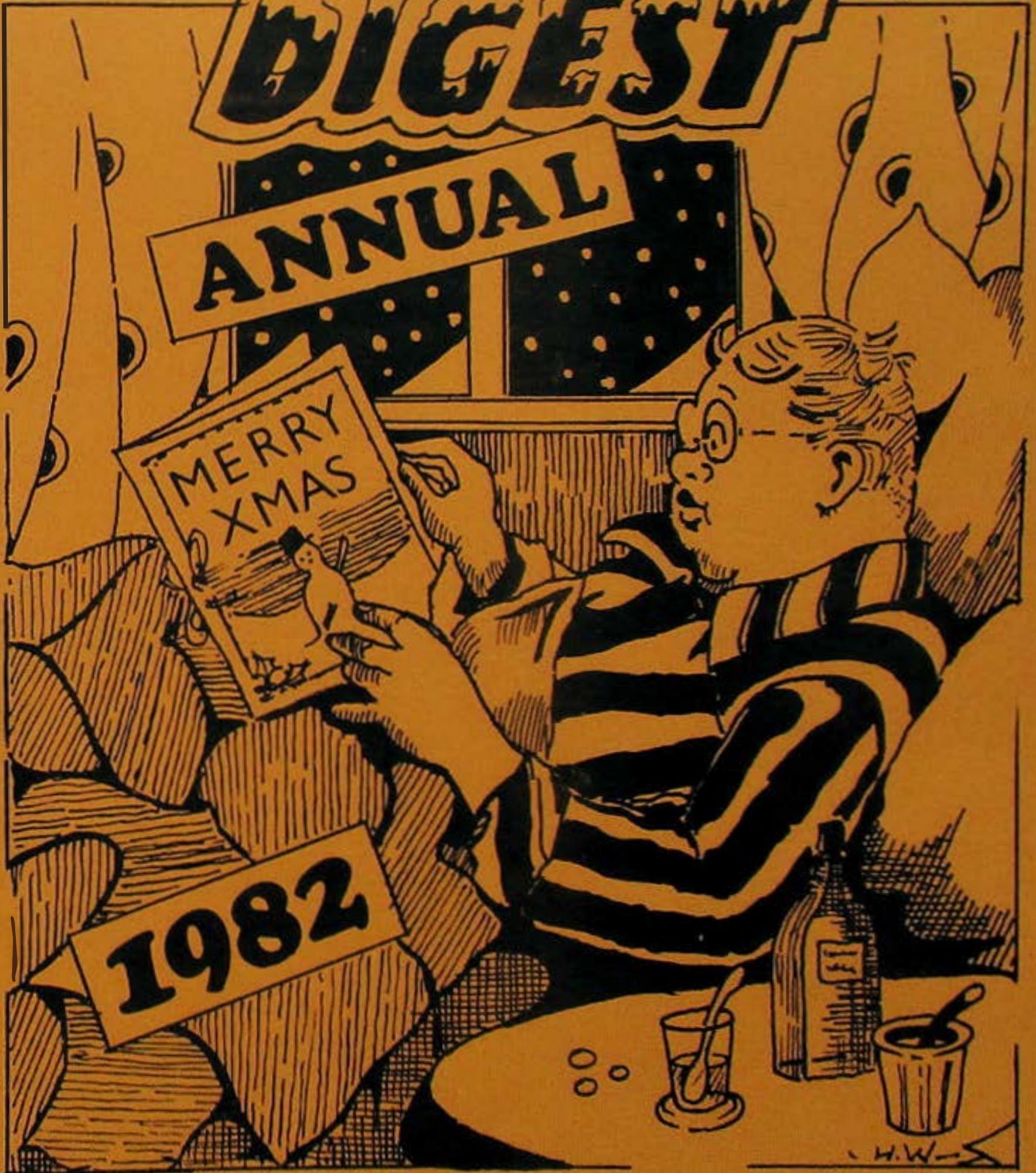


# COLLECTORS

## DIGEST

ANNUAL



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# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

# ANNUAL

Christmas 1982

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR

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

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## INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

This, the First Page of your Annual, is the Last Page to be written. It is also the most difficult to compose, for one must try to think of something new to write in it, and that is far from easy.

For years I have intended to abolish the Introduction. Does anybody bother to read it? I ask myself. Each year I make a resolution. I resolve - next year there will be no introduction. Next year we shall start with the Contents Page. And, as the months go by, being a happy-go-lucky sort of chap, I forget that resolution, and, when everything is completed - there I am with the Introduction to yet another Annual to write yet again.

Who could have dreamed, when the first C.D. Annual went out long ago, that 36 years on yet another Annual would be going out to readers all over the world? Those of us whose names figured somewhere in that first Annual, 36 years ago, are getting a bit long in the tooth by this time. For 36 years make quite a difference, don't they? Our "Get up and go" that spurred us on long ago seems, now and then, to have "Got up and went".

Or has it? I have a feeling in my ageing bones that plenty of you will write and tell me that this year's Annual is as good as, or better than, the best of the C.D. Annuals. For there is so much to entertain those of us who think that the Old Days had something which is well worth preserving.

This Introduction gives me the opportunity, at all events, to thank our superlative contributors who think up new slants for old themes, year after year. To thank our printers, York Duplicating Services, who have served us so faithfully from almost the beginning of it all. Down the years we have been loyal to them, and they have been loyal to us. Early in the year, our printers lost my very dear old friend, Ken Gore-Browne. Miss Linda Carter, who has taken over his responsibilities with this fine firm, has had a difficult year, but a splendid one. She takes the same keen interest in C.D. and its Annual as he did, and I am grateful to her.

My thanks go, at this time, to our own magnificent artist who is responsible for our cover and for much of the Artwork in this Annual. Thank you, a thousand times, Henry Webb.

Finally, my thanks to all of you - my readers whose love and appreciation and loyalty down these long years have done so much to enable me to carry on.

Happy Christmas! Happy New Year! God bless you all!

Your sincere friend,

*Eric Fayne*

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by HAROLD TRUSCOTT

"I say, you fellows ---"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Beast! Look here, this is rather important. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, you know ---"

"Great Scott!"

"I should have been pleased to stand a taxi to the school, but, as it happens, I'm rather short of cash. So you fellows can pay me back by standing a taxi."

"You fat frog!"

"Dash it all, Toddy, if you're going to be mean, I'll stand the taxi. There!"

"But would the taxi stand you?" asked Peter, with a shake of the head. "My idea is that it wouldn't. You had better hire a special van."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Just like hundreds of passages from the Magnet saga. Too much so, in fact. It is the kind of passage which is always quoted when Greyfriars is discussed in the Press, until one would think that Hamilton filled his stories with nothing else. And, in the circumstances which produced this actual quotation, it really should not have appeared at all. It occurs in a short story, purporting to be by Frank Nugent, called The Old Boys' Dinner, which was the first item in the 1932 Holiday Annual, in which Nugent begins by telling us that his age is forty-two. The story was certainly by a substitute writer - and there are one or two places, even in that extract, which shows that it was.

From time to time substitute writers played with the idea of Hamilton's Greyfriars boys grown to manhood. I cannot at the moment recall any similar instances concerning St. Jim's and Rookwood, although it may have been done. There is another, much shorter and far less awful, in the Holiday Annual for the following year, 1933. There it is supposed to be by Mark Linley. Linley and Nugent should have got together and agreed as to what their comrades were going to be, for Nugent has Wharton as a Major in the army and Bob Cherry as a big game hunter, whereas Linley's look into the future sees Wharton as a squadron commander in the RAF, and Bob as a flying officer in the same squadron. In both cases Hurree Singh, as might be expected, is now ruler of Bhanipur, and Peter Todd (Sir Peter, according to Nugent) an eminent K.C.

Now, these are, admittedly, lighthearted bits of fun, and should not be taken

seriously. "Nugent's" episode, in fact, turns out to be a dream, which may explain a lot. But there were a number of other such things from time to time which were not explained as dreams. so I feel justified in taking this instance as a text on which to hang some further conclusions. For one cannot prevent such effusions from giving rise to some serious thoughts. For instance, while "Linley's" effort is not taken far enough to show it. since wisely it eschews any development of personality, the writer of "Nugent's" account has plunged in and attempted some characterisation. And it is what one might expect. What are presented to us are not grown men at all. They are the Remove boys (and later some of the Upper Fourth, Shell and Fifth) pretending to be grown men, but with their personalities at the age of 15 or so unchanged. And I wonder - supposing this had not been a dream, could the writer really have imagined those boys as adults?

Mr. Quelch, too, is brought into this. In "Linley's" account he has replaced Dr. Locke as Head, which is feasible - just; although this would still make him about seventy-five, provided he has been subject to the ageing processes of time, which is difficult to believe. But Dr. Locke obviously has, for he has gone. In "Nugent's" we meet an altogether more tangled mixup. Here Mr. Quelch is a quavery old man with a long, flowing white beard, who is ready at the slightest provocation to cane Bob Cherry (he does) and report Vernon-Smith to the Head. Mark Linley is the form master's doctor and warns the two that they must give in to Quelch or his heart may suffer. Dr. Locke, of course, should be well over a hundred by now, one would think, in normal circumstances (he always was "venerable"). In normal circumstances; but there's the rub. This is where "Nugent" has slipped up. In all the Magnet saga Mr. Quelch did not age by so much as a day. His age is sometimes speculatively referred to as about fifty; he is, too, sometimes credited with a boyhood which he has not quite forgotten; nor should he have, at fifty. But I do not believe a word of it. I am convinced that he sprang into being already a schoolmaster, probably complete with gown and mortar-board. Just as Dr. Locke came into existence already Head of Greyfriars.

This brings up another matter, only slightly off my track. I had assumed that Mr. Quelch was always at Greyfriars, but in the Kranz series he is said to have come to the school after Franz Kranz left, "before the war". But how long before the war? Mr. Quelch was certainly at Greyfriars at the beginning of the saga. And where was he before he came to Greyfriars? Was he ageing normally until he arrived at the magic school, and the process arrested as soon as he arrived? Rather a chronological puzzle.

To return to "Nugent". The curious thing is that, by inference from his account, Dr. Locke has continued as Head long past the normal retiring age - very long past it. Or has he remained the same age? We do not actually meet him. But then we come up against this curious point: Dr. Locke may have remained the same age, but as soon as his Remove boys' backs are turned Mr. Quelch begins to age at a normal rate. Dream or no dream, the whole thing shows what a morass we get into as soon as we start meddling with the peculiar time-scale of these stories.

At one point, having introduced Captain Bull, now commanding H.M.S. Drake, who proceeds to punch Bunter's nose 'for having boned a cake belonging to him twenty-

five years previously', 'Nugent' tells us 'he linked arms with us, and the Famous Five marched arm-in-arm to Big Hall, as we had done so many times in the past'. Leaving aside the fact that the five never refer to themselves as the "Famous Five", in my experience men of forty, even if they attend a school reunion, do not - in England, at least; America is a different proposition - begin to behave and talk exactly as they did at 15; and I doubt whether five men, no matter how friendly they were at school, would link arms as they did when they were boys. They would be far too embarrassed. But, of course, they might in a dream experienced by a 15-year-old.

The inference is clear. Whoever wrote "Nugent's" story (and he, presumably, was not dreaming), no matter how much of a joke it may have been in intention, tried to see those boys twenty-five years older, and found it an impossible task; as, indeed, it is. He could not rid himself of their schoolboy personalities; not can any of us. Try as one will, one just cannot see these boys growing into young men, from young men to middle age, and so to the onset of old age. From the time of their conception in Hamilton's brain they were given the elixir of youth. To try to imagine them really grown up is as futile as trying to see Peter Pan as an adult. Whatever age you tack on to them in words, they will obstinately remain Greyfriars boys.

Thinking about this set me on to a particular problem that could (and probably would) have faced one of them, if he had not had injected into him this spirit of eternal youth. The boy is Hurree Singh. At the time that the Magnet first appeared in 1908, and Hurree Singh, in issue No. 6, made his bow by upending Bulstrode, it has been for a long time and was still for some time to come often a practice for young Hindu princes to be educated in England. Generally, unless they were particularly unpleasant individuals, they were treated well, learnt English ways, often proved to be first-class cricketers, as Hurree Singh was showing himself to be, and were welcomed into the fold. This, of course, was all under the British Raj. But later on the story was usually rather different. What had been accepted in a schoolboy was rather cold-shouldered in a young man. He found that familiarities that were encouraged when he was still in his teens were now regarded as objectionable intrusions. Often, too, the rather bewildered young Hindu found himself between two stools, being more and more made aware in England of the differences between himself and those he had been led to believe were his English friends, rather than of the similarities, and in his own country regarded with suspicion and at best as an Anglicised Hindu, and therefore no fit ruler for his subjects.

Those who have read A. E. W. Mason's fine novel, The Broken Road, will remember the plight of Shere Ali. Three short extracts will be enough to illuminate his situation, although the novel should be read complete; it is a fascinating study. The first is part of a conversation in Calcutta between Shere Ali and Violet Oliver, an Englishwoman who has been on terms of great friendship with him, and with whom he has had the temerity to fall in love:

"Yes, I have the priests against me," he said. "They call me the Englishman." He laughed. "A curious piece of irony, isn't it?" He stood up suddenly and said: "When I left England I was in doubt. I could not be sure whether my home, my true home, was there or in Chiltistan."

"Yes, I remember that," said Violet.

"I am no longer in doubt. It is neither in England nor in Chiltistan. I am a citizen of no country. I have no place anywhere at all."

And the second extract. Colonel Dewes is talking to the Commissioner:

"Do you think there will be trouble up there in Chiltistan?" he asked.

The Deputy-Commissioner, who was now a Chief Commissioner, smiled wearily.

"There is always trouble up there in Chiltistan," he said. "That I know. What I think is this - Shere Ali should have gone to the Mayo College at Ajmere. That would have been a compromise which would have satisfied his father, and done him no harm. But since he didn't - since he went to Eton, and to Oxford, and ran loose in London for a year or two - why, I think he is right."

A moment before, the Colonel has spoken of a peculiar experience with Shere Ali:

"What interested me was this - when I refused to help, Shere Ali's face changed in a most extraordinary way. All the fire went from his eyes, all the agitation from his face. It was like looking at an open box full of interesting things, and then - bang! someone slaps the lid down, and you are staring at a flat piece of wood. It was as if - as if - well, I can't find a better comparison."

"It was as if a European suddenly changed before your eyes into an Oriental."

These quotations are revealing enough. But there is proof that Hamilton had considered the two-edged sword this sort of East-West tug-of-war could become, as certain episodes in the India series show clearly. One will be enough. The juniors encounter a horse-dealer who, in his own tongue, curses them all as unbelievers. On being pressed, Hurree Singh explains this to the others:

"The excellent and ludicrous Dost Hamid was kindly cursing us as unbelievers," explained the nabob.

"Oh, my hat! The lot of us?" asked Wharton.

"Certainly; both the Englishman and the Hindu are unbelievers to the Mussulman."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The cheekfulness is terrific," agreed the nabob. "The Mussulman does not, after all, belong to India; he is an intruder, like ---" Hurree Singh broke off quite suddenly.

"Like what?" asked Bob Cherry unsuspectingly.

"Nothing, my esteemed chum."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Were you going to say like the jolly old white man, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face coloured faintly.

"My esteemed chums must excuse me," he murmured. "But here I am in my own country, and the thoughts that arise in my mind are not always the same thoughts as at Greyfriars."

It came again into the minds of Harry Wharton and Co. that they did not know their Indian chum quite so thoroughly as they had supposed. There was a 'native' side to Hurree Singh's mind, which had never been in evidence at Greyfriars.

There is not the slightest doubt that Hamilton was fully aware of the problem, and no doubt, either, that he was more than glad that Hurree Singh would never have either to grow up or to leave the shelter of Greyfriars. Fortunately, perhaps, for Inky, and for Bhanipur, that state would never have to contend with an Oriental spoiled by the West as their ruler, and he would be spared all the torment of mind that Shere Ali experienced, of belonging to no country.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

LACK, 4 RUSHMERE ROAD, NORTHAMPTON

= = = = =  
A Merry Xmas to all.

JOHN COX, HARDEN FOLLY, EDENBRIDGE

= = = = =  
Christmas and New Year Greetings to Eric, Madam, Darrell Swift, Bert Holmes and all Hobby friends.

LEN WORMULL, ROMFORD, ESSEX

= = = = =  
Seasonal Greetings to all fellow collectors. WANTED: Pre-war Schoolgirls' Own Libraries: anything with Valerie Drew: Champion Annuals 1927 - 1930: anything by John Wheway: My Favourite Annual 1935.

MARGERY WOODS, HARLEQUIN COTTAGE, SOUTH STREET

SCALBY, SCARBOROUGH, YO13 0QR

= = = = =  
A debt of gratitude to Charles Hamilton for so much of my boyhood reading. A debt of gratitude to Howard Baker for enabling a rereading in sumptuous form. A debt of gratitude to Eric Fayne and all who contribute to Collectors' Digest.

REG. V. MOSS, NGA10 WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

= = = = =  
Merry Xmas all L.B.C. I'll be back. 1982 was hectic business and long holidays!!

BOB MILNE, 21 DURHAM TERRACE, W.2

= = = = =  
Best Wishes from St. Frank's, Moor View, River House, Nelson Lee and Nipper.

JIM COOK



"O! Bold Robin Hood is a Forester good, As ever drew bow in the merry greenwood."

Thomas Love Peacock "Maid Marian"

"Robin Hood, legendary outlaw, has been represented as an historical personage --- in explanation of this --- various stories of no historical value have been fabricated."

Dictionary of National Biography

The popular idea of Robin Hood is of Robert Fitzooth, outlawed Earl of Huntingdon, who lived in Sherwood Forest in the reign of Richard 1st, changing his name to Robin Hood, and leading a band of a hundred stout outlaws, good yeomen, all clad in Lincoln green, including Friar Tuck, Little John, Will Scarlet, Allan-a-Dale, the minstrel, and Much the Miller; with him, too, was Maid Marian. He was a master archer, who could cleave a willow wand at five score paces.

We know how he lived in the forest; how he exchanged buffets with the disguised Richard Lionheart, and went to live with him at Court, but when John became king he returned to the forest; how he met his death at the hands of the treacherous Abbess of Kirklees. We also know of his enemies: Prince John, The Sheriff of Nottingham, and Guy of Gisborne. We even know he looked like Errol Flynn!

And if we think we know this, we have got it all wrong.

In dealing with Robin Hood, as several modern writers point out, we are dealing primarily with a legend rather than a man. The legend is at least six centuries old. The man - if he ever lived - dates from an even earlier period. He has survived in ballads and "rymes", in books, in plays (one of the Paston Letters complains that the man who played "Robyn Hood" has gone away), in May and Whitsun Games, in Broadsheets, "Garlands", novels, in children's stories, and now on film and Television Screen.

We cannot hope to find him. It is not a matter of finding a Robin or Robert Hood, Hode, or Hod. Medieval archives contain references to plenty of Hoods, as any historian of that period knows. The modern historian of medieval history has at hand well tried techniques to trace names, places, etc., by the use of Court Rolls, Charters, Inquisitions, Terriers, Wills, and other documents. (During the period I was writing this paper I traced the origin of an ancient rent charge of sixpence, still paid by one Cambridge College to another, to a sale of a messuage (house) in the 23rd year of the reign of Henry VIII.) So we shall find many references to the names Hood, Hode, Hod, Whood, or even Robynhod. Hood is the hood maker, as Miller was

the miller, etc. While Robert, or Robyn, was among the six most common first names in post Conquest England. We no longer need the student of Folk Lore with his suggestion that Robin was once a woodsprite, like Robin Goodfellow (pace the D.N.B.) or derived from Norse or Teutonic mythology; nor need we follow Dr. Margaret Murray's attempts to connect Robin Hood with the witch cult, or the sacrificial god-king of the old fertility rites.

The one thing we have is the legend; and the important thing is the persistence of the legend, but equally important it is an ever changing legend - all the way from early oral tradition to television script.

It has changed greatly over the six centuries or more since it first began. Each generation adopted new ideas and twists of plot, according to its interests and outlook; to its levels of literacy; and to the means of transmission and circulation. New characters were introduced; new tales told; historical context amended; themes expanded; older tales from other sources introduced. Robin Hood, in fact, being repeatedly adapted to suit the story teller and his environment and audience. He begins as a yeoman, and becomes an outlawed nobleman, then a Saxon patriot opposing Norman oppression; then a social rebel; then something of a figure of fun, and, as Professor Holt so shrewdly suggests, something of superman.

If we analyse the early ballads we find Robin Hood appears as one of those heroes who intervene on the side of right, master archer and swordsman, invulnerable to everything save treachery, who always wins in the end. That is the secret of his appeal, why so many stories and films today are meant for a youthful audience. But the hero is a man of his times. He deals with individual wrongs. He does not seek to change general social conditions.

Originally the legend had another meaning. Real or legendary, Robin is the product of an age of violence, as the early ballads show. An age when crime was often tolerated, the law an instrument of faction. Poaching the king's deer or the Lord's game was no crime to the many who suffered from the harsh forest laws. The legend follows the conventions of its early time: chivalry to women; devotion to Our Lady, the Virgin; generosity; loyalty to the king. But equally rebellion against the local sheriff or justice, and other administrators of oppressive laws. In modern popular view Robin Hood robbed the rich to help the poor:

"From wealthy abbot's chests and churls abundant store,  
What oftentimes he took, he gave unto the poor."

Yet there is little warrant for this in the earliest ballads. Certainly in the "Geste" he helped a needy knight, but recovered his loan by robbing a wealthy Abbey. But most of the ballads are mainly tales of adventure; full of fighting, disguises, stratagems. They are not particularly concerned with class grievances, or discontented peasants or serfs. There is, of course, a social context. The heroes of the ballads are outlaws. A class of criminals, defeated rebels - peasant, knight or yeoman, who took to the forest rather than submit to legal processes, to pay bribes or fines, or face hostile juries. They are at war with sheriff, justice, lord of Manor, or clerical landlord. They live and roam in woods and forest, which both in legend and fact were the haunts of criminals and fugitives. They live off the king's

deer. The most realistic early ballads of Robin Hood show him extorting money from travellers he has waylaid in the forest roads.

The very imprecision of the ballads has helped the Robin Hood legend to endure. We never know the real reason for his outlawry, or his feud with the sheriff or Guy of Gisborne: the legend is varied and adaptable. In time it would appeal to varied audiences, and join or take over other tales and ballads. The original "Rymes" and ballads had, by way of the May and Whitsun games, become in the late 15th and the early 16th centuries, stories and plays.

A main feature of the legend is, of course, the Greenwood. The forests of England could be a mysterious region; travellers would keep to path or road, avoiding its depths and its dangers. Here in this land the knights of King Arthur's Court could find strange adventures with maidens in distress or Green Knights. Even in Shakespeare's day, with the spread of the arcadian idea of the forest, it could be the haunt of fairies: Oberon, Titania, the mischievous Puck, creatures of a Midsummer Night's Dream, and the place where Rosalind can find the old Duke and his followers keeping his court like the Robin Hood of old as they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world". But to the outlaw, especially of the earlier medieval time, the forest would be a place of sanctuary wherein to find shelter and whose beasts provided his food. To be an outlaw then was to be literally the "wolfshhead" he was proclaimed - outside the protection of the law, one who could be killed like any wolf. There was thus an enormous difference between the life of the outlaw, carefree in the forest with food and shelter, and the starved and hunted life he would live outside its leafy refuge. In later times as outlawry became less irksome and dangerous - sentences of outlawry becoming more frequent, thus debasing its deterrent effect - many men would prefer risking outlawry rather than face courts - manorial or crown - when juries could be hostile or bribed. There were many outlaw gangs in the forests of the late 14th and in the 15th centuries. Such as the famous (or infamous) Folvilles of which the chronicles tell us much, or "Lionel, King of the rout of raveners" who sent a threatening letter to the Chaplain of Huntington, near York, in 1336. Many of these gangs were supported by the minor gentry, and their leaders spent more time in their own beds than "under the greenwood tree" - a medieval equivalent of the "godfathers" of the Mafia.

If we seek to find the "real Robin Hood" we come, at once, against a major problem. Can we find a date for him? For there is no chronicle or record which speaks of Robin Hood as a contemporary of the writer. The first we hear of him is in an edition of Langlands "Piers Plowman" which can be dated to c. 1377. The lack of any contemporary reference to Robin Hood can only mean that if he was a real person he was not of sufficient standing to catch the eye of his contemporaries.

In the 1377 "Piers Plowman", it is Sloth, who personifies the negligent priest who is one target for Langland's criticism, who says:

"I can noughte perfytly my pater noster as the prest it syngeth  
But I can rymes or Robyn hood and Ranulf erl of Chestre"

(I do not know the pater noster (Lord's Prayer) perfectly as a Priest should sing it  
But I know rhymes of Robin Hood and Randolph Earl of Chester.)

This is the earliest reference we have to Robin Hood and to "Rymes" about him. Whatever the origin of the Robin Hood stories they have been altered and amended from other sources. Many anachronisms have been imposed on the early ballads, and continue to be added to it. Oral tradition can lead to the repetition of themes. Old Testament stories of Elijah have a counterpart in Greek mythology. Many adventures of Robin Hood are found in stories of other real, known outlaws. These may have added fresh ballads to the Robin Hood originals; they may have changed the shape of the original sources. We have a ballad of "Robin Hood and the Potter", but in Kingsley's "Hereward the Wake" we find Hereward also played the potter; so, too, did Eustace the Monk. Hereward, Eustace, and Fulk Fitzwarin were all real persons. Apart from legends we have references to Hereward in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. We know Eustace was killed in a sea battle off Sandwich in 1207. We know of Fulk Fitzwarin, as being present at the signing of Magna Carta. But just as Robin robbed the Abbot of St. Mary's, Fulk robbed John's merchants, and Eustace the Abbot of Jumieges. Just as Little John led the Sheriff into an ambush, so Fulk did John, and so, too, did Eustace the Count of Boulonge. 'It is clearly wise' says one recent historian, 'to regard with suspicion the historicity of an incident, however probable, which occurs again and again in essentially similar stories, unless there are very strong grounds for the identification'.

Equally the Ballad of "Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough and William of Clouderley" may owe much to the Robin Hood ballads.

Some modern scholars argue there was no actual Robin Hood, but that his historical significance does not depend on whether he was a real person, or, as Childs believed a pure creation of the ballad makers. His appeal to the hearers of the ballads was his robbing of landowners, specially wealthy churchmen, and his maintenance of a running warfare against authority, represented by the Sheriff. The legends were first transmitted orally by Minstrel and Ballad singer, probably first chanted or recited, then by sung ballads. Such ballads did not survive if they were not popular, particularly to an unlettered audience. By the time the later 16th and 17th stories and plays were written or sung Robin's traditional world of the Greenwood already belonged to a half forgotten past.

It is to the very early Robin Hood ballads which were recorded in writing we must turn in any attempt to trace the greenwood legend back to its original place and form - always bearing in mind that hardly a single aspect of early English balladry is uncontroversial. These early ballads are not a single corpus of writing but form part of a general body of ballad literature. If the first mention of Robin Hood is in the last quarter of the 14th century (1377) we must allow at least 25 to 50 years, perhaps even longer, for the tradition to become widespread. So there is perhaps a real Robin Hood to be found in the early 14th or possibly in the 13th century; recorded in yeoman minstrelsy - as was so much history in an age when literacy was limited largely to churchmen and clerks. But if we cannot hope to trace the real Robin Hood on the evidence we have, we must remember as Drs. Dobson and Taylor stress, that the outlaw hero of pre-industrial societies has seldom, if ever, been an entirely fictional character. Consider Jesse James in American folklore.

Our search for Robin Hood must begin by looking at early references to him.

Andrew Syntoun, writing in 1408 refers to Robin Hood and Little John under the years 1283-85 as "plying their trade" in "Inglewood and Bernesdale".

Walter Bower, in 1440, writes under the year 1266 "Then arose the famous murderer Robert Hood, as well as Little John, together with their accomplices among the dispossessed.

It is not until 1521 that John Maior assigns Robin Hood and Little John to 1193-94.

Some things are clear. Richard I reigned for ten years from 1189 to 1199. Of that reign he probably spent less than two years in England altogether. The Order of Friars Minor was founded by St. Francis of Assisi c. 1209-1212. So one cannot associate Friar Tuck with the reign of Richard. Neither Scott nor Peacock, in *Ivanhoe* and *Maid Marian* respectively refer to "Friar Tuck". Scott calls him a hermit, Peacock a Monk.

The one thing about Robin Hood that is universally agreed is that he was a master archer. "shooting in the long bow" of yew. English archery began its main development in the wars of Edward I. There is controversy about the origin of the long bow, whether it was preceded by a Norman short bow or not, but there seems little doubt that it was from their experience of the five foot elm bows of the Welsh archers of Gwent, during the wars of the late 12th and early 13th century, that the English learned the use of the long bow. The Welsh archers had made themselves felt with considerable effect. Geraldus Cambrensis tells of an English knight being pinned to his horse by an arrow that pierced mail, leg, and saddle. He also saw himself a Welsh arrow head that had pierced a four inch door in 1188.

Richard I certainly used archers, as at Azotus. But his preference was for crossbowmen. He used a crossbow himself at the siege of Acre, and it was from a crossbow bolt that he received his own fatal wound, in a minor siege of a French castle.

It was Edward I who began the development of English archery, including in his army Welshmen, and pardoned outlaws, among them some from Sherwood. It was these men with their long bows, drawn to the ear, who shattered the Scottish spearmen at Falkirk, and went on to win that long series of victories, from Halidon Hill in 1333 to Agincourt in 1415 which made the English archers feared throughout Western Europe. Among the things we learn from the early ballads of Robin Hood is that, apart from their bows, Robin's foresters fight with the sword. Only in "Robin Hood and the Potter" do we find mention of the quarter staff, and then it is only used by the Potter. There is, of course, no mention of Maid Marian or of Friar Tuck. They come into the legend much later, from the May and Whitsun games. There is no reference to either Richard or John; the only king mentioned is "Edward, our comely king". The only tax mentioned is the toll Robin Hood exacted, or tried to exact from travellers through the forest. There is no evidence to suggest that Robin was ever a "resistance leader" to the Norman conquerors. And in spite of Maior, Ritson, and their followers there is no doubt about Robin's status. He is a yeoman. Percy and his fellow 18th century antiquarians were suspicious of the claims made for Robin's noble birth. Percy commented in 1765 that the most ancient ballads of Robin Hood made no mention of his Earldom "he is expressly asserted to be a good

yeoman in a very old legend in the Archives of the Library at Cambridge". And there is nothing to suggest that Robin Hood is the archetype of the social rebel, leading a rising of peasants and serfs against the wealthy, as Geoffrey Trease tries to make him in "Bows against the Barons". Robin Hood is no Che Guevara.

Of the early ballads five are important:

"Robin Hood and the Monk" first manuscript dated 1450.

"Robin Hood and the Potter" in a manuscript of 1503.

"The Geste" or "Littul Geste", which may in its origin date back to c.1400, and appears in early printed versions by, among others, Wynkyn de Worde (1492-1534), successor to Caxton, which in itself encapsulates the basic Robin Hood problem.

and two manuscripts rescued by Percy, and Published in his "Reliques of English Poetry" in 1765. The haunting

"Robin Hood's death", and

"Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne" - archaic in form and sharing some material with a fragment of a manuscript play of 1475.

But let us deal first with the suggestion that Robin was an outlawed earl. This was a sixteenth century idea, probably begun by Anthony Mundy in his two plays about "Robert, Earl of Huntington", fuelled by Stukeley's fatuous "pedigree", and perpetuated by Ritson in the 1795 edition of his collection. Every student of Robin Hood owes a debt to Ritson's industry in collecting together so great a number of ballads. But Ritson's belief that Robin was a real person influenced both Scott and Peacock, and through them other story tellers, and then in turn others until we come to Errol Flynn and Richard Green. But the "Geste" takes us back to the real Robin. In passing we should note an extract from an old ballad quoted in one of the Aldine Robin Hood Library tales:

"The father of Robin a forester was,  
And he shot with a lusty long bow,  
Two north country miles and an inch at a shot  
As the Pindar of Wakefield does know.  
For he brought Adam Bell, and Clym of the Clough,  
And William of Cloudesley,  
To shoot with our forester for fifty marks.  
And our Forester beat them all three".

No outlawed Earl here!

The "Geste" ("Geste = Tale) contains not one but several differing stories, and not only are they distinct, but they have different settings. The importance of the Geste is shown by the number of 16th and 17th century reprints.

The main story begins in Barnesdale forest

"Robyn Hode in Bernysdale stode, and leynd him to a tre"

Robin will not dine until a traveller is found to join him in, and pay for his dinner, and Little John is sent to find such a one. He asks Robin

"Where shall we rob, where shall we reve, where shall we bete and bind?"  
 Historians dispute about the status of the yeoman of this period. Is he still a superior household servant, or is he by now among the small landowners or farmers? But, whatever the status of the yeoman, Robin's answer puts him into the yeoman class:

"But look ye doe no husbonde harm	(husbandman = farmer)
That tilleth with the plow.	
No more ye shall no good yemen	(yeoman)
That walketh by greenwood shawe	
Ne no knyght, ne no sgyer	(knight; squire)
That be a goode felawe"	

There are significant references to the geography of the Barnesdale area in this part of the ballad, references that can still be identified. The ballad follows the familiar story of the poor knight, who has mortgaged his lands to the Abbot of St. Mary's, to pay a fine for his son, who has killed another knight at a tournament. Robin Hood lends him the money to pay the Abbot. But when the time arrives for the knight to repay his loan Robin's men capture the cellarer of St. Mary's abbey, and Robin Hood says Our Lady has repaid his loan. When the knight finally arrives to make his payment Robin refuses this, saying Our Lady has already paid it. The scene changes, presumably to Sherwood Forest, and Little John goes to Nottingham to take part in an archery contest. The Sheriff is impressed by his skill and offers him employment. While the Sheriff is absent Little John fights with the cook. They become friends and leave together for the forest, taking with them the Sheriff's plate. They meet the Sheriff, and lure him into Sherwood Forest, where he falls into the hands of Robin Hood. In the next part there is another archery contest at Nottingham, but this proves to be a trap for Robin and the band make their escape, with Much the Miller bearing the wounded Little John on his back. They seek refuge in the castle of the knight they had before befriended, who now appears as Sir Richard of the Lee. After an unsuccessful siege the Sheriff departs, but takes a later opportunity to capture the knight while he is hawking. The outlaws rescue him. Robin shoots the Sheriff with an arrow, and cuts off his head. Then follows the story of the disguised king (not Richard, but "Edward, our comely king") going into the forest disguised as a monk, exchanging buffets with Robin.

"And such a buffet he gave Robin  
 To ground he went full rere.  
 I do avow to Heaven said Robin,  
 Thou art a stalwart Frere."

Robin and his followers follow the king to Nottingham. But afterwards Robin tires of Court life and returns to Barnes dale, where he lives for some twenty years, until he is bled to death by the Abbess of Kirklees.

Barnesdale - Sherwood. Does this help us in our search?

Joseph Hunter, writing in 1852, first placed Robin Hood in the early 14th century. Working in the newly established Public Record Office, he identified "Edward, our comely king" with Edward II, who made a circuit of the forests of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Nottinghamshire in 1323. He, and his followers, Walker

and Valentine Harris identify Robin Hood with a "Robyn Hode" or "Hod" who received daily payments as one of Edward II's valets or porters. Hunter argued that these payments ceased because Robin Hood left the court to return to Barnesdale, as in the Geste. But this ignores an entry made in the King's Household accounts on 25 November, 1324, "To Robyn Hod, formerly one of our porters, a grant of five shillings, by royal command, because he can no longer work."

An attempt has been made to identify this "Robyn Hod" with a Robert Hood who bought a plot of land in Bichill or Bickhill in the Manor of Wakefield in 1316. It is claimed that this Robert Hood was a follower of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, who rebelled against Edward II in 1322 . . . Harris has found other names in the Wakefield area that could be associated with the Little Geste and other ballads. But the flaw in all this is that there is no proof that the Robert Hood of Bickhill was ever an outlaw, or joined in Lancaster's rebellion. Hunter's argument depended on the idea that the "Robyn Hod, Porter of the Chamber" appeared in surviving accounts only after Edward's visit to Nottingham in November 1323. But Professor Holt records that a fragment of an account book in the P.R.O. in poor condition reveals, under the modern technique of using ultraviolet light, Robyn Hod receiving wages in June 1323; so he was already in the king's service before Edward made his circuit. Nevertheless there are a number of Hoods (or variants of the name) to be found in the Wakefield area covering the period from c. 1202 until well into the 14th century. The case for a Wakefield Robin Hood has interest, but lacks any clear evidence.

But the "Geste" contains one significant story that suggests the ballad had a 13th rather than a 14th century origin. The Knight in the "Geste" has mortgaged his lands to the Abbey of St. Mary's. This strongly suggests that the story originated before 1279. For the Statute of Mortmain of that year forbade the alienation of land to religious houses. (See Rosenthal "The Purchase of Paradise".) If we must seek Robin Hood in the 13th century can we find him? Walter Bower thought Robin Hood to have been one of the dispossessed followers of Simon de Montfort, outlawed after de Montfort's death. This would place him around 1266. Though, however, at least one follower of de Montfort, Roger Godbird, did become an outlaw in Sherwood Forest there is no evidence that he ever called himself Robin Hood.

