers a Truant Too", "That Schoolboy Owns a Goldmine", "Lost Boys on the Unknown Planet", "The Schoolboy Sheriff wears Whiskers", "The New Boys on Venus", etc., etc. Perhaps the worst story was in the "Adventure" in 1948, "The Gunman Guards the One-Man School" which was utterly tasteless as the kidnapped schoolboys of western no-goods from the nearby town are kept there by a ruthless outlaw hero and a headmaster who keeps them under control by almost S.S. methods. Of course,

there was always the off-beat sports story as in "By Order of the Shadow" in 1945 in the "Hotspur", where the head forbids cricket resulting in secret training sessions in the old crypt with a mysterious unknown instructor helping them by shadowplay lectures.

Greyfriars came to me initially in a form which would send most Hamiltonians into apopleptic fits - as a picture strip in the "Knockout" of the war years. I loved those Bunter strips and still have a great affection for them and, at the time, I was quite unaware that Bunter had ever existed in any other form. My grandmother presented me with the book "Billy Bunter's Benefit" in 1950 for Christmas. I still have that first edition with its original dust jacket and I remember thoroughly enjoying it, though many feel the Bunter books were below par and possibly not even genuine Hamilton. The Howard Baker reprints fascinated me when they first came on the market and I purchased one - the Bunter Court collection, but found it very hard going.

Enthusiasts of Hamilton told me to go 'earlier' for the satisfaction I sought and so I went to the 1919 Magnets, Nos. 569 and 570, "Wally Bunter's Luck" and its sequel. There is no doubt these were far superior. These two episodes were part of a long double series running concurrently in both Magnet and Gem when Bunter swops schools for a period.

Frank Elias wrote "The Shadow on the School" for the "Boys Own Paper" in 1920, but I found it rather depressing. It was nicely written, but we follow the misfortunes of one particular sixth former who, through no fault of his own is wrongly expelled half-way through. He then disappears from the story and the rest is taken up with lesser characters trying to prove his innocence and therefore remove the shadow from the school. He is exonerated but too late for him to return.

Alfred Judd's "Mystery of Allens" in the 1927 volume of "Chums" starts with a good idea. Schoolboys having a secret late night rendezvous on the school roof to listen to 2LO only to find they are not alone as they discover a masked figure on the prowl. The rest of the tale gets a bit weary with the continuous sightings and escapes of the masked schoolboy. The final unveiling isn't so much a 'Who dunnit' as a 'Who is it' and the denouncement is completely unconvincing. Consulting again the early chapters I found it impossible for the boy concerned to have been where he was. On reading on in those final chapters, the author covers the ambiguities by making out that there were two masked men; the second having copied the idea from the first who had simply been out on a one night only prank. Good up to about chapter 23 then all went berserk.

The middle group are all really of one league. Hylton Cleaver wrote "Carson the Second" for the 1927 "Chums" and this was quite an original tale. Carson one disappears completely. When the police and the school have given up all hope Dad sends Carson two to the same school to find out what happened to his younger brother. A good mystery but with a surprising end with Carson the First just reappearing - at first as though nothing had happened but it wasn't quite as straightforward as it seemed. Harold Avery wrote "A Sixth Form Feud" in 1922 and "A Fifth Form Mystery" in the same year both for B.O.P. In the former, whilst there was nothing

exceptional about it, it made very pleasant reading. The school always prided itself on the past great athletic feats of one of the great school heroes. Eventually it turns out that the new gamekeeper at the 'out of bounds' mansion next to the school is in fact this very person. He proves to be now a far cry from his old school image and generally brings disappointment to his avid followers. However all turns out well in the end when one finds that the 'hero' had in fact died years before and the neighbour is in fact an imposter. Herbert Hayens wrote "Play Up Blues" around the turn of the century and I have this in a hardback copy. This is yet another of these stories of the new boy finding it tough but later proving his worth despite the actions of certain vicious opponents. I enjoyed this, and found it was one of those you could soak up and keep on reading without tiring, but it must also be said that I can remember very little about the plot details afterwards.

You could almost say the same for Gunby Hadath's stories which are also in this middle bracket, but the two I chose to read are both memorable because they are both set in World War II. "Grim and Gay", the better of the two was serialised in B.O.P. in 1941 and told of a school that wasn't evacuated but chose to stay in the war zone and stick it out. Again one theme is of a new boy finding it a hard time and actually being harangued by the school bullies suspected by them as being a fifth columnist! The school is bombed in the finale and it is this boy's heroism which saves the place as one wing is ablaze. "Fight it Out" was serialised in B.O.P. in 1943 under the title "The Fifth Hubbard". This time the school is evacuated to an old hall in the country complete with mystery wells, secret passages, etc., all favourite haunts of fifth columnists. The hero is the senior most boy chosen for Captain when the older boys more qualified have gone into the services and he finds his authority continually undermined by his fellow classmates plus disregard by the juniors. He fights it out against all odds hence the title.

Richard Bird's "Ace of Stamps" would also come into this middle range but the other two novels I read were far above this. Michael Poole's "Under Ringwood's Rule" from the 1929 B.O.P. is a cut above these with a well told tale of two boys given the task by the head of bringing a new boy from the United States into line. However the Yank is a tearaway of the worst kind, getting them into all manner of scrapes. Eventually they find he is an excellent swimmer and high diver and persuades him to better ways through the glory of sport. Fred Swainson's "The Informer" from the 1907 "Captain" is a compelling story, obviously intended for the young adult as could be said for many of the "Captain's" serials. The fair sex has a priminent part to play, this disposing of the sweeping statement often made that girls had no part in these boys stories. They were also present in "Bunter & the Phantom of the Towers" and more significantly in "The Shaping of Jephson's" and "Brought to Heel" and especially "The Rotter of Whitelands" all to follow in this review. "The Informer" of the title finds himself in this role through no fault of his own to keep a promise of honesty, but it results in him being sent to Coventry by his school fellows. His one loyal friend is a cripple boy, who narrates the story, and a girl from the neighbouring mansion. Basically it tells how he overcomes the prejudices and redeems himself at the end. It doesn't sound all that bright but it is in fact quite a lively story.

John L. Roberts was a regular contributor to B.O.P. from about 1916 to

1928 with his stories of Greystone school and of a great character called Blundell. All were first class, with delightful humorous touches. Blundell is a wild fourth former almost of the "William" type but older. Most of these stories were in the form of two-part novelettes but in 1926 the one and only full length novel of Greystone was published in B.O.P. In this Blundell reaches the bitter end and is given an ultimatum by the head that unless he does something during the term for the glory of the school instead of the opposite all the time, he will be expelled. He excells himself at the last minute by finding the lost statue of a monk, lost since the early days of the school, and virtually winning the house cricket match single handed. I felt the latter was unfortunate. His feats were too good to be true and might have been more in keeping with the characters' feats in the "Wizard" they were so fantastic. The finding of the statue would have amply sufficed.

Richard Bird's "The Red Flag" from the 1921 B.O.P. is held in high esteem by many as one of the best stories of that period and I agree that this tale of bringing to book an objectionable master with communistic tendencies is very absorbing. I found the hardback I have of "The Sporting House" far better though. I digested this in two days of continuous reading last year when I was ill in bed. I couldn't put it down. Absolutely first class - yet I can't remember a word of it. I suppose someone will say there must be a lesson in there somewhere.

Kent Carr's stories stay very well in my mind, though. I read four in fairly quick succession but the best of these was "The Shaping of Jephsons" (B.O.P. 1917). Bill Lofts discovered when researching for his "Men behind Boys' Fiction" that Kent Carr was a woman author, hence the presence of females in these stories. It has been said that sporting details were astray at times in her stories but in all honesty I hadn't noticed. This particular story tells in a completely compelling way of a boy picked out to bring Jephson's house into order. He doesn't really succeed but does stir the original Captain into action and to his responsibilities. "Brought to Heel" by the same author appeared in the 1903 volume of "Boys of Our Empire" and is to some extent a story of the masters more than the boys which takes it out of the ordinary for a start. A new head is despised by many of the boys, led by the prefect Powell, through his lameness but finds a champion in Waring, the school Captain together with the young lady of the manor next door. There is a strike of the lady's workmen which starts to turn nasty, and this coincides with a barring out by the boys and a school fire. The supposedly incapable head turns up trumps and establishes himself as a real power for good. Kent Carr's stories seem to me to be the very best for characterisation and contain the essential qualities for carrying one along in spite of oneself. I found it difficult to lay down either of these stories. "The Shaping of Jephsons" was a sheer delight.

At this point let me place Talbot Baines Reed. What a master of the school story he was. Those golden Victorian volumes of the "Boys' Own" wouldn't be the same without his superb stories: "Master of the Shell", "Cock House at Fellsgarth", "My Friend Smith", "Tom, Dick & Harry", etc., and of course the most famous of them all - "The Fifth Form at St. Dominics" which was even made into a film just after the First World War. Thirty-eight great chapters. You only have to tentatively venture into the first chapter and he has your interest completely

captured. Again it's the old Tom Brown's Schooldays formula of a new boy finding things tough but develops into really being about that boy's elder brother in the fifth and the young boy's fag master in the sixth. Very discreetly Reed infiltrates Christian example and attitudes. Loman of the sixth degrades himself more and more as he finds himself caught in a webb of iniquity, of bad company and cheating at an exam. The public house is pictured as the den of evil. The unchristian attitude of sending a boy to Coventry without proof of his supposed crimes is hammered. It's all there but apart from one minor incident, I expect all the boy readers at the time soaked it all up without realising the Religious Tract Society were at work through Reed in those far off days of 1882. He doesn't preach. He depicts the follies through the plight of his characters.

P. G. Wodehouse started his career virtually with his succession of school stories in "The Public School Magazine", and especially "The Captain". As with Swainson I feel his stories are more for the young adult. His most famous school story was undoubtedly "Mike" which was made up of two consecutive serials from the "Captain". I only possess the latter of these and I am waiting until I can acquire the other before reading this. In the meantime I read "The Gold Bat" (1904 "Captain"). This is one of the best boys' school stories ever written. It is every bit as good as any of Wodehouse's adult novels and although in general a serious story, the occasional humorous items are so beautifully interjected as to produce the belly laughs. The gold bat of the title is a cricketing award pin in the form of a cricket bat. Our hero lends it to a friend who loses it. Later it is found near an incident of vandalism and creates problems for its owner in several ways. He knows who really created the vandalism yet he cannot clear himself without involving his friend. A blackmailer finds the bat and disguised behind the activities of an organisation called "the League" tries to intimidate our hero into football team choices, etc. His friends set out to discover who the League are following receipt of anonymous letters and a succession of wrecked studies. In the end the villains are unmasked.

My favourite story was "The Rotter of Whitelands" (1947 Gerald G. Swan Publications). The author, Reginald Brown, was in fact E. S. Brooks and this story is a rewrite of an earlier St. Frank's story (Boys' Friend Library No. 435 - second series, 'The Schemer of St. Frank's').

The initial theme of "The Rotter of Whitelands" follows the misadventures of a Whitelands Fourth Former called Kenneth Pyne who is wild about motor-bikes and speed resulting in a near fatality when he crashes a borrowed bike. Following his recovery and with him being also under age, he is banned by his father from all two wheeled transport. When faced with the threat of an office job if he is caught, he is under great pressure when he has to save a young lady from the neighbouring school from distress. He saves her from expulsion by getting her back in time for call-over by borrowing another motorbike. He has no accident this time but is spotted by the rotter of the title - Hugh Devereux who sets out to win favours from Kenneth and the girl by blackmail. The story then gets quite complex culminating in a series of twists and turns resulting in a breathtaking climax. The plot has more 'meat' than any of the others mentioned before. It is a masterpiece of co-ordination and must

have taken some planning. A beautifully balanced story.

So there it is - a cavalcade of the public school story - yes there were stories about Grammar Schools and Council Schools - but not many. They say that today's boys would never read these because they would never be able to associate themselves with public schools. It would have to be a Comprehensive - heaven forbid - yet T.V's "Grange Hill" works in its way. Even in my day only a minority of boys went to the Public Schools - yet we Grammar School boys lapped up these stories and would not have had them any other way or located anywhere else. Today's story planners have little imagination except in violent science fiction and lurid war picture strips. I'm not decrying them but, there is really room for something else. However the great run of the school story has possibly been broken now for far too long to hope for any re-establishment now. So we must regard it as a form of literature that is now completely wound up and can be studied as a complete entity - for those of us with memories and the desire to keep reading this genre. It lasted a long time so whilst the old books keep in circulation we will have plenty of material - enough to keep any of us going until doomsday.

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Best wishes for Xmas and New Year to Josie, Mollie and Northern Club, Eric, Bob, and all readers.

HARRY PEMBERTON, MANCHESTER.

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WANT: Nelson Lee old series, 137, 140, 142, 143; William the Lawless.

JACK HUGHES, P.O. BOX 92, HOME HILL, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA.

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to our Editor, dear Eric, and all members of the London O.B.B.C. and followers of our hobby everywhere, long may you flourish.

SAM THURBON, 29 STRAWBERRY HILL ROAD
TWICKENHAM, MIDDLESEX.

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Seasonal Greetings fellow collectors. Special thanks Josie Packman, Norman Shaw, John Bridgwater, for all help given. WANTS: Sexton Blakes 1st/2nd, Union Jacks. SALE/EXCHANGE: N. Lees, U.J's, Thomsons, Annuals, miscellaneous, Hamiltonia and O.B.B's. S.a.e. details -

LAURIE YOUNG, 211 MAY LANE, KING'S HEATH
BIRMINGHAM, B14 4AW.

= =

WANTED: pre-war Tiger Tim's Annuals.

N. M. KADISH, 126 BROADFIELDS AVE., EDGWARE, MIDDX.

Elementary, Miss Watson!

(With apologies to Sherlock Holmes fans for further misquoting the master)

by MARY CADOGAN

It is a far cry from the flamboyant and intrepid sleuthing adventuresses who blaze across our T.V. screens to those discreet Lady Detectives who used to grace the pages of Victorian books and periodicals. But Charlie's Angels and others in the same mould get plenty of publicity, so I'm confining this personal appreciation of women investigators strictly to those who were around between 1861 and the 1920's. And of course only to some of these, because a tribute to them all would demand not an article but a whole book.*

In fact the tradition of female sleuths began in England. Mrs. Paschal's adventures appeared in a book by W. S. Hayward called The Revelations of a Lady Detective in 1861. The first edition was published anonymously, but subsequent editions attributed the stories to Hayward. Just three years later an author called Andrew Forester Junior followed up, and produced a nameless crime-solving heroine in The Female Detective. The anonymity associated with both these pioneering ladies suggests that the sleuthing profession was not then considered quite respectable for a woman. Mrs. Paschal, however, was more than confident about women's suitability for this type of work, and drew attention without any false modesty to the powers of her own 'vigorous and subtle brain'. And Forester's Female Detective, though more subdued, was always ready to defend with spirit her participation in a 'despised' calling, remarking realistically that as criminals could come from either sex, so too should their sleuthing opponents.

A dainty figure in white could be descried leaning nonchalantly against the wall. It was Yvonne.

YVONNE, DRAWN BY VAL, FROM UNION JACK

* Actually Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig have written a whole book about women detectives! Called "The Lady Investigates" it will be published by Victor Gollancz in February.

These fictional ladies anticipated historical fact by having professional associations with the Police some twenty years before the force started to employ women in any capacity. The mysteries that they solved involved blackmail, forgery, jewellery thefts and missing wills. (These were to become stock ingredients several decades later in the detective stories of the Amalgamated Press's girls' papers.) Each of these two early investigators used histrionic ability as an important tool of her trade. They could pose easily, when necessary, as servants or tradeswomen in order to gain access to evidence that might be concealed in the salons of their suspects. Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake, of course, had no difficulty in altering their distinctive features at will, but their flair for disguise was a low-key business compared with the dashing metamorphoses of some of the early lady sleuths.

Feminine intuition, and even second sight, were the keynote of the mystery-solving techniques used by Mrs. Paschal and Forester's Female Detective, but they also did a lot of stumbling from clue to coincidence. This was very different from the process of astute deduction accelerated by inspired hunches that was later to typify so many 'whodunits'. But in their day these ladies were symbols of courage and enterprise. Mrs. Paschal, for example, when pursuing her quarry shows a wonderful lack of regard for the conventions of English society in 1861:

> 'I with as much rapidity as possible took off the small crinoline I wore, for I considered that it would very much impede my movements. When I had divested myself of the obnoxious garment and thrown it on the floor, I lowered myself into the hole, and went down the ladder ...'

Mrs. Paschal then gets shut up in a damp, slimy underground vault; though only in her petticoats, and presumably feeling pretty chilly, she shows no sign of panic but simply 'sighs for a Colt's revolver'.

The success of Mrs. Paschal (her exploits were reprinted several times) produced a spate of successors, many of whom first appeared in periodicals. A Journal for University Extension students in 1894 even featured a skirted and parodied version of Sherlock Holmes himself. Mrs. Julia Herlock Shomes, who has just become a widow, decides to take up 'the line of Private Enquiry left vacant by her husband'. Feeling the need for a Watsonian side-kick she recruits a Mrs. Lucilla Wiggins, who knits constantly, counts her 'dropped stitches' and watches admiringly while Mrs. Herlock Shomes rakishly smokes cigarettes and expounds upon whatever crime she is currently investigating. Like her dead spouse, she makes instant and detailed analyses of situations, but unlike him she is usually wrong. Indeed, her very first client is almost frightened off by the unflattering diagnosis that Julia makes at the beginning of their initial consultation:

> 'I'm sorry to find,' she said very severely as the old man entered, 'that you are in the habit of cheating at cards ...' ... 'I, ma'am,' he cried ... 'I've never done such a thing in my life ... if it's the waxed finger ends you've been looking at, I'm a cobbler to trade ...'

Wilkie Collins was an author of distinction who took up the theme of the woman investigator (The Law of the Lady, 1875). But Collins's Valeria Woodville never had professional status. She undertook the unravelling of a murder mystery solely in order to prove the innocence of her wrongly accused husband. Amongst the twenty or so women detectives who followed Valeria between 1875 and 1919 there is a large sprinkling of ladies who became investigators to avenge, or redeem the reputations of, their husbands, fathers, brothers or fiances.

One of these was Miss Nora Van Snoop, who is probably the earliest professional lady detective magazine heroine. Rather sadly, she appeared in only one story - The Stir Outside the Café Royal - in the September 1898 issue of the Harmsworth Magazine. (Grant Allen's ex-Girton girl Lois Caley preceded her in the Strand by a month or two, but she was not really so much a crime-solver as an adventuress, in the literal and wholesome meaning of the word.) Clarence Rook, who created Miss Van Snoop, was an American based for some time in London, and he wrote several stories about the city's underworld. His heroine is also an American living in London.

At first she appears to be an innocent tourist enjoying London's sights from a hansom cab; but she suddenly gets out at the Cafe Royal where she has spotted the notorious criminal who has robbed a Detroit bank - and shot down its manager, who was her fiance. By a clever ruse Miss van Snoop gets her adversary arrested on another charge, and then booked for his major crime. The reader then learns that Nora, who comes across very prettily in Hal Hurst's pictures, is actually a member of the New York detective

Having noiselessly opened the safe, Janet took from it the case containing the diamonds, and substituted for it a similar case, on top of which she placed an envelope.

JANET DARLING, THE LOVE DETECTIVE (from Forget-Me-Not, 1909)

force. She certainly carries out her assignment with aplomb, but once her dead lover has been avenged she 'earns the luxury of hysterics' and immediately cables to New York her resignation from the detective force.

Another lady who stuck to crime-solving only until a man in her life had been cleared of false charges was Nurse Hilda Wade. Grant Allen chronicled her exploits for The Strand Magazine towards the end of the 1880's. Her father had been 'framed' for murder, and to vindicate his honour Hilda uses every weapon she can muster. These range from her hospital-trained practicality to her 'deepest feminine gift - intuition', plus the bonus of a photographic memory, and a mesmeric look that can un-nerve almost any man she meets. Hilda's main claim to fame is that because of the untimely death of her creator the last chapters of her saga were written for the Strand by Arthur Conan Doyle. Happily for readers he perpetuated the contemporary tradition of ending stories of feminine detection on a romantic note, so that when her task was done Hilda could relax into the arms of the fervent admirer who had helped her to clear her father.

