

1988

# COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL



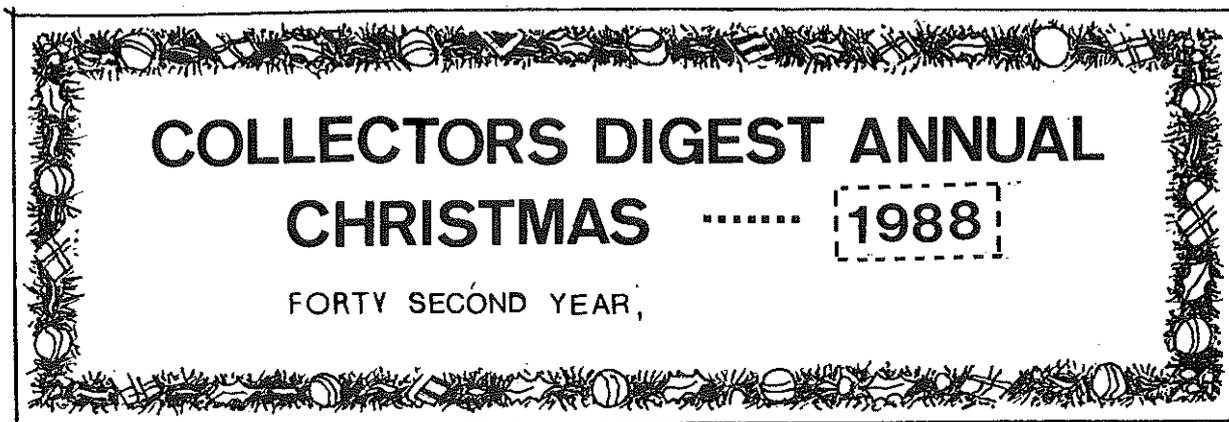
1988

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# SEASON'S GREETINGS



Terry  
Wahfeld



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#### FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

It hardly seems possible that another year has passed and that our forty-second Annual is now with us! Like the Editors of our favourite girls' and boys' papers from the past, I can claim that thanks to the splendid efforts of our contributors it is one of the best ever. I hope that you will enjoy reading it as much as I have found pleasure in preparing it. As always, there has been no shortage of contributions: the various branches of our hobby continue to provide stimulating food for thought as well as wonderfully nostalgic entertainment.

This is the time to say 'thank you' to all those who have contributed articles and pictures for this Annual. Once again I am particularly grateful to Henry Webb, who has drawn our cover picture and most of the headings for the articles and stories. I should also like to thank my predecessor, Eric Fayne, for advice and encouragement whenever this has been needed, and the helpful ladies of York Duplicating Services (who must, after typing so many copies of the C.D. and the Annual, be almost as knowledgeable now about Greyfriars, St. Frank's, Morcove and Cliff House as many of our readers).

Lastly I must thank all of you who have so loyally supported the C.D. as readers, and advertisers of 'Sales and Wants'. Your loyal support and your many lovely letters of appreciation are invaluable. I hope that you will regard this foreword as my answer to some of the shoals of notes and cards which you have sent me throughout the year; it also, of course, carries my warmest wishes that all of you will have:

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

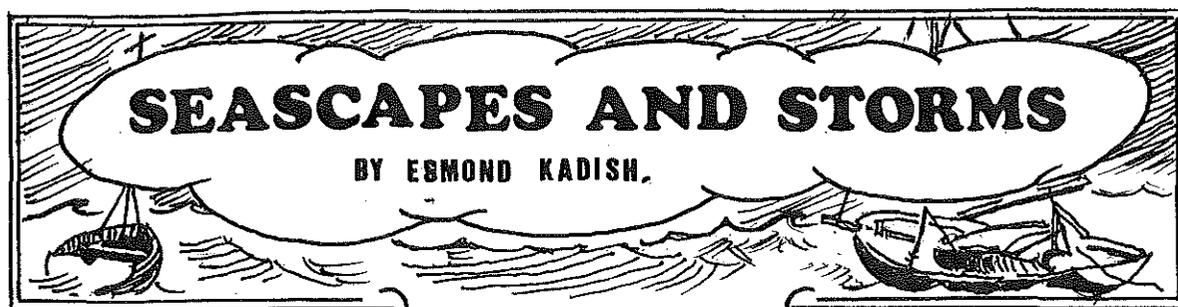
*Mary Cadogan*

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A little way into the radio adaptation of Denise Deegan's schoolgirl play, "Daisy Pulls It Off", last January, there was a reference to the "sapphire sea beating against the chalky cliffs, on which the school - Grangewood - so proudly stood". At this point, I leaned back in my easychair, smiling contentedly. Admittedly, it's not absolutely essential for our favourite fictional schools to have a sea-setting - after all, neither St. Jim's nor Rookwood has, and both schools get on perfectly well without - but, somehow, the notion of foam-flecked waves dashing themselves against rugged cliffs seems appropriate and satisfying in our school stories. Indeed, as far as I'm concerned, practically any novel with a similar background, such as Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca", where the old house, Manderley, has its "terraces sloping to the gardens, and the gardens to the sea", has me totally hooked, right from the start. So, too, do films with mysterious old dwellings perched precariously on cliff tops, overlooking the sea, as in that nice little wartime ghost film, "The Uninvited".

Both the girls' schools - Cliff House and Morcove - are fortunate in this respect. The former has, like Greyfriars, easy access to the sea at Pegg, whilst lucky old Morcove is said to be situated atop its own headland on the Devonshire coast. In fact, Betty Barton and Co. have only to hurry down the "zigzag path to Morcove's own bit of foreshore under the giant cliffs" to reach the sea. Both John Wheway, writing as "Hilda Richards" for the SCHOOLGIRL of the thirties, and Horace Phillips, as "Marjorie Stanton", in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, made full use of the opportunities for romantic adventure offered by the sea's proximity to their respective schools. Wheway introduced Belwin Island in his second Cliff House story for the SCHOOLGIRL in 1932: "brooding, sinister, its rugged cliffs towering out of the sea"; Phillips presented the Morcove girls with the evocatively - named Gull Island. Derelict ships, mysterious wrecks, ruthless smugglers, weird sea-faring characters, and wild storms at sea occurred in abundance at both Cliff House and Morcove. The windows of the Fourth Form dormitory at Morcove would more than once find themselves rattled violently by the wind "shrieking and whistling about the exposed walls of the vast schoolhouse", while "from the base of Morcove's giant cliffs came the thunderous crash and the surge of breakers". Inside the dorm. the girls would be cosily settling down for the night, and the "elegant duffer", Paula Creel, (the girl with the D'Arcy-like speech), might well plaintively ask, "Who thwew that pillow?" to be answered by the giggling culprit, Naomer Nakara, that the "equinochoorral gale" was responsible! Such violent weather seemed quite normal at Cliff House or Morcove, and the girls appeared to take it in their stride.

An early example of "sea-fever" at Cliff House occurs in "The Riddle of the Caves", in the 1922 SCHOOLFRIEND (175-77). This series was, of course, not written by Mr. Wheway. Babs, Mabs, and Bessie are out in a rowboat, pulling frantically to reach Pegg, before the gathering storm forces them on to "the treacherous Black Rock, where so many vessels had met their doom in these stormy seas". The rowboat is already taking water, in spite of Bessie Bunter's efforts at baling out with "an old salmon-tin". They land up on "Smugglers' Beach", and although Mabel Lynn laughingly assures the quaking Bessie that "smuggling days are over", mysterious signals from the school, a strange nocturnal vessel, and rocks covered with luminous paint to indicate a passage through the shallows seem to belie Mab's confidence. However, armed with hockey sticks at the ready, with Babs examining clues "with a quiet, Sherlock-Holmesy air", and with Katie Smith and her father putting in some daring detective work, Babs and Co. are more than a match for any smugglers.

Having created "Bellwin Island" in no. 141 of the SCHOOLGIRL, (one "I" was dropped in subsequent adventures), John Wheway used the island regularly throughout his series of Cliff House tales. In the Shaw Dennis series of 1935, for instance, the scheming, temporary headmaster of Cliff House imprisons the girls, and their

mistress, Miss Charmant, in an underground cavern. In another tale, "The Riddle of Belwin Island", (no. 326), it is taken over by a Mr. Dimitry. It turns out that he is really Baron Dimitry, and is plotting against the Princess Zenia of Silvania, whom he is holding captive. Staunch royalists to a girl, Babs and Co. are not prepared to countenance such nefarious activities, and soon put paid to the baron's schemes. Wheway also uses the derelict ship theme in "The Riddle of the Wreck", (no. 399). Barbara Redfern has barely time to say: "It must be awful to be at sea in a storm like this", before "a flame of lightning" reveals "the ship that plunged and reared not more than two hundred yards from the shore". Jemima Carstairs plays her usual enigmatic role in unravelling this particular "riddle".



But, for me, Wheway's 1934 "Ghost Ship" series (249-251), seems the most attractive of his sea stories, and the one for which I have the strongest affection. It's a fast-moving adventure yarn with colourful backgrounds and intriguing characters, and one can almost feel the tang of the sea. Wheway seems to enthuse, and gets quite lyrical at times:

"Out to the west the sun was sinking in  
a purple-and-golden aurora of glory,  
sending spectrally beautiful shafts of  
dazzling light glittering over the sea.

In the bushes the birds twittered,  
and the boom, boom of the surf on  
the shore below the cliffs throbbed in  
the warm atmosphere like a distant  
lullaby."

The Cliff House girls, caught on the cliff top, between the villages of Pegg and Sarmouth, in a sudden storm, seek refuge in the Roman Tower, an abandoned, and apparently unoccupied, lighthouse. However, as the girls huddle in the doorway for shelter, it turns out to have a tenant after all. This is an old crone named Sal, whose "darting little eyes, like two tiny red fires beneath grey overhanging brows, glared fiercely at the girls". Sal, who is clearly a nautical character, sports a "peaked sailor's cap, from beneath which wispy grey hair hung in straggling tendrils". She is apparently, also prone to give vent to warlike ditties at the drop of a belaying pin:-

"Ho, ho, ho! See the dogs all run!  
To your posts! Man every gun!  
Hoist the flag while the battle's hot,  
Fill her full of sizzling shot!"

And hark to the crash, and hark to the groans,  
As the scurvy rats go to Davy Jones!  
Yoho! Yoho! Yoho!

May be Old Sal had pretensions to lyric writing - a frustrated Noel Coward or Lorenz Hart, perhaps! At any rate, her piratical "songs" and belligerent demeanour panic Babs and Co. - even tomboy Clara - into flight. They cannon into Celeste Margesson, whose grandfather's yacht, the "Gloriana", is moored below, "riding like some gigantic graceful swallow upon the water". Celeste is a madcap, "a laughter-loving girl, blind to danger, revelling in escapades, who detested discipline, and railed at routine, and in her desire to dodge one or the other, sometimes did foolhardy things". A bit of a handful, in fact, but she does have a millionaire grandad, and a yacht to boot!



"GET ye gone!" the old crone shrilled. "Ho, be off with ye! Spies, spies!" And up came her stick threateningly. "But might we please—" Babs began. She got no further, for the old woman looked so fierce that the girls involuntarily stepped back.

The hospitable Celeste invites Babs and Co. aboard the "Gloriana" to dry off, and have tea. There, the girls meet Celeste's Aunt Mary, a lady with "a rather worried look in her mild blue eyes". Aunt Mary's source of worry is the ghost ship, a small vessel which gleams phosphorescently in the dark, and then seems to vanish "by gradual stages, as though some gigantically black and invisible hand were gathering the small boat into its grip an inch at a time". The ghost ship, it turns out, is being sailed by Old Sal's villainous-looking husband, Captain Rufus, who had once been dismissed by Celeste's grandfather when, as captain of the "Gloriana", he had "ill-treated the crew in the Malay States". Besides revenging themselves on Celeste's grandfather by kidnapping Celeste, the aim of the unpleasant pair was to frighten everyone away from the "Gloriana", so as to search for some gems hidden behind the panelling.

Wheway keeps the excitement and interest going in this series with some graphic storm sequences. At Cliff House:

"The old elms in the drive outside creaked and groaned in the fury of the blast. Now and again there came a terrific tearing and snapping, which told of branches being torn bodily from the bole. (Shades of the great gale of October 16th, 1987!)

Like slaps from giant hands, the rain in solid sheets hurled against the windows. The wind shrieked with the voice of a thousand demons, and howled down the wide chimneys. Outside, in the Pets' House, the dogs barked noisily against the storm."

This is in marked contrast to Wheway's idea of a "majestically serene" Cliff House, as Celeste sees it for the first time, when she is invited to visit it. There are "stately bronzed gates, flanked by two massive pillars, crowned with the Cliff House crest---admitting a view of the wide, sweeping drive, lined by stately elms". As she stands, marvelling, outside the gates, Celeste observes, above the wall on one side, "the red-tiled roof of the porter's lodge", and, above the other wall, "the

cheerful roof of the tuckshop". Beyond lies "the facade of the school, with its countless windows all agleam in the rosy glow from the sky". A lovely series - full of atmosphere!

While Babs and Co. sort out the Ghost Ship, Betty Barton and her friends are rushing to the rescue of a "doomed vessel" on the shore below the school. In "The Mystery from the Sea", (SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN; nos. 324 - 328), a Morcove series from 1927, Betty has just commented that the "equinoctial gale", which is raging outside, is "a fortnight late", and Polly Linton has dodged a hurled slipper, thrown by someone unappreciative of her rendering of "The Wreck of the Hesperus", when the boom of a distress rocket is heard. Determined to help, the girls pile out of the dormitory and down the cliff path, "slithering on wet slabs, stumbling and picking themselves up again", until they reach the shore. A line having been passed from the distressed ship to the shore, Betty and Co. haul away at the cable, and help to make it fast. The survivors of the wreck are pulled in.

The ship is identified as a Portuguese schooner, the "Sanvincente", skippered by Captain Lorenzo. His daughter, Mimi, who has also been saved from the wreck, is offered hospitality by Morcove. Betty and Co. are not too sure about Mimi, although she is "very beautiful in a foreign style". Not only does it transpire that she is pretending not to understand English, but her movements are definitely "slinky", and "Morcove never liked that type of girl".

The girls explore the wreck the following morning: "There was the poor old Sanvincente with its broken masts and tumbled rigging, mobbed about by the screaming gulls. It gave them an eerie feeling to hear little creakings and gratings from the ship's interior -- the groanings, as it were, of a mortally stricken leviathan". But the "Sanvincente" is not completely deserted; there is a girl hiding on the derelict - Hilda Morland - who warns Betty and Co. to be on their guard against Mimi Lorenzo and her father. They had kidnapped her from her South Sea Island home, and stolen a sacred idol from the natives, putting the blame on Hilda's father. The "totem" is hidden in the ship, and Hilda wishes to remain on the wreck in secret to locate it, and restore it to the rightful owners. Captain Lorenzo and Mimi are, of course, anxious to keep possession of the loot, but can't put their hands on it immediately, because it is hidden behind a jammed panel. The Morcove girls promise to help Hilda retrieve the idol before the Lorenzos can, and to smuggle food and supplies to her.

One of the nice things about this Morcove series is the part played by the "elegant duffer", Paula Creel. I've always had a soft spot for Paula, who, as I've already indicated, sounds like Gussy - unable to pronounce her "r's". Like Gussy, too, she is inclined to be fastidious about her appearance. While Gussy may ponder the merits of various neckties, Paula is for ever putting herself "to wights" with pocket-mirror and comb. She is easily gulled, and teased on that account - affectionately, of course - by madcap Polly, and "the imp", Naomer. In a 1926 tale, "A Schoolgirl Under Guard", the girls are sheltering from a thunderstorm which "had burst with full fury upon the romantic district of Morcove". While the lightning streaks across the sky, Paula takes out the ubiquitous comb and mirror to tidy herself:

"Hair is a conductor of electricity', was the demure observation with which teasing Polly fairly horrified Paula. 'If I were you', advised Polly, 'I'd pull my hat hard down, so as to cover -'  
'Yes, wather!' palpitated Paula, promptly acting on the advice. 'Geals, do the same! Why don't you? Thank goodness, I had my hair bobbed again yesterday.'"

As "Marjorie Stanton", Horace Phillips developed Paula's character in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN from snobbish, indolent Form captain to "beloved duffer". Paula is of a nervous disposition - unlike Gussy, who is "a great fighting man", at least in his own estimation. Paula prefers her easychair, and a "wefreshing cup of tea", although she gets precious little chance to enjoy either in Study 12, with Naomer for ever bouncing into her lap, and Polly flourishing her ebony ruler. In a crisis, of course, Paula is helpless: "with the best intentions in the world, Paula had a most unhappy knack of making a muddle of any task with which she was entrusted".

When the Study 12 girls are gated, and unable to take provisions to Hilda Morland, Paula must needs rise to the occasion, as she is the only member of the coterie not confined to school bounds. Naturally, one roots for such a character, wanting her to succeed, and she does, of course, helping Hilda to obtain the totem, and braving such perils as fire on the wreck:

"It was wonderful how Paula was keeping her nerve, when there was fire on the one hand and the nightbound sea on the other! What would Polly have thought of the 'duffer' now--- the same beloved Paula who, in cases of minor trouble, could only lie back in an easychair and offer useless lamentations!"

Thus, Paula rises to the occasion, without stepping out of character, and even Polly, who had asked, "can we trust this vain empty-headed, drawling old Paula of ours?" is forced to yell, "Bravo, the duffer!" as the Lorenzos are finally scuppered.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Paula Creel - not just a pretty face, after all!

Gull Island - where "mighty Atlantic breakers thunder against the rocks, the gale shrieks and booms about the cliffs, and even the restless seabirds are driven to seek shelter" - plays a prominent part in a 1934 SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN series (nos. 683-86). Perhaps there had been one of those periodic "sightings" of the Loch Ness monster in that year, because Horace Phillips has some fun at its expense. In "The Morcove Monster", Polly Linton spots "a long black object, swimming slowly, half a mile from the shore":

"'Had it a hump, Polly-wolly?' Jack Linton slyly asked.  
'Why, it did seem to have a sort of lump - in the middle of its back.'  
'Then that settles it! Boys, it's the jolly old Loch Ness Monster on tour!'"

Polly is furious at not being believed, but speculation at Morcove, as to whether she had imagined it or not, is hardly lessened when the "Monster" invades the Fourth Form dormitory that night:

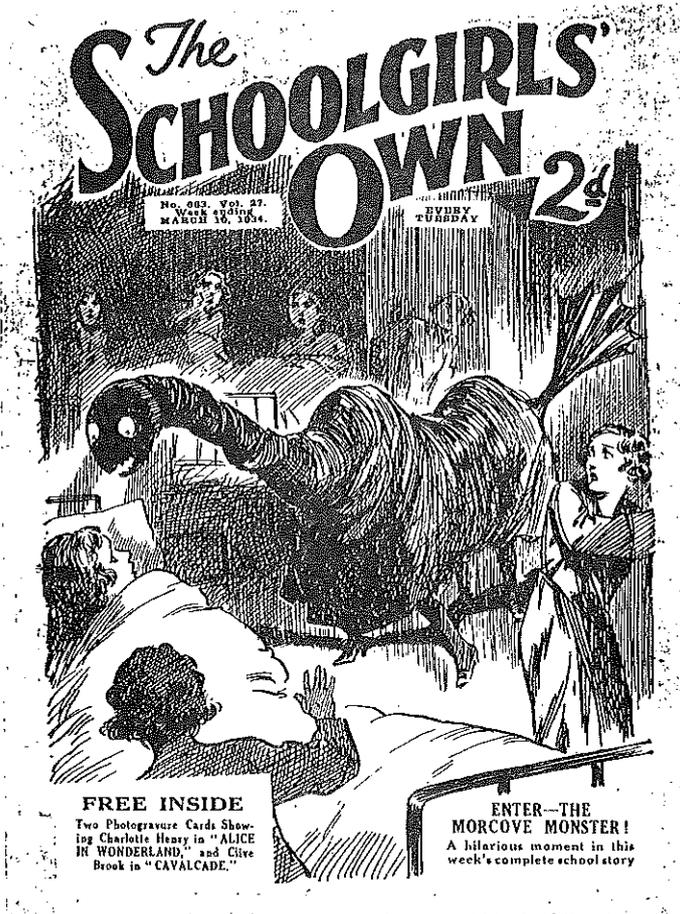
"Some old tarpaulin made a suitably shiny black hide for the fearsome creature. It was found that the arm of a black oilskin coat made, similarly, a very fine long neck when stiffened with a broomstick and suitably padded."

With a head made out of the husk of a coconut, and an old umbrella, turned inside out, serving as a webbed tail, it presents a fearsome appearance, as it makes a beeline for Paula (who else?). Naomer dances with delight until the "awful head" turns and snaps at her. Such "teasing and twitting" of Polly is maintained when Jack Linton, as a representative of the "Morcove Times and Grangemoor Independent", and armed with a "mammoth reporter's notebook," turns up at Morcove to inquire politely of his sister if "the so-called pleiosaurus, floating about in the sea, is really only a stray Channel swimmer, left over from last summer?" Polly, however, has a short way of dealing with intrusive members of the "media":

"'And now, Miss Linton, if you could just give me --'  
'I shall give you', Polly said, 'a thick ear, if there is any more of it!'"

Yes, you've guessed it! -- the "Monster" is actually a revolutionary new midget submarine, which can submerge under its own power, without having to flood its tanks to do so, or expel the water to re-surface. The "baby submarine", and a special fuel to power it, have been invented by an uncle of Morcove's Head Girl, Ethel Courtway - who is currently acting as a successful, and much-liked, temporary mistress of the Fourth Form. Uncle Peter has been staying as a tenant at Cliff Edge Bungalow - a famous cliff top residence near the school - in order to work on his invention, and make the necessary trials. But the unscrupulous agents of

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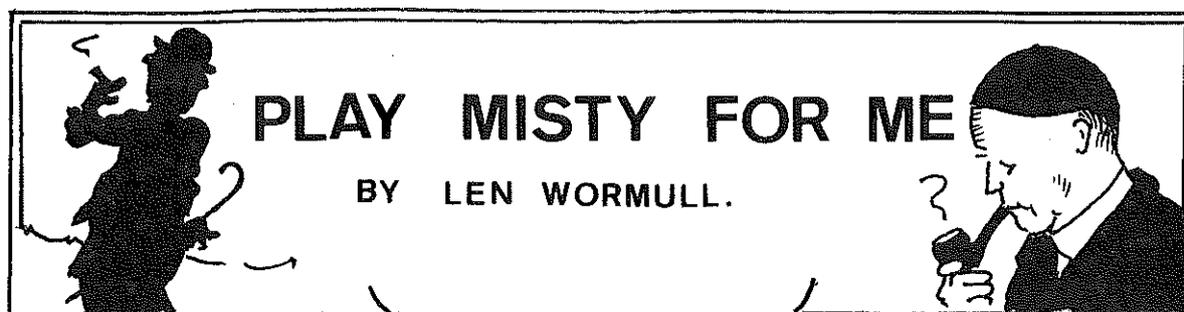


"THE MORCOVE MONSTER!" BY MARJORIE STANTON

a foreign power are seeking to acquire the submarine and its secrets for their own evil purposes, and have enlisted the services of Mr. Courtway's cadaverous - looking manservant, Dawker - pictured by Shields looking rather like Mr. Quelch on holiday. Dawker turns traitor; Uncle Peter is spirited away to Gull Island, and a "look-alike" takes over at the bungalow.

When Ethel visits "Uncle Peter", she finds him strangely altered in both appearance and manner, but, since she hasn't seen him for some time, she assumes that this is due to illness. The Study 12 girls find the real Uncle Peter's pocket-book, which contains the formula for the sub's special fuel, washed up on the shore one morning, and Ethel tumbles to the truth about the imposter at Cliff Edge Bungalow. It is now her turn to disappear, and be taken to Gull Island. She is followed by Betty and Co., and the Grangemoor boys, as well as Aunt Janet - who has hurried down from London - when, in searching for Ethel, they are stranded on the island by an accomplice of the plotters. Normally uninhabited, except as a haven for sea-birds, Gull Island thus gets unusually crowded as Uncle Peter, Aunt Janet, Ethel Courtway, and the nine Morcove girls and four Grangemoor boys scour the small island in search of each other. For the rest, Betty and Co. get the opportunity to indulge in some Crusoe-like activities in "Castaways of Gull Island", and when the stolen submarine appears off the island, Jimmy Cherrol leaps for the conning-dome, and is carried out to sea, proving that, when it comes to daring and action, James Bond has nothing on our James Cherrol! Meanwhile, at Morcove, Etta Hargrove foils a desperate attempt by Dawker to obtain possession of Mr. Courtway's pocket book, which has been hidden in the school. All good, stirring stuff!

Somewhere, no doubt, the storm-whipped breakers must still be lashing the coasts below Cliff House and Morcove, and the slightly sinister outlines of Belwin Island and Gull Island, too, may still be looming from out of the enveloping sea-mists, with an invitation to adventure. I hope so, anyway!



Apart from the fact that they were a couple of 'Charlies' in the appreciative sense, why should I think of Hamilton while reading about Chaplin? The answer is elementary, my dear friends. Both were purveyors of laughter and tears. And if you think this original, let me disillusion you. If you delve into our chronicles, and I'm quoting from memory, you will find mention of Hamilton as having a 'Chaplin-esque quality'. In the sense that he could make people laugh and cry, then certainly no writer of school fiction did it better than he. The mistake is in thinking that Chaplin came first with the comedy and pathos - Hamilton had a good lead start over him. Now a confession. As a kid I could always laugh at Charlie Chaplin, be it in the comics or at the cinema. With other kids I sang "The moon shines bright on Charlie Chaplin" - remember? As I grew up I still laughed at him, even cried a little. Now he hardly ever makes me laugh, and cry not at all. Sad, but there it is.

I once wrote that no boys' writer made me laugh and cry more than Frank Richards, to use an alias. Perfectly true of the past, but what of the present? The problem now is the funny bone. Some things I once thought funny it now rejects, while still retaining others. A "retainer" on a reduced scale is the humour of Greyfriars, once the Magnet's biggest asset. For instance, I am no longer inveigled into laughing by those "Ha, ha, ha's" of Harry Wharton & Co., necessary though they were. I'm more choosy and please myself. Those renowned comics, Bunter and Coker, who took me into adulthood with their antics, register only "Chuckles" on my laugh-ometer, instead of the former "Guffaws". Still, they had their money's-worth out of me - left me quite limp with laughing at times. What has endured, I find, is the author's manipulative skill with the heart-strings, his gift of pathos. Only the other day, reading one of his yarns, there I was all misty-eyed and with a lump in the throat. It brought back memories of times long past, when the emotions were young and when the tears ran freely...

... A sad thing happened to me in the Reading Room of the British Museum. I cried. Not audibly for it's not the done thing in libraries. A quiet cascade. The cause of the upset was a red Magnet tale entitled THE BULLY'S BROTHER, in which the death occurred of new boy Herbert Bulstrode. An old-fashioned tearjerker and melodrama seen now, but, in the long ago, how I anguished over the final scene. Hardly a youngster you could take to, yet there I was at his bedside, sobbing away with the rest of them. Not since the death-bed scenes of "ERIC" had I been more deeply moved. For once my heart went out to bully brother George, whose reign of captaincy ended with this one, making way for Harry Wharton. (P.S. If this copy is tear-strained then I swear I did it.)

The schoolboy vendetta, beloved by writer and reader alike, was never more viciously pursued than Ponsonby's persecution of Clare, in THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME. A battered copy of this B.F.L. marked my debut with the author, and what a baptism in villainy it was - yes, and tears too. Expelled and at the end of his tether, Clare finds his father and real name - Arthur Courtney. It would be a hard soul indeed not to be moved by this reunion between father and son. I quote:

"My little boy Frankie - alive and well!" The tears were running down the bronzed old cheeks. The Caterpillar turned his face away. He sauntered up and down the road, while Clare and his father talked in low tones - for the moment forgetting him. But the Caterpillar did not mind. He was smiling... For he saw now the end of the trials of the boy without a name!"

Then there were those "downfalls" of Harry Wharton to get all worked up about. The clash with authority, the break with his chums, the misunderstandings, his obstinacy and pride - all combined to bring out the hankies. The real crunch for me was when dear old Mauly, his last remaining friend, makes the break complete. Oh no, not Mauly! I suppose it was because he was such a lovable and trusting soul that Mauly's severance was always the one that hurt the most; the ultimate snub, as it were. And there was no scorn like Mauly's for piling on the agony. Poor Harry, after which it was downhill all the way. They made it up in the end, of course. (See Rebel series for 1925 and 1932.)

Cry over Bunter, our old fat man of a thousand laughs? Perhaps not, yet there were times when he came near to pulling it off. You may not recognise the description, but he could be caring, generous, affectionate, compassionate, doting, and completely un-selfish. Where his mother was concerned, that is. He was after all a mother's boy, even if no-one else loved him. Whatever names others may have called him, and the variety is infinite, to "mums" he was still her little "Willy". His efforts to help her in times of illness, fatuous though they were, did him great credit, and left this onlooker quite touched by the experience.

The Bounder, the first rebel without a cause and a favourite with me, was hardly the type to arouse feelings of sentiment. He was too hard-bitten for that. Whenever the chopper came down, which was often, I felt no pity for him whatsoever. Even gloated along with him, for we knew that things would work out all right. But there came a time when all this changed, when I felt very deeply for him indeed, when even the Bounder crumbled at the prospects in front of him. And if you have read the SMEDLEY series, you will know why. This time he had gone too far. Not only expelled, but completely cut off by his father...

'Sacked! If that had been all! Disowned and disinherited. Even yet Herbert Vernon-Smith could not wholly realise it. When he left Greyfriars on the morrow, it would not be to go home. His father's home was no longer his. If only he had had a mother...'

Yet still his luck held. Appalled by the severity of the sentence, the headmaster, in a finely written and moving chapter, rescinds the expulsion order and gives him another chance...

'The Head was looking at him, quietly and gravely. He did not trust the boy; he could not like him. Yet, if it could possibly be avoided, he could not send him away to what awaited him. He felt that he had to temper justice with mercy... "You are to stay, Vernon-Smith, and I will tell your father so."

"I'll play up, sir! You shan't ever be sorry for it, if I can help it", breathed the Bounder. "I know you won't believe me - I suppose you can't - but I mean it, sir! I mean it, every word!"

Being the Bounder, they had to be famous last words.

I once enquired of the Magnet editor the author's favourites among stories. A tall order considering that the Magnet had by then reached its quarter century. The reply is one I have not forgotten, however, and those rated highly were given as follows: 1. Barring-outs, 2. Circus, 3. Adventure. My choice here is No. 1, and the HIGH OAKS REBELLION in particular. The BRANDER series may have the edge in popularity, but this one had that extra little something called pathos. Which is hardly surprising considering that Mr. Quelch had been dismissed by his old friend and colleague, Dr. Locke. The Remove walk out in protest, taking up residence at High Oaks, a property bought for the occasion by Lord Mauleverer. A poignant moment is when the Remove master says goodbye to Harry Wharton, and through him the rest of the Form:

"I have tried to be a friend and helper to my boys, as well as their Form-master...I hope that my boys will try to remember me with kindness."  
"Oh Sir", said Harry. He felt a lump in his throat, as he realised, dimly, that he was in the presence of a tragedy."

How we felt like slaying Bunter for intercepting, and delaying, the phone call of reconciliation from Dr. Locke...the relief and joy when it was all over...

"My fault entirely, my dear Quelch, and..."  
"Not at all, sir! My carelessness was the prime cause..."

Curtain down.

\*\*\*\*\*

TO ALL FRIAR'S WHERE EVER YOU ARE!

Here's hoping your Christmas Turkey does not fight back and that a Prosperous New Year lies ahead. With GOOD WISHES, GOOD READING and GOOD COLLECTING from the FRIAR'S CLUB Committee.

=====

Season's Greetings to All. Ruperts, Beansos, Dandys, Williams, wanted. Please offer.

JOHN BECK

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=====

A Happy Xmas and New Year to All, with special thanks to members of The London O.B.B.C. for their kindness.

BILL BRADFORD

=====

Christmas Again  
The World becomes fuzz  
"C.D." soon cures that  
It Always Does.

Happy Fuzzing.

JOHN BURSLEM

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HOWARD BAKER and THE GREYFRIARS PRESS SEND CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS. And please note. We still seek loan of early Magnet issues, Numbers 204 to 231 inclusive (of 1912 a.d.) Offers Please?

=====

Greetings to all Hobby Friends, especially Tim Salisbury with Many Thanks for Happy Days at S.W.O.B.B.C.

SIMON GARRETT

=====

FOR SALE: H. Baker "Greyfriars Cowboys" £6.50, S.O.L. No. 375 by E.S.B. £2.00.

M. THOMPSON

4 WYVERN SQUARE, SUNDERLAND, TYNE & WEAR,  
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=====

"THE OTHER WAY AROUND"

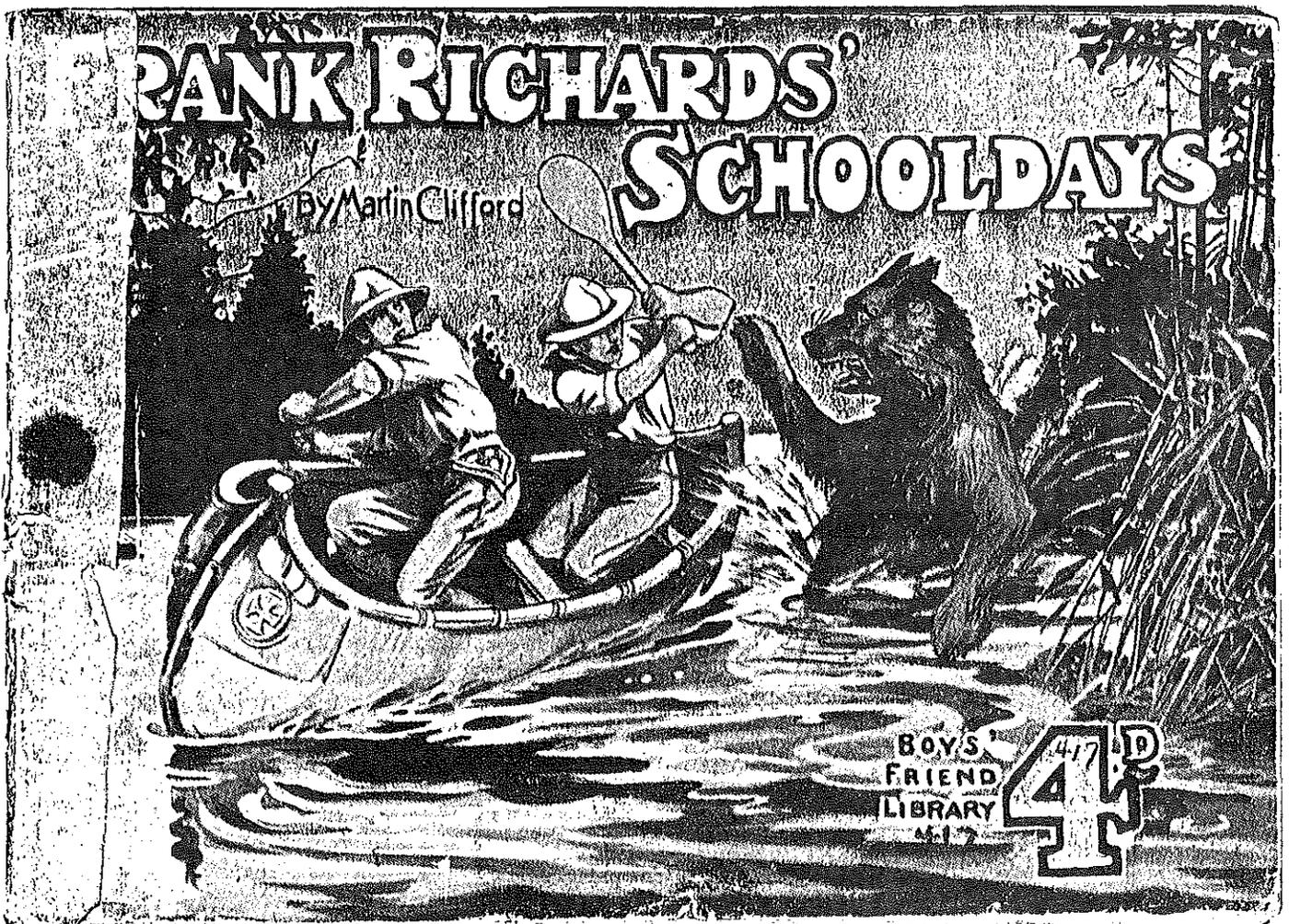
BY C. H. CHURCHILL

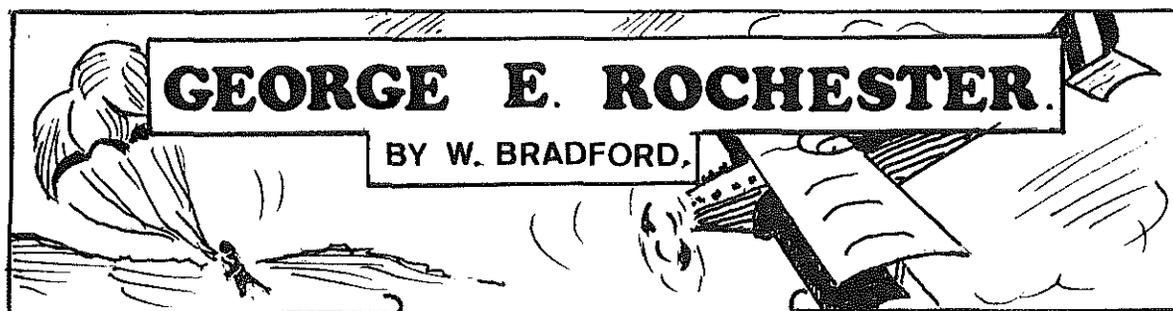
A few months ago our respected ex-editor raised the matter of some monthly Boys' Friend Library issues being printed "The other way around". As I have a copy of one of them in hand, I thought readers might be interested to see a photo-copy of No. 417. I do not know the date of issue but it is a reprint of the first nine stories of Cedar Creek which appeared in the weekly Boys' Friend Library at an earlier date.

As the book was printed in this fashion it meant that three columns of print appeared on each page. I think this was rather attractive to the reader. Eric Fayne said that this way of printing prevailed for some time but I do not know dates. I do remember earlier issues being printed in the normal manner. I remember seeing one where Nelson Lee met Nipper for the first time. I think the story was entitled "Nelson Lee's Pupil".

This one we are discussing was priced at 4d but the previous ones were 3d.

The discerning reader may notice that the figure 417 has been written in on the photo (but not by me I may add). The actual No. 417 appears on page one of the issue.





George E. Rochester was one of the foremost writers of boys' stories in the 1930's and his prolific output can be found in weekly papers, monthly libraries, annuals and hardback novels of the period. In particular, we associate him with the MODERN BOY, BOYS' OWN PAPER and the ACE series of novels published by John Hamilton. Rochester was born around 1895 in the North of England. Joining the Royal Flying Corps in World War I, he was shot down over enemy lines and ended the war as a P.O.W.

