

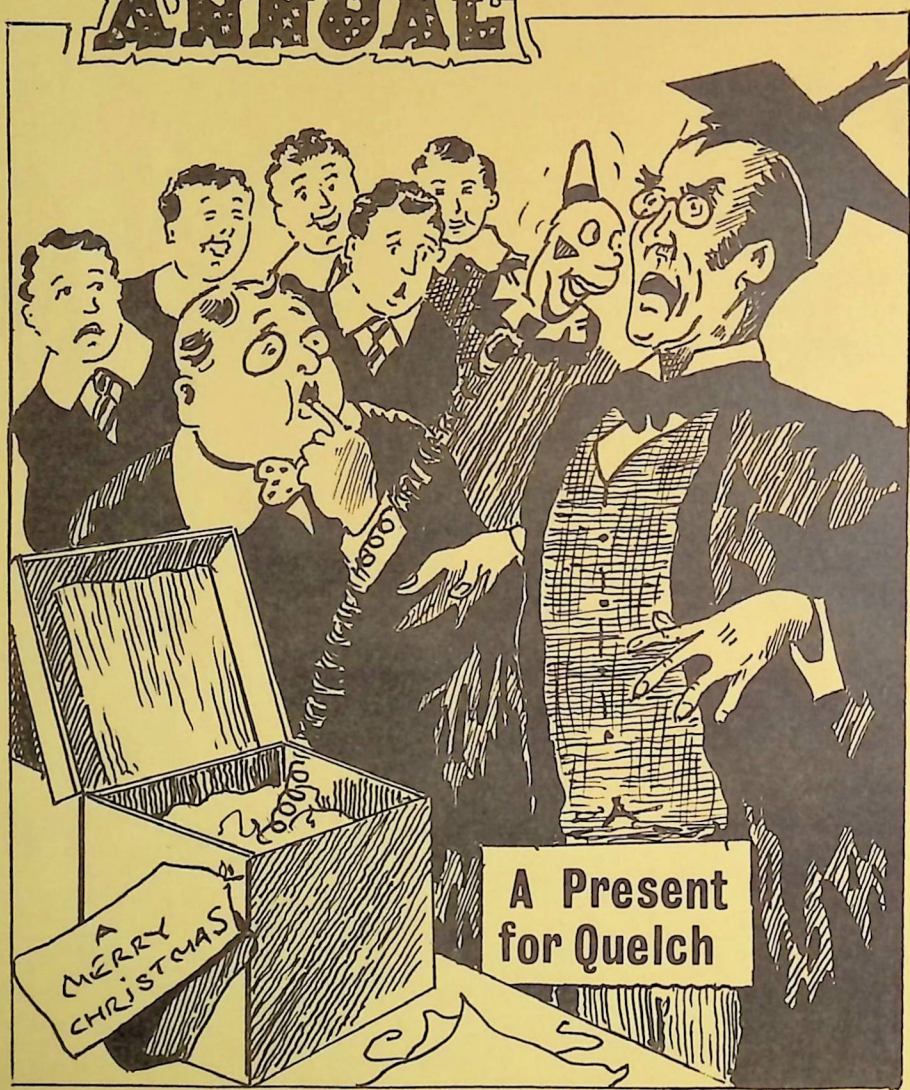
COLLECTORS'

1993

DIGEST

1993

ANNUAL



YOUR EDITOR
WISHES C.D. READERS
A VERY MERRY
CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR



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COLLECTORS DIGEST
ANNUAL
CHRISTMAS 1993
 FORTY SEVENTH YEAR

EDITOR: MARY CADOGAN, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham,
 Kent. BR3 2PY

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FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

As we look forward to Christmas and the changing of the Old Year into the New, it is once again my great pleasure to present you with the COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL. As always, it has been a labour of love from me, and from our enthusiastic and talented contributors.

It is a particular joy to be able to include in this year's Annual a story by Richmal Crompton from a long-ago anthology for adult readers, and a tale by Frank Richards, which has never before been published. Each of these shows its author in an uncharacteristic mood, although the insights into childhood for which they are rightly celebrated are very much in evidence.

Again, our very good friend Henry Webb has produced the Annual's cover picture and most of its headings, and Irene Wakefield has given further Christmassy pictures by her husband, the late Terry Wakefield, to add to the glow of its contents.

Many regular contributors, and some new ones, have provided stories, articles or pictures, and I feel sure that you will find most branches of our hobby well represented. From Sherlock Holmes and Buffalo Bill to Gussy and Bunter: from films and fairyland to St. Frank's: from Sexton Blake to the Chalet School and Cliff House - the range of items within these covers is wide and appealing. I hope that our Annual will enhance the festive season for you all, and give you plenty to ponder and chuckle over during the New Year.

As always, I should like to thank the ever-helpful Mandy and Debbie, who type the monthly C.D. and the Annual, as well as all the other co-operative members of the staff at Quacks Printers, who never let us down over dates and deadlines and, whenever problems arise, remain remarkably cheerful and unflustered. Warmest thanks are due to our contributors, and of course to all of you who support the Annual and the C.D. so loyally.

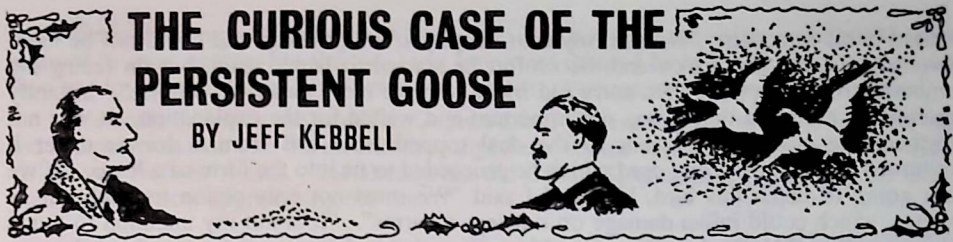
I send you the age-old but always appropriate greeting:

A RIGHT MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Mary Cadogan



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It was Christmas day. Mrs. Hudson had lit the fire in my room and I lay in bed listening to the sounds filtering into the room from outside. There was a swish of passing hansom cabs in the snow, the cry of the paper seller and below the familiar bangs and clangs as dinner was being prepared and the young housemaid given instructions as to how to lay out the table for the gentlemen upstairs. Despite the day, it was with some reluctance that I arose and poured the now warm water from the pitcher to the hand basin, performed my ablutions and dressed. I chose a rather dashing bow tie that a niece had bought me and then ventured forth into the lounge that Holmes and I shared.

Our chambers did not change from one year to the next which suited us both, untidy yes, full of souvenirs, yes, but now that my dear wife was gone these three years and our house sold, since I could no longer bear to live there, it was home. There was my section with the medical books and records and writing desk, and Holmes with the chemical corner and acid-stained deal-topped table. There upon a shelf stood a row of formidable books of reference, the violin case and pipe rack, even the Persian slipper which contained the strong tobacco that forced me to open the window, whatever the weather, when it began to smoulder in Holmes' pipe. With a smile of contentment I walked to my armchair by the fire to read the day's paper before the call for breakfast came.

To my surprise Holmes, already dressed and with his mouse-coloured dressing gown on, was looking out of the open window, as through it came the sounds of the street to which I had listened earlier, but with the added sound of a goose honking. "Come here Watson, and tell me what you make of this" he said without turning around. I went to the window and looked out. There, to my surprise, on the pavement below was a large white goose that was rapidly becoming a filthy grey with the slush cast from beneath the wheels of the cabs and drays passing by. It presented a rather brave figure as it was shouting its defiance to the world before becoming someone's Christmas dinner - in fact two urchins were already approaching it armed with cudgels and murderous intent. "Clear off you boys!" shouted Holmes, "On second thoughts, I'll give you a shilling, if you protect it 'till I come down." "Orl right Guv" shouted one, and the two boys took up positions on either side of it, as determined now to protect it as they had earlier intended to kill it, for a shilling would buy a larger goose already plucked and it was by no means certain that they would overpower this formidable adversary who flapped its wings and hissed loudly at their approach.

"Now Watson, what do you make of that?"

Careful not to show myself up, as so often happened at times like this, I carefully looked up and down the street, then at the pavement on which the defiant creature stood honking. There was absolutely nothing to lead me to disagree with my former prognosis and, except for a sewer manhole cover that had no snow on it, in front of the goose (due no doubt to bath water passing under it) nothing was out of place or amiss. A large brougham went past and the driver flicked his whip at the bird which flinched under the lash, but did not attempt to fly away. I felt quite confident as I replied "That, Holmes, is a large domestic goose that has escaped its owner and the oven for a short while and if it wasn't for the fact that I know Mrs. Hudson has two large capons for dinner I would suspect it was ours and a sense of decency has allowed it to bring notice to us of its escape".

Holmes was not often given to mirth, but my part humorous part serious interpretation of the incident started him laughing and he continued to laugh until he was

seated in his armchair. "Watson, my dear chap, you are priceless and could not be more wrong". To my annoyance and discomfort he started to laugh again, but on seeing my embarrassment stopped. "I'm sorry old friend, forgive me, I meant no offence". Instantly mollified I muttered that it was not important and waited for the explanation. It was not forthcoming and Holmes went to the deal topped table and from a drawer under it removed a length of strong cord which he proceeded to tie into the form of a lasso. "If we are going to catch this bird, Holmes" I said "We must not only pinion its neck but its wings, which could inflict damage on our legs or arms". "It is not my intention to touch the goose" said Holmes, but he armed himself with a poker nevertheless and led the way out of the lounge and down the staircase into the hall below. It was not my intention either to approach the bird unarmed so, putting on my ulster, I picked out a heavy walking stick from the umbrella stand and Holmes got a soaked crust of bread from the scullery and we opened the door onto a typical Christmas scene.

One of the young rascals guarding the goose held out a hand as we approached but was told shortly to wait, while Holmes walked into the cobbled road and faced the creature. For a rather severe and cold man, his attitude to the bird was one of sympathy, he threw the crust in front of it and went up to the manhole. The bird was by now an object of pity, but it kept its dignity eating the bread, although watching us carefully all the while. Its fine white feathers were now a foggy grey, it was frightened out of its wits, but something special was keeping it on that spot when surrounded by predators. Holmes approached only as far as the manhole and carefully levered the lid up, peering into the tunnel below. "Come here Watson old fellow and look at this". I approached warily, not having his icy courage, and also peered into the hole. As my eyes grew accustomed to the half light I saw to my amazement the most astonishing thing; another goose equally filthy was staring up at its only means of escape, but unable to fly up and out of the stinking morass it found itself in.

Ever resourceful, Holmes dropped the noose he had made over the bird's head and quickly drew it choking from the pit. Before the bird could attack he removed the cord and we both quickly stepped back. The bedraggled geese went to each other and rubbed their heads and neck together. Then the second bird finished what I swear was half the crust which the first hadn't eaten. "What does this mean Holmes" I started, "What in God's name was it all about?" "It's called love, Watson" he said and went to the two boys. "Stay with the geese until they leave, and my housekeeper will give you a florin to go with this shilling." He passed the coin to one of the boys and I could see that there was no chance whatsoever of them leaving until the birds had cleaned themselves and gone.

Holmes led the way into the house and left a request with the housemaid further to feed the geese: then we made our way upstairs to the comfort of our living room and sat down in front of the fire. I poured us both a whisky and soda and lit a small cigar. Holmes lit his pipe, not from the slipper I was pleased to note, as I did not want to open the window, and I waited patiently for him to clear his thoughts and explain how he had managed to deduce so much from so little.

Holmes sipped the whisky and began. "The first thing I noticed about the goose below was its whiteness, so perhaps I had the advantage over you to start with. It was a snow goose, a rare visitor to our shores, let alone our towns. The inclement weather and gales we have been suffering recently must have blown these geese off course. There's no way, however, that one would stand on our pavements among one of its most feared enemies except for a special reason. Geese mate for life, as do our humble pigeon, and their love and loyalty are total, so I correctly deduced that its mate must be nearby, but where? The manhole cover was obviously the point of focus, and when the street was silent at odd moments I could hear a faint reply to the bird's call which could only be coming from the sewer. Even I, Watson, cannot imagine how the mate landed where it did. Perhaps it was chased into the outlet by a fox and, losing its way, kept in touch with calls to the other bird.

"Holmes, you make it all sound so simple, yet I could not have begun to work it out as you did. May I congratulate you on your deductions and knowledge and thank you wholeheartedly on behalf of the geese. Well done!" Holmes smiled and sucked

reflectively on his pipe "You know Watson, that I do not have the softer emotions that are enjoyed by most people, but the two most important things I have found, through you, are love and loyalty and I would have paid ten, nay fifty, guineas to see those birds fly free."

We walked over to the window. A crowd had gathered and in time the birds having fed and preened, rose into the air and flew together over the roof tops, a magnificent sight. "Bless you Holmes" I said. "He already has old friend. Come now, I must pay off those young rascals now approaching our door."



Greetings to all from the South Pacific.

REG V. MOSS

KHANDALLAH, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

Best Wishes to fellow C.D. readers, Xmas Greetings to the Editor and contributors who make the annual such a success. Good hunting with your wants.

J. ASHLEY

46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM, HANTS, PO15 5AH. Tel. 0329/234489

Greetings and Best Wishes to all in the hobby, especially fellow enthusiasts of D.C. Thomson and Percy F. Westerman.

DES O'LEARY

LOUGHBOROUGH. Tel. 0509 215628

Christmas Greetings to all readers and Happy Years of favourite reading to come.

MARGERLY WOODS

HARLEQUIN COTAGE, SCALBY, SCARBOROUGH

Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year to all readers.

REG ANDREWS

LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY

Season's Greetings to all Hobby Friends from the BECKS OF LEWES AND POLEGATE

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to friends and readers everywhere.

BILL BRADFORD

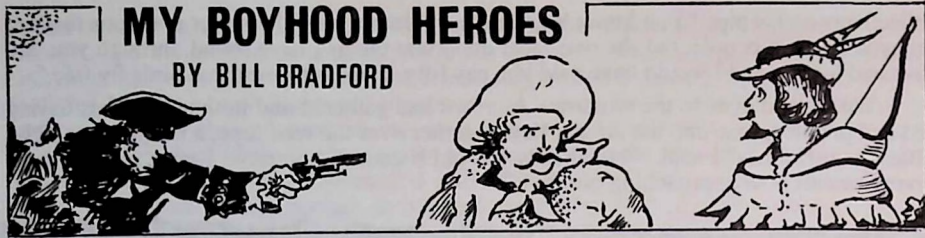
Best Wishes for Christmas and New Year to everyone, and a special greeting to our Editor, from

D. BLAKE

THAMES DITTON, SURREY

Season's Greetings to all Friars and Collectors from

ARTHUR EDWARDS



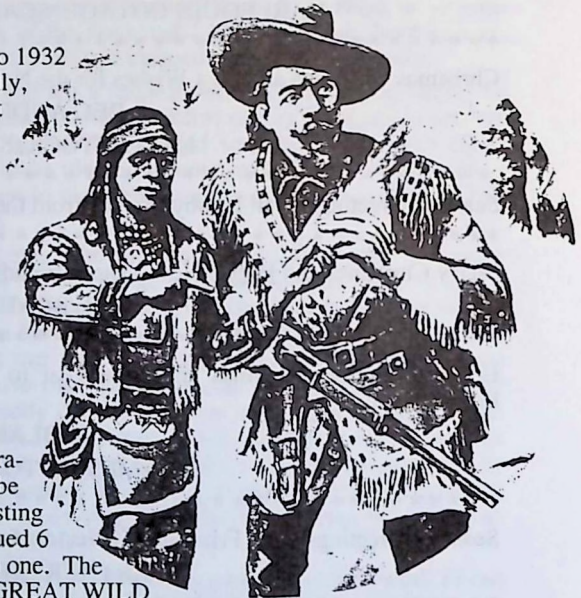
I started reading at an early age; probably as an only child, in an unhappy environment, I found solace in tales of the Greenwood, the Prairie and the High Seas. This was about 1930, a golden age for boy's story papers and magazines, and my preference for historical yarns led me to Robin Hood, Buffalo Bill and Dick Turpin. Fortunately my requirements were well met by current issues of Newnes and Aldine Libraries and Novels, plus the Robin Hood Library which had ceased in 1927 but could often be found in Woolworths at 1d. A few years later the other two Libraries became available at the same source and price, if you could afford them! These reduced price issues had their corners clipped off: you must have seen some over the years. This slight defacement did not worry us at the time, although in latter years, as a collector, I do not view this so kindly.

My thirst was also slaked by various Aldine books published at three shillings and sixpence, featuring Robin Hood and Buffalo Bill. Originally published in the mid and late 1920s but often reprinted, these books contained striking coloured plates. Western ones mainly by Robert Prowse with some by Savile Lumley and the Greenwood largely by W.B. Handforth. All these books were edited by Wingrove Wilson (r.n. Walter H. Light) and other authors included S. Walkey, Eric Wood, Geoffrey Prout and G. Clabon Glover. Looking at all these items now, they have one factor in common, wonderful covers, which I am sure attracted me to them in the first place. What a boon to Newnes and Aldine, Robert Prowse and H.M. Brock. Perhaps we might look a little closer and in more detail at my old favourites?

BUFFALO BILL (William F. Cody)

The Aldine Library ran from 1899 to 1932 = 941 issues. Probably priced at 1d initially, it sold at 2d in due course. Copies do not turn up that often and, having only two issues, I can only say they contained 32 pages of indifferent paper and print with covers that do little for me! The Aldine B.B. Novels ran from 1916 to 1932 totalling 342 issues and appear to have cost 4d throughout. About the first 180 were of 90 pages, approx. 6"x4", thereafter 64 pages of 7"x5". Almost all the covers were by Prowse.

Newnes New Redskin Library had, I think, all Buffalo Bill titles. These were from 1926-1929, 86 in total, mainly illustrated by J.H. Valda. The stories appear to be "originals" but I thought them less interesting than the Aldine publications. Pearson issued 6 such novels in 1935 but I have never seen one. The Aldine books were:- SCOUTS OF THE GREAT WILD WEST (1924); BIG ADVENTURES WITH BUFFALO BILL (1924); SCOUTS OF THE PRAIRIE (1925); SCOUTS IN BUCKSKIN (1926); SCOUTS OF THE LONE



TRAIL (1927); STORIES OF SCOUTS AND REDSKINS; MORE ADVENTURES WITH BUFFALO BILL; SCOUTING WITH BUFFALO BILL.

Stories appeared in many annuals and boys' papers and in numerous Boys' Friend Library, not forgetting No.674 (2nd series) by E.S. Brooks entitled "Buffalo Bill's Boyhood", available today from the Brooks Library per Mr. Roy Parsons. I can only trace two films bearing his name, "Buffalo Bill" in 1934, starring Joel McCrea and "Buffalo Bill and the Indians or Sitting Bull's History lesson" in 1976.

ROBIN HOOD

Aldine issued 4 Libraries over the years - 1st 1901-1903 = 88 issues at 1d, 32 pages, 8½" x 5½", written by half a dozen authors, including Alfred S. Burrage and Escott Lyn. 2nd 1912-1914 = 8 only? No information available. 3rd 1924-1927 = 88 issues at 2d. Apparently reprints of the 1st series, only slightly smaller in size but covers inferior in colour and composition. 4th 1930 = 8. No information available.

The Aldine books were:- STORIES OF ROBIN HOOD (1926); THE MERRY MEN OF SHERWOOD (1927); ROBIN OF SHERWOOD; MORE ADVENTURES WITH ROBIN HOOD.

Apart from Handsworth, other illustrators were Ogle and S.H. Chapman. and the authors mainly as in the Western books.

Apart from "For the Outlaw or King" No. 14 Briton's Own Library, there were numerous stories in the boys' Friend Library, both 1st and 2nd series, many by Morton Pike (D.H. Parry). In 1919 Amalgamated Press launched the Robin Hood Library but this only ran for 57 weeks, and if you have seen or read a copy, you will know why!

On the silver screen, in 1922, "Robin Hood" starred Douglas Fairbanks Jr. with Wallace Beery and Alan Hale. The 1938 version with Errol Flynn, Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains and Alan Hale (again) was a superb production and retained most of the incidents from early stories and was perfectly cast. On TV, between 1955-1959 there were 143 episodes with Richard Greene in the title role, quite good but aimed at a youthful audience. Some 30 years later, on ITV, our hero was played by Michael Praed and then Sean Connery. I was too steeped in the old memories of Sherwood really to enjoy these but they were well received by a modern audience. I did enjoy the musical scores, however.



The friar's whirling staff fell upon the Norman's helm.

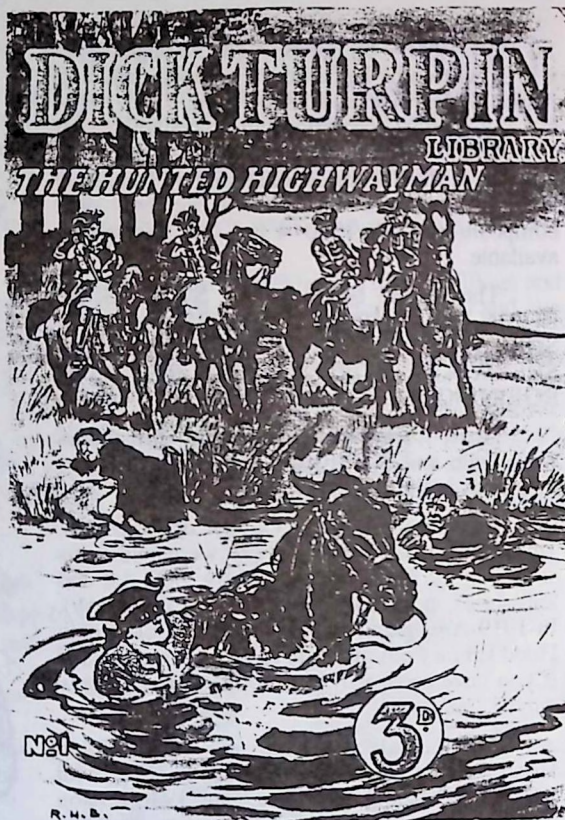
DICK TURPIN

The 1st Library was published by Aldine at 1d from 1902-1909 = 182 issues. Containing 24 pages, app. 10" x 7" the outstanding covers by Robert Prose are my favourites of all time. The first 111 stories were by Charlton Lea and the rest probably by Stephen Agnew.

The Newnes Library, from 1921-1930 = 138 issues, priced at 3d containing 64 pages. Without going through every copy, I would say these were largely rewritten from the Aldine Library, certainly the same characters and locations crop up. If you have ever read these Libraries you will know why I am loath to wade through them all!! All the exciting covers are by R.H. Brock although the first few have illustrations around the centre by Glossop. Format 6½" x 4½" approx.

In 1936 Pearson produced 6 Dick Turpin novels but I have yet to see one. The 1st Newnes Black Bess Library, in 1921, ran for 16 issues, 2d for 32 pages. The 2nd series also at 2d was a larger format of 20 pages. This survived for 38 issues and is said to contain reprints from the Aldine Library. The only relevant film appears to be "Dick Turpin" in 1933, with Victor McLaglen in the title role. That might have been worth watching!

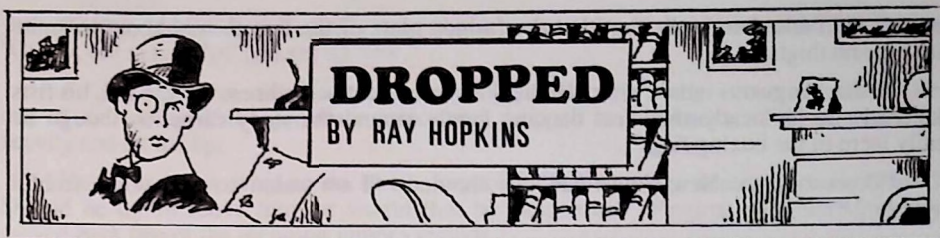
In conclusion, and on reflection, I must admit that today I find most of these Libraries pretty hard going and almost unreadable, but I do remember how I thrilled to them over 60 years ago. However, I can still enjoy the stories in the Aldine books, probably because they were shorter and not dated reprints. However, collecting seems to be in my blood and the others are collectable if only for some of the wonderful coloured covers.



Best Wishes to all readers for Christmas and 1994.

LEN HAWKEY

3 SEAVIEW ROAD, LEIGH-ON-SEA, ESSEX, SS9 1AT



(A "New and Original" school story not written specially for any issue of any publication and not found in a secret drawer among the effects of an old St. Jim's man. In fact, it is a pastiche. With apologies to Martin Clifford.)

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's was sitting in the gloom of Study No. 6, his head leaning against his fist and his elbow on the overstuffed arm of the easy chair. The chair was facing the study window, its back to the door. It had been twilight when he sank languidly into the chair but now the sky was dark and the only sound that came to his ears was the faint rattle of the branches of the old elms in the quad.

A faint footfall from the passage was followed by the careful turning of the doorknob and some heavy breathing as someone tiptoed into Study No. 6 and stood listening.

Arthur Augustus scarcely breathed. The fact that the unknown intruder had entered Study No. 6 so cautiously signified that he did not wish to be observed or heard.

Arthur Augustus did not move. Evidently the intruder had not realised that the study had an occupant, otherwise he would have left before Arthur Augustus had the opportunity to turn around and see who had entered the study so surreptitiously.

"What sneakin' wottah...?" Arthur Augustus murmured to himself. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye and moved his head slightly. He saw a dark form tiptoeing across the study toward the cupboard. The study table had been pushed up against the cupboard after tea. Arthur Augustus wondered if the intruder was going to move the table to get to the cupboard.

He stared intently through his eyeglass but, apart from the fact that the form was that of a junior, he could not make out the intruder's feature or any recognisable idiosyncrasy of gait or posture.

The junior halted before the table and then, to the surprise of the watching Arthur Augustus, suddenly sank down to the floor and commenced to crawl beneath the table.

Arthur Augustus silently arose and, racing to the electric light switch at the door, he flooded Study No. 6 with light. The intruder, startled, lifted his head suddenly and then came the crack of bone on wood.

"Ow! You silly ass, whoever you are. What did you do that for?"

Arthur Augustus stared and stood rigid. The rugged tones were those of the leader of the New House juniors, George Figgins.

"Figgay! You wottah! How dare you cweep into my studay like a - like a thief in the night. Come out this instant."

Arthur Augustus removed his coat and proceeded to roll up his sleeves.

"I intend to administer a feahful thwashin'. Get up, you New House wottah."

But Figgins remained beneath the table. Indeed, his attitude was such that Arthur Augustus was not even in the room. He seemed to be far more interested in the floor

beneath the table than in the fact that the fashion plate of the Fourth was about to smite him hip and thigh.

Arthur Augustus turned pink. He held his arms bent in readiness for the kill, his fists clenched and his neatly shod feet dancing lightly around the study carpet as though he really were in the boxing ring.

"Come on, you New House cad," he shouted. "I am waitin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

Figgins' rugged face creased into a grin. He wasn't afraid of the dancing junior and he had no intention of accepting a lamming from the well-dressed Arthur Augustus, but he had to remain in Study No. 6 until he had retrieved that for which he had come.

"I am waitin', Figgins," Arthur Augustus cried. "I am gettin' quite wathy." His wrath indeed, exceeded that of Achilles of old, to Greece the direful spring of woes unnumbered, but Arthur Augustus would not allow himself to help Figgins from beneath the table with the toe of his boot. Figgins was to have a fearful thrashing and one that he would long remember, but it all had to be accomplished in the most dignified manner. Therefore, Arthur Augustus was unable to extract Figgins from beneath the table but had to wait until he chose to emerge.

And Arthur Augustus was waiting for him. He thought he very probably looked like a tiger waiting to pounce but Figgins, glancing out at him, apparently thought he looked less like a fearsome jungle animal than some graceful gazelle, for he only smiled.

"Sit down, Gustavus, you'll wear yourself out."

Arthur Augustus almost did dance with rage then.

"Do not address me, Figgins, you wottah. Come out and take your punishment like a man."

"Gussy, old pal, you haven't asked me why I'm in your study."

"I am not your old pal, Figgins. You have no wight to be in my studay and I intend to teach you a lesson."

"But I was in your study for tea today, Gussy. You invited me. Have you forgotten already?"

Arthur Augustus lowered his arms and jammed his eyeglass into his angry eye.

"I only invited you because Cousin Ethel requested it. It was she who desired your pwesence at table."

Figgins grinned again. "Cousin Ethel," he remarked, "is a fellow of tact and judgement. She knows a gentleman when she sees one."

"I do not undahstand Cousin Ethel's taste in that wegard," said Arthur Augustus with asperity. "But, as I have no intention of dicussin' the deah gal with you, I desire this conversation to cease now. Figgay, get up or I will thwash you within an inch of your life."

With a rapid series of movements, the hero of the New House threw himself at the legs of the noble one and brought him down with a crash on the study floor. Figgins then lifted the table away from the cupboard and stood it over the floored fashion plate of the Fourth.

"Got it!" he said suddenly and, retrieving something from the floor which had been jammed between the cupboard and the study table leg, he pranced over to the door, intending to make his way as quickly as possible to the safe confines of the New House.

Arthur Augustus had not moved. Indeed, he had not uttered since the cloud of dust which had flown hither and yon had settled when his inert body crashed to the floor. Figgins paused.

"Gussy, old son." His usually rugged voice was soft and there was note of fear in it. "Gussy, old man. You can get up now."

Arthur Augustus still did not move. Figgins became really concerned then. He moved the table off the prostrate junior and dropped to his knees. Figgins breathed heavily and bit his lip.

He didn't know what to do now. Supposing Arthur Augustus really was injured? Should he try to move him, or would that be dangerous? Figgins, nonplussed, gently moved back one of the reclining junior's eyelids.

He jumped when he saw that eye glaring in his direction.

Arthur Augustus opened both his eyes and said quietly. "Figgay, you wottah. You were twyin' to get away before I had the chance to administah that feahful thwashin' I pwomised you."

Figgins grinned and helped him up. "Well," he said comfortingly, "you could have punched me on the nose while I was bending over you just now. Why didn't you?"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass in his eye. "That would have been takin' an unfair advantage. Besides, I feel too shaken up to thwash you now."

Figgins made a great display of sighing and patting his chest. "Phew! What a relief! Now I shall be able to sleep in peace tonight."

Arthur Augustus sank heavily into the armchair.

"Figgay! Why did you come in here when the studay was in darkness as though you didn't wish to be seen?"

Figgins turned pink. "Well, I didn't," he admitted. "I wanted to - er - get something that was dropped here while we were at tea earlier."

"You dwopped something in this studay, Figgay?"

"Er - no, I didn't actually drop it myself. But I saw it dropped and I wanted to return it to the rightful owner."

"Bai Jove, Figgay! You are implying that it would have not been returned had I found it?"

Arthur Augustus arose and proceeded to roll his sleeves higher.

Figgins turned pinker. "Don't be a silly duffer, Gussy," he said warmly.

"Weally, Figgins, I ..."

"I'm not insulting you, Gus. I just wanted to return this particular object myself, that's all."

"And to whom does the object belong? Somebody in Studay 6?"

"Er - no."

"Tom Mewwy or the Shell fellows who were heah to tea?"

"Er - no."

"Weally, Figgins, then I fail to see ..."

Figgins turned a deep red. "It belongs to Cousin Ethel," he said.

"Bai Jove, Figgins. I have had to speak to you before on this subject. Cousin Ethel is **my** cousin."

"I know, Gussy," said Figgins humbly, but with a humorous gleam in his eye which Arthur Augustus did not notice. "Forgive me for taking liberties, old son. I am not fit to walk on the same ground, let alone have tea in the same study, but I **always** think of her as Cousin Ethel ..."

The noble youth's eyeglass fell out as he raised both eyebrows.

"Weally, Figgins, you have no wight to think of Cousin Ethel at all. She's not **your** cousin."

"I know, O King. May I go now?"

Arthur Augustus replaced his eyeglass and regarded the hero of the New House coldly.

"I will weturn Cousin Ethel's pwoperty to her, Figgins. I do not wish you to put yourself out."

"Oh, it's no trouble, Gussy. In fact, it will be a pleasure to see her again."

"Indeed?" The voice of the swell of St. Jim's was icy. "I command you to hand whatever it is over to me so that I may return it to Cousin - to Miss Cleveland at once."

"Oh, she's still here, then?"

"Yaas, wather," said the unsuspecting Gussy. "She's stayin' the night with Mrs. Holmes."

"Thanks, Gussy," grinned Figgins and, giving the noble youth a push, he went to leave the study in rather more of a hurry than that in which he had entered it.

However, Arthur Augustus', wrathy and casting off the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, flung himself upon the leader of the New House juniors and prepared to do vengeance.

The two juniors struggled mightily.

There was a gentle knock on the door of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus' head was beneath Figgins' arm and his only answer to the knock was "Gwooh." Figgins, his fists busy, had his head free, so he sang out, "Come in, fathead!"

There was a musical laugh and the door opened and there stood Cousin Ethel herself, pink and smiling. However, she looked concerned as she caught sight of the attitudes of the two juniors.

"Arthur - Figgins," she cried, "What are you doing?"

Figgins dropped the noble one's head and both juniors jumped back and attempted to flatten their ruffled hair.

"Welly, deah gal, I do apologise for the state in which you find us. A slight argument with Figgins here. Nothin' sewious, y'know."

Cousin Ethel smiled at the two juniors. "Boys will have their fun, I know. Arthur, I won't keep you a moment, then you may resume your game."

Arthur Augustus. "Weally, deah gal, you cannot seriously believe ..."

Cousin Ethel said, "Arthur, Mrs. Holmes will be wondering where I am. Will you just see if my handkerchief is on the floor anywhere? I believe I dropped it here this afternoon."

Figgins blushed and pulled something out of his pocket.

"Here it is, Miss Cleveland," he said. "In fact, it was this handkerchief that Gussy and I were arguing about when you came in ..."

"Weally, Figgins ..."

"We both wanted to return it to you ..."

"Weally, Figgins ..."

"Arthur dear, Figgins is trying to explain."

"Weally, deah gal ..."

Figgins held out the dainty piece of embroidered linen.

Cousin Ethel smiled. "Thank you, Figgins. That was very kind of you."

Figgins blushed. "Er - may I see you safely back to the Head's house?"

Arthur Augustus breathed heavily. "Weally, Figgins, that is quite unnecessary. I am quite capable of escortin' my cousin."

Cousin Ethel coughed. "I'm sorry, Arthur. I quite forgot to tell you. Mr. Lathom asked me if I would kindly send you along to his study. Something about lines, I believe."

"Gweat Scott!"

"You have done them, Arthur?"

"Er - no, deah gal. They unfortunately slipped my memory."

Figgins regarded the embarrassed swell.

"As a fellow of tact and judgement, you'd better cut along to Lathom and pay your respects like a good little Gussy."

"Weally, Figgins ..."

The swell of St. Jim's watched his cousin and the hero of the New House disappear down the staircase. He sighed and made his way to his Form Master's study ...



Maudlin Tight, on Xmas night,
Alcholicly gay, on Boxing Day,
Emptied Bottles, gave up fight,
Then wish was granted, got Cadogan's delight.
(Postman delivered C.D.A. next door!)

Happy Christmas JOHNNY BURSLEM

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The Christmas Truce



With all the propaganda given out on both sides during the Great War, it is amazing how the troops could fraternize, or at least feel some of the milk of human kindness toward each other.

On several occasions after a terrible battle, with no quarter given and none asked, the victors would be seen offering a light for a cigarette or even a drink to the vanquished.

I suppose the greatest example of all was the "Christmas Truce". This was carried out along certain parts of the Western and Eastern Fronts in 1914.

Maybe the fact that barely five months had elapsed since the commencement of hostilities had something to do with it - nothing was ever again recorded on the same grand scale.

On the first Christmas Eve of the war, on the British sector known as Ploegsteert (facetiously called "Plugstreet," by the British Tommy) the troops were

surprised to see illuminated Christmas trees being hoisted on the parapets of the German front lines. Pretty soon the sounds of Silent Night and other carols came drifting over the still night air.

"Hark at old Fritz," muttered one cold and damp Tommy, "can you believe it?" After hearing several renderings, another Tommy, not to be outdone, looked round at his mates, "Come on you blokes, lets show 'em what we can do," and so saying led them in a version of *Come all Ye Faithful*.

Soon each side was exchanging pleasantries, each complimenting the other on their prowess in singing.

As the first streaks of light heralding the coming dawn cast an unearthly glow over no man's land, the troops were further surprised to see German heads popping up over their parapet.

With the daylight growing stronger, more heads were seen, followed by more carol singing and German voices speaking in English.

"Hey, Tommy, Merry Christmas to you!" This was soon followed by exhortations for the British troops to come over to the German lines.

"Hey, Tommy, come on over, if you won't shoot - we won't shoot!"

One British sergeant yelled out, "I'll meet you halfway," and so saying, went along a listening trench which stuck out towards the enemy's line rather like a finger. Soon he was climbing out and in the still uncertain light vanished in the direction of the German trenches.

After a short time he was back with cigars and German sausages he'd exchanged for cigarettes and bully beef (corned beef). Soon, along both lines of trenches, troops could be seen clampering over the parapets, threading their way through the barbed wire and walking towards their opposite number.

In the middle of No-Man's Land, field gray and khaki, albeit mud-encrusted, figures were soon exchanging all manner of things. Several eye witnesses reports are in existence and I would like to quote from three of them - two British and one German. The first is from an anonymous British medical officer:

"The most extraordinary scenes took place between the trenches. In front of our dugout our men and the Germans got out of their trenches and mixed together, talking, exchanging cigarettes, etc. Some of our people actually went into their trenches and stayed there for some time, being entertained by the enemy! All joined together in a sing-song, each side taking it in turn to sing a song, and finally they ended up with *God Save the King* in which the Saxons (Germans) sang most heartily! (They probably sang their words to it: *Heil dir in Sieger Kranz*) This is absolutely true.

"One of our men was given a bottle of wine in which to drink the King's health. One regiment actually had a football match (soccer game) with the Saxons, who beat them 3-2!"

The second eye witness account is from Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, famous for his "Fragments from France," a series of cartoons depicting the comic side of life in the trenches. Perhaps his most famous cartoon is captioned, "Well, if you know of a better 'ole, go to it."

"I clambered up and over our parapet, and moved out across the field to look. Clad in a muddy suit of khaki and wearing a sheepskin coat and Balaclava helmet, I

joined the throng about half-way across to the German trenches...

"This was my first real sight of them at close quarters. Here they were - the actual, practical soldiers of the German army. There was not an atom of hate on either side that day; and yet, on our side, not for a moment was the will to war and the will to beat them relaxed. It was just like the interval between the rounds in a friendly boxing match...

"I strolled about amongst them all, and sucked in as many impressions as I could. Two or three of the Boches seemed to be particularly interested in me, and

after they had walked around me once or twice with curiosity stamped on their faces, one came up and said, "Offizier?"

"I nodded my head, which means "yes" in most languages, and besides, I can't talk German.

"I spotted a German officer, some sort of lieutenant I should think, and being a bit of a collector, I intimated to him that I had

taken a fancy to some of his buttons. We both then said things to each other which neither understood, and agreed to do a swap. I brought out my wire clippers and with a few deft snips, removed a couple of his buttons and put them in my pocket. I then gave him two of mine in exchange...

"Suddenly one of the Boches ran back to his trench and presently appeared with a large camera. I posed in a mixed group for several photographs, and have ever since wished I had fixed up some arrangements for getting a copy...

"Slowly the meeting began to disperse; a sort of feeling that the authorities on both sides were not very enthusiastic about the fraternizing seemed to creep across the gathering. We parted, but there was a distinct and friendly understanding that Christmas Day would be left to finish in tranquility."

The third and last account is from a German officer: Doctor Josef Sewald, who was a student of languages at Munich University, and who also studied in London, Paris, and Rome. He served in the 17th Bavarian Regiment and was in the trenches that memorable Christmas not far from Fleurbaise. In 1964 he was a retired lecturer at Augsburg University, when he recorded the following in his quaint English:

"I was the son of a farmer in Bavaria. I was 24 and conscripted to the army. We were in the trenches and we

all had thought that the war would be over by Xmas. Our Emperor Wilhelm had said we would be home when the leaves from the trees fell down, but there were no trees with leaves, it was war just as ever.

"The trenches were terrible, full of water. I shouted to our enemies that we didn't wish to shoot and that we made a Xmas truce. I said I would come from my side and we could speak together. First there was silence and then I shouted once more, invited them, and the British shouted, "No shooting," then came a man out of the trenches and I on my side the same and so we came together and we shook hands, a bit cautiously. The lieutenant said there was a comrade who had been killed and they wished to bury the man here and I said why not? Of course you can do it, and so they brought the dead man, laid him in the ground, and we all laid handfuls of earth upon the dead man and together prayed the Lords' Prayer. And it was real inspiring.

"The soldiers would kneel down and hold up their heads to be shaved by the English and on the other side the German soldiers shaved the English soldiers.

"And it was laughter and joy and it was as though there had never been any disturbances between the feelings of these thousands of young men.

"The generals of course knew nothing and we were very careful in making it impossible that any news got back to them and the staff officers.

"When we heard the Englishmen singing we again began to sing, louder and louder and all at once it was like a hymn that arose out of trenches to the sky.

"Christmas was a thing that united the enemies, and it is wonderful to think that the thought of Bethlehem would unite the men. The men heard the voice of 2,000 years back but the rulers did not hear and so the war went on for 4 years and millions of young men had to die, had to die!"

With the passing of Christmas, the troops went back to their trenches. From generals and governments came reprimands for the men of the Christmas truce - the war must go on, and it went on!

Editor's Note: This article by Bob was originally published in the American magazine OVER THERE! (Fall/Winter 1992 number). It is reproduced here with permission.



A Vizefeldwebel belonging to the grenadier battalion of the 109th Reserve Inf. Regt. giving a light to a captured Tommy in the spirit of Christmas. Artist: Bob Whiter.



BY REG HARDINGE

'Full of jolly pictures and exciting stories for boys and girls'

The Harmsworth brothers' weekly publication THE RAINBOW aimed to appeal to six to eight-year-olds. I remember in the early nineteen-thirties a catchy popular song by Cicely Courtneidge from the film AUNT SALLY which went like this:-

Sing brothers and sing sisters
We're all leaving today,
And we'll all go riding on a rainbow
To a new land far away.

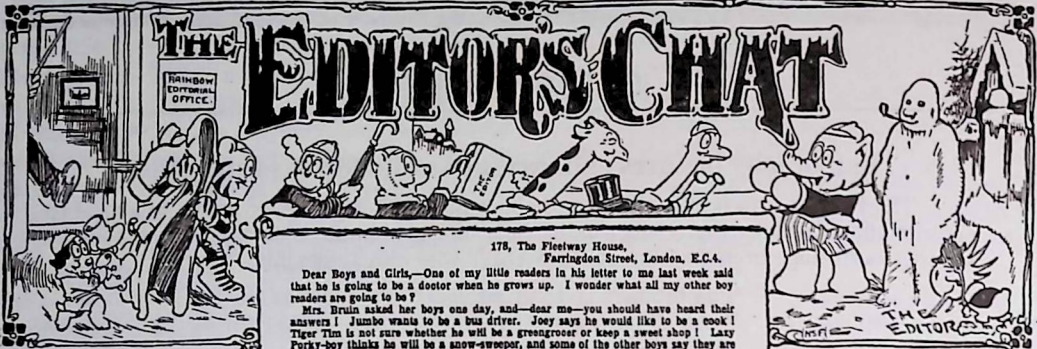
This is what THE RAINBOW attempted to do - to transport its readers to a wonderland inhabited by animals that dressed and talked like humans, nursery-rhyme and pantomime characters, fairies, brownies and gnomes, and children's toys that behaved like their owners. There were stories in pictures as well as in prose including the adventures of boys and girls with pirates on the high seas, and cowboys and Indians in the Wild West. There were jokes and puzzles too. The magic spell it wove around its many addicts made it one of the longest running publications of its kind.

The very first issue of THE RAINBOW appeared on February 14th 1914, priced at a penny, and it was eventually discontinued in 1956. By the mid-twenties it had established itself as one of the leading weeklies of its type. Adorning its multi-coloured front page every Monday was a six-framed escapade of the Bruin Boys. The artist concerned was Herbert S. Foxwell who had inherited this collection of animals from his predecessor, their creator, Julius Stafford Baker. Foxwell had cleverly developed these characters, giving each one a personality of his own. At the top of the front page, above the six frames, was a narrow strip about two inches in width, framed by vines, leaves and red roses in clusters of three, within which was a scene, different each week, from a fairy-tale such as JACK THE GIANT-KILLER or a nursery-rhyme (Baby Bunting, Little Miss Muffet, King of the Castle, Tom the Piper's Son, etc.). Superimposed on this strip in red was the lettering - 'THE RAINBOW 2d'.

In the centre of the front page within the space between the frames there appeared each week miniatures of two of the Bruin Boys. There were eight boys in all - Tiger Tim, Joey (the parrot), Georgie Giraffe, Fido (the dog), Jacko (the monkey), Bobby Bruin, Jumbo and Willie Ostrich. From time to time Porky-Boy was included in the strip. He was the butt of the Bruin Boys' pranks but occasionally he got his own back on them. Mrs. Bruin, a strict disciplinarian, had constantly to check the antics of her mischievous charges. The punishment invariably was detention in the classroom for extra lessons in drawing or arithmetic, which she herself conducted. At holiday time by the seaside, however, she relaxed and allowed the high-spirited boys to have a good time.

Joey, a loveable little bird who resembled a hawk-headed parrot from the Amazon both in plumage and in colouring also appeared every week in the bottom left-hand corner of the Editor's Chat feature, with some apt remark or other directed at 'Mister Editor'. The strip above the editorial letter depicted the Bruin Boys engaged in another of their larks outside the RAINBOW office. The Editor himself was never shown in full. Just a

foot, perhaps, coming over the threshold, with a hand wielding a cane as he emerged from his den to admonish the boys for the snowman they had made in his likeness with a bulbous nose and a pipe stuck in its mouth; or, his shadow thrown from inside his office upon the glass-fronted door; then again lounging in a chair with his back to the boys and only his feet showing.



178, The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Dear Boys and Girls,—One of my little readers in his letter to me last week said that he is going to be a doctor when he grows up. I wonder what all my other boy readers are going to be?

Mrs. Bruin asked her boys one day, and—dear me—you should have heard their answers! Jumbo wants to be a bus driver. Joey says he would like to be a cook! Tiger Tim is not sure whether he will be a green grocer or keep a sweet shop! Lazy Porky-boy thinks he will be a snow-sweeper, and some of the other boys say they are not going to be anything at all. Well, I don't think they will be, unless they work a little harder at their lessons!

When Mrs. Bruin heard that Joey wanted to be a cook, she said she would give him a trial. So she gave him a hat and an apron, but when Joey found he had to peel potatoes and wash up all day, he decided he would be a fireman when he grew up, instead of a cook.

By the way, have you read the funny Bruin Boys story in "Tiger Tim's Weekly" this week? You will roar with laughter when you do.

Your sincere friend,

The Editor



"I would like to be a cook and wash up, like Mrs. Bruin!"

HIDDEN TREES.

In each of these sentences is a name of a tree. Can you find them?
It was a very steep lane.
This is a fine opal, Mary.
This is a steel money-bag.
If iron sinks what does wood do?
The trees are: Plane, palm, elm, and fir.

ALL THE DIFFERENCE!

BILLY had fallen out of bed one night, and the next morning his sister said:
"Ah, that was because you slept too near to where you got in, Billy!"
"No, it wasn't," replied Billy. "It was because I slept too near where I fell out!"

"EGG-CUP AND PENNY" GAME.

Place an egg-cup about three inches from the edge of the table. You will want six pennies.