Going forward from the late-Victorian period to the Edwardian, Lady Molly of Scotland Yard emerges as one of the most colourful of the early lady detectives. She was dreamed up by Baroness Orczy (who had, of course, originated Sir Percy Blakeney Bart., the much loved Scarlet Pimpernel, a few years previously.) Lady Molly has to cope with none of the problems of prejudice encountered by some of her predecessors. The entire police force are 'invariably deferential' towards her, and even foreigners reflect that she is 'a true-hearted Englishwoman' and therefore 'the finest product of God's earth, after all's said and done'. Lady Molly is a strong character, 'the most wonderful psychologist in the world' and as adept at disguise as the Scarlet Pimpernel himself. Today the stories have a vintage charm, with period mood and colour expressed at the level of genteel affluence, and Lady Molly 'graceful and elegant in her beautiful directoire gowns', or retiring with her maid/assistant into a Lyons teashop in Regent Street for toasted muffins after seeing a matinée of 'Trilby'. Her adventures are also enlivened by atmospheric whiffs of Russian leather and parma violets. And of course the finale serenely follows the woman-saves-her-man formula.

Limitation of space makes it impossible to mention all the book and magazine heroines who so successfully demonstrated their investigative prowess around this time. But Lord Northcliffe's papers gave these enterprising ladies plenty of scope. Accounts of their brisk and inventive exploits were sandwiched between 'charming love romances' like 'A Mid-June Bride' or 'The Torments of Tessa'. Forget-Me-Not featured Janet Day, the Love Detective, from 1909. She was firmly described as 'the Girl Detective who will only help lovers', and each episode in her saga was headed by the following lines of verse:

Her face was like a flower
And her Heart for all could feel,
Truth and Beauty were her dower,
But her Nerves were nerves of Steel.

However, the process of smoothing the path to nuptial bliss for various couples

rather limited the talented Janet's scope as a sleuth!

Edith Dexter, the Mill-Girl Detective in Golden Stories (1910) had a wider variety of cases, and she was in fact unusual for her time in tackling industrial mysteries as well as the normal run of jewellery thefts, etc. She remained a leading light in the paper for a year or two, and as a detective graduated quickly from amateur to professional status. The authors of the Janet Day and Edith Dexter stories remained anonymous, but the rather flowery style suggests that they were not likely to be amongst the writers of the Sexton Blake series. (Bill Lofts may have some light to throw on this!)

The Blake adventures began seriously to influence the lady-detective genre after the First World War, and the popularity of G. H. Teed's Yvonne Cartier must have had a lot to do with this. She came on the scene, of course in 1913, to bring challenge and romance into the rather bracing all-boys-together world of Blake, Tinker and Pedro. (Mrs. Bardel was already there to provide a feminine touch, but she represented domesticity rather than the type of dashing enterprise associated with Yvonne.)

Yvonne was not only clever at detection but one of the most attractive 'adventuresses' in popular fiction. As we all know, under Blake's influence she graduated from crime-committing (though this was to redress a terrible injustice) to crime-solving. As her story has already been discussed in previous C.D's and C.D. Annuals my appreciation of her is really just a postscript; a series of vignettes.

Yvonne comes from Australia but her name, and the fact that even after years in England she was still frequently addressed as 'Mademoiselle', suggest a streak of the romantically Latin in her make-up. Though not quite Edwardian, Yvonne has some of the legendary elegance of that period; but as she remained active in the series until the end of 1926 her image became streamlined into something more in keeping with the post-war progressiveness of the jazz, cocktails and fast car decade. Yet Yvonne, who is in a sense the first of the modern female detectives, retains a slightly old-world and gracious flavour. This is conveyed in illustrations from the beginning to the end of her career - whether she is riding a horse and cracking a stockwhip in a 'Val' picture of 1913; drawn by Eric Parker in 1924 grappling with a murderous Chinaman, or (in a 1939 Detective Weekly reprint), depicted as a platinum blonde in slacks. (Usually she was described as having hair that was golden - or burnished-bronze.)

The fourteen years during which she was popular covered the First World War, and took in many subsequant social changes including, of course, the beginnings of women's emancipation. Yvonne was a fitting heroine for this time. She was quick-thinking enough to outwit Blake and, naturally, to discomfit the plodders from the Yard on many occasions; 'she ranked with the greatest scientists of the day', being a dab hand at physics and chemistry, and she conducted her excursions into crime with 'mathematical precision'. Added to all this was that typically feminine flair for disguise, and many other talents, including 'a perfect knowledge of Arab language and customs and Egyptology'.

Blake realises that he is up against 'a great and scientific mind' early on in their encounters, when Yvonne, after shadowing him, nips into the empty house next door to Blake's apartment and 'in a few moments' transforms herself into an elderly nun: she then calls on the detective in his consulting room to extract £10 from him for seaside holidays for worthy children! Her efficiency in disguise is again shown shortly after this. She kidnaps Tinker - 'Heavens, what will the guv'nor say when I tell him I was foiled by a woman?' - and then, with a brown wig and a few touches to her face, she manages to become 'a perfect reproduction of Tinker'. In fact she kidnaps both Blake and his assistant twice in this first story. It is not surprising that the detective begins to mutter, 'What a wonderful woman! What a brilliant mind, and what a detective she would make!' She does, of course - and puts her sleuthing capacities to good use by helping Blake and Tinker on so many of their cases.

Yvonne's natural successor is Eileen Dare, who in 1916 became 'Nelson Lee's Lady Assistant'. E. S. Brooks named her well; 'Eileen' suggests feminity of the unfluffy, dependable kind, and 'Dare' obviously implies courage and panache. It was a favoured surname for girl detectives, but Eileen was probably the first of them to have it. (Marie Connor Leighton produced a Lucille Dare, Detective on this side of the Atlantic in 1919, and Mignon Eberhart an American wrote a book called The Cases of Susan Dare in the mid-1930's. And apparently when Frank Hampson was planning the cover strip story for Eagle before its launching in 1950, he considered creating a character named Dorothy Dare, Detective - but of course he decided on Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future instead.)

EDITH DEXTER, THE MILL-GIRL DETECTIVE (from Golden Stories, 1911)

Like Yvonne, Eileen first became involved with crime in order to avenge herself on a group of tricksters, 'the Combine', who had disgraced and 'morally murdered' her father by having him falsely convicted of spying for Germany. Eileen gets rather more help from Nelson Lee in her campaign of vengeance than Yvonne did from Blake. She is, on the whole, a very modern heroine. Although she is at times subjected to some 'perils of Pauline' situations, her responses are always gritty. For example, when trapped by her enemies at the top of a blazing building, she thinks nothing of taking a several-storeyed leap to

safety. Or, shut in a cellar with Thames water rapidly rising above her waist she doesn't give in to panic but merely remarks: 'Oh, what a state my costume will be in!.' In another tricky moment she demonstrates her agility; though frequently described as 'dainty' - which presumably also means small - Eileen has no difficulty when the need arises in shinning up a six-foot wall in spite of her fashionably long, but cumbersome skirt.

She had a touch of present-day Modesty Blaize's talent for equipping herself with extreme efficiency for her bizarre tasks. She possessed 'a little hidden pocket' which always contained 'a tiny, silver-plated revolver'. Like Modesty Blaize too she is 'as strong - or stronger - than many men'. And Eileen is 'as clever as ten Scotland Yard detectives put together'. Fortunately her competence doesn't seem to undermine her femininity and appeal. Both Nelson Lee and Nipper are very taken with Eileen. Nipper hero-worships her, but with Lee there is at first a strong suggestion that a romance will develop. (It doesn't however, because Eileen rescues a handsome R.F.C. officer from the burning wreckage of his plane and they soon become engaged.) When Nipper pronounces Eileen 'a ripper', Lee responds by saying that 'Miss Eileen is a girl in a thousand. And, although she is a girl, I value her opinion highly, and should never hesitate to take her advice'. Nevertheless, it is usually Eileen who is on the receiving end of Nelson Lee's advice.

Despite her striking beauty, Eileen could almost instantly take on the appearance of a wizened old gipsy pedler or, with a wig and a pince-nez, turn herself into a middle-aged matron. In the matter of disguise, of course, she had many advantages over her male counterparts, because her detecting activities took place at a period when a woman could fairly easily escape recognition without even assuming fancy dress or make-up. Eileen frequently sported a hat with a face-hiding veil: 'A veil is a really splendid disguise, for it is impossible to clearly see the features through one'. Eileen Dare, though young, was very accomplished: 'She could ride, drive, swim, run like a deer, and her daring and sense of judgment were astonishing. She could play the piano, the violin, she could sing and dance - and do all infinitely better than nine girls out of ten.'

She could also write shorthand outlines which were as perfect as those in any manual. With all these things working for her, it is surprising that Eileen's career was so much shorter than Yvonne Cartier's. She was retired from the Nelson Lee stories in 1917, soon after she had found her 'perfect specimen of English manhood'. (Rather confusingly she came back in a one-issue story twelve years later to help Nelson Lee solve a mystery, and she was still single - just, in fact, according to Nipper, 'one of the guv'nor's best friends', and 'the most famous lady detective in the world'.)

Like Yvonne, however, Eileen survives still in our memories, and holds a special place in our affections. Long live the lady sleuths!

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Season's Greetings, Madam, Eric, Princess Snowee, friends everywhere.

BERT HOLMES

A Letter from St. Frank's

by JIM COOK

There are moments in our lives when a slight disagreement leads to a quarrel that leads to a fit of temper that leads to an almighty row and before you can say Jack Robinson your pride will not allow you to admit your fault - the demon has already taken possession.

I was reminded of this when Jerry Dodd, of the Remove, saw a recipe for making toffee, and tried to get the co-operation of his study mate, Tom Burton. But Tom Burton wasn't having any. He had a headache and felt rotten. The vision of cooking toffee on the oil stove and the smell therefrom was not conducive as a remedy for a bad headache and Burton said so.

Christmas was approaching and the River Stowe was covered in ice. But nobody was allowed to indulge in skating because the Headmaster had not given his permission. This was due to two village boys breaking through the ice near Judkins Corner, a tricky bend in the river.

As a result of the Head's veto a certain amount of irritability and bad temper had run through the school.

As Jerry Dodd proceeded to make his toffee Burton became more and more testy complaining the stuff had the odour of bilge. And when the pan caught fire Tom Burton, usually so sunny, in his own style of language went off the deep end which was too much for Dodd who gathered his books and things and sought another study. The demon was gathering strength.

It was the duke of Somerton who invited Dodd to share his study which further stretched the chain of events to involve Cecil DeValerie, the duke's study chum.

DeValerie, always an unreliable junior, took umbrage at the duke's high handed way of giving Dodd permission without consulting him and the fat was in the fire really and truly from that moment. The row was developing into something worse than the other. Just because of some ridiculous toffee, all this trouble had arisen! It is astonishing how trivial, insignificant things can cause such upheavals. The dust-up between Jerry Dodd and Burton was a trifling affair compared to the quarrel between the chums of Study M, but the one was undoubtedly the outcome of the other.

When boys quarrel hot words are used - hasty, ill-considered words which only make matters ten times worse. Damage is done which sometimes can never be repaired. Friendships are turned into bitterness and emnity.

While this show of bad tempers were going on it came to the notice of the St. Frank's juniors of the plight of the local carrier, one old Griggs, who lived at Pelton's Bend, and a very familiar figure to the boys. Now Griggs had been earning a bare living for a few years past by running a carrier's cart between Bellton and Edgemore, and a few other villages, and round about. He carried parcels and things,

from Bannington at a penny or tuppence a time.

Coming down the other side of Edgemore his horse slipped and broke a leg. The old horse had to be destroyed. On hearing of the sad event Nipper decided to get a subscription up and the majority of the fellows contributed a shilling or half crown and some could afford no more than a few pence. But the more wealthy gave a lot more.

It was Nipper's idea to collect enough to buy old Griggs another horse for without the animal his livelihood was indeed threatened and his family would starve.

But DeValerie's temper was now out of control and he not only refused to contribute but condemned Griggs and his family to the workhouse.

Tempers flared and DeValerie had lost any respect the juniors might have reserved in excuse for him. DeValerie was left to himself after that and he swept out of the Common-room and went to his study.

Soon after, as he sat moping by the study fire, Tubbs, the page boy, tapped on the door to tell him his Uncle Dan and Cousin Mary had arrived. It was unfortunate that his Uncle Dan had not advised DeValerie of their coming. But Cousin Mary had hoped Val would teach her to skate.

The demon was now in control of DeValerie and he became quite abusive to his relatives with the result they left him. So DeValerie returned to his chair by the fire and stared moodily at the flickering flames.

He rose and strode over to the door and savagely turned the key in the lock. Then he went back to the fireplace, kicked the glowing coals into a blaze, and pulled up the easy chair. He sat down, lay back, and glowered fiercely and maliciously into the twisting flames. His thoughts strayed towards the Fund which was being raised for old Griggs. In a perverted kind of way, he thought was too humorous the fact the Fund was still open - waiting for his contribution. Well, it could wait! All the money he had was his own property, and he wasn't going to be told how to spend it. What did he care if Griggs did starve. He meant nothing to him, and he thought even less of the other members of Griggs' family. Why he hadn't even seen them.

DeValerie, in short, was going from bad to worse. He found himself in a subconscious way in the lane that ran from the hamlet of Edgemore to Bellton. Snow was falling. The last time he had looked at the weather the sun was shining. It was bitterly cold.

Straining his eyes, it seemed to him that a shadowy kind of figure was about twenty or thirty yards in advance. He couldn't see distinctly, but he was certain that some shape at about the same distance. The effect was rather uncanny, for amid those whirling snowflakes the figure seemed ghostly and unreal.

DeValerie grunted with disgust. For the figure, after all, was that of a man pushing a hand-cart! And this was the rotter, thought DeValerie, they expected him to help! Rolling along the road, as full as a barrel!

The snow was now descending as hard as ever and so rapidly had it been falling that the lane was covered by a carpet three or four inches thick. And now he

understood why the old carrier had been going so rapidly. For they were descending a hill. Then suddenly old Griggs slipped. He fell sprawling, the hand-cart slewed round, and tipped up into one of the snow-covered banks.

Griggs attempted to rise, and he succeeded in getting to his feet, but he swayed, his knees sagged, and he fell again, uttering a low groan. DeValerie, who had paused, looked on with contemptuous interest. The fellow was so drunk, that once having fallen, he couldn't get up again! DeValerie walked forward, considering that here was an opportunity to say a few words of well-merited reproach.

But Griggs was not drunk. He was very ill. The rugged countenance of Griggs was as pale and ashen as that of a corpse. His cheeks were stricken, his eyes hollow. And it seemed to DeValerie that the eyes burned with a feverish, unnatural light. Obviously the stories about Griggs were true. He really was at the last extremity. His boots were gaping with holes. His clothes were threadbare-thin, somebody's cast off summer wear by the look of it.

DeValerie was aghast. The old chap was out trying to earn an honest shilling. Wasn't much, but it would buy a bit of bread and cheese for the kiddies.

And then, as he still crouched there with the unfortunate Griggs in his arms, he heard a kind of purring noise in his rear. It was a small car coming along through the thick snow. It was Dr. Brett, the village medico, and well-known to the boys of St. Frank's.

And Dr. Brett hurried across the snow-covered road to the spot where Griggs lay still. The doctor knelt down in the snow and raised the old carrier's head. Dr. Brett gave a sharp exclamation. "My boy, I am too late!" He said quietly, "This man is dead!"

Cecil DeValerie felt that the world had crashed to atoms. He walked blindly - not caring where he went. He never felt so absolutely miserable in his life. The fact came to him that if he had contributed to the Fund all would have been well. The old fellow needn't have come out on this bitter, cold day.

DeValerie blamed himself for the death of Griggs.

As he returned to St. Frank's he saw his Cousin Mary struggling in the frozen water. He saw her slip back and vanish in the black patch of icy water. This blow, coming so suddenly after the other dreadful affair, was nearly enough to send him crazy.

He had refused to go out with her, and this tragedy was the result. In a few minutes he found himself rushing to her. DeValerie thought he was going mad. He ran over the meadow like one possessed. At last he tore on to the ice of the river.

There were five or six juniors there, Handforth, Church, McClure, Pitt and Jack Grey and Solomon Levi.

But in spite of all the struggling to get the girl out of that icy depth their efforts failed. And DeValerie felt the ice crack into a thousand fragments and the cold, black waters enveloped him. He slipped down and down, and the icy waters

closed over his head. He was choking, and fight as he might, he found it impossible to rise.

The River Stowe had claimed him!

Crash!

Cecil DeValerie, struggling fiercely for his life, fought desperately and madly against the icy water which swirled cruelly round him. He struck out his hands, and something went with a splintering sound.

Then, shivering in every limb, he found that he was sitting on something hard. Dazedly, he found that he could open his eyes. He did so, and was dazzled. The bright gleam from an electric light fell upon him.

The icy chill had gone, and there, in front of him, was the fire of Study M, now dying down somewhat.

DeValerie gasped - a great, gulping gasp. Just in front of him, on the floor, lay the shattered remains of a jug, which somebody had apparently knocked off the corner of the table.

He picked himself up, steadying himself by clutching the table. For one brilliant, hopeful second, he had a wild idea he had been dreaming. But that was impossible - no dream could be so vivid and horrible as this.

He looked at the door. It was locked on the inside. Then he glanced at his watch. Half-past seven! This proved - beyond question - that nobody had been in there. DeValerie gave one shout of hysterical laughter. He sank down into a hard chair, and leaned over the table. And there was a light of wonderful, glorious relief in his eyes.

"A dream!" he exclaimed faintly. "Only a dream!"

But even now he half expected to wake up in a state of delirium. And rushing out he met Handforth who told him Cousin Mary and Uncle Dan were having a talk with Nelson Lee which finally convinced him it was all a dream.

DeValerie gave his last five pounds towards the Fund for old Griggs, and when the fellows found the great change and remorse in DeValerie all was well again. The chain reaction reversed itself and Jerry Dodd and Tom Burton were friends again.

And with Christmas approaching a general feeling of delightful expectancy surged through the old school.

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Christmas Greetings to old friends and new, especially Bill, Eric and Madam, Jaygee, Jim, Norman and Ben. All O.B.B.C. members, thank you for making my family so welcome at 400th C.D. Luncheon. Thank you Eric and Madam for making that visit possible.

ERN, AUDREY, LARAINE & SHARYN DARCY
47 FISHER ST., MAIDSTONE, VICTORIA 3012, AUSTRALIA.

Hamilton's Ghosts

by ROGER M. JENKINS

Regular readers of Hamiltonian papers had a pretty good idea of the sort of Christmas fare that was likely to be provided: seasonable weather, with plenty of snow; some slight mystery or humorous activity, or both; a description of the events of Christmas Day itself; and possibly the Boxing Day festivities.

Charles Hamilton was an undoubted admirer of Dickens whose praise of Christmas was unstinted, but on the subject of ghosts they parted company. Dickens' ghosts were genuine apparitions whereas those in the Companion Papers were all fakes. It was possibly nothing to do with a belief or disbelief in ghosts, but rather a recognition that permanent characters needed to be in closer touch with reality if they were to remain credible. Hamilton's private opinions about the supernatural came through pretty clearly in early days when Mr. Lathom was gently ridiculed for his belief that he was a medium attempting to get in touch with the unseen world so that the data could be laid before the Disembodied-Spirit-Communication Society.

Hamilton's use of ghosts seems to fall, oddly enough, into three almost self-contained sections, which take the theme from one school to another. The spacious days of the Gem double number were followed by further experiments at Rookwood and culminate in the famous ghost stories in the Magnet.

Part 1 - Spirits at St. Jim's

The first "Ghost of St. Jim's" takes us back to No. 41 of the Gem in the far-off year 1908. According to the legend, when the first snow fell the blind monk Rufus who had been murdered by the wicked abbot Wolfram could still be heard tapping his way around as he did when he first haunted the wicked abbot. There was no apparition in this story, just the ghostly tapping, enough to make the juniors uneasy, but not really awe-inspiring. Perhaps the most significant part of the story was the discovery of the secret panel in Study No. 6, which came into use on future occasions. Gem 41 ended with the customary get-together, not at a boys' home but at St. Jim's this time. Miss Fawcett, Mr. Dodds, Uncle Frank, Cousin Ethel, and Marmaduke Smythe made up the usual list of names of characters who played no part in the plot whatsoever.

"The Terrible Three's Christmas Party" the following year in No. 93 was part of a series set in France. Eleven juniors were on their way to Chateau Cernay when the train stopped because the line was blocked. They went out into the snow to walk the distance, and came across a ruined chateau. The story went that the seigneur and his family had been dancing when revolutionaries broke in and murdered them. The juniors saw flashing lights, heard a violin playing followed by dreadful groans, and then were frightened by a ghostly form in white that moved with a slow gliding motion. Tom Merry hurled a large stick at it, and the stick hit the wall behind the apparition. There is no doubt that this ghost story had far more fear and atmosphere about it, and the manifestations were so varied and mysterious that this story unquestionably represents Charles Hamilton's first real success in this genre.