One other possibility, first suggested by Professor Owen, is to be found in the Pipe Roll for 1230, where the Sheriff of York accounts for 32s. 6d. for the value of property of Robert Hood "fugitivus". There is also a reference in 1228 to this Robert Hood or Hod - where he is given the nickname "Hobbehod". But these are still only possibilities.

Robin Hood is definitely a northern outlaw. The earliest ballads speak much more of Barnesdale than of Sherwood. Barnesdale was a notorious haunt of highway robbers. We know that apart from Guy of Gisborne, the most notable enemy of Robin Hood, was the Sheriff of Nottingham. "Scherwode" is mentioned in the ballad, or metrical romance of "Robin Hood and the Monk". Possibly there were two cycles of Robin Hood ballads - one based on Barnesdale and one on Sherwood - which were conflated; or possibly two separate ballads, one of Robin Hood and one of the Sheriff of Nottingham were conflated?

The author of "Piers Plowman" knows that "Rymes" and ballads were being

recited and sung by the last quarter of the 14th century. In the early 15th century these rhymes became associated with the May and Whitsun games - from which came Friar Tuck and Maid Marian. We know that the young Henry VIII played the part of Robin Hood on at least one occasion. In the 16th century the idea of an ennobled Robin came in, with the arcadian idea of the Greenwood as shown in Shakespeare. But the home of the ballads was Barnesdale and Sherwood. While the Robin Hood games and dances can be found in a wide circle from Scotland to the West country, they are not found in Robin Hood's own country, Barnesdale and Sherwood. The medieval outlaw was a tough character,

more robber than rebel leader - the peasant risings were in the East and South, not the north of Robin Hood. Robin Hood lived in an age of violence. If we had ever met him we should have found him more like the Robin of Philip Lindsay's "Nut Brown Maid" than Richard Green "riding through the wood". In the ballad of Guy of Gisborne after Robin has fought and killed Guy, he cuts off his head, disfigures it with his knife and takes it to the Sheriff, releases the captured Little John, who promptly shoots the Sheriff. In "Robin Hood and the Monk", Little John and Much the Miller capture the treacherous monk and his page.

"John smote off the Munkis bed  
No longer wolde he dwell.  
So did Much the littul page  
For ferd lest he wolde tell

Rhyme, Ballad, May Games, Plays Broadshets, "Garlands", gathered into collections by Percy, Ritson and Childs. Place names, wells, graves, trees, etc., associated with his name, all spread the legend. New ballads were added, many of an obvious late date; for example a ballad of Robin and Marian (No. 11 in Dobson and Taylor) refers to Jane Shore, who was the mistress of Edward IV who reigned from 1461 to 1483'. The early rhymes were linked to the 16th century plays through the Whitsun Churchwardens' accounts, examples can be found in the records of St. Laurences, Reading and Thame, Oxfordshire. These may perhaps be regarded as precursors of the modern church garden fete!

Robin Hood ballads and dances were denounced by the church - witness Latimer's lament when he could not preach at a church "because it was Robyn Hode's day", and later by the Puritans, like Stubbs.

But in spite of all this the legend survived, and by the late 18th century Sherwood was taking over from Barnesdale. Scott and Peacock popularised the association of Robin Hood with the reign of Richard (incidentally both "Ivanhoe" and "Maid Marian" were made into Operas). Other 19th century authors followed them. Pierce Egan, the younger, wrote of "Robin Hood and Little John". Dumas "pirated" Egan's book, which was later re-translated into English. "Broadshets" and "Garlands" repeated the legend. Later both Tennyson and Alfred Noyes wrote verse plays about Robin Hood. The cheap, popular papers produced further tales in the 19th and early 20th century, notably the "Aldine Library" of 1902-3, which cheerfully plundered (in the true spirit of Robin Hood!) "Ivanhoe", Stevenson's "Black Arrow", and "The Cloister and the Hearth", while from Howard Pyle onward adventure stories of Robin Hood have continued, leading inevitably to cinema and television screens.

The interesting stories are those which make an unusual approach to the Robin Hood saga:

Geoffrey Trease makes Robin Hood a kind of Marxist Wat Tyler in "Bows against the Barons".

Philip Lindsay introduces Robin as a real medieval outlaw without grace or glamour in "The Nut Brown Maid".

Jay Williams in "The Good Yeoman" identifies Robin with the reign of Edward II, but makes him a yeoman wishing to get his old status back, by a bargain with king and Sheriff.

G. P. R. James in "Forest Days" sets Robin Hood in the period of Montfort and Henry III.

Perhaps the most interesting twist of all is made by Major Charles Gilson, who places Robin in the reign of Richard, but makes Marian his sister who marries Allan-a-Dale. See "Robin of Sherwood".

Despite these stories, and a host of others, and despite the efforts of historians, still the real Robin Hood will not stand up. He is lost in the mists of the 13th, or possibly 14th centuries, and there we must leave him, a shadowy figure in the shades of the greenwood:

"Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,  
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day"  
or leaning on the tree in "Bernesdale".

July 1982

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Dedicated with grateful thanks to Jack Overhill who encouraged me to write it.

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WANTED: Chums 1915 Annual, any reasonable price paid.

ROY PARSONS, 64 SHIRLEY AVENUE, SOUTHAMPTON

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# **Christmas Isn't Christmas Without Snow.**

By WILLIAM LISTER

Christmas isn't Christmas without snow! and I've heard that said before. I've said it myself and I've heard others say it. Moreover, I am conscious of the fact that down the years the St. Frank's Yuletide tales have revealed that one or other of its characters are of the same opinion.

Handforth, Nipper, Watson and others among them. The 'Nelson Lee' Christmas series of 1925 comprising "Uninvited Guests" - No. 550; "The Ghosts of Dorrimore Castle" - No. 551; "The New Year Revellers" - No. 552. Covering December through to January, finds Chubby Heath voicing the same thought.

He hadn't long to wait, ere the page turns, it's on its way. "It was a keen, brisk December evening and the darkness had already settled over the wintry countryside" when Chubby mentioned snow. Within a couple of days it arrived.

"Snow!" yelled Chubby Heath joyously. "Pater was telling everybody last night that snow was coming - and its started already! Look at those snow clouds".

Unquestionably, the heavy lowering clouds were of the right kind to produce a heavy snow storm."

Produce a heavy snowstorm it did. I would have called it a blizzard. Before it burned itself out (if burned is the right word to use in this case) it has left a trail of difficulties behind. Traffic brought to a standstill; the Railway Services snow-bound; travellers on foot, snowblind, struggling, breathless, cold, weary and frightened.

After all there is snow and snow, and, like a little at Christmas one may do, but you can have too much. Still for fictional purposes maybe you can't. The heavier it falls, the deeper it gets, the more seasonable our world of fiction becomes - and we like it that way.

If it's true that 'Christmas isn't Christmas without snow' it's also true that Christmas isn't Christmas with frozen lakes, parties, castles, and those most christmassy of all christmassy things - GHOSTS.

Breathes there a man with soul so dead that doesn't love a good, old-fashioned haunting, especially at Christmas.

Well now! You know all this, and I know all this and, what is more to the point, Edwy Searles Brooks knew all this. This knowledge Brooks put to good use.

True - he brought down the snow, the heaviest falls for every Christmas. True - he froze the lakes for our St. Frank's boys to skate upon, every Christmas. True - he conjured up every type of Ghost you could imagine during the Yuletides over the years, and WE LOVED IT! Never was Christmas better spent than with the 'Nelson Lee'.

What if there was no snow where we were. What if our parents could only afford a chicken and a plum pudding, and no sign of a party. What if we never saw a ghost. Christmas was Christmas for all that! With a copy of the 'Nelson Lee' in your hand - never was there such a Christmas.

Even if there was no Father Christmas, at least there was Edwy Searles Brooks, with his Yuletide Revellers, his snow-storms, nay, his blizzards. Parties - ghosts - skating, it was all yours for 2d. a copy. Take the imagination of E. S. Brooks, add to it your own imagination, and Christmas was in the bag for you.

I say this because in the three tales already mentioned, once again you get the lot. I'm sure the artists were also inspired by these tales. How they rose to the occasion, how they plastered those pages with parties, look at those tables groaning with grub, tread through the driven snow, see the ghosts glide across the pages.

Under the pen of Brooks, the brush of the artists, you were there - MAGIC!

We must not forget the characters without which there would be no tale. At this point let me allow the 1925 Christmas and New Year Revellers to take a bow.

Willy Handforth and party. Edward Oswald Handforth and party. Nipper and Nelson Lee. Archie Glenthorne, Reggie Pitt, William Napoleon Browne, each with their own particular friends. Not forgetting the Ghost of a Cromwellian soldier, and the Girls of Moor View.

Background scenery - St. Frank's; Moor View and Lord Dorrimore's Castle.

There's a New Year tale to follow, but then, Christmas is one thing and New Year is another. We shall leave it till next time.



Very Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year to Josie, Skipper Eric, Norman, Chris, Bertie, Laurie. Les, and Hobbologians everywhere. Still calling May Day for a copy, photo or original of Boys' Magazine 317, "Iron Army" instalment. Your price o.k. or any swap.

JOHN BRIDGWATER, 58 SPRING LANE, MALVERN LINK

WORCS., WR14 1AJ

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Happy Christmas, New Year, to Eric, Madam, Snowee, and all Hobby friends. Long may "Digest" and "Annual" flourish!

ESMOND KADISH, 18 GROVE GARDENS, HENDON, N.W.4



Most readers of the "Digest" have a nodding acquaintance with those two famous fictional girls' schools, Cliff House and Morcove - some, indeed, may actually have dipped into the pages of the "Schoolfriend", the "Schoolgirl", or the "Schoolgirls' Own", in which papers these schools were featured. Not all youthful readers were girls, it seems, if we are to believe the reply of "Hilda Richards", in a 1934 "Schoolgirl", to a schoolboy correspondent:- "No, it isn't extraordinary for you to enjoy my stories - you ask my girl readers how many of their brothers do the same". The reason for this surreptitious dipping into unaccustomed literary waters, according to the editor, in a 1936 issue of the "Magnet", was that "opinion seems to be that the average boy or girl likes to read something about the opposite sex", and he further added that there was "an overwhelming majority in favour of Marjorie Hazeldene and Co., the girls of Cliff House, being featured in our yarns". This last remark was the outcome of a controversy sparked off by the complaint of a "Magnet" reader that the girls were being too prominently featured in Charles Hamilton's Greyfriars stories.

Cliff House and Morcove apart, however, the wide variety of characters featured in the pre-war girls' papers must be quite unknown to most people. The "irrepressible" Hilda Manners of Vere Abbey School, and her form-mistress, the aptly-named Miss Timms, are in this category, but they are delightful humorous characters, and deserve some attention other than the brief occasional comment that they have inspired to date. Hilda is the brain-child of L. E. Ransome, writing as Ida Melbourne. Mr. Ransome appears to have written under many pen-names, beside the one already quoted. His connection with the old papers dates from the first war, and he has contributed the odd Greyfriars and St. Jim's tale to the "Magnet" or "Gem", substituting, like so many others, for Charles Hamilton. As Hilda Richards, he wrote most of the Cliff House stories in the smaller-sized "Schoolfriend", which appeared from 1925 to 1929, and he created the "imperturbable" and monocled Jemima ("Jimmy") Carstairs in 1925, transferring her from Morcove to Cliff House in the process. Other characters created by Ida Melbourne were "The Flying Sisters", "Gipsy Joy" and "Cousin George and the Imp", and, as Elizabeth Chester, he wrote serials like "The Pagoda of Peril" for the "Schoolgirl". His contributions to boys' papers, like the "Champion", writing as Tom Stirling or Ivor Melbourne, included adventure and school stories; under the latter pseudonym, he once introduced an owl-like-looking youth with the imposing title of Ethelbert Aloysius Perkins - otherwise known as "Pongo" - who seems to have some of the characteristics of Hilda Manners. Indeed, Mr. Ransome's forte is in creating humorous characters who are not quite

what they seem, and, like Hilda, "Pongo" alternately teases and backs up Miss Timms' counterpart, the mild-mannered Mr. Wiggins. Happily, Mr. Ransome's delightful stories were resumed in the post-war period in such papers as the new edition of "Schoolfriend", and undoubtedly helped to give them character and appeal. As evidence that he was still writing comparatively recently, I have a 1968 Hamlyn paperback, "Secret Agents All", in which a popular character from the pre-war girls' papers, Susan Clifton, and an enormous Great Dane, named Bill, are revived, although the composition of the eccentric family of which Susan takes charge, has been changed, and the plot suitably up-dated.

Like Susan, Hilda Manners first appeared in the 'twenties. She is the heroine of "Bobbed." and graces the cover of number one of the new series of "Schoolfriend", published in 1925. Clutching a scissors in one hand, and a long hank of fair hair in the other, Hilda has plainly just accomplished what many contemporary schoolgirls were wondering whether they dared do. The first page of a letter addressed to "my dear niece" is also included in the cover picture. It reads:- "I am coming to Vere Abbey School tomorrow, and I trust, Hilda, that I shall not find that you are one of those modern types of girls, with loud laughs, slangy ways, and bobbed or shingled hair". (One wonders what comment Hilda's aunt might make on today's rising generation of girls!) Two further stories followed:- "Too Many Cooks", and "Hilda's Treasure Trail", but although there were Hilda Manners stories in each of the "Schoolfriend Annuals" from 1927 to 1930, this seems to have been the total "Hilda" contribution by Mr. Ransome to the "Schoolfriend", and it was not until the early days of the "Schoolgirl", in a long series of stories, which began in mid-1930, that she really got into her stride. Possibly Mr. Ransome had little time for developing his character until then, since, as has already been stated, he was writing most of the Cliff House stories for the "Schoolfriend" of 1925-29. When he was able to resume writing about Hilda, she became rather more than the traditional merry madcap so popular in pre-war girls' fiction.

Amongst the madcap heroines who flourished in papers like the "Schoolfriend" were those created by Renée Frazer, otherwise Ronald Fleming - Tess Everton of Templedene School, and Sunny McAllister. Tess's chief characteristic was to lapse into a stage-Irish brogue in moments of crisis, and Sunny (real name Sally) is usually involved in befriending defenceless waifs who are being shamelessly bullied by tyrannical guardians. Sunny is, incidentally, accompanied by a Persian cat, endearingly dubbed, "Wangles", who, with feline good sense, has a habit of absenting himself from the scene whenever his young mistress is pursuing her madcap activities a trifle too strenuously, and whose permanent refuge appears to be a large hat box, from the depths of which, once ensconced, he is apt to mew plaintively. Hilda, however, is far more than the typical madcap heroine who, blue eyes flashing and fair curls askew, was usually encountered standing on the tuckshop table exhorting the Lower Fourth to rebellion against tyranny in the shape of a harsh and unjust mistress or prefect. Hilda does not take life that seriously; she has to have her fun, and if she does occasionally cause chaos out of order, her disruption is intended to strip authority of some of its pomposity, and is always good-humoured, and never malicious. She is ever ready to rally to the defence of poor Miss Timms, when that nervous lady finds herself - as she frequently does! - in hot water, as a result of one

THE  
SCHOOLGIRL

2<sup>d</sup>



## *Caught by the School Governor out of Bounds!*

A dramatic moment  
in the sparkling  
long complete  
Hilda Manners  
story which  
appears in  
this issue.

of Hilda's little pranks:-

"Ragging Miss Timms was a pleasant way of spending the afternoon, but Hilda had never had the intention of getting the mistress in Miss Jameson's black books". It has to be confessed, of course, that part of this laudable loyalty is born from a fear that Miss Timms may be dismissed and replaced by a lady of sterner stuff. Altogether, as a character, Hilda is a little like Richmal Crompton's William Brown. Although comparing Hilda to William would doubtless elicit cries of outrage from both parties, and no two characters could be physically more dissimilar, nevertheless, was it not once said of William that where he had been, nothing was ever quite the same again? If so, the same might certainly be said of Hilda.

Hilda's form-mistress, Miss Timms, is a gentle, affectionate soul who has entered the teaching profession under the happy delusion of guiding demure, tractable young ladies. Instead of the serene, genteel existence she had hoped for, Miss Timms finds herself confronted with energetic, high-spirited, adolescent girls like Hilda and Co., who make form-room sessions more eventful than she had anticipated. In appearance, Miss Timms is hardly imposing:-

"She set her pince-nez straight on her small nose, and pushed back a wisp of hair. Wisps of hair simply sprouted from beneath Miss Timms' hat."

Her mind was usually on higher things than school routine and schoolgirls:-

"As a rule she walked about with a smile on her face, for there were many things that interested her. She collected fossils, and she wrote plays in blank verse; which, as Hilda said, did them no harm and pleased Miss Timms immensely."

As for keeping order and discipline in the formroom. "Timmy" was kind-hearted, and disinclined to make her youthful charges work too hard:- "When a girl had a headache, Timmy excused her lessons. Of course, more girls had headaches in Miss Timms' than in any other mistress' lesson time". The girls had never been told to report to Miss Timms' study because "she would have felt embarrassed, and not known what to talk about. --- The usual thing when Miss Timms suggested a girl had been whispering, was for the girl to look injured, and Miss Timms would retract her hasty and unwarranted imputation, and change the subject". Hilda causes Miss Timms more than a little concern, for it is her firm opinion that the mistress has been "put into the world to be teased". In spite of this, the two, quite clearly, like each other, and when Miss Timms is "in a state" following a wiggling from the headmistress, Miss Jameson, Hilda is always ready to support her and make amends:- "Miss Jameson was in a temper, and poor Miss Timms went very white. There were tears in her eyes by the time the headmistress went, and Hilda and Theresa frowned".

Miss Jameson is certainly made of sterner stuff than Miss Timms. She is described as a "tall, grim, stern figure", and, on another occasion:- "her lips twitched slightly as though she were smiling. Not that that, of course, was likely, as Miss Jameson had a reputation for not being able to smile". Miss Jameson has an intimidatory effect on Miss Timms, and tends to dampen the proceedings when she is present:- "Miss Jameson swept from the room closing the door with that ominous quietness that she knew made more impression than a hearty homely slam. Never,

even when in a rage, did Miss Jameson slam doors". But even the stern and fearsome Miss Jameson finds it impossible to squash the unquashable Hilda.

Hilda's propensity for turning things inside out, and standing them on their head, is never better illustrated than in "Hilda's Afternoon Out", one of the thirty or so stories published in the "Schoolgirl" in 1930. The Vere Abbey Fourth-Formers, which includes Hilda and her monocled chum, Theresa de Travers, are lined up at the gates, ready to take a walk under the uncertain leadership of Miss Timms. An instruction by an absent-minded Miss Timms to "leap in line" is apparently ignored by Hilda, and spotted by Miss Jameson, who is just off to town to take delivery of her new car. Miss Jameson's reproof of Hilda includes an injunction to do as she is told:- "It is not for you to sit in judgment on what you are asked to do". Fatal words to speak to a girl like Hilda, and Miss Jameson really should have known better! On the way into town, Hilda spots such requests as "Please shut the gate" and "Please ring the bell", and obediently complies - with the inevitable misunderstandings. A notice in the High Street which says "Cross Here", on both sides of the road, causes a further opportunity for Hilda's diversion, but the high spot of the campaign is reached when she spots a notice at the crossroads where a policeman is directing traffic: "Sound the horn before crossing". Hilda assumes this instruction is for pedestrians, not motorists, and sounds the bull-horn of a new car standing, ownerless, by the kerb - several times! The new car is, of course, Miss Jameson's, and, while the irate policeman takes the headmistress's name for "unnecessarily sounding the hooter ten times", the unsupervised traffic at the crossroads becomes chaotic. Hilda decides to take charge:- "Hilda Manners stepped out into the fairway, stood in the centre, and held up her hand as a bus approached. That done, she waved an old, doddering man with a hand-barrow across the road. The man was very aged and extremely doddering, but once he was in the middle of the road, the traffic had to wait his time. The policeman, perhaps, would have let the bus go first, but Hilda had her own methods, and she was not going to let a bus cramp her style".

Hilda's efforts result in a gigantic traffic jam from all four roads:- "It was a lover's knot in appearance, but love seemed lacking in the drivers' hearts".

Miss Jameson is summoned to court, and Hilda goes too, as a witness that the headmistress had not blown the horn. She explains to the three elderly gentlemen acting as magistrates that she had merely followed instructions to "sound the horn before crossing". By the time Hilda, dabbing frequently at her eyes, has completed her evidence, the court is in a state of shock:- "The solicitor sat down rather heavily, and there was a far-away look in his eyes as he regarded Hilda. The magistrates looked at her over and under their glasses, and Miss Jameson seemed to be frozen". The chief magistrate kindly explains to Hilda that the notice was intended for motorists, not pedestrians. Hilda seems surprised, but the case is dismissed.

Miss Jameson's plans are frustrated again in, "That Cricket-Crazy Hilda". She decides to substitute cricket for tennis in the Lower School, and introduces her nephew, Mr. Beasely, who "plays cricket for his 'Varsity", as coach to the girls. Mr. Beasely, in white flannels and blazer, causes Hilda to sigh in ecstasy, but, unlike the redoubtable Clara Trevlyn of Cliff House, she and the girls are not keen to

see cricket introduced at Vere Abbey; it would mean no free half-holidays and compulsory cricket practice instead. Hilda decides to act on the principle that "a girl could be driven to the wicket, but she could not be made to bat". Hilda and her friends affect complete ignorance of the game. She knocks the stumps in - until they are only a few inches above ground:- "She was clutching the handle in both hands, her teeth were clenched, her eyes glazed with ferocity, and she thumped hard on the metal-bound top of the stump with the face of Mr. Beasley's bat!" Practice does not make perfect either:- "Theresa knocked the stumps down three times, and then hit one ball straight to Kitty Dane, who held out both hands, as though appealing to the heavens, and then stopped the ball with her nose. But Kitty did that quite unintentionally; she was doing her best to learn the game".

Miss Jameson, however, is not discouraged; she thinks the girls are getting on "very nicely", and urges them "not to hit too hard when the ball was likely to go near anyone". Two shattered greenhouses and several bruises later, she is still of the same opinion, and contemptuously dismisses a petition from the Fourth Form that cricket be abandoned, with a comment that a mis-spelling contained therein should be rewritten correctly by the signatories one hundred times. Hilda decides on drastic measures. Sporting enormous pads reaching almost to their waists, and orange and purple cricket caps, the Vere Abbey cricket "First Eleven" plays a moonlight game outside the large house belonging to one of the school governors, Sir Rigby Withers - a gentleman who, like Sir Hilton Popper, has an apoplectic temper. A garden frame is shattered, and so is Miss Jameson's new-found enthusiasm for cricket, which is forthwith banished from Vere Abbey.

In "Hilda's Latest Brain-Wave" she finds herself in possession of a five-pound note, and decides to set up as an insurance broker:- "Are you insured? Hilda Manners will insure you against being lined. Premium 6d. a week. Benefits, 2s. 6d. for fifty lines, five shillings for a hundred. Registered Capital, £5". When Theresa asks her what she gets out of it, Hilda replies, "I don't know yet; but all the insurance companies keep on building bigger and bigger buildings and things - I dare say before long I shall have a whole lot of offices in the town, and then, of course, I shall resign from school and run a car". Business flourishes, but Hilda nearly comes a cropper when the girls deliberately get themselves lined in order to claim the benefits. The scheme collapses when Miss Jameson substitutes the loss of conduct marks for the writing of lines, and Hilda, who is the only girl not to have had her name put in the punishment book as having been given lines, is rewarded with a new bicycle by an approving uncle.

Number 61 of the "Schoolgirl" sees "Hilda off to France", although that was not Miss Jameson's original intention, and she had expressly forbidden Hilda and Theresa to join the party of girls which she and Miss Timms were escorting to Paris. Hilda and Theresa help Miss Timms to pack:- "Hilda wrapped up some pieces of coal in tissue paper and put them in the suitcase. Theresa made a neat bundle of some pieces of firewood, and then, when Miss Timms was crawling under the bed looking for some shoes Hilda had put in the trunk, Theresa made a very secret-looking bundle of a cigar-box, containing a compass protractor and ruler". Hilda and Theresa manage to see Paris after all, as Theresa's aunt has a flat there, and she has invited Hilda to spend the holiday. If the girls are eagerly looking forward to

the trip, then Miss Timms has reservations:- "It was twenty years since she had been to Paris, run up the Eiffel Tower, and down again, peered in at the pictures in the Louvre, bought a reckless hat in one of the more dashing shops and actually worn it in the Bois de Boulogne - and not only that, had lemonade 'incognito' in cafés on the boulevards".

Poor Miss Timms; how I feel for her! Escorting a Hilda Manners to Paris could put you off Continental holidays for life. Mr. Ransome seems to take great pleasure in aiming at what were, in pre-war days, such popular "easy targets" as women drivers, detectives, authors, and village policemen in his Hilda stories; but it is all great fun and quite inoffensive. Hilda's eccentric Aunt Elspeth is a novelist - "writing one day, and the next day trying to read what she'd written". Driving the girls in Paris in her "little bus" - an ancient, open four-seater - is an equally haphazard experience, and Aunt Elspeth dons a flying helmet for the journey:-

"How they got through Paris they did not know. But there was an immense mascot on the front of the car, and it must have been overstrained to the point of exhaustion. True, Aunt Elspeth did not hit anything; but that was merely because the drivers of other cars were so clever at dodging".

The speedometer was having "violent hysterics" and, on reaching the hotel, Aunt Elspeth trod on the accelerator to stop the car, and shot "straight into the hotel yard and up the first five steps of the staircase".

"I think," said Hilda, picking herself off the bonnet, "this is the tradesmen's entrance, aunt. We ought to have gone through the main door".

They would have done, perhaps, had Aunt Elspeth seen the door".

As for detectives, Mr. Ransome's description of the lady invited to solve a "mystery" at Vere Abbey by the headmistress, hardly suggests the skill of a Miss Marple or Miss Silver:-

"Miss Worthy Stammerington had been at Vere Abbey School for two days. She had come into the country for a little rest and quiet, and had rented a cottage with a leaky roof. That was one of the things she had failed to detect until she bathed in bed during a heavy storm".

Policemen, as in the case of Miss Jameson and the car hooter, are "apologetic but adamant", and, on another occasion, a trifle embarrassed, too, when Hilda suddenly bursts into tears, and flings her arms round Miss Timms' neck, in a moving attempt to save her from arrest and imprisonment, when the oil lamp on her bicycle keeps mysteriously extinguishing itself:-

"Hilda burst into sobs so suddenly that the policeman's pencil stabbed right through the page. Theresa was making tentative grimaces and dabbing her eyes, too.

'He - he's going to arrest Miss Timms!' wailed Hilda.

'Boo, hoo - boo!' sobbed Theresa.

The policeman straightened himself, wrote down the name and address, and tried to make his heart very hard indeed. Miss Timms' lip quivered, and she turned to Hilda, patting her arm kindly".

After the stories in the "Schoolgirl", Hilda practically disappeared from its pages. but she continued to enliven the pages of the "Schoolfriend Annual" right through the 'thirties. She pops up again, in the 1937 "Golden Annual", in "High Jinks with Hilda". Hilda is staying with her Uncle Alfred, but has received an invitation from Aunt Elspeth. Uncle Alfred does not exactly beg her to stay:-

"He did not exactly drag Hilda by the hand, hurl her things into a bag, throw her into a car, and then heave her into a train and bribe the guard to lock the door; but he certainly showed very great keenness that Hilda should not miss this wonderful treat."

Thus, Uncle Alfred effectively disposes of our Hilda, just as, in a year or two, the war would mercilessly banish most of our beloved characters and favourite papers. Somehow, though, I can't really believe that Hilda has vanished permanently; she's surely bound to bob up again somewhere, cheekily, but good-naturedly making her presence felt, and delighting us in the process.

\* \* \* \* \*

Good wishes to Eric and the Digest from Bill Thurbon and the Cambridge Club. Many Happy New Years to all Clubs and Digest Readers.

Season's Greetings to London Club Members, borrowers from the Clubs "N.L." Library and to all C.D. readers everywhere. For those who may have missed out on previous offers I can still supply E. S. Brooks typescripts at £1.00 each, ex. postage. The St. Frank's Jubilee Companion at £3.50 and the last few copies of the E. S. Brooks Bibliography at £3.50 inclusive of post and packing.

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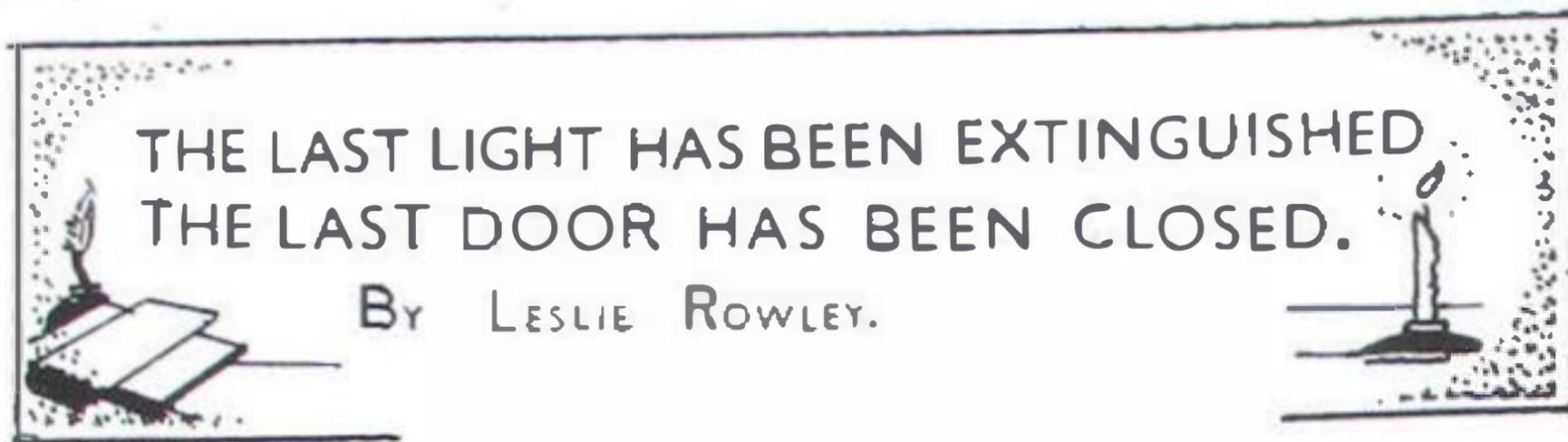
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Each Christmas now I feel much older,  
Blood is thinner, Speech less bolder;  
Although all News seems pain and hunger  
The C.D. makes my Heart feel younger.

JOHNNY BURSLEM

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The Form rooms lay silent, the earlier inhabitants having made their exits with that amount of noise appropriate to youth anxious to cast off the trammels of daily discipline. The studies, cloaked in the dark greys and black of night, are still; only the lingering aroma of embrocation and toast marking the study tea that followed the strenuous game. Though the sound of boot meeting leather or bat meeting ball has lingered long after the game was over, only the imagination still catches the sound of voices of departing players echoing across the ground in the deepening gloom.

It is an eeriness that finds its way into the nooks and crannies of the cloisters and, as the shades of night darken still deeper, the stirring breeze vainly seeks comfort in the cracks and crevices of some crumbling pillar. The silvery fingers of the rising moon reach out to make a spectre of each shadow before they seek their rest on broken arch or ancient flagstone. The fallen masonry, a monument to vengeful monarch and pious monk, defies the present and stirs the errant fancy with the story of its history.

The slender branches of the nearby elms encourage the whispering leaves into a soft accompaniment to a watchful and mournful owl. A solitary twig snaps noisily as a feathered or furry creature hastens to some nocturnal rendezvous. Heavy clouds move effortless across the sky, hiding now the gem-like stars on their endless setting of dark velvet. The hands on the illuminated face in the high clock tower come together as though in prayer, and the sound of midnight booms out across the deserted quadrangle.

Night has a rather awesome beauty of its own: an elusive thrill with which to stir the blood, and a mystery to enthrall the mind. There is an expectancy not known in the light of day, and there is a serenity that enshrouds the slumbering world below. It seems a pity, therefore, that there aren't more of us about to appreciate what night has to offer; and it is even more of a pity that those who are about have so little appreciation to echo!

Gerald Asheton Loder, having returned, much the poorer but none the wiser, from the smokey atmosphere of the back parlour at the "Three Fishers", uttered an imprecation as he missed his foothold in the cloister wall. His language was such as never featured in the school curriculum, and would certainly have not merited approbation if it had reached the ears of Dr. Locke. Rather, Gerald Loder would have been booked for an early train home. Dr. Locke remained in blissful ignorance of the extra mural activities of certain members of the Prefectoral body. The dear

old Head knew nothing of the attractions to be found at those delectable resorts, the "Three Fishers" and the "Cross Keys". Perhaps games with marked cards, betting on dubious runners, and a hundred up at billiards had no appeal to an academic of his standing. They should have had no appeal for Loder either, but, to the delight of certain members of the reading public, they did!

Of all the phrases that Frank Richards used, the one that claimed my fascinated attention; the one that promised me an enthralling night-time read, was "the last light has been extinguished, the last door has been closed". Twelve words that were the threshold to many an exciting incident when Greyfriars and Leslie Rowley should have been wrapped in slumber. For, buried deep in the bedclothes I would focus the clandestine light from my flashlamp on the page of a favourite Greyfriars story. For me the hour was as forbidden as it was for Gerald Loder, although the penalty of discovery would not have been so dire for me, the risk added to my enjoyment of the sharing of this nocturnal adventure. As the four and half volts of battery diminished to the point of expiry, I would read on with bated breath and fading illumination. But I digress. We have left Loder at the cloister wall and it would be lacking in charity to leave him alone in his dilemma. Besides, three chapters yet remain in which further adventures are about to befall the bully of the Sixth.

Loder's ready cash, together with a couple of compromising IOUs, presently reposes in the greasy pocket of Mr. Bill Lodgey. The wayward prefect has damaged his ankle in his drop from the top of the cloister wall, considerably reducing his chances in the forthcoming cricket. As he looks around him, a heavy bank of clouds separates like two quarrelling lovers, and the light from the now naked moon caresses the roofs and facade of the school. But Loder has no appreciation to waste on such disclosed beauty. Instead he shivers involuntarily at some imagined sound and, gathering both strength and wits, limps painfully from the cloisters to the gravelled path that borders the Sixth Form Green.

A minute later he is turning the heavy handle on the oaken door that leads to the little lobby from which he made his stealthy exit earlier. He gives a push, but the door refuses to budge. Some officious fool has shut the bolt or turned the key. He turns impatiently away and edges round the building to the study window that he had left unlatched as an added precaution. Loder pushes on the sash, but the window refuses to lift. The catch must have caught somehow, and the wretched Loder strains himself to press the blade of his penknife between the wooden frame and thus force back the latch. There comes the tinkle of falling steel on gravel as the blade snaps and falls below.

Already the wretched Loder can hear the stern, cold, tones of his Headmaster. "Loder, you have betrayed the trust I placed in you as a prefect! Worse, you have set at naught the most important rules that govern the conduct of Staff and scholars alike. There is no place for you at Greyfriars, and your parents have already been informed that you will be joining them today. I trust that you will profit by this lesson and turn back from the brink!"

Loder, perched precariously on his window sill, we leave in a state of blue

funk and dire anticipation. We have the advantage of Loder and know that what he dreads will not come to pass, and that he will live to be a blackguard for yet another day, or rather night, when he comes crawling home from the "Three Fishers". Whatever we wish this particular rascal, how much he may merit his just deserts, we are happy and secure in our knowledge that we shall witness his discomfort as often as we seek out those closely printed chapters that chronicle his transgressions.

Loder is not the only blacksheep at Greyfriars, of course, although he is the one that we probably most like to hate. His friends, Carne and Walker have their moments - Carne especially when we recall his 'possession' of the proceeds from a robbery, part of which he essayed to borrow to get himself out of trouble. Carne also had the distinction of being Mr. Hacker's head prefect in the famous 'tuck shop rebellion' and, for this manifold sin, was tied to the bench in the Close one darkened night. "Let's hope it won't rain!" murmured Mauleverer piously as the Removites left their enemy to stew.

"Putting on the Dog", as the out of bounds at midnight lark is often called, seemed a rather fruitless enterprise for the amount of risk run. If anyone ever won any money from Joey Banks, Bill Lodgey, "Soapy Sanders", and the like, it does not appear on record. The usually astute 'Boulder' was expected to take greater care of his money than to offload it into the clutches of such dubious gentry. It must, therefore, be the excitement of kicking over the traces that moves the Boulder to climb on to the leads outside the Remove box room window, thence to make his way to one or other of the hostelries in Friardale. Not that Herbert Vernon-Smith was averse to picking up some of the tricks of the trade, such as dealing from the bottom of the pack, and turning the tables against any card sharp he played against. Cocking a snook at authority was meat and wine to Smithy, and his 'after lights out' adventures brought disgrace and expulsion on more than one occasion . . .

