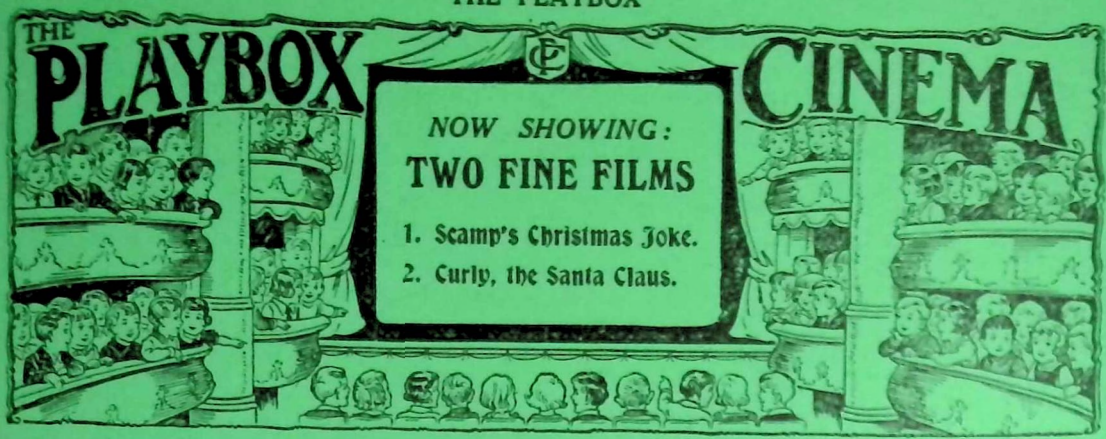
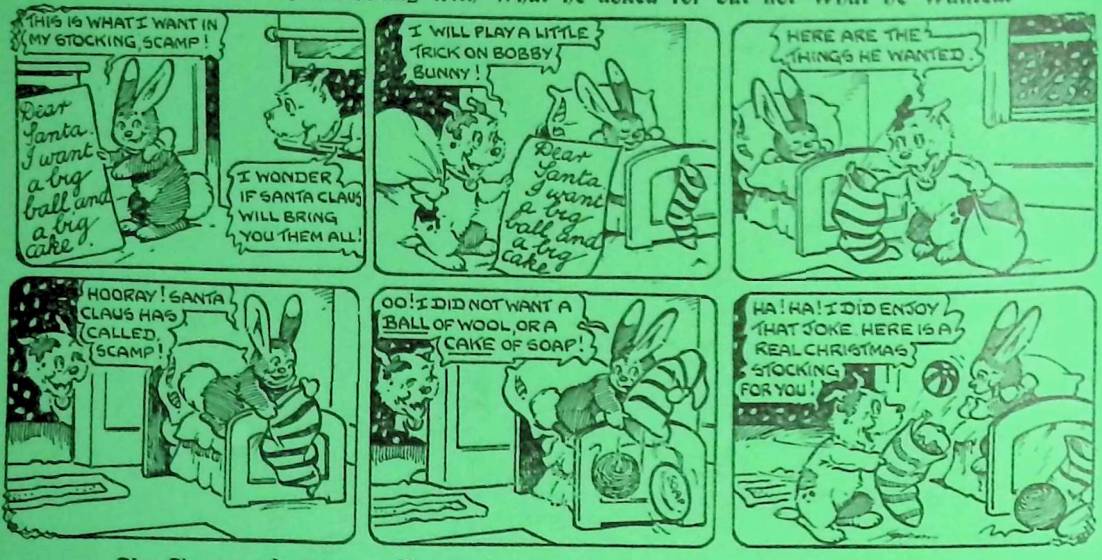
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

1995

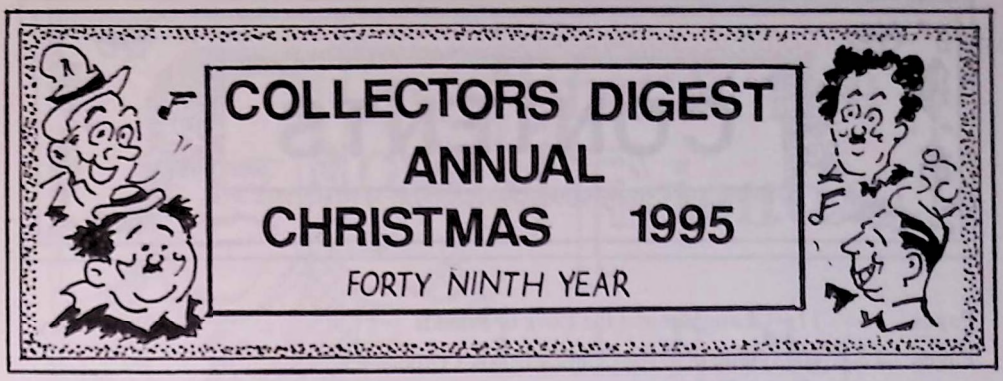
ANNUAL



Scamp fills Bobby's Stocking with What he asked for but not What he Wanted.



The Fire-guard makes a Fine Sledge for the Toys when Curly is Santa Claus.



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FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR

Many of you say that Christmas would not be Christmas without the C.D. Annual. It certainly does seem to have become an essential element in our seasonal celebrations and I feel confident that this 1995 number will offer as many satisfactions as its predecessors.

This is our 49th Annual: it is remarkable that still the memories of our favourite juvenile books and papers remain vivid, and that there is no ending to the flow of articles, stories, poems and pictures from our contributors.

As always this Annual covers a wide range of hobby interests and I hope you will agree that it offers something for everyone. I am especially grateful to Una Hamilton Wright for letting us use another previously unpublished story by her Uncle, Charles Hamilton (Frank Richards), and to Irene Wakefield for permission to use more of Terry Wakefield's pictures. Once again Henry Webb has drawn our front cover and most of the Annuals headings while Bob Whiter's illustrations are also well featured. My warm thanks go to them, and also to Mandy, Debbie and all the staff at Quacks Printers who have provided throughout the year their usual hard work and courteous co-operation.

Resounding thanks are due to all our contributors for their labours of love and dedication. Also, of course, to you, dear readers, for your unfailing support and loyalty.

To my C.D. friends everywhere I send the old but ever fresh greeting:

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Mary Cadogan

CONTENTS

Laughter & the Love of Friends

By Leslie Rowley

and illustrated by BOB WHITER

'From quiet homes and first beginnings.
Out of the undiscovered ends.
There's nothing worth the wear of winning -
Than laughter and the love of friends.'

(Hilaire Belloc)

I had graduated from 'CHICK'S OWN' to the more advanced 'RAINBOW', supplemented by the daily exploits of 'PIP, SQUEAK, AND WILFRED' when my grandmother, in her wisdom, introduced me to 'THE MAGNET LIBRARY'. I was somewhere in my ninth year at the time, and I'm still a devotee of Greyfriars seventy years later.

The uncle, whose name I share, had loved the stories and, grandmother (again in her wisdom) decided that what had been good enough for her youngest son would also prove good enough for her grandson. Henceforth 'THE MAGNET' would be delivered to the house in place of 'THE RAINBOW'. Doubtless I missed the bright colours of the comic, but I settled down to concentrate on stories instead of pictures. It was to prove, as Inky would have observed, 'a day worthy to be marked with a white stone'.

Opening a copy of 'THE MAGNET' was like entering through a gateway to an entirely new world and the cares, if any, of one's real world would be thrust into abeyance for the length of the story you were reading. As one golden hour succeéded another, it was as though I had left my native Berkshire behind for the green fields and winding lanes of Kent. This transition lasted until the final chapter had ended and the last page closed.

Had I known it, what Roger Jenkins has justifiably called the 'golden age' of 'THE MAGNET' was close at hand. The craft and skill of the creator of Greyfriars had already invented a very plausible setting for the school and the characters.

The river Sark flowed under the old stone bridge at Courtfield, passing either side of Popper's island, skirting the mortgaged acres of the Popper Court Estate and the unkempt grounds of 'The Three Fishers' inn till it lapped at the landing of the School boathouse, before continuing on to Friardale.

The village appears to slumber in the benign shadow of the square-towered Saxon church. The vicarage houses the Rev. Lambe, and his next door neighbour is Dr. Pillbury, who are respectively chaplain and physician to the staff and pupils at Greyfriars. 'Uncle' Clegg's bunshop waits impatiently for the boost in trade which will come on school half holidays. Nearby is the little cottage belonging to the village cobbler, Mr. Penfold, whose son won a scholarship and who is a popular member of the Greyfriars Remove. P.C. Tozer will most likely be found tending the vegetables in the tiny garden of police house. 'The Cross Keys' will be found at the far end of the village and from one of the open windows of the inn can be heard the click of cue striking ball. A hiss of impatient steam and a clatter of bogey wheels indicates the departure of a train destined for Redclyffe and Lantham, whilst the whine of cycle wheels heralds the arrival of Mr. Boggs with the afternoon post.

After leaving the village, the road narrows into the remainder of Friardale Lane bordered on the left by Friardale Wood and on the right by a muddy ditch into which many a recalcitrant youth has been consigned. There is a short cut through the woods that passes the clearing in which the ancient Prior's Oak towers above the miscellany of neighbouring trees, its history encompassing its tragic namesake of old with today's wayward schoolboy keeping a rendezvous with a disreputable betting man.

Brushing through briar and bramble, bush and thicket, the trees suddenly give to Oak Lane and the precincts of the School. It is as well to complete our knowledge of the area in which Greyfriars is set before visiting the School itself. The local bus is waiting where Oak Lane borders Courtfield Common in order to pick up passengers for Courtfield. Unwary travellers crossing the Common during the hours of darkness have often suffered the attentions of tramps and footpads. Inspector Grimes of the local police devotes some of his time to bringing these gentry to account, but often his attention is directed at more important fish who have transferred their interests from the metropolis to more rural locations. The local branch of the Courtfield and County Bank has been the target of criminals in the past and will probably suffer similar visits in future.

On the other side of the High street is the shop of Mr. Lazarus, whose pawnbroking business also embraces the hiring of theatrical costume. A pause for refreshment can be made in the Palm Court at Chunkley's, the local department store that aspires to becoming a second Harrods. Nearby, is the small cinema that, all too frequently, exhibits gangster films from America.

The town boasts two schools, the local Grammar School and the fee-paying Highcliffe.

SEAGULL'S CAVE.

The Grammarians enjoy a status not so generally in evidence at Highcliffe where Dr. Voysey's regime offers a rather slack administration.

The bus is ready to continue its circuitous route, this time along the cliff road to Pegg and Hawkscliffe. In the distance the breakers, with the fury of their spume and spray, lash themselves against the dark rocks of the Black Pike and the treacherous entry to Seagull's cave. Taking the stiff climb on the road that passes the Hawkscliff cottage of Mr. Redwing, the bus turns inland, crossing the patchwork quilt of farm and orchard, smallholding and country estate, to pause at the gates of Cliff House School.

This is the home of Marjorie, Clara, Barbara, and a host of young ladies, attractive in their uniform, of blazer, gymslip, and blouse. Curls, dark or fair, peeping coyly out from under soft velour hats that proudly carry the badge of school. Memory tempts me to recall such real-life visions of my youth and I wonder, briefly, if they ever recall me. Mr. Joyce, the woodcutter, halts his horse and offers me a lift in his cart back to Friardale Lane to the point where a track in the Friardale wood will take him back to his cottage.

I have dwelt in this glorious, imaginary, world rather longer than I have in the real one - or so it seems. Give or take a point or two of the compass, this is a part of Kent familiar to men and women the world over. Some may approach from a different direction; some may appreciate from another vantage, but I am sure that many will recognise what I have enjoyed in my sojourn. Like me, friends have related this setting with others they have known in real life. So much so, that I have wondered how many river Sarks (with their stone bridges) meander between a host of Friardales and Courtfields. Rounding a corner in a country lane and coming suddenly on a swinging signboard with its painted emblem of a pair of crossed keys. Pausing to wonder what is going on behind the curtained windows of the back parlour.

When I was young, and found guilty of some misdemeanour, I would be sent to my room as punishment. Far from reflecting on the enormity of my waywardness, I would take some well-loved story and lose myself in the other world I knew. Completely lost to the nature of my crime and its penalty, I would settle down to a good read. A far better way of spending an afternoon than helping with the housework.

There were to be other, more serious occasions in my natural life when escape to the world of Greyfriars brought with it an imagined parallel with a character from the school. When I ran away from home, it was Wharton who ...

'... rested for a while at the old stile that led into the wood. The dusk was already thickening and the road was deserted, but the former captain of the Remove paid no heed to the lengthening shadows and the air of solitude. Now all the school was against him. The master who had trusted him, the form that had followed his lead. All that was over, and who was to blame. As he asked himself that question, the inner bitterness that he felt answered it for him. They were.

In front of him, glimmered the distant lights of Friardale; behind him, the dark of evening was already swallowing the outlines of the school at which he had known such happiness. Already the school would be assembling for Roll and Prout's voice would be heard booming out each name. Well, old Pompous could call until he was blue in the face...'

I was once asked whether I had come to regard the Famous Five as friends. I certainly had, but my affection found an entity beyond Harry Wharton & Co. I came to regard Mr. Quelch as a guide and mentor. I often interpreted advice, given to a member of his form, as applying equally to me. Spoken of as being 'a beast, but a just beast' there might be rare occasions when the Quelchilian judgement was flawed, and I was disappointed. There was, I always found, some excuse for the Remove master when he was dealing with boys as self-willed and headstrong as Wharton, as rebellious as Vernon-Smith, or as frustrating as Bunter.

Another favourite character was "The Bounder" as Herbert Vernon-Smith was called by his contemporaries. My introduction to Greyfriars was of a much later date than Smithy's. His character had matured, and had improved in the maturing. Nevertheless, any confrontation between the Remove boy and his master was a guarantee of a good story. I can recall being locked out of the house one night and, rather than disturb the household, I climbed the sloping roof of an outhouse that brought me within reach of my bedroom window. With the aid of a shrouded flash lamp I was soon in bed, but it wasn't the excitement of my own adventure that I reflected upon when I was safely between the bedclothes.

... 'I had accompanied Smithy from "The Three Fishers", through the dark shadows of Oak Lane to where Greyfriars School lay, an etching in the light of a fitful moon. Together, we had climbed over the broken masonry of the cloisters wall, and had skirted the school buildings to where a convenient drainpipe enabled us to climb on to the leads outside the Remove box room window. As the Bounder stealthily pushed up the sash, there came a sharp 'click' as the light was switched on and we were confronted by the awesome figure of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"So you have ventured to return, Vernon-Smith."

Smithy and I momentarily stood still as though turned to stone, but it did not take Smithy long to recover.

"Good evening or should I say morning - Sir. How very considerate of you to wait up for me."

Despite the seriousness of the occasion I could not suppress a smile. Mr. Quelch, on the other hand, did not look amused at all..."

I was not attracted to the holiday series. The stories had a different setting and many of the familiar characters were absent from the action. A few of the more popular (or unpopular) characters would, it is true, put in a guest appearance. Coker, for instance ...

'Potter and Greene looked at each other. Coker had been talking non-stop for the last twenty five minutes, without let or hindrance, so to speak. But the words of their great leader had, like the idle wind, been heeded not. Yesterday, Coker had contrived to get them lost. They had intended tramping through the winding lanes of Wiltshire, but had finished up with pitching their tent in a Berkshire field, miles from any sign of habitation. Emergency rations in the shape of a tin of bully beef had been denied them since Coker had forgotten to pack a tin opener.

Tonight they were to have been Coker's guests at a wayside inn at Phaxley, and the two Greyfriars seniors had managed to harness an almost uncontrollable urge to set upon the fool of the Fifth and scatter his remains all over the countryside. Coker, they allowed, had his good points. In term those good points were limited to the glorious and generous hampers Coker received from his Aunt Judy. In the hols, Coker was well supplied with that necessary item, cash. Potter and Greene had been too willing to avail themselves of Coker's hospitality but, as weary mile succeeded weary mile, they realised that they were lost for the second day running. Tearing Coker from limb to limb would not compensate for the loss of the promised accommodation, but it would afford a measure of satisfaction. They prepared to pounce...

"Hello, hello, hello."

The trio of Fifth formers had rounded a corner. In the shelter of a field a small group were making camp for the night. A perspiring Billy Bunter was supervising the frying of sausages and bacon and an appetising smell greeted the Fifth form men as they came nearer. Potter and Greene sniffed appreciatively, it was ages since they had last eaten, and the miles they had covered had sharpened the appetite.

Ahead of them lay the great unknown, they watched as Bunter prepared more sosses and Nugent added tea to a huge can of boiling water. This was like corn in the lean years. They decided it was time to be diplomatic and forget that they were seniors. Tactfully, they decided to treat the Remove men as equals.

"Nice meeting you fellows," began Potter, his eyes on the ministrations of Bunter.

"Quite a pleasant surprise," agreed Greene, taking his cue from Potter. "This country air does wonders for the appetite," he added rather neatly.

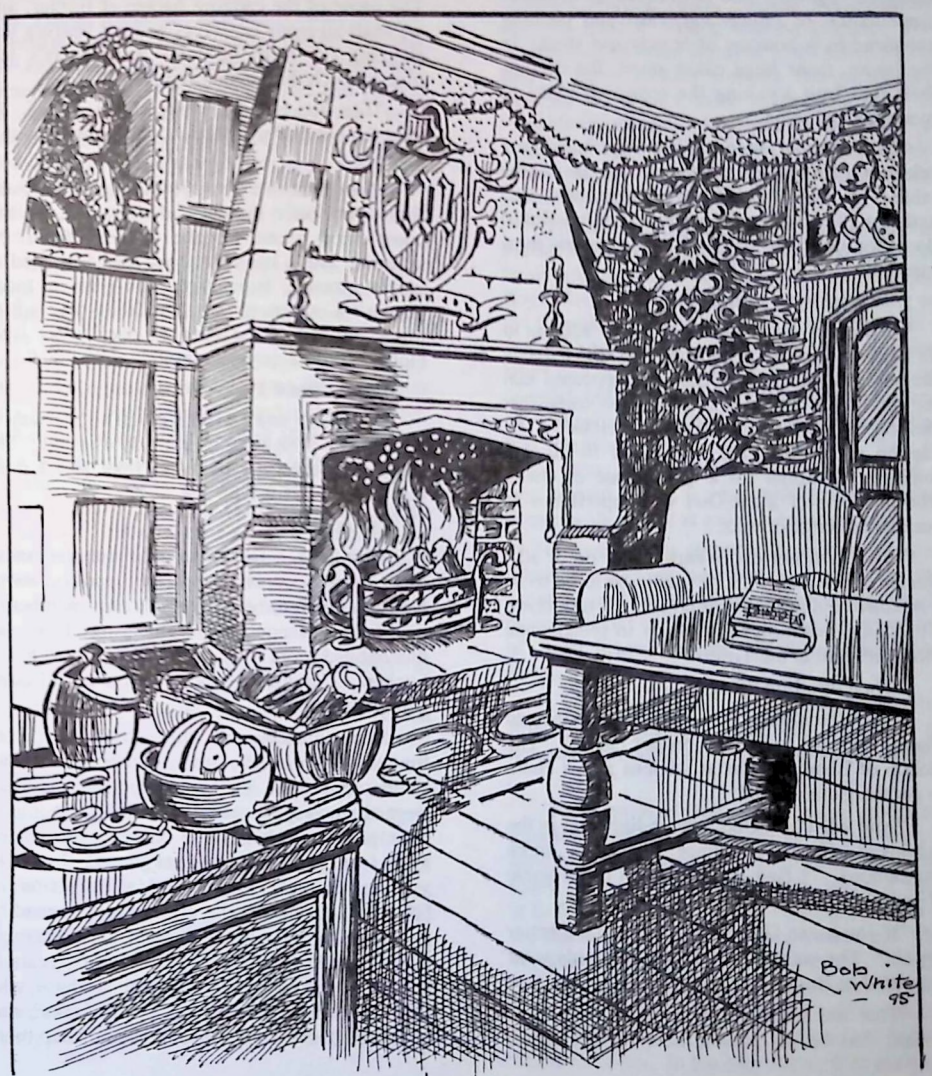
"You fellows are welcome to a spot of supper with us," invited Wharton, "even with Bunter, there is plenty to spare."

"I say, that's rather decent of you Wharton," came the heartfelt response from a starving Potter and Greene. We'll join you fellows with pleasure."

For a moment it seemed that diplomacy and tact had paid off. Coker, like his pals, was hungry enough to eat a horse but Coker, unlike his pals, possessed neither diplomacy or tact. Lack of both those qualities was evident the moment that Coker spoke.

"If you expect me to sit down with a crowd of grubby fags," exclaimed the burly Horace in his most Cokerish tones, as Potter and Greene heard him demolish their great strategy'...

You may care to exercise your memory, your imagination, or a combination of the two, in determining the outcome of that summer evening's encounter. For the purpose of this essay I choose to travel a little further along the calendar for my other example of what happens when the characters are away from the academic environment...



'Smoke curled lazily from the snow crested chimney stacks of Wharton Lodge. Frost had left an artistic tracery on the rime that coated every pane in door and window. Every ledge ad lintel bore its burden of white. The terrace and park were covered in the seasonal blanket of crystal crispness that crunched when trodden underfoot. The barren branches of the leafless trees welcomed each wayward flake that found its resting place.

In a corner of the oak-panelled hall, a giant Christmas tree, decorated with silver tinsel and coloured baubles, stood sentinel over the likenesses of Whartons dead and gone, the gilt of their frames relieved by the red and green of attendant holly. In the huge fireplace, flaming logs would suddenly shift and crumble sending a cascade of sparks into the dark reaches of the vast chimney.

Beyond the green baize doors leading to the domestic regions could be inhaled an aromatic combination of mincemeat, cake and pudding enhanced by a bouquet of brandy and stout. In the larder, three huge cakes stood, the dark of their rich fruit awaiting the crowning glory of marzipan and icing...

In the cellar below Wells was making a selection of wine and soft drinks for the festive table. A nearby glass of vintage port was assisting him in his deliberation. Behind closed doors the boy, Thomas, was savouring his third mincepie.

"What do you want, fathead?"

It was not the customary form of address to an honoured guest - not that Bunter was a guest, honoured or otherwise. Sadly, it appeared that the cordiality of the season was somewhat lacking as Wharton addressed Bunter. The captain of the Remove had retired to his den with Hurree Singh for a quiet game of chess. The presence of a fat Owl was superfluous to such a challenge of wits.

"This will not do, Wharton, not do at all." Bunter spoke with what he fondly believed to be a mixture of dignity and reproach. "I turn down a pressing invitation from Mauly to spend some time with him at the Towers ---"

"Then turn him up again ---"

"The ridiculous turning up of the esteemed Mauly appears to be the proper caper." The Nabob of Bhanipur was as anxious as his chum to get the game started.

"And what do I find," the indignation in the aggrieved Bunter's voice became more pronounced. "I find that old fossil of an uncle of yours ---"

"If you mean Colonel Wharton, you'd better say so." The warning in Wharton's words went unheeded as Bunter babbled on regardless.

"That old fossil of an uncle of yours has invited that beast, Quelch, here for the hols". This won't do, won't do at all. We see enough of Quelch during term. Besides, I find it despicable that a man should barge in where he's not wanted."

"Couldn't agree with you more, old fat man. I'm just the chap to deal with a man that barges in where he's not wanted. I'm sure that Inky won't mind postponing the chess and helping me to see this particular bargee of the premises ---"

"The helpfulness will be terrific, my esteemed chum."

"Good. I recommend that you make it abundantly clear to Quelchy that cadging a hol' at a fellow's place is not on. Tell him to go and fry his face somewhere else, after all tain't term, so he can hardly whop you."

"It just happens that the cadging bargee isn't called Quelch. Mr. Quelch is an honoured guest of my uncle, and I and the rest of the fellows intend to see that Mr. Quelch enjoys his stay. The name of the cadging bargee is Bunter, and we shall all enjoy ourselves without hearing you slanging our form master. Now, there's just time to catch the afternoon train ---"

"Tee, hee, hee, I can take a joke, I hope. I'll treat the old duffer with tact. I'll lay it on with a trowel ---

"Sorry, Bunter, but you've gone over the limit - not once but several times. Cook has complained about a cake missing from the kitchen. Wells has mentioned that you tried to borrow money from him, and you've made yourself a nuisance. You can keep that suit of mine and it will be easy to pack what little clobber of your own you brought with you."

"And what if I don't choose to go?"

Then Inky and I will kick you all the way to the station. The exercise will do us good. The sooner we start, the better as Inky and I don't want to be late back for tea."

"Beast!"

Of course, a Bunterless Christmas is not to be expected, and there are confrontations between the Remove master and that member of his form, clandestinely emerging from an uninhabited room for a grub-raiding prowl to the kitchen. Certainly scope here for a full-sized Christmas number.

Acquaintances of my childhood were limited to my sister, who was five years my senior, and three girl contemporaries. They were all good sports and I was allowed to join in their pastimes whenever I could be persuaded away from the Greyfriars background. I used to visit a boy cousin who had a collection of "Nelson Lees" which he allowed me to read in exchange for the current issue of "The Magnet" (strictly on loan, of course). In my last years at school I used to go cycling with a chum who had a growing collection of "Union Jacks", and who used to cross-reference them and keep them

in filing cabinets as his very own 'Baker Street Index'. He referred to his pet, a rather scruffy mongrel, as Pedro. I did not lapse from my loyalty to Greyfriars to favour either Lee or Blake, and simply mention this point to show that the two detectives enjoyed a popularity at my school as they certainly do in our world today.

When "The Magnet" ceased publication in the Spring of 1940, I had already been in the Army several weeks. It really was difficult and painful to assimilate that the thirty-two-year-old saga had come to an end. True, I had a collection of the old stories, but they had been left in the custody of friends, and there they remained until I was able to enjoy them again in peace. Nevertheless, when I was posted to the Middle East, I managed to find room in my kitbag for both the 'Brander' and the 'Egyptian' series. They not only comforted me, but many others during those perilous years. I am sure that Frank Richards was well aware of the affection so many of us had for the schools and the characters he had created ... stories that brought a breath of home to desert and jungle. Those two "Magnet" series of mine bore evidence of their perusal during the long march from El Alamein to Bologna in Italy. I have no doubt that other papers of our youth covered similar journeys in that and other theatres of war.

