COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL

1984 1984

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CHRISTMAS 1984.

THIRTY - EIGHTH YEAR.

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INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

The words at our masthead are almost startling. Our 38th year. For 38 boisterous and event-filled years the Collectors' Digest Annual, packed with attractions, mostly new, some old favourites, has come your way without fail at Christmas time.

It is my 26th year as Editor of this much-loved publication. It seems incredible to me, but I have to accept it, for it is true.

This page gives me the opportunity to thank all the sterling and loyal contributors who have given of their best for our Yuletide enjoyment. This year they have excelled themselves - but then, they always do. My heartfelt thanks to our splendid artist, Henry Webb, who has done so much to add to the high quality of the Annual for so many years.

My thanks, too, to the Proprietors and Staff of that fine firm, York Duplicating Services, which has done our work almost from the beginning, all those years ago.

As every reader will understand, this has been a difficult year for me personally, with the sudden death of my beloved Madam early in the summer. After having been spoiled all my life, with loving souls to look after me, I found myself alone. This year's Annual hung in the balance for a while, but difficulties are made to be overcome - and we overcame them. And here is the Annual. I hope that it will brighten your Christmastide.

During those terrible weeks, early in the summer, I was very deeply moved by the great wave of sympathy and affection which came my way. I received many hundreds of letters and cards from all over the world. I shall keep them always.

I have to confess that I have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. I have not been able to write a new Mr. Buddle story for this year's edition. Somehow the shattered old brainbox could not get down to it. However, Mr. Buddle is here, as usual, as he has been for so many years past. When, some years back, we published a complete list of all the Mr. Buddle titles, I had a great number of letters asking for some of the earlier stories to be reprinted. There has been a flood of requests for certain stories which featured in the monthly C.D. Therefore, I have selected two of those shorter tales, the early adventures of Mr. Buddle, from about 20 years ago. I hope you will regard them as "Paddy, the Next Best Thing" - and forgive the author for being such a lazy old so-and-so.

My thanks to you all - my wonderful, wonderful, band of readers who have done so much to help me carry on as the years have swept by. May the meaning of Christmas be deeper, its friendships stronger, and its hopes brighter, as this lovely season comes to you this year. God Bless You, one and all.

Your sincere friend,

Eric Fayne.

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by Leslie Rowley

CHRISTMAS is a time for greeting old friends, whether by a shouted salutation across a busy street, or a decorative card sent through the post. There are those who, being nearer and dearer, invite us to their homes or who are invited into our own. Some, like William George Bunter, peevishly consider an invitation as a tiresome and unnecessary formality that it is better, far better, to ignore! You and I have never invited him, but he is there, not so far from the festive fireside. If there is a feast of the gods on the table, and if there are chocolates, nuts, and glacé fruits on the sideboard, how can Bunter be far away? You only have to go to the bookshelf and, whilst you may be tempted by Dickens to witness the reformation of Scrooge, or the exuberance of Mr. Pickwick at Dingley Dell, surely you cannot completely ignore the Fat Owl of the Remove at this season of the year! And, of course, it is not only Bunter, but indeed all our favourite Greyfriars characters that are honoured guests in our homes as we allow the turkey to settle its differences with the pudding and mince pies by sitting quietly and turning the closely printed page.

Memories, those pleasant trees planted in the avenue of time, bring with them the stories of long ago. Memories of the snow that fell so loyally in the December of a favourite story. Memories of ghosts on the prowl or crooks on the run. Memories of those gargantuan meals that lessened the

distance between the edge of the dining table and the buttons of the waistcoat adorning Bunter's fat carcase! Influenced by those memories, and many others, I intend to out-Bunter Bunter by inviting myself to Wharton Lodge for the holidays, and I invite you, my dear friend, the reader to join me in this enterprise.

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A blanket of snow surrounds the tiny station at Wimford. The crisp and feathery white almost obliterates the landscape, as we crunch our way along the little village's high street. Here and there, the friendly glow of lamp and firelight illuminate the tightly latched window and lattice, but soon these are left behind as we stride out into the unchartered blackness beyond. Only the deepest of shadows indicate the boughs and branches of sturdy oaks or haughty elms, boughs and branches drooping with the burden of Winter. The icy finger of Mr. Frost burns the tips of our ears and pinches the bridge of our noses. What was a keen breeze has strengthened, and a myriad of flakes battle briefly against the warmth of cheek and forehead, and then dissolve. Behind us, the footprints of a minute past, grow faint and disappear. Our eyes strive vainly against the combined forces of night and the elements in the hope that they can guide the instinct of our feet. Is it fancy or reality that we catch the blurred shadow of another being darting between the deeper substance of the trees? Is it a muffled cry of terror or the sighing of the errant wind? Then, as suddenly as it livened, the wind drops, and the snow lessens to a flurry. A lantern set high in the stone pillars of a gateway, and we are able to make out the legend engraved beneath. We breathe an unspoken expression of thankfulness that would have done credit to a storm-racked mariner who has brought his ship safely back to harbour.

Ahead, beyond the curving bend of the drive, lie the roofs and terraces of Wharton Lodge, their gutters and coping stones etched white against the velvet pall of night. Window after window is alight with the warmth of welcome and the promise of shelter. With one last effort, we heave our suitcases up the steps and into the porch, and stretch out our numbed fingers for the bell pull.

The big oaken door slowly opens, its widening gap lets free a flood of golden light. The stolid and reassuring form of Wells, the butler, accompanied by the diminutive form of Thomas, the page, greets us, bids us enter, and relieves us of our baggage. Beyond, the great hall - its darkened panels of oak relieved by the green and red of holly; the high ceiling made less remote by festoons of tinsel and coloured cardboard, introduce us to the mammoth Christmas tree that stands sentinel at the foot of the wide staircase. The many likenesses of Whartons past and gone, look out from frames of gilt newly garlanded with seasonal wreath and spray. Moments later we are in the privacy of our rooms, removing the vestiges of our journey and changing our dampened clothes before the burning logs in the grate. Our feelings are of satisfaction and happy expectation.

Billy Bunter shared neither our satisfaction nor our happy expectation. He had, by peculiar habit and custom, accorded to himself the hospitality of

the Lodge without being requested to partake thereof. With both reluctance and regret, the rest of the household had accepted Bunter's presence as established practice. It was certainly a case of where his absence would have made the heart grow fonder. In the circumstances it might be expected that Bunter would be satisfied. But Bunter was not! His happy expectations had also received a body blow, so to speak. On arrival Bunter had discovered that one of his fellow-guests was Henry Samuel Quelch, his form master. Regardless that Mr. Quelch's qualifications as a guest were much better than his own, Bunter had expressed the opinion that it was despicable of a schoolmaster to cadge an invitation to the same house as the one to which Bunter had decided to grace with his undoubted distinguished presence. Unfortunately Bunter had canvassed this opinion within the hearing of Colonel Wharton. It was an opinion that did not enjoy the Colonel's support, let alone his approval. Forgetting, for the moment, the relationship between host and guest, Colonel Wharton had boxed Bunter's ears, after which the old army officer had felt considerably better and Bunter, on the other hand, had felt considerably worse! Nor was that all! Wharton had since spoken to Bunter on the subject, and what he had said was terse and to the point. There would be a train leaving early the following morning, and Bunter would be on it. The fat Removite could go willingly or be kicked all the way to the station; but go he would. It was not a happy Bunter as he sat helping himself to chocolates from a box that he had annexed from Wharton's den. But if Bunter was not happy with this state of affairs, it was very evident that almost everybody else was. The Colonel had nodded approval when his nephew had told him of Bunter's coming departure! Wells had confided to Thomas that he would have liked to have sped that departing guest upon his way. Cook had the joy of knowing that the pies, the puddings, the cakes, and other numerous delights now on view in kitchen, larder and pantry would now be safe from pilfering. Perhaps kind Aunty Amy felt compassion for Bunter, but if she did she felt it on her own.

His capacious mouth stuffed with confectionery, his fat head filled with thoughts of the morrow, Bunter had been unaware that the cause of all his troubles now stood before him. As coffee creme followed hazelnut whirl; as chocolate cracknel followed Turkish delight; Bunter's eyes had closed in appreciation of his present mastication and his forthcoming departure. But if Bunter was not aware of Quelch, Quelch was very much aware of Bunter, and that awareness did not betoken approbation. Rather the contrary! Quelch reached out a bony hand and shook a fat shoulder. An orange cup went down the wrong way as Bunter became aware of his form master's presence.

"Your hosts have considerately placed toilet soap in your room. Adequate supplies of hot water, face cloths and towels are readily available, and a bathroom is adjacent to your bedroom. There is no excuse, Bunter, no possible excuse, why you should appear in public in such an unclean manner."

Bunter looked with indignant eye upon the Remove master. This was too much! Having wedged himself in at Wharton Lodge like a cadging interloper, Quelch had been the direct reason for Bunter's departure on the morrow. Now he was talking to Bunter as though he was still at school. Cheek, Bunter

called it, but he took care to call it to himself! Undeterred by Bunter's indignation, Quelch continued, his words as sharp and severe as the weather outside.

"If we were at Greyfriars, Bunter, I should cane you for your alovenliness" Bunter was glad they were not at Greyfriars. He and Quelch's cane had made contact many a time and oft, and the experience had not been a pleasant one! The gimlet eyes glared at Bunter. For a moment it seemed that Quelch was about to follow Colonel Wharton's precedent and box Bunter's ears, but his form master still had more to say.

"I have observed, Bunter", he snapped, "your greed and gluttony both at the table and away from it!" He took up the half empty chocolate box, "I shall hand these to Wharton, together with the explanation that I feel that you have eaten much, far too much, than is good for you ---"

Billy Bunter glared through his spectacles with a glare that threatened to crack them. This was the end. Not only had that beast Colonel Wharton boxed his ears; not only had his beast of a nephew told him that he must depart in the morning, but here was that other beast, Quelch, confiscating the only means of solace that Bunter had in his present troubles. Bunter felt moved to protest.

"I say sir", he bleated, "we aint at school now. You can't tell me what to do until next term. You've no right to take away the chocs, sir. Of course, if you wan't to scoff some of them, I'm prepared to go halves. If you're ---"

"One more word, Bunter, one more syllable, and I will forget that I am a guest under Colonel Wharton's roof and chastise you. Although we are not at school, something is due to the reputation of Greyfriars. Your manners and your appearance, Bunter, do neither your school nor your form master credit. When next we meet I shall hope to see improvement, great improvement, in your person. Goodnight!"

Tucking the chocolate box under his arm, Quelch left the room. Bunter watched his departure with eyes as sorrowing as those of Dido as she followed the departing sails of the good Aeneas. From another room came the sound of young voices raised in song and the merry tinkling of piano keys, but Bunter cared for none of these things. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost and could not be comforted. Indeed, it looked very much as though, with the morning, Bunter would have a great deal more for which to mourn!

Herbert Vernon-Smith was singing almost, but not quite, as loud as Bob Cherry. On other occasions Smithy would have scorned to join in such innocent fun. The bad streak in him yearned for green baize tables and wicked pasteboards, or the click of the billiard ball striking against billiard ball. The bitterness of the past term, that had existed between Wharton and himself, was gone.

The Bounder realised, only too well, what he owed to the captain of the Remove and, much as he resented being under any obligation, he knew that

it was to Wharton he owed his life. Wharton had made little of that terrific struggle for survivial that had taken place off the treacherous Shoulder a few short weeks ago. He had been glad when Smithy had accepted the invitation to spend the Christmas at the Lodge, and doubly glad that Redwing had been able to come along with his pal from Study 4. Reddy would be a steadying influence should Smithy's uncertain temperament require it.

In the deepest armchair that he could find, Lord Mauleverer was asleep. Mauly often pretended to be alseep when he wasn't. Really, it saved an awful lot of fag, just as it had done that morning when the rest of the fellows had decided to go skating on the lake... and Mauly hoped that history would be allowed to repeat itself in the morning when Harry Wharton & Co. escorted Bunter to the railway station. It seemed that, in time, Mauleverer would be ably suited to take his place in the House of Lords. In fact, he seemed to be practising for that happy day already!

Harry Wharton smiled as he looked at the happy faces around him. At Frank Nugent, as he turned once again to the piano, his fingers already coaxing another well-known chorus from the keyboard. At Bob Cherry, looking uncomfortable in his dress clothes, his mop of flaxen hair contrasting with the severe black of his suit. Bob's stentorian voice threatened to burst the studs from his shirt, as he filled his lungs for each new bellow. Another stolid member of the group, Johnny Bull, set his shoulders squarely, in the resolute way that Yorkshiremen have, and prepared to join the next chorus. The fifth member of the Co., the dusky nabob, glanced at Wharton searchingly. He knew how uncomfortable his friend must be at the forthcoming departure of Bunter. No host enjoyed making a guest feel he was no longer welcome. Not, of course, that - strictly speaking - Bunter was a guest. Bunter was never invited; he just arrived. And now in a few short hours, he was to depart! Hurree Singh held no brief for the fat gate-crasher, but he could understand that to despatch even such a 'guest' as Bunter must be a distasteful matter for Wharton to carry into effect.

To do him justice, Wharton was concerned about the Falstaff of the Remove. On a previous occasion Bunter had taken refuge in a disused attic, making nightly excursions to raid the provender in the kitchen. There had, however, been extenuating circumstance on that occasion. Now, Wharton could not find any such excuse whatsoever. Bunter's allusion to Quelch as a cadging schoolmaster wangling an invitation to where he was not wanted, had caused considerable embarrassment. Colonel Wharton had been angry, and like the Biblical gentleman of old, felt that he did well to be angry. The die was cast, and in the morning that podgy porpoise, Bunter, would be on his way to the real - or imagined - splendour of Bunter Villa alias Bunter Court. The captain of the Remove shrugged off his mood of uneasiness. Bunter had eloquently asked for that which he had got, and there was an end to it. Wharton put the matter from his mind and paid attention to the celebrations going on around him.

Outside, on the terrace, James Soames drew the collar of his coat up to his ears to shield them against the bitter cold and the snow that was falling with increased density. Strains of revelry reached the ex sea lawyer and one-time employee of Mr. Vernon-Smith. There was a sharp pain in the shin of his left leg from the bruise he had received when he had collided with thar cursed oak as he had run to elude those interfering fools on the Wimford Road earlier on. When would the crowd of schoolboys seek their beds, and leave him to make his entry into the house with all the stealth at his command. Young voices raised in song, so appropriate to the season of goodwill, found no echo in his black heart. In his mind was the evil plan he had for the abduction of the son of the man to whom he had once served as valet; in his pocket was the wad of cotton and bottle of chloroform with which to fulfill his intention.

Somewhere, in the distance, a church clock struck midnight, the chimes coming clearly on the sharp night air. Within the house, songs and laughter came slowly to their end as guests and host said their goodnights. Mr. Quelch had been the first to seek his repose. Between the ages of fifteen and fifty a great gulf was fixed and the form master's exuberance more limited than that of his boys. Bunter had watched him go with baleful eye. The Owl of the Remove had looked in Wharton's 'den' to see if that box of chocs was now in evidence. It wasn't! So Quelch had snaffled those chocs for himself after all, and was now off to his bedroom to scoff the same! Bunter sniffed contemptuously, dishonest, he called it. What he thought of his own, original, bagging of those chocolates, Bunter did not admit to himself. On a less emotional occasion, Bunter himself would have laughed at the idea of a middle-aged schoolmaster scoffing sweets that were not his to scoff. What had really happened, of course, was that Quelch had handed the box to Wharton, who had promptly locked it away out of Bunter's fat reach! He had taken the additional precaution of locking away any other commestible that might attract Bunter's attention. Bunter had looked into the 'den' with the same expectation as Mother Hubbard may have looked into her cupboard and, like Mother Hubbard, he had found the cupboard bare!

In his room, Bunter had prodded the fire in the grate into life, and settled himself into an armchair. He had to make plans for the morrow, before those beasts came to escort him to the station. Perhaps he could hide himself in an attic, fortified with a store of tuck raided from the kitchen. Bunter's mind moved in uniform with the rest of him, sluggish and erratic in direction, and gradually the wrinkles of his fat brow in cogitation, faded, and his eyes closed. A deep and resonant snore, more familiar to the Remove dorm at Greyfriars, indicated that Bunter was sleeping, an accomplishment of his that came second only to his feeding. And, far beyond the confines of that and any other bedroom, came a slight click as the blade of Soamer's knife forced back the latch of a downstairs window!

Bunter stirred uneasily, his stout limbs cramped in the confines of the armchair; an aching void in the depths of him calling for sustenance. How long it had been since he had dozed off, he didn't know. What he did know, was that he ached both inside and out! The inner Bunter was even more important than the outer Bunter, so to speak. It had a call of its own that was a strong call, a call that could not be denied. A visit to the kitchen was denoted, Bunter being blissfully unaware that all was locked and barred! Pulling his dressing gown around him, he quietly opened the bedroom door and emerged into the passage and groped his way in the dark to the head of the staircase.

Soames froze as he heard the sound of movement ahead of him. Half-way up the staircase, his rubber soled shoes making no sound on the deep carpet, he pressed himself deeper into the shadows.

On the edge of the landing, Bunter put a foot cautiously forward to locate the top stair, and took a step downward into the darkness below. Unfortunately, that fat foot trod on the end of his trailing dressing-gown cord and, losing his balance, he found himself hurtling into the abyss below. It is said of old that fortune favours fools. There is no doubt that it now favoured Bunter for, had he continued to his descent, he would have been severely shaken indeed. But fortune was there in the shape of James Soames whom Bunter encountered in his descent, taking the ex-manservant with him on his downward flight!

Bunter, his fat wits scattered to all points of the compass, had landed on something soft that had broken his fall and, judging from the horrid gurgle that went up from beneath him, Soames was broken as well. In the distance lights were flashing on and enquiring voices could be heard. James Soames struggled to hurl Bunter's bulk from him, but it was no easy task. The stairway was suddenly flooded with light, and a host of faces looked down from the gallery above. Among them was that of the Bounder of Greyfriars and, as recognition dawned upon him, he pointed an accusing finger.

"Gad! It's Soames! Don't you recognise him too, you fellows?"

"The recognition is terrific!"

"That's Soames, right enough. What is he doing here with Bunter sitting on top of him?"

"I say, you fellows, I'm hurt!"
"So is Soames by the jolly old look of him!"

Soames may have been hurt, in fact there was not a shadow of doubt, not a possible, probable, shadow of doubt about that whatever! Somehow, he painfully struggled to his feet, his hand diving for the pocket of his coat, but he was given no time to reach it as a seething mass of humanity overpowered him.

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I hope that you, my dear friend the reader, have enjoyed being invited to this hospitable house for Christmas. And, if it all sounds familiar to you, you must remember the time tested ingredients for the Christmas pudding are as those necessary for a Christmas story, especially if it is about Christmas at Wharton Lodge.

And, now back to the sugared almonds and mince pies!

Happy, happy Christmas!

* *

Warmest Christmas Greetings to Eric, Norman, Chris, Les, Laurie, Mac, Bill and Bertie (where are you cobber? last letter returned underlivered) my address has changed but my wants unchanged. Was Boys' Magazine 317 ever published? My many years of searching has failed to find one. If you have please share "The Iron Army" with me. a photo-copy will do.

JOHN BRIDGWATER

5A SAULFLAND PIACE, HIGHCLIFFE, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET, BH23 4QP

Seasonal Greetings to our Editor, Norman Shaw, A. Cadwallender, Tyneside Dealers, and all fellow collectors.

PETER IANG

ELIEN COURT, JARROW

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Continued thanks to the Editor and all concemed. "A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu.

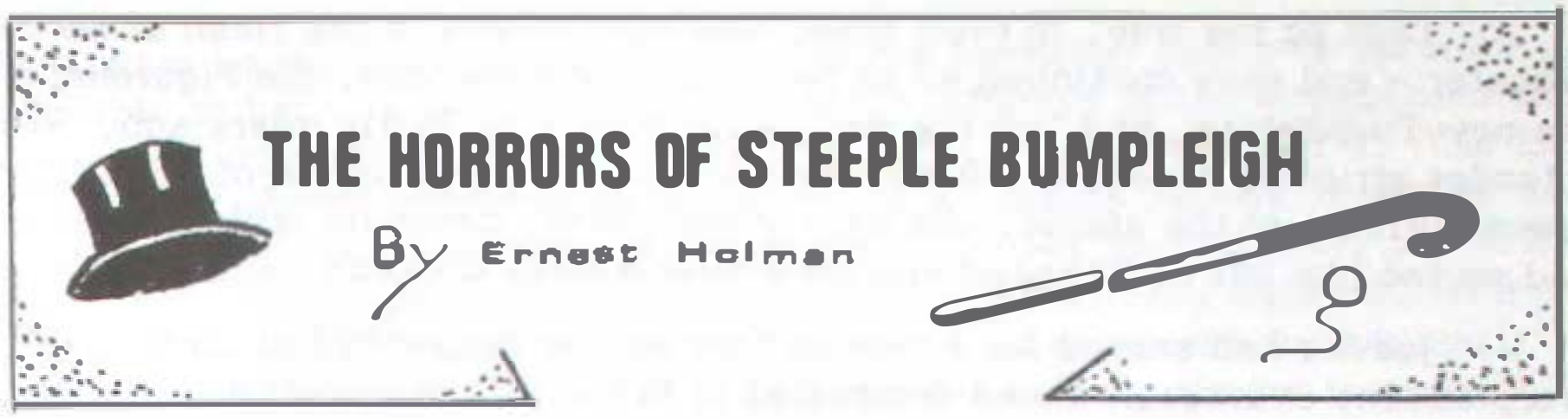
GEOFFREY CRANG

HEATHCOTE, HARTINGTON, DERBYSHIRE

The Compliments of the Season to all fellow enthusiasts of Old Boys' Literature.

LESLIE KING

CHESHAM, BUCKS.



THE HORRORS OF STEEPLE BUMPLEIGH

By Ernest Holman

One of our most picturesque settlements is in the County of Hampshire. Embowered in the midst of smiling fields and leafy woods, hard by a willow-fringed river, it contains honeysuckle-covered cottages and apple-cheeked villagers.

The authority for this description is Bertram Wilberforce Wooster - but, he adds, it's not a bally bit of use every prospect pleasing if man is vile! For the snag about Steeple Bumpleigh is that it also contains a more frightful collection of hideous specimens that could ever be found in any sequence of late-night horror movies.

When news started to creep along the grape vine that Bertie's Aunt Agatha was about to take another pop at matrimony, a gentle pity was aroused for the unfortunate goop slated to step up the aisle with her. For Agatha - she who chewed broken bottles and conducted human sacrifices by the light of the full moon - was a real Toughie. When details began to trickle through well-informed channels, however, that the bimbo who had drawn the short straw was Percival, Lord Worplesdon, commiseration for the victim became diminished. For this Percival was by no means a push-over and Agatha was pretty well reckoned to have quite a fight on her hands.

The marriage had nearly come off many years ago, in the days when Percy Craye and Agatha Wooster were often the last to leave picnics. Percy, however, was thrown out of a Covent Garden Ball and taken to Vine Street Police Station in the company of a girl named Tottie. This was the cause, he would related to listeners, of his escaping - er, having the misfortune not to marry Agatha all those years ago. Percy's appearance in Court, though too late for the morning editions, was fully reported in the evening papers - and Agatha broke the engagement within three minutes of reading the somewhat racy account.

Time, the Great Healer, had obviously done its stuff and now, at long last, a merger had been arranged. They settled into Bumpleight Hall with their respective offspring - and what offspring! Lord Worplesdon took along his children, Lady Florence Craye and Edwin Craye; Aunt Agatha added her son, Thomas Spencer-Gregson, to the strength. Under one roof were gathered together (probably in disarray, disenchantment and dissent) such a formidable five that one was reminded of Jeeves' remark about Childe Roland coming to the Dark Tower!

Each of the five, in their time, had been thorns in the flesh of Bertie Wooster - and they continued so to be. Lord Worplesdon, the Figurehead of the new Foundation, had left his mark - literally - on Bertie years ago. When a tender stripling of fifteen, Bertie had indulged himself in one of his Lordship's special cigars in the stable. An irate Worplesdon, complete with hunting crop, had rooted him out and chased him for a mile across difficult country.

Jeeves had served for a time in this earlier household of Lord Worplesdon, eventually being compelled to tender his resignation because of His Lordship's habit of dining in dress trousers, flannel shirt and shooting jacket. Some time afterwards, this same Percival had arrived at the breakfast table, lifted the first cover he saw, shouted "Eggs, eggs, eggs. Damn all eggs!" - and legged it for France.

In full flow, Lord Worplesdon was an alarming experience. Bertie was informed that he was a congenital idiot, with the proviso added that if a couple of doctors could be found he would be certified. Neither did Percy take kindly to Joke Goods - the Plate Lifter, the Dribble Glass, and, above all, the Surprise Salt Shaker (this last-named released a spider) - and he let the fact become widely known. He made no secret of his frustration when daughter Florence would not sanction the chastisement of her young brother - after all, the lad had only copped him a juicy one on the beam with a stick!

Hide in the long grass and Worplesdon would tread on a tender portion of one's anatomy - the miscreant would soon be given the bum's rush, prompted by the gardener, pitchfork and dog, with His Lordship overseeing the whole operation. A stroll by night in his grounds did not produce pleasant thoughts for Percy - only the presence of Bertie. The latter was left in no doubt about his unwelcome appearance. ("Sauntering! Go and saunter somewhere else, damn it!") When the village constable bobbed up shortly afterwards, he was most impolitely asked if this was the spot chosen for the Annual Outing of the Police Force. The poor copper's request to arrest a burglar only drew forth a torrent of strong words.

Perhaps the most expressive example of Lord Worplesdon in full voice, however, occurred when he was forced to spend a night locked in a garage. Bertie chanced to be an auditor of His Lordship's views on suitable punishment for the poor sap who had perpetrated the outrage - from the safe side of the locked doors. Many of the utterances were a little difficult to follow, as the speaker was considerably steamed up. One item intrigued Bertie and he raised the point with Jeeves. That worthy informed the young master that The Death of a Thousand Cuts was a penal sentence in vogue in Chinese Police Courts for minor offences. Bertie must have wished he had been able to make out some of the muttered-through-clenched-teeth remarks, which would probably have been vivid examples of punishments for major offences out East. A tough Hombre, this Percival.

Lady Florence Craye was engaged to Bertie Wooster at the time Jeeves first entered his employment. Jeeves, with memories of his time in the

Worplesdon home, knew that the verdict of the servants' hall was far from favourable to her. In fact, it was upon being informed of the engagement that Jeeves first uttered his disquieting "Indeed, sir.". Florence had no time for the defeated warrior and when Bertie failed in a mission he was given the chop. Bertie, in turn, dispensed with the services of Jeeves for the latter's part in the broken engagement. However, in the following morning light and after a glance at "Types of Ethical Theory" (Florence's set homework for her man) Bertie felt the scales fall from his eyes and - fortunately for the last of the Woosters - Jeeves stayed on.

Florence went through her engagements quickly. Boko Fittleworth was discharged for kicking her brother; Stilton Cheesewright was a self-inflicted wound, caused by her insistence that he grew a moustache. (Stilton settled, wisely, for a lady novelist.) The Louse Gorrings was adapting her novel into a play, so he was taken on. The play flopped and the Louse was immediately dumped. Ginger Winship received his cards for mucking up his Election Address.

The trouble from Bertie's point of view was that, in most cases, Florence (unasked) took up his option again - until chucking-out time arrived. There were hectic times for the poor shrimp. When he took her to a garish night club, in order to provide atmosphere for her new novel, he was unfortunate enough to select a night when the joint was raided. He even decided that he would have to sacrifice his much-loved new moustache (this had caused the Stilton trouble, in the first place) because obviously it made him appear too fascinating. Kicking her brother did not have the same effect as in Boko's case, for at the time the youngster was in disfavour with his sister. You had to be a winner to please Lady Florence - fortunately, Bertie never managed it.

Edwin, the young brother of Florence, was nothing more or less than a pestilential scourge. Joining the Boy Scouts as he entered his teens, Edwin set out enthusiastically to perform his good deed per day. Unhappily, he was constantly falling behind in his schedule and then life became a perfect hell for everybody around, as he endeavoured against time to catch up on his arrears. There was nothing he could not put his hand to - starting a fire with gunpowder, nursing it along with paraffin; poking into private receptacles for tidying-up purposes; spying on Bertie when the latter was engaged in a gentle task of house-breaking; putting fretful porpentines into beds; grassing to Bertie's uncle about the purloining of a manuscript; squealing to the fuzz when he traced a stolen policeman's uniform; using the same scout's stick with which he attacked his parent to fetch Bertie a wallop on the nut. Edwin was never at a loss when it came to persecuting the populace.

Cousin Thomas, son of Aunt Agatha, was always top of Bertie's Rogues Gallery of Repulsive Boys. Bertie reckoned he began where Edwin left off. A regular thug, through and through, slice him where you liked. A double-dyed scoundrel, in fact. Whilst innocently selling the autographs of Film Stars to fellow members of his school, he would carry on his person at the same time a small, rubber bludgeon or cosh, for use on one of those same

schoolmates. He once underwent (for purely mercenary reasons) a spell of saintliness that was sickening to see. Thomas it was who, having been enticed by Bertie and Jeeves to run away from school, spilled the beans to his mother. Many of his most dastardly crimes were beyond description - Bertie often hinted at them, but it would have needed a Hemingway to put them into words. "You can have no idea!" Bertie would tell his genial Aunt Dahlia Travers. "In the society of young Thos., strong men quail. He is England's premier fiend in human shape. There is no devilry beyond his scope." Aunt Dahlia was Agatha's sister and was hardly likely to doubt that the son took after his mother.

Which brings this chronicle to the Head of Bumpleigh Hall, formerly the Pest of Pont Street. Lady Worplesdon, nee Wooster, formerly Mrs. Spencer-Gregson, more than anyone else in the World of Wooster snootered the poor slug endlessly. If Aunt Agatha was out with her hatchet, it meant Bertie and Jeeves would be off on their travels. ("Lady Worplesdon will be calling, sir." "Mrs. Spencer-Gregson rang, sir.") It was a great help to Bertie's education, of course, enabling him to see places and people he would never have encountered in the ordinary course of events. Jeeves opined that a visit to Egypt at the time of year contemplated would be excessively hot; Bertie considered it would be like a cold spell compared to staying in England and facing the wrath of Agatha!

To Aunt Agatha, Bertie was simply a "Hey, you!" He would be ordered to America to prevent a cousin from mixing in stage circles; he had to journey to East Dulwich for the purpose of buying off a girl and releasing an uncle from an unfortunate entanglement; Thomas would be planted on him, with instructions to take the boy to the dentist and the Old Vic. Agatha's dog, on whom she lavished far more care and attention than on her nephew, was landed on him whilst she went away on holiday.

She told Bertie that he should be married and rearing children. She selected Aline, accomplice of that smooth operator, Soapy Sid, for him - Aline helped herself to Agatha's pearls and the danger was averted. Honoria Glossop, daughter of the loony doctor, was lined up for him- cousins Claude and Eustace helped Jeeves to kill this one. When invited to Lady Wickham's for Christmas, Agatha gave him minute details of the way he was expected to behave.

Bertie spent many a sleepless night, tossing on the pillow, at the mere thought of this fearsome Aunt. A full-face portrait of her over a door made him shy like a frightened horse. One incident, above all, often brought him out of dreams with a scream. This was an occasion that had seen him making a wearied journey at night, on a battered bicycle, on a bumpy road; he was in a highly-nervous state when he alighted to consult a signpost. Seated on top of this direction board was an owl so like Aunt Agatha that for a moment Bertie really did think it was that menace herself. Only when reason tottered back to its throne did he make himself realise that sitting on signposts was quite

foreign to his Aunt's nature.

There they are, then. All together at Bumpleigh Hall. Small wonder that Bertie feels a need for modern map makers to delve into the past. To the time when old charts would be marked with a cross, accompanied by such words as "Here Be Dragons" or "Keep Ye Eye Skinned for Hippogriffs". Some such kindly warning really should be given to pedestrians and traffic with regard to the village of Steeple Bumpleigh.

Whenever Bertie and Jeeves drive from London to Aunt Dahlia Travers' home in the west, Bertie always insists on a very wide detour in the middle of the journey. His imagination boggles at the mere thought of approaching within even distant range of the Fiendish Five. Jeeves is completely in agreement with the young master that, at all costs, they must avoid The Plague Spot!

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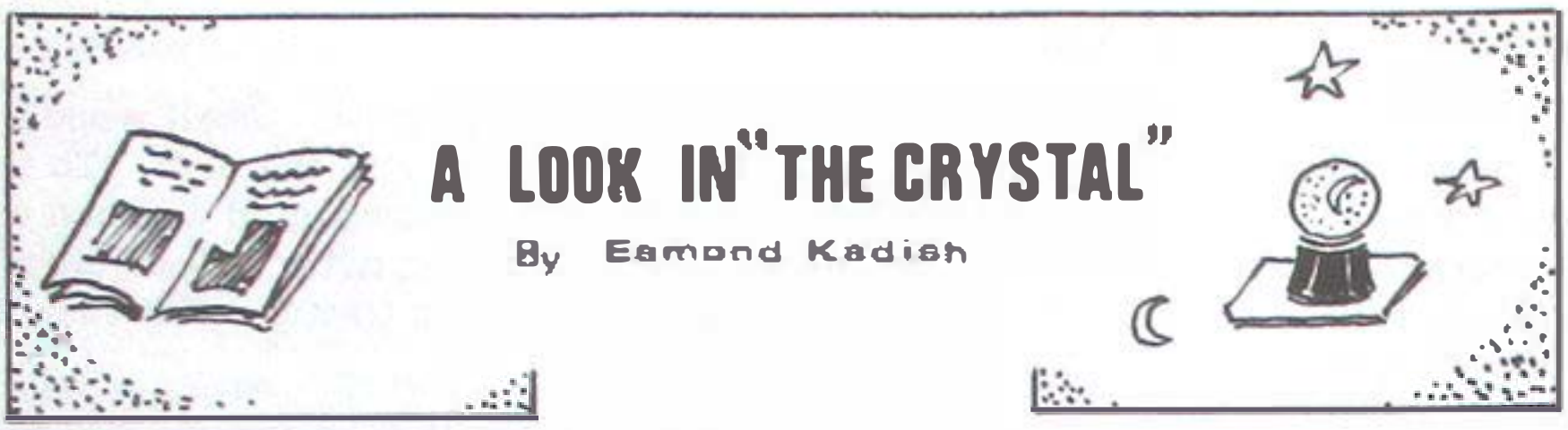

A LOOK IN "THE CRYSTAL"

By Esmond Kadish

The "Girls' Crystal" has always seemed to me to be the "odd girl out" amongst the schoolgirl companion papers in the inter-war years. Indeed, the very name - "Girls" Crystal" seems out-of-place when compared to such comfortable and familiar titles as: "Schoolgirl", "Schoolgirls' Own", or "Schoolgirls' Weekly". What is missing, of course, is the usual reference to "school", and this simple fact at once seems to place it apart from its sisters. The impression is heightened when one remembers that when the first issue appeared, dated 26th October, 1935, the paper's actual title was, simply, "The Crystal" - a name which suggested a periodical more akin to "Peg's Paper" than to Cliff House, Morcove, or Valerie Drew.

