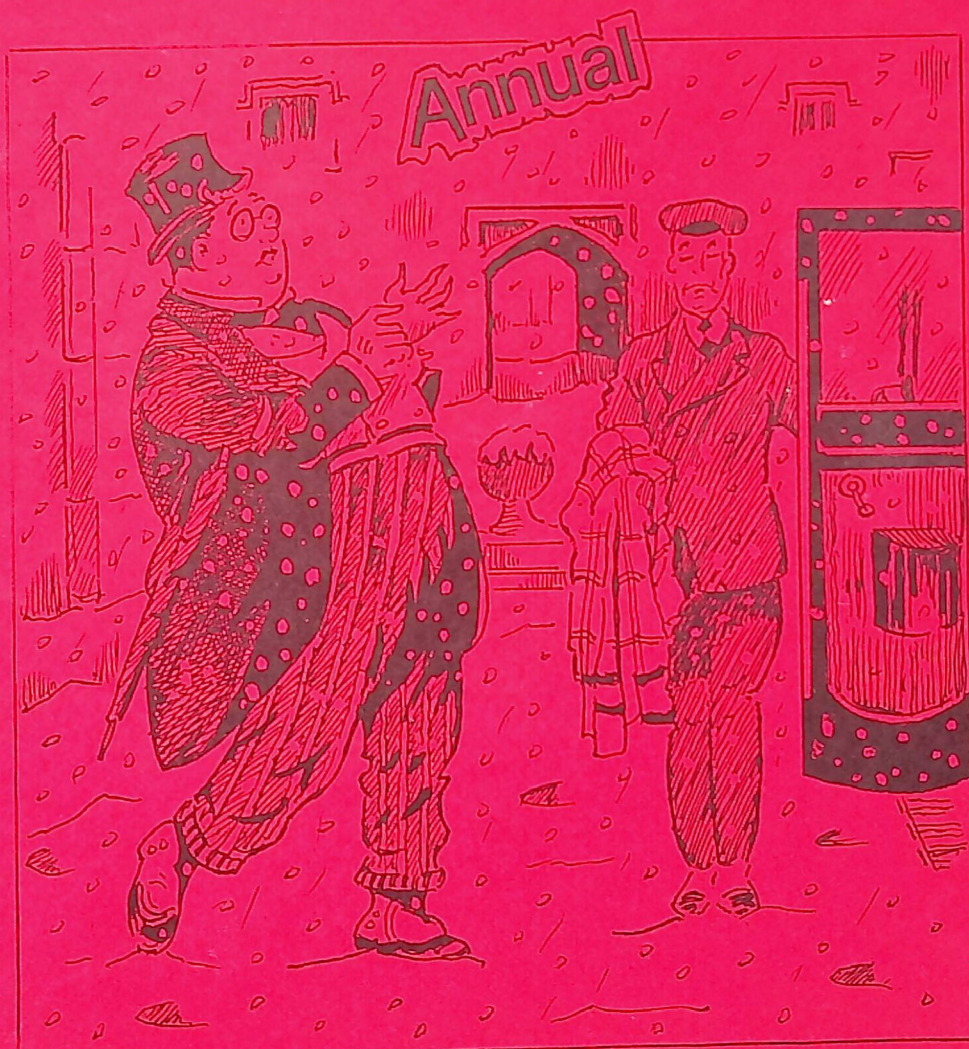


COLLECTORS' DIGEST

1999

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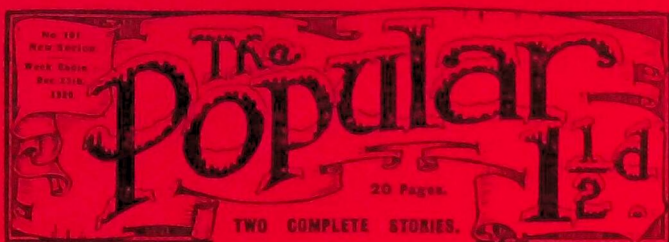


TO BUNTER COURT FOR CHRISTMAS!

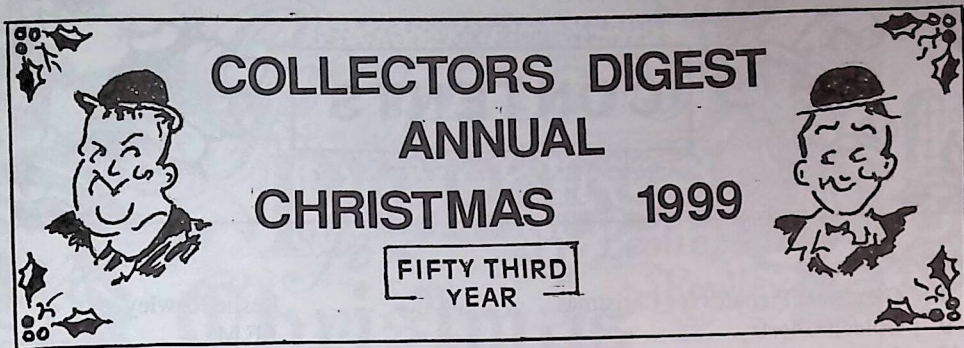
What Happened on CHRISTMAS-DAY!



By
Hilda
Richards



CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AT BUNTER COURT!



EDITOR: MARY CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM,
KENT BR3 6PY.

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FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

I think we can all take pride in the fact that this last C.D. Annual of the twentieth century is our 53rd volume, with standards as high as ever. As always, many aspects of our hobby are catered for: our contributors, both literary and artistic, have presented us with lots of wonderfully entertaining and nostalgic features.

As we hover on the verge of the new millennium it is a time to look forward and to hope that the twenty-first century will bring good things to men, women and children everywhere. I know that C.D. readers will respond to the deeper meanings of the current celebrations. At the heart of these is everything that is symbolised by what happened in the Bethlehem stable 2000 years ago (or thereabouts!), and all that has flowed from it.

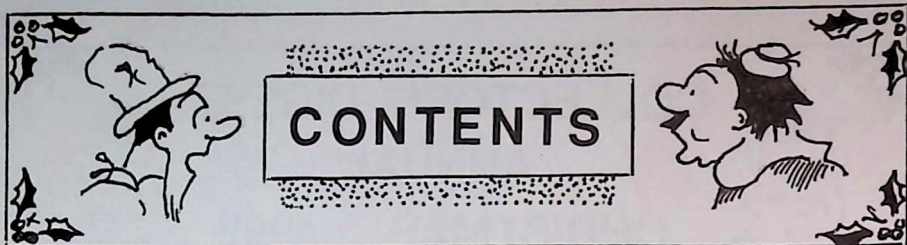
This is also a time to look back: to re-live and share memories of families and friends, of public and private events - and of books and stories we have loved. This year we have had to bid farewell to several members of our collecting circle who have passed away, and we shall long remember them with warm affection. Happily, however, we have also been able to welcome new friends into the hobby.

I trust that our Millennium Annual will strike the right note with readers, both new and long-standing. Thanks are, as always, due to our fine writers and illustrators. Henry Webb has supplied our attractive cover picture and most of the headings. Bob Whiter and Tony Glynn have also provided some very atmospheric pictures for us. We are particularly grateful to Una Hamilton Wright for her own article about 'Uncle Charley' and for providing us with an unpublished story by 'Frank Richards'.

Of course, Quacks - our printers - have not only produced our Annual but all the monthlies throughout 1999. It is a demanding schedule and, as ever, I would like to express deep appreciation of their unfailing, courteous and willing help.

Lastly, as Editor, I know that I am blessed to have such loyal and generous support from readers. I send my thanks to you all, and sincerest wishes for

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS NEW
CENTURY.
MARY CADOGAN.



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AN ICY wind from the north-east had swept in the snow from the sea and the grey of the early afternoon was heavy with its wintry burden of feathery flakes that would be added to the country lanes, fields and meadows of Kent. Rime from the early morning frost still remained, etching its delicate pattern on the glass of the study window from which the aquiline features of Henry Samuel Quelch looked out upon a frozen quad.

The Christmas vacation was close at hand, and soon the school would lie still and silent. The boisterous spirits of his form, the Remove, would soon be dispersing to many corners of the kingdom, and the cheerful voices of youth would no longer call across the quadrangle or echo along the corridors.

The Quelchillian eyes, so keen they were often likened to gimlets, focused on a small group of figures in the distance. Coats buttoned up to the chin, mufflers flowing in the wind, some half a dozen boys were busily engaged in making a slide. Slides, of course, were frowned upon by the beaks. Injury to limbs was a decided risk where slides were concerned and authority had sensibly banned them. Greyfriars men, however, viewed things differently from their kind masters. There was something exhilarating in whizzing along on a stretch of ice, and there was the added excitement of knowing that you were doing that which was forbidden.

A look of recognition came to Quelch's face as he gazed more intently at the culprits. His Head Boy, Wharton, who should have been a shining example to the other members of the form, together with his friends, was actively flouting the regulations. And Quelch was not surprised - not surprised at all to note that they had been joined by Vernon-Smith, a boy who constantly held authority in impudent disregard. The frown on Quelch's face became positively fearful. Although he would probably have expressed himself differently, Quelch was fed up with that member of his form. During that very term, Vernon-Smith had been found out of bounds at "The Three Fishers", had been

suspected of attending the Wapshot races, had been discovered smoking on several occasions. His sins seemed to Quelch to be as numerous as the sands on the seashore.

The master of the Remove was about to ring for Trotter to carry a summons for those young rascals to come to his study, when he paused. Quelch had been a boy himself sometime - in those dear dead days beyond recall - and it was just possible that in those happy days of carefree youth, Quelch had made a slide or two himself. Christmas near and, boys being boys, slides on the landscape were all part and parcel of the merry season.

The bell remained unring; Trotter remained unsummoned.

Mr Quelch went over to the fireplace and, picking up the poker, stirred the glowing coals into a cheerful blaze.

THE Bounder threw the half-finished cigarette into the study grate and scowled after it as it was consumed by the glowing coals that radiated comfort into the shadowy room. Outside, the dark of a winter's evening had all but fallen, bringing with it the gentle flutter of snowflakes against the window panes. Redwing would soon be coming up for tea, but Smithy made no move to get things ready. The ample supplies remained in the cupboard; the table was unmade; and the kettle needed filling from the tap in the Remove passage. Smithy had other things on his mind.

The Christmas holidays would shortly begin, and the studies and passages were alive with the excited chatter of fellows planning for the most festive of occasions. Redwing, his chum, was due to join his father at Hawkescliffe, old Tom Redwing having safely brought his lugger home from a long stay in northern waters. Smithy had been looking forward to a reunion with Mr Vernon-Smith, but that busy man was on the other side of the world negotiating an important business deal, and would be away well into the New Year. Before he had gone he had told his son that he was



The Remove master was about to ring for Trotter - when he paused. Quelch had been a boy himself sometime - in those dear dead days beyond recall.

welcome to invite a party of his friends to the house in Portman Square for the vacation, and Smithy had been giving the matter some consideration. When he had made that offer, Mr Vernon-Smith had in mind a party of Greyfriars men - impeccably mannered like Harry Wharton and his friends. What his son had in mind was a party of a much different calibre. Painting the town red in the company of Pon & Co. from Highcliffe had more appeal for the Bounder than mixing with fellows from his own form with whom he had recently been at loggerheads.

His first impulse had been to give Ponsonby a ring on Quelch's phone - that gentleman having gone to tea with the vicar, Mr Lambe. But he had resisted the impulse without really knowing the reason why: yet he had resisted. He stirred himself from the armchair and switched on the light. As he did so, there came the sound of footsteps in the passage outside and the door was thrown open as Redwing came into the study. The Bounder regarded his study mate with a cynical smile.

"Glad you've come up, Reddy, I've got something to ask you. For once I'm following Bunter's shining example and scrounging an invitation for the hols. Do you think you and your pater could put up with my company? Don't be afraid to turn me down, but if you can see your way clear . . ."

The radiant look on Redwing's face gave Smithy his answer but, if there was any lingering doubt, his friend's words soon banished it.

"Of course there will be a welcome for you. My father and I will be glad of your company. But are you sure you want to come? Christmas at Hawkscliffe will be different from Christmas in town but, if you really mean it, Smithy . . ."

"We'll talk about it over tea," replied the Bounder, "but, seeing it's the season of good will to all men, I thought we would have a study spread. Kill the fatted calf and that sort of thing. So, if you will get the things ready, I'll go and rope in Wharton and his pals. Let's hope that Bunter doesn't feature on the

programme.”

As Smithy made his way along the Remove passage, a smile on his face and a whistle on his lips, and his mind looking beyond the forthcoming spread, he knew that it was going to be a very merry Christmas for him. A far better Christmas indeed than spending it in the company of Pon and his nutty pals.

THE snow lay thick upon branch and bough; it formed a crisp and feathery blanket over field and meadow; it touched with magic the ledge of every window and casement, just as it had the slates and chimneypots of Wharton Lodge.

It was a seasonable picture that should have gladdened the heart of any traveller arriving to spend the holiday under that hospitable roof. It had certainly gladdened the hearts of Harry Wharton & Co. that morning, and now they had gone off to inspect the ice on the lake to see whether it was safe for skating.

William George Bunter had arrived at a later hour, the delay being occasioned by an altercation with some officious and suspicious railway official, and, in common with established practice, he had arrived uninvited. He had paused at the gateway to the Lodge, not for the purpose of assimilating and appreciating the beauty of Nature at her wintry best, but because prudence dictated that he should proceed with caution.

A few days earlier Wharton had been extremely shirty at hearing Bunter referring to Colonel Wharton and his sister as “a couple of old fogies”. That shirtiness had taken the shape of a severe booting and the dire prophecy that Bunter would be slaughtered should he show his fat nose within five miles of Wharton’s home. Only that morning there had been a repeat performance of the booting when Bunter had tried to attach himself to Wharton’s party when it had set off from Greyfriars. Now Bunter was anxious - only too anxious - that his fat carcass should not suffer a third time.

If Bunter lacked appreciation of the view of Wharton Lodge from the outside, he had ample appreciation for all that lay within. He could picture the blazing logs in the great fireplace, the dancing flicker from the flames as their glow reached out towards the portraits of past Whartons that hung in the panelled hall. The walls would be decked with holly,

and an outsize in Christmas trees would adorn a corner near the foot of the staircase. Beyond the green baize doors, which led to the domestic quarters, would be assembled a vast concourse of those things which Bunter liked most. Magnificent turkeys and barons of beef and the trimmings that went with them. The Christmas puddings, surrounded by gorgeous mincepies sparkling from their dusting of caster sugar. Elsewhere there would be fruits and confections in profusion. It was this upon which Bunter’s podgy mind dwelt as he paused, like a fat peri at the gates of paradise. But the pause was brief. Surely, Bunter speculated, as he trudged on up the drive, surely they would not be so beastly as to turn him away from this scene of plenty. Surely they would remember Bunter’s good points - his personal charm and the gracefulness of his manners at table - and welcome him as a pal.

As he reached the porch and extended a plump fist towards the bell pull, Bunter hoped with all his heart that it would prove a very merry Christmas after all.



As he reached the porch and extended a podgy fist towards the bell pull Bunter hoped with all his heart that it would prove a very merry Christmas after all!

The huge log in the great fireplace crackled and sent a spitting protest of sparks and flame upwards through the vast Elizabethan chimney. The ruddy glow of the fire reached out to caress the azure, the or, the rouge and the argent of crest and shield of long ago. The flickering light touched the gilded frames embracing ancestors in their silence of oil and canvas. Only here and there, on the polished oak panelling, did the light find some friendly reflection in the gathering gloom of the afternoon.

In the deep recess of his armchair, Lord Mauleverer stirred uneasily. Suddenly, it seemed, the fire had lost its warmth. An icy, chilling current of air penetrated the thick wool of the expensive lounge suit and his lordship gave a sudden shiver. His instinct was to reach out and stir the fire with the massive steel poker, but it was an instinct that his body was unwilling to follow, for his every limb seemed weighted with lead as the uncertain shadows surrounded him. He knew, as certainly as though Porson, the butler, had announced it that there was another presence in the room. Then, as he became more accustomed to the failing light, he saw the commanding figure before him.

Mauleverer needed no telling whose figure it was. The full-length likeness of the traitorous Red Earl that hung in the long gallery had been familiar to him since early childhood. So had the legend that had been handed down from one generation of the family to another. A story calculated to make the blood run cold with its dire portent of what would befall any Mauleverer so unfortunate as to receive a visit from the Red Earl's uneasy spirit. As the dread figure approached, the schoolboy earl struggled vainly for his self possession as the right hand of the spectre, heavy in its gauntlet of armour, reached out menacingly toward him . . .

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The ebullient roar of Bob Cherry of the Remove, so often compared to that of Stentor of old, resounded through the panelled room. "Here's his giddy lordship, sound asleep, you fellows."

"Does he ever do anything else?" enquired Johnny Bull as he and the rest of the Co. gathered round Mauly's armchair.

"The sleepfulness of the esteemed Mauly is terrific."

Herbert Mauleverer rubbed the sleep from his eyes as Harry Wharton switched on the lights. The sudden illumination drove the last



vestiges of the horrid dream from his mind as he rose to greet the friends who had come to join him for the Christmas hols.

"I - I - I say Mauly, old chap, is it all right?" A fat nose surmounted by a pair of spectacles peered cautiously in at the doorway. Bunter, at variance with the other fellows, had come uninvited and was wondering what kind of reception he would receive.

Mauly stifled the groan that came to his lips. A few moments before he had been troubled by a presence of the shadowy past. Now he was to be troubled by a presence of the substantial - very substantial - present. Possibly for this one appearance only, his lordship preferred the earthy bulk of Bunter. He nodded resignedly. After all, there were plenty of the chaps around to save him the fag of kicking Bunter himself if the need, as it most probably would, should arise.

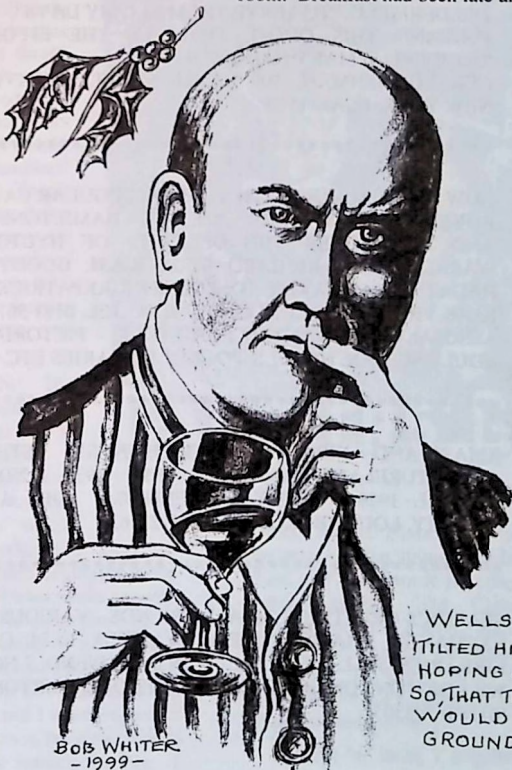
WELLS, the butler, lifted the glass that contained some of his master's finest port. A ray of wintry sunshine shafted its way through the pantry window, turning the wine into a bowl of rich ruby before the appreciative palate of Wells savoured the bouquet and the body.

Like Caspar in the poem, Wells considered his day's work was done. The boy, Thomas, should soon be through with the preparation in Master Harry's den and the maids had already cleaned and aired the best rooms ready for the friends who were to join him for the holidays at the Lodge. The hall, the dining room, the library, and even the corridors, would later be transformed by the seasonable decorations of tinsel and holly.

Christmas was a season of happiness which was heartily endorsed by Wells. He liked to see young people enjoy themselves and he would allow his normally expressionless features to relax to register benign approbation. Earlier, Wells had inspected those miracles of the culinary arts that the kitchen had been called upon to provide. Huge Christmas puddings, with their aroma of brandy and spice, flanked by a

veritable army of mincepies on which sparkling caster sugar rested like a delicate touch of frost. Giant turkeys, that would take pride of place at the festive table, awaited their turn in the oven. On sideboard and tables bowls and boxes of chocolates and crystallised fruits awaited the delectation of those who might have room to spare. At teatime there would be the Christmas cake, a masterpiece, its mixture of dark fruit hidden by two layers - one of marzipan, another of pink icing, with its greeting in red.

True, Wells had laboured little in these festive preoccupations, but he had looked with favour on the labour of others and found it good. There had been something else that he had gazed upon and found good, and this was the guest list. He had noted, with great pleasure, the names which featured on that list. He had noted, with greater pleasure still, a name that did not appear thereon. There may be those who would declaim that a guest list without the distinguished name of William George Bunter on it was beneath consideration. Wells was not of this school of thought. His experience of Bunter had not been a happy one. That young person (Wells never thought of Bunter as a young gentleman) had at previous Christmas gatherings taxed the patience of the Wharton Lodge staff to the limit. They had been kept busy carrying numerous foodstuffs to Bunter's room. Breakfast had been late and luncheon had

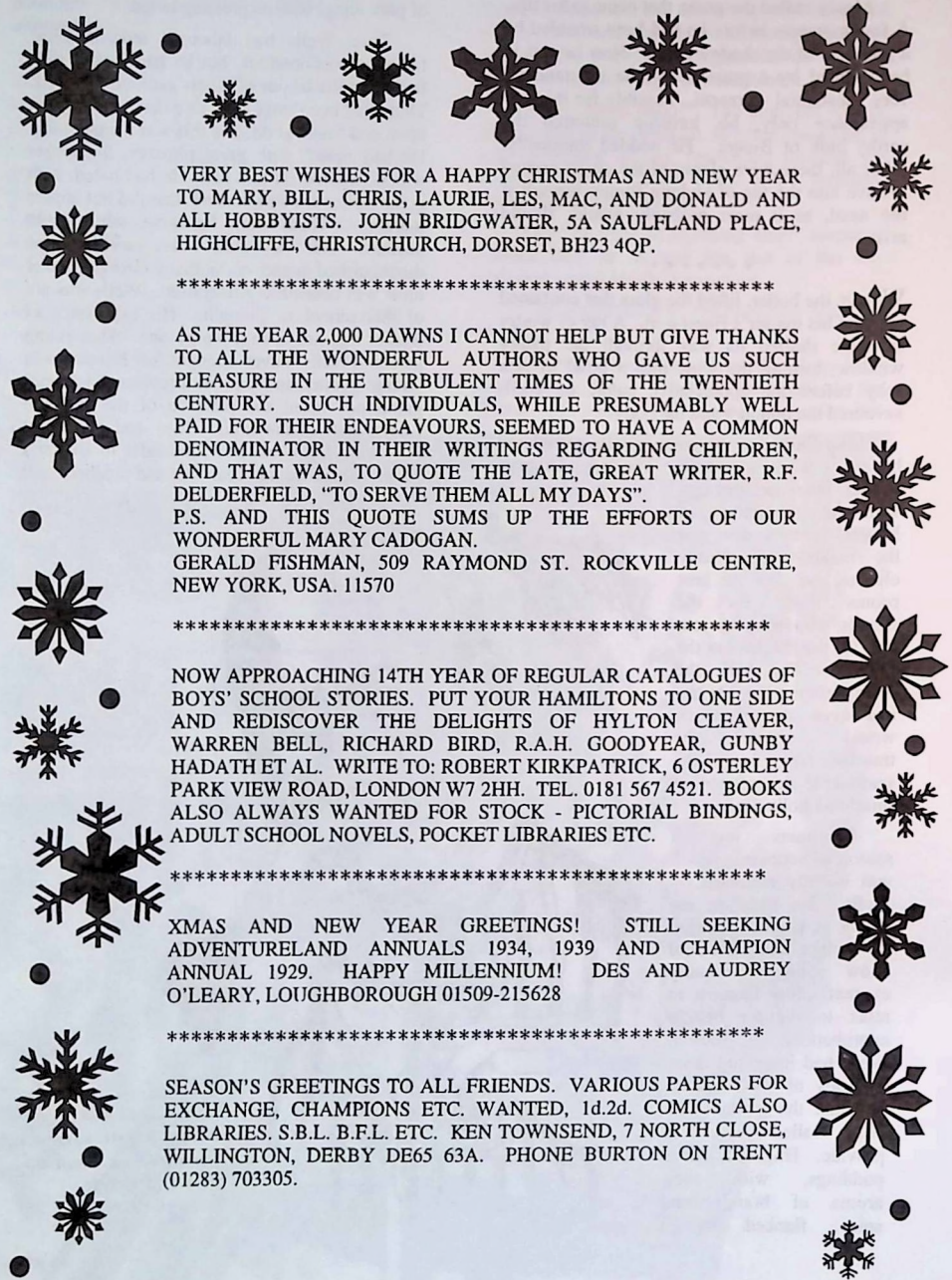


WELLS...
TILTED HIS GLASS,
HOPING AS HE DID
SO, THAT THOSE DOUBTS
WOULD PROVE
GROUNDLESS.....

been early, but Bunter had never managed to bridge the gap without snacks that would have satisfied a young and active horse. Bunter believed in doing himself well at other people's expense, his only acknowledgement to economy being in his use of soap and water with which to remove the traces of gluttony from his face. There had been raids on the larder; there had been raids on Master Harry's wardrobe. There had been all this and much, much more. And

Bunter, who always remembered mealtimes during his stay, never remembered gratuities for the staff when a stay came to its end.

Yes, Wells was pleased that Bunter did not feature on that guest list. Yet, in the innermost recesses of his portly mind, there lingered some faint doubt. He tilted his glass, hoping, as he did so, that those doubts would prove groundless.



VERY BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TO MARY, BILL, CHRIS, LAURIE, LES, MAC, AND DONALD AND ALL HOBBYISTS. JOHN BRIDGWATER, 5A SAULFLAND PLACE, HIGHCLIFFE, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET, BH23 4QP.

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GOLDEN GHOSTS:

A NOSTALGIC JOURNEY

BY J.E.M.

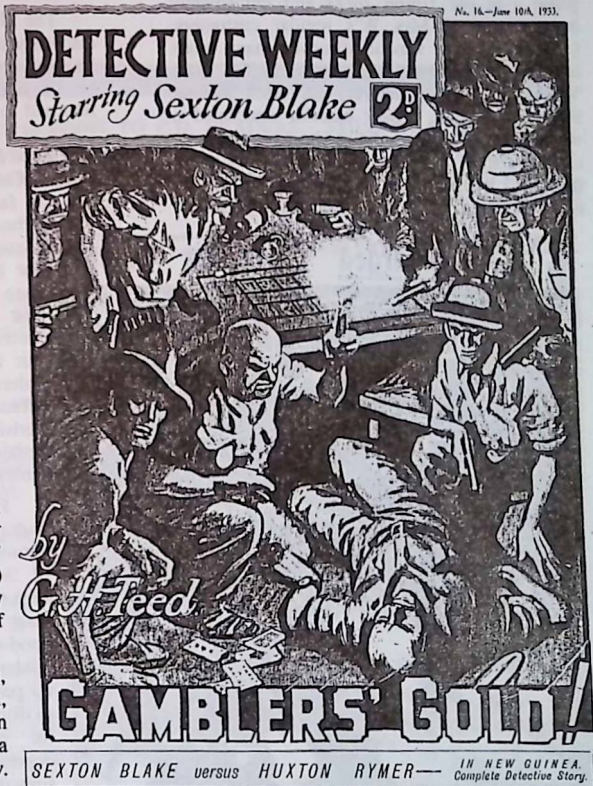


WHERE better to find a detective with a great tradition than in a city of many traditions? I discovered Sexton Blake in York more than sixty-five years ago - and in one of the oddest places.

The city, in those days, had a large weekly open market and it was always something of an adventure to wander around the numerous stalls which sold everything from hardware to soft fruit, from cheap clothing to any amount of useless, and sometimes unidentifiable, knick-knacks. There was also at least one stall selling second-hand magazines, comics and story-papers and it was here I first met Sexton Blake. He had not long abandoned the *Union Jack* for the *Detective Weekly*, and it was a copy of the latter (No. 16, in fact) that caught my eye. Its cover, brilliantly drawn by Eric Parker (who thereafter has had me for ever in his thrall) showed a tropical gambling den with a body on the floor, surrounded by some very tough-looking characters with automatic pistols in their hands. The story concerned was "Gamblers' Gold" and was one of G.H. Teed's fast-paced exotic tales, Blake doing battle with his old adversary, Dr Huxton Rymer. This was readers' gold and it cost me just one (old) penny, setting me on a journey which, with a number of interruptions, has continued.

Another *DW* cover (No. 26), which also drew my attention, showed Zenith the Albino, as ever in full evening dress, dealing a uniformed policeman a nasty blow. The story it illustrated was Anthony Skene's "The Crime Zone" which, Blakians may recall, introduced a touch of startling science fiction, Zenith deploying a ray which disabled all motor vehicles while he went about his criminal business in a car powered by steam! If I remember correctly, he also used a pair of X-ray spectacles to reveal the contents of bank safes!! This issue of the *DW* persuaded me to part with another penny and I much regretted that this was all I could spare at the time. Older readers will understand the reasons for this. I

had not long been a pupil at the local grammar school and, in the view of parents and teachers, pocket-money was not to be spent on 'penny dreadfuls' and 'twopenny bloods'. Thus I had to read, as well as buy, such material clandestinely but this only added to the fun and I was soon daydreaming of great criminal coups



which Sexton Blake alone would be able to frustrate. (What strange bed-fellows writers like Teed and Skene made for other occupants of my school satchel, like Caesar and Vergil, Shakespeare and Euclid. But what a wonderful escape and stimulus the Blake authors provided whenever the Gallic Wars of the Aeneid or Henry IV or the congruence of triangles brought the usual headaches!)

Little by little, I acquired more *DWs* and

soon learned from the readers' letters pages that many - perhaps most - of Blake's older followers lamented the transformation from the *Union Jack*, a journal about which I then knew less than nothing. This was a gap in my knowledge I was determined to plug. The market stall where I had come across the *DW* had no copies of its predecessor but I soon found in a street not far from York's great cathedral, the Minster, a quaint run-down shop which specialised in the sale of old story-papers - including the *Union Jack*. Illuminated by a single flickering gas-jet (believe it or not!), this strange emporium was run by a rather crusty-looking body of mature years called Mrs Walker. One could not help thinking her half-lit shop was a suitably sinister home for tales of crime and detection. At all events, this was where I found piles - literally piles! - of old *Union Jacks* and immediately became one of Mrs W's regular customers. (Another one, I was to discover many years later, was Herbert Leckenby himself.) Mrs Walker proved to be very far from sinister herself; even the crusty exterior concealed a warm heart when sometimes she gave me three copies of the *UJ* for the price of two. Most of the *UJ*s I bought from her belonged to the last two years or so of its life, which is why Sexton

Blake for me belongs essentially to the period 1931 - 1933.

The *UJ*'s final year was surely a most memorable one, including as it did the brilliant "Tram Series", the "Next Move" serial (to which the cream of the paper's authors contributed), the last of the Wu Ling stories, the conclusion of the Criminals' Confederation saga and, perhaps not least, one of the best Christmas stories Gwyn Evans ever wrote. Nearly all the tales from this period were illustrated by Eric Parker who was then on the very top of his form. If his brilliant, compelling graphics could not save the *UJ* from extinction - or at any rate from its metamorphosis into the *DW* - nothing could. Happily, as we know, he continued his fine work for the *DW*, as did many of the old *UJ*'s most distinguished authors.

The first fine careless rapture of my discovery of Sexton Blake obviously can never be recaptured and, in any case, one had to move on to other things. However, when I later returned to Baker Street, it was to see Sexton Blake in a new light. The very survival of this long-lived figure in popular fiction was clearly a matter of some socio-literary interest if nothing else. In fact, I was driven to see all so-called

'cheap' fiction from a different viewpoint. If survival is the ultimate test for the worth of a fictional character, then Sexton Blake had obviously joined that great pantheon which runs from Robin Hood to Billy Bunter - a part of our folklore. All this has, of course, enhanced rather than detracted from my affection for the man who was once derisively dubbed - I think somewhat unfairly - 'the office boys' Sherlock Holmes'.

For me, at any rate, Blake undoubtedly helped to bridge the gap between juvenile and adult fiction. Some of the long-running characters in the saga may have been a bit too exotic but at least they often transcended the simple good-or-bad classification. For an adolescent enduring the usual growing-up pains and anxieties it was wonderful to discover that they magnificent Zenith, for example, suffered the blackest depressions and melancholy. It was also something of a shock not only to encounter a master criminal (G.M. Plummer) who had once been a senior Scotland Yard detective, but also to meet a criminal husband-and-wife team like Gilbert and Eileen Hale. Members of the opposite sex could also be intriguingly complex characters, e.g. Yvonne, Roxane, June Severance, Miss Death, Olga Naismith, to name but a handful from the vast regiment of womanhood with whom Blake became involved. That

SEXTON BLAKE is a special, seasonal, Complete Detective Story in this attractive, Enlarged Christmas Number

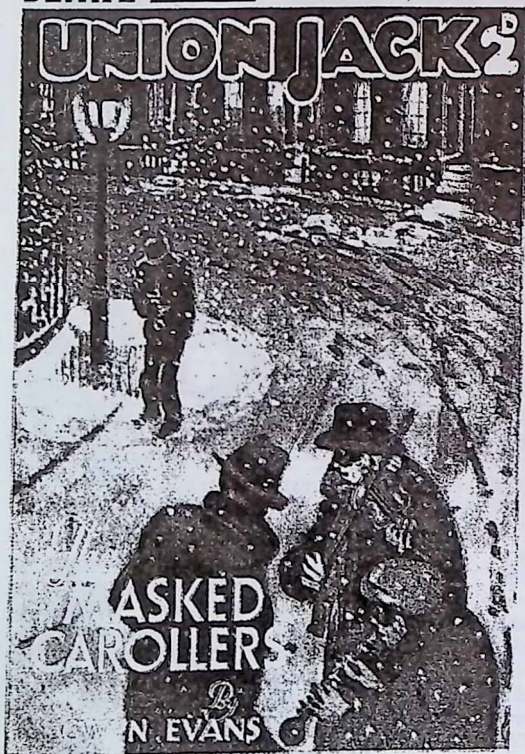


Fig. 1,211

EVERY FRIDAY.

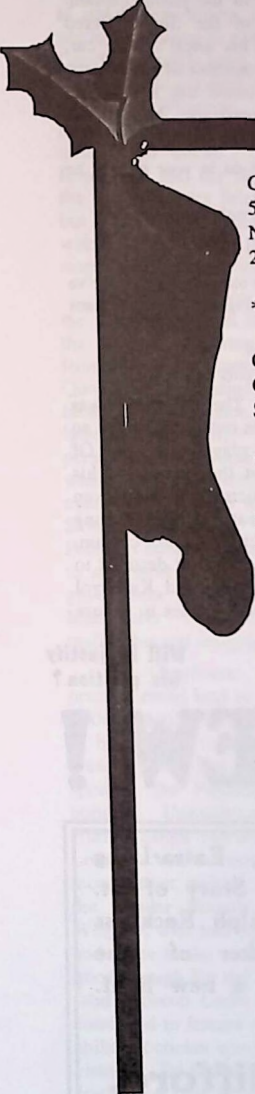
December 1934, 1-12

welcome!) change from the sexless heroes we had met in the course of earlier youthful reading. In short, Sexton Blake took me - and countless others - a little further into another world . . .

Mrs Walker of Colliergate, York, is long gone and her little shop, like so many other little shops, is now a café helping to cater for some of the million or so tourists and visitors the city welcomes every year. The large open market has also disappeared, reduced - at least on my last visit - to a few stalls in a side street. Our day and age, it seems, is now too affluent to make a home for a real provincial Petticoat Lane. But the ghosts of Mrs Walker and that market stallholder who introduced me to Sexton Blake,

almost a lifetime ago, must still haunt my old city just as Blake himself still haunts the imagination.

Footnote: In their choice of cheap popular crime fiction, my school contemporaries in the period referred to were, as I recall, roughly divided between Blakians and devotees of the *Thriller*, the weekly whose main attractions included the work of writers like Edgar Wallace and Leslie Charteris. The latter's creation, the 'Saint', was perhaps one of Blake's main competitors. I was myself (I still am) a fan of the 'Saint', though he will never be more than a runner-up to Sexton Blake!



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Games and sport in Hamiltonia

By Roger Jenkins



SOME avid sports fans have been heard to complain bitterly that Charles Hamilton's descriptions of cricket games, for example, were much too brief, and that they failed to mention the individual scores of all the batsmen, let alone the various types of delivery used by the bowlers: in short, it would not be good enough for entry in Wisden. Other criticisms have been made about inconsistencies in the choice of players for the various teams. The answer to all these objections is surely that Hamilton was not really interested in sport as such: it was just one of the many devices used in the exposition of his character dramas.

Where he may have slipped up was in the use of Association Football as a winter game, when the vast majority of public schools were and still are devoted to Rugby Union. Even this discrepancy may have been deliberate. The *Magnet* and *Gem* (unlike the *Captain*) were not aimed at public school boys, but were written for a much wider readership, and the choice of Association Football undoubtedly helped to widen that appeal. The problem was met head-on quite early in a *Gem* entitled "The Rugger Fourth". Tipton, a rugger-playing school, sent a challenge to St. Jim's. Tom Merry thought it unsuitable, but the receipt of a white feather so incensed Blake that he raised a Fourth Form fifteen to play Tipton, who were bad sports, but of course the Fourth Form won. The clear implication is that rugger-playing is somehow dishonourable compared with Association

Football. It is also worthy of note that Blake sometimes took the initiative from Tom Merry in some of the earlier *Gems*.

One of the principal uses of sport in Hamiltonian schools was its employment in causing the unpopularity of the junior captain. At Rookwood, Smythe of the Shell offered Jimmy Silver the use of his uncle's huge car, capable of holding a large number of passengers. The junior cricket team could use it to travel direct to the match at Greyfriars. Mornington was dubious:-

"Do you know what I'd do in your place?" he asked.

"Well, what?" said Jimmy rather restively.

"I'd refuse."

"And why?"

"You remember what that old johnny said - we've had it in class," said Mornington. "Timco Danaos et dona ferentes -"

"Construe," grinned Lovell.

"I fear the Greeks and the gifts they bring."

Mornington was right. The junior team was kidnapped and driven miles out of their way so that Smythe's team could play Greyfriars. Of course, Smythe hoped that the success of his team would silence all criticism, but his eleven suffered a humiliating defeat. It was not long before Mornington was elected as junior captain, but his tenure of that office was not destined to last long. When Jimmy Silver and Kit Errol successfully pleaded with Mr Bootles to excuse

Keen and clever as he may be, Cardew has shouldered a big responsibility.

Will he justify his position?

CAPTAIN CARDEW!



A Splendid, New, Extra-Long Complete School Story of St. Jim's, featuring Ralph Reckness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth Form, in a new light.

BY

Martin Clifford.

Mornington from detention so that he could play in the team that afternoon, Mornington repaid them by going off to Ticky Tapp's roulette game.

Similarly at St. Jim's, Cardew resorted to all sorts of tricks to avoid compulsory games practice but, when they were proved ineffective, he decided to become junior captain himself. He succeeded in putting Tom Merry in the wrong and got himself nominated for the post. Tom Merry was too proud to canvass for votes (a situation more appropriate for Harry Wharton) and of course he lost the election. Events at St. Jim's followed a much more violent course than those at Rookwood. Not only did Cardew prove unsatisfactory, but he also arranged for someone to attack Tom Merry, though the victim turned out to be Levison (a similar situation occurred at Greyfriars much later, in 1932, when Vernon-Smith's hired assailant struck at Redwing instead of Harry Wharton). In the end, Cardew proposed Tom Merry for captain, and the wheel turned full circle. In both the Rookwood and the St. Jim's series the matches were briefly described, but the junior who kicked the winning goal was the one who maintained his authority.

Manipulation was the name of the game in the first Rebel series in the *Magnet*. Wharton was deposed from his form captaincy by Mr Quelch (the distinction between Head Boy and junior captain was a later innovation). Wharton persuaded Mauleverer to stand and, when he was elected, he did everything Wharton told him to do, Skinner comparing Wharton with Polonius behind the arras. Needless to say, most of the advice Wharton gave him was unsound, and Mauleverer eventually came to realise this and resigned.

At Greyfriars, even games practice could lead to a feud. When Loder ordered Hurree Singh to bowl at him in the nets, Loder derived pleasure from the fact that he was spoiling the Famous Five's half-holiday. Unfortunately for Loder, Hurree Singh bowled so well that Loder was made to look incompetent, and he attempted to hit the bowler himself, but was prevented by Wingate, who had witnessed the whole episode and come to the conclusion that Loder was not good enough for the senior eleven. So began a feud between Loder and Wingate, and cricket continued to feature in the series. Nevertheless, ability at cricket was not confined to the morally virtuous. Da Costa, for example, was a splendid cricketer at first, but went downhill when trouble

overwhelmed him: so character does play some part in success. Similarly, with Stacey the same sort of occasion was related. His father wrote to him:

'It is good to know that you are going to Greyfriars, my old school. I suppose you are having the time of your life now. Your cricket ought to make you popular, unless the old school has changed a lot since my time.'

Stacey's cricket was so good that he even played for the senior team, but he was not always reliable when depressed by external events. He even used cricket as a tool in his feud with Wharton when he contrived to get Wharton run out, but in such a way that other cricketers merely thought it was a piece of bad luck:-

"You'll bat without me. I won't play again with that cur. What's the good?" shouted Wharton savagely. "Do you want me to be run out in the second innings too?"



It was from the foot of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that the ball went in. Seven minutes to go, and the visitors were one goal down! "A good game—a good game!" said Dr. Locke. And the game went on hard and fast.

Stacey was amenable to blackmail by Loder who was engaged in betting on the result of a match. It became clear that Wharton was more to be relied upon. Another character of dubious morals was Lancaster, who was a splendid cricketer. As a result no one would believe any accusations made against him. In this case, cricket was used as a means of suggesting moral worth.

Games were often so important that a master was asked to excuse someone from detention so that he could play for the Junior XI. In the second Rebel series, they asked Mr Quelch to excuse Wharton from detention. The Remove master was quite amenable, but he wanted to hear Wharton ask him personally. Harry Wharton was not so accommodating:-

"Considering that my detention was an act of injustice -"

"What?" gasped Mr Quelch.

"Considering that my detention was an act of injustice, I think you should let me off."

A dead silence followed the football captain's words.

Mr Quelch was equally obdurate when he detained the whole form for a rag in the French class, which Vernon-Smith had started. The Bounder was junior captain at the time, and Loder was to oversee detention. Vernon-Smith sent Loder a false telegram to get him out of the way, and then led the whole team out of detention to play a match at St. Jude's, where Mr Quelch happened to have called on the Headmaster. The whole team was ordered off the field and ordered to return to Greyfriars. Mr Quelch later remarked:-

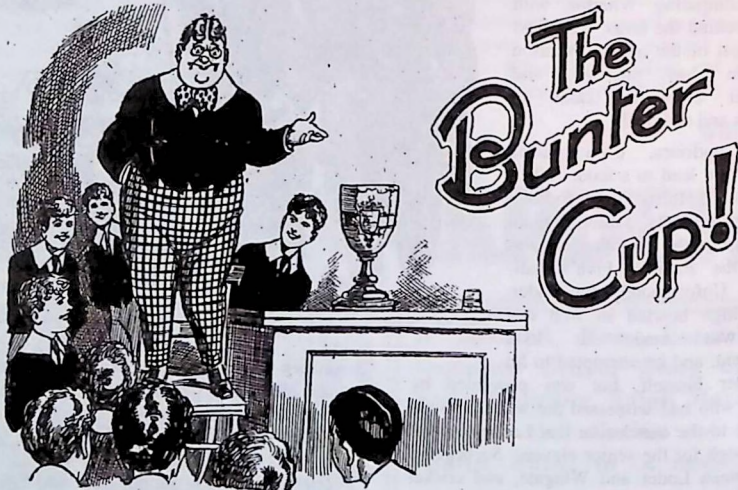
"No one can command, Vernon-Smith, who has not learned to obey."

Perhaps the most unjust punishment ordered was when Prout was Headmaster. The Remove were detained but, when Prout was got out of the way with one of Bunter's ventriloquial telephone calls, Loder, who was feeling grateful to the Remove at the time, gave them permission to play in a match that had been arranged for some time. Although Loder was Prout's Head Prefect,

he considered Loder's permission to have been worthless, and was about to proceed with some wholesale floggings when the unexpected return of Dr Locke put an end to Prout's regime and the unjust floggings he was about to administer.

It was the substitute writers who considered sport to be an end in itself. Could Bob Cherry beat Tom Merry at boxing? *The Boys' Friend* monthly library "School and Sport" was a good example of this. And it was Pentelow who inaugurated the Great Sports Series in the *Gem*, which ran for weeks and weeks. Continual harping on sporting and athletic prowess without a proper story line is like chewing on straw - tasteless and useless.

Charles Hamilton had been persuaded or threatened to contribute some stories to this series, and these were of course the highlights, but he was never happy when dancing to someone else's tune. What he seemed to like particularly were stories about games which were vitiated by outside influences on the junior captain. Marjorie Hazeldene was always entreating Wharton to help her brother, but when Hazeldene played in these circumstances he usually did badly. Blackmail was a particular favourite type of plot for Hamilton. Bunter once blackmailed himself into the team, and when Mr Bunter, after an unusually successful coup on the Stock Exchange, presented the Bunter Cup, a fifty guinea handsome silver trophy, it was on condition that Bunter played in all the football matches concerned. It was an hilarious romp, with Bunter's incompetence made manifest, but of course the Remove kept the cup because they won all their matches. Similarly, when Drake and Rodney arrived at Greyfriars they pretended they had no knowledge of cricket. They



A New and amusing complete story of the Chums of Greyfriars, specially written for the "Holiday Annual"

By FRANK RICHARDS

blackmailed their way into the team, but needless to say their ability carried the day.

Perhaps it would be interesting to end with the problem of which team should win the match if one Hamilton school played another. The general rule seems to have been that Rookwood should win if Owen Conquest was writing, St. Jim's should win if the story was by Martin Clifford, and Greyfriars if Frank Richards was the author. Of course, all rules can be broken, and the home team might lose if the plot demanded it: a player might let the side down by playing badly or even failing to turn up at all, leaving the others in the lurch.

Did Charles Hamilton have any real ability

at, or knowledge of, games? What information we have suggests that he was not a games player, though he liked swimming. The depth of his knowledge is uncertain. He did write that long serial "King Cricket" in Edwardian times, but that was in the days of gentlemen and players, and there was plenty of dirty work at the crossroads. What is definite is that he had sufficient knowledge to make his stories about games relatively convincing, and that was enough for the requirements of his plots. Any greater detail would have been an unnecessary diversion. It could not have been handled differently, and we would not have had it otherwise.



MOAN A BIT
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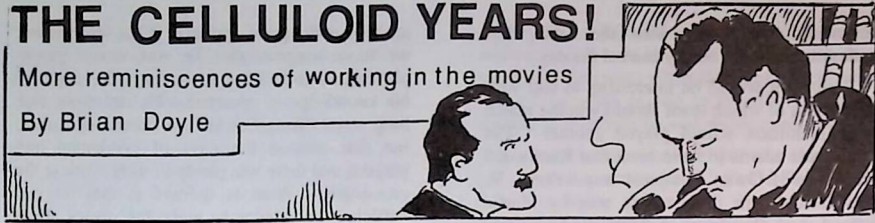
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THE CELLULOID YEARS!

More reminiscences of working in the movies

By Brian Doyle



It was lonely inside the wooden coffin. I could scarcely move in the slim, dark box that smelt of wood-shavings, glue and mustiness. The lid had been nailed down securely, it was pitch-black so I couldn't see a thing, and I was feeling rather scared - dead scared. Someone had surely made a grave error . . .

Then I was startled by a loud noise at my side - and voices, two male and one female. The noise continued and the lid of my small, dark prison suddenly burst open, crow-barred away with some force, and a lamp shone upon my still-closed eyes. A woman screamed and fainted to the ground as two men talked to one another urgently and in some excitement. I remained still and motionless in the coffin with my pale hands crossed over the front of my Victorian suit - and my make-up began to run ...

A loud voice shouted "Right - cut!", then "First positions everyone, we're going for another take . . .!"

Amidst the sudden hubbub above me, I heard a penetrating voice call out in a somewhat resigned German-American accent: "I've been directing pictures for over thirty years and Brian Doyle's giving the stiffest and most unfeeling performance I've ever seen in my entire life!"

Sherlock Holmes murmured in my right ear: "Don't mind him, Brian, old chum - you're doing just fine . . ." Then I opened my eyes in time to see a beautiful feminine face, fringed by a fetching hat, bending to kiss me. "You were wonderful, darling - I want you in my next picture - it's such a pity you're dead!" And with a delicious little wink, she disappeared.

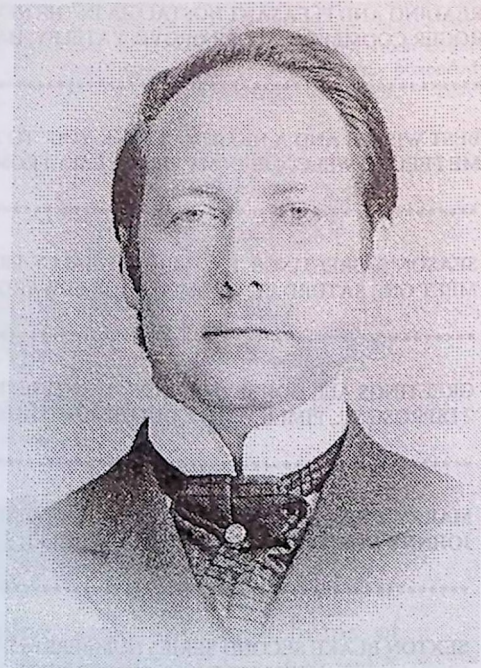
So this is what it was like to be a movie star in a top motion picture, directed by one of the world's most famous and distinguished producer-director-writers, Billy Wilder, winner of a whole clutch of Hollywood 'Oscars' and Nominated for many more, I thought a trifle sardonically to myself as I held my breath in readiness for the next 'take' for *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* at Pinewood Studios.

"Don't worry about it, Brian," called a Cockney electrician friend, gazing down at me in my 6-feet-under hole, "If you don't like it, you shouldn't have joined!" And he laughed unsympathetically as a props-man nailed down the coffin-lid for the fifth time.

This was me, Brian Doyle, ace publicist, at work on the highly-expensive (well, 8 million

pounds was a lot of money back in 1969) new Mirisch Production for United Artists, *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and about half-way through the 6-months shooting schedule. The picture was produced, directed and co-written, as I've said, by the great Wilder (who made such pictures as *Sunset Boulevard*, *Some Like It Hot*, *The Apartment* and *The Seven-Year Itch* (not to mention his own personal favourite - or so he told me - *Double Indemnity*). The current epic starred Robert (later Sir Robert) Stephens as Sherlock Holmes, Colin Blakely as Dr Watson, with Christopher Lee as Mycroft Holmes, the beautiful French actress Genevieve Paige (as 'my' wife!), Irene Handl as Mrs Hudson, Tamara Toumanova (the great Russian-American ballerina), Stanley Holloway and other fine actors.

The next time *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* is shown on television (it crops up every couple of years or so), watch out for the dramatic and memorable sequence that takes place in a remote Scottish graveyard at dead of night, when Holmes, Watson and a mysterious



Brian Doyle as Monsieur Valladon

French woman gather to dig up the just-buried coffin of a certain French engineer M. Valladon. Take a good look at the smartly-dressed, uncommonly handsome corpse in the immaculate suit, lying palely (but interestingly) in his final resting-place. When the camera zooms in for a close-up (in Panavision and colour) observe the white-faced and motionless chap with six dead canaries (don't ask) at his feet. Note his dramatic and remarkable performance. He may not move but he gives a most moving portrayal of a late French engineer

SERIES 2

From the original story and screenplay
by Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond.

Based on the characters created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

A novelization by

Michael and Mollie Hardwick



and you can't take your eyes off him . . . As Robert Stephens so rightly shouted at the end of my cameo role: "Get out the Oscars . . .!"

I was, of course, the Publicist on the film, and Billy Wilder asked me to play the part as a sort of 'in-joke'. I had no idea of the role I was

destined to undertake (good word, in the circumstances) since Wilder and his regular co-writer, I.A.L. Diamond, were actually writing the script as we went along (for reasons too complex to go into here) and new scenes and characters were being added all the time.

"Brian", said Wilder to me one day on the set in his German accent, "I want you to be in my picture. I want you to play a bread-roll." At least that's what I thought he said (his accent was sometimes a trifle impenetrable). "A bread roll?" I gasped. "Non, no, my dear chap, a **dead** role ... You'll be a corpse. At least you'll have no lines to learn! How do you feel about it?" "Honoured, Billy," I said, rather nervously. "That's what they all say," he coughed with a wolfish grin (he was a chain-smoker and invariably favoured an American brand called 'Larks'). "What about Equity?" (the Actors' Union and a tough one) I enquired. "Don't worry, we won't tell 'em," he grunted, and strolled away to rehearse the next scene.

Stanley Holloway played the grave-digger who 'buried' me (you may recall that he had played the First Gravedigger in Olivier's marvellous film of *Hamlet* some 20 years earlier). I didn't actually share my big scene with him, but we met when the 'Props' Department had me lie in my 'coffin' to make sure it - and I - fitted snugly before they completed it. Size is important on these occasions.

As I lay there, somewhat self-consciously, as the Props people busied themselves with tape-measures and so on, Holloway (an uncommonly nice and humorous man) came up to take a look. "My word, you do look queer" he half-sang (in the words of his long-famous song *You Don't Look Well*, which used to be played a lot on BBC Radio years ago, but not so much these days, sadly). He grinned and quoted again: "Alas, poor Yorick", he chuckled, with memories of *Hamlet*, and then took me off to a local pub for a drink (we were on location near Windsor). There an elderly customer came up to Stanley and said

accusingly "Do you know, you look very much like that chap Stanley Holloway - have you ever been told that?" "Frequently," said Stanley, "it happens a lot, you know. What are you drinking?" Afterwards, he went and sat in his massive Rolls Royce with his charming wife, where I joined them to do my usual tape-recorded interview. "I'm using the old jalopy as a dressing-room - better than sitting in a canvas chair on the location," he smiled. Undoubtedly.

I eventually walked off the set after completing my fifth 'take' in my own little wooden 'set' to ironic but friendly applause from the cast and crew, and back to my pair of Dutch journalists. These two gentlemen, important feature-writers from newspapers in The Netherlands, had arrived early, soon after my make-up, hair and wardrobe sessions (oh, yes, even to play a corpse, I had had to undergo full pale 'dead' make-up, wash and hair-set and be dressed in a suitable Victorian suit, with shirt, waistcoat, tie, and so on - there was even a snappy bowler-hat to go with it all - but sadly I couldn't really wear that in the coffin!) As the journalists were shown into my office, my secretary was admiring my 'New Look' and the two Dutch journalists rather rocked back on their heels at my appearance.

"I've been working rather hard lately, gentlemen," I explained shakily, before laughingly appraising them of the situation. They relished it all - after all, it was rather good 'copy' for them - and they subsequently wrote it all up in their respective newspapers, I was told. A real 'Dutch treat' for their readers, you might say . . .

Wilder unofficially slipped me £50 for my trouble (but don't tell Equity! - a sizeable little sum 30 years ago) and I had to put up with a certain amount of joshing and leg-pulling from friends and colleagues after it was all over (and again when the film was released in 1970).

Wilder used to say, by the way, that I was the ideal publicist to work on his picture. This was because my name was Doyle (though not Arthur Conan), my late wife's maiden name had been Holmes, and at the time of the making of the film, we lived at 122A Baker Street, London, which was virtually the reverse of Sherlock Holmes' famous address in the same street - 221B. "You should have gotten a dog and called it 'Watson'" said Wilder when I told him the story. "If we had, I would have gotten a hound and called it 'Baskerville'" I rejoined. "Just remember, Brian," he countered amiably, "I make the wisecracks around here!"

