

COLLECTORS DIGEST

2000

Annual

2000



TIGER TIMS 2^D

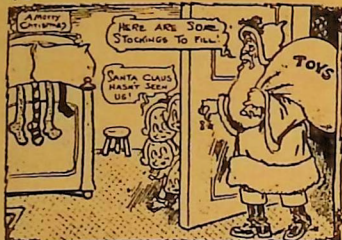
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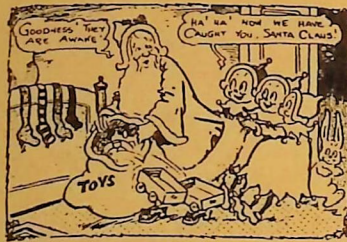
Dec. 27th, 1924.

CHRISTMAS
NUMBER.

THE BUMPTY BOYS & SANTA CLAUS



1. When Santa Claus came to the Bumpty Boys he did not know they were hiding behind the door.



2. And they caught his coat. "Ha, ha, Santa Claus!" they cried. "You didn't expect to find us awake, did you?" And Santa was so surprised.



3. And he dropped two little trucks out of his sack, and without knowing it, he put his feet in them. "Let me go, boys!" he said. "Oh, no!" laughed Dumpty.



4. But the trucks on which helped Santa to run away. And the Bumpty Boys held on. "Goodness, isn't he going fast?" cried Dumpty. "Where do you think he will take us, boys?" "Oh! Oh!" cried Billy Bumpty.



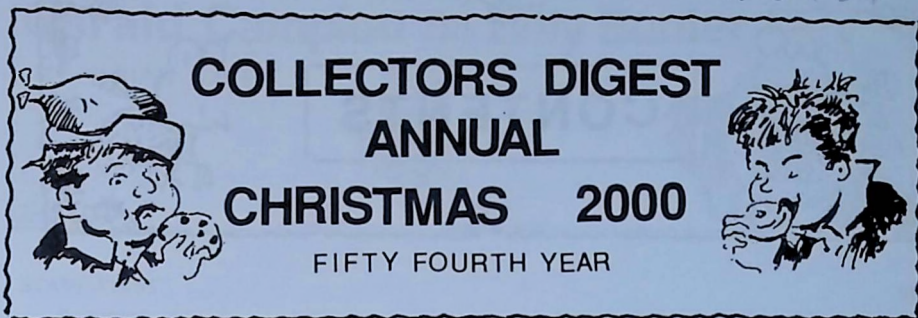
5. Presently they came to a dark cave. "Oh!" gasped the boys. "We don't want to go in there! Are you cross with us, Santa?" But the jolly old gentleman he only laughed at them as went in.



6. But they were pleased afterwards, for it was Santa Claus' cave where he kept all his toys. "You aren't afraid now, boys, are you?" he said. "Help yourselves!" And they did. Wasn't that jolly!



What excitement there was when the Bruin Boys saw their Christmas-tree this year! Porky-boy was so anxious to get at a box of chocolates from the tree that he got all mixed up with the steps. "There ought to be a ship for me somewhere!" said Tim, climbing up; but he pulled over the tree, and wasn't Mrs. Bruin cross!



EDITOR: MARY CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM,
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FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

Once again we are celebrating the season of Peace on Earth and Good Will to all Mankind. I hope that our Annual will bring an appropriately warm and golden glow to your Christmas festivities and the early days of the New Year.

I feel that, as always, it includes something for everyone, as it touches on so many aspects of our hobby. As well as recollections of favourite story-papers and books, we have film and radio memories and some looking back to the early days of the *last* (the twentieth) century. As well as the ever popular school story weeklies, papers featuring detectives and tales of high adventure are also in the limelight.

I am, of course, grateful to all our contributors, and particularly to Una Hamilton Wright, both for her article about her uncle, Frank Richards, and for allowing me to publish his *Some Thoughts of a Boys' Writer*. Our warm thanks are also due to Henry Webb for his fine cover-drawing and article headings.

This is also the time to express appreciation of help with the Annual and throughout the year with the monthly C.D. from Mandy, Freda, Margaret, Michael, David and everyone else at Quacks, our printers.

Last, but obviously by no means least, I thank all you loyal subscribers to, and supporters of, the C.D. I always like to think of you reading the Annual in the days immediately before and during your Christmas celebrations, when brightness and hope are all around us.

It only remains for me to send every one of you the time-honoured greeting:

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, HEALTHY AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.

MARY CADOGAN.



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Gerald Campion as Billy Bunter

BY BRIAN SAYER



STAND FIRST

SUDDENLY, there he was in the doorway of the restaurant.

It was William George Bunter straight out of a Chapman drawing.

He blinked round through his spectacles and grinned.

"I say, you fellows! This spread tonight is all on me.

"You might have to lend me a few quid, though, because after I left Bunter Court in one of the pater's Rolls-Royces I realised that I'd left my wallet on the grand piano in the blue drawing room."

In fact he did not utter those words but he might well have done.

A group of Hamilton fans gathered in restaurant's foyer came the closest they were ever likely to in meeting the most famous fat schoolboy in literature.

They were about to enjoy a spread, I mean dinner, with actor Gerald Campion whose remarkable performance as the Fat Owl in the BBC television series is remembered fondly.

It happened on a balmy evening in Broadstairs, on the Isle of Thanet, where so many of the author's golden period stories were rattled out on his trusty Remington.

Thanet areas were sometimes featured or were mentioned in the Magnets of the 1930-40 period.

Bunter's grub-hunting career nearly came to an end near Margate in the Muccolini series when the circus boss and enemy spy left the Owl below some steep cliffs, trapped by the in-rushing tide.

Pegg Bay in Greyfriars lore was probably borrowed from Pegwell Bay, Ramsgate.

Charles Hamilton, or Frank Richards as we best know him, lived – as devotees are well aware – at Rose Lawn, Percy Avenue, Kingsgate.

In summer 1683, Charles II and his brother the Duke of York, later James II, came ashore there.

The arrival was at the hamlet of Bartholomew Gate. As a tribute to the "merry monarch" the name was changed to Kingsgate.

It seems fitting that another king, the king of the school story, should live there.

It is a pleasant part of Broadstairs with the cliffs and sea within easy walks of the homes. It would have been more isolated and peaceful when Richards moved there about 30 years before his death.

For the second year in succession (1999) The World of Frank Richards was a highlight of the Broadstairs Celebrity Connections festival.

It was joyous to meet other enthusiasts who had travelled long distances. The programme included visits to Kingsgate and to Port Regis where items associated with the writer were on view.

Mary Cadogan spoke about Greyfriars at the seminar and Una Hamilton-Wright shared some of her childhood memories of visiting her uncle in Kingsgate. (Evidently an astute little girl, she mentioned that she had 'recognised one or two aunts' in the author's schoolgirl tales.)

The amazing John Wernham, in his 90s and from Maidstone, shared his near encyclopaedic knowledge of Richards' works. Among the happy group were Darrell Swift, of Happy Hours, and Betty Hopton, known for her huge collection of Noddy memorabilia.

The grand occasion was a dinner at Marchesi's Restaurant in a road winding in the direction of Broadstairs harbour.

THE ACTOR WHO WAS BUNTER

"Put him in check trousers, school cap and blazer and I reckon he could play Bunter again."

Thus an overheard comment by one of the guests at the dinner in Broadstairs last year (1999) in honour of Frank Richards.

The passing tribute was to the guest of honour, actor Gerald Campion.

The actor was in his 20s when he played so convincingly not only a 15-year-old public schoolboy but the famous Owl of the Remove.

He is now in his 80s yet when he appeared among us in a Broadstairs restaurant he looked not that much different from the 1950s when as

WGB he rolled across our tiny TV screens.

He lives in France with Susan, his second wife. Vivacious Susan is in her early 50s and a former dancer.

The visit to Thanet brought her to familiar territory. She grew up in Birchington. She is, like her husband, an expert cook and has written a book on the subject.

Gerald told me: "Playing Bunter was the best thing I have done."

Yet he did not leap at the chance to play the Owl.

Gerald has combined acting with a successful career as a restaurateur. One of his businesses was in Ashford. Although an outsized schoolboy has perhaps overshadowed his acting career, Gerald has been cast in numerous stage and television productions.

He travelled from France to England for BBC Radio's "humorous" play *Whatever Happened to Mr. Quelch?* in which he starred as old Bunter with Nigel Davenport as grown-up Vernon-Smith.

I felt pleased when Gerald said it was an awful script. Probably other Hamilton fans who tuned in felt, like me, that it was a waste of talent and yet another example of the BBC's self-indulgence.

In the 1950s, Campion the RADA graduate was running a club he had opened near the Haymarket Theatre. It was the natural venue for theatre people.

On one occasion he noticed that a fellow actor had been looking at him in an appraising sort of way.

The friend was aware of the TV Bunter hunt. Wheels moved and an offer was made to Gerald Campion to take on the part of the Fat Owl.

"I said, 'no, I don't think so'," he recalled.

But the TV people persisted. They had found Billy Bunter.

The actor gave in and gave the definitive performance of the Removite. The BBC paid him £16 a week.

The actor visited Frank Richards more than once. Shortly before the author's death, one newspaper carried a delightful picture of him offering Gerald Campion (in normal dress, of course) a plate of cakes.

On one occasion, Gerald visited Rose Lawn with a young TV spark who greeted the great author with the words, "Wotcha, Frank!"

Hamilton puffed on his pipe and gazed, said Gerald!

Campion had read the Hamilton stories in boyhood and was familiar with the characters. Not so his agent. When the actor told him of the TV series offer he declared: "I've never heard of

Billy BUSTER!"

BUNTER AND A BIT OF BOTHER

Actors usually have a fund of funny stories.

Gerald Campion produced a gem at the 1999 Frank Richards tribute dinner.

One episode in the TV series told of Bunter's expulsion from Greyfriars.

A sequence called for a railway scene and the principal players were taken with a camera crew to a suburban station.

With commuters buzzing around, there was Mr. Campion padded up in school blazer and tight check trousers. There, too, was the majestic Kynaston Reeves in cap and gown as grim Henry Quelch.

The director told Mr. Campion to enter a carriage. From there, following the script, 'Bunter' wound down a window and wailed to the Remove form master: "Oh, sir! I don't want to leave Greyfriars."

Fellow passengers must have been amazed to see a man approaching 30, wiggled and dressed as a very familiar fat schoolboy.

So, too, was the actor, when the train moved off!

Mr. Campion told fellow diners: "I sat down with all these suburban housewives staring at me. All I could think of saying was, 'We're filming for television!'"

"When the train stopped at the next station I took down my case with WGB on it – and then realised I had no ticket and no money!"

This was a situation with which Bunter in the Greyfriars saga was well acquainted!

It was quite new to the actor.

"Somehow I managed to get through and rejoin the crew," he said.

The scene at the ticket barrier must have been comical, too.

(I believe the episode to which Gerald Campion referred was *Bunter Won't Go*. This ran after *Muffin the Mule* with Annette Mills.)

The young actors often changed and one or two boys passed through Greyfriars to become well-known. John Osborne was one; Michael Crawford another. The cast list of *Bunter Won't Go* has a Ronald Moody playing Hurree Singh.

BUNTER THE TV STAR

At the start of the 1950s TV was growing in popularity – despite passing cars buzzing and streaks across the small black and white screens.

At about this time, the brilliant idea of a Billy Bunter series was conceived.

Auditions to find someone to play Bunter

naturally drew Press attention and publicity for the fledgling series.

The Daily Mirror in 1951 carried an almost full-page feature headed 'Billy Bunter boys kept rolling up.'

A picture of a stomach-clutching Bunter from a very early Magnet was accompanied by a cleverly set-up one of a 19-year-old, weighing 19 stone, in owlish specs and school cap and his tongue hanging out as he gazed longingly at a plate of jam tarts.

Thirty-six would-be Bunters arrived at Lime Grove Studios.

The lads were not universally familiar with the plump lifestyle of WGB because of the pre-war demise of *The Magnet*.

As it turned out, professional actor Gerald Campion took the role in which he was described by one national critic as superb.

Bunter's fat squeak appeared on TV on Tuesday afternoons for six series.

That was that. However, such was the demand from young viewers (and no doubt adults as well) that he rolled back two years later in 1953.

Pressure from grown-ups who had read *The Magnet* caused the programme to be repeated at a later time.

The TV series had been suggested by producer Joy Harrington, a fan of the Greyfriars stories.

She later wrote that when she made her suggestion cynics said that modern children were too "jet-minded" to be interested in Billy Bunter.

Others showed "a tremendous and alarming seriousness".

The mailbag was filled with

letters giving minute details of Greyfriars from the width of the stripes on the school caps to the size of Bob Cherry's feet.

After the first modest production appeared from the tiny BBC TV studio, one viewer wrote: "Don't you realise that there are five hundred boys and thirty acres of playing fields at Greyfriars?"

Copies of *The Magnet* were sent (what happened to them?), and beautiful drawings and maps.

Meanwhile, an H aerial went up at Rose Lawn so that Frank Richards, then in his late 70s, could see the antics of his greatest creation on television.

"I just couldn't miss the first show," he told a reporter.

BBC producers and technicians spent about six hours at Rose Lawn filming the author for a



Gerald Campion and Joy Harrington at a rehearsal

curtain-raiser for the series.

(Does that film exist on some dusty BBC shelf?)

In number 54 (July 1951) of *Collectors' Digest*, Herbert Leckenby referred to Press reports of Greyfriars "coming to television in the near future".

He continued: "A columnist suggest that scores of thousands of adults will contend that Harry Wharton & Co. should appear at a more convenient hour - for them. Do I hear an echo?"

(This snippet was headed *Have you a Television Set?*)

Attending school in Canterbury I missed most of the TV adaptations of Greyfriars yarns. It was so frustrating. I had read and read again the Bunter books and a few inherited Magnets.

When I saw a couple of episodes at home in Margate in the holidays I enjoyed them but it was bread without butter.

It seemed so small-scale and lacking in the drama.

Gerald Campion, however WAS Bunter.

I once mentioned the series in a conversation with Edith Hood (Frank Richards' housekeeper). She said: "We didn't like it much."

This did not apply to the star.

In a four-way conversation at the dinner, Mrs. Hamilton-Wright told the actor that her uncle 'thought he was good'.

The TV series disappointed many Magnet followers.

Yet on a small budget it was a brave effort made memorable by the brilliant choice of Gerald Campion as the immortal Owl. (Imagine what an enterprising film-maker could have done with him and one of the big Greyfriars dramas.)

Another huge achievement was that it introduced Frank Richards to a new generation, boosted the post-war Bunter books sales and started many on the trail of the great pre-war story papers.

In an interview in 1991 Mr. Campion made a revealing comment. He named a "high up" at the BBC who was "very left wing" and who "could not stand the idea of Greyfriars", a public school. So he killed the series.



Season's Greetings to all from sunny Australia. WANTED: Schoolgirls' Own Library 1st Series - most issues. Have duplicates of various Girls' Libraries. Catalogues welcomed. ALISON AINSWORTH, P.O. BOX 40, CHARNWOOD, A.C.T. 2615, AUSTRALIA.

Greetings to all and especially our esteemed Mary! Following articles for sale: Pre-war Tarzan Books (no dustwrappers) 11 in all, bound N.L.s o/s 1921 291-316. Bound N.L.s 1st N.S. 1927 61-87. Pre-war: *William the Rebel* with dustjacket. Pre-war Thomsons: Wizards - 4, Dandys - 4, Hotspur - 1, Skipper - 2, Rover - 1. Wartime Thomsons: Wizards - 5, Hotspur - 15. Chums Annuals: 1927-8, 1925, 1939. Champions 37-1920s. Startler: 3-1931. Boys Cinemans 36-1930s. GERALD FISHMAN, 509 RAYMOND STREET, ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NY 11570, U.S.A.

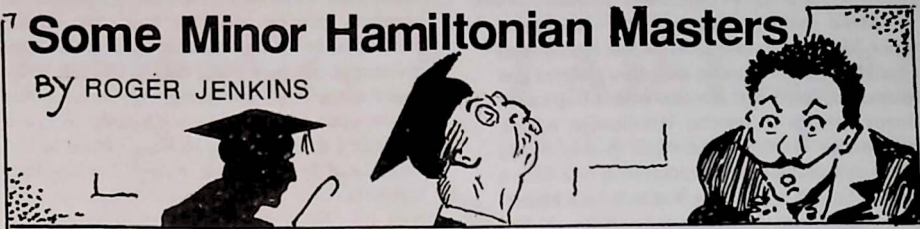
I'm Father Christmas at the local hall
This coming Xmas Eve
The beard is false and the paunch is pulp
In this world of make believe
My wishes to you all are not
At our age one's not false
Have lots to drink, forget to blink, and grab a nun for the Waltz.
JOHNNY BURSLEM

Best Wishes for a Happy Christmas and 2001 to all readers and especially Mary, Bill, Chris, Laurie, Les, Mac, and Donald. JOHN BRIDGWATER, 5A SAULFLAND PLACE, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET, BH23 4QP.

Season's Greetings to all Friends. Pre-war Thomson's "BIG" '5' for exchange only. KEN TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE65 6EA. TEL. BURTON-ON-TRENT 01283 703305.

Some Minor Hamiltonian Masters

BY ROGÈR JENKINS



Charles Hamilton obviously enjoyed himself tremendously in writing about exchanges between masters, particularly those involving Mr. Quelch, but because he was writing for young readers whose sympathies lay with their boyhood heroes he had to tread very carefully. Generally speaking, the masters represented obstacles in the path of the boys, or less often champions to protect them from injustice.

Tom Merry's oldest adversary was Herr Friedrich Schneider, the German master at Clavering. He was a Prussian, and held strict views:

"Poys are all the same, Herr Railton.

Dey haf high spirits till they are peaten.

All poys require peating every morning.

This was in the very first story, and in earlier days Herr Schneider was a potent threat to the juniors. When the war came, he was still at St. Jim's, and his temper was exacerbated by news of German defeats, though he would not have wanted to resign his well-paid post at the school in order to return to the Fatherland. In Gem 365 he was, however, something of a hero in exposing a German spy who had taken the place of the Australian, Mr. Carrington, who was engaged as temporary housemaster. Nevertheless, he was the villain of the piece when he attacked the French master, Monsieur Mornay.

At Greyfriars, the German master was a very minor character, but Herr Gans was a Saxon who resented Prussian ascendancy, and so he was portrayed as amore sympathetic character. During the war, Skinner drew an offensive caricature of him and, though Herr Gans interceded to prevent a flogging, Skinner and Co. began a series of events to make him think he was losing his mind. Even when all this came to light, Herr Gans was still forgiving. A more complete antithesis to Herr Scheider it would be difficult to find.

At Greyfriars, it was the French master who was most prominent. Monsieur Charpentier was the most well-rounded character of all the Hamiltonian language masters. His shabbiness, caused by the demands of his indigent relatives in France, was a byword at the school. He was usually a very poor disciplinarian, but in Magnet

1242 he was specially annoyed because the French franc had got stronger and his English pounds bought fewer Francs. He started rapping knuckles, and though Vernon-Smith regarded Monsieur Charpentier as hardly worth powder and shot, when picked on he wrote on the blackboard "Monsieur est très pauvre." This earned him a smack round the head. When the Bounder's £5 note went missing, he thought the French master had taken it, and a nasty situation developed until Bunter's trickery came to light. The Bounder had thrown a bag of flour over him in No. 1371, in the Smedley series. The French master forgave him, when he understood the culprit would be expelled. Vernon-Smith sold his diamond pin and anonymously sent the French master the £40 needed for nursing home treatment for his nephew Henri.

Henri had been a trouble to his uncle for years. In No. 438 Monsieur Charpentier was betting with Joey Banks hoping to send comforts to Henri who was a prisoner of war. Wibley's impersonations of the French master sorted out the mess. These impersonations went on for many years until in No. 1536 the two French masters came face to face, whereupon Wibley was expelled, and came back disguised as Popper. Poor Mossoo's classes became more riotous than ever.

Mr. Bootles of Rookwood was an unusual type of form-master. He seemed too gentle to manage a Fourth form, and his habit of ending his sentences with "What? What?" gave him an old-fashioned touch. Yet he was not without courage, and when Dr. Chisholm was about to administer an unjust flogging he interrupted the proceedings:

"Have you taken leave of your senses, sir?"

"No sir, I have not. I protest in public since you will not hear me in private. I protest, sir, against this act of injustice."

Mr. Bootle then ordered Silver to leave the Hall, for which action he was dismissed. When it became known that Leggett was the perpetrator, the Head refused to change his mind about the dismissal. The rest of the staff, with the exception of Mr. Manders, resigned in sympathy,

and the strike of the masters began.

About half-way through the Rookwood series, Mr. Bootles retired. This was forced upon Charles Hamilton because the editor asserted that readers confused Mr. Bootles with a boy called Bunny Bootles in another Hamiltonian school. As Charles Hamilton remarked, it was hardly likely that readers would confuse a boy with a master, but the real reason was to have a Fourth-form master who was young and popular. At first a Mr. Cutts succeeded Mr. Bootles, but his severity eventually forced the Head to dismiss him. Like Larry Lascelles, Dicky Dalton had been a professional boxer. When the Head learnt about this, he asked him to resign. He changed his mind, however, when an Old Boy with a grievance came to the school to take revenge on Dr. Chisholm personally, and Dicky Dalton intervened. The Head then asked him to remain at Rookwood as a favour to him. Perhaps Dr. Chisholm felt the need of a bodyguard.

Mr. Ratcliff of the New House at St. Jim's was hardly a minor character, but he did have a very minor role as Fifth-form master. In Gem 858, Figgins was going on home leave, and saw a £5 note left on the master's desk; he slipped it into his Livy, and went off home. Circumstances persuaded Mr. Ratcliff to suspect Cutts of stealing it. When it fell out of his Livy in the Fifth-form room, Mr. Ratcliff was astonished:

"You accused me of stealing it! It was in your Livy all the time. You put it there and forgot. And you accused me!"

"I-I-I" Mr. Ratcliff spluttered.

"Apologise" snapped Cutts.

And a public apology before the assembled school was forced upon the hapless Mr. Ratcliff in "The Housemaster's Mistake".

Mr. Selby had perhaps more reason for his bad temper. He suffered from indigestion, and the fags of the Third Form were hardly angelic. In "Taming a Tartar", the fags decided to buy him a birthday present to mellow him. As Manners minor said, when they were collecting money from the Fourth and the Shell, even murderers had been known to be fond of white rabbits. Trimble suggested buying a birthday cake, which would please their form-master and probably be given back to them to eat. Trimble then ate the cake, and filled the box with a brick and newspapers, for which the whole form was caned. The fags then reverted to their old methods, and were consoled by hearing Mr. Selby's cry as a bag of flour fell on his weary head as he entered his bedroom.

Mr. Selby came to unwanted prominence over the matter of the French banknote for 10,000 French francs, which he purchased when

francs were 50 to the £1. It was a speculation he hoped to gain by when the franc rose on the exchanges, but it had gone down, and the £200 investment was now worth only £110. Mr. Selby gazed at the note, wondering whether to cut his losses, when a knock came at his study door, and he slipped the note into a Holiday Annual he had confiscated from Levison minor. Levison later re-appropriated his book, and the banknote went with it. The form-master had to explain the matter to the Head, and Dr. Holmes was surprised to learn that a member of his staff was indulging in speculation. Mr. Selby wanted to call in the police, but the Head was blunt:

"You have the right to call in the police if you so decide. But I must tell you that if the police are called into this school owing to your own carelessness with your property, I shall expect you to resign your position here."

The same ultimatum applied if Mr. Selby were to start civil proceedings against Levison's father. It was a no-win situation for the form-master, but the real villain, unable to pass the banknote, left it anonymously on the Head's desk after Levison major had been sent home, and Levison minor was in the form-room.

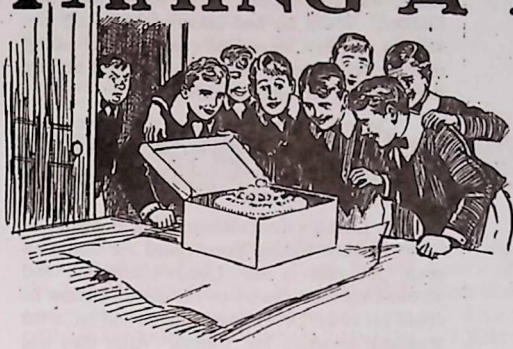
Mr. Roger Manders was the most completely drawn of all the unpleasant masters. With his elastic-sided boots, his interfering ways, and his devious maliciousness, this chemistry master, who ruled the Modern House at Rookwood, was a character whose aspects were firmly etched into the mind of the reader. These traits were never better displayed than in the famous story "Tea with Mr. Manders". He invited the Fistical Four to tea, knowing well that it would stop them playing in a match. Unknown to them, some tricks had been played in the master's study: fireworks were put in the grate, a pin in the chair, a stopper in the spout of the teapot, and the cake ruined. It was a tea party that ended in tragedy, the Fistical Four being blamed for it all, but they got their own back later.

When the school had to spend Christmas at Rookwood, under the headship of Mr. Manders, all sorts of things happened including Putty Grace dressing himself up as Mr. Manders' abandoned wife. More seriously, Mr. Manders contributed to put Mr. Dalton in the wrong just before Dr. Chisholm was due to return, and only the intervention of the juniors foiled his plan. Both Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Manders had a nephew in the school, but Marcus Manders was a cut above Bartholomew Ratcliff in terms of depth of study of character. They were both sneaks and also had more serious faults of character. Their uncles had no objection receiving this kind of knowledge, but they balked at dishonesty.

The German master at Rookwood was not a

Read this Rollicking Fine Story of the World-famous Tom Merry & Co.!

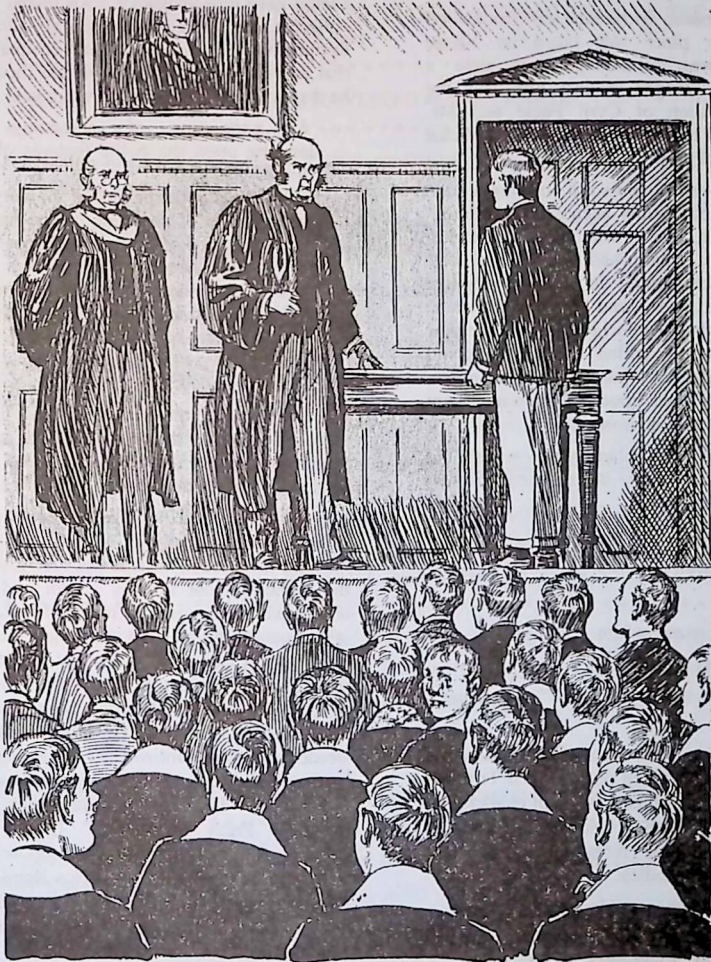
TAMING A TARTAR!



The Heroes of the Third Form at St. Jim's have tried many methods of "getting even" with Mr. Selby, their severe Form master. But their latest scheme appears to be a masterpiece! This is one of the most entertaining school stories ever written by your favourite author—

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE HOUSEMASTER'S APOLOGY!



Mr. Ratcliff spoke in halting tones. But he had to speak. Cotts stood out before the Fifth, and Mr. Ratcliff tendered his apology for his groundless suspicion. There was a deep silence while he was speaking—only Ratty's thin, acid, faltering tones were heard.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 853.

native of that country. Mr. Flinders lodged in the Modern House. He was seldom mentioned in the stories. The French master, Monsieur Monceau, was featured more often. Jimmy Silver was detained in Mossoo's study to write out an imposition:

Mossoo hated open windows, like most of his nation. Even on summer days his study was hermetically sealed. Apparently he breathed the same air over and over again, and liked it with a ripe flavour of age. Jimmy Silver did not like it one little bit.

Monsieur Monceau had a gold watch that disappeared, and Jimmy Silver was suspected. As Lovell said:

"If Mossoo wasn't such a silly old cackling goose, he would know better."

Dr. Chisholm heard these words, but ignored them. It was just possible that he agreed with Lovell.

When Monsieur Monceau left Rookwood temporarily, his place was taken by Victor Gaston who was something more than a schoolteacher. Ranged against him was the curious combination of Cyril Peele and Mr. Greely, the latter having had some idea of Victor Gaston's criminal past.

Mr. Lathom of St. Jim's did not play a large part in the stories, mainly because Mr. Railton, the housemaster, dealt with most offences. Nevertheless Mr. Lathom had some of the most individualised characters in his form, like D'Arcy, Trimble, Racke, and Cardew. He came into his own in the Angelo Lee series. The new boy wanted to be expelled so that he could become an air pilot. Lee pretended to be simple, and Mr. Lathom's reactions (rather reminiscent of Mr. Bootles') were amusing:

"Be Silent! I do no blame you – you should never have been sent here. But be silent. Say no more."

"No more," said Angelo.

"What? What?"

"No more."

Mr. Lathom gazed at him.

"What do you mean, Lee?"

"You told me to say 'no more'" said Angelo, innocently.

It was possible at times to pull Mr. Lathom's leg. Figgins had promised not to touch Trimble, who overheard the promise, and kept challenging Figgins to a fight. Cardew told Mr. Lathom that Figgins was suffering from cold feet, and suggested various remedies:

Little Mr. Lathom, kind-hearted and unsuspecting, peered at Figgins.

"I am afraid you can have neither a hot-water bottle nor a foot-warmer in the

form-room, Figgins," he said kindly. "But I will allow you to change your place and sit nearer the fire."

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell at St. Jim's, was considerably more severe than Mr. Lathom. When he had detained Mr. Railton's nephew, Victor Cleeve, and caught him climbing over the school wall, Mr. Linton grasped him by the ankle and brought him down:

"Cleeve! You have dared to break bounds when you are under detention," exclaimed the master of the Shell, his voice high with anger.

Mr. Linton's most embarrassing moment was when Grundy, having been caned for doing no prep, put gum in Mr. Linton's armchair and screwed up the drawers of his desk. Before he could get away, Dr. Holmes entered and sat in the armchair, awaiting Mr. Linton. After they had discussed an obscure passage in Euripides, Dr. Holmes couldn't get up, and his gown tore as Mr. Linton gave him assistance. An Inland Revenue collector then entered, and when Mr. Linton tried to open his desk drawer to get a cheque book so that he could pay the long overdue Income Tax, he discovered that the drawer was stuck:

An expression of incredulity was dawning upon the polite features of Mr. Slooth.

If this belated taxpayer, on the very last possible date of payment, on the day the very last period of grace was up, could not get at his cheque book, it was very extraordinary – very extraordinary indeed. It was, in fact, too extraordinary.

Mr. Slooth was accustomed to all sorts of wiles on the part of those who couldn't or wouldn't pay up.

Mr. Linton pulled the drawer strongly, the handle came off in his hand, and he fell back against the screen that concealed Grundy. The last Mr. Slooth saw was Mr. Linton chasing after Grundy.

With this hilarious episode, our review of some minor masters is at an end. If Greyfriars has had little mention, it is because it represents the author's most famous school and the one about whom he wrote most of all. As a consequence, the majority of masters are scarcely in the minor category. But there is one book to which reference must be made, if only because it is quite certain that Charles Hamilton read it. "The Lanchester Tradition" by Godfrey Fox Bradby was first published in the spring of 1914 by Smith Elder, but it was overshadowed by the Great War. The book was republished by the Richards Press in 1954. Bradby was a schoolmaster himself, and was a housemaster at Rugby from 1908-1920. Charles Hamilton must have possessed the original edition. The book deals with the reactions of the staff to a new Headmaster, Mr. Flaggon. A truculent housemaster, Mr. Chowdler, more or less ran the

previous Headmaster, and refused to co-operate with the new one, who was of different mettle. The novel is all about the staff with a boy mentioned here and there as a means of focussing the disputes. Mr. Chowder was asked to resign, but he claimed the right, as a master of many years' standing to invoke the statutes of the school, which enabled him to stay at the school until the Governors had judged the case. There is

just such an incident in the Brander series, when Mr. Quelch is dismissed and invokes the Greyfriars statutes. Charles Hamilton had a number of hard-back school stories in his library, but "The Lanchester Tradition" was the only one from which he borrowed. Probably he too would have liked to write a story solely about the teaching staff, but of course he dared not do it. What a pity!



Boys' School Stories – approaching 15th year of buying and selling. Are you on my mailing list for my termly catalogues? A bit of Bunter but lots more – old favourites such as Avery, Bird, Bell, Cleaver, Goodyear, Hadath, Havilton, Mowbray, Poole, Reed, Walker – plus lots more – adult school novels old and new, public school memoirs and histories, etc. etc. S.a.c. (and wants lists) to: ROBERT KIRKPATRICK, 6 OSTERLEY PARK VIEW ROAD, LONDON, W7 2HH

 Best Wishes to Mary and all hobby enthusiasts. If you are not on my list to receive free catalogues full of hobby "goodies" please write: JACK WILSON, NOSTALGIA UNLIMITED, 19 DUNBEATH AVENUE, RAINMILL, PRESCOT, MERSEYSIDE, L35 02H

 Season's Greetings to all hobby friends from NAVEED HAQUE, CANADA.

 Best Wishes to all hobby friends. JACK HUGHES, TOWNSVILLE, AUSTRALIA.

 Season's Greetings from down under. ANDREW MILES, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA.

 Still Wanted: Champion Library war stories. Greetings to all OBB readers. J. ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM, HANTS. PO15 5AH.

 Best Wishes to all at the London OBBC and thanks to Samantha for letting me our every month!
 LEN COOPER

 Season's Greetings everyone, especially South-Western members. Grateful thanks Tim and parents for the Bunter-like spreads. REG ANDREWS, SALISBURY.

 Required: *Schoolgirl* and *Schoolgirls' Own*. Compliments of the Season to all readers. D.D. BALL, 9 BROOKFIELD RISE, MIDDLE LANE, WHITLEY, MELKSHAM, WILTS. SN12 8QP.

 Season's Greetings to all hobby friends from RON, KIT, SUSAN AND NEIL BECK.

 Season's Greetings to all Hobby Friends, past, present and future. JOHN BECK, 29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX.

 A Very Merry Xmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year to readers everywhere. BILL BRADFORD.

 Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year to all C.D. readers. ERIC BAINES, NOTTINGHAM.

Those Were The Days

BY BILL BRADFORD.



I found it difficult to decide what to write about this year, partly because I have previously covered my favourite authors and weekly boys papers but also, because I am much older than most of you, my memories are largely of an earlier decade before many of you were born.

Reflecting on my happiest youthful reading memories, I decided to delve into a field that would give me pleasure to describe, so if this is not to your taste, tough luck – move on to the next contribution!

As an only child of a broken marriage and having a mother with cancer (no violins please) life was not all fun, and the cinema and reading were probably my main joys... The big day of each month was the first Thursday when most of the Amalgamated Press Libraries appeared. At this time, in the 1930s, they were nearly all priced at four pence, of 96 pages and about 7" x 5½", with colourful covers which usually gave a fair indication of the contents. Much as I loved my weekly *Magnet*, *Chums*, *Modern Boy*, etc, the thrill of an early morning visit to my newsagent and the sight of *Boys' Friend Library* (4), *Sexton Blake Library* (4), *Schoolboys' Own Library* (3) and *Champion Library* (2) was never equalled until I first visited Norman Shaw in about 1970.

My local newsagents were a Mrs. Badger and her son Jack, a suffered from T.B. who always reserved my *S.O.L.s*. For the rest it was a question of finance and choice, in that order! Fortunately my pocket money was generous, probably because both parents had a guilty conscience where I was concerned. Alas, money will buy many things in life but not true happiness.

According to Lofts and Adley, around 200 past publications could be classified as Library, but many weekly publications bore that description, for example the *Magnet* and *Nelson Lee*. I am only going to refer to those published when I was a lad, plus some that were still around as 'remainders', so here goes.

SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY. Amalgamated Press 3.4.1925-6.6.1940 = 411 issues

First published at the rate of 2 per month, with 64 pages, these were increased to 3 monthly

and 96 pages. In all, Charles Hamilton wrote 340 (*Greyfriars*, *St. Jim's*, *Rookwood* etc), E.S. Brooks contributed 53 while Michael Poole and others, including G.E. Rochester accounted for another 18. Nearly all were reprints from earlier serials in the weeklies, and it is often said that the abridged versions of these made poor reading, but this did not spoil the pleasure of those of us reading a yarn for the first time. Indeed it often eliminated a first chapter which was a synopsis of previous events. In those days I usually read the Brooks stories first since adventure stories held me more than school tales. I regret this is probably still true.

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY. A/P.

Sept 1906-4/5/1925 = 764

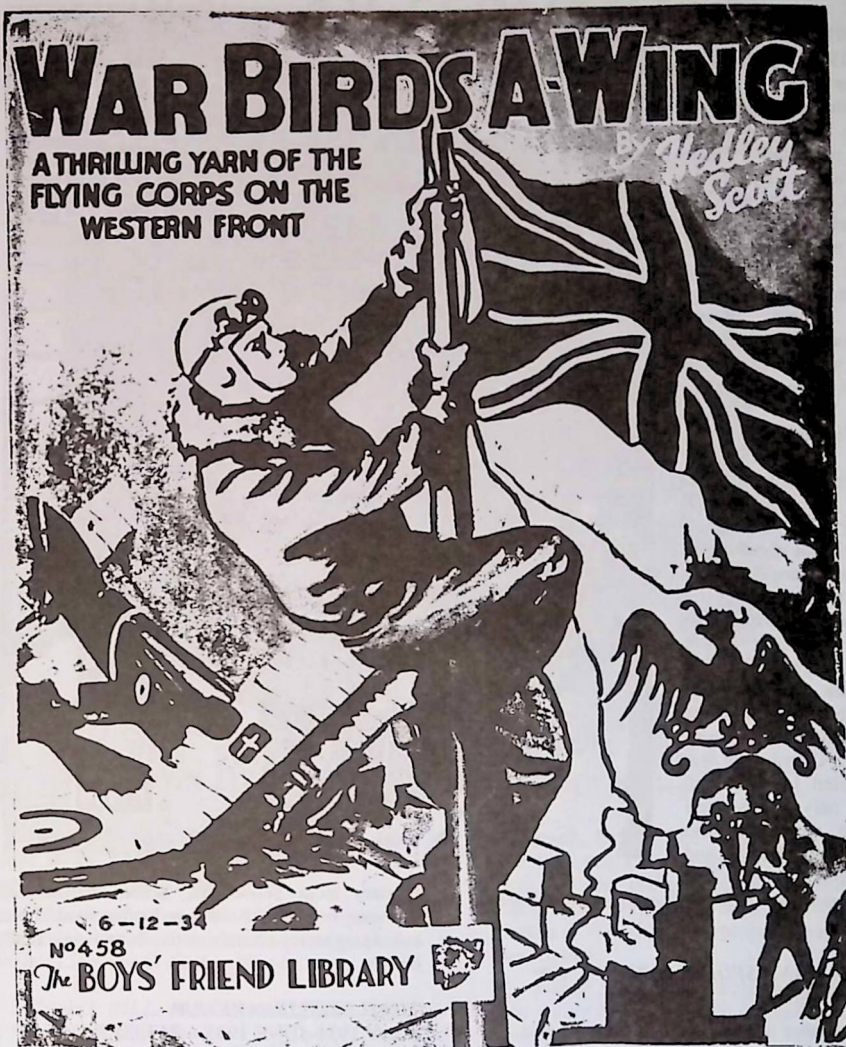
3.6.1925 – 6.6.1940 – 724

Again, almost all reprints from earlier A/P papers but they had everything – Charles Hamilton with the *Rio Kid* and *Ken King*, W.E. Johns and *Biggles*, Edwy Searles Brooks with *St. Frank's* and *Waldo*, George E. Rochester with everything from *Grey Shadow* to the *Flying Beetle*, and not forgetting the *Captain Justice* stories by Murray Roberts... My first purchase was No. 371 entitled *Dead Man's Isle* by Hedley Scott (Hedley O'Mant) in 1933. No. 204, *Crooked Gold*, anonymous, was a reprint of *Meet The Tiger* by Leslie Charteris. I once had a copy but gave it to a friend before I knew its rarity and value! Originally issued at the rate of 3 per month, this Library was increased to 4 from February 1919, also the price, from 3d to 4d. Of all the libraries I consider this to be the most interesting and collectable.

CHAMPION LIBRARY A/P

Feb 1929 – June 1940 – 274 2 issues per month

I think this library was entirely reprints from the *Champion* and *Triumph* weekly papers, with a very high proportion of sporting and First World War stories. A fairly limited number of authors were involved, including D.M. Cumming-Skinner writing as Douglas Dundee, and E.R. Home-Gall as Rupert Hall and Edwin Dale. Not one of my favourite 'monthlies',



probably because of only 64 pages for my money, plus I was never a fan of the weekly *Champion*.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY A/P
 20.9.1915-4.5.1925(382)
 3.6.1925-Oct 1940(744)
 Nov. 1940-May 1956(358)
 June 1956-June 1963(168)

Surely the longest run of any library. Nearly all original stories and one instantly thinks of authors such as G.H. Teed, Gilbert Chester, John Hunter, Rex Hardinge, Anthony Parsons, John G. Brandon, Gerald Verner/Donald Stuart, Pierre Quiroule, not forgetting William Murray Graydon who probably contributed more to the

library than anyone else (115 on a quick count!). My first acquaintance with Sexton Blake was in *The Bathing Pool Mystery* by Alan Blair No. 492 which I received when laid up with chicken pox on my 13th birthday. A vivid memory as my party went on, below, without me – not enough phones in those days for a last minute cancellation!

This issue was enhanced by the Eric Parker cover, the artist who illustrated most of the library between 1930-1954. Other covers from No. 1(1915) to No. 184 of the Second Series were largely illustrated by another outstanding artist, Arthur Jones. Of all the libraries this is the one most sought-after today.

DIXON HAWKE
LIBRARY D.C.Thomson
 14.7.1919 – 27.12.1941 –
 576 Size 5½ x 3"

Published at fortnightly intervals but not always on the predicted date. Commencing with 100 pages it was increased to 132 pages by No. 195, then to 160 pages at No. 411, when it then contained 2 complete stories. Although the authors were anonymous, thanks to Bob Blythe we know that at least 26 were written by Edwy Searles Brooks, mainly featuring Marko the Wonder Man, who had much in common with Waldo, another E.S.B. character! I still have a few of the original manuscripts. Many well known authors are said to have written for this library, including John Creasey and Lester Bidston. I tackled D.C.T. a few years ago on this subject but was told the information was not now available. Distribution was very limited in the South and I only knew one backstreet newsagent who stocked Dixon Hawke and many wasted journeys are why I remember that publication dates were unreliable.

FOOTBALL AND SPORTS LIBRARY A/P
 1921-1938 – 566

I remember seeing these but never actually bought any, although I have 2 issues in my collection now. Sports stories were never my scene, but as this library ran to 566 issues I feel it should be included herein. I cannot think of any other library that ceased in 1938, especially after so long a run, so maybe it just ran out of steam?

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY A/P
 NOV 1922 – JUNE 1940 – 733

Another publication that originally had 64 pages, 2 issues per month then 3 monthly in 1926 and increased to 96 pages about 1930/31. The main attractions were Cliff House stories (Bessie Bunter) by Horace Phillips and then Reginald Kirkham, L.E. Ransome and John Wheway, all writing as 'Hilda Richards', and tales of Morcove School, featuring Betty Barton and Co. by Marjorie Stanton (again, Horace Phillips) many



reprints from *Schoolgirl*, *School Friend* and *Schoolgirls Own*. As a boy I often read copies belonging to my chum's sister, but never actually bought any.

THRILLER LIBRARY A/P
 JULY 1934-JUNE 1935 = 24 ISSUES

I only include these as they are now so rare and very collectable and deserve a mention. Despite the use of many popular authors, such as Gerald Verner, Anthony Skene, George E. Rochester, Hugh Clevely and Margery Allingham, it never took off and obviously did not pick up readers of the weekly *Thriller*. I only read one at the time and subsequent efforts did not do much for me.

Now I would like to refer to several libraries that I bought as remainders, largely from Woolworths although sometimes my local newsagent would clear old or discontinued libraries at half price, such as *ROBIN HOOD LIBRARY* ALDINE 1924-1927 = 88 32 pages, 2 per month @ 2d. These were basically reprints

The MYSTERY SERVANT of MORCOVE

BY
Marjorie
Stanton



4^D
5-9-35

A Grand Story of the Early Adventures of Betty Barton & Co
THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY No 507

of their 1901-1903 series. There were 2 other short series, 14 around 1913, 8 in 1930, but I have never seen any of them.

I have read some of the 1924-27 vintage but it's a bit like hard work. Authors included Walter Light and G. Glabon Glover.

BUFFALO BILL LIBRARY ALDINE 1910-1932 = 941. 32 pages

Originally priced at 1d, this was eventually increased to 2d. Many were reprints of American publications, they make poor reading with indifferent quality paper and covers.

BUFFALO BILL NOVELS ALDINE 1916-1932 - 342 80 pages reduced to 64 at increase of dimensions

Excellent covers by Robert Prowse, my motive for collecting! Again many reprints of U.S.A. novels and very dated. Price of 3d, increased to 4d.

MONSTER LIBRARY A/P 1.11.1925-20.5.1927 = 19x128 pages @1/-

Although I never read or even saw a copy in

my youth, Nelson Lee is so much part of the O.B.B.C. that I feel it must be included in this item. All the stories originally appeared in the *Nelson Lee* weekly between 1918-1922, thus readers of the *Monster* were unlikely to have read the original.

Finally, will you indulge me in mentioning two earlier libraries which fascinate me and are probably underrated. These are

DICK TURPIN LIBRARY 5.4.1902-1909 = 182 24 pages 1d

CLAUD DUVAL LIBRARY 4.10.1902-1906 = 48. 24 pages 1d

Both were largely written by Charlton Lea and Stephen Agnew with brilliant covers, mainly by Robert Prowse and the rest by F.W. Boyington. Although obviously dated, the stories are well written and most descriptive. I have now read all the Duvals and am delving into the Dick Turpins. Try one, you might be agreeably surprised.



Rookwood: The Good, The Bad, and The Very Bad

By RAY HOPKINS



The new boy came with the very finest credentials. His father, a war hero in the North-West Frontier of India who held out against the tribesmen until relief arrived and thus saved what remained of his men. His son is personable, well-built and a good cricketer. Valentine Mornington, of Rookwood's Fourth Form, is so impressed that he intends to ask the son, Kit Erroll, to move into his study. The two unsavouries who share Mornington's study. Peele and Gower, demur. Mornington doesn't usually go overboard in trying to acquire new friends. Those he has are of the card playing, smokes and blagging variety not approved of by the rest of the Fourth.

This friendly little plan of Mornington's is nipped in the bud by three occurrences. Mr. Bootles, the Master of the Fourth, has already placed Erroll in Number Two Study with Higgs and Jones Minor. Mornington invites Erroll for supper in his study at half-past eight. Erroll accepts with pleasure until Jimmy Silver informs him of the type of fellows he will meet there. Erroll asks Mornington to excuse him from the supper invite. Mornington is furious and insists on knowing why. Erroll tells him that he has discovered that smoking and gambling are part of the programme and he wants no part of it.