The second "Ghost of St. Jim's" in 1911 (No. 197) began in fine fettle:

> Snow - thicker and thicker! The white flakes were falling incessantly. Walls and roofs at St. Jim's were gleaming white, and the old quad was wrapped as in a winding sheet. Through the dusk of this winter evening the leafless elms stood up gaunt and spectre-like, the white branches stretching out against the dim sky.

A shriek was heard, and they rushed out to find that Gore had fainted in the snow. According to the legend, with the first fall of snow the ghost of the White Monk would walk (a rather different legend from that mentioned three years earlier). The White Monk with his hands upraised was indeed a frightening vision, and the explanation was also a novel one, being neither criminal nor mischievous.

"Nobody's Study" in No. 250 retained the story of a monk appearing at the first fall of snow, but transferred the legend indoors to the punishment room where, it was said, a boy had been locked in years ago and was found raving mad the next day, talking about a white monk. In 1912 it seemed that the old tale might be true: there were groans, the gaslight in the room went out mysteriously, and a noise of swishing garments was heard. Levison agreed to spend the night there, and the next morning he had disappeared, leaving only his garments neatly laid out on the floor. This was a story with considerable changes in atmosphere, there being some light-hearted jokes mixed up with a good deal of tension and anxiety, but the essential question was never really answered: what advantage was to be gained by the elaborate trickery involved?

Deservedly the most famous single story was the Christmas number for 1913, "The Mystery of the Painted Room" in No. 302. Lord Eastwood had mysteriously disappeared, and when D'Arcy went home with Blake and Digby he was given a bed in that celebrated apartment:

> In the centre of the ceiling, amid the grouping nymphs, a fat and jolly looking Bacchus reclined under clusters of ripe purple grapes - a figure more than life size, with lips that seemed to grin, and eyes that seemed to wink, over the enjoyment of the foaming goblet he held in his hand. Round the figures and the grape vine was painted the blue sky of Greece, and it was from that ceiling that the room derived its name.

It seemed to D'Arcy, as he looked at the ceiling, that the eyes of Bacchus began to move, and then the lights went out, and he too disappeared. Although there was no ghost, there was a mysterious dark figure that moved in the night, and the story is memorable for Kerr's deductive reasoning by which he worked out both the identity of the kidnapper and the means by which he should be caught.

Just as "The Terrible Three's Christmas Party" in No. 93 had featured eight other juniors, so "Talbot's Christmas" in No. 359 also included eight others, plus Cousin Ethel and Marjorie Hazeldene. Talbot had refused Tom Merry's invitation to Laurel Villa because he did not want to accept hospitality he could not return, but he was virtually kidnapped and was happy enough to find himself one of the party. Near Laurel Villa was a ruined priory and it was commonly thought that at Christmas time the ghost of the murdered abbot walked among the ruins. There was certainly a mysterious figure and curious happenings, but the story was less enjoyable than

many of the earlier ones because of the grim shadows of war that overhung the events, and Miss Fawcett seemed to be just a silly frightened old woman: kindness without common sense inevitably lends itself to ridicule. Talbot said, "I was just thinking what a jolly old place this is, Tom, and what a dear your old governess is, and what a lucky bargee you are generally'." This is understandable in that Talbot had not yet been recognised as a nephew by Colonel Lyndon and so he had at that time no known relatives, but even so most youngsters at Tom Merry's age would have found Miss Fawcett's exaggerated solicitude highly embarrassing.

The last double number was "The Shadow of the Past" in 1917, Gem No. 510, which was set at St. Jim's. It was rumoured that someone had hanged himself in Pepper's Barn many years ago, and the appearance of a ghostly white face was enough to scare off most people but not Ernest Levison who was convinced that Valentine Outram had returned to the neighbourhood. It was something of a dead story, without much light relief and with very little mystery, and there was also only a slender plot. Perhaps the story was itself too much an echo from the past, and Christmas festivity seemed forgotten.

After 1917 there was a long gap until 1927 when "The White Cavelier" in No. 1035 formed a kind of postscript to the Gem ghost stories. If Laurel Villa was something of a damp squib as a Christmas venue, the 1927 story went up like a sparkling rocket with a beginning at Reckness Towers and a conclusion at Eastwood House. Gussy related the story of the White Cavalier, Sir Fulke D'Arcy, who was killed by Roundheads near his buried treasure, and indeed the cover picture showed his ghostly form even though this was not justified by the text, since the most that was seen was a flickering light: nevertheless, treasure of a sort was in fact hidden. This was the last pre-war story by Hamilton that featured Cardew as a principal character, and it was the last time that Cardew, with his wry, self-mocking humour, his airy persiflage, and his elusive charm was successfully depicted. It is indeed pleasing to record that the last ghost story in the Gem was an outright winner.

Part 2 - Hauntings in Hampshire

A double number of the Boys' Friend in 1916 (No. 810) provided the reader with fourteen chapters, one of the longest and most reprinted of all Rookwood stories. It was attributed to "Owen Conquest in collaboration with Frank Richards and Martin Clifford", the only time Charles Hamilton's three pseudonyms were attached to one story. Eric Fayne considers that the tale was written much earlier and held over, but there is little doubt that it was a highly acceptable seasonable offering. Entitled "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party", it relates the first occasion that the other members of the Fistical Four visited his home at Lexham Priory. Of course there was a story about a ghost, there was definitely a secret panel, and they noticed a dark figure on an uninhabited tower of the Priory, and there were other mysterious happenings. Although the St. Jim's and Greyfriars juniors were invited as well, they were not just there to add to the lists of names: each party arrived separately and had a vital part to play in unravelling the plot, and even Cousin Phyllis was not just a pretty face. All in all, the story represented a high technical achievement and, as the presence of the military was not definitely linked to the war, the story did not date as did "Talbot's Christmas" with its reference to a prisoner of war camp.

Four years elapsed before the next Rookwood ghost story, this time set in the old school itself, but it was well worth waiting for. "The Phantom Abbot of Rookwood" in No. 1020 was the second of a pair of stories about Mr. Bootles' nephew, Captain Digby, and there was a vivid account of the phantom:

> The juniors caught their breath.
>
> They knew that the slow, swishing sound could not be made by master or prefect. It was made by a long robe sweeping the floor - such a robe as the phantom abbot was supposed to drape around his skeleton limbs.

With fine atmosphere and impressive illustrations, it was a splendid Christmas offering for 1920.

By 1922 Jimmy Silver's home had moved from Lexham to Hadley Priors, but on this occasion the ghost of the Priory was a phantom in white with arms upraised. In Nos. 1125-27, we were given an account of the haunted room where Prior Aylmer had been murdered at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, and where his murderer had been found a gibbering maniac the following morning. The Christmas festivities were overshadowed by the theft of Mr. Silver's beloved Rembrandt, a smudge that had the colours of the rainbow running through it, but Mornington was astute enough to see through the ghost episode to the heart of the mystery.

The following year in Nos. 1177-78 Christmas was again spent at the Priory, with Texas Lick as an additional guest. Mr. Silver was finding that times were hard, and was selling a Tintoretto for £1,000. Texas Lick was instrumental in preventing him from being cheated, but perhaps the most amusing and novel episode was when the ghost was lassooed by the American. Texas Lick seemed to enjoy himself immensely in studying the manners and customs of the little island in which he found himself.

The Christmas of 1924 saw the last of all the Rookwood ghost stories, and the scene was, yet again, the Priory. In the Magnet Harry Wharton had quarrelled with his friends, and readers were told he was spending the holiday with Jimmy Silver. In Boys' Friend No. 1230, "The Haunted Tower", Rookwood readers could see that Wharton was there, but no explanation was provided. On this occasion we were told that a prior had refused to leave when Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of the monasteries, and had shut himself in the tower. When his ghost walked, a light was seen in the tower, and this ghostly illumination constituted the last spectre in the Rookwood saga.

Part 3 - Manifestations in the Magnet

The first story of major interest in the Magnet is No. 776, "The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers", which was the Christmas tale for 1922. After the first World War, the Christmas tale in the Companion Papers would always appear just before 25th December, whereas in the more spacious days of Double Numbers the date of issue would probably have been November, apparently because it was thought that readers in those days would not have had any extra money to spare so close to Christmas! No. 776 was dated 23rd December, 1922, and dealt with the legend of Sir Fulke, an ancestor of Mauleverer's who walked in his suit of armour when the

death of a Mauleverer was about to happen. The ghostly clanking footsteps were indeed audible and Lord Mauleverer twice saw the phantom, but the story was perhaps a little sombre and the sense of excitement was overlaid with anxiety for the health of Mauleverer. It was a far from happy story.

The Magnet inaugurated the idea of ghosts in summer time. In No. 811, "The House of Pengarth", it was believed that Spanish ghosts from a ship wrecked centuries earlier would haunt the vicinity of the house, and when the Greyfriars juniors were rowed across the bay they saw a luminous figure in trunk hose and doublet, sea boots and broad Spanish hat with plume, the figure standing on an unseen boat. Skinner who arrived later was inclined to scoff, but once his bedroom had been visited by the ghostly Spaniard he was happy to leave the next morning. The whole of the Pengarth series in the Cornish setting was lively and exciting, and the plot turned and twisted in a most intriguing manner.

"The Phantom of the Highlands" in Magnet 829 was of course the Christmas story for 1923, and this time the ghost was an unilluminated figure, apparently the old laird of Lochmuir who had been killed in battle when the Duke of Cumberland besieged the castle. Once again, there was something of a cheerless atmosphere in an old castle from which the servants had fled when they saw the ghost earlier. There was admirable economy in construction but little warmth and happiness in the whole series.

Equally uncomfortable was the Phantom of the Cave series in 1087-89. The Smugglers' Cave was reputed to be haunted by a ghost of one of the smugglers of old, and Bunter was the first to see the white gleaming face in the darkness. Redwing and Vernon-Smith were kidnapped and the Famous Five spent their Christmas in searching for the kidnapped Removites. The re-appearance of Soames was no contribution at all to seasonable festiveness.

It was not until 1931 that the first of the really famous ghost stories began in the Magnet in the celebrated Cavandale Abbey series. Bunter had contrived to invite himself and the Famous Five to the Abbey, where Lord Cavandale's life was threatened on more than one side. No. 1193, "The Phantom of the Abbey", added a supernatural touch to the more conventional mystery, and there was enough luxury and cosiness to make the reader revel in the intimate atmosphere with its series of interlocked puzzles. Equally successful was "The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers" in No. 1244, the following year, but as the reader was aware in advance of the identities of those who were playing ghost this series should perhaps be excluded from consideration here.

More summer holiday ghosts featured next, first of all in 1933 with "The Spectre of Hoad Castle" in No. 1335, part of the Hiking Series. A gleaming skull was the ghost that was seen, part of a complicated piece of financial dishonesty. An amusing and novel piece of trickery occurred two years later in No. 1435 with "The Mystery of Portercliffe Hall", when one phantom draped in a sheet was frightened by another phantom in trunk hose and a ruff, while Billy Bunter snored away, oblivious of the rival ghosts in his bedroom. The following week in "The Phantom of Portercliffe" the Elizabethan ghost made an impressive come-back, and this affair was also directly connected with hard cash indeed - sovereigns!

A Christmas ghost was provided that year with the Polpelly Series, set in Devon, on the Atlantic coast. The spectre was dressed much as the Spanish ghost at Pengarth, but this time it was reputed to be the Elizabethan squire of Polpelly who was still looking for his loot from the Spanish galleon he had captured before it sank. Once again, the setting was remote and the juniors were virtually camping out, but there was an attempt to provide some Christmas jollification, and the series had a much better plot than the one set at Lochmuir. The descriptive scenes were some of Charles Hamilton's most impressive among his later work:

> Dim in the shadows, but visible in the uncertain leaping of the fire - silent, strange, and ghostly - the figure of the phantom of Polpelly stood before his eyes.
>
> It was the figure and face of the old sea-captain in the portrait; the Elizabethan garb to the last detail - the pointed beard and trim moustache, the harsh, strongly-marked features and bushy eyebrows.
>
> Wharton felt the blood run to his heart with a chill. It was a trick - a trick to frighten away the dwellers in Polpelly to leave the field clear for their rivals in the hunt for the Spanish doubloons. He was certain of it - assured of it. Yet he could not repress the chill of horror that ran through him at the strange unnerving sight.

That antithesis between emotion and logic lies at the heart of all Hamilton's tales of phantoms.

With the salmon-covered Magnets the ghost stories were nearing an ending. "The Wraith of Reynham Castle" in No. 1558 was the only spectral episode in the series, but the scene was well laid with a legend about another Elizabethan ghost of a Lord Reynham who had been murdered and whose blood on the floorboards was renewed every Christmas Eve: his ghost walked until the New Year and it was death to meet him, though the man playing ghost was caught and the legend thoroughly discredited. The Reynham Castle ghost played an important part in the development of the plot, whereas the last ghost story of all - "The Phantom of the Moat House" - in No. 1661 - was intended to scare away intruders: it traded on the legend of an old miser whose ghost could be seen searching for his hidden hoard and whose keys could be heard clinking. This was certainly enough to frighten Bunter quite successfully.

CONCLUSION

The Reverend Arthur Bruning, in a recent thought-provoking talk to the London Old Boys' Book Club, drew an interesting distinction between Hamilton's and Brooks's treatment of ghosts. Brooks was fascinated in the mechanics of the illusion, the wires and ropes and pulleys and frames, whereas Hamilton was content with a suit of historical clothes and some luminous paint.

There is a great deal of truth in this, though it could be added that Hamilton was prepared to go into details about secret panels and trapdoors, and one of the earliest illusions of all, at Chateau Cernay, was produced by means of a magic lantern.

This is, of course, only a partial answer. Hamilton was largely content with his normal apparatus of old clothes and phosphorescence because he was primarily concerned with motivation, not means. The ghosts appeared for very

cogent reasons as a rule, and they were almost invariably real people dressed up, whose powers of escape seemed particularly fortunate. Nevertheless, one has to admire the ingenuity with which the spectre of Portercliffe, for example, replaced live bullets with dummies so that Mr. Fish blazed away in vain at the ghostly figure.

A re-reading of these old stories makes one realise the great variations in the degrees of success in Hamilton's handling of the theme. The one great mystery about the identity of the ghost is probably in the Cavandale Abbey series, yet remarkable success in plotting is evidenced as early as the Painted Room in the Gem, Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party in the Boys' Friend, and Pengarth in the Magnet. It is also noteworthy that many famous Magnet Christmas stories had no phantom at all: the mystery element was dealt with in another manner altogether, as, for example, in the famous 1929 festivities in the middle of the Courtfield Cracksman series.

What attributes, therefore, did the ghost stories possess that rendered them so attractive? Possibly it was to provide a pleasant frisson of terror, to add a further dimension to a rather conventional situation; possibly it was a theme that readers had come to expect, and it had become almost obligatory to provide it; possibly Charles Hamilton had in mind the words of the fat boy in "Pickwick Papers":

> "I wants to make your flesh creep."

How well he managed it!

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"MR BUDDLE'S ADOPTED"

BY ERIC FAYNE.

It happened in Crooked Lane on a Saturday afternoon in October. There was the subdued roar of a motor-cycle engine, the scream of tyres on the road surface, and the yelp of a dog.

Crooked Lane was a fairly narrow thoroughfare which ran from the High Street in Everslade, past the little railway-station, and then curved away, beneath an avenue of trees, into the Devonshire countryside.

Saturday afternoon was a half-holiday at Slade. Mr. Buddle, who taught English at the school, had walked down to the pleasant little country town after lunch, and had made a call at the railway-station to collect a parcel of books which was overdue. The parcel had not arrived, due, perhaps, to the dilatoriness of the railway company, or, just as likely, to slackness on the part of the dispatch department of the book company.

"British workmen!" said Mr. Buddle aloud as he left the station. His parcel had been promised several days earlier.

Mr. Buddle strolled back up Crooked Lane with the intention of finding a cafe where he could have tea. He had not gone far when the accident happened.

A motor-cycle with a goggled rider was coming down from the direction of the High Street. A dog ran out into the road. The motor-cycle struck the dog broadside on. The dog gave a yelp and sprawled into the gutter only a few feet from Mr. Buddle. The motor-cyclist swerved violently, twisted and turned, righted himself, and then, with a great roar from a powerful engine, forged ahead and vanished from sight round the bend of the road under the trees.

Mr. Buddle stared down at the dog, which had landed in the gutter, almost beside him, and lay there motionless. He raised his eyes and stared in the direction the motor-cyclist

had taken.

Several people had come running up.

"The feller didn't stop!" said an elderly rustic. "If that doesn't beat everything --"

Mr. Buddle looked round at the collected people. He said, with breathless indignation: "To ride on like that! He didn't stop to see what harm he had done to the poor animal. Did anyone get his number?"

"I never thought about his number - but it was a Beezer", said a young man with red hair and a multi-coloured scarf wound round his neck.

"A Beezer?" echoed Mr. Buddle.

"A B.S.A.!" explained the young man. "Heaps of 'em about."

"We can't leave the corpse here," said a plump lady.

Belatedly, Mr. Buddle's eyes returned to the animal in the gutter. He went down on one knee, regardless of the effect of the damp ground on his overcoat.

He gave a chirp of relief.

"The dog is still breathing. It is not a corpse." Always distressed to see an animal hurt, he stretched out his hand and stroked the head lightly. "Does anyone know to whom this dog belongs?" He looked up at the half-dozen people standing on the narrow pavement.

There was a shaking of heads.

"Never seen it before," said the red-headed youth. "Not a local, I reckon. Not got a collar on it. Chucked out of some motor-car, I reckon. Some people do that when they get tired of their pets."

"Not a local!" echoed several of the half-dozen onlookers.

As Mr. Buddle stroked the light-brown head, the dog opened its eyes. It gave Mr. Buddle a sad, startled look. It seemed to be saying: "What have I done, that the world does this to me?" Mr. Buddle felt a pang at his heart. He had never, in all his life, owned an animal, but he loved them deeply.

He looked up again.

"It needs the attention of a vet. Is there a vet in Everslade?"

There was a squeak of assent from the plump lady.

"One in this road - house before the station. Only a minute away. Mr. Croft, his name is. He attends to my canary."

Mr. Buddle rose to his feet. Several of the onlookers carried on their way. Only the elderly rustic and the plump lady remained.

"How very fortunate that there is a vet near," said Mr. Buddle. "We must get him."

"Just a door or two down," said the plump lady, pointing with a gloved finger.

"Thank you, madam. I will fetch him. I hope he is at home. Will you two good souls watch over the animal while I am gone. It should only take me a minute or two."

The two good souls nodded assent, and Mr. Buddle hurried down the road. The vet's house was close by, and Mr. Buddle felt glad that help was so near.

There was a brass plate attached to the wall outside the house. It gave the information:

CLAUD CROFT
(Veterinary Surgeon)

Mr. Buddle ran up three steps, and rang a bell. After a few moments, the door opened, and a middle-aged man, wearing a white jacket, stood there surveying the schoolmaster.

"Is the vet at home?" enquired Mr. Buddle.

"I am the vet," said the gentleman in the white coat.

"Thank goodness for that!" panted Mr. Buddle. "Please come with me. A dog has been hurt in the road near here."

He turned to descend the three steps. He was on the second one when Mr. Croft spoke.

"I do not attend road accidents."

Mr. Buddle stopped, and swivelled round.

He said breathlessly: "You do not understand. An animal - a dog - has been hurt in the road - a mad motor-cyclist --"

Mr. Croft nodded.

"I heard you the first time. I told you, I do not attend road accidents."

Mr. Buddle went to the top again. He gazed incredulously at Mr. Croft.

Mr. Buddle said, indignation in his voice: "You say you do not attend road accidents. Then what ---? You are a vet because it gives you joy to relieve the suffering of animals --"

"Not at all. I am a vet because it provides me with a means of earning a living." Mr. Buddle opened his mouth to speak. He was starting to bristle with annoyance.

Mr. Croft was eyeing Mr. Buddle appraisingly. He said:

"You are, perhaps, a lady's hairdresser. You are not a lady's hairdresser because it gives you joy to make women beautiful. You are a lady's hairdresser to earn a living."

"I am NOT a lady's hairdresser!" said Mr. Buddle acidly. "I am a schoolmaster."

"Just so! In that case, you are not a schoolmaster for much else but to make a living. And, if you go to a place of entertainment, they don't come on the stage and ask 'Is there a schoolmaster in the house?'"

"Unless your place of entertainment is a circus, they don't ask for a vet either," retorted Mr. Buddle. He breathed deeply. "We are wasting time. I do not expect you to give your services for nothing. Please come with me - only a few yards - and I will pay your fee, I promise you. Anything you may charge I promise to settle. Please come at once."

"Very well," said Mr. Croft, with a gesture towards the road.

"What a very unpleasant man!" thought Mr. Buddle.