Place one penny in the middle of your right hand and then bring up your hand sharply, hitting the underneath of the table with your fingers. The penny will jump off and perhaps fall into the egg-cup. This will come easier after a little practice.

Each player takes a turn with the six pennies and the one who gets the most pennies into the egg-cup wins the game.

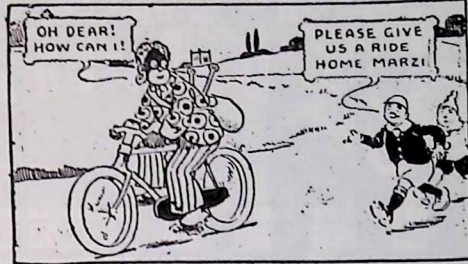
Herbert Foxwell, THE RAINBOW's top illustrator, was a prolific artist. He was also responsible for the Bruin Boys' adventures in TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY which first appeared on 31st January 1920. He created The Bunty Boys for BUBBLES in 1921. Also drawn by him was the front cover of PLAYBOX, a girls' comic which was launched on 14th February 1925 and devoted to the exploits of the Hippo Girls (the apparently twin sisters of the Bruin Boys). In the thirties he became responsible for the front cover of JOLLY JACK'S WEEKLY, the Junior Section of the SUNDAY DISPATCH (Associated Newspapers). When the DAILY MAIL decided to expand the daily Teddy Tail cartoon for children into a full-blown newspaper supplement for boys and girls, Foxwell was recruited to provide its front cover, at first weekly, then twice weekly and next thrice weekly. In addition his work had embellished many pages of the Annuals associated with RAINBOW, TIGER TIM'S, PLAYBOX and BUBBLES.

One of the most popular features of THE RAINBOW was 'The Wonderful Adventures of Bonnie Bluebell the Fairy Schoolgirl', a complete story each week. Her magic gloves made all Bonnie Bluebell's wishes come true. There was even a weekly story about 'Mr. Bushybeard, the Elderly Gnome', told in verse. The picture-serial 'Cinderella' dealt with the kitchen-maid's adventures in the company of Jack in the Beanstalk and her fairy godmother who, with a wave of her magic wand, could produce a delightful meal or turn a frog into a prince. They were joined by Peter Pan who taught Cinderella to fly. The strips included 'The Funny Adventures of the Brownie Boys' who were Peter Pippin, Billy Buttercup and Archie Artichoke, and their encounters with the Giant of the Beanstalk, Little Bo-Beep and others. 'Susie Sunshine and Her Pet Poms' was another regular feature, and was one of several British comic strips published by PRIMA ROSE, the Italian journal for little girls, by arrangement with the amalgamated Press. 'Sing Hi and Sing Low', two Chinese boys and their quaint ways, provided much amusement week by week. Two other strips worth mentioning are 'The Two Pickles', an

account of the happenings involving Peter and Pauline and their little dog, Fluff, and 'The Adventures of Marmaduke and Montague, The Merry Little Mice' and the tricks they got up to.

Perhaps the most fascinating figure of the lot was 'Marzipan the Magician', with his beaming black face which accentuated the whites of his eyes and his thick, red lips. He wore a turban made of materials designed with red spots on a white background, and curtain rings dangled from his ears. He sported a red jacket dotted with white circles whose centres were black. To complete his ensemble he wore white cuffs, red and white striped trousers and black shoes topped by white gaiters. He was a most cheerful and kindly character who, with the help of his red and white striped walking-stick (which in colour resembled a barber's pole) worked magical wonders to help others out of awkward predicaments. THE RAINBOW positively bristled with a delightful assortment of humour and excitement which greatly appealed to its young readers.

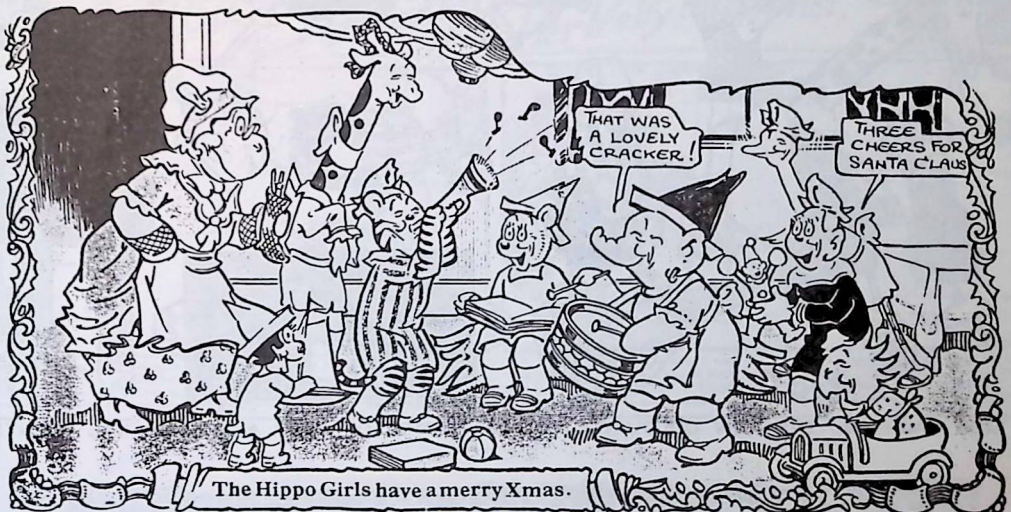
MARZIPAN the MAGICIAN



1. "Oh, do give us a ride, Marzi!" little Frank called to our good old magician, who was riding down the road on his bicycle after doing some shopping in the town. "Oh dear, how can I, boys?" Marzi replied, puzzled.

The Thames Television weekly publication, RAINBOW, bears no relationship to THE RAINBOW of yore, but is based on the T.V. series of the same name which started in 1972. This deals with the adventures of three puppets created by John Kershaw, the original writer of the series. Bungle, a brown bear, George, a hippo and Zippy, an intriguing character with a zip-fastener for a mouth, make up the trio, who are in the cave of Geoffrey, a human being. Zippy is 'a puzzlement' (as the King of Siam would have said). He could be a frog or a fish. But it is for each reader or viewer to decide the identity of this creature. Like the long gone CHICK'S OWN and TINY TOTS, today's RAINBOW caters for the very young who are just beginning to read. Good luck to these 'teeny-boppers'. Basically they are the same at heart as we were at their age.

A REMINDER OF TIGER TILLY & CO.



The Hippo Girls have a merry Xmas.

Coloured card model given away in the first issue of The Rainbow

PRESENTED FREE WITH No. 1 OF "THE RAINBOW." February 14th, 1914.

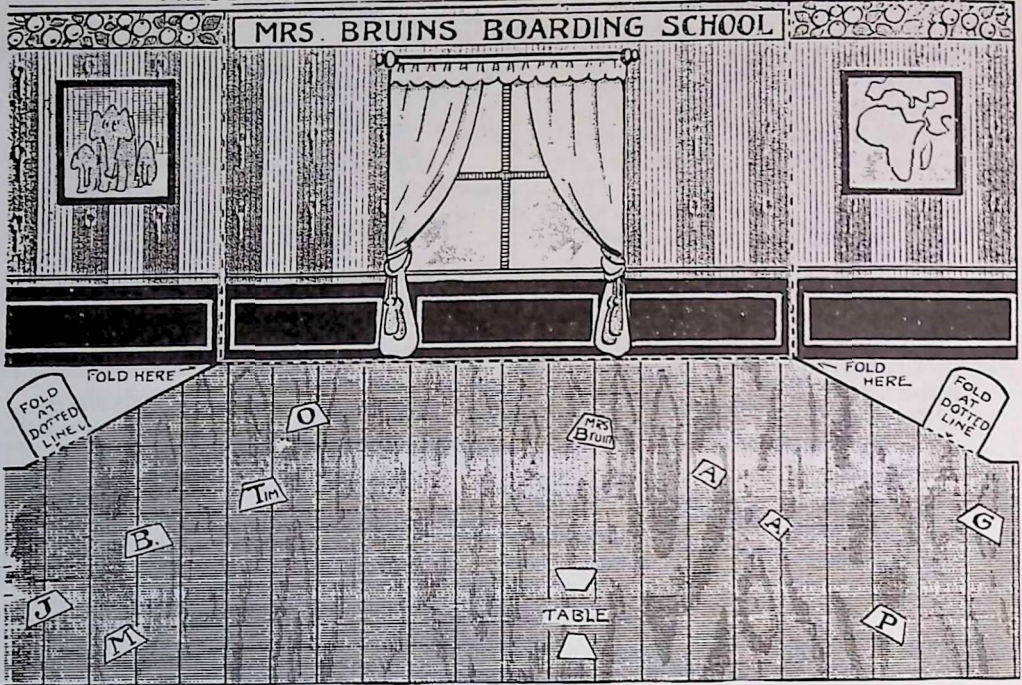


FIG I

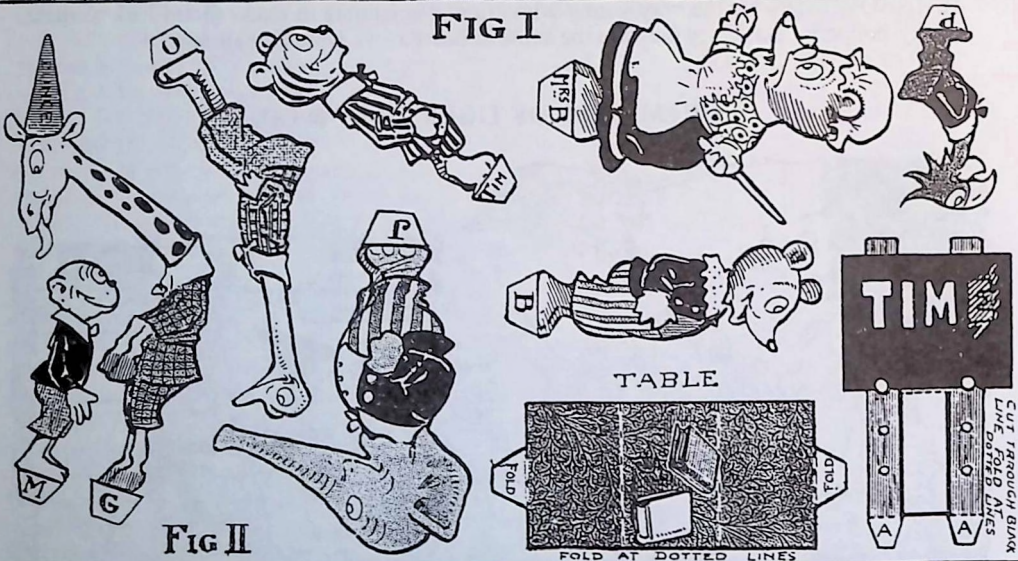


FIG II

"THE RAINBOW"—THE NEW COLOURED PICTURE PAPER FOR BOYS AND GIRLS—ONE PENNY!

No. 1. A SPLENDID TOY MODEL GIVEN FREE WITH THIS NUMBER.



No. 1. Vol. 1.

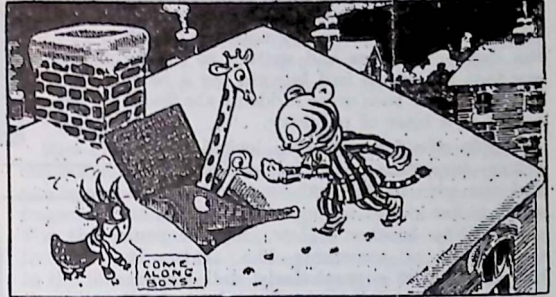
PRICE ONE PENNY.

February 14, 1914.

THE JOLLY ADVENTURES OF THE BRUIN BOYS.—THEIR SNOW-MAN HAS A WARM TIME.

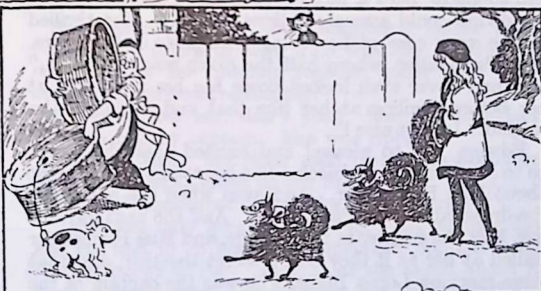


1. There was a great surprise awaiting the boys at Mrs. Bruin's Boarding School when they awoke the other morning. "Look!" cried Tiger Tim excitedly. "It has been snowing in the night! Isn't it grand!" "I wish we could go out," grumbled Willie Ostrich. "It will all have melted away by the time we've finished our lessons."

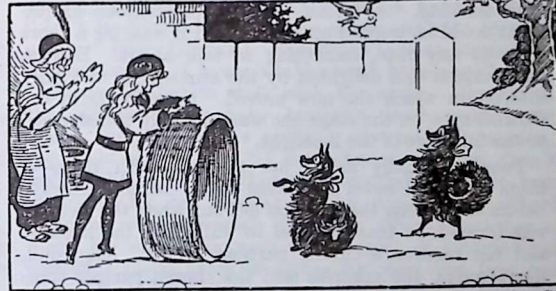


2. "I know!" exclaimed Tim. "Let's dress and go up on the roof before Mrs. Bruin gets up! We can have some fine fun up there." The other boys thought it a jolly fine idea, too, and in less than half a minute they were climbing through the roof door. "Come along, boys!" piped Joey, the parrot. "Who'll take me on for a snowball fight?"

SUSIE SUNSHINE And Her Pretty Pet Poms.



1. Here's a new friend for you, girls and boys! She's little Susie Sun-shine, and a good-hearted little girl she is, as you'll agree. Strutting along with her pet Pom- one day last week, Susie saw an old woman who had two heavy baskets to carry.



2. "Poor old soul!" thought Susie. "I'm sure those baskets are too heavy for her. I'll help her with them. Will you let me help you?" she said. "Ah, my dear, I would be glad if you could!" replied the dame. "My poor old arms aren't as strong as they used to be."



The TRIALS of EDWINA MORGAN

by Richmal Crompton



SHE was a podgy, badly-dressed, unattractive little girl who had only come to St Agatha's last term, and of whom no one had taken any notice at all, till the day her mother had written to her to say that the angels had brought her a baby brother. And then quite suddenly she found herself in a blaze of publicity.

People who'd never even looked at her before—important people in the Fifth Form, and one even in the Sixth—stopped her and spoke to her kindly, saying: "I hear you've got a baby brother. How jolly for you. Congrats!" or something like that. It happened to be a particularly dull stretch of a particularly dull term, (Lent in a strict church school can be very dull indeed)—no concerts, no plays, and an endless succession of watery boiled cod for dinner.

The only possible excitement was from "home news," and no one had had any "home news" worth speaking of for weeks. Even Dorothy Manger's mother's appendicitis had turned out to be merely indigestion, and Dorothy Manger had suffered a good deal of undeserved unpopularity on this score. As she said, it wasn't her fault. . . .

And so Edwina Morgan's baby brother was better than nothing. A certain amount of spurious excitement could be worked up over it, and it was, for a short time at any rate, something to talk about. Edwina was amazed and delighted by the atmosphere of kindly interest in which she now moved. From being in the darkest spot on the stage she was suddenly transformed to the full glare of the limelight.

People actually asked her to walk with them—a thing that had never happened to her before. Always before she'd been the odd one left out when the "croc." was formed, so that she had to walk with the mistress and the mistress's chosen partner . . . long, dull, silent walks, the mistress and the chosen partner completely ignoring her.

Everybody said how nice it was for her, and asked how the baby was, and what it was going to be called, and how her mother was. She thought it was so polite of them to ask how her mother was.

"I hear that you've got a baby brother, Edwina. I'm so glad! Isn't it nice!"

But the best part of it all was Miss Parmentier. Miss Parmentier, the most beautiful and most haughty of the mistresses, stopped her in the passage and smiled and said:

"I hear that you've got a baby brother, Edwina. I'm so glad. Isn't it nice!"

Edwina could scarcely believe her ears. She thrilled to the very core of her being with pride and pleasure. Miss Parmentier, whom half the Sixth was "gone on," who had never even looked down her beautiful nose at her before, smiling at her like that and saying, "I'm so glad. Isn't it nice!"

Edwina was so pleased and excited that she didn't go to sleep until two o'clock. She lay awake and thought about Miss Parmentier. And even when she fell asleep she dreamed of Miss Parmentier. And the next day she met Miss Parmentier in the passage, and Miss Parmentier smiled at her as if they had a secret together, and that same morning Lorna Blake, who was the captain of the hockey team and who also had never spoken to her before, came to her in the cloak-room and said: "Well, how's the baby brother?"

To Edwina it was as if she'd been suddenly translated to Paradise. She had no idea that life held such

ecstasy. It had seemed rather a dull affair to her before. She revelled happily and unsuspectingly in every second of it, answering questions about the baby brother and saying how nice it all was, telling them that he weighed seven pounds, smiling at Miss Parmentier in the passage, and hearing people saying to each other, "Edwina Morgan's got a baby brother."

And then, quite suddenly, it was all over. Nobody asked her any more about the baby brother, nobody cared how much he weighed, nobody wanted to walk with her, and when she told Effie Whitelock, who had a desk next to hers, and who'd been more interested than anyone else in him, that her baby brother had been vaccinated, Effie said: "Oh, do shut up about your baby brother. We're all sick of him. Anyone'd think no one else had ever had one."

Even so it wasn't till Miss Parmentier had passed her in the passage with an absent, frowning glance, as if she'd never seen her before, that Edwina realised that the limelight had left her, and that she was back again in the old obscurity. The explanation, of course, was quite simple.

As a sensation a baby brother does not last long. At best it had been a rather precarious one, owing its position chiefly to the general dullness of Lent, and the absence of any competition. Now, Megan Forrester's sister had become engaged to a man who had once gone on a big-game hunting expedition to Africa, Dulcie Masters had got into a row for taking a novel into chapel inside the binding of her Bible, and Pamela Gostling had gone into the san. with what some people said was mumps and others, brain fever. Edwina's baby brother was completely eclipsed. Not only that, but any mention of him now by Edwina drew the irritable retort, "Oh, do shut up about your baby brother. We're sick of him!"

So Edwina was relegated again to the obscurity in which she had quite happily spent her school career till the advent of the baby brother. But it was different now. The taste of the limelight had spoiled her for obscurity. Whereas before she had never expected Miss Parmentier to smile at her in the passage, it gave her now a definite pang when she passed her without any sign of recognition. Whereas before she had taken her partnerless position on all school walks as a matter of course, now it galled her. She wanted to be in demand again. She wanted to be smiled at and courted and congratulated. In fact, life had become unbearable to her on any other terms.

* * * * *

She was hovering in the background before breakfast when a group of elder girls was idly turning over the leaves of the morning register, going back as far as any of them could remember.

"I remember her, don't you? She left that term. She was hockey captain. She was ripping."

"Edna Clark. My sister used to tell me about her. She used to write dates on her fingernails."

"I don't remember Violet Morpeth, do you?"

"She was only here half a term. Her mother died, and she had to go home. I remember, because Parmy was so decent to her. As soon as she heard about her mother being dead, she sent for her to her bedroom, and took her on her knee and comforted her. Parmy always seems so snorky, but they say that if you're in any real trouble she's awfully decent."

"She's generally the real trouble herself as far as I'm concerned."

Then they saw Edwina listening, her pale blue eyes nearly popping out of her head, and they dismissed her as contemptuously as if she hadn't had a baby brother only a fortnight ago.

That evening after chapel, Edwina approached Miss Parmentier in the hall and, fixing her with the pale blue eyes, said, "Please, Miss Parmentier, may I speak to you a minute?"

Looking rather surprised, Miss Parmentier took her into the empty library and, glancing at her watch, said shortly:

"Yes, what is it?"

"You remember about my baby brother?" said Edwina.

Evidently Miss Parmentier didn't remember at first. She frowned doubtfully, but at last her brow cleared, as she dragged the baby brother back from the mists of antiquity.

"Oh, yes. I remember. I hope he's going on all right."

Edwina's expressionless blue eyes were still fixed on her.

"I've just had a letter from my mother. I wanted to tell you, but I don't want everyone to know—" The pale blue eyes swam suddenly with tears. "He's dead."

"Oh, my dear—"

Miss Parmentier sat down on one of the hard library chairs and took Edwina on her knees, and Edwina sobbed in a luxurious abandon of grief against Miss Parmentier's fragrant breast. The sobs and tears were quite real. For the moment Edwina honestly believed that her little brother was dead. She spent a delicious half-hour in the library being comforted by Miss Parmentier, and then she went up to the dormitory to bed.

Having learnt the precarious nature of limelight, she was now very sparing of it. She only told one person in the dormitory that night that her baby brother was dead, and she told her as a secret. The interest and sympathy her news aroused was very pleasant to her. After that the limelight came again in a glorious rush of warmth and light. Edwina now played the dual role of manipulator and object. She did not spread the news broadcast. She told it as a secret to a few select people every day, and from each one received that exclusive sympathy and interest that was becoming so necessary to her. Those who knew about it had the pleasant sensation of forming a sort of secret society. "Isn't it dreadful—?" they would whisper to each other. "Poor Edwina! She doesn't want anyone to know about it. I haven't told a soul, have you?"

People wanted to walk with her again. She found that details of the baby brother's death came quite easily, and, if ever she couldn't answer any question, she could always say, "I don't know. Mother didn't say." She told them that they couldn't afford to buy mourning for her (it was in the days before school uniforms were universal) and Flora Martin lent her a black tie which she wore with a sort of ostentatious secrecy. Little notes of sympathy were put into her desk. Miss Parmentier always gave her a sad, friendly, comforting little smile when she met her in the passage.

When she told people about it, she felt exactly as if the baby brother really were dead, and she always

cried. She didn't just pretend to cry. She really cried. Of course, the ones who had said, "Oh, do shut up about your baby brother, we're sick of him," were the nicest of all. In fact they simply couldn't do enough for Edwina.

And then, just when she was enjoying it more than she'd ever enjoyed anything in all her life before, came a letter from her mother.

Darling,—I've got a lovely surprise for you. You'll never guess what it is. Next Saturday daddy is going to bring me and baby over just for a peep at you, because I do want you to see him. You'll love him so. We can't stay long, but we can just let you see him, and I'm sure all your friends will want to see him, too, won't they? I know how delighted you'll be to hear this.

When she received this letter Edwina experienced the curious sensation that she usually experienced only in a lift that started too suddenly. She read the letter again. There was no mistake, except, of course, in the last sentence. Her mother was going to bring the baby brother to the school next Saturday, and everybody would see him. She looked down at her black tie and thought of the little pile of letters of sympathy in her desk.

She was very silent for the rest of the day, so that the members of the secret society said to each other, "Poor Edwina! She's so brave, but she feels it dreadfully."

After chapel she approached Miss Parmentier again and said, "Please, Miss Parmentier, may I speak to you a minute?"

Miss Parmentier took her into the library and, looking at her with kindly sympathy, said, "Yes, dear? What is it?"

Edwina fixed her pale blue eyes on her and said:

"Please, Miss Parmentier, I don't want everyone to know, but I wanted to tell you I've got another little baby brother."

"You've—what?"

Miss Parmentier's eyes were suddenly like blue ice. Edwina felt disconcerted. This had seemed such a simple way out of it. Another baby brother—a fresh supply of limelight, and no awkwardness when her mother turned up with the baby brother on Saturday. Edwina was rather stupid, and it had never occurred to her to question her mother's account of the origin of baby brothers. If the angels could bring one, they could, of course, bring another.

"You told me that your mother had had a baby last month," said Miss Parmentier, still in this new, cold, hard voice.

Laboriously Edwina began to explain.

"Yes, she did and it died. I told you. But she had another yesterday."

Miss Parmentier looked at Edwina for a few moments in silence, and in those few moments Edwina again experienced the unpleasant sensation of a lift that starts too suddenly. Then Miss Parmentier turned on her heel and left her without a word.

Edwina trailed back to the schoolroom and sat at her desk, staring in front of her, the tears rolling down her cheek. She still saw that terrible look on Miss Parmentier's face. She wished she were dead. She thought she was alone in the room, but soon she saw that Nina Larnaby was there, sitting at her desk, gazing at her in helpless dismay.

Nina Larnaby was a new girl. She'd come, in fact, at half-term, so she was almost newer than a new girl. She had been rigorously ignored and excluded from everything, in accordance with the mysterious etiquette that governs such matters. She knew nothing of the baby brother—of his having come or gone, or—anything.

She approached Edwina's desk timidly and said:

"I say, I'm awfully sorry. Are you in a row?"

The sympathy in the tone was delicious to Edwina. Her sobs redoubled in vigour.

"N-n-no."

"What's the matter?"

She made room for Nina on her seat, and Nina was sitting close to her, gazing at her compassionately.

"I c-c-can't tell you."

"Oh, do. I'm so sorry. Couldn't I—couldn't I help?"

"N-n-no. N-n-no one can."

"Oh, do tell me."

Edwina fixed swimming eyes on her, and spoke through her sobs.

"Promise you won't tell anyone."

"Yes."

"I don't want anyone else to know."

"I promise I won't."

Edwina's plump little body was shaken by her sobs. Her face was blotched, her nose swollen, her pale blue eyes suffused.

Tears splashed down upon the desk, upon her knee, upon Nina's encircling arm. Her voice came indistinctly.

"It's my stepmother. She's so cruel to me. I'm d-d-dreading next holidays."

She had forgotten the baby brother and Miss Parmentier. She had forgotten everyone but her cruel stepmother.

She sobbed in an ecstasy of luxurious grief.

(We are delighted to be able to publish this unusual story by Richmal Crompton in our Annual, with the permission of her niece, Richmal Ashbee, who holds the copyright. It originally appeared in a 1933 Annie S. Swan Annual. Richmal Ashbee comments: "It reads to me as if it was written very much earlier, even 1920... The explanation about the mention of mourning - that it was before the days of school uniforms - reads like an insertion added later, perhaps by the editor. I don't think that angels as baby-carriers belong in the '30s either, though my aunt did often write of past institutions.)



Christmas at Wharton Lodge

BY LES ROWLEY



"Pig!"

"Greedy beast!"

Affection, never strongly developed between members of the Bunter clan, was conspicuous by its absence at the meal table. Those charming epithets directed by Bessie and Sammy Bunter at their brother Billy, indicated that an all-time low had been reached. All three had coveted that last jam tart, and Sammy and Bessie had hurriedly emptied their capacious mouths ready to accommodate that remaining delicious morsel. With great astuteness and cunning, to say nothing of long established practice in such things, Bunter had not waited until his mouth was empty before targeting the new assignment. That jam tart, already in his sticky paw, was on its way to making that journey from whose bourne no traveller returns, when with commendable speed, Sammy reached forward and, jerking his brother's elbow, redirected that jam tart so that it missed its original destination and squashed itself on Billy's podgy nose.

"You cheeky rotter! You've spoilt that jam tart," Billy Bunter gazed angrily back at Sammy. "Look at my face!"

"No fear, not even when it's decorated with jam and pastry. It's enough to make a gorilla laugh!"

"Why y-y-you---" Billy Bunter rose in anger from the table, with the apparent intention of committing mayhem on Sammy, which only the timely arrival of Mrs. Bunter prevented.

"William, go and wash yourself. You are in a dirty and sticky state. Bessie and Sammy come with me to the kitchen. I think I can find another tart for each of you."

That, to Bunter major, was the sharpest cut of all. Slowly he washed the signs of the lamented tart away. At Bunter Villa he was treated as any other member of the family, as one who had no additional rights as a respected elder son. In fact, his father had only recently

taken him seriously to task on the subject of gluttony, and only the intervention of Mrs. Bunter had saved Billy from a severe diet. Now, he had been unable to snaffle that extra tart because of that greedy beast Sammy. At breakfast that morning his sister had adroitly secured the last of the toast and marmalade. At lunch, his father had insisted that his son had only one helping of the steak and kidney pie, and there had been the same miserly apportioning of the steamed roly-poly pudding that followed.

All this privation, whilst, at Wharton Lodge, Harry Wharton and his friends would be enjoying unlimited tuck. Bunter would very much have enjoyed it too: in fact he regarded it as almost a statutory right that he should have his share of what was on that hospitable table as he had done in previous years. It was Bunter's belief that lunch should start as soon as breakfast ended and that the intervals between other meals should be remedied by menials attending to his wants at the touch of a bell. It was not entirely unexpected that the bell in Bunter's room had been disconnected by some weary and disgruntled servant. Even the normally impassive Wells had been known to look at Bunter in a very expressive way. Had boiling oil been available on tap at Wharton Lodge, there was little doubt that a use could have been made of it on more than one occasion when he had honoured that hospitable house with his presence.

Bunter wished very much that he was a guest at the Lodge now, and the wish is said to be father to the thought. Thinking was not in Bunter's usual line of business. It was not in evidence in his form work, it was true, but Bunter could exercise his thought processes when dealing with the pressing question of sticking someone for the holidays. That beast Quelch had recently dissuaded Bunter from turning up at Wharton Lodge, but who was Quelch to interfere? Bunter asked himself. A

cadger of invitations himself, Bunter wondered how his form-master had managed to scrounge one. Quelch might be someone in term-time, but in the vac. he was no-one at all! And if Bunter met up with the Remove master he would tell him so. Bunter could be fearfully brave when no foe was nigh!

He hesitated, but he did not hesitate long. Wharton Lodge was like unto the land of milk and honey, but here at Bunter Villa he was being deprived of what good things there were by a greedy brother and sister. Whilst the food was adequate for most people, it was far from adequate for William George Bunter. Making the most of short commons, whilst his father dwelt on the iniquities of a government that fixed income tax at sixpence in the pound, did not accord with his idea of how the festive occasion should be spent.

As he put on his cap, his coat and muffler, Bunter debated on the manner in which he could be transported from Reigate to Wimford. The authorities at Reigate station had reason to be familiar with Bunter's mode of travel without paying his fare. In fact there were persons at the local station who were anxious for their feet to establish contact with that particular bilk. Bunter discarded any thought of travelling by train. He would have preferred to have travelled by taxi and for Wells, the butler, to have paid the taxi man on arrival. But there had been a previous occasion when Wells, like the beast he was, had refused to cough up and it was just as likely that that other beast, Wharton, might follow that unfortunate precedent. It would have to be the 'bus or hitch a ride and even in that choice there was a problem. Passengers were expected to pay fares on busses, and inconsiderate bus companies had failed to install any facilities for the convenience of bilks, and hitching a lift usually entailed a certain amount of walking.

"Suspicious rotters," he indignantly observed to himself, "won't even let a fellow on the blithering bus without paying. How's a fellow to afford a snack to sustain him for the journey if he has to waste his money on a bus ticket. The best thing is to buy a ticket for part of the distance and get some tuck with the remainder."

He wrote a short note, and left it where his mother could see it, before quitting the house. Outside, a further flurry of snow was already filling the footprints left in the previous fall. It

was but a short walk to the town centre, where the shops were doing a brisk trade as people embarked on their last shopping expeditions. Somewhere a band was playing carols and someone rattled a collecting tin under Bunter's nose. People shouted greetings to each other as they passed, and small children, their noses pressed to cold windows, viewed with enchanted speculation the seasonal displays within. Poulterers were inviting passers-by to secure a turkey as its sell-by date grew hourly nearer. Dusk was already falling, and trade vans were busily loading for the last deliveries of the day. Over all was an atmosphere of rejoicing and hope that the bitter wind and driving snow did nothing to dispel. The spirit of Christmas was abroad, as indeed it was in every village and town, every city and hamlet.

Having walked a little over half a mile, Bunter was already tired. He was also hungry and the trays of good things in the window of a welcoming café drew Bunter like a fat wasp in summer is drawn to a pot of honey. For once he was in funds, a kind uncle having parted with a pound note on the condition that this particular nephew stayed away from his door... The waitress who served him gazed at first with interest, then awe, as her customer dealt with doughnut after doughnut, eclair after eclair pausing only to wash down one after the other with cupfuls of tea.

The dusk outside had now given place to the dark of evening, unheeded by Bunter. The young waitress, anxious to reach her own home, brought Bunter the bill. It was for the princely sum of nineteen shillings and eight pence which Bunter peevishly and reluctantly settled with the cashier before finding himself on the pavement and the door closing emphatically behind him. The poulterer who had shouted his wares had disappeared, his shopfront was shuttered as were all but those of a few more optimistic traders. The small children had already been conveyed to their respective homes, there to spend their sleepiness night in anticipation of a visit from a gentleman dressed in red and white. Street lamps, their brackets etched with white, threw comforting rays as stragglers made their way to where they could catch the final buses of the day. Bunter followed them, and learned from a helpful inspector that the last bus to Wimford had left a half an hour previously. He was advised to take the bus that went to Elmwood, and walk

the five miles which would take him to Wimford.

How much the fare was to Elmwood, Bunter did not know, but that was of no consequence as he did not have sufficient cash to pay for it. Instead, he offered the driver three pence in coins of the realm bearing traces of jam. This small sum entitled him, as a fare-paying passenger to travel approximately one mile. In his hope of extending this entitlement he chose the top deck in the hope that the driver would forget he was there. He settled back into his seat and allowed his exertions of walking a half a mile, together with his gastronomic exertion in the café, to take their toll and allow him to sink into sleep. Within seconds his fellow-travellers were treated to a performance that would have done credit to a farmyard. That performance was destined to be short but not sweet, for Bunter's nearest neighbour jabbed an urgent elbow into his extensive circumference and Bunter was suddenly and emphatically brought back to consciousness.

"Leave off you beast. Taint rising bell yet!" he informed the other passengers. he glowered at the rustic features around him. "Can't you let a fellow sleep. Oh Lor!" He found himself looking into the enquiring face of the bus driver.

"You took a threepenny ticket and should have got off at Maggots lane half an hour ago. Now you'll have to walk back - that is after having paid me another ninepence for the excess fare."

The driver held out a horny palm, but Bunter did not put the required amount therein. The driver's face became even more expressive and the horny hand grabbed that peculiar and unwanted passenger by the scruff of the neck and propelled him forcibly down the stairs. With one final swing of a brawny arm the driver ejected his bilking passenger into the darkness of the night. Fortunately, Bunter had landed in a heap of snow but he did not waste any appreciation on that good fortune as he picked himself up and shook his fist at the rapidly disappearing tail light of that unaccommodating bus.

The cold, silvery light of the moon caressed the snow-covered roofs and chimney pots of Wharton Lodge, catching each burden of white

that lay on every terraced wall and window ledge. Each pane of glass bore a sparkling pattern of ryme and here and there lights twinkled their welcome to the outside world.

Within the Lodge the warmth of that welcome was emphasised by the blazing logs in the great fireplace. The dancing flicker of flames reached towards portraits of Whartons, past and gone, that hung in the panelled hall, the most imposing of which was a full length study of a cavalier. His handsome likeness dominated the scene from its place on the landing where the staircase divided in two. The gilded frame in uniform with its fellows bore the seasonal decoration of holly. Not to be outdone, the dark oak of the panelled walls had been relieved with novelties of tinsel and bauble. In the corner stood an outsize in Christmas trees, its green branches laden with tiny electric lights flashing their greens, their reds and blues, and their silvers and golds. As though in supplication at its feet, there lay a small mountain of gaily wrapped parcels of various shapes and sizes.

Beyond the green baize doors that led to the domestic quarters was assembled a vast concourse of provender to tempt the palates of young and old alike. Magnificent turkeys and barons of beef, and the trimmings that went with them. The Christmas puddings that awaited their boiling as the joints were ready for their roasting awaited their turn in pan or baking tin. The sideboard and side tables in the dining room already carried a profusion of apples, oranges, dates and figs. Bowls of nuts, boxes of glacé fruits and chocolates were there to sustain any waning appetite between meals.

Wells, the butler, had spent a pleasant hour or two selecting wines and other beverages suitable for the most happy of festivities. There were table wines, spirits and liqueurs for the more senior members of the gathering, whilst the juniors' taste was catered for with bottles of pop and ginger wine. There was even a bottle of Wells' favourite port that was not likely to travel further than the butler's pantry. Thomas, kept busy replenishing the fires in so many grates, had been allowed to taste and pronounce judgement on Cook's mincepies. "Spiffing," was his one word accolade, which won for him a further taste of the delicious pastries on which the castor sugar shone like a delicate touch of frost.

In his den, Master Harry was entertaining his friends. The Famous Five had discussed the serious question of soccer and especially the fixtures they had next term with St. Jim's and Rookwood. Inky was toasting tea cakes at the fireside, Johnny Bull was pouring the tea and Frank Nugent cutting the cake. The serious discussion over, Bob Cherry raised a lusty voice and encouraged the others to join in a free, a very free, rendering of the Greyfriars School Song.

The Bounder and Tom Redwing were expected to join that party later in that day, it had been hoped that they would be there for dinner, but Smithy had phoned to say that they would probably be later because of the wintry condition of the roads. He was not the only Greyfriars man to be concerned with the weather.

"Oh dear!"

With that doleful expression, Billy Bunter faced yet another hill to climb. How many he had left behind him, he could not remember, but it seemed like hundreds or thousands. At first he had devoted time and tongue to giving rein to his opinion of heartless bus drivers who turned fellows off their busses just because a fellow couldn't pay. Probably that rotten fellow he had encountered had garaged his vehicle and was beside his own fireside doing what Bunter liked best - feeding himself... As he thought dark thoughts about that bus driver, the fat Removite plodded wearily on, the driving snowflakes melting on his podgy features, a seemingly endless road stretched before him.

It was not the fleshpots of Wharton Lodge for which he longed now. He would have welcomed the simpler pleasures of home. He did not, like wise men of old, see charms in the face of solitude, as he put one tired foot before the other. He would have welcomed the company of Bessie and Sammy if only he had not set out upon this horrid journey.

Occasionally a passing car would over-take him, the comforting headlights temporarily dispersing the enveloping night. He had signalled to them to stop but the selfish beasts had hastened on their way. As yet another car approached, he raised his arm in half-hearted signal. To his surprise, the car slowed down as it passed, then reversed to come to a stop at his

side.

"Why if it isn't Bunter. Just a moment, you fellows, I'd like a seasonal word with our old friend Bunter."

The voice was friendly enough, which was surprising if it belonged to Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe School, not known for his friendliness towards Greyfriars men, especially helpless duffers like Bunter of the Remove.

"Leave the cad alone, we are late and it will be another thirty minutes before we reach my place," came the peevish tones of Monson. "The pater's bound to be in a wax already."

"Yes, Pon, the poor brute looks as though he's about all in." Gadsby, the third member of the trio from Highcliffe was tired and did not want to waste time on another of Pon's little escapades.

"Why, where is the Christmas spirit in you men? Our old friend, Bunter, looks tired and damp and, being endowed with the milk of human kindness, I think we should give him a lift." Pon wound down the window and smiled benevolently at the wanderer. "Going our way, old chap?"

Billy Bunter gazed apprehensively at the trio in the lit interior of that comfortable car, as Pon smiled pleasantly back at him. He had seen Pon smile before, and backed away.

"No larks, you fellows, I'm on my way to Wharton's place."

"Do you hear that, you men. Bunter's on his way to Wharton's place, and we all know how much Wharton and his gang will miss Bunter if he gets lost. I really feel that we should see Bunter safely to the doors of Wharton Lodge. If your pater's waxy, Monson, we can explain that we've helped a poor traveller on his way. Jump in, old fellow." Bunter blinked back doubtfully. This pally form of address was far from Pon's usual form of greeting, while Bunter warmed to the idea of a lift but still hesitated. It is said of old that he who hesitates is lost. He was tired to the point of exhaustion and, as Pon extended a helping hand, Bunter hesitated no longer. A moment later he was settling back in the comfort of the car's expensive upholstery as the motor gathered speed.

Ponsonby gave instructions to the driver, instructions which brought relief to the fat passenger, for Bunter recognised details of the route to Wimford. That relief bought with it

sufficient confidence for Bunter to regale his new-found friends with an account of the extensive Christmas festivities at Bunter Court. Festivities which he was reluctant to leave, only doing so because of Wharton's imploring that Christmas at the Lodge would not be Christmas at all without his presence.

"I could distinctly hear the sob in Wharton's voice as he begged me on the telephone not to let him down. 'Bunter, dear chap,' he pleaded, 'I know how disappointed the guests at Bunter Court, especially the princes, will feel at your not being there to greet them, but you owe it to us, dear fellow...'"

Yawn. Yawn!

"Really you men, show some semblance of manners when such a well-connected chap as Bunter here is condescending to enrich our social failings. Imagine the joy we shall be giving to all at Wharton Lodge when we drop Bunter on the doorstep. Why, it will be like delivering a valuable Christmas present and, like all valuable Christmas presents I think this one should be gift-wrapped. Grab his paws, you men!"

Realisation dawned on the faces of Monson and Gadsby. So this was one of Pon's little diversions, after all. Anxious as they were to reach Monson's home, they could spare a little time in some harmless fun. They grabbed the two wrists of the struggling Bunter and brought them together so that Pon could tie them. From a shopping bag beside him their leader extracted a bundle of fibre-tip pens, with the aid of which the playful Pon made some dramatic adornments to the extensive features of their alarmed and squirming prisoner.

"Won't be long now, Reddy." Herbert Vernon-Smith looked across at the shadowy figure of his chum in his father's Rolls Royce as Mr. Vernon-Smith's chauffeur carefully guided the expensive car over the icy road.

"It's going to be a spiffing Christmas, Smithy. It will be good to see Wharton and the others again, and it's better still that you and I will be sharing the rest of the vac. together with them. We had some fun together at Hawkescliffe but we shall have much more in the company of the other fellows. My father will enjoy the company of old shipmates at sea,

and yours will be busy with business matters in New Zealand."

"I understand Quelch is staying at the Lodge too." In the darkness a frown creased the face of the Bounder. "Our beloved form-master laid it on with the cane just before the end of term." He gave a reminiscent wriggle. "But it could have been the sack, so you can rest happy, Reddy, I'll be on my best behaviour - just to show Quelch how grateful I am."

"I'm sure that you'll find that he will want to enjoy Christmas as much as you do, Smithy, although I can't quite see him joining us in skating on the lake or having a battle royal with snowballs. As far as fellow guests go even Quelch is an improvement on Bunter, although I gather that Bunter will not be gracing the festivities at Wharton Lodge, this year. There was something about Dr. Pillbury advising him to go on a diet..."

"Canute stood a better chance of turning away the sea than a Bunter turning away the tuck," the Bounder observed as the car suddenly slowed and came to a stop. "What's the matter, Parsons? What are you stopping for?"

The chauffeur pointed ahead to where another car stood at the side of the road caught in the headlights of their own.

"Looks as though they may be in trouble sir. Have I your permission to go and see if they need help?"

"Yes, and I'll come with you. You coming, too, Reddy?"

Both Smithy and Redwing were anxious to reach their own destination, but the chance of stretching their legs was welcome after a long and difficult drive. Together with Parsons they approached the car, from which an elegant figure was already descending. Recognition was instant and mutual.

"Smithy, Awfully good to see you," Ponsonby, with studied indifference, ignored both Redwing and Parsons as he shook the Bounder by the hand. "We've run out of gas so, if you can spare us some, I'll be no end obliged."

"Who else is with you?" enquired Vernon-Smith. "You can't have been out at this time of night on your own."

"Monson and Gadsby are with me, but they are taking a snooze in the car before we get on

to Monson's place for the vac."

"Couldn't one of you have gone for some petrol?" Smithy by nature was a suspicious fellow, and he sensed an air of impatience about Ponsonby that he could not quite place. There had been times in the past when the black side of the Bounder's nature had occasioned him to throw in his lot with the knuts of Highcliffe. Now, he regretted those past associations - all the more so because his pal Redwing was by his side. The way Pon had ignored Reddy had not been lost on him. Two could play at the game of being awkward. Before Pon could stop him, the Bounder had hurried past him toward the stranded car.

Monson and Gadsby were there all right, but they were definitely not taking a snooze! They were both sitting on an wriggling mass of humanity.

"Hullo, what's this game? Your idea of spreading a little joy and happiness during the festive season?"

The sound of Vernon-Smith's voice seemed to galvanise the captive into frenzied animation.

"Ow-wow-wow! The cad's bitten me!" came a sudden yelp from Monson as he leapt up, disclosing the face on which he had been sitting.

"Bunter, by gad!" exclaimed Smithy. He recognised the Owl of the Remove - but only just. Bunter's face - never a thing of beauty or a joy forever - had recently received some attention. Dark rings had been painted round his bespectacled eyes, the owl-like aspect of which was relieved by stripes of blue and red that added a passable imitation of a technicoloured zebra.

"I asked 'what's this game?'" the Bounder repeated, as he lifted Monson to his feet. Gadsby had already risen; he had caught the threat in Smithy's voice, and Bunter was struggling to his feet.

"Just a little jape on those Greyfriars cads at Wharton Lodge," explained Ponsonby, who had joined the group, closely followed by Redwing. "Bunter was on his way to join that crowd, and, knowing how frightfully popular he is with them, we thought we'd make sure he'd get to his destination. No harm in that, old fellow?"

"No. I suppose you fellows would see no harm in bagging a helpless duffer like Bunter. Three to one - typical Highcliffe style. Well,

Reddy here, and I happen to be great japers ourselves." He looked at Mr. Monson's chauffeur. "You want any part of this?" he enquired tersely. The man shook his head and stood back.

"If you will kindly give us some petrol, I will take the young gentlemen on their way. Mr. Monson will be concerned already about our delay."

"Well, while you and Parsons are dealing with the fuel question, we will deal with the problem in hand. As the injured party, I think Bunter should have a say in the next item on the programme. What shall we do with them, fatty?"

"Kick them hard, boot them all the way to Monson's place!" Bunter spoke with an enthusiasm that was blended with a note of regret. Under other auspices, he would have preferred something more lingering and effective like boiling in oil. Unfortunately such an entertainment was no longer legally possible so he settled for the kicking.

"Booting, it shall be, then." The Bounder paused, "But as Pon was so keen to be artistic, why don't we follow his good example. Sit on him, Bunter."

"Don't you dare! Don't you - oh gad - Urgh, Groogh! Gettutoff!" It was Ponsonby's turn to be sat upon, and he did not seem to enjoy the experience as Smithy got busy with the fibre tips whilst Redwing kept the other two at bay and Bunter looked on ready to land a fat foot on the seat of the illustrated Pon.

"Ready Bunter, Ready Tom? Right Bunter. Redwing and I will hold Pon steady whilst you kick Pon for goal."

On Little Side Bunter could not have scored a goal in a thousand years, but he seemed to suddenly have acquired some expertise in the matter. Perhaps Bunter put all his weight into it, and that weight was considerable. Anyway Pon flew, and Bunter kindly helped him further by a supplementary kick as he landed. Bunter would have been pleased to have landed a few more, but Smithy and Redwing were attending to Monson and Gadsby, and Bunter had no wish to engage Pon in single combat.

"Greyfriars wins, I think," claimed Vernon-Smith, as he and Redwing, together with their newly-found companion, returned to the comfort of the Rolls. Lowering the window he

waved a fond farewell to what would have passing for a trio of demons in a pantomime.

"I say, you fellows, how well this has worked out for all of us. I was on my way to Wharton Lodge when those cads seized me. Now we can all arrive there together." Bunter had been giving some thought to the matter. Arriving at Wharton's place with two genuine and invited guests endowed the uninvited one with some respectability. Wharton and his friends could hardly welcome the Bounder and Redwing without welcoming him also. It was a piece of cake!

Unfortunately for William George Bunter, his appreciation of the position was on rather different lines from that of Herbert Vernon-Smith. Smithy's idea of etiquette may not have borne the stamp of Vere de Vere, but he had no intention of conveying an unwelcome guest into the home of his friendly host. Neither could he leave the fathead stranded far from home.