When peace came, I had access to other items from my collection and it was the "Mr. Prout, Headmaster series" that I chose when I went to Warsaw in 1945. The Polish capital was devastated. As far as the eye could see lay the broken masonry and twisted ironwork that was all that remained of churches and schools, homes and work places. Over all pervaded the aura of courage and sacrifice. It seemed no time for laughing at Mr. Prout, but the Poles are a resilient race and taught me to turn my face to the future. From a time of great sadness, my hosts infected me with their spirit to laugh again. But not until that hope - and the electricity - was restored, did Mr. Prout get an airing.

I left the Army, and the Embassy in Warsaw in 1948, and took a temporary post in the Diplomatic Service, serving in Addis Ababa and Tel Aviv until I was called home to sit appropriate examinations. Whilst in Tel Aviv, it became clear to me that if I was to succeed in those exams I had better have some coaching in maths - a subject I hated and in which my performance was lamentably poor. The wife of a colleague, who had been a schoolmistress, offered to oblige, and I remember sweating and swotting in the heat whilst her husband sat in an armchair drinking ice-cold beer and reading a selection from my "Magnets". I felt that I could sympathise with Wharton detained in the form room whilst his friends rode over to Cliff House for tea with the girls. Fortunately, for my coach and me, the extra tuition proved successful.

Many of my service colleagues, who had been readers of "The Magnet" in their schooldays, were much in evidence at the start of my career. The ambassadors in Addis and Tel Aviv (together with budding consuls and archivists like myself) 'mourned for that which was lost' but found comfort in borrowing from my collection. They spoke longingly of the years when their education had been shared between Greyfriars and such diverse academies as Eton, Harrow, Winchester and, in my case, the Joseph Henry Wilson Elementary School, Reading. It seemed that Greyfriars did form a bond between us, for those who still keep in touch with me today will often mention an incident from a favourite story.

It was in Tokyo, in 1953, that I came across a copy of "The Collectors' Digest" in the Embassy waiting room. I had been waiting there to greet a visiting concert pianist. The gentleman had been delayed, and I filled in the surplus time, looking through the periodicals from home, when I came across this mine of valuable information. I became so absorbed that I almost forgot the illustrious visitor, and had only time to conceal the magazine about my person before his belated arrival.

'The hart panting for the cooling stream' in the old hymn had nothing on the thirst I had for more information about a group called "The Old Boys' Book Club". I lost no time in writing to the London secretary, a Mr. Benjamin Whiter. I did not know then that this was to be the first letter in a correspondence that would culminate in satisfying many a mid-day appetite in ancient inn and tavern. But that was a joy to come. The first member, whose acquaintance I was to make, was Alan Stewart who visited Japan a year or two later. A photograph taken of this occasion shows me at a slim nine stone two.

During periods of home leave I attended as many meetings as possible, wallowing in the expertise of the members in recalling whole passages from the Greyfriars saga. A favourite of Ben's was from the 'Tuckshop Rebellion' series...

... 'Hacker's Head, it's come off,' babbled Bunter breathlessly, 'Hacker's Head,' he repeated, 'it's come off. It's on the noticeboard.' ...

Ben's brother, Bob, had a more extensive repertoire and I remember the joy it was to sit in his cycle shop, listening to an effortless recall of many passages of delight. Once, when a guest at Bob's home, we taped our singing a parody of the Harrow School song, 'Forty Years On'. This version (with new lyrics by Herbert Vernon-Smith including a line going 'remember the time we backed Blazer each way for a quid'), was one of my treasures. I must try and recover it from wherever it lies. In the meantime, if anyone can

locate the story in which the parody appeared I would appreciate the details.

Long after midnight, Bob and I would be exchanging Greyfriars anecdotes ...

... 'Long ago, in the dear, dead days beyond recall, had it that Prout, like Nimrod, had been a mighty hunter. The master of the Fifth liked nothing better than to ensnare some unwary colleagues for a chat in Prout's study. Once there, the victim would hear tales of Prout decimating the grizzly population in the Rockies. Prout would point proudly to the Winchester, much in evidence over the fireplace, or to the stuffed heads, antlered or otherwise, that he claimed were trophies of thrilling encounters by the score. Prout was not to know that Harold Skinner of the Remove form claimed that Prout had purchased these self-same trophies as a job lot from the Courtfield shop of Mr. Lazarus'...

Bob does not appear to have lost the exuberant enthusiasm that he seemed to have obtained from that other Bob [Cherry of the Remove], but he is also a gifted artist, as anyone who has received a greetings card from him can confirm. I asked him if he would grace this article by illustrating it and I am honoured that he has agreed.

Stories of Greyfriars appeared in hard back form, the name of Bunter gracing each title. Bunter has indeed been a pivotal point on which many of the plots depended [his ventriloquism, his eavesdropping, his purloining of other fellows' tuck], but I think he has been over-valued at times. My two favourite characters remain Mr. Quelch and Herbert Vernon-Smith after sixty-nine years since I first read about and appreciated them. That doesn't mean that the other characters fall far behind of course. However, to revert to the Bunter books. I bought both the Skilton and Cassell editions but found the stories between the covers shadows of what I had found between the covers of 'The Magnet'. I donated them to the children's' section of the Embassy library in Paris and can only hope that they will provide a threshold of joy to the youngsters of their days as 'The Magnet' did to me in mine.

I visited the lovely city of York and met the first editor of 'The Collectors Digest' and enjoyed a couple of evenings chatting as the summer sun set on the graceful walls. By the time my retirement came in 1972, I had already been a contributor to the 'Annual' and every now and then to the monthly. Eric Fayne was occupying the editorial chair, and many of us already knew him from the meetings in Surbiton, but it was at Excelsior House in Crookham that he and I would talk our hearts out as dear madam refilled the cups and a mound of fluff would purr happily in my lap. I cannot recall the hour at which we retired, but I still remember the night air carrying the fragrance from the garden as I stood by the open bedroom window.

Ben was a fund of information about London, especially the city's square mile. He accompanied me when I set out to photograph the City churches and, that venture completed, we decided to focus our attention on the inns and taverns. We managed only two, "The Old Cock Tavern" in Fleet Street (once visited by Pepys, Tennyson and Dickens) and "The Hoop and Grapes" (the latter rejoices in a secret underground passage linking its cellars to the Tower). But such historical connections did not delay us long. We were soon digesting a Ploughman's lunch, washed down by a glass of beer as we discussed Greyfriars or Cricket. Ben, at one time, belonged to no less than nine County Clubs. We attended several matches at Lords and I have a valued memento of the occasion when Middlesex played Gloucester on the 9th July 1975. Ben handed me two bound volumes of 'The Story Paper Collector'. A note said that they were a 'token of our long and happy friendship, and a happy day at Lords'. Others will, I am sure, be able to recall their own personal debt of gratitude to Ben but none could be deeper than my own for his encouragement and understanding and the help and advice he so readily gave.

Beside my ongoing membership with the 'Old Boys' Book Club' there are many that were, and still are, on a more personal level. Trust House-Forte of earlier years ran 'Bargain Breaks' at many of their hotels. I visited some twenty of them in the company of Roger Jenkins, and many a long drive up the motorway would be relieved by recalling a Greyfriars incident from memory (as are some of the quotations in this article), a favourite with Roger being ...

... "'Such serious conduct as yours, Bunter, calls for expulsion," Dr. Locke paused to allow his words to sink in, "however, some allowance can be made for your crass stupidity. I hope you will be suitably grateful for my decision to show leniency. Instead of expulsion you will receive a flogging-

"Wow. Is-s-say."

"--- a severe, a very severe, flogging ---"

"I say." There was alarm in Bunter's voice. Alarm, bordering on terror. If a very severe flogging was the Head's opinion of leniency, then it was an opinion that Bunter did not share one little bit.

"I-I-I say sir, I'd much rather you made it the sack---"

"The sack? What do you mean Bunter?"

"I'd rather be bunked than flogged, if you please sir." A flogging was one of those things that are more blessed to give than to receive. "Is it a go, sir?"

FRANK RICHARDS WITH SOME YOUNG FRIENDS

Dr. Locke looked at Bunter in speechless amazement. The very idea of someone preferring expulsion to some lesser punishment quite took his breath away.

"Besides, sir, if I'm bunked," Bunter prattled hopefully on, "the pater will be able to send me to another school - a better one than Greyfriars---"

"How dare you." The Head found his voice at last. The mere suggestion that there might be a better school than Greyfriars sounded like something approaching blasphemy to his ears.

"Mr. Quelch, will you kindly summon Gosling. His services will be required." ...

It is easier to recall these 'gems' rather than the settings from which they shine. This is not to undervalue the stories themselves, of course. For many years I used to read a story at night time; sometimes a whole series would claim my attention from the shadows of even to the grey of dawn. Nowadays the small print has become tiring on the eye, limited our reading and enhancing those occasions when our memories come to our aid.

I count myself fortunate indeed to have lived whilst the history of Greyfriars unfolded. Life would have been very different without the company of the characters that shared their adventures with my leisure time. I think that I have been doubly fortunate in having friends from the pages of 'The Magnet' and from real life itself. The pioneers of old who gave our love for the old papers the forum which that love deserved. I am grateful to that unknown person who left the copy of "The Collectors' Digest" in the Embassy waiting room in 1953, I am grateful to the three successive editors who gave me space and the encouragement to fill it. To Alan (whom I met in Tokyo nearly forty years ago) and Myra who have ferried me to most of the meetings, and those who have kindly done so on other occasions. To the indefatigable Roger and Bob, who can always find another 'gem' from the past, and to those who have so readily extended their hospitality to myself and others.

And last, but never last, to the author who helped me find LAUGHTER AND THE LOVE OF FRIENDS.

WANTED: Schoolgirls' Own Library, First Series from 1922. Also striped Leander Blazer, size L-XL, any colour combination.

SYLVIA REED
8 GOLINE COURT, HILLMAN 6168, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

* *

Very Best Wishes for a Happy Christmas and New Year to Mary, Eric, Bill, Chris, Laurie, Les, Mac, and all Hobbiophiles.

JOHN BRIDGWATER
5A SAULFLAND PLACE, HIGH CLIFFE, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET, BH23 4QP

* *

Make it a very special Christmas - for me!! Please send me "Blakes" 695 and 707 (2nd S's). I have interesting swaps and you never really liked my 2 numbers! Warm Wishes.

HILLIARD, 45 MOORBRIDGE LANE, STAPLEFORD, NG9 8ER

* *

Greetings from Nostalgia Unlimited. If you are not on my mailing list for free juvenile and newspaper/magazines lists please write.

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Happy Xmas to all pals made through our hobby. Can anyone please help with a copy of Fantastic Adventures, July 1939.

MAC

* *

WANTED TO PURCHASE: Bound volumes of 26 consecutive numbers each of pink Boys' Realms and green Boys' Friends.

ROBERT W. STORY,
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* *

Season's Greetings to all my hobby friends, the world over. From

NAVEED HAQUE
152 SPADINA ROAD, RICHMOND HILL, ONTARIO, CANADA

* *

ONE OF EDWY SEARLES BROOK'S OTHER DETECTIVES

by E.B. Grant-McPherson

Possibly the very first of E.S.B.'s detectives was Frank Kingston Circa 1910. In common with most fictional detectives, he had an assistant, but, unlike the majority, his was a young lady.

Kingston himself was a man of exceptional talents, I feel myself that Brooks' later character, 'Waldo the Wonder Man', was modelled on Frank Kingston, as perusal of many of his adventures will confirm.

Stories of Frank Kingston, appeared as the second feature in the 'Gem' for about two years, and, for the benefit of any readers who have not sampled him, here is a story of one of his cases involving his assistant, Dolores.

A Grand, New Series of Short Complete Stories, introducing Frank Kingston, Detective, and Dolores—his pretty Lady Assistant.

CHAPTER 1.

A Puzzling Case—Kingston Gets Busy.

"THE problem is an exceedingly knotty one, Mr. Kingston, and all our efforts to get to the bottom of it have failed. I doubt even if you, with all your extraordinary powers, can help us."

Sir Nigel Kane, the Chief of Scotland Yard, flicked the ash from his cigar into the glowing fire. He was seated in Frank Kingston's consulting-room at No. 100, Charing Cross, and had called upon the famous detective on business quite different from the matter under discussion, but a chance remark of Kingston's had brought the subject up.

"I have read a little concerning it in the papers," said Kingston lazily, "but I haven't followed it at all; I thought it quite ordinary."

"But it is very far from being ordinary," contradicted the other decidedly. "For the past two months a series of daring and well-planned robberies have been carried out, and the booty—consisting mostly of costly jewels—has been smuggled out of the country without the police making a single arrest."

"But all the seaports have been watched!"

"Watched! Why, my dear sir, practically every passenger by every boat has been subjected to the most careful scrutiny. How the stuff gets out of the country is a mystery. And the galling part of it all is we know who is responsible—we know that the organiser of the robberies is an unscrupulous woman known as Olga Saratoff."

"Then why don't you arrest her?" asked Kingston.

"Because we haven't an atom of proof," replied the head of Scotland Yard worriedly. "Mdlle. Saratoff has been known to the police for years, but she has never allowed herself to be trapped yet. She has a clever head on her, and the men who work with her are all experienced cracksmen."

Frank Kingston asked several questions, and Sir Nigel readily answered them. He knew what a clever man the detective was, and was delighted when Kingston announced his intention of looking into the case. It so happened he was without a case at the time, and the work was welcome.

"The police methods are too clumsy," he told himself, when Sir Nigel had taken his departure. "Unless they have positive proof they will not act. Personally, I believe in acting straightaway, if you are certain of your quarry."

Kingston sat in his easy chair thinking deeply.

"So mademoiselle lives in style in her own house," he thought. "She defies Scotland Yard, and carries on her work as if the police had no existence. Well, I shall set to work in my own way, and try to show Sir Nigel Kane that audacity is very useful on occasion. You only want to be sure of your meat, and there can be no mistake."

Kingston left his house in the guise of a rather dis-

reputable middle-aged man. He believed in getting to work without losing a second, and very soon was on a motor-bus bound for Bayswater. Mdlle. Saratoff's residence was in a fairly busy street, and Kingston was able to keep watch without being noticeable. He knew that the Russian woman's movements were strictly noted by the police, but he was bent on quite another object.

Untiringly he stuck to his post throughout the afternoon, and in the evening was rewarded for his efforts. Towards six o'clock a smartly-dressed man stepped out of a taxi opposite Mdlle. Saratoff's house, and was instantly admitted. Kingston saw at a glance that the new-comer was a foreigner.

"Probably one of the principal members of the gang," the detective decided. "He's the fellow to honour with my attention. By Jove, it will be a stroke of luck if I hit the trail to-night!"

Half an hour later the front door of the house next door opened, and Kingston gave a casual glance at the man who came into view. He was tall, and wore a fair beard, and suddenly Kingston started.

"The same man," he told himself quickly. "Of course, Mdlle. Olga is probably the tenant of both houses, and when she wishes to escape police surveillance she disguises herself and leaves the next-door house as another person. This fellow must have played the same dodge."

Kingston made no guess; he was absolutely certain about the matter, and immediately commenced following the fair-bearded man. A taxi came in sight, and Kingston's quarry stopped it and jumped in. In the darkness he did not notice that someone had stepped up beside the driver.

"Drive to Scotland Yard," ordered Kingston firmly. "I am a detective, and the man inside is a criminal," he went on as the driver began to protest. "A sovereign if you get him there in safety."

That settled matters, and soon the taxi was bowling towards the police headquarters. Once the fare inquired where he was being taken to, but the driver made a vague answer that the roads were up.

Scotland Yard was reached, and before the man could realise what had occurred he was bundled into the building by Kingston and secured in a cell.

"Good gracious me, Mr. Kingston, you have lost no time!" exclaimed Sir Nigel Kane when he knew what had occurred. "Who is this man you have brought here?"

"I don't know," was Kingston's surprising reply. "I have not the slightest atom of proof against him, but I strongly suspect him to be one of the chief members of Mdlle. Saratoff's gang."

"But, my dear sir," protested Sir Nigel, "this is a most serious proceeding! If you have no proof——"

"I am now going to procure that proof, and other information besides," interrupted Kingston calmly. "It is all chance work, of course, and if I have made a mistake I shall apologise, and set matters right. But I have made no mistake."

Sir Nigel had on one other occasion seen proof of Kingston's amazing will-power, and he was again to have a demonstration, but this time in a different manner. He and the detective were closeted with the prisoner, who raved and threatened unceasingly. Soon, however, he calmed down, and then dropped off into what seemed an easy sleep. As a matter of fact Kingston had mesmerised him—it required but little of the detective's wonderful will-power to bring this about.

"Now," exclaimed Frank Kingston, in an even voice, "tell me your name and what the business was that took you to Bayswater to-night."

"My name is Charles Le Vasseur," replied the prisoner, in a dull undertone, speaking in good English. "I went to Bayswater to see Olga Saratoff about the stuff that is going across to-night. She's taking it to Tressider herself, as usual."

Sir Nigel's eyes met Kingston's.

"By gad!" muttered the former. "You were right, Kingston!"

"What is the stuff you refer to, and who is Tressider?" went on the detective, taking no notice of the interruption. "And where is Mdlle. Saratoff going to?"

"The stuff is the proceeds of the Glover jewel robbery," replied Le Vasseur monotonously. "Tressider is to take it across the Channel to-night. Olga will leave her house at ten o'clock, and walk to the corner of Queen's Road, where a car will be waiting for her. This will take her to some spot on the South Coast."

"Whereabouts?"

"I do not know."

"Which house will Mdlle. Saratoff leave?" went on Kingston, knowing Le Vasseur's last statement to be true—in his hypnotic condition he could not lie. "Will she be disguised?"

"She will leave by the house next door to her own, which is thought to be occupied by an elderly lady. Mdlle. Olga will be dressed in black, and will wear a veil. That is the only disguise."

Sir Nigel watched and listened wonderingly. Kingston's extraordinary power was truly remarkable. By sending the prisoner into this trance he was obtaining all the information that was necessary—or nearly all of it. There was a small bench in the cell, and Kingston produced a piece of blank paper and a fountain pen. These he placed before Le Vasseur.

"Write on that paper the following," he commanded, still in the same even tones: "'On no account leave house to-night. The police are on scent, and if you take the goods to Tressider it will mean discovery. Remain indoors until I see you to-morrow.' Now sign it."

Le Vasseur did so, and although he was doing it absolutely unconsciously, the writing and signature were perfect.

"Mdlle. Saratoff understands English!" asked Kingston.

"Yes. She always speaks English while in this country."

"Very good, Le Vasseur," said the detective. "In one minute you will open your eyes and become fully conscious. You will forget everything that has just passed, and imagine that you are still angrily protesting against your arrest."

"My dear Mr. Kingston," cried Sir Nigel, as the latter turned to him, "the exhibition you have just given me is a remarkable proof of your power—your tremendous will-power. But what is the note for?" he added, as he saw Kingston pick it up.

"That is to send by District Messenger to Mdlle. Saratoff," replied the great detective, with a smile. "I think there is plenty of proof against this fellow now, Sir Nigel, and by the morning the rest of the gang will, I hope, be brought to justice. But hush! The minute is nearly up."

A few seconds later Le Vasseur opened his eyes, and immediately commenced shaking his fists and uttering threats against the police. As Frank Kingston had ordered, he knew absolutely nothing of what had just transpired.

CHAPTER 2.

Dolores Takes a Hand.

FRANK KINGSTON lost no time in taking his departure from Scotland Yard. When he arrived at No. 100, Charing Cross, he found the time to be just after seven. As the car which was to have carried Mdlle. Saratoff to the South Coast was not to be at the corner of Queen's Road, Bayswater, until ten o'clock, there was ample time for him to make preparations.

He did not stay long in his rooms, but having given a few instructions to Fraser, his confidential servant, he sallied out once more, and walked up the Strand to the Hotel Cyril. He was a constant visitor here, for his fiancee occupied a suite of rooms in the famous hotel. He was half afraid he would find her out, but this was not the case.

"Why, Frank, I'd no idea you were coming this evening!" exclaimed Dolores delightedly. "Have you come on business or pleasure? It's quite impossible to read anything in your expression," she added, smiling into his languid-looking, immobile features.

"This time, little girl, I have come on business," he replied, seating himself. "I'm going to ask you to do something for me—something that contains just a spice of adventure."

Dolores' eyes sparkled eagerly.

"Oh, Frank, I'm just longing to help you again!" she cried. "Since you overthrew the terrible Brotherhood of Iron I've done practically nothing. Do tell me what I have to do to-night!"

Kingston smiled at the girl's impetuosity. This evening she was looking especially pretty, and the rosy flush which mantled her cheeks was a delight to the eye. The detective lost no time in telling her of the Saratoff gang, and how he had, by a stroke of fortune, got on the scent straightaway.

"Mademoiselle will receive the note purporting to come from Le Vasseur," concluded Kingston, "and will consequently remain indoors. I must find out who Tressider is, where he is situated, and how he conveys the stolen property to the Continent. To have followed Mdlle. Saratoff's car would have been impossible."

"Of course," agreed Dolores. "So you want me to dress myself in black, meet the car at the corner of Queen's Road, and be conveyed to this spot on the South Coast?"

"Exactly! The only thing against the scheme is the risk——"

"Oh, Frank, surely you can trust me?" exclaimed Dolores, a little reproachfully, remembering the dozens of risks she had taken before. "I can take care of myself. I think the idea is splendid; indeed, it is the only sure way of getting to know who this man Tressider is, and so obtain incriminating evidence. And you cannot go yourself, because you are not capable of disguising yourself as Mdlle. Saratoff."

"Hardly," smiled Frank Kingston, thinking of his six

foot of muscular manhood. "You, Dolores, are the only person who can help me, and though I've no doubts as to your courage, I don't care for the idea of sending you there alone."

"But you'll be close behind me, you silly!" laughed Dolores.

"I certainly shall," declared Kingston. "I am going round to Carson Gray now, and he and I will follow your car in Gray's racer. Of course, if Mdlle. Saratoff had been doing the journey herself she would have kept a strict look-out, but you will be comfortable in the knowledge that friends are close at hand. The chauffeur will not trouble himself, you may be sure."

"The man Tressider will be caught red-handed," said Dolores confidently. "The case is simplicity itself, Frank, although, of course, something unforeseen may arise."

And something unforeseen did arise—something which, had Kingston even dreamed of it, would have caused him to send Dolores a thousand miles in the opposite direction rather than let her go through the terrible experience which was that night destined to come to pass.

At exactly ten o'clock a slight figure, dressed in quiet black and heavily veiled, stepped into a large landaulette at the corner of Queen's Road, Bayswater. The chauffeur accepted her as Mdlle. Saratoff without question, and immediately drove off into the line of traffic.

Some distance behind, an open car of the racing pattern glided along. In it were seated two detectives—Frank Kingston and his friend, Carson Gray. The latter was fortunately free for the night, and had eagerly acquiesced when Kingston suggested the trip. Gray himself was a well-known detective, but he readily admitted that Kingston was in every respect his master.

"I thought there would be no hitch over that incident," said Kingston quietly. "The chauffeur evidently knows exactly where he has to go, so there was no necessity at all for Dolores to speak to him. And when they get to the end of their journey, we shall be so close behind that no harm can come to her."

Carson Gray shifted his pipe to the other side of his mouth as he handled the steering-wheel.

"In my opinion there is nothing to go wrong," he said lightly. "By Jove, Kingston, you've been jolly smart over this affair, and no mistake! The police have been hanging about for weeks, yet you calmly go and get on the direct track within a few hours. Once Tressider is caught, it will be simplicity itself to lay hands on Mdlle. Saratoff."

Gray had not the slightest difficulty in keeping the landaulette within sight. It was travelling at a very moderate pace, and left London by the main Brighton road. Carson Gray's racer was fitted with an effective silencer, so he was able to follow fairly closely without his presence being suspected by the driver of the enemy's car.

All went well for an hour or more, and in Kingston's mind the chase was becoming rather tame. There was not much excitement in the adventure so far. Towards eleven-thirty, however, just as the two cars had left a large town, and were gliding through the open country, Gray heard a roar behind him, and swerved to the side of the road.

"Just in time!" he muttered, glaring round savagely.

He had reason to be angry, for a huge, sixty-horse Napier flew by with hardly an inch of room to spare. And as it did so Kingston imagined he heard a sudden cry. The Napier's driver applied his brakes rapidly, and the huge car slowed down until it was proceeding at the same pace as Gray's.

Then, before either Kingston or his companion could realise what was coming, a quartette of revolver shots rang out, a terrific hiss sounded on the night air, as the bullets ploughed their way through the two front tyres, and the car swerved giddily across the road before Gray could stop it. It struck the bank heavily, and by that time the Napier had accelerated, and was rushing forward at express speed.

"The scoundrels!" cried Carson Gray furiously. "Good heavens, Kingston, they must have recognised me as I looked round into the glare of their lights! What a fool I was not to wear a disguise! And Miss Dolores—she'll be simply at their mercy now, while we're stuck here unable to lift a finger."

Frank Kingston gave his companion a grim look.

"Helpless?" he said quietly. "My dear Gray, we're near the coast now, and if I have to run every inch of the way and follow the tracks of those cars, I'll do it. Dolores is in this predicament on my account, and it rests with me to get her out of it!"

CHAPTER 3.

At Turn of Tide.

DOLORES sat in the landaulette quite unconscious of the incident that had just happened so close behind her. The Brighton Road had been left behind some time since, and now the two cars—for the second racer, which had passed Kingston and Gray, was close behind the landaulette—proceeded along a quiet, unfrequented by-road.

The sea was very close now, and the journey's end was near. Dolores had not spoken a word to the chauffeur, but occasionally glanced behind through the little window, and smiled comfortably when she saw the lights of the following car.