The two men hurried the short distance to the scene of the accident.

The dog was still lying in the gutter. With the exception of the plump lady, the earlier onlookers had lost interest, and had departed. Several children had joined the plump lady, and were standing and looking sadly at the animal stretched full-length beside the pavement.

"Alive, at any rate," said the vet. He went on one knee on the damp road, and ran skilful fingers over the limbs and body of the animal. The eyes were closed, but the dog was breathing.

Mr. Buddle was leaning forward.

"A terrier, isn't he?" ventured Mr. Buddle.

"Irish terrier!" said the vet. "Young, too."

Carefully, he slipped both arms under the animal, lifted it carefully, and rose to his feet.

He eyed the onlookers.

"Any of you the owner of this dog?" he asked.

There was a vigorous shaking of heads.

"Never seen him before!" said the plump lady.

"Never seen him before!" confirmed the children.

The vet nodded. He spoke to Mr. Buddle.

"I'll get him on the table in the surgery, and look him over. Doesn't seem to be much harm done. Bit of concussion. Please follow me."

Mr. Buddle raised his hat in farewell to the plump lady, and followed the vet, who was carrying the terrier. Two minutes later they were in the vet's surgery with the animal on the table.

Mr. Buddle looked on with interest, as the vet examined the dog. "Nothing broken!" A pause. "Slight graze on the shoulder - nothing to worry about." Another pause. "Bit of concussion, as I said."

He looked up from the dog.

"Well, Mr. - er - "

"Buddle!" said the schoolmaster. "I am a master at Slade College."

"Well, Mr. Buddle. There's nothing much wrong here. I'll give him an injection to temper the shock. By tomorrow he'll be as right as fourpence."

"Good!" said Mr. Buddle. "I am much obliged to you, Mr. Croft."

The injection was given. Mr. Buddle ran his fingers over the shaggy brown head. The animal opened his eyes - dark, velvety, pathetic eyes.

Mr. Buddle bent down.

He said, soothingly: "You're all right now, old fellow."

A rough tongue licked Mr. Buddle's wrist. The stump of a tail started to wag gently. Mr. Buddle's heart smote him. Still stroking the shaggy head, he looked up at the vet.

"You have never come across this dog in your travels round the neighbourhood, Mr. Croft?"

The vet shook his head.

"Can't place him at all. Irish terrier. Well-bred. Not very old - less than a year, I would say. Abandoned, probably. No collar. It's a pointer, in these cases."

"I had noticed he has no collar," said Mr. Buddle. "Would anyone wilfully abandon an animal. He seems well cared for --"

Mr. Croft gave a short laugh.

"You'd be surprised what some people will do. This dog hasn't been neglected, but his owners may have got tired of him - or perhaps they don't want

to take out a licence for him. Take off his collar, and dump him somewhere from a car when they are out for a spin one day. And that's that."

"Terrible!" said Mr. Buddle grimly. He stroked the head again, the tail wagged more vigorously, and the little terrier tried to scramble to his feet, found the effort too much just now, and sank back again.

"Poor old fellow!" murmured Mr. Buddle. He stood in silence for a moment. "What should I do about him, Mr. Croft?"

The vet shrugged his shoulders.

"You've made yourself responsible for him. Turn him over to the police. They've got a kennel at the police station. They'll keep him for a week. Then, if nobody claims him, they will ask me to put him down."

"Destroy him, you mean. A lovely animal like that --"

"It doesn't matter how lovely they are, if nobody wants them, and they haven't got a home."

Mr. Buddle nodded sadly.

"Could I speak to the police on your telephone, Mr. Croft?" he asked. He sighed.

"I suppose you can," said Mr. Croft, a little impatiently. "I'll get them for you."

He crossed to his desk, and put through the call. In a few moments he was connected. He turned to Mr. Buddle.

"Sergeant Comber is on the line," he said.

"I know the Sergeant," said Mr. Buddle. He took the receiver. "Sergeant, this is Buddle here - you remember me - from Slade College. A dog has been injured in the road. A motor-cyclist was in the accident, but the man did not stop. I have the animal here at the vet's surgery. Mr. Croft has kindly attended to him. He is not much hurt. We have no clue as to the owner. Should I bring the dog to the police-station?"

While the sergeant, at the other end of the line, was asking a few questions, Mr. Croft had lifted the terrier from the table. Mr. Buddle watched him with his eyes while he listened to the Sergeant with his ears.

The dog stood for a moment against the table, looking round him. Then he padded across to Mr. Buddle, and rubbed round his legs.

"Bring him over, if you like, Mr. Buddle, or I will get one of our men to pick him up from the surgery. We have an outside kennel here. We keep it for seven days, and if it isn't claimed in that time --"

"I see!" said Mr. Buddle thoughtfully.

He leaned down and stroked the head of the little terrier. The tail wagged vigorously. A moment later, a rough tongue was licking his hand.

"Just a moment, Sergeant!" said Mr. Buddle. Once again the dog was rubbing round his trouser-legs. There was a soft light in the schoolmaster's eyes. He was unused to anyone or anything treating him with real affection, and he wondered whether he had found real affection in this little waif from the street.

Mr. Buddle made up his mind. He said, impetuously:

"Sergeant, would it be in order

if I took the dog back to Slade with me instead of bringing it over to the kennels at the police-station? I guarantee that it will be well cared for. If anyone should claim him in the next seven days, you can let me know, and I will bring it over to you at once."

"No objection to that, if you can cope with a dog at the school. If nobody reports his loss in the next seven days, you can keep him - or bring him along to us then."

After a further brief exchange of remarks, Mr. Buddle hung up. The vet was looking at him curiously, and Mr. Buddle felt himself blushing.

Mr. Buddle went down on one knee beside the dog, and rubbed the animal's ears. The tail wagged again. A rough tongue ran round Mr. Buddle's fingers.

"He seems to have taken to you," said Mr. Croft.

"Yes, he does, doesn't he? Do you think he will be all right now?"

"Should be!" Mr. Croft gave a shrug. "These terriers are wiry. They bounce. A bit of concussion, but it's wearing off under the injection. That graze on his shoulder may be a bit sore for a day or two." He paused, eyeing Mr. Buddle thoughtfully. "Are you thinking of taking the animal home with you?"

"To the school, yes. The school is my home. If anyone notifies the police they have lost him, I will turn him over to them. You have no objection to my taking him, Mr. Croft?"

"Me? Objection? It's nothing to do with me. It's your funeral. You don't know the animal's temperament, but he seems a quiet little fellow at the moment. Of course, he may tear you apart when he is fully recovered."

Mr. Buddle smiled faintly.

"I have to take that risk. My name is Buddle, and my address is Slade College, if you hear of anyone making enquiries."

Mr. Croft glanced at the clock on his mantelpiece.

"Time's getting on. It's turned four. You'll want a collar for him, and a lead. There's a pet shop in the High Street. What about food for him?"

"Our housekeeper is a good soul. She will see he has what he likes. And now what do I owe you, Mr. Croft?"

Mr. Croft made a grimace.

"Guinea for a visit. Five bob for the injection. What are you going to call him?"

Mr. Buddle had taken out his note-case. He smiled reminiscently, as he placed a pound and a ten-shilling note on the table.

"I think I might call him - Towser!" he said.

"Towser? That a bulldog's name?" remarked the vet.

"Herries's bulldog. Yes, of course!" murmured Mr. Buddle.

The vet turned on Mr. Buddle with interest.

"What did you say? Herries's bulldog?"

Mr. Buddle gave an embarrassed cough.

"I wasn't thinking. It is premature for me to consider giving the little fellow a name."

"You said 'Herries's bulldog'!" said the vet accusingly. "The only Herries's bulldog I have ever come across was in the Gem. Herries of St. Jim's. You must surely be a Gem man. Come on, Mr. Buddle! Own up!"

Mr. Buddle was smiling with pleasure.

"How remarkable! I suppose you could call me a Gem man. In fact, the father of one of my pupils has a vast collection of the paper, in lovely bound volumes. He has lent me a number, and, I fear, I have become an addict in a way I would never have thought possible a little while ago."

"Well, well --" Mr. Croft shook his head, and gave a chuckle. "It's nice to know that there are some of us left. One day we must meet together - you and me and this parent of whom you speak. Exchange opinions, and so on." He picked up the money which Mr. Buddle had placed on the table, and, to the schoolmaster's surprise, it was pressed into Mr. Buddle's hand.

"Can't charge another Gem man!" said Mr. Croft. "This treatment is on the house. If you have any worry over the dog, let me know --"

"Really, I cannot allow --" Mr. Buddle started to protest.

"Of course you can, and you will!" insisted Mr. Croft. "Who is your favourite character at St. Jim's ---?"

Ten minutes of Gem talk followed.

It was Mr. Buddle who interrupted it ruefully.

"I must go, Mr. Croft, or I shall not catch the shops. I must try to obtain a collar and a lead. I shall tell Mr. Meredith, my Gem friend, of your interests. He will be delighted. And now, could I trouble you to telephone for a taxi for me?"

Mr. Croft telephoned for a taxi.

"What a very charming man!" thought Mr. Buddle.

. . . .

Nearly an hour later, the taxi drew up outside the gates of Slade. The sun had set, and dusk was closing in. The autumn evening was cold. Mr. Buddle's "adopted" now wore a pristine new collar, and a lead was fastened to it. Under Mr. Buddle's arm was a hard-cover book entitled "So You Mean to Keep a Small Dog as a Pet" (fully illustrated). Price five shillings.

Mr. Buddle paid the taxi man, and alighted. He carried the terrier under one arm and the book under the other. The dog's lead was looped round Mr. Buddle's wrist, in case the animal should get excited at this wonderful adventure.

As the taxi drove away, Mr. Buddle put the dog on the ground, and it looked up into his face. "Surely you're not going to leave me here," the little chap seemed to be saying. Mr. Buddle felt oddly moved.

"You're home!" he said reassuringly. "Come on in."

The big gates had not yet been closed, and as Mr. Buddle moved forward, with the dog at his heels, Parmint came out of his lodge to attend to his duty of closing the gates.

The dog barked, and Mr. Buddle bent forward and patted his head.

The Lodge Keeper stared at the dog, and then at Mr. Buddle. He had never before seen a Slade master with a dog on the end of a lead, but it was none of his business.

Mr. Buddle paused.

"I am taking charge of this little fellow for the time being, Parmint. He was knocked down by a motor-cyclist in Everslade. The police are trying to find its owner. Until they do, I shall look after the dog here."

"I see, sir!" said Parmint. His expression was wooden. "Very kind of you, sir, if I may say so. He looks a bonny little bounder. I'm very fond of dogs, sir."

"Good!" said Mr. Buddle. "If the owners are not traced, I shall decide what to do. I might - er - adopt him myself."

"In the school?" enquired Parmint in surprise.

"Certainly in the school!" replied Mr. Buddle testily. "I have no other place where I could keep him. I might ask you, later on, if you could find him a place for sleeping at night in one of your sheds. Somewhere dry and comfortable. I would pay for the attention, of course --"

"I would do that, sir, willingly. Nice dry shed beside my lodge. A box in it, with cushions, and rugs --"

"Just the thing!" agreed Mr. Buddle. "However, for tonight I intend to keep him with me."

Mr. Buddle moved off across the quadrangle. Parmint, a curious expression on his face, watched the master with the dog, on a lead, running by his side.

A group of Slade boys stood in the doorway, chatting over the football games which had ended an hour or two ago. Mr. Buddle received a good deal of attention as he went up the steps. He found himself surrounded with youngsters, anxious to make acquaintance with the dog.

"Is he yours, sir?" asked Shovel, a member of Mr. Buddle's own form.

"I am taking charge of him for the time being," explained Mr. Buddle.

"A terrier, isn't he sir? We've got one something like him, at home. But ours is bigger. I haven't seen much of him." Shovel patted the terrier's head.

"An Irish terrier!" said Mr. Buddle. "He has been knocked down in the street by a motor-cycle. You must not excite him."

"Are you going to keep him, sir," asked Tammadge of the Fourth. "He'll need plenty of exercise. I'll exercise him for you, sir."

There was an excited babble of voice.

"Can we take him out for you sometimes, sir?"

Mr. Buddle smiled.

"We'll see." He spoke to Shovel. "Shovel, will you ask the housekeeper if she will be kind enough to come to my study when she is free?"

"Right, sir!" Shovel sped away, and Mr. Buddle passed on. At the foot of the main staircase, Antrobus, the school captain, was chatting with Michael Scarlet, a Sixth-form prefect, and Larner of the Fifth. The three seniors immediately took a great interest

in the dog. He barked, and wagged his tail vigorously.

"He's grand, sir," remarked Scarlet, the senior who was known to all and sundry as Pinky-Mi, owing to his relationship to Mr. Scarlet, the Head of Slade. "Is he yours, sir?"

Mr. Buddle explained the circumstances to the seniors, and the crowd grew. The enthusiasm over the little animal was enormous.

"I hope you'll keep him, sir," said Larner.

"We shall see!" observed Mr. Buddle. He picked the terrier up in his arms and mounted the staircase. Mr. Buddle was a little pink. He had not realised the sensation which the arrival of his "adopted" would cause.

Outside his study, he found the Slade housekeeper, awaiting him.

"You wished to see me, Mr. Buddle?"

"Yes, Mrs. Cleverton. I apologise for keeping you waiting. Please come in." He opened his study door, and ushered the good lady into the room. She was casting a slightly disapproving eye on the terrier.

Mr. Buddle placed the dog in his armchair, removed the lead, and murmured a few soothing words.

"You're home, my boy! You're all right now, old fellow."

The old fellow took his word for it, and settled down in the chair.

Mr. Buddle turned to the housekeeper. Once again, he found himself explaining the circumstances of the dog's coming into his care. He had told the story half a dozen times by now. He wondered how many times more he would have to tell it. As he explained, Mrs. Cleverton's expression cleared. It became one of approval.

"Poor little fellow!" she said. "There, there, you're safe now." In her turn she fondled the animal. It looked in danger of becoming the most spoiled animal in Devonshire. "Those motor-cyclists - dangerous and mad - all of them!"

"I have troubled you, Mrs. Cleverton, because I hope that you will be able to make up a meal for - for my dog," explained Mr. Buddle. "I believe they eat meat and - and gnaw bones - and so on - but I have no experience --"

"Leave it to me, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Cleverton. "I'll get him a good meal, and find a big bone for him. He'll want a bowl of water, too. Shall I bring it here, or shall I take the dog --"

"I shall be grateful if you will bring it here," said Mr. Buddle.

Mrs. Cleverton had only been gone a couple of minutes when there was a tap at the door.

Mr. Buddle had switched on his electric fire, and was kneeling beside the chair in which the dog was stretched.

"Come in," called out Mr. Buddle.

The newcomers were Meredith, Pilgrim, and Garmansway. Their excited faces were turned on the dog at once.

"The chaps are saying you've got a dog, sir," cried Meredith. "Could we speak to him, sir?"

Without waiting for permission, the three crossed the study, and went on their knees, admiring the very special arrival.

"He's gorgeous, sir," breathed Garmansway.

"What a grand fellow!" put in Pilgrim.

Meredith was on one knee beside the dog who was accepting, as a right, all the things which were being said about him.

"It's nice to have an animal in the school," said Meredith. He looked up at his form-master. "We heard you rescued him from a road accident, sir."

"That is so, Meredith."

"Are you going to keep him, sir?"

"It will all depend, Meredith. He may have an owner, and that owner may claim him.

"Of course, you're really a cat man," said Meredith thoughtfully.

A faint smile flickered on Mr. Buddle's face.

"I love all animals, Meredith. Let me see. You have a cat at home haven't you? What do you call it --"

"Pumpkin!" said Meredith. He turned a little pink. "He's magnificent, sir."

"I know he is, Meredith. I've met Pumpkin."

"What are you going to call the dog, sir?" asked Garmansway.

Mr. Buddle rubbed his nose, and bent down and stroked the terrier's head.

"Well --"

"Gyp, sir," suggested Pilgrim.

"Nelson, sir!" proposed Garmansway.

"He looks like a Pongo to me," said Meredith.

Mr. Buddle smiled. Meredith, like his father, was a Gem man.

"I think," said Mr. Buddle, "that Pongo is a very nice name. Yes, indeed. For the time being, at least, he is Pongo."

"A cheer for Pongo," called Garmansway.

"No, no." Mr. Buddle raised both hands. "The dog has had too much excitement for one day. We must not frighten him."

"Can we take him out for walks, sir?" asked Pilgrim. "Dogs need a lot of exercise. We have a Jack Russell at home, and I know."

"I shall be very pleased for you to exercise my dog, boys," said Mr. Buddle, with dignity. "It will help me a lot."

"Now, sir?"

"Not now, Garmansway. He must be kept quiet tonight, and I myself will take him for a little walk later on. But if you will exercise him for me, before breakfast --"

"We will, sir!" said Meredith sturdily.

At that moment Mrs. Cleverton arrived with the dog's meal, and the boys departed.

. . . .

During the next hour, Mr. Buddle had many visitors, all anxious to see the dog.

Peter-Roy Shannon arrived, hoping to take a photograph of the animal with his new master. Shannon was the editor of the School Magazine.

"It will make a nice cover picture, sir," said Shannon persuasively.

Mr. Buddle put Shannon off. The dog must not be excited after its experiences that day. But he told Shannon the story of the coming of the dog.

"And what are you going to call him, sir?" asked Shannon, having made numerous jottings in his notebook.

"His name is Pongo," Mr. Buddle informed him.

By nine o'clock the coming and going of visitors had ended.

Mr. Buddle sat down at his desk. In a moment, Pongo was at his side, and, another moment later, he had leaped up and was sitting across Mr. Buddle's knees.

"Dear me!" murmured the schoolmaster. He hadn't met with such affection for years and years and years. He whispered in the dog's ear. "You belong to me, old fellow. We won't let you go if we can help it, will we?" Pongo turned up his head, and gave a lick on Mr. Buddle's chin before settling down across Mr. Buddle's bony knees.

Mr. Buddle drew his telephone towards him, and dialled a number on the Taunton exchange.

"Mr. Meredith? Buddle, here, from Slade."

The two gentlemen exchanged courtesies for a couple of minutes. Then Mr. Buddle said: "I rang up to ask you a question, Mr. Meredith. What breed is Wally D'Arcy's dog, Pongo?"

"Pongo?" Mr. Meredith sounded surprised, as well he might. "Let me think! Do you know, I don't believe Martin Clifford ever told us the breed. Forty-seven varieties, I should think. A mongrel! Wally was a young monkey, and his pet was a young mongrel. Mongrels are the most affectionate, they say."

"I can well believe that," murmured Mr. Buddle, fondling Pongo's ear with his free hand.

"Why do you ask?"

"I have adopted a dog," Mr. Buddle informed him proudly. "The vet says he is well-bred, and I am calling him Pongo." Once again he told the story of the coming of Pongo. He then talked of Mr. Croft who knew the Gem.

Twenty minutes later, Mr. Buddle rang off. Pongo got down, and lumbered across to the glowing electric fire.

Mr. Buddle glanced at his watch and whistled ruefully under his breath.

"Well, telephone calls aren't expensive," he comforted himself. He was on the telephone again a minute later. He rang the local police station. Sergeant Comber was still on duty.

Nobody had reported the loss of any dog.

"Yes, sir, if the dog isn't claimed within seven days, you may keep it as your own."

At a quarter to ten, Mr. Buddle rose, and Pongo, who had been snoozing before the fire, cocked an eye at his new master.

"Pongo, we are going for a walk."

Pongo rose, stretched himself, and wagged his tail to express approval. Mr. Buddle attached the lead to the dog's collar.

In Masters' Corridor he met Mr. Crathie, the Science master. That gentleman stopped, and Pongo gave a pleasurable bark.

Mr. Crathie backed a pace or two.

"Is that a dog which I see before me?" gasped Mr. Crathie, understudying Macbeth. "Please hold it securely, Mr. Buddle. I am afraid of dogs."

"There is no need for anybody to be afraid of Pongo," Mr. Buddle assured him. "He would not hurt a fly."

Mr. Buddle descended the stairs into the main hall, which was deserted now. He crossed the quadrangle, and let himself out through the door in the wall to which all masters and prefects had a key.

In the lane, there was a blaze of light, and Mr. Buddle drew Pongo to one side. A taxi had stopped, and Mr. Buddle and Pongo were picked up by the headlamps. A lady and gentleman had alighted from the taxi. They were Mr. and Mrs. Fromo who had been to a concert in Everslade. Mr. Buddle raised his hat to Mrs. Fromo. Mr. Fromo paid the taximan, and the vehicle moved away.

Mr. Fromo peered at Mr. Buddle under the stars.

"Mr. Buddle, you are going for a late walk?" enquired the Slade housemaster.

