

An Old Boy Remembers!



An interesting article
by Lieut.-Comdr. PAT
STANLEY, R.N., one-time
Captain of St. Jim's.

IT was my privilege a few weeks ago to pay a visit to my old school for the first time since I left there sixteen years ago. I should certainly have gone earlier but for the fact that I have spent most of those sixteen years in sloshing about the seven seas in a cruiser. And many times, when I have been stewing in the China Sea or drinking iced lime-juice at Malta, my thoughts have gone back to the little sleepy hollow of Rylcombe and the ivy-covered school. I expected to find a great many changes in the old place.

Well, the first thing I saw on disembarking from the train was the identical horse-cab that took me away from the school, driven by the same identical driver, who was wearing (judging from its appearance) the same identical coat. The cab had not changed by so much as a single

splash of paint, but the horse was, perhaps, just a shade bonier than before. I climbed aboard this decrepit Ark and told Noah to get me to the school in one piece, if possible.

Rylcombe Village was also unchanged, save for a new cinema at the end of the High Street. It appeared to me that the village tuckshop still had the same slab of hard-bake, complete with dead flies, in its window. And when I reached the school I was quite staggered to find everything the same. It seemed as though the cab, instead of taking me away across the world for sixteen years, had merely turned round and brought me back.

Taggles was certainly a little older and a little crustier than when I dropped a couple of half-crowns into his horny palm as I went away. Otherwise he was not changed: Same

old bunch of keys, same old hat, same old grunt; and I even thought I saw his lips frame the same old remark about "young rips."

Dr. Holmes was as kindly as ever, but my old Housemaster, Mr. Kidd, had gone, his place being filled by a decent, athletic-looking chappie named Railton, who gave me tea in his study and proved a rattling good sort. One new feature, which I noticed at once, was electric light—we had gas lamps in my time.

And there was another change—Railton told me that caning was administered by "bending over." In my day we had it on the hands, but I really can't say which is the better method. Neither has any particular attraction.

I met Mr. Ratcliff, who was feature for feature the same old sourpuss as ever, bless him! One day he will forget himself and smile, and then his face will crack in halves and he'll have to be thrown away. I asked him if he remembered a fellow named Pelham. He replied sharply, "No, I do not!"—which was a lie. It's not easy to forget a Sixth Form man who, in a fit of exasperation, jams a wastepaper basket over your head and pushes you downstairs. Pelham was sacked on the spot, of course. He's sub-editor on a well-known daily paper now, I hear.

I looked into my old study in the Sixth, now occupied by a pleasant fellow named Darrell. Several prefects had dropped in to tea with him, and we had an interesting chat. I told them about an unexpected tea-party I myself once gave to the prefects. In those days I had a fag—a real gem of a fag—named Whibster, who was given me, for my sins, when he first came to St. Jim's. He was the dreamiest duffer I've ever seen.

One afternoon I decided to invite a friend, Crofter of the New House, to tea, as I wanted to have a chat about the cricket eleven. I sent Whibster over with the invitation. As he did not know Crofter by sight, it occurred to his brilliant brain that the best way of making quite sure that Crofter came to tea was to invite every prefect in the New House, and the right man would be bound to be among them.

Consequently, just as I had served up a nice little tea for two, my study was invaded by nine hungry men, who proceeded to make short work of the food on view, and then looked round for some more. I had to send an urgent SOS to the tuckshop, and as I was out of tin at the moment I had to borrow money all along the Sixth Form passage. The prefects of the New House owed a vote of thanks to Whibster, but he received something quite different from me.

I don't know what happened to Whibster when he left St. Jim's, but I should doubt whether he is alive to-day. Somebody must surely have slain him before now.

The present captain of the school, an Irish fellow named Kildare, is the right sort. I saw that at a glance. So are they all, if it comes to that. I



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watched the junior eleven in a match against Rookwood. The skipper, a youngster named Merry, made fifty-eight sparkling runs, and a fat New House fellow named Wynn bowled like a demon. Rookwood were well beaten by seven wickets, and we rarely did better than that in my day.

An elegant youth in spotless flannels and a monocle came up to welcome me to St. Jim's. Addressing me as "deah boy," he proceeded to do the honours with Chesterfieldian grace, and asked if it were not "twue" that I had been a friend of Lord Conway, his "eldah bwothah." I replied that it was perfectly true, but I felt rather dazed at the thought of Conway being related to such a peerless specimen of the old nobility. For Conway, as I knew him, had rather preferred his bags to be shabby, and he seemed to adorn his face with ink for reasons of personal taste.

It would surely be a deep blot on the D'Arcy escutcheon if it ever became known that Conway had, on one occasion, been sent up to the bathroom to wash ink off his face.

"I believe," beamed my youthful patron, "that my bwothah Conway was gweatly wespected in the school?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" I murmured.

"Yaas! My young bwothah, Wally, is wathah lackin' in wepose of mannah, but he is still quite young, you know. I'm suah old Conway had a twe-mendous wegard for his personal dig."

The vision of an ink-covered Conway shooting head-foremost off the banisters into Mr. Kidd's waistcoat rose before my eyes, but I fought it down.

"There's no doubt of it," I said loyally.

Before I went, I stepped into the tuckshop to see Mrs. Taggles, who welcomed me with her old good-humoured smile. A fat youth named Trimble (of Trimble Hall, I gathered) wanted to treat me to ginger-pop and tarts, but as I refused he kindly reversed the procedure and allowed me to treat him instead.

I thoroughly enjoyed my afternoon at the old place, and I am glad to see the present lot of fellows are keeping up its old traditions. They are a fine lot of modern boys, full of progress and common sense, and I am proud to think I once belonged to the same school.

Well played, the Saints! Keep the ball rolling in the good old way, and all the Old Boys of the school will wish you well.

GREYFRIARS FRAGMENTS

By BOB CHERRY

ODE TO A SKYLARK

(Not by Shelley)

I hate thee more than I can tell
On winter mornings, cold and dark:
When Gosling rings the rising bell,
He always rises with the lark!
Oh, beastly bird! Canst thou not rest
Within the comfort of thy nest?

WELL, THAT'S TRUTH, ANYWAY!

If Bunter lies all day,
What does he do all night?
"Lies still!" did someone say?
You're absolutely right!
And when he bursts, and meets his doom,
They'll put "Here Lies" upon his tomb!

STUDY IN BLACK AND WHITE

Now Inky is a "white man,"
And Smithy's a "black sheep":
Yet Inky's black and Smithy's white—
It fairly makes you weep!

PROBLEM PIECE

A snowball crashed upon the nose
Of Dr. Locke, with force!
Another dropped upon his head—
By accident, of course;
But which of these two, so to speak,
Would cause the greatest dread—
To hit the Head upon the beak,
Or the Beak upon the head?