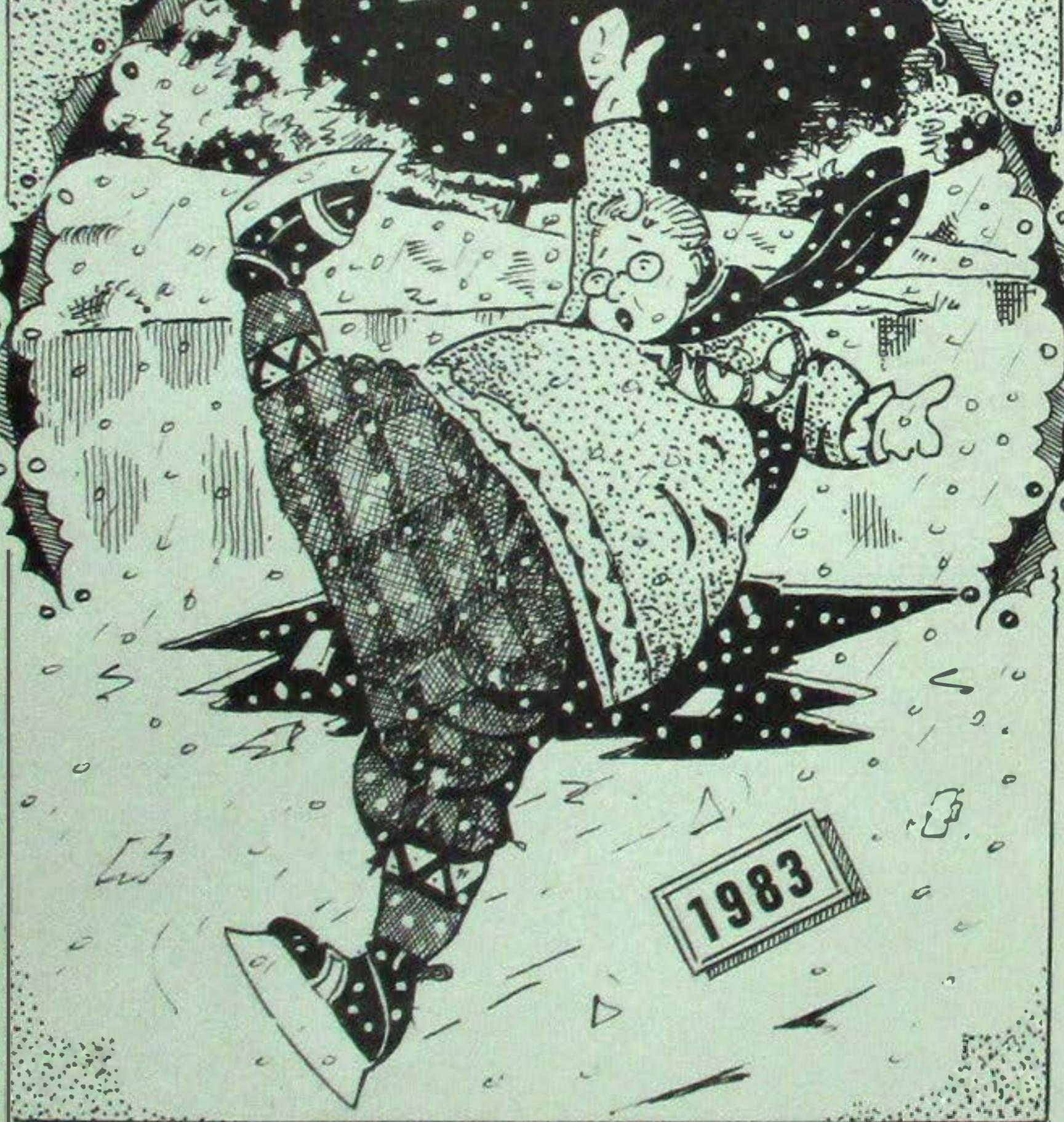


# COLLECTORS DIGEST

## ANNUAL



# COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL

CHRISTMAS 1983.

THIRTY - SEVENTH YEAR.

EDITOR:

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## INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

A year ago, on this Introduction Page, I mentioned that for some time I had been toying with the idea of abolishing any such introduction to your favourite Annual. Does anybody bother to read it? I had asked myself.

I anticipated that anyone who happened to read it would say "What a good idea!". They didn't.

To my surprise, the comment brought in dozens of letters from Annual readers, all assuring me in the most heartwarming terms that they always read the page, always enjoyed it, and were quite sure that it was absolutely necessary that it should never be scrapped.

So I am landed with yet another Introduction Page - and so are you.

It makes me feel rather humble when I realise that this is the 25th year that I have composed such a page. The humility comes when I know that readers still want it. It's remarkable, in a way. Even more remarkable is that this is the 37th edition of our Annual.

The 37th edition - and my 25th as Editor. Where are my crutches?

The main joy of the page is that I can thank our gifted contributors, some of whom have been writing wonderful articles for us right from the beginning, so long ago. A great deal of the Art Work in the Annual comes from our own gifted artist, Mr. Henry Webb. My sincere thanks go to this most loyal and hard-working friend. My thanks, too, to the Staff of York Duplicating Services, the fine firm which has done our work from very early days.

And, very especially, my thanks to you, my staunch and loving readers and supporters, for, without you, there would be no Annual and no monthly Digest.

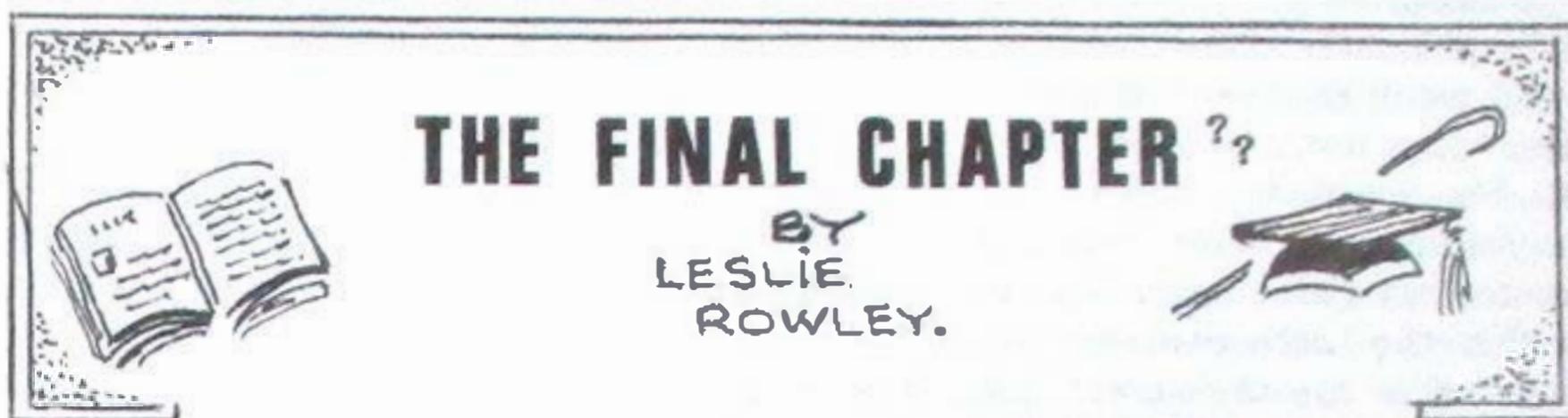
The Season's Greetings to you all. I wish you a Happy and Peaceful Christmas, and may the coming year be the best you have ever known.

Your sincere friend,

Eric Fayne

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An ember of gold dropped into the study grate with a momentary cascade of transient sparks. The disturbed shadows of the other-wise unlit room settled once more into their sombre forms.

The early dark of the winter's evening had fallen even earlier as deep grey clouds hiding their burdens of snow drifted lethargically in from the sea. Outside, in the Close, the wind stirred into more than a murmuring complaint as it brought with it the cold from the north east, and the artistic fingers of frost were already shaping their tracery on the windows.

Henry Samuel Quelch settled restlessly in his chair. Before him, the typewriter stood silent upon the desk; like its owner it was enjoying a respite from recent labours. The fruits of those labours could just be seen, a neat pile of manuscript, on a side table that intruded uncertainly into the relentless dusk. It had been one of those rare afternoons when, to quote the words of the poet, "the cares that infest the day, had folded their tents like the Arabs, and as silently stolen away". It was possible that Longfellow had not had schoolboys in mind when he wrote those deathless words but, if Longfellow had been a schoolmaster like Quelch, he might have found a value in the simile. Mr. Quelch's leisure from the trials and tribulations of being Master of the Remove was scant indeed, and because it was scant it was to be valued above the price of rubies!



Quelch had been filling those valued, golden hours of leisure in his

own peculiar way. His draft of "A History Of Greyfriars School", with its typescript neatly corrected and annotated in his clear and precise hand, covered many thousand of pages, although perhaps not quite as many as would fill the three hundred and sixty five columns as estimated by Skinner of his form! Mr. Quelch, unlike so many authors of the modern school, had started at the beginning, when the earliest of Franciscan monks had made their small priory in that quiet and pleasant corner of the Kentish countryside. Having started in the tenth century, the schoolmaster historian had resolutely persevered in his task until flowing phrases and innumerable paragraphs had embraced the near millenium that existed between that century and the present one.

His narrative had told of the hanging of Prior Anselm a tragic incident from which the still standing Prior's Oak was supposed to get its name. There was a full account of the courage and defiance of brave Abbot Hugh, the last of a line of Priors and Abbots that had influenced the transformation of the once small priory into a monastery of importance. Abbot Hugh had anticipated the Dissolution and hidden the monastic treasure, failing to divulge its whereabouts in spite of torture and final execution. Somewhere, possibly beneath the old flagstones in the crumbling cloisters, the bulk of that treasure still rested. Mr. Quelch, being only human, as well as an author, had dwelt at length - not only on the heroism of the brave Abbot but on the legend and theory that the ghost of the resilient Hugh still guarded the treasure of a Greyfriars of long ago. Perhaps, not wishing to spoil a good story, the Remove master had embellished a little. It was a criticism that he would have strenuously denied, at the same time remarking to his inner self that this brief excursion into the unknown could be excused as a brief, very brief, exercise in author's licence. Mr. Quelch, of course, did not claim that the restless presence of the old abbot actually existed. He was too much of a dealer in fact than to succumb to that kind of temptation. Nevertheless every incident of other people witnessing, or even accepting, that the wraith of Hugh, last Abbot of Greyfriars, still trod the ground beneath which the treasure lay buried, every such incident had been faithfully recorded with comments of his own that had enhanced the story in its telling.

Long hours in the School Library, scrutinising numerous black letter documents of cracked and crackling parchment, represented but one sacrifice to his labour of love. Those eyes, so often likened to gimlets, had followed closely each character of Latin or Old French with all the penetrating eagerness of the true classical scholar on the trail of some elusive solution to an enigma of long ago. Such dedication and devotion had not passed unnoticed in certain quarters! Fisher T Fish calculated and reckoned that Quelch had located that legendary hoard and was putting it by for financing his old age. If his form master had divined this speculation on his part, Fisher T Fish would have been given some other, more painful, subject for calculation!

The Dissolution having brought to a sudden and dramatic close the history of Greyfriars as a monastery, Quelch had persevered with the founding

of the School and the events that followed thereafter. As a schoolmaster himself, he found himself on even safer ground than he had been as a mere historian (not that Quelch would have considered himself as a 'mere' anything). The sound made by the keys of his faithful Remington sounded even more intense, even more insistent, as they hammered out stories that brought the early days of the school vividly to life. The Foundation, that had originally provided education for promising boys of poor parents, was enshrined in Royal Letters Patent issued under the Great Seal of the first Elizabeth. Quelch had nodded silent approbation of the neat italic script in Gloriana's own hand, and had wished from the bottom of his heart that some members of his form would emulate that royal example or, at least, write more legibly!

His research had been a journey into a world of enchantment, an enchantment enhanced by the many and diverse characters he encountered on his way. There had been the notorious Dr. Skepleton, whose tyranny had brought about the first (but certainly not the last) barring - out the School had ever known and who had called in a company of musket-bearing militia to put the mutiny down, only to discover that the ill-paid soldiery had no heart for an engagement in which rebel schoolboys poured down a flood of scalding water from the dormitory windows. Dr. Skepleton's rule had been as brief as it had been tyrannical and had ended with him being imprisoned in the village stocks in Friardale.

There had been periods of enlightenment as well. Dr. Hargreaves had been a great reformer, under whose wise direction the Foundation had been modified and extended so that fee-paying pupils were accepted and took their place at the side of the scholarship boys. There had been cases where the wealthier boys had bullied the poorer scholars. Reformer, though he undoubted was, the good doctor still knew that to spare the rod was to spoil the child and the bullies had got short shrift.

Boys of promise were still catered for by the provisions of the Foundation, but scholarship was no longer, even in the eighteenth century, the principal channel of entrance into the school. The transformation had been gradual, and had met with considerable resistance, and Quelch had generously devoted much attention to the matter, weighing the pros and cons with that fair-mindedness he felt was expected of him. The original funds of the Foundation would have soon become exhausted had they not been supplemented by the fees of those parents able - and anxious - to pay for the very best for their offspring, be they promising or otherwise. Entrance by scholarship still remained but the places were few and energetically contested. In fact the Remove, itself, had three scholarship boys in Penfold, Linley and Redwing, three boys of whom any great school would be proud: three boys who had long earned their form master's esteem. Cash, after all, cannot buy character. The old order had changed, giving place to the new, but Quelch was glad, with all his heart, that those Founder's Scholarships remained, even if the fee-paying parents were the source of his comfortable emoluments.

The good that Dr. Hargreaves had done for Greyfriars had almost been

obliterated by the reign of Dr. Savage, who had so maltreated some of his boys that they had retaliated by seizing their headmaster and tar and feathering him before casting him forth into the dust and grit of Friardale Lane, and by the rule of Dr. Trumpington who filled the headship after the unlamented departure of Dr. Savage. Dr. Trumpington had flogged not wisely but too well, and a great barring out had followed, led this time by Lovelace, Captain of the School. That barring out had shaken Greyfriars to its foundations in the far off days of William IV. The affair had been destined, indirectly of course, to provoke rebellion of a more recent date, and the story of High Oaks will be familiar to my readers' minds - as it certainly was to that of Quelch, himself.

The history of Greyfriars had not been one entirely of revolt and rebellion, nor were all of its Headmasters cast in the same mould as Skepleton, Savage and Trumpington. There had been great scholars and benign men who had followed the pattern of Arnold of Rugby. There had been others, well meaning but pompous pedants, one of which - a Mr. Septimus Pettifer - reminded Quelch of his colleague Prout. The Remove master had drawn the character of Pettifer with care, great care, but somehow the character of Prout had intruded. The cloak of personal dignity so exemplified by the majestic roll and polysyllabic speech of the one, now seemed to have descended on the other.

In depicting the masters so fully, Mr. Quelch had not neglected the scholars, especially those that had any connections with the form of which he was master, like Wharton and Cherry, or celebrities, like Wingate the present School Captain. There were little unsolved mysteries, like the disappearance of Horatio Whyte after he had been securely locked in the Punishment Room in the year 1885, or Barnaby Brown, who had lost himself in the maze of vaults and whose skeleton was found ten years later, only a few steps from safety.

On less certain ground, his knowledge of all sports being limited, Quelch had sought the help of Lascelles, the Master of Games. The manuscript, no dry-as-dust chronicle already, had been given added attraction by recording that Greyfriars had first played the game of cricket in the year 1700 with stumps that were twelve inches high, and twenty four inches apart. Soccer history revealed that Wainwright, the First Team goalkeeper in the 1876 season, had been expelled for accepting bribes from Sixth form cronies in return for seeing his side lost by letting in no less than six goals.

All this, and much more represented the meat of which his history was made. Of course, reflected Mr. Quelch from the comfort of his chair, there would be some carping critic who would not accept his 'history' for the literary gem it undoubtedly was; who would refuse to acknowledge the equally undoubted impact that that work would have upon the academic world. In his mind's eye he could see himself granting interviews to, and writing "follow-up" articles for, the "Public School Review" and both the Educational and Literary Supplements of "The Times". A modest lecture tour would possibly follow and an invitation to speak at the next Headmasters' Conference. All this, Mr. Quelch saw in his mind's eye. Time would prove whether he saw it in any

other! Where ignorance is bliss...!

The Remove master had scanned the pages of that informative volume, the Writers' and Artists' Year Book, in search of a publisher worthy enough to receive the great work. He wondered if there were any, among the illustrious names he found therein, who were prepared to meet the expense of calfskin binding, so eminently suitable for embracing such a valued masterpiece. They did not mention calfskin, but surely someone would accord Quelch the same compliment that they had accorded Seneca, Suetonius, and others, whose finely bound volumes were among Quelch's most treasured possessions! Probably Mr. Quelch would moderate his transports once he had been in contact with a publisher and had been given the sad facts of life!

For the present it gave him comfort and satisfaction to day dream, just as many a lesser would-be author had dreamed before him! He found himself wondering how he would fill his leisure time now that the days of research and revision were over. It was difficult to accept that, for the past thirty years or so, his "History of Greyfriars School" as largely in his life, almost, as the teaching post that had given him the opportunity to embark upon it. Somehow, a tinge of regret was intruding upon his feeling of comfortable satisfaction. Was fulfillment all that complete? Like a fond parent about to watch the beloved offspring go out into the cruel world, Quelch felt that same elusive sorrow. He tried to banish such sadness by turning his thoughts to other things. The manuscript, had had a history of its own that had been precarious indeed!

He found himself recalling the occasion when Bunter had hidden several pages of precious draft up in the study fireplace. Only some penetrating cross-examination in the Form room had elicited sufficient information for him to recover the manuscript. He had been sorry to discover that soot stains had obliterated some of his annotations; very sorry indeed - but not half as sorry as Bunter had been by the time that Quelch had finished with him! He made it clear, painfully clear, to Bunter and, by example, to others, that it would be a far safer pastime twisting the tail of a Royal Bengal tiger, than to mess about with the Quelchian literary endeavour.

Perhaps, with due passage of time, that direness of that warning faded and passed into nothingness. Schoolboys have short memories which have to be refreshed from time to time. He had come to his study, after class one particularly trying afternoon, intent on seeking escape in drafting further chapters, when he discovered that someone - so lost to all sense of propriety had swamped page after page of manuscript with ink. Quelch had been hurt as well as angry. Hitherto, he had thought that his boys held him in sufficient esteem that such an act would have been inconceivable. He had been disposed to lay the blame at the door of Herbert Vernon-Smith at the time and had, in fact taxed that youth to confess. Vernon-Smith had told his form master that he would never had considered such a low and despicable act. For once, Quelch had accepted the word of that 'worst boy in his form', and events had made him glad that he had. Not only had Vernon-Smith proved innocent but he had proved instrumental in bringing the real culprit to justice. There were not many

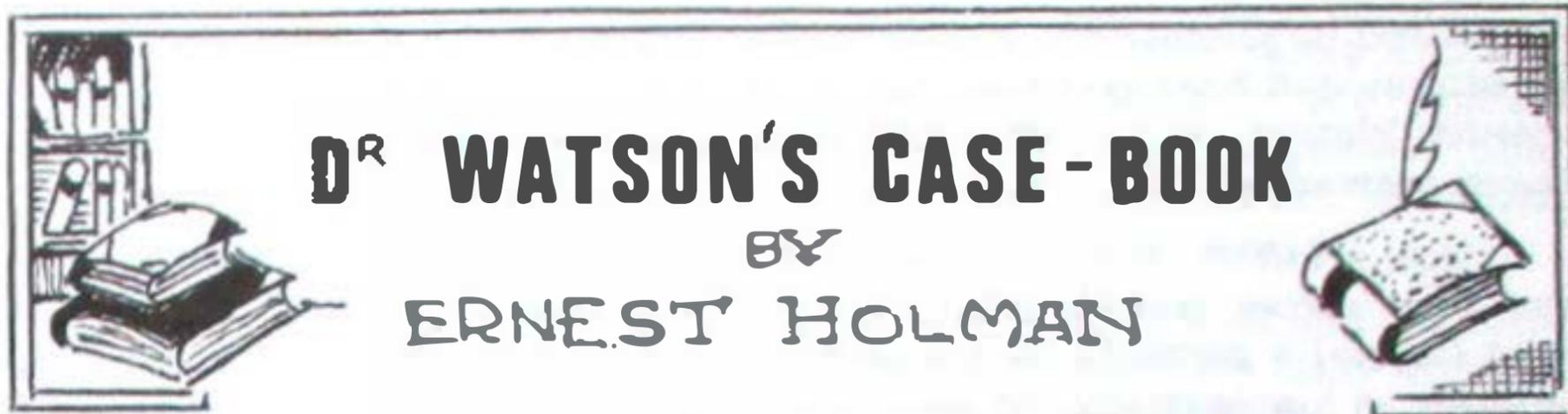
occasions on record when Quelch had felt grateful to Vernon-Smith, but he was happy, in his reminiscent frame of mind to recall that rare occasion now!

On another occasion he had discovered his precious manuscript soaked in glue, almost a year's research wasted and hours of re-typing in the offing. Unable to discover the culprit, Quelch had gated the whole form for the rest of the month, counselling them to find the culprit for themselves if they desired any remission. Later, he had been rather perturbed to see Harold Skinner being frog-marched to the fountain, and even later still had encountered the same Skinner running the gauntlet in the Remove corridor. As a form master, Mr. Quelch could not approve, could not, possibly, approve of such intimidation. Yet, at the end of the day, a sad and sorry Skinner had presented himself and confessed. Quelch could not, perhaps, approve, of a confession made under duress, but there are exceptions to every rule. He dealt faithfully with Skinner, and rescinded the sentence on the rest of the form. And, although he did not, could not, possibly approve of the action take by his form, he had been gracious, very gracious when he had told the Remove that their gating was over before it had really begun. The Remove, with the possible exception of Skinner, had felt satisfied; in his way, Quelch had felt satisfied. Skinner, perhaps, not so. But in an imperfect world it is impossible for everyone to be satisfied!

Another ember spluttered and sparked itself into the grate and, by the flickering light of its emboldened flame, Quelch caught a glance of the clock on the mantelpiece. He had been so lost to time in his reverie that he was now too late for tea in Masters' Commons with his colleagues. This fact occasioned him little regret. The rest of the Staff were probably listening to the fruity boom of Prout as he held forth on his favourite subject - himself! Quelch had no great desire to join the captive audience, or to help himself to what was left of cold tea and buttered toast. Instead he would ring for Trotter and ask for some refreshment to be brought to the study.

He rose from his chair at last, and went across to the fireplace, stirring the fire into new life with the poker. The window, with its filligree of rime upon the glass, now bore the fresh white of snow upon its ledges. He drew the curtains and made his way to the door so that he could switch on the light, but he paused before he covered the necessary distance. He had found it rather pleasant, sitting in the gloom and dwelling on days that were gone and years that were past. It would not come amiss to draw up the arm chair to the fire and to sit, reminiscing, for a little longer.

His history had been brought to its close at the turn of the century, for he felt it appropriate that the more recent story of Greyfriars should come from another pen. Still, life was not going to be the same now that the writing had come to an end ... or had it? Surely, somewhere amongst the reams of manuscript, there was the odd item for revision or correction! He would take another look on the morrow, he promised himself. The warmth and comfort of the fire reached out to him.



"It was early in April, in the year '83, that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed. "

So writes John H. Watson in *The Speckled Band*.

It is in the year '83 that this is now being written - so a 'ton' of years has passed since the above. Chronologically speaking, *Speckled* was the earliest association of Holmes and Watson in fifty-six short stories.

These pages are about Watson and his stories. The general impression of the two companions is usually of many cases, with Watson dividing his time between accompanying the detective and writing up the events. Watson did at times present this picture - yet, mostly, it is quite untrue.

After settling in at Baker Street and becoming involved in the Jefferson Hope affair, Holmes laughingly quotes a newspaper statement that the Scotland Yard detectives will receive a testimonial. Watson points out that he has all the facts and will give them to the public.

He does so - but not immediately. During subsequent cases Watson also worked on his writing of the Hope case. It took him some while to complete - the inner story of the Mormons must have required much research. *A Study in Scarlet* eventually turned up in Beeton's Christmas Annual for 1887. Holmes did not think much of it, as he tells the author in *Sign of Four*!

In the following year Ward Lock brought out *Scarlet* as a separate book. Watson was married that year to Mary Morstan. He still accompanied Holmes on certain cases, as well as carrying on a medical practice. When not engaged in either occupation, Watson wrote the events of the *Agra Treasure*, during which he had first met his future wife. He was quicker off the mark this time and Lippincott's Magazine for February 1890 contained *The Sign of Four*. Later the same year, Blackett produced the story in book form.

It would appear by now that Watson had been giving some thought to, and had started writing, one or two short stories - possibly prompted by his not very absorbing practice. A blow, however, fell in May 1891 - reported only in one foreign newspaper and by Reuter's despatch in certain British papers; this was no less than the death of Sherlock Holmes in the Reichenbach Falls.

In the July 1891 issue of the Strand Magazine *A Scandal in Bohemia*

appeared and in succeeding months further Holmes cases were presented. Only a few stories had been prepared before Reichenbach but with the death of his companion Watson set to with a will to give Holmes the due recognition that had not been granted earlier.

Now a further sad blow was to befall Watson - his wife Mary passed away. This second tragedy must have been shattering. He sold his practice and left the Capital - probably for his favourite Southsea. There he absorbed himself completely in his writings, to shut away the loss of two very dear companions.

In 1892 Newnes gathered the Strand series of twelve stories - which had run until June of that year - into a book and issued them as *The Adventures*. A second series of twelve cases began in December 1892 and ran continuously for thirteen months (Naval Treaty occupied two issues).

The very last story in this second Strand series dealt with the Holmes/Moriarty events, causing more than a little consternation to the readers. This was Watson's intended end to the Holmes saga, as he states in *Final Problem*. From what is mentioned in a later story, he appears to have returned to London and started another medical practice in Kensington.

It was, however, to be a short-lived occupation; for, in the spring of 1894, Sherlock Holmes returned from his watery grave. Watson was to undergo several shocks now. He fainted at the first sight of his former friend's face; he was then to learn that Mycroft, fully aware of his brother's continued existence, had preserved the old rooms as they had always been. Watson realised, too, that the Official Force were in the picture - "It's good to see you back in London, sir," was the matter-of-fact greeting by Lestrade to Holmes.

When Colonel Moran had been safely taken, Watson sold his practice to a relative of Holmes (from the French side of the family, the Vernets) and settled back into the Baker Street quarters with the Master. From that moment on, the old association resumed. Newnes, at about this time, gathered together eleven of the last Strand series of twelve stories and issued them as *The Memoirs*. Watson made no further attempt to write anything and the Strand continued without Sherlock Holmes for many a year.

When the new century was under way and Edward was King, Holmes began to think of retirement. (The suggestion that William Gilette's play, *Sherlock Holmes*, may have prompted the decision has been offered by one researcher.) As a result of Holmes' intention, Watson's thoughts turned again to the Strand Magazine and, in August 1901, Holmes re-entered their pages in the *Grimpen Mire* adventures. This was stated to have been an earlier case of the great detective (probably around 1887). It ran monthly until April 1902 - and later that year Newnes produced *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in book form.

Sherlock Holmes retired to Sussex in 1903 - his last case was most likely that dealing with Professor Presbury (Watson told the story twenty years later as *The Creeping Man*). By this time, Watson had begun a new series of short stories. In the Strand for October 1903, the readers were delighted to

see *The Empty House* and to learn that Holmes was, in fact, alive and well and living in Baker Street. Twelve stories appeared regularly until September 1904. A further story was contained in that year's December number. The reason for the extra story can be seen in the opening chapter of *The Second Stain*; the ban on any further stories lasted for about four years.

In 1905 Newnes produced all the thirteen short stories in book form, when they made up *The Return*. By this time, because of the many stories in the Strand and in volume form, Holmes was famous world-wide.

In the first decade of the century, whilst the real Holmes was living quietly and happily upon the South Downs (thinking about Bee Culture and the question of segregating the Queen) his John Watson/Sidney Paget image was accepted everywhere. Even silent films were getting into the act but none of Watson's stories were used in those early days - one British Company did, however, turn to Baker Street for a film character; they settled upon a detective who went by the name of Sexton Blake!

Watson's stories did begin again in the Strand - but now very spasmodically; even at a distance, Holmes obviously was holding the reins! From September 1908 to December 1913, only six cases were chronicled. Some of Watson's earlier stories were now beginning to appear as two-reelers; Holmes evidently had no influence to exert on the film-makers.

Round about 1912, more important matters began to occupy the attention of Sherlock Holmes. He came secretly out of retirement, at the combined request of Foreign Minister Edward Grey and Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. He set to work on the task of collecting vital evidence against the Kaiser's most devoted agent, Von Bork.

Holmes achieved his goal on 2nd August 1914. Watson and Mrs. Hudson were there, also - it was now close to War but Holmes tells Watson that a "cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared".

Watson's call from Holmes in that fateful August must have interfered with the Doctor's writing, for in the next month's Strand the Birlstone story began. It ran until May 1915. (Just how Strand readers took to the later monthly sequences of the Scowrers can only be conjectured!) In 1915 Smith Elder produced the full story of *The Valley of Fear* in book form. Film makers were soon after it and it appeared as a six-reeler in 1916 - as had *Scarlet* two years previously.

In the Strand for September 1917, Watson gave his version of the Von Bork affair. By the end of the year, John Murray had put between covers the six Strand stories from 1908 to 1913, plus Von Bork, under the title of *His Last Bow*. The volume also included the story omitted many years previously from *The Memoirs*. This time, the stories in book form did not follow the order of Strand publication.

In the telling of Von Bork, Watson revealed that Holmes would be

working for King and Country and that he, himself, would be returning to the Colours. When the hostilities had ceased, Holmes returned to his Bees; Watson, for the second time in his life, became a civilian. Their various exploits have never been revealed.

The year 1921 saw the Stoll Company commence their long series of two-reel films, all based on Watson's stories, with Eille Norwood playing the detective. In that year, also, the Strand again started Watson's latest short chronicles. As earlier, they made irregular appearances, from October 1921 to April 1927. Further on in the latter year, Murray gathered all twelve together as *The Case Book*. Again, they were not in Strand order.

No more stories of Holmes were ever penned by Watson. By the 1930s, the four long stories and the fifty-six short stories had appeared in two large volumes. Today, when copyright has expired fifty years after the author's death, a large paper-back edition contains all sixty stories.

So Watson's stories finished in 1927 - obviously only a few years prior to the writer's death. He penned his first Holmes story - *A Study in Scarlet* - in 1887; his final item in the saga - *Shoscombe Old Place* - came forty years later. All but *Scarlet* and *Sign of Four* appeared in the Strand.

Of the sixty chronicles, the vast majority were written when the two men were apart. Mainly, they fall into two compartments - those written between the disappearance and return of Holmes, and those penned after the detective's retirement.

*Scarlet* was written whilst Watson lived at Baker Street; *Sign of Four* during his marriage; then came two dozen short stories, all published during Holmes' absence. *Hound* was written during Watson's second Baker Street residence; almost every story thereafter was written after Holmes had settled in Sussex.

Immensely grateful as all readers are for the efforts of John Watson, author, it has to be conceded that his writings included quite a few oddities. Sorting out his chronology, of course, has always been a nightmare. There is something to be said for one researcher, who suggested taken the stories in the order of writing - he reckoned this method would require far less adjustment to items in the stories than following the popular practice of being unable to see the wood for the trees! Certainly, illustrator Sidney Paget would seem to have followed this procedure - whenever Holmes was portrayed on the coloured parts of the Strand, his dressing gown faded in hue over the years!

Watson would have readers believe that *Blanched Soldier* and *Lion's Mane* were written by Holmes. He used a neutral style in *Mazarin Stone* and *Last Bow*. His wife called him James (perhaps his second initial stood for Hamish?). He seemed uncertain of the date of the ending of the Boer War - see *Lion's Mane* and *Three Garridebs*. Both he and Holmes were uncertain that Texas was the Lone Star State in *Five Orange Pips*.

Watson was not too successful in disguising personnel; for instance,

there was Prime Minister Lord Salisbury in Second Stain and his near neighbour, Sexton Blake, in Retired Colourman. What price, too, Irene Adler and her friend Wilhelm in A Scandal in Bohemia? Well, of course, in this case there was no doubt - they were . . .!

Dates were not Watson's strong points, by a long way. There are far too many inconsistencies to relate them all here; let one suffice, i.e. the period from April to October in Red-Headed League was indicated as two months! The good Doctor was also lost in the world of horse-racing odds, as instanced by Silver Blaze. In Bruce-Partington, he did not reckon there were many points or curves on the Underground system between Gloucester Road and Aldgate.

Scarlet offers the information that Watson had been wounded in the shoulder by a Jezail bullet. In The Sign of Four, his leg had suffered the same fate. Shoulder was probably correct, as Watson's leg stood up well to a quick run in Milverton.

Dancing Men must carry a question mark. In the children's magazine 'St. Nicholas' for May 1874, there appeared a cryptogram headed 'The Language of The Restless Imps'. Watson's symbols in 1903 were somewhat different - but he may have seen the earlier publication in a children's ward in 1874, when he would have been on his medical studies.

Watson, however, was quite blameless when we turn to The Cardboard Box. The reason for its omission from The Memoirs and inclusion in Last Bow has never been explained. The strangest thing about this story, though, concerns one edition that gave this particular story an entirely different opening from the original. The first 300 or so words from Golden Pince-Nez took the place of the correct beginning. Thus, a blazing hot August morning became a wild, tempestuous night in November! Editions today, of course, are back to the original.

Watson tells us nothing about Jack the Ripper; in actual fact, whatever notes Holmes may have given him would (like the Official Documents today) have been sealed. At the time, in 1888, Watson was on his honeymoon and then setting up home and medical practice. Undoubtedly, Holmes was on to it - he and the Official Force must have discovered many facts in their investigations. No doubt several of the trails turned out to be unconnected with the crimes; but that much information about Society's Upper Strata came to light must be a good reason for the Records Office still refusing to spill any beans!

The Ripper must have been about the biggest case in which Holmes was involved - what a splendid fifth long story Watson could have made of it. It would probably have run for about two years and would have filled a gap in the Strand towards the end of the century.

In the end, John Watson left sixty chronicles of Sherlock Holmes. From what little acorns did great oaks grow, as thousands of researchers kept

delving into the cases. From the actual stories, the reader learns much about the great detective - but very little of Watson himself. This must have been deliberate, for Watson wished to present Holmes on as broad a canvas as he could.

How well he succeeded. When the two old friends finally got together, after solving the greatest mystery of them all, surely Holmes must have echoed the feelings of millions of readers by remarking:

"Good old Watson!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Father Christmas, Stuck between chimney breast,  
Thinking "lean" Digest reader, Vicious puller  
"Noel" thinner, Reader fuller. Best wishes everyone.

JOHN BURSLEM

= = = = =

Very best wishes to customers/friends for Xmas and New Year.

NORMAN SHAW

84 BELVEDERE ROAD, LONDON, SE19 2HZ

= = = = =

Best wishes for a very Happy Christmas and New Year to Josie, Eric and Madam, Norman, Chris, Bertie, Laurie, Les, Mac, and all good friends of the hobby, especially the other Johns, and not forgetting Princess Snowee. My Annual mayday call now goes out once again for Boys' Magazine 317 "Iron Army" instalment. Always hoping someone with a copy to photocopy is listening on my wavelength.

JOHN BRIDGWATER

58 SPRING LANE, MALVERN LINK, WORCS., WR14 1AJ

= = = = =

Happy Christmas, Good Health in 1984, to Eric, Madam, Snowee, and all hobby friends - known and unknown.