"Quite so!" agreed Mr. Buddle.

Pongo gave a bark, and moved towards Mr. Fromo, dragging on his lead. Mr. Fromo hopped back. Mrs. Fromo gave a small squeal.

"You have a quadruped with you, Mr. Buddle?" exclaimed Mr. Fromo. "Where on earth --"

"I have a dog - a terrier to be precise," said Mr. Buddle. For the twentieth time he explained the events which had led to the presence of Pongo at the gates of Slade.

"If the dog is not claimed, I shall keep him," said Mr. Buddle firmly.

"Remarkable!" ejaculated Mr. Fromo. "Would Mr. Scarlet agree to anyone keeping a dog at Slade?"

"I hope so," said Mr. Buddle. He raised his hat again. "Good-night to you both."

Mr. and Mrs. Fromo passed through the gate in the wall, and Mr. Buddle went on down the lane with Pongo.

It was well after ten o'clock by the time Mr. Buddle was back in his study. Pongo leaped into the armchair near the fire, turned round three times, and settled down.

Five minutes later there was a tap on the door.

"Come in," called out Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet entered. He was a large gentleman, both in body and personality. His eyes fell on Pongo immediately.

"Forgive my disturbing you at this hour," said the Headmaster of Slade.

"Not at all, Headmaster!" There was a glimmer in Mr. Buddle's eyes. "Will you be seated, or --"

"I am not stopping, Mr. Buddle I see that you have a dog in your study, Mr. Buddle."

"Yes, sir. No doubt Mr. Fromo informed you over the telephone. I met him in the lane a short while ago."

Mr. Scarlet coughed.

"Mr. Fromo was surprised. Surely, Mr. Buddle, you can see that a dog cannot be kept at Slade?"

"I will explain the circumstances, sir." For the twenty-first time, Mr. Buddle told the story. "The police tell me that, if the dog is not claimed, I can keep him."

"Impossible!" breathed Mr. Scarlet. "Obviously you must keep him here tonight, under the circumstances, unless you ask Parmint --"

"I shall keep him here," said Mr. Buddle. "He has had a trying day."

"Quite so. You will make arrangements for the police to take charge of him tomorrow."

There was a streak of obstinacy in Mr. Buddle's nature.

"I am a lonely man, Headmaster. I like the idea of having my own pet dog. He will be company for me, if he is not claimed."

"Impossible!" said Mr. Scarlet heavily. He blew his nose in a large linen handkerchief. "I am very fond of dogs. I would like to have one in my own flat. But being a sensible man, I know that such an arrangement would be quite impossible. No master or boy could undertake to care for an animal in the confines of school life."

"I know of a school where the boys are allowed to keep pets," said Mr. Buddle. "To my knowledge, one boy keeps a bull-dog and a second boy has a - another variety."

Mr. Scarlet frowned gloomily.

"Incredible!" he exclaimed. "Dogs need attention and care, and boys especially, keeping such pets, might certainly neglect them. It could amount to cruelty."

He raised his hand, as Mr. Buddle opened his mouth to make a rejoinder.

"However, whether or not the school you mention is a very odd place is beside the point, as you will be making arrangements to transfer this animal elsewhere tomorrow. No doubt you will make sure that he is kept under control this night. You're a nice old fellow."

For a moment Mr. Buddle was unsure whether the last remark was addressed to him, but as the Headmaster had moved across to Pongo and was now patting his head, he assumed that the remark was addressed to Pongo.

"Good-night, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Scarlet.

"Good-night, sir," returned Mr. Buddle.

The Headmaster departed. That night, before retiring, Mr. Buddle searched through one of the volumes of Gems lent him by the excellent Mr. Meredith, to find a tale in which Pongo played a part. He came on "The Flooded School", one of his favourite Gems, and, in bed that night, read how Wally's dog came to grief at the hands of Mr. Selby. Mr. Buddle enjoyed every line of that marvellous old tale.

He had left his own Pongo in his adjoining study, in his armchair, and it had looked as though the animal was settled for the night. However, only a few minutes after he turned out his bedside lamp, Mr. Buddle heard a light whine, and the next moment felt Pongo leap on to the bed.

"Good Pongo!" whispered Mr. Buddle.

When he went to sleep, the dog was tucked up on the soft counterpane, stretched out beside his new master.

. . . .

At half-past seven the next morning, Meredith arrived to take Pongo for his walk. He brought him back to his master just before the breakfast bell sounded. After the Chapel service, Larner of the Fifth arrived, and asked to be allowed to exercise the dog, and Mr. Buddle agreed.

During that day Pongo was not short of enthusiasts anxious to take him for a walk, but Mr. Buddle only allowed the privilege of "exercising Pongo" to certain boys whom he knew to be reliable.

During the days that followed, Pongo enjoyed life. He went for walks with those "reliable" people as well as with his master, and Mrs. Cleverton saw to it that the animal was well-fed.

On the Tuesday evening, Mr. Scarlet arrived once again in Mr. Buddle's study. The Headmaster looked grim. Pongo, as usual, was stretched out before the fire. Mr. Scarlet eyed Pongo with a frown.

Mr. Buddle guessed what was coming. He waited for the Headmaster to speak.

"I see that you have not yet transferred this animal to some proper home, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Scarlet severely.

"Slade is my home," replied Mr. Buddle on the defensive.

"Quite so!" agreed Mr. Scarlet. "But Slade is also a school, and a school is no place for a master to keep a pet."

"I know of a school --" began Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet interrupted.

"I am aware that you know of a school where the boys kept a bulldog and a Pomeranian, but Slade is not such an establishment. This will not do, Mr. Buddle!"

"If the dog is claimed by the week-end --" began Mr. Buddle.

"Undoubtedly!" interrupted Mr. Scarlet. "Let us hope it is claimed by the week-end. You're a splendid old fellow, aren't you?" He bent down and patted Pongo's head. This time Mr. Buddle felt sure that it was the dog who was the "splendid old fellow". After all, Mr. Buddle was not old.

The Headmaster departed, shaking his head in disapproval.

Mr. Buddle rang the police-station at Everslade. No report of any missing animal had been received so far.

With a guilty sense of satisfaction, Mr. Buddle hung up the receiver.

"Pongo," murmured Mr. Buddle, kneeling beside the dog, "I have a feeling that by Saturday you will belong to me."

Pongo gave a muted bark, and wagged his tail.

On Thursday evening, Mr. Scarlet called again. Mr. Buddle turned red as the Headmaster's eyes went to the arm-chair in which Pongo was stretched.

"So that animal has not yet been claimed," exclaimed Mr. Scarlet with emphasis.

"No, Headmaster. If he is not claimed by Saturday, he will belong to me." Mr. Scarlet compressed his lips. Mr. Buddle went on: "I am a lonely man, Headmaster. He is wonderful company."

Mr. Scarlet made a noise in his throat which may have expressed something.

"This cannot go ON, Mr. Buddle. A school is no place for an animal. The boys --"

"The boys delight to exercise him, Mr. Scarlet. He is a happy dog now - happier than he has been for a long time."

"As I said before, this cannot go ON," said Mr. Scarlet sternly. "You know my wishes, Mr. Buddle. You're a nice boy!."

Once again Mr. Buddle looked surprised for a moment. But the Headmaster was bending over Pongo.

"Good night, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Scarlet stiffly.

"Good night, sir." The door closed behind Mr. Scarlet. Mr. Buddle lifted Pongo to the floor, and sat himself in his armchair. In a moment, Pongo had sprung up, and was rubbing his furry face round Mr. Buddle's chin.

"You're my family, Pongo," whispered Mr. Buddle. "And you're going to stay my family."

. . . .

Saturday morning early, Pilgrim, Meredith, and Garmansway took Pongo for his pre-breakfast romp in the quadrangle. Later, Mr. Buddle took an English class with the Fifth Form.

"We hope that your terrier is doing well," said Carslake of the Fifth kindly to Mr. Buddle.

"Very well, thank you, Carslake". Mr. Buddle was getting accustomed to answering such kind remarks from all and sundry.

With classes over, Mr. Buddle had his lunch, and Mrs. Cleverton took Pongo away on his lead so that he, too, could have his meal. Pongo had grown fond of Mrs. Cleverton, and she was much attached to the dog.

That afternoon, Mr. Buddle walked down into Everslade, with Pongo, on his lead, trotting along at his heels. They went to the police station. A little nervously, and with his fingers crossed, Mr. Buddle enquired whether, during the past seven days, anybody at all had reported losing a dog.

Nobody, it seemed, had lost a dog. Nobody had claimed Pongo.

Mr. Buddle's eyes glistened.

"You may leave him with us, Mr. Buddle, or you can now regard him as your own property. What's it to be?" asked the Sergeant. He was smiling. "I think I can guess. You're going to keep him."

"I am!." exclaimed Mr. Buddle emphatically.

"Have you decided on a name for him?"

"His name is Pongo," replied Mr. Buddle proudly.

"Pongo!. Nice name. Uncommon too!. I only knew one - in a story book I used to buy. Kid named D'Arcy had a dog named Pongo. Those were the days, Mr. Buddle."

"Indeed, yes!." murmured Mr.

Buddle.

The Sergeant came round the counter. He bent down and stroked the terrier's head.

"You're a lucky boy, Pongo," said the Sergeant. "From now on you're Pongo Buddle!"

He laughed heartily, and Mr. Buddle joined in.

Mr. Buddle walked round to the post office, and bought a dog licence. As Miss Honeycomb, the post-mistress, handed over the licence, she peered at Mr. Buddle through her glasses.

"You have a dog, Mr. Buddle?" she enquired.

"Indeed, yes. His name is Pongo. He is a terrier," replied Mr. Buddle.

"Very nice," said Miss Honeycomb. "I have a cat. A real lady of a cat, of course. I call her Miss Thimble."

"Splendid!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle.

He had his tea at Ye Olde Devonshire Tea Shoppe, and he also purchased a ham sandwich which Pongo ate with enjoyment under the table. Then Mr. Buddle strolled back to Slade in the autumn twilight.

In the main hall, he saw the Headmaster standing in conversation with Mr. Fromo. They ceased their chat as Mr. Buddle crossed the hall. Mr. Fromo looked up, and seemed to be inspecting the ceiling. Mr. Scarlet stared hard at Mr. Buddle. Then he glared at the dog. Then he stared hard, and with meaning, at Mr. Buddle again.

"Good-night, gentlemen!" said Mr. Buddle.

"Good-night, Mr. Buddle!" answered Mr. Fromo. There was a slightly cynical smile on his face. His large nose quivered.

Mr. Scarlet did not speak. He merely inclined his head. The two gentlemen resumed their conversation, and Mr. Buddle went on up the stairs with Pongo at his heels.

. . . .

Late that evening Pongo was on Mr. Buddle's bed before the form-master retired. When Mr. Buddle turned in, the terrier snuggled down beside him.

Mr. Buddle read a few chapters of "The Flooded School", and then turned out his bedside lamp and went to sleep.

How long he had been asleep, Mr. Buddle did not know, but he awoke suddenly. Pongo was off the bed. From somewhere in the room he was growling, and it had awakened the schoolmaster.

"Pongo!" called Mr. Buddle. He switched on his shaded light.

The terrier was nowhere in sight, but there was a big bulge showing in Mr. Buddle's curtains. The dog was up on the window sill on the other side of the curtains. He was growling softly.

"Pongo!" called Mr. Buddle.

Pongo leaped down immediately, and emerged through the curtains. He moved over to the door, and scratched at the panels. He whimpered faintly.

Mr. Buddle patted his bed invitingly.

"Good Pongo," he said softly. "Come up and settle down in the warm. Good Pongo!."

Pongo took no notice. He continued to scratch at the panels.

"This," murmured Mr. Buddle, "is most vexatious."

It was clear that the animal was not going to settle down again for the time being. Evidently the walk which he had had with his master earlier in the evening had not been sufficient for him.

Mr. Buddle looked across at his little clock on the mantelpiece. It was nearly one o'clock in the morning. With a grunt, Mr. Buddle rose from his bed. He donned trousers and a jacket over his pyjamas, and then an overcoat on top of that lot.

Pongo gave a bark.

"Hush, Pongo!." hissed Mr. Buddle.

He took the dog's lead from behind the door, and attached it to the terrier's collar.

He opened the door, and the dog went ahead of him, pulling on his lead. Masters' Corridor was in darkness, and Mr. Buddle switched on a single light.

He made his way to the head of the staircase. Down in the main hall, a light was burning in case of emergency. Mr. Buddle descended the wide staircase, crossed the hall, and quietly unbolted the little door which was let into one of the main doors. A very cold breeze blew in.

Pongo gave a bark, and led the way. Mr. Buddle - a man and his dog - made his way into the dark night. It was misty and cold.

"Just one walk round the quadrangle," said Mr. Buddle. "That must suffice, Pongo. If you behave like this, I shall have to leave you at night with Parmint, and you wouldn't like that, old fellow, would you?"

They went down the outer steps.

Suddenly, without any warning, Pongo gave a sudden drag on his lead. The looped end was jerked out of Mr. Buddle's hand, and before the schoolmaster knew what was happening, the dog, barking furiously, disappeared into the night.

"Calamity!." ejaculated Mr. Buddle. He started after the dog, calling "Pongo!. Pongo!. Come back at once," in a tone which would have exacted immediate obedience from any Slade junior. Unfortunately, Pongo was not a Slade junior. If he heard his master's voice, he heeded not.

Mr. Buddle stopped. He never swore, but he felt like breaking a golden rule at that moment. He could hear Pongo, somewhere round the corner of the school house, barking furiously.

"Calamity!." repeated Mr. Buddle. "I should have brought a torch. I must get a torch."

He turned round and hurried back, through the gloom, into the hall. He sped up the stairs, and trotted towards Masters' Corridor.

In the Corridor, Mr. Buddle slackened speed. For there, under the single electric light, outside Mr. Buddle's study, stood the Headmaster, staring into Mr. Buddle's room through the door which Mr. Buddle had left

open. Majestic, huge, dominant, in his appropriately scarlet dressing-gown, the Headmaster of Slade turned and faced Mr. Buddle as that gentleman padded up in his slippered feet.

"Headmaster!." breathed Mr. Buddle, overcome with embarrassment.

"Mr. Buddle!." Mr. Scarlet spoke in wrathful tones. "Mr. Buddle!. An animal - a dog - is barking loudly in the quadrangle. It is obviously the dog which you introduced into the school. The animal is barking under my very window - under my VERY window, Mr. Buddle!. I have been roused from my sleep. Mrs. Scarlet has been roused from her sleep. In a few moments, the entire school will have been roused from its sleep --"

"I deeply regret --" Mr. Buddle edged round the large form of the Headmaster. He picked up a torch from his desk, and edged back past the large form in the doorway.

"Please apologise to Mrs. Scarlet," called out Mr. Buddle. "I will get the dog at once."

Several doors on the corridor had opened now. Mr. Buddle was conscious of masters peering out of their rooms.

Down the stairs, out into the darkness went Mr. Buddle. He switched on the powerful torch, and the light cut into the gloom.

Pongo was still barking. Mr. Buddle ran round the side of the school house. He hurried down the sidewalk, and at last the beam of his light picked out Pongo.

The dog was indeed under the Headmaster's window. And he was barking furiously. Above him, in a room on the second floor, there was a light. That was the Headmaster's bedroom. The room underneath, which was in black darkness, was the private sitting-room of Mr. Scarlet and his wife. And beneath that window Pongo was barking with excitement, and springing in the air.

Mr. Buddle raised the torch. Squatting on the window-sill of the darkened room was a man, and it was clearly that man whom Pongo was anxious to reach. The window was not open, but Mr. Buddle detected a hole in the glass which had obviously been made by a glass-cutter.

"A burglar!." exclaimed Mr. Buddle. He played the light on the head of the squatting man. The marauder looked grotesque. He had a silk stocking pulled over part of his face, and his appearance was enough to strike fear in the heart of any householder. At the moment, though, it was the marauder who was terrified - terrified of Pongo.

"Call him off!." came a plea from the worried burglar. "I'll go quietly. Call him off!."

Mr. Buddle bent down and seized Pongo's lead, and, as he did so, the window of the lighted room on the floor above shot up. Mr. Scarlet thrust his head out of the window.

"Mr. Buddle, have you secured that disgusting animal?"

"I have, Headmaster. I have secured my dog." The man on the sill of the lower room made as though to jump down and run for it. Mr. Buddle shouted: "Stay where you are, wretch!."

"Mr. Buddle - what - what - what did you say to me?" came Mr. Scarlet's

voice.

"My words were not addressed to you, Headmaster. On the window-ledge of the room beneath you there is a burglar - a criminal who has been stopped in his nefarious work by my brave and sagacious dog." He added soothingly to Pongo: "Steady, boy!"

Mr. Scarlet leaned out of his upstairs window at a perilous angle.

"Mr. Buddle, is it possible ---"

"It is more than possible - it is a fact," said Mr. Buddle, shining his torch full on the nervous burglar. "Perhaps, sir, you will telephone the police to send for this man, and also ring through to the porter's lodge to notify Parmint that the police are on their way, and to open the gates. In the meantime, I will stay here with my brave and sagacious dog who will ensure that this criminal does not escape."

Mr. Scarlet, up above, peered down into the darkness which was relieved only by the light from Mr. Buddle's torch.

"Are you sure you are all right, Mr. Buddle? I will send help to you as soon as I have telephoned to the police --"

"I am all right, Headmaster. With my heroic dog, I can make sure that this man does not escape."

Mr. Scarlet disappeared into the lighted room above, and Mr. Buddle waited - with Pongo. And a very scared man crouched on a window-sill, and cursed them both.

. . . .

It was over. In a very short time, several prefects, led by Antrobus, the school captain, relieved Mr. Buddle, and took charge of the burglar. By the time that the police arrived, Mr. Buddle was back in his study with Pongo. The terrier was wagging his tail proudly. He clearly knew that he had done something outstanding. Scores of Slade boys, and masters, roused from their beds, had cheered the dog and his master back to Masters' Corridor. It had been a triumphal procession.

Now, before his bright electric fire, with the dog in his lap, Mr. Buddle lay back, a happy smile on his face. He fussed over Pongo, and Pongo fussed over his master. Each was delighted with the other.

"You've won your spurs, Pongo," said Mr. Buddle, careless of his metaphor. "You're my dog now, Pongo. Nobody can make me send you away now. You're here to stay, old friend."

And there is no doubt that Pongo agreed.

As the clock in the tower struck two, Mr. and Mrs. Scarlet arrived. Mrs. Scarlet, wearing a long, warm housecoat, was carrying a tray with hot coffee for Mr. Buddle and a bowl of hot bread and milk for Pongo.

The Headmaster and his wife made much of the dog.

"A splendid animal," declared Mr. Scarlet.

"Lovely!" said Mrs. Scarlet simply.

"You mustn't spoil him," murmured Mr. Buddle proudly.

"He may have saved us from a considerable loss," admitted Mr. Scarlet. "All our silver is in that sitting-room, and I keep a fair sum of money in the sideboard drawer. Did you recognise the man, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"He had a stocking over his face," he said. "A youngster, I fancy. An amateur, probably."

"About eighteen, I would say," remarked Mr. Scarlet. "I knew him when the police took that cover off his face. A young fellow who, at one time, worked for Mr. Troke, the newsagent. He used to go round Slade, delivering papers. It is clear that he knew which was the window to my quarters."

"This remarkably intelligent animal heard someone moving about in the quadrangle when nobody should have been there," said Mr. Buddle, with due modesty. "I rose at once. I am thankful that my dog and I were able to save you serious loss, Headmaster."

"Most fortunate!" agreed Mr. Scarlet. He nodded, and patted Pongo, who yawned and was obviously ready to go to bed.

Mr. and Mrs. Scarlet took their departure. Mr. Buddle turned out his light and his fire, and went into his adjoining bedroom. Very soon, he was in bed. And beside him, fitting neatly into the small of Mr. Buddle's back, was Pongo. The master and his dog were well satisfied with life.

"My little pal!" breathed Mr. Buddle. But Pongo was fast asleep.

. . . .

Sunday morning. Before breakfast, Pilgrim arrived to take Pongo for his morning exercise. When they came back half an hour later, Pongo curled up in Mr. Buddle's armchair, and Mr. Buddle went down to the dining-hall to have his own breakfast. Mrs. Cleverton took the dog away to give him his breakfast. She made a lot of fuss of him. Pongo had earned a glowing reputation.

By ten o'clock, both the occupants of Mr. Buddle's study were back. Pongo took the armchair again, against the fire, and Mr. Buddle sat down at his desk to correct some exercises for one of his English classes.

At ten-fifteen, the Headmaster arrived. He was smiling graciously, and Mr. Buddle rose to greet him.