"Ripping car this," remarked Bunter with his mouth full. He had discovered a small basket of food which, for some reason his two school fellows had not consumed. Bunter was repairing that omission as apple turnovers followed chicken sandwiches down his fat neck. "I understand," he continued, clutching Smithy's arm with a sticky hand, "that some of the Cliff House girls are coming over on Boxing Day. Marjorie's rather sweet on me, so I don't want you fellows having any ideas of your own. It takes a fellow of charm to entertain the girls, so you can leave all that to me."

Thus did Bunter weave his own fate. Even the Bounder had felt sorry at Bunter's plight and had been debating whether to take him on to Wharton Lodge and leave him to the compassion of Harry Wharton's family. With his usual colossal cheek, and tenacity for staying where he wasn't wanted, the fat fool would probably have got by. Now, as Bunter prattled on, Smithy, like Herod of old, hardened his heart. The mere thought of the girls from Cliff House being the subject of William George Bunter's attentions made Smithy's mind up for him.

"You haven't been invited to stay at Wharton Lodge, Bunter, and I do not intend taking you there. You have a choice. I am prepared to tip Parsons to take you back to your home, or I am prepared to drop you off here and let Pon and his pals catch up with you. I rather

fancy you would be in for a high old time if they do!"

Bunter thought so too. He shuddered at the thought of what those three Highcliffe cads would do to him if they were given a chance.

"Make your mind up!" The Rolls slowed down, stopped, and the Bounder opened the door invitingly. It was an invitation that Bunter preferred to ignore.

"Jealousy, that's what it is. You can't stand the thought of my putting you in the shade with the girls... Let go of my collar, you beast."

"Out you get. We are already late and there is no more time to waste!"

Bunter gave one poignant look of appeal at the Bounder but it was to no avail.

"You can tell your man to drop me off at Bunter Court, and be blown to you. In the past I've treated you as an equal, next term I treat you as the rotter you are. Next term I'll..."

Perhaps it was fortunate for Bunter that the Rolls was by now running through the streets of a small town and, at a word from Smithy, the car drew to a stop.

"We can't be far from Wimford now, Parsons, and Redwing and I will make the rest of the journey by cab if you can manage to rustle one up. On your way back to London, I want you to make a detour to take Bunter back to Reigate where he lives. It's asking a bit much of you, I know, but here's a fiver to compensate you. On no account is Bunter to leave the car until he is at home."

The chauffeur touched his cap. In his opinion, young Vernon-Smith had too many fivers to throw about but, so long as a few came his way, it was all to the good.

Parsons returned in a short time, having managed to field a cab that was returning from a late party. Their luggage safely transferred from the Rolls, the two juniors turned to Bunter for a last word of farewell. Bunter's last word was emphatic but not endearing.

"Yah! Think I care about staying at Wharton's pokey little place. Tell that old fossil of an uncle that I - oh gurgh...". The fond farewell was cut short as a well-aimed snowball left the hand of the Bounder and found its target.

The Rolls sped on its way carrying its precious passenger. The first occasion that it slowed down, Bunter tried to open the door,

only to find it locked. Parsons observed this attempt in a driving mirror. Master Herbert's tip was for services to be rendered and Parsons fully intended earning it.

It was long after the time for dorm at Greyfriars, but Mr. Quelch had no comment to offer as he settled himself back in a deep and comfortable chair by the fireside at Wharton Lodge. During the day young appetites had been fully satisfied with all the good things available and though Mr. Quelch's appetite was of a more restrictive nature he had enjoyed what the limits of his diet demanded. He had enjoyed also the game of chess he had had with Huree Singh, and had quietly joined in the impromptu singing around the piano. Now the boys of his form were gathered in a semi-circle around that great fireplace. Occasionally a shifting log would blaze into greater intensity and find reflection in the young faces belonging to Harry Wharton and his friends. On the opposite side of the fireplace sat Miss Amy Wharton, looking at the straight and erect figure of her brother. A rising wind already made eerie echoes down the vast chimney.

The Colonel took a sip from the glass in his hand, and looked around the hall as though he half expected some interruption before he began.

"To many," he commenced, "there is no more romantic age than that of the Civil War when divided loyalties split families asunder. There is a thrilling little story regarding my own family that has its origin in that period and which you may find particularly fitting today.

"With one exception, the Whartons declared for the King. That exception was Rupert Wharton-Stacey (I see the second name is familiar to you) - a distant cousin who had long been regarded as the proverbial bad apple in an otherwise good barrel.

"The year 1644, with the battles of Marston Moor and Newbury, was a fateful one for the Royalists. The sons of the family were fighting far from home when Wimford and the surrounding area unfortunately fell into the hands of the parliamentary forces. This operation was made successful by the betrayal and treachery of Rupert, who was granted the Wharton estates as a reward for his infamy. As

though that burden were not enough, news came of the death at Newbury of Humphry Wharton, the head of the family.

"Although there was enough cause for the house to be in solemn mourning that Christmas the usurper Wharton-Stacey decided to hold high revel at the Lodge. Outside the house a storm was at its height. Inside, the lights from the chandeliers threw their beams on the festive throng of Cromwell's soldiery. Model Army indeed! Oliver himself would not have wished to claim them for his own. Intoxicated both with wine and his falsely acquired possessions, Rupert stood at the foot of the staircase, urging the unruly mob on to greater excesses.

"Suddenly the great double door flew open, as though borne on the howling wind from without. Through that doorway the startling figure of a Cavalier appeared, sword drawn, and advanced toward the drunken Rupert. The traitor stopped in mid-voice and gazed at the visitor. A look of horrified recognition came to Wharton-Stacey's face, dredging it of its wine-induced flush and leaving a ghastly pallor in its place. 'But you're dead Humphry - you're dead!' babbled Rupert.

'One last thing I have to do before I go to the rest you will never know. I have come to despatch you from the family and country you have dishonoured and from the life that you are not worthy to continue. Have at you, rogue and traitor!'

Spellbound, the Roundheads watched as the cavalier and his cousin cut and thrust at each other, but they did not have to watch for long! With a terrible cry Rupert fell, mortally wounded, with the silvery blade of his cousin embedded in his worthless carcass. For a moment, the cavalier stood back, gazing with scorn at the figure that lay sprawled at the foot of the staircase, the blood already staining the wood. Recovering their wits, the mob leapt upon the victorious Humphry, only to find that he had vanished as suddenly as he had arrived!"

Colonel Wharton took another sip from his glass before continuing.

"My ancestor had left behind his sword, and later it is supposed to have lain neglected in the gun room, as Harry's den was then known. From there, it was either stolen or mislaid. In those days a soldier's sword was representative of his honour, and could not be left where it would be defiled or disgraced. It is not

surprising, therefore, that a family belief persists that Humphry comes back on each anniversary of his encounter with Rupert. He comes, it is said, to conduct a forlorn search for the trusty blade with which he sought to restore the honour of his family and his house."

Colonel Wharton raised his glass in the direction of the full-length portrait hanging where the staircase divided into two.

"If my little history, often delayed or interrupted in its previous telling, has interested you all I hope that you will join me in the wish that the spirit of Humphry may one day be successful in its search and thus bring it the rest that it justly deserves."

There was a ripple of applause before the guests said their goodnights to their host. The story had kept beyond the past interruptions in its telling, and the Colonel had told it well. Everyone was glad that their host had got that piece of fascinating history off his chest, so to speak. The fact that its telling had been made possible by the absence of Bunter was a declared bonus. Whether Bunter would have thought so did not matter at all. What did matter was that, for not the first time on record, the distance of Bunter not only lent enchantment to the view, but ensured that everyone else had a merrier Christmas at Wharton Lodge!

(This pastiche is published in appreciation of, and with acknowledgements to, Frank Richards.)



Season's Greetings to all friends. Wanted: Sexton Blake Library (2nd Series). Have exchanges of other Boys' Papers if preferred.

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Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year to Madam Editor, Eric, Bill, Chris, Laurie, Les, Mac, and all fellow hobbyists.

JOHN BRIDGWATER
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Merry Xmas and Happy New Year 1994 to all Hobby Friends from

JOHN BARTHOLOMEW
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The House in Messenger Square

OR "WHATEVER BECAME OF BATHURST?"

By Len Hawkey



In the long and eventful history of Sexton Blake, from 1893 to the present day, few periods stand out with the same significance as the years from 1907 to 1914. From his creation by Harry Blyth, already dead, alas, his exploits had soon been taken up by other authors, and he had increasingly become one of fiction's most popular characters.

BART KENNEDY on the Stage. SEE INSIDE.

THE PENNY-PICTORIAL

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME READING



No. 444. (Vol. XXXV.)

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November 30, 1907

An unidentified impression of Sexton Blake, possibly by R.J. Macdonald

By 1907 his cases were not only being featured in what was termed "his own paper" - The Union Jack - but periodically in the 3d Boys' Friend Library, as well as in the so-called "companion papers" - The Boys' Herald, Boys' Friend, and Boys' Realm - (under the forceful editorship of Hamilton Edwards), but they had been taken up by the "adult" weekly, The Penny Pictorial, and shortly afterwards by that cornerstone of the Harmsworth Empire, Answers. It may have been no coincidence that Hamilton Edwards was at that time also editor of The Penny Pictorial, but it certainly shows that The Amalgamated Press regarded Sexton Blake as a "winner".

Throughout this unique era, there were, really, *two* Sexton Blakes. The one most of us know best - with stern, aristocratic features, and penetrating gaze, alert and athletic, dashing at a moment's notice from Manchester to Manchuria, Northampton to New York, Plymouth to Peking, but always operating from his comfortable base at Baker Street, and assisted by Tinker and Pedro. Then there was his "alter ego" - not always, visually, quite the same, and often a trifle jaded and world-weary. Frequently under doctor's orders to "take it easy", this was the Blake of The Penny Pictorial, and of Answers. The very first story in the former - "Missing" (P.P. No. 428, 10-8-1907) - announces that the detective was taking a longish convalescence, staying at a cottage in Surbiton - in those days a village on the outskirts of London - loaned to him by an old friend, Mr. Dove.

Surprisingly, Blake No. 2 seems to have been something of a hypochondriac! He was repeatedly being sent on holiday by his physician - whom he must have consulted - to recover from overwork, insomnia, mental strain and other debilitating complaints. Apart from his enforced "rest" at Aston villa, in Surbiton, he was sent away to recuperate in March 1908 (The Black Orchid: P.P.No.460, 21-3-08), suffers another setback in health in June 1910 (The Haven Farm Mystery: P.P. No.578, 15-6-10) when is is sent up to Yorkshire to recuperate, and yet again in April 1912. His Doctor insists he needs a "rest-cure" and he goes with his friend Bathurst to the latter's West Country cottage (The Plymouth Motorcar Mystery: P.P.No.672, 13-4-12). It may have seemed a little odd that, in spite of these recurrent bouts of indisposition, Blake contrived to take on - and solve - a fresh case every week! Equally intriguing is the matter of the detective's income. Anything so mundane as a fee is scarcely mentioned. Scotland Yard may have reimbursed him for his occasional help, but most of his cases seem to have involved clubland friends or acquaintances. Yet Blake and Bathurst were always travelling the length and breadth of England, staying at hotels, dining out, playing in golf tournaments, entertaining at their Club - and apart from the rent on Messenger Square, the detective could afford both a manservant and a housekeeper!

How, or why, two such different Sexton Blakes came into being is unclear. Doubtless the Amalgamated Press wished to capitalise on the popularity of the character, and the astute, if egotistical Hamilton Edwards may have suggested including his adventures in an "adult" paper, to widen his appeal. Rightly or wrongly, The Union Jack was regarded as a "juvenile" publication. He may even have persuaded Cecil Hayter to switch his yarns from Mr. Dove (who made only a very brief appearance) to the better-known detective. Who knows?

In the event, the great sleuth's stay in Mr. Dove's cottage was fairly short. The pleasures of a summer, gardening in suburbia, soon faded, and by November 1907 (The Case of Lord Richard Mansbridge: P.P. No. 443) he decided to rent a house off the Kings Road, Chelsea, in Messenger Square, to be precise. Cecil Hayter's brilliant evocation of this property could hardly be improved on by Dickens himself, and is well worth reproducing in full.

Sexton Blake at this time, bear in mind, was still supposed to be "taking things easy" and for a while led a very withdrawn and solitary existence. He did however engage a manservant, Morris (sometimes referred to as Morrison, and even as Simmons!) and also an un-named maid/housekeeper. Why he took this house when, at least in The Union Jack, he had a comfortable "des.res." in Baker Street is never explained. Possibly the idea was to distance the "P.P." from the "U.J.": the former in fact claims that these were the detective's "early cases" but they couldn't have explained this to the artists, as in most



THE CASE OF LORD RICHARD MANSBRIDGE.

A SPLENDID COMPLETE STORY OF ONE OF
THE EARLY ADVENTURES OF
Sexton Blake, Detective.

There are more queer places in London than most people know of. Probably not one man in a thousand, even if he be a Londoner and an inhabitant of Chelsea, has ever heard of, or set eyes on, Messenger Square, though it lies within a hundred or so paces of Chelsea's main thoroughfare.

It is a strange, old-world place, smacking of the later eighteenth century, and looks as if since then its very existence had been forgotten.

Some rusted iron figures on the walls of the principal house announce that that building, at any rate, was erected in the year of grace seventeen hundred and ninety-three. Judging from the outside, it has been left uncared for ever since.

There are many curious things about Messenger Square. To begin with, it is not a square at all, but an oval. At one end stands the house, which might at one time have been a small country mansion. The front door is reached by a double flight of steps, guarded by a slender balustrade of wrought iron, now heavily rusted, and of fantastic and artistic design; the blindless windows are glazed in the small square panels peculiar to the period, and a deeply-carved shelter-board overhangs the door. At the other end is a small slum alley-way, the only means of approach.

The centre space of the oval is a squalid, unrailed stretch of bare ground; dusty in summer, muddy in winter, always forlorn and desolate. In its midst is a snout-coated plane-tree, ragged as to bark and half withered.

But the most curious thing of all is that it is absolutely deserted. The dealers in second-hand clothing, fried fish, and castaway furniture, who inhabit the neighbouring alley, speak of it as the "deserted square." Even the children prefer the alley and the streets as a playground, rather than the gloom of that desolate oval.

The reason is that in the remote past the descendants of the long-deceased Mr. Messenger, after whom the place is named, quarrelled over the property, and indulged in the luxury of an expensive lawsuit.

One branch wished to sell, the other got an injunction. Whereupon the first branch refused to be party to any lease or leases; and no tenants daring to run the risk of being involved in such legal complications, the "square" had gradually become emptied of its former inhabitants, and

for the past fifteen years had passed from the shabby stage to the dilapidated—uncared for, neglected, desolate.

It was in just such a state when Sexton Blake strolled into it one bleak November afternoon. A steady drizzle had been continuous since the early morning, the oval was a dreary, muddy slough of despond; and the plane-tree looked like some weird, gaunt, second-hand skeleton, unearthed from the dusty attics of a dealer in antiques, its fleshless fingers upstretched to the leaden-grey sky.

Well as he knew his London, he had only seen that deserted corner of the big metropolis once before. The place had photographed itself on his brain, its aloofness from the strife and turmoil of busier centres appealed to him. Within twenty-four hours of his second view of it, and in spite of the solemn warnings of the house agent—agent the hopelessness of getting any repairs done, and the doubtful legality of his lease—he had entered into occupation of the house with the iron-railed steps.

His preparations were simple in the extreme. He paid a quarter's rent in advance, obtained the latch-key, and drove up with his belongings in a four-wheeler.

His bed-room, which opened off the sitting-room on the first floor, was hastily furnished with a camp-bed, a circular washstand, and a large tin bath. His clothes were bundled into a large built-in cupboard, and an old ranching saddle, a revolver-holster, and a repeating-rifle, were hung from nails on the wall.

The sitting-room contained a writing-desk, two easy-chairs, a reading lamp, a long trestle table, with various laboratory appliances, a couple of yards of tubing connecting the gas-bracket with a Bunsen burner, and a pile of books and albums of memoranda tossed carelessly into a corner. In the room below was an assortment of tinned foods, a big case of biscuits, and a small cooking-stove. The drawer of the writing-desk contained a Browning pistol. The rest of the house was allowed to go to ruin in its own sweet way.

Blake wanted quiet, retirement, and facility to study at his leisure; that found, the rest might go hang. He was busy for the time being in endeavouring to find out the exact structure of the cobra virus. Its component elements are, of course, well known; but the way in which these component parts are built into one another is one of the scientific problems of the age.

It was past five on a foggy afternoon. A chill, raw rainstorm was howling outside, and the fire in the grate had long burnt itself out unheeded.

3

illustrations Blake appears, if anything, to be older and more staid than his counterpart in the boy's paper. Except for a few tales in late 1908 (when Tinker and Pedro appear) none of the regulars from the Baker Street stories ever surfaces in *The Penny Pictorial* (or *Answers*). Oddly enough, for some time the heading in the "P.P." shows Blake lounging in his armchair, with Pedro sitting by his side!

How many authors were engaged in recounting these "early" exploits one cannot say. Bill Lofts reliably confirms that they were started by Cecil Hayter, who probably wrote the preponderance, but William Murray Gaydon, Herbert Maxwell and other regular contributors to the "P.P." were doubtless involved, which would account for numerous peculiarities. Apart from the odd introduction of Tinker and Pedro at one stage, another example, from "The Fernham Road Mystery" (P.P.No.444: 30-11-07) states "He (Blake)

had few friends these days, and lived a life of almost complete solitude" - and, again, later on in a story "The King's Messenger" - "Blake was sitting in his armchair ... doing nothing. It was his habit to spend days and days on end, dreaming the hours away in his armchair". Yet a few weeks later he was spending Christmas at the country house of his friend Sir John Yelverton, solving a succession of mysteries, and "living it up" in Piccadilly's "clubland" with a wide circle of companions (all of whom seem to need his professional services at one time or another!).

Other than the occasional mention of Morris, it is not until late 1908 that another regular character appears. This is Lady Molly Maxwell, who had in fact met Blake the previous year in "The Tragedy at No. 9 Hole", when he was on one of his golfing vacations. (P.P.No.440: 2-11-07). A year later she appears again and then makes more frequent appearances, billed as "The World's Greatest Lady Detective". It must be said that her friendship with her male counterpart seems entirely platonic. However, in the story "The Missing Ledger" (P.P.No.503: 16-1-09) the most notable addition to the tales occurs: we are introduced for the first time to "Bathurst"!

Of the 400 of so stories in The Penny Pictorial, and in Answers, Bathurst is featured in upwards of 150, yet not reference to a Christian name can be found. The friends are always "Blake" and "Bathurst" to each other though to the writer "John" always appears to be the most likely forename. Bathurst is obviously ex-public school, and is 27 when we first meet him, a clean-cut, slim but athletic young man. He is, it seems, an aspiring novelist, but actually works as a reporter on the "Daily Wire". He has a flat not far from Messenger Square, and a West Country cottage (legacy from a wealthy Aunt) and in all probability a private income.

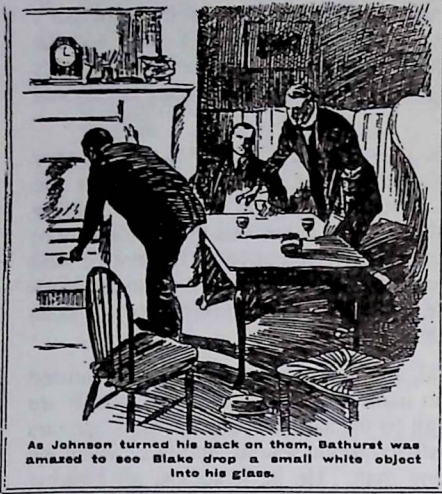
Their acquaintance evidently springs from their membership of the exclusive Baddeleys Club, which was probably in - or near - Piccadilly, as the two pals often walk home across Green Park. One uses the term "pals" advisedly, for whereas the relationship between the Baker Street detective and Tinker often verges on the paternal, Bathurst is described as "Blake's friend and assistant". In fact he was more the former than the latter. Whilst the older man obviously enjoys Bathurst's company, he rarely assigns him a task of any real importance. Bathurst often draws the detective's attention to a likely case, but has merely to "tag along" or stand by while the great man gets to work. It is also useful to have him on hand for the final dénouement. He accompanies Blake on many investigations, seldom playing a really active part, but is on hand to warn of impending danger, or join in a fight: Bathurst is never one to shirk a bit of excitement.

On several occasions Blake is rather dismissive of his companion's well meant intentions - much as Holmes was of Dr. Watson, at times - and he can even be a little hurtful, as when he introduces Bathurst as "a dilettente journalist", but basically the friendship is a firm one, and Bathurst seems welcome at Messenger Square at any time, bursting in while Blake is at breakfast or joining him for a late night whiskey and cigar.

By this time the detective seems to have become an inveterate clubman, playing bridge or billiards with fellow members, and on many a night, dining with Bathurst, going to a nearby theatre or even taking part in golf tournaments. (He had, apparently, a most enviable handicap.) That great Sexton Blake expert, Walter Webb, writing in a 1960 C.D. regrets that the detective "was a stranger to the world of sport". Walter must have forgotten the Penny Pictorial stories!

Here Blake is always golfing, fishing, sailing, playing tennis, etc., as well as taking long country walks with Bathurst, in the course of which, naturally, some unexpected kidnapping, robbery, or even murder, might occur! Their frequent holidays (mainly in the south of England) are chronicled in such cases as "The Pevril Bay Mystery", "The East Coast Mystery" and "The Crawley Cottage Mystery". Travelling arrangements were usually left to poor old Bathurst, and he was on hand for several "special" occasions, as during the Coronation of King George Vth in 1911, when the friends save the heiress to the Sicilian Throne ("Princess Sophia's Escape" P.P.No.629: June 1911).

Illustrations from The Penny Pictorial



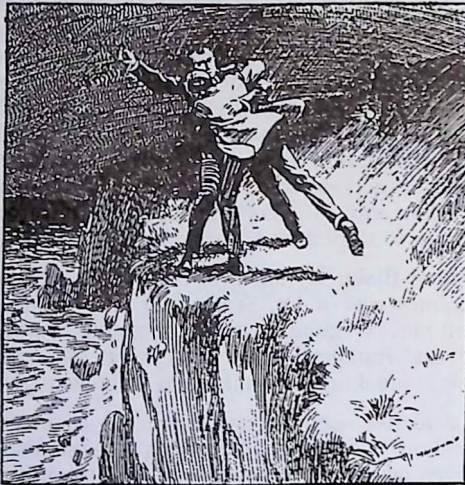
As Johnson turned his back on them, Bathurst was amazed to see Blake drop a small white object into his glass.



The door of Blake's study was flung open, and a tall man pushed his way into the room. His eyes already held the hunted look of a "wanted" man.

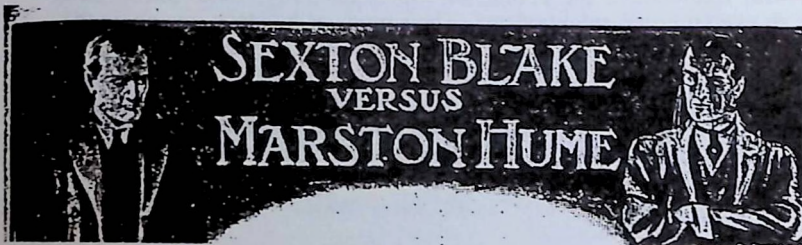
J. LOUIS SMYTH illustration from "CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE" - No. 611 (11-2-1911) Bathurst in background

Only portrayal of Blake's "housekeeper" - plus back of Bathurst. No. 613 (25-2-1911) "The Carven Wood Mystery"



It was a silent, grim fight for life, Blake losing ground as the almost superhuman arms of Marston Hume wound round him, forcing him to the cliff-edge.

The Final Struggle between Blake & Marston Hume (Bathurst with lantern!)
R.J. Macdonald - No. 607 (14-1-1911) "Found Guilty!"



Heading for the "Marston Hume" Series (R.J. Macdonald)



"Come quickly!" cried Molly Maxwell. "There's been an accident." It was just then that she caught sight of the wound and the ominous dark stain on the turf.

Lady Molly - who helps Blake solve "The Tragedy of No. 9 Hole"
Macdonald - No. 440 - (2-11-1907)



One man heard Blake coming, and turned; but, before he could cry out, Blake caught him under the jaw, and he went over into the water with a splash.

Marston Hume's minions attack Sexton Blake - No. 551
(18-12-1909) "Abducted". J. Louis Smyth

Whoever the authors of these adventures were, it still seems strange that no attempt was made to introduce other regular characters than the two already referred to. Scotland Yard officials are rarely mentioned more than once, yet alone "permanent" adversaries like Plummer, Huxton Rhymer or Carlac. The one exception is in November 1909 when the clubman-detective is challenged by Marston Hume, a brilliant criminal lawyer turned Master-crook ("Well-Matched": P.P.No.545).

In his more honest days, as a member of Baddeleys Club, Hume knew both Blake and Bathurst. He was regarded as a bit of a "show-off", always sported a monocle, and dressed rather flamboyantly. Blake, however, knows him to be supremely intelligent, and has great difficulty in thwarting most of his schemes. Once or twice Hume wins out, but at the end of the first series of encounters, the detective reduces Hume to penury (by a series of Stock Exchange manipulations) and forces the criminal to disappear abroad ("Blake Scores! P.P.No.552: 25-12-09).

Towards the end of 1910, Hume returns to England, in disguise, and crosses swords with his old adversary. But he is no longer the man he was, and his career comes to an end in "Found Guilty" (P.P.No.607: 14-1-1911). From information given by Blake, Marston Hume is trapped by Scotland Yard at the Quay Hotel, Newhaven, but he escapes and comes face to face with his old enemy on top of the Newhaven Cliffs. Despite being wounded, Blake struggles with Hume, and the latter is eventually hurled to his death on the rocks below. (Why does one think of Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty?) Bathurst is hurrying to the scene, of course, but as usual, arrives a little too late!

As well as Bathurst, Lady Molly also appeared in at least one of the Hume adventures (The Case of the Louis-Quinze Snuffbox - P.P.O.No.550: 12-12-09) so, rightly or wrongly, one assumes these stories were written by Cecil Hayter.

As the Penny Pictorial stories continued, one half suspected Marston Hume might yet "return from the dead" but it was not to be. There were increasing gaps from late 1911, through 1912, and these became more evident in 1913. At the very end of that year, the saga of Sexton Blake Mark II ended and was replaced in January 1914 by a new detective whom Cecil Hayter had created, the monocled and top-hatted Derwent Duff, whose exploits ran for some months. (Incidentally, it is worth mentioning that the Supplement to the Sexton Blake Catalogue - produced by the S.B. Circle - is wrong in stating the P.P. tales ended with No. 756 "The Mystery of the Golden God" as there were 5 more mysteries in succeeding issues:- No. 757 - "The Locked door"; No. 758 - "The Missing Miss Mansfield"; No. 759 - "Quits at Last"; No. 760 - "A Christmas Eve Mystery", and finally, on December 27th 1913, No. 761 - "The Motor Mystery").

A "ghost" of the Penny Pictorial series resurfaced in the Penny Popular, during the 1920s. Mention of Messenger Square was avoided, but Bathurst *did* feature, as he did again in The Detective Weekly, in 1936, when Blake was transmogrified as "Marcus Max".

So concluded the great sleuth's years as a clubland habitué, a golfer, man-about-town and tenant of that strange and secluded residence in Chelsea. What happened to that House in Messenger Square? Or to the apparently young but seldom seen housekeeper? Or to Blake's enigmatic manservant, be his name Morris, Morrison, or Simmons? Did Baddeleys Club (where, according to Blake "one can get the best meal in London") perish in the impending war, or possibly last until Hitler's war? Or is it, in its unobtrusive way, still a haven for solitary detectives and journalists? Sexton Blake, we know, returned to Baker Street, but what of Lady Molly? Did she marry some aristocratic Army Officer, or devote the rest of her life to "sleuthing"? All mysteries that 80 years on even the great detective himself could not solve.

Above all - the question that the writer finds most intriguing - for the young man had been closer to Blake than any friend he had had and was still playing an active role in the very last tale but one - "The Christmas Eve Mystery" - Whatever Became of Bathurst?





I was born in 1923. In nineteen thirty-six, the beginning of that year brought snow and at the tender age of 12 years and 9 months I got my first job.

Newspaper Boy at the "Bookstall" in Shenfield Railway Station at the salary of one shilling and three pence per week.

I only lasted four days. The climatic conditions nipped me in the bud with a vengeance. My reward for the period was Bronchitus and sixpence in wages. BUT... the memory still lives with me for on the very first morning... enclosed with the newspaper to an impressive domain was a Schoolboys Own Library with the title of "Tatters" by Frank Richards, priced fourpence.

Had I worked the full week, Mum had been promised a shilling, and the three pennies already aimed to pay for the "Magnet" with the last one swelling my "Xmas Card" for the coming season.

I nearly stole it.

I was standing in the blizzard debating good and evil... WHOEVER LIVES THERE? glancing at the imposing edifice... COULD AFFORD TO BUY ANOTHER! "I NEVER SAW IT" I would say. LOST IT? COULD IT JUST NOT HAVE BEEN ENCLOSED IN THE 'TELEGRAPH'.

Fifteen good minutes I weighed all the Pro's and Con's and then... I sneezed! Certainly didn't help my libido. The following day I coughed and my final day gave a jolly good faint as I wheeled the heavy delivery bike back to the station.

But "TATTERS" had made a mark. "Bill Martin" in later years could not get me a copy and then... Howard (Facsimile) Baker DID!!! The whole series with a glittering gold edge, encased in a cardboard folder.

Ironic, it may seem... I only paid for one copy, but... MMM! You guessed... TWO arrived. Still have them both. Think... the good Lord said: "Well, he was honest."



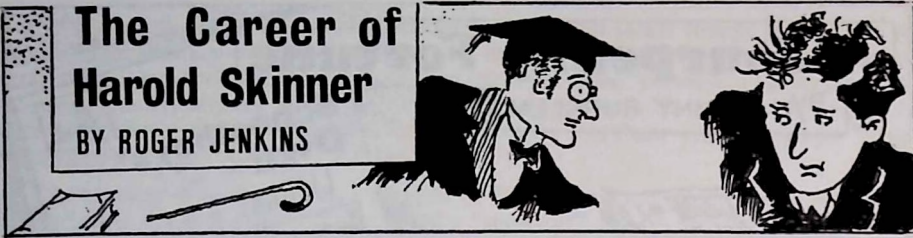
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The Career of Harold Skinner

BY ROGER JENKINS



When Harry Wharton was sent to Greyfriars in Magnet No. 1, there were only six Removites already there who were still at the school at the very end. Two of them - Bulstrode and Russell - had by that time become nonentities, but the remaining four played important parts to the very end, and they were Bunter, Nugent, Hazeldene and Skinner.

Skinner's dishonourable career spanned such a long period that it is impossible to do more than cover some of the highlights. Right from the early days he could never resist the temptation to mock Wharton, partly because he could not admit to himself the unpalatable truth that Wharton possessed an integrity of character and, whatever other faults he might have, he was not a hypocrite. As early as No. 127 Skinner's eloquence was in full flight, unctuously rebuking the Famous Four because it was believed that they had come back drunk:

"I should recommend you to turn over a new leaf," said Skinner. "My dear young friends, you are started on a bad path. Can you not see yourselves, in the future, shunned by all who know you? Can you not see yourselves reeling with tottering steps to a drunkard's grave? Oh, my friends -"

Skinner got no further with his impromptu oration. The exasperated four rushed upon him, and he was swept off his feet, and bumped on the floor, with a bump that shook all the breath out of his body.

Skinner was expelled in No. 196 after a brutal attack on Loder in revenge for ill-treatment at the prefect's hands, but Wharton was sentenced to be expelled for this attack, and it was only Nugent's persistence and determination that uncovered the evidence to save Wharton, and prove that Skinner was the real culprit. No more was heard of Skinner for some time, but he turned up again in No. 274 when he played cricket for Wapford against Greyfriars. It transpired that his father was furious when he was expelled, and put his son to work in an office. Skinner desired to return to his old school:

He was the same Skinner as of old, to all appearances - thin and wiry, and keen and sharp in the face, with the same shifty look in his eyes. Judging by appearances, Wharton would not have said that Skinner had changed at all since the time he was expelled from Greyfriars School.

He tried soft sawder on both Mr. Quelch and Dr. Locke, but neither of them was minded to have Skinner back at the school. He left late that evening and was eventually found lying on some rocks half-way down a cliff, apparently exhausted and suffering from exposure. After being taken to the sanatorium, it was finally decided that, for the good of his health and to aid his recovery, he should be granted permission to return to the Remove. Bulstrode had been Skinner's champion in all this, and he was very upset to discover rugs and food in a cave behind the ledge, which cast doubt on both the accident and the exposure. It is interesting to speculate why Charles Hamilton decided to re-introduce him after such a long absence. Perhaps he felt that Skinner was too complex a character to be consigned to oblivion, and certainly no other Removite could fulfil his particular role in the stories.

Two of Skinner's characteristics - his mischievous sense of humour and his stubborn animosity - were clearly displayed in No. 360. The form were preparing to honour the arrival of Ferrers Locke, the detective. Of course, Skinner mocked their solemnity:

"Shut up, Skinner. This isn't a joke," said Wharton.

"Isn't it?" said Skinner. "My mistake."

There was a chuckle from the crowd, and Harry Wharton frowned at Skinner. It was just like Skinner to turn the solemn occasion into a joke.

When constrained to stop joking, Skinner screwed his face up so portentously solemn that further laughter broke out. But when the reception went drastically wrong and Skinner was later caned, he tried without success to engineer complicated tricks on Ferrers Locke, getting him to investigate non-existent crimes.

The joke that Skinner played on Mr. Quelch in No. 407 was in revenge for being caned for smoking, though it was a light-hearted prank that would not have been out of place in a Rookwood story. He contrived to insert a notice in the Friardale Gazette's matrimonial column to the effect that Henry Quelch, a man of affectionate disposition, sought an acquaintance with a view to marriage. Mr. Quelch had quite an exciting afternoon as ladies of an uncertain age came forward with proposals of marriage. One cannot help wondering if Charles Hamilton shared Gilbert's prejudices towards such ladies, as exemplified in a number of the Savoy operas.



Mr. Quelch stepped back, and Skinner and Snoop entered the study. Skinner faced the Remove master's keen eyes with hardy coolness; but it was all that Snoop could do to keep his knees from knocking together. "I have sent for you two boys to question you about the revengeful act which has been carried out in my study," said Mr. Quelch in acid tones.

(In the nineteen-twenties, the regular Magnet artists were extremely painstaking in their attempts to differentiate between most of the well-known Greyfriars characters)

Skinner's pals were Snoop and Stott in Study 11, but Skinner was in Study 4 with Vernon-Smith, no doubt thinking that his money more than compensated for the unreliability of the Bounder's temper. When Redwing came permanently to Greyfriars, Skinner looked down on him as a longshoreman, and thought he ought to occupy himself repairing boats, and not presuming to mix with his betters. The Bounder offered Skinner £10 if he would exchange studies with Redwing. This was an enormous sum at the time, and was equivalent of a month's income for a poor family. Skinner refused out of

obstinacy and perhaps a feeling that the Bounder was merely manipulating him. All this did not stop Skinner from making it impossible for Redwing to work in Study 11, and so began a long drawn-out battle of wits, with Vernon-Smith attempting to blackmail Skinner into moving. Skinner's stubbornness and malice were fully displayed in this series in Nos. 553-6. In the end, it was not the Bounder's blackmail but Mr. Quelch's fiat that effected the exchange of studies. It is sometimes said that old sins cast long shadows, and certainly, when Vernon-Smith provoked Redwing into leaving Greyfriars during the Dallas series, Skinner was back in Study 4 again immediately.

By the time of the coloured covers, Skinner's character was being developed in a fascinating manner. In No. 810, he offered to help Bunter and Mauleverer with their Latin preparation:

Harold Skinner was a slacker, and generally scamped his work when he felt that he could venture to do so; but, when he chose, he was a clever fellow, and work that perplexed Bunter was nothing to Skinner.

Skinner's translation of the Aeneid of Virgil (a Latin author I certainly never came across before the Sixth Form) was so outrageous that Mr. Quelch ordered Mauleverer to stand in the corner of the classroom with his face to the wall.

The following week, Skinner arrived at Pengarth to hear about the ghost the others had seen the previous night. He was disappointed with the wild scenery in Cornwall and would have preferred a modern seaside resort with a promenade: so he vented his disappointment by jeering at the others for being frightened, calling the visions dreams and nightmares, caused by defective nervous systems. When the spectre visited Skinner's bedroom that night, there was an abrupt change of attitude. As Charles Hamilton said, there was none of Skinner's airy persiflage at breakfast that morning. The detached, sceptical attitude he adopted could not survive his own misfortunes.

No. 846 was appropriately entitled "Too Clever of Skinner". It started in typical vein, with more of Skinner's persiflage, directed at Wharton alone this time:

"Didn't the jolly old Greek johnny say that there is improvement for the mind in the contemplation of virtue?" he asked. "Don't ask us to go away; this is an improving occasion for Snoopy and me. We feel the moral benefit already. Don't we Snoopy?"

The story continued with a shady character offering Skinner sovereigns to row him across the river. In the course of the story, Newland explained that it was illegal for Skinner to offer them above face value, and he continued with a discourse about currency, and ended up by mentioning Gresham's Law of Economics, all astonishing matter to be found in a twopenny paper for boys. In the end, it turned out that the sovereigns were forged, and Skinner was flogged for selling them at 25/- each, rather a legalistic judgement on the part of Dr. Locke. Clearly, Skinner derived no moral benefit from looking at Wharton.

Skinner could always regard other people's misfortunes with equanimity. In No. 1078, when the Removites were gathered outside Mr. Quelch's study, to see whether Carboy would succeed in pulling his form-master's leg, their doubts were put to rest by the sound of the cane, and the strokes were counted carefully:

"Nine", said Skinner breathlessly. "Six is the usual limit. Is he going on? Carboy will want his bags patched at this rate."

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Twice six are twelve," murmured Skinner. "I remember that in my early infancy, my beloved 'earers, my dear governess takin' me by my little hand and murmuring 'Twice six are twelve!'"

Skinner derived a special pleasure from accusing the leading characters of injustice. In No. 1110, when Fishy complained to Mr. Quelch about jam tarts missing from his study (he suspected the Famous Five), Skinner raised a laugh by asking "Who stole the tarts?". The Famous Five tried to persuade Bunter to own up, and this gave Skinner a wonderful opportunity:

"I don't see putting it on Bunter," answered Skinner, feeling quite virtuous in the role of champion of the oppressed.

and later:-

"I don't think Bunter ought to be bullied," remarked Skinner pleasantly. "Hardly playing the game, is it?"

Mark Linley was as likely as Redwing to receive Skinner's contempt. It is highly unlikely that anyone as desperately poor as Linley would ever have gone on a scholarship as a boarder to a famous public school. In all probability he would have gone as a day-boy on a scholarship to a local grammar school. At all events, the slump of 1929 provided the ill-natured Skinner this opportunity to express his sardonic sense of humour in baiting Mark Linley:

"Sorry about your pater, Linley."

Skinner's face did not express sorrow. There was a malicious glimmer in his eyes.

Mark turned on him quickly.

"What do you mean Skinner?"

"What I say," answered Skinner. "Awfully rough to be up against it like that, isn't it?"

"I don't see how you know anything about my father or his affairs, Skinner," said Mark, breathing hard.

"What about the dole?" asked Snoop.

"The dole?" repeated Mark.

"Yes. Don't they get the dole in such circumstances? You've heard the favourite song of the unemployed?" said Skinner. "It runs 'You great big beautiful dole'."

This was really a very clever pun on a popular song of the day (dole/dole), and no doubt Charles Hamilton himself derived some amusement from it. Just as he loved gambling but warned his readers against it, so his own impish sense of humour found expression in the mouth of a despicable character. This incident came from No. 1116, and the following week Skinner, emboldened by his success, went too far, when Mark Linley was suspected of having stolen a banknote. He compiled a limerick and pinned it up in the rag:

There was a young fellow named Mark,
As poor as a tramp in the park
But he picked up a note,
Which quite made him gloat,
And he kept it most awfully dark.

This ended up in a fight between Linley and Skinner, which was described at some length. Whenever Skinner had a major role, it was still a detestable one: it was as though Skinner's amusing mockery could be allowed by the author to operate only on the sidelines. Otherwise retribution always followed.

Skinner's pleasantries were spread far and wide. In No. 1306, one of the most amusing episodes in the Valentine series related to Bunter's tray of twenty cheap articles, which he bought for £1 and hoped to sell at half-a-crown each. In Study 11, Skinner surprised his study-mates:

"Hold on, you men," said Skinner. "Let's look at these things. The fact is, I'm jolly interested in these articles."

"What rot."

"I say, you fellows, you shut up and let Skinner alone!" exclaimed Bunter. "Skinner knows a good thing when he sees it. Look at this alarm clock. It doesn't make a row like a lot of common alarm clocks. What about two bob?"

"Put it on the table."

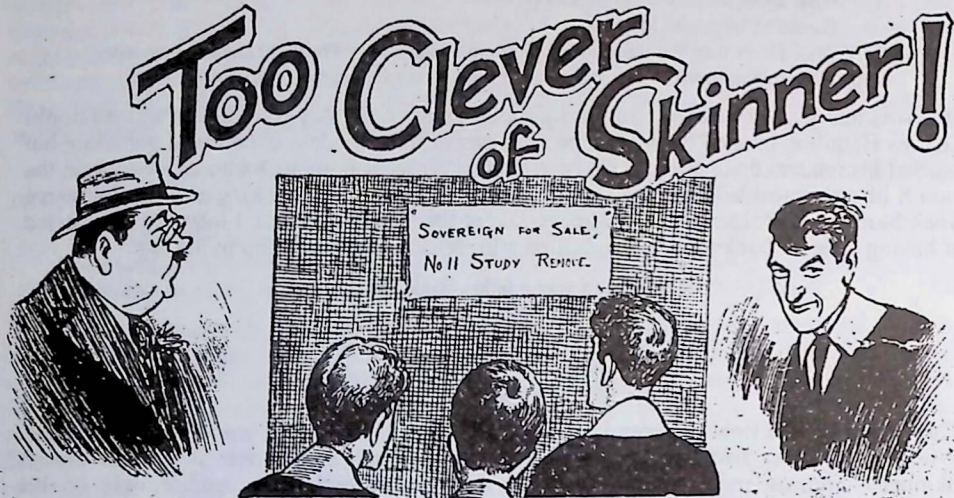
One by one, the twenty decrepit items were placed on the table in Study 11, whereupon it turned out he had no intention of buying them:

"You fellows coming down, now Bunter's done his comic turn?" asked Skinner.
 "Clear that rubbish away before we come up for prep, won't you Bunter?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I'll help you," added Skinner; and he took hold of the end of the table, and tipped it.

The pile of articles shot off and scattered on the floor.

A role that Skinner played a number of times was a marked reluctance to join in any rebellion or to back up Removites in trouble. Another role derived from his rather equivocal friendship with Ponsonby, who occasionally tolerated him and sometimes used him as a spy in the enemy camp. Perhaps Skinner's most oft-repeated gibe was that Wharton was the Great Panjandrum of the Remove and, like many of his disparaging comments, there was a small grain of truth in it, with the consequence that Skinner possessed the power to wound but he was afraid physically to strike. Skinner was a character who could never have fitted in at St. Jim's or Rookwood because Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver possessed no faults that could be the subject of telling criticism. Undoubtedly, the Magnet would have been the poorer had the Remove been deprived of the malicious mockery of the obnoxious Harold Skinner.

Skinner's "cleverness" has landed him into hot water on scores of occasions, but the Cad of the Remove oversteps himself in this grand story. Although Harold Skinner has sneered at the "goody-goody" ways of the Famous Five, it is to Harry Wharton & Co. the wretched Juniors turn when the crash comes; and the Co. is not found wanting.



A brilliant long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co.,
 from the pen of famous FRANK RICHARDS.



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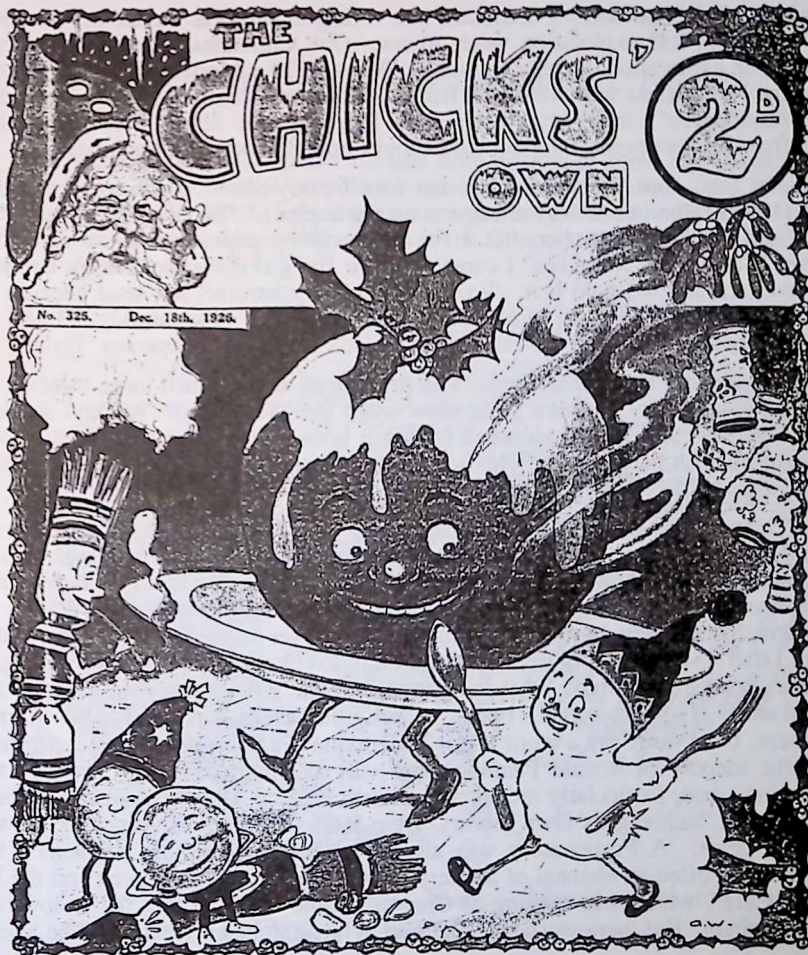
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Season's Greetings to all Hobby Friends



It was fortunate for my older sister and me that we had common-sense parents, who soon realised that a stocking is quite inadequate to hold all the Christmas presents that children expect. From the earliest Christmas that I can remember (1936, I think) it was always pillow-cases.

There was a special magic about Christmas. I enjoyed the slow build-up from that joyful day when school broke up for the holidays, after the carol service. There were presents to be bought - for I soon learned that Christmas was a time for giving as well as receiving. Then there were all the exciting culinary preparations - especially helping Hannah (our cook-parlour maid) stir the Christmas pudding and sticking our fingers in the



Rupert the Chick's Christ-mas Pud-ding—don't you wish you had it?

mixture when she wasn't looking. Finally there was the unbearable tension of Christmas Eve, and the difficulty of getting to sleep. I must have dropped off each year, for I never recollect actually seeing "Father Christmas" - Dad, of course - bringing in the pillow-case. What is still vividly in my mind is the thrill of waking up (probably about 4 a.m.) and investigating the contents.

There would usually be some aircraft construction kits in the excellent Frog Penguin scale-model series. Perhaps there would be an accessory outfit to add to my Meccano set, or a Hornby locomotive or one of the very realistic Bayko house-building kits. And always there were books, or postal orders which I later turned into books.