"Why, it's one of the easiest catches that Frank has ever made!" she declared to herself. "When I reach the coast Tressider will either be there waiting, or will join me after a little while. By that time Frank and Mr. Gray will have arrested the chauffeur, and will be ready for the others—that is, if there are more than one."

But Dolores was not aware that in the other car were seated Mdlle. Saratoff herself and two of her confederates. The Russian woman realised what was in the wind, and meant to deceive Dolores until the very last. She got to know of Kingston's ruse by the merest fluke. It so happened that a member of the gang had been sent by her to the corner of Queen's Road to dismiss the chauffeur who was waiting there. The man, however, had arrived just in time to see Dolores step into the car and drive off. He immediately guessed that something was amiss, and hurried back to Mdlle. Saratoff.

The result was that the adventuress had at once set out in the Napier to follow her own car, occupied as it was by some stranger. Her companions had recognised Carson Gray when passing, and the unfortunate result is known to the reader.

The night was dark as pitch, and Dolores was unable to see where she was going. At last, however, the car came to a standstill, and the door was immediately opened by a tall, thin individual of about thirty-five.

"Ah, Mdlle. Saratoff!" he exclaimed, in a grating, unpleasant voice. "You're here to time, as usual. I suppose you have brought the stuff with you? The tide is nearly on the turn, and I must be off immediately."

Dolores did not reply, but stepped out of the car and glanced round her. She found she was on a wide, smooth beach, with high cliffs towering to the left. Close behind, up a narrow kind of gorge, the lights of the second car were rapidly approaching. A moment later it was on them, and Mdlle. Olga's voice rang out.

"Hold that woman, Tressider!" she cried. "She is a police spy, and it is only by a stroke of luck that we have been able to frustrate the plan!"

The thin man uttered an exclamation of surprise, but before Dolores could make any effort to escape, she was caught in his strong arms and held firmly. The next moment the two other men had her secure, and the Russian woman ripped the veil from her face.

"So you thought to frustrate my schemes, eh?" she sneered viciously. "You look defiant, but that won't help you in the least. You are beautiful, too," she added, with an evil glitter in her eyes. "Before long you will learn what it is to cross my path!"

Mdlle. Olga turned away, and, taking Tressider aside, spoke to him. He departed immediately, and Dolores was considerably surprised when she saw a monoplane suddenly dart from the entrance of a large cave and shoot down the beach. In a moment it rose, and soared swiftly and steadily out to sea.

"So this is the way the jewels are conveyed to France," thought Dolores. "What a splendid idea! On this lonely piece of coast they might have continued at the work for months. But what can have happened to Frank and Mr. Gray?" she added to herself in anguish. "They must be near at hand—they must be ready to help me!"

But this did not seem to be the case. Without wasting words, the two men who had accompanied Mdlle. Saratoff—they were both Russians—grasped hold of her and forced her along the beach, the adventuress accompanying them. For half a mile they walked, making towards a huge jutting piece of the cliff, the base of which projected right out into the sea.

Dolores did not utter a word, although her captor taunted her ceaselessly. To struggle would have been useless. At last, after a scramble over rough rocks, the little party, headed by the driver of the racing Napier, who held one of the car lanterns, entered a low passage in the rock. A few yards further on, and they came to a halt on the brink of a natural basin. This was filled with water, and the little waves dashed splashingly against the seaweed-covered rocks. Through the front entrance of the cave—the party had entered from behind—could be seen the wide expanse of the Channel, with the bright lights of a passing steamer far away.

"Now, my beautiful enemy," exclaimed Mdlle. Olga, with a cruel smile, "I am going to prove to you that my words were not idle. If you escape now I should be lost, so there is only one course for me to pursue——"

"You're not going to kill me?" cried Dolores, horrified.

"I am going to do so," smiled the other woman. "It

is the only way. And since you have dared to thrust yourself into my affairs, I am going to kill you in a manner that will be rather novel. Tie her up!" she added sharply to her companions.

In a very short time Dolores was bound securely by the hands and feet. A gag was placed over her mouth, so she could utter no sound, as she realised the fiendishness of the Russian woman's plan. In the water floated a number of thick logs, tied together, so that they formed a raft. On this Dolores was placed. The next moment a noose of thin, strong cord was placed round her neck, and the end of this was securely fastened to the rock above her.

Mdlle. Saratoff laughed heartlessly.

"There, my fine English rose," she sneered, "this will prove what your nerves are made of. The tide will soon be running out fast, and the raft you are standing on will gradually drop lower and lower. The rope round your neck is not very long, and in twenty minutes at the most it will be drawn taut, and then——"

The adventuress shrugged her shoulders expressively, and gave another laugh. Two minutes later Dolores was by herself, in almost utter darkness. A faint glimmer came in from the cave entrance, and she could just see the water lapping against the frail platform on which she stood.

The brave girl did not lose her head in the least; but quietly and calmly tried to extricate herself from the fearful position. But it was useless; escape was absolutely impossible.

"What can I do?" thought Dolores, in agony. "That fiendish woman can never mean to kill me in this way! It is a trick; she is trying to frighten me. Oh, will Frank never come!"

Something within her told her that the Russian woman was in deadly earnest. Again she tried to get free, but again the result was the same. The raft swayed up and down with the waves, and once the cord came very near to stretching tight. With her hands bound the girl could do absolutely nothing; she must die a miserable death alone!

Then a thrill passed through her, and she drew herself tense and upright as she listened. Yes, it was true! She had heard Frank Kingston's and Carson Gray's voices! A moment later the two men, accompanied by a couple of well-dressed strangers, burst into the cave. The scene was revealed in a second, for one of the strangers carried a powerful acetylene lamp. Cries of horror burst from them all, and on Frank Kingston's face an expression of stern relentlessness showed itself.

"Good heavens," he cried, "to think that any woman could be such a fiend! But we are in time, Gray—just in time!"

He slashed the cord through with his knife, and after the lapse of a few seconds Dolores was unbound and clasped in his arms, caring nothing for the presence of the others.

"I knew you would come, Frank!" she murmured thankfully.

"But for the help of these two gentlemen we should have been too late!" exclaimed the great detective; and he explained how Carson Gray's car had been disabled.

"We had almost given up hope," put in Carson Gray, "and Kingston was on the point of setting out on foot when another car came towards us. We explained to these gentlemen what was in the wind, and they drove us here with all speed. The roads were thick, so the tracks of the other two cars were plainly visible, and easy to follow."

"And Mdlle. Saratoff," put in Dolores, "what of her?"

"She is a prisoner," answered Kingston grimly. "Her confederates escaped, but they will, in all probability, be captured very soon. It will be a very simple matter to secure Tressider when he arrives on his aeroplane from France."

THE END.

LITTLE FINGERS AND MECCANO AND HORNBY

BY DONALD V CAMPBELL

Frank Hornby, inventor of Meccano and chairman of Meccano Ltd. 1908-1936

For a boy, in the late inter-war years and beyond, it always seemed the most natural thing in the world to be the possessor of a Meccano set. My friends either had larger or smaller sets than mine. We swopped notes but NEVER models or equipment - they were personal and sacrosanct.

I always envied those who had Meccano-istic skills. I never had them. The notorious Campbell-cack-handedness has stayed with me all my life. I am noted for it. With a Meccano set or a Hornby train set things always "came to pieces in me 'ands!". Cross threading of those tiny (even to tiny hands) nuts and bolts was a skill soon learnt and put into continuous practice.

I was reminded of this only recently (fifty years or so later).

A set of so-called "continental shelves" had to be erected: "Easily done by anyone with a screwdriver". My screwdriver slithered and slipped, and skated and skipped out of the incorrectly-sized screwhead slots. *Technically it was the screwdriver that was the wrong size but the result was the same.* Nuts nipped my fingers (both nuts and fingers are now much bigger than in Meccano days but it makes little difference). Threads were crossed and jammed amid curses and sweat. Two hours later the job was done. Two hours! Two hours for four legs, two shelves and approximately sixteen sets of nuts and bolts! It was just like 1940-something.

In the Meccano magazine there used to be splendidly evocative adverts for Meccano - the toy that would make you the engineer of the future. The models illustrated were always bigger than the happy boy making them. I so wanted to make a crane or a transporter bridge or Blackpool Tower.

Can you imagine how many nuts and bolts (a quarter of an inch long in "old money") to be cross-threaded and uncross-threaded before the flag could be put on the top? I never did make a crane or a transporter bridge. Blackpool Tower was beyond the scope of my Number 7 set. But Dad did make the most incredible machine gun. A machine gun? Yes a machine gun. It worked so well it had to be dismantled in short order after I refused to stop shooting split pins at any moving object. Mam's legs suffered most. On reflection the thing seemed to have almost 'lethal' potential!

Before it vanished into small parts (I was quite good at dismantling) it stood like an almost mute memento of the First World war. The barrel was eighteen inches long. It stood on a firm tripod base. The barrel revolved and the split pins were loaded

automatically from a "cartridge" engineered from a nine inch wheel axle. It crackled. It almost roared. It had to go.

More sedate but still quite a feat of engineering by Dad was the "penny-in-the-slot" machine. This could hold real chocolate bars. It never did. Wartime put paid to that. Substitute items were found. Matchboxes were adjusted to fit and the game of sweet dispensing went on. The contraption was a large affair mimicking the machines more usually seen at railway stations. The mechanism could not be fooled. Only genuine pennies worked. Other coins bypassed the system and shot out of the appropriate slot at some speed and with a satisfying clatter. A penny allowed the operation of the drawer, rang a bell and caused the retrieval of a matchbox/chocolate bar. No need to dismantle

this replica. It was safe. Quiet. It also entertained. What more could boy want? *The machine gun of course!* Perhaps a crane; definitely the machine gun.

It is interesting to note that Hornby train sets were advertised in reverse fashion to Meccano. The boys towers over the railway line with flag and watch at the ready.

Fortune gave no-one that I knew an electric train set of any gauge. Such a lucky chap could have charged at the door for admission!

My wind-up set had a couple of goods wagons (covered in strange but probably correct hieroglyphics showing tare weight and such) and an engine with a tender behind. *(The old jokes are the best ones!)* The rails were sufficient to perform an oval with just enough extra rails to allow for one crossover. There was a station, a footbridge and a tunnel.

The tunnel was often the cause of crashes. It would not take a curved rail, being too long. It was a curious khaki-green flecked with a depressing yellow. Hard and rough it was presumably made of sawdust stuck and painted to a curved former. Lying full length on the floor peering at the exit to the tunnel never really gave a sense of "tunnelness". It was always somewhat false. The outside almost managed to create an illusion of greensward or hillock; the inside was poorly painted and looked more like a cardboard box!

Too much winding of the Hornby engine and the device went off the rails. Too little and it barely managed a couple of revolutions.

I had another box with an unbranded passenger set in it. This laid claim to be a "Pullman" train. It was even worse at falling off rails than the Hornby box of tricks. Both train sets were housed in sturdy cardboard boxes with full colour drawings of the (supposedly) relevant train flying across the countryside steam-a-billowing from stacks or pots or whatever they were called. The young boy (me) could accept the fact that there was no countryside in the box and certainly there was no steam anywhere near the engines. What was impossible to come to terms with was the total artificiality of the tin engine and wagons. Garishly coloured and with inadequate pistons and connectors the engines fooled no-one. Neither did they look anything like the "Dublo" items seen in Meccano Magazine. Only years later did the penny drop. "Dublo" was the real gauge to have. Models were more accurate, electricity powered the lines, accessories were matched and realistic.

This boy never did have a double "O" railway set but that doesn't stop the mind from tracking back and imaging "what if" as the Meccano Magazine is read and re-read.

The prejudices of the young were often supported by the magazine. Although a cover showing the *Coronation Scot* was good to look at it was not half of the engine that *Mallard, Sir Nigel Gresley and Silver Link* were. My home town of Darlington obviously biased this reader towards all things LNER.

Dinky toys featured in the boy's armoury of weapons of war. My searchlight-tender actually worked but its searching beam was a trifle puny. The artillery gun was a minor version of the lethal Meccano Machine Gun. It fired spent matchsticks. Not very far. The standard ballistics trajectory could be clearly seen as the matchstick laboured out of the barrel towards its target.

My aeroplanes were either silver grey or war-camouflaged. Of the aeroplanes the favourite piece was the *Armstrong Whitworth Whitley* bomber. I think the reason for the favouritism was that it had twin tail planes that seemed to me to be so modern. The very same planes also flew out of Goosepool aerodrome only a short bicycle ride from home. Goosepool later became Middleton-St-George (fighter station) and then adapted itself to become Teeside Airport. All my aeroplanes ended up with worn paint work and heavily bent propellers.

Despite the cachet of the brand name *"Dinky"* my own view is that they were neither particularly well made, as toys or models, nor were they especially accurate.

Sizing, for example, seemed arbitrary even to a young boy. Still - the pleasure from them was seemingly endless.

Endlessness is relative of course. All the toys went the way of all toys; collapsed, passed on, vanished. The boy also vanished - for a good few years - only to return, later, much later, to nostalgia-land. *So that's where all the toys went!*

* * * * * * * * * *

The Meccano Magazine was a splendid production. Emanating from Liverpool - the home of Meccano and Hornby and Dinky the magazine worked on a number of levels and towards and for those with different interests.

The model railway enthusiast was well catered for and there were also plenty of articles on the genuine article. Steam trains from all over the world were featured and there were always enough photographs to satisfy and reward interest.

The Meccano modeller took pride of place. What came across was the incredible dedication and ability of those who won the competitions - I just hope it wasn't their dads

who did the work. I would guess that for most of those who took the magazine the more esoteric models would be beyond the possibilities offered by their kits. But the sparking of ideas was wonderful. Competitors (even in the thirties) came from the far corners of the world.

Competitions went beyond and away from modelling. Those with a pair of scissors and a few skills could join in the "STOMACHION" competition. *Stomachion sounds rather like a digestive ailment or cure!* If you want to have a go simply copy the rectangle (in the same proportions) on to card. Cut it up. Now create your own "Stomachion" pictures. That is if you can stomach it!

Ships and planes featured heavily with detail a-plenty and photographs to support the text. The countryside and photography had their place and there was always a detailed article on stamp collecting.

All in all then Meccano Magazine was a worthy monthly that repayed its devotees the sixpence it cost them many times over. It made few concessions - assuming understanding and literacy to be present in the young (and not so young) that it set out to serve. Over the years the format varied little but, then, it had no need to do so. I wonder: are there still Meccano Clubs out there? The Meccano system of mini-girders, axles, wheels, gears and pulleys has never been surpassed.

I might add that the only other mechanical assembly kit that I owned was called "KLIPTIKO". It was advertised in the Boy's Own Paper of *"Take a cold tub, sir!"* fame.

If crossed threads and nipped fingers occurred monotonously with Meccano the devilish Kliptiko took the Gold Medal in savagery. You can probably imagine that anything depending on spring loaded folded metal pieces for assembly would nip and scratch and generally fly unexpectedly around the room. The wretched Kliptiko assembly kit did that and more.

Models had a tendency to lean one way or another or to slowly collapse sideways for the want of some additional cross-member. It was about this time that I seriously considered taking up knitting. I was in Miss Crane's class and actually started something purporting to be a scarf. It was never finished - I kept dropping stitches! How anybody knits socks on FOUR (or is it SIX?) needles still defeats me.

Be warned! The symptoms of what might be termed *lack-of-mechanical-ability* can be apparent at any age. In old age they not only continue to plague - they get worse. For me, writing about it is superior to doing it.

Yes, we're still out here Donald!

I caught sight of Donald's reminiscences as they were going to press, and I am sure he won't object to me briefly waving a 1995 Meccano flag. Yes, there still are Meccano clubs, but they are rather different from those organised by the old Meccano Limited. Today, there are in the U.K. a dozen or so clubs and guilds. Although they keep contact with each other, each is autonomous and comprises mainly adult members, many of whom are "of mature years", and most with a quite serious interest in engineering.

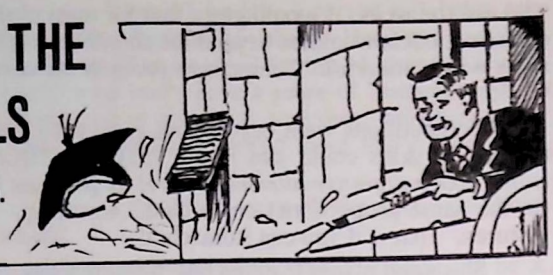
I happen to be a member of the South East London Meccano Club, which next year will celebrate its twentieth anniversary. Members meet monthly, bring and discuss models (many of which are quite ingenious and of fiendish complexity), hold an annual public exhibition, and act as a focus of information for anyone who may be interested in Meccano.

As you can see in the shops, new Meccano is available from France in a smart blue, yellow and nickel colour scheme, while you can get "old red and green" and other styles through specialist dealers who attend the clubs and exhibitions. Old Meccanoists never die, Donald, they simply get their threads crossed!

ALEX CADOGAN

REBELLIONS AT THE HAMILTON SCHOOLS

BY ROGER M. JENKINS.



There can be little doubt that rebellions were extremely popular with readers of the Companion Papers. No matter how obedient and orderly such readers might have been, the vicarious pleasure of seeing masters being defied by schoolboys in fiction must have been immense. The editors themselves were aware of this, naturally, but of course such series had to be carefully spaced out to have the greatest effect or otherwise they would be subject to the law of diminishing returns. There were three main types of rebellion and it will be helpful to examine these in detail.

TYPE A - REBELLIONS AGAINST PERMANENT MASTERS

The most difficult type of rebellion for any author to deal with is one instigated against an unpopular master who is also a permanent member of staff. Hamilton confronted this situation head-on in Gems 211-2. The scholarship boys who had just entered the New House - Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence - incurred Mr. Ratcliff's special snobbish displeasure, and eventually all the juniors in his house instigated a barring-out. The position was exacerbated by the fact that the Head was away, and Mr. Ratcliff as senior housemaster had unlimited power. The crisis point came when Kerr tapped him on the nose with a red-hot poker. Mr. Railton sent for Dr. Holmes, who was unsympathetic towards Mr. Ratcliff, and he was sent on holiday, whereupon the rebellion ceased and there were no recriminations. It is difficult to swallow this: Kerr got away with injuring his housemaster, and we are to assume that when Mr. Ratcliff did return he also forgot about it: forgive and forget was certainly not his maxim.

Years later a similar situation occurred in Gems 720-2. The Head had pardoned Figgins & Co. for drenching him with water because they told him it was a mistake, and their evidence cleared Tom Merry of suspicion. Dr. Holmes subsequently learned that Mr. Ratcliff was the intended victim. When the Head became ill as a result of the drenching, once again Mr. Ratcliff was in control, and sought to punish the juniors for offences the Head had forgiven, and as a result another barring-out occurred. On this occasion Kerr hit Mr. Ratcliff's wrist with a cricket bat, and later Figgins drenched his housemaster with water. It was Mr. Ratcliff's turn to be taken ill, and the rebellion ceased before the Head returned, and once again, it was all overlooked. The two rebellions in a sense achieved very little, but no doubt they allowed the expression of very deeply-held feelings.

At Rookwood, affairs were very similar to those at St. Jim's. In S.O.L. No. 94, when Dr. Chisholm was away with influenza, Mr. Manders took charge of the school, dismissed Mr. Dalton, and eventually caused the Classical Fourth to start a barring-out in the dormitory. The usual sequence of events followed: they were attacked by prefects, confronted with the local policeman, and finally assailed by a group of roughs hired by Mr. Manders. Mr. Dalton returned to the school and, as an ex-professional boxer, dealt with the gang of roughs, and ended the rebellion, remaining to teach his form. There was an unusual twist to the story: Dr. Chisholm was away, and Mr. Manders was plotting to put his rival in an impossible situation by the time Dr. Chisholm arrived, but of course his plan was foiled. Unlike Dr. Holmes and Dr. Locke, Dr. Chisholm was far from being calm and serene: he was in fact impatient and hasty, and Mr. Manders might well have succeeded in his plan. At least, when all was ended, the Classical Fourth were free of the jurisdiction of Mr. Manders.

There was a rebellion at Greyfriars as early as Magnet 190. Loder had suggested to Dr. Locke that the Remove should fag again, and the Head left it to the prefects, who voted in favour. It is something of a mystery why extra fags were needed. There were not a large number of prefects at Greyfriars and one would imagine that the lower forms would have been more than enough. To add some thirty-odd Removites to the list seems quite unnecessary. Anyway, Loder's bullying caused a crisis, and even Wingate was rude to Mr. Quelch. Wingate soon realised that, in seeking to put down what he regarded as impudence, he had been impudent himself. The Remove barricaded themselves upon the roof, and eventually gained the right not to fag. This is a rebellion that is difficult to classify but, since it was originally the Head's decision that caused the trouble, it has been included here, though Dr. Locke was never unpopular himself.

When Prout became Headmaster in 1934, there was plenty of defiance but no outright rebellion, but the governors had not forgotten his mismanagement and so Hacker was appointed Head in 1937 (Magnets 1510-15). Events on the first day of term conspired to put Bunter in trouble with Carne and Hacker, and that unholy alliance became all-powerful as a result of one of Bunter's tricks. He loosened a plank across the Sark, hoping to catch Carne, but instead it was Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch who fell in the Sark and they both had to go on sick leave. Though the reader could smile at Prout, Hacker had never managed to gain the reader's sympathy, and the insults he suffered seemed at times to go over the top, including being punched by Prout (whom he had dismissed) and insulted by Wingate. Like all tyrants, Hacker thought that the only remedy was even harsher punishments, and the Remove eventually barred themselves into the tuck shop under the leadership of Lord Mauleverer. Mr. Hacker's gang of toughs stayed longer than usual, but to no avail, and the temporary Head ended up being forced to wash up for the rebels. This rebellion, rather late in the Magnet's existence, seemed to suffer from a lack of restraint: the drama was to some extent sacrificed to the slapstick elements. Like Mr. Ratcliffe in years gone by, Mr Hacker was sent on holiday for the rest of the term.

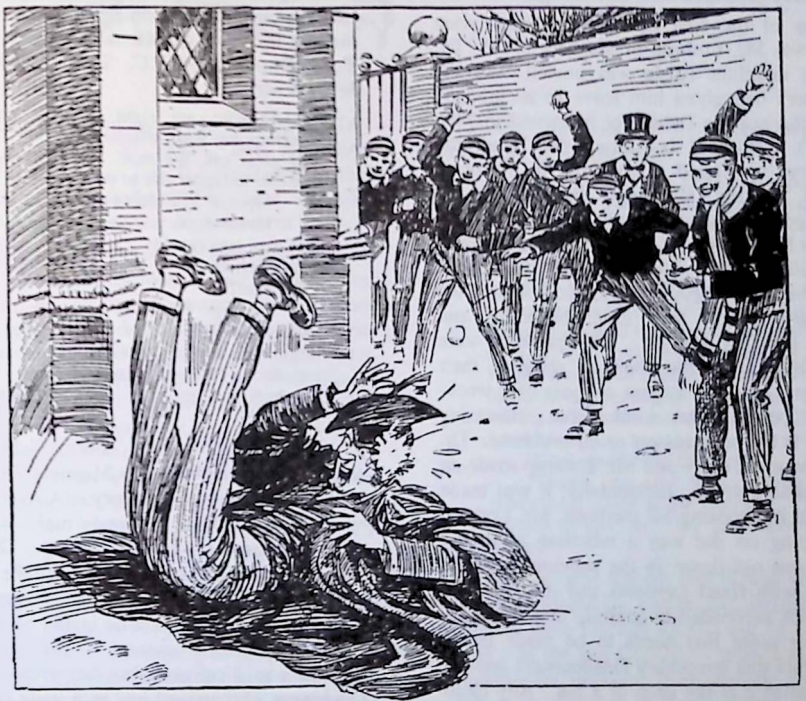
TYPE B - REBELLIONS AGAINST TEMPORARY TEACHERS AND HEADS

A rich vein was opened up when Charles Hamilton began writing about rebellions against temporary staff, since these teachers always left at the end of the series, and no problems were posed about restoring the status quo.

In early days at Rookwood, in S.O.L. 268, Mornington was wealthy and highly unpopular, and he persuaded his guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, that Dr. Chisholm had flogged him unfairly. As Sir Rupert was Chairman of the Governors, it was decided that Dr. Chisholm should be suspended while an inquiry was instituted, and a tyrant Head, Mr. Scroop, came in his place. Mornington was his favourite and could do no wrong. When Mr. Scroop ordered twenty floggings, the juniors instituted a barring-in, screwing him into the Hall. The inquiry exonerated Dr. Chisholm, and he was restored to his Headmastership. Dr. Chisholm was himself unjust at times: so the reader could hardly sympathise with him in his predicament.

Another tyrant was Mr. Carker in S.O.L. 166. Dr. Chisholm, as obstinate and autocratic as ever, dismissed Mr. Dalton because he had refused to cane the whole form:

> "The Fourth missed their popular master; the Head knew that, though he attributed no importance to it. It was very probable that they wanted Mr. Dalton back. In fact, the Head knew that they did. But the



Mr. Ratcliff made a jump at Tom Merry, but a dozen pairs of hands grasped him and sent him spinning over in the snow. "Now snowball him!" shouted Grundy. The juniors clutched up snow in handfuls, and soon snowballs were whizzing at Mr. Ratcliff in showers, smashing on him on all sides. "Grooh-ooch-wooch!" gasped the unfortunate Fifth Form master.

wishes of mere juniors of the Lower School passed by him like the idle wind, which he regarded not."

Matters reached such a stage that Mr. Carker was tarred and feathered, and eventually Jimmy Silver & Co. began a barring-out on an island in the river (one of many Rookwood themes later transferred to Greyfriars). The usual attempts were made to dislodge them. Once again Mr. Dalton intervened to save the juniors from injury from a gang of roughs, hired by Mr. Carker. The Head disapproved of Carker's methods, but the interesting problem was how he could re-instate Mr. Dalton without appearing to give way to the demands of the juniors. You will have to read the story yourself to see how this was achieved.