Mornington is not the unmitigated bad-hat that he appears to be. Only recently he had been the means of introducing a ragamuffin called 'Erbert Murphy into a new and better life at Rookwood, having discovered the lad starving and homeless near Rookwood. The waif had made his way from London where he was pressed into joining a gang of thieves and pickpockets who were in need of a sharp kid as a lookout. But honest 'Erbert refused. The leader of the gang threatened to "get him sent to chokey." 'Erbert made his escape into the country where he was found by Mornington at the roadside. The wealthy junior made monetary arrangements with his family so that his guardian pays 'Erbert's fees and Rookwood's head, Dr. Chisholm, allowed 'Erbert to join Rookwood as a Second former.

The day that the new boy is brought to the school by his father, 'Erbert, his eyes starting out

of his head, and almost too terrified to speak, recognises the celebrated Army hero, Captain Erroll, as "Gentleman Jim," the leader of the London gang. When he is able to get his speech back he informs Mornington that Gentleman Jim is a "thief, cracksman, forger an' gaol-bird."

Mornington, delighted to get back at Erroll, whom he considers has insulted him beyond forgiveness, begins a vendetta of hate against the new boy. In front of Jimmy Silver, Mornington asks Erroll why, if his father is Captain Erroll, is it he is known as Gentleman Jim. Jimmy notices the pallor that spreads over Erroll's face and momentarily wonders whether Mornington's absurd accusation is true. Mornington says he has proof as 'Erbert recognised Erroll's father as the leader of the thieving gang in London. Erroll challenges Mornington to a fight in the gym and succeeds in knocking him out. Mornington refuses to shake hands with the winner of the bout and hisses that he won't be satisfied until "that impostor is shown up and turned out of Rookwood!"

Jimmy Silver decides to clear the matter up once and for all. Captain Erroll had won the D.S.O. on the North-West Frontier and his photograph was printed in the *DAILY SKETCH* at the time. Jimmy writes to the paper requesting a copy of the paper in which the article and photograph appeared. Mornington smiles triumphantly. He feels his detractors are falling into his hands. The newspaper photograph will undoubtedly show no resemblance whatever between the gallant Captain and the new junior who is using his name and pretending to be his son. Silver, Mornington feels, is unwittingly doing him a good turn. Jimmy's hopes are dashed when the newspaper replies that the issue is out of print. Mornington has more luck writing to the *ILLUSTRATED GAZETTE*. They supply him with a copy of the magazine containing Captain Erroll's photograph. Mornington is dumbstruck. "The resemblance was not only noticeable, but it was striking. Every feature of Kit Erroll's handsome face was reproduced in the portrait under the eyes of the juniors."

Some days later, 'Erbert tells Mornington that the man who brought Erroll to Rookwood does not resemble the junior in the least. He has, in fact, just seen him emerging from Coombe Station. The Second former follows him as he turns into the wood between the town and Rookwood and sees him go into the old woodman's hut, evidently having arranged with Erroll to meet him there.

Erroll is playing cricket with the Fourth form eleven which will give Mornington time to make his way to the wood and secrete himself near the woodman's hut so that he can hear every word. Erroll tells Gentleman Jim about 'Erbert's recognising him and passing the information to Mornington and about the photo of Captain Erroll in the magazine and how it so closely resembles himself and wants to know if the Captain is a relation. The cracksman tells the junior that the resemblance is just chance.

After he has gone back to the station, Mornington confronts Kit at the woodman's hut and tells the junior that he has heard everything. He intends to show Dr. Chisholm Captain Erroll's photograph and ask him if he is the same man who brought Erroll to Rookwood. The game will then be up and the junior will be arrested as a plant to aid Gentleman Jim in breaking into and robbing the school. Erroll says, "Coming to Rookwood seemed a chance of getting out of a life that was horrible to me ... it was a fresh start, the beginning of an honourable life. I could not come in my own name. My father selected the name of Kit Erroll for me. I do not know why. There is no Kit Erroll in existence." Mornington smiles sardonically. He says he believes none of it and that the crooked pair are out to "crack a crib." When he reveals all to the Head, their crooked plans will be ruined.

Mornington realises that he himself is in great danger when Erroll leaps upon him and pins him to the ground. Erroll lets him get up after a few moments. "If I were the fellow you believe you would not be allowed to go back to Rookwood and say so," Erroll tells him. Mornington realises that, in letting him go, "Erroll was not what he had accused him of being." Mornington tells him that if he leaves quietly he won't say a word at the school. "For the honour of the school." It appears that Mornington is giving Erroll a chance to leave without any scandal. He gives Erroll until the following day and if he hasn't left by then he will publicly accuse him.

Back at Rookwood, Erroll overhears Mornington making plans to break bounds after lights out and conceives a plan to make it impossible for Mornington to accuse him. When

Mornington returns to the school he finds Erroll barring his way to climbing the wall. "We are birds of a feather. I am the son of - you know what. You are a gambling, rascally blackguard, a disgrace to the school. Whatever I am, Mornington, whatever I've been, I'm a better fellow than you are." Erroll tells him he will fasten the window Mornington had left open and he will have to ring the bell to get in. They will both be expelled in the morning. Mornington says that, if Erroll will let him get over the wall, he will say nothing. "You know I will keep my word. I Promise."

But Erroll is having misgivings about his own actions. "It was the son of Gentleman Jim who had planned this defeat for Mornington; not the frank, honourable schoolboy that Jimmy Silver believed him to be." Erroll, disgusted with himself, tells Mornington that he doesn't want his promise. "I want nothing at your hands. Do your worst!" The following morning Erroll tells Mornington that he is going to leave Rookwood after lessons and will not return. Mornington says he will keep his mouth shut as to what he has learned about Erroll. He has the upper hand over him whom he believes to be a crook but there is something less than satisfying in what he has had to make Erroll do.

Erroll telephones Gentleman Jim to let him know that he is leaving Rookwood that day, that he is forced to because Mornington overheard their conversation at the woodman's hut. If Erroll leaves quietly he has promised to say nothing about what he has learned. But the cracksman forbids Kit to leave. "The boy may be induced to keep silent." Gentleman Jim wants to know all about Mornington and his relatives. Erroll says that he is an orphan and his guardian is a Governor of Rookwood.

Mornington receives a message from Mr. Bootles, the Master of the Fourth, that he is to meet and dine with his guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole at the Royal George Hotel in Latcham. Bootles gives him the necessary permission to be excused afternoon lessons. The juniors are puzzled by Mornington's non-appearance by the time of calling-over and Erroll, who has been waiting for his return before he leaves Rookwood forever, begins to wonder...

On the road to Coombe to catch the local train to Latcham, Mornington is stopped by a man with a horse and cart who says he has an envelope for a boy called Mornington. Mornington thinks it may be something from his bookmaker and steps forward to receive it. But the carter snatches it away and grips him by the wrist. In response to a whistle, another man runs out of the bushes and together they subdue the infuriated Mornington, fling him into the empty

cart, bind his limbs and silence his cries by ramming a rag into his mouth. He is covered with tarpaulin and the two men climb into the driving seat and turn into a rough cart-track that leads to Coombe Moor.

When Mornington is removed from the cart he recognises that he has been brought to the disused Coombe quarries. The carter speaking in more cultured tones than those he has used previously, tells Mornington that he will come to no harm and will only be held prisoner for a few days. Upon being told that he will be missed immediately because his guardian is waiting for him at Latcham, his kidnapper tells him that he made the phone call to Mr. Bootles as coming from Sir Rupert Stacpoole. Mornington, searching the man's face and listening closely to what he is saying, tells him, "I know your voice! You are the man who brought Erroll to Rookwood calling yourself Captain Erroll. You are the man he met in the woodman's hut!" Mornington accuses Erroll in absentia with the man but is told that Erroll knows nothing of Mornington's capture. Mornington is fastened to a stake driven into a cleft in the hard ground by a padlocked strong chain which allows him to pace some eight or nine feet. No one will hear him if he calls for help but if he does he will immediately be gagged.

Later that night, Mr. Bootles makes a fruitless phone call to the Royal George Hotel at Latcham and a further one to Mornington's guardian and at eleven o'clock, when all are abed at the school, Dr. Chisholm contacts the police stations at both Coombe and Latcham. Neither have any news of a schoolboy being involved in an accident. Sir Rupert Stacpoole arrives first thing next morning and is quickly followed by a police inspector from Latcham.

Kit suspects the worst which is confirmed when he receives a note telling him to meet Gentleman Jim at the woodman's hut. His father tells him Mornington will be kept hidden until his work at Rookwood is done. "The school silver is worth a thousand pounds ... when we are ready you will let me in at night." Kit now understands that he has been sent to Rookwood not to turn him into a gentleman but to become a crook's accomplice. He refuses and is threatened by the man he has always believed to be his father. "Are you my father? You have never treated me as a son. I have wondered often, since I knew what you were. I will die before I will lift a finger to help you rob Rookwood." Gentleman Jim says he will contact him later by which time he will have come to his senses. Time is getting short and he must crack the crib while Kit is still available to give him access.

After a two hour search of Coombe Moor Kit finds the hiding place of Mornington. The crook's accomplice who has been detailed to guard the junior thinks he has been sent by Gentleman Jim and is startled and surprised when Kit attacks him and removes the padlock key from his pocket. Mornington helps Kit to fasten the accomplice to the stake with the chain and padlock. They leave the quarry but Mornington feels no gratitude. "The minute I get to Rookwood you'll be known in your true colours." Kit contemptuously tells him that he is free to go. "I leave Rookwood today forever. But I would not leave you a prisoner. I have searched for you and saved you. That is all."

As Mornington leaves the cave in the quarry he sees Gentleman Jim in the distance approaching from above. The two juniors make a run for it but Mornington is shocked to find that his imprisonment has made him weak and he is unable to keep up with Kit. Darkness is falling and they can hear Gentleman Jim and his accomplice scrambling among the stones as they follow them. Mornington tells Kit to leave him and make his escape as he falls to the ground, but the boy he hates hauls him over his shoulder and staggers on trying to reach the top of the rugged slope.

In the darkness below them the voice of the crook follows them, commanding them to stop. "If you do not obey me, I will shoot!" Kit lets Mornington slide to the ground and, picking up some fragments of slate, hurls them at the sound of the scrambling boots. A cry tells them that at least one has found its target. This is followed by the report of a gunshot. The bullet passes through Kit's sleeve. "I know now that what I've always suspected is the truth - that that man cannot be my father!" he tells the terrified Mornington. Kit follows up the shot with more unerringly thrown pieces of slate, some of which must have hit the target as the angry voices calling to them cease and there is the sound of retreating footsteps slithering over the loose quarry stones.

When absolute quietness prevails, Kit helps Mornington climb to the edge of the quarry and they hide themselves in bushes on Combe Moor. But there is no further sound of pursuit and eventually, after some urging on the part of Mornington to recount his life before coming to Rookwood, Kit is surprised when Mornington urges him to return to Rookwood and stick it out. "You don't think I'd give you away after what you've done? You're just the chap I'd have chosen to make a pal of if I'd known you better! Why shouldn't we be friends? If you choose to stick it out at Rookwood, I'll stand by you." Erroll can't believe his ears and shakes his head

reflecting on the difference between himself and his former enemy professing friendship in the sincerest terms, to himself, a nobody and an outcast brought up by a thief.

By the time they reach the locked school gates, Mornington had persuaded his new chum to stay at the school, surprising all who saw them obviously on friendly terms and especially gladdening the heart of Jimmy Silver who always wants everyone to be on good terms with everyone else. Mornington's studymates, Peele and Gower, feel differently however and find themselves left out in the cold to such an extent that when Peele sees a certain item in the newspaper relating to Captain Erroll he feels that he can get back at both Mornington and Kit Erroll and upset the apple-cart.

The newspaper item stated that Captain Erroll, who had intended to return to his colonial home in British Honduras after release from hospital in India, found that his severe wounds compelled him to remain for further hospitalisation in England.

Peele has a cousin who has an Army job in Whitehall and from him he is able to get Captain Erroll's address. He has asked the Captain to visit Rookwood "pointing out that his son's friends were awfully anxious to see him, because of his gallant conduct in India, and getting the D.S.O." Peele says, "If the merry captain hasn't got a son at Rookwood it will be rather a surprise." The Captain replies to Peele's telegram as follows: "Arriving Rookwood early morning - Erroll."

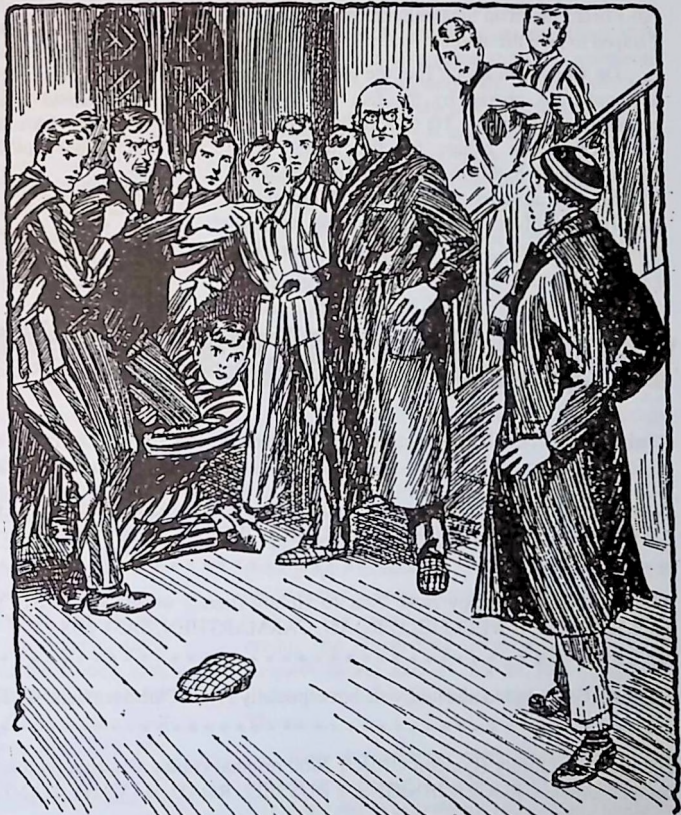
Jimmy Silver, immensely chuffed at what he considers a real slap in the face for Peele, tells Kit the good news and is faintly dismayed when the junior turns pale and loses all his usual animation. "The end had come, he knew that. Captain Erroll whose name he bore, was coming to Rookwood in the morning. The man he so strangely resembled and whom he did not know...

He was coming and the imposture would be discovered!"

Erroll decides that there is but one way open to him. He must leave Rookwood in the middle of the night when all are asleep. Facing Captain Erroll was an impossibility. He drops from a window into the quadrangle and is thunderstruck to hear the sound of glass breaking. Gentleman Jim has come to the school to make good his boast that he would rob Rookwood. As he climbs through the broken window into the hall, the sound of the loud bell at the front door rings out and he turns to face the broken window transfixed by the sight of the pale face of the boy staring at him from the outside. Choking with rage and frustration, Gentleman Jim pulls a revolver out of his pocket and fires through the window. The boy's ashen face disappears and the cracksmen attempts to scramble headfirst through the broken window.

But the thief in the night is pulled back into the building by Bulkeley, captain of Rookwood, a boy as large and strong as Gentleman Jim. But

THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY



Gentleman Jim staggered to his feet, and pointed a finger at Kit Erroll. "If I go to prison," he snarled, "that boy comes with me. He's my son, and accomplice!" A breathless hush followed his words, and accusing eyes turned to the fully-dressed figure of the handsome schoolboy.

the thief pulls Bulkeley to the floor and his opponent pulls his right hand free. Kit Erroll has climbed through the window and sees the intruder with the gun in his right hand, intending to fire it again. "With a fierce twist of the wrist he forced the ruffian to drop the weapon."

By this time the hall is full of excited schoolboys and the thief is held tight by many hands. Dr. Chisholm enters in dressing gown and slippers. He states that the police will be sent for in the morning; the thief must be locked up for the night. Gentleman Jim, gasping for breath, causes a sensation. "Let them take me, and let them take that boy at the same time! He is my son and accomplice! It was I who brought that boy to this school – under the name of Captain Erroll ... I am the father of that boy. We shall go to prison together!"

Erroll tells the head. "I was brought up as his son but I never believed he was my father. He placed me in this school, making me believe I was to be free of his influence ... He told me later that I was to help him rob you. I broke with him then forever ... I was leaving because I could not face Captain Erroll when he comes tomorrow, but I heard that man breaking into the house, and I stayed to give the alarm."

Dr. Chisholm says, "That the lad is not your accomplice is proved by the fact that he has prevented your crime." He tells Bulkeley to lock the thief in the cellars for the night. Dr. Chisholm tells Erroll to return to his dormitory and he goes upstairs supported by Mornington and Jimmy Silver who says to Peele as that worthy chuckles, "One word to Erroll and I'll smash you!"

The following morning when the real Captain Erroll arrives at Dr. Chisholm's study, he is made aware of Gentleman Jim's incredible imposture and of the boy who he said was his son. The boy incidentally, the head goes on, has a remarkable resemblance to yourself. "I have no son, Dr. Chisholm. But I had a son. He was stolen from me in early childhood, and I was never able to trace him." Captain Erroll's voice trembles.

Captain Erroll is taken to the cellars and there recognises Gentleman Jim as James Stanton who was in his regiment ten years previously. "He was discovered selling military information to a German agent, and it was I who exposed him." Stanton revenged himself on Lt. Erroll as he was then, by stealing his little son, and placing him in the hands of criminals to be brought up as a thief.

Father and son are reunited in the head's study. "It was your own name that the scoundrel gave you, my boy, when he brought you here ... He believed I had gone back to Honduras and it was safe to use my name. It is by Heaven's mercy that I have found my son."

"Jimmy Silver and Co. rejoiced when they heard the news – and Mornington almost danced with satisfaction." Erroll forgave all those who had schemed against him and especially Peele "for it was due to Peele's cunning scheme that he had, at last, found his father."

(The above series appeared in weekly *BOYS' FRIEND*, Second Series Nos. 833 to 837, May, June 1917. It was reprinted in *SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY* 220, entitled *The Son of a Cracksman* in May 1934.)



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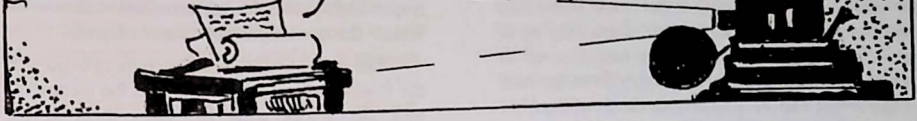
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Have Typewriter (and Tape-Recorder) Will Travel

BY BRIAN DOYLE



More Personal Memories of Nearly 40 Years in the Movie Business, by BRIAN DOYLE, whose film locations have taken him to 22 countries, including India, South Africa, Mexico, Israel, Tunisia, Greece, Morocco, Sweden, Ireland, and throughout Europe and the U.K.

I sensed that something was 'up' as soon as I walked on to the set of my latest assignment as Publicist at Pinewood Studios: 'Conspiracy of Hearts', a moving and exciting wartime drama about nuns helping Jewish children to escape from a German-Italian-run prisoner-of-war camp in Italy. It was 1959 and we had already spent a month's location filming at a beautiful monastery - 'Certona di Firenze' - just outside Florence, in the lovely Tuscany countryside where the unit had politely kept the resident monks at bay while we installed our own group of 'nuns', which included such stars as Lilli Palmer, Sylvia Syms, Yvonne Mitchell, Megs Jenkins and Phyllis Neilson-Terry. The male stars included Albert Lieven, Ronald Lewis, Michael Goodliffe and Peter Arne (who, as usual, played a 'baddie' and who was sadly and ironically murdered in real life by a burglar he had disturbed in his home, a few years later). The picture subsequently turned out to be one of the most successful British films of its year (1960) and won the 'Best Picture' 'Golden Bear' Award at the Berlin Festival.

Anyway, back to the set at the studios. I noticed that the cast and crew were just standing around quietly, not actually doing anything and looking a bit sheepish. That was unusual since a movie set is always a frantic hive of activity and noise (except when actual shooting is taking place, of course). 'What's going on?' I enquired of Ernie, one of the props men. 'We've got visitors,' he whispered, nodding respectfully (if you *can* nod respectfully) towards the 'Mother Superior's Office' set in the middle of 'Stage C'. I looked and walked towards the set, and saw that the producer, Betty Box, and the director, Ralph Thomas, together with some of the leading cast, were chatting politely to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and little Prince Charles, then aged 10 and looking smart in a pale blue coat with velvet collar and immaculately-brushed and shining hair (I've always remembered his hair - it looked almost too good to be true - 'the Hair to the Throne' I couldn't help thinking). Watching respectfully from a distance were assorted 'nuns',

mixed infants (youthful actors from an acting School) and sundry 'soldiers'.

Apparently, the Queen had been visiting the set of another wartime film 'Sink the Bismarck', produced by Lord Brabourne (one of her relatives, I believe), on a neighbouring set, and has asked to be shown another set as well.

Betty Box noticed me hovering and called to me to bring some still photographs on to the set. 'Any chance of getting Norman (our stills photographer) to take some shots?' I whispered eagerly. 'No, absolutely not, Brian,' she said firmly, 'this is a purely private visit and the last thing we want to do is capitalise on it. Sorry.' This was very disappointing. Given the go-ahead, I could have made the front-pages of practically every National newspaper in Fleet Street (plus world-wide coverage) the next morning - especially a shot of the Queen talking with the 'Mother Superior' and little Prince Charles gazing up at them both. I could envisage the headlines: 'Queen of Hearts' visits 'Conspiracy of Hearts' as little Charlie gets stars' autographs.' But it evidently wasn't to be.

But I raced off to my office (which was only a few yards away), gathered a good selection of stills, and dashed back to the set, where Sylvia Syms was now demonstrating to Her Majesty just how her nun's 'wimple' head-dress was fitted on. I approached the Royal group and handed the photographs to Betty Box (who was then one of the country's most successful film producers, with all the popular 'Doctor' comedies to her credit, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* re-make (starring Kenneth More) and *A Tale of Two Cities* also under her belt (all also directed by Ralph Thomas).

Betty showed some of the photographs to the Queen and Prince Charles, who was taking a lively interest in everything with a ready smile for everyone. 'They're very good, aren't they?' Her Majesty commented, asking as she glanced at me

'Did you take them?' 'No, Ma'am, they were taken by our stills photographer, Mr. Norman Gryspeerd,' I answered. 'Really, how very interesting,' she remarked politely. Betty Box introduced me and explained who I was. 'How interesting – what exciting jobs you all have...' she said. I smiled amiably at her – and found that the diminutive Prince Charles was grinning up at me – his immaculate and shiny hair seemed to grin too, reflecting the bright lights from the roof of the set. I had very nearly trodden on the Heir to the Throne, but he didn't seem at all put out. He caught my eye again and asked: 'What's that, please?' as he pointed to the movie camera. 'That's the film camera, sir – it takes the moving pictures you see on the cinema screen...' I explained. 'Hmmm...' he responded appreciatively, and the conversation ground to a halt.

There didn't appear to be any bodyguards around, by the way, just one nice deferential Lady-in-Waiting. Film people are (or were then) a fairly harmless and amiable lot, so I suppose the powers-that-be assumed that the Queen and the Prince would be reasonably safe, as, of course, they were.

Then Her Majesty and the Prince watched a short scene being rehearsed, then shot, before, after a few more words with various people (Charles was very interested in the movie camera and very pleased to be able to peer through its view-finder), the Royal group moved off.

I was chatting to Lilly Palmer (quite a big star in those days) soon afterwards and she said, smiling: 'Does this mean, Brian, that I can now put one of those 'Royal – By Appointment' signs on my dressing-room door?' 'Better than that, Dame Lilly,' I joked, and jumped swiftly away as she clouted me around the head. 'But Mothers Superior don't hit people!' I said. 'This one does, brother!' she replied.

I mention all this just to demonstrate what unexpected people and things can sometimes await the unwary on a film set.

And here, perhaps, I can break off for a moment to answer a query that has been put to me more than once since my 'screen career' articles have been appearing in the *C.D. Annual*, i.e. what is the actual difference between a producer and a director? Put simply, the producer is the over-all 'boss', the executive 'in charge' of the film and its making, the man (or woman) who gets the whole project together in the first place, arranging the finance, perhaps buying the rights to a book or play, commissioning a script and arranging key crew personnel, e.g. the director, the production manager (in day-to-day charge of everything), the casting director, production designer, director of

photography, indeed the publicity director or publicist, which is, or was, my own job. The producer has the final say in all things (sometimes in conjunction with the distribution company, whether it be 20th Century Fox, Rank, Columbia, or whoever) and carries the ultimate responsibility for the picture (and makes – or loses – the most money at the end of it all).

The director supervises everything to do with the actual making and shooting of the picture; he tells the actors what he wants them to do, rehearses them, discusses their roles and the interpretation of them, sets up camera positions (with the director of photography and the camera operator), and generally directs the cast and instructs the unit (which can range from 50 people to 500!). His key man is the first assistant director, who ensures that the director is getting just what he wants and he usually has a loud and commanding voice (his is the voice you hear shouting 'Quiet, please – absolute quiet on the set – settle down!'). It's the director who actually calls 'Action!' and later 'Cut!' when the scene is finished.

The team of producer and director is rather like that of impresario and conductor of a symphony concert; or perhaps the chairman or president of a large company and its managing director. Or even a publisher and his author.

I won't explain the duties of other crew members ('What's a 'Best Boy', Brian?') or we'll be here all night. (Oh, all right – the 'Best Boy' is simply the 'Gaffer' or Chief Electrician...!)

I recently described how I made my own movie 'debut' on-screen in Billy Wilder's film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (with Robert (later Sir Robert) Stephens as Holmes and Colin Blakely as Watson. In that I was 'seen but not heard' (not surprising since I rather brilliantly portrayed a corpse in a coffin!). That was in 1969. In my second 'appearance' the following year, I was 'heard but not seen'!

I was working as Publicist, on an MGM picture called *No Blade of Grass* (based on John Christopher's best-selling novel *The death of Grass* – why the title-change? Don't ask...) The story told of the effects on the world when nothing grew – no food, no trees, no vegetation, indeed, no blade of grass – or anything. There was virtually no food, leading to riots and destruction and death throughout the Earth, with the end of the world rapidly approaching. The film followed the adventures of a small group of people (one family plus a few others) trekking through Britain (mainly the Lake District in the picture, as it happened – nice locations and all that!).

The director was Cornel Wilde, a big action star in his day (though he first made his name playing composer Chopin in a 1944 picture called *A Song to Remember*, co-starring opposite Merle Oberon) and he played Robin Hood, 'D'Artagnan and Lancelot, among other athletic heroes. He was a very nice man, but the film co-starred his actress-wife, Jean Wallace, who was a lady of many moods, which tended to complicate things from time to time (every day, in fact!) Nigel Davenport was the male lead and the cast also included a lovely 15-year-old girl named Lynne Frederick, later to star in several films and also to marry Peter Sellers (and to inherit his multi-million pound fortune and also, sadly, to die tragically at an early age).

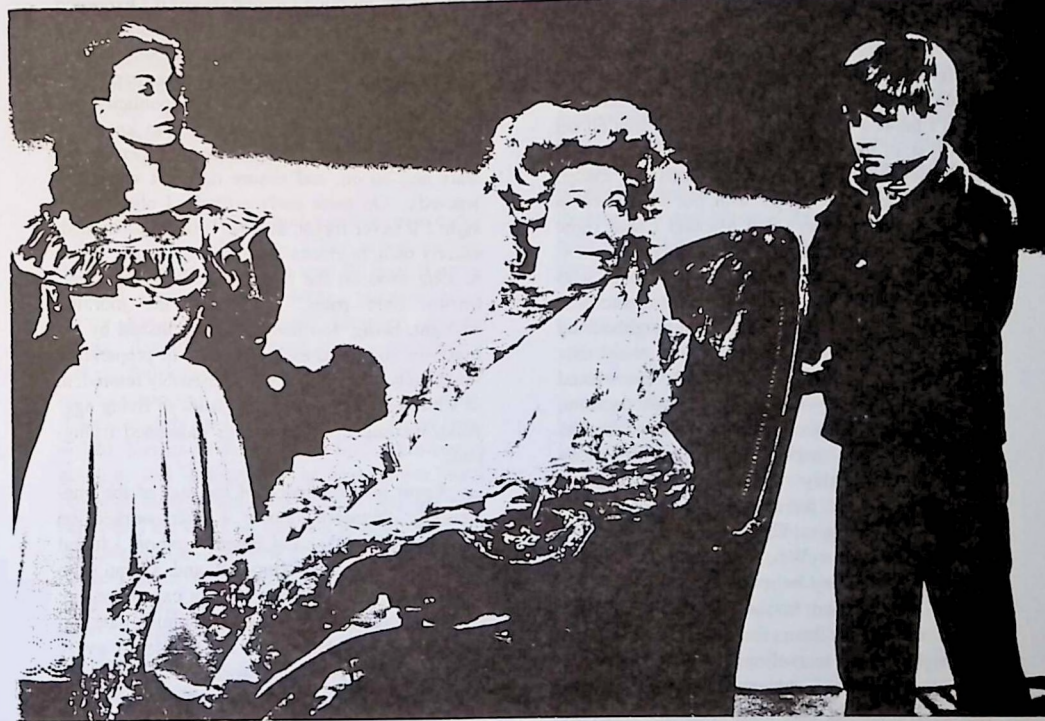
Anyway, Cornel said to me one day (rather as Billy Wilder had done); 'Brian, I want you to be in my picture.' 'Gosh!' I thought, first Wilder and now Wilde – Hollywood here I come!' Then he said: 'Or rather, I want your voice to be in it.' I cleared my throat and, in my best and most resonant voice, expressed polite interest – what did he mean exactly?

In *No Blade of grass*, the group of weary trekkers walk past an abandoned but almost-new Rolls Royce motor-car in the middle of nowhere – when you're escaping the ravages of nature and crazed, homicidal gangs of thugs in the wild and remote countryside, what's the use of a Rolls

Royce? The occupants had just left it and ran for their lives... As the camera tracks over the Rolls in some detail – and it's rather a poignant and ironic moment – a smooth and suave and persuasive voice (that of a luxury car salesman, probably from that well-known Piccadilly automobile showroom) is heard expounding upon the delights and comforts and finer points of the 'Roller', doing his best to 'sell' it to a presumably wealthy would-be-buyer. That voice was to be me, apparently, if Cornel Wilde had his wicked way.

'You have the right sort of very English voice I want over that sequence, Brian,' said Cornel. 'You mean that I sound like a second-hand car salesman,' I replied in my best sad and disillusioned voice. 'No, no, not at all – he's a rather elegant brand-new Rolls Royce car salesman, after all – nothing but the best...' said Cornel with the friendly grin that had captured feminine hearts all over the world. 'Tell you what,' he added, 'I'll take you to a slap-up lunch and also give you a Jeroboam of champagne. How about it?'

Since I had already had several lunches with him and I didn't especially like champagne anyway, his offer didn't really tempt me. But it was a small thing he asked of me, so how could I refuse?



From *Great Expectations* (Brian's absolutely favourite film)
Estella (Jean Simmons), Miss Havisham (Martita Hunt) and Pip (Anthony Wager)

So I sat in the Elstree dubbing-theatre in front of a microphone and with my page of script and duly did the required few lines. When Cornel asked for a sixth 'take', I was feeling a little bored and did it in my best Dublin accent! Cornel laughed as he called 'Cut!' and said (in his Dublin accent – though I was pleased to note that it wasn't as good as mine!): 'O.K. Brian, we'll use that one for the Irish release print...!' Then I did one more 'for luck' and that was that. So that was my second screen – or rather sound-track movie triumph. Look out – or rather listen-out – for that sequence when next *No Blade of Grass* crops up on television.

The favourite of all the 94 films I have worked on as Publicist has to be John Huston's *The Man Who Would Be King*, adapted from a short story by Rudyard Kipling by Huston himself and his long-time collaborator, Gladys Hill; they worked a minor miracle with their superb screenplay, expanding a short story of 20 pages to a full-length major feature film of more than two hours. We shot it all over a 4-months period in and around Marrakech, in Morocco, with two weeks in a place called Ouzezat (pronounced Wuzzerzat'), high in the Atlas Mountains, but with plenty of desert around too. Much of 'Lawrence of Arabia' had been filmed there.

John Huston, one of the great directors of all time was quite a tough character and was rarely seen without a big cigar in his mouth (where else?); he had originally planned to make the picture in the 1940s with Humphrey Bogart and Clark Gable in the leading roles. When this didn't happen for various reasons, he was all set to do it in the 1960s with Robert Redford and Paul Newman, but this didn't materialise either. But he was quite happy with our two stars in 1975 – Sean Connery and Michael Caine (now both knighted, of course). They played two ex-Sergeants of the British army in 1880s India, who become adventurers and set out to discover, conquer and rule their own land in neighbouring Kafiristan. They eventually achieve their aim, one becomes a king and the other his trusted lieutenant and they acquire a fabulous treasure, until greed overtakes them and leads to tragedy. It was – and is – a powerful and exciting story and the screenplay was Nominated for an Academy Award; there was surprise in many quarters that Connery, Caine and Huston weren't Nominated too. We also had Christopher Plummer, as a very believable Kipling (he told me he had listened to recordings of the great author's voice for hours so that he could get it just 'right') and a marvellous Indian actor, Saeed Jaffrey, as the two adventurers' little Gurkha helper, Billy Fish, who came to share many of their exploits.

Up in Ouzezat, the production designer, Alexander Trauner, had literally sliced the top off a large hill (or small mountain – whichever way you looked at it) and created and built (with a team of 500 local workers, plus many of the film unit) a complete ancient city, peopled by over 100 old, learned and bald-headed 'elders' and priests, as well as around 200 other inhabitants of both sexes. All these 'extras' had been recruited locally in the area and turned in astonishing 'performances' (though it took some time to persuade them *not* to look at the cameras during a 'take'...!)

One of them (aged 108!) who appeared as the Head Priest complete with white beard and bald head, was invited to watch one of his scenes in the regular evening 'rushes' (the scenes that had been shot the previous day) back at the hotel. When he saw himself on the screen, he let out a series of ear-piercing wails and rushed over to the projector intending to destroy it. I was there and he was very frightened and distressed, though he calmed down when John Huston carefully explained what was happening. When I subsequently interviewed him with my tape-recorder (with the aid of an interpreter) he said he thought that the 'camera-machine' had captured his soul and that he was doomed to die and join the Devil...!

Occasionally I arrived on the location very early in the morning (around dawn) if I happened to have a visiting TV crew or particularly keen journalist or photographer there and who wanted to make an early start to the day (it was part of my job to get them there in my publicity car complete with Moroccan driver who knew the way, etc., look after them, introduce them to the stars and so on, and ensure they got what they wanted). On these early arrivals, I often saw a sight I'll never forget: at least 100 white-bearded, elderly men, in cloaks and other costumes, sitting in long rows on the mountain-side, having their brown, bald pates, shining in the morning sunlight, being 'touched up' and polished by the make-up and hairdressing people, in preparation for the day's filming. I was irresistibly reminded, as I looked down at them, of rows of flying egg-yolks sizzling in an enormous elongated frying-pan.

I was also reminded of the star of the one-and-only 'Western' movie I ever worked on (*Callow* in Spain) – Yul Brynner, whom I found egotistical and short-tempered and a man who wore his famous baldness like an expensive hat. He was inordinately proud of his shining pate and he, too, had it burnished and made-up every morning before beginning work. One can't blame him, I suppose – it was after all, his universal trade—mark. 'Be bald – be bald – but not too

bald...!' as the poet Longfellow very nearly said. Or, to misquote *Star Trek's* Captain Kirk's infamous split-infinitive, the old chaps on the mountainside were ready 'to baldly go, where no man had gone before...'

At one point in the location filming, Sean Connery had to fall to his death from a long rope-bridge stretching over a very deep ravine. Only, of course it wasn't Sean Connery but an intrepid English stuntman named Eddie. He carefully supervised the laying of hundreds of empty cardboard boxes (full of natural air, you see!) and thick mattresses on the bottom of the 500-foot drop at the spot where he was due to land. All stuntmen are perfectionists (they have to be) and he wasn't taking any chances.

Dressed in Connery's costume, Eddie duly did the dangerous fall, and after Huston had shouted 'Cut!' we all crowded along the edge of the ravine (a somewhat dangerous enterprise in itself!) to see what had happened. Was Eddie still a leading English stuntman – or a mangled and deceased ex-stuntman? Eddie was standing amidst his boxes and mattresses and giving a cheerful 'thumbs up' sign.

The entire cast and unit clapped and cheered and there was much relief all round, though it was just another day's work for Eddie. He received the sum of £2,500.00 for that fall – Huston insisted he was paid the American stuntmen's rate (quite a lot higher than the English equivalent for some obscure reason!). And remember that this was in 1975 – rates have no doubt risen quite a lot since then... Connery took Eddie out for dinner that evening. Eddie was pleased and grateful. 'Sean's a great chap,' he said to me the next day, 'I've really fallen for him...'

In 1978, I spent two-and-a-half months in the wilds of South Africa on a big action picture called *The Wild Geese*, starring Richard Burton, Richard Harris, Roger Moore, German actor Hardy Kruger, and Stewart Granger, among others. I could write about many adventures I had on that location, but space is limited so I'll maybe return to it on a future occasion. I will say it was certainly the hottest location I've ever done – 120 degrees at least every day, occasionally going up to 130 degrees. The heat hit you like a physical thing when you walked out of your office and the hotel. It was in a little place called Tchipese in the Northern Transvaal, in the heart of the remote bush region, ten hours drive from Johannesburg; the nearest town was Pietersburg, about two hours drive away.

It was quite a dangerous place too. Wild baboons would come and bang on the windows of the little 'rondavels' (round thatched cottages we lived in in the hotel grounds) and throw

oranges at you; we were warned to stand perfectly still and not to 'catch their eye' if we encountered any of them. It happened to me when I was walking down to the bar from my 'rondavel' one evening. Three of them ambled over and stared at me, sniffing. I tried not to 'catch their eye' and, after a couple of minutes, they loped away, obviously (and thankfully) not 'fancying me'...!

There were snakes called 'boomslangs' around too – they're among the most deadly snakes in the world. They used to spit venom into your eyes from the trees at night and the hotel manager's dog was blinded by one. It was a couple of hundred yards from my office to the hotel bar in an area covered by tree-branches. We knew there were boomslangs in those branches. When I finished work, my secretary and I used to run quickly, shielding our faces with our hands as we ran. 'The Boomslang Trail', we used to call it.

There were three ostriches in the 'back garden' of the rondavel too. I christened the biggest one 'Eggo', after the one who featured on the front-page of *The Beano* comic in its early years.

Richard Burton was a marvellous chap and we soon discovered we had a love of books in common. I found him very easy to get along with. He often called me into his 'trailer' in the bush during a break in shooting and offered me a 'Diet Coke' (he was 'on the waggon' at that period!). 'Brian,' he would say in that wonderful voice of his, 'I'm re-reading the works of Charlie Dickens for about the fifth time and I'm on *Great Expectations* right now. I know you're a Dickens man too – now what about this character Magwitch, the ex-convict – how do you see him – what's his motivation?' I would say a few words, then sit back and listen as Burton would virtually give me a talk about the character and, indeed, the entire book...! It was great stuff.

I once told him of my interest in children's books and in old boys' books and papers and asked him what he had read as a boy. 'Oh, you have to remember that I grew up in a Welsh mining-valley and didn't have much opportunity to read much, for pleasure anyway. It was mostly school-work,' he said. 'There was one book – *John Halifax – Gentleman* by a Mrs. Craik – which someone gave me one day. I read it very quickly and with enormous pleasure, but then found that someone had torn out the last few chapters! I was angry and upset and I never knew how that book ended until a friend lent me a copy and I was finally, and many years, later, able to finish it...'

'Comics or boys' papers? I sometimes saw the comic-strips in the *Daily Mirror* – there was

someone called 'Buck Ryan' I seem to recall. And there was a boy at school who occasionally lent me his *Hotspur*, so I remember; what was it? *Red Circle School*, which had a nasty master that everyone hated!' 'Mr. Smuggs?' I ventured. 'That's the fellow,' said Burton with a laugh. 'Old Smuggly!'

One day he told of a visit he had made to Petersburg on a day off. 'I actually found a bookshop there,' he told me, 'and, of course, I sailed in for a browse round and do you know I suddenly realised that the books on the shelves were all Bibles, Prayer-books and so on. It was a religious bookshop!' 'What did you do?' I asked. 'Well, I came out with three Bibles – I didn't like to leave without buying *something!* Here, would you like one, Brian? I think I've been converted, as t'were...!' That was a favourite 'phrase' of his – he had done so much Shakespeare, that that little 'as t'were' had crept into his everyday conversation! I still have that Bible he gave me around somewhere. I should have asked him to sign it, I suppose...

I think that's about enough for now about the films I actually worked on. One or three people have kindly said they liked my own personal memories of films I have seen and my personal favourites, so here are a few odds and ends from my reel of celluloid recollections...

My own personal favourite and memorable film moments from the past include...

The Scene in *The Red Shoes* (1948) where ballet dancer Moira Shearer arrives at the gates of a beautiful chateau in the South of France and slowly walks up a long flight of stone steps wending through fabulous gardens and trees, in the hot afternoon sunshine – she wears a gorgeous green evening-dress and high-collared cloak, with a small bejewelled tiara in her red hair – an opera-singer is heard singing in the distance: she was like a fairy princess in a enchanted garden...

The remarkable sequence in *An American in Paris* (1951) (my favourite movie musical) where Oscar Levant plays the piano in Gershwin's 'Concerto in F' (my favourite concerto!), as well as playing several instruments and conducting the orchestra, and enthusiastically applauding from a theatre-box at the end of the performance...!

The ballroom scene in 'Madame Bovary' (1949) where Jennifer Jones dances a grand waltz with Louis Jourdan, as the camera tracks around them intricately... the dance becomes faster and faster and Jones becomes almost intoxicated and overcome with the dance, the music and the occasion.

The sequence in *Funny Face* (1957), where Audrey Hepburn is taken around various

landmarks in Paris by photographer Fred Astaire and photographed in different dresses and poses and colours, with the frame freezing to show how the finished 'fashion spread' may appear later in a magazine... followed almost immediately by the pair dancing dreamily together in a sun-lit meadow by a lake.

Joseph Cotton's several meetings with Jennifer Jones (as she becomes progressively older) in the haunting *Portrait of Jennie* (1948).

Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift's first kiss on a balcony outside a mansion where a big party is going on – perhaps the most perfect and moving screen kiss of them all... it occurs in *A Place in the Sun* (1951).

Bobby Van in the little-known Hollywood musical *Small Town Girl* (1953), in which he literally 'jumps' many times, to music, through a small town encountering people and things and is eventually followed by hundreds of people – joyous, memorable – and absolutely unique! (apparently, Van did the entire complex sequence in only three linking 'takes').

The scene in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) (his best picture, I think) where James Stewart kisses Kim Novak in the hotel room, as the camera encircles them at least six times and as Bernard Herrmann's superb music builds to a climax...

The *Consider Yourself* musical and dance number from *Oliver* (1958), set amidst London's Victorian markets.

The rowing-race sequence on the River Thames in Britain's second-best musical *Half a Sixpence* (1967) – a superb and strangely-underrated film, based on H.G. Wells' *Kipps* and starring Tommy Steele.

The moments when young Pip Anthony (Wager) first meets young Estella (Jean Simmons) in *Great Expectations* (1946) – my favourite picture of all time!

Burt Lancaster in the title-role of *Elmer Gantry* (1960) (for which he won the 'Best Actor' Oscar) making an impassioned evangelical speech from the back of a car, to a cheering crowd (one of many great speeches, but perhaps this is the best).

Gordon Macrae singing the memorable *Soliloquy* number on a beach in *Carousel* (1956).

The climax of *The Red Balloon* (1955) (a French film), when all the balloons in Paris come to rescue the little boy, who plays the leading role, and take him away high in the sky and off to a better and happier world (and if you can keep a dry eye, you're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!)

The end of the 1939 film of *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* where 'Chips' (Robert Donat, who won the



Brian with Richard Burton in South Africa on location for *The Wild Geese* 1977

'Best Actor' Oscar for his performance) remembers many of his 'boys' as he lays dying after a lifetime of schoolmastering at Brookfield. (See above Gunga Din...!)

The opening credit-titles of the 1969 re-make of *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (with Peter O'Toole as 'Chips'), showing various settings at the empty public school in holiday-time (including desks with old initials carved upon them) as Leslie Bricusse's beautiful and haunting Brookfield school song is sung on the soundtrack (*In the morning of my life, I shall look to the sunlight...*).

The opening few moments of A Matter of Life and Death (1946) where RAF pilot David Niven battles vainly to regain control of his badly-damaged bomber and chats bravely to a WAAF in 'ground-control' down at base...

The memorable sequence in *E.T.* (1982) where a group of boys on bicycles, with 'E.T.' at their head, race to help the loveable alien creature to escape from the pursuing authorities until, with the aid of his magic, they all soar into the sky, still on their bicycles, riding through the air and across the face of the moon- all to the sound of John Williams' superb music as it builds and builds...

The 'Battle of Agincourt' sequence from Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) (remember all those 'swishing' English arrows soaring into the air?),

fought to William Walton's stirring music.

Spencer Tracy's final speech to his family at the end of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (1967) (he was so obviously struggling to finish the picture despite his illness – then sadly died about two weeks after...)

The 'ballet sequence' at the end of *An American in Paris* (1951).

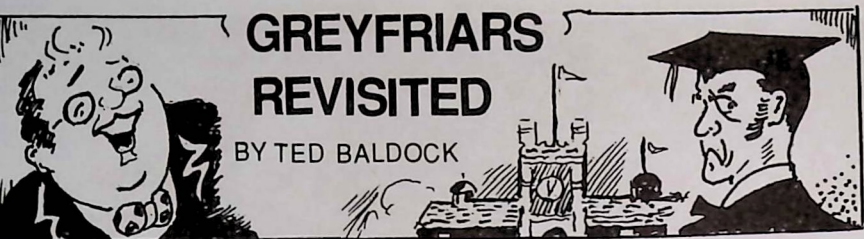
That makes, I think, 21 favourite moments – and even then I've cut them down from a total of 40! May I suggest that you start remembering your own favourite scenes and 'moments' from movies of the past? I can guarantee you'll find them accumulating quite quickly!

Before I finish, I must mention the one or three readers referred to earlier, who said: 'You seem to like everyone you have met and worked with in the film business. Were there any you *didn't* like particularly, or didn't get along with?'

It's true – I *did* like practically everyone! Without going into details, let's just say that Ava Gardner, Yul Brynner, Stanley Baker, Harvey Keitel, and director Michael Winner never made it on to my Christmas card list...!

Next time (if I'm still on *your* Christmas card list!) I hope to tell you about Harold Lloyd, Gene Kelly, Judy Garland, Dustin Hoffman, Sammy Davis Jr. and Gregory Peck. Oh yes, and a certain 007 James Bond...





THE ROAD TO YESTERYEAR

is pleasant through the loophole of retreat
peep at such a world

Moral uncertainties

Deepening shadows on a winter's afternoon
with an all-pervading air of dampness tend to
gender sombre thoughts.

Dispel them. Draw the curtains, stir the fire,
watch the shadows dancing on the wall. Light the
candle and reach for a favourite book or magazine.
This can be a magic hour, but like all worthwhile
activities it demands a little cultivation.

Palm-girt islands await the diligent seeker.
Sizzling white beaches, the eternal boom of surf
on the outer reef and - who knows - buried
treasures may be hidden between the pages.
Armies may march and deploy, citadels fall
amidst the roar of battle, and cavalry charges with
their pennants will swirl in the embers of the fire.
It matters if the rain beats on the window, or
if the wind wails in the chimney. Within romance and
adventure abound. Winter can be a jolly season.
It depends upon the individual and his train of
thought - and imagination.