When I said goodbye to Billy Wilder at the end of the long shooting schedule, he hugged me and said: "If I ever need a good corpse in a future movie, I'll send for you, Brian, and fly you over to Hollywood for a guest appearance".

It so happened that he did have quite an

important 'corpse scene' in his next film, *Avanti*, which starred Jack Lemmon, but, disappointingly, he never sent for me. When I happened to meet Wilder again at some film reception years later, I complained humorously. "You never did send for me to play the corpse" I pointed out. He laughed loudly and clapped me around the shoulder. "By then, you were too type-cast, Brian, old friend - everyone knew you as a corpse in a coffin by then. I made your name in the role. You were even on all the posters. I wanted a new face - and, for that matter, a new body . . . !" What could I say? And, by the way, I was on the posters - and the book of the film. My friends thought it was all dead funny . . .

Billy Wilder is still alive at the time of writing - at the age of 93. At this rate, he'll never make a corpse himself, let alone sending for me to play one . . .

The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes has become something of a 'cult' classic these days but, sadly, the film's distributors thought it was far too long and cut nearly an hour from it before it opened in 1970. So audiences were deprived of seeing three whole stories, which were all shot but never seen by the public. For the interest of Holmesian addicts: there was a whole sequence showing Holmes rowing for Oxford University before hundreds of cheering fellow-students (we filmed it at Oxford on the Thames). It included a rather touching scene showing Holmes (Robert Stephens) with a beautiful girlfriend (Jenny Hanley) and disclosing the reasons why he later became something of a misogynist.

Then there was 'The Curious Case of the Upside-Down Room' (in which a Chinaman had fallen to his death from his bed up on the 'ceiling' - the entire room was actually upside-down!) I was rather proud of my caption to a still photograph showing Holmes inspecting the bare foot of the corpse through his magnifying-glass and saying "Come, Watson - the game's a foot . . . !" (a line not in the script). This sequence featured Inspector Lestrade (played by George Benson), who was cut entirely from the film. There was also the case of 'The Honeymoon Couple', with the story taking place on an ocean-going cruise-liner, with the Captain played by Howard Marion-Crawford. There was a linking scene in the sleeping compartment of a railway train, featuring Holmes and Watson reminiscing. And a 'double' opening sequence featuring first Dr Watson (Colin Blakely) dictating his stories whilst in a nursing-home, and second, an old, battered leather box being opened in the vaults of Coutts' Bank in London, by the Bank's director, played by that fine English actor resident in Hollywood for many years, John Williams (*Dial M For Murder* etc.) Some shots of various key items being taken from the box did, in fact, survive, and form the

background to the opening credits of the finished film.

The evocative music for the picture, by the way, was taken from Heifitz's Violin Concerto.

I could, as you will probably gather, write a whole book about the making of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and, curiously, Panther Books did invite me to write such a book at the time. I checked with Billy Wilder who said he had no objections as long as I spelt his name right! But since I became busy with other films and overseas locations, I sadly never did get around to the project (though I do still have my file of the 99 features, plus many news stories and so on that I wrote during the production of the film).

P.S. I must mention that *Private Life* was a unique picture among the 94 films I have worked on during my nearly 40 years in the business, inasmuch as Wilder arranged for free tea, coffee, cold drinks, sandwiches, cakes, etc. to be available on the set throughout each and every day, and in addition threw a lavish party for cast and crew in the famous 'Green Room' next to the Bar at Pinewood Studios every Friday evening. There are always snacks on hand on the set, of course, but you have to pay for them. And there's usually an end-of-shooting party - just the one. But Wilder was one of the Hollywood veterans, going back to the 1930s, and liked to do things in the old Hollywood style. And in the Wilder style . . .

Six years later I did another Sherlock Holmes film, again at Pinewood Studios. This was *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (based on the book by a young American author named Nicholas Meyer, who was around during most of the shooting. We became friends and corresponded for years. He later became a top Hollywood director and has made some fine pictures.) Nicol Williamson was Holmes and American actor Robert Duvall (later to win a 'Best Actor' Oscar) was Dr Watson. Sir Laurence Olivier was Moriarty and others involved included Vanessa Redgrave, Samantha Eggar, Jeremy Kemp, Charles Gray and another American, Alan Arkin (as Professor Freud!). The American director was Herbert Ross (who had made the outstanding musical version of *Goodbye, Mr Chips* starring Peter O'Toole) and it was a good film in its way.

One of my main memories of it is the painstaking way Robert Duvall tried to perfect his English accent. He studied intensively and practised hard, but, fine actor as he was - and, indeed, still is - he still sounded vaguely American. "How am I doing today, Brian?" he used to ask, coming up to me on the set. He was such a nice chap that I didn't have the heart to disillusion him and tell him he sounded suspiciously like 'Doc Watson' of 'OK Corral' country, and instead usually assured him: "You're one of us now, Bob - actually rather

super, old chap!" He would grin delightedly and stroll off happily.

I had worked with Williamson on a film in Israel for a couple of months, four years previously and come to know him quite well. He had been cheerful, funny and a mean pianoplayer in those days (his impression of American satirical singer Tom Lehrer was amazing!). But his marriage to a lovely actress named Jill Townshend had since broken up (it had all happened on a film I was on called *Alfie Darling* when Jill had become what they call 'close friends' with singer Alan Price, during a location in France, so I knew the circumstances only too well - especially since Price's room had been right next to mine in the location hotel! - but that's another story . . . !) and he seemed a changed man - quiet, rather depressed and without his usual jokes and anecdotes. It didn't affect his actual performance, which was very good. But it wasn't Sherlock Holmes.

And I think that's enough about the great Baker Street sleuth and my dealings with the celluloid versions of him . . .

Anyway, where was I? This piece is supposed to be a sort of continuation of my contribution to last year's 'Annual', where I told the story of how I came to be embroiled as a Publicist in the movie business. That ended where I had just started work as a Rank Publicist at Pinewood Studios, working as Assistant on *The One That Got Away* and *Carve Her Name With Pride* and then being given 'my own' picture as full Publicist on *Heart of a Child*, shot almost entirely in the Austrian Tyrol in 1957.

After that I seemed to have established myself as a reasonably competent Publicist and set off upon my primrose path of dalliance through the often fascinating, sometimes exciting, occasionally hilarious, but never, ever dull, complexities of the film-making business. Today, after around forty years of it, I seem to spend much of my time mostly looking forward to the past - especially for rather nostalgic articles such as this one. There were one or two anxious moments in those early days though . . .

All film-employees had to be members of one of three unions - the one for Publicists was the powerful A.C.T.T. (Association of Cinema and Television Technicians) and it wasn't easy to 'get in'. It was the old story - you couldn't join unless you worked in the film or television business and you couldn't work in the film or television business unless you were a member. As a 'trainee' with Rank, I was allowed six months grace - if I had not been accepted by the time that period had elapsed, I was out! After a few anxious weeks, I was luckily 'in'. If I hadn't been, my film career would have finished almost as soon as it had begun!

The other 'anxious moments' came a couple of weeks after I had completed my stint on *Heart*

of a Child. John (later Sir John) Davis, the then-Head of the Rank Organisation, ordered a massive 'cull' at Pinewood Studios, for economy reasons (he had been - and tended to remain - a leading accountant). He said that 500 people had to be fired on New Year's Day, 1958 ('Happy New year' to you too, J.D.!) It was a cold and depressing day in more ways than one, but thankfully I survived. This, I subsequently learned, was mainly because I had looked after the then High Commissioner for Ceylon (Sri Lanka now, of course) and his family, on a goodwill visit to Pinewood Studios, rather well, had got along famously with Sir Cecil Syers, KCMG, CVO, his charming wife, and several of their children, who had had the kindness to laugh at my anecdotes and terrible puns as I took them on a tour of the sets and studios and, more especially, at the large table we occupied in the middle of the impressive Baronial Hall that served as the studio restaurant, thus being noticed by all present!

Sir Cecil was generous enough to write to several people at Rank, including Davis, saying how well he had been looked after and entertained. He even invited my wife and me to a slap-up dinner at the High Commission in London, where we had a very convivial time. That's why I've always nurtured a rather soft spot for Ceylon (or Sri Lanka) to this day.

Incidentally, about half-a-dozen publicity people, plus their secretaries, were fired on that fateful day. When John Davis shouted 'Cut!' in those days, people rushed to do his bidding. And there were no re-takes . . . One of my publicity colleagues, on hearing that he had been given 'the bullet', was so angry and upset that he piled all his files up in the middle of the office and set fire to them, necessitating an urgent call to the studio's fire department. He was subsequently escorted firmly from the premises - but lived to become one of Fleet Street's leading show business writers and critics on a national newspaper. Needless to say, any future Rank pictures received short shrift from his pen (or typewriter)!

I remained at Pinewood Studios for close on four years, working on many Rank films and getting to know, as friends, many people I had admired up there on the cinema screen for as long as I could remember. Sometimes, as I sat at a table in the Pinewood Restaurant, lunching and laughing with a group of actors and actresses, famous and not-so-famous, I felt that the only person I *didn't* recognise was myself!

It was all very free-and-easy and we Publicists worked in an unusual 'clock-shaped' set of offices in a small block just opposite the main executive block. We each had an office which led off a large circular central general office, just like the figures on a clock. We each had two big desks, sitting opposite our respective secretaries, with three telephones apiece

(telephones that rarely stopped ringing!). Stars of our own and other films dropped in regularly for tea or coffee or a chat, or to glance through the latest 'stills'. It was never dull. A knock on the door might herald a visit from the likes of Kenneth More, Donald Sinden, Norman Wisdom, John Gregson, Virginia McKenna, or a couple of budding starlets.

I won't go through a list of films I worked on, and the people I knew over the years (sigh of relief from the weary reader!) and I haven't even mentioned my 3½-year period as Press Officer with Columbia Pictures in London, or my spell with a top PR agency (where I also handled stage stars on tour, as well as films) or my time as Studio Publicity at Bray Studios, the home of Hammer Horror movies! I turned freelance towards the end of 1960 and will finish with a few words about working with a Hollywood legend of the 1930s and 1940s . . .

In 1962 I was Publicist on a picture called *Two Guys Abroad* (which never actually went out on release for reasons too complicated to explain here) and it starred George Raft, famous for his many gangster and 'tough guy' pictures over the years. I had to call on Raft at the Dorchester Hotel before shooting began to discuss publicity matters and so on. I rang at his suite and the door opened to disclose a short, fat, bald, elderly, unfriendly-looking man, with a tangled mat of white hair covering his chest. He was wearing a white towel around his waist and had obviously just stepped out of the shower. I had no idea who this strange 'Colonel Blimp-like' apparition was. "Hello", I ventured, a trifle nervously, "I've come to see Mr Raft - he's expecting me, I think." "I'm Raft" rapped out the bald and hairy one, with what sounded suspiciously like a snarl; he opened the door wider and stuck out a hand - I half-expected to see it holding a menacing automatic, but he shook my hand rather limply and contorted his still-wet features with what was half-sneer and half-grimace. Raft obviously considered it to be a welcoming grin, gave me a drink, and was, in fact, quite friendly and affable. He was then around 66.

"I get to dance the tango with some broad in the picture," he snapped out at one point. "Being as I'm famous for that in my pictures, especially one called *Bolero* and one called *Scarface*, where I tossed a coin a lot, I guess you'll want to get some pictures and press publicity out of that, eh, Barry?" I politely said my name was Brian and that I well remembered him in *Scarface*, with Paul Muni, and also asked if it was true that he had been a sort of 'gigolo' dancer with Rudolph Valentino in the old days before he became an actor and charged 10 cents a dance? He grimaced again and said "Yeah, that's the story but get this - I was no gigolo - just a hired dancer - OK?" "OK, George" I agreed hastily, and we talked some more.

Chatting with Raft I was irresistibly reminded of a Damon Runyon character - 'Harry the Horse' maybe, or more likely, 'Georgie the Gun'. He had apparently been a gambler, boxer - and had consorted with real-life gangsters in the 1920s and 30s.

Raft's co-star in the film was Maxie Rosenbloom, an American ex-boxing contender, sometimes known as 'Slapsie Maxie' who, when his fighting days were over, often played small parts in movies - the pinnacle of his career in this field had been as a crook in that epic item of Hollywood hokum *Abbot and Costello Meet the Keystone Cops* in 1955. Neither it - nor Maxie - received an Oscar nomination. (Maxie was, in fact, the World Light Heavyweight Champion in 1932 and held this title for three years.) Maxie was a genial soul and rather like a big, friendly kid and not too quick on the uptake, but Raft (who had known him since they were both poor kids in the East Side of New York) kept a close, almost brotherly eye on him all through the shooting. It reminded me of the relationship between George and Lenny in Steinbeck's famous play and film *Of Mice and Men*. The film's producer was a tough American named Maurice who, I gathered, had also been close to Raft and Maxie in their 'Hell's Kitchen' days (that was an infamous and violent area of downtown New York in the 1920s). It was apparent that they hadn't exactly been nice, clean-living lads in their youth. "Remember the 'Dead-End Kids'?" Raft once said to me. "Of course" I answered. "That was us." he explained ungrammatically but emphatically.

One of Raft's little idiosyncrasies was to break for afternoon tea served just as he liked it and from a silver tea-service (which he had brought with him) on a small table in a corner of the set at Shepperton Studios. If you were invited to join him for this pleasant little ritual, you were 'in'. I made it four times.

By the way, in contrast to that first meeting I had with Raft, when he

appeared on the set a few days later wearing his corset, wig, make-up and immaculate suit, he looked more like the old George Raft - he even wore 'lifts' in his shoes to give him extra height. And he danced the tango with 'the broad' brilliantly (and I made several national papers with the resulting photographs and interviews).

At the end of the picture, George Raft gave me a fine tie-clip made from a silver dollar. "Thanks, George, I'm very grateful," I said, "it means that I'll never be completely broke." "Don't you believe it" he rapped in his usual tough-guy delivery, which had become second nature to him after all those gangster and adventure movies. "It's a forgery!" A glimmer of a smile did its best to break through the grimace. His last words to me were: "Keep happy, Barry - I mean Brian - and don't talk to any strange gangsters . . ."

In 1961, Hollywood made a feature film titled *The George Raft Story*, starring Ray Danton. I once asked Raft what he thought of it. "They left out all the best bits," he said briefly. "And I was better-looking than Danton . . ."

I must say that I miss it all now that I'm virtually retired, after doing 94 pictures in 22 countries (plus the UK, of course). But I have thousands of memories and maybe I'll write another instalment next year, if our worthy Editor agrees, and tell you what it was like working on the most successful film of all time,

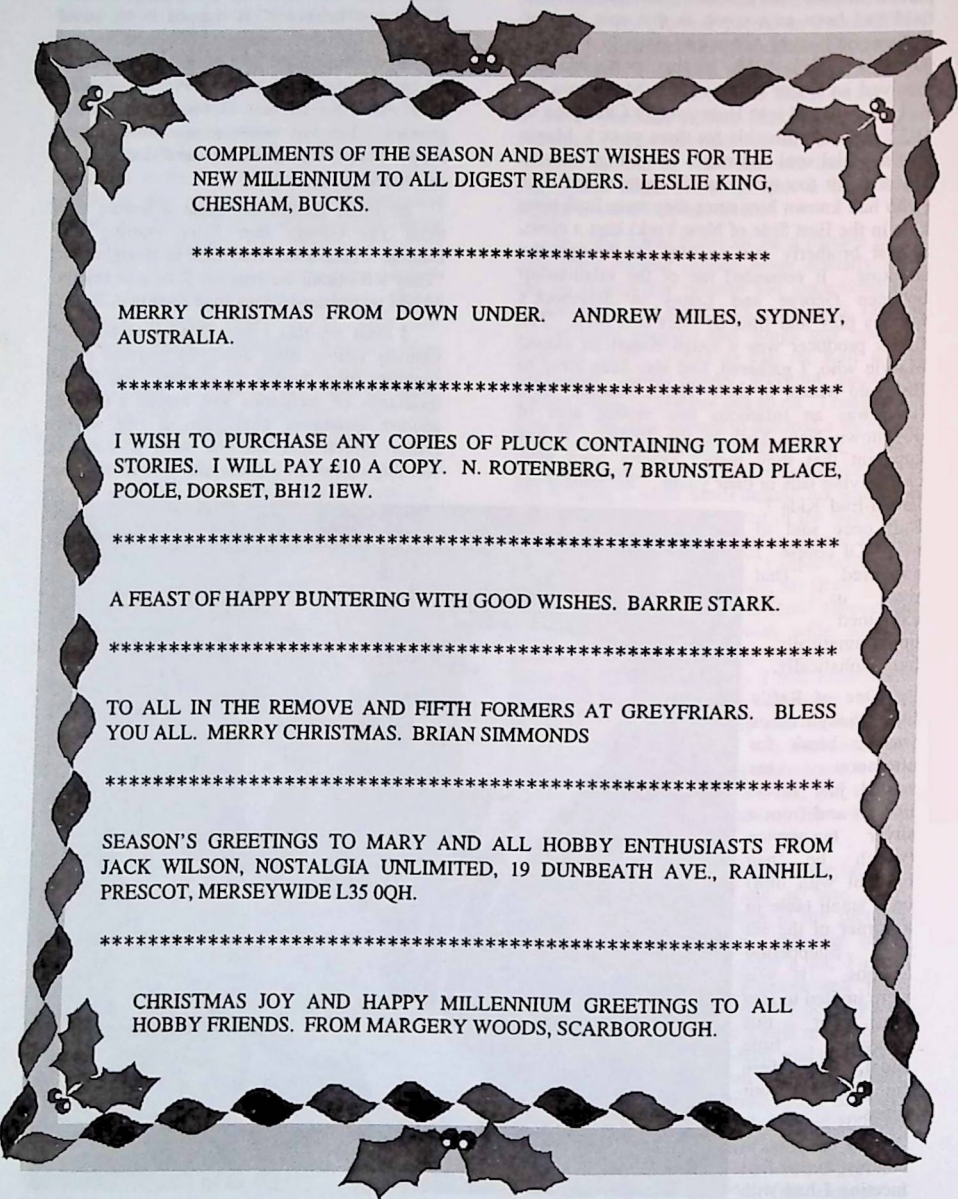


George Raft and Brian Doyle on the set of *Two Guys Abroad*

the original *Star Wars*; with 007 James Bond (Roger Moore); with Richard Burton in South Africa and Gregory Peck in India; what Judy Garland and Gene Kelly really said to me; what the great Bette Davis was really like - and how Cornel Wilde directed me in my second screen

'appearance' . . . Not forgetting what Her Majesty the Queen said to me on the set at Pinewood Studios . . .

But I must stop now - as I said to Elizabeth Taylor only last week, I can't stand name-droppers . . .



COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON AND BEST WISHES FOR THE
NEW MILLENNIUM TO ALL DIGEST READERS. LESLIE KING,
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TO ALL IN THE REMOVE AND FIFTH FORMERS AT GREYFRIARS. BLESS
YOU ALL. MERRY CHRISTMAS. BRIAN SIMMONDS

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO MARY AND ALL HOBBY ENTHUSIASTS FROM
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CHRISTMAS JOY AND HAPPY MILLENNIUM GREETINGS TO ALL
HOBBY FRIENDS. FROM MARGERY WOODS, SCARBOROUGH.



Initially published by Cassell in 1892 and acquired by Amalgamated Press in 1927, *Chums* was originally a weekly paper, but sometimes prior to 1914 it was also available in a monthly format comprising 4 or 5 weekly issues. These monthly issues had attractive covers and each contained a colour plate, otherwise found only in the Annuals. I still have a year of weekly issues, ending on July 2nd 1932, whereafter it was available in monthly parts only, August 1932 till July 1934. Thenceforth only the Annual was to be had and, in my opinion, *Chums* deteriorated from then onwards. I always felt that the enthralling weekly serials were the secret of the paper's success.

a whole new world. I cannot be specific over which years these supplements appeared. Many weekly or monthly issues have passed through my hands over the years, but I cannot recall any prior to 1923. Perhaps their advent was a fight back against the new D.C. Thomson challenge. One or two stories in the supplement did appear in earlier or later Annuals. In the 1908 Annual we find 'The Luck Stone' by Basil Windham (P.G. Wodehouse). This was reprinted in 1925 supplement as 'The Tear of Allah'. In a 1927 supplement we find 'Nighthawks' by Frank Chaltam, a pseudonym of George E Rochester. This was repeated in the 1937/38 Annual and no doubt there are other instances.



**REAR-ADMIRAL E.R.G.R. EVANS, C.B., D.S.O., R.N.
WRITES HIS GREATEST SERIAL WITHIN.
GALLEONS O' DEATH**

For many years the weekly issue contained an 8-page supplement, these were indicated in Roman numerals and did not interfere with the consecutive numbering of the other pages. Other pages, such as *Union Jack* and *Boys Magazine*, also had supplements but these were numbered as part of the paper and if removed, as often happened, caused much frustration - ask any *Union Jack* collector! The whole point of my research is that the *Chums* supplements were never included in the actual Annual and provide

All the supplements in my possession are of 8 (VIII) pages, except for 8 in 1932 which are of 12 (XII) pages.

To summarise, I actually have as follows:

1923-1925	72x8 = 576 pages
1925-1928	80x8 = 640 pages
1929-1930	14x8 = 112 pages
1929-1930	8x12 = 96 pages
1932	23x8 = 184 pages

TOTAL 197 = 1608 pages.

This is almost the equivalent of 2 extra annuals, with other supplements still to be discovered!

There are literally dozens of authors involved but I will only refer to a few, showing how many were established and popular writers and that these supplements were of real significance and not just makeweights.

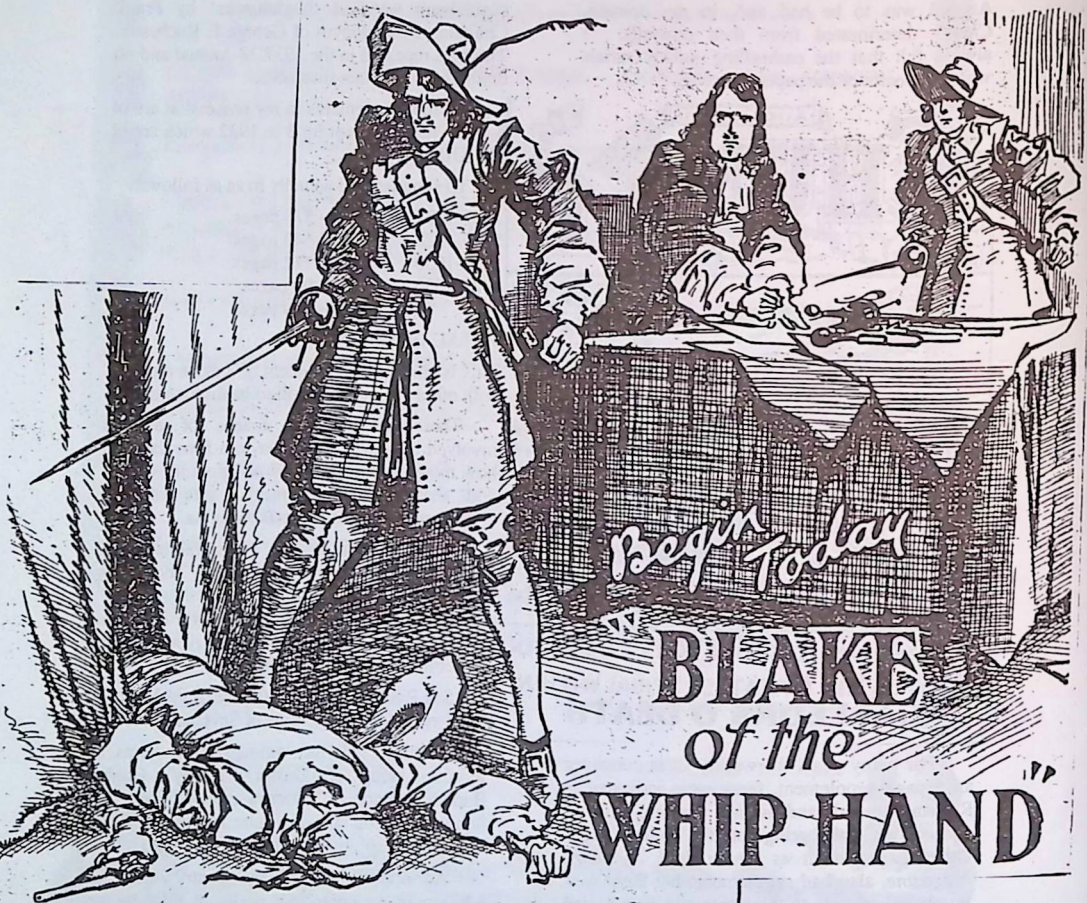
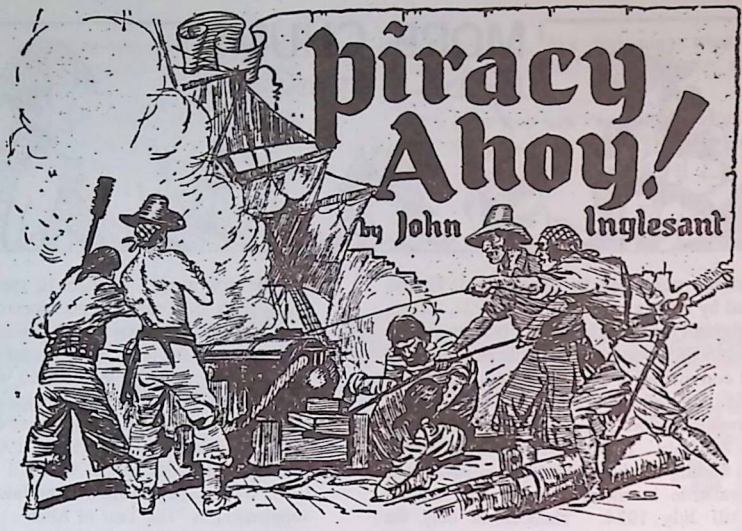
Alfred Edgar writes 14 instalments of 'Retreat' 1918 *Victory*. He created 'The House of Thrills' and 'The Phantom of Cursitor Fields' for the *Bullseye* and Jack Keen for *Film Fun*. As Barrie Lyndon he wrote 'The Amazing Dr Clitterhouse' for the West End stage.

Sax Rohmer gives us 30 tales of Fu Manchu and 8 episodes of 'The Sins of Severac Bablon'.

Michael Poole has, amongst other items, 2 serials, 1 being 'The Duffer of Danby'. Gunby Hadath, creator of 'Sparrow', pens 'The New School at Shrop' plus, as John Mowbray, 'Last-Shot Pennytop', both serials.

Admiral E.R.G. Evans contributes 'the Mystery of the Polar Star' no doubt aided by his experiences with Scott of the Antarctic.

Capt. Frank Shaw, forever associated with early *Chums* serials, ('Peril of the Motherland')



Begin Today
BLAKE
of the
WHIP-HAND

THRILLING NEW SERIAL OF THE SEA

Vol. XL.—No. 2056. Week Ending FEBRUARY 6th, 1932. 24 Pages

etc.) has 'The Melomene's Brass-Bounder' in 5 episodes.

D.H. Parry/Moreton Pike has just a couple of short stories.

Major Charles Gilson, who saw worldwide military service and wrote from experience.

Ernest L. McKeag, reputed to have written some 300 Colwyn Dane stories.

Robert Harding, best known for his tales of the North-West Frontier and Editor of B.O.P. for many years.

Samuel Walkey, who wrote for *Chums* from 1892 - 1940.

Percy F. Westerman, the most popular author of boys' stories in the 1930s.

John Wheway, noted for Cliff House stories in the *Schoolgirl*, 1931 - 1940.

Earle Danesford, actually F. Addington Symonds, first Editor of *Champion* and associated with writing and management of many other papers.

W.B. Home-Gall, prolific writer and father

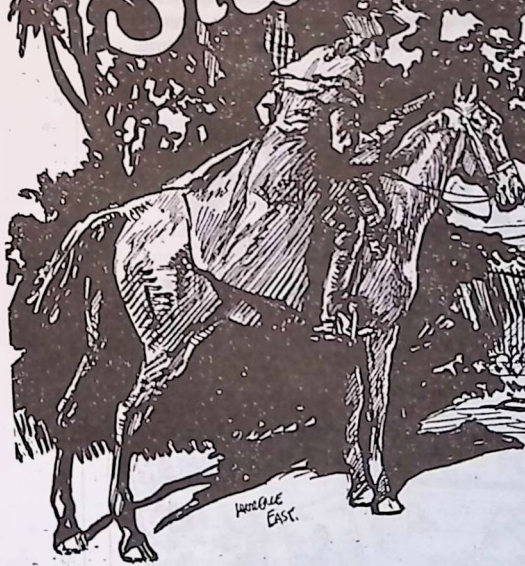
of Edward Reginald Home-Gall.

Julian Linley (A.G. Pearson) wrote at least 15 stories of Captain Montana, a Mexican brigand, in these supplements. Many of these had appeared in *Chums* in the 1908 Annual, which my father read to me when I was very young.

Draycott M. Dell, one of my favourite authors, under the pseudonym of Piers Anson, wrote 10 instalments of 'Blake of the Whip Hand' in 1932 supplements, also, that year, 'Piracy Ahoy' in 10 instalments, this time writing as John Inglesant. This latter I only identified a few days ago when given a book, 'Carrion Island' by Draycott M Dell, published by Jarrold in 1918. The plot did not ring a bell (after 67 years) but the characters did, and I was rather pleased with myself at identifying it.

I obviously lack a number of supplements and would dearly like to borrow, or preferably buy, any others that are available. There's so much scope for further research in this area and I would welcome any comments or information that readers can offer.

Stand & Deliver



A Magnificent Highwayman Story

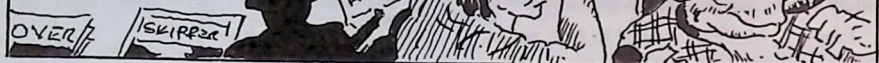
by

ALAN TOWER



The 'Big Five' Story Papers of D.C. Thomson

By Des Oleary



When *Adventure*, the first boys' story paper from D.C. Thomson, appeared in 1921, existing competitors must have wondered about its originators. But that extraordinary Dundee company, with a dominant position in Scottish newspaper production, enjoyed some outstanding advantages in the cut-throat world of juvenile publishing. A privately owned, ferociously independent firm, it yet, certainly from the 1920s on, employed on its staff writers and artists who were to change the face of British story papers and comics in this century.

Despite a policy of obsessive secrecy which keeps strictly out of public view circulation figures of their astonishing range of newspapers, magazines and other publications, their profitability is unquestioned. Costs, including wages, are kept to an absolute minimum, as are dividends. The *Sunday Times* in January 1994 reported Thomson turnover of over £84.5 million in 1993, producing what it called a

"spectacular" pre-tax profit of £30 million. Yet the five directors, all from the Thomson family, paid themselves a total of only £373,000 and most of the profits were allocated to reserves.

So the first significant point is that these Scottish "outsiders" were an extremely well-managed enterprise with a rock-solid financial base from the outset.

Their financial prudence was matched by the careful preparation of their entry into story papers, as, later, by their even more successful entry into comics with *Dandy* and *Beano*.

Although *Adventure* appeared for the first time in September 1921 it had been carefully planned. The principal featured character in it was Dixon Hawke, detective, but this was not his first appearance in a Thomson publication. In 1912 he had made his debut in *The Sporting Post*, a Dundee paper. His adventures are still appearing there as well as in *The Evening Telegraph* (another Dundee paper) as I write

THE BIG 5 OF BOYS' PAPERS



this in September 1999! In 1919 the *Dixon Hawke Library* began and ran to 576 numbers at two per month until its end in 1941. (In 1938, too, they began publishing *The Dixon Hawke Case Book* which ran to twenty numbers until its end in 1953.)

So we see that *Adventure's* leading detective, who was to feature frequently throughout the story papers' run of 1878 issues (1921 - 1961), had a solidly popular base behind him before that run started. As well as the ever-popular detective stories, *Adventure* offered action from around the world, usually with an up-to-date setting such as high speed motoring, wireless, aeroplanes etc. plus popular sports like boxing and football. Beginning, too, was the single cartoon or amusing illustrated strip which became such features of these story papers in due course.

In 1922, stimulated by *Adventure's* success, chief rival Amalgamated Press introduced their contender in the field, *Champion*. This paper was even more successful and galvanised Thomsons into producing *Wizard* and *Rover* that same year. *Wizard* enjoyed a double-page spread of strips in colour while *Rover* made do with a back cover in black and white containing two humorous strips. Both papers, as well, had well-drawn story illustrations and block headings and were eventually to give readers, along with the usual free gifts and competitions, coloured covers depicting the well-remembered "Spadger Isle" (*Wizard*) and "Nosey Parker" (*Rover*).

In 1923 *Vanguard* was launched but the General Strike of 1926 was its death blow and confirmed the Thomson hatred of trade unions. Since then unions have been barred to their workforce. In fairness it should be said that the firm has an excellent record in helping any of their workers who experience difficulties and it offers a good pension scheme, mortgages at favourable rates and loans. Many of their employees have worked for them for years. If you can accept their ethos, including the absence of public acknowledgement of writers' and artists' names in their publications, then steady employment is almost guaranteed.

Skipper in 1930 and *Hotspur* in 1933 were to complete the Big Five which ran through the 1930s until, in 1941, the Second World War caused the loss of the *Skipper*. (In 1932 another story paper, *Red Arrow*, had lasted only a year.)

The overwhelming success of the Big Five was shown by A.J. Jenkinson's survey "What do boys and girls read?" (1940) in which *Wizard* was the first choice of boys aged twelve to fourteen years in elementary and secondary schools, followed by *Hotspur*, *Rover*, *Skipper* and *Adventure*, although *Champion* edged out *Adventure* among fourteen-year-old secondary boys.

All the Big Five had individual stories, serials and series but an outstanding feature was the combination or "intermingling" of story types. So the *Hotspur*, specialising in school stories, would have a whole range of unconventional schools: for spies, for outlaws, for smugglers, for gangsters, for giants, etc. in addition to its - fairly - conventional public school, Red Circle, and the State schools like those in which working-class boys were taught by the Big Stiff.

There are far too many "interminglings" to list but if we look at a favourite setting, the Wild West, we can find a gun-fighter who is also an intelligent gorilla (*Skipper*): a Chinese pig-tailed sheriff who uses throwing-axes rather than a gun (*Adventure*); an unkillable sheriff impervious to knives and bullets - he's a ventriloquist's giant dummy made of wood! (*Wizard*); a vigilante group of veteran cowboys, ridding their town of the modern gangsters who, very mistakenly, laugh scornfully at these ancient 'Pistol-Packing Grandpa's" (*Adventure*); and even a Demon Barber, not of Fleet Street, but of Six Trails, Dakota, who proceeds to use his disappearing chair to land criminals in jail (*Hotspur*).

In this regard let me quote from "Boys Will Be Boys": "The Thomson Five had no hesitation in combining two or three kinds of story in one. If readers could swallow a serial about a huge stone statue which came to life and strode about the mountain passes of India, why should they jib at the statue being called upon to fight a prehistoric monster in a lake?"

The above-mentioned "Pistol-Packing Grandpas" illustrates a favourite - and economical - tactic of Thomsons. Schoolboy readers move on in a year or two, giving the publisher leave to reprint old series with or without emendations. "Pistol-Packing Grandpas" of 1944 was a reprint from 1938. The Big Five and later their comics gave the Dundee firm wide scope.

Having a unit of five inter-linked story papers under central editorial control enabled a vast field of story types to be available. Comic, war, historical, fantastic inventions,

sport, school etc. all feature, as does magic, particularly invisibility. It seems that Thomsons assumed, probably correctly, that the boys' dream of circumventing bullies, policemen, harsh teachers or other foes, by simply vanishing would prove popular. Indeed, "Invisible Dick" turned up in the first *Rover* in 1922, the very first *Dandy* in 1937 and even in one of Thomson's rare one-shot books in 1926. There were many other variations down the years.

roles played by representatives of the 'ordinary' people could be seen as a shrewd marketing move. Or, perhaps, it was due to the firm's Scottish roots and, as some argue, the essential classlessness of Scottish society?

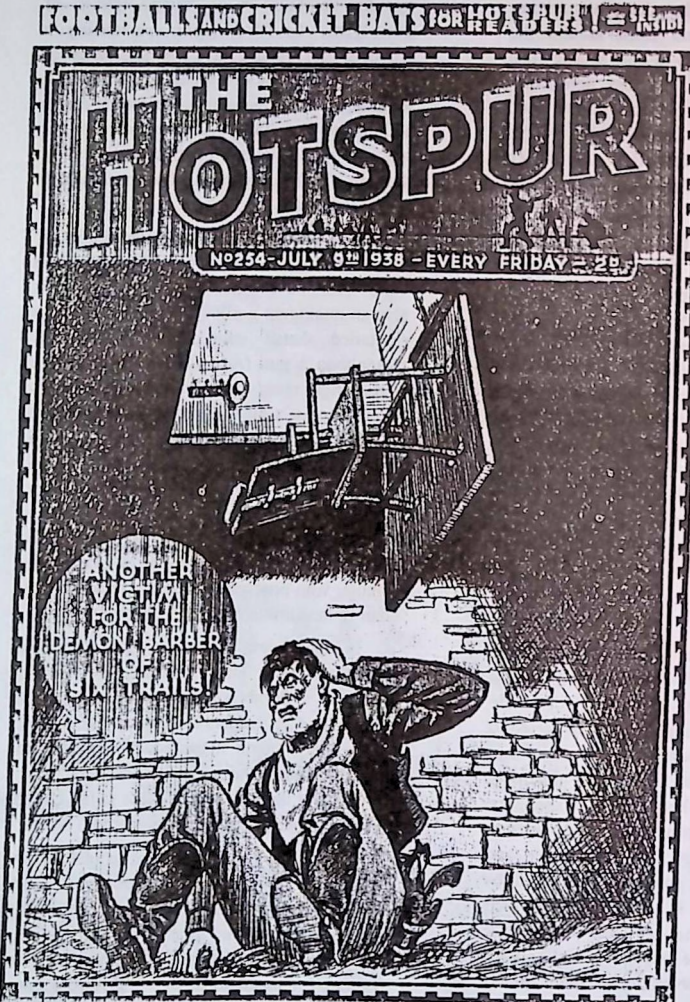
The Big Five had plenty of heroes of the older type who sported monocles and old school ties but they were less typical than figures like Alf Tupper. Alf, running star of the *Rover*, had to work hard in his scrap yard before his races. He had also very few

training facilities. Yet he surmounted the snobbery and other prejudices he encountered to achieve success. And he loved eating fish and chips, too, the great English working-class food!

As well as this, many heroes represented the world outside Britain. Those Tarzan clones, Morgyn the Mighty (*Rover*) and Strang the Terrible (*Adventure*), like the many cowboys, Mounties, gangsters and so on, are a clear indication of the influence of the cinema. I do not think it a coincidence that the Big Five flourished particularly during a period when the cinema became an increasingly important part of British life.

If we see D.C. Thomson as a unified enterprise of newspapers, magazines, story

papers and, later, comics, we come to the major reason for their great and continuing success. Their gifted writing and illustrating staff supplied their talents to each of the firm's publications as required. The organisers of their efforts were the editors who recruited, stimulated and disciplined them into a creative



To me, the most striking characteristic of the Big Five is the marked presence of working-class boys. Juvenile fiction in this century generally continued the English tradition of 'upper-class' protagonists, often public-school men, even aristocrats. Given Thomsons' readership, a stress on adventurous

whole.

So Dudley Watkins, generally agreed to be their outstanding artistic genius, was recruited from his Nottingham home by R.D. Low, Managing Editor with special responsibility for juvenile publications, to be one of his small but select Staff artists. Before Watkins' most brilliant work on *Dandy* and *Beano* (1937 onwards) he provided illustrations for the *Rover* and the newspapers and, most memorably, in 1936, created the immortal "Oor Wullie" and "The Broons" for *The Sunday Post*. Before his sudden death in 1969, the great Dudley D. had even broken through the - almost - iron rule of anonymity for writers and illustrators demanded by the hyper-secretive Thomsons. But Dudley Watkins was so outstanding that from 1946 he was allowed to sign his name to wonderful strips like "Desperate Dan" (*Dandy*) and "Lord Snooty" (*Beano*). Shortly afterwards, the excellent Allan Morley was allowed to use his initials. Allan had had a distinguished career in the story papers but, like 'Chick' Gordon and others, received no credit.

One word more on the anonymity rule. While causing resentment among writers and artists, it took a brave 'maverick' to rebel against this rule. Such was Leo Baxendale, creator of "Bash Street Kids" and "Little Plum", who resigned from *Beano* and gave us one of the few inside glimpses of what it was like to work at Thomsons, at least as far as comics were concerned.

For written stories the situation is rather different. Writers saw their outlines and characters subject to informed alterations and additional input suggested by the creative Thomson editors, thus making the resulting stories and series more of a co-operative achievement. The resulting absence of credits lost Thomsons and their writers the chance to build up a following, as did, for example, Frank Richards and W.E. Johns. But on the rear occasion when a story was contributed by an author of sufficient 'clout', his authorship was acknowledged. Very seldom was that the case. I can think only of Percy F. Westerman, who supplied two series to the *Adventure* in the 1920s and, in the annuals, Gilbert Chester, who was credited among the more usual (fictitious) house-names.

The superb editors of D.C. Thomson deserve far greater recognition than they have received. They were long serving and dedicated company servants. R.D. Low retired in 1974 aged seventy-eight! Colleagues like William Blain, George

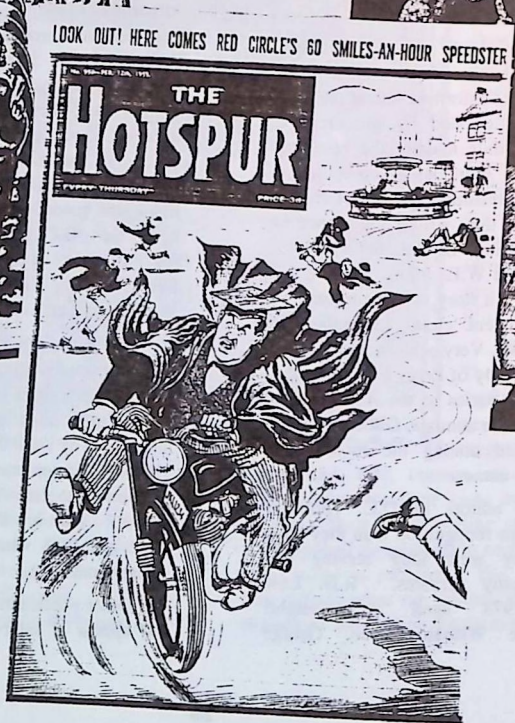
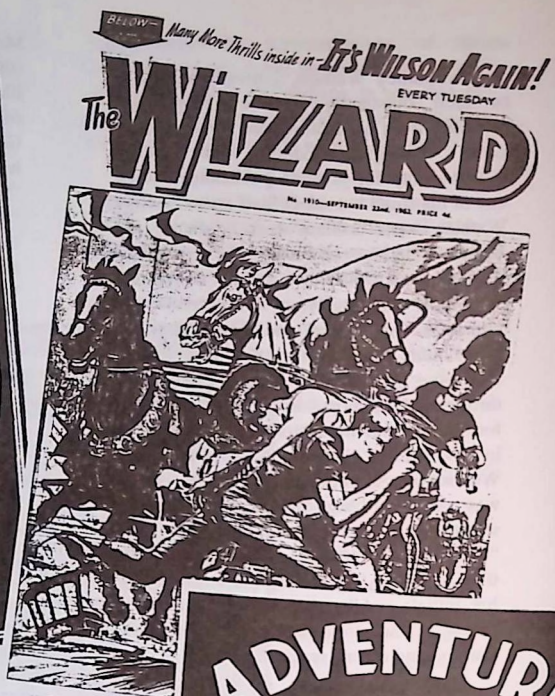
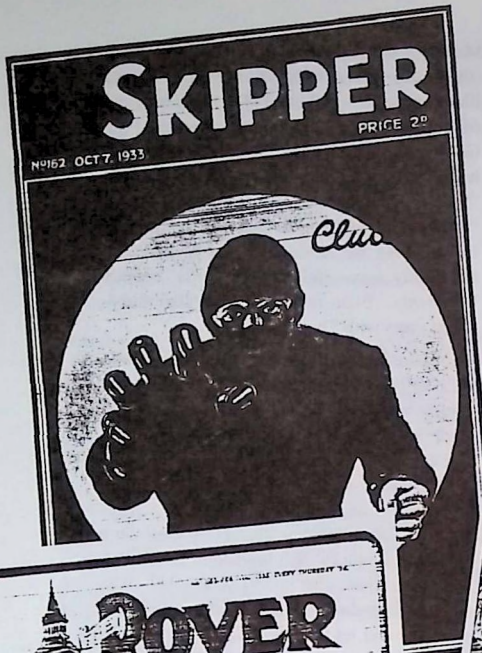
Moonie, Albert Barnes, Ian Chisholm and others also served faithfully for many years. Blain, indeed, celebrated by *Golden Fun* editor Alan Clark in an excellent article (see *Golden Fun* 18, Winter 1988), could claim at least some credit for "The Wolf of Kabul", "Wilson", "Braddock", "The Red McGregor", "Alf Tupper" and others. After taking a hand in launching the *Dandy*, he was involved in the highly successful post-war girls' comics like *Bunty*. Blain retired in 1970 after forty-seven years with Thomsons.

These men and others shaped the juvenile publications by a brilliant exploitation of the company's talent. They recruited the gifted artists and writers who produced the strips and stories. They shaped, criticised and accepted or rejected work offered to them by contributors on the staff or free-lance. They put forward story-lines, characters, treatments and the 'gimmicks' that boys loved. Why not have an athlete who is 150 years old? Why not an invisibility drug, spell, or garment which would let the possessor evade trouble? Why not a cowboy who was also a ventriloquist and whose clever horse, Gasbag, would astound outlaws with his apparent gift of the gab? Why not indeed? This original approach ensured the popularity of the Big Five (after 1941, the Big Four) throughout the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

Perhaps I am fanciful in seeing the editors as the equivalents, to a certain extent, of those extraordinary Hollywood figures of the 1930s, the creative producers such as Irving Thalberg, David Selznick or Darryl Zanuck, who arranged, organised and inspired, at least at their best, their directors, craftsmen and stars to ensure productions of the highest quality. I feel that the simple term 'editor' does not do justice to those like Low and Blain who produced story papers and comics from the 'D.C. Thomson Film Studios', starring, so to speak, Morgyn the Mighty, Desperate Dan, Wilson, Lionheart Logan, The Bash Street Kids et al.

The Big Five each produced annuals: *Adventureland* starting in 1924, *Rover* from 1926, *Skipper* from 1932, *Hotspur* from 1935 and *Wizard* from 1936. Production was interrupted by wartime paper shortages and by Thomson's own inscrutable policies. What explains the late introduction of *Wizard* annual? Why are there *Skipper* annuals for 1942 and 1948 when the weekly paper had disappeared?

Other publications related to the Big Five did appear at intervals, hardback books on



Morgyn the Mighty and Matt Braddock, paperbacks on Wilson, Braddock, Slade and Pickford.

When the story papers finally disappeared with *Rover* in 1973, something very traditional and, to my mind, important went with them. Although the quality of written books for children has never been higher, the experience of regularly buying and owning a range of easily affordable story publications which ensured that reading remained a continuous pleasure is no more. Apart from all else, where will one find the deluge of factual snippets which were a feature of the Big Five? Some random examples: 'A journey in an express lift produces momentary deafness' (*Skipper* 1935); 'Cleopatra's Needle in London is made of pink granite and weighs 180 tons' (*Adventure* 1945); 'What is the reason for three white lines on a sailor's collar? They represent Nelson's three great victories' (*Hotspur* 1933); 'Noel Coward has a room in his house papered with the scripts of his hit plays' (*Skipper Annual* 1941). It is fascinating facts like these that have made my mind, in my wife's words: 'A ragbag of absolutely useless information!' (True. A. O'L). [Editor's Note: A. O'L is Audrey, Des's wife, who typed and helped him prepare this article.]

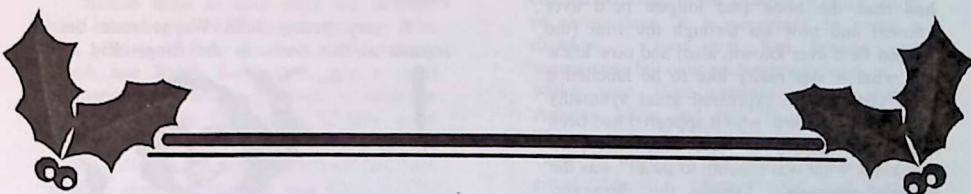
Much more could - and should - be known about these marvellous story papers. Michael Parkinson in *The Daily Telegraph* earlier this year appealed for the re-publication of some of the memorable Thomson stories. An excellent idea and one that many would

welcome. I personally would nominate the stories of Wilson, with their convincing athletic details, and the thrilling air adventures of Matt Braddock, that brilliant but insubordinate hero of the RAF, whom I once christened 'The Working-class Biggles' (see *Collectors Digest Annual* 1997).

I am conscious that I have not dealt adequately with the fascinating world of the Big Five. After all, with a combined total of more than 8,000 issues in all, boys have been given a world inexhaustibly full of adventure, humour and thrills. I would guess that the boys who paid out their pocket-money twopences for a story paper, later swapped for a copy of another title, would always retain a store of ideas and images vividly created for them by the fine writers and artists - not forgetting the presiding editors - who made *Adventure*, *Rover*, *Wizard*, *Skipper* and *Hotspur* not only the Big Five but the GREAT FIVE!

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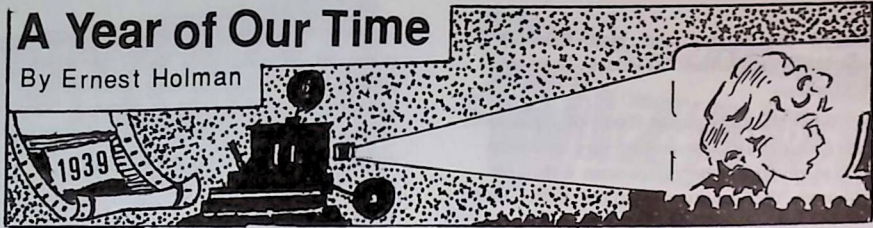
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- MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR 2000 -

A Year of Our Time

By Ernest Holman



From over one hundred years of film and goodness knows how many years of song, it would appear, at first glance, to be no easy feat to select just one particular year. All the same, I have made a choice and have decided to go back exactly sixty years. Yes, it is that number of years since that fateful year of 1939 was with us. However, this is not to be a wartime remembrance as such - but only to look at two aspects of that twelve months. The world, in fact, of film and song.

1939 was right at the height of those days when a good deal of our time was spent at the cinema and musical halls and, of course, listening to the radio. Well, just what were we seeing and hearing at that time? Starting with films, 1939 certainly contained many films of lasting memory. In my selection, here, there is no particular order and, in any case, the films shown here in the last few months of the year had no reference to war, as they had been made quite some months earlier.

Gone With the Wind is an obvious film of that year; it ran for more hours than any previous Screen Epic had ever achieved; it did, though, take itself to the public. By now, it is too well known for many further remarks about it; the critics nearly all acclaimed it. There was one reviewer, nevertheless, who was definitely 'anti'. He complained that he had read the book (the longest he'd ever known) and now sat through the film (the longest he'd ever known, also) and now knew just what it was really like to be labelled a 'film critic'. He expressed great sympathy with Leslie Howard, who it appeared had been reluctant originally to have taken his part. "He knew what was coming to us all" was the writer's comment. Despite this, however, nobody ever expressed agreement with him and even today I do believe it to be the greatest film of them all.

One last mention of GWTW - it has now made history - or so it seems - of sharing the Christmas TV screens with another 1939 Epic, which is the next on the list of films herein. *The Wizard of Oz*, in fact. Here, really, was a fairy story of screen note. Again, it is too well known to require any elaboration from me. There is, though, one interesting item concerning an 'out-take' from the original filming. Some time ago, this particular piece was shown on TV. It contained an elaborate and eccentric dance in a field by Ray Bolger (as the scarecrow). It was a marvellous bit of clown dancing and one wonders what Ray

himself felt at being 'cut out'. Probably, it would have overshadowed the other characters who went to the Emerald City with Dorothy. I would mention two very good performances not always given credit for their part in the film. Margaret Hamilton as the school mistress and witch and, not the least, the Wizard himself, that great actor Frank Morgan. When he was exposed, Dorothy called him a wicked man. "I'm a very good man," he replied. "I'm just not a good Wizard." Speaking personally, I will always wish to remember Judy Garland in this one role of Dorothy. That, no matter what came later, was - for me - THE Judy Garland.

Later revelations about *The Wizard of Oz* showed that the first choice for Dorothy was to be Shirley Temple, now aged about eleven and just right for the part. This did not come off, however, and so Judy was cast for the lead. At the time she was fifteen and, by all accounts, growing physically rather rapidly. If it is true that she had to play throughout the filming by being 'strapped down' all I can say is, she certainly earned her money for a splendid performance. Moving on to Shirley, however, 1939 saw her for the first time in Technicolor - this was the *Little Princess* but not, it would seem, of much note. The Shirley of *Good Ship Lollipop* days had now sadly passed.

A very young John Wayne rode the screens at this time, as the Ringo Kid in



Shirley Temple

Stagecoach (never to be beaten for quality and acting by subsequent versions) well cast, with strong performances by such as Claire Trevor,

as the outcast Dallas, and the drunken doctor portrayed by Thomas Mitchell.

Old themes die hard and Frankenstein was no exception. This year brought along Basil Rathbone as *Son of Frankenstein* but here again, like all sequels, it merely became a horror vehicle and nothing more. Rathbone, however, was now getting into his Sherlock Holmes films and, following on the earlier *Hound of the Baskervilles*, came up with the *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* - not, though, based on one of the saga stories.

The Roaring Twenties introduced the pairing of Humphrey Bogart and James Cagney. Warner Bros. (did anyone ever know how many there were?) had a reputation for gangster films, but *The Roaring Twenties* was to be one of the last that they were to produce in that genre. Lawrence Olivier was to be seen playing the 'heavy' Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, a film that was - for some reason - frequently reshowed during the early forties. Another of the heavyweights of Hollywood appeared in his element in the first talking version of *The Hunchback* but many people were never to believe that Charles Laughton's portrayal would live in the memory as did the silent one of Lon Chaney.

The best acting performance of 1939 was to go to Robert Donat for his gradually ageing appearance as 'Mr Chips'. *Goodbye Mr Chips* was made in Britain by MGM and they were so enchanted by the performance of Greer Garson as the schoolmaster's wife that the firm put her under contract and transplanted her to Hollywood. This is one of the few films that will, for me, always stand up and be noticed whenever it appears on the small screen.

British films as such were not behind-hand in adding to 1939's good offerings. The first version of *Four Feathers*, with Aubrey Smith and Ralph Richardson, was a most dramatic presentation, although it must be admitted that in later years, a very good version in colour appeared as *Storm Over the Nile*. Will Hay was not to be left out this year, either - *Ask a Policeman* and *Where's That Fire* showed the famous three at their usual capers. Never up to the heights of *Oh, Mr Porter*, of course, but a typical comedy romp for Will and Co.

Cronin's *The Stars Look Down*, *Four Just Men* (Edgar Wallace) and *Come On George* (Formby) were run-of-the-mill offerings; Lupino Lane, however, was at his merriest in *Lambeth Walk* and there was also on offer as a semi-documentary *The Lion Has Wings* - this featured Ralph Richardson but as propaganda it did not really deserve inclusion in Film Lore.

Back in Hollywood, an event was about

to take place, in other words, Deanna Durbin's first kiss. This was *First Love* but the actual act took place out of sight! The implication was left, however, that IT had happened. Memory eludes me as to the other half of the bargain - was it Robert Stack?



Deanna Durbin

I suppose the most appropriate title of them all was bestowed on a Betty Grable film *Million Dollar Legs*. These limbs were to be frequently seen during the years of hostilities in most barrack rooms. No, I never kept my pictures, but the memory lingers on!