Smithy left the Head's study in silence, and stood, meditating in the corridor outside. So this was the end! He had tried his luck once too often, and now he was under sentence to leave the school, whose rules he had so often and so recklessly cast aside. He was not even to be allowed to go into class or await the end of Second School so that he could say goodbye to his friends. Goodbye to Redwing, the best, the most loyal, of chums; goodbye to the friend who had stuck to him through thick and thin; even that was denied him. Momentarily, his face softened as he thought of his pal. He would miss the School, the footer, the cricket, when it came, but most of all he would miss his friend.

He was to go home and then face his father. The father from whom he had inherited some of the harder facets of his nature. What would his father think of him now? The son on whom all his hopes had been based, the son who until now had been destined to inherit his vast wealth. The Boulder winced as he pictured his father's anger and disappointment. Friends who had trusted him, and a father who had planned for him. All that had been set at naught for a stealthy visit to some dingy den in which to play the fool with men he held in contempt. If only he had stayed safely in his bed the previous night! If only he had heeded advice from Wharton and the others as he had quit the dormitory as the clock had boomed eleven. If only . . . But it was too late to think of that now, and now that it was too late he was thinking of it.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders, and some of the defiance returned to his face. He was 'down', although he didn't want to admit it. But no-one was going to see that he was down, if the Bounder could help it.

Any remorse felt by Vernon-Smith is short-lived. His fortune returns and the expulsion is cancelled ... "D'jevver see such luck?" Skinner confides to Snoop ... and the 'sacking' is commuted ... "A flogging, I think sir," amiably suggests Mr. Quelch. "Certainly, a severe flogging," endorses the revered Headmaster, "a most severe flogging indeed." "I quite agree, sir," concurs the faithful Quelch, as he and his Chief settle down to one of those pleasant excursions into the more obscure passages of the classics. Smithy can, as we know, stand a flogging, no matter the severity, and we can be as sure as night must follow day that it will not be long before .....

..... He dressed in the dark, and he dressed swiftly and noiselessly. One could not be too careful when one was going out of bounds after the hour of eleven at night. Over the gentle breathing of his form fellows could be heard the threatening rumble that was the distinctive snore of W. G. Bunter. In the dark, the Bounder grinned. After eating, sleeping ran a close second in Bunter's priorities; Smithy's tastes set a different precedence, and following them entailed risk, and it was the risk that appealed to him most of all. The fact that the contents of his well-filled wallet were likely to change hands over a game of chance, was of comparative little importance. Outwitting the beaks and standing discipline on its head was what motivated the Bounder into being the blackguard that his other and better judgment told him not to be ...

A few miles from the school is the wild and lonely expanse of Courtfield Common, where trees whose branches offered friendly shade and shelter during the day, now make threatening shadows of themselves in the darkness of night. It is not a pleasant place to be in the stilly watches of the night. Many an unsavoury character lurks in the cover of bush and bramble ...

Mr. Herbert Higgins was a gentleman of fortune - as much of other people's fortunes as he could lay his soiled and greedy hands on. Under different auspices Mr. Higgins might have been an eminent scientist or a distinguished member of the Diplomatic Corps. But, sad to relate, he was none of these things. Mr. Higgins was a footpad and the sceptre of his power was vested in the hefty cudgel he carried underneath his arm. It was a fine night and, since he had got himself barred from the "Cross Keys", Mr. Higgins had decided to take his repose 'neath the wide and starry sky'. He was about to compose himself for slumber, when he noticed another traveller on the skyline, and congratulated himself at this unexpected item of business that was coming his way. Mr. Higgins was not particular in most things and, although he had been successful in avoiding work for many years, he did not mind at which hour of the day or night he exercised his peculiar talents. He had, in fact, accepted flexible rostering long before it was a subject debated in the august assemblies of British Rail and the Trades Union Congress! From under a brawny arm he shifted his faithful cudgel so that it lay in the grubby palm of his hefty hand.

"Per'aps you could 'elp a pore feller on 'is way," suggested Mr. Higgins to the middle-aged gentleman as he confronted him. "Mebbe," he added, lifting the

cudgel threateningly, 'Mebbe as you'd like to 'and over yer watch and wallet before yer gets yer nut cracked!' The threatening leer on Mr. Higgins unshaven and unwashed features and the gesture he made with his cudgel had been calculated, from long experience, to make the victim cough up. As he looked at the gentleman before him, Mr. Higgins considered his present venture as a piece of pie. Held out his other grubby paw to receive the largesse so easily to be his.

Henry Samuel Quelch regarded the footpad with a look of disdain but, as Mr. Higgins had extended his hand to receive something, Quelch decided not to disappoint him.

Whack! The heavy malacca cane the Remove master had been carrying came down with a sudden swipe on the hand that was extended. It was, as it was intended to be, a fearful swipe. Mr. Quelch had had a lifetime of experience in inflicting whoppings, and it was a case of the practice making perfect. Not that Mr. Higgins saw anything perfect in it. The shock to one hand caused him to drop his cudgel from the other. Mr. Quelch saw his advantage, and took another swipe and yet another. A whole succession of blows rained down on the head and shoulders of the unfortunate Mr. Higgins. Punishment such as this was more blessed to give than to receive, and now that he was receiving it for a change, Henry Higgins howled for mercy. His frantic yells rang far and wide, awakening the local bird-life from its slumber.

Prior to Mr. Quelch's arrival, Mr. Higgins had been preparing himself for repose. Now he wished, very much indeed, that he had continued with those preparations. Instead of which his one thought was to get away from that castigation and, in desperation, he turned and ran as fast as his down at heel boots would carry him. As he went, Mr. Quelch gazed after the fleeing figure until the heavy cloak of night hid it from view. Mr. Quelch felt considerably better. Further down the road, Mr. Higgins felt considerably worse. But, in an imperfect Universe it is impossible for everyone to be satisfied . . .

Mr. Higgins was, of course, a mere amateur compared to the professionals from the higher echelons of crime that, from time to time, visited Greyfriars stealthily. Others either joined the Staff or enrolled as scholars. Forgers, safe breakers, art thieves, kidnappers and abductors. All came to add lustre to the night life at the School. All with same inexplicable fear of Ferrers Locke - inexplicable because Locke was so protracted and self evident in his investigations that one wondered why he had become famous. Why did they never send for Sexton Blake?

. . . Mr. Prout switched on his bedside light, and groaned. Somewhere, in the vast depths of his extensive circumference, something stirred, and when it stirred it stirred painfully. A few hours before, the Fifth Form master had dined with the Head, and Mrs. Locke had prepared an extremely good table. Prout had felt - duty bound of course - to do that good table justice. Now he was destined to pay the price that a fifty-year-old digestive system demands of those who eat not wisely, but too well. Ominous rumbles from the interior proclaimed their warning of dire happenings to follow. Prout searched hopefully on the bedside table for that remarkable antidote to recalcitrant digestive juices, Professor Dosem's Purple Pills. He searched in vain, and realised that he had left his bottle of that remarkable panacea in the desk in his study below. With many an emphatic and painful grunt,

Prout arrayed himself in a dressing gown that would have subdued Joseph's coat of many colours, and sallied forth in search of relief.

The hour was late and Prout, always a considerate gentleman, made his journey with as much quiet as his aching bulk would allow. He had pocketed the small bottle of pills and extinguished his study light as he stepped into the Stygian gloom of Masters' Corridor, when he became aware of a draught coming from an open window. Prout knew that that window should have been both closed and fastened. Why then, was it open? His fat heart almost missed a beat as he realised that the open window indicated the presence of intruders.

Normally, Prout's thought processes worked with all the speed of a tired and weary snail their wonders to perform. Now, like a warhorse sniffing battle from afar, Prout thought only of action. Eons ago Prout had been, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter! In his youth, if Prout was to be believed, he had hunted ferocious grizzlies in the Rockies. Again, if Prout was to be believed, the Fifth Form master has decimated the grizzly population with the assistance of his faithful Winchester that now hung in a prominent place over the Proutian fireplace.

Silently, hardly daring to breathe lest he disturb once again his offending stomach, Prout retraced his steps and noiselessly re-entered his study. From its place above the mantelpiece, Prout lifted down his dear companion of years ago, and cautiously made his way back into the passage . . .

Jimmy the Rat was in the process of lowering a sack full of the School silver into the waiting hands of Fred the Weasel, when he became startingly aware of the threatening barrel of the Winchester held in the hands of the garishly robed man behind it. Jimmy let go of the sack as though it had suddenly become red hot, and a fiendish yell from below indicated that it had landed painfully somewhere on the Weasel's person.

"Villain! I have you in my sights. Stand back from that window or I fire!"

Jimmy the Rat did as he was bid. In his profession one didn't argue with a rifle and a fat old gent behind it who looked as though he was longing to pull the trigger. Keeping the rascal covered, Prout approached the window and looked over into the depths below. He was rewarded with the sight of a pair of patched trousers belonging to Fred who was bent over picking up the contents of the sack. The Fifth Form master changed his aim from Jimmy to Fred but, in doing so, he must have exerted pressure on the trigger. There came simultaneously the sound of an explosion and a cry of agony from the Weasel below.

Prout stood transfixed as the explosion died away only to be replaced by the sound of opening doors and voices raised in anxious enquiry.

As we leave Prout victorious reflecting, perhaps, as we go how even more of a bore Old Pompous will be in the Masters' Commons for the foreseeable future, we reflect on how hazardous it is to break into Greyfriars. Will the underworld ever learn how heavy the odds are against such enterprise? For, if Prout is not entertaining dyspepsia you may be sure that Quelch is suffering from insomnia, or at least putting some touches to his history of Greyfriars School that cannot wait until

morning.

Now the resident crook may enjoy a longer term of success. He has time to become acquainted with the peculiar night life of our favourite school, and adapts his own course of action accordingly. Even so, discovery and exposure may not be so ensured for a variety of reasons ...

Bunter's fat and fatuous features expanded into an extensive grin as he looked into the study. The bunch of keys that he had borrowed from Fishy jangled together as the Owl of the Remove made his way across to the window seat and lifted the lid. There, at his mercy, lay the leather attache case belonging to the new boy. There could be only one reason why its owner had taken such care in seeing that it remained locked and secure, the case must contain tuck! How suspicious of the beast! How petty and mean, Bunter peevishly reflected, to keep tuck under lock and key; really it displayed a lack of trust that Bunter found distasteful!

Bunter would have preferred to switch on the study light, but even an ass like Bunter realised that an illuminated study at one in the morning might attract attention from any beak that was still up. Besides, the shaft of moonlight that shone through the study window would suffice for him to unlock that case and sample the contents. The fat Removeite, unlike the animals at a zoo, had no set feeding times, and food could travel down the gullet just as smoothly at dead of night as it could during the light of day.

His podgy fingers manipulated the bunch of keys clumsily as he tried first one, then the other in the locks before him. Those locks were of a peculiar design and seem to resist the variety of keys now at Bunter's disposal. An irritated grunt registered his disappointment as Bunter continued operations. So near and yet so far. Only leather separated Bunter from the object of his desire, as with an indignant snort he threw the keys down.

But difficulties are made to be overcome. In the study grate was a poker, and with this in his hand, Bunter inserted the end between the catch and the lock and applied all the force he could muster. There came a sudden crack like a pistol shot as the lock gave up the ghost. Bunter paused from his exertions before attempting an onslaught on the remaining lock. It was then, in the surrounding quietness, there came a sound that made Bunter's hair stand on end. From the direction of the corridor came the sound of muffled footsteps. Gathering his fat wits about him, Bunter backed behind an armchair, the only sanctuary that was to hand.

The next moment someone entered the study, the shaded pencil point of light from an electric torch directed at the floor on which lay the damaged attache case. There came a quick intake of breath.

"Discovered!" came a startled voice.

It was a voice that Bunter recognised immediately and, with that recognition, came awareness of the hopelessness and despair with which that single word was uttered! The hidden Owl of the Remove could understand a fellow being concerned about the safety of a hoard of tuck. If ever Bunter had legally been in possession of tuck that was his own, then Bunter would have been very concerned if that tuck had

been raided. But to be so stricken, as the owner of the case so obviously was, about tuck that had so far escaped capture was beyond Bunter's understanding.

He almost jumped out of his fat skin as the armchair was moved and the new man sat in it, his head in his hands and a deep sigh escaping from his lips . . .

We leave the shadowy study, and the story (for we have reached page 28!) having been abjured by the Editor "what is the new fellow's secret? What does the mysterious attache case contain? Be sure to read next week's gripping yarn in this exciting series! Apparently we are more astute than Ferrers Locke, for we already know the answer to those two questions. But we are still impatient for the denouement and the next seven days will simply drag by!

More cosy, and certainly more amusing if somewhat less dramatic, are those occasions when Greyfriars men from other forms undertook forays into the Remove dormitory after lights out.

. . . James Hobson, Claude Hoskins and Edward Stewart, armed with pillows, made their way stealthily through the shadowy corridors to the Remove dormitory. Caution was their watchword; revenge their objective. Caution in not attracting the attention of any wakeful Beak; revenge for the rag that the Remove had so audaciously perpetrated two days ago. Besides his pillow, Hobson had thoughtfully brought with him a large can of treacle with the charitable intention of anointing as many Remove heads as possible with that sticky mixture.

Barely managing to subdue their chuckles, they reached the Remove landing, and paused ready for the attack. To their surprise, the dormitory door was ajar. They were not to know that another vengeful body, in the burly shape of Horace James Coker, was already on the warpath and had preceded them by a matter of a few minutes.

Coker, armed in his turn with a wet towel? had arrived to demonstrate, as he had so often tried to demonstrate before, that he had a short way with fags, especially with a fat frog of a fag who had raided the latest hamper he had received from his doting Aunt Judy. Coker had intended bringing Potter and Greene with him, in fact he had distinctly told them that their help would be required. True, they had started out with Coker for the sake of peace and quiet but, at the first landing they had silently left their lord and master and returned to the Fifth Form dorm. The Fool of the Fifth under the impression that his two friends had taken a wrong turning decided to go it alone. Coker arrived at the Remove dormitory, his wet towel at the ready, clumsily making his way in the direction from which Bunter's porcine snore proceeded. As Coker reached Bunter so did another shadowy figure reach Coker. There was a startled gasp and the next moment they were struggling in the dark.

"Quelch's boys," observed Hacker bitterly. He had been stopped in the corridor by Prout who was anxious to have a goodnight word. Prout was always anxious to have a word with a colleague; the 'word' often extending into a chat from which the hapless victim could find no escape. In fact it was rumoured that other masters would peer round corners or peep out of their study doorways in order to elude Prout and his boring chatter. So, whilst Hacker made his observation with his characteristic bitterness he made it, nonetheless, with some measure of relief.

"Intolerable!" boomed Prout and, indeed, the noise that came from afar was not conducive to tolerance, especially as it had interrupted Prout in full flow! Prout did not like interruption even when essayed by a colleague trying to get a word in edgewise; still less did he like it now, when it issued from the direction of the Remove dormitory!

"Intolerable," he repeated, for he liked the sound of his own voice if no-one else did. "Really this passes all patience! Come with me, Hacker, and we shall see whether Quelch seeks to justify such unparalleled disturbance at this hour of the night." Together, they made their way to the Remove master's study.

Henry Samuel Quelch looked up as Prout and Hacker entered the study. It was not a welcoming look! Quelch had been correcting some of his form's papers and had reached that submitted by W. G. Bunter. That work by that member of his form had not enhanced his opinion of Bunter; rather it had ensured a whopping for that fat ornament of the Remove in class the following morning. But, as Prout and Hacker came into the room, there also came with them the sound as though of revelry by night. He wondered at the source. Prout and Hacker proceeded to elucidate.

"Quelch! This disturbance by boys of your form ---"

"Quelch! These scandalous proceedings in the Remove dormitory -----"

Really, it was a chorus, strophe and antistrophe, as the vials of wrath poured forth from the two form masters. But Quelch had already picked up a cane and the other two followed him as he briskly sailed down the corridor.

"I must insist, Quelch, that you exercise better control over your unruly form, otherwise I shall be compelled, yes sir, compelled to place the matter before the Headmaster ---"

"And I most definitely agree with Prout," Hacker added his twopennyworth, "this uproar will not be tolerated. Some semblance of propriety is expected from your form as it is from mine -----"

"And mine," added Prout, anxious not to lose the verbal advantage for which he was notorious. "In the Fifth Form, sir, such conduct would be unthinkable. In the Fifth Form -----"

The three had reached the doorway of the Remove dormitory and they gazed within.

The gimlet eyes of Mr. Quelch quickly assimilated the true state of affairs. Certainly, Horace Hames Coker was barely recognisable with treacle cascading over his rugged features, but Hobson who was nursing an eye that was already turning an art shade of purple, and Hoskins, whose nose was streaming red, together with a recumbent Stewart, could not be mistaken for other than whom they were.

Quelch's usually austere features creased into something resembling a crusty grin as he regarded those unfortunates. He turned to his two colleagues.

"Prout! Hacker! This disturbance; this scandalous proceedings by the boys of your Forms," he exclaimed in ironic and acid parody of those two gentlemen's own

words, "this uproar will not be tolerated. Some semblance of propriety by your forms is to be expected as it is from mine. I must insist," he added icily, "that you exercise better control over your unruly forms, otherwise I shall be compelled to place the matter before the Headmaster!"

Prout and Hacker took that as best they could as they wrathly shepherded the boys of their forms away. As the dismal procession made its way, the voice of Quelch could be heard addressing his own boys.

"My boys, as the two masters involved do not feel inclined to do so, I must apologise on their behalf for the unprovoked disturbance here tonight. It is clear that you were in no way involved, in no way responsible, for this unruly and unpardonable intrusion. I shall trust, by boys, that those other Forms may profit by your exemplary behaviour. Goodnight, my boys!" .....

As we leave the Remove to contentedly sink into slumber whilst Coker and the others face a bleak tomorrow, what happier outcome can there be on which to close this short record of what may happen when the last light has been extinguished, the last door closed!

\* \* \* \* \*

Warm thanks and love to Eric Fayne and Madam and greetings to OBBC Members and all collectors. Good prices paid for School Friend Annual 1943, Girls' Crystal Annual 1940, Popular Book of Girls' Stories, 1936, 1941; also Dorita Bruce's Mistress Mariner, Sally's Summer Term. Elsie Oxenham's - Biddy's Secret, Rachel In The Abbey, Maidlin To The Rescue, Guardians Of The Abbey, and Elinor Brent-Dyer's The Chalet School and Rosalie.

MARY CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVENUE. BECKENHAM, KENT

Telephone: 01-650-1458

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Warmest Greetings Stanley, Bill, Bob, Bertie, Josie, Ieanard, Eric, all the fraternity.

CYRIL ROWE

=====

Season's Greetings and Best Wishes to the Editor, Josie Packman, Norman Shaw, Bob Wilson and L. Young. Thanks for helping with my collection. I still want No's 453, 572, 606 and 739. Sexton Blake, Second Series. NAME YOUR PRICE.

ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRES., FAREHAM, HANTS

=====

Seasonal Greetings to all readers and many thanks to the Editor and all contributors.

REG ANDREWS, LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY, WILTS.



## Yo Ho Ho And A Volume Of Chums.

By  
Roy Parsons



"Chums is generally regarded . . . . . as one of the trio of best general boys' papers ever published" wrote Brian Doyle in his article 'Through the Years with CHUMS' in the 1961 C.D. Annual. Most Chums enthusiasts would agree with the sentiment - if quibbling about the exact place accorded to the magazine. But general magazines do not appear to figure as largely in the affections of collectors as those with an integrated theme. The most popular now seem to be those written around a single subject - a school, a detective and so on.

And yet CHUMS - in common with a number of other general papers - lasted a long time, from its initial weekly publication in September 1892 to Christmas 1940 when the last annual was published. By its 48 years of publication it outlasted most, if not all, of these more popular papers so it was a success and perhaps its more general content allowed it to move more easily with the fashion of the times.

In its 48 volumes there are hundreds of stories of all types. There are school stories, detective stories, adventure stories, stories about sport, about war, about the Wild West. There were also pirate stories and if it was not unique amongst boys' papers in this respect surely none featured this particular genre as regularly or with as much gusto.

The first editor of CHUMS was Max Pemberton and in its very first year of publication he included his own story 'The Iron Pirate' illustrated by Gordon Browne. Repeated in the 1927/28 volume it was, and indeed remains, a very readable story - but about a modern pirate (well 1890!) does not really qualify for this article at all. The first 'true' pirate story was in Volume 3: a reprint of the most famous of them all - 'Treasure Island' - with illustrations by George Hutchinson. At the very end of the story the news of Stevenson's death is recorded.

However 'Treasure Island' was not written specifically for CHUMS. The first such (long) story appeared in Volume 5 and was well-remembered for many years by readers of the paper. It was 'Rogues of the Fiery Cross' by S. Walkey with Paul Hardy illustrations. Walkey's first serial for CHUMS - an adventure story set in Arabia - had been published the previous year, but with this effort he had found his right metier. For more than forty years he wrote a succession of pirate yarns - serials, series, individual short stories - for most of that period unmatched by any other author. He wrote other, mainly historical, tales about the French Revolution (a number of stories centring round his Jack O' Lantern character), Robin Hood, Redskins, etc., but surely his most popular work remained in the field of piracy.

For some time then a history of the pirate story in CHUMS was a history of Walkey's work. It was a below-average year without something from his pen - 'The Rovers of Black Island', 'Yo Ho for the Spanish Main', 'The Ten Pirates', 'Crossbones Island' and so on. The content was clear from the title.

It was also clear from the illustrations. Almost all Walkey's work was accompanied by the graphic and highly individual drawings by Paul Hardy. Hardy's work went beyond the field of boys papers and he illustrated many historical novels for the adult market - I particularly remember his work in the Nelson editions of Dumas' romances.

Walkey and Hardy gave continuing pleasure to their readers until the 1940 volume containing the long story 'The Treasure of Pirate's Island' (by then he was in his late 60's) and using Stevenson's character Long John Silver - a curious link back to the early days of the magazine. Written perhaps in a slightly more restrained style it nevertheless contained the usual Walkey ingredients of swift action, strong plot and a highly individual atmosphere which can still be appreciated today. The only photograph of Walkey to appear in CHUMS (p.444 of the 1934/35 volume) gives no hint of the type of imaginative mind he obviously possessed - he could just as easily be taken for a bank manager.

Whilst Walkey was producing his entertaining and popular yarns he did not have the field entirely to himself over the years. A number of other writers attempted to emulate him from time to time - mostly with little success. The modern pirate story also appeared occasionally and without the direct comparison invited by the traditional story perhaps fared better. G. E. Rochester's stories in the late 1920's 'Pirates of the Air', 'Jackals of the Clouds' were well-written also. Rochester, of course, could write well across a number of types of subject with equal success. However as the 1930's arrived a more serious competitor appeared - writing very much in the Walkey style. This was Paul Croydon, believed to be a pen-name for Admiral ERGR Evans. Under these names he wrote some half dozen excellent tales starting with 'To Sweep the Spanish Main' in the 1929/30 Annual. Illustrated also by Paul Hardy the similarity to Walkey was immediate but in later years the visual presentation was by Cecil Glossap including the final pirate story of all in the 1941 annual 'Captain Sinister Sails Again'.

In the title to this yarn the author is given his full credit list as Admiral Sir Edward R. G. R. Evans, KCB., DSO., RN., LI.D., and indeed he was a man with a distinguished career. A survivor of Scott's expedition to the South Pole, of which he took command after Scott's death, he was honoured for bravery in the first World War. Perhaps it was not surprising that his first stories were published under a pen-name although his excellently written account of the Polar expedition 'South With Scott' appeared at the same time.

As Captain Sinister met his well-deserved end piracy as a subject was also at an end - and CHUMS was too. For some 45 years they had been associated with each other - not exclusively but to a considerable degree. The visual memories of each are inevitably mixed. A mention of CHUMS brings unbidden to the mind a composite Paul Hardy illustration of staring-eyed ruffians with sword and pistol

ready to cut down a whole army of heroes - all this an accompaniment to a story with a title perhaps of 'Sea Wolves of the Spanish Main' inevitably by S. Walkey. How could any other memory compete with that?

### A Complete Pirate Story by S. Walkey this week



**CHUMS**

Do you want a "Chums"  
"Original" Picture?

*Then see page 738*

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No. 1,936—Vol. XXII

JUNE 21, 1918

[PRICE ONE PENNY]



GRINWOOD JACK, THE PIRATE

Leveling a pistol at my head, the pirate pulled the trigger. "Death to you, you young dogs!" he cried, and let fly the contents of both barrels of his pistol. (See S. Walkey's Famous Complete Pirate Story on page 748.)





Being by nature a fanatical fan of that most robust season of the year, the festive season - Christmas, and being also by nature an avid reader, it should come as no surprise that from an early age to this present time I am inclined to steep myself in seasonable literature during the winter months.

The Christmas tales by Charles Dickens are read year by year. As for the rest only a few of the Christmas tales of years gone by remain to be enjoyed in 1982. For the most part they are to be found in such publications as the Magnet, the Gem, Nelson Lee and the Union Jack.

The Union Jack did not come up with many Yuletide tales. It was not until 1924 that a new author joined the ranks of those who presented us with a tip-top Sexton Blake mystery week by week. It was the advent of one Gwyn Evans. Under his skilful pen from 1925 some of the finest Christmas yarns of the Sexton Blake Saga were to be found in the Union Jack, which says an editor, the name of Gwyn Evans became truly famous, he also hastened to add - 'A Christmas Union Jack without a Gwyn Evans story was not really Christmas to his devotees'. His tragically early death in 1938 deprived the Sexton Blake Saga of one of its finest chroniclers. Indeed to read these Christmas tales once again is to make one realise what we would have missed, though the Union Jack itself later came to its end (in 1933).

Gwyn Evans, real name Gwnfil Arthur Evans, was born in Portmadoc, North Wales, in 1899. It is said the famous George Eliot was his Aunt. At this point it is of interest to note that another old favourite of the Old Boys' Book Club and author, Edwy Searles Brooks was also born in 1889 in Hackney, London, his father being a well-known writer to the times. Both men were sons of clergymen.

To write a good Christmas story you have got to know what Christmas is all about and if any man knew what Christmas was about that man was Gwyn Evans.

If you happen to have the stories in your collection or in the Howard Baker 'Union Jack' No. 2 test this out. Re-read them. Note the descriptive passages of seasonable weather, the mild flurry of snow, the heavy snow-storm, the blanket of snow. The joyous Christmas greetings among the friends of Blake and Tinker. The tables groaning with Christmas fare, of holly and mistletoe, Christmas crackers, puddings and turkeys - its all there. See the artists' response to the magic of the

winter tales so that from their pencils you view the puddings, the turkeys, the trimmings, the snow, and for makeweight a Ghost!

What of our newspapers in 1925? I think Evans got it right when he gives us a sample using Splash Page's newspaper the "Daily Radio" for a description. I quote - "Tinker studied the pages of the 'Daily Radio' if any proof was needed that Christmas was near, that go-ahead newspaper provided it. Right across the page usually occupied by scare headlines, was a message of goodwill tastefully bordered with holly and mistletoe "A RIGHT MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR READERS".

Most of the front page was devoted to descriptions, vividly written, of last minute shopping in the Christmas Bazaars. There were glowing accounts of festivities planned in the great London Hotels and announcements of pantomimes for Boxing Day" (end of quote). Our papers, much larger in those days, boosted Christmas in a way that is lacking today.

How did our Union Jack editors respond in those days? Take a look! U.J. 1925 - "First and foremost may this Christmastide for you and yours be overflowing with happiness, I extend my greetings and only wish I could be with you personally".

U.J. 1926 - "May your Christmases, now and to come, be all you could wish them, and if this periodical with which my name is associated can succeed in adding to your enjoyment of this festive season I am honoured indeed".

U.J. 1927 - "Here's wishing you this Christmastide the most that health and happiness can bring".

U.J. 1928 - "Here's wishing you happiness this Yuletide and a real rollicking Merry Christmas".

On this happy note from the page of the past, may I close. Except perhaps for a word from Tinker's Notebook, 1927:-

"IN THE DICKENS MANNER"

"I am glad to know you are going to have the story of that memorable Christmas of ours at Lyveden Manor. That was a real corker of a Christmas. A sound scheme too, of Splash Page to rig ourselves out in Dickens' costume and journey down in a good old-fashioned stage-coach with the guard tooting on his horn. As for the American Ruff Hanson, he'd never seen anything like it. Christmas in the States, apparently, still awaits the Dickens touch." Tinker. (Ref. to The Affair of the Black Carol.)

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# Brooks Tour

By R.H. Hibbert.



From snippets in the newspapers and glimpses on the telly I gather that some members of our aristocracy aren't above taking in paying guests. The Earl and Countess of This, the Duke and Duchess of That are now prepared to give you bed, breakfast and evening meal in their stately homes. More, they will sit down at table with you and keep up high-class chit-chat while you work your way through all those courses, and, when it's bed time, conduct you to the Blue Room or the Haunted Chamber, or some such sumptuous apartment, where you can't sleep for excitement in the very bed that was good enough for Queen Elizabeth I. All that's required from you is a respectable appearance and a big enough Barclaycard credit to pay the tariff.

A holiday like that could well suit my friend Jim Fielding. He, of late years, has been going in for what British Tourist Boards call Special Interest Holidays. So he's been Ghost Hunting in York (never saw a ghost), had a Sherlock Holmes' Holiday in London (they threw in a Haunts of Jack the Ripper Ramble) and had a go at Wine Appreciation in Herefordshire. He's very vague when you ask him what that was like. Remembers little I gather and puts it down to the soporific qualities of the Herefordshire air.

Anyway, digging in with the nobs could well suit Jim, and he, being a bank manager and all, could well afford it.

But, most of us only get across the threshold of a noble edifice when we go on a conducted tour in the summer. We seldom sit down - except for the £1.25 Cream Tea in the Stables - because the upper classes have the unsociable habit of cordoning off their furniture, and we certainly never get the chance of drawing up the Chippendale to the banqueting board. If we are going to visit the gentry we have to do it by proxy through the pages of popular fiction.

Edwy Searles Brooks had a weakness for the noblesse and their abodes and, thanks to his stories, I've spent many a happy hour in other people's ancestral halls.

The Christmas of 1931 was a bonanza for the I'd like nothing better than to dwell in marble halls fanciers.

In just over a fortnight - although the telling of the story in Nos. 98-101 of the Nelson Lee Library, 2nd New Series took four weeks, the non-stop action lasted for only fifteen days - the boys of St. Frank's and some Moor View School girls made a whirlwind tour of four, repeat four, stately homes.

This high speed jaunt, which presaged our modern package tours, is

described in the series to which Bob Blythe has given the innocent sounding title of 'Christmas with Jimmy Potts'.

The boy-baronet has a memorable Christmas and meets up with a long-lost millionaire uncle, a gang of ill-intentioned Chinese, four ghosts, peril on the ice, drug induced somnambulism, a fall into the Well of Doom, a Man with a Hidden Face, two Men in Black - one of whom has the strength of a gorilla - and Nelson Lee in three different disguises. Almost incidentally our hero is buried in an avalanche and life doesn't get back to what passes for normality as far as a St. Frank's Junior is concerned until 1st January, 1932. Jimmy lets in the New Year by taking part in an early morning car chase which runs foul of an express train at a level crossing.

So, with all this sort of thing going on, it's doubtful if Jimmy Potts took in the grandeurs of the magnificent houses he visited between the 18th and 31st of December, 1931. But we readers, who weren't as harried as he was, and who knew, in any case, that all would come out right in the end, were able to appreciate the glories of the ancient seats of the Handforths, the Tregellis-Wests, the Cavendishes (family name of the Dukes of Somerton) and the Dorrिमores.

E.S.B., no doubt well aware that the more roughnecked amongst us had better be introduced to high living by easy stages, started us off by taking us to a reasonably modest country house. And, as he knew we'd be intimidated by the succession of butlers we were going to meet, he made sure that the first one to usher us into a drawing room was such an obvious wrong 'un, and sinister with it, that we weren't likely to be overawed.

This happened at Travis Dene, the Handforth's rustic pad. Not far from Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk it is 'a fine old Tudor mansion partially surrounded by stately trees and with lawns and private gardens on all sides'.

Unfortunately when we visited the place the electricity was off most of the time so the ghosts of Travis Dene had any amount of darkness to wander about in. After two nights Jimmy Potts was reduced to a near gibbering state of terror and, on Doctor's orders, he and the rest of the young people moved on to Tregellis Castle for some seasonable peace and quiet.

Which we didn't get.

Tregellis Castle is in the West of England. It is 'one of England's most famous mansions'. It has a keep, towers, turrets, even a drawbridge. A five-star stately home that makes Brideshead look like my Uncle Fred's holiday bungalow at Prestatyn. The service is first-class too. A dozen of Sir Montie Tregellis-West's hereditary chawbacons are quite willing to give us half of Christmas Day, of all days, 'sweeping the big lake clear of snow' so that the guests may skate. But, despite this, and other amenities, J. Potts does not have a very merry Christmas.

The Phantom Cavalier of the Castle puts a damper on his Christmas Day, and Boxing Day begins badly with his falling through the ice while skating on the 'big lake', and ends nastily when a masked Chinaman steps boldly through the French windows and hurls an Oriental dagger at Jimmy's uncle. So feeling considerably harassed the caravan moves on to Somerton Abbey only to find that Jimmy is still being hunted.

The abbey is actually 'a proud ducal castle' and stands 'on a rising promontory with picturesque turrets and towers'. It is in 'one of the most rugged parts of Somerset' a district which holds the record for the heaviest snowstorm in the British Isles. Edwy Searles Brooks assures us that it snowed so heavily around Somerton Abbey, during 27th - 28th December, 1931, that in places - and not where it was drifting - the depth was 84". 'Guinness Book of Records' please copy.

But the state of the roads didn't stop Jimmy's enemies from pursuing him, and 30th December, thanks to a quick thaw and a special train, he and his friends escaped to Dorrimore Castle. But the hounds were still on his trail.

Within an hour of their arrival he and his uncle were attacked by three Chinese. Uncle had just been appraising the architectural beauties of Dorrimore Castle - a 'rambling old pile which stood sombre and dignified against the wintry sky-line ... In the Derbyshire hills (it) was indeed a magnificent reminder of England's great and noble past' - and remarking that it had the edge on Somerton Abbey, but was rather wasted on 'a bachelor (Lord Dorrimore) who spends half his life in the wild places of the earth' when all at once the sunken garden Jimmy and his uncle were strolling through was swarming with yellow-faced fiends brandishing daggers like nobody's business.

Uncle and nephew got out of that skirmish and, on the following night, the series came to a splendid climax in the Family Tomb of the Dorrimores.

And that just shows what a classy place Dorrimore Castle is. All four stately homes we'd been to had lawns and wide terraces, all of them had great halls, three of them had battlements, two of them had ballrooms, all of them had central heating - at Dorrimore Castle it was turned up so high that the ballroom windows were open on a snowy New Year's Eve - but only one had its own mausoleum.

The Dorrimore family tomb is 'a squat dignified stone building many centuries old and there (are) many smaller tombs within this great tomb'.

One of these smaller sarcophagai is booked for Dorrie himself. Like the pharaohs of old his Lordship's final resting place has been prepared for him in his lifetime. It takes the form of an 'ornamental casket covered with a great stone slab'. Knowing Dorrie's anything for a laugh outlook I bet he's tried it for size more than once.

The last glimpse we have of the inside of a stately home is the Library of Dorrimore Castle at 4 a.m. on New Year's Day, 1932. Nelson Lee is explaining some of the more baffling incidents of our fifteen day tour.

We're told 'it was comfortable in the Library' and the whole series makes comfortable reading sitting in front of the fire on a cold winter's evening. I myself was never one for derring do in the dark and the cold, but I do like reading about it and so long as there are writers like Edwy Searles Brooks thinking up the most incredible adventures for unfortunates like Jimmy Potts, I'm happy.



# **Take A Single With Bunter**

By Roger M. Jenkins....



William George Bunter is not everyone's cup of tea. Charles Hamilton, his creator, acknowledged that in actual life he would be unbearable. Safely encapsulated within the pages of the Magnet, however, he is enjoyable for those who possess a taste for the unexpected, the outrageous, even the bizarre. Although he played important parts in many series, the single stories portrayed his character in a wide range of aspects, and it is through an examination of some of these single stories that it will be possible to gain some insight into Charles Hamilton's technique.

## Bunter's Aspirations

There is no doubt that financiers were held in scant respect, lawyers were distrusted, and stockbrokers like Mr. Bunter were even lower down in the author's esteem. People who adopted the Bunter habit of boasting about their money were objects of contempt:

*As a man of experience he knew that people who were born to the possession of money never talked about money. (Magnet 910)*

"Viscount Bunter" in No. 474 is a particularly good example of the Bunter mentality: a confidence trickster induced Mr. Bunter to pay over large sums of money in order to establish the family's right to an ancient title and estates. Billy Bunter would become a Viscount and Sammy an Honourable.

*"Grand Duke of the Tuckshop!" chuckled Nugent. "Or Viscount Postal Order!"*

Mr. Bunter was shown to be full of cupidity and gullibility: the Famous Five had a low opinion of him, whilst Skinner & Co. openly mocked him. After the inevitable collapse of his hopes, Bunter gave up cultivating D'Arcy's accent and Ponsonby's sneer. A similar story appeared in No. 897 when Mr. Bunter laid claim to the de Bonterre baronetcy. The Bunters never seemed to learn by experience.