*There's a white, dusty road winding over the lea,
There are shadows and trees and sky,
The road to adventure for you and for me,
Come, let us with stout hearts try.*

Turn the page and we are on the verge of a
new adventure. Harry Wharton and Co, with up-
turned coat collars and bent heads are trudging
through the fast falling snow along Friardale lane
on their way back to the school and they
encounter a shadowy figure just ahead in the
darkness who quickly steps aside and disappears
among the leafless trees bordering the lane.

Who could it be? Why the furtive haste with
which he moves into the darkness? Is his
haste 'lawful'?

The Famous Five do not pursue him. They
are already late for 'call over'. Trouble with
the clock and Mr. Quelch looms ahead. They
wonder on and wonder about that shadowy figure.
This is the prelude to another adventure. As surely
as day follows night they will meet that dark,

furtive figure again and the game will be well and
truly afoot.

Another great school story splendidly
chronicled by that old master of the pen - or
rather Remington, Charles Hamilton, which will
be followed breathlessly by countless readers in
the *Magnet*.

There is an element strangely difficult and
elusive in any attempt to capture and describe the
precise romance of those now far distant days
when week by week we besieged our local
newsagent for our copy of the current issue. How
willingly were our two pennies surrendered.
How eagerly we clutched our latest copy.

Saturday was traditionally *Magnet* day. A
day marked with a red rubric in our calendar. A
day looked forward to with great anticipation and
not a little impatience, throughout the week.
Saturday spelt freedom, leisure and escape for a
brief period from the rules and strictures of
school.

It was an endless day, always summer - so it
seemed - followed by an equally long Sunday
during which we were able to amuse ourselves
much as we chose, and, it was another *Magnet*
day. What happy memories we have of those
long week-ends, be they in winter or summer.
Memories which are laced through with the
adventures of our heroes of Greyfriars school.

Mr. Quelch's crusty features, Mr. Prout's
portly figure and Billy Bunter's voluminous
check trousers were as familiar to us as our own
reflections in a mirror. George Wingate, of the
sixth form, was a supreme being who could do no
wrong. Not only the Captain of the school (an
honour beyond the reach of most of us) but a
fellow on the verge of 'going up' to Oxbridge,
where without much doubt he would in due
course get his 'Blue' at rowing and soccer,
making for himself as impressive a reputation as
that which he enjoyed at Greyfriars.

Happily for us this stage of events existed
always in the offing, it never actually
materialized thanks to the time capsule in which
this magic world had its being. These characters
and the host of others at the school were very real

to us. Possibly we tried to 'ape' them, with no discredit to ourselves.

Gerald Loder, Walker and Carne, together with certain others of a similar ilk were, of course, beyond the pale, although we followed their shady after 'lights out' activities with no small interest. By what degree would the drama have been diminished had the lights at the 'Three Fishers' not been gleaming into the small hours, or the silent shadowy figures not been making their way back to the school considerably less financially viable than when they had proceeded to the 'Three Fishers' earlier on.

The world hurtled along at its prescribed and hectic pace. There were wars and rumours of wars. There was unrest, discontent and unemployment. Of these dismal facts we were vaguely aware but not in the least concerned. We were young and the world was a grand place, full of possibilities, and always there were new adventures looming on the horizon. Best of all we had the *Magnet* as the high spot of every week. It was an immutable and glorious fact of life. We could not visualize existence without that host of great characters keeping us company.

Today, sixty or so years on, one may look back at these weekly covers in facsimile which meant so much to us, and experience again something of that old thrill of anticipation – an echo of the old magic – which never ceases to manifest itself. A fleeting yet tangible proof that those days were once a reality of which we were a part.

Thomas Moore approaches very close to the heart of the matter with his lines:

*Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood's years...*

Although, as I recall happily, laughter and 'rags' seemed to predominate in those *Magnet* years and although *horas non numaro nisi serenas* – it must have rained sometimes.

GREYFRIARS MICROCOSM

The World's a theatre, the earth a stage
Which God and nature do with actors fill.

T. Heywood. *Apology to actors*

It was in 1908, or perhaps 1917, or possibly 1923 – one gets a little confused; It is all the same, it could well be 1935, it really does not signify. It is Greyfriars time – our time. We exist in a kind of vacuum, a world that *is* – yet never was. Shakespeare speaks of the 'inaudible and noiseless foot of time.' This has little relevance for us. The little world of Greyfriars

exists quite happily without too much assistance from the wider influences outside. Herein lies much – if not all of its charm.

It is then a glorious day in high summer, with a blue sky and wisps of white cloud here and there. King Cricket is in the ascendant. The old school buildings are quiet and deserted. Fellows are scattered far and wide on such a day, some to the playing fields, many disporting themselves on, and in, that classic stream, the Sark. A few energetic chaps are rambling over the breezy expanses of Courtfield common. It is early afternoon and a 'Half'.

The Remove passage is empty and silent, the studies are still and unoccupied. There is one figure however, a grossly fat and corpulent junior with large spectacles and an over-all avaricious aspect. William George Bunter, one of the less decorative ornaments of the Remove, is feeling a trifle peckish – is it not almost two hours since dinner? Not unnaturally the pangs are beginning to make themselves painfully felt. Hence Bunter commences a careful and systematic exploration of the study cupboards along the passage in search of sustenance.

From the open window of Mr. Quelch's study comes the rhythmic tapping of a typewriter. The famous *History of Greyfriars* is proceeding space. Bending sharp glances ever and anon towards the telephone on the desk at his elbow, he mentally wills it to remain silent during this sacred hour of leisure so that his mind and imagination may wander uninterrupted among the vast collection of dusty and somewhat musty documents and papers piled beside him awaiting his scrutiny. From these he will, in due course, extract priceless facts and details relating to bygone eras in Greyfriars' history. All of which will, in due time, having been reshaped by his own intellect, appear in his *Magnum Opus*.

At such moments it may be said that Mr. Quelch is '*in nubibus*', and has entered into the nearest proximity to his 'seventh heaven' as he is likely ever to achieve. Routine matters of everyday existence quickly fade into the background of his mind as he becomes more deeply immersed. At junctures such as these, William George Bunter (his especial bane) might never have existed. A stray fly, droning tirelessly around his head, attracted doubtless by the aroma of musty documents, might have found more productive fields of exploration for all the attention it received. Once committed to his first love Quelch is a lost man to all else for the time being.

A summer day, silence – save for the occasional subdued clicking of the Remington – leisure, peace, calm, all conducive to tranquillity, happy content and quiet study. In these

circumstances one may observe a contented and happy master of the Remove. Thus we leave him, his crusty features composed and relaxed, lost in a haze of musty vellum, old English script, the shades of ancient Friars, and all things monastic pertaining to Greyfriars school. In such moments it is highly probably that overtures from Dr. Locke himself would have been received, though with courtesy, with less than cordiality. And should Mr. Prout have had the temerity to intrude at such a time, it is quite certain that he would have received very short shrift indeed, nothing less than a dismissal of an 'unprecedented' nature.

Having ascertained that Mr. Quelch is occupied, Bunter, sure that it is unlikely any disturbance will issue from that quarter, proceeds to explore the recesses of the cupboard in Study No. I., which unhappily for him proves to be a perfect blank. Grunting "Beasts!" he idly roots round the study for any morsel of toffee which might have been overlooked.

Any chance letter left lying about will immediately come under his inquisitive attention. The contents will be perused without a thought as to the enormity of his action. This is one of the Owl's less happy and disconcerting little habits. Cupboards, desks and drawers left unlocked are naturally 'fair game'. Any tuck left unsecured is doomed, and swiftly so. Thus will the fat Owl occupy himself on a quiet summer afternoon. Mr. Quelch to his researches – and Bunter to his, each in his own inimitable way pursuing his heart's desire.

It is a familiar and satisfying picture, one which has been portrayed countless times in the *Magnet* stories over the years. Much criticism has been levelled at the description of the school and the conduct of the Greyfriars characters. Criticism from many sources which would seem to suggest that much notice has been directed to this phenomenon. The *Magnet* collected to itself a readership of world-wide dimensions. Many countries are familiar with the names and activities of William George Bunter and Harry Wharton and Co. They seem to have transcended international barriers and frontiers. They may be safely said to have entered into the literary heritage of nearly all the English speaking countries of the world. Patterns of behaviour change over the years; different values replace erstwhile time-proved ideas; different modes of conduct, even of speech, all mark the forward thrust of what we choose to designate as 'progress'.

The world of the *Magnet* however is quite static, frozen in a pleasant limbo, a more gracious and infinitely less noisy and haste-ridden world, with characters reacting accordingly. In this near Utopian sphere we find grass-fringed village

high-streets and quaint old thatched cottages; quiet sleepy country towns with coloured awnings above the shops on hot sunny days (which seemed to predominate) and above all a peaceful atmosphere encouraging one to pause, linger and absorb the rustic charm. At such moments even the distant smoky city seems muted and less stygian.

Against such a background is the Greyfriars story enacted. Horace Coker has time to sit shaded by the immense elm outside Uncle Clegg's little store and sustain himself with sundry ices before proceeding to deal – in his time-honoured 'short way with fags' – with Harry Wharton and Co who have had the temerity to sit at an adjacent table and converse loudly in the lordly presence, much to his outraged fifth form dignity. It is probable that nothing more exciting than the ensuing fracas will stir the peaceful calm of Friardale high street that summer afternoon. It will certainly not impinge in any way upon the post lunch siesta of P.C. Tozer, the local arm of the law, as he sits in his secluded garden with his features covered by a somewhat gaudy handkerchief.

Potter and Greene, the long suffering lieutenants of the great Horace, with experience born of long – and bitter – apprenticeship, have slipped discreetly into the shady recesses of Uncle Clegg's shop, there to remain until the inevitable uproar is over, whereupon they will emerge and gather up the dusty and well-ragged remnants of their leader and set him to some semblance of rights, the while I fear suffering the keener edges of his eloquence for their base betrayal.

It has been a persistently reiterated question over the years. "How and why do Potter and Greene, two run-of-the-mill decent fellows, manage to tolerate the crass idiocies of a man like Horace Coker?" Here, if ever a case was obvious, is a perfect example of sturdy loyalty and monumental patience. Little credence should be placed in the oft repeated suggestion that the answer lies in the regular arrival of 'over the top' hampers from Coker's Aunty Judy. This is an implication and an impertinence which, in view of their far stretched good nature, will simply not hold water. It has been said that one should suffer fools gladly – who would deny that Potter and Greene are not long suffering heroes of the first water?

Little Mr. Twigg, master of the second form, clad in a faded and shapeless old blazer – a relic of his long gone university days – and yellowing panama bleached by the suns of many summers, with ash walking stick, is observed proceeding with such dignity as is commensurable in a gentleman of such small stature, along the shady

footpath by the rippling Sark. Taking the air on this glorious afternoon, he is free for the moment of the arduous and exacting duties of keeping some semblance of order among a dozen or so boisterous minors. Who knows what lofty thoughts and dreams may be drifting through his mind under the calming influence of the warm and peaceful surroundings by the river.

Were not C. Julius Caesar, Horatio Nelson and the first Napoleon, to mention but three – small men also? All were men of insignificant stature, yet each had possessed a spark of genius, each had accomplished might deeds about which Mr. Twigg had read in his younger days. They were giants indeed and he derived no small comfort from his knowledge of their achievements. Might not he – one day... For the moment however, the dappled shadows on the towpath will have to suffice. Thrashing the heads from the nettles growing alongside the path with his stick, Mr. Twigg squares his rather narrow shoulders and marches on happily with his dreams.

So immersed is he in thoughts of a possible glorious future that he quite fails to detect a stirring in the undergrowth by the dilapidated fence enclosing the seedy property of the 'Three Fishers', or to glimpse a swiftly ducking cap bearing the Greyfriars colours. The Bounder, less astute than usual, had almost dropped into Mr. Twigg's path, yet that gentleman, with twirling stick, is completely lost to his immediate surroundings as he strides away in the illustrious company of the great. With such elevating thoughts crowding through his mind he grows smaller as he proceeds along the shadowy path until he finally fades from view.

Possibly Cecil Ponsonby and Co. of Highcliff will be somewhere in the offing on such an afternoon keeping a weather eye for the odd Greyfriars fellow upon whom they may bestow their delightful brand of humour! It is a compact and select little company with whom we have to deal. We know them all quite intimately and are able to judge with some degree of accuracy just what their conduct will be in any given situation.

The following incident contains all the ingredients of fun, thrills and, as likely as not, the drama we have come to expect. It is a situation which has occurred many times over the years, yet it remains evergreen in its appeal. The river is flashing and sparkling in the rays of the afternoon sun.

It was hot and Bunter is perspiring freely. The willows linking the banks of the Sark drooped invitingly over the flood, creating a welcome shade. Popper island had never looked so tempting as it did at that moment. So thought William George Bunter as he stood panting on

the towpath, his podgy features aglow, resting after his exertions with Coker's hamper. "If only I could get across somehow" he murmured, "That beast Coker would never think of searching there."

One may predict with an accuracy born from long experience of the Greyfriars tales just what tribulations lie in store for the Owl in his flight from the avenging Coker.

Again, one may see Harry Wharton looking from the Remove landing window at the whirling snowflakes driven by a keen east wind across the quad. The old buildings are almost obliterated in the growing dusk. The elms over by the tuckshop are swaying and creaking mournfully and lights are beginning to appear in the study windows. It bids fair to be a wild night, not unseasonable perhaps – it is mid December.

Soon, in a day or so, term will be ending and the fellows will be scattering to the four corners of the kingdom and beyond. Here is the atmospheric winter climate, with snow and a searching east wind, two essentials to the success and well-being of the end of term at Greyfriars.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh will be joining Harry Wharton at Wharton Lodge for the first party of the vac: later, in time for the Christmas celebrations, they will be joined by the other members of the Co. And, although uninvited, Bunter will also be present – a self invited guest. These are all the events we have, over the years, come to expect – facets we would not willingly forego.

Mellow chimes from the old clock tower record the passage of time as they have done for centuries. The quad grows grey with shadows – even Gosling's shadow, goblin-like as it jerks along in his wake as he proceeds about his lawful business in the vicinity of the gate. He has never been known to fail by so much as a minute in being sharply 'on the nail' in locking the gates upon the official chime. Nothing, it would seem, delights the old reprobate so much as locking unfortunate fellows out and reporting them. Such is his crabbed sense of humour. Yet there is – amazingly enough – a redeeming feature even in his sterile psychological landscape, a feature which usually manifests itself at the end of term when certain remunerations become the order of the day. It is then that Gosling's horny palm extends to receive certain silver coins and notes for services rendered, generally connected with the carrying of cases and trunks. It has been recorded that upon these occasions Gosling's facial muscles have been seen to twitch and contort into what may be translated as the ghost of a smile.

In the lordly atmosphere of the sixth form quarters, Wingate sinks down into the recesses of his armchair by the fireside. This chair is an old and faithful companion, having accompanied him up through the school from his junior days. Consequently it has seen much service. Now it is rather worn and a little woe-begone in appearance. It is inclined to sag in places and is not without a burst or so here and there, yet it is still eminently comfortable – and beloved. Reaching forward, Wingate stirs the study fire into a blaze, selects a book from the shelf at his elbow and is soon immersed, oblivious to the world at large – for the time being. Noises from the corridor, a faint uproar from the distant fifth form games room – all fade into insignificance for a pleasant half hour. In short, the captain's study is an exceedingly snug little sanctum as befits the retreat of such an Olympian character.

Here is the complete security of the world of Greyfriars. Wingate is captain of the school, affairs are running smoothly (why should they not when in such capable hands), what could possibly go wrong?

Gerald Loder and his cronies, Carne and Walker, will probably kick over the traces from time to time, as becomes 'bad hats'. Mr. Prout will continue to boom and pontificate to the fifth form and to his long suffering colleagues in

Master's common room in his usual pedantic way. Mr. Quelch will snap, and Mr. Hacker will hoot, and little Mr. Twigg will expostulate mildly. What could conceivably go amiss with everything proceeding along its expected course under the benign eye of the venerable Dr. Locke.

The sun will continue to sink down behind the chapel in varying hues of colour and cloudscape according to the season, obeying the inexorable laws of nature. Lights will spring up in the study windows and life will go on in its immemorial way *Semper idem*. May the harsh winds of reality never so much as stir the fringes of this little world of school, this small – yet infinitely large – oasis of sanity in a hurrying and mercenary world.

On the edge of the downs in the weald of Kent
 The old school's standing yet,
 Forth in the world our boys are sent
 Old friends they won't forget.
 Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows all
 'Men' of yesteryear.
 Will you fail to hear the call.
 The message is quite clear.
 From the outposts of the world
 Where Greyfriars 'Men' are found
 Keep the fine old flag unfurled,
 Traditions – good and sound.



Season's Greetings to all Hobby friends from MAURICE KING, 27 CELTIC CRESCENT, DORCHESTER, DORSET, DT1 2TG.

Best Wishes to all Digest readers for Christmas and the New Year. LESLIE KING, CHESHAM, BUCKS.

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Wishing you all a Very Happy Xmas. Unfortunately I have spent most of this last year in and out of hospital. Good luck to all. 'MAC' (E. GRANT-McPHERSON).

Some Thoughts of A Boys' Writer



(Editor's Note: Bob Acraman sent this article and suggested that it might be an appropriate item for the Annual. I asked Una Hamilton Wright if she would put it in context for us and she has kindly done so.)

UNA HAMILTON WRIGHT SAYS:

The following article was first published in the Saturday Book of 1945. Later it was abridged for inclusion in the CHRIST CHURCH (RAMSGATE) MAGAZINE of August 1948.

Charles Hamilton's thoughts had turned to religion during World War II and he enjoyed reading the Ramsgate Parish Magazines and also those of St. Peter's, Broadstairs. He quite often had letters published in them and wrote articles when he had the time. He did, in fact, fulfil his ambition and write a book on religion, *FAITH AND HOPE*, as yet unpublished.

SOME THOUGHTS OF A BOY'S WRITER (by Frank Richards)

[Editor's Note: The Author of this contribution is the inventor of one of the best-known characters in English fiction: Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School. It is not too much to say that the Owl of the Remove is, like Mr. Pickwick and Sherlock Holmes, a character known in most corners of the globe. For more than thirty years Mr. Charles Hamilton (for that is the author's real name) kept going three pen names, Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest, and three schools, Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood. For the Magnet and Gem he invented hundreds of characters, and the fame of Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and others is not a great distance behind that of Billy Bunter. During all this time Mr. Hamilton was writing a million and a half words a year. At seventy, as his contribution shows, he continues to work hard. Perhaps it reveals another fact too, that he is the youngest man of seventy in the world.]

When an author is invited to talk or write about himself and his work, it seems to be taken

for granted that he will have something to say about 'early struggles'. How did he overcome the reluctance of publishers? How did he contrive to penetrate the solid editorial head with an idea of the value of his work? And how did he in the meantime, manage to exist? Did he sink in the depths of the blues at a rejection, and did he strike the stars with his sublime head at an acceptance? Did he in days of weary waiting, have to say, like Jean Paul, 'to a great height shall the business of hungering go'? Did he emerge, at last, a head bloody but unbowed, into the sunshine of success.

Frank Richards is almost ashamed to say that he knows nothing on the subject of early struggles, never having had any. He sold his first story in the far-off nineties, before he was eighteen: and was immediately asked for more. Publishers came and went: but as fast as one went, another came – and this continued happily for fifty years. He never saw a rejection slip outside an editorial office. His memory is charged not with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune but with urgent letters, telegrams, and telephone calls, demanding more and more copy. And all this came so easily that he never understood that he was a lucky man. It all seemed to him a matter of course. It was not till he was quite an old bean that Frank realized that he had been very lucky indeed. That was when fortune changed. The paper shortage of 1940 gave him furiously to think. Then when his income dropped in a day from £2,500 a year to nothing at all, with a taxation hangover by way of consolation. Frank Richards discovered that there were after all uncertainties in the writing life. He could be quite eloquent on the subject of 'late' struggles. But of 'early' ones he knows nothing at all.

Frank began to write almost as soon as he could hold a pencil in his fist. He wrote fairy tales as a little kid: romances of wild adventure as a schoolboy; but when he reached years of discretion – at about seventeen – he began to take things more seriously. Actually his tastes were almost as much for study as for writing: and he

read voraciously everything that came his way, in English and French – other languages came later.

Diffidence, a haunting distrust of one's own powers, is always a handicap: often most emphatically present in people who really can do things. They set their standards too high, and failing to reach them, feel they can do nothing worth while. Frank Richards knows, now, that he can write a good story, but only I fear, because so very many people have told him so. In early days though he wrote and wrote, and delighted in writing, it seemed a sheer impossibility that his writings should ever appear in print. Such glory was for far cleverer fellows than he. It was not on his own volition, but was usually on receiving a push from somebody else, that he made the desperate plunge. It was difficult for him to believe his eyes when the first story he had ever sent on its travels resulted in the first cheque he had ever received.

That cheque was the first of many thousands: and later in life one of Frank's bothers was to remember to send his cheques to the bank, and enter the amounts in his account book for income tax and surtax purposes. But all troubles come to an end at last – that one bothers him no longer. Sometimes he rather wishes that it did.

Frank wrote on many subjects; but he settled down at last to write chiefly the school story. He liked school; he liked schoolboys; he even, amazing as it may seem, liked schoolmasters. The subject was ever fresh to him; and time has not staled it; age cannot wither it nor custom stale its infinite variety. It is as fresh to him at seventy as it was to him at seventeen. Indeed, when he is writing a school story he utterly forgets that he is seventy at all, and is to all intents and purposes seventeen again. Never has he found it difficult to recapture the first fine careless rapture. This probably accounts for what was considered the astonishing output of a million and a half words a year. Frank's writing could never come under the general heading of work; for writing what one wants to write is not work but a pleasant pastime. When writing becomes work to write, it becomes work to read; and it is time for the writer to take a rest and give his readers one.

But there were not roses all the way. Frank had outdoor tastes; and writing could seldom or never be done out of doors. True as a boy he wrote reams and reams sprawling in his old boat on summer days. But when more serious times came, and his output ran into millions of words on a typewriter, those easy-going days were over. He had to make up his mind to sit at the machine for three hours every morning, and sometimes an hour or two in the afternoon as well.

How did I invent my characters? I didn't. They just grewed like Topsy. I don't see how

any character could be invented, for if it doesn't live already how can anyone breathe into its nostrils the breath of life? Harry Wharton was mine own familiar friend. He is still sixteen in my mind's eye; for owing to circumstances which it would be interesting not to relate, I never saw him after that age; and I just cannot think of him as seventy-one. In my memory he remains exactly as I saw him last, and as he is depicted in the Magnet. Johnny Bull I did not meet until he was in his forties; and I had only to visualise what he must have been like at fifteen, and there he was. Everyone, I suppose, must have known a Bob Cherry; Hurree Janset Ram Singh derives chiefly from a dark gentleman whom I met for five minutes in the early nineties. Frank Nugent, is or was, no other than Frank Richards himself, so far as one could draw one's own portrait: quite a nice boy, I am persuaded, but booked always to go in with the tail. Tom Merry is just an average healthy schoolboy such as one may see every day. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy owes his existence to a suggestion from H.J. Garrish, then editor of the paper in which he first appeared; but later he was slowly but surely modelled on a sub-editor, a delightful young gentleman who really knew what clothes were, and how to wear them.

Billy Bunter – the one and only – derived from several sources. There was an occasion when Frank Richards was simply fascinated by an editorial, gentleman at Carmelite House, who overflowed his chair to such an extent that it was a mystifying problem how he had got into it, and a still more intriguing mystery how he ever got out of it. From him Bunter borrowed his remarkable circumference. His celebrated postal order, which he was always expecting, but which never came, was in fact a cheque of which a relative of my own lived in a perpetual state of expectation, seldom or never realised. His big spectacles belonged to another relative, who had quite an entertaining way of peering at one like an owl. In these latter days Frank Richards himself is in still worse case; but retains, fortunately, his sense of humour; and if he stoops in the garden to stroke a cabbage, taking it for a cat, can laugh instead of swearing.

It has always been one of my ambitions to write a book on religion; if I ever do so, certainly it will not begin with "I say you fellows," or be published in weekly numbers. It was once asked, why should the Devil have all the good tunes?" As reasonably it may be asked why should he have all the wit and humour? Religion is attacked by the wits, and generally defended by the dullards. But the weapon of ridicule could just as easily be turned against the witty nitwits who are so much wiser than their Maker.

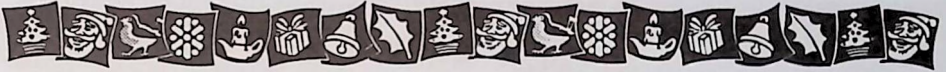
I read four or five hours every day; yet it never seems to me that I have enough time for reading. I compose sweet melodies on the piano; my eyes make it difficult for me to write them down, but I carry them all in my head, and chant them every now and then with great satisfaction. I write considerable copies of "Carcroft" copy, all ready for the brave new world, and for a publisher who may desire to make half a million pounds, as I have been told one of my former publishers did. I read the Bible regularly, and find great pleasure and profit therein. I translate the sections I like best from Don Quixote and the Divine Comedy, and dream, just as I did when I was a small kid, about the time when some publisher will ask me to complete the work, and offer me thousands of guineas for it.

The eyes that once looked from the hill of Capri across a lovely bay to Naples glittering in the sun, with Vesuvius smoking his morning pipe in the distance, cannot now see across a room —

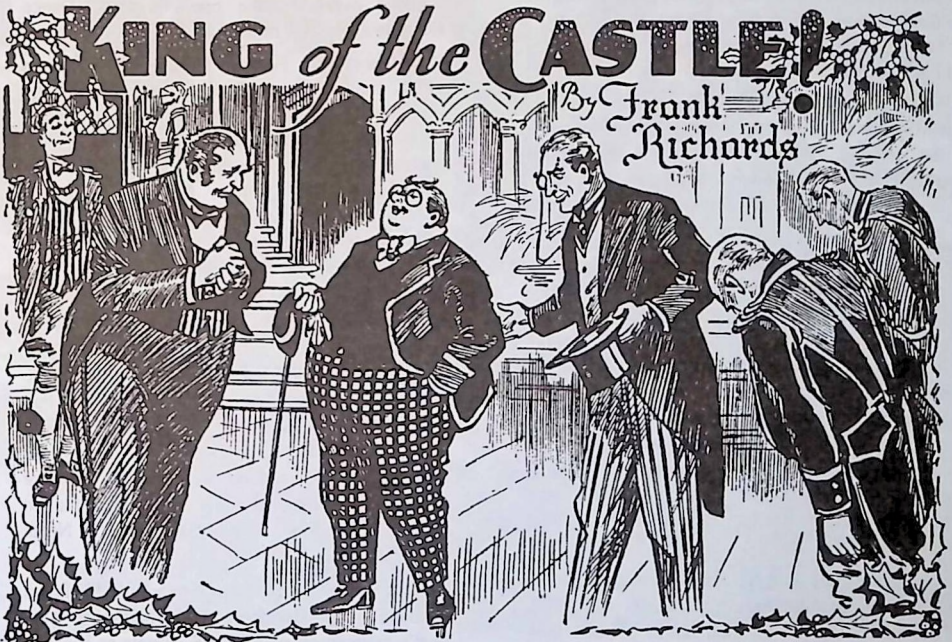
but they can see a page of Shakespeare. One of the active legs that tramped so cheerily over Alps and Apennines now has to be propped up with care when Frank Richards sits at the typewriter, and at times gives him pangs reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition; but as Tom Merry used to say, "Why grouse?" If old Friedrich put to me the question he put to the recruit, "Willst Du immer Leben?" my reply would be a prompt and emphatic "Ja: gewiss."

At seventy every thinking man must, to some extent, have an eye on two worlds; but I don't see that a decent Christian need be unduly perturbed about it. This world is a jolly place, and Frank Richards is going to remain in it as long as ever he can; but, when the time comes to move on. I am sure that he will look on it as little more than changing trains on a long journey. And when I meet unbelieving friends in the Elysian Fields, I shall enjoy saying to them, "I told you so!"

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Feeding on the fat of the land at Reynham Castle and giving orders right and left to an army of liveried funkeys is the ideal Christmas holiday! So thinks Billy Bunter—until he takes over the reins as—



A Magnificent New Long Complete Christmas Yarn of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, starring BILLY BUNTER as My Lord of Reynham Castle.

Henry Hall - Britain's Most Popular Band-Leader

BY
TERRY JONES



Added to the joys of Wednesday and Saturday mornings in the early '30s when I eagerly extracted the *Gem* and the *Magnet* from the inside of my father's *Daily Herald* sticking through our letterbox, was to sit eagerly near the wireless every weekday at 5.15 pm. That was when father tuned in, and the voice of the announcer told us that Henry Hall and the BBC Dance Orchestra were in the studio with their regular weekday broadcast. I think it is safe to record that 76% of the nation tuned in. It was the highlight of the day for young and old alike.

Henry Hall was a very shrewd broadcaster and he realized that at that time of the day many children would be listening, so he deliberately aimed some of his numbers at juvenile fans. The songs included *Rusty and Dusty Brown*, *Sweetmeat Joe the Candy Man*, *Here comes the Bogey Man* and that great hit that is still a favourite with both young and old to this day, *The Teddy Bear's Picnic*.

Incidentally, the recording quality of that time was so good that the BBC engineers used the original 78rpm record to test the record-players in the studios for many years. The sound is amazing from the high tinkle of the xylophone to the sonority of the tuba.

Meanwhile, the adults loved the hits of the day that the orchestra played and bought Henry Hall's records by the thousands. *Little man, you've had a Busy Day*, *Lullaby of the Leaves*, *It's the Talk of the Town*, *The Music Goes Round and round*, to name just a few. Each one a masterpiece of arrangement and playing with the vocalists so good that every word could be clearly heard. Those were the days of quality popular music by composers such as Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin and George Gershwin.

Henry Hall and the BBC Dance Orchestra made their first broadcast on March 15th 1932. They had a big job on their hands because they had to follow the famous and very popular Jack Payne who was leaving the BBC and taking the whole band with him. Payne had built up a terrific reputation with his BBC broadcasts. He

had some of the country's top musicians in his orchestra. Certainly his was the leading band. When he set out on a nationwide tour of the Variety Theatres he played to packed houses wherever the band appeared.

People in the music world were amazed when Henry Hall was chosen to form a new BBC Dance Orchestra. He was a modest, genial and immaculate man. Tall and slim, with horn-rimmed spectacles, he looked and sounded more like a private-school housemaster than a bandleader.

But Henry was a musical genius and soon produced a band polished and disciplined with a beautiful melodic sound playing in perfect dance tempo. It wasn't long before the nation's listeners accepted him instead of Payne and soon he had overtaken the previous BBC Dance Orchestra Director in popularity.

Henry Hall, born in Peckham, London in 1898, trained for a Civil Service career and studied music in his spare time at the Guildhall School of Music. He was an excellent pianist and trumpet player, after studying under George Aitken and John Soloman. He got a job in the Salvation Army when he was sixteen as a copyist and musical assistant in their editorial department. It was there that he gained practical experience in engraving, printing, composing and arranging. He even got as far as composing several marches which were published.

During World War One he served with the Band of the Royal Artillery playing trumpet and piano. After the war, in 1919, he got a job in a cinema in London as a relief pianist but after a year of that he decided it was time to move forward in the musical world so he formed a trio and got booked into several theatres in the North of England.

He formed his first dance band in 1923 at the Midland Hotel, Manchester, and that led to a ten year's association with L.M.S. Hotels as Musical Director. He led his band at the Midland Hotel in the Winter and at the famous Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland from 1924 in the Summer. On June 4th, 1924 he made his radio debut when the BBC

broadcast Gleneagles opening night. From then on he was broadcasting from there every Thursday. By this time he was in charge of thirty-two dance bands in L.M.S. hotels.

On the strength of the Gleneagles broadcasts the BBC chose him to form and direct a new BBC Dance Orchestra. Like Jack Payne before him, Henry Hall had some of the finest musicians in the land with him. The famous xylophone player, Harry Robbins was one of them.

One must not forget the drummer who joined in 1935. His name was George Elrick and he was famous for his vocals in his broad Scottish accent. His best one was *The Music goes Round and round*. Years later, George was listened to by almost every housewife in the country when he became the popular presenter of *Housewife's Choice* every weekday on the BBC after the 9 am news.

A very strong team of vocalists will always be associated with the Orchestra: Val Rosing, the

singer on *The Teddy Bear's Picnic*, Les Allen, Phyllis Robbins (who had a tremendous hit with *Little Man You've had a Busy Day*), Bert Yarlett, Kitty Masters, Anona Wynn, Leslie Douglas, Bernard Hunter, Bob Mallin, Anita Ridell, Molly Morella, Len Berman and, the best known of the lot, that handsome young Welshman, Dan Donovan.

Meanwhile the country's top bands were going from strength to strength. The bandleaders were like film stars with thousands of fans as pop entertainers have today. But it was records and the wireless that provided the only contact most people had with them because otherwise these crack bands played at the leading hotels and nightclubs for the rich elite only.

On Mondays from 10.30 pm to midnight there was Sydney Kyte or Sydney Lipton with Lew Stone on Tuesdays, Roy Fox or Carroll Gibbons on Wednesdays. Jack Jackson or Maurice Winnick could be heard on Thursdays



The B.B.C. Dance Orchestra directed by Henry Hall, December 1934.
Back row left to right: T. Farrar, C. Price, F. Wilson, E. Tann, W. Mulraney.
Front row: G. Dickenson, E. Cromar, B. Gillis, F. Williams, J. Halsall,
J. Hitchenor and Henry Hall.

and Harry Roy burst forth on Fridays. What a feast of quality dance-music we children enjoyed in the evenings if, as a special treat, we were allowed to sit up to hear some of them when we were on school holidays.

But what of Saturday evening? Ah, that was the top spot of the week. From the Embassy or the Mayfair came the royal favourite, Ambrose. Many royals used to drop in to dine, then to dance to the music of the Ambrose Orchestra. The most famous was the Prince of Wales who later became King Edward VIII.

So, with such a terrific flow of top bands to compete with, Henry Hall was always keeping his eye open for ways of keeping his Orchestra among the best. So successful was he that he and his band were honoured by appearing in the Royal Command Performance at the London Palladium on May 8th 1934. Dance-bands didn't normally fit into such programmes in those days so this silenced Henry's critics, once and for all. The bleated no more about the music being too lacking in entertainment value.

Then came another real scoop. Benny Carter, ace tenor sax player, was invited over from his home in the USA in the Spring of 1936 to join the Orchestra as arranger. For eighteen months, until Henry Hall and the band left the BBC, Benny Carter made dance-music a real gem. Never had Henry's men sounded better. They matched any of the famous American bands in those days.

Even the film industry started to notice the marvellous orchestra. In 1935 Henry Hall and the BBC Dance Orchestra took the leading role in an Associated British film called *Music Hath Charms*. Made at Elstree Studios it has been shown several times on TV.

Henry Hall always amused theatre audiences and listeners to the wireless by introducing his programmes with "This is Henry Hall" with an

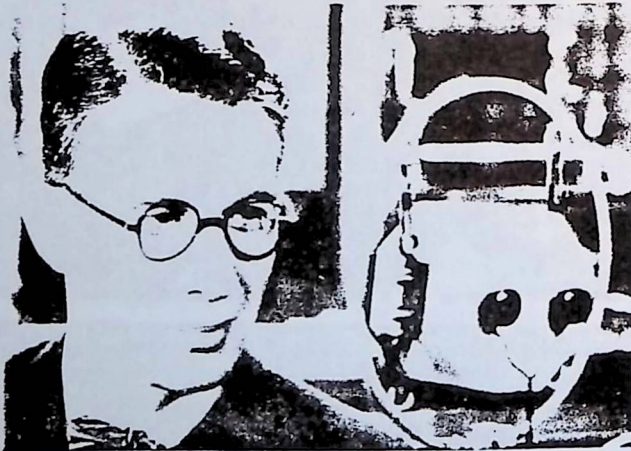
emphasis on the "is". It all came about when he went on holiday to the states. When the Orchestra started to broadcast after their vacation he had not returned, so the BBC engaged a man named George Hoddigan to do the announcing. His voice was so like Henry's that listeners thought it was the famous leader, especially as he used to say "This is the BBC Dance Orchestra directed by Henry Hall". But the *Daily Mail* radio critic exposed the fact that Henry was not there at all. When the leader did indeed return listeners didn't believe it, so he started to say "This is Henry Hall" much to the amusement of all in the studio. It became such a famous phrase it always stayed with him long after he retired.

As well as directing the Orchestra, Henry had another brilliant show going on the air. He was so popular that the BBC had no doubts about letting him launch his famous *Henry Hall's Guest Night* on 17th March 1934 which ran for twenty-five years even after the orchestra had left the BBC. The nation's top entertainers were always on the show. Max Miller was a regular guest, and little known talent Henry put on the road to fame included Donald Peers, Josef Locke, Al Read and Norman Wisdom.

On May 27th 1936 Henry Hall was invited to direct a dance-band on the maiden voyage of the great liner *Queen Mary*. The band broadcast from the ship thirteen times in eight days and was heard throughout the world.

By the summer of 1937, Henry decided to leave the BBC Dance Orchestra and form a new touring band so on September 25th 1937 the most popular broadcasting musical organisation made its last appearance.

The new orchestra was a sell-out everywhere it played. It was the magical name of Henry Hall that did it. Starting at the Birmingham Hippodrome in September it just swept to fame overnight. The whole of the UK and Europe was



covered and they carried on through the war years as well.

I lived in the small town of Stroud in the Cotswolds when Henry Hall and his Orchestra gave a Sunday concert. They had a job to start because the applause was so prolonged as soon as the famous celebrity came on stage.

The female vocalist with the band was a beautiful young red-head, a super singer who stopped the show with her impersonations of Gracie Field's songs. Her name was Betty Driver. Yes, the same Betty Driver who has appeared as Betty Williams for so many years in TV's *Coronation Street*.

After the war, Henry decided to concentrate on management and production. *Henry Hall Enterprises* was his successful agency supplying bands of every description and covering every aspect of show business.

In 1970 he was awarded the C.B.E. for his services to music. He spent his final days at Eastbourne and was often seen strolling along the seafront. He never ceased to be surprised that, in this age of rubbish on popular discs, his wonderful music is still welcomed all over the world on cassettes and compact discs.

Henry Hall died peacefully on 28th October 1989, aged ninety one.



I am writing this in the closing stages of the Twentieth Century and, subject to Editorial approval, it should appear a few weeks before the next Century commences. (No, I have not lost a year – you and I took twelve months to become one year of age – not so, the Calendar. There never was a year A.D.O., the sequence started at year 1. Well, you work it out!) Having put away my soap box – always a very rickety affair – let us look at what this piece is really all about.

Way back in January of the current year, many articles, lists, etc. were published, showing the cost of living and listing many articles – but the stated costs of the year 1900 varied so much from publication to ditto that it was not easy to pick out anything really reliable. In addition, the issue was confused by placing each 'old' price alongside today's cost. However, I have turned to a neutral source for information – my own source. Chancing to be re-reading P.G. Wodehouse's first novel *The Pot Hunters* I came across an item I had written in years ago. I had headed it 'Price example at time this story was written'. The book, published in 1902, was probably penned the previous year. So my copied price list was to be dated for the year 1901.

Before going into the various items available then, let us take a brief look at 1901. The Boer War was going on; Queen Victoria's long reign came to an end on Tuesday, 22nd January 1901. Music Hall was then a flourishing entertainment everywhere and, interestingly, the previous year had seen what was always regarded as the very first of the modern Musical Comedies that were to follow. The show was *Floradora* and contained a song that was often repeated in the Music Halls of the following years. This was *Tell Me Pretty Maiden* sung by, amongst others, Eugene (*Lily of Laguna*) Stratton. Although Gilbert and Sullivan operas were always being presented, there had been no new shows for some time. Sullivan himself had passed away in 1900. Notable events in 1901 included the introduction of the Mecanno set, the first Vacuum Cleaner and, not least, the safety razor.

Enough, though, of background. What do the prices of 1901 tell us? (By the way, I am quoting them in the original £.s.d. format and am making no attempt to compare them with today's prices. Suffice it to say that the small aspirin tablet of today which represents 5p equalled the twelve pence in a shilling in early days.)

So we will start with a typical item to be purchased – Binnie Hale was later to sing the praises of the man who first thought of pouring hot water on to tea. Well, you could get a lb. of tea for 10½d. If you took sugar with it, that set you back 1d. for every one pound weight of the commodity. The milk poured into the doorstep can came at a penny for a pint. Eggs do not appear on my list but here I can again turn to P.G. Wodehouse. In his original version of *Love Among the Chickens* (which appeared in the very early years of 1900), Ukridge refers to eggs at a penny each or six for fivepence. The staff of life to go with the breakfast – could be obtained at ½d. for a 4lb. Loaf. Other items for the dining table included potatoes for 2lb a penny. A two-pound jar of jam cost 3½d. If you preferred fish, hippers were on the slab at 1d. per pair.

How did smokers fare at this time? Tobacco was on sale at 2½d per ounce, cigarettes were 5 for a penny and matches appeared to be 'dirt-cheap' at 12 boxes for the single penny. (Contents of each box not known.) Now we come to an item that was surely much consumed then – as now. In 1901 beer was 2d. a pint. If you were affluent (some were) you got a bottle of whiskey for three shillings and fourpence. Rum was fourpence a bottle dearer. Gin was not so highly priced (even if highly prized by, we have been told, mothers) and a bottle could be bought for 2s. 9d. Brandy, though was dearer (even if only for medicinal purposes) – this caused you to work out the sum of 4s. 3d. for a bottle. By the way, you could get any alcoholic drink at almost any time, as the Public Houses were open from six in the morning to eleven o'clock at night.

Living accommodation, of course, had to be reckoned with in the family budget – two rooms could be rented for 1s.9d per week – for a 4-room rental you paid 4s.9d. The inclusive rates for a house and shop came out at five shillings and sixpence for each week of occupation. Board and lodging could be found for 10s. weekly.

The railways were in full swing of course – and were for many years. In 1901 a cheap day excursion ticket to the seaside from London varied from 3s.6d to 5s.0d. There were always

plenty of trains – however many passengers there were, a train was provided. Even years later when Lord Mauleverer took a Greyfriars party to Blackpool, despite the hordes of people seeking travel, trains were provided. Even years later when Lord Mauleverer took a Greyfriars party to Blackpool, despite the hordes of people seeking travel, trains were provided. In fact, you could even hire a 'special' – as Moriarty did in pursuit of Sherlock Holmes. Other than excursions trains, a whole carriage could be reserved quite reasonably.

By the way, if you wanted to try your luck in another country, you could emigrate to the U.S. for £3.10s.0d. Probably what was called steerage – and one can perhaps remember the conditions that existed in the Charlie Chaplin silent film *The Immigrant*.

This article is, I admit, incomplete – for one thing, I failed to note the source of my information. I believe it came from one of those books entitled *Turn of the Century*, *Times of Sherlock Holmes*, *When We Were Young* etc. One other thing is noticeably missing, also. What was the average or standard wage of those days? Again, articles in January of our present year also, like prices, varied considerably. Did most people take the daily newspapers at one half penny – or read the comics and story papers (including Sexton Blake) at the same price? We haven't mentioned the lowest coin of all – the farthing. I can recall being told during my youth of my elders obtaining large bags of fruit known as 'windfalls' from local Greengrocers for one farthing. (Maggots and all, I suppose.)

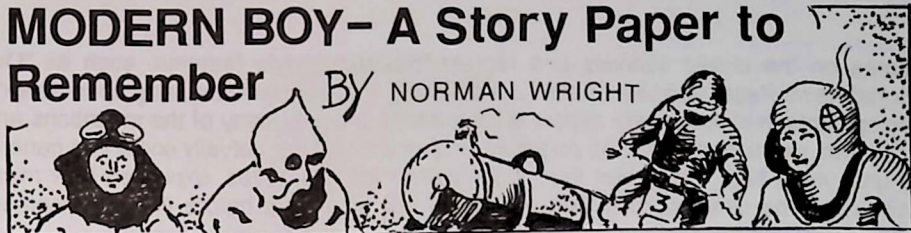
I rather think that now concludes this 'affair' of the 'good old days'. I suppose today the prices then must seem just like a fairy story. I doubt if it was. How many times, for instances, did the ploughman plodding his weary way homeward after receiving his weekly wages – probably on Saturday evening – call into his local for beer at 2d. a pint. Was it just once a week or did he imbibe more frequently. No, certainly not reminiscent of a fairy story.

Still, the expression does, at least, suggest a title for this article.



MODERN BOY- A Story Paper to Remember

By NORMAN WRIGHT



Ask anyone whose childhood fell between 1928 and 1939 to list a handful of their favourite story papers or comics and the title, *Modern Boy*, is sure to be included. As its title implies it was a forward looking weekly that kept its readers very much informed on all the latest developments that were taking place in the world; it was a robust publication that offered a wide range of stories and features and instilled a thirst for knowledge and a taste for stirring adventure into an entire generation. Like so many juvenile publications of its day it encouraged a spirit of patriotism and a pride in achievement. Many pilots, engineers and scientists got their initial interest and enthusiasm for their eventual professions through reading *Modern Boy* as youngsters.

The first issue of *Modern Boy*, published on 11th of February 1928, had a steam locomotive streaking across its front cover and a heading proclaiming "No. 1 of the book every boy has been waiting for." A few issues later, in number seven, the cover depicted a space rocket blasting off for the Moon and an announcement telling readers that the weekly was "The Most up-to-date Boy's Paper in the World!" These were typical of the exciting cover pictures that the paper presented. Transport was a favourite cover theme and over the years trains, 'planes, motorbikes, aircraft and cars all raced across the bold, bright, blue and orange coloured cover. 'Motor Racing on Top of a Chinese Wall', 'The Fastest Men on Earth', 'The London New York Air Express', 'Britain's New Rail Scorcher' and 'Out for 300 miles per hour' were just a handful of the exciting cover titles that thrilled youngsters during the late 1920s and 1930s and encouraged them to spend their hard earned pennies on a copy of the weekly.

But it was not just fast transportation that *Modern Boy* promoted; it kept its readers up to date with all the popular sports of the day and often offered tempting competition prizes. In 1933 a Test Match bat, autographed by the M.C.C. Test cricketers, could be won in a simple competition. How many readers could resist trying for a prize like that. I wonder if the lucky winner still retains it today! Cricket, football, motor-racing and all the usual outdoor activities likely to appeal to the average reader were featured, together with items on less well known sports such as skating.

Wireless was very much the 'in thing' when *Modern Boy* was in its infancy and the regular Wireless Column, written by Norman Edwards, editor of "Popular Wireless", was extremely popular. It offered advice on such topics as "How to Improve Your Crystal Sets" etc. and for the technically minded who wanted to build their own receiver, "A Crystal Set for 2/-", in issue number 12, was probably just the thing. "The Car X-rayed" was another popular feature that, with the aid of sectional drawings, week by week explained the components of the internal combustion engine. A regular "What Car Was That?" helped readers to identify the various vehicles they might see on their travels.

Articles regularly looked at the various careers that boys might consider. "Careers in the Making" began in issue number one and ran for the best part of a year. There were

features on the armed services and regular "newsreel" style features, such as "Our Pictorial News Page" and later "Let's Look Around", that kept readers bang up to date on developments in almost every aspect of technology. Indeed, many of the inventions and discoveries mentioned within the pages of *Modern Boy* did not actually come into general use until years later. One short item, published in the mid 1930s, explained how micro waves could be used to cook food. It was almost fifty years before that development found its way into our kitchens!