Yet, although the original title seemed to suggest that the paper was of the romantic "love-story" kind, "The Crystal" - later, "Girls' Crystal Weekly" - soon settled down to publishing fiction for schoolgirls, and can lay claim to being the longest-running weekly paper for girls, lasting - in one form or another - from 1935 to 1963. It was a "survivor", in both the ancient and modern meanings of the word, and the only girls' paper to beat the paper shortage caused by the invasion of Norway in 1940, in which both the "Schoolgirl" and the "Magnet" succumbed. In the course of its long career, it went through an astonishing variety of shapes, sizes, lay-outs, and covers, hanging on determinedly, by the very edge of its closely-printed pages to its existence, during the grim days of the war, and the almost equally difficult post-war period. It shrank from twenty-eight largest - sized pages in 1935 to twelve small ones in 1947, and then increased again in size and number in the fifties. The covers, too, seemed to be constantly varying, and went through the full range of the spectrum:- from full-coloured cover in 1935 to red-and-blue after a couple of months; from the spartan blue of July 1940 to a red-and-blue half-page cover illustration in 1941; ending up in "glorious technicolor" again when it became the cover of a "picture paper" in the early fifties.

The birth of "The Crystal" seems to have been greeted in complete silence by its three sisters, and it remained unheralded and unsung until January 1936, when it was referred to on the editor's page of the "Schoolgirl". Later that year, it was - significantly, perhaps! - advertised in the "Schoolgirls' Own", just before that paper was swallowed up by the "Schoolgirl". (No doubt the disappearance of the "Schoolgirls' Own" was hastened by the emergence of the "Girls' Crystal".) At any rate, on looking at the first issue

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The CRYSTAL

THE 7 STORY PAPER FOR GIRLS

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THE MADCAP FORM MISTRESS ARRIVES FOR CHRISTMAS

of the paper, I get the distinct impression that the Amalgamated Press were not entirely sure just which readership they were aiming at. It seemed to be - initially - a thing apart, not quite a conventional school story and adventure paper for girls, nor yet specialising in romantic fiction for the "older girl".

For one thing, all the heroines of six of the "seven enthralling stories", pictured on the coloured cover, are either young women, or girls who have clearly left school. "Film-Struck Fay', for instance, is, as the title implies, less interested in helping her friend and flat-mate, Connie, earn a meagre living at dressmaking, than in "crashing" into films. Fay does not act like a schoolgirl of the thirties:-

"Fay took up a lipstick and daintily applied it to her small, shapely mouth. Then she reached for a cigarette and serenely lighted it."

Not, one feels, quite in the style of Barbara Redfern or Betty Barton!

"Tony the Speed Girl" is desperate to win fame in motor-racing and "her one ambition was to drive a racer. Not a potty little sports model, but a big, gleaming thunderbolt of a car". Once seated behind the wheel of her brother's "Silver Phantom", Tony betrays no nerves: "Tony's hands, slim and fragile-looking though they were, had perfect mastery over the juddering wheel --- She knew no fear, wasn't conscious of danger. Her pulses did a jazz dance of delight. Her whole being seemed to respond to the rhythm of the spinning tyres". "Nurse Rosemary", on the other hand, is a young woman who is more conventionally occupied and, having trained at "St. Stephen's Hospital", Nurse Rosemary "brought happiness wherever she went - no wonder all her patients called her a ray of sunshine." In "She was a Fugitive", the heroine, Gilda Marsh, is "on the run" from the police, having been wrongfully accused of stealing the famous "Haverick diamond necklace". The heroine of "The Madcap Form Mistress" - the paper's only schoolstory - is Vera Desmond, B.A., the new Fourth Form and games mistress at St. Kilda's. Miss Desmond has recently passed an honours degree, but is still a real "sport" much to the dismay of the disapproving headmistress, "Miss Angela Catchpole, M.A., B.Sc.". The sixth story is entitled, "Mazda", and is not - as you might be forgiven for thinking! - about life in a factory manufacturing electrical components, but about a "girl who knew no pity". "Mazda" is a fortune-teller out to seek revenge for past wrongs, and is pictured clad in picturesque robe, and with cat perched on shoulder, gazing into the crystal: "'The poor fools!' she sneered. 'They think I really see things in that'". Finally, there is Noel Raymond - a young, twenty-four-year-old male detective, seemingly languid and urbane, but capable of swift, decisive action. When first encountered Noel has observed "the figure of a girl huddled beside the road". He springs into action:-

"In two athletic strides Noel reached the bank, and, careless of the immaculate creases in his trousers, he dropped to one knee."

Self-sacrifice could go no further! It is a gesture, one feels, that would have warmed the heart of Arthur Augustus D'arcy. On the other hand,

Noel could show quite a different side to his character, especially when a member of the "fair sex" was in danger:

"Noel saw red. Snatching up a heavy chair, he whirled it over his head and brought it crashing against the panel."

No wonder Noel was popular with schoolgirl readers; his detective stories - together with the "Cruising Merrymakers" - became the two longest-running series in the paper's history.

Besides the rather more mature heroines - and hero - featured in the first issue of "The Crystal", the paper contrived to give the impression that a whole new bunch of talented writers had been specially recruited for the occasion. Such pen-names as:- Jean Vernon, ("The Madcap Form-Mistress"); Diana Martin ("She was a Fugitive"); Audrey Nichols ("Nurse Rosemary"); Gail Western ("Tony the Speed Girl"); Stella Knight ("Mazda"); Pearl Fairland ("Film-Struck Fay") and Peter Langley ("Noel Raymond"), had never been seen in the other three schoolgirl papers. A closer scrutiny of some of of the stories reveals a marked resemblance in the style of "Diana Martin" to that of John Wheway's Cliff House stories, currently appearing in the "Schoolgirl" and, to a lesser extent, so, too, does that of "Audrey Nicholls". (As far as I'm concerned, the Cliff House tales started to drop off in quality about this time, and it could be argued that one reason for this was Mr. Wheway's having additional writing assignments.) Noel Raymond's creator, "Peter Langley", was, of course, Ronald Fleming, who broke with the tradition of only using female pseudonyms in a girls' paper. He might well have been "Jean Vernon, too, since "The Madcap Form-Mistress" has, like his other character, "Patsy Never-Grow-Up", in the "Schoolgirls' Weekly", the habit of "paling slightly" in moments of crisis. Who the other pen-names

belonged to, I do not know, but Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig write in their book, "The Lady Investigates", that "Gail Western" was a pen-name of the paper's editor, C. Eaton Fearn.

The ninth issue of "The Crystal" - the Christmas number for 1935 - displays a bright full-colour cover showing the "Madcap Form-Mistress" in festive mood, cruising downhill on a sledge. In number ten, however, a red-and-blue cover has been substituted, and the paper's name firmly and clearly proclaims its new identity: 'Girls' Crystal Weekly". The paper continued to contain twenty-eight pages of the same size as the "Champion of Schoolgirls Weekly" until number fifty-two, when four pages were dropped. Meanwhile, the stories' heroines continued to seem slightly more adult than their counterparts in the sister-papers. In "The Speed Girl in America", Tony again demonstrates her spirit of derring-do as she sends the "Silver Phantom" thundering at reckless speed down the deserted road. "Bounding over a hump-backed bridge, it skidded round a bend on two wheels, and rocketed on, raising clouds of white dust." Another reckless young lady was "Meg, the Speedsters' Mascot", by Elizabeth Chester (L.E. Ransome), who, with her brother, Hal, confessed to being "motor-cycle crazy". By this time - 1937 - the familiar pen-names were creeping back, and Renee Frazer (Ronald Fleming) was writing about familiar romantic themes in such serials as "The Boy who Mystified Marion", and 'Her Cavalier of the Caves". Humour was represented by "Poppy Binks - Countess", a series which was illustrated by Leonard Shields. Poppy had formerly been a "factory girl", and, as a new member of the aristocracy, was not standing for any snootiness. This slightly more plebeian notes was maintained by Elise Probyn (John McKibbon) in "Susie - the Pride of the Factory", although Susie's opening speech seems more appropriate to Cliff House than to the factory's "dressing-room": 'Well, here I am! First day at Jupp's jolly old biscuit works!" However, she is not named "Susie Bowling for nothing:-

"The clerks stared aghast as Susie sailed across the office. 'Here, I say, you can't go in there', declared the head clerk, but, unconcernedly, the girl brushed past him. Regulations or no regulations, she meant to see the boss!" The modern industrial dilemma caused by the practice of automation was, apparently, also raised at Jupp's Biscuit Works, in the shape of a "robot packer" (invented, perhaps, by Bernard Glyn of St. Jim's?). Susie, however, realises that "if the wonder machine proved a success, all the girls in the packing-room would be dismissed", and exposes it as "a fake". Meanwhile, the debonair young detective, Noel Raymond, continued his weekly sleuthing activities and, in 1937, found himself up against his chief adversary, Rosina Fontaine, a Mata Hari-like young woman who knows how to handle a revolver, and seems to materialise and disappear in a cloud of "scented cigarette smoke". She also has (naturally!) "a trace of a foreign accent", when she gets excited. Not quite so interesting as Rosina is June Gaynor, Noel's fourteen-year-old niece, who addresses him as "nunky", and "assists" him in his cases, finally displacing him after the war.

By 1938, the "Girls' Crystal" had become a twenty-eight-paged paper

of the size of the "Magnet". John Wheway had reverted to an earlier pen-name - "Hazel Armitage" - and also written a serial with a Riviera setting as "Hilda Richards", using three character from "Whitechester School", Cliff House's chief rival in the "Schoolgirl". "Ida Melbourne" was another well-known name (of L. E. Ransome's) which reappeared. In "Kay of the African Skyways", the heroine is aware that it is not just ability which will help her to get on in this world: "Kay, a skilled pilot, was an air photographer by profession, and she had already worked up a good connection". The year 1939 saw - sadly - the final number of the "Schoolgirls' Weekly", and its incorporation with the "Girls' Crystal". There was no mention of the "Weekly in the Crystal", apart from the usual acknowledgement on the cover, and its chief character, Valerie Drew, virtually disappeared, to return briefly, later in the year, in the "Schoolgirl". The same year saw the introduction of "The Cruising Merrymakers" - a party of two girls and two boys. This was written by "Daphne Grayson", (G. C. Graveley, according to the book, "You're a Brick, Angela!") and was so popular that it ran until well after the end of the war.

A curious four-page advertisement was inserted into a March, 1939 issue of the paper. It asked readers if they had "a schoolboy brother", or "a schoolboy friend", who was not taking the "Magnet", and offered "the opportunity of securing a thoroughly reliable lever-type wrist-watch on remarkably generous terms "to any schoolboy who would take the "Magnet" for eight weeks. There followed the usual "blurb" on Harry Wharton and Co. and Billy Bunter ("the fattest, funniest, and laziest schoolboy in the world"), and a reference to "the famous Frank Richards". I am still trying to puzzle out why they used four pages of the "Girls' Crystal" to publicise the "Magnet". There is no mention of the scheme in the corresponding issue of the "Magnet" itself. Did they expect "Girls' Crystal" readers to use their girlish charms on their brothers or boyfriends to get them to take the "Magnet"; were there, perhaps, a few misguided youths who were reading the "Crystal", and needed to be led back to the fold? Or was it simply that there were four pages to spare?

As already indicated, the outbreak of war in September 1939 resulted in a gradual reduction in the size and number of the paper's pages: from twenty-eight pages in October 1939 to twenty-four in April 1940, and twenty pages, after paper supplies from Norway were cut off in May 1940:- "there is a shortage of paper, and the amount available for every periodical is severely rationed". There was a further reduction in March 1942: "Owing to the great need for saving paper, next Friday's 'Girls' Crystal' will appear in a smaller size". Throughout the war there were constant exhortations, and almost desperate pleas to save paper:- "Turning out is always fun! But how much more exciting when you know that paper, books, cardboard - in fact waste paper of every description - is absolutely vital to the making of munitions". Another issue advised readers to "collect waste-paper from house to house"; yet another advised the collection of "newspapers, old books, unwanted music, calendars, birthday cards, card-board boxes". (So that's where my 1935 collection of "Gems" went!) After the war, the paper shortage became worse for a time, and in 1947 readers were told: "The need to save paper is every

bit as important now as during the war". Even in 1948, a notice instructed readers: 'Don't throw away your bus ticket!".

Although, during the war, the paper's reading fare was - thank goodness! - firmly escapist, unpleasant realities could not be kept entirely away from its pages. In 1944, in "Her Perilous Stay in China", Elise Probyn writes of a Japanese air raid:- "There was a hideous whistling in the air, the roar of an explosion, the ground seemed to rock under her feet, and she saw a great column of smoke and flame leap up from the town in a rain of debris. "Shirley - the heroine - feels not only fear, but pity for the "innocent dwellers who were as defenceless as their little bamboo homes". Another unusual story was "Tamara of the Russian Forest" by "Joan Maitland" (real name unknown), written in the same year, about a "courageous Russian girl who lived behind the enemy's lines". Tamara, who, for some reason insists on calling her little sister "my squirrel", knows that there are "brave Russian guerrillas who had stolen through the German lines" in the "innocent and peaceful forest facing her across the river". She encounters a young soldier "lying limp and exhausted under the trees. He was deathly pale, his uniform was torn and grimed with the mud of weary travel, but it was the uniform of her own brave lads - the Red Army".

Even the wayward "girl-crook", Rosina had her moment of patriotism and self-sacrifice. In 'Was Rosina the Mystery Spy?" in 1940, Noel Raymond realises that she is "ruthless and unscrupulous, but surely she would never betray her country?". No, indeed! "'You mean, Rosina, you deliberately missed the plane and risked arrest - for this?' 'It was the only way', she replied. 'England is at war. The handcuffs, please-quickly!'" Noel, of course, looks the other way, and, once again, Rosina vanishes - no doubt in the usual smoke-haze. She never really reformed - a fact which probably saved her from the unhappy fate of ending up as a completely colourless character!

The war over, it took some while before the paper took on something of its former glory. Sally Warner and Co. of the "Merrymakers" might well bask in the Arizona sun: "blue skies, sunshine, a comfortable chair, and a nice cold drink - marvellous!", or disport themselves at "Roxburgh Co-ed. College in California", but the paper itself grew slimmer still, and consisted of only twelve pages as late as June 1949. Gradually, however, things returned to normal - if they can ever be said to do that - and the paper was enlarged to twenty pages roughly the size of the "Schoolgirl", and a full-page, two-colour cover resumed. The "Schoolgirl", incidentally, had been "incorporated" into the "Crystal" in 1940, but, although John Wheway continued to contribute to the paper as both 'Hazel Armitage" and "Heather Granger", he never wrote another Cliff House story as "Hilda Richards". Meanwhile, the two long-running series featuring the "Merrymakers" and Noel Raymond, respectively, were soon to come to an end, Noel and his niece, June, bowing out in favour of another girl detective and her alsatian dog, Vicky Dare and Rex, who appeared to be closely modelled on Valerie Drew and Flash. Besides Mr.

Wheway, L. E. Ransome, Ronald Fleming and John McKibbon - members of the small but stalwart band of authors who had been writing for the paper since the thirties - there were "new boys", such as Reg, Thomas or Stewart Pride, who used pen-names like "Jane Preston" or "Dorothy Page". But there was a change in the offing!

A new girls' paper, with an old title - "The School Friend" - was published by the Amalgamated Press in May 1950. It was the first of the "picture-story" papers - although there were a few "stories-to-read" as well - and is said to have sold nearly a million copies weekly when it first appeared. Perhaps the post-war generation of schoolchildren had become more "visually-minded" than its predecessors; or maybe it had something to do with the lowering of reading standards caused by the war, or by half-baked "look-and-say" methods of teaching reading. At any rate, "picture-story" papers were now the order of the day, and the "Girls' Crystal" eventually followed suit, and itself became a "picture-story" paper in March 1953. Personally, I find the transformation rather disappointing, inspite of the bright full-colour cover. In the "School Friend", at least the lay-out seems neat and well-planned, and the picture-strips are carefully - even lovingly - drawn by Evelyn Flinders and other artists whose names I do not know; in the "Girls' Crystal" the impression persists that it is rather untidily laid-out and put together. Still, I musn't be hypercritical. The girls obviously loved it, for it lasted another ten years until the paper - un-numbered and un-noticed - passed away in May 1963, having survived for nearly twenty-eight years.

Perhaps the main criticism which can be levelled at the paper is that it seemed to lack a definite personality, and any really strong characters. The "Cruising Merrymakers" seem to me to be rather flat and bland when compared to Bessie Bunter, Clara Trevlyn, Jemima Carstairs or Diana Royston-Clarke of Cliff House, or Betty Barton and Polly Linton at Morcove. Even Noel Raymond doesn't seem to measure up to Valerie Drew and Flash, as far as I'm concerned!

But - as I said - I really mustn't make carping criticisms; after all, the "Girls' Crystal" brought happiness, comfort, and escape to thousands of youngsters in the dark days of the war and after, and that is no mean achievement!

* *

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A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

By Jack Overhill

My father had only nine months schooling, not long enough to learn to read and write, but he was a man who wanted to know what was going on in the world and in 1910, when I was seven years old, it became my duty to read REYNOLDS NEWS aloud to him every week. That coincided with a series of sensational events.

In February 1910, Hawley Harvey Crippen, an American dentist, murdered his wife, an ex-music hall artist and buried her body beneath the flags of the cellar of his house in Hilldrop Crescent, Camden Town. The inspiration of the deed (she was unaware of it) was Ethel le Neve, with whom Crippen had a love affair. Wireless telegraphy was used for the first time to catch them on board the steamship Montrose on its way to Canada. When the warrant was executed on board the ship, Miss le Neve was reading a story by Edgar Wallace. Crippen was found guilty and hanged on the 23rd November 1910, Miss le Neve was acquitted.

The Sidney Street Affair began seventeen days later. Police officers were murdered in Hounsditch by several Russians, believed to have been led by Peter the Painter (Jacob Peters). Two or three suspects, chased by the police, barricaded themselves in a house in Sidney Street, Whitechapel and fired their revolvers at them. Troops were called out by Winston Churchill, the Home Secretary and with him directing operations - in a fur coat and silk hat - a pitched battle raged for several hours. The house burst into flames and collapsed in ruins. Apparently, the Russians perished in the fire.

The day that happened the mutilated body of Leon Beron, an elderly Russian, was found under a bush on Clapham Common. Gashes on his cheek resembling the letter 'S' gave rise to the rumour that he had been a police spy in connection with the Sidney Street Affair. Stinie Morrison, a ticket-of-leave man, was arrested, charged with the crime, convicted and sentenced to death. In deference to popular doubt, the sentence was commuted. Morrison protested his innocence to the last and starved himself to death in gaol.

In November 1911, 'Lord' George Sanger, the famous circus owner, an old man of eighty-four, was shot dead. The murder was a chilly mystery and remained one for many years, then it came to light that one of his workmen was the murderer.

The newspaper reports, long and colourful, and cases of a similar nature that followed them, adversely affected me. My imagination ran riot and

I was plagued with horrific thoughts to do with being murdered, even in my own home.

On the wall of the front room was a picture of a cottage under a tree, bordered by a ditch - a simple, sylvan, country scene. In dim light and darkness, two gaps in the foliage of the tree became eyes, the cottage a nose, the ditch a mouth, the tree-trunk a beard; they transformed themselves into a man's face so menacing I could almost feel the glaring horror clutching me with invisible hands as I darted across the room to the safety of the street or the lamplit kitchen.

In bed, alone in the house, it was worse, as I listened for the stealthy approach of murderers up the old, boxed-in, creaking stairs with the horrifying thought that I couldn't run away there and I'd suffer the same fate as the victims I'd read about.

My fears and fancies left me as I grew up, but in their wake was a shadow that could be attributed to them. In November, 1914, I met the GEM. That introduced me to the MAGNET, the BOYS' FRIEND, the PENNY POPULAR, and the DREADNOUGHT. In Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, I found excitement of the sort I had long wanted. To me they became so real that I lived within their precincts more than I did in my own home.

As time passed, my mental outlook expanded and I read, or tried to read, most of the weekly and monthly libraries that were published. In doing so, I shunned, except in rare cases when I had nothing else to read, detective fiction, especially the UNION JACK, which, to me, reeked of murder and murderers. Happily, that wasn't lasting. I made a swop for a UNION JACK story about the Bat (Dirk Dolland) and his female confederate, the Butterfly. I liked it so much, I welcomed the chance of reading another Sexton Blake story. That was about Humble Begge, M.A., a man of peace who wore clerical garb, was skinny, old-fashioned- he had a sailors' hostel in Islington, and fought like a tiger with shattering effect on big-muscled men on the wrong side of the law who thought he was theirs for the taking.

In that way, I drifted into reading the UNION JACK and the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. Favourite characters were George Marsden Plummer, Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu the Zulu, Count Carlac and Professor Kew, the Hon. John Lawless, Mr. Reece and the Criminal Confederation, and Yvonne. I liked crime linked with adventure abroad, especially the South Sea Islands, West Africa and South America. To me, there was magic in the Pacific, the Congo, and the Amazon - hot climates, as I was always after sunshine, even in books.

Recently, I found several UNION JACKS among the few old weeklies I have. I hadn't read four of them though they were dated over sixty years ago. I looked at the picturesque covers and titles:

No. 912 2nd Apr. 1921 — The Terms of the Wager. A story of adventure in Africa. Introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, Sir Richard Losely, Pedro and Lobangu the Zulu.

No. 936 17th Sept. 1921 — Lobangu's Ju-Ju. Sexton Blake, Tinker and 'Spots' Losely and their old friends, the Etbaia, in Darkest Africa.

No. 949 17th Dec. 1921 — The Flower of The Etbaia. Sexton Blake, Tinker, Sir Richard Losely, and Lobangu, Chief of the Etbaia Tribe. A detective-adventure story of plotting and peril in the midst of the Dark Continent.

No. 1,019 21st Apr. 1923 — The Valley of Flies. Sexton Blake in South America, introducing also Adrian Steele, Newspaper Man.

The four UNION JACKS were in a bound volume, in excellent condition, the print clear. Looking at the pictures, youth welled up in me. I'd certainly read them.

Then, I came across the only two SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES that I have:

No. 140 — The Beachcomber. A detective drama, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and the Hon. John Lawless. A stirring adventure in England and the South Sea Islands.

No. 208 January 1922 — The Case of The Cultured Pearls. One of the greatest conflicts between Sexton Blake and George Marsden Plummer.

Both monthlies were in a bad state, tattered, falling to bits, tiny fragments covering the floor, the print faded, almost unreadable. The Case of The Cultured Pearls was really in a shocking state, but it was a story of George Marsden Plummer, a prime favourite, and I set to work with a magnifying glass to decipher the faded print. A painstaking task but I stuck at it and the following is what I made of it.

George Marsden Plummer, ex-detective-sergeant of Scotland Yard, shabbily dressed and looking down-and-out, is walking up the sandy beach of Thursday Island, where he has sought refuge from Sexton Blake and the law, when he sees Rosa, scarcely twenty, the daughter of John Hamilton, a missionary, standing at the gate of their cottage in the shade of the palms. She beckons. He finds her in distress, and as she and her father had cared for him through a severe illness when he arrived on the island, he feels in duty bound to help her and listens to her sad tale.

Her rich American fiance, Clifford Van Housden, who owns Napang, a neighbouring isle, has disappeared. As they now hear and know nothing of him, she thinks he's been murdered or being kept a prisoner (her father doesn't), and with those thoughts in mind, she'd gone to the island. She'd found it guarded by armed Malays, who had refused her admission. She'd caught a glimpse of several savage dogs of the mastiff type which had strengthened her conviction that her fiance was being strictly guarded. As she'd persisted in

her inquiries, a huge bearded, Dutchman, named Hans Paulig, whom she'd known as her fiance's chief overseer, had come forward and told her he was not there, but in New York. She hadn't believed him, felt sure he was a prisoner in Paulig's hands (unless he'd been murdered), for ends of his own, and not far to seek, as around the island and included in her fiance's property were extensive beds, which from time to time, yielded valuable harvests of pearls. He promises to help her - and himself, for if Van Housden is alive and he rescues him, he'd see that he had at least a half-share of the pearls.

Cursing the full moon, he sets out that night in a little pearling lugger he'd won from a Chinese-half-caste in a game of fan-tan. With him was his Malay boy, whom he leaves in charge of the lugger while he rows ashore in a skiff when they reach the island. Not a soul about, he pushes his way into a jungle of undergrowth of vines and creepers. The sound of someone crashing through the undergorwth comes to him. A sixty-year-old negro, white-haired, in shirt and trousers, stumbles and collapses at his feet. There are sounds of pursuit, the baying of blooshounds (he knows that sound well - Pedro!).

Sambo tells his tale. He's Massa Van Housden's faithful servant. Wicked Paulig wants to catch him. He has master a prisoner. He is trying to escape to fetch help. Sambo collapses. Plummer carries him on his shoulder to the skiff, The pursuers catch them up. There is a skirmish. Plummer puts a bullet into Paulig and two others and shoots one of three bloodhounds dead. He is miraculously missed by the guards when they fire. In the skiff with Sambo, he knocks out with the oars, Malays that swim after him. On board the lugger, he finds the negro is shot in the chest. Pulling aside his shirt, he sees a small bag round Sambo's neck. It contains a dozen pearls, one so large and beautiful it seems endowed with living fire. He mentally christens it the 'Globe of Fire'.

Sambo is dying, but only interested in the pearls, Plummer callously gets the old man to tell his tale. The pearls are cultured - fakes - but so like the real thing the difference cannot be seen. Clifford Van Housden had been experimenting for seven years for perfection of such pearls, but he'd done it honestly as he only wanted a fair profit when they went on the market. Paulig, his manager, had suggested they became partners, sold the fakes as real and shared the proceeds. Van Housden had rejected the idea and Paulig had shut him up in a guarded cell. Excited with the good fortune that had come his way, Plummer ignores Sambo's wound and simply forces brandy from a flask into his blood-flecked lips. That keeps him alive until he's heard the full story.

The next day, Plummer sells his lugger for a few pounds and works his passage back to England on a tramp steamer. He's a little troubled about his promise to help Rosa Hamilton, but self comes first. Doubts about Sexton Blake recognising him should they meet are set at rest by his having grown a beard while on Thursday Island. That would conceal his identity.

Five months later, at seven in the morning, snow on the ground, Blake, Tinker, and Pedro are in the consulting-room at Baker Street. Blake

reads in the newspaper that Gustav, an old accomplice of Plummer, is to be released from Pentonville that morning at 8 o'clock after serving five years in prison. He sends Tinker, disguised as a stout Hebrew of thirty-five to wait outside the prison to see who meets Gustav. His thoughts turn to Yvonne's birthday and the sort of present he would buy her. He decides on a pearl and telephones Porlock, a friend, who is a dealer in precious stones in Hatton Garden. Porlock has just bought a beautiful pearl from a man who had come from the Thursday Island fisheries. Blake would hold his breath in admiration when he saw it. Blake arranges to call at his office. He goes there and buys the pearl: the 'Globe of Fire'.

Tinker sees a clergyman meet Gustav out of Pentonville. He is shorter than Plummer, but he might be an intermediary and Tinker follows them to a Mission in Holloway Road, when he knows the clergyman is genuine and abandons his shadowing.

At the Mission, Gustav is given a latter for work to an old invalid who wants a male nurse. He goes to the address. The man, white-haired and feeble, is bedridden. They talk for a while, then he takes off the disguises that had fooled the medico attending him and reveals himself as Plummer. He tells Gustav of the faked pearls and in need of an associate, invites Gustav to go in with him. He does so.

Plummer has sold five of the pearls to a dealer - coincidentally, Porlock - for £7,500.

While Van Housden was being kept a prisoner in his own house on Napang, Hans Paulig had been clearing the beds of thousands of oysters, which from five to seven years had been culturing as gems. Within two days of the meeting between Plummer and Gustav he arrives in London with a grip-bag of pearls to sell. Aware of his movements and what he intends doing, Plummer and Gustav waylay him and by a trick, chloroform him in a taxi. Plummer departs with the grip-bag of pearls and books in at the Elsinore Hotel, off Piccadilly, as Hans Paulig, an accredited representative of Van Housden. Gustav drives off with the unconscious Paulig to Tiger Bates' place in the East End - he's a cracksman under Plummer's thumb.

Yvonne's birthday party is held a day or two later at the home of her uncle Graves, with whom she resides in Queen Anne's Gate. There she meets Hargreaves, an old friend of her uncle, probably the greatest authority in judging precious stones. Sexton Blake is at the party and in the shadows of the hall, he places the 'Globe of Fire' around her neck. She is enraptured by it and there is a touching little scene that shows their affection for each other. While talking to Yvonne, Hargreaves remarks upon the flashing beauty of the gem, and knowing it is of professional interest to him, she leaves it with him so that he can inspect it more closely while she talks to some of her guests. He examines it with a powerful lens and finds the faint, green streak that shows it is a fake. He returns the pearl to Yvonne and goes to Baker Street with Blake after the party and tells him what he has discovered. Knowing

Porlock is honest in his dealings and an expert in his profession, as well as being no mean judge of pearls himself, Blake finds that hard to believe. At last, he is convinced. For final proof they decide to have the pearl x-rayed the following day with Porlock in attendance. They meet him at his office. Filled with doubts about the affair, he agrees to go with them to Yvonne for the 'Globe of Fire' and after Blake has bought her a diamond necklace in place of that, they leave the office for her home.

Among the private papers Plummer stole from Hans Paulig with the grip-bag of pearls, there is a letter arranging a meeting with him and Otto Israel, the largest importer of pearls in Hatton Garden. Disguised, Plummer takes his place and suggests that Israel buys all the pearls he's got. After examining them, the latter decides to bring into partnership other dealers for the one million pounds necessary to buy them. If he doesn't and Plummer floods the market of pearls that will cheapen the value of pearls all over the world. They must be kept in store and sold over a period. Plummer gets a shock when he leaves Israel's office. Quitting Porlock's office on the other side of the hall are three men - one is Sexton Blake. Safely disguised, he passes close to hear what they are talking about and hears Porlock say, 'I can't believe the pearl that fellow called the 'Globe of Fire' is anything but the peerless gem I took it for'. Alerted, he hires a taxi to follow their car, which stops outside Yvonne's house in Queen Anne's Gate, as Graves, her uncle comes out. He watches at a distance while they talk on the steps. He pays off the taxi and after a while, his plans ready to be put into effect, he saunters back to the house. Nobody outside it except a man he'd seen working in the hall as he'd passed in the taxi. He invites him into a tavern for a drink and bribing him with a five-pound note, learns that there is no-one in the house and that one of the men had asked the white-haired man if he could lay his hands on the pearl he gave Yvonne the previous night; there was some question of its not being what it looked like. He'd said it was locked up in his niece's safe and she had the key. The man who'd inquired said they'd call again in the afternoon. Plummer hands over the five-pound note and leaves him.

To think Blake had bought 'The Globe of Fire'. He must get possession of it and the four cultured pearls he'd sold with it. Blake must never have the chance of examining them. He goes to Porlock's office and buys back three of the pearls from an assistant, the fourth has been sold. He deposits his grip-bag in a rented safe-deposit and goes to Whitechapel, where Tiger Bates lives with his father, a crook, and Gustav is keeping watch on Hans Paulig, trussed up in a garret. Plummer tells Gustav to shadow Blake and to keep him informed of his movements. He borrows a set of cracksman's tools, goes to Graves' house and in broad daylight breaks in by climbing a balcony and forcing a window into what happens to be Yvonne's boudoir with the safe in it. He sets to work on the safe and is disturbed by footsteps.

Yvonne arrives home as Blake, Hargreaves and Prolock call again. Blake gives her the diamond necklace in place of the pearl pendant, telling

her that is a fake. She goes to her boudoir to fetch the pearl and finds her uncle Graves gagged and bound and unconscious on the floor. The safe is open, the 'Globe of Fire' stolen, jewellery and money as well. Graves is brought round and Pedro is brought in by Tinker at Blake's request. Given the scarf that had gagged Graves, the bloodhound goes berserk. He hasn't forgotten the thrashing Plummer gave him many years ago. Plummer had departed in a taxi, so the trail quickly ends.

Porlock tells Blake that the man he bought the 'Globe of Fire' from had sold him four more pearls and at Blake's request he goes to his office for them. They have been sold by his assistant, one to a person he knows but hasn't his address.

Describing his struggle with the man that attacked him, Graves says that his eyes glowed green like a cat's, confirming what Pedro and Blake knew - that he was Plummer.

After Blake, Hargreaves and Porlock leave, Yvonne sees a man - Gustav - acting suspiciously behind a taxicab across the road as she walks on the balcony. She telephones her chauffeur for the car. As the three men drive off, the man springs into the taxicab and drives after them. Convinced that he is shadowing Blake, she shadows him.

The scene shifts to Napang Island. Rosa Hamilton, tired of waiting for Plummer to help her - he might have been killed in attempting to do so - decides to invade the island and storm its citadel in search of her lover, Clifford Van Housden. Stained brown, dressed in soiled, white ducks, she goes in a pearling lugger on a moonlight night with Jim, her faithful Malay boy servant. They land, go through the forest to the house. Prepared for a high wall, Jim climbs up a tree, drops the other side, unwinds a silken ladder round his waist, tosses it to her and holds it firm so that she is able to climb over. She is armed with two revolvers and carries poisoned meat for the dogs. They come to a plantation near the house, watch half-drunken guards gambling as Hans Paulig is away. They wait and watch until five of the six guards depart leaving one too drunk to walk lying on the ground. Talking pidgin English, Rosa tackles him and Jim binds him up. She puts on the man's native hat over her wig, fastens his cartridge belt round her waist and leaving Jim to guard him, sets off with his rifle. She finds the five Malays near the house, changing guard over Van Housden, a prisoner there. She pretends to be drunk like the man left on the ground and joins them. Fortunately, the man Jim is guarding is clean shaven, her height and build, and wearing soiled ducks like her own. In a detailed description, much pidgin English, courage on her part, snarls of hatred and grinding teeth on the part of the natives, she beats all the guards, totalling eleven armed men, shooting one through the shoulder in the process and rescues Van Housden.

Released from his prison cell, Van Housden joins her, and the Malays, now cowed and jabbering with fear, go back to their duties. Knowing all Malays are cowards at heart, he thunders to them in their dialects, shoots two

of them, and punches the ringleader in the mouth to teach him a lesson. The latter cringes, asks forgiveness, blames all on Master Paulig, who left the island on big ship, two-three days ago.

Van Housden, Rosa, and Jim, return to Thursday Island, get a fresh crew of Malays and a diver's outfit. He learns that Paulig had sailed for London four days previously. When inspecting the oyster beds a shark is about to attack him. Rosa leans over the side of their little vessel to attract the shark to her. It comes leaping half out of the sea, snapping its jaws. She cleaves its skull with an axe and saves his life again. Van Housden finds Paulig has raised all the planted shell-fish forming a gem. He catches a fast boat to England and arrives in London only two days after Paulig to frustrate his scheme to pass himself off as his agent and to sell the gems as real.