Rebellions were not confined to the junior forms. At Rookwood in S.O.L. 226, Mr. Greely had a black eye from a punchball incident, and later when going to the rescue of Sir George Hanson, he became more seriously disfigured. Mr. Prout had a similar experience in a later Magnet, but he did not meet Mr. Greely's fate of summary dismissal, without being allowed to give an explanation. The Fifth form behaved badly against a replacement master, and things went from bad to worse until they removed themselves to Manor House School, where Mr. Greely was installed as Headmaster by Sir George. Some juniors joined them, but matters got out of hand in the new school as well. Only Rookwood with the imperious Dr. Chisholm, could have produced such an imbroglio.

One of the first of the Greyfriars tyrant Heads was Mr. Lothrop in Magnets 171-2. Dr. Locke's daughter Rosie was unwell, and the Governors had given him leave to accompany her to the seaside (whatever happened to Mrs. Locke?). Without consulting the Head, the Governors appointed a substitute in his place without making sufficient enquiries. He dismissed Mr. Quelch when he protested against the new Head's cruelty, and Mr. Prout followed soon afterwards. The juniors barricaded themselves in the gymnasium, and some of the customary methods were used: the police, and then a gang of roughs. The prefects were unavailable, since they had all resigned their positions. This is a cogent analysis of a weak-natured person who thinks that increasing severity is the only answer to all problems. Dr. Locke returned early and Mr. Lothrop made an ignominious retreat. Incidentally, it was made clear that in choosing his methods, Mr. Lothrop was relying on the way a rebellion at Rugby School was put down in the previous century. Soldiers with fixed bayonets and drovers with long whips succeeded in quelling that rebellion. The other point that needs to be made is the curious fact that temporary Headmasters seemed to be available at the drop of a hat. Any Head seeking a new post would have to give at least two terms' notice. Assistant masters were readily available from scholastic agencies in those times.

Charles Hamilton seemed to have decided that the theme of a tyrant headmaster could be developed at greater length, which he proceeded to do in the war-time series of 501-5. On this occasion it was Dr. Locke himself who was unwell and he had again been given leave of absence. Mr. Jeffreys, who was known as Judge Jeffreys, was as cruel as any of the tyrants and soon dismissed Mr. Quelch, engaging Mr. Schwartz to replace him. Mr. Schwartz was a British subject, but Herr Gans, who was a Saxon, told him that their Prussian methods would not suit Greyfriars. To exacerbate matters, the Head extended fagging to the Remove again and also to the Fourth, but the actual rebellion started rather slowly. It began with the Inquisition: boys were dressed in Guy Fawkes masks and long coats, administering punishment first to Loder and then to Mr. Schwartz. (This was, of course, a method later used in the Prout Headmaster series.) A barring-out took place in the Remove passage, and the usual means were employed: first the prefects - only Loder, Walker and Carne - then P.C. Tozer and finally a gang of roughs. This pattern of rebellions was now firmly established for all of Hamilton's schools. Though personalities and preliminaries might vary, the subsequent events became established routine. It must be added, nevertheless, that the arrival of a single policeman could represent only a token show of authority, to say nothing of the fact that the jurisdiction of the police in such matters is highly questionable in law, as Peter Todd remarked to P.C. Tozer in the Judge Jeffreys series:

"You've no right here. You're overstepping your official powers. Unless you clear off, we shall have to consider whether to report you to your superiors."

"My eye" ejaculated Mr. Tozer.

"However, as you are here, kindly take that man into custody," said Peter, pointing to Mr. Jeffreys.

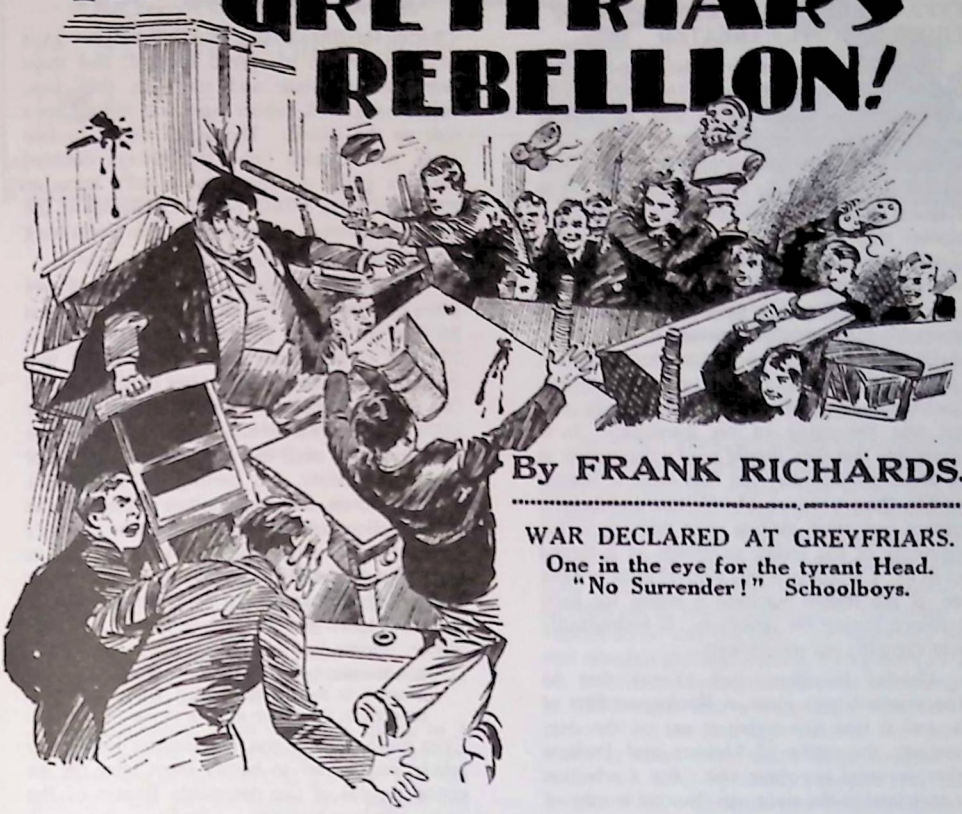
"Wot?"

"I charge that man with assault and battery, in the form of canings and floggings, and also with attempting to introduce a Prussian system into the school - which amounts to high treason in wartime!"

It was the Sixth Form who found themselves in rebellion in Magnets 743-5. Sir Hilton Popper and a minority of Governors had wanted Dr. Locke to resign to make way for a younger man with new methods. The Head eventually decided to resign and make way for Mr. Carnforth, whose new methods were to cane all and sundry and, when he began on the Sixth Form, a rebellion ensued. Yet again, Mr. Quelch was dismissed, but he wrote to some Governors who arrived just as a gang of toughs were arguing about their payment for services

ANOTHER ROUSING SCHOOL YARN, FEATURING OTTO VAN TROMP

THE GREYFRIARS REBELLION!



By FRANK RICHARDS.

WAR DECLARED AT GREYFRIARS.
One in the eye for the tyrant Head.
"No Surrender!" Schoolboys.

rendered to their employer, Mr. Carnforth. Dr. Locke was asked to return, and normality returned to Greyfriars, but the reputation of the Sixth Form was tarnished for quite a while afterwards - in the eyes of the juniors, at least.

The Brander rebellion in Magnets 1169-74 constituted the ultimate development in rebellions against tyrant masters. Sir Hilton Popper again wanted Dr. Locke to resign, but this time he refused to capitulate. Brander's nephew, van Tromp, entered the Sixth Form and, when Dr. Locke received a blow on the head, the way was open for Mr. Brander, whose tyranny was bolstered by his nephew, whom he installed as Head Prefect. There were some unusual aspects to this series: after the barring-out began, Mr. Brander agreed with Mr. Quelch that there would be no recriminations if it were ended at once but, as soon as it was over, he broke his word, and so it recommenced; not only were Sir Hilton Popper's keepers employed against the rebels, but a gang of roughs as well; and finally, Charles Hamilton, who must have been reading G.F. Bradby's "The Lanchester Tradition" was inspired to make Quelch give this reply to his dismissal:

> "According to the Statutes," repeated Mr. Quelch, with absolute calmness, "a form-master of ten years' standing has an appeal to the Board, and may remain at the school until his appeal is heard and decided. All that the Headmaster can do is to suspend him from his duties. That has already happened in my case, as I have no form. If you doubt my statement, sir, and are ignorant of the Statutes with which you ought to be thoroughly acquainted, I am willing to refer the matter to Major Cherry when he arrives -"
>
> "Confound Major Cherry!"
>
> "Thank you sir," said a grim and rather gruff voice in the doorway. "I am obliged to you, sir! By gad, very much indeed!"

When it became known that it was van Tromp who had injured Dr. Locke, Mr. Brander and his nephew were literally kicked out of Greyfriars. This was the last Greyfriars rebellion against a Headmaster imposed from outside the school, and it is one rich in both action and verbal

exchanges. Not even Charles Hamilton himself could better this rebellion series.

TYPE C - REBELLIONS IN SUPPORT OF THOSE UNJUSTLY TREATED

The Rookwood juniors who supported Mr. Dalton in Schoolboys' Own 166 were in an understandable position: he was an athletic popular young master, and often protected his form against the injustices of others. But what are we to make of the High Oaks rebellion in Magnets 1043-9? However much the Magnet readers may have enjoyed reading about Mr. Quelch, it is hardly believable that his form would have instituted a rebellion in support of him. Charles Hamilton gave it what credibility he could: Mr. Quelch, immersed in his History of Greyfriars, forgot about his form, and Dr. Locke intervened to restore order. Both Mr. Quelch and his form thought, erroneously, that this was the cause of his dismissal. It is acceptable that they should send a deputation to the Head because they felt they were to blame, but Mr. Quelch was no Mr. Dalton, and there is perhaps too much skating over thin ice in the beginning of the series, enjoyable as it turned out to be. Certainly, it was a novel twist to have one of the rebels purchase a house for their residence during the rebellion. It undoubtedly beats camping out somewhere.

Charles Hamilton used to say that he experimented with ideas at Rookwood first of all, and it was like trying it out on the dog. Certainly the strike of Masters and Prefects never occurred anywhere else. But a rebellion on an island in the river was deemed worthy of being transferred to the Magnet, and this duly occurred in Nos. 1374-82. Bunter had filled a squirt of ink and left it in the hollow of a tree, intending to use it on Prout. Someone else had a reason to use it on the fifth-form master and, when it happened, Bunter boasted about his intrepidity - so much so, in fact, that authority came to hear of it, and he was expelled. He refused to go, and kept returning to Greyfriars in secret. After a few weeks of this, the Remove decided he was innocent, and backed him up by instituting a rebellion on Popper's island, though it was doubtful whether it was the baronet's property:

> "The fact was that Sir Hilton's claim to that island was very nebulous. Sir Hilton's wide estate was covered with mortgages, as with a garment. But he had found difficulties in raising a mortgage on that island. There was a lack of title-deeds. Lawyers were more particular about title-deeds than was the lord of Popper Court."

Charles Hamilton stated that the Magnet gave him more room to spread himself, and there were many twists and turns in this plot, including a bank robber who was hiding up a tree on the island. The series ended in fine style, with Quelch (who had always doubted Bunter's guilt) obtaining the Head's leave to undertake there would be no expulsions if the real culprit owned up, and he led his Form back to Greyfriars in fine style.

The St. Jim's juniors backed up Tom Merry when he was unjustly accused of having robbed Mr. Ratcliff of fifty golden sovereigns in Gems 776-784. The reader knew Tom Merry was innocent, and his contemporaries believed it, but the unusual aspect of the series is that the identity of the real criminal - an outsider - was never revealed until the end. There were other unusual elements: the barring-out took place over Christmas, and Mr. Railton gathered some of his fellow soldiers from war-time days (a sergeant and some privates) as a force to try to storm the School House. They were very far from being the usual gang of toughs; as one of them said to the juniors:

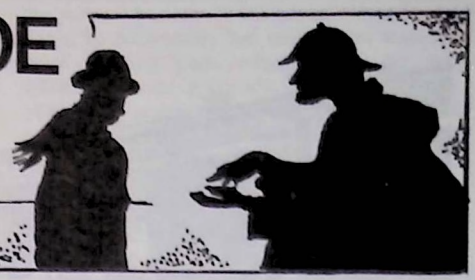
> "But I ain't grumbling. I've 'ad some 'ard knocks; but ten bob a day ain't to be sneezed at these 'ard times. Bless your little 'earts, keep it up as long as you like."

Even more strange was that Bunter joined the rebels, only to try to betray them later on: an action typical of the detestable Bunter of the early nineteen-twenties. Perhaps the most unusual episode of all was when Inspector Skeat arrived and was treated by the juniors as an enemy at first. It turned out that he had actually come to tell Tom Merry that someone was passing sovereigns in the district whilst Tom Merry was barricaded inside the School House.

And so we end where we began, at St. Jim's. Although Rookwood and Greyfriars often had points of similarity in their rebellions, St. Jim's managed to keep an individual style of its own. Perhaps the Greyfriars rebellions will live longest in the memory, but all three schools contributed to this genre, all are worthy of considerations and, whichever story of rebellion that you happen to read, I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

Mr LESTRADE

BY DEREK HINRICH



This is how we are introduced to him, as Mr. Lestrade, "a little sallow, rat-faced, dark-eyed fellow." Later in the same narrative, and subsequently elsewhere, we are told he was lean and ferret-like. On other occasions, perhaps after he had put on a little weight, he is compared to a bulldog, both for his tenacity and as to his features - a ratty, ferrety, bulldog. Clearly Lestrade conveyed a strong animal impression to Watson.

Watson, too, makes much of "little" Lestrade. Well, height is often a subjective thing. Holmes "was rather over six feet and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller"; Watson himself was "a middle-sized, strongly built man", say about five feet ten inches in height. Lestrade would probably be about two inches shorter and, being of a wiry build, looked smaller.

At the outset, when they first appear in *A Study in Scarlet*, Messrs Gregson and Lestrade, "the smartest of the Scotland Yarders" and "the pick of a bad lot" are solely *Mr.* Gregson and *Mr.* Lestrade: so they address each other, with that type of icy formality with which opposing generals were wont to exchange messages in times past. There is no mention of their respective ranks, no "guv" or "skip" as in our modern *tele-romans policiers*, though I rather feel that Gregson is the senior: it would surely be strange for two officers of equal rank to be placed jointly in charge of the same case.

We have, I believe, become too accustomed to think of him as "Inspector Lestrade" and perhaps to wonder that he remained in that rank for so long - from at least 1881 when we first meet him in *A Study in Scarlet*, until 1902 and *The Three Garridebs* after which he must, surely, have retired - but did he indeed remain so long unpromoted? It would be nice to think not and there may be reason to believe he did not. His rank is specifically mentioned as "Inspector" only twice - in the Milverton case and in that of the Norwood Builder. For the rest he is "Lestrade" or "Mr. Lestrade".

We know so little of him, nothing in fact, apart from those cases recorded by Watson in which he appears. There are thirteen of these, and in two only *en passant* (and the dating of four of them is in question), besides mention of two others of which the details are not recorded.

Perhaps it might be possible by reference to the history of the Metropolitan Police and the careers of some of Mr. Lestrade's contemporaries, of whom we have some note to infer or deduce a little more. Let us see.

Sir Robert Mark, the former Commissioner, in a television interview, once observed that when he joined the police force it was still an artisan body. It was in the beginning something less than that. The Metropolitan Police was raised in 1829. Its initial strength was some 3000 men, recruited from labourers, ex-soldiers, servants out of place, unemployed craftsmen of various sorts, and the like. A constable's pay was nineteen shillings a week, a sergeant's £1 2s 6d. While attempting to maintain the strength of 3000 there was a very high turnover in personnel: in the first eight years of the Force's existence there were nearly 6000 resignations (many of them probably encouraged) and another 5000 were dismissed as unsatisfactory for one reason or another.

The Metropolitan Police was originally conceived as a uniformed force to maintain law and order, to protect lives and property, and to deter crime by its presence. There was no suggestion that it should embrace a detective force. Any *post facto* investigation and thief-taking, insofar as it took place, still remained largely the province of the Bow Street Runners, a quasi-official body in the service of the Bow Street magistrates, which remained in being for ten years after the formation of the police proper (it is possible that the Runners gave some tuition in their craft to selected police officers). The police force inevitably found itself becoming involved in crime investigation but at first plain clothes work was apparently very much an ad hoc affair, with officers undertaking it as and when required and as they might be detailed.

In 1842, however, three years after the disbandment of the Runners, it was decided that a regular detective force should be created within the "Met" and so the Detective Department of the Commissioner's Office came into being. It had a strength initially of eight - two inspectors and six sergeants - and these

Holmes, Watson and Lestrade at Combe Tracey

were the only official detectives in the whole of London, probably in the whole country.

It was not until more than twenty years later, in 1869, that it was considered necessary to increase the number of detective officers in London substantially (The Detective Department had been enlarged in the meantime but only to a modest fifteen). The establishment was increased by 207. 27 of these officers were allotted to the Detective Department, raising its strength to 42, and 180 posts (160 of which were for detective constables) were distributed amongst the various divisions. The divisional detectives were selected from within the divisions by their superintendents and were employed in their own districts. There was no central control of the detective force as a whole.

No further reorganisation took place until after the great Scotland Yard scandal of 1877 when the three principle assistants of Superintendent Williamson, the head of the Detective Department, Chief Inspectors Clarke, Druscovitch, and Palmer, together with Meiklejohn, a former colleague who had left the Detective Department to head the police of the Midland Railway, were tried on charges of corruption following the arrest of a gang of fraudsmen responsible for a series of large-scale racing swindles. The frauds were many and ingenious, involving such bogus bodies as "The Systematic Investment Society" and "The General Society for Insurance against Losses on the Turf", and other devices to induce credulous members of the public, both at home and abroad, to invest in "infallible betting systems". The Comtesse de Goncourt, for instance, was swindled out of £10,000 by these means (this coup perhaps gives a whole new meaning to the *Prix Goncourt*).

Clarke was acquitted and retired, shortly thereafter. The others were each sentenced to two years' imprisonment. It is possible that some junior officers were also involved in the widespread web of corruption spun by Benson and Kurr, the principals in the frauds, but there were no further prosecutions. This was probably, proportionate to the size of the then Detective Department, the greatest corruption scandal in the history of Scotland Yard.

In April 1878 the detective organisation of the Metropolitan Police was extensively reorganised. "The whole of the detective establishment will form one body under the Director of Criminal Investigation. With the exception of the undermentioned officers, promoted or appointed to responsible posts, the present staff will be placed on probation for three months..."

The "establishment" was detailed as consisting of a Central Office staffed by one Chief-Superintendent, three Chief-Inspectors, three first class inspectors and 17 second class inspectors, with a clerical staff of four sergeants and two constables. In the various divisions there were 14 local inspectors, 29 first class sergeants, 30 second class sergeants, 110 third class sergeants, 60 detective patrols, and 20 special patrols.

The extent of the corruption revealed by the great Turf Frauds Case must have severely shaken the public confidence in the Metropolitan Police which had been so painstakingly built up over the previous fifty years since the days when they had been stigmatised as "Peel's bloody gang" by the radical element. This was further tested two years later by the outcry following the Titley case where evidence against a chemist suspected of acting as an abortionist was obtained by methods denounced as the use of *agents provocateurs* and severely commented upon by the trial judge.

It was at the beginning of this period when Scotland Yard's fortunes and repute were at such a low ebb, that Sherlock Holmes gained his first great success *d'estime et de scandale* by the

solution of the Hurlstone mystery and the recovery of the ancient crown of the Kings of England. It was a happy chance for him and over the next three years he was able to build up his practice. It was at this time too, or shortly after, that Lestrade began to consult him. Some eight years before Inspector Macdonald came to the same conclusion, Lestrade - however much he might as a professional detective affect a patronising air towards the amateur - "had talent enough to perceive that there was no humiliation in seeking the assistance of one who already stood alone in Europe, both in his gifts and (shortly) in his experience."

And Holmes's opinions of Gregson and Lestrade take on a new light when considered against recent events in the Yard's history.

When Lestrade spoke of twenty years' experience in describing his discovery of Stangerson's body, he could only be referring to his general police service, including his early years as a uniformed officer. Forty years as a detective is inconceivable, given the limitations of recruitment and retirement ages.

Since one may join the police at the same age as one may enlist as a soldier, Lestrade must have been just short of forty at the time of *A Study in Scarlet* and would have joined the police in or about 1861 and would have been born between 1843 and 1845. He would thus have been about the same age as, for instance, Inspector (later Chief Inspector) Abberline who figured prominently in the hunt for Jack the Ripper. Abberline was a sergeant within two years of joining the Force, but Lestrade was plainly not of the type to be a high-flyer, so his rise was likely to have been rather of the slow but steady kind.

I would hazard that Lestrade, after some eight years' service was most probably one of the 160 detective constables appointed in the divisions in 1869 and then progressed through the various grades of sergeant until he was posted to the Central Office of the CID as a second class inspector in 1878 as part of the "new broom" policy and that Tobias Gregson was brought in at the same time as one of the first class inspectors.

The quality of recruits to the police would have improved by the time Lestrade joined as may be seen by reference to officers who were broadly his contemporaries. Chief Superintendent (later Chief Constable, in those days the most senior rank at the Yard to which an "ex-ranker" might aspire) Williamson and Chief Inspector Moore were second generation policemen (Williamson's father, a former warrant officer in the royal Artillery who fought at Waterloo, was one of Peel's first divisional superintendents); Chief Inspector (later Superintendent) Swanson had been a schoolmaster; Chief Inspector Abberline had been a clocksmith. We have no means of knowing Lestrade's occupation before he joined the police. In view of his advancement in the Force, he presumably had rather more than the usual working class education of his day (children in mining districts started work at the pits - above ground - at eight years of age, while costermongers' children went to work at about seven and were often in business on their own, and with a "woman" of their own age, by fourteen). Nevertheless he was, one might say, less a product of Eton and Oxford as of Hard Knocks and Life. "Streetwise" is the current cant phrase: a necessary grounding for a thief-taker (splendid examples of this quality are to be found in Dickens's interviews with an earlier generation of Scotland Yarders in *All The Year Round*). He was apparently adept at horse-handling, since he undertook to drive Jefferson Hope's growler and did so with evident skill. This competence with horses might suggest a rural childhood.

Much of Lestrade's initial ambivalence towards Holmes no doubt sprang from social differences. Holmes was a gentleman, the cadet of an established country and, no doubt, "county" family, however impoverished lately, and his brother was a rising civil servant shortly to have the ear of a succession of Prime Ministers at a period when interest was still a significant, if tacit, factor in advancement in public service. I have spoken of Lestrade's patronising air towards Holmes, but Holmes was no less patronising in his own fashion which might have rankled the more. And Gentlemen and Players came out of different gates.

Gradually as the years passed, however, they mellowed each a little. They still rallied each other on occasion, as when Holmes met Lestrade in the Empty House, "I think you want a little unofficial help. Three undetected murders in one year won't do, Lestrade. But you handled the Molesey Mystery with less than your usual - that's to say you handled it fairly well." Grudging praise, that last sentence, but the "you" in the first could well be Scotland Yard at large and not only poor Mr. Lestrade. On the other hand, Lestrade was cockily exultant early in the Norwood builder case - so Watson avers but then we only view Lestrade through Watson's partial eye and Watson, as we know, could be mistaken.

For instance, in his account of the Boscombe Valley case, Watson has Holmes inform him that Lestrade had been retained on behalf of the younger McCarthy. Now Scotland Yard detective officers could not be retained privately, unlike their predecessors at Bow street. So this could only be a case of "Scotland Yard Called In" as the papers used to have it, and it was on Lestrade's recommendation, or because of his own (ie Lestrade's) doubts, that Holmes appeared in the affair.

Inspector Lestrade

It is clear, too, that Lestrade must have enjoyed the confidence of his superiors to a marked degree if one considers the delicacy of many of the cases allotted to him:

the Milverton murder, where the victim was known to be a Society blackmailer with many people prominent in the *beau monde* (or the Marlborough House Set) in his clutches:

the Lucas murder where the victim was a notorious foreign agent who must have been well known to Special Branch:

the Cadogan West murder and the theft of the Bruce-Partington plans (these two cases suggest that Lestrade may well have carried out tours of duty in the Branch):

the disappearance of the (bigamous) Lady Robert St Simon (how did she escape prosecution?).

As far as we know, Lestrade was personally involved in only 15 cases in the twenty-three years of Holmes's active practice out of approximately 180 recorded or mentioned by Watson (and the 500 of capital importance which Holmes himself claimed to have investigated). It is only fair to suppose that Lestrade's other cases - which must have been many - in *his* twenty-four years in the CID were uniformly successful, otherwise he would have been posted elsewhere.

Lestrade's rank is mentioned only in the Milverton case and in that of the Norwood Builder. The later took place in the summer of 1894 but the Milverton affair has been placed anywhere between 1883 and 1899 as Watson is careful not to date it too precisely. My own inclination is for the earlier date.

Lestrade's rank in 1894 must by then have been first class Inspector. In the next eight years there was ample time for one and perhaps even two further promotions.

The following year he was engaged on the Bruce-Partington case when he called on Sherlock Holmes in company with Mycroft Holmes, the Prime Minister's emissary. Now, in view of Lord Salisbury's concern, only a senior detective, senior in rank as well as service, would have been employed in this matter, so it seems clear to me that it was now Chief Inspector Lestrade who called on this occasion and who was probably temporarily attached to the Special Branch.

And it was the now mellow Chief Inspector, or possibly Superintendent, Lestrade who in 1900 was in the practice of dropping in on Holmes and Watson of an evening to discuss such oddities as the man who hated Napoleon so much as to indulge in iconoclasm. In support of this it should be noted that when Lestrade speaks of Inspector Hill, the expert on the criminal element amongst the Italian community, it is in terms suggestive of his seniority to the expert.

But as to the actual relationship between the gentleman and the player, when all the badinage is ignored, it is plain that Sherlock Holmes had no doubts *au fond*. When he needed an official police associate for "the biggest thing in years" there was only one man he wanted beside him. How he squared the Chief Constable of Devonshire we do not know - perhaps brother Mycroft had a word with the Home Office - but it was wiry "little" Lestrade, "the best of the professionals", who got off the London express at Coombe Tracey.