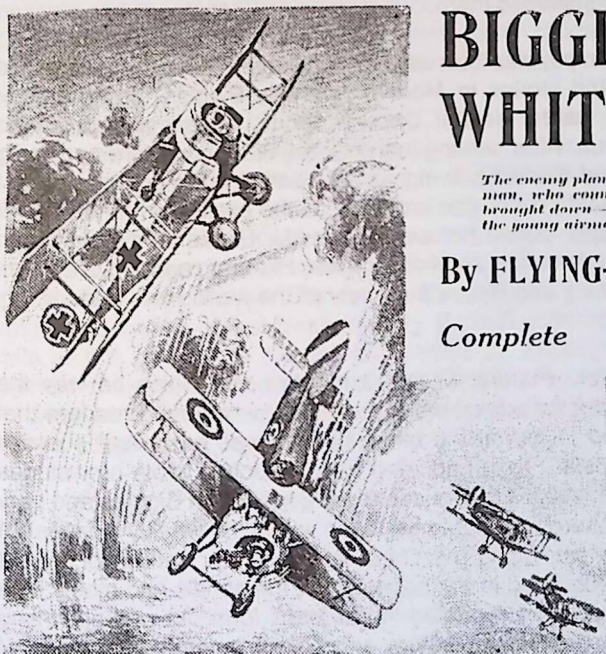
In early issues of *Modern Boy* about half of its twenty eight pages was devoted to factual features but as the years progressed more and more of its content was given over to fiction and by the mid 1930s about two thirds of its pages were filled with stories and serials featuring a wide range of characters.

There is no doubt that the Amalgamated Press' star writer during the 1930s was Charles Hamilton, better known to millions of *Magnet* and *Gem* readers as Frank Richards and Martin Clifford, creators of Billy Bunter and Tom Merry respectively. Hamilton had the golden touch and it seemed that every paper to which he contributed was a success. When the Amalgamated Press launched *Modern Boy* they asked Hamilton to create a new set of characters and featured his new creations in the very first issue. "King of the Islands" was a very different character to Hamilton's schoolboy creations. Ken King, the youthful hero of the stories, was a South Seas trader who roamed the ocean in his ketch, 'The Dawn', running into all manner of adventures. He encountered everything from cannibals to giants of the deep and treated them all with equal equanimity. The early "King of the Islands" stories were credited to Sir Alan Cobham and C. Hamilton, but it is doubtful whether Sir Alan did anything more than lend his name to the tales in an effort to encourage readers to buy the new weekly. The first Ken King series finished in issue number 20 and after that Charles Hamilton was given full credit for all the "King of the Islands" serials and series. The exploits of Ken King were so popular that many of them were reprinted in the monthly *Boys Friend Library* twice, an honour bestowed on very few other serials.

Apart from the two hundred or more episodes of "King of the Islands" Hamilton wrote a number of other series and serials for *Modern Boy*. "The School for Slackers" was a novel series of stories and something of a departure from the author's usual style of school stories, while "Len Lex, the Schoolboy Detective", who featured in three dozen adventures during the mid 1930s, was a more run of the mill series. Another of Hamilton's characters, "The Rio Kid", whose adventures had been a firm favourite in *The Popular*, was transformed into a picture strip serial and ran in *Modern Boy* for five months during 1933. This was the first picture strip adventure that the paper published but they were obviously popular and when the Rio Kid strip came to an end it was replaced by "Mickey Mouse". *Modern Boy* had always kept its readers informed on the latest developments in the cinema and as Mickey Mouse was a favourite amongst cinema-goers it was not surprising that The Mouse should find his way into the paper. Indeed, in September 1933 Mickey and Minnie had featured on the cover of *Modern Boy* to accompany a double page feature on their creator, Walt Disney. Mickey's first appearance, in issue number 302 on November 18th 1933, was heralded with only a small banner at the top of the cover but the following week Mickey was given the cover and depicted holding the sheet of full colour stickers that were being given away with that issue as a free gift. All the Mickey Mouse strips in *Modern Boy* were American reprints. In 1936 Mickey was replaced by another cartoon favourite, Felix the Cat, and



Here he is—young **CAPTAIN JAMES BIGGLESWORTH**, whose startling Air adventures you are going to revel in. A truly great young fellow is Biggles!



The Camel staggered, then plunged straight to earth. The white-painted Fokker pulled out of its dive and shot up to 3,000 feet in one tremendous zoom—straking for home.

BIGGLES and the WHITE FOKKER!

The enemy plane, piloted by a very brave and daring man, who counted his life as nothing, had to be brought down—somehow, at all costs. BIGGLES is the young airman to whom this dangerous task falls!

By **FLYING-OFFICER W. E. JOHNS**

Complete

Pictures from *The Modern Boy's* first issue to feature Biggles

(257, 17th January 1933)

like Mickey his adventures were all reprints. Deciding that his readers probably needed a break from cartoon characters, Felix was replaced by a series of adventure picture strips, a number of which were based on popular films. These included "Texas Rangers", "Captains Courageous", "The Prisoner of Zenda" and several Hopalong Cassidy adventures based on the innumerable films starring William Boyd.

"King of the Islands" and picture adventure strips may have been well liked but they were rivalled in popularity by a number of other *Modern Boy* characters. "Captain Justice", who made his debut in the paper in November 1930, was a much loved and well remembered character. Throughout the paper's run Justice, together with his companions, Dr. O'Mally, Midge, Len Connor and Professor Flaznagel had the most fantastic adventures in almost thirty full length serials and half a dozen shorter stories, the latter often recounting Justice's Christmas adventures. Justice often encountered robots, giant insects and prehistoric monsters and many of these frequently featured to great effect on the covers of *Modern Boy*. Most of the Justice stories were written by Robert Murray Graydon under the pen-name of Murray Roberts. After Graydon's death, in 1937, the stories were continued, still under the Murray Roberts by-line, by John Garbutt. Like the King of the Island stories many of the Captain Justice serials were reprinted in the fourpenny *Boys Friend Library*. The character remains popular and an enterprising enthusiast has just started to bring out very limited edition reprints of the Captain Justice stories just as they appeared in *Modern Boy* including the splendidly atmospheric illustrations that accompanied them.

Captain Justice may have been popular but without a doubt the best remembered character to appear in serials and stories in *Modern Boy* was Biggles. Flying Officer William Earle Johns, who later called himself Captain Johns, began contributing to *Modern Boy* very early on in its run. After serving in the Great War and before beginning his career as a writer, Johns had made his living as an aviation artist and his earliest work for *Modern Boy* were splendid covers that captured all the excitement and wonder of flying. Fairly soon after the paper began he became its 'Air Expert' and later began signing his name to a series of interesting aviation articles. His first regular series was "What Plane Was That?", describing and illustrating many of the worlds civil and military aircraft.

Johns created Biggles in 1932 for *Popular Flying*, a magazine of which he was the editor. The stories, originally written for adults, were so popular with young readers that the editor of *Modern Boy* decided to reprint the tales. Biggles was an instant success and when all the stories from *Popular Flying* had been used up Johns wrote new stories especially for *Modern Boy*. It seems that readers could not get enough Biggles and very few months went by when the air hero was not to be found within the weekly's pages. At first these were short adventures set during the Great War but later serial stories, set during the inter-war years, were published in the paper. All of the serials and ninety nine percent of the short Biggles stories were reprinted in hardback form. As well as writing Biggles stories Johns also wrote a pirate adventure serial and innumerable series of factual features on a wide variety of subjects. From February 1938 he wrote a regular weekly column entitled "Let's Look Around" that lasted until the very last issue of the paper. The present writer recently published a forty paged booklet, entitled "W.E. Johns & Modern Boy" cross referencing all of W.E. Johns' work that appeared in *Modern Boy*. (40 pages A5 soft covers. Available from N.Wright, 60 Eastbury Rd. Watford, WD1 4JL price £4.40 post free in UK)

Another popular writer of aviation fiction whose work appeared regularly in *Modern Boy* was George E. Rochester, creator of such characters as Scotty of the Secret Squadron and Grey Shadow Master Spy. Rochester wrote under a number of pen-names and in some issues of *Modern Boy* he had as many as three stories published, one under his own name and two others under pen-names. Like Johns most of his serials and series of stories were reprinted in hardback form and a good number of them were also reprinted in the pages of the *Boys Friend Library*.

Modern Boy published a very successful annual that must have been eagerly sought in many a stocking on Christmas morning. It also published a wide range of other related publications including "The Modern Boy's Book of Aircraft" (1931), "Modern Boy's Book of Pirates" (1939), "Modern Boy's Book of Adventure Stories" (1936) and several others. These volumes were all printed on good quality paper and featured stories and articles on similar themes to those published in the weekly story paper.

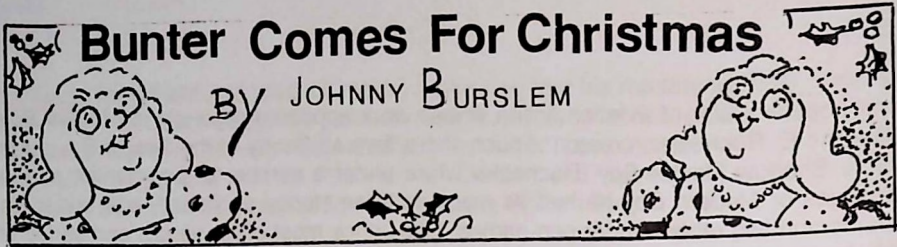
The first series of *Modern Boy* came to an end with number 523, dated 12th February 1938. The cover of that final first series issue promised: "Big News For You! See Inside". The big news was that the paper was to begin a new series and that the size was to be increased to a large fifteen and a half inches by ten and a half inches. Captain Justice and Biggles were both featured in the first issue of the 'new series' but the large size was unwieldy and the paper was soon reduced to something like its former size with a cover printed in orange and brown. Later, when paper rationing began to bite, the size was reduced to the size of the original series and the cover printed in blue.

Modern Boy came to an end in October 1939, a casualty of the wartime paper shortage that saw the end of so many weekly papers and comics. The last issue, number 87, bore a cover illustration of Captain Justice in another "Breathless Adventure", while inside Biggles came to the end of his adventure set in "Castle Sinister". On the back cover was a large advert for *Boys Cinema* and readers were told that the following week *Modern Boy* would be incorporated into *Boys Cinema*, a paper that was a world away in content from *Modern Boy*. *Modern Boy* ran for eleven and a half years and throughout that time provided a wealth of first class reading. It instilled an interest in science and technology while at the same time offering its readers an exciting feast of fiction featuring some splendid characters that are still remembered with warmth and affection by a generation who waited eagerly each week to follow the exploits of Grey Shadow, King of the Islands, Biggles and Captain Justice.

(Originally published in *Antiquarian Book Monthly*)

CAPTAIN JUSTICE





Have you ever felt like swearing
 At a person you detest
 If only to be hurtful rude?
 Well, you can guess the rest.
 Thus... This was the subject
 In study number one
 A couple of days 'for XMAS break
 In an atmosphere of fun
 Everyone of 'note' was there
 Plus Bunter... RIGHT UP FRONT
 Unknown to him, he was to be
 The 'Pivot' of a 'Stunt'
 "Wib' old man" said Wharton
 "Could you make Bunter..." "Phil"?
 "Prout has done his 'Nut' on her
 She works behind the "Till"?"
 "Gosh!" cried Wib' "That fat ol' blonde
 Sells tickets at BLUE HALL?"
 "You've got it." Shouted Cherry
 "Break-up day... SHE'LL PAY A CALL!"
 The cheer that followed showed acclaim
 But Bunter's face looked odd
 "I say you fellows, what's it mean?"
 "You're in DRAG!" Yelled Peter Todd.

~~~~~

Mr. Prout was in the quad  
 With Messrs Quelch and Twigg  
 When a taxi came and skidded round  
 And unloaded something 'Big'  
 Only the back of a wide fur coat  
 Was seen by the chatting three  
 Just a glimpse of hair that was very fair  
 And a pair of legs to the knee  
 "He's in." whispered Nugent (Soto voce)  
 "Masters passage is empty" said Bull  
 "Taxi's due in thirteen minutes..."  
 Cherry chuckled. "Some leg-pull"  
 The school clock boomed at four... dead on  
 "It will be dark very soon, get ready  
 Inky's in cupboard. Frank's camera's on 'sill"  
 Wharton's voice was a trifle unsteady  
 "Mrs. Mimble's a sport, to loan us the coat"  
 "Well... "Mauly" did tip her today"  
 "Hope Smithy's got the key in hand?"  
 "Sure, our "Reddy" will see it's O.K."

Mr. Prout wished the XMAS greetings  
 And Quelch with Twigg acquiesced  
 They watched his perambulation  
 To the Portals to get his rest  
 Along the passage to his room  
 His feet slowed up and stopped  
 Pushed open door with heavy thrust  
 And exclaimed "My God" Eyes popped.

~~~~~

This balloon like blonde with vast red lips
 Lay spreadeagled on his bed
 It squeaked and with a heave ruse up
 Fat hand over nose that bled
 "Mooh! It "squeaked" The carpet slid"
 Frozen Prout mouthed words in mime
 A blinding flash from the window came
 And a yell of "Got it...Sublime!"
 The voluptuous blonde came off the bed
 Struck Prout on his "tum" with a head
 "Glug" he gulped both hands to the spot
 Clutched Wig... fell flat... lay dead
 The red-faced fiend, encased in fur
 Went over the top like a ball
 Gurgling "Help" it crawled a yard then left
 A trail of blood down the hall

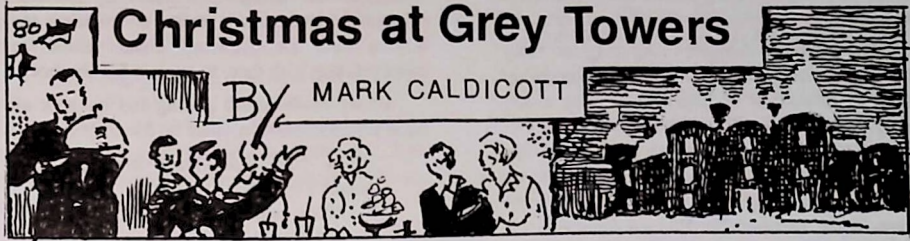
~~~~~

Quelch and Twigg were swapping farewells  
 At the entrance to the hall  
 When a giant hedgehog (as Quelch said)  
 Thudded into them... high heels an' all

~~~~~

A sedate Indian Junior gave Mimble the coat
 Said "Thankyou... and that's for the wife"
 The taxi man's grin as he packed 'em all in
 "'Ain't seen such a carry 'on... in me life"
 What could one prove? Who could tell?
 "Mimble smiled and patted his purse
 Quelch and Twigg were stumped to say
 And Prout was none the worse
 Thus dear friends t'was a Christmas thrill
 Our Bunter did not have to dodge
 Acclaimed... he was... His "HOLS" secured
 For Christmas at Wharton Lodge.





Sir Crawford Grey was to spend Christmas in his London home rather than his palatial country residence known as Grey Towers. He lived alone, his wife and his son having been killed in an horrific rail accident some years earlier.

Things happen, however, when Nelson Lee and the boys of St. Frank's become involved.

Sir Crawford had developed a soft spot for Jack Mason, a boy from a poor Bermondsey home who had saved his life and whom he had befriended. He had developed a great friendship with the boy and had secretly sponsored Jack's place at St. Frank's. He visited the boy regularly but, in order to disguise the fact that he was providing financial support to Jack, posed as a man of restricted means. Jack duly arrived at St. Frank's and, although from a poor background, was accepted by Nipper, Handforth and Co who recognised Mason's innate bravery and honesty. Only Fullwood and his snobbish cronies shunned Jack on the basis of his lower class upbringing.

It was Jack's unflinching good will which, in the end, induced his study mate, Reggie Pitt, to turn from his vindictive and caddish ways. Reggie will, far in the frozen-time future of St. Frank's, be so popular as to be voted leader of the Remove in Nipper's absence. In those early days, however, he was known as "The Serpent" in the light of his venomous personality. Jack Mason's unflinching efforts to remain Reggie's friend and, finally, Reggie's recognition that his evil ways have almost brought about Mason's death, culminated in the reformation of Reggie Pitt.

There is a surprise in store for Sir Crawford Grey and Jack Mason. Reggie's trickery over a gold locket has involved Jack in a great deal of trouble and danger, not to mention a degree of excitement for Nelson Lee and Nipper. As a result, however, the discovery is eventually made that Jack Mason is, in reality, Norman Grey, the son whom Sir Crawford had thought was dead.

It is this sudden happy change in the lives of Sir Crawford Grey and Jack Mason which causes Sir Crawford to change his plans and, incidentally, to set in train an intriguing Christmas mystery for Nelson Lee. Instead of

spending Christmas in London, Sir Crawford decides that he wishes to spend the festive season with his son at Grey Towers. Reggie Pitt is invited to accompany Sir Crawford and Jack. Nelson Lee and Nipper are to join them later, in time for Christmas.

Sir Crawford, Jack and Reggie travel by train with the snow falling steadily. Sir Crawford reveals that his plans have been so hastily rearranged that he has not had time to warn his butler, Rance, of his change of plan. As they approach Grey Towers in a closed brougham Jack, who had known nothing but poverty and squalor until he had met Sir Crawford, is overwhelmed by the sight of his new home which he left when he was two years old:

...snow covered and bathed in sunshine, the picture was one of delight. This was a castle indeed comparable with the one which Jack had pictured in his mind, never dreaming that the vision would become a reality.

One person who does not share in the happiness of the moment is Rance, the butler. He is most disconcerted by their unexpected arrival and does his best to dissuade them from entering the Towers. He has sent all the servants away, he tells them, and no fires have been lit. Sir Crawford, however, is not to be diverted from his plans and insists upon taking up residence.

Nelson Lee and Nipper are the next guests due to arrive, but in the event they are preceded by some unexpected visitors to Grey Towers in the shape of Handforth and Co. It is the increasingly heavy snowstorm that provides the impetus for the visit. Sir Edward Handforth has collected Edward Oswald, along with Church and McClure. The party are making their way to the Handforth home when the snow gets the better of their large touring car, which hits a snowdrift. A hidden ditch breaks a wheel and brings an end of the car's usefulness. A trudge through the storm brings them to the village of Pellton, which, as it happens, is less than a mile from Grey Towers. Finding the local hostelry too uncomfortable Sir Edward is easily persuaded in the circumstances to throw himself on the mercy of Sir Crawford

Grey, knowing the party would receive a warm welcome.

Or so they thought! Arriving at Grey Towers, Rance greets them in the mistaken belief that Sir Edward is Nelson Lee arriving a day early. When Rance discovers his error, however, his attitude changes. He announces that Sir Crawford is not at home and asks them to leave, his manner verging upon rudeness. Given the state of the weather, Sir Edward finds Rance's behaviour intolerable and, like Sir Crawford before him, insists upon entry. Rance capitulates and ushers them into the library where, with a blazing fire and the provision of a simple meal, Sir Edward and his party are mollified. Bedrooms are prepared and the party retires.

Handforth is the only one of the uninvited guests not to have partaken of the coffee provided by Rance after the meal. The coffee, contrary to its normal effects, had made the others extremely tired. Only Handforth is awake to hear strange noises and, upon investigating, discovers that his father is no longer in his bed. Moreover, when he returns to rouse Church and McClure he finds that they, too, have vanished. He is still trying to fathom out this mystery when dark figures appear and spring upon him, rendering him a prisoner.

It is the following day. Nelson Lee and Nipper arrive at Grey Towers, accompanied by Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson. They are looking forward to a splendid Christmas and, standing in its snow-covered grounds, Grey Towers looks magnificent in the wintry sunshine. As they draw nearer, however, they are surprised to note that there is no sign of festive activity. The snow at the entrance and on the steps is unspoiled.

In response to their ring at the doorbell, Rance appears. Once again he tries to turn his visitors away and prevent them entering Grey Towers, but is no more

successful in doing so than on previous occasions. Nelson Lee insists on entering and waiting until Sir Crawford either returns or communicates with them to explain his absence.

Rance is obviously getting fed up with all these visitors who won't take no for an answer:

A cold light leapt into the butler's eyes.

"You will pardon me, but you cannot stay---" he began.

"That is enough!" snapped Nelson Lee curtly. "Do you dare to give me your orders, Rance. You may go. I will ring you when I want you again."

Just for a moment it seemed as though the butler were about to burst out angrily; but he bit his lip, bowed, and walked away.

It is not Rance's lucky day, for Nelson Lee has recognised him as a convicted criminal.

N. J. 136. EXTRA LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL AND DETECTIVE YARN!

Grand Instalment of our Popular School Serial
in this Number!

THE
NELSON LEE
LIBRARY

GRAND
XMAS
NUMBER

1 1/2



THE
MYSTERY OF GREY TOWERS

A Yuletide Story of Detective Adventure, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER, SIR CRAWFORD GREY and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The Ancient House Barstary," "Jack Mason's Luck," etc., etc.

Moreover, the heat remaining in the library fire gives lie to Rance's claim that the house has been empty for two days.

Then Tommy Watson discovers a St. Frank's school cap. The puzzling thing is that inside it is inscribed "E.O. Handforth". Considering that its owner was thought to have accompanied his father to his own home, this adds significantly to their puzzlement.

Nelson Lee decides to pay a visit to the village of Pellton to try to get some clues to the mystery. Entering the Blue Lion, he encounters Sir Edward's chauffeur who confirms that the Handforth party had indeed made an unscheduled visit to the Towers and had not returned from there.

The mystery of successive visitors entering the Towers and disappearing reminds Lee of a fairy story, "where good people are lured into an ogre's house and are never heard of again." Obviously, Lee suspects, Rance is first in line for the role of the ogre.

Returning to the Towers, Lee is relieved to find that Nipper, Sir Montie and Tommy have not disappeared. The party spend a comfortable evening playing billiards and eating a fine meal. Rance brings in coffee which Nelson Lee immediately suspects is drugged. Feigning drowsiness they retire to their rooms, but Lee stays awake, only to discover that Sir Montie has joined the ever-increasing list of those who had disappeared. Sir Montie finds himself being transported along an underground tunnel to a series of dungeons, which lie beyond a great iron-studded door with a massive lock and two huge bolts. Left in this prison Sir Montie discovers he

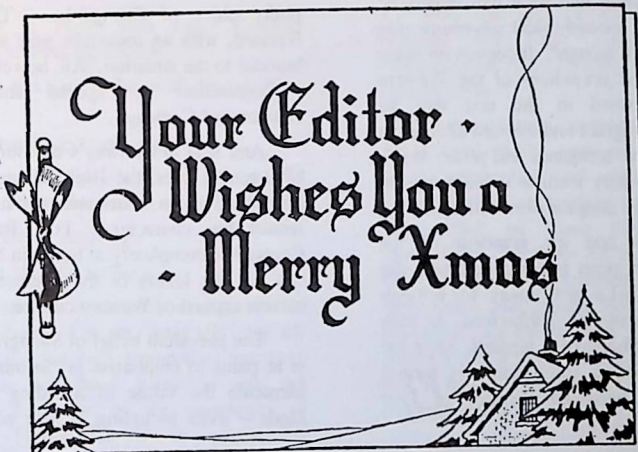
is the company of Reggie Pitt, Sir Crawford and Jack, not to mention Sir Edward Handforth, Edward Oswald, Church and McClure.

Pitt has not been idle in his own dungeon, however. He has discovered a suspicious looking stone and had been working away at it. He perseveres and eventually manages to make it slide backwards to reveal another passage. Jack and Reggie set out to explore but are cut off from the others when the stone door closes. They have no alternative but to follow the passage. In the darkness they encounter a figure which, after a brief but hectic struggle, they discover to be Nelson Lee, who has discovered this passage and is following it from the house.

All parties are rescued and return towards the house. Rance and the two companions who were acting as footmen have fled, but Lee has organised a police cordon into which they run. Rance's plan had been to strip the Towers of its valuables, but he had been foiled by the endless succession of unwanted visitors.

The mystery cleared up, the Handforth party accept an invitation to join the Christmas gathering. It was all hands on deck to put up the Christmas decorations. Sir Crawford manages to engage sufficient servants to bring Grey Towers back to life and imbue it with a light-hearted and festive spirit. Jack Grey, particularly, enjoys the celebrations as part of his homecoming.

No St. Frank's Christmas celebration would be complete without ice-skating. Grey Towers boasts a great lake in its park and, with perfect weather and ice thick upon it, this provides all the entertainment needed for another joyful Christmas.



Lost Horizon – A “New” Favourite Discovered

By LAURENCE PRICE



For many years now I've had a virtually unchanged list of my personal top twenty books. So about two years ago it came as a surprise, albeit a pleasant one, to be introduced by a good friend to a book which has quickly become established very high in that top twenty. The book is *Lost Horizon* and the author James Hilton. The floodgate then opened and I've since read other Hilton classics such as *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* and *Random Harvest*. Great books all but it is *Lost Horizon* to which I have most often found myself returning. For like its hero, Conway, I want to return to Shangri-La, that beautiful and mystical world, and word, that Hilton gave to the English language.

“Cigars had burned low” are the at first seemingly unprepossessing words that begin this lovely book. Yet these four simple words set the leisurely, laconic, spiritual and therapeutic tone of the story that is to follow – a story that, like a fine cigar is a rich, luxuriant experience – the rich tobacco essence savoured and relished. Cigars, unlike cigarettes, are not to be rushed, they are drawn on slowly, and the meditative smoker enjoys the lingering aroma. The slow burning of the cigars hints at the gradual unfolding of the “fragrance” of the story that is to follow.

The forced, yet benign abduction, of Conway and his three oddly assorted companions by aeroplane into the mountain fastnesses of Tibet is a thrilling introduction into what will largely be an intellectual and metaphysical adventure into Western and Eastern thought. It centres on many of the preconceived prejudices of the Western mind. A key word in the text will be “moderation” – a fragrant and tolerant alternative to dogmatism and to arrogance and pride. It is a book in which one may learn to unlearn the old habits and prejudices adopted over a lifetime.

The harshness and icy grandeur of the Tibetan mountain regions is contrasted with the first sight of Shangri-La by Conway, for through the written testimony of Rutherford, a man evidently seeking Shangri-La himself, after his encounter with Conway, (this testimony further recounted by the unnamed narrator of *Lost*

Horizon), we are always privileged to experience Shangri-La through the experiences of Conway.

He looks upon “the loveliest mountain on earth... an almost perfect cone of snow... so radiant, so serenely poised, that he wondered for a moment if it were real at all.” But real enough it is – Karakal – the blue Moon – “the dazzling pyramid” that is the lofty guardian of Shangri-La. And Shangri-La itself – “a group of coloured pavilions clung to the mountainside... with the chance delicacy of flower petals impaled upon a crag. It was superb and exquisite.”

Then there is the enigmatic Chang, with whom Conway will have many agreeable discourses. Not so agreeable, though, to his three companions. Their characters are the perfect counterpoint to that of Hugh Conway, H.M. Consul and hero of Baskul and numerous other far flung Eastern hot-spots, but beneath that seemingly cool and pragmatic surface is a man perfectly in harmony with the philosophies and ideals of Shangri-La.

Young Mallinson is the impetuous and testy consular junior to Conway and has none of the feeling that Conway experiences for Shangri-La; the only thing in Mallinson's mind is escape and flight from it. Then there is the Christian fundamentalist missionary zeal of the formidable Miss Brinklow, which will soon be tellingly contrasted and tested with the moderate philosophies of Shangri-La. The American, Barnard, with an uncertain past adds some wry humour to the situation. All, however, only serve to accentuate the special and remarkable character of Conway.

And it is in Conway's discourses with, first, Chang, and later, the High Lama of Shangri-La himself, that we learn more of his special and remarkable character. For, from the first, Conway is completely at home in Shangri-La; he can see the falsity or the counterfeit values of certain aspects of Western culture.

The prevalent belief of Shangri-La, as Chang is at pains to emphasise is “in moderation. We inculcate the virtue of avoiding excess of all kinds – even including, if you will pardon the

paradox, excess of virtue itself... We rule with moderate strictness, and in return we are satisfied with moderate obedience. And I think I can claim that our people are moderately sober, moderately chaste, and moderately honest."

Conway smiled. He thought it well expressed, besides which it made some appeal to his own temperament. "I think I understand..."

But the chief factor in the government of Blue Moon, Chang went on to say, was the inculcation of good manners, which made men feel that certain things were 'not done', and that they lost caste by doing them. "You English inculcate the same feeling," said Chang, "in your public schools – but not, I fear, in regard to the same things. The inhabitants of our valley, for instance, feel that it is 'not done' to be inhospitable to strangers, to dispute acrimoniously, or to strive for priority amongst one another. The idea of enjoying what your English headmasters call the mimic warfare of the playing field would seem to them entirely barbarous – indeed, a sheerly wanton stimulation of all the lower instincts."

Here is a later well-aimed riposte to the Protestant work ethic in an exchange between Chang and Conway.

"*Slackers?*" queried Chang. His knowledge of English was extremely good, but sometimes a colloquialism proved unfamiliar.

"*Slacker*", explained Conway, is a slang word meaning a lazy fellow, a good-for-nothing, I wasn't, of course, using it seriously."

Chang bowed his thanks for the information. He took a keen interest in languages, and liked to weigh a new word philosophically. "It is significant," he said after a pause, "that the English regard slackness as a vice. We, on the other hand, should vastly prefer it to tension. Is there not too much tension in the world at present, and might it not be better if more people were slackers."

"I'm inclined to agree with you," Conway answered with solemn agreement.

Compare this with the attitude of Miss Brinklow.

"What do the lamas do?" she continued.

"They devote themselves, madam, to contemplation and to the pursuit of wisdom."

"But that isn't *doing* anything."

"Then, madam, they do nothing."

Chang gradually introduces Conway to the traditions of Shangri-La; yet, ironically it is the arrival of Conway that will demonstrate that even in Shangri-La, long-held traditions are not unalterable. And one of the paradoxes of tradition in Shangri-La is to allow for

concessions to modernity. Conway brings this up in a discourse with Chang.

"A separate culture might flourish here without contamination from the outside world."

"Contamination, would you say?"

"I use the word in reference to dance bands, cinemas, sky-signs and so on. Your plumbing is quite rightly as modern as you can get – the only certain boon, to my mind, that the East can take from the West. I often think that the Romans were fortunate their civilisation reached as far as hot baths without touching the fatal knowledge of machinery."

The irony is that the plumbing is in the form of green porcelain baths manufactured in Akron, Ohio, a product of the Machine Age, if ever there was one! And surely the supreme irony is that Conway and his compatriots are brought to Shangri-La by the ultimate flying machine – an aeroplane!

But that certain of these traditions will not remain unalterable especially relate to Conway's meetings with the High Lama.

Not even the ice-cool Chang can contain his excitement when, less than a fortnight after his arrival in Shangri-La, Conway is summonsed by the High Lama to have an audience with him. "Never before has it occurred so soon!" Following this meeting Chang carefully explains a five year probationary period will follow until the High Lama will see Conway again – "to enable the body to accustom itself to the altitude, and also to give time for the dispersal of mental and emotional regrets."

But less than a month after his arrival Conway receives a second summons to see the High Lama – something that has never happened before since the routine of the lamasery had become established. To the bemused Chang it is quite "extraordinary" but when Conway has visited the High Lama a third and fourth time it does not seem to him "very extraordinary at all". Yet something very extraordinary is happening between the High Lama and Conway, summarised in one of the most lovely passages of *Lost Horizon*.

"There seemed, indeed, something almost preordained in the case with which their two minds approached each other; it was as if in Conway all secret tensions were relaxed, giving him, when he came away, a sumptuous tranquillity. At times he had the sensation of being completely bewitched by the mastery of that central intelligence, and then, over the little pale-blue tea-bowls, the cerebration would contract into a liveliness so gentle and miniature that he had an impression of a theorem dissolving limpidly into a sonnet."

As the Western practice of smoking cigars provides relaxation – for *even* in Shangri-La there are coffee and cigars – so do the frequent tea ceremonies offer Eastern tranquillity; also remarkable is the synthesis between mathematics and literature that echoes gently throughout the book. And as the reader adjusts to the apparently unbroken traditions and esoteric practices of Shangri-La as the story progresses so does Hilton, through the persona of the High Lama, play his master card, when after a long philosophical conversation with Conway, he baldly states.

“I place in your hands, my son, the heritage and destiny of Shangri-La.”

For the 250 year old High Lama, the former Capuchin friar, Perrault, who having overcome death in the ideal conditions of Shangri-La after his arrival in 1719, and created over generations its gentle traditions and philosophies, is about to die.

The religion of Shangri-La is a synthesis of Tibetan Buddhism and Christianity of unorthodox, even heretical Fifth century Nestorian origins, which taught that the divinity and humanity of Christ were not united in a single, self-conscious personality. But central to all is the tenet from Christ Himself, that “the Christian ethic may at last be fulfilled, and the meek shall inherit the earth.”

For the High Lama has foreseen, and shared with Conway, his fears that a coming storm, “such a one... as the world has never seen before,” is imminent. “There will be no safety in

arms, no help from authority, no answer in science. It will rage till every flower of culture is trampled, and all human beings are levelled in a vast chaos... the Dark Ages that are to come will cover the whole world in a single pall; there will be neither escape or sanctuary, save as are too secret to be found or too humble to be noticed. And Shangri-La may hope to be one of these...”

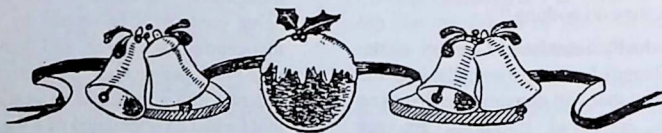
All this was written in 1933, the year that Hitler rose to power in what would become Nazi Germany; although the prophecy is also eerily similar to the dark shadow we all lived under in the Cold War years. What an astonishingly prescient writer James Hilton was, but we should not forget these doom-laden words were sweetened with the spiritual purity and hope of Shangri-La from that same gifted pen.

Then, in a twist of dreadful irony, as Conway has it confirmed, in the dying words of the High Lama, that he has truly found his spiritual home, the still demanding needs of the secular world outside make a final call on him, in the persons of the impetuous Mallinson and an enigmatic Chinese girl, Lo-Tsen. Conway, still a principled man of duty, knows he must respond to their pleas – even if it means leaving Shangri-La.

The narrator meets Rutherford again. Rutherford had tried to follow Conway on his return journey to Shangri-La but has had to give up the quest as quite hopeless as the trail eventually runs dry and Conway disappears. The narrator, concludes “Do you think he will ever find it?”

I like to think Conway did.

(Editor's Note: Whenever I go to California I stay in the small town of Ojai which is situated in a nest of mountains and orange-groves. There is a particularly lush and lovely view of Ojai as one approaches it by car that was used as the entrance to Shangri-La in the 1930s film of *Lost Horizon*, which starred Ronald Colman as Conway. In this very atmospheric film, of course, one sees the entrance of Shangri-La as a brilliant blaze of greenery, flowers and light which marvellously contrasts with the stark, snow-covered, hazardous mountainous terrain that immediately precedes it.)





Noel Raymond Versus Rosina The Baffling

By DENNIS L BIRD



"To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman." So wrote Dr. Watson of the adventuress Irene Adler, who completely outwitted the great sage of Baker Street.

Holmes encountered his conqueror only once. Another, more recent private detective had a much more prolonged battle of wits with a smiling, lovely, and utterly unscrupulous adversary. The debonair Noel Raymond first clashed with Rosina Fontaine in 1937; their duel continued sporadically over the next eleven years, in 39 separate stories.

Noel Raymond was the creation of "Peter Langley", pen-name of the Amalgamated Press author Ronald Fleming – of whom an extended profile appeared in the *C.D. Annual* 1999. Noel's first case appeared in the *Girls' Crystal* dated October 26, 1935. He was a unique character in the weekly schoolgirl papers. There had been earlier detectives: Sylvia, Silence, Lila Lisle, Valerie Drew. But they had all been women; Noel was uncompromisingly male, well versed in the arts of boxing, rugby football, jujitsu, and small-arms fire. And whereas previous detective series had invariably made the villains all too obvious, the Noel Raymond stories sustained a genuine air of mystery. Readers often did not know until the last few paragraphs who the criminal was.

Rosina presented a slightly different aspect of the tales. There was never any doubt that she was the guilty party in any story in which she appeared; but she was such a mistress of disguise that she could be impersonating almost any of the people involved – and not only the females.

The first encounter was in the episode entitled *Rosina the Baffling* (*G.C.* dated July 10, 1937). Noel had been called to the Dower House Museum, Milfield, to investigate breakages of priceless exhibits.

"He caught sight of a girl standing hesitantly on the steps... Noel found himself gazing into a pair of wide violet eyes.

"My name is Fontaine – Rosina Fontaine.' Her manner was so frankly ingenuous that Noel found himself smiling in response... The girl

shrugged, pouting attractively as she extracted a gold-tipped cigarette from a dainty case... 'What did I find when I came here? The museum is closed to visitors.' I – Rosina Fontaine – have come all this way for nothing!' She snapped her fingers;... in her excitement a trace of foreign accent crept into her tone."

Right from the start, the author poses question-marks over his anti-heroine. Is she a foreigner? Her name is part-Italian, part-French. Later she employs a thuggish pugilist, variously named Pietro, Pierre, Maxim. Yet when England is at war, she becomes robustly patriotic. Is the "foreign accent" merely one of her disguises?

What turned her to crime? In one story we gather it was poverty – but what was her family background? Who were her parents? How, old is she? We are not told; probably she was about 23 or 24 on that first occasion, and therefore in her mid-30s by the end of the series.

Noel soon found, in that museum case, that Rosina was responsible for the breakages; the priceless Star of Kubal was hidden in one of the curios. He confronted her, to find her "smiling mockingly over the barrel of a small, pearl-mounted revolver."

"Good evening, Mr. Detective Raymond!" she remarked sweetly, but with an unmistakable menace... "I warn you to stay just where you are – in case my finger should happen to slip!"

Noel out-smarted her: he found the emerald, but she got away – as she was to do so often. Their next encounter came within a few days (*The Girl of Many Disguises*, July 31, 1937). He saw her at an art gallery in London's famous Bond Street. He realised she was not there for any harmless purpose. "That baby face and those innocent violet eyes concealed a mind as cunning and unscrupulous as that of any crook in Europe."

This time she intended to steal a famous painting. Disguised as first the Comtesse de Cheyne and then as a Swedish artist (good opportunities to display a versatility in accents worthy of Meryl Streep), she and Pietro finally escaped by air with the picture. Or so they



Noel Raymond In a
Thrilling Detective
Story.

By
PETER LANGLEY

From *Girls' Crystal* July 10th, 1937
(the first Rosina story)

thought: but Noel had prudently substituted a forgery.

In *Rosina the Treasure Hunter* (August 28, 1937) Noel found himself on a case with a rival detective, a Miss Strudwick. It did not take him long to realise that she was Rosina, and once again he foiled her plans.

The *Girls' Crystal* dated October 2, 1937, introduced a new development in the Noel Raymond chronicles: a case which featured "his 14-year-old niece June Gaynor, daughter of his married sister." June appeared only occasionally at first, but eventually and inevitably she was to become involved with Rosina.

All that was in the future, however, *When Rosina Nearly Triumphed* in the very next story (October 9, 1937). Nearly – but not quite. It was some months before she got her next change, in *Rosina's Mid-Air Triumph* (April 30, 1938). Noel was on his way to Le Bourget airport in Paris in "a comfortable seat in the air-liner" – no doubt one of those slow and stately Imperial Airways biplanes of the Handley Page Heracles class. It was said of them that "they were as safe as the Rock of Gibraltar – and just about as fast."

Noel suddenly realised that the air hostess was none other than Rosina. "A faint waft of exotic perfume gave her away" (time and again, that perfume – "specially made for her, as Noel knew" – and her fondness for gold-tipped cigarettes were to betray her). She faked an

escape by parachute – but she had not given up her objective. This was to steal a jewelled gold goblet which one of the passengers, Maisie Terhune, was taking to her father. Noel, a qualified pilot, "hired a small cabin 'plane' to take Maisie to the chateau where her father was staying. But of course the "slim, dainty figure... muffled up in a leather travelling coat and wearing goggles" was La Fontaine in disguise. During the flight she seized the goblet and departed by parachute – in reality this time. But the parcel contained a dummy.

By now the pattern of the long-drawn-out Noel/Rosina duels was set: the girl crook's give-away idiosyncrasies, Noel's penetration of her disguises, his frequent substitutions of fakes for real treasures.

The next story (*Rosina's Amazing Imposture*, July 9, 1938) introduced another character in the conflict: "his old friend Inspector Stannard." On holiday in Southquay, Noel saw Rosina at his hotel. Stannard told him Rosina had been drowned, and showed him a newspaper cutting: "NOTORIOUS GIRL CROOK LOST FROM LINER: Vain attempt at Rescue." She had of course stage-managed her disappearance and then re-appeared as her (non-existent) twin sister Renee – the adopted daughter of a millionaire philanthropist. Noel and Stannard soon put paid to her schemes there.

The next two cases were *Rosina's Daring Return* (August 13, 1938) and *Rosina on the Island of Treasure* (November 13, 1938). In *Rosina the Elusive* (January 14, 1939) readers at last learned a little about the girl crook's background. Having sent Noel off to Brighton on a wild-goose chase, Rosina went briefly to her own London home "in an old-fashioned basement-type house in a gloomy street... she walked lightly up a flight of narrow, uncarpeted stairs, entering a barely-furnished room... 'What it is to be poor,' she breathed - 'to have to plan and scheme and live from hand to mouth - when there is so much wealth in the world ready for the taking!'"

But Noel was not concerned with Rosina's personal problems. As a detective, he was an upholder of the law; Rosina often transgressed it, and had to be brought to justice.

In the next story, *Rosina the Film Star* (April

But did she? Interestingly, there is an alternative ending. In May 1940 the *Schoolgirls' Own Library* (No. 731) reprinted nine of the Fontaine adventures, with *Rosina the Film Star* as the last. In this version, Noel pursued her in another car, taking a short cut to the airport for which she was heading. He drove into the centre of the road. Rosina, daring as ever, charged "straight for the narrow gap between the runabout and the high hedge." For a moment Noel thought she would get past him - then "Crash. There came a frenzied scream, then ... red tongues of fire." Gallantly he went to her rescue - to deliver her into the custody of the police. The SGOL version ended with Noel soliloquising: "A pity I had to send her to gaol... Somehow one couldn't help liking her. But it was her own fault. I couldn't help myself." And then, staring thoughtfully into the distance: "I wonder if we'll ever meet again?"



Another thrilling mystery story, featuring that popular young detective, Noel Raymond, in which, once more, he meets Rosina, that fascinating girl crook.

By PETER LANGLEY

From *Girls' Crystal* April 30th, 1938

1, 1939), Noel found his adversary in a new persona, as an actress eager to secure a £100-a-week film contract ("That's money, even to Rosina!" - equivalent to some £3,300 in to-day's values). In order to discredit a rival, she staged a jewel robbery. Noel tricked her by saying the theft had been committed by her confederate Pietro/Pierre. "That is a lie!... You cannot arrest Pietro; he knows nothing - nothing! The jewellery is in the shrubbery -"

"Thank you, Rosina!" snapped Noel. "I fancied there must be a soft spot in that callous heart of yours - and I happened to put my finger on it." He had beaten her - but she made good her escape by car.

They did - many times. *Rosina's surprising Birthday Gift* appeared in the *Girls' Crystal* for June 24, 1939. And then, just as Europe was about to be plunged into the Second World War, there came a series of nine stories (August 5 to September 30, 1939) which were to bring Noel near to despair. The catalyst was his schoolgirl niece June Gaynor, now 16. Rosina, already out of prison (had she somehow been acquitted?) persuaded June that she was a much-misjudged innocent, in need of help. June threw in her lot with Rosina, and then seemed to become her accomplice in crime. For story after story, Noel's anguish increased - until an amazing possibility dawned on him. Was this really June, the girl

had had known all her life – or could she be an impostor? No one, not even his good friend Inspector Stannard believed him. But at last came a happy ending for the young detective, if not for the police. Noel rescued June from captivity, but the crooks got away. The identity, and even the name, of June's double were never revealed.

The interpolation of convincing impostors who fooled everyone was a regular ingredient of Amalgamated Press stories, and indeed of other fiction in the 1890-1950 period. I discussed this in an article, *Seeing Double*, in the *C.D. Annual* 1991.

There were five Rosina stories in 1940. On April 13 *She Said She Was Rosina's Double*. A girl claiming to be Hilary Shelton had the misfortune to be Rosina's exact likeness. In fact, she was Rosina herself, trying to steal the Mannering rubies – unsuccessfully.

Next came *They All Believed Rosina* (June 15, 1940, in which she helped Noel to safety when he got into difficulties climbing in the Peak District. *Rosina Deceived Them All*, was the title on August 24, and that was followed by a particularly interesting case: *Was Rosina the Mystery Spy?*" (October 12). The date is significant in terms of World War II. France had capitulated in June; the Battle of Britain had been fought over Southern England from July to October. A German invasion was expected, and although Hitler had, in fact, postponed his plans, this was not generally known. October 1940 was therefore a very sensitive period.

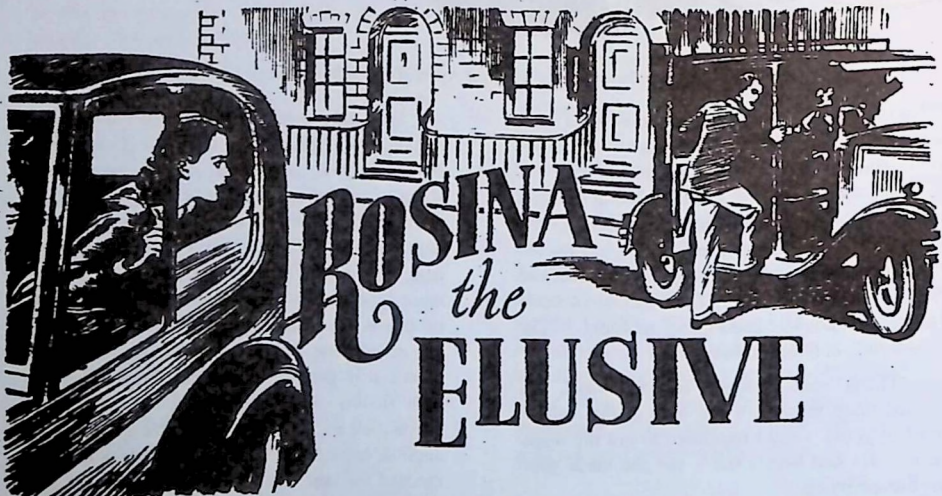
The Raymond story began when a British Secret Service agent, Hugh Carfax, thought he was being shadowed by an enemy. He asked Noel to stand in for him, guarding some secret

documents. Noel's suspicions were aroused when Carfax's daughter Julie found a handkerchief with the initials "R.F.". Was Rosina the mystery spy who had dogged Carfax's footsteps? "Somehow it did not fit in with Noel's knowledge of the beautiful girl crook. Though quite unscrupulous where her plans were concerned, Rosina had always played the game – according to her own rules. Treachery to her own country had not been one of them." So she was British?

It transpired that "a tall, bearded foreigner" (Signor Morelli, alias Carl Stein) had persuaded her that the Carfax Necklace was worth stealing – together with a few odd papers. When Rosina realised the importance of the papers, she refused to hand them over and gave up the chance Stein offered her of escape from the country. When Noel caught up with her, she said: "There was one thing that even I could not do. You thought I was the mystery spy, but there you misjudged me... It was the only way... England is at war. The handcuffs, please – quickly!"

But Noel let her escape. Julie Carfax accused him of being glad. Noel said gruffly "Rosina did the finest thing in her life – and for once she deserved to get away."

The last 1940 case was *When Rosina Asked for Noel's Aid* (December 7). This was a vintage tale. Rosina came to Noel's flat with a sob-story about helping an elderly friend, Miss Susan Conway. "You can rely on me to do my best," said Noel, "and for your part, go on playing the game!" So she did – but it was her own game, not the honest one he meant. She needed Noel's expertise on Nan-King vases, but she failed to get away with them, and Inspector Stannard arrested her.