Gustav discovers that Yvonne is shadowing him. He follows Blake and Porlock to a hospital in Bermondsey. Porlock has traced the man and recovered from him the cultured pearl for examination. X-rayed, that proves to be a fake.

Uneasy at being shadowed by Yvonne, Gustav telephones Plummer. He tells him to stop shadowing Blake and to lure her into Whitechapel, adding significantly, 'You know where'.

Blake gets in touch with Scotland Yard detective inspector Martin of the C.I.D., who promises to spread the net to capture Plummer. He has a telephone call from Yvonne. She tells him that she has been shadowing a man who has been shadowing him. At that moment, the man is having a meal in a restaurant; he now knows that she is shadowing him and is watching her telephoning from a newsagent's shop. He's taken to walking, so has she to continue following him. She thinks he is now trying to kidnap her. She's going to let him. Blake is alarmed. She outlines her plan. She has a silver pencil-case; it is chased and engraved with her initials. She will drop the case at the spot she is kidnapped. He must advertise for it straight away - £50 reward. He will soon have a claimant as the case is only worth £2. Do it in the name of a friend so that Plummer has no suspicion if he reads the advertisement. Blake will know where it is picked up and Pedro will get the scent from a glove or shoe of hers and lead to where she is taken. Blake begs her not to do it. Determined to do it she puts up the receiver. Fearing for her safety, he puts the advertisement in the newspaper. There are no replies as the pencil-case has rolled over the pavement and down a drain. His fears increase.

Yvonne has been kidnapped by Gustav and Tiger Bates at dusk and with a cloth over her head to prevent sounds of her screaming, she is bundled into a little shop of the Bates.

Plummer telephones Blake, puts his cards on the table and tells him that he will administer a drug to Yvonne in four days if he doesn't withdraw from the case and go away on a holiday. The drug will give her creeping paralysis and lead to an 'honourable suicide'. Blake thinks things over.

Plummer's four days means he is going to dispose of the pearls in that time with him definitely out of the way. Blake goes to the window, it is early morning and just light, and he sees Gustav disguised, watching the house. He telephones Harry Dainley, an actor friend, the same height and build as himself, and asks him to come to Baker Street disguised as an elderly working-class woman. He comes like that and is invited into the house by Mrs. Bardell. Blake, a master in the art of disguise, makes up as Dainley in women's clothes and transforms Dainley into resembling himself. He leaves the house with an elderly woman's walk and goes by bus and taxi to the Strand, where he rents a room to use when he wants to change his appearance away from Baker Street. Disguising himself as a grey-haired, grey-bearded old man, he goes to Scotland Yard for an interview with detective inspector Martin. He finds him in conversation with Clifford Van Housden, who has turned up in the nick of time to foil Plummer making one million pounds out of the sale of the fake pearls to Otto Israel and his fellow diamond merchants of Hatton Garden.

Blake unfolds his plan to deceive Plummer and capture him. Dainley, disguised as Blake will leave Baker Street and go with Tinker and Pedro to Paddington Station as though going away on holiday to save Yvonne from Plummer's threats to her. Gustav will follow them, acquaint Plummer and return to where Yvonne is held captive. Blake will follow him, dressed as he is as an old man. Martin falls in with the plan and details a dozen detectives to follow Blake at discreet distances from each other not to arouse suspicion. He also arranges for Otto Israel to ask Plummer to call at his office that afternoon to arrange the deal and receive the one million pounds.

Sexton Blake, disguised, waits at Paddington Station until he sees Dainley, posing as himself, enter a first-class carriage with Tinker and Pedro on his way to South Devon as Plummer had told him to make Yvonne safe. Their departure is watched by Gustav, who, unknowingly, is followed by Blake and a dozen burly police officers by Underground to Whitechapel after the train leaves for South Devon. He telephones from a public call-box in Whitechapel, obviously Blake thinks to Plummer at the Elsinore Hotel. Gustav goes on and enters the Bates' shop. Blake is certain that Yvonne is there, kidnapped. He dashes in the shop, hurls Old Bates aside, knocks out Young Tiger with a punch on the jaw and rushes upstairs to where he is sure Gustav has gone. He overtakes him as Gustav opens the door leading into a room in which Hans Paulig is a prisoner. Gustav asks with a snarl what he wants. Blake tears off his false beard and wig. Gustav snatches an automatic pistol from his pocket, Blake strikes it from his hand, thinks of the terrible fate Yvonne has been threatened with, seizes Gustav by the throat and hurls him downstairs. The Scotland Yard men rush in the shop, seize Gustav and handcuff him. Blake finds Yvonne in a room on the landing, gagged and bound on an old couch. He releases her and feels the wild fluttering of her heart as he holds her tight. Love is restrained by the iron grip he has on himself as she recovers from the ordeal she has undergone.

Paulig is released and arrested, so are the two Bates.

Plummer alights from a taxi and carrying the grip-bag containing the cultured pearls he's collected from the safe-deposit vaults, he enters Otto Israel's office that afternoon. Still posing as Hans Paulig, he expects to find Israel and the other precious-stone dealers there; instead he finds Blake waiting with detective inspector Martin and two plain-clothes detectives. Thinking only of his freedom, he hurls the grip-bag at Martin and sends him down in a heap. The two Yard men stumble over him and go down. He seems about to lash out with his left at Blake, instead he kicks him on the shin, causing Blake great pain and to lose his balance and pitch forward. He seizes the opportunity and uppercuts Blake with a force that would have knocked out most men. It sends Blake reeling and he goes down with a thud. He is up instantly, but Plummer dashes out of the office, through the hall and out into Hatton Garden. The taxicab man, whom he'd told to keep waiting, has the engine running. Plummer seizes him and chucks him into the road. He jumps in the cab and drives off before Blake and the three C.I.D. men reach him. He speeds off to High Holborn, runs the taxi to a kerb, leaps out and catches a passing bus, mounting to its top. Almost at once there is a block of traffic, the bus which Plummer occupies with only two or three other passengers occupying seats towards the front, their backs to him, halts beside another, which is empty and seems to be returning to the garage. Plummer comes to his feet and leaps into the other vehicle. He drops flat between the two rows of seats and lies there, panting, empty-handed again because of Sexton Blake, but free. For how long, he wonders, as all London will soon be ringing with his name, once more.

Gustav, the Bates and Paulig get penal servitude.

Martin gets a fat cheque from Clifford Van Housden, who sells the cultured pearls to a ring of dealers and returns to Napang to marry Rosa.

Tinker says his Guv'nor hasn't got anything out of the case.

Blake says he's got one thing.

'What, Guv'nor?'

'Memories', says Blake, wistfully.

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That's THE CASE OF THE CULTURED PEARLS without the trimmings. Coincidence and nick of time keep the story moving, but they are dealt with so matter-of-factly the reader is deceived into believing they are the fabric of life.

You may question Gustav shadowing Sexton Blake and Yvonne day and night. Didn't he ever sleep? But some people need so little sleep it is easy to assume that in times of stress they need none at all.

The time element does not bear examination, but who will stop to examine it in the middle of an exciting story. It's the same with other things

that are the result of hasty writing. And that's to be forgiven when it comes to earning a living.

The story, an intricate one, needed careful planning and that was well and truly done. As for the major characters - life was breathed into them and they all shine in their own way. Obviously, it was aimed at older readers. I think they got their money's worth.

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Who was the author?

I asked Bill Lofts, President of the Cambridge Old Boys' Books' Club, well-versed in all aspects of old boys books lore. He, as usual, promptly replied:

John William Bobin wrote his first Sexton Blake story in the Union Jack in 1912, entitled The Case of the Anonymous Letters. At the time, he was a laundry-man with a horse and cart at Southend, and his tale was written on scraps of paper. His main pen-name was Mark Osborne in the Blake saga, as he took over the character of George Marsden Plummer from Norman Goddard (killed on war service in 1916), who had in turn taken over from the creator, Michael Storm. Bobin did create his own character of Aubrey Dexter, who was very popular in the Blake stories. Bobin died at Southend on the 9th April, 1935, aged 45. He wrote 90 stories in the Sexton Blake Library and a large number in the Union Jack.

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A gifted man, he must have warmed the hearts of thousands of U.J. and S.B.L. readers - young and old.

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In Memory of Eric's beloved "Madam", I wish a Happy Christmas and New Year to our Editor, Snowee, and all readers of my favourite Little Paper.

ESMOND KADISH

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

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Greetings to Eric and all friends from

BILL AND CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Best Wishes for 1985. May our departed friends have rest eternal and may light perpetual shine upon them.

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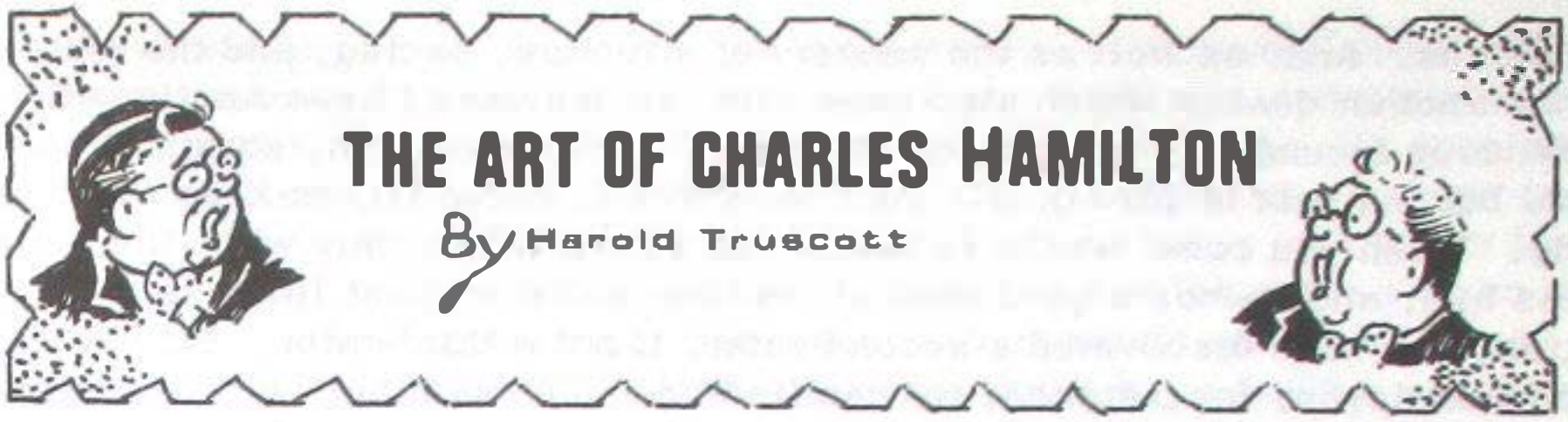

Talk to people of structure or any other technical aspect of an art in which they are interested, even deeply so, unless they are themselves involved in its creative side, and they will usually turn it off by saying something like "I'm not interested in the technique of it. I just like music", or whatever it is. And yet, if they are really interested, they will be aware of it when some work, in spite of its fine ideas, fails to grip. They are aware, nine times out of ten, of the absence of one or other of the things they are not interested in, although they do not know this; and, more often than not, the absent quality is a grip or mastery of structure. Sticking to music for the moment, which has been my art most of my life, there are many well-known composers who have got by, so far as they have, by a gift for fine ideas, themes, good orchestration or mastery of the piano keyboard, whose work mainly limps along, this bit followed by that bit, followed by this bit, without any particular reason, because a mastery of structure, organic growth in the music, is not among their gifts, and they have not tried to develop it. Often they know this, and do not know what to do about it. Often, too, there is a failure to invent even the right kind of ideas for the type of music they set out to write. Every one of the greatest composers has been a master of structure, and it shows. No composer has ever had a greater hold on a musical public than Beethoven, a hold that shows no sign of diminishing, after 157 years, but even is still growing, and no one gave more time and attention to structure in his work or had a greater gift for it. The same is true of Schubert, Haydn, Mozart - all of them what we call a genius.

So what has this to do with Hamilton? It all depends upon the field of endeavour. It may sound incongruous after what I have written, but my life-long knowledge of Hamilton's work in the Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood stories has convinced me that he, too, was a genius, with a gift for structure as strong in his own best work as that of the composers I have mentioned in theirs.

Am I crazy enough to put Hamilton on a level with Beethoven and the others I have mentioned? No; and there is no need. There are levels of genius. My beloved Schumann I would not put on a level with my equally beloved Schubert (who was beloved by Hamilton, too), but a genius he was, nonetheless. In his chosen field Hamilton was a genius - certainly the only one that field can show. There are numbers of very talented names but only

one genius. And, as well as the mastery of structure, pacing, and the rest, he had another quality which also goes with the geniuses I have mentioned: tremendous fecundity. When much pours out, some is rubbish, some not so good, but the bulk is pure gold. Such fecundity is necessary to keep the flow going. When you come across an artist who writes little, only when the spirit moves him, and spends a good deal of his time polishing that little he has written, you have discovered a second-rater, if not a third-rater. But with Mozart or Haydn, for instance, we can find near rubbish along with the masterpieces - but the latter form far the greater part of their output. The rubbish is a drop in the bucket. And, as with the work of any creative genius, Hamilton's stories have had far-reaching effects, not only on the youthful readers for whom he - partly, perhaps mainly, consciously - wrote, but who loved his stories often without being in a position to appreciate much that was there, but it reached, and continues to reach, adults, too. Subconsciously Hamilton was writing on more than one level a good deal of the time, although he kept his youthful audience in the forefront of his mind. His control is astounding.

At his best, everything fits, everything is allowed for, there is no extraneous fat, or padding. At his best. Admittedly, he was not always at his best. Who is? Allowing for the exigencies of writing for a magazine appearing weekly, which sometimes led him to stretch material to fill a certain space, as in the 'Lamb' or 'Silverson' series (Trollope and Dickens both had the same problem, though theirs concerned monthly parts), but even then the interest, to one reader, at least, was still maintained, by the power of the writing. After all, Beethoven wrote his so-called Battle or Wellington symphony, which is not a symphony at all; as with all his work, it has its unique points, but if everything he wrote had been on a similar level we should not hear much of him today. Now, I think that the Battle symphony is far lower in the scale of Beethoven's work as a whole than anything Hamilton produced for Magnet or Gem is in his.

On the other hand, he was also the master of the miniature. He produced countless single-issue stories (see, for instance, Magnet No. 1311, All through Bunter) which are not only complete, leaving no loose ends, but cover the ground with vivid tempo, balance of events, structure, in other words, and pacing, an important aspect of structure, and a quality not shown by so many writers of boys' (and girls') stories which yet have matter of interest. One of the reasons why in so many of these writers I find it difficult to maintain an interest is not the lack of good material, but precisely this lack of pacing in the story, and lack of consideration of structure as a whole, of balance of parts. At no matter what speed he worked, Hamilton seemed to have an inbuilt sense for these matters which operated most of the time, a sense he followed automatically.

At that same speed, too, he had a sense of exactly the right word, usually a word which spoke volumes. Other writers have had this sense, but never at the speed at which Hamilton worked. Henry James was one who had it, and towards the end of his life even carried this search for the right word

into conversation, to the discomfort of his listeners. Gustave Flaubert, whose reputation rests on five novels and two sets of short stories, spent a great deal of his time polishing his work and searching for the right word. He once said to Maxim du Camp, who was leaving after a visit, "If you visit me again in five years' time, you will probably find me still sitting here, looking for the right word". As I have remarked before, it Hamilton had taken the amount of time Flaubert did to find the right word, the Magnet would not have lasted thirty days, let alone thirty years; or the editor would have found a substitute who was not so particular about the right word, as, indeed, in later years, though not for this reason, they did at times find others who were not only not particular about the right word but also about many other things.

With such large scale affairs as the Courtfield Cracksman and China series, for instance, reading them straight through instead of having to wait a week in between each issue reveals their perfection of structure, tautness of design, variety of mood and content. But I am really concerned here with the shorter, and earlier, mastery shown by Hamilton in handling the elements of his art. It involves what many misguided and ignorant people would call nostalgia on my part. This it certainly is not. In 1922, when I was eight years old, a young friend lent me what proved to be a magical book for me - the 1920 Holiday Annual. I had already developed a taste for Dickens, having read "Oliver Twist" and "The Old Curiosity Shop". The latter, especially, I still re-read occasionally, only, these days, omitting the saga of Little Nell and her grandfather in their wanderings. But Quilp, Dick Swiveller, the Marchioness, Sampson and Sally Brass, still delight me. I ate up the Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood long stories with an avidity which would not be quenched. It was my first introduction tothe world of Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest - in a word, Hamilton. I was ten when I reluctantly returned that volume to its owner, because he asked for it. How many times I read those stories during the two years I could not say. But they were stored in my memory, although I did not see them again until, about 1947, I acquired a copy of that annual from the late Bill Martin. I remembered practically every feature, including the illustrations; especially, of those by Warwick Reynolds for "The Wandering Schoolboy", the one of Gussy looking in at the door of the refreshment room and seeing Fatty Wynn sitting eating, and equally the one of Arthur Augustus going full-tilt into Dr. Holmes' waistcoat; Chapman's superb drawings for the two Greyfriars stories, and, in "Rivals of Rookwood", Oliver Loring taking the trap and leaving Lovell on the ground. I always remembered part of the caption to that picture as "The trap bowled away down the lane", and was surprised to find, when I saw it again, that the word was actually "road", not "lane". My only mistake of memory. "Ructions at Greyfriars", also, remained vivid in my memory, especially for Mr. Quelch's tart remarks to Mr. Prout as to the danger of his brandishing his rifle. A fine example of a story (and there are many such in Hamilton's work) the plot of which, if told in a few words, sounds a bit silly, but which, in Hamilton's handling of it, seems logical and convincing.

Naturally, at that time I knew nothing of the history so far of the

"Well, Mrs. Brett," said the Head's deep voice, "can you identify the boy?" The outstretched hand of Mrs. Brett, the postmistress, pointed directly at Bob Cherry. "That is the boy, sir!"

Magnet, although it was because of that volume that I began to take the Companion papers, and I did not know that in reading "Fighting for His Honour" I was in fact reading two red Magnets, Nos. 173 and 174, "Driven from School" and "A Schoolboy's Honour", from 1911, three years before I was born. That story meant more to me than the others, and it still does. I could not count the number of times I have re-read it. It is, in my opinion, an early genuine masterpiece. It carried a special aura and atmosphere with it when I first read it, and it still does; for me, this is in the very stuff of which it is made, and in the way Hamilton has conceived and conveyed it. This is not nostalgia, any more than my reading "The Old Curiosity Shop" or any other Dickens these days is nostalgia, or my enjoying listening to music I first got to know when I was a boy is nostalgia. It is the power of Hamilton's art. The plot is not, in its bare outlines, original; nor were most of Shakespeare's.

It had been used before, it has been used since, many times, sometimes by Hamilton. The decent fellow who arouses the enmity of a rascal, and is made to suffer for it. But that is the bare bones of it - the originality or otherwise of the plot is the least important thing about it. After all, there is not an original theme in the whole finale of Mozart's Jupiter Symphony; all are tags, used by numbers of other composers of the time, and earlier, but the result is a toweringly unique masterpiece.

What matters in the Hamilton story of Bob Cherry and Esau Heath, the new boy, is Hamilton's handling of it. And here his unique mastery, even as early in the Magnet's history as this, of structure and, especially, pacing, is more than half what makes the tale stand out from numbers of others with a similar plot. Naturally, I did not know, at eight years old, what was particularly affecting me, what gave it its particular aura, but I responded to what I did not know, and that aura stayed with me vividly for twenty-three years, until at last I got a copy, re-read it and found the effect as strong as ever.

There is not a bit of fat, the story is lean, hard-muscled, not a word is wasted. The speed with which Bob's distaste for Heath is aroused even in the few words they exchange as Heath saunters towards the House at the beginning of the first chapter, his finding the new boy torturing a cat in his study, his handling Heath, and the bitter enmity thus aroused, are dealth with at an amazing pace, a pace which, strangely, does not leave one breathless but seems absolutely right. And it is a pace that is maintained throughout the story. Yet nothing is overlooked, and Hamilton finds room, mainly through Bunter, for the humour that is needed to leaven an otherwise rather grim story. But this is not allowed to get out of hand. Hamilton has his grip very firmly on the reins.

Heath gravitates naturally to Vernon-Smith, Skinner, Snoop and others of a similar character as companions, but his palliness with the Bounder is cut short when the latter discovers, in a fury, that Heath has killed his canary. In a way, it is Vernon-Smith who sets off the whole train of events that entrap Bob Cherry. Lounging on to the cricket field for practice smoking a cigarette, Bob indignantly snatches it away. In return, bowling to Bob, the Bounder deliberately throws the ball, hitting Bob on the leg and raising a nasty bruise. Bob retires to Study No. 1, which he is using in Wharton's absence, to rub his leg with Elliman's. Five minutes earlier Nugent had left his jacket there, with a letter and postal order from Alonzo Todd in the pocket. He actually sees Heath in the passage as he goes down, but this makes no impression on his mind. Bob is there alone for about a quarter of an hour before the juniors come up. Nugent proposes to Bull to go down to the post office to cash the order, only to discover that it is gone. The first thought is that Bunter is responsible, but that idea crumbles when they discover that Bunter has been haunting the tuckshop all through the vital period. The pity is that Bunter now knows what has happened and, of course, will spread it.

Beautifully handled, with just the right amount of accent and tempo, is first the boys', including Nugent's, bewilderment as to who could have stolen

the postal order, and then the gradual, though unwelcome, thought, that Bob was really the only one who could have done so. Leaving aside Vernon-Smith, Skinner and a few others, who relish the thought, no one want to think this, but they seem to be forced to. An interesting point in this and other red Magnets, is the character of Fishy, not yet the Fisher T. Fish of later stories. Here he is friendly and at first refuses to believe this of Bob. (At the end he shakes Bob's hand and says that Bob can kick him if he wants to. Fish is also named, with Bull, Nugent, Tom Brown, Linley and Desmond, as one of Bob's friends who would not believe a word against him.)

Bob is, of course, aware of the suspicion, and it makes him very unhappy. He is no dissimulator, and what he feels he shows. The usual sunny Bob Cherry has gone. By chance, the affair comes to Mr. Quelch's ears, and he is naturally disturbed; he tells Nugent to let him know if the postal order has not been found by bedtime that night.

Now, although he was present at the beginning of the story, Wharton has left the school for a week, with Dr. Locke's permission, to go to Wharton Lodge. (Hurree Singh is also absent at this time.) From this Hamilton later produces something like a masterstroke. Nugent has already written to Wharton to tell him what has happened. Bob Cherry goes out, moping alone; Heath also disappears for a while. Bob is so miserable that he forgets the time, misses calling-over and has to report to Mr. Quelch, who notices his troubled face and asks him what is the matter. Bob blurts out that the fellows suspect him, except his own friends. Mr. Quelch dismisses this as ridiculous.

In the meantime Nugent has written to Alonzo Todd asking him for the number of the order. A visit to the post office reveals that the order has been cashed, and Nugent and Bull are thunderstruck to find that it was signed 'R. Cherry', in Bob's handwriting. At first they cannot believe it, but their faith in Bob begins to weaken. Mr. Quelch asks them in class the result of their visit and Nugent tells him. Bob's cheeks burn as he hears this. Strangely, it is Fish again who finds a defence for Bob, saying that of course the thief would use another fellow's name and imitate his writing, thus actually hitting on the truth. The others do not agree with him, and especially find the idea of forgery far-fetched.

From here events move rapidly to a climax. Mr. Quelch informs the Head, who sends a message to Mrs. Brett, the Friardale postmistress, asking her to come to the school and identify the boy who cashed the order. She comes and picks out Bob. He is expelled in front of the assembled school, and stoutly refuses to go. After a tussle with prefects, in which he fights like a wildcat and actually knocks Wingate down, he is dragged to the gates, thrown into the road, his box after him, and the gates close.

Hamilton's handling of all this scene is masterly. There are times, especially in some of the red Magnets, when he gave way to a rather mawkish sentimentality (as did Dickens). They are not many, and they did disappear from his later work. But here his control of necessary feeling to the barest

minimum is, I think, equal to that of Dickens in Pickwick Papers, when Tony Weller tells Sam of his step-mother's death: "'Susan', I says, 'you've been a very good wife to me altogether: keep a good 'eart, my dear, and you'll live to see me punch that 'ere Stiggins 'ead yet'. She smiled at this, Samivel... but she died arter all". This is the one occasion, and in his first novel, if one can call Pickwick a novel, when Dickens resisted his almost invariable desire to make his readers weep. This same scene with Bob on his box in the road, a sort of middle distance view from the gates, also makes me think of one of the supreme moments in the films of Buster Keaton: the moment in "The Cameraman" when he realises that the girl thinks the lifeguard, with whom she has walked away, rescued her and he sinks to his knees on the sand, an immovable little figure; again a middle distance shot. Expressive restraint; Keaton, too, was not given to asking for pity from his audience, as Chaplin, for instance, often was.

Except for one thing still to come, one could see this as the end of the first act in a two-act play, an act in which an enormous amount has happened in a short space, and yet without a suggestion of hurry or scramble. In the meantime, as soon as Wharton receives Nugent's letter he cuts short his holiday and hurries back to the school, and the one remaining item in this first act is that as Bob sits, desolate, on his box in the road, the old station hack rumbles up, and Wharton jumps out and runs to his chum. Bob manages to tell him what has happened and Wharton does his best to hearten Bob, encouraging him to go on hoping, saying that he, Wharton, will get to the bottom of it and soon have Bob back. Bob knows, too, that his father will not rest until things are put right. He gets into the hack with his box and trundles away, and the curtain falls on act one.

Wharton's reappearance at that moment is the near masterstroke of which I wrote earlier. As one reads, there is nothing apparently contrived in what comes across. There is something in this incident, in the restained manner in which Hamilton has written it, which is very revealing of both characters, far more so than if the agony had been piled on. Also, it was a stroke of genius for Wharton to be away at the time these things happened, and it alone, apart from anything else, lifts this story on to a plane higher than any other I know by Hamilton (or by anyone else) which has anything like a similar plot.

When Bob was thrown out there was only one person, Mark Linley, at Greyfriars who believed in Bob's innocence, and he was at a loss as to what to do about it. With Wharton back there are two, and Linley is more hopeful, infected by Wharton's unshakeable belief in Bob Cherry and his confidence in his being able to nail the real thief. If Hurree Singh had been there, I am sure there would have been three, and if Mauleverer had already been at the school (he did not arrive until ten issues later), four. One remember his remark on a famous later occasion, "Evidence is bunk".

There are three major climaxes in the story. Two of them come fairly close together, and the second could possibly have got in the way of the first. In fact, it does not, because the two are of totally different kinds. The first

is the expulsion of Bob Cherry, his fighting with the prefects and his eventua lly being thrown out into the road. The second comes only two chapters later - more evidence of the unhurried rapid tempo at which this story mov es - and is, in fact, Major Cherry's visit to Dr. Locke to demand an explanation of his son's expulsion. The Head tartly gives him the facts, so far as he knows them, which the Major, in a towering rage, brushes aside as of no account. "Do you call that evidence? " he demands. The Head points out that it is all the evidence that would be needed in a c ourt of law. The Major retaliates by saying that Dr. Locke will take the consequences, to be told that the matter is closed and ended. "Closed and ended? " shouts the Major. "And my boy's career is closed and ended? " He tells Dr. Locke that he will hear from his solicitors, which kocks the stuffing out of the venerable old gentleman.

Wharton begins his enquiry by trying to get some help from Nugent, but the latter is now so rigidly convinced that Bob was the thief that he is not inclined to be co-operative; his manner is that of exasperation with Wharton for continuing to be unconvinced, especially since he was not at Greyfriars at the time. Wharton does manage, however, to stir Nugent's memory sufficiently for him to remember that he saw Heath in the passage when he went down to cricket, and when Wharton seizes on this, and says that Heath is a much more likely candidate than Bob, Nugent angrily says that Wharton is willing for it to be anyone rather than Bob, the actual thief. He is also angry because Major Cherry has threatened to sue the school for libel, and stamps out of the study, saying that he does not want to hear the name Bob Cherry again.

And now we come to what seems to me to be the one possible weakness in this story. Heath is anxiously searching his study for some item, muttering to himself that he knows he didn't destroy it, where can it be? Bunter slips into the study and watches him, even asks him if he has found it yet. It is, of course, a paper on which Heath practised writing Bob Cherry's name, in hand-writing like his own at the top, and getting more and more like Bob's down the page. Bunter has it and, in his sly, obtuse way, begins to elicit money from Heath for keeping quiet about it. Heath is forced to pay him. The weak-ness seems to me to be this. Surely Heath would have destroyed the paper the moment he had achieved his object? Surely, at least, he would have kept it on his person until he had destroyed it? Instead, he had slipped it under his blotter when he was called away, and so Bunter found it, being inquisitive. If he had destroyed it, it is doubtful if anything could ever have been proved against him. Well, it is said that the cleverest of criminals make some mistake eventua lly which gives them away, and perhaps we can excuse this apparent slip on Hamilton's part by reasoning that, dastard though he is, Heath is not an adult, experienced criminal, and was therefore the more likely to make some slip.

Because he is starting at the other end, the idea that someone somehow impersonated Bob at the post office, Wharton asks questions no one else had thought of asking, and quickly establishes two things. Although she is still sure that the boy who cashed the postal order was the boy she picked out - Bob

Cherry - Mrs. Brett does say that he seemed to have a cold, and kept a handkerchief over his mouth while he was cashing the order. Heath's thin, spiteful mouth was the one thing that could give him away. From there Wharton goes to Mr. Moses', the costumier's, shop, and discovers that a boy answering to Heath's description had bought a flaxen wig there on the afternoon of the day on which Bob was supposed to have cashed the order. He still had the handkerchief over his mouth. Wharton and Linley are now quite excited. The problem now is how to get Heath to give himself away, and it is not going to be easy.

Bunter, of course, is instrumental in directing attention to Heath. His new found funds bring the spotlight on him, and he can only explain them by his usual lie, that he had had a postal order which someone had cashed for him. When pressed, he names Heath, who is forced to admit it, but not very convincingly. Wharton wants to search Heath's study for the wig, but will not do it surreptitiously. He tells Heath what he proposes to do among jeers from Skinner and his like. Heath is quite unperturbed, and tells them to go ahead. (A nice touch, this.) A number of juniors go to Heath's study, where they search rather vigorously. Wharton and Linley are dismayed. Heath's willing agreement proves that there is nothing incriminating in his study. Wingate interrupts the search, and administers a sharp rebuke to Wharton for keeping up the idea that Bob is innocent.

Heath, meanwhile, is trying his hardest to get the paper back from Bunter, who only manages to extract more money from him. That night Wharton is awake when he hears Heath moving. He sees him bending down over Bunter's bed, feeling under the mattress. Bunter wakes, grabs Heath, and causes a commotion. Early the following morning Wharton sees Heath, dressed, leave the dormitory. He wakes Nugent and a minute or two later they follow. Heath goes to the ruined chapel, and the two juniors go there, too; they see a light below in the crypt and wait for Heath to come up. When he does he has a parcel. They take him to Wingate's study and ask the school captain to see what it contains. In it is the flaxen wig. Wingate's attitude is now very different, and Heath is finished.

The third climax is as uproarious as the first, but for a very different reason. It is Bob Cherry's triumphant return to the school. Apart from Wharton and Linley, who do not need to, no one can apologise enough. Fish's comment I have already referred to.

In many ways this story suggests a likeness to the remarkable "inverted" detective stories which were the invention of Richard Austin Freeman, the first of which was published in 1912, a year after this tale of Bob Cherry's expulsion. The difference, of course, is that part one of each of these Freeman tales shows us quite clearly the crime being committed; there is no mystery about the criminal; the interest is still maintained in the second part, in Thorndyke's unravelling of the case. In Hamilton's story we are not told in act one who had stolen the postal order and impersonated Bob Cherry,

but there would be few readers who would not have Heath in mind. The quick presentation, not only of the kind of boy Heath is, but his cause for malicious enmity against Bob, make it clear. Nonetheless, on a schoolboy plane, Wharton's unravelling of the mystery in act two is not far short of the excellence of Thorndyke. Linley plays a mild sort of Jervis to Wharton's Thorndyke.

There is, also, for me, a connection in the structure of this story with another of Buster Keaton's greatest films, "The General". There, the bulk of the first part consists of his chasing after his engine, stolen by Northern soldiers. The connecting link is his rescue of the girl, the stealing back of his engine and the return journey, this time being chased by the Northerners. The return is in most things the exact reversal of the outward chase. The first part of Hamilton's story is very much an outward journey for Bob Cherry, the second part a reversal in that all the machinations which enmeshed him are turned against Heath, with the result that Bob returns in triumph, and Heath expelled.

This story has had a particular hold on me for the greater part of my life, as I have tried to show. But my feeling for it, although it started when I was eight years old, has nothing to do with nostalgia. For many years now it has held me as an unusual and outstanding example of Hamilton's mastery, the mastery of a great artist, of the difficult art of balance and structure.

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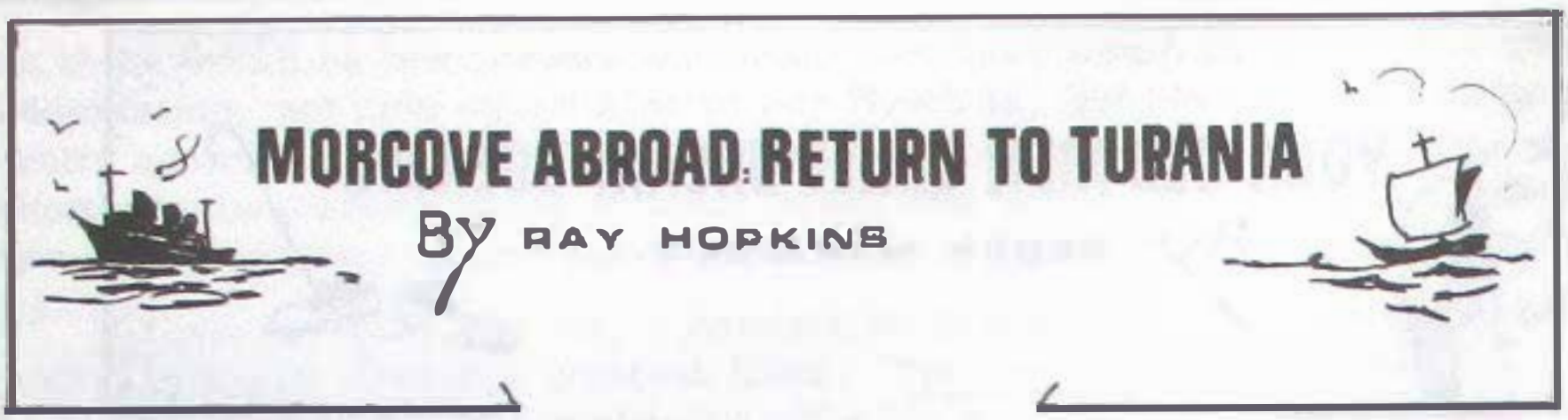
YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS

By GEOFF HARRISON



The loyal Morcove reader of 1931 who has eagerly awaited another visit to Turania since the first series in 1922 is in for two short, sharp shocks. The first is the blurb accompanying the title of the first story in the second series which states. "A wedding in the air, and the prospect of a thrilling holiday abroad in a country to which THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN BEFORE!. (The Caps are mine.)