When we turn from just a few of the cinema offerings of the year 1939 to the songs of those days, it is necessary to make a division. Once war had broken out, songwriters fell over each other to 'cash in', as will be seen. First, however, who remembers Annette Mills and her 'Boomps-a-Daisy'? This was greatly taken up by children, who 'went to town' on the action needed in the ritual 'dance'. 'Deep Purple' had been a favourite tune during the summer of that year, notably as performed by the Ambrose and Silvester Bands on radio. It was, however, Vera Lynn who produced typically emotional and long-remembered songs of that time. 'We'll Meet Again' must have been sung by the Forces more than many others of memory. 'Goodnight Children, Everywhere' touched the hearts of all listeners and Vera must have sold goodness-knows-how-many copies of the 78 of the time. Chick Henderson also presented a dramatic version of the song, as a parent visiting his evacuated daughter (played by the young Shirley Lenner).

daughter (played by the young Shirley Lerner).

'Jeepers Creepers' had come along earlier in the year and for years after was always associated with Louis Armstrong and Nat Gonella. It is, though, the late autumn songs that are mostly recalled now. Joe Loss came

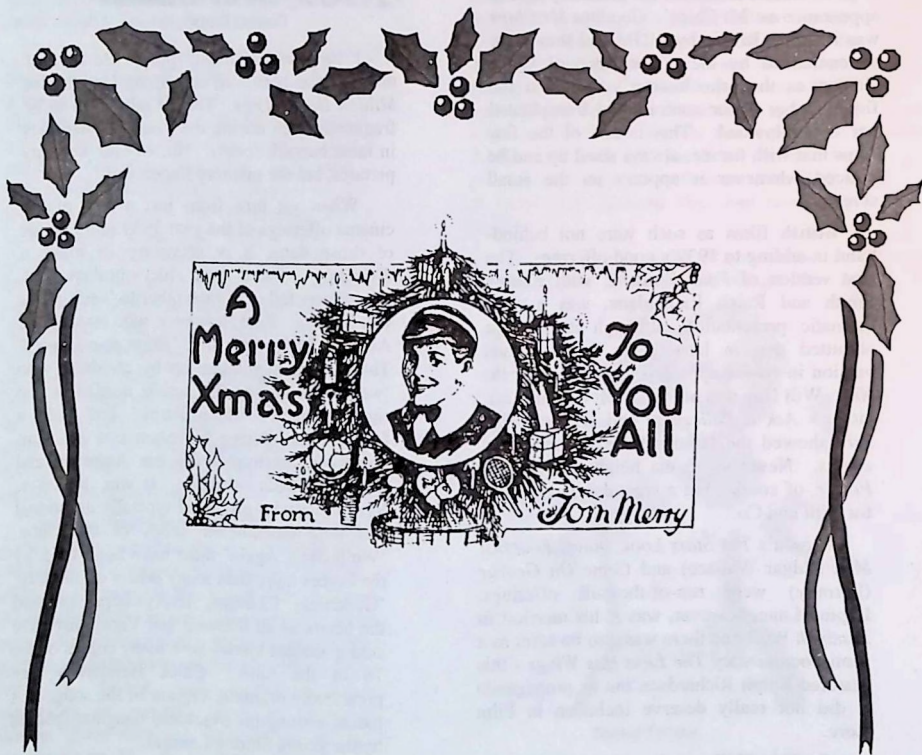


Joe Loss

along on radio, stage and records with several. Again we mention Chick Henderson, who will be remembered for his words "Don't you cry when I've gone, Wear a smile and carry on, Till the lights of London shine again". Al Bowlly was foremost with 'Somewhere in France', another very heartfelt tune. Sadly, both Chick and Al were to become war victims, Chick on naval duties and Al in the London Blitz.

Joe Loss performed all over the country to service personnel, with his other two singers, Monte Rey and Paula Green. I suppose, though, that the song that always came forth when servicemen sang together would be a tune made popular a little earlier by those intrepid songsters, Maxine, Patti and La Verne - or, of course, known as The Andrews Sisters. This epic and rousing ditty was that favourite 'Roll Out the Barrel'.

Well, there it is - just a few films and songs of one particular year. Yes, I have left out many other well-remembered items but there is a limit to a succession of such well-known films and songs. 1939, looked at from the point of view only of films and songs, was, to be frank, just a year amongst so many. All the same, it was by no means the least of them, was it?



Feminine Images in the Alice Books

By MARY CADOGAN



Writing several years after the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll reflected: "In a desperate attempt to strike out some new line of fairy lore I had sent my heroine straight down a rabbit-hole to begin with, without the least idea what was to happen afterwards." 'Alice on the Stage' (*The Theatre*, April 1887).

The impact of Alice's exploits was, of course, both immediate and astonishingly long-lasting. As well as entertaining several generations of children (and adults) and influencing other writers, they unleashed a torrent of critical analysis that seems never-ending. Not only in a literary context but psychologically and symbolically almost everything has been probed, from Carroll's plots, characters, logic and nonsense to his own personality and, in particular, his relationship with his dream-child and with the real-life small girl who inspired her creation.

Over the one-and-a-third centuries of her existence, the fictional Alice has been seen as everything from the embodiment of childish innocence to a nineteenth-century precursor of Lolita. She has undergone mutation from story-book heroine to media star in plays, operettas, ballets and films, on records, radio and television - and even in an Afro-American soul musical. Quintessentially Victorian and English, she has nevertheless acquired a timeless universality. She is, without doubt, the most celebrated heroine in children's fiction, and part of her fascination lies in the fact that she was created with extraordinary empathy and insight not by one of her own sex but by a male author during a period when men more usually showed scant sympathy for the dreams and aspirations of women and girls.

As Andrew Lang, one of Lewis Carroll's contemporaries, was to say, the *Alice* stories 'suggest so much more than they say'. Whatever our special interests in juvenile fiction may be, we will almost certainly find echoes of them in *Wonderland* or the domain beyond the looking-glass. There are the dream-drifts and time/place shifts; the relish of nonsense and topsyturvydom; the blending and blurring of fact and fantasy; the wit and word-play; the secret-garden and pastoral quest themes; the exploitation of the dream not merely as a device for magical adventure but to convey and question different levels of experience.

Tempting though it is to delve and dally in this cornucopia of colourful moods and vignettes, this present article is consciously directed towards the exploration of feminine images in the *Alice* books. One hundred years after Carroll's death, this is surely an appropriate theme for those of us who are living at a time when both the intelligent values of feminism and the dead hand of its less sensitive socio-political correctness are so much in evidence.

For the purposes of this study, the books from which feminine images have been drawn are *Alice's Adventures Underground* (completed in 1863 but not published until 1886), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871) together with its omitted section which was published eventually as *The Wasp in a Wig* in 1977, and *The Nursery Alice* (1889). However, before we turn our attention to these fictional worlds, let us look briefly at the real-life backgrounds of the little girls who might have been amongst the first readers of Alice.



Lewis Carroll illustration of Alice from the 1846 facsimile of *Alice's Adventures Underground*.

When it was first published, *Wonderland* echoed and extended the changing and more flexible attitudes that marked the middle years of the nineteenth century. In the 1850s Charles Darwin's controversial but influential *Origin of Species* had appeared. Florence Nightingale, by defying official opposition and organizing an official nursing service in the appalling conditions of the Crimean War, had shown what one determined woman could achieve, and by the 1860s many women were embarking upon their long struggle for the Vote. From 1846 onwards improvements had been made in elementary

education which was beginning to offer more than just the skills which kept the 'labouring classes' fit for drudgery. (In the early years of the century many schools had taught working-class children to read but not to write. Reading was regarded as a useful method of instilling obedience to society's codes through instructive moral tales but writing was considered an inflammatory tool for the poor.) The first generation of middle- and upper-class girls who were delightedly to absorb Alice's adventures were, of course, more fortunate in their educational opportunities even though, compared with those enjoyed by their brothers, they were strictly limited.

A few girls were beginning to discover learning and comradeship in the new world of school, but most of Alice's first readers were probably still receiving their education from governesses at home. Parents feared that schools might engender radical attitudes and immodest behaviour, and they preferred to keep their daughters at home where their work, play and reading could be supervised. Domestic skills were stressed, and much time was given to training in music, dancing and deportment. In countless well-ordered nurseries throughout the country younger girls were encouraged to play with wax, china, stuffed or wooden dolls which strengthened their images of themselves as potential mothers. Making dolls' clothes, of course, provided an incentive for needle-work while other accepted girlish pastimes were the making of scrap albums and collections of pressed flowers, and the playing of board-games, cats-cradle and marbles. There were lively nursery and outdoor games but these could be prevented by mothers and nurses from becoming hoydenish.

Small boys and girls - and especially the latter - were indeed expected to be seen but not too loudly heard. Before the advent of the Alice books their role in the family and society had been vigorously reinforced by moral tales which stressed that disobedience of the established codes of behaviour set by their elders would bring dire retribution. With the publication of *Wonderland* a new kind of heroine came into being. Alice was candid, outgoing and motivated by curiosity, a quality which few mid-nineteenth century parents encouraged in their offspring. Like many real life little girls, Alice was occasionally bewildered by the standards of grown-ups. In *Wonderland*, these are voiced and frequently turned upside down by the animal and other fantasy-characters in exhilarating dialogues - in which Alice, though polite, is often questioning - and by crafty parodies of prevalent nursery poems. There seems little doubt that in sending Alice down the rabbit-hole Lewis Carroll was demanding the recognition of childhood as an adventure to be enjoyed and not just a grim training round for adult (or after-) life. To illustrate this we need only look at the

sort of stories and juvenile heroines which preceded Alice, both in adult classics and the tales of hearth and home which were so resolutely served and *re-chaufféd* for young girls.

Charles Dickens, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840), had firmly established Little Nell in the hearts of minds of the public: she is, of course, an example of how long-suffering a girl can be. However, hardly sufficiently colourful to be anyone's role model, she is notable chiefly for her untimely death which reduced young and old readers to tearful sympathy.

Similarly, for all the strength of Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863), Ellie - gold and white, angelic and impeccable, and in marked contrast to chimney-boy Tom - must surely have seemed, even to well-brought-up Victorian little girls, a bit too good to be true.

There were retributive moral tales in abundance. Some stories written specifically for child audiences did manage to create occasionally convincing moments in their young heroines' exploits, but generally the leading protagonists were stiff, extremely conformist and inclined to make dull reading. In the early part of the century Maria Edgeworth offered some appealing situations but tended to blight them with moral strictures. Mrs. Sherwood, whose *The Fairchild Family* (1830) became required reading in many early Victorian households, provides a surely horrific instance of a father going to any lengths to discipline his offspring when he takes them to study a corpse which has been hanging for four years on the gallows, to make them aware of what might happen to children who are deceitful. Catherine Sinclair strikes a happier note with the main thrust of *Holiday House* (1839), but even in this Laura and Harry are up against the unyielding determination of their nurse, Mrs. Crabtree, to make them virtuous, 'though she were to flay them alive first'.

In considering feminine images in the Alice books, we need also to look at the real-life child who played so large a part in the creation of Carroll's fictional Alice. She was, of course, Alice Pleasance Liddell, second daughter of the distinguished scholar and teacher, Henry G. Liddell who, when Carroll became acquainted with the family, was Dean of Christ-Church, Oxford. The first version of what was eventually to evolve as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was told to Alice and two of her sisters, Lorina and Edith, in 1862 when the author was 30, and Alice 10 years old. A quarter of a century afterwards Lewis Carroll's memorable recollection of this early telling of his classic tale (*Alice on the Stage*) describes the sisters' "three eager faces, hungry for news of fairy-land . . . from whose lips 'Tell us a story please' had all the stern immutability of Fate!" (Sisterhood, as we shall see, is one of the images of femininity which are touched upon in the Alice books.) It

was, however, only one of the 'little listeners' who 'petitioned that the tale might be written out for her'. This, of course, was Alice Liddell and, from the time of that river trip until the present day, images of her have become inextricably intertwined with those of her namesake, Carroll's story-book heroine.

Lewis Carroll's pleasure in his numerous child-friends of the female variety is well-known. Despite more than a century of speculation about his motives and mores, it seems certain that in his own eyes this appreciation was aesthetic rather than sexual. Many Victorians, despite their ethos of male superiority (and even despite the fearfulness of contemporaneous child-labour and child-prostitution) idealized small girls for their virginal beauty and innocence. It has, of course, been suggested that an amalgam of the real and the fictional Alice represented the author's anima (the archetypal image of the female that compensates the masculine consciousness). It is certainly true that aspects of Alice Liddell's life form the thread on which the stories are loosely hung. Like several classics of juvenile literature, the books are enhanced by the strong relationships between the story-spinner and the listening child, and Carroll's awareness of his relationship with the real Alice is illustrated not only by the narratives but in the books' prefatory and postscriptorial poems.

Here we find truly haunting images of girlhood and of the progress into womanhood on which Carroll was to reflect in wistful tones. The poem at the beginning of *Wonderland* links the real-life sisters, Alice, Lorina and Edith, with the fictional '... dream-child moving through a land/Of wonders wild and new': the 'little arms' of the girlish rowers presage the moment in *Looking-Glass* when Alice rows a boat with the old sheep as a passenger and stops in order to pick some 'darling scented rushes': 'And then the little sleeves were carefully rolled up, and the little arms were plunged in elbow-deep...'. The sisters in the *Wonderland* poem are a united group in their demand for more of the author's magical story, but the last verse concentrates on Alice alone when Carroll urges her to lay the story '... where Childhood's dreams are twined/In Memory's mystic band/Like pilgrim's withered wreath of flowers/Pluck'd in a far-off land'. Though not yet as melancholic about Alice growing-up as he is in *Through the Looking-Glass*, the sense of time passing is strongly conveyed. The 'withered wreath of flowers' can be linked to other flowery images in the stories. Interestingly, though so often used as a symbol of feminine freshness and innocence, flowers in the Alice context have less positive associations. At the beginning of *Wonderland* she is too tired (or too bored) to bother with picking daisies and making them into a chain: though later on she longs to get into the sunlit garden, when she arrives there it is something of a disappointment (the roses are the wrong colour

and the Queen of Hearts is aggressively rushing around demanding that heads will roll). Similarly, in *Looking-Glass Land*'s garden of live flowers Alice is subjected to criticism about her physical appearance and her mental capacities from the distinctly acerbic flowers. Their comments are sharpened by the fact that two of the flowers, the Violet and the Rose, represent the younger Liddell sisters, Violet and Rhoda (this is almost their only contribution to the books). Violet tells Alice how stupid she is, while the Rose, furthering a suggestion that Alice's hair is untidy, says: 'You're beginning to fade you know - and then one can't help one's petals getting a little untidy'. This remark is a prosaic expression of Lewis Carroll's regret that little girls have to grow up, and it is also a comment that typifies sisters when in a competitive mood. An equally sniping sisterly exchange takes place in *Wonderland* when, after the birds and animals emerge from the pool of tears, Alice finds herself 'talking familiarly with them, as if she had known them all her life. Indeed, she had quite a long argument with the Lory' (an Australian parrot, whom Carroll uses as a representation of Lorina Liddell) 'who at last turned sulky, and would only say "I'm older than you, and must know better." And this Alice would not allow...'

Sisterly and growing-up themes are dwelt upon in the last chapter of *Wonderland*, after Alice has awoken from her dream. The elder sister, who is a shadowy figure at the very beginning of the book, reflects seriously on Alice's fantasy exploits; at this point Alice, child-like, has got up and run off to get her tea. Her sister falls into a dream (about Alice's dream) in which she not only has glimpses of *Wonderland* but sees Alice herself as a very little girl, and then 'as a grown woman', but one still able to recall a pleasure in all the simple joys of childhood. This is, one feels, not only Lewis Carroll in a wishful-thinking mood but an interesting exploitation of the sister-image. The nameless elder sister's fascination with images of Alice's journey from girlhood to maturity would more normally spring from the maternal than from the sisterly relationship; it is almost as if Carroll projects in the sister the ghost of Alice herself, grown-up - but, apparently, not completely so!

Curiously there are few further references to this listening and reflective sister. She crops up, briefly, towards the middle of *Through the Looking-Glass*, when Alice, dancing with Tweedledum and Tweedledee, suddenly thinks of her: "'But it certainly was funny," (Alice said afterwards, when she was telling her sister the history of all this), "to find myself singing 'Here we go round the mulberry bush' . . .". The 'Which Dreamed It' epilogue also mentions Alice's sister to whom she is 'explaining the thing afterwards'.

Although *Through the Looking-Glass* was published in 1871, only six years after *Wonderland*, the mood of the prefatory and final poems is noticeably more concerned with nostalgia and decay. By the time it appeared Alice Liddell (born in 1852) was a young adult. Alice the dream-child had also been around both on paper and in Lewis Carroll's imagination for quite a long time. Opening by remarking that the author and Alice are 'half a life asunder', the first poem devotes its last three verses to bemoaning the lost glory and gladness of childhood (more accurately, of girlhood). One particularly gloomy verse appears to equate the marriage bed, which Carroll sees as inevitably awaiting Alice, with the suggestion of death. The sense of loss he feels is almost overpowering:

'Come, harken then, ere voice of dread,
With bitter tidings laden,
Shall summon to unwelcome bed
A melancholy maiden!
We are but older children, dear,
Who fret to find our bedtime near.'

This mood of loss, longing and dying recurs frequently in the story and is the essence of the poem at its end which refers again to the three sisters and their now long-ago boating expedition. The fleeting and dream-like nature of young girlhood is vividly conveyed, and although the author writes of his fictional Alice '... moving under skies/ Never seen by waking eyes', the poem is an acrostic with the first letters of the lines spelling the name of the real-life Alice Pleasance Liddell.

When we look for consistent images in the Alice books we have to say as our heroine did in the sheep shop in *Looking-Glass* 'Things flow about so in here!' With Alice herself there are constants as well as contrasts and changing moods and situations, but before exploring these it is revealing to look at feminine aspects of some less central characters. Like many small girls in comfortably-off families, Alice would have had a nurse and a governess: also, of course, she would be acquainted with cooks and housemaids, and the books do not neglect these domestic roles.

In *Wonderland* Alice briefly recalls her nurse, speculating on how she might view the disruption of her charge's usually orderly routines. In *Looking-Glass* she remembers frightening her 'old nurse' in a game of 'let's pretend'. It seems likely that when the Mouse relates 'the driest [historical] thing' he knows in order to dry out the still-soaking-from-the-pool-of-tears animals, he is echoing Miss Prickett, who was governess to the Liddell sisters. In *Looking-Glass*, the Gnat and Alice discuss naming and identity, and her governess's possible reaction to a nameless child. Alice is sure that, with or without a name, for her the attentions of her governess would remain inexorable: she '... would never think of excusing lessons for that. If she couldn't

remember my name, she'd call me "Miss", as the servants do'. (The Gnat's reply, of course, is to joke that if the governess said "Miss" and nothing more, Alice would miss her lessons.) Later on in *Looking-Glass*, Miss Prickett, known as 'Pricks' to the Liddell girls, seems closely linked to the character of the White Queen who is gentle and caring, but untidy and on the stupid side. (Miss Prickett, strict but kindly, was not, apparently, highly educated.) The connection is established when the flustered White Queen screams 'like the whistle of a steam-engine' that her finger is bleeding. The concerned Alice asks:

"Have you pricked your finger?"
"I haven't pricked it yet", the Queen said,
"but I soon shall - oh, oh, oh!"

Lewis Carroll had strong feelings about governesses in general as well as in particular, as is shown in a quotation about his three fictional Queens from *Alice on the Stage*, the article that reveals so much about the way in which he envisaged his characters:

'Each, of course, had to preserve, through all her eccentricities, a certain queenly **dignity**. That was essential. And for distinguishing traits, I pictured to myself the Queen of Hearts as a sort of embodiment of ungovernable passion - a blind and aimless Fury. The Red Queen I pictured as a Fury, but of another type; her passion must be cold and calm; she must be formal and strict, yet not unkindly; pedantic to the tenth degree, the concentrated essence of all governesses! Lastly, the White Queen seemed to my dreaming fancy, gentle, stupid, fat and pale ...'

The Cook in *Wonderland* is another variation on the females in authority theme, for, even though her place in the Victorian household was lower than that of the governess or the nurse, the cook was generally allowed to rule in her own kitchen. Showing no respect for her employer, the Duchess, or for the well-being of that worthy's baby, the Cook is a harridan, aggressively over-peppering the soup and then throwing fire-irons, saucypans, plates and dishes at the Duchess and her unfortunate offspring. Even when, later on, the Cook is called to give evidence at the trial, she is truculent and uncowed by the frightfully belligerent Queen of Hearts.

Mary Ann, the White Rabbit's house-maid, is mentioned but never seen. The status of maids in nineteenth century households varied considerably from the lowliness of the solitary all-purpose 'skivvy' to the pretentious gentility of the lady's maid in great houses. Mary Ann appears to have been a maid of all work who was expected also to run errands and fetch and carry: 'Fetch me my gloves this moment!'

Motherhood, of course, lies at the core of images of femininity in both everyday and imaginative worlds. However, in the Alice

books there are distortions rather than reflections of the classic portrayals of maternity. In *Wonderland* the Duchess, when singing the 'Speak roughly to your little boy' burlesque, violently shakes her baby at the end of every line and tosses him up and down; then when Alice, who is far more protective, cradles him, mother-like, in her arms she realizes to her horror that he is turning into a pig, and promptly abandons him. (It is, of course, significant that the baby is male and not female. Here too is a reversal of the Victorian norm: boy children were generally considered to be far more important than girls, but for Lewis Carroll the opposite was true.) Only Dinah, Alice's cat, who has matured into motherhood by the beginning of *Looking-Glass*, seems to be cast in the accepted maternal role, as shown by her meticulous washing and grooming of her kitten! Despite his transpositions and distortions, the author, who was close to his own mother, had tremendous respect for the views of real-life female parents. Apparently he sounded out some thirty mothers to discover whether Tennial's robust illustration of the Jabberwock was too alarming to 'nervous and imaginative children' to be used as a frontispiece to *Looking-Glass*, and even whether it should be entirely omitted.

The Duchess in *Wonderland* is an interesting female in authority figure. One has to say that she is the typical bully and coward - pretty awful to those over whom she has control, such as her baby, and craven to those who are above her in the social scale, such as the Queen of Hearts. She has only a brief mention, as the 'Marchioness', in Carroll's earlier version of the story, *Alice's Adventures Underground*: Tennial's depiction of her in *Wonderland* derives from Quintin Matsys's sixteenth-century portrait of Margaretha Maultasch, a real-life duchess who was considered as being one of the ugliest of women. Carroll's Duchess, however, seems undaunted by her own lack of attractiveness unless her rudeness to Alice is seen as a jealous response to a female who is unquestionably appealing. It is only when she is in disgrace with the Queen of Hearts and thus threatened with execution that the Duchess becomes friendly with Alice: 'You can't think how glad I am to see you again, you dear old thing!' Not surprisingly, Alice is not over-responsive to this switch to chumminess, especially when the Duchess insistently rests her uncomfortably sharp chin on Alice's shoulder, but with her customary politeness and consideration Alice puts up with it.

Carroll more fully develops his female images in *Looking-Glass* than in *Wonderland*, and Alice can be seen as maturing during the course of the two books from a little girl into a Queen, or young woman. Similarly, *Wonderland's* Queen of Hearts, who as a playing-card is quite literally a two-dimensional character, is rounded and fleshed out in the Red

and White Queens of *Looking-Glass* from the original stereotypical, blinkered and violent virago.



Tennial picture from *Wonderland*

At first Alice sees herself as a small girl in the school-room: as she travels down the rabbit-hole she speculates on the depth of her descent, recalling her lessons, and saying them to herself even though she doesn't quite understand them. In the Mock Turtle's dissertation on his education Alice, feeling rather put down, says: 'I've been to a day-school, too . . . You needn't be so proud as all that.' And, during the trial, when she identifies the twelve strangely assorted creatures as 'jurors' she can't resist saying this word 'two or three times over to herself, being rather proud of it: for she thought, and rightly too, that very few little girls of her age knew the meaning of it at all'. She is also every inch the Victorian small girl in giving herself the good advice that she has received from her mother, nurse or governess ('"Come, there's no use in crying like that!" said Alice to herself, rather sharply. "I advise you to leave off this minute!"') and in keeping comfits and, of course, her thimble, in the pocket of the pinafore which protects her pretty dress from dirt or dishevelment. Still in *Wonderland*, and trapped by her fearfully fast growth inside the White Rabbit's house, she reflects that because of this lack of space she can grow no bigger, and wonders if she therefore will never get any older: "That'll be a comfort . . . never to be an old woman - but then - always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn't like that!" Here we see Lewis Carroll still not wanting his little dream-girl to grow up, while she, though knowing herself to be still a child, senses her future womanly role.

Looking-Glass was published six years after *Wonderland*, and in John Tenniel's illustrations for the sequel Alice has a slightly more mature look which befits the adolescent girl. Although her dress is similar to the one worn throughout her adventures in *Wonderland*, there are differences. Some of these might simply be attributable to changing fashions: Alice's skirt,



Tenniel picture from *Through the Looking-Glass*

for example, is narrower than the bell-like, crinoline-influenced earlier one. Her apron is dressier, with the frill on it suggesting something more than just a utilitarian cover-up, and her thick hair is now kept sedately and elegantly off her face by that famous band or ribbon. The sometimes shown striped stockings too suggest a growing-up sophistication. In *Looking-Glass* we also see Alice in travelling clothes when she finds herself briefly on a train with the goat, the beetle and the old gentleman in white. Here Tenniel pictures her in a style which was to become modish in the 1870s, complete with pill-box hat and muff. However, the strapped shoes have been changed for the outdoor fabric boots which were still fashionable for young girls in the 1860s.

It is not only in *Looking-Glass* that the illustrations suggest the older girl. Curiously, although *The Nursery Alice* (published in 1889) was intended for younger readers, the re-vamped visualization of its heroine suggests someone far closer to adolescence than the little girl of *Wonderland*. The crinoline-style skirt has been replaced by the flatter-fronted, narrower and slightly 'bustled' skirt which was popular during the 1880s and '90s. Its childish tucks (for letting down to allow for growth) are entirely absent in most of the pictures, and Alice wears dark instead of light stockings. Tenniel's use of

colour when depicting her in *The Nursery Alice* is intriguing. He did not put her into the baby-blue which Harry Theaker was to use (when he coloured some of Tenniel's *Wonderland* drawings in 1911) but used gold and dark turquoise for her clothes. He also gave her reddish-gold hair and in his general use of colour created a bolder, more grown-up image of Alice than Theaker's colourings.

It is easy, then, to see that in conveying changes in Alice Tenniel was influenced not only by Carroll's texts but by current fashions in dress, and it is also obvious that the styles of the 1870s and '80s reflected the new crispness and confidence that was beginning to be felt by girls in late-Victorian society. Perhaps we should note here that when Carroll made his own illustrations for *Alice's Adventures Underground*, which of course in its handwritten version preceded both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, his choice of clothes for Alice was less influenced by current styles. There are suggestions of Victorian full skirts and petticoats, but the Pre-Raphaelite simplicity of the bodice of Alice's frock, and her long, centre-parted hair impart a timeless air. She could be the fairy-tale or story-book heroine of an adventure set much earlier or much later, and elsewhere, than in her own period and place.

Looking-Glass begins with a cosy Victorian parlour scene which is set, in contrast to the summery open-air start to *Wonderland*, in winter. Alice is curled up in a large arm-chair, with Dinah's black kitten on her lap impeding her efforts to wind a ball of worsted. There is a reference to the progress of the seasons, which can be seen as an indication (sentimentally regretful on the author's part but excitedly on Alice's) of the process of change and growing-up:

"Do you hear the snow against the windowpanes, Kitty? How nice and soft it sounds! Just as if some one was kissing the window all over outside. I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says 'go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.' And when they wake up in the summer, Kitty, they dress themselves all in green, and dance about - whenever the wind blows - oh, that's very pretty!" cried Alice . . . "And I do so wish it was true! . . ."

For Alice, to become a Queen is a symbol for growing up and leaving childhood behind. Even before she goes through the looking-glass, she is reported as having suggested to her sister that they should play at being Kings and Queens. She sees a resemblance between the kitten and the Red Queen figure of the chess set, and almost as soon as she goes through the mirror she sees animated versions of the Red and White Kings

and Queens. Appropriately the first character there to speak is one of the Queens - the white one, who, despite an air of disorganization, shows true motherly concern for her offspring in marked contrast to the topsy-turvy maternal vignettes in *Wonderland*.

others from being beheaded by the Red Queen - and so on. In *Looking-Glass*, however, as well as being older she seems more in control and thus more able to express the kindly aspects of her nature - the gentleness that is usually associated with femininity.



Tenniel illustration to *The Nursery Alice*

She knocks over the White King in her rush to protect her child, and although he, in consequence, is annoyed with his spouse, Alice is 'very anxious to be of use' in restoring the White Queen's equanimity. Her wish to be helpful finds more outlets in *Looking-Glass* land than in *Wonderland*, where she spends so much time in a state of bewilderment that she must often feel ineffective. Of course, even in the earlier book her protectiveness is evident - she is concerned about the White Rabbit's fearfulness; she tries to rescue the baby from the violence of the Duchess and the Cook; she is patiently kid to the Mock Turtle in his long dissertations; she is anxious to save the playing-card gardeners and

When, for example, Tweedledum and Tweedledee have tauntingly reduced her to tears of confusion (about whether she is real, or just a figment of the Red King's dream), she soon recovers herself sufficiently to turn a laugh at one of Tweedledee's platitudes into a cough 'for fear of hurting his feelings'. Soon afterwards she is giving her energies to sympathetically adjusting the White Queen's fly-away shawl and equally uncontrollable hair, and then trying to stop Humpty Dumpty from falling off the wall. She is also shown as answering his rather tart questions 'very gently' and 'very politely' - although, understandably, she **does** become indignant when he macabrely suggests that she should have stopped growing (and growing-up!) at the age of seven.

Alice's tenderness finds fuller expression in her encounter with the White Knight, who is, of course, often seen as the author's caricatured representation of himself. By then Alice is supposedly a prisoner of the Red King, whom the White Knight fights in order to rescue her. She finds the rules of battle confusing and doesn't take the fight too seriously, but although anxious to get on with her journey so that she can become a Queen, she will not leave the kindly, clever but somewhat inept Knight until she feels that all is well with him. After telling him firmly of her own ambition - 'I don't want to be anybody's prisoner. I want to be a Queen' - she dallies to help him off with his helmet, to provide him with sympathy, to bolster his image of himself and to listen attentively while he sings the long and rambling song 'of his own invention'.

The meeting between Alice and the White

Knight is one of the most extensive and touching episodes in the books, and it seems likely that it is meant to convey the ending of Carroll's close relationship with Alice Liddell as she begins to grow up, as well as reflecting the less dependent state of any girl moving towards maturity. The whole sequence is overhung with wistfulness and a languorous charm that springs from the concern of each of the participants for the other: 'Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through the Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly...'. Impatient though she is to proceed with her journey towards her coronation, she cannot hurry away from the White Knight, and when they do eventually part, at his request she stays to watch and wave him on his solitary and stumbling way. In the published version of *Looking-Glass*, it is then, of course, that she bounds across the brook and becomes a Queen. However, it is meaningful to consider at this point a section of the book, eventually published in 1977 as *The Wasp in a Wig*, which was removed, partly at Tenniel's suggestion that it was almost impossible to illustrate a wasp in a wig and that the episode was anyway rather lacking in interest.

In the proof-but-unpublished stage of *Looking-Glass*, she meets the Wasp almost immediately she has seen the last of the White Knight. Indeed the Wasp encounter can be seen as a development of her dialogue with the Knight (or the author) after time has taken an even greater toll. Alice's relationship with the aged Wasp conveys not only the protective concern often shown by the female to the male, but a young girl's tenderness towards an older, sadder man. The Wasp, who is crotchety, anxious and frail, is bemoaning the loss of his youth and his once abundant locks. As when she was with the White Knight, Alice is impatient to be on her way to cross the brook and become a Queen, but nevertheless feels impelled to stay and give comfort to her querulous companion. She asks 'in a soothing tone' if she can do anything for him: she feels pity for him, listens intently to his meandering remarks, stifles her laughter at his stupidities and does not think of leaving him until he has 'quite recovered his spirits': 'Alice tripped down the hill again, quite pleased that she had gone back and given a few minutes to

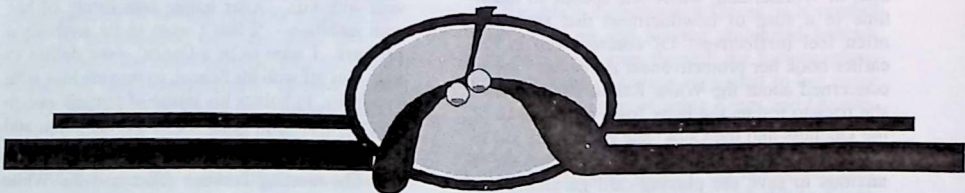
making the poor old creature comfortable.'

Then, of course, she attains her great ambition - to be a Queen. This is the crowning moment of her girlhood and, typically, Alice is determined to behave as befits the regal state: "'it'll never do . . . to be lolling about on the grass like that! Queens have to be dignified ...'" Finding herself suddenly in the company of the Red and White Queens she realizes that she has a lot still to learn about queenly behaviour, but there is little sisterly solidarity in the Red Queen's response to her - though the White Queen seems fairly amiable. Although not wanting wholesalely to hack off people's heads (like her fore-runner the Queen of Hearts in Wonderland), the Red Queen is horribly bossy and imperious, assuming a governessy, manipulative attitude towards Alice and also towards the less assertive White Queen. She nags, niggles and bullies them both even though they are all officially of the same status. (One senses that in real life Lewis Carroll felt himself being put down by aggressive and over-confident females - and that the creation of the Red Queen was a crafty act of vengeance on his part.) Alice, determined to remain as kind and considerate as possible in spite of provocation, finds that at certain moments the blander White Queen is being easily led astray (it is small wonder that earlier in the story she is transformed into a sheep and later into a leg of mutton) by the arrogant Red Queen. They both 'gang up' on Alice, possibly seeing her, young, pretty and newly crowned, as an unwelcome rival for power and influence whom they must cut down to suitably small size.

Happily it is Alice who has the last word. She wakes up, and thinking that she is shaking the life out of the Red Queen finds herself holding Dinah's black kitten again, back in her own home. She finds the Red Queen amongst the chessmen on the floor - now a tiny character: it is she, and not Alice, who has been cut down.

We are left with the softer female image of Alice, loving, queenly, curious and open to new experiences, dreaming of womanhood. In Lewis Carroll's elegaic words:

Dreaming as the days go by
 Dreaming as the summers die . . .





PANTOMIME

By Johnny Burslem



My nickname is 'Smithy'
and with 'Reddy' in tow
we both 'did' the Panto
booked centre, front row.

"I heard Loder was going"
said 'Reddy', hushed voice.
"If he starts any funnies,
trip him quick . . . there's no choice."

Thursday 'Mat' found us there
sitting expectant
laden with toffees
and unrepentant.

'Naff' orchestra leader
eyed us with malice.
'One in the neck' and
he'd fast close the 'Palice' (poet's licence)

The overture burst
and on flew the witch
of 'High Tide' said the programme.
It was smooth, without hitch.

Her eyes were puffed
She gobbled her lines
The 'Sisters' followed
made very rude 'signs'.

'Cinders' collected
not sticks but a lamp
Then on came the 'Prince'
and the rest of the 'Camp'.

It all went serene
Then . . . ooer! AD LIB fast
'Cinders' in coach
Horses, Footmen, full cast.

A very large cough
when Cinders said: "TIME"???
a 'Mouse' squeaked "Outside."
she's 'ad one o'er the nine"

"Grab somebody quick.
Do the 'dressing' routine
and the 'Sisters' leaped up
and filled out the scene.

"From the audience fast
we'll grab a big 'Jesse'
C'mon over the 'pit'
tell Doctor, No Messy . . ."

As they passed the Conductor
they hissed "Play a CODA"
Then they jumped the third row
and together grabbed Loder . . .

He fought all the way
Features yellow with rage
His trousers had ripped
'fore they stood him on stage
Whatever he mouthed?

Well . . . it's only a hunch,
was lost to the audience
because of a punch.

Karate chop on the back of his neck
Round went a belt at the waist
As Loder gasped, a hook was attached
thick rope growing taut with the haste.

Shouts and roars from
the crowd in the 'Stalls'
Cloak, pointed hat dropped
in place with their calls.

The 'Sisters' were deft
Green 'make up' slapped proud
Amid cheers came the roar
as the drum roll grew loud.

Into orbit went Loder
gasping with fright
The BAND going frantic
as he swung left and right

A real live 'Witch'
'Pants' coming adrift
Circled the COACH
Then the 'Ballet' moved swift.

Not swift enough
the fraying rope tore
Down he went "BULLSEYE"
Through the Glass Coach and Four.

To say 'Cinders' was shocked
Is drawing it mild
She lambasted Loder
Boy! Boy WAS SHE WILD.

Some of his 'face'
Got onto her gown
Green, on White Silk
She sure went to town.

The audience grew wild
The 'Band' blew their TOP
Fairies, Coachmen and 'Staff'
Cheered loudly non-stop

In total uproar
that rocked Courtfield Town
Cinders walloped Loder
as the 'Curtain' came down.

In the 'write-up' next day
Front page . . . Local RAG
Said "It should run a year"
and that was no 'Gag'.

No one believed
it was not in the 'Plot'
A tame little 'Panto'
It certainly was not!

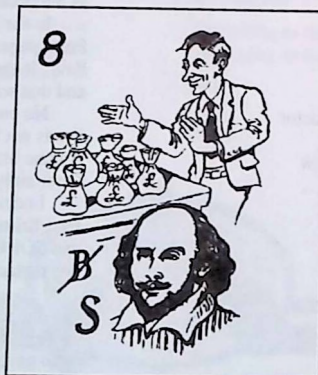
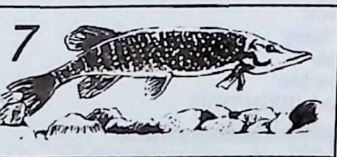
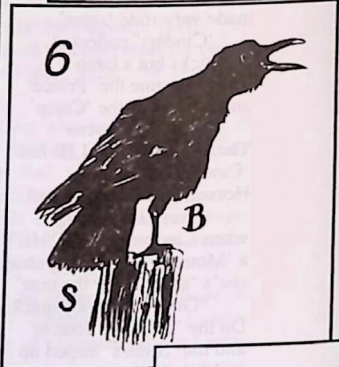
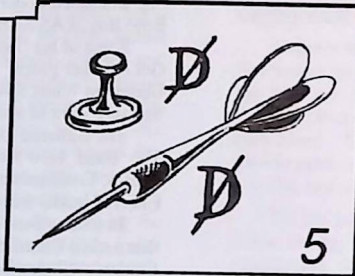
Loder's in 'Sanny'
for Christmas Tide
and SOBER 'Low Ebb'
has replaced Witch 'HIGH TIDE'.

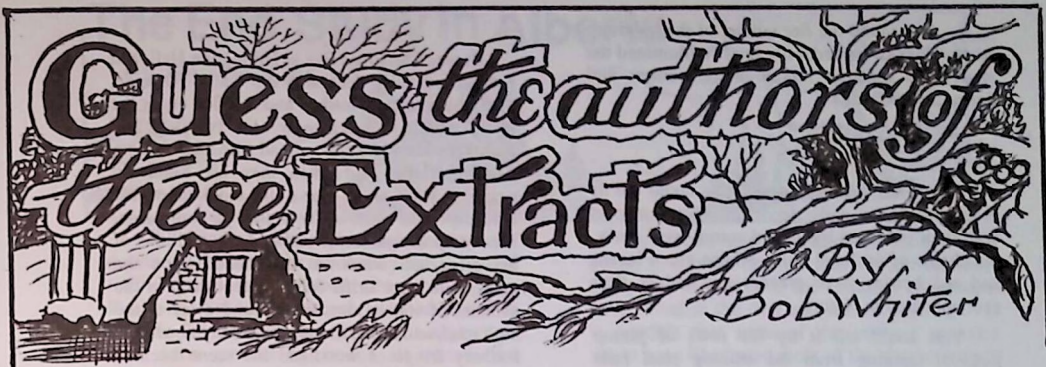
No one forgets Loder
as the 'LOW EBB' witch
who gave all the audience
a 'HIGH VOLT' stitch.



Guess these Authors

By Bob Whiter





1.

_____ stood in the darkness in the haunted room, his very flesh creeping.

What had caused that sudden extinguishing of the light? He had not touched it; no human hand had touched it. He put out his hands instinctively in the darkness, as if to ward off something - he did not know what.

What was that sound?

A rustling sound, as of a robe - an old monk's robe - sweeping on the stone floor, brushing against the stone walls!

The blood rushed to _____'s heart.

What was it?

From the silence came that deep and terrible groan. It rang in _____'s ears; it seemed to fill the haunted room with strange and eerie noises.

Groan!

_____ dashed in the direction of the sound. He stumbled against the table, and gave a sharp cry. There was a movement; something was in the room - he was no longer alone!

2.

Pen Names: Jeffrey Gaunt, Frank Chatham, Barton Furze, John Beresford, Eric Roche, Hamilton Smith.

_____, of the Lower Fourth, was having tea with his pal, _____, in their study when the door was thrown open and _____ strode into the room, followed by _____.

"Hallo, kids!" greeted _____. "I understand that you brought a horse's skin back with you after last hols - some theatrical rubbish. I want to borrow it!"

That was like _____. He never beat about the bush, particularly when dealing with kids.

"You're not going to get it, _____, so shove off!" replied _____. "And if you must bring

_____ into other men's studies, you might ask him to wash his neck and change his collar!"

"You cheeky young rotter!" yelled _____, and made a rush for the table.

_____ grabbed him by the arm.

"We don't want any impertinence, young _____!" he said loftily. "Are you going to hand over that skin?"

"No!" retorted _____, "so buzz off! We don't want to have to fumigate the study!"

3.

There was going to be a dance, in fancy costume, on New Year's Day. The five juniors had unpacked a large box, newly arrived, with all sorts of costumes and disguises in it. Now they were trying them on, and making their selections for the great occasion. _____'s taste ran to something rather striking. _____ was going to make up as the Bearded Bandit. _____, _____, and _____ were busy with their own occupations, but _____ kindly lent his assistance to _____. _____, the new fellow in the _____, was an obliging fellow! He dabbed fixing gum on a huge moustache and fixed it to _____'s upper lip; he gummed a big black beard, and fastened it to _____'s chin; he gummed gigantic eyebrows over _____'s own. Now he was busy with a big black wig, which he was affixing over _____'s hair.

4.

It was dim and dusky in the study. The December darkness had fallen on the school. The winter wind, whistling from the downs, pattered snowflakes on the window-panes. The study fire burned with a ruddy glow, gleaming on the faces of the three fellows sitting round the fire, casting strange lights and shadows.

_____ School was breaking up for Christmas the next day. After tea in Study No. _____, _____ had gone down to look for letters and _____, _____, and _____,

_____ sat round the fire talking of the holidays. As the dusk deepened, only the fire illumined the study, and shadows lurked in the corners and danced on the walls.

5.

Christmas was very near. You could tell its proximity in the gaily decorated shop windows with their coloured lights and cotton-wool snow, the chains of artificial holly, whose green leaves and red berries were greener and redder than ever appeared in Nature.

You could tell it by the rows of plump turkeys, hanging from the shining steel rails outside the butchers' and the poulterers', smooth, comfortable-looking birds, that reminded one of prosperous old gentlemen who had retired from business. You could tell it in the huge piles of oranges and rosy-faced apples that adorned the stalls in front of the greengrocers' and fruiterers', and which peeped at you shyly and tantalisingly from behind bunches of holly and evergreen and mistletoe. You could hear it in the added heartiness with which people greeted friends and acquaintances as they met, and see it in the excited faces and suppressed eagerness of the children.

6.

Also wrote under Frank Richards and Martin Clifford.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

It was unmistakable. From far down the corridor came that eerie, ghostly sound. All the Removites in the bedroom heard it, and the others quickly jumped out of bed. They were filled with a strange alarm.

"It must be a window or something," said _____, keeping a grip on himself. "For goodness sake you chaps, don't get the wind up! It's so easy to imagine things in the dead of night ..."

"Look!" gasped _____, who was at the door again. The others crowded up, and they received a shock. One or two of them uttered startled ejaculations. They crowded into the corridor staring with fascinated horror.

_____ had been trying to convince himself that there was a simple explanation of that clanking sound - perhaps the metal catch of a badly fastened window, or something equally trivial. Yet at the same time, _____ had to confess to himself that the sound was significantly akin to the rattle of heavy chains. Now he stared with the others. Down that corridor there was something to be seen - something which was certainly not normal.

7.

It was Christmas Eve at Hillingdon Hall, and red-berried holly decorated the walls. Outside, everything seemed hushed and muffled under the heavy mantle of fallen snow. For two days and nights the keen North wind had filled the air with whirling flakes and when they had suddenly ceased to whirl about nine o' the clock the whole landscape was white as far as the eye could scan. It covered the gables, it outlined the mullions of the great hall windows that looked upon the park; there were drifts full five feet deep in the avenues of stately elms that wound away to the high road, and as the moon rose slowly above the feathery fringe of woodland the scene became one of dazzling beauty.

8.

With the candlestick held high in his left hand, the cudgel gripped in his right, _____ followed through the arched doorway into the old dark passage. For a second he had a glimpse of the phantom figure, fleeting in the flickering candle-light. Then it vanished. His heart beat in great thumps. But with iron resolution he strode down the stone passage to the massive door at the end. It was still closed. It was barred and bolted on the inside, as he had left it.

The candle shook and flickered in his hand as he stared round him. The stone passage was empty - but for himself. He was alone - the phantom had disappeared! The sweat ran down the _____ man's bronzed face. His step was a little uncertain as he stepped back into the firelit hall.

_____ set the candlestick on the huge old mantelpiece, and with a hand that shook, piled logs on the fire. He did not return to his bed. The winter dawn, creeping over the snowy moorland and glimmering down into the _____, found him still wakeful and watching.

9.

_____, clad in grey flannels and a sweater, deep in a Sabatini novel from his host's library, paused to pull his chair a little nearer to the hall fire. It was bitterly cold for the time of the year; lowering skies and a drizzle of rain had put all ideas of _____ out of his head, and he settled down for a comfortable spell of reading. He frowned as the door opened to admit a party of men and girls whose heavy boots and macintoshes proclaimed them to be a shooting party, bound for fields. At their head was _____, a big, florid, middle-aged man to whom _____ had taken an instant dislike when they had been introduced the previous evening.

(Answers to the picture and prose quizzes are on page 60)

The End Study in Alberta

By Ray Hopkins



The howl of protest that one might have expected to result from the weekly *Boys' Friend* (BF) Editor's announcement that the popular Rookwood School series was to be relocated to Canada did not happen. In fact, it appears to have been greeted by smiles all round, the response being much as recorded by C.D. diarist Danny after the first month in April 1923, that he liked the stories very much. In view of the length of time that they eventually spent there, Danny wasn't alone in his evident enjoyment.

But what was behind the uprooting of this very English school series, giving it a totally different 'Wild West' flavour? Was the idea to turn the 'green 'un' as the BF was affectionately termed, into an all-adventure-and-thrills story paper to compete with the three terrors from the north, the Aberdeen Thomson papers with the eye-catching all-colour covers, probably thought of as 'garish' by the powers that were at the staid old London Amalgamated Press (AP). The *Adventure* commenced its assault on the boys' market in Sep 1921, followed by the *Rover* in Mar 1922, and in Sep that same year by the *Wizard*. As the files of the BF are buried in the vaults of the Colindale Newspaper Library, there is no way, unless one has a current British Library card, that one can ascertain the programme of stories when the Rookwood series removed to Canada. It would be interesting to find out whether another school took the place of Rookwood, or whether thrills and adventure obtained throughout the large green pages. The BF could stand some serious investigating after all this time.

Presumably, if it was the Editor's idea to remove the juniors from Hampshire, the author himself would not have been averse to the change of locale, having undoubtedly enjoyed the wide open spaces that he had written about so winningly in the Frank Richards' *Schooldays* series. Laid in British Columbia, this series had been a popular item in the same paper with a long run from 1917 to 1921. No doubt Charles Hamilton would have been pleased to portray some more lively scenes in the fresh air again.

The printing history of the Rookwood series in Canada is as follows: it originally ran in the BF, 2nd series, 1140 to 1174, Apr-Dec 1923. It was reprinted in the 2nd series of the *Popular* 429 to 462, Apr-Dec 1927 and in the *Schoolboys' Own Library* (SOL) Nos. 146, 150, 154 and 158 in Apr, Jun, Aug and Oct 1931.

As we can now only read this series in the SOLs, it is quite obvious that we are far from being able to wallow in the complete adventures as recorded in the first and second printings. It is possible that some of the omitted episodes might have illustrated more of the characteristics that we associate with Jimmy's study-mates at school, however, Lovell's rather endearing trait of being stubborn is well to the fore, but Raby and Newcome are, in the main, just used as physical backup to Jimmy Silver. He comes out in this series as an energetic youngster, very able on horseback and with firearms and, due to the often quite grim happenings in cowboyland, with few opportunities to exhibit the cheerfulness that is an important part of his makeup in the school surroundings. It may be interesting to ponder that the character of Jimmy as portrayed in Alberta might be considered as a possible template for Frank Richards' other 'Western' character, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. The Rio Kid made his debut in *Popular* 469, Jan 1928 and stayed for three years. He returned in the *Modern Boy* from Sep 1937 to Feb 1938, and is also much reprinted in the BFL.

That which follows is a rundown on the Rookwood episodes as they appear in the SOL reprints.

SOL 146: Jimmy Silver and Co. Out West (Apr 1931)

Jimmy Silver's cousin, Hudson Smedley, visits Rookwood and takes Jimmy, Lovell, Newcome and Raby back with him to Canada for a holiday. He is the owner of the Windy River Ranch in Northwest Alberta. The last night before arriving at the ranch they stay at Mosquito City. Smedley tells Jimmy he intends to be up at sunrise to ride to the ranch but when Jimmy wakes up it is already daylight and there is no sign of Smedley. When he enquires for him Mr. Bunch, the hotel owner, tells him that Smedley had left at sunrise and intended that they boys should rest all day at the hotel and Smedley would send a wagon for them on the following day. Jimmy and Co., to show they aren't soft, hire four horses from Mr. Bunch and ride in the direction of the Windy River Ranch. Mr. Bunch warns them to steer clear of a half-breed crook called Pequod le Couteau. Inevitably, they encounter him and he attempts to steal their horses and threatens them with a foot-long knife if they try to stop him. They crash a stone bottle in his face and leave him

the cowhands will believe that they were able to down Pequod.

Kentuck, one of Smedley's ranchhands, who takes a dislike to Jimmy, goads him into mounting Blazer, an unbroken horse. The horse bolts and Jimmy hangs on for dear life. Blazer is able to lose him in the foothills when the horse stops for a drink and Jimmy's attention is diverted from the horse by the sight of an Indian watching him nearby. Jimmy gives the Indian, Cloudy River, five dollars to guide him back to the ranch. When Jimmy arrives, exhausted, and recounts what happened to him, he is accused of telling tall stories. Kentuck is especially derisory. Jimmy strikes him and offers to fight him the next day. Smedley, knowing Kentuck will give Jimmy a bad beating, makes sure he is not available the next day by getting Kentuck to accompany him to Mosquito City. Pete Peters, the ranch foreman, tells Jimmy he's lost his cousin a very valuable animal.

Jimmy, without broadcasting his intentions, rides off with Lovell, Newcome and Raby in search of Blazer. Enlisting the help of Cloudy River's tracking abilities, for which he is charged twenty dollars, Jimmy locates Blazer in a fertile valley into which there is one narrow entrance. Leaving the Co. to block the entrance so that Blazer cannot escape, Jimmy rides into the valley but is attacked by Pequod le Couteau who is also trying to secure Blazer. Jimmy escapes by climbing up a tree and, while Pequod is engaged in capturing Blazer, rejoins the three juniors. After Pequod has settled for the night, Jimmy and Co. creep up and tie him. They feel they have proved themselves to not be called Tenderfeet any more when they return to the ranch with both Blazer and the bound Pequod.

Pequod is locked in a barred cabin until the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) can pick him up, but Kentuck releases him. Pequod climbs up to Jimmy's bedroom but Jimmy hears him coming and he is again captured by the four boys. The knife used by Pequod is known to be Kentuck's and Smedley fires him and the cowboys ride him on a rail off the ranch.

SOL 150: Pals of the Ranges (Jun 1931)

Buster, an unruly horse, runs away with Lovell and carries him, willy-nilly, to Coyote Creek Ranch, owned by tight-fisted but honest Grudger Grimes. His foreman, Spanish Kit, a Mexican, and all his cowhands are a gang of horse thieves. Jimmy follows on Blazer and is imprisoned in the same barn as Lovell. Grimes releases them later and tells them to get off his land. The crooked cowpunchers tell them that their horses have run away down the trail. Jimmy and Lovell have a tiring ten-mile tramp back to the Windy River Ranch.

Hudson Smedley decides the horses must still be at the Coyote Creek Ranch. He is reluctant to allow the boys to accompany him

when he and his cowpunchers leave to retrieve them but Jimmy says Blazer will answer if he calls him. Spanish Kit attempts to stop them entering the Grimes ranch but Skitter Dick lassos his gun and the Windy River gang search the corral for the stolen horses. There are twenty there, but none resembling Buster or Blazer. Jimmy gives the whistle familiar to Blazer and a horse they don't recognise trots forward. It is Blazer disguised by paint. Buster is also located, similarly disguised. Grimes is informed that his men have stolen the horses and disguised them. Enraged, the Coyote Creek Ranch owner fires Spanish Kit and his crooked cowpunchers. The next morning Grimes is found tied to his horse. When released by Smedley and upon returning to his property, he finds the ranch deserted and all his valuables and horses stolen.

Grimes tells Smedley to send a message to the Sheriff to arrest Spanish Kit. The crooked cowhands are hiding in the foothills and are hunted in vain by the RCMP. A week later they rustle a hundred head of steers in the care of Spike Thompson who works for Smedley. Hudson Smedley and his cowhands head for the foothills to retrieve the steers. He forbids Jimmy and Co. to accompany them. They are left at the ranch with only Baldy the cook and Woo Sing, the chore boy.

After dark, the ranch is attacked by Spanish Kit and his gang of rustlers. Jimmy shoots Cactus Bill off the veranda roof. Spanish Kit climbs up to the roof. Jimmy fires at him but misses. Kit tells his men, "We've got to get the ranch! Smedley's got thousands of dollars there - it's close on payday. I've got a scratch on the shoulder and I'm gonna make that kid pay for it." Jimmy is relieved that he has killed neither of the men but he fears for his cousin's ranch.

Kit tells Jimmy he will spare their lives if he will open the door and let the rustlers in. When he refuses, Kit and his men set fire to the ranch with bundles of brushwood soaked in kerosene. Pete Peters, the Windy River foreman, returns with some men from the Sunset Ranch across the river, chases off the rustlers and puts out the fire. "Half the veranda had been burnt away, the porch was a heap of smoking stumps, the door was blackened and scarred. But the house was safe and at length the last red ember was stamped out."

Pete Peters and the Sunset Ranch hands capture six rustlers, "two who won't ever steal a horse again", but Spanish Kit escapes. Jimmy and Co. are no longer looked upon as 'tenderfeet'. They have won their spurs, as it were, by their gallant defence of Windy River Ranch.