From *Girls' Crystal* January 14th, 1939

She re-appeared four times in 1941: *Rosina's Perfect Alibi* (January 18), *Rosina - The Detective* (March 8), *When Rosina Nearly Triumphed* (May 3 - different from the October 1937 case with the same title), and *Rosina's Amazing New Disguise* (December 27).

In *Rosina's Amazing Ruse* (May 30, 1942) readers were told that "she escaped abroad months ago" - not easy to do in wartime! Of course she had not. Once again Noel and Stannard were able to scotch her plans to steal a valuable Venetian vase, and she was led off under arrest by the Inspector (making his last appearance).

Later in 1942, the author Ronald Fleming was called up for military service, and joined the Royal Air Force. Thereafter he had little time to write stories. The *Girls' Crystal* solved the problem by reprinting many of Noel's previous cases. In particular, the 1939 sequence featuring Rosina and June re-appeared between May 8 and July 3, 1943.

For the remainder of the war years, "Peter Langley" wrote only two original stories about the girl crook: *Noel and the Girl Detective* (February 13, 1943) and *Miss Mystery of the Mobile Café* (February 19, 1944). In the latter case, Rosina and Pietro were in quest of scientific research papers which "enemy agents" wanted. She seemed to have overcome her fit of patriotism in October 1940. Needless to say, Noel defeated her.

"You win this time, Mr. Raymond," she murmured. "but next time -"

"There'll be no next time, Rosina," said Noel

sternly. "You have slipped through my fingers once too often - but you have played your last trick!"

And so it seemed. Ronald Fleming - and Noel - returned in April 1945, but not the lovely rogue. It was several years before the final seven Rosina adventures appeared.

In 1948, twenty stories featured Noel and June (now his partner in the "Raymond and Gaynor" detective agency) in Hollywood, where he was acting as technical adviser on a film about Scotland Yard. In *The Secret of the Torn Photographs* (June 19, 1948) Noel became suspicious of the film company's messenger Mick Rogan, "a slim, good-looking youth wearing horn-rimmed spectacles." Yes - the flat-chested Rosina in disguise! June demurred. "We haven't seen or heard anything of Rosina since she vanished from England during the war. She might not even be alive." She was though. The fascinating girl crook had scarcely changed one iota. "That slim, boyish figure - that raven hair - the faint, fascinating smile on her red lips..." she soon re-appeared as an actress, Julia Delane, in the leading role in a new film. Her real objective was to acquire a valuable tiara owned by Mr. Wilburn the film's director. Thwarted, she escaped once more.

In the next story a week later (*Rosina's Astonishing Challenge*, June 26, 1948) she turned up with her manservant, now Pierre, at the film studio's farewell party for Noel and June. Another tiara was at stake. Somehow Rosina foisted it on June's pannier-shepherdess costume, which led to Noel's classic and heavy-handed humorous remark: "I arrest you for the theft, June



Rosina's SURPRISING BIRTHDAY GIFT

From *Girls' Crystal* June 24th, 1939

Gaynor!" Soon the truth emerged - but Rosina had made good her escape.

Another week later the two detectives were aboard a liner bound for England (*The Case of the Elusive Stowaway*, July 3, 1948). This time a jewel called the Star of Nyasa was at stake, but again the stowaway - Rosina - was foiled by Noel.

He and June defeated Rosina again in *The Bogus Girl Reporter* (August 14, 1948) - but in

the subsequent trial she was acquitted (*Rosina's Most Daring Coup*, September 11, 1948). Unexpectedly freed, she telephoned Noel. "As one of my oldest friends (you) might like to know my future plans. You were always a good sportsman, Noel." Impudently she wagered him "a hundred of your favourite cigarettes against a bottle of my special perfume" that she would steal the diamond tiara from Cartel's London shop window within twelve hours. She nearly succeeded – but the story ended with her sending him a package. "Enclosed was a box of his favourite cigarettes and a note: 'You were just too quick for me... It was great fun while it lasted. Yours – until the next time. – Rosina.'"

"The next time" was *When Rosina Baffled the School* (October 9, 1948), involving only Rosina and June. Noel's niece proved up to the occasion, and Rosina had to flee.

Three weeks later the *Girls' Crystal* published the last of all the Rosina stories – *The Case of the Two Impostors* (October 30, 1948). By now, Noel had become involved with *The Man of Many Faces* – Ralph Danesford, a crook known as "The Jackdaw." Like Rosina, he had a fatal give-away. With her, it was perfume; with him, it was a tendency to tap his foot with nervous energy at moments of crisis.

This final Rosina story showed her in collaboration with The Jackdaw, pitted against Noel, June and Inspector Clifford. Rosina impersonated Clifford's daughter Ruth in her attempt on the Renville diamond. But Noel and June were too smart for the new criminal

partnership. "The two cleverest rogues in England joined forces to outwit us, June," said Noel grimly. But they failed. Nevertheless, he thought "We'll see her again."

They never did. That girl of "swift wits and amazing resource" had played her last game against her perennial foe Noel Raymond. He survived in the *Girls' Crystal* until 1951, but he never again crossed swords with his favourite enemy. He must have missed the intellectual stimulus of their encounters, and the crisp repartee they exchanged. "Goodness, we sound like something out of a play," murmured Rosina with an admiring glance (*Rosina's Secret Helper*, August 12, 1939). In spite of himself, he could not help acknowledging her ingenuity and her beauty.

That beauty was not at first well portrayed in the illustrations accompanying the stories. The first Noel Raymond artist was a disaster, drawing people with large heads and contorted expressions. His depictions of Rosina were artificial in the extreme, the artistic technique crude and coarse. He was replaced in January 1938. The new artist (regrettably unnamed) was vastly superior, and henceforth he drew Rosina until her end in 1948. His characters were exquisitely limned, natural and realistic. This was Rosina in all her outstanding beauty – which so misleadingly concealed a deeply flawed character.

Readers found her fascinating. So, evidently, did her author. He even gave her the initials of his own real name.

THE ROSINA FONTAINE STORIES

Title	Date	Reprint date
1. <i>Rosina the Baffling</i>	July 10, 1937	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731)
2. <i>The Girl of Many Disguises</i>	July 31, 1937	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731)
3. <i>Rosina the Treasure-Hunter</i>	August 28, 1937	
4. <i>When Rosina Nearly Triumphed</i>	October 9, 1937	
5. <i>Rosina's Mid-Air Triumph</i>	April 30, 1938	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731)
6. <i>Rosina's Amazing Imposture</i>	July 9, 1938	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731)
7. <i>Rosina's Daring Return</i>	August 13, 1938	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731)
8. <i>Rosina on the Isle of Treasure</i>	November 19, 1938	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731)
9. <i>Rosina the Elusive</i>	January 14, 1939	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731)
10. <i>Rosina the Film Star</i>	April 1, 1939	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731) [with different ending] and January 2, 1943
11. <i>Rosina's Surprising Birthday Gift</i>	June 24, 1939	May 2, 1940 (SOL 731) and March 6, 1943
12. <i>The Girl June Didn't Suspect</i>	August 5, 1939	May 6, 1943
13. <i>Rosina's Secret Helper</i>	August 12, 1939	May 15, 1943
14. <i>June's Amazing Deception</i>	August 19, 1939	May 22, 1943
15. <i>Rosina and the Mystery Casket</i>	August 26, 1939	May 29, 1943
16. <i>June's Message in Code</i>	September 2, 1939	June 5, 1943
17. <i>Mystery of the Pageant</i>	September 9, 1939	June 12, 1943
18. <i>The Puzzle of the Stolen Idol</i>	September 16, 1939	June 19, 1943

Title	Date	Reprint date
19. <i>June Meets Her Double</i>	September 23, 1939	June 26, 1943
20. <i>She Meant June to be Blamed</i>	September 30, 1939	July 3, 1943
21. <i>She Said She Was Rosina's Double</i>	April 13, 1940	August 28, 1943
22. <i>They All Believed Rosina</i>	June 15, 1940	October 9, 1943
23. <i>Rosina Deceived Them All</i>	August 24, 1940	December 25, 1943
24. <i>Was Rosina the Mystery Spy?</i>	October 12, 1940	
25. <i>When Rosina Asked for Noel's Aid</i>	December 7, 1940	
26. <i>Rosina's Perfect Alibi</i>	January 18, 1941	
27. <i>Rosina – The Detective</i>	March 8, 1941	
28. <i>When Rosina Nearly Triumphed</i>	May 3, 1941 [not the same as No. 4]	
29. <i>Rosina's Amazing New Disguise</i>	December 27, 1941	
30. <i>Rosina's Amazing Ruse</i>	May 30, 1942	
31. <i>Noel and the Girl Detective</i>	February 19, 1944	
32. <i>Miss Mystery of the Mobile Café</i>	February 19, 1944	
33. <i>The Secret of the Torn Photographs</i>	June 19, 1948	
34. <i>Rosina's Astonishing Challenge</i>	June 26, 1948	
35. <i>The Case of the Elusive Stowaway</i>	July 3, 1948	
36. <i>The Bogus Girl Reporter</i>	August 14, 1948	
37. <i>Rosina's Most Daring Coup</i>	September 11, 1948	
38. <i>When Rosina Baffled the School</i>	October 9, 1948 [with June but not Noel]	
39. <i>The Case of the Two Impostors</i>	October 30, 1948	

[with Ralph Danesford "The Jackdaw"]



The picture was striking. It resembled one of those romantic 18th or 19th century prints of the Roman Forum and depicted a shepherd boy dressed in skins and equipped, not with pan pipes, as one might suppose from his dress, but with a saxophone, standing with his sheep close to a shattered Nelson's Column in a Trafalgar Square reduced to ruins. IT was the cover of No. 518 of *The Boys' Friend Library* (Second Series) of 5th March 1936, *The Great Disaster: A Story of 2000AD*.

What, I wondered, had the author, John Breton (W.T. Taylor), had in prophetic store for us 64 years ago?

Whether the story was prompted by the release the same year of Alexander Korda's film of H.G. Wells's *Things To Come*, which began with a disastrous war starting in 1940 (not a bad guess that!), I do not of course know, but it also

depended, as did the film, for its initial premise on the popular fear of the time that, "The bomber will always get through".

This is appeared in Mr. Breton's tale that for some ill-defined reason a great war in which all the Powers were involved from the outset had suddenly broken out in 1950. Within a matter of months the great cities of the world had been reduced to rubble by aerial bombardment and a general collapse of civilisation as we knew it had rapidly followed, to be followed in its turn by the outbreak of various epidemics and other disasters, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse had generally had a very busy time cantering back and forth.

So the story opens with our shepherd lad, Colin Graves, tending his flock in the ruins of Trafalgar Square on "a fine sunny morning in 2000AD". We are soon informed that London is

The GREAT DISASTER



now reduced to a city of some 10,000 inhabitants clustered near to the Tower of London, which has survived intact, and is now occupied by Simon Darke, the "Lord Dictator".

Britain has shrunk into a number of petty states. For, "Northward, from the shattered, grass-grown rockery that had once been the National gallery, stretched a vast, deep, tangled forest of trees, swamps and sandy heaths, till lost in the dim blue distances. Epping Forest, filled with troops of savage, wolf like dogs, wildcats and wild oxen – and outlawed men, more savage than the beasts – could be found as far as the next human colony, which was the hostile village of Birmingham," against which Simon Darke is

preparing to launch his forces in a ware of conquest.

The collapse of civilisation is rather selective. There are still aircraft, steamships, a railway from London to Guildford, and motor vehicles. Rather less surprisingly, human nature being what it is, the troops have plentiful supplies of modern rifles and machine guns (remember, for example, what Afghan gunsmiths can make by hand!). So somewhere there must be industry of several sorts. But nautical pirates from Heligoland infest the Channel and the North sea in cruisers and an aircraft carrier, and aerial pirates from the Isle of White and Ireland swoop down like Vikings on the midlands. The great forest of Anderida once again stretches over the

Weald and is populated by outlaw bands rather less prepossessing than Robin Hood's Merry Men. All these we meet in turn.

The political scene is complicated. Simon Darke's writ, we learn, runs as far south as Winchester and must surely stretch some distance towards Birmingham but there are other war lords in Manchester, Glasgow, York, Edinburgh, Wales, and "so forth", while the rightful heir to the British throne, Prince Albert of Windsor, lurks at Harenby House in Lincolnshire.

On the continent, a reconstituted Golden Horde under Yunna Khan, "Grand Khan of Mongolia and Tartary, Conqueror of India, China, Russia; Conqueror-to-be of the World, the Scourge of Satan", has swept across the great plains of Central Europe and is poised to pour over the Rhine into France.

But, "Cometh the hour, cometh the man" as Cliff Gladwin said when he won a Test Match with a leg-bye off the last possible ball. While Colin Graves watches his sheep, a man suddenly bails out of an aircraft and lands near him. It is Lawrence Sharples, the leader of the League of Peace and Civilisation (Lepici for short), a secret society pledged to re-unite the country and to restore the rule of law, democracy, and all that. He is on a secret mission to organise a coup to rest power from Simon Darke. Sharples rapidly enlists the shepherd boy in the League (he is nothing loth; Colin Graves's father has been executed by Simon Darke for expressing dissatisfaction with the Lord Dictator's rule).

For the next ninety-odd pages they, and others, enjoy many adventures at break-neck speed with several sudden and dramatic reversals of fortune.

Notable amongst these are the destruction of the pirate fleet from Heligoland after it has bombarded Margate, the Monte Carlo of Thanet,

the Pleasure Dome of Simon Darke's supporters: the destruction of the laboratory of the evil Dr. Crull - a scientific henchman of Darke's - who is building robots and has developed a death ray (As I said, the technology of this New Dark Age is very variable) at Maidenhead: the enlistment of the brigands of Claygate for the cause and the seizure of a train and the subsequent liberation of a concentration camp at Clapham Junction. This is followed by the seizure of power in London. Now at last the House of Windsor enjoys its own again and we British save Europe from the tyranny of the new Tamerlane.

"With the deaths of Simon Darke, Dr. Crull, and Yunna Khan, the fifty years' terror came to an end. A war-racked world emerged from its nightmare of anarchy, pestilence, famine, and death, and peace and civilisation came dawning at long last for its relief.

"Much, indeed, had yet to be done before a society that had relapsed into barbarism could be awakened into its former self. Forests and waste lands had to be cleared and planted, deserted cities rebuilt. A generation that had grown up in the shadow of the second 'Dark Ages' had to be taught the duties and restraints of citizenship. There were bandits, pirates, and refractory war lords and dictators to be crushed by the air fleets organised by Sharples and Mark Ranger (another hero of the Lepici).

"But in the years to come before Captain Sharples and Mark Ranger were old, and before Colin Graves had attained full manhood, a new civilisation was to arise, phoenix-like, from its ashes, mightier than ever before."

A remarkable recovery since Colin Graves appears to be about fourteen. They certainly had their work cut out to do all that in seven years!

Well of course it didn't quite happen like that, did it?



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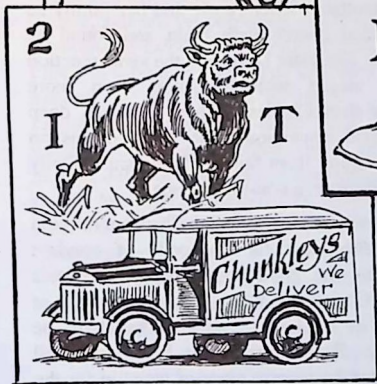
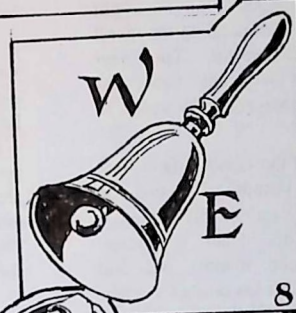
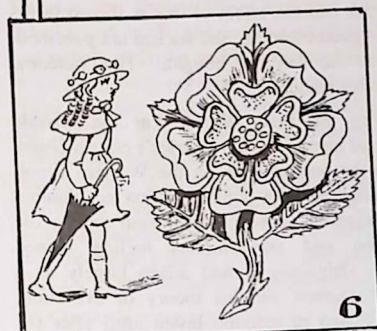
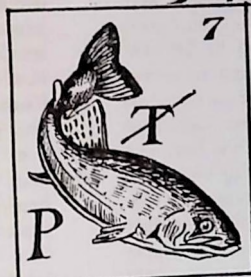
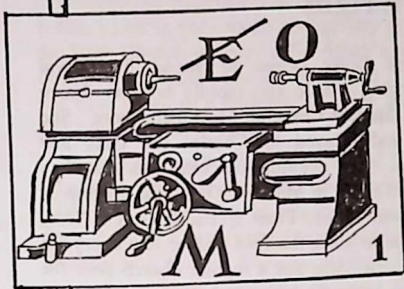
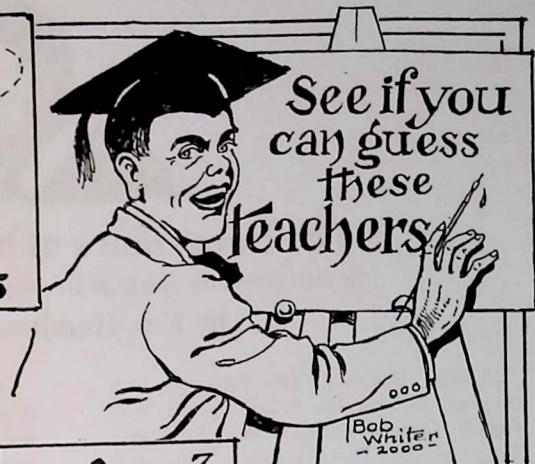
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Answers on page 85



The Importance of being Christian

(the Religious and Spiritual Development of Charles Hamilton)

by Una Hamilton Wright

Charles Hamilton came from two very religious families, his Father's people were Church of England and his Mother's family were Congregational. They were regular church-goers and brought up their children to be likewise. Sundays were the test of commitment: no secular occupations, games or books were permitted on Sundays. Charles remembered the Sabbath as dreadfully boring. If the weather was fine, long walks, but in clean clothes and staying clean. If it was wet then a good book with a good moral tone was the order of the day. The Victorians produced an amplitude of such books. They were probably the cause of his policy of burying a 'pill in the jam', as he called it, concealing the moral lesson in first-class entertainment. This latter factor was missing in his childhood. Grace was said before meals and the aim generally was to be good.

The shock that tested the family's faith took place in 1877 when the Hamiltons' second son died. He was only eight years old and he died of dropsy, according to his death certificate. Charles was only sixteen months old and naturally could not remember his brother's death. But the atmosphere of disillusion that it engendered lingered on. The parents' faith withered and was replaced by disbelief. His mother said "When Percy died, that finished me". She could not understand how a good and merciful God could let such a thing happen. His father was non-plussed and became an atheist and subsequently wrote for the *Freethinker*. He became actively anti-religious while his wife was more passive, but her faith was shattered.

Life was still based on the Christian ethic but the church-going and Bible-reading faded out – comic verse was written in the end-papers of the Family Bible in a juvenile hand. Agnosticism filled the moral background. Religious matters could now be questioned and the younger children's religious instruction came mainly from school. However, their aunts and cousins all received a traditional religious upbringing and the young Hamilton's began to feel out of step.

When Dolly began to attend the Royal Academy of Music she rapidly became drawn into the Student Christian Movement there. She joined and relayed to Charles the talks and activities. The eventual outcome was that they were confirmed in March 1905 by the Bishop of Kensington at St. Peter's, Paddington. They were glad to enter the fold and be like everyone else. Charles was not a regular church-goer for long, but he knew how to think in a Christian framework and the effect of this is shown in his stories – good triumphs, the wicked are punished. That was the way he thought. That outcome satisfied his readers.

During the First World War the terrible wastage of human lives – Charles's cousin Gussy died on the barbed wire on the Western Front, having returned from South America to volunteer – encouraged a sense of disillusion among the population and anti-religious feeling gained ground. Originally it had arisen largely as a result of Darwin and his theory of evolution. This recession of religion lasted until after the start of the second World War.

In the interwar period Charles's neglect of the outward observation of religious practice was not representative of his inner self: the Christian ethic that was the backdrop to his childhood was still there. Whenever, as a young man, he had stayed with his mother's sister Annie and her family he had attended church with them and found he enjoyed it. His sister Dolly had the same reaction and she stayed with her aunt even more frequently than Charles. They both had deep philosophical discussions with their cousins on subjects ranging from faith to feminism. (Dolly was a Suffragette, a non-violent one.)

So, in the interwar years the Christian religion was still the basis for the code of conduct practised by the *good* characters in Charles's stories. Curiously, when Charles settled at Kingsgate in 1924 there was no church to be found there. Broadstairs and St. Peter's were all endowed but the nearest place of worship for the residents of Kingsgate was a little non-conformist chapel halfway along the road to Cliftonville. It

was nearly opposite a well-known pub called the Wheatsheaf where the big haywains stopped on the way home from the fields. In London, since the age of five I had been taken to Church to a children's service on Sunday afternoons. This good habit had to be continued during the holidays and nanny took me to the little chapel on Sundays after lunch. It has a form of worship which would now be called 'happy-clappy'. We regularly sang 'I am H A P P Y'. I reported this to Mother and Uncle who were somewhat astonished but regarded it as better than nothing. I didn't like it very much and greatly preferred the High Church services at St. Alban's, Golders Green. Once I had been confirmed – at 13 – I did not have to go to a children's service any more and I was so glad to escape.

It was not until the Second World War that Charles turned his thoughts more seriously to religion. Hitherto he had largely taken it for granted, that it was right for decent people to practise it. It was Dorothy Sayers who had aroused people's interest in the Christian Religion by pronouncing the war to be an 'ideological war'. She pointed out that the aims and beliefs of Hitler and his minions were totally at variance with our own and, moreover, that if Hitler won we should lose the spiritual basis for our culture. She wrote an interesting book on Christianity where she dealt with the 'six other deadly sins'. I sent a copy of this book to my Uncle and it interested him very much. He was quite astonished that there proved to be such a large readership for it, and was surprised that he found it so interesting and thought-provoking.

Charles's approach to religion was essentially one of common sense and practicality. Practical common sense was an outstanding quality inherited from his mother's family and he would not allow that religion should not be expected to measure up to this yardstick. Later he was to write his statement of religious belief, *Faith and Hope*, a short book, very practically and utterly sincere, and not yet published. At this time I was a student at London University reading English. I used to send him my essays, after they had been marked, because I liked to have his views on English literature and often they contrasted quaintly with the accepted views which were handed out in the lectures. I had written a paper on the Mediaeval Chester Play dealing with the sacrifice of Isaac. Charles's down-to-earth comments provided his student niece with welcome relief from all the cant that buzzed round one's head during the course: "I am afraid I cannot think much of an author," he wrote, "who could take so savage a theme and take it seriously. Many things in the Old Testament are stumbling-blocks for the 'cover-to-cover' enthusiasts: but I think that all reasonable people

will concede that our religion is founded upon the New Testament, and that the greater part of the Old Must be taken in a Pickwickian sense. I am quite unable to see anything 'dramatic' in the play of Abraham and Isaac, because first of all any composition must have sense in it, and there is no sense in this. That the story is founded upon fact I do not doubt: it is the story of a wretched old man suffering under murderous delusions. But such homicidal mania, though tragic in a way, is not dramatic... To take the story seriously is impossible: for such a command could not have come from God, only from the Devil: and the explanation at the end that God was only pulling Abraham's leg is really shocking. If the story could for a moment be taken seriously for the sake of argument, obviously it was Abraham's duty to disobey such a command, and tell the commander what he thought of him... It is unfortunate that when the scriptures were collected, savage and brutal legends like this were included...

"I am afraid there is no general recognition of the fact that one-tenth of any composition must be solid common-sense: only nine-tenths imagination and style. When an author parts wholly with common sense, nothing will save his work from inanity. One has only to imagine a real father receiving such a command, supposedly from God. He would know that it was and could only be a delusion. But admitting that it was real, and no delusion, he would then know that it came from a bad spirit and not from a good one. Admitting further that it really came from God, he would know that God was bad and wicked – which is silly. The whole thing, therefore, is senseless and irreverent, and comes very near to blasphemy..."

This common sense approach led him to view many of the aspects of war in a logical way. Writing to his sister about the wartime 'flu which he had just had: "It is not, of course, ordinary influenza, but a war plague under a fancy name, like the so-called 'Spanish influenza' of the last war. If the war lasts another year, we shall probably get something like the 'Black Death' of the Middle Ages – God's judgement upon us for our folly. There's some very malignant germ in the present plague, probably caused by the underfeeding of millions of people and the general outbreak of immorality due to the war, and fostered by the theatres and the radio. People cannot sin on so huge a scale without getting punished. Unfortunately a godly righteous and sober life does not save one from sharing the punishment of the sinners."

In the Foreword to *Faith and Hope* he again raised George Orwell's comment that God was not mentioned in any of his stories: "I have been

a writer for sixty years, but the nature of my work has made it impossible for me to touch upon the subject of religious belief;... it does seem to me impious to introduce the name of God into works of fiction.

"Fiction has... an important place in making life happier... for the young. It... should inculcate principles of Christian conduct. But it is for the Church of God to teach religious truth, and for the imaginative writer to give what humble aid he can: but he must not mix God's truth with fiction." Belief in God was instinctive rather than a matter of material evidence. "Every man lives by faith without evidence in such matters as truth, honesty, mercy, kindness. Is it reasonable to omit from the list of instinctive beliefs the belief in God? ...The human mind is so constituted that it cannot do without faith."

Charles declared that the conflict between religion and science was due to one cause: that science had stepped out of place. "Science has its place: in which it should be content to stay. It is a good servant but a bad master... we slaughter one another in frightful wars... science cannot save us from them. It can only make confusion worse confounded. It can replace the musket with the rifle, the rifle with the machine-gun, the machine-gun with the bomb, the bomb with the atom Bomb: and the Atom Bomb doubtless with something still more destructive to man and hateful to God. It can very likely wipe the human race from the earth. But it cannot make a single swindler honest, a single spiv industrious, a single tyrant merciful. In all matters of high importance it is helpless. And it is a matter of very high importance for the swindler to be made honest, the spiv industrious, the tyrant merciful... Science can devastate, but it cannot build.

"Let us imagine that two unbelieving men of our own time had been sincerely believing Christians – Hitler and Mussolini... Can we then imagine that they would have turned Europe into a shambles. Sincere religious belief, in only these two men, would have saved tens of thousands of lives, and untold hunger and misery."

The core of Charles Hamilton's belief was that morality depended upon faith and that, as all men were – he thought – agreed as to the necessity of morality, it followed that faith was essential to man. "It is generally admitted," he wrote, "even by the atheist, that men should be good and not bad: ...He hopes that a moral standard may be maintained without faith.

"We are told of men who have renounced faith and yet led good lives: quite a possible thing, for they had had Christian teaching... Early Christian training may cause morality to run on, as it were, like an engine by its own momentum, after the power has been shut off.

The test come in the next generation, and the next, when faith and its influence have been forgotten and when men tempted to sin ask, 'Why shouldn't I?' ...What is the materialist to say?

"When religion goes, all, in the end, goes: one by one the lights are dimmed... We live in such a time in these very days... It does not seem to me possible for men without religion to live up to Christian standards, even if they so desire."

Forgiveness was linked in Charles's mind with his ability as a writer, "Perhaps because I am a writer, accustomed to 'live' the characters about whom I write, I have generally found it easy to put myself in the other fellow's place, to understand his temptation, and to pity his weakness in yielding to it..."

Charles's conscience still pricked him when he recalled his recurrent bouts of gambling fever in his younger days. "I spent much time which no doubt might have been better spent, at Monte Carlo. I don't see anything to regret in it. So long as one's pleasures do no harm, or at worst harm only oneself, why should anyone cavil? ... In an ideal world, perhaps nobody would gamble, drink, or smoke. I do not feel sure that I should like to live in so ideal a world." Harmlessness to others was Charles's touchstone in deciding that "foibles, even follies, should be tolerated if they give happiness".

In common with many other thinkers he was baffled by the existence of war and evil in a world he believed to be created by a good God, but he made an original contribution: "War is wickedness on so gigantic and dramatic a scale, that it makes an impression out of all proportion to its evil..." He remembered men who in 1914 when war was declared had said "There is no God". "But", he commented, "they had not said so while sin and suffering had been under their eyes for years, while there were neglected children, men who grovelled in vice, and women who were white slaves. It was only that the dramatic element in war woke up their sluggish minds to the realisation of one evil among many. It is not war, but the existence of evil at all in God's universe, that is the problem..."

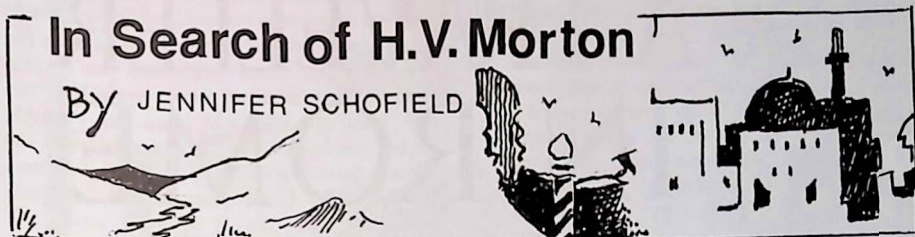
Thinking again of his brother Percy's death in childhood and of his parents' failure of faith he wrote "A child's sickness does not come from sin, and it is a harder trial of faith than the most gigantic and destructive of wars... The foolish man (Charles's father) who says 'There is no God' does not solve the problem: the evil remains, and he has only taken away the hope of remedy. The scientific man (Charles's brother Alex) who tells us that God is a myth, and that Nature is red in tooth and claw, gives us no help."

"Changing trains on a long journey" is how Charles thought of death. "It is strange and indeed incomprehensible to me, that men stumbling on a dark path should deliberately shut their eyes to the guiding Light. The man who throws away his faith, is like the miner who should throw away his safety-lamp..."

Finally Charles summed up his personal

creed: "I believe that behind all the apparent evil of the world, there is good: that behind all the trials and tribulations of this early life, there is a wise purpose, though we can see it only by glimpses... What I know of God contents me: what I cannot know, I am content not to know... What we do not know, it is not necessary for us to know."

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H.V. Morton was one of the most famous travel writers of the last century. Many readers will recall one of his best-known books *In Search of England*, published in 1927 and soon followed by equally popular *Searches for Wales, Scotland and Ireland*. In 1934 *In the Steps of the Master* was another bestseller, transporting his readers to modern Palestine, and in the same vein, *In the steps of St. Paul* (1936) and *Through Lands of the Bible* (1938) were enthusiastically acclaimed.

Why was he so successful then, and why is he still read today? I think, to give the answer in a nutshell, because he is an ideal courier – especially for the armchair traveller! His vivid pages take you to wonderful places and he is always there beside you. He takes you with him, sharing his thoughts with you and making you feel that you are his chosen companion. You soon seem to know him well and feel flattered to be befriended by this immensely erudite, amusing, civilised, romantic, kindly and charming guide. It is a shock to realize that you really know very little about him! He makes only a few tantalizing allusions to his private life in his writing. Is he married or single? Where does he live? What is his background? What is he really like?

Henry Canova Vollam Morton was born on July 25th, 1892, at Ashton-under-Lyne near Manchester. He and his sister, Margaret, spent their childhood and youth in Birmingham, where

their father, Joseph Vollam Morton, was editor-in-chief of the Pearson's group of newspapers, which included *The Birmingham Mail*. Harry Morton remembered his home as being full of books and his passion for history began in those early days. He was educated at King Edward's School and worked for *The Birmingham Gazette and Express* before moving to London and *The Evening Standard*. During the First World War he served as a Second-Lieutenant in the Warwickshire Yeomanry, returning to Fleet Street and the *Standard* in 1919. In 1920 he joined the staff of the *Express* and got on well with Lord Beaverbrook.

Now Morton's career began in earnest, and he made his name with brilliant sketches describing London, "snapshots" published daily of the lives of the rich and the poor, of institutions and buildings. These were collected into various anthologies and any of these London titles gives a crystal-clear picture of the contemporary scene in the twenties. Yet his greatest triumph in that decade – indeed, the pinnacle of his work as a journalist – was to take place in Egypt.

Morton was one of the very few reporters allowed to be present when King Tutankhamen's tomb was opened by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon in 1928. He entered the tomb before anything had been touched, and experienced the hot, stuffy air, the indescribable smell of age, and gazed in awe at the life-sized, black-faced

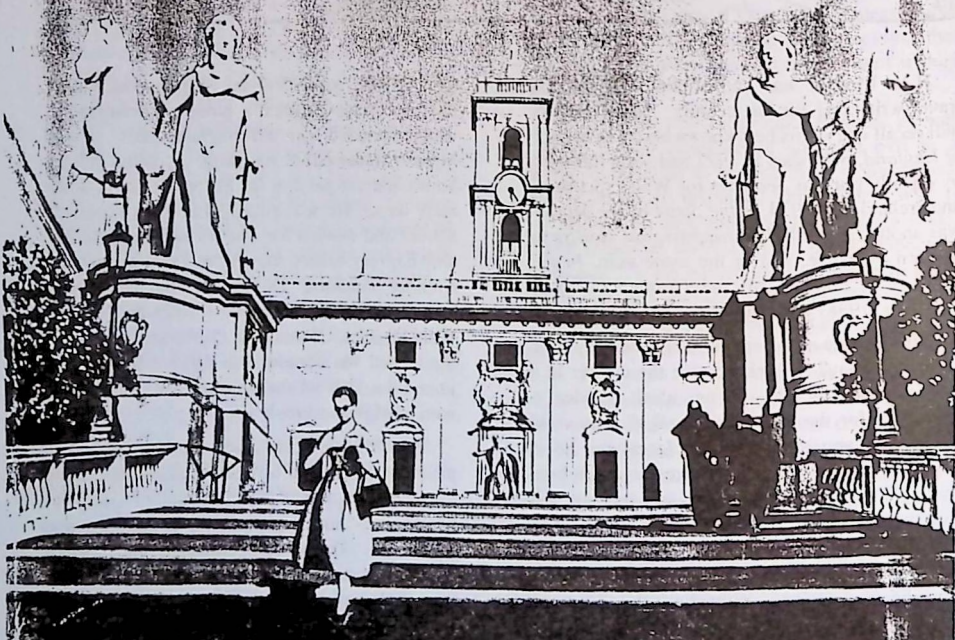
guardian figures, the gold on them "tarnished and stained with streaks of red like blood". He saw linen shawls, hanging from their arms, turning to dust at a touch. Later, he sat on a wall outside and saw objects brought out into the sunlight after three thousand, five hundred years.

H.V. Morton was a fine historian, but also he appreciated the mystery of the past. This becomes apparent as he explores the British Isles in his Search series of books and also in his accounts of his travels in the Middle East in the '30s. I personally particularly enjoy *Through the Lands of the Bible*, which despite its rather Sunday school title, is a lively and fascinating

account of not only famous places like the ruins of Babylon but also of little-known inaccessible monasteries. Best of all, for Biggles enthusiasts, Morton even goes to the Oasis at Siwa, far out in the Libyan desert, to see the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter Ammon. Readers of *Biggles Flies South* will remember, I know, the amazing preface to that story, describing how Cambyses and his mighty army attempt to march to Siwa and sack the temple in 525 BC, only to be lost for ever beneath the desert sands. Incidentally, Morton makes Siwa sound a beautiful and attractive place with its date palms, lakes, flowers and hoopoes, but he always has an eye for an

H.V. MORTON
A
TRAVELLER
IN
ROME

A TRAVELLER IN ROME



H.V. MORTON

METHUEN

incongruous detail. When he is invited to eat with the Sheik, he is surprised to be offered chocolate biscuits manufactured in England! However, he blandly calls this, "one of the romances of commerce".

As for romance – a sharp-eyed look at the opening pages of *Through the Lands of the Bible* reveals that "the photographs were taken by H.V. and Mary Morton". Mary was Morton's second wife, and often travelled with him. Many readers may not have spotted this item of information, which was just as well, for one of the attractive features of all Morton's travel books is the way that the author is unaccompanied, save by the reader!

The details of the author's private life do not seem to have been widely disseminated; even in 1960 a book jacket does not mention his marriage and remarks somewhat forbiddingly, "among his hobbies are astronomy, books and a Siamese cat!" However, very fortunately, I have met Morton's half-sister, Mrs. Marie O'Brien, who has very kindly told me much about him and his family. In 1915, Harry Morton married Dorothy Vaughan, and the couple had three children. They were divorced in 1920 and the author married Mary, the secretary of his publisher. They had one son, Timothy.

Harry's father had married twice, and as Marie O'Brien was the daughter of his second wife, she was much younger than the author and his sister, Margaret. She remembers them both as a romantic, dashing pair with a faint aura of scandal about them, because of Harry's divorce and Margaret's "several" marriages. Morton's books had made him rich by the Thirties and when Marie visited him and Mary in their Cotswold home she was impressed both by their luxurious lifestyle and their aura of glamour!

She was also impressed, as a young girl, by her half-brother's appearance. Until I met Marie O'Brien, the only likeness I knew of Morton was the photograph on my 1960 Penguin book, which makes him look like a bald Rudyard Kipling – and so I was very pleased to learn that he looked charming, with luminous dark eyes and dark hair. He was a little bald so he would often wear a hat, and he was not tall, but his personality carried all before him.

H.V. Morton's status as an author and journalist is illustrated by an important task he was given in 1940. Together with one other writer, he was invited to accompany Winston Churchill when he crossed the Atlantic in a battleship in 1940, to meet President Roosevelt. What a target for a U-boat! Morton wrote a riveting account of this dangerous voyage and momentous encounter in *Atlantic Meeting* (1943). No more such chances came his way in

the war, but in 1948 he had another flattering invitation which was to affect his whole life. Field Marshal Smuts asked him to come and write a book, and *In search of South Africa* was published in 1948.

Although H.V. Morton started his literary career in the 1920s, the Fifties and Sixties were to see a new flowering of his skills, and I like this phase of his writing best of all. In 1954 *A Stranger in Spain* came out, and three outstanding books on Italy were to follow *A Traveller in Rome* in 1957, *A Traveller in Italy* in 1964, and *A Traveller in Southern Italy* in 1969. These Italian volumes have all Morton's special characteristics: the author makes you see, smell, hear and feel the places he visits; he tells you the most intriguing historical facts; as he has introductions to all kinds of important people he can take you behind the scenes, and, in his charming, friendly way, he talks to everyone he meets, Italians and tourists alike. He loves jokes – he sympathizes with sad stories. He dines well and sometimes you can still find the restaurants he went to, despite the passage of the years – for excellent as his books are for the armchair traveller, he is also a first-rate guide for the traveller today.

Of course some things have changed, and it is interesting to contrast Morton's Italy with the present day, but much remains the same and some things never change. Morton loves byways as well as highways and tells you about places and things you would otherwise miss. For instance, in Florence, although he pays the obligatory visit to the Uffizzi, to see, as he says *The Venus of Botticelli rising from a sea of tourists*, he also finds the little-known palazzo that belonged to "Bonnie Prince Charlie" in his sad, degenerate, later days. Here, my husband Allan and I were more fortunate than our mentor, for when Morton went to see it he could not go in. The palazzo was in private hands and for a wonder Morton had no introduction to the owners. Now it is part of the University of Florence, and we were able to enter and to photograph the huge, Royal Stuart Arms of England, painted on the wall in the entrance hall, beautiful and defiant reminder of the King Over the Water.

There are so many more instances I could give you of fascinating places we have visited and things we have seen in Italy because Morton has been our guide – but this must wait until I write, *A Traveller – with Morton!* Perhaps one day, too, we will go *In Search of South Africa* and find the old farmhouse called "Schapenberg" or "Sheep Mountain", where Harry and Mary spent their last years. The author loved Cape Province so much that he made his home there

soon after his first visit in 1948, returning to Europe from time to time to write his last travel books. He died on the 25th June, 1979 at the age of 86, and his ashes are scattered in the grounds.

Today, Morton's books are out of print, but there is a possibility that some of them may be

republished. Meanwhile, some of them may be found second-hand, and of course there are far more titles than I have mentioned here. They are well worth the search if you would like to follow in the steps of H.V. Morton.



CHRISTMAS

WITH **COKER**

BY **MARGERY MOODS**

Chapter 1

"Potter!"

The stentorian summons rang across the ancient quadrangle of Greyfriars School. It was heard by fellows and masters far and near but not, it seemed, by the intended recipient, who merely quickened his step towards the gates.

"Greene!"

The companion of Potter also quickened his step, showing no inclination to spring obediently to the summons of their study mate, the great Horace James Coker of the fifth.

"Potter! Greene! Come back here!"

"Te-he-he," came a fat snigger beside the Famous Five as they emerged into the bright October sunshine. "I say, Coker's waxy. Look! He's grabbed old Pomposus."

"Shut up, you fat idiot," Harry Wharton exclaimed, "Prout'll hear you."

The Famous Five moved away from Bunter, intent on their planned jaunt to Courtfield rather

than the antics of Coker, who had indeed waylaid his plump and pompous form master and was gesticulating wildly in that startled gentleman's face. Words of response floated back: "Boy! How dare---? Preposterous! You---you---" Then abruptly Prout backed away, brushing away the importunate Coker as though he were a particularly irritating fly.

The Head and Mr. Quelch had become rather puzzled spectators as they advanced towards the tall figure of the Reverend Lambe, vicar of Friardale, who had just entered the gates.

"I don't believe this!" Bob Cherry halted. "Coker's taken leave of his senses."

"I didn't know he had any," grunted Johnny Bull.

"He's having a go at the Head!" gasped Nugent.

The chums paused again to stare as the Head suddenly backed off, snapped beckoning fingers at Wingate and Gwynne, whose misfortune it was to appear on the scene at that moment, and



Coker - drawn by Bob Whiter

rejoined Mr. Quelch. Their hasty exit seemed to indicate very urgent business requiring their presence far from the school. The vicar looked rather dazed as Wingate and Gwynne seized the wildly protesting Coker and marched him back into the school. Mr. Prout mopped his perspiring brow and hurried to join the recent abrupt exodus from the school.

"Show's over," grinned Bob Cherry. "Wonder what that was all about."

"I say, you chaps." Bunter rolled up again. "We'll miss the bus if we don't get a move on."

"We?" Wharton stared.

"He smells the invitingness of Chunkley's," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Or the Riverside Tea Rooms."

"We're not bussing," snapped Wharton, "and we're not tea-ing. We're going to buy a new lamp for the jigger *you* borrowed yesterday without asking and brought back with a puncture and a missing lamp. So scram, you unwanted

barrel of lard--unless you're going to fork out for a new lamp and treat us to tea."

"I've had a better idea," said Bob. "I think we should take dear Bunter with us. We'll walk over the common and have a spot of footer practice."

Wharton stared. "You caught madness off Coker?"

Bob shook his head. "If bunter lies down we can take turns booting him to Courfield. See who can win the most kicks."

"Score the most goals. Oh yes," chortled Nugent. "Lie down, old fat man. I'm first!"

Bunter got out of range. "You've all gone mad, you beasts! I told you I'll pay for your beastly lamp soon as my postal order arrives. It's--"

"Boot!" yelled Bob. He advanced towards Bunter, raising his voice in song. "Boots, Boots, boots along the highway. Boots, boots, boots--"

Bunter had forgotten all about tagging along in the hope of tea at Chunkleys. The opposite direction looked much more appealing, and the chums laughed as they resumed their pace. But not for long. Round the bend of Oak Lane came a small racing figure, headlong into the solid form of Johnny Bull. The five chums stopped.

"Dickie!" Nugent stared at his young brother. "What's the rush?"

"Him!" Nugent minor gestured over his shoulder. "Let me go before the brute catches me." He jerked free of Johnny Bull's grasp and passed only long enough to stick out a defiant tongue at his approaching pursuer before racing off again.

The Bounder of Greyfriars came to a halt. "You should keep an eye on your minor, Nugent," he said coolly. "Those young sweeps have got an accumulator on at Wapshot. I've just hooked the kid out of the Three Fishers."

"I don't believe it," Nugent gasped. "Dickie's over all his past nonsense."

The Bounder shrugged. "I'm a liar, then."

"And what were you doing at the Three Fishers?" Nugent snapped. "Up to your own smokey, card-playing antics?"

An angry scowl darkened the Bounder's features. "For your information I was taking the short cut, not darkening the doors of damnation--like your little lilywhite brother. And don't come the holier-than-thou at me, or I'll--"

"Wait!" Harry Wharton, sensing old enmities rising, stepped between the pair. "Is this true, Smithy?"

"Of course it's true. Next time I'll leave the little brute to it."

"Thanks, Smithy." Wharton turned to his chum. "You owe Smithy an apology. If Dickie had been nabbed there with a bookie it would have been expulsion."

"Sorry---thanks, Smithy," Nugent mumbled. "You chaps go on without me---I'm going back to sort those kids out."

"More likely to sort you out," said Smithy, but Nugent was already hurrying back towards the school.

The five---for Smithy seemed to have decided to tag along---resumed their amble, deciding on the path over the common instead of the towpath. Smithy was rather quiet, and Wharton said, "Okay, Smithy? And Reddy?"

"He's got a couple of days leave. His father's on a two-day turnaround before he takes a lighter out."

Harry nodded. He'd heard that Captain Redwing, Tom's father, was now skipper with a big international freight line. He said, "You're welcome to join us, Smithy if you're at a loose end."

"Thanks," the Bounder said, his eyes moody. "Of course I'm glad for Tom's dad. He really deserves this break now the fishing industry is making without trace but it's going to muck up our Christmas plans. He's going to take Reddy on a three-week voyage under this work experience lark they're getting youngsters on now. Of course Reddy's torn, but I know he's always longed to work with his father. So..." The Bounder's unspoken words were easily guessed at: he was prepared to be unselfish for a change and not persuade his chum to keep to his original plan for the Christmas break.

"We're losing our Nabob as well," said Harry, with a wry glance at their Indian chum. "Not only for Christmas! His family think it's the relations had a look at him before they get what he looks like altogether."

"The forgetfulness is of the most unessential," confirmed Hurree. "But not of the turkey minced pies."

"Well, it's only October," Bob Cherry put in cheerfully. "Lots of time to see what the Christmas fates have I store for us this year."

Actually, much less time than that was to be needed!

Chapter 2

A suitable new lamp for Wharton's bike having been purchased, and one or two other items needed, Bob Cherry suggested an amble by the river and tea at the Riverside Gardens. The unusually warm and sunny afternoon had brought many of the Courtfield residents out to take the air and walk their dogs. The boathouse was enjoying a resurgence of summer trade, and happy youngsters were enthusiastically plying oars. The chums leaned over the bridge and watched the scene. At last Wharton glanced at his watch, then enquiringly at the others.

"Yes," said Bob. "Watching all that activity has given me an appetite. Just like Bunter when---" He stopped, suddenly puzzled. "Is somebody calling us?"

"Berry! It is Berry, isn't it? And Barton?"

The boys turned, towards the voice and the quick footsteps, and stared at the smartly dressed lady hurrying towards them. "It is," she cried triumphantly, and Smithy gasped, "I don't believe it!" under his breath.

Gradual recognition was rendering the boys speechless. Smithy was the first to recover. He touched his cap and stepped forward. "It is--- Miss Coker, ma'am?" he said uncertainly.

"Yes," this apparition in a classic two-piece of shell pink silk with a silvery grey cashmere jacket looped over her arm looked delighted. "And you are---?"

"Vernon-Smith, ma'am."

Bob Cherry was still goggling and Wharton was still blinking hard. They couldn't believe that the elegant lady in high couture apparel was actually Coker's Aunt Judy. Where was the ancient garb, the dreaded umbrella, the fierce mien before which even the mighty Head had been known to quail? Only the sheer inability to remember names had remained.

"But isn't darling Horace with you?" she asked, and this query banished any lingering doubt of identity; only doting Aunt Judy would ever refer to the greatest idiot in the Fifth as darling Horace. And now the reason for the very strange scene in the quad became clear. Aunt Judy was on her way to Greyfriars; darling Horace must have had detention and an impot;

and darling Horace had been demanding his freedom this sunny afternoon.