The two gentlemen exchanged a few comments on the exciting and unprecedented events of the previous night.

Then Mr. Scarlet patted Pongo.

"He is a splendid dog," said the Headmaster.

"Indeed, yes," agreed Mr. Buddle.

"It is," went on the Headmaster pontifically, "quite impossible for you to take him to the police-station now."

Mr. Buddle smiled.

"I had no intention --" he began.

Mr. Scarlet interrupted ruthlessly.

"He must be rewarded, Mr. Buddle. It is unthinkable that you can take him now to kennels at the police-station, there, possibly, to be put down. It is unthinkable, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle nodded with pleasure.

"I agree, Headmaster. I have no intention --"

Again he was interrupted.

"Therefore, Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Scarlet, "I have decided to take him."

"Take him?" Mr. Buddle stared

in astonishment. "Take him where?"

"Into my home - into my family, Mr. Buddle. He is to become my very own dog. You will not have the embarrassment and sadness of turning him over to the police."

Mr. Buddle panted.

"Headmaster, I have no intention - no intention in the world --"

"Quite!" said Mr. Scarlet. "Mrs. Scarlet and I will be delighted with him in our home. Do not thank me, Mr. Buddle."

"Thank you?" echoed Mr. Buddle in disbelief.

"No, no, do not thank me - I insist. Now that Michael is growing up, my wife and I are lonely people. The dog will be good company for us."

Mr. Buddle's face was stricken with dismay.

"I, too, am a lonely person," he exclaimed, in a panic.

"Indeed? You chose to be lonely, Mr. Buddle. You chose to remain a bachelor. A bachelor is a lonely man by choice. I will now take the dog --"

Mr. Buddle felt desperate.

"You propose to take my --"

"I must think of a name for him," said Mr. Scarlet, unconscious of the consternation he was causing. Pongo had sat up in Mr. Buddle's armchair, instinctively aware, perhaps, that something was going on. "Yes, he must certainly have a name," went on Mr. Scarlet. Now what shall it be --"

"He already has a name," said Mr. Buddle coldly. "I have given him a name."

"Indeed?" Mr. Scarlet raised his eyebrows. "What is that name, Mr. Buddle?"

"Pongo!" said Mr. Buddle, defensively.

"PONGO!!" ejaculated Mr. Scarlet.

The scorn, the contempt, with which Mr. Scarlet repeated the name definitely merited capital letters and a couple of exclamation marks. Mr. Buddle smiled faintly, despite the awful pain at his heart, as a little story, told him by the Rev. Hatch of Everslade, shot into his mind.

A country clergyman was very annoyed at the extravagant names with which some of his flock were burdening their offspring. At a baptismal service, the clergyman stood at the font, holding the baby.

"What is the name of this child?" he enquired.

"Luthie, thir!" replied the mother, who lisped.

The clergyman was tense with indignation.

"Lucifer! Lucifer!" he exclaimed. "Preposterous! John, I baptise you."

It occurred to Mr. Buddle, in that fleeting moment, that the reaction of Mr. Scarlet to "Pongo" was akin to that of the parson to "Lucifer".

Mr. Scarlet had raised his eyes to the ceiling in thought.

"I have it! Homer! His name shall be Homer!" He smiled pleasantly. He went to the dog, and slipped a finger under the collar. "Come, Homer!"

Homer, late Pongo, jumped down from his chair. He looked in question at his late master.

"Homer!" breathed Mr. Buddle, in disbelief.

"I shall need a lead," said Mr. Scarlet, briskly. "I believe you have a lead for Homer, Mr. Buddle."

With deelings too deep for words, Mr. Buddle took up the lead, and attached it to the dog's collar. Pongo, now Homer, licked his late master's hand. Mr. Buddle handed the loop end to Mr. Scarlet.

"I bought a new lead and a new collar --" began Mr. Buddle.

"Just so! How fortunate!" said Mr. Scarlet. "Come, Homer."

"Yesterday afternoon I went to the post office and bought a licence," said Mr. Buddle.

"How thoughtful of you! You have thought of everything. Well, good morning, Mr. Buddle. Come, Homer."

Mr. Buddle opened the door. The Headmaster departed, heading for the green baize door which separated his own flat from Masters' Corridor. The dog trotted at his heels.

Mr. Buddle stood in silence in the corridor, and watched them go. At the green door, Pongo looked back. Tears sprang into Mr. Buddle's eyes.

He closed his study door, and looked around the room. It seemed empty - deserted. Mr. Buddle felt more lonely than he had ever felt in his life.

He moved to the window. He looked down into the quadrangle where the trees had lost most of their leaves.

A tear trickled down Mr. Buddle's cheek. And then another. He bit his lip hard to control his emotion.

Some fifteen minutes later there was a tap on the door. By this time, Mr. Buddle was sitting in his armchair, before his fire.

Meredith entered.

"Can I take Pongo for a little walk before chapel, sir?" he asked. He looked round the study, expecting the dog to come leaping out from somewhere.

Mr. Buddle stifled a sigh.

"Pongo isn't here any more, Meredith. He's gone."

"Gone, sir?" Meredith looked apprehensive. "Oh, sir, you haven't --"

"No, no, Meredith." Mr. Buddle could not keep a tremor out of his voice. "He has gone with the Headmaster. Mr. and Mrs. Scarlet have taken him to live with them. He will have a good home with the Headmaster."

"Oh, sir, you'll miss him," cried Meredith.

"Yes, I shall miss Pongo, Meredith. I had him for a week though, and it was a happy week. He has a new name now, Meredith. Pongo is now Homer."

"Homer!" Meredith was going to say something, but thought better of it. He went to the door. He turned. "I'm sorry, sir," he said, trying to speak cheerfully. "After all, sir, you're really a cat man, aren't you?"

Mr. Buddle smiled. He rose to his feet. There was just the slightest catch in his voice as he answered:

"Yes, Meredith. You are some-

thing of a philospher. I suppose I'm really a cat man. And there's the bell for chapel --"

. . . .

That was the end of the Pongo affair, really, but a little sequel, which took place two months later, may be worth recording. It was the last day of term, to be exact.

Boys had been leaving Slade, off for the Christmas holidays, all the morning. Some went in special motor-coaches chartered to take them to Everslade station. Others had cars come for them. One parent who called, with his car, was Mr. E. Lisle Shovel, father of Mervyn Shovel of Mr. Buddle's form.

Mr. Buddle had just called in on the Headmaster, in the latter's study, when Thilthorpe, one of the Slade domestics, tapped on the door.

"Can you see a Mr. Sh'vell, sir?" he enquired of the Head.

"Mr. Who?" demanded Mr. Scarlet.

"I expect it's Mr. Shovel, Headmaster," said Mr. Buddle softly. "He pronounces his name Sh'vell."

"Oh, I see." The Headmaster nodded. "Bring Mr. Sh'vell here, Thilthorpe, please."

Thilthorpe departed.

"His boy is in your form, Mr. Buddle, so you had better remain."

A few minutes later, Mr. Shovel came in. He shook hands with the two masters.

"I apologise for taking your time, Mr. Scarlet. You are a busy man, as I am a busy man. It is a matter of a dog."

"A dog!" echoed Mr. Scarlet and Mr. Buddle in unison.

"A dog!" agreed Mr. Shovel. "My dog was lost two months ago."

The two masters exchanged glances.

"I am sorry that you have lost your dog," said Mr. Scarlet, "but --"

"Actually my wife lost him. She drove to Slade with her sister one Saturday in October to see Mervyn. They had the dog on cushions under a rug in the back of the car. When they arrived, Mervyn was not here. He had gone to play in a football match at some place outside Everslade. The ladies set off to try to find the place where the game was being played. They did not find it - women have no sense of direction. They know the dog was in the car when they left Slade. They did not find it gone till they stopped for tea somewhere. At one or two places on the return journey they had stopped for one purpose or another. At one of those places, obviously, they left the car door open, and the dog slipped out. The result was, they drove home without him."

"Extraordinary!" murmured Mr. Scarlet.

"Women!" said Mr. Shovel expressively. "Lovely creatures, of course, but they haven't a man's brain." He shrugged his shoulders.

"Did you report your loss to the police?" asked Mr. Scarlet.

"In fact, no. They didn't know where the dog had been lost, though they thought it might be at Totnes where

they had done some shopping. But I placed a small advertisement in 'The Times'. There was no reply to it."

"I do not quite see --" murmured Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Shovel drew from his pocket a copy of The Sladeian, the school magazine edited by Peter-Roy Shannon. On the cover was a photograph of Mr. Buddle's Pongo who was now the Headmaster's Homer.

"While I was waiting for Mervyn to say good-bye to his friends, I glanced over this magazine which he had handed me. I read therein that Mr. Buddle found a dog, and that this is a photograph of him. He is remarkably like General Gordon."

"Like General Gordon?" gasped Mr. Scarlet.

"My dog was named General Gordon," explained Mr. Shovel. "Mervyn feels sure it is not the same dog, but he did not see much of General Gordon. It is strange that Mr. Buddle finds a dog just when General Gordon disappears, possibly in the neighbourhood. I understand that the dog is now in your possession, Mr. Scarlet. If you will kindly send for the dog, I shall know at once if he is my General Gordon."

"Homer, my dog, is at present in Everslade with my wife," said Mr. Scarlet coldly.

"My time is my own," said Mr. Shovel. "I will wait until they return. If the dog is mine, you will be anxious to restore my property to me."

Mr. Scarlet opened his mouth to speak, but, for once, Mr. Buddle got in first. He said, almost casually:

"Tell me, Mr. Shovel. Was your dog wearing a flea-collar to which was attached a piece of tin bearing the name 'Twinkle'?"

"Flea-collar? Twinkle? Good gracious, no!" said Mr. Shovel. "In fact, my dog wore no collar at all when he travelled in one of our cars. We liked him to be comfortable."

"No collar?" remarked Mr. Buddle in surprise. "Illegal, of course. However, that is beside the point. Was your dog of many mixed breeds - 57 varieties, in fact, as they say?"

Mr. Shovel looked offended.

"My dog is a thoroughbred from the Devizes kennels - he has a lengthy pedigree. Do you mean that the dog you brought back to Slade was a mongrel? Well, that settles the matter, of course."

"He is very lovable and friendly, is he not, Headmaster?" protested Mr. Buddle.

"Very friendly," agreed Mr. Scarlet faintly.

"He only bites when he is fairly hungry," added Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Shovel drew on his left glove.

"I have been wasting your time and mine, gentlemen," he admitted. "Clearly, Mervyn was right. Your dog is nothing like General Gordon."

Wishing the two schoolmasters a happy Christmas, he took his departure.

As the door closed on Mr. Shovel, the Headmaster eyed Mr. Buddle very thoughtfully. He said, slowly:

"Mr. Buddle, I do not bother whether my dog, Homer, has a lengthy pedigree, or whether he is a mongrel.

But I gather from what you told Mr. Shovel --"

"I did not tell Mr. Shovel anything, Headmaster. I merely asked him whether the dog he lost was a mongrel."

Mr. Scarlet rocked backwards on his heels. He clasped his hands behind his back. He did not look at Mr. Buddle as he asked:

"When you found Homer, was he wearing a flea-collar which bore the name 'Twinkle'?"

"Certainly not, Headmaster. I did not say that he was. I simply enquired from Mr. Shovel whether his dog was wearing a flea-collar bearing the name 'Twinkle'."

"He assumed --"

"We are not responsible for what Mr. Sh'vell assumes, Headmaster," said Mr. Buddle calmly.

Mr. Scarlet smiled. He said, tranquilly:

"Do you know, Mr. Buddle, I believe that that man would have laid a claim to my dog, but for you. A man who would filch a dog from a loving master is beneath contempt."

"You are right, as always, Headmaster," agreed Mr. Buddle.

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THE MR. BUDDLE STORIES

In the past year, we have been asked, on many occasions, for a complete list of the Mr. Buddle titles. So here they are. The stories commenced, exactly twenty years ago, in 1960.

"No End in Sight"
"Mr. Buddle Reads Again"
"Mr. Buddle's Hair Shirt"
"Merry Christmas, Mr. Buddle"
"Mr. Crayford Passes By"
"The Boy in the Corner"
"Advantage, Vanderlyn"
"Mr. Buddle Laughs Last"
"Christmas With Meredith"
"Mr. Buddle Meets the 'Magnet'"
"D'Arcy Maximus of Slade"
"Mr. Buddle's Greatest"
"Mr. Buddle's Christmas Case"
"A Mystery at Slade"
"The Buddle Pavilion"
"Mr. Buddle's Locum"
"The Spirit of Slade"
"Mr. Buddle's Old Flame"
"The Meredith Letter"
"The Boy With a Lantern"
"Tammadge"
"The Everslade Empire"
"The Haunting of Mr. Buddle"
"The Tell-Tale"

De Profundis

by NIC GAYLE

(Researcher's note: this extraordinary document came my way by serendipity, and its fascination lies in the fact that it is self-revealing to an unusual degree about a great detective of whom so much has been written yet so little is known. It was found untitled, on unnumbered sheets of paper, and in my opinion is probably incomplete. Internal evidence suggests that it was written in a great hurry, and I have been forced to edit, prune, and tidy up generally, not least because the original is given to inconsequential rambling. No theme, though, of fundamental importance has been omitted, and what follows represents about two-thirds of the original writings. The title I ventured to ascribe myself. The whole document I find strangely haunting, and I for one shall never see Nelson Lee in quite the same light again.)

'It is half-past one in the morning, another case is drawing to a successful conclusion, and for some unaccountable reason I feel as if I were the loneliest man in the world. There have been other times in my career when the same feeling has oppressed me, chiefly moments when those criminals that I have brought to justice are about to pay the supreme penalty, but never such a feeling as I am experiencing now. It is a loneliness compounded with insecurity and uncertainty, and an urge to communicate, if only to myself because there is none other who will listen. Dick - Nipper - , my ward and son in lieu, for all his maturity and wisdom, is too young to understand such things, so there is only this pen. I shall burn this when I have finished it.

... It is Christmas, and inevitably my mind drifts back thirty years to when I was a child. An unhappy childhood despite a loving family, a result - if such a complex state can have a single cause - of the Christian name 'Nelson' being thrust upon me by loving but unreflecting parents. Parents so rarely know - or remember - the tortures to which an unusual Christian name can condemn a child of sensitive disposition. For my own part, a whim of my mother's (a romantic creature, perversely proud of an unsavoury liaison in the family with England's greatest sea hero during the last century) resulted in the name 'Nelson' being foisted upon me, and for this happy notion I paid the price of seven years of intermittent misery in a boys' Prep School in Scotland. The school itself belonged to a time and a system that sought to suppress rigorously any spark of individuality or independence in its charges, thus producing minds and personalities of a uniform mediocrity that fitted well into society as it was in my youth. I think it must have been cruel taunts about turning a blind eye as my illustrious forbear did - they used to call me 'Long John' and 'Black Patch' - that first taught me as a defence to use my eyes with more accuracy and precision than the average child. Being possessed of a sensitive nature and a keen intellect (though never 'cool', as Nipper keeps insisting in his lurid little romances; my mind is always in constant ferment) I learnt over the years that my abilities could compensate for my nature. At first, my twinfold habit of observation, then deduction grew out of anger, a desire to show my tormentors that not only did I have two eyes, but that they were better than theirs; but as time passed I began to put my talents to more practical use, entertaining and sometimes astounding my peers with deductions and observations that must have appeared like magic to them.

Later, at Oxford, I was to realise that these gifts - and they are gifts, of that I am firmly convinced - were of considerable advantage in my scientific studies, enabling me to convert something of the fictional Professor Moriarty's Binomial Theorem into fact. But even in those days, my restless, recondite mind could not countenance the thought of a career in any of the accepted canons of society, and this, I suspect, helped to set me apart from my fellows. "He belongs to the eighteenth century" I heard one of them say once, "Leave him alone", and they did. Friendship - real friendship - has rarely come easily to me.

I became a detective by accident rather than by design. Considering that it turned the tide of my life, the incident that set me on my feet was a paltry, little affair. However, it did, for the first time in my adult life, make me aware of the ignorance, the intellectual paucity, the astonishing inability of the average man to see beyond the end of his nose, and I fear that it was this rather uncharitable view of the human race that encouraged me to continue in the direction of criminological investigation as much as anything else. The incident itself that acted as a catalyst to this occurred during my last year at Oxford, and was, to be precise, the affair of the exiled Prince Kassyegin of Russia who was found murdered in his rooms lying naked upon the floor, smiling up at the ceiling in a most disturbing manner. Though a simple case, it baffled both the Police and the college authorities, at least until I showed them the solution by winding up the Prince's wristwatch and standing on my head in the centre of the room. And of course the flowers that were fresher than they should have been. I shall never forget the astonishment on their faces as I demonstrated the truth .... I did not realise it at the time, of course, but it was this that fairly launched me upon my unorthodox career, though it was to be some years before I could run a practice upon consulting-room lines.

... It has grown very late indeed, a small doubt has taken root and grown, and now I find myself wondering why I'm writing this. What is it that I want to say? ... Or perhaps I mean, what is it that I NEED to say? It was of course Nipper's enquiry of yesterday that brought 'her' drifting back to mind. "Why is it, Guv'nor" he had asked, "that you choose to live alone with me when you could have your pick of society if you wanted it? You'd only have to click your fingers, you know that. I'm not trying to upset the apple-cart" he had added, "Far from it. But I'm curious to know why."

And of course I could not answer. Though he is wise beyond his years, there are some things beyond the understanding of even a fifteen year old of Nipper's undoubted maturity. 'She' is one of them. I fobbed him off with a smile and some faintly chauvinistic remark about the difficulty of putting up with women in the house, but one day I may tell him the truth. When that day comes, he will learn that most important lesson of life, that every Achilles has his heel.

'She' - MY heel - was the only time in my life that I have ever fallen in love. Who she was, what she was called, where she lived I never knew. I was very young - about twenty-four - and was just beginning to make a name for myself in my chosen profession. I had travelled down to Exeter to offer my services to the local Police there who, at the time, were puzzled by a series of murders that were apparently committed by a scarecrow. Having made some observations to them which they

subsequently found helpful, I returned to the station but found that I had missed my connection and would have to wait for an hour or so for the next train. It was a scorching August afternoon I remember, not a breath of wind, and the platform was quite deserted. But just as I had settled down upon a bench to pass a drowsy hour with my pipe, the waiting-room door opened, and out of it emerged the most inexpressibly lovely girl that I have ever seen. Even now, it seems something of a sacrilege to attempt to describe her with a pen as untutored as mine, and mere physical details cannot explain the intoxication of my being that this girl brought about. Shallow details I recall. She had a straight, pointed nose, overlarge auburn eyes flecked with orange, and an undulating walk that was entirely feminine but discreet. 'She walked in beauty', to borrow another's words. I sat in a trance watching her, the roof of my mouth dry yet the palms of my hands moist, never daring to speak or move. It was the most timeless hour of my life. When a train pulled in just before mine, she walked towards a first-class carriage, and for one fleeting moment halted and turned to face me, her face lit by a knowing, flame-like smile. I was transfixed, but the next moment she had entered the carriage and disappeared. The train rumbled on, and she was gone. I have never seen her again from that day to this, but I can never forget ...

... I have done, I now realise, what I wanted to do in these scribblings. There are no answers to lifelong doubts and questions, but at least it helps to face those doubts and questions squarely and with resolve. Thanks in part to my ward's romantic, adulatory romances about my doings, I am not permitted like an ordinary mortal the luxury of being able to turn to husband, wife, brother or sister with problems: the mask that has been built up for me over the years is so heavy that it cannot slip without cracking the ediface that it covers. Because of the secret ties of kinship that exist between us, whose history I may not reveal even to him, there is much of myself in Nipper, so that I hope he will understand these things for himself when he grows to manhood. I think that he will. ●

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Best wishes to all friends. "Always a Knight" wanted.

MAURICE KING, 18 BARTON ROAD, SLOUGH. Tel. 43950

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Xmas Greetings to the Editor and all at Excelsior House and to all C.D. readers everywhere.

NEIL LAMBERT

= =

Xmas Greetings to all friends remember with pride Charles Hamilton, Edwy Searles Brooks, Gwyn Evans, John Hunter.

LESLIE FARROW, 13 FYDELL STREET, BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE.

Personal Thoughts & Memories

by CLIFF SMITH

I've always associated sights, sounds and even smells with past events in my life. Therefore there are many occasions which I can bring to mind of yesteryear with a tune, a certain smell or even a Magnet series which I particularly enjoyed.

Music evokes memories for me far more clearly than most things, and I don't find this strange because although I can't play any instrument (too lazy to learn one), I do have an ear for music, and can even sing in tune!

