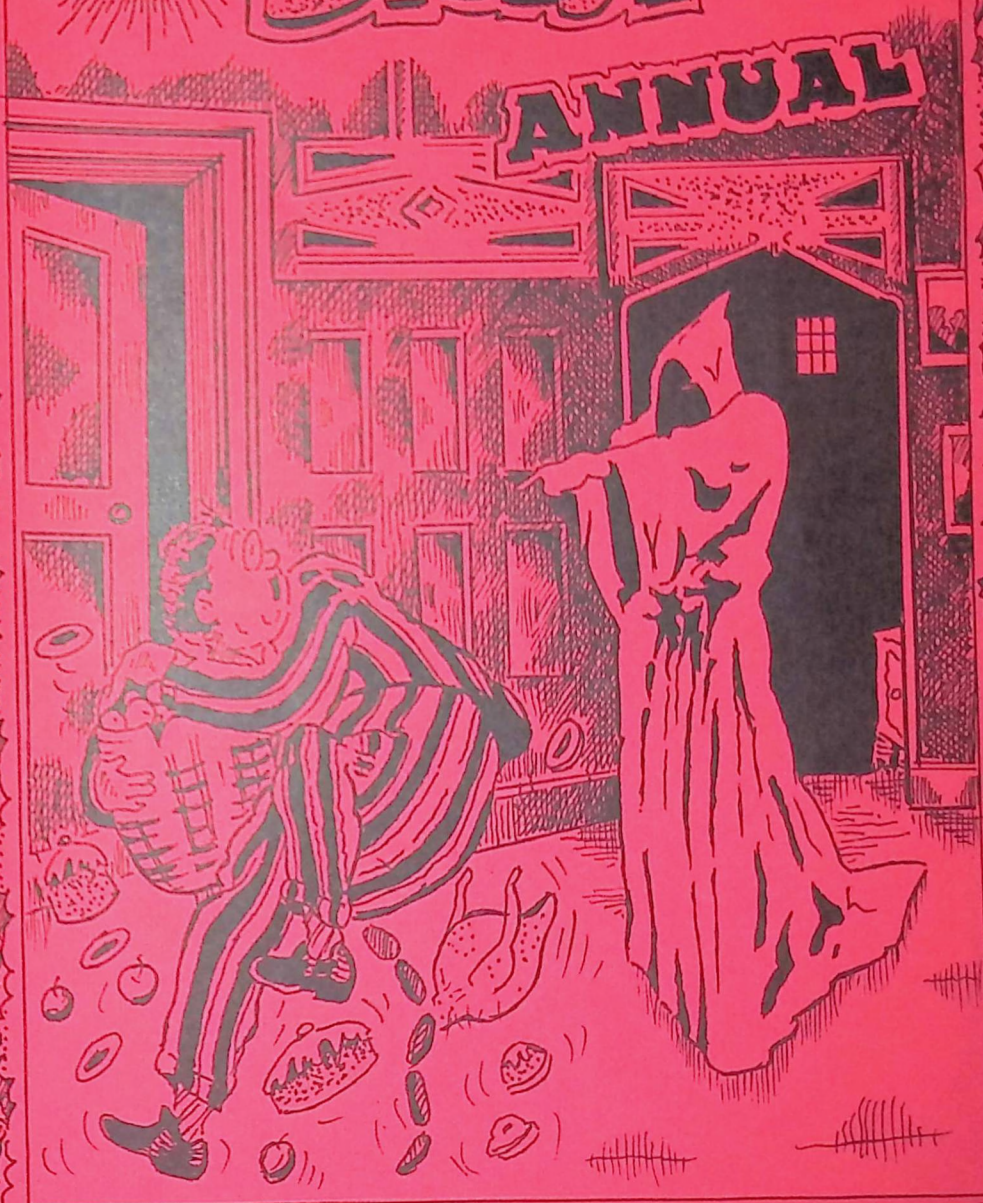
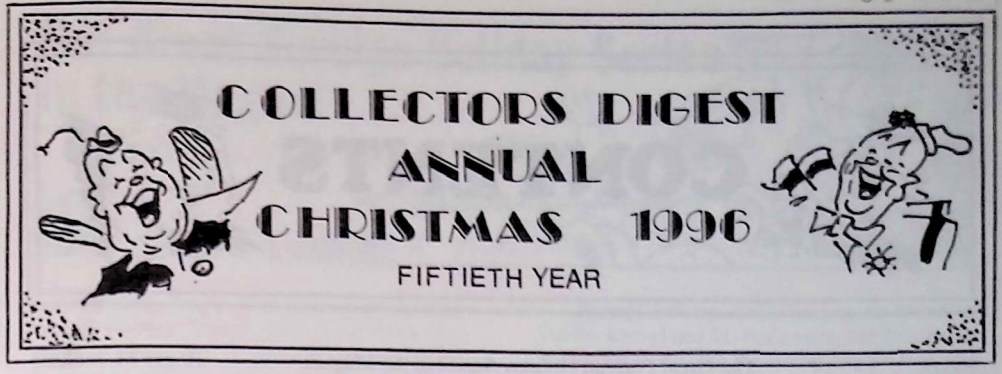
COLLECTORS DIGEST 1996 ANNUAL




Merry
Christmas
Bob Weber



EDITOR: MARY CADOGAN, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent. BR3 6PY

FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

This is indeed a very special number of the Annual, as befits our Golden year. We are celebrating half a century of recording our appreciation of favourite old papers, books and comics. Every one of us will cherish fond recollections of those glorious annuals that graced our childhoods - from TINY TOTS and TIGER TIM'S to the SCHOOL FRIEND and GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL. Our own Annual has, in fact, lasted longer than almost all of these colourful treasure-troves, although there is no doubt that the C.D.'s readers and contributors are still inspired by them.

Every year I say that we have produced one of our best ever Annuals, but this is no cliché: once again I'm sure I can truly make this comment. The volume that I now present to you provides as brightly as any of its forerunners a warmly satisfying blend of stories, pictures and articles. Many of our favourite papers are represented here as well as several lesser-known aspects of the hobby. All readers will join me in expressing gratitude to our enthusiastic band of contributors without whose dedication this Annual could not exist. I should like to convey special thanks to Henry Webb for drawing the Annual's cover and many of its headings, and to Una Hamilton Wright for permission to use the Frank Richards story BUNTER KNOWS HOW!

As always, I have to thank the staff of Quacks, our printers, for their ever willing help - and particularly Mandy O'Sullivan who has worked so hard to finish the Annual when her own great and happy event is very soon to take place. (It's sometimes seemed as if the Annual and the first O'Sullivan baby have been in a race to get born!)

Christmas is, of course, a time when we especially remember old and absent friends. I'd like to send a hearty greeting to my predecessor Editor, Eric Fayne, as well as recalling with gratitude the work of Herbert Leckenby, the Founder of the C.D. Sadly many of our early subscribers are now no longer with us but happily our circle is constantly being enriched by new readers of almost all ages. (This Annual includes two items by schoolboy contributors.)

I shall think of you all at Christmastime - and, when with family and friends you raise your own glasses during the festive season, perhaps you will drink a special toast to the C.D - and to its *next* 50 years!

I thank you all for your loyal and generous support, and wish you A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mary Cadogan.

CONTENTS

The Great Foreign Holiday Series in the Magnet

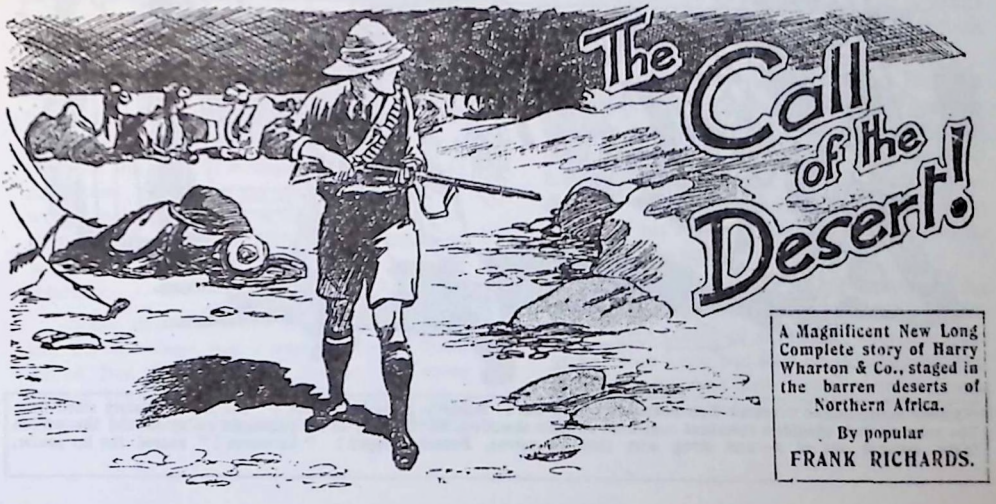
BY ROGER M. JENKINS

Although Charles Hamilton never travelled beyond Western Europe, there is no doubt that his most impressive foreign settings were those in other continents, with stories that combined careful research with a vivid imagination. Cedar Creek in British Columbia and the Rio Kid in Texas are but two examples of long-running series which used this very method. Sometimes people who have travelled extensively abroad read a Magnet foreign holiday series and search for geographical errors, forgetting that a work of fiction is not intended to be a guide book for tourists. I know for a fact that Charles Hamilton undertook careful background research, since I was the first person permitted to examine the library in the upstairs work room, before these books were dispersed to various destinations, and the pencil marks in the margins of the numerous travel books were clearly referable to descriptions in the foreign series. It must be admitted, however, that some of them were twenty or thirty years old when he began to use them, but the author was always careful to insert some modern touches, no doubt gleaned from reading current newspapers: for example, in the South Seas series, Mr. Vernon-Smith gave a little lecture on American attempts to drive down the world price of rubber at the expense of the growers, the millionaire having extensive interests in Malaya.

Foreign holiday series were to be found in the Rookwood and St. Jim's saga, but they never succeeded in making the strong impact that was the hallmark of the best Magnet series that were set abroad. It was the 1924 Sahara series in Nos. 862-9 that was the first real success. Yet it began quietly enough, with Bunter opening a letter from Major Cherry to his son, to discover that an Arab boy, Ali Ben Yusef, was coming to Greyfriars. Major Cherry had been involved with the Arabs during the war, and it was hinted that he had been another Lawrence of Arabia. Temple disguised himself as an Arab and had some harmless fun, but in the second number a serious note was struck when Bou Saoud, a former Spahi, appeared and demanded the Eye of Ahmed, the amulet of the chiefs. Ali Ben Yusef's father, the former Chief, had been murdered, but the usurper still lacked authority. The refusal to hand over the amulet led to the kidnapping of Ali and his being taken back to the Sarah. Major Cherry took the Famous Five and Bunter to conduct the search, whilst Mr. Hazeldene went to Algeria for his health, taking Peter, Marjorie, and Clara. The stage was all set and the cast assembled for a thrilling series.

As with most foreign holiday series, the journey out was described in great detail: the boat trip across the Channel, the train ride through France, the boat trip from Marseilles,

Major Cherry has carried out his intention of seeking Ali ben Yusef – once a Greyfriars schoolboy – in the desert fastnesses without being encumbered by the Greyfriars chums. But when Harry Wharton & Co. make up their minds to do a thing that thing is as good as done. Thus it is we see our cheery band of Removites setting forth on their own, scorning the innumerable perils of the journey, eager to answer –



A Magnificent New Long Complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., staged in the barren deserts of Northern Africa.

By popular

FRANK RICHARDS.

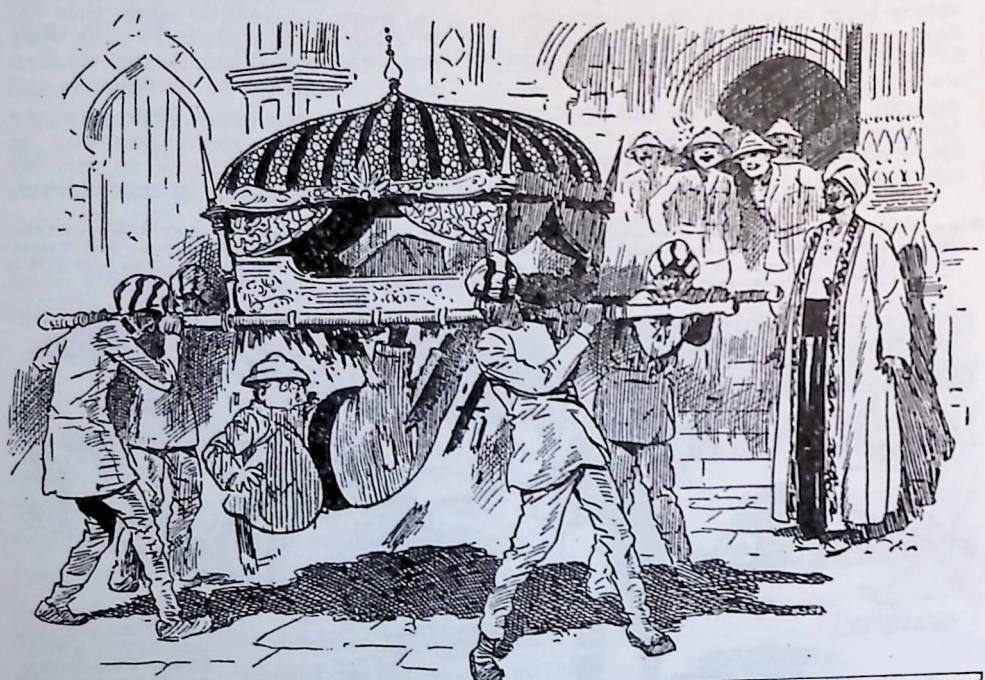
and the train ride in Algeria from Philipeville to Biskra: and the various incidents, mainly relevant to the plot, were related with conviction, but at the end of the series the return journey was omitted, probably being considered redundant. The Sahara series introduced a dishonest guide, in this case Ibrahim, and of course he was not the only one of his kind in Hamiltoniana.

With No. 866, the juniors left the civilisation of Biskra and journeyed into the desert in search of Major Cherry and Ali Ben Yusef, both prisoners of the usurping sheikh; in addition, Marjorie was also abducted. As the Sahara was entered, so the story became wilder, Ibrahim being adept with the knife and the juniors with rifles. Perhaps the most memorable section was when Bob Cherry was tied to the back of a camel, facing upwards to the sun, and so being carried for days across the desert, an episode which Charles Hamilton freely admitted was inspired by Byron's poem, 'Mazeppa'. Of course, all came right in the end, but this savage tale, told with riveting clarity, was undoubtedly the first of the really great foreign holiday series.

In the summer of 1926, the India series was published in Magnets 960-970, and it marked a new departure in that it was a visit to the home of one of the chief characters in the Greyfriars Remove form. Hurree Singh explained, in a most unusual passage of perfect English, that Baji Rao had been exiled for trying to incite a rebellion against Hurree Singh's uncle, Jam Bahadur. Baji Rao had returned from Russia, and the Jam was anxious about his nephew in England. Against this background, Wibley was claiming a place in the cricket team and, when he was refused, he lured Hurree Singh away and joined the team disguised as the Nabob. It seems astonishing that such an imposture could succeed, but it did, and Wibley was kidnapped by Nally Das and his associates.

The juniors did not leave England until No. 963, and the route was the same as the 1924 trip - train to Folkestone, cross-channel steamer, trains to Marseilles and a boat from there - only this time they were under the care of Colonel Wharton who had previous connections with Bhanipur. Much to Bunter's disgust, Colonel Wharton had hired a tramp steamer from Port Said, on condition that there were no other passengers, but the engineer had been bribed and the propeller was ruined, leaving them marooned in the Red Sea. Excitements like those of the Sahara series began again when there was an attempt to board the steamer. A rifle fight ended with the boarders being repelled: it was all a far cry from the cosy certainties of the Greyfriars Remove.

Bhanipur was not reached until the end of No. 967, but the closer that Hurree Singh came to his home, the greater was the change in his character. When a Mohammedan cursed them all as unbelievers, Hurree Singh remarked that at least the man was a native of India, implying that the British were not, a remark that seemed



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Look out! Bunter's going!" Crash! The Hindu bearers stood firm. The poles on their shoulders remained supported on their shoulders, but the body of the palanquin collapsed, and the bottom fairly dropped out of it—and along with that, of course, Bunter dropped! "Yarooooh!" roared the fat junior.

very prescient in 1926. In Bhanipur he wore a white linen suit with a jewel in his turban and a gem-encrusted scimitar by his side. What was surprising was that, having reached Bhanipur where his uncle was assured he would be safe, the juniors then left the shelter of the court and went off on elephants into the jungle on a tiger hunt, and Nally Das was successful in capturing the Nabob at last, the object being to force him to acknowledge Baji Rao as supreme ruler. It was Bunter who chanced upon the secret of the place of captivity, and he sought an interview with Mook Mookerjee, the Moonshee who had taught English to Hurree Singh. An interview was arranged with the Jam, and a search made where Bounder indicated. Hurree Singh rewarded Bunter with an enormous gold chain and a collar of diamonds.

Bunter played a completely different part in this series. In the Sahara series he was merely a passenger, grumbling and unpleasant, providing some humour but otherwise of little importance to the plot. In the India series, however, he was able, by pure luck, to save others from the attacks of Nally Dass, though his chafing at restrictions led him into rash courses because he was too foolish to apprehend dangers. Colonel Wharton was, more than once, about to send him home, but Bunter always contrived to avoid this humiliation. Bunter's obstinacy brought its just reward in the final number entitled "From India to Greyfriars", though the beginning was concerned for with the hunt for Baji Rao and his Russian adviser. Bunter determined to take back with him to Greyfriars one of the Indian servants at Bhanipur, but the Indian had other ideas, and he robbed Bunter of his gold and diamonds before absconding to Bombay. The last few chapters at Greyfriars were something of an anti-climax, but on the whole the series was a great success, and it marked another milestone in Magnet history.

The South Seas series of 1927 was unique among the great holiday series in that no member of the Greyfriars Remove (either permanent or temporary) was returning to his homeland. It began in a roundabout way in No. 1017, in which we were reminded that Redwing had left Greyfriars, as a result of the Bounder's taunts in the Dallas series, and Skinner had moved back into Study 4 with Vernon-Smith. When Skinner learned that Redwing was back from sea and that the Bounder was preparing to meet him, there was no underhand trick he would decline to use in order to keep the two friends apart, no doubt because he guessed he would have to leave Study 4 if Redwing returned.

Some new characters were already being introduced: there was a wooden-legged sailor called Ben Dance and a swarthy half-caste named Silvio Xero, both being at odds over a treasure chart on a disc which had been owned by Redwing's uncle, Black Peter, who had died in the South Seas. Fortunately, Mr. Vernon-Smith had to make a business trip to Singapore and the Marquesas Islands, and he laughingly agreed that the juniors could search for hidden treasure. They eventually sailed from Southampton in No. 1019 which is famous for one of the most amusing descriptions of life at Bunter Villa, and Bunter stowed away in the baggage room before they left.

By far the most important new character in the series was Soames, Mr. Vernon-Smith's suave and deferential valet, a rogue who had more than a passing interest in the treasure chart. When the juniors were on board a sailing ship to take them to the treasure isle of Caca, the millionaire kindly let them have Soames to look after them, but it was not long before Soames was master of the vessel, and determined to gain Black Peter's treasure for himself. Once they reached Caca, there was trouble from Soames, Silvio Xero, and the savages of the island.

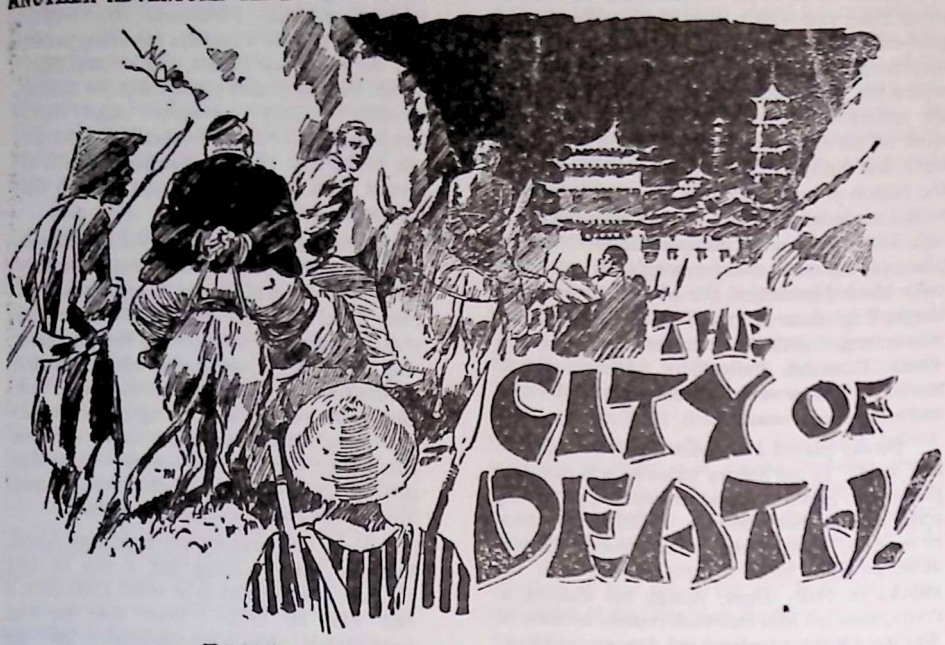
When the treasure was eventually found, Redwing left everything but a box of fifty priceless pearls, stated to be worth £500 each, a vast sum in 1927. Even after he had recompensed Mr. Vernon-Smith for the schooner that had been sunk, he was still extremely wealthy, and was said to be the only Greyfriars man who paid his own school fees. Soames re-appeared a year later in an attempt to gain money by a kidnapping plot, but after that Redwing's riches seem to have been forgotten, and it was not long before he was again being referred to as a poor sailor lad who was the unusual chum of the purse-proud Bounder.

The background to this series I vividly recall finding in a travel book belonging to the author, with heavy marginal lineations where items of special interest were found. No doubt Charles Hamilton came to the conclusion that all this research was too much to be wasted on a single Magnet series, and the King of the Islands stories later made full use of this background material. The second South Seas series in 1938 (technically better but far less vital and striking) did indeed feature King of the Islands, though not in a major role.

The 1927 series ended not with a bang but an anti-climax. Skinner managed to insert a notice in the stop-press of a Southend newspaper to the effect that the Famous Five had spent their holidays there, but Mr. Quelch managed to discover the truth, and Skinner was made to suffer for his sins. It was a curious ending to such a famous series.

The last of the really great foreign holiday series was the China series in Magnets 1175-86. There were points of similarity with the India series: Wun Lung and Hop Hi (his half-brother, for their father had three wives), were menaced by fellow-countrymen who intended harm; and

ANOTHER ADVENTURE THRILLER BY FAMOUS FRANK RICHARDS !



Harry Wharton & Co. in the hands of the merciless Tang Wang. . . Thousands of miles behind them is Greyfriars. . . Before them lies the City of Death !

Wun Lung decided to return to his native country for safety's sake. The perils were caused by his father's refusal to be blackmailed into paying money to the Mandarin Tang Wang who had ambitions of becoming Emperor of China.

Bunter was three times instrumental in saving Wun Lung, once at Greyfriars and twice at Wharton Lodge, where Ferrers Locke made his appearance, but perhaps the most astonishing episode was in No. 1177, when an aircraft machine-gunned Wharton Lodge and also parachuted an assassin on to the level part of the roof. Equally amazing was the fact that Tang Wang should have so many agents and resources in this country so quickly. It was thought safer, in all the circumstances, for Hop Hi to return to Greyfriars and for Wun Lung to return to his father in China, since he felt awkward at causing so much trouble at the Lodge. Certainly, Wun Lung's return to China was no safer than Hurree Singh's return to India, but both were starting points for memorable adventures abroad.

As usual, the juniors travelled to Folkestone to catch the ferry, but in order to shake off their pursuers they made a detour through Hawkinge, a village where Charles Hamilton once lived and where he still kept a holiday bungalow. They went across France to Marseilles, and Bunter kept turning up like a bad penny, with Ferrers Locke always trying to send him back home. The party made their way to China on the Silver Star yacht, and they met with many mishaps on the way, but all the Chinese agents of Tang Wang were just shadowy figures until they landed in Singapore and encountered the wealthy Ah Feng, who suddenly brought the menace to vivid life. Thereafter there were many memorable characters, like So Fat, the employee of Mr. Wun, and of course the Mandarin, Tang Wang himself. The secret was, of course, to portray these Chinese in their own environments and to give them patterns of speech in which ruthlessness could be masked by ironic politeness in accents of mock humility. When some of the juniors were in the power of the Mandarin, his second-in-command, O No, was presented in a slightly sympathetic light. Perhaps the most remarkable incident in China was when Ferrers Locke, with a perfect command of colloquial Chinese, was able to pass himself off as a native beggar.

It was long the custom of Hamilton to give many details of the outward journey of a foreign trip, but to condense the return trip in a chapter or two. The China series was unique in that it ended with a detailed adventure in the last issue, concerning a shipwrecked mariner picked up by the yacht, and the mystery surrounding him.

Bunter's part in the China series was a curious mixture of stubbornness and good fortune. His desire to go off on his own, like the

trip to Macao, led the others into difficulties, but his ridiculous antics often placed him in the very spot to prevent a disaster. Annoying as Bunter could be, the author would have been hard put to it to develop the plot without the Owl of the Remove, and these qualities were used again and again in the years to come.

What of all the other foreign holiday series in the Magnet? Only the Hollywood series falls within the ambit of those already discussed, and it certainly had many striking features, but it is difficult to consider the U.S.A. of this period as either a dangerous or an exotic place, and the idea of English schoolboys being necessary for a silent film is slightly ridiculous. Of the earlier series, it can be seen that the backgrounds were not really so well researched, and, though the later series had convincing settings, Billy Bunter among the cannibals was a faint joke, the trip to Brazil lacked convincing motivation, and the second South Seas series has already been mentioned. Sometimes, a second attempt exceeds the first, but this applies to school series, like the second Wharton the Rebel series. It would be difficult to imagine another China series, for example, especially as the Japanese later invaded China, and so when Wun Lung was kidnapped in 1937, he never got further than Europe. As for the Rio Kid, who seemed to belong to the Wild West, he was brought up to date in the Texas series in the Magnet, probably the least successful foreign holiday series. Perhaps the Kenya and the Egypt series have the most going for them, but none had the freshness and vividness of the famous four.

Charles Hamilton's own opinion of his foreign holiday series coincides with mine. His own collection of Magnets (now in the possession of the London Club's Hamiltonian Library) reveals that the only foreign series that he thought worth keeping were the four that are the subject of this article. Incidentally, he cared nothing for the condition of his Magnets. He folded back the front cover and tied each series roughly with string. As so much of his own collection went for salvage during the war, the few series that he kept back covered the mid-1920s to the early 1930s, a startling revelation of his own opinions of his stories. In public, he always maintained that the Magnet steadily improved until the very end, whereas in reality he clearly favoured the period 1924-32. I concur in his judgement, for these four foreign holiday series can be picked up and re-read with little loss of pleasure, simply because background and characterisation are so striking. Each of them has its own characteristics but, if I were forced to make a choice, I should settle for the China series, the last and greatest of them all.

Greetings to all Collectors' Digest readers from new boy Stan Mason who looks forward to meeting other Sexton Blake Fans.

STAN MASON, 37 GEORGIA ROAD, THORNTON HEATH, SURREY, CR7 8DU

* *

Merry Xmas and Prosperous New Year are wished to all Old Boys and Girls everywhere, especially to ye editor and Eric Fayne.

STUART WHITEHEAD, HYTHE

* *

Many pre-war D.C. Thomson Annuals, Magnet, Gem, Rover, Weeklies, and Rockets, SBLs, Nelson Lees. If interested write or call collect

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To the class of Greyfriars '96, take five hundred lines of the CD's Seasonal Good Wishes, and "suffer" detention with Bunter at Wharton Lodge for Christmas.

BARRIE STARK

* *

Greetings all Hobby friends.

JACK HUGHES, TOWNSVILLE, AUSTRALIA

* *

An Obsession with Words
'Can I Have a Word?' asks Brian Doyle

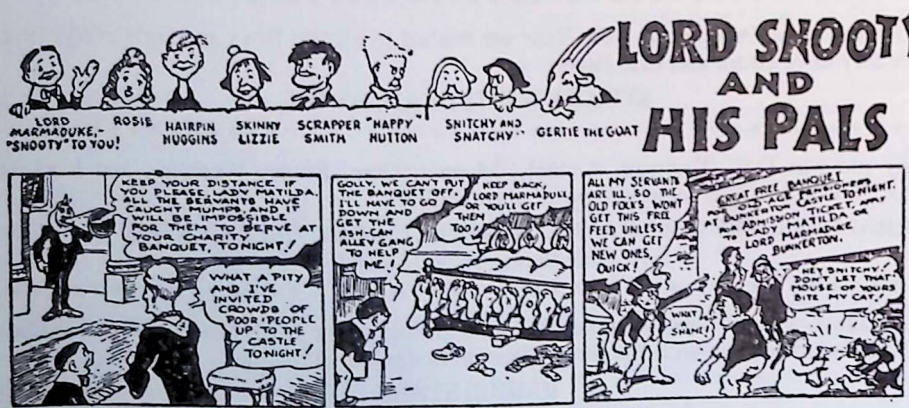
11.15 a.m. on Sunday, September 3rd, 1939. As the solemn and rather dry tones of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced to BBC Radio listeners that Britain was at war with Germany, and as practically every adult was transfixed in front of his or her wireless set, I was lazily lying in bed, aged nearly 9, avidly reading that week's copy of 'The Beano'. At that moment, the adventures of 'Eggo the Ostrich' were far more important to me than all this strange talk of war and someone called 'Herr Hitler'. My infant head was, rather like Eggo's, buried in the sand, as well as in the pages of 'The Beano'.

A few minutes later, the air raid sirens sounded for the first time (a false alarm) and my parents and I gathered in the downstairs hallway of our South London house uncertain of our next move. My father opened the front-door for no apparent reason. "The bombs'll start rainin' down any minute," called out Mr. Everett, our eternally-pessimistic next-door neighbour, from his front-porch. My father picked up a tin-hat he had acquired from somewhere and unexpectedly planted it firmly on my small head. This irritated me, since my newly-donned head-gear completely obscured my field of vision and, as I had now moved on to reading about 'Lord Snooty and His Pals', rudely interrupted my perusal of 'The Beano'.

"Perhaps we'd better go into the shelter," remarked my father. "We haven't got one," my mother reminded him. She was right. My father had been meaning to obtain and dig-in (or maybe 'dug-out'?) an Anderson air-raid shelter in our back-garden for weeks, but had never got around to it. By the end of the war, he still hadn't got around to it. It was an omission my mother approved. "If we go, then we'll all go together," she would often say mysteriously. Then the 'all-clear' siren sounded and everyone, including Mr. Everett next-door, laughed nervously and made weak jokes. I went back to bed and finished my 'Beano'.

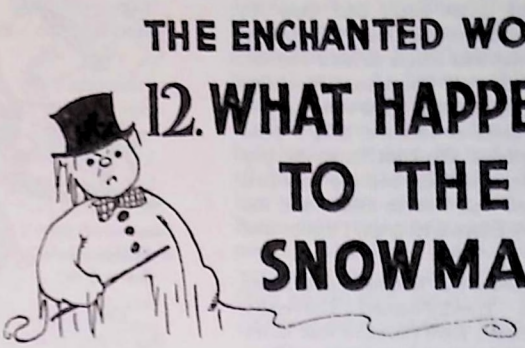
It was always like that with me. I was always reading, or listening to the radio. Or both. I could read a book, or whatever, and listen to, say, a radio play, both at the same time, and 'take in' both simultaneously. And re-cap on both to anyone who would listen. "That boy's got a two-track mind," my father would say, sounding neither critical nor approving. I thought it made me sound a bit like my model Hornby train lay-out, which I loved dearly, so I didn't mind. But reading was the thing with me, especially in childhood and early-teens. Words always came before action. I seemed, then as now, to have this strange obsession with words...

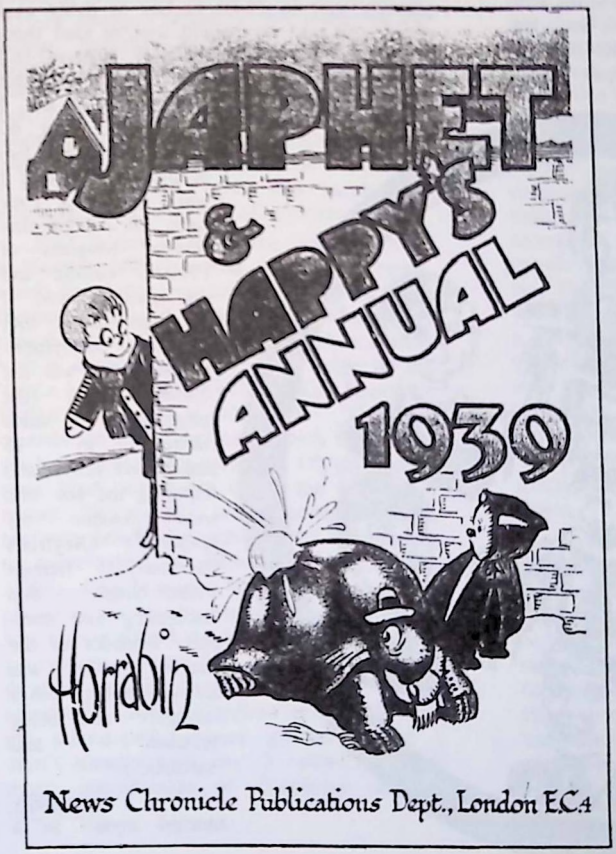
There was, of course, a time when I didn't - couldn't - read, but I don't really remember that barren period. It all really began, I suppose, with all the usual Annuals and picture-books given to me around the mid-1930s (I was born in 1930). I had lots of Annuals and so on as birthday and Christmas presents from my parents and from innumerable aunts and uncles, and one of the very first I can recall was a fat,



cardboard-paged tome called 'Baby's First Big Book', packed with large print and pictures and beginning with that well-known 'alphabet story' about an apple-pie - 'A ate it, B bought it, C cut it, D decorated it', and so on, with little, rather evil-looking, men twisted into the shapes of the appropriate letters. I got into trouble a couple of years later, when my mother discovered that an infant friend of mine had scrawled under the 'S' panel, 'S spat it out'. "I told you never to bring that Dennis Butler boy into the house," she stormed at me. Dennis Butler was the local 'undesirable'. He was only about 7 when I first knew him, but all right thinking Mothers warned their children about associating with him. Both boys and girls were forbidden to mix with him. Especially the girls. I could never quite understand this. All right, he was a bit scruffy and shabby, and he didn't seem to wash much, and he used to eat with his mouth open and he spat, and he used strange words now and again. But he was all right really, we all thought. Until we began to find our comics missing, or the occasional toy and pen-knife or whatever. But, despite all this, we rather liked Dennis Butler; I suppose it was the 'lure of the forbidden fruit' or something like that.

But I digress. Other favourites of mine at the time, were 'Rainbow', Tiger Tim', 'Rupert', and 'Happy and Japhet' Annuals, plus the usual comics, which my father often gave me when he arrived home from work. The first *real* books I remember receiving and reading were 'Little Black Sambo' and a similar small-sized book called 'Paw Paw the Pigmy'.





There was also - and how I looked forward to it - Enid Blyton's weekly little magazine 'Sunny Stories', full of that great lady's stories and serials and poems (and nice pictures, often by Dorothy Wheeler) to go with them. My favourite serials (later bought as books) included the trilogy 'The Enchanted Wood', 'The Magic Faraway Tree' and 'The Folk of the Faraway Tree', all about a group of children who regularly climbed a tall tree in the local woods and found a strange magical land at the top - a different one every time. I still think they were the best stories she ever wrote (along with 'The Adventures of the Wishing-Chair' and its sequel) and when I said this during a BBC Television interview many years ago, I received a shoal of letters from viewers who agreed with me and asking where they could get hold of them. They have never, of course, been out-of-print, and are still obtainable today. Why they don't adapt them for TV, I just don't know.....

Miss B. was a great influence on me (and no doubt on many other young children) since she

led me from her 'Sunny Stories' on to 'real' books and because she was so easy and exciting to read. A major stepping stone to literature was dear old Enid and I won't hear a word against her (despite the occasional critical bleatings of librarians and so-called 'experts' in children's reading).

As I grew slightly older, I regularly devoured such comics as 'Beano', 'Dandy', 'Tiger Tim's Weekly', 'Tip-Top', 'Knockout', 'Radio Fun' and 'Film Fun', and then my favourite boys' papers of the time, 'Hotspur' (I especially liked the Red Circle School stories), 'Skipper', 'Wizard' and 'Champion' (Rockfirst Rogan!). Strangely enough, I knew nothing of the 'Magnet' or 'Gem' or even the 'BOP'. I did read a few 'Detective Weeklies, however (my introduction to Sexton Blake) and the very first Blake story I read was 'Sexton Blake and the Man in Black' (by Edward Holmes, I discovered in later years).

My introduction to the 'Magnet' came at my prep-school, the grandly-named University School in Bexleyheath, Kent (three or four miles from my home in Abbey Wood in South-East London - I travelled there and back by trollybus). We all wore red-and-black striped blazers and caps, each featuring an impressive gold badge featuring the ornate letters 'U.S.', causing boys from other prep-schools in the area to shout 'Here come the Yanks!' at us. We longed for another local school quite near us (green-and-yellow blazers and caps) called Plumridge Independent School to have their initials emblazoned on their uniforms but, unfortunately it never happened. The most they managed pictorially on their school badges was a sort of purple plum (and quite wisely too, I should think).

One day I came home and told my mother that a boy at school named Hopgood was selling a pile of a paper called 'The Magnet' for a penny each. She said it was a paper she had loved when she was a girl (and apparently loved a boy named Bob Cherry) and she gave me the princely sum of five shillings (25p) (and it *was* a princely sum in 1941) to buy as many as I could; she said she would love to read them again, even if I didn't. Luckily, Hopgood still had his pile available the next day and I bought just over 60 copies (he threw in two or three extras seeing it was a bulk sale.) They were all salmon-pink covered 'Magnets' of 1939-40 vintage and my mother and I devoured them with enormous enjoyment. My favourite was the 'Lamb' series (the longest-ever series running to 16 consecutive stories and featuring the boy who soon became my favourite Greyfriars character, Herbert Vernon-Smith, that fascinating and complex 'Bounder of the Remove', who was always saying things 'savagely' and being 'reckless' and 'sarcastic').

I personally fancied myself as a

combination of Lord Mauleverer and Frank Nugent. Trying to model myself on the former (and I was still only 10) I got into trouble at school for affecting a languid air, lounging around with my hands in my pockets and speaking in what I fondly imagined was a rather classy drawl. After greatly annoying one of the Mistresses named Mrs. Martin (many of the Masters were away at the war), who gave me (quite rightly) 3 of 'the best' with a cane on each hand, I abandoned His Lordship and concentrated upon the more conventional Nugent.

Not long after I acquired the 'Magnets' from Hopgood, I was walking past a house two streets away from my home when I had another spot of luck. Glancing into a front-garden, I spotted a pile of what appeared to be comics and old boys' papers tied up neatly with string and lying next to a dustbin. Everyone was responding patriotically to the Government's appeal for paper salvage to help with the war effort. I furtively made a closer inspection and yes, the papers turned out to be 'Magnets', older than the one I already had and with orange-and-blue covers (Bunter was washing dishes, or was it a Master, on the top copy). I regret to say that, dismissing patriotism and the war effort from my guilty mind, I made off with them and found myself in possession of about 20 'Magnets' of 1937-38 vintage, including the whole of the famous 'Tuckshop Rebellion' series (another favourite). After that, and indeed for years, I was forever gazing into front-gardens hoping for more lucky finds, but without further success. I continued to read my 'Magnets' and other school stories avidly. My ambition - originally to be 'Just William' - was now to attend a wonderful public school like Greyfriars.

I did, in fact, go on (in the Spring of 1943) to Shooters Hill Grammar School, Woolwich, which had a fine reputation at the time. No flamboyant red-and black and gold blazers and caps there; just long grey trousers, black blazers with a discreet green-and-gold badge of the 'Grace A Dieu' galleon, built for King Henry the Eighth in Woolwich Dockyards. This was repeated on the school cap, which had green, black and gold stripes around it. Oh yes, and we wore black waistcoats under the blazers in winter. Shooters Hill wasn't quite Greyfriars, but I was delighted to note that the Headmaster, the white-haired and distinguished-looking Mr. Affleck, actually wore a mortar-board on special occasions and all the Masters wore gowns. It was a good school, equipped with laboratories, gymnasium, a large hall (which doubled as a theatre occasionally), the usual myriad classrooms - and an excellent library. Through my salmon-pink-coloured glasses (though I didn't actually wear any) I endowed it with many resemblances to Greyfriars and its inhabitants.

There was even a fat boy, though named Fairbrother and not Bunter, the maths Master had echoes of Quelch, a boy named Pinches used to play the 'Warsaw Concerto' rather brilliantly (that is, with no wong notes) on a piano in the music room (he was Hoskins, of course), a shock-headed boy named Farrar was burly and irritable and always barging around clumsily and getting into scrapes and he was Coker, and the handsome School Captain was named Ambler and we all rather hero-worshipped him and his prowess at rugby. When I read about the schools of today, I can't help feeling how very lucky I was. At Shooters Hill, there was no swearing, no sex talk, no smoking, no drugs (we wouldn't have known what they were!), no bullying, no stealing, no real unpleasantness at all, just the occasional fight. We were all too busy discussing what we had heard on BBC Radio the evening before, what books we were reading, what boys' papers and magazines we were following, how the sports were going, what films we had seen, and so on. There was, thank goodness, no pop music in those days either.

There was, of course, the war. I won't launch into my memories of this, since my space is limited! But it did obtrude into school life now and again. Within one month, in the Summer of 1944, I remember, Mr. Affleck, the Head made announcements at morning assembly that shook many of us, including me. Two of my favourite masters (Mr. Smith and Mr. Robertson, and one boy, Vincent of the Third) were killed in flying bomb incidents. Vince was a good friend of mine, Mr. Robertson taught English Literature, and we had got along well together, and Mr. Smith - 'V.V.' we called him, because of his initials - taught history and had made me Form Captain at some stage, so naturally I liked him too. All gone within a month. But this kind of thing was happening all over Britain, as it did during the Blitz in 1940-41. There was nothing we could do. We all said a prayer or two in Hall, then went to our classrooms. I remember thinking that I didn't even know Vincent's Christian name. It was all surnames at boys' schools in those days. Surnames or occasionally nicknames. Mine was 'Dead-Wide', after the then-Captain of Red Circle School in the 'Hotspur', Dead-Wide Dick Doyle.

I was still reading, and re-reading my small collection of 'Magnets' and still comparing Shooters Hill G.S. with Greyfriars. Our French Master wasn't actually French, like Mossoo, but he was excitable and couldn't keep order and we ragged him unmercifully as the Remove did M. Charpentier ("Please sir, the door's jammed, no sir, it won't open, sir, yes sir, we *are* pushing hard, are we all trapped sir? shall we climb out of the window sir?"). I was still play-acting and prone to copying Greyfriars boys. I was now a combination of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry.

I had found that being languid (à la Lord Mauleverer) was a bit of a bore and that affecting a rather attractive lazy drawl made people think I had some sort of speech impediment (it never happened to the 'Scarlet Pimpernel'...). My best friend at school at the time was Maddison, and he was another Greyfriars addict. He became Redwing for some reason and did his best to look sincere and troubled when I got into trouble. Things became somewhat complicated when he became obsessed with 'The Three Musketeers' (prompted by a marvellous BBC Radio serial then running) and modelled himself on 'D'Artagnan, exclaiming 'Ma Foi!' on every occasion and making his dream-girl, the beautiful Constance Bonacieux, counter my hearty 'Come on, Maddy, let's punt a ball around the quad before we go to the tuckshop' with 'D'Accord, mon ami, but remember, it's one for all and all for one!'.

Life was quite good fun at school, especially when, as I've said, I became Form Captain, once did the hat-trick in an Inter-Form cricket match, and starred in a couple of school plays presented in Hall before the whole school. In one, I played a tough Cockney burglar (adieu, Lord Mauleverer, as Maddy succinctly put it). It got so many laughs that we had to repeat the whole thing a few weeks later before a more general audience including parents and friends. 'Doyle of 4M gave a new meaning to the term 'tea-party' and produced the biggest laugh of the evening when he dropped the tea-pot,' wrote the school magazine reviewer. I didn't write to correct him that this had not been in the script.

The producer of this masterpiece of English light comedy (titled "Queer Street" by the way, but that was all right in those days...) was English master, Mr. Pickman, who was my favourite. Despite an endearing eccentricity of sitting at his desk in the form-room with his feet in the waste-paper basket, he was an intelligent, humorous and nice man, who looked rather like Western movie star Randolph Scott, and talked with enthusiasm and deep knowledge about English novels and plays, which made him a man after my own heart I met him years later when he was Headmaster of a local Primary School. 'Why did you used to sit with your feet in the waste-paper basket, sir - I mean Mr. Pickman,' I asked with interest, expecting some deeply philosophical reply. 'Because there was nowhere else to put them...' he said, with a twinkle in his eye. He still looked like Randolph Scott and, when we parted, I half-expected him to put on his ten-gallon hat (white, of course) and gallop off into the sunset. In fact, he put on his bicycle-clips and rode his cycle off into the busy High Street. That was the last time I ever saw him.

It was around this time that I accomplished something I've always been rather proud of. For no particular reason, I decided that it was time I learned to swim. So, armed with my swimming-trunks, a towel, and a book called 'The Boys and Girls Swim Book' by Sid G. Hedges, I went off to the Plumstead Public Swimming Baths, 15 minutes walk from my home. I would read a few paragraphs in the cubicle at the side of the pool, where I also left my clothes, then jump into the water and practise what I had just read (and observed from the book's drawings). I repeated this time after time over the 3-hour session, then returned the next day, and the next. I was really keen. After three weeks I could swim 25 lengths and dive off the top board. In another couple of weeks I could do seven different strokes, including the crawl, the butterfly and the back-stroke, plus the swallow dive off the top-board. I went swimming every day, including Sunday, for over a year. Then I represented my school at the sport. All due to Mr. Hedges. I wrote and thanked him. He wrote a charming, friendly letter back. 'It just shows you what can be done', he said. I haven't been swimming for years. There's too much chlorine in the water. Mr. Hedges' book didn't say anything about that.

But I'm straying from my early reading... There was a good school library and it introduced me to the school stories of Talbot Baines Reed, the 'Bulldog Drummond' saga by 'Sapper', the novels of John Buchan, and the science-fiction of H.G. Wells and Jules Verne (my favourite yarn of his was the trilogy which made up 'The Mysterious Island', which I loved even more than 'Robinson Crusoe'). I had earlier read some of Stevenson's books, including 'Treasure Island' and 'Kidnapped' which became (and remain) two of my favourites.

I had joined the local public library at Plumstead a couple of years before and had been working my through the school stories of Hylton Cleaver, Gunby Hadath, Richard Bird, Jeffrey Havilton, R.A.H. Goodyear, R.S. Warren Bell, Michael Poole, Anton Lind and P.G. Wodehouse (whose early 'Mike' I consider the best public school story ever written, apart, of course, from those of the great Charles Hamilton). 'Mike' is the one that introduces 'Psmith', you may recall. I loved Cleaver's endearing and hilarious Mr. Dennett, a housemaster at Greyminster School (and also his stories about Harley) and especially recall a cricket match played in the moonlight in his 'Brother 'O Mine'.

I didn't restrict my childhood literary diet to school stories, of course. I discovered the books of E. Nesbit, who became, and is still, my very favourite children's writer (though, like all the best children's writers, you can enjoy her books at any age; I know I still do). I especially loved her 'The Magic City', 'The Enchanted Castle' and 'The Phoenix and the Carpet'. I worked my way through all of Arthur Ransome and most of

the well-known children's authors of the 1930s and 1940s. Many books were introduced to me by regularly listening to the marvellous BBC Radio programme 'Children's Hour', broadcast every day between 5-6 p.m., and which frequently serialised children's books, old and new. My top favourite serial was John Masefield's 'The Box of Delights' and its pre-sequel 'The Midnight Folk'. I quickly sought out these books and was not disappointed, both were superb and made up a unique and memorable duo of volumes. Via 'Children's Hour' I also met (and read) 'Toytown', 'Worzel Gummidge', Pamela Brown's delightful 'The Swish of the Curtain' and its sequels; also 'The Prisoner of Zenda', 'The Spanish Galleon' (a little-known but superlative adventure story by Tudur Watkins), 'The Happy Mariners' (by Gerald Bullett), Mary' Norton's 'The Magic Bed-knob' and its sequel 'Bonfires and Broomsticks' (they were later filmed by Disney as 'Bed-knobs and Broomsticks', but retained little of the charm of the originals), several Noel Streatfeilds and Malcolm Savilles and, one of the very best, Howard Spring's 'Tumbledown Dick' (little-known today and out-of-print for many years). There were many more, but perhaps these few titles might revive a memory or two...

The 'adult' BBC Radio serials, broadcast in the evenings, also played their part in introducing me to such people as Sherlock Holmes, Raffles, Fu Manchu, Beau Geste, Paul Temple, The Count of Monte Cristo, The Three Musketeers, and many 'classics'.

I haven't mentioned the subject of 'comic swapping' yet, which naturally included boys' papers too. In later years, during chats on the old papers with friends and fellow-collectors, I have rarely encountered anyone who remembers this delightful occupation. Perhaps it was confined to South-East London? It worked like this: you would stroll around the local streets calling on various friends and acquaintances, carrying a bulky roll of comics and boys' papers you had read and ask 'Any comics to exchange?' If it was a good moment and he was not in the middle of his tea or whatever, he would disappear, then re-appear with a pile of his own comics and papers. Transactions would usually take place on the front-doormat (I can still feel the imprints of the rough coconut-matting on my elbows and hands!) and you would browse through his pile, while he did the same with yours. Ideally, we would each end up with a stack of papers we hadn't read. There would be some tricky negotiations. 'I'll give you these 3 'Film Funs', 4 'Radio Funs', 2 'Hotspurs' and 5 'Beanos' for those' ... and so on. Before matters were settled to mutual satisfaction, there would be amiable arguments about papers that were torn or incomplete or scribbled on, but the end result was usually that, after several such calls, you arrived back home with - joyful thought! - a stack of comics and papers you hadn't read before, and a feast of pleasures in store.

Books occasionally entered into these heady transactions, especially if the friend particularly wanted, say, a dozen 'Hotspurs' he hadn't read, and didn't have a similar number of papers that were acceptable, i.e. that you didn't want because you had read them. He would vanish to his room to raid his bookshelves to offer an alternative 'swap'. I was introduced to a bound volume of 'The Captain' in this way, grudgingly receiving it in return for a dozen or so 'Radio Funs'. I'd never heard of it before, but what a treasure it turned out to be, packed with marvellous school yarns, including a long serial about Harley School by Hylton Cleaver. On one occasion, when busily 'swapping' on my own doorstep, my mother turned up in the nick of time to prevent me, in a somewhat embarrassed way, from giving away her copy of Marie Stopes' then highly-controversial book 'Married Love' in exchange for 8 'Knockouts' and a couple of 'Wizards'!

All this was during the first three or four years of World War Two, and the curious thing was that (although they had all ceased publication by then) nobody in my circle ever seemed to have any copies of 'The Magnet', 'Gem', 'Nelson Lee', 'Detective Weekly', etc. to swap. In fact, I never saw any of these famous old papers, apart from my original small collection of 'Magnets' and a dozen or so 'Detective Weeklies', until I joined the London Old Boys' Book Club many years later (in 1959, in fact). Why was this, I wonder? Didn't schoolboys in the Woolwich area of South-East London ever read them? If not, why not? If I did occasionally mention such papers to my friends, their verdict appeared to be that they were 'a bit boring and old-fashioned'. They much preferred the exploits of the Red Circle schoolboys (including 'Dead-Wide Dick Doyle'!) in the current 'Hotspur', which I also read and enjoyed myself. But these didn't, in my view, even compare with the exploits of the Greyfriars schoolboys. And, indeed, still don't!

When I was about 15, I took to taking a bus to London's West End, where I discovered the joys of Foyle's and other secondhand bookshops in the Charing Cross Road. I used to arrive in Town in early-afternoon, book a stool for the gallery queue at a theatre - combined cost 3 shillings (15p) - then spend the intervening time browsing around the bookshops. In those days, Foyle's was a much better bookshop than it is today, especially in the way that it sold vast numbers of secondhand books (which it doesn't these days, sadly); they were arranged untidily on long shelves and racks outside the shop which were packed with 3d and 6d bargains. I often used to 'subsidise' my West End trips by buying a few likely secondhand books from Foyle's outside 'junk' shelves, taking them

home in a carrier-bag, cleaning them up with a damp cloth, a spot of furniture polish and a pencil eraser, and then taking them back to Foyle's, but this time to their Antiquarian Books Department upstairs, where they would often give me several times the price I had paid for them downstairs in the first place!

In this cunning way, I would turn an outlay of, say, 3/- (15p) into a profit of at least 10/- - (50p) - not bad for the mid-1940s! My efforts in this field were perhaps (as Richmal Crompton might have said of William's enterprises) worthy of a better cause. But the causes they went to kept me happy. Many a theatre visit, or a day's cricket at Lord's - or a purchase of more books! - were financed in this way. When I had the privilege of working on a film with Sir Laurence Olivier a few years ago (name-dropping time, folks - though I hate doing it, as I said to the Queen only last week...), I told him this story when we were chatting on the set one day, and how such book buying and selling had enabled me to see his memorable performance as 'King Lear' with the Old Vic Company in 1946. He laughed loudly and said he wished he had thought of such an idea when he was a hard-up drama student, and that he hoped that his 'Lear' had been worth all the trouble I'd taken. I assured him humbly that it certainly had been, and he fell to talking about playing Lear, as I listened with all my ears...