"I'm afraid Horace got detained back at school," Harry said carefully. "You're on your way there, Miss Coker?"

"Yes, but the car's sprung a leak or something. My chauffeur has gone in search of a mechanic." She looked along the river. "Can we get tea at that garden place? Horace has mentioned it, I believe."

"Yes, ma'am." Smithy, who could play the gentlemanly escort quite well whenever anything feminine came on the scene, stepped forward to the head of the steps leading down from the bridge and held out his hand. "May we treat you to tea---seeing that Horace is detained?"

"Nonsense! My treat." The transformation of Miss Judith Coker stepped briskly down in her dainty dove-grey court shoes and led the way.

"But Miss Coker," Harry said quickly. "Your chauffeur may wonder where you are. Shouldn't we leave a note for him?"

"A good idea!" In moments Harry was dispatched to the old Daimler that stood forlorn at the other side of the bridge, its bonnet opened to indicate its immobility. Harry tucked the note, 'At Riverside Gardens, J.C.' where it was secure and easily seen, then sped back to the tea gardens where a large riverside table had been secured and liberal lashings of lemonade, Coke, and assorted pastries were being set out. Aunt Judy looked perfectly at home sitting there dispensing hospitality, and Harry suddenly realised that she was actually an attractive lady and no longer an old frump as she had been called so often by impudent schoolboys. The colour of shame on their behalf came to his cheeks, and Miss Coker did not miss this. Whatever her appearance in the past she was a very astute lady.

She sipped her tea and smiled at the young faces. "I know you're all surprised, as dear Horace is going to be when I get to Greyfriars so I'm going to tell you the story behind my new outlook on life."

She paused, her eyes suddenly shadowed by deep sadness, and looked down into her cup. "You know of course that I never married, and this is partly why I'm so devoted to Horace. He has become the child I never had. But when I was very young, only eighteen, I had a sweetheart, a dear young man who wanted to marry me. His parents had been killed in an air raid when he was just a baby and he was fostered by various families, knowing only one surviving relative, a cousin. He ran away as soon as he left school to make his own way in the world. When we met, in a library where he was studying, he was working as a builder's labourer. We fell in

love. He was neat, clean, nicely spoken and what is sometimes called one of nature's gentlemen. But my family was horrified. My brother James ranted on that he was a fortune hunter. Henry said my grandmother would turn in her grave, which was totally ridiculous!" Aunt Judy's mouth, with its discreet tint of pale lipstick, twisted bitterly with the memory. She looked at the boys rather anxiously. "I hope this isn't boring you."

"No, ma'am!" they cried in unison, and Harry added: "We're honoured to be taken into your confidence."

"Thank you," she beckoned the waitress and ordered more cakes and savouries. "You see I haven't forgotten that you have twice saved Horace from unfair expulsion and because of that I trust you."

"Thank you." Harry coloured again, oddly touched by this tribute.

Then a fierce light came into Miss Coker's eyes. "My father forbade me ever to see the boy again and packed me off to a finishing school in Switzerland. When I came home a year later Charlie had disappeared altogether. But I've never forgotten him." She sighed. "To understand all this you need to know something of my family history. My fortune comes from my mother's side. Her mother was an American girl from Boston, one of the original four hundred, and she married a railroad king, when he died suddenly she was heiress to two fortunes. My mother was their only child and when she met my father during a visit to England her family were not pleased. They said the Cokers were a washed out old family without ten cents of brains between them."

The chums controlled smiles. Perhaps the great Horace was the victim of the Coker genetic inheritance and deserved sympathy.

"But she married him---my father," Aunt Judy went on, "and so the money was well tied up by crack American lawyers for me so that it could never be dissipated. This has always been a very sore point with the Coker family. But they live with me, I take care of all expenses and educate their children, while for all these years I really lost interest in my own life. It has been an existence, that is all. For I never again met anyone I wanted to share my whole life with and my brothers did their best to see that I didn't. Why was I so spineless?" she groaned. "My grandmother took me to America after my mother died, but somehow I couldn't settle there and I returned to England."

The boys were silent, aware of their immaturity in trying to offer sympathy while

wishing to think of something to say. But then she brightened.

"Three months ago the strangest thing happened." Aunty Judy leaned forward. "I had a thick crackling letter from a firm of solicitors I'd never heard of. They asked me to go and see them. Of course James insisted on going with me, being all protective, and it emerged that they had been trying to trace me for ages." Suddenly Aunty Judy giggled. "It seems there are quite a lot of Cokers scattered round Britain."

Smithy raised his brows and murmured within: Heaven forbid!

"Charlie had never forgotten me, never married, and become a very wealthy man. He had willed everything to me, with one condition involved, not an entail but something he wanted me to do. Otherwise everything went to a children's charity. The solicitor, a very worldly but charming young woman, said Mr. Charlson left the instructions only a few weeks before his fatal coronary and---"

"Just a moment," Smithy interrupted. "Sorry---but did you say Charlson? Charlie Charlson, Miss Coker?"

"Yes! Did you know him?"

"No, but my father did." Smithy gave a long drawn-out whistle. "He was one of the richest property men in the country, with interests in Europe and hotels in the Caribbean. Gosh, ma'm, you can pension the whole Coker tribe off for ever and do your own thing at last."

"I mean to." Miss Coker's chin came up pug-naciously. "But do you know what opened my eyes? Not the money, for that doesn't bring happiness, nor do places. It's people who matter. I had several discussions with the solicitor girl about this huge old country house Charlie was renovating with the intention of turning it into a refuge for abused children, and as I went into the office I overheard one of the young secretaries giggle and say, "The old frump's here, Ms Ryan," and she was sharply admonished by the solicitor. Well, the upshot of that was I told her I'd heard and I'd decided there and then to do something about myself. She proved to be one of the best friends I've ever made, helped me and advised, so tactfully, to have what she called a makeover. She assured me that sixty is not old these days and if I was to put my fighting spirit to good use in accordance with Charlie's last wish I'd need to look the part. But I'm going to need the help of young people. I shall---"

"Excuse me, ma'am..." A shadow fell across the table from the tall young man in chauffeur's livery who stood there. "The car is ready now, whenever you---"

His words were drowned in a chorus of shouts, taunting voices, sneers and insults. Bob Cherry's chair tipped over as he leapt to his feet while Wharton and Smithy shot up, exclaiming angrily: "Ponsonby!"

"Oh! Look at the dear little boys! Having tea with Nanny!"

"Shut up, Monson."

"Mind the umbrella!"

"You Highcliffe rotters!" In one concerted rush Greyfriars went on the attack. Arms, legs, fists, and insults tangled in a furious melee. Aunty Judy watched in horror and the chauffeur hesitated, unsure whether to interfere, and the struggle got dangerously near the river bank. "Oh, boys, be careful!" shouted Aunty Judy, but too late. Wild cries rent the air, and the three cads hit the Sark. Three Highcliffe caps joined them, and the Greyfriars victors cheered.

"Can they swim?" Miss Coker cried anxiously.

"Who cares?" grinned Smithy, dusting himself down.

Aunt Judy decided there was no time to waste. She hesitated just long enough to see Ponsonby and Co strike out for the opposite bank before she urged: "Let's go," and thrust some notes into the hand of the waitress. No-one demurred. As Inky remarked, "Discretion was the soul of essentialness." But only one newcomer disagreed. Too late, Bunter rolled on the scene in search of nourishment.

"You rotten beasts! I've been waiting all this time for you at Chunkleys. What about tea, you---"

"Get lost, fatso." They shouldered the indignant Bunter aside and made haste for the bridge and the car waiting at the far side. They tumbled in headlong and in moments the old Daimler was moving at a pace that belied its venerable age, carrying a hilarious party back to Greyfriars.

Chapter 3

Of course there were repercussions.

Dr. Voysey had been on the blower to the Head, with what must have been considerable exertion for him. The Head was waiting when the Daimler turned in at the gates. Mr. Quelch was waiting. Mr. Prout was waiting, but changed his mind when he recognised, with some amazement, the lady being handed out of the Daimler by Smithy. That indomitable lady put a stop to all incrimination. She had been insulted without any cause whatever by those Highcliffe bullies, and if a single word of complaint, let

alone punishment, should be visited upon these dear friends or Horace, who had been prevented from being with her, she would personally go over to Highcliffe and settle the matter once and for all. Whether a nervous warning was conveyed to the Head of Highcliffe was never disclosed, but the matter was never referred to again. Horace was instantly released from his struggles with his Latin namesake and was reunited with his doting Aunt Judy.

Peace descended on Greyfriars, for a little while at least. Frank Nugent was updated on the afternoon's events, Dicky had been "sorted out" and with his companions was suitably chastened by the collapse of the Wapshot accumulator and their pocket money. The help Aunt Judy had mentioned she needed had not been clarified and the weeks rolled by until the last week of November. Christmas was in the air now and plans still had to be finalised. Smithy was grumpy; Tom was going to sea with his father; Inky was going home; the Cliff House girls were bound for the Scottish Highlands and Diana was winter-sporting in Moritz with a party. Bunter, however, was still available. He barged into No. 1 Study after prep one chill and melancholy November evening.

"I say, you chaps. About Christmas..."

"What about Christmas?"

"Well it's coming, you know."

"Thanks for telling us."

Bunter blinked pathetically. "Mauly just told me that the plague has broken out at Mauleverer Towers."

"Rats, you fool."

"Yes, Mauly said they are a particularly ravenous type."

"Well, you'll be the answer to their prayer," observed Bob Cherry.

"Beast! I don't believe him," scowled Bunter. "And Smithy is going to a health farm in Siberia but I'm welcome to go with him and get fit. Where is Siberia, anyway?" Bunter sniffed. "I told him I couldn't possibly give him an answer until I'd talked to you lot. I mean I need to know what to pack. Evening wear for Wharton Lodge---the old fossil---I mean your uncle---is such a stickler for old-fashioned formality. Or is it to be cords and Barbor stuff at Moor Fells, Bull? If it's Cherry Place I don't suppose it matters much---Yow! Gerroff you beasts! Wow-w-w---"

Five pairs of boots were trying to score hits on whatever portion of Bunter's fat anatomy was nearest. They propelled him out into the Remove passage and along to the stairhead. Study doors opened and grinning faces looked out. Smithy

obligingly thrust out a foot and Bunter skidded onto his rear, to make an unorthodox descent of the stairs. Trotter the pageboy, unfortunately, was trying to ascend those stairs and went flying before the whirlwind impact of Bunter.

"Master Wharton," gasped Trotter, chasing his breath. "You---you're wanted---in---Mr. Quelch---his study."

Laughter ebbed from Wharton's face. Now what? He hastened to obey the summons, straightening his tie as he went. The visage of Mr. Quelch was not so much grim as suspicious. He gestered: "You are wanted on the telephone, Wharton. You may take the call in here."

"Thank you sir." Were his aunt and uncle all right? Had their dreaded relative, Aunt Margaret, changed her mind about inviting herself to Wharton Lodge for Christmas? Aunt Margaret left blight in her trail wherever she went. He picked up the receiver.

"Is that Harry Horton---I mean Wharton?"

"Miss Coker! Yes. How are you?"

"Very well, thank you," Aunt Judy responded crisply. "Now tell me, have you made any special plans for Christmas?"

"Not yet," Wharton said slowly. "We're still discussing plans."

"Good. You see, I'm having a house party at The Moat House and I do want to have some young people there. I know dear Horace won't want to be the only youngster among a lot of old grown-ups, and I'm hoping to have a children's party as well. You see," a note of sadness crept into her voice, "I know so few young people."

So this was the help she had mentioned that day at Courtfield just before Ponsonby had so rudely interrupted the pleasant little gathering at the tea gardens. Harry hesitated. "That's very kind of you ma'am, but won't Horace have his own ideas about this?"

"Oh I know he is senior to you and your young friends but you'll all be away from school and its unwritten conventions. Besides," again a note of uncertainty came into her voice, "there are one or two matters causing me a bit of concern but they can be explained later. So think it over, dear boy, and let me know. And of course the invitation includes your friends, and that charming boy who seemed so worldly wise--- I'm trying to remember his name. Oh dear," there was a sigh of impatience at the other end of the line, "my new system for remembering names isn't working very well. I can only think of blacksmith!"

"You mean Smithy!" Wharton chuckled. "Vernon-Smith."

"That's it." Aunt Judy seemed quite prepared to rattle on enthusiastically about The Moat House, the alterations which, she hoped, would all be completed in time. The west wing was almost done, central heating was being installed throughout, six new bathrooms and several rooms en suite, and there was a wonderful old ballroom, but the moat was in a shocking state. She was having some cards done with the address and phone numbers and she'd send one and would Harry let her know how many friends he'd be bringing.

At last she rang off, perhaps hearing the occasional harrumph of Mr. Quelch, who was amending yet another passage in his manuscript of the history of Greyfriars. The gimlet eyes turned to his head boy as Wharton replaced the receiver and murmured a polite thank-you to his form master.

"I trust you have not been annoying Miss Coker in any way," Mr. Quelch said suspiciously.

"Oh no, sir," Wharton exclaimed.

"Good." But Quelch did not seem quite satisfied. "I could not help overhearing the name of Vernon-Smith mentioned."

"He was with us that day in Courtfield, sir." Harry kept his voice even. "He was very polite and Miss Coker was simply asking after him, sir." Harry stopped, unwilling to divulge the content of Aunt Judy's conversation, even to his formmaster, and that gentleman's curiosity--if curiosity it were--perforce remained unsatisfied.

But no such reserve inhibited Wharton when he hared back to the study to impart his news. After the surprise abated it was agreed that this unexpected invitation solved the problem of a Christmas that had seemed in danger of falling apart owing to various setbacks at parental homes. There was also the intriguing hint of a possible mystery involved.

"Wonder what's worrying the old dear," said Nugent, who was still regretting missing all the fun of that Courtfield afternoon. "Didn't she give you any hint of it?"

Harry shook his head. "Mind, we must keep it dark

from Bunter."

"What about Coker?"

Harry shrugged. "No doubt he'll find out in his good time. So why tempt providence before it's necessary?"

Bob chortled. "Come on--let's tell Charming Smithy! She doesn't know him like we do."

They trooped along to Study No. 4.

"You're having me on," said the suspicious Bounder.

"We're not!"

"Well what are you all smirking at?" Smithy did not seem to be in a sunny mood.

"Isn't he a charming fellow?" said the irrepressible Bob, and the Famous Five began to fall about, causing Tom Redwing to stare in puzzlement and the Bounder's face to darken with rising temper.

"You silly asses!" he hooted. "What is all--?"

"Here they are, these cheeky fags." The study door crashing back drowned Smithy's voice. Coker stood framed there, his rugged features one large scowl. His two henchmen, Potter and Greene, framed him in the doorway. "What's the meaning of it?" roared Coker.

"The meaning of what?" chorused the Famous Five. "In trouble with your homework, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has the school gone mad?" snarled the Bounder. "Get out of my study, Coker, and take your minders with you."

Coker put out a beefy arm to shove the



Bounder aside. "If you lot think I'm going to stand for a mob of fags at Christmas, pestering Aunt Judy, you're mistaken. I won't stand for--- Urrgh---!! I'll---gug-ow-w-w---"

"That's right! You're not going to stand!" Smithy and the Famous Five leapt as one man on Coker and up-ended him with a thump on Smithy's expensive study carpet. Redwing and Potter and Greene piled in to the accompaniment of yells and thuds.

Three hefty Fifth Formers were a handful but seven Remove juniors were equal to the task, while the hearts of Potter and Greene were not really into gladiatorship, well aware that they were on enemy territory and that reinforcements of Remove warriors were likely to arrive on the scene at any moment. Sure enough, voices and feet sounded in the passage and Bunter's grinning features appeared at the door.

"I say," he snickered. "Quelchy and old Pompous are coming up the stairs."

"I'm sure Coker wants to see his beloved form master," yelled Smithy. "One! Two! Three!" Coker landed on all fours in the Remove passage. Potter and Greene were not waiting for exit assistance and were trying to appear as mere wayfarers.

"And you, too, Bunter!" Smithy's foot shot out and with a wild yell Bunter landed on the hapless Coker. Familiar tones of authority could be heard above the melee and Remove study doors began to close rapidly, discretion being infinitely preferable to valour, and Smithy slammed Study No. 4 shut. Silence reigned outside and fell on the dishevelled study and its equally dishevelled occupants. No-one uttered a sound that could be construed as an invitation to authoritative investigation. At last Bob chuckled.

"Methinks we have just seen the ghost of Christmas future! Still feel like accepting Aunt Judy's kind invitation?"

"Anybody's who's afraid of Coker can back out," granted Johnny Bull, "but I'm not."

"Nor me," said Nugent.

"So you weren't kidding," exclaimed Smithy.

"No." Harry shook his head and for the Bounder's benefit recounted the gist of Aunt Judy's telephone conversation, tactfully omitting however, a certain adjective likely to be seized

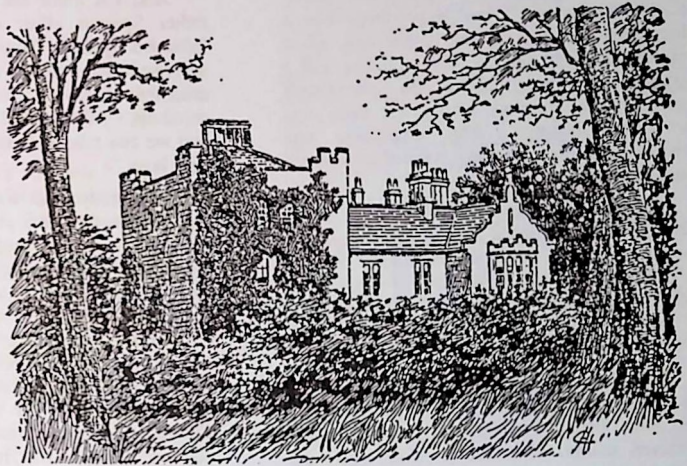
on joyfully by Bob Cherry. "So, are you in with us?"

"I wouldn't miss it for the world. Count me in," said the Bounder.

Chapter 4

"We must be nearly there now."

Aunt Judy's directions had been quite clear. The Moat House stood on the outskirts of a picturesque little village called Maybrook, which was three miles from Dellbridge, the nearest town, where the five cheery juniors had decanted from the train and piled into a taxi. Now they peered eagerly into the gathering dusk of the December afternoon, seeking a glimpse of their destination.



"There it is!" cried Nugent as the taxi swung off the road onto a broad curving drive. Woodland was set beyond wide verges and already lights sparkled against a deepening blue sky. The house was enormous, turreted at all four corners, heavily clad in ivy almost to its roof, and girded by the source of its name, the moat.

"Just look at that drawbridge," exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It's wide enough to drive a coach and horses across."

"And look at the floodlighting---Aunt Judy's gone to town on lighting," observed Smithy.

That redoubtable lady most certainly had. Festoons of lights were looped from tree to tree in the surrounding shrubberies, and concealed floodlighting at ground level illuminated the façade of this quite spectacular old house. The taxi stopped just short of the drawbridge, somewhat to the disappointment of the boys. The taxi driver, a cheerful, middle-aged man shook his head. "There's no inner courtyard there. Drawbridge was just a showpiece by a London business gent, turn of the last century, who fancied himself the country squire. Lot of folks

added and subtracted to that old heap down the years, till it was left to rack and ruin after the war. Thank you, young sir," this to the Bounder who settled the fare and added a generous tip.

For that the Bounder got his two cases carried across the drawbridge to the big double entrance. The doors swung open before the boys touched the old bell-pull of the clanger variety and at all imposing butler stood there. Then Miss Coker appeared and held out welcoming hands.

"Come in, dear boys!" For a moment they thought she was about to embrace them but she said, "Thank you, Stevens. Some tea now, I think and ask Ellis to take the boys' luggage up to their rooms." She led the way across the hall, which was high, panelled to shoulder height below a series of dark oil paintings, nineteenth century vintage in heavy carved and gilded frames. There were flowers on polished tables, a fire burning at the far end of the hall, silver candlesticks held tall flickering candles and a great mirror hung above the mantelshef reflecting the spacious setting, yet there was something missing. The atmosphere was cheerless, almost foreboding; it failed to welcome incomers.

Harry tried to analyse something for which there seemed no logical reason. He was almost inclined to shiver, which was ridiculous. He was a courageous, strong-minded boy so why was he suddenly prone to this sense of oppression? Could this be what was worrying Miss Coker. Was the house haunted?

But there was nothing sinister or eerie about the light, cosy sitting room into which Aunt Judy led them. Becky, a young maid, brought tea and buttered scones on a trolley. She was Aunt Judy's personal maid, brought from Hollywood House, the Coker home, along with the butler, chauffeur, a cook and a housekeeper. Again aware of a sense of desolation, Harry said: "Arc Coker---I mean Horace---and his people here yet?"

"No. Dear Horace and young Reginald have gone to Coker Lodge to join their parents. They'll be arriving here some time tomorrow, and James and Henry will be here tomorrow afternoon." Aunt Judy refilled their cups and lapsed into silence. Presently she said, "I believe Horace's two special friends will be joining us tomorrow. I do hope you all don't find this place too quiet and dull."

"Oh no!" the chums assured her. "Perhaps we can help with holly and stuff, the tree---if you are going have decorations."

She brightened. "Yes, that would be fun. I have ordered a tree and we should be able to find holly in the grounds. Now," she touched a bell by the fireside, "you'll want to unpack and settle in. Becky will show you your rooms, and we eat at seven. If there is anything you want don't be afraid to ask."

They thanked her politely and followed the quiet maid up to the first floor rooms allotted to them, and having sorted out their unpacking gathered by tacit agreement in Wharton's room.

"Something is worrying her," said Bob.

"Yes," Harry said, "and did you sense a sort of---of chill in the atmosphere?"

"Probably because the house has had a lot of building work going on, and it's been empty for yonks," said Johnny Bull, ever the down-to-earth one of the chums.

Smithy shook his head. "No, the heating system seems to be functioning okay. It's something else." He glanced at his watch. "Shall we spruce up for dinner? And perhaps Miss Coker will tell us what's worrying her."

And tell them she did. After the meal, a rather Spartan affair of salad and cold ham followed by fresh fruit and coffee, which rather surprised them, though none of them would have dreamed of saying so. Abruptly Miss Coker stood up. "I think we'll finish coffee in my study and we can talk without interruption. This way, dear boys."

The study was warm and as comfortably furnished as the other parts of the house they had seen so far. As they settled themselves by the fire their hostess said ruefully: "I must apologise for the uninspiring meal tonight but there was a reason for it." Her mouth tightened angrily. "Someone disconnected the big freezer some time during the past twenty-four hours and ruined all our stores. Not content with that they stole the chickens intended for tonight's meal, and the Christmas puddings, mincemeat and a large cake that we brought over from Holly House. Not content with that," her voice rose with indignation, "whoever it was poured away all our fresh milk and cream. If they hadn't missed the ham we'd have had to go and eat out somewhere. It's so senseless."

"And cruel," said Frank Nugent, expressing the shock of them all.

"Any idea who might be responsible?" asked Smithy.

"None of my staff, they've been with me for years."

"But you obviously have a lot of builders' workmen around the place," said the Bounder. "Any of them have keys?"

"No---except for Mr. Hardring and his foreman, a rather sly looking man, Pill Bowing---no! that's not right." Aunt Judy screwed her eyes shut in an effort to remember then opened them triumphantly. "Mr. Bill Bowen."

"Sure his name isn't Bunter?" asked Smithy dryly.

Harry shot him a sharp glance, and Aunt Judy looked puzzled.

"Bunter in the Remove. He has a habit of raiding our studies for eatables," said Bob.

"That's the understatement of the century," retorted Smithy. "Who is Hardring?"

"The builder's manager." Aunt Judy sighed. "But there have been other worrying things, setbacks and things going wrong. Faults in wiring, fixtures not fitted correctly, a consignment of paint in an atrocious colour, yet the paint firm swore that it was what we ordered."

"But this happens all the time today," said Johnny Bull. "My father says it takes at least three tries to get anything done properly."

"You need a new builder and a new team," said Smithy, "and a watertight contract that sues them if the work isn't done on time and properly."

"I know," sighed Aunt Judy, "but they always have an excuse. And then there's Major Simple---no, Simpkins---our nearest neighbour, who has put in an objection to Charlie's plans for having deprived children here."

"One of the NIMBY brigade," said Bob disgustedly. Seeing Aunt Judy's puzzled look he said, "The Not In My Back Yard protesters."

Aunt Judy got up and went to her desk. From it she took two papers. She held them out to Harry. "This is the worst of all. Read them, they're not private."

Harry separated the two crackling letters, each with a formal impressive heading. He read them and looked at Aunt Judy then at the intent faces of the chums. He said slowly: "The first one is from the council social services and says that you can't provide safe accommodation for young children in a premise enclosed by a deep moat. It must be filled in. The other letter---

"But I understood that Charlie had cleared all that. The moat was to be fenced securely. All the plans for the whole restoration were passed. According to Ms Ryan Charlie was an expert."

"And now the council says the moat must be filled in, or the whole scheme's off," said Harry.

"Now read the second letter," said Aunt Judy.

Harry obeyed. "It's from English Heritage. The Moat House is a grade II listed building. The moat must not be filled in."

"Deadlock," said Smithy grimly.

"There must be a way." Harry frowned. "Do your brothers have any ideas?"

A hint of belligerence tightened Aunt Judy's expression. "They think I should give up the whole idea, let the estate revert to the charity, who are better placed to deal with bureaucracy than I am. And the whole scheme is going to cost so much it'll swallow up every penny and probably my own money as well."

This statement held no surprise for the boys. They knew that it had special personal significance for her and was dear to her heart. It was also going to give her a tremendous new interest in life. Harry said, "If there is anything we can do to help, we will. And we'll try to find out how to appeal against these decisions."

"And we'll find the blighter who's causing all this trouble," cried Smithy. "It sounds like a vendetta, but if we get our hands on him he'll be sorry he ever set foot in the Moat House."

"You dear boys." Aunt Judy sounded tremulous "I knew you would understand and try to help. I've always had faith in you since the time when you saved my darling Horace from expulsion."

Harry coloured. He could never tell her that it was not affection for her darling idiot that had caused him to track down the real culprit but simply a wish for justice to be done. But he did feel a wish to put a comforting arm round this eccentric lady who had long been the butt of much laughter and tell her to try not to worry. Sadly, he knew he dare not take this liberty.

Smithy, however, had no such inhibition. He jumped up, put a quick sympathetic arm round her shoulders, and said: "Don't move. Cheer up, ma'am. I'll be back in a moment."

The chums cast puzzled glances at one another, Aunt Judy looked a little bewildered, then Smithy reappeared at the door, carrying an oddly shaped package in scarlet and gold Christmas wrapping paper. Solemnly he crossed the study and laid the package on Aunt Judy's lap. "This is part of your Christmas present. I know it's five days too soon but I think this is the right time to open it."

She stared at him, then at the packet, and whispered, "Nobody ever gives me surprise gifts at Christmas, only tokens, which aren't so exciting. Although Horace always gives me chocolates." She was carefully undoing the ribbon and unwinding the paper, to reveal the latest in fashion umbrellas. Scarlet, with an onyx handle, gold trim and tasselled loop, tipped off with a shiny spike to strike fear into any pompous school master.

Harry began to laugh. Only the Bounder could have thought of this. A new umbrella for the newly transformed Aunt Judy. For moments she was speechless, then stood up, and heedless of superstition, opened the gamp to its full and striking extent and twirled it exuberantly. She began to laugh and Smithy said, "I thought you might need a new weapon."

"You dear boy," she cried. "Thank you so much. We'll have to fight the battle now." Ginger wine was sought and glasses filled to toast the new umbrella while laughter echoed in that strange old house. Harry suddenly realised that Aunt Judy had never had so much simple fun in

her whole life. It seemed a sad thought.

Chapter 5

No sounds of untoward nocturnal activity disturbed the boys' sleep that night and an appetising aroma of bacon and egg and sausage and mushrooms led them downstairs by their noses shortly after eight. Aunt Judy looked briefly into the dining room to wish them good morning. She looked quite cheerful and told them Ms Ryan was calling to discuss some business matters and did the dear boys mind amusing themselves until lunch time. They asked permission to explore, which was freely given. "Anywhere, dear boys. Indoors or out," and decided to go in search of holly and greenery.

The morning was fine, sunny and crisp, ideal for a bracing tramp round the estate. Close to the house were many traces of what had once been formal gardens, a long since overgrown tennis court, and greenhouses minus their glass, then kitchen gardens in which rampant fruit canes and bushes still struggled to survive. Restorations of all this would come in the spring, once the more essential work in the house was completed. Striking off into the woodland the boys soon found holly and evergreens easily accessible and Johnny Bull spotted a rare growth of mistletoe, a plant now very scarce, swathed round a reluctant host, an ancient apple tree. They came to a gully and a small winding stream which they followed, trying to remember their route so that they could gather the holly on their return. Some distance along the stream they reached a narrow plank bridge, which they crossed, only to be brought up short by an angry cry. There was the threshing of a stick against undergrowth, the growl of a large Alsatian rushing towards them, and a tall angular man of ill-tempered visage.

"You're trespassing!" he thundered. "Get off my land."

"I'm sorry, sir," Wharton said politely. "We thought we were in The Moat House grounds."

Oh, that's where you're from." The man scowled. "Haven't you the sense to realise that streams usually mark boundaries, as do fences."

"We've seen no fences." The Bounder spoke up coolly. "And why have a bridge across this stream if you don't want people to cross it?"

The unpleasant man eyed Smithy with disfavour. "It's never been necessary," he snapped, "until that fool woman turned up with all her barmy ideas that'll spoil this select rural area. She--"

"Just a minute," interrupted Wharton. "Are you referring to Miss Coker?"

"Yes, I am!"

"Well I suggest you do so politely," Wharton said icily. "She is our hostess and a real lady, as well as a public-spirited one."

"Why--you insolent cub!" The implication was not lost on the man. He raised his stick threateningly and instantly Bob and Smithy stepped forward. Then Johnny, who had moved away a short distance, came back. He pointed a patch of woodland nearby.

"Sir," he said, lapsing back into a gruff Yorkshire accent, "do you know what you've got there?"

The man stared. "Just wild stuff. This area isn't cultivated."

"You mean you really don't know?"

The boys stared, wondering what Johnny was getting at. So did the man. "I'm not growing cannabis--hemp--whatever you call it."

"You've got a very dangerous plant there."

"What? Nonsense."

"That is a Giant Hogweed," said Johnny. "It's a public health hazard."

The man's jaw dropped. "Not on my land," he blustered.

"That plant grows to ten or fifteen feet high. It causes photodermatitis, burns, blisters and sensitises the skin to ultra-violet light so that exposure to sun after contact causes secondary burns and enormous blisters." Johnny was beginning to enjoy himself. "We once got a patch on our farm in Yorkshire. It's the devil to get rid of. You need protective clothing and glyphosate to kill it. Unfortunately, one plant can produce up to fifty thousand seed a year. Kids are attracted to it because its flowers are attractive and the thick hollow stems make great peashooters. But the poisonous sap gets on their face and eyes." Johnny's mouth turned down at the corners. "Very dangerous. And the seeds spread by wind, are carried on vehicle tyres. You've probably trod them all over your garden on your boots."

There was an appalled silence. Then Johnny added. "You've got a terrible job ahead of you, sir, and the health people are not going to like it if they get to hear about it."

The Bounder shook his head. "Miss Coker isn't going to be very happy when we tell her what is going to invade her property if you don't get it eradicated immediately."

"I--I'll have to take advice about this." The man was visibly deflating by the minute. "Look, I didn't mean to be too rough on you. We--we've had a couple of cases of young hooligans--not that I mean--"

"We understand, sir," said Harry coolly. "Glad we were able to warn you about that. Save you a lot of trouble later on if that patch spreads." Harry turned to his chums. "Better dip your boots in the stream, Johnny. Don't want to risk taking any seed back on Miss Coker's land. Goodbye, Major--it is Major Simpkins, isn't it?"

The man nodded and the chums retraced their steps. Out of possible earshot and cheerily gathering holly and evergreens, the chums were highly pleased.

"I think that has settled his hash," said the Bouncer. "All Aunt Judy needs to say is 'Giant Hogweed,' if she hears another word out of that bully. Glad you remembered all that, Bull, old chap."

They emerged from the woodland and crossed the lawn. "Oi oi!" exclaimed Bob as a familiar voice smote their ears. "What's going on?"

"It's dear old Coker going on," chuckled Nugent. "He's arrived! 'Now what's he up to?'"

It wasn't a case of what Coker was up to; it was more a case of what Coker was almost down to. Coker appeared to be fishing in the moat, precariously balanced on the extreme edge of the bank and clinging onto Aunt Judy's hand. Three tall men and a plump lady watched anxiously from the drawbridge. The chums ran, and Harry gasped. "It's the Christmas tree. It's fallen into the moat." Coker recovered his balance and stepped to safety, to turn and glare accusingly at the chums. "Did you lot push this tree into the moat?" he shouted.

"Of course they didn't, Horace dear." Aunt Judy turned to the boys. "It arrived last night and was left propped against that parapet over there. But someone has rolled it into the moat. Probably after dark. Did you notice it this morning, dear boys?"

Harry shook his head. "We went round the house the other way. But we'll get it out. Don't worry, Miss Coker."

After a brief enquiry as to where the workmen's gear could be found the chums raced indoors and through to the east wing, where restoration was still in progress. A thin dark man, sallow of skin and not particularly pleasant around the eyes, looked at them. "Yes?" he said in surly tones.

"We want a rope, quickly," said Wharton.

Unwillingly the man rummaged amid assorted building tools and gear and produced a length of sturdy thickness. "Thanks," said Harry and turned to leave, but noticing what looked like a camp bed in one corner almost covered in an untidy sprawl of dust sheets. A bulging haversack stood nearby. At the door Harry passed a second man, more smartly dressed, carrying a clipboard. He nodded, not unpleasantly, and the boys hurried back to begin the tree rescue operation.

Naturally, Coker wanted to take charge. The chums thought otherwise, being able to envisage the chaos likely to ensue. During the argument a car arrived to disgorge Potter and Greene and their luggage. This occupied Coker long enough for the boys to link Harry and Bob by rope and enable them to edge down the bank in reasonable

safety to stretch out towards the base of the large tree.

"No---this way!" Coker was back. Grabbing the other end of the rope, and having grasped the basic idea of safety, he wound it round himself and advanced towards the moat. Unfortunately he had managed to entangle the rope around Smithy and Johnny Bull. Caught in a sort of sandwich, they yelled at Coker and tried to free themselves before the entire rescue team landed into the moat. Coker was yelling directions as he tried to grab the tree. Unfortunately he seized the thin topmost branch of it. Not being a helpful tree it protested at being dragged the wrong way by Coker at one end and the boys at the other.

"Let go, Coker!" yelled Bob. "We've got it!" As he spoke the tree swung in under their grasp and they hauled it up the bank. Coker being Coker, however, had no intention of being ordered about by a bunch of Remove fags. He tightened his grip on the top of the tree at the same moment as Smithy and Johnny's struggle to disentangle themselves while hanging on to the bodies at each end succeeded. The tree won; Coker lost and went headlong into the moat with a frightful splash.

Aunt Judy gave a small scream and covered her face with her hands. Harry and Bob landed the tree on the lawn like a giant green fish, and Smithy and Johnny plunged into the moat and caught the frantically struggling Coker.

"Uurrgh! Groo-o! Let go you idiots," he spluttered. "You're drowning me!"

"You're drowning yourself," gasped Smithy. "Don't struggle or I'll sock you."

Harry and Bob were reaching out helping hands as Coker was towed to the bank and hauled out. He stood there dripping and spluttering with rage. Coker did not seem in the least bit grateful. But Aunt Judy was now in her element.

"My dear boys---into the house instantly. Hot baths and hot drinks before you all get pneumonia. Horace dear, don't be so cross! You wouldn't have got out up that steep bank if these dear boys hadn't helped you. Now come along, do."

In all the ado the assembly had not heard a second car approach and another visitor emerge. Then a fat "Te-he-he," cackled forth.

"I say---are you chaps having your annual Christmas bath?"

"Oh, no!" they groaned through the drips. "Bunter!"

Chapter 6

By the time the chums had bathed and donned dry clothes and been fussed over with hot drinks by Aunt Judy they felt fine, except for the aggrieved Coker, but it was too late to do anything about Bunter.

"How dare you silly fags invite him?" demanded Coker.

"We didn't," they retorted. "You did---when you kicked up that racket in Smithy's study. Bunter overheard it all. And Bunter can leave Sherlock Holmes standing when it comes to detecting the place for a free Christmas billet with unlimited grub."

Also, Bunter with his flair for putting on an act at the right time, had pressed a bouquet of flowers on Aunt Judy and turned on his best efforts at being a courtly gentleman.

This did not last long. After lunch he annexed the best seat by the fire, completely unaffected by the cold regard of the three senior Cokers; Horace's father, Uncle Henry Coker and Uncle James Coker. But Aunt Judy was happy. Ms Ryan's visit had been satisfactory in that the young solicitor assured her client that they would appeal against the ruling of the council and English Heritage. She was certain that the moat problem could be solved by partially filling it to render it very shallow and by fencing it securely.

The tale of the Major and Giant Hogweed was recounted and brought further smiles of hope to Aunt Judy's face, and the five chums relaxed as they lent hands with a session of Christmas adornment of The Moat House. The senior Cokers had been prevailed upon to ransack the attics at Hollywood House for long disused decorations. There were three large cartons to sort out. Some of the contents were useless or too dusty to decorate anything but a dustbin but quite a few were still bright and cheerful and soon the old house took on quite a festive appearance. Coker gave the orders, got tangled up a couple of times, and Bunter, jaws getting into practice for the coming feasting, watched and added his twopennorth of advice. The party retired to bed in cheerful mood, but not for long. If they'd hoped for peaceful slumbers as during the previous night they were disappointed.

At exactly two a.m. a wild shriek split the silence. Most of the occupants of the Moat House shot up in bed clutching bedclothes in terror. A few stirred uneasily and one or two snored on---until the shrieks were repeated. Wharton sat up, heart sinking back into dismay; Bunter!

The chums emerged into the corridor, adults appeared in hastily donned dressing gowns, and Aunt Judy rushed along from her room, the first words on her lips: was darling Horace all right? Then Uncle Henry gave a cry.

"My feet are wet!"

It was true. Water was seeping under one door; Bunter's door.

They rushed in, to meet a wave of water and see a large huddled lump under the duvet surrounded by what looked like snow and ice. But it wasn't; a portion of newly plastered ceiling

had fallen and between the exposed laths water flowed down in a steady stream.

There was no more sleep that night. The flood was traced to the second floor bedroom, still undecorated, above Bunter's room. A washbasin had been fitted but the plug had been firmly inserted and the cold tap turned on at half pressure.

"None of you fags were fooling about yesterday, were you?" asked Coker, and the chums had to muster very tight control to stop themselves from dealing with Coker in the most suitable way.

Bunter was given another room, a hot drink and a snack, this being the post practical method of keeping the fat owl out of their hair before the party endeavoured to mop up and stem further damage as much as possible.

"Deliberate carelessness," pronounced Uncle Henry to a sleepy-eyed company at breakfast. "I shall speak to that builder, Judith, and perhaps you'll no see sense and give up this harebrained scheme."

"Yes, think of the money that is being poured down the drain," agreed Uncle James. "See sense, Judith. Why don't we all pack up and return to Holly?"

"No!" Aunt Judy's moth set obstinately. "No way! But you can go back if you wish. I'm sure the dear boys will stay on and keep me company---in case anything else happens."

The family argument simmered on and the chums tactfully slipped away as soon as they could. "Let's go down to the village and see if we can get a bus or taxi into Dellbridge," said Harry. "We need to do a bit more Christmas shopping and I think we should have a serious discussion about sorting out Aunt Judy's problems. Her family aren't much help."

"We agree." Pausing only to whisper a brief message to aunt Judy that they were going shopping and wouldn't be back for lunch, the boys set forth.

"At least darling Horace won't be able to blame us if lunch goes wrong," chuckled Bob Cherry as they explored the possibilities of Dellbridge, a small, busy market town with a compact shopping centre. They found a florists who delivered and clubbed together for a really super Christmas bouquet to be sent to Aunt Judy. There were several gifts still to be chosen, and cards to be hand delivered to the family at The Moat House. Finally they scratched their heads over a suitable gift for Coker. Smithy suggested a new Teach Yourself Latin, and Bob thought a book entitled How To Win Friends and Admirations might be just the ticket. Tact prevailed, and as Coker liked goodies as much as any schoolboy a large selection box along with a book token was chosen. They were all laden by the time Harry suggested lunch and they

wandered down the High street in search of a café not packed to the doors with shoppers and blaring music over a babble of chatter. Finally, down a street of quiet business premises they discovered the kind of secluded restaurant favoured by business people. At a corner table they gave their order and Harry leaned back.

"Do you agree that all this hassle is definitely sabotage?"

"Looks like it," said Smithy. "Somebody wants Aunt Judy out of that house."

Harry nodded. "We don't know why, but we've got three days to try to stop the rot. So I vote we keep watch tonight."

"Another sleepless night," groaned Bob. "It could be cowboy builders, you know."

"Maybe." Harry drew a folded paper from his pocket. "While obeying Lord Coker's orders last night to fetch him a step-ladder I took the opportunity to have a quick look round where they have all their gear and someone has been or is camping out in there. I found this blank invoice with the firm's name on," Harry passed the paper to Bob, "and I also had a riddle through the phone book last night. They are not listed so they're not local, which is a bit odd. Anyway, I thought a watch might be in order tonight."

"It's a vast area to cover," said Smithy.

"How about having a word with Stevens, the butler? I think he would help," suggested Nugent. "He seems to be--"

"Just a minute," interrupted Smithy. "Look over there."

Two men and a young woman were paying their bill at the cash desk. As they turned to leave the boys saw their faces. "It's that bloke with the clipboard who seems to be in charge at the house," exclaimed Harry. "I wonder who the others are."

"Hang on, and wait for me." Smithy stood up and slipped quietly out after the trio. He waited until they crossed the road and entered a big redbrick Victorian building. Smithy sidled after them, read the notice board until they shouldered through some swing doors. He followed, stopped to make an enquiry, and then hurried back to the chums. "Guess what?" he slid into his seat and looked smug. "That is the Town Council building. They went into the planning department, where I asked if that was Mr. Bakewell, the chief planning officer who'd just gone in, was told it was, then I scarpiped. Well?" Smithy demanded. "Aren't you suspicious?"

"Could be about any planning job."

"But do they treat the chief planner to meals?" "Smithy tugged his lip. "I've had an idea. I'm going to phone my father and see if he can find anything out about Charlson's building contacts, or anything, and if he can trace those builders. Hang on." Smithy pulled his mobile

phone out of his pocket and huddled farther into the corner as he dialled.

"Mind you don't get too many brainwaves from that thing," said Johnny.

There was quite a long exchange before Smithy rang off. "Dad's quite interested. He's going to do a bit of snooping. He'll ring back soon as he has any info."

The chums had to admit that having Smithy on their side could be very welcome at times like this. They hiked back to the Moat House to find Coker in charge of the tree. It had dried out after its untimely dip and was now set in its big tub. Coker was doing the lights and did not wish for any advice. By dinner time several strings of amber and blue and pink lamps glowed softly in drunken swags about the tree. A fairy who also looked in a most unfairlylike state of inebriation tottered unsteadily on the top branch. Coker added liberal lengths of tinsel and the contents of a large box of crackers, most of which instantly slid off. The Coker got a tree needle stuck in his wrist. He groaned about this, yanked off his new expensive watch and dropped it carelessly on a side table while the minute puncture on his wrist was dabbed with antiseptic. As there was little that could eclipse Coker's evening performance the party went in to the dining room and, replete, decided an early night to recover the previous night's lost sleep was indicated.

When the house was quiet the chums, guided by Stevens, trooped to their various posts. Night watches, especially in old dark houses that creak with a secret life of their own, are long, and Wharton, in a shadowed nook near the door to the east wing felt his eyelids droop. He was cramped, on a small stool, and he wondered if he dare emerge and stretch his legs. He resisted the temptation in case he bumped into something in the darkened hall and made a clatter. Suddenly he heard rustling sounds and jerked awake, unaware that he had actually slept for almost an hour. The creaks sounded again, from the stairs this time, and Wharton tensed. Then he sensed movement very close to him and instinctively he fumbled for his torch. But it had rolled away on the floor. The next few moments were so fast they blurred as he strained to see movement so near and clutched at a shadowy figure. It gasped and twisted away and Harry dived after it, only to feel himself seized violently from behind. Desperately he struck out, wrestling for his freedom, and a stentorian voice cried: "I've got you!"

"Coker!" A great gasp escaped Harry. "Let go of me, you idiot. There's someone through there---getting away."

"What are you up to? Creeping around," demanded Coker. "There's nobody here."

Wharton broke away and darted through the door to the east wing. Coker blundered after him. The light switch failed to respond to

Harry's seeking fingers but his eyes were accustomed to the gloom now and just in time he shouted a warning to Coker as a figure rushed violently towards him, arm upraised. Harry dodged and tried to trip the intruder, who collided with Coker. The pair staggered, crashed into a stack of crates, and set off a chain reaction of falling objects.

There was a gasp of pain, a groaned plea to "Geroff you---" and a frantic gurgling noise that sent Harry groping to the rescue of Coker. A kicking leg found his shin and his hands grasped a frightening stickiness. Then light flooded the room.

Stevens stood at the door and gaped.

The intruder was the thin, surly youth. He lay gasping on the floor under the considerable weight of Coker, who was sitting on the youth's chest. Both were smothered in white paint from the upturned bucket nearby. Paint was being far too affectionate for Coker's liking. It clung lovingly to his spiky hair and trickled caressingly down his cheeks and his neck. It bestowed a few sashes on the youth, paying special attention to his eyes and nose, just to show there was no discrimination about its favours. Coker was smothered; the floor was awash, and quite a bit had transferred itself to Wharton.

"Oh, Master Coker!" sighed Stevens. "It's only emulsion, though, it'll wash off."

"Groogh!" spluttered Coker.

By now the house was waking up. The crowd at the door increased and Smithy's mirth could be heard clearly, distinct from Bob Cherry's chortles. Suddenly Wharton bent down and seized the youth's arm. "Look, Coker---is that your watch?"

Coker gurgled and blinked, then roared: "Yes it is! Why you thieving rotter! I took it off and put it down somewhere."

"You left it on the hall table, I saw you," Harry confirmed. He stared coldly at the youth. "Are you responsible for all the damage in this house?"

Smithy advanced into the room, carefully avoiding the paint. "It's time for the truth," he snapped. "You were going to pinch that watch, and what else. I think the police should be called."

"No---no!" the youth protested, "I was going to give it back."

"Wearing it? Try again." Smithy's voice was hard.

The fight seemed to be going out of the youth. A whining note came into his voice. "It wasn't my fault. I---I was paid to cause trouble."

"Paid?" grated the Bounder. "Who by?"

"My boss. And his boss. I---I only know it's because she---the new owner---has no right to be

here, and---"

"HORACE!" There was a scream from the doorway. Aunt Judy stood there transfixed with shock as she saw the state of her beloved nephew. "What's happening?"

They told her and suddenly sanity began to take over. Cleaning operations were the first essentials for Coker, Harry, and the youth. Stevens took charge of this, hot drinks were brought, spare clothes were found for the youth, who was given a room and locked in until the morning, which wasn't so far away now, and the inquests would start in the cold light of day, possibly with calling the police.

But there was little more that the youth could tell them when morning came and they gathered in the sitting room to try to piece together the reason behind this mystery. The youth was frightened now, even when told they might forget about his part in the vicious damage to Miss Coker's home. He could only give them the name of his boss, the man with the clipboard, which they already knew, and the name of his boss, which they already knew from the invoice Harry had found. There was no sign that morning of the clipboard man and it seemed they were no further forward, except that there would be no more vandalism. Then Smithy's phone rang.