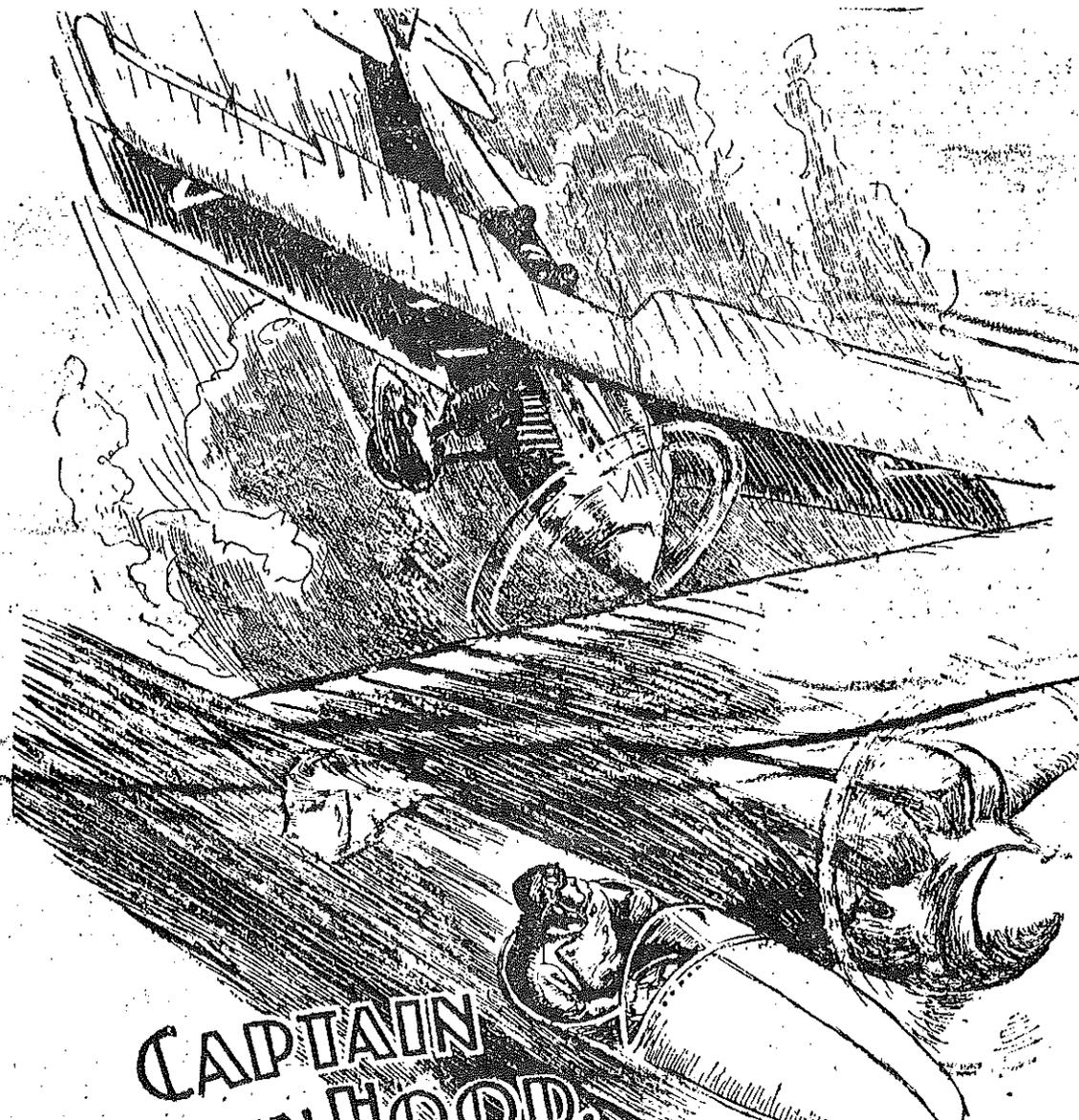
Little is known of his immediate post-war activities, but it would seem that his first published story was for the BOYS' OWN PAPER in 1926. This was entitled 'FUNK', a relatively short tale about a bombing raid on Germany and the capture of the two-man crew. The pilot is a Captain Harry Davies, a name with which we are to become increasingly familiar within the next few years. 'FUNK' is in the 1925/26 BOYS' OWN ANNUAL, commencing on page 347.

The following year there was a BOYS' OWN PAPER serial "THE FLYING BEETLE", a character whose real name is Harry Davies! This story was also to appear as a BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY, No. 187, in 1928 and was published as a hardback in 1935 by John Hamilton. Anyway, its initial publication was so well received that the Religious Tract Society who published the BOYS' OWN PAPER included "THE SCARLET SQUADRON" in 1927/28, "VULTURES OF DESOLATE ISLAND" in 1928/29 and "DESPOT OF THE WORLD" in 1929/30. However, there was not another Rochester serial in the BOYS' OWN PAPER until "RETURN OF THE FLYING BEETLE" in 1933/34.

During this interval he was writing some first class serials for CHUMS. These commenced with "PIRATES OF THE AIR" in 1928/29, followed by "JACKALS OF THE CLOUDS" in 1929/30, "WINGS OF DOOM" in 1931/32 and "CAPTAIN ROBIN HOOD, SKYWAYMAN" in 1932/33. It was during this period that I first discovered Rochester, and I still have most of my original weekly issues containing these thrilling stories. During this period he also wrote at least four long complete stories for CHUMS under the names of Frank Chartham or Barton Furse. Incidentally, the character of THE FLYING BEETLE (Harry Davies) appeared exclusively in the BOYS' OWN PAPER.

Looking farther afield we find that between 1926 and 1930 our author wrote seven long serials for the MAGNET, followed by three more during 1935/36. "THE FREAK OF ST. FREDAS" appeared in the POPULAR in 1926/27 and "THE AIR PATROL" in the Nelson Lee in 1928. Undoubtedly, Rochester's main contribution was to the MODERN BOY, between No. 12 in 1928 and the penultimate issue in October 1939. I have only just obtained my final issues for a complete run of this paper, but I have already identified Rochester in nearly half of the 610 issues. Most of the stories are under his own name, but a few are as Eric Roche and the many "TOLD IN THE TUCKSHOP" tales written as John Beresford. However, his best known creations for the MODERN BOY are undoubtedly GREY SHADOW, the MASTER SPY and SCOTTY OF THE SECRET SQUADRON.

A further indication of his popularity is reflected by the inclusion of a ST. FREDAS story in the 1929 GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL, an adventure story in that for 1930, and a Western yarn in the 1939 Annual. During the years 1928-1940, 30 issues of the BOY'S FRIEND LIBRARY were credited to Rochester and another to John Beresford. BOY'S FRIEND LIBRARY No. 175, "THE CURSE OF LHASA" was published under the editorial name of John Andrews. This was one of the MAGNET serials in 1927, and as it features MAJOR BEVERLEY, an ally of THE FLYING BEETLE, we may safely assume it is from the pen of George E. I wonder if any of the other Ferrers Locke stories were also his work?



**CAPTAIN  
ROBIN HOOD,  
SKYWAYMAN**

*Geo. E. Rochester's* **Greatest Air Serial**  
**STARTS TO-DAY**

Vol. XL—No. 2063

**24 Pages**

In 1934 Rochester diversified to the field of crime fiction, and between then and 1939 produced 10 long serials and 21 complete stories for the DETECTIVE WEEKLY, the former mainly under the name of Jeffrey Gaunt. At the same time, he contributed at least 5 stories for the THRILLER and 3 for the short-lived THRILLER LIBRARY. Strangely enough, he appears only once in the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY No. 104 (3rd series), "THE RIDDLE OF THE MISSING WARDRESS" (1945).

In addition, we should not overlook 3 SCHOOLBOY'S OWN LIBRARIES No's 92, 377 and 398. Also SCOOPS, that rarest of papers, which ran for only 20 weeks, contains a Rochester serial, "THE VULTURES OF DEATH" in 9 issues. All this apart from work on other papers, especially those of D.C. Thomson, which are difficult to identify.

During World War II he is reported to have volunteered for the R.A.F. Regiment, at which time he must have been at least 45 years of age. Somehow, this comes as no great surprise, as his writings always conveyed to me a deep sense of patriotism.

Between 1947-1957 he had some 20 novels published by 9 different publishers! This suggests a lack of demand for the old formula, once so popular. From a pronounced change in style and plot, I can only conclude he was trying to adapt himself to a changing world and a very different kind of reader. His last book was probably "DRUMS OF WAR", but "TIGER HAWK", published by Pitkin, is undated and could be later. In 1968 "SUPERNATURAL TALES", published by Hamlyn, contained "THE HAUNTED HOUSE" by Jeffrey Gaunt, first serialised in DETECTIVE WEEKLY in 1937.

Rochester is credited with some 70 hardback novels, of which I have only identified 53 and possess 41. Some 33 were published by John Hamilton in their ACE or POPULAR series between 1934-1938, of which 28 first appeared in the papers mentioned. I am particularly anxious to obtain a copy of "TRAITORS ROCK" published by Eldon about 1950. Stories with that title appeared in MODERN BOY in 1932 and in DETECTIVE WEEKLY in 1939. They had only an overlying theme in common, so which version is the hardback, or was it again re-written?

Now, as regards the stories themselves, Rochester wrote first class aerial, war and adventure stories, which I always preferred to those by W.E. Johns. Of course, the aerial aspects had that touch of authenticity that you would expect. Many of the early stories had a very familiar theme. A pirate squadron, very cosmopolitan in composition, operating from a remote base, would raid shipping lanes or air routes. The hero would inevitably be captured by the outlaws, but eventually help to bring about their destruction - usually at the hands of the Royal Navy or R.A.F.

Another plot would concern conspirators (usually Russian or Chinese) who plot against the British Empire, but meet their match against THE FLYING BEETLE. Despite similarity in plot, these stories never failed to hold and thrill. His humorous stories were almost equally popular, from THE FREAK OF ST. FREDA'S, PARSONS FLYING CIRCUS, GREYSTONE STORIES and TOLD IN THE TUCKSHOP. Also, WESTERN STORIES, FOREIGN LEGION and FRENCH REVOLUTION TALES flowed from his pen!



My companion was still unconscious and I found it a job of some difficulty to get him out of the cockpit. But eventually I managed it.

I do find his post-war books less entertaining than the earlier ones, perhaps he felt that patriotism, loyalty, self-sacrifice and courage, foremost in his earlier writings, had no longer the same appeal.

A stroke in 1962 put an end to his writing and he died on 23rd March, 1966, allegedly in comparative poverty. Not, perhaps, one of the all-time greats, he was a prolific and versatile writer who gave much pleasure to my generation - and still does. No reference to writers of the 1920s and 1930s would be complete without him.

The closing words of "DESPOT OF THE WORLD" are "For God, for King and for country" and I have a feeling that those words had a real meaning for George E. Rochester.

\*\*\*\*\*

Happy Holiday to All! May the Digest Flourish in 1989.

ESMOND KADISH

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

=====

Seasonal Greetings to our Editor, to Eric Fayne, and all Collectors' Digest Contributors and Readers.

PETER LANG

ELLEN COURT, JARROW.

=====

WANTED Annuals; Puck 1934, 1936, 1937. My Favourite 1934.

HEARN

20 WINGATE WAY, CAMBRIDGE.

=====

Happy Christmas Everybody. Wanted W.E. Johns' Books, Spin-offs etc.

PAUL GALVIN

2 THE LINDALES, POGMOOR, BARNSLEY,

SOUTH YORKS (0226 295613).

=====

A Very Merry Christmas and A Happy Healthy and Prosperous New Year to Mary, Eric and all the Staff, Contributors, and Readers of the Digest and Annual. Long may it all continue.

JOSEPH P. FITZGERALD

of MANCHESTER.

=====

Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year to All, with a special thanks to Mary Cadogan and Norman Shaw.

D. BLAKE

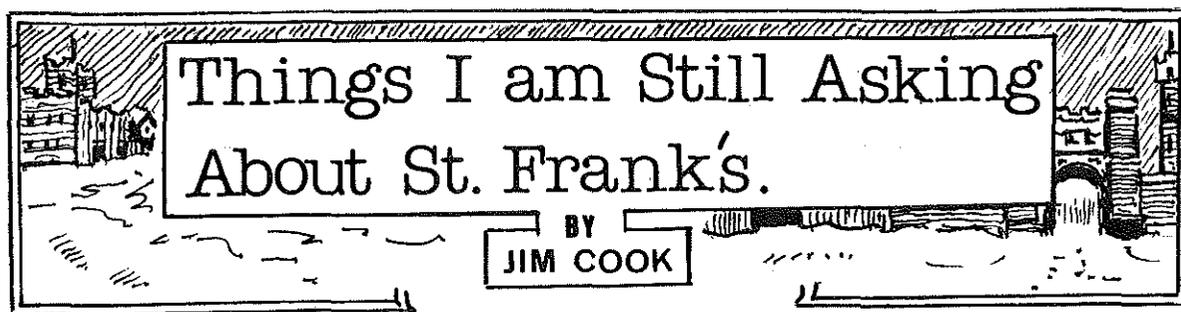
THAMES DITTON.

=====

STILL WANTED: Sexton Blake Library 2nd Series No. 453 On The Midnight Beat, and 411 Tragedy of West End Actress by John G. Brandon. Best Wishes to Norman Shaw, Eric Fayne, Our Editor and fellow collectors.

JOSEPH ASHLEY

46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM, HANTS, PO15 5AH. Tel: Fareham 234489.



There is so much left unanswered about St. Frank's...things we shall never know. But I still want to know and the only way to find out is to presume. But before I start delving I would like this article to be Dedicated to the memory of Edwy Searles Brooks.

Brooks created a world that lives on, and although that world is incomplete yet perhaps we may be forgiven for assuming a fulfilment according to our point of view.

Of the college itself we got a picture of a great number of boys in various aspects of school activities and overseas adventures. Later we were to admit school-girls to the stories. But school life was in some ways meagre as far as description was concerned. Certainly St. Frank's would never compare to, say, Bedales...but who wanted it to be so. And those overseas adventures...the Holiday series...were sparse in description, although I must admit Brooks' 1922 South Seas' series was very factual. Of the boys who came from foreign lands I would have liked to read of Yung Ching at Yum Char (breakfast), or Solomon Levi wishing me SHALOM; or Mrs. Poulter's "Carte du jour" for the dining room.

And did any of the boys receive a "cum laude"? Only one story featured Foundation Day! There were a few rich boys, but I should think that the Hon. Douglas Singleton who was fabulously wealthy, and displayed this, would be the sort of person Karl Marx had in mind when he invented Communism. However, the coming of our Douglas created a fine story, although I still don't know how he was permitted to have so much money. The Masters' Common room was rarely portrayed, yet it must have been a grand setting for gossip.

When the St. Frank's tales began the Head, Dr. Stafford, remarked that the rules had held good for twenty years. But what was St. Frank's like in the period before those two decades.

The edacious Fatty Little was eating himself to oblivion, but we must presume he thinned down before he went to Oxford.

There are many legends at St. Frank's and they will outlast us all. But, as Alexander The Great has said somewhere, a Legend has to be renewed every now and again.

In the series where women took control of St. Frank's it was evident their stay was shortlived. It was a kind of gynaeocracy that in the years to follow would be very much in evidence elsewhere. Society should have been warned then, but it ignored the "hack-written school stories". It did so at its peril!

When the holiday party visited Africa and South America the descriptions of the flora and fauna were scant. We must also assume there was the stridulatory noise of cicadas concomitant with jungle life. And the brumal discomfort of Northestria.

Then we went to India - but with no mention of the mudras, the hand gestures of Indian dancing girls - where they dress in different white robes five times a day and wash hands, face, ears elbows and feet each time.

Of course, Brooks had to bow to editorial policy and space restrictions, and he was subject to the whims of his readers. I feel sure he was influenced by them when he took Nipper away from narrating the stories in the first person. The tales were never really the same in strength afterwards.

But it is easy to criticise now, with hindsight. We do so even though we are re-living those salad days of our youth when we looked forward each week to the new issues.

If a concordance is ever made detailing the St. Frank's stories in the Nelson Lee Library then these little problems will be raised, so perhaps they are now being fore-stalled.

We could have been made more aware of Solomon Levi, the Jewish junior. He was a leading light when he first came, but like so many characters he drifted into the back-ground.

He could have remained as popular as Handforth, but we shall never know if Brooks had kept him in mind for a series to come. I feel sure if Levi could suddenly appear to me he would say..."L'chayim"..to Life! Getting to know Solomon Levi through the pages of the N.L.L. I am reminded there are 613 commandments in the Jewish religion.

Another absence of reality was in the description of the masters. Mr. Crowell, the Remove form-master was always very much to the fore, but we learned very little of Mr. Pagett, the master of the 5th. And the head stayed in his Olympian heights except where his presence was urgently required. Mr. Nelson Lee was often called upon in his capacity of detective. There cannot be any college on earth which could boast having a world famous detective as a master. But school stories for boys had to be interesting and different. Had to be thrilling and adventurous. The strange thing is that today, in our maturity, we still love to read them and still ask questions which we know will never be answered.

Unfortunately there are no reference books on the subject. And the man who wrote the yarns is in The Shades. So we shall have to make our own decisions about some of St. Frank's mysteries, and continue to dream our dreams.

**WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S!**



**EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH.**

**Remove Form.**

**Study D.**

*Big, burly and clumsy. Very aggressive, and ever ready to punch anybody on the nose. Yet for all that one of the best, and generous to a fault. A great sportsman, if not very brilliant in other spheres.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Our Seasonal Greetings to London and South-west Clubs.

VALE AND JOYCE

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

=====  
Christmas Greetings to all Friends, with Special Thanks to the Editor and Contributors.

ANDREWS

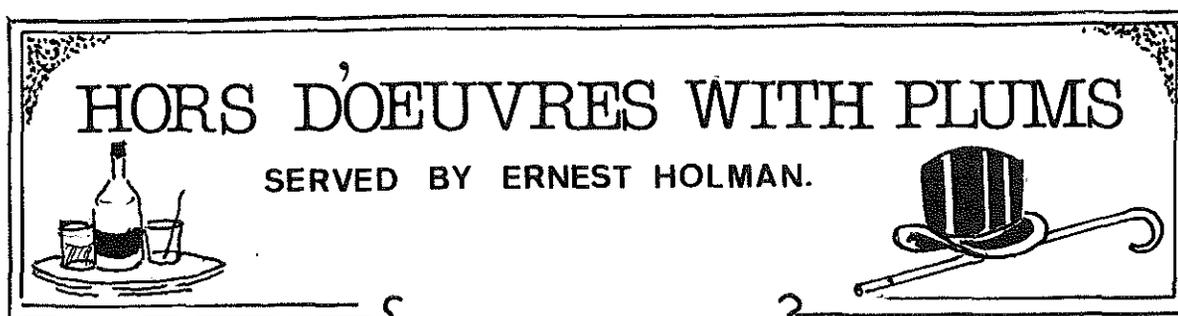
LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY

=====  
Seasonal Compliments to all Readers. Especially S.W. Club Members.

C. H. CHURCHILL

TOPSHAM

=====



Yes, most definitely plurals. P.G. Wodehouse gave us so much in the way of choice fruits - and frequently added preliminary flavourings.

Trying to find something new or different about P.G.W. is a pretty hopeless task - for surely everything that mattered about his stories must have been put forward by now? True - about his stories; but - what about his Introductions to many of them? These Prefaces or Forewords were entirely in Plum's style - excellent appetisers for the meals to come.

Most of these Introductions occurred in his earlier offerings - after about the mid-thirties he seemed to tire of these additions to any new novels. He was still willing, however, to give of his best in this respect, when some of his early works were reissued. Perhaps one day some enterprising publisher will gather these gems together in one volume; even if only in that style beloved of some of his 'intellectual' characters - a limp booklet, with a cover of purple velvet, plus gold lettering and in a private and very limited edition. For my part, here in this offering, I can only make a few references to some of these garnishings.

Surprisingly, the Jeeves/Bertie escapades do not form any part of the pieces. Apart from Omnibuses, the Wooster adventures did not rate Introductions. Our starting point is, therefore, Blandings Castle. When SOMETHING FRESH was reissued in 1969, more than fifty years had passed since this first peep into the home of Lord Emsworth. Plum wrote an introduction to this new issue - in the course of which he reminds us that the Saga habit was far from his mind then, when he referred to the elderly Earl as having been at Eton in the eighteen-sixties. He also considered he had been rash in placing Blandings in Shropshire - thus preventing that well-known Wodehouse occupation of characters popping quickly back and forth to London. He supposed that the train journey in those days must have been of four hours duration, expressing the hope that at the end of the nineteen-sixties, British Rail would have clipped a bit off the time! (A Wodehouse researcher, Colonel Michael Cobb, was able to produce evidence that Market Blandings was, in reality, a station at Buildwas. The journey from Paddington necessitated a change at Wellington, in Shropshire, about eleven miles from Shrewsbury. From Wellington, it was only a short trip to Buildwas. One arrived there, according to a 1961 timetable, more than four hours after leaving London. Buildwas (a Salopian once pronounced it as BILL-DWAS, accented on the second syllable) was closed when the 'stream-lining' took place in the Sixties. P.G. would have been intrigued by this information - unhappily, it was never revealed in his lifetime.)

P.G. stood for Pelham Grenville - he points out that he was named after a godfather, receiving for it nothing more than a small, silver mug - which the very young boy soon managed to lose. He confesses that he never liked the names and 'recalls' that he registered a very noisy protest when taken to the font - but the clergyman was not to be swayed, and his names were therefore with him for all time. Being Wodehouse, he did manage to 'realise' on them eventually. For years he had been writing as P.G. Wodehouse for the pulp magazines. When he wrote SOMETHING FRESH he offered it to his agent as the work of Pelham Grenville Wodehouse. He names some noted writers of the time, all with three names, the very first necessity for success in the field of Literature. The agent, with great audacity, submitted the story to Editor Lorimer of the Saturday Evening Post. Our Author is in no doubt that this 'swung the deal'. Lorimer would not dream

of letting a Pelham Grenville Wodehouse get away from him. The story was serialised in the Post, the recently-married P.G.W. received the English equivalent of seven hundred sovereigns, in dollars - and that was that! He was in. 'By P.G. Wodehouse' could be used again now, for he had made his mark. Whatever 'boners' were pulled at the font from time to time, Plum knew he had made up for the loss of a small, silver mug!

He added a final reminder to this new edition of SOMETHING FRESH by pointing out that Blandings Castle would appear to have imposters the way other houses have mice. He forecast that before long another 'ringer' would be making an appearance! He was right - the next Blandings story kept up the record.

At about the same time as the reissue of SOMETHING FRESH, another 'second showing' of a past story occurred when UNEASY MONEY appeared, also with a special Introduction. Plum covered certain aspects already touched on in his preamble to SOMETHING FRESH but also showed how the Saga habit had developed a 'Butler' habit. Both these reissued stories contained butlers, the habit was thus formed and, in so many of his subsequent writings, a butler was ever present. Quoting a reader who had expressed the view that there was too much of them, Plum says that he did feel inclined to agree with him - in fact, he emphasised, there had been many complaints about it!

It had been way back in the year 1907 that the Preface habit had started. THE WHITE FEATHER makes a brief mention of several short stories of Wrykyn School that had appeared in an assortment of publications. P.G.W. wanted his Publishers to gather them together in volume form - but it seemed that they were light on their feet and got away - a painful exhibition, he felt, of the White Feather!

Before the opening chapter of PSMITH JOURNALIST, the Author attempts to assure us that not all the citizens of the U.S.A. spend their time in murdering each other. He admits that gang warfare does exist, however; but it is so insignificant that it rarely rates more than a quarter column of small print. Another early story was LOVE AMONG THE CHICKENS. Written in 1906, it came out again in 1921, with a Wodehouse Dedication that stated the fact that the book had now been entirely rewritten. In particular, he shuddered at the thought that in the original story he had mentioned the fact that eggs could be purchased at six for fivepence. In 1921 he brought this up to half-a-crown for six. (Writing this in 1988, I suppose half-a-crown would get one egg - if it were possible to buy only one!)

THE CLICKING OF CUTHBERT and HEART OF A GOOF were devoted entirely to the subject of golf. In CUTHBERT, the Preface is headed FORE. The book, it seems, was written in blood. Golf had reduced Plum from one with a cheerful disposition, heart intact and life unsoured to an 18-handicap man - one who would have to look pretty slippy if he was not to sink down into the 20s. It was only after taking up the game that he learned eventually to smile through the tears and - like Figaro - laugh that he may not weep. He thanks the reader for his sympathy and asks only to be left to his misery. In GOOF, we have our attention drawn to the fact that it is golf that has made him produce a style so reminiscent of Dostoevsky. Small wonder, after playing himself across the National Links at Southampton, Long Island. These links were constructed by an exiled Scot, who had conceived the dreadful idea of assembling on one course all the really foul holes in Great Britain. This cannot fail to leave its mark on a man, when he is forced to turn in a score of one hundred and eight on two consecutive days. Then, believe him, you get to know something of life! Plum won his first - and only - trophy (an umbrella) in South Carolina, when he went through a field of the fattest retired business men in America like a devouring flame. Should we lose the Walker Cup at the next attempt, we are asked to remember that!

In the Prelude to GIRL ON THE BOAT, Plum requests his Publisher to hold back, when about to throw the book open to the public. He tells his expected readers not to jostle, that there will be copies for all. He must, however, clear himself of the charge of plagiarism. He would not like his public to label him as Pelham the Pincher. It seems that in A LUNATIC AT LARGE AGAIN (by J.S. Clouston) - what chumps we are, he says, if we missed it - there is an incident in which a character hides in a suit of armour. Such an event also occurs in GIRL ON THE BOAT. We are asked to take the word of a Northumberland Avenue Wodehouse that both these stories had first appeared in respective papers as serials - running

concurrently. So, he beams, at these particular crossroads, there could not have been any dirty work! (I myself wonder what the writer's thoughts were, a year or so later, when P.C. Wren's BEAU GESTE included a suit of armour incident.)

The last new book to be issued with an Introduction was a collection of short stories entitled BLANDINGS CASTLE AND ELSEWHERE, published in 1935. By then, Plum was able to look back at the way in which he had caught the Saga habit. He had to admit that there was no cure in sight. Undoubtedly, his greatest delight in this book was contained in the stories of the secret life of Film Land. He points out that they are just a few of the stories to be revealed in print that took the lid off Hollywood, stories that were whispered over the Frosted Malted Milk when the boys got together in the Commissary.

As late as 1970, when P.G.W. was pushing ninety, there came two more reissues, this time novels based on earlier musicals of the stage, both of them the combined work of Wodehouse, Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern. BILL THE CONQUEROR, originally published in 1924, had been based on the musical 'Sitting Pretty'. In a specially written Preface for the reissue, the author reckons he must have added about sixteen other plots. A friend told him that they were far too many and he realises now, although he did not see it at the time, that the comment was apt. He put it down to the exuberance of youth, for he was then just a kid of forty. To his shame, CONQUEROR included not only an overland trip to Madeira but (blunder of blunders) Surrey playing Kent at Lords in the 1920s!

THE SMALL BACHELOR, published in 1927, was based on the show 'Oh Lady'. Again, an Introduction to the reissue, telling readers that when he came to adapt the story into a novel, he had written about 50,000 words before he came to the start of 'Oh, Lady'. It took quite a lot of 'manipulation' to finalise the eventual book - and even then many characters in the story had played no part on the stage. Apparently, the stage show was first produced during a printing strike, so no notices appeared at the time. Nevertheless, it was a great success - never more so, at a later date, than when it was done at Sing-Sing, with a cast of convicts. It was, Plum learned, a riot. He also reminds us that the song 'Bill' from 'Show Boat' had been originally written for 'Oh, Lady'. He ends up his Introduction by observing that, as the fellow said, that's show biz!

The very latest of reissues occurred in 1972, when the author was in his nine-ties. His Preface was as typical of him as at any time in his writing career. He had always, he remarks, been fond of this one, SAM THE SUDDEN (1925). It was the beginning of some things to come, for it not only introduced for the first time that 'delightful' crooked couple, Soapy and Dolly Molloy (together with, of course, that other noted double-crosser, Chimp Twist); it was also the first of many visits to what he refers to as his own Dulwich, the delectable Valley Fields. A serious note is struck at the end of his remarks, however - he has recently read of a firm of builders who were going to erect a block of flats in Croxted Road "where I once lived, in the first house on the left as you come up from the station. Gad, sir! If that had happened in my day, I'd have jolly well horse-whipped them on the steps of their Club - if they ever had a Club!"

If I had to select a favourite from all these Forewords of P.G.W., I would surely go for the Preface to SUMMER LIGHTNING. He opens up with the remark that a certain critic - such men, he regretted, did exist - made the nasty crack about his previous novel that it contained all the old Wodehouse creatures under different names. He had probably been eaten by bears but, if he did still exist, he would not be able to make similar statements against SUMMER LIGHTNING. "With my superior intelligence, I have outgeneralled the man by putting in all the old Wodehouse characters under their own names!" Pretty silly it would make that critic look, he fancied.

He was also greatly enthralled when he decided on the title for the book. He believed that it was Thackeray who, hitting upon the title of VANITY FAIR, leapt out of bed, ran seven times round the room, shouting at the top of his voice. Oddly enough, Plum behaved in precisely that manner when arriving at the title of SUMMER LIGHTNING!

Such exuberance, however, soon abated and became, in fact, much diminished by the subsequent discovery that he was not the only author who had thought highly of the title. Two novels of the same name had, it seemed, been published in England

and also, in three other cases, in the U.S.A. As the story had already appeared under its title in serial form, it was too late to alter it. Plum sincerely hoped, in a modest way, that it would be considered worthy of inclusion one day in a list of the Hundred Best Books entitled SUMMER LIGHTNING!

All the many later books, after 1935, discontinued the 'habit' of Introductions by the author. A great pity, for his efforts in 1960/70, when he wrote Prefaces for several reissues, showed no lowering of standard. However, let us be ever thankful for those entertaining Preludes that were offered to the reader.

I feel certain that Plum, whenever he invites a guest to his Celestial Table, is behaving as of yore - the main meal will be excellent; the preliminary relish will not be lacking in its own richness!

\*\*\*\*\*

Season's Greetings to all O.B.B.C. fans of whatever group, sex or age, from:

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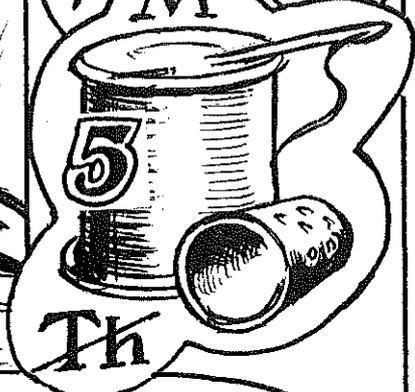
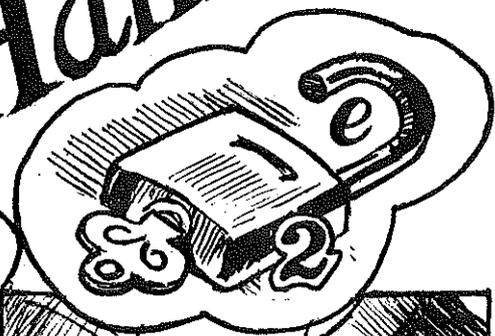
Merry Christmas, Happy New Year to all Hobby Friends.

DOCTOR JOHNNY AND BETTY HOPTON  
79 SCALPCLIFFE ROAD, BURTON ON TRENT.

=====

By Bob Whiter

# GUESS these Hamilton characters



# Duggie's Dinosaur

By GEORGE BEAL.



**B**ERNARD BRANDON isn't exactly a swot, but he's one of these clever chaps who can remember long words, and likes to show off how knowledgeable he is. He's only in the Fourth Form, like the rest of us, but he's a top bug in science, and that sort of stuff.

We'd just finished class—it was biology, actually—and our Science master, Mr. Chadwalader, had been talking about early forms of life, like dinosaurs and pterodactyls, and so on.

"Oh, yes," Bernie was saying, "the whole district's Early Jurassic, probably Triassic."

"And you really think there might be some here, then?" asked Willie.

Willie spotted me as I was making for the cloakroom. "Hear that, Tom?" he asked, all agog. "Bernie says we've probably got dinosaurs in the district!"

I gazed at him. "You'd better be careful, then," I said. "Take your catapult with you if you go out."

"Don't be daft, Tom," Willie went on. "It's because the ground is Early Elastic."

"Early Jurassic," put in Bernard Brandon. "Clot!"

I rounded on him. *We're* allowed

to call Willie a clot, but we're in the Group—Dabs and Smudger and me. But Bernie's asking for a clonk if he starts getting cheeky.

"Look," I said, "I don't care if it's late or Early Fantastic, you can jolly well shut up calling Willie a clot. If you think——"

"All right, all right, Bridger," Bernie said. He's always careful to get out of trouble. Nearly as bad as Belling and Hollings and Rigdon. "I was merely explaining to Wynn that this district is probably Early Jurassic. That's a geological period which was particularly rich in prehistoric reptiles, such as dinosaurs."

"Then why hasn't anyone found any round here yet?" asked Smudger, who was standing listening.

Bernie gave him a superior look. "Because, Winsford-Smith," he said, "no one has had the gumption to look. The place is probably abounding in ancient remains."

"Yes, there's Doctor Theobalds, for one," put in John Dabenham, who just came to hear Bernie's last words. Dr Theobalds is our headmaster at Downfield School.

"Shut up, Dabs," I said. "Bernie's

telling us all about the dinosaurs which are rampaging up and down Downfield High Street."

Bernie gave a sniff. "All right, laugh," he said, bitterly. "When I find something you'll hear about it. The newspapers will be full of it. And the scientists will probably name a new dinosaur after me."

Bernie turned on his heels.

"Hey, Bernie," I called.

He stopped. "Well?" he asked, haughtily.

I thought for a moment. Bernie was a fairly bright lad. He might be right, after all, and I began to see front-page stories in the newspapers — *Schoolboys Find Dinosaur*. Then, alongside, a picture of me, Tom Bridger, holding a whacking great dinosaur bone.

"If you're really serious," I said, "how about getting up an expedition? If you'd really like to try, I'm game. And I'm sure Willie will come, won't you, Willie?"

Willie Wynn nodded his head vigorously.

I glanced at the others. "And you, Smudger, and Dabs?"

They both stared, but nodded in agreement.

"O.K." I said. "What about

next Wednesday afternoon, then? It's a half-holiday."

Smudger went on staring at me. "You mean it, Tom?"

"I mean it, really. I know Bernie's a bit of a creep, but he knows his onions. I vote we get up a digging party for Wednesday afternoon for a bone-hunt."

I really was serious, and at last even Bernie was convinced.

"All right," he said, at last. "We'll need a few picks and shovels, things like that. We'll make an early start at about two o'clock."

"Where shall we start?" asked Dabs, who was still half-inclined to regard the whole thing as a leg-pull.

Bernie thought for a bit. "I know the very place," he said. "You know the disused sand quarry near Four Oaks?"

I nodded. "The one on the other side of Pentham?"

"That's the one. Well, we could make a start there. And the ground should be fairly easy to dig into. It's mostly sand."

"Is it good dinosaur country?" Dabenhams asked doubtfully.

"Yes, yes," Bernie went on, excitedly. "Bound to be Jurassic—or Cretaceous, at least."

"Now look here," I said. "We've done enough chatting to last till the end of next week. It's half-past twelve, and we'd better be off home. Don't forget—two o'clock at the old quarry on Wednesday. Bring your own pick and shovel."

Wednesday morning came and went, and we all dashed off home for lunch. I didn't explain to Mum and Dad what I was up to, but they wouldn't have been interested, anyway. When I got to the sand quarry, everyone was there already.

We set to work with picks and shovels. It was, as Bernie said, quite easy to dig, being sand. All the same, after half-an-hour of it, I began to get tired. Digging up dinosaurs was too much like hard work. We dug steadily for a while, and then Smudger let out a yell.

"A bone!" he shouted. "I've found a bone!"

We all dropped our shovels and



"Hey, you lads!" he yelled. "What d'you think you're doing?"

things and dashed over to Smudger.

It wasn't a big bone, only about nine inches long, but Smudger was delighted. "What's it from, Bernie? A brontosaurus?"

Bernie took the bone and examined it carefully through his big horn-rimmed specs. "I'm not sure," he said at last. "Saurian, of course, without a doubt."

I took the bone from him and had a good look. It looked too small to be a dinosaur bone, I thought. And anyway, it seemed much too

new. I could have sworn there was a bit of meat still sticking to it. But I didn't want to spoil Smudger's fun, and as for Bernie, he was delirious with joy.

We slogged on with the digging for quite a while, and then I found a bone. It looked like something from a large lamb chop, but Bernie took it with enthusiasm.

"Pteranodon, I think," he said, his eyes shining through his goggles.

After another half-hour, we'd

made a small pile of assorted bones, and Bernie was practically dancing with excitement.

By this time, we'd all become a bit fed up with the whole idea, but we helped Willie dig for a spell into a small cavern he'd dug into the side of the quarry. But we found no more bones—only a few rusty tin cans, a couple of broken gramophone records and part of an old bicycle.

Even Bernie was losing interest by this time. "Let's collect the bones together—" he was saying, when a shout, followed by the barking of a dog, interrupted him.

"Hey!" came the shout again.

We looked up to the top of the quarry, and saw an elderly man wearing a black velvet jacket and a little black skull cap standing on the edge, holding a big brown dog on a leash.

"Hey—you lads!" he yelled again. "What the dickens d'you think you're doing?"

We were all struck dumb for a minute. Then I answered: "Digging, sir!"

"Digging! Digging! How dare you dig in my quarry? Just you wait——" He broke off, as the dog gave a loud bark, and turned away. There was something about that dog which worried me, and it obviously worried Smudger, Dabs and Bernard Brandon even more. The dog came dashing along the edge of the quarry, and was obviously trying to find a quick way down to us.

Smudger, Dabs and Bernie took to their heels, and dashed off up the quarry path, with the dog barking like mad. Willie looked at me and I looked at Willie. We both turned together and made to follow the others, but the dog was too quick for us. It had reached the bottom of the quarry, and stood in our path, its teeth bared in a snarl.

"Oh lor," I said. "I don't like the look of him."

Willie took a fraction of a step forward, but the dog gave a loud, snarling bark, and Willie jumped back in terror.

"Stay where you are!" called the

elderly man. "Don't move! I'll be down in a few minutes."

It seemed like an age, but a few minutes later the man was walking towards us.

"Come away, Rex," he called softly. "Come away, boy. Friends. Friends."

Immediately, the dog stopped snarling, turned away, and ran over to his master, whining softly and wagging his tail.

"Now," said the elderly man. "Who the dickens are you?"

"I'm Bridger, sir," I told him, "And this is Willie Wynn."

He looked at us, his white eyebrows knitting over sharp blue eyes. "Bridger and Wynn, eh? And what was the idea, digging away at the side of the quarry?"

"We-we-we were looking for dinosaur bones, sir," explained Willie.

The elderly man looked up sharply. "What? Looking for what?"

"D-d-d-dinosaurs, sir."

"Dinosaurs? Prehistoric animals? In my sand quarry?"

"Y-y-y-yes, sir. It was Bernie Brandon's idea really. He said it was all Early Neurotic round here."

"Early Neurotic?"

"Er—well, Early Gymnastic, I think."

The elderly man's eyes twinkled. "I think you're a little off the track. If you mean Early Jurassic, you're quite wrong. I'm no geologist, but I think we're mainly Pliocene round here. Did you find anything, by the way?"

"Only a few bones," I told him. Then I spotted the dog sniffing at our pile.

"Yes," the man said. "Those bones are probably only a few months old. Doubtless you've discovered Rex's secret hiding-place. Now, what am I going to do about you two?"

He stared at us, and his blue eyes looked quite stern for a second or two, then softened. "You'd better come up to the house," he said.

We followed him along the quarry path, up a few wooden steps, and then along a little track which led into the garden. After a bit we

arrived at the house and went in.

Once inside, he turned to us, and said: "Now, just listen to me. In the first place, what you were doing was quite dangerous. If you go digging into the side of a sand quarry, you run a great risk of the whole thing caving in on you. Lots of people have been caught that way. And another thing, I don't want my garden to collapse into the sand quarry. That's why I bought the quarry. For many years, a builder owned the quarry, and every few years a small piece of my garden would slide down into the pit. Now, I'm fond of my garden, and I don't want it to become any smaller. I bought the quarry from the builder to prevent anyone digging the sand away, and then you lads come along and do that very thing! Do you wonder I was annoyed?"

"No, sir," I said. "I'm very sorry, sir."

The elderly man smiled. "All right, then, we'll forget about it. But be sure it doesn't happen again. You'd better get your friends to come back and collect all those picks and shovels. Would you like some tea?" he asked suddenly.

"Thank you very much, sir," I said, humbly.

"Good. My name's Merridew, by the way. Frank Merridew." He smiled again, and looked at us. "Ever heard of me?"

We shook our heads. "No sir," I said. "Were you in the war?"

He laughed. "Nothing so heroic," he said. "I'm afraid I was too old, anyway. Wait here, and I'll fetch the tea. Oh—if you want a book to look at, there are plenty on the shelves."

When he'd gone, we stood looking at his bookshelves. The books didn't look very interesting, mostly rows and rows of blue-bound volumes, with the word *Clipper* on them. Another row was bound in red, with the title *Diamond*.

Mr Merridew came back with the tea. "I have a housekeeper to do things for me, but she's gone into Downfield for the shopping. You both like sugar?"

"It's very nice of you, sir," I



I looked at the book he handed to me. It was called Duggie's Dinosaur

said. "After we annoyed you so."