## Bunter's Terrible Afflictions

Mr. Bunter sometimes put foolish ideas into his son's head, but William was quite capable of thinking them up for himself, as in the case of the remarkable afflictions that he pretended to suffer from in the nineteen-twenties, though in a way the first one had an element of reality. "Thin Bunter" in No. 682 was based on rather a slender theme. Bunter imagined he was getting thinner because of a lack of food. Mr. Quelch sent him to Dr. Pillbury, and the regime of dieting and exercise that he prescribed actually did cause Bunter to lose weight. Alarmed, Bunter took Dr.

Flummox's Fattening Fluid, which paradoxically enough made him even thinner, and he didn't recover his normal weight until he stopped taking the patent medicine.

"Thin Bunter" was somewhat rambling and inconsequential, but "Deaf Bunter" in 689 had a well-constructed plot. Mr. Quelch rebuked Walker for boxing the ears of Dicky Nugent, with warnings about causing deafness, and when Bunter provoked Walker into boxing his fat ears, he began a pretence of deafness which enabled him to blackmail Walker very effectively.

Probably "Bunter's Very Latest" in 715 was the most successful version. Bunter in detention began reading 'Good Gilbert, the Blind Schoolboy' and when he had offered to let Coker throw him in a ju-jitsu demonstration he had the excuse he wanted to feign blindness.

"You may sit down Bunter. "

Mr. Quelch spoke kindly enough.

"Thank you, sir!" said Bunter.

He looked round for a chair.

Fortunately - for Bunter - he remembered in time that, being blind, he couldn't possibly see where there was a chair. And it came into his mind that possibly Quelch was trying to catch him out. If Bunter had walked to a chair and sat down, certainly the form-master would not have believed that he was blind.

So Bunter put out his fat hands and began to grope. He groped over Mr. Quelch's writing table, and knocked over an inkpot. The Remove master uttered a sharp exclamation as a stream of ink shot across the table.

Despite assurances that Bunter's greatest grief was that he would be unable to do his lessons, he was met with considerable doubts about this particular affliction, quite unlike Good Gilbert

Equally amusing was "Bunter's Latest" in 787. Having witnessed the Famous Five's generosity to a dumb beggar, Bunter wrote on the blackboard 'Sorry Sir! I've gone dumm!' Sammy Bunter followed suit in the Second Form with 'Ime dum'.

Billy Bunter gave his minor a furious blink. Bunter was not bright, but he was bright enough to see that this claim on the part of his minor gave the whole thing an air of improbability. He opened his lips to tell Sammy what he thought of him, but remembering he was dumb, closed them again.

"Lame Bunter" followed in 806, with a bruise received at compulsory cricket practice made more impressive with the aid of Mrs. Kebble's marking ink. The latest affliction of all was in the nature of an excuse thought out afterwards. "Bunter's Brainstorm" in 996 related how he ordered large quantities of tuck from Chunkley's Special Order Department in the name of Mr. Quelch. Unfortunately his form-master returned before Bunter could remove the tuck, and it took little time to track down the culprit.

"If you were a less obtuse boy, Bunter, if you were not the most crassly obtuse and stupid boy at Greyfriars, I should take you to the Head and request him to expel you from the school. I am treating you very leniently in sentencing you only to twenty strokes of the cane. Bend over that chair, Bunter!"

Clearly, Bunter's and Quelch's ideas of leniency were poles apart. It was at this

stage that Bunter bolted and underwent an ersatz brainstorm, copying the symptoms from a newspaper story. It did not avail against Mr. Quelch. STOP (the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment) had no members among the gentlemen on Dr. Locke's staff.

### Bunter and the Fair Sex

Part of Charles Hamilton's technique in characterisation was to display unexpected traits, and Billy Bunter in love was one of these unusual characteristics. In 364 Mr. Quelch's niece Cora came on a visit to Greyfriars. She was a plump young lady who, with her self-willed and critical attitude, bore some resemblance to Bessie Bunter, who was yet to be created, but she met a twin soul in Bunter, who found her conversation (about cooking rabbit pies with onions) quite fascinating. He acted heroically in saving her from a bull, and it was not until three days after her departure that he became his old self again. Magnet 410 was entitled "Bunter the Masher". He received letters from Marjorie Hazeldene and met her for walks on the cliffs ("Girls like a chap with a good figure"). Of course, there was a mystery that was not revealed until the end, but it showed up Bunter at his worst. Bunter redeemed himself again, however, in 460 - "Billy Bunter's Reformation", in which Cora Quelch again visited Greyfriars and Bunter again displayed some heroic characteristics, including rescuing Cora from a fast-running stream.

The love stories ended with white-colour days, and these tales of Bunter were, perhaps, more in the nature of an aberration than anything else. Possibly Charles Hamilton realised it was too dangerous to tamper with the characters of established members of Greyfriars, and by 1927, with "Bravo Bunter" in 1016, Bunter's heroism in rescuing a gipsy girl from the path of an oncoming train was explained in these terms:

Somewhere buried deep under Bunter's layers of fat there was a spark of genuine British pluck.

No-one believed Bunter's story, and his attempt to manufacture evidence to support his claim to heroism made the Removites even more sceptical. This was a far cry indeed from the two Cora Quelch romances.

### Bunter the Runaway

Using his fat wits to escape retribution was a not uncommon expedient for Bunter to adopt, and on occasions he ran away from school, though this theme was usually developed in a series. "Bunter the Ink Splasher" in 1160 provided a beautiful insight into the character of Mr. Quelch, who was the unintended victim of the ink:

The Remove master returned to his study.

On his study table lay a stout cane specially selected for William George Bunter. That cane should have been exercised before this, but it lay idle. Mr. Quelch picked it up, absently, and swished it in the air, with a loud swish.

Bunter had run away from Greyfriars to escape retribution and arrived at a circus. He was offered employment there, and was quite flattered until he discovered that he was to be billed as the Fattest Boy on Earth. It is interesting to compare this story

with 1652 entitled "Grunter of Greyhurst". Once again, Bunter inked Quelch by mistake, but on this occasion when caught he claimed that it was his double who was responsible. Since Wibley was disguising himself as Goggly Grunter for a play, it was not long before Quelch became aware of Bunter's double, and an hilarious sequence of events followed. No. 1160 was full of irony, Bunter in particular being exposed to the contradictions inherent between illusion and reality, whereas 1652 eschewed irony and was more in the nature of a Whitehall farce. Both are enjoyable, but the Golden Age Magnet was the work of a writer at the height of his powers whereas the salmon-covered Magnet depended upon plotting and technique alone.

It is astonishing to find in the Magnet, a fortnight after 1652, that Wibley was again involved in helping Bunter escape from punishment, although on this occasion he was innocent. "The Black Prince of Greyfriars" was Prince Bomombo of Bongoland, another character in a Wibley play, and Bunter masqueraded as the Black Prince in order to avoid an unjust flogging, a story that was ingenious rather than funny.

"Billy Bunter's Bunk" in 1206 was built on the classic theme of crying wolf. Quelch had heard Bunter plotting to start the Easter holidays a week early by sending a fake message to the effect that his mother was ill. When Bunter received a real telephone message to this effect, no-one believed him, and he had to run away to get home. His affection for his mother was the one genuinely natural element of life at Bunter Villa.

### Bunter the Ventriloquist

Bunter's ventriloquism dated from the days of the halfpenny Magnet, but it has always contained an element of incredibility. It is true that boys are good mimics, and imitation of other people's voices is a possibility: it is even acceptable that Bunter could use the vocabulary of Greyfriars masters in his imitation of their voices. What seems unbelievable is that he could throw his voice so that it appeared to be coming from a different direction. However incredible this is, it was always good fun to read about, and by Magnet 57 he had already progressed so far as to offer lessons in ventriloquism. Mr. Maddox's maths lessons and Monsieur Charpentier's French lessons were turned into near riots by the sounds of a cat all over the form-room and a voice emanating from a packing case.

By 1926, Bunter's ventriloquism had taken a mellow and highly enjoyable turn. Magnet 942 entitled "The Mystery of the Head's Study" related how, by a series of incidents, Bunter found himself in the Head's study and obliged to lock the door and imitate the Head's voice in order to avoid a flogging. Nemesis caught up with him in the end, but the reader could not help feeling some sneaking sympathy for the Fat Owl on this occasion. "The Form-Masters' Feud" in 1086 was another fine example, this time from 1928, with delightful vignettes of Staff Room conversations. Bunter was pursued by Hacker and he locked himself in Quelch's empty study. In order to get rid of Hacker, he abused him in Quelch's voice, and the feud between the two masters was intensely interesting to the remainder of the Staff as well as to the boys. When Quelch heard Bunter imitating his voice in the Remove passage, Bunter nearly got away with it:

"Did you suppose, when this absurd boy spoke in that gruff, unpleasant voice, that it was I who spoke?"

When Dr. Locke eventually summoned Bunter to account, the fat Removite went along quite happily, assuming it was an invitation to tea, but the reality of the situation was far less attractive.

In 1933, "Bunter the Ventriloquist" in 1328 was in many ways typical in that Monsieur Charpentier was worried silly by the sound of a bee buzzing round him. On the other hand, Bunter carried his talents to Rookwood in the same number, and managed to get Jimmy Silver freed from detention by imitating Dr. Chisholm's voice. Of course, it was like Bunter to try it on too often, and when he told the French Master in Quelch's voice that the morning's French lesson was cancelled, he had not calculated on the fact that Quelch was actually behind that closed door in Mossoo's study at that very moment:

The door flew open, and Mr. Quelch almost flew out. His grasp closed on Billy Bunter's collar.

"Come!" said Mr. Quelch, in a voice that was like the filing of a saw.

By 1939 ventriloquism was beginning to lose some of its lustre. "The Bounder's Dupe" in 1653 was Bunter who was induced by Vernon-Smith to imitate Quelch's voice in order to rebuke Wingate. Amusing though some episodes were, the original zest and spontaneity behind the ventriloquism had faded away into a matter of bribery and malice. It is only fair to add, however, that ventriloquism was used on rare occasions after red Magnet days, and this did at least provide an additional enhancement to those stories in which the device was featured.

### Bunter's Swindles

Bunter was not very intelligent, but he had a certain low cunning which often took him a long way on the road to success. In 358, for instance, entitled "Billy Bunter's Uncle", he laid claim to relationship with a Captain Bunter who was reported injured in the war, and he made as much capital out of it as possible until the truth came to light. In this story, Bunter's own knowledge (or lack of it) was placed before the reader in full, but on some occasions Bunter's trickery was not revealed until the end of the story. "Bunter's Anti-Tuck Campaign" in 401 was an example of this method. The Removites caught him gorging himself and they marched him around with a placard saying 'The Prize Hog' and inviting others to throw missiles at him, on the grounds that over-eating in wartime was unpatriotic. Bunter turned the tables by challenging the others to miss dinner as he was going to, and eating only morsels of food at other meals. The mystery was where he was getting his food from in secret, and how he could manage to do this when he was stony.

The only tale that Charles Hamilton ever admitted having difficulty in finishing was No. 640 - "Bunter the Bankrupt" - which meanders a little at the beginning. Bunter consulted Peter Todd as a lawyer, with a view to declaring a bankruptcy so that he could start borrowing all over again with a clean sheet. He invited Removites to lodge claims and when all the sums were added up they totalled £27, apart from claims that Wharton and others didn't bother to lodge. When Bunter produced two and threepence and offered to pay a penny in the pound, a riot broke out. As Peter

Todd had advised him, it would have been better to let sleeping dogs lie.

Dishonesty played a great part in 643 entitled "Billy Bunter's Speculation", in which he sold Peter Todd's bike to raise money for a Stock Exchange investment that proved worthless. Even more typical of his dishonesty at the time was "Bunter's Picnic" in 693 in which he opened one of Wharton's letters and decided to impersonate him at the feed. Even so, it was not without humour:

"You catch on?" asked Bunter eagerly. "I'm going to the picnic as Wharton. Old Skeppleton can't guess. If he hasn't seen Wharton since he was a baby, how can he know?"

"That's right enough," said Skinner, with a nod.

"He'll simply think that Wharton has turned out to be a fine, good-looking chap," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

Snoop and Stott almost choked over their cake.

Bunter was no more honest in 1922, but "Bunter's Raffle" in 753 was a much more ingenious and well-constructed story. A brand-new gramophone, complete with six records, arrived for Bunter, and he offered a number of inconsistent stories about the kind relative who had provided it. He set about raffling it, whilst Fishy set about 'bearing the market' by disparaging the gramophone and buying up all the raffle tickets from the others, Bunter not having been able to sell many. Fishy was looking forward to being the certain winner of the raffle when it turned out that the gramophone had been sent on approval, and was re-possessed. Fishy lost his money and Bunter was ragged, which was rough justice all round. Stories like this are very amusing from a detached viewpoint, but of course the reader has no sympathy at all with the principal protagonists. This was still the case early in 1929 when Bunter came upon a letter Loder had written to a bookmaker, and began to blackmail Loder in 1090 entitled "Under Bunter's Thumb".

All through the nineteen-twenties Charles Hamilton was groping his way towards presenting Bunter's character as a sympathetic one. He began by making excuses for Bunter's swindles by stating that the Fat Owl was too fatuous to understand the enormity of his offences; this did not make Bunter a more attractive character but it did provide a reason for reducing the punishments for what were often nothing less than criminal offences. By the time of the Whiffles Circus series in 1928 this aim had been achieved, even though there were a number of subsequent lapses before Bunter's new character became fixed: he was no longer a detestable rogue but was now an amusing young idiot upon whom an indulgent eye could be cast. His misdeeds were still reprehensible but his complicated cunning and deceit were replaced by makeshift devices that were forced upon him by the exigencies of the situation. So in 1930 with "Bunter the Prize Hunter" in 1159 we had him entering for Mr. Quelch's prize for Latin verse (a book).

Some of the fellows thought it was very generous of Quelch to stand a prize out of his own pocket, and to devote some hours of his scanty leisure to examination papers, over and above his official duties. Other fellows declared that Quelch browsed on Latin like a donkey on thistles, and found some weird and unaccountable pleasure in this sort of thing.

Uncle George had promised his hopeful nephew £5 if he won the prize, and when

Linley was called home Bunter ransacked Linley's desk, hoping to copy out his abandoned entry. What Bunter eventually copied out was an Ode of Horace that Mr. Quelch had known by heart for forty years. Of course, retribution followed, but the main effect on the reader was to feel that Bunter's trickery was so inefficient that it was more a matter of laughter than disgust. "Popper's Unpopular Prize" in 1309 rang the changes on the same theme.

Conclusion

No attempt has been made to refer to every single story dealing with Bunter, which would have made this article far too tedious and long. Furthermore, not all single stories fit into the categories listed above. It might be possible, for example, to add other categories, such as Bunter's Delusions into which would fit 1560 - "Bunter's Big Blunder" - in which he thought he saw Mr. Quelch snowballing Dr. Locke. Nevertheless, the aim of this article is to illustrate the wide-ranging scope of the themes used, as well as the development of Bunter's character during the career of the Magnet.

Readers of the Magnet during the first twenty years of its run might well be excused for disliking Bunter, but for the last dozen years of its career there were probably few who found him detestable. The ability to present a basically unattractive character in a sympathetic light is an achievement few authors possess. To be able, in addition, to present this character in a large variety of different situations must entitle that author to a place in the higher echelons of his rank. Certainly, if Charles Hamilton is remembered a hundred years from now, it will undoubtedly be because of his one supreme creation, William George Bunter.

\* \* \* \* \*

Seasonal Greetings and Best Wishes for 1983 to all Hobbyists everywhere.

DARREL SWIFT - LEEDS

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To London and South-West Clubs all Seasonal Greetings.

VALE & JOYCE, 33 IVY HOUSE PARK, HENL DE

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Best Xmas Wishes to all in our Hobby. Charles Hamilton, Edwy earles Brooks, Gwyn Evans, John Hunter, may they rest in peace and in God's care.

IES FARROW, 13 FYDELL ST., BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

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Best Wishes for Yuletide to all Hobbyists, especially our Editor. Thanks for another wonderful year of C.D.

R. J. McCABE, 42 AUCHINBLAE PLACE, DUNDEE



# GIRL GUIDE GRIT

BY  
MARY CADOGAN



"Great stuff, this Guiding! We've always been keen on it at Cliff House."

(Clara Trevlyn)

As this is the Year of the Scout, perhaps we might also spare some thoughts for the Girl Guides, who not only rapidly followed the boys' movement in fact, but in fiction. And the Amalgamated Press papers, always in the forefront, were probably the first publications to chronicle the exploits of this new, satisfying and very exciting activity for girls.

The Boy Scout movement, founded by General Sir Robert Baden-Powell (later Lord Baden-Powell) in 1907 was actually gatecrashed by the girls. B.P. originally made no provision for them. He feared that their participation might make scouting unacceptable to boys, and encourage boydenism in young girls. However, soon after his SCOUTING FOR BOYS was published in 1908, some 6,000 girls up and down the country had formed themselves into unofficial patrols of 'Girls Scouts'. With relish and considerable pioneering vigour, they started to practise the tracking and tramping, drilling, First-Aiding and adventure-seeking that 'B.P.' had so attractively gone into in his now classic manual. By the end of 1909, he realised that the girls, if ignored, would not simply go away, and he drew up a scheme formally to establish a feminine membership. B.P. had a strong sense of protectiveness towards the girls, and he named them Guides rather than Scouts to emphasize their separateness from the masculine mainstream of his quickly expanding organization. He also stressed that training techniques used for his boy scouts would have to be 'administered with great discernment' for the guides, and under the control of the 'right kind of ladies ... You do not want to make tomboys of refined girls, yet you want to attract, and thus raise the slum-girl from the gutter'.

In spite of B.P.'s concern about not encouraging boydenism, however, there seems to have been an extremely robust feeling amongst the early girl guides, and fiction echoed fact by producing a spate of vivid adventures that featured tomboyish heroines.

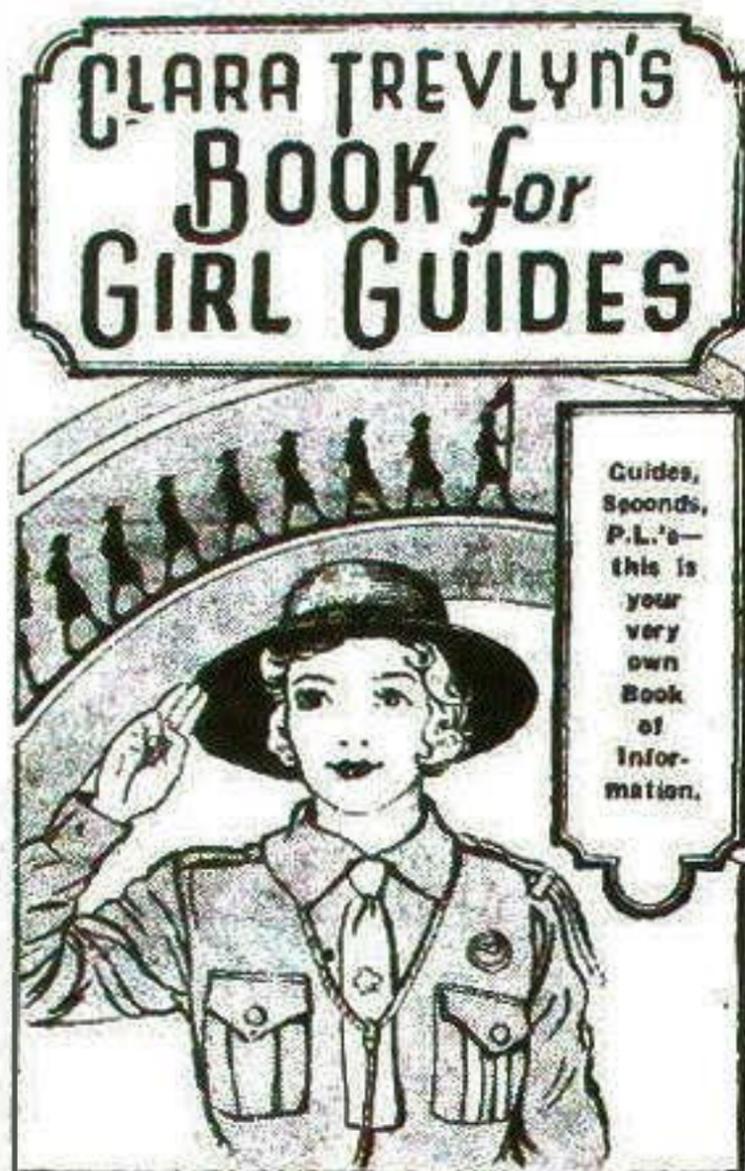
The favourable social effects of the Scout organization on boys from different backgrounds have often been acknowledged, but it is likely that Guiding had an even more drastic effect on its adherents. Before the advent of the movement, for many girls in 1908, social life outside the home had of course been pretty tame and

restrictive. Agnes Baden-Powell (B.P.'s sister, who became the first Girl Guide President), in her preface to an early guiding story commented that 'bright' and 'clever' girls were likely to find that 'prowess in the jungle, tracking Red Indians' had attractions that home routines of chat about 'bats or the new stitch in crochet' lacked.

The first girl guide story I have managed to find is in Northcliffe's *GIRLS' READER*, where Evelyn Yates's serial *THE GIRL SCOUTS* started in July 1909. It appeared before the original girl scouts had officially metamorphosed into guides and, as the *GIRLS' READER* was a paper for the older girl rather than for school-girls, the story's heroines seem also to be fairly mature. They are Mollie and Virginia, nieces of the Bishop of Hawkesbury, who agrees to provide a temporary home for the 'two sweet darling motherless little girls' whilst their father's regiment is in India.

Of course the Bishop gets much more than he bargained for. His nieces turn out to be strapping damsels of sixteen and fourteen, who make their entrance into his life at a sedate garden party for colonial Church delegates. They advance towards him 'with long, steady strides - a couple of straight-backed, eager-looking young girls clad in khaki skirts and soft felt 'cowboy' hats, and each carrying a pole ...' At this time of course uniforms were improvised, as the girls' movement was still unofficial. The early girl scouts seemed to compete with each other in wearing the broadest brimmed hats and carrying extraordinarily long staves (made from broom-handles). Mollie and Virginia further disrupt the garden party by an illustration of scouting prowess, their 'long, lusty ear-splitting yell, the call of the Curlew patrol', which the Bishop likens to a steam siren. However, although he longs for his nieces to abandon belts, broom-handles and haversacks in favour of 'dainty' attire, the Bishop soon has to admit that scouting gives them a high standard of consideration for others. As the story unfolds, Mollie and Virginia cheerfully put right several social wrongs, and make wholesale converts to B.P.'s movement.

In its early years, the Girl Guide movement could not afford its own journal. (They were less fortunate than the Scouts in this respect.) Pearson's allocated two pages of its weekly women's paper, *HOME NOTES*, for reporting Guide matters. The fact that an adult paper rather than a juvenile one was used for this suggests again that the majority of recruits might then have been older girls. Looking back, *HOME NOTES* seems a strange platform for robust Guiding issues, which had to rub shoulders there with romantic stories and advice to the lovelorn. Rose Kerr in her *STORY OF THE GIRL GUIDES* in 1932 (an excellent history), remarked that



many upper class members objected to this accommodation: 'Miss Lawrence, for instance, said it was not at all the sort of paper for the Roedean girls and their like'.

Roedean remonstrances prevailed, and HOME NOTES was abandoned in favour of the GOLDEN RULE, a monthly published by Martin Shaw, until in 1914 the movement was able to start its own official magazine, the GIRL GUIDES' GAZETTE. (There are now three journals, GUIDER, TODAY'S GUIDE and THE BROWNIE.)

But long before the guides had their own vehicle for stories and articles, one of our favourite papers - the GEM - had given space to the Girl Scouts, as they then were. In August of 1909, in GEM 78, Cousin Ethel is shown as an enthusiastic member of the still unofficial organization. Gussy is deeply shocked, fearing that she will be wanting the Vote next. (The Suffragettes, of course, were very active at this time and Gussy skirmished with them on more than one occasion.) He advises Ethel - with his usual 'exquisite tact and delicacy' - that she should abandon scouting in favour of domestic pursuits, but she remains unconvinced, and challenges the St. Jim's juniors to a scouting contest. In fact Ethel and the girls of her Curlew Patrol win this, but they triumph partly because Mellish and Gore have sabotaged Tom Merry & Co's efforts. So honours are really even between the girl- and the boy-scouts. Ethel, however, wins a moral victory, as the episode ends with Gussy "An assuaged and convinced supportah of the idea of patwols of Girl Scouts".

Really, for 1909, Ethel and her comrades, who were camping unchaperoned by any adults, were extremely advanced. Over a decade later, during the 1920s, camping was a commonplace and much-looked forward to activity for countless girl guides in fact, and of course in fiction: "The Camping fever is in my blood. I shall go dotty when I see the lorry arrive," remarks one young hopeful in May Wynne's THE CAMPING OF THE MARIGOLDS. This enthusiasm is echoed in story after story in which Guide authors waxed lyrical on the delights of camping: "There were blackberries, raspberries, the promise of nuts, the jolliest brown rabbits, sunshine and shadows in these magic woods ..." Also, of course, songs round the campfire and pow-wows - and some less enjoyable camping incidents arising from bogs, bulls, tents collapsing and the challenges of primitive field kitchens.

Like many other Guide activities, camping had very special meaning for girls from squalid urban areas. Going away to camp was often their opportunity to visit the sea or the countryside for the first time in their lives:

' "I'm longing to get to the sea ... until today I'd never seen it."

When at last the sea came into full view there was a long-drawn "Oh - oh - oh! "

"Isn't it heavenly?" said Maude.'

Nobody gives a better fictional account of a guide camp than Mrs. A. C. Osborn Hann in PEG'S PATROL (1924) from which the above quotation was taken. Dorothy Hann was Captain of the 12th Southwark Guide Company during the 1920s and remained active in the organization for many years. Her leading characters in PEG'S PATROL and its sequels are girls from working-class families for whom Guiding widened both physical and psychological horizons, and the stories have tremendous

vigour and authenticity. Peg at first resists the apparently 'goody good' Girl Guides, who 'swanked about in uniforms and short skirts . . .' trying 'to boss the world and show their mothers how to do things'. But she is soon converted by the guides' naturalness and sheer zest for life. Peg not only becomes a 'splendid' patrol leader, but a real champion of any awkward or graceless girls who, despite their handicaps, have ambitions to become efficient guides.

This theme of the competent and attractive girl helping hopeless duffers or 'outsiders' soon became as popular in guide fiction as it was in school stories (Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn always rallying round duffer Bessie Bunter; Betty Barton and Polly Linton teasing but always protecting Paula Creel, etc.). Variations



Peering through the foliage, Tom Merry could catch a glimpse of a form near at hand, and Cousin Ethel's voice came to his ears. "Did you see him, Flora?" "No, I heard him! Listen!" Tom Merry held his breath.

on the theme were used with great discernment and imagination by several well-established authors. Ethel Talbot, who set most of her guide stories in boarding-school backgrounds, was one of these writers. In her PEGGY'S LAST TERM, eleven-year-old Sylvia turns out to be the kind of kackhanded tenderfoot who 'doesn't know a Union Jack from a Stars and Stripes ... or a granny from a reef-knot'. So, 'in a kind of frenzy', the other members of her patrol coach Sylvia intensively in every aspect of the Guide Law, the Salute, the Flag and woodcraft. Poor Sylvia, under all this pressure, not unnaturally overdoes things, scratching the Union Jack on her desk lid so that she can study it at any moment during class, drawing 'arrows and crosses with her fingers and toes at every odd hour of the day', and at night obsessively practising knots when she is supposed to be asleep.

Cousin Ethel didn't have to go to those lengths back in that 1909 GEM story, and her exploits helped to set the lively but convincing pattern for Guiding features in the subsequent A. P. periodicals. Stories cropped up in a wide range of papers, and when the first issue of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN came out in February 1921 it included a serial by Mildred Gordon called THE GUIDES OF THE POPPY PATROL, as well as a whole page of tips and chat under the heading, THE GIRL GUIDES' CORNER. Even more indicative of the movement's appeal was the fact that the give-away photogravure picture in this first issue of the paper was of H. R. H. Princess Mary, the Girl Guides' President, in full uniform. Mildred Gordon's serial starred Molly Marsh, the leader of the Poppy Patrol, and her understanding Guide Captain, Miss Robson. Molly's father is wrongly accused of embezzlement, and sent to prison, but she manages to hold her head high and remain at the head of the patrol in spite of the nasty jibes and innuendos of two snobbish girls who are against her, because of her humble origins. Miss Robson supports her through thick and thin, and so do most of the 'Poppies' and other guides. Molly, using skills and preparedness in true B.P. style, of course, eventually proves her father's innocence.

Though a commendable character, Molly wasn't, like the usual Amalgamated Press heroines, exactly charismatic. Her adventures continued only until SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN No. 10, and then Mildred Gordon's second Guide story started in the paper. This dealt with Stella Ray, the leader of the Robin patrol, in a town called Seaville, and it was much more colourful and dashing than the saga of Molly's activities. Stella had the great advantage of living by the sea, so she and her fellow guides were called upon to respond to dramatic challenges like steep cliff-side rescues, being trapped in caves with the tide rapidly rising around them, and the threat of capture by smugglers. Stella's patrol also coped with farming adventures (wild bulls!), camping vicissitudes and even rescuing a baby from a burning building. During the course of her exploits the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN announced that its sister paper, the SCHOOL FRIEND, was bringing out a special Guide number of the CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY, including 'What the Guides Are Doing at Cliff House'. At this famous school, in fact, guiding rarely played an integral part in the stories, although it was frequently mentioned over the years, and some of the girls were illustrated very fetchingly in Guide uniform.

It was obviously still a popular leisure-time activity there right into the 1930s. CLARA TREVLYN'S BOOK FOR GIRL GUIDES was a pull-out



OUR PRINCESS  
H.M. THE PRINCESS MARY

supplement with SCHOOLGIRL 242, in March 1934. This was one of a series of attractive booklets, on different themes, ostensibly written by Cliff House pupils. (Others were BARBARA REDFERN'S BOOK OF ETIQUETTE, MARJORIE HAZELDENE'S BOOK OF NEEDLEWORK, STELLA STONE'S BOOK FOR PET OWNERS, JEMMA CARSTAIRS' BOOK OF PARTY MAGIC, etc.) The booklets

were packed with helpful and interesting information, and were very probably the work of John Wheway, the then 'Hilda Richards', who was always having bright ideas for special features and supplements for the girls' weeklies and annuals. The booklet for Girl Guides adopts Clara's slightly slangy style: 'I hope you won't think it fearful cheek on my part writing these paragraphs about patrol-leaders as I'm only a Second ... I need hardly say what a ripping patrol leader Babs is ...'. Clara kicks off with, 'Great stuff, this Guiding ...' and ends the booklet by saying:

'Well, now you've read all about the Girl Guide Movement, why not give it a trial yourself, if you do not already belong? I and my fellow Guides at Cliff House can assure you that you'll never regret joining!'

We learn that Babs is leader of the Linnet Patrol, with Clara her Second, and Elsie Effingham leads the Asters, Seconded by June Merrett. The other members of the Linnet Patrol are Mabel Lynn, Marjorie Hazeldene, Rosa Bodworth, Philippa Derwent, Phyllis Howell and Marcelle Biquet. Also, '... attached to the Cliff House Company are several Ranger Cadets including good old Stella Stone ... There are also a crowd of kids in the Brownies, but I don't think you'll want to be bothered with their names', Clara explains.

She gives a clear exposition of the aims of the Guide Movement, and lots of helpful hints. The booklet must have been a most useful one to any guide who read it in 1934, though its main interest to us now is for the Cliff House atmosphere that it provides:

'In the case of fainting, the great thing is to loosen the patient's clothing and see that she has plenty of fresh air. Of course, if she's like Bessie Bunter, a nice thick wedge of cake is the best treatment.'

Clara tells us that '... our most expert knot-tyer at Cliff House is undoubtedly Philippa Derwent', that Babs holds, amongst others, the Airwoman's and Artist's badges; Marjorie has those for Needlewoman and Child Nurse, and Peggy Preston has the Handywoman's and Health badges. (Significantly, perhaps, no details are given of Bessie Bunter's guiding achievements!)

Generally speaking, the Guiding stories in the A.P. papers were even livelier than those in the Movement's official periodicals, though these included some appealing fiction. There was also a GIRL GUIDE'S BOOK (an annual published by Pearson's and compiled by M. C. Carey, the Editor of the GIRL GUIDE GAZETTE). I have a copy of the 1923 edition of this, which features a message from the Chief Guide, Lady Olave Baden-Powell - who was of course the wife of the Founder of the Scout and Guide Movement. This, in fact, makes it clear that the 1923 issue is the first edition of this annual, which is full of interesting features, vivid pictures and good stories. It has two plays - one designed to be put on by Brownies and the other by Guides, and each has magical elements as well as the strongly practical ones that we always associate with Guiding. Guides and Brownies in those days had a wide range of resource, and many of the tips given in articles like THINGS ALL GUIDES SHOULD KNOW and HOUSEHOLD HINTS FOR GUIDES are still useful. (The jobs to be tackled ranged from removing spots on carpets to driving nails into plastered walls.)

Lots of other weekly and monthly magazines for girls exploited the immense popularity of Guiding by including stories about the Movement, and some of the best of these were in the **GIRL'S OWN PAPER** and **LITTLE FOLKS**, written by several celebrated authors. Amongst them were Elsie Oxenham, Dorothea Moore (a Guide Commissioner), May Wynne and Winifred Darch. Their stories caught the atmosphere of guide camps and patrols during the 1920s and '30s. They were succeeded in the 1940s by writers who reflected the challenges that the Second World War had brought to the organization, and its subsequent developments. Their tales, though extremely authentic, sometimes lack the colour and charm of earlier adventures, though Catherine Christian (who edited the official journal from 1939 to 1945) produced some exuberant books. In **THE KINGFISHERS SEE IT THROUGH** she uses the tricky theme of the integration of evacuees from city slums into their new rural and affluent communities: '... stuck up, that's what you are. Guides! Yah! ... Yer never wanted us, ter begin wiv.' Happily, however, this uprooted Cockney patrol, who at first meet indifference and snobbery rather than the expected sisterly-



**SAVED FROM THE SEA!** Stella, very pale, progressed slowly downwards towards the boy on the beach.



**THE GIRLS WHO DISLIKED MOLLY!** "We've come about Molly March, who's been!" said Rose North. "We object to having a patrol leader whose father's in prison!"

Guiding hand, soon become friends with their new associates in the 'posh' local company. The same author deals with another sensitive social issue in THE SEVENTH MAGPIE, in which an English Guide Patrol work for people who have suffered in Nazi occupied countries. (They are, of course, reflecting the real-life activities of the Guide International Service Committee. The extraordinary capacity of Guides and even tiny Brownies to give a helping hand to others, individually, and on a vast, international scale is something which should always be remembered, and it is good that quite a lot of guide fiction owes its inspiration to this.)

Today, Guides - like Policeman - seem to be growing younger, if the stories in the present GIRL GUIDE and BROWNIE ANNUALS are anything to go by. (At least, however, these books do have some real stories; they are not, like so many contemporary annuals, given over entirely to picture-strips!) And they not only look younger, but smarter. However, in their crisp, uncrumpled uniforms and streamlined berets, they do not have, for me at any rate, quite as much appeal as early Edwardian 'Girl Scouts' like Cousin Ethel, or the Cliff House girls in the 1920s for whom the thrills of Guiding were symbolized by camping and cowboy hats, in so many wonderful stories in the old papers and annuals.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Always a Knight" still wanted, author unknown. Good wishes to all.

MAURICE KING, 27 CELTIC CRESCENT, DORCHESTER  
DORSET, DORCHESTER 69026

= = = = =  
SHERLOCK HOLMES - anything on, including Herlock Sholmes, etc. S.a.e. my large wants list.

48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL, L63 2JZ

= = = = =  
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 worldwide who love our hobby and especially to Henry Webb and family.

STAN KNIGHT, CHELTENHAM

= = = = =  
Christmas Greetings to C.D. readers and to the Editor and all at Excelsior House.

NEIL LAMBERT

= = = = =  
Season's Greetings to Stan and all Old Boys. WANTED: No. 18, the double Howard Baker Magnet, your price.

R. G. ARNOLD, 40 LOCKINGTON CROFT, HALESOWEN, WEST MIDLANDS

= = = = =



# FACT AND FICTION

BY

JACK OVERHILL



John Fayers was a tall, slim boy, eighteen months older than me. The MAGNET and GEM brought us together. When he left school at fourteen, he went to work for a Cambridge boat-builder, who let out boats - punts, rowers, canoes, skiffs - on hire. It was the custom to pay when you took the boat back - the way of the world then - and every day in the summer, boats were left up the River Granta by people who wanted their pleasure for nothing. John's morning job was to row two miles upstream to Grantchester, collect the boats, tie them in line together and row back to the boatyard with them. He was skilful with the oars and there was little likelihood of his boat capsizing. It would have been all up with him had he done so where the river was deep - twenty feet in places - with no help at hand, as he was one of the few boys in the back streets where we lived close to the river who couldn't swim. He never went in the water, laughed away all thoughts of his drowning. He was that sort: quiet, good-humoured, a little puckish in manner, friendly and kindly disposed. He never quarrelled, never got into fights and brushed aside with easy grace those that wanted to.