ESMOND KADISH

18 GROVE GARDENS, HENDON, LONDON, N.W. 4

= = = = =

Greetings to all fellow collectors and thanks to Eric for all he does.

BILL THURBON AND THE CAMBRIDGE CLUB

= = = = =

# DANNY IN DECEMBER



Somebody - I think it was Mr. Ernest Holman - made a special request that we should include a few of Danny's earlier muslogs, as he entered them in his famous Diary, in this year's Annual. Quite a number of other readers asked the same thing. Well, why not. So here we go ...

## DECEMBER 1913:

What a sensation on 10th December! Everybody thought that Bombardier Billy Wells was going to win in the fight at the National Sporting Club. But Georges Carpentier of France knocked him out in 73 seconds. I wouldn't care much about being a boxer. I don't like getting hurt.

Carpentier is the most handsome boxer who ever existed, so all the ladies love him, but Doug says that if he goes on fighting his beauty will get spread.

For a Christmas present, Jessie, who is our maid, gave me the Sports Library. I had never seen this paper before. It contains stories about the Blue Crusaders, by Arthur S. Hardy. They are football stories, and there is a stout goalkeeper called Fatty Fowkes. It is a nice paper for anyone who is very keen on sport.

In return, I bought Jessie the Answers Library Christmas Double Number. This contained two long complete stories. One was "Magden's Little Girl", the story of an old lag's Christmas. What a lot of stories there are nowadays about golden-hearted convicts! The other story was "The Curate's Consolence". Both tales looked sloppy, but I know that Jessie likes sloppy tales. Her favourite author is Charles Garvice, and she has just got a book by him from the public library, called "Queen Kate".

My Christmas cards came from Pain's Presents House at Hastings, and they cost 1/3 for 25. They were nice cards, and they gave free envelopes for any card which was of an unusual size. One night, while Mum was making mincemeat, I got all my cards ready for the post, and all the time I was absent-mindedly dipping my hand in the raisins and eating them.

The Gem has been great this month. "The Cockney Schoolboys" was about a new boy called Harry Hammond, who dropped his hatches. Gussy did not like him at first, but Hammond rescued Cousin Ethel from the mill-stream, so Gussy and Hammond became friends. According to the artist, Ethel kept her hat on in the mill-stream, and even her feather did not look wet. I suppose it was her hat-pins that did it.

Next week came "Parted Chums" in which Levison did a despicable trick, so that Gussy and Hammond quarrelled. In this issue of the Gem, a new serial called "Secret Service" commenced.

Then came "The Ghost Hunters" which was very suitable for Christmas time. A ghost was haunting St. Jim's, but at the same time a thief was at work. In the end, the culprit turned out to be Prye of the Fifth, and he was expelled from St. Jim's.

Lastly, a story of House rivalry. There have been plenty of stories of this type in the Gem, but this one, "Caught Napping" is quite the best so far.

On the day school broke up, Mum took me to our local Grand Theatre. We lined up for early doors. You have to pay 3d more for a seat by "early doors", but it means you can get a good seat in comfort. It was a nice variety programme. The star was Tom Costello, who sang "The Ship I Love" and "Comrades". These were sad songs, but people like them, and Tom Costello sang "My Old Dutch" as an encore. Also in the programme was Victoria Monks who sang "Hitchy Koo" and "You Made Me Love You".

My cousin Robin, who lives at Aldershot, sent me the Union Jack Christmas Double Number for a present. It contained a very long Sexton Blake story called "The Sacred Sphere" which introduced Yvonne, Dr. Huxton Rymer, and Wu Ling. It was an exciting tale.

I passed it on to Doug in exchange for a new Boy's Friend 3d Library,



**CHRISTMAS  
DOUBLE  
NUMBER**

No. 029. November 19th, 1912.

**THE SACRED SPHERE**

*A Christmas Story with a Deeply Laid Plot*

INTRODUCING  
**SEXTON BLAKE, YVONNE, DR. HUXTON RYMER, and  
WU LING, etc., etc.**

called "The Ghost of Rupert Forbes", an 80,000-word tale of Sexton Blake. I read this, and then sold it to Mr. Lindsay for tuppence, which I spend on The Boy's Friend Christmas Double Number which contained five complete tales and four serials. The main story, however, was a two-part story entitled "The Red Man's Ghost" which is thrilling and mystifying. I must try to get next week's copy to find out how it ends. Luckily, it will only be a penny next week.

I have been busy buying Christmas presents. I bought Dad an ounce of Bell's Three Nuns Tobacco which cost be 6½d. For Mum I got a bar of Pear's soap which cost 6d. My grandmother and my Auntie Owen are coming to spend Christmas with us, and I intend to get my presents for them from Mr. Woolworth's 3d and 6d stores.

Dad evidently means it to be a very lively Christmas, for he has bought two bottles of Max Sutine 1906 Champagne at 5/- a bottle, and a bottle of Quinta Superba Port which cost him 4/6. He has booked seats for all of us to go to the pantomime "Puss in Boots" at the Prince of Wales Theatre on New Year's Eve.

A splendid month in the Magnet. "In Borrowed Plumes" was a most exciting story in which Billy Bunter got kidnapped by people who thought he was Lord Mauleverer.

Then came the Magnet's Christmas Double Number. It had a coloured cover. The Greyfriars story was "The Four Heroes" and it was good, though, so far as the title went, at any rate, it had a kind of aunty-climax. The Head received an anonymous letter from a man who said he was a Colonial who had been rescued by a Greyfriars boy. The supposed Colonial enclosed £20 to be given to the hero. Four boys claimed to be the hero. Then the Bounder stepped forward and said that he had sent the letter, in order to show how wicked and deceitful certain boys were. The Bounder was expelled for playing such a trick on the whole of Greyfriars.

The second part of the story switched to Christmas at Wharton Lodge. Bunter fell through the ice, and the Bounder rescued him. Colonel Wharton informed the Head, who was so pleased that he decided to let the Bounder go back to Greyfriars.

Also in this Double Number there was another complete story called "By Sheer Grit". This was an adventure tale, and I did not read it. There was, as well, a play about Greyfriars called "The Spectre of No. 1 Study".

Now an odd thing happened. Though we had had the Christmas Number, with the boys enjoying Christmas at Wharton Lodge, the following week we had "Harry Wharton's Christmas Number", where Harry decided to produce a Christmas Number of the Greyfriars Herald. This story was set at the school, of course. A kind of a jump back to the previous term.

The last story of the month was "Good Old Coker" in which a man called Rooke robbed Aunty Judy of all her money. Harry Wharton found the

criminal hiding from justice in Spindrift Cottage, near Greyfriars. A fine tale.

The week before Christmas I had the Double Number of Comic Cuts. It was packed full of snowy pictures and Christmas tales.

Sebastian Ginger had a "dubble kollum" and he started off: 'The saim 2 U. I no wot yu awl ad on the tips ov yore tungs, so I thart I wood loose no time in wishin yu 1st wot yu awl wish me, a Jolly Appy Merry ole Kristmus wiv the best ov luck in the way ov Kristmas presents & puddens? ".

I mustn't let Dad see that. He would never let me buy another Comic Cuts.

My grandmother and Auntie Gwen came on Wednesday, Christmas Eve. Dad and I met them in the early evening at Liverpool Street Station.

#### DECEMBER 1914:

"We do not intend to let the Kaiser interfere with the weekly publication of good old Comic Cuts, which is wanted these times if only to act as an antidote to the German killjoy.

"This time next year we shall, of course, be all going about our usual business, there's very little doubt about that, and we shall have no need to take our pleasures sadly; not that it's ever possible to look at Comic Cuts with a long face. But our brave boys will be back again, and we shall know once again the blessings of a peace that should never more be disturbed.

"Mr. Chips has a new story ready by the author of 'The Red Rovers'. He can't do better. Harry and Paddy, true-hearted British lads, are the most popular in any tale now being published. The Empire, football, and Comic Cuts for ever!

"By the way, remember a good resolution for the New Year of 1915! Comic Cuts Monday, 'The Funny Wonder' Tuesday, and 'Chips' Wednesday, are all one halfpenny each, and are Companion Comics. Try a year of them, and make 1915 that year. "

That's what the editor wrote in the Christmas Double Number of Comic Cuts. I hope that he's right, and that peace will soon be back. But a lot of people said it would all be over by Christmas, and it's still going on. Somehow there seems to be a bit of a damper over the old papers. There was a Christmas Double Number of Chips and Comic Cuts but not of the Funny Wonder. There was a Christmas Double Number of the Magnet but not of the Gem or the Boys' Friend. The Gem didn't really have a Christmas Number at all. It was called a 'Winter Number', though there was a Christmas story. The Boy's Friend had a kind of Christmas Number, but the editor said he hadn't made it a joyful number as he thought we shouldn't be joyful. He wished us "a Good Christmas" as he didn't want us to have a merry one. Well, that's all right, of course, but I think the editor of the Boys' Friend is a bit of a lettuce.

A dreadful thing happened in the middle of the month. Some German

cruisers bombarded Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby, and about 18 people were killed and a lot of homes destroyed. No wonder the newspapers call the Germans "baby killers".

I expect the Germans were angry because a few days earlier a British submarine passed under the Dardanelles minefields and sank the Turkish battleship "Messudiyeh". Rule Britannia!

The Gem has had some wonderfully good stories this month. Three out of the four have been about Talbot, and I can't help thinking that we are getting a bit too much of him. Even Tom Merry seems to be playing second fiddle these days.

"Keeping it Dark" was a tip-top tale. Cutts was furious because his pal Frensham, was expelled last month. Cutts tried to have his revenge on Talbot, but Kildare took a hand to stop him. Kildare got his overcoat smothered in ink, and Gussy saw someone going on the tiles in an inky overcoat and thought it was Kildare. It was really Cutts.

"The St. Jim's Refugee" was the only story not about Talbot. Gussy smuggled a little Belgian refugee boy into St. Jim's and it was fun while it lasted. The refugee's mother turned out to be an old friend of the Head's wife. What a coincidence!

"Talbot's Triumph" was fine. Mr. Packington was a new science master at St. Jim's, and Glyn House was robbed. Talbot recognized Mr. Packington as being a villain known as "The Professor". Talbot told the Head, and the Professor was taken away by inspector Skeat with gripes upon his wrists.

The last tale was "Talbot's Christmas" which took place at Tom Merry's home at Huckleberry Heath. Cousin Ethel and Marjorie Hazeldene were there. How ever did Tom come to know Marjorie Hazeldene, and what was she doing away from her family's bosom at Christmas time? It was a good tale, though, in which Wally D'Arcy and Joe Frayne were kidnapped by German spies, and Talbot saved them.

Dad always takes us to a London show on New Year's Eve, and we had to make up our minds what we wanted to see, so that he could book the seats. There's "Sleeping Beauty Beautified" at Drury Lane, with George Graves and Will Evans. Well, that seems to be the same Drury Lane show they had had for the past two Christmases, with the same cast, so we wiped that out. At His Majesty's there is "David Copperfield" and that really made me shudder. I might as well go to school on New Year's Eve as go to Dickens. At the Duke of York's there is "Peter Pan", with Madge Titherage as "Peter", but I have seen Peter Pan before. At the Aldwych there is "Cinderella" with Lily Iris as the Prince, but I was attracted by "Jack and the Beanstalk" at the Lyceum, and that's where we're going. Dad has booked the seats - 5/- ones in front. Jessie won't be coming with us this year as she has gone into a munitions factory near Dartford to make her fortune. She says she will come back to us next year when the war is over.

The editor of the Magnet has sprung a surprise. A special Greyfriars story by Frank Richards, entitled "The Boy Without a Name" is to appear in the Boys' Friend 3d Library on New Year's Day. It is the first time that Frank Richards has been in the B.F.L. I expect that's why the Magnet tales have been a bit weak lately. He's been busy writing this long story.

Doug had a magazine called "The Car", and in it there was a report that there has been an increase of 111,695 motor vehicles in the United Kingdom this year. It's pretty awful. Dad says that London will soon grind to a standstill. Goodness knows where it will end. It soon won't be safe to bowl a golf-ball along the tramlines. The other day a motor driver swore at me, using a word I'd never heard before.

Mum bought a kettle and when she got home she found it had got "Made in Germany" stamped on the bottom. She was furious and took it back to the shop and demanded her money back.

We haven't done much decorating this year as we are going to my Gran's for Christmas. But I put up some of last year's paper chains and a few bits of holly which I collected after dark from a neighbour's garden. There doesn't seem to be much mistletoe about, this year.

I don't know how it is, but the Magnet doesn't seem what it was. Maybe it's because they start the serial in the front of the paper these days, and it doesn't seem right.

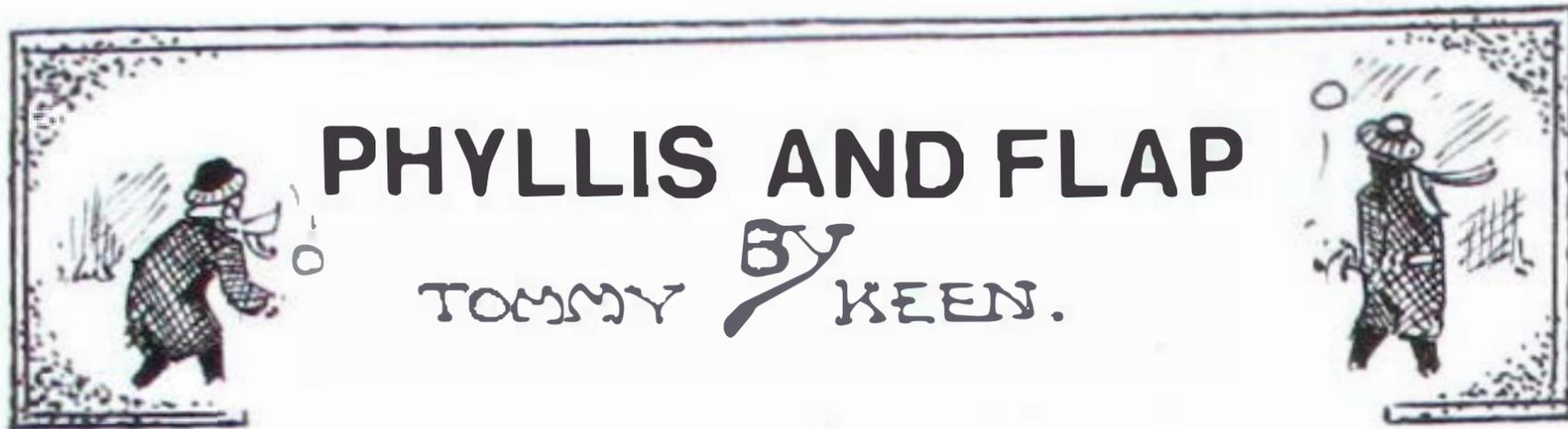
The first story of the month was "The Snob of the Remove". A new boy named Von Limberg came to Greyfriars. He was a German who had been born in England. I asked Doug about it, for I can't see how a German could be born in England. Doug was silly about it. He said that if I had been born in Belgium it wouldn't make me a Brussels sprout. At any rate, Von Limberg was very proud. He even put his foot on Bunter's neck. It seems that Von in Germany is like Lord in England. A kind of title. In the end Skinner found out that Von Limberg was really the son of a waiter named Klein, who had come into a lot of money and changed his name. I didn't like it a lot. I don't like tales about snobs.

Then came the Christmas Double Number of the Magnet, which wasn't all that Christmassy. It had a coloured cover with a picture by P. Hayward called "Fighting His Battles Over Again". It showed an old soldier of some prehistoric war showing his sword to some boys. The Greyfriars story was "The Return of the Prodigal", but except for the fact that Mr. Quelch fell down on a slide at the beginning, it wasn't Christmassy. The Prodigal in the story was Percy Locke, who was the Head's nephew. It pained the Head when his nephew got drunk. It gave me a bit of a pain, too.

Best thing in the issue was "Tom Merry's Weekly", which was a reproduction of the St. Jim's magazine. That was good fun.

"Billy Bunter's Uncle" was fair. Bunter read in the paper that a Captain Bunter was a hero of Mons, and claimed it was his uncle. When Captain Bunter





I can say little, or nothing, about a story I have not even read, and in fact have only once, very briefly, had the opportunity of gazing at (of course with awe and reverence), a copy of a popular BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY of by-gone days. This famous tale, "School and Sport", appeared in No. 319 of the BOYS' FRIEND 3d LIBRARY, issued in December 1915, and although credited to the authorship of Frank Richards, was in fact written by George Richmond Samways. The only thing I know about the story, is that it introduced a vivacious girl character by the name of Phyllis Howell. She, evidently, was the sister of an 'Old Boy' of Greyfriars, who lost his life in the Great War.

Now I must jump ahead. When, as a small boy, I was grudgingly allowed to look at her weekly issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND, I soon became acquainted with the girls of Cliff House School, my particular favourites being two great chums, Phyllis Howell and Philippa Derwent, generally referred to as Flap Derwent. Phyllis was the champion tennis player of the Fourth, and Philippa an expert horsewomen.

These two girls, to me, were by far the most interesting members of the Cliff House Fourth Form, far ahead of the real leading characters in the SCHOOL FRIEND - Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, Bessie Bunter, Marjorie Hazeldene, and Clara Trevlyn.

Then I discovered the MAGNET, and to my amazement, Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn occasionally appeared in the Greyfriars stories, as the SCHOOL FRIEND has given absolutely no clue that Greyfriars was nearby. Barbara and Mabel were seldom mentioned in the MAGNET, but to my delight, one or two stories cropped up featuring Phyllis Howell, and her brother Archie, who, supposedly, was in the Remove. Archie however, I discovered was also a George Samways' character, and only appeared when Mr. Samways wrote the story. Let me hastily add that it is only in recent years I have learned the history of the sub writers. Archie Howell, rather like Piet Delarey, became rather a confusing character. The, reading a SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY in those far off days, the name of Philippa Derwent arose.

I was quite bewildered then by the Cliff House establishment, more so as the illustrations of the Cliff House girls, by G. M. Dodshon in the SCHOOL

FRIEND, and C. H. Chapman in the MAGNET, were so vastly different.

This is a strange case of many authors being involved with the same two characters. G. R. Samways invented Phyllis Howell, and Philippa was introduced by J. N. Pentelow, together with her brother Philip (who was known as Flip), in a long, long, drawn out serial in the GEM, 'The Twins from Tasmania'. Philip Derwent was installed at Highcliffe, but very seldom appeared in the MAGNET stories. However, Frank Richards did occasionally use Phyllis in pre 1920 stories, and is credited with writing one story entitled "Flap's Brother", (MAGNET No. 515 of 1917), which featured the Derwent Twins. This was a slightly harrowing, sentimental story, not quite Frank Richards.

The first issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND appeared in May 1919, and in the second issue, Frank Richards, as 'Hilda Richards', included Phyllis Howell and Philippa Derwent as two of the leading lights of the Fourth Form at Cliff House. Therefore, at that time, Phyllis and Flap had passed through the hands of G. R. Samways, J. N. Pentelow, and Frank Richards. After No. 6 of the SCHOOL FRIEND, the two girls were featured in many stories, then written by either Horace Phillips, or R. J. Ransome. Also, sub writers in the MAGNET often included Phyllis and Philippa, when called upon to write, and both were mentioned in No. 654, "A Bid for the Captaincy", by S. Barrie in 1920. In No. 837 of 1924, "The White Feather", by F. G. Cook, Phyllis Howell and Bob Cherry were prominently featured, and again, in another F. G. Cook story, "The Feud with Cliff House", No. 902 of 1925, Phyllis even celebrates a birthday.

The SCHOOL FRIEND, sadly, finished in 1929, but a new paper emerged, the SCHOOLGIRL, whose main story featured Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House School. Phyllis and Flap were briefly mentioned, but alas, several of the old favourites were heard of no more, and fresh girls, with more up to date names were introduced. I have recently heard from a great admirer of the SCHOOLGIRL, that John Wheway, the then author of the Cliff House tales, had, during the mid 1930s, shipped Philippa, AND Phyllis off to Tasmania, where their fathers were to work together on a sheep farm, and presumably, where Phyllis and Philippa would continue a life long friendship.

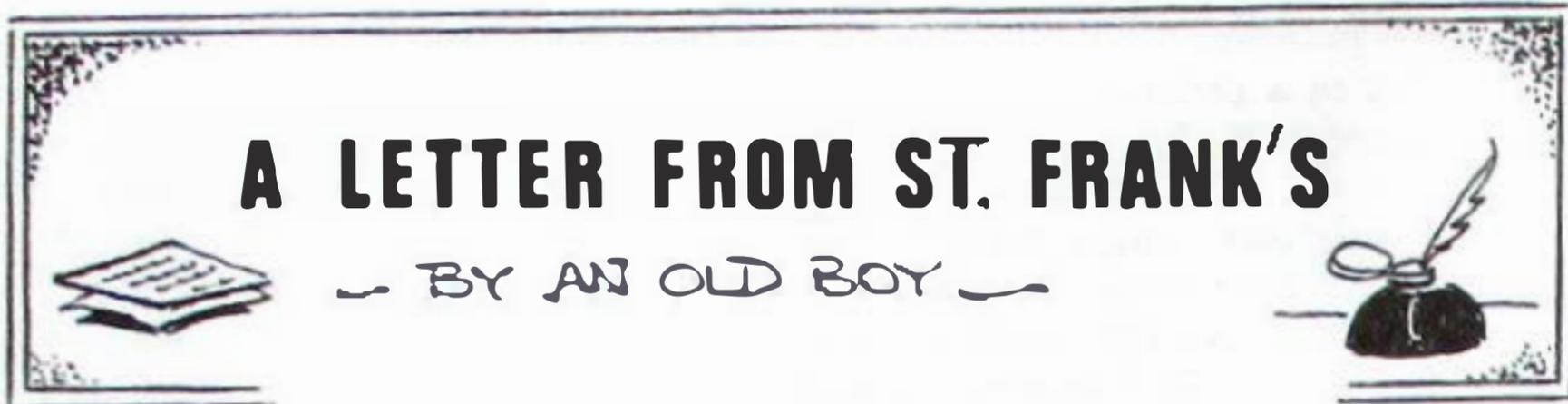
Mr. Samways created a splendid character in Phyllis Howell, and I think, given a little more encouragement by Frank Richards during the early days of Phyllis' introduction, she would have become a far more popular girl than the gentle (but rather dull) Marjorie, or the slangy, boisterous Clara, as according to the Editor's Chats, and Brief Replies to Readers, of Blue and White MAGNET days, Phyllis made quite a hit with the readers of those far off days.

Thank you Mr. Samways.

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When Nelson Lee decided to vacate his consulting rooms in Grays Inn Road, London, for the rustic peace of the Sussex countryside he imagined he and Nipper were in for a very quiet time. His appointment as Housemaster at St. Frank's College promised to be a term of repose for himself and his assistant from the deadly business of private investigation.

But Lee soon found his talents were needed as much as they were in London.

The surrounding environs of St. Frank's had very little suggestion that crime was flourishing in the hamlets and villages. For instance, there is the Moor View School for Young Ladies that was a deserted, rambling old house years ago. Then the owner rented it to an author, H. Ridgeway who ignored its local reputation of being haunted.

Incidentally, the writer was to meet Mr. Ridgeway and his wife some years later in South Africa.

When the Ridgeways vacated the Mount, which was the name of the old house, another tenant was a Mr. Grahame Tarrant, and it is interesting to note that when later the house became the Moor View School, Mr. Tarrant's grand-daughter, Sylvia Glenn, was a pupil.

The Mount is famous - or infamous - for a short tenancy by The Circle of Terror, a criminal organisation. Mr. Lee was very much involved with the Circle of Terror whenever circumstances brought them together.

Today, the Moor View School is a tourist attraction. It stands upon a high bluff overlooking a wide expanse of Bannington Moor and is an ideal spot for solitude.

Another unlikely spot for criminal activity is Most Hollow. This was built on the site of the old River House, another school in the St. Frank's area. Previously it had been a private lunatic asylum. But in the future it was to be used as a type of Dotheboys Hall for Unwanted boys. Then later it was used as a casino in the cellars. And the keen historian might like to know the St. Frank's junior, Fullwood, was concerned in a complicated affair with his cousin, Eustace Carey, who hid there from the police.

The advent of William K. Smith, the German-American millionaire, threatened to turn the St. Frank's area into one huge industrial complex and

the records are well worth reading as they fit very significantly in today's picture.

Smith soon found he had the boys of St. Frank's to deal with, and like many would-be dictators before him, his great idea failed.

Another building that occupies a place in St. Frank's history is the River House School. This is a Preparatory School completely different in type and general policy from St. Frank's. Where St. Frank's has a Triangle, the River House has The Courtyard. It houses 44 boys and has three Houses: Marshall's, Wraggs and the School House.

During the turmoil created by William K. Smith who purchased the River House, all the boys were transferred to St. Frank's as a temporary measure. Later when Smith left the area the school resumed as the River House.

There are many places the investigative scholar would find full of interest besides those I have mentioned. The village of Bellton, one mile from St. Frank's, with its quaint shops, was well patronised by the boys of St. Frank's. The Post Office, closing time 7 p.m. sharp, has a well recorded history. Mr. Binks, the owner of the village tuckshop, had had twenty years of experience with schoolboys, which claim restricted the wiles of Fatty Little.

Bellton Abbey is an old building which has been in ruins for years but was seldom featured in the St. Frank's records.

Then there's Bellton Chase, a high turreted building which has a short history.

The local medico Dr. Brett is also the visiting doctor for St. Frank's and the good doctor has quite an history of his own. Before Brett took over the practice there used to be a Dr. Banham, a cheery little fat man.

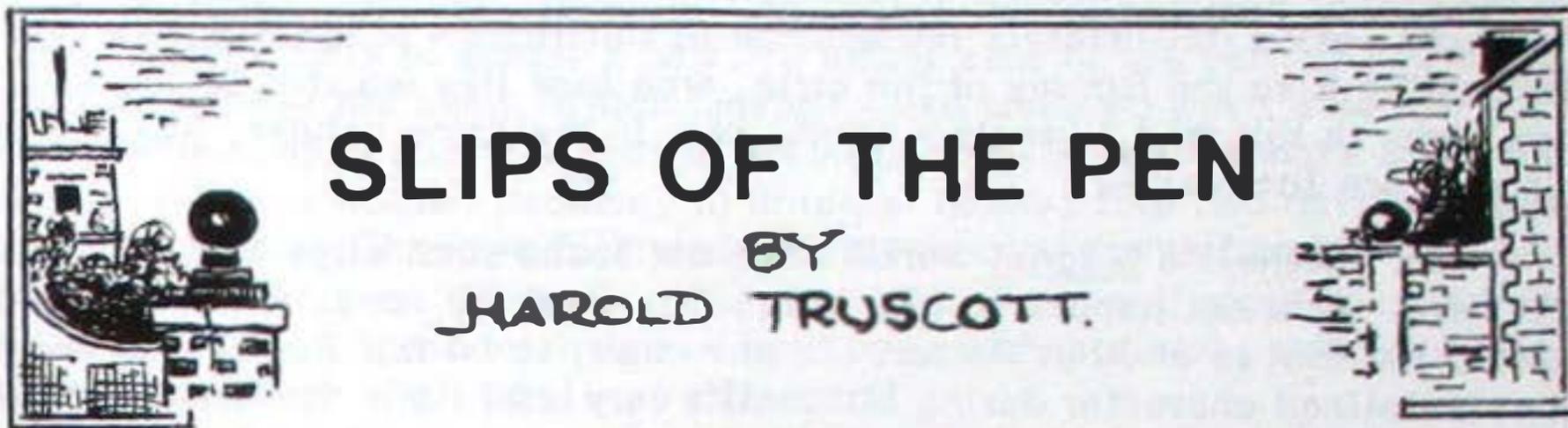
Space does not permit to mention all the places of interest, but it would be wrong of me to omit such famous spots as Caistowe, Holt's farm, Willards Island, the Old Mill, Bellton Wood and so on. And I must mention Helmford. There is always a fast train from Bannington to Helmford, but there is also Helmford College, which is in the St. Frank's Group for sporting fixtures, and also Helmford United, the soccer club that was formerly Third Division Bannington.

I have said very little about Bannington. It proudly boasts of a fine Grammar School and a grand cinema. Bannington Race Course which is a little on the outskirts of the town lies just past the Grammar School. Shady characters at St. Frank's have often visited the racecourse knowing full well they would be expelled if found out.

It might interest the reader to know that several St. Frank's juniors have shares in the Bannington Palladium cinema. How this came about has been recorded.

The colours of the St. Frank's Houses are Ancient House: Red and Blue; West House: Mauve and Yellow; East House: Black and Orange; Modern House:





It has always seemed to me that an artist employed to illustrate a certain author's work should be, in all things concerning that work, the collaborating servant of that author. Good illustrators add much to the flavour of a story, as Sidney Paget did to the Sherlock Holmes stories in the Strand magazine, as T. M. R. Whitwell did to so many stories in The Captain, and they certainly did to papers such as Magnet and Gem. And, of course, since illustrators are human, there will be slips. These one can understand; but for what appear to be deliberate contradictions of the text there can, in my opinion, be no excuse. In this article I have confined myself to the Magnet, and only certain instances in that paper. And let me say at once that the list I present has not been arrived at by a deliberate search for errors, nor is it the result of intentional fault-finding, but contains just some of the slips I have noticed as I read.

Of the four Magnet illustrators the first, Hutton Mitchell, worked only on the first thirty-nine issues; he was removed on the ground of his dilatory attitude to delivering work. He was succeeded by Arthur Clarke, who continued until 1911, when he died suddenly. He was followed by the first of the two best known of these illustrators, C. H. Chapman, who was then associated with the Magnet until its sudden disappearance in May, 1940. Chapman had it to himself until July, 1926, when the last of the four, Leonard Shields, joined up. From there until the end Chapman and Shields alternated, at times one drawing the cover picture while the other supplied the inside illustrations.

There were other Greyfriars drawings, in the Holiday Annual, for instance, by artists who are, fortunately, unknown to me. There is a certain fascination, perhaps misplaced, about the awful examples in any art, and indeed there have been collectors of the worst efforts in this or that line. My prize example in this group occurs in a short story by a substitute writer in the 1920 Holiday Annual, A Cliff House Comedy, supposedly by Phyllis Howell, Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh. This features, on page 85 of that annual, a lean batsman, most Magnet readers will have some difficulty in recognising as the character he is supposed to be, Mr. Prout. Had that artist ever read one of Hamilton's numerous descriptions of Mr. Prout? In fact, in the second chapter of the first story in the annual, Ructions at Greyfriars, the Fifth form master is described as "portly" and as pacing majestically. Our artist can hardly have read this or any of the hundreds of other similar descriptions of

Mr. Prout, or he deliberately ran counter to Hamilton - or his aim was very poor. Note also the figures of the girls, who look like wooden dolls, and the boys, who in this and in another short story in the same volume, Against all Comers, are little better.

In Mitchell's Magnet work I have not found such slips as I am concerned with here. I do not happen to like his drawings of the boys, especially his Bunter, but that is another matter. In any case, to be fair Bunter was no very closely defined character during Mitchell's very brief run. Similarly, I have not found inattention to the text in Clarke's illustrations; but I have not examined every Magnet he illustrated especially for this purpose. My complaints about his work are two: one, that to my eye the faces of his boys are often insipid, sometimes have a rather wizened look, and more often are like caricatures from the same mould, for while there is at times some attempt at characterisation it is not consistently maintained. The second complaint is less serious but the cause I find irritating; it is that he draws the turnups of the boys' trousers, where he does not avoid them, as though they had been made by a bad or inexperienced tailor. They stick out in an ungainly manner from the trouser leg.

Of the two remaining artists I have found by far the bulk of the inattentive slips in the work of Leonard Shields; therefore, I shall get Chapman out of the way first. He is my own personal choice for an illustrator of Hamilton's Greyfriars stories, especially in what I will call his heyday; that is, roughly during the latter part of the 1914-18 war, and the years that followed throughout the bulk of the twenties. After that, while his work was always recognisable, he seemed to lean towards Shields' type of drawing, especially in his thirties drawings of Bunter. This was very sad to me, for he had, to my mind, created the ideal Bunter in his illustrative work as superbly as Hamilton did in words. To see him gradually falling away from this original creative standard was very disappointing. I have wondered, indeed, whether this was editorial policy, and Chapman had been asked to copy Shields. If this was so, it was on a par with many another disgraceful editorial decision.

I have read criticisms of Chapman's work, as to the angularity of his boys, the manner in which they hold their arms, etc. It had not struck me before, but having read this I realised that it was so, up to a point. But I also realised something else. I began to look around, to study people and their attitudes, what might be called their Anglo-Saxon attitudes, and I was astonished at how often I found people holding themselves in just such angular attitudes as one finds at times in Chapman's finest Magnet drawings. There were times when I could have imagined that I was looking at a living representation of a Chapman Greyfriars drawing. In other words, in depicting such angularity he was true to life, and especially so in boys of fifteen and sixteen, who are often inclined to be gawky and awkward and not to know what to do with their hands. In the thirties, a good deal of this was lost, and while the faces were still recognisably Chapman's work, the figures were often smaller and rounder, and altogether approximated much more to Shields' manner

of drawing them. One way in which Chapman's Bunter suffered at this time is that the two curls of Bunter's hair, to either side of his parting and usually lying flat against his head, which Chapman had made so much a part of Bunter's appearance and which fitted so well with the rest to make a complete and homogeneous whole, became, in Shields' hands, like two devil's horns, and in the thirties Chapman followed Shields in thus despoiling his own best creative work. But in his heyday Chapman was the one Magnet artist who was consistent in his characterisation of the boys, although this, too, can slip in later years, as we shall see.

All these artists were good at drawing backgrounds, trees, foliage, and various other scenes; also, Chapman's (and Wakefield's, too, in his Rockwood drawings) horses were something special. What complaints I have concern the depicting of the characters, and inattention to the text, where that is so. But I must mention one aspect of Chapman's best work which has, ever since I was eight years old, when I first saw some of his illustrations, particularly given me pleasure and still does. This is his handling of perspective, a phenomenon I have always found exciting, in real life and in art. To digress for a moment, there was another artist famous for his illustrations to certain books whose work I find thrilling for, among other things, his handling of perspective. This was the American, Joseph Pennell, who illustrated books by William Dean Howells and Henry James, among others. Of James Pennell did illustrations profusely for A Little Tour of France, English Hours and Italian Hours, and these drawings are among the finest things of their kind in my experience. Some of the work by Herbert Railton and Hugh Thomson, in a book such as W. Outram Tristram's Coaching Days and Coaching Ways, are almost as good as Pennell's best, but they lack the variety of approach and technique of the American. In Italian Hours there is one picture in particular, of the colonnade sweeping round St. Peter's Square in Rome, which I find quite breathtaking, and it is as much the sense of perspective which does this as anything. Now, I find Chapman's use and mastery of perspective quite as exciting. One example is in the 1927 Holiday Annual, from the story What Happened to Bunter. On page 89 Bunter is shown running for a train that is on a gradual curve of the platform. The sense of the train's being about to move is conveyed partly by the sweeping perspective of the curve, partly by the particular angle of Bunter's running for it, aided, of course, by all the curves of Bunter's own figure. The whole thing is masterly. And on the matter of characterisation, leaving the superb Bunter aside, Vernon-Smith is equally recognisable looking from the window, but so also is Peter Todd, in the tiniest glimpse of his face in a very confined space between Smithy's shoulder and the window frame.