Words - and books - still pay a very big part in my life. I won't begin to discuss my collection of around 35,000 books (plus many magazines) for that would take forever. But, apart from the old boys' book and magazine field, my own favourite authors include Charles Dickens (I was really introduced to him by David Lean's great film of 'Great Expectations' in 1946, and this still remains my favourite move of all time), the great American novelist Thomas Wolfe (author of 'Look, Homeward, Angel' and 'You Can't Go Home Again'), J.B. Priestley, Somerset Maugham, Arthur Conan Doyle (no relation as far as I know, although my late wife's maiden name was Holmes, and we lived at Flat A, 122 Baker Street, London - 221B reversed! - soon after we were first married...), George Bernard Shaw (I love reading his plays, as well as seeing them), and such humorous writers as Jerome K. Jerome ('Three Men in a Boat', etc.) and George Weedon Grossmith ('The Diary of a Nobody') and, of course, the entire works of P.G. Wodehouse (as well as another hilarious novelist, largely forgotten these days, Joan Butler). And even Shakespeare, when I'm in the mood...

Apart from school, I was really introduced to William S. when I was taken in a school party to see Olivier's superb film of 'Henry the Fifth' at a local Odeon, in Eltham. I was so bowled over by the picture that I called into the public library on my way home and borrowed the play. I was determined to learn the King's rousing and inspiring 'Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more...' speech just prior to the Battle of Agincourt and, by slowing walking home from the library the long way round and reading it over and over as I walked (and being nearly run over by passing traffic three times), I knew it all by heart by the time I eventually arrived home three-quarters-of-an-hour later. I still know it to this day.

I have earned my living largely by, and with, words, for most of my life. On leaving school, I worked in Woolwich Central Public Library for ten years (minus two years National Service in the R.A.F.). More words. For the last 40 years I have worked as a publicist/publicity director in the feature film business (90-odd movies, with locations in over 20 countries), where a big part of the job has been interviewing stars, producers, directors, leading technicians, etc. and writing about them and also writing stories, features, announcements, etc. More words. I once worked out that, in my film work alone, I have written more than three and a half million words - that's well over twice the length of the bible, or about 60 average-length novels. All strictly ephemeral stuff, of course, and never destined - or intended - for hard-covers. And I have written a couple of books.

Maybe I'll write about my life in the Public Library, the R.A.F. and the film business sometime - come back! I was only joking! I think...

I bore readers with all this to show that my life has basically been a life of words. 'Words, words, words, nothing but words, words, words...' as Eliza Doolittle's famous song had it in 'My Fair Lady' (did you know, by the way, that this was originally 'Mayfair Lady' pronounced with a Cockney twang? Try it - you'll find that it comes out as 'My Fair Lady'...)

I'm rather like Rudyard Kipling, who once said: 'If words are the most powerful drug used by mankind, then I'm an addict long past saving.'

By the way - can I have a word with you sometime...?

BUNTER LOSES OUT

BY ANTHONY COOK

(Those who read "A Matter Of Logic" in the monthly C.D. may well wonder why William George Bunter sustained such short shrift and why he should ring up Wharton Lodge saying that he had other plans for the Christmas vacation and would not be joining his chums. It of course was not in the least like W.G.B. to leave his fellow removites bewailing his loss. It was really shortage of page-space that precluded the explanation, then, and I now hasten to put the matter right.)

On one of his daily walks during his Christmas vacation at Wharton Lodge Mr. Quelch made a detour, visiting the Parish Church of St. Mary at Wimford. It was a well known fact at Greyfriars that he regularly played chess with the Rev. Orlando Lambe, Vicar of Friardale, as indeed he had done just prior to the end of term. Then, the Rev. Lambe, knowing that Mr. Quelch intended to spend Christmas with Col. Wharton had asked him if he would be kind enough to call in and see his old college friend, the Rev. Allen Broadhurst, the new vicar of Wimford, to convey seasonal greetings from his old friend and fellow student. He further suggested that, if Mr. Quelch made known his interest in chess, Allen Broadhurst might well accommodate this during the period of his visit.

It was this mission that found Mr. Quelch walking up the tree-lined path leading to the vicarage at Wimford. He knocked on the sturdy oak door which was almost immediately opened by a homely looking woman wiping her hands on her apron. Without waiting for the master of the remove to state his business, she said "If it's the vicar you want, he's up at the church. He went not five minutes ago."

"Ah! thank you" Mr. Quelch raised his hat, and with that the woman disappeared, taking with her a delicious smell of baking.

A rather bemused Quelch turned out of the vicarage and made his way over to the church. Upon entering he found himself in a newly decorated, typically Norman church which, unlike most that he had visited, gave out a welcoming warmth. Two figures were just disappearing into what was certainly the vestry: therefore Mr Quelch looked around him and, seeing an array of books, chose one on the history of the church. Taking it to the back of the church and sitting down he proceeded to await the return of the so far elusive vicar and began to read. He had hardly read the first page when the door by which he had entered opened to admit two young people. To his surprise, one was none other than Harry Wharton and, on closer inspection, he saw that the young girl was Marjorie Hazeldene of Cliff House School. The remove-master half rose from his seat to make himself known when he clearly heard Harry Wharton say in strained tones: "It really is the only right thing to do, Marjorie. We must tell the vicar what has happened and ask his advice".

Mr. Quelch sank back in the pew. Marjorie's equally worried voice carried to him. "Do you really think that my Aunt would not help if we put the situation to her?"

"I'm afraid it's not quite so easy as it sounds. These things are all tied up with traditional values and family honour."

"Oh come, Harry, times are changing!" came the reply.

"Not fast enough to sweep certain things under the carpet."

"I suppose", Marjorie said, "It is really all my fault. I should have known better."

"Rubbish!" came Harry's quick rejoinder. "It takes two to make this kind of error, and our feelings were running pretty high at the time. We should have thought more deeply about things from the beginning and not let our enthusiasm run away with us".

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes were round with amazement at that moment. He was not one to eavesdrop on other peoples' conversations but he could hardly take in what he was hearing.

At that moment the vestry door opened admitting the Rev. Broadhurst and his visitor to the body of the church. The visitor acknowledged Harry and Marjorie as he passed, while the vicar warmly welcomed them. All three disappeared back into the vestry leaving a surprised and somewhat shocked Mr. Quelch

still at the back of the church. It was some fifteen minutes later that the trio reappeared, all with smiling faces. As they were ushered out of the church and the vicar shut the door, Mr. Quelch rose and, going forward, made himself known.

The vicar started:

"Goodness me, I did not realise there was anyone else here. This has turned out to be a busy morning". At last the master of the remove was ushered into the cosy little vestry. When they were seated and introductions made, the purpose of his visit was revealed to the delight of Rev. Broadhurst. They talked for some time on any number of topics relevant to them both and a further meeting was set up for a chess evening at the vicarage. Having done this, Mr. Quelch then broached the subject that had been uppermost in his mind.

"If you will forgive my curiosity, the young people who just left are both known to me. Wharton is head boy of my form at Greyfriars and the young lady is a pupil at Cliff House School close by. They seemed a little perturbed. The fact is that I - ah - could not help overhearing their conservation."

The Rev. Broadhurst smiled. "Indeed they were, my dear sir. A pair of extremely worried people." He chuckled "You know only too well that old habits and traditions are hard to break and in a village like this where things are so ingrained it is easy to offend, to say the least." Quelch nodded and willed him to continue.

"You see, these young people have spent a great deal of time and effort organising a Christmas party for the children of the village. This is usually organised by Miss Hazeldene's aunt and uncle. At these functions it is usual to invite the local incumbent to open the proceedings. Village geography being what it is, they invited the man from the church at the other end of the village which borders on the next parish and he has consented to do the honours."

"I think," Mr. Quelch said, with a strong feeling of guilt "I am beginning to comprehend."

"Quite so. I am a recent entry to the village, and, personally, I don't mind in the least. We have settled the matter and put the young people's minds at rest. I have also accepted an invitation to join them on the day and will assure Mr. Hazeldene that I am more than satisfied with the arrangements."

The form master felt better having digested this information. "It is good that young people take their responsibilities so much to heart. You must be proud of their efforts on behalf of the less fortunate?" "Indeed so," was the reply. The two pen parted, the Rev. Broadhurst escorting Mr. Quelch as far as the church gates where they said their farewells.

On his way to Wimford station Mr. Quelch took stock of the morning's doings. He still felt a certain pang of guilt that he had read all the wrong things into the conversation between Harry and Marjorie. Only once or twice in the past had Harry Wharton's character been questioned by his form master and, in general terms, no one could have thought more highly of a pupil than he.

Reaching the station at last he availed himself of a timetable with regard to his return journey. As he turned to go he saw a sudden rush of people coming through the barrier, and moved aside just as a rotund and untidy figure appeared that he knew only too well. It was none other than the fat owl of the remove, William George Bunter. A feeling of immediate irritation caused Mr. Quelch to frown. It was possible that he would have let Bunter exit without making himself known had not that member of his form suddenly extracted a sticky looking mess from his bulging gas mask case and proceeded to eat it with great gusto.

"Bunter!" Quelch rapped.

The startled removite choked on what was left of the sticky mess. "O Lor!" came the stifled comment. "Bunter, your gas mask case is for the precise purpose of containing your gas mask for your own protection and safety. Do you not realise that fact?"

The jaws halted momentarily. "Oh! yes sir, it's space you know, not enough..." Quelch ignored the comment. "May I ask where you are going?"

Bunter's face brightened. "I'm joining the other chaps for Christmas at Wharton Lodge. They always invite me."

Quelch's mind was working overtime. "Your ration card Bunter? No doubt you have it with you?"

"O Lor!" This seemed to be one of Bunter's less inspired days, "I mean they will have enough for one more. Old Wharton's bound to have a few extra rabbits!" The form master's brow furrowed even more deeply. "Your ration card?" he repeated.

"They are expecting me. That is, well, there's always an open invitation, sir." The thunder clouds gathered. "From what I begin to understand Bunter, I presume that your ration card is not on your person, and you are expecting your host to supply you with food in a time of difficulty."

"I'm sure the chaps would eat less if they knew! I mean they would sacrifice some grub - er, sustenance - for a friend, sir."

Mr. Quelch took a deep breath but held his temper in check. "Bunter," he said sternly. "Your friends are not spending their vacation at Wharton Lodge." The fat owl's face fell. "The rotters! Are you sure? I mean, they would have told me." That proved to be too much for

Quelch. Bunter's arm was suddenly held in a vice-like grip. "Are you suggesting, Bunter, that your form master would tell you lies?"

Bunter quaked. "N-no sir only..." He did not finish. "Not only are your friends *not* at Wharton Lodge, you foolish boy, but it is clear to me that you have not been invited. Under the circumstances you will return home on the next train."

"I c-can't!"

"W-h-a-t!" The grip on his arm tightened. "Well, I had to buy something to eat on the journey and... Wharton always pays my fare home, it's the least a fellow can do." Mr. Quelch let go of his arm and quickly produced a ten shilling note.

"Get yourself a ticket immediately," he ordered.

"The hapless owl did as he was told, thinking hard for a way of escape. He was to be disappointed. As he handed over the change he was relentlessly propelled towards the barrier. As he surrendered his ticket a coin changed hands. "Will you please see that this boy boards the London train and is deposited at his correct destination," Mr. Quelch said to the ticket collector. The man winked and touched his cap. "My pleasure sir, I will have a word with the guard."

The remove master nodded his thanks and, turning to Bunter, said firmly "I shall of course recover the cost of your return from your father."

"Oh crickey!" Bunter squeaked.

"That is, unless you care to telephone Wharton Lodge and leave a message to the effect that you will *not* be joining your friends for Christmas. Do you understand, Bunter?"

Bunter could only nod his head in surprise. At least he would be saved one humiliation though even he thought it not like Quelch to act in this fashion. Without further words Quelch turned on his heel and left the station.

It was a reflective Henry Samuel Quelch who took late morning coffee at The Cherry Orchard. He was very much aware at that moment in time that, having assumed added responsibility over the last year for both administrative and domestic matters, he was more in touch with the realities of life. He had, in a sense, stepped down from his purely academic role and now saw more clearly the needs and requirements of both staff and pupils. It had led him to consider simple everyday things which previously would not have entered his head.

Today he was very conscious of the fact that he had under-rated Harry Wharton and misread a situation. However, he took satisfaction in feeling that this misjudgement had been remedied, and after all, Bunter would not be presuming on the hospitality of the removites or their host. No doubt something would be said by Bunter to Wharton about Quelch's intervention but that would be in the future, and the pattern of Christmas would happily be changed this year for Harry Wharton and his chums; also though less happily, for William George Bunter!

Mr. Quelch reflected on all this over his coffee, and quite a number of people would have been surprised to see him smiling at his thoughts that morning.

Christmas Greetings to fellow collectors, and the Editor, Norman Wright, Derek Hinrich, Eric Fayne and Duncan Harper. I still want Champion Libraries 1930-1936, particularly war stories.

J. ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM, HANTS, PO15 5AH

* *

Season's Greetings to all Friends. Always interested in exchanging pre-war duplicate comics, story papers.

KEN TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE65 6EA
Telephone: 01283 703305

* *

Some people are not paying attention! I still want 2nd Series Blakes 695 and 707. Swaps available. Please help. A Blessed Christmas to you all.

DENNIS HILLIARD, 45 MOORBRIDGE LANE, STAPLEFORD, NG9 8GR

* *

Season's Greetings to all hobby friends from

NAVEED HAQUE, ONTARIO, CANADA

* *

HAROLD AVERY, the Forgotten Man of Boys' Fiction

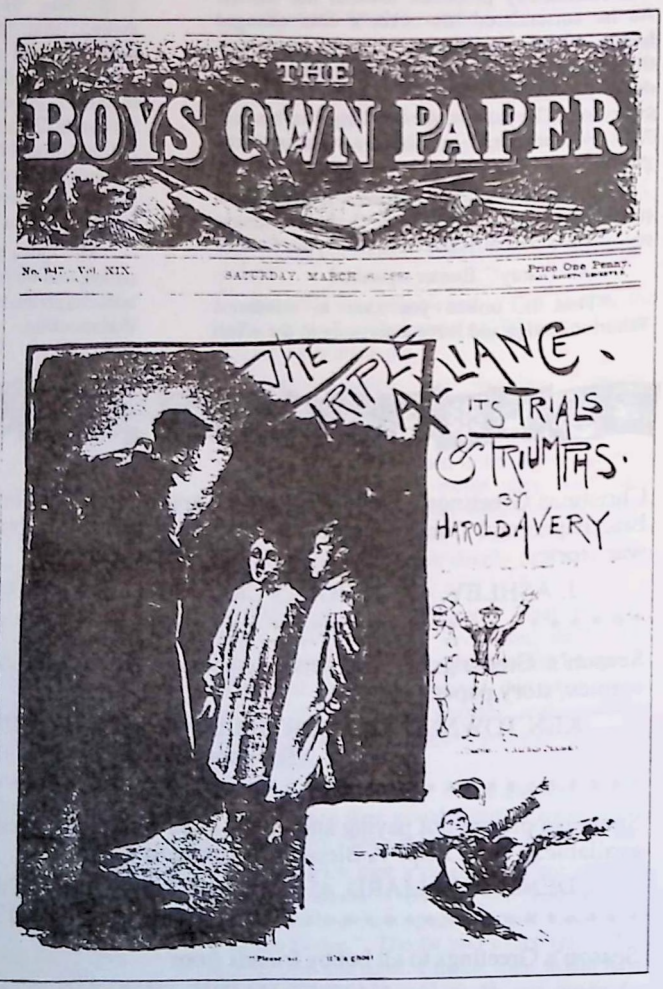
BY
RICHARD
BURGON

Charles Harold Avery was born in 1867 in Headless Cross near Redditch in Worcestershire. He was the son of William Avery, a local Justice of the Peace. Avery's schooldays were spread out between four schools. His early education took place at Dunheved College, Launceston, and then at the Midland Collegiate School in Birmingham. After this early education Avery attended New College in Eastbourne, Sussex. Avery's education was completed in a school that couldn't have been more different from the schools from which he was going to make his writing career. It was a large day-school in Dresden, Germany.

From when he was very young Charles Harold Avery had one burning ambition - to be a writer. This ambition never changed and from very early in his life. Avery was not only possessed by that ambition but also set about achieving it by practical means. He wrote stories when he was just a small boy and, for a while during his early schooldays, he organised and edited a hand-written "magazine" which his relatives and friends read. He penned his first story for boys in 1884 at the youthful age of seventeen but his short stories only began to be published regularly in the early 1890s. They appeared in "Young England," a boys' paper which was one of the papers of the time which was intended to be a clean and wholesome alternative to the unpleasant (but never the less extremely popular) "Penny Dreadfuls." This was the first of many boys' papers for which Avery would ably write - he would also write for "Captain," "The Boy's Own Paper" and "Chums."

"The Sunday School" published his first book in 1895. It was given a typically Avery-Sequel title - "The School's Honour." It was not a long school story of the kind which would make his name but a collection of short stories and was just 192 pages in length (very unlike his epic "Heads or Tails" which was a mammoth 496 pages long).

In the same year as "The School's Honour" was published he wrote "An Old Boy's Yarns"



which was published by Cassell who would, over half a century later, publish the Bunter books by Frank Richards. This book was 279 pages long - this, together with the 192 pages of his other book, confirmed his ability to write a great deal in the short space of just one year. This of course, is nothing compared to the speed with which the works of Frank Richards came into being but Avery was, nevertheless prolific.

Despite these early successes it was in the following year that he wrote the story which would really make his name. The story in question - "The Triple Alliance" - was serialised in the most famous boys' paper of all time, "The Boy's Own Paper," in 1897. The story was such a success that the famous publishers (T. Nelson & Sons) published it in book-form in 1899. This book ran to several editions and, because of its content, became popular as a Sunday School prize. My own copy illustrates the Sunday School connection - it was awarded to John Jewitt by the Wesleyan Sunday School in 1920. Just as a point of interest our President, Mary Cadogan, was given "The Triple Alliance" by her father when she was young. It was one of his favourite books and it also became one of hers.

In the year before "The Triple Alliance" was serialised in "The Boy's Own Paper" (but two years before it was published in book-form) one of my favourite Avery tales was published - "Frank's First Term" - or "Making a Man of Him." This book shows Avery's habit of writing a great deal about sports in his books. The cover depicts a cricket match taking place and the first black and white plate shows a scene of schoolboys playing a version of Association Football. The story is heavily moralistic - very much in the vein of "Tom Brown's School Days" - this was the prevalent style for children's literature at the time. Avery showed his ability to adapt his school stories and to change with the times to some extent by making his last few books - "Chums at Charlhurst" (published by Nelson in 1936) and "Through Thick and Thin" (Nelson 1938) - more in the style of "The Magnet" and "The Gem" than in the style of "The Boy's Own Paper." "Through Thick and Thin" is very light-hearted and virtually none of the heavy moralistic traits of Avery's early books is present in this book. In the story there is a cameo appearance by a fat boy called Gunter - was this Avery trying to introduce a character like the best-selling Bunter who was so prominent at the time? Despite the similarities between the names and weights of the two characters Gunter only appears in a few lines.

In the back of my copy of "Chums at Charlhurst: there is an advertisement for Avery's very last school story book - "Through Thick and Thin" (which I have already mentioned). The advertisement promises "a lot of laughs" - it promotes the book as a story which aims to cause mirth and merriment rather than to teach young readers the Christian, morally correct and gentlemanly way to behave (which Avery's earlier books did).

"Through Thick and Thin" is, in some ways, like the Thomson Papers which were coming into prominence at the time. Although retaining the traditional school story feel of all Avery's books, it also includes several sensational features which take away the realism of the tale and seem to be more appropriate to a Thomson Paper such as "Adventure."

The main character is Jim Verral - he possesses extraordinary strength which was used to the full when he was an attraction in the circus as "The Pocket Samson" (the youthful yet strong sidekick to Atlas, the strong man). Jim Verral became the possessor of such amazing strength because his father was an instructor in a military gymnasium. His devoted father trained Verral to develop his muscles from an early age. However, the gymnasium went into debt and Jim's mother died. Three months later poor Jim Verral lost his father - his father died when attempting to save a man from drowning. The man was rescued but Jim's heroic father was caught by a wave and flung against a stone jetty which stunned him. Jim's father then went under and his body was washed out to sea. Every penny that Jim's father had left was spent in paying their debts. Jim had no relations but Brankster's Circus had come to town and a man called Farrow, an old friend of Jim's deceased father, was connected with the circus. Farrow was the circus performer Atlas and he recruited Jim to be his sidekick - "The Pocket Samson."

Then a kind man called Mr. Hartland, whose father employed Jim's grandmother as a house-keeper, saw Jim performing and recognised his name. Mr. Hartland made arrangements for Jim to be sent to Kenford College - which Hartland had attended in his youth.

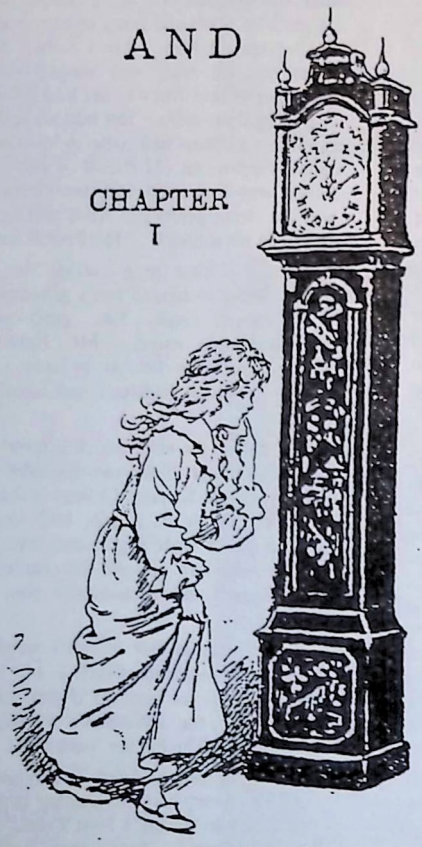
A part of the story which is quite unrealistic and sensational, if not unimaginable in today's society, is that Kenford College had a bad name because two of its pupils had recently been fooling about with a gun and trying to shoot rabbits after lock-up, and the one with the gun had slipped and accidentally shot his chum dead!

The story is full of other remarkable and sensational incidents which I will not recount now - read it for yourself if you want to delve deeper into the adventures of the schoolboy strong man, "The Pocket Samson!"

Getting back to Avery's early literary career - in 1896 Avery had had another book published in addition to "Frank's First Term," this was "A Boy All Over." From then until 1912 the brilliant school stories of Charles Harold Avery continued to flow from his imagination and into

print. Harold (who was now married to a rector's daughter) had no books published between 1912 and 1914. Harold joined the Army when the First World War broke out in 1914. He did this even though he was 47 years old. This is the kind of patriotic (if slightly reckless) thing one of Avery's fictional heroes would have also done. Harold served with the Worcestershire Regiment throughout the war. The only book Harold Avery had published during the years of the First World War was "The Chartered Company" in 1915. At the end of the war Avery again turned his attention to full-time writing - between 1918 and 1938 he penned 19 published school stories - this was in addition to the adult novels and younger children's books which he wrote during this time. Harold died in September 1943 at the age of 76. His school books had been best sellers for 43 years of his lifetime and after his death Nelson published reprints of his books in the 50s - describing him to the youthful readers of the day as an author who was "universally acknowledged as one of the masters of the Public School Story." An even greater honour than this was the fact that Charles Harold Avery appeared in "Who's Who" for his contribution to boys' fiction. Harold's writing talents were displayed in other types of books as well as in the 41 school story books he published and the countless editions of "Young England," "The Boy's Own Paper," "Chums" and "Captain" in which his school stories appeared. He was a prolific short story writer. He tried to spread his writing talents into the field of adult novels - such as "Every Dog Has His Day," "A Week at Sea" and "Thumbs Up." He also wrote stories for younger readers - such as "Under Padlock and Seal" which appeared in the 1902 "Little Folks" annual and was so well received that it was published in book-form later (here is the first page from my book version of "Under Padlock and Seal"). "The Enchanted Egg" and "The Magic Beads" are other examples of his

UNDER PADLOCK AND SEAL.



CHAPTER I

DOWNSTAIRS IN THE DARK.

ELSIE pushed away the bed-clothes which were covering her ear, and listened; then she sat up in bed, and listened again.

There was no doubt that it was an actual sound, and not mere imagination. How long it had been going on, or when it first began to mingle in a confused manner with her dreams, she could not say; but

fiction for younger children.

There you have a very brief synopsis of Avery's life, sprinkled with a few of my own observations and opinions. Now I will tell you how I became a collector of the stories of this "forgotten man of boy' fiction."

In October 1992 I had already been introduced to the wonderful world of Greyfriars. This, though, was probably the only public school fiction that I had discovered in depth at this time. I knew of the other great school writers such as Eleanor M. Brent-Dyer, Angela Brazil etc. I was also a long time devotee of Richmal Crompton's William stories and had sampled one or two Jennings books and revelled in the exciting "Tom Brown's Schooldays" but I had never even HEARD of Harold Avery!

It was Mrs. Regina Glick (a member of the Northern O.B.B.C.) who gave me a wonderful surprise on October 31st, 1992 - a copy of Harold Avery's "Heads or Tails", which had once been one of her husband's favourite books. I was fascinated by the lovely leather binding and colour plates of the book and felt privileged that such a book should now belong to me. I set about reading it. I have to admit that I attempted to read it a few times before I actually succeeded in reading the entire story. At first I found it strange - different from anything I had ever read before. Here was a school story which was not blessed with the wonderful language of the Bunter stories. Nor did it have any of the brilliant and memorable characters in it that the Magnets did. Some time later I started reading it again. This time I couldn't put it down. I sat for hours on end basking in the sheer pleasure of reading it. I remember thinking how the school in the story seemed to be just the kind of school I would love to go to.

It was a story of a friendship - a chronicle of two fellows' lives from their schooldays to their days working in the grown-up world. The yarn cleverly illustrated all the obstacles which can get in the way of a smooth progress through life and all the times that people and things can lead you astray. The first half of the book has the title "The School World." Ingeniously the second half of the book has the title "The World's School." I can recall being extremely impressed by these two titles and the way they represented the course of the characters' lives so well. The book contains characters who seem to be "jolly good fellows" but who, in fact, turn out to have sides to their natures which are rather unsavoury. This is very true to life and it adds a depth to the book that some of Avery's other stories don't have - in many of his other books the characters are either "good uns" or "bad uns," no-one was ever a mixture of the two types. Reading the book I could see why it was given as a Sunday School prize. It teaches a number of very important lessons to the youthful reader, yet, because of Avery's skill, the youthful reader (and I, in particular) could not feel patronised in any way. "Heads or Tails" is definitely my favourite Charles Harold Avery book - not least because it's the first book of its kind that came into my possession and also because it was given to me by Mrs. Glick. My second favourite is "Frank's First Term".

One of my best memories involving "Heads or Tails" is of reading and delighting in it in the sunny garden after the last day of the school term had finished and as the holidays stretched endlessly ahead of me.

Since then I have added extensively to my Harold Avery collection. I contacted Eileen Golborn (a friend of Mrs. Glick's) who runs "Rosemary Books" from her home in Southport. She sells books by mail order and all the proceeds go to charity. I asked her if she had any Harold Avery books, hardly expecting her to have heard of him. Yet, to my surprise and delight, she had many of them in stock and all at very reasonable prices! I was overwhelmed by the opportunity I had to increase my collection so magnificently. I seized the opportunity and bought eight of the nine books that were for sale. The book I declined to buy was the excitingly titled "Gunpowder, Treason and Plot." I did this because my funds were, unfortunately, not limitless and because it was a book which contained short stories by both Avery and other authors and, therefore, I might be spending my money on just a few pages of Harold Avery whereas with the others I knew I was spending my money on just Avery's writings. The eight Avery books I bought were: "Frank's First Term," "The Dormitory Flag", "Sale's Sharpshooters", "Schoolboy Pluck", "The Marlcot Mystery", "The Triple Alliance", "Mobsley's Mohicans" and "Chums at Charlhurst."

It was a long time after that splendid parcel of Avery books arrived at my door that I bought any more of his works. In the last half term holidays of 1995 I went to Todmorden to see "The Border Bookshop". Club members Donald and Darrell amongst others, had recommended this shop to me. In the shop there were scores of Avery books! I could not possibly buy them all but I managed to spend nearly £20 on quite a selection of them! I trooped out of "The Border Bookshop" grasping the following treasures: "Through Thick and Thin," "Captain Swing" (an adventure tale set during the Swing Riots), "The Enchanted Egg", "A Sixth Form Feud,", "A Girl at the Helm", "Off the Wicket,", "Between Two Schools" and "Padlock and Seal." The most recent additions to my collection are "Soldiers of the Queen" and "The Magic Beads".

So why would I recommend Harold Avery to you? Why do I rate his work above the work of the multitude of school story writers who were around near the end of his career? I cannot,

truthfully, say that his work is better than the work of Frank Richards or Edwy Searles Brooks for originality and characterisation. Despite this, Avery's works were vitally important in the progression of school story writing and in the whole history of children's fiction. Avery wrote long after the publication of "Tom Brown's School Days", "Eric, or Little by Little" by Farrar and slightly after the early work of Talbot Baines Reed. Harold Avery bridged the gap between the old type of school story and the new "pop" type of school story. He laid the foundations for writers such as Frank Richards. Without Harold Avery - who knows? We might have never seen the genius of so many of the school writers whose works we, today, celebrate to such an extent. I plead with you now to rescue Harold Avery from being "The Forgotten Man of Boys' Fiction" by reading just one of his books.

THANK YOU

(This feature was first given as a talk by Richard to the Northern Old Boy's Book Club.)

Happy Xmas to all my good friends in the hobby, particularly the S.W. Club Members.

MAC

* *

Season's Greetings to everyone. Still seeking Zane Grey Westerns, Schoolgirls Own Libraries, Kathleen Fidler, Monica Edwards.

GEO. B. SEWELL, 27 HUMBERSTONE ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 1JD

* *

Greetings to all Collectors' Digest readers! How pleasant to meet so many of you at the London C.D. Fiftieth Anniversary Lunch. A Peaceful and Happy New Year to you all.

DES and AUDREY O'LEARY

* *

Best Wishes to all Hobby friends. Always seeking Rupert and P.G. Wodehouse novels plus any signed items.

JOHN BECK, 29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX, BNJ 2RU

* *

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all friends and readers. And here's to the next 50 years of the "C.D." (which stands, of course, for 'Cheers and Delights'! From:

BRIAN DOYLE, PUTNEY, LONDON

* *

I bent very low as low as I could
My tum you must know was full of rich pud.
One must blame the postman he was late with the mail
To retrieve the dropped annual I had to exhale
As he should've and didn't
I couldn't and oughter
C.D. is now with me
Plus bi'carb and water.

Have a breathtaking explosive Christmas everyone.

JOHNNY BURSLEM

* *

Season's Greetings to all Hobby friends from the

BECKS OF LEWES AND POLEGATE

* *

Floreat Blandings

By Ernest Holman

When a visitor to Blandings Castle, having paid his fee, is shown over the vast building and equally vast grounds, he (or she) comes away feeling what a wonderful life the owner must have - everything that one could ask for: money, servants, nothing at all to worry the owner, who obviously lives a complete life of bliss. "Lucky stiff" is the final point of view of the departing visitor.

Well, who is this 'lucky stiff'. In broad terms, Lord Emsworth, ninth Earl of the Threepwood family. Should something like the remarks in the preceding paragraph have been relayed to him, he would have rolled his eyes to Heaven and muttered "They little know!"

Clarence, Earl of Emsworth, lived well at Blandings Castle, in the Country of Shropshire. However - and now we approach the nub - there were many sprinklings of sand into his spiritual spinach. These will be elaborated as the story continues - and they will show just what is meant by the expression 'Times that try men's souls'.

Lord Emsworth was first introduced to Blandings long ago, by the historian Wodehouse. At this period in the Earl's life, the coming strain of events had not yet taken place. He was a widower, content in his little ways, spent much time in old clothes in his garden, and generally let the Castle look after itself. At this time, a sister - the first of several to surface eventually - resided at Blandings. Lady Anne Warblington was not, however, a hostess and spent most of her time keeping out of everyone's way. This suited Clarence, who followed the same procedure - and this state of affairs continued to exist when a large house party collected under the Castle roof.

On the face of it, this may seem strange - how can a large House party be organised if the two main overseers are 'otherwise occupied'. The explanation is simple - the Efficient Baxter. Rupert Baxter was, to all intents and purposes, Lord Emsworth's capable Secretary - in fact, he found himself forced to 'run affairs' and, not to put too fine a point on it, loved doing so. A member of the servant's hall once wondered how he came to own the Castle - he was not popular below stairs, where (of course) his Lordship secretary did not belong or wish to do so.

Therefore, the Castle was run on smooth lines and Clarence was only too pleased that such was the case. He wanted to know nothing of who was present or of what may be happening - he followed the rule of 'friends and relations are better apart' from him.

As it happened, he could not escape every event, and before long he was made to realise that all of his life was not quite in 'apple pie' order. One night, for reasons which do not matter here, a guest arose in the middle of the night to fetch a supply of food - and coming slowly through the darkness of the Main Hall met another occupant of the Castle head on. Something had to give - and they both did. After scattering the tray of food all over the Hall floor, the two 'bumpers' decided to make themselves scarce. As it happened, the bedrooms were far from the Hall and most likely only a slight breaking-off of sleep occurred. Except - to the Efficient Baxter. Baxter had had suspicions of a fellow guest recently and had tried to stay awake in case 'anything' happened in the small hours. The noise from below reached his waking ears nicely, and he was out of his room and shooting across the landing leading to the stairs in a moment. Unfortunately, with the usual thoughtlessness of youth, a person who earlier had been brushing up his putting on the landing had left the golf ball well and truly in the fairway. Baxter's foot found it easily in his rush. He hit only the third and ninth stair on his rapid descent before landing in a breathless heap on the floor of the Hall.

He had no time to gather his wits about him, though. He found his hand touching a cold, wet face - and he realised that a death struggle must have taken place, with the victim left lying on the floor. His blood, like the face, became frozen. Well, even two noises as had recently penetrated the night had to penetrate to the Castle's sleeper and before long he was 'playing' to a large audience. On the landing, the guests - all lights were now blazing, and the servant's hall emptying with puzzled domestics. The view was a startling one. Baxter lay amidst much scattered food, with his hand tight on a

piece of tongue.

It was left to Lord Emsworth to sum up the situation, when he assured Baxter that no one had any objection to him partaking of fodder at night, provided he did it without disturbing the household. Baxter, robbed of both breath and speech, saw the guests and servants return to their sleeping quarters - the last remark being that of a page who expressed the view 'greedy pig'.

This, however, was the time when the Earl began to realise that all was not well in his life. For the first time, he began to wonder about his secretary. Had his mighty brain become unhinged - was he (Emsworth) now the employer of a man who 'wasn't quite right in the head'. These thoughts troubled Clarence before he finally fell asleep again.

As it happened, this was only the first event of many worrying matters that were to occur. When we next meet his Lordship, things have changed at the Castle. His sister (one more of them) Lady Constance Keeble was in residence - and in control of the Castle, ably aided and abetted by Baxter (according to the now much disturbed Peer). His life of ease was 'no more' - he had to dress for meals, was harried frequently when wearing gardening clothes and, all in all, Blandings - to Clarence - had become far from an 'earthly paradise'.

In addition to the main antagonists, Lord Emsworth could not stand the moody, mooching presence of Frederick, his younger son. It has to be frankly admitted that the British Aristocracy does not want the younger son. Freddie, though, had problems of his own - financial. He worked out a scheme of making money by an attempt to steal his Aunt Constance's pearl necklace, which would provide plenty of 'wherewithal'. Briefly, he engaged a personable young fellow named Smith (who had decided to place a P in front of his surname, as a silent protest against the more common or garden name). He came to Blandings in the guise of a Poet. This was nothing unusual at Blandings - during its long history, the Castle always seemed to have at least one impostor residing under its roof. In fact, one such once believed that an alias was the 'done thing'. He did not think it at all sporting to visit anywhere under one's own name. So Psmith, as Freddy'accomplice, was a resident to the Castle.

The Efficient Baxter, however, was still functioning on all mental cylinders and began to suspect his 'poet'. When the robbery finally took place and the necklace was thrown from a window to an accomplice, Baxter's brain set all its engines revolving. An inspection of the outside Terrace told him that the necklace had been picked up and hidden somewhere out of sight. He was correct - it had been placed in a flower pot, standing with rows of others, on the terrace. As it happened, the 'necklace' pot had already been moved but it was not until the small hours that Baxter, lying awake, recalled the line of flower pots and decided there and then to investigate. He was a bit sore on the question of flower pots - the visitor, Psmith, in order to attract his attention, had propelled a flower pot, playfully, into his room. However, when Lord Emsworth heard the story, he was left with the impression that it was Baxter who had thrown a flower pot at his guest. Once more, those doubts about the sanity of his Secretary surfaced.

So, early in the morning, wearing only lemon coloured pyjamas, Baxter rummaged amongst all the flower pots on the terrace. Only when he failed to unearth any 'booty' did he decide to give up. However, there was a further snag. The front door was shut and he hesitated to rouse the household, who would require 'explanations'. Only when the slight chilliness of the night drew its attention to Baxter, did he decide to take action. Just above him, wide open, was a window. Pebbles, however, did not disturb the sleeper. In desperation, he took the only course left - he said it with flower pots, one after the other.

It was about the fourth pot that awoke the sleeper, when something hit him on his humped back. It was Lord Emsworth, who, on sighting the flower pots about the room, recalled the earlier event. Was Baxter throwing flower pots at this time of night? A quick glance from the window confirmed the fact - a wild-eyed, dirty-fingered figure, in pyjamas, was about to aim yet another pot. It was enough - it was Baxter.

Lord Emsworth was equal to the situation. He aroused the sleeping Psmith and despatched him as his agent to 'deal with a madman'. Psmith did so, and quietly led Baxter back to his room, receiving a kind of explanation on the way. On reporting to his host, he mentioned that Baxter had been looking for Lady Constance's necklace in a flower pot. As was usual with Clarence, he had known nothing of the earlier robbery and he summed the whole thing up in a few words. The man, he stated, was mad - stark, staring raving mad - not only did he throw flower pots in the middle of the night but he thought Lady Constance kept her jewellery in a flower pot. It was more than enough - Baxter must go and very quickly.

For once, Lord Emsworth was proof against his sister's pleadings, and he handed Baxter his notice and cheque with much satisfaction. Baxter decided to accept the inevitable situation, but informed Clarence that his Guest, Mr. McTodd (Psmith's alias) was an impostor. When confronted with this statement, however, Psmith was equal to the situation. It was revealed that he was a member of the Conservative Club - and that settled it for Clarence. If his guest was a Conservative Club member, he could not be an impostor. Just one

more - and the last - of Baxter's mind-wanderings. Lord Emsworth drew a great breath of relief as the station taxi was heard to chug away with the madman!

Despite the trials and tribulations that occurred on occasion in the life of Lord Emsworth, he was a man who could at times be single-minded, even if sister Connie disapproved. One of Clarence's obsessions was the rearing of a giant pumpkin. This was intended for the County Annual Flower Show and much attention and care was given to the object, notably by the Earl's Head Gardener, Angus McAllister, a dour Scotsman of taciturn, even autocratic, attitudes and views. Tragedy stalked soon, however - McAllister left his employment with the Earl and instantly, the pumpkin lost heart and began to get seedy and listless. It took an awful amount of persuasion - and money - to tempt his gardener back into service. Fortunately, all came out well and the pumpkin took first prize. Such was the life of Clarence, Earl of Emsworth - the slings and arrows came all around him but there were always breaks and solaces in between. He found it a wearing life but he always plugged on. One 'nice piece of goose' came his way when his younger son, Freddy, departed from the Castle. Marriage to the daughter of an American manufacturer of dog biscuits took the younger son off his father's hands. What a relief it was when information came to him that the future distance between father and son was over 3,000 miles - and mostly of water, at that. It seemed that the good man was getting the reward of perseverance at last.

Not for long, though. Blandings Castle was, amongst other things, a kind of Bastille. In other words, whenever a member of the family was found to be loving not wisely but too well (or assumed to be so doing) the victim served a term of imprisonment in the old home. Correspondence was vetted, phone calls checked, movements watched. This was very irksome to poor Clarence - he sympathised with the victim at times, but mostly he was rather feeling self-sorrow. For, whenever a niece was 'jerked' from her true love and incarcerated at the Castle, she became the 'little mother'. She would fuss over people and things and, it seemed to Clarence, especially with him. He was happiest left alone, without a valet or secretary. Nieces, however, were thorough. Clarence's rooms and belongings were always being, 'tidied up' so that the poor man could find nothing and never seemed to be free of a gloomy, soulful-looking niece.

By now, the ruling passion with the ninth Earl was pigs. He was the owner of one of the largest of all pigs, Empress of Blandings, being prepared for the Fat Pigs Class at the Annual Shropshire Show. It came as a bitter blow to Clarence when his pig man, George Cyril Wellbeloved, was given fourteen days in the 'jug' for drunkenness. Immediately, the Empress refused all food and, in his Lordship's eyes, began to 'fade away'. Just when things looked blackest, he encountered the beau of the captive niece and found him sound on the treatment of pigs. He was given a master-call that brought all pigs to the trough and set them eating right away. It was not very successful when Emsworth, and his Butler Beech, tried to use the call - it was 'no go'. However, the 'man in question' turned up in the nick of time, gave the loud, prolonged clarion call, and the Empress was herself again, going on to win the Gold Medal for the fattest pig in the County. Needless to say, Clarence uncorked some capital, his niece was released from her 'dungeon' and free to marry her 'pig-caller'. Once again, harmony reigned - and Constance this time had no say in the matter. When asked if her brother thought his pig was more important that his niece, he was amazed at such a stupid question. The pig won hands down, with him!

Lord Emsworth seemed to have an endless supply of nieces. It was not long before another arrived. She had fallen in love with an impoverished Clergyman so there was only one thing to do - whisk her to Blandings for a spell of corrective treatment. Wheels within wheels, however, managed to get her man into Blandings Castle as a visitor, with the intention of making himself so useful and helpful to his Lordship that, in the end, the OK flag would be hoisted and the two young lovers could be sent out together into the world. Now yet another trail was to descend around Clarence.

In addition to 'tidying-up' relatives, a blow fell when Wellbeloved, the Castle pig man, sold himself for gold and entered the employ of a near neighbour, Sir Gregory Parsloe, of Much Matchingham. Lord Emsworth lay awake for many nights, trying to see how this wicked Baronet could be shown the error of his ways. Fortunately, a new pig man was obtained but the anger never left Clarence's bruised soul. He had other things to bear, though, at this time. The resident Clergyman did all he could to help Lord Emsworth. When he found his Lordship had leg problems, he provided him with ointment to rub in - omitting to notice that the lotion was intended for horses. Clarence spent a terrible night whilst constantly applying the salve! When he went up a ladder and disappeared amongst branches to do a little pruning, the guest saw a ladder left unattended and promptly took it away. When the Earl went for his early morning dip, and flung his arms about joyfully and burst into happy singing, his guest dived in, collared him unceremoniously and brought him, shattered, to the safety of the lake side.

Lord Emsworth was now at his Wits' end (such as they were, of course!) and he was

thinking dangerous thoughts of his guest when Providence intervened. In the village of Much Matchingham was a Vicarage that was in Lord Emsworth gift - and when the resident incumbent decided to retire at a ripe old age, all was well. His clergyman guest should be given the vacancy, he and the niece could depart happily to Much Matchingham - where Clarence had every hope of the newcomer making life 'hell' for Sir Gregory. A good man coming into his own again, felt the Earl with much satisfaction. All was for the best in this improbable world, he felt.

The niece problem soon reared again and with it, of all people, the former Secretary, Rupert Baxter, resurfaced. Brought to the Castle to act as tutor to Clarence's grandson, George - and with Lady Constance still eager to get the man reinstated, life was once again no longer a bed of roses for the Earl. Fortunately, George had an airgun; after shooting Baxter in a bending position,the rifle passed from hand to hand, awakening thoughts of childhood. The long and the short of it was that, eventually, Baxter grew tired of being the target and departed - but not before Clarence had potted him in the 'old spot' as he bent over the handle bars of his motor cycle. All went well, including the niece as a result of Clarence's happiness - and once again peace reigned in the bosum of the dreamy Peer of the Realm.

As a change from nieces, the next visitor was very welcome to Clarence but not to sister Constance. Galahad Threepwood, Clarence's younger brother, was a blot on the escutcheon of a noble family - but then, this was only the view of his numerous sisters. Gally was a man of the world and knew how to cope with problems, not least of all his sisters. Galahad, after a long boisterous life, was still willing and able but had come to the peace of Blandings to write his Reminiscences. As it was conceded that he probably knew most of the secrets of the aristocracy in their wild youth, it seemed that Gally would be on a winner. Matters became very involved over the next few weeks. Sir Gregory Parsloe, learning that his youth (in particular, a very disreputable story concerning prawns) was about to be laid bare, just when he was standing for Parliament, engaged a private eye to get hold of the coming document and destroy it. Much intrigue was forthcoming, including the stealing of the Empress of Blandings and, eventually, a back and forth exchanging of pigs. When the latest impostor to the Castle, Sue Brown, came in another's name to be with her Ronnie (a nephew this time) Galahad discovered that she was the daughter of an old flame of his and promptly took her under the his wing. Baxter reappeared yet again but when, owing to a variety of circumstances, Empress of Blandings was discovered hidden in the ex-secretary's caravan, Lord Emsworth was once more beaming with joy. Ronnie was able to marry his Sue, with the help of his Uncle's gratuity - the whole thing being achieved by Galahad agreeing not to publish his Memoirs after all.

Even then, snags occurred. Ronnie's mother, another sister of Clarence's, put the kybosh on the wedding and once again there was much activity amongst Galahad, Emsworth, Parsloe and both Constance and Julia, Ronnie's mother. Again all came out well, Julia departed, Ronnie and Sue went off happily and Galahad was able to leave Clarence once again reunited with his pig and free from troubling relatives. Just how long, though, a happy state of affairs would last *did* bother Clarance at times - it was fatal to believe that fate was not about ready to deliver further disturbances to his tranquillity.

So it was to prove - Emsworth, in difficulties once again and being unable to contact Galahad, found an able ally in Frederick, Earl of Ickenham, who came along to the Castle to help. Naturally, he came under an alias. In the course of several visits, he coped with many situations - pig stealing, of course - poor Clarence never seemed to keep his animal in safety for long. Visiting dukes, grandsons, Church Lads - the lot were all part and parcel of much intrigue within the Castle grounds. When - of course - everything came out well (yet another score off Rupert Baxter) Clarence settled down as usual to try and obtain as much relief as he could before, inevitably, another storm arose.

A third sister - unlike her other sisters, not stately or statuesque, but in appearance getting mistaken for the Castle cook - was another thorn that had to be removed. A dumb-blonde niece, an American tycoon, much misunderstanding and the final arrival of Galahad to put everything right; these all took time and certainly took toll of the by now almost shattered Earl. What a life it was, he must have felt, being a rich Nobleman. Never sure of the Parsloe menace from his dastardly neighbour, and having to be always watchful over the Empress, was a very wearing, worrying time for Clarence.

The Rainbow, however, was to come along in all its glory - and to remain. Constance married an American Millionaire and, like Freddy, lived in the United States. Clarence was also about to so much offend some of his sisters that they too departed, not to return. His pig, now handled by a young lady named Monica Simmonds (NOT an impostor), was successful for the third year running in winning the County Gold Medal for the fattest pig. When, in the quiet of an evening, Galahad and Clarence sat peacefully alone in the Castle Library, they looked back to the sea of troubles that had finally been left behind. Galahad put forward the view that he and Clarence should have set their faces against having any sisters in the first

place. The Earl nodded, conscious that he himself had 'got it right' by producing two sons and leaving it at that. The two brothers drank a toast - but it did not include 'loved ones far away'.

Bare bones from a very well documented History of what really went on behind the confines of a 'lucky stiff'. Right triumphed - as it always will in the end. We sometimes find ourselves exhorted to accept the fact that times change and therefore we must change with those times. Nonsense. Just don't believe it! The truth is far more relevant in (like all sayings and proverbs) its opposite - and this points out that the more things change, the more they stay as they are.

How so very true this is of Blandings - long will it flourish!

CHARLES HAMILTON – The Ealing Connection

BY UNA HAMILTON WRIGHT

In Autumn 1995 I and my younger daughter, Penny, spent several days walking round Ealing armed with a camera. We photographed many of the places which have a Hamilton connection. Not all the houses my uncle lived in - and there were a great many - have survived. Charles Hamilton's actual birthplace is gone - marked by a plaque in the grand new shopping precinct, on a column behind a sweet-stall. Both Bunter and his author had a sweet tooth and would have approved.

Altogether I have traced eleven addresses for my grandmother Marian Hamilton since her marriage. Charles was born at the fifth house after she had already had five children. She once remarked that three removals were worse than a fire: she certainly must have known. Her first child, Maude, was born at 25 Oak Street in 1865, a year after Marian's marriage. She was not yet eighteen, and her husband nine years older. I have learned from researches at Ealing Library that Oak Street and the surrounding roads were not built until the 1850s as a result of slum clearance in the centre of Ealing. So the houses there were probably the equivalent of what we call 'starter homes' today. In Mary Cadogan's book THE CHAP BEHIND THE CHUMS, there is a picture of Oak Street shortly before it was pulled down, in a bad state of disrepair. Round the corner at the back of the Precinct, Grove Street, which the Librarian told me was similar to Oak Street, has been left as an example of what the centre of Ealing was like during the last century. It has been excellently restored and consists of a terrace of bijou residences, probably in better fettle than ever they were originally.

Charles's parents, John and Marian, seem to have moved every two years since early in their marriage. Their second home at 15 St. Mary's Place, off St. Mary's Road, beside the New Inn and almost opposite the church was, I imagine, the prettiest of all their homes. It is quite charming now and well worth a visit. Charles's elder brother Alex was born there in 1867. The family then moved to Park Lodge, Castlebar Hill, via Avenue Road, Ealing, where their second son, Percy, was born. The lodge, now at the entrance to an independent girls' school was another charming miniature home. The 1871 Census found them there while a year later they had arrived back at Oak Street, this time no. 15, where the last five children were born.

Charles's father, John, was born in Acton at the Steyne, but his family moved to Castlebar Hill while he was an infant. They remained there until after the 1851 Census and had moved down to Lancaster Road, Victoria Terrace, by 1861 and remained there until they died in Oak Street in the 1870s. Living along the road from John and Marian they were well-placed to help look after their grandchildren.

Lastly, while setting the scene of Charles's immediate antecedents, one must note that the Trinder maternal, grandparents and the Trinder aunts all lived in Ealing. Marian's family were in the High Street, where her elder brother, Stephen, kept what used to be called an 'Emporium' - a store that sold furniture, ironmongery, upholstery and hired out gilt chairs for parties. Stephen Trinder was also an agent for two insurance companies and for a dyers and cleaners. He was very successful and by 1871 he was living at The Green and eventually came to own Willow House, next door (now) to Ealing Studios. By this time he had added estate agency, an advertising business and the 'Ealing Indicator' to his list of businesses. He also became a property developer and manager and drew rents from a large number of small properties in Ealing, Chiswick and Hounslow. Finally, he was a founder member of the local Temperance Society. He remained a bachelor 'to look after my seven sisters', all of whom married at least once and most of them twice. At the time of my grandparents' marriage he was in partnership with my grandfather, John Hamilton, in running a bookshop in Ealing High Street.

It was the Ealing Temperance Society which led to the meeting of Stephen and John and, subsequently, to the meeting of John and Marian. John had been brought to one of the meetings as a reclaimed drunkard and Stephen Trinder honestly believed that John would never fall to the demon Drink again. Marian was only 16 and under five feet in height when she met John Hamilton. She used to go with her two elder sisters to the Temperance Society dances and entertainments, presided over by her elder brother. There she met her husband-to-be who was utterly charming when sobre and very good-

looking, over six feet tall with chestnut hair and a military bearing. I think Stephen realised how responsible he was for Marian and her large family - out of eight births only one child, Percy, died in childhood. Her brother was always very kind and generous to her and the children, and he found inexpensive houses in Ealing for her to live in. He helped the boys to start in business and gave them little jobs to do in connection with his own commercial interests. He helped his brother-in-law who was an intellectual and very bookish. The bookshop failed - the only one of Stephen Trinder's businesses to do so. John Hamilton became a journalist, eventually a very socialist one, and wrote for the FREETHINKER. Stephen's EALING INDICATOR also offered opportunities for John. Later on he was to give his aid in property maintenance.

So, we have a situation filled with widely differing characters full of interesting abilities and with varying temperaments all interacting in the centre of Ealing. Both families were first generation in the town - or village as it used to be called. The Hamiltons claimed to have come to Ealing from Windsor via Acton. John's father was a landscape gardener and a very sweet-tempered man. His wife was born in Shropshire on the borders of Wales, probably near Oswestry, and brought the name Griffith-Jones into the family. The Trinders arrived in Ealing in 1858 from Standlake, Oxfordshire, via St. John's Wood. They can be traced back in Oxfordshire to the 1680s.

By the time Charles Hamilton was born on 8th august, 1876, his paternal grandparents were dead and his maternal grandparents were to die before he was seven. His elder brother Percy died when Charles was fifteen months old and his father died when Charles was seven, in 1884. The elder generation's sole survivor was his mother's grandmother, known as 'Daedy' who died in 1885 aged 90. Charles and his siblings remembered her well and he recalled her and her youthful memories of Napoleon in some of his autobiographical articles written towards the end of his life.