John got too old for his job of boat-boy and went to work at the Gas Company: 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. He went to bed at ten o'clock, got up at five o'clock, had breakfast, a wash and brush-up and walked a mile and a quarter to his place of employment. To be late meant the sack. His hard, dispiriting life was made bearable by reading. The MAGNET and GEM were his favourite weeklies.

Poor pay and hard work led to his enlisting in the Suffolk's. He spent several of his seven years' service in India. Every week, I sent him his favourite newspaper, the NEWS OF THE WORLD, which was read by other men of the regiment, many of whom I knew. Discharged from the army, he returned to Cambridge determined never to leave it again. He became a railway porter and lived quietly as a bachelor until he was forty, when he married. He had no children and died at the age of forty-five.

Perhaps, you are wondering why I've related this piece of personal history of my old friend John Fayers. A year or two before he died he talked to me of the time he went up the river to bring the boats back that had been left there.

'I'd find a place under a shady tree,' he said, in his quiet voice, 'and there I'd read the MAGNET and GEM. There's never been a time in my life like it and there never will be.' The look on his face expressed his feelings.

I have similar memories. They crowd on me every day of the year, especially,

on walks with Jake, a sable-and-white Scotch collie (one of a long line extending back sixty years); and in bed, when they often lull me to sleep. Some of them bring puzzles I have never solved. One relates to a fine Sunday morning in March 1916. Reading one of the monthly libraries, I left the house, made my way through a labyrinth of little streets to a main road leading out of the town until I came to open fields near the Gog and Magog Hills, a continuation of the chalk formation of the Chilterns. The flatness of the surrounding country made them almost majestic two hundred and twenty feet above sea level. I looked round at the glory of the spring day; then, I turned and still reading began the slow walk home.

The story was about three British soldiers who, on their own, were winning the war against the Kaiser on the Western Front. One of them had the harrowing experience of being shut up in a building from which there was no escape. He was in dire danger of dying of thirst when he was found by his comrades and rescued. Later, I read a series of similar stories in the JESTER about three soldiers known as The Dauntless Three. I did not relate them to the story in the monthly library until years afterwards. I've wondered whether they were connected. Probably, as serials and series were frequently published in them.

John Fayers gave me his NELSON LEES when he went in the army in 1919. I gave them away except number 94, The Monk Of Montessor, which I recently found still hiding itself. Tattered, it was almost a remnant, but it was faintly readable and as I'd never read it, I felt it was time I did.

Fifty-year-old Robert Crosby, confidential secretary to Sir Henry Montessor of Montessor Castle, Yorkshire, calls on Nelson Lee. His employer has mysteriously disappeared during an evening walk. He has received a letter, bearing no address, from Sir Henry, saying he'd met a friend on his walk, had accompanied him to London and sold all his valuable gold ornaments and plate to Samuel J. Hearn, an American millionaire. He'd received a second letter instructing him to pack the gold articles in stout wooden cases for delivery to Mr. Hearn when he calls for them. Sir Henry might have done that because of financial difficulties, but the peculiar circumstances of the matter needs looking into. Suspecting foul play Nelson Lee takes up the case. He and Nipper and Robert Crosby, old in appearance and nervous in manner, travel by night mail to Montessor Castle - modernized into a mansion with its own electricity plant. Using a powerful magnifying lens, Nelson Lee compares the writing of the two letters with samples of the baronet's handwriting. They are identical, but Lee is convinced that they are forgeries. Only one man in the world is capable of that, an old enemy. Jim the Penman (Douglas James Sutcliffe) and he can see his hand in the affair.

From the flat moorland rises an old monastery surrounded by a bog a mile wide in parts, known as the Montessor Mire. Many people have lost their lives in it. Superstition abounds. Legend says a shadowy monk is to be seen flitting across the surface of the mire to lure people to death.

The next day as it is growing dusk, a mist spreading over the moor, Nelson Lee goes for a quiet ramble alone to ponder the whole case. He comes to a cliff edge. Twenty feet below stretches the bog. As he stands lost in thought he hears a slight

sound behind him. He turns. Four feet away is the Monk of Montessor. The cowed figure isn't a ghost as it leaps forward, punches Lee in the chest before he can defend himself and with a half-choking cry, he falls back into the bog. He struggles up, knowing that unless he's rescued in twenty minutes, five minutes if he didn't keep quite still, he'd be sucked to his death. Chilled to the bone, he remains cool in spirit, and dauntless in the face of death.

Providentially, Nipper has also taken a walk in the same direction. He hears a sudden desperate hail: 'Nipper! Thank Heaven!' He is astonished to see his master waist deep in the treacherous mire below him. He begins to ask questions. Lee cuts him short. He must fetch ropes. Then, Lee realizes the impossible nature of the task. There is no time for the double journey. He urges Nipper to say goodbye and go - not to wait there and see him die.

Nipper stunned and appalled looks round despairingly. No human being in sight; not even a tree to tear off branches; only the bleak, desolate moor. Then, he sees something that makes him gulp - a telegraph post closeby. He rushes to it and swarms up it. At the top, he takes a small pair of nippers from his waistcoat-pocket and in a flash severs one of the wires. Careless of splinters, he slithers down the post, races to the next post, reaches up and cuts the wire again. Telegraph communications are not as important as the life of a human being! On the ground again, he races back to Nelson Lee, the wire trailing behind him. Gasping for breath and streaming with perspiration, he finds him up to his armpits in the bog. Filled with joy, a glorious light in his eyes, he shouts, 'Never say die, Guvnor. I'll have you out of this in two ticks.'

Nelson Lee, his heart leaping, asks what he's done.

'Pinched Government property,' says Nipper.

He fastens a stone to the wire and throws it to Nelson Lee. He takes off his coat and holding firmly a piece of wood a foot long he'd found and fastened to his end of the wire to give him a good grip, inch by inch, with the strength of Samson, he pulls his master out of the quagmire and up the side of the cliff to safety. Every now and then during the process it sends forth a curious sucking sound as though reluctant to lose its victim from its deadly embrace. Nearly jumping with joy he asks Nelson Lee how he'd fallen into the quagmire. Mud begrimed and chilled with cramp, he tells him.

The ruins of the old monastery are shrouded in mist. They suddenly see a dim figure moving about there with an eerie, ghost-like movement. The quagmire surrounds the monastery on all sides, no-one could cross it.

To Nipper it is a spirit. To Nelson Lee it is a man. The one who had tried to murder him.

They return to the castle in silence. Nelson Lee reaches his bedroom without being seen and keeps from Mr. Crosby what has happened because of his nervous nature.

Another letter arrives from Sir Henry the next day saying Mr. Hearn will

arrive in the afternoon with positive proof of ownership of the gold and Mr. Crosby must hand it over to him and obtain a receipt.

The gold is packed ready to be taken away.

Mr. Hearn arrives in a chauffeur-driven landaulette. He is perfectly dressed and distinguished-looking. Mr. Crosby inquires after Sir Henry. Mr. Hearn assures him that he is well. He produces documents that show the Montessor gold is now his property. He's bought the plate and articles to put them on view to sightseers in his home in Illinois. Nelson Lee is present at the interview and smelling a rat because of the attempt on his life, he refuses as Mr. Crosby's representative to part with them.

Mr. Hearn leaves in a bad temper. He utters a threat. Nelson Lee will find out! Acting on Nelson Lee's instructions, Nipper shadows the car on a bike as it drives off. It goes slowly and that enables him to. After a short distance, the car stops. Nipper leaps off the bike and hides behind a rock. Mr. Hearn steps out of the car and it drives on. It is nearly dark and unseen Nipper follows Mr. Hearn. He comes on him talking to a cowed figure - the Monk of Montessor. The pair vanish through a narrow crevice amid the rocks. Sure the two men are involved in a criminal undertaking, Nipper switches his electric-torch on and follows them. The crevice is the opening of a deep tunnel that seems to lead into the bowels of the earth. He hears the two men talking, switches off his torch and creeps forward. Hearn and the Monk have an electric torch and he realises his peril as he listens. The floor of the tunnel is soft and moist; they come to a part where it is boggy. They are passing beneath the Montessor Mire. Hearn says it is treacherous but not if you don't dally at that spot. The tunnel ends with a flight of slimy stone steps.

Gripping tight his revolver, Nipper follows up the steps to a small dungeon that leads to another dungeon in which the two men are talking. Nipper steals close. He recognizes the voice of Jim the Penman. The Monk of Montessor is none other than Douglas James Sutcliffe, the master forger. Hearn - Robert Channing - is one of his confederates.

Sir Henry is a prisoner in the dungeon.

All is now clear. Sir Henry kidnapped, Jim had planned forgeries in his name to Mr. Crosby to obtain the gold plate and ornaments. Fortunately, Nelson Lee had prevented this taking place.

Nipper hears footsteps coming in his direction. He turns and runs for the tunnel that leads to the flight of stone steps. Jim the Penman catches sight of him and recognizes him. With a snarl he snatches the torch from Channing and gives chase only a couple of seconds behind Nipper, who hears him panting close to him. He gains on the forger and with a curse the latter pulls out his revolver and fires. The sudden concussion sounds like the roar of a cannon in the confined space. The bullet whines past Nipper's ears as he enters the stretch of tunnel which is boggy and treacherous, hits a projecting rock in the roof of the tunnel twenty yards ahead, dislodges the piece of stone and causes the roof to collapse and block the tunnel with chunks of solid rock for fully six feet. Nipper staggers back at the first intimation of

disaster but is unhurt. The tunnel blocked he is incapable of reaching solid ground again and trapped with Jim the Penman, Channing, and Sir Henry Montessor.

Nelson Lee goes to the top of the castle with a pair of binoculars to watch Nipper following Hearn's car. He sees the car stop, Hearn get out, the car go in, and Nipper follow him into the crevice and the pair disappear among the rocks. Obviously Hearn is meeting someone - the Monk. He sets out in overcoat and hat with a revolver in good trim, finds the crevice with the aid of a torch and goes in search of Nipper. A startling thing happens. He sees a point of light in the distance and knows it's an electric torch carried by a running man or boy. He guesses that Nipper is the runner. A shot rings out like thunder - the one that brought down the roof. He finds the tunnel blocked and fears for Nipper's safety. Then, he hears Nipper's voice, defying Jim the Penman.

'Yes, you've got me, you rotter, but the gov'nor will have something to say before long, Jim the Penman. You'll cop it in the neck, my pipin. The tunnel's blocked and you can't escape. We're all in the same cart.'

Sutcliffe's usually smooth and silky voice becomes hard and steely. 'Yesterday, I attempted to kill your master. Today, I'm going to kill you. You will die the same death I planned for him.'

Nelson Lee is frantic - and helpless. There is something going on; then he hears Jim the Penman say: 'There you are my lad, trussed up like a fowl. A few feet ahead the flooring of the tunnel is boggy. You'll be in it in a minute and left to sink in it and die. You may cry for mercy -'

'I'm likely to cry for mercy,' says Nipper angrily. 'I'm not a coward. But you'll swing for this Jim the Penman, don't forget that. You'll have the hangman's noose round your neck.'

'Enough of that, hang you.' Jim the Penman is furious.

'No, it's you who'll be hanged,' says Nipper, as undaunted as ever.

Nelson Lee grips his teeth together. He hears the Penman depart and calls to Nipper. Nipper tells him he's bound, the ropes cut him like wires. He's sinking - will be gone in a couple of hours.

Nelson Lee laughs lightly. He'll get him out of it.

Nipper responds by saying he's a good 'un.

Nelson Lee is terribly alarmed, his face is ashen grey. But he has the consolation of knowing that Jim the Penman and Channing are also trapped. He rushes back to the castle for help. To Mr. Crosby, he raps out that he wants men, shovels, picks. Almost overcome. Mr. Crosby gasps 'Good gracious!'

Two brawny, outdoor servants are soon ready. For safety, Lee takes Sir Henry's self-contained electric lamp to work by. Walking in the dark they are back to the tunnel in half-an-hour. They work hour after hour - Nipper made a miscalculation in the time it will take for him to die - Lee doing as much as the other two men put together, but seemingly as fresh as ever. All he thinks of is Nipper,

who pluckily tell them the stage of his sinking. He is still alive up to his armpits. The hours pass heedlessly. Everybody is tense, excited. Nipper calls out that he is going, sunk to his chin. The men work harder. Then, comes sudden deliverance. Providence steps in at the last moment. There is a sudden rumble, the workers spring back, thinking another fall is coming. There is no fresh fall, only a collapse of the pile of rock which obstructed the passage.

Nipper is rescued safe and sound.

Nelson Lee explores the tunnel with the two trusty men, expecting trouble with Jim the Penman and Channing. They are trapped and he means to capture them. He is doomed to disappointment. There is no sign of them. It is already dawn. A frost in the night has hardened the surface of the mire to enable them to escape across the morass.

Sir Henry is found unharmed in a dungeon.

Back at the castle, they find the Montessor gold has vanished. Jim the Penman and Channing have burgled the place and gone off with the gold in a car waiting half-a-mile away in a hollow.

Reduced to fact, one man kidnaps another man to obtain his gold plate by forgery; instead of biding him in a house with little likelihood of discovery, he puts him in a dungeon in the ruins of an old monastery surrounded by a quagmire and dresses himself up as the monk that is said to haunt it. The secretary of the kidnapped man receives a letter in his handwriting saying he had sold the gold plate to an American millionaire and it must be handed over to him when he calls for it. A following letter fixes the date and time the millionaire will call. The secretary appeals to Nelson Lee for help. Nelson Lee and Nipper go to the castle with him. Nelson Lee examines the letters, thinks they are forgeries and when a confederate of the kidnapper calls, he declines to hand over the gold plate. Out for a walk, Nelson Lee is pushed into the quagmire by the bogus monk. He is rescued in coincidental, nick-of-time manner by Nipper, who later gets himself in a fix and is rescued in the same way by Nelson Lee. Foiled, the kidnapper and his confederate burgle the castle and steal the gold plate, which could have been done in the first place.

Edwy Searles Brooks fashioned those few facts into a story for young readers. He knew they wanted thrills and supplied them.

Life seemed dull and dreary when I was a boy. Nothing much happened in the way of excitement, but looking back, I think that some of what happened could have been 'touched up' with effect by Edwy Searles Brooks. There was the time when a policeman chased me. He actually ran all out and drawing close and shouting, 'You young sod,' he hurled his cape at me. It knocked me flat. Heedless of gravel rasb to hands and knees, I got clear of the cape and ran like mad, again. The training-ship, reformatory, and birch seemed close, but content with summary justice, he did not follow me.

I was thirteen when that took place. A few months later, on my way to school, I threw stones up an apple tree overhanging a garden wall. A policeman saw me, I was summoned and had the dreadful experience of seeing him standing baldheaded

reading from the Bible that all he said was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God. That sounded like the Last Judgment.

Nervous and apprehensive, I stood and looked up at the three old men seated in a row looking down at me. The middle one gave me a severe dressing-down about the seriousness of throwing stones up an apple-tree. He had a talk with his colleagues and looked down at me again. 'We are binding you over in the sum of five pounds to be of good behaviour for six months,' he said.

I could have shouted with joy. I'd been let off!

My father soon rid me of that idea. He was a bootmaker, working for bespoke shops. He only got five shillings for making a pair of boots. When he had a full seat of work we lived on the bread line, when he was slack we lived under it.

'I haven't got five pounds,' he said, 'and I shan't have if you get into trouble, so mark time on yourself.'

Determined to keep out of trouble I marked time on myself.

Early in the New Year there was a fall of snow. It was still snowing when I came out of school and joined a crowd of boys snowballing on Parker's Piece, a recreation-ground across the road. A lady came along the path with an open umbrella. Snowballs whizzed her way. None hit the umbrella. To be in with the rest, I had a go. Fatally unerring the snowball hit the umbrella and split it from top to bottom. A chorus of, 'Now, you've done it,' guided her towards me. Filled with dread, I waited. Suddenly, she stopped, turned and walked away.

What a piece of luck! Then, I was less sure. She might turn up at school - my cap-badge would give me away.

For days I was a prey to speculation of the blackest kind. But that was the end of it. A few weeks later, the period of probation was over and the binding-over papers were destroyed.

I'd had reason to be worried. Two boys I knew were out together when one picked up a workman's red-handkerchief that had in it tuppence ha'penny and a broken-bladed shutknife. He threw the handkerchief and knife away and split the tuppence ha'penny with his mate. They were found out and taken to Court. The boy that picked up the handkerchief was sent to His Majesty's Training-ship Cornwall for three years, his mate got six strokes of the birch.

Going up the Court left its mark on me and forty years later I wrote a factual account of my juvenile delinquency and sent it to the Talks Department of the B.B.C. The Talk - Bound Over - was accepted and I broadcast it on the Home Service on the 15th August, 1956. That led to my broadcasting twenty Talks about things that happened to me during my boyhood. A surprise. I'd never thought working-class life of much interest to anyone.

I found talking to an unseen audience nerve-wracking, but I got used to it and on the 23rd June, 1962, I welcomed the opportunity of broadcasting Magnets and Gems, a tribute to Charles Hamilton, who had died the previous Christmas. I always

felt a pigmy walking through the 'miles' of corridors of Broadcasting House and that day Jack Singleton, the producer, showed me round the new broadcasting department, chockful of 'controls', with a cheerful technician handling them. We had lunch at the top of the building in a big canteen resembling a glasshouse. I don't like heights above a three-tier ladder and looking out over London was a nightmare to me.

Paul Humphreys, a producer, had particular interest in me and he suggested I broadcast unscripted for one hour on the Third Programme. Could I do it? - that was the thing. My wife's comment on that was 'You talk for one hour - you could talk all day!' That settled it and on the 28th January, 1967, I broadcast unscripted for one hour on the Third Programme. The Talk, A Regular Scob (technical term for a shoemaker) was a homey one about the first twenty years of my life. Listeners liked it, so did newspaper critics and it was repeated on the Third Programme. A short interval and it was repeated again, with an introductory fanfare on the Home Service.

Derwent May, literary editor of THE LISTENER, wrote saying he would like to include it in GOOD TALK, the first anthology of B.B.C. radio, shortly to be published by Gollancz. It was included and there was I rubbing shoulders with Professor A. J. Ayer, Sir Bernard Lovell, Rene Cutforth and other notabilities I knew of only by name.

Listeners and radio critics asked for a sequel and on the 8th April, 1969, I broadcast a 45-minute unscripted Talk, Marriage On A Shoestring on the Home Service.

All told, I broadcast fifty-four B.B.C. Talks. Remarkable to think that my being pinched for throwing stones up an apple tree should lead to that, but life is full of surprises. Things happen that seem slight and insignificant, but it takes time to get them in focus and then they are seen in a different light. Fiction is basically fact. Something happens, fancy dwells on it, free rein is given to the imagination, and what might have been a commonplace incident is glamourized and dramatized into a best seller.

Neil Bell wrote scores of novels and hundreds of short stories. He made up his mind to write fifty short stories in fifty days. He sent them to me in batches as he wrote them and completed his self-imposed task. They were all published, one The Horse Dobbin, in an American woman's magazine, earned him four hundred pounds - when money was money. He had the remarkable ability to think up a story. I've never had that ability, but since I was a child I've had an excellent visual memory and things that have happened within the family circle, let alone outside it, crowd on me. Many, I'm sure, with a little touching up, would become readable fiction.

Here's a few examples - straight off the bat!

In 1909, my brother Tom, nineteen years old, stopped a runaway horse and cart on a main road, heavy with traffic, in Romsey Town, the railway district of Cambridge. He did it by leaping at the horse's head, clutching the reins and hanging on till the horse stopped. A brave act, much talked about at the time. The owner of the horse and cart rewarded him with half-a-crown!

My brother Nap had infantile paralysis when he was a little child. That left

him with a paralysed right leg, which he could hang round his neck. In spite of this severe physical handicap, he taught himself to swim at an early age. When he was sixteen, he saved a man from drowning in the River Granta. He was rewarded with tuppence. Rattled and indignant when he returned home, he said: 'You'd have thought he'd have given me a bloody bob, wouldn't you.' Evidently, the man undervalued himself!

Nap also showed his mettle on the 12th May, 1914, two days after he was nineteen. Peddling one leg, he cycled from Cambridge to Colchester and back, a distance of ninety-eight miles, in one day, in a fruitless search for work at his trade as a shoe-repairer.

At five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon in 1922, I left the office where I worked to walk the mile and a half home; instead of turning right, I turned left, a rare change of mind as I walked the journey four times a day (for seven years!) and to go another way increased the distance. Nineteen years old, I felt exceptionally free to enjoy the weekend (a long time then, only a few minutes now). At the end of the street, I turned right. Coming towards me was a smartly dressed girl (girls knew how to dress then); she had a graceful walk (as rare in human beings as a white blackbird), dark eyes and black hair. She took no notice of me as she passed, but I looked round at her - admiringly, ardently. How I found out who she was and where she lived - in a village three miles from the town - and what followed cannot be told here, but a few months later, we were married.

On a Sunday morning in May 1935, I went with my wife Jess, daughter Jess, and son Jack, to Byron's Pool, the site of Trumpington Mill, for a swim. Jess was eleven years old, Jack was nearly eight. The sluice-gates were half-open, the water rushing through them making it rough in the mill-pool, so we went above the weir. Jess was first in the water. She practised motionless floating, then the propellor. On her back, the tips of her toes above the water, her hands and arms circulating at the back of her head, she was suddenly caught in the fast-flowing current and with a little cry swept under. Alarmed, I ran to the other side of the weir. She had already surfaced and waved to show she was all right. She'd gone through one of the half-open sluice-gates on to the 'apron' and been tossed bodily into the foaming water of the Pool - unharmed.

Business affairs stopped me, an external student of London University, from staying in London for a week to sit for the Final of the London B.Sc. (Econ.) examination. Daily, I cycled to the railway-station to catch an early-morning train to Liverpool Street; I then travelled on the Underground to South Kensington. It was a worrying time. Late one day meant delaying until the following year to sit for the examination again. A bleak prospect after studying hard for a long time. One morning when I got to the station I found I hadn't my glasses with me. I'd be severely handicapped without them. Was there time to go back? A quick decision and I was riding fast for home. I got my glasses, raced back, threw my bike against the wall of the station, rushed on the platform and in the nick of time jumped in a carriage as the train was leaving the platform.

In 1951, my son Jack and his wife Jill, were crossing a field when they heard

a muffled, grunting noise behind them. Looking round they saw a bull a few yards away tossing its head as though intent on charging. Alarmed, they stood still. The bull not moving, Jack told Jill to back away slowly until she felt safe to run while he tried to centre its interest on him. She did so. Then, he beckoned the bull and said, 'Come on'. The bull didn't move. Beckoning the bull and saying, 'Come on,' he slowly backed away. The bull followed. He stopped, the bull stopped. Beckoning and saying, 'Come on,' he continued to back away. The bull didn't follow and he was able to escape. There had been no sign of the bull when they entered the field and they suspected the farmer, or one of his hands, of letting the bull loose as they were trespassing.

{Bulls are Jack's favourite animals.}

Nearly thirty years ago, my wife and I were out for a walk when a fire-engine sped past, its bell clanging. With the detachment that goes with freedom from worry, she said: 'Somebody's house is on fire. I'm glad it isn't ours.' Half-an-hour later, we returned home and saw two fire-engines outside the house. One drove off as we drew near. A fireman of the other, while rolling up a hose, told us what had happened. Smoke had been seen coming out of the kitchen door. A neighbour had telephoned the fire-service, another neighbour, more practical, had forced the lock of the door and hooked a saucepan of burning fat off the gas-stove with a garden fork. No serious damage was done, but the house reeked with the smell of burning fat for days and that was unpleasant.

In 1934, I founded a swimming club in Cambridge. That led to my becoming an honorary representative and examiner for twenty-one years for the Royal Life Saving Society. Drama and comedy crept in. At midnight, my wife in Addenbrooke's Hospital, the telephone rang. Keyed up with suspense because her condition was critical after a major operation, I leaped out of bed, almost fell downstairs and lifted the receiver. A Cambridge University undergraduate inquiring about the Award of Merit examination of the Society! I fixed a time and date for him and went shakily back to bed.

A knock on the front door of my house. I answered it. A policeman waiting with the Black Maria to take me to Police Headquarters, not for breaking the law, to examine a life-saving class of policemen - the Chief Constable watching - in Land Drill and Theory before going to the Leys School indoor swimming-bath for the practical tests in the water. He'd been passing our way and thought he'd offer me a lift. Considerate of him, but I'd rather have made the three-mile journey in my own car.

On a Sunday afternoon in December 1916, when I was thirteen and ten months old, I had an irresistible urge to write a short story. I wrote it in a school exercise-book and called it The Ruined Abbey. A few months ago, Mike Rouse, a member of the Cambridge Old Boys' Book Club, asked me to give a talk about my writing life to an adult audience at Soham Village College, where he teaches. Responding, I took with me several of my books, a number of my typescripts and the exercise-book with The Ruined Abbey story in it. While we waited in the college hall for me to begin my talk, he picked up the exercise-book on the desk in front of him, opened it and

started reading the story. Suddenly, his face lit up and looking at me, he said: 'The Magnet and Gem!'

'Yes,' I said. 'Charles Hamilton was my teacher.'

I enlarged upon that theme in my talk and had great pleasure in doing so.

Just think: a thirteen-year-old elementary schoolboy writes a short story in an exercise-book in a shoemaker's kitchen-workshop during the dark days of the first world war and sixty-six years later he talks about it to men and women at a Cambridgeshire Village College where he, himself, had for several years taught Pitman's shorthand and typewriting.

Fiction?

No - FACT.

\* \* \* \* \*

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+ + + + +

Now at the end of my fifth consecutive year of elected office as Hon. Secretary and Chairman of THE GREYFRIARS CLUB which I instigated, founded and established during 1976/77 at COURTFIELD let me take this opportunity on my standing down for the reasons given in my Editorial Chat on page 11 of No. 38 of the COURTFIELD NEWSLETTER'S to extend HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS from all at COURTFIELD to all our friends in all the clubs everywhere and thank them for their very many scores of appreciative letters I have received.

Bob Acraman, Curator and Chairman of the TRUSTEES of the FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM & LIBRARY at COURTFIELD officially opened 16/12/79 by our much loved Miss Edith Hood (see reference C.N. No. 24/5, C.D.A. 1979 & 1980, pages 68 and 120 and C.D. March 1980, page 24).

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# THE TINKERITE SCHISM

BY

JOHN BRIDGWATER.



A paper read before the Society for the Preservation of Blakiana

Since presenting my paper on Interblakenisation<sup>1</sup> the Society has been stricken by a subtly subversive schism. This had its genesis in an intensive study of the 1920 material. Document UJ 849<sup>2</sup> imbedded in the Kestrelarea of the Zenithera gave rise to the hypothesis that had it not been for supreme Tinkerality<sup>3</sup>, Blaketry<sup>4</sup> would have ceased at that time.

The evidence for this theory is sufficiently convincing to have caused grave doubts to be entertained as to the relative importance of the two protagonists<sup>5</sup>. Sufficient support has been obtained for a serious call to be made by the Tinkerites<sup>6</sup> for the replacement of Blakiana by Tinkerana. The evidence cited by this faction as proof positive of the justness of their demands is given in Annex A.

Naturally such a demand has been received by the Blakians with some amusement and not a little derision, pointing out that volume SBL 2nd 171/723<sup>7</sup> together with paper DW 9<sup>8</sup> are all that is required to rebut such an outrageous suggestion.

This rebuttal has led to a further frantic search for more supporting evidence. However instead of a strengthening of the case a basis for a counter hypothesis was discovered in UJ 1179/1180<sup>9</sup>. The Pedrolians<sup>10</sup> now entered the field to do battle for the establishment of supreme precedence for the incomparable canine olifactory operative over his humanoid co-investigators. The documents cited are listed in Annex B.

The tremendous tripiatic controversy which now rages has forced the supporters of the established criteria to agree to a complete and integrated reciprocally projected reappraisal of the archival accretions with a view to producing a meaningful pan-Blatinpedriatic up-dated synthesis which will reflect the ambient climate of opinion as at this point in time<sup>11</sup>.

Unfortunately this reappraisal must, perforce, concentrate attention with sharp hyperfocality on every available minutia of evidence. Inevitably this will eventually highlight UJ 1157/1210<sup>12</sup>. Without the least shadow of doubt this presages the coming of the Bardellonians<sup>13</sup>.

It is to warn the Society of the dire consequences of entering on an internal quadriloidal divisination continuum that this paper is presented. For such fragmentation is the rampant prelude to the steep and slippery slope leading down

through Plummerana to the abyss of Confederana<sup>14</sup>.

NOTES

1. Published in C.D. Annual 1978.
2. "Tinker's Lone Hand", Union Jack. No. 849.
3. Tinkerality = Smart work by the young 'un. He saves Blake's life.
4. Blaketry = What the gov'nor does.
5. Guess who!
6. Tinkerites = We think Tinker is tops.
7. "The Case of the Crimson Conjuror", Sexton Blake Library, second series, No. 171, reprinted in No. 723. Tinker leaves Blake after a quarrel.
8. "Wanted", Detective Weekly, No. 9. Tinker wanted for murder.
9. "The House on Hathou", UJ No. 1179 and "Pedro takes Charge", UJ No. 1180 (two-part story). Pedro saves the lives of both Blake and Tinker.
10. Pedrolians = We dog lovers prefer Pedro the premier pooch.
11. "Complete and integrated... this point in time" = Let's all have a good browse through our collections.
12. "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Pudding", UJ No. 1157 and "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve", UJ No. 1210.
13. Bardellonians = We say none of the trio would last long without his nosh.
14. Trust those crooks to get into the act if they can.

ANNEX A

- Tinkerable documents cited by the Tinkerites. (The Tinker Saga)
- "Tinker's Schooldays", Boys' Friend Library First Series No. 229. (Also serial in weekly Boys Friend.)
- "The Four Musketeers", B.F.L. 1st Series No. 232 (Sequel to No. 229).
- "Tinker's Lone Hand", Sexton Blake Library First Series No. 199 (Title used for second time).
- |                                 |   |   |        |   |   |      |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--------|---|---|------|
| "The Crook of Chinatown"        | " | " | Second | " | " | 122. |
| "The Riddle of Crocodile Creek" | " | " | "      | " | " | 148. |
| "Raders Passed"                 | " | " | Third  | " | " | 1.   |
- "Tinker's Peril", Penny Popular No. 88.
- "Tinker Arrested", Detective Library No. 38.
- "Tinker Ltd.", Union Jack No. 125.
- "Tinker's Triumph" " " 180.
- "Tinker's Big Plunge" " " 406.
- "Tinker's Terrible Test" " 525.
- "Private Tinker RASC" " 589.
- "Tinker's Big Case" " 862.
- "The Five Clues" " 867.
- "Tinker, Wireless Operator" 1028.
- "Tinker's Secret" " 1149 Followed by the Nirvana series.
- "The Mystery of the Masked Rider" UJ No. 1178.
- "Tinker's Notebook" in a long series of Union Jacks.

ANNEX B

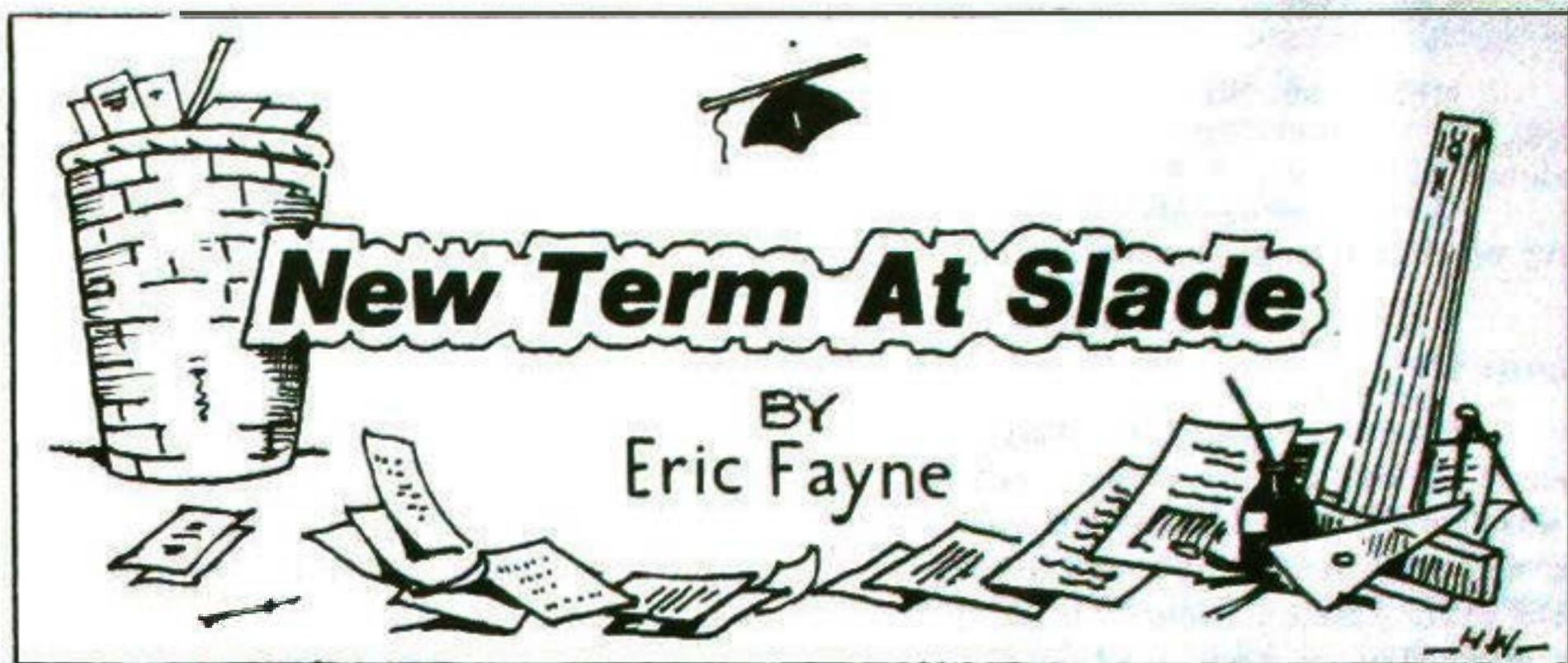
Further Pedrolian evidence.

- "The Dog Detective", Union Jack No. 100 (First Pedro story).
- "The Dog Detective" " " " 887.

When you have got a good title stick to it - only change the story.

The author apologises for any noticeable tendency on his part to pile on the ossification.





Mr. Buddle stood at his study window, gazing out across the quadrangle to the extensive Slade playing-fields beyond the road. It was a Monday, a lovely, sunny day in mid-September, just pleasantly warm. A silent scene which, within a few hours, would be changed dramatically. Slade College was assembling that day for the Autumn term.

Boys would be returning to school from all corners of the kingdom. And Mr. Buddle was happy. All was well with his world. He did not really like holidays. The long summer vacation, in particular, was a time of considerable boredom for him. He was happiest in harness, surrounded by boys.

The telephone rang. Mr. Buddle moved across to his desk, and lifted the receiver.

"Slade College! Buddle speaking!"

The voice which came over the wire was familiar.

"Mr. Buddle, this is your old friend, Francis Hatch. I guessed that you would be back at Slade for the new term. Have you had a pleasant

vacation?"

Mr. Buddle smiled.

"Mr. Hatch, how kind of you to ring! I returned to Slade several days ago. Most of the staff came yesterday. And how are you keeping?"

Mr. Buddle and the Rev. Hatch, the vicar of St. Mary's Church, Ever-slade, were old friends. For a couple of minutes they exchanged pleasantries over the line.

Then Mr. Hatch said: "My real purpose in ringing is to remind you of your promise to give a short address to our boys' club brigade. I am hoping that you will join us at our meeting in the church hall tomorrow evening, and give us your long-anticipated talk."

Mr. Buddle sat on the edge of his desk. He hedged.

"My friend - my very dear friend - did I make such a proposal? It would be difficult - term is just starting - I shall be extremely busy --"

He was not to escape so easily. The Rev. Hatch spoke a shade severely.

"You will be free in the evening, surely --"

Mr. Buddle was still on the defensive.

"I shall have marking to do - very much marking. I am afraid --"

Mr. Hatch became a shade reproachful now.

"I felt so sure I could rely on you. The boys will be so disappointed. It was last Spring. I asked you then, you will remember. You said to leave it till early Autumn. Mid-September, you suggested. I made a note of it in my diary --"

Mr. Buddle grimaced. He remembered the occasion in April when, weakly, he had put off the evil moment. Autumn had seemed a long time distant, way back in the Spring. He had hoped that the tentative suggestion would be forgotten in the intervening months. Evidently it had not been forgotten.

He said slowly: "Mr. Hatch, I very much regret --"

Mr. Hatch broke in.