If I am right in assuming that Chapman was editorially asked to let his style lean towards that of Shields (and I wonder what the result would have been if Shields had been asked to copy Chapman) he was singularly unfortunate in two ways: it did harm to his own very positive style, which had more than anything created Greyfriars pictorially, long before Shields had anything to do with the Magnet, and it would be the secondtime that he had been asked

to model his style on that of another artist. When he took over after Arthur Clarke's death he was asked to use Clarke's style as a basis. For a time he did, and this is, presumably, why one can sometimes be deceived into thinking that a late drawing by Clarke is an early one by Chapman.

Although there will obviously be more than this in the whole run of his Magnet work there are only four of Chapman's slips in my list. They are not easy to find and, as I have said, I have not set out to look for such things. The first is from Magnet 875, The Vanished Ventriloquist. To begin with, the caption under the picture and Hamilton's text do not agree. Hamilton wrote "It was by sheer ill-luck that Bob Cherry let a heavy geography book fall to the form room floor soon afterwards. The crash of the falling volume seemed like thunder to the startled juniors. On any other day a word of reprimand would have been enough. On this special day Bob's clumsiness was punished more emphatically. He had two hands to rub for a long time afterwards". In spite of this the caption adds dialogue between Bob and Mr. Quelch which, as can be seen, Hamilton does not record. Chapman's contribution to this error is curious. The Remove are in class, and we know, since we have seen them and had them referred to often enough, that there are desks for the boys, as well as one for Mr. Quelch. But Chapman shows a standing Quelch, and the boys standing round him, with not a desk in sight.

Next is one from the 1920 Holiday Annual. In the story Ruuctions at Greyfriars, on page 11 Chapman has one of his finest drawings (especially of Bunter's back) but he shows Bob Cherry and one other boy on their bikes in Etons, although Hamilton plainly says that the Five were in Norfolks.

In Magnet 1562, from the Carter series, on page 23 Chapman has given Desmond exactly the face he normally reserves for Vernon-Smith, and in 1564 he makes a similar mistake. On page 19 the three characters should be Ponsonby, a marker and Wingate. This time it is Ponsonby who is given Smithy's face.

The rest in my list are by Shields. Of these four artists, Shields seems to me to be by far the most inattentive to the text he is supposed to be illustrating. Indeed, at times it almost seems as though he deliberately ran counter to Hamilton. The very first one shows this clearly. In Magnet 982, from the Coker kidnapped series, Hamilton states that the smaller of the two men had a large beard and horn-rimmed spectacles. On page 21 Shields has drawn both men clean shaven and neither has spectacles. In Magnet 1024 Shields has more seriously contradicted Hamilton. In this story from the first Soames series Hamilton clearly states that the skeletons had their arms above their head, and this proves to be important, as it is a clue to the direction of the treasure. So Shields draws his skeleton with its arms at its sides!

In 1043, the first in the High Oaks Mutiny, chapter 8 states that Mr. Quelch had deliberately placed himself in the Head's way when the latter was on his way to the Sixth form room. "To Mr. Quelch's surprise, the Head had passed him with a formal bow, without even bidding him good-morning". That is all- no speech, the juniors had not even seen this. Shields transfers this

encounter to the quad, page 13, with juniors looking on, and according to the caption "As Mr. Quelch passed the Head in the quad, he merely bowed stiffly and passed on. The juniors who saw the meeting exchanged glances and winked. 'My hat!' exclaimed Harry Wharton. 'Something's wrong somewhere, you fellows!'. Not only has the venue been changed and speech added, but the sentence construction, which may simply be bad English, of course, makes it appear that it is Mr. Quelch who has cut the Head. Just why at times captions invented the text in this manner I do not know; abbreviating a text for a picture I can understand, but not completely altering it in this way. And Shields has chosen, or was forced, to illustrate the caption rather than Hamilton's text.

In the first of the Da Costa series, 1059, page 9 shows a lorry turning on a corner, with a flat road. It should be coming up the hill behind Bunter. Again in 1067, the final Magnet of the Da Costa series, on page 9, the caption is invented and Shields has illustrated the caption. Compare with the ending of chapter 3. The cover of 1193, in the Cavandale Abbey series, shows Bunter sitting in a chair and startled by the ghost on the landing, whereas according to Hamilton he was in his room. In 1074, from the Whiffles series, Hamilton wrote "As they rode in a cheery row, behind the caravan". Shields' title picture has the Famous Five riding in front of the caravan, behind Nobby on the elephant. In 1075, penultimate number in the Whiffles series, Hamilton has made it clear that the caravan is crawling along, so much so that Dance has ordered it to the back of the procession, with which it has quite lost touch. On page 9 Shields' right back wheel is absolutely racing, while what we can see of the left back wheel has, at the same time, achieved the impossible feat of moving at a very moderate pace. Details are everything in such illustrations.

In chapter 11 of Waking Up Greyfriars, as Mr. Prout looks down on Bunter and the cake, Hamilton states that "Bunter had made considerable progress with the cake". Yet in Shields' drawing on page 19 only one fair-sized wedge is missing from the parent cake, and this is in Bunter's hand, with only the tip of the wedge in Bunter's mouth. In 1198, from the Tatters series, the text has it that Wilson was bearded, but according to Shields, on page 13, he was not. In 1199 Hamilton has it that half-a-dozen cigarettes lay on the carpet. Shields' cover picture shows 32. The illustration on page 23 of 1200 has Came scorching directly away from the school gates on his bike - the gates behind him. He must have scorched straight into a hedge or a fence, since the road runs along past the gates, at right-angles to the path of his bicycle. In 1203 the title picture has Rackstraw watching the tramp larruping Ponsonby. In Hamilton's text Rackstraw was not present. He came along later, after Bunter, who did see the tramp and Ponsonby from his place up in the beech tree, had hurried off to Courtfield. Also in 1203 on page 9 Shields shows Bunter up the tree, Ponsonby running below. Perspective is at fault here. Shields gives the tree the height almost of a tall building, which is ridiculous.

In No. 1251, from the Flip series, Bunter, according to Hamilton, is in Remove Study No. 7 to open the box, with the door locked and safe from interference from the other fellows. According to Shields he is being watched out-

side the window by other boys, who are excluded from the text. It has always been made clear that the Remove studies are at least two floors up, so what are these boys standing on? Especially long stilts or a mighty long ladder? This time the caption does not support Shields, and in departing from the text he has drawn an impossibility. In the first story in the Smedley series, No. 1360, Vernon-Smith appears in Loder's study and Hamilton tells us that Loder says "'Oh! You!'", looking across at the Bounder, and Carne and Price left the study". But Shields shows Loder threatenting to cane the Bounder with Carne and Price looking on. The title illustration of 1374, the first in the Popper Island rebellion series, is a peculiar production. I am at a loss to know what we are looking at. I cannot fit these two rows of narrowly separated windows, under an archway and near to the steps leading to the House entrance, into anything I know of the geography of Greyfriars. In addition to this, what is it supposed to illustrate? Wingate's taking Bunter home is all that I can connect with it, and Hamilton's text has nothing between Wingate's hooking Bunter out of the dormitory and pushing him into the taxi; nothing at all to justify this extraordinary picture.

In. No. 1404, from the Caffyn series, several fellows, including Bunter, have been eating the cake that was Nugent's; but Shields' cover picture has a whole cake on the table. In 1405 Hamilton writes of Caffyn trying to move Bob Cherry, who won't budge. He even says that Caffyn's face "was only a few inches from Bob's". Yet Shields draws Bob Cherry holding Caffyn so that the latter's back is towards him. In No. 1412 Hamilton states that the ball hit Caffyn's features; Shields' drawing on page 19 shows it hitting him on the chest. The cover picture of No. 1566 has Bunter running just in front of Mr. Quelch; in fact, in the story, by the time Mr. Quelch reached the farmer Bunter was in the next field. Shields has made it appear that the farmer is letting Bunter through and stopping Quelch from following him. Next we have No. 1627, page 9. Hamilton invariably refers to Mr. Vernon-Smith as "portly", and does so here. Shields invariably ignores this, and does so here. The cover picture of No. 1629 shows John Redwing and Bunter with Tom Redwing outside the rocks that Rance had piled up against the opening. In fact, only Tom was there; the other two were below in the cave.

This is my list; by no means as lengthy as I could have made it. To conclude: I do not know who drew the series of Greyfriars cartoons, supposedly by Skinner, which accompanied the Popper Island series. They were among the worst drawings I ever saw. The one on page 7 of No. 1375, intended for Bunter, was the worst of the lot. He looks as if he has got cancer in an advanced stage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kindest regards to all at the London Club. Please don't think I have forgotten you Good Souls! Merry Xmas from

BOB MILNE

21 DURHAM TERRACE, W. 2. 229-8258

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# SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY 2<sup>d</sup>

No. 704. Vol. XXVIII.

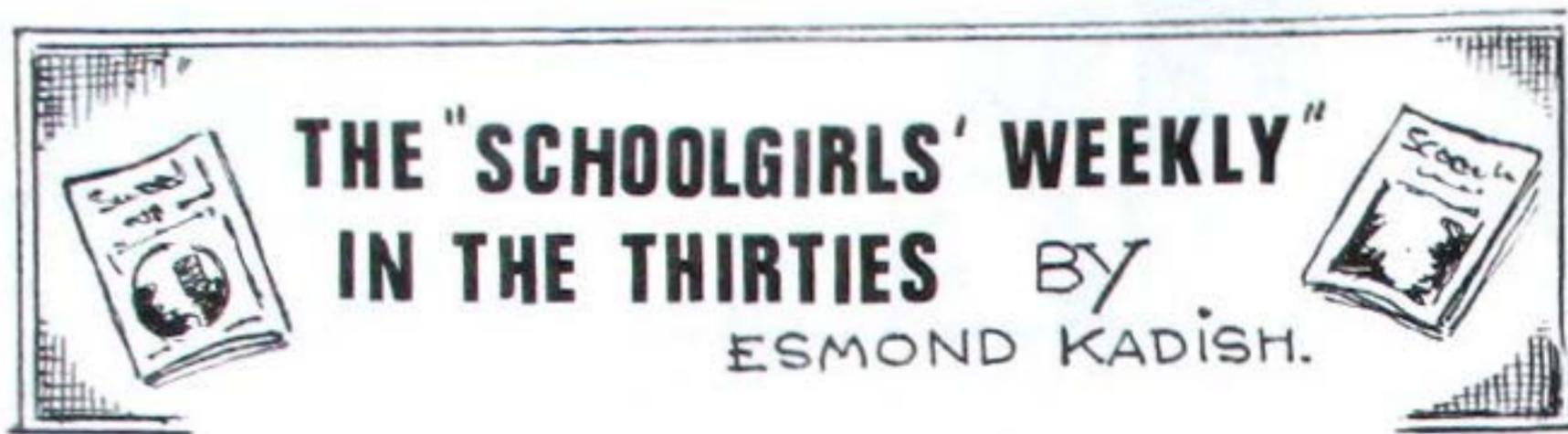
EVERY WEDNESDAY.

April 18th, 1936.



**VALERIE AND FLASH, MAROONED  
ON A BARREN ISLAND, FIND A  
TRAIL OF FOOTSTEPS!**

A dramatic moment from this week's  
enthralling **LONG COMPLETE** girl  
detective story.



Of the four main schoolgirl papers which flourished between the wars:- "Schoolfriend", "Schoolgirl", "Schoolgirl's Own", and "Schoolgirl's Weekly", it is the last-named which, perhaps, is least regarded and most neglected. One possible reason for this was that the other three sister-papers each contained a long school story of either Cliff House or Morcove as its main attraction, whereas the "Schoolgirl's Weekly", for much of its run, featured a long complete story with a variety of characters. Yet, strangely enough, The "Weekly" ran for longer than any of its contemporaries, spanning a period of nearly seventeen years, before it was swallowed up by the "Girls' Crystal" in May 1939. Browsing through its pages is a little like looking at a social history of the period; its stories and, particularly, its illustrations faithfully reflect the changing attitudes and fashions between 1922 and 1939. Its heyday probably occurred in the early and middle 'thirties with the arrival of its most well-known and striking character - Valerie Drew, the "eighteen-year-old girl detective, and her wonderdog, Flash".

The "Schoolfriend" and the "Schoolgirls' Own" were already well established, when the "Weekly" made its first appearance in October 1922. Presented with the paper was the customary "free gift" - in this case, "a real photograph of H.R.H., the Prince of Wales". It contained twenty-eight pages, the same size as its recently established brother, the "Champion". Beneath the rather sparsely-coloured red and blue cover picture was a list of the contents:- "'Sisters All Alone' - the tale of two waifs; 'The Lass who was Nobody' - a splendid school story; 'Eldorado Nell' - Wild West adventure; 'The Ventriloquist' - the girl of many voices; ' Sylvia Silence-Detective' - the girl Sherlock Holmes (a precursor of Valerie's); and 'The Duffer of the Family' - a tale of mill life". This selection seemed to meet with approval, and, in an early issue, there is an enthusiastic letter from a reader:- "today I am one of the happiest girls in the world. The paper came at a time when, owing to a sad accident to my father, my mother and myself were lonely in our home, with father away in hospital... When I got home from my work at the mill, there was a note from mother to say that father was out of danger. You don't know how happy I am. Already I feel that the 'Schoolgirls' Weekly' is a real friend".

Praise indeed for a gratified editor! Later in the 'twenties, however, the number of pages had been reduced to twenty-four, and the "Weekly" had settled down to a formula that was to remain constant for some years: a long,

complete story of up to ten pages, and three serials, one of which was usually a school story, and a second, generally a humorous tale written by Reg. Kirkham, alternating between the pen-names of Hilary Marlow and Joan Vincent. The third serial tended to have a "home-life" setting. A typical issue from 1928 contains a school serial by Gladys Cotterill - the pen name of John Wheway, better known for the Cliff House stories he wrote as "Hilda Richards" for the "Schoolgirl" in the 'thirties - a "laughter story" featuring a girl ventriloquist, Lily Lane, who is one of Reg. Kirkham's bright creations, and a third serial, "When Daddy Went to War", by Elise Probyn (John McKibbin), in which our young heroine endeavours to "keep her little home together during the grim, dark days of the Great War". The main feature of the paper, however, was the ten-page "complete" story, which generally had a domestic background, and was often described as "appealing". Typical titles in 1928 were:- "She Wouldn't Mind her Own Business", "Her Brothers Wouldn't Help", "She Deserved All She Got", "Too Easily Offended", and "The Penalty She Had to Pay".

No doubt these stories were popular, or the paper would not have sold, and those girl readers who wanted something more exciting probably abandoned the "Weekly" and took to reading the boys' papers. By late 1932, however, a change had occurred to the ten-page stories. A new type of heroine, more adventurous and more in keeping with how the modern, post-war generation of girls regarded themselves, had emerged. The accent was on adventure rather than home-life. Even those serials which would continue to focus on domestic situations had more independent and self-reliant heroines - such as "Stay-at-Home Susie", a plain girl, who not only cares for two small children, but, single-handed, clears her brother's name when he is "wrongfully accused of theft", and uses her gift for mimicry to carve out a successful career for herself on the stage as an impersonator. Susie was so popular that she was "starred" again as the heroine of several of the ten-page stories. In "Susie's Yuletide Problem" she receives an offer to play Man Friday in the pantomime, "Robinson Crusoe", at the local theatre, and wonders how her two small cousins are to be cared for:- "Tom, her only brother, had promptly offered to look after things, but, of course, that was impossible. A man couldn't go to work all day, then come home and look after a house and the two young children".

One of the first of the new characters in the ten-page stories was Tess, "the wonder girl trapezist of Tarranto's Mammoth Circus". The stories were written by Elsie Trebor, which may have been a pen-name of John W. Bobin, who also wrote the early Valerie Drew stories. Tessa's companions at Tarranto's are Tumblo, "the quaint old clown", and Lizzy, "the perky, Cockney, maid of all work"; her chief rivals were the "hard and cruel lion-tamer", Captain du Garde, and his envious daughter, Babette. Tessa's appearance in the "Weekly" was closely followed by that of Helen Bourne, who lives in a village with the intriguing name of Weirdslea. Described as "the village of a hundred secrets", Weirdslea is as full of "props" as a stage set. There is Merlin Castle, about whose "towers and turrets and ancient walls the bats were sweeping", a little Saxon church "about which, and as though for protection, the tiny homes of Weirdslea clustered", and an ancient yew-tree "about whose bole was

an aged plate that announced the fact that once Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley had frequented this spot". With this kind of setting and brooding atmosphere, it is little wonder that curious things happen in Weirdslea, and strange apparitions manifest themselves. Helen and her rather timorous friend, Daisy, have barely time to put their noses outside the front door of their cottage, and ghostly cavalier horsemen thunder past gleaming phosphorescently, a long-disused belfry suddenly tolls mysteriously, and phantom coaches rattle by. Even the weather appears to be in conspiracy; thunder is constantly pealing, and frequent flashes of lightning throw the "gloomy keep of Merlin Castle into vivid relief". Unfortunately, the spectres and phantoms of Weirdslea usually turn out to have some disappointingly mundane trickery behind them. In any case, whenever I think of Weirdslea, I am irresistibly reminded of the 1939 Will Hay, Moore Marriott, Graham Moffatt film, "Ask a Policeman", and the romantic aura of Weirdslea is immediately dispelled. In the sleepy little village of Turnbottom Round, Moore Marriott's ancient dad recollects a "rhyme", (quoted by Leslie Halliwell in his book of film essays, "Halliwell's Hundred") is:- "When the tide runs low in the smugglers' cave. And the 'eadless 'orseman rides above. He drives along with his wild hailo, (deep breath taken here). And that's the time when the smugglers go in their little boats to the schooner and bring back the kegs of brandy and rum and put them all in the Devil's Cove below". - Well, at least "Weirdslea" sounds more romantic than "Turnbottom Round".

Besides Tessa and Helen, there were other colourful characters. In addition to earlier personalities such as Lily Lane, (already referred to), the look-alike twins, Jill and Phyl Greenhill, and May and June Reece - sisters with a penchant for disguising themselves at every opportunity - Reg. Kirkham created Penelope - usually known as "Pen" - Holliday. Pen's talent was as a conjurer, and she later featured in a serial, "Pen's Quest in Film-land", in which scenes from contemporary British films were described being made, and such actors as Charles Laughton, Jessie Matthews, Conrad Veidt and Max Miller were introduced into the story. A popular school serial, "The Quest of the Silent Six", written by Gertrude Nelson - another pen-name for John Bobin - provided a "secret society" setting for more long complete stories. The society was formed, of course, "to fight injustice", and its leader was Shirley Carew of the Fourth Form at Highcroft. One of its members is Gretchen van Houten, usually known as "Dutchy", whose remarks are somewhat reminiscent of those made by Fritz von Splitz in Charles Hamilton's stories of Grimslade:- "Ach! I wish you would your hands to yourself keep!" snapped Gretchen. "You haf made me bite mein tongue, aind't it!". Freda Treggenis and Letty of the fishing village of Corycove, seem to be the marine equivalents of Helen Bourne and Daisy, and have similar "ghostly" problems to solve. Autograph Anne, a character who, in real life, might prove to be a trifle irritating, has, as her name implies a passion for collecting the signatures of famous people. In a subsequent serial, "Autograph Anne's Secret Task", she wins sympathy when her precious autograph album is destroyed, and she has to start collecting again from scratch. Another character, "Quick-Change Pearl", is not only a dab hand at disguises and impersonation, but can speedily extricate

herself from a tricky situation by sliding down a drainpipe, or escaping from a trapped lift by squeezing through the opening at the top and climbing the lift shaft. Girl Guides - always a popular theme - were represented by Carol Frazer, "the popular leader of the Marigold Patrol", and her chums, Lena Dalton, "always grumbling, but never called upon in vain when her help is needed", and Dolly Blane, who is "fat and jovial, and simply can't be serious no matter how many times she fails to win a badge". The creator of "Toots" Ashton must have conceived her with a sidelong glance at Gracie Fields. She appears first in "A Lancashire Lass in Filmland", and speaks the kind of dialect considered "authentic" anywhere, except, perhaps, in Lancashire:- "Oop in Lancashire they'd tighten belts, smile at thee, and put thee away for t' rainy day", she says, as she produces a last, solitary sixpence. An Irish terrier attaches himself to her hopefully: "'Hallo, laad!'" greeted Toots cheerily. 'What's oop wi' thee? Tha looks as if a feed'd do thee good, too!'. Toots wins fame and fortune eventually, of course, but, like Autograph Anne, has to start all over again in a serial, "Try Again, Toots!" when her career is ruined.

In May, 1933, the "Weekly" asked its readers to vote for their favourite characters. The first three in popularity - Tessa, Valerie Drew, and the Silent Six - were all probably created by John Bobin, and the editor's chat in the final issue for 1932 had announced the arrival in the next number of "a clever girl detective. Valerie Drew her name is, and she is assisted by a most lovable Alsatian dog, Flash". Valerie is, indeed, introduced in "That Amazing Room of Clocks".

"'Who are you?' the voice asked doubtfully. 'Valerie Drew of London, though I don't expect you know me. I give you my word I'm not a lady burglar, and my dog doesn't bite people unless I tell him to', she added with a laugh". Valerie's father - shortly to be dropped from the stories - is an experienced officer of the law, with a special feeling for solving crime problems:- 'The feeling was a sixth sense that Valerie sometimes had, and which her father, at times, also experienced. Perhaps that had helped him to become one of the most successful Commissioners of Police Scotland Yard had ever known".

Valerie speedily became a favourite character, and the editor's chat reported receiving "a tremendous number of letters" about her, and suggested that "never has a heroine been so universally popular". Allowing for some pardonable editorial exaggeration, it was quite clear that Valerie had made a "hit". John Bobin's pen-name for these stories was "Adelie Ascott", and he continued to write them until his death, some two years later, in April 1935. Thereafter, no author's name was given beneath the title for over two years, until, in 1937, the Valerie Drew stories were finally credited to "Isabel Norton". Who this writer - or writers - was is not quite clear.

Mr. Bobin had written many Sexton Blake tales for such papers as the "Union Jack", but the Valerie Drew stories, which he wrote for the "Weekly", were, of course, appropriate for the schoolgirl readership, and were mostly mystery stories with romantic settings. No corpses littered the floor in the Valerie Drew tales, no blood from murdered victims stained expensive carpets;

no-one, having been slipped a surreptitious dose of poison by the dastardly murderer, slumped to the ground with an "argh!" of despair rattling in his throat, clutching vainly at the furniture for support. It was all much more civilised and decorous! Typical Valerie Drew plots (these were not written by John Bobin) involved ghostly figures "from the past" carousing "in a secret room in a lonely house", and in "The Doll That Talked", Flash presents a ventriloquist's doll to his mistress:- "She realised that there was something strange - almost weird - about this child-like figure in evening dress, its face always set into a fixed, half-grinning expression". In "The Case of the Haunted Chimneys", Valerie investigates the problem of "who lowered numbered stones down the chimneys of an hotel, and why". The motive was, of course, to locate the inevitable secret room, there being eighteen known rooms and nineteen chimneys. Another puzzle for Valerie to solve is when she picks up walnut shells on the beach which contain gold coins, and a seasonable story in the Christmas, 1936 number features the obligatory "phantom" in "The Whispering Monk".

Valerie, herself, is fully described in the second story in which she appears, "The Problem of the Red-Haired Girl":- "The suffused light shining through the blind threw her dauntily-moulded profile into pleasing relief. As she moved slightly, it showed the elusive hint of violet in her blue eyes, and put magical gleams of gold into the wisps of auburn hair her small neat hat left visible". She sounds quite delightful - good enough to eat, and a fitting subject for the new, "perfected" Technicolor system that was just about to be used in the 1935 film, "Becky Sharp". I must say I have a clearer picture of what she looked like than I do of either Sexton Blake or Nelson Lee, but perhaps it is a matter of policy for most male 'tecs to appear rather as ciphers; the reader is expected to concentrate on the plot, not the detective. At any rate, the Valerie Drew stories were delightfully illustrated by C. Percival (later by Shilton), and when a red and light blue coloured cover took over from the original red and dark blue, his full-page illustrations of Valerie show her to even better advantage. She is trim and attractive in her 'thirties-style clothes, and looks purposeful but, at the same time, feminine.

Valerie went from strength to strength, and in a 1934 issue of the paper, a reader asked: "Could we have these long complete stories of Valerie Drew every week? The 'Schoolgirls' Own' always contains a long Morcove story, and the 'Schoolgirl' a long Cliff House story. Why shouldn't the 'Schoolgirls' Weekly' always have a long complete Valerie Drew story?". The editor was, naturally, only too happy to comply with this request, and a detective story featuring Valerie, of about seven to eight pages, appeared in the "Weekly", until January 1937. The final "long" story was "Seen in a Glass Screen" in which Valerie solves a mystery involving the "modern marvel, television". In one of those sudden and bewildering changes in editorial policy, to which the old papers were subject, the following issue introduced a new seven-story programme, in which the Valerie Drew story was reduced to three or four pages.

At this point, a word must be said about Valerie's canine "assistant", Flash. He was no ordinary animal - more of a superdog in fact. Commands like

"Walkies," or "Sit-t," would probably leave him baying with doggy mirth; mere tricks like counting out numbers by giving the corresponding number of barks would be regarded with derision. His prime function is to protect his mistress, which he does most effectively:- "'Stop!' cried Valerie. 'You shan't come another step.' The man smiled sneeringly, until he noticed that Flash was close at hand". His ability to track down suspects, given the merest of scents, is phenomenal. He is also particularly adept at rescuing his mistress from tricky situations. One of his rescue operations involves removing a heavy beam which has fallen on Valerie, and trapped her inside a burning cottage. He also saves her from drowning when the brakes fail in the van she is driving and it plunges through the parapet of a bridge into a river:- "With claws and teeth he was tearing savagely at the canvas top". In another story, he extricates her from a treacherous bog in which she is slowly sinking:- "'Find rope, boy - find rope and bring it here! Quick!' - as Flash wavered in puzzlement. 'Rope in car - bring it here!'" . Flash does just that, twines the rope round a convenient tree at the edge of the bog, and holds the other end taut between his teeth, while Valerie hauls herself to safety. A bit far-fetched, perhaps? Possibly, but our Val can't be allowed to come to a sticky end - after all, she's due to reappear in the next issue of the "Weekly". In "The Case of the Nine Columbines" Flash's talents even have him dressed in bonnet and shawl, and impersonating an elderly lady. The villain's hand "encountered a furry, moist muzzle, and from 'Grandma Ash' broke a most menacing growl". Truly a sagacious animal, and little wonder that he was occasionally featured in a story of his own.

Valerie herself grows more sophisticated, and the plots occasionally more adventurous, as the series progressed. An interesting departure from the customary plots is contained in "Valerie's World-Wide Quest" in 1938:- "Valerie Drew is working on the greatest case of her career. She is determined to track down 'Colonel Mars', head of a sinister regiment whose object is to bring about a devastating world war. From private to corporal, corporal to sergeant - step by step Valerie is unmasking the agents of Mars. Unwittingly they are leading her to the Colonel himself". In her task, Valerie is assisted by her erstwhile enemy, now - unhappily! - reformed, the vivacious Marcelle Dauphine. Colonel Mars is finally cornered:- "A figure no bigger than a tallish child was scuttling across the deck, moving its tiny legs at almost incredible speed. Snarling with fury, they saw it scramble for the rail, swing for a dizzy second, then plunge into the river beneath. 'It is!' Valerie gasped. 'It's Colonel Mars himself'". He produces a revolver when Flash leaps to the attack, and there is "a flash of white teeth, then a scream of agony, as they fastened on the hand that would have struck him mortally a moment later". Rather a grim theme for a girls' paper, perhaps, especially in view of the worsening international situation at the time, like Alexander Korda's 1936 film of H. G. Wells' "Things to Come", which showed a devastating air-raid on a large city, it was, one infers, understandably not popular amongst readers. At any rate, the Valerie Drew stories - now serials - reverted to more familiar themes, such as "The School on Haunted Island", and "To the 'Snow Queen's' Aid".

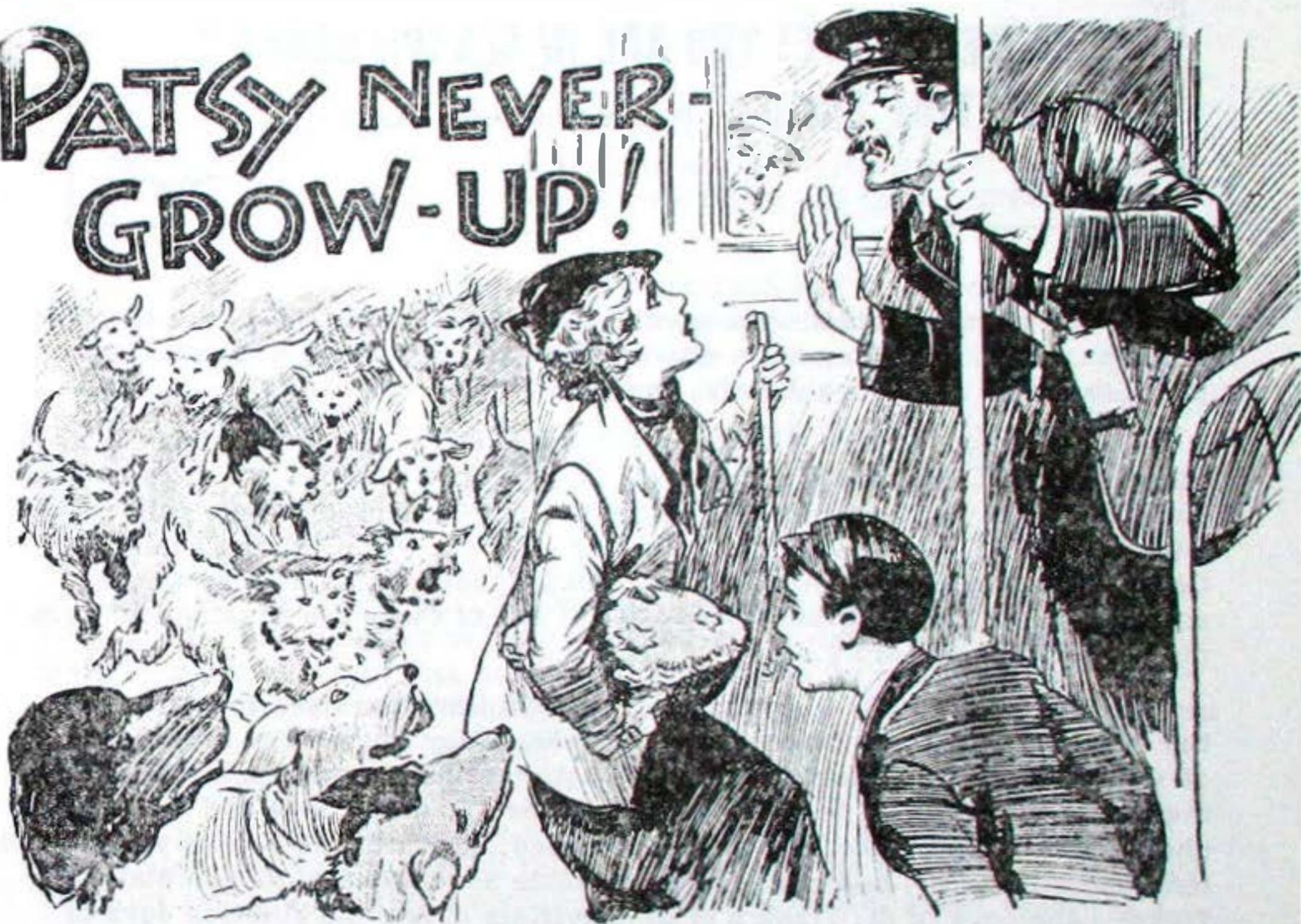
Early in 1938, the editor announced that the following issue of the paper

would appear in a "slightly different form". It would be "handier". It was - the pages were smaller, but there was no increase in the number, which remained at twenty-four. The familiar cover - now red and green - continued to decorate the bookstall racks, until the final issue, no. 865 of 20th May, 1939, enjoined readers to "Buy the 'Girls' Crystal' this Friday". The last number of a long-running paper is, inevitably, an unhappy affair, but this was a particularly lack-lustre and characterless final issue. It contained the first instalment of a serial, "The Bandit's Daughter", by Renee Frazer (Ronald Fleming) the second instalment of which could only be read in the next issue of the "Girls' Crystal". Poor Valerie, in the last instalment of her serial, "House of Hidden Peril", was ignominiously banished to the back pages of the "Weekly", and pride of place was given to a story featuring the "Girls' Crystal's" own "resident" detective, Noel Raymond. This, too, was written by Mr. Fleming, using the male pen-name of Peter Langley - one of three male pseudonyms being used in the girls' papers, (the other two pen-names were "Clive Bancroft" and "Wallace Carr"). Noel was a popular character, and described as being young and "debonair". No doubt the girls considered him quite "dishy", but, personally, I much preferred the picture conjured up by Valerie "pursing her lips" and with her "violet eyes narrowing", as she follows up a clue, with the ever-faithful Flash trotting devotedly at her side. She eventually reappeared in serial form in the "Schoolgirl", until that paper, too, finally folded when Norway was invaded in 1940. Thereafter, Valerie and Flash never reappeared, as far as I know, although a pale imitation of Valerie, Vicky Dare, complete with Alsatian dog, Rex, was featured in the "Girls' Crystal" in the 'fifties. For me, "Vicky and Rex" never had any of the magic of Valerie and Flash. Incidentally, Noel Raymond's creator, Ronald Fleming, also wrote the delightful "Patsy Never-Grow-Up" stories - a long-running humorous series which first appeared in the "Weekly" in 1934. His pen-name for this was "Rhoda Fleming", but his other pen-name of Renee Frazer was still being used in the late 'sixties in "June and School Friend".

I must not leave the "Weekly" without a brief reference to the magnificent band of artists who contributed so much to its success. One nice thing about the paper was that it usually gave credit to its illustrators as well as its authors. Thus, beneath the title of one story, readers are informed that "the illustrations are the work of C. Percival whom you will all recall in connection with the Tessa stories". Why the artist's full name was rarely given, I'm not quite sure; it took me sometime to realise that "E. Flinders" and "V. Gaskell" were both ladies. Other artists credited were: C. H. Chapman, G. Dodshon, J. Pariss, S. Leigh, and L. Shields, who was at his humorous and witty best illustrating such series as "Patsy Never-Grow-Up" and "Bright Sparks of the Family". Perhaps, after all, it is only fitting that the "Weekly" should be best remembered by the drawings of its artists:- Patsy, clutching a huge meat-pie, and followed by a motley assortment of eager dogs, being refused permission to board a bus by a supercilious conductor; or the graceful figure of Valerie Drew, hot on the trail, with Flash at her heels adorning its brightly-coloured cover.

Thank goodness we still have our memories!

# PATSY NEVER - GROW-UP!




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\* \* \* \* \*

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To London and South-West Clubs all Seasonal Greetings.

VALE AND JOYCE

33 IVY HOUSE, PARK HENLADE, TAUNTON, TA3 5HR

= = = = =

Xmas Greetings , Happy New Year to all members of the Courtfield Club.

LEN BERG

WEMBLEY

= = = = =

**SMILE, PLEASE! YOU ARE IN SEXTON BLAKE'S  
YULETIDE LAND. BY RAYMOND CURE.**



A Christmas tale should breathe the Spirit of Christmas. Some do and some do not. I know that some attempt is made and has been made in the past, to create a seasonable tale, but it has fallen short,

You've got to be a Christmas fan yourself before you can create a good old-fashioned Christmas tale, with all its attendant luxuries, such as Old Baronial Halls - sliding panels - secret vaults - unlimited snow - cold cruel winds and frost. To say nothing of tables groaning with Christmas fare and Ghosts groaning in spectral agony or clanking their chains as they wander around the castle on Christmas Eve, and if any of these are missing you have not got a Christmas story.