Mr Merridew grinned. "Don't say any more. As a matter of fact, I'm rather enjoying your company. It's a long time since I had anything to do with boys. A long time."

"Were you a teacher, then, sir?" asked Willie.

He laughed. "A teacher? Good gracious, no."

He didn't say anything else about that, but chatted on about the garden, and the town, and which school we went to, and so on. When we left, we felt quite sorry to go.

Next day, at school, Smudger, Dabs and Bernie Brandon rushed over to us during the break.

"I say, Tom," said Smudger, "what happened? Did that old buzzard get you?"

"If, Winston-Smith," I said, haughtily, "you are referring to my friend Mr Merridew, I'd be grateful if you would refrain from calling him an 'old buzzard'. Mr Merridew and I happen to be friends. And if you three funks hadn't scarpered, you might be included too."

"Perhaps we were a bit hasty," Smudger admitted.

And there the matter rested, although things between Smudger and Dabs and Willie and myself were a little cool for a bit.

I didn't see Dad until the Thurs-

day evening. "By the way," he said, as he came in from the garden. "I meant to ask you. Have you seen my garden spade, Tom?"

"Oh, lor'," I gasped. "I'd quite forgotten."

"Forgotten what?" asked Dad.

Well, I just had to tell him that his pick and spade were still lying in Mr Merridew's sand quarry. Then he wanted to know why, so I told him the whole story. Dad really read me the Riot Act over that, I can tell you, but when he'd simmered down, he began to show interest in old Merridew.

"Frank Merridew," he said thoughtfully. "And you say he's quite old?"

"Well, over forty, I'd say," I said. Dad gave me a withering look, and then I realised that *he's* just over forty, so I suppose Old Merridew must be well over eighty.

"These books," Dad went on. "Can you remember their names?"

I told him that, so far as I could remember, there were rows of them with *Clipper* on the backs, and lots of others titled *Diamond*.

Dad sat in his chair looking very thoughtful. "Good heavens," he was saying. "*Clipper*"—I wonder if it's really *the* Frank Merridew."

"Who's *the* Frank Merridew?" I asked.

"Never mind about that now,"

Dad said. "What about nipping over with me in the car and collecting my gardening tools?"

Of course, I agreed, and soon we were pulling up outside Mr Merridew's house. The old boy was outside in the garden pruning his rose trees when we arrived, and he came down to the gate to meet us. He was still wearing the little black smoking cap.

"Ah, it's Tom, isn't it?" asked Mr Merridew. "And you must be Mr Bridger?"

My Dad said "Yes", and we went off into the house. They chattered away for half-an-hour. Then old Merridew said to Dad: "So you're in publishing, Mr Bridger? Not by any chance Bridger and Lawson?"

"Why, yes," Dad said. "I'm a director. My father started the firm with Lawson many years ago. Did you know him?"

Old Merridew smiled. "Yes, but not well. I was an old friend of Charles Lawson. It was he who introduced me to publishing."

They went on chatting, and I went down to the quarry to pick up the tools. Rex, Mr Merridew's dog, came with me, and I could hardly believe he'd been so unfriendly when we'd first met. When I got back, Dad and Mr Merridew were shaking hands.

"Good," Dad was saying. "Then it's a deal. I'll get my people to draw up the agreement, and we'll be hearing from you very soon."

On the way back home, Dad explained about Mr Merridew. It seemed that he was an author of children's stories. Mostly, he'd written for boys in the days when Dad was a boy.

"You won't remember them, Tom," Dad said. "But all my friends used to read those papers avidly every week. *Clipper* was our favourite, of course; and then there was the *Diamond*, and the *Boys' Target* and the *Weekly Wonder*. Dozens of them. And old Frank Merridew wrote for them all. Marvellous long school stories about Jim Tracey, and Ben Weatherstone, and the fat boy—what was his name?—Roly Rumbold."

"Doesn't Mr Merridew write them any more?" I asked.

"He hasn't, for years," Dad said. "But he's going to. I'm going to publish his books myself."

I didn't see Old Merridew for a long time after that. Then, one day, quite a while after, he rang up.

"It's for you, Tom," Mum said, calling me in from the garden. "Mr Merridew."

Wonderingly, I picked up the 'phone. "Hallo," I said. "Tom Bridger here."

"Ah, Tom," came Mr Merridew's voice. "I'd like you to come over with those friends of yours."

"My friends?" I asked. "You mean Willie Wynn, and——"

"Yes, yes," he interrupted. "You know who I mean. Bring them over, tomorrow afternoon. It's a little celebration."

Well, I said "Yes", and on the following afternoon we all trooped into Mr Merridew's house. We had an absolutely magnificent tea, and it really was super. Then, after we'd finished, Mr Merridew called us together.

"Just a little word of explanation," he said. "As you probably know, I used to write many stories for boys. Well, now Tom's father is to publish some of my newer work, and today, the first book is published."

We all clapped, and then he went on. "Here behind me, are some copies of the book, and I'd like each one of you to have one. You'll see by the title that it was inspired by an episode that took place here last year."

I looked at my copy of the book as he handed it to me. It was called *Duggie's Dinosaur*.

Mr Merridew smiled. "I suppose it should really be *Bernie's Dinosaur*," he said. "But this is a work of fiction. As they sometimes say in the beginning of books: 'all characters are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons is purely coincidental.'"

He glanced round the group of boys, and then looked at me. "But we'll keep our knowledge of the actual events a secret, eh?"

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Warm Yuletide Greetings, and God Bless us everyone.

GEOFFREY CRANG  
INDIAN QUEENS, CORNWALL.

=====

Kit and Ron Beck of Lewes, Susan, Neil and David Beck of Polegate send Christmas Greetings to all Hobby Friends.

=====

Xmas Greetings and a trouble free New Year to all Hobbyists.

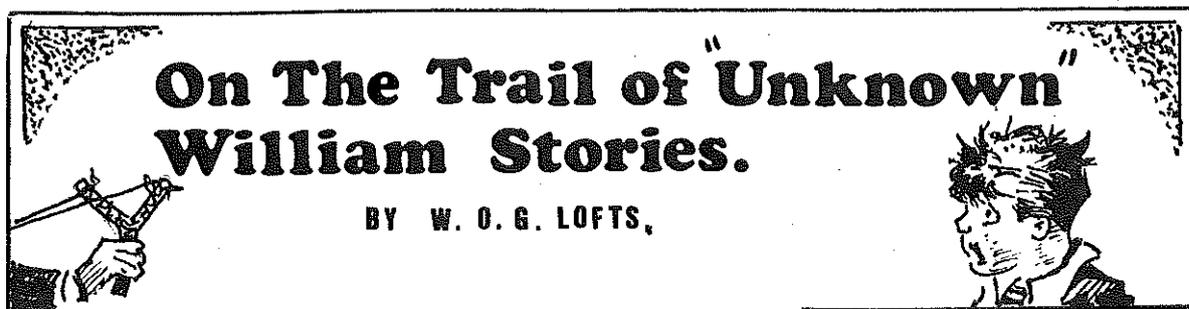
LEN BERG  
WEMBLEY.

=====

WANTED: Annuals, Rupert Schoolgirls' Own. Books by Ransome, Brent-Dyer, E.J. Oxenham, Monica Edwards. Schoolgirls' Own Library.

GEORGE SEWELL  
27 HUMBERSTONE ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 1JD.

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One of my most interesting forms of research in the literary field, is to peruse copies of old fiction magazines that were published mainly prior to the Second World War. In fact by now, and over a period of 35 years I must have examined thousands of them in the popular markets in researching the many bibliographies published by myself and Derek Adley.

It is really surprising what one can find. Short stories written by world famous writers and not included in any anthologies of their work, sometimes penned over 80 years ago. Tales buried out of sight to the public at large, and obviously forgotten by the writers themselves. Personally I must have discovered many hitherto unknown stories through the years including those of Edgar Wallace, Leslie Charteris, and, only recently, one of the first ever written by that great writer of mystery Sax Rohmer, entitled aptly 'The Mysterious Mummy', under his real name of Arthur Sarsfield Ward.

But probably the greatest find I ever had was an unknown short tale called "Man Overboard" written by Winston Churchill when he was only 19 years of age. As the great man had only recently died there was great excitement at the time, with the story completely unknown to the former Prime Minister's Estate. It was eventually published in the short story magazine 'Argosy' through the medium of an old Director friend of The Amalgamated Press. I was presented with a special copy suitably inscribed, as well as being rewarded for discovering this story.

This brings me to the delightful 'William'. We were able with the kind permission of Mrs. Ashbee of the Richmal Crompton Estate, to include an unknown tale, "William on the Trail", in our William Bibliography. We had found this buried in an issue of The Happy Magazine. It was generally agreed that the theme of William's brutal beating in the boxing ring probably made it unsuitable to be included in book form.

Actually when one thinks about it, the formula for the William Books was quite simple, unlike so many collections of short stories. When sufficient stories had been published in the Happy Magazine they were collected into books, with usually the best title or story making the main heading. Now the very last story of William in Happy Magazine was in May 1940 when this so greatly loved family magazine monthly closed through the acute wartime paper shortage. This story, along with previous ones appeared in "William and the Evacuees" in 1941.

I cannot recall where the information came from now about the William short stories appearing in Home Notes in 1947, but some odd issues are missing from the British Library files that possibly could contain other tales as yet unrecorded. This still leaves a curious gap from 1940 till 1947, when books of the short stories were regularly published, with no trace of them having first appeared in magazines. Readers who have a copy of the Bibliography may have also been puzzled by this.

Last year, however, my friend Denis Gifford, of T.V. Looks Familiar fame, told me that he had bought at a book fair a copy of a war-time woman's magazine entitled "Modern Woman". This had in its pages a William story, though no mention of this paper was in our William Bibliography. This obviously was one of the missing links of the stories in magazines, so at the first opportunity I examined the files at the British Library, finding no less than 29 William stories in its pages! 28 of them fitted nicely into three William Books, "William Does His Bit" (1941), "William Carries on" (1942), "William and the Brains Trust" (1950).

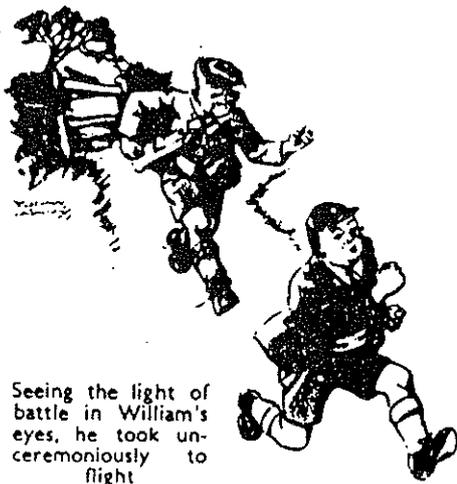
(However, two stories in the books "William and the Brains Trust" are still unaccounted for: "Aunt Florence Toy Maker" and "William's War-Time Fun Fair". No magazine originals have been traced for these, though they could be in the odd copies missing in Novel Magazines.) But it was the 29th story - not traced in book form - that aroused my main curiosity. A quick check through our bibliography could find no story with the same title, 'The Pageant' nor any first lines exactly to match. Yet the story had some familiar ring about it. Not having the complete set of William books I consulted Derek Adley, who also thought the story familiar, but with a spate of decorating on, and all his books packed away, plus a trip to the North for some conference, he was unable to make a thorough search until everything was clear.

Thinking I had possibly found another William story which was unpublished in the books, I sent the story to the Editor of Macmillan's Children's Books, with a word of caution that while I could not trace the story it did have a familiar ring about it.

I was a bit crestfallen a few weeks later to find that, after all, the story had been used before with a change of title (and rewritten as "The Battle of the Flowers" in 1949 in Home Notes). It had been published in "William the Bold", the book that came out in 1950.

What, however, is interesting is that the delightful drawings by Thomas Henry for the original magazine story were not used in the reprinted version. Consequently these could be used at some time in the future.

Whenever I plough through the enormous amount of popular publications at various National Libraries, I'm still hopeful of discovering some unknown William material, to be brought to light for the benefit of the many thousands of admirers of the delightful stories of Richmal Crompton which have given us so much pleasure through the years.



Seeing the light of battle in William's eyes, he took unceremoniously to flight

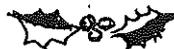
# THE PAGEANT

By Richmal Crompton



## The Bounder's Christmas Present.

BY LESLIE ROWLEY.



With a sibilant snort, the small local train pulled out of Friardale station, its smokestack sending a cascade of golden sparks into the dark wintry heavens as it disappeared in the direction of Woodend. Henry Samuel Quelch pulled the collar of his coat up and the brim of his hat down as some protection from the driving snow, as his feet crunched the crisp white beneath them. Midnight was striking from the tower of the old Saxon church as the master of the Remove made his way up the one street to which the village could lay claim. On either side of him lay buildings, their roofs, their chimney pots, and their window ledges clad in winter's virginal cloak of beauty. Above, the moon played hide and seek in the fleecy cover of clouds that were heavy with their burden of snow. Here and there a ruddy glow in some latticed or mullioned window still shone out its promise of warmth to complete a scene that did justice to the season of goodwill.

Mr. Quelch strode purposefully through the village. He was late, and anxious to reach the shelter of Greyfriars and the comfort and warmth of his bed. He had spent most of the day in London, meeting friends of the same academic background, and delivering a lecture for their behoof on "The Public School, Past, Present, and Future". It was an extension of an article that he had once written for "The Public School Review" and now, as he mused on the lateness of the hour, he wondered if he had extended that lecture just a little too much! The sound of the creaking signboard outside "The Cross Keys" brought him back from his musings and, a moment later, a sudden shaft of light intruded into the night as a door at the side of the inn was opened and a boyish figure stepped into the road, almost into the path of the form master. Mr. Quelch stopped in his tracks as both man and boy uttered expressions of recognition.

"Oh Gad! Quelchy!"

"Vernon-Smith! What are you doing here at this hour?" A grasp, as of steel, was on the Bounder's arm as Mr. Quelch spoke. He hardly needed telling that Vernon-Smith had broken school bounds by visiting a disreputable hostelry after midnight, and it was doubtful whether any additional information that the boy had been gambling, first at cards, and then at billiards, would have satisfied him as adequate excuse! That being the case, Smithy made no reply.

"You will walk with me to the School, where you will be lodged in the Punishment Room for the remainder of the night, and will be taken before your headmaster in the morning", Mr. Quelch's words came colder than the winter's air, bringing with them the additional bitterness of contempt. The Form master's grip on his arm had tightened and gave Vernon-Smith no alternative but to follow. A night in "punny" would be no new experience for the Removite. Not for the first time, expulsion stared him in the face. He had given no thought to the possibility of the "sack" when he had embarked upon this escapade and now not all the thinking in the world could save him from the disgrace that surely lay ahead. Later, as he tossed and turned on the bed that a startled Trotter had made up for him, the dawn seemed long in its coming, and slumber did not come at all!

Bunter, of course, was the first with the news! As long as doors had keyholes at which to listen in to private conversation, Bunter would be in the van with information. Gossiping was one of the few things that Bunter did really well, the other two being eating and sleeping. On this particular morning he had strategically placed himself outside Wingate's study door whilst attending to a recalcitrant shoe lace. Bunter's ears were both extensive and receptive to what Wingate was telling

Blundell. A fat grin extended from one side of Bunter's face to the other as he assimilated the fact that Herbert Vernon-Smith had been discovered out of bounds and was awaiting an interview with the Head. Bunter would have liked to have gleaned more, but Tom North had happened by, had seized Bunter by the neck, swung him on his fat axis, opened the door of the study and booted that snooper within. Wingate had looked a little startled at Bunter's dramatic arrival but, after North had acquainted him of the reason for Bunter's sudden and unheralded appearance, it was time for Bunter himself to be startled. Rather unreasonable, Bunter thought, that Wingate should object to a little news gathering, and the 'six' that followed showed how deep the Head Prefect's objections were. As the prefectorial ash struck home, a cloud of dust rose from Bunter's extensive trousers and higher still rose the sound of Bunter's cries in anguish! It was at least thirty minutes later before Bunter could bring himself to attend his fellow Removites to pass on the stirring news. Soon, the whole of the Junior School was in possession of the facts according to Bunter. True, those facts were both garbled and embellished, but the practised mind could soon assimilate that which was fact and that which was fiction.

A curtain of gloom descended upon the Remove as they awaited their master at the form room door. Their noisy chatter of speculation was suddenly hushed as Mr. Quelch came into the offing.

There was an expression on Mr. Quelch's speaking countenance that warned them to be on their best behaviour and, when the Remove master unlocked the door and let them in, they took their places with unaccustomed quiet. In Bunter's pocket reposed a bag of bullseyes, lately the property of Donald Ogilvy. It had been Bunter's intention to consume those bullseyes in class but, wisely, Bunter decided to leave that pleasure till later. In present circumstances it behove others to exercise similar care. Bob Cherry managed not to shuffle his feet, and Mauleverer hurriedly stifled a yawn! When the Remove master spoke, the Remove hung on to every word as though it was a pearl of great price! Seldom had Quelch had such an attentive form, as the members of it waited breathlessly for news of the missing Bounder. When Quelch spoke, his voice was not loud, but deep!

"My boys! I have to tell you that a boy of this form Vernon-Smith, was discovered out of bounds at an early hour this morning, and is at present in the punishment room, waiting to be taken to the headmaster. Whilst I am gone, Wharton, you will be responsible for maintaining order. So that valuable time will not be wasted, I have set the form a paper on Gray's 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard'. General Wolfe is reputed to have said that he would rather have written this epic than to have won his famous victory on the Heights of Abraham. I trust my form will endorse the opinion of one of our greatest generals, and that its appreciation will be reflected in the exercise I have set. In the absence of any such appreciation being shown in your papers, those responsible will be detained after school in order that they may write out the elegy ten times. What is it Redwing?"

All eyes immediately turned in the direction of the Bounder's pal as he ventured to ask the question on everybody's lips.

"Is Smithy, that is, Vernon-Smith, to be expelled, sir?" Redwing's words came haltingly and were obviously spoken with emotion - so much so that Mr. Quelch's face softened and all harshness had gone from his voice when he spoke.

"That is a matter for the headmaster to decide, Redwing. But I can hold out little hope that the head will rule other than that Vernon-Smith must leave Greyfriars. I am sorry, my boy, but Vernon-Smith has only himself to blame. I now leave the form in your hands, Wharton. Let there be the least disturbance during my absence and the penalty will be severe!"

Perhaps, after he had left the form room, Mr. Quelch considered that the Remove would settle down to enjoy the undoubted delights of the famous elegy. But the curfew could have tolled the knell of passing day on the bells in the school clock tower for all that it mattered. Far more important was the subject of Smithy and his forthcoming appointment with the Head. It was some time before the heads of the Remove were bent over the paper that their form master had set them and the juniors allowed themselves to follow the lowing herd o'er the lea.

Dr. Locke gazed through the window in his study at the snow-covered quadrangle below. He was waiting for his dear friend Quelch, as he had waited for that dear friend and colleague on many previous occasions. This time, however, he was not waiting for his dear Quelch to join him in one of the pleasant excursions into the obscure passages of some chosen classic, with Quelch interpreting in one way and the Head elucidating in another! On the contrary, an expulsion was a very serious matter, the severest penalty that he could award for a misdemeanour. Expulsion from a school such as Greyfriars would reflect adversely for the lifetime of the boy whose sad experience it happened to be. Dr. Locke had already been on the telephone to the Bounder's home, only to receive the news that Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith was away for the following three days. The Headmaster, who took his responsibilities seriously, was puzzled as to how he could send home a boy who had no parent at the other end to receive him. Time was short; in a few days the School would be dispersing for the Christmas holidays. He hoped that Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith would by then be able to take delivery of his son. The Head did not envy the boy that home-coming!

There was a tap on the door, and Mr. Quelch entered with the Bounder in tow. Dr. Locke turned from the window and fixed a serious gaze upon both master and boy.

"Vernon-Smith! I hardly know what to say to you! This is not the first time that you have been before me, accused of flouting the school rules - the punishment for which can only be expulsion. The evidence of your form master is unquestionable and irrefutable, yet I feel bound to ask you if you have anything to say, but be brief!"

Smithy looked at the Head. On other occasions, when he had been brought before the beaks for judgement, he had displayed an impertinence that had served only to add to the severity of the punishment he had received. Now, even the normally reckless Bounder realised that there was nothing to be gained by cheeking the beaks. During a restless night in "punny" he had come to recognise what the outcome of his latest escapade must be. Even an indulgent parent like his father was likely to be angry at his son being expelled. On a previous occasion, Mr. Vernon-Smith had disowned him. He could scarcely expect better now. Still, the Head had given him an opportunity to defend himself and it was better to say something than remain silent.

"What Mr. Quelch says is true", he admitted, "I've been a fool and kicked over the traces and I know that I may face the music. All I can ask, sir, is that you allow me to take some other punishment than the sack. It will be a great disappointment to my father if I am kicked out of Greyfriars-----"

"You should have thought of that before you visited "The Cross Keys" last night", replied Dr. Locke. "Had you broken bounds for some other purpose than to visit such a disreputable place there might have been mitigating circumstances. Mr. Quelch, have you anything to say in Vernon-Smith's favour?"

"Nothing at all, I am afraid, sir", Quelch's reply was firm and resolute. "Vernon-Smith has been before you on several such occasions when expulsion was merited. I can see no extenuating circumstances now."

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch. Vernon-Smith, you will wait outside in the passage while I discuss the matter with your form master. Do not go away, but remain within call." The door of the Head's study closed behind the Bounder, as the Head turned again to the master of the Remove. "My dear Quelch, this must be a trying time for you, and I regret adding to it. I have been in touch with the boy's home, and the butler tells me that Mr. Vernon-Smith is overseas on business and is not expected home for the next three days at least. On past experience, it has proved unwise to send the boy home on his own. Until Mr. Vernon-Smith's return the boy must be accommodated here and, since he is the type of boy who may well run away, I feel that he should remain in the security of the punishment room. I have no wish to be unnecessarily harsh, and see no reason why he should not receive visits from his friend Redwing, and others of whom you approve. With the season of hope upon us, it is regrettable indeed that the school should suffer such a sad occasion. As to the boy, he will have to face his father and, from what I have seen of Mr. Vernon-Smith, I have some compassion for the boy. Please call him so that I may tell him of my decision." A moment later the Bounder stood before the Head once again.

"Vernon-Smith! My decision is that you shall leave the School just as soon as your father returns from abroad. For the next two or three days you will remain in the punishment room, but you will enjoy a normal diet, and I am sure that Mr. Quelch will kindly set you some work so that you may still profit for what remains of your stay with us. You may receive visits from Redwing and other boys, subject to your form master's approval. I trust that, in some other sphere, perhaps at some other school, you will profit by your present experience and do well. You may go!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"P-p-please, sir!"

"What is it, Bunter? There was a touch of asperity in Mr. Quelch's voice, as he turned from the blackboard. No master liked an expulsion in his form, and the strain was beginning to show. Even in more normal times, Bunter had an irritating effect on his form master; now there was an added edge to Quelch's tongue.

"Can I have permission to visit Smithy in punny, sir? You've allowed Wharton and his friends to visit him, but what he really needs, sir, is a visit from one of his oldest and nearest friends....."

"If you are alluding to Redwing, Bunter, the matter is already arranged, so do not waste the time of the class by enquiring....."

"But, sir, I didn't mean Redwing, I meant myself. Smithy must miss me no end, and besides the pie will go bad if it is left in his study cupboard. When a fellow is willing to take a fellow his pie - especially a fellow in punny --"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"You will not be permitted to visit Vernon-Smith but, since you seem to have a desire to see what detention is like, you will remain after class is dismissed and I shall set you a paper-----"

"Oh lor!" Bunter's crest-fallen expression owed more, perhaps, to the pie than it did to the pie's owner, and the many grins on the faces of his schoolfellows indicated that they appreciated in which direction Bunter's anxiety really lay.

But, if some members of the form were amused, others were serious. The Bounder did not have a large circle of friends, but he was widely recognised as a sportsman - as someone who could be reckoned with in both footer and cricket. He was also free with his money when it came to a lavish study spread. There were, however, other reasons for some people to regret his expulsion, and quite a few consciences were troubled now as they had not been troubled before.

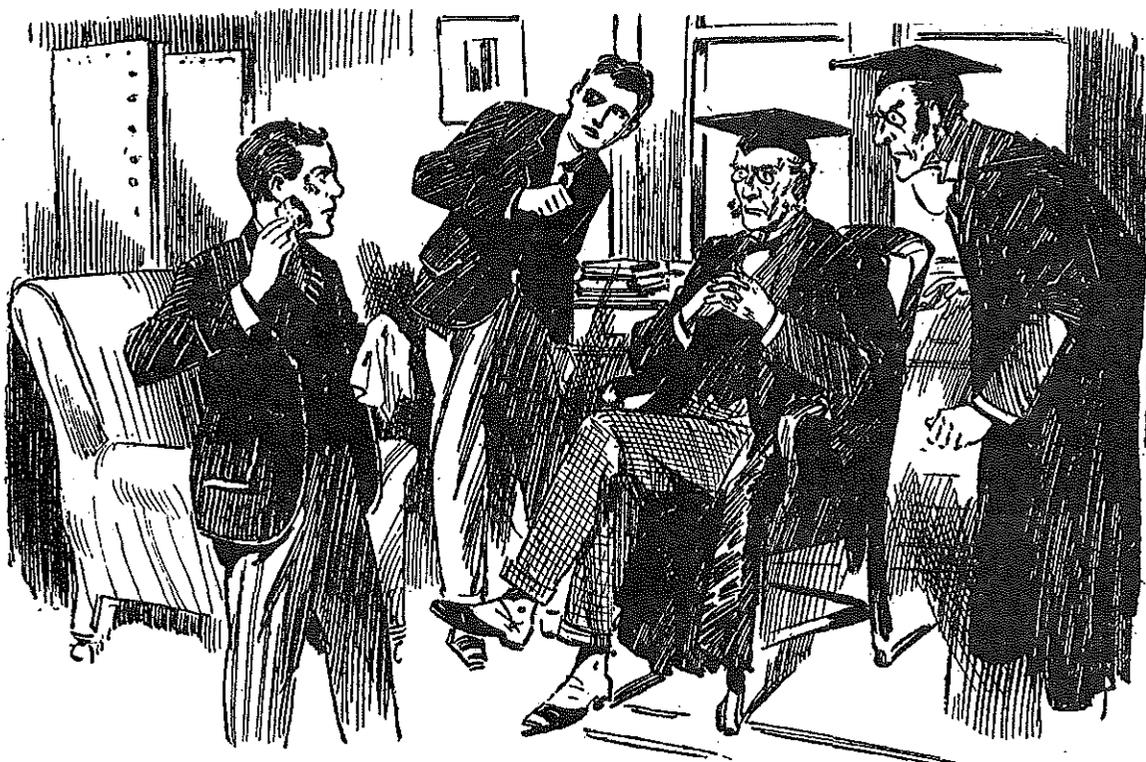
"It's rotten that it has come to this", Harry Wharton remarked to other members of the Co. who had gathered in study No. 1 for a chat before prep. "Smithy has asked for the sack a dozen times, so he cannot grouse now the chopper has fallen, but some of us here owe him some kind of debt or other. I cannot forget how he came to my help when I was being blamed for something that Stacey did, and took a whopping in order to prove my innocence. Doubtless I could recall other occasions when Smithy came to my aid.."

"I can say the same", agreed Frank Nugent. "When my minor was in trouble over that bank note of Twigg's, Smithy saved Dicky from disgrace at considerable risk to himself, and all he got for his trouble was a form ragging."

"You fellows are absolutely right. Smithy chipped in when my cousin Paul Tyrrell threatened to draw myself and my family into disgrace. But for Smithy, the police could have charged me with aiding and abetting Paul. Smithy risked being charged also through giving Paul another chance. Like you fellows, I owe Smithy a lot. If only we could do something. An appeal to the Head, perhaps?" Bob Cherry enquired of Wharton.

"We can't very well go over Quelch's head, especially as it was he who caught Smithy leaving that den at midnight. It's best to try it on with Quelch first. Who's prepared to beard Quelch in his den?"

\* \* \* \* \*



"If I prove, sir, that Mr. Quelch once caned a boy in the Remove for having a black eye, when the black eye was only an imitation," said Vernon-Smith, "will not that prove that a mistake might have been made about Wharton?" "Most assuredly!" said the Head. The Bouncer rubbed with the sponge, and the discoloration round his eye gradually disappeared!

Henry Samuel Quelch looked out of his study window at the dark and bitter evening. The earlier fall of snow had eased, and only an occasional flurry of white could be seen falling on the Sixth Form Green in the distance. The trees in Elm Walk stood silent, their branches heavy with the burden of winter. Overhead, the reluctant moon was shrouded in a fluffy field of cloud. The wind from the East brought its forecast of colder weather to come. But it was not the wintry night that made Mr. Quelch shudder as he closed both casement and curtain. His mind was travelling back over the years to a similar Christmas. Through the avenue of the years there came to him that awful period when he had been held prisoner against his will. The long, so terribly long months, spent in the damp and dreary confines of the air-raid dugout at the remote summer bungalow called "Sea View". How slowly those days had passed before rescue had come. And whom had he to thank for his rescue? The boy who now languished in the small punishment room under sentence of expulsion. Vernon-Smith had been expelled on that occasion, and it was a grateful Quelch who had persuaded the Head to allow the boy to return. Quelch tried to tell himself that he had repaid his debt to Vernon-Smith but, somehow, his conscience would not accept this. "I shall never forget this, Vernon-Smith", he had told the boy at the time. Neither had he, but what use was his remembering now? There came a knock on his study door. A moment later, three boys of his form stood before him!

"Wharton, Cherry, Nugent! What is the meaning, of this? Why are you not at preparation?"

The three Removites looked uncomfortable as they met their form-master's penetrating gaze. It was Wharton who spoke first, but the others soon followed, and it took some minutes and almost all of Quelch's patience before he could gather the reason of their visit. To their surprise he gave them a fair hearing, and when he spoke it was without admonishment.

"You are all sensible boys, you know all the rules of the School and you comply with them most of the time. There are occasional refractions of the rules which can be remedied by punishment decided by your form-master, but there are far more serious offences where the punishment must be left to your Headmaster's decision... Dr. Locke has given his judgement in regard to Vernon-Smith. I am sorry, my boys, but there the matter ends."

There came another knock on the door. It opened to reveal Redwing. Serious attention to preparation was obviously not being paid in the Remove that evening. This time Quelch did not need to ask Redwing the reason for his visit. A few moments later the four of them were on their way back to the Remove passage. They were lucky that they had not been awarded lines but, on this occasion, their form master had seemed inclined to pass over punishment.

"No luck", Wharton told the others when they had reached Study No. 1. "Can't say I blame Quelch in the circs. He could hardly take any notice of little us." Which was where Wharton was wrong...

Mr. Quelch stood facing his Chief. He knew he was there on the matter of Vernon-Smith, but he did not know how to begin. But the Head was a man of tact. He smiled at his friend's discomfiture, and tried to put him at his ease.

"Is it something to do with Vernon-Smith?" he asked, "You have nothing to reproach yourself for, my dear friend. An expulsion is not a pleasant affair for either the boy's form-master or for his Headmaster. I have just received a call from Wingate of the Sixth. To my surprise, he wanted to put in a word for Vernon-Smith. Wingate reminded me of the trouble there was with Wingate Minor some time ago. Vernon-Smith, at great risk to himself, shielded the younger Wingate from disgrace for the sake of the Captain of the School. Wingate approached me to see if there was the chance of an alternative to expulsion in the present case. Out of the deep respect I have for Wingate, I promised that I would consider his appeal, but that I could hold out little hope. Vernon-Smith has been before me on other occasions when he has flouted the rules of the School. As you know, Quelch, Vernon-Smith has been pardoned before, and what good has it done him - or the School?"

"I cannot but agree with what you say, sir. Nevertheless, there is another side to the boy's character, as three members of my form have just pointed out to me. They have recalled occasions when each of them has been in deep trouble, Wharton at the time when Stacey was with us; Cherry because of his cousin, Paul Tyrrell, and Nugent because of the possible disgrace of his minor. On all these occasions the help that Vernon-Smith rendered was given at great risk to himself. What you say about Wingate shows that these three boys are not alone in their reluctance to see the boy sent home in disgrace. I have to tell you, sir, that I myself have been troubled by similar recollections. There was the occasion when the boy risked his life to save me falling from the roof. It is true that, indirectly, he was responsible for my being there in the first place but, for perilous minutes until help came, the boy refused to leave me to my peril. For that deed, you



Cool and collected, Redwing stood on the rounded roof-ridge, space yawning round him, and threw the end of the rope to Harry Wharton. "Smithy!" he shouted. "Help's coming—hold on!" His eyes gleaming, Vernon-Smith hung on to Mr. Quelch's arms.

generously forgave him then his misbehaviour. More recently, the boy was responsible for my release from the air-raid shelter at Sea View where I had been incarcerated for long and weary months by that villain, Lamb, and his crony. Others may owe him their gratitude for saving them from disgrace, but, I sir, owe him my life, not once but very possibly twice. I feel that I must support the pleas of others that some lesser punishment - a flogging perhaps - be awarded in this present case."

For a long while the Head sat silent. Although he would probably have phrased it differently, he was fed up to the teeth with Vernon-Smith whom he regarded as the worst boy in the School! Fortunately for those concerned, Dr. Locke was unaware of the peculiar customs and habits of Loder, Carne and Walker, or of Price of the Fifth and Angel of the Upper Fourth, otherwise the title ascribed now to the Bounder might well have fallen on other shoulders. For moments that seemed like hours to the waiting Quelch, the dear old Head pondered the matter. He, too, did not welcome an expulsion and, in the case of Vernon-Smith, he could expect some very awkward moments with an irate and difficult parent....

Tap!

That knock on the study door interrupted Dr. Locke's train of thought. Was this to be another appeal on behalf of the disgraced Removite? The Head almost barked his invitation for the newcomer to enter. The door opened to reveal the effervescent French master who, on seeing that the Head was engaged, made his profuse apologies and, with his normal Gallic courtesy, withdrew apologetically for having disturbed the Head and his friend. But the brief appearance of Henri Charpentier had struck a chord in Dr. Locke's memory. He was recalling an occasion when the French master had been helped out of financial difficulty by a kind and generous act, an act that had had to be anonymous because it had come from this very Vernon-Smith. Even under the threat of expulsion, the boy had kept his silence, and only the intervention of the Head himself had revealed the true facts and so avoided a grave miscarriage of justice. Lucius Teggers alias Eustace Smedley had been standing in for Quelch at the time, and had made the most of his opportunity to bring disgrace on the boy so that his father would disinherit him and appoint Teggers as his heir.

Tap!

There came another interruption as the Head was deep in his meditation. This time, the door opened to reveal Tom Redwing.

The Head suspected that this heralded another appeal on the part of Vernon-Smith. He was right. After long and serious deliberation, Reddy had decided to beard the lion in its lair, so to speak. It would probably mean a whopping, but that was a small price to pay if he could help his friend.

Dr. Locke looked at the Bounder's friend. Really it seemed that it was raining people who wanted to save Vernon-Smith from expulsion! Nevertheless, he listened to what Redwing had to say as he spoke of what his friendship with the Bounder meant to him. It was a friendship that had had plenty of ups and downs, but the friendship had endured. To the Head, Smithy might be the worst boy in the school; to Reddy, he was the best friend a chap could wish for. The Head heard the boy make his appeal but, had Reddy known it, the Head's mind was already made up.

"You must leave us, my boy. Your form master and I are discussing the matter, and I will say no more."

The door closed behind Redwing, as earlier it had closed behind the dapper frame of Mr. Charpentier. The Head cleared his throat as he looked across his desk at Quelch.

"Very well, my dear Quelch. In view of these approaches, and because of your own representation, I am prepared to rescind the expulsion order on the condition that Vernon-Smith receives a flogging and a warning that there will be no such leniency shown him in future. I will send for the boy now. Gosling will also be needed!"

It was some time later, and the Bounder was holding a celebratory spread in Study No. 4 for invited guests only - a stipulation which was duly ignored by W.G. Bunter. Bunter's previous anxiety over the pie was now extended to all the good things that graced the Bounder's table. It was noticed that Smithy ate standing - like a horse. The dear old Head had laid it on; the flogee, so to speak, wondered where the flogger packed all the muscle. Bunter, on the other hand, made many present wonder where he packed the enormous cargo of grub!

During that wonderful spread, Wharton extended an invitation to Smithy and Reddy to come along to Wharton Lodge for the Christmas celebrations. It was an invitation that the two chums accepted. It was an invitation that, most emphatically, was not extended to Bunter, but Bunter was there just the same and, as they all opened their Christmas gifts on the great day, there was none so welcome as the one in the title to my little story.

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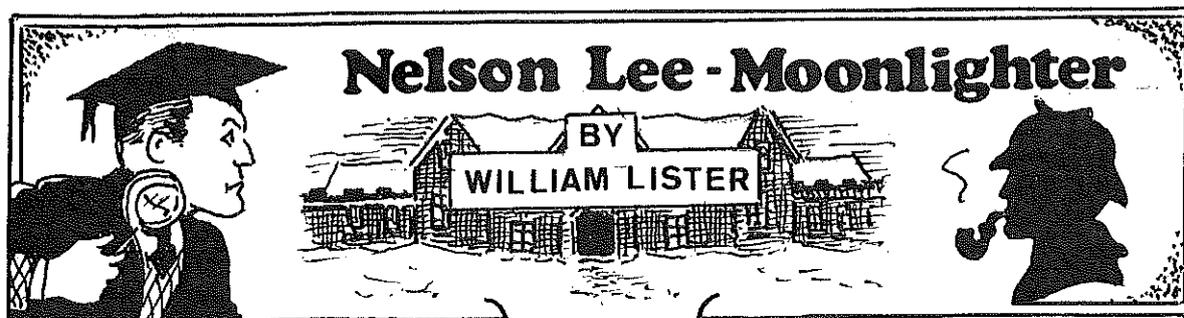
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There are many statements, slogans and phrases that arise and become exceedingly popular, and then slowly fade away.

Letters sometimes began by "I have decided to put pen to paper". This was used so much that it has nearly faded out now. Here's another phrase, used for complaining to editors "I'm sick and tired of...". This has nearly had its day also. Now for a new one, based on a Bible saying (taken out of its context). It is "Born Again", used in American adverts instead of "It's altogether fresh from our old brand". One car firm went so far as to say "This is a Born-Again" car. Pray, what can that mean? However, in the deceitful world of advertising there is a general mis-use of words.

Here then is a fairly new and increasingly used expression - 'MOON-LIGHTING'.

Whether its meaning will change or not remains to be seen. For the moment I will put it this way. If our N.H.S. nurses take another job to help out their income a certain government official refers to them as 'MOONLIGHTING'. In my youth the other meaning prevailing was, if you are staying at an Hotel or some other form of lodging and find that you cannot pay the bill, you pack your bag and endeavour to steal away in the night without anyone seeing you.

This being a "Nelson Lee" article I will use the first illustration as being acceptable, I wouldn't want to use the second one in connection with "Nelson Lee". It would lower the standard somewhat.

Way back, in the mists of time, say between 1929-1932, Nelson Lee himself was a MOONLIGHTER, according to existing records of the N.L. library, including new series 115 of April 1932 entitled "The Final Round". One week the famous schoolmaster sleuth would be away hunting down the top criminals of his day, and, the week after, he'd be back at St. Frank's as a school teacher doing a little detective work in his spare time. When I say, one week, I mean a fictional week. In April 1932, Nelson Lee was in the vestibule of the Masonic Hotel in Napier, New Zealand with a long and exciting case in front of him, and in the next week was back at St. Frank's. Now that can't be done. It might be possible in 1988: even so he would be suffering long-term jet-lag. In any case he was at this time on a large ocean-going ship. So Edwy Searles Brooks, in order to satisfy the editor, had to have Lee back within the week or "Nelson Lee" would be losing its readers. So, a week at school, a week in New Zealand, then a week (heaven knows where) and then back again at St. Frank's, and if that isn't Moonlighting I don't know what is.

"So what?" I can hear you say. "If Nelson Lee can Moonlight without coming to any harm, let him MOONLIGHT!" However, the point is one can't. Tired nurses can make mistakes, tired doctors make mistakes, some tired stars and mega-stars of film and sport take drugs to keep up with the pressures.