"Cannot I persuade you, Mr. Buddle? You will recall how enthusiastic you were when I told you of the boys' club project we had in mind a year ago. You said it would be splendid for the local lads. You were right. Our Brigade project has been a great success. You even suggested the name we should give to it - the Curlews. You have named our Brigade the Curlews. A splendid suggestion from you, Mr. Buddle."

"The Curlew Patrol!" murmured Mr. Buddle. His eyes stole to a volume, bound in blue cloth, in his bookcase.

He said: "Mr. Hatch, I really cannot believe --"

Mr. Hatch spoke persuasively.

"Just an hour of your time, Mr. Buddle. One of our young officers will pick you up at the school at 6.45, and take you home again afterwards. I am relying on you, my dear friend."

Mr. Buddle did not give up without a struggle.

"I was going to say that I doubt whether your Brigade would wish to be lectured by a schoolmaster on one of their recreational evenings. What could I possibly say to interest them, Mr. Hatch?"

"Then you will come!" Mr. Hatch sounded pleased. "I knew that I could rely upon you. As for what you say, well, what about a description of some of your school activities?"

"Schoolmasters lead prosaic lives, my dear friend. Your lads would not be interested in my uneventful career."

"Uneventful!" ejaculated the voice over the line. "Come, come, Mr. Buddle! You are not an ordinary schoolmaster. You have had an extraordinary side to your scholastic career. You have added detection to your accomplishments. What about the little tales you have told me on occasion at the vicarage?"

Mr. Buddle said weakly:

"You think the Brigade boys might like to hear about one or two of my - my adventures as a - a sort of detective?"

"They will be delighted," said the Rev. Hatch with assurance. "Thank

you so much, my dear friend. All right, then. Mr. Cartridge will collect you in his car tomorrow evening --"

"Alas!" murmured Mr. Buddle, as he put down the telephone.

An hour later Mr. Buddle stepped out into the sunshine of the quadrangle. He adjusted his hat. It was fairly warm, so he had not bothered about a coat.

"The boys will all be back within a few hours, Parmint," he remarked to the lodge keeper at the school gates.

"They will that!" agreed Parmint. "The holidays go all too quickly. No sooner are the young scamps away than the young scamps are back, two months older and three months more wicked."

Mr. Buddle smiled tolerantly. The school porter did not share Mr. Buddle's pleasure at the thought of getting back into harness.

A Rover car was approaching, and it turned slowly in at the school gates. Mr. Scarlet, the Headmaster, was driving, and his son, Michael, a Slade prefect, sat beside him. Seated at the back was the Headmaster's wife. Their Irish terrier, Homer, was stretched across her lap.

The car came to a halt, and Mr. Scarlet put his head out of the window.

"Mr. Buddle, you are going out?" enquired the Headmaster.

"I am walking into Everslade, Headmaster. I intend to have lunch there, and then return to Slade."

"The boys will be coming in from three o'clock," said Mr. Scarlet.

"Some will be accompanied by parents. As always, I shall require your moral support. I shall see the more important. The housemaster will see some others. And some, Mr. Buddle, you will take off our hands."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"Of course, Headmaster. I shall be back in the early afternoon, long before the boys are due."

Mr. Scarlet smiled his agreement. Mrs. Scarlet gave the English master a friendly wave, while Homer, the dog, roused himself, peered at Mr. Buddle, and gave an excited bark. The car was driven on.

Mr. Buddle went through the gates, and strolled at a leisurely pace towards the little town of Everslade.

Once in the town, Mr. Buddle called in at the shop of Mr. Trohe, the newsagent, and placed an order for the delivery of his morning paper to be resumed from tomorrow. Then he sauntered along to the second-hand book shop run by Mr. Passenger. Mr. Buddle enjoyed browsing over old books. On one occasion, he had found a Holiday Annual among the books on display. That happy experience had not repeated itself, but Mr. Buddle lived in hope.

After ten minutes in Mr. Passenger's shop, Mr. Buddle emerged and looked across the road at the Post Office clock. It was nearly half-past twelve, and he decided it was time to take the light lunch he had planned. The Olde Devonshire Tea Shoppe, which he patronised occasionally, served a reasonable lunch for those whose palates were not too demanding, and Mr. Buddle was not a heavy eater.

The Tea Shoppe was on the

opposite side of the road, not far from the Post Office. Mr. Buddle moved to the edge of his pavement, joining a dozen or so other people who were waiting to cross the road when a lull in the traffic should occur.

A dray, laden with barrels of Devon cider, was approaching at a good pace, the dray rattling loudly and the horses' hooves making a clatter on the road. Once the dray was passed, there was nothing else near, and Mr. Buddle prepared to step out as soon as the large vehicle had gone by.

Suddenly he felt a bump in his back. He threw up his arms and staggered. The clatter from the dray was at its loudest as the horses swept level with the people waiting to cross. Mr. Buddle strove to regain his balance, but he would have gone forward into the dray had there not been an iron grip on his shoulder and a firm pull backwards on the tail of his jacket.

Again the schoolmaster staggered, but this time he staggered back away from the road. There was a murmur from the people standing near, and interested eyes were turned in his direction as he uttered an involuntary cry of alarm.

The grip on his shoulder was relaxed, and the gripping hand was transferred to his arm. Mr. Buddle turned, and found himself staring into a boy's face. The owner of the hand and of the face looked concerned.

"Are you all right, sir? I had to grab you suddenly. You would have been under that dray in another second. I think it was some man. He bumped into you --"

Mr. Buddle looked into the boy's face, which was pale and worried. He

swept his gaze down the pavement. Several people were hurrying along, not far away, and it was impossible to say whom the careless person had been who had knocked into him.

Mr. Buddle transferred his gaze to the face of his youthful rescuer. A boy of fifteen or thereabouts, with much concern evident in an open, trustworthy countenance.

Mr. Buddle drew a deep breath.

"I am astonished. I hardly know what happened. If I had fallen near that dray I might have been injured severely --"

"You should take more water with it," commented a surly-looking bystander.

"That kid may have saved your life," said a gentleman of the farming class.

People lost interest, and were taking advantage of a lull in the traffic to cross the road.

"Mr. Buddle, thank Heaven you are safe," said a tall lady, who had crossed over from the other side of the road. She had a bush of hair, with a severe and sparse little hat perched on the top of it.

Mr. Buddle raised his hat. He knew the lady.

"Did you see what happened, Miss Honeycomb? I am a trifle shaker. --"

Miss Honeycomb, the Everglade post-mistress, was a lady of great determination, fixed ideas, and strength of character.

"I didn't see you bumped into, but it seems somebody jostled you,

unless you had a mental aberration. Apparently this boy acted with promptitude and presence of mind. He saved you from possible catastrophe."

Miss Honeycomb went on her way.

Mr. Buddle eyed the boy thoughtfully.

"I am much obliged to you. You have rendered me a great service. What happened?"

The boy shrugged his shoulders.

"Some lout knocked into your back. I did nothing, sir - just grabbed you to stop you diving forward into the road. Can I take you somewhere, sir, to sit down and recover yourself? In the Public Library, maybe --?"

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"I owe you a debt, my boy. You must let me reward you in some way. A little donation to your pocket-money would be welcome, I am sure --"

"Oh, no, sir." The boy dropped his hand from Mr. Buddle's arm, and drew back a pace. "Nothing of the sort sir."

Mr. Buddle looked at him curiously.

"That is a very proper spirit, but the fact remains that I owe my well-being to your promptitude - to your courage, I may say. What is your name?"

The boy smiled. He was an attractive lad when he smiled.

"I'm Shane, sir. Conrad Shane."

Mr. Buddle thought for a moment.

"I should like to reward you, Conrad --"

"No, sir," ejaculated the boy, very definitely.

"I am just going to have a light lunch at the little cafe yonder. Could you join me at lunch, or are you on your way home?"

Conrad Shane was still smiling.

"I'm not on my way home, sir. I came to Everslade to look for a job. I'm turned fifteen, and it's time I got work. I shan't have any trouble in that. I'm a good worker, and I'm not particular what I do. Yes, sir, I'd like to have lunch with you."

"Good!" Mr. Buddle grasped the lad's hand and shook it. "Let us cross the road then, and have lunch."

Five minutes later Mr. Buddle and his youthful rescuer were seated on the verandah of Ye Olde Devonshire Tea Shoppe, and the schoolmaster ordered a rather more substantial lunch than he would have contemplated had he been alone.

"So your name is Conrad Shane," exclaimed Mr. Buddle. "Do you live locally?"

"A couple of stations up the branch line towards Brent, sir. I came in on the local train."

"You are a member of a large family?" queried Mr. Buddle.

"No, just my mother and me. My mother's a widow. I don't remember my father. He died when I was very small."

"I see," murmured Mr. Buddle softly. Conrad Shane was not very forthcoming about himself, and Mr.

Buddle did not wish to appear inquisitive.

"You are seeking work, you tell me. Where were you educated?"

"Just a village school, sir - near where I live."

Mr. Buddle leaned back in his chair.

"I am a schoolmaster, Conrad."

"No, sir!" Conrad Shane sounded incredulous. Just a little too incredulous, it occurred to Mr. Buddle.

"I teach English at Slade College, and I am in charge of the Lower Fourth Form there. Have you heard of Slade?"

The boy's face lit up.

"Everybody's heard of Slade, sir. It's a fine school, isn't it, sir?"

"Slade is the finest school in the world," said Mr. Buddle with pride.

"I should love to go to a school like Slade, sir," murmured Conrad, with a sigh.

Over the meal the schoolmaster and the boy chatted. Conrad did full justice to it. Mr. Buddle, with his digestion in mind, took things a little more easily.

Unobtrusively Mr. Buddle was taking stock of his guest. A wholesome-looking boy, with a frank, open, intelligent face. Dark haired; bright eyes which always seemed on the alert. He was neatly-dressed in grey slacks, a navy blue blazer, and an open-necked white shirt. It occurred to Mr. Buddle that, wearing the Slade blazer of mauve piped with white, Conrad Shane would look no different from any Slade boy. He spoke well, with just a slight west

country intonation. Had he been a Slade boy, he would have looked a credit to the school.

While they were taking coffee, Mr. Buddle observed:

"You speak well, Conrad. You have clearly mixed with people of refinement. You sound well educated for your age."

The boy answered, after a pause.

"I hope to take the School Certificate next year --"

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows.

"That's fine. But I thought you had left school - that you are seeking employment --"

"I work in my spare time, sir. I love reading. I know plenty of Shakespeare and the poets - my maths are fairish. I shall go on studying."

"Splendid!" remarked Mr. Buddle heartily. "I feel indebted to you. I should like to give you a small sum --"

The boy's face clouded.

"No, sir. Please don't think of it. It would make me feel small --"

Mr. Buddle smiled faintly.

"I admire your attitude, Conrad. If there is ever anything I could do for you - some small return --"

Conrad Shane rose to his feet.

"I must be getting along, sir. Thank you for a lovely lunch, and for telling me about Slade. I might meet you again some day, sir. I hope to be able to tell you that I have done well."

"I'm sure you will, Conrad." Mr. Buddle rose also. He held out his

hand, and the boy grasped it a little shyly. "Once again, Conrad Shane, remember that I am grateful to you. If ever there is anything I can do for you, the pleasure will be mine. My name is Buddle, and you know my address."

"Thank you, sir. I'll remember that, Mr. Buddle. It has been a bit wonderful to talk and to have a meal with someone like you."

Before Mr. Buddle could make a rejoinder, Conrad Shane turned and left the verandah. Mr. Buddle watched him pass through the Olde Devonshire Tea Shoppe and out into the sunshine.

Mr. Buddle rubbed his chin thoughtfully. In a way it had been a strange encounter.

"Somehow oddly unreal!" murmured Mr. Buddle to himself. He gazed out across the River Dart, and spoke aloud again: "I wonder -"

He ran his mind over old Gem stories - he often did, these days - trying to find some parallel at St. Jim's. Slightly dissatisfied, he shook his head. He could recall nothing.

He went into the main section of the Tea Shoppe and paid the bill.

Out in the High Street of Everslade, he looked up and down the thoroughfare. There was no sign of Conrad Shane.

By the middle of the afternoon Slade was a hive of activity. Some boys arrived alone; others came by car with their parents. New boys were usually accompanied by some members of their families. Special coaches, which had met special trains run from the junction at Brent, drove into the

quadrangle and disgorged their occupants.

The Headmaster himself received a few parents and guardians. Some were conducted to Mr. Fromo, the housemaster, who lived through his interviews in his own house adjoining the main school block. It was a busy time for the staff, and especially for the Matron.

Mr. Buddle sat in his study to take over some of the duties and relieve the Headmaster. His first visitor was a Mrs. Penney, whose son, in the Lower Fifth, wished to train as a schoolmaster when the time came.

"A noble profession, Mr. Buddle," gushed Mrs. Penney.

Mr. Buddle tried to look noble, without much success.

"Rewarding, would be a better term, perhaps," he amended. "You rarely meet a rich schoolmaster, Mrs. Penney, but it is a career which is rewarding in many other ways."

Mr. Hunwick, whose son was one of Mr. Buddle's own Lower Fourth boys, wished his son to take riding lessons.

"Riding!" echoed Mr. Buddle. "Riding what, Mr. Hunwick?"

"Well, not bicycles!" snapped Mr. Hunwick. "Horses, my dear Mr. Buddle, horses. Riding, jumping, dressage, and so on."

"Ah, horsemanship!" said Mr. Buddle, comprehending. "Yes, that can be arranged. We have an agreement with qualified instructors at a local stables, lessons to be fixed so that there is no interference with general studies or school games."

Mr. Shovel, whose son was also in the Lower Fourth, wanted Mr. Buddle to notify the Headmaster that he, Mr. Shovel, would be taking his son for a 3-weeks' holiday in Tunis in three weeks' time.

"Mervyn does not want to go," volunteered Mr. Shovel. "He does not appreciate the advantage of travel, and prefers to be with his friends at school."

"Your son has just returned from a 7-week vacation," said Mr. Buddle sternly. "The Headmaster would never allow a further holiday in term-time."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Shovel, going red in the face. "I have never heard of such nonsense. I presume that I am entitled to do as I wish with my own son."

"Certainly!" agreed Mr. Buddle. "You are entitled to do as you like with your own son. You are not entitled to bend the rules of Slade. You can take your son to Tunis in mid-term if you wish, but he will not be allowed to return to Slade afterwards. Yes, by all means, see the Headmaster, Mr. Shovel. He will tell you exactly the same thing."

And so it went on through that somewhat harassing afternoon. The last visitor, at about five o'clock, was Mr. Meredith, the father of one of Mr. Buddle's most trying pupils. Mr. Buddle and Mr. Meredith were old friends. In fact, it had been Mr. Meredith who had, some terms ago, introduced Mr. Buddle to the delights of a paper named the Gem, and turned the little schoolmaster into a Gem fanatic. Mr. Meredith had a vast collection of Gems, all beautifully

bound, and he entrusted many of those precious volumes to his son's form-master.

"I have brought you another volume," said Mr. Meredith. He placed a bound volume of Gems on Mr. Buddle's desk, and Mr. Buddle turned the pages over gently. Not so long ago he would have thought it impossible that he would ever have found a paper so important in his life as the Gem had become.

"A number of the earliest Talbot stories," explained Mr. Meredith. "You have read them before, but you expressed a wish to read them again --"

Mr. Buddle nodded in appreciation.

"You are kind to lend me your valuable books. You will take back with you the one I have just finished. The stories of Joe Frayne always fascinated me. Unlikely - impossible, we might admit - but magnificent reading matter."

Mr. Buddle took a volume from his bookcase, and replaced it with the one Mr. Meredith had brought with him.

"You will take a cup of tea with me?" ventured Mr. Buddle. "I think my duties are finished for the afternoon. All the boys should be safely back by this time."

"Nothing I should like better."

Mr. Buddle lifted his telephone, and, soon, Mrs. Cleverton arrived with hot scones, strawberry jam, and Devonshire cream, plus a large pot of tea. She poured out the tea for the two men before taking her departure.

And, for the next twenty minutes, these two Gem fanatics talked Gem lore and enjoyed a pleasant little meal.

After Mr. Meredith had left, Mr. Buddle had a stroll in the quadrangle, accompanied all the time by hosts of boys, seniors and juniors, who joined the English master to tell him about their experiences during the just completed vacation.

At 6.30 the Headmaster addressed the assembled school in Big Hall, outlining what was expected of everyone in the term which was just starting. That took half an hour, and then the boys dispersed to amuse themselves for the rest of the evening. The school which had lain silent and peaceful for so many weeks was now a hive of muted noise and industry.

Mr. Buddle dropped into the Junior Day Room to have a brief chat with his own boys, and then returned to his study. He was feeling distinctly fatigued.

It was nearly eight when the telephone bell rang. Mr. Buddle sighed, put down Mr. Meredith's volume of Gems over which he had been browsing, and stretched out a hand to take up the instrument.

It was Parmint, the lodge keeper, ringing up from the school gates.

"Parmint here, Mr. Buddle. There's a youngster at the gates, asking if he can speak to you."

"A youngster?" echoed Mr. Buddle in surprise. "One of our Slade boys, do you mean?"

"No, sir, not a Slade boy. Young chap says his name is Conrad Shane. He says you know him."

"Conrad Shane!" Mr. Buddle was perplexed. He glanced at his window. It was dark now outside. The Autumn evening had closed in. "Yes. I know Conrad Shane, Parmint. He rendered me a service in Everslade a few hours ago. What does he want, Parmint?"

"Just says he wants to speak to you, sir. Shall I call him to the 'phone?"

"No, Parmint. I will see him. Perhaps he needs my assistance in some way. Could I trouble you to bring him over to my study?"

"The School Captain is having a few words with him outside the lodge, sir. Shall I ask Mr. Antrobus to bring him along to you?"

"That will be excellent, Parmint."

Mr. Buddle put down the telephone. He stood with his back to the mantelpiece. It was about five minutes later that there was a tap on the door. Antrobus, Captain of Slade, looked in.

"I've brought a lad named Shane to you, sir. Parmint said you are expecting him."

"Thank you, Antrobus. Come in, Conrad," said Mr. Buddle.

Antrobus stood on one side, and Conrad entered the study. Antrobus departed, closing the door as he went.

Conrad looked round the room. He was twisting his cap in his hands. He eyed Mr. Buddle, a strange, elated expression on his face.

"I can say I've actually been at Slade. I can hardly believe it, sir." He spoke in a low voice.

Mr. Buddle said. "I did not expect to see you again so soon, Conrad. What can I do for you?"

The boy spoke nervously. Colour flooded into his face.

"I'm sorry to be a bother, sir, but --" He faltered for a moment. He seemed overcome by his own temerity.

Mr. Buddle waved a hand deprecatingly.

"It is no bother, Conrad. What is the trouble? If I can help you, the pleasure will be mine."

The boy spoke gratefully.

"You are very good to me, sir. You did say --" He broke off in confusion.

"What is the trouble, Conrad? I am your friend."

Conrad Shane squared his shoulders, and seemed to overcome his nervousness.

"I forgot the time, sir. I stayed too long in Everlade. I went to the cinema - I hardly ever go to the pictures - and didn't notice the time. I found that my last train had gone. I didn't know that the train service on the branch line ended so early --"

"You mean that you have no way of getting to your home? Is there no bus service?" asked Mr. Buddle.

Conrad Shane shook his head.

"The village where I live is only served by the railway line from Everlade to Brent. I feel worried, sir. I have nowhere to go. I've telephoned through to ask a friend of mine - a local clergyman - and he has let my mother know that I can't get

home tonight. She won't worry, sir. That's the really important thing."

Mr. Buddle gave his crusty smile.

"And that is all your trouble, Conrad?"

"That's it, sir. I haven't much sense, have I, sir? I'm a bit of an ass. I've never been anywhere or done anything much --"

Mr. Buddle patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't worry any more, my boy. I can soon get you home, and, after what you did for me, I am pleased to have the opportunity. I will ring up a taxi firm in Everlade which often serves me, and have you taken home by taxi. We may not get one immediately, but a little delay won't matter, will it? Better late than never, Conrad --"

Smiling pleasantly, Mr. Buddle sat down at his desk, and lifted the telephone.

Conrad Shane looked the picture of dismay, and, observing his discomfort, Mr. Buddle said, with assurance:

"It will be quite all right, Conrad. Don't worry any more."

"Oh, no, sir, please -- it would cost a lot - all that way by taxi, sir --"

Puzzled, Mr. Buddle paused before dialling.

"The cost is immaterial, Conrad. I am only too pleased to be able to help you."

"That sounds as though you are rewarding me, sir, for the small

thing I did today. I don't want any reward," Conrad Shane exclaimed. He looked down at the study carpet. "At least, not that sort of reward -- I wondered, sir -- It's an awful cheek, I know," he added ingenuously.

Quite astonished now, Mr. Buddle leaned back in his chair, and folded his arms.

"Tell me, Shane. Just what did you wonder?"

Conrad Shane stood in silence. Suddenly his face lit up.

"I wondered, sir -- It's a cheek, but I'd be no trouble. Could I possibly have a bed here at Slade, just for tonight? I wouldn't expect any food. I'd get up early and go before breakfast -- I know I ought not to ask, sir, but you did say --"

His voice trailed away. He eyed Mr. Buddle hopefully.

Mr. Buddle was regarding him with wrinkled brows.

"You would like to stay the night here at Slade, Conrad?" Mr. Buddle paused in thought. He smiled faintly. "It could be arranged, no doubt. There would be no difficulty. But surely --"

Conrad Shane broke in impulsively.

"Oh, sir, if I only could -- It would be fine. I couldn't let you pay for a taxi, sir. That would be the same as taking money from you. But if I could just stay for the one night --"

Mr. Buddle did not answer immediately. He was giving the unusual matter careful consideration.

Conrad Shane turned away. He moved to the door. He spoke in a low voice: "You can't do it, sir. I can see

that. I'm sorry I was so stupid. You said I could ask anything of you, sir, and I took advantage of it."

He had his fingers on the door handle.

"Stop!" Mr. Buddle spoke a little brusquely. "Don't be impulsive, Conrad. I meant what I said to you this afternoon. If you wish for a bed at Slade just for this night, I will arrange it."

"Oh, sir!" The boy's dark eyes sparkled. "I won't be any trouble, sir. I'll go in the morning before breakfast --"

"You will go in the morning after breakfast." Mr. Buddle smiled again. "I have to arrange matters. I must obtain permission from Mr. Fromo, our Housemaster here. Then I must find out from the Housekeeper which room she will arrange for you to have."

"You are very good, sir." Conrad was beaming now.

"In the meantime, while I am telephoning, you may sit in my armchair and look over this book. It is a volume of issues of a weekly paper that has always been very popular with boys."

So Conrad Shane sat in Mr. Buddle's armchair and browsed over Mr. Meredith's volume of Gems, while Mr. Buddle got busy on his telephone. The Housemaster had no objection to accommodation being provided for the night for Mr. Buddle's friend who had lost his train. The Housekeeper said that she would see that a bed was prepared at once in one of the private rooms near the Sick Bay.

Ten minutes later Mr. Buddle

rose to his feet.

"Well, Conrad, it's all settled. You are going to stay at Slade for the night. Room No. 3 in the private wing is being prepared for you."

Conrad stood up. He put the volume of *Gems* reverently on the table.

"I'm so glad, sir." Certainly the boy looked very glad, and Mr. Buddle felt a little moved. "I once read a story entitled 'King for a Day'. A fine story, sir. It's kind of come real for me. I'm going to be a Slade boy for a night. It's like a dream." He rubbed his hands together and laughed softly.

"I'm glad you're happy, Conrad." Mr. Buddle glanced at his watch. "It is some time yet before you will wish to retire. Come with me, and I will introduce you to some boys of your own age who will look after you till bed-time."

Conrad followed Mr. Buddle from the study, along the corridor and down the stairs, and thence to the Junior Day Room. There was a buzz of chatter from within.

Mr. Buddle opened the Day Room door, and entered, signing to Conrad to follow him. Various indoor games were in progress, some boys were reading, some stood in groups talking. There were about a couple of dozen boys present. Those engaged in more strenuous games had discarded their jackets. Others were wearing the familiar mauve and white blazers of Slade.

There was a lull in the noise at the entry of the English Master. He spoke:

"Is Pilgrim present?"

A boy detached himself from

one of the groups, and came across. He looked at Mr. Buddle in enquiry.

"Sir?" Pilgrim glanced curiously at the boy standing shyly beside the master. Fresh-looking, neat and tidy, but a little incongruous in his plain navy blue blazer. "New boy, sir?" enquired Pilgrim.

"No, Pilgrim. This is Conrad Shane, who saved me from possible injury in the town today." Mr. Buddle smiled pleasantly at his youthful guest. "He has lost his last train home, and is staying the night at Slade. The matron has provided him with a room. Conrad, this is Pilgrim, the Head Boy of my own form."

Shane and Pilgrim shook hands. Another boy, golden-haired and merry of countenance, sped across, having detached himself from a game of table-tennis. "This is Meredith," went on Mr. Buddle, "another of my boys. Meredith, meet Shane."

There was a happy look on Conrad Shane's face.

Mr. Buddle said: "I shall be glad if you two, Pilgrim and Meredith, will look after Shane until bed-time. Make him feel at home. Show him your formrooms and your study. Let him join in your games here, if he would like to. When you go for your supper, take Shane with you, and see that he makes a good meal. I'm sure he is hungry."

Conrad Shane laughed, and Meredith said: "We'll look after him, sir."

"I know you will," remarked Mr. Buddle. "When you are ready to go to your dormitory, bring Shane to my study, and I will escort him to the room he is to occupy for the night."

"You're very good," said Conrad Shane awkwardly.

Conrad Shane went off with Pilgrim and Meredith, and Mr. Buddle watched them for a moment or two. Then he turned and left the Day Room.

It was after half-past nine that a tap came on the door of Mr. Buddle's study. Mr. Buddle had completed a busy hour or more in preparation for the next day. Once or twice he had wondered how his unexpected guest was faring with the members of the Slade Lower Fourth.

"Come in," called out Mr. Buddle, from the depths of his arm-chair. One bar of his electric fire was burning now, for the Autumn evening had turned chilly.

The door opened. It was Pilgrim, and behind him stood Meredith and Conrad Shane.

"Enter, boys," said Mr. Buddle.

They entered.

"We're just off to dorm, sir," explained Pilgrim. "Shane has had his supper, and we've brought him to you."

Mr. Buddle stood up a little wearily. It had been a tiring day.

"Have my boys looked after you well, Shane?" he asked.

Conrad Shane nodded enthusiastically.

"I've had a grand time, sir. They've done me proud."

"We've enjoyed it, too, sir," put in Meredith. "We've shown Shane around, and he likes it a lot. He plays table tennis like an angel. Better than any of us."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Buddle. "Well, thank you very much for looking after our guest. Good night to you both. I will now take Shane to his room. You will see him again at breakfast, when you can say good-bye to him."

"We would like to have him in our dorm for the night, sir," suggested Meredith. "There's a vacant bed against the door. Garmanaway isn't coming back for a few days. He got 'flu at the end of the vac."

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"I think not, Meredith. The matron has provided a spare room for Shane."

Pilgrim and Meredith shook hands with Shane, and took their departure.

Mr. Buddle smiled at his youthful guest.

"You have enjoyed this evening at Slade, Conrad?"

There was no doubting the genuineness of the reply.

"I shall never forget it. I wish --"

Mr. Buddle regarded him whimsically.

"What do you wish, Conrad?"

"I wish that I could come to Meredith's school, sir. I wish that I could be a Slade man, like Meredith, and Pilgrim, and the others. It's a good wishing, is it, sir?"

"No, I fear it is no good wishing, Conrad." Mr. Buddle wrinkled his brows. Conrad Shane had reminded him of the Gem. So many things always did remind Mr.

Buddie of the Gem. Surely it was Joe Frayne, the waif Tom Merry had befriended while the hero of St. Jim's had his rather unlikely experiences in the slums of London, who had said: "I would love to go to Master Tom's school." And Joe Frayne, the waif from the slums, had gone to "Master Tom's" school. It couldn't have happened in real life. A lad like Joe Frayne, a slum waif, could never have been accepted at a school like St. Jim's, but the happening had made a splendid story, of almost Dickensian charm.

Mr. Buddle said gently:

"I wish it were possible for you to come to Slade, Conrad, - you would be a credit to us, I know - but --" He sighed. "Pupils for Slade are normally entered several years in advance. There would be many obstacles --"

Conrad Shane gave his open, attractive grin.

"I know, sir, but there's no harm in wishing. I wonder, sir --" He paused, with a little embarrassed laugh.

"What do you wonder this time, Conrad?"

"I was wondering, sir -- it's an awful cheek - would you just write on a sheet of paper that I have been a guest at Slade for one night, sir? King for a night, sir. I would value it a lot, and keep it for ever."

Mr. Buddle sat down at his desk. He selected a sheet of notepaper with the Slade College crest, took up his pen, and wrote:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Conrad Shane has been a guest at Slade College tonight, and we hope that he will come and visit us again.

Signed JOSEPH BUDDLE

Mr. Buddle added the date, took up the sheet, rose to his feet, and handed the document to Conrad.

The boy read it, a happy smile on his face.

"Thank you, sir, I shall value this." He kissed the paper, and gave a chuckle. "I'd rather have this than a fiver, sir."

Mr. Buddle opened his study door.

"And now, Conrad, I have work to do. I will take you to your room and say good-night to you."

Conrad Shane hesitated.

"Couldn't I possibly sleep in the empty bed in the dormitory with the boys? I'd much rather, if it wouldn't be breaking the rules."

Mr. Buddle rubbed his chin doubtfully. He gave a little shrug of his shoulders.

"It is unprecedented for a guest to sleep in the boys' dormitory, but, if that would please you, I don't think anyone would object. And the boys seemed to like you. You can have the vacant bed in the Lower Fourth dormitory, and then, before you leave in the morning, you can take breakfast with the boys in the dining hall. Does that satisfy you?"

Conrad Shane's face had lit up.

"Oh, yes, sir, thank you very much."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"Come, then, and I will escort you to the dormitory."

It was after eleven when Mr. Buddle turned into his own bed. It had been a tiring day, as the day of re-assembly always was. This first day of term had been like a couple of score other opening days which Mr. Buddle remembered. Apart, of course, from the little adventure concerning Mr. Buddle's rescuer, Conrad Shane. That was unique.

It was a nightly ritual for Mr. Buddle to read the Gem before he switched off his light, and tonight was no exception.

To bed with him Mr. Buddle took Mr. Meredith's volume. He adjusted his bedside lamp to his satisfaction, plumped up his pillows, lay back, and opened the volume. He turned to the story entitled "The Toff". He had read it before, some time ago, but Gem tales never grew stale for Mr. Buddle.

The story started dramatically. Arthur Augustus was walking back to the school alone along the Rylcombe Lane. At a stile - Mr. Buddle loved the rural touches - Gussy came upon three rough-looking men who barred his way. From their remarks, it became obvious that their names were, respectively, Hookey, Rabbit, and Nobby. They set about robbing the St. Jim's "swell". But help was at hand in the person of a handsome youth, with clear-cut features and dark eyes, of about Gussy's own age. The newcomer routed the thugs. Gussy thanked his rescuer who said that his name was Talbot.

Gussy reported the incident to Mr. Railton.

A pleasurable smile was playing over Mr. Buddle's lips as he got into the story. He read on.

Late that night, Dr. Holmes was walking back to the school along that same Rylcombe Lane in the darkness. He, too, was attacked by Hookey, Rabbit, and Nobby. He, too, was rescued by the handsome lad named Talbot. And just then, Mr. Railton arrived. He had been walking to meet the Head to escort him on the final part of his saunter back to the school.

Learning that Talbot had no home, the Head took the boy back to St. Jim's.

Mr. Buddle paused in his reading. He lowered the book, his brow creased into wrinkles of thought. He turned his eyes towards the black blur of the curtained window of his bedroom.

Something in the chapter he had just read had caused a strange stirring in his memory. He wondered what that "something" was.

Still frowning, Mr. Buddle looked back over the page he had just finished. He came on the line at last. Something in his brain had clicked as he read it a short while before. He read it again.

"Talbot would have passed quite easily among a crowd of St. Jim's fellows. There would have been nothing to single him out from the rest."

Mr. Buddle knew now why that paragraph had given an odd jolt to his memory. Twelve hours earlier he had experienced the same thing with Conrad Shane. It had passed through his mind that, had Shane been wearing the Slade uniform, he would have passed easily as a Slade fellow. Mr. Buddle shifted in his bed. That paragraph had given him an eerie, uneasy feeling.

Mr. Buddle referred again to

printed pages. He read:

Mr. Railton did not speak. His eyes were fastened upon Talbot. Perhaps it struck him as strange, to say the least, that the unknown lad should have been on the spot, ready to come to the rescue, on both occasions when the same foot-pads had attempted a robbery. But if Mr. Railton pondered upon the peculiarity of that circumstance, not so the Head.

Mr. Railton clearly suspected a put-up job. Mr. Buddle was beginning to wonder, with a little alarm, whether his rescue by Conrad Shane twelve hours earlier, had been a put-up job.

A little further on in the story, Talbot met Joe Frayne. Joe recognized Talbot as a juvenile criminal, nicknamed "The Toff", whom he had met in the slums of London before Joe himself was snatched by Tom Merry from that sleazy environment.

Mr. Buddle closed the volume of Gems, but he did not put out his light. A curious coincidence that he had come on the story of "The Toff" on the very evening that Conrad Shane was a guest at Slade, vouched for by Mr. Buddle himself. Had the affair with Shane been a put-up job? Something now told Mr. Buddle that it had. He strove to remember the startling event in the town when Conrad had saved him from going under the cider dray.

Surely, though he had not realised it at the time, there had been the firm grip on his shoulder at the very same moment that he had received the shove in the small of his back. So there had really been no danger of his plunging into the traffic. Mr. Buddle wished that he could remember more of that psychological moment.

Conrad had refused a reward. Had that been a clever piece of preparation for the time when he would turn up, hours later, and ask to stay the night at Slade? A rhetorical question. Mr. Buddle had no answer to it. Possibly, all too likely, he was doing the lad a grave injustice by letting such questions pass through his mind.

What would be the purpose for Conrad Shane to get himself into Slade? Mr. Buddle had a ready answer to that, but not a convincing one. To rob the school. To admit an accomplice, an older man, perhaps. There was not a lot to steal in a school. Still, there would be pickings to make it worth while for petty thieves.

Was Conrad Shane, at that very moment, downstairs somewhere in the sleeping school, admitting some thug to carry out a robbery?

Mr. Buddle felt uneasy. A glance at the clock on the mantelpiece showed him that it was after half-past twelve in the morning. If Shane really intended to admit an accomplice, or to rob the school solo, this would be the ideal time for it. He would be at it now, in all probability. It would be a simple matter to ascertain whether the boy was still in bed.

Mr. Buddle rose from his bed, slipped on a warm, thick dressing-gown, and slid his feet into carpet slippers. He took a torch from a drawer, and a white handkerchief.

In his doorway, he paused. A thought shot into his mind. Surely if Shane were planning to admit an accomplice, or something else was in the wind, he would have preferred the private room which had been prepared

for him? Yet he had insisted on a bed in a dormitory where there was always the chance that some boy might awake. Was it just another daring piece of trickery? Mr. Buddle did not know.

Silently, in his slippers, Mr. Buddle went along the corridor. Small pilot lights were left burning all over Slade at night, in case of emergency, so the master did not have to move in darkness. He went down the staircase. Everything was silent as the grave. The hive was asleep.

Outside the Lower Fourth dormitory, he paused for a moment, listening. Quietly, he opened the door. The dormitory was peaceful and silent. It was dark within. There was no moon to shed a ghostly light through the high, long windows.

The bed which had been allotted to Shane was the first on the right; the bed normally occupied by Garmansway, who had not yet returned for the new term.

Mr. Buddle draped the white handkerchief over the front of the torch. Moving silently, the master crossed very slowly and carefully to that first bed on the right. He switched on his torch, and directed the dim, diffused light towards the bed.

Conrad Shane was there, obviously fast asleep. His dark hair formed a contrast against the white pillow. The blankets were drawn up close to his chin. Mr. Buddle stood regarding him in the soft light from the torch. The boy did not move. He was on his side, his closed eyes towards the door. He looked the picture of innocence. Mr. Buddle smiled wryly. Conrad Shane had no appearance of being another version of "The Toff".

Mr. Buddle raised the torch, and swept the dormitory with the dim ray. Every bed was occupied with a sleeping figure.

The master moved back to the door, and for several minutes he stood there listening. There was the occasional grunt, the occasional deeply drawn breath, the occasional squeak of a spring as a recumbent figure moved a little in a bed.

Mr. Buddle left the dormitory, closing the door silently behind him. He made his way along the dimly-lit corridor.

Ten minutes later Mr. Buddle turned into his own bed, switched off his light, and settled down to sleep, feeling somewhat relieved and not a little ashamed of his unworthy suspicions.

It was the following evening. Classes were over. Boys had shown just how much they had forgotten in the weeks of the long vacation. It had been a lively day.

Mr. Buddle had seen no more of his youthful visitor of the previous day. In response to a brief enquiry, Mr. Buddle learned that Conrad had breakfasted at the Lower Fourth table in the dining hall, had said good-bye to the temporary friends he had made, and had taken his departure. Mr. Buddle thought no more of him. There was plenty to occupy the English master's mind during the next few hours.