Gwyn Evans, E. S. Brooks and Charles Hamilton were men who had the knack of handling a true seasonable tale. They followed in the footsteps of Charles Dickens. Have you ever thought that had there been no Christmas there would never have been "A Christmas Carol", no Scrooge and no Marley's ghost, with door-knocker and chains included. Some of the scenes we enjoyed (and can still enjoy) depicting the seasonable adventures of Sexton Blake and Tinker - the boys of St. Frank's or of Greyfriars during the Yuletide days of long ago would be non-existent. Perish the thought! Rejoice with me that through the services of our Collectors, booksellers and the Old Boys' Book Club Libraries they are still in existence for posterity.

I have been perusing the adventures of Sexton Blake and Tinker over about ten Christmas numbers of the Union Jack. Of the titles before me I have the feeling that one or two of the tales were "cooked" for Christmas. By "Cooked" I mean that the plot could fit any day of the year except for the odd paragraph or two placed here and there to tell you it was snowing at the time or that a party was in progress, if you gather what I mean. Some tales just have Christmas injected into them while others are born of Christmas, they have that seasonable spirit flowing right throughout. Of such, from the Sexton Blake and Tinker angle you cannot beat Gwyn Evans or Edwy Searles Brooks, though one or two other writers set a fair standard. But for Ghosts - Ghouls - and things that go bump in the night and for Christmas snow-scenes, parties, etc., give me those two. Charles Hamilton was in the same class, but of course was not a Blake author.

I don't wish to dwell on the negative, so apart from the mention of

titles I shall just draw attention to those that have the real Spirit of Christmas.

"Sexton Blake's Xmas Truce" No. 1105, 1924 and "The Thousandth Chance" No. 1000. together only account for a flurry or two of snow, a cold wind, a little holly and mistletoe and a Christmas tree. "The Thousandth Chance" is of some interest as the 1000th copy of the Union Jack and sporting several photographs of the leading artists and an illustration of the cover of the first Union Jack. A few lines eliminated here and there and these tales would pass at any time of the year.

"Nirvana's Secret" No. 1159, dated 1925 and "The Two Devils" No. 1208, dated 1926, are tales with a few paragraphs added as a Christmas touch. They are good tales but as Christmas numbers they are weak. These two have a nice line going for the ladies. Tinker has a crush on the dancer Nirvana and she likewise. It all started way back in the early part of 1925 and looked like continuing for ever (but did not). It's never safe to fall in love with a popular figure of fiction, in books, films or T.V. (He belongs to the public.) If you notice any female foolish enough to fall for the hero of a weekly series, sooner or later she is disposed of by the author. Can you imagine Ironside, Harry-O, Cannon, the 6 Million Dollar Man, James Bond, Nelson Lee, Dixon Hawke or Sexton Blake, in the matrimonial state. If you are a female and one of this bunch or the like falls for you - you've had it - the author will eventually dispose of you, no happy married life with children and a cottage with roses round the door, these boys belong to the public and must stay belonged.

Having dealt summarily with those Christmas numbers in which the seasonable atmosphere is a bit thin on the ground, let us turn with relish to the tales that are the very embodiment of Yuletide. Christmas 1929 was a vintage year for the Union Jack. Two special tales from the pen of Gwyn Evans Nos. 1365 and 1366, "The Mistletoe Milk Mystery" and "The Mask of Time". Novel themes with a touch of humour (later echoed by Jack Trevor Storey) and plenty of seasonable scenes such as "It was 2.30 p.m. on a cold winter's day, there was a hint of snow in the air and the icy blast buffeted the windows and howled mockingly down the chimneys" or speaking of a man just entering a bar, "He was dressed in the ermine tipped red cowl and cloak of Santa Claus, his nose was red and pinched with the chill wind - his long white whiskers whipped by the breeze" or take this "Snow was falling, whirling, generous flakes, soundless and beautiful".

Highwaymen and favorite characters in period costumes flit in and out of the snow scenes and the whole Spirit of Christmas runs throughout the tales, not just a few injected sentences here and there but the build up of a whole seasonable double-length story.

One more and I finish - its 1939 and "The Masked Carollers" by Gwyn Evans is given to us for our Christmas delectation. Union Jack No. 1521 the last one in our dear old Union Jack.

Mr. Howard Baker has given us a bound volume of these lovely old tales entitled "Crime at Christmas". These will never die so long as a Sexton Blake fan dwells upon the face of this earth. I refer to "The Mystery of Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Pudding", "Mrs. Bardell's Christmas Eve", "The Affair of the Black Carol" and the "Crime of the Christmas Tree" plus two tales by Mr. Brooks. Well worth having and as for the others - try Josie Packman's Sexton Blake Lending Library. Ah Blythe Spirit of Christmas, they say you come once a year - but its a good job we Union Jack, Nelson Lee and Magnet fans can recapture the Christmasses of years gone by.



Wanted Magnets 1920-30 - Top prices paid.  
Season's Greetings to all Collectors.

KEN HUMPHREYS

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Season's greetings to all friends. Always interested in exchanging pre-war duplicates.

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Christmas greetings to all hobby friends from the -

BECK FAMILIES OF LEWES AND POLEGATE



Wanted - School Friend 1919, 1920; Holiday Annual 1922, 1932.

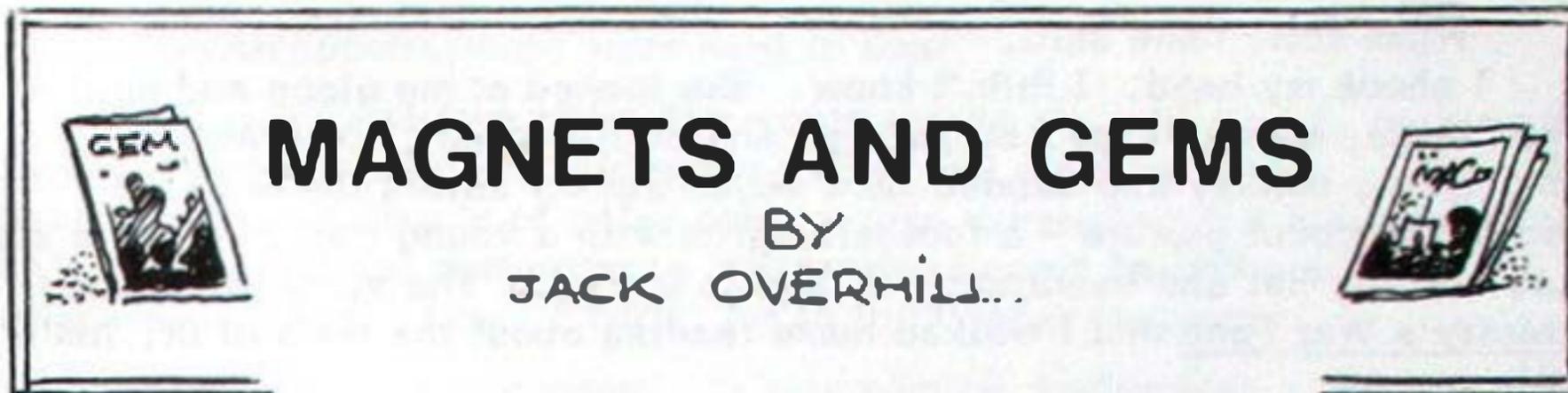
LACK

4 RUSHMERE ROAD, NORTHAMPTON



The ST. FRANK'S MENAGE wish everybody very best wishes for Xmas and the New Year.





Broadcast in the B.B.C. Home Service, Saturday, 23rd June, 1962

'A man who wrote about public schoolboys for errand-boys' - that is what somebody said, rather contemptuously, I am afraid, about Frank Richards. Well, suppose he did - and there are other opinions about that. I was an errand-boy - thirty-five hours a week out of school hours for three bob a week was one of the jobs I had - and lugging a heavy basket of goods about the town was hard work; and frightening work on winter nights when it meant going down dark roads and drives where dogs barked and owls hooted to scare the life out of you. With so much on your hands and on your mind you wanted someone to brighten things up a bit. Frank Richards did that for me - and for a lot more.

Frank Richards' real name was Charles Hamilton and I first became acquainted with him under one of his other pen-names - that of Martin Clifford. It was 1914, I was eleven, and the First World War had just started. There was a grim reminder of it wherever you went. The men of Kitchener's new army were drilling in blue uniforms, and khaki-clad soldiers, regulars and territorials, with guns, limbers and waggons, were all over the place. It was an exciting time, but the day came when I wanted passive enjoyment - something interesting to read.

Before going further I'd better say there wasn't much reading done in our house. My father was a shoemaker and a Radical. He was satisfied with the politics he found in Reynolds' Weekly News. (We lived on our own together in a tumbledown old house in a poor neighbourhood that would now be called a slum.) Our library consisted of one book. It was published in 1803 and it bore the impressive title Natural Theology, or Evidence of the Existence and Attribute of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature. It was written by Dr. William Paley, the Archdeacon of Carlisle. My father often said that his old man, whom the book belonged to, was a great reader and I would learn a lot if I read it. I tried, but I showed no thirst for knowledge by soon giving it up.

That was the background to my entry into a little newsagent's shop on a wet autumn afternoon in 1914. I placed the only penny I had on the counter and said to the girl behind it.

'A penny book, please.'

'What sort?' she said.

I shook my head. I didn't know. She looked at me along and hard - she had large, dreamy eyes, so perhaps she was a reader, too. And then, picking up the penny, she handed me a boys' weekly called the GEM. I looked at the cover picture - a football match with a young man in a dress suit raising his silk hat and heading the ball into the net. The story was called Tom Merry's War Fund and I walked home reading about the boys of St. Jim's school.

I read the book all the evening in my father's workshop. In the beginning it was rather confusing: there was so much I didn't understand. There were the School House and the New Houses, classes that were called forms - they only had standards at my school - and one form had the odd name of the 'Shell'. There were little groups of junior boys called Co.'s under their leaders Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Figgins. These junior groups were in friendly rivalry with one another but united in their opposition to the seniors, one of whom was Kildare, the school captain - he was the one on the cover, heading the ball into the net. The juniors wore Eton suits and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sported a monocle. He talked peculiar English ('Yaas wathah, deah boy') and struck me as funny. I had lived among college students in Cambridge all my life but I had never come across one like him.

I went to bed that night dazed by the new world I had toppled into. For it was a new world to me, a world full of colour in which I could find adventure of a kind I had never known. Home, school, the shops I worked for, the town I lived in - they were humdrum places compared with St. Jim's, Rylcombe, and Wayland - and before long Greyfriars, Friardale, and Courtfield: for on the track of good school stories I was soon taking the MAGNET as well as the GEM every week.

Bunter The Blade was the first MAGNET I read. The cover picture showed the Owl of the Remove, fat and resplendent in Etons and topper, sitting on a stile smoking a cigarette, a seraphic look on his face. He had come into money. His father, a 'bull' or a 'bear' on the Stock Exchange, had sent him twenty pounds, which had taken the shine out of those who didn't believe he was expecting a postal order!

It wasn't long before taking the MAGNET and the GEM every week didn't satisfy me. Harry Wharton and Co., and Tom Merry and Co., had been on the go five or six years and I was eager to know of all their adventures from the beginning. So, the hunt for back numbers began. No treasure hunt was more exciting and often more disappointing. I went all over the town to little shops in back streets, turning over piles of boys' books that were sold at half-price or swapped one for two by old men and women who traded in them as sidelines.

I had some rare finds: one of them was a five-year-old MAGNET called The Fifth At Greyfriars. Five years old! Nearly half my life-time! Think of it!

The disappointments were hard to bear.

'Magnets and Gems?' a boy would say to me. 'Y-e-e-s, we've got plenty. My brother takes them every week, had done for years.' I'd go to the house, perhaps a couple of miles away, to be greeted with a stare from the boy's mother and the curt order to 'Clear off, I can't be bothered with you'. Sometimes, it was 'There, I burnt 'em in the copper last week'.

'Burnt 'em in the copper.' It was wanton destruction - and heart-breaking.

It got hard to find the money to buy the weeklies I wanted. For in addition to the MAGNET and GEM and their back number, I now bought the PENNY POPULAR: that told of the early adventures at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. Then, I began to buy the BOYS' FRIEND in which Jimmy Silver and Co., of Rookwood appeared every week: again, it was written by Charles Hamilton, this time under the pen-name of Owen Conquest. I solved the problem by letting out on hire at a ha'penny a time an old girl's bike I had. There was a lot of squabbles between me and my customers - they would keep the bike longer than they should have done - but it was worth it to have the money to buy my favourite weeklies and to keep up the hunt for back numbers that had become an absorbing pastime.

There were other absorbing pastimes: drawing maps of Greyfriars and St. Jim's; cutting portraits out of the MAGNET and GEM and pasting them in a book; listing the studies with the names, age and height of those in them - some of which I got from 'Answers to Correspondents'.

Frequent contact with the 'Famous Five' and the 'Terrible Three' had its effects on me. I modelled myself on them. They 'played the game'; it was up to me to do the same, not be a cad like Skinner, Snoop, and Stott; and Mellish, Racke, and Crooke - and Levison before he reformed.

I found a shop where I could buy the GEM on Tuesday night instead of Wednesday morning. One night I stopped outside and in the gathering twilight and then by the light of the shop window I nearly read a story through. It was Tom Merry's great fight with Grundy. What a fight that was! And how I gloried in Grundy's downfall.

I read the MAGNET and GEM in all places at all times: by the dim light of the oil-lamp in the workshop, by the flickering light of a candle in bed; under the lid of a desk at school; in shadowy corners of the shops I worked for; at mealtimes, in the water-closet, in the street - stumbling over kerbs and bumping into lamp-posts. My eyes always glued to a book earned me a nickname - the Poet. But what did it matter what was said and who said it so long as I could keep on reading. And I kept on so earnestly that the piles of MAGNETS and GEMS on the low cupboard beside the fireplace in the workshop got higher and higher. At last, they touched the ceiling and my father said I'd soon have to do something about them or they'd fill up the room. An exaggeration - and only a mild protest, for he never destroyed a book of mine and only once showed his temper over them. That was when I lost two shillings while shopping for

him. My mind wasn't on what I was doing; it was them damn books; he'd stop me reading 'em! But he didn't and he soon got over his grievance - a just one, two shillings being a lot of money to him: he only got five bob for making a pair of boots.

Then there was a national appeal for reading matter for the troops in France and filled with patriotic fervour, I handed in four hundred MAGNETS and GEMS at a Post Office. I missed one MAGNET called Sportsmen All, dated July 1915. It was in an old jacket I used to wear when I went to the coalyard with a handcart every week and I've still got it.

By way of back numbers and the PENNY POPUIAR I read most of the adventures at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. By the time I had, one thing was evident: Billy Bunter was growing. Only a secondary character in the beginning, a podgy guts always boning grub and pitching yarns about a postal order that never came, he came more and more to dominate the scene, not so much butting in as crowding others out. He developed characteristics of a dubious nature and remarkably enough continued to be liked for it - a portent of the time when he was to burst the covers of the MAGNET and spread his fat self all over the world. (Indeed, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh would have put it - he was an Indian pupil - 'the spreadfulness of the esteemed Bunter was terrific'!) )

Something else that was evident was the growing charm of the Cliff House girls, Marhorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevelyn - and Cousin Ethel, whom Figgins was so keen on. Clara once called Bob Cherry to her after he'd scored the winning goal in a football match and (I quote from memory after nearly half a century) 'Bob suddenly felt her soft lips on his and he realized the delicious, overwhelming truth - she had kissed him'. I realized it, too. It wasn't Bob Cherry's lips she'd kissed, it was mine.

Towards the end of the 1914-18 war austerity made itself felt at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. The tea-table no longer groaned under the weight of jam-tarts, cream-puffs, meringues and other eatables that made your mouth water. The boys were lucky to have a bloater for tea, study feeds and dormitory spreads were things of the past. That grieved me. I'd never eaten a cream-puff or a meringue in my life, but I wanted Harry Wharton and Tom Merry and Co., to eat them. I didn't enjoy it half as much when they had bloaters.

Maybe, it was natural for so much reading to seek an outlet. It did - in writing. Just before I left school at fourteen the headmaster praised by compositions - the only work of mine he ever did praise. I knew he was really praising Frank Richards, but it was a start and encouraged I wrote a short story. And I continued to write short stories after I left school, writing for an hour every morning before sitting down to work with my father to learn his trade of shcemaking.

Years passed and I rarely saw a Magnet or Gem. When I did the characters had been modernized. Eton suits had given way to flannel trousers and blazers, Wun Lung had lost his Oriental dress and pig-tail.

Then I dreamt of a story called Nobody's Study that I'd read in the GEM twenty years ago. I was so struck by the vividness of the dream that I wrote to the editor of the GEM about it. He said it was a tribute to the force of the story and sent me a copy of Nobody's Study, which had been reprinted. I read the story again and handed it to my eleven-year-old son. Straight away, he became an ardent GEM fan. It soon came to my notice that he was reading the same stories as I'd read as a boy and inquiry revealed that a changeover to the 1908 stories had been made in 1931.

My son also developed the craze for back numbers. I helped him, buying a sackful of MAGNETS and GEMS for thirty bob. I had them bound and looking through them I wish a writer could now thrill me as Frank Richards did nearly fifty years ago. He had the rare gift of creating characters, scenes and atmosphere that stirs the imagination of the young in a healthy way. I'm sure he had a lot to do with my being a lifelong teetotaler and non-smoker. And there was an under-current of chivalry and compassion in his work. It's a fact that I called every girl 'Miss' at evening classes when I was 14, 15, 16 and 17, though they were the same age as myself. That stemmed from the MAGNET 'Miss Marjorie' and 'Miss Clara', I'm sure. The good he's done and is doing has never really been recognized.

I shall always regret I never met him in person. But he said in letters I had from him - letters written in the same style as his stories - that he didn't want any visitors, he was too old for them.

I heard his death given out on the radio. It was like a punch under the heart.

But though the living-link has been severed, memories remain.

Looking at a MAGNET somebody once said to him: 'Don't you ever think of doing something better than this?'

He replied: 'You see, there isn't anything better'.

Well - is there anything better than giving pleasure to millions?

★ ★

Still wanting original artwork by following: McDonald, Shields, Henry, Hardy, and any others in hobbies field.  
Seasons Greetings to all Collectors.

E. G. HAMMOND

33 CANTERBURY AVENUE, UPMINSTER, ESSEX

= = = = =  
Seasonal Greetings to all hobby members everywhere - and to all my friends who gave me such a good time "Down Under". Thank you all.

DARRELL SWIFT

= = = = =

# SERIALS IN THE BOYS' HERALD

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>STARTED</u>	<u>ENDED</u>
The Seventh House of St. Basil's	H. St. John	1.8.03	5.12.03
Trapper Dan	G. M. Fenn	1.8.03	9.1.04
Wings of Gold	S. Drew	1.8.03	2.1.04
Nelson Lee's Pupil	M. Scott	8.8.03	21.3.04
Rajah Dick	D. Goodwin	5.12.03	16.4.04
The New Master at St. Basil's	H. St. John	12.12.03	14.5.04
The Pit Hero	M. Hamilton	2.1.04	16.4.04
No Quarter	Capt. W. Blake	16.1.04	4.6.04
The Black Tracker	Capt. H. Anthondyke	26.3.04	9.7.04
A Boy in a Thousand	A. Blair	16.4.04	30.7.04
The Boys of Winbury College		30.4.04	13.8.04
The Rival Inventors	R. Webster	4.6.04	3.9.04
Gordon Fox, Detective	W. M. Graydon	2.7.04	22.10.04
The Scarlet Horseman	S. Sprigg	30.7.04	12.11.04
Gillingham's Last Term	A. Graham	13.8.04	19.11.04
Afloat with Nelson	H. St. John	27.8.04	31.12.04
On Turpin's Highways	D. Goodwin	8.10.04	28.1.05
Football Foes	A. S. Hardy	5.11.04	7.1.05
The Fengate Schoolboys	H. Burrage	19.11.04	25.2.05
Nipper's Schooldays	M. Scott	17.12.04	3.6.05
The Long-Bows of England	M. Pike	7.1.05	29.4.05
The Black Mast	D. Goodwin	28.1.05	20.5.05
Fighting His Way	M. Shaw	25.2.05	22.6.05
Two Newcastle Lads	E. A. Treeton	22.4.05	8.7.05
The Only Way	H. St. John	20.5.05	30.9.05
The Mystery of Brierly Grange	F. Whishaw	3.6.05	9.9.05
The Secret of the Thames	J. Tregellis	24.6.05	14.10.05
The Red City	A. Armitage	22.6.05	4.11.05
Staunch Chums at Calcroft	S. Drew	2.9.05	23.12.05
Circus Ned	H. St. John	15.9.05	16.12.05
Always Honest	H. Edwards	7.10.05	24.2.06
The Football Detective	M. Scott	21.10.05	10.3.06
The Ordeal of Hugh Vane	M. Shaw	25.11.05	7.4.06
True as a Die	H. St. John	23.12.05	21.7.06

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>STARTED</u>	<u>ENDED</u>
Honesty Wins	H. Edwards	3.3.06	23.6.06
The Blue Orchid	S. Drew	10.3.06	30.6.06
The Romance of the Road	Morton Pike	31.3.06	21.7.06
The Far Far North	M. Shaw	23.6.06	24.11.06
The Three Detectives		30.6.06	25.8.06
The Ocean Outcasts		14.7.06	13.10.06
Redcastle of St. Simeon's	D. Goodwin	21.7.06	2.3.07
Black England	A. Blair	18.8.06	8.12.06
The Waif's Progress	H. Maxwell	22.9.06	19.1.07
Nelson Lee in the Navy	M. Scott	24.11.06	6.4.07
White Slaves	A. Blair	8.12.06	1.6.07
From Pole to Pole	C. Hayter	19.1.07	29.6.07
Despised by the School	A. Gray	2.3.07	21.9.07
Facing the Footlights	A. Daunt	6.4.07	10.8.07
Camp and Caravan	H. St. John	18.5.07	5.10.07
The Iron Hand (Nelson Lee)	M. Scott	6.7.07	28.12.07
The Coster King (Sexton Blake)	E. Q. Alais	10.8.07	28.12.07
The Terror of the Remove	D. Goodwin	31.8.07	14.3.08
A Boy o'Bristol	G. M. Fenn	5.10.07	8.2.08

\* \* \* \* \*

Seasonal greetings to my many C.D. friends. Still need any mags. with J. Louis Smyth illustrations - also any information about him.

LEN HAWKEY

3 SEAVIEW ROAD, LEIGHON-SEA, ESSEX  
(SOUTHEND 79579)

= = = = =

Christmas Greetings for 1983 to all hobby friends and Happy New Year, 1984, from:

JOHN BARTHOLOMEW

NORTH ROCKHAMPTON, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

= = = = =

Christmas Greetings to all C.D. readers and our Editor and all at Excelsior House. From

NEIL IAMBERT

= = = = =

WANTED: Chums Annuals 1907, 1909. Any reasonable price paid.

ROY PARSONS

54 SHIRLEY AVENUE, SOUTHAMPTON

= = = = =



"It's Quirke!" said Nipper.

"Quirke!" echoed the juniors.

"Yes - Ezra QUIRKE himself!" said Nipper.

Ezra Quirke - one-time schoolboy magician, source of many extraordinary manifestations at the old school.

Ezra Quirke - a name embedded in the minds of many readers of the old "Nelson Lee". He is strongly placed among their fictional characters. Be it Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown, Lord Peter Wimsey, Sexton Blake, James Bond, Billy Bunter, or, for that matter, Jane Eyre or David Copperfield.

I am not speaking of the number of readers each character has. I am sure that all those I mention have far more followers than our Ezra. But I am also sure that if you are a "Lee-ite" and you have read the original "Quirke" series at an impressionable age, way back in the 1920's, then Ezra Quirke joins your mental parade of great fictional characters. No wonder Nipper says "It's Quirke", and the juniors echo "Quirke".

Like us they had not forgotten Quirke, and here he is coming back to us (late in 1928) in the "Return of Ezra Quirke" N.L. 137 N.S. Yes, Ezra Quirke, charlatan, crook, deceiver (and possibly, self-deceived). He really did believe in the occult powers, but he does not make the same impression on us as he did in his first appearance. However it is nice to welcome him back. Though it is a case of hello and goodbye.

However, some of our "C.D." readers may never have met this strange fellow. Let me introduce you to him. There is a good full-head drawing of him in this series, but for a word picture I rely on Edwy Searles Brooks,

"There was something almost magnetic in Ezra Quirke's personality. In figure he was quite normal, but his face was almost like a mask. There was something about it that caused people to look twice. IT WAS AN EXPRESSLESS FACE, very pale and with high cheek bones. The cheeks themselves were sunken in, and the deep set eyes were mysterious and black; and those eyes proved that this boy was full of life. His face was that of a statue, his eyes unforgettable. His lips were thin, his hands were long and

tapering with sinuous fingers. His eyes would shoot from one junior to another and there was nothing that he missed. "

At the time of writing he lives with his aunt in Market Donning about 18 miles from St. Franks and he is gaining a reputation as a spiritist medium.

Now when you have a character like Ezra Quirke you need a background for him, and it must be the right background. And so after a long absence we find our Ezra standing in a weed infested drive, by delapidated gates that had been left to rust and decay. Beyond lay Raithmere Castle with its grey masses of stonework, enormous buttresses and battlements, some portions in ruinous state. Its ruined drawbridge and entrance smothered in weeds and thick grass, tangled and dead and rotting vegetation, stagnant and sinister.

I mean, you couldn't fit a character like Quirke into a background of bluebells and primroses, or a stately home complete with well-kept lawns, a lake, a hot sun streaming down, and our Ezra smelling the roses. The poor fellow would wither and die (even if the roses didn't). A Gilbert and Sullivan Opera runs a little ditty "to make the punishment fit the crime" and when it comes to fictional characters, you must make your scenes suitable to your characters, or vice-versa.

Irene Manners & Co. are perfectly fitted for tip-toeing through the tulips or skipping through sunlit meadows or whatever. Fatty Little looks a picture in a larder. Handforth looks positively romantic between Church & McClure, (when those two are sporting black eyes). So you can understand why Ezra Quirke thrives on ruined castles - cobwebs - ghosts - weeds - owls and gravestones. Give him these and he absolutely blossoms.

In the words of Doris (a friend of Irene Manners) "Isn't Quirke a horrid sort of boy" - but then it's because he's so horrid we like him.

Coming to the last story in the "Return of Ezra Quirke" series, "St. Frank's Revels". It occurs to me that I am probably reading the last words of Ezra Quirke, perhaps E. S. Brooks would never bring him back, if so, Ezra fades out as Ezra came in - a figure of mystery, bear with me as I quote the exact wording.

"But there isn't any wind", said Quirke, his eyes gleaming strangely, "I do not like this. There may be some danger for us, I have already told you that this castle is in the possession of a materialised spirit". I now move to page 31 - "Do not make fun of the World Beyond", said Quirke, in a low voice, and it is on that note we say "Goodbye Ezra Quirke".

It seems a shame that all we have of the Quirke character is contained in these two short series. However there are other Quirke-like beings in the realm of fiction both past and present.

Currently reading "The Witches of Lancashire" by Harrison Ainsworth, I came across one such. Allow me to quote:

"Stay!" cried a harsh, imperious voice. "Stay!" and to his surprize

the abbot beheld Nicholas Demdike standing before him. The aspect of the wizard was dark and forbidding. Seen by the beacon light, his savage features, blazing eyes, tall gaunt frame, and fantastic garb, made him look like something unearthly. His black hound at his heels (shades of our Ezra's Owl). Amid it all the abbot heard a wild burst of unearthly laughter proceeding, he thought, from Demdike. "

There's lots about Nicholas Demdike and his Quirke - like doings in "The Lancashire Witches". One more glimpse of old "Nick" and I close.

"A lofty ladder had been placed against the scaffold and up that Demdike mounted and adjusted the rope. His tall gaunt figure fully displayed in his tight-fitting red garb made him look like a hideous scarecrow. Above him wheeled the ravens, uttering their discordant cries. "

It would be of interest to me to know if any of our "C.D." readers have come across any of Ezra Quirke's ancestors (Demdike was created in the 1850's) or his descendants (after all Ezra Quirke first appeared in the "Nelson Lee Library" in the early 1920's, and no doubt similar characters have since been created.

However, once again, "Goodbye Ezra Quirke" but may you and your creator Edwy Searles Brooks, long be remembered.



WANTED: Early Ruperts, for sale or exchange; Boys' Books, Annuals, etc.

R. A. JAMES

30 KING'S HILL, GREAT CORNARD, SUDBURY, SUFFOLK

Phone Sudbury 71128



Christmas Happiness all year through to Eric, Madam, and all C.D. comrades.  
WANTED: School Friend 1923-25, School Girl 1932-35, Schoolgirls' Weekly with Valerie Drew. Any Schoolgirls' Own Libraries 1st series, especially Cliff House items.

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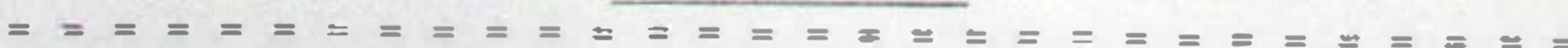


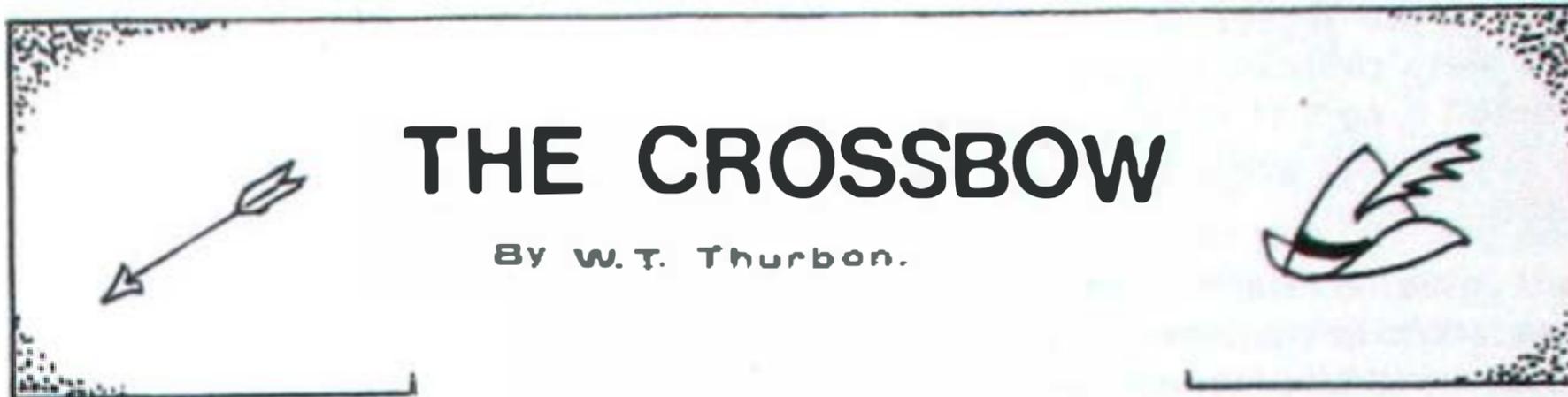
A Very Happy Christmas to our Editor and Madam and Yuletide Greetings to all hobby friends. WANTED: C.D. Annuals 1954, 1955, 1956.

JOAN GOLEN

41 CHERRYWOOD ROAD, STREETLY, SUTTON COLDFIELD, B74 3RU

Tel. 021 353 2196





Next to the discovery of fire, perhaps the greatest invention made by primitive man was the bow. What unknown genius first used the power in the bent bow we shall never know. C. G. D. Roberts in his story of a prehistoric tribe, "In the morning of time" imagines a cave dwelling family. A small boy ties a length of some fibre to the end of a stick; his mother slides the loop down the stick. She is pleased by the twanging note it sounds. Then comes the father and somehow senses the hidden strength in this new plaything. After what were probably painful experiments with stones, he finds a length of cane that flies away. He has made a new weapon. Possibly some unfortunate tribesman has become the involuntary target for this new weapon. And across centuries it develops. And then at last comes a new version of his weapon.

Speak to an Englishman of the bow, and his mind will fly at once to the Longbows of the English archers, to Crecy and Agincourt, to tales of Robin Hood.

But there was another form of bow, better known in Europe than in England, the crossbow; (arblast or arbalest). The early crossbow shot a bolt or quarrell, made of wood, with a strong metal head, later some were all metal. They were frequently "fletched" with vanes of "cuir bouille" (boiled leather) to make them spin in flight, as the feathers did the long bow shaft. Both crossbow bolts and long bow arrows were found in the "Mary Rose". The crossbow bolt was shorter than the "clothyard shaft" of the longbowman, but its metal head was heavier. Modern target crossbow bolts are often made of iron with a screw threaded base to enable them to be recovered easily from the target.

We know something of the age of the bow from prehistoric wall paintings. The crossbow was developed much later. Evidence suggests its origin was in China. There is evidence there for its use as early as the third century B.C. A well authenticated Chinese book of 100 B.C. speaks of its use in battle in 341 B.C. From historical works of the Han Dynasty (which ruled China from around 200 B.C. to 25 A.D. there is strong evidence that the crossbow was the principal weapon of the Chinese foot soldier, and the Emperor Chin Shih's tomb, which he built before his death in 210 B.C. was defended against tomb robbers by concealed crossbows. Recent archaeological research has produced more evidence of Chinese crossbows. Sir Aurel Stein, one of the great explorers of China in the early years of this century, found 2,000 years old guard stations on the frontiers of the "Silk road" from

China to the West. In these were ordnance lists, still legible, in which crossbows were referred to some thirty times. The Chinese seem also to have invented a sort of magazine crossbow which could be fed from a magazine above the bow which automatically dropped in a new bolt as the bow was drawn back to shoot again.

We have much less evidence of the use of crossbows in classical times. While the Romans seemed to have used a giant crossbow worked by torsion of twisted cords the first mention of hand crossbows by Roman soldiers is in a military work written by Vegetius c 306 A.D.

The medieval crossbow is first mentioned in the tenth century. This was a composite weapon, the bow part (or "prod") was first made of a composite mixture of wood, horn and sinew, glued together. Mounted crosswise on a wooden stock with a groove for the missile, it was discharged by a long trigger. At the front of early crossbows was an iron stirrup in which the archer would put his foot while he drew back the string; as the "prods" strengthened until finally they were made of steel, first the crossbow was strung by hooking the cord on the archer's belt, later came winding gears, and finally a "goats foot" lever, which could "span" the bow. The main assets of the crossbow were that it shot a heavier missile than the longbow, and to a longer range. Also it could be used in defence through loopholes in low ceilinged rooms, whereas the longbow required a height of some seven feet to draw. Like the longbow it was noiseless, powerful and accurate. But its countervailing defects were its weight, the time it took to load and be raised to the shoulder, and its susceptibility to weather. Before the Battle of Crecy there was a short, but violent rainstorm. The English longbowmen unstrung their bows and kept the strings dry. The French crossbowmen, whose weapons may well have been strung by sinew, were slackened by the rain, their bolts fell short, and the English archers replied with the three great flights of arrows that routed the Genoese.