Mention of a wedding and the name of Jack Somerfield would inevitably lead the eager, romantic reader to believe that, at last, Somerfield has said something more emotionally satisfying than "Well done" to Rose of the Desert, the dusky beauty who has been the means of saving the lives of the Morcovians on so many holiday trips to Rose's homeland, Morocco, and their previous first visit to Turania.

But this second shock comes when the reader learns that Somerfield, brother to Morcove's headmistress, is taking his fiancee back to her native country, Turania. TURANIA! Not Morocco? Poor Rose of the Desert. And poor reader who has to replace Rose with a new love who is "so amazingly beautiful, in a dark and gypsy-like way". Her name is Zora Druvesco.

There are others who do not approve of this marriage. Orphaned Zoro's Uncle Nicholai Brancovar orders her to return home without Somerfield. He has arranged for her to marry the heir of the Cosetti estate. "Black Rupert". Somerfield also receives a Turanian telegram from Black Rupert warning him not to set foot in Turania.

Jack Somerfield insists on going to Turania with Zora, also accompanied by Betty, Polly, Paula, Madge, Tess, Naomer, Pam Willoughby and Helen Craig, with Mrs. Linton as Chaperone.

The first blow falls at the frontier station at Bukajero when Somerfield is arrested because he has no passport. He had left England with one, but a man who had bumped into him on the train and got off at the next stop was apparently the thief.

The second tale in the series contains some scenic descriptions adding to the unease of the English travellers:

"To right and left steep slopes formed the cultivated bases of mountains that ultimately raised jagged peaks against the turquoise sky.

The scenery was more than grand: it was dramatically wild."

"At last they were at an altitude where cultivation ceased. There was nothing but fir forest, draping the rugged mountain sides, with here and there a foaming torrent."

Castle Brancovar is "grim as a stone fortress, two-thirds of the way up the mountainside. Far from standing four square to the gales and blizzards, which must have raged about it every winter for centuries past, its lofty walls were at all angles to one another. And there were many turrets and towers, some of the latter battlemented, with cross-shaped slots in their walls".

"A closer view only deepened the impression that these great, grim walls formed the stronghold of a despot."

Uncle Nicholai meets them in the "enormous courtyard" of Castle Brancovar together with Black Rupert and his seventeen year old sister, Ettel. Rupert tells Zora, "Turanian should marry Turanian, not make a mongrel marriage with a common foreigner, who is this fellow, after all? Not much, that his sister keeps a school - bah!"

After lunch, Ettel takes Betty and Co. for a walk but her attitude is far from friendly. She tells them, "You are middle-class of course. Your people keep shops. In England everybody keeps a shop, I know. Well, we Cosetti's have so much land; we are almost like royalty. When I marry, a husband will be found for me as if I were a princess". Polly says, "I wish you joy of him!".

When they return to the Castle, Uncle Nicholai tells them Zora has left and they are all to pack and go home. He gives Mrs. Linton a note purporting to be from Zora which says all is over between her and Somerfield and she is to marry Rupert. When they leave the Castle proudly refusing the use of a wagon offered them by Nicholai Brancovar they gaze back at the Castle from further down the mountain and observe a light in a window and a silhouette they recognize as Zora's. They realize Zora is a prisoner in the Castle. At this point they are joined by Somerfield, dishevelled and out of breath, who has escaped from the authorities at Bukajero.

The following day Zora hears the cry of a seagull - a bird unknown in Turania - which she recognizes from her visit to Morcove situated on the cliffs in Devon. Feeling sure it is Jack Somerfield trying to attract her attention, she encloses a note in a small jewel case, drops some oil from the lamp on her handkerchief and ties it to the jewel case, sets light to the oil-soaked hankie and watchies it as it descends to the ground. Her condition reminds Zora of her childhood reading and she amuses herself by imagining she is an important Princess in Castle Dangerous. Her Uncle is the Ogre and Ettel is an ugly sister. Somerfield, of course, is Prince Charming.

Polly, next day, is watching Tess as she is sketching outside the gates of Castle Brancovar. Rupert stalls his car as he slows down to make a disparaging remark about Tess' drawing (The 1931 illustration by Leonard

Shields shows Rupert's car to be like a straight-backed London taxi). While he is getting the car in motion again, Polly climbs on to the luggage grid at the back and vanishes through the Castle gates and into an old coach-house. Her mission: to free Zora. (Shades of Rose of the Desert!)

By a series of incredibly lucky chances, during which she is seen by no-one, Polly arrives at Zora's door. About to knock and make her presence known to Zora, she hears voices, and realizes that one voice she is listening to is that of Ettel. Ettel, hearing a movement at the door, has a scout round, thus giving Polly the opportunity to pass Zora a note under the door and tell her to send it to Somerfield who is below giving off seagull noises. Betty and Co. are thrilled to read, "Please stand by, all of you, and watch for a red scarf waving from the battlements of the tower. That will be a sign I want help - Polly".

Somerfield encounters a servant girl in the woods who gives him a note: "Trust Her - Morcove". She says she is a native German who hates working for the Brancovars and begs him to take her with them if she helps him rescue Zora. Somerfield agrees and the servant sneaks him into the castle, intending to alert Brancovar and Rupert.

Polly observes this little comedy and ties her red scarf to one of the chimneys where it acts as a signal to the waiting Morcovians.

Somerfield, who is waiting patiently for Zora to appear is thunderstruck when the door bursts open and Betty, Madge and Tess tell him he has been lured in to the Castle by the disguised Ettel in order to be made captive.

Polly and Zora lock Ettel in Zora's room. Somerfield tells Zora to get Rupert's car started and wait at the gate while he settles a couple of old scores. Betty and Co. see what he means when he joins them at Rupert's car as Nicholai (holding his streaming nose) and Rupert (covering a darkening one eye) appear enraged and discomfited to find their captive driving off her rescuers in a borrowed car.

When they return to Devon, Somerfield and Zora hope to find themselves a home near the school and plan to be married in September. Morcove's wedding gift to them is a "rose bowl, fashioned by one of the best silversmiths in London".

The marriage of the Headmistress' brother is not recorded in the pages of The Schoolgirls' Own.

The second Turania series recounted above can be found in The Schoolgirls' Own, Nos. 544-547 (11 July - 1 August, 1931).

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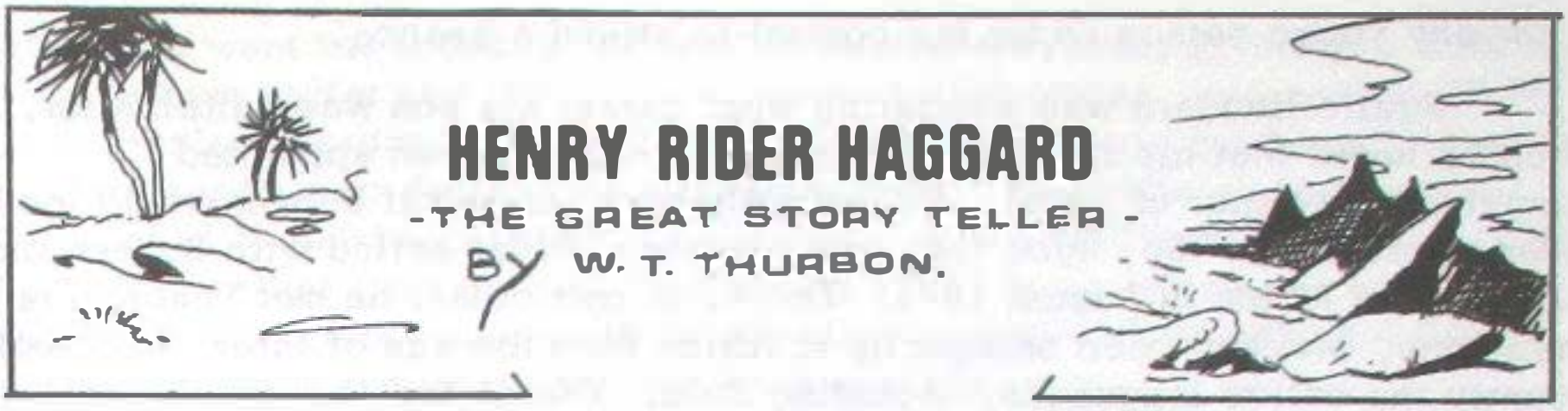
Xmas Greetings to Eric Fayne and Norman Shaw.

H. HEATH, WINDSOR



HENRY RIDER HAGGARD

-THE GREAT STORY TELLER -

By W. T. THURBON.

It all began as the result of a bet. Most accounts say of a "bob" (a humble shilling in old money; 5p in todays coinage).

In 1883 had appeared a book which had attracted great admiration - Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island". Two brothers were travelling up to London by train, and they were discussing "Treasure Island". One brother was praising the story with great enthusiasm. Replied the other "It's an interesting book, but I don't think it so very remarkable". Indignantly retorted the other brother "Well, I'd like to see you write anything half so good; bet you a bob you can't". "Done" said Henry Rider Haggard, and within six weeks he had written "King Solomon's Mines".

Henry Rider Haggard was the eighth of ten children born to "Squire" William Haggard; a flamboyant Norfolk country gentleman. From his birth Rider seemed to be in some ways different from his brothers and sisters. Alone of all the family he was not born at Bradenham Hall, the home of three generations of his family. Because his father had temporarily let the Hall, he was born at a farm on the estate on 22 June 1856. He nearly died just after his birth, first from jaundice and then from inflammation of the lungs. The doctor gave him up, but his mother by dosing him with brandy and wrapping him in hot flannel saved him. So near was he to death that he was first christened at home. A few weeks later he had recovered, to be duly christened in the village church. He grew up healthy and strong, but developed a characteristic that separated him from the rest of his family: a vivid and inventive imagination. These flights of imagination often occurred at night, in the darkness of the nursery, and one nurse took advantage of this by producing a hideous doll, with a hissed warning that he was being left in the care of "she who must be obeyed" - out of these nightmares, years later, his most famous character, "She", was born.

Rider's mother most influenced him in his childhood, and by her simple, devout faith, encouraged his habit of churchgoing which he kept up until his death. His relations with his father were different; "Squire" Haggard formed early the impression that Rider was stupid. His schooldays were varied. At one time he attended a private tutor, and here he met and became friends with a farmer named Quatermain, whose name he was later to make famous. Haggard's vivid and macabre imagination was to lead him to the study of Egyptian religion. Later, while studying under an Army "Crammer" he went to some spiritualist meetings. He was to say of these that he would never

allow any young person under his control to attend a seance!

Squire Haggard was wondering what career his son was suitable for, when he heard that his friend, Sir Henry Bulwer, had been appointed Lieutenant Governor of Natal. He promptly wrote to ask if Bulwer would include Rider in his party. So, aged just over nineteen, Rider sailed with Bulwer and his party for Africa in August 1875. There, in particular, he met Theophilus Shepstone, who had been brought up in Africa from the age of three, and spoke fluently the native languages, including Zulu. There, too, he met the real Umslopogaas, son of a Swazi King, who owned the battle axe named "Inkosi Kaas (Chieftainess), and who had the relic of a head wound in his forehead. Haggard spent an exciting time in Africa and learned much of the history of the Zulu and other tribes. Here he also met, among others, A. D. Cochrane, known to the Zulus as "Macumahzahn" ('Watcher by night"), the name which Haggard subsequently gave to Allan Quatermain. Also a man who had seen the great battle on the Tugela River where after the death of Panda his two sons fought for the Zulu Chieftainship, and Ceteway defeated Umbelazi.

The Boers, of Dutch descent, had made their great trek across the Vaal river and there established the Transvaal Republic. Shepstone returned from a visit to England with a knighthood and instructions to annex the Transvaal, where Boers and Zulus were on the edge of war, while other native tribes, like the Basutos, were also in warlike mood. Shepstone led a mission to the Boer capital, Pretoria, including Haggard in his party. Haggard came to know the leading men in Natal, including F. B. Fynney, chief interpreter of the Zulu language. Haggard had some narrow escapes while in the Transvaal. Sent as Secretary to a mission to the Basuto king, Secocoeni, only Haggard's desire to see some fine mountain scenery by moonlight saved the party from a native ambush. When the annexation of the Transvaal by the British Government was made Haggard finished the reading of the proclamation, and assisted in raising the Union Jack, in Pretoria. Haggard now received several government appointments, finishing as Master of the High Court of the Transvaal, and accompanied the Judge on Circuit. The party went well armed, and Haggard showed himself in addition to his other duties to be an excellent cook.

In the Zulu War that followed, although Haggard joined the volunteer cavalry, his official duties kept him in Pretoria. In the Zulu war, part of the British Army was ambushed and destroyed by the Zulus at Isandhlwana. In 1879 Rider resigned his government post and came home, having first agreed to run an Ostrich Farm with Cochrane as partner. While at home Haggard met, and married, Louisa Margitson, heiress to Ditchingham House estate, after difficulties with her guardians. Soon after they had returned to Africa came the first Boer War of 1880. British defeats caused Gladstone's Liberal Government to withdraw from the Transvaal, and Haggard returned to England. Here he tried his hand at literature, but two novels "Dawn" and "The Witches Head" were failures.

Haggard decided to become a Barrister, and it was on the train to London, in connection with his studies, that the famous bet was made. The

manuscript went the round of the London publishers, until it reached Andrew Lang, famous writer and critic. Lang gave it high praise, and sent it on to W. E. Henley, reader for Cassells. Henley's and Lang's combined praise caused Cassell's to decide to publish the book. They offered Haggard a choice of £100 for the copyright of the book, or a small royalty on each copy sold. Haggard at first decided to take the £100, but a whispered warning from an elderly clerk caused him to change his mind and take the royalty option - probably the best decision he ever made.

Yet Max Pemberton, famous author of the day, remembered sitting next to a well known publisher at dinner on the publication day. Said the publisher "There's a silly book about a diamond mine being published today. It was offered to me and I turned it down. I'm sorry for the fool who bought it". Pemberton wondered what that publisher thought later when Cassells could not produce copies fast enough to meet the demand in the first year, during which some 12,000 copies were sold. The night before publication Cassells had covered London with posters "King Solomon's Mines - the most amazing story ever written".

Though Haggard never admitted it, the general impression was that he had modelled Allan Quatermain on the famous elephant hunter, Frederick Courtenay Selous, one of Africa's most successful big game hunters of the 19th Century. Selous had written a book shortly before "King Solomon's Mines" was conceived, "Wanderings of an Elephant Hunter". Selous took part in the fighting in the Mashona and Matabele rebellions in late 19th century Rhodesia, and was killed in action during the first World War while fighting against the German in Africa. The Selous Scouts of recent history in Zimbabwe Rhodesia were named after Selous.

"King Solomon's Mines" has never been out of print since it was first published; next year will see the centenary of its original publication.

It was the first story of it's type to appear - and it brought in two subjects, then new, that Haggard was among the first to use, and which he was to use again with great effect: a forgotten or undiscovered tribe or race, and a treasure hunt.

D. S. Higgins has called Haggard "The Great Story Teller", and Beresford Ellis speaks of "the voice from the infinite". Haggard had found his vocation. For a period from when he was twenty-nine he wrote a series of books in five years that were to be the sensation of the period: "King Solomon's Mines", "Allan Quatermain", "She", "Nada the Lily" and "Swallow". His writings were to impress writers and critics as diverse, among others, as Andrew Lang, Rudyard Kipling, C. S. Lewis and R. Llancellyn Green. Incidentally, also, he was to inspire many of the writers of the tales we read in many of the papers we collect. "King Solomon's Mines" is still too well know to need further recall. It introduces Allan Quatermain to us, and also the first of Haggard's Zulu characters, Ignosi.

The bulk of Haggard's stories are remarkably free from racial prejudice

or cultural exclusiveness. He once said 'I could never discern a superiority so great in ourselves, as to authorise us, by right divine as it were, to destroy the coloured man and to take his land". Beresford Ellis refers to Haggard's awareness of the transcience of human civilisations. A lesson we can all learn. Rider Haggard was to write some 58 books in all, apart from short stories and articles in many of the magazines of the period, such as 'The Windsor", "The Strand", and 'The Sphere". Fifty years after his death in 1925 many of his books were still in print. And new editions still appear. His output included 42 romances, 12 contemporary novels, and a number of works of non fiction.

Having successfully launched his first romance in "King Soloman's Mines", Haggard began its sequel "Allan Quatermain". This was the book that first introduced Umslopogaas, and continues the lost civilisation theme. It begins with Quatermain mourning the death of his son, and soon he, with his friends Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good return to Africa. Following up a rumour of a lost white race in central Africa, and adding to their part Umslopogaas, they set out on their search. After numerous adventures on the way, they are caught up in a current in the river they are travelling on and swept into a subterranean water way, from which after a nightmare journey they emerge into the waters of a great lake. Here they find a race of white people and find a great city on the far shore of the lake. "On the brow of this precipice stood a great city of the same granite that formed the cliff --- at the back of the palace the town sloped gently upward to a flashing building of white marble, crowned by a golden done." This is the capital of the Zu Vendi people. Sun worshippers, ruled over by two queens. The story leads up to the rivalry of the two queens to win the love of Sir Henry Curtis. Sir Henry's final choice of Nyleptha arouses the jealousy of her sister, Sorais, and leads to a battle between the armies of the rival queens. There is a fierce battle in which the army of Nyleptha, led by Curtis win the victory. But news comes of a plot to kill Nyleptha back in the Zu Vendi captial. Allan and Umslopogaas rush back to the rescue, Umslopogaag running beside Allan's horse when his own horse fails. They reach the palace and warn Nyleptha, but find the great gates of the palace have been thrown down from the top of the staircase leading to the palace. Here in a great fight, Umslopogaas holds the stair until help arrives but is mortally wounded in the fight. The story ends with the death of Umslopogaas, and also of Quatermain, and Curtis and Good ruling in Zu Vendi land.

Sounds familiar? Clarke Hook used the idea of a subterranean waterway in an early Jack, Sam and Pete tale. Cecil Hayter's Lobangu is based on Umslopogaas and he uses Haggard's ideas in many Lobangu stories: as also another Zulu, M'Wama, in his 'Red Scarab" tales, so also is Brooks Umlosi based on Umslopogaas.

Haggard's stories set a pattern many were to follow.

But before Haggard's "Allan Quatermain" was published he had begun work on a new story. He gave the manuscript to his Agent, saying prophetically

"This is what I shall be remembered by". The book was "She".

Haggard was deeply interested in reincarnation and in the religion of Ancient Egypt. Yet he combined with this the early churchmanship he had learned from his mother.

"She" is a story told by a man named Holly. He is in Cambridge when he is visited one night by a friend named Vincey. Vincey tells Holly he is dying, he asks Holly to become guardian of his young son Leo, and on Leo's 25th birthday to hand to him a strong box which he gives to Holly. On Leo's 25th birthday the box is opened. Inside is a broken potsherd, covered with ancient writing, in Greek and Latin. Leo learns that he is the sole descendant of an ancient Egyptian family. His ancestor was one, Kallikrates, a priest who broke his vows and fled with the daught of Pharaoh, Amenartes. The two travel to central Africa to a place of caves, named Kor. Here they encounter an immortal white queen, revered as a goddess; and a strange pillar of fire. The goddess falls in love with Kallikrates and offers him immortality. He rejects this for Amenartes. In a fit of jealousy the goddess, "She", kills Kallikrates. Amenartes escapes and bears a son, ancestor of Leo. Amenartes bids her son or his successors to seek out the goddess, slay her after finding the secret of her immortality. Holly and Leo set out for Africa. After many adventures they find the cave of Kor, in which they find the city ruled by "She". Holly first meets the veiled figure of She, and learns that she has the secret of immortality by bathing in a pillar of fire. When shee sees Leo she recognises him as the returned Kallikrates. Leo falls in love with her, and under her spell, is taken to the cavern of the pillar of fire. Leo hesitates to enter this, and "She" enters in all her beauty. But this time the pillar undoes its work. "She" ages before their eyes, and finally disappears, saying she will return.

Andrew Lang, in conversation with Haggard, suggested the "She" should return, saying "I hope they find "She" in Tibet and all die together". 25 years were to elapse before Haggard wrote "Ayesha, the return of She", and he duly set this in Tibet. "She" was an enormous success, and made Haggard's name, though it met with come criticism. In 1888 Haggard went to Iceland, and his interest in Norse history led to his writing a story, in the form of the old Horse Sagas, "Eric Brighteyes". Years later in "The Wanderer's Necklace" he would write a story that led from the north to Byzantium. In 1888-9, in collaboration with Lang, he wrote "The World's Desire". Many writers, from early times have tried to write a sequel to Homer's "Odyssey". No one has ever really succeeded; but the Lang-Haggard "The World's Desire", set in the Egypt of the Exodus, is a very good story indeed.

Haggard followed this up with one of his great epic stories. "Nada the Lily" is an epic of the Zulu people, from the beginning of Chaka's reign to the death of Dingaan. A tragic story, it includes Umslopogaas, and his winning of his battle axe, his life with his blood-brother, Galazi, with his pack of wolves, and his great war club, Umslopogaas's wife "Nada", the Lily of the story, and ends with the deaths of Galazi and Nada. Longman, Haggard's

publisher told him "you have constructed a story in which the dramatic persona are all natives".

Rudyard Kipling wrote later to Haggard to say that a scene in "Nada" of wolves leaping at the feet of a dead man, seated on a rock, inspired his beginning of a wolf tale that led to the "Jungle Book". Haggard and Kipling became close friends, and in after years would both work on their individual books in the same room. Burnham, the famous American scout who spent many years in Africa, named his young daughter (who was to die tragically young, during the Matabele-Mashona revolt in Rhodesia) "Nada", after Haggards heroine.

"Distanced as he was from the years spent in Africa, when night after night he had listened to the folk tales of the Zulu people, and lived among the few white men to have studied Zulu history and tradition, Haggard weaves his memories and recollections in a vivid and unique tribute to an African kingdom" writes Higgins. Haggard also visited Eygpt and wrote a tale of Cleopatra. His readers clamoured for more of Allan Quatermain, and in 1887 he wrote a good tale, "Maiwa's Revenge". A dispute with one of his publishers led to Haggard working a neat "come back" on the firm concerned. He had to write two books to finish his contract, and the second of these was "Mr. Meeson's Will". In this a young woman author has written a successful book, but has bound herself to a contract of the kind that Haggard had turned down over "King Solomon's Mines". Agusta, the heroine, finds herself sailing to Australia on the same ship as Mr. Meeson, the publisher. The ship is wrecked and both Augusta and Mr. Meeson find themselves marooned on a pacific Island. Meeson realises that he is dying, and decides to make a will in favour of his nephew, whom he has sacked for supporting Augusta's case. But there is nothing to write on! So the Will is finally tattoed on Augusta's back. In time Augusta is rescued and the Will proved in Court. Haggard (a Barrister himself) gets much amusement out of the court scenes. It is an amusing book, and might be called "Haggard's revenge".

Haggard, distressed at this time by the death of his mother, decided to leave London and farm his estate, but before doing so he, and his friend Jebb, with their respective wives went to visit Mexico. Soon after his arrival there he was shattered to receive news of the death of his only son. When at length he recovered from the shock he wrote his first Aztec story "Montezuma's Daughter". He took as his hero a sixteenth century native of Bungay, in Norfolk, Thomas Wingfield, although the real Wingfield never had the adventures described in the novel. Haggard's Wingfield follows the murderer of his mother to Spain, and from thence to Mexico, where the murder is finally avenged. Wingfield marries a daughter of Montezuma, but after her death returns after twenty years to his native village. The Conquistadores form a vivid background to the story. Many years later Haggard wrote another tale of the same period "The Virgin of the Sun".

"Montezuma's Daughter" was the last story Haggard wrote by hand. He engaged a secretary, Miss Hector, and bought a typewriter. In 1894 Haggard

wrote "Heart of the World" set in Mexico and "The People of the Mist" an African story. He also wrote a book on Agriculture "A Farmer's Year". In 1896 he wrote "Swallow", a very fine story of the Great Boer Trek.

Rider Haggard was a great natural storyteller. The range of his stories was extremely wide. From South Africa to Ancient Egypt. From the Norse Sagas to Byzantium; from the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 ("Pearl Maiden" - which introduces the Essenes of recent "scroll" fame) to the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin during the Crusades ("The Brethren" - a fine novel, with a strong plot, beginning in England, on the east anglian coast, moving to Alamut, the stronghold of the Assasins, then to the court of Saladin, to the battle of Hattim, and finally to Jerusalem). From Holland under the Spanish rule ("Lysbeth") to the dissolution of the monasteries ("The Lady of Blossholme"): and he was to bring back "SHE" in other tales.

There were also the stories of ancient Egypt: "Morning Star", based on Egyptian religion; "Moon of Israel" (The Exodus); "Queen of the Dawn". The trilogy: "Marie", "Child of Storm" and "Finished", introducing Zikali, the Zulu Wizard, and Mameena, a Zulu princess. "Benita" (1906) was a story of regression under hypnosis, set in Africa; and "The Holy Flower, a story of orchid hunting in Africa, is linked to "The Ivory Child" and "The Ancient Allan", in which, under a drug, Allan finds himself living in Ancient Egypt. Haddard's African tales were exceedingly popular, and there was a general demand for these; which he met both by the longer stories, and by short stories. The motto that Haggard put at the beginning of "Allan Quatermain" - "Ex Africa semper aliquid novi"* was to prove very apt. "When the World shook" was Haggard's only attempt at science fiction. Oro, a reborn superman, seeks to destroy the World by altering the path of the gyroscope on which the whole earth swings. The description of the approach of the gyroscope at first seems like the pillar of fire in "She", but as it whirls past on it's course it is a cold, frozen fire, and it continues it's course undeflected, in spite of all that Oro can do.

A writer in a recent issue of the new "Book Collector" magazine gives high praise to what is perhaps Haggard's grimmest story. If Haggard had not written "She", probably "Red Eve" would have been regarded as his most imaginative story. Set in the 14th Century it tells the story of the difficult courst of the love of Eve Clavering and Hugh de Cressi. Apart from it's opening chapter it begins and ends in East Anglia, in Dunwich and Blythborough, in the reign of Edward III, but it moves to the Battle of Crecy, and through Europe to Venice. It was Kipling who suggested to Haggard the terrible figure of Murgh, "the Second Thing created", "Gateway of the Gods", the personification of Death itself. It is more than a tale of star crossed love. Through it moves the splendid heroine, Red Eve, the gallant Hugh de Cressi, the grim archer, Grey Dick, and above all the nightmare figure of Murgh. For it tells of the coming of the Black Death from the East to Venice, and then across Europe. "Such was the beginning of the awful plague, which travelled from the East to Venice, and then to England."

* "Out of Africa always comes something new."

From where I sit writing this I can look across to the tower of St. John's College Chapel, founded on the old hospital of St. John, and note from the hospital archives that three successive Masters of the Hospital died of the Black Death, in one year.

Of particular interest to us is the 1908 novel "Queen Sheba's Ring". It is believed that Conan Doyle founded his "Professor Challenger" of "The Lost World" on Haggard's "Professor Ptolomeny Higgs" of "Queen Sheba's Ring". Both are good stories, but in U.J. 504 of 7 June 1913. "The Long Trail", Hayter uses effects from both "Queen Sheba's Ring" and from "The Lost World". Reginald Wray used both as sources for several serials in "The Boys' Friend" and in particular for his serial in "Chuckles", "Phantom Gold".

Haggard did much public work. He made a tour of Rural England in 1901-2, which showed the bad state of English farming. He served on Royal Commissions. He wrote a book on the Salvation Army, "Regeneration", for which he took no fee, and gave the copyright to the Army. In 1911 he was knighted for his public service. He toured the Colonies during the Great War seeking to find settlements for ex-service men. After the War he became a K.C.B. In the 1920's and 1930's many of his books were made into films.

Haggard continued writing until his death in 1925; several novels were published posthumously.

* *

WANTED: S.O.L.s - 145,147,228,230,280,283,308, "Always a Knight", Author unknown. Good Wishes to all.

MAURICE KING

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= =

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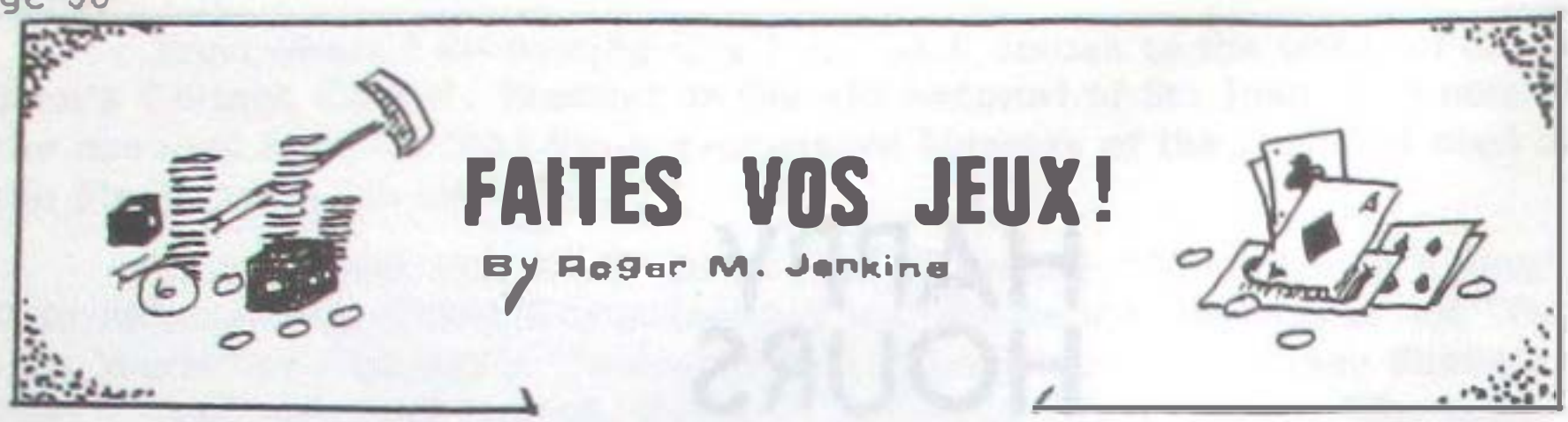


FAITES VOS JEUX!

By Roger M. Jenkins

It was a great occasion when Frank carried on his longest and most determined campaign to break the impregnable bank. For the time that mirage dominated him. Roulette haunted even his dreams - it even spilled over into the pages of the Gem and Magnet, though as a warning to youth, not an example. Frank has always been wiser for others than for himself.

Charles Hamilton's autobiography, though tantalising with its obvious gaps, still portrays in detail that long-forgotten Edwardian world of Nice and Monte Carlo, in chapters 9 and 14. The Villa in Nice where he lodged, the carnival, the Battle of the Flowers, the afternoon train to Monte Carlo - all came to life again in Gems 111-12, when Miss Fawcett, for her health's sake, took a villa and Figgins' uncle took the neighbouring one, the juniors each donned a domino costume, and Figgins' cousin Archie Hilton eventually stole money to gamble. It is easy to see how the fascination of gambling, especially roulette, is so often acknowledged: Skimpole offered them an infallible system, and in the casino (where they were disguised as adults) Figgins could understand the lure of the game, even if Kerr poured cold water on it: the unattractive elements were, however, clearly brought out, including an old lady annexing someone else's winnings, easy enough when gold and silver coins were thrown on the tables.

The unlucky numbers at roulette are often said to be 3, 17, and 32, and it comes as something of a surprise to read how Charles Hamilton came up more than once with 17 at Monte Carlo, a number he often backed because he sold his first story at the age of seventeen. It is also surprising to see that he often backed the even money bets on the sides, or the 2-1 columns at the foot, which are generally reckoned to be ladies' bets - though he does acknowledge that this was really descending to child's play. Men are generally expected to bet on the numbers, and these winnings are pushed towards a player with a rake, whereas winnings at "child's play" are often tossed over with scarcely-veiled contempt. Nowadays most roulette tables have three croupiers and each player has counters of an individual colour, which would rule out the dishonesty of the old lady in the Gem story, but for all this Charles Hamilton's vivid contemporary details etch an unforgettable picture in the mind's eye. Gems 111-12 could really be classed as a schoolboy's guide to roulette.

A few weeks later in the same year, 1910, a similar theme was developed in Magnets 123-4, when Aunt Amy went to Switzerland for her health, and Wharton was allowed to take some friends with him. Bunter

managed to join the party by annexing one of the tickets, and the other unexpected guest was Hazeldene: for Marjorie's sake he was included to get him away from the bad influence of Vernon-Smith, though the Bounder later turned up in Switzerland himself. The trip to Switzerland was a little unusual in that the juniors visited various famous historical places, but the lure of gambling was still strong, though the local game - petits chevaux - was not described in detail. As in the Gem series, entrance to the casinos was achieved by disguise - false moustaches on this occasion - and once again one of the gamblers stole money to try to win back his losses. Despite some similarities in details, the Magnet series made much more use of personality clashes to provide the drama:

> "You think you've stopped me, do you?" went on Hazeldene, looking at Wharton with a bitter gaze. "You're mistaken! Monceux isn't the only place on the shore that has a Kursaal, and I shall play again, and as often as I like. I've got one friend here, at all events, and he will stand by me! As for you, I've done with you! I'll never enter your house again; I'm going back to Geneva tonight with Smith: hang you!"
>
> Wharton still silent.
>
> "I'm stony now", went on Hazeldene. "I might have won it all back; I might have won any amount! I know my luck was on the turn."

This exchange ended with Hazeldene striking Wharton in the face, a far cry from the good-humoured pranks in Nice. Incidentally, the Schoolboys' Own reprint of these two numbers - No. 79 - is the only one that contains more material than its Magnet source. Presumably the original script was too long for the Magnet but must still have been available when the reprint was issued in 1928.

It was not until 1913 that the Magnet readers were treated to a description of the casino at Monte Carlo, but it was well worth waiting for, since it was the most detailed and fascinating of all. In No. 270, Bob Cherry's disgraced cousin, Paul Tyrrell, had asked Bob for help in order to get himself established. The scheme was to use a system to beat the bank at Monte Carlo, and he had a list of genuine permanences - thousands of numbers as they occurred at the roulette table. (The genuineness is not doubted, but the permanence of such a sequence of numbers is quite unbelievable.) He had then tried his system against this list and found that he was, in theory, winning at the least every tenth time, and with odds of 35-1 this represented, in theory, a handsome profit. Needless to say, Bob Cherry did not finance this scheme, and his cousin then stole money from Mauleverer, and the juniors went to stay with Mauleverer's uncle so that they could pursue Tyrrell to get the money back.

The first chapter in the Principality recounted in detail a stay at a most expensive hotel, with excessive prices charge, including pears at seven and sixpence each. The last three chapters dealt with the Casino, including a whole column on the various bets possible, and the odds attaching to each - cheval, carre, transversale en plein, transversale simple, etc. Apart from all this factual information, and a comprehensive description of the building itself, Charles Hamilton did not neglect to maintain his chief interest as a writer:

> The game goes on, the juniors watching it, fascinated. It is a sight well worth seeing - human nature displaying itself in unaccustomed ways.