After three days, the Windy River cowpunchers return without the steers and without Boss Smedley who was taken prisoner by the rustlers when he left camp to scout alone. Jimmy Silver rides off alone at nightfall on

Blazer to search for his cousin. That night, Jimmy sleeps in the foothills at the camp of the Windy River cowboys. The following morning he bumps into Cactus Bill, now an outlaw, and bids him put up his hands. With the help of Red Henri, his fellow outlaw, Cactus manages to capture Jimmy. Back at the rustlers' camp, Jimmy discovers that a new member is Pequod le Couteau. "He had been a savage enemy to the junior who had captured him, yet Jimmy had risked his life to save Pequod when the breed fell

reprisal. Pequod unwillingly cuts Smedley free and leads them both from the rustlers' camp. Unfortunately, they are seen by a guard. Pequod shoots him. This raises the alarm and the three fugitives are forced to turn loose their horses and climb to a ledge two feet wide some twelve feet up a rocky incline. Cactus Bill and Co. discover the horses and, knowing there is no escape from the well-guarded valley, they search the rocks and Jimmy and Co. are ambushed. A burst of fire from the top of the cliffs above saves them.

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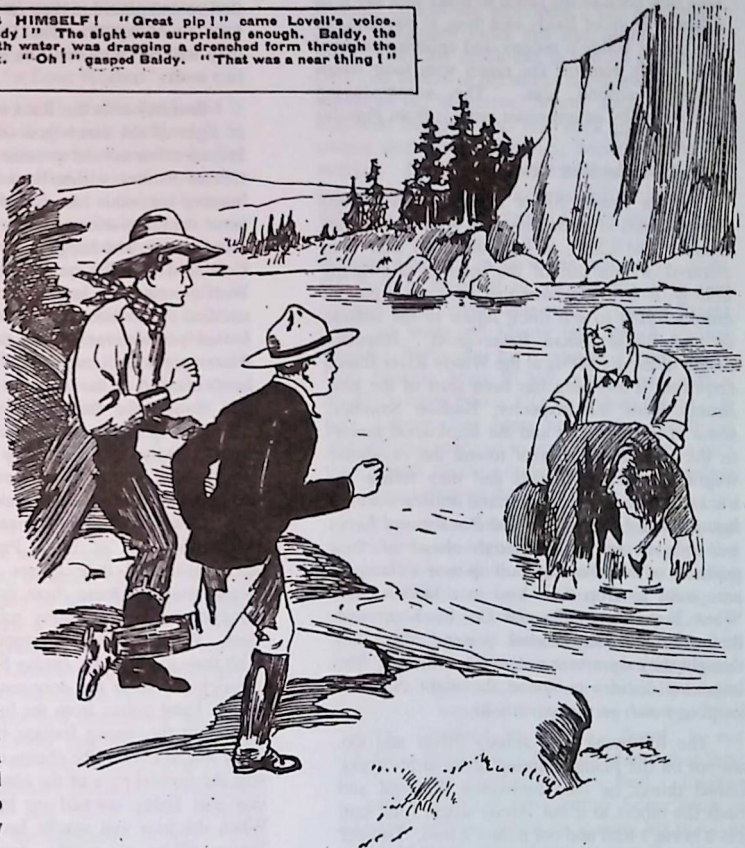
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BALDY REDEEMS HIMSELF! "Great pip!" came Lovell's voice. "Good for you, Baldy!" The sight was surprising enough. Baldy, the cook, streaming with water, was dragging a drenched form through the shallows to the bank. "Oh!" gasped Baldy. "That was a near thing!"

from the cliff in an attempt to escape." The latter quote, startling to the reader, evidently refers to an omitted episode in this reprint.

Smedley tells Jimmy that Spanish Kit wants ten thousand dollars to let him go. Spanish Kit demands that Smedley write a draft for the amount on the bank at Red Deer. Smedley refuses. Kit approaches Jimmy with a red-hot branding iron. Then he hands Jimmy, bound to a tree, a revolver and orders him to shoot Smedley through the head.

Jimmy feels the heat from the branding iron on his face and shoots. At Kit, not Smedley! Kit falls to the ground, his cheek pouring blood, and Jimmy puts two more bullets into him, one in his shoulder and one in his chest. Pequod is detailed to bind Jimmy securely so that Kit can deal with him when he recovers. He whispers to Jimmy that he hasn't forgotten he owes his life to the boy but must appear to treat him roughly in front of the other rustlers. Pequod returns during the night to release him while he is on guard. Jimmy refuses to leave without his cousin. Pequod urges him to leave his cousin behind but Jimmy fears that Spanish Kit will kill Smedley in



They have been rescued at the last minute by the Mounties, but it was Lovell who had found them secreted on the ledge. The sound of gunfire had drawn him to the top of the cliffs so that when Skitter Dick finds him, Lovell is able to lead them to the spot.

This second volume is rounded off by a thirteen-page comedy episode featuring Baldy Bubbin, the Windy River Ranch cook. When the rustlers raided the ranch, Baldy had kept out of the way and hid himself under his bed. He is not allowed to forget this act of cowardice especially as he has a habit of romancing about his courage

in the face of fearful odds. (Shades of W.G. Bunter!) In order to make himself appear heroic, Baldy arranges a mock 'rescue from drowning' with the help of a passing hobo called Slim Hookey. Baldy gives Slim five hundred dollars for allowing him to rescue the hobo, but Slim blackmails him by threatening to tell the truth unless Baldy keeps on feeding him and letting him stay at the ranch. So while the cowboys are missing, Baldy chases the hobo off by beating him with a stave. But Slim gets his revenge by lying in wait for the ranch hands and telling them the truth about the rescue from drowning. They take him back to the ranch to make him say it all again in front of Baldy and then, to pay him out for taking Baldy's money and splitting on him, they hustle him off the ranch with their whips cracking around him. The accompanying illustration by an unknown artist is from *Popular* 444, Jul 1927.

SOL 154: The War Trail (Aug 1931)

When Jimmy Silver returns to the Windy River Ranch after helping two Americans, Jude Bunker and Lebel, a half-breed, to pull their covered wagon out of the mud of a swampy hollow, it is to discover that they are a pair of crooks trying to sell illicit liquor to the Indians on the Blood Indian Reservation. Inspector Steele of the RCMP is at the Windy River Ranch enquiring if anything has been seen of the pair. Jimmy leads the Inspector, Hudson Smedley, some of the cowboys and the Rookwood juniors to the spot where Blazer towed the two-horse wagon out of the morass and they follow the tracks. There is fifteen thousand dollars-worth of liquor aboard the wagon and Bunker and Lebel are able to keep far enough ahead of their pursuers so that they can pull up near a clump of pine trees to drop their load in a hidden cave. When Inspector Steele and Co. catch up with them, Bunker and Lebel pretend that they thought they were being chased by rustlers. The Inspector decides to spend the night close by keeping watch on the two crooks.

The following day, Jimmy Silver and Co. are out on the plains, hunting down stray steers. Lovell thinks he has discovered the trail and leads the others to it but Jimmy doesn't tell him it is a horse's trail and not a steer's trail. Trooper Bright had ridden off to join Inspector Steele that morning. They find his horse shot through the head with the buzzards already at work on the body! There is no sign of Trooper Bright but his carbine is found close by, smashed and useless. Jimmy suspects both the Trooper and Inspector Steele have been made captives by Bunker and Lebel. The two Mounties are tied hand and foot near the cave in which is hidden the contraband liquor intended for the Indians. Bunker stops Lebel from knifing them and then tells the Mounties that he intends their bodies shall be fished out of the Windy River at Mosquito City without a mark on them. "Who's to guess that

you was held under water with your hands tied till you was a gone coon, and then untied and set floating?"

Jimmy Silver and Co. have spotted the troop of Indians and witnessed the illegal transaction between them and the two crooks. They also see the two bound figures of the RCMPs thrown over the two horses and led away from the wagon. As they approach where the boys are hiding, Jimmy Silver tells them to raise their hands. Bunker and Lebel attempt to get at their guns. Jimmy shoots them both so that they are unable to use their guns. The Mounties are freed and the villains tied up and placed in their own wagon and driven back to Mosquito. The Doctor confirms that they will be fit to stand their trial in Calgary in two weeks' time.

Smedley tells the Rookwood quartet to stay in sight of the ranch just in case any drunken Indians come around to make trouble, but Lovell refuses to stay within bounds. The fire-water burning his inside has caused Laughing Wolf to leave the reservation to find a white man's scalp. The first one who happens along is Lovell and he is lasso'd and flat on his back with Laughing Wolf's extra sharp knife gleaming in front of his terrified eyes. Jimmy Silver rides up before the Indian can deliver the death thrust and rides Blazer right at Laughing Wolf. "The heavy hoofs crashed on the Indian as Jimmy Silver rode him down, and the Blood yelled wildly and crumpled up under the attack." Jimmy and Co. make rapidly for the Windy River Ranch but their path is crossed by six young Indians led by Running Water, all decked out in feathers and war paint. The chums manage to reach the stockman's hut at Lone Pine and barricade themselves and their horses inside. Running Water tries to charm them out by speaking in honeyed tones but Jimmy refuses to open the door. When the Indians return to attack the hut with their tomahawks, Jimmy Silver fires at them through cracks in the door and wounds four of them. Faint noises from the back of the hut tell them that the young Indians haven't given up. They intend to burn the chums out of the hut! "It was the funeral pyre of the chums of Rookwood that was being stacked up by the Redskins." When the heat and smoke become unbearable, Jimmy Silver opens the door. The horses immediately race out. The boys, dizzy and staggering, are set upon by the Indians. But Skitter Dick fires at Running Water who is attacking Lovell and crashes his rifle-butt on the head of the Indian attacking Jimmy.

On the way back to the ranch, the three boys on foot and Skitter Dick on his horse are menaced by another group of Indian horsemen who ride around them yelling, the circle getting smaller and smaller, but they are saved at the eleventh hour by Hudson Smedley and a dozen ranch hands from Windy River Ranch who ride into the Indians and scatter them. Smedley: "The

Mounted Police will be up from Red Deer tomorrow. The trouble will be stamped out pretty quick."

Smedley, together with six cowpunchers and Jimmy Silver, rides away from the Windy River Ranch to round up Lone Wolf and his gang of a dozen braves who have become renegades after Leaping Elk, the Chief of the Little Blood Reservation, has returned all that remains of the contraband firewater to the RCMP. Smedley refuses to take Raby, Newcome and Lovell because of the danger, but Lovell, without telling anyone, rides off after them, having borrowed a rifle from Pete Peters' cabin. Contingents from other ranches further up the river are to be met by the Windy River party, a total of more than fifty men, to search for Lone Wolf.

Lovell loses the trail in the badlands and is captured by Lone Wolf who tells him he will be burned at the stake tomorrow! Lone Wolf takes him to the outcast Redskins' encampment, but Lovell has managed to drop buttons, handkerchief, leather purse and other small items on the trail and these are picked up by Smedley and Co. after they find the spot where Lone Wolf captured Lovell. Nearing the encampment, Skitter Dick shoots the sentinel on the lookout. The shot is heard by the Indians just as they are torturing Lovell. He has been bound to a stake and they are throwing axes in his direction without actually striking him. The torch has been ignited but when the cowboys attack, the torch is dropped and Lovell is saved from a horrible death. Smedley calls him a "silly young fool". Lovell apologises. Raby and Newcome bump him when they all return to the ranch.

The short tale at the end of this volume involves a travelling theatrical company who are stranded at Mosquito by their manager running off with the takings, a plot we've come across before, though perhaps not in school stories! One of the actors, Orlando Fitzroy, tries to get a job at Windy River Ranch but he is given short shrift by Pete Peters and chased off the ranch with a whip. Orlando gets his own back on Peters by visiting the ranch disguised as Peters' deserted wife, Charlotte. She makes him appear a real blackguard and leaves, giving Jimmy Silver a note for her husband. It says, "You made me hop and I've made you squirm as I said I would."

SOL 158: Chums of the Ranch (Oct 1931)

Jimmy Silver is attacked with a knife by Red Henri as the outlaw tries to steal Blazer. A stranger intervenes as Red Henri is about to plunge the knife into Jimmy. He tells the junior his name is Monty Smith and he's looking for work. Jimmy takes him back to the Windy River Ranch and Baldy the cook recognises him. He says his name isn't Smith. The name in his hat is M. de Courcy. Tired of jokes being made about his posh name, Jimmy's rescuer says he decided to call himself Smith. Smedley decides he can

stay at the ranch, though it's out of season and they don't need any extra hands. Pete Peters, finding that he is a good worker and can ride a buckjumper, decides he's worth his keep. Jimmy suspects that he may have a good reason for not wanting to meet the Mounties when Monty offers to go to Mosquito to pick up stores having heard that the RCMP are coming to the ranch in connection with catching Red Henri.

Baldy finds a two-month-old newspaper reporting a bank robbing in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, committed by a man called Lagden, who stole ten thousand dollars and severely injured the watchman. The newspaper photo of Lagden looks just like Monty Smith! Monty flees the ranch but is lasso'd by Skitter Dick and locked in the stores cabin, awaiting the arrival of the Mounties. Monty asks Jimmy to help him escape. The real bank robber is his cousin and the resemblance between them is striking. Jimmy pleads for Monty to Smedley but his cousin tells him he must deliver him up to the RCMP. When Corporal Caylet and Trooper Bright arrive to arrest him, Monty first of all barricades himself in the stores cabin, then, when the door is smashed in, evades the MPs and escapes to the cookhouse roof. Trooper Bright spins his lasso and Monty falls into a waiting blanket. Right after his recapture, Trooper Grey from Kicking Mule RCMP post arrives with a telegram from Police HQ at Prince Albert. It says Lagden has been arrested. Monty is released and prepares to leave saying they won't want a bank robber's cousin as a hand. Smedley urges him to stay at the ranch.

Two weeks later, Trooper Bright rides up with a newspaper which reports that Lagden has escaped from gaol and is believed to be heading West. Monty receives a letter from Mosquito addressed to him in his real name of de Courcy. He tells Jimmy it is from Lagden who wants to meet him after dark in order to give him some important information. Monty asks Jimmy to accompany him and bring along his revolver. Lagden, disguised in a heavy beard, is not pleased to see Jimmy. He tells Monty that their relative, Lord Erdingford, has died. Lagden persuades Monty to send Jimmy Silver back to the ranch. Jimmy insists on leaving his revolver with Monty. He tells Jimmy to raise the alarm if he does not return in an hour. Lagden tells Monty he read of his arrest in Alberta and that's why he came to contact his cousin and ask for his help. Monty refuses. On the way back to the ranch Monty is struck down by Red Henri. When he regains consciousness, he finds himself in a cave guarded by his assailant. Red Henri tells him he won't be missed at the ranch because his cousin has taken his place there.

Lagden goes to the ranch dressed in Monty's clothes. Without the false beard he is accepted by all, but Jimmy thinks he notices a slight difference in the tone of voice. Later, he

tells him he won't be missed at the ranch because his cousin has taken his place there.

Lagden goes to the ranch dressed in Monty's clothes. Without the false beard he is accepted by all, but Jimmy thinks he notices a slight difference in the tone of voice. Later, he observes that Monty has become very bad-tempered since the meeting with his cousin and Pete Peters accuses him of being lazy, something never said about the real Monty who had always been good-tempered and a good worker. Pete has also caught him ill-using a horse.

Sergeant Kerr from Kicking Mule RCMP arrives to inform Monty Smith that he's wanted in England as the heir of Lord Erdingford, his great-uncle.

After three days Lagden comes to the cave. Lagden tells Red Henri that, as Lord Erdingford, he will have ten thousand pounds per year. Red Henri: "And you will not forget an old friend who has helped you so much." Lagden replies, "It will always be in your power to give me away if I do not pay your price." Lagden tells his accomplice that, after he has left for England, a body must be found floating in the Windy River which the police will think is Larry Lagden. Red Henri: "He will not be my first. It is nothing to me. You have only to give the order."

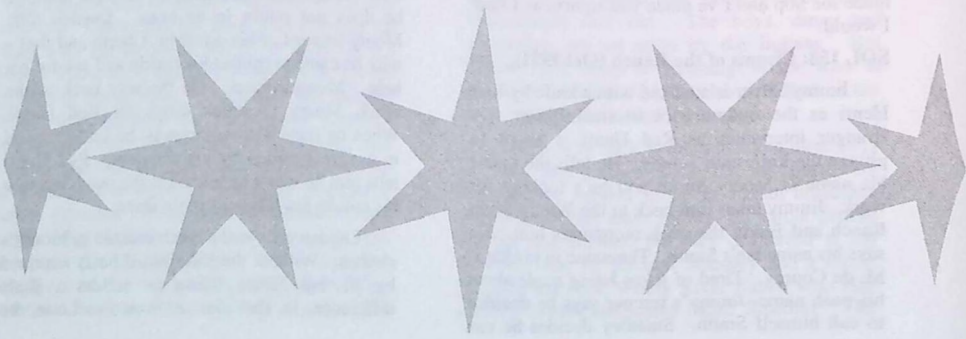
The following day, Sergeant Kerr, who has remained overnight to accompany Smith to Kicking Mule, asks Jimmy if he's noticed a change in the man since he met his cousin. Jimmy says he has, especially in his attitude to horses - he never showed the cruelty he's exhibited lately. As they go to leave the ranch, Sgt. Kerr jams Smith against the gate and puts handcuffs on his wrists. He accuses him of being Larry Lagden, of robbing a bank in Saskatchewan and of murdering a man in Alberta. Kerr says there was no reason for Lagden to come to Alberta for help. Monty had no money, whereas Lagden had the proceeds from the bank robbery. What he wanted was Monty Smith's name. The final proof comes when his right leg is seen to be clear of a large black bruise that the real Monty had sustained the week before from his being kicked by a

horse. Sgt. Kerr wants to leave immediately for Kicking Mule with his prisoner but Lagden tells him that, if he does, his cousin will be killed by Red Henri. Lagden leads the Sergeant, Smedley and the juniors to the cave. Red Henri shoots Lagden in the face and Smedley shoots Red Henri in the head but both will live to stand their trial. Lagden, scarred for life, will never again be mistaken for de Courcy.

Another short, humorous sequence involving Baldy, the fat, lazy cook, follows. He gets Skitter Dick to hand in an advert at the *Kicking Mule Times* in which he hopes to get a new job as a 'First Class Cook'. He gives Skitter Dick a dollar but Skitter, who's a joker, hands in another advert which says "Picked up in Main Street, Kicking Mule, a five-hundred dollar bill, name of J. Robinson written on the back. Owner must apply personally to Baldy Bubbin, cookhouse, Windy River Ranch, and pay cost of this advertisement."

Baldy is visited by tramps, crooks, in fact all the freeloaders in Kicking Mule on the lookout for something for nothing.

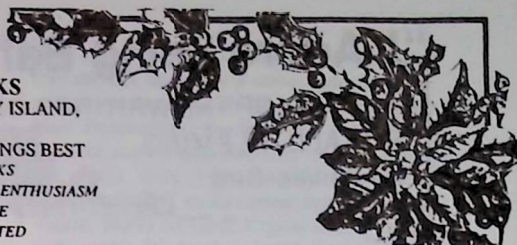
Texas Lick and his father, Lincoln P. Lick, "said to be a millionaire and the owner of tens of thousands of acres in Texas, with ranching interests in Wyoming, California and Canada, and now visiting Alberta to extend his acquisitions of property to that Province", arrive at Smedley's ranch on business. Lincoln P. Lick's horse runs away with the buggy in which he's riding and Jimmy Silver, who has acquired skill with the lasso during his stay in Alberta, prepares to save Mr. Lick from a nasty accident and lasso the runaway. But the role of saviour is taken out of his hands by Lick's son knocking Jimmy out of the saddle, taking the lasso and rescuing his father himself. The cheek and bumptiousness of the boy Lick anger Jimmy and Co. and they decide to give him as wide a berth as possible during his stay at the ranch, but they are considerably dismayed when Lick decides to send his son to Rookwood to get some book-larin'! Before they part, Jimmy Silver and Texas Lick fight. Jimmy wins but Lick promises him a return bout at Rookwood.





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"I Adore Being Baffled!"

A STUDY OF THE WRITINGS OF
RONALD FLEMING.

By Dennis Bird



"I like mystery and detective stories best. I adore being baffled!" So said a schoolgirl in a 1940 advertisement for the *Girls' Crystal*. Of all the Amalgamated Press's many authors, the one who most satisfyingly met her needs was undoubtedly Ronald Fleming.

He began, under his own name, as a writer of boys' stories, originally in the weekly *Pluck*.

However, from 1925 until 1963 Fleming's main income was to come from the schoolgirl papers. For these, feminine pseudonyms were customary, and it is under these names that he is best known, particularly as 'Renee Fraser', of whom more later. 'Jean Emerson' was a name he used only once, for a 1934 *Schoolgirls' Own* serial "A Spoilt Girl's Folly"; two years later it

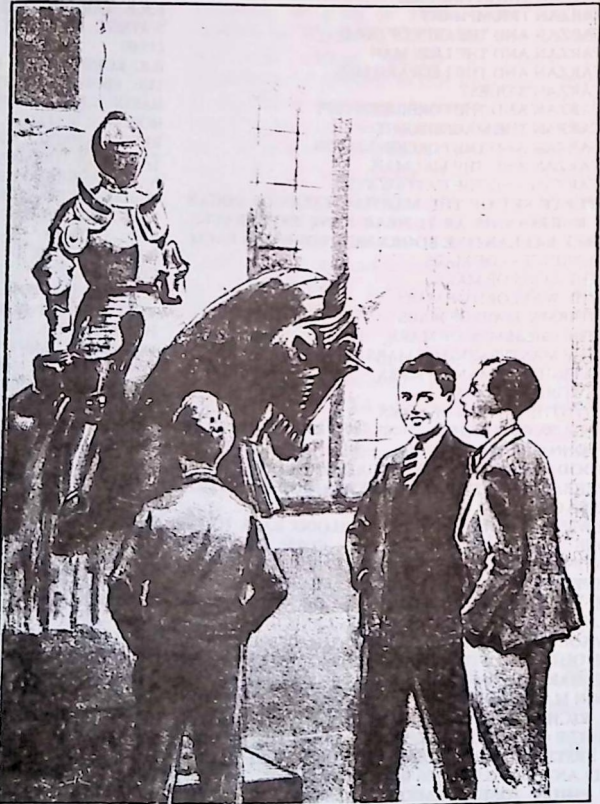
Gadby's Spook!



A Tale of a
"Spoofer"—and a
"Spook"!

BY
RONALD FLEMING

First published in 1904, around the time of Fleming's birth, this paper in a year or two introduced St. Jim's to a delighted world. It was after the First World War that the young Ronald began to write for it. Later he contributed to *The Champion*, and *The Champion Annual 1930* contains his light-hearted tale "Gadby's Spook". It features a lad who is an inveterate prankster, who dons a suit of armour to mystify a house-party, and inadvertently trips up the villainous butler absconding with someone's jewels.



"There," said Gadby, "is the celebrated Stone Rider!"

was reprinted as No. 541 in the *Schoolgirls' Own Library*, that popular series of little yellow-covered books which cost a mere fourpence in old money (less than two new pence). Marvellous value!

In October 1935 the Amalgamated Press launched a new paper which was aimed at a slightly different readership; the *Girls' Crystal* (originally just *The Crystal* for its first ten issues). Previously AP weeklies had strongly emphasised the school element in their titles - *The School Friend*, *The Schoolgirls' Own*, *Schoolgirls' Weekly*, and simply *The Schoolgirl*. The new paper was aimed partly at the same young readers, but mainly at the slightly older girl who had just left school and was starting work in an adult job.

'Jean Vernon'

Ronald Fleming was to spend his next 38 years writing for this new paper under several different names. One was 'Jean Vernon', the creator of a slightly comic teacher, "The Madcap Form-Mistress". She was Miss Vera Desmond, BA, and she appeared regularly in the first 80 issues of the *Girls' Crystal*. For over a year (58 weeks) she taught at St. Kilda's (presumably not located on the desolate Scottish island of that name), and her experiences were recorded in weekly short stories. Then Fleming had the idea of transferring her to a then-new type of school, Cranberry Hall; it was co-educational, teaching both girls and boys under the same roof. This led to the serial "The School Where Girls Were Not Wanted", whose title suggests that the revolutionary idea of mixed intakes was not universally welcomed. This story became No. 642 in the *Schoolgirls' Own Library* (first series) in July 1938. After her co-ed interlude, Vera returned to St. Kilda's in a further series of short stories, which ended abruptly (no reason given) in the *Girls' Crystal* dated 1st May 1937.

'Peter Langley'

At the same time as he was writing his Vera Desmond stories, Ronald Fleming also developed a totally new type of character for the *Girls' Crystal*. This was a debonair young man who was a private detective - Noel Raymond. Stewart

Pride (later editor of the post-war *School Friend*) tells me that the author's name 'Peter Langley' was chosen "because the main character was a man. Presumably it was felt that a woman could not write about a male detective." (A whole host of writers from Dame Agatha Christie to Baroness Rendell would contest that!) It was not entirely known for *Girls' Crystal* writers to use a male name, for Stanley Austin had written as 'Clive Bancroft', but it is curious that Fleming did not use his own name as he had done ten years earlier in the schoolboy papers.

However, 'Peter Langley' was the name that was to survive for 15 years as author of the most intriguing detective stories in the *Girls' Crystal*. During that time Noel Raymond developed considerably as a personality. In the first story in 1935 ("The Menace of the Green Dragon"), he was described as "aged 24, and comparatively fresh from college" - that is, university. We are not told what degree he took, but in that time he seems to have learned several useful

THRILLING NEWS FOR NOEL RAYMOND ADMIRERS



You will meet all these three famous characters next Friday—in the first of an enthralling new series of detective stories that ever-popular Peter Langley is writing specially for "Girls' Crystal" readers. Noel Raymond, the debonair young detective; June Gaynor, his adventuresome young niece; Rosina, the unscrupulous but fascinating girl crook—all play a big part in next week's extra-long complete mystery story. Whatever you do, don't miss reading it.

PLACE A REGULAR ORDER FOR YOUR "GIRLS' CRYSTAL."

378

Girls' Crystal, 29th July 1939

accomplishments such as boxing, swimming, rugby football, playing the piano and the violin, tennis, dancing, and ice skating (there was a rink at Oxford but not at Cambridge). He had also mastered the use of firearms and had gained a private pilot's licence.

As he was christened 'Noel', we can assume that he was born around 25th December 1910.

The 1930s were the classic golden age of the detective story, and Ronald Fleming no doubt knew the novels of Dorothy L. Sayers. Certainly

Noel initially had something in common with her aristocratic, somewhat foppish sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey: "Languid, Noel might appear at times - but not when action was called for." This phase did not last long. Noel soon matured, and during the Second World War he became a sterner and more resolute character, combating spies, enemy aliens, racketeers, and the 'black market'. Later still, post-war, he took his niece June Gaynor into partnership, and gradually dwindled into his cosy 'Nunky' domesticity of the 1950s, leaving most of the detective work to June.

The plots of the Noel Raymond stories were often over-elaborate, sometimes involving complicated mechanical devices which would have been completely unworkable in practice. And yet the reader was swept along by the sheer speed of the narrative, the suspenseful atmosphere, the sudden surprises. In describing the London scenes in which so many of Noel's cases were set, Fleming was almost in the Conan Doyle class. Take the first chapter of "The Clue of the Double Six" (G.C., 28th November 1936). It opens in London's Dockland, "muffled by the yellow fog that hung like a blanket over the narrow Limehouse street . . . Noel knew Limehouse better than most, and something of its secret, underhand ways. Here in these dark backwaters of London, mysterious signs were frequently passed from hand to hand - messages that spelt a warning - messages that brought disaster in their wake." Powerful writing for a schoolgirls' weekly!

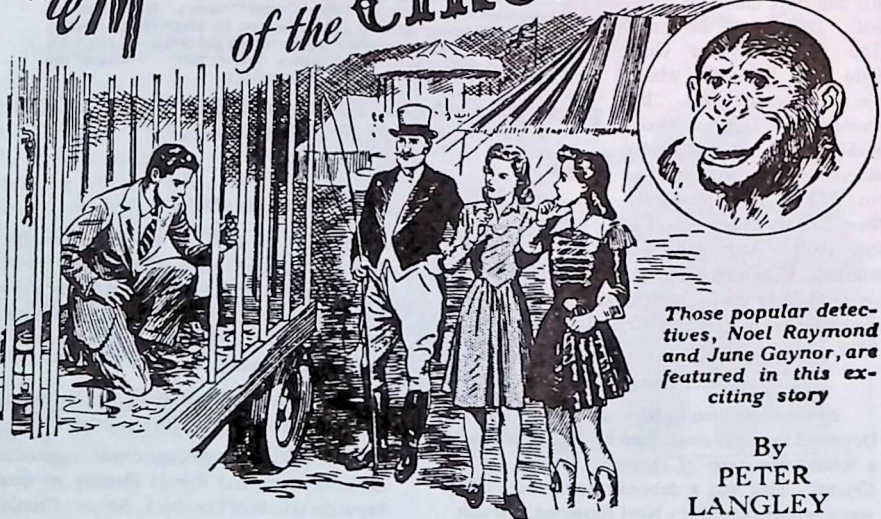
The most notable feature of the Noel Raymond stories was the surprise ending. Very rarely did the reader know, early on, the identity of the villain. Usually Fleming kept his baffled readers guessing to the very end - just like Agatha Christie. Several suspects would be introduced and gradually eliminated; the eventual culprit was usually the most unexpected. Normally it was a man. On the rare occasions when there was a feminine miscreant, Fleming would give subtle hints during the story. He would refer to her as a "young woman" instead of a girl, or would consistently use her full name instead of "Jean" or "Sylvia".

There was, however, one female antagonist with whom Noel had frequent confrontations - the girl crook of "swift wits and amazing resource", Rosina Fontaine. She was a mistress of disguise, so in any story in which she appeared, suspicion had to fall on everyone mentioned, young or old. And not only the women; it was not unknown for the flat-chested Rosina to disguise herself as a boy. Altogether she featured in no less than 53 stories (11 of them reprints) between 1937 and 1948.

In total, there were 551 short stories and four serials featuring Noel between 26th October 1935 and 26th May 1951. Or were there? Closer investigation reveals a curious fact. From October 1935 until December 1942, Noel appeared in a different story every week. Then suddenly Ronald Fleming's inspiration seemed to dry up. In the next 67 weeks, until March 1944,

"Girls' Crystal Annual 1951"

The MYSTERY of the CIRCUS APE



Those popular detectives, Noel Raymond and June Gaynor, are featured in this exciting story

By
PETER
LANGLEY

there were 57 reprints of Noel's earlier adventures. Mostly these were exactly the same stories from the 1939-40 period, although with new illustrations. But 17 of them turned out to be 'reprints in disguise': they had new titles, different characters, other locations, yet the plots and even the descriptions were almost identical. And then, in the 11th March 1944 issue of the *Girls' Crystal*, there came the stark announcement that "Starting next Friday, the Noel Raymond stories will be replaced by a grand series of double-length complete stories, each featuring a different set of characters."

What on earth had happened to Noel Raymond - and Ronald Fleming? I eventually learned the truth from Mrs Constance M White - herself a writer of girls' fiction - who knew Ronald Fleming during the war. Apparently he was called up for active service in 1942, and joined the Royal Air Force. The Amalgamated Press thus lost one of their most prolific and versatile authors. The *Girls' Crystal* editor C Eaton Fearn had a major problem. At first he endeavoured to keep the Raymond stories going by 'doctored' versions and eventually straight reprints (even though his readers would no doubt recall seeing the same tales only a few years earlier). By 1944 he decided to call it a day, and like Sherlock Holmes in 1893, Noel Raymond vanished from the *GC* scene. But, also like

Holmes, he was to return, and when Ronald Fleming was demobilised from the RAF, there were Noel and June in "The Mystery of the Clothing Coupons" (*GC*, 28th April 1945).

Now invariably accompanied by the rather tedious June, Noel embarked on the second phase of his career. He appeared sporadically in the 'long complete series' and in four serials. The weekly tales resumed in 1947-48, featuring his sojourn in Baycroft Holiday Camp while he wrote "an important book dealing with detective investigation" (an odd place to choose for peace and quiet), and in Hollywood where he was "an expert adviser on a new film dealing with Scotland Yard". By 1951, he was 40 and June was 28, and their careers petered out in the dismal story "The Vanishing Statues" (*GC*, 26th May 1951).

The Noel Raymond stories relied heavily on stereotyped phrases. He solved most of his cases with 'a grim smile'. Ejaculations or stifled cries were continually being torn from people's lips; 'something cold and hard' (a pistol) was often pressed to his forehead; and he frequently formed 'strange, incredible theories' which he was 'anxious to put to the test'. Yet, despite all this mechanical formula-writing, Ronald Fleming's fertile imagination and narrative drive made Noel an unforgettable character. He was clever, courageous, decisive; but unlike many other

"Girls' Crystal Annual 1951"

JULIE'S Most Amazing SCOOP



An intriguing mystery story, featuring those popular, rival reporters,
Julie Wilson and Barry Doyle.

By RHODA FLEMING

fictional enforcers of the law, he was also kindly, friendly, humorous, and altogether likeable.

'Rhonda Fleming' and 'Renee Frazer'

Noel Raymond was Ronald Fleming's most notable single creation, appearing over a period of more than 15 years - but for very much longer the author contributed to the AP's weekly papers as 'Renee Frazer'.

The pseudonym is significant, for it uses his own initials: 'R.F.' He also wrote a number of stories as 'Rhoda Fleming' between 1930 and 1951. And perhaps it is worth noting that Noel Raymond's chief antagonist Rosina Fontaine shared the same first letters.

The Rhoda Fleming stories were mainly about such characters as a rebel schoolgirl or a madcap princess, but (as Mary Cadogan pointed out in the 1989 *Collectors' Digest Annual*) one of them gave an interesting pointer to the future. For the *Schoolgirls' Weekly*, the author created Patsy-Never-Grow-Up, and in the issue dated 27th October 1934 (No. 627) he wrote a story called "Patsy Turns Detective." In it she compared herself with the girl detective Valerie Drew, who had made her first appearance in the same paper in January 1933; Patsy even re-christened her Scottie dog 'Flash', in honour of Valerie's sagacious Alsatian. This seems to have been Ronald Fleming's first venture into the world of detective fiction of which he was soon to become a master.

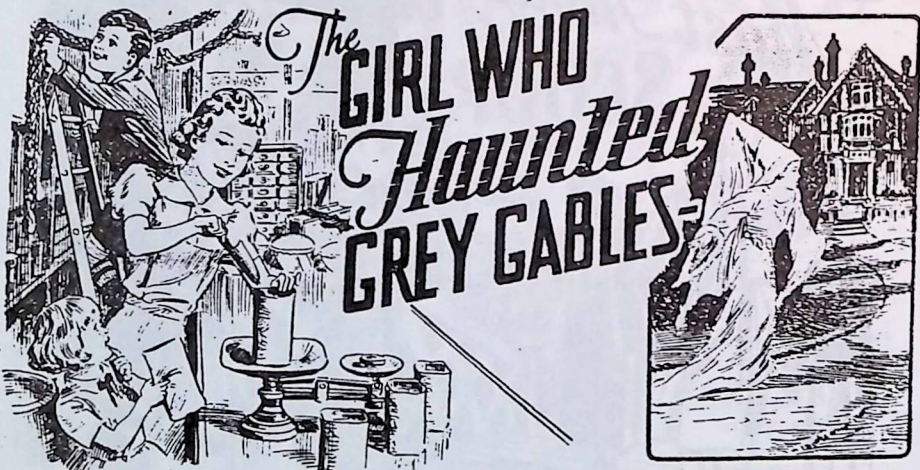
'Renee Frazer' wrote 52 serial stories for the AP, which were all re-published in the first and also the (post-war) second series of the

Schoolgirls' Own Library. 'Renee's' career spanned 38 years, 1925 to 1963. At first, Fleming used the name for the obligatory school stories. He also focused on a single heroine who could undergo a series of adventures. His first creation for *The School Friend* (1925-1929) was "The Madcap" - Tess Everton of Templedene School. She appeared in 26 short stories, three serials, and in *The School Friend Annual* for 1927, 1928, and 1929. Fleming then dropped her in favour of a new personality, "Sunny" McAllister, who was to occupy his attention from 1927 to 1934. She began as a schoolgirl at St. Claire's, but later developed into a globe-trotter who was once shipwrecked in the South Seas. She appeared in various AP publications - *The School Friend*, *The Schoolgirl*, the short-lived *School Days*, the *Schoolgirls' Own*, and various annuals.

So far, Fleming's output in both the boys' and the girls' weeklies had been quite light-hearted. In the 1930s, however, he developed a more serious style, and began to experiment with mystery stories. "The House of Strange Surprises" was a *Schoolgirls' Own* serial in 1933, and he used the same title for a Noel Raymond story in the *Girls' Crystal* of 5th October 1940.

From 1936 he wrote exclusively for the new *Girls' Crystal*, and (except for the Noel Raymond stories) always in serial form. A particular storyline now became prevalent: the girl whose father had been wrongfully accused of crime (shades of Edith Nesbit's 1906 classic *The Railway Children*) and whose innocence she sought to prove.

"Girls' Crystal," 10th December 1938



RENEE FRAZER'S *Enthralling*
New Mystery Story
STARTS TO-DAY !

The first of these tales in the *Girls' Crystal* (1936) was "The Boy Who Mystified Marion". Mr Sheldrake has been imprisoned for embezzlement from his firm, the department store Smith & Martin. His daughter Marion took a job there, determined to clear his name. She was helped by Barry Martin, son of one of the owners - but at times he seemed to be her enemy. The final, unsatisfactory explanation revealed one of Ronald Fleming's weaknesses: his fondness for 'doubles'. Barry Martin, it turns out, has a villainous identical twin brother, Bob.

Doubles occur all too frequently in Fleming stories. Noel Raymond and June Gaynor were plagued by them. One of their most incredible adventures was "Detective June's Strangest Case" (*GC*, 4th February to 6th May, 1950), in which both June and the valet Parker live and work together with a Noel who is not Noel but an impostor - and June suspects nothing for quite half of the story!

'Renee Frazer' used the 'daughter-vindicates-father' plot many times. Sometimes these were set in England: "The Girl Who Searched in Secret" (*GC*, 1937); "The Girl Who Haunted Grey Gables" (*GC*, 1938 - nothing to do with "The Archers" of BBC fame!) Sometimes the girl's quest took her abroad: "The Boy Who Kept Paddy Guessing", which ended up in France (*GC*, 1939); "The Bandit's Daughter" in Mexico (*GC*, 1939); "The Boy Who Threatened Her Holiday Quest" set in Florida (*GC*, 1940). In this last story, the sunshine and friendliness and exuberance of the USA came across strongly. It was also my first acquaintance with the words 'barbecue' and 'kumquat'.

Two Frazer stories of this period warrant special mention. "The Spectre Marred Their Friendship" (*GC*, 1938) featured Jean Stirling, who opens a riverside café; a ghostly figure tries to wreck the enterprise, but she is sustained by the help of two young fellows. Suspicion falls on each of them in turn, and Ronald Fleming cleverly keeps the reader guessing until almost the last page, when one of them proves to be the villain.

The other notable serial was "Maureen and the Boy Who Didn't Care" (*GC*, 1939-40). Its heroine was Maureen Eversham, daughter of a famous actor. She was a girl of great spirit ("Maureen - the girl who wouldn't be beaten"), and her courage, determination, and charm made her an unusually endearing personality. But the story had a fatal flaw. The villain, Vincent Gayford, was revealed in the very first

instalment, and so Maureen's doubts about the scapegrace Laurie Channing had little substance.

As already stated, Ronald Fleming was away on war service from 1942 to 1945, so there were no 'Renee Frazer' stories during that time. 'She' returned in 1946, fecund as ever. Soon new characters emerged, notably "Colin Forrest - That Amazing New Master" (1949), who was a kind of replacement for Noel Raymond.

Fleming's last contributions to the Amalgamated Press were in the post-war

*I ride with the storm
I fly o'er the sea—
A foe to the tyrant
A friend of the free!
The hawk swoops for justice
and liberty!*



SIGN OF THE HAWK

by RENEE FRAZER

Schoolgirls' Own Library, and the final three stories were a totally new departure for him: historical romances about the French Revolution of 1789. "Mam'selle X" was *SGOL* No. 380 (June 1962). "Mam'selle Pimpernel" (*SGOL* No. 396) followed in February 1963 - a conscious echo of Baroness Orczy's famous "Scarlet Pimpernel" Sir Percy Blakeney, of 1905. And his last work of all was "The Sign of the Hawk" (*SGOL* No. 399, April 1963).

Ronald Fleming

What was he really like, this gifted writer of so many dramatic tales? Very little is known. From the fact that he was not called up for active service until 1942 it seems likely that he was born around 1903 or 1904. (The upper age for call-up was 41, I think.) But whether he married, where he lived, or indeed when he died is shrouded in mystery.

Two personal reminiscences help a little to bring him to life. Constance White, already mentioned, sought his help over one of her own stories. "Trying to show me how I could improve it, he walked up and down the room, waving his hands and arms like an actor. Tall" (he was over 6ft) "with crinkly brown hair and piercing eyes, he could well have been one."

Stewart Pride corroborates this. He writes:

"Ronnie came regularly to the office to plot about four instalments at a time. He lived the stuff, sometimes prowling round the room, acting out different characters. I recall an incident when I was in on the post-war plotting of Noel Raymond, when he stood and dramatically clapped me on the shoulder, exclaiming: 'I arrest you for the theft, June Gaynor!' The real thief had put the stolen jewels in the panniers of a fancy-dress costume June was wearing, thus hoping to smuggle them out and recover them later." The incident is in "Rosina's Astonishing Challenge" (GC, 26th June 1948).

Ronald Fleming later made the difficult transition from the written word to picture-stories when the *Girls' Crystal* became a strip-cartoon paper for its last decade, from March 1953. He

had already experimented in the *Girls' Crystal Annual 1950* with a four-page strip featuring June Gaynor ("The Mystery of the Museum"). This had an additional, unexpected feature: the criminal - the butler, of course - made mistakes which readers were invited to spot. The solution was given on a later page.

After the 1960s Fleming fades from view. But for those of us who in our youth were gripped by the tense drama of his tales of mystery and adventure, there will always be a special place for him in our hearts.

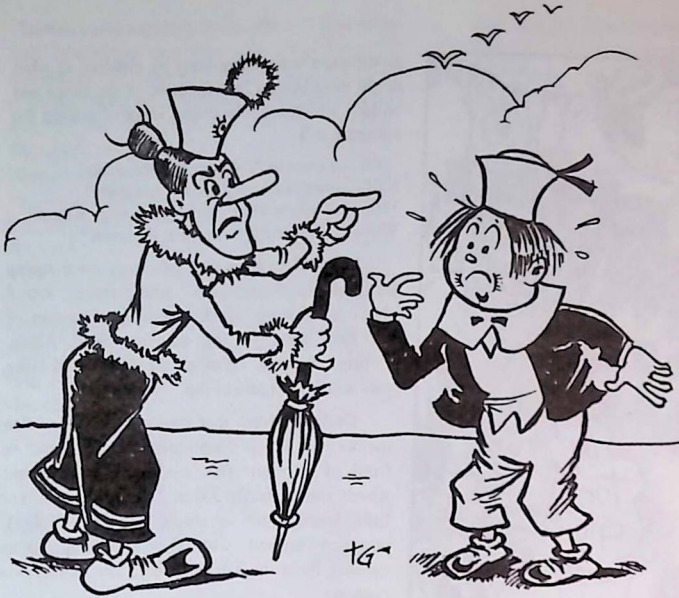
As usual, I am greatly indebted to Mary Cadogan and Ray Hopkins for help in researching this article. - D.L.B.



ANSWERS TO "GUESS THE AUTHORS" QUIZ

1. "The Mystery of Nobody's Study" reprinted in *Gem* 1452 - by **Martin CLIFFORD**.
2. "The Haunting of the Herr!" by **George Ernest ROCHESTER**. Could have appeared in another publication, my copy is in 1929 *Holiday Annual*.
ROCK CHESTER TV series - Gunsmoke in US, Gunlaw in UK?
3. "The Boy Who Walked By Night" (the story of Dudley Vane) reprinted in the *Schoolboy's Own Library* No. 356 - by **Owen CONQUEST**.
4. "The Moat House Mystery" by **Charles HAMILTON**. Originally appeared in *Modern Boy*, also in the last *Holiday Annual*. Len Lex, Fifth Form Oakshott School.
5. "The Crimson Smile" a story about Sexton Blake by **Donald STUART**. *Union Jack* No. 1523.
Pen names: Gerald Verner, Ronald Stuart.
6. "The Ghost of Travis Dene" by **Edwy Searles BROOKS**, *Nelson Lee Library* No. 188, Dec. 7th 1929, New Series. Pen names Reginald Browne, Edward Thornton, Norman Greaves, C. Heddingham Gosfield, E. Sinclair Halstead, Berkeley Gray, Victor Gunn, Robert W. Comrade, S.B. Halstead.
7. "Dispatches for the King!" by **Morton PIKE**. My copy is printed in the *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* 1929. Real name David Harold Parry 1868 - 1950.
8. "John Redwing Meets the Spectre of Polpelly" by **Frank RICHARDS**, *Magnet* No. 1453.
9. From Chapter XIV, "On Leave", "The Camels Are Coming". Author **William Earle JOHNS** 1893 - 1968. *Stories about Biggles*, originally in *Modern Boy*.
Long JOHNS.





Marmy and his formidable Ma appeared in the *Funny Wonder* for many a long year.

before the cornucopia of a groaning table in the unlikely setting of the Hotel de Poshe.

Mention of Willie and Tim brings me to an early and lasting favourite, *Chips*, properly called *Illustrated Chips*, and I remember well how I first encountered that long-established publication which advertised itself variously as "The world's jolliest paper" and "The famous pink penn'orth". Curiously enough, it was at the home of my aunt but a short distance from where I am writing this. My grandparents and a married aunt lived in Southport and we stayed with them from time to time. One day, my aunt gave me some back numbers of *Chips* which someone had given her. I still remember the enjoyment of poring over those pink pages and meeting characters who would become familiar favourites.

There were, of course, "Weary Willie and Tired Tim", created before the turn of the century by the masterly black-and-white draughtsman Tom Browne; there were the whimsical and always inventive denizens of "Casey Court" and "Film Struck Fanny", a servant girl who was a wannabe Garbo, and there was a strip called "Our Grand Fun Theatre", inspired by old-time melodrama, with an innocent heroine, a handsome young hero and a dastardly villain named, of course, Sir Jasper. Ever since, I have never heard the name Jasper without visions of a top hat, riding boots, a twirled moustache and a heart full of treachery.

That initial meeting with *Chips* established the paper as one of my favourites and, for years, I

happily devoured the exploits of "Laurie and Trailer", the comical secret service men; "Pa Perkins and his son Percy" and that appealing lost dog, "Homeless Hector". Two of the printed text stories became enduring favourites, "Dane the Dog Detective" and "Captain Kerrigan", the tough little skipper of a tramp-steamer.

Through the thirties, I followed in the whole range of pink-, blue- and green-tinted comics whenever I could obtain them, which

was often through the long-established custom of swapping with other youngsters in the locality. In the uninhibited strips of those papers, people were smitten by bricks, soused in great volumes of water, savaged by ferocious dogs, dropped from great heights or blown sky-high. It was no place for mummies, daddies or blue-veiled nannies, but I loved the realm of the penny comic.

The cast of characters was memorable: "Basil and Bert", the globe-trotters, in *Jester*; "Pitch and Toss" and "Marmy and his Ma" in *Funny Wonder*; "Dad Walker and his son Wally" and "Peggy the Pride of the Force" in *Larks*, with Dad Walker in rather seedy Edwardian attire and his offspring competing in a seemingly endless "old crocks' race". The front page of *Joker* gave us "Alfie the Air Tramp", whizzing around in a



There was a good deal of distinctly Edwardian style about Dad Walker who, with his son Wally, rollicked on the front of the pink-tinted *Larks*.

comic version of that DIY aircraft of the thirties, the Flying Flea, while, inside, "Dickie Duffer the Dunce" pitted his not-so-dim wits against his headmaster, Dr. Donut, and, in my old favourite *Chips*, Billy Baggs, battered topper, monocle and all, presided over the antics of the nibs of "Casey Court".

I was puzzled by the pair who romped around on the front page of *Comic Cuts* in the early to middle thirties, Jackie and Sammy, billed as "The Terrible Twins". They puzzled me because, to me, they were exactly the same twins who, equally puzzlingly, appeared in not one but two comic strips in the American comic sections which I saw occasionally. The strips were "The Katzenjammer Kids" and "The Captain and the Kids". In each version, the boys were called Hans and Fritz and they spoke a mock-German.

Exactly why this duo of mischief should have such a widespread appeal is now rather difficult to understand but their history is curious. Their prototypes were a pair of young rascals named Max und Moritz, spotted in a German picture book by the tempestuous American newspaper tycoon, William Randolph Hearst. Hearst had one of his cartoonists, Rudolph Dirks, create a similar pair, thus bringing "The Katzenjammer Kids" into being. Later, Dirks and the Hearst company had a dispute which went to law and Hearst was granted the right to the title and the existing characters while Dirks was granted permission to use the characters in a new strip, so he created "The Captain and the Kids" for another newspaper syndicate.

Somebody at the Amalgamated Press, it seems, was smitten by the pair soon after the American version was created around the turn of the century and the late Bill Lofts told me he had it from the veteran artist Leonard Shields that Shields was told to copy the American version of the twins and place them in a British setting. By the thirties, Jackie and Sammy were drawn by the hugely prolific Percy Cocking who had inherited Weary Willie and Tired Tim from Tom Browne.

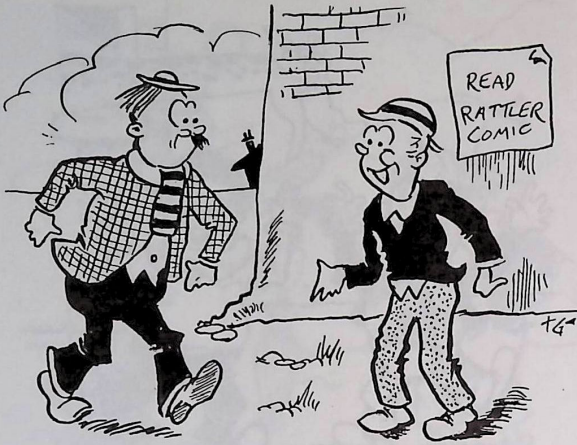
In the thirties, the penny comics of the AP led the field, but they did not have the field to themselves. There were also the papers produced



The "Terrible Twins", Sammy and Jackie, lived in a zoo and appeared on the front page of *Comic Cuts*, causing me some puzzlement. They seemed to be exactly the same pair of rascals who appeared in two American comic strips, "The Katzenjammer Kids" and "The Captain and the Kids".

by Target publications, of Bath. Every copy of this firm's string of comics, *Target*, *Rocket*, *Dazzler* and *Sparkler*, contained a four-page giveaway comic, *Ovaltine's Own Comic* - yes, the apostrophe was where I've put it - which promoted the well-known bedtime drink and the band of "happy girls and boys" who made up a grouping which, to me, is almost symbolic of the thirties. All of these publications were edited by H. Louis Diamond, who was also a comic artist of sorts. His work was often slap-happy, looking as if it was produced at top speed aboard an express train racing over a bumpy track, but he contributed many strips and joke drawings to the papers he edited. Again, it was Bill Lofts who told me that, though Diamond had worked for the AP papers in the twenties, he was eventually barred from that market because his drawing had become so sub-standard. Even as a youngster, I was aware of how Diamond's contributions stamped a keynote of mediocrity on the Target Publications comics. They contained no characters to equal those of the AP's string of penny comics but they did have some artists who maintained a worthy standard of work. One was Edgar (Harry) Banger, who also contributed much work to the AP comics and another was a younger man, Bert Hill, who cut his teeth in the Bath publications then went on to AP.

Strange to relate, though I read many printed stories in the AP comics which were vastly superior, two stories from *Ovaltine's Own Comic* stuck in my mind even into adulthood.



H. Louis Diamond's slap-happy cartooning style hardly placed the comics he edited in the top drawer. Here are a couple of his unmemorable characters, Larry Laff and Nipper Newsboy.

One was called "Hot Potato Man" and the other was "In a Hole". The first concerned a boy who did a good turn for an old man who sold hot potatoes in the street. I have a copy of it, dated January 23 1937, and I can't think why this unremarkable story stayed in my mind. Possibly it was merely because the old man was named Tony!

I know well enough why "In a Hole" made its impact. It scared me.

In this yarn which I also have - the date is February 19 1938 - two boys decide to dig a hole in a garden and dig deeper and deeper. One begins to feel that they are digging so deep that they will not be able to get out but his chum laughs at the idea. Eventually, the boy with cold feet makes an excuse of going to buy sweets to scramble out of the hole, leaving his friend still digging. The doubter returns to find that earth has slithered back into the hole, burying his friend, and there is a frantic rescue. Eventually, the buried boy is brought out unconscious but is finally revived and, over comforting mugs of Ovaltine, the two chums reflect on how their folly almost brought disaster.

The chilling central idea of this yarn, that of digging so deep that might not be able to climb out of the hole, smote me as powerfully as Edgar Allen Poe's tale of a man buried alive. I enjoyed digging holes at the seaside and in the garden of the council house into which my family moved in 1936 but this not particularly literate yarn curbed any ambitions of digging to Australia I might have entertained.

Something prophetic occurred in the expensive reaches of the twopenny range of comics in 1936. A brand new comic, printed in sparkling full colour by the photogravure process, was launched. It was *Mickey Mouse Weekly*, the first issue of which dazzled me with its shiny rainbow brilliance.

Walt Disney's animated cartoon enterprise was branching out into what we now call "merchandising" and this comic was part of the advance upon the British scene. The comic contained a variety of strips featuring the Disney characters and I particularly enjoyed the back page compilation of

the "Mickey Mouse" daily comic strips from American newspapers in which Mickey and his chums had non-stop adventures. There were, however, a number of strips drawn by British artists, one of whom was the young Basil Reynolds with a strip, "Skit and Skat", featuring a youngster billed as "The World's Smallest Cabin Boy". It was yet another comic rendering of seafaring life and a major character was the Captain. It eventually took on the title "Skit, Skat and the Captain". Skat was the ship's cat and this strip, drawn in a style quite different from the usual run of artwork in British comics, was a great favourite of mine. Basil Reynolds who, elsewhere in *Mickey Mouse Weekly*, was showing that he was mastering the Disney style of drawing, was on the way to becoming a versatile cartoonist.

Mickey Mouse Weekly, with its mingling of American and British work, was a lively hybrid and, as the thirties moved towards a close, yet more new comics were launched. In fact, the various publishers were vying with each other for our pennies and twopences.

In 1937 came an orange tinted new arrival, *Golden*, published by the AP but of particular importance that year was a new twopenny comic, *Dandy*, radically different in style and the first comic shot from the Scottish firm of D.C. Thomson. They would become the AP's major rivals in the field. Before war was declared in September 1939, the AP had produced *Happy Days*, a sparkingly coloured photogravure



Skit, Skat and the Captain by young Basil Reynolds, appeared in the sparkingly coloured twopenny newcomer of 1936, *Mickey Mouse Weekly*.

offering to counter *Mickey Mouse Weekly*; also *Radio Fun*, two pennyworth of good fare inspired by the popularity of what we called the "wireless" and another twopenny, *Knockout*, which would become highly popular and, in 1938, D.C. Thomson brought forth *Beano*, which would become a record-breaker, still surviving. Even the shoestring outfit in Bath issued a short-lived twopenny, *Bouncer*, in 1939 which proved to be that company's final effort.

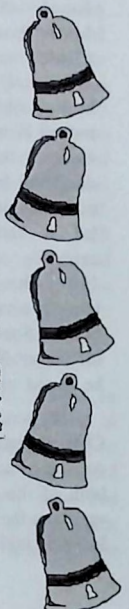
The war altered the whole field of comic papers and many of the well-loved titles and characters disappeared for good.

For youngsters like myself in those straitened thirties when a penny or twopence brought us a voyage into mirth and adventure through the medium of a comic, I hold there was an additional benefit to be gained from being curled up with one of those papers. Our teachers often warned us that comics were rubbish, but they

were hypocrites all, for they had themselves enjoyed the long-established comic papers before they grew older and donned the cloak of teacherly rectitude. At six, I was reading fluently, devouring comics and sharpening my imagination on the stories therein, whether about skippers of tramp steamers, detectives, aviators or cowboys. The old-style comic papers gave me a good education, no matter what some of my tight-lipped teachers said. And it was all good fun.