Wounds caused by crossbow bolts were considered so barbarous that several Popes condemned their use, and the Lateran Council of 1139 banned them. Richard I was a great believer in the crossbow and revived its use in the English army. At the siege of Ascalon, Richard, when ill with fever, had his mattress carried from his tent to enable him to shoot at the defenders with a crossbow. It was during the Crusade that Richard proved his generalship by defeating Saladin at Arsuf. He kept his supply train on his seaward flank, his mounted knights at the head and the back of his column, and kept a screen of crossbowmen on his outer flank. There is a vivid description of this battle in Ronald Welch's fine story "Knight Crusader". His hero, Phillip D'Aubigny is riding with Richard. When the saracen cavalry close Phillip watches the English archers stolidly draw back the cords and fix the bolts in their crossbows. Phillip groans "too soon" as the crossbowmen shoot. "But he had underestimated the range of the crossbow. The stumpy bolts whirred through the air, flatter in their flight than the arrow. The leading files of Turkish horse went down with a crash."

But the crossbow was to turn against Richard. He was besieging the small castle of Chalus in France. On the evening of 26th March, 1199, he left his tent after supper to view the siege. He wore his helmet, but not his armour, depending for protection on a large siege. All day a solitary crossbowman had shot from the Castle wall. He shot at Richard. Too late he ducked behind his shield. The bolt struck his shoulder; the wound turned gangrenous and on 7th April, Richard was dead. In Bowmen of Crecy Ronald Welch says of the English archers watching the French advance "They respected the crossbow, it was accurate and had a long range, but its rate of fire was slow".

The crossbow was to survive the long bow as a weapon of war for a long time, and after it was supplanted as a soldiers' weapon it was still used for hunting. Vasco da Gama, Cortez and Pizarro all had crossbowmen in their armies. De Soto had equal numbers of crossbows and guns on his expedition through Florida. The French and the Swiss had crossbowmen. We have the immortal story of William Tell; even if he is as legendary as Robin Hood at least he inspired a famous opera overture. Sabatini uses crossbowmen in several of his novels. In the "Banner of the Bull", Cesare Borgia gets a would be assassin shot in his own crossbow ambush, and in Bellarion the hero leads a band of mounted crossbowmen. Crossbowmen compete with the English Archers in Doyle's White Company. The Hero of Stevenson's Black Arrow carries "a steel crossbow at his back". (Incidentally I once had a pre-1914 volume of the "Boys Journal". The Editor announced he would be having a "new serial" by Robert Louis Stevenson. This turned out to be "The Black Arrow" under a different title. In Charles Reade's "Cloister and the Hearth" there is a dramatic encounter at an Inn when Gerard and Denys are attacked by robbers. Suddenly they see a hand moving down towards the door bolt. "Denys slowly raised his crossbow. He levelled it. He took a long steady aim. At last the crossbow twanged. The hand was instantly nailed with a stern jar to the quiver-doorpost". When I read the "Cloister and the Hearth" I found that this scene had been pirated by the author of No. 2 of the "Aldine Robin Hood Library" almost completely, substituting Robin Hood and his men for Denys and Gerard. E. Barringer's "Rose in Splendour" also has his hero use a crossbow.

Though the decline of archery with the longbow began in England with the development of firearms crossbow continued in use much longer. The training of a longbowman to draw the six foot longbow was long and arduous. The crossbow and the gun needed much less physical effort. "Clap me a callver in Wart's hands" says Falstaff in Henry IV. Centuries later the Western gunman was to call the Colt revolver "the equaliser". The crossbow was developed in many ways: fitted with a barrel it could shoot fire arrows, bolts, or stones. In the letter scene in Twelfth Night, Sir Toby says of Malvolio, "O that I had a stonebow that I could hit the villain i' the eye". Stonebows were used for rook shooting almost to within living memory. Before the invention of the pistol a small folding crossbow was known as the "Assassin's crossbow" since it could shoot a miniature, but deadly dart, at close range.

The crossbow was, and still is, used in this country, though not so

much as the longbow, in target archery. It can no longer be legally used for hunting. But in other countries, especially the U.S.A., crossbow hunting, as well as field target archery is practised. Some Countries still use crossbows for shooting at the "Popinjay" a large wooden bird model on a long mast - at one time they shot live birds.

Though, in fact, the use of the crossbow, for hunting was abandoned years ago in Britain, the stonebow and pellet crossbows being abandoned in favour of the catapult and air rifle towards the end of the last century, unfortunately crossbows are now being used by poaching gangs, going particularly after deer. These modern poachers are not the poor labourers after "a rabbit for the pot". They are organised gangs, using motor vehicles, and are prepared to use violence against keepers, or to threaten their families. To ban crossbows would, of course, be a useless exercise, since anyone with a little skill can make a crossbow for himself.

But if, here in England, the crossbow has proved that it can be used for poaching, in other parts of the World, particularly in Africa, it is proving a potent instrument for saving wild life in the hands of rangers and veterinary officers. It has been found better than air rifles for projecting tranquilising darts into wild animals, so that these can be treated for disease or injuries, and, in overcrowded districts the pressure can be relieved by transferring the animals to fresh pastures.

\* \* \* \* \*

Christmas Greetings from the Greyfriars' Club who invite all collectors to become members. Subscription £3.00 p.a. includes Magazine Meetings, etc. The only Charles Hamilton Centenary F.D.C., few available at £1.70 or sheet of 8 'Bunter' stamps at £1.20 incs. post. Write MAURICE HALL, Chairman, Greyfriars Club, 26a Sidney Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 2NA.

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Happy Christmas reading to all hobby friends. Magnets, Lees, Sols, Annuals, 1950's comics for sale at reduced prices to clear. Large S.A.E. for lists.

JOHN BECK

29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX

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WANTED: Richmal Crompton's William The Lawless.

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In this age of T.V. few people seem to listen-in but some of you may have heard a radio programme called "Any Questions?" in which the chairman visits a different town each week with a panel of four people (also different each week) and they answer questions put by the audience. Recently, while listening to it, I began to wonder what would have happened if they had ever visited Greyfriars, so I decided to try and find out:-

From the Courtfield & County Gazette - on Thursday last, the well-known wireless programme "Any Questions?" came to Greyfriars School. Big Hall was crowded to capacity as the team entered and took their places on the platform. After being welcomed by the Headmaster, Dr. Locke, the chairman, Sir Hilton Popper, introduced the four members of the panel. These were Ferrers Locke, the eminent detective, William Gosling, the school porter, Miss Judith Coker and Captain John Redwing of Hawkescliff, the two latter, it is understood, have relatives at the school, a nephew and a son respectively.

The first question was asked by Herbert Vernon-Smith of the Remove. "Does the panel not consider the present-day schoolboy to be an improvement in every way on those when Sir Hilton Popper was at Greyfriars?"

Sir Hilton's face grew furious and assumed a purple tinge, but before he could speak, Ferrers Locke hastily interposed, saying that he detected a hint of sarcasm, not to say impudence, in the question, and suggested that Sir Hilton should disregard it.

But Vernon-Smith persisted "It would be interesting to hear Gosling's reminiscences, sir, for he was here sixty years ago, weren't you, Gossy?". Gosling's reply was that all boys should be drowned at birth and not allowed to grow up into the young varmints they are.

But the chairman decided to call for the next question, which was put by another Remove boy, Alonzo Todd, "Is there such a thing as the Ideal Schoolboy?".

One member of the panel provided the answer immediately. Rising to her feet and with a sweep of her umbrella which almost knocked the chairman's glasses off, Miss Judith Coker pointed dramatically into the centre of the Hall and announced in ringing tones "Yes, there he sits, my dear nephew Horace!".

Loud laughter, jeers and catcalls broke out, while Coker, with a face in colour like a beetroot was heard to ejaculate "Oh crumbs, draw it mild!".

Sir Hilton Popper seemed on the verge of exploding as he gave voice to a number of short, sharp sentences, to which Miss Coker seemed to take exception. "Sir Hilton", she cried. "Do I understand that your are applying these opprobrious epithets to MY nephew?"

"Yes, madam, you certainly do", thundered Sir Hilton, "Young jackanapes - infernal motor-bike - trespassin' on my land, begad -".

Miss Coker was equally infuriated. "I cannot tolerate such unfounded accusations", she cried. "There must be someone here who is familiar with the sterling qualities possessed by my nephew?"

Gosling replied at once, "Yes, m'am, wot I says is this 'ere - Master Coker's werry open-'anded wen it comes to givin' tips - he appreciates that a man's got a thirst - ahem - that's to say, 'e ain't such a varmint as the other varmints!".

At this point a disturbance took place at the back of the Hall, where several members of the Third Form were using pea-shooters with Coker as the target. When Mr. Wiggins had restored order, the chairman called for the next question, which was asked by James Hobson of the Shell. "What is the best form of discipline a boy could have to fit him for the rough and tumble of life?"

Captain Redwing was in no doubt. "Send the lad to sea at an early age, let him swab decks and climb the rigging in his bare feet, let him feel the wind in his hair and the salt sea spray on his skin in a Force 10 gale and if that doesn't make a man of him nothing will!"

At this awful pronouncement several of the juniors were seen to wilt, one aristocratic-looking youth in the Remove (who had, by the way, just wakened up in time to hear it) actually turned pale and seemed on the verge of fainting, while another, later identified as Cecil Reginald Temple of the Upper Fourth, appeared to be on the point of collapse and, rising, asked in a trembling voice for leave to withdraw. This being granted, he walked with unsteady steps to the door amid much laughter from all present, while Gosling repeated that if all boys were drowned at birth there'd be no need to think of doing anything else with them.

In the face of such unassailable logic it seemed judicious to proceed with the next question, which was put with evident relish by Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form. "Is flogging outdated and what would the panel suggest instead as a punishment?"

Gosling was seen to be looking thoughtful at the idea of flogging being abolished and your reporter recalls having heard that when floggings are carried out he takes some part in the proceedings.

Ferrers Locke discoursed at some length about various methods of

punishment - not to say torture - he had witnessed in different parts of the world, mentioning among others the Chinese ordeal in which the unhappy victim is forced to drink enormous quantities of water.

At this, a stout boy in spectacles jumped up excitedly, exclaiming "Oh sir, what a ripping wheeze!". And then, as he felt his headmaster's eyes upon him, "Er, I mean, it's a jolly good idea, sir, not the water but grub! Just think, you could have a big spread, lots of jam tarts and doughnuts and... and... all sorts of tuck and then you could force me - er - whoever it was, to eat the lot. It's a spiffing punishment, sir".

There was loud laughter at this novel idea and even the Head's face was seen to relax slightly as he said "Do not be absurd, Bunter".

But Sir Hilton Popper had considerably more to say. "Boy, Bunter, your pre-occupation with food stuffs is revolting. You remind me of nothing so much as an obnoxious bluebottle or wasp buzzing around above a table spread with eatables."

"Oh really, sir", squeaked Bunter.

"Not another word. Oblige me by sitting down and keeping silent", fumed Sir Hilton. "We shall now proceed to the next question - ow!" He suddenly slapped one hand to his face while he fanned the air around him with the other.

"What is the matter, sir?" enquired Ferrers Locke.

"An insect of some kind", snapped Sir Hilton. "There it is again!"

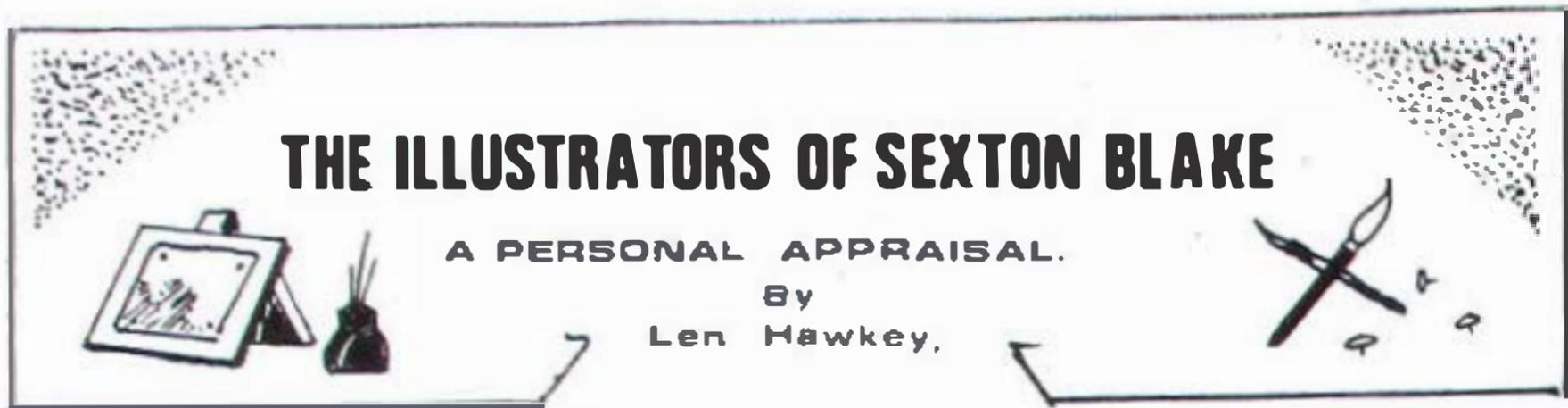
"Allow me", said Miss Coker, rising and wielding her umbrella in the vicinity of Sir Hilton's face.

The audience laughed loudly at the spectacle of the panel, all of them now on their feet, and fanning the air with their hands, while Miss Coker seemed likely to annihilate not only the insect - a loud buzzing could now be heard - but some of her fellow-panelists at any moment.

"Madam, will you put that umbrella down?" shrieked Sir Hilton, who was now looking like a dancing dervish as he writhed and twisted about. "Can you not see the thing, Locke?"

"I have a clue to its origin, Sir Hilton", said the detective. But Sir Hilton seemed to be driven to a frenzy, crying "I cannot stand this any longer", made a rush for the door. The Headmaster hurriedly declared the meeting closed and the assembly filed out of the hall.

Ferrers Locke was seen to abstract Bunter from the ranks of the Remove and gripping him by the arm, marched him to a corner where he appeared to be lecturing him on some matter which caused the broad grin to vanish from Bunter's face. A youth, identified as Robert Cherry, was heard singing a line from that wellknown song "Little man, you've had a buzzy day", but whether there was any connection between the two incidents is of course unknown to your reporter on the Courtfield & County Gazette.



Little did Sidney Paget realise when - mistaken by the publishers for his brother Walter - he undertook the task of illustrating the first Sherlock Holmes stories in the "Strand Magazine", that he, along with Holmes, Watson, and their creator, Conan Doyle, would become an "immortal". His other work, and that of his two brothers, is virtually forgotten, but through his connection with the great detective, his name lives on, and doubtless will for many decades yet.

It is said, as some small compensation for poor Walter, that Sidney used his brother as a model for Sherlock Holmes. Be that as it may, a clear visual picture of the Baker Street sleuth was afforded readers from the start, and tho' other artists had depicted Holmes earlier, and many did so after Paget's death in 1908, those first "STRAND" illustrations show the features and figure we have come to accept. Actually, Conan Doyle himself was not initially too happy with it, but seems to have, in time, "come round" to liking it.

With Sexton Blake, other problems arise - principally that innumerable authors came to write about his cases - in a wide variety of magazines and books - and upwards of 50 different artists have drawn their version : the writer, who has by no means seen all the publications featuring Blake over almost 90 years, can identify more than 40. Again, few of these writers have described his appearance, in more than scanty detail. The reader has been left to take their hero's physique for granted, or rely on the illustrations, so that quite a heavy burden has rested on the shoulder's of the artists. Strangely, the authors, excellent tho' many of them were, have been at much greater pains to describe subsidiary characters, and of course, "regulars" like Plummer, Waldo, Rhymer, Reece, Kew, etc. - Blake and Tinker are more often than not, "glossed over".

Even in Blyth's very first story - leastways as reprinted in the 1939 "S. B. Annual" there is no indication - other than in the somewhat rudimentary drawings - as to his great creation's age or looks. Maybe some expert can identify the artist - from the "posture" of some of the figures, and the child-like hands, they might be from the (early) pen of Harry Lane or H. M. Lewis. Be that as it may, they are not very decisive and one wonders if either then or indeed at any time in the succeeding years, any editorial guidance or instructions were given to the Art-staff, especially as Blake's popularity grew.

The earliest "Union Jack" I have is No. 135 (1906) - "Sexton Blake,

SEXTON BLAKE

- 1. Depicted by J. H. Valda
- 2. Depicted by H. M. Lewis
- 3. Depicted by J. H. Valda
- 4. Depicted by G. M. Dodshon



"Humph!" muttered Blake. "What possible use can an elderly retailer of tobacco have for hydrogen gas?" . . . Four cylinders in all Wakeham laid on the table.

K.C.". Brian Doyle mentions this in his invaluable book - the author of the story, E. J. Gannon writes of Blake as a "tall, wiry figure, his clean-shaven face showing indomitable character". This alone would hardly enable one to pick out the great man from a crowd of people at Baker Street Station - or elsewhere! On the cover (not addressing the Bar!) S.B. is wearing a pith-helmet! Moreover he is square-featured, round-eyed, and quite characterless. E. E. Briscoe, an excellent draughtsman, and competent all-round illustrator, was, I feel, always a bit weak on the human figure - everyone, including Blake tended to be somewhat short and stocky, and he also had a habit of adorning the detective with a bowler hat, plus enormous "turn-ups", making him almost a twin for Inspector Coutts!

Yet for two decades the A.P. used him for many Blake stories, along with T. W. Holmes, Harry Lane, H. M. Lewis and "Val" Reading. These five were the main-stays of the "U.J." - in the Christmas Number for 1913 (No. 533) there are photos of Arthur Jones (designated a "newcomer"), G. M. Dodshon and Willis Reading, "Val's" brother. It always strikes me as amazing how alike Lane and Lewis were in those days - Lane had a slightly care-free and thicker line, I feel, but otherwise they might have been brother-artists, similar to each other in style, as were the Readings, the Holmes, Brocks, Heath-Robinsons, etc. Somehow I always prefer Lane, of the two, but in truth T. W. Holmes was, to my mind, the best of the five, and came closest to showing a character we can identify with the Blake of E. R. Parker. Even so, Holmes' portrayal was not always consistent, while taking the quintet generally, the great detective varied from a quite young man with wavy hair, to a middle-aged "Reece-like" individual with a bony visage and little hair at all!

True, they got precious little help from the writers. After the Cannon excerpt in 1906, already mentioned, a few random examples - W. N. Graydon in U.J. No. 414 ("The Alibi", 1911) describes Blake as "a tall, slim gentleman, with shrewd, clean-shaven features" - not exactly detailed or explicit! In 1918, the other Graydon gives us "a tall, well built man . . . striking-looking, with pale clean-shaven features, and a firm, determined chin" (U.J. 782 - "The Steel Claw"). A little better, perhaps, but five years on, in U.J. 1038, G. N. Philips dismisses Blake as a man "with blue-grey eyes, shrewd as a sword-thrust!". A nice simile, but what about the rest of his anatomy? Edwy Searles Brookes, in 1931, briefly pictures him as a "tall, sharp-featured man" (U.J. 1428) - while if we move on to the closing year of the "golden age", Robert Murray, in 1939, talks of S.B. as being "keen-featured and active-looking, with eyes of a rare depth and colour". The most detailed portrayal is given in the first Sexton Blake Annual (1938) - "Blake is a man in the prime of life, and just six feet in height, with a spare athletic figure, and a lean, somewhat ascetic face, whose seriousness is often belied by his quick spontaneous smile. One's immediate impression is of an acute intelligence, allied with human kindness, and of bodily strength and will-power held easily in control. His grey eyes are his most noticeable feature, steady, level, dominating, piercing but with a hint of humour every lurking there".

This is probably the most definitive description we shall get, altho' the first issue of "Detective Weekly" (25/2/33) adds "... a high brow, dark hair, brushed back" and that his "... spontaneous smile discloses even, white teeth...". These informed details clear up the more vague impression given in earlier times, though one may wonder what tooth-paste (or powder) the great man used, that his teeth remain so white and even after a life-time, and more, of puffing away at his trusty briar - let alone the odd cigarette he was sometimes shown as smoking!

Just as one must assume that illustrators got little or no editorial guidance so there seems to have been a lack of collaboration between authors and their artists - leastways, this would account for the fact that until Eric Parker became established in the U. J., Blake seldom looks the same from issue to issue. It seems strange that it took almost 30 years after the creation of a character who, after Sherlock Holmes, must be the world's most famous detective, for a really clear portrait to emerge. Not, really, till 1924, as in truth Parker's work in 1922 and 1923 is much less assured, and one senses that he was "feeling his way". Studying this early work with his illustrations from, say, 1924 onwards, one is struck by the comparative speed in which he matured, so that in barely two or three years, he was able to create an image of Sexton Blake, that remains today a true personfication of the character.

It is hardly surprising that when, around 1930, readers were asked to vote for their favourite U. J. illustrator, Parker was clearly first, though the next places - in order, "Val" Reading, Valda, A. Jones and H. M. Lewis seem less predictable.

The following, alphabetically, are the Sexton Blake artists known to the writer:-

Fred Bennett C. H. Blake W. M. Bowles F. W. Boyington E. E. Briscoe  
 Kenneth Brookes C. H. Chapman S. H. Chapman A. Collins J. Abney  
 Cummings Terance Cuneo Vincent Daniel Wm. Dewar G. M. Dodshon  
 Laurence East F. J. Gillingham Cecil Glossop Frank R. Grey Louis Gunnis  
 F. B. Harnack E. F. Hiscocks Fred Holmes T. W. Holmes Ernest Hubbard  
 F. Bernard Hugh L. G. Illingworth E. Ibbetson Arthur Jones -. Kochmann  
 Harry Lane Nat. Long H. M. Lewis Ray Morgan R. J. MacDonald  
 Eric R. Parker Sid Pride Val Reading Willis Reading Leonard Sheilds  
 Ellis Shilas Warwick Reynolds J. Louis Smyth Alfred Sindall Phil Swinnerton  
 W. Tayler J. H. Valda D. Vine R. Wenban H. Ratcliff Wilson Jos. Waler

The above were spread over almost 40 years - some appeared only occasionally - several not in the "Union Jack" at all, but in one or other of the various magazines which have carried S. B. stories. The writer has not had access to all of these, e.g. the 1912/16 "Penny Popular's" - the 1908/11 "Answers" or the "Detective Library" of 1919/20. As to the old "Populars", a few cover reproductions and similar "ad's" have been carried in companion papers, but from these it is difficult to judge how well, for instance, C. H. Chapman or Warwick Reynolds depicted the celebrated sleuth. A. Reynold's "cameo" ad. in one magazine showed Blake with a middle parting, a slight

curl on either side of the forehead and a squarish face!

Apart from the five principal illustrators used in the early U. J. 's, from time to time Fred Bennett, Willis Reading, W. Tayler, G. M. Dodshon and Louis Gunnis (a much under-rated artist who worked consistently in periodicals from the 1890's to the 1940's) appeared. A. Jones joined the main five during the Great War, as did W. Tayler, while Chapter-headings, tail-pieces, etc., were supplied firstly by R. Kessell and latterly by F. B. Harnack. It may be that some other enthusiast has already amassed an entirely complete list of Blakian artists - but in any case, a detailed analysis of all contributors would be impossible. Some, indeed, are best passed hurriedly by - how any publisher or editor came to use the likes of Boyington, Dodshon, Hiscocks or Vine, for example, is incomprehensible. Presumably they did not attach great importance to the art-work - when in fact it was that, especially a good eye-catching cover, which often sold the paper in the first place.

C. H. Blake, Gillingham, F. B. Hugh, Sid Pride and several others were at best mediocre. Arthur Jones had an odd appeal, in spite of his technical aberrations, while others, like Lewis, Briscoe, Lane, Swinnerton and Tayler were always competent, but seldom more than that. Really fine artists, such as Cuneo, Sindall, Illingworth, and Shields, appeared too little to pass a reasoned judgement; tho' Shields and MacDonald did good work for the Blake stories in the "Penny Pictorial". That most stylish - and prolific - of all A.P. artists, J. Louis Smyth also drew S.B. in the "Penny Pictorial" and later in the short-lived "Dreadnought". But in all honesty, he did not make him a very distinctive character. My own favourite was Fred Bennett, who was used intermittently from the early years until the late 1930's. His illustrations for the 1906 Boys' Friend serial - "Sexton Blake in America" show him at his excellent best. Another great favourite was J. H. Valda, who joined the U. J. panel shortly after Parker, and continued then, to the demise of the "Detective Weekly" - by this time he must have been well into his 60's.

Mention too, must be made of Glossop, whose style was almost as free and dashing as Bennett's and Parker's - and Hubbard, who did some fine work in the 'D.W.'. In fact there were several illustrators in this magazine whose work I do not recognise, but then I also cannot say who may have drawn Blake during or since the last War.

Looking back on some 90 years of art-work, one must admit that the readers of 1930 were right in their judgement of Eric R. Parker - the more one looks at his work, the more one admires it. Valda, I would place second, myself, with T. W. Holmes, Hubbard, Harry Lane, Lewis and "Val" as "runners-up" - but it might be interesting to find out the opinion of present day enthusiasts were a new "Poll" to be taken among "Blakiana" readers.

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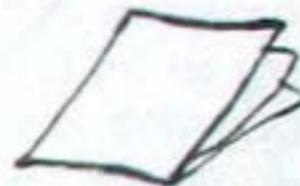
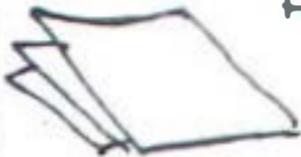
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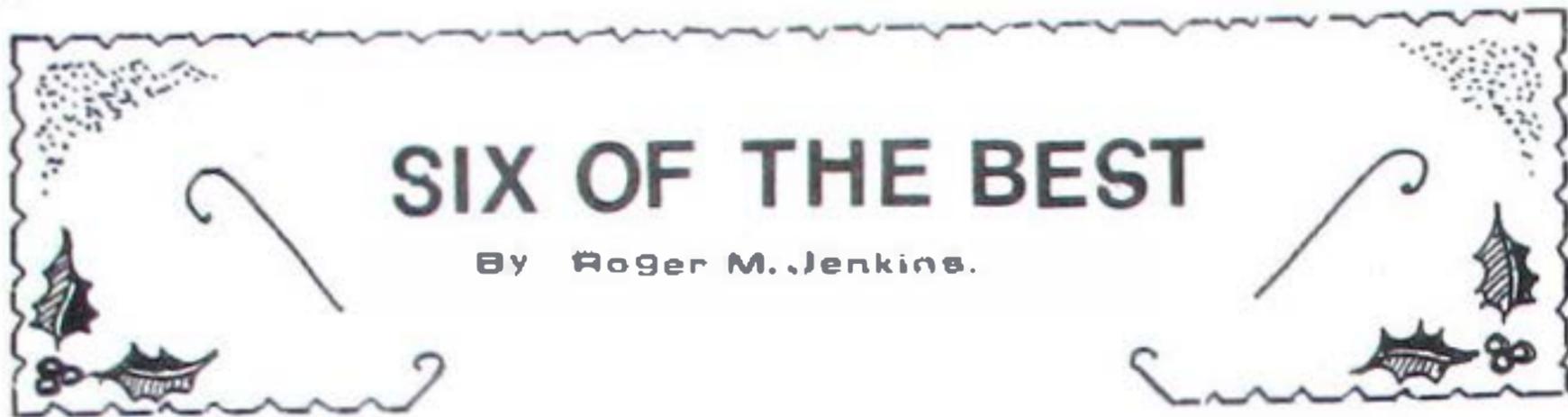
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# WE LOVED THEM IN ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

HOW MANY CAN YOU GIVE A NAME TO ?

BY G. HARRISON. (N.Z.)





A selection from some of the earlier Collectors' Digests of the series "Do You Remember? "

No. 15 - Boys' Friend Nos. 1140-74 (January 1956)

Most collectors of school stories tend to regard holiday series with a good deal of impatience. The Rookwood caravanning series of 1918, the St. Jim's Thames boating trip of 1923, and the Greyfriars hiking series of 1933 are given benevolent nods of approval, but these are the exception rather than the rule. The general feeling is that a school story should be in a school setting, and, if there must be a holiday, then it should be spent amid the English countryside. Foreign holidays are nothing but adventure stories which should not be allowed to impinge upon tales of school life. Yet when all this is freely admitted, it is still rather difficult to brush aside all the foreign holiday series just with the wave of a hand. One of the series that so obstinately sticks in the memory is the trip to Canada in 1923, made by the Fistical Four at the invitation of Jimmy Silver's cousin, Hudson Smedley.

It was like old times to have the Fistical Four on their own again, though the Rookwood saga had not much longer to run. It was like old times for another reason, too, for Hudson Smedley's ranch near the Rockies brought back memories of the Cedar Creek stories which had finished two years previously. It has been a never-ending source of wonder that Charles Hamilton has been able to bring to life the atmosphere of so many different countries that he has never even visited. Certainly he never achieved greater success in this line than the way in which he brought to life the lonelier parts of Western Canada as they were thirty or forty years ago.

This series in the Boys' Friend lasted for thirty-five weeks, longer than any other series he ever wrote about his Public School characters, though it must be remembered that the Rookwood stories were only half the length of the St. Jim's and Greyfriars ones. It is doubtful whether so long a holiday series would ever have been tried out in the Gem or the Magnet, but as the Boys' Friend was not wholly a school story paper it was no doubt considered to be a judicious place in which to experiment, especially in view of the success of the Cedar Creek stories. A selection of tales from the series about the trip to Windy River Ranch occupied no less than four Schoolboys' Owns - Nos. 146, 150, 154, and 158.

The trip to Canada was unique in that it was really a succession of series; first came the encounter with Pequod le Couteau, then the trouble with Kentuck, followed by the affair of Spanish Kit, the outbreak of the redskins, and the advent of the mysterious Monty Smith (nearly all the villains, it will be noticed, coming from the south of the forty-ninth parallel), and in between these episodes occurred single stories such as the attempt of Baldy Bubbin to pass himself off as a hero. It looked as though the Rookwood stories were going to be permanently transferred to Canada, but eventually the juniors did return to Rookwood, together with the amazing Texas Lick. It would be idle to pretend that their return to school was in any way regretted, but it is still possible to retain a sneaking affection for the memory of those days in Alberta when Jimmy Silver proved himself even more of a hero and Arthur Edward Lovell, in the certainty that he knew best, proved himself an even bigger idiot.

N. B. This brought a reply from Charles Hamilton in the following number. He wrote "Roger's article on Rookwood also stirs up a lot of reminiscences. It may interest Roger to know that his surmise is correct: actually the idea at the time was to transfer the Rookwood series to Canada. But other counsels prevailed later, and home they came again."

#### No. 16 - Boys' Friend 3d, Libraries Nos. 288 & 328 (March 1956)

Charles Hamilton wrote only two stories centring around Highcliffe, but each was a veritable jewel and both have now become collectors' items. They were published in the Boys' Friend monthly library in 1915, a year in which the Magnet and Gem were in a state of relative decline, but there can be no doubt about the excellence of these two stories, which were never surpassed by anything else the author wrote in the earlier days.

No. 288 entitled "The Boy Without a Name" appeared on New Year's Day, 1915, though it had been written before the outbreak of war. There was nothing remarkable about the plot - a new boy named Clare arrived at Highcliffe on a scholarship. His antecedents were unknown, and he had been brought up by a sea captain. Ponsonby (surely the most villainous schoolboy Charles Hamilton ever created) led a campaign against him, in which he was abetted by the snobbish Mr. Mobbs, who toadied to all boys who had wealthy or aristocratic connections. This is sufficient to form the basis of a very readable story, one might suppose, but why should it have been rated by Charles Hamilton as one of his very best? The secret lies in the presentation of the character of Rupert de Courcy, the Caterpillar.

The Caterpillar was one of the most fascinating characters Charles Hamilton ever created, and was quite wasted at a minor school like Highcliffe. Now and again Magnet readers would catch another glimpse of him, but he was never allowed to play such a large part again. Cardew of St. Jim's was his nearest counterpart, but Cardew was not always presented in a sympathetic light. The Caterpillar was the friend of the reader from first to last, perhaps because his enemy was Ponsonby the villain, not Tom Merry the hero.

The nobodies of Highcliffe (sons of solicitors and doctors who had to work for a living) were too much under Ponsonby's influence to chum with Clare,

and it was left to de Courcy to invite him to share his study in this typical manner: "At all events, I shall find you an interestin' study. I shall watch your manners and customs and habits, and so on - it will be as amusin' as keepin' rabbits, and much less trouble. After a term or so, I shall have a real insight into the ways and doin's of the brainy workin' classes." (De Courcy could be equally disconcerting to others: "You see, Franky wasn't trained like us, dear boy. Franky was brought up accordin' to the stern morality of the workin' classes. He'll never get over it. He might know you for a thousand years, Pon old scout, and he'd never take to gamblin' or smokin' or drinkin' or tellin' lies. It's all a matter of trainin'.") Acquaintance ripened into friendship, and in the end the Caterpillar had the satisfaction of knowing that Clare was the son of Major Courtenay, the rich uncle of whom Ponsonby had hitherto entertained high expectations.

It is interesting to note how contemporary Magnets dealt with this situation. No. 344 which appeared in September 1914 mentioned the arrival of a new boy named Clare, but the circumstances were quite different: he was not a scholarship boy and his arrival aroused no antagonism. This could not have been our Clare. No. 374 dated April 1915 refers to Courtenay's earlier difficulties, however, and is the first obvious reference in the Magnet to "The Boy Without a Name".

No. 328 of the Boys' Friend Library entitled "Rivals and Chums" was that rare bird - a sequel that lived up to its predecessor. Courtenay was now form captain, and Ponsonby was full of hatred for the newcomer who had supplanted him. To add to the fun, Mr. Banks had installed a roulette game in a house at Courtfield, to which the Caterpillar was irresistibly attracted. In this story Charles Hamilton devoted more space than he ever again permitted himself to an explanation of roulette, the various systems of the punters, and the way in which de Courcy realised, stage by stage, that it was impossible to beat the bank. Ponsonby reached the nadir of his infamous career when he informed the police about Mr. Banks' gaming house the night he knew de Courcy would be going, and then sent Courtenay after him, hoping that they would both be arrested together. Needless to say, all his plotting came to naught, and the story ended with Courtenay determined never to trust his cousin again.

This pair of stories illustrates, perhaps better than any other, the essential quality of timelessness in Charles Hamilton's writings. He was not concerned with topicality, the latest invention, the newest fad: all these become stale, weary and unprofitable overnight. Topicality dates, the latest invention is soon an everyday matter not worthy of comment, and the newest fad becomes old-fashioned in a moment. These two Highcliffe stories, on the other hand, are timeless because they deal with human nature in its varying facets: since human nature never changes, they remain as intriguing today as they were forty years ago. Thus it is that "The Boy Without a Name" and "Rivals and Chums" bear witness to the fact that Charles Hamilton wrote not for the moment but for all time.

No. 21 - Gems 743-7 - Rogue Rackstraw Series (November 1956)

1922 was one of the best years of the Gem, and the Rogue Rackstraw series possessed all the requisite ingredients of a good tale, including a novel and ingenious plot. Despite all these auspicious concomitants, however, the series failed to ring the bell. Perhaps the shortness of the stories was the cause (they seldom exceeded nine chapters at this time), or perhaps the author was not up to his usual form. At any rate, the epic was told in a jerky manner which did less than full justice to the originality of the theme.

The stories revolved around a remarkable series of kidnappings, which began with Tom Merry and Kildare. Dr. Holmes paid £500 to ransom Tom Merry, and then further kidnappings occurred - Lowther, Gordon Gay, Inspector Fix, Mr. Railton, Manners and Talbot. The real hero of the series was Wildrake, and it was he who guessed half-way through that the culprit was Mr. Brown, the miller of Wayland Moor. Wildrake later became the confidant of Inspector Fix, and he played the game on his own later when the Inspector disappeared, being responsible in the last number for the successful dramatic climax.