Whether it was the woman trying to appropriate someone else's winnings, or the man who backed both black and red, the author could describe them with acute perception:

> Such players, it is true, are rare - and yet outside the Casino they appear to be in possession of their senses and not fit subjects for a lunatic asylum. Upon habitual players the game exercises a fascination which seems to rob them of all common sense.

Few readers at the time could have guessed that 'Frank Richards' was wryly analysing his own weaknesses. Of the dishonest woman he wrote:

> She stands where she is, looking out for another chance - a convicted thief - and not in the slightest degree put out by being convicted. And none of the players appear shocked, either; they are all too busy with their play to think about the matter.

When Tyrrell is described at the table, some of his bets are related in detail, and after one or two wins, when he might have left with a profit, he persisted:

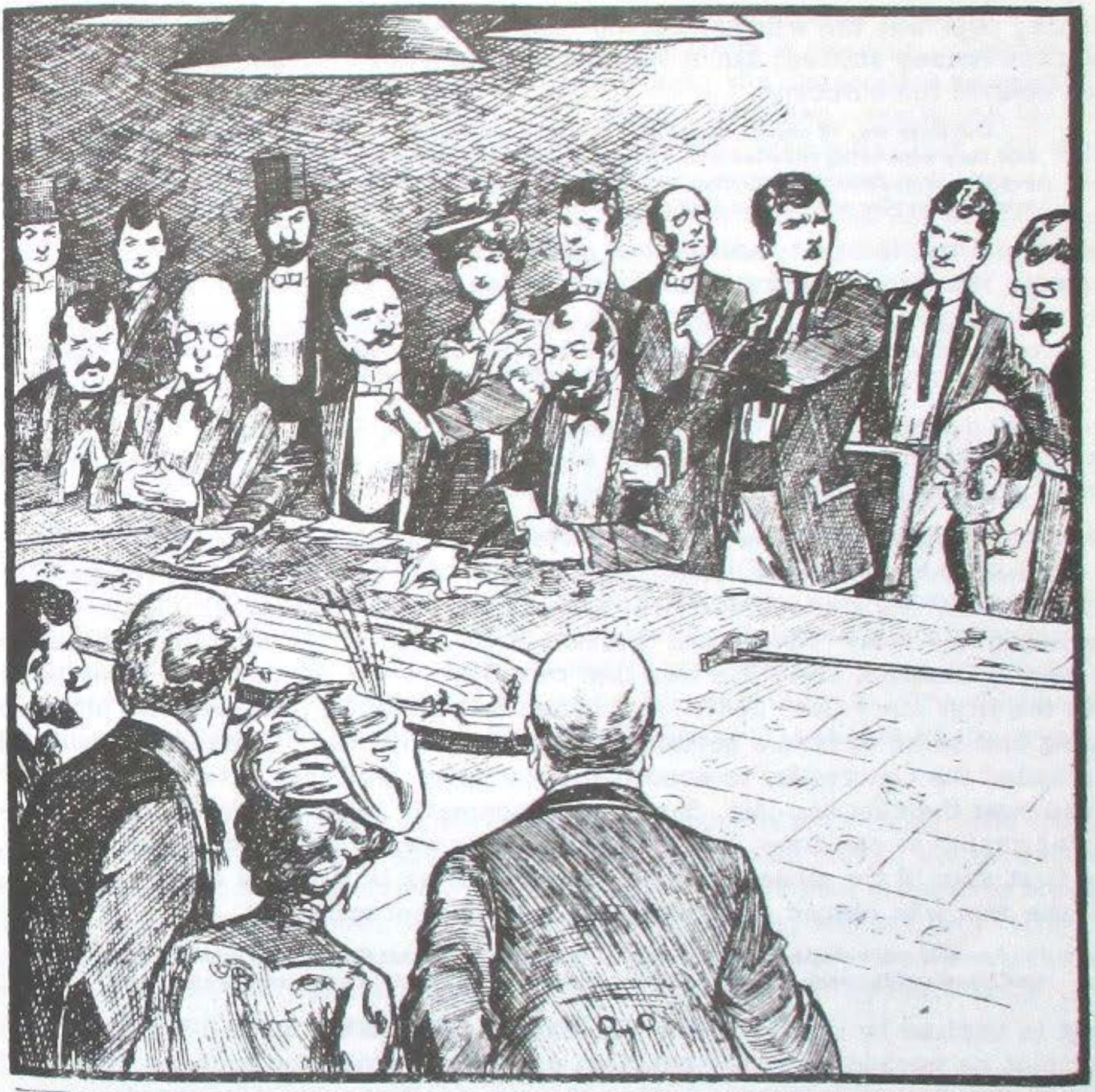
> And now, as might have been expected, his brief spell of luck had run out. He lost, and lost again, and again, and again, and the gold before him melted away like fairy gold.
>
> The little piles of gold vanished, till only the bare green cloth was before Tyrrell at the table. He stared at it blankly, as if by hard staring he could discover some piece of money that had gone for ever.

In those spacious days before the first world war, when the rich were very rich, this story provides a contemporary social document of fascinating value. Roulette is still played, and human nature is still unpredictable, but the age of gold coins, at least, has gone and with it some of the extremes of wealth that were implicit in these accounts of reckless gambling.

A sequel to Magnets 123-4 occurred four years later in No. 332, published in June 1914. It was Founder's Day at Greyfriars and Vernon-Smith, now reformed, offered to finance a day-trip to Boulogne for the Famous Five, Hazeldene, Marjorie, and Clara. Bunter had acquired a pocket book of Hazeldene's, containing a long sequence of numbers ranging from one to nine, which represented winning horses at petits chevaux, noted down all those years ago in Switzerland. Like Paul Tyrrell, Hazeldene convinced himself that this run of numbers could form the basis of a system, and he discussed it with Vernon-Smith:

> "You don't believe in a system?"
>
> "Yes, I do", said the Bounder unexpectedly. "I've looked into it. There's not one system: there are half a dozen that would be certain to win if the game were played fairly. That alone is a proof that it isn't played fairly, for lots of people go there with good systems, and the casinos don't go broke that I've heard of. I shouldn't wonder if your system's all right, given a fair game. But given a game in the hands of the most unscrupulous set of swindlers on the Continent -"

This is extremely surprising for a number of reasons. First of all, there was no suggestion that the game was dishonestly run when they both played in Switzerland. Secondly, there is an assertion that infallible gambling systems could be devised. The reformed Bounder is clearly putting forward Charles Hamilton's own thoughts here, and it seems as though the author was blaming



Vernon-Smith touched Hazeldene on the arm. Hazel turned round savagely, and started violently as he saw the Bounder. "You again?" he muttered. "Turned up like a bad penny, you know!" said the Bounder coolly. "How is the system going?" (*See Chapter* 15.)

his own losses on the corruptness of the croupiers who managed the game. When the juniors landed at Boulogne, they took the coastal tram that passed many casinos, including Coin and Wimereux: it was in the last-named town that Charles Hamilton owned a villa until the 1930's, and no doubt played at the local casino on a number of occasions.

The game of petits chevaux was described in detail. There were nine wooden horses each mounted on a metal bar that ran in a slot. The croupier cranked up the machinery, and nine horses sped round the table, each in its own groove and each running at a variable speed so that horses passed and re-passed one another, and at the end the horse that stopped nearest the

winning post was the winner, paying odds of 7-1. Some gamblers held back until the horses started, but it was stated that even then the croupier could still control the outcome:

> And there are, of course, none so blind as those who refuse to see! To admit to themselves that they were being swindled would have been to acknowledge that it was no use playing at all; and they were determined to play, so they closed their eyes to the obvious. For the true gambler would rather play and lose than not play at all.

Hazeldene left the party and played at the Casino at Boulogne, losing all his money. He then stole some and lost it all at the Casino at Coin:

> Vernon-Smith had always known when to stop; but Hazel did know when to stop. He was a true gambler in that he had no self-control - that when he lost, his only thought was the foolish one of playing on to regain his losses, throwing good money after bad.

The story maintained dramatic tension, with Vernon-Smith attempting to stop Hazeldene from gambling and at the same time knowing that Marjorie suspected him of encouraging her brother's weaknesses.

When the war came, it was obvious that foreign holidays and visits to casinos abroad were no longer in the realm of practical politics for the juniors at St. Jim's and Greyfriars, but roulette was still a possibility, as the Highcliffe story "Rivals and Chums" in No. 328 of the Boys' Friend Library so clearly showed. No. 328 was that rare bird, a sequel that was even better than the first story (No. 288). Mr. Banks had found that the war had hit horse racing and so he opened a gambling casino in Courtfield. Ponsonby eventually persuaded the Caterpillar to accompany the party, and they attended with gauze over their faces. Mr. Banks had apparently been a croupier in a continental casino at one time, and this experience was illustrated in some detail. The first spin of the wheel brought up 17, Charles Hamilton's lucky number, and the man who placed a sovereign on that number won £35:

> Probably not a single one of dupes in the room suspected that the bearded gentleman was a confederate of the bank, who was allowed to win a handsome stake to encourage the others.

What is implied by this was that Mr. Banks could make the ball fall in whatever slot he wanted, a rather puzzling assertion, since the roulette wheel is spun in one direction and the ball in the other. If one croupier could manage this spectacular kind of control, then so could all the others, but it was never suggested that the Monte Carlo casino was run on dishonest lines. Ponsonby had also had a win, half a crown on the transversal 16-17-18 and had won eleven half-crowns:

> "Keep an eye on me, and follow my game -"I'm in luck", said Ponsonby, with the curious boastfulness of the gambler who has made a win. To the winning gambler there comes a sense of mastery over the game, which gives him complete confidence in his ability to beat King Roulette hands down - a confidence that sooner or later is shattered.

When the Caterpillar began to play, he dropped a sovereign on the board and it fell on 16 after the wheel had begun to spin. He won £35 and played the whole lot on the numbers, losing every time. When he was down to half-a-crown he won again. Eventually, when all his money had gone, he realised that Mr. Banks could control the sheel completely, and on the second visit he began to "play the croupier". When the table was covered with heavy

bets, and zero would sweep all into the bank, the Caterpillar dropped a sovereign on zero at the last minute and won £35 when it came up. Shortly afterwards, when heavy bets were placed on black, the Caterpillar dropped a fiver on red and won again. Mr. Banks found this irritating, and began to allow other punters to win in order to ensure that the Caterpillar lost. As the junior placed his bets after the wheel had begun to spin, it was obvious to him that Mr. Banks had some method of controlling the wheel when his hands were no longer touching it - some sort of brake, perhaps that he could work with his foot. Even if this seems highly unlikely and even if it is doubtful that any such device could work with precision, it was from the point of view of the story an important development in making de Courcy sicken of gambling altogether.

Of all the roulette stories, "Rivals and Chums", for all its inherent improbabilities, was the one story in which this form of gambling was not an end in itself but was woven into the mesh of the plot with consummate skill. Roulette was merely an incident in the changing relationship between Ponsonby and de Courcy. It was Ponsonby who persuaded the Caterpillar to visit the casino in the first place, in order to try to win him away from Courtenay; and it was Ponsonby who, after a bitter quarrel with the Caterpillar, telephoned Inspector Grimes to inform him of Mr. Banks' illegal gaming house, hoping that de Courcy would be arrested by the police on his second visit. The casino was thus an integral part of the plot in "Rivals and Chums", the last of the great roulette tales.

Casino gambling never played so large a part in the stories after this, and one suspects that the suggestions of cheating on the part of the croupiers marked a stage of disillusionment in Charles Hamilton's own attempt to break the bank at various casinos. In other words, he rationalised his own failure by declaring the whole system of gambling a dishonest procedure, connived at by theauthoritieswho ranthe gaming tables, and winked at by the French government who took a percentage in the form of taxes.

There were, nevertheless, a number of references to casinos over the years. For example, in Gem 867 Cardew persuaded the hikers to spend a few days in Boulogne and, while the others werewalking towards Wimereux, Cardew was sitting down to gamble at the casino at Boulogne - only to find that £40 had disappeared from his pocket book! Levison returned the money to Cardew when they were safely back in England. Again, in Magnet 880, that curious Christmas when Harry Wharton stayed with the Bounder in Nice, in 1924, he watched his host play in the local Casino, lose all his own money, and then borrow from his guest:

> The Bounder had been winning at first - a common experience with newcomers at a continental casino. Keen as he was, he did not know that he was allowed to win to encourage him to keep on and to play for larger stakes. But now the croupiers were coming down to business, and almost at every spin of the ball the Bounder lost, and lost heavily. The stock of red and yellow counters melted away, and he changed more bills, and the new stock melted away in its turn. His face was set and savage now.

This is an interesting passage because Vernon-Smith seems to have forgotten

the good advice he handed out to Hazeldene in Magnet 332, but of course there has been a reversal of role: the Bounder's reform was not a permanent one, and it is now Wharton who has the sensible attitude to gambling and refuses to lend any more money, which caused the Bounder to hit his guest. Apart from this, there is the clear accusation that the Casino Oriental at Nice was dishonestly run and that the croupiers, who were employees, were parties to that fraud. The game, which was presumably boule, made use of a rubber ball in a bowl with numbers from one to nine and, if there were only nine numbers to back, it would seem likely that the bank would win anyway, without needing to cheat. It is impossible not to feel that the attack on gambling became something of an over-kill as the years went by.

It is appropriate to end this survey with Magnet 1366, published some ten years later than the last story and some twenty years after the previous trip to Boulogne. Once again, the juniors made a day trip across the Channel and took the coastal tram. Whereas Mr. Vernon-Smith had business in Wimereux, his son intended to gamble at the casino in Le Bosquet-dan-le-Foret. Ponsonby & Co. were discussing the fact that roulette was now legal in France (as well as Monte Carlo) and it seemed that petits chevaux and boule had been superseded by the more sophisticated game. It is, in a way, a pity that as events turned out Vernon-Smith never in fact entered the casino to try his luck at roulette. Of course, Charles Hamilton had by this time sold his house, Chalet des Courlis at Wimereux-sur-Mer, and he was no doubt feeling that the passage of time was distancing him from his gambling days.

It is easy to see that casinos did not play a great part in the Gem and the Magnet, but where they were featured the descriptions were always vivid and based on personal recollections. They were, perhaps, unlikely institutions to find in papers for boys, but they were always more convincing than the vague dissipations at public houses like the Three Fishers or the Green Man, where billiards seemed the only wickedness and a beery atmosphere the only real connection with licensed premises, since most schoolboy visits appeared to be out of hours. Without doubt, it was the behaviour of compulsive gamblers at casinos that afforded Charles Hamilton some of the greatest opportunities for exploring his chief area of interest as an author - the unpredictability of human nature.

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* *

Heartfelt Greetings to all friends and especially Eric Fayne, Les Rowley and Norman Shaw.
Specially wanted to buy: SBL (1st) No. 1 (or photocopy) and 37, SBL (2nd) 35, Thriller 118, NL (O.S.) 382, 453, NL (1st N.S.) 148, U.J.s 495, 498, 505, 512, 529, 548, 584, 633.

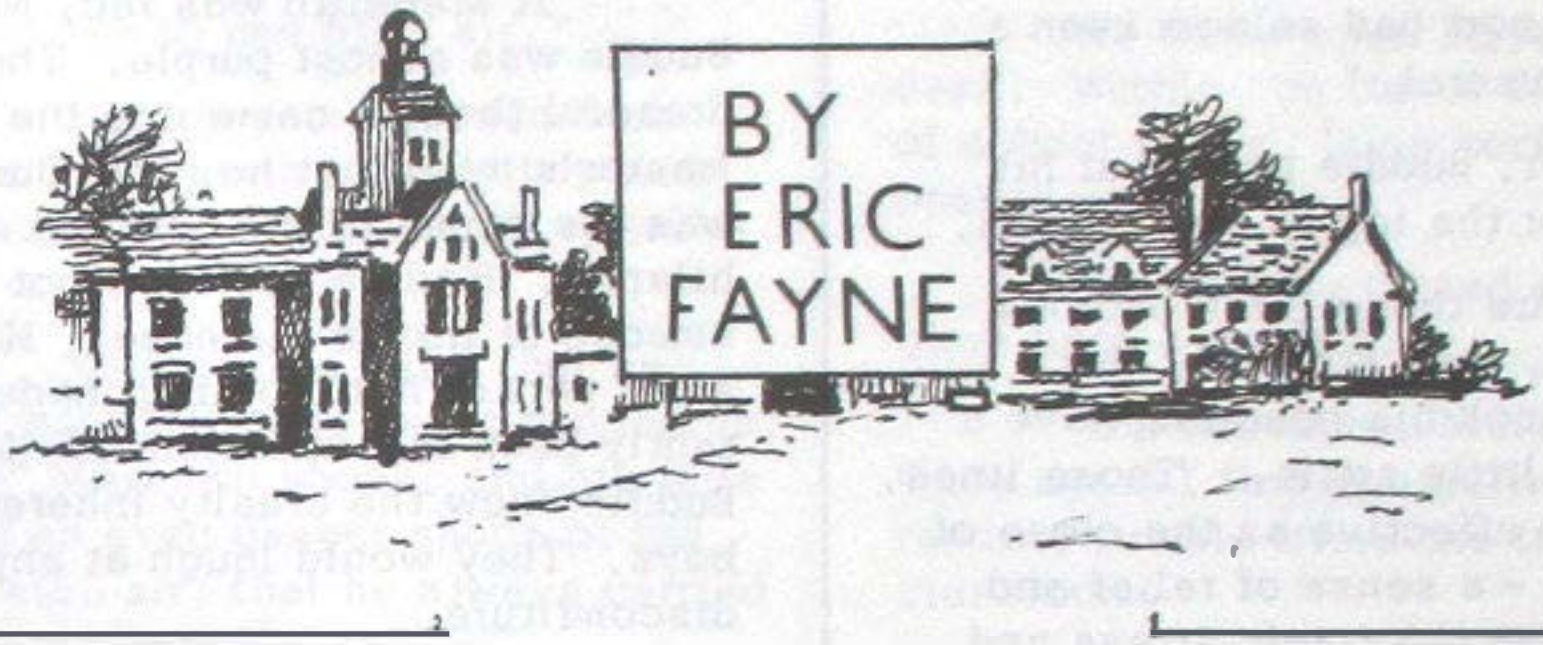
HOWARD SHARPE

c/o A.A. SWALLOW, P.O. BOX 182, FAIRFIELD, VIC., AUSTRALIA 3078

= =

AN EARLY ADVENTURE OF MR. BUDDLE:

Mr BUDDLE LAUGHS LAST



Meredith laughed.

It started as a gurgle. It continued with a sound like steam escaping from a kettle of boiling water. It ended as a loud explosion. The laugh rang out and reached every corner of the Lower Fourth form-room at Slade.

There was, or course, nothing unusual in Meredith laughing. He was a bright youth who laughed quite a lot as he went his happy-go-lucky way through his schooldays.

But there is a time and a place for everything. Saturday morning was not the time, and the Lower Fourth form-room was not the place for a gurgling laugh which ended as a loud explosion.

Mr. Buddle was leading his form in English Literature. His subject was Tennyson's "Enoch Arden". Mr. Buddle had been talking for some time, and a pleasant, somnolent atmosphere had settled over his class. Mr. Buddle touched upon the probable sources of Tennyson's narrative. He analysed the characterisation - the strong and resolute Enoch, the constant and kindly Philip, the gentle and compassionate Annie.

As the minute hand of the clock crept round towards noon yawns became general through the class. Some boys succeeded in keeping frowns of concentration on their brows while their thoughts were really far away, dwelling on what they proposed to do with their half-holiday that afternoon. A few lowered their heads and dozed. When Buddle got into his stride he became rather unobservant of what was going on around him.

Mr. Buddle was nearing the end of his one-sided discussion.

"We now consider the last two lines of this beautiful work", said Mr. Buddle. "Many students of literature regard these two lines as being the most outstanding example of anticlimax in the English tongue. That is not my view. Let

me read you the closing lines in question."

Mr. Buddle lifted his book, and read dramatically:

"And when they buried him the little port had seldom seen a costlier funeral."

Mr. Buddle peered at his class over the top of his glasses.

"Are those lines bathos? No, boys, they are not!" Mr. Buddle shook his head and gave a dignified little smile. "Those lines, boys, are effective as the close of a tragedy - a sense of relief and repose after the tragic stress and passion. Those two lines are not anticlimax - they are a sigh. The poet finds peace of mind, all passion spent."

And then Meredith laughed.

As Mr. Buddle's noble words ended, Meredith's gurgle dispelled the calm, the explosion of laughter which followed the gurgle shattered the atmosphere. Boys who had been dozing sat up and took notice.

It was a question whether Tennyson's closing lines in "Enoch Arden" were an anticlimax. There was no doubt at all that Meredith's laugh was one. Though Tennyson's passion may have been spent, Mr. Buddle's was just touched off.

Mr. Buddle glared at Meredith. He fairly bristled. Every eye in the form-room was turned towards the boy who had laughed.

"Meredith, obscene boy, how dare you?"

And Meredith laughed again. Another gurgling peal. His face was red as a peony in contrast with the gold of his mop of hair. His laugh rang out, a mixture of mirth and intense pain. He held his sides and shook.

If Meredith was red, Mr. Buddle was almost purple. The dreadful thought came into the master's mind that he, Mr. Buddle, was the cause of the outburst of hilarity. Had he somehow got a smudge of ink on his nose? Had some part of his clothing inadvertently been left unfastened? Mr. Buddle knew the cruelty inherent in boys. They would laugh at anyone's discomfiture.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Meredith.

He went off into another peal of laughter, and panted for breath. There was a pronounced titter through the class.

"Touched!" murmured Brazenbean.

Mr. Buddle's eyes glinted with anger.

"Meredith, you have dared to insult your form-master by laughing at something in the English lesson."

Sagging, exhausted, Meredith rose in his place.

"Oh, sir, it wasn't the English lesson, sir --"

"Then what was it?" demanded Mr. Buddle.

Meredith jerked a handkerchief from his blazer pocket and wiped his eyes.

"Oh, sir - it was Gussy, sir --"

"Gussy?" hooted Mr. Buddle.

"Who is Gussy?"

Meredith gurgled and sniffed. He spoke breathlessly.

"Oh, sir, Gussy set himself up as a detective, sir. He had a client come to see him, sir."

Every boy in the room was watching Meredith. Every boy was grinning. Mr. Buddle stood speechless.

"Gussy said, sir, that he didn't mind his case being dangerous, sir --" Meredith shook, and his face turned an even deeper shade of red. "He said, sir, that he always carried his "twustay wevolvah---"

Meredith quaked with mirth.

Mr. Buddle's countenance was a study. Out in the class, Shovel lifted his hand and tapped the side of his head with his index finger. Delighted grins were to be seen everywhere.

"And, sir, when Gussy said that, his client said 'A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment.' Oh, sir, it was a scream -- Oh, sir --"

Meredith rocked with laughter once more. Tears were running down his cheeks. His face was the colour of a beetroot now.

Mr. Buddle snatched up his cane. He leaped from his platform. With a couple of bounds he crossed to Meredith. Lifting his cane, Mr. Buddle brought it down with a mighty crack on the top of Meredith's desk.

"Silence, grotesque youth!" roared Mr. Buddle.

Calm descended upon the form-room. Meredith had ceased laughing. His face was contorted. He held his sides in anguish.

'This is scandalous!" yapped Mr. Buddle.

He threw open Meredith's desk. Within, on top of the neat pile of school books, lay a periodical opened wide.

Mr. Buddle turned a basilisk glare upon Meredith.

"As I thought, Meredith! Once again I find you guilty of reading puerile literature in my classroom."

Mr. Buddle seized the periodical, closed it, and glanced at the cover.

"Oh, sir -- my Gem --" wailed Meredith.

"This", said Mr. Buddle, "is by no means the first time I have found you reading this pernicious publication during the lesson."

"Not that one, sir", said Meredith plaintively. "That one's called 'Hard Times', sir. "I've never read it before sir. My dad only sent it to me this morning, sir."

"Pish!" exlaimed Mr. Buddle.

Still clasping the Gem, he strode back to his platform and mounted.

"Meredith", said Mr. Buddle, his voice very deep, "this obnoxious periodical is confiscated. For daring to laugh aloud during my English lesson you will be detained this afternoon and next Wednesday afternoon. This afternoon you will write

me an essay on Tennyson's 'Enoch Arden'. You will bring that essay to me tomorrow morning after chapel."

"Oh, sir!" moaned Meredith.

"If ever again, Meredith, I find you reading this noisome magazine in class --" Mr. Buddle tapped the Gem ominously " -- I shall request Mr. Scarlet to inflict upon you the most severe flogging ever to be administered to any boy in the long history of Slade College. You may be seated, Meredith."

Woefully Meredith sat down.

"Class", said Mr. Buddle, "will be extended by fifteen minutes this morning in order that we may recapture the time which this obtuse boy has caused us to lose."

When class eventually dismissed, Meredith found that his popularity among his form-fellows had waned.

. . . . . .

"It is an ill wind which blows nobody any good", observed Mr. Buddle that evening to the bust of Shakespeare in his study.

When Mr. Buddle went to bed, he took "Hard Times" with him. He had been justly incensed by finding Meredith engrossed in the Gem in the middle of the English lesson, but the event had its own compensations for Mr. Buddle. It had provided him with the light literature which he always found so satisfying.

For some time now Mr. Buddle had been a keen reader of the Gem. A new issue of the periodical was delivered to him every Wednesday by his newsagent, and Wednesday had become a red-letter day for Mr. Buddle.

But "Hard Times" was even more desirable, for it had a blue cover. The Gems with blue covers had been published many years earlier, as Mr. Buddle knew, and somehow he enjoyed the blue Gems even more than the later issues. Mr. Buddle had not read many Gems with blue covers. They were unobtainable in the shops. Every copy of the blue Gem which Mr. Buddle had read had been obtained by confiscation from Meredith of the Lower Fourth. "Hard Times" was no exception in this respect.

So Mr. Buddle adjusted his bedside lamp, and settled down to read. The story was hilarious from the opening lines. The author had really let himself go in a riot of rib-tickling sequences, bad puns, and slick humour, and Mr. Buddle found his enjoyment increasing with every column. It was obvious that the author had loved writing the story, and the reader entered into the spirit of it all.

Mr. Buddle grunted and gurgled and giggled as he read.

Tom Merry & Co. were short of money, and it was Arthur Augustus who had the cosy idea of earning some. It was fantastically funny.

There was reference to a visit to St. Jim's by the celebrated detective, Ferrers Locke, who had managed to capture the elusive criminal, the mysterious 'X'. Mr. Buddle was delighted. He remembered the occasion well. In fact, the account of it had been contained in the very first Gems which Mr. Buddle ever read.

DETECTIVE D'ARCY'S DOUGHTY DEED!

In "Hard Times", Arthur Augustus decided to advertise himself as a detective, and he succeeded in attracting a client.

Arthur Augustus would gladly have assumed the airs of a Ferrers Locke or a Sexton Blake. He felt keenly the need of a big bloodhound lying on the rug, or of a gentle Dr. Watson before whom his client could speak quite freely.

Mr. Buddle chuckled happily. He was unacquainted with Sexton Blake, but he knew quite a lot about Sherlock Holmes and Ferrers Locke.

Gussy's client wore a motor-coat, with huge goggles covering up most of his face, and thick grey whiskers covering the rest.

"I deduce that you are a bachelor, sir, because a mawwied man would not be allowed to go out in a dustay coat or a dustay car", said D'Arcy. "His wife would see that it was dusted. Am I wight?"

"Yes, certainly I am a bachelor", said the colonel. "I have never been married, not once in my life. It is a thing I do not go in for at all."

"And now to business, sir."

"You are willing to take up a dangerous case? To risk your life?"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway let me have the details, Colonel."

"Very good. My wife has disappeared", said the colonel.

D'Arcy jumped.

"You wife?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Buddle shook with merriment. It was a long time since he had been so thoroughly entertained. He read on.

"I was really alluding to my mother", said the colonel in explanation. "The mistake was due to my agitation. My mother has disappeared."

"I am vewy sowwy to hear it."

"Excuse these tears - even an old soldier feels the dreadful loss of his mother", said the colonel. "While I was in South Africa, fighting for the Empire, my mother was stolen by by a gang of Anarchists."

"Bai Jove! That was wathah a long time ago, wasn't it?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Time does not check the flow of filial grief", said the colonel with a husky sob. "The police are useless. You must be

aware of that, if you have perused detective stories to any extent."

Thirty-five years had dropped away from Mr. Buddle. He was grinning and chuckling like a schoolboy.

In the story, the colonel succeeded in providing Detective D'Arcy with such useful clues that Gussy decided he could find the missing lady without delay or difficulty.

"You will venture to seek my mother?" said the colonel.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You will go armed, of course?"

"Perwaps I had bettah take my twustay wevolvah", said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment --"

"Twustay, my deah sir -- I said twustay --"

Mr. Buddle roared aloud. He shook with uncontrollable laughter.

"Utterly ridiculous!" gurgled Mr. Buddle. "A brilliant writer! Superb comedy! Completely preposterous! Oh, dear!"

Mr. Buddle read on.

. . . . . .

The chapel at Slade presented a peaceful, devout scene on Sunday morning. The Spring sun filtered through the stained-glass windows and fell across the Slade boys seated in the pews.

Every boy, senior or junior, was expected to attend divine worship on Sunday mornings. Most of them attended Slade's own chapel where Mr. Scarlet, the Headmaster, conducted what he described as a purely non-sectarian service.

The Lower Fourth boys, spick and span in their mauve and white blazers and sharply-creased grey slacks, occupied pews towards the front of the chapel. Mr. Buddle, like the Village Blacksmith, sat among his boys. He sat at the end of a pew, on the central aisle.

Mr. Scarlet was now half-way through his sermon. A good sermon helps people in different ways. Some rise from it greatly strengthened. Others wake from it refreshed. If anything, Mr. Buddle belonged to the second category.

Mr. Buddle sat and dozed as Mr. Scarlet let himself go concerning the deplorable materialism in the modern world.

"We need trust!" said Mr. Scarlet.

The word penetrated Mr. Buddle's drowsiness. It struck a chord in his memory. Trust. A trusty revolver. Mr. Buddle gave a silent, involuntary chuckle. To his horror he found himself thinking of Arthur Augustus and his client.

"If we introduce trust instead of doubt into our lives --" thundered Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Buddle heaved. He had a terrible desire to laugh. He began to feel dreadful. He looked around him. He tried to expel the trusty revolver from his thoughts. It was useless. His mind went back

automatically to Arthur Augustus.

"Perwaps I had bettah take my twustay wevolvah."

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment --"

Mr. Buddle gave a slight giggle, and smothered it. Several boys in pews further forward turned and looked at him. Mr. Buddle went red as fire. He frowned. He grimaced. He tried to adjust his mind. He concentrated on the preacher.

Mr. Scarlet was booming on:

"The Gospel tells us not to give undue consideration to the things of this world - not to lay up treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt --"

"Perwaps I had bettah take my twustay wevolvah."

Mr. Buddle bit his lip hard. He fought a losing battle with his emotions.

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment --"

Mr. Buddle laughed.

It started as a gurgle. It continued with a sound like steam escaping from a kettle of boiling water. It ended as a loud explosion. It rang through the chapel at Slade.

In the pulpit Mr. Scarlet's eloquence was stemmed abruptly. He stood in silence, staring in utter amazement of Mr. Buddle. Every eye in the chapel was turned upon Mr. Buddle.

He choked. He heaved. He had an internal fight, and then he laughed again.

Hastily Mr. Buddle rose to his feet. Covering his mouth and nose with his handkerchief he hastened down the aisle, giving several artifical coughs as he went. Only the clatter of Mr. Buddle's shoes on the tiled gangway disturbed the silence of the chapel. As he reached the doors he heard a murmur pass through the congregation.

The doors closed on Mr. Buddle.

. . . . . .

The morning service was over. As Mr. Scarlet left the chapel by the side door, Mr. Buddle approached him. Mr. Scarlet gave Mr. Buddle a frosty look.

Mr. Buddle's face was red. He spoke jerkily.

"Excuse me. Headmaster. I owe you an apology. I sincerely hope that my outburst of coughing in chapel this morning did not disturb you unduly."

"Your outburst of coughing, Mr. Buddle? Coughing? I was under the impression --"

"I was thoughtless, sir. I omitted to take my cough lozenges into chapel with me. A tickling in the throat, sir. I thought it better to leave."

"Very distressing for you," said Mr. Scarlet drily. "I suggest that you visit the school matron for some sort of remedy."

"I will, sir", exclaimed Mr. Buddle. "I can only repeat my apology, Headmaster --"

"Pray don't mention it, Mr. Buddle!" said Mr. Scarlet.

The Headmaster walked away in stately dignity.

Mr. Buddle mopped his brow.

. . . . . .

"Oh, calamity!" muttered Mr. Buddle.

It was nearly time for lunch, and Mr. Buddle was resting in the armchair in his study. He felt mentally exhausted, undecided whether to be ashamed of himself or tickled to death.

Charles Lamb once said that he "laughed at anything awful", and confessed to having laughed at a funeral. Now Mr. Buddle had laughed in chapel. He felt akin to Charles Lamb.

Mr. Buddle and laughter were not close acquaintances. Long, long ago, no doubt Mr. Buddle had laughed as much as any average schoolboy. But many years as a schoolmaster had dulled his sense of humour. He had clothed himself in dignity, and as the years passed it had hardened into a veneer of solemnity. Nowadays Mr. Buddle seldom laughed.

Yet the man who could sit through a film comedy without a smile creasing his face had now laughed in chapel. He decided that he felt none the worse for it. If anything, he felt a little better. Possibly Mr. Buddle was on the verge of acquiring the gift - one of the most precious in humanity - of being able to laugh at himself.

In his armchair he chuckled, a trifle self-consciously.

There was a tap on the door.

"Come in", called out Mr. Buddle testily.

The door opened and Meredith entered. He closed the door and crossed to Mr. Buddle.

"My imposition, sir", he said, handing Mr. Buddle an open exercise-book. The golden-haired youth stood with his hands behind him.

Mr. Buddle ran his eye over Meredith's scrawl, reading the opening paragraph of the essay:

"Enoch Arden is a sad story. Annie is a gentle woman who commits biggermy but she gets away with it because one of her husbands is on a desert island. The second husband gives the first husband a costly funeral and that cheers everyone up though they sigh. It is not an anticlimax."

Mr. Buddle shook his head ruefully.

"It's a lovely story, sir", said Meredith.

"It's a preposterous story", snapped Mr. Buddle. He blushed. "Oh, you mean 'Enoch Arden'. Yes, Meredith, I'm glad you appreciate the work of Tennyson."

There was a glimmer in Meredith's eyes.

"May I go, please, sir?"

"You may go, Meredith."

Meredith turned and walked to the door.

"Meredith!"

"Sir?" The boy looked back.

Mr. Buddle frowned.

"Under the circumstances - you seem to have understood the lesson - I mean, your detention for next Wednesday afternoon is cancelled."

Meredith's face lit up.

"Oh, thank you, sir. May I have my Gem, please, sir?"