Books have always been a major part of my life. Early presents included the "Chicks' Own Annuals". Does anyone remember "Chicks' Own", in which all the com-pli-ca-ted words were hy-phen-a-ted, like that? (That so useful punctuation mark, the hyphen, seems nowadays almost to have disappeared.) By 1937, aged 7, I had graduated to the "Playbox" and "Rainbow" annuals, with characters like Brighteyes, Brave Joe, and of course the Bruin Boys.

Enid Blyton did not feature in book form, although I enjoyed her weekly "Sunny Stories". I have never understood the prejudice against Miss Blyton. True, her tales are not masterpieces of intellectual thought, but - then and still to-day - she delighted her juvenile readers. Surely anything that stimulates children to read should be welcomed?

By about 1939 I had become interested in a variety of subjects. Aviation was one of them; motor racing and exploration were others. One Christmas present in particular started me off on exploration: Helmer Hanssen's "Voyages of a Modern Viking". Hanssen was one of the Norwegians who went with Roald Amundsen (for a long time I misread his name as "Amundsden") in 1911, so my knowledge of the South Pole was gained principally from his viewpoint: I did not read about Captain Scott until much later.

My sister Joan, four years older, had her own literary tastes, which to some extent we shared. It was rather a one-way arrangement; my copies of "Popular Flying" and "The Aeroplane" did not appeal to her, but I found her story papers much to my liking. Through her "Schoolgirls' Weeklies" I came to know the girl detective Valerie Drew, of the violet eyes and the red-gold hair. Valerie became my heroine, not least because she flew her own de Havilland Puss Moth and kept a handsome Alsatian dog, Flash. On holiday once, I bought a realistic die-cast model of such a dog; he became my "Flash".

When Joan and I had our quarrels, Valerie seemed like a much more tolerant and understanding elder sister. It was a great blow when the "Schoolgirls' Weekly" suddenly ceased in May 1939, and Valerie vanished from our home. It was many months before I briefly caught up with her again in "The Schoolgirl" - just in time for her final demise in May 1940.

The "Schoolgirls' Weekly" amalgamated with the "Girls' Crystal", and the first combined issue (27th May 1939) introduced us to many new characters. There was the "Princess on Probation" by Margery Marriott (really Leslie R. Swainson); I have always liked Ruritanian-style romances. There were the Cruising Merrymakers, Sally Warner and Co; the original sextet was soon reduced to four (whatever happened to Freddie Parker and Muriel Dean?). Daphne Grayson (G. Cecil Graveley) kept their adventures going for more than a decade. And above all there was the urbane young man who foiled crooks with a grim smile - Noel Raymond. I have written often about him in the "C.D. Annual" and elsewhere, but I must say a word about his creator "Peter Langley". The pen-name concealed the identity of Ronald Fleming, who was also Jean Emerson, Jean Vernon, Rhoda Fleming - and, particularly memorably, Renee Frazer. Under the Frazer name he contributed to the "Schoolgirls' Own Library" from 1926 until its final year, 1963 - a span of almost 40 years. A Frazer story was always notable for credible characters, fast-moving plots, and often an element of mystery. My favourite was "Maureen and the Boy Who Didn't Care", which was running at Christmas-time 1939; at 9, I fell in love with Maureen Eversham. But there was also "The Girl Who Searched in Secret", "The Spectre

Marred Their Friendship", "The Boy Who Threatened Her Holiday Quest" (set in Florida), and many more.



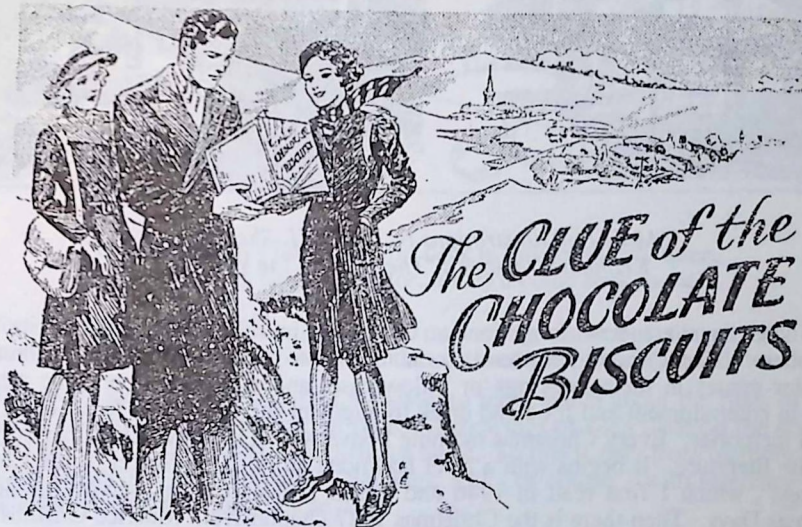
The Opening Chapters of a Fine New Story by

RENEE FRAZER

GIRLS' CRYSTAL 30/12/1939; illustration by C. Percival

The "Playbox" and "Rainbow" annuals now no longer filled my Christmas pillowcase, but during the Second World War a successor came my way - the "Girls' Crystal Annual". My first was dated 1942, although it came out at the end of 1941; all I have of it now is the Noel Raymond story "The Clue of the Chocolate Biscuits" - a suitably topical tale about war-time shortages.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ANNUAL 1942



The CLUE of the
CHOCOLATE
BISCUITS

*A Thrilling Mystery Story, Featuring that
Famous Young Detective, Noel Raymond*

By PETER LANGLEY

Joan had started taking "The Schoolgirls' Own Library" for their last year or so, and the Christmas month of 1939 produced a vintage volume: No. 711, "Noel's Christmas Ghost Hunt" and eight other tales, reprinted from 1936-37 issues of the weekly "G.C.". The title story was a seasonable mystery about thefts at a country-house Christmas party, apparently by a ghostly figure. A rational explanation is eventually found by Noel - no supernatural nonsense about him!

The previous month's SGOL books included No. 706, the best of all Morcove stories, I think. "The Legend of Swanlake" tells of Betty Barton and Co. at Pam Willoughby's stately home for Christmas. Our Editor is writing about this festive story, so I will say no more except to mention "Marjorie Stanton's" clever use of humour to relieve the dark, brooding air of mystery. In the middle of strange events there is a hilarious chapter about the chums' Christmas entertainment "The Haunted Inn".

Reverting to my childhood memories of Christmas Day, Joan and I were always given most of our presents in the pillow-cases. Other family presents were opened after breakfast - including those for friends who sometimes came to stay with us. Then, about noon, we children were allowed one drink (gin-and-It, sweet Italian vermouth). I do not remember any wine at lunch until after the war. We always had the traditional roast turkey (some families, I believe, had goose), and Christmas pudding with, in later years, rum butter. Then came the afternoon event which reminded us that we were part of a United Kingdom and an Empire: the King's radio broadcast. The tradition was begun by George V but for me it is always the halting but determined voice of his son George VI that I remember. I am a convinced monarchist on political rather than sentimental grounds, but I think these childhood recollections of a shy, hesitant, courageous King have left their mark. During the blitz there was a popular song which summed him up: "The King is still in London" - he quietly refused to be driven from home by the Luftwaffe, even though Buckingham Palace itself was bombed.



*Mole End illustrations by Ernest H. Shepard for
Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows"*

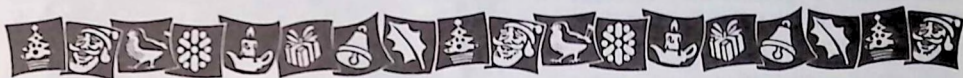
Those days are now long gone. Christmas in the 1990s still has its unique atmosphere. The Queen's broadcast is on television rather than radio; children want computer games in their stockings or pillow-case, and there are now wide ranges of choice in entertainment and food and drink to augment the traditional fare. But I like to stir old memories. Every Christmas morning I have what I call my "Christmas survey" of favourite literature. It begins with a Noel Raymond story: "The Secret of the Christmas Warnings", which I first read in 1946 and which has started my survey for 46 more Christmas Days. Then there is the Christmas 1927 chapter from Maurice Griffiths' books of sailing yarns "The Magic of the Swatchways". Next, the chapter from "The Wind in the Willows" in which Mole takes Ratty back to his old home, and they regale the field-mice carollers with mulled ale. After that, the Christmas scenes from Tennyson's glorious poem "In Memoriam"; and finally another Christmas Day from "Problem Party", by M.E.

Atkinson. I am surprised that many people seem not to know of the dozen or more children's novels by Mary Evelyn Atkinson. Starting with "August Adventure" in 1936, they follow the trail blazed by Arthur Ransome but without any sailing. They recount the adventures of Bill, Jane, and Oliver Lockett ("Things do so *happen* to us"), and they deserve to be better known.

"C.D. Annual" is eagerly awaited by many people every year, and it gives us an opportunity to remember the reading which dominated our youth and no doubt played a considerable part in developing our characters. I for one am deeply grateful to all those authors who have left their indelible mark on me - partly through the books that I received in my Christmas stocking (sorry, pillow-case).

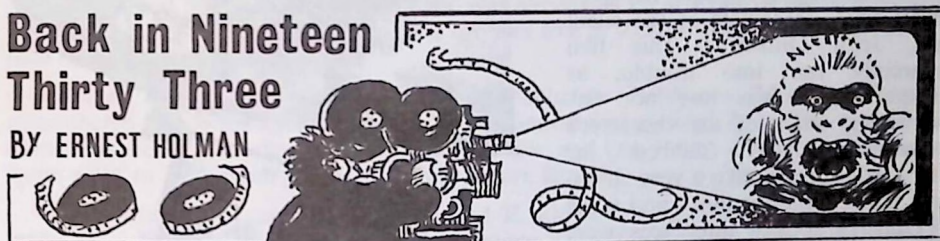


Carol singers: illustration by Stuart Tresilian for M.E. Atkinson's "Problem Party" (1945)



Back in Nineteen Thirty Three

BY ERNEST HOLMAN



"There are films I had a yen for, back in nineteen thirty three,
"There are films I'd go again for, if they'd come back to me!"

Not quite as sung by Dick Powell, in one of his numerous film songs; I have substituted 'films' for Dick's 'girl' - otherwise the sentiments apply to what follows.

Sixty years ago may seem some time away to recall much about the films of 1933. Nowadays, however, one has the use of repeated showings of such films on the domestic box - and then they don't seem all that distance away. So this is only from memory in part - reinforced by second and subsequent sightings, and - of course - with reference to the many publication 'aids' relating to those days.

Even then, 1933 has been slightly elasticated. Generally, the yearly date of a film is that in which it had been completed, so many of the 1933 showings are listed as the previous year. In some cases, I have included them in the year being dealt with, as the time when they were 'going the rounds'.

1933 was the year when it could be said that the Talkies had really taken off in great quantities - when those very new and, sometimes, gigantic, Picture Houses had sprung on the scene almost, it appeared, overnight!

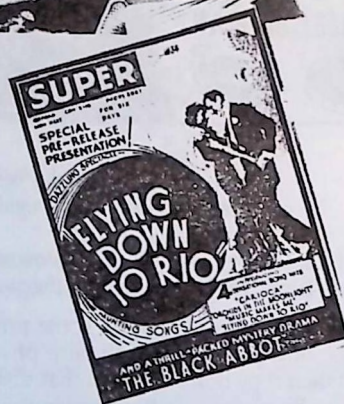
The year featured a few 'beginnings'. A young man with frequent part appearances wearing a cowboy neck scarf was shown on the cast list as John Wayne - nowhere yet near his stage-coach riding days but already being 'noticed'. It was also quite a while before Betty Grable was to reach pin-up 'proportions' - but all the same she was beginning to 'bob up' and also become 'noticed'. Carmen Miranda - not yet fully-fruited in headgear - was among an occasional cast list; a semi-documentary entitled 'In the Wake of the Bounty' included an Australian gentleman of the name of Errol Flynn. On the other hand, some of the earlier silent film stars had 'gone', and shortly to follow them was that hero of the past, Tom Mix. Talkies had seen him in a few offerings but they were never to 'compare'.

Perhaps the most important beginning took off in a film called 'Flying Down to Rio'. (One may have by now forgotten that the stars were Gene Raymond and Dolores Del Rio.) It included a number, 'The Carioca', and was danced by two featured members of the cast, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Fred had recently had a 'bit' part in Joan Crawford's 'Dancing Lady' but Ginger had been around for some little time. Together, they certainly started something when they took to the dance floor in 1933.

'Queen Christina' was another of this year's presentations, in which Garbo was playing opposite her old - shall I say? - associate of the silent days, John Gilbert. This film apparently ran into trouble, as Gilbert's voice was just 'not on'. Eventually, much of the character's conversation was 'dubbed on' afterwards - it will take a very sharp-eyed viewer to spot this - and some of Gilbert's spoken utterances were heard when he himself was not seen. It has generally been considered that Gilbert re-recorded his part - but some books are not very informative on the subject.

Mae West was now breaking out - in many ways to come - and the year saw 'She Done Him Wrong' (freely adapted from her own stage show, 'Diamond Lill') and 'I'm No Angel'. Dietrich was also out and about, in some of Von Sternberg's offerings - but titles were changed here and in the States and it is not easy to identify a year or a known title.

Not the least, by any means, of this particular year's offerings was a film partly scripted by Edgar Wallace. It probably contained more cinema trickery and other



technical items than many a 'contrived' film. It was, of course, 'King Kong'. Later revelations tell one that Fay Wray was paid 'over the odds' for 'indignities suffered' - and it is somewhat disconcerting to learn that Kong was actually a fifteen inch model!

Nevertheless, it was 'good theatre' throughout - not only for its 'spectacle' but also for the final remark of Robert Armstrong. When told that the planes had finally got Kong, he shook his head and said 'No, it was Beauty that killed the Beast!'

'Gold Diggers of 1933' was another great success in 1933, with Joan Blondell striking a poignant note in her rendering of 'Remember My Forgotten Man'. (Yes, the word Depression was around in those days!)

Not to leave out another noted item of 1933, one should recall that it was the year when British films 'hit' Hollywood. This was due in the main to Alexander Korda and Charles Laughton - and, naturally, the film was 'Henry VIII'. Hollywood also went very British in their version of Noel Coward's 'Cavalcade' - probably as much remembered for Diana Wynyard's final toast as for anything else therein. However, there were many fine incidents in the film and it well deserved its great reception.

Some other Home memories include the screen version of Priestley's 'The Good Companions' - a superb role here for Edmund Gwenn - and two very young members of the Concert Party were Jessie Matthews and John Gielgud. 'The Fire Raisers' may not be recalled easily, but it was made quickly to 'cash in' on the very recent fire insurance scandals that had filled the front pages of newspapers for some time. An unusual British offering came with 'Friday the Thirteenth' a film with separate stories within, with the final meeting together of them all during a bus ride.

Cicely Courtneidge came along with her 'Aunt Sally' - and two of the most popular tunes of the time came from the film - 'Riding on a Rainbow' and 'Sally on Sunday'. H.B. Warner recreated his original role in 'Sorrell and Son', with Hugh Williams.

Britain's own Sherlock Holmes was not forgotten in Hollywood - some films had already appeared and in 1933 Reginald Owen took the part - he is probably one of the few actors who can have played both Holmes and Watson in separate pictures.

That great Britisher, Ronald Colman, was already as great a star of the Talkies as in his previous silent days. He rehearsed for his later role in 'Zenda' when he met himself in a dual role in 'Masquerade' in 1933.

Other memories of the year include Katherine Hepburn's 'Morning Glory' - remembered by me for what I felt was an 'uncomfortable' ending; Zasu Pitts started her domestic series of comedies with Slim Summerville; and Lee Tracey led poor Jean Harlow 'quite a life' in 'Bombshell'. The (now three) Marx Brothers gave us 'Duck Soup'.

This article must carry the old-fashioned 'E. and O.E.' I feel - hopefully there are not many 'Es' - but of course there are many, many 'Os'. I fell to thinking what did one remember most clearly from those sixty-year away days. To me, one word comes to mind - value!

Consider. An afternoon visit to the local Granada. Plonk down a mere tanner (the price of a haircut), receive a small ticket from the cashier's slot, have it torn in half by an attendant, and then take your seat before the show starts. Anywhere for sixpence up to four o'clock. Half an hour's recital from the Wizard of the Wurlitzer - then the newsreel, the 'second feature' - this was often a first feature of some weeks ago, which had been shown 'elsewhere' - then a Mickey, Popeye, March of Time, Comedy short (any two of these) - the trailer for next week's film. So far, the programme was only half way through. A stage show, with pit orchestra - and then, the main feature. Entering the place at about 1.30, it would be past five thirty before one emerged. Value? It certainly was - at a tanner a time!

What is there left to say about this memorable year of 1933? Perhaps mention should be made of the fact that, as previously stated, these offerings reappear at intervals

in our own domain. Maybe, like me, you sometimes think you would like to see yet another showing of 'So and So'.

I do - and, do you know - I have a feeling that it will be for that 'Beauty and the Beast' thing!



A Merry Christmas, and all Best Wishes, to: Betty, Johnny, Charles, Tim, John, George, James, Simon, and H.W.S. The members of the S.W. Club, and our Editors, Past and Present.

MAC

Seasonal Greetings to Hobby Friends Worldwide.

BETTY AND JOHNNY HOPTON
GREYFRIARS, 6 WELLFIELD ROAD, CARMARTHEN, DYFED, SA31 1DS,
SOUTH WALES

1930-39 Puck Annuals, Comics wanted.

VIC HEARN
20 WINGATE WAY, CAMBRIDGE, CB2 2HD

Greetings all Hobby Friends.

JACK HUGHES, TOWNSVILLE, AUSTRALIA

Greetings to all O.B.B.C. Members, particularly London Branch, Bill Bradford, Brian Doyle, Alan Pratt *et al.*

LARRY MORLEY, HANWELL

To all in the Remove with excellent references, and of good character? A Merry Christmas, and with lots of Good Fortune to you all in the coming year.

NUGENT, OF THE REMOVE

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all Hobbyists from

STUART WHITEHEAD

Happy Christmas. WANTED: S.O.L.s

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FAIRYLAND TALES

THE KIDDIES' FAVOURITE PAPER N°268

GEORGE BEAL takes a look at an old children's paper and tries to identify some of the artists who contributed such fine work to a publication which is now almost forgotten



SOME years ago, I acquired a number of issues of a young children's paper which had been published in the 1920's by the Scottish firm, John Leng and Co., of Dundee.

Its title is FAIRYLAND TALES. I cannot remember how I acquired them, nor why.

One reason is that they have a great charm: a period charm, it is true, but they are probably the more attractive for that. My copies are bound into four volumes, but although they are in chronological order, there are a fair number of issues missing. Mine date from 1922 to 1927, but I believe later issues went on until 1939.

FAIRYLAND TALES was printed in small format: the familiar 'library' size, with very attractive full-colour covers. I say 'full-colour', when in fact they were printed in three colours, but that is just a technical quibble!

They were published weekly at 2d. by John Leng and Co. officially from their London office in Fleet Street; but then all of John Leng/D.C.Thomson publications bore the London address, at least at the beginning of their life. Yet they are quite unlike anything subsequently published by the Thomson/Leng firm. My memory may be faulty, but I don't seem to have seen any reference to them in past issues of *Collectors' Digest*.

The paper was printed letterpress on the usual newsprint (except for the covers), so the pages have deteriorated somewhat over the years. The covers, being printed on quite good quality paper, have retained much of their freshness.

The standard of artistry on the covers was high; and I daresay that this is what what attracted me to them in the first place. Inside, the pages were printed in black, with an occasional red second



An illustration from the story 'The Cow With the Magic Horn' (Issue No. 89)

colour. Unfortunately, the standard of printing was not as good as it might have been, and the register between the black and the red was often quite poor.

However, I carp! FAIRYLAND TALES was basically a story-paper. Indeed, the first issues bore the title of the main story on the cover in large letters, with





Two covers, Nos. 205 and 259, both drawn by Savile Lumley. These reduced-size black-and-white reproductions do little justice to the original colour pictures.

the subsidiary legend FAIRYLAND TALES in much smaller lettering. This arrangement changed in about the beginning of 1927, when FAIRYLAND TALES became the main title.

I recognise some covers as being drawn by Savile Lumley, but others, although of a high standard, I am unable to identify.

Each issue contained a main story, almost always with a 'fairy' connection, although, as I mention below, I notice that as the years went by, this became less marked, and the stories were often of the familiar school themes, featuring either boys or girls, with titles such as *Pip Puzzles the School* (No.207, 1925) with cover picture and two-colour inside illustrations by Savile Lumley (I am certain!).

There were other stories, many with popular humanised animal characters. A favourite of these was Lop-Ears, a bunny-rabbit, who appears over and over again. The illustrations in these stories were of a high order, but I cannot decide which artist could have been responsible. The names of the Brock and Robinson

families come to mind. The drawings certainly have a familiar 'feel'.

There were also a number of strip picture stories. *Jenny and Jimmy's Jolly Adventures* ran for a while, until they were superseded by *The Adventures of Jack and Jill* which seemed to go on for ever. This was a four-frame picture-strip serial, which led on from one issue to the next. I sometimes wonder if it ever came to a conclusion: I suppose it must have. Even modern television 'soaps' come to an end eventually!

There were also comic strip features, like *Sammy Snowball's Funny Tricks* and *Wiggie, Willie and Winkie*. Wiggie was a pig, and the other two were mice. *Billy and Bunny* was another popular strip, printed in two colours, and was sufficiently successful to sponsor an annual, *The Billy and Bunny Book*. 'Billy' was a kind of boy scout, and 'Bunny', surprisingly enough, was a rabbit. Billy, for some reason, wears short trousers and leggings, while Bunny wears short trousers and a blazer.

There was something very familiar about the look of Peggie, Peter and Nun-

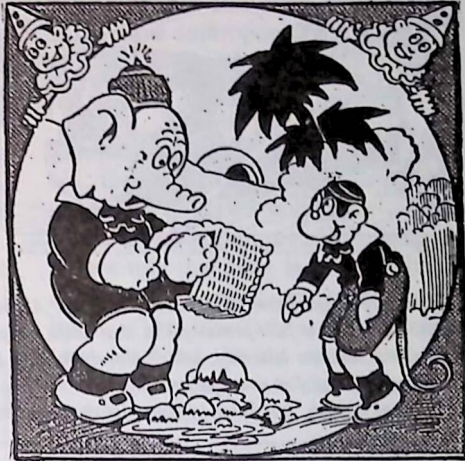




These three pictures were surely drawn by H.S. Foxwell. The characters are so like the Bruin Boys that the artist cannot be in doubt!

ky Noah, a four-frame two-colour 'funny' picture strip. Do I detect the hand of the old Amalgamated Press artist, Herbert Foxwell? Elsewhere in FAIRYLAND TALES, we find a 'Jumbo' character very much like that well-known member of Mrs Bruin's school. Foxwell, after all, did not confine himself to AP, but certainly worked on children's comics elsewhere, including the *Daily Mail*, which issued its own children's comic supplement in the 1930's.

Early issues of the paper contained a strip featuring *Douglas and Don*, a Scottish pair. Douglas was a wee kilted laddie sporting a tam-o'-shanter and scarf



while Don, being only a dog, needed only a tartan scarf. *Douglas and Don* ran for several years, but disappeared sometime in 1924. His tam-o'-shanter was inherited by Peter, in the *Peggie, Peter and Nunky Noah* strip.

The 'fairy' element in the stories had all but gone by 1925, although 'fairy' stories did occur from time to time. Yet, in that year, we have a boys' school story *The Youngest Billy Brown*, which would, one would think, appeal to rather older children. 'William Brown' comes to Rockhampton School, and joins the Lower Fifth. Charles Hamilton's characters in a comparable school would have been 15 and 16 years old; yet the Rockhampton boys seem much more like 9-or-10-year-olds, perhaps closer to the readership of FAIRYLAND TALES.

The artist, again with familiar style, shows the boys in the characteristic



Two fine character sketches from the pages of FAIRYLAND TALES



Peggie, Peter, and Nunky Noah



"We will go for a trip up the river," said Nunky one day. So into the boat the twins and Nunky clambered with a hamper. Nunky sang an old sea song as he rowed, while the twins started to examine the hamper.



He at once plunged into the water. "I'll save myself first," he shouted. "Then I'll swim back and save you!"

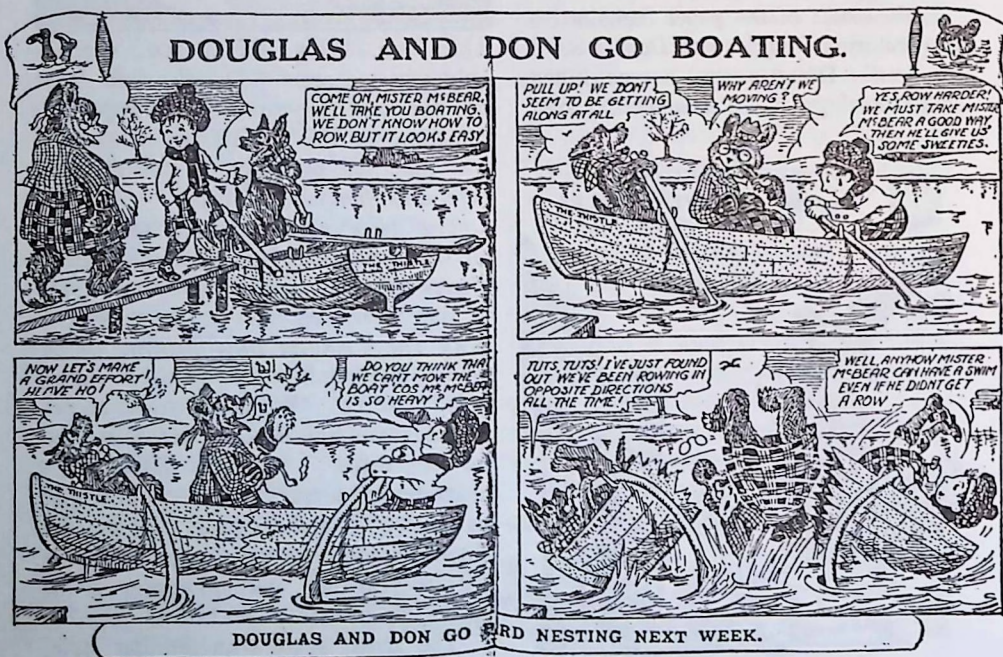


They came across a funny-looking bottle. "Whatever is it?" said Peter, as he picked it up. All at once a jet of water flew up. "Goodness! The boat has sprung a leak," cried Nunky.



Then Peter leaned over the side. "Why, Nunky," he said, "there's nothing to be afraid of. Oh, dear!" cried Nunky. "They were only playing with the soda syphon after all."

Two picture-strips from FAIRYLAND TALES. Above is one of the episodes of Peggie, Peter and Nunky Noah. It seems a fair presumption that these strips were drawn by Herbert Foxwell. One clue is the style of the balloon lettering, which closely follows Foxwell's style. Below, we see Douglas and Don, in a strip which ran for some years. It seems to have been dropped after the advent of Peggie, Peter and Nunky Noah, but Peter in the strip above appears to have inherited Douglas's tam-o'-shanter!



DOUGLAS AND DON GO BOATING NEXT WEEK.



PIP PUZZLES THE SCHOOL

blazers and caps, but wearing short trousers. The cover illustration was certainly by Savile Lumley, and I believe the line illustrations were also by him. A story appealing to boys of a similar age, *Bobby Breaks the Rules*, was also illustrated by Savile Lumley.

I apologise for referring so often to this artist, but he is the only illustrator I



LOP-EARS P.C.

The opening pages of two stories. 'Pip Puzzles the School' is obviously by Savile Lumley, but who was the artist for 'Lop-Ears P.C.?'

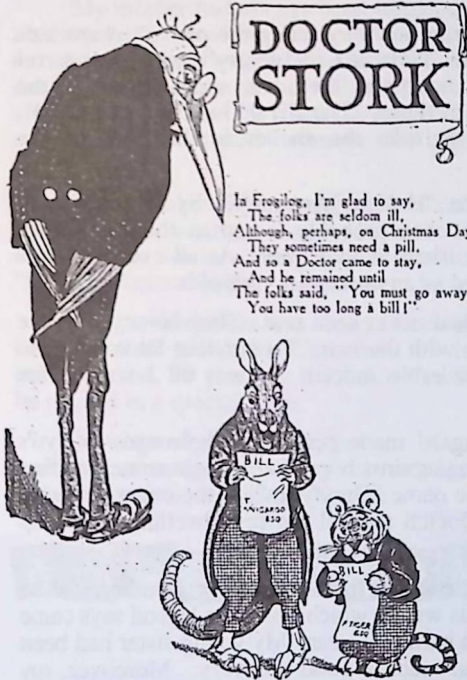
can identify positively. I am also fairly sure about the Foxwell strips. Some deal with human figures, but other drawings elsewhere are in the same anthropomorphic vein as in *Rainbow*, *Tiger Tim's*, and *Playbox*.

Girls' schools are also featured. In *Judy Dresses Up*, the eponymous heroine is sent to Westlands School, which is a boarding establishment, since we are told that Judy is in Dormitory A, although we never learn which form she joins. The illustrations, by a another, less practised hand, showed Judy as being very young, but that does not prevent her from dressing up as a 'ghost'.

The Second Form's Secret dealt with the girls of the Lower School, who, fed up with being dubbed as 'babies' by the Upper School, raise a protest. It's a battle of wits between the Second Form and the Fifth Form. Naturally, the little ones score heavily. *Plain Susie*, of Upley Park School is a member of the Fourth Form, but from the illustrations, appears to be aged about seven or eight.

Apart from the stories and picture-strips, there were regular painting competitions, organised by the 'Fairy Uncle' He wrote a weekly letter to his nephews and nieces, telling them what was in store in issues to come. When the 'fairy' element diminished, he became 'Uncle Jim'.

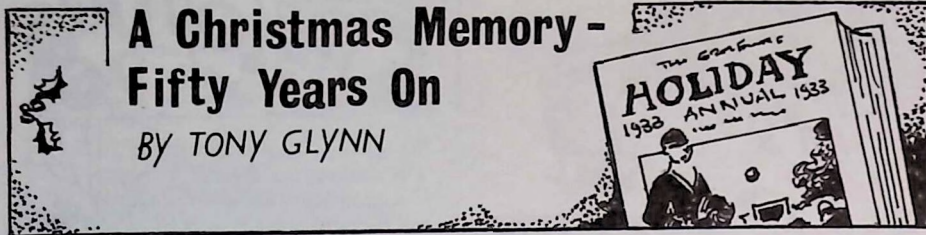
FAIRYLAND TALES brings delight from a bygone age, and it also shows another side to the activities of the old Dundee publishing house.



DOCTOR STORK

In Frogglog, I'm glad to say,
The folks are seldom ill,
Although, perhaps, on Christmas Day
They sometimes need a pill.
And as a Doctor came to stay,
And he remained until
The folks said, "You must go away;
You have too long a bill!"





It is a battered volume, a "Greyfriars Holiday Annual" for 1933.

It has been ill-used by the years, though I am ashamed to say that my own carelessness is more to blame than the passing of time. It now has improvised paper covers devised by myself. It has become dog-eared and grimy, but it is now a greater treasure than ever to me.

It deserved far better treatment considering how I longed to own it and the tremendous joy it brought when, at last, it came into my hands - but particularly because it was my mother's last Christmas present to me just 50 years ago. I look at it now, recalling that time and I can scarcely believe that half a century has passed.

This "Holiday Annual" was already ten years old then. In good condition and with its original covers, it sat in the window of Syd's second hand bookshop in the days approaching Christmas 1943. In a long distant "CD", I mentioned Syd's, a place where you could swap books and comics on a half-price basis or buy them outright at whatever price Syd was asking. If you were lucky, you might find oddments of Hamiltonia, treasure indeed in those wartime years when the "Magnet" and "Gem" had disappeared into history.

I haunted Syd's musty-smelling shop in those years. Among the piles of magazines and books, I discovered my first copies of the "Nelson Lee Library", some wonderful "Union Jacks" from the 1920s, a "Magnet" now and then and some issues of the "Schoolboys' Own Library". I still cherish one of these, "The Rival Guys of Rookwood", remembering how I devoured it through a night in the shelter in the thick of the Manchester blitz.

Towards the close of 1943, I spotted the "Holiday Annual" in Syd's window. I cannot recall what he was asking for it but it was probably less than the 1933 price because that was how the old book market worked at that time. At all events, it was priced beyond my pocket which was as restricted as any other 13-year-olds.

I had heard of the "Holiday Annual" but had never seen one. They belonged to the golden, Hamiltonia-filled world which had gone with the war. To me, that fat volume, so obviously filled with pre-war goodies, was desirable indeed. It was all I wanted for Christmas.

After school, on the chilly winter evenings, I made penniless pilgrimages to Syd's window, hoping it might still be there and hoping against hope that I might somehow find the price of it. I would gaze at it, and the magic name "Greyfriars" on the cover conjured up visions of the Famous Five, Bunter, Mr. Quelch and all the rest dwelling within its covers. If only it could be mine!

We were not exactly poor but my father, exempt from military service because he was on essential work, did not make the fabulous wages which post-war legend says came the way of those on war work. Things had been hard that year. My young sister had been nursed through a life-threatening illness but had made a good recovery. Moreover, my mother had been told she had an illness then regarded as rare, and I knew through a kind of instinct that she would not live long.

There was small place in the family priorities for luxuries and that "Holiday Annual" seemed to be a luxury indeed.

Nevertheless, when my mother asked what I would like for Christmas, I came right out with it: "The 'Holiday Annual' in Syd's window."

It was still there some days before Christmas though I was sure it must soon become the property of someone better off than myself. Cash was scarce but my mother had a suggestion: "If you really want that annual, I'll call in and ask Syd if I can put some money down so he'll keep it for you, then I'll pay him later." Syd was agreeable and I received that glorious gift just before Christmas. With admirable self-control, I kept it wrapped up until Christmas morning when I opened it and savoured its wares in a state resembling rapture.

It was the best Christmas present I ever had and it helped to create the happier side of a wartime Christmas I can never forget. There was a long Greyfriars story, "Saved from the Sea"; a short one, "Coker's Capture"; a tale in which Fisher T. Fish showed up at St. Jim's, a Rookwood yarn featuring Herr Kinkel, the German master, and much more. I revelled in every word.

Could Charles Hamilton, C.H. Chapman, Macdonald and writers and artists such as Michael Poole, Terence Cuneo and Saville Lumley, who helped to make that volume, ever have dreamed that, ten years after it was compiled, it would bring such pleasure to a youngster who had yearned for it through a shop window as hungrily as any Dickensian urchin envied the wares of a pie-shop? Or that the "Holiday Annual" could come to have a value far beyond its intrinsic cost?

For, half a year on from that Christmas of 1943, I was ushered into a small hospital room to have a last private moment or two with my beloved mother. It was the brilliant summer of 1944, sunshine was visible, even through the shaded windows and there was birdsong outside. I now think of that room, indeed of the whole day, as a kind of waiting room for heaven.

My mother had always been tremendously brave and she was brave to the very last. She was lying flat within deep pillows, extremely pale and drawn and capable of very little movement. She was just 36, and so short a time before she had been a pretty, slender, dancing-mad flapper of the 1920s who caused the young men to brush back their quiffs and straighten their ties when they spied her in the offing. But her heart was lost to the tall, quiet, black-haired Irishman who shyly asked her to take the floor with him at a church dance.

From the bed, she managed to reach out and take my hand. She managed, too, to smile. I know now that our parents made sacrifices for my sister and myself and I have no doubt that it was at some personal sacrifice that my mother put down the money on the "Holiday Annual" which turned out to be her last Christmas gift to me.

For us, Christmas was always a celebration. In company with so many others in the hobby, I shall spend this Christmas reliving some happy moments within our favourite literature and, 50 years on from that Christmas of 1943, that same "Holiday Annual" will be re-read in a special spirit.

Not one of melancholy, but one of celebration for the lives of both my parents with particular remembrance of my mother's last Christmas with her family on this earth - and of how she made it so happy for me.



Good Wishes to all Hobbyists and Friends.

MAURICE KING



GOODBYE TO THE HOTSPUR

BY D.J. O'LEARY

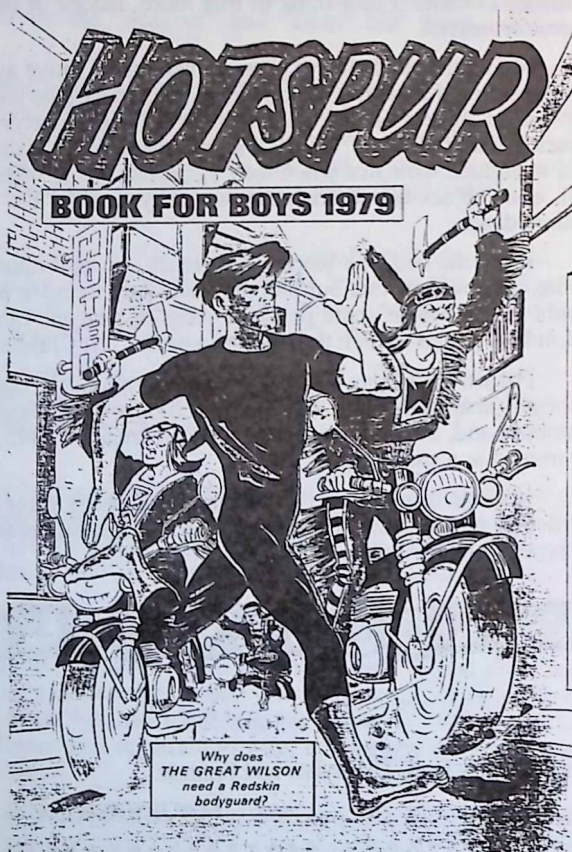


The HOTSPUR BOOK FOR BOYS 1992 marked the end of a great tradition. It was to be the last Hotspur Annual. The Hotspur story-paper lasted from 1933 until 1959. The New Hotspur continued as a picture-story comic until the beginning of the 1980s when it, too, ended. But at least one link remained. THE HOTSPUR BOOK FOR BOYS reappeared in 1966 and ran until 1992. This was a much longer run than the story-paper's annual had. The old HOTSPUR BOOK FOR BOYS first came out in the autumn of 1934 and appeared each year until the war. Later two more appeared for 1942 and 1948. The new series of annuals after 1966 managed a run of twenty-seven although, obviously, since it derived from the New Hotspur and Thomson's other attempts to change from written to picture-story format, it cannot be justly compared with the annuals up to 1948.

Nevertheless, while the name HOTSPUR remained alive one could always hope that a revival of the great days might be possible. I have never understood, for example, why Thomson have not copied Howard Baker's brilliant idea of publishing facsimile editions of old boys' papers. The MAGNET and GEM reprints have enabled new generations of readers to appreciate the genius of Charles Hamilton. Even with the absence of named authors, readers might enjoy superb volumes of the Thomson papers' Red Circle, Wilson or the Wolf of Kabul stories.

At least the HOTSPUR BOOK FOR BOYS 1966 had some written stories among the strips. Only three and short at that. After 1974 the written stories vanish as do the occasional games, which formed another link with the old Thomson annuals, after 1981.

So what interest for old story-paper readers is left? Two things at least: the excellent feature articles, concentrating mainly on sport and war; and the welcome return of some well-loved characters: Deep Sea Delaney, a written story in 1967; Limp Along Leslie, 1967; Nick Smith, 1981, and Bernard Briggs, perhaps favoured because of his all-round interest in so many sports. (He figured in eight annuals between 1978



and 1986, participating in everything from baseball, boxing, ice-hockey and pole-vaulting to hang-gliding.)

The Wolf of Kabul had picture-stories in 1966, 1967 and 1981, the Iron Teacher in 1975-1977, Wilson 1978-81 and the Black Sapper 1974-77.

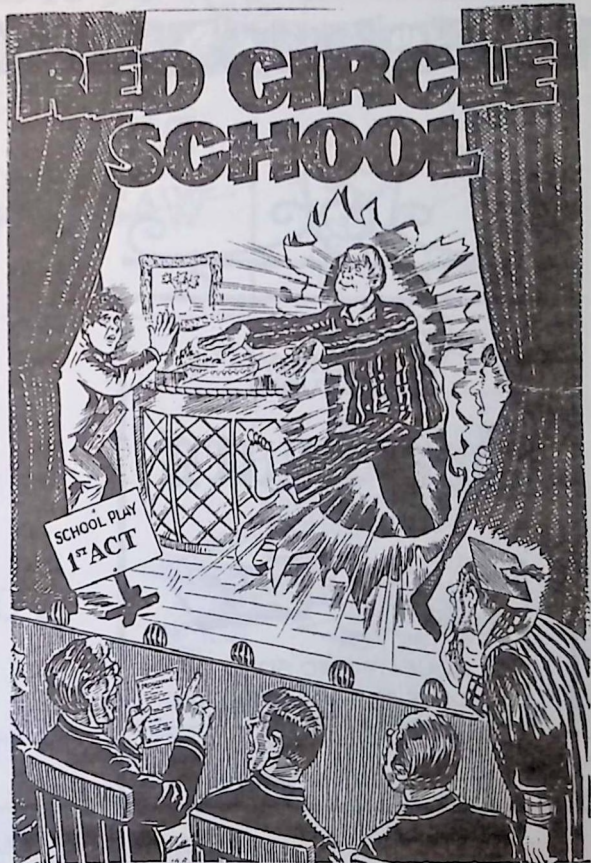
Interestingly, we can see in the vivid, if not brilliantly drawn covers, a progression from photographically-derived images of our armed forces in action (and, even, in 1967 the Charge of the Scots Greys at Waterloo after the painting of SCOTLAND FOREVER, in my opinion, the most striking of its covers). Then the old favourites, the Black Sapper, 1975, the Iron Teacher, 1977, Wilson, 1979, and the Wolf of Kabul, 1981. Finally the "super-heroes" like King Cobra who featured in twelve stories between 1978 and 1992 and on four covers, and X-Bow who had nine stories between 1981 and 1991 with five covers.

Together with the influence of American type comics, the allied attraction of films is evident. The cover for 1989 is devoted to a certain John One, a survivor of a holocaust living in a war-ravaged landscape. He reminded me powerfully of "Mad Max" films. And Crocodile McPhee of the 1991 and 1992 annuals is an unblushing "pinch" from the Paul Hogan smash-hit pictures.

As well as the overwhelming visual influences of film and TV, the increasing affluence of youngsters begins to show through. Golf and angling feature more. The sports practised by Bernard Briggs include hang-gliding, a new leisure activity.

The impression I get is of a publisher trying hard to find a format to attract young readers against a background of changing interests and in the face of fierce competition. Where Thomson publications had strengths (in war and sport stories and, especially, in the strip-cartoons which made, and make, DANDY and BEANO the best-known and loved comics in the country) it could compete. But in the new world of Batman- and Superman-clones it was at a disadvantage. The old HOTSPUR had offered a fantastic - in every sense of the word - range of school-stories with the superb Red Circle at their head. Together with excellent sports stories, such as Cannonball Kidd, and war stories, like the Destroyer of Q Squadron or the Iron Teacher, it had held an esteemed place in the world of story-papers.

But, in my view, the shift to action picture stories was not a great success for D.C. Thomson. Despite their brilliant achievement in comic material, their dramatic illustrative talents were not always of the same high standard. A Dudley Watkins or Paddy Brennan could produce excellent comic or adventure strips but such artists are thin on the ground and even in the




last Hotspur annuals the comic strips, such as Police Hog Grunter or Calamity Chayne, seem superior. Only in the factual illustrations of aeroplanes, boats, boxers or motor cars are the drawings neat and attractive.

Although all story-paper enthusiasts must be grateful to see a last written story of Red Circle in the 1971 annual, it must be admitted that it is a disappointment. It is entitled simply 'Red Circle' and is rather a feeble tale of how Numb Ned, the always sleepy pupil, volunteers as a guinea-pig for a sleep-learning experiment. After sleep-walking into the rehearsal of a gangster play being put on by the school, he convinces himself that he must be unconsciously responsible for a run of petty thefts which is plaguing the school. Of course, he finally discovers his error and the real culprit.

Although familiar names make an appearance in the story, (Mr. Smugg, Rob Roy McGregor, Pinky Farrell, for instance) it seems perfunctory and lacks the unmistakable flavour and sparkle which marked Red Circle's vintage years.


The plot itself is adequate but the characters are mere names. In an article of only a few pages there is no room for more. Red Circle's strength was the development over time of a familiar background and a cast of characters offering endless possibilities for exciting or comic action. If the new Hotspur Book For Boys was not going to persevere with these stories it was probably better to stop. In the new world of picture-stories, Red Circle might share the fate of Billy Bunter in The Knockout, amusing enough in its own way but having little in common with the original.

So, farewell to a great name of the past, and nostalgic memories of a time when boys absorbed standards and literacy along with their entertainment from our great heritage of story-papers!



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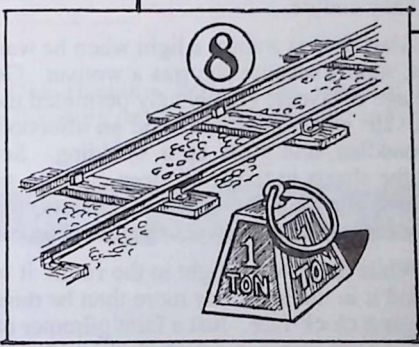
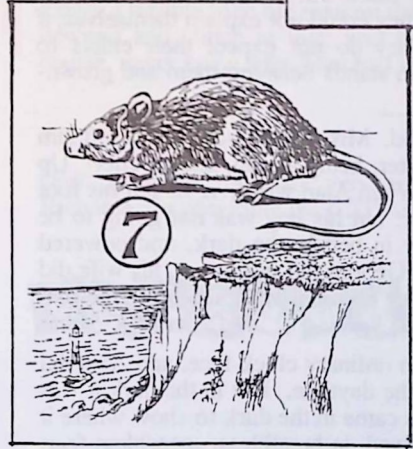
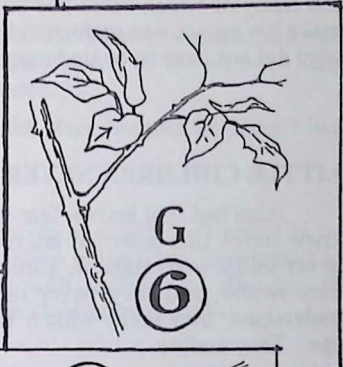
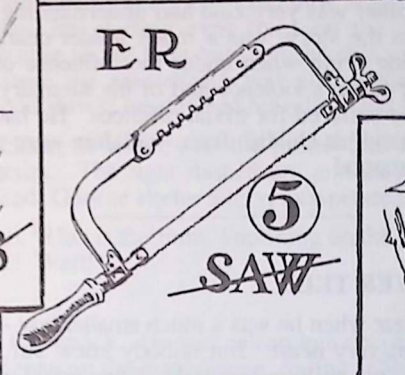
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BOB WHITER '93

(ANSWERS ON PAGE 80)

LITTLE CHILDREN NEVER TELL

BY Frank Richards



INTRODUCTION BY UNA HAMILTON WRIGHT

I found this tale among the bed-time stories that my uncle made up specially for me when I was very young. Later, my mother had persuaded him to type them out so that I could keep them. *Little Children Never Tell* was in the packet of Fairy Tales but it is quite different from the rest. I had not seen it before and I think uncle must have written it while in nostalgic mood when he was typing out the other stories. I don't feel it is a story for children so much as a story *about* children by someone with a sharp memory of what it was like to be a child and afraid of the dark. No doubt my own fear of the dark revived his early memories of those unseen terrors.

There are three autobiographical elements in the story: a child's fear of the dark, his inability to make grown-ups understand these fears, and the unjust slap.