"Tell me", you ask "did Nelson Lee suffer as a detective because he was a Moonlighter?" Yes! and in every way. Very many readers of detective fiction place Sherlock Holmes (and not Lee) as number one. Nelson Lee took on some great cases successfully, so do some of my favourite detectives; take G.K. Chesterton's famed Father Brown; a good runner up to Holmes, but only a runner up. Father Brown was a priest doing a little detective moonlighting. There is another moonlighting detective of whom I am very fond. Bro. Cadfael, a monk of the year A.D. 1113 with twelve to thirteen full book-length successful cases under his Habit.

He was created by Ellis Peters, amid life-like descriptions of that period, but like Lee and Brown, Bro. Cadfael is a moonlighter, a devoted monk in charge of the Abbey Herb-gardens who sleuths as well.

Sherlock Holmes as a detective will always be at the very top. Time has proved that. He had one job, detection, and, fortunately, one author who set his character for all comers.

Sexton Blake, like Sherlock Holmes, was another who was no moonlighter for his own benefit. However, the reason he will never out-run Holmes, is because unfortunately, Blake had to go moonlighting for authors! Instead of having one chronicler of his exploits, he had dozens.

What do you think?

\* \* \*

NO. 62. LONG COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORY. 1<sup>0</sup>. *Week ending August 12, 1916.*



INCORPORATING THE "BOYS' REALM."

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Happy Xmas to all my Friends in the Hobby particularly Charles, Tim, John, Eric, Betty and our Editor.

MAC.

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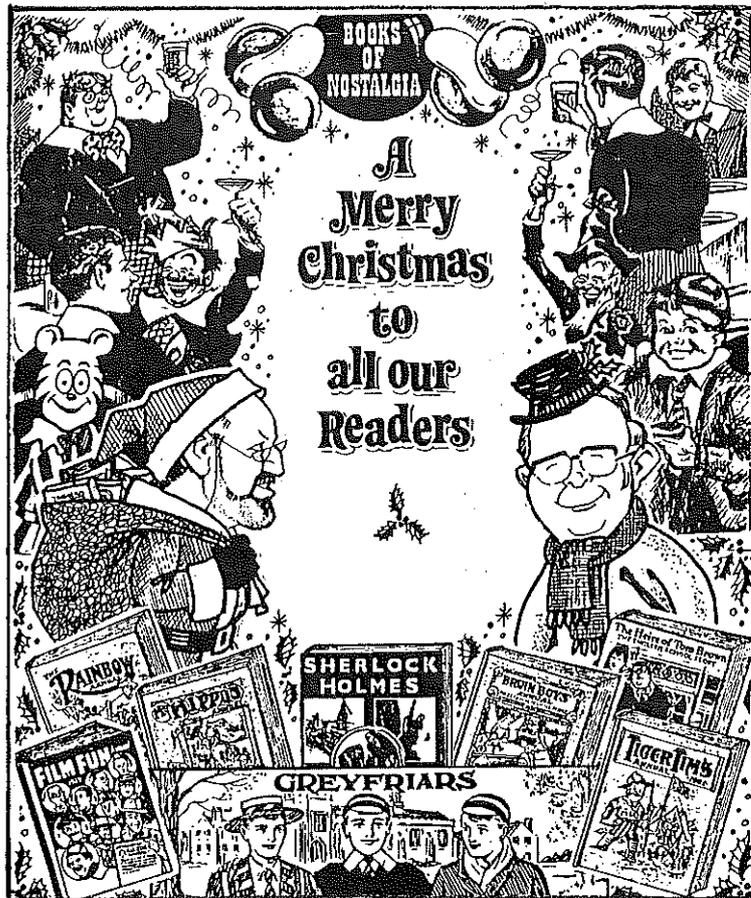
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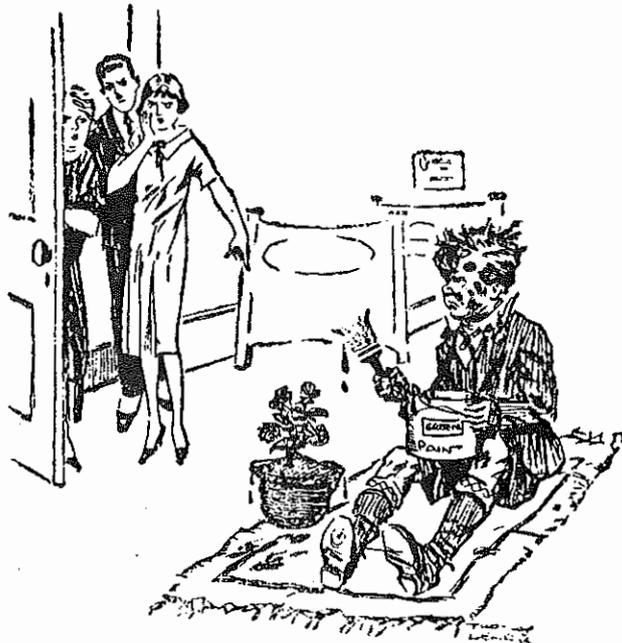
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# SCRAPBOOK

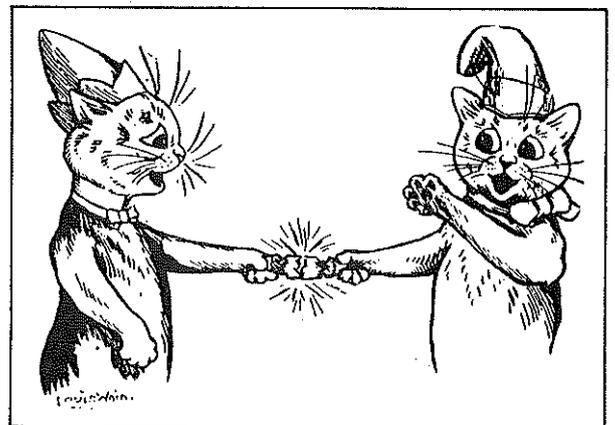
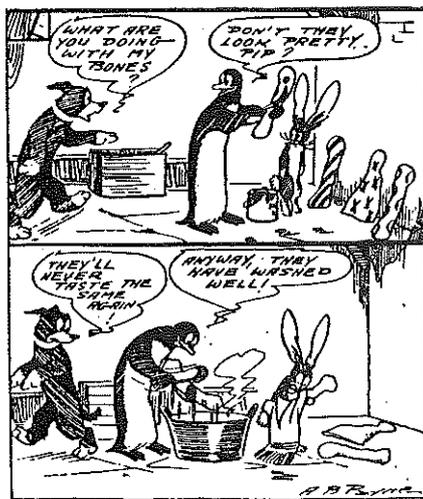
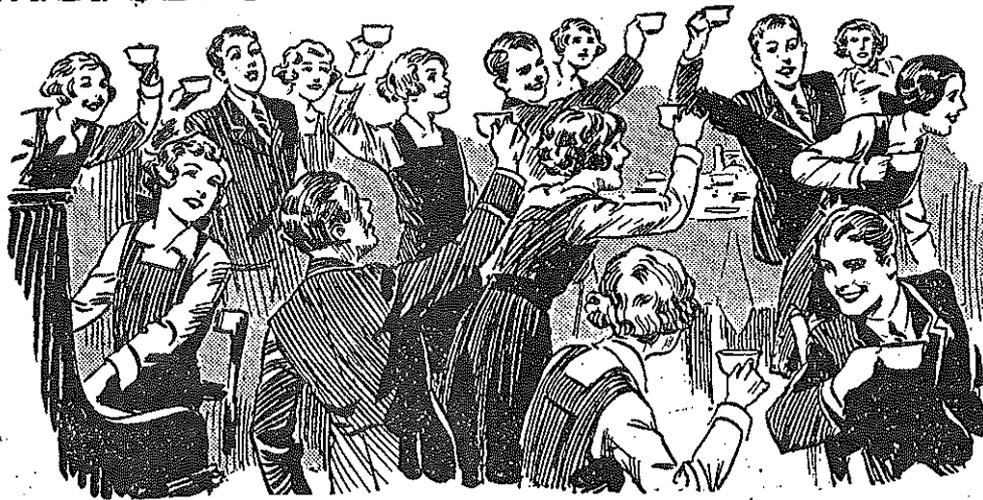
## CHRISTMAS at HILTON HALL!

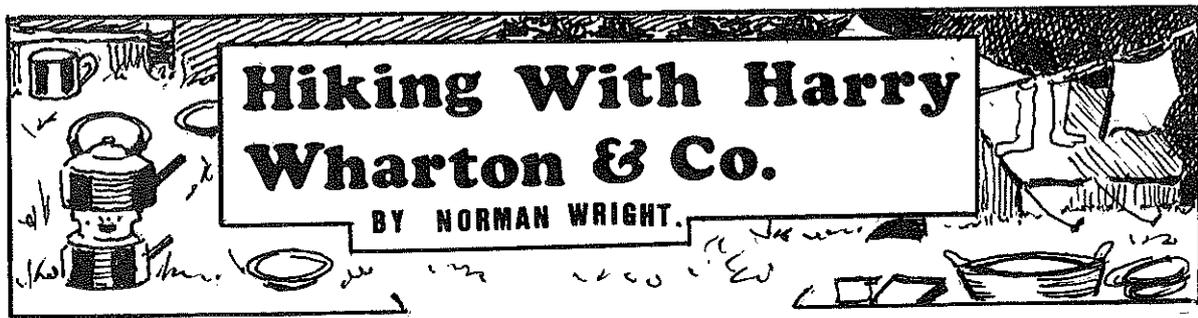


"LOOK!" CRIED ETHEL, ALMOST SPEECHLESS WITH FURY.  
"MY—MY BEST HAT!"



# Marcove's Greatest Romance





I never have liked foreign holiday series. I can just about put up with the boys of St. Frank's finding Northestria or New Anglia, but when they start trekking across the desert in search of lost civilisations I start to perspire with the heat.

I remember waiting eagerly for the first Howard Baker reprint back in the Summer of 1968. What was it - 'the Egypt Series' and there I was again undoing my collar and mopping my brow on the track of ancient scarabs under the sweltering African sun, trekking across the sands.

My first acquaintance with the Holiday Annual was a battered copy bought in a charity shop in a part of Harrow bulldozed some years ago and now the site of their Civic Centre. That volume, mine for nine old pence, provided a wealth of reading. I sat back to enjoy the long reprinted story occupying the final third of the book. Oh dear, we were in the tropics again with Martin Clifford's answer to Stevenson's "Treasure Island" in what must be one of the most reprinted Tom Merry series, "The Schoolboy Crusoes", appearing in the "Gem" in 1911, later reprinted in the "Boys Friend Library", then in the 1924 "Holiday Annual" and finally as a reprinted series in the "Gem" in 1934. It was a good story, an exciting story, but still far too hot for me.

Now the "Holiday Annual" leads me to a summer series I do like. The hiking series of 1933, later reprinted in three "Schoolboys Own Libraries" in 1939.

Hamilton's skill at depicting the English country scene is a delicacy to be savoured. His summers were not over dry and many were the scenes set in sodden meadows with glum chums surveying the rain trickling from tents etc., etc. His was a very rural England, criss crossed by country lanes usually of the sunken variety, edged with woods for lurkers, ditches for shirkers and lush secluded meadows for tired schoolboys to pitch their tents. Always there was a sparkling stream on hand for an early morning dip. More often than not a narrow bridge, consisting of a plank or two spanned the brook and provided a platform for precipitating someone, often an undersirable someone, into the gushing waters. That same bridge would sometimes be usefully removed to cut off an attack from rival campers or tramps or irate farmers. Hamilton loved water; streams, brooks and particularly rivers. A much underrated series is the "Water Lily" series from the Magnet's salmon days. It related the exploits of the Greyfriars Co. on a trip along the Thames, and the continued attempts made to steal their boat, the 'Water Lily', by one of the aforementioned unsavoury types who knew something about the boat unknown to its schoolboy occupants. This brings me back to the Hiking Series. The prelude to the series began on the half holiday before the end of term. Two Greyfriars masters were enjoying a stroll, while a good many of the boys were, in the words of the old song, 'Messing about on the river'... Cecil Ponsonby and Co. were on hand, their undesirable presence destined to instigate much of the action in the ensuing series. After 'guying' Quelch and Prout the Highcliffe 'nuts', together with the objects of their disparaging remarks, witness a daylight 'smash and grab' raid on Mr. Lazarus' jewellery shop. Due to the intervention of Mr. Quelch one of the crooks was unable to complete his getaway and his hide and seek antics in the Greyfriars neighbourhood brought him into contact with William George Bunter, himself at that time a 'man on the run' after purloining a parcel belonging to Bob Cherry, which he mistakenly believed contained food, but which in reality contained a "Holiday Annual" (yes we're back to the H.A. again!). In desperation the crook persuaded Bunter to show him the Holiday Annual and he secretly marked the volume in a way known to his accomplice. The secret code indicated where he had concealed the loot. Bunter was then



The Greyfriars hikers were slogging through the rain when Bunter's foot suddenly slipped, and he sat down in the mud. "Yooooop!" roared the fat junior. "Yow-ow-ow!" "Funny, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry, looking round. "Why aren't you he-he-heing? You went off like a Chinese cracker when I took a tumble. Doesn't seem so funny now, eh?"

bribed to take the book to the accomplice, but on arrival found the man in the grip of the law.

Now while the Holiday Annual was being marked the scene had been witnessed secretly by Ponsonby, who, being a chap 'who knew his way around', realised its significance and determined to lay hands on the H.A. by fair means or foul. The holidays arrived and the Famous Five, together with Mauzy and an unwanted Bunter, set out on their hike, the vital H.A. snugly packed in Bob's rucksack.

As the story unfolded the reader was able to appreciate Charles Hamilton's plot building ability. It was certainly a gift denied many other authors - even those with a far less prolific output. I've mentioned in the past W.E. Johns' tacky plots firmly based on the 'string' principle, one event leading on to the next, with the author probably not aware of what was going to happen in chapter six until chapter five was underway. Now I have no doubt that some of Hamilton's plots were like that. But many of his finer series, those of the late twenties and early thirties, often had plots that jigsawed together. The Hiking series, while being typically episodic and following the much used Hamilton device of someone trying to get something and continually failing in his attempts, was an intricately plotted series. In no way does it bore its reader, an indication of the story teller's skill, particularly when such a potentially boring theme was running through the series. As in so many series Bunter was absolutely vital to the plot. His was the hand, more often than not, that moved the H.A. and thus prevented it falling into enemy hands. Unlike other series with a similar theme Harry and Co. realised quite early on in the proceedings why Pon wanted the book, but were unable to find the secret message.

Pon and Co. pursued the Greyfriars party by car, and considering the distance the hikers travelled I don't blame them!! They started in Surrey and seemed to traverse every county in England as they wended their way north to Yorkshire. Taking into account the number of wrong turnings and detours they made on the way they must have travelled hundreds of miles. Billy Bunter's figure should have been well and truly slimmed down by the sheer mileage he covered. In fact Bunter was not particularly obnoxious in the Hiking Series. True he continually demanded rests, moaned about the lack of food and grew irate if not allowed to consume everyone else's supper as well as his own. He did 'bilk' a taxi driver and steal a train ticket from Skinner, but considering Bunter's character those were fairly minor blemishes.



The taximan made a movement towards the unhappy Owl of the Remove. "Getting in?" he asked. "No!" gasped Bunter. "Then I'm going to chuck you in!" said the taximan grimly. "You're going to the nearest police station, you are!" "Oh lor!" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows. Yow!"

The real villain of the piece was Cecil Ponsonby, portrayed in the very worst possible light. After his own attempts to wrest the H.A. from Cherry had failed he enlisted the help of a tramp to beat up the Co. and steal the book. The gentleman of the road in question, named 'Erbert 'Iggs had fallen foul of Harry Wharton and Co. when he had tried to rob them earlier in the series. He was only too willing to accept Pon's cash and get even with the young gentlemen who had given him such a licking. With a gang of like minded footpads he routed the Greyfriars fellows in their cap. Bunter, as indispensable as ever, quitted the scene as soon as the trouble started and, in his haste to escape, inadvertently bumped into a one legged sailor who went to the rescue of the Co. and also put them on their right road.

Later when Mauly fell into Pon's unscrupulous hands and was left tied and gagged in a dark, dank underground chamber his lordship commented that he couldn't understand how it was that Ponsonby had managed to avoid Borstal or even prison. Without a doubt Pon's most callous act was when he paid two gypsies to kidnap Bob Cherry. There is a lovely little speech made by one of the gypsies to his confederate. Pon had just completed his bargaining with the pair and was on his way back to join his Highcliffe friends who were waiting for him in their car.

"...Joseph looked after him as he went, with a peculiar expression on his face.

"Michael", he said in his smooth tones. "We are a pair of rogues you and I - we have been kicked out of our tribe Michael, because we go a little too far even for their rather easy code. I am a man of education Michael, and you are just a brute - but in rascality we are on a par. But, both of us together, my friend Michael, do not make up such a thorough going rascal as that young gentleman who has just left us. And he drives in a car, with excellent clothes on his back and money in his pocket - and we trundle a cheap van and steal chickens and dogs and even washing from the line! The world Michael is not just and fair to its rogues...."

Later when Vernon Smith made an appearance Ponsonby tried to cheat him at cards in order to relieve the Bounder of some of his money. Needless to say Smithy turned the tables on Pon and fleeced the Highcliffe boys - only to end up flinging their money back in their faces when he grew tired of their unhealthy life style.

As if all the trouble with Pon, tramps and gypsies were not enough the Greyfriars seven found time to unmask an unscrupulous estate agent (is there any other sort these days!), save Ponsonby's uncle from drowning and prevent Gadsby's butler from making off with General Gadsby's prize treasure. Life back at Greyfriars must have seemed dull after such adventures.

Eventually the H.A. was handed over to Inspector Grimes, who, much to Mr. Quelch's surprise, discovered the secret message and recovered the missing jewels. Everyone, with the exception of Cecil Ponsonby, was happy. As Lord Mauleverer had so rightly said, that youth should have ended up in 'choky', but then the Greyfriars scene would have been very quiet without him.

When Inspector Grimes explained to Mr. Quelch how to decipher the secret message hidden in the H.A. the reader was given quite explicit instructions as to where each word was in the book. The H.A. date had been mentioned earlier in the series as being that for 1934. When the series was reprinted in the S.O.L. in 1939 the H.A. was said to be that for 1940. As a little experiment Bill Bradford and I recently investigated those H.A.s. to see if we could solve the message as easily as Grimes! Sure enough the H.A. for 1934 did contain the correct words on the correct page to solve the message. But, when the series was reprinted in the S.O.L. readers of those Wartime pocket libraries would have searched in vain in their 1940 Holiday Annual, for in the stories only the date of the annual was changed; the sub-editor did not take the trouble to look through the 1940 issue of the famous annual to make sure that his eager young readers (or Inspector Grimes) would be able to solve from its text the secret message!

There it is then, the Hiking Series in the English countryside of Charles Hamilton - not too hot and with a splash of rain - with plenty of humour and adventure. As we sit close to our Christmas fire reading our Collectors' Digest Annual we can but hope that our next summer holiday will be half as good as that enjoyed by Harry Wharton and Co.



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WANTED, THE FRIAR'S CLUB is open to all interested Collectors to become members. We have a large programme to complete, with many features. There is an excellent journal (The Friar's Chronicles) with meetings, adventure trips etc. If you would like to join, please contact: Brian Simmonds, (Hon. Sec.), 4 Nutfield Road, London, NW2 7EB. Sub £4.50 p.a.

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Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to Madam Editor, Eric, Chris, Norman, Laurie, Les, Bill, Mac, and all Hobbiphiles everywhere. Still trying to find C.D. Annuals 1946, 1947, 1948, 1953, 1955. Can anyone help?

JOHN BRIDGWATER

5A Saulfland Place, Highcliffe, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 4QP.

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Seasons Greetings to all O.B.B.C. members and special thanks to: BILL BRADFORD.

LARRY MORLEY.

=====

Christmas Greetings to our Editor and Eric Fayne. Also to C.D. Readers everywhere from:

NEIL LAMBERT

=====



Comics and story papers had a special fascination for me during my school days in the 1950s. I was an only child with elderly parents, who, although basically very kind, had some very old fashioned ideas -- comics were very definitely forbidden! In consequence these became a sort of 'forbidden fruit' to me. With the assistance of sympathetic relatives, neighbours and classmates, I obtained access to a wide selection, including many boys' papers. Little did my parents know the ruses of which their carefully brought up daughter was capable. Later I formed a friendship with the local newspaper boy; he saw to it that I received School Friend and Girl each week, together with the Schoolgirl's Own Library each month, sometimes with other material as well. At the time I was led to believe that these magazines were surplus and shop soiled items. In fact he paid for some of them out of his own pocket, but I didn't learn this until many years later.

During the early 1950s, School Friend was undoubtedly the most popular girl's weekly, and the adventures of the Secret Society known as the Silent Three were its most popular feature. They still live in memory. Ask any middle-aged woman about her childhood reading, and the Silent Three will be among the first names that come to mind. In recent months I have built up a collection of the old weeklies and annuals; these give pleasure, not only to myself and my contemporaries, but also to my daughters, nieces, and other present day girls. My 12 year old daughter still enjoys books such as Enid Blyton's Mallory Towers and Famous Five Series, so her interest in 'What Mum used to read' is understandable. However, my 14 year old step-daughter is equally interested, and she is not 'bookish'. She enjoys servicing cars and motor cycles, and helping to restore old railway locomotives -- shades of 'George' from the Famous Five, though I think that she has far more in common with 'Alf Tupper' from the Rover.

The Silent Three also enjoyed some popularity with boys during my school days, certainly most newspaper boys read the cover stories of School Friend while making their rounds, and the Silent Three (together with Dilly Dreem) are the characters which boys remember. Over the years where the smooth running of factory or office premises have been disrupted by a strident female (shades of Cynthia Drew, Miriam Porter, etc), I have heard mutters to the effect that 'the Silent Three should have sorted that b\*\*\*h out long ago!'

What are the reasons for the popularity of the Silent Three, Betty, Joan and Peggy, who still give pleasure after nearly 40 years. I never saw the first copy of School Friend back in 1950, but I can remember the thrill many years later when I examined a museum copy.

The excellent illustrations by Evelyn Flinders were an obvious factor. There was something cheerful about the front page of School Friend each week. More important were the warmth and utter decency of the three main characters. Betty, Joan and Peggy were such close friends. In one of the stories Peggy has been 'nabbed' and placed under lock and key, Joan is fighting back the tears while Betty does her best to comfort her. I had difficulty in making friends at school, and the knowledge that somewhere in the world outside there could be real friends was very reassuring. Although I attended an excellent school and obtained decent exam results, I loathed the place and was very glad when I left. Disregarding the secret society element for a moment, the schools that our three friends attended always seemed such happy places. Another factor was that the Silent Three were NOT infallible, they made mistakes, and they had their weak points -- Joan's fear of heights comes to mind. This made them more believable and and perhaps more acceptable. Finally

there was the escapist element. Possibly as a result of my home background, I was a very straight-laced and serious-minded girl (it took me some time to get used to seeing girls in jeans and other casual clothes), the Silent Three in their robes and hoods were to me completely different, something completely new in characterization.

I ceased to read School Friend regularly in 1960 when I was 16. It was never the same after the Silent Three were removed from the front cover, and, even before this, the atmosphere of the magazine had started to change. I sometimes read the odd copy in later years when the opportunity arose, but it was no longer the same, despite having our three friends on two of the inside pages. During the early 1960s some of Betty's, Joan's and Peggy's earlier adventures were republished in the Schoolgirl's Picture Library. I enjoyed reading the old stories again, and only wished I had retained these little booklets.

There were lots of other secret societies in schoolgirl fiction at this time; the pages of Schoolgirls' Own Library seemed crammed with them, but they never had the same appeal as the Silent Three. I do not think this was anything to do with the different style of presentation, one of the best Silent Three epics appeared in School Friend in 1954 in WRITTEN as opposed to picture - strip form, I enjoyed this particular story set in the Scottish Highlands just as much as the picture strip version.

There was one other secret society story which did catch my imagination. The first issue of the Schoolgirls' Picture Library in 1957 featured the SECRET AVENGERS. This was a beautifully drawn comic booklet, the story was very similar to the Silent Three's first adventure, where a girl who has been wrongfully expelled returns secretly to clear her own name and expose a bullying prefect. The girls in this story even resemble the Silent Three physically, the two younger girls being rather like Betty and Joan with their fair hair, while the older girl could be Peggy's elder sister. I have always regarded the Secret Avengers very much as 'cousins' of the Silent Three.

Although the Schoolgirls' Picture Library titles were widely advertised when first published, they were unobtainable in the town where I lived. Once again our newspaper boy came to my rescue, and, after a lot of trouble, obtained a copy for me. I enjoyed this story and kept it among my possessions for some years; regrettably it went the way of most childhood treasures. I maintained contact with the paper boy for some years. He was not my boy friend in the accepted sense of the word, more a 'boy chum' as mentioned in the older story papers. After we had completed our education we lost touch with each other.

We now move on some twenty years. By this time I was working in the Midlands. I had had an unsuccessful marriage and although this had been a very civilized affair compared to many, I was in no particular hurry to try marriage again. I had been attending a course in the North of England, I was travelling home with the intention of collecting my daughter who had been staying with relatives in the West Riding. I had some time to kill so I broke my journey at the pleasant town of Ripon. The place was packed out, it being market day, so I made my way to Fountains Abbey, which is only a few miles away, and which I had not visited for many years. One of the features of the abbey ruins is a long vaulted chamber called the 'cellarium'; it bears a striking resemblance to the crypt at St. Kit's School - see the front page of School Friend No. 1. While in this chamber I got into conversation with a gentleman of about my own age, whom I did not recognize. It was only later that I realised that it was my friend the newspaper boy from some 25 years earlier. By this time he was a widower, and a few months later I married him. He too had visited Fountains purely by chance that day.

Consider that we had become acquainted because of the Silent Three and the Secret Avengers, and that we met again many years later at a location which greatly resembled the crypt at St. Kit's. Who says that our lives aren't governed by a destiny of some kind?

### Some final comments

The Silent Three continued in School Friend right to the very end in 1965. After Miss Flinders ceased to draw them, there was a coloured cover story in 1959, and from 1960 onwards an almost constant stream of stories on the inside pages. I suspect that these were drawn by Peter Kay who used to work for Girl, Betty

and Peggy are almost twin sisters of Wendy and Jinx, and Joan looks like a younger sister of Susan of St. Bride's, (the black and white versions, that is). The very last story was a reprint of the WRITTEN Highland adventure from 1954; the illustrations had been revised, and the girls looked quite interesting in mini skirts.

The adventures continued in School Friend Annual well into the 1970s, in written form. The atmosphere wasn't the same, but the stories compared well with the remaining contents of these books.

Regarding the smart appearance of the girls, I always have a quiet laugh at the very first (St. Kit's) story. The girls are wearing blue and white striped blouses, just like the shirts worn by the inmates of H.M. Prisons. I wonder if the post-war clothing shortage had caused the bursar at St. Kit's to obtain a batch of blouses from Holloway or some other 'government hotel'.

With regard to all the other secret societies mentioned in Mary Cadogan's article in 'Golden Fun' during the 1970s, perhaps I can add one more. During one of my forays into second-hand bookshops (my husband describes these as a combination of a Viking raid, and Guderian crossing the Meuse in May, 1940), I came across a pre-war School Friend Annual (1932 I think). In the course of a lengthy school story, brief mention was made of the 'Mystic Three', I couldn't deduce whether these were good girls or crooks, they wore the usual long robes, but with hoods which completely covered the face, with just two eye slits, rather different from the usual hoods and masks in which girl members of secret societies garbed themselves. As usual money was short, so I didn't buy the book, but the date was rather earlier than most secret societies.

**Editor's Note:**

Girl readers must have been particularly attracted to fictional secret societies. The Cliff House juniors had to form one to right various wrongs sometime in the 1930s, and probably one of the first of these bands of hooded helpers was The Silent Six, whose exploits began in the Schoolgirls' Weekly in 1932. They were created by J.W. Bobin, in the pen-name of 'Gertrude Nelson'. (He was also, of course, 'Adelie Ascott', the originator of the celebrated girl detective Valerie Drew, and he wrote stories for the Sexton Blake Saga.)



"Listen!" Shirley exclaimed. The members of the Silent Six listened, and paled beneath their cowls. "The fire-bell!" someone whispered. "The school's on fire!"



The Silent Three; an illustration by Evelyn Flinders for the *School Friend*, 1950

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Good Wishes From

MAURICE KING

27 CELTIC CRESCENT, DORCHESTER, DT1 2TG.

=====

WANTED: Bunter Postwar Hardbacks. Happy Christmas to all Readers.

ROSEMARY KEOGH

78 GREENVALE ROAD, ELTHAM, LONDON, SE9 1PD.

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De Mortus Nil Nisi Bonum. Greyfriars Chums Adventure at Dunkirk.

McCALL

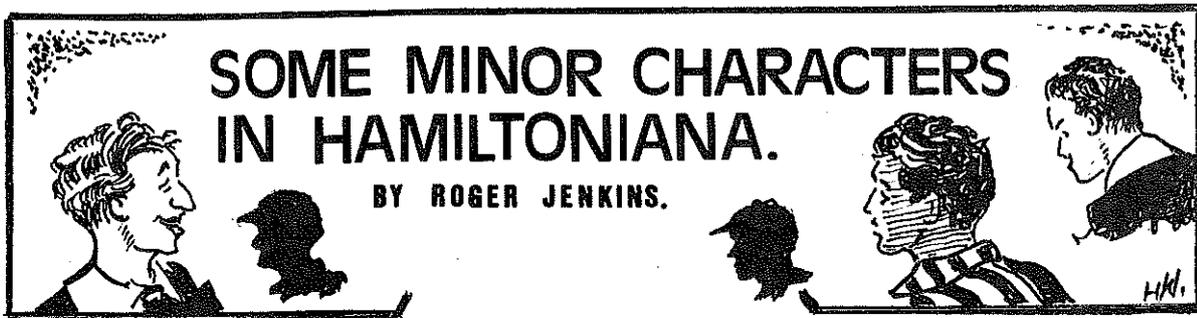
47 The TERRACE, WOKINGHAM, RG11 1BP.

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Best Wishes to all Collectors. Thanks to Eric and Mrs. Cadogan for the C.D. during the year.

R. J. McCABE

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It is difficult to define a minor character. The identities of the leading lights at the three main Hamilton schools, such as Tom Merry, Harry Wharton, and Jimmy Silver, are obvious to all readers; after these juniors there is a second circle of less important characters, such as Skimpole, Wibley, and Peele. After that there are the minor characters, most of whom for a great deal of the time seem to be names with few, if any, distinguishing marks to their characters, though they have indeed enjoyed a starring role in one or two stories over the years. Finally, there are characters who were never more than mere names all the time. I can clearly recall my visit to Charles Hamilton all those years ago; he was in some indignation because a correspondent had asked him to feature Pratt of the New House in a post-war St. Jim's story. "Pratt!" he exclaimed in tones of exasperation. Clearly, Pratt does not fulfil the role of even a minor character.

Eric Fayne has pointed out that new boys tended to remain at St. Jim's to clutter up the scene whereas they often left the school at the end of a Greyfriars story. At St. Jim's some new boys were referred to continually after their arrival, like Wildrake, and they cannot be considered as minor characters, and neither can the temporary inhabitants of Greyfriars. Perhaps the scope of this article can be best illustrated from examples.

Alonzo Todd was dropped from the Greyfriars stories because it was thought that the readers had become tired of such a guileless simpleton. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to note the arrival of Algernon Blenkinsop in Gem 331. He was the fourteenth child of the Rev. Rabbits Blenkinsop of Huckleberry Heath, and Miss Priscilla Fawcett recommended him to the care of Tom Merry, whom Algernon called "Thomas". His father believed in missionary work, and Algy arrived with a pocketful of tracts: he left one on Mr. Linton's desk entitled "Be Patient: or the Cost of an Angry Word". He was duped by Levison and the Grammarians, who even abstracted his clothes when he was bathing and left a girl's clothes instead. A little of Algernon went a long way, and though he had the same potential as Alonzo he was never used so frequently.

Even more surprising was the introduction some time later of Clarence Cuffy into the Rookwood saga. He came from Gander's Green and was quite simple-minded. It was Tommy Dodd to whom he referred as "Dear Thomas", and it was Tommy Dodd's uncle in Schoolboys' Own 202 who wished that his old friend's son would join the caravanners. Jimmy Silver advised Clarence Cuffy that when he joined the party led by Tommy Dodd he should do good by stealth: mustard would prevent the milk from going sour, ammoniated quinine would enhance the flavour of the stew, and pepper in the beds would kill microbes. Even more amusing was the occasion in Schoolboys' Own 368 when Tommy Dodd boasted that the Moderns would beat the Classicals with Clarence Cuffy in goal, but Cuffy's response did surprise him:

"To games of a more strenuous, indeed rough, character, I have given little attention", said Cuffy. "To be quite frank, I have rather considered them beneath my intellectual powers. Projecting a ball across a field by the impact of a foot does not appear to me, to be a form of activity adequate to my mental gifts."

Algernon Blenkinsop was as simple as Clarence Cuffy, but the reader tended to laugh at Algy, whereas it was possible to laugh with Cuffy simply because Clarence appeared to have a guardian angel somewhere who protected him from most of the trouble his simpleness caused.

A less eccentric minor character was Wingate minor in the Magnet. When he arrived in Magnet 265 he was spoilt and arrogant, expecting his elder brother to provide him with all the privileges of a sixth-former, an attitude which antagonised Tubb & Co. in the Third Form (whose form-master, incidentally, was Mr. Twigg). When he was ragged he complained to Loder who was only too pleased to cane those responsible, not to oblige Jack Wingate but to make George Wingate's position more difficult. In Magnet 269 there were further developments, and eventually it seemed that Jack Wingate had learned how to behave, but, of course it was too good to be true, and his younger brother remained George Wingate's Achilles' heel, someone who might always compromise his position as Captain of Greyfriars.

St. Jim's over the years had a number of juniors whose speech and education left much to be desired. The cockney schoolboy surprised a number of people when he spoke:

"You've 'eard of 'Armond's 'Igh-class 'Ats, sir, surely?"

When Hammond regretted having said this to the vicar, D'Arcy told him that if he were ashamed of his father's hats, he ought to be ashamed of himself. Hammond was featured from time to time after his initial arrival, and Gem 367 "The Secret of the Towers" was one such occasion. Cousin Ethel's brother, Captain Cleveland, had been wounded at the front, and had taken The Towers, a local mansion, which the juniors had permission to attend to participate in the house-warming. Captain Cleveland mysteriously disappeared, and it was Hammond who pointed out the significance of a vital clue. Hammond originally featured as a curiosity and it was obvious that his part in future stories was limited, since the surprise aroused by his cockney accent could not be repeated indefinitely.

Bolsover minor, who was found in the slums of London, was in a way the Joe Frayne of Greyfriars, though in Hubert Bolsover's case there was a family connection that Joe Frayne never possessed. Over the years, young Bolsover's cockney accent disappeared, and in 1927 he seemed like any other Third-former. "Bolsover's Brother" in Magnet 1011 was a fine character study of the two brothers and their tangled relationship with one another, in a story built on de Courcy's quixotic generosity and Mr. Wiggins' absent-mindedness. Bolsover minor's early life became less important than his family connections, but Charles Hamilton made little use of the Third Form after this tale, though Bolsover minor, the burly Tubb, the petulant Jack Wingate, and the aristocratic Percival Spencer Paget were all promising characters - but, then, the Hamilton schools were littered with promising characters who were hardly ever used.

Perhaps Charles Hamilton decided that the Middle School at Greyfriars deserved a similar character. At any rate in Magnet 471 Sir Jimmy Vivian arrived. He was an orphan and a distant relative of Lord Mauleverer's. His early days were spent on the London streets selling winkles and shrimps, and his speech was worse than Hammond's. In addition, his table manners were appalling, and the Remove sycophants lost interest in him when they discovered that no money was attached to the baronetcy - indeed, the whole idea of a waif inheriting a title was something of a black joke - but Vivian had a good deal of liveliness and was not at all malicious. He came into prominence again in the usual manner of such characters when someone from the past approached him in Magnet 483 and got him to mind a parcel that turned out to be something quite unexpected. In 491 another figure from the past turned up, this time more honest than the last one, but this particular mine was soon worked out, and Vivian fell into the background.

Grundy of St. Jim's was featured quite often, but his bull-at-a-gate tactics and his hectoring attitude towards his henchmen Wilkins and Gunn made him both unattractive and also an unmitigated nuisance in the stories. Peter Cuthbert Gunner of Rookwood, however, was more of a lonely figure, despite his study-mate Dickinson minor. His turbulent yet naive character seemed to fit in at Rookwood so that a truly comic effect was created, which was never better exemplified than in Schoolboys' Own 380, when a tramp called William Henry Dalton persuaded him that Mr. Dalton was his brother, and Gunner tipped him to keep away from Rookwood. Of course, Gunner could never keep a secret, and soon everyone except Mr. Dalton knew that the Fourth Form-master had a seedy relative. In one sense, Rookwood was closer to Greyfriars than to St. Jim's in that a sense of comedy

was allowed a free rein from time to time, and Gunner provided Owen Conquest with rich scope. On the other hand, Lovell was another version of Gunner - the boy who was sure he knew best - and so Gunner was not over-used in the way that Grundy seemed to be in the Gems of the nineteen-twenties.

At times, one of the less attractive minor characters would be featured strongly. Sidney James Snoop, probably the most weak-willed member of Study 11, was given star billing on a few occasions. His father was a gaol-bird, and was guilty of the crime of which he was convicted (relatives of more attractive characters usually were unjustly suspected) and during the first world war he joined up and earned the King's Pardon, but Snoop's fees at Greyfriars were paid by his uncle, Mr. Huggins, whose business interests took him to Canada. As late as Magnet 1135 his uncle paid him an unexpected visit when he was smoking and gambling with Skinner, Stott, and Angel. It was a fine display of character in Study 11, with the selfish vindictive Skinner contrasted with the slow-witted Stott, sometimes at odds with each other and sometimes leagued together against Snoop. Mr. Huggins had decided to remove his nephew from Greyfriars but an unexpected occurrence saved Snoop at the end.

When Charles Hamilton wanted an ebullient, mischievous character to place on the St. Jim's stage, he introduced Mulvaney minor in Gem 312 "Making Things Hum". Apparently there was a Mulvaney major in the Sixth Form (probably never heard of before) and he very much deprecated the arrival of his younger brother. There were two aspects to Mulvaney minor: one was his physical prowess that ensured that when Gore bullied him he could stand up to him, or when Levison played a trick on him he could force Levison to put the matter right; and the other was a sense of mischief as when he used a safety pin to attach Mr. Linton's gown to Crooke's jacket. There was undoubtedly some mileage in Mulvaney minor, but a story containing a series of practical jokes could not appear all that often.



Skinner & Co. were playing cards when suddenly a trampling of footsteps was heard along the path. "Hallo, hallo!" came a cheery voice. Snoop started so suddenly that the cards dropped from his hand and scattered over the log. "Oh, it's all right!" said Skinner, in relief, as Harry Wharton & Co. came into view. "It's only that Remove crew!"

Another minor character who was also Irish was Micky Desmond at Greyfriars. In Magnet 425 "Micky Desmond's Luck" he thought he had a two-cent Sandwich Islands stamp among a collection his uncle had sent him, and Walker of the Sixth, a reputedly knowledgeable philatelist, assured him it was worth a thousand pounds. Micky spent a long time planning how the money was to be spent, but there was the initial difficulty of trying to sell it, and quite a number of people had felonious designs on that little scrap of paper. Micky Desmond was also supportive to Dick Rake, another minor character when his cousin was suspected of robbing

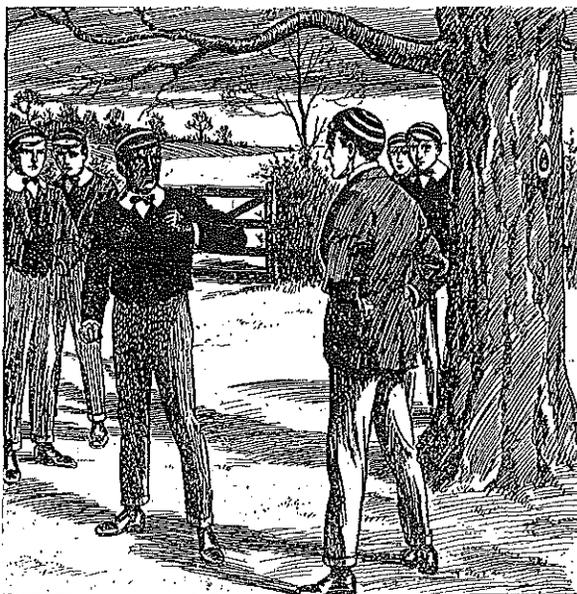
a bank in Magnet 445, a drama that was played out against a background of cricket rivalry.