Charles was baby number six, born in the twelfth year of his parents' marriage. He was a strong infant and grew into a strong child, always forward for his age, a very fast learner of everything and anything. Although he was small he was sturdy. He never attained more than five feet six inches in height. When adult his shoes were only size six. But he looked immensely strong and solid, never fat, but muscular. He had broad powerful shoulders and strong arms and muscular hands with their square short fingers which were later to pound a typewriter so effectively. His torso was of average length but his legs were short although fortunately not bowed. From childhood he was a good walker, propelled, no doubt, by his inquiring mind. When he was seven he followed a fire-engine for miles round Ealing and surrounding districts and arrived home very late to receive a terrible thrashing from his irate father.

Charles was the fourth son in the family, so the usual jubilations over the arrival of a boy were somewhat muted. In fact he was something of an anti-climax. His eldest brother, Alex, nine years his senior, was already showing signs of being brainy and scientific and was certainly already a dreamer. Not much is known about the next son, Percy, except that he died young. But the third son was the most handsome child in the bunch and his mother's favourite. He was called Richard, after a Hamilton forbear, and was known as Dick. So Charles had serious competition from the start.

Charlie - or Bags as he was nicknamed when he was promoted to long trousers (Dick's hand-me-downs which had to be hemmed up by sister Edie who had a magic touch with a needle) was a quiet and thoughtful little boy who watched and listened and thereby instilled a certain feeling of unease in the hearts and minds of his siblings. Little Brother, rather than Big Brother, was watching them. And well they might have been worried had they known that they were to live for ever in the pages of the MAGNET masked by different names.

Charles was christened Charles Harold St. John. His mother's relations thought he ought to bear the name of his father, John, especially as none of the earlier sons had received it. However, Marian hated the name John, not because it was her husband's, but she just didn't like it. Finally, she decided to relent and allowed one of the baby's names to be John, but not the first. But before the birth was registered she had modified 'John' to 'St. John' and the relations had to be satisfied with that.

Charles arrived when the Hamiltons had been living at Oak Street for four years. The family fortunes were at a low ebb, caused mainly by the father's drinking. Charles's parents' marriage had started very happily with John writing romantic little ditties in praise of 'Mary-Ann' but each new child brought added pressure on the father.

Although Charles's father had been reclaimed from Drink before he married, he was to have DTs again before he died. In the early days he would try to give up Drink but his temper became white-hot and Marian said he was worse trying to be sober than when he was regularly indulging. His bookshop failed, he became too drunk to be a journalist, turning his copy in late or not even bothering to go out and find copy. He grew depressed and morose. And all the time the children kept coming at their regular two-year intervals. Years later Marian told my mother that "The only reason we didn't have any more children was that your father

died". Stephen Trinder repeatedly came to John's rescue, getting him to help with the property side of his business, making use of John's practical flair. John became ill with tuberculosis, doing odd jobs for his brother-in-law to try to make ends meet - doctors had to be paid for in those days - his children's birth certificates reflect a sorry tale of failure recording his sporadic employment as a jointer or a builder - a far cry from the attractive poet or the journalist who wrote for the FREETHINKER.

John's habit was to come in from work and go to the local immediately after his evening meal. The local was the 'Three Pigeons' in the High Street - which became the 'Three Fishers' of Greyfriars fame. Now it flourishes under the curious name of the 'Rat and Parrot'. His wife would tell the children to "Wait till your father's been in and gone out again" before starting games and hobbies because he would stop their play and send them to bed on any pretext.

Into this turmoil came the last two children. Douglas was born when Charlie was three and two years later my mother arrived; Una, but always known as 'Dolly' because someone told Douglas to go upstairs where his mother had got a little dolly for him. He actually tried to walk away with the 'dolly'. To her family she remained 'Dolly' all her life. John, in his few sober moments, was rather intrigued with his little girl with the big blue eyes. But he was not to know her for long: he died before she was three. His long-suffering wife described how in his last months he became repellent with his raking cough and bloodspitting. "There goes another bit of my bloody lung" he would growl. In those days 'bloody' was a terrible word and certainly not one to be used in front of women. My mother winced when she repeated the story to me.

Left without even the semblance of a breadwinner, the family found life very hard. Although women did not have jobs Marian felt she should try to do something to bring in some money. She saw an advertisement for a woman to dust the china in a china shop. She applied and went along to the interview. She was back home within the hour. Asked by the children whether she had been successful, "No," she replied, "When I saw all those women standing in a line, waiting, I thought they needed the money more than I did."

Before the father died in 1884 the family moved to Victoria Terrace in Lancaster Road. It was a larger house with more room for young children and for the dying invalid.

John Hamilton's death was greeted with relief. The brakes were off. On the day of his funeral the younger children were left at home in the care of an easygoing relation. Dolly remembered a day in early childhood when the children could do as they liked. She recalled Charles turning the elegant drawing-room chairs over on to their 'knees' and he and Douglas riding them as pretend horses. When Dolly mentioned this to her mother and sister Edie, much later, her mother commented "I do believe the child is talking of her father's funeral". In their new-found freedom Marian and her daughters had their front hair cut into fringes, a frivolity not permitted by John. Soon after marriage he had become unsociable and refused to accompany Marian to her brother's and sisters' parties. Once she went on her own, only to have her evening spoiled by John's arrival and insistence on taking her home immediately. Her sisters commented "John keeps Marian in a bandbox, takes her out and spanks her, and puts her back in again."

Financial pressure caused Maude to became a companion to the wife of a city businessman while Edie went to live with her Uncle Stephen and his eldest sister, Margaret. But she missed her mother and siblings so much that she cried herself to sleep every night and had to return home after a few months. Marian worked part-time for her brother as a ticket-writer for his advertising business, producing beautifully written sale-tickets. Alex was later to turn to advertising but at seventeen he wanted to take his father's place in providing for the family and suggested they should all run a shop. He actually did organise a corner store for about six months after his father died. The business failed and the family moved to Kirchen Road on Christmas Eve 1884.

The way the Hamiltons lived went with them from house to house, and there were several more moves to come. My mother remembered her mother as being always bright and cheerful about the house, small and slender, immaculately dressed and groomed. The sitting-room was always decorated in old gold, my grandmother's favourite colour. She should replace the silk summer curtains with heavy velour ones in winter. The drawing room suite was upholstered in old gold brocade.

In the centre of the room a large circular table covered with a chenille cloth supported an oil lamp which gave a brilliant light for reading. My grandmother was forward looking and cooked on a gas-stove rather than on a range and even had a gas fire in her bedroom. The running of the house was highly organised, tasks were meted out and every child had a duty. My grandmother cooked - a pity, in the opinion of the children who complained that her boiled puddings, which appeared nearly every day because they were supposed to be nourishing, were heavy, like cannon balls because they did not rise properly. The boys nicknamed them 'killumquicks'. Stews with dumplings or pearl barley, boiled bacon with haricot beans, boiled salt beef and carrots, and many breadpuddings both boiled and baked were regularly on the

menu. Chops were at the more choice end of the menu and roasts were comparatively rare. Edie and her mother sewed, Edie being specially good at it. She made all her own and all Dolly's dresses. The latter had sashes three yards long and poor Dolly from the age of seven had to hem her own. She also had to darn her brothers' socks and got to know the configurations of their toes with a different pattern of holes for each brother. Friday was the day she cleaned the silver, Charley clipped the hedges and Dick moved the lawn.

First Maude and then Edie had to play 'little mother'. Maude was recalled in childhood as 'Poor Maude, she always had a baby under one arm and a book in the other'. When Edie became little mother she was a tougher proposition. Economising at tea-time she ordained that half the slices of bread should be eaten with butter and half with jam. Charlie retaliated by eating half his bread bare and the other half with both jam and butter. Edie fumed, powerless, as no rule had been broken. This sister was immortalised as Mr. Quelch: a beast but a just beast, while Charles contributed a lot of his own early self to his schoolboys. A washerwoman coped with family washing, coming in one day a week on a Tuesday for a shilling and her dinner. Tuesday was chosen for religious reasons: soap had to be cut up the day before and this could not be done on a Sunday. On Monday Marian and Edie cut up the soap for the washing.

Pastimes were activities that did not cost money: card games, draughts and chess. They all read - their mother 'wished she'd never had any of her children taught to read' as they always had their noses in a book. Charles read the classics very early, Thackeray, Dickens and Scott were old friends by the time he was eleven when he learned Scott's LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL by heart when laid up with a childhood illness. He also read adventure stories and tales of the Wild West and Red Indians.

All the children had a certain flair for drawing and painting, the youngest three perhaps the most strongly. They painted Christmas cards and Charles did the most beautiful lettering in them. He would buy second-hand books for presents out of his meagre pocket money and inscribe the recipient's name and add decorations to the titling. They also made scrap albums using former years' Christmas cards.

Dick brought home the *polite* songs from the Music Hall, Dolly was a quick learner of tunes and they sang together, there was always a piano in their home. Outdoor activities were limited to walks and picnics, rowing on Regent's Park lake when they were older, and messing about in boats when they were safe to play by water. Picnics were family affairs on Ealing Common, Hanger Hill and Gunnersbury, organised by Marian and her sisters so that the children could play with their younger cousins. Alex and Charlie walked great distances when Charlie was old enough; meanwhile Alex had walked across to Paddington to see the great fire at Whiteley's stores when he was fourteen. Charlie was seven and too young.

Health problems afflicted the family. Douglas gradually became deaf and was the model for Tom Dutton, the deaf boy at Greyfriars. He also inspired the languid elegance of Lord Mauleverer, and of Gussie of St. Jim's. Dolly developed eye ulcers when she was about three and her sight was permanently affected. She spent many childhood hours with her eyes bound with hot poultices. Finally Marian's health broke down and she persuaded Edie to marry her fiancé without waiting to save up more money. Marian did this because she feared that if anything happened to herself, 'poor little Dolly' might not have a home unless Edie could offer her one. A few years later Charles decided that he would like to adopt Dolly, but that's another story.

Meanwhile, until her marriage, Edie was still the power in the house, tidying up after the boys until she decided to make them do their own tidying. There were noisy shouting matches and Edie galloping down the stairs after Alex and Charlie. Edie usually won, but the battles were hard fought. The author of Greyfriars relived these skirmishes in the fights in the Remove Passage. Charlie invented a 'burglars' game when he was about eight and living in a taller house than the one in Oak Street, probably in Kirchen Road. He was frightened of the dark and invented this game in which all the children grabbed a poker and rushed up the stairs to the top of the house, rattling their fire-irons in the grates of all the bedrooms on their way up. When the older ones, who led the way, declared the topmost rooms burglar-free they all rushed down again to the warmth and light of the ground floor and Charlie was reassured that it was safe for him to go to bed in the dark. In the days before electric light houses had spooky dark corners, full of terrors for sensitive children.

Many people have wondered where the children went to school. The family's peripatetic existence necessitated their attendance at many different schools as Charles himself has stated in interviews and articles. If one looks at the map of Ealing one notices what a plethora of schools there are in the area, many of them church schools of various denominations. In 1884, when they were at Lancaster Road, their school was literally round the corner, next to the Methodist Church in Windsor Road. It was the Wesleyan Day School and Edie worked a sampler while she was there giving its name and the date 1884. The two youngest children went to a private infants'

school because of their health problems. Dolly only stayed a year as she could not see what was going on around her. She then stayed at home and was taught by a governess using a book then popular, 'Magnall's Questions'. There were other schools near Kirchen Road and then the family moved to Acton - a cheaper neighbourhood - and more schools were involved. While living at 83, Osborne Road, Dick, Edie and Charlie all went to the same school. There is a rumour that Charles and Dick went to a 'good school' later, and Charles used to tell me how he had teased his Latin master, but I cannot identify the establishment.

The family then moved to the Parade, Acton, which I cannot find on any map, and from there to 148 Avenue Road, Mill Hill Park in the nicest part of Acton in those days. They arrived there in 1892 and stayed a long time, until 1903. The road has been renumbered, 148 used to be at the Ealing end. It was my grandmother's favourite home, but tragedy still stalked them. Charles celebrated his twenty-first birthday there in the summer of 1897. He was a fully-fledged writer by this time and very comfortably off. He helped with the household finances and bought bicycles for himself and Dolly, and presents all round. His first story was accepted from this house when he was seventeen in 1893. Charlie had made up stories since he was about seven. When Dolly had her eyes bandaged he used to read to her and Douglas. Then he took to making up stories for them - their favourite topic was farms in Canada (shades of Cedar Creek!) people with every sort of animal. Charles became a polished storyteller.

When he left school he worked for brother Alex in his poster and advertising company. Alex was always expecting a cheque in settlement of an account and always being disappointed - hence Billy Bunter's Postal Order. Charlie lived at Alex's married home during the week and as soon as his work was finished he would race up to his room and begin writing. It was Alex who suggested that Charlie should send in a story to a magazine. Charlie did, and it was published. His first cheque, for £5, was so unbelievable that he pinned it up over his bed to see whether it would still be there in the morning. It was. He then knew that he was going to be a writer. As soon as he possibly could he left Alex's business and moved back to his mother's house and concentrated on writing. Soon after 1900 he bought himself a typewriter and taught himself to type, using the middle finger on each hand. Eventually he reached a speed of 60 words a minute. Douglas took Charlie's place in Alex's business but worked much more slowly - he was beginning to show the first signs of the illness that was to prove fatal. Then the blow fell: in November 1902 Douglas died of tuberculosis which had developed extremely rapidly in a matter of months. Marian was devastated. Charles was practical, he insisted on having his brother cremated and the house fumigated. Then he decided they should move. Marian did not wish to leave her pretty home. But move they did, to 601 High Road, Chiswick, near Kew Bridge. Charles loved living near the Thames but his mother found the house too big for the depleted family; Edie was married and Dick had settled in Coventry where he built up a successful business in advertising.

In 1904 Charles was on a cycling holiday in Devon when Dolly sent him a telegram to return at once - their mother had remarried without telling anyone of her intention. Charles sped home aghast but too late. He was disillusioned and dumbfounded that a woman of 57, who had already had an unsatisfactory marriage, should want to set course for another. Sadly the new husband died one year later, after having shown himself to be a little too fond of the bottle. Lightning had certainly struck twice.

While at Mill Hill Park both Charles and his sister became vegetarians, but Dolly went into a decline as the result of a deficient diet and caught diphtheria through which Charles nursed her without catching it himself. A Sanitas-soaked handkerchief worn over his nose and mouth saved him from infection. It was at this time that he and Dolly formed a friendship with an elderly lady opposite who polished up their French and Italian and read Latin with Charles. They continued to live at 601 High Road, Chiswick until the end of 1906 when they left the Ealing area for good. They moved to a service flat at 7 Dorset Square, behind Baker Street. Charles's love of music developed while he was living at Mill Hill Park. Dolly taught him to sing - she was a student of singing at the Royal Academy of Music and was in the opera class - he had a good bass voice and enjoyed using it. Dolly also joined the Student Christian Movement and she got her brother interested as well. Together they went to Bible classes and were confirmed in 1905 - in all the turmoil of their youth, confirmation had been overlooked for the younger ones. They felt they had now rejoined the mainstream of society.

Just a year after Charles left Ealing he created St. Jim's and a year later Greyfriars and Billy Bunter came into being. He turned his back on his early days, on the very practical scale of values of his family and he chose the creative life. His Ealing life furnished much of the background to his stories; leafy lanes, big houses glowing with light on festive occasions, houses he had never entered but in which he imagined the splendours that wealth could provide. Willow House, the home of his Uncle Stephen, was his only contact with that world. Now the house is owned by Mrs. Barbara Tait, the President of the Society of Women Artists, who has beautifully restored it. She very kindly

took me on a tour of it and I was able to see where my uncle made his enjoyable boyhood visits.

His relatives considered Charles 'odd' - how could one make a secure living without a business of some sort? It is not entirely irrelevant that he made fun of businessmen and shopkeepers so often in his writing. Nevertheless much of the motivation and much of the character interest in his writings derive from his Ealing Connection.

Season's Greetings to all, and a special thanks to our editor.

D. BLAKE, THAMES DITTON

* *

Seasonal Greetings to all readers.

MAURICE KING, 27 CELTIC CRESCENT, DORCHESTER, DORSET

* *

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* *

The Development of Norman Conquest

by Norman Wright

With the demise of the *Nelson Lee Library* Edwy Searles Brooks suddenly found himself devoid of the larger part of his income. From 1917 until the early months of 1933 his bread and butter earnings had come from his weekly Saint Franks story written for the *Nelson Lee Library* and any additional work - Sexton Blake stories, Dixon Hawke adventures and the serials he wrote for a variety of papers, were essentially the icing on the cake. The *Nelson Lee Library* stopped publishing original Saint Franks stories in February 1933 and adopted the same policy as *The Gem*, namely that of reprinting the stories from the beginning; or in the case of the *Lee* from the arrival of Nipper and Lee at St. Franks. "Nipper - New Boy", in the third new series number one, in February 1933 thus reprinted "Nipper at St. Franks" that had originally appeared in the Original Series *NLL* number 112 in July 1917. We do not know whether or not Brooks received any form of payment from the Amalgamated Press for these reprints - in the same way as authors received payment for stories reprinted in the *Schoolboys Own Library* etc. , but as it was the Third Series only ran for twenty five issues so any payment for reprints would have been very short lived. After the demise of the *Lee* a number of St. Franks serials did run for a couple of years in *The Gem*, the paper into which the *Nelson Lee Library* had merged, but each episode was very short and for almost half of St. Franks' tenure of the back section of *The Gem* the serial was reprinted material. Thus with the ending of the *Nelson Lee Library* E.S.Brooks found himself, almost overnight, devoid of a large slice of his income.

I have checked through Bob Blythe's excellent Brooks Bibliography and carried out a rough word-count for two periods of Brooks' career. Firstly for the period 1928 to 1932. During those five years Brooks wrote:
164 St. Franks Stories for the *NLL*.
1 serial for the *NLL*
17 short stories in *Boys Realm*
17 Sexton Blake stories for the *Union Jack*
21 short stories for *Boys Magazine*
1 serial for *Boys Magazine*
9 Dixon Hawke novels for the *Dixon Hawke Library*
9 St. Jims stories for *The Gem*.
I may have missed the odd story out but I think this list contains the bulk of his work for the period. At a rough word count I estimate that during those five years his output was somewhere in the region of eight million words. That is over one and a half million words a year or thirty two thousand words per week.

The second period I looked at was that immediately after the demise of the *Lee*. The five years from 1933 to 1937 inclusive. During that period Brooks wrote:
1 short story for the *Holiday Annual*
18 stories for *Detective Weekly*

2 serials for *Detective Weekly*
3 full length Blake stories for *Sexton Blake Library*
1 serial in *Rover*
3 Sexton Blake stories for *Union Jack*
2 stories (original) for *Boys Friend Library*
6 St. Franks serials (original) for *The Gem*
28 short stories for *Boys Magazine*
36 short stories for *Buzzer*
9 stories for *Dixon Hawke Library*
1 serial for *Modern Boy*
4 short stories for *Pilot*
2 serials for *Pilot*
1 western novel "Ghost Gold"
2 detective novels "Strange Case of the Antlered Man" and "The Grouser Investigates"
5 stories for *The Thriller*

A rough word count for this period gives a total of two and a half million words; an average of half a million words a year or ten thousand words per week. Comparing the two periods shows that in the second five year period his output has dropped by two thirds, from 32,000 words to 10,000 words per week and his income must have suffered accordingly. This must have been a savage blow to the author and particularly grueling as he was in his early forties and probably just reaching the peak of his creative powers.

Throughout this period Brooks was almost certainly searching for new markets, new themes and new series characters that he could develop in the way that he had developed the St. Franks characters. He did, of course, have his own character - Waldo the Wonderman, and his alter ego Marko The Miracle Man. Other Amalgamated Press writers, Anthony Skene and Gerald Verner amongst them, had de-Blakenised their thrillers and had them published by Wright and Brown and other publishers of hardback thrillers. John G. Brandon was probably most successful at the game, taking almost all of his RSVP stories, re-christening the hero ASP, and having the result published by Wright and Brown. Brooks probably hoped to do something similar with Waldo. As I have written before, Waldo had undergone a number of changes since his initial appearance in the Christmas 1918 of *Union Jack*. At the start he had been an out and out villain but over the years Brooks had made subtle changes to his character and he had become a likeable rogue. So the question is, why were Waldo stories not de-Blakenised and offered to Wright and Brown?

I think the answer is that by the mid 1930s Waldo was already too out of date to and rather too far fetched to appeal to publishers of hardback detective novels. His description; plus fours and all was fine for the 1920s but hardly the dress of 1930s heroes and anti-heroes. His incredible powers: impervious to pain, unequaled strength etc., while of great advantage to the hero made plot development difficult. After all, with a hero who is stronger than half a dozen toughs, who can out-run, out jump and out everything else even Olympic athletes; who can hear someone breathing out of doors at

fifty yards and who appears impervious to bullets, any contest between said hero and any opposition is bound to be something of a walk-over. Even Superman had his Achilles heel in the form of Cryptonite, but Waldo, rather like Felix, just kept on walking and seemed to be totally invincible. And once a character has all of these powers it is difficult for an author to take them away. In my opinion Waldo, for the reasons just given, was unsuitable for a hardback manifestation and I think Brooks must have realised this too.

Waldo did however have many qualities that were ideal for any self respecting swashbuckler and this too Brooks must have been aware of. All of these things must have been simmering in the back of his mind and when Brooks had the opportunity to feature The Wonderman in a story without Sexton Blake the character was subtly changed. In September 1934 a full length original non-Blake Waldo story appeared in the *Boys Friend Library*: "Waldo's Wonder Team", and while the character still overdid the super powers part when playing football there are definite shades of Norman Conquest beginning to show through. A year later, in November 1935, Waldo featured without Blake in a *Detective Weekly* story entitled "The Mystery of the Man in Mail" and here the character really was beginning to look and act like Norman Conquest. Thirteen years later Brooks used the story with hardly any alterations as the basis for part of the Norman Conquest story entitled, "The Spot Marked X".

If, as we have surmised, Brooks was looking for a firm interested in publishing hardback detective and adventure novels from his pen he must have thought that he had struck gold in 1935 when Harrap published "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man", his first story to feature the irascible Inspector William Beeke of Scotland Yard, better know to his colleagues as 'The Grouser', and his assistant Detective-Sergeant Eustace Cavendish. The book was obviously fairly successful and was reprinted early in 1936 just prior to publication of the second Grouser novel, "The Grouser Investigates". Between these two publications Rich and Cowan had published a western by Brooks entitled "Ghost Gold". But things were not a bed of roses with Harrap. We know from the radio interview Brooks gave just prior to his death that he did not find Harrap the easiest of publishers to deal with. The manuscript of "The Grouser Investigates" was returned to Brooks several times for quite major alterations and this was not to Brooks' liking. The result was that no further hard backed Grouser stories appeared, although a new novel length Grouser story, "Mr. Nemesis", was serialised in *Detective Weekly* during 1937 and four novella length adventures of Beeke were also published in *Detective Weekly*. These were all later re-written as Ironsides of the yard stories. *Detective Weekly*, incidentally also serialised both "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man" and "The Grouser Investigates".

With 'The Grouser' more or less 'on ice' and westerns not being his forte I would imagine that Brooks again looked around for another character to develop and returned to Waldo. What more natural a step to take than to take the more usable aspects of Waldo's character, tone down his more outlandish qualities and develop a new hero. The advantages of such a move were obvious. If a new character was a toned down Wonderman then many of Brooks' plots that had featured Waldo could be dusted down and, with minimal changes, used as the basis for stories featuring the new character.

I am fortunate in having seen a transcript of the question and answer session that E.S. Brooks gave when he attended the London Old Boys Book Club meeting in December 1963. Answering a question about the origins of Norman Conquest Brooks explained that he had originally planned to name his new creation Peter Gay and that it was Montague Haydon, then Director of Juvenile Publications at the Amalgamated Press, who had suggested the name Norman Conquest. And what a good idea it was too. The numerical sobriquet was, as far as I am aware, something quite original at the time and during the late 1930s at least the '1066' trademark became as well known to readers of *The Thriller* as The Saint match-stick man figure.

The first Norman Conquest story, "Mr. Mortimer Gets the Jitters", appeared in *The Thriller* in January 1937. Very early on in the story Conquest met his partner in adventure, Joy Everard, and had shown his contempt for the 'ungodly'. While having many of Waldo's traits Norman Conquest was no Superman and his character was much more acceptable to the 'thirties thriller buying public. He was a young man of twenty five in the first story and the Arthur Jones cover illustration on that first *Thriller* depicted him as a typical nineteen thirties swashbuckling daredevil.

The first Norman Conquest appeared under Brooks' own name but from the second story he adopted the pen-name of Berkeley Gray. As the Editor explained in his letter to readers in *Thriller* number 422 :" The first Conquest story was by Edwy Searles Brooks. This one is by Berkeley Gray. Do not be perturbed or distressed, for E.S.Brooks and Berkeley Gray are one and the same person. The truth is that Mr. Brooks is so pleased with Norman - his great new character - that he has decided to renew himself. In other words, from now on he intends to write all Norman Conquest stories under the pen name of Berkeley Gray". There are a number of reasons why Brooks may have opted to adopt a pen name for the Conquest stories. It may have been that readers associated the name of Brooks with juvenile fiction, in particular the St. Franks stories in the *Nelson Lee Library*, and that as Brooks saw his future in adult crime fiction he wanted to shake off that image. On the other hand it may have been that he changed his name because he wanted to change his publisher. I favour the former reason, but we will probably never learn the actual reason for his decision.

Further Norman Conquest stories appeared in *The Thriller* and the first three were collected and published by Collins in August 1938 as "Mr. Mortimer Gets the Jitters". Not surprisingly the book was dedicated to Monty Haydon.

Brooks' relationship with Collins seems to have been a very amicable one and further Norman Conquest novels appeared. At first these were culled from the pages of *The Thriller*, but when the war ended that publication original novels were written for Collins, many of the earlier ones making use of plots and themes Brooks had used in old Amalgamated Press papers and libraries.

The Norman Conquest stories were very popular so Brooks dusted off his previous character, 'The Grouser', re-christened him William Cromwell - 'Ironsides' to his colleagues - and began a new series of detective novels for Collins. The first of these, "Footsteps of Death", had been serialised in *Detective Weekly* as a 'Grouser' story and had originally been planned as the third Harrap novel to feature the detective. Likewise the short Grouser stories that had been published in *Detective Weekly* were later collected and published in book form as 'Ironsides' stories. In September 1939, the same month as the first 'Ironsides' book was published, the first original Bill Cromwell story, "Ironsides of the Yard", was published in *The Thriller* and this, together with two further *Thriller* stories became the second book in the series, "Ironsides of the Yard".

Brooks had found his new niche and with the exception of his output for Swan during the 1950s and a few very minor works he concentrated on writing adult thrillers for the rest of his life; producing 49 Conquest novels and 43 Ironsides thrillers, the best of which can hold their own against any stories in the genre.

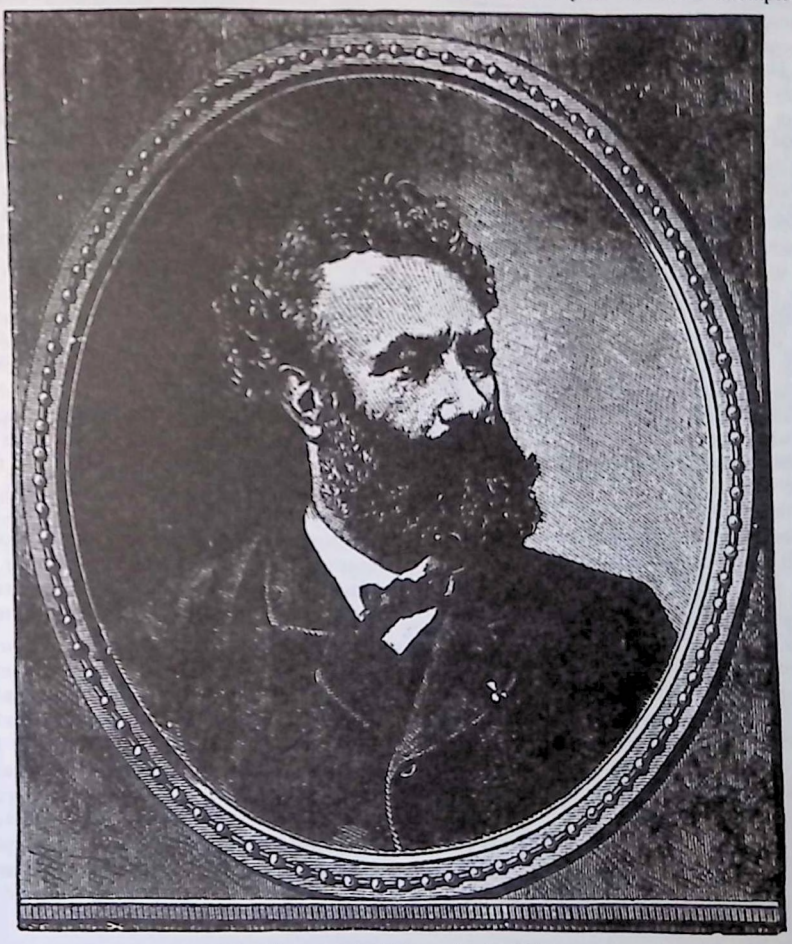
The Extraordinary Journeys of Jules Verne

BY LAURENCE PRICE

Jules-Gabriel Verne was born on 8th February 1828 on the artificial island of the Isle of Feydeau, Nantes in Brittan, an inland port, once the centre of the old spice trade with the West Indies. The artificial island had been raised up on piles over a small, sandy island on the River Loire in 1713 by the wealthy merchants of Nantes on which they had erected twenty four great mansions. By the time of the birth of Verne, the once fashionable mansions were let out as apartments and to traders. The emphasis on this artificial island is an important one as it would have a measured influence on many of Verne's later writings.

Jules's father, Pierre Verne, was a respected lawyer, a career in which he fully expected Jules to follow in his footsteps. His mother's maiden name was Sophie Allotte de la Füye and she was believed to be proudly descended from a 15th century Scottish archer, who had served in France with the Scots Guards under Louix XI. On earning his title, part of the royal privilege was to erect a dovecote, or 'fuie'. Another son, Paul, was born in 1829 and three sisters followed, Anna (1836), Mathilde (1838) and Marie in 1842.

An apocryphal story is often related that, in 1839, the 11 year old Jules attempted to run



Jules Verne aged 60. Engraving by Guillaumot

away to sea by boarding the "Coralie" as a cabin boy bound for the Indies, allegedly to bring back a coral necklace for his cousin, Caroline Tronson, with whom he was infatuated. He didn't get far: his father caught up with him at the next port. The legend concludes that following this brash escapade, Jules told his mother 'from now on, I'll travel only in my imagination'.

As a pupil Verne was said to be quite unexceptional, yet he consistently won prizes for geography. Together with a related love of maps this was almost certainly the root of his virtual obsession with the frequent quoting of co-ordinates in his later 'voyages extraordinaires' - his extraordinary journeys. By 1847 he was dutifully, if half-heartedly, studying law in Paris. His youthful years were otherwise marked by a series of unhappy love affairs, particularly with his attractive cousin, Caroline Tronson, who became engaged to someone else in the same year as his arrival in Paris.

Determined to live a Bohemian existence he quickly established himself in literary circles, meeting the writers Alexander Dumas 'pere' and 'fils'. His long writing apprenticeship began, writing minor plays, libretti and short stories. During these years Verne passed his law degree in 1849, married a young widow with two children, Honorine Du Fraysse de Viane, in 1857, only to forsake law and become a stockbroker in the same year. An only son, Michel, was born four years later. Retaining his interest in the arts and drama Jules was secretary of the Théatre Lyrique in Paris from 1852-55.

In 1859 Verne visited Scotland and England with a musician friend, their experiences being recorded in fictional form in "Voyage en Engleterre et en Ecosse" which his friend and publisher Hetzel decided not to publish. It was eventually published in France in 1989 and as "Backwards to Britain" in England in 1992. Suffice to say it is an important book, revealing Verne as an excellent prose and travel writer, and from which he evidently 'borrowed' many diverse themes and ideas for his later works. There are evocative descriptions of the Edinburgh and Scotland of the late 1850s and a finely crafted description of the port of Liverpool and its bustling docks and harbour.

In this book Verne gives a description of 'a jewel' of castle 'with huge windows and all the refinements of modern luxury with a luxurious drawing room opened into a study at one end and a conservatory of rare plants at the other, creating the effect of a large gallery'. There is a library, a natural history display, fine furniture and valuable paintings - greenhouses containing 'the most beautiful ripe fruit in the world'.

This passage seems likely to be the inspiration for the wonders of Nemo's great submarine, Nautilus, with its huge salon windows from which the occupants can view the ocean depths, giving the impression of an immense aquarium, its own vast library with a museum combining priceless paintings by the masters and an incomparable natural history display.

Jacques Lavaret (Verne) is always impatient for the 'off' and restless for departure; and on arrival, ready to be moving on to the next stage of the journey. This foreshadows the theme of "Around The World in Eighty Days" in which the precise use of time and timetables to ensure both punctual departure and arrival motivates the ever restless Phileas Fogg as he impatiently circumnavigates the globe.

There is frequent use of facts and figures throughout the book, again echoing Verne's emphasis on statistics of every type in many of his later works. Lavaret and his companion eat well in the Scottish castle; Nemo and his companions eat equally lavishly in the 'Nautilus'. Copious eating is an important factor in many of Verne's tales! "Backwards to Britain" is, therefore, virtually a reference book for many of the Vernian classics that were to follow.

It was not until 1863 and at the age of 35 that Verne eventually encountered 'immediate success', with the publication of "Cinq Semaines en Ballon" (Five Weeks in a Balloon), his wonderful story of the progress across Africa of the balloon "Victoria" in which Dr. Samuel Fergusson and his two companions set out from the island of Zanzibar (lat 6° S) heading west to Senegal, covering that vast area between the '14th and 33rd meridians'. The reader shares all the thrills of the three intrepid aerial travellers as they float over the vast continent; over jungles and deserts, mountains and mighty rivers, including the source of the Nile. There are still numerous dangerous encounters, narrow escapes and rescues from wild beasts, warring tribesmen, not to mention heat and storm and tempest.

Verne could leave his largely unsuccessful stockbroking behind and turn his talents to full time writing for a living. This new type of novel, a scientific romance combining action and adventure with erudite and factual descriptions of science and novel modes of travel, established Verne immediately as a master of the genre. Within a few years his fame would spread world-wide: Verne had struck a literary goldmine.

"A Journey to the Centre of the Earth" followed in 1864, "From the Earth to the Moon: in 1865, "Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea" in 1870. "Around The World in Eighty Days" in 1873 and "The Mysterious Island" in 1875. Famous books all but only a fraction of his vast literary output of 79 'voyages extraodinaires', for although Verne's output was surprisingly varied it remains a fact that he is

best remembered as a pioneer and master of the science fiction novel.

What of "The Fur Country" published in the same year as "Around the World in Eighty Days" or "The Adventures of Captain Hatteras" of 1866, or "The Tribulations of a Chinaman" of 1879 or "Foundling Mick" of 1893, to name but a few? None of these stories has a basis in science fiction at all. "The Fur Country" and "Captain Hatteras" are set in one of Verne's favourite alternative worlds - the frozen icefields of the Arctic. On average, Verne wrote two books per year from 1863 until the year of his death in 1905, and these also included some substantial non-fictional geographical and travel works.

During his years of great world-wide literary success Verne was to own three boats, each one more impressive than its predecessor, all named "Saint Michel". "20,000 Leagues under the Sea" was mainly written while 'at sea' in the first of these boats. He made his last trips in the St. Michel III to North Africa in 1878 and around the Mediterranean in 1884. His longest voyage, however, was aboard the "Great Eastern" to American in 1867 where he visited New York and saw the Niagara Falls.

Various traumas also affected the life of Verne including both the Franco-Prussian war and a period of civil unrest in Paris during 1870-71 which unsettled him, undermining his confidence as a writer. His father also died in 1871 and Verne decided to settle in Amiens in 1872.

1886 was to be a particularly bad year for Verne. Firstly, he sold the Saint Michel III and was never to sail again. Secondly, and most tragically, he was deliberately shot in the foot by his nephew, Gaston. Gaston was placed in a mental home but the wound was a serious one and Verne was left permanently lame. Thirdly, his friend, publisher and confidant, Jules Hetzel died within a few days of the incident.

Verne continued to be prolific but his novels, now of an increasingly pessimistic nature, sold less well; added to this was his increasingly failing health, although he still managed to serve as an active Councillor on the city Council of Amiens from 1888 to 1904. Jules Verne died on 24th March 1905 after a life as one of the world's best loved and most popular authors: much of that popularity has continued to the present day, with frequent reprinting of his most famous books into numerous translations 'around the world'.

VERNE AS A WRITER OF SCIENCE FICTION

In his foreword to Verne's "Journeys and Adventures of Captain Hatteras" (1866), the publisher, Hetzel, amplified the grand purposes of the 'Voyage Extraodinaires'.

'The goal of the series is, in fact, to outline all the geographical, geological, physical and astronomical knowledge amassed by modern science and to recount, in an entertaining and picturesque format that is his own, the history of the universe'.

In the 1890s Verne made light of this vast and weighty undertaking, saying 'Yes! But the Earth is very large, and life is very short! In order to leave a completed work behind, one would need to live to be at least 100 years old!'

Yet Verne, particularly in the field of his 'scientific fiction', could be said to have accomplished many of these lofty goals. What is of interest is how he accomplished the task set before him by Hetzel.

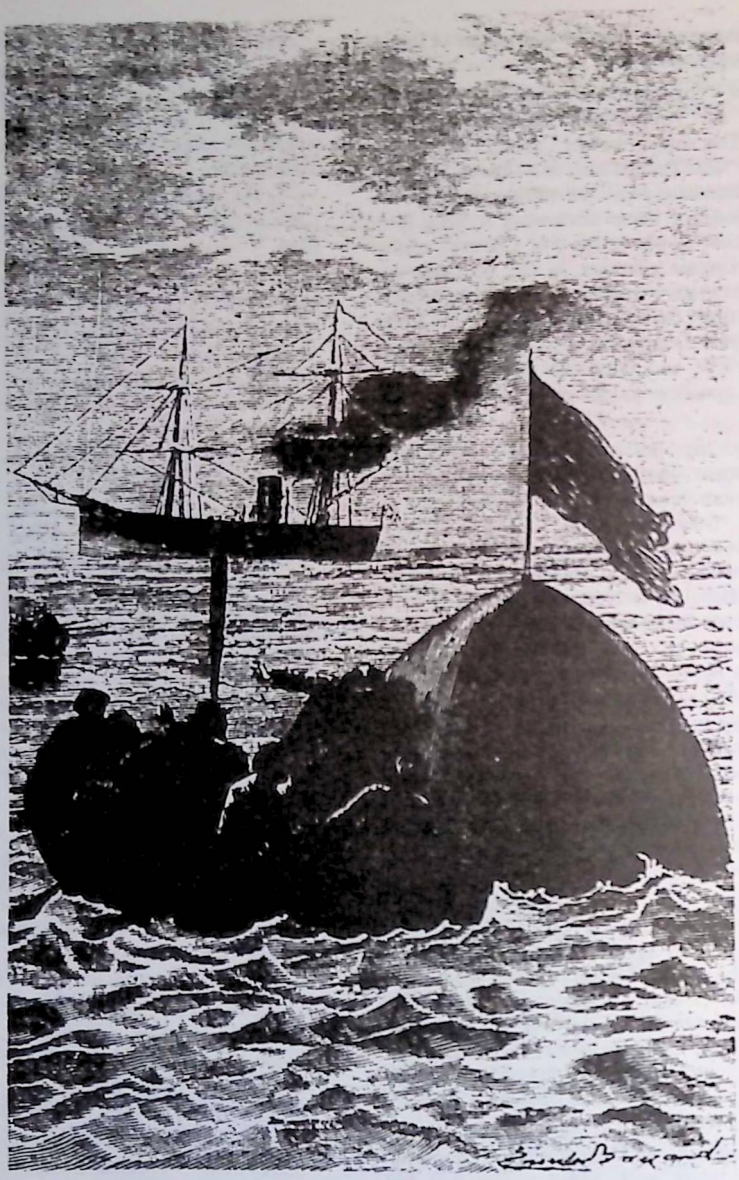
Verne's science fiction was of a particular type. Whereas H.G. Wells would later write about time machines and invading Martians, admittedly quite convincingly, Verne wrote good 'scientific' science fiction within the realms of possibility, so that today we have seen many Vernian dreams realised. Plausible submarine circumnavigation of the globe, an exciting, but possible, balloon trip across Africa, a meticulously calculated voyage to the moon and a return, with safe splashdown, to earth. But no Selenites or other moon inhabitants. Playing with international time zones in "Around the World in Eighty Days" - but never with time travel.

Although Verne is now rightly regarded as much more than a writer of scientific fiction by many modern commentators, his contribution to the genre should not be underestimated or devalued. There may have been earlier 'fathers' of science fiction but there were none before who made it as exciting or feasible as Verne.

As a boy Verne admitted he had enjoyed the 'fabulous, ridiculous adventures' of Raspe's "Baron von Munchausen" who had made two extraordinary voyages to the moon. These had made him think whether such adventures could be written in a serious manner.

It was this committed and sober approach to his scientific writing that has ensured lasting respect for Verne as a pioneer of viable lunar exploration as described in his seminal "From the Earth to the Moon and a Trip Round It". The oft-recorded accuracy of Verne's calculations estimating the escape velocity speed of the 'Columbiad' to break free from the earth's gravity: the choice of the southern tip of Florida for the launch site, the orbit around the moon, the successful splashdown in the correct area of the Pacific - all demonstrate the verisimilitude of Verne's novel.

Poe or Wells may have been more fanciful but to Verne fell the laurels. It was no coincidence that it was a spacecraft called ';Columbia' that was launched to the moon on that memorable July day in 1969. The ultimate



The splashdown, illustrated by Bayard, in *From the Earth to the Moon*

accolade to the great author from NASA: after all, he correctly prophesied that 'the Yankees' would 'take possession' of the moon and plant upon it 'the star spangled banner of the United States of America'.

This is not to suggest that Verne got it right every time. The remarkable cannon in "From the Earth to the Moon" would actually have crushed both the 'Columbiad' and its occupants on being fired; the rockets that would take man to the moon over one hundred years later did not exist when Verne wrote and he simply could not envisage or invent them.

Verne used and adapted existing machines, vehicles and technology or achievable ideas or theories. Submariners were already known and with a leap of imagination Verne could successfully hypothesise on their possible future development in the form of the fabulous 'Nautilus'. He was uncannily accurate, and surely realistic, rather than pessimistic, about the threat of the submarine as a weapon of destruction that would eventually render battleships and dreadnoughts ineffective and obsolete.

Active membership of such groups as the Society for the Encouragement of Air Travel via Heavier-Than-Air Vehicles gave Verne the opportunity to study new proposals for air travel and to create a flying machine such as Robur's

super-helicopter 'Albatross' in "The Clipper of the Clouds" (Robur the Conqueror) of 1886.

The moving pavements of Milliard City are one of the many technological marvels of "The Floating Island" of 1895, largely peopled by American millionaires. Verne had a great admiration for America and the Americans and it is likely he would have been aware of the enormous success of Max. E. Schmidt's three-speed moving sidewalk at Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893, particularly as Verne refers to the 'Chicago World's Fair of 1893' in the text.

Navigational balloons, huge submarines and super-helicopters, spacecraft and mechanised floating islands in which Verne realised his extraordinary journeys: a unique science fiction based upon the known scientific facts and technological achievements of the 19th century 'translated into an entertaining and picturesque format that is his own' to inspire the reader with prophetic Vernian dreams and visions of the future.

VERNE AND HIS ISLANDS

Jules Verne had a particular fixation with islands, both 'rooted' and artificial or floating: this is claimed to have its origins in Verne's childhood fear and insecurity that the artificial Ile of Feydeau might break away from its piles during the periodic floods on the Loire. He recorded that he was once 'marooned' on an island on the Loire and decided to enact the part of Robinson Crusoe. After a few hours when his 'stomach cried with hunger' he tired of the game and waded ankle deep to the mainland.

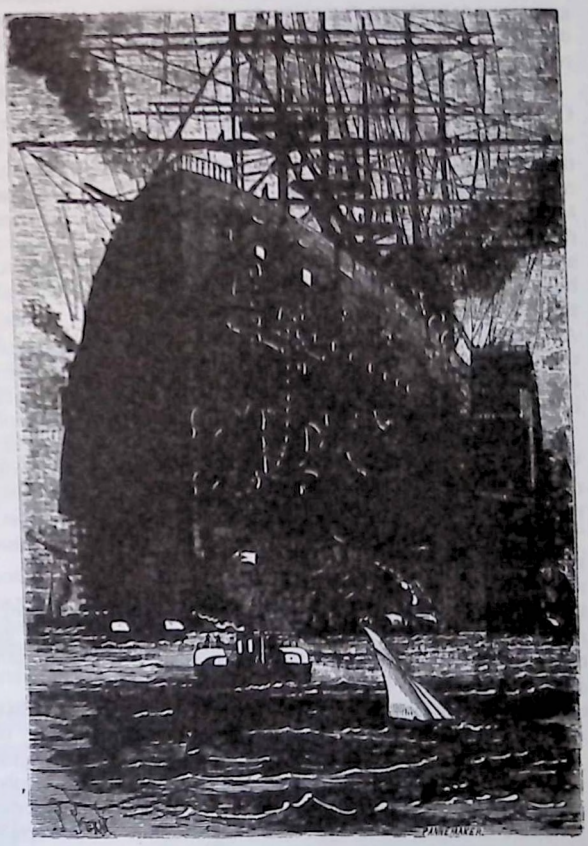
As a child Verne had a particular 'amour' for the "The Swiss Family Robinson' by Johann Wyss and an admiration, to a lesser extent for Defoe's great desert island story "Robinson Crusoe". His own 'desert island' stories include "The Mysterious Island" (1875), "Godfrey Morgan" (1882), "Adrift in the Pacific" (1888), the adventures of some shipwrecked New Zealand children, one of only two stories he ever wrote specifically for children, and in 1900, "Second Fatherland", his own sequel to "Swiss Family Robinson".

Of floating islands the first is "The Fur Country" (1873), about an expedition that finds itself cast adrift on an ice island, melting as it heads for the warm waters of the Pacific, the second, "La Jangada" (1881), a romance about a giant raft community floating down the Amazon and finally "The Floating Island" of 1895, a mixture of both science fiction and satire, in which a floating utopia meets a watery fate due to petty rivalries and the ever present flaws of human nature on this Pearl of the Pacific. "A Floating City" (1871) is Verne's experiences of sailing to America in 1867 on Brunel's leviathan ship "The Great Eastern", which he indeed considered a vast floating city.

There is an underlying feeling of pessimism in some of Verne's work which might more accurately be called realism. This pessimism-cum-realism means that many Vernian inventions, machines and utopias, even the journeys themselves, ultimately fail.

Island sanctuaries, for instance, natural or man-made, may sink, explode or even melt. This happens respectively in "Floating Island", "Mysterious Island" and "The Fur Country".

"The Floating Island" is a particularly good example of a Vernian invention, machine, utopia and extraordinary journey all-in-one that ultimately fails. This seems a sad fate for an



UNE VILLE FLOTTANTE

advanced community in which they 'commonly use the teleautograph, an instrument which sends the written as the telephone sends the spoken word, without forgetting the kinetograph, which registers the movements; being for the eye what the phonograph is for the ear, and the telephote, which reproduces the images...'

However the island and its inhabitants, mainly American millionaires, are symbols of materialism and human pride and folly on a gigantic scale. This eventually leads to the floating island breaking up and sinking in fragments beneath the waves, with the loss of several hundred human lives., The utopian elements of the island included an idyllic artificial climate, as the island can move at will around the Pacific, always seeking favourable conditions and, in effect, cheating the elements. All should be well but human nature and the elements being what they are...

Verne concludes: "And yet - we cannot repeat it too often - to create an artificial island, an island that moves on the surface of the seas, is it not to overstep the limits assigned to human genius, and is it not forbidden to man, who disposes not of the wind or the waves, to so recklessly usurp the functions of the Creator?"

By comparison, the earlier "The Fur Country" is an altogether more optimistic story where, despite numerous dangers and deprivations on an island of ice that is rapidly melting away, there is not one single loss of human life. This, despite sharing the diminishing resources with various wild animals, including a polar bear! Verne has his heroes wade ashore, fall on their knees and give thanks to Heaven for their miraculous delivery. An interesting contrast, once more, between an omnipotent and a providential Creator, incorporated by Verne into these richly imaginative island romances.

There is one other 'island' with which Verne had an apparent fascination; the description of this forms part of one of the most moving and inspiring chapters of his classic "20,000 Leagues under the Sea". What so many still seek, Verne had allowed Nemo to discover and Professor Aronnax to gaze upon in wonder - the legendary, lost island continent of - ATLANTIS. This is perhaps the most extraordinary journey of all that Verne took us upon: a journey far beneath the ocean depths into our antediluvian past...

VERNE AS A PROPHET AND A TEACHER

There remains, nevertheless, a reassuring sense of stability and order underlying many of Verne's extraordinary journeys, amplified by his near obsessional use of co-ordinates and established units of time and other constants.

However wild or desolate the location, the traveller, and in turn the reader, is still able to define his position within a world-wide grid of longitudinal and latitudinal co-ordinates and international time zones provided, of course, the necessary maps, compasses and sextants remain available to him!

For even though the lines of longitude and latitude are 'imaginary' grids dividing the globe into convenient geographical and geometrical units, they are capable of both accurate measurement and observation to ascertain one's exact location at any one time and in any one position on the earth's surface.

Speed is also a recurring motif - think of Phileas Fogg's famous races against time around the world. Fogg's victory against time itself perhaps helped Verne's readers to adjust subliminally to the rapidly changing pace of life they were then experiencing as ever faster and more novel modes of transport and increasingly efficient machines were being developed.

Verne's science was also of the ordered and stable Newtonian variety. No theory of relativity, first tentatively expounded by Einstein a few months after the death of Verne in 1905, no quantum physics, unsettling black holes or baby universes, to quote but a few 20th century scientific developments.

Verne, therefore, entertainingly educated and assisted his readers to overcome understandable fears of progress and change brought about by science and the machine; and even positively to embrace them! This is a lesson in history for us as we face our own uncertainties, instabilities and unrest as we approach the 21st century.

Verne was, nevertheless, well aware of the dangers and misuse of science and progress but he also ultimately recognised that man cannot resist change or remain a Luddite. He used many of his scientist heroes to teach a rational, ordered and unified vision of reality: enigmas and problems are logically explained and solved, everything is capable of scientific analysis and solution, there is a proof for everything and everything is under control.

Those individuals that might misuse science or invention, such as a megalomaniac like Robur in "The Master of the World" (1904) pay the price of their pride and folly - sudden death and annihilation.

There is surely in Verne's work the timeless quality of great literature, the ability to speak to later generations with universal truths., Verne was truly a prophet and teacher not only rooted in his own time but one who can still speak out powerfully to us today.

VERNE AND HIS TRANSLATIONS

Discernment in reading Verne is an essential requirement to a fuller understanding

and enjoyment of his writing, as numerous appalling translations and bowdlerisations of even his greatest books abound. It is possible that no other author of note has suffered to such a degree as a result of this and had his reputation diminished as much as Verne.

"20,000 Leagues Under The Sea" is a good example of this. When it was first published in England in 1873, the translator, an Oxford cleric, the Reverend Louis Page Mercier (Lewis Mercier), cut nearly a quarter of Verne's text and made hundreds of translation errors. Yet, for nearly a century, this remained the official English text. Such amendments and abridgements may have been politically motivated - Verne was often caustic and contemptuous about what he considered the excesses of British Imperialism, even though he peopled so many of his stories with heroic Englishmen.

This becomes particularly evident in "The Mysterious Island" in which Captain Nemo makes irrevocably clear his own nationality and that of his previously unidentified greatest political enemy. He is an Indian, Prince Dakkar and 'he hated England'. At least he did in the original, unexpurgated French text but not in the heavily censored English translation by the 19th century children's author, W.H.G. Kingston, who rewrote, cut and fabricated Verne's text, so as not to offend the sensitivities of English readers.

As recently as the 1960s even such a 'sympathetic' modern translator and 'life-long admirer of Verne' as I.O. Evans, whose avowed intention was to bring Verne's entire oeuvre to an English reading public, was guilty of abridging the texts on the grounds that 'surely no author more repaid judicious skipping'. In the opinion of Evans, Verne overloaded his stories with an incredible wealth of technological or historical information and 'parenthetical disquisitions'. So followed the abridged and truncated "Arco" series, with such books as "The Barsac Mission" appearing in English for the first time, but not true to Verne.

The tide, however, has at last turned and an increasing number of accurate and unabridged texts and translations are appearing in bookshops, together with critical studies and even an encyclopaedia, all of which do honour to the genius of Verne. The bibliography at the end of this article lists recommended modern translations true to Jules Verne and his extraordinary journeys.

Great discoveries await the reader who will embark on these journeys; too long buried literary riches await the treasure seeker on these Vernian islands of imagination!

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Key to the Translators (where identified)

(a) William Butcher
(b) Walter James Miller & Frederick Paul Walters
(c) Edward T. Baxter
(d) Ellen E. Frewer
(e) Janice Valls-Russell
(f) Evelyn Copeland.

Treasure Island: The Spin-Offs

BY MARK TAHA

I'd like to begin this article with a possible apology; I hope I haven't missed anything out. The following are all the spin-offs I've read.