In real life Charles' mother was very kind and understanding although always in fear of her husband. George, in the story, was a much milder character than Charles' own father who became a bullying brute when under the influence of drink. Uncle and his siblings lived in fear of their father's violence and of his summary unjust punishments, all too many of which uncle had suffered for trivial offences. He had found it impossible to make his grown-ups understand his childish fears - children were treated as a subject race who did not have to be understood

LITTLE CHILDREN NEVER TELL

by Frank Richards

Alan had first known fear when he was a much smaller boy - four or less. At five he knew terror that searched his very heart. But nobody knew but Alan: for, of course, he never said a word about it. Little children never do. They could not explain themselves, if they would: and they never think of explaining. They do not expect their elders to understand: they know what a wall of incomprehension stands between them and grown-ups. They endure.

Alan always wanted a light when he was left in bed. Mrs. Porter would have left him a light, simply because she was a woman. George Porter, being a man, knew better. Up to the age of five he grudgingly permitted the light. When Alan was five, he put his foot down. He was a good man and an affectionate father: but his boy was not going to be mollycoddled, and grow up a weakling. So Alan lay in bed in the dark, and covered under the sheets in terror till sleep came to save him. George did not know, his wife did not know, but Alan knew, that in the dark, the clock-face on the mantelpiece changed into a grisly face with staring eyes fixed on a little boy in bed.

While there was a light in the room, it was just an ordinary clock-face, and Alan did not mind it in the least, any more than he minded it in the daytime. But in the dark it was no longer a clock-face. Just a faint glimmer of the glass came in the dark to show where it stood - a faint glimmer on which the little boy's eyes fixed, in breathless, speechless fear; for in the dark he knew what it was - the face of a little old man with staring eyes, who might descend from the mantelpiece at any moment and approach the bed, and touch a shrieking little boy with a grisly hand.

Sometimes, when there was a creak of the bed, or some other faint sound in the room, Alan had no doubt that the little old man was getting down from the mantelpiece, and waiting in shuddering terror for the icy touch that he was sure was coming. It never came, but that made it no better. For any night it might come.

If Alan had said a word, his parents might have understood. But he never said a word of his secret fear. No little child ever does. Besides, in the light his fears vanished, leaving no trace during the day. When he awoke in the morning, it was light, and the clock-face on the mantelpiece was merely a clock-face, with nothing frightening about it. He never gave it a single thought during the day. Days were long, almost endlessly long, at Alan's age, packed with new discoveries and experiences. He had plenty to think of, without looking into the future. It was only when bedtime came that he remembered: and even then, so long as there was a light, he did not worry. But when his mother was gone, and it was dark, his eyes would turn from the bed to that faint glimmer in the dark where the clock stood, and the old, old haunting terror would be there. And he would lie awake for minutes and minutes - whole centuries - in a sweat of fear.

The climax came one night when Alan did not fall asleep, as usual, after five minutes - five hundred years - of quaking dread. There was a high wind, and the window creaked, and the ivy rustled: and Alan, shuddering in bed, knew that it had come, at last. He knew, as plainly as if he could have seen, that the little old man was stirring - that he was getting down from the mantelpiece, that his staring eyes were fixed on the little boy in the bed, that he was coming - coming - coming!

Alan did not stir. He dared not cry out. His little heart was almost ceasing to beat. He sat up, unconsciously, his starting eyes fixed on the darkness, hardly breathing, listening - listening - listening to the faint but unmistakable sound that told him that that dreadful little old man from the mantelpiece was almost upon him. Then frantic fear moved him, and with a loud shriek, he clutched his pillow and hurled it.

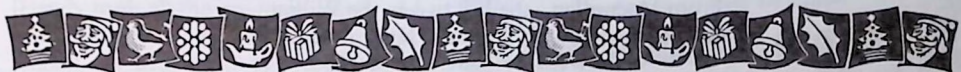
The crash of the clock, as it fell with the pillow into the fender, brought George Porter and his wife upstairs. The light flashed on, and they stared at the scene - Mrs. Porter grieved and shocked, George Porter angry, exasperated.

"Well," said George, "This is the limit. Smashing up the place because he doesn't like going to sleep in the dark! Well!"

Smack!

Alan did not mind the smack. He was asleep in a couple of minutes. There was no longer a terrible little old man on the mantelpiece, staring at him in the dark, threatening to descend and clutch at him: and he could close his eyes with confidence. George, of course, never knew why Alan had smashed the clock. Little children never tell.

(Editor's Note: We are very grateful to Una Hamilton Wright, the niece of Frank Richards, for providing the C.D. Annual with this story on which she owns the copyright.)



**A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR
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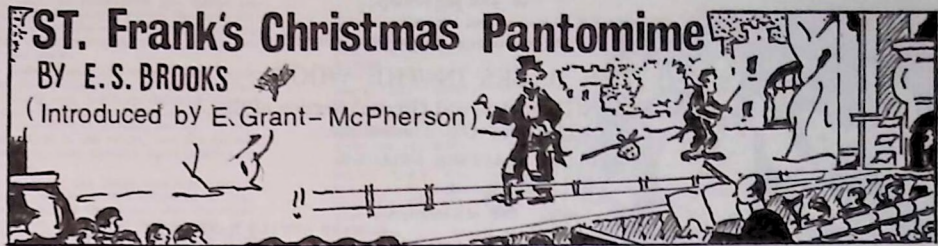
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A number of the St. Frank's Remove boys were guests of the famous Lord Dorriemore, or Dorrie, as he was known to all and sundry, at his London House, where they had come, after spending Christmas at Glenthorne Manor, as guests of Col. Glenthorne.

Dorrie has mapped out quite a programme for the juniors, and at the moment they are on their way to see a matinée performance of 'Babes in the Wood'. Having arrived and been shewn to their seats, Edward Oswald Handforth has, of course, to cause an upset; he decides that he must have a programme, and forces his way from almost the centre of the Stalls, upsetting almost the entire row in his customary manner. Having returned in a similar way, and with a warning from the usher, he is restrained by his chums, who are only too happy when the curtain goes up, and he becomes engrossed in the Pantomime.

The following week, the party was due to visit Jack Grey's place, Grey Towers in Berkshire, where they had been asked to give a concert in the local village hall.

Handy, who had been very thoughtful ever since the visit to the Panto, suddenly comes out with an idea: "Why" he says "Don't we give a Pantomime, instead of the concert?" Most of the juniors burst out laughing, then to their amazement, Reggie Pitt claps Handforth on the shoulder, and says "Handy old man, it's the idea of the century. Irene and Co. will be joining us, at Jack's place, and they can take part as well."

"That's all very well" said Jack Grey "But what about a story?" "No trouble, Clarence Fellowe, can write that, he talks in rhyme, most of the time, anyway," replied Reggie, and so it was agreed by all, and of course, Handy took all the credit as usual, and said it could all be left in his hands. Again, as usual, no one took much notice.

Clarence soon produced a script, Dorrie said he would take care of providing costumes and the scenery, and at last all was arranged, and the programme finalised.

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HANDFORTH, AS THE BARON, WAS A SCREAM.

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No. 500.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

January 3, 1925.

E. GRANT-McPHERSON

UP WITH THE CURTAIN.

THE programme was impressive.
The central pages were something like this:

THE BABES IN THE WOOD

An Entirely Up-to-date and Original Version of the
Celebrated Old Pantomime.

By CLARENCE FELLOWE

Cast of Characters:

BARON DE BIFFE, The Lord of the Manor	EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH
RUSH & TARE, His Personal Attendants	WALTER CHURCH & ARNOLD McCLURE
DOLLY DIMPLE, The Baron's Ward	IRENE MANNERS
WIDOW PANCAKE, The Baron's Cook	REGINALD PITT
FELIX, The Celebrated Cat	WILLY HANDFORTH
BILLY, The Girl Babe	FATTY LITTLE
PETER PANCAKE, The Widow's only Son	CLARENCE FELLOWE
PRINCE CHEERIE, The Heir to the Throne	JACK GREY
COUNT HAPPIE, His Equerry	DORIS BRRELLY
ROB RATE, The Bold, Bad Robber	MARJORIE TEMPLE
TOM TAX, His Wicked Confederate	JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS
TIGHT-ROPE TIM	ARCHIE GLENTHORNE
GLOOMY GUS	JOHNNY ONIONS
VENTRILOQUAL VIC	BERTIE ONIONS
TRIXIE TRAPEZE	NICODEMUS TROTWOOD
	TESSA LOVE

Peasants, Servants, Lads, Lasses, Guards, etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

ACT ITHE KITCHEN AT DE BIFFE CASTLE
ACT IIA GLADE IN THE FOREST
ACT IIITHE BARONIAL HALL AT DE BIFFE CASTLE.

The Entire Production Under the Personal Supervision of REGINALD PITT.

ACT I.—THE KITCHEN AT DE BIFFE CASTLE.



"HURRAH!"
The curtain rose amid a storm of cheering and clapping. The village hall, packed almost to suffocation, was a dazzling scene. Never before had the local rustics seen so much light and colour on their modest little stage.

The occupants of the stalls, more sophisticated, sat back in their seats with an air of kindly tolerance. They had come as a matter of duty, expecting to be bored stiff. The opening scene of the pantomime took everybody by surprise.

The kitchen was well portrayed, considering the difficulties of production. The scenery was small but adequate. And the stage itself was crowded with gaily-attired performers—retainers of the castle, milkmaids, etc.

And after one or two hints of hesitancy, the opening chorus was delivered with much gusto. A special orchestra had been engaged, and although it was composed of five members only, they proved sufficient.

"Jolly good; everything's going fine!" murmured Reggie Pitt, from the wings. "But we've got to wait until the show really begins—this is only a preliminary."
"I'm all on the jump!" muttered Jack Grey nervously.

"You'll be all right after you've made your entrance," declared Reggie.

The chorus had finished its song, and many voices were now calling urgently for the cook. This was Reggie Pitt's cue, and he bustled on to the centre of the stage, to be greeted with a shout of laughter.

For Reggie's appearance was somewhat funny. As Widow Pancake he was attired in the usual fashion of pantomime dames. His make-up was clever, and it was almost impossible to recognise him as the cheery skipper of the St. Frank's Fourth.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Dear, dear, dear! Good gracious me! What's all this I see? Who's making all this commotion? It's worse than all the ocean!

CHORUS (in unison): The baron's coming and wants his dinner. What about it, you slow old sinner?

WIDOW PANCAKE: Be off with you and leave my kitchen! To get to work I'm surely itchin'. And where's my boy, the lazy wretch?

A DAIRYMAID: He's gone away the milk to fetch.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Don't bandy words with me, my wench. When he returns his neck I'll wrench. Ah, here he comes, I do declare! Upon my soul his legs are bare!

Peter Pancake burst in, and the audience yelled. For Peter was a ludicrous sight, attired in green velvet with frills, and with tiny knickers only reaching half-way down his thighs. He carried a huge can, and appeared to be breathless.

PETER PANCAKE: Oh, mother dear, what do you think? I met a gentleman in pink. He's just outside the castle gates. I think he wants some roller-skates.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Don't talk such trash to me. What earthly good are skates to he?

PETER PANCAKE: He's limping badly, mother dear. He's hurt his foot, I rather fear. And such a gent I've never seen; he's got a pal who's all in green. Their clothes are made of purest silk—

WIDOW PANCAKE: Yes, but what about my milk? You'll waste the whole confounded day. You're nothing but a silly Jay. And as for all these interferences, you mustn't let them try to sneer us!

Widow Pancake showed the entire company off the stage with the exception of Peter, and then there was a good deal of comic action at the table. Reggie proved himself to be a rare comedian, and long before the scene was over the audience was convulsed.

The sophisticated people in the stalls were just beginning to unbend, and were, in fact, realising that this schoolboy pantomime was something out of the common in amateur entertainments.

Widow Pancake rendered a comic song in splendid style, and was obliged to give an encore. In the meantime, Handforth was fuming in the wings, eagerly waiting to make his entrance. He considered it rather a cheek on Reggie's part to get such a lot of applause.

PETER PANCAKE: I think I hear the master's voice.

WIDOW PANCAKE: His words don't seem so very choice. But there, we can't expect much else, poor man! As far as money goes, he's an "also ran." As for getting all our wages, I don't see any chance for ages!

The door was flung open, and Baron De Biffe stalked in, immediately followed by his two personal attendants, Rush and Tare. Their appearance caused much hilarity. Edward Oswald Handforth, as the Baron, was a scream. His legs were encased in tights, and there were large knobs sticking out in various places. He wore a huge moustache, a flowing wig, and his general attire was a mixture of mediæval grandeur and modern simplicity.

BARON DE BIFFE: Who talks of paltry, weak-as-money? Don't try to be so jolly funny. I've come down here to find some grab—

RUSH (aside): He's just had four pints at the pub!

BARON DE BIFFE: Another word from you, my lad, and then you'll see me really mad! I've had enough of all your rot!

TARE: Plenty of your own you've got. BARON DE BIFFE: Another word, and you'll get the sack! In fact, you'd better go and pack—

TARE: But what about my six months' screw? It's no good getting in a stew. Both Rush and I will stand your rage, until you've paid us all our wage.

RUSH: So there you've got it, old funny face! It's lucky we can stand the pace. BARON DE BIFFE: You're insolent, you scurvy knaves. Be like the cook, for she behaves.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Perhaps I do, but don't forget, unless you pay you'll need a v.t. We've stood your nonsense quite enough, so don't you start your funny stuff.

BARON DE BIFFE: I've had too much of all this—call this—My hat! I've forgotten the giddy lines! I've had too much of all this—

A VOICE FROM THE WINGS: Piffle! BARON DE BIFFE: Eh? Who's talking piffle? Look here, Buster Boots, I'll jolly well lift you for that when I come off—

At this point his words were drowned in the yell of laughter. Handforth apparently forgot that he was on the stage, but Church and McClure came to his rescue, and all was well.

BARON DE BIFFE: I've had too much of all this piffle. A lot of fuss over such a trifle. The rhyme's all wrong, but let it pass—in pantomime we need some farce.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Why can't you go—the whole lurch? I've got to see about the lurch. Oh goodness me, here comes another! Why should I suffer all this lurch?

BARON DE BIFFE: My rhyme was bad, but yours is worse! One more like that, and you'll need a leaser! But here comes my ward with all her suite—

WIDOW PANCAKE: To litter up my kitchen neat. I've never known such golgs on. I think I'd best by far be gone.

And as Widow Pancake and Peter indignantly left by one door, Dolly Dimple appeared from another, followed by her retinue of handmaidens. Irene Manners was certainly looking very charming as the principal girl, and her suite included Winnie Pitt, Ena Handforth, Violet Watson, and several other fair young ladies.

Dolly Dimple's appearance was the signal for a song, in which the Baron was supposed to join. But as Handforth got mixed up with the first and second verses, the audience enjoyed the entertainment immensely. In fact, the more mistakes there were, the funnier the show.

After Dolly Dimple had retired, amid much applause, Handforth had to be literally pulled off by Church and McClure—Edward Oswald having quite forgotten that he ought to have made his exit several minutes earlier. A certain commotion in the wings, and the quivering of scenery, only created more hilarity in the audience.

For a moment the stage was left empty. There were two doors—one supposed to lead into the interior of the castle, and the other an outer door. The latter now opened, and two newcomers appeared. Prince Cheerie and Count Happie strolled quietly into the empty kitchen.

Both looked very sweet and dainty. Doris Berkeley, as the principal boy, was attired in a pink silk suit, and she wore it with perfect ease and grace. With her dark eyes and piquant face, she made a charming prince. And Marjorie Temple, as the empress, looked fair enough in her costume of green silk. The Prince was limping somewhat.

PRINCE CHEERIE: Oh, dash! She's gone, as I'm alive! To speak with her I must contrive! The sweetest girl I ever

COUNT HAPPIE: I rather like the dress she wore!

PRINCE CHEERIE: But did you see her lovely face? Such eyes—such smiles—such perfect grace!

COUNT HAPPIE: But what about your injured toe?

PRINCE CHEERIE: One smile from her and the pain will go! We seem to have the place alone. Oh, my foot—

COUNT HAPPIE: I thought you'd groan! You'd better rest awhile. I think, before you give the girl a wink.

PRINCE CHEERIE: She's not that sort of maid, old man! I'll have to get another plan. Fate led our footsteps on this road—the way to happiness it showed, I'll win that lovely girl, I swear—

COUNT HAPPIE: A prince like you can do and dare.

PRINCE CHEERIE: That's just where you are all at sea. Such simple ways are not for me. If I the girl so quickly got—pray what would happen to our plot? No, no, my Count, no words I'll mince—I mustn't see her as the Prince.

COUNT HAPPIE: You mean you'll pose in humble guise?

PRINCE CHEERIE: Yes, and thus find favour in her eyes. A prince, I fear, would date her so, I'd rather that she didn't know. In such a case as this, old chap, blue blood is simply off the map.

COUNT HAPPIE: What's that? I think I hear a voice!

PRINCE CHEERIE: You're right—the maiden of my choice! Retire at once, and leave the field—I'm not a prince if she'll not yield.

Count Happie quickly passed out through the doorway, and at the same moment Dolly Dimple came tripping into the kitchen. She paused, in slight confusion, and the Prince bowed low.

PRINCE CHEERIE: Forgive this base intrusion, pray—I simply had to pause and stay.

DOLLY DIMPLE: If father finds you here, bold sir, he'll very quickly make you stir. You seem a nice young man, I think, especially in that suit of pink.



The commotion Handy caused within the space of ten seconds was startling. He moved along the row like a miniature tornado.

PRINCE CHEERIE: Such words will make me bolder still—your beauty gives me such a thrill. I'd dearly like to know your name—

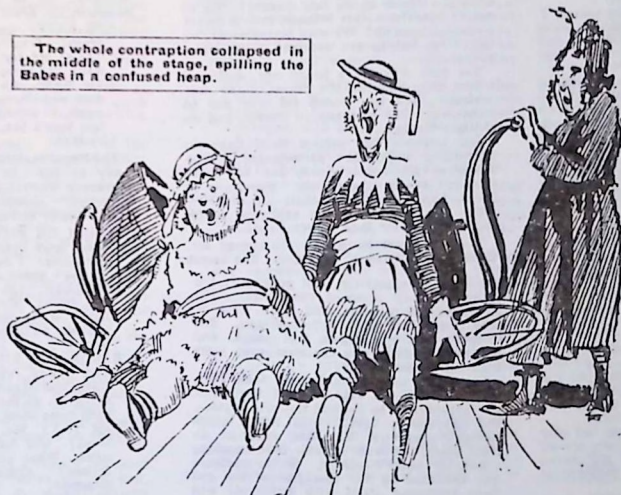
DOLLY DIMPLE: Why, I do believe your foot is lame!

PRINCE CHEERIE: A trifle—nothing more. I vow. Come, tell that name—come, tell me now! I'm sure you're not the Baron's child—I've heard he's just a trifle wild.

DOLLY DIMPLE: He will be if he finds you here. Take my advice, and quickly clear. My name is really very simple—I'm known to all as Dolly Dimple.

PRINCE CHEERIE: A wondrous name, indeed it is! You make my blood all boil and fizz. I take it you're the Baron's ward?

The whole contraption collapsed in the middle of the stage, spilling the Babes in a confused heap.



DOLLY DIMPLE: And you, no doubt, some noble lord?

PRINCE CHERIE: Oh, no—a passing stranger, I—but after this I'll be king. That is, of course, if you'll permit. I'd like to feel I've made a hit.

This was the cue for the orchestra to strike up, and a duet was renewed very charmingly by the principal girl and the principal boy. Without doubt, the show was going with a sparkle, and the people who had expected to be bored, were astonished to find themselves genuinely entertained.

Immediately after the duet there came the sound of lusty squalling, and the Prince gaily kissed his hand to Dolly.

PRINCE CHERIE: I must away, but go not fear—

DOLLY DIMPLE: Be quick—be quick—the Baron's here!

With a bound the Prince disappeared through the doorway. But Baron De Biffe had already entered, and he struck an attitude of exaggerated surprise, and stared keenly after the Prince's retreating form.

BARON DE BIFFE: Hello! Hello! What's this I see? What made that young man start and flee? There's something fishy here, no doubt—I'll very shortly find it out!

Dolly dimpled, confused, and, before the Baron could intercept her, the Babes made their appearance. And the audience rocked in their seats.

For the Babes were about as incongruous a pair as could well be imagined, and they made their entrance in an enormous perambulator, pushed on by Widow Pancake. The whole contraption collapsed in the middle of the stage, spilling the Babes in a confused heap.

Clarence Fellowe picked himself up, and his six feet of thinness rose everlastingly. He was dressed in frilly baby clothing, and the spectators fairly shouted with merriment.

But Fatty Little, as Tilly, the girl Babe, with little bits of pink ribbon tied to his shoulders and in his hair, wore little short socks, and his bulky figure and fat legs proved a most diverting sight. He and Clarence clung to one another and waited at the top of their voices.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Now, now, just stop that noise. Another squall, and I'll pinch your toys. A lullaby, and then to bed—at least, that's what your uncle said.

BARON DE BIFFE: I meant it, too, and don't forget it—obey my word, or you'll regret it!

This was the signal for a concerted number—comically rendered by the Baron, the Cook, and the Babes. It was a comic song with short verses. At the finish, after several rages, the Babes were hustled off by Widow Pancake. The entire chorus had taken part in the song, and these dispersed, too.

The Baron was left entirely alone on the stage, and a scratching sound attracted his attention to the outer door. He frowned, grunted, and flung the door open. A black,

furry object whisked in—to be greeted by gleeful shouts from the many children in the audience.

BARON DE BIFFE: Oh, yes, of course, I might have known! Just when I want to be alone! Lie down, you brute, and don't disturb your spirits, Felix, you must curb.

Felix, the cat, didn't seem to be curbing his spirits. He pranced up and down, made a dash at the Baron, and bowled him clean over. Edward Oswald and Willy Handforth had rehearsed this scene several times—and it had always been funny. But this time it was a roaring success. Willy acted wonderfully as the cat, and the antics he got up to were astonishing. But at last, after a lot of fooling, he settled down, and squatted at the Baron's feet.

BARON DE BIFFE: About time, too, you awful creature! Be jolly thankful I don't beat you! Sit there, and listen while I speak—I'm going to let a secret leak.

FELIX: Me-ow, me-ow!

BARON DE BIFFE: You saw that chap all dressed in pink? He's not exactly what you'd think.

FELIX: Me-ow?

BARON DE BIFFE: May I be boiled in liquid beefy—I'll bet he's none but young Prince Cherie! He's after Doll, or 'Tut a kipper—as her hub, he'd be a ripper! I'll do my best to help this match, and so the wealthy Prince we'll catch.

He paused, tried to look knowing, but only succeeded in looking funny, and Felix cocked his head on one side, and eyed the Baron gravely. The latter nodded in a confidential manner.

BARON DE BIFFE: The Prince is keen to keep it dark, but I see through the gay young spark! And here we come against a snag, for empty is my money bag. It seems to me I've got to think—hang. It seems to me I've got to think—I'm nearly on the dizzy brink! A party gay must needs be held, and one that cannot be excelled.

FELIX: Me-ow—wow—wow!

Again the Baron paced up and down, and when he paused he looked at Felix, and laughed gruffly to himself. The sound of the Babes squalling floated through the half-open doorway.

BARON DE BIFFE: Those lusty babes are full of health—they stand 'twixt me and mighty wealth! I'll take them in the woods to play, and do the dirty work to-night!

The Baron crouched in a sinister attitude, and the orchestra struck up some slow, quivering, villainous music. Felix shrank back, frightened, and the Baron drove one fist into his other palm.

BARON DE BIFFE: Yes, that's the way we'll get it done! A knife, a rope, or 'praps a gun! A picnic in the woods at once—and soon I'll have some piles of bunce! This frightful deed I mustn't shirk—the wood's the place for dirty work!

The orchestra crashed out on a solemn note, and then the stage filled with rustics and countryfolk and all the other members of the chorus.

BARON DE BIFFE: Prepare at once for feasting gay, so boys and girls come out to play. Let's get a hustle on and go, or we'll never get the giddy slow!

There were cheers and shouts, and the curtain descended on the first act, with the chorus dancing and prancing in happiness and glee.

ACT 2—A GLADE IN THE FOREST.



EDWARD OSWALD
HANDFORTH

"Not so bad, eh?" he said genially. "Everything's going fine, and as for you girls, you've done marvellously. I've never seen you looking so ripping, Irene."

Irene Manners laughed. "I don't know about 'looking ripping'—I felt awful!" she replied. "I don't know how I got through it—and I'm sure I made a ridiculous hash of the whole scene."

"Rats!" said Doris Berkeley. "You were topping. If anybody made a hash of it, I did! Just fancy! Me pretending to be a boy, and making love to you! These pantomimes are all topsy-turvy!"

"That's what makes them so different from any other kind of show," grinned Reggie Pitt. "I'm jolly pleased with you all—you've done ten times better than I expected. And the show's going with a glorious swing. There hasn't been a single flat minute. Even when Handy forgot his lines the audience enjoyed it!"

Handforth turned red. "Bluffed if I can understand it!" he growled. "I thought I was absolutely letter perfect—H! What's the matter? Leggo, Walter Church! What's the idea of grabbing the—"

"You're wanted, old man," said Church briskly. "Look at all this scenery! We've got to transform this kitchen into a forest glade—so buck up! We may be actors during the show, but in the interval we're scene-shifters!"

The task was not a heavy one, and well within ten minutes the forest glade was perfected, and the second act was due to commence. The company, of course, had no changes to make.

The audience had settled itself down to thoroughly enjoy the performance. The villagers were openly awed, and the more educated people—the county "nobs," so to speak—had entirely lost their air of tolerance. As the local doctor said, the pantomime was better than Drury Lane!

When the curtain rose on the second act, there was a round of applause. The forest

was depicted effectively, and practically the entire company occupied the stage. The picnic was in progress, and there were such things as "property" foodstuffs. The company was enjoying a real snack, and appeared to delight in the show even more than the audience.

There was some little trouble with Tilly, the girl Babe, for her share of the picnic was supposed to be imbued out of a bottle—and through a tube. But Fatty Little thought otherwise. He liked milk in its right place, but with all this food knocking about, he couldn't resist it. So the audience was enlivened by the spectacle of the girl Babe cramming itself with doughnuts and mince-pies, and other indigestible trifles.

Towards the end of the picnic, a picturesque troupe of strolling players appeared, and forthwith proceeded to perform. This was really a speciality act, and the Onions brothers and Tessa Love and Nicodemus Trotwood and Jerry Dodd provided some highly entertaining fare.

But the story had to be carried on, and after a few songs, the chorus dispersed, and the signs of the picnic were cleared away. The stage was left in the hands of Baron De Biffe and his two attendants, Widow Pancake and the Babes.

BARON DE BIFFE: The revels done, we've got some peace—I thought the gorge would never cease! After such a lot of pies, the kids must have some exercise.

WIDOW PANCAKE: I'll take them home, without delay.

BARON DE BIFFE: No—take them in the woods to play. Return to me in fifteen jiffs, or else you'll get some mighty biffs.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Come on, my loves, we'll have some fun—among the tree, we'll have a run.

TILLY: Oh, please don't take us far away.

BILLY: The woods are dreadful dark today.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Come on, and cast away those fears—I'm with you all the time, my dears.

The Babes were led off among the imaginary trees, and Baron De Biffe turned to his two attendants, and waved an imperious hand.

BARON DE BIFFE: Away, you knaves, and leave my sight! I'd be alone amid the night!

RUSI: But that's absurd—it's daylight yet—

TARK: He speaks as though it's black as jet!

BARON DE BIFFE: My lads, we're in a pantomime—so everything has got to rhyme. Don't argue here, you silly clowns! Or else you'll earn my lordly frowns.

RUSI: Oh, well, in that case, we'll away.

TARK: It seems it's dangerous to stay!

And the Baron's attendants linked arms, and walked off—leaving their lord, and master alone in the forest. The Baron looked round with an air of exaggerated mystery.

BARON DE BIFFE: Ah-ha! Alone at last, I see! And now for fearful villainy! When Widow Pancake brings the kids, I'll do them in and get their quids!

At this point, two strangers crept upon the scene. They appeared from behind the imitation trees at the rear. The Baron was unaware of their stealthy approach. They were a villainous-looking couple, and they obviously had base intentions towards the Baron.

They were Rob Rate and Tom Tax, the robbers. Rob Rate was dressed like a pirate, with high sea-boots, a farical naval costume, and an admiral's hat emblazoned with the skull and crossbones. Buster Boots looked a really desperate character. Tom Tax, his confederate, was no less grotesque; for Archie Gentlemane appeared as a highwayman, but as he was still wearing his monocle, the effect was rather funny.

ROB RATE: Avast, you hulking lump of trash! What's this I hear about cat? You're old De Biffe, or I'll be bust! I want the rates for March the Fust!

TOM TAX: We've caught you fine, my dear old chere—I've come along your goods to seize! You haven't paid your last year's tax, so fork it out, and don't be lax!

The Baron started back, and scowled ferociously at the two newcomers. Handforth overacted everything, and the effect was ludicrous. Humorous enough, he took himself quite seriously.

BARON DE BIFFE: What! Rates and taxes once again? They're on me like a hurricane! I haven't got a single cent—so don't annoy a stout gent!

ROB RATE: You can't back out like that, you swab! We'll skin you out of every bob! We're robbers bold, so don't you squirm, we're out for blood, you slippery scound!

BARON DE BIFFE: What's that you say, you're robbers bold? May I be froze and struck with cold! The very blokes to do the deed! Do you object to spill some blood?

TOM TAX: We do it twice a day, old scout! Our fees, in fact, are next to none. What deed is this you want performed? Come on, we'd like to be informed!

ROB RATE: But don't forget we want some tin—

BARON DE BIFFE: Hold on a bit, till I begin! I've got two babes—they'll soon be here. Let's confab while the coast is clear! If the young sparks are sunk in sand, I'll have a fortune in my

hand. Then I'll pay my tax and rate, and all the fees you nominate.

TOM TAX: We'll do the job, old funny face, and after that we'll haunt your place. Until we get our little parcel, our home is with you at your castle.

ROB RATE: That's a bet, so if you like, we'll drown the nippers in the dyke! And when the deed is truly did, you'll owe us more than fifty quid.

BARON DE BIFFE: I'll give you more than that, you see, when the kids are dead, I'm in for millions. The lot is laid, so I'll be gone—I'll see the pair of you aben.

ROB RATE: But what about the babes, old horse?

TOM TAX: I think I see them through the gorse!

They all turned and stared across the glade, and Widow Pancake marched in with Tilly and Billy. She was scolding them severely, and the Babes were sobbing.

WIDOW PANCAKE: I've never known such naughty cives—they simply won't behave themselves. Just now I found them in a brook—

BARON DE BIFFE: Bah! You can't do anything but cook! Give me the kids, and get you hence! It's time you learnt a bit of sense!

WIDOW PANCAKE: Oh, very well, I won't stay here! Good gracious, what a smell of fish! These friends of yours I don't admire—they look to me like villains dire!

With a toss of her head, Widow Pancake marched off, leaving the Babes in the Baron's hands.

BARON DE BIFFE: Now, list to me, my little dears—lend me your tiny, shell-like ears. These gentlemen, so good and true, are going to have some fun with you.

BILLY: Oh, please, dear uncle, they're not gents—one's got his trousers all in ruffs!

TILLY: Hoot! I want to go home, I do!

BARON DE BIFFE: I've had about enough of you. Here, take the pair, and get you busy—I won't look on, it makes me dizzy!

Covering his face with his hands, the Baron staggered out of the glade, leaving the Babes in the hands of Rob Rate and Tom Tax.

ROB RATE: Come on, my lad, we'll get it done! It won't take long when once begun. I've got some rope, and string, and stuff—I think that ought to be enough.

TOM TAX: Odds life, and all that sort of thing! If we do this, we're sure to swing! The whole affair seems rather foul—in half a tick I'll start to howl.

ROB RATE: All right, we won't do any strangling—we'll cart 'em off and do some wangling! The Baron's wicked to the core—a greater rogue I never saw! Dragging the children with them, the two

robbers went off into the woods. And as they vanished, two other figures appeared, from the other side. Prince Cherie and his Equey entered the glade.

PRINCE CHERIE: Some fishy work, now I'll be bound! These are stamps, I'll bet a pound! They've got the Baron's babes in hand—that's something I don't understand.

COUNT HAPPIE: The Baron's wicked through and through.

PRINCE CHERIE: Yes, I know that as well as you. You'd better follow quick as light, and keep the babes within your sight.

With a wave, the Equey ran out of the glade, and Prince Cherie thereupon burst into song. Doris proved herself to be an excellent singer, and she won great applause. The song finished, Prince Cherie moved about despondently, until Dolly Dimple appeared at the end of the glade.

PRINCE CHERIE: A lucky meeting this, I vow! Whatever made you come here now?

DOLLY DIMPLE: I'm here because the author knows, the pantomime has got to close. We've got to exercise our tact, and hurry on to end the act!

PRINCE CHERIE: I say, you'll give the show away! Don't be so confidential, pray! I think we'd better sing a song, before we're bothered with the throng. And Prince Cherie and Dolly Dimple rendered a love duet which entranced the audience. By the end of it the pair were in one another's arms, and further lovmaking, apparently, was needless.

PRINCE CHERIE: This show's too short for lengthy wooing, we've got to weed, and must be doing! So off we'll go and make our plans, but first we'll orler up the banns.

They left the glade, with the Prince's arm round Dolly's waist, and then the Baron appeared. At the same time, the Robbers strode into the glade from the other side.

BARON DE BIFFE: I knew I'd find you here again! It's in my part as plain as plain! Now, what about the brutal murder?

ROB RATE: Nothing could be more absurd! We've done our work, so don't you fret—so how about the cash we'll get!

BARON DE BIFFE: Come back with me and be my guests—I'd rather you than those young pests! They've gone for good, and so I'm rich! I've got more wealth than Little Tich!

TOM TAX: (Aside): Don't count your chicks before they're hatched! Against us both you're more than matched! The babes are safe, we've seen to that. We've diddled you, my dear old rat!

The robbers winked at one another, and then marched off with the Baron, arm-in-arm. And then, as though by magic, the picnic-party appeared again—having apparently lurked in the vicinity throughout. But this sort of thing, of course, is permissible in pantomime. And it was absolutely essential that the act should end with a full stage and plenty of rousing music.

ACT III.—THE BARONIAL HALL AT DE BIFFE CASTLE.



REGGIE PITT was delighted.

The pantomime was going wonderfully—even better than the schoolboys had dared to hope for. All the members of the cast were doing well, and there had been scarcely any mishaps.

The last act was necessarily a short one—but it was, nevertheless, the chief one of the evening, so far as spectacular effect went. When the curtain rose on the Baronial Hall the audience was astonished. The scenery, for so small a place, was quite gorgeous, and the electricians had performed their work so well that sprays of lights were hanging in festoons all round. And in the opening of the act, Prince Cherie and his entire bodyguard arrived in daze.

Doris Berkeley and her attendants were looking more charming than ever—for they had now donned some gaily coloured cloths, which were dazzling in their brilliance.

There was a very attractive dance, and after this the guests dispersed in the usual fashion of pantomimes, leaving the stage in possession of two or three of the principal characters. In this case, they were the Baron and his two attendants, and Dolly Dimple.

BARON DE BIFFE: Here you got the Prince, and all is well. Within an hour you'll wed the swell! So make you ready, Dolly dear—the time is drawing very near!

DOLLY DIMPLE: I'll go at once, but can you say, why are the babes so long away? We haven't seen them for a week.

BARON DE BIFFE: Be off, my girl, and find your sheik! The babes are well, and safe and sound—(Aside)—In fact they're safely underground!

He looked very pleased with himself, and Dolly Dimple, her fears allayed, tripped off. The Baron turned to his attendants, and clapped Rush on the shoulder. The unfortunate Church nearly turned a somersault.

BARON DE BIFFE: To-night, my lad, we'll all be gay. We'll throw our troubles far away! My fortune's changed, I've heaps to spend. I'll even pay your wages, friend!

RUSH: The news is good, I don't deny—

TARE: But I want a finger in this pie!

BARON DE BIFFE: You'll have your money—every great. So no more grumbles from your throat. But who comes here in such a haste? I do believe he's being chased!

Peter Pancake came tearing in, and he was apparently highly excited. He paused in confusion as he saw the Baron, and bowed.

PETER PANCAKE: My lord, my lord, a man without! He's brought a hamper, strong and stout! A gift from our most noble prince—

BARON DE BIFFE: Then show him in—don't be so dince!

PETER PANCAKE: The man has gone, O noble sire!

BARON DE BIFFE: It seems to me that you're a liar! You say a man awaits without—and then you say he's gone, you loot! What game is this, I'd like to know! I'll have you chucked out in the snow!

PETER PANCAKE: The man has gone, but not his load.

BARON DE BIFFE: Then fetch it in to me, you fool! Here, Rush! Here, Tare! Go help the lad! Don't be such lazy dolts, by gad!

RUSH: We go, my lord, to do your bidding.

TARE: We thought the kid was only kidding.

The Baron's attendants hurried off, and a great commotion came from the side of the stage. The Baron stood in the centre, frowning. Then Rush and Tare came back, dragging with them a huge hamper, with Peter Pancake pushing at the other side.

BARON DE BIFFE: What's this? Great Scott! A hamper large—It's almost bigger than a barce! What have we here, good gracious me?

RUSH: Suppose we open it and see? They unfastened the strings, and in the middle of the process Rush pulled off a label and read the wording on it aloud.

RUSH: The Prince has sent you this, old mate, so raise the lid and learn your fate!

BARON DE BIFFE: Presents rich, I'll bet my boot! Let's look inside and see the loot!

The lid was raised at last, and Baron de Biffe started back when two figures rose from the interior of the hamper, the Babes—both of them smiling with calm delight. The Baron uttered a hoarse cry, and fell back a step or two.

BARON DE BIFFE: May I be boiled in olive oil! The kids again, my joys to spoil! Where's Rate? Where's Tax? Bring in the curs! They've done me brown, and even wurs!

BILLY: You wicked, nasty uncle man!

TILLY: The Prince it was who spoilt your plan.

BARON DE BIFFE: The Prince? My hat! I'm all undone. It seems to me I'll have to run!

PRINCE CHERIE: (entering quickly): Too late, you cunning, scheming wretch! Who'll hurry off, the police to fetch! This man, he planned to kill the mites! See how he trembles in his tights!

BARON DE BIFFE: You've got it wrong, so let's cry "Tax"—the thing was schemed by Ilato and Tax!

PRINCE CHERIE: A lie, and well you know it, too! Both Rate and Tax are good and true. They never meant to do the deed, but only fooled you out of greed! I've had the babes up at the Palace, looked after by good Sister Alice!

BARON DE BIFFE: I'm finished now, without a doubt, but how the deuce can I slip out? The fortune isn't mine at all, so all that's left to me is gall!

He appeared broken, and then Rob Rate and Tom Tax strode in with stern footsteps, and pointed accusing fingers at the Baron.

ROB RATE: He fooled us with his wicked bribes, but now it's him that gets the gibes. He wanted that which was 't his'n—so now he'll soon be sent to prison!

TOM TAX: Before he goes I want my taxes—he doesn't get who never axes!

PRINCE CHERIE: I'll pay his bills, and let him go, for this is pantomime, you know. Besides, I've got his ward for keeps, and that will compensate for heaps. But after this the babes must go, to live in quite another show. I'll have them at the Palace grand, where wicked nukes never land.

BARON DE BIFFE: My gratitude is fervent, quite—I thought I'd see a cell to-night! A royal prince you've proved indeed, and may you never lack a feed!

PRINCE CHERIE: So am I right, and now the time, we ought to end our pantomime.

The music struck up, and the guests paired in from all sides. Songs and dances followed, and the whole show ended up with a joyous, merry swing. And the curtain went down amid deafening applause.

Again and again the curtain was raised, but at last the flattered performers were set free. Behind the curtain, they congratulated themselves with noisy enthusiasm.

"Well, you've all done wonders!" declared Reggie Pitt. "Particularly you, Doris—and you, Hanoly! I thought the show would be fairly good, but it's been a regular triumph!"

"You don't say anything about yourself, Reggie," said Doris Berkeley. "You played the Cook screamingly, but your part was too small—"

"Quite large enough, with all the directing to do, on the top of it!" declared Pitt. "I say, what about a second performance tomorrow night?"

"Rather!"

"We're all game!"

"As a matter of fact, we ought to take the show to London!" declared Hanforth firmly. "I've made up my mind to be an actor—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This part is all very well, but it doesn't give me enough opportunity!" went on Edward Oswald. "I've decided to act in a real drama—"

"Perhaps so, but your pater's decided that you shall go back to St. Frank's!" chuckled Tommy Watson. "I say, what about the author? We ought to give him three cheers."
 "Hurrah!"

Clarence Fellowe was dragged to the front, and warmly cheered. Then Pitt came on for an ovation, for he, after all, had done more actual work than anybody else.

And later on, at Grey Towers, the school-boys and schoolgirls were royally feted by Sir Crawford and the remainder of the house-party. And it was unanimously decided that the pantomime should be repeated on the following night. There would be no difficulty in getting an audience—and, after all, it was all for charity.



**THE CHRISTMAS STORIES
OF L.E. RANSOME**
BY MARGERY WOODS



The Cliff House chums shared eighteen Christmases together all told, and collectively they encompassed the work of several authors, all writing under the pseudonym of Hilda Richards. It is only recently that the years of patient and painstaking research by Bill Lofts and Derek Adley has enabled author credits to be assigned to a great number of the stories which constituted those eighteen years of the Cliff House saga in *SCHOOL FRIEND* and *THE SCHOOLGIRL*.

Eric Lyth Rosman, who liked to be known as 'L.E. Ransome' was, we believe, responsible for only five of these Christmas series, in the new series of *SCHOOL FRIEND* which ran from 1925 to 1929, when the magazine closed, but these festive tales are gems, every one of them. Ransome could weave an enchanting blend of humour, heart appeal, mystery and tradition spiced with sparkling dialogue that was probably the funniest and most original of exchanges in the Cliff House stories. His characterisation was sharp and well delineated, never overstated and remarkably free of the somewhat lazy, cliché-ridden style often found in popular fiction.

It is said that editors groan when they pick up yet another novel ms from a would-be writer that opens with either a journey or a funeral. But for storypaper purposes what could be more joyous than the beginning with a journey, all the excitement and the anticipation not only of the characters about to cast off the shackles of school and embark on Christmas festivities but of the readers who were all agog to identify with the experiences of their favourite schoolgirl characters. John Wheway invariably began with a train or coach journey; Ransome usually with the joyous camaraderie and banter of the packing for the hols.

Ransome's Barbara Redfern was not quite so serious in those earlier stories and in *HER CHRISTMAS MYSTERY*, 1925, we find her making an energetic attempt to close her trunk

lid by jumping mightily on it, until she cracks the lid. "Swindle, I call it" said Barbara, with a shake of her pretty dark head. "Awful swindle." Because it was a new trunk. Perhaps she should have used the more popular method for closing overstuffed cases; that of getting Bessie Bunter to sit on them!

The chums are bound for Moorlands, the new home of Clara Trevlyn's family. Katie Smith, another member of the fourth, is temporarily homeless while her detective father is in South Africa and is not looking forward to spending the hols at Cliff House. Tomboy Clara, ever impulsive and kindly, invites Katie to join her party, unaware that Moorland was once Katie's own home and that she and her father have been defrauded of it by crooks with forged deeds. Could the Trevlyns have had anything to do with this? Katie accepts the invitation but keeps her secret, hoping to investigate how the Trevlyns came into possession of the house. She is touched when unwittingly her own little bedroom is allocated to her, and she becomes more and more certain that Clara's family could not be blamed.

And it is here, at Moorlands, that Ransome's greatest creation, Jemima Carstairs, meets the Cliff House girls for the first time, in the now historic encounter with the battering ram that resolved into Bessie Bunter. "Fifteen stones of solid protoplasm!" Jemima already knows Katie and Katie's father, but accedes to Katie's plea to remain silent about this.

Katie, of course, is remembered in the village and is appalled to find that the locals are boycotting Clara's family. The carol singing expedition organised by the chums in aid of the local hospital comes to a discomfiting end before the hostility of the villagers, and from one of them, a man called Wade, Mr. Trevlyn discovers the truth about Katie. Her silence about this naturally makes the chums start to wonder about her, and the Tomboy can hardly

OUR SPLENDID CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

The **SCHOOL FRIEND**

Every Thursday

2

No. 42
(New Series).
Vol. 2.

Week Ending
December 19th,
1925.

Her Christmas Mystery

A Grand Long Complete Story of the Girls of Cliff House School.

be blamed for feeling that her kindness has been thrown back in her face.

The siege element arises when the servants walk out of Moorlands and the chums have to take to kitchen and cleaning jobs. Jemima announces that her family crest is crossed brooms and dustpans rampant on ground ashes, and lends her elegant hands somewhat uncertainly. Difficult to believe that Jemima appears unable to crack eggs without sending them flying anywhere except the bowl waiting to receive them. She is relieved of that task and decides to clean a bedroom, thoroughly! This requires taking a long brush to the chimney, with results which do not take much imagining.

She is also removed from that job by a somewhat alarmed Mrs. Trevlyn.

But behind that languid air Jemima's brain is working keenly. It is she who eventually unmasks the villainous Wade when she reveals that he has previously stolen manuscripts from her father, Captain Carstairs. She also knows that Katie's father is not in South Africa but much closer at hand in his investigations. The pivot of this delightful story, well constructed behind the Christmas larks, depends on everyone keeping silent on what they know, and Jemima is superb at pulling the ends together at precisely the right moment, when Mr. Smith turns up and all is revealed. Now the real

business of Christmas can begin.

But of course mere celebrations do not keep a story moving and in **THE SECRET OF SANTA CLAUS** more mystery is afoot at Moorlands. Blood-curdling screams --- from Bessie, need we say? --- rouse the house in the dark hours and lead to a Bessie, safe now with her chums, declaring that she has chased several burglars away from the pantry. This statement meets with the derision it deserves, then a Santa Claus figure is glimpsed, which the chums assume is Mr. Trevlyn playing Father Christmas. However, it is not Mr. Trevlyn and the mystery deepens when a large parcel arrives for Mr. Trevlyn containing the Santa Claus outfit and a rather pathetic note from the intruder. All seems amusing on the surface but the sinister air lurks beneath when the chums explore a dilapidated old empty house after a blizzard forces them to seek shelter. There is a creepy sojourn in the old house, lots of delicious creaking and banging of doors up in the top of the house, and then boots glimpsed standing behind a curtain. After Katie finds a coded note in the snow she remembers that the old house was once owned by a man called Grahame who was a suspicious

character. Later the chums find a book on ciphers back at Moorlands and decode the message which tells of a hidden cache of bonds in the teak room. But which teak room?

After an interlude for light relief in the form of Christmas pranks, a fire in the library and the departure of the turkey --- mostly into Bessie! --- the chums start their search for the hidden bonds, a search hampered by the activities of the mysterious intruder and the increasing tetchiness of Mr. Trevlyn, not forgetting a detective named Hitchins who is supposed to be investigating criminal activity in the area and of whom Mabs is suspicious. Her suspicion proves not unfounded but it is the astute Jemima who realises that the teak room is in Moorlands itself, having been wallpapered over and turned into a pingpong room.

So a trap is set, into which the bogus detective falls. The bonds are found and Santa Claus makes no more nocturnal sorties. Mr. Trevlyn recovers his Christmas spirit and all is well once more.

1926 brought **THAT MOST EXCITING CHRISTMAS**, which threatened to be a very spartan affair when Bessie, for a change,

A DELIGHTFUL COMPLETE STORY OF BABS & CO. ON HOLIDAY!



Yuletide fun and happiness—adventures and thrills—Babs & Co. find them all in haunted Delma Castle, Jemima Carstairs' beautiful old home. Read what happens to the chums of the Fourth in this superb story by **HILDA RICHARDS**.