My early days, which forever seem to have been sunny in summer, and icy in winter, were the nineteen twenties. I only have to hear tunes from Rose Marie, or the Indian Love Lyrics to conjure up the image of our old gramophone with the huge red horn, which gave my family so much pleasure. We had scores of lovely tunes on the old '78 records, and I recall my dear old mum collecting lots of the musical comedy pieces, so very popular in those halcyon days. To name but a few - No No Nanette, Student Prince, Chocolate Soldier, Floradora, Desert Song, The Arcadians, The Merry Widow - I could go on and on. Those melodies are never to be forgotten in my book, not like the incomprehensible cacophony, that passes for music amongst the 'Beat Groups' of the modern generation. The 'top twenty' or is it 'thirty' come and go and are forgotten overnight, even if they were ever remembered in the first place. Not so long ago I had a young decorator working in my house, and he nearly drove my wife and I round the bend with the endless monotonous row coming from his 'tranny' as he called it - what with the untuneful tunes and the mindless cackle of the disc jockeys on Radio 1 we were eternally grateful when he finished and packed his 'tranny' for his next job - he won't be back!!

However to get back from the ridiculous to the sublime. The Messiah was my father's favourite - I still have his score, which he used when listening to the annual rendition on the wireless. It stirs memories of many happy childhood Christmases, and to this day when I hear Kathleen Ferrier singing, as only she can, 'He was despised' or 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' I get a tingle running up and down my spine.

Stephen Fosters 'Jeannie with the light brown hair' pictures for me fairy lights in the Alameda gardens, Gibraltar, during the war - there was no black out on the Rock. We had a film show on the upper deck one night, and that tune was the theme music - the melody still lingers on.

Smells, or more delicately put, aromas, can start me reminiscing. We have a small family bakery near my home, and whenever I make an early morning call for our order, the delicious smell of freshly baked bread takes me back to Friday nights in our house - again the late twenties and early thirties - which as well as being bath night, or "Amami night" as my mother used to say, was also bread baking night. My brother and I after being newly swept and garnished were allowed to make our own little loaves with the 'left overs' of dough, and you should have seen the shapes we conjured up.

One thing I never smell these days is the scent of an old time newsagents shop like the one I got my magazines and comics from. The smell of printers ink, and the sight of all those wonderful colourful papers on the counter was enough to gladden the heart of any British boy or girl. We'll never see the like of such a thing again - perhaps our modern newsagents are too 'plastic' and utilitarian, but I consider the present crop of magazines and comics are 'as moonlight is to sunlight or water unto wine' as dear old Frank Richards used to say.

Newly cut grass always reminds me of happy, carefree days, flying my kite, and playing cricket in fields near our old home. There was a farm nearby, and I can see in my mind's eye the old farmer (he must have been at least 40, but to us he looked ancient) who had side whiskers and a beard. In those days fields of grass were scythed, and he was an expert in the art, but he reminded me of 'Old Father Time' that still stands as a weather vane on the pavilion at Lords cricket ground. Which brings me to my favourite game - cricket. Being a cricket lover stamps me first as an Englishman and secondly (I like to think) as a Lancastrian. Therefore I can't help being an addict of the doyen of all cricket writers - Neville Cardus. I've quite a few of his essays and books in my collection. He fairly made our lovely game live by his wonderful prose, and I particularly enjoy his accounts of past Roses matches, which is reasonably natural. He used to quote characters like Emmott Robinson of Yorkshire, saying 'we don't play cricket up here for fun', but believe me my southern friends - we do. The gulf between north and south is very much narrower these days than when those old die hards used to play. Strangely it may seem, and whisper it very quietly on the Lancashire side of the Pennines, I used to support Yorkshire in my youth. This was because my parents were both Yorkshire - they emigrated to the more civilised regions just before I was born, God bless them. However, I was brought up on the deeds of Wilfred Rhodes, and George Herbert Hirst of redoubtable memory. In retrospect I must admit they were pretty good, but when I reached the age of discretion I transferred my affections and loyalty to the Red Rose county of my birth.

Whilst on the subject of cricket - if I'm not boring you - I wonder how many of our readers used to get up at about 5 a.m. during the Test Match series of 1931/32? It was the notorious if not infamous 'Body line Series' in Australia. My father, brother and I used to creep downstairs at that unearthly hour to listen to the final overs of the day out in sunny Australia. We thought it marvellous - which of course it was. Of course we weren't blase in those days like youngsters today. I've always been a believer that pleasures earned are pleasures savoured, and today's pleasures are too easily obtained to be appreciated by most youngsters.

Pardon me for digressing once again, but who cares, I'm enjoying my disjointed trip down Memory Lane. In spite of the fact that Frank Richards' accounts of cricket (and football) matches were a little weird to say the least, I enjoyed his series where cricket played a prominent part. I remember reading the Da Costa series of 1928 and revelling in it, but the cricket series which stands out in my memory was the Lancaster series of 1931. It may have been the name Lancaster (which is a town not far from my home) that appealed to my boyish heart, but on reflection I think Frank Richards excelled himself with his fascinating portrayal of

Dick Lancaster - the Wizard. Lancaster was a convincing character, and as a senior boy, the fact that he was a criminal wasn't too unrealistic as to be absurd. For me his gradual awareness of the kind of life he was leading and the way he was deceiving all the people who admired and respected him, made for dramatic reading. It is one 'book' I would want on a desert island. The Lancaster series reminds me of 'homework'. I was a pupil at our local grammar school when the stories appeared in the Magnet. They so enthralled me that I could hardly wait for the next episode. However, my father, like most responsible parents in those days wouldn't let me have my Magnet until I'd completed my weekend homework, which usually comprised two subjects. Consequently my brother (two years younger and also a Magnet fanatic) got it first. I can still remember the smug, self-satisfied look on his face when he 'bagged' it - ah well, life can be very hard sometimes.

Another famous cricket series and one of the best in the Golden Age is of course the Stacey v Wharton epic of 1935. You'll notice I was still buying the Magnet even though nearly 19 and earning my daily bread, I was still a reader when the fateful demise came in 1940. The Stacey series was to me almost as good as the Lancaster stories, but I was just a wee bit disturbed by the remarkable likeness of two people who were not identical twins. Also the number of times when Stacey was up to no good and Wharton was on his own with no alibi, were a little too frequent to say the least. Still all things considered it was a series worthy to be included in the Hall of Fame. I remember reading this Stacey series very well because in the middle of it I went on a cycling tour of North Wales, and I had the dickens of a job to get my weekly copy. The country area where I happened to be, didn't boast a newsagent that stocked the Magnet. I recall getting very frustrated in my efforts to purchase a copy, so much so that I went all the way to Caernarvon before I was successful - I wouldn't have been surprised if it had been printed in Welsh. Anyway all's well that ends well, and I was satisfied that Harry Wharton was still winning through in spite of the machinations of his unscrupulous relative.

One Magnet series which stands out in my memory for various reasons is the Ravenspur Grange mystery. This of course was not a school story, but rather a detective yarn full of gruesome murders. Many critics have said that it was out of place in the Magnet, but I must disagree for purely selfish reasons. Firstly I read it during school holidays and in very pleasant circumstances. The weather if I remember rightly was hot and I used to go down to our beach and lie on the sand dunes revelling in the plot and counter plot - knowing all the time that Packington the butler was the villain, but still entranced with the magic of Richards. He (Frank) was the supreme artist in holding the reader's interest in spite of the fact that the mystery man was nearly always disclosed in the first copy - only a great author could do that.

In 1933 whilst I was still at school there was a Magnet series called Billy Bunter's Easter Cruise. I'd forgotten all about it until I happened to purchase it from the late Bill Martin - I think each copy cost me 1/- complete with Bill's famous stamp on the covers. What I do recall is the hilarious exploits of Billy Bunter trying to impersonate an elderly Frenchman - one Gaston Blanc or Blong as Billy pronounced it. His misinterpretation of the French language was really funny, and as I was

studying French at school - with difficulty I may add - I likened some of his howlers to my own.

There are many more famous series which I have loved - and of course these have been reviewed so many times before by the experts, but I feel I must reveal a few of my favourites. The second Wharton Rebel series is of course an obvious choice. I lent my copies to our local vicar some years ago, and he was amazed at the quality of the writing plus the dramatic plot - he'd never read the Magnet before and could hardly believe that boys of our generation could buy such excellent reading matter for twopence or one new penny in our current monopoly money. I also enjoyed the famous hiking series of the early thirties - I've always been a sucker for leafy lanes, dusty roads, hot sunny days, with the promise of a cool lemonade (or should I say pint of something stronger) at the village inn.

The Greyfriars Secret Society - versus Prout and Loder was another happy memory. I vividly remember my younger brother using the Secret Code and Cypher Key free gift to bamboozle me, I never did decipher his messages without the key.

Another series which I enjoyed, although it has never been thought up to much by our panel of judges, is the South Sea Island Maulever's Cousin plot of about 1937. It gave me enjoyment when I read it, and I remember having a large map of the South Seas (one of those excellent Geographic Magazine free gifts) and trying to trace the journeys of our heroes amongst the islands, but of course I never did find the localities.

I could mention many more but space forbids, however, when I want to wallow in the nostalgia of my youth, I have only to select a favourite series from the Magnet, sit in a field with the scent of new mown hay, and listen to a selection of popular musical comedy tunes of the twenties and then I'm completely unconscious of all the worries and troubles of our present mad society. So I'll finish by wishing all our readers lots of happy memories and loads of luscious nostalgia.

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INDEX TO THE C.D's
Let's be Controversial Series

The Let's Be Controversial series in the monthly Digest are essays, editorially written, which commenced in April 1957, and, by this time, must have covered every possible phase of Hamiltonia, and the Hamilton environs. We have been asked, time and time again, to publish a book containing a selection of them, and we may think about it one of these days. In addition, we are constantly asked for an index to the essays. Readers want to look up some specially-remembered topic, but find it difficult to find between 1957 and 1980. Here, at any rate, is a brief index of the first fifty of them. The index is compiled by TOM PORTER.

1. (April 1957; C.D. No. 154) Reginald Talbot, the Toff. (A long look at Reginald Talbot Wilmot of St. Jim's.)
2. The Cliff House Girls. (Did Charles Hamilton make his girl characters convincing?)
3. Dr. Birchemall. ("Crude, witty, vulgar, whimsical, utterly outrageous -- I loved the Birchemall series and missed them when they were rested".)
4. Do we owe anything to the Substitute Writers?
5. Is Gussy Tedious?
6. Were there Too Many Characters in the Gem & Magnet?
7. Can any criticism be levelled at the Reformation of Vernon-Smith and Levison?
8. Should Tom Merry, Harry Wharton and the rest have grown up?
9. Which were the best Christmas Numbers?
10. (January 1958. C.D. No. 133) We Who Idolise! (A reply to some comments of the late Harry Broster.)
11. Did we suffer from Too Much Bunter in the Magnet?
12. Which was the better written of the two Wharton, the Rebel, series?
13. Why did the Gem's circulation drop in white cover days?
14. Are the masters credible at the Hamilton schools?
15. Did any of the series over-stay their welcome?
16. Is it possible to regret that Hamilton wrote so many series apart from Greyfriars and St. Jim's?
17. Which was preferable - a school setting or otherwise?
18. We who Criticise! (Are we over-critical?)
19. Did Rookwood have something lacked by Greyfriars and St. Jim's?
20. Pet Aversions. (Eric Fayne had three: Tales of upstarts; early Magnet stories telling of extreme poverty and snobbery; and barring-out series where boys handled masters.)

21. Is it possible to regard the whole set of stories as one long series?

22. (January 1954; C.D. No. 145) To Bind or not to Bind.

23. Was the Magnet's Mr. Lamb series a complete success?

24. Two Years of Controversy. (The Controversial series is two years old, and the writer glances back.)

25. Somebody Said (first spasm) (Gerry Allison said "What poor fish Hamilton's rotters became when they reformed." And Shakespeare said "We must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures.")

26. Somebody Said (2nd spasm) Roger Jenkins said "Characters who have a special part to play in one series can often outlive their usefulness."

27. Somebody Said (3rd spasm). W. O. G. Lofts said a few things about the Cliff House school. And Tom Merry or Jimmy Silver said "Keep Smiling". Cynical modern rendering of it - "Keep smiling. It makes everybody wonder what you've been up to."

28. What's in a Name? (Mainly about the Hamilton pen-names.)

29. Frank Richards's Writing Life.

30. What makes a good story?

31. Printer's Pie and Author's Errors.

32. The Gem, the Magnet, and the School Story Classics.

33. Chumley for Short. (On pronunciations.)

34. (Jan. 1960; C.D. No. 157) Straws in the Wind. (Judging Hamilton's views from what he wrote in his stories.)

35. Did the Magnet decline and fall? (An answer to somebody who alleged that it did.)

36. Thanks for the Memory. (A musing on a remark of Remarque.)

37. CLICHÉ. (A sentimental one this, and readers loved it. And it was one of Frank Richards's own favourites in the series.)

38. Up, the School! (About cricket tales.)

39. Back to the Beginning. (The earliest Hamilton tales.)

40. CONTACT! ("I cannot imagine Frank Richards ever having the time or the inclination for a readers' column conducted by himself - and I am thankful that he never attempted it".)

41. "Let Me Have Men About Me That Are Fat." (A look at the fat boys.)

42. The Magic of Yesterday.

43. Full Circle. (Old Rookwood tales are reprinted in Knockout, with full modernisation and plenty of "clots" and "twerps" and Dr. Chisholm says "Rot!")

44. Spotlight on the Fags.

45. Christmas at Wharton Lodge.

46. (Jan. 1961; C.D. No. 169) When is a Comic not a Comic?

47. The Ugly Duckling. (A look at the Penny Popular which became just the Popular.)

48. Dovetailing. (How one series in the Magnet linked with another.)

49. No Larger than Life. (Comparing real schoolboys with the fictional ones.)

50. (June 1961; C.D. No. 174) Make Room for your Uncle Sam. (Americans in Hamiltonia.)

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Well, that's all we have room for now. More anon, maybe. And, perhaps, a complete index later on. And, to wind up, here is one of the very early "Let's Be Controversial" essays, reprinted from the C.D. of December 1959, soon after Eric Fayne became editor. The theme has become a bit hackneyed twenty years later, but it was original then. The writer had that Christmas spirit, methinks.

CHUMLEY FOR SHORT

(from the Let's Be Controversial series)

How is your pronunciation? Do you call Levison "Leevy-sun" and Ogilvy "Oggle-vee"? Do you say "Rill-cum" or "Rile cumby"? Does it matter, in any case? Of course it doesn't! The rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

We all know that Cholmondeley is "Chumley" and St. John is "Sin-jun" and Marjoribanks is "Marshbanks". If the B.B.C. is to be believed (it probably isn't) Compton is pronounced "Cumpton" and Montgomery is "Muntgummery", and Austria is "Orr-stria". My old headmaster used to call a vase a "vawse", (quite all right), Gilbert Harding calls a laboratory a "labber-atree" (correct enough), and the Americans call a tomato a "ter-may-toe" (horrible).

I knew a family named Tripe who pronounced it "Tree-pay", and another family called Onions who called themselves "O-nye-uns". Luckily they lived far apart. I have heard that folk with the good old English name of Sidebottom like to be called "Sid-boom", but I can't vouch for that.

In saying the names of our schoolboy characters, it is likely that many of us pronounce them as they occurred to us when we were children. When I confess that, as a child, I always called Pontius Pilate "Pointed Pillitt", it will be seen how misleading I must be as a potential guide to this sort of thing.

A well-known English family of Levison called themselves "Loosen". It is likely, however, that most of us call our Levison "Levvy-sun", which is pleasant to the ear, and probably what the author intended. I have heard this character called "Leevy-sun", which may pass, but is hardly so tuneful.

In Scotland, "Kerr" is "Carr", or "Care", but I daresay most of us call him "Cur", as we did when we were younger. I do, for one.

As a lad I called Ogilvy "Er-gill-vee", the gill soft as in "fish". Today, I call him "Oggle-vee", though it might well be correct to say "O-gll-vee", or even "Odge-ll-vee."

Wharton is undoubtedly akin to the man who had a wart on his nose. For that reason, I am puzzled as to why deaf or forgetful people in the stories (Mr. Woose, for example) have addressed Wharton as "Carton" or "Carter".

Some folk call Outram, the grand Blue Cover character, "Out-Ram". Personally, I prefer the more soothing "Ooo-trum."

As a boy, seeking to air my newly-acquired knowledge of French, I called Lefevre "Lay-favre". Nowadays, I think of him as "Ler-fever" but if you call him "Ler-fevver" you are just as prone to be right.

What about Lowther? I like the pronunciation the Scotch give their Lowther Hills, rhyming Low with Cow. Some people rhyme the Low with "Toe", and who am I to say them nay?

Do you say Quelch to rhyme with "belch" or to rhyme with "Welsh"? I prefer the latter, but it's all a matter of taste.

Mauleverer is, I think, "Mer-levver-er", but it's all the same to me if you call him "Mauly-vera" or even "Mer-levver-ay", if you are a bit pedantic.

Our English language being what it is, Lovell is, of course, "Luvvell" to rhyme with "shovel". Kerruish is "Cur-roosh" and Monteith is "Mon-teeth", though, as a kid, I called the latter "Monty-ith."

Wodehouse School, where Cardew originated, might be "Woad-house" after the early Britons, or "Woodhouse" after the novelist, or even "Woddus", after the Sid-booms. You never can tell.

D'Arcy is certainly "Dar-see", though I have heard the name mentioned with a hiccup. Lascelles, I feel sure, is pronounced to rhyme with "vassals", and should not be "Lass-sells".

Ponsonby, to most of us, is almost certainly "Pon-sun-bee", but I believe the correct pronunciation would be "Punsby".

Talbot, of course, can be "Toll-but" or "Tall-but", though I like, probably incorrectly, to rhyme the "Tal" with "pal".

As a horrible child, speaking from the stomach, I used to confuse Nugent with "nougat" and call them both "Nugget".

"Let's Be Controverial", this month, reminds me of the little girl, who, while having tea at the party, called out "Wanna go levity". This column, with sad loss of dignity, has sunk to levity, and our only excuse is that Christmas is near. In January, when the bills come in, we shall be serious once again.

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BUNTER THE BENEVOLENT!
BY FRANK RICHARDS
SCHOOLBOYS OWN
LIBRARY No 209
4d


The Magnet 1½
THE FALL OF THE MIGHTY!


PRESENTED FREE WITH THIS ISSUE! TWO REAL PHOTOS OF THESE FAMOUS FOOTBALLERS!
The Magnet Library 1½
THE COURAGE OF A SNOB!


"THE RIVAL TUCKSHOPS!"
The Magnet

Too much Detective Work - No Doubt

by W. O. G. LOFTS

One of the disadvantages of doing so much detective work is that one is now prone to discover things in reading that before one would have just glanced over and missed. It is indeed most annoying when sitting down to read one of our old favourites - such as a pre-war Sexton Blake Library. That after reading a few chapters, to suddenly pause, and wonder how the author could have been so slip-shod in his plot and construction. This does completely spoil my enjoyment, and I wish that my mind had not been trained to such a pitch in discovering these so petty and trifling errors, that I'm sure the majority of juvenile readers - what the papers were for - would never have noticed.

Firstly, one must be fair to the authors concerned; after all they were not only churning out material for the lowest market, and not for the intelligent grown-up mind, but were often typing like mad to reach their deadline schedules. They were also paid very little for their efforts, and not the thousands in royalties that awaited writers in the Agatha Christie and Ellery Queen class.

This irritation has now at times, even spread to the dear old Magnet and in the writings of my favourite author 'Frank Richards' - even allowing as we all know for his at times inconsistencies and what one calls 'authors licence' in the stories. Magnet 1110 is a classical example for instance.

Fisher T. Fish had been paid two shillings interest by Fry for a loan. Rather astonishing for Fishy, and completely out of character - he decides to buy some jam tarts with his ill-gotten gain. Bunter then arrives on the scene when he sees the American junior in the Tuck-Shop. By some ruse he gets into Fishy's study, and in less than no time all the tarts have disappeared - into Bunter'. Fish is so annoyed and upset that he complains to Quelch, who takes a serious view of the matter, and suspicion falls on the whole Form. Though if the Remove Master did not suspect who it was he was far from being astute or a wily old bird'. Of course all the Form know who it was, and urge the Fat Owl to confess. Bunter then thinks about it, then reasons it out ...

(a) It was only a lark.

(b) It was not Fishy's money anyway, but he had bought them with Fry's two-shilling piece.