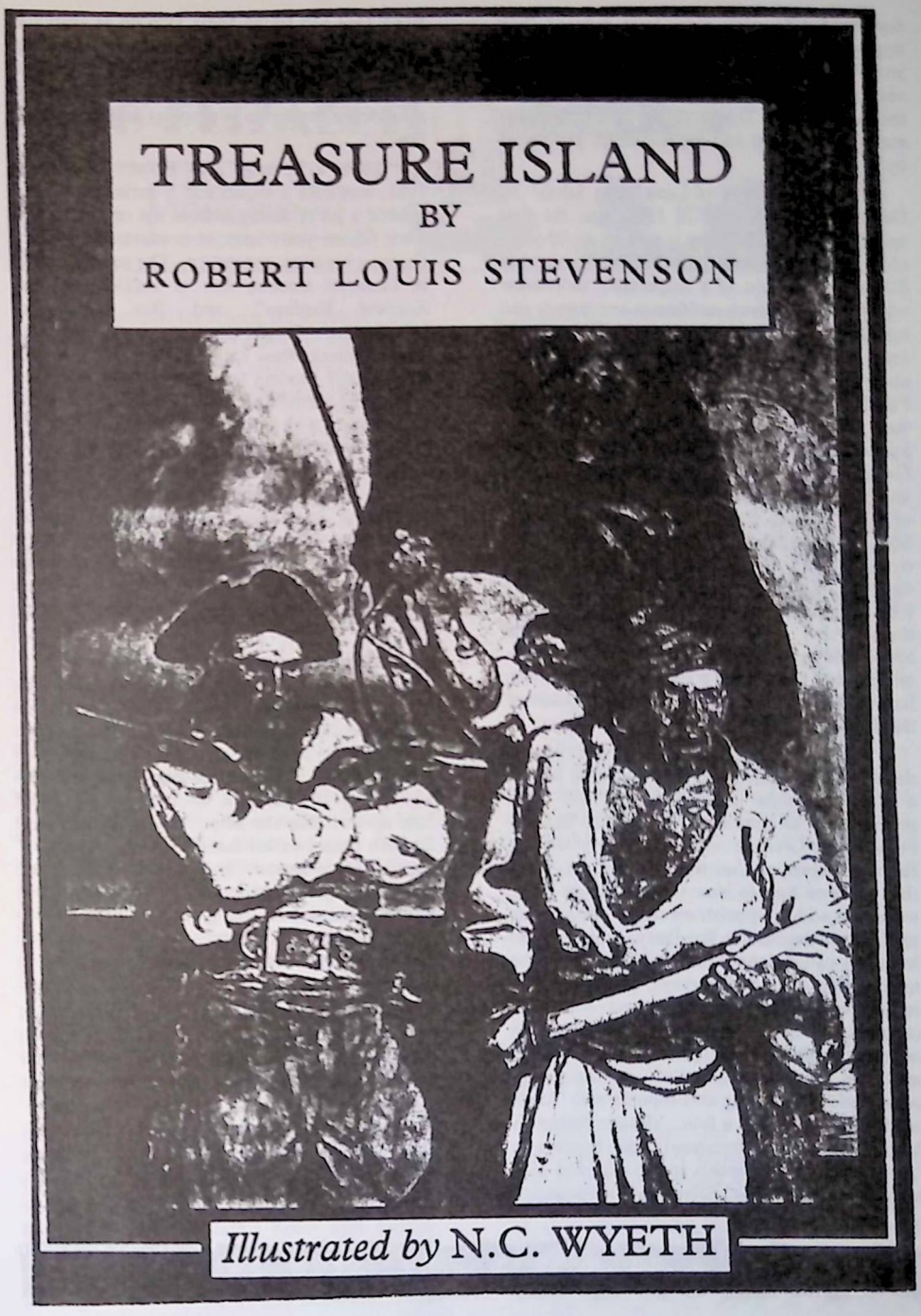
It was obvious from the start that somebody would write a sequel to *Treasure Island*. Leaving aside the many hostages to fortune and the fact that Robert Louis Stevenson was only 44 when he died, Long John Silver was too good a character to lose. Indeed, his earlier life would undoubtedly be worth reading about (it definitely was) and he naturally appears in all the spin-offs. One can't help agreeing that Silver deserved either a seat in Parliament or a rope necktie (let's compromise - both!).

The first sequel, "Back to Treasure Island" by H.A. Callahan, came out in 1936; its author modestly said that "I have tried to write the story as Stevenson would have written it". The book is set three years later. Jim, whose wealth has gone to his head a bit, is still living at the Admiral Benbow; a young negress called Diana is hired as general help. Jim has buried half his treasure and invested the rest in the infamous "South Sea Bubble" with the Squire and Doctor. The squire returns with the news that the bubble's burst and they're all ruined. Jim suggests using some of the rest of his share to go to the island for the rest. They go with Abraham Gray from the original as captain, the Squire's business associate Blandly as mate, Diana as ship's cook, Ben Gunn in the crew, and some barrels of water. They get to the island - and Jim finds that the barrels contain not water but Silver and thirteen buccaneers. Diana's his wife, Blandly's his agent; the war this time sees Jim rescued from torture (Silver is depicted as an out-and-out villain) by Dick the castaway and Silver's men massacred; Silver himself loses his other leg and is left marooned with Diana. They are the sole survivors.

In Chums Annual for 1940 there appeared "The Treasure of Pirates' Island" by S. Walkey, which told of Gabriel Gold, a one-legged seaman with a black wife and parrot, and the local innkeeper. The young narrator, Ensign Martin Dane, accompanies his uncle, Admiral Sir Barnaby Broom, on a voyage to the West Indies with Gold as ship's cook. It turns out that several of the crew are working for the pirate Devilshoof - who naturally attacks the ship. Gold and others find themselves on Devilshoof's ship after a sea battle; Gold talks them out of trouble and they escape when other pirates come after Devilshoof. They're eventually picked up by Captain Jeremy Clinker, who's sure he's seen Gold before. Gold first goes over to the other pirates - with a plausible explanation later - then eventually kills Devilshoof after discovering the treasure buried by Martin's ancestor, "Mad" Dane. All ends happily, with Gabriel a prosperous property-owner singing in the church choir and Captain Clinker musing that, when he'd seen Gabriel before, his name had been Silver, not Gold.

"The Adventures of Ben Gunn", written by R.F. Delderfield some years later, tells of how he became a pirate; he was forced to run away from home with scapegrace parson's son Nick Allardyce, who'd killed the local squire's revolting son. Nick became ship's doctor with Ben as his servant on a convict ship, the Walrus - it picks up a castaway slaver, Captain Silver. This story develops into a postscriptorial retelling of the "Treasure Island" tale from Silver's viewpoint. The 1954 film "Long John Silver" was turned into a book by Kylie Tennant. Jim, at school and fed up, is summoned to the West Indies by a letter from his uncle, "James Harbridge" (guess who?). His ship is taken by pirates led by one Mendoza, and he and the Governor's daughter are taken hostage; Silver and his men save Jim and win a battle with Mendoza's men over the contents of the Governor's warehouse. Silver and Jim again go on a voyage to the island - Jim doesn't care for the Governor's plan to make him a midshipman in the navy and Long John doesn't care for a woman called Purity Pinker's wanting to marry him!

Ultimately Jim and Silver's men arrive on the island - meeting Israel Hands, now a blind castaway, with an understandable grudge against Jim, and several men under his command. Jim gets away from him only to be captured by Mendoza - and again rescued by Silver. This time, Mendoza is left on the island and Silver decides to go straight, taking off in a sloop just in time to avoid his wedding! There were no more sequels until the 1970s: then they came thick and fast.



"Flint's Island", in 1973, was by Leonard Wibberley, who doesn't seem too well-informed ("For two score years I waited for a sequel from other hands"). Set in 1760, it's narrated by Tom Whelan, the 17-year-old quartermaster of an American trading brig, the "Jane". The island's recognised by Mr. Arrow, the mate and a non-drinker since going overboard from the "Hispanioloa"; he recognised it from a chart. He and Tom go ashore; Mr. Arrow is shot dead and Tom meets a castaway, the one-legged Long John Silver, who'd been there for four years and had found the treasure. Tom's uneasy about Silver and his commander, Captain Samuels, calls him "too nice for honesty". It turns out that he hadn't been alone on the island but had

commanded fourteen men, later reduced (best not ask how) to seven. They taken the ship and are overcome - then Silver turns out to be "a seaman to put beside Drake" who talks most of the crew round. Things finally end with Silver escaping in a boat and the mutineers getting off by legal tricks.

"The Adventures of Long John Silver" by Dennis Judd, published in 1977, was the first spin-off I read. The story is told by an 89-year-old Silver to Dr. James Hawkins. It seems that Silver was the son of a respectable shoemaker who hated the French, noblemen and popery and told his son "Don't you ever think the world must always be as you find it!" - views entirely shared by Silver's later commander Captain Flint! Young John drifted into smuggling and was jailed; he escaped, ran away to sea, and joined a slaver. On his second voyage, he meets Gabriel Pew, a mad captain. There is a mutiny, and Silver gets off hanging by claiming "benefit of clergy", being condemned to slavery instead. Sold to a French planter, he rises to become overseer and forms a liaison with the planter's daughter, whose father finds out. Fortunately for Silver pirates take the plantation and he joins them. After many vicissitudes (including the loss of his leg!) Silver returns to Bristol, leases an inn, and establishes a reputation as "honest, hardworking, scrupulous... staunch supporter of the Tory cause"!

"Return to Treasure Island", the sequel, deals with what Silver did afterwards; he bought a sugar plantation in Grenada and had made preparations to return to the island, but the French took Grenada and his property with it. He was imprisoned until exchanged in 1770; then he spent time in New Orleans before going to Boston with a Spanish mistress. He actually took part in the Boston Tea Party, along with an Irishman called John Kennedy; from there, he took a ship, recruited a crew, returned to the island, found the treasure - and was then captured by a British navy frigate. He meets his old comrade Black Dog there, stirs up a mutiny, and puts the non-mutineers to sea in a gig-commanded by a young midshipman who "looks sickly... can fight like a lion... Horatio Nelson is his full name". Unfortunately, the treasure is "confiscated" by the rebels in Georgia and sent to Washington's Army. Silver and his comrades Black Dog and Isaiah Meek sign up as spies for the British and are taken on as kitchen staff to Washington. Silver ends up in Canada as a "pillar of local colonial society... an outspoken upholder of the rights of property and the rule of law."

"Silver's Revenge", by Robert Leeson in 1981, was both a sequel and a burlesque which cribbed a lot of dialogue from the original. Set some fifteen years later, it is narrated by Tom Carter, a runaway apprentice. The squire is now in financial trouble, Jim is landlord of the Admiral Benbow", and Ben Gunn a lodgekeeper. Tom's taken on at the inn and meets a black maid called Betsy; he's rescued from bounty hunters by a Mr. Argent, a mine-owner who seems to know Jim. He, of course is Long John - with a false leg. The upshot of all this is a fresh voyage with a motley crew including the aforementioned, Dr. Livesey, Captain Gray, miners, prize-fighters, and blacks - including women picked up in Jamaica, one of whom turns out to be Silver's wife (Betsy is his daughter). It ends with the whole lot of them marooned.

A more recent spin-off was "Return to Treasure Island", the book of the 1985 TV series. The necessity to end every episode with a climax no doubt accounts for the repetitive if exciting story line. Jim, at 22, is to go to Jamaica as the squire's agent; Silver turns up and finds himself soon committed to transportation. He becomes ship's cook and has his mutiny in operation when Spanish pirates turn up and take the ship. Silver, Jim, Ben, a Spanish beauty called Isabella, a big Dutchman called Vanderbrecke, and a Welsh preacher called Morgan escape; to cut a long and repetitive story short, things end with the Squire acting Governor of Jamaica, Jim marrying the Spanish beauty, and Silver again getting away - this time, freed by Jim.

Well, they're certainly all worth reading, Judd in particular. By the way, in "Flashman", Flashman tells us that his family fortunes had been founded by his great-grandfather, old Jack Flashman, who'd made a fortune out of "rum and slaves, and piracy I shouldn't wonder." Might Silver and the Flashman family have been related?

U.J. 1366
21/12/'29

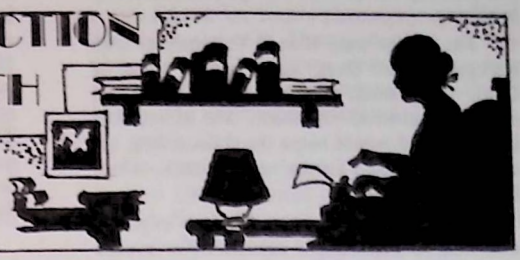
Queen Elizabeth Bardell: "Mr. Hansom, I wishes you the Condiments of the Season and a Preposterous New Year."

Ruff: "Queen, you said a mouthful."

AN INTRODUCTION TO ELIZABETH

BY

TONY GLYNN



Casting around for a hook on which to hang this article, I remembered the story of Lottie.

So, I'll tell you about Lottie. Well, not the whole story because I would like you to discover the ending for yourself.

The hook I mentioned was required because our editor put me in a dilemma. She graciously asked me to tell you something about the author of the story of Lottie when she learned that I was researching into her life but since our author did not deal in juvenile stories, I was at a loss to know how I might introduce her into these pages. Then the appealing figure of Lottie came to mind.

She filled the bill perfectly, for she was a schoolgirl. Rather, she had just ceased to be a schoolgirl and she wished with all her heart to remain one; but her parents had taken her away from secondary school because she was now 14 and they had found a job for her. It was in a button factory run by a man with the nasty-sounding name of Mr. Winkinglot. This Mr. Winkinglot employed a thousand girls in his factory and Lottie's selfish and short-sighted parents were so impressed by their only child's chance to make a few extra shillings a week by becoming the one thousandth and first that they took her away from school two years early.

Lottie wanted to stay at school. She wanted more than anything to continue her studies, particularly in English and French, and one day be a teacher of French. She had no desire to be a drudge in a button factory.

When she objected to that prospect, her mother told her it was a good thing they took her away from that school, it was making her cheeky. When she asked why, if she must work, she could not seek an office job, her father's reply was that he didn't hold with offices. Fellows and girls working together like that wasn't right. It was the button factory at eight shillings a week for Lottie and she could forget her fancy ideas about becoming a teacher. That took years of training. Did she expect her parents to keep her for all those years when she could be earning?

It did not matter to her parents that their daughter had won her way to secondary school through a scholarship; nor did it matter that she earned good reports and was particularly bright at English and French. They were dullards to whom libraries and books and art galleries meant nothing. To her father, Lottie was someone to blame when his feet hurt, when he was in trouble with his boss or when he was drunk. Her mother wanted her only as a household skivvy and constantly scolded her about having her head in some "heathen book".

Their home was a tiny flat in a shabby Stephney Street and, with nothing more attractive that Mr. Winkinglot's button factory on her horizon, it looked as if bright little Lottie would never get out of that street and its stultifying atmosphere.

Ah, but Lottie had a secret, something locked in her heart, a certain truth which would emerge and fill her with hope.

I have no intention of telling you what it was. Find out for yourself by discovering the story of which Lottie is the heroine. It is called "The Threshold" and it is by Elizabeth Myers whose pithy short stories have a tender touch, a compassion and a style which is all her own.

You have probably never heard of the author for she has become sadly forgotten. So now, having employed the hook, I can settle down to the real purpose of this article which is to introduce you to Elizabeth Myers. I do so happily, hoping that the fact that all her books are now out of print will not deter you from seeking them out. Try second-hand bookshops or badger your local library, for they might be gathering dust in the "stacks", just aching to be read.

Firstly, a good deal of "The Threshold" came from Elizabeth Myers' own life. She was born in 1912 in Ancoats, then one of the most deprived districts of Manchester, and she grew up in a small street, typical of the time and place. It has now been swept away under widespread clearance, and good riddance!

Her mother was not at all like Lottie's mother; she was heroic, coping with poverty and distressing home circumstances. Her father, I fear, is reflected in Lottie's father. The picture of him which emerges from Elizabeth's letters is hardly inspiring.

In later life, she revealed that there were aspects of their Manchester childhood which, for

herself and her younger sister, Dorothy, were terrifying.

The family were Roman Catholics of Irish background and there was a strong streak of Celtic imagination in Elizabeth. Her father's old Irish aunt lived with them., She adored little Elizabeth and would nurse the child, telling her stories of Irish fairies and giants which Elizabeth never forgot.

Elizabeth grew with a gift which might be described as Franciscan, but she never evoked the grossly sentimentalised image of St. Francis in articulating it. Rather, she chose to cite the 17th Century Anglican mystic and poet, Thomas Traherne: "How can anyone love what God has made too much?"

One of her earliest memories was of having a bunch of dandelions in their shabby backyard. They gave her a vision of herself in a beautiful garden, full of fragrant summer blooms. Years later, her husband was to recall how every aspect of nature thrilled her, how she was fascinated by the sight of a ladybird or a spider. Her close friend, the author and editor Collin Brooks, remembered her standing in the street, enraptured by the sight of the moon sailing over prosaic London rooftops. She put into words her concern for ill-used animals long before such was a popular cause, asking: "How can some women pay a hundred pounds for the fur of some poor creature that has died in agony in a trap?".

But, back in Manchester in the dawning twenties, Elizabeth and her sister went to the local Catholic primary school where the headmistress was a truly enlightened woman. Miss Ann Lee became Elizabeth's first mentor and they remained friends for the rest of Elizabeth's life. Miss Lee was devoted to her slum children and believed in giving them a love of life and beauty. She took them to art galleries and concerts, introduced them to literature, art and her own great love, music, carrying their imaginations out of the grimy bricks and cobbles of cramped Ancoats. In due course, Elizabeth, too, acquired a love of music and became an accomplished pianist.

The little girl loved to write, and Miss Lee saw the intellectual in her. When she grew older, she went to Miss Lee's home for further tuition and, at 11, won a scholarship to Notre Dame Convent High School, a major Catholic girls' school, staffed by nuns and lay teachers.

The English and literature mistress was a laywoman who was soon aware of Elizabeth's ability and encouraged it further. There is little doubt that Elizabeth would have gone on to further education, possibly winning one of the then scarce places at university.

She reached the age of 14, however, at which age, in that time of cramped opportunity, the bulk of working-class children left school for work, often in some hopeless, dead-end job. Her father insisted on taking Elizabeth away from school instead of permitting her to stay on until 16 and who knows what future. Her mother insisted just as strongly that, if she had to leave school, she would go to commercial classes. This Elizabeth did, eventually passing out well qualified with secretarial skills. Ultimately, she became secretary to the chief of a major Fleet Street advertising agency.

Before that, however, her mother obtained a legal separation from her husband and, with her two daughters, moved to Preston where Elizabeth had a secretarial job. All the time, Elizabeth was striving to write and she sold her first short story to "The Countryman" at 18.

At 19, she found a post in London and moved there with her mother and sister. She continued to write with occasional successes and studied furiously in her spare time. She absorbed literature, English and foreign; she had an astonishing thirst for philosophy and went to various university extension classes. She learned Greek, helped by a retired tutor, delighted in concerts, the ballet and exhibitions. She fell in love with every aspect of London and haunted the corners associated with Dickens, whose work she loved, with the 18th Century which she called "my time of times".

At 24, she was found to have tuberculosis.

At that time, this diagnosis was virtually a sentence of death. It was 1938, just a year before the war began, and she spent little more than a year in a sanatorium on the fringe of London. One lung was eventually destroyed by the disease but she continued to write, even in the sanatorium.

Never shy of contacting her favourite authors, Elizabeth sent a short story manuscript to Eleanor Farjeon, that delightful children's writer, to seek her opinion, although she did not know her. Eleanor Farjeon read it and passed it over to her companion of many years, George Earle, asking him what he thought of this story by an unknown girl who was in bed in a sanatorium. Earle pronounced it "a little masterpiece".

So began a happy friendship with Eleanor Farjeon who eventually introduced Elizabeth to Arthur Waugh, chairman of Chapman and Hall, and father of Evelyn and Alec Waugh. He, too, became a firm friend.

Released from hospital into the uncertainties of early wartime London, Elizabeth was soon caught up in a life all too hectic. She came close to death in the blitz when the house next door to the Eltham home she shared with her mother and Dorothy was bombed. Their house was rendered unsafe and the three moved, finding a flat in Hampstead close to Eleanor Farjeon's home.

Elizabeth continued to work as a secretary, enduring the blitz and the general turmoil of war and writing in her spare time. The bulk of 1941 and 1942 was spent on her first novel, "A Well Full of Leaves".

It introduces a family of children in an unnamed Northern industrial city. Their mother is domineering and vindictive and their father a feckless drinker and petty gambler. They live in a grubby street with only bleak misery on their horizons.

The narrative follows the fortunes of the children, chiefly that of the eldest, Laura, who knows, just instinctively *knows*, whenever she sees even a blade of grass or the tiniest insect, that there is a pattern of goodness behind all creation. It is her conviction that all humanity has the birthright of rejoicing in life and of rising above cruelty and shoddiness. Even the onset of tuberculosis in herself and a dreadful fate befalling the brother she loves above anyone cannot dim her vision.

Arthur Waugh read the novel and was tremendously impressed. Chapman and Hall published it in the summer of 1943. Though forgotten now, "A Well Full of Leaves" created a considerable stir. Writers who knew their business praised it in reviews: the likes of Howard Spring, Eric Linklater, Richard Church, Monica Dickens, Ralph Straus, the distinguished book critic of that day; John Brophy, Brigid's father, and others. There was something compellingly different about this young novelist's style. "She uses words as if they were new", declared "Punch".

Elizabeth was overwhelmed when letters and telegrams of congratulation began to arrive and an American edition in 1944 also met with acclaim.

Not that all was light, of course. There were those who were unimpressed by the philosophy of the novel and others criticised Elizabeth's undoubted use of the dramatic device. I have seen a more recent criticism, perhaps not untouched by modern scepticism, holding that its vision was brave but naive.

I feel the novel had something which the public craved in 1943, for many now do not know how dark a time that was. It was the "middle passage" of the war. The bombs still fell and Britain might yet be invaded. It was an anxious time of waiting because the assault on Nazi-occupied Europe had yet to occur. This was a time when the King regularly called for days of prayer - and people prayed. Assurance and the feeling that there was hope beyond our anxieties was no bad thing in 1943. It is certain, however, that "A Well Full of Leaves" was not a deliberately contrived morale-booster.

A cloud arose with the suggestion that Rome might ban the novel, claiming it was "pantheistic". Elizabeth, a faithful Catholic but a radical one, prepared to stand her ground, and countered that her book's philosophy was based entirely on that of St. Thomas Aquinas, the key philosopher of Catholicism, whose message was that mankind should always rejoice in God's gift of life. The ban never materialised.

The novel made a particular appeal to those in adversity, Elizabeth received a grateful letter from a German Jewish nurse whom it had helped. She had escaped from the Nazis but had lost her family and was now suffering from tuberculosis. A beautiful young woman to whom she was introduced greeted her by hugging and kissing her because "A Well Full of Leaves" had sustained her in a dark portion of her life. After the war, Elizabeth told the Italian scholar and biographer of Swift, Dr. Mario Rossi, that she received letters from all over the world from people who said the novel had helped them.

It was almost as if Elizabeth, stricken herself and constantly battling for life, sent out a message only fully understood by those who were also afflicted. So let me declare why Elizabeth Myers' name has been on my mind for five decades though I only recently learned anything about her.

My treasured copy of "A Well Full of Leaves" was given to me by my mother who said: "You will appreciate this when you are older." It is a fourth edition of 1944 and I know my mother appreciated it and was impressed by it. I believe it did something positive for her: she was one of those afflicted who understood Elizabeth's special message. She, too, had been under virtual sentence of death since 1940 and, in the summer of 1944 soon after she read the novel, she died of leukaemia.

I do not believe my mother knew that Elizabeth Myers was, like herself, a Manchester girl, only five years younger, of the same ethnic and religious background and brought up quite close to her own childhood home. The Manchester papers seem to have paid no attention to Elizabeth, though the London ones did.

The more I researched her life, the more I saw how it touched my own. I knew her home district before the bulldozers razed it; in my youth, I was acquainted with the sister of the Notre Dame English teacher who encouraged her, and my father, arriving as a young Irish immigrant in 1924, found digs near the Myers' home and was a fellow parishioner, so must have crossed paths with the schoolgirl Elizabeth.

I had a fellow feeling with Elizabeth. We sprang from the same soil.

In 1943, just after the publication of her novel, Elizabeth married Littleton Charles Powys, one of the noted Anglo-Welsh literary family but a lesser known one for he spent his life as a schoolmaster. He was the retired head

of the preparatory department of Sherborne College, a widower, many years Elizabeth's senior. He was a gentle, compassionate scholar whose mind was wholly tuned to Elizabeth's.

If you have an impression of Elizabeth Myers as a dreamy mystic, let us linger with her in her London years and consider the picture which can be formed from her letters and the memories of those who knew her; a picture of Elizabeth the wartime woman.

She smoked cigarettes, however ill-advised we in our time would see that to be. She exchanged letters with a young Fleet Air Arm pilot, probably through a scheme to "adopt" a serviceman. They met when he came on leave but there seems to be no suggestion of a romance. She had a brush with death in the blitz. She liked films, confessed herself to be a Walt Disney fan and enjoyed Tommy Handley's ITMA programme, the national wartime tonic, dispensed by BBC radio. She enjoyed thrillers, which she always called "murders". Accompanied by her mother's little dog, she would go to their Hampstead local with Eleanor Farjeon and George Earle, and she sometimes played the pub piano.

"Bring your torch", she reminded Littleton Powys in a letter in which she discussed his journey to London to marry her, and what memories of the black-out, the ubiquitous pocket torch and the "number eight" batteries, always in short supply, those words evoke.

I think of her as one of the great army of real-life Mrs. Minivers whose war was infinitely harsher than that enacted in Hollywood.

Elizabeth and Littleton Powys came together through his brother, John Cowper Powys, the novelist, with whom Elizabeth had corresponded since her struggling days. It was a happy marriage in which they settled in Sherborne with Littleton caring for her devotedly when her illness laid her low.

She was courageous and uncomplaining and remarkably active. She produced two more novels, "The Basilisk of St. James's", dealing with the difficult personality of Jonathan Swift who had fascinated her since schooldays, and "Mrs. Christopher", a work of quite different stamp which many thought her finest achievement.

"The Basilisk of St. James's" gave her a chance to re-create her "time of times", the reign of Queen Anne, and she thoroughly enjoyed portraying the London of the time. She gives a vigorous picture of the dangerous streets, the political intrigues, the glitter, the tawdriness, the vice and the poverty. She dealt sympathetically with the cantankerous Swift in his association with the woman he called "Vanessa" and in his bitterness through being created only Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, when he believed he merited a bishopric. It fully reflects Elizabeth's love of the period and her considerable scholarship.

"Mrs. Christopher" appears to start out as a murder story but develops into something quite different, an essay on how love can be betrayed and how greed can twist the human soul. In her lifetime, both Warners and MGM in Hollywood showed an interest in it but never followed it up. After her death, a film version was made in England with title, action and characterisation changed. I cannot think it would have satisfied Elizabeth Myers.

Also at Sherborne, Elizabeth wrote a number of short stories, several of which were broadcast over the BBC's West Country service.

Late in 1946, she and her husband sailed for the United States so that Elizabeth could spend six month at a sanatorium in Tucson, Arizona, in the hope that the desert air would arrest her illness. The prospect thrilled her immensely. "We'll see wild horses and Indians!" she wrote to a friend.

She loved America. In New York, a group of American writers feted her, and she made new friends. Elizabeth Sergeant, biographer of Elizabeth Myers' favourite American poet, Robert Frost, and William Rose Benet, a poet and brother of the wider known Stephen Vincent Benet, exchanged many letters with her.

In the Arizona sunshine, she escaped the ice- and snow-gripped opening of 1947 in England, never to be forgotten by those who experienced it, but all was not plain sailing. She had to have an operation for an appendicitis and joked that she would go home a partial American because American blood was transfused into her.

The couple returned home to Dorset with Elizabeth bearing a substantial portion of a fourth novel, began in Arizona. It was the glorious spring of 1947. Just a month after returning, Elizabeth fell gravely ill and her devoted mother came from London to nurse her.

Just after Elizabeth received the Last Sacraments, Littleton also fell ill and his doctor ordered him into hospital.

At dawn on May 24 1947, her mother kept watch beside her bed and her little black mongrel, Joffrey, who was devoted to Elizabeth, lay morosely beside the bed as he had all night. Suddenly, Elizabeth's friends, the birds in the trees outside, began their dawn chorus, filling the spring morning with song.

Mrs. Myers told Eleanor Farjeon afterwards: "I said, 'Listen, Joffrey. They are singing our Betty away!".

Elizabeth Myers was 34 years of age.

Those who knew her never forgot her. Eleanor Farjeon said Elizabeth had entered her life never to leave it. She remembered her

spontaneous charity: how she could never pass a certain severely disabled beggar in Hampstead without giving him money and her cigarettes. Collin Brooks recalled the affection she evoked and what a joy it was to converse with her, though her laboured breathing often made it difficult for her. Richard Church, who saw her gifts early, wrote to Littleton Powys: "Your Elizabeth had a rare genius as a person and as an artist."

Five years after her death, an Australian woman broadcaster said over Sydney radio that she had discovered Elizabeth Myers a short time before and had been influenced by her ever since. A portion of her tribute is given in Littleton Powys' second volume of autobiography which contains much on Elizabeth: "I find myself looking at all things differently because of her," said the broadcaster. "I find more excitement and joy in nature and in people and in books and in music because of her intense joy and responsiveness to all created things."

But perhaps the most fitting thought to pass on this Christmas when I have had the privilege of introducing Elizabeth Myers to you is the one recalled by one of those Americans who welcomed her to New York just 50 years ago.

In a letter to Littleton Powys, Laura Benet wrote: "I shall never forget how she said to me: 'There is not enough love in the world. We must send out all we can.'"

Although Elizabeth Myers' books are now out of print, you might discover them if you search. They are:

A Well Full of Leaves (Chapman and Hall, 1943 and Wm. Morrow, New York, 1944).

The Basilisk of St. James's (Chapman and Hall, 1945).

Mrs. Christopher (Chapman and Hall, 1946).

"Good Beds - Men Only" (Chapman and Hall, 1948). Short stories, contains "The Threshold".

Thirty Stories, edited with a commentary by Littleton C. Powys (McDonald, 1954).

The Letters of Elizabeth Myers, edited by Littleton C. Powys (Chapman and Hall, 1951).

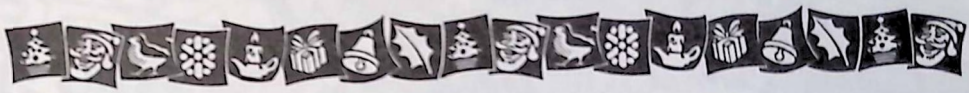
A partially completed fourth novel. "The Governor", was destroyed after Elizabeth Myers' death at her own wish.

This article is a spin-off from a wider biographical study of Elizabeth Myers on which I am working. In addition to those listed above, sources on which I have drawn are:

Still the Joy of It by Littleton C. Powys (Macdonald 1956).

Elizabeth Myers - A Memoir by Eleanor Farjeon (St. Albert's Press, Aylesford, 1957).

Tavern Talk by Collin Brooke (James Barrie, 1950.



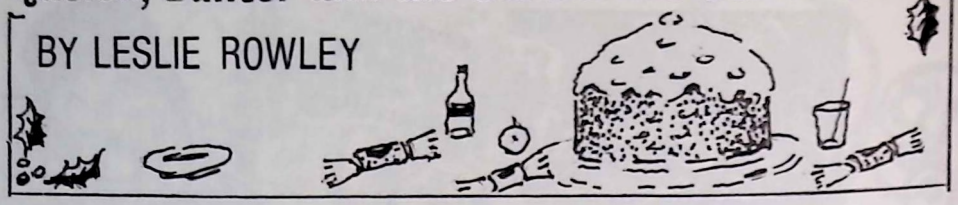
Bessie Bunter in seasonable mood
(Picture by T.E. Laidler)


Special Xmas Number
The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN
SEASONAL JOY
Christmas Greetings
TO ALL MAGNET READERS
From the Editor
Madge Minden
Betty Barton
Greetings
The GEM
GOOD BYE! SORRY WE'VE GOT TO SLIP AWAY!


To C.D. Girls and Boys
GREETINGS FROM GREYFRIARS
Dear Santa, please leave me some nice things. thankyou. Gloops
Christmas Greetings
To All Magnet Readers
The Magnet
From:- BILLY BUNTER
The Editor of the "Nelson Lee" Sends Christmas Greetings To All His Readers At Home and Abroad.
Naomer
Paula Creel.

Quelch, Bunter and the Christmas Cake

BY LESLIE ROWLEY



CHRISTMAS! An earlier fall of snow had already spread a coverlet of white over Wharton Lodge and the grounds in which it stood. The bitter winds from the north east had done little to disturb the tall trees that lined the drive like ghostly sentinels as they had done for so many years. The house itself bore its own artistry of winter. Silvery rime had traced its delicate filigree on every window pane and there were individual layers of snow on the roof and on every ledge.

In the house, the crackling logs in the huge fireplace threw back uncertain shadows on panelling of age-blackened oak. From gilded frames and painted canvasses, the likenesses of Whartons, past and gone, looked down on a younger generation lounging on the wide levels of the staircase. The walls carried the red and green of holly in profusion. Tinsel of gold and silver vied with the baubles and twinkling lights of the tree in the corner. The two suits of armour stood as though they were to welcome guests from another age.

Colonel and Miss Wharton kept Mr. Quelch company in a corner away from the intensity of the fire. There was a smile on the Remove master's face as he glanced across at the cheerful members of his form. Herbert Vernon-Smith had not always dwelt in the pleasing countenance of his beak, but Quelch was pleased to see him there with his chum, Redwing.

If Mr. Quelch found any delight in the presence of W.G. Bunter, he did not go out of his way to demonstrate it. Mr. Quelch had been rather surprised that Bunter had been among those invited. He was not alone in that surprise.

Bunter knew where many delectable comestibles were to be found. He had readily given up much of his time to a surveillance of the kitchen area. Like a fat peri at the gates of paradise, his fat eyes glistening, and his fat lips drooling, he had witnessed the many and varied preparations for the Christmas festivities. He had noted the size of the turkey with fat approval; he had watched, with great appreciation, the stirring of enough mixture for several large Christmas puddings of such a spicy aroma that it had his fat nostrils twitching with anticipation. Mountains of mince pies with their 'frosty' sprinkling of caster sugar had passed within the range of Bunter's vision before an array of cakes. Bunter, of course, was an authority on cakes; it was rumoured that at Greyfriars he could foretell the arrival of any cake before it passed through the gates of Gosling's lodge. Legend also had it that he could see, blindfolded, whether a cake had arrived in a hamper from Coker's aunt Judy; whether it had been delivered by Chunkleys at the behest of Lord Mauleverer; or whether Mrs. Mimble had sold it to Harry Wharton for tea in number one study. Acquiring a cake never cost Bunter any cash, but retribution would be exacted by the application of a boot.

Instinctively, Bunter reached for one of those cakes, really it was too much to expect him to do otherwise. Nevertheless, some one did.

"Bunter! What are you doing with that cake?"

Bunter jumped, nearly dropping the cake as he did so. His fellow guest, Henry Samuel Quelch, was at his elbow and it was clear that Quelch had reverted to character. It was as form-master, not as fellow guest that Bunter now observed the awe-inspiring person before him.

"When I saw you at breakfast this morning, Bunter," continued Mr. Quelch, replacing the cake on the shelf, I could not fail to notice the slovenliness in your appearance then; you are slovenly now. You are unwashed and uncleanly. You are a disgrace to your school and your form-master, and unfit to present yourself at table. I am sure that you have been supplied with soap and towels, and water is available if you take the trouble to turn on the tap. Now go to your room and wash. I will inspect you in fifteen minutes time, and I warn you that being clean is a prerequisite if you are to join others at lunch. Now go!"

Behind the closed bathroom door, Bunter shook a podgy fist at the back of his form-master, but Quelch's threat was too dire to be ignored. Bunter resigned himself to renewing a lapsed relationship to soap and water so that he managed to pass muster when Mr. Quelch returned.

Harry Wharton & Co had just come in from skating on the lake in the park as Mr. Quelch came back from his interview with Bunter. How happy and healthy they all looked, he thought, when compared to the decadent Bunter. He favoured them with a pleasant but slightly crusty

smile. Herbert Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing were among them, and it gave Quelch much pleasure to see the Bounder in such good company. How different life could be without Bunter!

"Good morning, sir," Wharton said politely, "I hope that you are enjoying your stay with us."

"Thank you my boy. It is kind of you to enquire. I take it that Bunter is not inclined to the same pursuits as you and your friends, yet he was telling Miss Wharton of his undoubted prowess in skating and it seems a pity that he did not join you all this morning. This point is not unconnected with a matter on which I would value your advice, if you not object to my referring to a problem during vacation. You have every right to refuse, my boy, and I shall quite understand if you do ---" The other fellows had gone ahead, and Mr. Quelch and Wharton halted outside the door of the library.

"This room seems empty, sir, and I am sure that my uncle would wish me to offer you any help I can."

"The matter is all the more delicate, Wharton, as the affair involves another guest - Bunter."

"Allow me to put your mind at rest, sir. You are my uncle's guest and a very welcome one. I suppose that if Bunter is a guest at all, he is a guest of mine. As you know sir, Bunter is a bit of an ass and though he probably means no harm ---" Wharton left the sentence unfinished.

"Thank you my boy, you are very perceptive. Perceptive as well to have observed that Bunter practises economy in soap and water and appears at table in a rather slovenly condition. I feel that this reflects adversely on myself as his form master, and you, my dear boy, know just how much I value Colonel Wharton's regard. Could I trespass, through your own good nature and that of your friends, to counsel Bunter into mending his ways. Besides his reluctance for healthy exercise and clean appearance, I have reason to believe that Bunter is apt to abuse his host's hospitality. Earlier today he seemed to be displaying an unhealthy interest in a cake, an extremely large and decorative cake in the kitchen. You will remember, Wharton, that several items of pastry - pies, tarts and so on disappeared from various studies, and traces of these I observed on Bunter's person. He escaped punishment because no one charged him with theft. I have never encouraged sneaks or tale-bearers, Wharton, but I do not support pilfering - especially when one is the guest of a liberal and generous host."

"Leave it to me and my friends, sir. We will ensure that we set Bunter on the right track. We will try and effect a transformation in Bunter which should set your mind at rest."

The re-assuring words from his Head Boy cleared the frown from Quelch's brow, and he idly wondered what form the counselling of Bunter would take. He was not long in doubt. Taking a brisk walk across the park he spotted the substantial form of Bunter being rolled in a pile of snow, some of which was being thrust down a fat neck. Later still, he came across that same fat figure, garbed in some one else's dressing gown, being urged toward a spare bathroom from the open door of which came clouds of steam. Bunter was shouting at the top of his voice as the door closed. It was possible that Mr. Quelch might have regretted the nature of the 'counselling' being meted out at his request. He could have urged tolerance on his boys. Mr. Quelch could have; but Mr. Quelch did not. It seemed rather as if, like Herod of old, Mr. Quelch had hardened his heart.

Usually, there was not much demand for Bunter's company. Other fellows did not seek him and urge themselves on Bunter. Previously he had never been urged to go on cross-country walks and his participation in a paper-chase had been rare indeed. Bunter had preferred it that way. No invitation was ever needed for him to attend a study spread - he just arrived. In the matter of physical exercise or personal cleanliness, Bunter was a non-runner. He had not asked for the little attentions that he was now receiving. He had made it abundantly clear that he preferred, much preferred, to be left to snooze and stuff himself to the eyebrows. Being turfed out of bed at the crack of dawn was a form of persecution which he brought to the notice of Mr. Quelch in the hope that he would intervene. Mr. Quelch was not very sympathetic.

"On the contrary, Bunter, you should be grateful to your form fellows for being so concerned about your welfare. Healthy exercise can do you nothing but good. I am much gratified by the improvement in your personal appearance. I commend you, Bunter, to maintain that improvement next term for, far from acceding to your request to interfere, I will let the other boys know that this concern has my full approval. If you hurry you may be in time for another walk!"

Out in the hall, an exuberant Bob Cherry was waiting. He had Wharton's overcoat, which now strangely seemed to have become Bunter's, with him. Bunter looked wildly around him, but there was no escape.

Shifty Spooner viewed Wharton Lodge from the cover of a snow bedecked hedge. He was trespassing, but then he spent most of his life trespassing for other people had houses from which to take property. Silver and gold had he none, and his liquid assets had disappeared down his unclean neck in the public bar of the

'Dog and Partridge' the previous evening, and he had spent a very cold and uncomfortable night in a deserted barn until discovered by an extremely irate farmer at five in the morning. If Mr. Spooner had ever looked for gainful employment, he did not seem to have found it, and it seemed unlikely that any potential employer would offer him a post where honesty and industry were essential.

Now, as he scratched his stubby chin reflectively, Mr. Spooner came to the conclusion that Wharton Lodge was worthy of further attention - when the shades of night had descended.

"Some easy pickings there," he speculated, as he made his way back to the 'Dog and Partridge', there to plead for the loan of a pint or two of ale until evening fell.

Had he but known, Shifty had chosen his time well. Guests were being decanted from their cars in the front of the house while he, by a more devious and covert route, arranged to decanter himself at the rear. It was simply pie for him to effect an unobserved access to a small stair case. High up in the house, he found an un-used bedroom and made himself comfortable in a rejected armchair. There came to the ears the sound of distant revelry by night as Mr. Spooner settled himself comfortably and poured the remainder of the ale down his appreciative gullet. If there had ever been a time for self-congratulation this was it. Far below him, William George Bunter was approaching the girls with a sprig of mistletoe.

Unaware that the house now accommodated a second unwanted guest, the party continued, with Bunter offering an impromptu funny act as he tried to extricate the mistletoe that been pushed down the back of his neck, until the chiming of the clock intervened to remind the party it was entering another day. The 'goodnights' gradually became fewer and finally died away as tired and sleepy heads found grateful rest on soft pillows.

Bunter tried hard to resist the beckoning arms of Morpheus. This was the last, the very last opportunity for him to gain sole custodianship of that most magnificent of cakes. Tomorrow would see that cake given wider consideration, and many undeserving people would be offered a share in a cake that Bunter believed to be rightfully his. The fat eye-lids closed; the fat lips opened, and the band began to play.

It was some time later when Bunter's sleep was disturbed. He had no idea what the time was or of the nature of the disturbance. It was, in fact, one thirty in the morning, and it was the occasion on which Mr. Spooner stubbed his toe on a doorpost (and it is considered unsuitable for certain ears that Mr. Spooner's observations should be given a wider public).

Once more Bunter found his fat thoughts reverted to the cake and, try as hard as he could to believe that it was only a short journey to the kitchen area, one's bed seemed a much safer location. Still there was the point that the cake had what Mr. Masefield might have termed 'a wild call, and a clear call that may not be denied.' Bunter decided to put his confidence safely in the hands of the old Poet Laureate. He groped in the dark for Harry Wharton's dressing gown.

Shifty Spooner grunted with satisfaction at the weight of the bag of loot he was carrying. His plunder, so far, included a couple of jewelled snuff boxes, silver cups from the days when the Colonel would chase the polo ball; a heavy gold cigar case from the advisers at the India Office for his services to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. There were caskets of wood and metal, their lids engraved with details of services rendered in many countries throughout the world.

The rascal would have been wise to have called it a day but, having looted the downstairs with such success he decided to seek similar fortune upstairs. The ladies of the house would have rings, necklaces and bracelets. All was grist that could come to his mill. For a moment he fancied he was not alone on the staircase that he proceeded to climb, and he paused to regather his wits. Shifty was not the only person on the prowl.

William George Bunter had reached the top of the staircase. It had been a hard climb; the cake had felt heavier with every step. But, with his mission so nearly accomplished, Bunter felt he was entitled to a little rest before completing the journey to his bedroom.

On the landing at the top of the staircase there was a table and a chair where a fat carcass could rest for a moment. Laying the cake carefully on the table, Bunter felt round for the chair and sank gratefully on it. His fat arms reached out and gathered cake to him. Why not reward one's success with a sample of the wonder cake. Just a small bite, a mere taste, a mere introduction to the marvellous forthcoming gluttony in the comfort of one's bed.

Bunter's mouth was not constructed for small bits. Large bites - yes, in fact, the larger the better. Harold Skinner of the Remove had once solemnly averred that there was sufficient room in Bunter's mouth to garage a whole fleet of corporation buses. That, of course, was a slight exaggeration. Nevertheless the volume potential of one of Bunter's bites was quite considerable as he was prepared to demonstrate, as the upper-jaw started to separate from the lower.

Then...

"YURRGGH GUROOR ARRGHH! M-my m-m-mouth's on fire! URGGH, I'm poisoned.

Someone else can have it. I'm not going to be poisoned to please you rotters-"

In the darkness there came the sound of a missile. It has been said that every bullet has its billet, a theory that was now proven to Mr. Spooner, though not to his satisfaction!

By now some incandescent intellect had located the light-switch revealing one of the most starling of tableaux ever seen within confines of Wharton Lodge. The centre of attraction was the recumbent figure of Mr. Spooner, who had apparently been felled by a cake and, in the process had entangled himself with two suits of armour, and beside whose body lay a bag from which his recently 'acquired' loot was cascading. At the top of the stairs, Bunter was gulping from a large jug of water.

"Uncle! We know that man. My friends and I encountered him on a holiday trip on the Thames. He is a convicted thief and should be held until he can be handed over to the police!"

"You!" Shifty looked sharply round for a chance at escape, but the stalwart forms of Johnny Bull and the Bounder were available to provide any necessary restraint. Imperturbable as ever, Wells announced that the police were on their way and Aunt Amy suggested that she and the girls should withdraw although it would possibly be some time before they would settle down to sleep again.

Under the supervision of the Colonel, Mr. Spooner was made secure. Considerately, Frank Nugent fetched a cushion and placed it under the rascal's head. Shifty should have looked grateful, but he didn't. Free accommodation would be arranged for him, but previous experience of such amenities had proved far from satisfactory. Two policemen, grim and forbidding at having their own holiday disturbed, took charge of their prisoner without any word of seasonal greeting.

After Wells had said goodnight, probably seeking a belated nightcap in his pantry on the way, Colonel Wharton turned to the Master of the Remove.

"Mr. Quelch, with the experience you have of your boys, you seem to be the best person to throw light on tonight's extraordinary happenings. It is also extremely likely that some of us will be required to give evidence in court so that the rascal, Spooner, will get his just deserts. It has, however, been principally a matter of great relief that my property has been saved. Lots of time could be wasted in any enquiry, and to what purpose? Even the taking of the cake by Bunter and the doctoring of it as a jape, proved felicitous. I hope that you will agree with me that we will be better engaged in ensuring we all enjoy the rest of Christmas as the festive season dictates."

Henry Samuel Quelch smilingly nodded assent. His boys had saved his old friend from a serious loss and he was proud of that. Christmas was a great time for rejoicing, anyway.

OF UNDERGROUND TUNNELS AND TREE-TOP PRISONS

(ST FRANK'S IN THE TOILS!)

BY RAY HOPKINS

The title will give the reader some idea of the intriguing battle-grounds where Nelson Lee wages war against not one set of enemies but two in a series in which the detective not only finds himself versus arch-fiend Fu Chow but also the Yen-Shan Tong. This double horror descends upon St. Frank's with the advent of schoolboy Yung Ching, placed in charge of Nelson Lee as a safety measure by Mr. Tsen Wang, the Attaché of the Chinese Legation in London.

Fur Chow and the Tong are not connected in any way and both are desirous of kidnapping Yung Ching for reasons of their own. Fu Chow is intent on capturing and killing the young Chinese boy as an act of revenge for his father's having married the woman Fu Chow desired. Yung Ching's brother and sister have already been murdered by the fiend Fu Chow and Mr. Tsen Wang feels that the anonymity of a large College and being in close proximity of Nelson Lee's protection will save the life of the young Chinese boy.

The Yen-Shan Tong have no desire to kill Yung Chin but want to use him as a bargaining tool with the boy's father, a powerful Mandarin, a high official in China. The latter has been waging a fierce war on the Tong and has imprisoned six of its most prominent members. If they can kidnap his son, they will be able to force the Mandarin to release those six men.

So Yung Ching, as a new pupil at St. Frank's, constantly surrounded by his fellow students and under the close protection of Nelson Lee, will be safe as he could be nowhere else, at least until Fu Chow and the Tong find out whence he has been spirited away. Yung Ching is a likeable, placid little fellow, who takes the inevitable teasing in good part and, when he wants to appear inscrutable, utters, "No savvy". As it is quite obvious that he does indeed understand what is being said to him, some of his form fellows feel annoyed and the great Handforth, who is not used to this unusual form of opposition, becomes explosive but does not lay hands on the Chinese boy. Handforth's creed is such that one does not strike someone smaller than oneself. Good for Handy!

So all goes well for Yung Ching until one night ... It doesn't take long for the two gangs to find out where he is ("Ve haf vays of vinkling you oudt," as they might have said had they not been Oriental). After an abortive attempt by the Tong men to seize the Chinese boy while asleep in the dormitory, Nelson Lee decides that he must sleep in the detective's own bedroom so that he can be under his protection both day and night.

It would appear that nothing could happen to Yung Ching during the day and during a cricket practice match with the Junior Eleven when he would be surrounded by his new friends and with Nipper and Pitt keeping a particular eye upon

(Told by NIPPER of the Remove.)

Menaced by sinister and relentless enemies, YUNG CHING is sent to St. Frank's for safety—and it's left to NELSON LEE, the Schoolmaster-detective, to protect him from deadly danger!

him. In the field the Chinese boy shows that he is a good catcher and a swift returner of the ball. Nipper posits him near the boundary and the next ball hit by Jack Grey flies over the hedge and into a meadow on the other side. Yung Ching disappears through the hedge. Alarmed at his not returning immediately they go in search of him to find that he is nowhere in sight.

Yung Ching had in fact fallen into a deep ditch right into the arms of a watching Chinaman who, holding the Chinese boy's throat in a vice-like grip so that he can make no sound, carries him along the bed of the ditch until they reach a haystack which looks solid from a distance into which the Chinaman and junior vanish through a cavity, the opening of a runnel which goes right to the centre of the haystack.

After nightfall, the Chinaman and another who had been waiting inside the haystack, take Yung Ching through the hay tunnel into the meadow. And there the Chinese boy is wrested from them by three other Chinamen who flash knives at the kidnappers but make no attempt to follow them when they race off across the meadow. These three new Orientals are, in fact, employees of Mr. Tsen Wang, sent for added protection. They surround the boy and return him to the school where he is later found in the study he shares with Dick Goodwin and Soloman Levi deep in an English grammar textbook. He appears surprised when his studymates question him excitedly as to where he has been, his pet phrase "No savvy!" coming in very handy.

Nelson Lee had not been neglecting his protective duties. He was on watch in the meadow, had seen Yung Ching rescued by the three Chinamen and heading back in the direction of St. Frank's. Lee decided to follow the two fleeing kidnappers to see who they are connected with and finds himself on the tip of an old disused quarry, fifty feet below the level of Bannington Moor. Other criminals had used this old quarry so the detective is quite familiar with its geography and knows they are heading for a cave-like opening which leads into one of the old quarry tunnels. Lee follows silently and observes the arrival of the two Chinamen and the effect their returning empty-handed has on an older man with a wizened yellow face who upbraids them angrily. As this group did not kill Yung Ching immediately Lee realises that he is gazing at members of the Yen-Shan Tong and that the old man is not, in fact, Fu Chow.

Arrived back at St. Frank's, Nelson Lee anticipates another attempt to remove the boy and realises that, in order to arrest them, he is going to have to give the kidnappers notice that the Chinese boy is no longer sleeping in the dormitory where the previous attempt has been made. He instructs Yung Ching to pull up the blind of the detective's bedroom and lean out of the window for a few seconds. Lee then turns out the light and remains standing in a recess by the wardrobe where, after mid-night, he is joined by Nipper.

A dim figure slides over the sill, places something on the Chinese boy's pillow and climbs back into the night. Lee crawls rapidly over to the boy's bed, removes the object from the pillow and places it just underneath the open window. It is a tiny bunch of small red flowers and no sooner has the detective stepped back to the recess, than a head appears at the open window and drops something onto the floor. Lee flashes a torch on the object and Nipper gazes in horror at something eight or nine inches long "with legs and feelers and a bony kind of body" which moves around the bunch of flowers. It is a scorpion of a vast size never before seen by either Lee or Nipper. Nelson Lee kills the giant insect with one strong blow from a cane to the scorpion's head. He tells Nipper had the flowers remained on Yung Ching's pillow the insect would have made its way there attracted by the smell of the flowers and would have bitten him, causing instant death. His death would have remained a mystery as a thin line attached to the creature was intended to pull it back through the window after it had concluded its deadly work. Yung Ching had slept throughout the whole amazing episode. Lee realises that this latest attack on the Chinese boy can only have been master-minded by the evil Fu Chow as death, not just kidnapping, was intended.

The next day but one, Nelson Lee receives a letter informing him that "Inglish boy safe. No harm him," and goes on to state that he will be released if Yung Ching is taken to the Hog's Ear on the top of Bannington Moor at ten o'clock. What English boy? It transpires that Archie Glenthorne has been abducted during the night and is being used as a hostage. If this has been done by Fu Chow's gang then it can only result in Yung Ching's death, and if the order is not complied with then Archie will certainly be killed. The detective feels that this latest action has been taken by the Chinese Secret Society, the Yen-Shan Tong, which means that if the order is followed, neither Yung Ching nor Archie will lose their lives.

Nipper escorts the Chinese boy to the Hog's Ear and leaves him there, returning to St. Frank's. Yung Chin, bound hand and foot and gagged, is driven by motor-car to an old house in Greenwich where he is transferred to a rowing boat which takes him to Limehouse, a duplicate journey to that taken by Archie Glenthorne the previous day. Archie, known as the "genial ass" of the Ancient House, waited on hand and foot by his valet Phipps, and believed to be totally incompetent if left to work something out on his own, gives the lie to his popular image of complete helplessness when he

is imprisoned in Shanghai Jack's eating house. Noticing that the first cup of tea he is given puts him to sleep, the second one he pours away surreptitiously, so that upon the entrance of another Chinaman he is able to watch the man uncover a trapdoor, disappear through it then return, replacing the rough mat which covers it.