The White Monk of Delma!

invites the chums to stay with her rich uncle at Golden Park. But the vast Golden Parks holds a shock; the chums appear to have arrived at the Wyatt Holiday Home for Schoolgirls, which is run by the tyrannical Miss Turner in the style of the best traditional Victorian reformatories. It is Golden Park, yet they find themselves almost prisoners, and the starving wraith of Christmas spirit has long since departed in search of more welcoming surroundings. Bessie has a hard time trying to explain this away, or where her rich uncle might be found. Of course, as the reader is beginning to suspect, there are two parts of the vast Golden Park

locate the house in Golden Park where Bessie's uncle awaits them amid almost as much luxury and kindness as Bessie had promised.

OFF FOR THE HOLIDAYS in 1927 sees the start of the series at Delma Castle, home of Jemima Carstairs. The chums are disbelieving when Marjorie Hazeldene tells them she must back out of the holiday arrangements; her father is beset by financial problems and Marjorie feels she must go to him for Christmas. Meanwhile, Bessie has received a call from another rich titled relative, Earl Bunter. Fatima swaggers out of the monitresses' room, where the telephone is kept, with her nose in the air

A SUPERB CHRISTMAS TALE. FEATURING BABS & CO. ON HOLIDAY.



CHRISTMAS AT MINDEN HALL

By **HILDA RICHARDS.**

Christmas at Minden Hall as the guests of Marjorie Hazeldene's uncle, is the pleasant prospect that awaits the Cliff House girls. They little know of the mysteries and adventures that they are to encounter ere Christmas is over!



Estate; the girls have found their way to the section which was once a girls' school but which has now been usurped by the villainous Miss Turner while the daughter of the real owner is desperately searching for the missing will which will prove her entitlement to it. Restoring lost inheritances, dealing with tyrants and discovering lost treasure are minor matters which the chums regularly take in their stride, and this one proves no exception, before they

and haughtily informs Jemima that she won't be able to go to Jemima's "little shack" for the hols! Jemima's expression may well be imagined!

A joyously entertaining tale ensues, in which Bessie's "earl" proves to be The Earl and Hunter Hotel, and the call was never for her in the first place. Marjorie borrows a typewriter with which she hopes to find some holiday work to help her father financially. Jemima

beavers away quietly to ensure that both Marjorie and her father spend a well deserved Christmas at Delma Castle, where the ghost of the White Monk ensures plenty of thrills and mystery and excitement just in case the Christmas eating and jollity should begin to pall.

The last of the SCHOOL FRIEND Christmas series, in 1928 to 1929, consisted of the three stories featuring Marjorie Hazeldene and set at Minden Hall, with her uncle and aunt and young cousin Leatrice.

As always, secrets from the past return to cast their shadows, in this case from a seven-year-old injustice when Bob Storm, cousin of Marjorie and brother of Leatrice, was falsely accused of theft and banished from the family home.

The human interest heart of this appealing series lies in the conflict within the Storm family. Marjorie's uncle remains completely unrelenting, but Mrs. Storm has never ceased to love and yearn for her son. She has managed to keep in touch with him during the years and is now possessed by the incredulous idea of persuading him to return secretly to Minden Hall and hide in the haunted wing during the Christmas season where his mother and Marjorie will be reunited with him. To Marjorie is entrusted the task of finding Bob and bringing him home. This far from easy mission is not helped by the wilfulness of Leatrice, who has young Doris Redfern and Madge Stevens of the Third to aid and abet her in mischief. Even worse is the presence at Minden Hall of Evelyn Parr, another cousin, whose brother, Captain Parr, is in India.

The unpleasant Evelyn, who for reasons of her own would prefer Marjorie to be unsuccessful and Bob to remain discredited, stirs trouble subtly and deliberately, as Marjorie endeavours to find the proof of Bob's innocence which Bob swears is concealed in the haunted wing. And so the scene is set for a great deal of conflict, interspersed with the traditional Christmas merrymaking. There is a burglary, and Leatrice insists on leading a search party into the haunted wing. Marjorie manages to warn Bob, but the signs of his presence in a room in the haunted wing are all too obvious. Evelyn cleverly plants the notion that the intruder, who must have taken the valuable paintings and Mrs. Storm's jewel case,

has an accomplice in the house. Her glances at Marjorie are full of suspicion.

Bessie provides the necessary light relief next day when she emerges glowingly clad in shades of pink, purple, peach, plum, blue, fuchsia and fawn, all ready to take to her skis. Unfortunately, her skis don't quite take to her! Nor were they ever intended for progressing down a staircase!



Bessie Bunter landed in the hall with a resounding bump, one hand wildly clutching her sash. "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fourth-Formers delightedly. "Bravo, Bessie!"

It is not until the final title, SEARCHERS IN THE HAUNTED WING, that it is revealed that Evelyn has this wastrel brother in the Indian Army. It is he who was responsible for the theft seven long years ago for which Bob had suffered. Bob had caught him and forced him to write a letter of confession and return both money and pearls. But Evelyn's rascally brother had hastily concealed letter, money and pearls in a secret compartment, handing only the empty wallet to Bob, so landing Bob with the accusation of theft. Captain Parr had left the following morning and the missing things had never been found. Now Parr is back and in dismay remembering the incriminating letter he had been forced to pen. It is this which Evelyn has been searching for, hence the intrusions and

Evelyn's determination to keep everyone out of the haunted wing.

The story climaxes dramatically with a fire, then the discovery of the evidence Bob seeks, and the exciting cache of hidden treasure several centuries old. Best of all, Bob is reunited with his family, Leatrice has a brother restored to her, and the Christmas festivities can now continue unabated.

So ended the Christmas stories in SCHOOL FRIEND, Ransome vintage. A study of these outlines soon reveals the basic nature of the plots and situations around which the stories are woven. And yet they continued to compel the interest of the readers, who did

not necessarily remain addicts for only a year or so before passing on to more adult fare. Many continued to follow the storypapers for several years, which only goes to prove how great was the story-telling skill of authors like L.E. Ransome, who ably demonstrated his ability to create a fresh and appealing version of a basic storyline which had been, and would be, used many many times.

Ransome gave his readers a precious gift: stories and characters to live in happy, nostalgic memories down through the years.

A toast to the Christmas memories of the Cliff House chums, and to the inimitable Jemima and her creator. Long may they live!

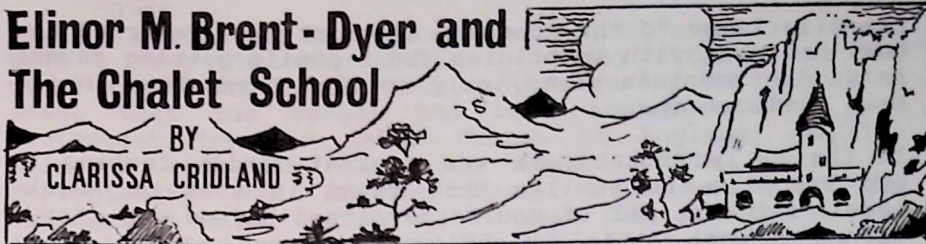


ANSWERS TO GUESS THESE MASTERS

1. *Eugenio Mobbs, *Fourth Form*
Highcliffe
 2. Edward Greely, B.A., *Fifth Form*
Rookwood
 3. Herbert Manders, M.A., *Sixth Form*
Rookwood (1921 Holiday Annual). Afterwards generally Roger.
 4. Henry Samuel Quelch, M.A., *Remove (Lower Fourth)*
Greyfriars
 5. Horace Manfred Hacker, B.A., *Shell Form*
Greyfriars
 6. Eusebuis Twigg, B.A., B.Sc., *Second Form*
Greyfriars (In early Holiday Annuals he is sometimes listed as the 3rd Form Master)
 7. Horace Ratcliff, M.A., *Fifth Form*
St. Jim's, also New House Master
 8. Victor Raitton, M.A., *Sixth Form*
St. Jim's, also School House Master
- * Eugenio Mobbs
1926 Holiday Annual "The Form Master's Substitute"

Elinor M. Brent-Dyer and The Chalet School

BY
CLARISSA CRIDLAND



1994 sees the centenary of the birth of Elinor Brent-Dyer. It also sees the 70th anniversary of her trip to Pertisau-am-Achensee in the Austrian Tyrol, as a result of which she wrote *The School At The Chalet*, the first in her long series of Chalet School books for which she is best remembered.

Elinor set the first thirteen and a half books in the fictional Briesau-am-Tiernsee (Pertisau-am-Achensee in real life) and this exotic setting is one reason for the success of the series. The other reasons are exciting and yet believable plots and characterisation.

The School At The Chalet was not the first of Elinor's books. She had already had published *Gerry Goes To School* (1922), *A Head Girl's Difficulties* (1923) and *Maids of La Rochelle* (1924) all loosely connected and now known, together with four later titles, as the *La Rochelle* series. The first two titles are school stories, but the school, *St Peter's in Dawley*, does not inspire the fierce loyalty that grips the reader almost from the start of *The School At The Chalet*.

When 24 year old Madge Bettany announces to her twin brother Dick, whose leave from the forestry commission in India is almost up, that she is going to start a school in the Austrian Tyrol so that she and their 12 year old sister Joey can have enough to live on, Elinor fires the imagination of every reader. The school prospers at once; starting with three pupils and two mistresses, by the end of the first term there are seventeen pupils, three mistresses and a visiting master. The second term sees the numbers of pupils double and it is not long before there are over 100 girls with a suitably large staff. The school continues to grow and when, in *The New Chalet School*, it takes over the pupils and staff of *St Scholastika's*, there are over 250 pupils. Although the nationalities of the staff are limited to British, French and Austrian (visiting only) the pupils come from at least nine European countries as well as the United States and, later on in the series, Kashmir, Australia, Kenya and India.

Elinor did not depart entirely from the traditional schoolgirl story - there are the requisite number of fires and floods as well as a Ruritanian princess, but, given the setting of the books, these are not so far fetched as in other school stories. Fans who have made

the pilgrimage to the Achensee district have remarked how they had read with scepticism about pupils getting caught in sudden mountain mists, only to find themselves in the same predicament.

In the early books there was a great family feeling in the school - not unlike that found in some of Angela Brazil's books, but of course developed beyond one story. To start with, this is obviously because of the small number of pupils, but it persists even when the school has reached well over 100 pupils. Much of this has to do with the presence of Joey Bettany as the school's leading character. We meet Joey first as a delicate 12 year old, whose health does not deter her from becoming first a middle with instant leadership qualities whose sinful deeds are recalled throughout the series, later a responsible senior, prefect and of course head girl. Joey remains at school for the first eleven books in the series and since neither the reader nor Elinor can bear to let her leave she comes back for a visit at the beginning of the twelfth book, Jo Returns To The Chalet School, and is stuck at school for most of the term because of measles at home. She goes on to marry Jack Maynard, one of the doctors at the Sanatorium (of which more below), to spend most of her married life living close to the school and acting as 'mother' to the numerous pupils who arrive either motherless or with parents in inaccessible places as well as eventually having 11 children of her own of whom all the girls go to the Chalet School! As is frequently stated towards the end of the series she will remain a Chalet girl even when she is 90 with great grandchildren.

Two themes which feature throughout the series are health and religion. The school was started in Austria partly because of Joey's poor health and delicate pupils abound in every book. At the end of the first book, Madge Bettany meets a young doctor, James Russell, whom she marries in the third book, The Princess Of The Chalet School. Dr Jem (as he is known) opens a sanitorium on the Sonnalpe, the shelf above the Tiernsee, for TB pupils. Many pupils come to the school because they have relatives at the san and the health of the girls is watched over carefully. In The Chalet School And Jo an annexe to the school for delicate children is established at the Sonnalpe. Although the school has four moves, the san is never far away and many of the old girls and staff marry doctors. Elinor grew up in South Shields in a lower middle class background when illnesses such as TB and scarlet fever did cause many deaths. In 1911 her best friend, Elizabeth Jobling, died of TB and in the column in the death registers where her death is recorded, over half of the 75 deaths mentioned were those of children under 14. The following year, her younger brother, Henzell, died of cerebro-spinal fever. Even a mere cold was something to be watched over. Elinor's preoccupation with health is not perhaps surprising.

Nor is it surprising that religion plays a large part in her books. Quite apart from the fact that this is

typical of all pre war school stories, Elinor did herself have a deep Christian faith. Being situated in the Tyrol and having pupils from many different nationalities meant that the school had both Roman Catholic and Protestant (by and large Church of England) pupils. Elinor's ecumenical attitude towards both forms of Christianity was amazing when one looks at the segregation which was normal in real life and the almost exclusively Church of England pupils of other school stories. Elinor herself grew up as a practising member of the Church of England but in 1930 she converted to Rome. Her religious faith is evident throughout the series and is woven into the books in a way that is offensive to very few and comforting to many. Perhaps children these days do find it unusual that the Chalet School pupils say private prayers night and morning, but school prayers are still common practice in most private schools and a number of state schools and discussions about God and prayer in moments of danger are by no means abnormal.

Even a fictional school could hardly remain in Austria after the Anschluss and in the Chalet School in Exile, Madge Russell is forced to close the school, losing many of her continental pupils, in particular the Austrians and Germans. The Chalet School in Exile is regarded by many as Elinor's best book, and her handling of the flight across Europe by Joey Bettany and various others, and the reasons for it, is masterful. She shows an amazing understanding for her day in her differentiating between the Nazis and the German and Austrian people, and indeed she does not mince words about the evils of Naziism.

Having moved the school from Austria, Elinor made the unwise decision to move it to Guernsey. She had, probably around 1921-22, visited Guernsey and had set part or all of several of the La Rochelle titles there. Like the Achensee district, she knew the terrain well - what she had not bargained for was, shortly after the publication of the Chalet School in Exile, the German invasion. In the first chapter of the following book, The Chalet School Goes To It, the school has to move again, this time to a mansion some fourteen miles from Hereford (Armiford in the books).

Since 1933, Elinor had been living in Hereford and it is not difficult to work out that the locations of the school, village, Madge Russell's and Joey Maynard's houses are in the Golden Valley in the Peterchurch, Michaelchurch area. (Elinor had been a governess in Peterchurch for about three years.) This section of the school's career is perhaps the most frustrating. The period of the school being at Plas Howell covers some six or seven years of school life, but only nine books which were written over eight years. In addition three of the books were not published in the series proper, and Jo To The Rescue is set during the holidays. There are serious gaps at the beginning and end of the sequence and

that between The Chalet School And Rosalie and the final Hereford title, Three Go To The Chalet School covers about three years of the school's existence - the longest anywhere in the series. Elinor makes many frustrating mistakes during the series but there are proportionately more of these during the Hereford books - one of the most aggravating being that Biddy o'Ryan is called Biddy o'Hara all the way through Highland Twins At The Chalet School - and amazingly enough this was never corrected. Probably the reason for the mistakes and the comparatively few books written during this period (there were four non Chalet books as well during 1940-49 but the total output is much lower than in the preceding or succeeding decades) was that from 1938 Elinor was running her own school in Hereford, the Margaret Roper school. This was, alas, not nearly so successful as the Chalet School - probably because she spent much of her time writing Chalet books! - and closed down after ten years in 1948.

At the beginning of the 21st book, The Chalet School and the Island, Elinor moved the school again - this time for a reason beloved of many school authors - bad drains. The place chosen is an imaginary island off the south west coast of Wales. (Joey Maynard follows nearby shortly after since her house is suffering from subsidence.) This was not the only change. From now on, Elinor faithfully records events at the Chalet School on a termly basis. Although the school only spends two years and a term on the island there are seven books set here, but this is very much an intermittant period of the school's existence. The removal seems to be simply a preparation for the next move back to the Alps. At the same time, Elinor moves Madge Russell from the scene to Canada and later Joey follows her for a year. Why Elinor did this will probably never be known. Was it because she felt she had to get away from the Bettany influence in the school (if so, she was profoundly unsuccessful and even brought both Madge and Joey back for visits in Shocks For The Chalet School) or was it because she - or her publishers - felt that Canadian readers needed a closer link with the series? Given that in Shocks For The Chalet School an Australian pupil makes her first appearance, it could well have been that she was trying to keep readers in the Commonwealth happy.

Whatever the reason, both Madge and Joey leave Canada for good in Changes For The Chalet School, although in the following book, Joey Goes To The Oberland, Joey's adopted sister Robin Humphries goes to Toronto as a nun. Madge was to be left in England but Joey Goes To The Oberland saw Joey and Jack going out to the Bernese Oberland in Switzerland where Jack was to run the Sanatorium and Joey was to live next door to the school. This is the last of the school's moves and it remained in the Oberland until the last book in the series, Prefects At The Chalet School, no 58.

The continuing popularity of the Chalet series was proven when in 1959 Chambers established a Chalet Club which by the time of its demise in 1969 was to have 4000 members from around the world. Today, there is a successor in the international Friends of the Chalet School, established over four years ago.

Elinor did not, though, forget the school's first home and in *Coming Of Age*, when the school celebrates it's 21st birthday, trips are made back to the Tiernsee where Joey buys a holiday home (in fact the Russell's old summer home, the former St Scholastika's school) and two full length books, *Joey And Co In Tyrol* and *A Future Chalet School Girl*, are set here during the Maynard's summer holidays.

Elinor did write a number of other books besides the Chalet books. The La Rochelle series are collected by Chalet fans because of their connection with the Chalet series (when the school moves to Guernsey the leading La Rochelle characters join the series) and there are one or two other connectors. In the main, though, her non Chalet books are collected only by the completist and we would probably not be celebrating Elinor's centenary if it were not for the Chalet School. We have much to thank for that trip to Austria seventy years ago.



Elinor M. Brent-Dyer
(Vivian Studio, Hereford)

Appendix

The Chalet School series was published between 1925 and 1970 but actually covers approximately 26 years of the school's existence.

Although on the back of the dustwrapper of the last title 58 books are listed, the numbering is more complicated since there were some extras. The titles are listed below in reading order with the numbers given to the series by Chambers in brackets, followed by the first publication dates. The Armada paperbacks have slightly different numbers since some of them have been split into two. The Armada numbering can be checked by looking in a copy in any bookshop. Although HarperCollins have not yet republished all the titles under the Armada imprint, they plan to do so by the end of 1995. Many of the Armada titles are abridged.

THE SCHOOL AT THE CHALET (1) 1925
JO OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (2) 1926
THE PRINCESS OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (3) 1927
THE HEAD GIRL OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (4) 1928
THE RIVALS OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (5) 1929
EUSTACIA GOES TO THE CHALET SCHOOL (6) 1930
THE CHALET SCHOOL AND JO (7) 1931
THE CHALET GIRLS IN CAMP (8) 1932
THE EXPLOITS OF THE CHALET GIRLS (9) 1933
THE CHALET SCHOOL AND THE LINTONS (10) 1934
THE NEW HOUSE AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (11) 1935
JO RETURNS TO THE CHALET SCHOOL (12) 1936
THE NEW CHALET SCHOOL (13) 1938
THE CHALET SCHOOL IN EXILE (14) 1940
THE CHALET SCHOOL GOES TO IT (15) 1941
HIGHLAND TWINS AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (16) 1942
LAVENDER LAUGHS AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (17) 1943
GAY FROM CHINA AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (18) 1944
JO TO THE RESCUE (19) 1945
MYSTERY AT THE CHALET SCHOOL * 1947
TOM TACKLES THE CHALET SCHOOL (31) * 1948 & 1949, 1955
THE CHALET SCHOOL AND ROSALIE * 1951
THREE GO TO THE CHALET SCHOOL (20) 1949
THE CHALET SCHOOL AND THE ISLAND (21) 1950
PEGGY OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (22) 1950
CAROLA STORMS THE CHALET SCHOOL (23) 1951
THE WRONG CHALET SCHOOL (24) 1952
SHOCKS FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL (25) ** 1952
THE CHALET SCHOOL IN THE OBERLAND (26) ** 1952
BRIDE LEADS THE CHALET SCHOOL (27) 1953
CHANGES FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL (28) 1953
JOEY GOES TO THE OBERLAND (29) 1954
THE CHALET SCHOOL AND BARBARA (30) 1954
THE CHALET SCHOOL DOES IT AGAIN (32) 1955
A CHALET GIRL FROM KENYA (33) 1955
MARY-LOU OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (34) 1956
A GENIUS AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (35) 1956
A PROBLEM FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL (36) 1956
THE NEW MISTRESS AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (37) 1957
EXCITEMENTS FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL (38) 1957
THE COMING OF AGE OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (39) 1958

THE CHALET SCHOOL AND RICHENDA (40) 1958
TRIALS FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL (41) 1959
THEODORA AND THE CHALET SCHOOL (42) 1959
JOEY AND CO IN TYROL (43) 1960
RUEY RICHARDSON, CHALETIAN (44) 1960
A LEADER IN THE CHALET SCHOOL (45) 1961
THE CHALET SCHOOL WINS THE TRICK (46) 1961
A FUTURE CHALET SCHOOL GIRL (47) 1962
THE FEUD IN THE CHALET SCHOOL (48) 1962
THE CHALET SCHOOL TRIPLETS (49) 1963
THE CHALET SCHOOL REUNION (50) 1963
JANE AND THE CHALET SCHOOL (51) 1964
REDHEADS AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (52) 1964
ADRIENNE AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (53) 1965
SUMMER TERM AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (54) 1965
CHALLENGE FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL (55) 1966
TWO SAMs AT THE CHALET SCHOOL (56) 1967
ALTHEA JOINS THE CHALET SCHOOL (57) 1979
PREFECTS OF THE CHALET SCHOOL (58) 1970

* MYSTERY AT THE CHALET SCHOOL was first published in The Chalet Book for Girls (1947); TOM TACKLES THE CHALET SCHOOL was first published in two parts in The Second and Third Chalet Books for Girls (1948 and 1949) and reissued in 1955 as a book, for some reason being given the number 31 in sequence; THE CHALET SCHOOL AND ROSALIE was published as an original paperback (1953).

** SHOCKS FOR THE CHALET SCHOOL and THE CHALET SCHOOL IN THE OBERLAND take place during the same term.

The Chalet School Cookbook was published in 1953 but is set in the Tyrol just after Joey Bettany has left school.

Other Publications

Behind The Chalet School (the biography of Elinor Brent-Dyer) by Helen McClelland (New Horizon, 1981 and Anchor, 1986, now o/p)

Elinor Brent-Dyer's Chalet School with additional material by Helen McClelland (Armada, 1989, now o/p)

The School At The Chalet (p/b facsimile Armada, May 1994)
The Chalet School Companion (Armada, May 1994)

May 1994 also sees the first publication by Armada of Jo Of The Chalet School and The Princess Of The Chalet School in cassette form.

For further details of The Friends of the Chalet School, please send an A5 SAE to

Mrs Gill Bilski
4 Sheepfold Lane
Amersham
Buckinghamshire
HP7 9EL



THE WONDERS OF AN HOUR

(THE BOYS' PUBLIC SCHOOL STORY ON STAGE, FILM,
TELEVISION AND RADIO)

BY BRIAN DOYLE



"A Schoolboy's Tale, the Wonder of an hour!" (Lord Byron)

The small, closed world of the English boys' public school has often attracted filmmakers and playwrights, television and radio producers, over the years. Its compact microcosm of human life distilled into a few adults and a few hundred boys has frequently provided the opportunity to concentrate upon the lives and loves, the friendships and feuds, and the humours and tragedies of a little, close-knit and fascinating community.

Since practically all of us have gone to school (although perhaps only a small proportion to boarding-school) we have all experienced at least some of the small triumphs and ordeals, adventures and mishaps, laughs and tears, experienced by the young protagonists in the stories we read, or see on the stage or screen, or hear on the radio. We cannot help but undergo that slight shock of recognition, that faint frisson of familiarity, when we see the dramas and humours of school life laid out before us - whether we 'boarded' or attended daily. A sort of time-travelling mirror reflecting our own youth generally and our schooldays particularly.

I'm sure that most people will have seen or heard on the radio films and plays that dealt with life at an English boys' public school, so I thought it might be interesting and useful to present a survey of most of them. I don't, by the way, deal with 'ordinary' day-schools, or comprehensives, or co-educational schools, or primary schools, or girls' schools, or special schools, or reform schools, or even grammar schools. One or two prep schools are mentioned, and one or two American schools. But the emphasis is firmly on the traditional English boys' public school. In fiction, your Greyfriars, St. Jim's and St. Frank's, but **not** your St. Trinian's, Grange Hill, Brick Street or Dame Slap's Mixed Infants.

So, as Lord Byron once put it: let us on to 'a schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour!'...

One of the first feature films based on a well-known boys' school story was *THE FIFTH FORM AT ST. DOMINIC'S*, from the book by Talbot Baines Reed, originally serialised in the 'Boys' Own Paper' in 1881 and published in book-form in 1887. The British Granger's Production was a silent film

and came out in 1921; it was presumably successful since it was re-issued two years later. The director was A.E. Coleby, who was said to have made some 700 silent films between 1907 to 1929; he appeared in some of them too. His credits included a 'Fu Manchu' series in 1915. It starred Ralph Forbes as Oliver Greenfield and Maurice Thompson as his brother Stephen, the story's main characters. Forbes later went to Hollywood where he became a well-known actor and appeared in many films. Movie fans may be interested to know that he married popular film stars Ruth Chatterton and Heather Angel. The rest of the cast of *FIFTH FORM* contains names that are unknown to me these 72 years later, but it's amusing to note that it includes: 'Bramble, The Bully of the fourth', 'Pembury, the Fifth Form Cynic', 'Simon Wren, a Poet', 'Wraysford, Oliver's Chum', and 'Nancy Senior, the Headmaster's Daughter' (just as well, perhaps, that she wasn't called 'Nancy Junior' or we might well have been in Lolita country!).

THE FIFTH FORM AT ST. DOMINIC'S was serialised in BBC Radio Children's Hour in 1947 and then, in 1961, it became a really outstanding 4-part BC Television serial. I remember that the whole youthful cast was excellent and they really came across as believable characters, and not small boy acting school students dressed in old-fashioned clothes. Would that a Greyfriars serial could be produced on television to this high standard! In this production, Oliver and Stephen Greenfield were played by Peter Marden and Lindsay Scott-Patton, with Richard Palmer (a one-time TV Harry Wharton and a guest at a past meeting of the London Old Boys' Book Club) as their good-egg friend Wraysford. The serial was produced by Barbara Hammond, and I, personally, still rate it as one of the two finest school serials ever to be produced on television. A film producer named Kevin Francis announced a feature film version of *FIFTH FORM*, to be made as a Tyburn production at Pinewood Studios, in 1980, but his plans sadly never materialised. There was actually a colour poster in existence, which he once showed me, but the farthest it got was being exhibited on his office wall!

Another early public school film arrived in 1931 and this was John Van Druten's controversial YOUNG WOODLEY; a silent version was also shot shortly before but, because of the advent of sound, this was never released. Just to remind you, YOUNG WOODLEY was about a brief and sensitive love affair at a public school, between a prefect and his housemaster's wife. The original stage play was banned from a London production in 1924, but was presented on the more tolerant New York stage in the following year; it was eventually produced in London in 1928 and enjoyed a highly-successful run; the novel version was published in 1929. The 1928 stage production was at London's Savoy Theatre, and starred Frank Lawton as Woodley and Kathleen O'Regan as Laura Simmons, the housemaster's attractive wife. Also in the cast was the youthful Jack Hawkins, as a school prefect. A curious note in the programme advised: 'Sports Equipment kindly lent by Mr. Jack Hobbs, the Surrey Cricketer'; whether the equipment was used by Young Woodley or Laura Simmons, or both, was not explained.

The motion picture version of YOUNG WOODLEY in 1931 was a British International Picture, directed by Thomas Bentley, a leading director of the time with many pictures to his credit, including no less than six silent versions of Charles Dickens' novels; the caption-card writers must have been kept very busy. Bentley's film starred Frank Lawton in his original role as Young - but by now possibly ageing-rapidly - Woodley; Lawton was married to Evelyn Laye later. Maleleine Carroll played Laura; Miss Carroll was subsequently to find fame as a film star when hand-cuffed to a future 'Mr. Chips', Robert Donat, in Hitchcock's classic screen thriller, "The Thirty-Nine Steps". Noted names in the film's supporting cast included Billy Milton (later a popular entertainer at the piano, with his own radio show) and René Ray as The Shopgirl Who almost Seduces Our Hero in the Local Woods; Miss Ray became, many years later, a popular novelist. The film, doubtless because of its (for those days) controversial and 'daring' context, was a very successful film in 1931. A BBC Television version of YOUNG WOODLEY was produced in 1960, with Jeremy Spenser in the title-role.

But for what was probably the very first feature film adapted from a famous school story, we must go right back to 1914, when the public was understandably too preoccupied with the beginnings of a terrible World War to take much notice of a mere little silent movie. For the record, however, it was the original screen version of Thomas Hughes' classic TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS. The Windsor production was directed by Rex Wilson and

starred Jack Hobbs (the actor, not the cricketer noted for his sports equipment) in the title-role. Hobbs was 21 at the time he made the film, but the wrinkle-cream must have worked wonders for he survived to finish the picture. This Jack Hobbs, by the way, went on to become a very busy and successful supporting actor and appeared in numerous British films and stage plays. He co-starred with Ronald Shiner throughout the record-breaking R.F. Delderfield farce about wartime RAF life, "Worm's-Eye View", which ran in London's West End for 1,745 performances and over four years during the mid-late-1940s; he also repeated his role of 'Pop' in the 1951 film version. In this 1914 TOM BROWN, the bully Flashman was played by Laurie Leslie.

The second film version of TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS (title "Adventures at Rugby" in America for some inscrutable reason) was released in 1940 by RKO Pictures, and directed by Robert Stevenson in Hollywood (Stevenson was later to direct "Mary Poppins" among many other successful pictures). It starred Jimmy Lydon as Tom Brown; Lydon was an all-American, freckle-faced young actor who was more destined to play Tom Sawyer than Tom Brown and this was a serious case of mis-casting, though the lad did his best. Perfect casting, however, was the talented Freddie Bartholomew as East, Tom's best friend at Rugby. But with bully Flashman, we were firmly back in the Mis-casting of the Year Department, with Billy Halop doling out the beatings and roastings and sneers in generous good measure. Halop had made his name as the leader of the tough, violent, street-wise 'Dead End Kids' in several Hollywood movies, including the original classic "Dead End" with Humphrey Bogart. He looked what he played best - tough, ill-tempered, Italian-looking hoodlums. He was good at those. But playing Harry Flashman in this style, plus a thick American accent, made it seem that the Mafia had come to Rugby.

An interesting little footnote is that Walker, a schoolboy crony of Flashman's, was played by Hughie Green, later to win fame on British television in such shows as "Double Your Money" and "Opportunity Knocks" and who was a busy juvenile actor in Hollywood at the time. Dr. Arnold, the Headmaster of Rugby, was portrayed by Sir Cedric Hardwicke and he was magnificent. The role was specially 'built-up' for Hardwicke and he responded brilliantly. He was, of course, one of Britain's most distinguished actors; his son, Edward Hardwicke, has been a superlative Dr. Watson to Jeremy Brett's Sherlock Holmes in the recent Granada television series.

The third, and so far last, film of TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS, was released in

1951. Directed by Gordon Parry, it starred the angelic-looking John Howard Davies as the eponymous young hero; he had earlier played the title-role in David Lean's memorable film of "Oliver Twist" as well as being in other pictures and did well as Tom, though he was perhaps a trifle over sensitive and gentle. His sensitivity didn't prevent him from forging ahead in later years to become a top TV producer, being responsible for such shows as "Monty Python's Flying Circus", "Fawlty Towers", "The Good Life", and "The Goodies" and eventually ending up as Head of Comedy, then Head of Light Entertainment for BC TV. In this 1951 film version, the role of East was in the capable hands of John Charlesworth, one of the busiest juvenile actors around at the time. Flashman was brilliantly portrayed by John Forrest, who lent elegance and sophistication to his bullying and all-round nastiness. Dr. Arnold was played by Robert Newton with quiet dignity and strength, something of a surprise to those who later knew him mainly for his roistering Long John Silver in the colourful Disney version of "Treasure Island" - a role that virtually ruined his subsequent career, unfortunately. A marvellous supporting cast included such favourites as James Hayter, Diana Wynyard, Michael Hordern, Hermione Baddeley and Max Bygraves (as the coachman!). And the weak and delicate little Arthur, who came under Tom's wing as a nervous new boy, was played by Glyn Dearman, later to win fame as 'Jennings' in BBC Radio's Children's Hour and today a top BBC Radio Drama producer of over twenty years' standing. The tuneful musical score was by Richard Addinsell (of 'Warsaw Concerto' fame) who had written the score for the 1939 "Goodbye Mr. Chips" film. Some of the location shots were actually filmed at Rugby School.

There was an excellent - and controversial - BBC TV serial of TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS in 1971, starring Anthony Murphy as Tom, Richard Morant as Flashman, and Iain Cuthbertson as Dr. Arnold. Location scenes were shot at Milton Abbey, a West Country public school. The serial was very well-done and most enjoyable, but it aroused considerable public controversy and became something of a 'cause celebre' at the time, because of what some viewers considered its 'excess violence'. There was a long-running series of letters to "The Times" and the "Radio Times" citing beatings, violence, torture, sadism, cruelty, terror and so on. I have a copy of a "Radio Times" containing no fewer than nine such letters, though others wrote in high praise of the programme. Needless to say, it was a big success in terms of viewer-ratings.

Also in 1971 came - wait for it! - the Tom Brown musical show... Originally-titled YOUNG TOM it was 'tried out' at the Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon, by the Croydon Operatic and Dramatic Association, in association with Joe Vegoda, in November, 1971. The book and lyrics were by Joan and Jack Maitland and the music by Chris Andrews. Then, in May, 1972, the show achieved a big London West End production at the Cambridge Theatre, with a full professional cast which included Roy Dotrice as Dr. Arnold, Judith Bruce as Mary Penrose the Matron (?) and Adam Walton as Tom Brown. The show was now called (don't hold your breath) TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS and billed as 'A New Musical, freely based on the Thomas Hughes classic'. The schoolboys of Rugby included Russell Grant (today the well-known TV astrologer), Keith Chegwin (later TV presenter and 'personality') and Simon Le Bon (today a pop star). I saw both amateur and professional productions and both were generally enjoyable. Obviously, the London show was more polished and better sung. There were, I thought, a couple of excellent 'knock-out' show-stopping numbers: 'A Boy's Point of View' sung by a large group of Rugby boys, underlining neatly both the advantages and disadvantages of being a schoolboy, and 'Have a Try', which gave a brilliant impression in song, dance and music of an energetic rugby football game. I still play the record-album I have of the show and it always makes pleasant listening. There were, however, some very sticky moments involving the attractive Matron's love for Dr. Arnold - three of her big numbers were titled 'Where Is He?', 'Hold Me' and 'If I Had a Son', which make up a story of their own if you think about it... And dire indeed was a gypsy family singing (interminably) a song called 'The Ballad of the White Horse' - this was the low-spot of the show and was, frankly, just bad.

But the show was generally entertaining and I was sorry to see that it ran for only a few weeks. Probably the best performance was given by Christopher Guard as Flashman.

I suppose that, apart from TOM BROWN, the other most famous school story of them all is GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS. Leaving aside the favourite tales of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Frank's and so on, CHIPS is almost certainly the best-loved story in the genre. The story is well-known enough. About a nice, good schoolmaster at Brookfield who taught there from 1870 until 1933 - 63 years, from youth to old age, and about the several generations of the boys he teaches and about the wife he knows and loves so briefly. James Hilton wrote it in four days - only 17,000 words, a long short story, or a short long story, or a novella - for an American magazine's

Christmas Supplement in 1933. It was published in book-form in 1934 and was one of the biggest best-sellers of its time, reprinted over a dozen times in that first year alone, and many times since. Moving and gently amusing, it is the best fictional study of a schoolmaster ever written and stays in a corner of the memory as long as Mr. Chipping - 'Chips' - was at Brookfield. Hilton never gave 'Chips' a Christian name, by the way. I bet you didn't know that! Even his wife called him 'Chips'.

GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS became a stage play, written by James Hilton and Barbara Burnham, in 1938, when it was produced in London's West End. 'Chips' was played by one of the leading actors of the day, Leslie Banks, and his wife by Constance Cummings. One of the leading schoolboys was played by Nigel Stock, later to become a very well-known actor and a fine Dr. Watson to the TV Sherlock Holmes of both Douglas Wilmer and Peter Cushing; Stock was also in the subsequent film version. Another schoolboy in the original stage production was none other than TV's Billy Bunter himself, Gerald Campion; his role was that of 'Smelly'!

James Hilton once said that 'Chips' was a composite of two people: his own father, who was Headmaster of the Chapel End Senior Boys School, Walthamstow, and W.H. Balmgarnie, who had taught Hilton at the Leys School, Cambridge. It was appropriate that, at the First Night of GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS in 1938, Balmgarnie was a guest of honour in the audience.

Then, in 1939, came the first and most famous motion picture version of GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS. And thereby hangs a fascinating little story. Charles Laughton read the book, fell in love with it and nurtured a burning ambition to play the leading role. He persuaded Irving Thalberg, of MGM, to buy the film rights, and Laughton was all set to play 'Chips'. Then came his huge success as Captain Bligh in "Mutiny on the 'Bounty'" and MGM felt that his current image as the loathsome, bullying sea-captain would not be exactly in tune with the role of the gentle, shy 'Mr. Chips'. Laughton was bitterly disappointed but reluctantly came to see their point.

Robert Donat had just scored a big success as the dedicated doctor in another MGM film "The Citadel" and, although several leading actors were being considered, he finally won the role. The lovely red-headed Greer Garson (a qualified lawyer, by the way) was to make her screen debut in the short but memorable part of Katherine, Mrs. Chips. The director was to be experienced veteran from the silent days, Sam Wood. Shortly before shooting began, Wood tried 27 different moustaches on Donat before settling on the correct ones.

Studio interiors were shot at Denham Studios, in Buckinghamshire, and location sequences were at Repton College, one of England's famous public schools; around 200 pupils gave up some of their holiday period to work as 'extras'. I was talking to someone who worked on the film a while ago and he said that when Donat was playing the aged 'Chips' he remained 'in character' for the entire working day, behaving like a very old man and walking and talking as he might have done. It's also good to know that Donat was universally liked, and always polite and friendly to everyone on the movie set.

Robert Donat won that year's 'Best Actor' Oscar for his magnificent performance in GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS, beating Clark Gable (who was Nominated for his 'Rhett Butler' in "Gone With the Wind"); 'Best Actress' Oscar-winner was Vivien Leigh for "Gone with the Wind". 'Chips' director Sam Wood received a Nomination for 'Best Direction' but lost out to Victor Fleming ("Gone With the Wind") while Greer Garson, who received a 'Best Supporting Actress' Nomination, also failed to win. The music (including the wonderful and moving 'Brookfield Song') was by Richard Addinsell, by the way.

Thirty years after the original film, in 1969, came a brand-new screen version of GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS - this time a musical, with music and lyrics by the prolific and highly-talented Leslie Bricusse, and a screenplay by no less than Terence Rattigan, one of Britain's most distinguished dramatists, later knighted (and also the author of THE BROWNING VERSION, which we will come to later). The first-time director was Herbert Ross, whose previous experience had been in musical theatre and musical films. Peter O'Toole was 'Chips', his wife Katherine was Petula Clark and the Headmaster of Brookfield was Sir Michael Redgrave. Rattigan, incidentally, gave 'Chips' a Christian name this time around. The choice was 'Arthur' - 'Arthur Chipping' - which was acceptable - but why buck a tradition of 35 years?

The film flopped at the box-office. This was said because I think it was very underrated. So 'Chips' sang a few songs! But he sang them mainly in his head, we didn't actually see him singing. O'Toole would assume a suitable expression and we heard the words on the sound-track. We saw Miss Clark sing and that was very nice. The schoolboys had a big ensemble number, "When We Are Older", which was a knock-out and tremendous fun. The school song "Fill the World With Love", sing by the 'school choir' (and later by others) was truly beautiful and bore comparison, I think, with Addinsell's school song in the Donat version. There were other lovely songs,

including O'Toole's rhapsodic "What a Lot of Flowers" that still moves me to tears; and Petula Clark's haunting "You and I" was also superb.

The location sequences were all filmed at Sherborne School in Dorset. Again, a couple of hundred boys volunteered to stay behind for a week or two during their holiday so that they could appear as 'extras'. The Headmaster of Sherborne was so keen on the film that he even stayed on too!

This musical version of GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS was adapted for the stage in 1982 and produced at the Chichester Festival, in Sussex, with Sir John Mills as 'Chips'. It was destined for a West End run but, sadly, it was not to be. But a record-album was issued (as one was for the film) and it makes good listening (I tracked down my own copy in New York, of all places!).

In 1984, there was a major BBC TV serial of GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS, starring Roy Marsden in the title-role. Location scenes were filmed at Repton (like the original 1939 film) and also at Christ's College, Brecon. CHIPS has been broadcast several times as a radio play. Richard Goolden played the title-role in the late-1930s. Cecil Truncer did the same in a Coronation week production in 1953. And John Church played 'Chips' in a two-part radio production as recently as May, 1991.

A famous public school play that was a smash-hit with public and critics alike was Warren Chetham Strode's THE GUINEA PIG, which enjoyed a long run at London's Criterion Theatre from 1946. This dealt with a working-class boy who gets the chance to become a pupil at an old and famous public school, Saintbury, and his experiences in adapting (or not) to his new environment and upper-class schoolmates. The story was inspired by several real-life cases when the Fleming Scheme funded such educational 'experiments' during the 1940s; one actual such case was that of a lorry-driver's son who went to Eton College under the scheme - he eventually ended up running a country pub in Dorset (and why not?). Derek Blomfield was excellent as Jack Read, the new boy (in more ways than one), with Cecil Truncer as the Headmaster, Robert Flemyng as the Housemaster and Denholm Elliott as a prefect.

THE GUINEA PIG play was such a hit that a film version was made in 1948, starring the 25-year-old Richard Attenborough in a school-cap (his real-life wife, Sheila Sim, also appeared, as his Housemaster's love interest!). Truncer and Flemyng repeated their original stage roles, and Roy Boulting directed. It was a good picture, but they really should have found a younger actor to play Read for, good as Attenborough was, his real age kept on

cropping up in one's mind! Location scenes were shot at Mill Hill School and Haileybury. In America it was titled "The Outsider", lest the Stateside cinemagoers should think it was a movie about domestic pets. Young actors who appeared in THE GUINEA PIG as schoolboys included Anthony Newley, John Forrest (a one-time Flashman) and Anthony Wager (memorable as the young Pip in my favourite film of all time, David Lean's "Great Expectations").

Following on from THE GUINEA PIG, it might be noted that its author, Warren Chetham Strode, also wrote a very successful and long-running BBC Radio series, THE BARLOWES OF BEDDINGTON, the story of a public school seen through the eyes of its Headmaster and his wife (Patrick Barr and Pauline Jameson). It started in January, 1955, and ran for four long series of a dozen or so episodes in each series, finally finishing in 1959 (plus many later repeats). Each episode concerned an event, or problem, or incident, dramatic, tragic, humorous or gently amusing, but always absorbing or entertaining, at the school and featuring its staff or pupils or families. A book was later published, based on the series. It may be of interest to note that one of the school's Housemasters was played regularly by Noel Johnson (radio's original 'Dick Barton - Special Agent') and boys who hovered around from time-to-time included Michael Crawford, Glyn Dearman (mentioned earlier in connection with 'Tom Brown' and 'Jennings'), John Charlesworth ('East' in 'Tom Brown' and another 'Jennings') and Anthony Valentine ('Vice Versa', 'Raffles' and one of the Famous Five in TV's 'Billy Bunter' series).

Terence Rattigan's THE BROWNING VERSION must surely rank as one of the most dramatic and famous studies of a public schoolmaster ever. It was loosely-based on an actual incident during Rattigan's own schooldays at Harrow and the story of the play is probably too well-known to be outlined again here. It originally formed one of two one-act plays (the other was a comedy called "Harlequinade") which made up Rattigan's "Playbill", produced in London in 1948. Eric Portman created the role of Andrew Crocker-Harris, better-known to his pupils as 'The Crock' or 'The Himmler of the Lower Fifth'. He is bitter because of his unpopularity, and because of his nasty, nagging wife's infidelity. He is a failure both professionally and personally, but we can't help feeling sorry for him somehow. Rattigan had written the play with John Geldgud in mind, but he turned it down for some reason (though he subsequently played it on BBC Radio in 1957 and on American television in 1959). Portman was superb, however, as was Mary Ellis (one-time

singing Novello heroine, now turned fine straight actress) as his stage-wife, Millie.

The inevitable film version came along in 1951, directed by Anthony Asquith and starring Sir Michael Redgrave as Crocker-Harris, and he was brilliant. It was appropriate casting too, since Redgrave had been a public schoolmaster himself at Cranleigh, before he became an actor. Jean Kent was Millie, Nigel Patrick another master, Wilfrid Hyde-White was the Headmaster, and young Brian Smith was schoolboy Taplow, who touched Crocker-Harris's emotions for a brief moment in that famous scene where he presents his form-master with a copy of the (Robert) Browning Version of the 'Agamemnon'.

There have since been many revivals of THE BROWNING VERSION on TV and Radio. Portman and Ellis repeated their stage portrayals in a 1949 BBC Radio production, and a 1956 version featured Robert Harris. A 1955 TV production featured Peter Cushing (with young Andrew Ray, son of comedian Ted as Taplow). Now a new feature film has recently been made of THE BROWNING VERSION (curiously re-titled 'The Browning Affair!') starring Albert Finney as Crocker-Harris and Greta Scacchi as his wife. Location sequences were filmed at Sherborne School, in Dorset, and the Director was Mike Figgis.

What could a play called THE HOUSEMASTER be, other than a play about a public school? It was indeed and the London production of this comedy by Ian Hay opened in 1936, ran for a year, then ran in New York for a further period. Distinguished British actor Frederick Leister played Housemaster Charles Donkin in both productions. It was all about a nice middle-aged Housemaster at Marbledown School, who opposes the new Head's tough discipline and is sacked when he supports the boys' revolt against the Head's tyrannical methods (a touch of the Brander Rebellion at Greyfriars here perhaps!). A trio of pretty girls also turn up to complicate the issues. It was a frothy, popular and successful play. Derek Blomfield (perennially-youthful apparently), later to create the role of 'The Guinea Pig', appeared as one of the leading schoolboys, and the tough Headmaster was Kynaston Reeves, later a memorable Mr. Quelch in the Bunter TV series, who repeated his portrayal in the 1938 film version, in which Hollywood actor Otto Kruger was curiously cast in the role of the Housemaster; very good he was too. In later years that loveable actor Jack Hulbert became closely-associated with the title-role in the play, playing it on BBC Radio in both 1951 and 1953, and then starring in a West End revival of the durable piece in 1954.

Different indeed from THE HOUSEMASTER were the rough horseplay

and somewhat eccentric and crude humours of Rudyard Kipling's STALKY AND CO. The BBC's TV serial of STALKY began in 1982 and ran for six hectic episodes. I won't dwell on STALKY and its dead cats, smoking, drinking and general savagery - it's never been one of my own favourite school stories. But as most people know it was based on Kipling's own schooldays at the United Services College, at Westward Ho! in Devon, and about the devil-may-care exploits of a trio of extrovert schoolboys, who like nothing better than to exact revenge on anyone, boy or adult, who has crossed their path. The trio was based on Kipling and his two close friends at school. It's fascinating to note, by the way, that the story included a master named Prout, whose house-servant was named Richards. STALKY was published in 1899, nine years before Frank Richards created Greyfriars (and Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout) in the pages of 'The Magnet'...