Yet the fact was that Bunter did not know where Fish had got the money from, or certainly there was no indication in the story. As related earlier, Bunter only comes on the scene when he saw the American Junior in the Tuck-Shop with Mrs. Mimble. Of course Frank Richards may have intended the reader to assume that Bunter knew somehow - even though he did not pen the actual incident in the story. It is a possibility he did, and it was cut out of the story owing to the tale being overlong in length. Perhaps he had originally started the story of Bunter seeing Fry walking

towards Fishy's study and was curious to know what he was going in there for, and put his ear to the key-hole. He then followed Fish to the Tuck-shop knowing where he had obtained his windfall.

This story reminded me of many years ago when I met Fred Gordon Cook a prolific substitute writer of Magnets and Gems. Mr. Cook was always annoyed with the sub-editors who cut his stories so much that they always read disjointed, and not having the even flow that one finds in the genuine Hamilton stories. He also used to tell me that quite a large number of substitute stories were rejected - especially by the Magnet Editor C. M. Down with all sorts of reasons written in the columns - and especially where the writer had not fully narrated the situation fully. Another common reason was when the Hamilton characters were depicted out of character, and the explanation given, e.g. Wharton would never do this or that, or e.g. Bob Cherry would never bully another boy.

Mr. Cook once complained after reading a current genuine Hamilton Magnet story, that even the creator was prone to make errors of this nature, and he wondered if his stories were returned to him for perhaps revision. He got a big horse laugh from a sub-editor and was told that the great man was a 'law unto himself' - and that he had the right as they were his brain children to write exactly about them as he liked.

Actually when one goes deep into "The Shylock of Greyfriars" the more inconsistencies one finds. It was so completely out of character for Fish to ever buy six tarts to devour himself. Good heavens the Yankee junior would spend all one afternoon going over his accounts if he found a half-penny missing, and would lament long and loud if this was not found. What about the price he paid for six jam tarts! Two shillings! That is four-pence each in 1929! As any older reader knows they were never more than a penny each or at the most in an expensive bakery more than two-pence, and the price here is absolutely absurd. Almost absurd as myself for finding such trifling matters in wonderfully written stories of school life - and I'm the one to blame - not the author.

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Best Wishes all Hobbyists especially Bob, Josie, Stan, Bill, Bertie, from -

CYRIL ROWE, NORWICH.

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WANTED: "Making of Harry Wharton", "B.B's Christmas", pre-1968 Beezer, Dandy, Topper, Beano Annuals, Elsie Oxenham's books.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE
Tel. ABERDEEN 0224 491716

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THE GREYFRIARS CLUB, GRAND CHRISTMAS and 33rd MEETING will be held on 7th December, at the exciting new rendezvous - 10 Valencia Road, Stanmore (short walk from Stanmore Tube), home of Norman Berg and family. Please ring him at 019544510 to confirm attendance. Both Miss Edith Hood and Howard Baker hope to be present. Full report CHRISTMAS TREBLE NUMBER 'COURTFIELD NEWSLETTER' containing scores of letters and articles.
Your Hon. Secretary, Bob Acraman and Courtfield Hostess from COURTFIELD, 49 Kingsend, Ruislip, Middx., home of the FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM & LIBRARY (see announcements C.D. Annual 1979, page 68, and C.D. March 1980, page 24) extend HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all donors, hosts, and club members everywhere who make our hobby the enjoyable pastime it is.

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Seasonal Greetings to all Readers.

DON and ELSIE WEBSTER

= =

Best Holiday Wishes to all at Excelsior House and all fellow enthusiasts.

G. FISHMAN, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

= =

SALE-EXCHANGE: H. Baker facsimiles Nos. Magnet 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 219, Gem No. 7, Yaroo. Offers.

ELLIS, 13 ALBERT COLLEGE DRIVE
GLASNEVIN, DUBLIN 9, EIRE.

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A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year is the age-old wish to ye Editor and old boy's book collectors everywhere, from -

STUART WHITEHEAD

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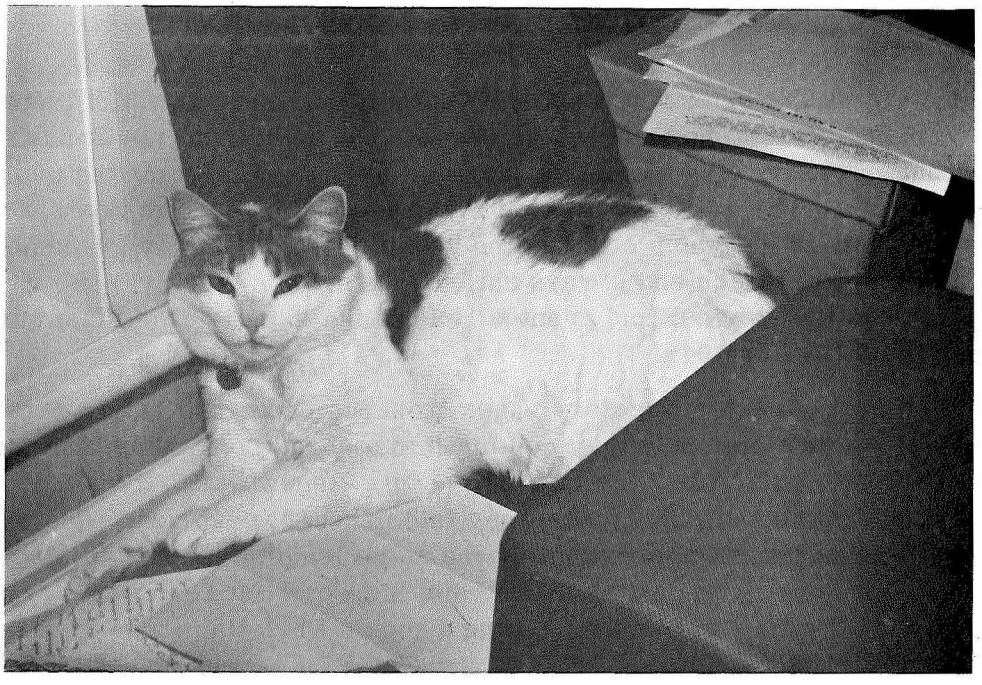
Best Wishes for a Merry Xmas to all hobby chums.

McMAHON, TANNOCHSIDE.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S PAGE



My first picture shows me AT TOIL. I am on the Editor's desk. His typewriter is in the foreground, right, of the picture. My head rests against the window-sill, with a curtain behind me. My right paw is on the radiator which is pleasantly hot. My left paw lies on an article just received from Mr. Les Rowley. Against my tail is the file of the morning's letters from you.

My second picture is COFFEE BREAK. I am in my favourite position, on my Mum's lap. After having that typewriter clacking in my ears for hours, I am really exhausted - and my Mum has a nice lap. My love for Christmas to all those grand people who read Collectors' Digest Annual.

(The Royal Photographer is C.D. reader Neil Evett)

George Goodchild & Dandy McLean

by GORDON HUDSON

I found the recent brief references in Collectors' Digest to Chief Inspector McLean extremely interesting because, so far as I can recollect, the Dandy McLean series must have been the first detective stories I ever read. It ran, as mentioned, in D. C. Thomson's "Weekly News", which my grandmother used to take. Each issue contained a complete story which covered the whole page. After my grandmother had finished with the paper (which she always called "Thomson's Weekly") she gave it to my father who read the stories, and eventually I did the same. This must have been somewhere around 1947 or 1948.

At one time I collected the story pages from the paper and, after carefully cutting them up, stuck them column by column into a scrap book, thus making my own Dandy McLean Case Book. I believe I still have this somewhere. It was my personal rival to the Dixon Hawke Case Book which my father bought each year, and the cases were in fact very similar, of approximately the same length and each with two main characters, Dixon Hawke with Tommy Burke and Inspector McLean with Sergeant Brook. Actually, I cannot remember seeing Brook's Christian name mentioned in any of the stories I read.

As I grew older, these short stories did not have the same appeal, and I was pleased to discover the local library had some full-length hard-backs which I borrowed. I can only remember one now which was entitled "McLean to the Dark Tower Came". This was rather a cumbrous title, but it was adapted from a quotation in the book taken from Lord Byron's long poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage".

When the library ran out of Dandy McLeans, I moved on to other stories by George Goodchild. I found these to be exciting adventure and mystery stories, a few of which were set in the wilds of North America. I possess two Goodchild books which I purchased second-hand some time ago and which are on the pile for future reading. They are mystery stories, not McLeans, and the titles are "The Eye of Abu" and "Cauldron Bubble".

I also have one Dandy McLean book. This is a Pan paperback, "Inspector McLean's Holiday", published in 1951. It states that the story was first published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1942 under the title "McLean Takes a Holiday". This is an extremely good story in which Dandy McLean becomes mixed up with murder and German spies in Cornwall. It is set just a few days before the commencement of the Second World War and finishes on the first day of the War.

There is a short biography printed on the back cover which relates that George Goodchild first earned his living in a publisher's office, engaging in journalism in his spare time. After being wounded and gassed in the First World War, he decided to devote all his energy to writing. Up to that time (1951) he had written close on one hundred and fifty full-length novels and thousands of short stories. Unfortunately, none of the titles are given. It also stated that Goodchild

was born at Kingston upon Thames and was then living at Guildford.

About six or seven years ago, some half dozen McLean books appeared on the library shelves, including "McLean Scores Again". They were, I think, published by White Lion Publishers, who specialise in the re-issue of out-of-print books, but were all short stories. Since the references to Dandy McLean appeared in the C.D., I have checked through the local library indexes but not one book by George Goodchild is included, which seems a great pity as I am sure many readers would enjoy his long stories.

I do not know whether Dandy McLean strictly qualifies to be included in the lists of boys' stories, although I have a note that he appeared in the Dandy McLean Library, published by D. C. Thomson, about 1933. However, I have no idea at all as to what size or format this took, nor how regularly the issues appeared.

Since the above notes were written, it has occurred to me that perhaps George Goodchild wrote some of the anonymous Dixon Hawke stories. As he was already writing for Thomsons, he would know their requirements and would presumably be in an ideal position to do so.

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Warmest Christmas greetings to our worthy Editor, Eric Fayne, to Madam, to W. Howard Baker and Norman Shaw, Derek Adley, Darrell Swift and to all readers, friends and collectors everywhere. Health and happiness through 1981.

PHIL HARRIS, 5542 DECELLES 4
MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA

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A Very Merry Christmas to all hobbyists and special grateful thanks to our Editor, Madam and Princess Snowee.

JOAN GOLEN and SILVER
41 CHERRYWOOD ROAD, STREETLY

= =

SALE/EXCHANGE: Ruperts, Thompson Annuals and comics, various other Annuals, etc.

JAMES, 3 GREENACRE, GT. WALDINGFIELD
SUDBURY, SUFFOLK.

= =

MERRY XMAS - HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL. CHEERS!

JIM SWAN!

St. Jim's ~ Conservation of Chaos

by R. H. RHODES

For many years now I have attempted to resolve order from the apparent chaos which appears to surround the make up of St. James' College. This aspect of the hobby, that is the research and reconstruction of the schools from the information contained in the stories, has been to some extent forced upon me by residence in a small bungalow with little storage space for books and magazines, coupled with the fact that the collection of Boy's Story Papers is now, more than ever, becoming a rich man's occupation.

With Greyfriars much groundwork would seem to have been done and facts and figures obtained from various sources would seem to dovetail together to provide a reasonable framework upon which one might hang the flesh of boys and forms and masters. Rookwood, a much later creation, also seems to be more logically described but St. Jim's; oh dear! nothing really seems to fit. There has been in my mind all through any attempted reconstruction of St. Jim's one complete and until fairly recently unresolvable stumbling block. In many places from Gem 737 to Gem 1561 there have been statements made, whether originating from the original author or from his many imitators, editors, sub-editors or office boys, or even well meaning people connected with the publishers, which state that - St. Jim's School is situated in the heart of Sussex, and consists of two houses, School House and New House, and that accommodation is provided for 300 scholars. That some 200 are housed in School House and 100 in New House.

My arithmetic is not of the highest standard, but I have always been led to believe that there were six forms at St. Jim's - The Sixth, The Fifth, The Shell, the Fourth, The Third and The Second Form. Thus it always seemed to me that if one accepted that a maximum of 23 scholars were in the Sixth Form then the other 277 scholars were divided amongst the remaining five forms. This would produce an average of 56 boys to each form and even allowing for Victorian and Edwardian overcrowding this was a little steep; and in my own mind I felt quite sure that Charles Hamilton would have a logical answer to it. It was however, this premise that was overriding any attempted work of reconstruction of the forms and the Houses.

Whatever I did to try and strike a reasonable balance upon which to base any information gained I was always faced with the figures given in the preceding paragraph until one day, very recently, I came across the following snippet of information - Gem Old Series No. 16 - Reprinted in Gem 1228 - Chapter 3 makes reference to a Lower Fifth Form. Now I had never previously heard of a Lower Fifth at St. Jim's, usually a character is referred to as 'Cutts of the Fifth'; 'Lefevre captain of the Fifth', 'Blacksheep of the Fifth' or so forth, but in this particular story there is this reference to the Lower Fifth and at once I felt I had come across the answer to the problem which had been hampering my progress. However the subsequent stories of the school unfolded I was certain that Charles Hamilton intended an Upper and a Lower Fifth Form in his outline plan of the School. Now I

had some six forms into which I could divide the 277 scholars. My unmathematical brain now started to uncurdle itself a little and I began to conjecture as to how many scholars might be found in each form. A little juggling and I came up with the following skeleton -

Sixth Form	23
Upper Fifth Form	37
Lower Fifth Form	42
Shell	45
Fourth Form	55
Third Form	50
Second Form	50
	302

Included in the above figure for the Fourth Form would, of course, be Richard Brooke the Day Boy and Lynn the Boot Boy on a Servitors Scholarship, thus reducing the residential figure to 300.

Having now assembled the bones I started to try and sort them into rights and lefts; i.e. School House and New House, always bearing in mind that there had to be twice as many in School House as there were in New House and the following figures resulted:-

	School House	New House	Total
Sixth	15	8	23
Fifth (Upper)	25	12	37
Fifth (Lower)	29	13	42
Shell	30	15	45
Fourth	35+	20	55
Third	33	17	50
Second	33	17	50
	202	100	302

+ includes Brooke and Lynn

Now having laid down a theory what evidence had I which would corroborate my ideas? At once I could produce two good starters in this line -

(i) Gem 409 - Redfern's Barring Out - """"some 70 juniors in the New House Shell, IVth, IIIrd and IInd forms""""
(ii) Gem 79 - Jack Blake's Plot - """"more than 30 Fourth Form Juniors boarded in the School House""""

Having reached this stage I felt quite excited that I had at last managed to overcome the obstacle presented by the 300 scholars figure. From then onward I felt I could make progress and at last cast aside the shackles which the well meaning Pentelow and his satellites had provided. I felt also that I could make a complete nonsense of the Editorial comment in Gem 1521 in which it was stated that the Shell consisted of 30 boys. Now, who were in what studies, where and when?

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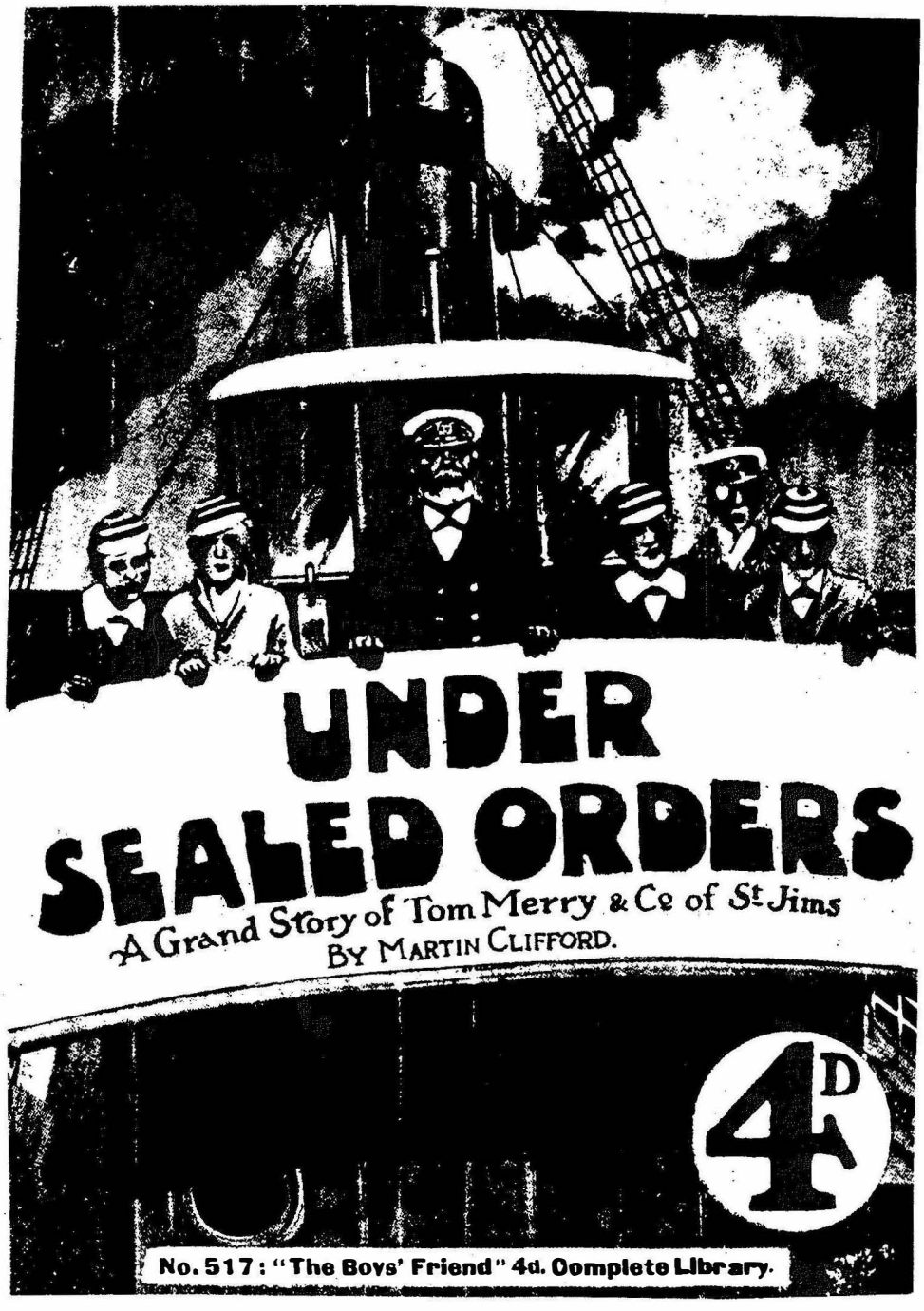
Thanks to 'Danny'....

by T. KEEN

Many congratulations, I am sure, will be showered upon our Editor for the splendid achievement of producing 400 issues of the Collectors' Digest, as he must have encountered many difficulties along the way to have the magazine printed and posted each month. To these congratulations, I certainly add mine.



I deeply regret that I only became aware of this enchanting and informative little magazine (and, also the Old Boys' Book Club) of recent years. The years however, between boyhood and a certain day in 1973, seemed to disappear when, in Foyle's Bookshop in Charing Cross Road, I espied several hardback volumes of the memorable books of my schooldays, the Gem and the Magnet. Nostalgia overcame me, which was immediately dispelled by keen interest in seeing these amazing volumes ... and there it was, my favourite ever St. Jim's series in complete book form, "Cardew of St. Jim's", and of course I bought it there and then.

And so I became a reader of the Collectors' Digest, being absolutely enthralled by the articles, especially by 'Danny's Diary'. What a superb feature it is, and what a help it turned out to be.

At the back of my mind, I remembered a certain Gem story, which affected me strongly when I was a boy. Although not particularly smitten by Tom Merry, his nobility in this particular story made a deep impression. How could I trace it? All I could remember was that it involved a new boy, and that Tom Merry lied to save this boy from disgrace. I had an idea of the period of the tale, and therefore wondered if I could trace it through 'Danny's Diary' ... and so I did, which caused a wry smile, proving that "One man's meat, is another man's poison".

In your issue No. 335, Danny states, "I should think the Gem has lost a few readers this month. If it keeps on like this, it will be losing me. Started off with "The Fool of the Form" ... Robert Courtneidge pinched £5 from Mellish's locker. And in order to save pain to Robert's Mum, Tom lied and 'confessed' that he had pinched it". Well, this was the story.

I have recently read the story again, and still (with reservations) marvelled at Tom's nobility - absolutely lovely stuff. "The Fool of the Form", together with another tale of the same period, "The Pluck of Edgar Lawrence", were two of my choice St. Jim's tales, but now, I doubt if either of them were written by Martin Clifford. Ah well ... what does it matter?

Carry on with the good work.

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The Editor of Collectors' Digest Annual wishes all his readers a Joyful Christmas and Happier Times in 1981

TOM PORTER, 1 TIMBERTREE ROAD

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