At 7 that evening, Parmin rang through to inform Mr. Buddle that a car was waiting at the Lodge, ready to take him to Everslade and to

the Boys' Club connected with St. Mary's Church.

Sighing inwardly, he crossed the quadrangle as the shades of the September evening were falling fast. At the school gates stood a little Austin Seven. A young man introduced himself as Mr. Cartridge, one of the honorary officials of the club.

Mr. Cartridge was a talkative young man, and was obviously extremely keen on his work at the club. He was profuse in his thanks to Mr. Buddle for giving his time to entertaining the boys with what Mr. Cartridge was sure would prove an absorbing address. Mr. Buddle, who was not so sure that the boys would find his talk absorbing, answered modestly. In ten minutes they were at the Church Hall.

The hall was a roomy building, beside the Church. There was a buzz of noise from within.

In the vestibule of the hall Mr. Buddle found the Rev. Hatch awaiting him. Mr. Hatch was a bright-faced, kindly, middle-aged gentleman, his greying hair belying the youthfulness of his face and build.

"My dear old friend, how good of you to come!" said Mr. Hatch.

"You wouldn't allow me to escape," replied Mr. Buddle. His eyes twinkled. "I doubt whether your lads will be so pleased with me as you are."

Mr. Hatch seized his hand with a grip that made his old friend wince.

"You underestimate yourself, Mr. Buddle. I am sure our boys are going to enjoy every word of your address to them."

For a few minutes the two

friends chatted in the vestibule. Then Mr. Hatch said: "I must not waste your time. Let us go into the hall, and we will introduce you to our young fellows."

They entered the hall, which was brilliantly lit. There were about thirty youngsters present, the ages ranging from twelve to the later teens. There were several young men also - one or two looking enthusiastic, some seeming harassed. There were small billiards tables, table-tennis tables, dart boards on the walls, a vaulting horse, and plenty of items of equipment for athletic or less active pastimes. At the moment, the boys were in small groups, each group centred on one of the young men directing operations. It reminded Mr. Buddle of a larger version of some of the Day Rooms at Slade.

Most of the boys were wearing a club uniform - shorts or grey trousers with green shirts, and black scarves knotted round their necks.

At the far end of the hall there was a low stage. On the front of the stage there was a table, with two chairs behind it. To the right of the table there was a lectern. There were other chairs at the rear of the stage.

A sandy-haired young man came forward, and Mr. Buddle was introduced to him.

"Mr. Buddle, this is Mr. Scott, the chief officer of our Curlew Brigade."

They shook hands. Mr. Scott said effusively:

"So good of you to come. The boys are anxious to hear you, I am sure. And I imagine that one of them

is especially grateful, for it is due to you that he has won our first Initiative Badge. The Initiative test and badge was my idea, Mr. Buddle. I am full of ideas. Full of them!"

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows in polite enquiry.

"Initiative?"

"Mr. Scott is full of what they call pep," explained Mr. Hatch.

"Our Brigade boys can win badges for various forms of efficiency. We run it on scouting lines, Mr. Buddle. My latest idea has been an Initiative Badge. It is so important that young people should show INITIATIVE." In his fervour, Mr. Scott spoke in capital letters. "Don't you agree, Mr. Buddle?"

"I'm sure you are right," agreed Mr. Buddle.

"I set six tasks - some of them were really quite outrageous, but to perform any of them needed INITIATIVE. To earn his Badge, a Curlew has to carry out one of those tests."

Mr. Buddle nodded politely. He did not quite see what Mr. Scott's Initiative tests had to do with him.

"One of these tests was that a Curlew, quite unknown to anyone at our famous local college, Slade, should spend one night there as an honoured guest."

Mr. Buddle stared hard at the beaming young man with the sandy hair.

"I don't quite follow, Mr. Scott. Please explain."

"You yourself, Mr. Buddle, provided the means for one of our lads to earn our Brigade's first Initiative Badge," said Mr. Scott cordially.

Mr. Buddle cast an eye over the green-shirted throng of boys in different parts of the large hall. He had an inkling of what he was going to learn. His gaze returned to Mr. Scott. The friendliness had gone out of the schoolmaster's face.

"You mean?"

"I refer to our lad Conrad." Mr. Scott drew a sheet of paper from his breast pocket, and unfolded it. Mr. Buddle recognised it. He saw in his own hand-writing: "To Whom It May Concern". Mr. Buddle began to see light. His feelings were very deep at that moment.

He said, coldly: "Am I to understand that the lad, Conrad Shane, to whom I gave that paper, is one of your members of this club, and that to stay a night within the walls of Slade was a means towards earning a badge for initiative?"

"That is so," concurred Mr. Scott. "The boys are required to produce proof that their claims are true."

"You mean that the paper I gave him - that paper - is a document of proof and nothing more." With rising annoyance Mr. Buddle recalled the words of Shane, the previous evening when he accepted the paper: "I shall value this. I'd rather have this than a fiver."

"You did not know Conrad before yesterday, Mr. Buddle?" asked Mr. Scott. "He was unknown to anyone else at the school?"

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"So far as I know, he was quite unknown there."

"May I ask how it came about that he was so honoured?" enquired Mr. Scott.

Mr. Buddle spoke slowly.

"He saved me from an accident in the town, or so it appeared to me at the time. I wanted to reward him, but he refused. He asked for a night's lodging at Slade. He stayed as a guest, and, at his own request, slept in a Slade dormitory."

"Initiative, with a little luck thrown in." crooned Mr. Scott.

Mr. Buddle spoke grimly.

"Perhaps I should add --"

Mr. Scott did not notice that Mr. Buddle intended to add something. He said:

"I'm going to ask a favour of you, sir. Before you give your address to the club, will you please honour us by presenting this Initiative Badge to the boy who has earned it - Conrad Shane?"

He drew an envelope from his pocket. From the envelope he drew a neatly embroidered badge.

Mr. Buddle took it, and gazed down at it with frowning brow.

He said very quietly: "I will present it to the boy."

Mr. Scott hurried towards the stage.

The Rev. Hatch had been watching Mr. Buddle. He noted the abstracted look on the schoolmaster's face, the tightening of the lips. The sensitive clergyman realised that something was wrong. He placed a hand on Mr. Buddle's arm. He said in a low voice:

"You are not happy about the matter, Mr. Buddle?"

Mr. Buddle gnawed his lower lip. He looked across the hall, casting an eye from one group of boys to another. He glanced towards the platform which Mr. Scott had mounted. The Curlew leader was standing by the table, on the dais, waiting to be joined by the guest speaker.

Mr. Hatch said:

"Did the boy, Conrad, misbehave himself at Slade - is that what you are hesitating to say? I can see that you are worried --"

Mr. Buddle breathed hard.

"His conduct at the school was exemplary. He was liked by the Slade boys who met him. Nevertheless --"

Mr. Hatch said:

"Perhaps it will help you if I let you know that Conrad Shane is one of the most keen of all our lads in the club here. In spite of all he does to assist his widowed mother - his father died when Conrad was only eight - he has always managed to cycle here from his home out in the country. His enthusiasm knows no bounds."

"He cycles?" Mr. Buddle almost snapped out the remark. "He has a bicycle."

"Indeed, yes. He cycles everywhere. As I say, he comes to all our meetings on his cycle."

The compression of Mr. Buddle's lips indicated that the clergyman's words had not had the soothing effect intended.

Mr. Hatch added hurriedly, speaking softly:

"Conrad Shane has his faults, Mr. Buddle. All the same, he has one immense virtue. He is a splendid son at home. It is a virtue which atones for many sins."

Mr. Buddle said: "The club officer is waiting for me. I must go to the platform."

Mr. Hatch nodded. He pressed Mr. Buddle's arm again.

"I will accompany you," he exclaimed.

The two men mounted the platform where Mr. Scott was waiting. Mr. Buddle and Mr. Hatch sat down at the table, and Mr. Scott went to the front, and blew a whistle.

"Boys, our distinguished guest is here. He is going to address us. Boys, boys. Bring your chairs forward, please. Quietly, please, boys."

Under the direction of their leaders, the boys brought chairs up and placed them in half a dozen rows in front of the stage. The clatter died down as everybody was seated at last.

Mr. Scott cleared his throat. He held up a hand for silence.

"Mr. Buddle is a schoolmaster from Slade College, of which you all know." There was a muffled groan from somewhere at the back, and a shuffling of feet in the front. "Mr. Buddle has taken a great interest in our Brigade. It was, in fact, Mr. Buddle who suggested the name which we adopted for our movement - the Curlews." A few claps from the young men seated among their boys. "Mr. Buddle has kindly agreed to come here this evening to give us a little address. We are grateful to him."

Mr. Hatch, on the dais, clapped

vigorously. There were desultory claps in the audience, a stifled yawn or two, a kick or two on chair legs.

There was a fixed, artificial smile on Mr. Buddle's face. He wished himself anywhere but in the St. Mary's Church Hall.

Mr. Scott was plunging on.

"Before Mr. Buddle addresses us, there is a service which he has agreed to perform. It is the presentation of our first Initiative Badge, gained by one of our Brigade. I now ask Conrad Shane to come on to the stage."

Mr. Buddle had risen to his feet as Mr. Scott was speaking. He had the embroidered badge in his hand as he moved forward on the platform. Mr. Buddle looked across the hall to the back row where a youngster stood up as his name was called. The boy, tall, handsome, dark-haired - one who would easily have passed as a Slade boy - pushed his way down the row, and made his way to the platform.

There was a loud burst of applause from the other Curlews. Either Conrad Shane was popular, or, possibly, the Curlews were glad of the opportunity to let off steam.

He mounted the steps at the side of the stage. He walked and stood near Mr. Buddle. Mr. Buddle looked searchingly at the boy. Clad in dark trousers, green shirt, with the scarf knotted round his neck, he looked neat and efficient - a boy who would go far. No Talbot - this lad was no juvenile criminal. No Tom Merry, of course. The St. Jim's parallels passed through Mr. Buddle's mind in a flash.

What did Mr. Buddle read in his eyes? Impudence, or an appeal?

Nervousness, perhaps. Mr. Buddle was unsure.

Conrad Shane stepped forward, and Mr. Buddle pinned the rather striking Initiative Badge on the breast pocket of the boy's shirt.

The applause was renewed, as Mr. Buddle prepared to deliver a little homily - a mild exposure of the evils of duplicity. A warning against furthering ambition by employing deceit.

As he waited for the applause to subside, Mr. Buddle looked round. His eyes fell on the Rev. Hatch, seated behind him. There was a gentle, tolerant smile on the clergyman's face. Suddenly Mr. Buddle remembered what Mr. Hatch had said: "He is a splendid son at home. Something which atones for many sins."

Mr. Buddle touched his dry lips with his tongue. Another thought. It was possible that the little rescue of the day before had been genuine. He did not think it was - but he didn't know.

Mr. Buddle held out his hand.

"Congratulations, Conrad!" he said simply.

"Thank you, sir." It came just above a whisper. Conrad Shane raised his eyes and they met Mr. Buddle's. The lad was smiling. What, Mr. Buddle asked himself, did he see in that ingenuous smile? Gratitude? Or mild mockery? Another image from St. Jim's came into Mr. Buddle's mind in a flash. Cardew! The whimsical, loveable, and rather unscrupulous Cardew of the Gem stories. Mr. Buddle dismissed the thought at once. He was becoming too Gem conscious.

Amid loud applause, Conrad

Shane returned to the obscurity of his seat in the back row.

A few more words of introduction from the stage, and then Mr. Buddle stepped up to the lectern.

The Rev. Hatch clapped loudly. The young men joined in, and nudged their young Curlews to follow suit. Desultory applause greeted the start of the evening.

Mr. Buddle started: "I am a schoolmaster, but --" He looked over the uninterested faces before him, at the sprawling figures in their green shirts, at a crowd of youngsters prepared to be bored for the next twenty minutes. "But," went on Mr. Buddle, "I am also a detective."

A slight quickening of interest.

"Some of you may have heard of a celebrated character in fiction named Nelson Lee -- Ah, I see that you have." Eyes that had turned away to pass the time now returned with a shade more interest. "You must regard me as a kind of Nelson Lee."

A few smiles. A slightly relaxed atmosphere.

"I am going to tell you a true story. One of my adventures, or, it would be just as accurate to say, one of my cases. This true story entails great danger and suspense, so, if there happens to be in my audience tonight, any boy of nervous disposition, it might be as well if he withdrew before I tell you all about it."

Anticipatory chuckles. A few warm handclaps led by the Rev. Hatch. A warming up in the youthful audience. This old chap might turn out to be good, after all.

Mr. Buddle leaned forward,

both hands on the lectern. He spoke clearly, but not loudly.

"It was just before Christmas. I remember the snow on the ground. I was in the town of Taunton, and I went into an hotel to have my lunch. I noticed two men sitting, close by, at the adjoining table. The hotel dining room was far from crowded. The two men finished their lunch. One man rose to leave. The man still sitting at the table said to him: 'Are you sure that you will remember the address?' And the man who was leaving answered: 'Never fear. I shall remember the address. I'll think of apple-pie'."

All eyes were on the speaker. There was no fidgeting now. The boredom had passed.

Mr. Buddle resumed: "I asked myself what an address could be, if it reminded that man of apple-pie. And

those chance words, which I overheard by accident while I was having lunch, provided me with my most startling case." He paused again. "May I go on?"

A roar of approval.

"Yes. Go on, sir."

Mr. Buddle went on.

When he completed his talk, some twenty minutes later, there was no doubting that he had been a complete success. It was most heartwarming. Standing on a chair, clapping louder than anyone in the room, was Conrad Shane. Mr. Buddle found that the most heartwarming of all. A thought flashed through his mind.

"Goodness me, he might be a Tom Merry after all."

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Anthony Skene, Five Dead Men, The Masks, Gallows Alley & Monsieur Zenith (all published by Stanley Paul); W. W. Sayer, Sellers of Death (Wright & Brown, 1940); Donald Stuart, The Shadow, The Man Outside, The Valley of Terror, Midnight Murder & The Man in the Dark (all published by Wright & Brown); G. H. Teed, Spies Ltd. (Wright & Brown, 1938); Clifford Witting, Case of the Michaelmas Goose (Hodder, 1938) & Catt Out Of The Bag (Hodder, 1939); Leslie Charteris, The Misfortunes of Mr. Teal (Hodder, 1934), The Saint Goes On (Hodder, 1934); Cyril Hare, Suicide Excepted (Faber, 1939); Roger East, Candidate For Lilies & The Bell Is Answered (Crime Club, 1934); Norman Berrow, The Smokers of Hashish (Eldon, 1934); Gerald Verner, Sinister House, Terror Tower, The Token, The Silver Horseshoe, Mr. Budd Again, The Huntsman & The Secret Weapon (all published by Wright & Brown).

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER, CLEMATIS COTTAGE, CRADLEY

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# Behind The Mask

BY  
CHRISTOPHER LOWDER

It would not be strictly true to say that we know a lot about Charles Hamilton, because we don't. A secretive man, he successfully (at times, I suspect, cunningly) built up an image of himself over the years -- and especially from the mid-1940's onwards -- that, though on the surface solid and palpable, is, when you come to dig into it, as insubstantial as cloud-wrack.

But if we know relatively little about Hamilton, what do we know about his editors -- the men who, for better or worse, guided the fortunes of the papers to which Hamilton was a major -- at times, sole -- contributor? Less, if that is possible, than we know about their star author.

Editors are more often than not dismissed by most readers and collectors as people of no consequence when compared to those who actually sit down at the typewriter and hammer out the fodder without which pages in the paper would be left blank. Either that, or they are reviled as parasites who in one way or another short-change the genuine creators, and suck their genius dry.

As always in life there's a germ of truth in this. But only a germ. Editors, being human beings, come in all shapes and sizes -- good, bad, indifferent. In my time I've known quite a few Average Joneses, as well as cranks, pedants, bores, time-serving sloths, rogues (one I knew invariably paid half-rate because the stuff always needed 'cleaning up', and then proceeded to print-as-copy and pocket the difference), some absolute monsters in whose presence one could not remain for any extended length of time without either succumbing to a massive nervous breakdown or the urge to cut loose with a hatchet, and the odd three or four for whom it was, and is, a pleasure to work.

The impression that Hamilton himself gave about the editors for whom he beavered away for something like half a century was that they were in the main necessary nuisances. They marked up his copy, proof-read it for literals, saw it out on to the streets. Other than that, the best possible place for them, as a breed, was 50 miles away at least, in the middle of a train-strike with the phones not working.

And -- the thought occurs -- who can blame him for thinking thus? The first editor he ever worked for paid him a good rate, then cut it when he realised that Hamilton was so young. Percy Griffith, by all accounts, was by no means a man of probity; far worse, he introduced the subs. Pentelow would insist on acting as

though he had created the Hamilton universe, not Hamilton. Hedley O'Mant was rude to him. Herbert Hinton borrowed money from him, then conned stories out of him for which he was never paid.

Just about the only editor for whom he seems to have had any time at all was Down, who was (on the surface, anyhow) the least colourful of all those with whom he came into contact at the Fleetway House. There were minor upheavals, of course -- the time when he was told to make less of Bunter and more of Coker, the time when the Magnet was in danger of being turned into a juvenile Thriller -- but generally speaking Down's reign was the calm after the storm. During it, Hamilton wrote what was undoubtedly his best, most creative, most enduring work.

Down survived Hamilton (who died in 1961) by eleven years, and one might have thought that other people's happy remembrance of times past, and his own part in them, would have spurred him into taking an active role in what is known as 'the Hobby', or at least becoming -- like P. G. Wodehouse, who was for many years President of the Northern section of the OBBC -- a benign though essentially passive patron. He was, after all, connected with the Magnet almost from its conception. And yet -- although to those who met him or corresponded with him he was invariably polite, even charming ("a gentleman of the old school", as one researcher remarked) -- he made it perfectly clear that he had only the mildest interest in the subject of Charles Hamilton, the Companion Papers, and the prominent role he himself played in their production and history.

Why this should have been so is part of the fascination Charles Maurice Down has always held for me. I've always seen him as the perfect epitome of the 'company man' -- starting at the bottom, rising through the ranks to the level which suits him best and going no further, no stranger to the 8.45 crowd from the more civilised reaches of Suburbia -- and like all company-men, blank-faced, anonymous, inhuman, almost.

But surely there was more to Down than that. If only that he grew prize marrows as a hobby. There had to be. And of course there was. The trick, as in all such cases, is finding it. And when I did find it (typically, while researching something else entirely), what I found came as a much-needed lesson that one should never take anybody for granted, even men who spend most of their working life passing proofs of school stories for printers.

First, a little background. Born at Woolwich in 1890, Down joined the AP sometime during the period 1904-06, probably as an office-boy. For a short time he worked as a junior sub on the papers controlled by the lordly and idiosyncratic Hamilton Edwards (Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, etc.), and then was moved across to H. J. Garrish's department, which ran Pluck and Marvel.

It's possible he worked for Griffith, who had recently (1907) started the Gem, but I suspect he joined what was later to become the Companion Papers department when the Magnet actually began in 1908. New staff would certainly have been needed for a brand new paper, if only to do the minor subbing donkey-work. However, it's clear he soon became more than just the office-boy as, in October or early November, 1908, he began to supplement his wages with freelance writing. (1) When

Griffith decamped (sometime in 1909-10) Herbert Hinton was appointed editor and Down became chief sub-editor, a position he held right up until the outbreak of war in 1914.

Down enlisted almost immediately and took a commission in an infantry regiment, the 1st Hertfordshires. G. R. Samways, who had joined the staff in 1913 as a junior sub, recalls that quite early in the war (probably during October/November, 1914, to judge from other evidence I've managed to gather) Down walked into the Magnet office with his arm in a sling. "He had been shot through the hand and wrist," Samways told me, "and we congratulated him on the comparative lightness of his wound."

Most War Office records for this period were destroyed by enemy action during the 1939-45 war, so that tracking down Down's movements from 1915 onwards has not been an easy task. What is certain is that sometime in 1916 he volunteered for kite-balloon (KB) duties and was seconded into the RFC. After training, he was given his Aeronaut's Certificate on the 15th December, 1916 (his entry is No. 107 in the Royal Aero Club's register of licence holders). This was a pilot's licence that covered free or tethered balloons only, not powered craft. By now, Down was a full Lieutenant.

The main duty of the KB-pilot or observer (the two seem to have been interchangeable) was to spot from the front lines for the artillery, who were placed to the rear. Often the guns would fire short, then walk up to range guided by the signals of the KB-operator (either using flags or a field-telephone line), or they might overshoot and then lower their sights and correct. Whatever method the gunners used, spotting for the artiller was no sinecure. Enemy guns would try and blast you out of the sky and enemy aircraft would try and shoot you down.

To be sure, the KB-site would have its own ack-ack, or 'Archie', emplacement for protection, and if tethered the balloon could be hauled down on winches with remarkable rapidity. Too, parachute bags were slung over the sides of the basket (which measured approximately 3½-foot long by 2½-foot wide, and was not the kind of place to share with your worst enemy), but these were often inefficiently packed and it was by no means rare for pilots to bale out and then discover that the chute was staying stubbornly inside its pack, with gruesome results. All in all, KB-piloting was far from being the cushiest number on the Western Front, and it took a great deal of courage to volunteer for the job.

The disaster that very rarely occurred was when a tethered KB broke loose from its moorings. The balloons themselves were tethered securely; rigorous checks were carried out regularly to test the efficiency of the cables and support-lines, and it was considered a thousand to one chance that a KB would rip itself off the winch, even in a high wind.

But on Easter Monday, 1917, the almost unheard-of happened. It was the day when, after a night-long barrage, the British Army moved against the Hindenburg Line, the French along the Aisne pounded the Germans almost to obliteration-point, and the Canadians fought their way up the notorious Vimy Ridge. It was also the day when Charles Maurice Down made what was surely the most horrifying journey of his

life. What follows is his own account of what happened to him.

## AN EASTER MONDAY OUTING

by Captain C. M. Down (Retired)

From the first I mistrusted FM-1. I examined her when she was issued to my section and thought that her fabric, as well as her construction, seemed flimsy in comparison with the stout Spencer-built balloons we had hitherto used in France. For FM-1 was "French-made", and from her number was, I assume, the first of her type to be supplied to the British Army.

But FM-1 in her flight trials behaved admirably. She was of the latest Cacquot type, and her graceful streamlined shape, nosing dead into the wind, kept the basket very much steadier than the old type of balloon could do, making much more efficient observation.

The morning of 9th April, 1917 -- Easter Monday -- saw FM-1 bedded down in the advanced position where she had been lurking for some weeks, without once showing herself, against the dawning of this very day. For today the Canadian Corps, after months of stealthy preparation, were going to carry by assault the impregnable-looking Vimy Ridge, that natural fortress which had already been the scene of some of the most bitter fighting of the war. The Canadians were a magnificent lot and their performance that day ranks as one of the finest feats of arms of the whole campaign.

After a very early breakfast I went down to the balloon with Major F. Maude Roxby, commanding No. 2 Balloon Company. The weather was about as unpromising as it could be for balloon observation. It was bitterly cold with a strong westerly wind, bringing flurries of sleet every few minutes, which effectually blotted out the landscape while it lasted. However, it was der Tag, and we had been brought down to the Canadian Corps especially for this show. Major Roxby and I, therefore, decided to go up to see if it were possible to give any effectual assistance by observation.

FM-1 was hitched on to the winch with some difficulty owing to the strong wind, and up we went. The wind seemed to get stronger as we ascended, and at about 1,200 feet the Major stopped the winch. The view was very patchy, whole areas being practically invisible owing to cloud, but there were bright patches here and there, and we were soon able to pick up the flashes of some very active hostile batteries, positions of which we duly pinpointed and phoned down for transmission to the Canadian Counter-Battery Office. The scene was an amazingly impressive one, though we had little leisure to appreciate it. The whole front was in a blaze from Loos in the north to far beyond Arras in the south.

With the high spur of Notre Dame de Lorette on our left, and the church of Ablain St. Naraire almost directly beneath us, we looked over the ruins of the village of Souchez right into the monstrous boneycomb of earthworks and trenches which was the deadly Ridge. Shell smoke practically blotted out all view of the immediate battle-line, and our attention was concentrated on the enemy's back areas, where the rapidly winking points of light denoted intense activity of his heavy batteries.

Observation, however, proved extremely difficult. Apart from poor visibility, the balloon was bumping about so badly in the high wind that it was almost impossible to use glasses at all. For possibly twenty minutes the Major and I did our best to pick up and pass on observations that might be useful, when there was a sudden rending crack, as the stabilising fin on the starboard side of the balloon ripped up like tissue paper under pressure of the wind. Things then began to happen with great rapidity.

I should perhaps explain that a Cacquot balloon is kept steady in the air by large fins which resemble bolsters. These are filled out with air by the wind when the balloon is in flight, and the effect of one of them ripping up is to upset entirely the equilibrium of the balloon.

FM-1 began by making a swooping nose-dive from 1,200 to about 200 feet. The Major yelled "Hold on!" and I held on; as I told him afterwards, I was going to anyway! Plunging like a mad thing, she swooped up to the limit of her cable again and then dived again, just as I have seen a kite do on a windy day. Our winch, which was mounted on a heavy lorry chassis, was located in a field, screened from enemy observation by a thick wood. FM-1 dived on to this wood, where she rolled over so that the balloon basket, for a short moment, was actually balanced on the top of the balloon! I remember vividly looking over the side of the basket, into the rigging of which I had wound my arms, and seeing the greeny-grey belly of the balloon below me with the tops of the trees just below that, and beyond the winch and a crowd of men with upturned faces.

The wire cable, in great coils, seemed to be lying all over the place.

How many times the balloon dived almost to earth and then plunged up again like a shying horse, I cannot remember. She rolled and somersaulted so that the basket seemed to be upside down more often than not. The fabric ripped still further and the rigging began to give way. I felt that this sort of thing could not last, but what would happen I did not try to guess! I merely concentrated on clinging on. It was impossible to do anything, anyway. But something had to go.

Eventually it was the cable that went. At the top of one of the balloon's upward plunges, during which she pulled the winch-lorry, weighing some ten tons, half the length of the field, the cable snapped, and away we went. The blessed relief when, like magic, the balloon stopped her mad antics, and went sailing away on a perfectly even keel. Free ballooning is a delightful sensation at any time, the smoothest, most silent and peaceful mode of travel known; but after the bucketing we had had, it was heavenly!

The only snag was that we were proceeding towards Hunland on the wings of a gale!

I had a free balloon pilot's 'ticket', and had the wind been blowing the other way, I might have been tempted to stay with and ultimately to try and land FM-1. But the prospect of landing in German-held country did not appeal to either of us. We therefore had to act quickly. Overboard went everything likely to be of any military value. Then I had a look over the side to see if the parachutes were still there. We carried three, hanging outside the basket in their cases, looking like huge acorns. One had gone altogether, but luckily the other two were still there, but so wrapped about with rope that it took quite a while to free them. I worked feverishly on one, while Major Roxby freed the other, and we clipped on.

I remember I ran my hands very carefully along the rope which led from the waist of my parachute harness to the parachute. The great thing was to avoid getting hung up in one of the many ropes of the basket suspension rigging -- a thing that I have seen happen to more than one luckless observer.

In a moment I was sitting on the edge of the basket. Then -- "Good luck, sir!" and I pushed off and dropped feet first into the blue.

I remember having an entirely detached feeling at that moment, rather as if I were a mere spectator of what was happening. After what seemed rather a long drop, the chute opened with a tremendous jerk, which caused me to somersault in the air. Almost at the same moment I saw Major Roxby's chute come out of its case and open, and the sight was a very cheering one. Quick as we had been in getting out, the balloon had got up to nearly 5,000 feet before we left her. Swinging like a pendulum in mid-air, as I now was, I cocked an eye at FM-1, which was shooting up very fast, with every anti-aircraft battery on both sides shooting at her. She was sailing along Hunwards with Archie bursting on all sides, apparently without any effect on her buoyancy.

Major Roxby, who was 6 ft. 5 ins. tall and broad in proportion, was dropping much faster than I, who was very light. I waved to him vigorously and saw him wave back. I now began to wonder where I should land; my chute was blowing along at a great pace towards the line, and the battle was getting nearer every moment. The noise of the bombardment was terrific, and I felt quite unpleasantly conspicuous, suspended between heaven and earth, "like a tea-tray in the sky"! As an infantryman, I had many times been under fire, but had never before occupied such an exposed position in a battle! I visualised large numbers of unpleasant German gentlemen laughing heartily as they lined up their sights on my gently swinging body; but fortunately, I had no need to worry. The fighting Canadians were keeping the aforesaid German gentlemen far too busy to worry about me, and the amount of laughter indulged in by the defenders of Vimy Ridge that day must have been negligible.

As I got nearer to the ground I realised how fast I was travelling. I managed to fish a penknife out of my breeches pocket and opened it, with the fond idea of cutting myself free the moment I hit the ground, but when the bump came the knife flew out of my hand. The trouble was that the chute did not stop for a moment, but blew along at a good twenty miles an hour, dragging me, of course, with it. It was exactly like being dragged by a runaway horse. I was quite helpless to stop it, as there was ten to twelve feet of rope between me and the rigging of the chute, and I was quite unable to get on my feet. Off I went across country on my tummy, hanging on to the chute rope for dear life. The terrain was mostly shell-holes and wire, and I had an unhappy passage. I was just about done when the remains of a hedge loomed up ahead -- a hedge practically obliterated by shell-fire, but with one blasted tree about five feet high sticking up like a lone sentinel -- and my chute blew straight on to that tree and stopped! I just had strength to unhook myself before passing out, and the next thing I knew I was in a dug-out in the support trench line, receiving first aid from the officers of

a famous line regiment.

I felt a wreck and looked it. My clothes were literally in ribbons, and I was barefooted, having lost both my flying boots, also helmet, gloves and glasses in my high-speed, cross-country journey on my tummy. I was badly scratched and bruised black and blue pretty well all over -- but, almost miraculously, nothing was broken. Eventually I was dumped on a truck and pushed along a trolley line to a dressing-station.

There I reposed for about five minutes, when my Wing-Commander arrived -- Colonel P. K. Wise, since famous as an international polo player. He had arrived at the balloon-winch just as FM-1 had started her exhibition, and had been an interested spectator of our adventures. He had followed up in his car as far as possible, and now turned up at the dressing-station to yank me out of the clutches of the MO in charge. This was apparently an irregular proceeding, and there were winged words over my body, but the Wing-Commander prevailed.

Later I heard that Major Roxby, as stout-hearted a man as ever lived, had landed in a roofless house in Ablain, and damaged his head rather badly, subsequently having to be invalided.

A couple of riggers were sent up to the line to retrieve my parachute, but for a long time could hear no news of it. Subsequently they discovered it beneath the bed in a subaltern's dug-out, whose idea apparently was that its thirty-odd pounds' worth of pure silk would make several pairs of pyjamas -- and other garments -- for his lady-love.

The last heard of FM-1 was from an RES crew, who reported sighting her well over the German lines at 11,000 feet -- and still going strong!

I have often wondered if the Germans got her intact.

For me, they were welcome to the old cow!

\* \* \*

Down was extremely lucky, of that there is no doubt at all. Possibly it was his weight and slimness of build that saved him from any serious injury. His CO, Major Roxby, was not so fortunate. He weighed over 16-stone and thus dropped like a rock when he baled out. On touchdown savage gusts of wind swelled his balloon and caused him to "bounce like a cork", according to the report of a Flight-Sergeant who spotted his descent and galloped after him. The parachute finally jumped the wall of a roofless house and slammed Roxby against the brickwork, which was how he injured his head so severely.

And what happened to the old cow of a Cacquot? Ironically, that last line in Down's article (2) was rather truer than he imagined. The Germans did indeed welcome the rogue balloon -- with open arms.

As Down implies in his opening paragraphs, FM-1 was a new design. So new, in fact, that the modifications incorporated into its structure were still on the secret list. As soon as the balloon came to earth, it was retrieved and whisked away to the German KB specialists, the Luftstreitkräfte. Within a matter of days a replica, utilising all the special modifications that had made the Allied version so unique, was ready and officially designated -- even more ironically -- AE Balloon (Achtungswert Englisch). Down was never to know it, but indirectly he was the cause of the German High Command gaining a rather more efficient kite-balloon design for their own artillery spotters. (3)

Doubtless, after his appalling experience, Down was granted extended leave, but afterwards he stayed with 1st Balloon Wing under the RFC (later, of course, the RAF) probably until the end of the war, and was made a Captain. He became a close friend of that courageous though impetuous ace and balloon-strafer Edward 'Mick' Mannock.

Mannock had only one good eye, but this proved to be no hindrance to him in his quest for kills. In a little over one year (June 1917 -- coincidentally he joined 40 Squadron the night before Down's hair-raising jaunt in the Cacquot -- to the day in July, 1918, when his SE5A was seen to plunge towards the ground in flames) he gained the MC, DSO, and VC (post.), and, using somewhat unconventional (some might say harebrained) methods succeeded in shooting down 73 enemy aircraft and balloons (that was the official total; it was probably many more).

Down and he worked out a simple but effective stratagem for enticing fledgeling enemy balloon strafers across the lines. Down would send up an empty KB while Mannock would sit in the sun and wait. Although putting up empty balloons as lures was frowned on as being a possible waste of a highly valuable piece of material, the ploy almost invariably worked. On one occasion Down missed death by a hairsbreadth when a piece of shrapnel hit him in the region of the heart -- and ricocheted off the leather wallet which held his Aeronaut's certificate.

Not unnaturally, after the upheaval of the war there was a certain amount of confusion in the Fleetway House. The lucky ones moved straight back into their old jobs; others took longer to return to the fold; not a few did not return at all. In a letter to me G. R. Samways recalls, "When we reassembled after demobilisation, the staff (of the Magnet) was complete with the exception of Down. I was appointed chief sub-editor in his place, and thought it was a temporary measure; but in fact I remained in that capacity, under Hinton's editorship, for two years.

"In 1921 I fell ill, was believed to have contracted TB, and advised to turn freelance and live in the Isle of Wight. With my departure Down ... was persuaded to resume his old post."

On returning to the AP Down (who, being an officer, was one of the last to be demobbed) had taken over the Boys' Friend, then running Rookwood stories. When Samways left, he moved back into the Magnet office but shortly afterwards Hinton was sacked (for rather ineptly plagiarising an early Hamilton story) and Down at last moved into the editor's chair, where he remained until May, 1940. (4)

His subsequent movements have proved harder to trace, in many ways, than his career during the First World War. With the axing of the Magnet Down discovered that there was, quite literally, nothing for him to do. Due to the war the AP belt had been tightened to such a degree that there were simply no jobs going spare. Whether he was made redundant or left under his own steam is not clear, but as he was only 50 he still had a fair way to go before retirement.

What is clear is that he joined the Army & Navy Stories in Victoria, though in what capacity is not known. One assumes that he was on the administrative side; one theorises that perhaps (with 35 years of editorial experience behind him) he took charge of their house magazine; one may well discover in time that he did something else entirely. He would have retired in any case in 1955, and unfortunately the computer records of the House of Fraser (who now own A & N) do not go back that far. From 1955 until 1972, when he died, he lived quietly in Hazpenden.

The extraordinary thing is that Down seems never to have spoken of his war-time experiences, even to those he liked or knew pretty well. Samways, who actually

joined the RFC, was astonished when I broached him on the subject of his old editor's hazardous career as a KB-pilot in the First World War, and at first could not believe we were talking about the same man. Down's Royal Aero Club photograph, however, convinced him that the man who hurtled Hunwards in a rogue balloon on Easter Monday, 1917, was indeed the man who later presided over the Companion Papers for nearly 20 years. "His identity," he wrote, "was instantly obvious."

On the other hand, perhaps it is not so surprising. By all accounts, Down himself was a modest, self-effacing man, quite unlike such racketty spirits as Percy Griffith and Hedley O'Mant. In any case, when reunited after the war, those who had fought in it seldom discussed their active service experiences. As Samways pointed out to me, "they were in many cases too harrowing."

True enough in Down's case. And it's pleasing to be able to reveal that he was not at all the dull, bureaucratic cipher one had been led to believe. G. R. Samways has never been in any doubt on that point. Quoting Byron on Shelley, he told me. "Down was the best and least selfish man I ever knew."

\* \* \*

## NOTES

1. In his Autobiography, Hamilton says that one day Percy Griffith handed him the MS of a St. Jim's story. To his surprise, Hamilton discovered that it wasn't by him at all, but a journalist on the Daily Mail who had tried his hand at writing a school story. Griffith airily told him to clean it up, which Hamilton duly did. This journalist, Hamilton says, was the first of the substitute writers, a wretched breed of hacks who were to plague him for the next 30-odd years.

It's a good story, and shows clearly the kind of editorial chicanery Hamilton had to put up with during his days with the Amalgamated Press. The trouble is, it's simply not true.

Much odium has been poured upon the sub-writers over the years, and it must be said that when compared with Hamilton at his peak most of them come off a poor second, some an even worse third or fourth. A few are so bad, they're not even in the race.