The BBC TV series was well and robustly done, with three young actors - Robert Addie, Robert Burbage and David Parfitt - who did their roles as Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle (the latter Kipling based on himself) more than justice. The director was Rodney Bennett. The production, incidentally, aroused almost as much public and media controversy as the 1971 TV TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS, for its uninhibited portrayal of turn-of-the century public school life and behaviour. "Worse than 'Grange Hill'" said a protesting letter to the "Radio Times".

F. Anstey's famous novel VICE VERSA has rarely, if ever, been out of print since its publication in 1882. One of the funniest and most entertaining school stories ever written (though only the central part is set actually in school) it tells of a man, Paul Bultitude, who exchanges bodies magically with his unruly son, Dick. Dick's body returns to his boarding school with his pompous father's brain and mind intact within his head - if you catch my drift... And vice versa! I'm sure that the story is very well-known anyway. The dramatised version was first produced on the London stage in 1910, with Bultitude Junior played by Spencer Trevor and his Senior by Frederick Volpe. One of the schoolboys was, wait for it, folks!, one Jack Hobbs (no, not the one with all that sports equipment, but the young actor, soon to play Tom Brown in that 1914 silent movie). The story was later broadcast several times, including an acclaimed BBC Radio production in the late-1930s with Cyril Maude as Bultitude Senior and Robert Holland as Junior. It was also serialised on BBC Radio in 1945. The first BBC television serial of VICE VERSA came in 1953 when Anthony Valentine played Dick and George Benson his father, Paul. Then, in 1981, there was an ATV serial

starring Paul Spurrier as Dick and Peter Bowles as Dad. Headmaster Dr. Grimstone was Iain Cuthbertson.

The big feature film version of VICE VERSA was released in 1948, when it was written and directed by the versatile Peter Ustinov, no less, and starred Anthony Newley as Dick, Roger Livesey as his Dad, Paul, and James Robertson Justice as a magnificently over-the-top Dr. Grimstone (and virtually began his busy career in British films). There was also a wonderful supporting cast, which included the indefatigable Kynaston Reeves. Ustinov took a few liberties with the story and even more with his direction, but the result was a rollicking roller-coaster of an hilarious farce. Attacked by some critics at the time, it is now generally regarded as an eccentric but memorable British film classic.

Another school film was released in 1948 - and this time of a far more serious nature. MR. PERRIN AND MR. TRAILL was based on the famous novel, published in 1911, by Sir Hugh Walpole and derived from his own rather unhappy experiences during his brief spell as a teacher, when he was only 24, at Epsom College. It told of two masters at a public school, with the older one, Vincent Perrin (played by Marius Goring) becoming jealous and resentful of a new young sports master, David Traill (played by David Farrar). Eventually, Perrin's mind is unhinged by his obsessive jealousy and hatred and his thoughts turn to murder... The marvellous Raymond Huntley (who always looked, I thought, as though there was a nasty smell under his nose!) played their sadistic Headmaster. Greta Gynt was around as the school's assistant Matron, no less, and she was coveted by both Mr. P. and Mr. T., which didn't help the prevailing atmosphere. The screenplay was by L.A.G. Strong, who had been a schoolmaster himself for ten years and, amidst his other busy literary output, found time to write two or three boys' school stories too. MR PERRIN AND MR. TRAILL was also produced on radio more than once, being especially well-done, I remember, in 1960, when Rolf Lefebvre and David Spenser portrayed the two conflicting schoolmasters.

One of the most enjoyable stage plays of 1953 (I saw it three times, I recall) was Roger Macdougall's ESCAPE, much of which was set in a public school. Nigel Patrick, Phyllis Calvert, Alec McCowen and Ernest Clarke (as the Headmaster) did well, but it would take too long to dwell on the rather intricate plot. The film version in 1955 had John Mills, Yvonne Mitchell and Alastair Sim (as the Headmaster) and Jeremy Spenser, Andrew Ray and Peter Asher as three of the leading schoolboys, and was even better. Sim was gloriously-funny, as

ever, and there were many memorable comic moments. The film is rarely-mentioned these days and is very under-rated, I think, though it does crop up on TV now and again.

Another fine stage play, produced in London in 1948, was THE HIDDEN YEARS, by Travers Otway, a public schoolmaster himself. Set entirely at Harlston School it dealt with the growing friendship between a junior boy and a senior boy; it was completely innocent, but misconstrued by others, especially by a self-important and unpopular Housemaster. Finely-acted by an impressive cast, its centrepiece was a remarkable performance by Ray Jackson, as Martineau, the younger boy, and excellent support was given by Anthony Oliver (later to become well-known as a TV storyteller and today a successful detective story writer), James Hayter and Nigel Clarke. The play is largely forgotten today and one wonders why it was never produced as a film or a TV play. I think it was broadcast once but I can trace no details.

We mustn't forget those public school films made to make us laugh. And there were quite a few of those. First and foremost in this category, I think, were the three famous Will Hay pictures. They were: BOYS WILL BE BOYS (1935) (based loosely on Narkover College, created originally by the humorous writer, J.B. Morton, better-known as 'Beachcomber'), in which Hay played the Headmaster, Dr. Alec Smart, Gordon Harker, portrayed the Cockney assistant Headmaster, and Jimmy Hanley was a leading schoolboy (it's interesting to note that Jimmy's son, Jeremy Hanley, is today a leading Conservative M.P. and a Junior Minister in the Government - Dr. Alec Smart would have, I feel, approved!); the second Will Hay school comedy was GOOD MORNING, BOYS! (1937), featuring Graham Moffatt (he of plump and 'Bunter-ish' girth) and Charles Hawtrey as two of the leading schoolboys, with Will Hay Junior popping up two or three times - this picture was re-made as TOP OF THE FORM in 1953; and the third in the Hay trilogy was THE GHOST OF ST. MICHAEL'S (1941), co-starring Claude Hulbert and, again, Charles Hawtrey as the leading schoolboy.

Will Hay was surely the archetypal humorous schoolmaster of fiction and could convey more with a sniff and a screwed-up eye than most comedy performers could with a whole speech. In 1944 he had his own 'schoolmaster' BBC Radio comedy series; originally titled, somewhat obscurely, THE DIARY OF A DOMINIE, it returned after a few weeks break as THE WILL HAY PROGRAMME, or 'The diary of a Schoolmaster', with Hay's old friend, Charles Hawtrey, Billy Nicholls (the 'old man' pupil)

and John Clark (D'Arcy, the bright lad) as his leading students. Clark was later to create the role of "Just William" in the long-running radio series. Hay himself played Dr. Muffin of St. Michael's and he also co-wrote the scripts.

I briefly mentioned earlier that TOP OF THE FORM was a re-make of GOOD MORNING, BOYS! and this new version, in 1953, starred that sly Cockney con-man Ronald Shiner as Professor Fortescue, Headmaster of Ropinham Young Gentlemen's Academy. Who cropped up as The Dean? Our old friend Kynaston Reeves yet again! And the schoolboys included Gerald Campion (TV's Bunter, of course), Anthony Newley, Harry Fowler, Alfie Bass and Ronnie Corbett. A mixed bag indeed! Co-writer of the screenplay was Ted, later Lord, Willis.

In the same farcical mould was the 1955 FUN AT ST. FANNY'S, bringing to cinematic life Cardew Robinson's comic school made famous in his radio act. Douglas 'Cardew' Robinson, as he then was, starred, of course, and the Headmaster of St. Fanny's was played by that massive figure of fun, Fred Emney, famed for his cigar, top hat and monocle, to say nothing of his fruity voice. Many leading British comedy performers present at roll-call included Gerald Campion and Kynaston Reeves, and a younger (and presumably even smaller) Ronnie Corbett. Also billed were 'Francis Langford's Singing Scholars' (I make no comment here!). Noted British film critic David Quinland said of this epic: "A competent cast routed by one of film history's worst comedy screenplays."

WHACK-O! was the onomatopoeic title of Jimmy Edwards' popular comedy series for BBC TV from 1956 to 1960. Jim played the Headmaster of Chiselbury School, Professor James Edwards, M.A. (School Motto: 'They shall Not Pass') and Arthur Howard (brother of the elegant British star, Leslie Howard) was the long-suffering and neurotic assistant Head, Mr. Pettigrew. The series was written by Frank Muir and Denis Norden (who at one time in the 1940s was Manager of my local Granada Cinema in Woolwich, South London!). When the film version of WHACK-O! followed in 1960 it was titled BOTTOMS UP! Not perhaps quite so onomatopoeic, but highly-graphic notwithstanding... The director of this one was Mario Zampi, who sounded as though he knew a lot about English public schools...!

Still in comedy vein, but this time light comedy rather than farce perhaps, we should blow an English kiss to A FRENCH MISTRESS, a play by one Robert Monro (who was actually the popular British entertainer and husband, Sonnie Hale - 'husband'? well, he was married to both Evelyn Laye and Jessie Matthews, though at different times, of

course...!). His play was produced on the London stage in 1959 and became a film in 1960; it was all about the havoc caused by the arrival of an attractive new French mistress (or French teacher, I suppose we'd better say) on the staff of a boys' public school. A good British cast was headed by the ever-delightful Cecil Parker as the flustered Headmaster (and nobody could fluster so well as Cecil Parker), with Raymond Huntley and Ian Bannen as masters and pretty French actress Agnes Laurent in the title-role. The leading senior schoolboy who was smitten by the French lady's charms was Scot Finch, one-time juvenile star, later a screenwriter, and an old friend of mine. The director was Roy Boulting, who had already passed his exams on THE GUINEA PIG.

Although it's a mixture of both boys' and girls' public schools, we mustn't really leave out the now-classic THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE, by John Dighton. This began life as an early BBC TV drama production in 1947, before becoming a West End stage play in 1948. Dighton had co-written Will Hay's THE GHOST OF ST. MICHAEL'S, as well as such Ealing comedies as KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS and THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT, so he knew what he was about. THE HAPPIEST DAYS play originally starred George Howe and Margaret Rutherford, and was directed by Richard Bird (no, not the popular school story author!) enjoyed a long and successful run on the London stage, and became an even more successful film in 1949, when Rutherford co-starred opposite the one-and-only Alastair Sim, as the Heads of a girls' school and a boys' school; complications arise when the former is billeted on the latter by a (mistaken) government order. Various teachers were played by Joyce Grenfell, Richard Wattis and John Bentley (a one-time film 'Paul Temple' and 'The Toff;'). It all made a very funny and entertaining picture.

Before we leave the comedy side of school, let us mention the ITV 1980s series based on the hilarious A.J. WENTWORTH, B.A. by H.F. Ellis. Wentworth was a benevolent, old-fashioned and rather naive maths master at a boys' preparatory school in the 1940s. Arthur Lowe, of TV's "Dad's Army" fame, portrayed Wentworth beautifully, and sadly it was the last thing he did; he collapsed and died a few weeks after recording the final episode. The stories, which had originally appeared in "Punch", were adapted for TV by Ellis's fellow-"Punch"-writer, Basil Boothroyd and ran for six weeks in the Summer of 1982. The stories were collected into three books. And, excellent as the TV series was, I personally feel that their humour is best to be savoured on the printed page.

A YANK AT ETON was made in America, so audiences didn't see anything of the authentic Eton College in Berkshire. The 1942 production starred Mickey Rooney as a rich American boy sent to Eton to reform his wild ways, and Freddie Bartholomew was an English pupil who eventually became his friend. Another pupil was baby-faced Terry Kilburn who was Colley in the 1939 GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS. Edmund Gwenn, Ian Hunter and Alan Mowbray were around too, presumably as masters but, since I've never seen either the film or a synopsis, I can't confirm this. The picture was made by MGM, who had had a success four years earlier with A YANK AT OXFORD, so they were probably trying to 'cash in' on that hit, but with a younger audience in prospect. MGM had also, of course, made CHIPS only three years before.

An unusual radio play that became a TV play and then a film, was Giles Cooper's equally-unusually-titled UNMAN, WITTERING AND ZIGO (the last three names on the Form Register - but the last-named never turns up and is never seen!). It concerned a keen new young public schoolmaster who senses strange doings at every turn from the moment he arrives and is eventually informed by his sinister young charges that they have murdered his predecessor! He is next on their list and they also attempt to rape his attractive young wife. It becomes something of a living nightmare for the young teacher and his wife... but I won't disclose more in case you haven't yet encountered this haunting tale. The play is extremely well-written, intelligent and engrossing. The original radio play was produced on the Third Programme in 1957, with Peter Howell as John Ebony, the new master, and subsequently repeated. It helped to establish the reputation of Giles Cooper, who later became recognised as an acclaimed writer for all the media, but especially radio. In fact, the BBC established 'the Giles Cooper Award' some years ago, in his memory, and it is awarded each year to the best radio play.

The television version of UNMAN, WITTERING AND ZIGO came in 1965, with Peter Blythe as Ebony (and the original Peter Howell, interestingly, as the Headmaster, this time around) and Dennis Waterman and Hywell Bennett as two of the schoolboys. Paramount made the feature film version in 1971, with a screenplay by Simon Raven, and starring David Hemmings as John Ebony and Carolyn Seymour, then a rising young British star, as his wife. The Headmaster was Douglas Wilmer, one of the best-ever TV Sherlock Holmes. The schoolboys included two or three young actors who have since become well-known, including Michael Kitchen, Michael Cashman and Michael Howe. Zigo was, as

usual, absent. The film was, and is, in my opinion, something of a flawed masterpiece. Hemmings gave one of his best screen performances, and the look of mingled horror and apprehension and disbelief in his eyes as he realises what is happening within the cosy confines of an English public school is not easily forgotten. Do look out for the picture if and when it crops up on television. (There was a BBC broadcast of the play as recently as 1992, with Geoffrey Collins as Ebony.)

TELL ENGLAND, Ernest Raymond's best-selling novel of 1922, was about young men at public school who later join the Army and tragically perish at Gallipoli in the First World War. The first half of the book was set at a public school, the second half at the war front. When the film version was made in 1931, it was almost totally a war film; all that was left of the school part of the story were three scenes! So I mention TELL ENGLAND here not as a school film, but because many people seeing the film's title and having read the book thought of it as both a school story and a war story. Not so! The cast of the film were largely unknown, but the director and co-writer of the screenplay was Anthony Asquith, later to become one of Britain's most distinguished film-makers. In America, by the way, the picture was re-titled "The Battle of Gallipoli".

Two more recent public school films reflect the more modern and realistic attitudes to, and at, English schools. IF... was made in 1968 and directed by Lindsay Anderson, who shot location scenes at his own old school, Cheltenham College. The original screenplay by David Sherwin was set in a fictional school simply called 'College', where brewing discontent among the pupils eventually erupts into open rebellion, when fantasy and farce take over in a climax of gunfire, massacre and bloodshed, violence and revolt. Bullying and tastelessness were much in evidence too and the film certainly wasn't my cup of tea, though it won critical approval and also the 'Best Film' Award at the Cannes Festival in 1969. It starred Malcolm McDowell, David Wood, Richard Warwick, Peter Jeffrey and Arthur Lowe and was, as they say, a fashionable success. But not with me.

The next film I personally liked even less. This was Julian Mitchell's original stage play, ANOTHER COUNTRY, which enjoyed a successful West End run in 1982; its cast was of note today because it included the now-famous actor-director-manager Kenneth Branagh in the role of a schoolboy. The film version in 1984 starred Rupert Everett and Colin Firth and, like the play, was full of upper-crust arrogance, sadism, unlikeable characters and, naturally in a modern play about public school life, homosexuality. The leading

character, as played by Everett, was so 'wet' and effete and effeminate that the audience in the cinema where I sat through the picture was laughing aloud. I nearly joined in, but I was busy making my exit! For some reason, the gay play attracted good reviews, and the film, as I recall, didn't.

The first of Evelyn Waugh's humorous satirical novels was *DECLINE AND FALL* in 1928, and the film version came in 1968. The story was about an innocent and accident-prone Oxford undergraduate, Paul Pennyfeather (played by Robin Phillips) who leaves precipitously and who has many adventures, including a spell as a master at a minor public school in Wales. Leo McKern practically steals the film in his role as fellow-teacher, Captain Grimes, a grotesque character of almost Dickensian dimensions, complete with wooden leg and several eccentricities. Grimes tends to speak in public school clichés such as 'jolly super' and 'in the soup' and 'what-ho!', and has weaknesses for both drink and sex; he is a 'bad egg', but a likeable 'bad egg', and hilarious with it. The rest of the distinguished cast of *DECLINE AND FALL* included Sir Donald Wolfitt, Genevieve Page, the exceedingly-beautiful French actress, and Colin Blakely. It was certainly one of the funniest and most off-beat British films of its time.

Space is getting short, so I'll just have to make fairly brief mention of some other public school entertainments...

Two imports from America: one is very special, for it's the nearest a motion picture has come close to portraying a world akin to that of, say, Greyfriars, or St. Jim's and so on - the fictional school par excellence. The film was *THE HAPPY YEARS*, which came from MGM in 1950 and was based on America author Owen Johnson's "The Laurenceville School Stories" (the group title for several books) set in a New Jersey school (rather like an English public school) around 1905. In 1989 a 3-hour TV movie version was shown on British TV under the title *THE PRODIGIOUS HICKEY*. Great stuff!

The other American school-set story was *TEA AND SYMPATHY*; the stage play was by Robert Anderson and originally produced in the States starring Deborah Kerr and John Kerr (no relation), who repeated their performances in the film version in 1956. The play was at first banned in London because of its theme of a schoolboy falsely accused of homosexuality (the film completely cut this subject!) but it was finally produced in the West End in 1957, when the laws had been relaxed in this matter; it starred Elizabeth Sellars and Tim Seely. It was the old story of the attractive wife of a housemaster who has a love affair with a boy.

Sounds familiar? You've heard of *YOUNG WOODLEY*? I'll say no more...

R.F. Delderfield's massive and best-selling novel *TO SERVE THEM ALL MY DAYS*, published in 1972 (the same year, sadly, that the author died) formed the basis for what was for me, and many others too, I'm sure, the best TV series about a public school of all time. The 13-part series, in 1980 (repeated in 1983, and more recently, I believe, on Sky TV) concerned a young, shell-shocked soldier, home from the First World War, who becomes a master at Bamfylde School, where many years later, he becomes Headmaster. John Duttine was the central character, and Frank Middlemass the Head - both superb. Delderfield's story was based loosely on his own schooldays at West Buckland School in North Devon. Locations for the TV series were filmed at Milton Abbey School, in Dorset. *TO SERVE THEM...* won the BAFTA Award for 'Best Drama Series' in 1980. And deservedly so.

Now for brief mentions of half-a-dozen television productions. *DRUMMOND'S* (1985) featured that fine actor Richard Pasco as the Headmaster of a boys' prep school. We didn't see much of the lads themselves since most of the problems concerned the staff and their families, but it was always entertaining and ran for two series. The highlight for me was a stand-out, gloriously over-the-top performance by Edward Hardwicke (whom we've already mentioned) as an eccentric master who gradually went completely mad in a wonderfully roaring and berserk fashion. Tragic in real life, of course, but engrossing television.

John Osborne's *THE RIGHT PROSPECTUS* (1970) had a middle-aged couple (George Cole and Elvi Hale) entrolling as new pupils at a public school for boys - and no one finding anything at all odd about it!

Frederic Raphael's *SCHOOL PLAY* (1979) was a public school play with all the boys played by adult actors (including a Denholm Elliott, Jeremy Kemp and Tim Piggot-Smith) - with the rather fetching school cook portrayed by pretty Jenny Agutter!

William Boyd's *GOOD AND BAD AT GAMES* was produced on TV in the early-1980s and was set partly in a public school. Unfortunately, I didn't see it and have no record of it in the files.

Gerald Vaughan-Hughes' *END IN TEARS* (1966) was about conflict in a minor public school between an older master and a younger one, which leads to tragic consequences. You've heard of *MR. PERRIN AND MR. TRAILL*? I'll say no more - again...

Hugo Charteris's **THE CONNOISSEUR** (1966) was yet again about a feud between two masters at a boys' public school, also touching on homosexuality (yet again), corporal punishment, fagging, and other time-houred school customs. Richard O'Sullivan and Ian Ogilvie (the future TV 'Dick Turpin' and 'The Saint') were among the pupils.

Let's follow these TV productions with a trio of radio plays...

One of the best-ever novels of public school life was G.F. Bradby's **THE LANCHESTER TRADITION** (1914). It was about conflicts among the masters at Chiltern School and of its new Headmaster. Bradby knew what he was writing about as he was a master, then a housemaster, at Rugby for over 30 years. An excellent BBC Radio version was broadcast in 1961.

BREAK MY HEART, by Nobel Prize-winner for Literature William Golding, was broadcast in 1961 too; it was about a master in a boys' public school who discovers that a nice, reliable boy has apparently forged a signature, and of the conflicts and complications that ensue.

FIRST LESSON, by Peter Fraser and Madeleine Bingham, was an enjoyable light comedy set at Havant Court boys' School and starring Hubert Gregg. The Headmaster announces his retirement - who will succeed him? He has just engaged the first woman teacher in the history of the school - and an attractive one at that! Whatever next? All good fun, this one.

A pair of little-known British films now.

WALK A CROOKED PATH (1969), in which the Headmaster's accused (yet again) of homosexual tendencies (yawn, yawn). I've never seen it but it sounds like a 'B' picture and features Tenniel Evans, Faith Brook and Christopher Coll. Point of interest for veteran thriller readers is that the screenplay was written by Barry Perowne, who is probably best known for writing several 'sequels' to the 'Raffles' stories, created originally by E.W. Hornung, including four concerning both Raffles, the gentleman-crook, and detective Sexton Blake; one of Perowne's books was titled "She Married Raffles" (whatever would Bunny say?).

The other film is a bit of an oddity: a short (30-minute) picture called **THE DOLLAR BOTTOM** (1981), a comedy set in a Scottish school about a schoolboy who invents an insurance scheme that compensates policy-holders who get beaten by the masters. This little plot will come as no surprise to readers of "The Magnet", "The Gem" and several hard-cover schools stories! It was based on a story

by a well-known British novelist, the late James Kennaway.

A final glance at the theatre. **MASTER OF ARTS**, by William Douglas Home, was produced in the West End in 1949 and was mainly notable for its amusing portrayal of a public school Headmaster by Roland Culver. **CAUGHT NAPPING** (1959) by Geoffrey Lumsden, was more of a farce than a comedy, and again was notable for its Headmaster, this time played by the reliable Raymond Huntley, who portrayed Dr. Rodd (who sounds rather as though he should have been at 'St. Sam's!'). This play also featured an early appearance by the now very well-known Timothy West, but whether as pupil or master is unclear.

Alan Bennett's **FORTY YEARS ON** was a comedy and a 'play within a play' plus a few songs, set in a public school in the South of England. It was originally produced in the West End in 1968, with Sir John Gielgud as the Headmaster, and with Paul Eddington and Alan Bennett himself as masters. Eddington took over the role of the Head in a West End revival about 15 years later. It was mildly entertaining, but I thought it overrated and full of somewhat obvious 'jokes' about the British Empire and its traditions. But it enjoyed a very successful run, nevertheless.

Did you know - or indeed, care - that there was actually an **OPERA** about public school life? No, neither did I, until I came across details of **THE SLEEPING CHILDREN**, an Opera in 3 Acts, with libretto by a distinguished theatre director, Tryone Guthrie, and music by Brian Easdale, probably best-known for his superb score for the ballet film "The Red Shoes". The opera was produced in 1951 by the English Opera Group, at the Opera House, Cheltenham, during the Cheltenham Festival of British Contemporary Music, and featured in its cast list such characters as 'The Matron', 'The Headmaster', 'The Janitor', 'The Headmaster's Wife' and 'The Assistant Master' (all parts sung, of course), plus a Chorus of Children. Several notable singers of the time were featured, including Jennifer Vyvyan and Roderick Jones. The sets included 'The Headmaster's Study', 'The Matron's Room' and 'The Dormitory'. The mind boggles! The opera was broadcast by BBC Radio in 1951.

You may have noticed, by the way, that I haven't mentioned 'Bunter' or 'Jennings', except in passing. That's because I covered Bunter on TV and stage in previous articles for the CD Annual and the SPCD, and because the Bunter TV series, featuring the one-and-only Gerald Campion, is well-known to most people. It began in 1952 and went on for several years, including many repeats.

Anthony Buckeridge's **JENNINGS AT SCHOOL** is known to most people too. His

adventures began in BBC Radio "Children's House" in 1948, with the original 'Jennings' played by David Page (who also played 'Hubert Lane' in the film "William Goes to Town" and made more than 130 broadcasts as a child actor); the original Darbshire (Jennings' friend) was Loris Somerville. There were another half-dozen 'Jennings' actors over the next 13 or so years, the best-known being Glyn Dearman (mentioned earlier). JENNINGS transferred to BBC TV in 1958 when he was played by John Mitchell, and Darbshire by Derek Needs. There was a further TV series in 1966 when David Schulten was Jennings and Robert Bartlett was Darbshire.

Well, there they all are - schools, masters, schoolboys, on the big and small screens, on the

stage, and on the radio (nearly everything turns up on the radio, sooner or later, you find...).

As I said at the beginning, public schools have long been a popular background, indeed often foreground, for plays and films. In my researches, I found that there have been far more productions about schools than about angels - that's probably because schools rush in where angels fear to tread...!

Very sorry about that, sir... yes sir... no, sir... 200 lines? Yes, sir... by tomorrow, sir... yes, sir...!

Well, we started with a quotation, so let's end with one. As Longfellow said: "Youth comes but once in a lifetime..."

ADDENDUM

In 1927, one of the great Alfred Hitchcock's early British-made silent feature films (his fourth) was released. Produced by Michael Balcon as a Gainsborough Picture, it was DOWNHILL and was based upon a play written by Ivor Novello and actress Constance Collier under the collective pseudonym of 'David Lestrangle'. Its early scenes took place in an English public school and the film starred Ivor Novello himself in the leading role of a senior schoolboy who was expelled by the Headmaster for allegedly getting a local flirtatious shop-girl 'into trouble' (though he was, in fact, shielding his friend, whose scholarship to the school would naturally have been cancelled if he had been expelled and his future ruined). Novello's own future didn't look so hot since, though he came from a well-to-do family, his father threw him out and he fled to France, only to undergo a sorry series of misadventures, which included marrying a worthless young actress, having his money stolen, having a fierce fight (with Ian Hunter,

later to become a major screen star himself), and falling very ill. At the end, of course, he is proved innocent of the school charge and is taken back by his contrite family. The whole thing was novelettish in the extreme, by all accounts, but still showed faint signs of Hitchcock's embryo talents. ('Hitch', by the way, knew something of English boarding school life himself, since he was educated at St. Ignatius's School, Stamford Hill, London, which was run by Jesuit priests.) In DOWNHILL, Ivor Novello was, at 34, twice the age he was meant to be in the film, and certainly looked it in the few stills I have seen (though the famous profile was in good shape!). The film is perhaps best-remembered today for its oft-quoted and hilariously-celebrated caption-title card, reading: "Does - does this mean, sir, that I can't play for the School against the Old Boys?" The catchpenny American title of the film, by the way, was "When Boys leave Home"...



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Christmas in India

BY MARY CADOGAN



I can't remember any time in my life when I have not been intrigued by India. My grandfather was an Indian Army officer and my mother spent much of her early life there. It is not therefore surprising that the far-removed-from-the-seething-subcontinent semi-detached house in Bromley, Kent, where I grew up contained Indian textiles, ornaments and photos of the family posing against exotic backgrounds. These became a vivid focus for my childhood imagination, stimulating long-standing dreams of travel to the colourful country of their origin which my mother so often described. Her anecdotes of British-Indian Army life were rounded out and enhanced by 1930s films about the Raj which, I think, must have proved a potent inspiration not only for me but for many boys and girls of my generation.

Particularly memorable was the 1935 production of *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. I have since discovered that this bears little resemblance to the F. Yeats-Brown novel of the same name which it was supposed to have dramatised. The book is more concerned with individual mystical enquiry than the military splendours and tribal adventures which make up the thrills

and chills of the Paramount picture - but with Gary Cooper giving charismatic life to the hero, Lieutenant McGregor, ably supported by Franchot Tone, Sir Guy Standing and C. Aubrey Smith, who could ask for more! Incidentally, in the film Cooper was 'Mac' to his friends: my then nine-year old brother, (also named Mac, loved the movie as much as I did and - I swear - spent the rest of his life (in common with many other small boys on both sides of the Atlantic) trying to look like Gary Cooper. To some extent he succeeded!

Yeats Brown wrote an introduction to the programme for the London premiere, praising the men from the Punjab and the Pathan tribes and the British officers who served so gallantly in those cavalry regiments along the North-West frontier. He said:

India may be changing, like the rest of the world, but the basic things remain: courage, faith, adventure. We hear too little about them. We know too little about our soldiers on the



Paramount proudly presents

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frontiers of India, keepers of the King's peace. It is good to travel in imagination ... to that land of vivid contrasts, the Marches of the North-West, where there is blazing heat and bitter cold, feud and friendship, loyalty and treachery, and where men hold their lives lightly, but their honour high.

Another film which stirred me with the desire to see India was *The Drum*, based on the book by A.E.W. Mason. This starred Roger Livesey and Valerie Hobson who, cast as the wife of a British officer in a remote and constantly threatened garrison, looked extraordinarily fetching and quintessentially English in tailored blouses and jodhpurs. (My admiration for her as an actress began with *The Drum*. Since then I've admired her too for her off-screen dignity and loyalty to her husband throughout the widely publicised Profumo affair.)

Books, of course, also drew me to India, from Kipling to the stories in the Companion papers. I don't recall the Cliff House or Morcove girls going to India, but serials and 'shorts' in the girls' weeklies sometimes used the setting of the Raj. In fact, Frank Richards' *Magnet* India Series was published too early (1926) to have become part of my childhood reading. I've devoured it since and been impressed by the authenticity of its atmosphere. Something of this filtered through in the character of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh who adorned the *Magnet* tales which I read during the 1930s. *The Times of India* - or at any rate its special Christmas numbers - occasionally arrived at our home, and I remember being fascinated by its photographs of Indian places and people - and particularly of its dancers and musicians. There were pictures of Bengal Lancers in full, uniformed splendour; of Rajas' palaces and gardens; of Delhi, Bombay or Calcutta street scenes, and the architectural magnificence of Sir Edwin Lutyens' government buildings. A great deal of this was seen from the viewpoint of the British but an extraordinarily languorous oriental charm came across which, to me as a schoolgirl who had never gone further afield than Clacton, seemed both strangely remote and unbearably intriguing.

It was to be many years afterwards, in 1980, that I had the opportunity to visit India for the first time. For a large part of my working life I have been involved with an educational charitable trust which, as part of its work, maintains schools in several parts of India. Through this I have made many friends there who pressed me to attend some special meetings scheduled to take place from mid-December 1980 to mid-January 1981. Although my long-held ambition was to be realised, I accepted the invitation with some reluctance - because I would be travelling without my family, and missing that warm and wonderful festival - the British Christmas.

I knew that my hosts in India came mainly from Brahmin families and made virtually no acknowledgement of Christmas, and I wondered how I would feel as December 25th approached and I found myself far removed from the Dickensian traditions which I so much appreciate. I love every Yuletide trapping and symbol from the fripperies of tinsel and crackers to the magnificence of the Christmas music from Handel's *Messiah* and the Festival of Nine Carols and Lessons broadcast from King's College Chapel in Cambridge on Christmas Eve. The holly, the candles, the mistletoe, the paper chains, the tree, the ritual wrapping of parcels and the writing of cards: the food - nuts, dates and tangerines (and memories of these stuffed into our Christmas stockings); the scrumptiousness of chocolate Christmas-tree decorations, shortbread, mince-pies, crystallised fruits, plum pudding, iced cake (decorated with tiny Father Christmases and reindeer and bounding 'Eskimo' children) and of course the traditional Christmas dinner with everything cooked succulently to a turn. Then there are those boisterous party games and the quieter pencil-and-paper ones such as *Consequences* and board games (our family, despite changes in fashion, have remained remarkably faithful to *Cluedo* and *Monopoly*).

Rather forlornly wondering if there was any way in which I could carry some part of an English Christmas with me to India, I decided that I could do so through my reading matter. And, sure enough, in between astounding days of sight-seeing, of hearing India's music and watching its sacred dances, and, of course, of meeting its remarkably resilient people from many walks of life, I dipped long and lovingly into the books and papers which I had brought with me from England.

Before I outline some of the delights of these, I should mention one or two outstanding memories of my Indian trip. I had the privilege of meeting Mrs. Gandhi - then, of course, the Prime Minister - and of having dinner with her, and her son Rajiv and his wife. Before dining *al fresco* we watched a magical and floodlit performance of Indian dance against the background of a giant banyan tree. I responded warmly to the beauty of many of the ancient temples - especially those built on the sea-shores, and to India's animals and birds - particularly the so-strong and so-patient elephants. Overall there was a strangely clear and beautiful light that gave the countryside (which was far greener than I had expected) a translucent quality.

There were also the cultural shocks, about which I had been fore-warned by friends but which nevertheless hit me hard. I don't think anyone can fully understand the poverty - and the amazing robustness - of the really poor in India unless they have seen these at first hand. Less dramatic and rather amusing cultural shocks also came my way when Indian friends told me that a department store in Madras was in every way as wonderful as Harrods, and that it was full of fine Christmas fare. I went there, prepared to enthuse - but was sadly disappointed. For me it bore absolutely no resemblance to the celebrated Knightsbridge establishment: it offered badly-recorded canned carols (mainly *Good King Wenceslas* repeated *ad nauseam!*), and crude decorations which were un-Christmassy hangovers from some Hindu festival, and whose livid cerise, orange and yellow-green colours made me yearn for the darker green-and-red of British holly and paper chains. The *pièce de resistance* offered by the Madras store was a real-live Father Christmas. This engaging but horribly out of place character was a small, skinny Indian who pitifully lacked the plump, sturdy stature which we have come to expect of dear old Santa's embodiments. He wore the usual cottonwool whiskers and moustache, but sported something which we don't see on the faces of the Father Christmases who do their 'Ho, ho, ho-ing' in the toy departments of our British shops. This Madras Santa had covered his dark visage with a hideous pink plastic mask which to me was more suggestive of Guy Fawkes than Father Christmas. It's awful to seem ungrateful but I was unimpressed too by the range and quality of all the objects offered for sale. In fact I came away with only two or three modest - but important - purchases: toilet rolls! (These, I understand, are not an essential part of Hindu culture, and I had been told by English friends who were hardened travellers to India never to miss an opportunity of buying these as they were often in short supply.)

Christmas Day dawned, horribly hot and humid, and I yearned intensely for the crisp, cold but often sunny brightness that so often occurs in England on December 25th. Of course, to have seen snow would have been like receiving a gift from the gods!

Our truly kind hosts informed our party of Brits, Canadians and Americans that we would celebrate a happy and unforgettable Christmas with them in Madras, and, indeed, they tried extremely hard to make us feel at home on that very special day. In the morning a recital of religious chanting was laid on (all in Sanskrit, by Hindu priests who - though admirable performers - could hardly be expected to create a Christmassy atmosphere). We were then told that lunch was to be really traditional - and we weren't allowed to enter the dining-room at the normal time because the food was taking longer than usual to prepare and the room was still being decorated.

When the doors were eventually flung open in triumph, the sight that greeted us was beautiful. The room was full of wonderful roses which had been flown in especially from Delhi for the occasion. We were touched by our hosts' consideration (even though we basely longed for holly and mistletoe and crêpe-paper chains rather than roses). Then came the lunch which had been so exuberantly 'trailed'. The first course was good but, so far as we could make out, without seasonable connections. It was curry as usual, but particularly spicy and tasty.

Then came the great moment! We were told that we were to have Christmas Pudding, imported from England and cooked by the Chef in our traditional British way. We had delightful visions of rich, brown, fruity pud, with custard or cream - or even flaming brandy. In came the smiling servant, bearing a large, covered dish. It was put on

the table and the lid was taken off with a flourish - to reveal lots of thin and very dry and rather tasteless slices of cold Christmas Pudding. To this day I can't imagine how the chef cooked it. We nobly munched and muttered appreciatively - after all, as we are so often told, it is the thought that counts.

And I, of course, was sustained by the thought of the feast of Traditional Christmas reading that would be mine later on that day when I could retire to my room and immerse myself in those wonderful books and papers which I had brought with me.

I dipped first in *Peg's Paper* of December 18th, 1928. Noticing that it was a Christmas number I had grabbed it rather at the last minute before leaving home and didn't know quite what to expect. It had a promising cover - snow-tipped title, holly and mistletoe borders - but frankly, as a reminder of the British Christmas, it was very disappointing.

The only complete story, *What a Girl Wants*, turned out to be a tale 'of love, romance and adventure on a lonely islet on the coast of Italy, where skies and seas are always blue'. No trace of Yuletide atmosphere there. The other stories, *Would Marriage Save Her?* and *The Girl Who Feared Love*, similarly had no Christmas flavour. Neither did the horoscope feature conducted by Miss Nell St. John Montague under the heading *When Will You Marry?* Even the agony-aunt page, *My Christmas Post-Bag* (which had a picture of Father Christmas carrying a sack marked 'Peg's Letters') made no mention of the festive season and contained only the usual cautious advice to the lovelorn.

A feature called *Christmas Presents from Hollywood* looked hopeful, but the gossip about the stars (or starlets - in fact they never became famous) lacked lustre, being confined mainly to what they wore. Someone called Evelyn Brent had sent 'a pair of exquisite shoe buckles', another Hollywood denizen named Estelle Taylor had donated a 'gorgeous coolie coat', and, to win these, readers had to enter a curious competition. This was to make up a sentence or phrase (apparently about anything) 'using for the words composing this' only words which had appeared on the *Peg's Paper* page announcing the competition.

Christmas was marked in a holly bordered snippety feature called *Whispering* - but this was hardly redolent of good cheer and Christmas chumminess: 'Why is the Brixton Hill girl so terrified at the thought of her husband eating the Christmas pudding she made in November?': 'What will happen if the Crewe girl's elderly aunt really comes to spend Christmas with them, and is it true she will let down all her frocks?'

So - I moved on from *Peg's Paper* in my search for some Dickensian atmosphere. In complete and wonderful contrast to that romantic-story magazine was *The Christmas Happy Extra* for 1929 from Newnes, the publishers of the celebrated *Happy Mag*. I had brought this with me mainly because it had a wonderfully seasonable cover which featured Richmal Crompton's William having to endure being kissed beneath the mistletoe -

XMAS GIFTS FROM HOLLYWOOD. SEE PAGE SIXTEEN.

PEG'S 2ND PAPER



What did he mean by his whispered words?
(An incident from this week's long complete novel.)
No. 125. December 19th, 1928.

WHAT A GIRL WANTS. SPECIAL LONG COMPLETE NOVEL.

Thomas Henry in full colour, at his iconoclastic best yet exhilaratingly conveying the mood of the season. This *Happy Extra* certainly didn't disappoint. It positively overflowed with Christmas cheer. There was the bonus of two William features, for a start: *William's Christmas Truce* and *William Writes a Play*. There was also a story by Evadne Price - not about her anti-heroine Jane but an adult tale, a light-hearted romance called *First Prize - Cinderella*, about confused identities and a masked ball. It was illustrated with lovely pictures by Arthur Ferrier.

There were lots of other Christmassy stories, poems, pictures and cartoons, as well as seven pages 'for the children' of fairy-stories, picture-strips, etc. This truly happy magazine did a great deal to make my Christmas in exile merry. I get it out now almost every December and browse through its goodies with love and gratitude.

I took the current C.D. Annual (1980) with me. This had arrived the day before I left for India, and it gave me great pleasure, not only through its articles about the story papers but through several real-life nostalgic articles. I especially remember some reflections on youthful Christmases and carol-singing by Jack Overhill, that stalwart of the hobby whom many of us remember with much affection.

Naturally, Christmas series featuring my favourite girl characters also accompanied me. Because of the limitation of luggage space I had chosen examples of the *Schoolgirls' Own Library*, rather than the serials in the weeklies for Morcove and Cliff House.

I read the Morcove story, *The Legend of Swanlake*, with immense satisfaction. This brings Betty Barton and her chums to a Christmas house-party at Swanlake, the gracious and expansive Devonshire home of Pam Willoughby. The author, Marjorie Stanton (in reality Horace Philips, of course) wastes no time in creating the seasonable mood. He hurls snow down from the skies as the girls make their way by car from Morcove to Swanlake: the car can no longer cope with the great drifts, and the girls gamely agree to walk the rest of the way (7 miles!) while the chauffeur struggles on foot to the nearest village to find someone who'll take their luggage on by horse and cart. The girls remain remarkably high-spirited - despite having to press on through a virtual blizzard:

... for an hour and more it was a case of their simply tramping on through the foot-deep snow, with all too many breathless flounderings through shallow drifts. And on they forged once more, their cheeks as red as holly-berries, such strenuous work it was!



(Illustration copyright The Thomas Henry Fisher Estate, reproduced by permission of Pan Macmillan Children's Books)

(All this, of course, was heady stuff to me, sweltering at the time in steamy Madras.)

However, after a few miles the girls' way is eased. Madcap Polly Linton's brother Jack (who with his boy chums from Grangemoor School is already installed at Swanlake for the hols) has organised a rescue party. He and his mates come to meet the Morcove juniors with sledges, thermos flasks of coffee and packages of eatables. (They are, of course, perfect role-model brothers!)

Pam has whiled away part of the journey by telling her friends the ghostly legend of Swanlake, which is summed up in a couplet that has been known to her family for generations:

When 'tween the trees Grey Man is seen,
Woe to Swanlake on Christmas E'en.

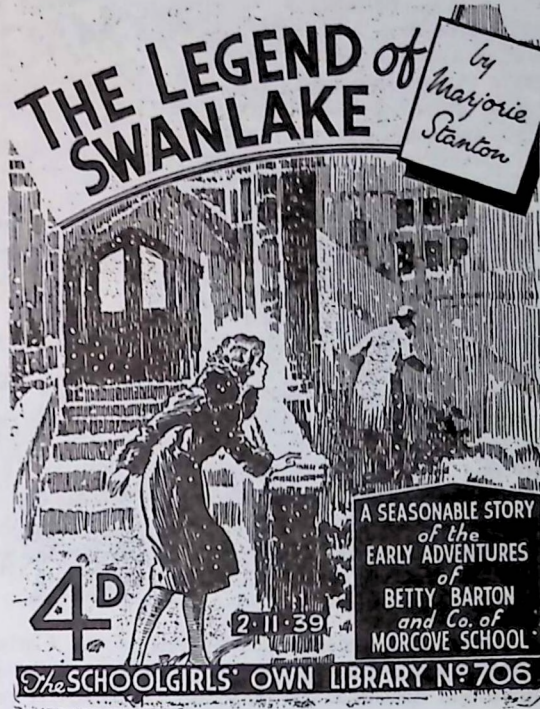
Pam assures them all that as far as she knows the Grey Man or ghost has never been seen within living memory: but, almost as soon as the chums reach Swanlake and pour into the old house's warmly lighted and richly decorated interior, Pam - who lingers outside for a moment to have a word with her father - sees the greyish, phantom-like figure of a man running between the trees a short distance from the house...

Naturally the ghostly mystery informs the holiday, although there is also a great deal of high-spirited fun. Horace Philips never missed a trick in his holiday adventures. The traditional English Christmas was celebrated *par excellence*, with indoor parties, dancing, charades and a lively, impromptu play called *The Haunted Inn*, while outside there was plenty of snowballing, skating and sledging. As Naomer Nakara, the adolescent African

Queen who was one of the Morcove chummery would have said, it was all 'absolutely GORJUS!'.

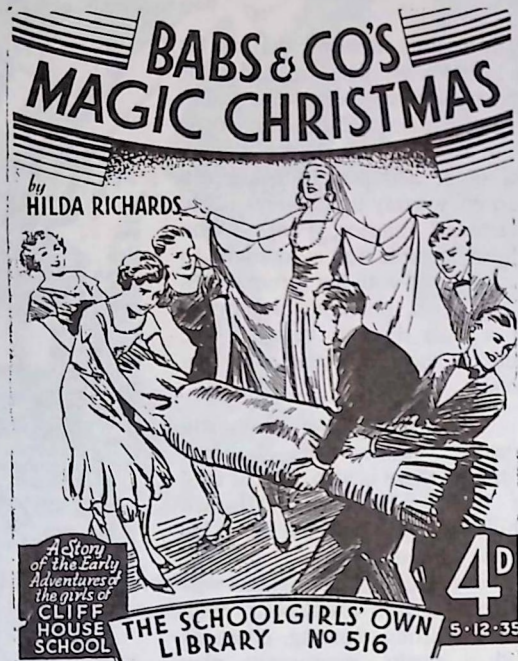
The Legend of Swanlake is, to my mind, just about the perfect Christmas story, offering both good cheer and suspense, and intensity and idealism as well as fun and high-jinks.

The Cliff House *Schoolgirls' Own Library* which accompanied me was *Babs & Co's Magic Christmas* by John Wheway, writing of course as Hilda Richards. Magic is indeed the operative word, but in the sense of wonder and imagination rather than anything airy-fairy. It was a good choice for Christmas in India, combining the traditional old-English trappings with touches of Oriental splendour. The chums are the guests of Andros Bey, a fabulously wealthy Egyptian Prince, and his teenage daughter, Naida, at Luxor Hall. Although this mansion is buried in the heart of the home counties (which in turn are buried under several feet of snow) it is a place of *Arabian Nights* magnificence, with towering lotus pillars supporting a blue ceiling in which wink golden stars; with shining, glass-like



parquet-floors; walls carved and painted with scenes from ancient Egypt, and the icing on the cake of gold inlaid furniture. There are also lots of 'soft-footed servants, like the genie of Aladdin's lamp' constantly at the girls' elbows, ready to dispense food and drink whenever these are required. An ideal Christmas for Bessie Bunter, in fact. She makes more use of this amenity than the indoor marbled and mosaic swimming pool which her more athletic chums, Clara Trevlyn and Janet Jordan, very much appreciate. There is also a ghost, not, as Jemima sagely comments, a common or garden spectre like 'the jolly old knight who clanks around at Christmas at Delma Castle' (her own home) but a young princess from ancient Egypt called Nut Hapi. (One wonders if the Wheway tongue was in his cheek with this strangely named phantom: inevitably it suggests the appellation of 'Not Happy', and the princess is one of a trio of mummies at Luxor Hall who are all of the Nut Hapi dynasty.)

As is their frequent custom, Babs & Co. befriend a waif-type employee of their hosts; she is Nilos Rosetta, a young dancer who adds sparkle to the festivities. They also have to outwit a gang of Egyptian thieves and thugs who plan to kidnap the Princess Naida. I was transported by this splendid story into satisfyingly Christmassy reflections and memories because, despite the theme of exotic oriental intrigues, good old British traditions shine through. There is a carol-singing sequence (girlish voices ringing across the snows) that brings pure joy. There are loving descriptions of the girls' party dresses. (Bessie, just like her brother Billy, borrows clothes from others in the party and - also like the Fat Owl - bursts seams frequently; Wheway cleverly uses this by making switch of costume a quintessential part of the foiling of one of the kidnapping attempts.)



There are evocative descriptions of the Christmas Tree which is so high that Jemima's father, Colonel Carstairs - another of the guests - has to climb a ladder to remove and distribute the presents. And SUCH presents! Clara receives a rowing machine, Marjorie Hazeldene an ebony and ivory, silver-initialled workbox, Barbara Redfern a beautiful cedarwood box of paints and finest camel-hair brushes, Jemima a slender malacca cane with a solid gold knob, Mabs a marvellous model theatre, Janet a silver teapot ('which would be the envy and admiration of every study at Cliff House') and Bessie 'nothing less than a moving picture camera with projector and films all complete'.