A grin of sheer satisfaction spread over his face. "My father is on his way here. He's got news for us---or rather for Aunt Judy." His grin faded. "Sorry, ma'am---Miss Coker."

"Dear boy. Do call me Aunt Judy. You've all done so much to help. I'd like to be Aunt Judy to you all."

"Aunty!" protested Horace, and was interrupted by a yell from Smithy. His father's Rolls had arrived.

Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith exuded all the power his son was undoubtedly developing. Plied with whisky and a cigar by the senior Cokers, he opened his briefcase and hauled out a sheaf of papers. These are photocopies," he said briskly, "but the originals are available. Now, Miss Coker, I don't know how much investigation your solicitor has done into Charlson's case, or how much she has divulged. But Charlson had one close relative, a cousin, now of course an elderly man with a grown-up family." Mr. Vernon-Smith shrugged. "It's the same old story, I'm afraid. Money always brings relatives out of the woodwork. He never saw his cousin, whom he apparently didn't get on with as a boy, but when the news of his death and his will reached them they lodged an appeal. They didn't see why a stranger or a charity should get the lot. But they didn't have a leg to stand on, Charlie had his will sewn up too tightly for that, and the appeal was refused. Also, the cousin's birth certificate had been destroyed during the war. Charlie's lawyer said the cousin, whose name,

inconveniently, was Smith, could not be positively identified as the John Smith who was his cousin."

"I didn't know about the appeal," said Aunt Judy.

"Well," Mr. Vernon-Smith pursed his mouth, "it was over a year ago. You hadn't even been traced. Your young woman at Thompsons is new, only a very junior partner, and she probably concluded that as it was all over and settled she wouldn't worry you about it. So this unpleasant business has been pure spite. If they couldn't have the spoils they didn't see why you should."

"But what about these builders?" asked Smithy.

"Oh, I checked. They're cowboys." Smithy's father waved a dismissive hand. "They got in on a sub contract after Charlie's main builders had a couple of hotels to build. Sack, and threaten to sue for faulty workmanship. I'll leave you a couple of reliable numbers to call. They'll sort everything out for you and probably offer your local planners a better greased paw."

"How did you find all this out so quickly?" Aunt Judy asked.

"Mr. Vernon-Smith smiled. "I've many useful contacts, and I knew Charlie fairly well. Good chap. I seem to recall him mentioning you once, but of course I never connected your name with the Cokers at my son's school." He stood up. "I must leave now. I--"

"Oh, no," exclaimed Aunt Judy. "Do stay to lunch. "I--I should like to hear more about Charlie."

Thanks, but sorry. I've a plane to catch at four." He saw the disappointment on her face and his own hard features softened. "Tell you what. Let me take you out for a meal when I get back. Then I can tell you what I know about Charlie. And I'll tell you just how wealthy a woman you've become."

Aunt Judy was a bemused lady after Smithy's father departed as quickly as he had come, but she was a happy bemused lady, knowing now that the distressing weeks at The Moat House were over at last and renewed hope for Charlie's philanthropic project had returned.

Smithy, of course, came in for her special thanks, much to the amusement of the chums but not to Coker's. If there were mixed feelings among the senior Cokers they did their best to conceal them with resignation.

The youth was sent on his way with Christmas forgiveness and something to spend, again to Coker's displeasure, and a Christmas card actually arrived from the Major with the Giant Hogweed.

The transformation of Aunt Judy was complete!

Now they could begin to enjoy Christmas. And what a most wonderful Christmas it was.



ANSWERS TO GUESS THE TEACHERS' QUIZ

1. Mr. Philip G. Lathom, B.A., Fourth form Saint James (St. Jims).
2. Miss Amelia Bullivant (The Bull), Games & Maths Mistress, Cliff House (sister to Richard Bullivant (Skip) also known as the drill-mistress, School Friend No. 1)
3. Mr. Samuel Wiggins, B.A., Second form, Rookwood (see foot note).
Mr. Herbert Wiggins, M.A., Third form, Greyfriars (see foot note).
4. Mr. Maurice Bootles, M.S., Fourth form, Rookwood (see footnote).
5. Mr. Leslie Linton, M.A., Shell Form Saints James (St. Jims).
6. Miss Penelope Primrose, Head Mistress, Cliff House.
7. Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout, M.A., Fifth form master at Greyfriars.
8. Miss Bellew, Fourth form mistress, Cliff House.
9. Rev. Henry Chisholm, Headmaster, D.D., M.A., Rookwood

Footnotes

Regarding Wiggins at Greyfriars

The 1921 *Holiday Annual* gives the following: Greyfriars 3rd Form: Eusebins Twigg, 2nd Form - Bernard Morrison Twigg, 2nd Form - Samuel Wiggins.

The 1922 gives: Greyfriars Third Form - Eusebius Twigg, B.A. B.Sc.

Whereas Peter McCall gives Mr. Herbert Wiggins M.A. as the master of the Third form and Bernard M. Trigg is listed as master of the First form, sometimes referred to as the "Babes". But very little if at all is heard of that form in later years. J.S. Butcher's *Greyfriars School - Prospectus* also lists Mr. Herbert Wiggins as master of the Third.

In Magnet 1,011 July 2nd 1927 *Bolsover's Brother* (who is Herbert Bolsover or Bolsover minor) a member of the Third form and the master is mentioned as Mr. Wiggins. A little later we have Magnet 1276 July 30th 1932 *Who Walloped Wiggins*.

After March 1921 in *The Boys' Friend* Mr. Bottles was replaced by Mr. Dicky Dalton.



**COLIN CREWE CATALOGUETTE SPECIAL ISSUE
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Dixon Hawke – The Durable Detective

BY DES OLEARY



On two occasions Bill Lofts paid tribute to D.C. Thomson's Dixon Hawke in COMIC JOURNAL. In issue number 12 (Sept.-Oct. 1983) in the article "Over Seventy Years of Dixon Hawke" he calculated that from his debut in Dundee's SATURDAY POST in April 1912, and including other publications, our busy sleuth had dealt successfully with 5731 cases up to April 1984, easily exceeding Sexton Blake's 3848 adventures between 1893 and 1968.

In his second article in the Spring 1993 issue Bill surveyed the most famous characters of D.C. Thomson in both story papers and comics. In an extensive discussion ranging through DANDY, BEANO, WIZARD, HOTSPUR and many more, he gives his personal choices as Desperate Dan of the DANDY and the WIZARD's Wolf of Kabul and Wilson. It is, of course, an impossible decision to make and depends on personal taste and a reader's first youthful encounter with a character. (I was mightily impressed when Bill told of a schoolmate who, fascinated by the Mountie stories about Lion-Heart Logan, emigrated to Canada. That's what you call influence!)

But, Bill concludes, "In writing about the Dundee firm, of famous characters none can really equal the astonishing feat of Dixon Hawke, though it is true most of the time he appeared in an adult publication. He started in the SATURDAY POST of 6th April 1912 (later renamed the SPORTING POST) [later the EVENING TELEGRAPH D.O'L] and has hardly missed a weekly instalment over an incredible eighty-plus years."

Although, sadly, the EVENING TELEGRAPH is no longer published – it ceased publication on 27th May 2000 – the "astonishing feat" is so distinctive that I intend to attempt a brief survey of aspects of the great detective's career.

If we look first at his origin and career in Thomson's newspapers, certain things become clear. The detective story vogue was in full swing by 1912, particularly in newspapers and magazines. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes had established, though not created, the genre as the nation's favourite reading even before the great era of Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham and many other distinguished

authors. Accompanying the more 'literary' products was the vast array of popular magazines and story papers, from the up-market STRAND, where many of Conan Doyle's stories appeared, to the humbler mass market where more vigorous heroes combing physical strength with deductive skills were in demand.

Sexton Blake first saw the light in 1893 and enjoyed a long and successful career. Blake and his various authors drew heavily on Holmes's characteristics: chambers in Baker Street, a motherly housekeeper, dressing gown and pipe, a mastery of disguise, an amazing number of contacts in both criminal and highly respectable spheres plus high intelligence and great physical resources. Above all he had a reliable companion and confidant in his adventures.

The most striking change about Blake, however, came in 1904 with the appearance of Tinker. This young assistant not only gave younger readers someone to identify with, but also furnished a counterpart of Blake's mature, intellectual side, showing an impetuous youngster whose very speech and nature embodied a spirit of enthusiasm. In tandem, Blake and Tinker were a superb team. Nelson Lee and his assistant, Nipper, had already shown the way in this respect some years earlier.

Dixon Hawke continued this tradition. Even his name, two syllable first name and one syllable surname, follow the trend already established by Holmes and his successors. Like Lee and Blake he had replaced Holmes' Baker Street Irregulars by a single assistant, Tommy Burke. Tommy, while juvenile enough to pass unnoticed in a crowd or school, was yet able to drive a car and handle a gun! He could even be "disguised in tight-fitting horsey-looking clothes ... which made him look quite the racing stableman of about five-and-twenty" although the author added quickly that he needed make-up "to give his bright, smooth young face the appearance of being shaved daily." (From *The Favourite For The Cup*, SPORTING POST, 12th Oct. 1912.)

In Hawke's first year in the Dundee SPORTING POST he investigated weekly cases ranging from horse-nobbling (*The Favourite for the Cup*), robbery (*The Jewel Robbery at St. Clare's*), bank fraud (*The Mystery of the Glasgow Bank*), "The Mystery of the Wrecked

Express" to "The Taxi-Cab Robbers" etc.

Some interesting points might be noted in these 1912 cases. In both "The Favourite for the Cup" and "The Wrecked Express" investigator Hawke allowed the guilty party to go free and in "The Kidnapped Centre-forward" of the same year, Hawke's football knowledge about Glasgow Villa soccer club and his own skill at ju-jitsu are revealed to the reader and we see one of the sporting cases which will be quite typical of our detective, particularly in the stories of the Dixon Hawke Library and ADVENTURE.

Another frequent theme in Hawke's career, as in Sexton Blake's and Nelson Lee's, was present in "The Murder League" (9th Nov. 1912). This mysterious and deadly league with its initials B.O.E. (the Bond Of Equity) is a forerunner of the many other murderous groups which were to threaten Hawke in the future.

One last curious item. Most Hawke fans have, I think, always thought him accompanied by his faithful bloodhound, Solomon. In "Accused by his Father" (21st Dec. 1912) it is his dog Caesar, "a bloodhound of exceptional powers," according to Hawke, who unearths the evidence which clears an innocent man. This case, thinks the detective, was "a case after his own heart, full of human and perplexing problems."

These newspaper episodes must have been favourably received because in 1919 came the Dixon Hawke Library. Running from 14th July 1919 to 27th Dec. 1941, a total of 576 issues were published. The format was smaller than the somewhat comparable Sexton Blake Library at about 10cms by 14cms and, of course, the invariable policy of anonymity for authors and cover artists was in place.

The Library issues often reveal Hawke contending against miscellaneous villains and the sinister criminal organisations which so often menaced the popular heroes of the day. He faced super-criminals like The Tiger, who appeared in the first D.H. library and was to return a number of times; Zorn; Professor Zingard; The Snake; The Sniper; The Black Angel; The Shadow, etc. etc. And the criminal leagues! The League of the Purple Dragon; The League of the Crimson Diamond; The Seven Grim Jokers; The Clan of



the Crimson Star, The Opal Tong, etc. etc.

The library published two volumes a month, varying from 100 to 160 pages in length. From no. 411 (31st Aug. 1935) until the series ended with no. 576 (27th Dec. 1941) each volume contained two stories. The titles vary from the 'straight' detective stories such as "The Museum Mystery" no. 67 (1922) to the more wide-ranging adventures like "The Secret of Floating Island" no. 232 (1928), "Dixon Hawke - Witch-Doctor" no. 281 (1930) or "The Earthquake Master" no. 394 (1935) or "The Secret of the Totem" no. 310 (1931).

We do not learn the names of the authors of course. Thomson's policy of anonymity was very rarely breached. But we know of yet another link with Sexton Blake. E.S. Brooks was responsible for twenty-six of these Hawke stories (see The Nelson Lee Library, by Blythe/Caldicott, 1995) and, of course, was author of numerous Blake stories. One of ESB's greatest characters from the Blake stories, Waldo the Wonderman (first appearance in UNION JACK 1918) was soon appearing in the Dixon Hawke Library as Mark the Miracleman and was featured fifteen times from Dec. 1923 to Oct. 1937. Marco was later to reappear in ADVENTURE, of which more later.



Marko is portrayed much like Waldo – great strength, acrobatic ability, proof against pain and bullets and with a personality which was intelligent, mischievous and resourceful. Like Waldo, Marko moves from being a daring crook to a sometime ally of Hawke. His criminal nature is rarely of a vindictive or malicious kind.

So, the Library continued, in tandem with the *SPORTING POST*, to build up the Hawke persona: chambers in Dover Street; a motherly housekeeper, Mrs. Benvie; a wide acquaintanceship with a variety of policemen, like Inspectors M'Phinney, Green, Crail, Baxter etc; his trusted young man, Tommy Burke, who also looks after Solomon the bloodhound; a knowledge of ju-jitsu; a library of dossiers on hundreds of criminals, and so on.

After 1918 a new world was developing where social patterns had been disrupted and new scientific inventions were demanding incorporation into fiction. Amalgamated Press was dominant in the world of juvenile publishing, but, with their usual shrewd eye, Thomsons could see an opening for a new, exciting story paper to reflect the fast-changing world of the Twentieth

Century. In 1921 they launched *ADVENTURE*. To ensure a successful debut, they featured their already very popular detective-hero with an established readership – none other than Dixon Hawke! There is no mistaking the importance of Hawke to the new story paper. Of the first series of sixteen 'long completes' up to 31st Dec. 1921, eight were Dixon Hawke Stories. On the first page of the first issue Hawke is up against elegant jewel thief, The Black Duke. The following two adventures are "The Crimson Trail" and "The Sign of the Pointing Finger". "The Crimson Trail" features Solomon, who not only shows his tracking powers but also saves Tommy Burke's life by killing a deadly enemy as the League of the Copper Triangle is smashed. The remaining stories bear as titles "Game to the Last", "The Clue of the Chinese slipper", "The Avenger", "Two on a Trail" and "The House of Danger".

1921 finished a triumphant year for Dixon Hawke with a brand new publication starring him and also offering a new advertising opening for his library. In no. 1 of the story paper there is the first of a long series of adverts for the library, in this first case no. 57, "The One Who Haunted Them".

The stories would continue at intervals throughout *ADVENTURE'S* run. The last, "The City of Frightened Men" ran in nos. 1863-1877 (1960-61). Issue 1878, 14th Jan. 1961, was the end of the story paper, when it combined with *ROVER* until October 1963 and the proud title of the first of the Big Five story papers finally disappeared.

Typically, this last Dixon Hawke was a reprint of the earlier story "We've Got To Wipe Out Dixon Hawke!", published in 1948. Thomsons made full use of their knowledge that every few years their young readership changed, and so reprinting of stories was a cheap and efficient way of filling their pages!

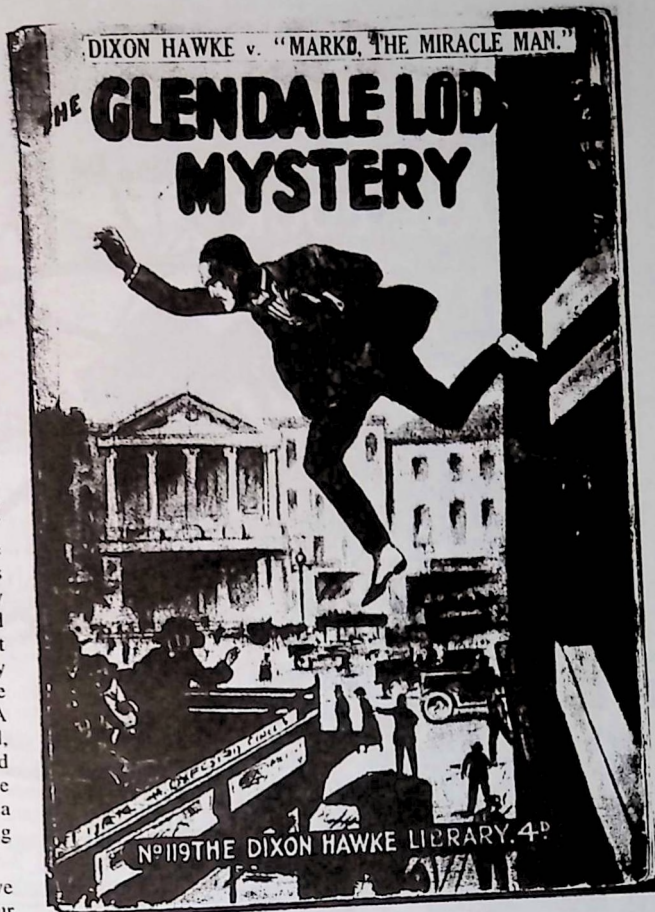
I have not yet mentioned the fondly remembered "Dixon Hawke Case Book". Appearing first in November 1938, there were eventually twenty of them, the last in May 1953. The titles of the cases show us a detective dealing with somewhat more conventional problems than the daring deeds of Hawke and Tommy in the story paper, more apt perhaps, like the newspaper

ones, for an adult readership. Titles, all beginning "The Case of...", "...the Missing Corpse", "...the False Bookcase", "...the Man Who Knew Too Much", (all from Case Book no. 1, 1938) and "...the Tidy Servant", "...the Riddle of the Playful Pekinese", "...the Corpse with the Wrong Hairstyle" (all from Case Book no. 20, 1952) show a stress on pure detection rather than the physical and disguise skills of the story paper.

(As a student of languages, I was particularly struck by Hawke's knowledge of German, which gives him the clue to solve "The Moon Cried Murder!" in the last Case Book. He realises that the murderer's overheard remark "...only the moon as witness. And the moon - well, he won't tell." Hawke explains "Only in German, Tommy, is the moon referred to as 'he'." A cultured detective indeed, worthy to be set beside Lord Peter Wimsey's spotting the use of a wrong gender in a French conversation, alerting him to an impostor.)

So until 1941 we have Hawke appearing in four different publications, newspaper, Library, ADVENTURE and Case Book. We may also add that the 'give-away' booklets in ADVENTURE (their 'ADVENTURE Vest Pocket Library') had started off in 1925 with no. 1 "The 10.30 Air Express - a Thrilling Story of Dixon Hawke". No. 5, too, was "Solomon and the Sixth Fingerprint", which starred him and his faithful bloodhound. When we think also of THE TOPICAL TIMES of 1921, mentioned by Bill Lofts in his 1983 article, we see five publications running Hawke stories. Not as many, perhaps, as would run Blake stories, but a respectable total nevertheless.

With the demise of ADVENTURE the possibility of more Marko the Miracleman tales disappears. However, in his last appearances in the 1940s, Marko has been transformed into a crook who possesses anti-gravity and X-ray devices which enable him to fly and to look through steel locks! A villain not out of place in ADVENTURE, but a lot less interesting than the original Marko/Waldo. We have to agree with the judgment in the Nelson Lee Library (op.cit.)

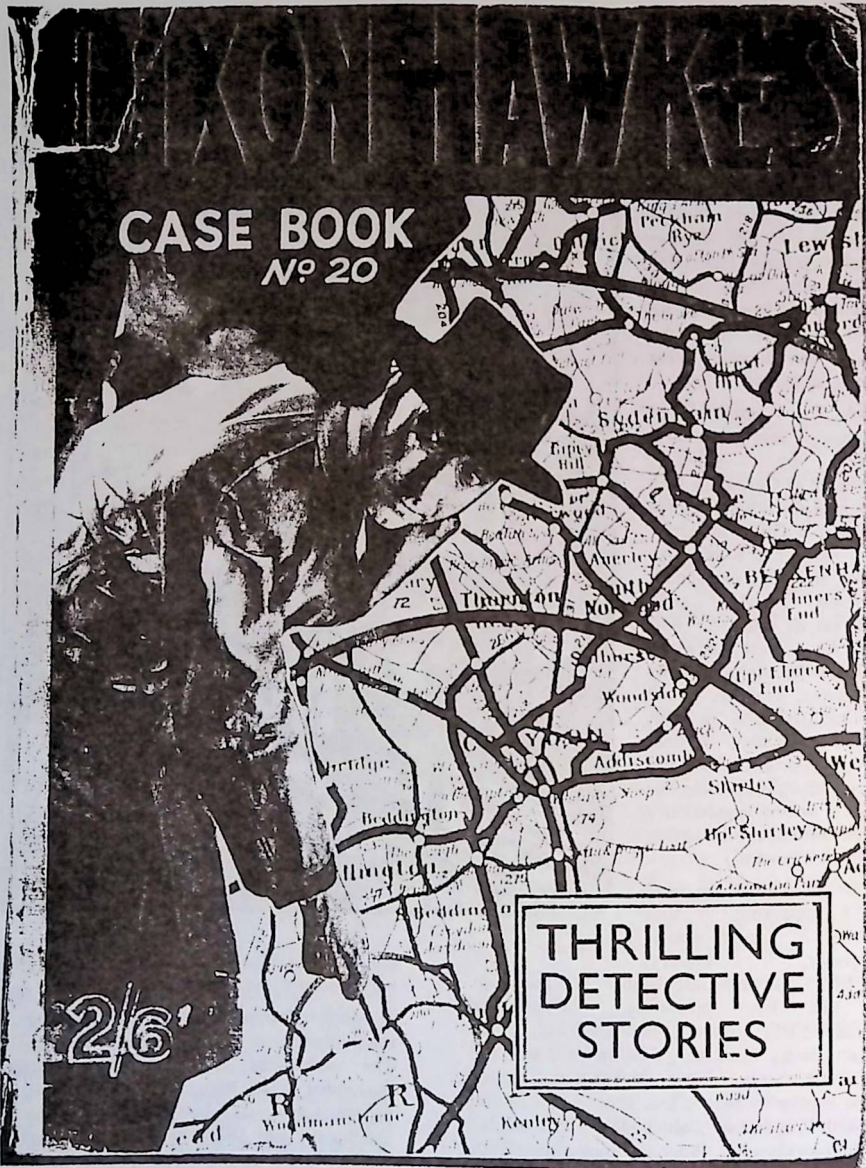


that "It is extremely unlikely that ESB played any part in the writing of these stories."

Before leaving ADVENTURE however, two other aspects of Hawke should be pointed out. The 'odd facts' covers which had begun in November 1940 were replaced in 1946 by a picture story serial called "The Human Eagles" - and by the late 1940s Dixon Hawke battled in pictures there against "The Yellow Ghost", an invisible adversary, bearing strong resemblances to a written story from 1943, proudly proclaimed in ADVENTURE no. 1081 as "The Best Spy Story of the War." The Japanese villain with his invisibility cloak in the earlier story was also named "The Yellow Ghost" and the setting, too, was San Francisco. In 1951 the back covers featured more illustrated exploits of Hawke and Tommy.

The other, unexpected, aspect is that in 1923 Hawke is credited as the author of a story about a jungle expedition to the Amazon by young explorers, a story in which he takes no part.

At least it seemed that, although the Hawke



stories had come to an end in the Library, the Case Book and ADVENTURE, they would continue in the DUNDEE EVENING TELEGRAPH. And so they did – until May 2000. These stories occupied a single page, with an illustration. Typical titles through 1999 and 2000 were “A Deadly Intruder”, “Time For Revenge” and “A Sporting Death”. The last three stories were “A Deadly Image”, “Blood Money”, (in which the victim was named O’Leary and the murderer was trapped by the detective with a bit of forgery of the victim’s diary, “...Mr. Hawke’s little stratagem”, as Tommy Burke put it approvingly!) and then “The Final Whistle” on 27th May, appropriately

perhaps on a sporting theme, football.

Two of the earlier ones struck me particularly. In “Murder in the Millennium” (8th Jan. 2000) a millennium wedding in a Scottish baronial hall is interrupted by a ghostly figure in Highland dress who speaks of the ancient enmity between the families of the newly-weds and fires an ancient musket at the bridegroom. Notwithstanding the musket ball embedded in the table, Hawke is able to explain everything in rational terms. He has frustrated an elaborate murder plot to take advantage of a complicated will. His solution is based on the presence of one suspect’s film-making equipment and another’s

Marko makes a £250,000 haul—by looking through steel!

MARKO The MIRACLE MAN



knowledge of physics. "The Vanishing Visitor" (26th Feb. 2000) has references to the Cold War, the CIA and some missing diamonds, and the shady world of spies. Add in the inexplicable happening of a new arrival to a cottage who vanishes from the assembled party, leaving only a single track of footprints approaching in the snow and you have what I thought a neat puzzle. Hawke solves it, of course, and retrieves the diamonds while suggesting a way of removing the threat from their CIA owners.

The very last story of all – may we hope for a reprieve? – deals with a thoroughly modern football club whose overpaid star striker has been murdered. Extremely arrogant, a womaniser, heavy smoker and alcoholic, he is hated by everyone who comes into contact with him. His club "Highbury Villa", however, has insured him for millions. Hawke's inquiries follow

conventional lines and lead him to the correct solution, but the proof he needs to clinch the case comes through DNA testing of a speck of blood, a contemporary touch for the year 2000.

It is significant how the Hawke stories have continued to keep up to date. Agreed, the motives of the crimes he investigates are as old as human nature, love and hate, greed, revenge, a thirst for power, but as the 20th century progressed newer types of opponents made their appearance: anarchists, American gangsters, foreign spies, Nazis, bent policemen. The settings of the stories become worldwide and employ the new inventions of the era. The first Library stories declare their modern themes in their titles: no. 1 "The Flying Major", no. 2 "The Masked Motorist", no. 3 "The Stolen Seaplane", no. 8 "Tracked By Aeroplane", no. 9 "The Submarine Pirate". Scientific developments play

A Story of Thrilling Adventure in the Amazon.

The RIVER OF MISSING MEN

BY DIXON HAWKE



their part too: ballistics, already present in the SPORTING POST's "Accused By His Father" (21st Dec. 1912) and in the last stories of 2000 which we have considered; lasers; video cameras; the CIA; espionage and DNA.

How to sum up Dixon Hawke? Not a new combination of detective characteristics, at least for those heroes of the new popular fiction which aimed at exciting entertainment for the younger reader. Orwell said, "Physical strength is the form of power that boys can best understand," and for the young readers of ADVENTURE and the Dixon Hawke Library at least, a credible investigator needed powerful muscles and a good punch as well as a range of detection skills.

What sleuth could compete with Dixon Hawke? For us schoolboys of the 1940s and 1950s, even the 4d or 7d for the Sexton Blake Library was double our usual expenditure for a thrilling detective story. So the Thomson star had his place – or had, until at the end of the last story in the last Dundee EVENING

TELEGRAPH, dated 27th May 2000, we sadly read the following black-edged notice "You won't be seeing Dixon Hawke for some time as he is now taking a well earned holiday." After eighty-eight years he does indeed deserve a holiday, but let us hope it will not be too prolonged!

(Warm thanks to Bill Bradford and the late Colin Morgan for their expert and generous help in this article.)

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Mr Brown's Eminent Literary Antecedent

by Mary Cadogan



With all the well-deserved acclaim that Jane Austen has had recently with TV and cinematic revivals of PERSUASION, SENSE AND SENSIBILITY and – most splendid of all – PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, I thought it would be interesting to explore similarities between Mr. Bennet, the father of her most attractive character, Elizabeth, and Mr. Brown, who is of course the father of Richmal Crompton's most engaging character, William.

Just before embarking on this, however, I should mention that I've long been struck by similarities between Jane Austen and Richmal – similarities of literary style, of their sparkling and slightly sardonic humour and their wonderfully sharp observation. Let's look at their lives for a moment. There are several parallels.

Each was the second daughter of a clerical gentleman: Jane's father was the Rector of Steventon and Richmal's was also a Clerk in

Holy Orders and Licensed Curate – though he chose to be a teacher. Neither Jane nor Richmal married although both had strong familial feelings, and as aunts, sisters, cousins, etc. were the keen family and social observers. Both had to cope with serious illnesses which didn't seem to impair their sense of humour or unbalance their critical judgement. Jane, like Richmal, went away with her elder sister to boarding-school. Both writers created stories and verses from childhood and often wrote on small scraps of paper, rather than in notebooks, as part of this process. Jane has been described as 'a secret scribbler' and Richmal is on record as having written her early stories secretly in an attic well away from the rest of the family.

Both ladies in their writing brilliantly conveyed English village life in all its richnesses and complexities, its friendships, rivalries, ambitions and frustrations. Both excelled in their



"Read it aloud," said their father.
Chap. XLIX

different versions of domestic novels of manners and mores. The great Sir Walter Scott, referring to Jane Austen, humbly noted: 'The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself ... but [her] exquisite touch which renders commonplace things and characters interesting ... is denied to me'. This praise for Jane could equally be applied to Richmal.

As we all know, in her most celebrated domestic saga Richmal focused particularly on the exploits of a small boy through whose eyes, ears and general approach to life the main thrust of the stories is allowed to unfold. Jane focused on relationships between adult individuals and families, with matrimonial aspirations at the heart of things. In *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* she not only gave us the lively, lovely Elizabeth and darling, dashing Darcy – but also another intriguing figure, Elizabeth's father, Mr. Bennet, whose affinities with Richmal's Mr. Brown are indeed marked.

Mr. Bennet and Mr. Brown both regard themselves very much as heads of their families, though we readers delight in seeing that their nearest and dearest are in fact frequently beyond their control. We gather that Mr. Bennet, firmly described as 'a gentleman', had no profession, and there is always a cloud of mystery too about precisely how Mr. Brown earns a living and manages to support all those unwaged members of his family. In *WILLIAM THE FOURTH*, Richmal tells us that William feels ashamed that his father 'just catches a train to his office every day'. We are never told what he does there and

Richmal once, in a radio broadcast, admitted to vagueness about his occupation, saying airily that perhaps he had something to do with the making of ladies' handbags.

Neither of these literary fathers, then, had what we might call a vocation, and neither seemed particularly passionate about hobbies or pastimes, though Mr. Bennet occasionally engaged in shooting, and Mr. Brown in golf. In fact, they both seem to have spent most of their leisure time in keeping well out of the family's way and immersing themselves in books in Mr. Bennet's case, and in Mr. Brown's, in newspapers. Both bitterly resent being diverted from this main preoccupation by the demands or exploits of their offspring and other relatives. In *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*, the pompous and persistent Mr. Collins not only never stops talking but pursues Mr. Bennet into the sanctum of his library:

Such doings discomposed Mr. Bennet exceedingly. In his library he had always been sure of leisure and tranquillity and though prepared, as he told Elizabeth, to meet with folly and conceit in every other room in the house, he was used to being free from them there.

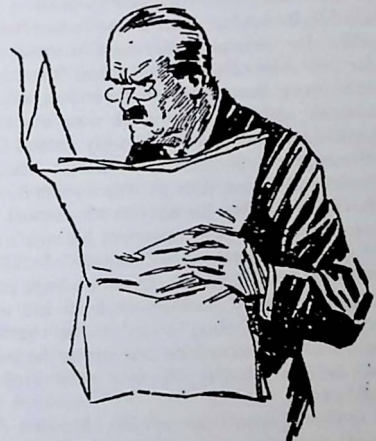
Similarly in *JUST WILLIAM*, when our hero, temporarily infatuated by his pretty teacher, Miss Drew, decides to do his homework to impress her, he invades his father's library:

...spreading out his books around him, a determined frown upon his small face. His father was sitting in an armchair by the window reading the evening paper.

'Father,' said William suddenly, 's'pose I came to you an' said you was to give me a hundred pounds an' I'd give you five pounds next year an' so on, would you give it me?'

'I should not, my son,' said his father firmly. William sighed ...

And, getting nowhere with arithmetic and compound interest, he starts asking Mr. Brown



history questions. His attentions drive his father, groaning, out of the library into the dining-room, where William pursues him, and relentlessly persisting with his new-found hunger for knowledge, switches his questioning from history (the date of the Armada) to geography (what is the capital of Holland?) and languages ('Father, what's the French for "my aunt is walking in the garden"?). Mr. Brown has to beat a final retreat to the veranda where he confides to his wife that 'William's gone raving mad ... Takes the form of a wild thirst for knowledge, and a babbling of a Miss Drawing, or Drew, or something. He's best left alone.'

Both fathers are intelligent, witty and sardonic. As Mr. Bennet remarks to Elizabeth 'we live but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn'. Both are married to women who, despite their attractions, can be seen as their intellectual inferiors. Certainly Mr. Bennet has much to put up with in the vacuity of his pretty, slightly nagging, gossip-and-money-orientated wife, although we, perhaps, can find some excuse for her indefatigable efforts to find rich husbands for her daughters (after all, in Jane Austen's time, marriage offered women the only attractive form of security and social status, and the five Bennet daughters, who were debarred by their gender from inheriting the family home, had to live somehow). When Mrs. Bennet urges her husband to call on the new, affluent and unmarried neighbour, Mr. Bingley, he teases her by refusing – and suggesting that if, as Mrs. Bennet hopes, Bingley will wish to marry one of their daughters, he (Mr. Bennet) will write a letter giving him permission to marry whichever of them he chooses. Poor Mrs. Bennet, as always, responds to the bait:

'Mr. Bennet ... You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves.'

'You mistake me, my dear, I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least.'

Mr. Brown had rather less to endure from his wife. She certainly didn't need to match-make for their elder offspring. Ethel and Robert, who were more than active in their own amatory interests, and who grew up in a society where some measure of financial security seemed likely for members of most middle-class families. However, Richmal does provide us with hints in the books that Mr. Brown, like Mr. Bennet, had reason on occasion to despair of his wife's lack of intellectual interests and enquiry. In STILL WILLIAM the Botts are planning a large party, and Mrs. Brown 'looking up from her usual occupation of darning socks' as her husband enters the room comments that among the guests will be Lord Merton, who is a member of the Cabinet:

'That fellow,' snorted Mr. Brown. 'He ought to be shot.' Mr. Brown's political views

were always very decided and very violent. 'He's ruining the country ... I tell you that man's policy is bringing the country to rack and ruin ... I wonder decent people have him in their houses ... I tell you he's bleeding the country to death. He ought to be hung for murder. That man's policy ... is wicked – criminal. Leave him alone and in ten years time he'll have wiped out half the population of England by slow starvation. He's killing trade. He's ruining the country.'

'Yes, dear,' murmured Mrs. Brown, 'I'm sure you're right ... I think these blue socks of yours are almost done, don't you?'

In many ways Mr. Bennet wrote off his wife and his three younger daughters. However, he acknowledged that Elizabeth and Jane were not only lively and engaging but naturally intelligent. Sadly, Mr. Brown seems blind to the fact that, of all his family, William is closest to being a chip off the old, reasonably intelligent, block. Although far from being a conventional intellectual, William nevertheless has capacities of which many a father might be proud – leadership, initiative, entrepreneurial skills and, of course, great originality of thought (as well as a persistent desire to rectify the wrongs in society).

Rather than appreciating all this, Mr. Brown appears to favour the fatuous Ethel who, knowing her good standing with him, constantly threatens to (and often does) go to Mr. Brown to complain about some aspect or other of William's supposed bad behaviour. She is secure in the knowledge that her father will favour her and heap retribution on William's head – or some other part of his anatomy!

I think we can see that, like Mr. Bennet, Mr. Brown is somewhat wanting as a father. Always anxious for a quiet life, though he will frequently be hauled out of this to castigate William, he does nothing to check Ethel's silly flirtations and lack of application to work or study. Similarly, Mr. Brown ignored the stupid antics of his man-mad two younger daughters, Kitty and Lydia, wanting always to detach himself from familial responsibilities:

'Their father, contented with laughing at them, would never exert himself to restrain the wild giddiness of his youngest daughters'. The results for Lydia of this neglect (seduction at 15, followed by an enforced marriage which promised little security or happiness) were rather more disastrous than Ethel's lot – although her 50 years of nothing but extremely superficial flirtations might seem to many of us a pretty dire fate! Mr. Brown is negligent of his paternal duties, as far as William is concerned, on several occasions. For example, in WILLIAM THE FOURTH, the Brown family are staying for a short period in a London hotel. William has been invited to a party by friends in Kensington:

The house was so near to the hotel that a taxi seemed hardly worth while. But there was a general reluctance to be his escort. Ethel was



"If it's offer of marriage you have refused?"
Chap. III

going to a theatre, and Robert had been out all day and thought he deserved a bit of rest in the evening, instead of carting kids about. Mrs. Brown's rheumatism had come on again, and Mr. Brown wanted to read the evening paper.

William is sent off, unaccompanied, to his party. Surely no caring father would have let an eleven-year-old boy, who was unaccustomed to the city, go out alone at night in London, even in those safer days of the 1920s.

Mr. Brown could also, of course, be impatient – and delightfully sardonic – with his elder son, of whose superficialities he was sometimes forced to become aware. In WILLIAM AGAIN, the question of an escort for William arises once more: this time he has to make the journey to Ireland to gratify the wish of a rich and dying great-aunt who has never yet seen him:

'I suppose,' said Mrs. Brown, 'that someone must take him.'

'Good Lodge! Who?' [replied her husband]

'Yes, who?' echoed the rest of the family.

'I can't possibly leave the office for the next few weeks,' said Mr. Brown hastily.

'I simply couldn't face the crossing alone – much less with William,' said Ethel.

'I've got my finals coming off next year,' said Robert. 'I don't want to waste any time. I'm working rather hard these vacs.'

'No one,' said his father politely, 'would have noticed it.'

We could, of course, fill a small book with Mr. Brown's deliciously sarcastic put-downs of his younger son. The irony here is that Mr.

Brown is casting the pearls of his sardonic quips before swine – because William, who takes quite literally what adults say, rarely understands them. In JUST WILLIAM, for example, when William falls out of love with his teacher because 'she can't talk straight. She dunno what she means', and Mr. Brown comments that this is 'always the trouble with women' and that William's 'idol has feet of clay', William, 'the literal', replies:

'All I can say is she can't talk straight. I think her feet's all right. She walks all right. 'Sides, when they make folks false feet, they make 'em of wood, not clay.'

Let us look back for a moment at Mr. Bennet and one of his gems of sarcasm: Elizabeth has just refused a proposal of marriage from the smugly pompous Mr. Collins, and her mother, furious at what she regards as this lost opportunity, demands that Mr. Bennet should insist upon the marriage taking place. Elizabeth is solemnly called into her parents' presence in the library and, in answer to her father's question, confirms that she has rejected Mr. Collins:

'Very well.' [said Mr. Bennet] *We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennet?'*

'Yes, or I will never see her again.'

'An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do.'

Characteristically he is here putting down his silly wife and supporting his independently minded daughter. He is, of course, more than ready to cut down to size another of his children, the plain, pretentious, studious and untalented Mary who, to the acute embarrassment of her family, insists on singing and playing the piano rather badly in an interval during the grand ball given by Mr. Bingley:

Elizabeth was in agonies ... She looked at her father to entreat his interference, lest Mary should be singing all night. He took the hint, and when Mary had finished her second song, said aloud, 'That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit.'

We find echoes of this paternal dismissiveness in several of Mr. Brown's encounters with William. In WILLIAM'S HAPPY DAY, after receiving yet another discouraging report from his son's headmaster, Mr. Brown warns William that he will have to have special coaching during his forthcoming school holiday. William, not unnaturally, is 'speechless with horror'. Then:

'In the holidays,' he exclaimed wildly. 'There's lors against it... I've never heard of anyone having lessons in the holidays. Not anyone. I bet even slaves didn't have lessons in the holidays...' (William continues and develops this rich vein of rhetoric, eventually ending by declaring with passion: *'I shall only get ill with*



overworkin; an 'get brain fever ... an' then you'll have to pay doctors bills an' p'raps,' darkly, 'you'll have to pay for my funeral too... Anyone'd think you wanted me to die. An' if I did die I shun't be surprised if the judge did something to you about it.'

His father, unmoved by this dark hint, replied coolly, 'I'm quite willing to risk it.'

We are told in WILLIAM AGAIN that William is sometimes 'crushed' by his father's sarcasm: 'The fact that he rarely understood his father's remarks to him had a good deal to do with the awe in which that parent was held.'

Fortunately, however, the crushing process as far as the resilient William is concerned never lasts long.

In the same book, when his elder brother Robert decides not to go to church one Sunday morning, William tries to follow suit by pretending to feel unwell. His father, of course, refuses to sanction this:

Mr. Brown came downstairs, tophatted and gloved...

'William's too ill to go to church,' said Robert in an unfeeling tone of voice. William raised his healthy, ruddy countenance.

'I'd like to go to church,' he explained to his father. 'I'm disappointed not to go. But I jus' don't feel well... I feel's if I went to church I might worry everybody with bein' so ill. I feel' - his Pegasean imagination soared aloft on daring wings - 'I feel's if I might die if I went to church this mornin'...'

'If you're as bad as that,' Mr. Brown said callously, as he brushed his coat, 'I suppose you might as well die in church as anywhere.'

So there we have it - two of my favourite authors, Jane Austen and Richmal Crompton, who created two of my most relished fictional characters - Mr. Bennet and Mr. Brown. We know that Richmal admired Jane's works, and I feel sure that if, by some etheric device, Jane could read Richmal's William stories, she would be vastly entertained by them, and especially by the affinity between these two intriguing father figures.

(This article is reprinted from the Just William Society Magazine no. 2, June 1996).



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The GREYFRIARS GUIDE



A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL.

(1)
The kitchen's full of appetising steam,
To hungry schoolboys it must surely
seem
That working here is like a lovely
dream,
Devoutly to be wished!
But cooking for so many hungry boys
Means WORK—a thing which nobody
enjoys,
As in the busy clatter, heat and noise,
Good things are cooked and dished.



The Kitchen.

(2)
Upon the Christmas puddings and mince
pies
Collected here, poor Bunter turns his
eyes
Like Peri at the gates of Paradise,
And longs to make a swoop!
Alas, he very swiftly meets his doom,
A busy cook, with still more busy
broom,
Soon chases Master Bunter from the
room,
His farewell word—"Yaroop!"

(3)
On Break-up Day the staff work over-
time
Preparing extra dishes so sublime
That all words fail me—not to mention
rhyme!
Ah, turkeys, puddings—come!
Come hither, oh, ye morsels of delight,
I would devour the whole of ye on sight,
Lay waste among your army, left and
right,
And leave no single crumb!

A WEEKLY BUDGET OF FACT AND FUN

By
THE GREYFRIARS
RHYMESTER

CHRISTMAS CHUCKLES

"Birds are intelligent creatures," says
a Nature book. You wouldn't believe
the number of local turkeys who have
committed suicide to save the farmer a
job!

Christmas comes but once a year,
And Bunter's glad of that!
If Christmas came but twice a year,
He'd soon be twice as fat!

Stewart of the Shell is a boon to his
relations. His birthday is on Christmas
Day, so they only have to give him one
lot of presents!

Bootes' Fertiliser Makes Plants Grow
Like Wildfire! Having heard this,
Fishy bought a bottle—and a packet
of Christmas-tree seeds! (They're sell-
ing at five bob each!)

Christmas waits, who sang "Christians
Awake!" under Sir Hilton Popper's
window, wished sincerely they'd left him
asleep!

Loder said yesterday he was just going
to "slip down to the village." But he
was wrong, because our slide didn't go
as far as that!

We wish "breaking-up" included
Quelch's canes!

Fisher T. Fish has been collecting
empty match-boxes. After all, everyone
has to give Christmas-boxes, including
Fishy.

Somebody sent Gosling a bottle of
cherries-in-brandy the other day. He
didn't care much for the cherries, but
he was grateful for the spirit in which
they were sent.

A Chinese visitor to Wun Lung some
time ago called on Quelch, and bent
over in a polite bow. Fortunately,
Mr. Quelch recollected himself just as
his hand closed on the cane.

Fisher T. Fish, walking in the quad,
found a shilling, another shilling, and
yet another shilling. His beaming smile
lasted till he discovered the hole in his
trousers pocket.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,557.

AFTER SCHOOL HOURS

Breaking-Up Night!

We're off for the vac,
And we're not coming back
Until Christmas is done and the New
Year begun,
And it's fun and frivolity,
Joking and jollity,
All the way homo in the morning!
For Christmas is coming and holly is
green,
And Greyfriars is humming with happi-
ness keen,
So pack your portmanteau, your hamper
and bag,
And come to the concert we hold in the
Rag.
We'll sing the old strains
Of the Christmas refrains,
Fill lumps of the wall break asunder
and fall,
We'll sing 'em merrily,
Happily, cheerily,
All the way home in the morning!
The Owl is unfolding a plan to the
Form,
A supper he's holding to-night in the
dorm.
For once he discovers he's really in luck,
We all give him money to purchase the
tuck.
He scuttles away very nimble
To interview poor Mrs. Mumble,
Then smuggles in pastries and pop and
mince pies,
And joins us in eating the tasty supplies.
Then stories are told,
Of the spectres of old,
Which make our flesh creep as we go off
to sleep.
To-morrow we're verily
Travelling merrily
All the way home in the morning!

THE GREYFRIARS ALPHABET WILLIAM GREENE,

Coker's studymate in the Fifth Form.

G is for GREENE—I beg to state
He's merely Coker's studymate,
And having got that off my chest,
I'll now ignore him. For the rest,
I wish to say I'd like to know
Where all my Christmas presents go.
My Uncle Bill, so they relate,
Went out and purchased 38!



And if he'd only thought of mine
He would have purchased 39!
My Uncle Joe has sent away
A hundred presents, so they say,
To all the beastly family,
Except, of course, his nephew—ME.
If I lived out in Timbuctoo
I might expect a gift or two,
But while I spend my Christmas here
They'll all forget me once a year!

NEWSPAPER NONSENSE

Jack Hughes from Australia has sent us this press-cutting from long ago. We don't have the earlier article that prompted Frank Richards's letter but, as Jack Hughes says, Frank's reply led to "more nonsense from the newspaper's writer." We can sympathise with Frank's imitation, especially at that time (1946) when there were few outlets for his stories, with *The Magnet* and *Gem* ended, and the *Bunter* books not yet launched.

18

BOOK REVIEWS

SYDNEY
DAILY TELEGRAPH, 15.6.46

Billy Bunter exposed

Billy Bunter the author of the schoolboy stories published in the *Magnet*, *Gem*, and *Popular* magazines?

This theory was suggested by a book reviewer in the *Telegraph* of March 9 last, in a review of "The Saturday Book" (London: Hutchinson).

The reviewer claimed that Bunter's tart-guzzling and illiteracy were poses adopted to deceive the world about the true identity of one of the most prolific writers of the time.

The following letter has now come to hand from England:

SIR.—A kind friend in New South Wales has sent me a copy of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, dated March 9, 1946, which contains a "review" of my article in Hutchinson's "Saturday Book," under the heading of "The Billy Bunter Hoax."

Criticism, even when severe, any author must naturally expect. But I am quite astonished that you would open your columns to what is nothing more or less than a torrent of vulgar abuse.

Your "reviewer" accuses me of untruthfulness, in matters of which I can have no knowledge. Is it an Australian custom to denounce a man as a liar without making a single inquiry into the truth or otherwise of his statements?

He even accuses me of "deceiving the public" by the use of a pen-name. It is a fact that my actual name is Charles Hamilton, and that I have written very extensively under the pen-names of Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Ben Conquest. Was Dickens deceiving the public when he was called "Boz"?

This accusation is so senseless, that I can only suppose your reviewer to be wholly uneducated.

In a footnote he tells your readers that I have made a "silly slip" in arithmetic. "If Wharton," he says, "was 16 when the author was 17, how can Wharton be 71 when the author is 70?" Could any of your readers guess from this that in my article in "The Saturday Book" there is no statement, or the remotest suggestion, that Wharton was 16 when the author was 17? This is deliberate misrepresentation of what I have written, and if your Reviewer is looking for a liar he should look much nearer home.

Your Reviewer states that I am "unable to remember my own age." My age is given in the article as 70. Why should your Reviewer suppose it to be incorrect? I have for many years drawn an Annuity in the British Post Office, and even your Reviewer must be aware that an Annuitant's exact age must be known. He is welcome to refer to the Postmaster-General in this country.