It was pleasant to have Tom Merry more prominently featured once again and there is no doubt that the atmosphere of tension and anxiety was well depicted. Yet it was perhaps too large a theme to be handled successfully in some forty odd chapters. The events were too rapid and the characters too numerous to allow the reader to take in fully the bewildering sequence of disasters. Hamilton fans with a taste for this kind of story would be better advised to turn to an earlier, and far superior, series in Nos. 906-911 of the Boys' Friend (reprinted in No. 20 of the Schoolboys' Own Library), where the manner in which the Fistical Four disappeared one by one was related most eerily and with consummate skill on the appropriately smaller canvas of Rookwood School. The Rookwood series was as compact and intimate as the St. Jim's series was amorphous and impersonal. One of the drawbacks of the Gem was that the author began with plenty of space but was cut down severely and permanently after the first ten years. The Rookwood stories were always on a small scale, a factor which helped them to retain a much more consistent standard. A disappointing series like that of Rogue Rackstraw would thus not have occurred in the Rookwood saga, but, though the series was not up to standard, it was not a failure, and the reader who prefers Study No. 10 in the Shell passage will find a good deal in this series to please him. For a lover of the old blue Gems, this is a recommendation which covers a multitude of sins.

N. B. This piece was not accepted in toto by Eric Payne, who wrote to the editor (Herbert Leckenby) as follows: "I do not find myself entirely in harmony with Roger Jenkins' views on the Rogue Rackstraw series . . . I cannot agree that the Rogue Rackstraw series was disappointing, - I have always regarded it as one of the best of all the kidnapping series, - but, all the same, there is a great deal of truth and wisdom in his comparison of this series with its Rookwood counterpart. The Rookwood series was brilliant, with an eerie quality which was quite remarkable: the Gem series had, however, certain excellent character sketches which helped to make it outstanding. It could be added that the identity of the kidnapper was never in doubt from the first in the Rookwood series, while the mystery was sustained for some time in the St. Jim's series."

Cardew of St. Jim's and Mornington of Rookwood are a fascinating pair of characters for comparison. Cardew is the more delightful to read about, more insouciant and urbane. Moreover, his character remained the same since he was first introduced into the stories. Mornington, on the other hand, changed as frequently as Vernon-Smith, sometimes blackguard, sometimes scoundrel, sometimes hero. Cardew was wealthy and well-connected, but Mornington was deprived of his fortune when his cousin Herbert turned up. He did not begrudge the one-time waif the money that had once been his, but he certainly missed it, and this deprivation undoubtedly embittered him. As he said to Erroll on one occasion, "You don't care what clothes you wear so long as you're decent! I care no end. I hate wearin' a collar twice and a necktie three times. I hate havin' my boots soled and heeled. I hate lookin' at a quid twice before I spend it. In fact," said Mornington, with a bitter grin, - "in fact, I've all the tastes of a gentleman's gentleman, and that's what I ought to be, I suppose. I belong to the vulgar rich, and I can't get out of it. And you don't understand it a little bit." Charles Hamilton must have been thinking of that line from Tennyson about sorrow's crown of sorrow being the remembrance of happier things.

Like Cardew, Mornington also aspired to be junior captain, and like Cardew he succeeded. But there the resemblance ends. Mornington's rivalry was mainly a friendly one, whereas Cardew's was most unfriendly, though he maintained his urbanity as long as possible. Mornington, on the other hand, was rather reckless in the bribes he offered voters (Smythe, Tracy, and Howard were promised places in the team) whereas Cardew's promises were as vague and bland as a politician's.

The Rookwood series was the earlier of the two, appearing in the Boys' Friend in 1919, and running straight through from July to October without a break for the holidays. It was reprinted in Nos. 308 and 317 of the Schoolboys' Own Library. Many themes were first tried out at Rookwood, to be developed more fully in the Magnet and Gem at a later date, though in this case the prototype suffered from no lack of development itself.

Mornington's opportunity arose when Smythe offered the junior eleven the use of a large car to take them over to Greyfriars. Mornington bore in mind the tag from Virgil "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentis" (I fear the Greeks and the gifts they bring), but Jimmy Silver unsuspectingly accepted the offer. As a result, the junior eleven was taken for a ride into Devon, while Smythe presented his own team at Greyfriars. The dissatisfaction this incident caused, and the fact that Jimmy Silver had refused to heed Mornington's warning, were used as a lever by Mornington to demand a new election, which he won. Like Cardew, he had his initial successes and, again like Cardew, he later tired of the whole business. The St. Jim's and Rookwood series may be read one after another without any loss of enjoyment, so differently are they constructed and so well do they illustrate the characters who had perhaps more dramatic potentialities than any other at their respective schools.

No. 41 - The Oliver Lynn Series - Gems 787 - 791 (February 1963)

In one sense, the Gem never properly recovered from the first World War. Like the Magnet, it was reduced in size when the paper shortage came, but, whereas the Greyfriars stories resumed their full length when circumstances permitted, the St. Jim's stories seemed to remain confined to a limit of about nine chapters throughout the 'twenties. The Gem became cluttered up with at least two serials each week, with other odd features thrown in for good measure. In the glorious past, the Gem had had a longer story than the Magnet. Now the wheel was come full circle, and the Magnet engaged most of Charles Hamilton's time and attention.

Of course, mere length in itself is no criterion of merit, and the basis for the series in Gems 787-791 seemed most promising: St. Leger, the dandy of the Fifth, had a young cousin who had been a professional boxer, by name of Oliver Lynn. Colonel St. Leger befriended his uncouth nephew, and sent him to St. Jim's. From this time, Lynn suffered a series of setbacks: his cousin seemed not to want to know him at school, and his studymates in No. 6 could not stand his manners. There were some good situations, when Cardew took up the outcast merely out of whimsical curiosity only to drop him after he tired of him, and when Lynn quarrelled with his studymates and threw them all out of the study - a situation in which Charles Hamilton contrived to represent both sides as being in the wrong. And Lynn's sacrifice for his unworthy cousin provided a moving climax to the whole series.

Even so, there were drawbacks: the quarrel with Blake & Co. was resolved by what critics scornfully call a *deus ex machina* - four footpads who decided to hold up Cousin Ethel so that Lynn could conveniently rescue her, which hardly altered his studymates' reasons for disliking his manners. Lynn's strength, too, was exaggerated; even the most skilful young boxer would scarcely be able to cope with four men at once. And the shortness of each weekly episode ruthlessly eliminated any chance of having a sub-plot with which to embellish the story a little. Everything was very direct and to the point. One might deduce from this that the Schoolboys' Own reprint in No. 160 would be a very satisfactory presentation of this short series, but in point of fact it is the most unsatisfactory of all Hamilton Schoolboys' Owns, since it ends in the middle of the series with Gem 789. Why the series was not reprinted in full, using two numbers of the monthly library, is one of the mysteries that surround most of the Fleetway House publications.

This Gem series inevitably challenges comparison with a very similar series about Richard Dury in Magnets 985-990, which was, incidentally, reprinted quite satisfactorily in Schoolboys' Owns 167 & 169. There can be no doubt that the Greyfriars version was vastly superior, partly because it was longer and artistically developed, and partly because it was written four years later, in 1927, when Charles Hamilton was approaching the peak of his performance. Whereas Lynn was presented briefly and rather coldly to the reader, Dury was shown to be a sympathetic character and the Greyfriars juniors objected not so much to his table manners (as Blake & Co. did) as to

his bad sportsmanship in crowing over defeated opponents. Dury's worship of Hilton was shown to be quite reasonable and credible, whereas Lynn's regard for St. Leger was explained briefly by a reference to something that was never related in the Gem itself. Masterly, too, was the description of how Dury came to realise that his idol had feet of clay, whereas Lynn admired St. Leger right to the end. But perhaps the most endearing part of the Dury series was the beginning: Christmas at Wharton Lodge, snow abounding, Dr. Locke an honoured guest, and Bunter forcing his way in without an invitation.

With such an irresistible opening to a series, how could it fail to win the reader's heart?

No. 28 - Magnet No. 186 - "The Only Way" (March 1958)

There was an intriguing set-up in the Greyfriars Sixth Form in the hey-day of the red Magnet, there being five seniors with well-defined characters. The black sheep were Loder and Carne (Walker was not often mentioned), and on the other side of the ledger were Wingate and Courtney. In between was Rupert Valence.

Arthur Courtney was Wingate's closest friend, whilst Valence with his waywardness and instability of character was someone with whom the rugged and forthright Wingate had little patience. Courtney, however, was very much attracted to Valence's sister, Vi, and was in consequence closely connected with Valence's affairs. This was the Hazeldene theme all over again, but, because of the age of those concerned, it was much more plausible and realistic. It is therefore hardly surprising that all these characters should have featured in the finest red Magnet story of all, "The Only Way".

There is no disguising the fact that this story is a period piece, a drama which comes dangerously close to being melodrama. Yet when all this is freely admitted, the story lives today because of the convincing display of characterisation, which triumphs even when the theme is so Victorian as this passage in which Courtney censures Valence:

"You have been after the game."

"Well, supposing I have? I remember you had some of the partridges when I stood a game supper in the study."

"That's not so bad. I don't hold with it, considering the birds are private property; but poaching a partridge or two for a feed isn't so bad. But -"

"But what?"

"You've done more than that!" said Courtney sternly. "You've been poaching birds to sell. You know you have. You've sold a dozen brace in Friardate."

It was Sir Hilton Popper's preserves which were being raided, and when Valence was caught red-handed one evening he gave Courtney's name. So it was that Courtney received a stern letter from the baronet inviting him to Popper Court for a flogging as an alternative to reporting the matter to the police. How Courtney saved Valence from this predicament and what thanks he received for his pains constituted the main part of a most engrossing story.

As most collectors know, Courtney and Valence were removed from Greyfriars by Pentelow in that famous story "A Very Gallant Gentleman". In the interests of accuracy it is only fair to point out that collectors regard this story with very mixed feelings, some esteeming it highly for its noble sentiments, and others deploring it for its sentimentality. But whatever may be thought of this story as a single story, it is obvious that, considered as one of a sequence of many hundreds of Greyfriars stories, it is entirely misplaced. Death was not a proper topic for the pages of the Magnet, and permanent characters were not to be disposed of in such a manner.

Pentelow himself declared that this story had brought him more letters than anything else published in the Magnet for years past, and added that some readers had confessed to crying over the last chapter. It was clear that he thought 'Frank Richards' had excelled himself on this occasion. At the same time, it is equally clear that Pentelow had some doubts about what he had irrevocably done: "Those who talk about a big gap left by Courtney's disappearance are guilty of exaggeration. Some times we heard nothing of Courtney for months together; and in only two or three stories did he ever play more than a minor part." This excuse has some validity if the characters had in fact been his to dispose of. As it is, we can only wonder what the 'twenties and 'thirties might have held in store for Courtney and Valence if Pentelow had not intervened.

At all events, the fabric which Charles Hamilton had so carefully woven was mutilated beyond repair by the work of a minute, and the Sixth Form at Greyfriars was never so interesting again. The other prefects - Gwynne, Sykes, North, Bancroft, etc. - were merely names, and Wingate was left with no intimate friend. That is why, in later Magnets, he appears something of a lone wolf, an isolated figure in the school with no-one he really trusted and with no-one upon whom he could completely rely. That is why collectors who like the occasional story about the senior forms can only deplore Pentelow's judgment in writing "A Very Gallant Gentleman". There were many substitute writers, and many of them made mistakes, but only Pentelow succeeded in perpetrating irreparable damage. For the sake of his Roman holiday he deprived future readers of many interesting possibilities in later years.

"The Only Way" was, in events, a path which Charles Hamilton never trod again.

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We seek him here, we seek him there,  
 Those Frenchies seek him everywhere.  
 Is he in heaven? - Is he in hell?  
 That demmed, elusive Pimpernel.

These lines, of course, occur in Baroness Orczy's famous novel The Scarlet Pimpernel, which celebrates the activities of Sir Percy Blakeney and his gallant band of helpers who constantly risked their own lives to rescue potential victims from "Mam'zelle Guillotine". The book was first published in 1905 but Sir Percy was created earlier in 1903, in a play, also called The Scarlet Pimpernel which the Baroness wrote in collaboration with her husband Montague Barstow. This was produced at Nottingham's Theatre Royal during the same year, in London in 1905 and in New York in 1910. Fred Terry immortalized the role on the stage and played it time and time again, but probably for many of us Leslie Howard's portrayal of Sir Percy in the 1935 screen version seems the most perfect recreation of Baroness Orczy's aristocratic, enigmatic and dashing hero. (There have been altogether two silent and three talking picture versions of the Scarlet Pimpernel's exploits, as well as T.V. and radio adaptations.)

It is fitting that eighty years on from Sir Percy's inception another film is to be launched, for showing on our T.V. screens. This stars Anthony Andrews in the title role, and after his fine performance as Sebastian in Brideshead Revisited it is not surprising to hear that his interpretation of the Scarlet Pimpernel is said to be as brilliant and charismatic as Leslie Howard's.

The phenomenal success of the first book prompted Baroness Orczy to write a long string of others about the same characters (ten full length novels and two volumes of short stories). The later books were highly enjoyable, dramatic and written in splendid style, but none achieved the distinction of the first. Of course, this is partly because the original book only reveals the identity of the Scarlet Pimpernel at the end, whereas in the sequels this mystery element is lacking.

Sir Percy Blakeney, with the true English gift for under-statement, takes as his emblem the tiny, often hidden, wayside flower, the scarlet pimpernel. To confuse his French enemies, he assumes the role of an inept but fashionable fop - although the inane exterior never completely conceals his inner reserves of strength, humour and compassion, or his romantic if slightly sardonic sense

of chivalry: "The commands of a beautiful woman are binding on all mankind, even Cabinet ministers."

With their background of the French Revolution, the stories are highly wrought and intensely atmospheric. There are vivid contrasts between the rabble-ridden, blood-running and squalid streets of Paris during the Terror, and the glittering splendours of the court of King George III in England. Sir Percy is equally at home in both, ringing the changes from appearing at London balls and supper-parties as one of the Prince of Wales's favourite associates, to disguising himself as a loathsome looking old merchant, or some smelly market-hag or fisherman, in order to whisk aristocratic families away from the fury of the French mob, and the ever-devouring Guillotine. He drew his band of helpers - The League of the Scarlet Pimpernel - from the upper classes (Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, Lord Anthony Dewhurst, Lord Hastings, etc.).

Generally speaking, artisans and even middle-class people did not show up too well in Baroness Orczy's books. In spite of her attraction to strongly chivalric ideas, she writes about the "lower orders" with a distinct air of condescension, especially if they step out of line and fail to respect their "betters". And of course, nothing could be more disrespectful than putting the heads of these betters under the guillotine!

Sir Percy, however, falls heavily in love with someone from a different class - and a foreigner to boot. The object of his affections is Marguerite St. Just, a French actress of great beauty and accomplishment, who, until she realizes the ruthless nature of the Revolution, has republican tendencies. Naturally this opposition of political attitudes puts some strain on their marriage, but Marguerite soon becomes disillusioned with the Revolution, and,



once she learns of Sir Percy's heroic exploits, their relationship again becomes idyllic. Marguerite plays an intrepid part in some of her husband's more exciting rescues.

Villainy pops up throughout the series, often in the form of Monsieur Chauvelin, the brooding, hate-filled agent of the French Revolutionary Government, who is the arch enemy of the Scarlet Pimpernel - but who never really manages to outwit him.

In the 1935 film mentioned earlier, this part was skilfully acted by Raymond Massey, and Marguerite was brought to life by Merle Oberon. The film was produced by her husband, Alexander Korda, a Jewish-Hungarian who settled in England and achieved fame and distinction as a film-maker. It is fascinating to note that this quintessentially English film was based on a story by a Hungarian Baroness (who couldn't speak a word of English until she was fifteen), was made by a Hungarian producer - and that Leslie Howard, the most English of all English actors - also had part-Hungarian

*The*  
**SCARLET  
PIMPERNEL**

**BARONESS  
ORCZY**



origins!

Baroness Orczy once wrote that there was nothing English about her "except my love, which is all English". She tells the story of her own life and her passion for England, her adopted country, in Links in the Chain of Life, which was published by Hutchinson in 1947. Her story is a dazzling one. Born in Hungary at Tarna Ors on 23rd September, 1865, Emmuska Magdalena Rosalia Maria Josefa Barbara Orczy came of an ancient landowning family. During her girlhood she also lived in Budapest, Brussels and Paris. She came to London with her family in the early 1880s, and later studied painting at the West London School of Art and Heatherleys (where Angela Brazil was also once a pupil). She married Montague Barstow, an artist and book illustrator, in 1894, and their relationship seems to have been an extremely happy one. They had a son, who was born in 1899, and educated at Harrow. Baroness Orczy wrote afterwards that she always loved the school songs: "Forty Years On is one of the most affecting songs I know."

In Links in the Chain of Life she draws vivid and atmospheric pictures of late-Victorian and Edwardian London. She remembers attending glittering assemblies in ballgowns with tulle skirts, satin or moiré bodices, and, for more general attire, wearing "artificial excrescences" (the bustle and the waterfall back). This, of course, was in the 1890s, when "every girl in London aspired to an eighteen-inch waist".

But she recalls too the less practical aspects of those voluminous and extravagant fashions - "the hideous discomfort of walking in London on a muddy, rainy day, holding up an umbrella with one hand and one's dress with the other". Even so, the flounced edges of her skirts, their inside frillings and her boots and stockings would become badly splashed with mud.

She writes with affection of the old horse buses "going clippety-clop up the Edgware Road and along Oxford Street". She heard Paderewski play, and saw Edouard Grieg conduct his Peer Gynt Suite in the now long demolished St. James's Hall; she met Franz Liszt, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Lord Leighton and many other



"What do you think will happen?"

personalities who were celebrated in the field of the arts. A specially cherished memory is of seeing Ellen Terry and Henry Irving in Shakespearean productions at the Lyceum - and of Irving's colourful performances as Bill Sykes in Oliver Twist, Mephistopheles in Faust and Matthias in The Bells.

As well as serious drama she enjoyed the music hall - Lottie Collins singing Tarara-boom-de-ay! at "the old Pavilion", Vesta Tilley's male impersonations, Marie Lloyd's hearty songs and Albert Chevalier's pathos. She mentions the time when the Princess (Alexandra) of Wales attended the music hall at the Alhambra, and thus conferred respectability upon it.

Baroness Orczy as a girl had once cherished ambitions to go to Cambridge, but her father wouldn't consent to this. Indeed it was only through the persuasions of Lord Leighton (then Sir Frederick), who was President of the Royal Academy, that she was allowed to go to art school. She soon realized that as a painter she was "destined for mediocrity" (although in fact her work was hung in the Royal Academy for three successive years), and she recognized that her pictorial training helped her later to visualise and bring to life in literature many historical scenes and events.

Her dismissal of her talents as an artist is characteristic of the search for perfection that continued throughout her life. Earlier on she was deterred from embarking on a musical career when the great composer Liszt - though affectionately calling her "ma poésie" - had shaken his head sadly at her piano playing. And, achieving some success soon after she began to write fiction, with The Emperor's Candlesticks (1899) and Juliette, published in the Royal Magazine during the same year, she still "wished to aim at an eagle and not be content with bringing down a sparrow".

A step on the ladder of her literary aspirations was climbed on a foggy afternoon in London when, going home on a horse bus after a National Gallery visit, she was struck by the "so dark, so gloomy, so silent and mysterious" atmosphere, and decided to write fiction of detection and suspense. Her husband gave her sound advice in suggesting that she resisted the temptation to become yet another imitator of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Her leading character should be "in no way reminiscent of Sherlock Holmes". So her Old Man in the Corner series was conceived, and the stories of the sedentary, astute and string-knotting detective are still today very much sought after.

But Baroness Orczy still longed to create a character far more appealing, and a setting far more romantic. The latter was suggested to her during a six month stay in Paris. As she walked through some of the ancient streets they still seemed to "echo with the footsteps of Robespierre and Danton, of Charlotte Corday and Mme. Roland, with the clatter of the tumbrils and the shouts of 'Ca ira' of the revolutionary mob thirsting for freedom ..." So she had her setting - the French Revolution, with all its private and public dramas, intrigues, animosities and sacrifices. But, so far, the cast was lacking - and particularly the leading character.

It was the stimulus of her beloved London that was to provide this, and

in rather bizarre circumstances which Baroness Orczy relates in her own picturesque style: "Strangely enough the personality of the Scarlet Pimpernel came to me in a very curious way. I first saw him standing before me - don't gasp please, on the platform of an underground station, the Temple ... Now, of all the dull, prosy places in the world, can you beat an underground railway station? It was foggy too, and smelly and cold. But, I give you my word that as I was sitting there, I saw - yes, I saw - Sir Percy Blakeney ... I saw him in his exquisite clothes, his slender hands holding up his spy-glass; I heard his lazy drawling speech, his quaint laugh."

She called this "a mental vision", and said that although it lasted only a few seconds, the whole life-story of the Scarlet Pimpernel (10 full-length romances and two volumes of short stories!) was there and then unfolded to her. Baroness Orczy wrote the first book in five weeks, and claims that this was the happiest period of her life. Her romantic feeling for her handsome and adventurous hero has invested him with an untarnishable glamour and appeal, which spills over on to lesser characters in the saga - like Ffoulkes, Dewhurst and Hastings, of whom she says, "I knew them all personally. They were more real and vivid to me than the friends of this world". And, "... above all I love Marguerite, Sir Percy's brave and devoted wife ..."

The Scarlet Pimpernel's phenomenal success occurred not only within the English speaking world. By the 1940s the novels had been translated into some twenty languages, including Russian, Japanese and several Eastern tongues. Like Dickens, of course, Baroness Orczy had written a tale that embraced two cities, so naturally the play of The Scarlet Pimpernel was translated into French and produced in Paris. It was apparently very badly written and presented, with an explosive Gallic hero who was for ever clenching his fist, rather than a restrained and dignified English milord. Also, when the 1935 film was dubbed in French, Leslie Howard was made into a French emigré, because for the fiery hearted French audiences no Englishman could be allowed to down any of their countrymen! Such are the roots of literary vandalism.

Despite the long-lasting international success of The Scarlet Pimpernel, however, it went off to a show start. When Baroness Orczy first began sending her manuscript around the circuit of publishing houses (before Fred Terry's stage performance had created a demand for the book), it was refused by twelve publishers. And even though the public immediately and irrevocably took the play to its heart, critical notices of the first night in 1903 were damning. The Daily Mail reviewer, for example, remarked that "the only good thing about this play is its name - the scarlet pimpernel is a little flower that blossoms and dies in one day, which is the obvious fate of this play ...". Fortunately - like many critics before and since - those who so uniformly wrote off The Scarlet Pimpernel utterly misjudged the response of the public.

The popularity of The Scarlet Pimpernel, in spite of changes in fashion and social attitudes, has continued throughout these eighty years, though

regrettably now only the first book and one or two of its sequels remain constantly in print (in Knight paperbacks). Soon after the play was launched, Baroness Orczy became a literary celebrity, showered with letters from her fans all over the world. The accolades she most particularly cherished were those from distinguished Englishmen who told her that, in Sir Percy, she had created what was "best and truest in the English character", and that the Scarlet Pimpernel was "such a gentleman".

An interesting footnote to her appreciation of her own hero is that she remained lukewarm about Leslie Howard's extremely English-gentlemanly interpretation of him, remarking that "Leslie Howard was certainly very attractive, very charming, he knew how to make love, but he was not Fred Terry. Fred Terry was the ideal Sir Percy and there cannot be two ideals in one's mind of the one character." (Fred Terry of course was dead when this film was made, and, sadly, his portrayal of the Scarlet Pimpernel has not been recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations.)

It is intriguing too that Alexander Korda, the producer of the film, also failed to go overboard for Howard. Apparently he favoured Charles Laughton (a great actor, but hardly an appropriate choice) until a bombardment of protest letters from Scarlet Pimpernel enthusiasts persuaded him to engage Leslie Howard. One feels there could have been no better choice: for many of us, indelible images of the literary character and the screen star are perfectly and timelessly fused.

In 1908 Baroness Orczy and Montague Barstow moved out of London to live at Minster in Thanet. Staying in Kent, they then bought a house called Snowfield, between Maidstone and Ashford, where they created a superb garden of rhododendrons, azaleas, pines, mountain ash and roses. After the ending of the First World War in 1918, they had to live in a gentler climate, and moved to Monte Carlo, which remained their home until Montague Barstow died in 1943, thus ending a fifty-year marriage "of perfect happiness and understanding, of perfect friendship and communion of thought". Baroness Orczy was an Anglo-phile until the end of her life, frequently visiting England (except when she was trapped in Monte Carlo during the Second World War). She died in London on 12th November, 1947, secure in the knowledge that with the Scarlet Pimpernel, her "demmed elusive", elegant and wholly fascinating character, she had left a glowing ideal for posterity.

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"I'm getting old," said Mr. Buddle.

He was not confiding in some other person. He was speaking his sad thoughts aloud.

Classes were over, that Tuesday afternoon in early October. Mr. Buddle had ended a tiring session in English Grammar with the Fifth Form at Slade, and he had come to his study to recuperate. In blissful seclusion he had enjoyed a dainty tea brought to him by the Slade housekeeper. He had sat with his armchair drawn up close to the window, and his tray balanced on his knees. From there he had a clear view of the quadrangle with the playing fields on

the far side of the road which ran past the gates of Slade, all bathed in the glow of the setting autumn sun.

Now Mr. Buddle put his tray on one side, and went to stand against his table. He stood there with his eyes resting thoughtfully on two items which lay side by side on the table.

One was a small handbill in garish colours. It announced that Tite's World-Famous Fair would be honouring the town of Everlade with its last appearance for the season, prior to going into hiding for the winter. Tite's Fair, complete with Dodgem Cars, Roundabouts, Swings, Flip-Flap, Helter Skelter, Ghost

Train, and a great many other attractions would be open for custom from Wednesday till Saturday on their pitch in the Plymouth Road, Everslade. "Come in your Thousands!" invited the little handbill optimistically.

Mr. Buddle sighed. It was a great many years since he had been at a Fair. His senses stirred. He remembered going to a Fair as a boy of - what was it? - about twelve. He had had an enchanting time, he seemed to recollect. And years later, when he was a University student, he had attended a Fair somewhere among the city's "ancient spires", and that had been a very lively occasion indeed. The memory brought a broad smile to Mr. Buddle's lips.

His eyes moved from the handbill to a blue-covered periodical which lay beside it. A copy of the Gem. For a schoolmaster, Mr. Buddle knew quite a lot about the Gem. He often read it for relaxation; bound volumes of old tales lent to him by the father of one of his pupils. This one was a single issue. It was entitled "Tom Merry's Legion of Honour". It sounded just a shade dated.

Mr. Buddle turned his head a little on one side as he gazed down at the blue-covered paper. For some reason he thought of Tennyson, who had said: "Old age hath yet his honour...".

It was then that Mr. Buddle said aloud: "I'm getting old".

He shrugged his shoulders. He didn't really mean it. He didn't feel old - except sometimes. Just on the shady side of 50, he was in

his prime, he told himself. Someone had once described Mr. Buddle as a "dried-up little pipkin of a man", but it wasn't true. He was keen and shrewd, as many people had found out in their time. His kindly green eyes showed a sense of humour, which is indispensable to a schoolmaster. Once, to his shame, he had laughed in Church --

He was a bachelor. Bachelors are lively and dashing until they reach 40. When they pass 50, they are often crusty. Rumour had it that Mr. Buddle had been jilted as a young man, and so had decided on a life of loneliness. Mr. Buddle was smiling faintly. One day he would show them.

There was a tap on the door. Stirring himself from his reverie, Mr. Buddle slipped the copy of the Gem out of sight under his blotting-pad.

"Come in", he called.

The door opened. The youth who entered was golden-haired and cherubic of countenance. In his Slade blazer of mauve, piped with white, he looked the picture of innocence. He closed the door behind him.

"What is it, Meredith?" asked Mr. Buddle.

Meredith clasped his hands behind his back.

"I wondered, sir, whether you might very kindly let me have the paper which you confiscated in class this morning."

Mr. Buddle looked severe.

"Meredith, you know that anything confiscated in my class is

never returned till the end of term. I have often found you reading these periodicals when you should have been studying in class." His voice rose a trifle. "When you take your examinations, you will be questioned on Shakespeare and Chaucer, not on Martin Clifford."

Meredith raised his head. He looked thoughtful. It was Meredith's father who lent Mr. Buddle his volumes of Gems, but Mr. Meredith's son did not know that -- perhaps.

"Yes, sir, I know", exclaimed Meredith humbly. "But I promise that it won't happen again. I should very much like to have that copy of the Gem, if you would be so kind, on this occasion --"

A smile flickered momentarily over Mr. Buddle's face.

"You are incorrigible, Meredith, I sometimes fear. Well, perhaps just for this once --"

Meredith's blue eyes glowed with gratitude.

"Oh, thank you so much, sir. I'll never bring a Gem into class again."

"Very well, Meredith." Mr. Buddle's brow wrinkled in thought. "Now where did I put that periodical? Possibly I placed it in my desk in the form-room --"

"Oh, no, sir, you brought it away. You had it in your hand when you left the form-room. I watched it go --"

Mr. Buddle rubbed his chin.

"Now where did I place it? Ah, I think I remember. I think I

placed it under my blotting pad --"

He lifted the blotting-pad. There it was. The paper with the blue cover.

"You may take it, Meredith."

Under his form-master's gaze, Meredith took up the Gem. He stood, eyeing the paper affectionately.

"What is the title, by boy?" asked Mr. Buddle.

Meredith grinned.

"Tom Merry's Legion of Honour", sir."

"Ah!" Mr. Buddle nodded. "What is a Legion of Honour, Meredith?"

Meredith looked doubtful.

"It's a very old story, of course, sir. Boys who have done something special - an act of unselfishness, a brave deed, or something worthy, sir - they are invited to become members of Tom Merry's Legion of Honour. A sort of club, sir. Tom Merry started it. Redfern saved somebody's life, so he became a member." Meredith eyed his form-master a trifle sheepishly. "It sounds a bit smug, doesn't it, sir?"

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows.

"Smug? To be proud of one's sense of honour is never smug, I hope."

"Well --" Meredith shuffled a foot uncomfortably. "A bit old-fashioned, sir. Would that be a better way to put it, sir? They say the Victorians and the Edwardians were hypocrites, don't they, sir?"

Mr. Buddle shook his head wisely.

"Honour is never old-fashioned, Meredith, though I see your point of view." He sighed. "In this modern age, people tend to sneer at Edwardian and Victorian values, but those people are merely excusing themselves for their own licence. Honour is as important today as it ever was, Meredith. Never forget that."

"I won't, sir." Meredith was a little pink. "I see you have a bill on your desk about the Fair, sir. There's a Fair coming to the big meadow near the town, sir, for 4 days. I suppose there would be no harm in our going?"

Mr. Buddle smiled genially.

"So long as you behave yourselves as Slade boys should while you are there, I should think there would be no harm at all, Meredith. But don't waste too much of your money on it."

"Some of us would like to go, sir", said Meredith confidentially. "We can't go tomorrow because the Third Eleven has its first game of the season at home. But we haven't a game on Saturday, so we may go in force."

Mr. Buddle nodded, and Meredith took his leave.

Just about the time that Meredith was taking his leave and Mr. Buddle was making his way to the Headmaster's study for a chat, Mr. Fromo came out of the main doorway, and stood at the top of the broad flight of steps in the fading sunset.

Mr. Fromo was Housemaster at Slade. He was a brilliant scholar, taught the Classics to the Upper Forms, and was a first-class schoolmaster. Mr. Fromo was, at heart, a kindly man, but, though he was moderately popular with the senior boys, they tended to laugh at him behind his back.

He had a few little characteristics which could be irritating to those who came in contact with him. He loved the sound of his own voice - Irony of the Sixth had been heard to remark that Mrs. Fromo's main virtue as a wife for Mr. Fromo was that she was a good listener. Mr. Fromo was also opinionated, and liked to believe that his opinions carried great weight. His drawback was his sense of his own importance. Physically, he had an unusually large nose, which, when he was under stress of any sort, tended to glow like a ripe grape.

Mr. Fromo's attention, when he emerged from the School House, was centred on a little gathering of Slade boys at the School Gates. Parmint was there, - Parmint was the Lodgekeeper - and he appeared to be holding in his hand a large collection of leaflets of some kind. Just out in the road, beyond the gates, there stood a plump, florid gentleman who seemed to be talking volubly while he handed out circulars to boys who had gathered round about. Boys stood near, scanning the handbills.

Mr. Fromo stood for a few moments viewing the scene with a grim face. Anyone giving out handbills in the gates of Slade offended his sense of decorum.

A Slade prefect was coming up the steps, and Mr. Fromo spoke to him.

"What is going on over there at the gates, Scarlet?"

Scarlet of the Sixth, known to all and sundry as Pinky-Mi, due to his relationship to Mr. Scarlet, the Head of Slade, looked back, and smiled.

"It's a Mr. Tite, sir. He seems to be the proprietor of a travelling Fair which is being set up in Everslade. It's on till Saturday, I think." Pinky-Mi's smile broadened. "Mr. Tite is advertising his Fair, sir. He hopes that Slade fellows will turn up in droves, sir."

Mr. Fromo set his lips. His large nose quivered.

"They will do nothing of the sort, Scarlet. A travelling Fair is no place for Slade boys."

Pinky-Mi shrugged his shoulders.

"A Fair seems harmless, sir", he suggested.

"I am sure the Headmaster will not think so", said Mr. Fromo sharply.

Scarlet went into the House, and Mr. Fromo crossed the quadrangle. A couple of dozen boys moved a few yards away as Mr. Fromo approached, and then stood watching with interest.

"What is this, Parmint?" demanded Mr. Fromo.

The Lodge Keeper turned at the master's voice.

"This is Mr. Tite, sir", he

explained. "His Fair is opening on Farmer Vyse's meadow down in Everslade tomorrow until Saturday. He has given me some of his advertising bills - " he held out the heap of bills in his hand - "and he wants to make them available to boys of the school."

"Quite unheard of!" ejaculated Mr. Fromo. "You will hand those back to the gentleman, Parmint."

"If you say so, sir", murmured Parmint.

"I do say so, and the Headmaster would say so", said Mr. Fromo. There was a note of complaint in his voice. It was characteristic of Mr. Fromo that, when he spoke, there was often a note of complaint in his voice.

Dutifully, Parmint handed the pile of bills to Mr. Tite. Mr. Tite took them reluctantly, and he eyed Mr. Fromo.

"You are the Principal of this seat of learning, my dear sir?" he enquired.

"I am the Housemaster. You are wasting your time, Mr. - er -."

"Tite, sir!" said that worthy. "Josiah Tite. My Fair, my dear sir, is world-famous. Rides and entertainments of a high class - all perfectly safe and inspected by the authorities every season. Certain of our sideshows are highly instructive."

Mr. Fromo nodded.

"I am certain that your Fair is attractive for those who care for that class of entertainment. But, in this case -"

"I hope that the boys of this seat of learning will come along in their hundreds", said Mr. Tite.

"Perhaps you, yourself, my dear sir - a free pass for you on every ride -- "

Mr. Fromo held up his hand.

"Please say no more, Mr. Tite. Slade boys will not be permitted to attend. The Headmaster would disapprove. Good day to you. "

Mr. Fromo turned away, and walked in state towards the House. Parmint grinned ruefully at Mr. Tite.

"And that's that!" he murmured.

"Sure you can't distribute some of these?" asked Mr. Tite.

"Worth five bob to you, if you would," he added persuasively.

Parmint's grin widened.