Today, you're likely to find me poring over one of these relics of a past and more innocent age. I am apt to tell you I'm doing so because I am a student of cartooning or that it's all in the interests of sociology because comics throw light on the habits and customs of past times, but that makes me just as hypocritical as my old teachers.

The truth is, I'm just having fun all over again!



Champagne Charley

By Una Hamilton Wright



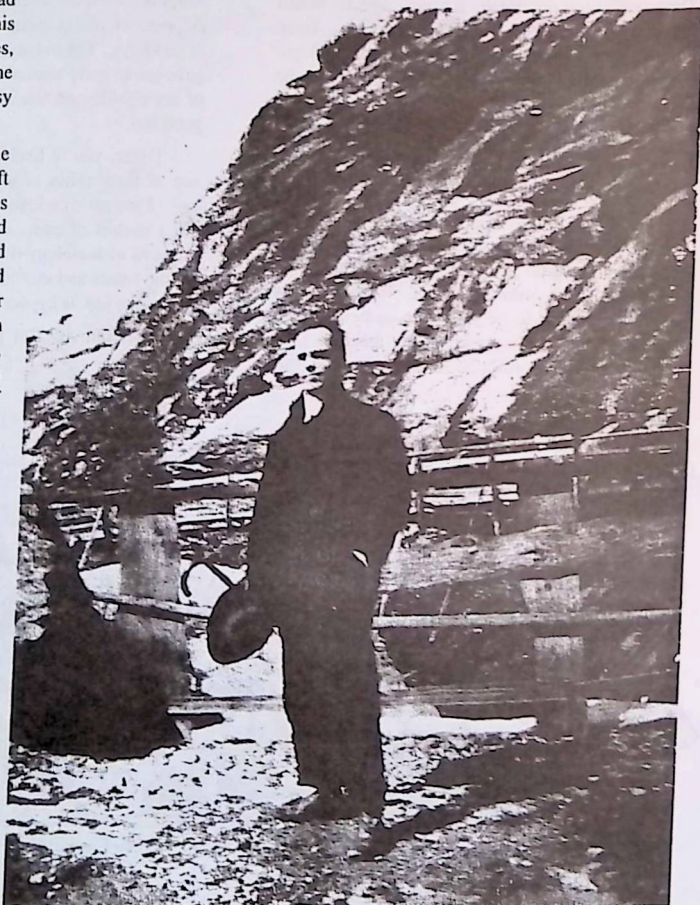
(A report of a talk given at the London O.B.B.C.'s Luncheon in September 1999)

What a pleasure it is for me to come to Ealing again to meet you all and to talk to you once more about my uncle, Frank Richards/Charles Hamilton. I have called this talk "Champagne Charley" because it covers the period in his life when his dreams came true. We start a few years into the Edwardian period and continue until the onset of the First World War. It was the time when he could do what he liked and follow his fancy - a new experience to Charles. Hitherto he had been able to follow his fancy only in his stories, but now he had the means of turning fantasy into fact.

For the first time he felt free, he had left home in 1904 when his mother had remarried and had then returned after his stepfather died a year later. His mother had taken a flat in Clapham and his sister, Dolly, spent term-time in Royal Academy of Music boarding-houses. Charles was on his own and lonely. Then his brother Alex and family moved in with him. He found the children delightful but disturbing and so he moved out and led a rather rootless existence until January 1907 when he moved into a service flat in Dorset Square, No. 7, off Baker Street, which he shared with his sister.

It was here that Charles had his two crowning successes - the birth of the *Gem* and a year later the birth of the *Magnet*, including Billy

Bunter. His publishers, Amalgamated Press, had an insatiable demand for his work. He was already fulfilling seven other writing commitments, all but three for Amalgamated Press: *Marvel*, *Pluck*, *Boys' Herald*, *Smiles*, *Boys' Realm*, *Vanguard* and the *Boys' Friend Library*. He loved his work and was not worried by the huge demand: he was happy, expressing himself through his writing, like a stage star treading the boards. He could spread his wings:



Charles Hamilton in Switzerland c. 1911/12

provided he performed his daily stint on the typewriter there was nothing he could not do.

In this talk I shall allude to my uncle as Charles Hamilton, his real name and a name he was proud to bear. It is true that he grew to think of himself as Frank Richards, his *nom de plume* for the Greyfriars stories in the *Magnet*. He was happy as Frank Richards: he could distance himself from his natural background with its tendency to cast shadows upon him, he could invent a new one. He could turn himself into somebody else. And who was this man who so desperately wanted to be someone else? His ego cramped by the narrow space allotted to plain Charles Hamilton of Ealing, his wings clipped, his horizons limited by the reputation of his drunken irresponsible father, no wonder he welcomed the opportunity to cast off his old self and acquire a new identity. No doubt if the *Magnet* had not been such a runaway success he would not have reinvented himself as Frank Richards. This name carried with it the approval of his publishers and the greatly increased wealth which enabled him to gratify his wishes. Amalgamated Press had really assumed the role of Fairy Godmother. For the time being plenty of work and plenty of money represented freedom.

Charles was used to living in a family - he liked the company and the support and he also liked an audience for he was a born entertainer. He was an excellent raconteur - but he needed a listener. He was very happy to share a flat with Dolly where the domestic matters were organised by her. Service was paid for in the rent and they were cooked for and catered for. Dolly had now left the Royal Academy of Music and was a freelance teacher of singing and voice production. But she was also an 'ideas-man'. She was his sheet-anchor and also his inspiration. She helped him with plots - always something of a problem for her brother when he had a large number of commitments. She brought him the gossip and the petty scandals from the Royal Academy and her brother fed them into his production line with changed names. In many of the things that Charles enjoyed Dolly was the leader. She it was who persuaded him to take holidays abroad. She had been to Grindelwald in 1905 with a party of friends and to Norway in 1907 but it was 1909 before she managed to get her brother to Paris for a weekend. It was Dolly who introduced him to classical music. He supported her as a student by attending the fortnightly concerts given by the Academy to bring on the less experienced students. He had always loved the theatre when he could afford it. Now they went regularly to both drama and opera. Dolly taught Charles to sing, developing his promising bass voice for him. He obviously enjoyed singing very much though was somewhat

shy about it outside family circles. I can remember him singing 'Simon the Cellarer' lustily in the bath. 1906 saw the start of their opera-going (seven performances) followed by twenty-seven the following year. After the advent of his Continental travels he changed his allegiance and his theatre visits and concerts took place on the Continent, especially Paris.

Dolly had a wide circle of friends and her invitations to stay often included her brother. Charles was always shy about meeting new people and Dolly had to coax. But he enjoyed the social gatherings when he actually got there. Dolly spent three holidays in the Isle of Man, Charles came with her on one of them. He enjoyed it very much apart from the sea-crossing; he was a bad sailor. Dolly was invited to stay with friends every year in Huntingford, Herts. Charley came once. Before the start of the Continental trips Dolly made sure that Charles had an English summer holiday every year. They visited the South Coast - Hastings, Margate and Canvey, then they stayed with brother Alex on Canvey Island.

Charles also enjoyed cycling holidays either on his own or with his brother Dick who had settled in Coventry. They toured Warwickshire. They went to Wales and hired a 'motor' at Rhyl. Woburn Sands, Fenny Stratford, Bletchley, picture post-cards from these places were sent to their mother.

Charles found the pace of Dolly's socialising a little too intense for him. He began to feel he wanted a retreat where he could hide away from the social whirl and also from time-wasting editors in Fleet Street. His intention was to find somewhere not too far from London but far enough away to discourage editors from summoning him at the drop of a hat. He found his retreat on Canvey Island, Essex, quite near to his brother Alex's home, so that Charles could enjoy the three children when he had the time and inclination and could also shut himself away to work when the need arose. And this was a need which continued to arise ever more often and ever more pressingly during this pre-war period. He bought his bungalow, Hazelwood, in 1908 and his mother came and stayed with him and found him a respectable housekeeper. She often went for visits, sometimes accompanied by her second daughter, Edie, and son-in-law Jack. Dolly enjoyed the happy family gatherings there.

Then the kaleidoscope began to change. In the spring of 1909 Charley spent a weekend in Paris with Dolly. He enjoyed it so much that he returned towards the end of August and stayed until the end of October. In September he invited his niece Rosie to stay in Paris and see the sights. He promised her father, Alex, that he would take

care of her. She was about sixteen at the time. Meanwhile Charles's mother had heard a rumour that under French law an uncle could marry his niece. She ordered Alex to go to Paris and bring Rosie home. It took Alex three days to organise himself to get there and remove Rosie from her uncle's care. Alex had never been abroad before and spoke no French. Charles felt insulted but realised that Alex was not to blame. He and all his siblings felt that his mother's orders must be obeyed. Alex never quibbled, he had his orders and he went, even though he was forty-two. His mother never forgave her daughter-in-law, Alex's wife, for letting her young daughter travel alone to Paris to stay with a bachelor uncle. After this incident there was always a coolness between Rosie's mother and grandmother.

At the end of October Dick came and stayed for a week and the two brothers had a wonderful time seeing light operas and musical entertainments every night. One or two of the programmes mysteriously became lost so that it was not possible to identify all that they had seen . . .

The pace of Charles's life began to quicken: he returned to Canvey Island on 6 November, the following day he went to London for an editorial conference, on the 10th he returned to Canvey Island and on the 14th he left England for Calais. He arrived at Nice for the first time on 18th November and stayed there until February. The delights of the Continent had ousted Canvey Island and Charles sold his bungalow. His base in London had also changed: he and Dolly had moved from their service flat in Dorset Square to a larger flat in Antrim Mansions in Belsize Park, Hampstead. Percy Harrison, her future husband, had entered Dolly's life and there was a need for more space. His home was in Manchester and he came to London for weekends to see Dolly. Charles had met him on holiday on the Isle of Man in 1907, a year after Dolly and Percy had been introduced. When he came to London Percy stayed nearby in Hampstead.

Percy was stimulating company and he and Charles had long conversations whenever Charles could spare the time. Charles quizzed him about the 'Northern Game', the variations on football as played in the North of England. Percy had a wide general knowledge and was good at finding out information. Charles found him very helpful. Dolly was relieved that her brother and her musical friend got along so well together. Percy joined them in their visits to the theatre and Covent Garden. The three of them used to take supper afterwards at Frascati's, the Florence and the Café de l'Europe and other similar restaurants. They were all literally having the time of their lives.

Percy unconsciously made one or two contributions to the Greyfriars personnel. Hoskins, the fanatical musician, owes some of his ways to Percy, albeit exaggerated. Horace Coker's obstinacy and sense of justice and fair play were inspired by Percy, as also was Coker's inability to take a short cut when walking and get it right. This was a failing of Percy's who always thought he knew a shorter way of getting anywhere. Somehow it always eluded him and the luckless followers whom he was guiding were in for a lot of extra walking. Finally Johnny Bull's stolid, utterly straight character owed much to Percy. A few years later Charles had much cause to be glad of this quality in his brother-in-law.

Percy and Charles struck up a partnership: Percy loved composing songs and so Charles wrote words for him. They conducted a long correspondence on this subject. Many years later there were further outbreaks of songwriting including musical shows *Looking After Uncle*, written during the post-war flapper period, and *The Bride of Barcroft* much later.

Christmas 1909 found Charles in Nice at the Villa Louise Pauline. This small hotel encouraged amateur dramatics and always produced a Christmas play or other entertainment. In the *Swiss de Nice Times* for the 2nd January 1910 the festivities were reported as follows:

'On Monday evening the Villa Louise-Pauline held one of its most successful and agreeable Christmas festivities. Last year the waxworks were good, but this year ambition soared higher. Among the guests staying at the villa are Mr. Charles Hamilton, a gentleman well-known in London literary circles, and Mr. Morley Steynor, whose play *La Femme d'un Acteur* was produced at the Theatre Moderne, in Paris, in 1908. These gentlemen, most cordially assisted by the rest of the guests staying at the villa, arranged the production of a play by Mr. Steynor. This play, *The Privet Hedge*, was most successfully produced, the performance being undertaken by a company selected from the guests . . . The company, it must be said, fully deserved the loud applause with which the performance of *The Privet Hedge* was received. The scene between Mr. Lock (Charles Hamilton) and Mr. Stamford in the pretended quarrel, was extraordinarily effective . . . The numerous audience were united in the opinion that, upon the whole, amateur theatricals had seldom reached so high a point of perfection in the English company in Nice.

'Applause long and loud followed the representation of *The Privet Hedge*, and the members of the company were compelled to

appear more than once, and finally retired with their blushing honours thick upon them.'

As far as is known Charles had not indulged in theatricals before, charades, yes, but learning a part and acting it . . . never. Dolly also spent Christmas at the Villa and witnessed her brother's pleasure. Something had changed, he was growing a new confidence, he was speaking French like a native and enjoying life in a Gallic way. He found he got on very well with Europeans, particularly the French. Dolly said that he developed all the typical mannerisms of the French, including the gesticulations. She put it down to the trace of French blood that was supposed to be in the family.

During 1910 he explored Switzerland: he arrived in Lausanne via London and Geneva where he saw Wagner's *Siegfried* - he rather liked Wagner in spite of the length of the operas. At Lausanne he settled in the Avenue d'Ouchy which runs down to the lake. He had retained his early fascination for water. He went to a local Revue, *Il Pleut Bergiers!* at the Kursaal-Variétés at Lausanne, a grand spectacle in three acts with twelve tableaux, according to the advertisements. The Geneva theatre offered opera 'daily in winter'. He was well catered for with entertainments. *Samson and Delilah*, *Tosca* and *Mignon* he had seen before he left Nice in February. He had really cast loose from England and had no regrets at having parted with his bungalow on Canvey Island at the end of the previous year (1909).

From Lausanne he continued round Lake Geneva to Chillon and mused on the names of the famous who had stayed there, including Byron. Then he returned to Lausanne and Geneva where he visited Voltaire's place at Ferney. Then to Morat with its Roman remains and ancient town walls on the 1st of May, and a week later he was in Les Avants. This tour ended at Clarens in the Savoy in mid-May.

Meanwhile Dolly had become engaged to Percy. Charles felt it would be good for Dolly to see as much of Europe as possible before she was married, so he took her to the Munich Exhibition and then to Oberammagau to the Passion Play. They stayed in Munich for about a fortnight. Charles had to work in the mornings while Dolly learned German at the Berlitz School. They both liked the language very much and made good progress at it. While in Munich they saw *Così Fan Tutte* at the Residenz Theatre, and *Tristan & Isolde* and the Prinz Regentem Theatre. They also saw a performance by Rita Sacchetto of her *Dance-Poesy* featuring the poetry of movement to music. Towards the end of August they left Munich for Nuremberg, then to Wiesbaden, which they loved and reminisced about for years

afterwards. Then they visited Bonn, Cologne, Namur, in Belgium, and finally the Waterloo Battlefield, which gave them plenty of food for thought.

Charles had very quickly established himself as a Man-about-the-Continent and thought to live abroad and write for the rest of his life. He was much happier in Europe than in England. While Dolly was unmarried he enjoyed exploring the Continent during her visits to him during her holidays from teaching. Then she fixed the date for her wedding to Percy and Charles gradually grasped what life would be like without her. May 8th was the chosen day and Charles helped with the wedding arrangements where he could be useful, and hopped back to the Continent whenever he could, settling again at Lausanne. The flat in Hampstead became a hive of activity. His mother came and stayed to support Dolly and help look after Percy's two sisters who were to be bridesmaids along with Dolly's best friend Grace and her niece Rosie. Charles felt a fish out of water amongst this crowd of femininity but put on a brave face. He humoured the idiots, eternally concerned as they were about dresses and hats and colours and flowers. He was a natural peacemaker. He took the girls to the theatre, festooned them with flowers and stuffed them with chocolates, but his circulation never quickened and there were no palpitations within his rib-cage. He enjoyed himself but was quite unmoved. He looked forward to being able to concentrate on his work again.

Dolly was slightly puzzled at his coolness. She was worried about him and wondered how he would manage after she was married. With whom would he discuss his work? She and Percy could still send him ideas for plots but the interesting conversations and impressions would be greatly missed by both of them. Dolly had always hoped that her brother would marry. In her student days she had introduced him to countless pretty girls from among her many friends. He delighted in paying them compliments and taking them out but he never felt inclined to proceed any further. If a girl had to forego a social appointment with him he would just as happily take her mother. Even though his sister was marrying, Charles had no feeling to follow suit. There was no doubt that he liked women and women's company, but he did not want a woman as a household pet. He confided to his sister when he was tempted to court her best friend Grace, who was to be her chief bridesmaid, that he wondered how any responsible man could propose marriage to a girl with the proviso that she was to be kept in the position to which she was accustomed. 'How could any man guarantee that? One can't see into the future: I wouldn't dare to try.' And so Grace

never received her proposal, although she and Charles remained friends until the ends of their lives and had a great mutual respect for one another.

There was one occasion when Charles deliberately set out to be a naughty boy in a very mild way. He felt a grudge towards his cousin Steve because of his teenage romance with Dolly. When Steve got engaged, just after Dolly did, Charles took Steve's fiancée to the theatre by taxi and on the way thought he would try to flirt with her. As he explained to Percy, rather limply, 'It was no good, Percy, every time I got a bit too close, she pushed me away.' That was the only occasion when Charles tried to assume the role of the wicked seducer. He did, once when he was slightly inebriated, tell Percy, very wisely and knowingly, that 'There are no bachelors, Percy.' He did not elaborate and Percy wisely changed the conversation. But he did report it to Dolly who hadn't the faintest idea what her brother meant.

Dolly and Percy were married at St. Stephen's Church, Haverstock Hill, Hampstead on the 8th June 1911. All the arrangements flowed like silk. Dolly's uncle Stephen gave her away as her father was dead. He also made the speech as Charles was too nervous to do so. Back in England Charles's shyness returned. The reception was at Frascati's - very popular with the happy couple and with Charles. The following day Percy and Dolly left for Paris. From there they travelled via Lausanne, Montreux and Chamonix to Zermatt, where they stayed at the Hotel de la Poste. Two months after their marriage they received a letter from Charles asking whether he could come and join them. They both agreed and the twosome became a threesome. They all visited Kandersteg and Interlaken, then Grindelwald and Brienz and then Lucerne, whence they turned south and went to Italy - Lugano, Milan, and Florence - in time for Christmas.

The trio intended settling on the Continent. They no longer had a base in England, the Hampstead flat had been given up, the furniture stored: Charles had got exactly what he wanted - a Continental, roving existence; no marriage ties but a female relation to take care of the domestic side of life. Really, he had several points in common with his creation, Billy Bunter. He packed good things into his life like Bunter stuffing himself at a feast. He had good companions who shared his interests. He still had time to read and discuss. He could indulge his whim to be taken for a Frenchman - he attended the Carnival of Nice dressed in a monk's habit made of pink satin and wearing a black mask. He could hire boats and row them

on lakes. Everything he wanted to do he could do. But whereas before 1909, when he first went abroad, freedom had meant plenty of work and plenty of money to afford his chosen pleasures, now an either-or situation began to develop: he could have exactly what he wanted if he had the time to enjoy it. A tussle between discipline and freedom ensued. He now had to give up the idea of having a completely uncluttered holiday, work now invaded the mornings and he was 'ex-dividend' as he called it, only in the afternoons. He signed himself 'Click-click' in his letters to Percy. Sadly, that is how he was beginning to see himself - as someone glued to the typewriter. The pressure built up so that he began to think it would be the perfect solution to win a fortune at the roulette tables at Monte Carlo. Roulette was not played elsewhere on the Continent. La Boule, simpler and for lower stakes was generally the game in the other countries of Europe. Gambling had always attracted him, but now he had a purpose in playing - to win his freedom so that he could write only when he wanted to, and could experiment with other types of literary work - novels, for example, and the travel book that he and Percy were working on. Thus began his gambling habit which never quite left him although he did manage to bring it under control. In the meantime, however, he was very much in need of Percy's restraining influence to keep his gambling fever within bounds.

Charles's technique for keeping his gambling within pre-set limits was to give his wallet to Percy to mind for the evening, Charles having taken out the pre-agreed sum. Percy was enjoined on no account to part with any of the money to Charles whatever impassioned pleas emanated from his brother-in-law. Percy made a very good prefect. He withstood all requests and demands for just a little bit more to complete this system. Charles operated on a system and there were many to be bought from the touts that hung round the casinos. Dolly pointed out that if the systems were any good the touts would have grown rich on them themselves. Charles could see the logic of this but he could not act on it. To Percy, Charles seemed to be in the grip of an evil spirit: his expression and posture gradually changed, he appeared to shrink and his eyes became glazed. But he did not grow rich. Percy stood his ground until the evening's ration of cash was exhausted and then he piloted his charge back to the hotel. Gambling fever never engulfed Percy, it left him utterly cold. He hated to see his brother-in-law make such a fool of himself. Years later, in the Yellow-jacket Bunter Books, Charles was to give a telling account of gambling fever and its effect on its victim. In this story, 'Billy Bunter's Beanfeast', it is Herbert Vernon-Smith - the Bounder - who is the

optimistic, cocksure gambler brought low by a system from which he will not depart. The author speaks through his character in a sympathetic autobiographical passage, although in this example the game is La Boule, played in France, and not Roulette. I recommend the book to anyone who wants to know of the temptation that invaded the gambler's mind when the fever took possession of him.

In 1912 the trio continued to explore Italy. In January they spent a week in Rome before going on to Naples. There Grace joined them and in February all went across to Capri. They missed the boat (literally) for that crossing and had to hire a boatman to row them across complete with luggage. Seasickness was quite a threat for Dolly and Charles and neither felt in the best of spirits when they arrived on the island. However, when they had recovered they found they loved it and fond memories of Capri were talked about years afterwards, accompanied by Percy's watercolour sketches. The pattern for existence was busy mornings and sightseeing in the afternoons. Before lunch Charles worked hard and long, Percy usually composed and arranged music, but sometimes went sketching and Dolly polished up her Italian with a native speaker. Grace cheerfully accompanied her, being something of a linguist herself.

They moved back to the mainland and stayed in a hotel close to the ruins of Pompeii where they hired a guide and took numerous walks to see the remains thoroughly. The party was intending to go on to Greece when the blow struck: Charles received a letter from his sister, Edie, telling him that his mother had been taken ill with 'galloping consumption' (as they called T.B. in those days) and ordering him and the others to come back to England at once. This they did, travelling continuously for two days and arriving home on 17th April. They estimated the distance was 1,000 miles. Nevertheless Edie (the model for Mr Quelch) demanded why had they taken so long? Edie's husband did not want his mother-in-law to stay in his house and so Charles and Dolly were urged to take her and look after her. They settled on a house in Hampstead, 46 Froggnal, which Percy found. It had large airy rooms which they thought would cheer the invalid. Percy did most of the furnishing on his own and Grace found them a cook and a butler and later on a nurse. Charles and Dolly were exemplary children and Percy was the soul of consideration. He liked his mother-in-law and was genuinely distressed at the tragedy happening round him.

Charles was again immersed in family contacts and visits from concerned friends. His mother issued an edict that she did not want to

see either her granddaughter Rosie, nor her mother. This naturally led to a division in the family and there were cross-currents and cliques which made life very uncomfortable for Dolly who was running the house. The stress and the sadness seemed to unbalance Charles: he refused to let his mother make a Will formally, using a solicitor, but insisted, instead, that she should dictate her wishes and he would write them down. She was puzzled but submitted to Charles' strange ideas. Eventually, despite all the care and all the drives in hired cars round Hampstead Heath for the fresh air, Charles's mother died on November 9th. Charles was beside himself with grief and threatened to throw himself out of his bedroom window. A nurse had to be hired to watch him all that first night. He was quite unable to see to any of the arrangements for the funeral. Brother Dick came down from Coventry and he and Percy saw to it all. Dick summed up his attitude to Charles: 'Well, we all feel it, but there's no need to make a complete fool of oneself.'

Charles suffered with shock for a few weeks, but a fortnight after his mother's death he hired a lawyer and made his own Will in the normal way, leaving everything to Dolly. This was the first of the three Wills he made, each of them leaving everything to Dolly. There were only minor changes in the two subsequent Wills.

Dolly and Percy had quite a lot to do sorting out and soothing aggrieved relations. Charles returned to the Continent, to Nice again, but not to his usual hotel. Dolly and Percy came to join him for a short break at the beginning of January and then left for England but Charles stayed on. He was feeling lonely and depressed and he had the luck to meet a nice respectable girl, the niece of the owner of an English hotel in Nice. He took her out for walks and drives and had many pleasant, serious conversations with her. Finally, he proposed to her and she accepted and he wrote home to announce his engagement. The young lady's name was Agnes but there is no record of her surname. The aunt was always known by her nickname of 'The Beetle' and so remains untraceable. Charles had to carry on with his work in the mornings. Agnes understood that. But she began to miss the parties and dances in the evenings. Charles did not and could not dance, and parties were not his favourite entertainment. Being kind and understanding he told her he did not want to stop her pleasures and that he would not mind at all if she went out to these entertainments without him. He preferred a good walk along the promenade. This arrangement worked for a time until the elderly gossips got hold of it. 'Poor Mr Hamilton, he does put up with a lot ...' etc. Finally the scandalmongering grew out of all proportion and

Charles decided that he and Agnes had better discuss the matter. She proclaimed her innocence, which he accepted, but she also objected to being quizzed and felt that he did not trust her. Then she declared she did not want to marry him unless he could trust her, and she gave him back the ring - a handsome two-diamond crossover creation. He told her to keep it, but she would not do this except with its true significance. She would not have it as a dress ring. They met once more to discuss the problem and Charles suggested that they immediately had a Civil Wedding in Nice, there and then. She would have none of this - a white wedding in an Anglican Church, with bridesmaids, in England, or nothing. So nothing it was.

Charles's feeling was one of relief rather than sadness. He always retained a respect and a slight feeling of affection for her. But he had no regrets. Percy and Dolly never met Agnes and were always somewhat mystified by the whole affair.

Charles remained on the Continent in accordance with his plan to settle there. He was able to return to his favourite hotel, the Villa Louise Pauline. There he worked steadily by day and often went to Monte Carlo in the evenings. He had his gambling fever under control for the time being. He went to Stresa on Lake Maggiore via Oggebbio. He tried to learn shorthand in a boat on the lake. Alas, good though he was at learning languages, he could not take in shorthand. He tried and tried and even resorted to a teacher for a short time, but he could neither gasp it nor memorise it. Esperanto, which he also learnt and believed in fervently, went in really easily. So his idea of dictating his scripts and enjoying himself while a shorthand-typist typed them out sadly came to nothing. At the start of his writing career it was enough for him to be writing to make him happy: now he needed more out of life and began to feel frustrated that he had not time enough to get it. He now had to settle for half his time for working and half for enjoyment. Any more free time had to be very carefully planned for. He was never again to have a formal holiday with **no work at all**. Poor 'Click-Click' was well and truly chained to his typewriter, never to escape until the Second World War.

After a month at Stresa the party went on to Vevey on the shore of Lake Geneva. His sister and brother-in-law left for England on 2nd July but Charles had fallen in love with the place, staying until the middle of November. 5 Quai Sina was his address there for the whole of the time. In October he went for a short stay to Les Avants. In mid-November he left Vevey and travelled to Genoa. He wrote to his sister that he

'was about to go on to Ventimiglia and then Nice' and that 'I am doing Genoa in 2 hours, that beats the American record'. He stayed in Nice over Christmas while Dolly and Percy set to work to close down their house and store the furniture so that they could be free to join Charles on the Continent where they also proposed to live permanently.

1914 dawned to find Charles in Nice enjoying himself at its casino and also playing Roulette in Monte Carlo. With no Percy there to mind his wallet Charles went too far and ran his finances down to a precarious state. In desperation he settled his debts and with little to spare he went to ground in Cuneo, staying on the way for a week at Eze-sur-Mer in the Alpes Maritimes. Cuneo, in the Italian Alps, due north of Ventimiglia, was a nice quiet, non-tourist place in which to work hard with no distractions. Charles stayed there working industriously, mending his finances until he was on an even keel again. Then he went to Bellagio on Lake Como, via Milan. On 18th May Dolly and Percy joined him there and they all stayed at the Hotel du Lac. They made short stays at some of the many beautiful places on Lake Como, including Grandola, Cadenabbia and Como itself. Towards the end of July they thought they would like to go to Austria and they made their way to Formio, where they stayed a few days, on the way up to the Stelvio Pass into Austria. At the beginning of August they arrived at the Hotel Hirsch, Spodining. Here their pipe dreams came to an end. Here it was that Champagne Charley found that the cork had been jammed back into the champagne bottle by forces beyond his control.

The Great War was just beginning, unknown to them. An Austrian Archduke had been shot in Sarajevo by the Serbians. The three travellers thought it was just another Balkan squabble. On 23rd July Austria had issued an ultimatum to Serbia, which Serbia ignored. Consequently on July 28th Austria declared war on Serbia. Germany in support of Austria declared war on Russia, and then France, and England supporting France, declared war on Germany. The fat was truly in the fire and there was no escape from the consequences.

It was not until 4th August when England declared war on Germany that the trio found themselves in difficulty. Their money stopped coming through from England. They had to wait while it came, slowly, via Switzerland, a neutral country. All thought of enjoyment departed, life became one long negotiation to arrange transport home and to avoid becoming prisoners of war. The Austrians treated them very well and fed them well. The only hitch was the soldier with a fixed bayonet standing guard over Charles as he

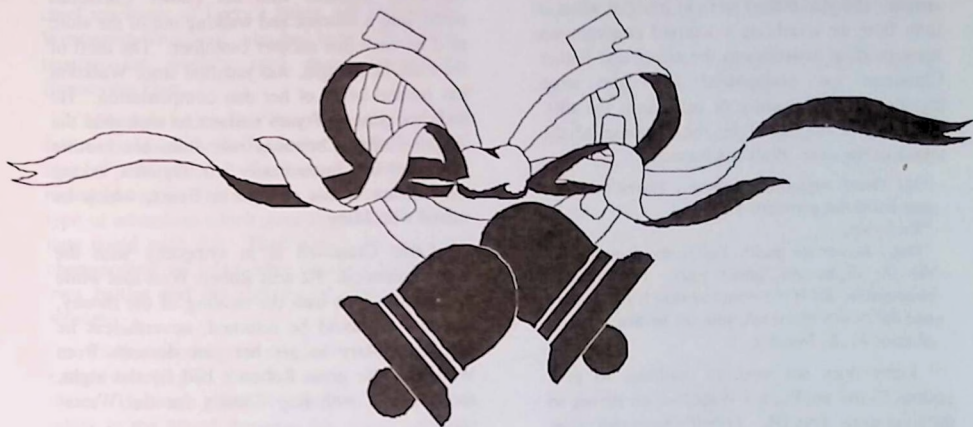
typed. The war was brought home to the party by the sight of farm carts left standing in the harvest fields with the horses gone from the shafts - the horses had all been commandeered by the army, and the men called up. The women, in groups, pulled the carts back to the farmyards themselves, making tremendous efforts, some of them weeping because they had already lost brothers or sons in the conflict.

Anxious and depressed, the three made their way home to England. Dolly and Percy had passports and could easily cross from Switzerland to France at Pontarlier, but Charles didn't believe a passport to be necessary and was therefore separated from his sister and brother-in-law by an official. He had to go to Paris and have his papers, if any, checked. Burdened with his typewriter, his handgrip and his mongrel dog,

Mickey, who had adopted him in Vevey, he made a slow and painful way home. He had to leave the poor dog in France to be cared for by two country people outside Dieppe. By the time he had reached the coast, Calais and Boulogne were in German hands and even Dieppe was expected to fall soon.

Charles Hamilton's war is another story. Champagne Charley was vanquished, never to effervesce again except in nostalgic passages in the Greyfriars stories. His travels supplied him with a seemingly endless supply of happily collected raw material, but the author's confidence had deserted him: he could write about what he had done, but he could no longer do it.

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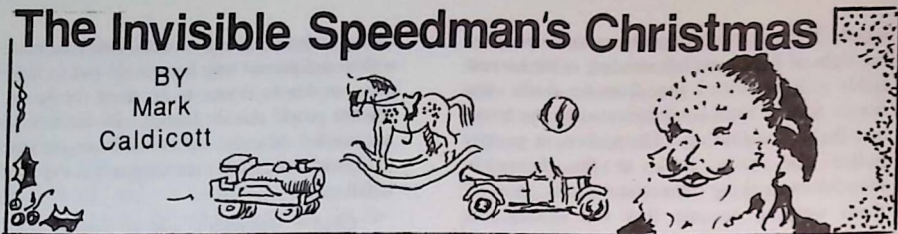
On a Christmas Eve some hundreds of years ago, the wicked Earl of Reynham was found murdered! According to legend, the phantom of the wicked earl haunts the castle—and it is death to meet him! Plucky as they are, the thought of the ghostly vision is unnerving to Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, who are spending the Christmas vacation at the castle.

The Wraith of Reynham Castle!



The Invisible Speedman's Christmas

BY
Mark
Caldicott



Larry Cromwell, the "Invisible Speedman" of Edwy Searles Brooks' stories, is visiting Walkdon's Department Store in the company of his friend and co-adventurer, Ray Somers. The festive spirit of Christmas is enhanced by the large, burly figure of Father Christmas. But Larry is puzzled. Instead of radiating bonhomie this particular Father Christmas has in his eyes a restlessness which is not in accord with the season. His puzzlement turns to intrigue when, a little later, he overhears a worried conversation between shop assistants to the effect that Father Christmas has disappeared from the store together with a quantity of cash from the tills. Larry is not impressed by the response of the owner of the store, Walkdon himself.

"Mr. Trent!" exploded the owner. "Haven't any of you found that scoundrel yet?"

"Really sir . . ."

"Don't answer me back! You're the manager of the toy department, aren't you? I hold you responsible, and if the wretched man is not found and the money recovered, you will be dismissed." (*Buzzer*, 11, 25-Dec-37)

Larry does not wish to continue to give custom to the unpleasant Walkdon, so drives to the rival store, Trytell's. Trytell's have their own Father Christmas, which is only to be expected apart from one notable irregularity - Larry is convinced that this Father Christmas is the same Father Christmas who has disappeared with Walkdon's takings. He confronts the man with an accusation of theft. To his surprise the man admits the action immediately, but Larry is so taken with the man's obvious honesty that he does not hand him over to the authorities. Instead he takes the man, whose name is Robert West, to Sunrise Cottage, Larry's own home.

West tells a tragic story. His brother, Jim West and Jim's son Dick were both employees of Walkdon's store for many years. Dick was a lift attendant and became concerned about the safety of the lift mechanism. He reported the problem to Walkdon who was too mean to get it mended. Then one day the lift mechanism failed completely and Dick was killed. Walkdon managed to avoid any blame in the ensuing enquiry and refused to pay compensation to Dick's wife Mary who was consequently left to raise their two children without a penny. To make matters worse Walkdon thought it

advisable to sack Jim West too, so Jim is without regular employment.

Jim West managed to get a job as Father Christmas at Trytell's. Robert West seized this opportunity to strike back at Walkdon by also taking on the job of Father Christmas, but at Walkdon's. That day Robert West had put his plan into action, clearing out the tills and putting the cash, together with his Father Christmas outfit, into a suitcase and walking out of the store as if he were just another customer. The theft of the cash, he thought, was justified since Walkdon has robbed Mary of her due compensation. He had then gone to Trytell's where he took over the Trytell Father Christmas role from his brother Jim. Jim had immediately left Trytell's, taking the suitcase to his cottage in Essex, which he shared with Mary.

Larry Cromwell is in sympathy with the Wests' situation. He tells Robert West that while he doesn't agree with the stealing of the money, and that it should be returned, nevertheless he will help Mary to get her just desserts from Walkdon. He gives Robert a bed for the night, and sets out with Ray Somers for the Wests' cottage.

Such a problem is right up his street. Larry Cromwell, the Invisible Speedman, had been introduced to readers in the very first number of the *Buzzer*, published by Newnes, which made its debut on 17 October 1937. He appeared in every episode of the paper which, unfortunately, only lasted for 36 weeks. The stories are relatively short - about 6,000 words - but the plots are fully developed and detailed. Indeed they are worthy of a lengthier format.

They were written at the time when the Norman Conquest episodes were gaining great popularity in the *Thriller* and were poised to take off in novel form. The tone of the Invisible Speedman stories and to some extent the characterising of Larry Cromwell is influenced by the Cromwell yarns, but with some of the less believable excesses of previous super heroes thrown in. It is interesting to compare the characterisations of Larry Cromwell - the Invisible Speedman and Norman Conquest - the Gay Desperado.

Larry and his friend Ray Somers were in the

fortunate position that they "had as much money as they knew what to do with". Cromwell, therefore, is no desperado. Unlike Conquest he does not rob his victims or antagonise the constabulary.

The passion of Larry and Ray was for fast cars and so, with the help of Nelson, a talented mechanic who also acted as Cromwell's butler, the pair built a revolutionary road racer, *Flash*, which ran so swiftly and silently that it could not easily be seen, hence giving rise to the legend of an Invisible Speedman. The car was garaged in a secret underground workshop at Sunrise Cottage where Nelson, whose physical description bears a similarity to Conquest's Mandeville Livingstone, tended to the car as if it were a baby. In fact Nelson, we are told, is one of the most brilliant motor mechanics in the world, and had been the chief mechanic of Larry's father, the famous Sir Wentworth Cromwell, who had been killed while beating the world's land speed record on Bonneville Flats.

Although loving fast cars, Larry declined to follow in his father's footsteps. Rejecting the idea of adventure of the normal type - track racing and so on - he and Ray had planned a new type of adventure which gave them all the thrills they could wish for. Their aim in life was the championing of folks who couldn't fight their own battles and the righting of other people's wrongs.

To this adventurous role Larry brought some extraordinary gifts beyond those of a racing driver. He was a gifted ventriloquist, particularly adept in the art of throwing his voice - a skill which no real ventriloquist can exercise in the way it is portrayed in these stories but which was always popular in the old story papers. In addition to throwing his voice he was also an artful mimic so that the thrown voice could in fact sound like that of another character in the story. In toning down of the superhero into the more adult-oriented Norman Conquest character ESB retained the art of mimicry while ditching the more extravagant voice-throwing ventriloquism. In contrast, Larry Cromwell, because he is resident in the more credulous world of boys' adventure stories, is still allowed to exercise the doubtful art of throwing his voice.

The Invisible Speedman also had the power to mesmerise his victims. This power is one which Brooks had first provided for his first superhero, Frank Kingston, nearly thirty years earlier. Kingston had gained the power to mesmerise others as a result of his lengthy exposure to the iron content of the Iron Island where he was held prisoner. Conquest, of course, exercises a less direct form of hypnosis which is called personal magnetism - or as Conquest

himself says on one occasion: "I switched on the full force of my electric personality, and practically hypnotised him into agreeing" (Conquest in Scotland, 1951).

Like Conquest, Larry is an athletic young man and uses acrobatic skills to climb walls and scale buildings. He also thrives on gadgets, an example being an ingenious hidden contraption worn on his back which opens into a pair of wings. This allows him to leap into space from high windows and seem to disappear into mid-air. In the gadget field Cromwell has an advantage over Conquest, for he has the assistance of Professor Sylvester Storm, a brilliant scientist and inventor who is always happy to allow Larry to try out his latest invention. While having an inventor as an ally is another feature shared with the original superhero Frank Kingston, it is not one which is carried forward into the Conquest adventures.

All the powers exhibited by Larry tend to have a common feature: combined, they create an air of mystery to the perception of the Invisible Speedman and give the impression to his victims that he is some kind of mythical avenger. He reduces his prey to a state where they will agree to make recompense to the unfortunates whom the Invisible Speedman is championing.

Thus the Invisible Speedman is the right man for this particular Christmas challenge. So quick is *Flash* that the journey to the Wests' cottage is completed in such a short time that they arrive before either Jim West or Mary has retired to bed. Assuring them that he is not a policeman, Larry enters the cottage and notes the poverty-stricken state of the tiny front room. He tells Jim of his encounter with his brother and of the intention to return the stolen money and toys to Walkdon's. Mary is eager for him to do so:

"Yes, please, take it, sir. I don't want the money from Mr. Walkdon - like this! I'm glad you've come, sir! There's a right way of doing things and a wrong."

Larry takes the stolen money and toys, but in return he drops a parcel onto the table.

"What - what's that, sir?" asked Mrs. West.

"A hundred pounds in small notes."

"But - but we can't take this money from you, sir!"

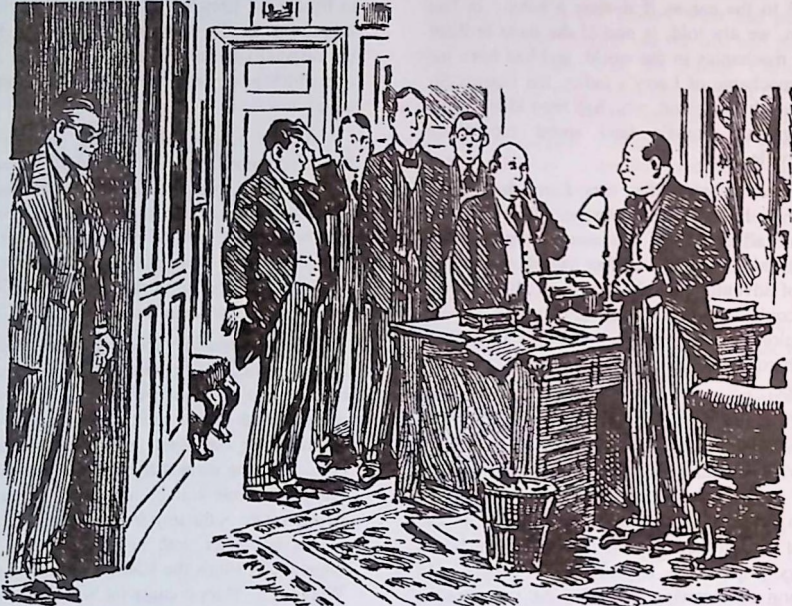
"It's just an advance on the money that Mr. Walkdon is going to give you," said the Invisible Speedman softly. "You can spend it as you wish, with the comfortable knowledge that it is clean and honest. You'll be seeing me again!"

The next morning Walkdon arrives to find Larry, wearing motoring goggles to avoid identification, already occupying his office. Considering Walkdon has the only key to the office, Larry's presence comes as something of a

shock. "The Invisible Speedman can do without keys" explains Larry. the mention of the Invisible Speedman unsettles Walkdon even more, and his amazement is complete when Larry tosses the returned money and stolen goods onto his desk and announces that the Father Christmas who helped himself to the items was Jim West's brother. Walkdon threatens to call the police and have them all thrown into jail, but Larry brings up the issue of the neglected lift and the ensuing accident.

Walkdon started back, his face twitching with guilt.

"You - you don't understand," he stammered. "It was an accident! The lift was in perfect order ..."



"Gentlemen," said the store-owner, licking his dry lips and feeling that the Invisible Speedman's eyes were boring into him, "I—er—I have decided to—er—walk through the stores attired as Father Christmas, and I shall give presents to the—er—customers!"
The wonder of it was the departmental chiefs did not all faint on the spot.

"It was not!" said Larry, in a hard voice.

"Well . . ." The store owner seemed hypnotised into speaking the truth by the steady stare from Larry's eyes . . . "I'm not making any admission that the firm was liable. I'll drop the prosecution, and I'll give the woman some compensation . . ."

"You'll give her enough money to live on comfortably until her children grow up," interrupted Larry calmly. "Also, you'll take Jim West back into his old job, pay him all his back wages, and give him his pension when it's due.

"And just to make you feel how good it is to go about giving things away," he added, his eyes twinkling, "You're going to get into a Father Christmas rig-out and go about your store giving presents to the kiddies".

Under threat of exposure, Walkdon has no

choice. He calls his department chiefs and announces his intention to walk through the stores as Father Christmas giving away presents. This is so out of character that the staff are dazed with shock. Nevertheless Walkdon puts on the costume and begins his walk through the store. His employees would have been no more surprised if an earthquake had shaken them.

"Their expression told Walkdon just how he stood with his staff. And it was a shock to his pride."

Giving away even a twopenny water pistol is so against Walkdon's mean nature that his voice comes out as a harsh croak which frightens away the intended recipient.

But now something startling happens, for after successfully giving away a sixpenny game of Ludo, Walkdon looks around for something cheaper, and his eye falls on a threepenny ball. Next to it is a splendid cowboy outfit, priced at twenty-five shillings.

"Give the cowboy outfit to the boy standing over there," came Walkdon's voice. And then, after a pause, "no, no! I didn't say - Yes, go ahead! I said the cowboy outfit."

He rocked on his heels because he knew he hadn't given that order. He had protested, and then the order had come again. His own voice - from his own lips.

He was not the only surprised one. The assistant was feeling quite faint. For the "Old Man" to give away such a present was

unbelievable.

Walkdon then hears himself give away a girl's bicycle and a rocking horse. The assistants "could not remember such a sensation since the big fire of 1917, when a war-time bomb had fallen through the roof." He manages to get out of the department but on his way through the adjoining jewellery department his voice is continuing to give away presents.

The answer, of course, is the skill of the Invisible Speedman's combination of voice-throwing and mimicry.

After a while, however, to Larry's surprise he finds that Walkdon has begun giving things away of his own accord. For the first time in his life Walkdon has discovered the pleasure there is in giving. His staff think it a masterstroke of salesmanship, for it is the best advertisement the store has ever had. The idea goes to Walkdon's head. He has caught the spirit of Christmas and become a reformed character. He assigns Larry to the task of collecting "all the Christmas presents you can think of. We're going to give someone the finest Christmas they ever dreamed of." For the first time in his life Walkdon has found out what it is like to be popular.

Still dressed as Father Christmas, Walkdon accompanies Larry and the huge sack of presents to the Wests' tumbledown cottage in Brentwood. The children are, of course, overwhelmed with

joy and excitement.

"Well, I don't know what to say," muttered Jim. "If it's a dream . . ."

"No, it's not a dream, Jim West," said the red-robed figure. "It's just an attempt by someone to make amends. I hope it will bring you happiness. You have suffered in the past - I hope the future will bring you joy."

Shouldering his empty sack, he waved them goodbye and strode out into the snow.

True to his reformed self, once back at the store, Walkdon sits down at his desk and signs a promise that Mrs West should receive a pension for life and that Jim should get back his job.

As in all good Christmas stories everyone ends up happy, even the villain of the piece, and if Dickens had already used the idea of the spirit of Christmas as the means to the reform of a miserly and heartless man then readers of the *Buzzer* would not have minded. It is a pity, therefore, that this was the Invisible Speedman's only Christmas. By the following year the *Buzzer* was long gone, Britain was at war, and the death knell was sounding for the majority of our other favourite story papers. I am only grateful to those collectors who cherished and preserved these story papers so that we can still read them long after those darker times. To all the collectors, preservers and readers of these precious old story papers I wish you all a joyful Christmas.



CHRISTMAS PRELUDE

By TONY COOK



Henry Samuel Quelch crossed the pedestrian crossing at Tombeland, turning right and making his leisurely way towards the impressive monument of the Erpingham Gate which led to the close and the clergy houses of Norwich Cathedral. It was a fine but cold day auguring a fine Christmas, hopefully without snow. Arriving at the gate, despite the cold, the master of Greyfriars Remove stood for a few moments contemplating the massive structure raised by the Erpingham family to commemorate Sir Thomas who had been Marshall of the Bowmen at Agincourt. The master's appointment with Canon Dursley was still half an hour hence; he was therefore getting acquainted with Norwich and its many places of interest.

Mr Quelch had been invited by Sir Oliver and Lady Elizabeth Carstairs for the Christmas vacation to Carstairs Manor which lay some two miles outside the city centre. The invitation had been a bonus for Canon Dursley, who was a member of the cathedral staff and Quelch's old friend from his Oxford days. Both men were now involved with the Oxford University Press in a special project. The Canon had written suggesting a meeting as soon as was possible; therefore the Carstairs invitation had been providential. All the same, Mr Quelch's acceptance of the invitation had been with some slight hesitancy. Carstairs' letter had mentioned the fact that their son and daughter would be joining them over the festive period. Mr Quelch realised that in these wartime days the family was rarely together, and wondered whether he might be intruding, especially as the death of their younger son, who had been a fighter pilot, had brought them together. However, on reflection the Remove master realised that the invitation would not have been issued lightly.

Their surviving son was in the army, based in Whitehall, while the daughter was secretary to a large girls' school in North Wales. Since he had first met the Carstairs, chance seemed to have drawn them together on several occasions with amazing results. Soon all his doubts were dispelled and replaced with a feeling of pleasant anticipation.

The Remove master continued through the gate whose cobbled entrance led past the close and the converted stables to Pull's Ferry which

opened into the River Wensome. He turned at the green, making his way towards the west end of the cathedral. Entering this, and asking for the Canon, he was taken into a small room and greeted by his friend with great enthusiasm. The Canon led him back out of the cathedral by the south door and across the close to his house, and a homely, smiling Mrs Dursley. Ushered into a cosy sitting room in which burned a welcome fire, the two men were immediately plied with tea and hot buttered scones. The next couple of hours were spent in earnest conversation resulting in their agreement that part of their editorial responsibilities would benefit from a collaboration which would certainly be to their publishers' advantage.

It was just after six o'clock when Mr Quelch took his leave of the Dursleys. He hurried back to the city centre feeling well pleased. Despite his added responsibilities as Assistant Head of Greyfriars, now evacuated to Worcestershire for the duration, he felt that life in general had taken a turn for the better as these academic and editorial interests suited him extremely well. He managed to hail one of the few taxis available which took him back to Carstairs Manor in good time to dress for dinner.

War or no war the Carstairs maintained their formality, which Mr Quelch appreciated. He was ushered in by Dawson the butler who smilingly relieved him of his outer garments and gas-mask. Times may have changed but the Carstairs were lucky in still retaining a butler, cook-housekeeper and gardener. All three had been in the family employ for some considerable time and were too old for either call-up or war work. The retention of the staff allowed Sir Oliver and Lady Elizabeth to go about their respective duties without the responsibility of running the Manor.

It was not until Mr Quelch reached his bedroom and was putting his briefcase on the chair that something struck him as odd. His briefcase, which had been a present from his hosts, had his initials embossed upon it but there were no initials on this one. Although the same in all other respects, the case was not his. How on earth could this have happened? He took out his keys and to his amazement the case opened easily. On the top were two copies of *The Times* but the rest of the contents took his breath away.

A selection of documents confronted him, six brown files each marked clearly 'Secret - Authorised Personnel Only'. Every file had the same heading followed by a string of letters and numbers.

"Oh dear!" murmured the master of the Remove.

His immediate thought was to telephone Canon Dursley and inform him of the error. It was only after reflection that he decided, because of the exceptional contents, to approach Sir Oliver and seek advice. He had no doubt that there was some rational explanation, but wondered whatever the Canon was doing with such official documents in his possession. After changing and completing his toilet, Mr Quelch made his way down to the hall. His hosts were already there.

"Ah, Henry, do come and sit down," Sir Oliver invited. "Sherry? We still manage a bottle now and again." Feeling that this might boost his morale, Mr Quelch accepted readily. As he was handed his drink Sir Oliver asked: "How did your meeting go?" "Ah, yes, the meeting, extremely well thank you." "Two like minds, no doubt. By the way Henry, while you are our guest please dispense with the formalities; you know us well enough."

Mr Quelch smiled. "Thank you. It was most thoughtful of you to invite me here for the Christmas vacation." Elizabeth flashed him one of her enchanting smiles. "If it were not a pleasure to have you, we would not have invited you."

Mr Quelch smiled and sipping his drink said: "I'm afraid there was a slight difficulty regarding my visit to the Canon." "Oh dear!" came from Sir Oliver. "Academic or personal?" "Neither. You see I seem to have picked up the wrong briefcase on my departure from his residence."

Sir Oliver laughed. "Feel free to telephone him, my dear chap." "I fear that it is not so straightforward as that." came the reply. "It does indeed appear to be the same type as my own but . . . I think you had better look for yourself, Oliver. I have left it unlocked."

With a perplexed look Sir Oliver opened the case and, having discarded the newspapers, looked at the files. His face was serious as he said: "Elizabeth, my dear, I think you should see these." Crossing to her husband's chair she went through the files. "I have a feeling that the Canon should not be in possession of these, providing that they are genuine of course; they appear to be highly classified material." There was silence as the Olivers continued to examine the files. An amazing couple, thought Quelch. He knew that

Sir Oliver was connected with a government department in London while Elizabeth was an officer in the WAAF. What either of them actually did he had no idea. At last he broke the silence.

"I suppose the Canon could also be in possession of the wrong case?"

"Anything is possible," said Elizabeth. "I have a strange feeling that you have picked up another mystery trail." Mr Quelch managed a sheepish smile while feeling rather excited at the prospect of solving another mystery. "What do you suggest I do about informing the Canon?" he asked.

With sudden decision Sir Oliver rose, crossing to the telephone. "Let us wait until we get some professional advice" he replied. "Who are you ringing, Oliver?" asked his wife. "A family friend and one of your prime admirers" came the reply. Elizabeth smiled at Mr Quelch. "He is telephoning the Chief Constable, Robert Dearing, a long-standing friend and one of the youngest men to hold such a position. He has a fine brain, and contacts in all the right places. If anyone can advise us, he can."

Sir Oliver replaced the receiver. "Robert is coming straight over. Monica is away at the moment, I hope cook can cope with another dinner?" "Leave it to me."

As his wife left the room Sir Robert replenished their glasses. "Robert suggests that we do nothing until he has seen the files. If, however, you wish to ring the Canon you should not mention at this stage that anything is amiss. I suggest we await further developments." Mr Quelch nodded. "I agree, of course." Although deception had never entered Mr Quelch's mind he realised only too well that the matter could have far-reaching effects. They must wait for professional advice.

Elizabeth Carstairs returned, bringing with her Robert Dearing. The Chief Constable was an imposing figure, standing just over six feet, and immaculately dressed. He shook hands with Sir Oliver and was then introduced to the master of the Remove. "Delighted to make your acquaintance sir. I understand you have something of a puzzle for me?"

When the company was seated the documents were produced. There was silence while Dearing examined them. At last he said: "I understand from what I have been told that you visited Canon Dursley this afternoon and, upon leaving, you picked up the wrong briefcase. Now at what point did you realise the error?"

"As I was putting it down on the chair in my room."

"And yet you opened it!"

"Ah . . . yes. I did indeed. It was almost exactly in every detail like my own case."

"It was unlocked then?"

"No, I opened it with my own key."

"Despite the fact that you knew it was not your case?"

At this point Sir Oliver interrupted. "Robert, the offending case is indeed an exact twin of Mr Quelch's, I can vouch for that. I suggest that they have similar locks." Dearing nodded, his manner relaxed. "Quite so. I have no doubt that I should have done the same."

For once Mr Quelch felt out of his depth. Elizabeth broke the tension. "Don't let Robert get to you, Henry. He is only using his normal official tactics."

"I'm sorry, but the situation calls for solid facts and exact reasoning" said Dearing. Elizabeth looked at him questioningly. "Robert, if the files are genuine and there is some spying afoot, don't you think it a little amateurish to carry such documents about in a briefcase that can so easily be opened? If this business stems from German roots it is unlike them to take such a risk. There would be far too much at stake. Is it all a hoax, I wonder?"

Robert Dearing sat back with a sigh. "A worthy assessment, Elizabeth my dear. It is indeed unlike our enemies to underestimate anything."

"Surely the real owner of the briefcase must be in a panic to secure its return" suggested Sir Oliver. All eyes were on the Chief Constable who was looking at each of them in turn, deep in thought. "Right, this is the plan of action. I suggest that Mr Quelch telephone Canon Dursley and explain that he has the wrong briefcase. No more than that. He then makes an appointment to return the offending item as early as possible tomorrow morning. I of course will accompany you, sir."

Mr Quelch nodded. "Very well, I will do as you ask. I presume you do not feel that the Canon is in any way implicated?"

"No," came the reply. "But at this stage we must keep an open mind. In wartime one cannot overlook any possibility. Meanwhile I must have the files examined and authenticated, and try to establish their source."