Neither was there any doubt on Lestrade's part either. We all know his enconium after the recovery of the black pearl of the Borgias': "well, I've seen you handle a good many cases, Mr. Holmes, but I don't know that I ever knew a

more workmanlike one than that. We're not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down tomorrow there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand."

What is even more significant, however, is that when he heard what was afoot in Baker Street on a night in early April 1894, Lestrade made certain that he was in charge of the police arrangements, for it was "good to see you back in London, sir."

A typical British understatement with which we all agree.

A Note on Sources

In writing the above I have, besides the Sherlock Holmes stories, drawn on:

The Story of Scotland Yard by George Dilnot

Critical Years at the Yard by Belton Cobb

Jack the Ripper A-Z by Paul Begg, Martin Fido and Keith Skinner.

(The above article appeared first in *Back to Baker Street*, a publication of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.)

Seasonal Greetings to all readers.

REG ANDREWS, LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY

* *

Best wishes to all magazine and book collectors. Pre-1970 Rupert Annuals and books always wanted.

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* *

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* *

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'T'taint the Xmas goodies or the pies just full of mince.
It's Annual time my readers, a holiday in itself.
But most of all it's magic, does wonders for my health.

Happy Xmas, JOHNNY BURSLEM

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* *

It's a long shot but has anyone any books by Elizabeth Myers?

TONY GLYNN
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* *

SILVERWINGS AND THE BEAVER

BY FRANK RICHARDS

(We are delighted to have been given by Una Hamilton Wright another of the fairy-stories which her uncle created especially for her when she was a little girl)

Silverwings the Fairy was flying one day over the Earth, when she dropped her fairy wand, and it fell into a deep river. The fairy flew down to the bank of the river, but she could not see the wand, which had sunk in deep water. And poor Silverwings said: "Oh, whatever shall I do?"

Now it happened that on the river was a beaver's dam. It was built of branches and leaves and twigs, and in it the beavers had their little houses. All the beavers had gone out that day to hunt for food, excepting Bobo, a young beaver, who was too lazy to work. Bobo hid himself in a bush till the other beavers were out of sight, and then he came out, and lay in the sunshine on the river-bank. And so it happened that Silverwings saw him there.

"Please, beaver," said Silverwings, "dive into the river and fetch up my fairy wand. I cannot go back to fairy land without it."

Bobo yawned.

"Too much trouble" he answered. "Sorry and all that, miss, but I never take trouble if I can help it."

"You are a very lazy beaver," said Silverwings.

Bobo nodded. "So they tell me," he answered.

"You are very lazy indeed," said Silverwings.

"My dear young lady," said Bobo, "Don't tell me that any more. I've heard that from the King Beaver, and the Queen Beaver, and the other beavers, till I'm quite fed up. Say something new."

"What am I to do without my wand?" said Silverwings.

"If that's a riddle," said Bobo, "I don't know the answer. Ask me an easier one."

"It's not much trouble for a beaver to dive into the river," said Silverwings.

"Not much," agreed Bobo, "but some! And I don't like any trouble at all. Sorry but it's not in my line."

"If you will fetch up my wand," said Silverwings, "I will do three things for you in return. You will only have to call out "Please, Silverwings" and whatever you wish shall be done, and this shall happen three times."

Now when Bobo heard that, he began to take notice. And lazy as he was, he got up, and dived into the river, and fetched up the fairy wand. He gave it to Silverwings, and she flew away to fairy land, and Bobo went to sleep on the river bank.

When the other beavers came home at sunset, they saw him there, and they were very angry because he had not helped them in hunting for food. So they woke him up, and the King Beaver said:

"Bobo, why did you not come hunting?"

"I stayed at home to mend the dam," said Bobo, who was a very untruthful beaver. "There was a leak in it, and I was afraid that the water would come in, and we should all catch colds."

"And you have mended it?" asked the King Beaver.

"I was just going to," said Bobo, "but I wanted to make a good job of it, so I thought it over and over and over, and I was still thinking it over when you came home.

"You were fast asleep!" exclaimed the King Beaver.

"Oh, no, not at all," said Bobo.

"Your eyes were shut!" said the King Beaver.

"I think better with my eyes shut," said Bobo.

But the beavers did not believe him, and they took him into the house on the dam on the river, and told him that in the morning he should have a beating for being so lazy.

In the morning, Bobo was very much alarmed. He did not like the idea of being beaten at all. And suddenly he remembered Silverwings, and called out very loud:

"Please, Silverwings."

Then Silverwings appeared, and said:

"What do you want, Bobo?"

"The beavers are going to beat me this morning," said Bobo. "They make out that I am lazy. Now please make me into a big, immense, enormous beaver, so big that they will not dare to come near me."

So Silverwings touched him with her wand, and immediately he became a great, big, enormous beaver, three times as big as any beaver that ever was seen. Then she flew away.

Now Bobo was so big that he quite filled up his room in the dam, and when the King Beaver and the other beavers came to beat him, they were so frightened that they all ran away at once, and went a long way down the river, where they built a new dam to live in.

Bobo laughed very much, feeling very proud of having frightened away all the beavers, and went to sleep again.

But when he woke up late in the day, and thought of going out to fish for his dinner, he found that he was so big that he could not get out of the dam. He rolled over and over, and struggled, and wriggled, but he could not get out, and at last he was so tired that he went to sleep again, hungry as he was. When he woke up next morning, he was fearfully hungry, and he struggled so hard to get out, that the wall fell out of the dam, and Bobo fell into the water. Now Bobo had always been able to swim, like all beavers, but now he was so big, and so heavy, that he sank to the bottom of the river, and could not come up again. And he was very nearly downed, when suddenly he remembered Silverwings, and cried out as loud as he could:

"Please Silverwings! Change me into a fish!"

And immediately he was changed into a fish. Now fishes can breathe under water, so Bobo felt all right at once. He swam about in the river, and found some little things that fishes eat, and ate them for his breakfast, and then he drifted along, letting the river take him on its current, as he was too lazy to swim against the current.

"Why, this is much better than being a beaver," thought Bobo. "No trouble at all now. This is a jolly life."

He was just thinking this, when he found himself caught in something in the river. It was a large net which a fisherman had placed in the river, right across from one bank to the other, to catch all the fish that came along with the current. Bobo was caught in the net before he knew what was happening.

"Oh dear!" said Bobo. "This isn't half so good as being a beaver, after all. I've got to get out of this."

He wriggled for a long time, but he could not get out of the net. And then he remembered Silverwings again, and called out:

"Please, Silverwings, change me into a caterpillar, so that I can crawl out of this beastly net."

And immediately he was changed into a caterpillar, and he crawled through the meshes of the net, and crawled to the bank where he was very glad to lie in the sun and dry himself.

After a time, he sat up on his tail and looked around him. In this place the bank of the river was very rocky and stony, and there were no trees or leaves for a caterpillar to eat, and Bobo was getting very hungry again. So he called out:

"Please, Silverwings, change me into a bird, so that I can fly away from this unpleasant place."

But he did not change into a bird: he was still a caterpillar. So he called out again:

"Silverwings! Bother you, Silverwings, can't you hear? Change me into a bird, will you?"

But still he did not change into a bird: and then he remembered that he had had his three wishes, and there was nothing more to come. First he had been changed into a great big enormous beaver, and then into a fish, and then into a caterpillar: so now he had to remain a caterpillar.

When Bobo understood this, he was very much alarmed and dismayed. He crawled along the bank, but he could not find anything that a caterpillar could eat, and he grew hungrier and hungrier. But presently, as he crawled along, he saw a pretty fairy sitting on the bank, and recognised Silverwings. So he crawled up to her and said:

"I say, I'm awfully hungry. Will you get me something to eat? You can do it quite easily with your fairy wand."

Silverwings yawned.

"Too much trouble," she answered. "Sorry and all that, but I never take any trouble if I can help it."

Then Bobo remembered what he had said to Silverwings when she first asked him to get her wand out of the river, and he was very much ashamed. But he said:

"You are a very lazy fairy."

Silverwings nodded. "So they tell me," she answered.

"What am I to do without anything to eat?" exclaimed Bobo.

"If that's a riddle," said Silverwings, "I don't know the answer. Ask me an easier one."

"It's not much trouble for a fairy to wave her wand," said Bobo.

"Not much," agreed Silverwings, "But some! And I don't like any trouble at all. It's not in my line."

Then Bobo looked very sorrowful, just as sorrowful as a caterpillar could possibly look.

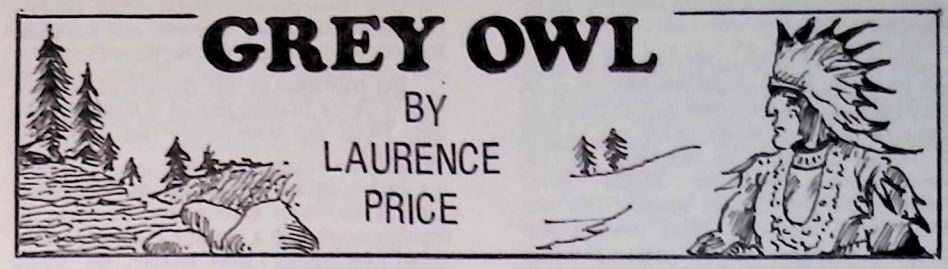
"Oh dear," he said, "I wish I hadn't been such a lazy beaver. Now I shall have to be a caterpillar all my life, and it won't be very long, because I've nothing to eat. Boo-hoo!"

Then Silverwings took pity on him, and she said:

"If I touch you with my wand, and change you back into a beaver, will you be a good beaver, and an industrious beaver, and help the other beavers, and never tell stories any more?"

"What-ho!" said Bobo, brightening up, "I will! Honest Injun!"

So Silverwings touched him with her wand, and immediately he became a beaver again: and he ran away back to the other beavers; and when he told them how sorry he was, they let him off the beating, and he lived happily with the other beavers ever afterwards.



We'd watch the way the Equator ends,
And visit "Grey Owl" and his beaver friends -
And when we went home through the sunset red
That fairy would tuck us up in bed!

So ends a simple poem for children in the mid-thirties book "The Caravan Family" by M.D. Hillyard. The poem was a flight of fancy but there was nothing whimsical whatsoever about Grey Owl.

At the time the poem was written Grey Owl was known as a famous Red Indian naturalist with a particular interest in the conservation and protection of the native Canadian beaver. His background was not then shrouded in controversy as it would be later at the time of his tragically early death from pneumonia at the age of fifty, a weak and worn out man following months of arduous lecture tours in England, the United States and Canada.

Following the horror and carnage of the Great War there was an international yearning by many for a 'return to nature'. This reconciliation with the natural world suggested simple, healthy living and perhaps the possibility of rediscovering lost innocence. This was reflected in the continuing popularity of the Scouting movement for both boys and girls, the formation of rambling clubs and even those promoting naturism.

There seemed, therefore, a niche for a man who appeared to be at one with nature and who taught the precepts of what we today call conservation and ecological awareness. Add to this a romantic Indian background - a native Canadian caring for the welfare of the endangered Canadian national animal and emblem, the beaver.

Not even in the life of Grey Owl, however, could such an aura of romance last for long. By the time of his death hostile questions were being asked. Was Grey Owl, in fact, an Indian at all? Was he a half breed? Or even an Englishman? All these accusations and counter accusations only served to cloud and to diminish the great achievements that Grey Owl had accomplished..

Paradoxically, Grey Owl never intended to suggest in his writing or in his lectures that life in the Canadian wilderness was in any sense romantic. What he did provide was a realistic, unsentimental description of life, and death, in that wilderness, where even a campfire meal was a mundane affair and Spring a dangerous, life-threatening season.

With regard to his origins, Grey Owl was always careful to say that he was not a full-blooded Indian. His real name was Archie Belaney and he was born in 1888. There were two versions of his origins. Either he was 'a clever schoolboy from Hastings' with a passion for animals and Red Indian life, or he was the son of a Scotsman called McNeill, who had served as a scout with Buffalo Bill at Fort Laramie in Wyoming, and had a full blood Apache wife called Kitty Cochise.

To follow the latter version, McNeill was supposed to have hated the cruelty and injustice of the wars against the Indians of the prairies, and resigned from his post. Archie, however, later came into contact with Buffalo Bill and travelled to Europe in his Wild West show. Upon his return to America he went northward to Canada.

In reality, Grey Owl was born Archibald Stansfeld Belaney on 18th September, 1888, in Hastings, Sussex, England, the son of George and Katherine Belaney. He was named Archibald after his grandfather who in his younger days had published a book of poetry, "The 100 Days of Napoleon", dedicated to Queen Victoria. He left poetry behind and became a prominent ship's broker, marrying an heiress, Juliana Jackson, who bore him three children, George, Caroline and Adelaide.

George could best be described as an adventurer with a keen interest in big game shooting and a penchant for falling in love with young women. His third wife was a thirteen year old American girl, Katherine Verona Cox, from Florida, whom he had married in 1886. His second wife had been her older sister, Elizabeth, who had died in 1885 from a stomach ailment. Katherine, or Kitty Cox, was the

mother of Grey Owl. A second baby boy, Hugh, was born in 1890.

On the death of his mother, George Belaney was persuaded it was in the best interests of all the family, including his own, that he should go into exile and never return. Kitty was allowed to remain to bring up the boys on the understanding that she should never communicate with George again. This was when Archie was four. Kitty however sent money to George when he requested it and Archie was taken from her and put into the care of the aunts Carrie and Ada so that he could have a good life.

It was aunt Ada who helped develop Archie's love for nature in his formative years. She took him for walks and explained about the trees and the forest undergrowth, wild flowers, birds and insects, giving them form and names. He had a genuine love and understanding of the authentic way of Indian life and loved to play as an Indian scout; silent tracking of animals was his hobby.

In actuality, the lurid Buffalo Bill Wild West show enactment of the American West consisting of the firing of guns and the dust and din of battle, bloodcurdling yells and the taking of scalps was anathema to the young Archie Belaney. His empathy lay at all times with the true Indian and his traditions.

Out of this background Archie developed his Grey Owl persona, and George Belaney became the Scotsman, McNeill, and Katherine Belaney, the full blood Apache, Kitty Cochise.

But regardless of this mixture of fact and fantasy Archie Belaney arrived in Canada in the early 1900s, and from hereon fact and fiction coalesce.

Archie arrived in Canada in April 1906. Little is known of exactly how he made his transformation from a 'green 17 year old youth' to an experienced Indian trapper, yet within three years he had shed his civilian clothes, had learnt the Ojibway tongue and dwelt amongst those people, who accepted him as one of their own and gave him the name Wa-Sha-Quoon-Asin - 'He Who Walks By Night' - Grey Owl. What was remarkable to those who knew him best was how, in a short season, he learnt the secrets of the wilderness and became an outstanding guide and woodsman, demonstrating his passion for woodcraft and wild animals.

For the remaining years prior to the Great War he adapted himself completely to the Indian way of life and he became a forest ranger. But when the war started he joined the 13th Montreal battalion and served overseas. He was twice wounded and rendered unfit for further active service, returning in time to his old life and becoming an assistant Chief Ranger. It was during the years of 1910-25 that Grey Owl became known as a hell-raiser and hard

Beaver in canoe. Canoe and camp inspection is included in the daily routine of this beaver.

drinker, skilful at knife-throwing and sharp-shooting. His marital and extra-marital affairs were both complicated and controversial, alienating and offending many around him. He was frequently in trouble with the law and more than once had to go on the run. It was this wild background that resurfaced at the time of his death and did so much to damage his reputation and destroy the memory of the good work he had done.

During 1926-27 he travelled 2000 miles by canoe and could find few beaver, except for their broken dams and lodges. Although still a trapper and hunter he became sickened by the indiscriminate slaughter of the beaver when between 1925-28 some 287,409 pelts were placed on the market.

Because of this mass slaughter, which he likened to the buffalo killing-fields of the late 19th century, and the likely extinction of the beaver, he was determined to create a sanctuary for them. Like the Ojibway and other Indian peoples, Grey Owl held the beaver in reverence. The 'red men' considered the beaver as themselves and dignified their Little Talking Brother with the name of the Beaver People. Traditionally they had 'held their hand' when it came to the beaver and would not kill it.

During this period in his life Grey Owl met and married Anahareo whose nickname was Pony. She was the descendant of a line of Iroquois chiefs. Later, in 1932, they had a daughter, Little Dawn. Anahareo was the woman he cared for the most and she was a major influence in his decision to give up trapping and to devote his life to conservation and most particularly the welfare of the beaver.

In 1928 Grey Owl and Anahareo found the two orphaned beaver kittens, a male and female they named McGinnis and McGinty. With encouragement from Anahareo, Grey Owl reared the two waifs but with as little human interference as possible. He saw what jolly, friendly little creatures they really were, and from that time turned his back on trapping forever.

Then came his vision for a sanctuary. A vision of a large forest area studded with crystal streams and lakes where the beavers could be safe.

Settling by Touladi Lake in Quebec he set to writing accounts of life in the wilderness to help pay for the sanctuary. One day tragically the two beavers disappeared and Grey Owl never saw them again. It was a severe blow to him and he recorded their loss in his most famous book, "Pilgrims of the Wild".

He wrote 'we hoped on long after we knew that there was nothing left to hope for. We sat at night in the darkness by our unhappy camp beneath the elm trees, waiting, watching, listening for a well remembered cry of greeting, or the thump of clumsy plodding feet that never came, never would come. And we saw nothing save the still lake and the silent ring of trees, heard nothing but the tiny murmur of the brook. The leaves came, and grass grew undisturbed on the ancient beaver house; the pond dried to a marsh and only the stream remained, running slowly through it.

And at last we knew that they were gone forever, into the darkness from whence they came, two random spirits from the Land of Shadows that had wandered in and stayed a little time, and wandered back again, that had passed like the forgotten winds of yesterday, and vanished like the figment of a dream'.

But even Nature has a way of compensating for loss and soon there were two more beavers to claim his attention, Jellyroll, a female kitten and Rawhide, a male.

Stories about Grey Owl and his beavers filtered through to the National Parks Branch in Ottawa who were particularly interested at that time in beaver conservation. The Parks Branch wished to form a new beaver sanctuary in the Riding Mountain district of Manitoba and Grey Owl was offered an appointment as a specialist in the conservation of beaver.

At this time his first book, "The Men of the Last Frontier", was published, following the success of articles he had previously had published in *Country Life*. It was 1931 and now Grey Owl was to become famous. A film followed, "The Beaver People", starring Jellyroll and Rawhide, and it was shown throughout North America, the British Empire and in other countries. The beaver colony prospered and more books followed, including "Pilgrims of the Wild" in 1934 and the films "Strange Doings in Beaver Land" and "Grey Owl's Neighbours".

Later in 1931 a move hundreds of miles north westwards took Grey Owl and his extended beaver family to Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan. His last years, when home in Canada, were spent by the shores of Lake Ajawaan, one hundred miles north of Prince Albert. However, time at home was interspersed with a punishing and busy schedule which included two European tours (including a visit by Royal Command to meet King George VI in 1937) and tour of the Unites States.

By 1938, Grey Owl was a weary and very ill man. His health further deteriorated and he died on Wednesday, 13th April 1938, aged just fifty. He was buried by Lake Ajawaan and the simple cross bore both his names, Grey Owl and Archie Belaney.

The obituaries and the character assassinations, seemingly beloved of certain sectors of the popular press of all eras, soon followed. Amongst some of the more venomous reports one particular obituary seemed to stand

out in defence of Grey Owl. It came from *The Shooting Times* of 30th April 1938 and read:

He was a good writer and lecturer, and was one of the greatest naturalists of his time. The Canadian Government were glad to use his services for several years, and no Government ever had a better man for the job. I met him when he was in England and was impressed both by his character and his knowledge. It is hard to understand why anybody should think it right or necessary to attack a man who is no longer with us, a man, moreover, who has given more pleasure to nature-lovers than most naturalists are able or willing to do. He was not, they say, a real Red Indian. So what?

A view with which this writer heartily concurs!

THE LEGACY OF GREY OWL

If a man must be accused of being a fraudster then let him be a man like Grey Owl. Nearly fifty years before it became fashionable to care about the environment and ecology, the plight of endangered species or racial minorities, Grey Owl pleaded eloquently for the care and the conservation of the beaver, had a deep love, coupled with a healthy respect, for the grandeur of Nature in all its forms and actively lived the Red Indian-cum-Native Canadian way of life and philosophies.

His understanding of the devastating effects of indiscriminate deforestation and inadequate reforestation are remarkably contemporary and reflect views which many have only really grasped within the last decade or more.

His respect for Nature was self-evident. Wary of 'the grim Spirit of the Silent North, who stalks each lonely traveller's footsteps, relentless and implacable, whose will is law in the White Silence'. Not the sentimental snows of a Christmas card but the deadly, endless, shifting snows of the Wilderness, that can drive a grown man to insanity and death. Nature that can leave a man desolate, soaking wet, half frozen, hungry and tired or alternatively trapped in marsh country, hot and thirsty and plagued and bitten by flies and mosquitoes. Where to take a short cut may be a long walk to oblivion. Simply, he recognised Nature as the raw, elemental force that it really is and looked out for danger from the forest, in the wilderness and in the snow, in the rivers and in the mountains and from wild animals and from man himself.

Grey Owl understood all these things.

IN THE WORDS OF GREY OWL

Of the many gifts Grey Owl had, perhaps the greatest was his skill of translating into words his adventures in the Canadian wilderness, his experiences with wild life and most particularly the beaver, and his understanding and acceptance of the Indian way of life. He was a born story-teller. This sketch of his life is, therefore, completed in his own words and it is the hope of the writer that it will lead you, the reader, to seek out his books and read them fully for yourself.

An Encounter with a Beaver

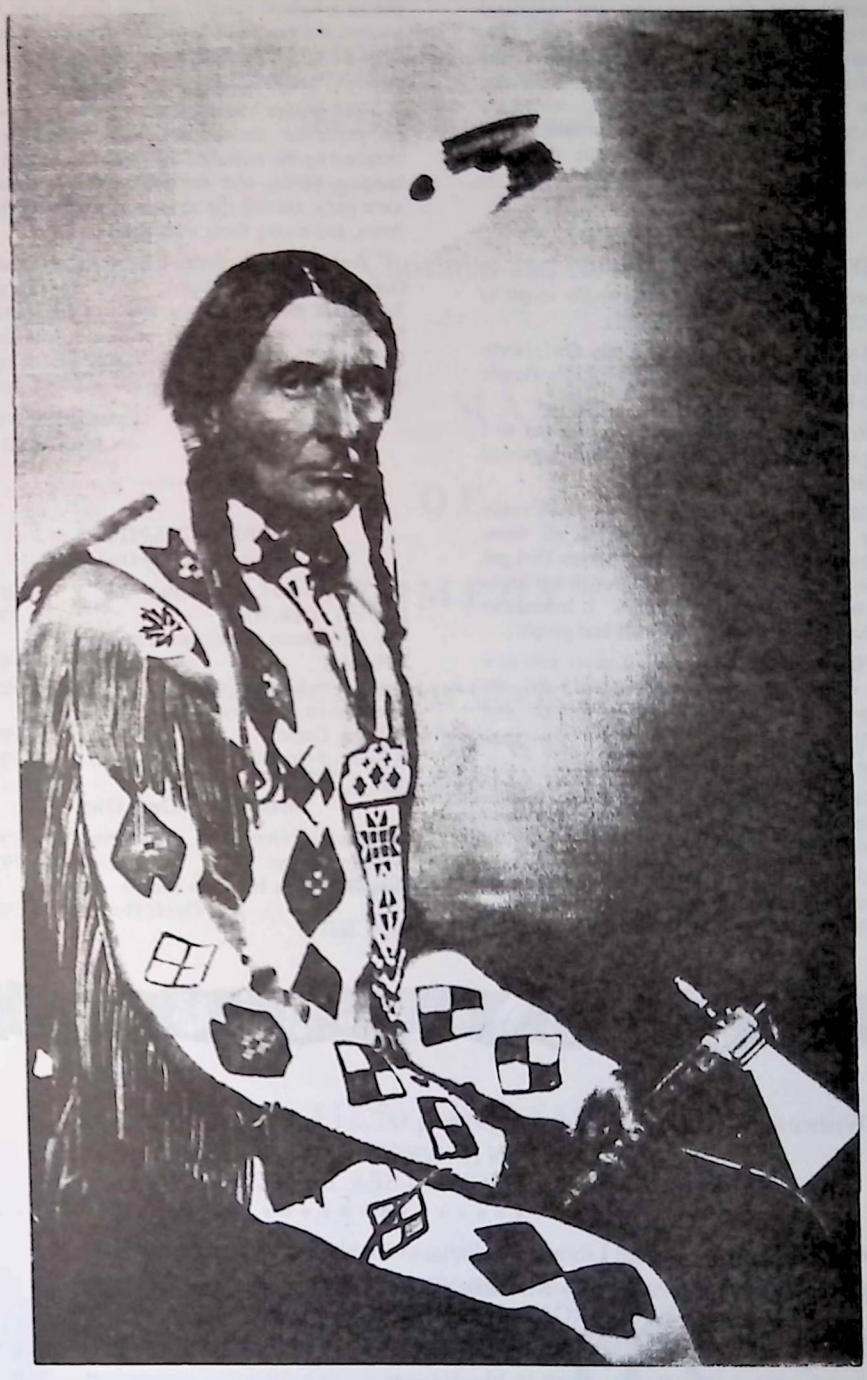
The beaver regarded me steadily, again raising himself to catch an expected scent, and not getting it he turned lazily to swim away. He was at my mercy, and I had his head snugly set between the forks of my rear sight, when my heart contracted at the thought of taking life on such a morning. The creature was happy, glad to be in God's good sunlight, free after a winter of darkness to breathe the pure air of the dawn. He had the right to live here, even as I had, yea, even a greater claim, for he was there before me.