"Your Gem? Certainly not! I haven't --"

Mr. Buddle nearly said "I haven't finished it yet", but he checked himself in time.

"That absurd periodical is confiscated, Meredith. You may ask me for it on the last day of term. Now go! The bell for lunch has just started to ring."

Meredith went. There was a faint Giaconda smile on his innocent young face.

* *

WANTED: 1st Editions by W. E. JOHNS, particularly Biggles Flies East (1935), Biggles Hits the Trail (1935), Biggles & Co. (1936), Biggles in Africa (1936), Biggles in the Baltic (1940). Biggles Flies Again (John Hamilton), The Camels Are Coming (John Hamilton), The Black Peril (John Hamilton), and Biggles of the Camel Squadron (John Hamilton).
Also non-Biggles 1sts: The Spyflyers (John Hamilton), Desert Night (John Hamilton), The Raid (John Hamilton), The Unknown Quantity (John Hamilton), Steeley Flies Again (Newnes, blue cloth), Blue Blood Runs Red (Newnes), and Wings of Romance (Newnes, 1939).
Also many other 1sts, pre-and post-War.

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER

CLEMATIS COTTAGE, CRADLEY, NEAR MALVERN, WORCESTERSHIRE, WR13 5LQ

= =

New acquaintances this year,
I was fortunate to meet,
In this Bumper Christmas Annual,
I intend those folk to greet.

JOHN BURSLEM

= =

WANTED: Following Angela Thirkell novels - "Enter Sir Robert", "Double Affair", "Close Quarters", "Love at all Ages".

MRS. IRIS HOLMAN

10 GLENBERVIE DRIVE, LEIGH-ON-SEA, ESSEX

= =

THE WORD-PAINTER AND HIS CANVAS

BY REG MOSS

Charles Hamilton provided a large canvas, and almost all the substantive members of the Remove had their moments of prominence. To those who read the Magnet for the first time, in the twenties and thirties, the Remove appeared as a long established cast of distinctive Characters. Individual traits were obvious and the interlocking of different temperaments made for a large range of story settings. But how had the Remove come to reach such a size? Was it always so large? The apparent answer is in the first year of the Magnet.

Gratitude is due to Howard Baker for his magnificent reproductions of the Magnet. With the planned publishing of the early issues in numerical sequence, it is possible toe valuate the early stories in consecutive order. Until now this has only been possible for the relatively fortunate few who have been able to amass the complete or almost complete issues of the Magnet.

Because of this publishing venture I have now been able to read in consecutive order the first fifty Magnets, less numbers 41 and 42. It is indeed a different world from even 1924, but the basic ingredients for the success of the paper are there. The one obvious lack is that of sufficient back-up Characters of note to sustain varied story lines. In fact the Characters are there numerically; an incredible number, but they are nonentities.

At this stage Charles Hamilton was undoubtedly feeling his way into the Greyfriars situation. Names of background Characters were evidently chosen at random. The result was the incredible number of such names that occurred in the first year of the Magnet. The names certainly, but the Characters themselves are nonentities. We learn little or nothing about them. Often a name crops up in a single situation. Perhaps in a team list, or simply as one replying to a casual remark or request.

By issue number 50 the stories had mentioned eighteen names which were to form the nucleus of the Remove as it was to become. The beginning of the substantive list. Of the eighteen, twelve could be considered as fairly substantial Characters who would play a prominent part on occasions, some of course on almost every occasion. The remaining six, good background Characters of whom we are already able to form some idea of their individual attributes. But in addition there are the 'random' names of the eventual nonentities. The luckier ones receiving more than one mention. It seems fortunate that these names disappeared, to be replaced in course of time with

new Characters, so well delineated, and with names which so often aptly suited the particular Characters.

After reading forty-eight of the first fifty Magnets it comes as a distinct surprise to find that the number of Characters applicable to the Remove is no less than fifty. Eighteen substantive form members and thirty-two nonentities. There must have been a steady flow of arrivals and departures in those days. Even Henry Quelch would have blanched at the prospect of a class of fifty to control, and of the sheer weight of paper work which would have to be marked. The alternative of a constant arrival and departure would have been no less foreboding. It will be interesting to read the second year issues of the Magnet to find out what further pupil changes occurred - if any. That is among the nonentities.

Of the fifty Remove men named, Levison came and went, the first recorded sacking at Greyfriars. Two others were the excruciating pair of Hoffman and Meunier who were fortunately only in the Remove for a short time, before shifting into the new brick Friardale Academy. Nevertheless as such close neighbours they continued to haunt the precincts of Greyfriars. 'The shadowy cloisters divided Greyfriars from the neighbouring Academy.' What sacrilege! Thank goodness the Academy was evidently non existent by 1924. Was it finally removed brick by brick, or was it jerry built and collapsed of its own accord.

'The new Academy had been built on Greyfriars ground', and 'Herr Rosenblaum's pupils, mostly sons of foreigners resident in England were on terms of rivalry with Greyfriars'. Built on Greyfriars land! How did the Governors come to grant approval? Was it Sir Hilton Popper, who in return for a low interest mortgage on his estate, used his influence to bring such a decision? Oh! Charles! How could you! Among your magnificent Characters, the insufferable pair of Hoffman and Meunier.

With the publication of issue 50, the eighteen substantive members of the Greyfriars Remove were in order of appearance - Wharton, Nugent, Bulstrode, Bunter, Russell and Skinner, all in Magnet No. 1. Hazeldene, Cherry and Trevor followed in No. 2. In later issues they were joined by Huree Singh, Morgan, Desmond, Smith Minor, Stott, Wun Lung, Ogilvy, Snoop and Linley. Although some of them played little part in the stories save as background Characters, they were not, with the exception of Smith Minor, nonentities. Of all the substantive Characters the latter is the only real nonentity, the one we know least about. We are now left with twenty-nine names including Price and Lantham referred to earlier. Other interesting Hamilton names among the Remove are Jameson and Carew.

The majority of the nonentity names do little to suggest that they could have been turned into memorable Characters. Hamilton's skill would certainly have developed them into acceptable minor Characters. But they would have lacked names, which in so many cases may have failed to achieve that happy association of name and Character. Surely one of the delights of

the Greyfriars stories. Happily these nonentities disappeared, whether consciously by the author or otherwise, to be replaced by some of the unforgettable Characters, both major and supporting, with names which suited their particular characteristics. This also permitted a steady stream of new boys with their own particular introductory story. Much better than endeavouring to develop some of the early nonentity names into interesting Characters. No doubt these early names were taken at random. The happy result was for them to disappear.

It is interesting to speculate as to what would have been if the early names had been retained and the Characters developed. The name Herring appears in No. 11, and Fisher in No. 27. Was this the genesis of Fisher T. Fish? It is difficult to imagine Fish, an interesting Character, having the same appeal if the surname had been either Herring or Fisher. Somehow neither Fisher T. Herring, nor Herring T. Fisher sounds right. Neither does Bob T. Fisher nor Tom T. Herring. The use of Fisher as the first name made all the difference, when combined with T and with Fish as the surname. Fisher T. Fish sounds just right. It was either the tremendous skill of Charles Hamilton or happy instinct which produced such names.

Outside of the Remove we find that there is a Harker in the Sixth Form, but as yet no master of that name. An early shock is to find that the reverend Dr. Lock is not named Henry. More important is the mention in number 35 of a Mr. Skipton as the master of the Fifth. Fortunately by number 38 there must have been a staff change for the master is now Mr. Prout. A younger, slimmer Prout than old pompous of the future. But it is the real Prout because the Character is already showing signs for future development. He has a trusty gun and is only too willing to produce it if he thinks that circumstances warrant such action. Thank goodness for Paul Prout. How can one imagine a portly pompous Skipton.

In course of time twenty-one of the Remove nonentities would be replaced by new Characters. Some of them would play leading roles in the Greyfriars stories. Others would have their moments of greatness. A few would only add breadth and depth to the Remove background. But it is here that Hamilton exhibited his ability in bestowing appropriate names upon his new Characters. Lord Mauleverer, Alonzo Todd - could the Duffer of Greyfriars have seemed the same if named Jim Todd, Johnny Bull, Tom Brown, Oliver Kipps, and above all - the Bounder.

It is rewarding to look at the nonentity names and compare them with some of the above. To take only the first nonentity name, that of Owen in issue No. 2, and that of Barr which appears in issue No. 45. Neither Oliver Owen nor Oliver Barr has the same authentic ring to the Character that Charles Hamilton introduced as Oliver Kipps. But of all the later Characters who replaced the nonentities Herbert Vernon-Smith must surely be the greatest. Hamilton excelled himself with the Vernon touch. Not one of the nonentity names would have sounded right for the Bounder; even Herbert Smith would have fallen flat. Vernon Smith would have been a little better, but Herbert

Vernon-Smith made all the difference. As Vavasour of Highcliffe would have said - 'absolutely', and Vavsour would have been right.

In fact Vavasour is one of Hamilton's finest creations of a minor Character. This was achieved by the use of a single word. It was tried for example with Dabney by the use of the word 'rather', but it did not really succeed. With Vavasour everything was right. The name suited the key word. It is very easy to hear Vavasour in a slow drawl intoning ab-so-lute-ly. What is more it so succinctly described the type of Character Vavasour portrayed.

A reading of the early Magnets shows what a change there was between 1907 and 1924. Not only in the establishment of the Remove substantive Characters, which must have contributed substantially towards the success of the Magnet, but also to the quite different world in which the Characters moved. The gap in time from the present to 1924 seems far less dated, than from 1924 back to 1908. The stories of the 'Golden Years' and even of the years leading up to them, still hold their charm. They are much less of an anachronism than might be expected. Back to 1908 is still rewarding reading. The charm is still there, but the world does seem that much further away.

* *

Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for 1985 to all Hobby Friends from

JOHN BECK

LEWES, SUSSEX

= =

Compliments of the Season.

BEN AND LILIAN AND BOB AND MARIE, L.A.

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A St. Franks' Old Boy wishes you all the very best at Yuletide and the New Year.

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E. G. HAMMOND

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= =

When I first started to read the SCHOOLGIRL in 1936, I was immediately captivated by the girls of Cliff House School, and in particular by Clara Trevlyn, who was to become my long-standing favourite. (Jemima Carstairs ran her a close second in my affections, but my sense of identification with Clara was always stronger.) The Tomboy of Cliff House seemed as much part of my world as any of my real life friends, and for years I tried to model myself on her ('What would Clara do in this situation?' 'What would she think about that?', etc.).

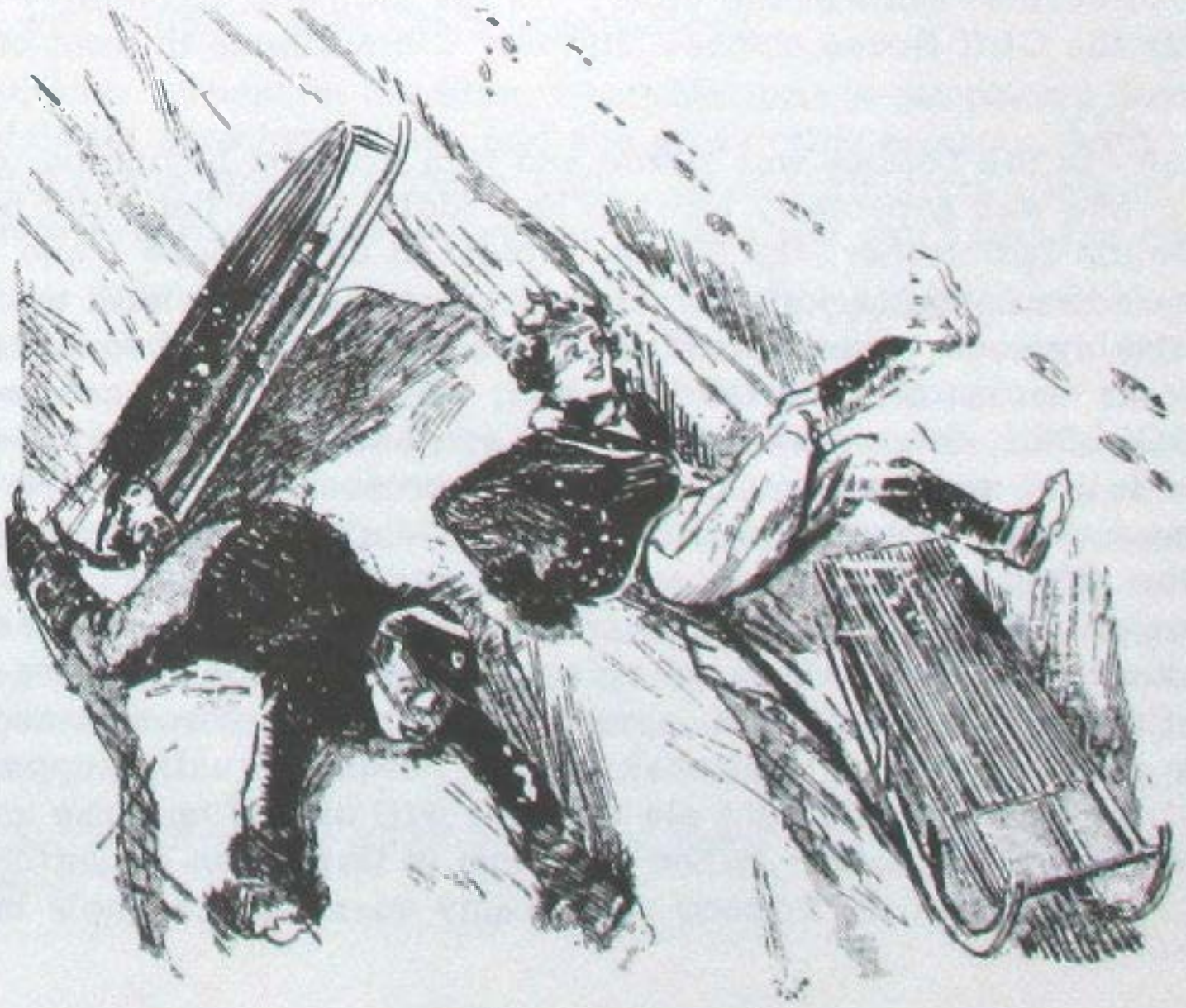
Of course, the Clara of the 1930s, in the hands of the then 'Hilda Richards' (John Wheway) had changed considerably from the Edwardian tomboy that Charles Hamilton created as a perfect foil for the calmer natured Marjorie Hazeldene back in the 1909 MAGNET. Yet, looking at the earliest stories to feature Clara, one sees that despite changes over the years her character always retained some of the facets that Hamilton had built into it when he originated this slangy and sporty schoolgirl, who was somewhat revolutionary for her time. She was from the beginning plucky though rather headstrong, deeply loyal to Marjorie, utterly honest, and contemptuous of any kind of hypocrisy or double-dealing. These aspects of Clara never changed, even when - in the 1920s and '30s - different authors contributed to her saga. (In the SCHOOL FRIEND of the '20s, Horace Phillips and L. E. Ransome wrote most of the Hilda Richards stories, until in the SCHOOLGIRL of the 1930s John Wheway took over Cliff House.)

Clara, in my opinion, is Hamilton's most enduring and engaging creation (not excluding Marjorie, who became slightly wishy-washy as the stories in the SCHOOL FRIEND and SCHOOLGIRL proceeded). Hamilton tended to play on the extremes of Clara's nature, which of course made her very colourful. She was at one extreme a fourteen-year-old version of the Edwardian 'New Woman' and Suffragette, who was prepared to resort to physical violence (especially against bullies) to get her way, while at the other she would consciously exploit feminine wiles and weaknesses. In an early MAGNET series (68 - 70), Greyfriars temporarily takes in the Cliff House juniors 'when there is something amiss with the foundations of their school', and Clara challenges Bulstrode to a fight because of his insulting behaviour towards the girls. All very inspiriting - but Clara knows that she has him at a disadvantage, because he will not dare to fight a girl and thus 'incur the mortal fury of the Remove'. So he is forced to apologize, and with triumphant magnanimity

Clara Trevlyn

Clara says, 'I will let you off this time, but you must not be a naughty boy again!' Later, however, she admits to her chums that if the bully of the Remove had accepted her challenge and fought, she would have countered this by resorting to tears. Such feminine wiles did not sit entirely happily on the truly tomboyish Clara. Nor did the sentimentality of another early MAGNET episode, when Clara, after a slight quarrel with her schoolmate, Milly, makes things up by kissing her (something that might well have made girl readers squirm, and which L. E. Ransome and John Wheway later on would never have permitted the Tomboy to do).

Hamilton thought that all females - whether tough or tender-hearted -- were obsessed by 'pretty hats'; another out of character incident occurred regarding Clara in The Girls' School Challenge (MAGNET 151) when, after some lively Greyfriars versus Cliff House skirmishes in the snow, she rebukes the boys by remarking 'severely' "You might have spoiled our hats!". Hamilton started Clara off as being '... charming' with 'vivacious blue eyes and golden curls'. The SCHOOL FRIEND authors didn't wait long to cut off these curls and to give her a more suitable hair-do in the shape of an Eton Crop. This, of course, was in the 1920s. By the '30s her coiffure had settled into one that was perfect for her tomboyish but attractive personality ~ a tawny, wavy and 'windblown bob, with an unruly quiff'.



Another uneasy characteristic that Charles Hamilton gave to Clara was a 'typically feminine' fear of mice and insects. In The Invasion of Greyfriars series in the MAGNET, the Cliff House juniors are sharing the Remove form-room, and the intrepid Clara has successfully ragged Mr. Quelch, and reduced him from his usual astuteness to abject incompetence. She constantly calls him 'Mr. Squelch', and comes out with niceties like 'I should not mind if you called me "dear", sir ... You are such a nice old gentleman!' Yet, within minutes of this, our bold-hearted heroine is transformed into a figure of screeching fear when Billy Bunter lets loose one of his trick-ventriloquial mice! Similarly, writing several decades later in the hardbacked BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL (1949), Hamilton tries to make us believe that the tough and independent Clara is terrified of spiders. Marjorie discovers that her brother Peter is hiding in the Cliff House apple-loft, under suspicion of theft. To keep Clara away from his hideout she mentions the presence of spiders:

> '"Oooooooh!" said Clara. And to Marjorie's immense relief she descended the ladder.'

This is a very far cry from the Clara of the 1930s SCHOOLGIRL, who rose nobly to the demands that her readers made upon her, even from time to time suffering torture at the hands of international thieves, smugglers or foreign espionage agents. Fear of insects, or of any kind of animal, would in her own (Hamiltonian) words have been 'piffling rot'. Indeed, in the 1930s she is unafraid even of lions, when the need arises to protect her chum Marjorie. They are, it seems, faced with death in darkest Africa, trapped by a savage and hostile tribe in a cave; there is a terrible conflagration at one end of this, and the lair of several lions at the other. As the growling and hungry lions move towards the Cliff House chums, 'fiercely Clara stands in front of Marjorie'.

Loyalty in the Tomboy was fierce and firm from the beginning to the end of her saga. She was especially loyal to her 'idols' - like her elder brother, Jack, and Dulcia Fairbrother, the Senior Captain at Cliff House - and to chums like Barbara Redfern and Marjorie Hazeldene. Her friendship with the latter, though regrettably never given sufficient space in the MAGNET for it to be fully exploited by its originator, Charles Hamilton, was to become a celebrated one in the SCHOOLGIRL. Stories featuring Clara and Marjorie were always exciting, touching and full of incidents that remained in our memories long after we had first read about them. Sometimes it is the quiet Marjorie who has to shield Clara from the effects of her quick temper and her impulsiveness. Often, however, it is the sturdy Clara who has to protect the gentler Marjorie, and to prevent meaner spirits from taking advantage of her kind and generous nature. A measure of their friendship is that even when they 'do not understand' each other (over a certain event or relationship) they remain mutually supportive. Clara, with a gulped 'Oh, all right old thing!', will nip off on some hazardous enterprise on Marhorie's behalf, when her chum is trapped in detention at Cliff House, even though the Tomboy may deeply question the whole business,

and must simply have blind faith in Marjorie's judgement. Similarly Marjorie will always accept Clara's tempestuous lapses from grace or good behaviour with 'a faint smile', and a determination to help - although their other chums are throwing their hands up in horror because Clara is stubbornly 'on her high horse' once again.

One wishes that Charles Hamilton could have written further long adventures starring Clara and Marjorie than his one and only full-length Cliff House novel, BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL. In this, with a few deft touches, he managed to convey the quintessence of the splendid and steadfast friendship between the two girls. The theme is an old one. Peter Hazeldene of Greyfriars is again in trouble, and pushing his problems once more on to his ever trusting sister, Marjorie. After years of restraining herself over Peter Hazeldene's spinelessness, lying behaviour and callousness towards Marjorie, Clara blows her top, and snaps: 'He can't be made to pay an account ... or get a whacking from his form-master, without telling you what a wronged angel he is.' These and other over-due home-truths about her brother hurt Marjorie so much that she gets up from her chair, and tries to leave the study, saying that she cannot share it with Clara any longer. Then the Tomboy

> 'unceremoniously gave her a push, and she sat down in her chair again quite suddenly.
>
> "Don't be a goat!" said Clara. "Stick where you are, Marjorie. We're friends, and we're going to stay friends."
>
> "Not if you speak of Hazel like that."
>
> "I won't then", said Clara unexpectedly.'

There is another moment in the story when Marjorie's composure breaks down because of Hazel's inadequacies, and she sits crying silently, with the tears running through her fingers: 'Don't blub, old girl', mutters Clara miserably - quick to give sympathy and support, even when she can't find the right words.

Clara is always an ardent champion of the oppressed and the underdog. She will never let anyone bully or exploit Cliff House's 'lovable duffer', Bessie Bunter. She is, however, tougher with 'dear old Fatima' than Barbara or Marjorie manage to be, because, always impatient with dishonesty, she tries teasingly to push Bessie on to the straight and narrow path of truthfulness: 'You don't mean to say Sir Dustbin de Dishwater de Bunter has turned up trumps at last?' says the Tomboy, when Bessie - who swanks like Billy about fictitious titled relations - suddenly and unusually finds herself in funds. In a MAGNET episode when the Cliff House girls set out in a boat for a Popper's Island picnic, Bessie claims to be counting the tarts in the hamper, and Clara says:

> '"Don't! The more often you count them, the less there will be to count."

"If you think I was eating a tart behind this sunshade, Clara -"

"I believe you'd eat the sunshade if there wasn't anything else to eat."

"Cat!'"

It is in this particular MAGNET series (1528 - 1530) that, through the evil machinations of Ponsonby, a feud develops between the girls of Cliff House and Harry Wharton & Co. From the start the boys are anxious to put this right, but the girls - and Clara especially - huffily refuse even to discuss the situation. There is a great deal of anguish all round, and the Greyfriars juniors not only suffer from the humiliations inflicted by their erstwhile girl chums, but from the censure of the Remove, who believe the Famous Five to have been guilty of unchivalrous conduct. Mauly eventually manages to solve the puzzle, and to make things 'calm and bright' again between Wharton & Co. and Marjorie and Clara. Marjorie, true to her gracious nature, then apologizes gently for ever doubting her Greyfriars chums. Clara's regret is expressed in characteristic and more robust terms: '"Sorry old beans!" said Miss Clara affably.'

Wharton then mentions that if the girls had told them about the false clues laid by Ponsonby, they could quickly have cleared up all the misunderstandings:

'"How could we, when we weren't speaking to you!" asked Clara ...

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"That's a boy all over - no gumption!" said Clara.'

From the early days Charles Hamilton had made Clara a youthful proponent of sexual equality (or, indeed of women's 'superiority'). Later authors perpetuated this. In a 1920s SCHOOL FRIEND, Clara is late getting back for call-over, and Ginger Hawkins, a boy from Lanchester College who thinks she is a 'top-notcher', offers her a lift in his motor-bike and side-car combination. She firmly announces that she will ride the bike and Ginger can travel in the side-car:

'"You don't think I'd trust my life with you driving?" said Clara scornfully. "Boys can't drive motor-bikes. I'll give you a few tips as we go along."'

But Clara, though independent, wasn't an out and out toughie. She was vigorous but essentially warm natured; in fact she had several personality affinities with Bob Cherry - the same exuberance and dogged devotion to chums, coupled with an inability to express this in words, but only in actions. Vivacious and charismatic, she was a tremendous girl at games. As Cliff House's junior sports captain she was always a force to be reckoned with, both as a player and a fair-minded leader. Many were the times in her career that Cliff House echoed to the sound of 'She's a Jolly Good Fellow', as the

THE

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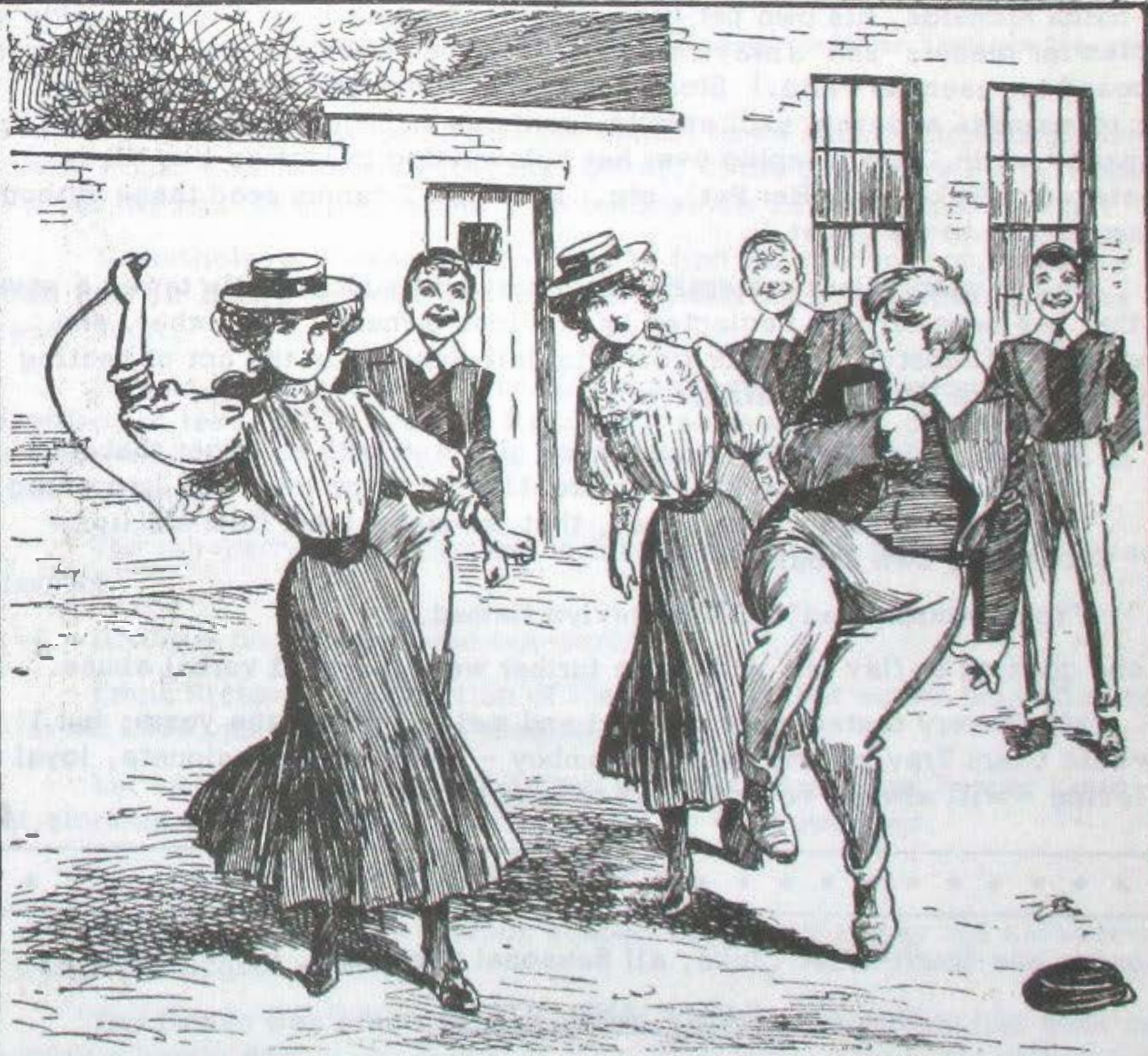
VOLUME 3. NUMBER 70.

Complete Story for All.

A Grand School Tale of

GREYFRIARS COLLEGE.

By Frank Richards.



A SURPRISE FOR BUNTER!

"You untruthful little wretch!" gasped Miss Clara, breathless with her exertions. "Take that, and that!"

tomboyish 'giddy heroine' was hoisted shoulder high, after her dazzling leadership on the hockey-field:

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

An indelible and an endearing image. But for me there is an even more engaging one of Clara, and this is in relation to her love of animals. Clara, protector of the weak and helpless, would allow no animal to suffer. In particular she loved dogs, and her 'magnificent Alsatian', Pluto, was the light of her life. (John Wheway, who created Pluto, told me once that the Tomboy's pet was inspired by an Alsatian he had once owned. By the 1930s, when he was Hilda Richards, his own pet (like Bessie's) was a Peke - but in 'Hilda's' articles for readers 'she' always spoke of 'her' pet Alsatian, Juno, which was supposed to resemble Pluto.) Stories featuring Clara and Pluto, in spite of their robustness and many excitements, contains moments of almost unbearable poignancy, with Clara weeping over her beloved dog in stories like 'They Threatened to Take Away Her Pet', etc. Even now I cannot read these without a lump coming to my throat.

In one story Clara patiently, intrepidly and successfully tames a savage dog that has been terribly neglected by previous owners. In another, she surprises Paul Mostyn, a senior from Friardale School, in the act of beating his rival's black Highland Terrier:

> 'A face, red with rage, whose eyes glittered with a temper that was volcanic, blazed into his. Before Mostyn knew what was happening, the stick slashed with a swish, that brought a howl from his lips, round his own shoulders.
>
> "You cowardly cad!" Clara Trevlyn flamed.

And she goes on to flay him with some further well deserved verbal abuse.

My literary tastes have changed and mellowed over the years, but I know that Clara Trevlyn, my beloved Tomboy - plucky and passionate, loyal and loving - will always be wonderful to read about.

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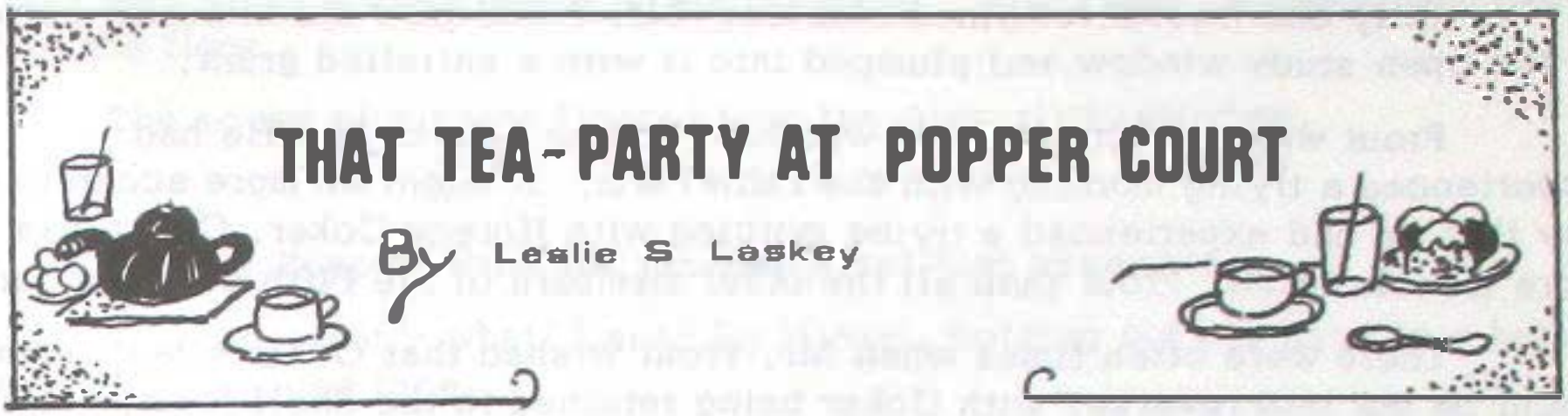

THAT TEA-PARTY AT POPPER COURT

By Leslie S Laskey

It had all happened on a hot, sunny half-holiday; one of those games of the summer term when the dusty, dusky classroom is deserted, and the bigger, brighter world outside is there to be explored.

Popper Court, on the face of it, would seem to be an improbable venue for a schoolboys' tea-party.

However, the tea-party was the sequel to an equally improbable event, for who would ever have expected that Coker, of the Greyfriars Fifth, would discover the haul of silver recently stolen from Sir Hilton Popper's home?

Nevertheless, Coker had chanced to find the hidden loot, with the result that Sir Hilton had decided to reward Coker with an invitation to tea at Popper Court.

It must have cost the crusty old baronet quite a big effort to invite a schoolboy to tea. Still, even Sir Hilton felt some measure of gratitude in the circumstances. The invitation was even extended to include one or two of Coker's friends.

The tea-party was organised to take place on the following Wednesday afternoon.

It was a truly remarkable tea-party.

Frank Richards' description of the events of that sunny June afternoon, in far off 1936, makes hilarious reading.

Let us go back in time, and drop in on Greyfriars and Popper Court, on that glorious afternoon, and observe events as they occurred.

* * * * *

The chimes for three o'clock echoed out from the grey old clock tower at Greyfriars School.

The House was practically deserted. Almost everybody had gone out on such a lovely day.

White-clad figures flitted to and fro on Little Side, where the Shell were playing the Upper Fourth.

Only one master remained indoors. Mr. Prout drew his armchair across to the open study window and plumped into it with a satisfied grunt.

Prout wasn't going out. It was hot, and he was tired. He had experienced a trying morning with the Fifth Form. It might be more accurate to say that he had experienced a trying morning with Horace Coker. Coker was more trouble to Mr. Prout than all the other members of the Fifth put together.

There were often times when Mr. Prout wished that Coker's last remove could be put into reverse, with Coker being returned to the Shell Form.

There were just two obstacles to that course of action, however.

Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, wouldn't have stood for it.

And Coker's Aunt Judy wouldn't have stood for it, either.

Prout might have been able to cope with the "Acid Drop's" opposition.

Aunt Judy's opposition was another matter altogether.

The mere thought of another visit from Miss Judith Coker was enough to make Mr. Prout shudder.

Anything was better than that.

Even two more whole terms of Coker.

Even three more whole terms of Coker!

The Fifth Form master dismissed Horace Coker from his mind and opened his copy of 'The Field", and settled down to read.

* * * * *

On Little Side the Fourth Form were batting. Scott and Wilkinson had opened the Fourth's account, and they were batting very carefully indeed. After forty-five minutes' play the score was only seventeen. Scott and Wilkinson were painfully aware of the weakness of the Fourth's batting, and they were determined to give the innings a good sound start.

In the pavilion their captain, Temple, frowned, and remarked to Fry that this was a bit dashed slow. He added that he would have to push the score along a bit faster than this when he got out there.