"By tomorrow morning?" Elizabeth queried.

"Indeed, by tomorrow morning! It will mean a considerable number of people working through the night, so, with regret, I must ask you to make my apologies to Mrs Mayhew." With this Robert Dearing took possession of the briefcase and left without further comment, except saying to Mr Quelch: "I will return tomorrow morning with the case. Sir Oliver will let me know the time and place of the meeting."

Sir Oliver rose to see his friend out. Sensing

Mr Quelch's discomfort, Elizabeth said: "There is no need for you to get so worried, Henry. It is all very perplexing but I feel sure that your friend the Canon is blameless. Robert will sort things out, of that you can rest assured."

"It is all very well Elizabeth, but I feel responsible for this unfortunate situation." There was a hint of a giggle from his hostess. "Indeed you are, but think what might have happened if there is something sinister about this affair and it had not been discovered."

At that moment Dawson announced dinner. Elizabeth and Mr Quelch joined Sir Oliver in the dining room. The meal was cheerful with the Olivers setting the tone by not referring to the evening's events. Just before retiring Mr Quelch made his call to Canon Dursley making an appointment for ten o'clock the next morning. As his hosts sat together mulling things over Elizabeth said "You know, Oliver, one point puzzles me about this affair. Why did Henry not notice the difference in weight between the two cases?"

There was a moment's silence. "I wonder if that is of any real importance, my dear."

Elizabeth nodded. "Perhaps you are right. I find it strange though. Henry is like a magnet; he seems to have attracted adventure ever since we've known him."

Her husband laughed. "There are times, my dear, when I despair of your ever growing up. Adventure indeed! Some of the situations have been tinged with danger for all concerned, including yourself."

"So," she replied, "what is adventure without its share of danger? And who wants to grow up?"

Oliver Carstairs sighed. "So be it. Still, I like Henry's company. And you sometimes seem able to twist him round your little finger."

Meanwhile, in his bedroom, Mr Quelch was in a very thoughtful mood. It was some time before he prepared for bed, and then sleep did not come easily. The next day dawned cold but fine. Soon after breakfast Robert Dearing arrived to escort Mr Quelch to Canon Dursley's. On their way the Chief Constable said that he would make the explanations to the Canon no fuller than was necessary. On arrival they were greeted by the Canon himself who, although surprised to see Mr Quelch's companion, ushered them in without undue fuss and listened to Robert Dearing's explanation. Without hesitation he grasped the import of this and went immediately to the cathedral with the briefcase. While they awaited his return, having refused Mrs Dursley's offer of coffee, Mr Quelch said "May I ask what exactly was done with the files during the night?"

"Quite a lot," Dearing answered. "The contents were genuine and from a very confidential

source. At the moment there is a great deal of activity in very high places. The documents were painstakingly doctored and re-sealed. Whatever happens the information they contain will appear creditable but be of little or no use to the enemy." "Thank goodness some good has come out of this unfortunate error."

The Chief Constable smiled. "In wartime strange things happen, small things mainly by chance, or in this case pure accident. As you say, some good has already come out of it."

At that moment Canon Dursley returned, clutching a briefcase. "I now have the right briefcase back, gentlemen. The mix-up concerns one of our vergers. I made quite a fuss, saying that I was unable to unlock the case with my key. I think my explanation was accepted." He paused for breath. "Please tell us all the details, Canon," said Dearing.

"Well, Robert, the man concerned has only been with us about three months. He had picked up what he thought was his case (they all seem to be very similar) locking it in his personal locker overnight. He checked the contents and confirmed that it was his."

"A cool customer, to say the least. I wonder why he didn't take it home with him?"

"Oh, it would be quite safe in the locker. You see there is no master key."

Without commenting further Robert Dearing rose. "Thank you, Canon, for dealing with the matter so well. Leave the matter in my hands from now on. Perhaps you will give me full details of this gentleman. Oh! when will he come off duty today?"

"At three o'clock" came the reply.

"Thank you. I will have someone here to keep an eye on his movements from the time he leaves. Meanwhile, gentlemen, thank you both for your help and co-operation. You can leave the rest to me."

As Dearing prepared to leave the Master of the Remove also rose but Canon Dursley laid a hand on his arm. "Look, Henry, have you any particular plans for the rest of the day?" Mr Quelch said that he was in fact free. "In that case, why don't you take a look at our library? I know that there are many books that would be of considerable interest to you."

At this Quelch brightened and the two men made their way down to the cathedral crypt where the most valuable books had been stored for safety for the duration of hostilities. It was getting on for three o'clock before Mr Quelch, after breaking for an excellent lunch with the Dursleys, decided to leave. He made his way into the main body of the cathedral towards the west door, a decision which proved to be another step along the road to a dangerous situation.

Moving quietly through the great building he noticed a figure leave the room in which he had first met Canon Dursley. Moreover the man was carrying what appeared to be a briefcase identical with the one that had caused so much trouble. He was benign-looking, of medium build, dressed in a knee-length overcoat and certainly not in a hurry. Almost immediately, another figure appeared from behind one of the pillars and, with an air of certainty, followed. It was at this point that Mr Quelch made the error of letting his curiosity get the better of him. As he admitted later, he allowed himself to be ruled by illogical rashness, for he followed the two men out of the cathedral, through the city and into the market area. Both men then went into Jarrolds, the large department store. The main quarry made some purchases and then disappeared into the cloakroom. For some time no-one left or entered the cloakroom until a man emerged looking not at all like the person Mr Quelch had seen go in. The man headed towards Petergate and Mr Quelch followed.

At this same time the Famous Five turned into Petergate with other things in mind. "What ho!" Frank Nugent called out, "I spy a tea shop." "Good egg!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Just the thing."

The Co. had spent the day looking around Norwich. They were staying over the Christmas holiday with Bob Cherry's uncle whose home was in Sherringham. By the usual stroke of misfortune, as Harry Wharton put it, there were in fact six in the party for at the last moment an unexpected guest in the shape of William George Bunter had turned up! The discovery of the tea shop was welcome at this juncture. "This should make an old fat man happy," grinned Harry Wharton as he pointed to a notice in the window 'One scone or cake per person'. Bob Cherry looked back at Bunter as he struggled up the road. "Come on, Bunter! Tea!" he cried.

"Beasts!" panted the fat owl. "You might wait for a fellow. I'm famished. Order a large stack of buns, you chaps." They chucked as they entered, sat down at a window table and watched Bunter totter the last few yards towards them. A waitress came forward to take their order. "Tea for six please" Bob Cherry said.

"Cake or scones?" she asked. Bunter slumped into a vacant chair and said "Lots of both."

The waitress frowned. "You can only have one or the other."

"Just bring a plateful of something" Bunter said, waving a fat paw.

"Come off it! You can only have one of anything" grinned Frank Nugent, enjoying the situation. By this time the waitress had retreated, cakes having been ordered. "There is a war on, old bean, or has the sad fact passed you by?"

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles. "Look, you fellows, don't fool around. It's been a trying day, trailing about after you. Ask for the Manager."

"W - h - a - a - t?" came a howl from the rest of them.

"Well, tell him I'm special, or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The chums were enjoying the joke.

At that moment tea arrived. On a plate reposed six cakes. A groan came from Bunter. "Look here . . ." He was ignored as Harry Wharton with slow deliberation poured the tea and Frank Nugent handed round the cakes until only one was left. This he presented to Bunter. "Don't eat it all at once."

"Beasts!" Bunter ate his offering in silence.

Suddenly Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who had been looking out of the window, tapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder and pointed. On the opposite side of the road, looking into the window of a second-hand bookshop, was the back view of a familiar figure.

"I don't believe it! Look, you chaps, it's Henry."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Inky and Harry having queer turns again?" sang out Bob Cherry. They followed Harry's pointing finger. "It is Quelch; well spotted, Inky!" The Nabob grinned. "The spotfulness is terrific!"

They all watched as their form master entered the shop. "Wonder what brings him into this part of the world." Harry Wharton said. "Hang on. Don't the Carstairs live around here? I think I heard uncle talking about them the other evening."

"I say, you chaps, do you think he would buy Bunter another round if he saw him looking so poorly?" suggested Johnny Bull. There was renewed merriment as the chums consumed their second cups of tea. "Plenty of time" said Wharton. "Another half an hour before our bus leaves." Bunter groaned again. "If we went by taxi we might be back in time for tea. I can't last out till dinner."

"In funds, Bunter?" enquired Frank Nugent.

"No, you ass," came the reply. "I thought we might have a whip round."

"Good idea" agreed Harry Wharton, laying his cap on the table. "All donations gratefully received." His cap remained empty. "Sorry old bean, no takers." There was more laughter and from Bunter continued groans. Soon afterwards they paid for their teas and quitted the café. "Any of you chaps seen Henry leave?" asked Wharton.

"Why the sudden interest?" said Nugent.

"Well, some fellow is putting up the shutters over the road."

"Blackout time?"

Harry shook his head. "Almost another hour yet.

Inky, you spotted him going in. Have you seen him leave?"

"No, I have not seen our esteemed master leave."

"Oh, come on Harry, just because we didn't see him leave it hardly constitutes a mystery" said Johnny Bull.

They moved off towards the bus station, and Harry Wharton almost collided with a woman who seemed to be in a hurry. As he made his apologies he realised that it was Lady Elizabeth Carstairs. "Oh, Lady Carstairs!" he said. She stared at him for a moment. "I remember you, Harry Wharton, Colonel Wharton's ward. We met the other Christmas at the children's party." Harry explained that he and his friends were staying in Sherringham over Christmas.

"Quite a coincidence! We have Mr Quelch staying with us at the moment."

"As a matter of fact we saw him a short time ago."

"And he disappeared!" Frank Nugent said with a grin.

"Disappeared!" Elizabeth looked suddenly serious. "You are joking, I hope." Wharton realised that she was concerned and explained exactly what they had seen. Without more ado, Elizabeth took charge of the situation. "What are your immediate plans?" she asked. Wharton looked at his friends. "To catch a bus to Sherringham" he replied.

"Back to my uncle's place, William Cherry's" Bob said.

"Ah! Sir William Cherry, the merchant banker. My husband knows him well. In that case I suggest that the main of you do just that. But I would like Harry and one other of you to stay with me. I'll explain why later, and I'll telephone Mr Cherry."

"I'll stay with Harry" said Bob Cherry.

"Good."

The rest of the chums went, leaving Harry and Bob rather puzzled. Elizabeth said: "I must make some urgent phone calls. What I want you to do is to watch the front of that bookshop and note anyone who tries to enter or leave. It is possible that your form-master is in some kind of danger. I will be as quick as I can, but I am afraid it will be a cold wait for you."

"All seems a bit queer to me" Bob Cherry said, as they were left to keep vigil. Wharton agreed.

"A bit silly, if Quelch **did** leave."

By this time it was getting dark. There were no street lights and most of the shops were putting up their shutters.

Meanwhile Elizabeth had entered the teashop and, after a word with one of the waitresses, was welcomed by a man who took her into a side room. The weather as well as the darkness had now closed in. Wharton and Cherry

were stamping their feet in an effort to keep their circulation going. "Look, why don't I go round the back of the shop and see if there is anything doing?" Bob Cherry suggested. Wharton agreed. "Yes - but if you are not back in five minutes and there is no movement here, I'll come round, right?"

Bob crossed the road, in search of the back entrance. There was indeed a passage running along behind the shops, each having its own small yard. The bookshop, he knew, would be the fourth one up. When he reached it he paused. For a fleeting moment a light appeared in the upper window, then the curtains were quickly drawn. After this things happened quickly. Making his way to the back door he came into contact with a dustbin and sent it over with a crash. Realising that the noise would have been heard from inside the house he turned to go, only to become aware of a figure in his way. There was nothing for it but to face whoever it was. He was preparing to defend himself when a voice said "It's me, Harry."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"
"Reinforcements have arrived." Harry said. "I thought . . ." He got no further for someone opened the back door. A shaded light shone out and a voice came down to them. "It's two boys. Clear off! What do you want round here?" Before either of them could reply more figures came up. "Right, you two stay here," a voice commanded. "Leave this to us."

At that moment there was the sound of a shot from the shop, and the man, visible now because someone had put on a light, was pointing something down the path. Wharton, without thinking of his own safety, picked up the dustbin lid and threw it discus-like, with unerring aim. It hit the man in the chest at the exact moment that the two officers passed him. "My hat, that was some shot!" Bob Cherry chuckled.
"Pot luck. I only hope Quelch is all right. Did you hear that shot?"

They stood wondering what they should do next when out of the darkness came the light of another torch and the familiar voice of Elizabeth Carstairs: "Hello. Is that Wharton and Cherry?" "Yes," replied Harry. "We were wondering what was happening inside."
"Perhaps we can leave that explanation until later. I have telephoned Sherringham and they will not expect you back until you have had some food inside you. Meanwhile you are to come back to Carstairs Manor with me."

Everything seemed very well planned, for a car was waiting. They were told that their form master was well and that they would see him later that evening. By the time the second car, carrying Mr Quelch and Mr Small, the owner of

the bookshop, left Norwich a light covering of snow was falling. Both men were silent during the short journey. Robert Dearing and two of his officers followed in another car. Within a short time all were gathered in the great hall before a blazing fire. The two Removeites had been taken down to the kitchen by Mrs Mayhew and given hot drinks and a good meal. Sir Oliver, very relieved, proceeded to pour glasses of hot punch. "I was worried by Elizabeth's telephone call. It really is a pleasure to see you all safe and well."
"Mr Quelch was certainly in a serious situation. Things might have turned out much worse had it not been for the keen observations of those boys," said Dearing. Quelch, who was sipping his punch, nodded. "Indeed Wharton and Cherry are to be commended and I shall see that they are rewarded accordingly."

"And what about you, my dear sir?" asked Sir Oliver, turning to the bookshop owner who had remained silent.

"Why yes, of course, both Mr Quelch and I were in a difficult situation."

Elizabeth, who had been downstairs to see to the welfare of Harry and Bob, came in and sat by her husband's side. "Just in time, my dear, I think Robert is going to fill us in with some details" said Sir Oliver.

"That should be enlightening" said Elizabeth, giving the Chief Constable a conspiratorial look. "Before I make any comment, let me tell you that the story is far from over. What has happened strengthens my belief that this infernal war is not going to be won purely by fighting but very much by luck and coincidence. First there was the accidental switch of the briefcase by Mr Quelch. The contents heightened our suspicions of what had been going on in our city for some time. Then, having spotted our man, we lost him and again by pure luck Mr Quelch picked up the trail. Luck for us, that is, although it could have turned into something quite nasty. Now, Mr Quelch, how did you know the man?" The Master of the Remove looked embarrassed. "Don't blame your man too much for losing him. After all, he did make a good job of disguising himself."

"And?" Robert Dearing prompted.

"It was his socks," came the reply. Elizabeth almost choked on her drink while her husband, with an amazed look, said: "Your powers of observation must frighten your pupils, Henry. Do explain!"

"It was quite easy really. You see, although he was wearing different apparel he still wore his trousers rather short and had one blue sock and one green. I had noticed this before his change of clothing."

At this point even Robert Dearing was chuckling. "Indeed, Oliver, I think that Mr Quelch's powers of observation would do credit

to any of my staff. Well, we met with another piece of luck when the boys in the teashop noticed their form master enter the bookshop. We had been interested in that for some time."

At this point Mr Small commented: "I see no reason why you should be interested in my shop!"

"There were various reasons which we need not discuss at this particular time, my dear sir. However, when my people removed the transmitting equipment this evening something did strike me as peculiar. You said that the men concerned took over your premises earlier today. Why then was there a great deal of dust outlining that equipment?"

Mr Small coloured. "Are you suggesting . . . ?" The Chief Constable raised his hand. "I am not suggesting, sir. I am giving you the facts and there is more to come." At this point he went over to the punchbowl, replenished his glass and offered his hand for the glass of Mr Small. "Ihr Glas ist leer Herr Klein, Darf ich ihn auffullen?" "No," said Small, "no thank you, I . . ." he stopped in mid-sentence. An expression of fear came over his face.

"Ah, now we get down to facts, Herr Klein." Robert Dearing sat down. There was silence in the room. "The truth is that you were born in Germany. You went to boarding school in England while your father was working in London at the German Embassy. Later on you had a respectable shop in Berlin, but that was just a front for your double life. You returned here setting up your present shop in 1937 and have been awaiting your chance to work for your country."

At this point Small or Klein looked around the gathering. "You fools! If you think you can win this war by luck then you will regret it. Germany will easily overrun a pack of fools."

"We shall see. Oh, you made one other grave error of judgement. Your friend should not have left the briefcase in the cathedral overnight. It was indeed safe, but see what happened. Also you left Mr Quelch with your antiquarian books while you were holding him. A great shame. He enjoys old editions of the classics!"

"Providing that they are readable" Mr Quelch replied with a knowing smile.

"You know, Herr Klein, that there were in fact

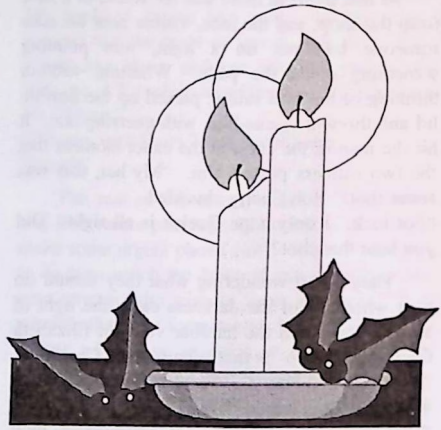
your code books in false covers. Such a pity! Had it not been for Mr Quelch, we might not have found them so quickly." The look which Klein gave Robert Dearing was indescribable. The Chief Constable went to the door and admitted two of his officers who led the spy away in silence.

"Well, well," said Sir Robert. "An extraordinary day! What do you think, Elizabeth?"

With a sigh she answered: "There are still things to be cleared up, my dear. I have a journey to make. Those code books must be taken to a special department immediately. I shall have to leave after dinner and return tomorrow."

"All my fault, Oliver, but Elizabeth will have a Special Branch man with her and they will go in one of my cars" said Dearing. At that moment Fred Dobson the handyman announced that he was taking the two Greyfriars juniors back to Sherringham. Sir Oliver and Mr Quelch went to bid the boys good-night. The former complimented them on their day's work while their form master had some very warm and sincere words for them both.

It was a thankful yet satisfied Quelch who sat down to dinner that evening. The conversation centred on the next two days leading up to Christmas and everyone's hopes for a relaxed and happy time. And on Christmas day some very surprised and happy Greyfriars Removeites received gifts of silver initialled pencils from their form master.





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THE WIZARD'S TREASURE

by Frank Richards (Charles Hamilton)



There was once a Wizard who lived on an island, in the midst of a lake, which lay in the middle of the Great Green Forest. There was only one way to reach the island, and that was by a long causeway from the shore of the lake. For the waters of the lake were so full of sands, and shoals, and sharp rocks, that no boat could cross it. And the causeway was very long and very narrow; so narrow that only one person could pass at a time.

Now the Wizard was a very rich wizard, and he had gathered up treasures from every part of the world. He had heaps and heaps of gold that had been dug up in the mines of South Africa, and Australia and America. But the more gold he had, the more he wanted; and he would make long journeys into distant regions of the earth, searching for more treasure; and then he would come back to the island in the lake with gold loaded on the back of his camel, and sometimes with a long train of camels, all laden with gold.

The Wizard feared that while he was away on a journey, someone might come to the island and dig up his treasure and take it away. And especially he was afraid of the King of the Palm Country, for he had taken away that King's treasure one day while the King was gone hunting, to add it to his own. And the King had three sons and a daughter, and the wizard feared that some day they might come hunting for the treasure of their father. So he buried the treasure deep in the island, under a large tree, in a cave which he had dug. And at the mouth of the cave, he placed a large stone, and over this he laid earth and grass, so that no one should ever see it. But as the wizard was growing old, he was afraid that he might forget himself where he had buried his treasure and hidden it from sight. So he taught a Golden Bird to sing to him every time he came home. And the bird lived in the tall tree under which the treasure was hidden, and as soon as it heard footsteps on the causeway, it would begin to sing the words that the wizard had taught it.

The Wizard's gold lies here unseen,
Beneath this tree so tall and green,
Dig deep beneath the grass and mould,
And move the stone, and find the gold.

And every time the wizard came across the causeway to the island, the Golden Bird sang, and then the old wizard remembered where he had buried the treasure: and he dug down to the cave, and added more and more to the treasure, and then covered it up again. And lest any stranger should come across the causeway during his absence, he laid a spell upon it: so that if anyone should look either to the right or to the left, or speak a single

word, while he was on the causeway, he would immediately fall into the lake and turn into a fish.

Many people had heard about the wizard's treasure, and they came to look for it, but always something caused them to look either to the right or to the left, or to speak, as they were crossing the causeway, and so they turned into fishes. And there were scores and scores of fishes in the lake, swimming about, and every time the wizard came home they would put up their little noses from the water and look at him pleadingly. And the wizard would only grin at them, and think what a clever wizard he was to guard his treasure so well.

Now it happened that the eldest son of the King of the Palm Country grew up, and desired to have a palace of his own to live in. So he went to his father and asked that a palace should be built for him. But the King shook his head and said:

"That is impossible for, as you know, my treasure was taken away by a wizard, and I am now one of the poorest kings in the world. And I cannot build you a new palace unless my treasure be found and brought back to me."

"Father," said the prince, "I will go in search of the wizard, and I will not only bring back your treasure, but the wizard's treasure also, as a punishment to him."

"The danger is very great, my son," said the King, "for the wizard's island can only be reached by a long and narrow causeway; and by magic he has made it almost impossible to pass this causeway. For if you should look to the right, or to the left, or utter one word, you will fall into the lake and become a fish."

The prince laughed and said, "I will look neither to the right, nor to the left; neither will I speak a word. And I will take with me my sword, and cut off the head of that wicked wizard if he be at home. And in a few days, father, I will return laden with gold."

So the prince mounted his horse, and girded on his sword, and rode away from the city. And in three days he came to the Great Green Forest, and he rode along the forest paths till he came to the border of the lake.

There he dismounted from his horse, and stood looking about him. The great lake stretched before his eyes, shining in the sunlight, surrounded by the tall green trees of the forest. Far away across the shining water he could see the island, with tall trees growing on it, and from the shore where he stood ran the narrow causeway. There was no one to be seen, not even an animal: only the birds singing in the trees. The prince drew his sword and, leaving his horse on the bank, strode along the causeway.

He had gone a very little distance when he heard a sudden splash in the water on his right side: and he was about to turn his head to see what caused it when he remembered that he must not look round. So he kept on, looking straight ahead of him. Then suddenly he heard a crying voice from the water on his left, and again he was about to turn his head, but he stopped in time and kept on, with his eyes fixed on the island before him. For he guessed that these sounds were magic tricks, caused by the spell that the wizard had laid on the causeway.

He was halfway to the island when a voice behind him cried out suddenly: "Stop! Stop! Take me with you and I will guide you to the wizard's treasure."

"Good!" exclaimed the prince, "that is just what I want."

And he turned round to see who had spoken.

But there was no one on the causeway, and as he turned, he found himself slipping off into the water. And suddenly he found that he was swimming in the lake. Then he was greatly astonished, for he found that he was swimming under water without being drowned, and he did not yet understand that he had turned into a fish. And a large golden fish swam up to him and said:

"Stranger, who are you?"

"I am the Prince Otto, the eldest son of the King of the Palm Country," he answered. "But how is it that you are able to speak to me, and I to understand, when you are a fish and I am a prince?"

"Once," said the fish, "I also was a prince, but I came to seek the wizard's treasure, and I turned and answered a voice that spoke behind me on the causeway, and was instantly turned into a fish. And you are now no more of a prince than I am, but a fish like myself."

Then the prince understood, and he cried out very bitterly:

"O how unfortunate I am! And what will they think has become of me in the City of the Palms!"

"Take courage," said the fish, "for some day, though it may be a long time, someone will come across the causeway who will defy the spells of the wizard. And if that should happen, the wizard will himself turn into a fish, and we shall all resume our natural shapes."

"And when may this happen?" asked the prince.

"Alas!" said the fish, "I know not!" And he swam away, leaving the prince feeling very sad.

Now in the City of the Palms they waited long for the prince to return. But he did not come: but after some days his horse came home without him. Then the king's daughter, who was the youngest of the family, said to her mother:

"I will go and look for Prince Otto!"

But her two remaining brothers laughed and said "What use is a girl to do such things?"

And the elder of the two said "I will go and seek my brother, and if he lives I will find him, and bring him safely home: also the wizard's treasure."

And this prince, whose name was Stephen, mounted his horse and rode away to the Great Green Forest, to search for his brother. And what happened to him will be told in the next chapter.

(Copyright Una Hamilton Wright.)

(Una writes: I can remember all three princes being unsuccessful in crossing the causeway and I think the princess was successful. I believe she put muffs over her ears. I think the name of the third prince was Rudolf. I remember the story being told to me - it was a great favourite - and it was thus that I learned what a causeway was.)

Greetings from the FAMOUS FIVE.



pigmy started biting him and pinching him and pulling his hair and ears.

"O pup-pup-pup-please dud-dud-dud-don't do it!" Fatty wailed. "Oh, help me. Hellup!"

As he cried out, he heard quick footsteps approaching, and he sat up and looked round. A most extraordinary figure was coming. It was the size of a boy but was covered in soft feathers and had a beak like a bird. But stranger still it wore an eyeglass.

"Hellup me!" pleaded Fatty.

"Do the rescue stunt and all that rot so to speak," spoke the queer apparition, and flapped its wings. "Save the jolly old ship as it were. Dashed awk, and all that, if I may say so. I mean to say, where am I and what not?"

"Why it's Ar-ar-archie!" stuttered Fatty Little, and managed to scramble to his feet.

"Absolutely old fruit," replied the other.

Fatty stared at the Removite and his eyes nearly fell out of his head. But Archie was smiling as though he enjoyed looking like a bird.

"I'm bewitched and what not," he explained. "A jolly old magician did this so to say. Turned me into a sparrow and all that. Absolutely!"

Fatty was going to reply when he saw that all the little pigmies had run away. They had taken with them all his tuck

except the bag of tarts which he still held in his hand.

"But what are we to do?" he asked. "It's awful! All my tuck's gone."

Archie did not reply. Instead, he suddenly flapped his wings. And in an instant he had flown on to the branch of a tree from where he began to whistle. Then he flapped his wings again and disappeared up into the sky.

Fatty ate a tart and mopped his brow. It was too frightful. He could not understand it. The only thing to do seemed to be to try and find a way out of the wood. He walked along as quickly as he could, when suddenly he heard a terrific noise as if an army of men were rushing towards him through the trees. The next moment Fatty stood still trembling with alarm. For straight ahead came the strangest animal he had ever seen.

It was a great big monster with a terrific head and a body like a great alligator. Out of its mouth and nose came fire and smoke. It was, in fact, a dragon!

And round its neck was strung a large open box of cigarettes!

Upon its back were three St. Frank's juniors. The next moment Fatty recognised that they were Fullwood and Co.

"Gug-gug-good heavens!" gasped Fatty, in terror.

He could say no more. For the dragon reared up above him and then caught him up quickly and put him on his back in front of the other juniors.

"Now you're going to get it," he heard Fullwood remark. "You're going to be taken to the dragon's lair and be eaten! He does that with all boys he meets. He lives on schoolboys. He has them for breakfast!"

"How do you know?" asked Fatty. "Because he's eaten us," returned Fullwood, and Gulliver and Bell roared with laughter as though it was a joke.

Before Fatty could reply, they had reached the dragon's lair. It was quite empty. And the floor was covered with cigarette ends. The dragon sat down on the floor and lighted a huge cigarette. Fullwood and Co. climbed off his back and lighted one each.



It was a great big monster, with a terrific head and a body like a great alligator. Out of its mouth and nose came fire and smoke! It was, in fact, a dragon!

Poor Fatty did not know what to do. Fullwood offered him a cigarette and a box of matches. Fatty never smoked. But he struck a match.

Hey presto!

There was a sudden explosion and the dragon turned into a ball of green fire! Fatty did not wait to see what became of Fully and Co. He dashed outside faster than he had ever run in his life. He did not stop running till he saw in front of him a great cavern under a rock. He approached cautiously and peered in.

A n extraordinary sight met his eyes. The cave contained three people. One was a great giant who sat on a small chunk of rock and nearly filled the cave. In his hand was a huge club. The others were two tiny dwarfs no bigger than tablespoons.

But the weirdest part of all was that all three were dressed in Ebon suits. The giant had quite grown out of his, and his legs and arms stuck out of sleeves and trousers ludicrously, while the two dwarfs had had to roll up their sleeves and trouser legs to make them fit. One of the dwarfs was cleaning a huge boot, which evidently belong to the giant. The other was at work with an old broom.

"My-my hat!" roared the giant in a voice of thunder. "Are you never going to get that boot ready? I never saw such a chap. Call yourself a friend!"

"All right Handy," came a little squeak of a voice.

Fatty's eyes goggled again. For he realised that the three figures were those of Handforth and Co! And on the rough wall was chalked STUDY D. It was utterly weird. Fatty swallowed three more farts and then went into the cavern.

"What on earth are you chaps doing?" he gasped.

The giant Handforth leapt to his feet, waving his club.

"Don't ask potty questions," he roared. "We didn't do this. Any idiot could see what's happened. We've been bewitched. It's just like Church and McClure to get so tiny they can't help me to get away."

"It isn't our fault," bleated Church, throwing down Handy's boot. "We didn't ask to get bewitched. And, after all, you're big enough to carry us away from here."



The cave contained three people. One was a great giant, with a huge club, the others were two tiny dwarfs, no bigger than tablespoons.

"Where am I to carry you to?" asked Handy. "Tell me that."

"Anyway, you brought us here," put in McClure. "So you ought to get us away."

"Just like you two," Handforth replied bitterly. "You get yourself into a silly hole like this and expect me to get you out of it. Oh, it's all right for you two," he added. "You're so small that you can live on a grain of wheat a day. But what about me. I'm starving. And every time I stand up I hit my head on the roof—wow, yaroo!"

As he spoke there came a terrific crash. Once more Handy had hit the ceiling with his head. He sat down hastily and rubbed the top of his cranium tenderly.

Just then there was the sound of footsteps rushing towards the cavern. And into the room poured a number of juncos headed by Nelson Lee, who wore a fez and was waving a fishing rod.

"Boys!" he shouted. "We've killed the dragon and we're going to toast him for tea."

Even as he spoke he rushed at Fatty and caught him on the end of his fishing-rod. The hook fastened in his coat collar. Fatty shut his eyes. He felt himself swung through the air. Then with a thud he landed on something soft. When he opened his eyes it was to see the familiar surroundings of the Remove Dormitory! And he was lying on his own bed!

Thus ended his Christmas Eve in Frightful Land!

THE END.

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The Long Christmas of 1929

BY DEREK HINRICH



When I was asked at rather short notice if I could contribute a morsel of Blakiana to this year's Annual, I thought of the Christmas of 1929, when I was just three months old, and the fortunate readers of *The Union Jack* enjoyed an extra long celebration of Christmas. They had not merely one but two Christmas Issues as Gwyn Evans excelled himself, producing one of his delightful neo-Dickensian Yuletide adventures of Sexton Blake in two parts, with the conclusion in the following week.

In the previous year, 1928, he had introduced to *The Union Jack* in "The Crime of the Christmas Tree" a merry band of upper-class desperadoes devoted to piratical good works, who, led by Robin, Earl of Huntingley, called themselves The League of Robin Hood. In this first adventure the League (whose members had been recruited by an advertisement in the personal column of the *Daily Radio*, rather after the style of that which set Hugh Drummond on his adventurous career) had kidnapped and held to ransom a number of unsavoury characters, including an East End slum landlord and a sadistic stipendiary magistrate who sat in the same district, Shinwell, where the magnate's property lay. The ransoms were to be spent on good works in Shinwell. Only the timely intervention of Sexton Blake had eventually saved the League from prosecution for the offences they had committed and from the still more serious charge of murder when the magistrate died in bizarre circumstances.

Now, in 1929, the Earl of Huntingley returns from Africa and the League regroups to commit more diablerie. The stories, "The Mistletoe Milk Mystery" and "The Masque of Time" begin with that flourish of the grotesque and arabesque which marked so much of Evans's work: a series of abductions, some mischievous (of a bank clerk and of Julius Jones, Splash Page's editor), some of serious purpose (two executives of the Amalgamated Welsh Dairies who propose an extortionate rise in the price of milk - of one penny a quart). The possibility of travelling in time is suggested, and hypnotism and hallucinatory drugs play a part. Bottles of blood red milk appear on certain doorsteps and Mrs Bardell disappears. Inspector Coutts is flummoxed, as in the previous year, and Splash Page is strangely disingenuous to his friends. But Sexton Blake discerns the fine Italian hand of the League at work, just as Holmes could descry that of Moriarty, "like the signature of an Old

Master". This time, though there is mystery enough, there is no body, and once again at the denouement Blake sympathetically smoothes things over for the League, the proposed increase in the price of milk is rescinded by the skinflint dairymen, and "A Merry Christmas and God bless us, everyone".

These stories appeared successively in the two weeks before Christmas but that year Christmas Day fell on a Wednesday and so the readers of *The Union Jack* found another issue on sale upon Christmas Eve. This featured a rattling-paced yarn by Reid Whitley (or Coutts Brisbane, or R Coutts Armour, if you prefer), entitled "The Judgment Men" which featured enticingly on its cover a group of sinisterly cowed (and hideously masked, we learn from the text) men about to commit murder on a tethered prisoner who is fortuitously rescued by a passing friend of Blake's, a Captain Minto of the Gurkhas, home on long leave.

The murder is only temporarily frustrated but the dead man, it soon transpires, has associates who stand in the same peril themselves. Blake and Minto move to their assistance but the offer of aid is scouted until another of the band has paid the price of - whatever it is they have done (can't be too specific: you might wish to read it yourselves!). Suffice it to say that Blake soon realises that in this matter he is not entirely on the side of the angels but nonetheless he cannot stand idly by while murder is done. The resolution of the story follows a tragic course. Well worth reading!

I said that that of 1929 was a long Christmas with a fortnight of Christmas Numbers before and another issue on its Eve, but Christmas has traditionally twelve days and before they were up in 1930 another issue of *The Union Jack* was on sale. This time it featured another splendid tale by G H Teed, of intrigue in the Far East with Blake encountering his old adversaries, Huxton Rymer and Mary Trent, in Shanghai. This time, though Blake eventually thwarts Rymer's schemes, that masterful adventurer does not depart entirely empty-handed, thanks to Blake's sense of justice. It is, I think, one of Teed's best stories with that fine feel for adventure in exotic places which he so splendidly conveyed.

How fortunate those devotees of the Great Detective were seventy years ago. There is, alas, no publication like the *UJ* now!



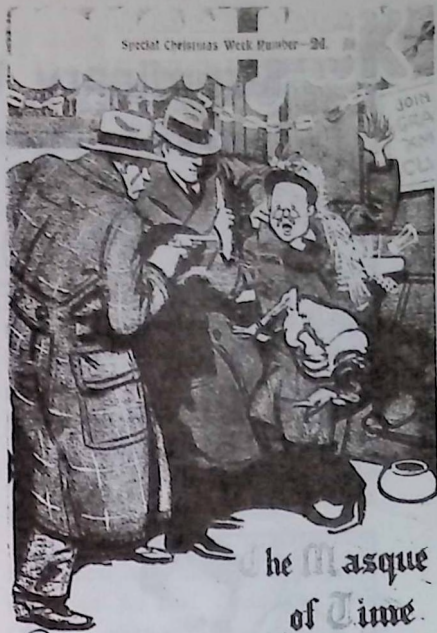
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By Reid Whitley

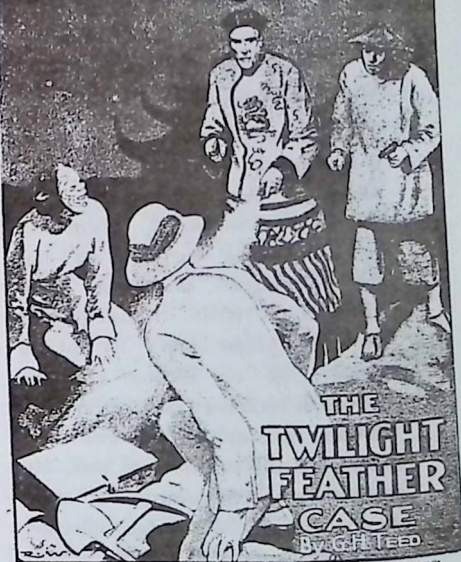
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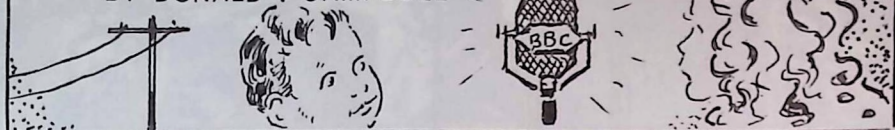
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No. 1,285. EVERY THURSDAY. January 5th, 1940.

“ ” Strordinary, Wonderful... ”

BY DONALD V CAMPBELL



This is a re-working of a talk given to the NOBBC in early 1999. The original talk was illustrated with period broadcast material much of it obtained from the Vintage Radio Programme Collector's Club and its members.



Uncle Mac in the early days of Children's Hour

These are mere meandering memories plus a little bit of historical stuff (to paraphrase Ronald Frankau) the "strordinary, wonderful, fascinating, queer, marvellous, incredible, oh, dear dear" long-gone institution THE CHILDREN'S HOUR. I don't pretend that this is a proper history - for that you should look up Wallace Grevatt's marvellous book but I have put in some pertinent dates and events as well as the more personally remembered stuff. My memories are a touch selective and aided by the splendid BBC Radio Collection tape issued in 1988 (ZBBC 1028) commemorating CHILDREN'S HOUR.

serious CHILDREN'S HOUR listening began from around 1936 and continued unabated until about 1951. (I have totally and amiably ignored the programmes that did not appeal to me). Many of your favourite programmes may be missing but "none the more for that!" as

All writers on the subject seem to be agreed that, whatever differences of opinion arise, the programme was a shaper of children's tastes and attitudes. Today's "advanced" thinkers on radio and television will of course deride the notion of taste or standards or aspirations as so much twaddle. Well, so be it - their loss. We can at least reflect that the CHILDREN'S HOUR was a "jolly good thing" and if it was tinged with "middle-class morality" we should not worry overmuch - we probably aspired to be touched in that way anyway.

By now you will have guessed that I am, like many of us, just a little regretful for Children's Hour. That it vanished so peremptorily, that, in so vanishing, it upset so many people and that it can never be the same again is sad but true but we can look back with fondness.

It was the setting of standards and the maintaining of clear unambiguous links to the CHILDREN who listened in that made it such a special programme. It was a continuing special event for those who - like me - spent their most formative years under both its spell and its influence. I think that the programme gave us aspirations. Aspirations sums up the character of the programme whether from the North, London, Scotland or Midlands.

CHILDREN'S HOUR began within hours of the opening of broadcasting by the British Broadcasting Company - as it first was. November 14, 1922 saw the opening of the service from Birmingham and on the following day someone brought some stories and rhymes into the studio and around tea-time they were broadcast. Other regional stations followed suit.

The children's portion of the wireless broadcasts was called by many names - Children's Corner, Children's Circle and Children's Hour - It was CHILDREN'S HOUR that stayed the course! In truth the term "HOUR" was a misnomer. Except for a period in 1937 - 38 sixty-minutes was rarely given over to the CHILDREN'S HOUR. As little as thirty minutes applied in the early days of the Second World War. Eventually the programme settled down to around fifty five minutes and remained thus - more or less - until its demise.

For the child who actually "listened in" and, shock, horror! there were those who did NOT! it was a sacrosanct hour, even more holy than Coronation Street in its heyday. No homework was done. Silence was required from parents and an "hour" of happy listening would begin. For the very young there was Nursery Sing Song and fairy tales. For the older listener drama loomed large. For those who would welcome reminders of their own region's contributions you should get hold of Wallace Grevatt's fine and readable history of the programme.

Across the British Isles young actors and musicians would cut their teeth in CHILDREN'S HOUR programmes. In the North there were Judith Chalmers, and her sister, Sarah; Brian Trueman, and a now "much revered" composer and conductor - Peter Maxwell Davies. Sir Peter still has solid connections to Manchester - although

he lives in the Orkneys - he is composer in residence to the BBC Philharmonic (originally the BBC Northern Orchestra when he was a lad.)

Scotland had a very young Stanley Baxter who was used often by the Scotland Organiser - Kathleen Garscadden. And, there were others. Only last year Glyn Dearman died. He became a respected producer of radio drama and I have a number of plays on tape in which he was involved, but in the fifties he was Jennings!

From those long-lost days three people stand out: for me: Derek McCulloch (Mac); - pictured at the head of the article - David Davis (David) and Nan Macdonald. The last first. This for the very good reason that, living in County Durham, it was from the BBC Northern Region that most of my CHILDREN'S HOUR programmes came although some were "networked" from London or elsewhere. Nan was a tower of strength to the Northern Region but there were others: Herbert Smith and Trevor Hill and Muriel and Doris and Vi who all contributed. But the the last three were not regional organisers, the others were.

The impact of the CHILDREN'S HOUR programmes is terribly difficult to pin down and define after so many years and having experienced enormous changes to the media across the years. There was the utmost respect for the listener. The children were not patronised, they were treated as equals. Jeremy Spencer who worked with and for Mac as a child actor tells us this. We were not treated as "customers", we were not subjected to jingles and sales pitches. If something needed to be said about a future programme it was done simply and directly rather than hyped up. The credit for these

attitudes rests with all the organisers but, specifically, with Mac.

The story of Mac is well known but it is worth trying to get a copy of the Radio Lives broadcast of 1992 where various people tell of his life and times and his approach to children - "You must NEVER talk down to children..." he said and would no doubt fail to understand the approach that typifies most of the "so-called" children's TV programmes today. Yet, even as I scribble this, E Nesbit's Five Children and It is being given another Radio 4 airing - this time for the 1999 Easter holidays.

David Davis was the last London Organiser. He had the unhappy task of presiding over



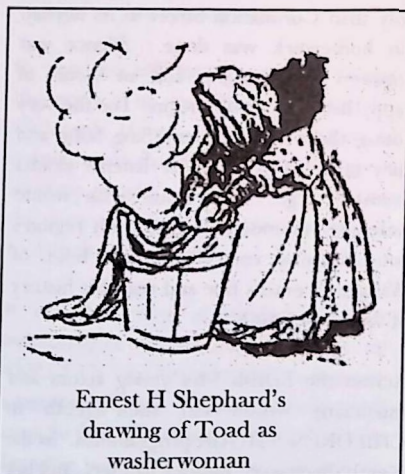
David Davis

the untimely and coldly calculated death of CHILDREN'S HOUR. He fought against this assassination to no avail - the grey suits winning again. His was a voice of great mellifluousness and character.

Joining Mac just before World War II he did many things before taking on the role of organiser. He read stories, presented programmes, wrote and selected music for

CHILDREN'S HOUR and he played the piano, writing a "fanfare for Children's Hour" along the way. In the words of another regional organiser "David bound the regions together with bonds of silk". The most telling piece of programming in which David was involved was that of the final hour of the final CHILDREN'S HOUR. Among other items was his own reading of THE SELFISH GIANT by Oscar Wilde - a modern fairy-tale-parable of misplaced and misused power. But, even had the butcher-extermimators of CHILDREN'S HOUR been listening, the subtlety of any hidden meaning would certainly have passed them by. This reading, along with other Children's Hour items, appeared on the previously mentioned BBC Cassette on which David brings together some well remembered items - excellent listening.

A notable and memorable actor appears in an episode from WIND IN THE WILLOWS: Norman Shelley, as Toad, escaping Gaol and fleeing the authorities on the footplate of a train. Beautifully judged and paced - David Davis is the narrator.



Ernest H Shephard's drawing of Toad as washerwoman

Norman Shelley was a stalwart of Children's Hour drama and a fine actor elsewhere. Not only did he play Toad but he also essayed the

part of Peter Brass and others in Toytown. His was the classic Watson to Carleton Hobbs' Sherlock - the original Holmes' broadcasts began on CHILDREN'S HOUR. As a matter of history we now know that he declaimed some of Churchill's speeches for on air! Talk about "I was Monty's Double"! **What we don't know is which speeches he spoke and which were Churchill originals.**

Toytown, of course, features on the tape. Why is it that we all seem to say "Toytown, of course"? Well, and of course, it was a classic piece of writing for children that always transcended the childish. This meant that it could be enjoyed on a number of levels by many age groups. It was also the longest running children's programme which surely tells us something (c1936 - 1968). Its life was extended beyond the death of CHILDREN'S HOUR itself. Mac always played LARRY THE LAMB and acted as narrator. Other notable actors who appeared in it across the decades were: Preston Lockwood, Norman Shelley, Peter Cloughton (a wonderfully roly-poly-sounding Ernest the Policeman) and Mary O'Farrell.

David Davis died a couple of years ago but he continued broadcasting for many years after the demise of Children's Hour. He enriched the air waves with his glorious plum coloured voice with diction the rest of us might well kill for.

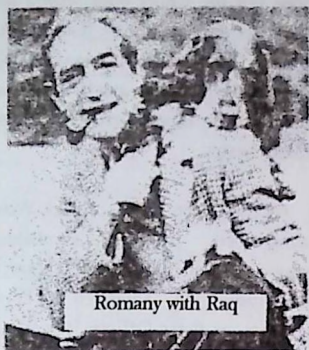
Northern Region is represented on the tape by Nursery Sing Song with Trevor Hill (the last of the Northern Organisers) and Violet Carson. Violet was a splendid pianist as well as a good singer with a warmth and delicacy of touch and voice which eludes most. However her singing, at least in this

excerpt, was rather fraught - **The Teddy Bears' Picnic** has some odd pitch variations but the whole goes with a jolly swing. We should remember that of all the Northern Organisers it was Nan MacDonald who, in particular, was responsible for so much high quality drama from Manchester.

Only recently the death of Jack Watson was announced. Jack was a reliable, if undersung, British radio and film actor. On wartime radio he appeared in Forces' Programmes as Petty Officer Jack Watson. In the forties and fifties he played Biggles in the Northern Region's exciting dramatisations of W E Johns' favourite character. I well remember an outstanding production of **Biggles Flies North** where the snowy wastes of Canada were brilliantly evoked by the music of Sibelius's First Symphony. At the start of each episode the music would make us shiver a little and then it was merged into the drone of an aircraft engine. A sparkling effect! Watson was an exceptionally rugged Biggles - nothing like a later and odd reworking of the character in Australia where he was more than somewhat effete. On a musical note: through the use of serious music as incidental or theme music for plays we were ever so gently introduced to good music

Out with Romany was another long running series which demonstrated the emphasis placed on good radio voices in those days. It was not a matter of accent but of quality of voice. The calm, deep and warm voice of Bramwell Evans contrasted with the chirpy sounds of Doris and Muriel to great effect. Unfortunately, and to my great chagrin, I realised, too late, that I was one of those who imagined that the programmes really did happen out of doors and in the hedgerows - this despite many being broadcast when darkness had

descended! Eventually Nomad followed in Romany's footsteps. He also had a



rich and satisfyingly voice. Good as he was he never fully replaced the loss of Romany. Romany was, as many of you will know, not only a writer and broadcaster but also a Methodist minister.

Having access to radio recordings is useful and rewarding. Patricia Hayes - who as a very young girl played Henry to Charles Hawtrey's, Norman in "Norman & Henry Bones, boy detectives" reminisces with great gusto her downfall when reading birthdays - she tells us of a clutch of names on the same day - Pamela Wiffing and others - to which she managed to keep a straight voice! But when Ursula Smelling turned up on the list she collapsed in paroxysm. Her punishment was to be banished by Mac from the Birthday announcements for many weeks.

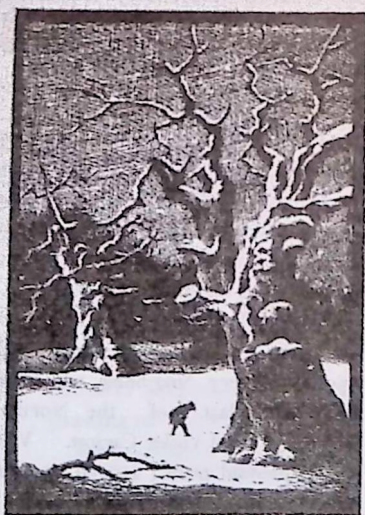
After Biggles the most memorable serial was **Brendon Chase** by "B.B." (Denis Watkins-Pitchford.). He was a children's author and a noted naturalist and wildlife painter. His story really is an outstanding classic and I have referred to it before.

It has, and had, such resonance that it was dramatised for TV in the 70s but the book and the sound version are what stick in the

memory. Now I hardly know which had the greater impact - the play or the music. Incidental music was a little-known and little-played item by Hugo Wolf: The Italian Serenade. Not the easiest of music for anyone never mind a young lad like wot I was! But I dashed out and bought a 78 of it and more or less wore it out. To this day I have a version of the music.

Long after the demise of CHILDREN'S HOUR David Davis suggested that the best of the programmes were in the thirties but my personal feeling is that it was the forties that gave so much to so many.

The yearly REQUEST WEEKS showed how much drama was valued and one of the most requested was John Masefield's "**Box of Delights**". This is pure fantasy/adventure which works exceptionally well aurally. It is interesting to find that the play was dramatised and put on air in 1943 within a couple of years of the book's original publication. As with Toytown the producers were interested in original and modern stories not merely in "old" classics. The true



Winter in Brendon Chase by DJ Watkins-Pitchford

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR programmes



At 5.0 this afternoon children are to hear the story of 'The Showing Up of Larry the Lamb'. Note how sorry Larry looks!

877 kc/s REGIONAL 342.1 m.

5.0 A TOYTOWN DIALOGUE STORY

by S. G. Hulme-Bassman

'The Showing Up of Larry the Lamb'

Despite the 'showing up', Larry emerges on top, as usual

5.35 A Pianoforte Interlude

5.45 THE ZOO MAN

1013 kc/s MIDLAND 296.2 m.

5.0-6.0 Regional Programme

668 kc/s NORTH 449.1 m.

5.0 Regional Programme

Radio Times for 18 December 1931 detailing Children's Hour programmes

measure of **Box of Delights** is that it was first aired in 1943, repeated in 1946; repeated in the fifties, re-worked in the seventies and a new and excellent radio production was given to the general public in 1997. In between times BBC spent a lot of money on a diverting and spectacular TV adaptation which was later issued on video! What a history!

At the start of these scribblings I suggested - "mere meandering memories" and it is surprising how narrowly selective memory is. Only the other day I picked up The Wizard Index which covered "my" period. Most of the stories I could neither place nor remember despite the specific historical / time references given. Truth is that I will have read all of them yet only a handful of titles from The Wizard and the other story papers have stuck in my mind.

So it is with CHILDREN'S HOUR Poring over Wallace Grevatt's book only serves to remind me of how few programmes made a lasting impression. But there are others that I must mention because they did touch

and tingle - there isn't time or space to talk about them. In no particular order then: **Ballet Shoes**, **The Swish of the Curtains**, **Worzel Gummidge**, **The Scarlet Pimpernel**, **The Thirty Nine Steps**, - this last came at the time of transfer to the adult library and most of Buchan's books were devoured in short order. Then there was **Tammy Troot** - who was so brilliantly characterised by Willie



Jack Mathews interprets the Pimpernel for Radio Times

Joss, **Down at the Mains** - another Scottish offering which seemed to provide a party on every visit. Mollie Weir was a regular. (The Mains was a farm by the way). There were many current affairs and "documentary" type of programme but I wanted to be entertained rather than be talked at so I usually gave them a miss - so much for the avowed intention of the BBC to "educate". And just look at me now!



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Enter the Saint	L.C.	The Avenging Saint	L.C.
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The Saint in New York	L.C.	Count on the Saint	L.C.
Saint Overboard	L.C.	The Saint and the FictionMakers	L.C.
The Saint around the World	L.C.	The Saint in Miami	L.C.
The Saint in Pursuit	L.C.	Follow the Saint	L.C.
The Bandit	L.C.	Meet the Tiger	L.C.
The Saint Plays with Fire	L.C.	The Saint in Europe	L.C.
The Saint on the Spanish Main	L.C.	The Saint in the Sun	L.C.
Alias the Saint	L.C.	The Happy Highwayman	L.C.
The Ace of Knives	L.C.	The Saint Steps In	L.C.
Señor Saint	L.C.	Vendetta for the Saint	L.C.
Boodle	L.C.	Send for the Saint	L.C.
The Holy Terror	L.C.	Getaway	L.C.
Thieves Picnic	L.C.	The Saint to the Rescue	L.C.
Trust the Saint	L.C.	Salvage for the Saint	L.C.
The Saint Goes On	L.C.	The Saint and the Hapsburg Necklace	L.C.
Thanks to the Saint	L.C.	Daredevil	L.C.
The Saint on Guard	L.C.	The Saint and the People Importers	L.C.
The Saint and the Templar Treasure	L.C.	The Saint in Trouble	L.C.
Prelude for War	L.C.	The Bright Buccaneer	L.C.
The Last Hero	L.C.	Saint Errant	L.C.
The Saint Goes West	L.C.	She Was a Lady	L.C.
The White Rider	L.C.	The Saint Closes the Case	L.C.
The Saint Sees it Through	L.C.	X Esquire	L.C.
Alias the Ghost	G.V.	Noose for a Lady	G.V.
Dead Secret	G.V.	The Watcher	G.V.
Mr Budd Again	G.V.	The Nursery Rhyme Murders	G.V.
Thirsty Evil	G.V.	The River House Mystery	G.V.
They Walk in Darkness	G.V.	The Black Hunchback	G.V.
Sorcerer's House	G.V.	The Heel of Achilles	G.V.
The River Men	G.V.	Ghost House	G.V.
The Red Tape Murders	G.V.	The Twelve Apostles	G.V.
The Whispering Woman	G.V.	The Hangman	G.V.
The Clue of the Green Candle	G.V.	I Am Death	G.V.
The 'Q' Squad	G.V.	The Vampire Man	G.V.
The Third Key	G.V.	The Faceless Ones	G.V.
The Death Play	G.V.	The Show Must Go On	G.V.

The Tipster	G.V.	Dene of the Secret Service	G.V.
The Football Pool Murders	G.V.	Death Set in Diamonds	G.V.
The Jockey	G.V.	The Hand of Fear	G.V.
The Lady of Doom	G.V.	The Ghost Squad	G.V.
The Seven Clues	G.V.	Grim Death	G.V.
The Moor House Murders	G.V.	Murder in Manuscript	G.V.
The Seven Lamps	G.V.	The Next to Die	G.V.
Six Men Died	G.V.	Mr Midnight	G.V.
The Embankment Murder	G.V.	The Cleverness of Mr Budd	G.V.
The Tudor Garden Mystery	G.V.	The Shadow Men	G.V.
Mister Big	G.V.	The Con Man & The Angel	G.V.

Operation Conquest	B.G.	Conquest Overboard	B.G.
Curtains for Conquest	B.G.	Nightmare House	B.G.
Mr Ball of Fire	B.G.	Killer Conquest	B.G.
Lost World of Everest	B.G.	Six to Kill	B.G.
Conquest on the Run	B.G.	Conquest Goes West	B.G.
The Conquest Touch	B.G.	Conquest Goes Home	B.G.
Thank You Mr Conquest	B.G.	The Big Brain	B.G.
Conquest After Midnight	B.G.	Conquest in the Underworld	B.G.
Death on the Hit Parade	B.G.	The House of the Last	B.G.
Six Feet of Dynamite	B.G.	Mr Ball of Fire	B.G.
Mr Mortimer Gets the Jitters	B.G.	Seven Dawn to Death	B.G.
The Gay Desperado	B.G.	Murder & Co.	B.G.
Dare Devil Conquest	B.G.	Conquest Calls the Tune	B.G.
Miss Dynamite	B.G.	Call Conquest for Danger	B.G.
Six to Kill	B.G.	The Spot Marked X	B.G.
Turn Left for Danger	B.G.	Duel Murder	B.G.
Blonde for Danger	B.G.	Get Ready to Die	B.G.
Count Down for Conquest	B.G.	Alias Norman Conquest	B.G.
Conquest in Scotland	B.G.	Castle Conquest	B.G.
Conquest Likes it Hot	B.G.	Leave it to Conquest	B.G.
Calamity Conquest	B.G.	Cavalier Conquest	B.G.
Conquest Marches On	B.G.		