I conquered my momentary weakness; for, after all, a light pressure on the trigger, a crashing impact, would save him many days of useless labour. Yet I hesitated, and as I finally laid my rifle down, he sank without a ripple, out of sight. And I became suddenly conscious of the paeans of praise and triumph of the feathered choir about me, temporarily unheard in my lust to kill; and it seemed as though all Nature sang in benediction of an act which had kept inviolate a sanctuary, and saved a perfect hour from desecration.

I went home to my cabin and ate my breakfast with greater satisfaction than the most expertly accomplished kill had ever given me; and, call it what you will, weakness, vacillation, or the first glimmerings of conscience in a life hitherto devoted to the shedding of blood, since the later experiences I have had with these animals I look back on the incident with no regret.

How Grey Owl received his name

Many years ago I cast in my lot with that nation known under the various appellations of Chippeways, Algonquins, Londucks and Ojibways. A blood-brother proved and sworn, by moose-head feast, wordless chant, and ancient ritual was I named before a gaily decorated and attentive concourse, when Ne-ganik-abo, "Man-that-stands-ahead," whom none living remember as a young man, danced the conjurors' dance beneath the spruce trees, before an open fire; danced the ancient steps to the throb of drums, the wailing of reed pipes, and the rhythmical skirring of turtle shell rattles; danced alone before a sacred bear-skull set beneath a painted rawhide shield, whose bizarre device might have graced the tomb of some long-dead Pharaoh. And as the chanting rose and fell in endless reiteration, the flitting shadows of his weird contortions danced a



witches' dance between the serried tree-trunks. The smoke hung in a white pall short of the spreading limbs of the towering trees, and with a hundred pairs of beady eyes upon me, I stepped out beneath it when called on. And not one feral visage relaxed in recognition, as, absorbed in the story of their ritual they intoned the almost forgotten cadence.

"Hi-Heeh, Hi-Heh, Ho! Hi-Heh, Hi-Heh, Ha! Hi-Hey, Hi-Hey, Ho! Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho, Ha!" and on and on in endless repetition, until the monotony of the sounds had the same effect on

the mind that the unvarying and measured markings of a snake have on the eye. The sensation of stepping into the motionless ring was that of suddenly entering a temple, devoted to the worship of some pagan deity, where the walls were lined with images cast in bronze; and there I proudly received the name they had devised, which the old man now bestowed on me.

GREY OWL'S FAREWELL

(Extracts from an unbroadcast radio script to the "Children of the British Isles")

I am Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin, Grey Owl, North American Indian, champion of the Little People of the Forests.

You too, to me, are Little People, and so I bring to you my final, last message of goodwill and farewell...

And now, I wonder if you wouldn't make me a promise, too: to be kind to all those helpless creatures, of every kind, whom God put on this Earth to accompany us through out lives. This world is not altogether ours. It belongs to all who live upon it, both animals and people...

I'll ask you, too, if you will never join in a chase where foxes, stags, or otters and hares, are driven to the last extremity of terror, and misery ...

Is that fair play? Is that sport?

And then, isn't this better - rather kinder - this little story of the Christmas of McGinnis and McGinty?

And so we got a fine balsam fir, a very picture of a Christmas tree, which we wedged upright in a crevice in the floor. On top of it we placed a lighted candle, and on the boughs tied sweets, and pieces of apple and small delicacies from the table, so they hung there by strings ad could be reached.

The beaver viewed these preparations with no particular enthusiasm, but before long, attracted by the odour of the tree, they found the hanging titbits, and sampled them, and soon were busy, cutting the strings, and pulling them down, and eating them with great gusto...

And now, my wife, Silver Moon, and I, Grey Owl, two Indians, must leave you. Tomorrow we sail for the Land of the Setting Sun. Lots of luck to all of you. And don't forget the invitation. Beaver Lodge has an open door for every one of you. We'll be seein' you!

I am GREY OWL.
I have spoken.

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Books by Grey Owl

The Men of the Last Frontier	1931
Pilgrims of the Wild	1935
The Adventures of Sajo and Her Beaver People	1935
Tales of an Empty Cabin	1936
The Tree (a story from Tales of an Empty Cabin)	1937
A Book of Grey Owl (Compilation)	1938

Books about Grey Owl

My Life with Grey Owl	Anahareo	1940
Wilderness Man	Lovat Dickson	1974
Grey Owl - The Hastings Indian	Geoff Hutchinson	1985

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RANGING WITH THE RANGER

BY BILL BRADFORD

On the 7th February, 1931, the PENNY POPULAR, after a run of some 20 years, announced that this was the last issue, and that next week an exciting new paper would appear. This was the RANGER: following the launch of the BULLSEYE three weeks earlier, obviously the Amalgamated Press was trying to recover sales lost to D.C. Thomson, who had introduced 6 new story papers over the previous 10 years, of which 5 were still appearing, most successfully.

This new paper measured 12" x 7½"; it was initially of 28 pages but reduced to 24 as from No. 17. An eye-catching multi-coloured cover, with some predominantly orange coloured illustrations within, it was priced 2d. and appeared on a Saturday. It was well served over the years by artists such as W.E. Johns, Eric Parker, Glossop, Fred Bennett, Arthur Jones and Leonard Shields, to name a few.

The first issue contained 5 complete stories and 2 serials*, which are worth listing:

WALLY THE BOY GANGSTER	A 12 year old cockney lad, involved with criminals.
RODEO TEX	A wild horse catcher and rodeo champion.
NIGHT RIDERS OF THE RHONDA	A modern highwayman, operating from a motorbike.
LORD GINGER	An uneducated youth inherits a title.
MAC THE 8 HORSE MOUNTIE	Modern adventures in Canada.
HAWKS OF THE ATLANTIC*	A pirate air squadron of great ruthlessness.
BOYS OF THE BLUE LAGOON*	Shipwrecked schoolboys on a desert island.

It is not practical to summarise each issue but I will itemise some of the stories that I consider the highlights of the paper.

No. 8 The first of 9 stories of the RIO KID, by, of course, Charles Hamilton.

No. 10 HELL'S ANGELS, a story based on the film released the previous year, which was a lavish 135 minute production, starring Ben Lyon. This ran for 14 weeks and was very mature and popular reading, probably helping to establish the RANGER.

No. 12 CHUMS OF THE CARIBBEAN, a 5 part adventure serial by Edwy Searles Brooks.

No. 21 A competition to name the most popular feature in the paper, with first prize being a cricket bat, autographed by the entire New Zealand Test team. Two readers tied and one had to settle for a cash compensation prize.
For this issue and Nos. 22, 24 and 25, the Picture Gallery, on page 28, a regular feature on items and people of interest, comprised a full page illustration of aerial combat by W.E. Johns.

No. 24 SONS OF VALMOND, a new serial and sequel to HAWKS OF THE ATLANTIC. On reflection, aerial stories always played a prominent part in THE RANGER.

No. 34 Introduced us to BALDY'S ANGELS, and we meet again Bud'Baldy Atlee, and his new pals John Henry Dent and Langton Wagstaff, a trio who became an essential part of THE RANGER. The early episodes comprised some 12,000 words each, thus only 3 other stories in these issues. Our heroes were to appear within for nearly 2 years!

No. 37 Meet BLACK WHIP-GANG BUSTER, who was to feature in several series over the years.

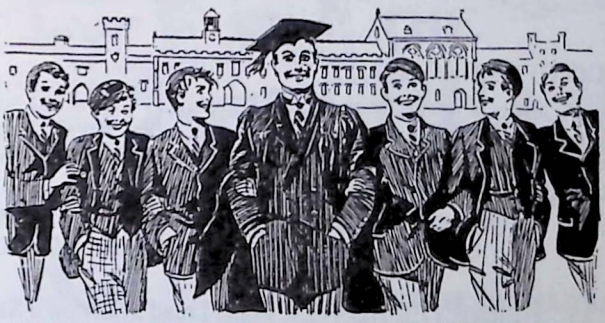
BALDY'S ANGELS!

The Mystery Man of Mayfair

WARDER LYNN OF PENTONMOOR PRISON, TELLS "RANGER" READERS ANOTHER BREATHLESS STORY OF THE MOST DARING CRACKSMAN THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN.

THE CRACKSMAN THE POLICE COULDN'T CATCH.

The Fourth Form at GRIMSLADE!



MEET THE CHEERY LADS OF GRIMSLADE AND THEIR UNUSUAL HEADMASTER IN THIS ROLLICKING STORY OF SCHOOL FUN AND ADVENTURE. IT'S A WOW!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the famous Greyfriars stories in the "Magnet.")

No. 50 The first appearance of JIM, BUCK & RASTUS written by Percy A. Clarke; very obviously rewrites of the JACK, SAM & PETE STORIES by Samuel Clarke Hook which ran for 20 years in the MARVEL.
At the same time we have THE MYSTERY MAN OF MAYFAIR, a gentleman crook, known as the March Hare, whose exploits are told by Warder Lynk (G.H. Bowman). A very good series, resumed in No. 97, a total run of 44 copies.

No. 74 DEAD MAN'S GOLD, a serial by Headley Scott. Subsequently No. 371 in The Boys Friend Library, which I purchased in Oxford (half price) around 1935 and retain yet.

No. 80 THE FOURTH FORM AT GRIMSLADE by Frank Richards featured Sammy Sparshott, Jim Dainty and Fritz Splitz. Together with THE CHEERIO CASTAWAY, at a later date, appeared in Schoolboys Own Library Nos. 232, 235,242,248,252,254 and 256.

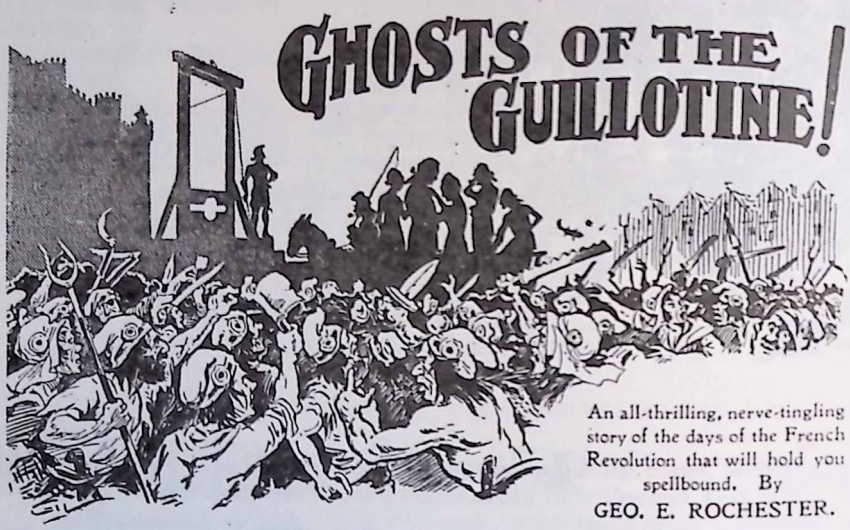
No. 86 G.H. Teed serial 'THE EYE OF THE TIGER' began a 12 week run. A Nelson Lee and Nipper tale. As E.S. Brooks was now the regular author of Nelson Lee, in all probability this was a reprint of an earlier story.

No. 110 THE WHITE INDIAN was a popular series by John Brealey, appearing in 28 issues.

No. 124 GHOSTS OF THE GUILLOTINE, a serial by Geo. E. Rochester and one of my favourites!

No. 130 End of 1st series on 5th AUGUST 1933.

WHO IS THE PHANTOM WHO CHEATS THE GUILLOTINE OF ITS VICTIMS?



SECOND SERIES

A larger format, being 12" x 9", still 24 pages but minus the orange illustrations within and not actually a lot more reading. Not having as many copies of this series, I have to rely mainly on memory, and an impression that I was not as thrilled as by the earlier issues.

No. 25 SKULL OF THE SKIES, a 15 part serial by Capt. Robert Hawke, a pseudonym used by G.M. Bowman and, sometimes, Hedley O'Mant. Yet another flying story.

No. 35 HERNE THE HUNTER which I read avidly on a Saturday morning, even before opening my MAGNET! Many years later I read this again, in B.F.L. 472, and was bitterly disappointed.

No. 47 THAT TOUGH GUY HOBBS (12 episodes) followed by TOUGH GUY AT CROFTS (Nos. 82-94) are very familiar titles but I cannot recall a thing about them.

No. 95 THE BLACK MOLE by Rochester was an unusual 14 part serial that not only was in B.F.L. 561 but also published as a hardback by John Hamilton in the ACE series.

No. 112 Final issue, replaced by the PILOT, with which it had little in common.

Over the years there were a number of free gifts which were a little above average and are perhaps worth listing, issue number as indicated.

No. 1 Model aeroplane fuselage with assembly instructions.

No. 2 Relevant propeller, metal hooks, elastic, etc.

No. 3-10 A weekly coloured plate of aerial scene by W.E. Johns.

No. 37 Coach assembly for an aerial railway.

No. 38 Mechanism for same, comprising propeller, engine cap, elastic, pulley wheels and length of wire.

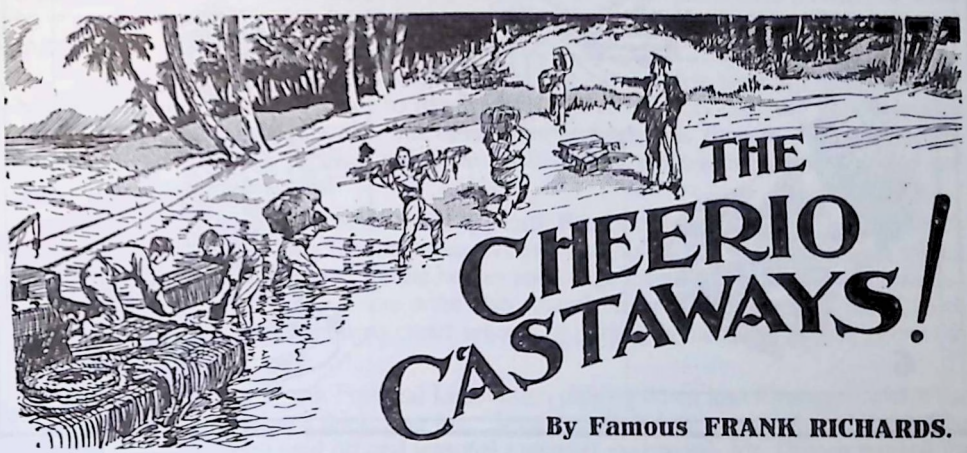
No. 86 "EVERY BOY'S WORLD IN PICTURES" album (10" x 7") plus 6 picture stamps. These for 16 weeks, similarly equalled by both MAGNET and MODERN BOY over the same period.

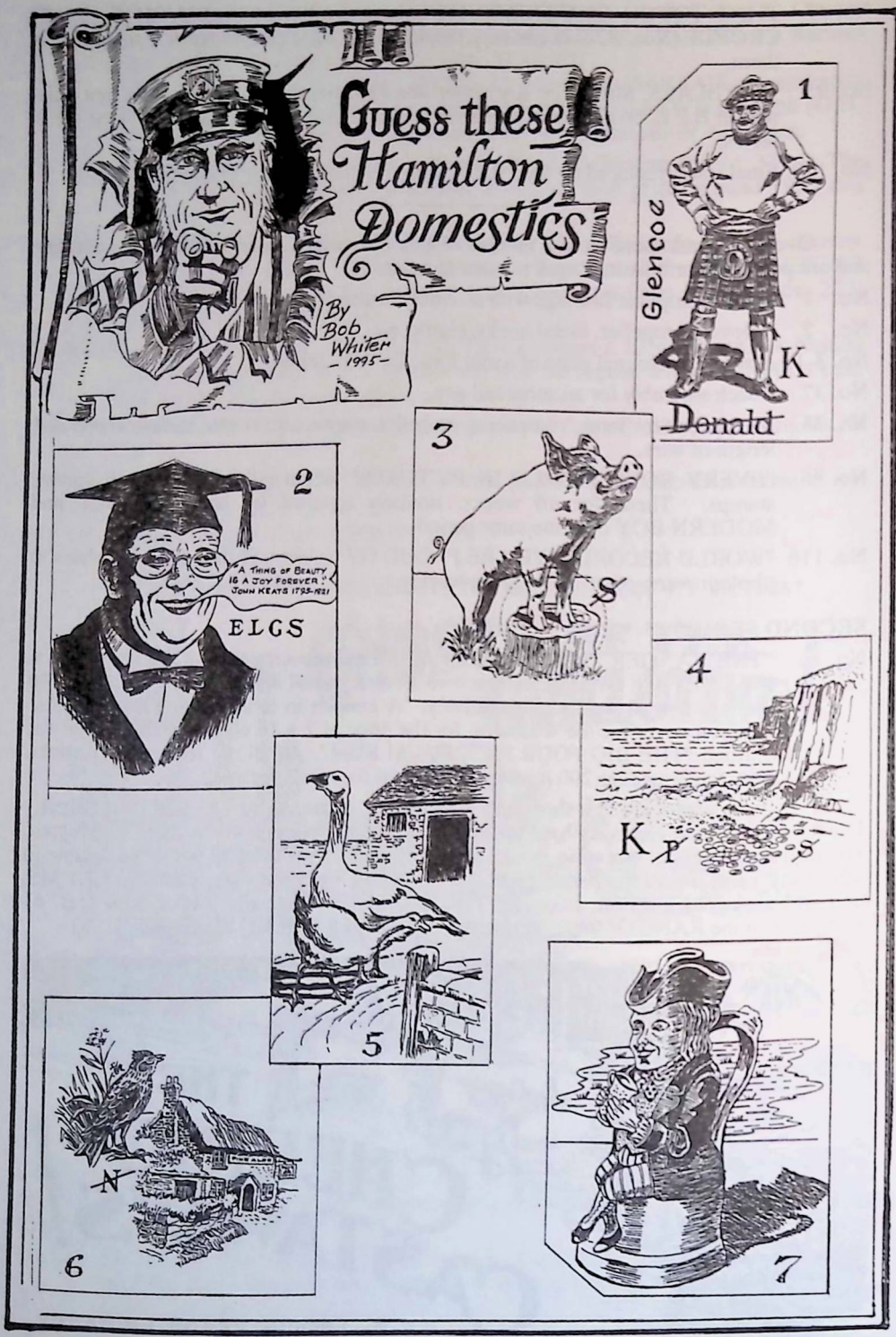
No. 116 "WORLD RECORDS WE ARE PROUD OF" folder and first of 12 art plates in photogravure, other plates given weekly.

SECOND SERIES

No. 16 "THE RANGER PICTURE ALBUM". Simultaneously the MODERN BOY & MAGNET and GEM gave their own albums and all 4 papers gave a sheet of 10 pictures for 10 weeks consecutively. A coupon in each enabled the reader to obtain a cover for the 4 albums, for the price of 2 x 1d stamps. This cover was entitled "THE BIG FOUR PICTURE ALBUM". Of all the free gifts I possess, now totalling over 200 items, this is one of the most cherished.

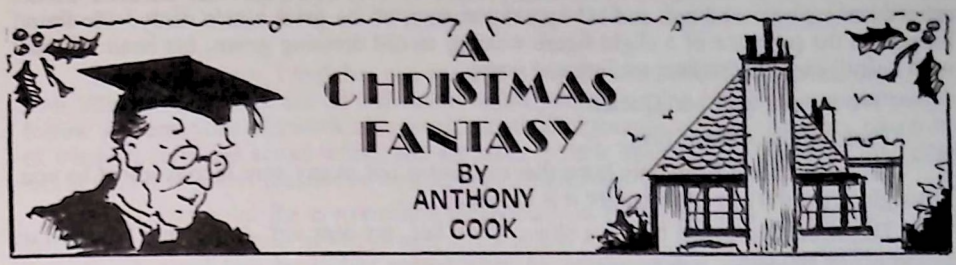
Finally I would say that this paper is deserving of greater recognition than hitherto. Unfortunately, issues are very hard to find, and probably only pre-war readers, like myself, are acquainted with it. Sporting stories were very rare (to my delight) but when it came to adventure yarns, illustrations and general presentation, I place it only second to CHUMS, and well deserved inclusion in one of THE BIG FOUR. Actually a total of at least 61 stories from the RANGER were reprinted in THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY.





GUESS THESE HAMILTON DOMESTICS

(Answers on Page 78)



Christmas is not what it used to be, so we are told. Yet despite the lack of seasonal snow as a regular occurrence and the ever decreasing merry bands of carol singers from the local church there is still, thank goodness, an air of something that is quite apart from the rest of the year, and a certain touch of magic.

It is a time when many like minded people settle down in front of a blazing fire (or in centrally heated comfort) and in a relaxed and anticipatory mood dig into another world of adventure. Many of us journey back to Greyfriars, its environs, and its wealth of characters who remain part of our more pleasurable moments.

It is also at this time of year that reality and fiction seem separated by only an amazingly thin veil. It was one such Christmas season, December 22nd to be precise, that found Mr. Quelch alighting from a train at Broadstairs station. A cold wind blew down the platform, making the master of the remove turn up his coat collar. Outside the station he hired a waiting taxi, instructing the driver to convey him to The Royal Albion Hotel where he would book in, already having reserved a room, and then on to the address he submitted on a slip of paper.

They drove down the High Street which was brilliant in the late winter afternoon with the multitude of coloured lights emanating from the crowded shops. Turning slowly into Albion Street they negotiated the narrow turning, drawing up outside the hotel. Having left his luggage at reception, Mr. Quelch was about to re-enter the taxi when he became aware of something that made him pause with surprise. A few yards from the hotel a man stood wrapped in a large but very old coat and wearing a tall brown hat. In front of him was an open brazier on which he appeared to be roasting something. Being so near to Christmas this scene might not have elicited a second look apart from the fact that the two people who stood beside him were not of this era. The lady was attired in a russet coloured coat over what seemed a voluminous skirt, and on her head was a poke bonnet. She stood next to a gentleman wearing a green velvet trimmed overcoat sporting a top hat. They were Victorians from top to toe. Through his immediate unbelief of what he was seeing Mr. Quelch heard his driver say "Dickens folk sir, their Christmas get together."

"Oh, yes, I see", Quelch answered, although he did not. He need not have worried, however, for the driver explained to him that the Dickens Society not only kept a special week in June for their activities but three days at Christmas time in the same spirit. Digesting this information Mr. Quelch sat back, a little more satisfied that he had not wandered into another world.

The journey continued down the long North Foreland Road. Despite the fog which had started to come in from the sea it was evident that this part of his journey was taking him through an interesting area for the houses and bungalows were set back with spacious gardens and well cared for. There were also several larger buildings which Mr. Quelch presumed might well have housed either schools or nursing homes, and he was correct in this assumption.

They passed the North Foreland Lighthouse, dipping down into Kingsgate where the sea was now shrouded in a thickening fog. Soon they pulled up outside Rose Lawn. The taxi driver having been paid off and seasonal greetings exchanged, Mr. Quelch paused for a moment and then, squaring his shoulders, strode up the path and knocked at the door. The knock was answered, to his surprise, by a homely smiling woman who informed him

that Mr. Hamilton would be more than pleased to see him. He was ushered inside, relieved of his coat and hat, and led into the warmth of the great man's study. He found himself in the presence of a slight figure wearing an old dressing gown, his head adorned with a skull-cap, and his face smiling and warm.

"We meet at least Mr. Quelch"

Their handshake was firm.

"Indeed so, and I can only hope that my visit is not in any way inconvenient to you. I thought it my duty to come before it is too late."

The author motioned him to a chair, "Too late, my dear sir! A meeting between us can never be too late".

"I think", Quelch continued "that you slightly misunderstand me. I am suggesting that the years are passing and I fear that at some point our paths will divide".

His host smiled.

"I see what you mean. Well at the moment I am hard at it and hope to continue my work for some time to come".

The conversation, to say the least was, a little stilted; both men seemed ill at ease. It was perhaps the best possible solution to the situation when the housekeeper appeared with a laden tray carrying hot buttered muffins, jam and home-made cake.

"Here we are Mr. Quelch, the ingredients of a first class study tea, what do you say to that?"

For once Mr. Quelch beamed.

"It seems a long time since I was given the privilege."

As tea progressed the two participants of the feast were soon in earnest conversation with the barriers of their initial meeting broken down. They conversed as old friends. Before long the muffins had disappeared and so had most of the delicious fruit cake. At last they sat back, replete and relaxed.

"Now tell me Mr. Quelch, what really precipitated this meeting?"

For a moment the remove master thought in silence, his hands locked together.

"To be quite honest with you", he said at last "I suppose I have been wondering what the future holds for us both, in fact for us all at Greyfriars. After all we cannot go on for ever can we?"

This speech was met with a chuckle. "What you really mean, my dear sir, is what happens when I stop writing."

Mr. Quelch nodded. "Yes, that thought has been on my mind".

Charles Hamilton with a smile hovering around his lips, stroked the cat that had jumped on to his lap.

"One day it will surely happen: indeed that is true. Who knows what will happen then, who knows what the future holds? I am a writer, and writers like all men come and go".

"You seem to suggest then a state of suspended animation?" said Quelch. "For a time perhaps, but there must be others capable of following in my footsteps, filling the void," answered the author.

Quelch shook his head. "In my opinion, impossible. No other writer could take on the characters you created. It would be unthinkable". This comment was met by a shrug. There was silence for a moment; only the loud purring of the cat was heard.

"In that case, Mr. Quelch, let us hope that all those connected with us, with Greyfriars, become immortal."

"Immortality", the school-master said with feeling "belongs only to the Gods themselves."

"I wonder if Dr. Locke would agree with such a comment? Look at it this way. We have survived two generations, why should we not continue? With an interested core of the public, amazing things can happen."

"It is an interesting thought", said Mr. Quelch, after a pause, "I wonder what the pupils and staff would think of our conversation, but then they are hardly a reality are they?"

"On the contrary, I feel that you are all a complete contradiction in terms, one of my own little quirks. You are all a *fictional* reality. It is amazing to me how many people follow you and your like week after week, month after month, and for a time are taken out of what we term the actual world, and are taken in their inner consciousness to that other world which is just as real but on another wavelength, so to speak."

From that point the conversation meandered on to any number of subjects. They talked of staff and pupils at Greyfriars, of chess and of Latin, much to the delight of Mr. Quelch. A good two hours had passed when he suggested that he should return to his hotel, for on the morrow he was making an early start.