Yes, John Wheway as Hilda Richards, like Horace Philips as Marjorie Stanton, never disappoints. And neither of course does that master of the Christmas mood, Frank Richards. With so many wonderful series to choose from I had some difficulty in deciding which *Magnets* to take to India. (By the way, I'd re-read the India series a little earlier, to help prepare me for my trip.)

Again, the limitations of luggage space had to be observed, so a *short* series was necessary. And - for me - it **had** to be one which took the chums to Wharton Lodge. So I decided on the 1933 *Mystery of Wharton Lodge* series. I also took the Howard Baker single facsimile, *The Mystery of the Christmas Candles*. I'd first read this story in the 1939 *Holiday Annual*. Although it features Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, its Christmas setting is a London mansion, and, as in the Cliff House series at Luxor Hall, English and

oriental atmospheres were successfully blended. It seemed a most appropriate single number for me to re-savour in India and, predictably, I much enjoyed reading it there.

The Mystery of Wharton Lodge is so well-known to C.D. readers that it is hardly necessary to give details of the plot. Suffice it to say that every ingredient of the Frank Richards; Christmas magic is included: Wharton and the Nabob established cosily at the Lodge and awaiting the arrival of their chums to complete the party; the joyous anticipation - and eventual celebration of - the great festival; the Bunteresque unwelcome-but-sticking-like-glue antics; the Cliff House girls arriving for a Boxing-Day fancy dress dance - and, as well as all the good-will and seasonable cheer, the mystery of the unknown intruder who from time to time disrupts the household, throwing suspicion of theft on the servants and causing temporary misunderstandings between the chums. And, to top everything, lashings of snow and lots of great Christmas grub!

Bunter blots his copy-book even before he gets to Wharton Lodge: unluckily for him he mistakes Colonel Wharton for Harry on the telephone - and refers to the ex-military gentleman as an old fathead, a donkey, a wet blanket and a savage old bulldog. Not surprisingly, the Colonel is distinctly ruffled and forbids Harry to allow that 'young rascalion' Bunter into the house.

How the Fat Owl gate-crashes the party, at first by hiding-out in one of the attics and eventually by alerting the household to the presence of a criminal intruder, makes mirthful reading. There are so many wonderful moments in the Greyfriars Christmas stories that it is always easy to find atmospheric quotations. I particularly like those which set the scene just before the right merry and peaceful Christmas which the chums are expecting to enjoy:

The Surrey hills gleamed white through the December dusk. Another fall of snow had come on rather suddenly, and caught the two juniors a mile from home. Flakes danced on a keen, searching wind, which seemed to the Indian junior to penetrate through his thick overcoat as if it had been paper. Wharton and the nabob had gone for a ramble that afternoon, and they were returning by a snowy and rather sticky lane ... the old leafless trees, ridged with snow, rose like spectres in the dusk ...

'Rippin weather for Christmas!' Wharton remarked.

'Eh? Oh, yes!' gasped the nabob. 'The ripfulness is terrific! Perhaps a little too terrific! Ooogh!'

Grand Enlarged Christmas Number!



INKY IN ALL HIS GLORY!

(The Magnificent Scene when Harry Wharton & Co. arrive as Hurree Singh's guests for Christmas.)
No. 722. Vol. XX. Week Ending December 7th, 1921.

Great, nostalgic reading for me in Madras in December 1980 on my first visit to India. When, long ago, Hurree Singh was temporarily exiled from Greyfriars he said: 'My heart had the hungerfulness for my esteemed chums'. In my case, the hunger was for a family Christmas with dollops of Dickensian trappings and good cheer. The *Christmas Happy Extra*, the 1980 *C.D. Annual*, *The Legend of Swanlake*, *Babs & Co's Magic Christmas*, *The Mystery of the Christmas Candles* and *the Mystery of Wharton Lodge* provided me with gratifying touches of these, and helped in large measure to ward off any pangs of homesickness.



Christmas Greetings to everyone. Still need Rupert, Biggles, Schoolgirls Own Libraries, Stories and Picture.

GEORGE SEWELL
27 HUMBERSTONE ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 1JD



IMPISH IMPERSONATORS

By Peter Mahony

One of Charles Hamilton's regularly recurring plots was the impersonation, often of someone in authority, perpetrated by an impudent member of the Lower School. Greyfriars, St Jim's and Rookwood each had budding actors with the ability - and the nerve! - to pull off some quite hilarious apings of their betters. Often the impersonation would be highly successful, only to founder at the last moment when an unexpected turn of events threatened exposure. Then, like Laurel and Hardy it was "Exit, running".

These intrepid Thespians were: William Wibley at Greyfriars; Monty Lowther and George Francis Kerr at St Jim's; and 'Putty' Grace at Rookwood. There were others - notably Cyril Peele at Rookwood and the redoubtable Gordon Gay at Rylcombe Grammar School - but these four, generally speaking, took the "Oscars". Wibley, of course, was a born actor, though rather thick-headed in other respects. Lowther and Grace were inveterate japers, with 'Putty' proving the more recklessly inventive of the two. Kerr, whose brain was a good deal sharper than the others, usually pulled off his 'stunts' with great success and fewer alarms.

The impersonations were of two kinds. The easier one involved presenting themselves, suitably disguised, as visitors to the school who were not known by sight to any of the inhabitants. The riskier ones required a full-blown portrayal of a person well-known to the community. Kerr, predictably cautious, concentrated chiefly on the easier type; only occasionally did he impersonate a St Jim's native. Lowther's japes also centred on the more feasible kind of deception, (e.g. Cardew's "cousin"). The bumptious Wibley, always over-confident, frequently chose dangerous subjects for his 'stunts' - masters, school governors etc. - usually with disastrous results. Grace, the most audacious of the four, undertook his impostures for the 'kicks' - he enjoyed the risks. Wibley, whose ego was susceptible to flattery (preferably in chunks), could be 'conned' by others, e.g. Vernon-Smith, into crack-brained escapades. Grace, on the other hand, usually did the 'conning'.

Sometimes the impostures involved going into 'drag'. (Don't forget, this was the hey-day of "Charley's Aunt" and Pantomime "Dames".) 'Drag' was less dangerous than it seemed, for in the masculine world of Hamilton's public schools, ladies were always treated with deference and consideration. It was highly unlikely that anyone would have the nerve to challenge the bona fides of a female - however peculiar she might have seemed. Kerr pulled off some female impersonations. Grace notched a humdinger with his "Mrs Manders".

WILLIAM WIBLEY

The arch-impersonator, however, was Wibley. The other three always had definite goals to achieve: 'Wib' often did one just to show that he could. Hamilton usually employed Wibley in isolated episodes of single stories - at least 20 of the Greyfriars tales feature him. Three times Wib starred in longer series - of which more anon. The single yarns covered a rich variety of characters, most of them strangers to the Greyfriars' community. These were: Wharton's "Cousin George"; General de Courcy of the Herald's Office; Captain Bunter; Colonel Cholmondley; Miss Phyllis Montmorency (Coker's fiancée); Mr Hooker (an editor); Bill Filey; Sir Fulke Pulteney; Joe Bagshot (a bookie); Mr Moon (a schoolmaster); Vernon-Tracy (Smithy's cousin); Mr Spofford (another

schoolmaster); Dr Diddle and Mr Gordon (Wharton's uncle). Several of these brought dire retribution when Wib was rumbled; most, however, were highly successful.

In his first appearance (April 1914 - Magnet 322) Wibley perpetrated two deceptions. The Famous Five, in the lofty manner of 'old hands' towards new boys, allowed Wibley to join the Remove Dramatic Society, but refused him a part in their current production. Seething with indignation, Wib disguised himself as a shabby, impecunious youth and turned up in the Remove passage claiming to be Wharton's "Cousin George". Wharton's rejection of this 'poor relation' was not well-received by his form-mates. Harry had to squirm quite a lot before Wibley revealed himself. The outcome was a 'bit part' for Wib in the forthcoming play. Later, in the same story, Temple & Co. stole the Remove's thunder by planning to present the same play one night earlier. Wibley offered a bizarre solution. He volunteered to impersonate Mr Capper and close down Temple's show, while the real Capper was playing chess at the vicarage. Wib's price was the lead in the Remove's cast. Wharton, anxious to thwart Temple, reluctantly agreed. Wibley pulled it off and from then onwards was the Remove's leading dramatic light.

A Wonderful Story of Harry Wharton & Co. Inside!

The MAGNET²



His next 'stunt' was to ridicule the aristocratic pretensions of Fisher T. Fish. Posing as "General de Courcy" of the "Sealing Wax and Pencils Department" of the Herald's Office, Wibley led Fishy to believe that his family's claim to a title was to go before the House of Lords. He induced the gullible American to sign a 'claim form' which later turned out to be an admission that F.T.F. was a "silly ass and a bounder". Collapse of cocky Yankee! (July 1914, Magnet 337).

The bragging Bunter was Wibley's next victim. In Magnet 358 (December 1914) Bunter's "uncle in the Army" was supposed to have been wounded. Of course, it was a typical Bunter ploy for making money out of his school-fellows. A "Captain Bunter" had been listed as "wounded" in the newspaper. Billy and Sammy claimed him as theirs. Vernon-Smith, always more suspicious than the rest, persuaded Wibley to help call their bluff. Captain (Wibley) Bunter duly arrived at Greyfriars, sporting a scarred face and an armless right sleeve. He gave Billy a harassing time. Unfortunately, the other boys swallowed "Captain Bunter" whole and the generous Coker laid on a great feed. When Wib owned up, great exception was taken to the spoof - as Squiff said, "It was past the limit". (It was also highly illegal - impersonating a King's officer!) Wibley and Smithy

were soundly ragged, the first of Wib's many disasters. It showed that in pursuit of a stunt, Wibley could be sadly lacking in taste.

The next dodge was Skinner-inspired. Ferrers Locke was visiting Greyfriars (Magnet 360) and Skinner persuaded Wib to pose as a potential client of the detective. "Colonel Cholmondley of the Dum-Dum Fusiliers" consulted Locke and contrived to send him on a wild goose chase. Unfortunately, Locke saw through the deception and locked the disguised Wibley in his room. With dinner and afternoon school looming, the frantic impersonator had a fraught quarter of an hour until Locke relented and let him out. Skinner was highly unpopular with Wibley afterwards.

The tastelessness appeared again in Magnet 396. A benefit performance for Bunter was to include an act by Wibley where he proposed, among others, to give an impression of de Courcy (the "Caterpillar" of Highcliffe). At a tea party, Wib studied his subject carefully. The obliging Caterpillar, aware of what was afoot, went through a series of bizarre antics which astonished his friends. On leaving, de Courcy asked Wib if he had given him enough 'colour' for his act and apologised for not being able to "think of anything else". Egg on Greyfriars' faces, particularly Wib's!

In Magnet 398, Bunter and Skinner swiped a manuscript of Linley's and submitted it to a literary competition as Bunter's. Wun Lung retrieved it, but Wibley and Bob Cherry decided to make the punishment fit the crime. They communicated with Bunter (via Quelch's typewriter), telling him that his story had won. Then they visited Greyfriars disguised as "Mr Hooker" and "Mr Slogg". Bunter's £10 prize turned out to be ten "pounds" from Mr Slogg's (Bob Cherry's) big fists.

Wibley's next ventures involved the egregious Coker. Coker's infatuation with Phyllis Howell of Cliff House (Magnet 419) gave rise to an excruciating love-letter. Wharton & Co obtained it : Wibley suggested himself as a bogus "Phyllis", who had received and misinterpreted the letter. Accordingly, "Miss Phyllis Montmorency", a lady of uncertain years, arrived claiming Coker as her "fiancee". The self-satisfied Coker was well and truly mortified by the lady's attentions - Wibley's only essay in 'drag'.

Ten stories later, Coker was conned again. This time, he was hunting the district for Bill Filey, a 'conscription dodger'. (It was no business of Coker's but that never bothered him.) Wib, disguised as Filey, was "arrested" by Coker and lugged off to the Army Recruiting Office. There, he revealed his true identity, and left Coker in trouble with the Authorities. Two highly successful impostures which, sadly, had little lasting effect on Coker.

There was a long period before Wib turned up again. (This was the period of the substitute authors.) Hamilton's next contribution to the saga was a curious story "Montague the Mysterious" (Magnet 814). Montague Snooks, a new boy given to boasting about his "connections" received a visit from "Sir Fulke Pulteney", an imaginary relation. The resulting 'show-up' caused the middle-class Snooks to leave the school and seek a fresh start elsewhere. Wib had been cruel to be kind.

Kindness was the motivation behind the appearance of "Joe Bagshot (bookmaker)". Bunter was on the 'razzle', looking to wager money he hadn't got in the usual 'get rich quick' hope. Wibley's impersonation of the bookie, and persistent 'dunning' of Bunter when his horse loses, forcefully persuaded the fat owl that betting was a mug's game.

None of these impersonations, so far, had involved Wibley in much risk. In Magnet 1190 (December 1930), the deception took on a much more dangerous aspect. The Fifth had decided to put the Remove in their place. Led by Blundell, they gave Wharton & Co a series of painful and humiliating experiences. Bob Cherry hit on a wheeze to restore their reputation. Mr. Prout was away from school and a new master, Mr. Moon, was expected to replace him. Before the real Moon arrived, Wibley, aided by the Famous Five, put in a hectic afternoon posing as the Fifth Form's master. The Head was conveniently out for the day, and "Mr. Moon" stopped the Fifth's half-holiday. Blundell & Co. were hauled from the playing-field into the Form-room; Coker was set to 'fagging' for his new master; extra work was set to the rebellious Fifth. Coker and Blundell were

caned; the Form-room door was kept open so that a procession of Removites could see the show. Being Wib, he spread himself: Quelch and Capper were insulted; Wingate was tersely repudiated. Wibley at least had the sense to quit before the deception had gone on too long. Leaving the fifth in detention, Wib resumed his own identity before Dr. Locke and the real Mr. Moon turned up. A glorious spree, beautifully constructed, and recounted in Hamilton's best style.

In Magnet 1308, Wibley was after his rights as a footballer. He had a row with Wharton; made up as M. Charpentier (a regular subject for Wib's attentions); caned Wharton; was bowled out and whopped. Smithy then fell ill and dropped out of the Soccer team, volunteering his red-haired cousin, Vernon-Tracy, as a replacement. (Wharton's acceptance of this recruit was really an insult to the Remove reserves and it is a wonder that only Wibley was incensed.) Wibley ran across Vernon-Tracy, who conveniently fell into the Sark! He was rescued by Wib, but the ordeal decided him against playing footer. With Smithy and Vernon-Tracy hors de combat, Wibley seized his opportunity. Disguised in a red wig, he played for the Remove - and performed abysmally. Rookwood beat them and then the real Vernon-Tracy arrived. Wib, already exhausted by his efforts on the field, received a record ragging. So much for sublime self-conceit!

At this period of the saga, Wibley was often at odds with Harry Wharton. In the "Ace of Jokers" (Magnet 1341), he was still demanding his football 'rights'. Quelch's absence necessitated another temporary master - Mr. Spofford. Wibley intercepted a 'phone call from Spofford saying that he could not come, so Wib impersonated him. The Famous Five had a terrible time, but, as usual, Wibley did not know when to stop. He made the Head suspicious; antagonised Prout; and forgo: that Quelch, though in the 'sanny', knew Spofford personally. It was exit, running!

His appearance as "Dr. Diddle" at Portercliffe Hall (Magnet 1438) was lightweight for Wib. Bunter was malingering - his idea of a holiday was breakfast and lunch in bed, with flunkeys running to and fro at his behest. Wibley suggested calling a doctor, and "Dr. Diddle" came, prescribed a starvation diet, treated the patient with mustard medicine; and generally knocked him about in a series of weird and wonderful examinations. Bunter's recovery was miraculous!

Wibley's last one-off appearance was as "Mr. Gordon", Wharton's "uncle". This repeated two themes - the Wharton's 'cousin' one from 1914 and the football squabbles of later vintage. Hamilton, however, had a 'twist' in the story. Monty Newland, the Jewish junior, had been offended by a thoughtless remark of Wharton's. He enlisted Wib's aid in impersonating Mr. Gordon as a Jew. Wharton had never met his relative: when a money-conscious 'sheeny' turned up, he endured considerable embarrassment. Wibley was exposed when the real Gordon - a Scot - arrived. (This was another example of Wibley's lack of taste. Though Newland thought of the wheeze, Wib's portrayal was of the worst kind of 'stage Jew' - Shylock or Ron Moody's Fagin. Hamilton was getting in one of his thrusts at the English 'superiority' complex.)

Wibley's other impersonations were altogether more complicated. At various times he "took off" Capper, Mr. Mobbs of Highcliffe, Bill Lodgey of Friardale, Hurree Singh, Mr. Twigg, M. Charpentier, Bunter, Quelch and Sir William Bird (Loder's uncle). He also took the place of Archie Popper (Sir Hilton's nephew). All of these characters were well-known in Greyfriars and/or the surrounding district. Consequently, the risk in impersonating them was high. Wib, who could never see beyond the challenge of the actual 'part' he was playing, recklessly disregarded the risks - and endured a number of hair-raising experiences. The 'Mobby' one provides a good instance. Wharton & Co. - and Wibley - fell foul of Mr. Mobbs when engaged in an excessively violent brawl with Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe. To get their own back after a Head's flogging, the Greyfriars juniors kidnapped Mobbs, and Wibley took his place. The Highcliffians were well and truly chastised by "Mobbs II" and everything went swimmingly - until Bunter barged in and released "Mobbs I" from the Monk's cell, where the disguised Wharton gang had imprisoned him. Wib only just got clear. This all occurred in Magnet 389 (July 1915).

His essays at other masters were equally fraught. In Magnet 1310, Wib impersonated Mr. Twigg of the Second Form.

The impersonation of Quelch was two-edged. It came late in the Magnet saga (No. 1670, February 1940) and it was instigated by the Bounder. In his feud with Mr. Lamb (replacement Remove master for the missing Quelch) Smithy had discovered that Lamb was scared of Quelch. To torment his enemy, Smith decided to confront him with 'Quelch'. Wibley, standing up, was not tall enough; but, sitting down, suitably disguised, he might get away with it. Wib, over-confident as ever, tried it on - and was nearly strangled for his sins. Lamb, a desperate criminal who had kidnapped the real Quelch, assumed at first that the Remove master had escaped from captivity and was going to 'shop' him to the police. Wibley's disguise came off in the struggle - which was just as well, for Lamb was ready to murder him. By the time Lamb had finished caning him poor Wib felt murdered. Smithy was unsympathetic with Wib's woes - he was more interested in Lamb's extreme reaction. Wibley got his own back, though, by disguising himself as Lamb (a much smaller man than Quelch) and caning Smithy - hard.

Wibley's stock impersonation of a Greyfriars master was of Monsieur Charpentier. In several episodes, he 'did' Mossoo - notably in the Vernon Tracy story previously described, but his best efforts were in Magnet 438 "Monsieur Wibley" (a highly successful effort) and in Magnets 1536-40, the "Archie Popper" series (an almost irretrievable disaster).

"Monsieur Wibley" had a serious theme. Charpentier was hard-up (it would seem that French masters were less well paid at Hamilton's schools than their English counterparts!). He backed an outsider with Joey Banks to net him the money required to alleviate the sufferings of his nephew in a German prison camp (this was during the Great War period). The horse lost, of course; then Banks tried his hand at blackmail. The distraught Frenchman told Wharton and Nugent of his dilemma. Bolsover also knew of it; between them they concocted a scheme. Wibley, got up as Mossoo, met Banks; then the others arrived, with Quelch in tow, and Wib was accused of being a fake. Banks was completely duped - he thought the faker had been his client all the time. Wib fled, and Mossoo was saved from exposure. Quelch, for once, was deceived; he even reported Banks to the police. Wibley had done a good turn, again.

The 'Popper' series was an utter disaster - until the last chapter. Wib, caught writing a play in the French class, was extremely rude to Mossoo when his script was destroyed. Taken to Quelch, he was caned for insolence. Then, he 'took off' Mossoo in the Rag. Quelch arrived unexpectedly but Wib's impersonation was so good that he took him for Charpentier. Just as Wibley was getting away with it, Mossoo appeared. Wib was carted off to the Head and sacked. Waiting in the Head's study for Dr. Locke, Wibley answered the telephone. It was Sir Hilton Popper, rescinding arrangements to send his nephew to Greyfriars, so, shortly after getting the chopper, Wib was on his way back to an unsuspecting Greyfriars, disguised as "Archie Popper". He arrived to find the whole form up in arms on his - Wibley's - account. A series of hectic episodes followed, with the remove continually annoying Mr. Charpentier while 'Popper' was trying to catch him in a good mood to plead Wib's cause. In a sub-plot, a local thug named Huggins was pursuing Mossoo with fell intentions. What with the Remove **and** Huggins, the little Frenchman was in a constant state of agitation. Happily, everything ultimately worked out well, though by chance rather than design. A superb series in Hamilton's funniest vein.

Wibley's attempts at portraying his school-fellows were, surprisingly, less frequent. He needed slightly eccentric characters to give him a 'fix' for his impostures. The Remove contained several 'freaks', yet Wib only attempted Hurree Singh and Bunter. The Bunter portrayals were quite late in the saga. In Magnet 1571 (the Carter series - very underrated), Smith persuaded Wib to provide protection for Bunter, who was being 'framed' by his nefarious cousin, Carter. Wibley, disguised as Bunter, twice met Gideon Gooch, the arch-plotter, and landed him in predicaments which brought dire retribution. A couple of years later (Magnet 1652), Wib was producing "Grunter of Greyhurst" - a play based on the Bunter character. Bunter, who had just 'inked' Quelch in mistake for Coker, conned

Wibley into venturing forth made up as Bunter. Wibley was attacked by Coker (over a missing cake); then collared by Quelch to go to the Head for punishment for the 'inking'. Naturally, Wibley ran for it. A series of 'double' escapades followed, until Quelch caught the two 'Bunters' together. Then they both visited Dr. Locke. Hilarious!

Altogether more sinister was the situation in which Wibley's impersonation of 'Inky' placed him. In a forerunner (Magnets 960 and 961) of the clashes with Wharton over football, Wib demanded a place in the cricket XI. He was rejected; so a 'stunt' was required. Being Wibley, he chose Hurree Singh as his victim. If he had chosen Nugent or Hazeldene or Ogilvy or Penfold - any of the average cricketers - he might have got away with it. Instead, he elected to impersonate Greyfriars' champion bowler! His make-up as a Hindu and his reproduction of Inky's sing-song accent were faultless, but he had as much chance of imitating the deadly bowling as Bunter had. The Redclyffe match was a write-off and, half-way through, Inky, who had been locked in a box-room, telephoned Redclyffe and 'blew the gaffe'. Exit, running again.

That was only the start. Wibley, on the run, was abducted by Hindu villains, enemies of Hurree Singh. He had a desperate experience as a prisoner in a lonely house on the coast, in imminent danger of being shipped off to Bhanipur. Fortunately, he kept his head and managed to engineer his escape. Restored to Greyfriars, he didn't monkey with the cricket XI again.

All of which brings us to Wibley's finest hour. In the last complete Magnet series (Nos. 1676-82, 1940), he was called on to 'do his bit' for King and country. Sir William Bird, Governor of Greyfriars, uncle of Loder of the Sixth, was a British Intelligence Officer. Wib saw the little, bewildered Sir William as a suitable 'subject'. His initial attempt was calamitous - the two "Sir Williams" actually came face to face at Greyfriars! Faced, yet again, with condign punishment, Wibley got off the hook because the shrewd baronet saw an opportunity. He persuaded Wibley to 'double' for him at home during the Easter holidays, while he went on a secret mission to Europe. A Nazi spy ring was watching Eastcliff Lodge. All the while "Sir William"/Wibley was there, they would be put off the scent of the genuine article. Of course, there were complications. Wharton & Co. were invited as "Sir William's" guests; Bunter wasn't, but wangled in because his eavesdropping had discovered the secret. Loder & Co. turned up and provided plenty of antagonism to the Removites. To complete the picture, Sir William's valet, Jermyn, turned out to be James Soames, one of Hamilton's 'best' villains, whose chequered career would be worth an independent study. The thrills and spills were of the usual high standard, with a superb episode entitled "Billy Bunter's Hair-Raid" featuring a fracas between Wibley and Bunter which introduced a note of levity into a rather sombre war-time adventure.

In the end, the Nazi spy ring was smashed, and even Soames, on the make for the spies' payroll, ultimately showed up well. The "Pet Actor's" farewell performance had been a resounding success.

MONTY LOWTHER

Like Wibley, Monty Lowther was stage-struck. Three times he ran away from St. Jim's to try his luck in "Show Business". Each time, he came a cropper, returning to school chastened and stony-broke. Strangely, this burning ambition only rarely indulged itself in impersonations. (Perhaps Tom Merry and Harry Manners curbed Lowther's reckless streak. Or, perhaps, his bitter-sweet experiences in the theatre calmed him down.) The Gem carries barely half-a-dozen yarns of Lowther as an impersonator.

Monty's first venture was a bizarre 'stunt' pre-dating Wibley's "Archie Popper" by a couple of decades. Gem 27 (September 1907) found Lowther, removed from St. Jim's by his uncle, suffering under a tutor. (Apparently the 'ruffianism' at St. Jim's had convinced Uncle Lowther that it was no place for his 'genteel?' nephew.) When uncle went away on business, he assigned Monty to the care of Miss Fawcett (Tom Merry's Guardian). The wily Lowther, playing on the old lady's concern for Tom's health, 'conned' her into letting him return to St. Jim's in disguise - "to keep an eye on Tom". "James Edward Jessop"

duly arrived at St. Jim's, complete with an extensive stock of patent medicines. Being Lowther, "Jessop" did not confine his attentions to Tom Merry alone. Secure in the disguise of a florid complexion, blue-tinted 'gig-lamps' and a high-pitched treble voice, Monty was soon making waves. His best jape was to 'doctor' Tom Merry & Co.'s picnic with pills and medicines. Figgins & Co. snaffled the grub, so New House tummies became the real victims. When "Jessop" was identified as the culprit, Figgins & Co. threw him into the Ryll. His complexion washed off and the deception was over. Of course, it all worked out in the end. Uncle relented and Lowther rejoined the Shell. A story with several weaknesses, but interesting as the fore-runner of the greater impersonations.

Lowther's next came in Gem 338 (August 1914). This time, the Junior Dramatic Society was badgered by Monty into producing "Catching the Colonel" as its end-of-term play. Lowther took the lead part and based his comic colonel on Herr Schneider, St. Jim's German master. Unfortunately, Schneider's niece, Fraulein Erlen, came on a visit and Lowther was 'smitten'. She became friendly with the Co. and was persuaded to take the female 'lead' - a part which had been proving difficult to cast. Lowther had either to drop his caricature of Schneider or risk offending the niece. When the great day came, Lowther carefully avoided all the Schneider mannerisms which he had intended to exploit. Consequently, the comedy fell flat. During the first interval, his chums, including the Fraulein, urged him to 'buck up'. Throwing caution to the winds, Lowther went for the Schneider portrayal - and brought the house down. Herr Schneider, unaware that he was being guyed, laughed with the rest. Sadly for Lowther, Marie Erlen realised what he was doing and gave him the cold shoulder after the play. Like many another Thespian, Lowther had sacrificed friendship for 'Art'. Tragic! - but beautifully written, with sympathetic insight into 'calf love' and a brutal awareness of the indifference of outsiders to its very real pangs.

The next stunt was different - and funnier. Ralph Cardew came to St. Jim's and proved to be an arrant snob. He insulted Redfern & Co. (the New House scholarship trio) and was ostracised by Tom Merry & Co. Lowther decided to take him down a peg. This time the Gem (No. 475, March 1917) developed a Magnet theme (No. 322, Wibley's debut) to a deeper level. Heavily disguised in working-man's clobber, plus an eye-patch, Lowther visited Cardew, claiming to be his "Cousin Dick". Cardew, cornered in public, angrily rejected the claim, and "Dick" appealed to the interested bystanders. The "poor lad" was hungry and had been "turned away from (Ralph's) door". Public opinion was all against the unfortunate snob. Lowther was getting away with it beautifully when Mr. Railton came on the scene. The impersonator reluctantly owned up and Cardew's discomfiture was complete. A cautionary tale for all 'high-hats'.

ALL-STAR PROGRAMME OF FICTION AND FUN—
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In Gem 533 (April 1918), there was a superb double bluff. Lowther, looking to score off the Fourth, planned to impersonate Mr. Lathom, who was due to be away on the next half-holiday. (Shades of Wibley's Mr. Mobbs.) Unfortunately, Fatty Wynn overheard the plot and put the fourth Form wise. They laid counter-plans.

On the Wednesday, Lowther/Lathom arrived and called the Fourth in from the playing-fields. He was just getting into his stride, dishing out lines and detentions, when the Form-room door opened and the real Mr. Lathom walked in. He confronted Lowther, threatening to send for the police. Of course, Lowther had to own up. Lathom caned the whole of the Shell (though the castigation was only light) and then revealed himself as - Kerr of the New House! The biters, bit, with a vengeance!

Lowther's final effort at impersonation came in Gem 751 (July 1922). Tom Merry & Co. were hard-up; Lowther decided to raise the wind by 'busking' as a black faced minstrel in the quad! He drew a crowd, took a collection, and then was turned out by Taggles. Typically, Lowther carried on his 'show' in the public road. Knox of the Sixth went to move him on - and Lowther's wig came off in the ensuing tussle. Lowther was caned; the collection went into the poor-box; and Tom Merry & Co. remained stony. Another tragic ending! Like Wibley's, Lowther's 'stunts' tended to end in disaster.

GEORGE FRANCIS KERR

A much more successful impersonator was the New House's pet Scotsman. In Gem 43 (January 1908), Kerr successfully doubled for Tom Merry when the Junior Football Captain had been detained by Mr. Ratcliff. The deception was Lowther's idea. Kerr got away with it, until an anonymous telegram (from a disgruntled George Gore) put Ratty wise. Tom and Kerr were in dire trouble (though Tom's two goals had won the match), but Dr. Holmes intervened and persuaded "Ratty" to let the matter drop. Rather implausible, but Ratty's intransigence needed a rebuff.

Gem 79 (August 1909) found Kerr on the warpath against Jack Blake & Co. Blake's Uncle Harry, whom he had not seen since childhood, had promised to visit him. Figgins & Co. pumped Blake for details about his uncle. When Uncle Harry telegraphed to say that he could not visit after all, the New House was in business. Kerr, suitably disguised, turned up as "Uncle Harry". He played cricket, making Blake & Co. the butt of several jokes, then he cooked the tea and set the study chimney on fire; finally, he locked Blake and D'Arcy in the crypt. The New House had scored, well and truly!

A bizarre story came in Gem 103 (January 1910) in which Kerr impersonated Skimpole after Bernard Glyn, St. Jim's enterprising scientist, had made a mechanical model of the Freak of the Shell. Consequently, the School House, including Mr. Linton and Herr Schneider, were subjected to a series of japes which left every-one bewildered. It seemed as if the mechanical Skimpole had developed a life and will of its own. (Shades of Frankenstein's monster!) An even more daring 'spoo'f came in Gem 240 (September 1912). Mr. Ratcliff, as he so often did, over-reached his authority. Lowther rang Ratty and, adopting a feminine voice, flirted outrageously with him. 'Ratty' was appalled. He needed a victim and took it out of Figgins. Kerr hit on the idea of developing Lowther's jape. His scheme was to appear as "Mrs. Ratcliff" and claim desertion and betrayal. All the leading lights supported him and, when "she" arrived by taxi, a large audience was on hand to see the fun.

Kerr really put the unfortunate Ratty through the ringer. "Mrs. Ratcliff" fell on his neck in the open quadrangle and sobbed bitterly when he rejected her. Ratty hid in his study, but 'Mrs. Ratcliff' cornered him there. Frantic, he fled through the window, but she followed and chased him across the quad to the Head's study. In a brilliant scene, Kerr/Mrs. Ratcliff virtually convinced Dr. Holmes that 'she' was a wronged woman. Ratcliff's babbling denials appeared very 'thin' and his post at St. Jim's was in the balance. Eventually, Kerr threw his/her wedding ring at Ratty's feet and departed in deep distress. Of course, enquiries established Ratcliff's bachelor status and the 'woman' was presumed to be an adventuress. (This was Hamilton's first 'drag' story and it is really one of his

funniest. Ratty's utter consternation; the gradual disbelief of his protestations by Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton; the contempt of the boys for a wife-deserter are all brilliantly portrayed.)

In Gem 309, Kerr was in drag again. Gussy had fallen in love - for the umpteenth time. The favoured lady on this occasion was Miss Chunn, assistant at the local tobacconists, and, by impersonating her, Kerr so embarrasses Gussy that his infatuation is quickly cured.

Miss Fawcett, forever worrying over Tom Merry, caused problems in Gem 322. A fortune-telling gypsy had alarmed her, and poor Tom had to endure the indignity of a hired 'bodyguard' to protect him from imaginary dangers. Kerr, adopting a gypsy disguise, encountered Tom and Miss Fawcett. He retold Tom's fortune, reversing the other gypsy's forecast, and the gullible governess promptly dropped all the restrictions she had previously imposed.

SCHOOLBOY RIVALRY, RAGGING, AND JAPING ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS SPARKLING LONG ST. JIM'S STORY.



"By Jove! I'll wake him up!" exclaimed Lowther. But just as he bent over Albert Adolphus the new boy yawned and sat up suddenly. The top of his head came into violent contact with Lowther's chin, and the Shell fellow let out a fearful howl. "Oh! Ow! Yah! Oh!"

In Gem 389, Kerr hoaxed D'Arcy again by posing as "Lieutenant Lynx of the Secret Service". (This was a W.W.I. yarn.) Then in No.499 came his tour de force. In a thoroughly believable story, Kerr joined the School House as new boy, Albert Adolphus Walker. He affected deafness - which led to all sorts of confusion. Figgins & Co. had notched another win.

Kerr's last impersonation came in Gem 605 (September 1919). Caravanning near Dartmoor, Tom Merry & Co. were menaced (at night) by an armed, escaped "convict". He took over their camp, ate a meal and commandeered the caravan. Blake ran off to fetch the police. The "convict" surrendered meekly and the policeman gave Tom Merry & Co. a 'ticking off' for dragging him into the jape.

As these stories illustrate, Kerr was rarely unsuccessful in his impersonations. Wibley and Lowther, through over-eagerness, often failed to think through all the aspects of their deceptions. Kerr invariably had his escape planned before he undertook the risk.

Perhaps the infallibility of his schemes detracted a little from the thrills of the stories. One never felt that disaster was imminent where Kerr was involved.

TEDDY GRACE

The irrepressible 'Putty' Grace of Rookwood was a splendid character. An inveterate practical joker, he pulled off outrageous jokes of all descriptions. His 'stunts' were as daring as Wibley's, while his care in planning was the equal of Kerr's. However, success often went to his head. Having pulled off a scheme, Grace, with the adrenaline flowing would try to squeeze more fun out of an already fraught situation. Consequently, he sometimes came a cropper.



MR. BOOTLES 'TUMBLES'!

"Boys!" "Oh—ah—yes, sir," stammered Jimmy Silver. "How dare you!" said Mr. Bootles. "Grace, I shall take you to the Head!" The rest of you, cease this foolery!" it was the "curtain," with a vengeance!

Putty's impersonations were not numerous - but they were action-packed. His first excursion (Boy's Friend 1002/3, August 1920) involved Mr. Bootles, his form-master. Putty wanted to caricature Bootles for the school play (like Lowther and Herr Schneider!). Jimmy Silver & Co. doubted his acting ability, so Putty vowed that he would visit their study on the next day, disguised as Bootles. The Fistical Four were ready for him. When 'Bootles' arrived, they gave him a thorough ragging. Unfortunately, it was the genuine article! Harrowing scenes, featuring the cane, and further entertaining antics followed.

Subsequently, Putty played "Mr. Twittles" in the comedy written by the Classical Fourth. To everyone's consternation, Mr. Bootles, the benevolent little form-master and inspirer of "Twittles" came to the actual play - "to support his boys". Grace, despite the urging of the rest of the cast, went through with his portrayal. Unlike Lowther, he did not get away with it. Mr. Bootles, less smug- and somewhat brighter - than Herr. Schneider, tumbled to what was going on. The play was stopped; the cast collected a 'book'; Putty visited the Headmaster.

The next episode was even more risky. This time, Putty was planning to ape Mr. Boggs, the Coombe policeman in a play. With the help of Jimmy Silver & Co. he eventually used his disguise to outwit and apprehend a rascally solicitor who had robbed

Lovell's father. Putty was hero of the hour. A good story, tightly written and plausibly plotted.

Having twice proved his ability, Grace moved on to greater challenges. In Boys' Friend 1065 (November 1921), Hamilton worked the 'long-lost cousin' plot again. This time there was a variation. The 'cousin' was female!

The "Merchant of Venice" was being produced by the classical Players. Putty expected to play "Portia". The rest, despite the proofs of "Bootles" and "P.C. Boggs", doubted his ability to play a female convincingly. On the next half-holiday, a poorly-dressed, waif-like girl arrived at the school gates. She asked to see her "Cousin James". Jimmy Silver was due to play football and he refused to acknowledge that he had a "Cousin Clara". "She" hoodwinks everyone else, with a convincing "sob" story, and Putty thus gets the cherished part of Portia.

"Cousin Clara" was really a rehearsal for Putty's masterpiece (or should it be mistresspiece?). A 'flu epidemic (Boys' Friends 1074/75 January 1922) had prevented Rookwooders from going home for Christmas. They were confined to school under the tender care of that epitome of peace and goodwill, Roger Manders! By New Year's Eve, the Fourth Form were seething. An amateur production of "Charley's Aunt" had been banned. Putty, due to play the title role, was particularly peeved. Then Jimmy Silver put up the idea of "Mrs. Manders". (At first glance this would seem to be a reworking of Kerr's "Mrs. Ratcliff", but Hamilton had developed his ideas considerably in the decade between.) Putty swallowed the suggestion whole and laid extravagant plans. compared with these, Kerr's treatment of Ratty was like moonlight unto sunlight...!

On New Year's Day, a strange female (poke bonnet, yellow curls, dumpling figure, shortish skirt, striped stockings and gamp) arrived at Mack's lodge. "Mrs. Manders" was soon telling her sad story of cruel desertion to an interested crowd. Bulkeley tried to head 'her' off, but she spotted Mr. Manders at his study window. He, of course, denied all knowledge of her, but the clinching evidence (a scar on his neck, this time) was forthcoming. While the crowd roared "Shame!", the weeping lady was escorted by a helpful Jimmy Silver to Manders' study. To that point, it was much the same as the Ratty yarn.

Putty, however, was not Kerr. Success swelled his head and he went right over the top. In a hilarious scene, he set about Manders with the gamp, chasing him round the study. Manders, desperate, escaped into the corridor, locking the door behind him. With the terrible 'female' now trapped, he sent for a constable. Putty's recklessness had landed him in a real scrape. Even when Jimmy Silver & Co. tried to rescue him as "Mrs. Manders" he still slanged the prefects, and attacked Manders with the gamp again. By now, Putty almost believed he was a 'wronged wife'. It's called "getting into the part".

With Manders outside the house, waiting for P.C. Boggs, Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd set about rescuing Putty. They locked the house door; then Jimmy burst the lock of Manders' study with a chisel. Jimmy ran for it, expecting Putty to follow; but Knowles appeared before "Mrs. Manders" could leave the study. On the 'in for a penny' principle, Putty belaboured Knowles with the formidable gamp and chased him down the corridor. Then, "Mrs. Manders" dodged into Tommy Dodd's study and got rid of his disguise. When Manders got into the house again, Putty was ready to join in a search for "that female". By the time P.C. Boggs arrived, after a thrilling drive with Lovell, the 'bird' had flown. As Sid Field used to say: "What a Performance!"

So there they are - four consummate Thespians. Wibley was the most versatile; Kerr the cleverest; Lowther a natural entertainer, and Grace the most hare-brained of the lot. Kerr would have followed another career in adult life. Wibley would probably have been a Donald Wolfit-type actor-manager, Lowther a music-hall comic, and Grace a Whitehall farceur. Four splendid characters - and all different.

They form a lasting tribute to Hamilton's gift for subtle character-drawing.





THE GREYFRIARS CLUB now in it's 17th year (C.D Annual 1991 and C.D Jan.1991) has great pleasure in extending HEARTIST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all hobby connoisseurs of goodwill and integrity everywhere, in particular our C.D Editors past and present Eric and Mary, and all those Club members who have written to us with their news and good wishes throughout the past year - and indeed, the past 30 years ! What a pleasure it was to visit some of those on the other side of the world and enjoy their hospitality last year and on another round-the-world trip this year between June and August.

On this tour we took in Hong Kong again for another week at our old hotel but this time decided to cut out Singapore and Bangkok so that we could spend much more time touring and exploring Australia. Our youngest son Robert (who many of you will remember from Club meetings) has renewed his contract out there and was married in Sydney on 12th June. We attended the wedding with our second son, Roger, and his wife. It was a wonderful affair and the reception was held at the top of the Sydney Centre Point Tower with some 95 guests present. His bride is a Qantas airline stewardess as well as being also a trained nurse and is a very lovely girl. After spending a week or so in Sydney we went up to the Gold Coast in Queensland to stay at a luxury flat right on the beach (Surfers Paradise) which is owned by the bride's brother, who kindly loaned it to us for a week.

After a lovely time there we flew out to Alice Springs for another week, and then on to Ayers Rock which we climbed at 7 a.m one morning before the sun got up. We then flew down to Adelaide, which I had last seen in 1954, for a week or so. We hired a car and I was able to take Betty around many favourite viewpoints (Windy Point and Mount Lofty) high in the surrounding hills, which I had told her about. We also visited Victor Harbour and Acraaan Street named after John Acraaan, who emigrated from Bristol and was one of the early pioneers of South Australia, and indeed also had Lake Acraaan (250 miles N.W of Adelaide) and Acraaan Creek named after him. He was highly thought of, owning a shipping business and sheep farm; when he retired he was presented with a silver dinner service by the local community. We have managed to get from the Adelaide State Library photo-stats of the 2 1/2 column obituary that was published in the newspapers when he died. When I get the time, must check up if there is any blood connection.

From there we flew back to Sydney for two more days before catching our plane for Christchurch to spend a very enjoyable two/three days with Don (a J.P) and Hazel Reed - members of the Greyfriars Club - discussing and admiring Don's large F.R collections. Don drove us round Christchurch and showed us the cathedral (Where we climbed to the top of the tower) and we explored and searched several old book shops. After hiring an Avis car we motored all round the South Island visiting the Franz Josef and Fox glaciers and Wanaka, where we stayed. After completing some 1300 km we drove back to Christchurch where Don and Hazel kindly met us at the airport to have lunch with us and see us off to Sydney.

In Sydney again we met up with Rob and Margaret, who had just returned from their honeymoon in Las Vegas and Honolulu, and were able to spend three more days with them before flying on to Fiji. Last time we were in Fiji we had lots of rain from hurricane Betsy but this time it was sunshine all the time and we were able to sail out to some of the islands by schooner. The islands are really lovely - real South Sea Islands with brilliant blue seas surrounding white coral fringed beaches- real Ken King territory; you could walk all round one of them in 10 minutes ! Landing on these we did some para-flying and it was sensational to encircle Beachcomber Island about 600 ft up and see the midgets down below - great fun, and well recommended to anyone who has the opportunity. Needless to say, we have it on film and video.

After some grand tours we flew on to Honolulu for 10 days. We also flew to Maui, one of the 8 islands in the group, where we drove up 10,500 ft to the crater of Haleakala - an extinct volcano - and visited Lahaina, a lovely old whaling town. A couple of days later we flew to Hawaii, which is called the Big Island. There we saw a number of lava flows from earlier eruptions of the volcanoes as well as the craters of dormant volcanoes such as Kilauea and Mauna Loa, even walking through a lava tunnel. Back in Honolulu we met up with a girl we had met in Fiji who is a nurse and lives in Waikiki. Her boy friend was home on leave from the Navy and we spent a lovely day together in Hanaua Bay (Which is another extinct volcano where one side has been eroded by the sea) swimming, snorkeling and feeding the tame fish who eat out of your hand in the sea - finishing the day at the huge Ima Cinema watching a film about the islands of Hawaii. On another day we went again to the Polynesian Cultural Centre at the other end of the island where the students from all the Polynesian Islands at the Brigham Young University demonstrate their home way of life, provide an excellent buffet dinner and finish up with a first class show of music and dancing.

All too soon it was time to board yet another plane for California, the old stamping ground of the Rio Kid and ourselves. On arrival we took a taxi to our hotel just round the corner from Disneyland in Anaheim. Although we have visited Disneyland several times, we still had to go back for a second day to see more.

After another tour round L.A we could not leave without visiting Knotts Berry Farm which is a very good theme park smaller than Disneyland but with a different character. Here we rode on 100 year old American trains and original stage coaches and could actually pan for real gold and mix with Indians in their wigwams, real old boy's book and Rio Kid atmosphere. How Frank Richards would have loved it !



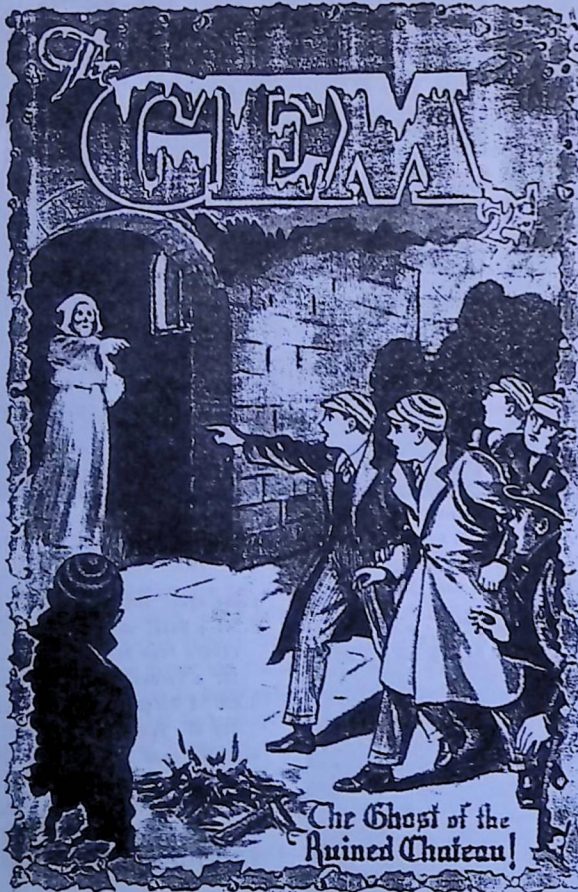


1. Don meets and greets us at Christchurch airport
2. Don & Hazel meet us at Christchurch airport on our return from our 1300 ka tour of South Island, N.Z for a farewell lunch before our return to Sydney
3. Rob & Margaret at their wedding reception at the top of Sydney Centre Point Tower.
4. On the road to Queenstown in New Zealand
5. Juabo Floating Restaurant in Hong Kong
6. Acran Street in Victor Harbour, Adelaide
7. Rob & Margaret's first waltz as man & wife
8. Traditional welcome in Hawaii

CHRISTMAS EVE

by Ted Baldock

Here's the snow and here the holly,
Here the keen December's blast,
Come, you fellows let's be jolly
'Tis Christmas Eve at last.
Another log upon the fire,
Draw the curtains tight,
Now we have all we require
A truly festive sight.
Come Christmas ghosts and do your best,
Get Haunting with a will,
Clank your chains - disturb our rest
Give us a Yuletide thrill.
Visit thus the scenes you knew,
Work then your phantom will,
You and all your ghostly crew
Give us a joyous thrill.



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SEASON'S GREETINGS