One of the strangest characters at St. Jim's was the Indian Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, who was lord of a thousand elephants and ten thousand spears. He was drawn in a less subtle manner than Hurree Singh (or even da Costa) at Greyfriars. He seemed proud and passionate, and would walk about talking to himself and gesticulating. He originally sought the death of Tom Merry because his uncle had annexed Bundelpore to the British crown. When Tom Merry saved his life, that feud was over, but it was Figgins with his open good-nature who had the most influence with Koumi Rao, who was incidentally a New House junior. In Gem 373 "Loyal and True", the war added a new dimension to the situation, when someone started suggesting to Koumi Rao that with German aid Bundelpore could be freed from British rule. All Figgins could say was

"Under British rule, you know, you don't have such whacking big famines, and you aint allowed to cut one another's throats and to burn widows. You ought really to be glad of it, you know."

Much as Koumi Rao respected Figgins, it was not Figgins' arguments but the Jam's own experience with a German spy that changed his mind. Koumi Rao was an under-used character but of course his smouldering resentment of British rule was a theme that could be used only very infrequently. Charles Hamilton must have realised the extremely limited use he could make of a character whose viewpoint was tied to a single subject, for he never made the same mistake with a new character again.

The profusion of distinctive characters at the three schools is clear evidence of Charles Hamilton's astonishing capacity to populate his schools with such a wide variety of recognisable human beings, who are not merely types but indentifiable people. Of course, the minor characters are only of peripheral interest and some of these, who tended towards eccentricity in some form or other, obviously had only limited value to their creator, but among the comic characters there was a rich vein to be tapped from time to time, and the use of these minor characters provided the regular reader with particular satisfaction. In appraising the work of a much earlier author, Dryden exclaimed, "Here is God's plenty!" In view of Charles Hamilton's range of perfectly realised characters, it would not be wholly inappropriate to apply this commendation to him as well. Times change, customs change, but human nature remains constant, and if Hamilton's work is to achieve any sort of immortality, characterisation will be one of the important factors that will help him to climb that pedestal. But this will be a judgement to be made by future generations.



"Take your hand from my shoulder, you dog!" said Koumi Rao, in a low, passionate voice, his white teeth gleaming between his dusky lips. Figgins glared at him. He had reason to glare. For a prefect of the Sixth to be addressed as a dog by a Jag in the fourth form was a little too much. "Why, you cheeky powdy-headed gasped Koumi. (See Chapter 1.)"

A FURTHER STORY FROM FRANK RICHARDS

By The Rev. J. P. H. Hobson

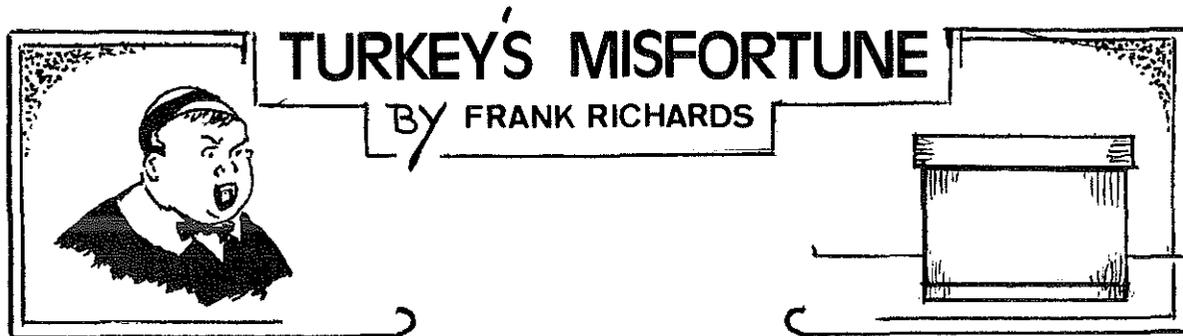
At the end of my article in the 1986 C.D. Annual on "My correspondence with Frank Richards" there appeared the first story "No Tuck for Turkey", which he wrote for me.

I published this in the 1953 Special Coronation edition of the magazine of the school of which I was Headmaster.

On receiving a copy of the magazine Frank Richards wrote to me on April 6th, "I like very much the way it is printed: it is a pleasure to read such beautifully clear type. I am glad to hear the boys liked the little Carcroft story." I was encouraged by this letter to behave like Oliver Twist and ask for more!

He agreed and wrote to me in August 1954 enclosing the typescript of "Turkey's Misfortune". It was in this letter that he wrote rather sadly: "To tell the truth, I am not just now quite so fit on I was this time last year --- and the years do accumulate".

They do indeed!! Once again there is no tuck for Turkey in "Turkey's Misfortune".



"PUT them in this box!"

"And lock it!"

"Safe there, even from Turkey!"

Turkey Tuck could not help grinning, as he listened to those remarks. Harry Compton, Bob Drake, and Dick Lee, in the corner study at Carcroft, were speaking with the study door half-open. Every word was audible in the passage, where the fat Turkey lurked and listened. The Carcroft Co. were well aware of Turkey's nefarious manners and customs. They knew that he would listen at doors, and had indeed sometimes booted him for the same. They knew that no fellow's tuck was safe from his fat hands. Yet they seemed to have no suspicion, as they talked in their study, that Turkey was in the offing: or that his gooseberry eyes had watched them conveying parcels to the study.

"Cram it in," came Harry Compton's voice.

"Hardly room for the lot, by gum!" said Bob.

"Must get it all in", said Lee, "Leave anything out, and it will do

the vanishing trick while we're gone. You know Turkey!"

Turkey suppressed a fat chuckle.

He heard a sound of packing and cramming from the study. Then the sound of the lid of a box, closed with some difficulty. And then the click of a key, as the box was locked.

"Safe now!" said Bob Drake. "If that fat villain comes nosing round, before we come back, he will nose into the cupboard. Not likely to think that there's tuck in that old box."

Turkey Tuck retreated rapidly at that point. He did not want the chums of the Fourth to see him on the spot when they came out of their study. He was standing at the passage window, gazing out at the pigeons in the quad, his plump back to them, when they came along to the stairs and went down. If they glanced at him, he did not see it, having of course no eyes in the back of his head. If they grinned, he remained in ignorance of that also. He waited at the window till they were gone, and did not turn his fat head till their footsteps died away down the

staircase.

Then he revolved upon his axis. He gave one squint over the banisters, to make assurance doubly sure that the Co. were quite gone. Then he shot up the passage to the corner study.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Turkey, as he rolled into that study. Under the table stood a wooden box. Turkey might not have noticed it there, and certainly would never have guessed that it contained comestibles, but for what he had overheard. Now he knew!

He stopped, and dragged the box out from under the table. It was heavy, and Turkey was no athlete. Meals between meals had developed Turkey's circumference, but not his muscles: and dodging games-practice did not make for fitness. He panted as he dragged at that heavy box.

It was no wonder that it was heavy. The wood was rather thick, in the first place: and then, it was, as Turkey knew, crammed to the very brim. The contents of three parcels had been packed into it. Still, the weight surprised him a little. Jars of jam, probably, tins of pineapple and apricots and that kind of weighty thing, Turkey concluded. It looked as if the Carcroft Co. had planned to stand a very extensive spread, -- perhaps asking a dozen fellows. If so, a dozen fellows were going to be disappointed. It is sad to relate that Turkey had not the slightest scruple about annexing that munificent supply of tuck. He ought to have had. But he hadn't! All Turkey was thinking about was getting that box open, and transferring the contents to the inner circle of his circumference.

He could not deal with the lock. His eyes strayed to the study poker. But he realised that banging that box open with a poker would draw more attention to the spot than was convenient. Also, he did not know how long Harry Compton and Co. would be gone, or how soon they might return. Obviously, there was only one thing for Turkey to do, --get that box away to a safer quarter, and get it open at his leisure.

He grasped it and heaved it up.

"Oh, haddocks!" gasped Turkey, as he heaved.

The weight was tremendous. He staggered under it. For the first time in his fat life, Turkey would have been better satisfied with a smaller supply. But it was all or nothing: and he staggered out of the corner study with that heavy box on his shoulder, panting for breath.

He perspired up the passage with his burden. He dared not halt at his own study: they might look for him there. He tottered on to the box-room stair. How he got that heavy box up the stair, even with resting it on step after step, he hardly knew. He was streaming with perspiration by the time he reached the landing above, where he sat on the box for a much-needed rest, and pumped in breath. For full five minutes he was incapable of another effort. But at long last, he rose, and bent himself to the task again: and with an almost expiring effort heaved the box into the box-room.

"Ooooh!" gasped Turkey. He mopped his brow with his handkerchief. He could not help feeling that, immense as was the quantity of tuck in that box, he had earned it.

However, there it was at last, safe in a secluded retreat. Nobody was likely to hear banging from the box-room: and Turkey had to bang hard and often, with a billet of wood, before the lock yielded. But the lid was open at last: and Turkey threw it back, and prepared to enjoy the fruit of his long labours. And then--!

Then, as the poet has remarked, a change came o'er the spirit of his dream!

"Oh!" gasped Turkey.

He stared into the box.

He goggled into it.

It was hard for Turkey to believe his gooseberry eyes, as he stared and goggled at a solid mass of bricks and half-bricks, which packed that box to capacity.

"Oh haddocks!" gurgled Turkey.

He had taken it for granted that the parcels he had seen the

Co. convey into the corner study contained tuck. What else should they contain? Why, in the name of wonder, should they carry in parcels of bricks and half-bricks and lock them up in that box? It was quite inexplicable: until it dawned on Turkey's fat brain that they had known, all the while, that he was listening outside the study, and that the whole thing was a leg-pull, planned for his especial benefit!

Turkey gazed at that box of bricks and half-bricks, with feelings that could not be expressed in words. He had

laboured and perspired and almost collapsed under that terrific weight, --for this! Turkey could eat almost anything: but bricks and half-bricks were beyond even Turkey. There was no tuck for Turkey. There was only an ache in all his fat limbs, in an ocean of perspiration. Words failed him. He just groaned.

When Harry Compton and Co. saw Turkey again, they smiled. But Turkey did not smile. Turkey seemed to be understudying that ancient monarch who never smiled again!

THE END

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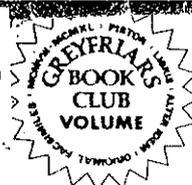
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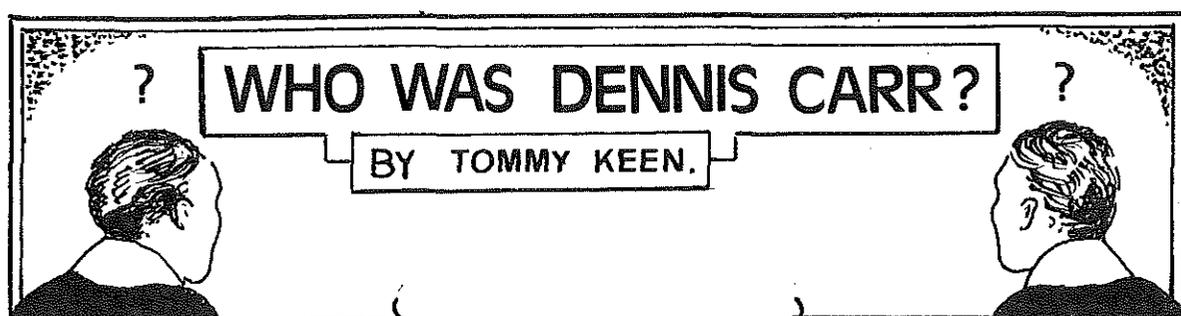
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In the MAGNET COMPANION '77 (as in the first edition of this very informative volume) against No. 718, 'The Slacker's Spasm', is the name Dennis Carr. However, when reading this story (republished in the Howard Baker Volume No. 99), one finds that Lord Mauleverer is the leading character, although the following occurs on page 13: "My only Aunt Jane" ejaculated Dennis Carr. "Look at this, you chaps!" And that rather unimportant reference was all that there was in MAGNET No. 718 regarding this unknown character.

So how did he arrive at Greyfriars? Had he been introduced in an earlier story, with his name unmentioned in the COMPANION? I was curious, as I knew I had vaguely heard the name mentioned somewhere, maybe in the GREYFRIARS HERALD, or in one of my numerous scrapbooks. There I found a clue. Wading through these, I discovered a POPULAR cover of 1919, with the wording underneath the picture: 'Dennis Carr's Gallant Rescue!'.

Now, amongst the many notes I have made during the past few years, I find that MAGNET No. 587 of 1919 comments 'Entirely new and original stories are to begin in the POPULAR by Frank Richards, Martin Clifford and Owen Conquest, NOT just repeats as before'. One can smile now, knowing that at that period in the paper few stories were being published by the original author. However, I have now traced the arrival of this elusive character, in POPULAR (New Series No. 32). His arrival at the gates is depicted by C.H. Chapman showing Carr as very nonchalant, with no luggage, and with his hands in his pockets (a favourite pose of Mr. Chapman's). But anger immediately takes over. There is Bolsover of the Remove giving Billy Bunter a bashing. "Cad, Bully! Stand aside!" These are the first words of Dennis Carr on his first day at Greyfriars.

Immediately he rushes at Bolsover, and soon a heavy scrap is in progress, with a crowd gathering, including Harry Wharton & Co. But Dennis, although showing he is no coward by trying to thrash Bolsover, disgusts the crowd of watching juniors by suddenly kicking him. Wharton & Co. are contemptuous. There is instant dislike between Carr and the Captain of the Remove, and the only boy to feel any sympathy for Carr is Mark Linley.

Mr. Quelch is not amused by Carr's appearance; nobody wants him as a study-mate, but eventually he joins Lord Mauleverer and Jimmy Vivian in Study No. 12. There is no mention of Piet Delarey, although at this time, according to J.N. Pentelow, he was a member of this Study. Carr was evidently a problem boy. He had already been expelled from one school (Milvern), a fact of which Mr. Quelch was well aware. The one person of whom Dennis stood in fear was his father, an Education Officer. Like most of the doubtful characters who arrive at Greyfriars, Carr is an excellent cricketer, but to the horror of Harry Wharton & Co. he complains a lot to Quelch. This is considered by our heroes as sneaking, an absolutely unpardonable offence. Dennis has to run the gauntlet in the dormitory, and yells at Wharton, "I hate you, I hate you".

Tragedy intervenes. Dennis receives a telegram, 'Your Mother is dying - come at once'. He rushes home, but his Mother has already died. He returns to Greyfriars, telling nobody of his tragic loss (although surely Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch must have known). He becomes involved with Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe, and is therefore on the downward path. He loses money at cards, and is soon owing Pon the sum of £10. Carr tells Mark Linley of his troubles, and then foolishly steals £10 from Wharton's desk to pay Pon. Three titles here tell the whole story, "The Path of Dishonour", "Dennis Carr's Folly", and "Mark Linley's Sacrifice", for Mark, to save Dennis from being expelled, confesses to stealing the

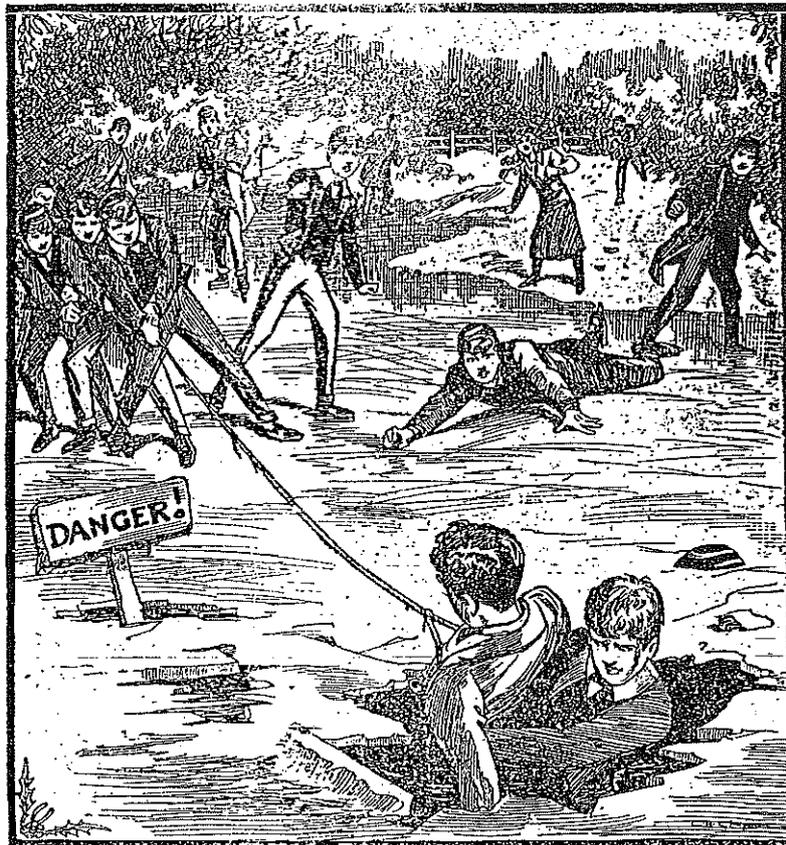
money. Mark is therefore expelled, and Dennis gives way to grief.

There is so much more, but I must cut it short. Harry Wharton & Co. guess that Linley is shielding Dennis, but Mark has gone, and Carr is still playing the 'blade'. He is to be expelled for breaking bounds, but escapes from the punishment room into one of those wild, stormy nights which cropped up around Greyfriars whenever drama was to be enacted. Wharton & Co. help in the search for him, and, in a tussle with Bolsover right on the edge of the cliffs, Wharton goes over (not an unusual happening in those far off days). Carr arrives on the scene, and with the help of a frail rope is lowered by Bob Cherry and the other juniors. Wharton is brought up to safety, but Dennis crashes to the shore below.

The storm then subsides as if by magic, and Carr is found at the bottom of the cliffs ...quite safe. Taken back to Greyfriars, he confesses to the Head that he stole the money, so Mark Linley is recalled. Dennis is not expelled, but goes to London to convalesce, staying with his father. Therefore au revoir, but not goodbye.

POPULAR NO. 46 is entitled "Dennis Carr's Return", and back he comes. He had left Greyfriars a spoilt and wayward boy, but returns to a 'clean and healthy existence'. He finds that Wharton is no longer Captain of the Remove (through an upset with Mr. Quelch), and decides to stand as a candidate. Conveniently, he is able to be a hero again, discovering Mr. Prout unconscious on the railway track, with an express train fast approaching. In the nick of time, Prout is dragged clear. This helps Carr's chances in the election, and he is voted captain. Wharton now loathes him, and there is a terrific fight in the quad. Carr wins!

Now it is winter, with the River Sark frozen. Dennis appears to be the best skater on the ice, where there is quite a party - Greyfriars, Highcliffe and Phyllis Howell of Cliff House. At a spot marked 'Danger', Ponsonby crashes through the ice (why do all the Hamiltonian characters ignore those 'Danger' warnings?), but of course he is rescued by the intrepid Dennis (his third rescue act since he first arrived at Greyfriars. Not at all bad!).



DENNIS CARR'S GALLANT RESCUE!

Christmas is almost due, and Carr goes to London to spend the holiday with his father. However, he is now on friendly terms with Wharton. Many rows occur between Dennis and his father, and the boy returns to Greyfriars bitterly resentful. He is still Captain of the Remove, but this honour is soon to be curtailed. More tragedy. Now his father dies! Oh dear, both parents gone in such a short space of time, and, an added catastrophe, his father turns out to have been absolutely broke. Dennis has to leave Greyfriars to seek work, and goes to London. In an office where he obtains a job, he is soon, though another's scheming, branded a thief, but Mark Linley arrives from Greyfriars, and discovers the real culprit. Happily Dennis then discovers a rich Uncle Dick in London, who becomes his guardian, and sends him back to Greyfriars where Wharton is now Captain of the Remove again.

One more act of bravery must be mentioned before I bring this part of the Dennis Carr saga to a close. Peter Hazeldene, through worry over his misdeeds, has taken to sleep walking. He leaves the dormitory, and his movements disturb Dennis Carr, who awakens Wharton & Co. They all go in search of Hazel. He is spotted walking along the edge of the gymnasium roof (I am not quite sure how he managed to get there), but Dennis, using two ladders tied together, joins Hazel on the roof, and stays with him until the local Fire Brigade arrives. Dennis, again, acclaimed a hero!

More temptations with Pon, more trouble with Wharton, then Hazel in trouble again, so Dennis takes part in a Boxing Contest at Aldershot hoping to win £20, the amount that Hazel needs. Dennis wins!

At the end of 1920, Dennis was still at Greyfriars. For nearly seventy issues, he had been (with a few exceptions) the leading character. Sometime I will endeavour to discover how long he continued to feature in the POPULAR stories. Personally, I liked the character but then, I liked George Samways, his particular author, Pathos and heroics abounded, but this was 1919/20, and surely, as we must all know by now, Friardale and the nearby locality must have been amongst the most dangerous spots in the country, with characters forever falling in the Sark, tumbling over the cliffs, crashing through the ice and almost stopping trains. And even when all these events were dealt with, there was always THAT charging bull!

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Though a small army of authors chronicled the adventures of Sexton Blake, it was the work of a relative handful that really established him as a convincing and lasting character. Writers like Norman Goddard, the two Graydons, E.W. Alais, G.H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, Anthony Skene and Lewis Jackson were the important creators of the "real" Blake. The most enduring visual image of our favourite detective, however, was undoubtedly the work of one man, Eric Parker. But if Parker was pre-eminent among Blake's illustrators, there was a solid company of predecessors, rivals and stand-ins who cannot be ignored. The pre-1914 era of the UNION JACK, for example, produced two outstanding artists, J.H. Valda and Val Reading. In much more recent times, a number of distinguished illustrators were thrown up by the so-called "new look" period. However, I want to glance at a small selection of the best-known practitioners from Blake's "golden age" - the late 1920s and early 1930s.

H.M. Lewis had actually worked for the UJ in the Valda-Reading era but went on illustrating Blake till the end of the '20s. He was highly competent - for many, indeed, he remained a firm favourite to the end - but it is not difficult to see why Parker had long overshadowed him. The Lewis drawing reproduced here (1) is from a 1928 UJ story with a sci-fic theme about a syndicate of "life stealers", and shows Blake (in moustache disguise) about to have his life literally drained from him! Even 60 years ago, this illustration had a rather dated look and clearly echoed the much earlier period of Lewis's work.

Cecil Glossop was another artist from the older tradition still hard at work in the '30s. The illustrations here (2 and 3) for a 1932 Zenith story called The Rainmaker have a more modern flavour than Lewis's, though their style will seem to many bizarre and unreal. Blake (complete with spats!) is depicted as a thin, almost emaciated figure in the first sketch while in the second he is wearing a check suit more appropriate to a bookmaker. Not the most convincing images of our sleuth. Nevertheless, Glossop's unmistakable style had its attractions - and many devotees.

Illustration 4 by Fred Bennett (for The Hunted Man by Reid Whitley, UJ December 1932) has enormous vigour and surely justifies the opinion of Blake expert Jack Adrian that Eric Parker himself was influenced by Bennett's style. Certainly a far more convincing draughtsman than Glossop, Fred Bennett never, alas, totally won me over as a Blake illustrator. This was, I think, largely because he seemed far more at home with his light-hearted and humorous work. His much earlier drawings for The Happy Company (an inspiration for Priestley's The Good Companions?) in CHUMS delighted almost everyone, including me, but their memory no doubt tended to overlay his more dramatic work. Just the same, two cheers at least for "Blakian" Bennett!

Kenneth Brookes, a highly trained and gifted serious artist, was never quite at ease with his story-paper work, whether for the NELSON LEE or UNION JACK. He always seemed to be searching for a style and the illustration here (5) for Village Vengeance (UJ February 1933) obviously owes something to Eric Parker but without the Master's touch.

An artist from this period with a very distinctive style was G.E. Lang whose drawings for the UJ and DETECTIVE WEEKLY always impressed me. Examples 6 and 7 illustrated Black Traffic, a DW story from 1933 about African slavery and Blake's conflict with the glamorous Mlle. Roxane when she gets involved in this awful trade. The first illustration shows Blake leaving Roxane's yacht after their quarrel and catches something of the drama (dare one even say poignancy?) of the

moment. The second drawing of Roxane in the company of two obvious "baddies" is extremely atmospheric and has great sophistication of style.

Though I always lamented any temporary absence of Parker's work from the Blakian saga, I was usually consoled by Lang's substitution. In fact, occasionally, I actually welcomed it. After all, one tires even of caviar (which is what Parker's work represented for me!). Lang also illustrated the DW's serialisation of Leslie Charteris's *The White Rider* to great effect. Though his work was much more variable in quality than Parker's, it brought a touch of class to the Blakian periodicals.

There were, of course, a number of other noteworthy artists from this period. Arthur Jones, for example (drawing no. 8) who succeeded brilliantly in the pages of the THRILLER, always failed - at least to my mind - when, very occasionally, he drew for the Blakian papers. His style was altogether too sombre. Another THRILLER artist I would like to have seen depict our detective was Ernest Hubbard, the brilliant illustrator of *Raffles* and *The Saint*. So far as I know, he never did.

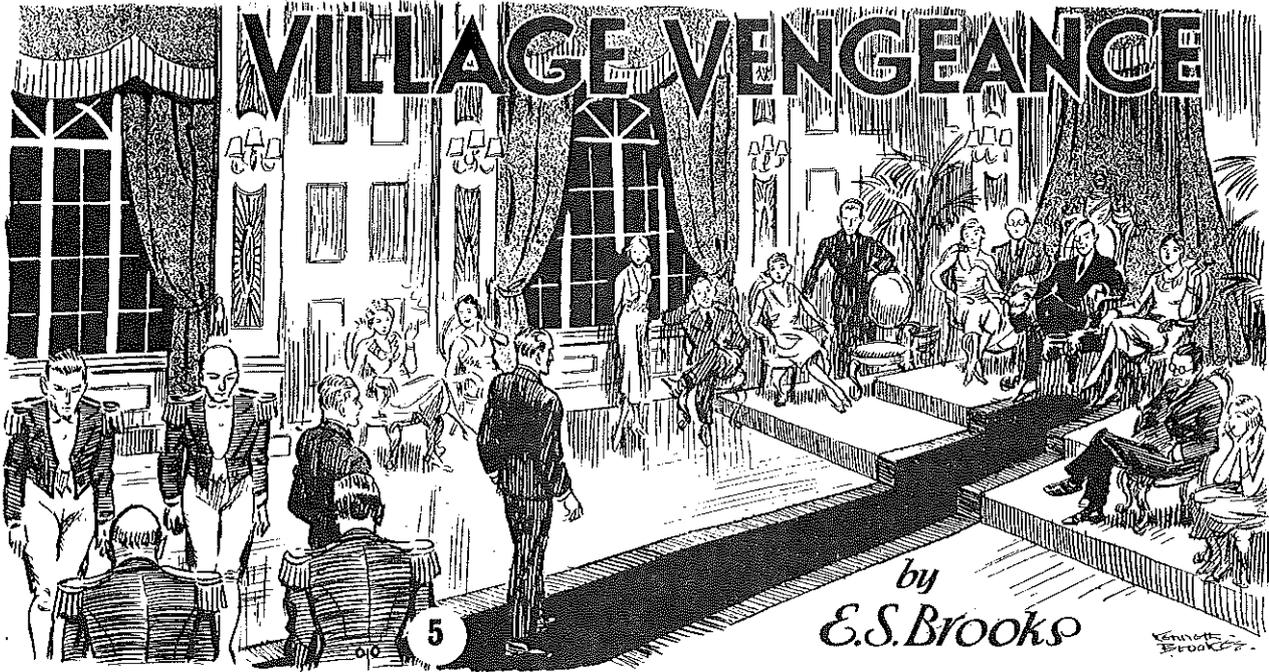
I can't leave this subject without the inclusion of the greatest Blake visualiser of them all. Illustration number 9 is from a December 1932 issue of the UJ. Though Blake is shown only in three-quarter rear view, he is immediately and convincingly recognisable, as are Inspector Coutts and Tinker. But the whole drawing commands our attention. How well it catches the musty, almost sleazy atmosphere of a provincial theatre rehearsing a Christmas pantomime. The stage carpenter on his knees; the puzzled expressions and apprehensive postures of the chorus girls and stage manager as Blake announces that there has been a murder; the solid pillars of the proscenium; the obviously well-worn seating - even the humble cane-back chair on the right of the stage - all make the scene real for us. No other illustrator of the Blakian chronicles brought as much delight as Eric Parker. This fact, however, simply reinforces the tribute we must pay to that group of hardworking and sometimes highly talented artists who, from time to time, had the honour of filling Parker's place.

**(Editor's Note:** Because these pictures have had to be reduced, they may not unfortunately carry the same impact as when they were originally published, but something of their strength and atmosphere is still vividly conveyed.)



Blake gave a twist of his wrist and the half-filled bottle hit the man in the mouth as Blake tore the pistol from his grasp.





# VILLAGE VENGEANCE

by  
*E.S. Brooks*

5

ENNOE BROOKS



# BLACK Traffic

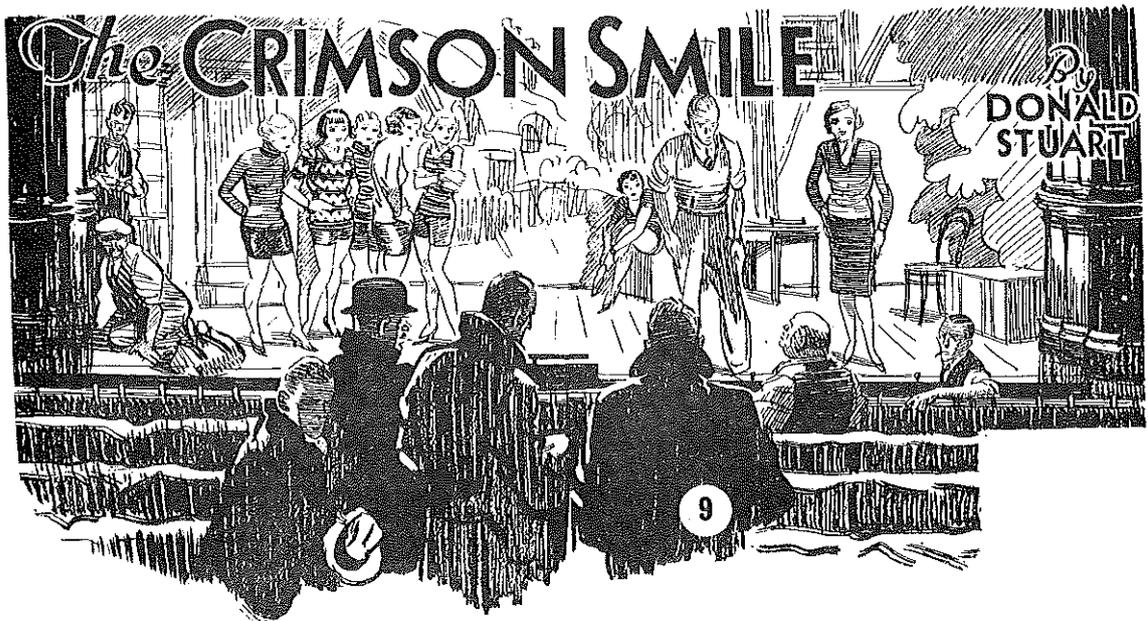
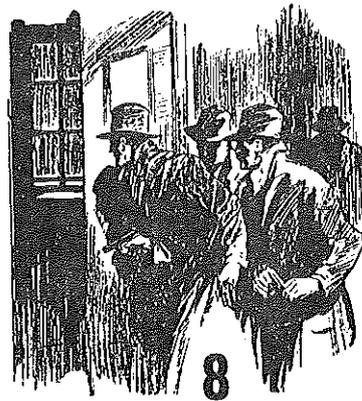
By  
*G. H. Teed.*

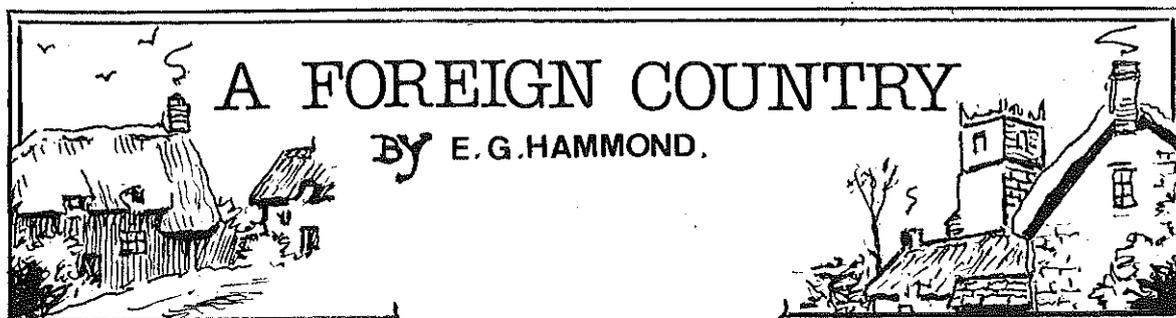
6

Rozone met Blake's last look with a defiant stare. She was dropping like was she had plied her through so many troubles. Under the spell of Rozone, the filling crew, she was selling to face Blake as an enemy.



"I don't go any farther in the scheme without knowing who is working with mademoiselle!" Silence fell on the queerly assorted trio after Loraine's outburst. At last came Roxane's voice: "The name is Svensen—Dr. Adolf Svensen!"





It was L.P. Hartley who said the past is a foreign country. If the statement is correct, one's advancing years make it a very familiar country. For we return to it more and more, if only to enjoy the warmth of the old and safe memories.

Our early memories are usually a haphazard sequence of happenings set against the background of home and immediate surroundings. They have little order and are very difficult to pinpoint in time. At best they can only be set in seasons, seldom a year or month, unless an anniversary or similar event triggers the memory.

The first home I can remember was in the early thirties. I was born in 1928 in a town at the end of the District Line. It was then just sloughing off its village title. It was soon to become, and still is, one of London's outer suburbs. I don't remember my birthplace, because my father, who as a teenager had given up his ploughman's occupation to become a bricklayer, moved to a less expensive cottage in the country. His change of job was for financial reasons, but even the higher pay of the building industry was not enough for him to rent a town house. This cottage was the first home I can remember. It was only two miles from my birth place, but very definitely country. It was number one of a terrace of seven. I would imagine them to be early Victorian. Slate roofs, obligatory stock bricks, near black with age, with two up and two down. A wooden lean-to with pan-tiles roof was added at the rear and this served as a scullery. Being at the end of a terrace meant we had a garden at the side of the property, which gave us certain advantages. The other cottages only had "yards", never big enough to be called gardens. It meant our lavatory was much farther from the house, which at any time was a boon, but, in a hot summer, a blessing. For we never had the luxury of a flush toilet. A bucket of water was taken with you when the need arose.

A few yards beyond our terrace stood a tiny white walled one storey thatched cottage. This was my mother's birthplace. I never saw inside, but it always held a special fascination for me. As a small child it seemed almost hallowed ground to me. I would proudly declare its association to anyone who would listen. It has been gone now, many, many years, even before the rest of the terrace. No trace remains of any of them. But I can still see them clearly, even without the help of a very faded photograph of young twin aunts standing in front of the rose covered porch that enclosed our front door.

In our cottage we had no running water, electricity or gas. Our lighting was supplied by oil lamps and candles. Our water for drinking was collected each evening by my father in two gleaming galvanised buckets, from a well situated about fifty yards up and on the other side of the lane. It was beside another terrace of red brick farm cottages. They still exist, but now have kitchen and bathroom facilities in a box-like structure built on the back. It was no great distance to carry water, but in very inclement weather it made life just a little more difficult. I never remember father complaining.

The two terraces were on very friendly terms including the respective children. When some "Townie" boys, out for a stroll, had the temerity to spit in our well, an immediate alliance was formed to drive them away. I was too small for physical participation, but stood on the fringe of the fracas and gave "our side" vocal support. In fact I felt great satisfaction in being able to use the Anglo-Saxon words the big boys had recently taught me. Their meaning was vague, but they sounded just right for the occasion.

The water father collected each evening was poured into a large terra cotta glazed bowl that was then covered by a tight fitting wooden lid. To leave it off was a sin of the first order. This water was only used for drinking and cooking. The bowl stood upon a large brick-built copper that stood in one corner of the scullery. This was used to boil the week's washing every Monday, and to cook the puddings at Christmas. From the scullery, a door led into the kitchen. Here food was prepared and cooked in the shiny black leaded kitchener. We lived and had all our meals in the kitchen. Like all the other rooms of the house, it was low ceillinged and decorated with dark floral wallpaper. We listened to the wireless, of bakelite and sunrise motif, that stood in the corner. I read all my books and comics, father his "Daily Herald" and "News of the World", and mother her "Red Letter", with its doctor heroes and dark-haired villians. The mending and the sewing and the weekly bath in a galvanised bath in front of the fire, all took place in the kitchen. From the kitchen another door led into the "Front Room". It was never used except at Christmas. The family's pride and joy was housed in this sanctum. A gleamy black upright piano had pride of place. It had been bought for my use, but I had no musical proclivities. In all of the years of my youth I can only remember it being played once, and that by a visiting stranger.

The two upstairs bedrooms were reached by a very narrow and dark flight of stairs that led from the kitchen. They were so narrow that only the smallest articles of furniture were taken this way. Beds, wardrobes, dressing tables were all taken through the windows, from which the sliding sashes had been removed. Each bedroom had a small cast iron fireplace. I can only remember a fire being lit in either of them when I contracted one of the usual juvenile maladies. I remember one illness of some length, probably measles, when to alleviate the boredom, mother and I sat at the front window watching the local women pulling spring onions in the field opposite the cottage. Dressed in very old clothes and boots, with sacks tied round their waists they would pull, shake vigorously, and tie each bunch with a piece of string and place it in a box. With pencil and paper we noted the number of bunches to a box and, later, the number of boxes to a cart load. A useless computation, but how it passed the time.

Our garden, being bigger than the other yards, had room for a chicken run. Here we kept Rhode Island Red hens with a splendid cockerel in attendance. They were fed on household scraps and gleanings from the local corn fields, and kept us in cheap eggs for most of the year. We also had a well in the garden, that served the terrace. It was only fit for washing, when the water butts were empty, and for the flushing of the outside lavatories.

Just beyond our back door stood the dog kennel. This housed Floss, our "Guard Dog". She was chained to this all day and night, apart from her evening walk with father, she was never allowed into the house, yet her devotion to the family never faltered. Her great shaggy black and white body quivered with uncontrolled excitement, when any of the family appeared, while her tail beat a tattoo on the side of the kennel.

So many other memories crowd in from that childhood "Foreign Country" but perhaps some other time.....

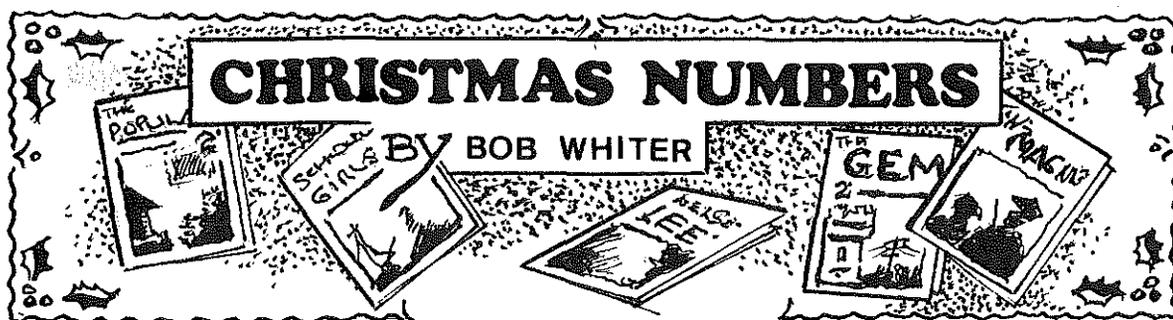


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SEASONAL GREETINGS TO ALL

PETER McCALL.

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Those wonderful Christmas numbers! What excitement, what magic they did and still evoke! From the colourful covers with titles dripping with snow, to the sprigs of holly that adorned the inside pictures, they just made our Christmases.