"On then to Wharton Lodge?" said his host.

"Indeed so," came the enthusiastic reply. "It is always a pleasure to be invited, all thanks to you, of course."

Both men rose, instructions were given to send for a taxi while Quelch thanked his host for the hospitality he had received. It seemed, however, that the master of the remove was somehow trying to set his mind at rest about their previous conversation.

"We spoke earlier," he said "of a certain immortality. It would, of course, appear that Dickens has found it, not just with regard to his writings but with his characters who are portrayed every year in this area."

"Yes," came the quick reply. "But he was a classic writer and a great social historian. You can hardly suggest that my writing is in the same league."

"Nonsense!" Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed. "I cannot deny that you and Dickens have different qualities, but *you* have a larger reading public on a regular basis, and after all some of *his* characters - like yours - were larger than life. Why then should not the demand for your works continue into the future?"

"We shall see," came the answer "I have an idea that you and I will survive long after our appointed time."

At this point they were informed that the taxi was waiting. Renewed thanks and seasonal greetings were exchanged, and it was a satisfied Mr. Quelch who set off from Rose Lawn on the journey back to Broadstairs.

It was also a very thoughtful author who who sat down at his typewriter and worked well into the late evening. Then inside and out, all became quiet save for the intermittent sound of the offshore foghorn giving its warning to the shipping lanes. The intense cold and the all pervading dampness of the fog entered the house and gave the entire road a sense of unreality. The author, wrapped in the world of Greyfriars, seemed himself to be strangely dissolving into the fog.....

Suddenly the front door of the house nearby Rose Lawn opened and women's voices could be heard.

"Do you think you can make the journey my dear?"

"Don't give it another thought", said the second voice. "The car almost knows its own way back; in any case the fog lights will help. By the way, I forgot to ask, how do you get on with your new neighbours at Rose Lawn?"

"Fine, my dear," came the reply. "We are keeping an eye on the place over Christmas while it's empty, they have gone to Bristol and then on to their daughters in Scotland to see 1996 in."

"There were a few words of farewell, then the car disappeared into the murky night, and complete quietness returned to the road.

MEMORIES. . .

AND THE MAGIC OF THE SEASON

BY ROBERT WHITER

(Editor's Note: This article first appeared in an issue of the American magazine, *British Heritage*)

I suppose most people look back on their youth through rose-coloured glasses. I'm certainly no exception, particularly when recalling past Christmases in England. Ah, but the thrill, the excitement that still comes over me as my mind travels back through the misty corridors of time.

For us children, the sight of shops and department stores dressing their windows provided the first signs of the coming festivities. Twinkling-coloured lights inside the windows, reflecting on the imitation snow and holly hung and festooned in gay profusion, made the toy and novelty stores even more attractive than usual. Not to be outdone, the butchers and poultry shops displayed their prime cuts, turkeys and geese, decorated appropriately. The birds, decked out in white paper hats and cuffs, hung in lines clearly marked in graduated prices.

Costermongers packed every side road, pushing barrows piled high with large assortments of fruits, nuts, figs and dates. Overhead, holly and mistletoe hung draped over awnings. At night-time, the cries of the costers mingled with the hissing of the Naphtha lamps, which provided the only illumination apart from an occasional street lamp. People staggered home, heavily laden with their Christmas shopping. They handled their purchases very carefully in some cases, especially if they were carrying holly!

The sound of the latest record of Christmas music boomed out from every radio and music shop. When I was a boy, it seemed that a new song was written for every yuletide. Looking back, it's strange how some caught on and are still being played and sung, whilst others have vanished into the land of forgotten songs. For instance, how many people recall the following: 'The Little Boy that Santa Claus Forgot,' or 'Does Santa Claus Sleep with His Whiskers Over or Under the Sheet?' Yet when they first came out they were very popular.

Christmas as seen through the eye of a child is a spectacular frenzy of brilliant decorations, hurrying shoppers and, most of all, impatient anticipation.

Edmonds Brothers, one of the two major department stores in Wood Green (a borough of North London in which I spent my boyhood) was a veritable Mecca for children, especially at Christmas time. Their toy department, apart from its wonderful selection of toys, always featured another great attraction known as the 'Magic Cave.' This consisted of a set of tableaux telling the story of some well-known childhood favourite. Each year Edmonds Brothers featured a different story. For example, if the story was Robinson Crusoe—for a nominal fee, we could enter the cave and follow the story of the immortal shipwrecked sailor right up to his meeting with Man Friday. After feasting our eyes on the fabulous scenes (at least as children they seemed so), we always received a line drawing of the tableaux we had just seen and were invited to colour it in and have it judged in a competition. Home we would go, to sort out our paints and crayons and get busy. I managed to win third place one year and several consolation prizes in others, but never captured the first prize. The store gave the prizes out after Christmas and I can well remember going along the rear counter, where we all picked from a pile of books and toys.

During the weeks that closely preceded the great day, this same store held a street procession led by a gigantic Father Christmas, so big that the costume had vision holes approximately at the waist region so the man inside could see out! The rest of the procession consisted of well-known nursery rhyme and fairy story characters. Clowns, some of them on stilts wheeling barrows piled high with toys, brought up the rear. Usually, a man dressed up as that year's Magic Cave personality occupied a prominent spot. Sandwich-board men were also conspicuous, advertising the shop and its attractions. Altogether, it made for us children a heart-warming sight, something that has stayed in my memory these 60 years.

Another event on the Christmas calendar was the school concert party. The games and music teacher came round the classrooms, picking out likely performers. Then followed the endless rehearsals until the week of 'breaking up for the hols.' Our par-

During the last week before Christmas, several bands of carolers walked the streets singing carols.

ents came along in the evenings to watch the Christmas show or 'Concert Party,' as we called it.

The last day at school we always held a party, the boys being invited to come in costumes. At a given time, those in fancy dress paraded around the hall so that the headmaster and some of his staff could pick out the winners. I was very lucky and came in first several times. Then came the headmaster's Christmas gift, as he called it. Out of his own pocket, he hired either a conjurer or ventriloquist to entertain us. I remember pointing to the pocket I thought the magician had palmed the coin into. He invited me to put my hand inside and I produced an apple! Another year we had a ventriloquist, complete with dummy. At the close of the performance, the headmaster thanked the man, told us that if the ventriloquist, wanted, he could throw his voice and make it appear to come from the ceiling. Looking back now, I wouldn't mind betting the poor fellow was praying that no one would ask him to do this! But in those young and innocent days, I really thought people could actually throw their voices.

As the days got closer to the great event, our house took on a new look, as we draped paper chains, bells, holly and mistletoe across various rooms. The Christmas tree, standing in the bay window of the front room or parlour, was always suitably decorated with strings of coloured lights and tinsel. With the curtains open, this presented a wonderful sight from the outside. In the midst of all the various preparations, my mother made the cakes and Christmas puddings, the latter providing a special ritual. In our house, we had a copper in the scullery, and she used this for mixing the pudding. Sugared peel and other special ingredients went into the mixture, along with carefully washed threepenny pieces. Every visitor to the house had to go into the scullery and give a stir to the pudding. Supposedly, this brought the stirrer good luck! Further good fortune went to the ones who found the silver threepenny pieces in their helping of pudding on the great day!

Before long, the Christmas cards started arriving, and the family got out our own card list so that we would not miss anyone. My sister Vera and I, being artistic, would hand-draw ours, a practice that I pursue to this day. The only difference now being that I cheat and just draw one and then have it duplicated!

During the last week before Christmas, several bands of carolers walked the streets singing carols. Any remuneration they collected went to the local hospital or charities. Later on, as members of the Wood Green Operatic Society, my friends and I would form a group and visit hospitals and try to cheer the patients with our renditions of yuletide favourites. Of course, as children, we all prayed for a 'White Christmas', eagerly noting any hint of snow. We kept our skates and sleighs ready in the event of such a happening.

Christmas Eve at last! After a church service, we children were packed off to bed, all agog with excitement. Naturally, stockings and pillowcases waited at the end of the bedstead. How hard it was, in

those days, to get to sleep on that particular night!

One year, my father, who always dressed up as Father Christmas, tripped over his red robe whilst carrying a train set and other toys upstairs. The crash awakened the whole household. I can still remember my mother saying, in a stage whisper, 'Are you all right, Will?'

On Christmas morning, the church bells rang as we opened our presents. Soon the floor was covered with train tracks, blackboards complete with easels, dolls, and all sort of toys, not to mention mountains of torn wrapping paper, boxes and other impediments. We beat toy drums and sounded trumpets. My sister Connie was a 'songster' in the Salvation Army, and I well remember the Christmas morning she proudly played the record of herself and the other songsters singing carols, accompanied by the superb Salvation Army band. How I wish I had a copy of that record now but, the old 78s were quite fragile in spite on their thickness!

After a light breakfast, we children purposely ate only a little in order to leave plenty of room for the turkey, Christmas pudding and mince pies, that would grace the festive board later on. Some of us even went on walks to improve our appetites, leaving our dedicated elders to prepare the Christmas dinner. As we grew older, my brother Douglas and I received Meccano sets and he, in particular, spent the best part of Christmas Day building working models. Another favourite present was a 'Hobbies' fretwork outfit, as jigsaw puzzles were the order of the day!

Much as I loved receiving these presents, the *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* held first place in my heart. This book came out every year and was a sort of companion to the weekly papers *Magnet*, and *Gem*, and the monthly *Schoolboy's Own Library*. These dealt with the adventures of Harry Wharton and Company of Greyfriars, Tom Merry of St Jim's, and Jimmy Silver of Rookwood. Later on, when a lot older, I had the good fortune to meet the author of these wonderful stories, Charles Hamilton, better known as Frank Richards. In my humble opinion, he and Lord Baden-Powell did so much for the youth of my generation.

Apart from getting the *Holiday Annual*, Christmas wasn't complete for me without the Christmas numbers of one of these famous weeklies, the title shown dripping with snow and festooned with holly and mistletoe! The stories told about a set of schoolboys at a public school. They were so cleverly written that every reader could identify with one of the characters (girls read them as well as boys) and, in the case of a sterling character, emulate him. There was the comic appeal of the fat boy, Billy Bunter, in the case of the *Magnet*. The rest of the cast consisted of the nice boys, the bad boys and also the grey 'characters.' Vernon-Smith, 'the bounder,' was a good example of the latter. Some of the boys usually spent the Christmas holiday at some large mansion, in many cases reputed to be haunted. Those wonderful stories have never lost their fascination. Even now I dip into them at Christmas time and relive those magic days.

After our Christmas morning walk, our appetites sharpened, we returned home to a crackling yule-log fire. We warmed ourselves, then repaired to the dining-room. At Christmas time, we added an extension piece to the table. This allowed our

Next, the steaming Christmas pudding made its grand entrance, complete with its sprig of holly.

large family to enjoy the choice comestibles at one sitting. Because my father was not a dabhand at carving, my mother always handled that responsibility. She loaded each plate with turkey, as well as ham, stuffing, roast potatoes, green peas and gravy. There wasn't a sound for the next few minutes, except for the occasional champing of jaws! Next, the steaming Christmas pudding made its grand entrance, complete with its sprig of holly. The menu also featured a large plate of mince pies. When we finished the meal, my father rendered one of his quips, his favourite being 'Thank God for that little snack; some people would call it a meal!' My mother and sisters all pulled mocked pained expressions.

After the table was cleared and the dishes washed, the company retired to the front room to gather around the crackling fire. Those who had any space left after the sumptuous meal helped themselves to bowls of oranges, apples, figs and nuts arranged on the sideboard. We played games and told jokes. We children enjoyed soft drinks and the adults drank stronger ones. Most of the adults soon dropped off and took forty winks, leaving the rest of us to play with our toys or read our books. By around six o'clock everyone was awake and stirring, ready for high tea, with slices of Christmas cake and table jellies served in glass containers, usually with pineapples or oranges set in the jelly. We pulled Christmas crackers, and soon everyone was wearing a paper hat, and asking each other the answer to the riddle they had found inside their own particular cracker.

Still wearing the paper hats on their heads, the company then all headed back to the parlour, pushed the chairs back against the walls, so couples could dance. My father came into his own, supplying the music. He called himself the 'stoker' and kept the gramophone going, putting record after record on. The console-type 'Fullertone' gramophone had to be hand-wound. When the company tired of dancing, the games began. One year Barry, my sister Doris's husband, was home on leave from the Navy, and he hid half-crowns all around the room. I well remember the fun and excitement as we children tried to locate them. Each time one of us spotted one, we pounced upon it with screams of delight.

Bedtime came later than usual for all the children, and nobody needed much rocking when we finally laid our heads on the pillows. The promise of the next day's delights already filled our young brains.

For generations, children have revered Boxing Day as pantomime day. We were no exception. Sometimes, though, for a change, we visited the Agricultural Hall in Islington to watch Carl Hagenbeck's circus, with its dazzling trapeze artists, animal trainers, clowns and, of course, the ringmaster, replete with shiny top hat and red coat, cracking his whip! We generally timed it so that we had time to visit the large fun fair and menagerie before the circus started. Not for nothing was it known the 'World's Fair!'

But I am advancing too fast! All this usually took place in the afternoon and evening. If it was a white Christmas, we first sallied forth, dragging a toboggan to the nearest hill, in our case, Alexandra Palace, soon to be famous as the world's first transmitting television station. After a morning sliding down the hill and having the time of our lives, we returned home for lunch, all with splendid appetites. Sometimes we would be soaked, so the order of the day was a hot bath, after which we were more than ready for the delicious cold turkey and hot fried potatoes. With lunch over, we children began champing at the bit to proceed on to Islington, whilst the grown-ups had their tea or coffee and a nap.

Finally , the great moment arrived

and our party would set off for the pantomime, making sure we had the tickets. How we used to love to go by tramcar and sit upstairs in the u-shaped portion of the vehicle. This was so convenient for chatting, and being upstairs, we could look in the undrawn curtain windows of the houses we passed. How cosy the rooms looked with their paper chains and other decorations. If the lights were out, log fires sent shadows dancing up and down the walls and glinting on the crockery laid for tea.

Once at the theatre and safely ensconced in our seats, we enjoyed cheering the hero and hissing the villain and, of course, joining in the sing-song led by the comedian. For example, if the pantomime was *Cinderella*, this would be 'Buttons.' In those days, pantomimes usually incorporated a popular song of the moment. The song leader presented a huge sheet with the words to the song printed large enough for all to see, just in case some people in the audience weren't familiar with them.

All too soon the show came to an end and we headed home once more, our sleepy heads filled with memories of the scenes and music. So we happily spent another of the days of Christmas. Before returning to school, we children attended several other functions, such as Sunday School parties and the grand show the Rover Scouts always put on. All these helped to prolong the

magic world of Christmas a little longer.

But all things have to end and, suddenly, the 12th night arrived and down came all the decorations. Then we knew we had another year to wait until the next season of festivities. When one is young, the period of waiting seems forever! As Frank Richards once said to me, 'When I was a kid, one Christmas seemed an interminable age from the last one—but when you get to my age, one Christmas is treading on the heels of the next!'

TOM MERRY - HAMILTON'S "THOUSANDTH MAN"

BY PETER MAHONY.

"Nine hundred and ninety nine depend
On what the world sees in you.
But the Thousandth Man will stand your friend
(Rudyard Kipling)

The outcome of many of Charles Hamilton's stories depended on characters behaving like 'Christian Gentlemen'. The Bunters and Skinners of his world hardly ever did; some, such as Cardew or Vernon-Smith, occasionally rose to the challenge. Many, like the Famous Five, were 'straight' but would suffer the odd fall from grace. Only three of his leading lights - Jimmy Silver, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Tom Merry - were prepared to do the 'right thing', irrespective of other considerations.

The likeable 'Uncle James', though a champion of the 'right', had a well-developed streak of mischief which he never quite suppressed. His good deeds sometimes foundered when his sense of humour got the upper hand. The well-meaning Gussy often came to grief because he was too innocent and trusting. Tom Merry, as innocent as Gussy and as mischievous as Jimmy at the start of his career, matured much more quickly. He learned by experience - as most people do; but he retained his innate decency - as many don't. In the process, he became the epitome of Hamilton's ideal 'Christian Gentleman'.

It is interesting to note that two of these 'shining lights' appeared in the *Gem*. Jimmy Silver was Rookwood's star, playing Guardian Angel to the headstrong Lovell, or the wilful Mornington, or the obtuse Tubby Muffin. The Rookwood yarns, nearly always on a lighter level, dealt with troubles stemming from weak, irresponsible behaviour - the lot of most of mankind.

In the *Magnet*, Hamilton concentrated most of his writing on three characters - Bunter, Wharton and Vernon-Smith. All of these were flawed in Christian terms - Bunter's selfish greed, Wharton's pride, Smithy's double standards. The steadfastly upright characters, like Redwing and Linley, often played crucial, but secondary roles. (Bob Cherry, who might have been placed alongside Silver, D'Arcy and Merry, twice dithered about doing 'right'. On the first occasion his wastrel cousin, Paul Tyrell, was concerned and Bob was extricated from his dilemma by the intervention of Vernon-Smith. The other occasion involved Marjorie Hazeldene and Bob, understandably, agonized irresolutely over what to do.

It was at St. Jim's that Hamilton depicted a more obvious Christian theme. (Most of his Tom Merry stories were written in his early years as an author - 1907 to 1915). Rookwood came next (1915-1926); the heyday of the Magnet (1927-35) occupied his later years. The capers of Gussy provide a sharp contrast to the exploits of Tom Merry. Gussy - a noble soul - had a soft heart and - unfortunately - a soft head. His personal behaviour was almost impeccable - the chief blemish being a smug conviction that he 'knew best'. (Lovell of Rookwood laboured under the same delusion.) A tendency to expect the best of everyone, sometimes in defiance of strong evidence to the contrary, occasionally paid off, but more often resulted in an awkward predicament for Gussy. Many modern 'do-godders' are of Gussy's ilk. They make irrational allowances for villains, expecting them to behave like 'gentlemen', and are invariably flabbergasted when their protégés desert them with whatever 'pickings' were available. Gussy was, no doubt, loved by the Angels, but they could not have regarded his intellect highly.

Tom Merry was a different proposition altogether. He too, had a soft heart, but his early experiences quickly caused him to develop a hard head. He always suffered fools gladly; but he gave rogues very short shrift. The early Gem stories illustrate how he learned to distinguish the two types.

CLAVERING - THE FORMATIVE DAYS

Tom Merry arrived at Clavering College equipped with several handicaps. The over-

protective Priscilla Fawcett had insisted on dressing the strapping youth in a velvet suit, a garb calculated to make Tom the butt of his school fellows. In addition, he had acquired a convoluted vocabulary of the type later exemplified by Alonzo Todd and Herbert Skimpole. His sheltered upbringing (Tom was an orphan; Miss Fawcett his guardian/ governess) had made him 'greener' than most new boys. Manners and Lowther exploited his gullibility by giving him wrong directions en route to the College; the outcome was an extremely late arrival at Clavering where a harassed Headmaster was trying to cope with the panic-stricken Miss Fawcett. The Shell Form soon re-christened Tom - 'Spooney'.

Appearances, however, were deceptive. Tom, blessed with an excellent sense of humour, was splendidly resilient. Personal embarrassment did not bother him too much - he certainly never brooded on his discomforts - and his 'innocent' conversation tended to include disconcerting home-truths which did not please the listeners.

Once he had got rid of his velvet suit - and Miss Fawcett - Tom entered whole-heartedly into school life. Naturally athletic, he was soon making his mark. The blustering George Gore started bullying him, using a walking-stick. Tom retaliated with a cricket stump and convinced Gore that he was 'mad'. That put the bullying 'on hold', until Tom, under the tuition of Harry Manners, learned to box. This early incident shows one of Tom's most notable traits - he never started a quarrel, but, once involved, he always sustained the conflict until his adversary cried 'Pax'.

Manners and Monty Lowther, impressed despite themselves, took Tom under their wings and showed him the ropes! He did not need a lot of showing. When Herr Schneider, the German Master, complained about him to Mr. Railton, Tom fell back on a long-winded exploration which infuriated Schneider but amused Railton. He got away with it; and a long-running feud with Schneider developed.

The antagonism of Gore continued, particularly when Tom began to make his mark at sports. They were paired as 'hares' in a cross-country run and Tom outran the bully. Late in the run they saw a little girl drowning in a mill-race. Tom plunged to the rescue and would have drowned with her but for the timely arrival of Manners and Lowther. The hero was feted at the school, but Gore sent a 'come at once' telegram to Miss Fawcett which frightened her and caused Tom severe embarrassment. Mr. Railton investigated and asked Tom (in public) to name the culprit. Tom refused - "It wouldn't be cricket" - and took a flogging for disobeying an order. His stock immediately rose with his school fellows.

The next step was to bring Gore to book. Tom challenged the bully and, in the first of many stand-up fights, gave him a thrashing. 'Spooney' disappeared from the Clavering vocabulary.

Later, Tom scored his first century in a cricket match with the Fifth Form. He was duly picked for Clavering's 1st XI and became acknowledged champion of the Middle School. By the time Calvering College closed and transferred staff and pupils to St. Jim's, the 'green' new boy had matured into a self-reliant, energetic, enterprising leader.

ST. JIM'S - THE GLORY DAYS

Tom Merry's early days at St. Jim's were devoted to 'establishing his credentials'. A larger school than Clavering, St. Jim's had two houses, both of which already possessed accepted leaders. Jack Blake and George Figgins resisted the intrusion of a new rival - and sparks flew. Tom suffered a few reverses, but, generally, he out-smarted the others in a series of light-hearted japes. It was not until Rylcombe Grammar School started putting it across the Saints that the internal squabbling ceased. Shrewdly, Tom let Blake and Figgins take turns at leading, giving them his loyal support in forays that came disastrous croppers. When his turn came, he master-minded a resounding victory over the Grammarians. From then onwards, Tom's right to captain the St. Jim's Juniors was undisputed (except for one dramatic period).

As a leader, Tom was resourceful, quick-witted and positive. He always led 'from the

front' and the Saints enjoyed regular success on the sports field. A fine batsman and fielder at cricket; a robust centre forward; a strong athlete and swimmer' Tom's sporting prowess gave him a prestige which potential rivals could not match. But his leadership was more than one-dimensional.

The Hobby Club; Tom Merry's Weekly; a concert party; a Music Hall; an Orchestra; a Scout Troop; a fire brigade; a Pet's Club; and even a Secret Society were all ventures instigated by Tom. Some failed; few lasted; all were entertaining side-shows which owed their existence to Tom's drive and enthusiasm. Manners and Lowther were always in support: St. Jim's enjoyed exciting times under their auspices.

SUPPORTER OF THE UNDER-DOG

If Tom was a good leader in the good times, he came out even stronger when the going was tough. He was particularly concerned with aiding the under-dog. Skimpole, Manners, Lowther, Joe Frayne, Langton - even Cutts and Trimble - received much-needed help from Tom at crucial times. With Cutts, he came badly unstuck, but the rest justified his friendly concern - and were probably better fellows as a result.

Two of St. Jim's hardest cases, Lumley-Lumley and Talbot, owed much to Tom. The former, despised as an "Outsider", was reclaimed from the downward path as a direct result of a request from Dr. Holmes. Tom and his friends took Lumley-Lumley under their wing and completed his reform. With Reginald Talbot, the 'Toff', Tom's influence was even more vital. The intelligent Talbot was cynically planning further crimes (he was a cracksman) when he met Tom. The cheerful integrity of the St. Jim's skipper made a firm impression on Talbot, who started questioning his own principles. Finding them wicked, he bared his soul to Tom and started along the thorny path of repentance and reparation. After many vicissitudes, the reformed Toff received a King's Pardon and enrolled at St. Jim's. He and Tom became firm friends.

Later 'Professor' Rivers and the Angel Alley gang 'framed' Talbot for burgling the Head's safe. Tom stayed loyal when the Toff was expelled from St. Jim's, 'staking' him with money and food to help him survive 'on the road'. But he did more than that.

Convinced of his friend's honesty, Tom did some hard thinking He deduced that the 'Professor' would have another 'go' at the Head's safe. Helped by Manners and Lowther, Tom kept watch and caught Rivers red-handed. After a fraught episode, involving Rivers' daughter, Marie, the school nurse, the authorities were convinced of Talbot's innocence. Even then, the Terrible Three endured an anxious few days scoring London for the destitute Toff. They found him - just in time - and restored him to St. Jim's. But it was Tom's faith, loyalty and - above all - tenacity that pulled the brand from the burning.

FRIEND'S CHAMPION

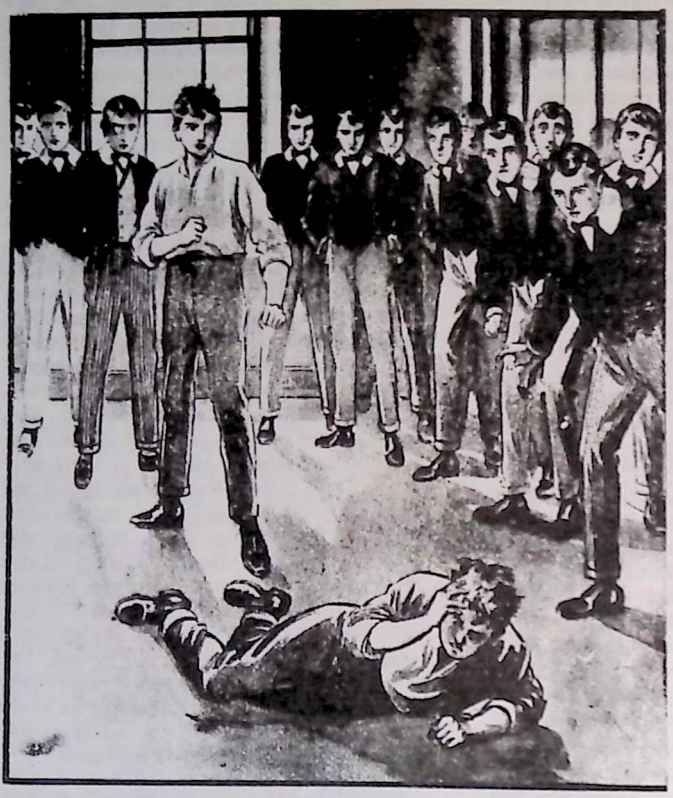
Tom never worried too much about his own troubles. However, a friend's difficulties always brought out his protective qualities. Harry Manners wrongly assumed that Dick Roylance, a new boy from New Zealand, had been bullying his young brother, Reggie. Manners and Roylance fought and the New Zealander, a formidable scrapper, thrashed Manners. Resentful, the loser started a feud with Roylance, for which Tom, who found the new boy likeable, rebuked Manners in fairly terse terms. Then Aubrey Racke made trouble and Manners fought Roylance again - with the same result. At this point, Tom, believing that Roylance had called Manners a coward, decided it was up to him to stand up for his wronged friend. He challenged Roylance and a Titanic 'mill' resulted. It was touch and go, but Tom's fitness and determination just won the day. The insult to his friend - which had never really occurred - was avenged. How many men would face a gruelling fight with a formidable opponent just to restore a pal's good name?