Archie, thrilled to discover that he had not been wanting when there was a necessity for immediate action, escapes through the trapdoor which leads to a smelly sewer. A heavy rainstorm fills the sewer and Archie is swept along and finds himself eventually swimming in the Thames.

It is still not daylight but he spots a small rowing boat and realises it is the same one that carried him down river from Greenwich. It contains two Chinamen and a third figure which he recognises as the bound and gagged Yung Ching! He pulls himself aboard the boat, manages to heave one of the Chinamen over the side and turns to face the other. He is brought up short by the other man's congratulating him in the well-known tones of Nelson Lee! He had been able to substitute himself for one of the Chinamen in the quarry workings by drugging the man when challenged, donning the man's clothing and accompanying another to pick up the waiting Yung Ching at the Hog's Ear. He had been guarding the Chinese boy right from the time Nipper left him on Bannington Moor. Thus ends the activities of the Yen-Shan Tong who, losing both the Chinese boy and Archie Glenthorne, are able to depart in the nick of time to evade the clutches of Scotland Yard.

So now the field is left clear for the evil and cunning Fu Chow who has moved his headquarters into another underground tunnel which ends at the quarry but, more importantly, begins beneath St. Frank's itself and can be entered part way via the ruins of the old monastery in the school grounds. Fu Chow has turned one of the large openings into an oriental apartment, hung with Chinese tapestries, and it is here that Nelson Lee first meets Fu Chow.

Fu Chow is old and lined but his green, hypnotic eyes are full of life - and hate. The detective had been unlucky enough to run into three Chinamen who had beaten him to the ground, tied him up and taken him to their master. Lee had just observed three other Chinamen walking in the direction of the school along the tunnel, two of them carrying what looked like heavy boxes. Ruminating on this activity he has failed to be alert and is consequently overpowered by the second group of three Chinamen.

Fu Chow tells Lee he will not kill him if he will perform one little deed for him. He points to a black rope which disappears into the darkness of the tunnel and tells the detective that the rope ends in the cellars right beneath the ancient House and it is, in fact, a fuse which is connected to a gigantic cache of dynamite. This is contained in the boxes Lee had previously seen being transported along the tunnel. Fur Chow informs Lee that once the fuse is lit nothing can save St. Frank's and the whole school will be blown to smithereens: instantaneous death to all, including the Chinese boy he hates. If he will light the fuse, Fu Chow tells the bound detective, his life will be spared, but if he does not ...

Lee refuses to do this unthinkable task!

Fu Chow praises Lee as a man of principle and great courage and he is taken down the tunnel so that he is in sight of the boxes of dynamite where he is manacled to iron stakes. He will be able to watch the spark travelling along the fuse and will live long enough to see the huge explosion which will destroy St. Frank's. How can the old Chinaman reconcile his conscience with the destruction of all these young English boys! It is his contribution to the downfall of all the white races who in two hundred years' time will be entirely obliterated by the yellow man who will become conquerors of the world! Fur Chow smiles, bows and leaves Nelson in complete darkness. The detective can do nothing but wait and regret that he is too late to save St. Frank's.

Lee has told Nipper that he would be back in his bedroom by one o'clock after making his nightly rounds. Nipper wakes at gone two and goes in search of the schoolmaster detective, taking Pitt and Watson with him. They find the entrance to the tunnel beneath the monastery ruins has been securely blocked with boulders. Nipper fears that Fu Chow has planned something desperate for that very night and that Lee is already in his power. The three boys manage to dislodge enough of the barrier so that their voices are heard by Nelson Lee who tells them of his predicament and that they must fly back to the school and wake everyone so they can get to a place of safety before the dynamite explodes. But Nelson Lee then tells them that it is too late for he can already see the spark travelling toward him! The juniors manage to dislodge enough boulders so that they are able to climb through and Nipper cuts through the fuse with his pocket knife and collapses at the feet of his Guv'nor.

St. Frank's is saved. And Fu Chow has been defeated. But he is still at large! And, several days later ...

Christian, Yorke and Talmadge of the College House, intent on a jape against the Ancient House which involves a trip to Bellton Wood after dark, find themselves surrounded by six black-clothed Chinamen who suddenly disappear from the juniors' sight and are replaced by soft, black material which envelops them and carries them aloft as they lose consciousness.

Teddy Long, an inveterate liar, has been frightened by what he thinks is a ghostly face in the darkened wood. It is, of course, one of Fu Chow's Chinamen whom he has seen, whose black clothes mask the fact that there is a body beneath the pale face. Nipper hears of this mysterious encounter and makes a bee-line to his Guvnor's study.

Nipper informs Nelson Lee that he suspects Fu Chow has moved his operations to Bellton Wood and they both go there accompanied by De Valerie and Jack Grey. The detective discovers the footprints of Christine and Co. Ending at the foot of a very tall tree. Nelson Lee orders a quick return to the school by all the boys but it is too late to stop Jack Grey who disappears in the same mysterious fashion as the College House juniors.

Lee orders the boys to form a chain and lead each other out of the wood and Pitt and Archie Glenthorne are detailed to stay in Yung Ching's bedroom to guard the Chinese boy. By this time it is learned that Christine and Co. have not returned. Lee and Nipper return to Bellton Wood, Lee giving his assistant a small revolver telling him to use it if necessary! Nipper finds himself beneath the tree where Grey disappeared and is himself enveloped in thick, black material which carries him aloft during which time he is drugged into insensibility. It is, in fact, a lift or elevator which closes tightly around the victim so that he cannot fall out as he is being drawn higher into the tree. Nelson Lee observes the whole operation and knows Fu Chow is at work.

When Nipper regains consciousness he discovers Jack Grey. They are both on a platform that sways gently with the movement of the breeze. Two Chinamen guard the entrance to the platform. Through the entrance Nipper can see another platform at the top of an adjacent tree and suspects that Christine and Co. Are being held prisoners thereon. The two Chinamen stand to attention as an old, wizened Chinaman climbs on to the platform and Nipper realises he is looking at the hated Fu Chow.

Nipper pretends he is still under the influence of the drug inhaled by him in the 'lift' and observes Fu Chow place a pinch of powder under the nose of the still drowsy Jack Grey. Grey becomes alert immediately and Fu Chow stares fixedly into the junior's eyes and commands him to obey him. Grey's face becomes lifeless and Nipper realises the Chinaman has hypnotised him into submission. Grey will follow his instructions which are to go to the bedroom of Yung Ching and kill him. Fu Chow places a sharp knife in Grey's hand. Grey repeats the instruction and says he will plunge the knife into the Chinese junior's heart. Nipper listens in horror and is stunned that he can do nothing to stop Grey from becoming an unwitting murderer!

Nelson Lee has climbed to the top of an adjacent tall tree and is in time to see Grey leave accompanied by another Chinaman. Grey makes Lee think of an automaton and he realises Fu Chow has overpowered Jack's mind in some way and is being taken back to the school for ... there can be only one thing. But Lee decides this he is too good an opportunity to miss capturing the old Chinaman once and for all. Uncoiling a long, thin rope wound around his body, he lassos Fu Chow. The other Chinaman guard pulls out a knife and cuts his master loose but Nipper punches Fu Chow n the back. Fu Chow springs at Nipper who has the sublime joy of smashing his fist in the face of the old Chinaman. Both Fu Chow and the Chinaman fall through the entrance to the platform and descending by rope ladder disappear into the wood.

Jack Grey arrives in Yung Ching's bedroom and is warmly welcomed by Pitt and Archie but they are surprised by the coldness with which he receives their joy at his return. He brushes past them and, staring at the Chinese boy, mutters, "It will be easy." He approaches the bed. Pitt, mystified and nervous though unable to tell why, follows him and sees Grey pull the knife out of his pocket. Pitt manages to deflect Jack's aim and grapples him to the floor. Grey loses consciousness and Nipper, entering the room out of breath, explains the cause of Jack's strange actions to Pitt and Archie. He tells them that Jack Grey must never be told what he has tried to do for he will not remember being under Fu Chow's will in this manner when he regains consciousness.

As before, Yung Ching has slept through all the excitement. And Fu Chow doesn't get very far in his departure from the wood. He is, in fact, just in time to be made a prisoner by no less a personage than Nelson Lee's old friend, Chief-Inspector Lennard of the Scotland Yard C.I.D. He will be deported to his own country where he is wanted for many crimes. Once there, it is doubtful if he will be allowed to live out his normal lifetime. He will, says Lennard, end up in two baskets, his head in one and his body in another!

(Re-told from incidents related in SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARIES 372, 'Yellow Menace!' and 375, 'The Fiends of Fu Chow!', issued May/June 1939, which were reprinted from NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Old Series 360 through 365, published 1922.)

BUNTER KNOWS HOW!

By FRANK RICHARDS

Illustrated by C.H. CHAPMAN

'Bunter!' rapped Mr. Quelch.

'Oh, lor'!' murmured Billy Bunter.

The Greyfriars Remove were in form. Virgil was the order of the day. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, had been put on 'con' in turn; and Billy Bunter was hoping to escape the gimlet-eye.

Bunter had had no time for prep the previous evening. He had been too busy sitting in an armchair. So he was not prepared to construe if called upon. Not infrequently did Bunter thus 'chance it' with Quelch. Now, it appeared, he had chanced it once too often.

'You will go on, Bunter.'.

'Oh! Yes, sir!' mumbled Bunter, 'I—I—I've lost the place, sir—.'

'You absurd boy! Go on at Line 41.'

Billy Bunter blinked dismally at his book through his big spectacles. Prepared Latin did not come easily to Bunter. Unprepared Latin had him guessing. No doubt Virgil must have meant something, when he wrote Line 41 in the Second Book of the *Aeneid*. But what he might have meant, Billy Bunter didn't know and couldn't guess.

'I am waiting, Bunter.'

'*Laocoon ardens summa decurrit ab arce*—' mumbled Bunter.

'Construe!'

'Laocoon—' Pause!

'Well!'

'Laocoon—' Another pause.

Frank Nugent ventured to whisper in a fat ear.

'Laocoon in hot haste rushed down—'

'Nugent!' A rap from Quelch interrupted. 'Take fifty lines for speaking in class. Bunter, go on at once.'

'Laocoon in hot haste rushed down—!' said Bunter, quite brightly. Then there was once more a pause.

'If you do not construe immediately, Bunter—'

'*Ab arce—ab arce!*' mumbled Bunter. He had to make a shot at it. It was a hasty shot: and hasty shots often miss the target. Bunter's did, '*Ab arce*—from the Ark—!'

'What?'

'Laocoon in hot haste rushed down from the Ark—'

Ha, ha, ha!' came from the Remove.

'Silence in the class! Bunter, how dare you be so absurd?'

'Isn't that right, sir?'

'Bless my soul! Bunter, are you not aware that "*arx*" is a citadel, and that "*arce*" is the ablative? You have not prepared this lesson, Bunter! You will write out the whole lesson after class, and—'

A tap at the door interrupted Mr. Quelch. Trotter, the House page, put in a chubby face.

'If you please, sir, Headmaster wishes to speak to you in the Sixth Form room.'

'Very well, Trotter! Wharton, I shall leave you in charge here for a few minutes.

The Form room door closed behind Mr. Quelch. Billy Bunter shook a fat fist at the door— after it had closed.

'Beast!' hissed Bunter, 'Giving a fellow the lesson to write out, and I believe I had it right all the time. I'll jolly well show him what we think of him, and chance it.'

Bunter rolled out before the form.

'What are you up to, you fat ass?' exclaimed Harry Wharton.

'Just look and see.'

All the Remove looked, as Billy Bunter picked up the chalk and proceeded to scrawl large capital letters on the blackboard

BEEST

Then he blinked round at the Remove with a satisfied grin.

'That'll make Quelch wild!' he said. 'He won't know who did it—he can fancy it was any fellow he likes.'

'You fat chump!' roared Bob Cherry. 'Think Quelch doesn't know your spelling?'

'Eh? What's the matter with my spelling?' demanded Bunter.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'You're the only fellow in the form who spells like that. Quelch will spot you at once. Rub it out, quick, before he comes back.'

'Shan't!' retorted Bunter, independently. And he rolled back to his place.

'Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!' murmured Bob.

The door re-opened. Mr. Quelch rustled into the form room. He glanced at the form, and then at the blackboard—and gave a start. The Remove watched him breathlessly.

Billy Bunter grinned. Capital letters gave no clue to a fellow's 'fist'. How was Quelch to know a thing?

But the grin faded from the fattest face in the Remove, as Quelch rapped out:

'Bunter!'

'Oh!' gasped Bunter, 'It—it wasn't me, sir! I—I haven't been out of my place, sir, and I wasn't out for more than a minute—'

'Stand out before the form, Bunter.'

Billy Bunter rolled reluctantly out. His fat face registered despondency and alarm. Mr. Quelch picked up a cane from his desk.

'It—it wasn't me, sir!' groaned Bunter. Truth and Billy Bunter had long been strangers. They were not likely to strike up an acquaintance at such a moment. But unveracity proved no present help in time of need.

'You are the only boy in my form, Bunter, capable of spelling so simple a word incorrectly. And there is chalk on your fingers, Bunter.'

'Oh, crickey! Is there, sir? I was going to rub it off on my trousers, only you came in so suddenly—I—I mean. I—I never touched the chalk—'

'Bend over, Bunter!'

Whop!

'Ow! Wow!'

It was a sad and sorrowful Bunter who sat—uncomfortably—during the remainder of that Latin lesson.

'I say, you fellows.'

'Hallo, hallo, hallo!'

'It was morning break when Billy Bunter rolled up to Harry Wharton and Co. In the quad, with a grin on his fat face.

'I say, I know how to get even with Quelch for whopping me in form', said Billy Bunter impressively. 'I'm going to make him sit up, I can tell you.'

'Better learn to spell, before you call him a beast again!' suggested Bob Cherry.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I'm not going to call him a beast. But I'm jolly well going to tell him he's a brute. How will he like that?'

'I can see you doing it', said Harry Wharton, laughing.

'Well , of course, I'm not going to walk into his study and say "Quelch, you're a brute". I'm going to write it on a sheet of impot paper and slip it under his door see?'

'Look out for whops, if you do.'

'He won't know it was me, this time. He made out that the spelling was wrong in the form room this morning—'

'So it was, you fat ass.'

'Well, it won't be wrong this time, and there won't be a clue. Quelch can guess who called him a brute, and keep on guessing. I say, you fellows, fancy his face, when he picks up that paper and sees "brute" written on it! He, he, he! He can go all over the Remove with a small comb, if he likes, looking for the fellow who did it, but he won't spot me! He, he, he!'

'Better give it a miss—'.

'I'll watch it!' said Bunter.

And the Owl of the Remove rolled away to his study, leaving Harry Wharton and Co. Laughing. In his study, Bunter selected a sheet of impot paper, dipped a pen in the ink, and proceeded to write in large capitals

BROOT

And, a few minutes later, that cheery missive, was slipped under Mr. Quelch's door,

to meet the Remove master's astonished eyes when he went to his study. And Billy Bunter rolled out grinning into the quad, happily satisfied that he had given Quelch a Roland for his Oliver and that there wasn't a clue!

But alas for Bunter!

How Quelch knew was a mystery to him. It really seemed rather like magic to Bunter. But Quelch, somehow, did know; and the result was six of the very best for Bunter. After which, Billy Bunter sagely made up his fat mind that calling his form master names was not a paying proposition, and never again did he reveal his opinion that Quelch was either a 'beest' or a 'broot'.

'It's Not War, It's Plain Bloody Murder!'

(A BULLDOG DRUMMOND PASTICHE)

BY A.E. SIMS.

Prologue

On a short leave from the 'Front' in May 1915, Captain Hugh Drummond, DSO, MC, of His Majesty's Royal Loamshires, is invited by the Headmaster of his old Public School to talk to the boys about the 'glories' of war. Drummond accepts the invitation.

Part I. 9.30am. Empire Day, 1915

Thwack!

Stephen Lomax, Head Prefect, put plenty of beef into the fourth stroke of the cane across Leonard Popplewell's tightened trouser seat.

"You may get up," he said, throwing the cane aside.

Slowly and stiffly, sixteen year old Popplewell straightened from his bending position over the desk. His eyes were bright, his face red.

"You're wondering why I haven't given you six," said Stephen, He became stern, "Well you deserve six after telling everyone that the present war isn't a war, but plain bloody murder!"

"It's true," muttered Popplewell defiantly.

"War is a matter of honour and glory!" Stephen's head was held high, his eyes aglow. "Most of us in the fifth and sixth forms will soon be officers in the greatest conflict there has ever been. What you said was defeatist, almost treasonable, talk, Popplewell. Listen carefully to Captain Drummond this afternoon when he talks of the 'glories' to be won in France. Afterwards, to emphasise those 'glories' I shall give you the remaining two strokes of the six. Between us, Captain Drummond and I will give you the true picture of the War. Now cut!" Popplewell quietly left the study.

Part II. 2.30pm. Empire Day, 1915

The buzz of conversation in the Hall ceased, as the Headmaster led Drummond onto the stage. The soldier was a shade under six feet and broad in proportion. In uniform, the leather of his Sam Browne belt and shoulder strap shone in the light of the May afternoon sun.

The Headmaster made the necessary introductions. He spoke of the gallant allies across the Channel, who would soon overcome the vicious and tyrannical Hun. The 'glories' to be won while doing so. The pleasure of having Drummond here on Empire Day to expound these 'glories'. The gallant Captain had already been awarded the DSO and MC. Perhaps he would tell the School how he had gained them? Drummond nodded. "But before the Captain gives his talk, the School will sing Rudyard Kipling's famous song, this being Empire Day."

The boys rose and soon the hall was filled with the sound of four hundred young voices singing with great fervour, "Land of our birth we pledge to thee". The very atmosphere was charged with patriotic emotion. England was the greatest country in the world! The song came to an end and the boys sat down.

Leonard Popplewell, watching Drummond intently, had noticed that the soldier had not sung one word. He had remained mute. Stephen Lomax thought, now we shall hear why Britain has an Empire on which the sun never sets. Rows of young faces glowed expectantly as Drummond rose to his feet.

For long moments the soldier stood and regarded them. The frown on his face emphasising his broken nose, gained during the Public Schools Boxing Championships, some years ago. Then he began to speak. "So the Hun advanced into Belgium and some way into France, using the Schlieffen Plan. Belgium called for assistance, so to War we went. The British Expeditionary Force arrived in Calais and was cheered all the way through the streets. One old man, so overcome to see us, jumped into the sea! We were the conquering heroes! The War would be over by Christmas, with the Hun running away, his tail between his legs! Great Britain was the ruler of the world!" Drummond paused. Young faces glowed with anticipation. The Headmaster whispered to his Deputy, "He's on the right lines, always knew he was the right type. Just what the boys need to hear."

Drummond continued, "Our first battle was at Mons, at first we held our own, then we were driven back. We retreated towards Paris, where the Hun turned Eastwards. Their flank was attacked by the Paris garrison and we managed to break through a gap in their lines. The Hun retreated across the River Marne. Here he dug in and we and the French were stopped in our tracks. Then began a race to get round each other's flanks, but in vain. Soon the trenches, which we call the Western Front, extended from the North Sea to Switzerland. Then came the first battle of Ypres and the most terrible slaughter took place. Division after division of men was mown down by machine-gun fire and artillery barrages."

Drummond passed a hand over his eyes as if to remove an unwelcome sight. "It's difficult to describe but you know those beautiful trees which surround the playing fields here. Well, I've seen whole woods like that stripped of every last leaf by gunfire, leaving the trees bare and stark, bark torn away, naked to the elements. By the end of 1914, the French and Germans had both suffered a million men killed and wounded, the British Expeditionary Force had lost half its men, about one hundred and sixty thousand."

Stephen Lomax noticed that the glow on many young faces had died. He did not realize his own face was pale. Leonard Popplewell was staring fixedly and thoughtfully at Drummond. The Headmaster whispered to his Deputy, puzzlement in his tone, "He's not going to be a defeatist with a touch of Keir Hardie is he?" His Deputy did not reply. Drummond was continuing. "On April 22nd 1915, the Germans used gas for the first time and the casualties were enormous, but reserves were rushed in, in the nick of time. The Hun did not wish to advance through his own gas, so the allies counter-attacked and during the rest of April and early May, thousands - and I do mean thousands - of British lives were lost. So that is the state of the War at present. Deadlock! We are fighting over a piece of shell-torn, muddy ground. Back and forth goes the struggle and young lives are being sacrificed on a scale never before seen by man!"

Drummond abruptly stopped speaking, walked to the back of the stage, selected a chair, brought it to the front, sat down and crossed his legs. A sympathetic smile spread over his ugly face. "But you lads know all that. Your Headmaster informed me that you have been following the events in France from the newspapers. So it's all history to you?" He paused, obviously expecting an answer.

None came. The boys seemed to be too shocked to speak. Behind Drummond the Headmaster spoke. "Captain Drummond, we as civilians in our very sheltered existence, had no idea of the real state of affairs in France. True, we follow the newspapers, but you have enlightened us and changed our perception of the War in a matter of minutes. We knew things were not going quite as expected, but not to the degree you have shown us." "Thank you, Headmaster." Drummond again concentrated on the boys. "Let me try and tell you what it's like to be a soldier in France at the present time. One night during the Second Battle of Ypres, we began our march back to base well behind the trenches, our tour of duty being over. We were absolutely exhausted. We moved like dead men; great-coats sodden with rain and mud. Loaded with rifles and equipment, we staggered and slipped through the thick slime like drunken men, some had no boots, all had blistered feet. Everyone was deaf to the sound of the distant artillery and blind to the constant flames which lit up the sky."

Drummond paused, every eye in the hall was upon him. "Suddenly, Algy Longworth, my second-in-command yelled, 'Gas attack! Get your masks on! Gas! Gas! Gas!' His voice died in a gurgle as he crammed his own mask over his face. We all fumbled with our heavy, clumsy masks, straps slipping through dirty muddy fingers, stiff with cold. Then a sea of swirling green enveloped us. Through the haze appeared two of the lads, who had failed to don their masks. They were choking, gasping and retching. They sank to their knees, tearing at the collars of their tunics, frantic fingers getting weaker and weaker. All in vain. We picked them up and laid them in the troop wagon. There they lay, faces sickly white, their eyes huge, as they breathed their last in choking agony."

Drummond stopped speaking. The silence was absolute. Young faces full of horror gazed at him. Stephen Lomax's mind was numb; brought up on Kipling's tales of the Empire and Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade', his ideas of war were dying, killed by each word Drummond spoke. Leonard Popplewell leant even further forward, intent on not missing a

single syllable. The Headmaster felt like a man having a revelation.

Drummond continued. "Now, let me tell you what it's like to be one of the sentries in a salient on a Winter's night. First of all you're frozen. You lose contact with your feet and hands. They become like lumps of ice. You whisper nervously to one another. The loneliness and the bouts of silence get to your nerves. The freezing wind tugs at the barbed wire, a badly played violin grating the ear-drums. Flares go up, a moment of brilliance against the blackness, and you hear the dull rumble of heavy guns in the distance. You begin to imagine that the Hun is coming, your mind makes your eyes see grey shapes advancing towards you, but no-one is there. You wait and peer, wait and peer, nerves strung taught, and worst of all, nothing happens."

In the hall every eye was upon Drummond. The silence, now he had stopped speaking for a moment, could be heard.

"Then dawn begins to break, you watch the grey clouds march overhead, rain and sleet hiss down. You strain your eyes through the downpour. Suddenly you discern moving grey shapes, men running, real this time, not imagined! The Hun is mounting an attack without the usual artillery barrage. The alarm is give. The machine-gun opens up. Swathes are cut in the advancing grey ranks. The conflict is over in minutes, the Hun fails to reach the salient, he retreats. You breathe deeply and massage your right shoulder, the thud of your firing rifle has bruised it. Your frozen hands failed to hold it tightly enough. You look around you. Young Sid is dead, half his face blown away. Cyril is groaning in pain, but looking pleased through his agony; the blood seeping through his fingers as he clutches his right thigh. He knows his wound is serious enough to get him sent home to Blighty. He has survived, he is alive."

Drummond took a drink of water from the glass provided. "Then, as the rain and sleet stop, with the Hun gone, the burial party appear. They check the bodies, peering into each dead face before carrying it away for burial." Drummond stopped speaking. The hall was absolutely still and silent; no-one seemed to be breathing. The soldier smiled, an apologetic smile, full of sympathy. He thought, I hope I haven't shocked these youngsters too much, but they had to know the truth. Aloud, he said "I've tried to tell you what is going on across the Channel. I was asked to speak about the 'glories' of war, but this present war isn't glorious. It's not gallant charges on horseback, with trumpets blaring and soldiers wearing scarlet tunics. It's a grim, horrible business."

Seeing that Drummond had finished speaking, the Headmaster rose to his feet, his face was pale and set. "Are there any questions for the Captain?" he asked. Stephen Lomax stood up. "We must continue to fight though, musn't we sir? Britain is still the best country in the world?" His voice held a plea. "Of course we must! Tyranny must always be put down. What I have tried to do is make you see it isn't easy - it isn't glorious - war never is. Feats of honour and glory are performed in war - great sacrifices are made - but these would not be necessary if the war hadn't started in the first place. To say war is glorious is rubbish! Necessary at times! Unfortunately, yes!" Drummond smiled, "and of course Britain is still the best!"

Leonard Popplewell slowly stood up. "Please sir, how would you describe this present war in one sentence?" Drummond rose to his feet and thought for long moments while the school waited. He cleared his throat, "I would use this sentence. The present war is not a war, it is just bloody murder!" He sat down. No more questions came. The Headmaster walked across the stage to Drummond. He gripped the soldier's hand and shook it. "Thank you, Captain Drummond", was all he said. It was all he needed to say. The silence was broken. Every boy, without exception, was on his feet and shouting, "Thank you Captain Drummond!"

Part III. 4.30pm. Empire Day, 1915

Leonard Popplewell rather reluctantly knocked on Stephen Lomax's door and entered the Head Prefect's study. His eyes automatically went to the cane on the table. Stephen Lomax stood and looked at him. He made no move to pick up the cane. Instead he offered his right hand. They shook, a new understanding between them. Words unnecessary.

Leonard had reached the study door, when Stephen asked, "How did you know Captain Drummond would use that sentence?" Leonard answered over his shoulder. "My mother is Captain Drummond's sister, I know him as Uncle Hugh."

Quietly he left the study and closed the door.

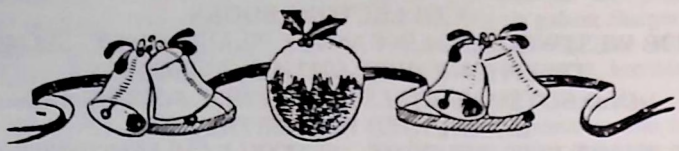
At CHRISTMAS TIME as the good *'Steamship Collectors' Digest'* sails into her 51st ocean may I wish our Lady Skipper, Officers and all you devoted deckhands a terrific Christmas followed by fair winds and warm seas during the new year.

Happy Seasonal Reading to you all. Colin

In those Halcyon pre-war days the holiday annual was an essential part of the Christmas festival. Why not phone me now to order the year of your choice and relive the magic. Most years available with reading copies from £15.

THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL

Another Christmas tradition. Why not treat yourself to a vintage issue over the holiday season. Years available: 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1987 and 1988. Prices - issues of the 1980s at £10.00 each, issues of the 1970s at £12 each, issues of the 1960s at £14 each, issues of the 1950s at £16.00 each.



THE COLOURS OF CHRISTMAS

by MARGERY WOODS

The Victorians have long been credited with - or accused of - effecting the main changes in our social, economic and industrial history, not the least of these being the invention of the Great British Christmas, an idea the Americans took to in a big way as a potential annual winner that could run and run, thus putting the commercial into Christmas with a capital C. Some cynics would say with a capital K for Kitschmas. But to be fair to our friends across the Atlantic the seeds of at least one of the most enduring seasonal traditions were sown over there quite some time before Victoria ascended the throne.

In 1823 Clement Moore wrote for the amusement of his own children the much loved classic *The Night Before Christmas*, in which he describes a visit from St. Nicholas, complete with sleigh and eight flying reindeer, all bearing names to make Disney eat his heart out. From this poem and two earlier books, one by an anonymous author and the other by Washington Irving, evolved the transformation of St. Nicholas and the old English Father Christmas into the Santa Claus of the past couple of centuries, complete with all the trappings of stockings hung up, chimneys, scarlet robes and white beards, a tradition of Christmas Eve likely to live as long as children are born and parents long to recapture the magic of innocence. Also from the USA came a certain song that has outsold every other popular song for some fifty years. The colour of Christmas, indeed!

But with respect to those who would prefer a little less of the commercialism and a little more of the true meaning of Christmas, it has to be admitted that the Victorian age bequeathed us many of the well loved traditions that have helped to keep Christmas as the major festival in our calendar during a rapidly changing era when many other creeds and cultures have been grafted onto our national society.

Prince Albert brought the Tree into our homes, although holly and mistletoe had been part of the winter solstice ritual for centuries. The Victorians adopted freely and gave each newcomer its distinctive British touch. In Bohemia, a heart of the world's glass-making industry, beautiful coloured baubles were spun and decorated: these were ideal for decking a candlelit tree. One evening a man called Tom Smith toyed with a French bon-bon and the idea of a paper cracker with its little secret inside was born in 1840. Three years late the Christmas card was introduced, in an initial print run of one thousand, which sold like the proverbial hot cakes at the enormous price - for those days - of one shilling. Enormous when one remembers that a labourer or a seamstress worked a twelve hour day for that, or even less. Did it ever occur to Sir Henry Cole or the artist who designed his card for him that they were founding a vast world-wide industry that would expand to take in greeting cards for every conceivable occasion?

Many of our best loved carols are a legacy from the reign of Victoria, and an entertainment with its roots in Roman times evolved from the Harlequinade into a form we still know today. Someone borrowed a theme from Grimm, was possibly inspired by an opera by Rossini, added some slapstick, designed some lavish business with scenic transformations, assembled a cast of pretty girls and comedians, led by a thigh-slapping wench in tights, a sweet-singing girl in silvery gauze waving a magic wand to repel a scarlet shade of Mephistopheles shooting up amid smoke and flamelight from a trap centre stage, and lo! The Victorian musical extravaganza we know as pantomime was established anew.

In 1843 Charles Dickens published A CHRISTMAS CAROL and Victorian conscience was stirred suddenly to realise how appalling was the poverty that lay in the backwaters of the big cities. The Victorians remembered that the true heart of Christmas should be in giving and goodness, and many great charities still doing vital work of alleviation today were born in the Victorian age. Bank Holidays began and the 1870 Education Act brought literacy to the masses, thus opening up a vast market for the printed word. And there was another far reaching legacy to which few give a second thought today, so taken for granted is it; the Victorians gave us colour printing.

Today we can scarcely visualise a Christmas in black and white print, dependent for its festive colour on textiles and arrangements that could be contrived with hand-painted efforts and the natural colours of fruit and greenery available in winter's season. As we warm to the glow of Christmas 1996, the scarlets and greens, the glitter of gold and silver, the rainbow hues that leap to the eye from every magazine we pick up - even our newspapers are colour printed now - and we choose our cards, gift tags and a myriad other temptations to make the festive season a feast of colour, we do not have to travel back too far to an age when none of it existed. Even the gaily hued paper with which we embellish our gifts to loved ones would not be possible without those colour processes that made its production feasible. And those seals we scatter on our gifts, printed and embossed by the million, are a spin-off from the popular Victorian scraps, of which there had been a vast range of sizes and themes, developed to satisfy the Victorian craze for keeping ornate albums filled with cards, scraps and whatever else took the collector's fancy. Corner stationers carried stocks of these, along with fascinating packets at varying prices containing an assortment of the items necessary to make one's own Christmas cards or Valentines. These were made with much care and affection by adults as well as children, from the silvery motifs, paper lace, embossed card, feathery birds or tissue butterflies and tiny sprays of flowers. Most important were the miniature insets with romantic or more formal verses of greeting. Examples of these handmade cards can still be found today at specialist dealers in ephemera. Many of them were little works of art; the ingenuity of the decoration was limited only by the skill and imagination of the child or adult who so patiently constructed them.

The pioneers of colour printing were Baxter and Dickes, very early in the nineteenth century. They experimented with colours laid on wood blocks, and later their method was further developed by Kronheim and Edmund Evans. But much of the mid-century colour printing was crude and garish. Glorious colour work on paper and vellum had been known for centuries, notably in the illuminated manuscripts of the monks, and many books with hand-coloured plates existed in the great houses. But the less pecunious who were fortunate enough to be taught to read had to be content with the crude little chapbooks or cheap toybooks illustrated with rough woodcuts which were sold from door to door or at fairs by the peddlers. The full colour of ephemera that could roll off the presses by the million and which virtually all could afford was still only a scarcely formed dream at the beginning of the Victorian age.

Nevertheless, efforts to bring colour into print persisted, even though much was still being done by hand, by a method described in an 1887 reprint by the Leadenhall Press in their series of forgotten children's books The title was *Deborah Dent and Her Donkey*, and it had first appeared in 1823, published by Dean & Munday of Threadneedle Street. The 1887 facsimile carries an interesting footnote to the introduction. It reads:

> In the original edition the illustrations are hand-coloured. The unfolded sheets were given out to a number of girls. If six colours were used - and there were seldom more - six girls would be required. No. 1, after filling in, say, all the parts coloured blue, would pass the sheet on to No. 2, who would add the red. This plan of colouring has been followed with the present series of reprints.

It will be gathered from this account that the process of getting colour into books was in urgent need of a method of much speedier mechanisation. By the eighteen-fifties Dean & Son, the descendants of that same Mr Dean of Dean & Munday, were printing their books in colour in what was the forerunner of the lithographic stone method. They were also being extremely venturesome in other respects.

In 1856 they began their famous series of New Scenic Books with the titles: *Little Red Riding Hood, Aladdin,* and *Cinderella.* These had board covers and six model scenes. They were coloured, three dimensional, and consisted of several cutouts joined by ribbons, which could be gently raised from the page. A different novelty book followed, entitled *Changing Transparencies.* The illustrations here were also drawn up from the page but then held to the light when a transformation would be effected. In one scene a full rainbow is revealed over a lake; in another day becomes night as a campfire glows red and a full moon appears. In yet another a horse waits patiently outside a forge until the interior is revealed to show the smith and his lad working at the forge. Perhaps the most intriguing is a smooth pastel tinted picture of Vesuvius dormant beyond a calm blue sea; then, in a moment, the volcano is shown belching flame and sparks, and turning the sea to scarlet. It is difficult not to wonder at the sheer inventive exploitation of the new possibilities of colour printing.

Another printer was exploring colour in what perhaps could be termed a little more upmarket way. Some particularly beautiful colour work by Messrs M & N Hanhardt can be found in a book called *Christmas Carols.* The words of these are set in an illuminated frame, gilded and with intricate designs taken from original mss in the British Museum, including one from Henry III's missal. At last people could possess in their own homes faithful reproductions from the country's historical treasures.

The next two major users of colour printing were Kronheim and Edmund Evans, and their styles were completely different. Kronheim's colourwork, very collectable now, but disliked by some devotees of early colour printing, was dark and rich in tone, echoing the general style of Victorian fashion, heavy dark mahogany furniture, deep crimson velour hangings and heavy fabrics in dark hues, while Evans pursued limpid, light colours, predominantly green and pink, delicate and flat, which are seen to great advantage in the books of Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane. Perhaps Evans was pointing the way to the lifting of the sombre aspects of Victorian style and the coming of light with colour. One's preference for either of these printers simply depends on whether one is drawn to water colours or oils, for these are the two mediums which seem apt to their production.

At the same time colour printing was developing rapidly in Germany, principally in Bavaria and Saxony, and soon two particularly skilled and artistic men decided to come to

London and set up their publishing houses there. One was Ernest Nister and the other Raphael Tuck, and they brought with them their chromolithography process. This colour printing method was the first to shade colours and skin tones, as later developed in today's colour photography. Illustrations were now beginning to resemble the end product as we know it today.

Not content with storybooks awash on every page with this new colour, Nister and Tuck broadened the market for the novelty books pioneered by Dean. In Nister's books the child pulled a tab and a picture made in slats changed into another one, or a loop at the edge of the page could be drawn around causing another type of transformation. Some opened up across a centrespread, others were even more ingenious, like one depicting a scene in which two curved rectangles were cut out to show a picture passing behind when the inner wheel was spun. But it wasn't quite as simple as that. A procession of sledges, or boats, or whatever would pass behind the first opening, quite empty, but as they reappeared behind the second opening those sledges or boats then would be occupied by rosy cheeked children laughing happily as they played. How magic they still seem today, and how magical a century ago when one of these beautifully coloured and crafted books emerged from its wrapping on Christmas morning. Some of these Nister movables are being reprinted today, but because of the high cost of labour here they are assembled abroad, either in the Far East or Columbia. The colour is now done by photolithography, but somehow it doesn't quite recapture the depth and glow of the original.

It is an indication of how rapidly the market for colour printing grew, in late Victorian and Edwardian times, when Tuck, who was producing almost the same kind of product as Nister, could prosper as well and neither seemed to dent the other's share of the market.

Tuck published some beautiful children's books and ephemera. Cardboard dolls with wardrobes of pretty clothes for a child to dress; shaped books, cards, scraps and movables. One interesting novelty issued by Tuck was a panorama called *With Father Tuck in Fairyland.* It was a four folder which opened out to about four feet and the back of the folder held a pocket in which were sixteen little figures depicting favourite fairy tale characters. There were four scenes in the panorama, each with its numbered slots into which the appropriate figures could be fitted to complete the scene.

France also explored the potential of coloured embossed printing. One gift book put out by an anonymous publisher was entitled *Givre d'Images en Relief, que les Enfants Composant eux-memes.* It consisted of poems facing a full page illustration in silvery print which was to be completed by the embossed scraps contained in a pocket in the rear cover. The colours and detail are exquisite and still bright to this day.

There was one other famous contributor to the world of colour wonder for children, the German artist Lother Meggendorfer. Although he did not experiment greatly with printing techniques his work was too brilliant to be excluded. He has been referred to as the father of the movable, although he was later than Dean, but he was the greatest of all at paper engineering and the intricacy of working levers which made his models work. One tab would cause up to five different actions in one scene. Five doves fly down to the girl who is feeding them and each is an individual movement. A portly man rides a horse which rises and falls in a gallop, its head tosses, the man pulls the reins with one hand while the other waves his crop. A mother rocks a cradle and a clock pendulum ticks, and so they go on. Meggendorfer's first editions were sometimes hand coloured and subsequent editions colour printed. The humour and novelty of his books were appreciated by adults as well as children, and his art had a pungency and wit that was not found in the sometimes oversweet prettiness and sentiment of the Nister and Tuck books. But any of these publications finding their way to a child's bedside on Christmas morning must have been sure of a joyful welcome.

At last, nearing the end of the century, colour reached the comics. Although colour had appeared in periodicals as early as 1855 when the Illustrated London News celebrated Christmas with a pull-out colour supplement, and several isolated issues shone forth on special occasions, it was not until 1898 that Trapps, Holmes & Co issued The Colour Comic, in colour every week for nearly a year, and by the turn of the century penny plain, tuppence coloured aptly described the choice presented on the comic market. Annuals began to proliferate, bright covers and shiny plates in full gorgeous colour, and pages in two or three tone colour line were scattered generously through the contents.

Another industry profited tremendously with the advent of mass colour printing: advertising. How would it get its message over today without colour to heighten the image that sells the product? Somehow, until the latter years of the nineteenth century, they were obliged to achieve this in stark black and white, usually aided by extravagant claims for their product which today would very quickly land them in court on a charge of misrepresentation. An interesting example of this is to be found on the back cover of Dean's Changing Transparencies.

The Co-operative Sanitary Company promotes its wares with the declaration that

Health and good estate of body are above all old ..." a premise with which few would disagree. But the aids to this desirable state are lastly. For instance, "Dr. Nichols' Portable Morco-Russian Bath, (hot air or Vapour), Cures Colds, Fevers, Skin Diseases, Rheumatism, even Contagious Opthalmia, and all diseases of Children in the most rapid and delightful manner. Complete for gas, 32/-, complete for spirit, 29/6d with full directions."

Perhaps a modicum of faith would also have been necessary.

And so colour galore became the order of the day, mass produced on every medium that could be fed into a printing press, for Christmas and all times. But the greatest colour of Christmas is surely to be found in the amber glow of candles, the blue of the Lady's robe, the roughspun cream of a shepherd's garment, the soft browns of the animals and the finery of the Three Kings as they watch in wonder round the Manger. The homely spiritual scene to be found in all churches and many homes at Christmas; still the only true meaning of what this loveliest of all seasons is about. Christ's Mass ...

ALL ALONE! With just one light switched on, Helen Craig sat down in the lonely study. How her chums must be enjoying themselves this evening! she thought.

A Leonard Shields picture of a less festive moment from a Morcove Christmas story.

JULES GERVAISE, DETECTIVE.

SEXTON BLAKE'S PARTNER

by DEREK HINRICH

SEXTON BLAKE—DETECTIVE.

"So my wealthy client has come at last, thanks to the influence of my friend Gervaise of Paris. I wonder what kind of mission it is he has in mind to bring me in such high rewards? Gervaise says it may keep me busy for a year or two." Thus Mr. Sexton Blake muses when we first meet him, on the threshold of his illustrious career, in his first recorded case as he awaits his client, Mr. Frank Ellaby, shortly to become "The Missing Millionaire" of the title.

Sexton Blake, at this time (1893) we are told, "belonged to the new order of detectives. He possessed a highly-cultivated mind which helped to support his active courage. His refined clean-shaven face readily lent itself to any disguise, and his mobile features assisted to clinch any facial illusion he desired to produce."

He had apparently been active in his chosen profession for some little time as he already had an office in New Inn Chambers, in Wych Street off the Strand, with sufficient business to justify the employment of a clerk. He also had some knowledge, it becomes apparent as the case develops, of the upper echelons of the London underworld and in particular of the activities of "The Red Lights of London", a sort of proto-Criminals Confederation (whose leading light, Leon Polti, a youthful mastermind and occasional transvestite, might in later days have made a memorable serial villain).

Blake is eagerly awaiting Mr. Ellaby and has high hopes of the commission. Perhaps business is not too good at that moment. His windows we are told are grimy: could he be behind with his rent? Certainly, two years or so of full-time employment must have seemed a godsend. At any rate his gratitude to Gervaise is manifest and when the Frenchman comes to England to help him, there is perhaps something of the master and pupil in their relationship.

The case ends triumphantly for Blake and Gervaise. Mr. Ellaby is rescued from the clutches of "The Red Lights of London", who are destroyed, and all the other manifold complications are resolved by the story's end, and Gervaise, forsaking Paris, becomes Blake's partner in London.

Sexton Blake's next case, "The Mystery of 'The Black Grange'", finds the partners each separately engaged by clients who are unknown to one another, upon what turn out to be different aspects of the same investigation (something not unknown in private eye novels even now). This affair is a sequel to "The Missing Millionaire" as once again Mr. Ellaby is the subject of a murderous assault, and many other characters reappear.

And once again our heroes are triumphant and, amongst other desperados, they make an end of a gang known as "The Assassins of The Seine" which has terrorised the French capital for some time past. Gervaise plays a somewhat larger role in this case and, indeed, at one moment completely baffles Blake when he appears before him in disguise in the offices of the Paris Prefecture of Police. This is noteworthy perhaps because Sexton Blake's own skill in disguise is not exhibited in either of these stories.

Nor is it in his third adventure, "A Golden Ghost; or, Tracked By A Phantom". Gervaise neither appears nor is mentioned in this tale which is, however, a farrago of nonsense and the weakest of these earliest chronicles. It is heavily indebted to *The Moonstone* and concerns the theft of a gem from an Eastern idol on behalf of an (unidentified) "British prince" and the attempted vengeance of the idol's devotees - amongst much else.

None of these stories, which - despite their relatively short length - contains as much incident as any three-decker "Sensation Novel" by Miss Braddon or Mrs Henry Wood, and in which the long arm of coincidence is not merely tweaked but repeatedly tugged out of its socket, really give either Sexton Blake or Jules Gervaise any opportunity to exhibit much in the way of detective skills beyond boundless activity.

Blake does have rather more work in "Sexton Blake Detective", his first adventure in *The Union Jack*, and does for the first time adopt a disguise, but once again there is no mention of his partner and one wonders what part Jules Gervaise plays in the concern of Blake

and Gervaise (presumably he has accepted the position of junior partner as he is a foreigner).

Seven weeks later, however, the partnership is seen again in action together in *The Halfpenny Marvel* in "Sexton Blake's Peril" in which they foil the schemes of a sinister trio of international criminals, known as "The Terrible Three", who, having made Italy too hot for them, have commenced operations in London. Here Gervaise, who has encountered the gang in Rome, counsels caution and advises Blake not to proceed in the matter as the gang is too dangerous. When Blake disregards his advice Gervaise washes his hands of the matter, though when Blake is in the peril of the title he decides, like Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*, that he must do something about it (though fortunately for us, of course, Blake is not murdered like Spade's partner, Archer).

In this story and in the last of the original six adventures of Sexton Blake by Harry Blyth, "Sexton Blake's Triumph" (from which Gervaise is again absent) there is more of what might be called detective work, though the coincidences still come thick and fast. Blake readily assumes another disguise as he tells a client that he has a wig and a beard available (his wardrobe is perhaps limited as yet), even though the villains see through it at once. He is, however, prepared for every eventuality. When one subtle villain attempts his murder by the scratch of a talonous fingernail dipped in an alkaloid poison, Blake is able to produce a stick of lunar caustic from his pocket-case with which to cauterise the wound. He does not, though, carry firearms regularly as in his hey-day.

The character of the partners is now more fully delineated than in their earlier adventures though we have no further physical description of Blake than that at the outset of his first recorded case. Besides this we have his portrait, though in other illustrations he perhaps appears a trifle more portly than we have become accustomed to in later years, though this might be a matter of posture or the cut of his topcoat. We know that he is chivalrous, determined, active and headstrong. He has stuck to his last despite having for the first time fallen in with a damsel in distress who, despite becoming an heiress to vast wealth, "has given him more than a half-promise that she will some day reward his devotion to her in the way he most desires."

In "Sexton Blake's Peril" he outlines to a prospective client the principles upon which the partnership of Blake and Gervaise conducts its practice, "If you look for any dishonourable work at our hands you may spare your own words and our time. We do not interfere in disputes between man and wife, nor do we pursue defaulting clerks. But if there is a wrong to be righted, an evil to be redressed, or a rescue of the weak and the suffering from the powerful, our hearty assistance can be readily obtained. We do nothing for hire here; we would cheerfully undertake to perform without fee or reward. But when our clients are wealthy we are not so unjust to ourselves as to make a gratuitous offer of our services."

Or, as Sherlock Holmes told "The Gold King", J. Neil Gibson, "My professional fees are upon a fixed scale. I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether."

Philip Marlowe was more prosaic, "Twenty-five dollars a day plus expenses, mostly gasoline and whisky."

We have, too, a likeness of Jules Gervaise - a slim, thin-faced man of indeterminate age with close-cropped dark hair cut *en brosse*. I think his character is more fully rounded out by Harry Blyth than that of Sexton Blake, who for the moment is little more than an embodiment of the standard heroic virtues and sentiments. Gervaise's personality is not too apparent from the accounts of those exploits of his partner in which he shared but he features solo in one story. It is "The Accusing Shadow" by Harry Blyth and has been reprinted in the Oxford University Press anthology, *Victorian Tales of Mystery & Detection* edited by Michael Cox (Oxford 1992). Having read them all, I think this is the best of Blyth's stories of Blake and Gervaise.

It would seem that having settled in London, Jules Gervaise has soon come to contemplate retirement, but with no particular desire to return to his native France. At the beginning of the story we find him, "thin, wiry, alert, and wonderfully keen-eyed" with an acquaintance, Saul Lynn, seated "together in the latter's dining-room in a small comfortable house in the neighbourhood of Kennington Oval." Gervaise has just explained that he has tired of his profession and, "So it comes that now I say gladly, let my good partner, Sexton Blake take the rewards and the honours, while I sit peacefully under my vine and cultivate my garden."

In the course of their conversation it transpires that Saul Lynn's daughter, Daisy, is shortly to marry a business acquaintance of her father's, George Roach, and Lynn (a widower) will then retire too, and he suggests that afterwards he and Gervaise might share a house. It soon becomes clear that Daisy is marrying Roach to save her father, who is greatly indebted to him, from bankruptcy, and that she is really drawn towards Rupert Peel, a clerk of her prospective husbands. Soon after, however, it develops that Mr. Roach has disappeared. He is supposed to have gone to Glasgow on business but has not arrived. Presently he is found battered to death in the house in Canonbury which he has taken for the marital home. Suspicion rapidly falls upon the young man and Gervaise undertakes an investigation to find the real culprit. And, of course, he duly succeeds.

The story is nicely told and does not suffer as much as Blyth's Blake cases from fits of transpontine fustian when declarations of love or of other sensibilities take place. Gervaise is clearly drawn as a man of shrewd and incisive mind with a pleasant sense of irony, and a calm and unruffled temperament. He is clearly a man of a very different cast of mind from the young Sexton Blake. Gervaise is aware of this himself. At one point he muses, "I am glad I have no Sexton Blake with me. He would inevitably ride a bicycle, plunge into a stream, or stop an engine in full career, before he got to the end of this business. I must do my acrobatic feats in my head, and on the ground." One interesting feature of the case is that the identity of a deliberately disfigured corpse is established by dental evidence. This must surely have been a fairly novel idea in detective fiction in 1894.

At the conclusion of the case Gervaise has been so successful that the thought of retiring has to be banished for the time being, but this is the last that Harry Blyth wrote of either Sexton Blake or Jules Gervaise.

"The Accusing Shadow" benefits by being viewed entirely - with one very short exception - from Gervaise's standpoint as he pursues his investigations: in the Blake stories we rush from point to point with different protagonists at breakneck speed.

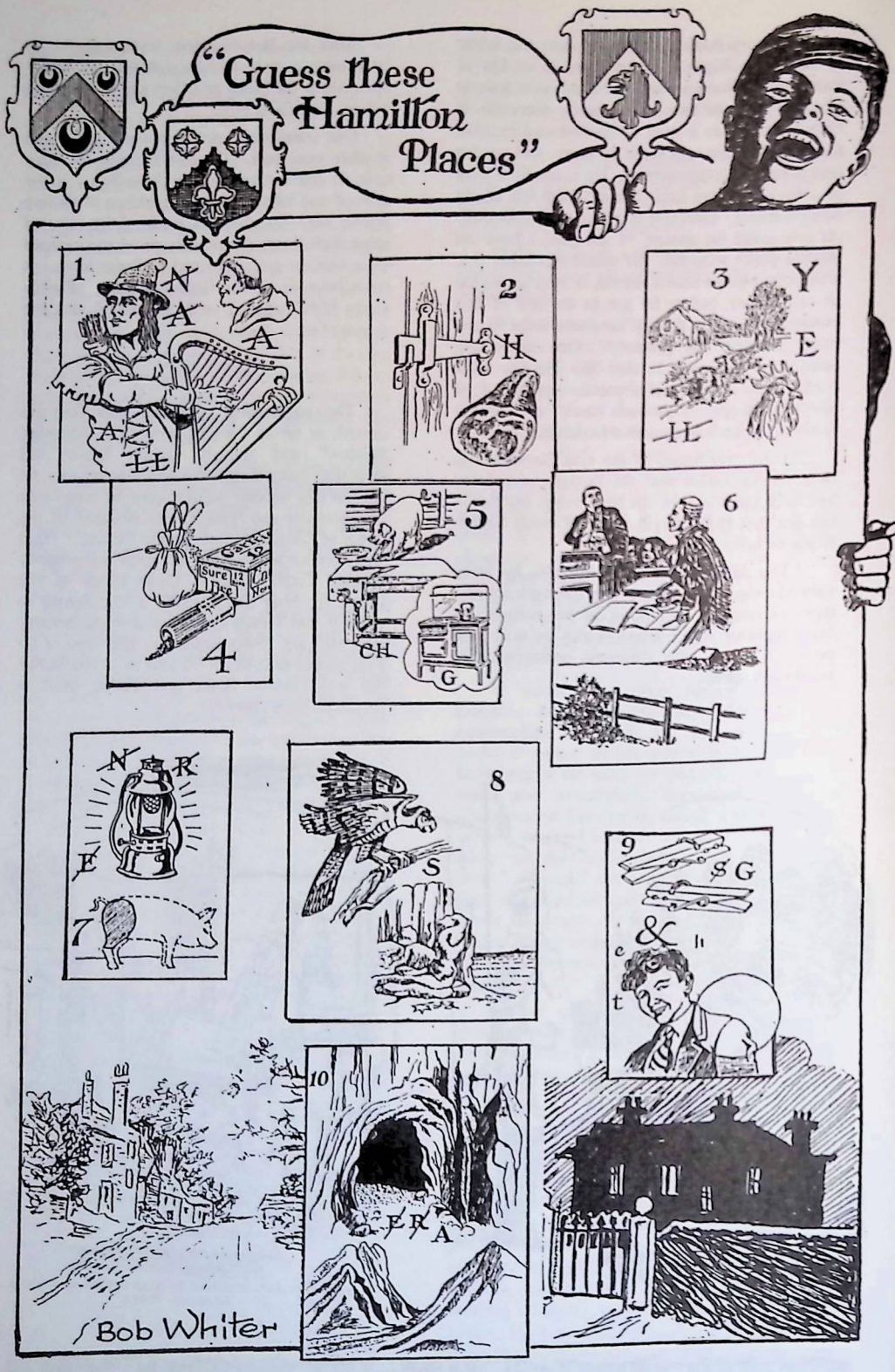
After the last of these seven cases it is interesting to note that though they all ended successfully for Blake and Gervaise, none of the villains ever stood trial.