But Hamilton's trenchant views on the sub-writers were to a very great extent coloured by the grim events of 1940 when, without much warning, his income (a more than substantial one compared to most salary-earners of the time) dried up completely, and he found himself a poor man. That this was almost entirely his own fault -- in that he never thought to put aside any part of the truly vast amount of money he'd earned from the AP -- never seems to have occurred to him. What did occur to him was that the AP had stabbed him in the back, and the greater part of his bitterness was directed at the sub-writers, who he now saw as thieves who had stolen not only his name, or names, but also money he could have earned himself. And as his bitterness grew, so he began to change history to suit his own taste. All sub-writers were rogues; everything had been done behind his back; he knew nothing of what had been going on at the Fleetway House; the arrival of the sub-writers had come as a complete surprise. And so on.

He conveniently forgot that one of the sub-writers, H. Clarke Hook, was the son of S. Clarke Hook, one of his closest friends in the early days. He conveniently forgot that during the six months prior to the publication of that notorious sub-tale "The Terrible Three's Air Cruise", there had been no less than eight substitute stories in the Gem (which meant eight times when his weekly cheque from the Gem office did not pop through the letter-box -- and there is no freelance writer living, or dead, who would not have screamed blue murder if that had happened completely out of the blue). He conveniently forgot that the very first of the hated breed was not Harry Harper (the Daily Mail journalist in question) but Charles Maurice Down.

Down's story "The Schoolboy Jockey" was published as Gem (New Series) 43, on the 5th December, 1908. He was then aged 18. In the period 1908-11 he wrote six St. Jim's stories and then, oddly, another

six during the early part of 1928 (one of which, No. 1048, "Trimble the Truant", was published as the Gem's 21st birthday issue). He also wrote 2 dozen Magnets in 1919-20, and three Rookwood stories in the same period. Recently I discovered that he was a contributor to the prestigious London Magazine before the First World War.

- 2. "An Easter Monday Outing" was published in the April, 1935, issue of Popular Flying as part of a continuing series by various writers under the umbrella title "My Most Thrilling Flight". It's a pity it wasn't published six months or so before as it would then have been included in an anthology issued by John Hamilton (a publisher who specialised in flying books) under the title Thrilling Flights. Both the book and Popular Flying itself were edited by W. E. Johns.

It's quite likely that the two men -- Down and Johns -- knew each other fairly well. Although Popular Flying was a Newnes publication, Johns did a great deal of work for the AP; principally in Modern Boy, although he wrote for other papers as well. Down himself published two original serials by Johns in Gem -- "The Spy Fliers" in 1933, and "Biggles' South Seas Adventure" in 1939.

- 3. Easter Monday, 1917, was one of the more successful days for the Allies. The German line was breached to depths of between 6,000 and, astonishingly, 15,000 yards. Casualties on both sides were, not unnaturally, appalling.

- 4. The end of the Magnet is inextricably linked with (one might say tangled up in) the thorny problem of what happened to the stories that were written by Hamilton but never published. That is, what would undoubtedly have become known as the third "Wharton-Rebel" series (the first instalment of which -- "The Shadow of the Sack" -- was issued as the final Magnet).

For some reason there seems to be a view held in some quarters that the TSS disappeared under mysterious, not to say highly suspicious, circumstances. This smacks of conspiracy -- though to what purpose has never been made clear. In fact, far from being mysterious the circumstances were entirely commonplace, even banal.

Before he left the firm Down gathered up all the portable Magnet and Gem material -- manuscripts, typescripts, proofs, jokes, puzzles, stationery, all the rest of the detritus of a busy editorial office -- packed it into crates and boxes and left it with H. J. Garrish, his group editor. There being a war on, it doubtless disappeared eventually in one of the periodic paper salvage drives, "The Battle of the Beaks" and all. The only mysterious aspect of the affair concerns Hamilton himself. What happened to his carbons? The truth of the matter is that he probably chucked them as salvage as well.

\* \* \*

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I am indebted to, and gratefully acknowledge the assistance of, the following: Andrew Cormack of the Aviation Records Department at the RAF Museum, Hendon; Peter Gerrisford Ellis; R. Gibson, Regional Personnel Controller, House of Fraser; Alan Morris, whose fascinating book The Balloonatics (Jarrolds, 1970) covers the activities of the KB-operators; Derek Adley, who is by now used to my importunate phone calls; and C. R. Samways, whose unfailing patience and courtesy in answering my many questions does him credit.

\* \* \* \* \*

Christmas Greetings to our Editor and all Collectors, especially the members of the Midland Club, to Madam and The Princess Snowee, from

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Warmest Christmas Greetings to our respected Madam and the Skipper; to W. Howard Baker, Norman Shaw, Darrell Swift, Derek Adley and family and all the grand folk in our hobby. May 1983 bring to you all health, peace and contentment.

PHIL HARRIS, 5542 DECELLES AVENUE, APT. 4  
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WANTED: Annuals: Champion 1924, Jester 1937, 1940. Jingles 1940, 1941, Playbox 1934, 1940, Puck 1938-1941, Tiger Tim 1923, 1926, 1928, 1940, Jolly Jacks 1935, 1939, 1940. Greetings Eric and all hobby friends.

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=====

Christmas Greetings 1982 all hobby friends here and overseas and Happy New Year 1983, from JOHN BARTHOLOMEW, NORTH ROCKHAMPTON  
QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

# Greyfriars in December

by A. REES

The snow is falling thick and fast,  
The doors are all locked tight.  
The mantled quad is silent,  
In the dark December night.

No light is burning in the Rag  
And none burns in the Hall.  
The Winter darkness like a cloak,  
Covers the old school.

The clock strikes out the midnight hour,  
But no-one hears the chime  
For Morpheus has them in his power  
Until the morning time.

The old elms stand in deep, deep snow,  
Dark sentinels of night.  
The distant roofs of Friardale  
Are glimmering, ghostly white.

So still, so safe, stands Greyfriars now,  
Just as it's always been;  
Its old stone arms are wrapped around  
The boys asleep within.

No human force can breach these walls,  
Nor can the hands of Time  
Tear down the stones of Greyfriars school,  
For it lives in my mind.

=====  
Season's Greetings fellow collectors, from: LAURIE YOUNG, 211 MAY LANE,  
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all readers of Story Paper Collectors' Digest and the Annual from:

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=====

# "Let's be Controversial" Series

The "Let's Be Controversial!" series in the monthly Digest comprises essays, editorially written, which commenced in April 1957, and, by this time, must have covered every possible aspect of Hamiltonia and the Hamilton environs. In the past two years of the C.D. Annual we have indexed the first 100 of them. Here the list continues:

101. (July 1966: C.D. No. 235) "For Summer is A-Coming In - and Cricket". Concerning cricket in fiction, with particular reference to the cricket stories of Hamilton and Wodehouse. (This essay was reprinted, by permission, in the famous Annual of the Cricket Society.)
102. "Are Authors Nuts?" Strange things done by certain authors, and particularly Hamilton.
103. "Grist for the Mill". Some of Hamilton's problems as a famous author.
104. "Out of Step". When certain characters, down the years, were presented out of character.
105. "The Myth of Greyfriars". Concerning an hour radio broadcast about Hamilton, by people who were not too well-informed, and in which somebody read an extract from a sub story under the belief that it was genuine.
106. "Christmas for Remembrance". Looking back over Hamiltonia at Yuletide.
107. (January 1967) "A Pharaoh Who Knew Not Joseph". Why did Rookwood end as it did in the Boys' Friend of April 1926?
108. "The Puppets". Weaknesses in the Hamilton series.
109. "Let's Give Silverson His Due". Concerning the Gem's closing series.
110. "The First Rebel Series". The rebel was a sub character named Delarey. He appeared in the first sub series. And the effect this probably had on Hamilton's own writing.
111. "Sweet Lavender and Old Lace". Concerning old stories which never dated.
112. "What Did They Do With The Empire?" Concerning the Empire Library and the part that Hamilton played in that short-lived paper.
113. "Survival! Revival!" "The Desert Song" had just been revived in the West End of London. Concerning revivals in old papers.
114. "Frank Richards's Schooldays". Thoughts when Cedar Creek reached its Golden Jubilee.
115. "First Bloom". The early work of Hamilton.

116. "There in His Noisy Mansion --" Hamilton's schoolmasters under the Controversial microscope.
117. "The Papers Made Them Stars". Mainly about the various artists.
118. "The Last of the Christmas Doubles". The St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood stories in the last Christmas Double Numbers in 1917.
119. "The Sailor's Son". A review of the career of Tom Redwing.
120. (February 1968) "Toll of the Years". How age brought changes in the writing of Charles Hamilton.
121. "The Ladder". It is unfair and unreasonable to praise the author when things go right, and to slam the editor when things go wrong.
122. "IF --". What might have been.
123. "No Summer! No Story!" Concerning Pentelow's notorious Gem sports series, which lasted for 23 weeks in 1918, and the part that Hamilton played in it.
124. "Which Wing for Billy Bunter?" Politics in the Hamilton story.
125. "Camp, Caravan, and Cricket". The Hamilton summer series set in England.
126. "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy - New Boy!" Concerning Hamilton's story "The Swell of St. Jim's" which introduced Gussy to an admiring juvenile public.
127. "The Last Days of the Empire". The odd thing that happened as the curtain came down on the Empire Library.
128. "Sixty Candles". A preposterous sub story entitled "Cousin Ethel's Champions" followed by two more on the same theme. A suggestion that there was something wrong with the "official lists". Dr. Holmes is 60 years old and throws a party.
129. "Ha, Ha, Ha! You and Me!" The humour of Hamilton.
130. "The Last of the War Years". A review of the year 1918 in the Magnet and Gem.
131. "GEMS - and Magnets - of HAMILTONIA". Picking out stories for reading - at random.
132. (March 1969) "Bunter - and Bunter". When Billy and Wally Bunter changed places. Billy went to the Gem and Wally went to the Magnet.
133. "Masters on Strike". The masters' strike, peculiar to Rookwood, of 1919.
134. "The Good and the Bad of the Schoolboys' Own Library".
135. "'Your Editor' and His 'Personal Recollections' ". Hinton's charming and autobiographical serial of 1919: a strange blending of fact and fiction.

136. "Caravanning With Circumstances". Circumstances was the horse. A lovely series of the Gem summer of 1919.
137. "The Magnet Love Story Of 1920". Did Hamilton write this curious series in one of the Magnet's worst years - 1920? "I am convinced that he did not."
138. "King Cricket in a Golden Summer". Concerning Hamilton's Boys' Realm serial of 1907. (This essay was reprinted, by permission, in the famous Annual of the Cricket Society.)
139. "Unfinished Symphony". What actually happened in the Spring of 1940 when the final Magnet appeared? Probably the most controversial of all the essays.
140. "The Great Hiatus". Perhaps the greatest mystery of Hamiltonia is why Charles Hamilton was almost non-existent in the Magnet and the Gem in 1920. What caused it?
141. "Plump Scrooge". Bunter, influenced by Dickens, in the delightful Christmas pair of 1927.
142. "Written to Order". To excuse a story on the grounds that it was "written to order" is complete nonsense. It is endowing the writers with a literary sensitivity which they did not possess and could not possibly have possessed.
143. (February 1970) "That's My Dad!" Weird and wonderful mistakes down the years. In an absurd pair in 1920 (two tales credited to Samways) Harry Wharton refers to his "pater", Colonel Wharton, and the Colonel signs his letter "Your affectionate Father".
144. "The Schoolboy Author". Concerning Frank Richards' adventures as a writer of stories for Mr. Penrose in the Cedar Creek series.
145. "Take With Just a Modicum of Magic". Concerning what two professional gentlemen said in criticism of "The Boy Without a Name" when it was reprinted by the Hamilton Museum at Maidstone.
146. "The Dirk Power Series". The main significance of the Dirk Power series is that it was a turning point for the Gem. The real author was back, at long last.
147. "The Strange Case of Bunter's Baby". The story with which Hinton was guilty of plagiarising an early genuine tale. The strange episode is fully considered.
148. "Miss Priscilla". Miss Priscilla had her drawbacks as a piece of character work. Roger Jenkins says that she was a mistake of a serious nature. Miss Flinders says that she was an embarrassment to all those around her.
- "Miss Priscilla Fawcett was never a mistake for me. She never embarrassed me. You see, I loved her."

149. "Passed - with Honours". Concerning examinations in fiction.
150. (September 1970) "Fingo". Concerning a story written by a South African sub-writer. "Fingo of the Fourth" is a loose end in itself, for he remained at St. Jim's at the close of the tale. There should have been a ruling against sub-writers introducing new characters and leaving them behind as dead wood.

Well, that's all we have room for now. More anon, maybe. To wind up, here are some extracts from one of the essays of about fourteen years ago.

### PLUMP SCROOGE

(from the "Let's Be Controversial" series)

... It is the Christmas story of 1927 that I propose to dwell on for a while. It is an entertaining and charming little fantasy, very much like Christmas itself in that it has an anti-climax. The best part of Christmas is found in the few weeks which precede it - the glee-filled preparations; the carol singers; the Christmas lights; the gaily decorated shops; the hanging of the holly, the mistletoe, and the garlands; the giving and accepting of presents; the bustling, good-tempered crowds. Christmas itself comes and goes in a flash. Then comes the anti-climax: the day after Christmas; the stewed turkey; the empty streets; the forlorn shops, shorn of all their glamour; the knowledge that nearly twelve months must go by before Father Christmas comes again.

Several times in C.D. we have drawn attention to the power of the pen, whether that pen is used for the championship or for the denigration of a particular subject. The power of the pen depends on the skill of the writer. We tend to believe what we read. In 1927 Billy Bunter was influenced for the better by the writing of Dickens.

In the opening story, "Billy Bunter's Christmas Present", the Owl is expecting a gift from his uncle. That uncle, like most of the Bunter clan, did not believe in giving much away. He sent his nephew a shilling copy of Dickens' "Christmas Carol".

"Bunter's Christmas Present" - the run-up to Christmas - is a delight from beginning to end. There is snow, there is break-up from school in the air. Many passages, like most of the tales of the Golden Age, show Hamilton at his most inspired.

Scrooge was reformed by the spirit of Christmas. Scrooge, unlike most people who make new resolutions, did not back-slide. According to Dickens, the reform of Scrooge was permanent, even after the glow of Christmas had faded. He became a second father to Tiny Tim.

Bunter, under the influence of Dickens, followed the excellent example of Scrooge, and reformed. Bunter's reform was not permanent, but it lasted throughout the first story and it was intense while it lasted. It was delightful pre-Christmas stuff. For a while he became truthful and generous. He met an old man who looked

poor and needy and seedy. Bunter helped him to the best of his limited ability - he even gave the old man his turnip of a watch. At the end of the story, while the Christmas bells rang out over the snowy countryside, the old man turned out to be the reverse of poor. He was a millionaire, deeply moved by the goodness of the plump schoolboy.

The millionaire was a philanthropist. He saw in Bunter a kindred soul, who would aid him in his philanthropic works. So, at the end of the first story we saw Bunter invited to spend Christmas at the Park Lane residence of the millionaire. It was the ideal run-up to the festive season.

But with the sequel "Bunter, the Benevolent" the glamour had disappeared as it does in the shops immediately after Christmas. The story is artfully diverting, even though the star at the top of the tree has tarnished and the snow has turned to slush. The influence of the reformed Scrooge has worn thin. The millionaire philanthropist, like so many philanthropists, is of the cranks cranky.

There are fashions in philanthropy, and each decade has its own fashion. At the turn of the century, it took the form of soup kitchens. At the time of "Bunter the Benevolent" it took the form of distributing money and goods among the poor and needy. In later years the State has taken over that particular branch of philanthropy. In the sixties, the fashionable philanthropy was education. And so on.

As Bunter's millionaire banded out largesse, the recipients tapped their heads behind his back. His chauffeur exchanged the slightest wink with the beggar. The millionaire's relatives regarded him as "nuts", and when the millionaire departed unexpectedly for a long holiday in the sunshine, Bunter was kicked out. His pig-in-clover period had been as transient as Christmas itself - but he could always fall back on the humble shades of Wharton Lodge. And did!

These two Magnets made a charming little Christmas story and together they formed that rare phenomenon, the ideal Schoolboys' Own Library.



WANTED: Richmal Crompton's "William The Lawless", "William The Superman", Richards "B.B's Bean Feast", "Lord B.B", "B.B. Does His Best", Magnets pre-1930, "Biggles" books.

SALE: Greyfriars' Holiday Annual (original) 1920: C.D. Annuals, 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980.

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# - Public School -

by NIC GAYLE

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the celebrated author P. G. Wodehouse found himself incarcerated in a German prisoner-of-war camp. He was then 59. He was given no special treatment or privileges: he went through the same dehumanizing experiences of hunger, jealousy, and deprivation that are suffered by anyone in an institution where the human spirit is set at naught. Incredibly, he was later to write to a friend, 'camp was really great fun'. He meant it.

Wodehouse is a writer of special interest to us, not just because he wrote a number of excellent public school stories at the beginning of his career, but because it is difficult to think of anyone who bears such a close resemblance to Charles Hamilton. The differences are of course obvious - any intelligent reader can sort these out for himself - as are the superficial similarities: that they were both long-lived men and both born writers, that they both loved their pipes and spent seventy years apiece sitting in a room creating a fictional world that pleased them rather better than the real one, needs little remark. What does bear closer examination is the question why.

Both men had similar characters, being quiet, placid, unassuming, devoid of malice or aggression; everyone who came into personal contact with them seems to have regarded them as pleasant. That they were both incapable of dealing with the world except from behind a typewriter is fairly clear; ill-equipped emotionally for its management, they retired at the earliest possible opportunity to the confines of a study, there to create fictional worlds with which they could deal, and deal superbly. They are curious worlds. For all their richness of tapestry, the difficulties of love and sex, their natural chemistry and momentum, are denied acknowledgement and even existence; for this reason commentators have often drawn attention to the essential 'innocence' of their private worlds. This is mirrored in real life. Hamilton almost got married, but drew back at the last moment; Wodehouse crossed the line, but in a childless marriage in which he maintained a bachelor working life until he died. Perhaps it is well for us that these things were so, for the worlds of Wooster and Greyfriars, of Blandings and St. Jim's, could not exist as they do had their creators been different men.

But why this social diffidence? Was it just the demands of the inner artist upon the outer man? Or was there something else? I believe there was. Both men were in some way emotionally deprived. One has no need of psychology - or even to know the extant facts which support this view - to feel that this must be so. At something like the age of two, Wodehouse was sent by his parents, then resident abroad, to live in England. From then on he saw them so infrequently they were almost strangers to him. In Hamilton's case, less is known; but we do know that he disliked his father, a stern, puritanical man - he once told a schoolfriend, whose

father had died. 'I wish mine had' - who did actually die when the young Charles was seven. We also know that Hamilton was not just reticent about his childhood, but downright secretive. His autobiography is notorious for its astonishing omission of the first seventeen years of his life. I do not suggest, as some commentators have, that he had something to hide; but I do suggest that he had something to forget.

One major difference between the two men was this: that with Hamilton, school was a part of the secret past - though I surmise a more agreeable part - but to Wodehouse, Dulwich College, his public school, was a delight. It offered him exactly what he was most fitted to cope with, and made no demands upon him to which he could make no response. A consideration of the public school is thus instructive.

Certainly by the turn of the century it had accredited to itself aims, values and objectives that had not actually been envisaged by Arnold, fifty years before: so entrenched were they to become that it was not till the changing social world of the nineteen sixties and seventies did they undergo any modification. In their time they stamped an indelible mark upon the English national consciousness; perhaps, sub-consciously, they still do. By 1900 the public schools' primary concern was no longer to turn out, according to Arnoldian precept, a 'Christian gentleman'; this end had begun to be seen as but a means to a greater end, which was to supply the social, legal, economic, religious, and bureaucratic hierarchy of Britain and her vast Empire. This entailed a training which exactly suited the withdrawn, athletic Wodehouse: the diminution of individual worth before the encouragement of team, house, and competitor spirit; the prizing of loyalty, gallantry, and obedience; the active discouragement of intimate relationships; the supreme value of games. He flourished in such an atmosphere, and managed to recapture it for a brief time as a prisoner of war; for here the schoolboy ethic flourished once again, waxing strong in the face of German authority. No wonder he found it great fun; for once again he could belong.

Clearly, such a highly-charged educational system can have left few unmarked; it invaded or suppressed too many important areas of life at too early an age. Loved or hated, it must have been extremely difficult to have remained indifferent to it. There was nothing anodyne or half-hearted about it. Convinced of its moral and ethical superiority, its sons whom it favoured strode out into a world they had been taught to think of as nothing so much as a gigantic quadrangle, with an unbounded faith and confidence, and the comfortable feeling that under British patronage, all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. If a little something was missing - something personal, individual, some indication of an inner life - well, that was all rather rot, anyway. But for those whom it did not favour - well, they have a different story.

The English language is privileged in that one of her greatest writers has left us a brilliant if chilling portrait of life - inner rather than outer - at an English public school at the turn of the century, seen through the eyes of a junior master. E. M. Forster attended Tonbridge School in the 1890's, and his experiences there were brought to life in his second novel, *THE LONGEST JOURNEY*, in which the

school is renamed Sawston. Forster's biographer, P. N. Furbank, notes:

'The school at the time of Forster's arrival was a hard, jostling, athletics-ridden place. There was not much violent bullying in the school but a good deal of kicking and calling of names in corridors; by convention senior boys were allowed to kick the 'novi' or new boys, and a local 'novus' learned to 'dodge like hell'. The staff encouraged inter-house rivalry, and boys who strayed into the wrong house would get manhandled and ducked in cold baths, whilst the boarders united in despising the day boys. The social inferiority of day boys extended to their parents, the staff tending to treat them with condescension. It is not plain how much Forster was physically bullied at the school. He must have been so to some extent, for one of his schoolmates, when questioned about him in the 1950's, said, 'Forster? The writer? Yes, I remember him. A little cissy. We took it out of him, I can tell you.'

- But what really hurt him was the atmosphere of sheer, beastly, petty unkindness, unkindness for unkindness's sake, that flourished in the school. Rickie Elliot, the junior master at Sawston in *THE LONGEST JOURNEY*, says this, expressing Forster's own thoughts: 'Physical pain doesn't hurt - at least not what I call hurt - if a man hits you by accident or in play. But just a little tap, when you know it comes from hatred, is too terrible.'

The following scene, splendid in its accuracy and evocation - the present writer remembers a similar scene some seventy years later in another famous Kent public school - depicts Rickie's introduction to school life at the hands of the housemaster, Herbert Pembroke.

'The room was almost full. The prefects, instead of lolling disdainfully in the back row, were ranged like councillors beneath the central throne. This was an innovation of Mr. Pembroke's. Carruthers, the head boy, sat in the middle, with his arm round Lloyd. It was Lloyd who had made the matron too bright: he nearly lost his colours in consequence. These two were very grown up. Beside them sat Tewson, a saintly child in spectacles, who had risen to this height by reason of his immense learning. He, like the others, was a school prefect. The house prefects, an inferior brand, were beyond, and behind came the inextinguishable many. The faces all looked alike as yet - except the face of one boy, who was inclined to cry.

'School' said Mr. Pembroke, slowly closing the lid of the desk - 'school is the world in miniature.' Then he paused, as a man well may who has made such a remark. It is not, however, the intention of this work to quote an opening address. Rickie, at all events, refused to be critical: Herbert's experience was far greater than his, and he must take his tone from him. Nor could anyone criticize the exhortations to be patriotic, athletic, learned, and religious, that flowed like a four-part fugue from Mr. Pembroke's mouth. He was a practised speaker - that is to say, he held his audience's attention. He told them that this term, the second term of his reign, was the term for Dunwood House; that it behoved every boy to labour during it for his house's honour, and through the house, for the honour of the

school. Taking a wider range, he spoke of England, or rather of Great Britain, and of her continental foes. Portraits of empire builders hung on the wall, and he pointed to them. He quoted imperial poets. He showed how patriotism has broadened since the days of Shakespeare, who, for all his genius, could only write of his country as -

This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war;  
This happy breed of men, this little world;  
This precious stone set in the silver sea.

And it seemed that only a short ladder lay between the preparation-room and the Anglo-Saxon hegemony of the globe. Then he paused, and in the silence came 'sob, sob, sob', from a little boy, who was regretting a villa in Guildford and his mother's half acre of garden.'

I must attempt to sum up. The public school said to its charges - and perhaps still does - 'the world is like this'. There were many who enjoyed their time there and went out in to the world and found that this was so. There were also many like Wodehouse who found that it was not. And finally there were the goats among the sheep, those whose souls were forged in a different metal, who discovered that it was nothing more than a great and horrid lie. The real world was so much better.



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'Bucks is a beautiful county. There is scenery in the Chilterns that simply cannot be beaten anywhere.' So states Frank Richards in Magnet No. 1120. "Chums on Tramp", from the marvellous "Bob Cherry's Big Bargain" series of summer 1929, the big bargain being Bob's very old fashioned motor-trike, and how very true Mr. Richards' statement is.

Being a native of Buckinghamshire, having first seen the light of day in Aylesbury, the Methuselah motor-trike stories particularly appealed to me, and as the Famous Five, with of course Bunter in tow, hiked and jolted along from county to county, it was an added pleasure to me when our heroes suddenly arrived in the magnificent Chilterns.

Of recent years, through reading the many articles and books published regarding Frank Richards, I learned that during the 1914-1919 period, he spent a considerable time living in a cottage, two or three miles from Aylesbury, and although this period was many years before I had even heard of the Magnet, or our revered author, the knowledge that at one time he must have made many visits to my hometown and the neighbouring villages, gave me a feeling almost of awe, and I liked to think, a closer affinity with the Greyfriars master-mind!

I have an elder brother, many years my senior, who during Frank Richards' latter period near Aylesbury, was an avid Magnet and Gem reader (it was he, in fact, who almost forced me to become a reader when I became 'of age' - I didn't need much forcing), and on giving him the information that Frank Richards at that time was so near to Aylesbury, he said "Well . . . if only I had known".

Several months ago, I wrote to the local Newspaper Office at Aylesbury, which was published under the heading 'Local link with the Magnet', giving more than a faint hint that I would be interested in locating anyone who might have remembered him. Alas, no such luck, but I did discover the cottage in which he lived, and that it had belonged to a Mr. Fowler, who owned the nearby farm and pastures. To Aylesbury I went, with my camera at the ready, a snapshot of the cottage was necessary, and discovered that the last of the Fowler family, a Miss Fowler, had died at the age of 101, only last year. On a more recent visit, I was informed that the old farm had now been demolished, and fresh buildings would soon be on the site. Progress is unrelenting.

Now, apart from the Bob Cherry and Methuselah series, there appeared way, way back in the far off days of the Blue and White Gem, a series, published during

the summer of 1919, which was of even greater interest to me. Tom Merry and Co. were having a caravan holiday, the caravan itself being drawn along by a pet of a horse, with the superb name of Circumstances, and again Buckinghamshire featured prominently. Gem No. 600 - "Foes of the Fifth" - to me is pure nostalgia.

Breaking away from his usual procedure of using fictional villages in his stories, in this case, the author (Martin Clifford), used the true local names. The nearest village to where our author lived, is Weston Turville, and it is in this very village where I stay on my fairly frequent visits to Bucks. Therefore, it was sheer delight when I first read in Gem No. 600 'That day they intended to be in the Chilterns, where the next camp was to be fixed. They turned out of the Roman road into the lane to Weston Turville, and in that village Tom Merry secured a supply of eggs, and ham, and milk'.

As, during my sojourns in Weston Turville, I stay in the home of a jovial, though slightly caustic, 80-year-old gentleman, and whose parents at one time almost owned all the land in the village, and as, at the period in question 1914-1919, Weston Turville was little more than a hamlet, I wondered if his path ever crossed with Frank Richards'.

Even on the cover of the Gem in question, the illustration shows a signpost pointing to Wendover, (where supposedly St. Leger of the St. Jim's Fifth lived), and Wendover too, is also one of the local beauty spots. However, the highlight of Gem No. 600 to me, is a chapter entitled "The Mystery of Aylesbury". Arthur Augustus D'Arcy decided to cycle to Aylesbury to do the shopping for the party, but on arrival there, found, to his amazement that all the shops were closed. The only reply he received from various people, including the local policeman, to his puzzled enquiry regarding the closing of the shops, was "Thursday". Of course it was early closing day, and I can personally vouch, that even until the late 1930's, Aylesbury, on a Thursday afternoon, was a silent, deserted place. As in the song "Scarlet Ribbons", 'All the stores were closed and shuttered'. There is an absolutely delightful MacDonald illustration inside, with Gussy addressing a real country yokel, probably the oldest inhabitant!

Back again to the "Bob Cherry's Big Bargain" series, in the Bucks episode, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent visit the small local shop to buy provisions (and where, of course, they run into Horace Coker), and the village here is referred to as Greenleaf. There is, to my knowledge, no Greenleaf in the Chilterns, but there is the hamlet of Whiteleaf.

Oddly enough, the bungalow in which Frank Richards lived at Kingsgate, before moving to Rose Lawn, was called Mandeville, and only two miles away from where he lived in Aylesbury, is Stoke Mandeville! This district is now noted for the famous Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Was the bungalow, I wonder, already called Mandeville when he purchased it, or perhaps, as I like to think, he may have still retained a little affection for the lovely county I still adore, and named it Mandeville.

One day, this late summer, I stood on the top of Coombe Hill at Wendover, the highest point in Buckinghamshire, where there is a monument in honour of the officers and men of Bucks who died in the Boer War, and as I looked over the superb

panorama. with Chequers, the Prime Minister's country home, showing up clearly in the afternoon sunshine, (in the foreground), I thought to myself, that perhaps in those far-off days of World War 1, Frank Richards may have stood in almost the same spot.

Yes Mr. Richards, in spite of modern improvements in the name of progress, Bucks really IS beautiful.

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## CHARLES HAMILTON AND THE "ALL BLACKS"

by Reg Moss

As another of those who enjoy Hamilton's enlightening and usually most apt comments on the world and society, it was intriguing at last to find one the meaning of which is perhaps somewhat obscure.

In 1905 the New Zealand Rugby football team made its first visit to the British Isles. The jersey and shorts worn were black. During the tour a press report referred to "All Black" play. This immediately became the accepted name for New Zealand teams. Only one match was lost, that against Wales at Cardiff. This was the scene of the historic disputed try. The referee ruled that Deans had not scored.

During October and November 1982 a New Zealand Maori team is touring in Wales. No doubt the "Deans" incident will again be discussed in detail as Welshmen and New Zealanders view the "hallowed" spot.

Now on page 13 of Magnet No. 53, dated 13th February, 1909, we read -

"Ow roared Bob Cherry, stopping his ears with his fingers. Shut up! Ring off! You're not refereeing a match with the All Blacks, you ass."

This incident does not involve a football match, only a football whistle. But it is an odd remark to appear in a 1909 Magnet. The "All Blacks" would only have been of limited news in 1905, even less so in 1909, Greyfriars was a Soccer school, and Bob Cherry the noisiest member of the Remove was the least likely to protest at the noise.

We know from an earlier Magnet which involved Rugby, that Morgan and Linley had played the game. They would have been expected to be more familiar with the "All Blacks" than Bob.

But the question remains. Was this one of Hamilton's comments? Was he referring to some aspect of Rugby or even to Football in general; perhaps in particular to referees and their use or undue use of the whistle? Why the emphasis on a loud shrill whistle and the "All Blacks"? If there is a reason for the comment, has it been lost in time? One suspects that in any case "All Black" was meaningless to many of the world wide readers of that Magnet.

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# A Letter From St. Frank's

by JIM COOK

It was a bright and sunny day at St. Frank's with slight traces of an early morning frost lingering on the grass. Spring was on the way and the Sunday calm had settled over the school as I kept my appointment with the Remove form-master, Mr. James Crowell.

After all what has been written and said about the boys of St. Frank's I had decided to interview the most well-known of the masters, for he figures quite a lot in the history of the school. Those of us who know so much about the boys of St. Frank's are perhaps less aware of the schoolmasters and their off-duty life.

It was my first question to Mr. Crowell. He told me he once had a burning desire to write the history of the school and had actually started where the old College House was added to the Ancient House over fifty years ago. The Ancient House had been standing for over three hundred years and was one of the most picturesque old piles in that part of Sussex. Even some of the old stones are redolent of the history of South Saxon England and the Norman Conquest. But when St. Frank's had changed into four Houses the desire to write the history had ceased. Now, after school, Mr. Crowell rests in his study or passes the time in Masters' Common Room.

One of his regrets, he told me, was never to have been asked to join the famous Holiday parties that Lord Dorrimore was so famous for. He wasn't quite sure he would have agreed had Dorrimore approached him about it, but it is always nice to be asked. And he went on to describe the loneliness that descended after he left the form-room. He spent most of his free time in his study, for some of the other masters often irritated him; Mr. Pycraft, of the East House was always too ill-tempered to converse with. Then there was Mr. Pagett, the Fifth-form master with the sharp tongue and usually setting on track of somebody. Other masters like Mr. Stockdale and Mr. & Mrs. Stokes seldom used the Common Room and Mr. Langton of the Sixth spent most of his time reading.

Mr. Crowell's one-time interest in Astronomy was often awakened with a chat from Professor Tucker, but his absentmindedness made conversation very difficult. The most interesting of Dr. Stafford's staff was Mr. Lee. But his many visitors precluded his free time and he kept to his study.

The formation of the Four Houses was generally regretted except by those who had arrived after these were built. But when reflecting back to the old days and the strange and sometimes dangerous incidents that occurred at St. Frank's, it was always with a tender memory of the Ancient House and College House. But Progress had arrived and two more Houses had been erected and somehow nothing was ever the same after that.

As it was Sunday, Mr. Crowell's thoughts went back to the many exciting times at the old school. I had to mention the time when he suffered from fatigue after an intensive study in Astronomy and had to recuperate away from St. Frank's. But it wasn't so much Astronomy that had caused the brain fever, but overwork in school duties, he stated.

Mr. Crowell gave me a picture of the lonely life school-masters can lead. Naturally I couldn't dig too deep into his private affairs, but it wasn't a sine qua non that masters entering St. Frank's were compelled to remain celibate. Probably that happy couple, Barry Stokes and his wife Joyce, must have at times created thoughts of what might have been in the minds of the bachelors, but a higher fate than luck decides our destinies was Mr. Crowell's answer to that.

I asked next what were his thoughts on the rebellions that had happened at St. Frank's with a seemingly regularity unknown in other public schools. He replied that those events were not created by the boys but the strange innovations new headmasters or Housemasters ordered. And always these changes were not necessary. But newcomers had different ideas on how to run the school and it was only natural the boys made their feelings known.

Perhaps the most strange of mutinies were those that erupted from outside influences. There was the German-American William K. Smith attempt to buy the school and the surrounding district. And the time Dr. Stafford was drugged so that he could be replaced by a fanatic idealist. Really, St. Frank's owes a lot to the boys in many ways.

Were there times, I asked, if he regretted being a school-master? No, that was always his intended metier, and would be till he retired -- if school-masters ever retire. He had no opinions about the other masters, although no doubt they had similar thoughts to his own except perhaps Mr. Lee, who would no doubt, continue with his police work.

Was there another country the Remove master would like to retire to? No, definitely he would always be near St. Frank's and live his last days in the vicinity. I remember Nelson Lee telling me this and wanting to retire to Belton when the time came. Still, that's a long way ahead and there is a wealth of events yet to record.

I had to ask it ... who gave him the most trouble in the form room? Teddy Long, who was always inattentive. Did he have a favourite junior? No; but there were some he could never get annoyed.

Had he ever visited other schools in the vicinity of St. Frank's and formed friendships with masters? Yes, he often was invited to the River House School to dine with the principal, Dr. Hogge. Schools such as Greyfriars and St. Jim's were too far away, but he knew slightly Dr. Locke of Greyfriars and Dr. Holmes of St. Jim's.

If Lord Dorrimore invited him to a trip abroad with the St. Frank's party would he go? Yes, but only to the warm regions.

What was his opinion about Nipper first as the captain of the Remove and as

Nels on Lee's ward. He thought it was a strange situation having a pupil who was an assistant to a famous private detective in the school, but the coming of Mr. Lee and Nipper had certainly changed the routine of St. Frank's for the better. Previously the old school was almost unknown.

Did Mr. Crowell know that events at the school had been recorded? No; it was news to him. He knew certain happenings had found their way into the London dailies from time to time.

That was my last question. Soon afterwards I left the form-master's study and returned to other parts of the school. But Mr. Crowell looked so very lonely. In that study was a microcosm of an old world that persisted to function. I left Mr. Crowell as he read Plato's Theory of Knowledge that he had been perusing when I had called.

At St. Frank's the atmosphere never fails to give me a feeling of Euphoria.

\* \* \* \* \*

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Howard Baker extends warmest Christmas greetings to all Friars and to all other Members of the hobby. May God bless you all. And for 1983 - many hours of happy reading.

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My very best wishes and Christmas and New Year Greetings to our esteemed Editor (long may he reign) and to all the magnificent contributors to the monthly and the Annual Collectors' Digest. Many thanks for a feast of superb reading and wonderful memories through 1982.

ARTHUR HOLMES, 33 GRANGE HILL, EDGWARE, MIDDX., HA8 9PG

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BEST WISHES TO ALL for Xmas and the New Year.

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