Wilkinson suddenly hit out at Carr's bowling. The ball soared over mid-on's head and went first-bounce over the boundary, hitting a wooden fence with a loud bang. A couple of yards away Mrs. Kebble's cat, Thomas, had been sitting in the sunshine, stroking his whiskers. The startled Thomas scuttled a few yards away. Turning his head, he gave the now recumbent cricket ball a sour look. Then he stalked off Little Side, looking aggrieved.

In the pavilion, Temple's frown had cleared somewhat.

The scoreboard read 21 for no wickets.

* * * * *

Mr. Prout's head began to nod forward. "The Field" slipped from his lap to the floor.

The sound of a snore floated from the open study window.

* * * * *

Over at Popper Court the tea-party had just assembled.

"Coker, what - what!" said Sir Hilton, holding out his hand to a burly youth with a rugged face.

"Yes, Sir" replied Bolsover Major calmly.

For the assembled Greyfriars boys were imposters - they were all Removites. Billy Bunter had chanced to intercept a telephone call from Sir Hilton, on Mr. Prout's 'phone. Coker knew nothing of the invitation to Popper Court. Bolsover was there instead, accompanied by Billy Bunter and Skinner & Co.

Meeting the old baronet had been an anxious moment for Bolsover. However, Sir Hilton seemed satisfied that his invited guests had arrived, and the Removites began to feel more at ease.

They were looking forward to their tea, especially Bunter.

* * * * *

The half-hour chimed out from the Greyfriars clock-tower.

The first Fourth Form wicket had fallen on Little Side. A good ball from Stewart had found the edge of Wilkinson's bat and Hobson, after a bit of juggling, had held on to the ball at second slip.

Cecil Reginald Temple came down the pavilion steps. The captain of the Fourth was clad in spotless white shirt and flannels, and immaculate pads, and he swung a beautiful new bat. In fact, that bat had been used once before, in the Remove match, a week earlier. On that occasion Temple had been clean-bowled for a first-ball "duck" by Hurree Singh.

Temple arrived at the wicket, took guard carefully, and faced Stewart.

He played forward elegantly to his first ball, and heard it smack into the wicket-keeper's gloves.

The next ball was of a fuller length. Temple played back to it elegantly, only to hear the click as it hit his off-stump.

"Oh gad!" muttered Temple.

Looking thunderstruck, the captain of the Fourth left his crease slowly, reflecting that his side was really in trouble now. They would have been expecting a "captain's" innings from him today. It was really pretty dashed thick when a class player had ducks in successive matches.

Temple returned to the pavilion, his beautiful new bat still unmarked.

Fry took his captain's place at the batting crease.

The scoreboard read 37 for two.

* * * * *

Thomas, ambling slowly past the windows of Masters' Studies, stopped suddenly, the fur on his back bristling. A strange rumbling noise had come from one of the open windows. The rumbling noise changed to a loud, strangled grunt as Mr. Prout woke up suddenly.

Thomas fled.

* * * * *

The Greyfriars party at Popper Court were playing tennis. Sir Hilton looked on, pretending that he was enjoying the spectacle. A wild slash from Billy Bunter's racket sent the ball whizzing straight at Sir Hilton's rather prominent nose.

Somehow the baronet restrained his temper. He retired indoors, with a pain in his nose and his feelings of hospitality somewhat soured. A few minutes later the butler confided to the cook that the "Old Man" was in one of his "bates" - those boys from the big school must have upset him in some way.

Meanwhile the tea-table on the lawn was being prepared.

* * * * *

Four o'clock struck.

Tea was now being served at Popper Court.

This was what the illicit guests had been waiting for.

Back at Greyfriars Mr. Prout was asleep again.

Thomas stalked a blackbird through the gooseberry bushes to the Head's garden.

Thomas pounced.

The blackbird squawked and flew up into an apple tree.

Thomas stared up at the bird.

The blackbird stared down at the cat.

There was just a hint of contempt in the bird's stare.

Thomas mooched away towards the House.

Thomas and Mr. Prout had one thing in common.

Their hunting days were over.

* * * * *

On Little Side the Fourth's innings was in ruins. Fry had not lasted

very long. Dabney had survived only three balls, and his successors had fared little better. The scoreboard read 49 for seven.

Luckily Scott was still there, batting with great determination.

* * * * *

On the bank of Popper's island, Coker had been trying to pull down Sir Hilton's "No trespassers" notice board with a rope.

Coker reasoned that Sir Hilton had a blessed cheek to put that notice up on the island. It was by no means certain that the old baronet really had any claim to the little island at all. Coker was feeling sore where Sir Hilton was concerned. After all, he - Horace Coker - had found the stolen silver, and he hadn't even had as much as a "thank you" from Sir Hilton in return.

But the notice board wouldn't come down.

Then Harry Wharton and Co. chanced to arrive on the scene. Normally they would not have had any hand in what amounted to an act of vandalism. But the Famous Five shared Coker's views on Sir Hilton's notice board, and they agreed to lend a hand.

Six sturdy pairs of arms pulled on the rope, the post snapped, and the board came tumbling down under six satisfied pairs of eyes.

This triumph was short-lived.

Just as the notice board had fallen, two of Sir Hilton's keepers had emerged from the trees on the river bank.

A few minutes later a doleful party was marched by the keepers, through the woods, in the direction of Popper Court.

There the tea-party was in full swing on Sir Hilton's lawn.

It was destined to be interrupted rather abruptly.

* * * * *

The quarter chimed out from the old clock-tower.

Mr. Prout had woken up again and was glancing through "The Field".

The Fourth's innings had just ended on Little Side. Scott had eventually gone for a very sound 35. The rest of the Fourth's team had gone down like skittles. Temple's side had totalled a meagre 53 runs.

Hobson & Co. didn't expect to have too much trouble in making 54 off the Fourth's rather modest bowling resources.

* * * * *

The sudden appearance of Horace Coker and Harry Wharton & Co., with the two keepers, on the edge of the lawn, had an electrifying effect on the tea-party.

Sir Hilton demanded to know the identity of Horace Coker. He gazed at the real Coker in stupefied amazement; then he turned and gazed at Bolsover Major.

It was at that precise moment that the tea-party broke up.

It broke up with dramatic suddenness. No tea-party, probably, had ever broken up quite so suddenly in all the long history of tea-parties.

Once the bemused Sir Hilton collected his wits together, he went into action.

The Removites fled, pell mell, down the drive with Sir Hilton in hot pursuit, wielding his riding-whip.

The tea-party vanished from sight.

The tea-table looked forlorn and deserted.

* * * * *

The chimes of the school clock sounded through the quiet evening air. It was eight o'clock, and it was a beautiful evening.

Long shadows crept across the now deserted Little Side where the Shell had soundly beaten the Fourth by the margin of eight wickets.

The River Sark rippled slowly past Popper's Island, washing round a notice board that lay amongst the rushes.

Prep was in progress at Greyfriars.

The Famous Five, in their respective studies, were feeling quite satisfied with life. Once Sir Hilton Popper had calmed down, he had overlooked the matter of the notice-board. Coker and the Famous Five had been treated to tea at Popper Court. They had carried on where Bolsover & Co. had left off.

In Study No. 7 Billy Bunter squirmed on his chair. Having been at the rear of the party, in the breathless flight down the drive, Bunter had received the biggest share of Sir Hilton's whip.

"Ow!" said Bunter for the eighth or ninth time.

"Oh, dry up, fatty!" said Peter Todd.

In Study No. 11 Harold Skinner scowled over his prep.

"That old ass Popper" he growled. "I can still feel that whip of his."

"So can I" assented Stott. "He caught me round the back of my ankle with one lick."

'I'm fed up with this tosh" said Skinner, tossing his Virgil into the waste-paper basket. "I'm going to chance Quelch in the morning."

"Same here" said Snoop. "Let's have a smoke."

Snoop's copy of Virgil joined Skinner's in the waste-paper basket.

Stott's Virgil landed with a thud on top of Snoop's.

Soon a blue haze of cigarette smoke filled the study.

* * * * *

At Popper Court Sir Hilton sat at his desk in the library.

He was going through the estate accounts.

They did not make cheerful reading.

There was a somewhat tense atmosphere at Popper Court that evening. The afternoon's events had annoyed and tired Sir Hilton. He still had a pain in his nose from the impact of the tennis ball.

The domestic staff were not having a very comfortable time of it. They were staying below stairs as much as possible.

Sir Hilton was not nice at close quarters.

The baronet laid down his pen and reflected on the matter of the uninvited guests. They probably hadn't been whipped enough. He might call on Dr. Locke in the morning and report that matter to him. It would be simple to identify that burly boy who had impersonated Coker. And the fat boy in the spectacles.

"Huh!" Sir Hilton grunted to himself. "Impertinent young rascals."

One thing, however, was quite clear in Sir Hilton's mind.

There would never be another tea-party or boys at Popper Court.

Sir Hilton's domestic staff would emphatically have approved that resolve.

Theydidn't want to see any more juvenile tea-parties there.

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* *

Christmas Wishes to the Skipper, W. Howard Baker, Norman Shaw, Darrell Swift, Jim Cook and friends in our hobby.
May the New Year bring to all contentment and peace, warm memories of our dear Madam.

PHIL HARRIS

5542 DECELLES AVENUE, MONTREAL, QUEBEC

CANADA, H3T 1W5

Index to the C.D.'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 four years of the C. D. Annual we have indexed the first 200 of them. Here the list continues:

201. "AN HOUR TO PLAY AND THE LAST MAN IN. Showing how the games arrangements at Hamilton's Greyfriars were a little absurd. This essay was reprinted by permission in the Annual of the Cricket Society.

202. "IT WILL GO DOWN, OF COURSE!" Three occasions when Hamilton used the theme of guests who went to stay for a holiday with one of the fatties and found that they were "paying guests", expected to pay for their board and lodging. The theme was used twice at Greyfriars, but originally, and by far the best, was the one centred round the Rookwood chums.

203. THE SPIRIT OF 1910. How Horace Quelch of early days became Henry Samuel as the Magnet grew older.

204. THE BROTHERS ABUNDANT. Concerning older boys who had "minors" at the Hamilton schools.

205. HOW LEGENDS ARE BORN. According to report, Hamilton regarded "Boy Without a Name" and "Rivals and Chums" as his best work. "And that is contrary to everything I knew about Hamilton. He always maintained to me (and, I reckon, to nearly everyone else) that his later work was superior in every way to what had gone before. Did he really believe that his best work was written in 1915, 23½ years before the Magnet closed? I think not."

206. THE END OF THE SILVER TRAIL. When Rookwood came to its grand finale in the Boys' Friend.

207. THE ISLAND IN THE RIVER. The island - any island - in the river - any river - certainly served Hamilton well during his long writing career. That island turned up as a spot for picnics, as a dumping ground for the loot of various burglars, as the hiding place for law-breakers or those suspected of law-breaking, and as a stronghold in barrings-out.

208. ATMOSPHERE. How the master school story writer used it.

209. THE HEAVIEST STONE Hamilton's nicknames. "The most valuable prize a boy can earn at school is a nickname which is not offensive."

210. THE MAGIC THIRTY. In the C.D.'s Pearl Jubilee Number. How those Hamilton papers which lived to celebrate their 30th birthdays (not many of them did) presented the big occasion.

211. SO MANY CHRISTMASES. (This one was Christmas 1976.)

212. (January 1977) THE CHICKEN AND THE GAME KID. A comparison of the Gem's Schoolboy Pug series with the Magnet's Dury series.

213. THE BOSS, THE ADVERTISEMENT, AND THE GREEK. Mainly concerning S.O.L. No. 45 entitled "Boss of the Study".

214. A THOUSAND WEEKS ON AND FIFTY YEARS BACK. How the Gem and the Magnet celebrated their respective thousandth issues.

215. TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING. Later years when Hamilton overplayed Lovell at Rookwood and Gussy at St. Jim's.

216. ROYAL OCCASIONS. This was 1977, the Queen's Silver Jubilee year. How other Royal Occasions had been marked in the Gem and Magnet.

217. THE VARIED BOUNDER. Phases in the characterisation of Herbert Vernon-Smith as the years swept by.

218. THE CEDAR CREEK STORIES. A look at them. Cedar Creek was the only one of Hamilton's major sagas to which he never added in post-war years.

219. ONE "OTHER" SCHOOL. Concerning a character "Merry" at Pentelow's Wycliffe School.

220. THE NABOB OF BHANIPUR. An essay onthe career of Inky.

221. (February 1978) THE ONE THAT DIDN'T CLICK. A look at the Cliveden series in the Boys' Herald of 1907 and 1908. Some were reprinted as Rookwood stories in the Penny Popular.

222. THE RECURRING DECIMAL. Repetition in the Hamilton stories - and a thought or two on certain flawed series.

223. THE PERIOD PIECE. Concerning a couple of Alonzo Todd tales from 1910. They must have been very dated, for certain reasons, when reprinted in the S.O.L. of 1928.

224. THE LAST OF THE ST. JIM'S GREATS. Concerning the fine Victor Cleeve series of 1928.

225. THROUGH THICK AND THIN. A look, in passing, at a B.F.L. St. Jim's story circa 1913. And proof that St. Jim's was more popular than Greyfriars up till the middle of the First World War.

226. CHRISTMAS 1913. A look at the Gem and Magnet in that last Christmas before the First World War. (This essay appeared at Christmas 1978.)

227. SIXTY YEARS OF BESSIE. (April 1979) A look at Hamilton's Bessie Bunter.

228. ABSENT FRIENDS. One of the curiosities of Hamiltonia, particularly in early days, is the way that, on occasion, certain characters were away from their respective schools, for various lengths of time and for some rather vague reason or other.

229. SPAIDING HALL AND THE GEM. From the summer of 1928 Hamilton was absent from the Gem until April 1930.

230. THE GIRL SCOUTS.

231. (July 1980) A SCHOOL NAMED BOLSOVER. The links between Hamilton and Talbot Baines Reed.

232. WILL LADIES KINDLY REMOVE THEIR HATS! It would be an exaggeration to regard any Hamilton story as a social document, but there is no doubt that plenty of the old tales provide reflections of the periods in which they were written. This essay looks at a 1931 S.O.L. which comprised two tales which had first appeared in 1912.

233. (February 1982) THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS. An oddly neglected Hamilton story which ran as a serial in the Gem throughout the summer of 1912.

234. SECOND OPINION. A look at the story "Lucky for Parkinson" which appeared in a certain Holiday Annual.

235. THE EVERGREEN CEDAR CREEK. The final series in the Cedar Creek saga.

236. THE "ERRATICS" OF ROOKWOOD. Sub stories of Rookwood, and why they are sometimes difficult to detect.

237. THE FIRST SUBSTITUTE STORY. Probably it was "The Schoolboy Jockey" in December 1908. C. M. Down did not write many sub tales, but there are reasons why his tales are acceptable while many of other writers' are not.

238. (March 1983) CONCERNING TROUSERS, ET CETERA.

239. FROM GOVERNESS TO GUARDIAN. An essay on the obscure background of Tom Merry of St. Jim's.

240. AN HOUR TO PLAY AND THE LAST MAN IN. Repeat of an earlier essay.

241. THE JEW IN THE HAMILTON STORY.

242. MASTERS ON STRIKE. Repeat of an earlier essay.

243. THE SENSITIVE SPOT. With our adult criticism we knock Greyfriars and St. Jim's apart, and then they come together again like magic, and we love them more than ever.

244. (May 1984) THE MYSTERY OF LUMLEY-LUMLEY. Certain inexplicable mysteries concerning the Outsider who was dropped from the St. Jim's stories after Blue Cover days.

For many years, the Let's Be Controversial series appeared every month without fail. In the past year or two the essays have appeared occasionally. The reason is obvious. Almost everything connected with Hamilton has been covered in the series. Every now and then, however, something fresh crops up. And, in consequence, a new essay takes the stage for a brief time. And that's how it will go on, while the writer of the essays is spared.

To wind up, here is one of the essays from the list indexed here:

IT WILL GO DOWN, OF COURSE!

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were having a dainty tea on Captain Muffin's yacht, Silver Cloud. "It will go down, of course", observed Captain Muffin. The four schoolboys were slightly surprised. They did not see any reason why Captain Muffin should mention that the dainty tea would go down. After all, any meal, dainty or otherwise, was expected to go down.

Over fifty years ago, the readers of the Boys' Friend were enjoying the Silver Cloud series and having the time of their lives. Many of Hamilton's best plots were peculiar to Rookwood. This one of the Silver Cloud was not that, though it was tried out first, and most successfully, at Rookwood. It was novel, not because it was a series set on a yacht, but because a number of boys went to the yacht expecting to be the guests of Tubby Muffin's uncle. They were guests all right - but they were expected to pay for that privilege. Paying guests, as boarders are euphemistically called.

That was in 1925. Eight years later, at Easter in 1933, the author sketched in again the theme of the paying guests on a yacht - in the Magnet this time. Billy Bunter's relative, George, owned the Sea Nymph. This 1933 series was pleasant enough reading, though it rang a little too familiarly for those who recalled the Rookwood series. The Sea Nymph series was really a few stories, related to one another only by the link of the ship. There was no developing plot, and, for the discriminating, it was below the standard of the 1925 series.

So, let us ignore Easter 1933, and leap ahead another 16 years to 1949 when, for the third time, the author returned to the the me of the fellows who accepted a holiday invitation, only to find that they were expected to pay for it. This time, the boys find themselves the "paying guests" of Bunter's Uncle Carter at Folkestone.

Brown, the weird manservant of Tankerton Hall asks the boys if they

would like a fire in their sitting-room. "I'll tell Sam to bring up a basket of logs, and I'll put it down."

It occurs to the boys that there is no reason why Sam should not put down the basket of logs unaided by Brown.

Which was the better of the two stories - the Rookwood summer holiday series of the unknowing "paying guests" or the Greyfriars Christmas story with a similar theme in 1949? For my money, the Rookwood series was very much the better of the two.

It wasn't only the ship's setting, though that was attractive, with the vessel crusing along the south coast of England, calling at Devonshire and Cornish bays, and up the west coast as far as Blackpool. But there was a freshness, a spontaneity, a kind of a joy of living which seemed to be lacking a quarter of a century on. The boys of the summer of 1925 must have loved every minuted of it, even though there was, possibly, just a wee bit too much Lovell in the series.

An adult, of course, can detect just a little too much contrivance in it all, but providing that was well-handled, as it was in this series, contrivance did not matter.

Apart from the Rookwood boys, which party included the Fistical Four, Muffin, and Mornington, there were Smythe & Co. of a higher form and Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe. It was very unlikely indeed, really, that Captain Muffin would have wanted to fill up his floating boarding-house with schoolboys. A sea captain might retire and decide to take in paying guests. But it seems most improbable that a boarding house proprietor would turn sea captain, be able to buy a large and luxurious yacht, and fill it up with schoolboys at £4 a week all found. Surely, even at the prices going in 1925, £4 a week would have been far too low a price for a sea cruise of this type. Early in the series Jimmy Silver & Co. discovered, in a deliciously humorous tale, that they were "paying guests". In the post-war Bunter book, the Greyfriars boys did not discover until the end of the tale that they were expected to pay their way, and the delay was unbelievable.

The Rookwood series came vividly to life after Ulick Lee, the nephew of the previous owner of the yacht (a bank robber whose haul of precious diamonds had never been discovered), joined the ship. The last two or three tales were tense and exciting as Lee clashed with Lovell andthenMomington until the thrilling climax was reached. A rather novel slant of the plot was that the diamonds were never discovered while the party was aboard the yacht, which showed unusual restraint on the part of the author. When the new term began, Muffin told his schoolfellows how the police had searched the yacht and had found the diamonds in a specially-prepared hiding-place.

The Silver Cloud series is one of the happiest memories or Rookwood's last year in the Boys' Friend.

"Billy Bunter's Christmas Party" should have been equally as good, but

it really wasn't. I always felt - and it is, of course, only a personal view-point - that it was a tired and pedestrian affair, even though the paying guests theme was anything but hackneyed. It should have been good. There was the old, old house; there was Christmas; there was a ghost; there was a mysterious young man who, in typical Hamilton style, was not so mysterious to the reader. But somehow it all lacked atmosphere. The ghostly bits were never eerie; the paying guests lark went on for too long; it was heavily unlikely that a boarding-house proprietor, who advertised his establishment, would fill it up with schoolboys. Perhaps, most of all, it just did not ring true that fellows like Harry Wharton & Co. would spend their Christmas in a boarding-house, and be embarrassed when they were expected to find £2.10s per day to pay for their board and lodging. (Mr. Richards recognised that inflation had taken a hand between 1925 and 1949.)

I regret to say that I even found the very democratic Sir Hugh Tankerton a bit of a bore. But then, Hamilton, like Agatha Christie, was always a bit coy with his young adults and at his most successful with older ones.

Of course, the Silver Cloud series was bought almost entirely by boys. "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party" was supported almost entirely by the not-so-young. And, though some of those not-so-young certainly viewed the world of Greyfriars through rose-coloured glasses, the passing of the years did make a difference.

* *

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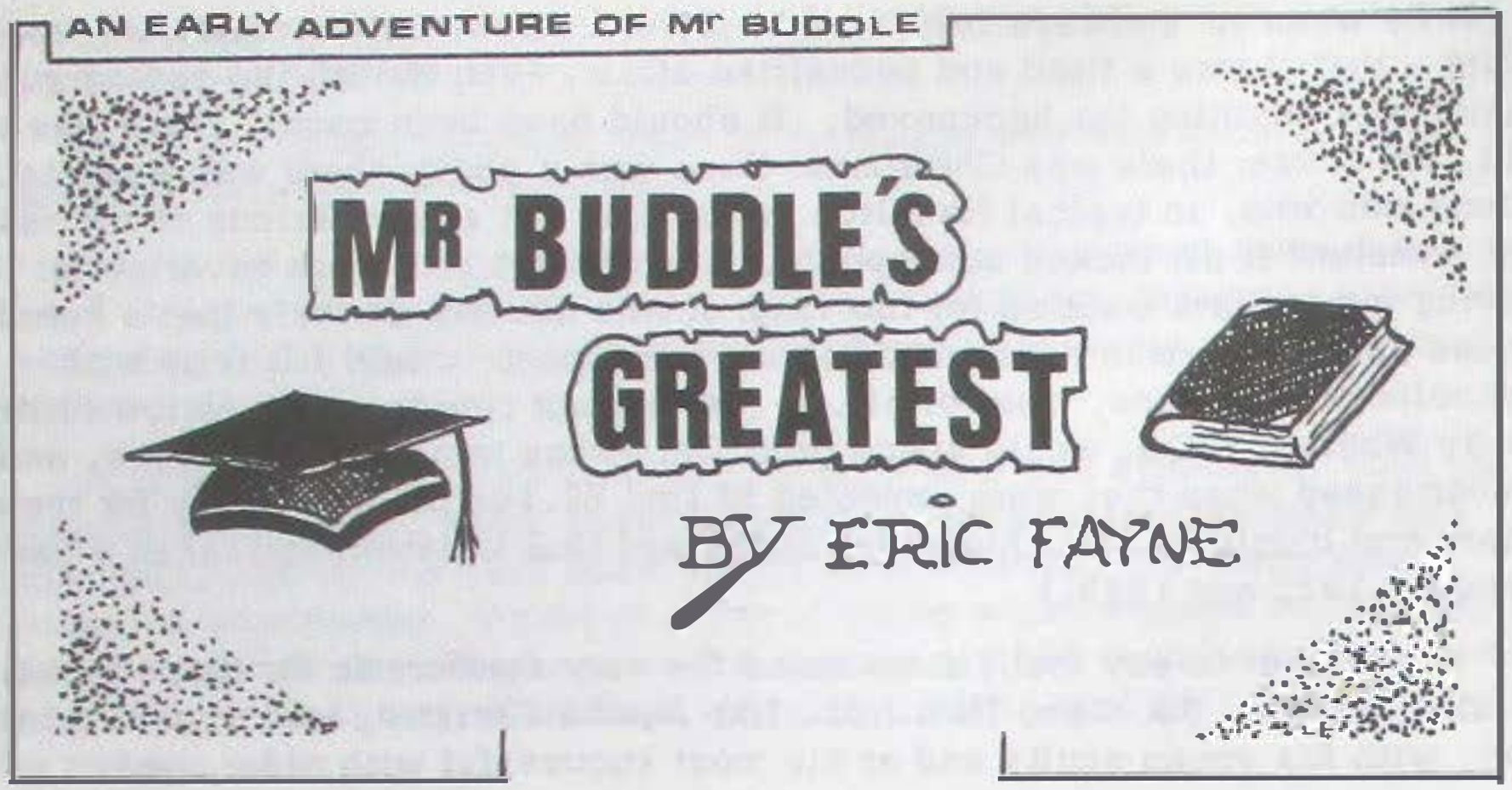
AN EARLY ADVENTURE OF Mr BUDDLE



It was a warm afternoon. As the heat from the autumn sun penetrated the cloth of his jacket, Mr. Buddle moved his shoulders in mild discomfort, and wondered whether he might have been a little premature in donning his winter woolies.

He had enjoyed his tea on the shady verandah of Ye Olde Devonshire Tea Shoppe. Now he had crossed the narrow High Street of the Village of Everslade, and he found himself on the sunny side, gazing into a window of Mr. Passenger's second-hand shop.

Mr. Passenger's shop was double-fronted. On one side he had on display a considerable variety of junk - aged oil-stoves, an unusually heavy-looking bicycle with rusty handlebars, a perambulator with tired springs, and a number of pots and pans of all shapes and sizes.

It was the other side, however, which interested Mr. Buddle. Second-hand books of every type were laid out in array in the space behind Mr. Passenger's left-hand window. When he was in Everslade, Mr. Buddle usually paused for a few minutes to gaze in at the books Mr. Passenger had on display. Up till the present, Mr. Buddle had never, in all his years on the staff at Slade, crossed the threshold of the second-hand book shop. He was about to do so now.

There were about fifty books spread out to make a window display. No doubt Mr. Passenger had selected the less-worn of his stock, along with some which had lurid dust-jackets, to tempt a prospective customer who stood, like Mr. Buddle, on the outside looking in.

For a while Mr. Buddle stood in doubt, thoughtfully scanning one of the volumes. It nestled snugly between Hall & Knight's Algebra and Elinor Glyn's "Three Weeks". Suddenly, as he realised that the sun was getting uncomfortably warm,

he made up his mind and entered the shop.

It was dusky inside. It was hot. There was a decidedly fusty smell.

A big bald-headed man, in shirt sleeves, yellow braces, and with a cigarette in the corner of his mouth, came forward. He eyed Mr. Buddle lazily without speaking.

"There is a book in the centre of your window. It is called, I think, the Greyfriars Holiday Annual. That one there!" Mr. Buddle and Mr. Passenger leaned over the low partition which divided the window display from the shop proper, and Mr. Buddle pointed. "Could I, perhaps, have a look at it?"

Using his tongue to transfer his cigarette from one corner of his mouth to the other, Mr. Passenger stretched out an arm over the partition. With a grunt he managed to withdraw the book indicated, and haul it out of the window. He banged on it and blew on it to dispel some dust, and then passed it to Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Buddle scanned the cover which bore the words Greyfriars Holiday Annual, and the date 1922. He flicked over a few pages and was intrigued by what he saw.

He glanced at Mr. Passenger.

"How much?"

"Four bob!"

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows.

"That's expensive, isn't it? Four shillings for a second-hand book."

Mr. Passenger spat out his cigarette and put his foot on it.

"Three bob to you, then - and it's a gift at that price."

Mr. Buddle took out his purse, and extracted three shillings which he placed on the grimy counter. He held out the book to Mr. Passenger.

"Thank you. Perhaps you will wrap it up for me."

Mr. Passenger glared.

"Wrap it up?" He sounded as though he could scarcely credit his ears. "You don't want much for three bob, do you? We don't wrap up second-hand books."

Mr. Buddle tried to think of a devastating reply, but none was forthcoming. Tucking the book under his arm, he emerged into the sunshine. He felt rather conspicuous with the naked book under his arm and hoped that he would meet none of his pupils.

He had only taken a few steps when he saw Mr. and Mrs. Fromo coming towards him on the narrow pavement. Mr. Fromo was the senior housemaster at Slade, a rather bulky man with irritable tufted eyebrows, and an unusually large nose. He taught Latin and Greek to the upper forms in the school.

Mr. Buddle said "Bother!" under his breath. He raised his hat politely to Mrs. Fromo, and Mr. Fromo returned the salute.

"You have been making a purchase, my dear Buddle?" observed Mr. Fromo pleasantly.

"A present for a young relative", explained Mr. Buddle. He turned pink.

"Marvellous weather for the

time of year, Mr. Buddle", put in Mrs. Fromo.

Mr. Buddle agreed that it was, indeed, marvellous weather for the time of year, and Mr. and Mrs. Fromo walked on.

But Mr. Buddle's ordeal was not yet over. He had only gone a few hundred yards further when a young man emerged from a shop. It was Mr. Crayford. who was sports master at Slade.

Breathing hard, Mr. Buddle pushed the Holiday Annual further under his arm. So vigorously, in fact, that it slipped out behind him and fell on the pavement.

Before Mr. Buddle could collect his property, Mr. Crayford had darted forward and picked it up. The sports master glanced at the book, and grinned. He handed it to Mr. Buddle.

'Do you want to be an engine driver when you grow up?" enquired Mr. Crayford. He walked on, laughing.

For the second time that afternoon, Mr. Buddle struggled to think of a devastating reply. but once again he struggled in vain.

Pinker than ever, Mr. Buddle hurried on his way. When he saw two big Slade fellows - Antrobus, the Slade captain, and Scarlet, a prefect - coming towards him, Mr. Buddle dived into a newsagent's shop, and bought a newspaper. It came in handy to wrap up the Holiday Annual.

. . . . .

Mr. Buddle enjoyed himself with his Holiday Annual. Indeed, he found it fascinating. Before retiring to bed that night, he browsed through it, thoroughly savouring its varied contents.

When eventually he went to bed, Mr. Buddle started on one of the stories. It was entitled "To Save His Honour". He had not been reading for long before he realised that he had read the story before. The discovery intrigued him

"Undoubtedly a story from the Gem", mused Mr. Buddle. He was quite well acquainted with the Gem, and liked it immensely. Any Gem story was worth reading a second time, in his opinion. He settled down to read.

It took him three successive nights to complete his reading of that story, which was a long one.

By Saturday he was reading a story about Rookwood School. Mr. Buddle was not well acquainted with Rookwood, though he had come across it on one occasion.

For Sunday there was a lengthy narrative around a school named Greyfriars. Mr. Buddle found it entertaining. He had come to the conclusion that his outlay of three shillings on that Holiday Annual had been money well spent.

On Monday evening, having marked a set of exercises worked by one of his English classes, he settled himself comfortably in his armchair to read the last story which really interested him in his Holiday Annual. It was a story of the boys of St. Jim's, and, with a touch of sentimentality, Mr. Buddle had purposely kept it to wind up his glut of that type of reading.

The autumn dusk had fallen,

and he had switched on his study light. From a distance came the sound of boyish voices as Slade fellows, with their evening "prep" finished, betook themselves to the Common Rooms for a gossip or to the gymnasium for some sparring.

Mr. Buddle, however, was undisturbed by the distant sounds of youthful high spirits. He was immersed in his second story of St. Jim's provided by the Holiday Annual.

After a while he sat back for a few minutes to rest his eyes, and to think over what he had read. He was about to resume his reading when a tap came at the door.

Mr. Buddle grunted. It still wanted nearly an hour before he would be due to carry out a junior dormitory inspection, and he did not relish any encroachment on his limited spare time.

"Come in!" he called out.

A man entered. He was carrying a square box by a handle bolted to the top. For a moment Mr. Buddle thought it was a portable sewing-machine.

The man closed the door. He approached the table, and put down his box. He panted a little, as though his burden had been heavy.

Mr. Buddle stared at him in amazement.

"My name is Glyn", said the newcomer.

"Glyn!" echoed Mr. Buddle. The name seemed familiar. He scanned his visitor.

Mr. Buddle's first impression has been that the intruder was a young man, but at closer quarters the lines were evident in his forehead. Deep lines. The hair which had seemed flaxen from a distance was actually white. He was of below average height. He wore a shabby mackintosh.

"What do you want with me, Mr. Glyn?" asked Mr. Buddle. He spoke sourly. "You should not visit my study unannounced. This is a private part of the college."

"I have made a remarkable scientific discovery", said Mr. Glyn. His voice was low, with just the suspicion of a lisp. "I felt that you would be interested, Mr. Buddle."

"A scientific discovery!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. He rose to his feet, and went on irritably. "I am not interested in science, sir. Much of the misery has been brought to this world by science. You must be seeking our science master - Mr. Crathie. You will find his study farther along the corridor."

The strange little man shook his head.

"No, Mr. Buddle, I am not seeking Mr. Crathie. I have purposely come to you. You are aware that the most astounding strides have been made in science in the last thirty years. Things which we accept as normal today would have been regarded by our grandparents as impossible - magic - quite unbelievable."

"No doubt!" said Mr. Buddle. "Well?"

"Today my invention is beyond belief, in the same way that radio and electricity, talking pictures and air

travel, would have been beyond belief to our grandparents." The man lowered his voice to little more than a whisper. "Mr. Buddle, I have solved the problem of the seventh dimension."

"The seventh dimension!" muttered Mr. Buddle in wonder.

Mr. Glyn smiled. He looked more youthful as he smiled.

"I have conquered Time, Mr. Buddle. I have long realised that all eras - past, present, and future - are in existence together on different planes. By turning a switch, I can transfer a person from one plane to another - from the present to the past, from the past to the future. I can take you back into the dear dead days. No longer are they beyond recall. If you will, I can provide you with a visit to any year of the present century."

Mr. Buddle gave a half-suppressed snort. He took a couple of paces forward.

"This is sheer nonsense!" he rapped out. "Mr. Glyn, please leave my study, or I must ring for a servant to escort you out."

"It is not nonsense, Mr. Buddle. My machine is here. I call it the electronic, radiophonetic, anti-clock. You can test it for yourself. You will come to no harm. At present my range is limited. At the moment, about thirty years is the utmost I can take you back in time. After further research, I shall be able to convey my passengers to an infinitely greater depth. It will be possible to discover whether Bacon wrote Shakespeare and how the Druids managed to convey those huge rocks to Stonehenge."

Interested in spite of himself, Mr. Buddle leaned over the table. Mr. Glyn unfastened strong clips and removed the cover of his box. A queer-looking machine - if it were a machine at all - was disclosed. It consisted of a thick rod of metal, with metal handles projecting from it. Insulated wires disappeared among a mass of valves.

"A most odd device", observed Mr. Buddle dubiously.

"So far, I have conquered the seventh dimension. In time I shall do more. Where, at this moment, I can only take you into the past, there will come a time when I shall be able to take you into the future. You will be able to pay a visit to the year nineteen-ninety-nine, Mr. Buddle."

"Perish the thought!" yapped Mr. Buddle. "Under no circumstances would I wish to see into the future." Solemnly he quoted the words of his favourite hymn: "God holds the key of all unknown - and I am glad."

Mr. Glyn shrugged his shoulders.