One committed suicide to avoid arrest and another went mad. The rest all came to sticky ends of one sort or another (literally so in the case of one who fell into a cauldron of boiling pitch): they fell through roofs, down disused mine shafts, were fortuitously gored and tramped by a bull, or were drowned or burnt alive. It must have saved the Crown a mint. Plainly Harry Blyth believed, with Saint Paul, that the wages of sin is death.

The partnership of Blake and Gervaise ceased, as far as I know, with "The Accusing Shadow" and though Sexton Blake had thereafter many assistants and voluntary aids, he did not take another partner until he became an Organisation and Tinker was elevated to the status of "Associate and Junior Partner". That was after we learned that his name was properly Edward Carter - though Gwyn Evans in *The Crook of Fleet Street* (SBL 2.76) seemed to think it was Tinker (a not uncommon surname after all!) and Lewis Jackson in *The Case of the Five Fugitives* (SBL 3/77) told us it was Smith. Ah well, Sexton Blake and Tinker dealt in mysteries didn't they?

"HE STOOD FACE TO FACE WITH HALF-A-DOZEN OF AS VILLAINOUS-LOOKING RASCALS AS IT HAD EVER BEEN HIS LOT TO BEHOLD."

"I HAVE ACTUALLY SUCCEEDED IN BAMBOOZLING SO SMART A MAN AS SEXTON BLAKE."



ANSWERS ON PAGE 111

CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS - AND OTHERS

As portrayed by two notable artists

by DENNIS L. BIRD

Cliff House School for Girls has a long history. It is first mentioned in "The Magnet" of 27th March 1909, and two of its pupils - Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn - featured in a number of stories. They were delineated as prim Edwardian misses by Arthur E. Clarke, the Greyfriars artist of the time, but they were always minor characters, subordinate to Harry Wharton & Co.

It was not until the launch of "The School Friend" dated 17th May, 1919, that Cliff House came into its own. From then until 1940 the clifftop school in Kent appeared regularly every week, apart from one or two interruptions. And as a kind of trailer for "The School Friend", Charles Hamilton in early April 1919 introduced a new schoolgirl character in the Greyfriars saga. She was a plump, avaricious creature named Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter - sister of the famous Billy.

With "The School Friend" came most of the girls whose names were to become so familiar over the years: Barbara Redfern and her younger sister Doris, Mabel Lynn, Dolly Jobling, Peggy Preston, Stella Stone, as well as the already-established Marjorie and Clara. To give readers some idea of their appearance, "The School Friend" commissioned regular drawings from a rather odd artist named G.M. Dodshon. As Mary Cadogan says in the book "You're a Brick, Angela", he often gave them "strangely oriental faces", and his depictions of Bessie in particular were positively grotesque.

"The School Friend" came to a sudden end with its issue of 27th July 1929, to be replaced a week later by a new paper, "The Schoolgirl". Two 10-week Cliff House serials appeared in it, but when the second one ended in February 1930 the school and its Dodshon drawings vanished without trace. E.L. Rosman told Bill Lofts that there had been growing concern over Dodshon's old-fashioned style, which he would not or could not modernise.

It was not until 2nd April, 1932, that the stories were revived in "The Schoolgirl". They sprang into new and more vigorous life, partly due to the illustrations of one of the Amalgamated Press's finest artists.

He was THOMAS E. LAIDLER, known for no doubt obvious reasons as "Tubby". Bill Lofts has kindly given me some details of the man who was to depict Cliff House for the remaining eight years of its life. He was born in Windsor in 1893, and before taking over the "Schoolgirl" series he drew for some of the boys' papers - mainly "Chums". He also illustrated the Renee Frazer story "What a Memorable Christmas Eve!" in "The School Friend" of 27th December 1930.

At this same period, in the 1930s, a cartoonist who called himself "Pont" was becoming increasingly prominent with his weekly drawings in "Punch". He specialised in everyday humour, drawing typical scenes in middle-class suburban households. His name was Graham Laidler, and I have often wondered if he was related to Thomas. However, "Pont's" biographer Richard Ingrams (founder of "Private Eye") tells me he found no connection, and according to Bill Lofts "Laidler is quite a common name, especially in Scotland."

T.E. Laidler gave verve, charm, and elegance to the Cliff House girls. He was skilled at differentiating between the various characters. There was no need to look at the captions to see if Barbara or Mabel or Clara were the subject. Some of the senior girls - Stella Stone, Dulcia Fairbrother - were truly beautiful, although he also made some of the more spiteful prefects such as Connie Jackson and Sarah Harrigan look suitably mean. The mistresses, like Miss Bullivant and the Head Miss Primrose, were dignified, and he really let himself go with Miss Valerie Charmant, "The Charmer".

Male characters were equally successful, whether they were the peppery chairman of the school governors, Sir Willis Gregory, or the sadistic and fraudulent accountant Shaw Dennis, who briefly became Headmaster.

Two of Laidler's best drawings were covers for the "Schoolgirls' Own Library", the monthly "yellow books". No. 704, "Clara's Strange Conduct", recounted the events when the extrovert games captain Clara Trevlyn got into trouble for no apparent reason (actually she was trying to clear her brother Jack of false

accusations). She was deprived of her captaincy, and Laidler's drawing poignantly captures the anguish of this proud, strong-minded girl and the uncomprehending dismay of her friends Barbara and Marjorie.

The other cover is Laidler's loveliest picture of Barbara (No. 729, "Babs and Co at the Manor of Menace"); she is anxiously telephoning, not realising she is about to be attacked by the felonious "Ferret", Freda Ferriers.

He was so good at portraying moods. Compare these two emotionally tense drawings, for instance, with the gaiety of "Christmas Romance at Trevlyn Towers" ("The Schoolgirl", 23rd December 1939), when Dulcia Fairbrother's RAF officer brother Dick announces his engagement.

The Amalgamated Press were not generous to their artists. The "Girls' Crystal", for instance, never once named their illustrators. The "Schoolgirl's Weekly" sometimes did; "The Schoolgirl" very rarely. The exception was Tommy Laidler; his earliest drawings were signed, and the Cliff House stories were later annotated "Illustrated by T. Laidler".

He was evidently more insistent than his colleagues on recognition.

Cliff House came to an abrupt end with "The Schoolgirl" of 18th May 1940; the German invasion of Norway cut off vital paper supplies and the magazine closed. It was never revived. Laidler's work was not seen again for many years, but although he was never to re-create Cliff House, he illustrated some of the post-war annuals. The "Girls' Crystal Annual 1951" published his drawings for Elizabeth Chester's story "No Larks for the Madcap", and he appeared frequently in the "School Friend" weeklies and annuals in the 1950s and 1960s. He was no longer given a by-line, but his readily identifiable drawings were either signed or initialled "T.L.".

Apparently in his later years he grew an impressive white beard, which gave him a resemblance to Father Christmas. He died at Taplow in January 1975, aged nearly 82.

*

Laidler did almost all the Cliff House drawings after 1932, but just occasionally (perhaps he was ill?) he was unavailable. That was when the other subject of this article, EVELYN B.

FLINDERS, was called in. She was one of the A.P.'s longest-serving and most versatile artists. She was always on hand whenever a stand-in was needed. She was born around 1910, and at the age of 15 went to Hornsey Art School in London. The school introduced her to an agent, who soon gave her her first story to illustrate. She then drew for the A.P.'s short-lived "Schooldays" (1929-31), and for other papers such as the "Schoolgirl's Weekly".

"The Schoolgirl", December 23, 1939

In 1933 the Morcove artist Leonard Shields was unable to provide his usual drawings, no doubt through illness. Miss Flinders was given specimens of his art to copy, and was asked to illustrate the story "Althea Dillon's Dilemma" ("Schoolgirls' Own", 21st October 1933). On other occasions in 1934 and 1935 she came to Morcove's rescue, and similarly she sometimes temporarily replaced Laidler as the Cliff House artist.

For six weeks in October and November 1938 she also filled the breached in the "Girls' Crystal" when the artist for the long-running Noel Raymond series was absent. She renewed her acquaintance with the debonair male detective and his niece June Gaynor many years later, first in the 1947 "G.C. Annual" ("The Puzzle of the Yuletide Doll"), then in the serial "Detective June's Strangest Case" (1950), and finally in a short story, "The Mystery Girl They Televised" (24th February 1951).

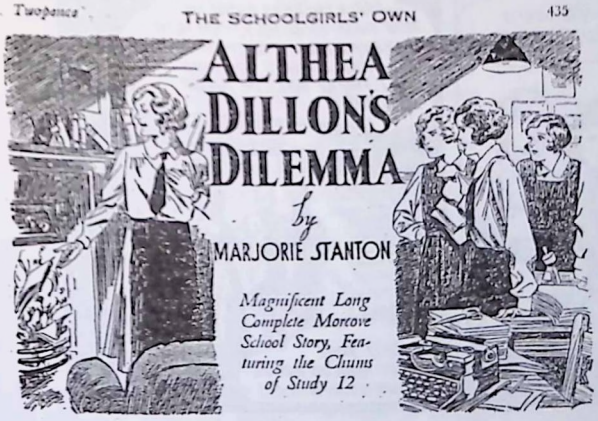
The 1930s were good times for Miss Flinders. As she herself wrote in 1981, in Dennis Gifford's Association of Comics Enthusiasts' newsletter:

> *"I was doing fine, illustrating stories for all the girls' papers and Christmas Annuals. But the pre-war Depression was looming, and the poor old 'Schoolgirls' Weekly' gave up (20th May 1939) and left me stranded. Even the Income Tax people wrote me a kindly letter and hoped things would soon look up! Then the editor of the 'Girls' Crystal' gave me a serial to illustrate."*

This was Gail Western's "Film-makers of Smugglers' Isle" (November 1939). Other "G.C." work followed in 1940 ("Mystery Girl of Holiday Camp School" - another Western - and Hazel Armitage's "Her Secret Dancing Days at School"). Soon, too, she found another source of income:

> *"During the war I became a semi-skilled joiner making cases for shells, etc., for four years, and at Christmastime I did the posters advertising the pantomimes given by the factory workers."*

After the war there was plenty of work again. The monthly "Schoolgirls' Own Library" books were re-started in 1946, and she was invited to draw covers for many of them. There were more "Girls' Crystal" serials like Dorothy Page's "The Fourth Grey Ghost" (1948)



Illus: Evelyn Flinders, October 21, 1933

The Puzzle of the Yuletide Doll

An intriguing mystery story, featuring Noel Raymond, the famous young detective and his schoolgirl niece, June Gaynor.

By PETER LANGLEY

Illus: Evelyn Flinders - "Girls' Crystal Annual", 1947

and the new long complete stories. She also illustrated books by Constance M. White, and worked for Deans the publishers. And in May 1950 the A.P. gave her perhaps her biggest opportunity when they launched the second series of "School Friend" and asked her to draw "The Silent Three". These tales were written by the editor Stewart Pride, and by Horace Boyten, and they kept her busy for the next seven years.

In 1981 she was presented with the Ally Sloper Award for her "Silent Three" work. By then she was not well enough to attend the Comicon 81 Awards Dinner, and Mary Cadogan made the actual presentation to her privately, later.

The Flinders style is easy to recognise, and did not change much over the years. Her characters were usually tall and slim, sometimes with curiously elongated faces. Background details - scenery, buildings, vehicles - were usually convincing, and she was good at dramatic confrontations. Marion Waters, who has made a special study of "The Silent Three", wrote in "C.D. Annual 1991":

> "Miss Flinders produced striking work; her pictures conveyed not only mystery and drama, but also warmth and kindliness... Her hooded girls looked most attractive, with long flowing robes, graceful hoods, and black masks... The artist introduced subtle variations: ... no two sets of robes were quite alike."

Eveyln Flinders and T.E. Laidler played a crucial role in the literature of our childhood; they created for us vivid images of some of our favourite characters. Together with such other artists as Leonard Shields, C. Percival, J. Parris, Valerie Gaskell, they deserve to be remembered just as much as their authors.

This article owes a great deal to Mary Cadogan and W.O.G. Lofts; I could not have written it without their generous help. D.L.B.

"School Friend", No. 1, 20th May 1950

Memories of the Early C.D. Annuals

BY BILL LOFTS

I well remember Herbert Leckenby, the first editor of the C.D. Annual, telling me that the main idea of the Annual was to use articles received which were far too long for the monthly C.D. These were mainly of the statistical type, dealing with lists of titles, dates, and other length details. Also, as many boys' papers and comics had a yearly annual, there was no reason why the monthly C.D. should not follow suit.

I well remember sending off my first subscription which was for the 1950 Annual. Having only just started in the hobby, I found this Annual so interesting that I read it right through, and then realised that I had a whole year to wait until the next one was due! However, this was not strictly true as there were three back numbers to read (1947/1948/ and 1949) which I was easily able to obtain from Bill Martin, the then top specialist of our unique hobby material.

The very first Annual, which cost only 7/6d, I thought superb, not only in material, but its cover as well. This was drawn by an unidentified 'Nemo' who was as mysterious as the Captain Nemo in '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea', played in the film by James Mason. Herbert Leckenby flatly refused to reveal who exactly he was, and the secret might well have died with him.

The first cover scene showed Sexton Blake, in dressing gown, at his house in London. With him was the Baker Street household, Tinker, Mrs Bardell, and Pedro. The door of the room was open, when waiting to greet Blake were Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, and the coloured Pete of the trio Jack, Sam, and Pete. One should add that in those days these characters were extremely popular, and still very collected. Already arrived and resting in a chair was the character who simply could not be left out - the famous William George Bunter of Greyfriars School!

At that stage in my career I had just started to collect The Schoolboys Own Library in the belief that I was getting original tales in a compact form. I also thought that they were all original. So it was a sheer revelation to me that they were old Greyfriars tales from the Magnet, but greatly abridged or hacked about by editorial staff and even the editor. Written by Roger Jenkins and John R. Shaw it was a fascinating piece of research. Many years later Roger wrote a piece on where a whole chapter of The Magnet had been left out of one.

Well some years ago now in correspondence with the son of Anthony Skene of Sexton Blake fame, and his character Zenith the Albino, he told me that when young his father had managed to get for him a position on the Companion Papers staff at Amalgamated Press Ltd. One of his jobs was fitting Magnet stories into The Schoolboys Own Library. Once he left out a whole chapter, when as far as he knew nobody noticed. But then of course someone did!

John Shaw eventually dropped out of the hobby, and got married, and sold his collection, which I bought part of. Of small stature, he came from a distinguished background, spoke in a very cultured voice when his mother was reputed to be a portrait painter connected with Royalty. I met him several times, and often wondered what happened to him.

Herbert Leckenby contributed a fascinating article entitled 'A Hundred Years of Boys' Weeklies', listing those then discovered. This in all probability started my now long career into research in the hobby, as later I published in three parts those fresh ones discovered in the British Library. I also remember the editor of the popular weekly comic 'Lion' (Stan Boddington) boasting to me that the title was completely original in the history of picture strip papers, and me replying "How about Lion Library" published by James Henderson in 1909.

All these new discoveries eventually led to the first Lofts/Adley catalogue in 1969 entitled 'The Old Boys Book Collector' that had in all six reprints, with many others to follow.

The Sexton Blake Circle feature was started in 1951 when Harry Homer became President. A teacher of languages in Spain, he also had a farm in England. I only met him once at the yearly meeting at Len Packman's house in East Dulwich. There were at least 15 members, the objective was for each member to list a certain author's works in the Union Jack and Sexton Blake Library, with a potted biography, have them checked by another member, then published in the Annual. At that time I only knew one author to any extent - John Hunter - and his creation Captain Dack - who I think dominated even Sexton Blake in the stories. But

at least I was able to write about him in an early Annual. The Sexton Blake Circle gradually petered out as members died. It was only the other day that I realised that I am probably the only survivor of this organisation of members who were known to me. To sum it up, the early C.D. Annuals were full of quality - but had poor duplicating and a circulation of about 100. In Eric Fayne's day much improved, with far better printing and use of illustrations.

In Mary's day, there have been more interesting new features and interesting pieces on neglected girls' papers and detectives. The C.D.A.'s scope is unlimited!

PONSONBY THE PSYCHOPATH

by Dr. Nandu Thalange & Donald V. Campbell

Let those without fear among you read on. For we are about to enter a closet so dark as to defy description - *the closets of the mind and the minds of those with dark problems.*

Yet what can Frank Richards have to do with psychoses and devilish disorders? Well, dear reader, we have seen before that, whether by mischance or through innate intelligence or with forethought and medical research, Frank Richards had the ability to portray medical conditions with surprising accuracy. That's our story and we are sticking with it.

(See: Bunter's Diagnosis - CD Annual, 1994; and Coker's Condition - CD Annual, 1995.)

But, a psychopath in the Greyfriars stories? You might cavil and complain but here it is - the proof. The tragic case at point is that of Ponsonby of Highcliffe. Highcliffe, that misbegotten school of hopeless masters and no-hope inmates, sorry - pupils! If Highcliffe is misbegotten we think you will find that the purpose of it suits the needs of Frank Richards most beautifully.

(Quote from "Vol 2; The Greyfriars Characters" by John Wernham and Mary Cadogan.)

> "If we examine again the portraits hanging in the Hamilton hall of infamy we shall find some familiar faces. Skinner is there, all the hatchet meanness of him: and Loder never ceases to sneer from the canvas: Snoop is not far away - tucked in a corner as befits so minor a crook. But overlooking this collection of rogues is the arch villain of them all, the "nut of nuts", Ponsonby.

It is difficult to find suitable epithets to describe this pathological specimen of humanity. To Frank Richards he was the "best of the nuts" but it would be more to the point to call him "the ripest villain of them all". Every possible grade of sin and depravity were meat and drink to this polished monster and there does not appear to be a single chink of light in the all-pervading darkness of this unsavoury youth. He is really an awful blackguard.

> Any amount of research in the pages of the Magnet will only reveal Pon doing his level best to be at his worst. The list of misdemeanours include most of the deadly sins that inflict mankind but, above the familiar round of foul behaviour and crowning all the more ordinary routines of vice, Ponsonby emerges as ace of predators.
>
> Younger boys are led astray: poor boys are insulted: traps are laid for the unwary: and the gentle art of bearing false witness offers no obstacle to this scarred product of youthful decadence.
>
> Iago's complaint that "some foul germ of nature did give mine issue" is no whit less applicable to Mr Mobbs' favourite pupil and there is nothing in the Ponsonby history to relieve the endless catalogue of dark deeds, dirty tricks or, indeed, any brand of viciousness that a cruel nature and vindictive spirit might conceive.
>
> Even the lighter moments were tinged with unpleasantness and his rivalry with the Greyfriars juniors often degenerated into a display of dangerous intimidation that was

by no means humorous and was more usually the projection of a distorted mind."

Here then is our man. A gloriously evil and awful character whom we should first place within a medical background. There are three kinds of conditions to be considered and to be clarified.

1. *Neurosis - a condition much beloved of journalists and uninformed authors - but, and sadly, neuroses manifest themselves in those areas of human life which encompass depression, anxiety and phobia.*

2. *Psychosis - experienced by those unfortunate people who, from time to time, may suffer from delusions and hallucinations.*

3. *Psychopathic personality disorders: these are even more serious than the other two. They start in childhood and can be totally unresponsive to treatment.*

A brief quotation from a standard hospital text will illustrate the situation in which the psychopath may be found (UNIVERSITY COLLEGE HOSPITAL TEXTBOOK OF PSYCHIATRY - Heinze Wolff).

"The personality is considered to be disordered if in all its aspects there is a pervasive disregard for social obligations, a lack of feelings for others, impetuous violence and callous unconcern. The charm of the psychopath is illusory, he is unable to learn from experience and blames others for his misfortunes ... Seriously disturbed behaviour is already manifest in childhood".

The sufferer or victim of a psychopathic PERSONALITY disorder will be seriously irresponsible and, more often than not, aggressive. Yet the sufferer will be abnormally and crucially charming. However, the charm masks a malevolence that can only be seen by the rest of us in the doings of the likes of jungle man and cult leader David Koresh. These people are often so charismatic as to lead their followers into the acceptance of deeds of severe bizarreness. Many of these deeds are what we would call immoral or, at the least, against the mores of society.

To further sub-divide we need to recognise the sub-classes that exist: there are two sorts.

PRIMARY - the sufferer has no remorse, no guilt, no anxiety over actions taken, is COLD and calculating in manipulating people and situations AND - IS UNTREATABLE.

SECONDARY - the sufferer has some form of conscience and may be racked with guilt.

Ponsonby is a member of the Primary sub-class, he never feels guilt and demonstrates no conscience.

Ponsonby's father is rarely mentioned yet we do know that he was in the army so his absence might well have aggravated possible early lack of affection in Pon's case. Those experiencing psychopathic personality disorder have usually been spawned by a father with similar problems or having other personality disorders. The children of such fathers will most likely have been physically abused or (at the least) have been denied affection in that critical period up to the age of five.

An interesting sidelight - if you can bring yourself to accept the results of "research" - is in a Danish study into adopted children. It was found that the adoptees followed into the NATURAL FATHER'S psychopathic disorders rather than the habits and guidance of the loving adopters. One in the eye here for the "nurture versus nature" brigade.

What marks Ponsonby out from the generality of these unfortunate kids is that he is "brainy". This devious and clever mind aids him in his manipulative ploys. Manipulation of others is a dominant feature of the psychopathic personality. Along with a meanly malevolent streak Ponsonby's cunning can also be identified:

> Skinner's eyes gleamed.
>
> "By gad! That's a good idea, Pon!" Ponsonby glanced round cautiously before he answered. But there was no-one within hearing.
>
> "Might be a bit worse than that," he murmured, "he might have a fall, hurt himself, and not be able to do any swottin' for the exam - what?"
>
> "I say, Pon!" exclaimed Gadsby, turning pale.
>
> "Nothin' to get us into trouble, you ass!" said Ponsonby contemptuously. "I'm not a dashed fool, am I? A chap might have a fall, scuffin' on a rocky path - fellows carry him home, full of sympathy, an' fetch a doctor - full of regrets an' apologies, an' all that - and there he is, crocked, and when the exam comes off he hasn't done any work for it".

Perhaps the most sustaining, informative and truly supportive writings on the subject of Pon from Frank Richards are in "Redwing's Triumph" - Magnet 517 - Magnet 533 (early 1918 - late 1918) (Howard Baker Book Club - vol 28). Richards' illuminating texts often open out characters far beyond two-dimensionality and so it is with Ponsonby in this "good boy suffers from bad boy then triumphs over adversity" story.

Tom Redwing's Triumph is a complicated story that benefits from the strong intervention of Ponsonby.

The series is split across two periods of 1918. Magnet 517 - 522 is the "Clavering of Greyfriars" story; Magnet 530 - 533 is "Tom Redwing's Return". Ponsonby appears in both sequences.

Redwing - a local boy - saves Vernon-Smith from a watery grave and is seen by Smithy to be a scholar. Redwing turns down Vernon-Smith's offer to get him into Greyfriars. Sir Hilton Popper grudgingly gets the son of a friend a place at Greyfriars and then washes his hands of him. Redwing takes this boy's place because Clavering wants to get into the army to avenge the death of his father.

Clavering makes a ripple at Greyfriars - his habit of saying aye-aye instead of yes is duly noted. The fact that Clavering's clothes are two sizes too big for Redwing causes a further stir. Redwing is picked on by the usual crew - Skinner; then Bolsover. These are enemies not to be trifled with. Vernon-Smith is still in the "san" and Redwing is unsure of what to do once he is released. Meanwhile he falls foul of Ponsonby & Co through helping Bunter out of a ragging by the Highcliffe fellows. Pon recognises him but can't quite place him. Smithy comes face to face with Redwing and does not blow his cover.

Skinner learns from Ponsonby that Clavering is a pseudonym. Various accusations are flung at Clavering/Redwing and he does nothing to repudiate them. His stock starts to fall in the eyes of the remove.

Smithy ensures that Clavering is unable to meet his old tutor (and thus be unmasked) by allowing Pon & Co to kidnap Clavering onto Popper's Island. By the time Redwing is released the tutor has gone. Bunter has witnessed the kidnapping and is able to support Clavering's story.

The real Clavering wants to meet Redwing before going off to kill Germans. Skinner has snooped on the letter setting the meeting and he and his cronies spy on the assignation. Sir Hilton appears and belabours the real Clavering with a whip! Clavering turns on him and uses Hilton's own whip to beat him with. By the time Skinner has spilled the beans about Redwing the local boy has seen the Head and confessed. Redwing leaves Greyfriars and Clavering gets to kill some Germans.

The second series starts with Smithy's father offering to pay for Redwing to go to Greyfriars. Redwing haughtily refuses. Vernon-Smith suggests his father endows a special scholarship that will be particularly suited to Redwing's skills. Skinner & Co rag Redwing's cottage as a warning but Smithy arrives to chuck them out. Redwing jumps at the chance of the scholarship, not knowing that it has been set up particularly to help him.

Skinner, having been warned off by Wharton, induces Bunter to meet Redwing on his first visit to Greyfriars in order to put him off. Bunter succeeds and the sensitive Redwing goes back home. Smithy is furious and brings Redwing back to the school. Quelch is delighted to see him again and promises extra tuition to help towards the scholarship. Skinner is beside himself with anger and brings in Ponsonby to engineer the downfall of Redwing. Ponsonby agrees to ambush Redwing on the cliffs. The ambush goes ahead but in the struggle they both slip over the cliff. Redwing has managed to anchor himself to a small ledge and is holding up the insensible Ponsonby. He refuses Smithy's admonition to let go of Pon in order to save himself. The Famous Five arrive with ropes to save the situation.

Ponsonby has hatched the most evil of plans to lure Redwing to Highcliffe for a celebratory tea. Bunter has been spoofed by Skinner and he heads off for Hawkscliffe - Redwing's cottage where there is the smell of food in the air - or so he thinks. Currency notes have been checked for their numbers and Ponsonby plants them in Redwing's cottage prior to the "tea" at Highcliffe. Bunter has regretfully found no food in the cottage but he sees Pon hide the notes. Aware that there is trickery afoot Bunter does the right thing for once and recovers the money. The Famous Five come across him and he tells all. Ponsonby has had Redwing slung out of Highcliffe and he then tells Mobbs of the theft. Mobbs jumps to the conclusion that the culprit is Redwing, just as Bob Cherry and the others arrive to put things right. "Snobby Mobby" manages to "cover" for Ponsonby but Redwing is cleared.

In the final episode Skinner and Bunter collude in order to prevent Redwing coming to Greyfriars but they substitute the wrong papers and are unmasked when they denounce the scholarship boy. Skinner's last trick is to forge a letter from Smithy to Redwing that suggests Redwing should give up all idea of the scholarship because this will diminish Vernon-Smith's standing in the school should he be associated with a boy of such low status. Redwing is hurt and decides not to take the examination. Smithy saves the day and personally gets Redwing to the examination in time. The truth comes out, Redwing takes the exam and wins the scholarship.

Frank Richards was nothing if not a keen observer of human life and the human condition. We know that he drew on real life acquaintances for some of his characters - it is to be hoped that Ponsonby was not an editor! From the Redwing story we can surmise that a suitable place of employment for Ponsonby and his likes would have been in the SS!

The fundamental flaw in Ponsonby's character is that of every psychopathic personality disorder sufferer - he can see no wrong in what he does and he will lay blame on others for his own lack of success. It is this basic "blindness" that makes a character such as

Pon so inherently evil and desperately dangerous.

The manipulative coldness of Ponsonby helps him to know precisely what needs to be done to his own advantage. So, after the cliff-top attack by him on Redwing, he arrives at Greyfriars with an invitation for Redwing to come to tea. At the tea Redwing will be feted and applauded, but marked money will be planted so that he can be accused of stealing from Ponsonby later. All of this despite the fact that Redwing had saved Ponsonby from certain death.

> "Ponsonby smiled an EVIL smile. 'I'm going to make that longshore cad repent that he laid his low paws on us, my infants.'
>
> 'But, he fished you up the other day, Pon, over the cliff' said Gadsby, hesitantly. 'I've just heard you tellin' Wharton you're goin' over to thank him.'
>
> 'So I am,' answered Ponsonby, his eyes glittering. 'I know what he did. He fought with me on the cliff path, the cheeky hound, an' we fell over together! ... those Greyfriars louts pulled us up with a rope. I don't owe the cad anythin'!'
>
> 'He held you up Pon. You'd have gone straight down to the beach an' been smashed if he hadn't held you.'
>
> 'Oh, rot ... he did nothin', nothin' at all. It was his fault. I shouldn't have fallen over if the low cad hadn't been fightin' me - layin' his low paws on a gentleman, by gad'."

Here we can detect that gold-hallmark of the psychopath - inability to perceive fault in self and, instead, always laying the blame on others. In fact at this point Ponsonby re-writes the history of the event. This no-conscience, no-remorse, feature is the dead "giveaway" to the true nature of Ponsonby.

Despite his characteristics and his giant malignity he still has his "hangers-on" - Gadsby, Monson and Vavasour & Co. Yet they are often shocked at his ideas and go with him reluctantly. Why do they stay with him? Well, Ponsonby is that doyen of the evil leaders - charm itself. So they keep coming back for more.

Ponsonby is aided in his evil ways by the appalling school that he attends. It is populated by "no-hope" pupils, and masters who are anxious to placate their clients (and thus get their fees). This situation helped to grow the cancer that was Highcliffe. Mr Mobbs is the arch-protagonist in maintaining Highcliffe's "status quo". Ponsonby is clever enough to manipulate the master - in the first accusation of Redwing's theft of the "marked" money we find the following:

> "'It's rather a shockin' thing, sir' said Ponsonby. 'I felt that I had better come an' tell you at once. Some money has been stolen from my study, sir'."

Some inconsequential chat continues and then Mobbs falls into the waiting paws of the predatory Ponsonby.

> "'It's incredible to think that a thief can exist at Highcliffe' murmured Mr Mobbs. 'I think, Ponsonby, it - it may turn out to be some foolish jest. Stay though! Were the notes there when that boy Redwing was in the study?'
>
> Ponsonby repressed a smile.
>
> He greatly preferred the suggestion to come from the form master, as it was bound to do in the circumstances. But it pleased Ponsonby to put on a shocked and started expression.
>
> 'Good heavens, sir! Do you think that he may have taken them?' he exclaimed."

The denouement is quite brilliant. Bunter has overheard the plot and recovered the planted notes. He tells Study Five who are outraged. Cherry and the others confront Mobbs and Pon in the master's study.

> "'Where's Ponsonby? Where's that sneaking scoundrel Ponsonby?'
>
> Bob Cherry's powerful voice rang right into Mr Mobbs' study.
>
> Ponsonby stood very still.
>
> A sudden fear was upon him, icy, terrible fear. What did it mean? ..... The door was thrown open and Mr Mobbs' angry face glared out at them.
>
> 'What does this mean?' exclaimed Mr Mobbs. 'How dare you invade these precincts?' .....
>
> 'Where's that scoundrel?' shouted Bob, who was too furious to care a rap for Mr Mobbs or anybody else. 'He's found out. Oh, there you are, you slinking cur!'
>
> He strode into the study, pushing Mr Mobbs aside. The astonished form master gasped as the crowd followed him in. Courtenay closed the door. Bob was shaking a big fist under Ponsonby's nose. 'You're found out!' he roared."

Quite one of the strongest exposés that Frank Richards ever produced.

Would Frank Richards have known precisely what a Frankenstein's monster he was creating? This is quite possible even from the simplest level of observation of his fellow men. But there were texts available on such matters. The particular personality disorder had been written on as early as 1801 where it was referred to as "Manie sans délire". Later Pritchard (1835) talks of "moral derangement".

What was then recognised (and still is) was that sufferers were BAD rather than MAD. The badness in Ponsonby was untreatable, incapable

of remedial medicine, a hopeless case. Yet a case that Frank Richards could comfortably turn to for sheer evilness. Ponsonby would always be there - no sackings at Highcliffe!

The Greyfriars "baddies" - Vernon-Smith and Skinner - were always subject to bouts of conscience and were even seen (at least by the reader) as doing surreptitious good. They were not vile at all times; they were even witty or amusing. Ponsonby, on the other hand, is an aristocratic snob who claims to be better than others and looks down on all that he surveys.

He is still perpetrating his malicious ways as late as the hardback novel "Bunter's Last Fling" (1965) - EVEN OUTLIVING, AS IT WERE, FRANK RICHARDS! He always knows that he will be exonerated by Mobbs, "a crawling snob who crawls to snobs".

Frank Richards, we believe, actually liked Ponsonby as a character ("the best of the nuts"). Although Ponsonby would always get his "come-uppance" yet he is evermore available for future misdeeds. Had the author placed Ponsonby in Greyfriars he would have been "sacked" in 1909 AND EVERY OTHER YEAR OF HIS APPEARANCE!

A checklist will show how Pon matches the mplest of psychopathic agendas:

ATURES OF CHOPATHY	PONSONBY
rficially charming	A great "charmer"
us and vindictive ure	both the "Redwing" and the "Hikers" episodes show this to the full
cking in	Tea party episode
earn from	Constantly taking on the Famous Five and coming a cropper
Unable to perceive fault in self	He dismisses the truth of Redwing's life-saving help
Prone to alcoholism	Constant visitor to The Three Fishers
Prone to gambling	He lures Wingate Minor into gambling in order to disgrace Wingate through his minor's sacking (from "Ponsonby's Pal" Magnet 507 1917)

The eternal truth about psychopaths is that they have an evil genius and intelligence to boot which enables them to collect bands of ne'er-do-wells around them. Ponsonby has his "hangers on". The signs of vicious and vindictive malevolence are apparent in "Hikers" wherein he persuades the gypsies to abduct Cherry and to dump him in the quarry. There to die for all Pon cares. Such an unsavoury character can be perceived as someone for boo and hiss, yet Ponsonby is no pantomime "baddie". He comes from the real world and that is his strength - like it or no.

We have said that Ponsonby usually got at least some of his just deserts, even though his innate evil genius managed to manipulate and twist the weakness in others to end on one or the other of the "cover" what he had done. It is a pleasure to end on one of the happiest of pictures - in every sense of the word. Charles Hamilton is nothing if not serendipitous and he chooses the happy confluence (if not misuse) of Ponsonby and the use of the help of Cherry has the "nut of nuts", Holiday Annual. The beating of Ponsonby and Wharton to hold the "nut of nuts", Nugent and Wharton down as he belabours him with The Holiday Annual. A much better use for it (after reading, of course) than propping up a grand piano!

...ggling and kicking, was turned over on his face, in the grasp of Wharton and Nugent. Taking the Holiday ...erry proceeded to hand out "six" to the Highcliffe junior. Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack! ...Ponsonby, wriggling wildly. "Oh, you rotter! Help! Whoooop!" Whack, whack, whack, whack!

JACK KEEN OF FILM FUN
(Introduced by Bill Lofts)

Editor's Note: During the course of 1996 I have received several requests for information about FILM FUN, and particularly about its super-sleuth, Jack Keen. I am therefore reprinting the article by Bill Lofts which appeared in C.D. 531 (March 1991) together with a Jack Keen tale from a 1950s FILM FUN ANNUAL. As so much interest has been shown in this long-running comic, Bill has written a full and fascinating history of it which will be published in the C.D. during 1997.

JACK KEEN -PRIVATE DETECTIVE

by W.O.G Lofts

Curiously, I never read Sexton Blake in boyhood days, but another detective about whom I did read enthusiastically was Jack Keen in the highly popular *Film Fun* comic. It is true that in the main the stories were short, probably only two pages. But they were to me just the right length for about ten minutes of avid reading during the school break (certainly not under the desk!) or awaiting my turn to bat in our cricket match, or waiting for friends to call to go to the popular cinema.

Jack Keen was a private detective, with an agency at Denver St. London. Unlike Baker St. Or Grays Inn Road this was a mythical place. Described as a young man, keen eyed, with clear cut features, and a dogged, resolute expression on his face, he always reminded me in later years of Charles Hamilton's Ferrers Locke. Of course he had to have an assistant, this being blue-eyed Bob Trotter, who was 16 years of age. With similar origins to those of Tinker and Nipper, he had been found as an orphan of the streets. Bob Trotter also seemed like an ordinary normal boy for his age, because Keen kept telling him off for reading boys' papers and eating sweets!

Before the man could offer any resistance, Keen and Castleton were upon him!

Jack Keen's first appearance was actually in *Kinema Comic*, the early Companion to *Film Fun*, issue No. 582, dated June 20th, 1931. *Film Fun* was then running another detective called "Mr. E.". When *Kinema Comic* folded in 1932, they simply switched over Keen to replace 'Mr. E', no doubt thinking he had more appeal to readers. The sleuth was created by Alfred Edgar, who was also contributing to the same group of papers - especially Bullseye, "The House of Thrills" and "The Phantom of Cursitor Fields" being very much remembered today.

When Edgar went out to Hollywood to become a famous script writer, the series of Keen was taken over by Fred George Cordwell. Cordwell, a big balding man, and a cockney, was always laughing at his (and the comic's) jokes in a large, fruity guffaw that used to be heard in the corridors of Fleetway House.

Later writers included Anthony Boucher, Harold Lamb, Walter Tyrer, Charles M. Lewins, Philip Davis and Jack Le Grande. Davis I met in the late fifties, when he was editor. Le Grande also was editor at one period, and I became very friendly with him.

Apart from the single episodes of stories, later on there were serials featuring Jack Keen against various criminals - as in the Sexton Blake sagas, "The Fox" and "San Wu", a Chinaman, to give a brief example, but I never cared for these, much preferring the complete stories. I have a feeling that some old stories were also revised as new towards the end.

In 1957, vast changes were made to *Film Fun*, including giving it some colour. One big change was to give the past adventures of Jack Keen when he was serving with the Secret Service during World War Two. This created no end of a problem, as like Peter Pan the characters had always remained the same age. This time-switch meant that the young Bob Trotter had to be cut out completely.

The last Jack Keen story appeared on 23rd May 1959, so that this popular detective ran for almost 28 years. As the weekly *Film Fun* had an enormous circulation, one of the highest for any A.P. Comic, and many times the joint combination of Detective Weekly and Sexton Blake Library, I would venture to suggest that far more readers read of Jack Keen than those of Sexton Blake in that period.

The stories were mainly solved by deduction and were extremely lucid. Keen and Bob Trotter were very likeable sleuths, and are still fondly remembered whenever the contents of the dear old *Film Fun* crop up in conversation.

The VETERAN CAR MYSTERY

Read How This Baffling Case is Solved by Jack Keen 'Tec

CHAPTER I
THE ACCIDENT

"SORRY I'm late, chief," said Bob Trotter as he entered the famous Baker Street detective's consulting-room one morning.

Jack Keen glanced up from his big untidy desk, and smiled across at his youthful assistant.

"That's all right, Bob," he returned, in a bantering tone. "Can't expect you to be punctual after a night out at a country barn-dance, or whatever it was you went to last night!"

"Oh, the dance didn't make me late, chief," declared Bob, quickly, as he drew off his light raincoat and threw it across the arm of a chair. "I left the George Hotel in Braydene just after eight o'clock this morning. Should have got here easily by half-past nine, but I was delayed by an accident."

Jack Keen frowned. Then, slowly filling his pipe with tobacco, he regarded his assistant again and asked:

"Done much damage to the car, youngster?"

"Your car, chief? Oh, no," Bob replied, with a shake of his head. "I wasn't involved in the accident. It happened just a mile or two outside Barnham."

"Anybody hurt?" Keen asked.

"The driver was killed," responded Bob, gravely.

"Did something else run into him—or what happened?" the famous sleuth asked.

"No, there wasn't another car in it at all," said Bob. "The poor chap drove straight out of his garage, which is on the top of Barnham Hill, and went clean through some railings on the opposite side of the road and finished up in an old quarry. There was no other vehicle of any sort coming either way at the time, either," Bob added, "so he wasn't panicked into suddenly dashing across the road."

"How do you know that?" inquired Keen, shrewdly.

"The local postman saw the whole thing happen," Bob answered. "He was there—and a local police constable—when I drove up. I climbed down into the quarry with them. At first I reckoned something must have gone wrong with the steering-gear. It was one of those funny-looking old-fashioned cars—about a 1908 model. You know, a proper veteran car as they call them."

"Well, was the steering faulty—or the brakes?" asked Keen with increasing interest.

"No. Everything was o.k.," Bob declared. "I suppose the poor chap must have trod on the accelerator instead of the brake."

The famous detective made no reply. He was staring fixedly across at Bob Trotter's raincoat lying over the arm of the chair opposite.

Keen's intellectual features assumed a look of grim intensity which made Bob feel uncomfortably guilty.

"Sorry, chief," he murmured, stepping forward and snatching up the raincoat. "I didn't mean to dump my things——"

"Hold it!" interrupted Keen, springing out of his chair, and reaching for the raincoat. "Where did you get this green stain from, Bob? That's what I'm interested in."

As he spoke he lifted the right sleeve of the raincoat. Bob saw a dark green smear, and shook his head with a puzzled frown.

"Didn't notice it before," he said. "I couldn't have got it last night. I didn't wear the coat to go to the dance. Come to think of it, chief," he added, suddenly, "I only put my raincoat on when I left the hotel this morning. I wore it to drive up in."

Raising the coat-sleeve, Keen sniffed at it a number of times. He seldom let his facial expression betray his thoughts, but Bob could tell that he was uncommonly interested in his discovery.

Before Bob could voice a question, Jack Keen swept out of the room, taking the raincoat with him. The ring of his footsteps on the landing told Bob he was going to the small room which was equipped as a laboratory.

Within a couple of minutes Keen was back. His eyes glowed with excitement, though his expression was sombre.

"As I thought—it's *andonal!*" he exclaimed, holding out the green-stained coat sleeve.

"Andonal?" Bob repeated, screwing up his boyish features into a bewildered look. "What's that—a new paint?"

"It's a drug. A very potent and little-known Indian drug," declared the detective. "The smallest quantity of it would render a man unconscious almost immediately!"

Bob Trotter's astonished look was almost comic to behold. This was a bit thick, thought the youngster—and right after a night out at a dance, too. Why did

the chief have to start such a head-aching line of thought to-day of all days!

"But—but, chief," he began, protestingly, "how could I have got such stuff on the sleeve of my raincoat, I ask you?"

"That is precisely what I intend to find out," returned Keen. "You must have been near to something that had andonal on it. That green stain is the only trace it leaves—and that disappears within twenty-four hours. Which proves you've been in contact with the stuff this morning."

Bob scratched his head thoughtfully as he slowly replied:

"Well, as I told you, I didn't put the raincoat on till I set off from the George Hotel in Braydene. All I did then was sit in the car and drive in the normal way——"

"Until you came upon the accident on Barnham Hill," Keen nodded. "Tell me exactly what you did when you stopped there, Bob."

Again Bob paused to recollect his thoughts before making a reply.

"I saw there had been an accident by the gap torn in the railings," he explained. "The postman and the constable were there, and I stopped to see if I could do anything to help."

"Did you actually help to get the driver out of the car?" asked Keen.

"Yes," nodded Bob. "The postman was pretty old and feeble. I gave the constable a hand. We lifted the poor chap out between us."

Jack Keen's gaze flashed for an instant to the raincoat now held in his young assistant's hands. Then, with a nod of finality, he made across to the door.

"Get the car out again, Bob," he said briefly. "We're driving down to Barnham."

CHAPTER II

KEEN INVESTIGATES

THE big car slipped through the London traffic at a fast, smooth speed. Bob Trotter could drive with a sure touch and make many a motorist look a novice when it came to getting out of town without loss of time.

Soon the crowded thoroughfares of London and the suburbs were left behind. The open roads of Surrey and Sussex beckoned the car on faster and faster. And all the time, Jack Keen sat back, puffing thoughtfully at his pipe and saying nothing.

Bob Trotter knew it was not wise to ply the great detective with questions when he was in such a mood. Yet the youngster had many he wanted to ask—first and foremost being the question, "Why are we making the journey down to Barnham?"

It seemed a waste of time to Bob. However, Keen always had a good reason for whatever he chose to do, and soon after eleven-thirty his young assistant halted the car on Barnham Hill.

"There, that's the garage the car came out of, chief," said Bob, pointing to the centre one of three lock-up garages on the other side of the road.

Jack Keen climbed out of the car with his assistant and silently viewed the scene for a moment.

"The car shot straight across here and crashed through those railings," Bob continued. "Come over here and you can see the wreckage down in the quarry."

One side of the road was bordered by white-painted iron railings, supported at intervals of several yards by squat white posts. One of the latter and a length of the rails had been torn away at the spot directly opposite the lock-up garage, whose doors still stood wide.

Beyond the broken rails was a sheer drop of some forty feet or so, and, peering over, Jack Keen surveyed the wrecked car.

Watching him, Bob saw his chief turn away from the railings and start to carefully examine the surface of the road. Naturally there were many wheel and tyre-marks on the surface, but by going right up to the open lock-up garage Keen was able to detect the particular tracks of the old veteran car now lying wrecked in the quarry.

The fact that it was a veteran car aided the sleuth in his investigations, for the tyres were of a much narrower type to modern ones, so he had little difficulty in tracing the tracks from the garage and across the road to the broken railings.

"H'm! No sign of a skid," Bob heard him murmur. "The car was driven straight through the rails. Something must have gone wrong."

It was impossible to descend the precipitous drop just beyond the gap torn in the railings, but by moving a little farther along, Keen and his assistant were able to make their way down a rough path which wound round to the lower level.

"Now tell me, Bob," said Keen, "where exactly did you stand when you helped the police-constable lift the driver from the car?"

His assistant promptly stepped forward and ranged himself on the right-hand side of the wrecked two-seater, which after turning a complete somersault had come to rest on its four wheels.

"I stood just here, chief," Bob answered. "Then I leaned over the door here," he went on, illustrating the action, "and I helped the constable shift the poor fellow across the seat, so we could both lift him out from the other side. See?"

"Ah!" The exclamation fell involuntarily from Keen's lips, his eyes suddenly gleaming.

The old two-seater car, painted bright yellow and aglow with polished brasswork, had all the original fittings of its year. The veteran car was built long before the days of electrical motor-horns.

It had one of the old-fashioned type of rubber bulb-horns—the kind you had to squeeze with the hand to make a "parping" noise come from the end of the brass horn.

Jack Keen was gazing intently at the rubber bulb of the horn. This protruded from the off-side of the car's dashboard, the brass end of the horn being on the outside.

His hawklike eyes swiftly detected a faint green stain on the end of the rubber bulb. It was slightly to the left of the end, and a closer examination revealed a tiny puncture in the rubber. This, he noticed, was in the very centre of the small green stain.

Quickly Keen unscrewed the rubber bulb, and Bob saw a grim frown cloud his face directly he glanced at the end which screwed into the metal part of the horn.

"What is it, chief?" asked Bob, coming closer.

The detective held the rubber bulb so his assistant could see. The end of the bulb was corked up!

"Gosh!" gasped Bob in surprise. "That prevented the horn from sounding, didn't it. But why would anybody do a thing like that——"

"Not with the object of preventing the driver sounding his horn!" remarked Keen, grimly.

As he spoke he drew a sharp penknife from his pocket. Then, carefully and deliberately, he cut the rubber bulb in two. He gave a grunt of satisfaction, and held the two halves out to Bob for him to see the dark-green colour of the insides

"*Andonal!*" said Keen, briefly.

The significance instantly struck Bob Trotter.

"Then this wasn't an ordinary accident, chief!" he gasped.

"It certainly wasn't," agreed Jack Keen. "But had you not accidentally rubbed the sleeves of your raincoat against the end of this horn-bulb, I doubt very much whether there would have ever been any suspicion of foul play."

The startling facts of the case crowded fast into Bob's mind. He glanced from the green-stained horn to Keen in wide-eyed alarm.

"Someone filled that bulb with the Indian drug and deliberately corked up the other end so that when the driver squeezed it the andonal would squirt out of the little puncture into his face!" he murmured. "Is that it, chief?"

"Precisely!" nodded the 'tec. "It was a natural assumption that the man in the car would attempt to sound his horn as he came out of the garage. And directly he did so, he was rendered unconscious. That's what caused the accident."

"But, why should anyone do such a thing?" murmured

Bob. "I mean, nobody would do it just—just out of spite, now would they?"

Keen shook his head.

"No. There's much more than that behind this affair," he declared, with conviction. "Whoever planned this must have known the driver's movements pretty well, too. Of course," he added with a thoughtful nod. "He would know the driver was going to use this old car to-day."

"Why?" asked Bob, blankly.

"As we came through the village I caught sight of a poster on a hoarding," replied Jack Keen. "It was advertising a Veteran Car Rally to be held on the twenty-third. That's to-day. Obviously, a man owning a veteran model like this would go in for such an event. The guilty man is cunning and ruthless."

CHAPTER III

THE GREEN STAIN

JACK KEEN was perfectly right in his surmise that nobody would suspect the man had been killed through foul play. This was proved when he and Bob Trotter paid a visit to the local hospital.

Owing to the unusual nature of the drug, the doctor had been unable to detect any trace of the andonal which had deprived the unfortunate victim of his senses. He was astonished when he learnt Jack Keen's identity, and his suspicions.

The latter soon enlightened him of the true facts of the case, however. Keen then asked if he might see the dead man's identity papers.

"Why, of course, Mr. Keen," said the doctor. "I have them here. As you will see, the poor fellow's name is Winslow—Geoffrey Winslow. He is not a patient of mine, but I understand he is a local resident. According to the business cards found in his wallet, he is a private inquiry agent like yourself."

Keen nodded, but said nothing as he started to examine the papers and letters found in the victim's clothing. It was a small notebook which arrested the detective's attention.

In this were a number of hastily-scribbled notes which clearly related to the various cases on which the other private detective had been engaged.

Most of them were crossed out with pencil. Those cases had evidently been concluded, but the last page to be written on was headed: "Milton Bailey Case."

Under this heading were half a dozen brief notes, five of which had been crossed out. Keen deduced from this that the subjects in question had been investigated, and found useless to Winslow in his work.

But the sixth note, obviously written very recently, had not been crossed out. It read. "The mill—ten."

Bob Trotter looked puzzled when his chief suddenly asked the doctor: "Is there a mill around here?"

"Yes, about three miles down the west road, on the right-hand side," answered the medical man.

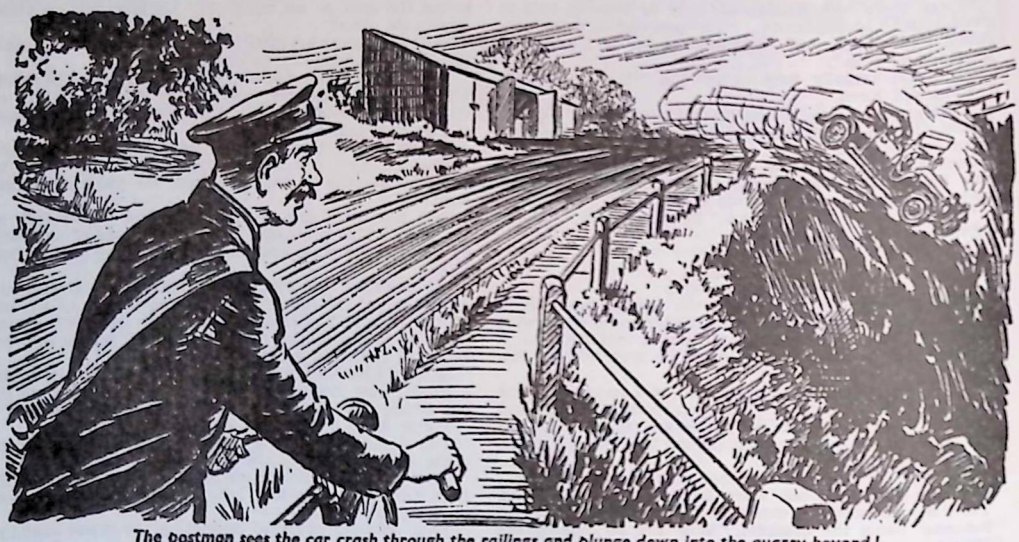
"Thank you, doctor," responded Keen. "And do you by chance know of a man named Milton Bailey?"

"Why, yes, of course," nodded the other. "Mr. Milton Bailey owns the Bailey Engineering Company outside the village."

"Oh, yes," nodded Keen. "And now I think that will be all, thank you, doctor. Unless perhaps——"

He paused, stooping momentarily to examine a pair of men's brown shoes which stood on the floor near the chest on which the luckless Geoffrey Winslow's belongings lay.

The examination was so brief that it seemed to Bob Trotter a mere formality. But in the space of only a few seconds Jack Keen had learned all he wanted to know,



The postman sees the car crash through the railings and plunge down into the quarry beyond!

and as they emerged from the hospital he instructed his assistant to drive straight out to the mill.

This picturesque old landmark proved to be in a field about twenty yards off the main road. Leaving the car near the hedge, the detectives made their way on foot to the mill.

Upon reaching it, Keen cast about him for signs of footprints on the ground. To an untrained eye it would have been very difficult to detect any, for the ground was firm. But Keen's acute powers of observation enabled him to immediately do so.

There were two different pairs of footprints at the front of the mill, close to the door, and when he went round to the side Keen observed those of another man who had clearly concealed himself behind a clump of gorse.

"Just as I thought," nodded Jack Keen, half to himself. "Winslow came here to overhear the conversation of two other men. He had found out the time they were going to meet—ten o'clock last night. He hid behind this gorse bush here."

"But how do you know they are Winslow's footprints, chief?" asked Bob Trotter.

"By a broken rubber-heel on the left shoe," was Keen's prompt reply. "I noticed it on the shoe at the hospital

Yes," he murmured, nodding with satisfaction, "the pieces of the jigsaw are beginning to take shape now, Bob. The picture is becoming recognisable. Next we'll go along and see Mr. Milton Bailey."