"Sorry. My job's worth more than five bob", he assured the proprietor of the World-Famous Fair.

Mr. Fromo tapped on the door of the Headmaster's study in Masters' Corridor. He waited.

"Come in", came the voice of the Head of Slade.

Mr. Fromo entered. In his hand was one of the small bills advertising Tite's World-Famous Fair.

The Headmaster was sitting behind his desk, and Mr. Buddle was occupying a leather armchair near by. Mr. Buddle rose to his feet politely as Mr. Fromo entered.

"I did not know you were in

conference, Headmaster - but the matter is important, so --" Mr. Fromo glanced meaningfully at Mr. Buddle.

"I will leave you", said Mr. Buddle at once.

"No, no, Mr. Buddle." Mr. Scarlet waved a large hand. All the physical features of the Slade Headmaster were large. "I take it that you do not wish to see me in private, Mr. Fromo?"

"Not at all, Headmaster." Mr. Fromo looked gloomy. "I have taken the step of dealing with a man who was distributing circulars to Slade boys at the school gates. He was asking Parmint to assist him. I told Parmint that you would disapprove, Headmaster."

"Undoubtedly! What was the object of the circular? It is most impertinent of anyone to attempt to deliver literature in our quadrangle."

Mr. Fromo placed the handbill on the desk before Mr. Scarlet, and waited. Mr. Scarlet scanned the garish sheet.

He read aloud: "World-Famous Fair. Dodgem Cars, Helter Skelter, Flip-Flap, Whip. Hm! Stalls, side-shows. See you in Tite's".

The Headmaster handed the bill to Mr. Buddle who scanned it in his turn.

"I have seen one of these earlier today", confessed Mr. Buddle. "One of them was delivered inside my morning paper. Maybe the newsagent is co-operating, or the enterprising Mr. Tite may have tipped the delivery boy."

Mr. Buddle replaced the bill

on the desk, and seated himself again in the armchair.

Mr. Fromo said: "The proprietor of the Fair was at our gates. I told him that Fairs were not for Slade boys. I am sure I did right in your view, Headmaster".

Mr. Scarlet rubbed his ear.

"You feel this Fair should be put out of bounds, Mr. Fromo? The only days Slade boys would be able to attend would be on the half-holidays --" He paused, and glanced at Mr. Buddle. "What is your view, Mr. Buddle? A Fair seems innocuous enough, perhaps, but --"

Mr. Buddle smiled faintly.

"I would think it quite harmless, Headmaster."

"My view entirely", said Mr. Scarlet. "You think not, Mr. Fromo? I expect that most of us went to Fairs in our youth."

Mr. Fromo's nose took on its ripe grape hue.

"As you ask me, Headmaster, I think it would be most undersirable. See that item?" He bent over the bill and stabbed at the item with his forefinger. "The tattooed lady. It sounds most improper. And look at that final line - 'See You In Tite's!'. That shows the worth of the entire entertainment."

Mr. Scarlet looked puzzled, and Mr. Buddle passed a hand over his mouth to hide a fleeting smile.

Mr. Scarlet said, slowly: "I do not quite follow you, Mr. Fromo. It seems that Tite is the name of the proprietor of the Fair.

Surely that line is merely the equivalent of, say, 'See you in Woolworth's'?"

"It is innuendo, Headmaster - most offensive innuendo."

Mr. Scarlet coughed. He said a little dubiously:

"I like our boys to join in some of the affairs of our little neighbouring town. It makes for amicable relations between the college and the town's folk. We are, after all, an important section of the community. However, if you feel --"

Mr. Fromo struck a pose, possibly akin to Daniel in the lions' den.

"Headmaster, only the roughest of town boys would attend a Fair of this class. If our boys, in Slade uniform, are there, we run the risk of a fight between the two groups. A riot, Headmaster! A fracas!"

"You think that the Fair should be put out of bounds for Slade boys, Mr. Fromo?"

"I have strong feelings on the subject, Headmaster."

"Very well. The Fair shall be put out of bounds", said Mr. Scarlet, with the air of someone saying 'Anything for a quiet life'. He glanced at Mr. Buddle. "You agree with me, Mr. Buddle?"

"Undoubtedly, Headmaster! My personal view is that a Fair like this is harmless enough, but as Mr. Fromo, who is your Senior staff member, thinks otherwise, then his view must be respected."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Scarlet, "I will place a notice on the board to the effect that the Fair is out of

bounds. Thank you for bringing the matter to my notice, Mr. Fromo."

"You have relieved my mind, Headmaster," said Mr. Fromo. He bowed to his chief, nodded to Mr. Buddle, and took his departure.

On Wednesday morning a notice appeared on the board in the Main Hall. It read as follows:

A Fair is being held in Farmer Vyse's meadow in Everslade on the last four days of this week. This Fair is strictly Out of Bounds for all Slade boys.

Signed

R. SCARLET (Headmaster)

The juniors, almost to a man, were deeply incensed. Even the lofty seniors felt that it was altogether too high-handed.

"What on earth's the harm in a Fair?" demanded Carslake of the Fifth. And the reply, from all and sundry, was the same. No harm at all. That afternoon most of the Fifth and Sixth would be travelling to Brent to see the First Eleven in action in their opening Soccer game of the season, so they were not much concerned. But it was the principle of the thing. If any Slade man, senior or junior, wanted to go to a Fair - well, why shouldn't he?

The juniors were more vociferous. Most vociferous of the lot was Meredith. After all, he had sounded his form-master on the subject, and knew that Mr. Buddle had nothing against a Fair.

Seated under the Mulberry tree in Slade's famous Mulberry Walk, Meredith spoke with a deep sense of grievance to his closest friends, Pilgrim and Garmansway, plus a few others.

"The Gump had no objection", said Meredith. "I spoke to him about it yesterday, and he said he hoped we should enjoy ourselves. The man to blame is old Fromo."

The rest agreed that it was, indeed, "old Fromo", who was the villain of the piece.

"You should have seen him when Parmint was asked to give out bills to the boys, advertising the Fair", confided Hunwick. "He threw his weight about as though he were the Head himself."

"Old Pink wouldn't have bothered", commented Shovel, thus disrespectfully referring to the Head of Slade. "It's Fromo who persuaded him that there's something awful about a nice little Fair."

"Well, I know one thing", said Meredith, rising to his feet. "I'm going next Saturday, Fromo or no Fromo."

"Do you want to be turfed out of Slade?" asked Pilgrim drily. "Don't talk rot."

Meredith sniffed.

"If we can persuade a crowd of fellows to go with us we shall be safe enough. They can't turf out a whole form. It would leave too many vacancies at Slade."

"I wouldn't bank on it", said Pilgrim.

"Well, I'm going, for one", said Meredith obstinately. His voice was quite penetrating in his indignation.

"Look who's coming", said someone in the group.

The someone was Mr. Fromo

himself. He had crossed to the Mulberry Walk from his house - the Housemaster had his own private dwelling adjoining the main school buildings - and he had been obscured by the tree until he rounded it. They wondered how much he might have heard.

"Where are you boys going?" demanded Mr. Fromo. He cast a suspicious look over the little band.

"We have a match on in Everslade this afternoon", explained Pilgrim. "We shall be leaving very soon." He glanced up at the clock in the tower.

"I hope that none of you is thinking of going to the Fair in Everslade", said Mr. Fromo sternly. "You all know that the place has been placed out of bounds by the Headmaster."

"I told you, sir, we're playing football in Everslade this afternoon", said Pilgrim.

"Make sure you do nothing else", exclaimed Mr. Fromo. ("The cheek of the man to give orders to the Gump's boys", as Meredith was to comment later.) Mr. Fromo went on: "I thought I heard you, Meredith, say something like that you were going in any case. What did that mean?"

Meredith stared at him resentfully.

"It isn't fair to ask me a question like that, sir. I expect I meant that I should go to watch the match in Everslade today, even if I were not playing. I didn't know you were listening, sir."

Mr. Fromo compressed his lips.

"I was not listening, Meredith. Your voice carried. No person in the vicinity could help hearing what you said." His angry glance swept the juniors. "I warn you, that is all, that if any boy should flout the Headmaster's decree, he would be gated for every half-holiday this term. As an extreme measure, the ringleader would risk being expelled from Slade. Remember my words."

Mr. Fromo strode away.

That Wednesday evening, soon after six, there was a tap on Mr. Buddle's study door. He was busy marking English exercises, and looked up irritably.

The door opened, and Meredith entered. He looked as cherubic and innocent as ever.

Mr. Buddle put down his red ink pen.

"What is it this time, Meredith? Surely you should be at your evening preparation."

"Oh, we've finished that, sir. We're just going to have an hour in the Day Room. I wanted to ask your advice, sir."

"Very well. What is the trouble?"

"Well, sir --" Meredith sounded confidential. "We've been playing a school team in Everslade this afternoon, sir. It was a good game."

Mr. Buddle's eyes twinkled.

"I hope you won."

"Oh, yes, sir, we won - 3-2, sir. But when we were changing in our dressing-room after the game, a chap came round to see us. Do you remember that fellow, Shane, who came to Slade about three weeks ago? He was a guest of yours, sir - you said he had performed a service for you. We liked him, sir, and, if you remember, he slept in a vacant bed in our dormitory."

Mr. Buddle nodded with interest.

"I remember Shane very well, Meredith. So you have met him again. What about him?"

"Well, sir, he and one or two of his friends were watching our game in Everslade. After the match he came round to see us, and then we all had tea together in a cafe. He belongs to a troop - a kind of a club, sir - attached to the church he attends. They call themselves the Curlews." Meredith's eyes glistened.

Mr. Buddle smiled.

"Yes, I've heard about their Curlews, Meredith."

Meredith slid a hand into his blazer pocket.

"They've got a 'do' on, on Saturday, sir. A kind of a fete in aid of charity. There's a white elephant sale - that's a sale of presents you don't want", he explained. "And all sorts of stalls - guessing weights, a lucky arrow affair, a refreshment stall, a garden stall - all kinds of things, sir. All in aid of doing something special for the elderly people in Everslade when Christmas comes. They do it every year, sir - a kind of Curlew fete. They made twenty pounds last

year."

"A worthy cause, Meredith", said Mr. Buddle thoughtfully. He remembered Conrad Shane well. Only a few weeks earlier he had met that youth, and had wondered whether Shane was all that he seemed to be. Happily, Mr. Buddle had given Shane the benefit of any doubt.

"Well, sir," continued Meredith. "Shane asked me if some of us would like to go along and lend them a hand on Saturday. We haven't any football on that day, and quite a few of us would like to go. Would there be any objection, sir?"

"It sounds a useful way of spending a half-holiday, Meredith." Mr. Buddle thought for a moment. "Where is the little party being held?"

"They have a hall beside St. Mary's Church, sir."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"I know it. I was a guest there myself recently." He smiled reminiscently.

"Well, sir, fun and games in the hall, and the vicar - the Rev. Hatch, sir - is letting them use the vicarage garden which adjoins the hall, if the weather is fine." He paused. "The vicar will be there some of the time, and they have club officers." He paused. He said, modestly: "I thought I'd better ask you first, sir."

"Very right and proper", said Mr. Buddle, in approval. "The Curlew club is excellent for the town boys. Slade boys could not attend their meetings in the week

obviously, but if you like to spend your Saturday half-holiday there - and you have no sports fixture on that day - then you have my full approval."

"Thank you, sir. Then we shall go. I'll get some of the fellows to go with me. We might all be able to help."

Mr. Buddle took up his red ink pen again.

"Splendid, Meredith. Remember me to Shane", he said, pleasantly.

"I'll do that, sir."

As Meredith walked down the corridor a minute later there was a guileless smile on his face.

Saturday dawned bright and sunny. Devonshire in the autumn is a place where "parting summer's lingering blooms delayed", though Goldsmith had another place in mind when he made the observation.

The annoyance over the banning of Tite's World Famous Fair had subsided somewhat in the two previous days. Slade boys, in any case, would have been unable to visit Everslade on a Thursday or a Friday.

It was not forgotten. The sound of the music from the Fair was carried through the silent and still autumn atmosphere to the boys seated in class in the afternoons. The music was faint from nearly a couple of miles distant, but it sounded pleasant and meant that the existence of the Fair was not forgotten.

On Saturday the grumbling was resumed. Only the First Eleven had a fixture, this time at home, and

there would be no lack of spectators. Had the Fair not been out of bounds there is no doubt that the mauve and white of Slade would have been well in evidence among the Fair's attractions. So, if only mildly, the annoyance over the banning of the Fair surfaced again on the Saturday morning.

Mr. Fromo was generally blamed for the ban. He did not improve matters by reminding a good many juniors, after classes ended that morning, that the Fair was out of bounds for all Sladeians.

Oddly enough, quite a number of Lower Fourth juniors boasted that they were going to the Fair, and, among the juniors at least, admiring glances were cast in their direction.

About two o'clock a dozen Lower Fourth Formers gathered in the quadrangle with their bicycles.

Tammadge, also of the Lower Fourth, approached the group. His little currant eyes were inquisitive.

"Where are you chaps going?" he asked several of them.

And the reply was "Ask Meredith! He's the organiser!" Amid a general chuckle. So Tammadge asked Meredith.

Meredith patted him on the head.

"We're going to the Fair, Tam. Would you like to come with us."

Tammadge shook his head vigorously.

"No, thanks. I'm not tired of Slade, if you are."

Meredith patted Tammadge's untidy mop of hair again.

"Wise lad! If anyone asks

you where we've gone, you can tell them. We've gone to the Fair in the pride of the morning, like the song says. Only it's afternoon."

With a waving of hands and a whirr of machines, the bicycle cavalcade, led by Meredith, peddled away through the gates.

Tammadge made his way into the House. In the main hall Mr. Fromo was standing in conversation with Mr. Greenleaf, the maths' master. Mr. Fromo spotted Tammadge. With a word of farewell to Mr. Greenleaf, Mr. Fromo crossed the hall, and called to Tammadge.

"Boy! - Yes - you - what's your name?"

Tammadge came to a full stop. He waited.

Mr. Fromo stood looking down at Tammadge.

"You're one of Mr. Buddle's boys, aren't you?"

"I'm Tammadge, sir. Yes, I'm in the Lower Fourth, sir."

Mr. Fromo eyed Tammadge with disapproval.

"You are untidy, Tammadge. In fact, you are grubby. If you are planning to leave the school precincts this afternoon, you will make yourself more presentable first."

"Oh, yes, sir. I don't suppose I shall go out. I might do a little private study, sir", answered Tammadge primly.

Mr. Fromo wrinkled his large nose. Tammadge had that effect on people.

"I saw a large crowd of your form-fellows going out on bicycles. Is there a game of football being played this afternoon?"

"Only a First Eleven game, sir. No Second or Third Eleven games this afternoon."

Mr. Fromo eyed him shrewdly.

"And are your form-fellows on their bicycles going to watch the First Eleven play?" demanded Mr. Fromo.

"Oh, no, sir." Tammadge shook his head knowingly. "They're going to the Fair --" He clapped a hand realistically over his mouth. "Oh, dear, I shouldn't have said that. I don't really know where they've gone, sir."

Mr. Fromo's eyes glinted.

"You are aware, Tammadge, that your Headmaster has placed the Fair in Everslade out of bounds."

"Yes, sir, I know, sir."

"Yet", said Mr. Fromo severely, "you tell me that a number of your friends have gone to the Fair. Are you sure of what you say?"

"Well, they said they were going", said Tammadge, a little peevishly. "You won't let anyone know that I happened to mention it to you, will you, sir? It slipped out."

"And who is the ringleader of that excursion?" demanded Mr. Fromo.

"I don't know. It seemed as though Meredith arranged it all, sir --"

"I suspected it", ejaculated Mr. Fromo.

"Did you, sir? Is that all, sir? May I go?"

"Take yourself off, Tammadge", ordered Mr. Fromo. "Spend half an hour in taking a bath and brushing your blazer."

Tammadge took himself off. There was a faint grin on his face.

Mr. Fromo stood in deep thought for a few moments. Then he made his way to Mr. Buddle's study on Masters' Corridor. He found Mr. Buddle at home.

Mr. Buddle had been washing his hands at his ablution bowl, and he was using a towel when Mr. Fromo blew in.

"I am glad to find that you have not gone out, Mr. Buddle", said Mr. Fromo. "I thought the bright weather might have tempted you."

"I am going out shortly", replied Mr. Buddle, disposing of his towel. "Can I help you in some way?" He looked curiously at the House-master.

"I have reason to believe that a number of your boys are attending the Fair", said Mr. Fromo, coming to the point at once.

Mr. Buddle stared at him.

"The Fair? What Fair?" he asked.

"There is a Fair on Farmer Vyse's meadow in Everslade. You may recall that the Headmaster placed it out of bounds for all Slade boys."

"Oh, that Fair!" exclaimed Mr. Buddle. "I had forgotten it. I

thought it was over."

"It finishes today, and I suspect that a number of your boys are there at this very moment, in spite of Mr. Scarlet's decree."

Mr. Fromo folded his arms and waited.

Mr. Buddle frowned with annoyance. He said forcefully: "I do not believe for one moment that any boys in my Form would do anything so stupid and reckless."

"I hope you are right, but I fear not", said Mr. Fromo with icy dignity. "You might think it a sound plan to go down into Everslade, and see for yourself, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle answered frostily.

"I do not think it a good plan at all, sir. I do not believe for one moment that any Lower Fourth boy has gone to the Fair. If, as you say, you have suspicions, then why do you not go yourself to the Fair, Mr. Fromo?"

Mr. Fromo drew himself up to his full height. He looked deeply offended.

"In my position, I can hardly spend the afternoon looking round a fairground, Mr. Buddle - and, as I said, the suspected boys are in your Form."

"Who are the suspected boys, Mr. Fromo?"

Mr. Fromo waved a hand in the air.

"Meredith - he seems to be the leader - and Pilgrim, - I saw a number of them in the quadrangle with their bicycles. I know that Meredith and others were incensed

when the Headmaster banned the Fair --."

"Possibly!" Mr. Buddle spoke disdainfully. "But that they would risk severe punishment by defying the order of the Headmaster is quite ridiculous. I will question them, when they return, but that is all. I have no intention of spending the afternoon on a fairground when I am quite sure they are not there."

Mr. Fromo's nose shone with annoyance.

"You surprise me, Mr. Buddle. You surprise me very much. Then I must find a prefect and send him --"

"You will do as you think fit, Mr. Fromo", agreed Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Fromo left the study, closing the door forcefully behind him.

Mr. Buddle stood in thought. In spite of what he had said, he was perturbed. Ten minutes later he put on his hat. He walked down to Everslade, and to the meadow where joyful music was proclaiming that a Fair was in progress. He strolled through the Fairground, but, to his relief, he saw no sign of any Slade boy in that forbidden place.

Meanwhile, Mr. Fromo, frustrated and annoyed, went in search of a prefect who might be sent to cast an eye over the Fair. With the First Eleven playing a football fixture that afternoon, it was not easy to find a prefect in the House. But, just as he had given up hope, he came on Tomms who had not been selected for the game and was improving the shining hour with

a novel in his study.

Tomms rose to his feet as Mr. Fromo looked in.

"I would be obliged if you would do me a service, Tomms", said Mr. Fromo.

"Yes, sir?"

"Thank you, Tomms. You have a bicycle, perhaps --"

"Yes, sir, I have a cycle."

"Good!" Mr. Fromo picked his words carefully. "You are aware that there is a Fair in Everslade today. I wish you to go to the Fair."

Tomms looked surprised.

"You wish me to go to the Fair, sir? But it's out of bounds, sir - the Head's orders --"

"Quite!" Mr. Fromo nodded genially. "There is a rumour in the school that Slade boys are at that Fair this afternoon. You will go to that Fair, and bring back to the school any Slade boys whom you may find there."

Tomms looked unhappy.

"Isn't it a waste of time, sir. Chaps said things when the ban was first announced, but they were only blowing off their mouths. I don't believe any Slade man would ignore the Head's order --"

"I hope you are right, Tomms, but we must make certain. Make your way to the Fair, and report to me when you return."

"Very well, sir", said Tomms reluctantly. It was distasteful to him, but, as a prefect, he could not refuse the request. He looked at his watch. "It's twenty past three now,

sir. Shall I get my tea in Everslade, sir --"

"I shall rely on you to act sensibly", replied Mr. Fromo. "Do not waste time, and report to me when you return."

So Tomms went down into Everslade. He went to the Fair. As he expected, he saw no sign of any Slade boy there. Tomms had a ride on the Ghost Train, and won a coconut at a shy. He wasn't a good fieldsman on the cricket field for nothing. He went on into the town and had tea in a cafe. Then, with a shrug of the shoulders - after all, he had nothing to report - he went to the cinema in the town.

The Lower Fourth came in just before the gates of Slade were closed for the night at 6.30. Sunset was long past, and the shadows were deepening.

There were a couple of dozen of them, plus a scattering from other junior Forms - even one or two Fifth Formers came in at the same time - wheeling their bicycles and chattering away happily. At the cycle racks there was a buzz of conversation. With one exception, all were wearing the mauve and white blazers of Slade. The exception was a dark-haired youngster in a plain navy blue blazer, grey slacks, and a plain navy blue cap.

As they left the racks, someone murmured:

"Look out. Here comes Fromo."

The Housemaster was

descending the steps in front of the School House. He had waited in vain for the return of Tomms. And he had been awaiting the return of Mr. Buddle's boys. Now he approached them with stately dignity.

He called out:

"Meredith."

Meredith of the golden hair detached himself from the group. He moved towards Mr. Fromo.

"Here, sir!"

Mr. Fromo spoke sternly.

"So you have returned, Meredith."

"Yes, sir." Innocent eyes were raised to the Housemaster. "We were in before the gates were locked, sir."

"I am aware of that, Meredith." Mr. Fromo paused. Then came the hundred pound question. "Where have you been this afternoon, Meredith?"

The answer came - hesitantly - with well-timed effect.

"I've been to a Fair, sir."

Mr. Fromo drew a deep breath. He stared hard at the guileless face.

"Can I believe my ears, Meredith?"

Meredith did not answer that one. It was clearly a rhetorical question, requiring no answer.

Mr. Fromo said, severely:

"You realise that you will be

severely punished for this, Meredith? " Mr. Fromo looked over the crowd which had swollen considerably in numbers now. All looked serious, though there was lurking merriment on some faces which puzzled Mr. Fromo a little.

"We've all been with Meredith, sir", came the chorus. The boy in the plain blazer looked surprised, and a trifle dubious.

"Who is this boy?" demanded Mr. Fromo, indicating the odd man out.

"His name is Shane, sir", volunteered Pilgrim. "Mr. Buddle knows him, sir. He's our guest for the next hour."

Mr. Fromo's eyes roamed over the little crowd in the gathering gloom of the autumn evening. He transferred his gaze to Meredith.

"I know that you are the ring-leader in this afternoon's outrage, Meredith. You will follow me."

"May I say something, sir?" asked Meredith.

"You will say nothing. You will follow me to the Headmaster."

Mr. Fromo turned away.

"May we come, too, sir? We were all together this afternoon." It was Pilgrim calling out, and others echoed him. There was an animated buzz of voices.

Mr. Fromo looked back.

"You will all be dealt with, never fear. But first - follow me Meredith."

Mr. Fromo strode away, and Meredith followed him. The little

crowd watched them go.

In Masters' Corridor, with Meredith close behind him, Mr. Fromo stopped before the door of Mr. Scarlet's study. He tapped, and a deep voice bade him enter.

He entered. Meredith followed him. In the august presence of the Principal of Slade, Meredith looked nervous.

Mr. Scarlet, seated at his desk, looked in surprise from the Housemaster to the boy. He eyed Mr. Fromo in polite enquiry.

"I regret to trouble you, Headmaster", said Mr. Fromo. "This boy is guilty of a serious fault, and he has led others into wrong-doing." Mr. Scarlet turned a horrified frown on Meredith.

Mr. Fromo went on: "You, Headmaster, placed out of school bounds a common Fair which has been held this week in Everslade. Today is the last day of that Fair. This boy, and some others, have disregarded your ruling, and have been to that Fair this very afternoon."

Meredith's mouth opened in well-feigned surprise. Mr. Scarlet rose to his feet. His expression was alarming.

"You are aware, Meredith, that you merit expulsion from Slade for such an offence". The Headmaster gazed down at the shattered youth.

Meredith clasped his hands behind his back. He tried to control a tremor in his voice.

"Mr. Fromo is mistaken, sir."

Mr. Fromo turned on him in

amazement.

"Mistaken! How dare you speak so brazenly. When I asked you, ten minutes ago, in the quadrangle, where you had been this afternoon, you replied, with reckless impudence, that you had been to the Fair."

Meredith looked at him innocently.

"Oh, no, sir. You are mistaken. I did not say that I had been to the Fair. I said that I had been to a Fair."

"A Fair!" echoed Mr. Fromo. And Mr. Scarlet repeated, parrot-like: "A Fair!"

"Yes, sir. A Fair! This Fair!"

He drew a handbill from his pocket and held it out to his Headmaster.

Mr. Scarlet took it, puzzlement evident in his face. He scanned the bill. It read:

HEIGH-HO, COME TO OUR OIDE ENGLISH  
FAYRE!

Saturday afternoon, from 2 till 6. The Curlew Club's Grand AUTUMN FAYRE in St. Mary's Church Hall. White Elephant stall, Competitions. Lucky Arrow. Bottle sale. Lots of amusement. Dainty teas served in the Vicarage Garden, if fine, by kind permission of the Rev. P. Hatch. In aid of the Curlew Fund to provide happiness and cheer for the poor and elderly of Everslade and district this coming Christmas. Come in your thousands and Help the Cause.

COME TO OUR FAYRE

There was an extraordinary expression on Mr. Scarlet's face as he read the bill. In silence he passed it across to Mr. Fromo.

As Mr. Fromo read it, the colour mounted into his face. His large nose was almost puce.

"What is this nonsense?" burst out Mr. Fromo.

Meredith was gazing at the carpet.

"That's the Fayre we all went to this afternoon, sir. That boy you spoke to out in the quad. is one of the Curlews. He invited us to help the cause. I didn't know there was any harm in it, sir. I asked our Form-master about it on Wednesday evening. Mr. Buddle said it was all right for us to go."

"I don't believe it. This is sheer evasion", breathed Mr. Fromo. He looked the picture of embarrassment.

"Who printed this sheet?" asked Mr. Scarlet. "It has been done on a duplicating machine."

"Yes, sir." Meredith nodded. We had been invited by one of the boys - a chap named Conrad Shane - he came round to see us after a football match on Wednesday. I suggested this kind of advertisement, sir. The boys of the Curlew Club ran off hundreds of them and delivered them round the town. One of the Curlew leaders typed it out for them, and the boys duplicated it on the Church machine."

Mr. Fromo stood in silence. Mr. Scarlet coughed. He said, at last: "You say that your Form Master knew of this function, Meredith, and gave you permission to go?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think, Mr. Fromo", said Mr. Scarlet mildly, "that we might have a word with Mr. Buddle. Perhaps he is in his study now."

"As you think best, Head-

master", said Mr. Fromo icily.

Mr. Scarlet crossed his study, and went out, followed by Mr. Fromo and the serious Meredith. Down the corridor, Mr. Scarlet tapped on Mr. Buddle's door, and a voice called out from within.

Mr. Scarlet opened the door, and entered. Mr. Fromo and Meredith followed.

Mr. Buddle, surprised at the invasion, had risen hastily from his arm-chair.

"Forgive us for disturbing you, Mr. Buddle", began Mr. Scarlet.

"I hope, Headmaster, that this boy of my Form is not in trouble." Mr. Buddle cast a suspicious look at Meredith.

"I hope not, Mr. Buddle", Mr. Scarlet waved away the chair which Mr. Buddle offered him. "Mr. Fromo has reason to believe that a number of boys, led by Meredith, attended a Fair which has been operating in Eversalde. You will recall that I placed that Fair out of bounds."

Mr. Buddle looked troubled. He cast a hasty glance in Meredith's direction. Mr. Fromo stood, just inside the doorway, with his arms folded and his nose glowing.

Mr. Scarlet went on: "Meredith claims that he and his friends did not break any school rule, but that they were, in fact, at a Church Fayre or Bazaar which you had given them permission to attend."

Mr. Buddle looked puzzled.

"A Church Fayre - I do not recall, Headmaster --"

Mr. Fromo broke in.

"So you did not give any such permission, Mr. Buddle? I thought as much."

Solemnly Mr. Scarlett handed to Mr. Buddle the duplicated handbill, and Mr. Buddle gazed at it.

"Heigh-Ho, Come to our Olde English Fayre", read out Mr. Buddle. Understanding came to him suddenly. He turned to Meredith. "Is this the gathering to which you were invited by the boy, Shane?" he demanded. "You did not tell me it was called a Fayre, Meredith."

Meredith spoke eagerly. His words tumbled out.

"You remember, sir. I came to you about it on Wednesday evening, sir. You said it sounded like a good cause. We went, sir - all the team, at first. Then, once the Fayre started in the Church Hall, a lot of us went out into the streets and persuaded people to Come to the Fayre. Oh, we were very persuasive. We must have got about 50 Slade fellows there before it was over - and heaps of grown-ups and local people, too." His enthusiasm was growing. "Shannon of the Sixth came in and took photographs - he's going to put an account of it in the school magazine. Mr. Lidbetter came in, sir --"

Mr. Scarlet held up his hand, and the voluble Meredith was cut short - for the moment.

"Mr. Lidbetter? Our Art Master, do you mean? You did not tell me that a Slade master was

present. "

"Yes, sir - oh, yes, sir. Mr. Lidbetter was there, and Mr. Crathie, too. They were having a walk together, and we persuaded them both to come to the Fayre. Luckily Mr. Lidbetter had just bought a new sketching block. He ran his own stall. "

"He ran his own stall", echoed Mr. Scarlet, incredulously.

"Yes, sir. " Meredith's innocent face was glowing with excitement. "He did lightning one-minute sketches of crowds of people at two shillings a time. He had a long queue waiting. He made pounds and pounds for the cause. And Mr. Crathie won a cake for guessing its weight. Any amount of our fellows helped with the different entertainments, sir. Garmansway and Pilgrim and Shovel helped with the teas, when they opened up in the Vicarage garden. Nearly everybody had a dainty tea - that's what they called them, sir - at dozens of little card tables. The teas made a real packet for the cause. "

Once again Mr. Scarlet held up a hand. He looked bewildered as well he might. But Meredith rattled on:

"Oh, sir, it was fine, sir, and the Curlews are splendid chaps. Shovel dropped a pat of butter, as he served teas to Lady Plum and her daughter. The pat of butter landed on the toe of Lady Plum's shoe, sir, as she sat with her legs crossed. Shovel went down on his knees and cleaned off the butter with his handkerchief - and how Lady Plum laughed! You know, sir - Lady Plum

from the Manor House. She gave Shovel a £5 note - for the Cause, sir. She told him he was a credit to Slade, and that Slade, is the best school in the world, sir -- "

He broke off. At last he seemed overcome by his own temerity.

Silence fell. Mr. Scarlet appeared, for once, to be at a loss for words. Mr. Fromo's colour was high, but his face was expressionless. Mr. Buddle looked embarrassed. Meredith raised his head and gazed at the ceiling.

The telephone rang.

The noise of the bell startled everybody in the study. Mr. Buddle stood in uncertainty for a few seconds. Then, at a nod from the Headmaster, Mr. Buddle moved over to his desk, and lifted the instrument.

"Slade College! Buddle speaking!" A pause. An extraordinary look came over Mr. Buddle's features. He went on: "Mr. Hatch! Just a moment, Mr. Hatch --" He placed a hand over the receiver, and addressed the Headmaster. "It is the Rev. Hatch, the Vicar of St. Mary's, Headmaster. Possibly he will confirm --" He addressed the telephone again. "Go ahead, my dear friend." A pause. "How very-- Yes, I am so pleased." A pause. "How very gratifying --" A long pause. The tones of the Rev. Hatch could be heard in the room, but muffled to those watching Mr. Buddle. "Over £70? How wonderful!" A pause. Then Mr. Buddle said into the mouthpiece: "Mr. Hatch, our Headmaster, Mr. Scarlet, is with

me at this moment. Would you repeat to him --? "

Mr. Buddle looked across at the listening Head of Slade.

"Headmaster. The Rev. Hatch has telephoned to express his thanks for what Slade boys and some Slade masters did for charity at the Church Fayre this afternoon. He would like to express those thanks to you personally. Would you speak to him --? "

In silence Mr. Scarlet took the telephone. He dropped into Mr. Buddle's chair at the desk. He spoke to the Rev. Hatch and the Rev. Hatch spoke to him. They chatted for over three minutes. As the seconds ticked by, a very pleased expression rooted itself in the Headmaster's face. The conversation was interspersed with comments from him: "How kind of you to say so!" "I am so very gratified!" "I am delighted, Mr. Hatch..." And then "Good-bye, my dear Mr. Hatch. Thank you so much for your courtesy and thoughtfulness."

The Headmaster rang off. He turned to Mr. Fromo, and repeated what he had heard over the telephone.

It was the anti-climax of the century.

The Headmaster had gone - pleased, smiling, and, perhaps, a little amused. Mr. Fromo had gone, embarrassed and quiet.

Meredith remained. He had his hands behind his back, and was awaiting dismissal.

Mr. Buddle sat in silence

in his armchair, his eyes on the innocent specimen of boyhood standing before him. Under the gaze of his Form-master, the colour rose in Meredith's cheeks.

"Is there anything else, sir?" ventured Meredith.

Mr. Buddle spoke at last, very quietly.

"My friend, the Rev. Hatch, is pleased with the way Slade boys helped the Curlew Club at his Church Hall this afternoon. It seems that they took over £70, three times what they have taken for their good cause in past years. Mr. Hatch is delighted. Our Headmaster is glad that Slade boys worked in so good a cause, and were a credit to their school."

Meredith smiled self-consciously.

"I'm so pleased, sir. We enjoyed it all so much. Conrad Shane came back with us. He's going to have supper with us before he goes home. He will get away about eight. Can I bring him along to see you, sir? He'd love to see you again."

"I should like to see Shane again", said Mr. Buddle. "A promising lad. I will come along to the Day Room shortly."

"I'll tell him that, sir. Thank you, sir. May I go now, sir?"

"Not for a few moments, Meredith." Mr. Buddle eyed his fair-haired pupil thoughtfully for a few silent seconds. He went on: "I hope, Meredith, that you do not feel proud of the embarrassment you caused Mr. Fromo this evening. It seems to me that you set out deliberately to make a fool of Mr.

Fromo."

There was a dogged expression on the boy's face.

"I didn't make a fool of him, sir. He made a fool of himself."

"Do not dare, in my presence, to speak in those terms of a Slade senior master, Meredith", said Mr. Buddle very sternly.

"I'm sorry, sir, but Mr. Fromo was suspicious of us unjustly, sir. When the Head first put up his notice banning the Everslade Fair, we resented it a bit. We talked wildly and were silly, but we didn't mean to break the Head's orders, sir. No other master would have taken any notice of it. You wouldn't sir. But he did. He suspected us, and watched us, and --"

Mr. Buddle held up a hand.

"That's enough! When Shane invited you to take part in that little function at their Church Hall, was it originally called a Fayre?"

A smile flickered over Meredith's face, and Mr. Buddle said sharply: "Don't smirk, Meredith!"

"No sir. It wasn't called a Fayre at first. I suggested it -- and someone else had the idea of running off handbills on their own duplicating machine. It helped towards the success of it all."

"That would have been excellent, had your motives been beyond reproach, Meredith, but I suspect that you set a little trap in the hope that Mr. Fromo would fall into it."

"Yes, sir -- and he did fall into it", said Meredith, sullenly.