"Nevertheless, you will accompany me on a brief trip into the immediate past. You will enjoy that. I may say that I have paid several visits to the early years of the century. Yesterday I had lunch at the Hotel Cecil in the Strand, in the year 1920. I have always returned to our own day and age without difficulty. There is no danger, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle wrinkled his brows in thought.

He said slowly: "A visit into the past. It would be pleasant, just

for a very short time, to find oneself a young man - even a boy - again."

Mr. Glyn shook his head.

"You misunderstand, Mr. Buddle. Though we may go back half a century, you yourself will not change. I shall merely transfer you, as you are, from one plane to another. At the present time you are sixty --"

"At the present time I am fifty", snapped Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Glyn bowed.

"I was merely speaking in round figures. You are fifty now. You will be fifty when we alight in the year nineteen hundred or thereabouts. I cannot change human beings, but I can change their planes. In a few years time, families will go back into history to spend their summer holidays. 'Where are you spending your holiday this year?' someone will ask. And the reply will come 'We are going into the days of Good Queen Anne.' Fascinating, is it not, Mr. Buddle?"

"I don't believe it", said Mr. Buddle.

"You will see!" promised Mr. Glyn. He pointed to the machine. "Hold one of the handles, Mr. Buddle. With your other hand, grip my shoulder. I must keep one hand free to manipulate the controls. Do not be afraid. You will not go into orbit. Once you seize a handle, you cannot let go till I switch off. You will feel but little - merely a floating sensation."

Mr. Buddle hesitated. The experience was so strange - so bizarre. The remarkable Mr. Glyn spoke sharply.

"Take a handle!"

Mechanically, Mr. Buddle took a handle. Mr. Glyn stretched out a hand, and twisted first one knob and then another. He adjusted a clock-like device. He pressed a button.

There was a deep hum from the machine. The light in the study snapped out; there was a sudden burst of sunshine.

"Dawn!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle.

"Yesterday's sunset!" came the lisping voice of Mr. Glyn.

The hum grew louder. Mr. Buddle was conscious of motion - ceaseless motion - an odd whirl in which his senses grew giddy. Flashing light and dark, like Fire-work Night gone mad. A sensation of rushing -- rushing --

"We are there!" came the voice of Mr. Glyn.

Mr. Buddle released the handle. The machine was resting on the top of a low wall on the verge of a green, grassy common. The sun was warm. The sky was cloudless.

"Where are we?" demanded Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Glyn was pale with excitement. He consulted a dial on the machine.

"We are in the year 1913 - the autumn, I think, from the look of those trees. I regulated the machine to move a mile for each year clipped away. If my calculations are correct, we are on the outskirts of Plymouth."

"Wonderful!" muttered Mr. Buddle. He drew a deep, deep breath. The air was like the rarest wine.

"We cannot stay long, but you would like to have a short walk?" suggested Mr. Glyn. "I cannot leave the machine - it might be stolen or tampered with. But you can stroll for a while."

"I should dearly love to", said Mr. Buddle impulsively.

Mr. Glyn held up a hand.

"A word of warning, Mr. Buddle. I can give you, at the very outside, an hour in which to look around. Take note of this spot, in order that you can find me again without difficulty. My batteries and accumulators are not as powerful as they will be when I have completed my research. I must get back soon in order that I may replenish them. Should you be longer than an hour, you would return to find me, and my anti-clock, gone. You would be left in the year 1913. It might be impossible for me ever to find you again."

Mr. Buddle nodded. He spoke breathlessly:

"I will be back quickly. I will just have a look round. It will be most instructive. I shall return in less than an hour."

"Take note of the surroundings", warned Mr. Glyn.

"A common with a brick wall, and a small lake in the distance. A pillar-box for letters. A see-saw for children. I shall find the spot again easily."

Mr. Buddle spoke with assurance. He hurried away across the common, and reached a main road. He looked back, and a distant Mr. Glyn waved to him. An open-topped tramcar hummed along the road. Mr. Buddle signalled it, the car stopped, and he boarded it. Before he had ascended to the top deck, the tram was in motion again.

The trolley-wheel sang on the wires above. The wind blew in his face.

A conductor came up to him.

"The town centre!" said Mr. Buddle recklessly.

"A penny!" said the conductor. He clipped a ticket with the ting of a bell, and slid the penny into his money-bag without looking at it.

Soon Mr. Buddle found himself alighting, and the car sped on its way. He was in a fairly busy street. The air was fresh and pleasant. Two horse-drawn vehicles were in sight.

"The air is marvellous", said Mr. Buddle aloud. "No petrol fumes, of course."

A milkman was pushing a square trolley along. Hanging all round the trolley were leaden-coloured cans. Mr. Buddle stood watching for a few moments as the man stopped the trolley.

Lifting a large four-gallon can from the centre of the trolley, the milkman approached a house adjoining a shop. A woman appeared with a jug. The milkman detached a ladle, filled it with milk from the can, and tipped the contents of the measure into the jug.

As he returned, the man noticed Mr. Buddle staring at him.

"You'll know me again, mister!" said the milkman.

"No bottles!" crooned Mr. Buddle. "Where I come from, we get our milk from bottles."

"In this country we get it from cows", retorted the milkman.

Mr. Buddle strolled on. A watering-cart, drawn by a horse, was spraying one side of the road. Two small boys were dancing joyfully through the puddles left behind. The dust was effectively laid. A slight steam rose from the watered surface of the road, and the colours of the rainbow gleamed in the steam in the sunshine.

A muffin-man passed along, ringing his bell. Mr. Buddle hadn't seen a muffin-man for years.

"No rush and tear!" murmured Mr. Buddle. "So quiet - so leisurely."

There were plenty of people about, but nowhere was crowded. The women wore long skirts nearly reaching the pavement. They wore large hats perched on masses of hair.

"I always thought", mused Mr. Buddle, "that Edwardian clothes for women were ugly - but really these ladies look quite beautiful."

Something about the men struck Mr. Buddle as odd. For a while he could not think what it was. Then he realised. All the men wore hats or caps. They looked as though they might feel semi-naked without their headgear. Arriving on his visit from a less-hat-conscious generation, Mr. Buddle found the change quite striking.

"An absence of flesh", decided Mr. Buddle. "Hands and faces are all these people have. All the rest of them is clothes, clothes, clothes."

A motor-car, open to the sky, with a goggled driver sitting high behind the wheel, chugged past. Beside the driver sat a lady, wearing a fur, a big hat, and a huge veil which covered her face and her hat as well.

"Were cars ever like that?" Mr. Buddle asked himself.

Enthralled, he passed slowly along the lines of shops, peering in the windows. A mangle, with large wooden rollers and a giant handle, caught his eye.

"My mother had one like that", exlaimed Mr. Buddle.

His eyes drifted to some furniture. A grandfather chair with armrests; a grandmother chair without armrests; a sofa. The card announced: Suite £4-19-11 ½d.

"Amazing!" crooned Mr. Buddle.

He strolled on again. Then he stopped before a newsagent's shop. Beneath the window front were newspaper placards, held in place by wire mesh.

One read: Daily News - Mrs. Pankhurst places wreath on grave of woman killed at the Derby. Another: Daily Chronicle - Vesta Tilley Dangerously Ill - Little Hope: A third: Evening News - Kent are the Cricket Champions.

Mr. Buddle was conscious

that the placards were there, but he did not read them. On an impulse, he entered the shop. The counter was piled high with papers and periodicals of all shapes, sizes, and colours.

A plump woman with a large wart on her chin looked curiously at the little schoolmaster.

"Have you a paper called the Gem? " he asked.

Without speaking, the woman jerked a blue-covered periodical from a large heap.

Mr. Buddle extracted a shilling from his pocket, placed it on the counter, and waited for his change.

The woman took up the shilling, scrutinised it, and then glared at Mr. Buddle.

"Foreign money! " she said scornfully.

Mr. Buddle was startled. The possibility of a currency problem had not occurred to him. He gave a self-conscious laugh.

"It is English money, madam, but from many years on", he assured the astonished shopkeeper.

"From which? " she demanded. She folded plump arms across her ample bosom.

Mr. Buddle smiled.

"I am a visitor from the future, madam", he said chattily. I do not belong to the year 1913. I come from a year long after. "

"Long after what? "

"Well, I suppose I mean long after the war", said Mr. Buddle.

"What war? " The woman looked startled and suspicious.

"The war against Germany, madam! This is the year 1913, isn't it? "

The woman did not answer. Trying to act unobtrusively, she picked up a small hammer which had been lying on top of a slab of toffee on a tray. She gripped the hammer hard.

Mr. Buddle did not notice. He went on excitedly:

"Next year, madam, this country will be at war with Germany. The war will go on till 1918. During that time, golden sovereigns will disappear and you will use money made of paper. After that, women will be given the vote. People will fly across the Atlantic and back in a few hours. By turning a switch you will be able to hear an orchestral concert from the continent. "

Suddenly the woman waved her hammer in the air, and the startled Mr. Buddle hopped back.

"Bert! " shrieked the woman. Apparently she was calling for male assistance from somewhere beyond the door behind the counter. She said to Mr. Buddle:

"Get out, you! You're potty! I won't be murdered without a struggle. Get out before my Bert comes and deals with you. "

Once again she waved the hammer ferociously.

"Oh, calamity! " gasped Mr. Buddle. Hasily, he skipped out of the shop.

Somewhere a clock was

striking. The sound gave Mr. Buddle a sense of urgency.

"Good heavens, how long have I been?

It must be more than an hour. I must find Mr. Glyn".

He felt perspiration standing on his brow. Anxiously he looked round for a tramcar, but none was in sight.

"Oh, dear! I shall be left behind in 1913. What a catastrophe!" panted Mr. Buddle.

He walked fast in the direction from which he had come earlier. He broke into a run. People scattered as he sped along the pavements. The crowds on the pavements seemed to thicken.

The scene was changing. He could see the green common in the distance. There was the lake, the pillar-box for letters, the see-saw for children.

Mr. Buddle's feet pattered across the grass of the common. There was no sign of Mr. Glyn. No sign of the anticlock machine.

Mr. Buddle was calling as he panted along

"Mr. Glyn -- Mr. Glyn -- Where are you, Mr. Glyn? Come back for me, Mr. Glyn-"

Perspiration was flying from his brow. He was making no progress. He tried to force his legs up and down like pistons, but they acted like machinery badly in need of lubrication. He caught his foot in something and went staggering forward. He flung out his arms.

"Mr. Glyn, where are you?"

The common was spinning. The light was fading. The atmosphere was hot and stifling. Still Mr. Buddle attempted to run, but could not. He tried to shout but no words would come. He felt that his chest was bursting.

"Sir!" came a voice.

"Mr. Glyn!" gasped out Mr. Buddle.

"Sir!" repeated the voice. Someone was shaking him by the shoulder.

Mr. Buddle opened his eyes. His study looked peaceful in the glow from the shaded electric light. A boy stood at his side, looking at him with some concern but with an amused glimmer in very blue eyes.

"Meredith!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. The schoolmaster sat upright in his armchair. Jerking a handkerchief from his breast pocket, he mopped his damp forehead.

Meredith spoke respectfully, but Mr. Buddle was conscious of that gleam of fun in the boy's eyes.

"I've brought my essay, sir. You told me to do it again, sir, and bring it to you this evening. I knocked on your door, sir, but you didn't answer. I heard a funny noise like a pig grunting, sir, so I thought I'd better come in."

Without a word, Mr. Buddle took the exercise book which the boy was holding out to him.

"I thought you might have been taken ill, sir, I thought you might be having a fit, sir", said Meredith softly.

"I had dropped off to sleep", snapped Mr. Buddle. His eyes rested on the Holiday Annual which had fallen to the floor. After a moment, he picked it up.

"I purchased this book in Everslade last week, Meredith. It seems to be the sort of literature which appeals to you. If you care to have it, you may take it away with you."

"Oh, sir, that's awfully good of you!" Meredith took the book, and turned over a few pages. "I should love to have it, sir. Thank you very much indeed, sir."

In the kindness of his heart, the fair-haired youth omitted to mention that he already owned a copy of that edition of the Holiday Annual, given to him long ago by his father.

"Very well" said Mr. Buddle stiffly. "You may go, Meredith."

Meredith tucked the book under his arm, and turned to leave the study.

"There is", said Mr. Buddle dreamily, "a curious tale in that volume about someone who invents a machine which can conquer time. It is, so far as I remember, entitled 'Glyn's Greatest". It was probably beyond reason at the time it was written, but, in these modern times, with so many new scientific discoveries, it does not seem so very far-fetched. You should read the story, Meredith. It will give you food for though."

"I'm sure it will, sir", murmured Meredith, "Good night, sir."

There was an inscrutable smile on his face as he left the study.

. . . . .

* *

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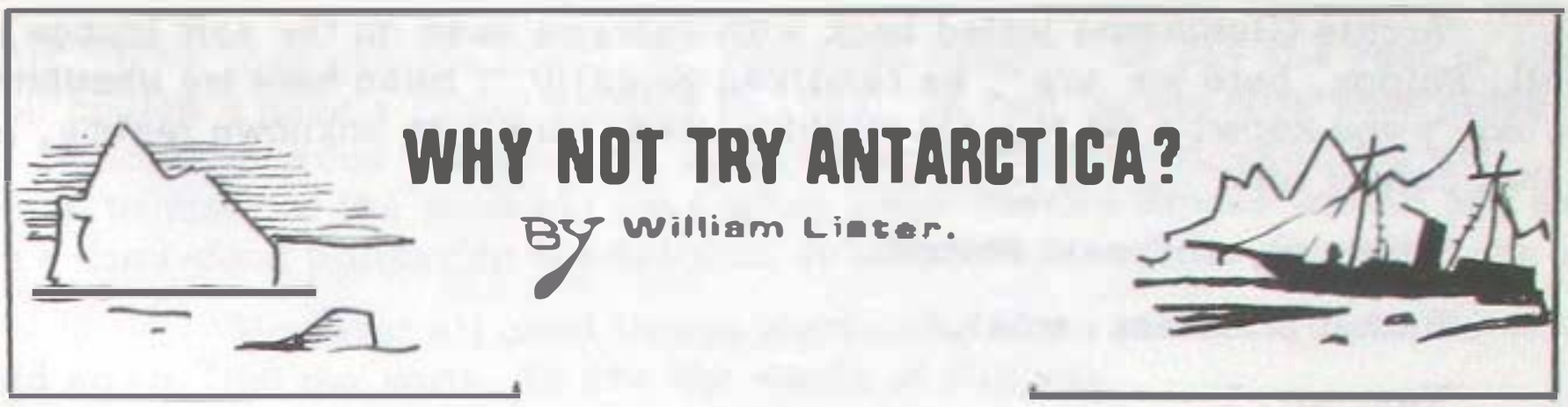

WHY NOT TRY ANTARCTICA?

By William Lister.

Let me give you a few titles of stories, in order of appearance; "Golden Rover", "The Kingdom of Wonder", "The Lost People", "The Rival Kings", "The Invasion of East Anglia" and "The Storming of the Capital".

Round these titles up. Put over them the name "The Nelson Lee Library" and under them the name Edwy Searles Brooks and you will be all set for a reading adventure that will bring you not only a touch of P. G. WODEHOUSE or of Jules Verne but a touch of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Charles Hamilton.

A strong statement you may say, but one in which (I hope) you will agree when you conclude the reading of this article.

Here we are then, with a party of twenty schoolboys, also Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, Phipps and a Crew of five, on board the most amazing sea-air craft the world of the nineteen - twenties had ever seen, "A veritable leviathan of the air" claims E. S. Brooks - "big saloon, state-rooms, cabins, engine room, kitchen and numerous other compartments". An amazing air and submarine craft, which for the year 1922 left little to be desired.

We are told, by those who have trod the path before us, that if we wish to write a story, short or long, we must introduce our main characters as soon as possible. This E. S. Brooks does. All main stars are gathered round in the first couple of chapters.

Your characters should also have their own distinctive personalities, some strong point stressed. Mr. Brooks certainly does this. Nelson Lee- schoolmaster - detective. Lord Dorrimore, devil-may-care, adventurous millionaire. Umlosi, giant African chief, Handforth (and to know Handforth is to love him) also twenty boys, the pick of the Remove, not forgetting Phipps, valet to Archie Glenthorne and our first link with one of the authors mentioned - P. G. WODEHOUSE. To illustrate my point I shall have to provide a few short "quotes? as Brooks would say "it may be a bit tedious, but you can't have all honey, and it's necessary".

In this galaxy of stories Archie and Phipps appear in frequent scenes, more Wodehouse than Wodehouse, so to speak, if you keep "My Man Jeeves" in mind. Here's a short "trailer" for you.

"Archie Glenthorne lolled back with supreme ease on the soft lounge. 'Well, Phipps, here we are", he remarked genially "I mean here we absolutely are, don't you know! On the old airship, staggering into unknown realms, and all that sort of rot!"

"Quite so, sir" said Phipps.

'Rather priceless, what."

'Yes, sir."

"I mean to say, buzzing through the atmosphere at about two hundred and sixty-three belly miles an hour, and all that", said Archie. "Lightning superseded, and what not! The fact is old bird, we're having some rapid changes, what with one thing and another, and this and that".

"Undoubtedly, sir", agreed Phipps.

"Absolutely", said Archie, "In fact a chappie hardly knows whether he's standing on his bean or his old pedals! You get me, Phipps. You gather the trend. Does the young master make himself clear?"

"Quite, sir" replied Phipps, with the utmost gravity "I am convinced that very few young gentlemen can boast of experiences such as those we have passed through, or fallen to our lot".

Archie adjusted his monocle.

'Dashed good Phipps!" he said, clapping his hands. "I mean to say, brainily put, and so forth. Fallen to our lot, don't you know. I like that absolutely! You're a wonder, Phipps".

"Not at all, sir", said Phipps. "Have you any special instructions for this morning, sir".

Forgive me for quoting such a lengthy passage, but I want you to catch the P.G. WODEHOUSE angle, and there's lots more of this to delight the reader.

Perhaps Jules Verne is noted for his fantastic travel machines of his generation. His 'Round the World in Eighty Days" by balloon, or "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" by submarine or "Journey to the Moon" by rocket. Many similar machines were launched by the fertile imagination of Edwy Searles Brooks in the long history of St. Franks, and the machine used here is every bit as interesting as Verne's.

In an article Bob Blythe revealed that E. S. Brooks had all the works of A. Conan-Doyle and in this series, as indeed in other tales, one catches glimpses of Doyle's "Lost World" in the variety of monsters that make an appearance in the "Nelson Lee".

All this, combines with a race of people not unlike the early settlers in the U.S.A. or the "Quakers" of our country, being discovered in the warm gulf-stream of the underground Antartic, mixed with a crowd of the St. Frank's Remove boys, and you have tales to be remembered. And remember them you

will. (The boys provide the C. H. Hamilton touch). To say the year is 1922 you couldn't have a better holiday in 1984. In fact by the time your plane is 24 hours overdue and you find yourself in an unfinished hotel you will begin to sigh for the good old days when Edwy Searles Brooks wafted you away on a ding-dong holiday in the Antartic or wherever it was he chose to take you.

However all good things must come to an end (don't ask me why) and so we find our party, to use the words of Nipper:

"One fine morning in September we saw below us the green fields of France, and, in due course, the Channel - with the white cliffs of Dover like a little streak against the blue and green.

We were home - there, beyond lay a smokey patch which denoted London. We had come back from our adventures in the far corners of the world.

Now we felt only one anxiety - and that was to get to St. Franks - and to tell all our adventures to all the rest of the fellows.

Considering all the adventures we had gone through, it was wonderful we should arrive home safely.

But here we were - and all was well!"

Postscript

To read of these adventures you need the "Nelson Lee's" 1922 No. 375 to 380.

* *

THE GREYFRIARS CLUB 48th and 8th CHRISTMAS MEETING WILL BE HELD AT COURTFIELD on SUNDAY, 9TH DECEMBER.
As always, membership of the GREYFRIARS CLUB is completely free and your COURTFIELD hosts once again take this opportunity to extend the HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all hobby connoisseurs of goodwill and integrity, and such members are warmly invited to the Christmas meeting subject to usual telephoned confirmation of attendance. Regret COURTFIELD NEWS-LETTERS Nos. 46 and 47 containing recent authenticated meeting reports and pictures are now out of print.

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HOME OF THE FRANK RICHARDS' MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

See C.D. March 1980, page 24 and C.D.A. 1982, page 72.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE GWYN EVANS HARDBACKS

BY JACK ADRIAN.

Recently I stumbled across not one but two of those seemingly inexplicable mysteries without which, I often think, the world of old boys'/girls' papers would not be half the fun it is.

As most people probably know by now Sexton Blake writers were allowed to 'de-Blakeanise' their Blake material and re-sell it to mainstream publishers. Over the years much flak has been fired at this practice in Blakiana, but I see nothing wrong with it. Possibly I'm biased because I've done it myself, though not in the Blake field. It means you get paid twice for one story which, as any writer will tell you, is good business.

De-Blakeanising goes back at least to Andrew Murray, who probably started the ball roling with his The Selicombe Murder published under his pseudonym Nicholas Islay in 1920, by his own publishing company. This was a de-Blakeanisation of SBL (1st) 15 The Black Chrysanthemum. Murray issued at least one other de-Blakeanisation in the same year, but his firm seems to have gone bust shortly thereafter. The cynical may see a connection, but I doubt one. More recently Bill Howard Baker de-Blakeanised most of his original SBLs, which were then issued by Consul Books, Mayflower, and under his own imprint.

Most de-Blakeanisation was carried out in the 1930s, however, and that mainly for one publisher, Wright & Brown, who cranked out gargantuan amounts of cheap fiction, all genres, for the smaller rental libraries. There were two main suppliers: Gerald Verner (Donald Stuart) and John G. Brandon, both pretty prolific writers of SBLs. Most of Verner's Blake material -- SBL, UJ and DW -- was recycled in one way or another into hardbacks for Wright & Brown, and the same went for Brandon. When the latter died in 1941 his son Gordon carried on regardless.

Another Wright & Brown stalwart was Gwyn Evans. He had 20 books published by the first (or 22 if you include reprints of his first two books Hercules, Esq. and The Homicide Club, originally issued by Shaylor in 1930 and 1931), most of them straight reprints of his SBLs or stitched-together UJs. Three UJs generally made a 70,000-wd, 288-page book selling at 7/6d, while two UJs could be processed into a 50,000-wd, 256-page book selling at 3/6d.

In the early days Evans edited his own books although, careless in this as in everything else, he rarely failed to leave the odd 'Blake' or 'Tinker'

in the text instead of, say 'Double O'Day' or 'Ginger'. Splash Page usually remained Splash Page (he was, after all, Evans' own character) but Coutts, oddly, was often Coutts (he wasn't, of course, but no matter). Latterly Evans' secretary (a useful euphemism) did the editing; she was, if anything, rather more casual at the job than Evans himself.

Over the years I've been desultorily picking up the odd Gwyn Evans hardback if it's in decent enough shape (usually they're falling apart) and a month or so ago I found Murderers Meet (W & B, 1934) and The Clue of the Missing Link (W & B, 1938). Both books, not entirely metaphorically speaking, rocked me back on my heels.

The Clue of the Missing Link contains the title-story (originally UJ 1167, 20 Feb 26) and one other, and it's that other which astonished. For it is "Mystery of the Painted Slippers" which, although it appeared as UJ 1161 (9 Jan 26), isn't by Evans at all, but George Teed.

Murderers Meet is, if anything, even more surprising. At first I couldn't place it at all. It's a long novel, yet didn't seem to tie in with any of Evans' SBLs, or even any series of loosely connected UJs. Then, as I read on, it clicked. It wasn't by Evans. Or at least not wholly. It turns out to be a book-version of the serial which appeared in the UJ in its dying weeks, 'The Next Move". But that or course was by four Blake authors: Evans, Teed, Robert Murray and Anthony Skene.

It was a round-robin serial with each writer taking it in turns to push the plot in any direction he chose. I suspect that the original idea for the serial, and probably the basic plot, was supplied by Harold Twyman. Even if he wasn't physically editing the UJ at that time (too busy creating the Detective Weekly) the whole idea of four star authors vying with each other to plunge Blake into impossible situations and then trying to get him out again smacks of Twyman's lively and creative imagination.

"The Next Move" is actually a rattling good story. To be sure, it is by no means seamless. Each individual author had his own individual style, and it shows, Teed's clean, relentless prose suddenly jars into Evans' frantic and expostulatory journalese; the hard-boiled hokum of Anthony Skene gives way with a jerk to the lighter, more relaxed style of Robert Murray. And yet it works, against all the odds. It is, in its own way, a success.

But still this doesn't alter the fact that Murderers Meet is "The Next Move" and has not been changed by one word (other than the normal process of de-Blakeanisation) and is thus not Evans' sole creation at all. How then did it come to be published under his name?

The mystery is deepened by the dedication at the front of the book. In "The Next Move" the female lead is Teed's then-regular heroine Roxanne Harfield (she gets kidnapped, chloroformed, threatened with hideous torture, thrown into a giant, air-tight and unopenable safe, and so on). In Murderers Meet Roxanne becomes 'Madeleine Morny'. This is fair enough. Blake himself is translated into 'Clifton Vale' ("the celebrated criminal investigator of Judge's

Walk, Chelsea " -- not, incidentally, a million miles from where Evans himself had once lived), Tinker into 'Berry' and Splash Page into 'Bannerhead Bruce'. And yet the book itself is dedicated: "To The Real Madeleine/With Love ".

Now it is not to be thought that all four writers shared the same girl friend (although stranger things by far have happened in the reality behind pulp fiction), so this is clearly a very personal dedication by, one can only assume, Evans himself.

Does this then mean that Gwyn Evans pinched the story, surreptitiously had it published under his own name, and then copped the fee from Wright & Brown himself? That is to say, is this a case of outright plagiarism?

There was at least one Blake writer who did quite deliberately plagarise other writers' Blakes and, more seriously, swiped novels from the mainstream of thriller fiction and published them under his own name. One of these days I may go into his extraordinary career in more detail.

But Evans? On the whole I think not -- and for a number of reasons. Evans, a gregarious character, was on more than good terms with most of his fellow writers. He certainly did some odd things in his short but comet-like career, but I doubt that he'd deliverately bilk his brother scribes, especially George Teed who was a close personal friend, and in any case a man of some violence when crossed. But I think the main reason was simply that Evans by 1934 had an in with Wright & Brown.

It was Gerald Verner who'd made the breakthrough with the firm, in 1932, when he signed, in a blaze of trade publicity, a contract to supply them with as many as half a dozen books a year for the next decade. He could do this easily by simply de-Blakeanising everything he'd done up to that time, and everything he did subsequently. Evans, I suspect, signed a similar contract and certainly proceeded to deliver three or four books a year until he died. It was easy money.

Of course it may be argued that all four names could have been printed on spine and title-page. Nothing to stop that. On the other hand, far less complicated simply to byline the book "Gwyn Evans " andhave done with it. In the matter of payment I have no doubt at all that Evans divvied up the loot four ways. He was honest with his fellow writers, if sometimes a little less particular with his editors.

With "The Mystery of the Painted Slippers" we are on rather more rocky ground altogether. There is really no obvious reason why this Teed story should suddenly appear in a Gwyn Evans book. There is no doubt whatsoever that it is genuine Teed. Apart from the matter of style and subject-matter and plot (all thumpingly Teedesque) it is a Nirvana story. Although that of course makes it an even more bizarre choice, for the Nirvana stories (a dozen in all) were all pretty much connected: to read one, you need to know what has gone before. Yet no attempt has been made to edit her out (a relatively simple

task) or even explain who she is, where she comes from, why 'Ginger Mullins' (i.e., Tinker) is in love with her, and so on.

It certainly can't be because Evans was running out of material. As I said, he sold 20 books to Wright & Brown and could easily have spliced together another 20 from his own Blake output.

A clue to the mystery -- typically, and infuriatingly, cryptic -- lies in the book's dedication (again): "To George Teed H./Who Understands". Apart from the strange transposition of 'H' and 'Teed' -- which is probably a printer's error anyway (though who knows?) -- what on earth is to be made of that? What would Teed have 'understood' in the January of 1938?

Was it, perhaps, that Evans owed Teed money and paid off the debt by using one of Teed's old stories so that Teed would get half the book's fee? A reasonable theory, but unlikely. Why use one of Teed's stories? Evans could just as well have used one of his own and simply paid Teed out of his own pocket. Or was it the other way round? Teed owed Evans so Evans used one of Teed's stories to pay off the debt. This is better but still not good enough, and for a reason that is difficult to explain. Stuff one wrote ten years ago is -- how can I put it? -- 'dead': it might just as well have been written by someone else. There is no hard work involved in changing a few names on a manuscript. To put it another way, altering characters' names in one's own story is as easy, or as difficult, as altering them in someone else's. If one uses someone else's story to pay off a debt, one feels that one is not really getting one's moneysworth. That is not to say that the practice did not (or does not) go on, because it did (and does). But here, I can only say that it simply doesn't smell right.

Or does that dedication, perhaps, refer to something rather more metaphysical? The peculiar -- and often peculiarly awful -- conditions of the freelance writer's life. The sheer grind of having to write about one character -- and not a character you created, either -- year after year after year (and it's no good saying they didn't have to: life isn't that simple). The atrophying effect on the brain from writing nothing but junk fiction for too many years. Teed would certainly have understood all that.

I would give much to have the signed copy that Gwyn Evans undoubtedly sent to G. H. Teed when the book first came out.

* *

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'It will soon be time for good resolutions, you chaps: well one of the best you can make is to be sure and buy the Old Paper every week, and encourage as many of your chums as you possibly can to do so too. You know your own opinions of Chums - that it is the best, the brightest and biggest of all boys' papers.'

So wrote the editor to his readers in his weekly chat in a 1919 issue of Chums - so did I read it sixty-four years on. Alas the old paper has long since gone, but I like to think that its spirit lives on in the thinning ranks of its original readers.

Improving the shining hour one summer afternoon recently I entered a second-hand bookshop, seeking shade rather than for any more serious reason. Browsing along the shelves - always a delightful occupation - which seemed to be arranged in a somewhat haphazard manner, or possibly I was unable to detect the system, I passed a pleasant ten minutes. Eventually I observed, lying by itself on a top shelf, a large tome bound in red cloth. This much I detected through the thick deposit of dust with which it was enshrouded as obviously it had reposed there for some considerable time, probably many months. I enquired of the assistant, expressing a desire to examine it. Standing on a chair he reached it down, handling it somewhat gingerly and spent some few moments dusting the upper residue of grime from its covers, finally handing it to me. I was, as may be imagined amazed and delighted to discover that it was a Chums annual volume for 1920. What a flood of memories were awakened. Suppressing my joy as best I could I enquired the price. "Oh, whatever you like, it is of no value' he replied. I suggested £1.00. He seemed genuinely amazed and closed the deal immediately. Here was a young man who obviously was not aware of the intrinsic value of the article he was holding and I rather doubt if he would have realised the fact had I enlightened him - ergo - I remained silent. Possibly only dedicated Chums' enthusiasts of the old school will fully understand and appreciate the jubilation with which I bore this treasure home. Thus did I become possessed of a book of inestimable value which has since given me hours of pleasure and has stirred memories which have been dormant - or almost so - since boyhood.

It had been well read but at the same time scrupulously cared for and I

silently blessed the previous owner or owners for their obvious respect for this venerable volume. The pages were rather discoloured through age, but what of that, the text was complete and perfectly legible, as were the well-remembered illustrations. Quite unfaded, however, were the several coloured plates, the frontispiece being a spirited rendering of a buffalo hunt by Stanley L. Wood and it displayed all the vigour and dash associated with this artist. I have the book before me as I write and, opening it at random, I find all the old undying names, Alfred Judd, John Hunter, Wingrove Wilson and many more authors, names to conjure with in the realms of boys' fiction.

The familiar covers of the weekly issues of Chums which comprised the annual volume made no pretensions, to my knowledge, of the use of colour except, I believe, on one occasion. The title 'Chums' was flanked by youthful figures, on one side a boy in uniform on horseback blowing a bugle, while in the background was the silhouette of a large vessel which could be a battleship. On the other side was depicted two boys sitting discussing a book, with school buildings in the background. Then usually there was a full page illustration of a stirring character showing an incident from a story within the paper. This picture would, upon occasion, be diminished in size to allow a column of text to be included. Very little space was allotted to advertising. The price of the old paper at this period (1919/20) was three (old) half pence.

'The Railway Adventurers' by S. Andrew Wood who, educated at Manchester Grammar School, was well fitted to present the localities he describes so vividly in his stories. This particular tale was one of the many first class serials in the 1920 'Chums' annual. Action and intrigue in the railway workshops and the surrounding country, chiefly remembered for the excellent evocation of the scenes in the rail-yards and the mysterious house in Brackish Valley. Jack Jennings and Terry Barlow, the chums in question here, have apermanent niche in the gallery of good fellows in my personal hall of fame. This fine serial was illustrated by Paul Hardy who captured the power and menace of great steam locomotives thundering through the night in highly dramatic style. Elsewhere in 'Chums' Wood contributed a good public school story 'The Mutineers of St. Martins', and also an idyllic and quite charming saga of a summer journey - plus adventures - through the English countryside entitled 'The Motor Gypsies'.

Another highlight in this vintage year was the series of articles by Georges Carpentier, the current idol of the pugilistic world at this period on this side of the Atlantic at least. A heavy-weight of remarkable skill and great personality, he expounded his methods of training and described many of his techniques for the benefit of avid 'Chums' readers. Also accompanying these articles, which ran for several weeks, were photographs of the great man in action, among which were scenes of the exceedingly brief contest with Joe Becket the current British Champion. Poor Joe - he must have wondered what was happening. But while applauding the dashing and popular Carpentier, there was looming menacingly upon the horizon, the formidable figure of the

American, Jack Dempsey, already world champion and now approaching his brilliant best. That, of course, is another story.

'The Dud's Term', another excellent serial in this volume by S. Clarke Hook using the pseudonym Ross Harvey by which he is best remembered, and illustrated by Thomas Henry. Wherein are related the adventures of C. C. Wicklow, the 'Dud' of the title who, as may be imagined, proves to be anything other than a dud. A tale of good clean action, sport and thrilling stunts and, as ever, the despicable chaps finally meet with their just desserts... A School tale well up to the high 'Chums' standard.

'The Night Rovers' by S. Walkey, with the incomparable illustrations of Paul Hardy - who could depict more fearful villains or more handsome heroes than he? - is a tale of smuggling in the late eighteenth century, a period in which many of S. Walkey's tales are set, and which he was extremely adept at re-creating with a high degree of realism.

So the list could be extended almost ad infinitum. Alfred Judd, a particular favourite of mine contributes a series of short stories, each one a cheery little gem. The pages of contents at the beginning of the volume make fascinating reading in themselves. Nothing remotely similar is to be found in this our contemporary age.

I make no apologies for singling out individual series: it is not that they exceed in style or interest the many other stirring tales, but a line must be drawn. They may be viewed as examples and represent the general high standard throughout. 'Chums' certainly heralded the advent of the roaring twenties in splendid style.

●

* *

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= =

THE OLD PAPER-SELLER.

One of the sights of the big towns which has long disapeared. I don't know the age of the picture, but from the papers he has for sale I would guess it as in the first decade of the Century.