A short run in the car brought them to the Bailey Engineering Company. The famous Baker Street detective had no difficulty in gaining an interview with the principal of the firm. Tall, grey-haired Milton Bailey gave him and his young assistant a smiling welcome.

"Well, this is a surprise, Mr. Keen!" he declared, shaking hands warmly. "I've often read about you, but I never expected to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. Please sit down. To what do I owe this pleasure?"

"I've come about a man who had a fatal accident in an old veteran car this morning," Keen explained. "I have a feeling that you know him. I'm referring to Geoffrey Winslow."

The other gave a start, his expression instantly changing to one of deep concern. He was genuinely shaken by Keen's news.

"Poor fellow!" Bailey muttered. "And he was coming to see me this morning, too! I wondered why he hadn't turned up."

"Ah, yes," nodded the detective. "He was handling a little investigation for you, I believe, Mr. Bailey. Might I ask the nature of the inquiry he was engaged upon?"

"Well, Mr. Keen, I have been losing a considerable amount of business during the past few months," the engineer explained. "I suspected that secret information —of a very valuable nature—was leaking from my firm to a rival concern, and it wasn't long before my suspicions were confirmed."

"So you engaged Winslow to trace the person who was betraying you?" nodded Keen.

"Exactly," agreed Milton Bailey. "And late last night he rang me up to say he would be able to place some startling information in my hands this morning."

Bob Trotter shot a sidelong glance at his chief, and noted the grim set of Keen's mouth. More and more pieces of the jigsaw puzzle were now falling into place.

It was clear to Jack Keen that the private inquiry agent had discovered the identity of the man who was betraying Bailey's secrets. It was one of the men who had met at the old mill the previous night.

But Keen was also convinced that in some way the informer had found out that Winslow suspected him. Probably the rogue had seen and recognised the private sleuth after leaving the mill. One thing was certain in Keen's mind.

The unknown informer was guilty of engineering the fake accident which had resulted in Geoffrey Winslow's death.

As the famous detective sat opposite Milton Bailey, thoughtfully turning over the facts of the case in his mind, there came a discreet tap on the office door and a tall, smartly-dressed man of about thirty-five entered.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Bailey!" he exclaimed, seeing his employer's visitors. "I'll bring these letters to be signed later."

"No, come in, Rawson," responded the proprietor of the engineering works, picking up a pen from his desk. "You'll excuse me for a moment, won't you, Mr. Keen."

"Certainly," nodded Keen, eyeing the newcomer from beneath lowered lids.

Rawson, the firm's secretary, leaned forward at that moment to place the sheaf of letters before Bailey. And Keen's ever-roving eye missed nothing.

Presently Rawson withdrew, and Bob Trotter shifted in his chair, expecting his chief to terminate the interview at any moment.

Keen, however, was not yet ready to leave.

"Tell me, Mr. Bailey," said the 'tec, "do you suspect any particular person of betraying your secrets?"

"Well—er—no, Mr. Keen," answered the other, slowly. "After all, there are naturally quite a number of my top men who are in a position of trust. Several of them could be guilty but—well," he shook his head. "I don't like suspecting men I've employed for a lifetime."

"But Geoffrey Winslow discovered one guilty man," Keen reminded him.

He paused, puffing thoughtfully at his pipe, then remarked:

"Of course, I suppose your secretary, Rawson, is not in touch with the technical side of the business?"

The engineer shot him a swift look of surprise.

"Rawson? Why, no," he replied. "At least, what I mean is that he isn't engaged on production work. But, of course, being my secretary, he often handles blueprints and that kind of thing. But Rawson's all right," he went on, with a confident nod. "Been with me nearly ten years now."

"And he was with you late last night when Geoffrey Winslow telephoned to say he had some startling information for you!"

Bailey gave a start.

"How did you know that?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, it just happens to fit correctly into the jigsaw puzzle, that's all," returned Keen with a grim smile. "Would you mind calling him in again, please?"

Bob was as puzzled as Milton Bailey looked, but the latter complied with the 'tec's request without question. Presently Rawson entered the office.

Without betraying the slightest excitement, Jack Keen raised his eyes and levelled his penetrating gaze upon Rawson's face. Bob Trotter was quite startled by his chief's steely tones when he spoke:

"Mr. Rawson, for what purpose have you recently used andonal?"

Bailey, glancing up in surprise, saw his secretary give a violent start.

"I—I don't understand you!" Rawson muttered.

"I think you do, Rawson!" retorted Jack Keen. "That faint green stain on your right shirt-cuff—that was made by andonal unless I'm greatly mistaken."

There was a tense silence, finally broken by Keen.

"And you know nothing of Geoffrey Winslow's accident, eh?" snapped Keen, challengingly. "Who did you meet at the mill at ten o'clock last night? Don't deny you were there. Your left trouser-end still carries a smear of the chalk soil on which the old mill stands!"

A strangled gasp was the secretary's only response. Then, realising his very demeanour must have betrayed his guilt, he suddenly made a wild dash for the door.

But Bob Trotter was not caught napping. He was out of his chair in one swift bound. His outflung hands grasped the guilty man just as he drew open the office door, and they crashed to the floor in a heap.

"Nice work, youngster!" commented Keen. "Please phone the police, Mr. Bailey!"

• • • • •

Some hours later Jack Keen's car was speeding back to London with Bob Trotter at the wheel.

It was Bob who broke the silence with a question.

"Tell me something, chief," he said. "How did Rawson manage to put that dope into the bulb of the old motor-horn? That was a lock-up garage of Geoffrey Winslow's."

"Yes, and someone had forced the lock on the door," said Keen. "I detected that when we first reached the scene of the accident. I knew then that someone had tampered with Winslow's old car."

"Oh, I see," murmured Bob. Then, after a momentary pause, he added: "I wouldn't have thought a private 'tec like Winslow would have used an ancient veteran car for business trips."

"He didn't in the ordinary run of events," declared Keen. "But the Veteran Car Rally started at half-past nine in the morning, and I noticed on the poster advertising it that the rallying point was at Clandene—a town eight miles out of Barnham. And the Bailey Engineering Company is on the Clandene road, remember."

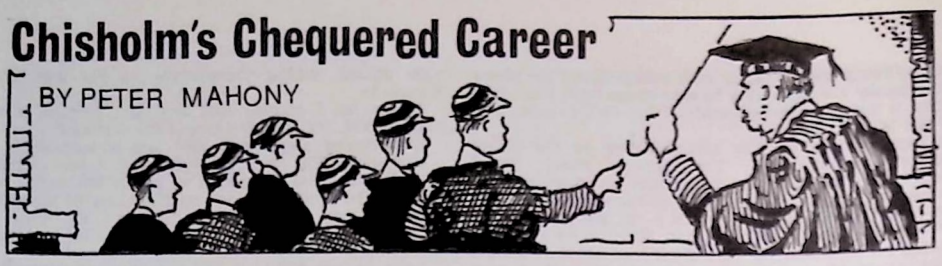
"I get you, guv'nor," said Bob. "Naturally, Winslow would get out his veteran car for the rally, and he intended to stop and report to Mr. Bailey on his way to Clandene. Gosh! That chap Rawson certainly made his plans well, didn't he."

Jack Keen nodded his head.

"But he made just one slip," he remarked. "The andonal stain betrayed him. They always overlook something!"

Chisholm's Chequered Career

BY PETER MAHONY



"Man, proud man! Drest in a little brief authority,

Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven

As make the angels weep;"

(Wm. Shakespeare, "Measure for Measure")

Greyfriars had its Bunter; St. Jim's had its Gussy; but Rookwood, the third school of Hamilton's great triumvirate, had as its chief catalyst of troubles and trials not a schoolboy, but its own revered Head Master, Dr. Edward Chisholm D.D., M.A. The number of vicissitudes into which Rookwood was plunged by this dictatorial Doctor is appallingly impressive.

During Rookwood's eleven-year saga, no less than eight large-scale rebellions occurred - more than happened at St. Jim's and Greyfriars combined over a period three times as long. At least four of these were direct revolts against Chisholm's autocracy; while two of the others were the result of his failures to make sensible and fair decisions. The Rookwood governors must have been a supine lot to retain Chisholm as Head in the face of these constant upheavals.

The rebellions were, however, not Chisholm's only difficulties. For a man of culture and education, he had a rackety family background. His younger brother, Oliver, was a wastrel - and worse; his nephew, Gunter, was a cowardly wimp; his daughter Dolly an imperious minx; added to which, his long-lost son, Cyril, turned out to be a budding criminal. The Doctor's efforts to deal with his domestic problems usually ended in scandal or embarrassment - or both. The Chisholm ménage was not a happy family.

In addition, the Doctor was a poor judge of men. His selection of subordinates - usually done in a hurry to cover gaps caused by hasty decisions - was downright poor. Over the years he engaged bullies (Cutts and Carker), a boozer (Whibbs), a lunatic (Oliphant) and a couple of cracksmen (Egerton and Gaston) as replacements for stalwart teachers whom he had summarily dismissed.

He was also an expert at "rubbing people the wrong way". Sir George Hansom, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, George Gummage (an Old Boy), Mr Greely, Mr Bootles, Mr Dalton and even the villainous Baldwin Sleath all had reason to resent Chisholm's high-handedness.

The Headmaster's autocratic attitude brooked no argument. Consequently, arbitrary orders were issued to masters and boys alike. Very rarely did he concede that they might have a valid alternative view. Rookwood rubbed along precariously, labouring under a series of difficulties created by its Headmaster. The real tragedy was that the problems increased rather than diminished with experience.

Chisholm's earliest difficulty was not of his own making. A 'flu' epidemic laid him low, along with most of the classical masters. Mr Manders was put in command and Jimmy Silver & Co. were soon in open revolt against his severity (*Boys' Friends* 719 - 721). The Reverend Doctor had gone away to convalesce. He was informed of the outbreak and, instead of returning himself, sent orders for Mr. Bootles to deal with the matter. Poor old Bootles, still seedy from the 'flu, had the unenviable task of superseding Mr Manders and quelling the revolt. Fortunately, Jimmy Silver & Co., once assured that Bulkeley (the School Captain) would take charge until Bootles was fit again, toed the line. When Chisholm returned, order had been restored, but Manders nursed a resentment of the Classical Fourth which gave rise to a stream of niggling complaints in the future. Both Bootles and his successor, Dicky Dalton, suffered from the aftermath of this first fracas. Chisholm, never one to learn by experience, repeated the mistake some seven years later (*Boys' Friends* 1074 - 1082).

The next drama involved Chisholm, Sir Rupert Stacpoole and the depraved Lord Mornington (*Boys' Friends* 778 - 783). Mornington, excluded, quite rightly, from Rookwood's Cricket XI, inveigled his guardian, Stacpoole, into "speaking to Dr. Chisholm". Wishing to please the Chairman of the Governors, Chisholm ordered Mr. Bootles to order Jimmy Silver to pick Valentine Mornington for the St. Jim's match. Tom Rawson intervened to prevent Mornington from playing, but the implacable dandy sought his revenge on Jimmy Silver. With the aid of Leggett of the Modern Fourth, he surprised Jimmy in the dark and left him a prisoner at the top of the old tower throughout a cold night.

Jimmy was rescued too late to save him from illness. A thorough investigation exposed Mornington and Dr. Chisholm gave him a well-deserved flogging. Sir Rupert, appalled that his aristocratic ward should be so treated, raised the matter with the Governors and persuaded them to dismiss the Head.

Chisholm's replacement was Mr. Scroop, a petty tyrant. Currying favour with Stacpoole, Scroop indulged Mornington while ruling the rest with a rod of iron. Inevitably, rebellion broke out, and after a series of confrontations - most of which Scroop lost - the Governors had to climb down and reinstate Chisholm. Mornington, the prime cause of all the trouble, was "excluded" from Rookwood while the dust settled.

This chastening experience seemed to deepen the flaws in Chisholm's character. The Governors' hasty *volte-face* may have convinced him that he was indispensable. Certainly his attitude to matters of discipline - always stern - now developed an implacable streak.

Mind you, Chisholm's jaundiced view of life had some justification apart from this latest "You're fired", then "Come home, all is forgiven" episode. In his early days as Head of Rookwood, he had been forced to remove his own younger brother, Oliver. This bright youth seems to have been the Mark Carthew of his day. A gambling blackguard, he had traded on the assumption that his older brother would ignore his misdemeanours. Chisholm, faced with a scandal, had expelled him, an awful decision in view of predictable family reactions. (Incidentally, the Doctor must have been something of an educational high-flyer. Even if the age-gap between himself and Oliver had been as much as twenty years, he must have acquired the Rookwood Headship somewhere around his mid-thirties. If the age-gap was narrower, then Edward's career success would have been even more startling.) Oliver went from bad to worse after leaving Rookwood - a development which must have caused Edward great concern.

Then, there had been the loss of his son, Cyril Chisholm. As an undergraduate, Dr. Chisholm had been acquainted with Baldwin Sleath. When a theft took place at their college and suspicion fell on an innocent man, Chisholm had exposed Sleath, who was "sent down". Years later, Sleath had exacted a vicious revenge by kidnapping Chisholm's infant son, Cyril. The child had never been found. A terrible load had been placed on the Chisholms' marriage and they had, naturally enough, over-compensated by spoiling their daughter, Dorothy (Dolly). This young madam had a role to play in one of the barrings-out.

Another unsavoury member of the Chisholm clan was Gunter, the nephew from America. This spineless wimp allowed a rip-roaring Texan, Sam Barker, to take over his identity and turn up at Rookwood as a scholar. The excessive behaviour of "Gunter" - smoking, gambling, assaulting his school-fellows with a whip, loosing off a loaded revolver - caused a sensation. The Rookwooders, surprisingly loyal and sympathetic to their Head, tried to keep the worst of these excesses dark, but "Gunter" eventually went "over the top" once too often. The imposture was discovered and Barker was expelled. (Chisholm had good grounds for criminal proceedings but the prospective "scandal" deterred him). The real Gunter was quietly refused admission to Rookwood, and another family skeleton was returned to the Chisholm closet.

These experiences, plus his own "sacking", caused the reinstated Chisholm to harden his heart - like Pharaoh of old! He was immediately plunged into another "Mornington" situation (*Boys' Friends* 801 - 805).

Mornington's "exclusion" period had ended and he returned to Rookwood as arrogant, malevolent and dangerous as ever. With the help of Beaumont, a rascally prefect, he "framed" Jimmy Silver for theft. Jimmy was expelled but refused to go. Rawson (a resourceful character, who had every reason to dislike the snobbish Mornington) chipped in, and Jimmy's father exposed the plotters. Mornington and Beaumont were expelled; Jimmy's sentence was rescinded.

Mornington conveniently fell "ill" before he could be sent away. Playing for time, skulking in the sanatorium, he was fortuitously on hand when fire broke out in the Head's house. Mrs. Chisholm was overcome by the fumes; the Doctor rescued her, but lost contact with daughter Dolly in the process. Mornington rescued the girl, but was badly burned. After he had recovered, Chisholm pardoned him, and he rejoined the Classical Fourth. Understandable, since Mornington had saved the Doctor's "only" child, but it does seem rather rough on Beaumont. The Sixth Former stayed "sacked", even thought he had been Mornington's tool in the Silver affair. Another example of Dr Chisholm's expedient approach to justice!

For a fairly lengthy period, Rookwood settled down. 'Erbert Murphy, a waif, was befriended by Mornington, whose experience in the fire had mellowed him considerably. Morny got 'Erbert into the Second Form by quoting one of Chisholm's sermons - "We are all brothers ..." - back to him. (One suspects that Morny sponsored 'Erbert as much to take a rise out of his Headmaster as to benefit the waif.) Anyway, the enrolment of 'Erbert was Owen Conquest's first step on the trail of Mornington's reform.

Two further steps - one positive, one negative - were the arrivals of Kit Erroll and Mark Lattrey. Erroll, after some early enmity, became Mornington's friend, and encouraged

the reform process. Lattrey, son of a private detective, had opposite ideas.

Prying into his father's cases had given Lattrey clear evidence that 'Erbert was the real "Lord Mornington". When he and Mornington, who had "gone the pace" together, fell out, Lattrey tried to blackmail Morny into continuing their association. After much agonising of conscience, Morny rebuffed Lattrey and did the "right thing". 'Erbert was established as the legal Lord Mornington. Valentine became the "poor relation". Rather naturally, he resented Lattrey and a vendetta ensued (*Boys' Friends* 865 - 876).

Lattrey (who was really one of Conquest's/ Hamilton's nastiest creations - well worth an in-depth character study) perpetrated a series of nefarious schemes, most of which were foiled by the cynical Mornington. These culminated in a plot to implicate Jimmy Silver as a "pub-crawling blackguard". Mornington and Erroll exposed Lattrey: Dr. Chisholm, with his usual instant reaction, expelled him.

Enter Mr Lucas Lattrey, the private detective, armed with evidence of yet another Chisholm "chicken". The Doctor's wastrel brother, Oliver, had graduated from racecourse tout to British soldier during the Boer War. Under an assumed name, Private Smith, he had been commissioned for gallantry in the field. Then he had been "found out in treacherous traffic with a German/Boer agent", tried by curt-martial and sentenced to death. He had escaped and disappeared. Mr. Lattrey confronted Chisholm with evidence of these events - and, predictably, the beleaguered Doctor rescinded young Lattrey's expulsion.

The matter did not end there. Lattrey and Mornington were soon quarrelling again. A vicious assault by Lattrey - with a poker - ended with Mornington (temporarily) blinded. An incensed Fourth Form was scandalised by Chisholm's failure to expel the culprit. They sent the Doctor a "round robin"; autocratically, he refused to consider it. Jimmy Silver & Co. then took the law into their own hands and frogmarched Lattrey to the railway station. His father brought him back; Chisholm acquiesced; a full-scale rebellion ensued.

Dr Chisholm cut a sorry figure during this confrontation. He tried to be high-handed; was hotly rebuffed; sent in his prefects who were roundly defeated by the rebels; was screwed-up in his own form room; and eventually ceded the quelling of the rebellion to Mr. Lattrey.

Lattrey's methods were ruthless. He flooded the rebels' form room, their stronghold on the school allotments, and probably would have restored complete order if Jimmy Silver & Co. had not run away from school and taken refuge in the old quarries.

Impasse had been reached. Dr. Chisholm, in upholding a proved delinquent, would surely have been on very thin ice at a Governors' enquiry. Fortunately, help was at hand in the form of Oliver, the wastrel brother.

A German spy was hiding in the quarries. A British soldier, searching for him, ran into the Rookwooders. Together they apprehended the spy, but the soldier, Oliver Chisholm, was shot and seriously wounded. Conveyed to Rookwood, he told his unhappy story to his brother, the Doctor. Proof of his innocence of the Boer War spying was forthcoming and Lucas Lattrey's power over the Head was gone. The rebellion ended; Lattrey was expelled; Oliver Chisholm recovered, and resumed his real identity.

One would think that with all these alarums and excursions, Dr Chisholm would have breathed a sigh of relief, drawn in his horns and taken a mellower view of life. Not likely! Within a year, he had precipitated another outbreak.

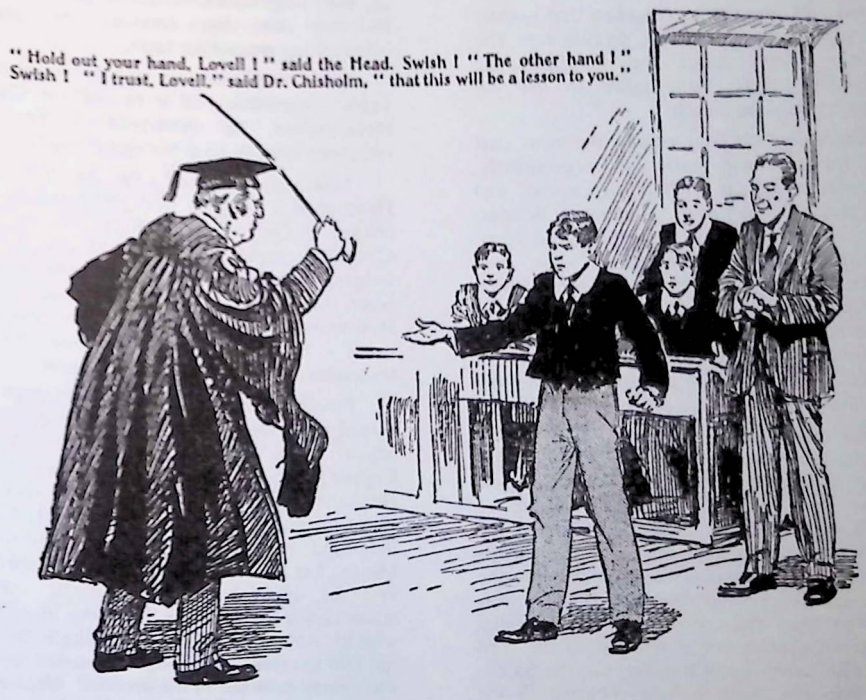
Albert Leggett, the Modern Fourth cad, stretched a cord across the entrance to the Head's study. Chisholm came a cropper; and jumped to the conclusion that Jimmy Silver, an innocent bystander, had done the dark deed. The summary sentence was a flogging.

Mr. Bootles interceded in Silver's behalf. The ensuring dialogue shows Chisholm at his most unyieldingly arrogant:

> "Time is passing, Mr. Bootles, and the school is waiting in Hall."
>
> "Silver's studymates told me, sir, that it was impossible that Silver did what was done in this study. They were with him when he came to replace the cane on your desk. He was only in the study a few seconds, sir."
>
> "He was here, at all events."
>
> "Well, if Silver was in the room only a few seconds evidently he had no time for all this."
>
> "And what evidence, Mr. Bootles, is there that Silver was in the study only a few seconds?" exclaimed the Head, with an expression that was perilously like a sneer.
>
> "The evidence of three junior boys whom I know to be truthful and honourable," said Mr. Bootles warmly.
>
> "I attach no importance whatever to the evidence of these three boys. This story is concocted by them to save Silver from punishment."
>
> "I disagree entirely. I am convinced they would not utter falsehoods to save Silver."
>
> "Nonsense!"
>
> "Sir!"
>
> "Enough, sir; I am satisfied of Silver's guilt. If you hold a contrary opinion, you are at liberty to hold it. The matter closes here."

"Did you perpetrate this outrage upon Mr. Manders last night, Mornington?" asked the Head, sternly. "No, sir!" said the junior, quietly

Illustration by G.W. Wakefield (1922)



"Hold out your hand, Lovell!" said the Head. Swish! "The other hand!" Swish! "I trust, Lovell," said Dr. Chisholm, "that this will be a lesson to you."

Illustration by Savile Lumley (1938)

With that the Head swept from the study. (S.O.L. 206)

A clear illustration, in Hamilton's best style, of how to be pig-headed, supercilious and pompous all at the same time.

Of course, Bootles did not leave it there. He protested in public against the "act of injustice"; ordered Silver to leave the Hall; and generally bearded Chisholm in his own den. The upshot was predictable; Bootles, having refused to resign, was fired.

It then transpired that Leggett was the real culprit. Jimmy was exonerated; but Chisholm would not have Bootles back. (A hasty man hates to have his injustices brought home to him.) The other masters, led by Mr. Greely, then took a hand. They asked the Doctor to reconsider; he refused; they protested; he noted the protest; but would not recall Mr. Bootles.

The masters went on strike in sympathy with Bootles; Dr. Chisholm regarded them as "dismissed". He engaged replacements - a "tatty" collection of bullies and incompetents, plus one criminal - Egerton - who burgled the Head's safe!

This episode shows Chisholm at his most obstinate. Mr. Bootles, lodging in the neighbourhood, knew Egerton had been dismissed for thieving at a previous school. His attempt to forewarn Chisholm was loftily scorned - the dear Doctor suggested that Bootles was unjustly slandering his successor. The striking masters foiled the burglary; the grudgingly grateful Head failed to use the occasion to heal the breach.

Gradually, the boys ragged the new staff into leaving their posts and, eventually, Chisholm had to get off his "high horse" and take back the old hands - including Bootles. The "strikers" were tactful; the Head's so-important dignity was preserved. He even deigned to admit to "faults on both sides, which by mutual goodwill we must endeavour to avoid in the future". To quote Owen Conquest: "For some time afterwards the extreme politeness of the Head and his staff to one another was quite entertaining to witness".

Rookwood needed a breather. They didn't get one. There was just time for "Putty" Grace to turn up as a new boy; then Chisholm was off again. Raby and "Putty" set a booby-trap for Carthew, the bullying prefect. Bulkeley, the school captain, got it by mistake. He lost his temper with the culprits; the Head came on the scene and disapproved strongly. Bulkeley was removed from the captaincy. (The parallel between Chisholm's own reaction to the cord across his doorway and Bulkeley's to the booby-trap does not seem to have occurred to the Doctor!) (*Boys' Friends* 935 - 941).

The prefects - except Carthew - took exception to Bulkeley's dismissal. Taking their cue from the masters (only seven weeks previously) they went on strike. The Head called an election for a new captain - Carthew was the only Sixth Form candidate.

Faced with the appalling prospect of a bully for skipper, the juniors were at a loss - until "Putty" Grace proposed a solution. His bright idea was to "run" Tubby Muffin for captain! The idea caught on; the Middle and Lower Schools voted solidly for Muffin. Dr. Chisholm was confronted with the "democratic" election of the least suitable boy in the school.

Mayhem followed. Tubby "spread himself". His methods of keeping order - e.g. thrashing Carthew for "cheek" - caused so much disturbance that Chisholm cancelled the election and appointed Carthew as Head Prefect, backed by the Fifth Forms. Open warfare ensued; discipline broke down completely; Carthew became the scapegoat for Chisholm's ham-handling of the whole affair.

Retiring to his study for a comforting "smoke" while he brooded on his wrongs, Carthew carelessly dropped a lighted "dog-end". After lights out, Bulkeley and Neville were discussing the sorry state of affairs. They discovered the blaze; Bulkeley marshalled the juniors and got everyone out of the building in safety. Chisholm was impressed; he seized the opportunity to restore the *status quo*, appearing as the magnanimous Headmaster rewarding Bulkeley for his services by graciously overlooking the earlier fault.

There were no more revolts for nearly three years - something of a record for Chisholm. Nevertheless, he contrived a few minor rumpuses (just to keep his ego going?).

Mornington kicked over the traces again. He dodged a flogging (for going absent to play cricket at Greyfriars) by hiding in the vaults. Chisholm expelled him. Mornington took lodgings - and work! - in Coombe and spent some happy days tormenting his erstwhile Headmaster. Chisholm came down heavily - as usual - by cancelling orders from the local tradesmen who employed Mornington.

Finding himself unemployable, Mornington turned up at the Rookwood gates with a barrel-organ! The sight of his placard, "Spare a Copper for an Old Rookwooder", so incensed the Head that he made an unprecedented visit to the "Bird-in-Hand" where Mornington had taken lodgings. He "persuaded" the landlord to evict Morny, but the resourceful dandy "camped out" near the school boathouse. Another confrontation ended in Chisholm thrashing Mornington with his walking-stick. In the struggle, the Head fell into the river. Mornington rescued him, but was nearly drowned in the process. Once again, gratitude wiped out past offences and the delinquent returned to Rookwood (*Boys' Friends* 992 - 1001).

The Head's next trauma was a family affair. Kit Erroll was helped by a young criminal called "The Kid". He saw the boy in company with Baldwin Sleath, a cracksman who was known to Erroll from his pre-Rookwood days. Erroll sought to retrieve "The Kid" from Sleath's clutches, but it all went wrong when the lad was arrested for burgling Rookwood.

Sleath, of course, was Dr. Chisholm's implacable enemy. He visited Rookwood, taunting the Doctor by claiming that his missing son was "doing time" in Borstal under an assumed name. Chisholm, not unnaturally, clutched at the hope that his son was alive, and believed him. It was only after the Head had preferred charges against "The Kid" that Sleath revealed the real truth. His revenge had ended with Chisholm prosecuting his own son!

Bulkeley and some of the juniors tried to apprehend Sleath and in the struggle the villain was fatally wounded by his own gun. "The Kid" and Chisholm were reunited - and all was calm and bright! But even here, with his family restored, the Doctor's concern with appearances asserted itself. Cyril - "The Kid's" real name - was sent off to school in Devon to remove his "rough edges". The Headmaster's son was not to be seen at Rookwood until he was up to scratch!

The next event of major interest was the departure of Mr. Bootles. The little gentleman inherited a fortune and departed to enjoy his wealth. This gave Dr. Chisholm a chance to display his powers of picking staff. Bootles' first replacement, Mr. Christopher Cutts, was a petty tyrant. The Fourth Form, once again, had to suffer for their Head's lack of judgement. When Cutts (*Boys' Friends* 1030 - 1034) was finally driven out, Chisholm brought in "Mr. Oliphant", who turned out to be "as nutty as a fruit-cake". (Actually, a cheerful lunatic - Lord St. Leger - had managed to substitute himself for the real Oliphant.) The Fourth Form had some fun and the Head a good deal of embarrassment before this affair was resolved.

The Doctor's next choice was a good 'un, but he nearly blew it. Richard Dalton arrived and proved the ideal man for dealing with Jimmy Silver & Co. Unfortunately, "Dicky" had fought - with success - in the prize-ring. Carthew of the Sixth had been rebuked by Dalton; for revenge Carthew let the Head know about the "Boxing Beak". Chisholm loftily decided that Dalton would lower the tone of his staff. He asked "Dicky" to leave; the Form Master, annoyed and hurt, decided to go at once.

Enter George Gummage, Old Boy of Rookwood, yet another of Chisholm's "expellees" from the past. Gummage, burly and surly, had taken to the Ring. Now, he had returned to settle old scores by going for Chisholm with a dog-whip. Bulkeley and Neville tried to eject him and failed; P.C. Boggs was rendered *hors de combat*. Dicky Dalton, fetched from his packing by Jimmy Silver, took on the bruiser - and won. Chisholm, saved by the bell, as it were, did the handsome thing. A battered Dicky Dalton was asked to stay "as a favour to me". This fortuitous fight had the outcome of stabilising Rookwood's staff for nearly three years.

After a period of normal education, Rookwood erupted again under the "gentle" aegis of Mr. Roger Manders. This was a repeat of the earlier "flu" crisis - but far funnier. Manders took charge after Christmas when Dr. Chisholm was laid low by the virus. He indulged in excessive discipline; quarrelled with his colleagues; and took a leaf out of Chisholm's book by sacking Dicky Dalton. Dalton did not go: when discipline broke down completely he stepped in, restored order and ignored Manders. The Head returned to be acquainted by Mr. Greely (Manders was forcibly detained elsewhere) with the sequence of events.

The affair was glossed over; but really Chisholm could have prevented the whole schemozzle. He could not help falling ill; but he certainly should have established a new "pecking order" among his subordinates after Manders' earlier fiasco. Appointing Mr. Greely as Deputy Classical House Master was surely a viable alternative. Yet again, Rookwood was disrupted because of the Head's lack of foresight. (Still, this series - *Boys' Friends* 1073 - 1082 - provided a "gem" of a jape. "Putty" Grace, in Charley's Aunt "drag", arrived as the rejected "Mrs. Manders" and gave Roger a terrible time, one of Hamilton's funniest stunts.)

Nearly two years passed; then Chisholm lost his rag again. The victim this time was Dicky Dalton. The ubiquitous Mark Carthew was inked by the Fourth Form. Dr. Chisholm ordered Dalton to cane the whole form; Dicky, suspicious of Carthew's story, refused to carry out wholesale punishment. Chisholm dismissed him.

Carker, Dalton's replacement, was a bully. The Fourth rose; they tarred and feathered Carker; they even locked their august Headmaster in a form-room. Jimmy Silver was expelled; the whole form absconded to an island on the river. The usual measures to bring them to heel were thwarted; Chisholm, obstinate as usual, was at his wits' end for a solution.

Dalton, due to take a post in Canada, intervened "for the good of the school". Jimmy Silver & Co. agreed to return to duty once they realised that "Dicky" was lost to them. The Head, practising self-deception as usual, decided that they had "surrendered": therefore he, Edward Chisholm, could be magnanimous. He offered Dalton his post back; Dicky, who wasn't really keen on Canada, accepted. Once more, having backed himself into a corner, Chisholm was rescued by a man he had victimised.

The permutations on the "you're sacked - all is forgiven" theme were running dry. A new French master, Gaston, was engaged. Mr. Greely was certain that he was Felix La Croix, a bank-robber, whom he had seen while holidaying in France. Chisholm "pooh-poohed" the suggestion in cutting terms. He even hinted that Greely should leave the school for casting such an aspersion on a colleague. Then, Peele of the Fourth was accidentally locked in the Head's safe. The key was missing; Gaston had to display his safe-cracking expertise in order to save the boy from suffocation. More egg on the Doctor's face! He certainly knew how to pick 'em.

The last disaster in this sorry tale of mismanagement involved Mr. Greely yet again (*S.O.L.* 226). The portly but active Fifth Form master kept fit with a daily session of ball-punching. Sadly, the ball bounced back too smartly and Greely collected a prize nose. Dr. Chisholm, tactless as ever, intimated that such accidents should not occur in the best educational establishments. Greely was nettled, especially as Chisholm loftily brushed aside his explanation. Did the Head suspect him of brawling?

The suspicion became reality. Sir George Hansom, a personal friend of Greely's, was attacked by footpads on his way to meet the Form Master. Greely barged in and a battle royal ensued. The footpads were vanquished, but Greely finished with two black eyes to add to his beetroot nose.

Dr. Chisholm spotted him on his return to Rookwood and jumped to a typical conclusion:

"Mr. Greely, this is disgraceful!"

"Sir!"

"..... You have been engaged in a fight, a personal encounter, with some person."

"Quite so, sir. I ....."

"Kindly do not interrupt me, Mr. Greely. ..... You have the temerity ..... to parade yourself, sir, in the sight of all the school with the appearance of a prize-fighter. This is too much, Mr. Greely."

Greely's attempts to explain were ruthlessly swept aside. Chisholm demanded his immediate resignation; Greely refused; the Doctor sacked him. Greely, boiling with indignation, had the last word:

"Sir, I refuse to accept dismissal at your hands! I resign, sir! I resign my position here! I fling my resignation, sir, in your teeth - in your teeth, sir!"

With which, he stormed out of the Head's study. Chisholm was probably lucky that Greely didn't "dot him on the boko"!

Sir George Hansom tried to mediate; the Head was icily rude. The Baronet, highly offended, decided that this "dashed autocrat" would be "made sorry". He accordingly set Greely up as Headmaster of "Manor House School", Coombe, in direct opposition to Rookwood.

The Fifth Form, led by Sir George's son, Edward, protested to Dr Chisholm about Greely's dismissal. They were met with Chisholm's peculiar brand of frosty implacability. Trouble followed, and the Fifth Form left Rookwood *en bloc* to enrol as scholars at the Manor House. They even sat the Reverend Doctor down in the dusty road when he tried to prevent them! Authority was breaking like a reed in Chisholm's hands. He vented his spleen by "gating" the whole of the Lower School.

The Lower School seethed: "Dicky" Dalton tried vainly to get Chisholm off his "high horse". Mornington rebelled and set off to join the Manor House. The Fistical Four followed him to remonstrate. The Head caught them out of bounds and threatened them all with floggings. The Fourth Formers absconded rather than take Chisholm's chivvying; they all ended up at Manor House.

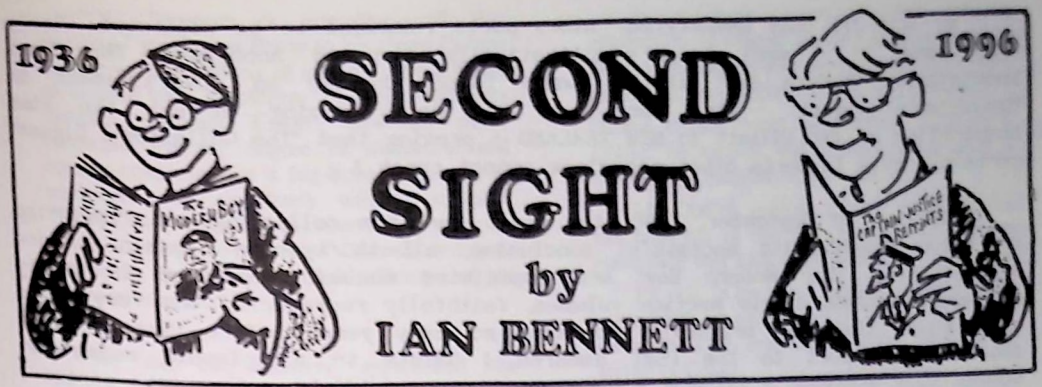
Unfortunately for Mr. Greely, Edward Hansom tried "chucking his weight about" with Jimmy Silver & Co. In the inevitable rumpus, Hansom defied Greely - presuming on Greely's dependence on his father. Greely punished Hansom; and, consequently, fell out with Sir George. The Manor House's days were numbered.

Meanwhile, Dicky Dalton had managed to make Dr. Chisholm listen to the real account of Greely's "brawl". Chisholm, once again repenting a hasty action, extended the olive branch - Rookwood was losing too many pupils! - and Greely rushed to accept. The usual amnesty for offenders was granted and they all trooped back to Rookwood - Greely included. The Manor House was sold to become a sanatorium.

So ended Rookwood's last upheaval. Dr. Chisholm resumed his haughty, arrogant way, perhaps a little sadder, but not, I'm sure, much wiser.

In view of this lengthy catalogue of snap decisions, gut reactions, "deaf ears" and pompous posturing, it is amazing that he kept his job. But, if he hadn't, we would have been deprived of some of Charles Hamilton's funniest action-packed yarns. Hamilton really had more boisterous fun with Rookwood than with the Friars and Saints put together. If Chisholm had not "chivvied", then Jimmy Silver, "Putty" Grace, Mornington, Mr. Greely, Mr. Bootles *et al* would not have been able "to strut their stuff" so effectively.

So hats off, Hamilton buffs, to Dr. Edward Chisholm D.D., M.A. To quote an anonymous cynic: "He was taciturn, sullen, a cold fish - the sort of chap nobody likes: all in all ideal Headmaster material".



A SALUTE TO RONALD HIBBERT'S ASTONISHING ACHIEVEMENT IN REPRINTING THE ENTIRE *CAPTAIN JUSTICE SERIES* FROM 'THE MODERN BOY'

As L.P.Hartley so famously put it : "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there". Indeed they do - as a glance at any newsagent's magazine racks will confirm these days. But, in the field of boys' weeklies, so nostalgically missed by all who enjoyed them in their heyday, a delightful passport to the past has been provided by Ronald Hibbert's truly remarkable achievement in reprinting, these sixty years later, the entire Captain Justice series, exactly as originally published !

Despite the passage of time, the enjoyment of these splendid adventure stories is as great as ever, both in word and picture. Coincidentally, Ron and I both became regular readers of 'The Modern Boy' back in the autumn of 1935 and followed most of the subsequent series (depending on how the pocket money stretched !) published up to the sad demise of 'Modern Boy' in the early months of World War II. During war service, the happy memory of reading the Justice stories remained and Ron even contemplated how pleasant it would be one day to have *every one* of the CAPTAIN JUSTICE STORIES with all their excellent illustrations too - and so it was in the fullness of time.

Ron's 'Modern Boy' collection survived the War and in 1965, through subscribing to 'The Collector's Digest', he was able to add some issues via the late Norman Shaw. Later still he contributed an article about Captain Justice to the 1987 'Collector's Digest Annual'. About that time he and I began corresponding and jointly produced a 'Complete Listing of the Captain Justice Stories'. Then, based on Ron's extensive experience in printing and publishing a magazine for some local parishes - monthly run 400 copies, no less - he produced, as an experiment for us both to enjoy, five complete Captain Justice serials, photcopied from 'The Modern Boy' as A5 size booklets.

Realising that there could be copyright implications, Ron wisely sought and obtained from I.P.C. (successors to the old Amalgamated Press) permission - at no cost - to reprint by photocopying more of the stories in A4 size. Nine further 'Adventures of Captain Justice' (each story had a print run of five copies) followed. Then came the 'Captain Justice Christmas Stories', completed through the invaluable assistance of Bill Bradford of the London Club who also introduced the booklets at a Club meeting there.

Early in 1995 'Collector's Digest' published, courtesy of Mary Cadogan herself, a three page advertisement for the Reprints, and by mid February over one hundred copies of the Captain's adventures had been printed ! Printing, sewing, fore edge guillotining, packing and posting became the 'normal' hectic activity in the Hibbert household.

By mid '95 only seventyfour story-parts remained to be collected. Slowly they came in - many from sympathetically disposed hobbyists. The final twentythree 'Modern Boy' stories were found through an advertisement in 'Collector's Digest' - the very last ten parts coming through the kind cooperation of Ron Gillatt in NEW ZEALAND - proving that 'The Collector's Digest' certainly gets to parts other magazines cannot reach !

And so, by September, 1996, the great marathon collecting and reprinting operation reached its successful conclusion; all thirtyseven Captain Justice stories from 'The Modern Boy' and associated annuals reprinted in thirty cardboard backed, single section volumes, faithfully reproducing the very pages upon which they had originally appeared so many years before. Second Sight indeed ! Passport to the Past assured ! Salute to a splendid endeavour, wonderfully achieved - perhaps a new concept in republishing favourite series ? In the words of Rudyard Kipling : "Something lost beyond the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go !"

TOUCHÉ

"A fool must now and then be right by chance."
Cowper.

In the old quadrangle at Greyfriars, surrounded by grey weather-worn buildings and shaded by ancient elm trees, two figures are strolling sedately in fluttering gowns. One tall and angular, the other short and rotund. It is a brief and much valued period between classes when, usually, coffee and biscuits in the common room are the order of the day.

Spring is in the air and the sun is shining with a special brightness after months of grey mediocrity. From a cloudless blue sky it generates a comforting warmth.

Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch M.A. and Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout M.A. are taking advantage of its early rays. Elderly joints are very susceptible to the comfort of heat. The winter has been long and, at times, quite harsh. Twinges in those joints have not been absent, and humours have suffered accordingly, as could be well testified by certain members of the Remove and Fifth forms whose studies were directed by the two quietly strolling gentlemen.

The Remove, never renowned as a model of propriety, had been rather exuberant that morning. Ever a trifle reckless in his dealings with authority, Vernon Smith had been particularly exasperating: so much so that to terminate a series of barely veiled impertinences the ash had been introduced, having the effect, at least for a time, of reducing Smithy to a tight-lipped and scowling silence.

All of this had been anything but conducive to the well-being of Mr. Quelch's humour. His eye, the celebrated gimlet eye, had swept over the form - and silence had reigned. Bob Cherry's feet ceased to scrape and shuffle, and Skinner suspended his production of ink pellets, much to Billy Bunter's relief.

Mr. Prout had suffered similar annoyances that morning and was waxing extremely verbose upon the collective tribulations of masters in general - and himself in particular. Thus the conversation of the two colleagues did not aspire to any great heights of intellectual stimulus. But for the well-being of both strain had to be released, and the boom of Prout's eloquence reverberated among the old elms causing fellows as far afield as the tuckshop to pause in their mastications, look up and grin.

"Old Pompous is sounding off this morning," murmured Potter to his chum Greene as they were in process of staving off the pangs of hunger until lunchtime. Greene discreetly agreed. Horace Coker, however, never renowned for any degree of discretion and equally celebrated for a fog-horn propensity of utterance, was completely without scruples. When Coker had a pronouncement to make he stood not upon any form of fineness but gave tongue in tones which probably Stentor of old might have envied.

"Pompous old ass!"

As the two masters approached the tuckshop, Mr. Prout stopped in his tracks and glared at that hopeful ornament of his form.

"What - what - unparalleled! COKER - boy! Come here this instant!" he thundered. Horace Coker had never been distinguished for his quickness of thought, quite the contrary in fact, but circumstances tend to alter cases. He realised immediately that he had committed a fearful gaffe. How to salve some remnant of credibility seemed now to be the salient point. Prout was booming again.

"Boy, did I hear aright - did I not hear an extremely disrespectful epithet directed at your form master just now?"

"I - I beg your pardon, sir, I do not understand." Coker managed to look reasonably bewildered. Mr Prout snorted. "Did you or did you not refer to your form master as a - a pompous old ass, sir?"

"Oh, that - oh no sir," replied Coker, whose mighty intellect had obviously been working at unusually high pressure.

"What - what, you deny it? Do my ears deceive me?" gasped Prout, whose features were by this time assuming a distinctive shade of pink.

"Oh yes, sir." Coker rattled on, "We were discussing Q. Pompeius, he who made such a hash of the war with the Numantines in Spain - he must have been an old ass, sir".

At this point Mr. Quelch, who had been standing silently by, glanced sharply at Horace Coker, and a close observer might have detected a gleam, a not un-humorous gleam, permeating his crusty features.

"What - what, why bless my soul!" spluttered Mr. Prout. The Fifth Form master was deeply versed in the ancient classics - almost as well versed as Mr. Quelch himself. But for the moment Q. Pompeius, rather sadly, would not fall into the rightful scheme of things. Those old classical fellows had the unfortunate habit of getting themselves somewhat mixed up in the minds of elderly gentlemen. Mr. Prout was not a little confused by such unexpected erudition from the most backward member of his form. He was, in short, for the moment "thrown".

By a happy chance the bell for the resumption of classes clanged at that moment, thereby rescuing Prout from what might have developed into a most embarrassing situation.

"Come to my study immediately after class, Coker," he boomed, and turned a podgy back on that hopeful member of his form.

Mr. Quelch smiled, a frosty smile up into the branches of the elms as the two masters made their way back to the house.

He saw, in his mind's eye, poor Prout doing some hasty classical revision in his study and refurbishing his ammunition while awaiting the arrival of Coker.

It seemed to afford Mr. Quelch a certain degree of amusement. His stern features could be happily described as benignity itself as he made his way to the Remove form room.

It has been said that there exist in life circumstances which will - given time and patience - eventually swing in our favour. It was some such circumstance which now came to the rescue of Horace Coker. Against all the accepted laws of average he had "got away with it". An exceedingly mild exchange took place between the Fifth Form master and himself later that day. There had been a fair amount of huffing and puffing, and a little snorting and posturing on Prout's side which had finally terminated in the abrupt dismissal of Coker from the presence.

Now here was the fathead of the Fifth swelling almost visibly with triumph, holding forth to Potter and Greene in his study. Their joint opinion of Coker's escape may be summed up briefly. He was a complete ass - but a lucky one. Which opinion they did not communicate to Horace in exactly those terms. *Humanum est errare.* For a day or so Mr. Prout's boom was noticeably less resonant in the form room, and Coker - sad to relate - was more insufferable than usual.

LEGACY OF LAUGHTER

I believe she could spread a horse-laugh
through the pews of a tabernacle.
Goldsmith. The Good-Natured Man.

From the cachinations of William George Bunter, through the sniggers of Harold Skinner and Co. to the boisterous ringing peals of Bob Cherry and hoots of merriment from Horace Coker when events are going his way, differing expressions of mirth echo through Greyfriars in many and varied situations.

Leafing through old copies of the 'Magnet' one comes upon illustrations which happily typify a hundred such. Billy Bunter is in full flight, terror writ large upon his podgy features. He is being pursued by a host of fellows,

prominent among whom are the Famous Five and Vernon Smith. Excepting the scowling features of the latter, every other face is convulsed with smiles and laughter.

Obviously trouble is afoot for the fat Owl, yet humour is never far away. Laughter and cheery good humour were - it would seem - ever present in the 'Golden Years' of the companion papers.

'Japes' and 'Rags' devoid of any vicious connotations were the order of the day. Fellows when detected in breaking cardinal rules of the school took their 'medicine' with stoicism and good nature, always accepting the fact that the piper must be paid, and with no thought of retaliation or revenge.

One may easily visualise Mr Mimble leaning on his hoe in the vegetable garden with Gosling in attendance, the ancient pair cackling crustily over some well worn joke which had probably done sterling duty down the years. One sees their weatherworn old features creased with mirth, and these two Greyfriars inmates lost for the moment in a world of their own within which, very apparently, laughter is present.

William Caln in his biography of Harold Lloyd, the silent screen comedian, asks: "What makes people laugh ...?" He goes on to say: "There are certain laugh provoking situations and antics that appear to be timeless. The downfall of false dignity is one. The confrontation of fraud with reality. Pomposity slipping up on a banana peel." These things are perpetually funny to most people. It is on such situations that so many of the Greyfriars "laugh-raising" stories are based.

Even the traditionally severe features of Mr. Quelch were wont upon occasion to twist into the semblance of a smile, albeit of a frosty nature. Being a "just beast" he must have been fully cognisant of the underlying humour of many of the situations with which he came into contact. Bunter tried him sorely, yet who can say what humour was extracted from Quelch's frequent passages with the Owl in the comparative privacy of the masters' common room. History tells us much yet manages to keep in reserve certain facets which, given wider publicity, would have been prejudicial to discipline. For have we not been informed upon numerous occasions that the Master of the Remove was a "wily old bird"?

Laughter was and is still the saving grace in almost any situation. This was understood in our early years and the realisation has stood us in good stead.

One cannot help contrasting those happy Greyfriars scenes with many aggressive and gloomy happenings of today. The depiction of horrendous explosions, and the destructive lack of respect for property and individuals that is so rife is, unhappily, presented over vividly and *ad nauseam* in many contemporary magazines directed at present-day young people.

There is yet much to be said for Miss Wilcox's sentiment: "Laugh and the world laughs with you". Greyfriars has shared with us in good measure down the years the gift of laughter which re-echoes frequently in our own, at times, somewhat prosaic lives.

Scenes come drifting back to me
O'er the vista of old time,
Again in retrospect I see
In schooldays' happy clime
The faces of my early friends,
I hear their ringing laughter.
On such my peace of mind depends
Both now, and yes, hereafter.

LAST TEA IN STUDY NO. 1

The guests are met, the feast is set.
Coleridge. Ancient Mariner.

"Rely on me you fellows, I'm expecting a postal order by the next mail. Rely on me for the cake. Not one of those ordinary affairs you usually trot out, I mean a real cake. I'll phone Chunkleys for one of their "specials" with bags of marzipan and fruit you know."

Billy Bunter was holding forth, promising endless supplies of milk and honey on the strength of a purely hypothetical postal order.

End of term was approaching and by way of celebration Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were "throwing a party" for their chums and a few other fellows in Study No. 1 in the Remove passage. Naturally no-one had invited Billy Bunter. Quite the contrary. Much effort and subterfuge had been used to keep the whole affair a secret. This proved to be a miserably hopeless ploy. The Owl had become cognisant that something was afoot through his own particular channels of information. A "feed" was in the offing, and, invited or not - the latter being the generally desired rule - Bunter was determined to be a participant. Hence his noble and selfless promise to supply the centrepiece for the coming spread.

"Just leave it to me you fellows," was his parting injunction as he left the study to patrol in the vicinity of the main gate to watch for the postman.

"How did that fat ass discover we were planning a spread?" enquired Bob Cherry.

"The howfulness is terrific - and mystifying," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Tell me," said Johnny Bull in an argumentative tone, "when did Bunter's antennae ever fail to detect a feed even in its embryo stage?"

"There are few things which may be taken as read in this jolly old world." chucked Frank Nugent. "But among them is Bunty's unerring instinct in the detection of 'tuck'. We shall be landed with the fat cormorant, you fellows, so let us make the best of the inevitable."

So the matter rested with the extremely unlikely advent of the Owl's postal order arriving and the yet more unlikely appearance of even a modest cake, much less one of Chunkley's "specials", to grace the festive board.

The guests were arriving. The Co., together with Vernon Smith and Tom Redwing, Lord Mauleverer and Peter Hazeldene: even Harold Skinner had been invited on the strength of his having knocked up seven runs in a "pick-up" earlier in the term at which he had been ordered by George Wingate to present himself. Thus virtue was being seen to receive its just reward. It is true that certain remarks of his pals, Snoop and Stott, had been far from complimentary regarding the invitation. Stott had even asserted that the size of Skinner's headgear might have to be seriously assessed if "this sort of thing" became the norm. But Skinner - trailing clouds of unaccustomed glory as it were, seven runs no less - chose to ignore his friends on this occasion and joined the élite of the Remove at tea.

Observe the party seated round the well-stocked table in Study No. 1. It is a very familiar scene, except perhaps for the inclusion of Skinner, to those of us who have read of countless other teas in that famous sanctum.

Orwell's grey battle cruisers are keeping watch and ward out in the grey channel. The Union flag still flies at the ends of the earth. The splendid British pound is worth twenty shillings anywhere in the world. All is well - or is it?

Something curious has occurred in Study No. 1. An unwonted quiet has descended upon the party gathered round the board. Most curiously, all animation has ceased, the scene has taken on the flat, rather unreal appearance of a tableau.

Mauly has been caught - and held - in mid-yawn. Bunter's hand is reaching out in the direction of a plate of cherry tarts, the familiar look of greedy anticipation fixed on his fat features. The other fellows in their various ways have been arrested in time and frozen into immobility. Slowly the realisation of what has happened makes itself apparent. The master hand of Frank Richards, which so skilfully manipulated the strings, released its magic touch when he died. The characters, so real to us over many previous years, were perhaps to become inanimate at last.

Faint echoes of boyish laughter and chatter have not entirely faded into silence, however: these sounds live on even though they really belong to the enchanted world of youth.

"I say you fellow, this is prime ..."

"Another doughnut, Skinny old man ...?"

"What became of Chunkleys' 'special', Bunty ...?"

"The fellow in the cake department insisted on payment before he would dispatch it." Bunter's voice is heard. "I explained that I had been disappointed about a postal order but - you know these tradesmen, the fellow was positively offensive, he just would not take the word of a public school man ..."