Let us take a typical "Magnet Christmas Number" and peruse its contents. Somewhere within its pages would be yuletide wishes generally in the form of jingles, purported to be from the boys themselves. Yet another favourite feature was a pantomime or some other form of Xmas show, with the parts being played by the Removites. Of course we mustn't forget the Editor's chat in which he, and sometimes Frank Richards would wish their readers the 'Compliments of the season'. These greetings would be in 'old English' writing, whilst sprigs of holly and old-fashioned lanterns would often embellish this "Come into the Office Boys" (in later years the appellation "Girls" would be added) feature.

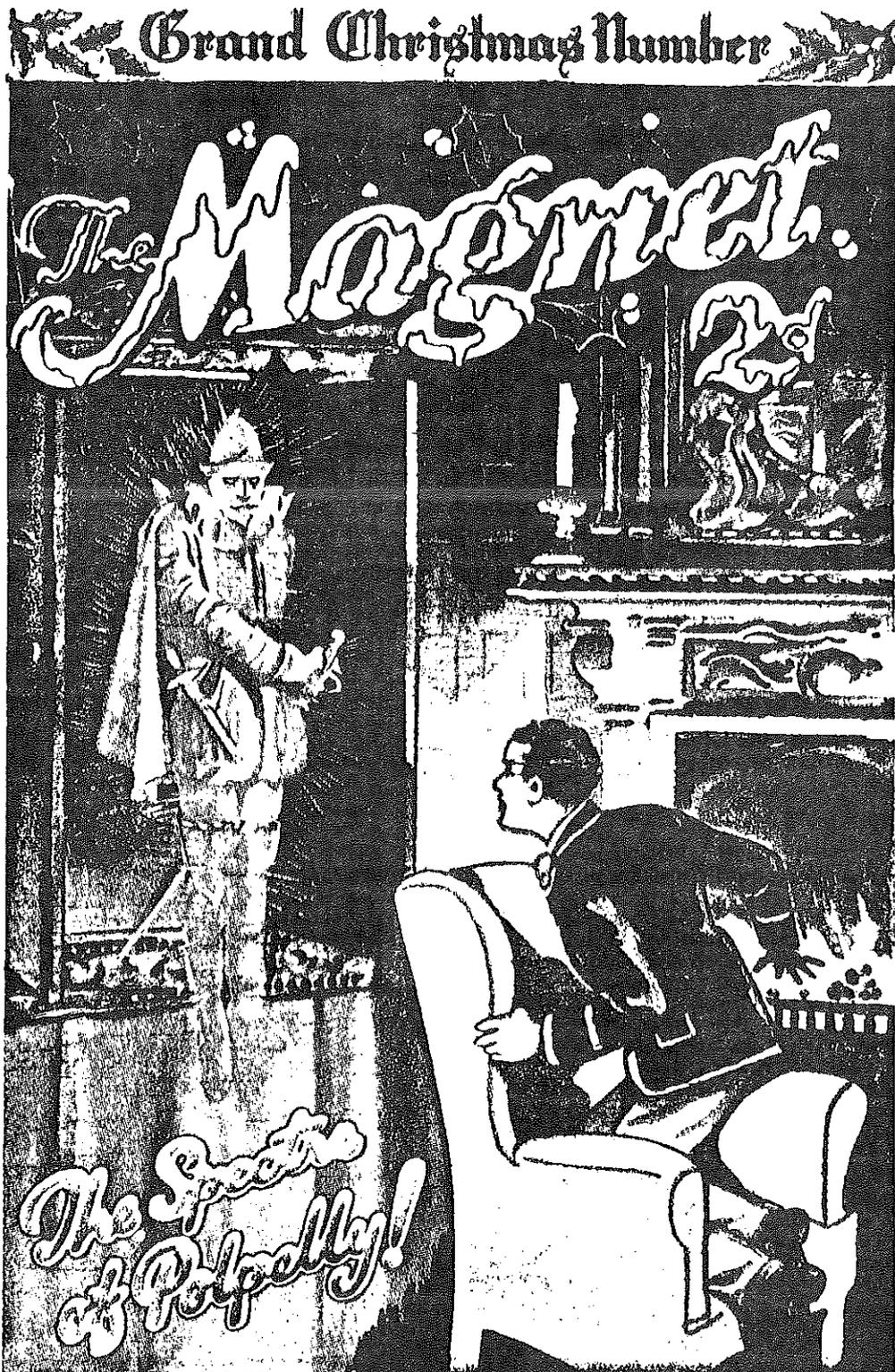
It wasn't unusual for the editor to include a conjuring trick or two for the readers to try out at their Christmas parties. Borders of holly would sometimes enclose the descriptions under the pictures. The initial letter of each chapter would be an old English or Gothic type capital.

One of my favourites, "The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers", went a step further and had a little seasonal picture supporting the letter, almost reminiscent of an illuminated address.

Generally speaking the following week's copy would be almost as good as the first - I hated it if it wasn't - I wanted the whole of the Christmas series to have the snow, the holly, in fact all the trimmings. What an anti-climax I thought, when the last story, normally with January's date, had no such ornamentation! I love getting out all my Christmas numbers and comparing them - how the memories come crowding back, recalling some happy event one always associates with a certain copy or story. I love the full page advertisements for the annuals - some I'm lucky enough to possess - others I'd dearly love to have. Of course, along with the happy memories are some sad ones. A certain Modern Boy annual always reminds me of a good friend. We were both in the Air Cadets, and avid readers of the Companion papers. He was great on maths and I was not, with the result that I went in the army and he became an air navigator. Coming back from a raid in a Mosquito, he and his pilot had to bale out - and his parachute didn't open. He had loaned me the 1935 Modern Boy annual - whenever I see the facsimile, I think of him.

On a happier note, I loved the pictures, showing what wonderful models one could make with Meccano and the Erector sets. Incidentally brother Ben had a large assortment of Meccano pieces which passed on to my next brother, Douglas, and yours truly. I wonder what happened to the boy and his father who appeared in so many of the Hornby train adverts? Remember the type of thing: "Of course she'll take another, Dad"! One feature we mustn't overlook: that's the celebrated Greyfriars Herald. It was a poor Christmas number that didn't sport a Herald full of Yuletide pleasantries. Perhaps it would contain a St. Sam's Christmas story, with that wicked old scamp Dr. Birchermall using the festivities to further his own ends! How about the stories themselves? What's your favourite? Mine is Polpelly, followed very closely by Cavandale Abbey, Mauleverer Towers and Reynham Castle. Polpelly consists of four first rate stories: it has all the ingredients that to my mind make up a classic Christmas story. Snow, mystery, a ghost, some of my favourite characters. The cover of "The Spectre of Polpelly" is a real work of art - the fine old carved fireplace, surmounted by the armorial bearings, the panelled walls, the ghost, Smithy kneeling in the armchair - all this topped with

the title, "The Magnet", its letters dripping with snow and superimposed on the delicate tracings of holly! I loved this series when I first read it fifty two years ago. I've re-read it every Christmas since then. To use one of Frank Richards' favourite quotations - "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety". Before I get too carried away I'll end on my first line - Those wonderful Christmas numbers! Ah!

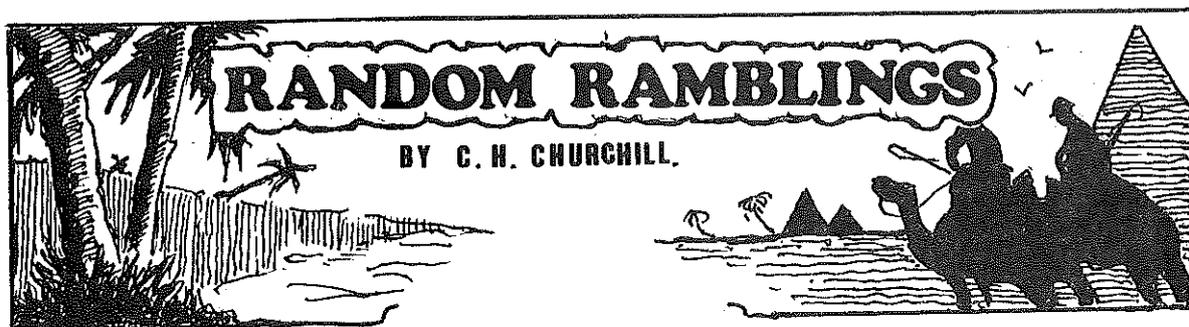


No. 1,463. Vol. XLVIII.

EVERY SATURDAY.

Week Ending December 21st. 1935.

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## DORRIE!

The very name appearing in a story in early summertime each year was guaranteed to cause a throb of pleasurable anticipation to surge through the veins of all ardent readers of the Nelson Lee Library. It meant that they were soon to be regaled with a new summer holiday series in which Dorrie, Umlosi and a party of St. Frank's personnel would be off to some far flung corner of the earth, and that thrilling adventures would soon be described in first class manner by their favourite author, E.S. Brooks. Over the years these series proved very popular and Mr. Brooks was able to give readers a good insight into conditions in foreign places. He gave descriptions of cyclones, tidal waves and various other perils of the seas such as sharks, giant clams, etc. etc. Naturally, friend Handforth sometimes fell foul of these creatures and was often rescued by good old Umlosi.

In No. 366 10th June, 1922 "The Schoolboy Crusoes" Mr. Brooks gave a very good description of a journey through the Suez Canal. Later in this series we read of the great cyclone and what it was to be in the thick of it. I do not know if E.S.B. ever experienced one himself but what he wrote was very realistic and quite in line with other authors' efforts.

As to cannibals encountered by the St. Frank's party, I presume there were still a few about in 1922. The second world war seemed to dispose of these but what goes on nowadays in various places makes one wonder if all wild ones are gone!!

There were several tropical island series over the years and Mr. Brooks was able to make each one quite a lot different from the others. In between there were very entertaining stories about adventures in many other places. One such was when the St. Frank's party went to Mr. Farman's Roaring Z Ranch in Montana. This adventure ended up in wild north west Canada. Another series took readers to Africa in search of "The Treasure of El Safra". Dorrie once took his guests across America to Hollywood. Another time it was the Sahara desert, to search for a missing party of adventurers which included Dr. Stafford and Pitt and Grey of the Remove.

Over the years much has been made of the two

Splendid Adventure Story of St. Frank's Holiday Party in the Wild West!



GRAND NEW NELSON LEE DETECTIVE SERIAL JUST STARTED!  
No. 322. August 6, 1921.

Northestria series but to my mind it seems strange that the "New Anglia" series of 1922 was rarely mentioned. Another time Dorrie & Co. visited Umlosi's homeland, Kutana in Africa. All these stories contained much information about the various locations visited. The reader obviously learned much from reading them.

In my modest view the best of all these holiday series was the one in 1920 about how Dorrie and his party discovered the White Giants and their wonderful golden city of the Arzacs - El Dorado. I have read these stories many times and am still thrilled by them. We learned in this series many things about a journey up the Amazon and through the jungle.

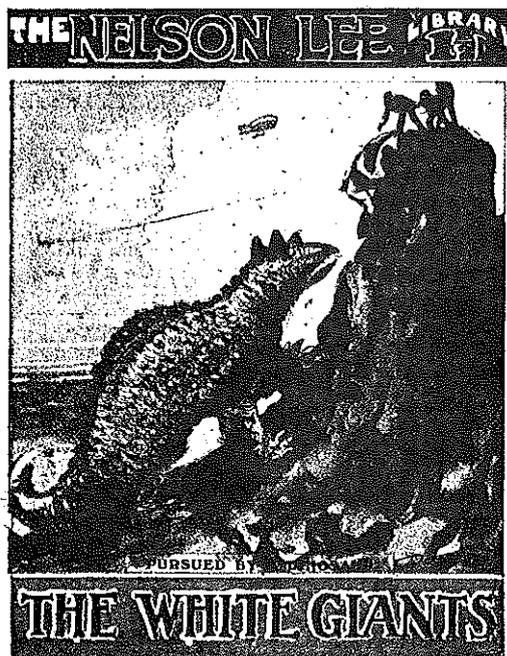
This discovery of a "lost People" was a favourite theme of E.S.B. He sent Dorrie & Co. on many a trip for such a purpose and very enjoyable they were to read about.

The only non-summer holiday adventure series as far as I remember was in 1921 when our intrepid adventurers landed up in Mordania in the Balkans. This happened because they started off in an airship which "came down" in the Adriatic and they managed to get ashore and found themselves in the hands of the Tagossa a band of revolutionaries. All things came to order of course, with the trouble-makers crushed. This was an Eastertime journey. All the holiday series I have touched upon here were in the St. Frank's saga but there were two stories featuring Dorrie and Umlosi in previous days. The first one was in No. 105, "The Ivory Seekers" which introduced readers to Dorrie and his friend Umlosi. Here Dorrie, Lee and Nipper visited Umlosi in his own country and helped him to defeat his rascally half brother and so become Chief of the Kutanas. The second story was in No. 119, "The City of Burnished Bronze". Here our intrepid adventurers crossed part of the Sahara in search of a friend of Dorrie's who was missing in that area. They reached this fabulous city and duly rescued Dorrie's friend. A good description of a sandstorm was in this story.

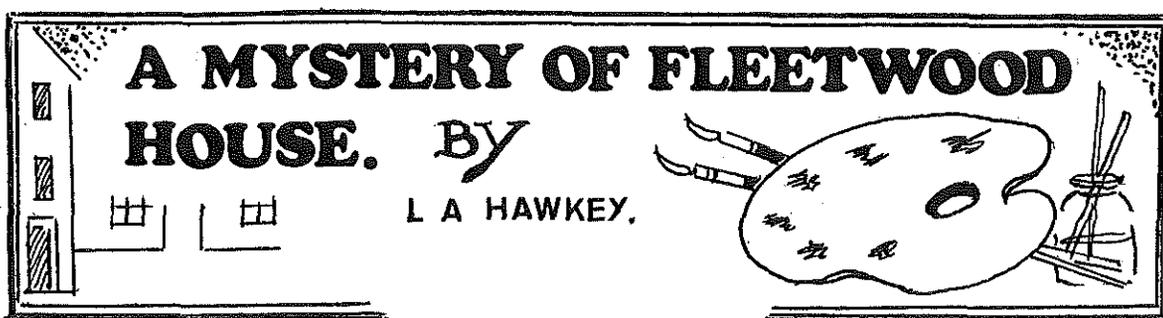
It may seem rather odd to write about summer holiday stories at this time of the year, but I thought the memories of travel in hot climates and exotic places might help readers to forget for a short time all the cold and chill of December in England and take a flight of fancy to where? El Dorado, the desert or Northestria?

A very merry Christmas and the compliments of the season to anyone reading these notes.

No. 268.-OUR ADVENTURERS IN A WORLD OF ANOTHER AGE.



A Story of Holiday and Detective Adventure, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "Bound for Brazil," "The River of Wonders," "The Dream City," etc. July 24, 1920.



One of the great fascinations of our hobby is its continuing ability to spring fresh surprises - newly discovered stories by favourite authors, unusual work by familiar artists, vagaries of editorial policy and in fact, innumerable questions to ponder over, and new paths of enquiry to follow.

Personally I find the mysterious behaviour of some of the illustrators more intriguing than that of the authors. Much has already been written about the methods and motivations of Charles Hamilton, Edwy Searles Brooks, etc., but what about C.H. Chapman, Leonard Shields, Arthur Jones et al. How, and why, were they chosen for the work they did? How, and where did they perform it, and, indeed, how much, over the years, were they paid for it? Did they, for example, have to read each story, before they decided which incidents to illustrate, or did some sub-editor select the items for them?

I have not found the answers to any of these queries in previous issues of our magazine, though they may have been dealt with 20 or 30 years ago. So many strange occurrences seem to have taken place in the Amalgamated Press' Art Department. As a prime example, take the long careers of Albert (erstwhile "Anton") LOCK and Arthur WHITE. The latter contributed to several A.P. magazines from the 1890's onwards. He specialised in "action & adventure", especially sea stories, of olden times. In style he was very like the young Fred Bennett, and like Bennett could turn his hand to humorous subjects, as in the Jester (1907) serial "The Pride of the Ring".

Lock was similarly versatile, though arriving almost two decades later. He drew school and adventure stories, as well as the "blood & thunder" serials which featured a lot in the "Jester", "Puck", "Chips" etc. pre-1918. Whereas White was probably born around 1870, Lock was born in 1893, and both lived to a good old age, 85 in the case of Lock, and they were both still working up to, if not after, the last war.

The mystery is, why were these excellent illustrators (Lock was in fact an R.A., R.B.A., and R.W.S.) employed almost exclusively after 1918 in the "kiddies" section of Fleetway House? "Chicks Own" was launched in 1920, and for the last half, or more, of his life Arthur White drew the front page, with "Rupert, the little Chick", almost exclusively. True, he drew other strips, and in some other children's papers, plus many Annuals but, so far as I can trace, never penned a "serious" picture again!

Strangely, Lock was allocated similar work. He did do a few covers and other illustrations in "Young Britain" during 1919 and 1920, but his last art-work, other than for children, appeared in November 1920. Yet only a few months earlier (1/5/1920) a small feature was published about him, complete with photograph, describing him as a valued member of the "Young Britain" staff. From that time, on, it would seem, his work was confined to the "Rainbow", "Bubbles", and the numerous similar coloured children's comics, only. The same fate (if fate it was, as their pay may have been just as good working for the very young, as for the older readers) befell Vincent S. Daniel, and my own very favourite, J. Louis Smyth.

Smyth seems to have come to the A.P. around 1900 and by 1903 was an accomplished illustrator, working on the Boys' Friend, Realm and Herald, and adept at embellishing the full-blooded serials running in "Chips", "Comics Cuts", and all the so-called "comics". When "Puck" was launched as a semi-adult journal he was entrusted with some of the covers, and from then on hardly any new comic was marketed without a cover by J. Louis Smyth. He was the first illustrator to be

given a "by-line" in the "Jester", "Funny Wonder" etc. and was certainly the top-artist for the A.P.'s various girls or women's papers, especially the "Girls Friend" from 1905 onwards. For close on 20 years, he contributed to over 40 Fleetway House publications, and the writer knows from his own collection this meant, in the 1907 to 1917 decade, often ten to fifteen drawings a week.

Yet, shortly after the Great War ended, he was "reduced" to single, smallish illustrations in the cheaper comics, and, like White and Lock, "fairyland" pictures in the kiddies' papers. True, he seemed to have a greater and more original talent for these than the other artists I've mentioned. I can still recall with delight his work for a serial "Peter & Daffy and the Little Brown Man" in the short-lived "Wonderland Weekly", around 1919/20. In this field his style was unique and fascinating. Some of his best work was in the Annuals - "Wonderful (1920-1926)" in particular, and also "Puck" and "Playtime", but for some strange reason he seems never to have been given again the more serious sort of work for which his great talents were better suited.

It is odd, also, that though he was many times called on to depict Sexton Blake in, for example, the "Penny Pictorial" and "Dreadnought", he was never once asked to illustrate a "Union Jack" throughout its more than 1500 issues! Yet his working life at Fleetway House coincided almost exactly with the life of the "Sexton Blake" Union Jack. Smyth died, in somewhat sad circumstances, I believe, around 1933.

One could go on, of course, forever, dredging up these irrationalities and foibles of the A.P. Art Department. In a somewhat different direction, for example, why did they persist in using what I call "Sub-standard" workers, especially when they had such a wealth of first-class talent to call on? Although time may have lent a certain amount of nostalgic charm to the work of G.M. Dodshon and Arthur Jones - to name but two - they had little idea of perspective or proportion, or ability to draw a human figure. Dodshon was passable in the 1890s and just after, but seemed to get worse as time went by. Jones on the other hand smartened up a bit in the 1930s but how he came to be entrusted with almost all the work in the earlier "Thrillers" I shall never know. Especially when set against the work of Valda or Hubbard in the same publication. These are but a few of the mysteries that have plagued me for years, yet added to the enjoyment of our hobby, and to the pleasure C.D. gives me each month. Just another intriguing aspect of the "good old days", awaiting clarification, perhaps from some more erudite reader.



Paul Sleuth confronts Foxdale with a charge of attempted murder.



Her blue eyes dropped beneath his eager, questioning gaze. "You come from Aunt Mary?" Mabel faltered, and made an attempt to withdraw her hands.

LOCK: GIRLS' FRIEND, 1914.



The curtain was pulled aside. "Captain Swift!" gasped Ralph.

LOCK: BUBBLES ANNUAL, 1937

WHITE: MARVEL, 1903

A man on horseback mounted the slope and looked down at the trenches.



WHITE: CHICKS OWN, 1933





### THE FAT FELLOWS

Billy Bunter just now was like a lion seeking what he might devour... The first object that met his eyes, and his spectacles was a large cake. There were several paper bags, which he soon ascertained to contain eclairs and meringues. There was a box of chocolate creams, and a packet of toffee. There were several pots of jam, one of marmalade, and one of honey. Billy Bunter's little round eyes popped behind his big round spectacles as he gazed...

William George Bunter, Baggy Trimble and Tubby Muffin, the "Fat Fellows"! Every school, it would seem, boasted (?) its fat boy - its "Bunter", and all of these seemed possessed of similar characteristics. Of our particular three none can be said to have any outstanding features, apart from the propensity to consume endless quantities of "tuck" and possessing a figure which would indeed be only mildly described if the world rotund were used. Yet all three were in some inexplicable way likeable if at times exasperating fellows whose absence would have been sadly detrimental to the great stories which formed part of the staple diet of our boyhood.

Emotionally they expressed themselves in similar ways. All squeaked, grunted or groaned. Seldom did they smile; more generally they smirked or grimaced, while the ejaculation "He He He" did duty for a good, healthy peal of laughter from them. When kicked - a frequent occurrence - they emitted hoots, roars and howls, giving vent to their feelings in terms which left much to be desired. All were hardened prevaricators of the first water. All possessed vivid and inventive imaginations. All were prepared quite unscrupulously to stretch the truth to unimaginable and unrecognisable lengths. They eavesdropped too, and repeated "tittle tattle", often with outrageous additions, while the striking of attitudes of injured innocence, when confronted with their sins, was a characteristic of all three.

It would be difficult to imagine Greyfriars, St. Jims and Rookwood without them although certainly none of them contributed an iota of dignity, scholarly brilliance or athletic prowess to his Alma Mater.

It may be said that all the world has an affection for a rascal, provided he is plausible and not too far beyond the pale. Into this category our three "heroes" fall, capable of any amount of mild villainy and subterfuge, but also - in most unlikely moments - of rising to the occasion and behaving like decent fellows - almost. It would seem obvious from our knowledge of them that regular bumping and booting from their fellows, and equally regular administrations of the cane from long suffering masters, played a necessary part in keeping them in something approaching manageable form.

All, especially Bunter, were possessed with the strange illusion that they were splendid athletes, and were never able to understand why this prowess was not utilised on the football and cricket fields, their captains being classified as complete asses in not recognising sporting genius beneath their very noses. But in other spheres truth may be found in the old adage that a genius is seldom acknowledged on his native heath, and we may give our 'fat fellows' the benefit of the doubt without losing too much face.

A HAPPY EQUATION

The study of Mr. "Larry" Lascelles, the Sports and Maths Master at Greyfriars is probably the most easily identified apartment in Masters passage. It is revealing in no small degree to the most unobservant eye - being closely indicative of the man himself chiefly renowned for the mass of Mathematical and Trigonometry books which cram the shelves. Not least among these are the celebrated 'Elements' of Euclid, with the aid of which he is wont to regale the Remove upon regular occasions (not, be it said generally appreciated by that 'studious' Form). Sad to relate the general consensus of opinion concerning Euclid is that he can be a frightful bore and an undoubted infliction of the worst kind. Bunter has been heard to utter remarks of a decidedly homicidal nature when referring to the famous founder of the Alexandrian Mathematical School.

Over the mantle hangs a framed group photograph of a college rowing eight, complete with crossed oars in the foreground, this being the official memento of some long past victory on the river, dating from the Maths Master's University days. Sundry other groups adorn the walls - football and cricket elevens produced by the school in bygone years. It is the study of a Sports Master, ample evidence being provided by hockey sticks, a cricket bat and a pair of Indian clubs standing in a corner, while a pair of foils together with a head-guard grace a small table by the window. On both sides of the mantle-shelf stand silver cups, symbols of hard won contests in Mr. Lascelles' not so distant youth.

Although junior by a considerable number of years to other members of Dr. Locke's staff at Greyfriars, Mr. Lascelles is never-the-less popular among his colleagues. Indeed there exists between himself and Mr. Quelch a distinctive rapport the roots of which may possibly be traced to their mutual love of the classics, or perhaps to the ancient game of chess, of which both are very able exponents. (Mr. Lascelles with his penchant for Mathematical equations frequently holds the edge over his more senior friend.)

A legend exists (or is it fact?) of a Homeric fistic battle, deep in the recesses of Friardale wood, with a pugnacious tramp who had been making demands with menaces from certain Remove fellows. In this confrontation, "Larry" Lascelles excelled himself, much to the discomfiture of that "gentleman of the road". In consequence of this, "Larry's" stock, already high, rose to fresh heights, although as Horace Coker said at the time, "Any decent fellow would have done the same in like circumstances". Whether or not any "decent fellow" would have acquitted himself with similar credit, is, of course, open to debate. Such fine distinctions of thought and reasoning naturally do not occur to the mind of the great "Horace".

An eminent gentleman of a bygone age once opined, "Show me a man's library and I will tell you the type of man he is". This may be a reasonable statement in the majority of cases, yet one cannot but feel that a close examination of Mr. Lascelles' library - composed, as mentioned earlier, largely of Mathematical books - would hardly lead one to visualise an athlete, an excellent oar, a fine soccer player, and a doughty exponent in the boxing ring. The moral here would appear to be to tread warily in making assumptions from exterior appearances.

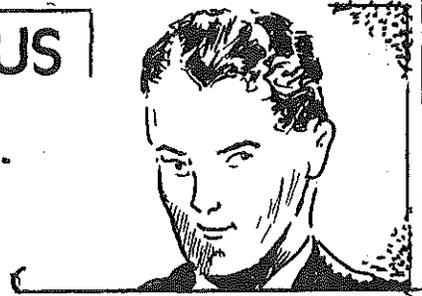
Although one does not read a great deal of the Sports Master in the Greyfriars stories, there can be little doubt that he is the driving force and architect of much of their success on the playing field. Although he blushes largely unseen in the Greyfriars firmament he is, never-the-less, one of its most popular inmates. The contrast between, for instance, little Mr. Twigg, Master of the Second Form, and the quietly confident and capable Mr. Lascelles may be likened to a gulf of considerable proportions. They are rather at opposite ends of the spectrum. However with the true instincts of a gentleman, though aware of differences in their natural physical abilities each accords to the other behaviour which would have earned a nod of approval from the patrician Lord Chesterfield himself. All of which glowingly reflects the excellent and shrewd observational powers of the their revered chief, Dr. Locke.

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## A YOUNG AND FAMOUS DETECTIVE.

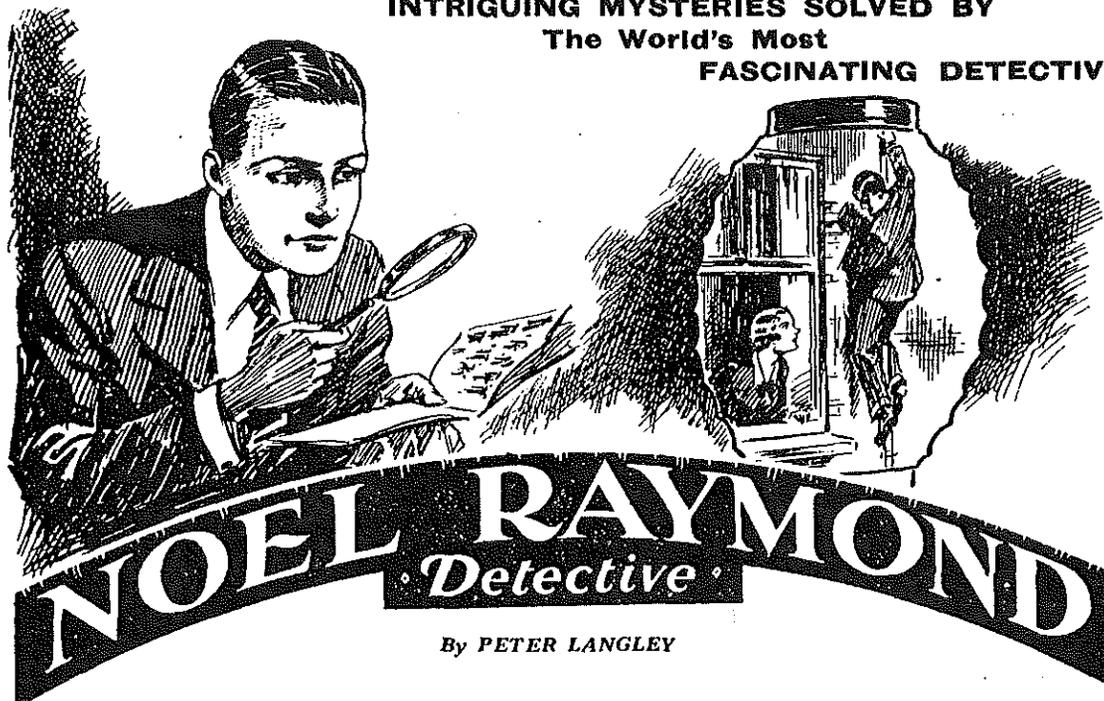
BY  
DENNIS L. BIRD.



When I was a small boy, before the Second World War, my best and dearest friends were two private detectives - Valerie Drew and Noel Raymond. I say "friends" deliberately, for I was a solitary lad and until I was a teenager I made no real-life friends. When I was 8 or so, my constant companions were the characters in books and story papers. I had an older sister, Joan, who read the "Girls' Own Paper" and "Schoolgirls' Weekly," and I found that reading her papers was an inexpensive way of augmenting my usual diet of library books. That was how I first met Valerie Drew and her Alsatian dog Flash. Auburn-haired Valerie, intrepid aviator and sleuth, seemed like another sister. And then, in May 1939, she suddenly ceased to come into our home: the "Schoolgirls' Weekly" was discontinued and amalgamated with the "Girls' Crystal". (It was many months before I discovered that Valerie was still around, in "The Schoolgirl" - and then that too closed, killed off by the war in May, 1940.)

The merger with the "Girls' Crystal" introduced Joan and me to a new and exciting character, a dashing young man named Noel Raymond. He was everything I wanted at that age. I had begun to develop an interest in the detective story, mainly through reading my father's 1905 edition of "The Return of Sherlock Holmes". But Holmes, though fascinating, was also rather alarming - all those dead bodies in stately homes and on lonely moors. Noel Raymond possessed much the same powers of deduction, but in a far friendlier atmosphere. For one thing, no one ever died in his adventures. For another, he was a less intimidating, more human figure than Holmes. He was good-tempered, friendly, sympathetic, in addition to his more heroic qualities. He was, I suppose, everything a boy would wish to be, and from 1939 to 1944 he was my regular weekly companion - a very real and much-loved kind of elder brother. His Friday appearances were the high spot of the week, and the latest story would be read in bed by torchlight under the blankets - for my room was not blacked out.

INTRIGUING MYSTERIES SOLVED BY  
The World's Most  
FASCINATING DETECTIVE



From "The Crystal" No. 1, October 26, 1935.

And then, in March 1944, he was suddenly no more. After nine years the "G.C." editor decided to end the series. I was frankly devastated. But youth is resilient. I had by now made other literary friends - Dr. Dolittle, the Arthur Ransome children, M.E. Atkinson and Pamela Brown. And I had also developed friendships with schoolfellows which became important. (One such friendship, 14 years later, introduced me to my wife and transformed my life!) Nevertheless, Noel Raymond was still important to me, and joy was unconfined when in April 1945 he returned in a single "long complete story". Between then and 1951 he reappeared fairly regularly, now accompanied by his niece and partner June Gaynor, whom I always found rather tiresome. And so, right up to his last year, I still kept up with his cases, even though I was by then no longer a schoolboy but a Pilot Officer in the Royal Air Force.

Wherein, then, lay the charm of Noel Raymond, "the young detective" of the 1930s who became "the famous detective" of 15 years later? I think it was the element of mystery. The Noel Raymond stories were unique, in my experience of children's weekly papers, in that they not only featured strange and sometimes very far-fetched adventures, but the identity of the wrongdoer was almost always kept secret until the very end. This was a most powerful attraction; as one of the "G.C." advertisements of the day put it, "I adore being baffled"!

Even now, half a century later, Noel exerts his benign spell. Every Christmas Day since 1946 I have read "The Secret of the Christmas Warnings" to put me in the party mood. And when my elder daughter was born in 1960 she was christened Clare Valerie Noel Bird - Clare because my wife and I liked the name, Valerie for Valerie Drew, and Noel after Noel Raymond.

Noel was the creation of Ronald Fleming, who wrote the stories under the pseudonym "Peter Langley". In using a male pen-name, he was in a class by himself. Although most of the story-paper writers were men, they all used female names (Fleming himself was also "Renee Frazer" and "Rhoda Fleming"). The first tale, "The Menace of the Green Dragon", appeared in Issue No. 1 of "The Crystal", dated October 26, 1935. The series ran unbroken until March 11, 1944. Noel returned in the "G.C." dated April 28, 1945, and thereafter sporadically in "long complete stories", four novel length adventures, and 86 short stories, until his final appearance in "The Vanishing Statues" dated May 26, 1951.

Very little biographical detail was ever vouchsafed; Noel was even more reticent about his family than Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes were about theirs. In the first story of 1935, he was described thus: "Languid, Noel might appear at first sight, but not when action was called for. At 24, and comparatively fresh from college, he had already made a name for himself as a private investigator". Incidentally, the various references over the years to his college career have always struck me as ambiguous. Is "college" used in the sense of University, or only public school?

It was not until October 1937 that we learn any more of his relations. Then we meet June Gaynor, his "14-year-old niece.... the daughter of his married sister" (note the careful reference to married sister - no skeletons in this family cupboard!) We never hear any more of this sister - curious, when Noel was so clearly on good terms with his niece. In later years there are mentions of June staying with a succession of aunts - Janet, Susan, Lucy - presumably relatives on the Gaynor side. Of the Raymonds we hear not a word.

In the early years Noel was evidently modelled on Dorothy Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey.



The colour flooded into Jane's face as she brought a hand from behind her back. For in it she held a brush—a paint brush. Could she be the person responsible for damaging the valuable paintings?

Obviously of upper-class parentage, he spoke with the lazy drawl of his station in life: "What's the correct procedure when a chappie's goin' to meet a girl who signs herself 'Yours distractedly'? A bit awkward, what"?

That is not how I remember him. When I first met him in 1939, he was a much more robust character. "His eyes, steel blue and a little amused, invited confidence". The major change in his personality came after his year's absence in 1944-45. As was said of Sherlock Holmes's disappearance in 1891-94, he may not have perished in the interregnum, but he was never quite the same afterwards. When Noel returned in 1945 he was usually in the company of his niece. Although he still occasionally had some notable cases of his own, he increasingly became an avuncular figure, less glamorous, less dramatic, rather tame.

But I still wanted to read all about him, although now, in my late teens, I could see how unconvincing and indeed improbable were some of the plots of the stories. When Noel went away for the last time, in 1951, I felt an era in my life had ended. I still, in 1988, have almost all the stories published from August 1940 onwards, in ten hand-sewn volumes which I bound in cartridge paper. At about that time, I had thoughts of writing a spoof biography, akin to all those books about Sherlock Holmes. In 1952 I was stationed with the RAF in Egypt, surrounded by desert sand and with time hanging heavily in the afternoons, for we worked mornings only. So I embarked on the project, and after several months I had written eight chapters - still extant in old RAF exercise books. I never finished it, and when I did finally have a book published in 1964 it was not a biography but a textbook on figure skating (I was skating correspondent of "The Times" from 1959 to 1978). However, Noel had again proved a good friend, for writing his book was a useful literary exercise for me.

My interest never died but became dormant, until it was thoroughly re-aroused when in 1976 I read that endearing study of schoolgirl fiction, "You're a Brick, Angela!" by our editor Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig. They gave a shrewd and amusing analysis of Noel and June and the perennial foe, the jewel-thief Rosina Fontaine, that "girl of swift wits and amazing resource". I wrote a congratulatory letter to Mary, and since then she has supplied me with much factual information, as well as copies of many of the early stories.



Girls' Crystal, October 12, 1940

So Noel takes his leave. Since his first appearance, he had solved something like 550 cases. (Sherlock Holmes tackled 60.) From the languid, almost foppish figure of pre-war days, full of "y'knows" and "whats?" and "johnnies", Noel had matured into the tough investigator of the Grey Falcon and Jackdaw cases, but without ever losing his likeable good humour, his boyish enthusiasm, or his chivalry towards the unfortunate and the distressed - particularly if they were young and feminine. June, too, had grown up from being a tediously reckless schoolgirl into an apprentice detective of promise and much courage.

For me, Noel Raymond will always be one of the most congenial and engaging characters in detective literature. I owe him a great debt.



Girls' Crystal, August 12, 1950.




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Christmas Joy and Happiness now and always to dear Eric and all Hobby Friends. Warmest Greetings and thanks to our own dear Editor. Please does anyone have any spare copies of Schoolgirl's Weekly?

MRS. MARGERY WOODS

HARLEQUIN COTTAGE,

SOUTH STREET, SCALBY, SCARBOROUGH, YO13 0QR.

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Seasonable Greetings to all enthusiasts everywhere. Wanted H.B.C. Vols. 1, 9 & 10. C.D. Annuals 1947, 1959, 1983.

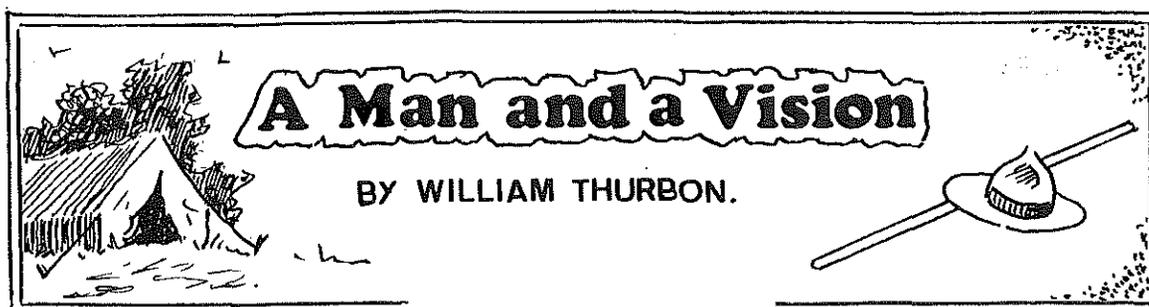
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Some bound volumes for Sale. Lion, Boy's Own Paper, Schoolgirls Annual etc. Wanted Magnets 1923 single copies, top rate paid. Ring Maurice Hall 01 644 5914.

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Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden Powell was an unconventional soldier. In India he first displayed his interest in scouting and reconnaissance, and there he later wrote a small book for his soldiers, "Aids to Scouting".

He campaigned in Africa against the Zulus. In 1895 he took part in a campaign against the Ashantis of the Gold Coast. B.P.'s task was to organise a column of natives to act as pioneers and scouts, since owing to the tsetes fly pack animals could not be used. He divided his tribesmen into small parties; the work of cutting through the forests, and of erecting bridges and shelters was carried out, and after three weeks steady work the Ashanti capital, Kumasi, was reached. He arranged for his men to cut a path around Kumasi, and by a careful night-watch prevented any of the Ashanti leaders from getting away. He gave up smoking, and never smoked again; he wore a broad brimmed hat, and by wearing two shirts, the second tied by the sleeves round his neck he could, if one shirt was soaked with sweat change to a dry one. By his care he avoided the fever which struck down many white men. B.P. was kept busy. In April 1896 he was ordered to Cape Town to be Chief of Staff to Sir Frederick Carrington in the operations against the rebelling tribes of Rhodesia's Matabele and Mashonas. At Bulawayo he met a famous American Scout, Burnham.

Together with Burnham, B.P. went on a three day reconnaissance. Carrington realised, when Burnham went off on another errand, that only Baden Powell had the skill, audacity, alertness and deductive ability required for the work. Together with a Zulu, Jan Grootboom, B.P. made many scouting trips. He was playing a dangerous game among the rocks and boulders of the Matopo mountains; even when detected by the enemy he would still get away; the Matabele gave him a nickname "Impeesa", "The wolf that never sleeps". The Cape Times correspondent expressed great admiration for B.P. "Every time we went out he led us to where he had found the lurking enemy; and every time we found them."