Your Reviewer calls me a liar, a toady, an inveterate humbug, a deceiver of the public, and other such extremely pretty things.

Is this reviewing, or is it reckless, foul abuse?

If I were a young man, and in Australia, I should demand an apology from this blackguard. But no doubt your Reviewer feels quite secure in insulting a man of seventy at a distance of many thousands of miles.

Yours truly,

—(Sgd.) FRANK RICHARDS
(Charles Hamilton).

Rose Lawn, Kingsgate-on-Sea,
Kent.

THE book reviewer concerned replies:

This letter is of importance to the English-speaking world, for one of two reasons:

● Either it proves conclusively that all the *Magnet*, *Gem*, and *Popular* stories were written by one man—a collective output of millions of words—and not by a syndicate or series of writers as has often been suspected.

● And/or it is another of Billy Bunter's elaborate hoaxes.

From painstaking analysis of this letter, I am led to believe that it was written by Bunter (only just

released from his duties as Air-raid Warden at Greyfriars School) in an effort to preserve the anonymity he has guarded so carefully over the years.

I BASE my deduction on three points:

● The writer of the letter alleges that his real name is Charles Hamilton, yet he has signed himself "Frank Richards" and typed the name "Charles Hamilton" (see exhibit A). Surely he should have done the reverse.

My view is that, in his anxiety to prove his case, Bunter has made another of those slips which I examined in detail in my review of "The Saturday Book."

I suggest that this is due to a psychic conflict. Although consciously attempting to hide his identity, he is under the stress of an unconscious compulsion to reveal that identity. Hence the lapse.

● Even more significant is a code which I have discovered in the letter. Bunter writes: "Was Dickens deceiving the public when he was called 'Boz'?"

The use of quotation marks is clearly intended to draw attention to the word "Boz." This word not only follows a comment about deceiving the public, but begins with B, just as "Bunter" does. It also has three letters, which suggests a 1-2-3 code.

Last word of the next paragraph is "uneducated"—beginning with U.

The code then switches to Key 2. Second last word in the next paragraph is "nearer"—beginning with N.

Second last in the next paragraph is "this"—beginning with T.

Then comes Key 3. Third last word of the next paragraph is "extremely"—beginning with E.

Third last word of the next paragraph is "reckless"—beginning with R.

There is the answer: "B-U-N-T-E-R."

My third point is based on examination of the handwriting of Billy Bunter himself (see exhibit B from the 1923 edition of the "Greyfriars Holiday Annual") and the writer who purports to be "Frank Richards" (exhibit A).

As all students of Magnet stories know, Billy Bunter is always portrayed as an illiterate.

When exhibit B was shown to a leading Sydney graphologist, he declared that it was not the writing of an illiterate, but of an educated person who was pretending to be illiterate. He drew particular attention to the well-outlined "C" in "Could" and to the controlled shape of the "r's" in "order."

"The signature 'W. G. Bunter' was written in 1923—23 years ago," he said. "It is a well-known fact that writing can change considerably over the years. It is not impossible, therefore, that the person who

wrote 'W. G. Bunter' in 1923 also wrote 'Frank Richards' in 1946."

I must leave Telegraph readers to judge whether this evidence vindicates my theory that this letter is another Billy Bunter hoax.

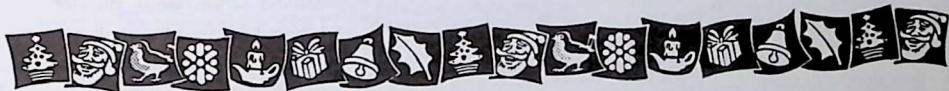
Yours truly,
Frank Richards
 (Charles Hamilton)

Exhibit A: Signature on letter sent to the Editor of the Telegraph.

TWO LEAVES FROM HARRY WHARTON'S AUTOGRAPH ALBUM

May every happiness be yours Wharton! I've always been one of your stoutest pals. Could you advance me five bob on my postal order?
W. G. Bunter

Exhibit B: Specimen of handwriting and signature of Billy Bunter, "Gwl of the Remove," published in the "Greyfriars Holiday Annual," 1923.





In his usual bombastic manner, Billy Bunter chats about the famous novelist.

EDITORIAL!

By
HARRY WHARTON.

WHIO the dickens was Dickens? Or, slightly to miskwoto Shakespeare:

"Who is Charlie? What is he That all the swains commend him?"

I confess I had never even heard of Charles Dickens, until Quelchey read us eggstracts from the "Pickwick Papers" in class the other day. And then I made it my bizness to find out all I could about the author of that work.

I have discovered the following facts. Charles Dickens was born; he lived; and he died. He also wrote a handful of novels, in one of which was a certain fat boy, whom Dickens derided.

Now, a man who jeers at fat boys never gets any simperthy from me. I'm not going to lord Dickens to the skies, and say that he was the greatest novelist who ever novelled. I think it was jolly mean and spiteful of him to hold fat boys up to ridicule. Where would the world stand to-day, if it wasn't for the fat boys? Echo answers where?

I can't honestly understand why people go potty on Dickens, and speak of him with baited breth, as if he was one of the giants of literature. I have egg-samin'd all his novels, inklooding "Oliver Nickleby," "David Twist," "Great Times," "Hard Expectations," "A Tale of Two Copperfields," and "Barnaby Rumble Chuzzlewit." I can't find anything to enthuse over. Far better stuff appears in my own paper, "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

These stories by Dickens are supposed to have the power of moving you to tears, or of making you hold your sides with helpless larfter. I can faithfully assert that I didn't shed a single chuckle or burst myself with greef. I saw nothing to laf at, and nothing to howl at.

The only Dickens character that I had a sneaking simperthy for was Mr. Micawber. He was always waiting for something to turn up. So am I.

Mr. Micawber waited for fame and fortune. I'm waiting for my postle-order. There is quite a bond of affinity between Wilkins Micawber and your humble servant.

But as for the rest of the Dickens characters, they leave no cold. The adventures of Nicholas Copperfield were tame. The egg-splott of Barnaby

Chuzzlewit were also lame. I'll admit it was a wee bit thrilling to read how Oliver Twist went to the gilloteen—or was it Sydney Carton? (I haven't dug very deeply into Dickens, so you must forgive me if I happen to make a few blunders.)

I have come to the conclusion that Charles Dickens is a very much over-rated writer. When Quelchey was reading to us about Mr. Pickwick's articles on the slide, some of the fellows roared with larfter. But I couldn't quite see where the joak came in. Why larf at a man just bekause he's too fat and clumsy to slide properly? It is hartless and crool. Dickens was in a callus mood when he invented Pickwick. And he was in a more callus mood still when he invented the Fat Boy.

My Uncle Claude has threatened to send me a complete set of Dickens' works on my berthday. I have told him not to trouble. A tuck-hamper would be far more acceptable.

Peter Todd possesses a complete set of Dickens, and he guards them with jollus care. They are illustrated by an artist named Crookshank, and Toddy declares he wouldn't part with those preshus books for untold gold.

A BOXING A B C.

My chums often ask me for a good handbook to the Noble Art. I can recommend the smart little guide by Stanley Hooper, which is issued at eightpence by Messrs. Drame, Danegeld House, Farringdon Street, London. Stanley Hooper has packed all the advice and information necessary into his volume. As ex-Fly-weight Champion of the Eastern Counties, Hooper can speak and write with authority. A disability due to his experiences in the War prevented him winning the highest honours in the boxing world; but, as Eugene Corri points out in a preface to this excellent little work, Hooper was one of the cleverest eight-stone boxers. His style was the correct old English upright poise, with a perfect straight left as the chief weapon of attack and defence. This style is still good enough to retrieve this country's lost boxing prestige. "The A B C of Boxing" is written in simple language, as befits the title, and shows the whole science of the art. One can say no more.

SOME time ago I tried the experiment of publishing a Special Shakespeare Number of the "Greyfriars Herald."

I confess I was just a wee bit doubtful as to the reception such a number would get at the hands of my readers. Not every fellow is a worshippur at the shrine of Shakespeare. Schoolboys who have been ordered to write out a hundred times some passage from "Hamlet" or from "Julius Caesar" could hardly be expected to entertain affectionate thoughts for the Bard of Avon.

But my fears were soon set at rest. The Special Shakespeare Number got a tremendous reception. Even now, long after its publication, I still get letters about it. I can only conclude that the reason why the Shakespeare Number was so successful, was because it was bright and breezy and entertaining, and not dull and stodgy and scholarly. The great Bard of Avon was treated from a schoolboy's point of view; and there was no lack of fun and merriment.

One thing leads to another; and from Shakespeare to Dickens is a natural step. Both are lions of literature, and both deserve the highest praise that we can give.

There must be very few fellows who have not read at least one of Dickens' famous novels. It was "Pickwick" that first brought Dickens into the limelight; and he followed it up with "Oliver Twist" (the youth who had the temerity to ask for more!), "Nicholas Nickleby," "David Copperfield," and other stories which are remarkable, not only for their humour, but for the delightfully human touch which characterises all Dickens' works.

What was the secret of Charles Dickens' success? His own words will explain it far better than I can. He says:

"Whatever I have tried to do in my life, I have tried with all my heart to do well. Whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely. Never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self, was one of my golden rules."

There's a valuable lesson here for all of us who want to rise out of the common rut, and play the game of life to some purpose.

HARRY WHARTON.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY, -No. 340.



Famous Dickens Characters

ARTFUL DODGER.—A young pick-pocket, cradled in crime.—“*Oliver Twist.*”

BARKIS.—A carrier, whose pet saying was “Barkis is willin’.” He even proposed marriage by employing this phrase.—“*David Copperfield.*”

BOYTHORN, LAWRENCE.—A kind-hearted gentleman who pretended to be very ferocious by roaring at people in a stentorian voice.—“*Bleak House.*”

BROWNLOW, MR.—The benevolent old gentleman who rescued *Oliver Twist* from a gang of thieves.

DUMBLE.—A most pompous personage, who considered he was “*It*,” and threw his weight about accordingly. He had a big sense of his official importance.—“*Oliver Twist.*”

CARKER, JAMES.—The rascally manager of *Dombey’s* house, whose laugh resembled “the snarl of a cat.”—“*Dombey and Son.*”

CARTON, SYDNEY.—The heroic young fellow who went to the guillotine in order to save the husband of the woman he loved.—“*A Tale of Two Cities.*”

CHESTER, SIR JOHN.—A cruel-hearted, swaggering, blustering member of the aristocracy. Killed in a duel by Mr. Haradale.—“*Barnaby Rudge.*”

COPPERFIELD, DAVID.—A splendid type of young Englishman. The hero of what is regarded as Dickens’ best book.

CRATCHIT, BOB.—Clerke to Scrooge, the miser. Underpaid and overworked, but always cheerful and contented. Especially cheerful at Christmas-time.—“*The Christmas Carol.*”

FAT BOY.—The prototype of Billy Bunter. A fearful glutton, who appeared to be asleep most of the time, but who always knew what was going on.—“*The Pickwick Papers.*”

GAMP, SAIREY.—An old-fashioned nurse, who was rather too partial to “the cup that cheers” and also inebriates! A typical saying of Sairey’s was, “Leave the bottle on the chimney-piece, an’ don’t ask me to take none, but let me put my lips to it when I am so disposed.”—“*Martin Chuzzlewit.*”

GUMMIDGE, MRS.—The “lone, lorn creature” who lived in the quaint little house fashioned from a boat, with Dan’l Peggotty, at Yarmouth.—“*David Copperfield.*”

HAWK, SIR MULBERRY.—A rogue and an inveterate gambler, who brought many young fellows to ruin.—“*Nicholas Nickleby.*”

HEEP, URIAH.—A rascally hypocrite, who always posed as being very “umble.” Tried to swindle his employer, Mr. Wickfield, but was cleverly outwitted and exposed by Wilkins Micawber.—“*David Copperfield.*”

MARCHIONESS, THE.—Dick Swiveller’s nickname for the devoted slavey who nursed him through a serious illness. He eventually married her.—“*The Old Curiosity Shop.*”

MICAWBER, WILKINS.—An extraordinary gentleman, much given to the use of flowery language. Recklessly improvident in his habits, and always waiting for something to turn up.—“*David Copperfield.*”

PEGGOTTY, DANIEL.—A rough-and-ready old fisherman, with a heart of gold. Searched “fur air wide” for his niece, Little Em’ly, who had eloped with the fascinating but unscrupulous James Steerforth.—“*David Copperfield.*”

PICKWICK, SAMUEL.—The man who founded the Pickwick Club. A simple soul, brimming over with benevolence.—“*The Pickwick Papers.*”

SCROOGE, EBENEZER.—A hard-hearted old miser, who, through having three remarkable visions on Christmas Eve, was converted into a more humane and generous man.—“*The Christmas Carol.*”

SQUEERS, WACKFORD.—A school-master of the worst type. Tyrannical and vindictive; ruled with a rod of iron over Dotheboys Hall, a school of the old-fashioned type, now happily extinct.—“*Nicholas Nickleby.*”

SWIVELLER, DICK.—A curious but likeable character, who was put to many shifts to avoid his creditors. Developed an amusing habit of speaking in rhyme. Married his devoted slave, “The Marchioness.”—“*The Old Curiosity Shop.*”

TAPELEY, MARK.—The King of Optimists. Would have laughed through a howling wilderness. Made it his golden rule to be jolly under all circumstances. No character in fiction ever withstood so cheerfully “the flings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”—“*Martin Chuzzlewit.*”

TRADDLES, TOMMY.—“The merriest and most miserable” of the boys at Salom House School. Always drew skeletons in class in order to console himself.—“*David Copperfield.*”

TWIST, OLIVER.—A lad of good parentage, brought up in a workhouse. He fell among thieves.

WELLER, SAM.—The faithful henchman of Mr. Pickwick. One of the most amusing characters ever created.—“*The Pickwick Papers.*”

SAYINGS FROM DICKENS.

(Which can be applied to certain Greyfriars fellows.)

“To the young this is a world of action, not for moping and dreading in.”—“*David Copperfield.*” (Applicable to Lord Mauleverer.)

“Things cannot be expected to turn up of themselves. We must assist to turn them up.”—“*David Copperfield.*” (Applicable to Billy Bunter’s postal-order.)

“Think and speak and act like an accountable creature.”—“*Martin Chuzzlewit.*” (Applicable to Horace Coker.)

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“I don’t care; nothing puts me out; I am resolved to be happy.”—“*Barnaby Rudge.*” (Applicable to Bob Cherry.)

“In journeys, as in life, it is a great deal easier to go downhill than up.”—“*Nicholas Nickleby.*” (Applicable to Coker when motor-cycling.)

“It is a melancholy truth that great men have their poor relations.”—“*Bleak House.*” (Applicable to Billy Bunter.)

“Any man can be in good spirits when he is well-dressed. There ain’t much credit in that.”—“*Martin Chuzzlewit.*” (Applicable to Cecil Reginald Temple.)

“Anything that makes a noise is satisfactory to a crowd.”—“*Old Curiosity Shop.*” (Applicable to Tom Brown’s gramophone.)

“You can’t make a head and brains out of a brass knob with nothing in it.”—“*Little Dorrit.*” (Applicable to Horace Coker.)

“What are we,” said Mr. Pecksniff, “but coaches? Some of us slow coaches.”—“*Martin Chuzzlewit.*” (Applicable to Lord Mauleverer.)

“That boy is no common boy, and, mark me, his fortune will be no common fortune.”—“*Great Expectations.*” (Applicable to Vernon-Smith.)

“There is at this present moment, in this very place, a perfect constellation of talent and genius.”—“*Martin Chuzzlewit.*” (Applicable to the editorial sanctum of “*The Greyfriars Herald.*”)

[Supplement II.]



The Boy who Asked for More!

A Screamingly Funny Story of School Life,

By Dicky Nugent.

"GOOD-BYE, my dear boy!" Mr. Muggins' voice quivered with commotion. He was just packing his hopeful son off to school, and the tear-stained face of Paul Muggins was pressed against the carriage window.

"Good-bye, pater! Is there anything else you'd like to say to me before I proceed to St. Sam's?"

"Yes," said Mr. Muggins, stroking his clean-shaven beard thoughtfully. "If you want to make a success of your school career, you must stand up for your rites. Never be backward in coming forward. And, above all, never be afraid of asking for more!"

"More what, pater?"

"More of whatever happens to be going, of course! For eggssample, if you have stake-and-kidney pudding for dinner, and the portion they give you is not sufficient, take your plate up to the master in charge of the dining-hall, and say to him in loud, wringing toans, 'Please, sir, I want some more!'"

"But—but that's what Oliver Twist did, pater! And it landed him in the soap."

"True," said Mr. Muggins. "But times have changed since Oliver Twist was a boy. Besides, he was a pawper, whereas you are the son of a rich man—a wealthy City magnet, who is very popular, and who regards you as his gem. I am paying quite a lot of munny for your edification at St. Sam's, and they will not dare to refuse you if you should ask for more. And you are not only to ask for it, boy—you are to demand it! Whenever anything is given to you, no matter whether it is food, or drink, or advice, you are to say, 'Please, I want some more!' Make that your daily maxim, my boy, and you will prosper. The boy who has the carriage to ask for more will rise in the world. You will never find him begging his bread, or carrying sandwich-boards down the Strand. But see! The guard is waving his whistle, and blowing his flag. You are off! Once again—good-bye!"

"Good-bye, pater!" panted Paul Muggins. And then he threw himself down into the corner-seat of the carriage, and burst into a torrent of wild weeping.

Do not laugh at him, dear reader! You have been through the mill, and so have I. We all know what a terrible pang it is to part from our parents, and to plunge into the stormy seas of school life. Paul Muggins was not the first fellow who had cried his eyes out in the corner-seat of a railway-carriage; and he will not be the last.

The train rushed on its mad career. It rumbled through tunnels, and rattled over level crossings, and rattled over level crossings, until at last it drew up at Little-Clackfold-in-the-Mud, which was the station for St. Sam's.

Waiting on the platform to meet the new boy was Broot major, the bully of Supplement III.]

the Fourth. He was a hulking, hefty, horrible lout, with a fierce jaw, a criminal's frown, and little, beady eyes. He strode towards Paul Muggins as the new boy delighted from the train.

"Are you the new brat?" he demanded.

"Yes, please."

"What's your name?"

"Paul Muggins."

"What's your father?"

"A wealthy City magnet."

"Bah! He duzzent attract me by his vast riches!" growled Broot major.

"By the way, young Muggins, have you ever been nocked down?"

"Only once. I was nocked down in my infansy by a steen-roller. That accounts for my snub nose."

"Har, har, har!" laughed the brootal Broot.

"Well, it will give me grate pleasure to nock you down for the second time in your life. Here goes!"

The cowardly bully shot out his left, and Muggins was nocked clean off the edge of the platform. He landed on the mettlies with a sickening thud.

"Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" he yelled.

And then, remembering the advice of his worthy sire, Muggins staggered to his feet and blinked up at Broot major.

"Pip-pip-please, I want some more!" he stammered.

Broot major looked astonished.

"Grate Scott!" he gasped. "One mighty blow from my fist is generally enuff for most people. However, you shall have your hart's desire. I'm always a very obliging sort of fellow. Get up on the platform!"

Muggins obeyed; and then another powerful straight left nocked him on to the mettlies again.

The new boy lay like a log. And his dasterly assailant walked off, and left him lying unconscious on the iron way.

About an hour later, the rear of an eggsspress-train aroused Muggins from his steeper, and he scrambled off the track in the nick of time. Had he lingered a second longer, his remains



"Please, sir, I want some more," said Muggins.

would have been sent home to his sorrowing parents in a match-box!

Feeling very broozed and shaken, Muggins made his way to St. Sam's. He reached the school without further mishap, and interviewed his Form-master, Mr. Lickhau, who put him in Study No. 3, with a couple of very stowidious fellows, Cramfer and Swotte.

All went well until dinner-time next day. Dinner consisted of Sir Loin of Beef, and every fellow was given a tremendous portion. Nobody was ever eggsspected to come up for a second helping. In fact, only the glutten of the school, like Tubby Barrell of the Fourth, ever managed to get through the first helping!

But Paul Muggins was thinking of his father's words—"The boy who has the carriage to ask for more will rise in the world." So, after he had shifted the mountain of beef and vegetables that was on his plate, he rose from his seat, and walked up to the master in charge of the dining-hall.

"Please, sir," he cried, in wringing toans, "I want some more!"

The silence was so intense that you could have heard a pear-drop.

Never in the long history of St. Sam's had any fellow been known to ask for more.

The master on duty nearly swooned.

"W-what?" he gasped faintly.

"Please, sir, I want some more!" repeated Muggins boldly.

"More?" gasped the horrified master. "And you have already kousumed enuff for six people! Never in my life have I known such brazen ordastity! You will come with me to the headmaster!"

Shortly afterwards poor old Muggins got it in the neck—or, rather, in a lower portion of his anatomy.

The Head wielded the birch with grate vigger. He laid on a dozen strokes good and hard; and then he paused, pumping in breath after his eggssortions.

Then, to the utter amazement of the whole school, Muggins slipped down from the porter's shoulders and turned to the Head, and repeated the formula which his father had given him.

"Please, sir, I want some more!"

The Head nearly fell down.

"Grate jumping crackers!" he eggclaimed. "Hasn't the young brat had enuff? I gave him a dozen of the best, and now he's asking for an oncore! He shall have it, too, by Jove!"

So saying, the Head administered another dozen, and by the time it was over the victim resembled a limp rag. He had to spend a week in the school sanny before he recovered. This gave him plenty of time for meditation, and he decided that never again, in any circumstances, would he ask for more. It was anything but a paying game, being the Oliver Twist of St. Sam's!

THE END.

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An Essay on Dickens.

By MARK LINLEY.

CHARLES DICKENS, the greatest English novelist, was born at Landport, Portsmouth, on February 7th, 1812. He was the eldest son of a naval writer who was stationed in the local dockyard.

It is said that Charles Dickens' father was the model on which Wilkins Micawber was founded. At all events, when the novelist was only ten years old, his improvident parent was in prison for debt. And Charles Dickens found himself pitchforked into the world, to fight the battle of life in real earnest.

He had a terrible time at first. Boys of to-day can hardly realise the appalling conditions under which young Dickens lived and worked. This is how he describes his place of employment:

"It was a crazy, tumbledown old house, abutting on the river, and literally overrun with rats. Its wainscoted rooms,

and its rotten floors and staircase, and the old grey rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up vividly before me, as if I were there again. The counting-house was on the first floor, looking over the coal-barges and the river. There was a recess in it, in which I used to sit and work.

"My work was to cover the pots of paste-blackening—first with a piece of oil-paper, and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string, and then to clip the paper close and neat all round, until it looked as smart as a pot of ointment from an apothecary's shop. Two or three boys were kept at similar duty downstairs, on similar wages. (Six or seven shillings per week.) I felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my breast."

But things did not turn out so badly as Charles Dickens anticipated. His father was able to put him to school two years later, and there he remained until he was fourteen.

After his brief school career, Dickens became a clerk in a lawyer's office; but his heart was not in his job, and at the age of nineteen we find him a reporter on the staff of the "True Sun." Later he joined the "Morning Chronicle."

It was in 1836 that Dickens, like Byron, "awoke one morning to find himself famous." His "Pickwick Papers" were published by instalments, and their delightful humour brought him into popularity at a bound.

Now that he had got his feet firmly planted on Fortune's ladder, Dickens never looked back. He went on from strength to strength. His energy was inexhaustible. Story after story flowed from his pen. In fact, he worked so hard and so strenuously that he did not reach the allotted span of "threescore years and ten." He died in 1870, at the comparatively early age of fifty-eight.

The man who had once worked in a blacking factory for a small pittance left nearly a hundred thousand pounds at his death. This was due, of course, to his industrious and thrifty habits.

It was only fitting that Charles Dickens should be laid to rest in Westminster Abbey. Above his grave are the monuments of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, and David Garrick.

Both as novelist and reformer, Charles Dickens must rank as one of the greatest Englishmen of all time.

MY FAVOURITE DICKENS CHARACTER.

There are many Dickens enthusiasts at Greyfriars, and it is interesting to note which are their favourite characters.

BOB CHERRY:

Pickwick, every time! His merry antics send me into convulsions. I consider him the funniest character ever created. He even puts Billy Bunter, the Pickwick of Greyfriars, into the shade!

TOM REDWING:

My favourite Dickens character is that bluff and hearty son of the sea, Dan'l Peggotty. I often picture to myself the quaint old boat-house at Yarnmouth, where Peggotty lived. And I have met people like Peggotty in real life, before I came to Greyfriars, and I love them for their rugged honesty and simplicity.

HARRY WHARTON:

I am divided between David Copperfield, the hero of the novel which bears his name, and "Pip" Gargery, the hero of "Great Expectations."

MURREE SINGH:

The esteemed and mirth-provoking Micawber is my first favourite. He was always waiting for something to arrive, and he reminds me of the fat and ludicrous Bunter and his postal-order. The letters written by Mr. Micawber to David Copperfield make me hold my sides with mirthfulness, and laugh until I busily explode!

MARK LINLEY:

To my mind, there is no finer character in Dickens than Sydney Carton, whose heroic end is so admirably portrayed in "A Tale of Two Cities."

DICK PENFOLD:

"Although he was a driveller, I rather like Dick Swiveller. The way he used to versify was great! I might do worse if I Copy his gay absurdities. 'Tis funny, 'pon my word it is!"

MICKY DESMOND:

Shure, an' it's Mark Tapley who takes my fancy! He always looked on the bright side of things, and he never whined when all the world seemed upside down. Hats off to this merry optimist.

WILLIAM GOSLING:

"I dunno who this 'ere Dickings was, an' I don't care! I do wish you'd stop worritin' an' pesterin' me with questions! Ask me which is my favourite brow of ale, an' I might be able to answer you; but as for this 'ere Dickings, wo's 'e to me, or I to 'in? Nothin' at all. Werry well, then. Leave a pore old man to smoke 'is pipe in peace!"

DICKY NUGENT:

My favorite character in Dickens is Sir Walter Scott. (And we presume your favourite character in Scott is William Shakespeare.)

LOVERS OF DICKENS!

By DICK PENFOLD.

Bob Cherry is a gay young spark, He's up to every kind of lark. But when he's weary of his capers, He sits and reads "The Pickwick Papers."

That burly brute, Bolsover major, Is always gungo to fight, I wager. But, when his foes have felt his list, He sits devouring "Oliver Twist."

Alonzo Todd is fond of walks, But when he's out he seldom talks. For weary miles he'll tramp and trudge, Eagerly reading "Barnaby Rudge."

Tom Brown was "crooked" the other day, And had to leave the field of play. Towards his couch he limped and reeled, And asked for "David Copperfield."

You wouldn't dream that Billy Bunter Could ever be a fiction-hunter; And yet I saw our human barrel Digesting Dickens' "Christmas Carol."

Our worthy skipper, Harry Wharton, Is present when there's any sport on. But after all his recreations He loves to read "Great Expectations."

Whenever my fortunes fickle be, I take up "Nicholas Nickleby." It lucks me up; I never brood, (I've yet to tackle "Edwin Drood.")

Are you downhearted? Not a bit! We still have Martin Chuzzlewit. We love old Dickens' yarns and rhymes - There's no "Black House" in the "Hood Times!"

[Supplement to,

THE MAGNET LIBRARY, - No. B10.



The Xmas Round Table



SCENE: Dinner of representative gathering of UNION JACK readers. The toast of "Sexton Blake," proposed by the Editor, has just been drunk with acclamation. In response to musical honours, and insistent demands for a speech, Blake rises to reply.

"MR EDITOR, Ladies, and Gentlemen" (said Sexton Blake), "It is with great pleasure—and a somewhat acute sense of my unworthiness of the honour—that I reply to your toast.

"One of the finest innovations which have been made possible for us in late years is, in my humble opinion, the institution of the Round Table.

"This board at which we are now assembled for our Christmastide meeting is more than a mere convenient table at which we can debate our affairs during the year, or at which we can forgather at a dinner such as this at the season of reunion and festivity. It is the outward and visible sign of comradeship in our allegiance to the Old Paper—the paper that is ever new. (Applause.)

"My friend the Editor has made it a sort of slogan. I believe, that the paper is intended for readers of all ages and both sexes. He might have added: 'All nationalities that can read the King's English,' too.

"It is an established fact that everybody can enjoy a good detective story, and I think that if the contents of our paper were translated every week into, say, the language of the Cannibal Islands, the inhabitants of those places would refrain from their usual habit of greeting the stranger with spears, and would gibber with joy—or however it is that they express their delight—on the arrival of the boat with the weekly supplies of the UNION JACK.

"You will notice that I said one could enjoy 'a good detective story,' and not 'stories of a good detective.' The fact that I happen to be the individual whose doings are chronicled is merely incidental. I cannot claim that my activities are the best that could be chosen for the purpose. (Cries of "No, no!")

"I see that you are inclined to disagree with me on that point, so I will not press it. I think it will not be disputed, however, that even my commonplace exploits are presented to you in such a way as to be not entirely uninteresting. That, of course, is through no merit of mine, and I must regretfully accuse my chronicler of a little occasional exaggeration, especially with regard to my alleged versatility, perspicacity, or prowess."

(Here the speaker was interrupted by cries of dissent, in which the author of "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve," was particu-

larly observed to join, with a somewhat guilty air.)

"Nor will I protest against his descriptions of my personal appearance. He means well, and may be excused on the grounds of literary zeal. But I would remark in passing that it is news to me that I have a 'hawk-like beak,' or that my eyes are 'orbs of steel-grey, set beneath a lofty, intellectual dome.'

"I will also forgive the same writer, in his account of my recent visit to Goreham Grange, in emphasising the tobacco-burnt, chemical stained, and faded condition of my dressing-gown. I will assure you—and him—that it is quite a comfortable garment, and that although my worthy housekeeper, Mrs. Bardell, has kindly made me a present this Christmas of a new and very handsome one to replace it, I shall experience a pang to be off with the old love and on with the new.

"To do our writer friend justice, however, I must admit that he invariably refers to my evening rig-out as 'immaculate,' or 'faultless' and sometimes both. (Laughter.) I am not aware whether or not he is in league with my tailor for advertising purposes, but if not, I am sure that gentleman would be pleased to hear of his unsolicited testimonial.

"But enough of this banter. "There is one thing I must mention, while I have the opportunity of addressing you, and that is my gratification at seeing at our Round Table such a representative gathering of those to whom the UNION JACK is a weekly boon

"Boys and girls, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers—grandfathers and grandmothers, even, are here. Readers from At Home; readers from each and every one of our Colonies; and readers from lands which owe no allegiance to the UNION JACK as a flag, but which distinctly owe it to the UNION JACK as a paper.

"My friend the Editor tells me that the easiest way of becoming a stamp collector is to be the editor of such a paper as the UNION JACK, and to 'freeze on'—the term is his own—the foreign stamps that decorate his morning mail from readers in all parts of the earth.

"He is to be envied as regards the stamps, but he is to be envied even more so as regards the splendid loyalty and enthusiasm in the letters themselves. And, speaking for myself, I must say that I am honoured, and at times embarrassed, and at laudatory things that those letters often say about

me personally. I suspect the Editor of attempts to undermine my modesty by insisting on my seeing them.

"One thing I learn is that there is a persistent demand for stories recording a visit of mine to that particular part of the world from which the sender of the letter writes; it might be Kamchaka, Zanzibar, Backwash, Ga., Walla-Walla, or Bing-Bang-Bong, China. (Laughter.)

"I do not think I can claim acquaintance with literally all those places; but, as you know, I have had occasion to travel a bit, and I am sure the Editor is doing his best to oblige you with tales about as many of your hometowns as he can. It is, I understand, mainly a matter of selecting the material concerned from the records of my past cases, which I have already placed before him.

"But, as my time is drawing short, I will refrain from going further into the matter, except to say that you may rely on him doing his best for you; and that the material, whatever it may be, will be served up to you by our clever writing friends in the same palatable and enjoyable form for which the paper has so long held a reputation.

"To conclude, I must thank you very sincerely for your hearty reception of my name, and as I see that the next toast on the list is 'Mr. Tinker,' I will no longer intervene between you and the remarks of my young assistant, who, I can see, is already itching to make his speech."

(Laughter, during which Tinker was observed to shake his head emphatically.)

"My best thanks, then, for your toast. May your Christmases, now and to come, be everything that you can wish them; and if the periodical with which my name is unworthily associated can succeed in adding to your enjoyment of this festive season, I am honoured indeed." (Cheers and prolonged applause.)

Your Editor

A New School Story about a New Schoolboy Character.

Read the Adventures of

POSHER P. POSH

in
"THE FREAK
of
St. FREDA'S!"



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THE GREY FRIARS CLUB



Your Hon Chairman and founder of **THE GREY FRIARS CLUB**, (now in its 24th year of operation) and also the Curator and owner of the **FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM AND LIBRARY** (now in its coming of age year since your chairman established it 21 years ago.) once again has very great pleasure in extending **THE EARLIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS** to all members of the club, and enthusiasts of Christian goodwill and integrity. Our particular congratulations go to Mary, our C.D. and Annual Editor, whose work so unflinchingly enchants us in these delightful trips of memorabilia each month and year in the Annual as well as the excellent work done by our printers over all these long years.

Now in view of your queries about my occupation and interests over the years, and in view of the interest shown in Herbert Leckenby's war time memories which we have reported in the club's newsletters - here goes. Not many, if any, of you know that during my years of continuous wartime service overseas beginning in South America (Bahia) and South Africa (Durban) and Suez and Algiers to become part of the 8th Army in Africa, and Sicily, Italy, Austria and Germany (2nd para, Club Christmas Greeting C.D.A. 1991 and end 4th para C.D.A. Xmas 1996) surprisingly enough the odd discussion in our off duty moments (not started by me) did occur about the old papers, such as the Magnet & Gem, that your Chairman and others assumed had gone for good - little knowing that Howard Baker was going to reintroduce them after the war for many years running, in far better form than the original.. When the war ended and I received my honourable discharge from the army, signified by five awards and the 8th Army Clasp, and Certificate for same from the War Office, I decided (much as I loved my home and the Old Country) I would like to continue seeing more of the world by joining the Merchant Navy. Accordingly I enlisted as a crew member of the P. & O liner "Arcadia" which regularly did the Australian run, and all places in between, and frankly it was great. I enjoyed every minute of it, sailing to many exciting places in the world with my shipmates - and being paid for it !!

However I finally decided it was time to leave the Merchant Service to settle down and get married to a lovely young lady (My very own Marjorie Hazeldene) who was educated at one of the very first Girls Public Schools, (the N.L.C.S. founded 1850), and who became a Chartered Certified Accountant, She also subsequently became my secretary in a national business we had started, our products being rated and pictured first, out of some 30 other similar products by national manufacturers, in a leading trade magazine the "Electrical and Radio Trading" published nationwide by Odhams Press. We also advertised our own products on television, as well as in the national newspapers, with considerable success and had a constant turnover of many thousands of machines to wholesale and other trade outlets.

As a result, we were able to send our three sons to well known prep and public schools, and indeed your Hon Sec. has been pleased to accept invitations to attend their School's Annual Dinners. at both the Mansion House London with the Lord Mayor, of London - one of the Governors of the City of London school; - and at Harrow School. Members will remember the picture in our Courtfield Newsletter No. 17 centre pages showing our son's school the John Lyon eleven, playing Harrow School on Harrow School grounds, with your Courtfield Hostess sitting watching, and which match resulted in a draw by our son's school against Harrow School.. (Members will also recall trips that I organised and arranged for them to be shown over Harrow and Eton Schools and NLCS in 1979. See reports and pictures in our Courtfield Newsletters Nos 12 - 20)

We moved on to purchasing a number of modern freehold properties which we turned quite successfully into another property business for many many years until we finally sold most of the properties off to retire. During this time we also purchased a large freehold section of Kingsgate Castle and cliff, (a typical Frank Richards castle - one with a concealed long underground passage leading to the sea, reputedly used for smuggling) almost alongside our Frank's home at Roselawn (see latter part 3rd para., centre pages C.D. No 529 for Jan 1991) and I and your Courtfield hostess were subsequently then made Directors of Kingsgate Castle, where we have held many happy club meetings with club members including the late Miss Edith Hood and our Frank's relatives Una Hamilton Wright and her husband Brian, and many others (see 3rd Para page 98 C.D.A. 1989)

Some years ago I decided to join the Merchant Navy Association., and subsequently became one of the four Committee members, under the Founder and Chairman, to organise the agendas for our meetings held in a large modern Merchant Navy building in London. This also has some 50 modern en-suite bedrooms for members to use. and we often stay there for several nights whenever we have business in London or I am attending a M.N.A remembrance parade and service at the Tower Hill memorial site. This site is right opposite the Tower and is in memory of the 30,000 Merchant seamen who have died in service in the last two wars. Their names are all recorded in raised letters on numerous bronze plaques, in the memorial garden just outside Trinity House on Tower Hill. and a service is held there annually on 3rd Sept, usually conducted by the Bishop of London. As a committee member it has been essential for me to attend each monthly meeting and this memorial Service on Tower Hill each year also.

This, with my British Legion membership and other duties, is very demanding on my time. Our 3rd Sept meeting this year on Tower Hill, led by a full brass band and Scottish pipers in full uniform, was attended by the Deputy P.M. John Prescott (Ruskin College, Oxford,) an ex Merchant Navy man, who I had the pleasure of meeting, shaking hands, with and chatting to, (see a picture showing us which appeared in this year's September 5th edition of "Lloyds List" of shipping interests) We then adjourn to the Association's club house for another brief meeting, and report, followed by an excellently laid out buffet and chat and drinks with other members. for as long as we liked.

During all this time I have never lost my interest in the old papers and the sound, moral, good common sense of our Frank's writings which leave nothing to be desired for young men of all ages.. I agree completely with our Frank's comments in reply to George Orwell of 1984 fame in the Christ Church , Ramsgate, Magazine when he, (F.R.) wrote them in 1948 and hopefully our Editor, Mary, can find room to print them in this current edition of the C.D.Annual.

This year we have continued our globe-trotting and, in response to enquiries from members, will give you a short report on our latest travels.

In February we re-visited Hong Kong – partly to see whether the handover to China has made any visible difference there – and also to spend a couple of weeks there with our son, Friar Rob (who now has a lovely detached house in Brisbane) and his wife and family. The first change was, of course, the new airport – Chek Lap Kok. This is an enormous airport started by the British, which has been built on Lantau Island and is joined to the mainland by the Tsing Ma bridge.

Victoria Peak has been transformed. The Peak Railway, which runs from the Central district to the top of the Peak, used to terminate at a ramshackle wooden building, housing a small restaurant and a couple of small shops. Now there is a large, modern Galleria containing several restaurants and many varied shops on three floors, with a roof garden affording a splendid view across the harbour to Kowloon. Everywhere you go in Hong Kong new buildings are springing up – shops, offices and terminals for the many ferries running to the outlying islands, and it was great to revisit one of our old clubs there the "Mad Dogs" with all its ornaments of the Empire and unique English memorabilia all around. We have spent some happy times there chatting to American sailors and English tourists.

Our next trip this year was a cruise on the Fred Olsen's Black Watch to the capital cities round the Baltic – Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, St Petersburg, Tallinn and Amsterdam, at each of which we spent a day or two touring around before rejoining our ship and subsequently sailing through the Kiel Canal in Germany also. This wonderful trip gave us some fascinating glimpses of Scandinavia and Russia, and we are hoping to return to some of them for a longer stay – particularly the magnificent palaces of St Petersburg, -one is now referred to as the Hermitage. This is a magnificent place with a Grand Staircase and world famous paintings on each wall, several by Leonardo Da Vinci. Travelling some 25 miles inside Russia we also visited the magnificent Catherine's Palace in Pushkin, which we explored all over. This is ornately decorated with many huge paintings and some smaller ones by Leonardo again. Apart from the beautiful exterior the inside was a feast for sore eyes. With beautifully painted ceilings, walls and doors - much of it in gold - in each of the main rooms and again beautiful parquet floors all over. The weeks just flew past

Our latest excursion was another visit to France - Disneyland Paris - together with our other two sons, Friars Reg and Roger, and their wives and children. It was interesting to see how the Paris Disneyland compares with the California and Florida ones, see last para page 120 C.D.A. 1993. The weather could have been kinder but it was a most enjoyable stay, and our huge modern colonnaded hotel in the resort left nothing to be desired with lovely wide balconies to fully admire the view outside each of our windows and, needless to say, we enjoyed every minute. A full report will appear in our full colour Courtfield Newsletter which will be available to each member at £3 plus postage 20p.

Our next meeting is on Saturday 2nd Dec. Stevenage is in the heart of lovely Hertfordshire countryside easily reached by train or car (remember to ring me, or drop me a line to confirm attendance) and at the meeting, during our break period I hope to show, weather permitting, the long "Friardale Lane," which runs right alongside the end of our Close and the playing fields with Greyfriars School alongside. This is really as perfect a location as you could imagine, for the location of our Franks stories, for, with its giant Sequoia and oak trees alongside this lane, its long hedgerows, with several openings to enter the fields, and squirrels and different birds in abundance, it is as close a copy of our "Franks" Friardale Lane as you could hope to find. At week ends it is very pleasant to see full teams of school football players in their own sides' coloured shirts playing there and for the rest of the week the ground is used for general recreational purposes. Shephalbury Manor House a lovely old mansion just seen through the trees adjoining the open playing fields and grasslands there, was subsequently taken over by the Council and then turned into a private school. To us it represents Greyfriars School and playing fields as well as Friardale Lane. No motor traffic is allowed along this really lovely old lane, needless to say. Our local village shops (Friardale), and with Stevenage some two miles away representing Courtfield, with its trains reaching such far away places as London and the far North. In the old town of Stevenage (remember, there is the old town and the new town, separated by a local dual carriageway) while the new town is only 45 years old the old town goes back for centuries. It has been left just as it was then, with all its wonderful old 14th century country coaching inns with large courtyards to accommodate horse drawn coaches on their way to the Midlands and the North, and its lovely old village shops. All the above is what attracted us to Stevenage.

Look forward to seeing you all again.

R. F. Acraman

Chairman / Secretary

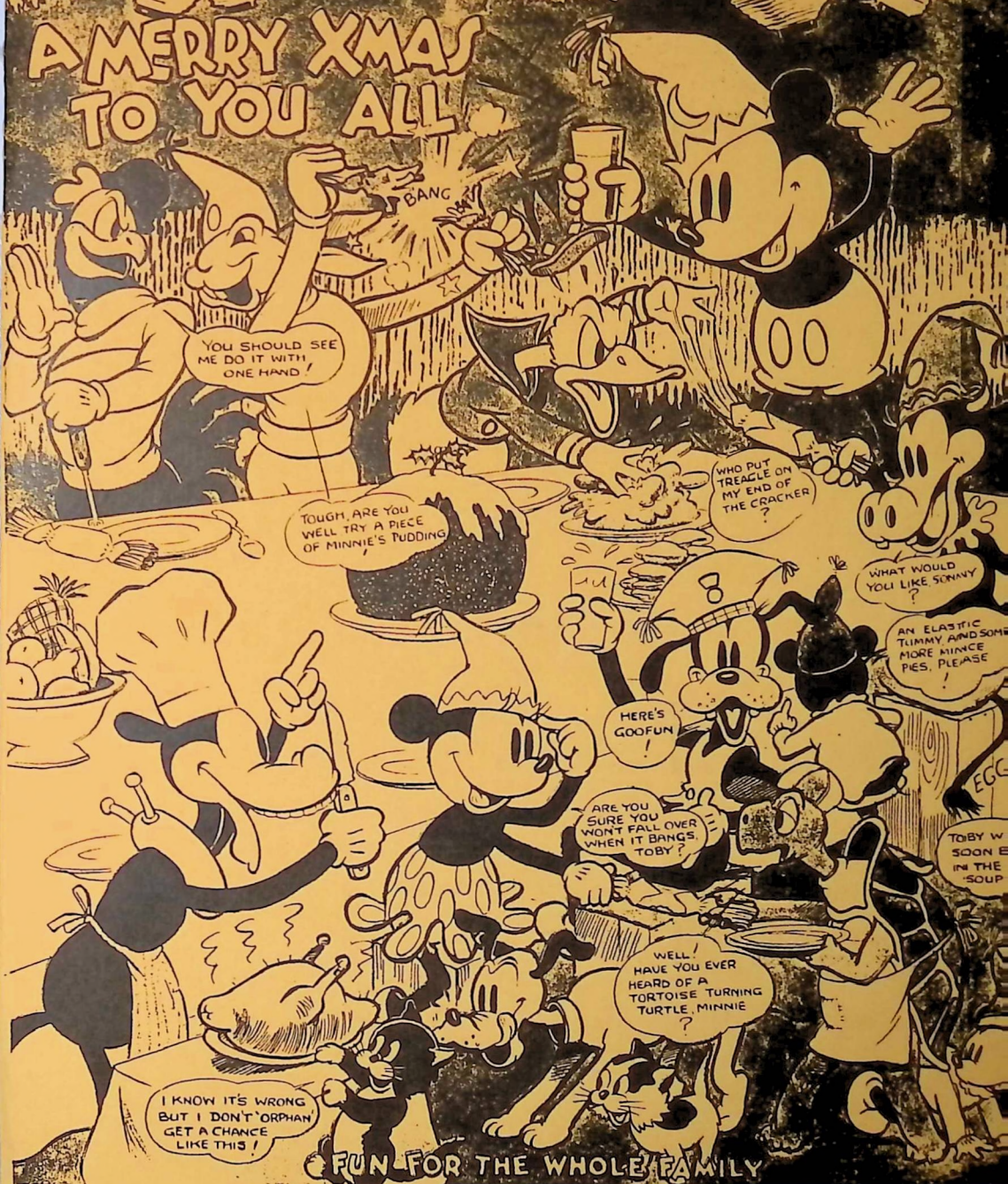
MICKEY MOUSE

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WEEKLY

2d EVERY FRIDAY 2

A MERRY XMAS TO YOU ALL



YOU SHOULD SEE
ME DO IT WITH
ONE HAND!

BANG!

TOUGH, ARE YOU
WELL TRY A PIECE
OF MINNIE'S PUDDING

WHO PUT
TREACLE ON
MY END OF
THE CRACKER?

WHAT WOULD
YOU LIKE SPRINKY?

AN ELASTIC
TUMMY AND SOME
MORE MINCE
PIES, PLEASE

HERE'S
GOOFUN!

ARE YOU
SURE YOU
WO'NT FALL OVER
WHEN IT BANGS,
TOBY?

WELL!
HAVE YOU EVER
HEARD OF A
TORTOISE TURNING
TURTLIE, MINNIE?

I KNOW IT'S WRONG
BUT I DON'T 'ORPHAN
GET A CHANCE
LIKE THIS!

TOBY W
SOON E
IN THE
SOUP

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

MAGIC PICTURES AGAIN! See Pages 4 & 5

JOLLY JACK'S WEEKLY

JUNIOR SECTION—SUNDAY DISPATCH

FUN AT MRS. LEO'S CHRISTMAS PARTY



I WANT THE PIECE WITH THE HOLLY ON.

JUST LOOK AT YOUR YOUNG RASCALS PROFESSOR.

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYBODY.

POP!

HA HA! YOU DIDN'T EXPECT THAT.

FOXWELL

The merry folk from the Pages of "Jolly Jack's Weekly" come to Mrs. Leo's party.

"Hoora! Here comes the pudding!" cheered the merrymakers at Mrs. Leo's party. "Will one be enough, do you think?" murmured Tubby. "I'd like to lasso a whole one for myself!" "Dear me!" chuckled Professor Simple. "We are having a gay time! I wonder if anyone would kiss me under the mistletoe?" Meanwhile, Jolly

Jack and Timothy, the cabin boy, were having great fun with the cubs and a giant cracker. "Why, there's a cuckoo inside!" laughed Jack. "Let's take him back to the Fun Ship and make old Pimpie jealous!" Just then Santa Claus arrived to give everybody a Christmas present, and then you may be sure the party went with a swing.