Dead Man's Warning	V.GN	Dead in a Ditch	V.GN
Murder With a Kiss	V.GN	Mad Hatter's Rock	V.GN
The 64 Thousand Murder	V.GN	The Petticoat Lane Murders	V.GN
Murder on Ice	V.GN	Murder at the Motel	V.GN
The Crooked Staircase	V.GN	Sweet Smelling Death	V.GN
The Black Cap Murder	V.GN	The Crooked Staircase	V.GN
The Laughing Grave	V.GN	The Crippled Canary	V.GN
The Painted Dog	V.GN	Road to Murder	V.GN
Death on Bodmin Moor	V.GN	Death at Traitors Gate	V.GN
Dove in the Maze	V.GN	Nice Day for a Murder	V.GN
All Change for Murder	V.GN	Castle Dangerous	V.GN
Ironside Smells Blood	V.GN	Dead Man's Warning	V.GN
Murder on the Whispering Sands	V.GN	The Body in the Boot	V.GN

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NODDY'S HOME

By Betty and Johnny Hopton



It is Sunday morning, early and almost breakfast time.

Deep in the outback of wild West Wales lies a little white house, the home of a loveable character who often nods his head, wears a little blue cap, and is often seen in the company of Big Ears, Policeman Plod, Miss Fluffy Cat, Bumpy Dog and all his other Toytown friends. Can you guess his name?

Well Johnny of course!

This is how you will find him every Sunday morning, when Betty, who owns the world's largest collection of Noddy memorabilia, insists on being served with tea, Noddy soldiers and a boiled egg, on a set of original teaset china, of course! This ritual occurs magically every Sunday morning in the fantasy house now nicknamed "Betty and Johnny's Museum of Childhood" by its visitors.

On entering, one immediately enters a fantasy world created by us. Our house has been largely given up to Toyland, with Noddy and all his little friends taking centre stage. The hall and stairway are completely decorated by Noddy ephemera from the 1950s to the 1990s.

After several attempts at the stringent competition conditions, we received a Guinness World Record Certificate, for the largest collection

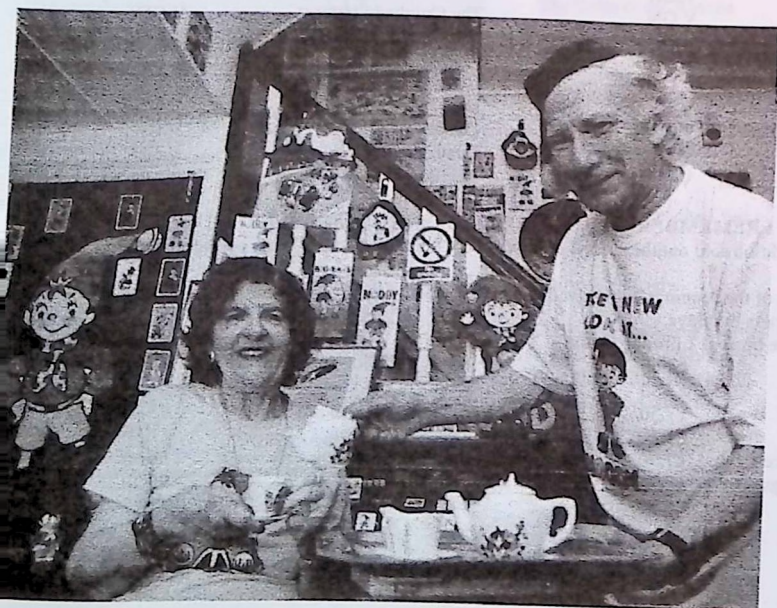
of different, individual items of Noddy ephemera in the world, on December 23rd 1998, just in time for a wonderful Christmas present.

This collection is photographed regularly by magazine, newspaper and TV photographers and we have now appeared in several TV shows, as described below.

1. *The Antiques Show* with TV presenter Tim Wonnacott and Gillian Baverstock (Enid Blyton's daughter). This was a shared programme with Tim first going to see Gillian's collection and afterwards to visit our Welsh Noddy Museum. Tim also joined us for one of our Sunday morning specials, to enjoy the eggs and toast..
2. *Money Spinners*, an ITV presentation showing how collections of small cost, mainly jumble sale articles and childhood toys, can build up to the world's largest collection of beautiful ephemera and memories.
3. BBC2 Choice Digital for the programme *Hype*. This is the first time Noddy has gone digital but he still seems to be just his normal joyful self!
4. *Collectors Lot* with Martin Beaumont, illustrating how small collections can build up over the years.
5. Several national news programmes, in the 6 to

6.30 pm and later 9 to 10 pm slot, showed shots of us on the day the news of our world record was announced in the *Daily Mail's* article.

Noddy has recently been translated into a completely new language for Enid Blyton fans, i.e. Welsh, and this has opened up a vast new outlet. There are at present four books and one video, entitled *Noddy Y Dewin* or *Noddy the Magician* in Welsh. The new



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*Betty and Johnny Hepton
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had collected 1170 different
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interest in Noddy in Wales brought about a special programme for Welsh viewers, entitled *Hel Straeon* (or *Strange Stories*), an S4C production completely in Welsh, featuring us and Lyn Ebenezer, a popular presenter on S4C.

In the summer of 1999 we were invited, courtesy of Butlin's Holiday Camps, to Somerset World Minehead, where the new Noddy Toyland was being launched. This was a new section dedicated solely to Noddy and his friends, complete with a mini open stage surrounded by several funfair time activities, a slide, a roundabout and a beautiful toy train track, all complete with Noddy characters. The photographs show the special Butlin's Celebration, with Betty seated outside the new Noddy Toyland Complex. A Noddy-style bedroom, simulating our own, at home in the Carmarthen "Museum of Childhood", was constructed. The culmination of the wonderful Butlin's festivities was an afternoon stage show ending with Noddy and Big Ears presenting us with the Guinness World Record Certificate. (Noddy told us that he was very proud to be part of our new world record.)

The demand for articles and pictures of the "Museum of

Childhood" is world-wide and these have already appeared in magazines such as *House Beautiful* and *Take 5* (An Australian glossy). This magazine was spotted by one of Betty's antipodal Blyton fans, who spotted her face in the magazine when visiting Canberra. Also *The Scottish Weekly News Summer Special*. Our Caledonian friends seem to love Noddy, maybe he should be fed with some porridge!

Further afield, *Die Ganze Woche* (an Austrian magazine) featured us. This magazine was donated to the Welsh museum, together with eight books about "Nicki", the German equivalent of Noddy, by an Austrian Noddy fan. She sent the parcel addressed to Betty and Johnny, Noddy's Home, Wales! What a wonderful postal system we have. We also appeared in *Collectors Life*, a French magazine.

National British newspapers produced several articles on the "Museum", including the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror*. As a result of the new Welsh interest, several Welsh newspapers and publications joined in the new wave of "Nodi" interest. (Nodi is the Welsh equivalent of Noddy.) These publications include a popular glossy magazine entitled *Golwg* or *Sight*. Other newspapers illustrating the new world record were *The Western Mail* and *Wales on Sunday*.

We are also in regular demand by club organisations, where we put on a "Visual Lecture" for lay audiences, who wish to know more about Enid Blyton, Noddy or just our Noddy collection of Blyton ephemera.

Well, it is now time for bed! Noddy and friends have had a busy day with us, and it is time for all good toys to close their weary eyes and prepare to meet the sandman.




The World Of Greyfriars

BY TED BALDOCK

Magnet

No 1 LIBRARY

THE 10 2



Mr Westlake leaned back in his chair, thoughtfully pulling his grey moustache. His mind had flown back to that time when he himself had been started off to school, and from the top of the coach had heard his father's parting address: "Now boy, be a man; goodbye, and God bless you."

Harold Avery. *Frank's First Term.*

When, so early in the twentieth century, Colonel Wharton, standing before the fire in the library at Wharton Lodge, removed the cigar from his mouth and uttered the significant remark: "That boy must go to school", did he have any inkling of the career he would be instigating for his nephew (who was somewhat recalcitrant and undisciplined) or to what vista of adventure he would be exposing him?

Many years have passed since that momentous announcement: an entire way of life has waned and passed into history. A vast empire, which the Colonel himself had helped to maintain and direct during his Indian service, has now disintegrated and gone into the shadows. But the records remain. The written word has brought down to us the aura of romance and the stirring atmosphere of those far-distant times.

It was against such an imperial background that Harry Wharton prepared for and embarked upon his career at Greyfriars school. Immaculate, we must assume, in all the glory of Eton clothes, at that period the required dress of the junior forms, and in a possibly less than amiable frame of mind.

Thus did the odyssey begin. To many, the year 1908 belongs to another age, an early time when manners and customs were more graceful and civilized. Somewhere along the road to 1999 we have shed many cherished and worthwhile traditions and habits. It was a very different world in which Harry Wharton made his debut. Quite possibly in the recesses of his waistcoat pocket there reposed a small gold coin, a sovereign, bearing the head of either Queen Victoria or King Edward VII. A handsome little coin with an exchange value of twenty shillings anywhere in the wide, wide world, and purchasing possibilities which, to a schoolboy, would seem almost endless. This coin would have been a parting 'tip' from the Colonel.

Although it is not recorded, it may be supposed that Wharton's Aunt Amy, in the privacy of her own room, indulged in the relief of a few tears at her nephew's departure for the rough and tumble (and the character-building discipline) of a public school.

The Colonel saw vividly the necessity of a curbing factor if his nephew was to develop into anything resembling a "chip off the old block" of his father and himself. Thus the command "to school". After a less than dignified scene from which the Colonel had emerged triumphant, his strategy being much superior to that of his nephew, preparations were soon afoot for Harry Wharton to proceed to Greyfriars.

From this moment the world seems to freeze into immobility. Time ceases to be. The world of Greyfriars was crystallised, and within this timeless frame began the Greyfriars story. Momentous public events are referred to in the progress of the saga, but they in no way indicate any changes in the time-honoured ways and customs of the school. Henry Newbolt sounds a familiar note in *The School at War* which seems to epitomise the essence of that suspended world.

We played again the immortal games,
And grappled with the fierce old friends,
And cheered the dead undying names,
And sang the song that never ends;
Till, when the hard, familiar bell
Told that the summer night was late,
Where long ago we said farewell,
We said farewell by the old gate.

Did his creator have any idea of the impact that Harry Wharton was to have upon generations of schoolboys, implanting modes of thought which revealed remarkable tenacity in surviving and developing in these young minds? These remained too when the boy reader attained adulthood and became that particular type of fellow - a 'gentle' man, still retaining in his make-up the ethos and traditions of Greyfriars which defy complete definition.

Events and fashions evolved, waxed and waned, giving way to more progressive tendencies. Wars, global and minor upheavals, tragic affairs in far-flung places all took place. Thus did the world spin merrily (?) on its way. All these momentous changes

made no perceptible difference in the Greyfriars lifestyle.

Loder continues to play the 'black sheep', breaking bounds in the dead of night to enjoy the dingy and smoky delights of the Three Fishers - that beery and insalubrious establishment. Joseph Banks wears the identical cheap and flashy waistcoats he was sporting seventy years and more ago, and Vernon-Smith still - more or less skilfully - walks the tightrope; one moment a decent fellow, the next a young blackguard. All is set like a bee in amber. A little world in miniature which has nevertheless asserted a very tangible influence upon the lives of generations of readers.

It is a happy fate that one becomes involved - primarily upon the outer fringes - but later is soon drawn into the vortex of this magic world with its clear-cut standards of conduct.

What Shakespeare has called "the inaudible and noiseless foot of time" has had little or no visible effect on the characters. They retain both their good and less commendable traits. I suspect that it will always remain so.

Many years have passed and much water has flowed beneath Courtfield Bridge since those early days, yet they retain a perennial freshness in our minds. There is something special and difficult to define precisely in the early years of our lives when sharp impressions and ideas are formulated. Although these may change somewhat from their original outlines they remain the products of that early time when all things appeared to be possible the Greyfriars fellows, Harry Wharton in particular, always appear as serene figures set apart from much

real-life frantic activity - a welcome breath of permanence in a world of restless change.

One has only to visualise the calm of Friardale's main street, preferably in the afternoon of a summer day, with its shady old trees and equally ancient thatched cottages, its all-pervading atmosphere of unruffled tranquillity, or Courtfield, slightly more animated on such a day, to realise that here we are set firmly and immutably in the Edwardian era. The sun blazes through the trees in Friardale Lane casting dancing shadows along the narrow way, and just around the bend stands the venerable foundation of Greyfriars School with its quadrangle, its cool and shady cloisters and dim old formrooms which have witnessed the passage of so many fellows in the past. Many of these have become considerable figures in the great world outside and, human nature being so full of contrasts, some have proved less creditable.

Like the characters in H.G. Wells' *Time Machine*, we are caught and held in this enchanted world, feeling that if we sit quietly beneath the trees outside Uncle Clegg's little shop (and the peace is not rendered hideous by the jarring racket of Horace Coker's motor-cycle) surely sooner or later we shall hear the whirr of cycle-wheels and the sound of cheery voices as the Famous Five come breezing up amidst a cloud of dust, seeking refreshment.

This is Harry Wharton's world with its laughter and japes, its friendships and rivalries, its echoes of serious study, its successes and failures and, above all, its powerful influence for good. This was the environment into which Colonel Wharton, in his far-seeing wisdom, saw fit to place his nephew. This is the world we would seek to perpetuate.

THE DORMITORY

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

Hamlet.

Much has been written of the 'cosy' study existence at Greyfriars: warm fires, comfortable armchairs, study teas, and a generally tolerable lifestyle in these small compartments (originally monks' cells presumably). Rather less is recorded of another aspect of life which must have existed in the old monastic foundation converted into a school. Much has been 'covered' and improved; much else must, and has of necessity remained unchanged since the early and austere times of the Grey Friars. During the winter season in the delightful corner of Kent wherein the old monks saw fit to establish their monastery, the snows and gales could be, and still are, severe in the extreme.

Imagine, if you will, the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars any morning during the winter.

Presumably there is no heating in this austere apartment. It must have been Spartan in every sense, rather akin to military barrack rooms. Rows of beds on either side of the great and otherwise bare room. Apparently private cubicles were not the style adopted at Greyfriars. A row of large windows, some of which will be open whatever the climate prevailing outside. It presents a less than comforting picture, especially in the early morning, when Gosling has with his distorted sense of humour taken great satisfaction in tolling the rising bell. We may assume that most of the fellows leap from their beds, shaking off the warmth of waking dreams, and make a rush for the washing facilities - consisting of cold - or at best lukewarm - water. Some fellows would inevitably prove the exception to the general rule,

William George Bunter, for example, being notoriously difficult to prise from his 'bunk'. Bob Cherry usually adopted the swiftest method - that of tipping the fat Owl out onto the floor in a sea of blankets, with much howling and protestations.

The prospect of having a cold sponge squeezed over one's yet half-awakened person proved eminently successful, but to say the least a trifle daunting especially on a frosty January morning. This method would appear to have been a favourite with Bob Cherry in extracting 'slackers' from the warm recesses of their beds. Lord Mauleverer with commendable - even heroic - fortitude and aristocratic courage, would gingerly test the atmosphere with the tip of a noble toe, sigh and sigh again and finally slowly emerge. On the whole the Greyfriars fellows seemed not to pay too much attention to the freezing conditions in the dormitory. One cannot help feeling that there must be a time and place for everything, especially Bob Cherry's type of exuberance. But such exuberance and methods usually carried the day, it being part of the general plan in which fellows are prepared and conditioned for the 'harsh realities' and responsibilities awaiting them in the world beyond the gates of Greyfriars. One may almost hear Coker of the Fifth - among others - declaiming, "If a fellow is tough he will succeed . . .", a very admirable sentiment even though the preparation be ever so Spartan. *Mens sana in corpore sano* would appear to have been the guiding principle.

We read of Harry Wharton and Co. taking 'trots' round the quadrangle before breakfast in all weathers, and indulging, should the conditions be appropriate, in snow fights, or a 'punt' about with a

football, or again 'up-ending' Horace Coker should that great man attempt any suggestion of enforcing his 'short way' with them. It was a way of life conducive to developing many fine qualities, not the least of which would be endurance. The little achievements and minutiae of the daily routine, seemingly insignificant in themselves yet which have a cumulative effect far greater than we realise. For instance, kicking Bunter, tweaking Skinner's nose, or reducing Coker to a state of dishevelment may in themselves appear trivial and minor incidents measured against the greater background of advancing experience. But they have a place in the system of things. Is it not for the ultimate good of these fellow that they are thus dealt with?

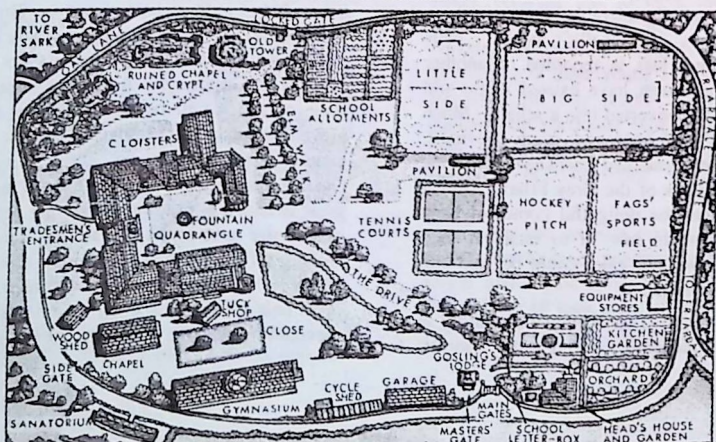
Mr Quelch, in the seclusion of his private bathroom, presents a more congenial and domestic picture. Meticulous in everything, the ceremony of bathing and shaving (with hot water) is performed with care and precision. The cares of the day - and the Remove - lie ahead, but before he is launched upon his official duties comes the pleasant prospect of breakfast, followed by a brief social exchange with colleagues in the common room, and perhaps a short briefing with Dr Locke before confronting the irritations of Bunter, Harold Skinner and Co. and Vernon-Smith - to name but a few 'hurdles' - in the form room.

Much 'flack' has been directed against the public school system in the past. Yet it cannot be denied that it produced, and still continues to 'turn out', fellows who possess the power of influencing for good others who missed the good fortune of attending such an institution. The epitome of such fellows may be found at Greyfriars.



GREYFRIARS SCHOOL

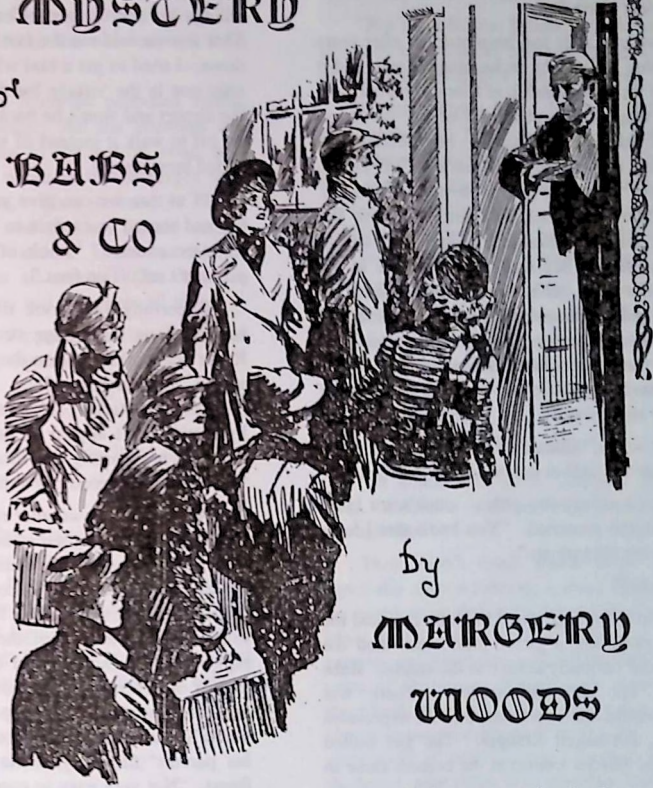
FROM ★ THE ★ AIR



A WHITE CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

for

BABS
& CO



by
MARGERY
WOODS

The traditional white Christmas brings a touch of magic for many . . . but for the Cliff House chums it brought more menace than magic . . .

Chapter 1 Snowbound.

"B - but it'll only take five minutes, Babs. Just a cup of tea and a snack . . ."

"No, Bessie," said Barbara Redfern, "we haven't time. We . . ."

"Bib-but I'm tired," moaned Bessie Bunter, "and I'm famished."

"When are you anything else?" groaned Clara Trevlyn, stamping her feet and rubbing gloved hands together. "Come on, Fatima, it's too cold to stand around arguing."

Bessie glowered and continued to stare longingly through the misted windows of the little village café. There were dishes of golden glazed mince pies and shiny white iced currant buns visible within, set around a tray heaped with slices of delicious dark fruit cake layered with thick yellow marzipan. Boxes of glacé and marzipan fruits and

plump sugar Santas added more temptation to the cosy warmth the café interior promised and Bessie planted her feet more firmly than ever by the doorway.

"Taking root, old Spartan?" Jemima Carstairs polished her monocle and gazed quizzically at the fat duffer of the Fourth. "Going to treat us all with your German pfennig?"

"Ha ha ha!"

"Come on, we might as well give in," sighed Mabel Lynn. "She's not going to move."

"Okay, Jack?" Clara glanced at her brother, knowing that as their driver he was more or less in charge of the party.

"Fine by me," he said cheerfully. "As long as we remember that we promised to be back at the castle by five."

Bessie was first in and made for the biggest of the five tables in the little café. Only Babs looked

faintly concerned. She had heard the weather forecast on her small radio just before they set out with its warning of snow to come in the north. And they were certainly in the north now, high in the wilds of Northumberland, perched by the edge of the cold, turbulent North Sea.

Curranwick Castle had been restored after years of painstaking work by an archaeological trust and it was now in the custodianship of Clara's Uncle David and Aunt Elspeth; the guardians of the castle, as Clara had already nicknamed her affectionate relatives, and it was with them that the Cliff House chums were spending the Christmas vacation. Jemima's father, Colonel Carstairs, was with the party, and Marjorie Hazeldene's dare-devil cousin Ralph Lawrence. They had remained back at the castle this afternoon, with Janet Jordan, while Babs and Clara and Mabs and Bessie and Jemima had come to the village for a last-minute session of Christmas shopping. Jack glanced at his watch. "Ten minutes," he said firmly, "or back there they'll think we're all skiving."

"Don't worry," Clara told her brother. "Fatima could deplete this café in less time than that."

"Oh . . . I sus-say you girls . . . that's not fair," the plump duffer protested. "You know that I have to kik-keep my strength up."

"Ha ha ha!"

The merriment rang round the little café and the only other occupant, a girl a little older than the chums, looked curiously across at the chums. Babs caught her eye and half smiled. There was something wistful and also strained in the expression of the slim, fair-haired stranger. The girl smiled back, then the buxom woman at the counter came to their table.

"Tea for six, please," said Jack. "What do you want in the way of nourishment, girls?"

The girls settled for mince pies, except for Bessie who wanted iced buns and fruit cake as well. Bessie's eyes glistened and Clara raised despairing eyes. As Bessie munched happily the girl at the next table got up and went to the café door. She looked out, spoke to a woman passer-by, and came back again into the warmth, her face worried. Jack was looking at his watch again.

"It's back to the castle time, girls." He went to the counter to settle the bill, while Bessie crammed the last of a slice of cake into her mouth. Then she announced she wanted some marzipan fruits to take back.

Babs looked resigned. It always took so long to get Bessie away from the proximity of food! Then she turned as a touch came on her arm.

"Excuse me," said the girl, "but are you by any chance going to the castle . . . Curranwick? Only I heard your friend say . . ."

"Yes, we are," returned Babs. "Can we help you?"

"If you have transport . . . my name's Philippa Craig and I'm on my way to Currangate Hall to stay with my grandfather . . . I've just travelled back from college but there's a problem with the bus service. That woman told me the last country bus had broken down. I tried to get a taxi when I arrived . . . there's only one in the village but he's taken somebody to the airport and won't be back till late. I should have set off to walk it instead of waiting for the bus," she added breathlessly.

"I'm sure we can give you a lift," Babs assured her and started to explain to Jack as he turned away from the counter. "Look, it's starting to snow . . . you can't set off on foot."

Cheerfully Jack took the girl's case and they hurried along the village street to where the Range Rover was parked. Soon they were all stowed away within its warmth, along with Bessie's sundry collection of sticky packages. The snow was quite light and didn't appear to be freezing, nevertheless Jack was not wasting any time getting on the narrow winding country road out to the castle.

As ever, the newcomer responded to Babs, who had become used to total strangers confiding all their woes, and Pippa, as she said was her name to her friends, proved to be no exception. She was deeply worried because she had not had any recent response to her letter to her grandfather, nor had she had nay reply from the much loved old lady who was still known as Nanny Jenks, despite all her former charges now being grown up and making their way in the world. Her elder brother was working with her parents' film unit in the South American rain forest. "Not very easy to contact at present," Pippa sighed, "and when I tried to phone Grandpop yesterday to let him know the time I expected to arrive there was no answer. It just isn't like him."

"But he may have been visiting friends." Babs tried to reassure her. "It is the season of visitors and visiting."

Pippa shook her head. "Grandpop has never been keen on much socialising . . . not since Gran died five years ago. He's happiest with his books and his various collections of eastern artefacts, especially jade. He spent a lot of years in the Far East. And then when he heard that Aunt Laura drowned in a boating accident last year he drew more and more into himself. He hadn't seen her for eighteen years."

Pippa fell silent, and Babs sensed family tragedy behind this last statement.

"I sus-say, it's snowing." Bessie obviously decided it was time she contributed to the conversation. "It's nearly dark."

"Just noticed it, chump?" said Clara.

Certainly it was almost dark now beyond the dense swirl of big flakes, which was causing Jack to slow the big car considerably. Great wedges of white rode on the wipers and framed the windows.

"It's going to be a white Christmas!" whooped Clara. "Snowmen and sledging and snowballs. We'll have a competition to see who can roll Bess down the hill fastest."

More mirth, except from the proposed victim, but Jack was not smiling. All his attention was concentrated on keeping to the narrow road, now merging into a sea of white in which verges were almost indistinguishable. They seemed to be the only travellers abroad and the last lighted cottage had long since been left behind. There was only the world of swirling white all around. The desire to tease and chaff had faded and they were all silent.

"It's not far now," Pippa said at last, "and then it's only about a mile to the castle."

"Thank goodness," said Jemima. "I'd hate to be stuck out here!"

"Not in this sturdy beauty," declared Jack in the affectionate tones of the true car aficionado. "We'll be . . . What the . . .!"

A flare of headlights, blasting horn and a great dark shape had skidded round the bend Jack was turning into. A head-on collision seemed unavoidable. Jack swerved desperately, the girls ducked their heads and Bessie screamed as a tearing thud shuddered through the vehicle, then a violent lurch sent them all straining against their seat belts.

"The idiot!" yelled Jack. "He hit us! We're in the ditch! He ought to be shot - the maniac!" Jack twisted round. "Are you all right, girls?"

"We think so," several voices assured him. "Can we get out at your side?"

"I've lost my box of mince pies," wailed Bessie. "Put the light on, somebody, and keep your big feet out of the way, Clara. You'll . . ."

"I'll kick your precious mince pies into the ditch if you don't stop moaning." Clara tried to get past the fat one, only succeeding in pushing her onto Jemima's lap. Jemima gasped and tried to reach the door handle.

"Not that side!" Jack warned. "You'll land in a couple of feet of ditch water. Hang on till I get your door open."

Somehow they struggled out into snow already several inches deep and surveyed the stricken vehicle. "Anyone feel up to heaving a couple of tons or so out of there?" asked Jack.

"You mean Bessie, of course," Clara grinned, stepping back and giving a yell as she sank up to her knees in a drift.

"What on earth is Uncle David going to say about this?" Jack groaned as he surveyed the

damage. "And Dad'll be furious when he hears about it."

"But it wasn't your fault!" the girls cried as one voice. "That brute was on the wrong side of the road and belting down. What was it, anyway?"

"Big Land Rover, I think." Jack was reaching inside to secure doors and rescue Pippa's case and seek a torch. "Shanks's pony now, girls."

"Listen," Pippa broke in, "why don't you all come with me? The rate the snow's coming down you'll have a job to reach the castle. The drive's a long one even after you get to the gates. Whereas we're almost at the hall . . . it's just round this bend. And you can phone your folks and let them know, then stay the night. We've loads of room."

Babs looked round at her chums, or what she could see of them through the white-spattered darkness. In the few moments they had stood there they had begun to resemble extensions to the snow-mantled landscape. There was much sense in Pippa's suggestion.

"Are you sure?" Babs asked.

"Of course I'm sure! Unless," Pippa added slyly, "Bessie is yearning for a two-mile flounder through this!"

They didn't need much more persuading, especially after traversing a short distance through the heavy snow underfoot that dragged at every step while the blizzard stung faces and eyes. Bessie was gasping and protesting long before they reached the gates of Currangate Hall and the quite long drive there took them nearly an hour to cover as they had almost to carry Bessie most of the way. There were great sighs of relief as they ploughed their way up the broad stone steps, now invisible, leading into the portico of Currangate Hall. They were too exhausted to notice that only one light showed at a ground floor window; all they wanted was shelter. Pippa thrust a key into the lock of the heavily studded old door, and twisted it, confidence suddenly replaced with puzzlement. "That's funny," she muttered, "it's not giving."

"Let me try," offered Jack. "The lock might be frozen."

No . . . the bolt must be in." Impatiently Pippa yanked at the old iron bell pull at the side, then raised the knocker and hammered hard. "Come on, Nanny Jenks darling . . . we're frozen."

There was no sound. The chums drew closer together, then the dull rattle of a bolt being withdrawn sounded within. The door swung open on gloom and a sharp male voice exclaimed: "I didn't expect you back so soon . . . you were supposed . . ." The voice died away and the porch light came on.

A tall man of sallow and dark visage stood there. He stared at the group. "Who are you? We've nothing for carol singers." He made to close

the door but Pippa was too quick. She thrust her way in.

"I could ask you the same question. Who are you and what are you doing here?"

"I presume you must be Philippa," the man said at last. "I am looking after Currangate now."

"I don't understand!" snapped Pippa. "Where is my grandfather? And where is Nanny Jenks?"

"Lionel is in hospital and . . ."

"Hospital?" Pippa's face whitened. Suddenly she turned to the silent chums. "Come on in before we freeze to death. Take off your wet things while I sort this out. Now," she turned back to the man and said sharply: "Why was I not told? When did this happen? And why are you here? You're a total stranger."

"No he is not. We have every right to be here."

A tall young woman clad in black stood at the foot of the stairs. Her skin was whitely transparent except for a dark red slash of lipstick. Her hair coiled in smooth black plaits round her head, and her eyes were hostile.

"This is our home now," she said icily.

Chapter 2 Hostile Home

Jemima moved near to Babs and Pippa. "Sure this is the right place, old Spartan? Methinks it's Manderley moved north."

"This is my home," said Pippa grimly, "and in a moment or so I'll prove it to you all." She advanced towards the tall man, a slim and defiant figure as she stared from him to the girl in black. "You must be my late aunt's husband, I suppose."

"That's right. I am your Uncle Gerald . . . and I deserve your respect, young lady."

"Which you'll never get from me until you get it from my grandfather. You, and your daughter" - Pippa flung a scornful glance at the girl in black - "are not welcome here until I hear it from Grandpop's own lips. Now where is he?"

"He's being cared for," the girl in black moved forward, "in a nursing home, since he fell and broke a bone in his foot two weeks ago. And by the way, my name is Martina, if you and these kids have the manners to remember it."

"Ooh, hoity-toity," murmured Clara, who had taken an instant dislike to the apparently new occupants of Currangate Hall and was in no doubt about whose side she was on. Clara decided to speak up. "Just who did you think we were when you answered the door?" she demanded. "Not carol singers! You thought it was someone else, didn't you? Someone you weren't expecting just now."

"Yes," cried Pippa, "who was it you didn't expect back so soon?"

"My father has already told you." Martina stared the younger girl out. "Carol singers. We've had two lots already this evening." Her chilly glance passed over the little group. "If you intend to entertain your friends you'll have to see to it yourself. The village servants have gone and won't be returning until after the holidays."

"Where's Nanny Jenks?" Pippa demanded again.

"Nanny Jenks has retired. We sent her to her sister in York."

"But Nanny Jenks . . ." A furtive dig in the back from Jemima interrupted Pippa's outburst and she turned to stare in some surprise at the enigmatic member of the Fourth Form at Cliff House. Jemima shook her head and said quietly: "Pippa, dear, I don't think you should upset your uncle and cousin. I mean all of us descending like snow aliens from space must have been a shock. Tch, tch, tch!" Jemima shook her elegant Eton-cropped head and inspected her monocle for dust. "Such an unwelcome invitation. And dripping all over the best Brussels." Jemima tut-tutted again and the chums hid grins; they knew their Jemima, but Uncle Gerald didn't, judging by the baffled expression creeping over his face. "So," Jemima went on, "if we could just quietly make ourselves a cuppa and thaw out our little tootsies . . . then make a call to our folks to let them know where we are . . ."

"And about the Rover," Jack broke in. "Some idiot in a Land Rover crashed into us not far from your gates."

Father and daughter exchanged sharp looks at this divulgence. Then Gerald Mallis said reluctantly, "In that case I suppose we'll have to let you stay."

"You jolly well will!" Pippa retorted. "Come on, folks, the kitchen's along here."

It seemed that Pippa was well acquainted with the layout of the big house. She led them unerringly along passages with three turns to reach a large kitchen which, although still retaining most of its old characteristics, had been embellished with modern equipment. The kettle went on, cheerful blue and white striped mugs were lined up for coffee or tea, and various tins yielded an assortment of biscuits and cakes. Pippa sorted out an old-fashioned clothes-horse and set it up beside the big range so that the chums could drape snow-soaked garments to dry.

"If you don't mind I'd rather stay in here than take you through to one of the sitting rooms," Pippa said, rounding up chairs and stools until everyone was seated, with the warm comfort of mugs of tea to nurse. "I'd like to talk to you without them around." Rather pointedly she glanced outside before shutting the door with a sharp slam and rejoining the chums round the big table. "I'm so worried," she said,

"because I don't know why they're here. Why did you shut me up, Jemima?" she asked abruptly.

"Because you were going to say that Nanny Jenks does not have a sister in York."

"But how did you know that?"

"I didn't," said Jemima calmly, "but it was the obvious assumption from your reaction. The old brainbox is beginning to thaw out, you know, and the scenario is not difficult to work out. They didn't know you, so obviously they are either impostors or long estranged relatives. If so they are here for some purpose of benefit to themselves rather than you. In which case you should never let them know how much you know. Keep them guessing and read their body language until we discover what they're up to."

Pippa looked at the others. "Isn't she brilliant? I tend to fly off the handle and lose the argument. Oh, I'm so glad I met you all . . . although I'm sorry about the accident and your being stranded. You will stay tonight, won't you?"

"I don't think we've much choice." Jack had gone to the window and beckoned. "Just look out at that."

They crowded round and stared at the falling curtain of white. Pippa went to a switch near the outer door and an outside light came on. She revealed an outer lobby and said grimly: "If we opened that door I think we'd find the snow was waist high against it."

"Not to worry," Jack said cheerfully, "we'll soon dig ourselves out in the morning. Now, Pippa, if we may, I'd like to use your phone."

"Of course. It's over there and there's a directory on that cupboard. Then I'll phone the local hospital and find out about Grandpop."

Babs picked up her cooling mug of tea. Bessie had commandeered an old basket chair and was now sound asleep. The room had gone very quiet and Babs could hear the click of the receiver rest under Jack's fingers. Suddenly he turned towards her, the phone still in his hand.

"It's dead." His voice was grim. "The lines must be down."

Chapter 3 Incommunicado

"Oh no! You mean we can't . . .?" Dismay was on every face.

"I'm afraid so."

"It can't be! Here . . . let me try." Pippa seized the phone from Jack's hand and feverishly started to dial, then slowly returned the instrument to its rest.

Jack made an impatient gesture. "I wish I'd brought my mobile. I meant to, but . . ." He paced across the room then came to a halt by the table. "We'll have to try and get back, somehow."

"To the castle? Tonight?" Pippa stared at him.

Jack nodded. "But I'll go on my own. I must let the folks know what has happened. They'll be worried sick. And if the rescue services are out - there'll be people stranded in cars all over the place - and report the car there empty and no sign of us . . ."

Babs nodded. She knew Jack was right. They had to make the effort. Then Jemima said, "Why don't we divide up? If we can leave Bessie with you, Pippa, and Mabs - to give you moral back-up sort of thing if you need it - and we'll try to get news of your Grandfather and get back to you. After all," Jemima said sagely, "the snow ploughs could have cleared it all away by morning."

"I doubt it," said Pippa. "They'll do the main roads first and the tough country folk have to get on with it as best we can, like we've always done."

"I'm going with Jack," Clara said suddenly. "The rest of you stay here. It's only a couple of miles - heavens, it's nothing. Think of the treks we've done - remember our eight miles to Delma and that ghastly old Mother Faa. We had to carry that poor girl. Until your father turned up with M'lizi and the brandy barrel cloth to rescue us."

"Oh happy, happy days" Jemima sighed, pretending to dash a tear from her eye. "That sure was a New Year to remember."

Pippa suddenly became very practical. "You'll need wellies and warm dry things. A couple of sticks and maybe a spade if you feel like carrying it. And an extra torch."

The lobby yielded up various items of warm protective clothing and very soon Clara and Jack were kitted out for their snow trek. Babs looked uneasy, in her heart she wished they were all together but realised that the strong, athletic Tomboy would make good headway along with Jack.

There was no sign of the two objectionable strangers who seemed determined to take over Pippa's home as the chums crossed the big hall and Pippa opened the heavy front door. There seemed to be a lull in the snowfall and Jack said, "Right, let's go while it's calmed down. Okay, sis?"

"If you are." Clara gave a desultory wave and stepped out into that silent white vista.

The chums watched the two dark figures gradually diminish in size and then reluctantly drew back into the shelter of the great house. Pippa suddenly became very practical and said they'd better see about making up beds and led the way up the broad old oak staircase. She stopped at the second door along the big landing. "This is my room. I'll see what I can find in the way of nighties or pidgies to fit you." As she opened the door she said quietly, "You do believe me, don't you? That this is my home and they are the interlopers?"

"Of course we believe you," Babs said gently. "You . . . what's the matter, Pippa?"

"What's the matter?" Pippa almost screamed. "She's pinched my room! The awful rotten b - - -!"

"Now now," Jemima shuddered. "No college language here. Ahem. Our dainty ears are not accustomed to it."

Stifled laughter broke out but Pippa was serious. "Look at this. Red lace pyjamas! And a black satin negligée. It's like something out of a thirties movie." Furiously Pippa grabbed armfuls of shimmering gauzy fabrics and flung open the wardrobe doors. She began throwing clothes on the floor. "She's not getting away with this!"

Guessing that Martina's thirties wardrobe was about to be slung outside the room, Babs shook her head. "Calm down, Pippa, while we decide what to do."

"I've decided!" Pippa snarled. "This is the best bedroom in the place. It was my mother's until she married and it's mine for whenever I want it." A large soft-topped white case under an Empire table near the window caught Pippa's notice. She hauled it out. "I'm going to pack for that . . ."

Mabs began to chuckle. "Who does she remind you of, Babs?"

"Our one and only Diana. Di would have revelled in this."

The case dumped outside, Pippa proceeded to sort out her own belongings from the other wardrobe, setting aside nightwear as she did so. "Help yourselves. I'm going to get some bed linen."

Soon she was making up beds in two other bedrooms, filling hot water bottles for them and taking the precaution of pocketing all keys from the three rooms. Then it was time to return downstairs and see what the fridge would yield in the way of supper, for which Bessie was awake and more than ready. There was cold chicken and some apple pie, and Bessie's mince pies. "And if they're hungry they'll have to make do with tins." Pippa said with a certain malicious satisfaction. "Unless they raid the freezer. It seems to be well stocked." She sighed heavily. "I wish I knew where Nanny Jenks is."

They couldn't find the answer to that. Nor to what lay behind the unwelcome presence of Pippa's unpleasant relations. With Bessie snoring at her side, Babs lay wakeful long into the night, wondering about Clara and Jack. Had they reached the castle safely? There was no means of knowing, and no way Clara and Jack could make contact. Would the morning bring some of those desperately awaited answers?

Chapter 4 Snow Trek to Disaster

Babs seemed to have scarcely closed her eyes

before a hand touched her shoulder and startled her into full wakefulness. Pippa's voice whispered through the gloom: "Cup of tea, Babs . . . I've got to talk to you . . . I've found something dreadful."

Babs struggled up to grope for the bedside lamp. But Pippa had already reached the switch. Her face was strained with worry. "I've called Jemima and Mabs," she whispered, "they're in my room next to this one."

With an anxious glance at the still sound asleep Bessie Babs thrust her feet into unfamiliar slippers and put on her watch; it was not yet seven and no light showed from beyond the heavy curtains. "We'd better leave Bessie."

Pippa nodded and the two girls stole from the room. Mabs and Jemima were seated on Pippa's bed, clutching mugs of tea and munching toast. Pippa seemed to have prepared for a siege. A big tray nearby held milk and mini packets of cereal, several boiled eggs in a dish and a rack of toast besides the pot of tea and a jar of marmalade.

"I do enjoy these surprise dorm feasts, especially at the crack of jolly old dawn." Jemima decided to top an egg and butter some more toast. "Is Bess going to miss this conference?"

"Yes," said Babs firmly, "she's a dear old duffer but you know what she is . . . always gives the game away to the wrong person. Now give, Pippa. What's happened?"

"I've just had a fearful row with Martina. That's for starters."

"Well you did throw her out in the cold cold snow," chuckled Mabs, then sobered as Pippa's mouth hardened.

"She must have heard me moving about . . . I couldn't sleep, not knowing what happened to Grandpop and Nanny and them being here. The range was out in the kitchen and I'd got into supplies first . . . serve them right. There's about two crusts left for her and I hope they starve. This is the last carton of milk as well." Pippa drew breath. "But how I didn't challenge her with what I'd found I'll never know."

"What?" Babs breathed.

"I was still awake at half past five so I decided to get up and go down to Grandpop's study just to see if I could find anything to explain all this. But it was locked, and the key was missing." Pippa gulped a mouthful of tea then went on: "I'd also remembered Grandpop's phone extension in there and I just hoped it might be working. I knew there was a spare key in the library, in an old tobacco jar on the mantelpiece. I found it, then couldn't believe what I saw. The glass cases with his jade collection and netsuke - some of them very rare and valuable - were empty." Pippa's voice broke. "I - I thought I must be imagining things, but I wasn't. And some

miniatures. It must be them. And then I knew the most important thing was the phone. Of course it was dead. Like the extension in the kitchen."

"I'm sure Jack and Clara will be back soon." Babs put a comforting arm round the stricken girl's shoulders. "And we'll stay with you until we sort out this mystery."

"Thank you . . . you're all wonderful," choked Pippa, her spirit having temporarily deserted her. "But that's not all. Something made me check the telephone plug on the floor by the desk. It was plugged in okay but the lead to the plug had been cut clean through."

The chums looked at each other aghast.

"I went and checked the connection in the sitting room, the one on the landing up here, and the kitchen. All cut. He must have gone round them all immediately we arrived last night."

"Which means they're worried," said Babs.

"Yes, and they're going to be more worried before I'm through with them." Pippa's spirit was reviving. "Will you help me, girls?"

"Anything," Babs assured here.

"I want to try and get through to the beach house."

"Beach house? Where is it?" Mabs asked.

"Not very far by the estate path. It started as a sort of summer house where we used to picnic. Great-grandfather had it built . . . like those chalets at seaside resorts, then Grandpop decided to refurbish it and enlarge it when I was a child. It's like a small cosy bungalow now and there's a phone in it. I used to bring friends from school and we'd live in it, cooking for ourselves and playing house. Those holidays were some of the happiest times in my life. But I want to get there without them knowing where I am. Will you . . . ?"

"But we know where you are, Pippa." The plump form of Bessie appeared at the door. "You're not going anywhere . . . oh, you kik-cats . . . you've started breakfast. What time is it?"

"Just on seven. Help yourself, Fatima."

"Th-thanks." Bessie joined the party on Pippa's bed, then complained that the tea was cold and the eggs were going cold and the toast was cold. "Well that's all there is, honeybunch," said Mabs with a scant display of sympathy. "We've eaten those nice people downstairs out of house and home and there's ructions on down there."

"Oh." Bessie decided to make the best of it. "Where're you going, Babs?"

"To get dressed."

Babs escaped and Pippa followed her. Out of earshot of Bessie, who, loveable old duffer that she was, didn't know that discretion even existed when it

came to keeping secrets, Babs whispered: "I'll come with you, and Jemima and Mabs will hold the fort here and sit on Bessie till we get back, or Clara and Jack beat us to it. Okay?"

"Great. Now I wonder where the enemy is?"

"Like us to create a diversion?" Jemima sidled through the doorway. "What's the plan?"

Briefly Babs explained, while she finished dressing, and minutes later strange sounds drew her to the top of the stairs. Jemima was prancing round the hall below, still wearing borrowed pyjamas, singing at the top of her voice and waving a pair of wellingtons.

"Oh no!" Pippa chortled, then drew back as Gerald Mallis and his arrogant daughter appeared and stood open-mouthed.

"Latest thing in aerobics. Keeps the old physique in tip-top form, y'know. Now follow me. This way to the library for some balancing. Can you keep six of the Encyclopaedia Britannica on your old napper while performing a handspring, Martina?" Jemima began to dance in what she hoped was the general direction of the library and suddenly Martina cried: "Stop her, Dad!" and the pair hastened in pursuit of Jemima.

Babs and Pippa were downstairs in a flash, to grab outdoor clothes and torches and let themselves out through the lobby door, Pippa taking the key with her.

The snow was as thick as ever but now frozen. It crunched underfoot but was less exhausting to traverse than the soft yielding stuff that had made such heavy going the previous night. Pippa led the way, sure-footed along an invisible pathway under the trees, banishing any doubts that might linger as to her being exactly who she claimed to be. Presently she began to confide the story of family enmity, how her aunt, her mother's only sister, had become totally infatuated with Gerald Mallis and married him against her father's wishes.

"It all happened before I was born." Pippa brushed an overhanging branch aside and took Babs' arm to guide her past a hidden tree root. "Apparently Aunt Laura was very headstrong and refused to listen to Grandpop, who swore that Gerald Mallis was an out-and-out waster, and Laura would rue the day she's married him. There was a frightful row, according to Mum, which ended with Grandpop telling Laura not to come back expecting him to pick up the pieces when the money ran out, and she wouldn't get a penny from him as long as she stayed with Mallis. Of course she was too proud to admit it when she discovered that Gerald and his brother were living by their wits on shady business deals, and Grandpop refused to have him at the house, and of course she wouldn't give in. It broke Grandpop's heart and when Martina was born he refused to make any concession whatsoever and as far as we knew he

never saw his first grandchild. He just turned more embittered and sort of turned in on himself. I was the only one who could ever get through to him." Pippa sighed. "He has always spoilt me rotten. And then the boating accident happened. Aunt Laura was drowned and Grandpop refused to go to the funeral. He sent flowers, and that was it . . . until now."

Pippa fell silent. They could hear the boom of the sea now and suddenly the sun emerged, gilding winter's landscape with a fiery gold. The path was more discernible now as it widened and its stony pattern showed under snow that had drifted. The trees thinned and the beach house lay ahead, enjoying a supreme view of the bay with Curranwick Castle standing proud on the headland.

Pippa hurried towards the attractive square white bungalow with its red pantiled roof, low stone walling surround and an old swing hanging from a sturdy frame at the far side of the garden. Tensely Pippa thrust the key into the lock and pushed open the front door. It led into a tiny hall and Babs was surprised at the warmth that met her. She had expected the chill damp of an un-lived-in building at such a northerly exposed place. Then she heard Pippa cry out as she entered the room to the right. Heard a gasp and then a frail, tremulous cry from within.

A white-haired man lay on a recliner chair, one foot encased in plaster, and near him a plump old lady was getting unsteadily from a chair by the fireside. She stared incredulously at Pippa and held out her arms. Pippa's face crumpled between joy and tears as she cried, "Oh, darling Nanny . . . why . . . how . . . ?" and flung herself into those open arms. And then she dropped to one knee beside the elderly man who struggled to stand up, and embraced him fiercely. "Oh, Grandpop . . . I thought I'd never find you! I . . ."

"So, you've come to find your old grandad, have you?"

The unpleasant voice and the big shadow casting into the room brought instant shock. He stood in the doorway, his features as unpleasant as his voice, and sneered at the white-faced girl. His glance shifted to Babs, who had drawn protectively close to Pippa. "Brought your friend to rescue him, have you? Well," suddenly the drawing voice became clipped and threatening, "Now you're here you can make yourself useful and persuade him to sign that!"

'That' was a stiff cream and black document lying on the table by the window. Even from across the room the words 'Will' and 'Testament' stood out like letters of black fire.

The stranger spun a key between his fingers, and now Babs could recognise him as either brother or close relative to Gerald Mallis. He glared at them. "Yes, it's settling up time. My brother is entitled to

half the Currangate estate. Due to him through his late wife. And Martina is your granddaughter, sir!" His lips curled on the word that should have been an address of respect. "And don't try to kid us the estate is entailed in any way. We know it's not. In the meantime," he added, "we would like regular cheques on account."

"And you think you'll get them! Just like that!" Pippa flared. "Not when we tell the police what's happened. You'll . . ."

Babs put a warning hand on Pippa's arm. "No . . . not this way," she whispered. "You'll make things worse."

Babs faced the man. Her pretty face looked calm but inwardly she was seething, and it took a great deal to make Babs so angry. "I think you've forgotten something," she said quietly. "Mr Searle can't do any Will signing here."

The man frowned. "And why not?"

"Because we'd all be beneficiaries, except me. All Wills or codicils need two witnesses to the signing."

For a moment he looked shaken, then he blustered, "I'll soon sort that little problem out."

"Also," Babs went on as though he had not spoken, "we could be witnesses to a Will signed under duress, which is illegal." Secretly, Babs crossed her fingers that this was so, and added calmly: "There's something else you ought to know."

"And what's that, Miss?"

"What your brother and his daughter are up to."

"What do you mean?" he snapped.

"Well, Martina had her case packed this morning before we left. And a whole lot of stuff as well as the jade has gone."

"Why, you interfering little chit!" He seized her shoulders roughly, ignoring the protesting cries from the other three people in the room. "How do you know about that?"

"Thieves always fall out." Babs wrenched free. "We were too late to stop your Uncle Gerald, weren't we, Pippa, when he packed all that jade and stuff away while he left you to do the dirty work up here."

His face twisted with rage as though for a moment he believed that his brother and niece were two-timing him, then his slower reasoning took over and he exclaimed, "But it's all out there! If you think I'm going to be taken in by a couple of stupid schoolgirls you're wrong. You'll be sorry for this, and don't get any bright ideas about rescue. The old man'll break his other ankle if he tries to hobble in that snow, and she won't get far at her age," he dismissed the lame Lionel Searle and Nanny Jenks with a contemptuous gesture and spun the keys in his

hand again. "Remember, you'll sharp starve in here, there's not much fuel left and not much grub, either. As for you two," he turned to Babs and Pippa, "I've got a couple of mates out there who'll keep an eye on you for a tanner and glad to. You sacked them last month, old man, so just watch out."

He slammed the hall door, then the outer one, and the little group was alone.

Chapter 5

When Bribery is not Corruption!

"Oh I'm a fool! A stupid fool!"

Pippa rushed to the door and thumped it with clenched fists. Babs stared at her. "Why? You couldn't have stopped him."

"I could." Pippa came back into the room. "I was in such a hurry to get in just now I left my key in the door. We are locked in, unless . . ."

Fury at herself spurred Pippa into a rush around the little house. It had only three small rooms, a tiny kitchen and a shower room. All it took to frantically try every window and the two outer doors was two minutes. "Why did you have double glazing put in, Grandpop?" she cried.

"For security and warmth, child," he said wearily. "You know that we sometimes let it out to holiday visitors. Now come here and calm down."

His stern old features softened as his granddaughter sat down close to his side and asked despairingly: "How did you get yourself into all this?"

"They arrived out of the blue a couple of weeks ago, all caring and putting on a great act of obsequious family affection, desire to heal the family rift because it was Laura's dying wish. Which was rubbish," Lionel Searle snapped. "According to the inquest Laura was dead when they pulled her out of the water. I never told anyone, you know, except my bank manager, but I did make Laura an allowance ... to salve my own conscience, I suppose," he interjected bitterly, "but I never wanted to see her penniless. So when Mallis turned up I sent him packing and threatened to call the police. That would have been the end of it, if I had looked where I was going and not slipped on the kerb last Monday. Next thing I was in hospital, acquiring this pot and kept under observation for a couple of days because I'd hit my head as well in the fall. And then they arrived, full of concern, and said they'd make arrangements for me to convalesce at a nursing home down in Alnwick. Twenty miles away! The hospital never questioned this, even though I protested and Nanny here swore she could look after me."

"Aye, that I did, but they wouldna listen." Nanny Jenks got to her feet. "I'll make a cup of tea if those brutes have left any."

"The eternal panacea for all ills." Lionel Searle

signed. "Then we found ourselves here . . . I surmised that you'd made contact and they had to revise their plans. You say my jade and netsuke have been swiped?"

"And that lovely Turner child over the Chippendale cabinet, but listen, Grandpop, we can fill in the missing bits later. This is my new friend Babs, by the way, she was on her way to the castle yesterday . . ." Pippa explained rapidly, "and I'm sure that help will be here in abundance very soon. Gerald - I refuse to recognise him as my uncle - and his family must know that their plans have come unstuck. I shouldn't be surprised if they're not clearing off already. So don't worry, Grandpop. Everything's going to be all right."

He looked at her fondly. "I hope so. You've certainly made some great friends. But I think a little more cunning might just help the business on." He reached for his walking stick and held out his hand. "Help me up, child . . . I can walk on this pot if I'm careful."

Halfway through the hobble to the kitchen they met Nanny Jenks with the tray of tea in her hands. She backed away and set the tray down. "Those two layabouts are hanging about at the back here."

"Yes, I want to see them," said Pippa's grandfather. "Have a look in that cupboard down there and see if the basket of tools is still there."

"Yes." Pippa hauled it out.

"I want a screwdriver, and have either of you ladies got a nail file?"

Nanny produced that and the job of trying to pick the locks of their own property began. "It always looks so easy when they do it on the movies," Pippa said wryly. Suddenly a great smile transformed her face. "The skylight in the loft! Come on, Babs!"

"Just a minute, child." Lionel Searle issued some lucid instructions and added, "Be careful."

Pippa let down the loft ladder and the two girls shinned up it and threw open the big loft skylight without the slightest difficulty. "I think we could get out, you know," said Pippa.

"Not on those icy tiles," Babs reminded her. "Now call those two men."

The two former employees had come to stand beneath the skylight, plainly prepared to jeer, before Pippa said clearly: "My grandfather says you're to prise open the kitchen window, even if you have to smash it. He wants to talk to you and says it will be worth your while."

They looked at each other, the two rather shabby countrymen, then decided they may as well go and find out what might be in it for them.

It was all settled very quickly. Lionel Searle promised them their jobs back . . . for the sake of

their families and Christmas. Certain treasury notes changed hands and some information was exchanged. Higgins and Wilks had obviously decided that they devil they knew was preferable to the devils who might land them into the hands of the police.