When the Boer War broke out B.P. had been instructed to form two regiments of mounted infantry. With one he was occupying Mafeking; the other was headquartered at Bulawayo. By bluff and courage B.P. defended Mafeking during the siege that lasted 217 days. Short of artillery, the gunner officer found an old brass gun, used as a gate post; then in the railway workshops he made a second gun. Lord Edward Cecil got the boys together, fitted them out with uniforms and made them into a cadet Corps of Messengers, lookouts, mail carriers, etc.

When, late in the evening of 18th May, 1900 the news of the relief of Mafeking arrived in Britain, it caused great rejoicing, probably not equalled until Armistice Night 1918.

In the closing years of the South African War B.P. formed the South African Constabulary. Then B.P. received a letter from the War Office offering him the post of Inspector of Cavalry for Great Britain and Ireland, with responsibility also for Egypt and South Africa.

### The genesis of an idea

At 4 o'clock on Saturday, 30th April 1904 B.P. rode on to Yorkhill Drill Ground. Dressed in his general's uniform, mounted on a lively black charger, and escorted by a party of 17th Lancers, he made a spectacular entry. He had come to Scotland to inspect the Lancers and had arranged to combine this task with that of acting as Inspecting Officer of the Annual Drill Inspection and review of the Boys Brigade. The Boys Brigade had been started in 1883 by a Scottish merchant, William Alexander Smith, a lieutenant in the Lanark Rifle Volunteers, and a dedicated Sunday school teacher.

Finding, according to the Glasgow Weekly Herald, "that some of the unruly unwashed boys belonging to his Sunday School were beyond the range of ordinary discipline", Smith became inspired with the idea of turning the lads into young soldiers. The result was so marvellous, and the transformation in the lads so striking, that Lieutenant Smith's example was followed far and near.

The enthusiasm of the boys and their leaders opened the eyes of B.P. to two important facts; that boys would come in their thousands to be trained when the training had attraction for them, and that hundreds of adults were willing to sacrifice time and energy to train them. But the programme bothered him, the playing at being soldiers; marching, drilling, the military aspect.

As the boys marched away B.P. congratulated Smith on the turn out, but thought the movement would have ten times the number with more variety in training. Smith agreed, and added that it might be done through a boys' version of B.P.'s Aids to Scouting. B.P. had received many letters from boys, he religiously answered them; stressing the value of obedience, preparedness, devotion to duty, and cheerfulness. In April 1906 he did some thinking. He sent copies of his ideas to Smith, and mailed copies to a number of men whose opinion he valued.

Smith thought enough of B.P.'s paper to send it to the editor of the Boys Brigade Gazette. But the material was so different from the usual articles and traditional organization that the editor cut it down, with rather condescending comment. B.P. had suggested a number of activities that boys might practise in city parks and in the country. But instead of employing the Company formation, B.P.'s recommendations were for things that boys might do alone or in small groups. Observation and deduction, first aid, and distance judging, hiking, camping, swimming. Nevertheless the article presented a series of outdoor skills that might well fit a boys' version of "Aids to Scouting".

B.P.'s friend, General Allenby, told him of one of the uses of "Aids to Scouting". One day as the general was riding home from parade he had been startled by a shout. It was his son Michael, "Father you're shot. I ambushed you." Allenby looked up, his son was sitting on a branch of a tree. But to the general's amazement the boy's governess was also in the tree. "What on earth are you doing up there" asked the general. Climbing down the Governess said "Oh, I'm teaching him scouting". She explained she was teaching Michael scouting according to "Aids to Scouting". She explained B.P.'s book had been one of her textbooks at her training College. There it had been the contention that the practice of observation and deduction was a vital point in education and that "Aids to Scouting" was the best book on the subject.

B.P. looked again at his small book. All military references must be taken out. The parts left, suitable for boys, were games and practices, stories about tracking and stalking. "Aids to Scouting" was a book to train men for war. What B.P. now needed was a book for training men for peace. B.P. realised also that to make the training of the individual more effective he needed smaller groups than the Boys Brigade companies of 20 to 30. He turned to his bookshelves, to read of training of primitive peoples, of training of Spartans, and other ancient peoples; of medieval chivalry. He studied the rules and regulations of existing organisations, and consulted military and civilian leaders he knew were concerned with the coming generation of boys. At the end of July a small book arrived by mail, its title, Birchbark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians, its author, Ernest Thompson Seton, a British citizen, living in the U.S.A. Seton was a naturalist and an artist.

Thompson Seton had become a popular lecturer, in England as well as America. Seton and B.P. met and struck up a friendship. B.P. was intrigued with what Seton told him of the scouting practices of the American Indians. B.P. made notes in his diary, and sent Seton his "Aids to Scouting", saying "you will see that our principles seem practically identical".

While making an inspection of Cavalry in Africa B.P. jotted down notes. The title of his resume was "Boy Patrols". Indicating his conviction that the training of boys for citizenship could best be done in small groups, he spelled out his aim explicitly: to help existing organizations to make the rising generation of whatever class or creed into good citizens; the activities he intended to promote were scoutcraft, including observation, tracking, woodcraft, watermanship, life saving, health, thrift, self-sacrifice discipline, chivalry and patriotism. The organisation: "a Patrol

is formed of six boys under a senior boy as patrol-leader. From four to ten patrols form a Troop", under an officer as Scoutmaster. Finally he sent his draft to be printed in two four page circulars; "Boy Scouts, a suggestion" and "Boy Scouts, summary of scheme". B.P. approached Pearson, the publisher, with his scheme. Pearson was interested. B.P. began writing in the Mill House, a cottage next to Wimbledon Windmill. Arrangements for the issue of B.P.'s book were for publication in weekly parts, and B.P. also agreed to make a weekly publication by Pearsons the official organ of the Boy Scouts.

B.P. was determined to give his boy scout scheme a thorough test before developing the final details. The only way to do this was by camping with a party of boys. He had earlier met the owners of Brownsea Island, Dorset. He wrote to ask them for permission to hold his camp. This was readily given. He wanted to see how far his scheme would interest boys, and therefore recruited campers from various walks of life. He invited his soldier friends to send their sons or nephews (pupils of public schools). He also invited the Bournemouth Boys Brigade to send six members and the Poole Boys Brigade three. The letters of invitation were explicit. B.P. explained in detail the purpose of the camp and the instruction he intended to give the boys. The invitations were accepted with alacrity. The Brownsea camp of 1907 was a great success.

Now B.P. knew that his scheme was right. He went on a carefully planned lecture tour in February 1908. In seven weeks he gave forty lectures to some twenty five thousand boys and men.

Part 1 of "Scouting For Boys" appeared on the bookstalls on Wednesday, 15th January 1908, to be followed by four more parts, issued fortnightly. Two weeks after the publication of the last part came the launch of the weekly "The Scout" on 18th April, 1908. Not only a great movement but a great paper had been born through the inspiration of B.P.

(Editor's Note: Extracts from this article were published in the April 1988 issue of the C.D. to mark the 80th anniversary of the launching of "The Scout".)

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Merry Xmas. Happy New Year everyone, especially dear Eric and ye Editor from:

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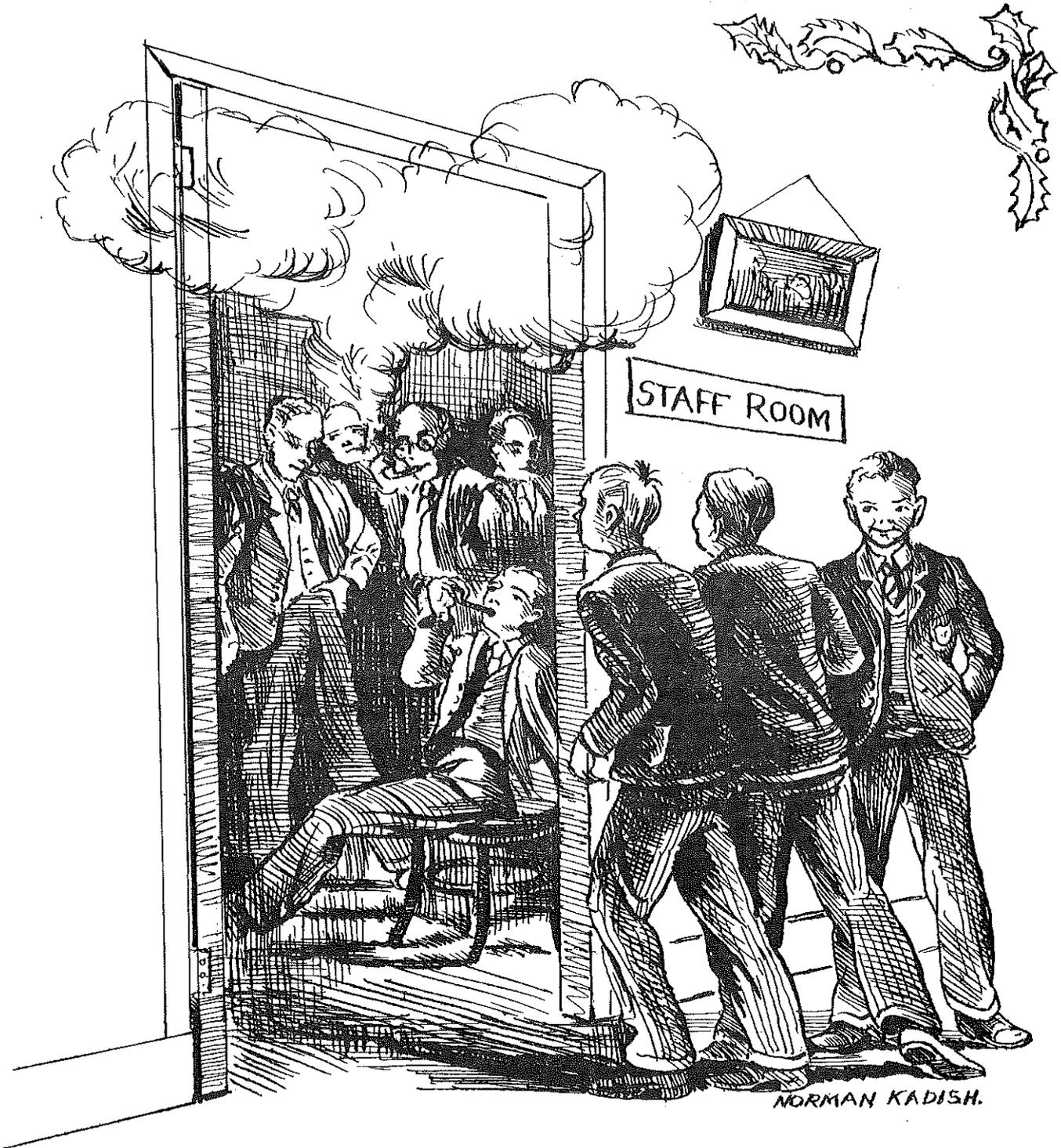
HYTHER, HANTS.

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MEMORIES OF SCHOOL-DAYS

By Norman Kadish

In those days to go to the staff-room was an event, like venturing to the Holy of Holies. Inside the staff were busy chatting away, no doubt greatly relieved from having to teach classes of juveniles. A lot lit up their pipes or cigarettes. In those days it was a popular custom to offer cigarettes when in social discourse, and I can remember the fug being poured forth from within the hallowed precincts and the loquacity emitting from the shadowy figures within.





## THEIR CHRISTMAS QUEST AT THE HAUNTED PRIORY

BY MARGERY WOODS



### Chapter 1.

"Goodbye school!"

"Hello Christmas!"

"Hurrah!"

Barbara Redfern's blue eyes danced with excitement as she flung open the carriage door. "Got everything? Come on, girls!"

No need to urge them!

Golden-haired Mabs and Leila Carroll, the American junior, tumbled happily after their captain, heaving out their suitcases, while slim, monocled Jemima Carstairs made to follow. Unfortunately for Jemima, plump Bessie Bunter and boisterous tomboy Clara Trevlyn dived for the doorway at the same moment. Jemima found herself uncomfortably transformed into what it must feel like to be a squashed sandwich filling. Then they all gasped as Pluto, Clara's magnificent pet Alsatian, decided he had behaved himself for quite long enough. He thrust his doggy nose towards freedom and fresh air and the rest of him promptly followed.

"Wow-w-w!"

"Look out!"

"Pluto!"

Bessie went flying into Babs, who couldn't take evasive action in time, and landed on a heap of mail bags, her not inconsiderable weight knocking the breath out of poor Babs. Clara and Mabs went spinning into an impromptu waltz variation entirely unknown on any dance floor, while Jemima tottered weakly under the impact of some seventy pounds of warm, furry, very solid dog.

Marjorie Hazeldene, olive-skinned Janet Jordan and tall Scots lass Jean Cartwright looked down on the scrimmage and roared with mirth. "Tut tut! Such disgraceful behaviour!" cried Jean, in quite a passable imitation of Miss Bullivant's scandalised tones.

"Take a hundred lines each," giggled Janet.

Nine cheery fourth-formers from Cliff House school were now holiday bound for Inglestone Priory, the new home of Jemima's father, Colonel Carstairs. The girls should have been spending the Christmas holidays with Babs and her people at Holly Hall, but the misfortune of influenza had struck Mr. Redfern the previous week and it was

felt that an invasion of youthful high spirits was best delayed until he was more fully recovered. Hence the last minute change of plans.

Secretly, Jemima was delighted. She had seen so little of her father during his long years of service abroad and even now she was not entirely convinced that he was actually to be home-based on London for the next eighteen months. Jemima was not a demonstrative girl and even her chums did not always divine the depth of the close and understanding relationship that existed between Jemima and her father. Now, recovering her equilibrium and patting forgiveness on the wildly excited Pluto, she wondered again about Inglestone Priory. The Guv'nor would have found himself accommodation in town handy for the Foreign Office, but she wondered why he would not be commuting at weekends to Delma Castle. Perhaps he had decided that Yorkshire was a bit of a hike on Friday evenings---especially in winter; no doubt all would be explained very soon.

"Look here, you grinning idiots!" hooted Bessie. "I'm stuck! Give me a hand!"

"How many would you like?"

"Cuckoos! I th-think my spinal column's snapped!" Bessie glowered wrathfully from her inelegant resting place amid the mailbags.

"Ha ha ha!"

A concerted effort by eight girls, a porter, two interested bystanders, a suspicious representative of the Royal Mail and the canine cause of it all were required to restore the wailing Bessie, her dislocated vertebrae, her fractured nervous system and the various other damaged portions of her anatomy to a semblance of working order. At last the exhausted party staggered weakly, still overcome with mirth, out of the little station to where two cars waited on the forecourt.

"Whew!" gasped Babs. "Why are our journeys always like this?"

"Ask Bessie," chuckled Janet.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Leila. "Isn't that just the dandiest little village you ever saw?"

"Isn't it just!" Mabs craned over Leila's shoulder to look appreciatively at the scene.

Afternoon dusk was trailing her purplish veil across the countryside, meeting the last crimson rays of the winter sun. Lights were beginning to twinkle along the quaint old village high street, and countryfolk bustled about their last minute Christmas shopping. Three of the little shops had delightful Georgian bow windows, in which coloured fairy lights and sparkling cottonwool 'snow' surrounded the Christmas fare displayed within. Toys, books, sweetmeats in one, then next door came the old fashioned chemist with enticing gifts of perfumes and toiletries, and then the village bakery.

The girls could almost smell the delicious waft from homemade bread, cakes and pastries as the cars threaded their way along the narrow, busy little street.

"I sus-say---can we stop?"

"What for, Fatima?"

"As if we didn't know!"

"Just for a snack---I'm starving."

"No, you fat fraud! You said your appetite was fractured in the station."

"Ha ha ha!"

But the teasing banter was good-natured. The Christmas spirit was with them all now, and in moments the cars would bring them to their destination. To one side a small group of children were carolling hopefully at the door of a large house, their voices sounding thinly to the happy girls in the cars. Then countryside, a mile of winding lane, the first glints of frost peppering the dark road, and then wide gates open to them, a short drive, and the first glimpse of Inglestone Priory.

"Was it a priory?"

"Are there ruins?"

"Doesn't it look old?"

A broad Tudor-Gothic entrance spilled warm amber light and the tall military figure of Colonel Carstairs stood framed within it, waiting to welcome his youthful guests. The cars seemed to be stopping quite a way from the entrance, then as the girls scrambled eagerly forth they saw why.

"It's a moat!"

"With a dinky little bridge to the front door!"

Over the ancient stone bridge they trooped and into the great hall of the Priory. Gasps of delight greeted the scene within, the glowing crackle of a vast log fire in a grate as big as an average-sized room, a gorgeous Christmas tree at least fifteen feet high and emblazoned with starry lamps to enhance the load of gaily wrapped gifts weighing down its branches, and---best of all if one's initials happened to be E.G.B.! ---a great oak refectory table groaning with festive goodies. At its centre gleamed a big silver punch bowl filled with mulled ginger wine and presided over by the dignified

Parkins, Delma Castle's butler. Oh, it was like coming home, after all, Jemima's expression seemed to say as she greeted the Carstairs' old family retainer.

"Eat and drink up, girls," the Colonel gestured, "and warm yourselves before Mrs. Pounds shows you up to your rooms. And then," his eyes twinkled, "I have a surprise for---"

"Yoo-oo-ee!"

The girls started, eyes widening in surprise and disbelief as that strange cry rang out. They stared up towards the head of the wide old staircase. "Where is she?" exclaimed Babs as the call they knew so well came again, overhead and impatient. The Colonel smiled broadly.

"Inkoosikana---do you not see me?"

"M'lizi!"

"She's up there---look, there's a minstrel's gallery!"

"M'lizi---you imp! I don't believe it!" Food and drink forgotten, the girls ran across the hall to swarm up the stairs, but M'lizi, their little black friend of so many adventures, was too impatient to complete the star appearance on the gallery that she had obviously intended to make. With a whoop of glee she tore along the landing and with a lithe spring on to the polished bannister skimmed down with the speed of a bird in full flight.

To Jemima, the Slim One, she gave her first greeting, but it was to Babs she turned with delight and perhaps a shade of concern behind her excitement. "Oh, Clever One, my heart feels good to know you are here. There is much to tell you---but later."

"M'lizi, you look marvellous," Mabs admired, and M'lizi forgot whatever was worrying her as she preened in front of the girls.

And looking very attractive indeed was M'lizi. Her dress was bright scarlet, of a soft fluffy lambswool, and round her shoulders was draped a furry white cape with dark spots that could have been leopard skin but whose styling owed more to Paris than anything the once wild little girl might have salvaged from her royal days in Shest. Gold chains jingled and gleamed against the scarlet dress and dainty black court shoes graced her slim feet. M'lizi looked a treat and well she knew it!

In the excited hours of reminiscences which followed the girls learned that Delma Castle was to be closed for several months while extensive repairs were made to its ancient fabric. So Colonel Carstairs had decided to lease Inglestone Priory while its owners were in the Far East.

"The place has changed hands several times during the past few years," mused the Colonel. "Strange for such a fine house."

"It must be very old," said Janet, gazing up at the magnificent hammerbeam roof.

"This part is early Tudor. The rest of the house is later, about 1650, and various additions have made since then," said the Colonel. He smiled indulgently. "No doubt you'll all be delighted to know it's honey-combed with secret passages. Two were found during the last re-wiring, and back at the turn of the century a secret room was found. Rumour has it that there was a second one, with an underground tunnel leading to the ruins of the original priory, which was twelfth century."

Eyes glowed and delighted smiles curved the girls' lips; secret passages! What fun they would have exploring.

"Is---is it haunted?" Bessie looked out somewhat fearfully from the depths of the biggest armchair.

"It would be very odd if a place as old and steeped in history as this one did not have its quota of ghosts," laughed the Colonel. "There is a very sad Mist Lady, said to seek endlessly for her tiny son who wandered out into a mist and was never found. And according to Imogen there's a ghostly Friar who---"

"Imogen?" Jemima looked enquiringly at her father.

"You'll meet her shortly." The Colonel inspected a fresh cigar and decided it was ready for lighting. "Charming girl, researching the history of a group of old houses for a book she's writing. In a way she was wished on us. The owners had given her permission to come here some time before they knew about their Thailand job. She lives alone, I gather, has an older brother somewhere, so it seemed churlish not to invite her to stay over for our houseparty. But she'll not bother you," Colonel Carstairs leaned back and stretched long legs towards the log-fire's warmth.

"Spends her time taking endless notes and drawing little maps. She'll tell you all you want to know about Inglestone."

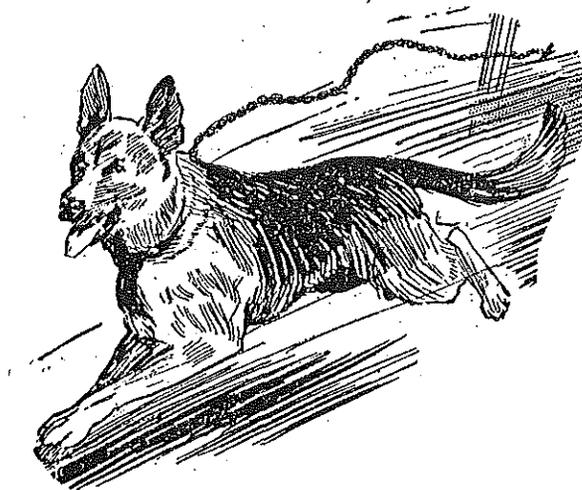
There was a silence. In the safety of numbers, the cosy warmth of the great fire, and the knowledge of unseen servants present in the house it was deliciously creepy to speculate on the possibility of hidden panels leading to dark mysterious places and encounters with sad ladies seeking their lost ones down the years. Clara looked down at Pluto, her invariably faithful pet who had actually deserted her to pour himself along the hearthrug, basking in the heat and pillowing his great head on M'lizi's feet. But because it was M'lizi, with her strange power over animals, Clara forgave him and ruffled affectionate fingers along his flank. Then she felt him stiffen and bristle.

"Pluto, old thing---what is it?"

A growl ran through him and suddenly he leapt up. He gave a stifled bark and faced the door, his ruff bristled and his teeth

showed whitely. Clara grabbed his collar and admonished him as she looked at the girl in the doorway.

She was tall, quite slender, with shoulder-length dark hair and a tanned complexion that betrayed time recently spent in some hot climate. She looked about nineteen, but her red lips were smiling affably enough despite Pluto's unfriendly welcome.



"Hi," she said to the company in general, moving towards the fireside. "It's getting really cold out there, Colonel."

He rose to his feet. "Girls, this is Imogen, our historical expert. "Imogen---my daughter, Jemima, and her friends."

Imogen acknowledged the introduction and smiled at Clara. "May I make friends---I adore dogs."

She seemed utterly charming and quite brave as she knelt down and encouraged the reluctant Pluto to come to her. Slowly he came and the watching girls relaxed, ready to accept the newcomer's obvious wish for friendship. Only Babs noticed that of them all only M'lizi remained seated. There was no smile on the black girl's lips or taut little features, and Babs felt a cold shiver run down her spine. She suddenly remembered the very first time she had seen M'lizi, on a peril-fraught day in the heart of the African jungle. They had all been prisoners of the Ingombi, even Mabs, whom M'lizi's tribe had set up as their queen. And Babs had seen M'lizi with a deadly blowpipe held to her lips, aimed directly at the hapless Mabs. On M'lizi's face had been such an expression of hatred that Babs had recoiled in horror before she dashed the pipe of death from M'lizi's hand.

That was long ago, and M'lizi had left those days behind her. But now, M'lizi's imperious little face wore that same expression as she stared at the attractive Imogen: sheer, implacable hatred.

\* \* \* \*

"But, M'lizi, why?"

Babs, Jemima and Mabs were gathered

in Babs' room later that night. They had partaken of a sumptuous meal, had their first glimpses of the house, although not by any means all of it, and taken possession of the lovely old bedrooms where they were to sleep. There were exclamations of delight as the girls beheld the great fourposters with billowing quilts and brocade curtains for the draught fearers, although central heating made shivers unlikely for the chums. Now they were preparing for bed, and M'lizi stared defiantly at Babs.

"She is not good, that one, that Imogen with her pretend smiles."

"But you can't know her, you little goose."

"I have been here, and Baba Carstairs has been here for two whole weeks. She has been here eight days." M'lizi's lower lip stuck out mutinously. "I need only one day, one look, to know. Why is she spying all over the house? Why is she tapping on the woodwork?"

"Now, now, little Spartan," said Jemima, "she is writing a learned tome, which no doubt will be published one of these days and reviewed in the very best Sunday newspapers."

"Pah!" hissed the black imp. "I, one time Queen of the Ingombi and Queen of Shest, am now learned. I learn from Baba Carstairs, and now I learn from another Clever One, whom I shall take you to meet tomorrow."

"Come on, M'lizi, be honest." Jemima eyed the Carstairs' problem child solemnly. "Sure you're not jealous?"

"Jealous!" Hands on hips, M'lizi looked astonished at the very idea. "I, who have been with the Baba Carstairs in Africa all this year, helping him with the palaver for my country's independence. Where I have aided the Baba Carstairs with much valuable counsel, which he greatly appreciates and never calls me the goose. So why should I, M'lizi, be jealous?"

The girls looked at one another, not daring to allow a flicker of humour to show on their faces, for when M'lizi got on her high horse, as Clara termed it, she was an imperious little adversary.

"But you can't make snap judgements just like that," Babs pointed out. "You have to have evidence."

"I do not need that. I have instinct and the magic of my ancestors. You, Inkoosikana, should know---"

Her closing words were lost. Somewhere in the house someone was screaming. Frantic, desperate screams.

"It's Bessie!" Babs and Jemima reached the door at the same time and flung it open. Doors were opening farther along the shadowy corridor, and Clara and Jean and Marjorie appeared. Babs rushed along to the door of the room where Bessie had settled down to read and dip into a box of chocolates only half an hour ago. The room was empty. A tousled bed and the open box of chocolates

on the bedside table were the only signs of the fat duffer's presence.

"Where has the idiot got herself to?"

Below, somewhere in silence of the kitchen regions, Pluto gave mouth. Clara fled for the stairs. "I'll go and let him out of the lobby," she cried over her shoulder. The girls were all talking at once and Babs said abruptly, "Be quiet--let's try and trace Bess by the sound."

The screams had become sobbing cries and seemed to be drifting farther away. By mutual consent the girls split into two parties and set off down the two branches at the end of the main corridor. The upper floor of Inglestone Priory seemed to be a positive warren of passageways, alcoves, two steps up and then a turning a few steps down. Mabs doubled down one, and was caught by Jemima. "Steady on, old chum. No sense in us all getting lost. Stick together, what!"

Babs was half excited, half scared. She was worried about poor Bessie, who had a consummate talent for getting into difficulties. There was no sound now, except their own quick breathing, and they were all aware of the atmosphere of the old house insidiously closing about them. But what a place to explore!

"Let's turn back, she's not here," said Babs, and they began to retrace their steps. Heavy framed pictures of long gone Inglestone ancestors gazed down from the panelled walls, the painted eyes seeming to follow the girls with eerie gaze. There were tapestries, and ghostly suits of armour lurking in niches, and heavy curtains that swayed, yet no draught seemed present to ruffle them. Once there was a scutter and a quick movement under a great forboding black oak cabinet and Mabs stifled a small scream. She hated mice, at least she hated them when they alarmed nerves already taut with uncertainty. Then they heard Pluto bark not so far away, heard the Colonel's deep tones and, blessedly, Bessie's protesting cries. The three girls were not at all sorry to see the familiar corridor and the dressing-gowned figures of their friends and the Colonel. Bessie looked terrified. She was still crying and her plump cheeks were the colour of ash. She was clinging to Marjorie Hazeldene.

"I sus-sus-saw him!" she sobbed. "Then he wasn't there. I---"

"You saw what?" demanded Clara.

"I sus-saw him---he raised his arm---and---and---" Bessie was shaking so much she was virtually incoherent. "I--I---"

"Where? And whom did you see?" the Colonel asked patiently.

"And what were you doing right away at the far end of the house?" exclaimed Janet Jordan.

"I--I wanted a drink of water," Bessie gulped. "I'd spilt my--m-my glass, and--"

"You would!"

"---and I fuf-found the bathroom and th-then I gig-got lost, and then I sus-saw this man in a long robe, and a hood, and he--he was coming for me and I screamed and then he disappeared through the wall and--and a kik-curtain came over me and---and the floor creaked and I couldn't fuf-find m-my spectacles and---"

"Sure you didn't have a nightmare after scoffing all those chocs?" said Clara unsympathetically.

Babs shook her head. "Come on, Fattikins let's get you back to bed. You're really scared, old thing, aren't you?"

"Oh, Bib-Babs, it was awful," moaned Bessie, turning gratefully to the one chum who really understood her. "I'll never sus-sleep tonight. I---"

"Whatever's going on?"

A new voice broke in on the scene as Imogen arrived, in a blue silk quilted dressing robe obviously hastily wrapped round her slim form. "Somebody seen a ghost or something?"

"Now whatever gave you that idea?" said the Tomboy gruffly, restraining Pluto, who was starting to rumble deep in his chest.

Imogen rubbed her eyes sleepily. "He doesn't seem to like me, does he?," she said with charming ruefulness. "Maybe he didn't like being awakened from his beauty sleep, either."

"Maybe not," said Babs, in what for her was quite a brusque tone. She started to pilot Bessie back into the plump duffer's



bedroom and closed the door firmly. "I'm going to stay with you tonight, Bess," she said, and was rewarded with such an expression a heartfelt relief that Babs knew it was worth the broken night's sleep which undoubtedly lay ahead.

But why had Imogen hinted that her beauty sleep had been disturbed? Because the gesture of rubbing her eyes had drawn attention to the fact that she was still fully made-up, including the full panoply of eye cosmetics. Strange, thought Babs tiredly, because she'd

been told that not removing make-up before turning in was bad for the skin---apart from what it did to the pillow case---and eye make-up especially, which could give you sore eyes if you slept in it. And something else...Babs called up another mental picture as she tucked Bessie in; hadn't that been a bit of jade green lace collar sticking up above the lapel of Imogen's house coat? The same colour blouse Imogen had worn at dinner? Still, Babs, crept in beside the still palpitating Bessie, maybe Imogen slept in her day clothes...

## Chapter 2.

"Well, if your phantom friar haunted you here last night, he sure must be slim to get through one of these cracks."

Leila sat back on her heels after an exhaustive examination of the solid linen-fold panelling at the blank end of the corridor. "Sure this is the right place, Fatima? These passages could all look alike in dim lighting."

"I dud-don't know." Bessie was still uneasy.

"This is the only corridor with a dead end," said Colonel Carstairs.

"It was probably blocked off centuries ago, judging by the age of the panelling," said Imogen, who had attached herself to the party immediately after breakfast when the exploration began.

She had shown them the secret room, a small windowless place which left the girls unimpressed, and the two known secret passages, one of which simply ran parallel with the main corridor, having access by sliding panels at each end, and the second one which linked the library to the drawing room. The girls had tapped and pressed and

twisted every protuberance in sight without discovering anything remotely resembling another hidden way, and were now beginning to experience disappointment. Somehow there had been no fun in having Imogen's company every inch of the way with her endless commentary on strapwork, finials, timbering, cusps, and motifs. M'lizi soon began hopping about impatiently.

"If we do not go out now it will be time to come back," she declared.

"Yes, come on!" The chums rushed eagerly to don warm togs. Pluto pranced along with them, overjoyed at the opportunity to work off surplus doggy energy, chasing and worrying the sticks Clara threw for him. The morning was sharp and frosty and exhilarating, and the walk to the village just long enough to sharpen Bessie's appetite. They stopped by tacit consent at the delightful little bakery whose tempting smells had wafted to them the previous day. Bessie was overjoyed to find a tiny cafe attached to the premises and they trooped in to order coffee and delicious pastries warm from the ovens.

"Mm-mm," sighed Bessie, visibly recovering from her fright, as her mouth rimmed with crumbs of mincepies. "I say, girls, these are super!"

Replete and restored, the girls parted company for a little while, Bessie, Jean, Janet and Marjorie to do some shopping, Clara and Mabs to walk Pluto, and Babs and Jemima to accompany M'lizi on some errand the imp had set her heart on.

"Where are you taking us?" Babs exclaimed as M'lizi led them unerringly along tiny winding alleys, up a hill, and along a narrow street of Georgian houses on the outskirts of the village. M'lizi stopped outside the last one, the bow window of which displayed a great number of antiquarian books.

"This is the home of the Other Clever One," M'lizi announced. "Come," she added imperiously, pushing open the door to the shop. Then she stopped at the sound of a very unpleasant voice. A man of about twenty-four was waving a book and shouting at a pretty dark-haired girl behind the little counter.

"It's disgraceful!" the man cried. "This is not a first edition. There's no value in it at all. How dared you people try to palm off a worthless copy on me? I demand my money back."

"If it isn't genuine, of course my father will refund the cost." The girl's face was flushed and unhappy. "But my father always verifies a first edition as far as is humanly possible."

"Pah!" The man slammed the book on the counter. "Of course, what can one expect from a man with your father's reputation for shady dealing? I'm surprised he was allowed to show his face back in this area."

"That is unjust!" the girl cried. "There was never any evidence to prove my father was ever guilty of shady dealing!"

"And none to prove he was innocent," the man sneered. "You just tell him I'll be back tomorrow for a refund and an apology."

He turned, and for a moment the chums glimpsed his dark, surly face with its lines of cruelty as he roughly shouldered his way through them, apparently oblivious to courtesy. A second too late M'lizi stuck out a foot and glowered after him before she ran into the shop.

"Vicky---who was that dung of the jackal!

Why does he make the bad palaver about your father? He---"

"Oh, M'lizi, I don't know who he is---just another unpleasant customer who has heard the old story about my father and that missing picture." The girl looked on the verge of tears though she was trying valiantly to smile. "But Dad's out, only for a little while. Are you coming through to wait?" Her smile encompassed Babs and Jemima as well.

Seeming perfectly at home, M'lizi went through into the little booklined sitting room and introduced the chums to Vicky Clive. Then, without preliminaries, M'lizi said: "A terrible thing happened to Vicky's father, many moons ago, at the place which is now your home, Slim One. This is what I wished to tell you, my clever Babs and Jemima, for it is essential that we have palaver and carry out my plan."

Babs looked puzzled. "I don't understand."

Vicky sighed. "I'd better explain. It started with a remark my father made to M'lizi, more as a joke, though a sad one, when she found us last week and told us she was living at the Priory. He was taken with her," Vicky smiled, "because she seemed so eager for reading matter about British history, and he said while she was there she had better look for his lost painting."

"Your father is a jolly brandisher of paintbrushes, what?" said Jemima, and Babs made an exasperated face at the irrepressible Jimmy.

"No," Vicky looked uncertainly at the monocled Fourth former---as strangers sometimes did! "My father is an art expert, especially oils, and several years ago the people who used to own the Priory decided to sell part of their collection. Dad was well-known and respected here because we owned this place as a summer retreat, and my mother was born here, so he was asked to value the pictures. Another expert valued the miniatures. As we were living in London in those days---my father was at the Haydn Gallery---he was invited to stay overnight or as long as was necessary. The second night he was there the Priory was burgled. Mostly the Georgian silver and some of the miniatures. The thieves were disturbed and didn't get any of the pictures in the library, thank goodness, nor was there any sign of their getting upstairs."

Vicky paused, her eyes sad. "Unfortunately my father had taken one of the pictures up to his room. It was thought it might be a Hals but Dad believed it was by one of Hals' sons, who used to copy his father's work. Even so, it would still be very valuable. Dad was very security conscious and locked both his door and the window, but the picture was gone the next morning."

"And your father was blamed?" Babs

whispered.

Vicky nodded. "There was no hard proof that he had somehow got it out of the house, or was in league with the thieves, and of course we know that's unthinkable, but the picture was never seen again. The house was searched several times, and some of the stolen silver did surface several months later, but no-one could think how that picture had vanished from a locked room. It ruined my father's career and finished him at the gallery. For nobody wanted to entrust valuables to a man mixed up in such a suspicious case."

M'lizi could stay silent no longer. "You see, Babs mine, it is so simple. There must be a secret passage from that room and that is how the thieves took the picture."

"But how would they know?" objected Vicky.

M'lizi shrugged small, expressive shoulders. "Perhaps the servants knew the thieves. Everyone knows that all old places in England have hidden places to hide the spies in olden days. So we must find it. Then all will be well again for Mr. Clive."

"As simple as that! Oh, M'lizi, you optimist!"

"The classic locked room mystery, ahem." Jemima affixed her monocle more firmly. "But methinks the trail will have gone cold by now, my budding old Sherlocks."

"Just what I told you last week, my little friend," said a pleasant, if resigned voice from the doorway.

Vicky's face lighted. "This is my father," she said proudly and made the introductions. The girls saw a tall, thin, slightly stooped man with silvering hair and a lean, clever face. His smile was whimsical as he regarded M'lizi. "Have you finished that book I gave you last Saturday? Already!"

"Yes---I am learning much so that I can join my friends at their great hall of knowledge," said M'lizi determinedly, "but first we have to find the place where the picture was taken."

"My dear, that house was put through a sieve. How do you expect to discover anything now?"

"Which room was it?" asked Jemima.

He drew a deep breath. "Let me see... yes, it was the fourth door along the main corridor, to the left of the staircase. There was a large portrait opposite, of a girl in a blue crinoline."

"She is still there!" M'lizi gave a yelp. "But that is the room of Imogen!"

Her voice expressed such total disgust that Babs had to laugh. Then she sobered. "I don't see how we're going to search a hidden way into the room while Imogen is in occupation."

M'lizi's black eyes flashed. "I do. No problem! M'lizi has a plan!"

\* \* \* \*

"Oh crumbs," groaned Clara, when they were back at the Priory. "We know M'lizi's plans of old."

The chums were gathered in Babs' room later that day for one of the imp's famous palavers. Despite any doubts about M'lizi's bright ideas they had taken an instant liking to Vicky and her father, and every instinct told them that dishonesty was the last thing to associate with those two gentle people. So they were all ready to aid and abet M'lizi. For the discovery of an unsuspected entry into the room from which the picture had so mysteriously vanished would certainly help to dispel the unpleasant suspicion which still hung over Mr. Clive.

M'lizi proceeded to issue orders. "I, with the aid of the Slim One, will persuade the Unwelcome One to change her room."

"How?"

"You will see." M'lizi said confidently. "You, Clever One, and Inkoosikana shall search within the walls. Leila from across the great sea, and the tall one from the farthest north" ---"Thank you!" interjected Jean Cartwright, the Scottish junior---"shall examine the floor."

"What!" Leila looked down at the broad solid old boards, probably dating back to Tudor days. "Do we excavate it or roll it up?"

"Ha ha ha!"

"A moment." Jemima polished her monocle. "I think it is time to chat to the Guv'nor."

"What about?"

"Oh, theses and thoses, and the science of geometrics, and inviting Vicky and her Guv to join our little party. What sayest thou?"

"Oh goody!"

Although all the chums had not met Vicky and her father their interest had been caught by the mystery of a painting lost from a locked room. And logic dictated it had to be through a secret panel.

M'lizi insisted on retaining her counsel as to ways of moving Imogen, and Jemima, obviously in the conspiracy, was no more forthcoming. Imogen continued to cling to the chums and freeing themselves threatened to become difficult. For she was a guest, and how could one be rude to someone who seemed determined to be charming to the world?

There were no scares that night. Bessie made up for lost sleep---noisily! She was still snoring when Babs heard stifled giggles and light footsteps outside her door quite early next morning. Curiosity won and Babs slipped into a cosy dressing-gown and peeped out just in time to see the backs of M'lizi and Jemima disappearing into Imogen's room. Babs hesitated, then stole along to the partly

open door. She heard Jemima's dulcet tones murmur something about a nice cup of tea in bed, a sleepy exclamation from Imogen, and then an angry cry.

"You stupid little idiot! It's all over the bed!"

Babs entered. M'lizi was capering about with a large towel, her face alight with malicious glee as she pretended to mop at the dripping bedclothes. "I am so sorry! I was just bringing the water to add to the teapot for lots more cups, and I tripped!"

"But it's cold water!" shrieked Imogen. "I'm soaked!"

"Tut-tut." Jemima frowned. "You must get some patent pick-ups for your feet, M'lizi. You might have fractured your jolly old vertabrae or something. Oh dear. Such wet water too. It's gone right through the mattress.