"Yes", agreed Mr. Buddle quietly. "He fell into your trap, and now you are glorying in his embarrassment. You will go away and laugh and jeer about it among your friends."

Meredith did not speak.

"Meredith, I am sure your father would not approve of such conduct. You are at Slade to learn many things. One of the most important of those many things to learn is to be a gentleman. A gentleman does not find pleasure in making a fool of a man old enough to be his father - a man like Mr. Fromo who has nothing but your welfare at heart. Your conduct today was not that of a gentleman, Meredith."

Still the boy stood in silence. He looked uncomfortable under the searching gaze of his master.

Mr. Buddle went on: "I read a story once, Meredith. A lad who was sound at heart and, normally, honourable - one such as yourself. This boy took a photograph of an unpopular master who was, apparently, listening at a door to a private conversation. That boy used the snapshot in a form of blackmail over the master. In the end, the boy's better nature won, and he apologised to the master."

Meredith gave a little uneasy chuckle.

"Oh, sir, there was a story like that in the Gem. It was Manners, one of the best chaps normally. I think the master was Mr. Selby."

Afterwards, Manners apologised to Mr. Selby. That Gem tale was entitled 'Manners Holds His Own', sir."

"Is that so?" murmured Mr. Buddle gravely. He did not think it necessary to mention that it was the very tale he had in mind. He continued, speaking a little more gently now: "Those stories which you read are a powerful influence for good, I sometimes think. I have glanced over one or two of them, from time to time, and it seems to me that their moral tone is splendid. The leading characters are gentlemen in the real sense of the word. I think, maybe, that a lad who reads and who enjoys them may learn to - to -"

He paused. He smiled faintly.

"To 'play the game'", put in Meredith softly. "It's a bit old-fashioned, sir - or isn't it?"

"It is not old-fashioned, Meredith. It is common sense. It is never old-fashioned to play the game, to be a gentleman --"

Meredith drew a deep breath.

"You mean, sir, that you think I ought to apologise to Mr. Fromo?" he said, in a low voice.

"That is for you to decide, Meredith. I should think better of you if you did, if my opinion counts with you."

"Oh, it does, sir."

"I am sure you would lose nothing in self-respect", added Mr. Buddle.

Meredith made up his mind.

"I'll apologise to Mr. Fromo, sir." He ended gloomily: "He'll only snub me, sir."

Mr. Buddle rose from his armchair. He smiled again.

"Somehow I don't think he will. It will all depend how you do it, of course. If you make him see that you mean what you say --"

Meredith nodded.

"I'll do my best, sir."

"Good! I'm glad!" said Mr. Buddle. He crossed to the door and opened it. He stood on one side to let Meredith pass through. "I'll come with you now, and have a few words with Shane." He switched off his Study light before closing the door.

"After you have apologised to Mr. Fromo, Meredith", went on Mr. Buddle, speaking in a lower voice, "you would feel worthy to put your name down on that special roll of honour which featured in the title of that story you had. Yours could be the first name on it."

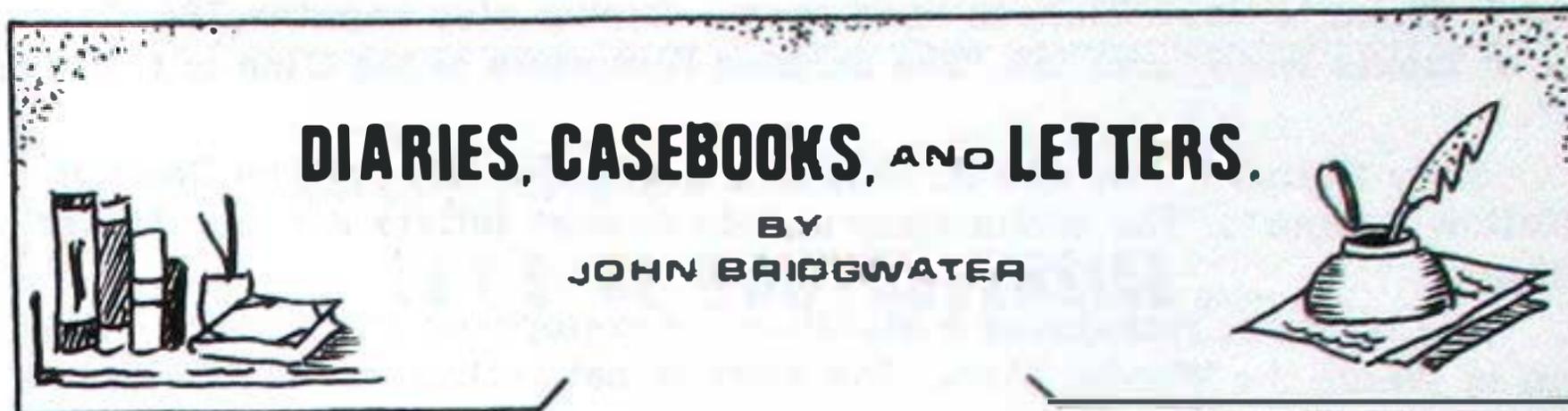
"A Legion of Honour!" said Meredith. "It sounds out-dated, sir --"

Mr. Buddle shook his head.

"How many times must I assure you, Meredith? Honour is never out-of-date. Now what could you call the new roll. Tom Meredith's Legion of Honour, perhaps."

He laughed. And Meredith stood thunderstruck for a moment. It is uncertain what had astounded him. It may have been his master's use of that old Gem title - or it





Between 1917 and 1920 the Union Jack published some 28 stories as written by Tinker in diaries and letters and by Blake in his casebooks. (All were prepared for publication by Edwy Searles Brooks.) More stories in Blake's and Tinker's own words appeared during this period than at any other time in the history of the Union Jack. It is noteworthy that Tinker had the honour of introducing one of the most popular of Blake's adversaries - Waldo the Wonder Man - and relating the first 7 accounts of his exploits.

Tinker commenced writing for the U.J. in No. 720 with the first of Tinker's Case Diary series. It is entitled "Twixt Sunset and Dawn". It is interesting to note that the week before U.J. 720 appeared Nelson Lee No. III contained the first batch of leaves from Nelson Lee's Diary called "The Yellow Shadow" and in the same week as U.J. 720, N.L. 112 printed the first of Nipper's Notebook series "Nipper at St. Franks".

The next extract from Tinker's diary appeared in U.J. 726 "The Riddle of Yew Hollow". This was followed by "The Valley of Crags" in 729. U.J. 733 brought "The Secret of the Third Panel or the Clue of the Cameo".

In Grand Xmas Number 737 most of "The Peril of the Trehermes" is "set down" by Blake himself with the opening provided by Robert Treherne and the whole thing rounded off by Tinker. No. 750 "Rescued by Aeroplane or the Treasure City" is also opened by one of the other characters. This time Tinker takes care of the rest of the story.

U.J. 768 brings the first of the series in which Blake and Tinker join forces with Nelson Lee and Nipper. "The Mount Stonham Murder Mystery or the Case of the Mysterious Hunchback" opens in the form of an author's prologue: this is followed by five chapters by Tinker, Nipper contributes two chapters and Tinker supplies the final one.

771 reverts to the Watsonian way with Tinker telling the entire story of the "The Mystic Cypher or the Lone House in the Forest".

774 seems to be an odd one out, "The Dual Detectives", in which the two teams join forces again and though the story is headed "specially written by the author of Tinker's Case Diary series and the Nipper at St. Franks series", no use is made of the writing talents of any of the detectives.

In 777 "The Flashlight Clue" and 781 "The Case of the American Soldier", Tinker's Case Diary is used again. Tinker also narrates 786 "The Terror of Travis Wold" and 788 "The Studded Footprints or the Clue of the Blue Dust".

Story telling by the use of letters is introduced in 793 "The Case of the Hollow Dagger". The entire story is told through letters between Tinker and Nipper.

In 794 Tinker introduces a significant development in the saga - the arrival of Waldo the Wonder Man. The story is naturally entitled "Waldo the Wonder Man".

No. 796 "Hoodwinked or the Diamonds of Zamkala" brings the first of Sexton Blake's Casebook series. Blake narrates throughout.

Tinker tells of Waldo's second exploit in 798 "The Case of the Five Hairs". 799 "The Clue of the Frozen Knife" starts Tinker's Letter File series. Tinker tells us that he keeps copies of his own letters along with those received and is thus able to compile a narrative of this case in which Nelson Lee and Nipper participate. The letters are from Tinker to Nipper, Blake to Tinker, the replies and letters from other characters with a telegram thrown in for good measure.

Blake takes over as narrator in 800 "The Affair of the Bronze Monkey". This is quickly followed by the third appearance of Waldo in 801 "The Shanghaied Detective" with Tinker as story teller who follows this up with "The Case of the Stacey Rubies" with Waldo again in 805.

The second extract from Tinker's Letter File comes in 810 "The Clue of the Second Bullet". In this one we get the first letter from Blake to Nelson Lee. Nipper is Tinker's correspondent once again. 813 "The Riddle of Quinton Grange or the Man with the Shrivelled Face" gives more letters to Blake and Nipper from Tinker. Tinker narrates the fifth Waldo story in 817 "The Great Spiritualism Case". More letters from the file provide the material for 831 "The Valley of Missing Men" which includes a statement from Blake. 865 "The Clue of the Green Stain" is Waldo's sixth appearance with Tinker doing straight story telling. 874 reverts to the letter method in "The Chessington Towers Mystery or the Case of the Exiled Sons" with correspondence by Blake to Lee, Tinker to Nipper and others. (The Blake Catalogue credits this one to L. H. Brooks but it is surely a misprint for E.S.B.) The seventh and last Waldo story to be told by Tinker is 888 "The Human Link". After this, narration by Tinker and Blake and the use of diaries and letters is dropped.

The entry of E. S. Brooks into the saga at U.J. 720 with a fresh approach to story telling in the form of diaries, casebooks and letters whilst echoing Doyle brought the reader into a much closer relationship with his favourite detectives than he had before by having them speak directly to the reader without having a narrator interposing himself in between them. Brooks wrote these stories with considerable skill and whilst the experiment only had limited life it reflects great credit on him. The popularity of Waldo introduced by these means needs no further comment. One final note of interest, Sexton Blake Library first series No. 33 "The House with the Double Moat" is also narrated by Tinker. One wonders how many more S. B. L. s come into this category.

Index to the **C.O.'s**

**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 papers. In the past three years of the C.D. Annual we have indexed the first 150 of them. Here the list continues:

151. (October 1970) "A Crown But No Pedestal. "
152. "The Everlasting Summer. " Small wonder if we thought it would last for ever. Looking back on it all, we can only wonder and be glad.
153. "In a Brown Study at Christmas. "
154. (January 1971) "Were They Expendable? " Concerning characters which were killed off or dropped.
155. "The Curious Case of Thin Bunter. " Odd points about a genuine story in the midst of a glut of subs.
156. "A Question of Quality. " Comparing an early Hamilton story with one of his post-war efforts.
157. "Stonehenge of Hamiltonia. "
158. "Tap. Tap. Tap. " A man on his typewriter.
159. "Such Men Are Dangerous. "
160. "Farewell to the Prairies. " The closing months at Cedar Creek.
161. "The Upstarts. "
162. "The Gift. " Comparison; a Red Magnet and a much later one placed side by side.
163. "Yes, please, Let's Be Controversial. " Are we critics dogmatic?
164. "Remember, Remember --. " Concerning stories about Guy Fawkes' Day.
165. "Long Ago Christmas. " A peep at how the Hamilton papers celebrated Christmas 1921.

166. (January 1972) "Bend Over, Bunter!" In reply to a reader's letter, we consider corporal punishment as used in the Hamilton schools.
167. "Let's Have a Happy Ending!" Was Hamilton weak on story endings?
168. "The Schoolboy Inventor." An essay on the St. Jim's character, Bernard Glyn.
169. "Look Back and Wonder." A look at the different sub writers.
170. "The Twilight Years." The period in the Gem in the twenties when a sub writer thought he was there for good.
171. "Shadow of Doubt." The relationship between Hamilton and editor, Pentelow.
172. "The Professor and his Daughter." Samways claimed that he was the creator of Marie River and her father, John Rivers.
173. "Strange, Eventful History." Hinton and his paper "School & Sport".
174. "Levison."
175. "The Early Rookwood."
176. "Joe Frayne." It was cosy. It was pleasant reading. I, at least, loved it. But it was quite unbelievable that Joe Frayne, waif of the slums of London, son of a convict, and almost illiterate, could ever have been accepted into a school like St. Jim's.
177. "Coward or Hero." Concerning a blue Gem tale, and a misconception regarding it.
178. (February 1973) "Moments of Musing." An essay on comments different readers were making at the time.
179. "The Glorious Prout and the Sheriff's Kit." How Hamilton linked a series with Free Gifts then being given with the Magnet. Did it weaken the series?
180. "Whither Monteith?" A reason why Hamilton may, after blue cover days, have dropped Monteith from starring in the St. Jim's stories.
181. "Agatha and Charlie." A comparison of the styles of Charles Hamilton and Agatha Christie.
182. "Bric-a-Brac." A look at characters and characteristics of early Gem and Magnet stories.
182. This essay, probably due to a misprint, was numbered 182. So two items receive this number, and it was not corrected in later issues. "Hearts and Flowers." Sentiment as handled by Hamilton and ladled on by the sub writers.
183. "The Machine." Concerning Hamilton's writing life in his most

prolific days. What a life of drudgery! And for what, beyond fame and money?

184. "Credit - or Debit." Comments on a very strange Magnet tale, No. 817, entitled "Condemned by the School".
185. "Gold in Them Thar Hills." Hamilton as a writer of westerns.
186. "Just Food for Thought." How tastes vary among readers.
187. "The Rookwood Christmas Story." There was not really one Christmas story of Rookwood which lingers very lovingly in the memory.
188. "Enduring Strangeness." Concerning Tom Merry & Co.'s trip to Paris in 1909, culminating in the Chateau Cernay story which was used as a Christmas Double Number in that year. The pseudo-Christmas story of the Chateau appeared in the Schoolboys' Own Library in December 1933, and is currently receiving attention in Danny's Diary in the Digest.
189. "Fayne's Folly." A reply to a contributor's eulogy on the blue Gem story "Figgy's Folly". The latter was omitted from the reprints.
190. "Last Voyage." The end of the Benhow stories and how Drake and Rodney transferred to Greyfriars for a time. "Hamilton, by transferring Bunter's characteristics to so many of his fatties like Trimble, Muffin, Todgers, Toodles, etc., devalued Billy Bunter. He came perilously near to making hackneyed the greatest money-spinner in schoolboy fiction. Today it doesn't matter. Bunter has lived on, still making money, while his photostats are forgotten except by the few who never forget."
191. "Oh, Mr. Hamilton!" Mainly concerning Hamilton's early work in pre-Gem days.
192. "Polished Nonsense." The Herlock Sholmes stories.
193. "The Schoolboy Arab." The Magnet's Sahara Series of 1924.
194. "Rivals and Chums - of St. Kit's." Hamilton's different serials and series which he placed in a school he named St. Kit's.
196. And now this series jumped a number. Maybe we discovered the error of a year or more earlier, and now put it right. So, from now on, the numbering is correct.  
"The Letters." Concerning the letters which Frank Richards wrote to us, and a few thoughts concerning them.
197. "Harry Wharton's Christmas." Wharton's Christmas during the first Rebel Series of 1924.
198. "The Mystery of Harry Dorrian." Harry Dorrian was a pen-name for Hamilton. We had been running a classic serial by "Harry Dorrian" in C.D. and the essayist came to the conclusion that it was

198. actually written by C. M. Down.
199. "A Matter of Taste." Among boy readers of the Gem and Magnet there were plenty who could tell the genuine from the imitation stories. There were others who could not tell the difference. There are, in fact, plenty of adults who cannot tell the difference today. Not long ago I had a letter from a reader who assessed the Bounder's characters, backing up certain arguments by quoting from a post-war substitute tale. I have had letters from people who sum up Hamilton's religious beliefs from "The Sunday Crusaders" - and I find it astounding.
200. "Mr. Greely." ... Rookwood came to its end, but the main characteristics of Mr. Greely were transferred to Mr. Prout of Greyfriars. Up till then, Mr. Prout had been a slightly potty, somewhat botty, little man who had, in earlier days, bragged of his adventures in the Rockies. But after Prout donned the elephantine cloak of Mr. Greely and became "Old Pompous" of Greyfriars, he also became one of the finest characters in school literature.

And that brings us to April 1975.

Well, that's all we have room for now. More anon, maybe. To wind up, here is one of the essays from a decade ago.

### THE SCHOOLBOY ARAB

(from the Let's Be Controversial series)

All of Charles Hamilton's series of travel have become period pieces. They must be read as historical novels are read. They are not dated by any style of writing for the most part, any more than the style of a writer of the calibre of Jean Plaidy is dated. From style alone, they could easily have been written this year. But the tales they tell could not occur in the later half of the twentieth century.

With his Sahara series of 1924, fifty years ago, Hamilton commenced his Golden Age of travel stories. True, a year or two earlier he had written the series of Billy Bunter as King of the Congo. That one, no doubt, was popular in its day, especially with younger readers, but it was not really in the same class as the travel tales which were to follow. For one thing, Bunter was so completely repulsive that the reader became irritated; for another, the tales of how Bunter dominated a savage tribe by making the idol speak by way of his ventriloquial gifts, though they were exciting, were too far-fetched; and perhaps, even in 1922, the cannibals in darkest Africa took some swallowing, as it were.

The Sahara series of 1924, was more restrained. Bunter was no less repulsive yet, but, though he was present, he played a minor role for the most part, which was an advantage. Ali Ben Yusef was pleasantly presented, and his constant use of the present participle in his remarks was novel and

fascinating, and, even more important, believable. This was very definitely one of those series which did not come alive until the party left England, but it was one long serial story, with the plot developing throughout. It was not a string of episodes, each one complete in itself - a factor which perhaps marred the series in the closing years of the Magnet. Ali Ben Yusef, for instance, was kidnapped in England, and he did not appear again until he turned up in the Sahara, some few stories later.

This was Hamilton's only travel series which introduced the Cliff House girls. Marjorie and Clara were on the spot at Biskra by a device which was not too palpably contrived. Maybe they added to the lustre of this particular series, but I personally, am glad that they were not introduced into any of the others.

The series came alive after the party reached North Africa, and the final three tales in the series are beautifully written, and contain, in their descriptive passages, a good deal of attractive prose.

My own view is that one character alone made the series. Honest Ibrahim! He was a magnificent character study. The party found him ubiquitous, smiling, loquacious, friendly, slyly simple, utterly unscrupulous, cruel, and murderous. Without a trace of mawkishness Hamilton convincingly related how events changed the heart of this Arab and made him ready to die for the members of the party which he had planned to betray.

In my book Honest Ibrahim stole this series. Stole it from under the very noses of Sheiks, schoolboys, schoolgirls, and Billy Bunter.

One can say that of only one other character in the travel series as a whole - the magnificent Soames. It is a question whether any purpose was served by letting Soames turn up again in later series. As for Ibrahim, he had his glorious month in the Magnet of 1924, and then he was gone. But for those who know the Sahara series (and it is not too well known) he is unforgettable.

Political change and what we euphemistically call "progress" have dated the travel series, and made them into period pieces. I believe that even the Congo of glamorous memory has changed its name and is now called the Zaire.

The travel series improved as time passed, until, with the China series, Hamilton reached his zenith in that line. For China was surely the perfect travel series, without one flaw.

But the tales of the Schoolboy Arab were first-class, putting the series into the top drawer. This was the series in which Hamilton used one of his Mazeppa sequences, with Bob Cherry, bound on the back of a camel, driven off to be lost in the desert.

Only the slightest touch of theatre in the conversations, when Bob Cherry referred to the "Dastards." Boys didn't talk like that in 1924, if ever. And Major Cherry saying: "Dastards, do your worst!" smacked of the Lyceum of

Victorian days.

But that's carping. The Sahara series is memorable, and Honest Ibrahim, the dragoman, goes down as one of Hamilton's finest pieces of characterisation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Christmas Greetings and all good wishes for 1984 to Darrell Swift. Thanks for all your help with my collection.

GRAHAM McDERMOTT

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**A QUIZMAB MESSAGE**

By Keith Atkinson.

1. He's quite a devil of a chap  
And thus belies his name,  
To smoke and back the gee-gees  
Is his favourite game!
2. 'The Acid Drop' he's known as,  
And he drops on many an ass,  
His first name smacks of Ancient Rome  
And his cane smacks hard in class!
3. The Christian name of Number One  
And also that of Racke;  
A precious pair of rotters these  
Who both deserve the sack!
4. A portly personage who walks  
With elephantine tread,  
'Old Pompous' as he pontificates  
The other masters dread!
5. Another pompous personage  
Who's often found in court,  
Either the one that's mortgaged  
Or the one where trials are brought!
6. The middle name of Clarence T,  
The duffer of St. Jim's,  
Though on occasion he can turn  
And thwart tormentors whims!
7. A 'different fellow' he might be,  
He's glad to be alive,  
A member of the Greyfriar's clan  
And of the Famous Five!
8. A character from E. S. B.  
His first name's what we need,  
For he can hand forth many a blow  
And make St. Frank's noses bleed!
9. A leader born, a British lad,  
Though he's no plaster saint,  
A scholar and a sportsman,  
Who's always fresh as paint!
10. The secret of immortality  
Frank Richards holds, in truth,  
For he and all his characters  
Possess eternal -----!
11. A character who broke the rules  
When he was at Greyfriars,  
Reformed when at St. James' Coll.,  
His first name we requires!
12. The first name of Theophilus  
A character who's prosy,  
With cousin Peter he adores  
Study 7, though he's dory!
13. A sailor's son, a faithful friend,  
Though Vernon-Smith may waver,  
He tolerates his tantrums  
Till he comes back into favour!
14. This little quiz contains a wish  
Which comes with thoughts sincere,  
Just read it down initially ----

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## THE DEPARTMENT STORES' OWN PRODUCTIONS

By W. O. G. LOFTS.

It has long been established that some National Newspapers in the thirties, gave away children's comic supplements for their readers' children. Probably the best known and longest running was The Boys and Girls Daily Mail, with Teddy Tail as its leading comic character. Later Commercial household names got in the act, when Ovaltine's Own Comic was given away free inside the Bath publication comics, with Cadbury's Joe Lyons of tea shop Corner House fame, Gibbs Toothpaste, and Lilley and Skinner, also active in this field. The last named giving away a comic, when parents took their children to one of their branches to purchase a new pair of shoes.

All this brings one to the interesting discovery that seemingly some big department stores produced their own Christmas Annuals, and possibly comics for the busy season, selling direct to the general public. Certainly this has been proved with the giant Oxford Street store Selfridges, with their Selfridges Schoolgirls' Annual, which had illustrations by well known Amalgamated Press artists such as Derek Eyles. The difficulty in proving other items such as comics, is that records do not exist of them, many being one-shot publications, as well as being highly unlikely to be preserved after all these years.

One of the highlights at Christmas time when one was a small child in the Tiny Tots and Chicks Own comic stage, was the visit to the big London department stores. Not only to see Father Christmas, but to also visit Fairyland, Snow Land, or whatever fantasy name it was called. At the conclusion of this magical trip - one usually saw Father Christmas, telling him what you wanted for Christmas - though one never got all you asked for. At the conclusion one usually also got a small present from Santa's sack, wrapped in blue tissue paper for a boy, and pink for a girl.

To enter one of these giant stores, was like entering a new enchanted world of thick, plush carpets, and gaze in wonder at the magnificent expensive toys, that you knew somehow your parents could never afford. Living in the heart of London one had the advantage of so many to visit. Harrods, Selfridges, Barkers, Whitley's, Gamages, Pontings, and Derry & Tom's. Unfortunately, only the first three now remain in this world of progress. Like my Father and Grand-Father, I worked for a time at William Whitley's at Bayswater as a teenager in the Art/Promotion department - a position obtained by winning an art scholarship at school. Certainly I recall some of the staff designing comics

for the lucky dip in the toy department, and asking me what I thought of them!

Gamages in Holborn, was a delightful store to visit when one was a little older, for its extensive model railway tracks. Many years ago, I heard of someone having a Gamages Childrens' Annual, whilst one of my brothers does recall them giving away a comic with strips depicting boys playing with various toys in the store. What better nostalgic memories could one have during the Festive season, than visiting the large department stores at Christmas!

★ ★

Bunter, Biggles, Brazil, Bruce, Buckeridge, Blyton, Brent-Dyer, Ransome, Rupert, Giles. Please state wants.

GEORGE SEWELL

27 HUMBERSTONE ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 1JD

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Warmest Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes to Tommy Keen. Enjoy Gracie on Boxing Day!

GRAHAM McDERMOTT

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SALES: Many C.D.s from 101. S.O.L.: 217, 219, 223, 271, 273, 326.  
WANTED: S.O.L.s 145, 147, 236, 382. "Always A Knight", author unknown.  
Best Wishes to all Hobby friends.

MAURICE KING, 27 CELTIC CRESCENT  
DORCHESTER, DORSET, DT1 2TG (0305) 69026

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HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all enthusiasts in our grand hobby from us all at COURTFIELD, HOME OF THE FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM AND LIBRARY.

REMEMBER: The next full meeting of the GREYFRIARS CLUB will be our GRAND CHRISTMAS MEETING held at COURTFIELD, HA4 7DD, on 18th DECEMBER, but do please confirm your attendnace.

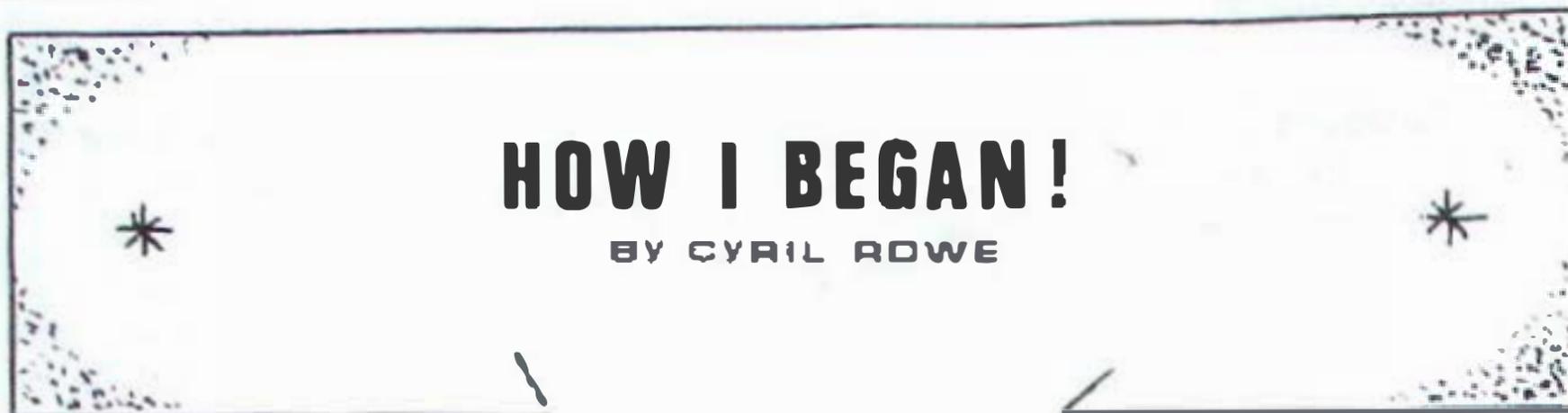
BOB ACRAMAN - CURATOR & CHAIRMAN OF TRUSTEES  
FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM AND LIBRARY COURTFIELD

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The Season's Greetings to all who contribute to my continued enjoyment of Collectors' Digest.

REG. MOSS, NGA10, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

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# HOW I BEGAN!

BY CYRIL ROWE

I was five when the Great War broke out in 1914. A farm-labourer's son, one of three, I had already been to school for two years, having started a week before I was three year's old. I can never remember being unable to read, though more came from home application than my infant schooling. I remember reading the captions beneath the pictures in 'The Rainbow'; Bruin Boys; Marzipan; Marmaduke and Montague, etc.; 'Bonnie Bluebell' was all a little too much for me, but soon came within my compass and then the serial. One I remember running for sometime was 'Little Redfeather'.

However the war went on, I grew older, conscription came in and my Dad left for the front in France; also a young neighbour of ours, and here is where the story starts:

His Mother gave my elder brother (by four years) a collection of boys' weekly papers, etc., that he had collected over some time. They were 'Marvels' Boys Friends Library 1st Series and the newly commenced 'Nelson Lee', also some old 'Union Jacks'. The staple tales in the 'Marvel' and in many of the 'B.F.L.' were the favourite of that time, Jack, Sam and Pete by S. Clarke Hook, many double numbers of 64 pages. They were the subject of many of the 'B.F.L.s' also, though I do remember other tales. In the 'U.I.' were early Yvonne Cartier tales, Wu Ling; Huxton Rymer and Plummer.

By 1917 I was quite an omnivorous reader and well remember reading and thoroughly enjoying H. G. Wells 'Mr. Polly' and 'Food of the Gods' and more adult fiction of the time. Naturally I read the normal run of school prizes, of which I amassed many, Ballantyne, Kingston, Charles Kingsley, Dickens, etc., the usual, and, of all things, the monthly magazine "The Quiver" which a dear lady used to pass on to my Mother.

The Boys' weeklies opened up a new mine to explore. The adverts in them proved to us that the Amalgamated Press had other irons in the fire, so soon we were hooked even firmer. 'The Nelson Lee' started with 64 pages before wartime paper rationing cut it down, as it did all the papers, the 'Magnet' size paper to 16 pages and the 'Green 'un' to 8 pages, and the complete suspension of 'Boys Herald', 'Boys Realm', 'Pluck' and many more.

Of course money was the obstacle, which we removed in the main by swapping copies round on a regular rota. We had the 'Gem' - the 'Magnet'

was less favoured for years, Talbot, Marie Rivers, and Levison were to the fore those days. The 'Union Jack' and 'Chuckles' came around and I still found the latter enjoyable although hooked on the former which we read on into our grown up days till its closure. Well do I remember the Criminals Confederations, Zenith and John Lawless.

We also took in the 'Nelson Lee' and with Bob Blythe's memory in mind I gladly confess to greater enjoyment when St. Frank's established itself than in Greyfriars, St. Jims and Rookwood. But the chief of my delights was in the 'Bombay Castle' run of stories in the 'Boys' Friend'. I can never understand the lack of interest in these tales, which of all the various items I still possess I can enjoy them with great enthusiasm today. I like the characters and I dote on the language of the various members of the ship's crew which were the essence of the vernacular, perhaps striking me more now than when I was a lad.

The 'Realm' reappeared in 1918 which we enjoyed for the cricket tales of J. N. Pentelow (as Richard Randolph). As the editor of the monthly journal 'Cricket' he knew the County players and introduced them completely in character it seemed to me. He and John Finnemore to my taste are the only two writers who give an authentic picture of the game. Both knew exactly what they were talking about.

Later came the 'Greyfriar's Herald'. Does anyone now remember Stringer the amazing goalkeeper, later during summer he became the amazing bowler?

We saw a few issues of the resuscitated 'Pluck' but the 'Champion' group did not appeal except for the 'Young Britain' 2nd series which I thought was a good paper. I revelled in the tales of 'Kerry, Puncher and Charlie'. But I think the solid staple was 'Nelson Lee', 'U.J.' and 'Green 'un', till the last named went silly in the late twenties. We had an elderly 60-70ish neighbour who would frequently tap on our door (or window) and enquire if we "had any O' they 'Saxton Blaaakes'". which he vastly appreciated. So me at 7, he at 70, 'U.J.' is for readers of all ages!

I remember walking across the field footpath to a beloved Aunt and saying to my Brother "I'll never give up reading these tales". But of course I grew up and did, but never have I ceased to read, and in fact have many thousand volumes around me now.

Yet Brian Doyle's Catalogue brought me back and in the last fifteen years I have found considerable enjoyment in perusing the old papers and in fact in finding earlier authors in the 'B.F. Lib.' which I failed to see at the time and now have learned to appreciate.

Collector wishes to purchase Schoolgirls' Own Library (pre-war and post-war).

GERALDINE IAMB, "LUNAN", 38A LEA CRESCENT  
LONGLEVENS, GLOUCESTER, GL2 0DU

Happy Christmas and New Year to all friends in the O.B.C.C.

Wanted: Crompton's "William the Lawless" and "Inspector Higgins' detective novels by Cecil Freeman Gregg.

BRIAN DOYLE, 14a CLARENDON DRIVE  
PUTNEY, LONDON, S.W.15 1AA

Seasonal Greetings everyone. WANTED: Magnets, Nelson Lees, School Friend.

ROSEMARY KEOGH  
78 GREENVALE ROAD, LONDON, S.E.9

Christmas Greetings to our gracious Madam and the Skipper; to W. Howard Baker, Norman Shaw, Darrell Swift, Jim Cook, to all in our Hobby. Health, contentment and peace be yours through 1984.

PHIL HARRIS, 5542 DECELLES AVENUE  
MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA, H3T 1W5

Merry Xmas and Best of Hogmonays to all and especially our Editor and his wonderful Lady of Excelsior House.

GERALD FISHMAN

Happy Holiday New Year all readers. Large selection of Mint Howard Baker out-of-print facsimiles available.

LARRY ELLIOTT 01 472 6310

Warmest Seasonal Greetings to our esteemed Editor and Madam. To Tom and all Midland Club friends. Uncle Benjamin and all London Club members - to Cyril Rowe, Albert Watkin and all World Wide who love our Hobby and especially to Henry Webb and family.

STAN KNIGHT, CHELTENHAM

Seasons Greetings to the Editor, Madam, Bob Wilson, Norman Shaw, Josie Packman. STILL WANTED: Sexton Blake second series. Nos. 453 'On the Midnight Beat' and 572 'The Crime in the Kiosk' by John G. Brandon. Your price.

J. ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM  
HANTS., P.O. 15 5AH. TEL. FAREHAM 234489

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Warmest love and thanks to Eric and Madam for another year of splendid C.D.s Hearty Xmas Greetings to all O.B.B.C. members. Good prices paid for the following books required for my collection: Schoolfriend Annual 1943, Popular Book of Girls' Stories 1936, 1941, Girls' Crystal Annual 1940, also Mistress Mariner, and Sally's Summer Term by Dorita Fairlie Bruce.

MARY CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVENUE  
BECKENHAM, KENT. TEL. 01-650-7023

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Have you any old "KNOCKOUTS" for sale? (1945-1949). Also AnnuaIs for 1944 and 1947. Been looking a long time now. Collections considered --- "Daft, I call it!"

T. R. PEED, 91 SHELFIELD ROAD, KINGS HEATH  
BIRMINGHAM, B1 4 6JT

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WANTED: C.D. No. 1. Seasons Greetings to all.

PEFER McCALL  
47 THE TERRACE, WOKINGHAM

=====

Looking for one or more consecutive series of Modern Boy containing complete sequence of King of the Islands.

RUDD, 35 NORTHVIEW, MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA

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WANTED: Comer Magazine, Grand Magazine, Strand Magazine, and similar that period 1930 - 1935.

PERRY, 10 THE WALDENS, KINGSWOOD, MAIDSTONE, KENT

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A Merry ChrIstmas and a Happy New Year to Eric, Ben, Josie and all readers and loved ones.

E. A. HUBBARD

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Nearer to Bunter's mouth came the glowing ember of coal—ever nearer! He trembled and perspired with fright. But the Greyfriars junior's only means of saving himself from horrible torture was to betray his chums.



Peter Todd did as he was ordered;—he dropped—on Loder! There was a yell of anguish from the prefect—"Yarsoogh!"—as he curled up and went sprawling in the grass.