This last tea in Study No. 1 would have signalled the end of an era but for a small group of dedicated historians of this particular genre; wise heads who saw and recognised the charm of this magic world which, rather than having passed into limbo, is being kept very much alive through their researches and enthusiasm. This little world in embryo has an ongoing fascination for all of us who yet retain an element of youth in our make-up which refuses to be trampled down in the onrush of time:

Does Chunkleys flourish yet think you
Along the old main street,
Where we our pocket money 'blew'
With many a savoury treat.
Stand yet the tables fresh and clean
As in the days of yore,
As though 'old time' had never been
When Bunter yearned for more.
Does the podgy shadow fall
Athwart the entrance there
As oft it did, I can recall,
Intent to have a share.
Then to search with dismal mien
In pockets void of money.
The feast is o'er, the plates are clean,
Where now the tea and honey?

QUIZ by PETER MAHONY

LITERARY CONNECTIONS

Identify the Hamilton character linked by the two descriptions (one Hamilton, one general literature), e.g.

The Captain of the Shell (Tom Merry) and "Treasure Island" (George Merry)

= Merry

(The last five questions relate to St. Frank's and not Hamiltonia.)

A. ST. JIM'S

1.	Professor Balmycrumpet	and	"Bleak House"
2.	Towser	and	Hugh Walpole
3.	Eastwood House	and	"Pride and Prejudice"
4.	Study No. 6	and	"Jerusalem"
5.	Clifton	and	Clemence
6.	Bernard	and	Elinor
7.	A form-master	and	"Wuthering Heights"
8.	The St. Jim's 'Top Man'	and	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
9.	The New Firm	and	"Sons and Lovers"
10.	The New Firm	and	A World War I Poet
11.	George Alfred	and	Solomon
12.	St. Jim's Shell-cowboy	and	Mark Twain
13.	A Day Boy	and	"If I should die, think only this of me ..."
14.	St. Jim's Shell nonentity	and	"Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"
15.	St. Jim's Fourth nonentity	and	"The Darling Buds of May"
16.	St. Jim's	and	St. Fanny's
17.	Rylcombe Grammar School	and	"The Beggar's Opera"
18.	New House Sixth	and	"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day ..."
19.	William Cuthbert of the Shell	and	"Treasure Island"
20.	Captain Crow	and	John Creasey

B. GREYFRIARS

1.	Study No. 7	and	"Lord Peter Wimsey"
2.	The Upper Fourth	and	"Ivanhoe"
3.	The Fifth Form	and	"The Great Gatsby"
4.	Study No. 1	and	"The Buccaneers"
5.	Study No. 2	and	"Middlemarch"
6.	Study No. 5	and	H.G. Wells
7.	The Sixth Form	and	"Oliver Twist"
8.	The Fifth Form	and	"The Lost Horizon"
9.	The Fifth Form	and	"The Third Man"
10.	The Fifth Form	and	"Peter Rabbit"
11.	The Shell Form	and	"Willy Mossop"
12.	The Upper Fourth	and	"Venus Observed"

C. ROOKWOOD

1.	The End Study	and	"Treasure Island"
2.	The Modern Fourth	and	"The Sign of Four"
3.	The Classical Sixth	and	"On Approval"

D. ST. FRANK'S

1.	Study C	and	"Sherlock Holmes"
2.	Study C	and	Frank Richards
3.	The Remove	and	"Rookery Nook"
4.	Study A	and	The Brontës
5.	Study A	and	Dean Swift

ANSWERS ON PAGE 115

Villains and Heroes on Wheels

BY DONALD V. CAMPBELL.

At the turn of the century the marvel of the age was the motor-car - at least it was for the rich and the richer. And for the reader. Authors grasped the usefulness of the new machine with some gusto. The motors were large, noisy, they were often open - or part open - to the elements and surprisingly colourful. *"The Scarlet Runner"* (C N & A M Williamson) was, naturally enough, scarlet and formed a useful ploy on which the authors could hang a few stories.

The eager readers of the 1920s and 1930s might have been forgiven for thinking that *John Buchan* had invented the motor-car-as-hero in *"The Thirty-Nine Steps"* and *"The Island of Sheep"*. Richard Hannay in the first story came a cropper with a "motor car, was visited by an "Inspector of roads" who drove a small motor car, and stole one from Marmaduke Jopley ..... In his first adventure Hannay also has to contend with the aeroplane as surveillance tool - but the book was written much later than some others we shall be considering.

In *"The Island of Sheep"* a Bentley carries Lombard and Haraldsen's daughter to safety at Laverlaw in Scotland. They are chased by a great yellow and black "Stutz" up the Great North Road and beyond.

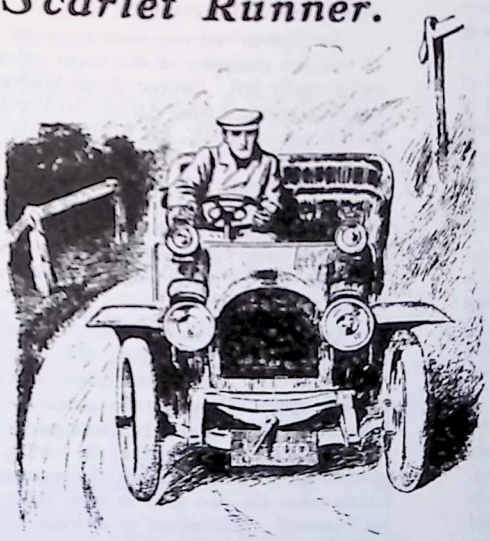
Lombard is that unlikely hero beloved of older men - an older man. He has grown fat(ish) in the city and has lost the drive that endeared him to Richard Hannay in an earlier adventure together in the African bush. Yet he comes good and is no mean driver of his escaping car. He has a nicely devious mind that, in the end, outwits the crooks who pursue them. There is, as well, the neat pairing of the young teenage schoolgirl and the city-man-turned-adventurer that works exceptionally well - both having respect for each other. The girl (later) has her own adventures on small boats with Hannay's son, Peter.

Earlier accounts of enormous automobiles can be found in *The Strand* and elsewhere - as, for example, *The Scarlet Runner*, already mentioned. Written by C N & A M Williamson it appeared in *The Strand Vols. 31-33, 1906 & 1907*. The excitement generated in *The Scarlet Runner* depends on the various and multifarious uses to which the motor is put.

William Le Queux introduced a grand-touring car as a central character in *"The Count's Chauffeur"* in *Cassell's Magazine* in 1906. The car though is overshadowed by the powerfully strange and criminal character of Count Bindo di Ferraris, the owner of the motor. Yet the motor is intrinsic to the plot as we see it transformed from sports car to full-bodied tourer. In the end the story depends rather more on the characters than on the use of the motor as a camouflaged weapon of criminality. The illustrations (Cyrus Cuneo) give some hint of the different shapes of body that transform the machine as the criminals go about their murky "scams".

Le Queux is a great character himself and we are offered this from him regarding his own name:

The Scarlet Runner.



V.—THE ADVENTURE OF THE NUREMBERG WATCH.

By C. N. and A. M. Williamson.

Authors of "The Lightning Conductor," "My Friend the Chauffeur," etc.

It troubles each sex,
So I put it to you,
Is it William Le Quex
Or William Le Queux?

I give you the clue,
So no longer perplex,
It is William Le Queux,
NOT William Le Quex.

Then *Louis Tracy* gave the world *Sylvia's Chauffeur, Ward Lock, 1917.* The book date may be misleading as the illustrious (Townsend?) would indicate an earlier appearance in *The Windsor.*

The Rolls, as a character, also turns up rather later in the century with *Dornford Yates* giving Jonathan Mansell one. But, in *"Perishable Goods"*, the driving is mainly done by an almost speech-deprived and subservient skivvy-cum-servant. This breed comes in handy for rough and tumble and general thuggish-knockabout as well as the "jackets-off" hard work bits! The lower classes are still firmly in their place in all these stories - and in *Bulldog Drummond* (not averse to car driving) as well as *Biggles.*

The earlier stories depend for their protagonists on the rich or the "almost rich" - the latter "struggling by" (in 1906-7) on two thousand a year!

The approach is similar in all of these adventures and romances. The motor is used as a necessary and a useful prop - taking the principals here and there, wherever a motor could go.

The three authors - the Williamsons, Le Queux and Louis Tracy - used the car with differing literary needs. The Williamsons wrote a light-hearted adventure-romance series, Le Queux produced the adventures of a band of criminals - about one gallon of petrol ahead of the police forces of Europe. The Tracy novel turns out to be a mild and flirtatious romance.

The Scarlet Runner is the property of Christopher, who has to prove to his uncle that he (Christopher) is worthy of his inheritance. A race is entered and (well before *"Monte Carlo or Bust")* Christopher proves himself. But this is only after a disguised female driver in opposition to him saves the day for him, he wins and he gets the girl! Twist in the tail - Uncle had loved the girl's mother - fade, curtain. The car has more character than the players in this one.

The Count's Chauffeur introduces the villainous but likeable Count Bindo di Ferraris who (being a jewel thief) is a gem but flawed. The (almost) hero and teller of these stories is the chauffeur George Ewart - fallen on hard times he takes up employment as a skilled driver of the Count's motor. The motor is seen constantly undergoing face-lifts, or rather, body-lifts.

> The car had undergone a transformation. With a new racing-body, built in Northampton, and painted in white picked out with gilt, no-one would have recognised it as the car which had carried away the clever jewel thief from Bond Street.

William Le Queux was a prolific thriller and espionage writer - *The Count's Chauffeur* is one of his easier reads. He was well equipped to write about journeys and motors. He was a keen motorist and owned a 40HP Napier in which he travelled some 7,000 miles on a tour across England and Wales. This was quite a feat for those days. He had some prescience and was, in this, rather like E Phillips Oppenheim in seeing German trouble ahead. In *The Royal, September 1919* he has an article on the continuing German menace:

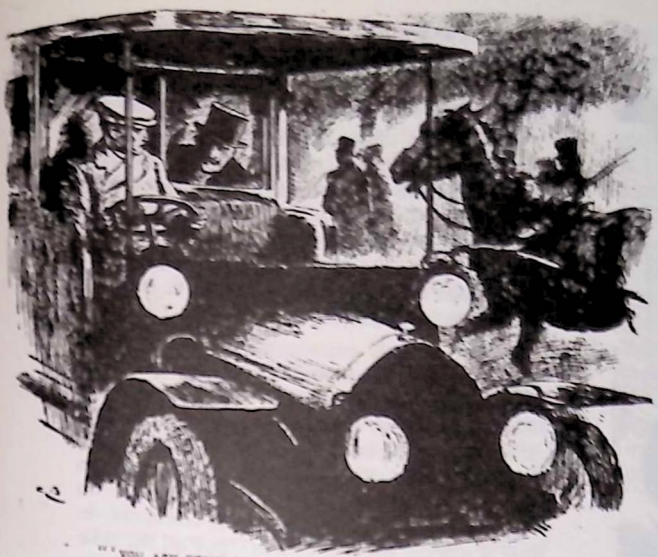
> "This article is a clarion call by Mr Le Queux who knows more than most people about European political secrets." Thus the editor praises his author. Le Queux condemns Germany and the Hun in the most scurrilous language (unrepeatable here). He concludes his diatribe with: "Keep before (us) that motto, which, by the way, I invented myself nearly twenty years ago, 'Britain for the Briton'."

Sylvia's Chauffeur is a romance and a bit of froth after the others. It is recommended for a wallow in sentimentality and escapism.

My copy carries the inscribed legend: "Mildred Hall, Ladies Hairdresser, 248 Hunslet Road, (Leeds). Library Books, 1d per week." A later embellishment, in another hand, (a bad habit of some library users but often illuminating) B+ good. There shall be no argument with the grading.

In "Sylvia" we are, once more, in the land of and the company of the upper classes - we never really left. George (Lord Madenham) is not long returned from Africa. He comes across an old war comrade - his batman. The batman is in a terrible fix on Derby Day. Hired to transport a young lady to Epsom and then on to Brighton, his vehicle has a broken transmission. The young lord, probably bored with the old country, using his own vehicle, becomes chauffeur for the day. (And the next day, and the next and so on.)

Sylvia - Miss Vanrenen and rich, naturally - and against all her upbringing, falls in love with him, a servant! (But deep down, she knows, doesn't she?) However the dastardly Count Edouard Marigny (had to be a foreigner - shades of Carl Peterson and Irma) is loathe to let Madenham have her. Finally the night-ferry to Calais takes the two men to their destiny. A duel ensues! Madenham is seriously injured, and yet:



"'YOU ARE DRIVING MUCH TOO FAST,' SAID THE ROYAL VOICE."

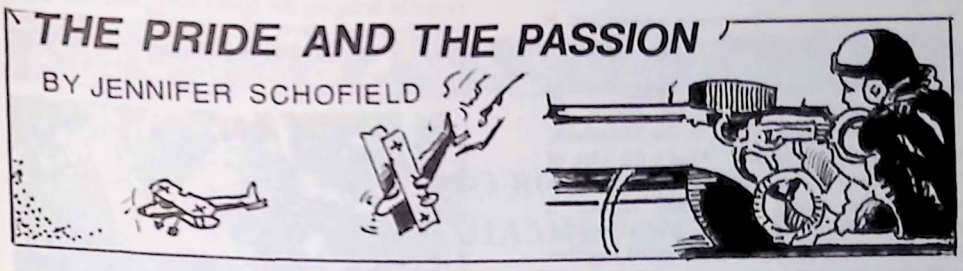
"I never thought for a minute that any Frenchman could kill George," cried Scarland cheerfully.

And so the two lovers are reunited, all problems and alarums cleared and solved and nicely tidied up - well they would be, wouldn't they?

It may be that the day of the car as a character in a novel will soon be (is?) over. When the roads clog with vehicles, when the petrol runs out and when we all stay at home working at the end of a computer terminal, then we will be truly nostalgic for adventures with a motor.

THE PRIDE AND THE PASSION

BY JENNIFER SCHOFIELD



Although World War II is over, Biggles is about to be executed by a German war criminal, who is still in command of his U-boat and its crew:

> Von Schonbeck barked an order. Two men seized Biggles by the arms and jostled him forward until he stood with his back against a face of rock. Another order and the firing party lined up in front of him. Another order and they came to attention.
>
> "Would you like a bandage over your eyes?" sneered von Schonbeck.
>
> "No," answered Biggles evenly. "There's nothing a Nazi can give me that I can't take".
>
> Von Schonbeck raised his hand. "Take aim!"

A gripping scene - but is Biggles displaying a splendid pride or is he a typical British hero of adventure stories, above all human fears, always keeping his Stiff Upper Lip?

Certainly, Biggles conforms to one convention of a very mixed collection of fictional heroes, which includes, for instance, The Saint, Bulldog Drummond, Lord Peter Wimsey and John Steed: he makes flippant remarks and jokes in perilous situations. When Biggles is woken up in his own base by his arch-enemy, von Stalheim, who taps him on the shoulder with a gun, he knows his minutes are numbered, but he mutters petulantly, "You know, von Stalhein, you're becoming a perfect pest. Why can't you let a fellow sleep?" (von Stalheim can play the same game too; "Don't worry," he purred, "Very soon you shall go to sleep for a long, long time".)

But though Biggles walks nonchalantly towards the waiting firing squad, a cigarette in his hand, the grim reality of the situation comes home to the reader, and the airman's brave last words show his real perception of his terrible plight: "Get on with it, and get it over".

'You know, von Stallein, you're becoming a perfect pest,' he muttered petulantly

Banter can serve several purposes - it can show contempt or scorn for the enemy for instance, as in Biggles' retort to von Schonbeck. Once Bertie asks Biggles, "What's the idea of the backchat?" and Biggles says, "There's nothing like getting the enemy rattled; it interferes with his judgement". On yet another occasion, when waiting to be executed together with Algy, the airman jokes to lower the tension; but most important of all, light words help to maintain the speaker's pride.

Anger, too, can overcome fear; Algy is pale as he is led before the firing squad, but he finds relief in rage. However the end is achieved, I believe that the result is the same, and that Biggles and his friends, when they are at the mercy of their enemies, show the heroic pride that is true courage, springing not from immunity to fear, but the will and strength to overcome it.

Pride is a vital element in the Biggles series and so is passion, in the sense of intense feeling. Passionate pride prevents any sign of weakness in the face of the enemy, but at other times the airmen can be visibly shaken by the force of their emotions. Biggles was so overcome with grief when he thought that Algy had been killed that he shook like a leaf. After learning that Algy was alive after all he "flung himself face downward on his bed, laughing and sobbing in turn". On another occasion, it was Ginger who "trembled like a leaf" when he thought he saw Biggles' body in a burning aeroplane; as the full horror of the thing struck him, "he screamed, and then commenced to run round the blazing wreck, jabbering to himself".

Algy sat alone by the sea in a deserted, barren landscape to mourn Biggles' apparent death, and the desolate scene counterpoints his bitterness and despair. In World War I, Biggles thinks that Marie Janis, the girl he loves, is in a blazing house, and white-faced and swearing, he strikes out viciously at those trying to stop him from dashing to the rescue.

Biggles feels passionately, too, for people for whom he is responsible. When a sailor under his command is killed, and Biggles thinks that he could have averted the tragedy, he weeps. In a fascinating passage in a World War II book, Biggles muses about the duty, imposed on service personnel by High Command in wartime, to hide all grief for lost comrades, in case it impairs the will to win - and all the time anxiety for Algy, who is missing, gnaws at his heart.

Far from writing about stereotypes with Stiff Upper Lips, Johns created heroes who feel passionate about friendship, love, other people and their own standards of courage. The pride and the passion in the Biggles series is a major factor in bringing the books alive, and lifts them to a level well above that of the usual adventure story.

A long black object broke the surface and rose clear

But that is not all. Biggles and his friends never flinch in the face of the enemy, but one of the refreshing aspects of the books is the way that on certain other occasions the heroes give way to stark terror! "A cry of stark terror" broke from Algy's lips when a crocodile almost seized him in a mangrove swamp. "A screech of stark terror" was Ginger's reaction to a rotting corpse. Biggles' voice rose to "a frenzied cry of panic" when he and his friends were chased by a deadly mamba. Lions, rhinos, bears, tarantulas and especially crocodiles and snakes invariably evoke yells of fright.

There are many fraught moments involving aeroplanes in the series, even in peacetime. The Condor refuses to become airborne as she rushes along a river towards a colossal waterfall; after she has taken off at the last minute, Biggles, at the controls, leans back limply. Algy gives a sickly grin, and Dickpa bellows sarcastically, "I thought you said this was the safest form of transport in the world!"

"Quite right," yelled Biggles. "Where would you have been in a canoe?"

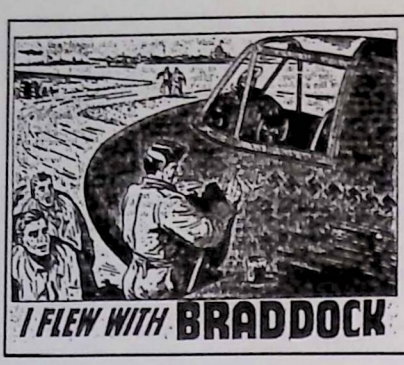
With amazing honesty, too, Johns describes Biggles' reactions after he has flung a parcel bomb away from himself just in time; no *sang froid* on this occasion; the airman goes pale, his hands are unsteady, and he says he needs a drink. These moments of panic or of the feelings experienced after a danger has been averted are hardly "passions", but add a human and often a humorous touch to the stories, and help to destroy the myth of those Stiff Upper Lips for good!

This is a very big topic, and I feel sure that readers will think of many more examples of "pride and passion" that I could have given, especially from the World War I stories, but space forbids! So finally, a last look at the way that pride and passion may be interwoven and fears overcome with quiet, dogged, resolution. It is easy to underestimate Bertie, with his absurd slang and outdated monocle, but when he is trapped in a cave with his friend, Dizzy, he never appears to lose heart.

At last their food is exhausted, their torch gives out and the air is stuffy. Dizzy becomes unconscious and Bertie knows that he himself is finished too. But he still has his integrity - a passion for and pride in his own ideal of bravery, first proved as a pilot in The Battle of Britain. There in the dark, with no-one to know, although he is too weak to stand, he still tries to uncover a way out of the trap, picking up a stone and dropping it behind him.

ANSWERS TO BOB WHITER'S "GUESS THESE HAMILTON PLACES"

1.	Friardale	(Greyfriars)
2.	Latcham	(Rookwood)
3.	Rylcombe (Rill a Little Brook)	(St. Jims)
4.	Bagshot	(Rookwood)
5.	Hogben Grange	(Greyfriars)
6.	Courtfield	(Greyfriars)
7.	Lantham	(Greyfriars)
8.	Hawkscliff	(Greyfriars)
9.	Pegg & The Shoulder	(Greyfriars)
10.	Cavandale (Cavern Dale) (Dale, a Valley)	(Greyfriars)



MATT BRADDOCK, THE WORKING-CLASS BIGGLES

by Des O'Leary

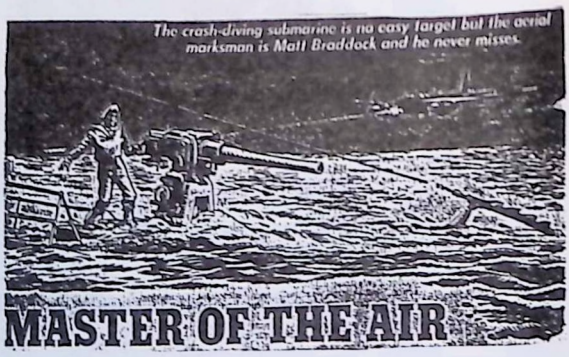
Between the World Wars enthusiasm for flying was at a peak. Real-life heroes like Lindbergh, Cobham and Amy Johnson were celebrated in a flood of books and articles. Fiction, too, had its heroes, in films, books and magazines. Biggles has survived as the epitome of the heroic flyer who embodies all the qualities admired by young readers: courage, loyalty, patriotism and indominatable tenacity among them. Biggles was, of course, one of many airmen featured in the 1930s story-papers. W.E. Johns' stories in MODERN BOY, for example, would appear in issues also containing tales by fellow air-writers, Percy F. Westerman and George E. Rochester among others. Yet it is Biggles who continues to be best remembered of the flying heroes and could well stand as the pattern for the type.

The fictional character of which I now write is very different. Whereas the typical protagonist of English adventure stories is usually portrayed as being of middle-class origin, often public school educated, even an aristocrat, Matt Braddock, in contrast, is a typical hero of the D.C. Thomson story papers.

These mass-circulation publications, ADVENTURE, WIZARD, ROVER, SKIPPER, HOTSPUR, catering for the working-class boy reader, took another view. The HOTSPUR's public school, Red Circle, was very different from Greyfriars or St. Frank's. The schools were more likely to be Council Schools, with down-to-earth teachers like The Big Stiff. Alf Tupper, the athlete of the ROVER, worked as a plumber and did his training on the British working class's favourite food, fish and chips! Thomsons, perhaps because of their firm Scottish roots, felt themselves somewhat detached from English ideas of social hierarchy, but, above all, they certainly knew their market.

Their greatest flying hero, Matt Braddock, did not appear until 1952, in the ROVER. This late start had the tremendous advantage of hindsight for the writers of his World War II exploits. As he followed his adventurous course from one theatre of war to another, the information released since 1945 was available to his author or authors. A hero, of course, need not be bound by narrow standards of realism, but authentic depiction, especially of the technical matters in which boys so often delight, becomes the more important as unlikely incidents or escapes have to be pressed into service. Since Braddock flew a bewildering variety of aircraft, British, Allied and Axis, from Iceland to China, the description of, say, American aircraft-carrier planes in the Pacific, or British heavy bomber raids on Germany had to convince the knowledgeable young reader.

From 1952 to the disappearance of the story-paper format in 1973, the Braddock saga spread over no less than 469 instalments, during which time D.C. Thomson gave Braddock the unique distinction of publishing two books of stories reprinted from the ROVER, "I FLEW WITH BRADDOCK" (hardback, 1959) and "BRADDOCK AND THE FLYING TIGERS" (paperback, 1962). After 1973 the stories



continued in picture-strip form in VICTOR and WARLORD comics. Braddock was also prominent among the "greats" featured in THE GOLDEN YEARS OF ADVENTURE STORIES published by Thomson in 1991.

Braddock's whole career centred on World War II, from the start of his preparation for war in 1938 and with his amazing deeds during it. Although the publishers later made an attempt to introduce a much more imaginative and fictional approach, notably in "Braddock Fought the Flying Saucers" (1966), the factual background that had always marked the stories made the attempts unsuccessful and thereafter only repeats of previous stories were published. On the other hand, Biggles had a much wider range of experience. From his early days in the First World War he moved to roving peacetime air-adventures, then World War II exploits, followed by his career as an air-detective. This variety obviously helps to explain Biggles' greater impact.

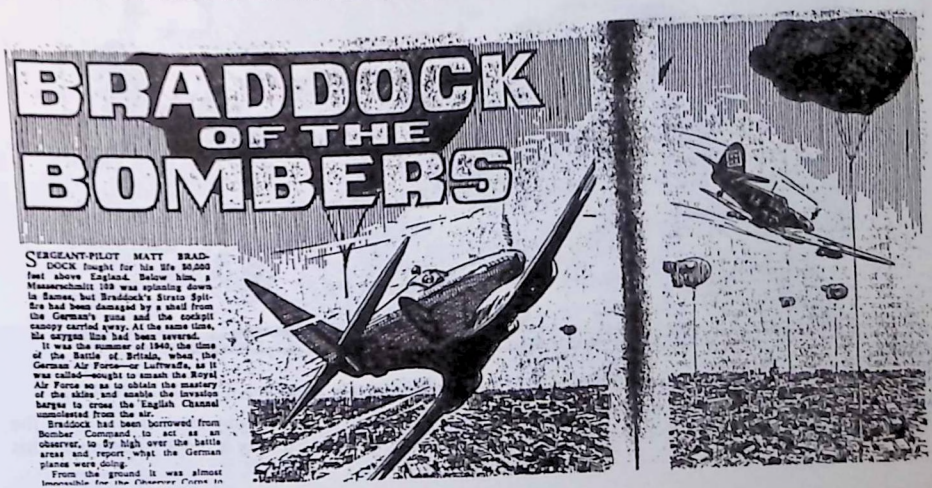
The continuing popularity of Biggles may also be explained by the fact that his adventures were featured in books very early on. In contrast, apart from the two books already mentioned, Braddock's tales appeared only in the story-papers, which were often thrown away and are therefore more difficult to acquire and read, leading to a lack of public awareness of him.

Of course, another reason for comparative ignorance of these stories among the general public is the lack of a "real" author to collect or look out for. Thomsons had an almost unbending rule of anonymity for their authors and artists, though, as in this case, they sometimes provided fictional names for their authors. Most of the adventures are attributed to George Bourne - a fellow fictional character himself, Braddock's navigator and friend!

The titles of the series changed from time to time: "I Flew With Braddock", "Braddock Flew By Night", "Braddock of the Bombers", "The

Battles of Sergeant Braddock", "Braddock Master of the Air". Two distinguishing aspects of our hero show in these titles. Unlike other flying heroes, he remained a Sergeant-Pilot (walking out of the only Officers' Course he went on), and in what has now become an unfashionable opinion, he believed firmly in the necessity of bombing the enemy's homeland.

Hew flew a bewildering array of aeroplanes - among them Blenheims, Hampdens, Battles, Beaufighters, Flying Fortresses, Spitfires, Liberators, etc., etc., not to mention a Junkers 52 and a Focke-Wulf Kondor 200! But special favourites for Braddock and Bourne were the Lancaster heavy bomber and the versatile mosquito, the "Wooden Wonder". The Lancaster embodied Braddock's belief that only a philosophy of attack would win the war, and the Mosquito was the ideal aircraft for such a versatile pilot.



I have not yet mentioned another characteristic of Braddock's which stretches credulity even more than his flying skills. He was the most insubordinate airman who ever plagued an RAF unit.

Untidy, disobedient when faced with orders he considered unnecessary, hostile to "spit and polish", liable to transfer himself to another unit without permission, Braddock could never have survived in the real RAF

On the other hand, his discipline in the air is legendary and meticulous. His flying skills are so outstanding and bring such results that he is known to the "higher-ups" in the Air Ministry as someone worth protecting against petty authority. So furious Air Police or disgruntled officers find themselves bypassed by Braddock's phone calls to friendly superiors.

When you remember that every young man in the country from 1939 up to the 1960s had to undergo National Service, the background of petty regulations and officious authority figures could count on a certain familiarity. The boy-reader of the 1950s could expect to experience it himself at some point, even if his Dad or big brother hadn't already told him all about it. Add to this the sturdy independence of working-class Britons and their potential resentment of upper-class individuals whose rank was not justified by their talent or dedication. It must be said that Braddock was quick to distinguish between the officers he called "wingless wonders" and who "flew a desk" and the brave and able commanders who matched his own dedication.

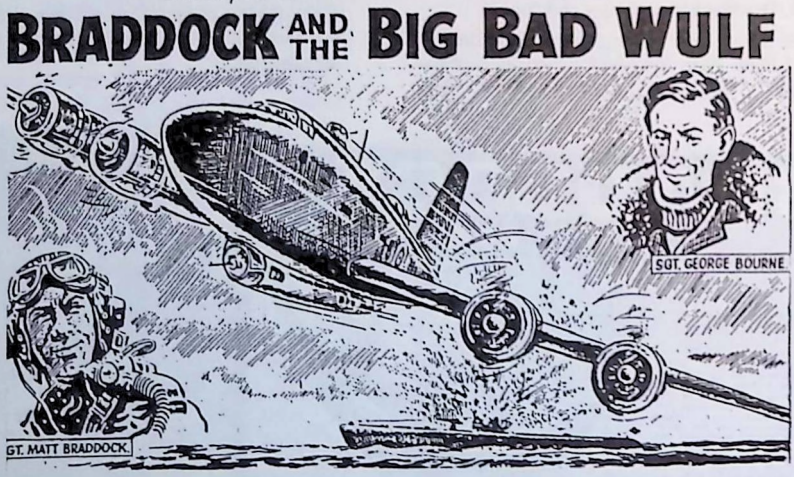
It is this side of his character, the ability to recognise and appreciate talent and character, which makes him more than just a "bolshie" figure who hates all authority. His drive to win the war at all costs makes him an uncomfortable person to those less dedicated. For example he refuses to wear his medals in an inspection parade before a Duke in protest against a comrade's being overlooked for a richly-deserved decoration. Sgt. Braddock's gesture succeeds, to the amazement and dismay of those culpable of the oversight. But as George Bourne says, "..... Matt Braddock was no ordinary sergeant." Given his decorations, V.C. and bar and D.F.M. and bar, we can see how true that was!

Let me choose two incidents from two favourite series to show his dedication and then his working-class background.

In "Born To Fly", the early days of Braddock, we see him preparing himself for the war he is sure is coming (not a universal opinion in 1938). This series, printed in 1957, the first not narrated by George Bourne (whose first encounter with our hero came in 1940), shows a Walsall lad who has worked in an aero-engine factory but has left, determined to become a flyer Since he has not the education to be accepted into the RAF Volunteer Reserve, he resolves to take flying lessons anyway. He becomes a steeplejack, but his meagre wages of £4.11.6 per week are not enough, so he sells his beloved motor-bike to help pay for the lessons. He thinks the sacrifice well worthwhile in his determination to fly, and he is at least at nobody's beck and call there above the rooftops.

We meet him one night studying aeronautics in the Public Library before making his way back to his humble lodgings. In his unheated bedroom, he continues to study, surrounded by the model aeroplanes, mostly German, which are helping to develop his encyclopaedic powers of aircraft recognition,

Matt Braddock, Britain's Ace of Aces, becomes a burglar—to steal a German plane that Britain needs for the vital Battle of the Atlantic!



skills much in evidence in his later exploits.

Typically, on his way back home from the Library, (pausing to buy a black pudding for his

supper, price 4d) he has encountered a band of upper-class loungers just about to "cut" their compulsory RAFVR classes.

As someone who would have given anything for their opportunities, his indignation is fierce: "..... you're cheating," he tells them. "You're the sort of shirkers who make Hitler think he can beat us."

An example of Braddock's extraordinary knowledge of aircraft is his ability to locate spare engines for the Focke-Wulf Kondor he has "borrowed" from the Germans and has been flying in the North Atlantic on long-range convoy protection. This series from 1960, "Braddock and the Big Bad Wulf", excellently depicts the vital battle against U-boats and surface-raiders. (Incidentally, the idea of the RAF. using an enemy aircraft is not completely fantastic. Our air force did fly and test captured German aeroplanes. Not so fantastic as the British Focke-Wulf's incredible record against Nazi aircraft and ships, anyway!)

When, after battling against the Nazis and the weather, replacement engines are needed, Bourne and Braddock, knowing that several German planes use the same motors, BMW 232G, search for a replacement among the RAF's collection of crashed enemy aircraft. Some of the Dorniers are powered by Daimler-Benz motors but the majority have BMW radials," muses Braddock to Bourne, and by night they purloin what they require. Simple!

This series, too, makes magnificent use of the sets of initials so common in Services jargon and, perhaps, especially useful in inter-crew communication; PLE for "prudent limit of endurance", ASI for "air-to-sea radar" etc. And all Braddock's crews were drilled in prompt and efficient warnings to the pilot in action. Not "Go right" but "Starboard go!", for example.

Braddock - his very name recalls the forthright Labour MP, Mrs. Bessie Braddock. He was a steeplejack (shades of Fred Dibnah, too!), eater of black puddings, rider of motor-bikes, ace darts player, reader of paperback Westerns, thorn in the side of officiousness, plane-spotter extraordinary, but, above all else, "Born to Fly" and "Master of the Air".

Biggles had a more varied background to his adventures and a close group of friends and comrades around him. Braddock was a self-supporting loner with George Bourne as his only friend.

If only Thomsons had named their authors and published all his adventures in book form, so that their wonderful accuracy and verve could be appreciated by a wider readership, I think Matt would have given W.E. Johns and Biggles quite a run for their money!

I gratefully acknowledge the help given to me by Colin Morgan, whose brilliant survey "Braddock, Master of the Air" appeared in GOLDEN FUN No. 13 in Spring 1983, an essential and entertaining summary of all these excellent stories.

ANSWERS TO PETER MAHONY'S LITERARY CONNECTIONS QUIZ

A.
1. Skimpole
2. Herries
3. D'Arcy
4. Blake
5. Dane
6. Glyn
7. Linton
8. Holmes
9. Lawrence
10. Owen
11. Grundy
12. Finn
13. Brooke
14. Gibbons
15. Bates
16. Cardew
17. Gay
18. Gray
19. Gunn
20. The Toff

B.
1. Bunter
2. Scott
3. Fitzgerald
4. Wharton
5. Bulstrode
6. Kipps
7. Sykes
8. Hilton
9. Greene
10. Potter
11. Hobson
12. Fry

C.
1. Silver
2. Doyle
3. Lonsdale

D.
1. Watson
2. Hamilton
3. Travers
4. Bell
5. Gulliver

PONY BOOKS - A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

by Clarissa Cridland

Like many other small girls, I was mad about ponies, and dreamed of spending my days riding, emulating the many children about whom I read. The reality, when it came, was rather different. I was a very wet child, and became absolutely terrified of ponies. I overcame this to a certain extent, but never to go beyond a gentle canter, and the desire to ride has never returned. However, I have never lost my love of reading pony books, and indeed this has extended (surprise, surprise) to collecting them!

As soon as she could wean me from *How the Mole Got His Car* which was my favourite book until aged about four, and before I could graduate to something worse (in her eyes) like *Noddy*, my mother read me her childhood books *The Ponies of Bunts* (by E Ducat and M M Oliver) and its sequel, *Ponies and Caravans*, and I was hooked for life. At first, these, and other books were read to me, but as I grew older and able to read, I devoured them for myself - literally as I had a nasty habit of tearing off the bottom of pages and eating them as I read! Having read all those my mother had I then moved on to read the books which were being published in my own childhood.

Not all books which feature ponies are 'pony' books. A 'pony' book needs to be fundamentally about learning to ride, owning or caring for ponies. The pony is the hero of the book, and without the pony, there would be little point to the book. Plot wise, there are three types of pony book; format wise there are two types. All of these overlap, but the divisions are quite distinct.

The early pony books (in general those published pre 1945) were much larger than other children's books, often being the same format as an annual. Unlike the school and adventure stories we collect, there were few full colour or black and white illustration plates, no decorative covers and no full-colour dustwrappers. The books made up for this, however, by the quality of the illustrations that they did have which were often by such distinguished artists as Lionel Edwards, Alan Seaby and Stanley Lloyd. The dustwrappers were very much that - made of rather rough paper, which was usually buff, cream or grey, and with one of the inside illustrations printed on the front to make them seem not totally boring. Some of the books, especially the non fiction and the 'non fiction story' books were illustrated with black and white photographs, which have a wonderfully nostalgic look to them now. It is also interesting to note that many of these early pony books were published by three publishers - Country Life, Blackie and A & C Black. After the war, other publishers moved in and the books were published in the normal 8to format, with black and white line illustrations and full colour dustwrappers. Although there are exceptions - Anne Bullen being a notable one - many of the post-war illustrators were vastly inferior to their earlier counterparts. Not because they were less famous but because they simply couldn't draw ponies accurately.

Pony books did not appear until the late 1920s. Before everyone shrieks and says 'What about *Black Beauty*?' I must say that, although the forerunner of them all, *Black Beauty* is about a horse and not a pony. Before the first world war, ponies were used, by all classes except the poorest, as a means of transport. Cars were kept only

by the rich, and then often in conjunction with horses. During the war, the motor vehicle was developed at a far greater rate than it would otherwise have been and people could see it overtaking the horse completely. Thus for a time, few children were learning to ride. This started to change in the late 1920s. In 1928 Country Life published Golden Gorse's *The Young Rider* which went to a second edition in 1931, and a third in 1935. In the preface to the third edition, the author wrote: 'Since then [1928] the outlook on children and their ponies has changed very much for the better. Five children seem to be learning to ride today for one who was learning seven years ago.' The market for pony books had clearly arrived, and apart from a short period of time from about 1975 to 1985 has never ended. Like many children's books, pony books published after 1970 hold little interest for the collector, and I am not considering them here. suffice to say that the market is once again booming, with new titles being published regularly and old ones being reissued.

The plots of the pre 1970 books can be divided into three types: those written by the pony itself, rarely found after World War II, books written from the point of view of the rider with little instruction in riding techniques, mostly written between 1936 and 1965 and, thirdly, books also written from the point of view of the rider but which taught far more (roughly from 1946 to 1965).

Golden Gorse, the author of *The Young Rider*, wrote what is generally considered to be the first 'true' pony story which was published in 1929, with wonderful illustrations by Lionel Edwards - *Moorland Mousie*. This was followed by *Older Mousie* in 1932, another non fiction book, *The Young Rider's Picture Book* in 1936 and then two 'fictional' books, *Janet and Felicity The Young Horse Breakers* (1937) which was revised and extended as *The Young Horse Breakers* in 1946. Back in 1992 I wrote an article on pony books for *Folly* (a fanzine dealing mostly with girls' stories for those who don't know it). Some time before my article was published, someone asked if anyone knew the identity of Golden Gorse. Looking though *The Young Rider's Picture Book* I discovered a photograph of Moorland Mousie (who was a real pony) together with a man with a caption which said 'This picture shows Mousie in the following year as a 3-year old. In my month at the farm I finished their education.' I made the incorrect, but perhaps natural, assumption that Golden Gorse was a man. I wrote to tell the person who'd asked his identity and she wrote back to say that she had now discovered he was called M R Wace. CD readers who attend the William meetings will know Michael Wace, with whom I worked at Macmillan. I asked Michael if this were a relative and he denied all knowledge of M R Wace or Golden Gorse. Shortly afterwards I discovered Lucy Faulkner of Bookline in Northern Ireland, the one dealer whom I know who specialises in pony books. She sent me an article which had appeared in the *Riding Annual* in 1980, in which the author had searched out Golden Gorse and discovered her to be Muriel Wace, married to the Rev Henry Wace. I took this into Michael. 'Gosh, yes', he said. 'Henry Wace was my father's cousin.' When Michael brought me in his family tree, it was not surprising that he didn't know all his relatives - his grandfather was one of 14, and his father one of 11! Interestingly, though when Michael asked one of his female cousins whether she had ever heard of Golden Gorse, she replied 'Gosh, yes, she was my Godmother.' Sadly, I haven't managed to get to see Michael's cousin yet to find out more, but it shows what an incredibly small place the world is.

An author who spans both the pre-war and post-war books is Primrose Cumming, whose first book, *Doney*, was published in 1934 when she was 19. She went on to write what is probably the greatest pony book ever written, *Silver Snaffles*, in 1937. Jenny, sitting on the manger in Mr Pymmington's stable, tells the old pony Tattles how much she longs to ride. '"Through the Dark Corner and the password is Silver Snaffles"' is the startling reply. When she gives the password and walks through what had been a brick corner of the stable, she finds herself in a land where the children are taught to ride by the ponies themselves. The book was illustrated by Stanley Lloyd. Primrose Cumming wrote other classics such as *The Wednesday Pony* and *The Chestnut Filly*. She also wrote, in what I call her middle period, *The Silver Eagle Riding Stable* series of three and then moved to Dent where she produced seven books ending with *Penny and Pegasus* in 1970. The climate in the early 1970s was changing and it is unlikely that Dent would have welcomed more books after this, but Primrose Cumming was too astute to wait for rejection. Having written a number of articles for annuals, both about ponies and not, she was approached by D C Thompson to write a series about ballet. As she told me, she 'simply mugged up' ballet and wrote the series. She then 'simply mugged up' on several other subjects to write more series! She was paid considerably more than she earned at Dent, her last few books there bringing in £50 advances against royalties of 10%. My first job in publishing was with Dent. I joined on 1st November 1976 to find that my boss, who was the Editor of the children's books, loathed the type of book I like, and one of my first jobs was to clear out all the files relating to books no longer on the list. I found some fascinating memos about the quality of writing of *No Place for Ponies* (by Primrose C) which was seen to be not as good as her other books, and, very stupidly, did as I had been instructed and threw them out, instead of keeping them. The books I was told to 'take to some jumble sale or other' and I did at least keep these!

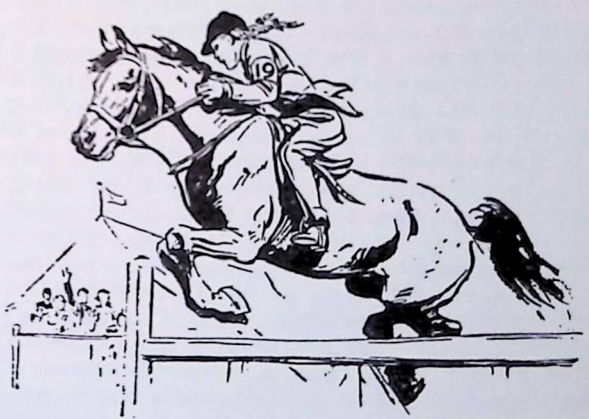
In 1937 Joanna Cannon's *A Pony for Jean* was published. This paved the way for the style of pony book which was written from the point of view of the rider but actually gave not much instruction. She wrote two more books about Jean, *Another pony for Jean* and *More Ponies for Jean* (not very imaginative titles but they told the reader exactly what she was getting) and another five non-Jean pony books (as well as a pony Picture Puffin and numerous other titles). Joanna Cannon would not be remembered now for her pony books were it not for her daughters - Josephine, Christine and Diana Pullein-Thompson.

Mention the P-T sisters to anyone who reads, whether pony-mad or not, and you will get instant recognition. It was they who started the third phase of pony story writing - that written by the rider but with solid instruction. With the development of International Horse Shows after World War II, the British had learnt that they could not win the dressage and showjumping sections unless they changed their way of riding and adopted the continental forward seat as opposed to the old backward seat with which they had led in the hunting field for years. Many instructors of riding, however, still favoured the old way and there was to be a forward/backward seat battle for years. This is reflected in all the post-war P-T books, and in the best of the others of this era. How often do we read 'and he <u>still</u> jumps with the backward seat', or words to that effect.

The P-T's first book, *It Began With Picotee*, was a joint effort written by all three of them, but after that they went their separate ways. Personally, I enjoy Josephine's books the best, especially her *Noel and Henry* series. All her books, while full of riding instruction, are also excellent stories and full of humour. Christine and Diana, perhaps because they are twins, write in a very similar style to one another - and one which I find rather annoying in that their heroines frequently swing from deep despair to extreme joy and back again, which detracts from the stories. Josephine wrote 12 pony stories between 1946 - 1961, Christine 19 from 1948 - 1963 and Diana 8 between 1946 - 1956. They all went on to write other things and then returned to pony stories in the 1970s and indeed are still writing them today, even if these are very different from those of their early years (and from the collector's point of view published in horrible paperbacks!).

The Enid Blyton or Elinor Brent-Dyer of pony stories is Ruby Ferguson whose Jill series has never been out of print since *Jill's Gymkhana* was published in 1949. This was the one series I bought for myself as a child, going to Harrods to spend my hard won book tokens and pocket money, and, with one exception, I still have these same books today. All of us who have read the *Jill* series know exactly how to ride and care for a pony, even if only in theory, and perhaps this is why the paperbacks today sell an average of 4,000 a year. Sadly, but probably inevitably, the paperbacks have been updated and not always well.

Inevitably, this is a very personal selection of pony books, and because of space I have not included all my favourites, and other CD readers may have others they would like to recommend. One word of warning about prices, since with the pre-war books, these vary enormously, because so many of them are collected for their illustrations. I have seen shabby reprints of *Moorland Mousie* for sale at around £15 - £20 because they come from a 'sporting' bookseller or one who specialises in Lionel Edwards. You ought to be able to pick up ordinary reading copies for not much more than £1 - £3. For those who want very good firsts in dustwrappers, at reasonable prices, Bookline's address is 35 Farranfad Road, Downpatrick, Northern Ireland BT30 8NH.



From *Jill's Riding Club*

The Greyfriars Club

The Greyfriars Club now in its 20th year of operation and its 17th year of the establishment of the **Frank Richards Museum & Library** has very great pleasure in once again extending the **Heartiest Christmas Greetings** to all hobby connoisseurs of Christian goodwill and integrity everywhere and in particular our C.D. editors past and present - Eric Fayne and Mary Cadogan - and all those scores of club members who have written to us over the past year in praise of our ' 94 & '95, 90 page full colour editions of the **Courtfield Newsletter (C.N)**, with all their news, articles, and good wishes..

As many of you know we have just returned from a tour of the Far East taking in South Africa, Australia & Tasmania, Hong Kong and finally China, - Beijing and climbing the Great Wall - during the last three months August, Sept and part October. As a consequence we have not been able to keep up with either our correspondents, or their news, or news in the hobby. It was only after our arrival home in October that we learned of the tragic loss of our senior Consultant and Vice President of the Club and the **Frank Richards Museum & Library**, George Samways, whose support and letters were always a joy to receive.

It was on the 3rd December 1984 that your Chairman wrote to George Samways stating that I would like to propose him to become our Patron and Consultant of the Club and a Trustee of the **Frank Richards Museum & Library**, as someone so intimately connected with the Magnet & Gem, and interested in preserving the Christian ideals and traditions given to us in those papers by Frank Richards. He replied to the effect that he would feel most honoured at having his name put forward, and in due course at our next meeting this was conveyed to our members. A formal vote then took place in which he was unanimously elected as Patron to our club and Senior Consultant and appointed to the position of Hon Trustee of the **Frank Richards Museum & Library**. A further unanimous vote was then passed appointing him as joint Vice President of both the Club and **Museum** (Tom Porter and Miss Edith Hood holding the existing posts,) as reported in **C.N.** No 48 which carried the full report. Our late President, Howard Baker, had long since held the post of President of the Club.

At an invitation from the late Tom Porter (Chairman of the Midland Club) and Jack Bellfield (Editor of their Newsletter, who has paid us so many compliments in their newsletters see **C.N.**'s nos., 35,36,37) for Friars to join them at their **Christmas Meeting** (see report front cover of the **C.N.** No 48) I took a party of Friars (Don Webster , John Look , Len Berg , Emanuel Cohen) up to Birmingham and they were delighted to see us as leading members were already Greyfriars Club members ; Tom Porter welcoming us in his opening address then invited me to speak in reply , which I was happy to do for it gave me an opportunity to return his complimentary remarks. Then the Christmas festivities began , for the two Joans, Joan Loveday and Joan Golen, had prepared an excellent Christmas feast. The reason I mention this was that all the above named and club members mentioned below have joined us many times at our Greyfriars Club meetings either at **Friardale or Courtfield** in Ruislip, or at **Kingsgate Castle** and at Stevenage. Emanuel each time travelled some 2,000 miles from Israel to be present. Alas, on our return from the Far East in October his daughter rang me to tell me that , following the loss of his beloved wife earlier this year, he had also joined her. A keener and more enthusiastic fan of our " Frank " would be hard to find and Friars will remember his excellent letters and articles in the **C. N.** Friars will remember his last letters in our last two issues of the **C.N.** among the scores that were published from Friars. They will undoubtedly join those other great Friars who have passed along the same road - which include our "Frank," (who passed away on **Christmas Eve** 1961) and Miss Edith Hood, our late President William (Bill) Howard Baker, Bob Blythe, (See 2nd para page 120 C.D.A. 1991 and centre pages C.D. April 91) John Look , Norman Kadish, and his brother Esmond, whose collections their relatives asked me to sell for them (see 2nd para centre pages C.D.Jan 91 and page 98, 2nd para C.D.A. 1989. Friars will remember them in this month of Remembrance as others, including myself, will also remember their comrades who fell in the last Great War, which was our reason for revisiting South Africa, where the "Lady in White"sang us into Durban harbour in the 1940's where we stopped on our way to the Middle East. I simply had to call and pay my respects at her monument,where she stood,and meet her niece who had sculpted her statue, and who met us and welcomed us to tea at her lovely house. in Durban.

Let me close by wishing you all another exciting and enjoyable read of the of the packed **New Year and Spring** edition of the full colour **Courtfield Newsletters**, and remind you of my advices contained at the end of your Chairmans report in last years excellent C.D. A. to which your Chairman on behalf of all our members adds his heartiest congratulation to it's sister mag the C.D on reaching it's 50th anniversary. Needless to say he has every one. God Bless.

R.F. Acraman. (Chairman/Secretary)

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TINGLEY

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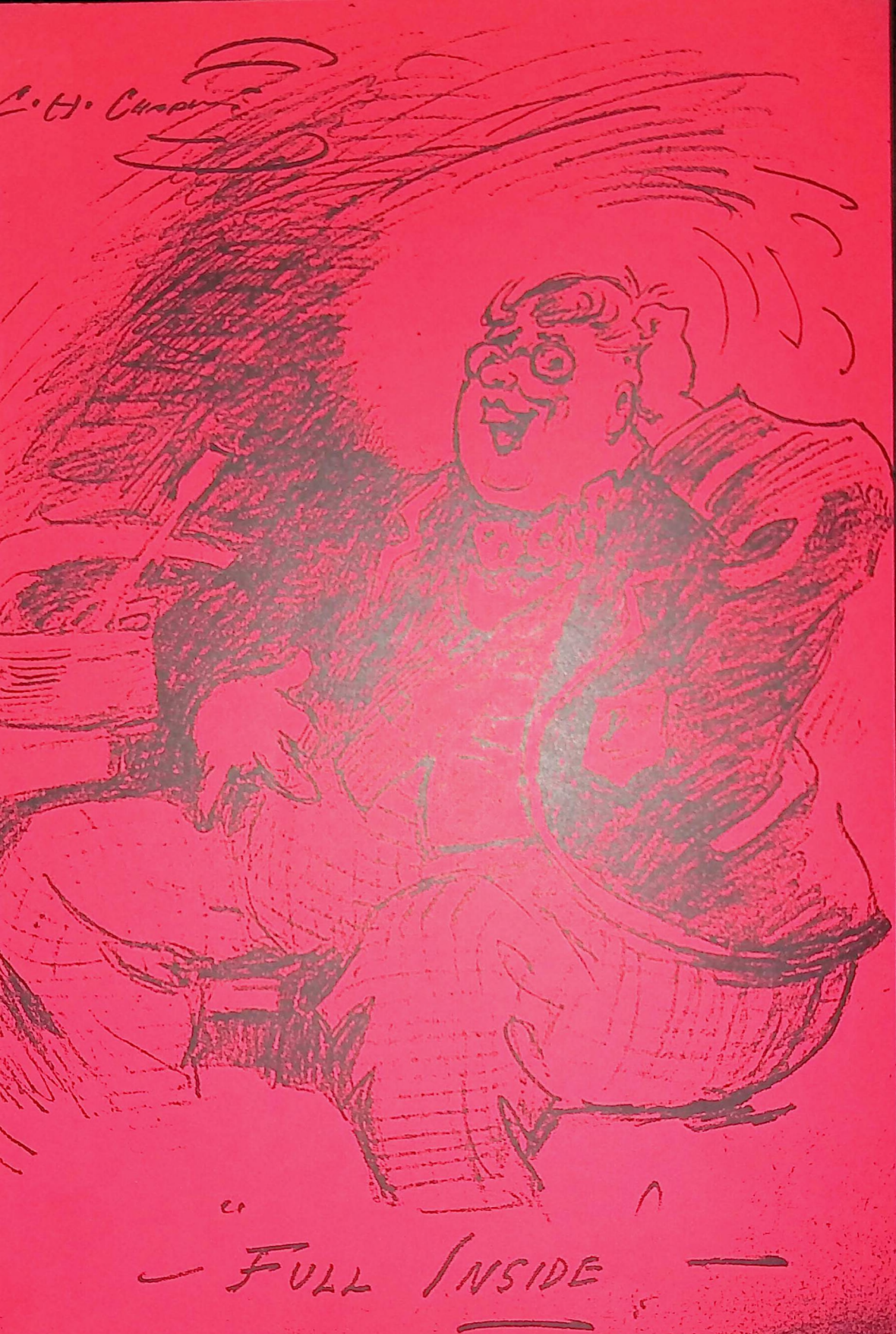

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