"We'll change the sheets!" M'lizi pranced round the bed, managing to send the teapot flying this time. "Shall I fill a hot-water bottle to dry the mattress, oh, Slim One?"

"No! Get away from me!" Imogen struggled to extricate herself from cold soggy bedding. "Oh! this is impossible!"

Jemima shuddered. "How can we bear to have this on our conscience? Do something, M'lizi, or Imogen will catch pneumonia."

"She must have another room---a dry one."

"I don't want another room!"

"But I insist. It's our fault." Jemima looked more owlish than ever. "I don't believe there are any spare mattresses left--- dry ones, that is. You must have my room. We'll help you to move, then Babs must suffer the inconvenience of this merry old Spartan's cold creaking bones beside her. Don't worry, Imogen dear. We'll make right the jolly old mishaps and everything."

Imogen did not stand much chance against ten determined chums, aided and abetted by Pluto, who decided to worry everything in sight and get in everyone's way. With a great deal of hilarity Jemima's room was virtually spring cleaned, crisp fresh linen put on the bed, and Imogen's belongings transferred by a chain of willing carriers. At last the grinning crew bowed out.

"I do feel mean," laughed Mabs as they hauled the soaked mattress along to a spare room and propped it up to dry before bringing in the one from Babs' room, "but we've now seen Imogen's charm crack. I think M'lizi's right; our Imogen is not quite as sweet as she'd have us believe."

"Am I not always right?" said the imp complacently.

"No!" they chorussed, "Now who has the tape measures?"

These were not articles usually packed in Christmas holiday luggage, but Marjorie

had one in her needlework case, and Mrs. Pounds, the housekeeper, produced one. The Colonel contributed a ruler and the offer of his assistance should they require it, and after lunch the girls adjourned to the room of the mystery.

It was one of the bigger bedrooms, situated on the south-west corner of the house, which meant two of the walls were outer ones, leaving two to concentrate on. The big four-poster stood against one of these and proved impossible to move.

"It must be fastened somewhere," said Jean, desisting breathlessly. They turned to the fourth wall, against which stood a vast old wardrobe of ancient panelled oak. Again, this resisted all attempts to shift it. After an afternoon of pushing and rapping and twisting and crevice seeking the girls were almost but not quite ready to concede defeat. Mabs sat down on the bed and Leila made for one of the two quaint alcoves, one at each side of the fourposter head, and sank down on the velvet covered seat within. After a moment she looked curiously down at the padded cushions. "Shall we have these off, girls?"

The cushions were hauled off and the built-in timber seat examined. Hope died again. The timber was very solid and set in the wall at both back and ends; there was no way that the seat would open or slide or in any way reveal a cavity. The second alcove was similarly treated and brought a similar blank.

"I'm starving," grumbled Bessie. "Isn't it tea-time yet?"

"No!"

Muttering darkly, Bessie went out, doubtless to her own room, which was next door, in search of the odd chocolate that might have got mislaid.

"Y'know," remarked Jemima after a few minutes contemplation of nothing in particular, "methinks a jolly old cuppa of the brew that refreshes wouldn't come amiss. What sayeth thou?"

"Seconded and thirded and---taken as read?"

"We'd better give Bess a call."

But the room was empty when Babs looked in, and she closed the door. "I expect she's gone down already."

They trooped downstairs, loving the festive appearance of the great hall below with its festoons of greenery and gaily coloured chains looped along the beams. At the foot of the stairs, Clara halted. "I think I'd better take Pluto out before it's completely dark. He needs a good gallop."

"Sounds like a jolly old Derby winner," chuckled Jemima. "I'll come with you--- a drop of good old ozone or hyper-ether or what ever won't go wrong. Get the old bellows aired, what-ho!"

"Ha ha ha!"

Babs elected to join them, and grabbing a couple of torches with their coats they set forth over the moat bridge and along the winding path through the grounds that eventually led to the old ruins of the original priory.

"Had enough, Boy?" Clara asked her pet, just as Babs gave an exclamation.

"There's someone over there---in the ruins. Oh, it's gone."

"Maybe a shadow."

Dusk was thickening now, and Babs switched on her torch. Then Pluto gave a deep growl and charged off like a bullet. "What the---?" Clara exclaimed, setting off in pursuit of her pet. It was soon plain that Babs had not been mistaken. When they panted and stumbled over the rough ground they found Pluto running in circles round a frightened figure whose voice was instantly familiar. It was the man who had made such unpleasant accusations in the Clives' bookshop.

"I say---call this damn brute off, can't you!"

"What are you doing here?" cried Clara, ignoring the plea and letting Pluto continue to pin the man on the spot without ever touching him.

"I--I thought I'd take a quick look at the ruins, the man said. "They are open to the public, aren't they?"

"Not at this time of year," Jemima told him coldly. This is private property. Better let him go, Clara."

Pluto came to Clara's command and the man hurried away, seeming thankful to escape. Pluto, although adored by all the chums could appear very menacing to a stranger. They watched the man until his shape and footsteps were lost to sight, then turned to make their way back. Except that Pluto had darted away on some other doggy exploration. They could hear him growling and worrying at something.

"Leave the bunnies alone!" Babs shouted with a laugh.

"Come on, Pluto!" called the Tomboy. "Tea-time!"

Pluto loomed up out of shadows, dragging something which he laid at Clara's feet, and looked up at her, thumping his tail. She looked down at the shapeless bundle and gingerly stirred it with her toe. "What have you found now, old boy?"

"It's a roll of cloth or something," hazarded Babs, and Jemima cautiously picked it up. The girls gasped as she shook out the folds.

It was a robe. A full friar's habit.

Suspicion struck all three of them at the same moment. Was the unpleasant man the "ghost" who had so frightened Bessie? And why? What was he up to?

When they returned to the Priory, eager with the news of their outing, they found pandemonium raging. The girls and the Colonel were gathered round a furious and defiant M'lizi, and a more quiet but accusing Imogen. She was saying:

"There's your ghost prankster. I tell you I caught her with this old muslin curtain draped over her, waving her arms and moaning, at the end of the corridor upstairs."

"M'lizi, is this true?" demanded the Colonel.

"No, Baba Carstairs! She did it!" M'lizi pointed angrily at the older girl. "She and that awful man who pretends to be the monk. The man who hates the Other Most Clever One. He caught me and she of the pretend history-making said I should be stopped." M'lizi, when excited, tended to lapse back into her own wonderful ways of the English language. Beyond reason now, she stamped her foot and almost spat at Imogen. "They are bad! Bad, bad, bad!" she screeched.

Imogen fell back. "She's crazy! A crazy little hooligan! I know it's no business of mine and I appreciate your hospitality very much, but really, I shall be glad to complete my research and get away from here." She looked on the verge of self-pitying tears, which didn't fool the unrepentant M'lizi for one moment.

The Colonel raised his hand. "Until I get to the bottom of this you'd better behave yourself, M'lizi. Understand?"

M'lizi's lower lip protruded, but a warning glance from Babs silenced a fresh outburst. The Colonel took a deep breath. "I think tea is indicated."

Concern was on the faces of all the girls, but most of all on that of gentle Marjorie Hazeldene, who unnoticed during the argument had hovered on the fringe of the group waiting for a chance to speak. Now she said anxiously: "Have you seen Bessie? I can't find her anywhere."

Bessie missing at a meal time! It was unheard of!

"Isn't she in her room?"

"No---I thought she must have followed you, Babs."

"What? Bessie go walking when she was hungry!"

"Ha ha ha!"

But the laughter was uneasy. "We'd better have a look for her," said Babs. "Come on, split up into twos. I'll take Mabs and we'll look in the library and the dining room, then the kitchen quarters." Quickly Babs allocated portions of the house for the willing search parties and they set off. Half an hour later they gathered again, white-faced and alarmed. There was not a sign of the lovable plump duffer anywhere.

Bessie had vanished.

\* \* \* \*

Tea was forgotten. They went through the house again. The Colonel and a couple of the menservants took lanterns and searched the grounds. No luck. The chums were desperately scared now. Led by Imogen, who seemed unwontedly alarmed herself, they traversed the hidden passage behind the upstairs corridor, searched the other known one from the library, which had been blocked off because it was considered unsafe, and opened the priest's hole. Still no Bessie.

"I couldn't eat anything." Marjorie shook her head, as did the others when dinner was ready. The Colonel insisted that they try, and unwillingly they took their places at the old refectory table. Hardly had they sat down when Clara rose. "I nearly forgot," she said miserably, "I must feed Pluto---he doesn't like to take his food from anyone except me---or the little maid at Cliff House. Will you excuse me, Colonel?"

"Of course." Ever courteous, he rose as she left the table, and silence fell again. By now the girls' imaginations were conjuring up the most miserable of fates for poor Bessie. Had she ventured out and got lost? Fallen somewhere? Was there a well into which she might have stumbled? The Colonel and Jemima had not been in the Priory much longer than the girls and had not yet explored all its mysteries. Imogen probably knew more than any of them---more than the owners---but she confessed herself baffled.



"I only wish I could think where your friend might be," she said, her dark eyes full of concern. From down the table M'lizi regarded her with undisguised malignity. Suddenly, without an apology, M'lizi tore out of the hall, shouting something about a plan!

Almost immediately she was back, with Clara leading Pluto, animated with new hope, "We're going to see if Pluto can get her scent," cried the Tomboy.

"Oh yes!" Dinner forgotten, the chums pushed back their chairs. With a sigh, Colonel Carstairs threw down his napkin and followed.

Up the stairs they rushed to Bessie's room. Her bag still lay on a chair, along

with her blue cardigan. The wardrobe door was half open and a half eaten mincepie lay on the floor just beside it. A tender little smile touched Babs' lips as she picked up the crumbly sticky remains and automatically closed the big door of the massive old wardrobe. There was a grating, creaking noise, and Jemima shook her head. "Much oil needed for the hinges of Inglestone!" No-one took any notice. "Try this, old boy." Clara held Bessie's slipper to his nose. "And this," Janet held out the cardigan. Leila grabbed a scarf, and Mabs a hairbrush. There was no shortage of Bessie's belongings scattered about the not very tidy bedroom.

Pluto sniffed and barked. Clara opened the door and the girls waited expectantly. Pluto did not move. "Find her!" Clara bade him. Pluto moved, only to the wardrobe, where he scratched at the door and whined softly.

The girls groaned with disappointment. "She's not in the wardrobe, silly! See?" Mabs flung open the door and Pluto leapt into the cavernous depths.

There he stayed, scratching the worn old floor of it and whining softly between little yelps. "Take her things out!" Leila cried, and the girls rapidly began taking out Bessie's clothes and shoes. Bessie's box of chocolates seemed to have been spilt and a squashed one showed where the plump duffer had inadvertently stood on one. Babs bent to pick up the box and as she straightened up caught her elbow painfully on some protuberance. She jumped back, pushing the door wide open with her other hand and the same creaking noise sounded that they had heard before.

"What is it Babs?"

"I don't know---I thought I felt the floor move after I bumped my elbow. Mind---Bessie's spilt her chocolates all over the floor."

"There is no floor!" Jemima exclaimed. "At least only half of it."

"Let me see." The Colonel motioned the excited girls aside, and shone his big torch into the wardrobe. "Egad! There is a trap! It---Oh, it's coming up! Girls---don't shut that door. Keep still!"

Scarcely able to contain their excitement the chums tried to obey his command. He came out, opened and closed the door a couple of times, and tried the bar of wood on the inner panel on which Babs grazed her arm.

"It's a primitive hoist!" he exclaimed. "Opening and closing the door works it, but the bar along that panel has to be turned a quarter turn to the right before it can operate. Ingenious! Most ingenious."

"Do you think Bessie---?" Marjorie's voice was frightened.

"We'll soon see. Wait here," ordered the Colonel. "I'm going down. You work the door, Jimmy."

Breathlessly they watched the Colonel's form descend slowly into the unknown depths. They heard his muffled voice call: "There are some stairs, I'm just going to have a quick look."

"And so am I," said Jemima. "Stand by, me old Spartans."

The girls brought up the hoist and Jemima stepped on to it. Then M'lizi tugged at Mabs' arm. "Come, and bring Inkoosikana."

Mabs gasped. "Of course!" There is probably one in the room next door---the Locked Room! Eureka! Have we cracked it?"

They tore into the next room and made for the wardrobe. Sure enough, there was the same section of bar, its cuts almost invisible, and the same mechanism. Down groaned the ancient hoist, and on it went Babs, to find herself in a passage some four feet broad, ending at the head of a narrow flight of stone steps. She called up excitedly: "That's the reason for that old deep seat in the alcove! It gives the headroom down here where the steps start. And---oh!" Babs screamed with disbelief and surprise and triumph. "Girls! I think I've found it! Pull me up! Quick! I've found the picture!"

The cries of excitement brought the others racing in, and a Pluto barking dementedly. It was unbelievable, but true. Babs, smudged with dust, her chestnut curls tousled and her blue eyes dancing with joy, was holding a gilt-framed oil painting of a jolly man in a broad hat and deep collar of white linen and lace.

"Let me see!" They crowded round, for the moment even poor Bessie forgotton. M'lizi did a wild caper and leapt on the bed, all her instincts vindicated at last. Now her new friend Mr. Clive would be cleared of any suspicion at all. Then they heard the Colonel's voice and their faces sobered. He came in and saw the picture, and said unsmilingly, "Good. Look after it girls. Now, Babs, will you come with me---she wants you."

"You've found---Bessie?"

He nodded. "She's hurt, but she'll be all right. Jemima's gone to get Parkins and a couple of the lads to help get her up. The poor child fell down those steps, she may have broken her ankle."

Babs sped after the Colonel, to be guided down the hidden way from the other room, to where poor Bessie sat curled up on ancient rubble, whimpering with fear and pain. Babs put her arms round the plump duffer, and petted her while Bessie sobbed out her story. She didn't know how it happened. She'd been trying to pick up her spilt chocolates and found the floor giving way under her. She'd stumbled along, trying to see where she was and how to get back up to her bedroom, and had toppled down the first flight of the hidden staircase.

"I s-shouted and s-shouted, bib-but nobody kik-came."

"It's going to be all right now," whispered Babs. "Don't worry."

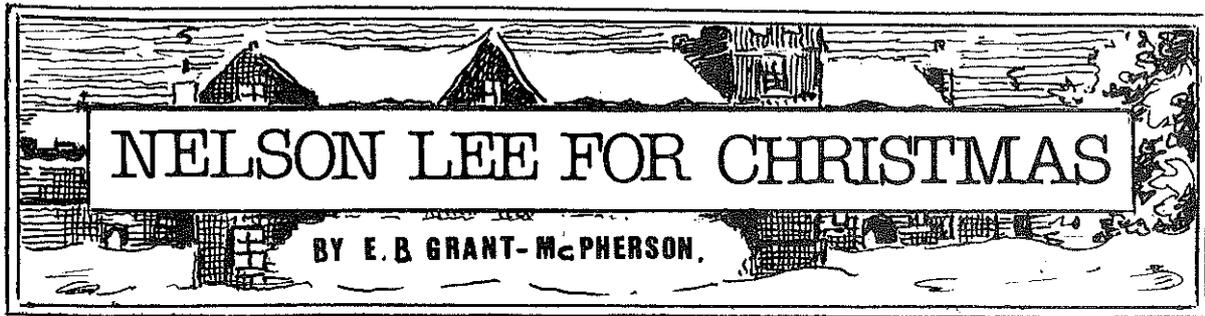
Much later, when Bessie's foot had been bound up and her bruises anointed, there was jubilation round the Yule fire in the great hall. Mr. Clive and Vicky arrived, overjoyed at the news, and Mr. Clive vaguely recalled bumping his arm exactly as Babs had done as he reached into the wardrobe when he placed the picture inside for added safety. When he closed the door the trap had functioned and the picture slipped down into the passage below where it had lain unsuspected for so long. "Although I don't know why the trap didn't open when the door was open this morning," he added.

"Because the mechanism on that side was malfunctioning," said the Colonel. "The bar was quite loose and slipped back itself, whereas its partner in the next room was still firm."

Imogen was very quiet. She had denied knowing anything about the unpleasant stranger, and also denied wanting to get into Inglestone in the hopes of locating the Priory treasure, supposed to be hidden during Henry's depredations of the unfortunate monasteries. Later, when the chums eagerly investigated the new secret way, it was found to link up to the library passage and another narrow tortuous stairway which ended at the panelling upstairs where Bessie had been terrified by the ghostly friar and M'lizi swore she had been "set up". Later enquiries also disclosed that Imogen was indeed an historian, but the unpleasant stranger was indeed her brother. She decided to depart the next morning, and Colonel Carstairs gave her the benefit of the doubt as to her motives in wishing to be at Inglestone. Her brother's accusations regarding the book he had brought from Mr. Clive proved to be actually fraudulent; he had substituted the worthless copy. But he was not seen again, and M'lizi openly rejoiced when Imogen was seen into her taxi on the morning of Christmas Eve. A strange, beguiling girl, but probably as treacherous as the imp believed. But after all, it was Christmas!

M'lizi and Bessie were the heroines of the hour---with Pluto the runner-up hero! As for the reputed treasure that might have eluded Henry's sack, well, that was another Christmas Quest to look forward to, cheered Jemima, raising her glass high.





"Snow" said Tommy Watson. "Eh!". "Snow" repeated Watson, "Look at it my sons, look and rejoice".

What better beginning could you have to a Christmas story than lots of snow, the common factor in all Edwy's Christmas series. Since its beginning in 1915 the Nelson Lee had a Xmas Number every year except the first, when of course it was purely a detective story paper. However although still a detective story No. 78 in the Christmas of 1916 was an excellent real double number, 68 pages and priced at 2d. The story opens in London, in a snow storm of course, the first few paragraphs beautifully descriptive of the seasonable weather in true E.S.B. style. The plot is quite involved, and brings in a number of Brooks characters, but is very readable and all ends happily, Eileen Dare and her Aunt, Douglas Clifford and his wife (nee Vera Zingrave) with Nelson Lee and Nipper helping to defeat Zingrave himself, aided by Jim the penman and three members of the combine who had caused the death of Eileen Dare's father.

By Christmas 1917, Nelson Lee and Nipper were at St. Frank's, although under the names of Mr. Alvington and Dick Bennett, which identities they had assumed to escape from the agents of a Chinese Tong that was on their trail. Thus the first of the Christmas stories proper was born. Dick Bennett and Mr. Alvington were spending the Yuletide holidays with Sir Montie Treggellis - West and Tommy Watson, his two chums, and Montie's guardian, Lord Westcliffe, at Treggellis Castle. In order not to be under the aliases they had taken the party into their confidence. The night before they arrived, Lord Westcliffe had seen the family ghost, the Phantom Cavalier, and, of course, the boys are most anxious to see it for themselves. The phantom duly turns up and Nelson Lee naturally lays it. The "ghost" was part of a plot to kidnap Sir Montie; it seems that when he was very young, he was mistaken for the prince of a little known Balkan State. A nice story, but the plot is rather complicated. However, all turns out well in the end, and a very happy Christmas is enjoyed by all.

Xmas 1918 and Sir Crawford Grey has invited a small party to his home, Grey Towers in Berkshire. Sir Crawford, his son Jack and Reggie Pitt were going down first and Nelson Lee, Nipper and Co. were to follow in a few days. On their arrival at the

Towers, quite late at night due to the snow, Jack, his father and Reggie were very surprised to find the place virtually closed with only the butler, Rance, and a couple of manservants present. Rance says that he had no idea that Sir Crawford was coming, but gets rooms ready and makes them hot drinks, which he drugs. Then after they have passed out he puts the three of them in one of the dungeons. The next day Handy and his two chums with Sir Edward Handforth are driving near the Towers when they get stuck in a snowdrift, and put up at the local inn.

Then Handy remembers that Grey Towers is not far away so they make their way to the castle. When they arrive, Rance does not want to let them in, but Sir Edward is most insistent so he admits them, and makes rooms up for them. He then apologises to Sir Edward, and brings in hot coffee which, of course, he has drugged. The next day Nelson Lee and Nipper and Co. turn up at the Towers. Rance is again awkward, and denies that anyone has been to the place, but Lee insists on staying, and, having recognised Rance as a villain, solves the mystery. Rance had sent most of the servants home for Christmas, and with the two footmen had arranged to rob the place. The unexpected visitors had upset his plans; however, the three villains are locked in the dungeons, more servants are obtained from the village and a Happy Xmas is enjoyed by all.

Christmas 1919 starts with our heroes stuck in a snowdrift. They are on their way to Cliff Castle in Kent, where Lord Dorrimore has invited the usual gang to spend the holidays with him. After a while they get free, and arrive at Yalemoor Station, the stop for Cliff Castle, where cars are waiting to take them to their destination. Dorrie has arranged to play a trick on the St. Frank's lads; he fakes a robbery and his kidnapping, by disappearing and leaving lots of false clues about. The juniors are very worried at first but, after a lot of detective work by Nipper, the final clue is put into place, they trace Lord Dorrimore, and a Merry Xmas is had by all.

The Christmas 1920 story is set in the middle of the Bannington Cinema series. When the school breaks up for Christmas, Sir Montie invites his friends including Solomon Levi and his father to spend the vacation with him at Tregellis Castle. Messers. Webb and Ryan, who own the old Bannington Cinema, plot to kidnap Mr. Levi, but the St. Frank's boys frustrate their plans. Not one of the best

Xmas yarns by a long way.

For 1921, the Christmas story again comes in the middle of a series. In this the Headmaster, Dr. Malcolm Stafford, is having a very rough time at the hands of one Hugh Trenton, a master at the old school, who is making him so unpopular that half the Remove is on the point of revolt.

Then Dorrie turns up and invites the whole of the Remove to his castle, for Christmas. All goes well until the rebels, led by Tucker and Armstrong, decide to hold a barring out, and secretly leave the castle. They make their way to St. Frank's where they take over and fortify the Ancient House. Nipper and Co. find out what they have done and follow them to try and get them out before the term starts, but they fail as the rebels are too strongly entrenched. So the new term begins with the rebels in possession of the Ancient House. A very good series, but not particularly Christmassy.

It is Christmas 1922; we are at St. Frank's, and Nipper and Co. and Handy and his chums are looking forward to a jolly time at Treggellis Castle, when a telegraph boy turns up with a message for Sir Montie. This says that as one of the servants caught scarlet fever they will not be able to go. Somerton sees all the long faces, and asks what is the matter. On being told, he invites the whole party to join him at Somerton Abbey, as he would otherwise be the only youngster among a lot of grown ups.

Lord Norberry, Sommy's guardian, realises it will probably be a very good thing they are coming as the youthful Duke is due for a big experience that Christmas, as it is his time to visit the "Locked Room" of the Somertons. There was a family tradition that the Duke of Somerton had to enter this room for the one and only time when he acceded to the title, or, if earlier on his 15th birthday. Sommy's birthday fell during the holidays. That night Fatty Little, who was also in the party, woke up hungry as usual, and decided to go downstairs to the dining room, remembering there were some biscuits on the sideboard. Making his way down the corridor, he saw a ghostly figure disappear into a doorway, and screamed out in terror.

Nipper and Pitt, who are sleeping in the same room are woken by his cry, and find him cowering in the corridor. They quieten him, and he tells them that the ghost vanished into a certain doorway which turns out to be that of the famous Locked Room. On the morrow, they tell Nelson Lee, who finds it to be a trick door. Opening it they find an ex-servant in there, and another door. The servant had found out the secret when employed there some time ago. He had acted, the ghost to keep his presence secret, but had himself been scared by noises from the inner room. The servant, who had escaped from prison, was locked up until the police came for him in the morning. The Duke of Somerton duly underwent his ordeal, and the holidays were voted a great success by all the juniors.

1923 was, as they say, a very good year. It opens as is customary with plenty of snow. Handy has invited a number of Removites to spend Christmas with him at his London home; they are just about to leave for the station when a telegram arrives saying that there has been a fire so the party is off. As it is too late to make any other arrangements that night, the Head invites them to spend it at his house. During the night the snow falls very heavily, and the boys go for a walk through the village of Bellton only to find that quite a number of the cottages are completely snowed up. They acquire some shovels, and help to dig them out. Having done so they find that some are Farmer Holt's employees, who have been on short time for a long period, and are not looking forward to a very happy Xmas. As the snow has blocked the railway line, and the boys are going to be stuck at the school for some time, Nipper gets the bright idea of playing Santa to the villagers.

So the boys dress up as animals and, with Nipper as Father Xmas, drag a sledge loaded with presents and Christmas fare all round the village distributing the goodies to both children and adults. They then find out that Irene Manners and Co. of Moor View School are spending Xmas at the school, as several of the girls' parents are abroad, so they all get together, and an excellent time is had by all. There is another story running through the series, about the return of a son to his aged mother, after he has made good in Australia. A very happy Christmas series, well written.

1924 is spent at Glenthorne Manor, and is a very good three-issue series. Archie Glenthorne has invited all his friends, as well as a number of the Moor View girls, to spend the holidays at his home. Handy, his younger brother Willy, and their sister Ena are of the party, which gives Willy, a great joker, a very good idea. All the boys and girls are decorating the big hall with streamers, etc. His sister is wearing a distinctive cardigan, which he gets her to change with that of Irene Manners. Handy has not noticed this and when Irene is under the mistletoe, Willy kids Handy into kissing her, under the impression, that she is his sister, much to everybody's amusement. Later that night some of the boys are singing carols outside the Manor, when one of the maids comes running across the lawn, screaming with terror, having heard noises in her bedroom at the lodge and thinking it is haunted. The juniors decide to sit up and wait for the ghost, when Archie remembers there is a secret passage running from the Manor to near the lodge. He shows them the secret panel, but, as they are entering it, Pitt hears a noise and runs to the door. However, whoever it was had vanished. The boys follow the tunnel to a spot where the roof had caved in; there they find a number of tools used in the clearing of the tunnel, obviously the cause of the knocking that the maid had heard.

Following the tunnel, they realise that it must pass almost under the bank in the



December 23, 1913.

village. Some of the temporary servants are involved. They overpower the boys and leave them tied up in the tunnel, to be released only after the robbery, which has been planned for Xmas.

Willy eventually manages to release them. The four criminals are captured, and handed over to the police, leaving the holiday-makers to enjoy a very happy Christmas.

And finally Christmas 1925, the best of the lot in my opinion.

It starts with a party at the Moor View School, to which the Removites have been invited. Willy Handforth decides that he and his chums should go too. The fags, however are in a disgusting condition with messy collars, dirty shoes, creased suits and not very clean faces either. They call at the school where a rather surprised maid shows them to the dining room where the party is. Everyone is appalled at the sight, and the girls tell the boys to throw them out.

Most of the boys and girls spend the holidays in London, whilst Willy and his chums are staying with Lemon's people in Derbyshire. A couple of days before Xmas, the three fags are out for a walk, when they pass a pair of massive iron gates leading to a park, the gates being well and truly padlocked.

'Juicy Lemon' tells them that it is one of Lord Dorrimore's castles, which is always kept locked over Christmas. Willy has an idea to get their own back for being thrown out of the party.

The three third formers send telegrams in Dorrie's name to the boys and girls who were at the party, inviting them to spend Xmas at the castle. They think it would be a good laugh to wait outside the locked gates, and see the faces of the Moor View girls and the St. Frank's boys when they had to turn round and go home again. But Mother Nature rules otherwise. There is a very heavy fall of snow, and it is well into the evening before the train bringing the chums finally halts in a deep cutting, with the weather getting worse every minute.

Pitt finds out that Dorrimore Castle is only a couple of miles way, so the party borrow lamps and, led by Phipps, set off for the castle. When they arrive after much struggling through snowdrifts etc. they are astounded to find the place locked up. Willy and Co. arrive, and are so genuinely upset that the girls forgive them.

As Lemon's house is overcrowded already, Pitt decides to break into the castle, knowing that Dorrie would not mind under the

circumstances. They find it is quite warm with the heating left on, but the larders are completely bare, and everyone goes to bed hungry

The next day, they find a magnificent breakfast laid out, but still with no staff in sight. They all tuck in, and leave the dining-room wondering what could have happened. Later Handy and his two chums hide behind some curtains and see, just before lunchtime, a door in the panelling open, and a number of servants enter and lay another meal. A butler

comes in to check everything; then the three schoolboys confront him. He explains that a friend of Lord Dorrimore had lost his fiancee many years ago on Christmas Eve. Ever since, he had come to the castle to remember her then, and had asked that all the meals be laid out for the party that had never happened.

The servants said that they were only too happy for the food to be eaten then and for the rest of the holidays, so the Christmas was celebrated in fine style after all.



Phipps led the way with the lantern, and the St. Frank's fellows followed in pairs—each pair with a girl between them.

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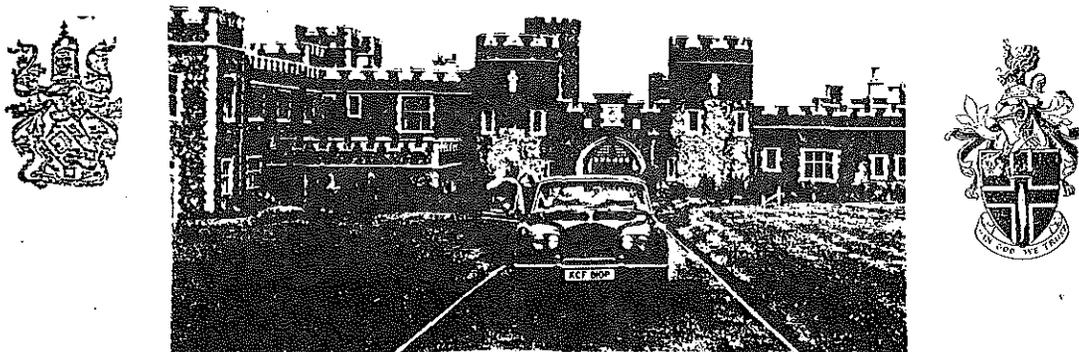
ANSWERS TO:

Guess these Hamilton Characters

1. James McCann, Headmaster, School for Slackers, High Coombe.
2. Ferrers Locke 'tec. relative of Doctor Locke.
3. Ken King of the Islands.
4. Bill Sampson, Headmaster of Packsaddle.
5. Mimble gardener of Greyfriars.
6. Len Lex, the schoolboy 'tec. of Oakshot School.
7. Jack "Bunny" Hare from the Modern Boy.
8. Rio Kid. (Rio being Spanish for river)

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**THE GREYFRIARS CLUB** first established in February 1977 to give more personal direct encouragement and feedback to the publishers of the beautiful reproductions of the **MAGNET & GEM** (and allied magazines) by means of club meetings at which members could personally meet the publisher and discuss further new reproductions, and which club is now in its **12th YEAR OF QUARTERLY MEETINGS** many of which have been attended by our Hon. President Howard (Bill) Baker, and Miss Edith Hood (Hon. President of **FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM & LIBRARY** trustees); - have great pleasure in extending **THE HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS** to our Presidents and to all hobby connoisseurs of goodwill and integrity everywhere, not forgetting our editors of the C.D./A's. As always membership of the club **IS COMPLETELY FREE** - see announcements C.D.A. 1985, 86 & 87, pages 112, 128 & 119: C.D. March 1980 page 24 etc.

Following our last meeting at the Castle on 21st August, when members once again had the pleasure of meeting Miss Edith Hood, the next meeting of the club will take place on Sunday, 26th of March 1989 at 2.00 p.m. at **KINGSGATE CASTLE, KENT**, near the home that our Frank Richards and Miss Edith Hood his housekeeper and secretary loved so well, and where after eight years of club and public viewing at **COURTFIELD** the **FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM & LIBRARY** consisting of our Frank's full size writing desk, his faithful old **REMINGTON** typewriters and small typing desk and stool, his carved wooden tobacco jar, movie camera and projector, his entire reference library and maps, his collection of **GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF GREYFRIARS SONGS** and manuscripts, volumes of **GREYFRIARS STORIES** in Braille for the blind, indeed 100's of relics - has been moved to **KINGSGATE CASTLE** for private viewing by appointment by club members making the usual telephoned confirmation of attendance to club meetings, to your elected Chairman R.F. (Bob) Acraman, Secretary and Treasurer of the Club and **CURATOR** of the **FRANK RICHARDS MUSUEM & LIBRARY** and Director of **KINGSGATE CASTLE** Tel. (STEVENAGE) 0438 352930 or (KINGSGATE CASTLE) 0843 64460.

\* \* \* \* \*

FROM ERIC FAYNE

My Very Dear Old Friends,

I feel privileged to be able to send a few lines, in our wonderful Annual which goes from strength to strength with every passing year, to my many hundreds of old friends.

I have missed my job very much - my job as your old Editor. Perhaps ancient Editor would be more appropriate. I have missed the enormous batch of mail which the post office used to deliver to Excelsior House each morning. All the same, I still get letters - a goodly heap of them - from plenty of my old friends in the hobby. And I am cheered beyond measure at the way our splendid Mary has kept the old flag flying, so loyally, enthusiastically, and successfully.

The post office is less efficient than it used to be (but in this modern world, what isn't less efficient, with the assured exception of our beloved S.P.C.D.?) and your letters keep me ticking over, as it were, and bring me much joy.

I live in the past, of course. But what's wrong with that? When I pay 1s/6d for one box of matches which, not so long ago, cost one penny, and when items in the awful supermarkets jump in price, at frequent intervals, by a shilling a time - then I think of the old days when the Magnet and Gem and the rest were 2d from the early twenties till the end of the thirties.

A visitor looked at one of my Magnets the other day. "Tuppence!" she exclaimed. "Why! You pay 29p for a paper like this in the shops to-day."

"There IS no paper like this in the shops to-day - alas!" I replied.

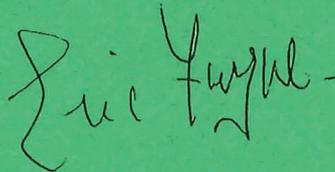
So many things remind us of the fictional schools we love. A clue for an 8-letter word in the crossword of my newspaper was as follows: "Makes half-a-dozen deliveries, we hear, in Derbyshire." It took me quite a while to get the answer. But had the clue been: "Makes half-a-dozen deliveries, we hear, at Greyfriars" I should have got the answer in less than a minute. I won't insult your intelligence by giving the answer. But, as you will know, he was a character who played the bully often, in the first 20 years of the Magnet, but for some reason he disappeared from the scene in the final decade of the paper.

It's pleasant to ramble on like this. Just like the old days when I thought up all sorts of triviality to include in my Editorials. But I must not waste space - and your time.

I wish you all a splendid old-fashioned Christmas, with plenty of good reading. Reading about Greyfriars, St. Frank's, Sexton Blake, and Tom Merry, of course.

And, as I once said to you, quite a long time ago: "Thank YOU for being YOU!"

Your old friend,



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I shall enjoy Christmas at St. Frank's as usual along with hobby friends.

JIM COOK

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No. 23

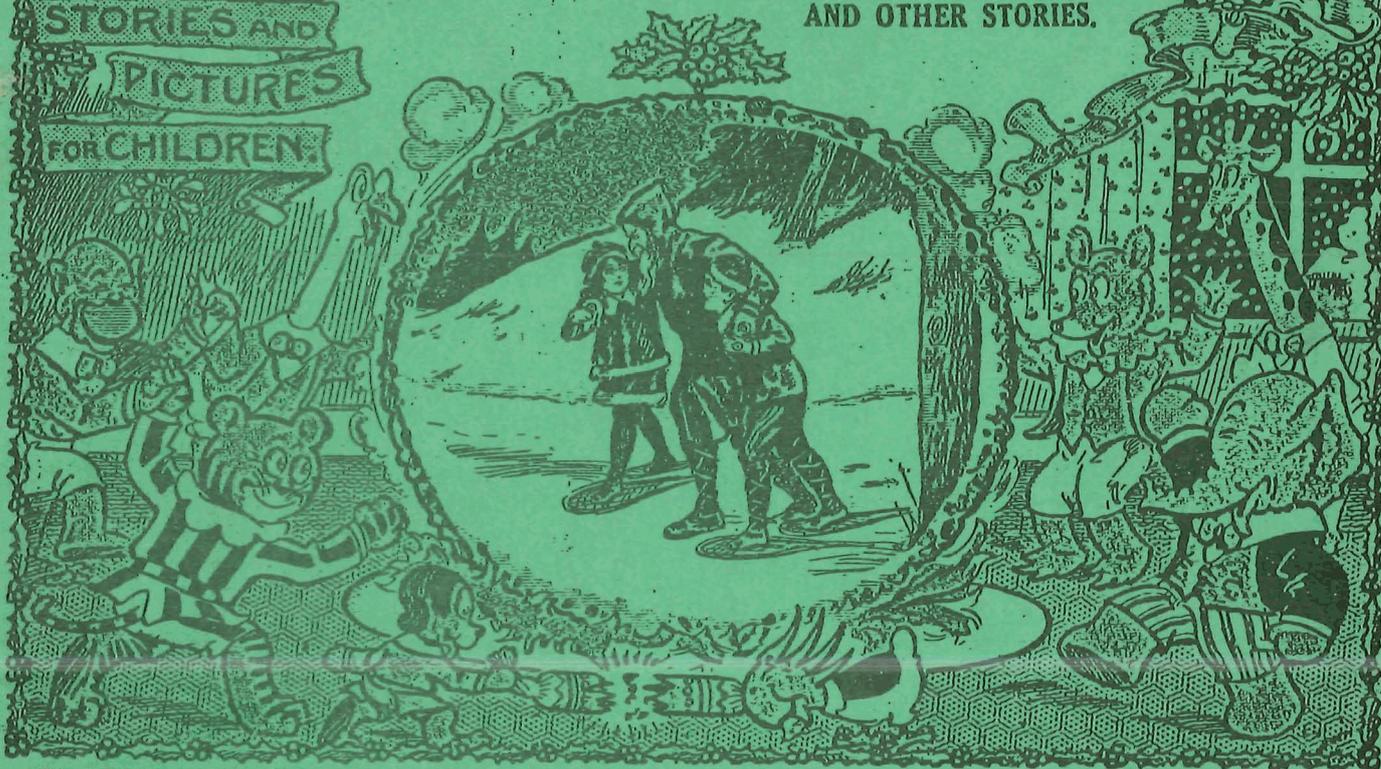
# Tiger Tim's Tales.

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

## FATHER CHRISTMAS OF THE SNOWS,

AND OTHER STORIES.

STORIES AND  
PICTURES  
FOR CHILDREN.



PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.



### CHRISTMAS EVE ON THE ROOF!

THE BRUIN BOYS TRY  
TO SHOW FATHER  
CHRISTMAS THE  
RIGHT CHIMNEY

"I don't think you have spelt 'chimney' right," said Jacko.

#### Hanging Up Their Stockings.

IT was Christmas Eve, and you may be sure the Bruin Boys knew it.

For days and weeks they had been looking forward to this great day, wondering and wondering what Father Christmas was likely to bring them.

"Do you think Father Christmas will bring me a trumpet?" Joey asked Mrs. Bruin for about the twentieth time.

"I do hope he will bring me a box of soldiers," said Tiger Tim. "Did you think to remind him, Mrs. Bruin?"

"You will get nothing at all if you keep on worrying me!" cried the good lady. "Father Christmas never brings anything at all to children who are tiresome!"

"But we haven't been very

tiresome to-day!" exclaimed Jacko. "Except Jumbo, who upset the soup down his coat!"

"Well, what about you?" retorted Jumbo crossly. "Father Christmas won't bring you a toy engine, if he knows that you wiped your sticky face on the clean towel! So there!"

"Come, come!" said Mrs. Bruin, with a smile. "I don't suppose any of you would get very much if I told Father Christmas all! The best thing you can do now is to go to bed and get to sleep as quickly as you can."

"Yes, let's go to bed now!" exclaimed Tiger Tim eagerly. "We've got our stockings to hang up, don't forget!"

So anxious were the boys to get to bed that night that Mrs. Bruin had to persuade them to stop and have a little

supper first. It was so unusual, for, as a rule, the boys grumbled more than enough when she told them it was time to go to bed.

"You won't forget to leave the door unlocked for Father Christmas to come in, will you?" said Joey, while they were having their supper. "We don't want him locked out, you know!"

"He won't be locked out!" laughed Mrs. Bruin. "Besides, Father Christmas doesn't trouble about doors! He comes down the chimney!"

"Of course he does!" added Tiger Tim. "Fancy you not knowing that, Joey!"

"Oh, I'd forgotten that!" said Joey, blushing at his ignorance when all the other boys laughed at him. "What time does he come?"