"I did think there was something a bit fishy about that pair." Wilks leaned against the window and looked inside at his boss. "He made a mess of the Land Rover last night. I told him he shouldna have taken it out when he hadn't a licence. But he ..."

"You mean it was our own vehicle that hit us last night!" Pippa cried. "He nearly wrecked the castle Range Rover and killed us into the bargain."

"Another score to settle," her grandfather said grimly. "Right, away you go, you two, and see what transport you can find to get us out of here. And find Jed Slater. He's handy with locks."

But it was too late for that.

A Jeep was coming up the narrow track at the rear of the bungalow, Jack at the wheel, followed by a Porsche off-roader driven by Clara's Uncle David. Clara was first out of the Jeep, followed by Mabs and Jemima, while Bessie and Marjorie and Ralph scrambled out of the Porsche. Everyone was talking at once until Clara yelled: "Well, is someone going to let us in?"

"We can't!" cried Pippa. "We've been trying to get out for the past half hour."

"May we break the lock, or wait for a locksmith?" asked Colonel Carstairs.

"Break it" said Lionel Searle, and they did.

The vehicles were turned and Mr Searle was helped out and settled into the Porsche with Nanny Jenks, who turned her face up to fresh air and freedom with a smile of thankfulness. During the journey back to the Hall much of the story was pieced together. The snow ploughs had reached the

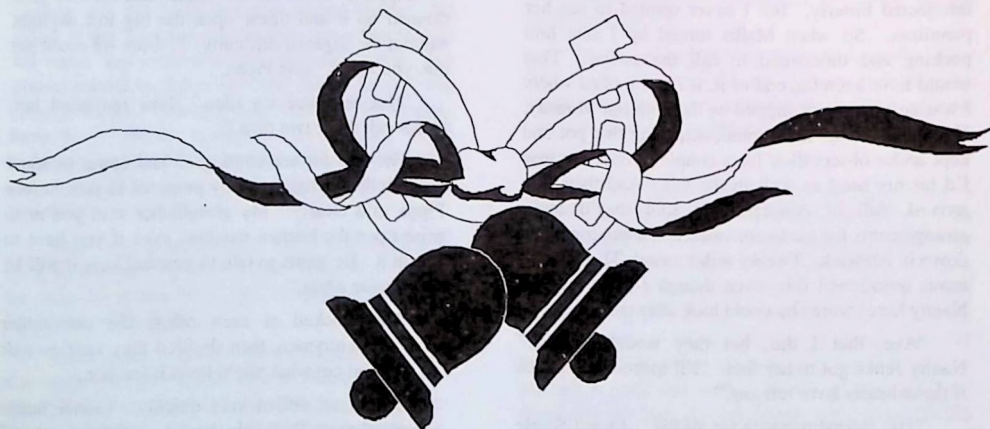
secondary roads and a breakdown recovery had been promised for that afternoon for the stricken Range Rover. Jack and Clara had made it back to the castle the previous evening without mishap and it had been decided to postpone attempts at rescue and showdown at the Hall until daylight. Colonel Carstairs had reported everything to the police, who turned up at the Hall after Jemima had told her father about the missing valuables. But Gerald Mallis and his brother had given up and gone, and all that remained of Martina was a crumpled satin negligée trimmed with moulting pink swansdown. The trio had made a bad mistake in that they had taken the estate Land Rover; its number plates and visible damage from the collision with the Range Rover made it instantly identifiable and the police were confident that it and Gerald Mallis's own car would be picked up, along with Mr Searle's valuables.

"And you are coming back to the castle for Christmas with us," insisted Clara's uncle.

Pippa clapped her hands. "Come on, Nanny darling, I'll pack a case for Grandpop and help you with yours. I've always wanted to spend Christmas in a real castle!"

And a real Christmas castle it proved to be, with all the traditional ingredients. Great logfires, flames a-leaping, casting golden light on the wonderful old restored panelling and the holly bedecked staircase stretching up to the minstrels' gallery above. The festive board duly groaned with enough mouth-watering goodies to keep Bessie's eyes permanently a-glisten. Mr Searle, still frail after the trauma of the past weeks, relaxed by the fire and watched the youngsters in paper hats gather round the piano to sing the beloved old carols. Crackers snapped, eyes shone, cheeks glowed rosilily and happy smiles sang out the magic message of Christmas. Most of all, of the joy of new friendships forged that would endure.

As Clara said: "You couldn't beat a white Christmas in a real castle!"



LETTER FROM FRANK RICHARDS

THE REV. JACK HUGHES WRITES:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I received from Frank Richards in 1952. It deals with the matter of my visiting a young man dying of cancer during my early years as a Methodist Probationer Minister, and of his telling me how much he had loved the Greyfriars stories in the *Magnet* and my being able to let him have copies to read. This was mentioned by me in a C.D. at that time. The outcome was a letter from F.R. expressing his pleasure that the young man's mother, after his death, had told me how much pleasure the patient had received in his last few weeks from reading the stories.

Rose Lawn
Kingsgate
Broadstairs
Kent.
October 20th, 1952

Dear Mr. Hughes,

I cannot tell you how pleased I was to receive your letter, sad as it made me feel for the young man laid under so heavy a trial. The knowledge that, in my own humble sphere, I have done some good, is something; but more than that, I am glad and thankful that God permitted me to be the means of relieving suffering, even if only a little and for a short time. If our young friend was able to forget his unhappy situation even for a few minutes at a time, in reading my writings, they were worth while. How very fortunate it was that you came into contact with him, and were able to give him what he wished for; and if I may say so, how very kind it was of you to afford him so much comfort and consolation. I conclude from what you tell me that he died with the comfort of faith and hope in the hereafter: the only real comfort when the last day comes. I am, as you probably know, a very old man: verging on eighty, and naturally have given much thought to these matters: and my serious conviction is that I would rather die a Christian than live an unbeliever. It is tragic to think of the poor boy passing at so early an age: but he is in God's hands, and his relatives have not lost him for ever.

Thank you very much for the kind things you say about my books. And thank you still more, for having written and told me this, for though it has made me feel sad, it will always be a happy memory to me that, even in so slight a way, I was of some help to the dear lad in his suffering.

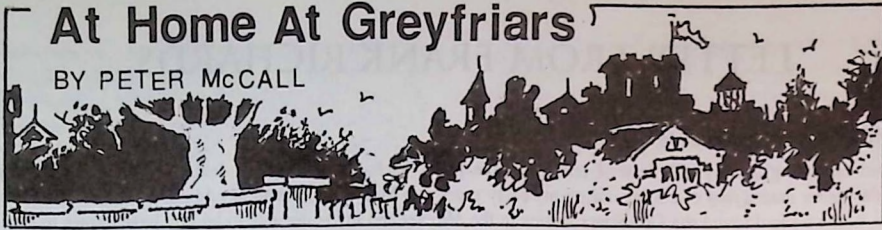
With kind regards,

Very sincerely,

Frank Richards

At Home At Greyfriars

BY PETER McCALL



INTRODUCTION

I have been working on an hypothesis - soon I hope to become a thesis - on Landscape and Literature.

Having made copious notes from many books (too many to include in a bibliography here), I have tried to set down some thoughts on the subject in two articles. Our illustrious Editress was good enough to call them the first two chapters of a thesis. To this I cannot lay claim! They are outline thoughts (even random in parts) which have been brought together to see if my ideas have any merit.

What I have discovered is the sheer scope of the subject!

In this first of the articles, I have taken an introductory, and simple, look at 'belonging' in a landscape or story, and then the enclosed nature of landscapes, and, hence, narration itself. Obviously, Greyfriars plays a central rôle in these musings.

I hope it stimulates discussion.

Peter McCall

(Editor's Note: I wish we had space for more of this intriguing thesis. At least this extract will serve to whet our appetites for the main body of work which should be available later.)

AT HOME AT GREYFRIARS

This imaginative world of 'reality' (Greyfriars), peopled with a believable cast, set in recognizable places (despite the fantasy plots), led to the familiarity decried by Orwell¹ who called this "the untiring effort to keep the atmosphere intact"; but went on to admit the world so created is "not easily forgotten". The people and the places recurred regularly in familiar surroundings, at familiar times, as the *Magnet* followed the seasons.²

The 'World of Frank Richards'³ is a rich landscape, as we know. Orwell on the one hand reviled, on the other hand revelled in, this microcosm. The familiarity thus vilified is, I submit, one of the strengths of the *Magnet* stories. The width of Frank Richards' landscape, peopled by a large and varied cast, set with all manner of geographical features - both physical and man-made - creates a series of scenes that lead us to **want** to read on.

It is fascinating to look at how such a phenomenon arises. Let us start by looking beyond Greyfriars to try to understand this.

When the day-dreamer died, leaving unfinished his life's-work - an artefact that might be useful to mend his neighbour's house - his sense of disquiet was not laid to rest until, after a time in limbo, he came to Heaven. Here, feeling at peace, he realised that all around him was what had been his life's-work. The landscape he had merely dreamed, the tree he had striven vainly to paint, the mountains that were no more than a half dreamed of proto-memory, were now so real that he lived amongst them. Even more incredible was that his reality was the haven that would be inhabited by those who came after him.

His memorial in the world, and all that remained of him or his works, was a corner of a painting (and even that turned out to be ephemeral) - a single leaf - a leaf that gives this Fairy Story its title - *Leaf by Niggle*⁴ written by Tolkien as a pure example of a fairy story.⁵

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Fairy-Tale (not Fairy Story which merits only a sub-entry) as:

- A) A tale about fairies. Also gen., fairy legend, Faërie.
- B) An unreal or incredible story.
- C) A falsehood.

The etymology of the word is interesting and certainly plays a part in Tolkien's thesis. It derives from the French *fae*, from which come fay, Faërie, and fairy. He considers the fairy-being 'largely a sophisticated product of literary fancy'.⁶ He considers their perceived diminutive size to derive from the English love of the delicate and fine, and then from a form of 'rationalisation',

[this love] . . . transformed the glamour of Elfland into mere finesse, and invisibility into a fragility that could hide in a cowslip or shrink behind a blade of grass.⁷

He then makes a vital point:

... Fairy stories are not in normal English usage stories about Fairy, that is *Faërie*, the realm, or state in which fairies have their being. *Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds . . . ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted.⁸

For Tolkien, the majority of 'Fairy Stories' are about the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm. On the other hand, he considers that travellers' tales (i.e. *Gulliver's Voyage to Lilliput*)⁹, stories that depend on Dream [sic], or the dreaming of mortal men to explain the marvellous happenings (*Alice in Wonderland*)¹⁰, the beast fable (*Beauty and the Beast*),¹¹ *The Wind in the Willows*)¹², and other examples of anthropomorphism, must not be included as Fairy Stories.

According to Helm,¹³ it is correct to consider *Leaf by Niggle* as an allegory. In other words, to describe a subject under the guise of some other topic that appears similar. Helm sees *Leaf* as an allegorical description of the way in which *The Lord of the Rings* grew out of the leaf of *The Hobbit*. Niggle is seen to exemplify the frustrations that Tolkien, himself, felt during the difficult times of creation. The journey to death that is the central theme of the story was a personal attempt to overcome the author's depression and fixation with his own mortality.

However, while this is important in the development of Tolkien's thesis, it is not with this aspect of the derivation of the story that we are concerned. Instead, it is the internal ideology expressed in the introduction to this paper that acts as my starting-point in the exploration of Landscape in Children's Literature. *Leaf by Niggle* has as its central theme the concept of a Homeland; that throughout our life we are striving to create our own Landscape. Whether it is an entirely fictional world into which we escape or one that we create out of 'reality' in which to live our lives is a sentient choice made by the adult. But, when children, truth, reality, fact, and fiction become intertwined in a complex world - the world of a child. This world is composed of part fact, part fantasy, and part fiction. Imaginary people may enhance the landscape. *Christopher Robin*,¹⁴ a fictional being with 'imaginary' friends, is possibly the best-known fictional example; while L.M. Montgomery (the author of *Anne of Green Gables*)¹⁵ had her imaginary friends in her private, imaginary world into which she escaped from her misery; friends who changed with her mood.

Whether the landscape and the characters the reader visualizes are 'real' or otherwise does not matter. Rather, it is how the reader 'sees' the Author's words. These combine with his, probably subconscious, perceptions to create the illusory

landscape with all the artefacts and people that comprise it.

We all see with our mind's eye. And the 'real' landscape about us is created in part, and interpreted, by individual memories or past events that colour our vision - even sometimes blur it. Thus, everyone has more than a small amount of 'fiction' in their everyday seeing. When it comes to reading, this personal, private world, whether inhabited by others or not, must intrude into and influence the reader's interpretation of the text. One's past, one's likes and dislikes, one's loves, one's prejudices, all combine in a subconscious interpretation of the text.

Textual imagery has to be even more critical in children's literature than adult. Through the written (or spoken) word, there must be an evocation of the story being told. Mere 'words' are not enough - a visual response to the stimulus of the spoken or written word has to be a major part of the reader's, or listener's, reaction. There has to be, and this is seen especially in the 'Fairy Story', an illusory landscape. This is peopled with imaginary beings and strange creatures, all of whom are used to illustrate the moral to the tale - for most classical 'Fairy Stories' (of Andersen¹⁶ or the Brothers Grimm)¹⁷ do have a moral of the achievement (through hardship and strife) of an apparently unattainable goal. However, it is the very unreality of the setting that gives the Fairy Story at least part of its success. The fright engendered by the witches and hobgoblins; the claustrophobia brought about by the enchanted woods and castles; the *frissons* produced by the dangers of giants or man-eating ogres - all combine to create a resistance in the reader that, maybe paradoxically, welds him to the story. The conventions of the *genre* require this form of narration. There is also a standard register in which the stories are related and by which such tales can be recognised by the audience: "Once upon a time . . ." "There was once . . ." etc.

The various parts that compose a fairy story combine to create a familiar pattern. But, is this pattern comfortable? Certainly, if one considers the *Märchen* of the Brothers Grimm,¹⁸ there is no comfort offered nor intended.

To return to *Niggle*. There is no element of escapism intended here. Tolkien's thesis is that each of us has to create a 'real place' to inhabit within the external realities. It is not a place of escape. Rather, it is a personal construction of the outside world internally reconstructed. Without this concept, the harshness of life has no leaven. This mental construct is not seen as an ostrich-like burying of one's head in the sand - but rather as a goal of the idealist. The reader, therefore, creates, in his mind's eye, an idealized Valhalla which, perhaps through work and effort, may become an attainable Shangri-La. Perhaps Tolkien was trying to create a modern parable as opposed to a modern *Arabian Night* -

although he insists *Leaf by Niggle* is a true Fairy Story.

While Tolkien does underline the middle-class ethos of satisfaction with one's lot and position within society throughout *Leaf by Niggle*, he is more concerned with the concept of familiarity and home.

Was Frank Richards consciously doing the same?

However, the Greyfriars landscape, that has become so familiar through reading the *Œuvre*, starts by being familiar. Even the boy who has never been to Greyfriars has seen pictures of Eton and Harrow. From these roots, C.H. Chapman's illustrations are, I am certain, a clever revocation and reworking of their architecture. Although Frank Richards was convinced the artists never read the story, the illustrations have become, by their very presence within the text, an integral part of the Greyfriars landscape. The artist, who uses familiar places (and known to both Artist and reader) as the origins of his drawings, creates in the latter a feeling that he **knows** the fictional place, and, hence, the more readily enters into this 'real' landscape as does a willing, compliant participant in the story. This autonomous and subconscious mechanism of personal recognition of fictional places thus almost becomes a realization of a Jungian, primordial proto-memory whereby all readers, from this primeval tribal pre-memory, know where they are within the imagined landscape.

All around the fictional Greyfriars School there are, in reality, many archaeological sites. For example, Mr Quelch takes the Remove on a walk to a Roman remains (either well or stone, if my memory serves!). While this spot is entirely fictional, it probably derives from the Hengist Stone, which is not far from Frank Richards' own home - and, therefore, Greyfriars itself.

The buildings Frank Richards placed on his imagined landscape are, even if not immediately recognizable, vistas which one can create and see in

one's mind's eye. They serve to remind the reader, as they do, of 'bare ruined cloisters',¹⁹ ancient churches, old market places, open commons, as well as the great houses of the gentry.

All these common sights, and, indeed, sites, have a preconscious remembered structure and form. From personal knowledge and experience, this leads to an internally reconstructed vision by the reader.

The latter's interpretation may be 'wrong' from the author's point of view. But does this matter? Probably not.

So long as the reader gains insight into the text, the imagery created by the reader through the author's world must be accurate - to the reader. For example, we have all played the game of casting the characters in a favourite book for the stage or screen. Disagreement as to who is best for a particular rôle illustrates how we all read a text differently. We probably arrive at the same ideological conclusions about the text. However, individual responses must, by different routes of interpretation - both visual and auditory - lead to alternative, and highly personal, conclusions. Each reader has a concept of the text created internally from reading the text and reworking it according to his own personal philosophies and ideologies. The final reconstruct, therefore, must be different from person to person.

So long as 'you', the reader, comprehend and grasp the author's concepts and ideologies and 'see' some of his landscape, the text must, surely, be considered to have succeeded in transmitting the author's 'message'.

All this familiarity must lead to the reader feeling more 'at home' within Greyfriars itself, as well as feeling more comfortable with the text. The enjoyment gained from this sense of belonging in the landscape, and not being a mere onlooker, is at least one factor that explains the enduring popularity of Frank Richards' works ninety years after Bunter first tripped over Harry Wharton as he entered upon the Greyfriars stage for the first time.²⁰

End Notes:

¹Orwell, page 509.

²McCall, 1994, page 34.

³*The World of Frank Richards*, Title of the biography of Frank Richards, Lofts & Adley.

⁴*Leaf by Niggle*, J.R.R. Tolkien, first published in *The Dublin Review*, 432 (January 1945). Reprinted in *Tree and Leaf*, (with *On Fairy-Stories*) George Allen & Unwin, London, 1964.

⁵See Footnotes 4 and 6.

⁶Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*. My edition is in *Poems & Stories*, page 118. In the Andrew Lang Lecture in 1939, he delivered a paper entitled *On Faerie*.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Swift, 1726.

¹⁰Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865.

¹¹A fairy story, the best known version of which is in the French *Contes* of Mme de Villeneuve, 1744.

¹²*Wind in the Willows*, Kenneth Grahame, London, 1908.

¹³Helm, 1974, page 120.

¹⁴The hero of A.A. Milne's *Pooh* books: *Winnie the Pooh*, *the House at Pooh Corner*.

¹⁵The eponymous heroine of nine books by L.M. Montgomery, published from 1908 - starting with *Anne of Green Gables*.

¹⁶Hans Andersen (1805-1875) wrote over 150 fairy stories - some original, some rewritten folk tales.

¹⁷The Brothers Grimm (Jacob, 1785-1863, and Wilhelm, 1786-1859), collected and rewrote more than 200 tales and legends. Published under various titles, they are known, collectively, in the English speaking world as *Grimms' Fairy Tales*.

¹⁸*Vide Supra*.

¹⁹Knowles, David, *Bare Ruin'd Choirs*, Cambridge University Press, 1975. The title is from Shakespeare's *Sonnet* number 73:

That time of year thou mayest me behold
When Yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

²⁰*Magnet* number 1, 9th February 1908.



CHILDHOOD REVISITED

by Terry Jones



(Editor's Note: Here are two chapters from *A Stroud Valley Childhood* published by Alan Sutton, and written by Terry Jones, a long-standing supporter of the C.D.)

RHYTHM IS OUR BUSINESS

After war was declared in 1939 we entered into a period which has come to be known as 'the phoney war', when nothing happened. The troops were abroad, bored stiff, and thousands of children who were evacuated to the country were taken back home again by December. All entertainment was back to normal and the BBC was doing us proud. This was due to the fact that the Government had instructed them to sort themselves out, and provide the bored nation and forces abroad with the kind of entertainment that Luxembourg and Normandy had broadcast before they went off the air.

So on came *Break for Music, Workers' Playtime*, and great laughter shows like *ITMA, Hi Gang* and *Bandwagon*. But by far the most popular of the lot was *Music While You Work*, which went on long after the war had finished. This was two half-hour broadcasts at 10.30 am and 3.30 pm, Monday to Friday, of non-stop dance music, without any spoken word. Indeed, it was a strict Government instruction that no singing was to be broadcast. Nothing had to take the mind of the worker off his job in case of accidents.

So the factories were wired up with tannoy speakers and we loved it. The workers could sing if they wanted to, as long as they got on with the job.

Can you imagine hundreds of girls and fellows all bawling their heads off 'Rolling out the Barrels' and 'Run Rabbit Running' and 'Nightingale Singing in Berkeley Square', to name just a few of the songs we used to sing. It was hard to believe there was a war on.

The poor old office staff were all out of it, of course. They couldn't very well sing 'Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major', making up the wages, could they? (No, it was definitely a world of song for common workers in overalls!)

But, what to do when work is through? That was the problem! Dances, that was it! Live bands or records. Everybody dance! So every hall in the district was used for dances. Usually it was records in the week and a live band on Saturday nights, which we called the 'Saturday Hop'.

Now today a disco dance to me is a queer affair. How can you dance standing still? (They just stand and look at each other and shake about.) Dancing is what you see on the BBC's *Come Dancing* and everybody in my young days danced like they do on

the 'box'. All on the move all over the dance hall.

So one had to learn to dance. If a chap couldn't dance he might as well go for a walk, likewise the girls. At first the dance hops used to feature girls who couldn't dance, who sat alongside the wall looking very pretty in their dance dresses and silver dance shoes, but very unhappy. They were known as 'wallflowers'. Likewise the fellows who couldn't dance. They were known as 'Brylcreme boys', all plastered-down hair and patent leather dance shoes.

Then some bright Johnny who could dance would swan in chewing gum (like James Cagney did in the picture at the Gaumont that week) and slowly swagger along the line of girls like a farmer inspecting the animals at the local market, until he recognized one he knew who could dance.

Very politely he would say, "May I have this dance?" The sweet young thing would say "Of course" and away they would glide. All very civilized. At the end of the dance he would escort her back to her seat and say "Thank you", and swagger off.

Now, if you could score three times with the same girl you were in a position to ask her if you could bring her a lemonade, for alcohol was strictly barred at all small dances. In fact, at Cainscross Co-op Hall (where most of us Cashes Green crowd used to gallop about), when the pub drinkers turned out from the pub opposite and tried to get into the dance, there were three hefty bouncers there to see that they didn't! No boozers allowed.

As a result there was hardly ever any real trouble. But, as I was saying, if you got as far as the lemonade, then it was "Can I see you home after?"

From then on, if it was a moonlight night, and if the last waltz had been her favourite . . . Well, many a married couple in the war years started their romance at the 'Saturday Night Hop'.

But, you had to know how to dance. So that started a rash of dancing schools. Almost all of my Peewit patrol from Stonehouse Scouts decided that we should attend a dancing school. (By then tying knots, woodcraft, tracking and other fine, healthy activities for growing boys had lost their attraction.) I am sorry to report that the Peewit patrol had retired from active duty. We had abandoned the Scouts.

The fine, healthy activities for growing boys were chatting up girls from then on (and the leading chat-up centres were definitely the dance halls).

The leading dance school in the Stroud district was Miss Audrey Butt's. Audrey was a brilliant dancer and qualified teacher, very young and very good looking. Her assistant was younger and even better looking.

Bill Dowdeswell had an invasion on his hands for fourpenny haircuts and Woolworths ran out of Minora penny razor blades. You couldn't get a jar of Brylcreme anywhere! (It was under the counter in any case - severely rationed.)

The charge for an hour's dance lesson was a shilling and sixpence. Audrey taught using Victor Silvester records only. We had to stand in a line and move our feet about as instructed. First left out, right to side, left to right. Goodness knows what we were doing half the time. Slow, slow, quick-quick, slow. I must confess there was some 'horsing about', when Miss Butt was trying to get some idiot with lead in his shoes to get his steps right, and the rest of us were without supervision.

After the lads had made donkeys of themselves it was time for the girls to stop guffawing at our antics and get in line.

Then it was our turn. "You're not playing football, Nancy." "I never knew you had three feet, Edna."

But it was all good fun and it gave us all a passport to the 'Saturday Night Hop', because we were grouped together in couples for the last fifteen minutes and dancing cheek to cheek! (Even when you're learning.)

I have dozens of Victor Silvester records still. Every one is a memory, especially of Audrey Butt's School of Dancing. Yes, slow, slow, quick-quick, slow was the beginning of a great deal of happiness for me.

COME DANCING

Despite going the full course at Audrey Butt's School for Ballroom Dancing at Stroud in the early 1940s, I must confess Victor Silvester was in no danger from me as a rival.

I loved dance music and listened to it for hours right from a small boy. But my feet didn't act as they should have done once on the dance floor. Instead of 'quick-quick, slow' it was more likely I would do a 'quick, slow, quick', much to the annoyance of the young lady I would be partnering at the time. Her toes were subjected to grave assaults from my feet (the size of which had been inherited from my father, PC 97 of the Gloucestershire Constabulary).

The fact that I was a right 'kick starter' on the 'field of battle' was because I had latched onto the way I could always dance with Audrey Butt's beautiful blonde assistant. When Audrey saw that someone was holding back the progress of the class

she would surge ahead with the rest and leave the 'lame duck' to the tender mercies of Sheila. I played it dumb, so that every week Miss Butt would say "I'm sorry, Mr Jones, you'll have to stay with Sheila and practise your basic steps again. It's no use you coming into the waltz until you get the quickstep right!"

She said this as if it was some kind of punishment. I used to put on an air of deep disappointment and pretend not to notice the glares of my fellow 'Come Dancing gentlemen'.

"You jammy git" hissed Johnny (the toilet roll storeman at work). "Nobody else can get near Sheila with you clumping away with her." "Well, I can't help it if I can't dance properly", I yelped. "Rubbish", said Gerald Baker (late patrol leader of the 'Owls', Stonehouse 1st Scouts). "You can dance all right up in the office on the top floor." "What d'you mean?" "I know, I know," said horrible Gerald, "up there with old Bonzo Bingham, practising your Victor Silvesters with little Nancy from the drawing office, instead of doing the rewiring."

I was knocked out! That unspeakable idiot Bonzo had leaked the well-kept secret.

You see, we were both up on the top of the office yanking up floorboards and pulling out old wiring prior to the works electrician coming up to direct operations for rewiring. It was an ideal spot to do a good quickstep without being disturbed. But, as none of us could master Audrey Butt's lessons properly, we weren't getting far (especially after I had managed one 'quick-quick, slow' backwards and went right down into the ceiling space where we had just removed a floorboard). It was a miracle I didn't go straight through onto the typists underneath. But it was a sturdy old ceiling and held up 'against the attack' as it were.

Little Nancy from the drawing office used to come up with old blueprints for storing and take down more. She was only 15 and the junior runner - a kind of 'uppercrust dogsbody'.

We used to lie in wait for Nancy when we heard her coming up the stairs and then attempt to grab her. But she was quick off the mark and it took us twice around the whole floor area before we ran her to earth, usually around the back of the tannoy control.

The galloping around heard downstairs was put down to those noisy little fellows up there yanking up floorboards, you see.

We used to let Nancy go when we both had a big kiss off her (Hollywood style). But one day we were really depressed and didn't hurtle after her when she appeared with the ancient blueprints. Somewhat bewildered because the chase hadn't started as usual (quite frankly, between you and me,

I think she enjoyed it), our little lady wanted to know why the miserable faces.

"It's the blessed turns on the corner with Audrey's quicksteps," we moaned. "We can't get them right no-how." "I know how to do them," says our Nancy. "I'll teach you, on one condition." "What's that?" "You stop chasing me around the back of the tannoy every time I come up. Old Parker wanted to know how I got so out of breath the other day just climbing a few stairs. I said it was the dust up here!"

It was a hard contract, but we agreed, and Nancy (who was a superb ballroom dancer) used to give us our daily dancing lessons, until the works electrician wanted to know how much longer we were going to be pulling out those wires. (He'd finished making a carrier for his bicycle and wanted something to do.)

But by that time I was as good as any of the other pupils from the A.B. School. But my cover was blown by Misery Baker and I realized I would have to improve rapidly at the school or get 'done' by the gang.

So I had to relinquish the beautiful assistant. "You have improved, young Terence," she smiled. "You can trot off on your own now." (But I'll always remember that marvellous smile of hers!) Of course, now the pretence was over, I found I could get back to dancing properly.

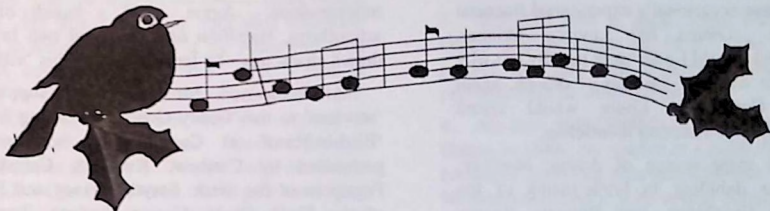
But the weekly 'strict temp dances' began to drag after a while. Especially so, because we were getting together a good collection of swing records and wanted to show off the sounds, as it were. This was the beginning of the disco, but we didn't call it by that name. One of our crowd was a genius with amplifiers and loudspeakers. We called him 'Bomber' because his ears stuck out like a B15 bomber's wings.

He built a super, big record player and we were most thrilled when the Co-op at Cainscross allowed us to install it in their dance hall. At first we played the usual Victor Silvesters and Josephine Bradleys to keep the ballroom dancers happy.

Then we booked the hall for Wednesdays as well. But this time, never mind the 'quick-quick, slow'. It was the birth of the Cainscross Rhythm Club. I had the most swing records, so I became the club secretary.

Fed on the huge supply of American musicals showing at Stroud's two cinemas, we were soon leaping and shaking about all over the place. It was called 'Jive' and Bomber's marvellous amplifier was belting out '9.20 Special', 'Woodchoppers' Ball', 'In the Mood' etc. every Wednesday, to dozens of happy teenagers.

Thank goodness Audrey Butts didn't look in! I fear that 'slow, slow, quick-quick, slow' had become a thing of the past!



My Worst Christmas!

Greyfriars Celebrities Recall Unhappy Times.

MR. PROUT, Master of the Fifth:
My worst Christmas was spent in the Rocky Mountains, when I was big-game hunting in 1896. Under the impression that I had tralled a grizzly bear to a remote part of the pinewoods, it was a distinct shock when I found that the grizzly bear had, in fact, tralled me. Figure to yourselves the position, my dear readers. I had dropped my rifle when climbing the tree—did I mention that I had climbed a tree, purely for strategic purposes?—and so I had nothing to harm the monster as it swarmed up after me. In that fearful moment, my dear friends, all my past life came



before me in a flash. What was I to do? (To be continued in the next 720 issues.—ED.)

HARRY WHARTON, Captain of the Remove:
My worst Christmas? Any Christmas! Can't dodge Bunter!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER:
My wurst Crissmus was the first wurst I can remember. We had dinner at Bunter Court, with turkey, chlokin, roste beef, vejeables, Crissmus pudding, mints pies, cream triphles, jellies, froot, nuts, raysins and wine. And as I was only 4 years old, I had bred and milk! How I ever stood that hari-rending aggerny, I can't imagine. Beests!

LORD MAULEVERER:
Two years ago my car broke down more than a mile from a railway station, and I had to walk! I did it, though; but I can't think of it without a shudder. I was lucky enough to get a lift part of the way, but for quite half the distance I had to use my own feet. Of course, I was laid up over the Christmas holiday with exhaustion; but I have a strong constitution, and I pulled through. That's all! Good-bye now, I'm tired!



BOB CHERRY:
Once, when I was a far, I was taken ill on the day we broke up for the vac, and I lasted ill until the day we went back to school, when I was passed by the doctor as fit. I wish I could have the germ that bit me!

FISHER T. FISH:
One Christmas I gave a man ten cents for a diamond pin he had picked up in the gutter, and I offered the pin to Moses, of Courtfield, for £20. When I picked myself up, I guess I moseyed out to look for the pilgrim who had welsheid my ten cents for a bit of bottle glass. It took me three solid weeks to find him and hammer the cents back often him, so I had no time for Christmas at all.

DICK PENFOLD, the Remove Poet:
This Christmas, so far, is the worst! I've eaten too much tuck to-night! Alas! If I could only burst, My skin would not be quite so tight!



HORSEY HAMILTON

BY PETER MAHONY



(OR HOW TO MAKE A PROFIT FROM ALSO-RANS)

Many of the stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood revolved around 'horses that came in eleventh'. All three schools had a gambling fraternity whose main object in life seemed to be to keep Messrs. Banks, Lodgey, Hook & Co. in luxury. Regularly, the 'Blades' backed their 'fancies' - with signal lack of success. But, like all compulsive gamblers, they kept trying their luck - and made a notable contribution to Hamilton's literary output.

Backing a losing horse is not particularly dramatic - provided the punter can 'pay up and look pleasant'. Unfortunately, most of Hamilton's 'lads' found great difficulty in covering their losses - hence, a host of dramatic incidents.

Some of Hamilton's gamblers - Vernon-Smith, Lumley-Lumley, Lord Mornington (before he lost the peerage) and Ralph Reckness Cardew were rich enough to indulge their passion for the 'gee-gees'; though even these occasionally experienced financial embarrassment. Others, like Levison, Skinner, Gerald Cutts and Gerald Loder were usually too wily to get into debt with the 'bookies' - though, again occasionally, Cutts and Loder would create repercussions by over-reaching themselves.

Hamilton's main source of drama, however, arose from the dabbling in horse-racing of his 'mugs'. Peter Hazeldene, Jack Wingate, Reggie Manners, Dicky Nugent, Rupert Valence, Stephen Price and Valentine Mornington all ran up debts which they could not pay. Most of them lumbered their friends and relatives with the task of bailing them out: once or twice they resorted to theft or fraud to meet the demands of Joe Banks & Co. In the process some of Hamilton's best writing and character-drawing emerged - for which all 'buffs' should be eternally grateful to the 'Sport of Kings'.

Hamilton's Sportsmen

The 'Blades', 'Bucks', 'Knuts', 'Giddy Goats' etc. of the three schools comprise a galaxy of 'characters'. At Greyfriars, Loder, Carne, Walker and Valence of the Sixth; Hilton and Price of the Fifth; Angel of the Fourth; Vernon-Smith, Skinner, Snoop and Stott of the Remove were regular punters. Smithy and Loder were the worst reprobates - the Bounder because he had no fear of authority; Loder because he had very few scruples. Mr Joseph Banks

of Friardale must have collected a small fortune from these 'sportsmen' over the years.

In Sussex, Mr Bill Lodgey catered for the book-making needs of St. Jim's. (Now and again Mr Banks turned up at Rylcombe as well - probably when Friardale was temporarily 'too hot' for him.) Knox and Sefton of the Sixth; Cutts & Co. of the Fifth; Racke, Gooke, Scrope, Clampe and, sometimes, Gore of the Shell; Levison, Mellish, Lumley-Lumley and Cardew of the Fourth; and Piggott of the Third were just as profligate as the Greyfriars 'Blades'.

Lumley-Lumley and Levison eventually reformed, but they, with Cutts, provided a series of episodes where Mr Lodgey & Co. did not come out on top. Lumley-Lumley, the 'outsider', was more worldly-wise than the seedy racing men with whom he dealt. Cutts and Levison were far cleverer than their peers - as well as being completely unscrupulous. Again, amid a bunch of seedy schoolboys, Hamilton had produced two brilliantly drawn characters - by far the 'best' of his 'villains'.

At Rookwood, Mr Joey Hook supplied his 'services' to the 'Giddy Goats'. Working from the 'Bird-in-Hand' at Coombe, he was regularly patronised by Carthew, Knowles, Catesby and Frampton of the Sixth; Smythe, Tracy and Howard of the Shell; Peele, Gower, Lattrey, Townsend, Topham and Mornington of the Classical Fourth; Albert Leggett of the Moderns; and Bertie De Vere of the Third. Of these 'lads', Adolphus Smythe, Leggett, Cyril Peele and Mark Lattrey were interesting studies, but the 'star' was, undoubtedly, Valentine Mornington. Initially, 'Morny' was an unpleasant, snobbish, mean-hearted villain. His gradual reform under the influence of Kit Erroll makes one of Owen Conquest's (Hamilton's) most gripping sagas. Mornington lost his title and his wealth chiefly because he did a good deed on the spur of the moment. Lack of the 'ready' put an end to his career as a gambler - though once or twice he 'broke out' with dire results.

When one adds the weaklings - Hazeldene, St. Leger (Cutts' crony), Algy Silver (before Jimmy sorted him out) - and the volatile 'kickers over the traces', like Hilton and Cardew; plus the buffoons - Bunter, Gussy, Tubby Muffin etc. - who

occasionally 'plunged' on the horses, it can be seen that the 'Turf' provided an absolute wealth of material and 'colour'.

It is well-known that Charles Hamilton enjoyed a 'flutter'. Generally, his 'flutters' proved expensive. I suspect that he 'recovered his losses' by plundering the history of horse-racing for plots and characters. The remainder of this article is aimed at proving my point.

Rookwood Racing Connections

1. Diomed, winner of the first Derby, was owned by Sir Charles BUNBURY, the driving force of the Jockey Club 1768 - 1800. Owen Conquest (Hamilton) used this name for a thriving town about 20 miles from Rookwood. It was in Bunbury that Mr Skinforth passed counterfeit banknotes ("Lovell on the Warpath", G.H.A. 1938).

2. HERBERT MORNINGTON Cannon was the champion jockey of the 1890s. The young Hamilton was probably 'following the horses' pretty closely during this period. Perhaps he backed 'Morny' Cannon's mounts! Whether he did or not, Hamilton certainly made a 'killing' from the jockey's name. Valentine Mornington - nicknamed 'Morny' - became a leading light at Rookwood through nearly the whole saga; and, for good measure, Hamilton also created 'Erbert Mornington, the true heir to the earldom. Two characters from one source! Good going!

'Morny' Cannon won all the classic races during his career. He was a 'late run' specialist who took exception to the riding tactics of the American, Tod Sloan. A complaint by 'Morny' after a race at Doncaster in 1900 led to Sloan being 'warned off' by the Jockey Club. (Sloan was the original of George M Cohan's 'Yankee Doodle Dandy'. Shades of James Cagney!) 'Morny' won the Triple Crown (2000 Guineas, Derby, St Leger) on Flying Fox in 1899. He retired in 1907 after 21 years of 'wasting' and hard riding. He then embarked on a life of free spending - which, sadly, whittled away his substantial fortune. Rookwood's Valentine was prone to similar profligacy. Cannon was a great-uncle of the redoubtable Lester Piggott.

3. William Arnold 'Farmer' HIGGS was Champion Jockey in 1906 and 1907. One of Owen Conquest's earliest 'new boys' was the overbearing Alfred Higgs who had to be vanquished by Jimmy Silver before the Classical Fourth could breathe easily. 'Farmer' Higgs, like 'Morny' Cannon, had a chequered post-riding life, failing as both trainer and horse-breeder. Alfred, too, was never so fearsome after Jimmy Silver had 'dusted' him.

4. Mr Tregonwell FRAMPTON, the 'Father of the Turf', was 'Keeper of Running Horses at Newmarket' for King William III. Frampton adjudicated in racing disputes before the Jockey Club came into being. Ronald Frampton, of

Rookwood's Modern Sixth, was definitely 'one of the lads' - a connection too marked to be dismissed as coincidental.

St. Jim's Scoops

If Owen Conquest dipped into the racing fraternity for characters, then Martin Clifford waded knee-deep. The *Gem* provided a surprising number of racing names, among them: D'Arcy, Lumley, Sefton, Hammond, Mellish, Pratt, Webb, French, St. Leger, Manners, Lowther, and Merry! At least seven of these became leading characters at St. Jim's.

1. James DARCY of Sedbury, Yorks, supplied the Royal Racing Stable of Charles II with 12 colts annually at a fee of £800 - big money in the 17th century. Darcys were also connected with the 'Royal Mares' which provided the roots of British bloodstock from the time of Queen Anne. Martin Clifford put an apostrophe into the name, and kept the aristocratic qualities and horsemanship of the Darcys alive in the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

2. In 1907, the Right Hon. Lawrence John LUMLEY Dundas, 2nd Marquis of Zetland, was elected Unionist M.P. for Hackney. Three years later Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the 'Outsider', arrived on the St. Jim's scene (*Gem* 129). Lord Zetland was much-travelled in early manhood - Jerrold was likewise in his childhood. Later, Zetland introduced the Tote to horse-racing (right down the Outsider's street!).

3. SEFTON was a great horse which won the Derby and St. Leger in 1878. The New House prefect was not such a thoroughbred. He was expelled from St. Jim's (*Gem* 446).

4. Mr Jack HAMMOND won the Derby with St. Gatien in 1884. He started as a stable-boy but a flair for heavy gambling won him a fortune. The poor in Newmarket found in him a kind benefactor. Harry Hammond, the St. Jim's cockney, also came from humble origins - Bethnal Green, "'Ammond's 'Igh-Class 'Ats". He too was generous-natured.

5. A much more significant connection is Colonel Henry MELLISH (1780-1827). He ran away from Eton, joined the 10th Hussars and indulged in such reckless extravagance that his colonel - the Prince Regent, no less! - sent him on permanent leave to shield other young officers from his deplorable example. Mellish must have been a 'goer' if he could shock 'Prinny'!

Mellish lost a fortune at cards and dice, but he became an important figure in the racing world. His abilities as a handicapper and match-maker were unequalled and he was in great demand at meetings around the country. Twice, he won the St. Leger, but heavy losses at cards forced him to sell all his horses. He served in the Peninsular War, displaying courage and resource under fire, but his gambling continued and the Duke of Wellington ordered him

home. Mellish spent the later years of his shortened life living on the fortune of his wife while he went in for cattle-breeding. Percy of the St. Jim's Fourth had the Mellish gambling streak, developed to a high degree, but he lacked the cash to emulate his notorious namesake.

6. The PRATTS, nephews of the great Fred Archer, were a racing family. Willie and Charles were trainers; Fred was a good jockey who won the 1000 Guineas in 1895. The New House Fourth Former may have originated here. Another New House boy (who was rarely mentioned in the *Gems*) may have owed his existence to Jem ROBINSON, the great 19th century jockey who rode six Derbys.

7/8. Two other New House characters who rarely appeared in the stories were prefects, George WEBB and Shell-Former, FRENCH. Fred Webb was Lillie Langtry's trainer; Tom French was a brutal rider who was sacked by his stable to make way for Fred Archer. Racing history was a natural plundering ground when Hamilton needed convincing names for minor characters.

9. The vacuous Arthur ST. LEGER was a crony of Gerald Cutts. Easily led, St. Leger had several anxious encounters with book-makers. Cutts generally, but not always, 'saw him through'. The connection of his name with the fifth of the great Racing Classics gave St. Leger a more prominent place in the St. Jim's saga than his weak character deserved. It is a name not easily forgotten. Hamilton used it on several occasions, e.g. in stories of St. Kit's, Oakshott etc.

10. All of which brings us to 'The Terrible Three'. John HENRY MANNERS (1778-1857), 5th Duke of Rutland, attained racing fame by lodging an objection to Running Rein, winner of a two-year-old race at Newmarket in 1843. The subsequent scandal, when Running Rein, having won the 1844 Derby, was found to be a 4-year-old, vindicated him. Harry Manners of the Shell probably owed his existence to Martin Clifford's knowledge of this major racing fraud.

11. Hugh Cecil LOWTHER, the famous Lord Lonsdale, enjoyed a richly varied career. At seventeen, he ran off and joined a circus. MONTY LOWTHER ran away from St. Jim's on two or three occasions to go 'on the stage' or 'into films'. The similarity did not end there. Lonsdale was a great patron of boxing (Lonsdale Belts), athletics, and horse-racing. He entertained lavishly and tended to boastfulness: like Monty, he had a high opinion of his own abilities, and, though good-humoured, was not pleased by jokes at his expense. Lonsdale liked to be noticed: his yellow coach, magnificent horses and liveried servants were the cynosure of all eyes at race meetings. Unfortunately, the Earl's extravagance dissipated his wealth and he ended his days living in what had been his stud groom's house in Rutland. One could see Monty coming a similar

cropper. Hard-headed husbandry of resources would not have been in Lowther's line.

12. The most surprising of these connections is JAMES MERRY (1805-77). Any similarity, except for the surname, between this ill-educated, uncouth, suspicious Scot and the cheerful, open, honest Tom is impossible to find. James was a hard, mean man. Money, cock-fighting and horse-racing were his chief interests. A quarrelsome man, Merry was always changing his trainers. He employed Tass Parker, an ex-pug, as his 'minder'. There is some indication that Merry's horse, Hobbie Noble, was 'got at' for the 1852 Derby by the notorious poisoner, Dr W Palmer (a heavy gambler). In 1860, Merry won £85,000 when his horse, Thormanby, won the Derby. He 'rewarded' his trainer with £1,000 and the jockey with £100.

A number of Merry's horses were guilty of 'in and out' running. He tended to blame his trainers for this; sometimes hinting that the poor performances were deliberately induced. This led to frequent friction and minor scandals: it is significant that Merry was never elected to the Jockey Club. I believe that this Scot's chequered career not only gave Martin Clifford the name for the Hero of St. Jim's, but also provided the background for a number of his yarns about seedy racing-men and lost wagers.

Rylcombe and Wayland

The WOOTTON brothers, Jack and Harry, at Rylcombe Grammar School formed a link with the contemporary racing world. Richard WOOTTON, an Australian trainer, opened stables at Epsom in 1906. His sons, Frank and Stanley, became his jockeys. Frank started riding at 13; was Champion Jockey at 16; remained Champion for four seasons (1909-12); became too heavy and retired, with 882 winners to his credit, in 1913.

'Old Man' WOOTTON was the plaintiff in an unsavoury libel case against *The Winning Post*. He was awarded judgment - with one farthing damages. I am sure that Hamilton was abreast of all this: it is too much of a coincidence that the Woottons, major and minor, joined Gordon Gay in the Empire Library in 1910 when their namesakes were the talk of the racing world.

The Champion Jockey of 1902 was W M LANE. He also rode Pretty Polly (of which more anon) to the Triple Crown in 1904. Frank Monk's chum, Eddie Lane, appeared regularly in early *Gems*. There was also William GRIGGS, a jockey circa 1907, who may have begat Mr Griggs, the Socialist firebrand of several Skimpole/D'Arcy stories.

4. St. Winifred's

Two of the 'Bucks' of the Benbow in these Owen Conquest yarns (*Gems* 1588 - 1649) were FENWICK and CHETWYND. Mr Noel Fenwick's

Mimi won the 1000 Guineas and the Oaks in 1891. Sir George Chetwynd, Bart. was an arrogant, overbearing Jockey Club Steward of the late 19th century. He betted for a living: Charles Wood, his jockey, 'pulled' horses for him. A scandal resulted, Chetwynd sued Lord Durham for libel and was awarded a farthing damages. He had to resign from the Jockey Club. This real-life character probably gave Hamilton a prototype to develop some of his seedier aristocrats.

'Friars' Fancies

Though the *Magnet* embraces fewer racing connections than the *Gem*, it does include two of Frank Richards' best roty creations. We'll save those till last! Lesser names are:

DESMOND, a horse-which ran unplaced in the 1899 Derby. I like to think that Richards (Hamilton) backed him and salvaged something from the wreck by creating Micky Desmond of the Remove.

Norah WILMOT was the first woman to hold a trainer's licence. She took over the stables from her father, Sir Robert, in 1931. She was well-known when Eric Wilmot came to Greyfriars from Topham in 1936 (*Magnets* 1457-60).

The SCOTTS were a famous racing family. William was an outstanding northern jockey - 9 St. Leger wins. John, a trainer, collected 41 Classic victories in the mid-nineteenth century. Their father trained for Sir John Lade (the 'villain' of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Rodney Stone"). James Scott, Temple's crony in the Upper Fourth, may have his origins here.

One of the Scotts' champion horses was Sir Tatton SYKES - 2000 Guineas, St. Leger and second in the Derby of 1846. Sykes of the Sixth?

A notoriously unreliable, bad-tempered horse of this period was VAN TROMP. The obnoxious OTTO, nephew of the tyrannical Mr Brander (*Magnets* 1169 - 1174), was a kindred spirit of this equine rogue.

CLAREMONT was second in the 1875 Derby: it was also the name of one of Greyfriars' minor rival schools.

The 5th Earl of Roseberry (1847-1929) bet that he would (1) marry England's richest woman (Hannah, daughter of Baron Rothschild), (2) own a Derby winner, and (3) become Prime Minister. He achieved all three, and won his bet. He was sent down from Oxford for owning a racehorse (LADAS). Later, when P.M., he named another horse LADAS, which won 2000 Guineas and Derby in 1894. Roseberry did it again with Sir Visto in 1895, and with Cicero (1905). What has all this to do with Greyfriars?

The Roseberry family name (like his racing colours) was PRIMROSE. It is typical of Richards' quirky humour to name that virtuous paragon

PENELOPE, Head of Cliff House School after the rather rakish Roseberry. Certainly, the dear lady would have been shocked to have such origins attributed to her. Or would she? After all, he was P.M. and aristocratic - and rich!

In the mists of 18th century racing, Captain Richard 'Mr Jockey' VERNON was known as the 'Oracle of Newmarket'. He was lessor of the Coffee Room which became the Jockey Club Headquarters. His horses Beau and Marquis won the first race under Jockey Club auspices (4th April 1752) and the first Jockey Club Challenge Cup (1768) respectively.

This lively gentleman **must** be the source for Herbert VERNON-Smith. Richards was too clever an author to miss such an obvious gift. The sardonic, businesslike, reckless Bounder, always seeking the limelight, was a copy of the gambling, drinking, connoisseur of horses. Even the 'new rich upstart' element was present. RICHARD Vernon and HERBERT Vernon-Smith could be described as 'soul-mates'. Almost Hamilton's best 'lift' from the racing world.

But not quite. One of the most prominent racing figures of the immediate pre-*Magnet* period was Major Eustace LODER. Between 1892 and his early death (aged 47) in 1914, 'Lucky' Loder was a leading owner and breeder. He owned the Eyrefield Stud in County Kildare, where he bred Pretty Polly, the magnificent filly which won the 1904 Triple Crown. Before her career was over, she had collected 22 victories worth over £37,000. Loder's luck was legendary during this period of his career. He became owner of Spearmint, the Derby winner of 1906; and also was invited to be a Jockey Club Steward. His luck eventually deserted him: he was the Steward at the 'Suffragettes Derby' (1913) who had to disqualify the favourite, Craganour. The strain of the betting public's hostility told on him; he fell ill and, surprisingly, did not recover.

Nevertheless, 'Lucky's' begetting of GERALD LODER, the blackguard prefect, seems obvious. When Gerald's career at Greyfriars is considered, it would seem that the luck was inherited. In normal circumstances, LODER, like Smithy, would have been expelled a dozen times or more. Frank Richards' genius for developing 'bad' characters from dodgy antecedents was never better displayed than in Loder and Vernon-Smith.

So that is it. A journey through Charles Hamilton's racing background. Convincing enough, I hope, to convince the reader.

One last thought. Did any of Hamilton's 'blades' ever back a winner? I cannot recall a single instance in *Magnet*, *Gem* or *Boys' Friend*. Letters, quoting chapter and story, to the Editor, please. Merry Christmas all!





THE GREYFRIARS CLUB



THE GREYFRIARS CLUB now in its 23rd year of operation and its 20th year of the formation of the **FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM AND LIBRARY** your Hon Chairman \ Secretary and Curator of the said museum . has very great pleasure in extending **THE HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS** to all of our connoisseur club members world wide - and in particular our C.D.C.D. Annual Editor Mary Cadogan and her husband Alex , as well as to all other enthusiasts of Christian goodwill and integrity everywhere, not forgetting the excellent printers whose work is before us every month without fail, and whose work along with Mary's has kept the flag flying in our hobby from 1947 to 1999.

May I refer you to the remarks contained in the 2nd para of our announcement on page 120 of the 1995 C.D. Annual - indeed the whole paragraph - and it is with pleasure, on behalf of the club, I can inform you we are still breaking the records Our last edition, the 64 page GRAND SUMMER FULL COLOUR EDITION 1999 of the **COURTFIELD NEWSLETTER** also contained over 52 colour photographs - many in full page size as befitting a pre millennium issue - and in addition to the colour photographs, scores of enthusiasts letters. It is also fitting to note that since our first issue way back in 1977 and under your Founder and Chairman's Editorship and management , to this present day, he has never instituted any charge for club membership. You only pay for the **Courtfield Newsletter** if you require a copy of it, and since our club is a non-profit making organisation, devoted to the stories and Christian ideals of our late Charles Hamilton. (FRANK RICHARDS, as we always knew him) you only pay for the actual cost of the newsletter and postage. Nothing else at all - even when meetings are held in our home and a full study tea and refreshment is provided free by your Courtfield Hosts time and time again, since we started the Greyfriars Club in '77. (see pictures in our last edition mentioned above.) To your Chairman it is a labour of love for our Christian hobby, and we love the interest shown by our many readers over the years - many of whom we have visited , by invitation, in their homes in England and overseas and who , similarly , have visited your Courtfield hosts . You can see the many pictures in both our **Courtfield Newsletters** and the C.D.A. Once again a very Happy Christmas to you all.

To celebrate the millennium, as a special present and welcome to our newer members, your Chairman is making available as reprints, (in response to requests) , a special **FREE GIFT** copy of the historic **COURTFIELD NEWSLETTER** No. 46. another collectors item, post free. Nos 47 & 48 - were our last issues with black and white photographs (another first before we introduced the fully coloured grand multi photographic issues) and both Nos., 47 & 48 will also be available at a nominal charge of 50p. each, to cover reprint charge and postage. Now you can actually catch up with actual past events and meetings of our grand club attended again and again by our late President, Howard Baker. You can read the many scores of letters and reports of the history of the club exactly as if you were there attending those very meetings at COURTFIELD, Ruislip, a district so much beloved by the late **GEORGE SAMWAYS**. (See his letters to me in our last GRAND SUMMER EDITION 1999) Magnet Editor, as well as the very warm and friendly letters from the late Eric Fayne so typical of his letters to us.

In response to many of your enquiries - yes we did enjoy our three months holiday this year, sailing out from Southampton to Australia on the 4th January and stopping first at the Azores , our second port of call being Bridgetown Barbados. We rambled through Broad Street to Trafalgar Square -complete with pigeons and a small plinth bearing a statue of Lord Nelson . The Parliament building is on one side of Trafalgar Sq. Next day we docked at St. Johns, Antigua and visited Nelsons Dockyard then on to Shirley Heights, with ruins of 18th century barracks and gun emplacements. Docking at St. Kitts we visited Piccadilly Circus (where they get these names from I just do not know) and Brimstone Hill Fortress, a magnificent fortress on top of a very high hill - all lovely, unique places. We spent the day there before sailing on to La Guaira Venezuela where we boarded a coach for Caracas. Three days later we docked at Puerto Limon, Costa Rica, en route to the Panama Canal. Three locks raise you 85 feet to the Gatun Lake, then another three lower you down again. Next stop was Manta and Monti Cristi , Equador , where we visited the beautiful church and town. Three days later we docked at Callao to visit Lima in Peru, where our first calls were the lovely San Francisco Monastery and the magnificent Lima Cathedral, with it's vast underground eerie catacombs and the Gold Museum owned by an elderly millionaire - with thousand of gold artefacts going back to Inca times. All too soon it was time to sail on to Easter Island , where we strolled among the giant statues. On to Pitcairn Island where we were able to shake hands & chat with Tom and Steve Christian, direct descendants of Fletcher Christian of "Mutiny on the Bounty" - a wonderful experience. Then on to call at Tahiti, Bora Bora, Tonga, and New Zealand before leaving the ship and spending a week in Sydney, where we climbed to the very top of the ironwork of the Bridge. On then to Brisbane to stay for three weeks with our son Friar Robert and his family, then another week in Bangkok before flying home. See full report and pictures in the **COURTFIELD NEWSLETTER** see above (& p.124 2nd para C.D.A'97) Next meeting 4th Dec 2.00 p.m. Please confirm attendance as usual.



Bob Acraman
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