THE PUBLIC BENEFACTOR

When the redoubtable George Alfred Grundy arrived at St. Jim's mayhem ensued. He flattened Gussy, who had gone to meet him off the train; threw Cutts of the fifth out of the tuck-shop; knocked out Jack Blake in one round; and spanked Percy Mellish. Then he commandeered Crook's study; had a dust-up with Study No. 6; and announced his intention of fighting his way into the cricket XI. Really, Grundy was a public danger. Someone had to cut him down to size. Tom Merry went into special training.

Matters came to a head when Tom refused to play Grundy in the team. A proper 'mill' was arranged in the gym with Kildare keeping time. It lasted eight hard rounds, with Tom gaining most of the points, but Grundy always dangerous. Grundy, charging in recklessly, was floored in the first for a count of eight, and was later saved by the bell in the fourth. Tom went down for a full nine in the fifth when one of Grundy's haymakers got home. The punishment on both sides was considerable, but Tom's stamina - the result of conscientious training - was superior and Grundy flagged badly in round eight. Tom landed a right to the jaw which put George Alfred down for the full count.

That wasn't the end of it, though. Grundy, always resilient, restarted proceedings in the dormitory. Tom, fed up with his arrogance,



THE GREAT DORMITORY FIGHT

TOM MERRY versus CRUNDY.– See the Magnificent School Tale of St. Jim's in this issue

gave him a merciless hammering for two more rounds. When Grundy was finally floored it took him four minutes - a long time - to recover. He owned himself licked - and St. Jim's breathed a sigh of relief. The fearful prospect of a reign of terror had been nipped in the bud. Tom's popularity rose even higher.

Throughout this story, Tom's tolerance and good humour are very evident. He found Grundy an amusing study and could see the good qualities (generosity, straightforwardness) in the overbearing Shellite. But when it came to the crunch, Tom faced the music. Most of his peers would have shirked a showdown with Grundy - discretion is the better part of valour; and compromise and appeasement much better than war (ask Mr. Chamberlain!). Tom, however, knew that a battle was necessary. He preferred to face it sooner rather than later and prepared accordingly. Having settled the issue beyond doubt, he immediately shook hands with Grundy and resumed his easy-going ways. (One of Tom's nicest qualities was the absence of any 'big-headedness'. He would accomplish a difficult or dangerous task without any gloating or swank.)

THE 'ANIMAL RIGHTS' MAN

Another of Tom's attributes was a regard for animals. One summer's day, the Terrible Three encountered a frowsy specimen (whom Lowther christened 'Fur Cap') ill-treating a monkey. Tom chipped in, felled the ruffian and rescued 'Mike'. Then this troubles began.

Mike was installed at St. Jim's as Tom's pet. A series of hilarious escapades ensued with Tom coming off second best to the monkey. The creature was named "Tom Merry Minor" by Jack Blake and a lot of good-natured ribbing resulted. Tom did his best to train the animal, but valuables began to disappear and it was eventually discovered that Fur Cap had taught Mike to snap up trifles from unsuspecting victims. Most people would have got rid of the monkey once it proved troublesome, but Tom's tenacity this time proved a drawback. A kind heart is not always rewarded with success.

On another occasion, the Terrible Three came across a man ill-treating a horse. They stopped him and set the horse loose. Later, they discovered that the man was James Silverson, who turned out to be one of Tom's most villainous relatives. More trouble resulted, but Tom did not regret saving the horse. Nevertheless, 'kindness to animals' produced more kicks than half pence for him.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Early in his St. Jim's career, Tom had to leave the school. Miss Fawcett had lost money on investments and her ward insisted that he should fend for himself. He went to London and endured a deal of hardship looking for work. Tom was befriended by a ragged urchin, Joe Frayne, who helped him to survive the worst of his privations.

When Tom's fortune turned he did not forget the ragamuffin Joe. Arrangements were made to give Frayne a St. Jim's education and Tom kept an avuncular eye on Joe's progress.

Mr. Selby was not pleased; but the urchin soldiered on under Tom's encouragement and became a solid Third Form citizen. There were other instances of Tom's Samaritan attempts, but this was one of his lasting successes.

TOM AND THE FAIR SEX

Tom was rather reserved towards the ladies. Long exposure to the vagaries of Miss Fawcett's emotions had made him wary. Women, apparently, wanted their own way and would make an inordinate fuss until they had it. And they could not be punched on the nose when the got out of order. Consequently, though he liked Ethel Cleveland, Doris Levison and others, Tom kept a careful distance from girls in general.

Miss Marie made as if to speak, but she closed her lips tightly. The look on Tom Merry's face made her shiver. The miserable secret had to remain a secret.

The difficulties endured by Reginald Talbot also made an impression on Tom. Talbot's later trials were largely due to the devious conduct of Marie Rivers. Maries, aware of Talbot's regard for her, manipulated him into compromising his hard-won reputation under direction of her father, the 'Professor'. Tom's active intervention on his friend's behalf exposed the whole miserable business. It must have left him highly dubious about the trustworthiness of pretty girls with bright eyes. Certainly, he never allowed himself to be drawn into the kind of close relationship which George Figgins and Ethel Cleveland enjoyed.

His cautious attitude was probably re-inforced by the unpleasant affair when Ethel, due to a 'con' by Baggy Trimble, became the possessor of a stolen tenner. Figgins, unable to confront an angry and disdainful Ethel, changed the tenner for her and then fell under suspicion of theft. A series of quarrels and misunderstandings followed. Cardew eventually deduced that Ethel might know the truth, but he and all the other juniors were too diffident to ask her. Gussy had an opportunity to confront her but pussy-footed so much that Ethel became impatient and confused. She asked Tom to see her and demanded to know why Figgins was being ostracised. Tom grasped the nettle and asked her a series of questions which Ethel found very disconcerting. He obtained enough information to unravel the mystery, but, once again, he must have found the 'sensitivities' of the female irritatingly obstructive. Tom was always going to be his 'own man'; it would require a very sensible, level-headed girl to appreciate and accept him. The "I'll soon change him into what I want" type would have found him very hard going. Unwittingly, Miss Fawcett had made her ward into a 'man's man'.

THE 'COALS OF FIRE' MAN

The only serious challenge to Tom's captaincy was mounted by Ralph Reckness Cardew. Tom, generally tolerant of other fellows' foibles, was totally unimpressed by the volatile personality of Lord Reckness' grandson. Other fellows found Cardew's cynical flippancy amusing - and, no doubt, his wealth was an important factor with some. Tom considered him a pain and a humbug - and said so bluntly on several occasions. Cardew, under his air of easy nonchalance, resented this bitterly - probably because he realised that the description was true.

Matters came to a head when Cardew challenged for the captaincy. Tom, confident that he had been a conscientious skipper, was justifiably 'miffed' when a number of fellows thought it 'time for a change'. If the change had involved Blake or Figgins or Talbot or any reliable citizens, Tom would not have minded too much. But the irresponsible and irritating Cardew was beyond the pale of creditability.

As a result, Tom refused to canvas the voters. His view was that if they preferred to have Cardew, they were welcome to him. Sharp practice by Cardew wangled the election - but Tom's resentful indifference gave him the opportunity.

Of course, the whole business was a disaster. After early success, Cardew began to neglect his responsibilities. Defeats at sports were sustained; the better fellows were alienated; Cardew fell foul of the authorities; unreasonably he blamed Tom. He challenged

Tom to a private fight in Rylcombe Woods; then he laid plans with Aubrey Racke to 'nobble' Tom. The criminal villainy of this plot showed Cardew at his worst.

Being Cardew, he had a concurrent feud with Gerald Cutts. Cutts, seething over a humiliating reverse, cornered Cardew in the woods. He tied him to a tree-stump and started to thrash him viciously. Cardew would have fared very badly, but Tom arrived and immediately came to his rescue.

While the helpless Cardew watched, a colossal scrap took place. Cutts, bigger and heavier - and fully possessed of the necessary pluck, tackled Tom with gusto. Fired up by an angry temper, he dished out heavy punishment. Tom, angered in his turn by Cutts' cowardly treatment of a helpless victim, gave as good as he got. After a while, Cutts' temper cooled and he realised that he was opposed by an implacable opponent who would fight till he dropped. The Fifth Former did not have the stomach for the inevitable repercussions. (Defeat would be humiliating; victory might bring about a dangerous enquiry by the school authorities.) He broke off the fight; Tom was left bloody, but unbowed.

Cardew, awe-stricken and chastened by what he had witnessed, experienced a change of heart. He returned to St. Jim's; resigned the captaincy; and voted for Tom in the subsequent election. Probably his enemy had brought an unexpected change in Tom's fortunes. Being a 'good guy' sometimes reaps rewards - though, on this occasion, it also brought an impressive collection of cuts and bruises.

THE TROUBLE MEETER

People deal with trouble in different ways. Some lie down under it; some protest resentfully; some crawl sycophantically out of it; a few meet it philosophically; only very rarely does someone give the trouble-makers more than they can manage. Tom Merry was one of those rarities.

Early in his career, he had constant trouble with Herr Schneider. The crusty German was given to petty punishments: Tom retaliated with a series of japes which caused Schneider acute embarrassment. When they transferred to St. Jim's, the feud fell into abeyance - perhaps because Schneider could find easier victims in other forms.

Sometime later, on a school cruise, Tom received the unwelcome attentions of Mr. Ratcliff. He was subjected to a campaign of victimisation in Ratty's worst style, and reacted - for the only time in his career - irrationally. Threatened with yet another chastisement, Tom threw himself overboard. He was rescued, and Ratcliff, shaken to the core, drew in his horns. A drowned pupil would have taken some explaining. Tom, probably inwardly ashamed of his loss of control, never succumbed to panic again.

Instead, he met fire with fire. When Dr. Holmes found him guilty of theft and ordered his expulsion, Tom refused to go. Adamant about his innocence, he set about barring-himself-in against authority. To his surprise and gratification, the Middle School, almost to a man, joined him. A prolonged rebellion ensued - over the Christmas holidays - and the masters had more trouble than they had ever experienced. Of course, it was resolved satisfactorily in the end. Nevertheless, if Tom had not fought for his honour, another injustice would have been recorded against human innocence. The St. Jim's authorities had learned a lesson about being less precipitate and more discerning in the future.

THE SELF-RELIANT SCRAPPER

If Tom had one sporting talent superior to all his others, it was as a boxer. Already, we have seen how he dealt with Gore, Grundy, Roylance and Cutts. He never lost a fight in a Hamilton story (there were a couple of misguided yarns by substitute authors which had him defeated, but those don't rate). Among other schoolboy dust-ups, he vanquished Bully Barker (during the school cruise series) and the murderous Koumi Rao, who harboured a family grudge against Tom's deceased father. But his skill went above and beyond that.

At least three times Tom ventured into the professional ring. In "Tom Merry & Co. at the Fair", he tackled the "Bethnal Green Chicken", a professional bantam-weight. Tom, who was probably a light-weight, had a weight advantage but it was boy versus man, amateur versus pro'. In three rounds, he disposed of the Chicken but refused to take the £1 purse.

In similar circumstances, Tom went up against 'Sankey's Lamb'. Sankey's Circus included a boxing 'turn'. This time the purse was £10 if the challenger could 'stand up' for six rounds. The 'Lamb' was taller and bigger than Tom and a ding-dong scrap resulted. Tom's speed kept him out of early trouble and he scored well with some heavy body-blows. The Lamb stepped on the gas in the third and Tom took some punishment. He weathered the storm, however, and raised the pace further in rounds four and five. In the sixth, he applied the K.O., pocketed the tenner and 'blued' it on a celebration at St. Jim's.

His third venture was more altruistic. "Tiny Tim", a bantam-weight appearing at the Wayland Empire, came to Tom's rescue when he was attacked by footpads in Wayland Wood. The boxer routed the thugs and Tom was very grateful. Later, Tiny Tim was ambushed by the footpads and, though the terrible Three came to

his aid, they were too late to prevent him sustaining a severe arm-injury. This meant he would lose his week's pay if he failed to appear in the ring at the Empire.

One good turn deserves another; so Tom booked in as Tiny Tim's substitute against the 'Limehouse Slogger'. The Slogger, a bigger man, probably a welter-weight, saw a chance to win for once and went bald-headed for Tom.

Skill and speed kept him at arm's length. The Slogger became reckless, left himself open, and Tom dropped him twice in round five. In the sixth, and last, Tom suddenly switched to attack and the surprised 'pug' went down for the full count. Tiny Tim's wages were safe.

These three forays show how mature and self-reliant Tom was. Of all Hamilton's characters, he is the one who shows a clear transition from boyhood to manhood. An old head was emerging from the young shoulders as the Gem saga continued.

This maturing was clearly emphasised whenever Tom came into contact with his relatives. The orphan, abandoned to the care of his doting governess, had an instinctive wariness of his clutch of rather dubious family connections.

STRAINED RELATIONS

Very early in his school career, Tom was persecuted by Amos Keene, temporary Master of the shell. Keene was the tool of Philip Phipps, a cousin of Tom's. Phipps wanted Tom to be disgraced so that he would be disinherited from his uncle's fortune. Phipps, of course, stood to benefit by Tom's downfall. Keene was foiled, but the experience left Tom with a jaundiced view of Phipps in particular and relatives in general.

His next unpleasant experience involved Mr. Gabriel Poinsett, his uncle in Arizona. Poinsett, who must have been related to Tom's mother, invited the boy 'out West' and, by pretending to be an impecunious rancher, subjected Tom and his friends to a holiday of 'roughing it'. It transpired that the whole affair was an elaborate test to see if Tom was 'worthy' of inheriting "thirty thousand acres, plus a million dollars". Tom, unaware of the test element, accepted the situation at face value and displayed his usual resilience when the going got rough. When Poinsett 'came clean', Tom was deeply offended. He turned down Poinsett's offer:

"You deceived me! I didn't come here as a fortune hunter; I came expecting to be treated fairly, and I wasn't treated fairly! You've made a fool of me, and you can't expect me to like it! Hang your acres and dollars!"

The flabbergasted rancher, who had developed a deep regard for his nephew, had to 'sing small' before matters were smoothed over and family harmony restored.

Another 'inheritance' battle arose over the wealth of Mr. Brandreth, a South African millionaire who had been a friend of Tom's dead father. Gerard Goring, wastrel son of Brandreth's South African partner, saw Tom as a rival for the fortune and took steps to eliminate him. The scheme was to kidnap Tom and to substitute Reggie Clavering (Tom's exact double in looks) at St. Jim's. Clavering, a young reprobate, was to break rules right and left and get himself expelled - in Tom's name. This, Goring judged, would be sufficient for Brandreth to cut Tom out of his will.

It did not work because of Tom's courage and resource. (In similar 'Double' yarns Harry Wharton needed the help of Vernon-Smith to defeat Ralph Stacey; while Smithy himself owed his escape to the honesty of his cousin, Bertie Vernon.) Tom sorted out his own salvation.

While Clavering was spreading himself at St. Jim's, the imprisoned Tom fashioned a weapon from a broken chair-leg and slugged his jailer when the man brought food. Outside the lonely house where he had been held, he encountered Goring, armed with a pistol. The chair-leg came into play again and, while Goring was recovering, Tom made his escape. He arrived at St. Jim's just as Clavering was 'on the carpet' for expulsion. Shrewd questioning

Manners spread the tell-tale photographs in a row on the table. Tom Merry and Lowther gazed at them breathlessly. Miss Priscilla gazed at them dumbfounded. James Silverson gazed at them with staring eyes.

by Mr. Railton soon established which was which, and Tom resumed his place with his record unblemished.

OVER-TURNING THE WORM

The last-ever *Gem* series (1939) was a 'snorter'. Hamilton, who had only recently resumed writing St. Jim's stories after a long run of re-prints, went right back to his original clutch of characters and produced some superlative yarns. The Terrible Three, Blake & Co., Figgins & Co. and Miss Fawcett all played prominent parts, uncluttered by the Talbots, Cardews and Wildrakes of Hamilton's later invention. The only new addition to the cast list was the slimy James Silverson - "The Worm" - one of Hamilton's nastiest villains.

Silverson, with his eye on Miss Fawcett's money, obtained a temporary teaching post at St. Jim's. There, he contrived to make life difficult for Tom; the aim being to destroy Miss Fawcett's trust in her ward and to insinuate himself into Tom's place in her affections and, more importantly, her will. His machinations nearly brought Tom down.

For once, Tom was out of his depth. His forthright method of open clashes with rascality foundered against Silverson's wily cunning.

Each confrontation was turned into "a rebellious boy showing ingratitude to a caring relative". Tom's reputation began to suffer.

Fortunately, Lowther and Manners took a hand. Both of them owed Tom loyalty for past support; in turn, they came up trumps. The cheerful Lowther turned one of Silverson's schemes against him so that the rogue had a most humiliating experience in front of all the masters. Manners, a really brainy customer, matched his guile against Silverson's and defeated the "Worm" hands down. The final dénouement took place at Laurel Villa when Manners produced photographic proof of Silverson's skulduggery. The final *Gem* story ended with Tom and his pals and Miss Fawcett in happy harmony, just as the stories had begun thirty two years before. Hamilton had brought his favourite character home again.

So there it is - the saga of Tom Merry. The blend of admirable qualities in his character made him the finest (in the true sense of the word) of Hamilton's creations. When I was young I wanted to be like Tom: now I'm old I wish I had been. What more can one say?

Best Wishes to you all.

TOM KELLY (DUNLEARY)

* *

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* *

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JEMIMA SOLVES A CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

by Margery Woods

"Hark The Herald Angels Sing, Glory to the new born King, Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled, Joyful all---ye---"

"Bessie!"

"Shut up, Bessie! We told you to stay out of this one!"

"Bib-but I---"

"You can't. So pipe down!"

The fattest member of the Cliff House carol party sniffed indignantly. "You're only jealous of my beautiful soprano voice. But just you wait until I'm singing at Covent Garden. You'll---"

"Ha ha ha! They don't sell fruit and veg there any more!" chortled Clara Trevlyn. "So what are you---?"

"All right, girls," Barbara Redfern broke in, laughing. "Shall we start again? Bessie, would you like to hold the lantern?"

Bessie would; she fancied herself leading with the big, traditional lantern, and Hark The Herald Angels Sing got off to a second, rather more successful start.

There were six youthful owners of the sweet clear voices; Babs, captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House; Mabs, her loyal lieutenant; Tomboy Clara Trevelyn; elegant Jemima Carstairs of the famous monocle; Marjorie Hazeldene, great chum of Clara; Janet Jordan, the Fourth's swimming champion, and the seventh member of the party, of the not quite so sweet voice, Bessie Bunter. They had arrived the previous day to spend the Christmas hols with a cousin of Mabs' playwright father. After living for several years in Canada, Major Lynn's cousin Laura had recently married an English architect and come to settle with him in Merrythorte Hall, a lovely old Tudor house in the heart of the Sussex countryside. Laura and James had only completed the restoration of it in time for Christmas and were celebrating the move with a house warming, cum Christmas party to which the girls had been invited. Now it was Christmas Eve and almost time to end the carols at the last house before the little village petered out into countryside to the west. The collecting tin for the local church's overseas fund was pleasantly heavy, and the chums turned their steps happily back towards Merrythorte Hall, about a quarter of a mile distant from the other end of the village. Although the weather had been rather unseasonably mild the air was chilling now, with crisply midnight blue sky, a huge silver moon, and a hint of frost to come. Bessie puffed along, always last, and then suddenly Babs heard a scampering sound, a muffled bark, and realised Bessie had stopped.

"Come on, Bess," she called. "We promised Laura we'd be back by eight and it's five past already." She waited, then retraced her steps to where Bessie was befriending a small white and patched dog of indeterminate terrier ancestry.

Bessie said, "Do you think it's lost, Babs? It's frightened."

The little dog did seem distressed, darting round as though lost and uncertain of its surroundings, then running hopefully to Bessie and sitting in front of her. But it would not allow her to touch it, cowering back when she tried to get hold of it to seek its collar. The rest of the chums had turned back now, and suddenly Mabs exclaimed: "Is it Gyp?"

But the name evoked no recognition from the animal. The chums knew that there was one cloud on the happiness of the newlyweds; Laura had had to put her beloved pet into quarantine when she brought him over from Canada and the six months had just elapsed a week ago. With great joy she had collected him and brought him down to Merrythorte, only for him to disappear the very next day. She and James had searched the area, reported him missing, asked everyone they met to look out for him, but there had not been a trace or word of him since.

"Let's take him back with us, just in case," said Mabs. For a moment they looked at one another doubtfully, then agreed, a decision that was being made for them regardless as the dog, although still wary, watched their every move and followed.

He seemed to favour Jemima, trotting close to her until they reached the gates of Merrythorte but showing no sign of picking up a familiar scent, and then suddenly a rough voice came out of the darkness.

"Where're you going with that dog?"

A youth of about fifteen loomed out of the shadow of the high wall. In the amber light from the coaching lamps either side of the gates he glowered threateningly at the chums and made a snatch at the dog as he snarled: "How did you get out, you brute? Come 'ere!"

But the little creature gave a whimper of fear and darted behind Jemima, who gave an encouraging murmur. Clara planted herself in front of the youth and glared at him belligerently. "You say this is your dog?" the Tomboy demanded.

"I just said so, didn't I?" he snapped.

Jemima surveyed him coolly. "It doesn't seem to agree with you, old thing. Why don't you call it politely?" she suggested.

"I just did."

"Well it doesn't answer to "Come 'ere brute," Jemima said sadly. "Why not try it with Bruno, or Aristophanes, or Secundus? If you don't fancy any of those try Thingamajig," Jemima added helpfully. As she spoke she stopped and picked up the dog in one swift movement. Only for a moment did it protest, then settled down in her arms as though it had known her all its life. "See that, old Spartan," she said. "We've lost a dog as well, you know."

"Well," said Clara. "Satisfied?"

"No I'm not!" he shouted. "You've no right to that dog!"

Jemima pretended to shudder. "Tut-tut. Terrible things these rights. But don't get so upset, sonny. We live here and we're quite reasonable, you know. Why don't you give us your address and jolly old phone number, then after the old brain boxes have had their fixes of turkey and Christmas pud---especially our slim maiden here who's expiring with starvation---we can all get together and talk about our pooches. Yes?"

The youth gaped at Jemima, at the monocle, the Eton crop, the elegant self-possession of her, and gave a bewildered shake of his head. Jemima shook her head, sadly. "Can't remember his name and address, or his dog's name. Dreadful to see such a bad case of amnesia in one so young. Mind," she tickled the dog's ear, "I never could remember phone numbers myself. Well, fellow Spartans, shall we toddle?" She began to walk up the drive and the chums followed. Only Clara hung back for a long, challenging stare. The youth stared back, still bewildered. Plainly he had never met anyone like Jemima Carstairs. Then abruptly he turned and hurried away into the long shadows of the lane.

* * * * *

Laura was waiting for them, framed in the broad lighted doorway, and the hearts of the girls ached as they saw the leap of hope in her face, then the disappointment when she realised that the dog was not her beloved Gyp returned to her. She was puzzled by their account, the dog's likeness to Gyp, and the unpleasant youth who claimed ownership.

She and James had not lived long enough in the village to get to know everyone and could hazard no guess as to his origin. The cause of the mystery decided to make himself at home after a timid exploration of the great timbered hall and hesitant survey of the occupants. The wide old inglenooked fireplace tempted him, as did the dish of food Laura brought for him, and soon he was sleeping happily in front of the leaping, crackling flames.

There was still much to do, the tree to finish, last minute presents to wrap and add to the colourful circle of parcels heaped round the gaily decorated tree. After supper the time simply flew and at eleven-thirty they all set off for the village church for the midnight service. The dog was left in the utility room in a hastily made bed and James said they might meet someone at the church who had heard of a lost dog other than their own.

But they were still no wiser after they'd talked to several of the locals, who were able to supply chapter and verse regarding the other newcomers who had bought Old Gables.

"They haven't got any pets, though," said Mrs. Meadows, the Vicar's wife, "and neither have the people who moved to Redgates Farm back in summer---except a couple of big farm dogs,"

"Cross bred collies," said Miss Johnson of the Post Office.

"What about those theatre folks staying with Tom, our local celebrity?" said a deep voiced man at the rear of a now very interested group of neighbours. "About four or five of them."

"He doesn't have a dog, he has two cats, those weird skinny creatures with hardly any fur," said the well informed lady from the post office. "No sign of his visitors, really, and they left at the weekend. Left a right mess of the place, according to Dora who cleans for him. Gave her the week off while they partied," Miss Johnson sniffed, obviously put out that no inside information had been forthcoming about the partying of the local celebrity.

"Who would the boy be?" asked Babs, describing him as well as she could.

There was a brief silence and some exchanged glances before Miss Johnson said: "That sounds like old Mrs. Amos's lad Josh. A copper short of a shilling, there. A real trial to his ma. They have a smallholding right over Greenacres way. Now they've got dogs. Great ugly cur and a couple of mangy Alsatians, surly as he is. Never seen him with a little dog like the one you've lost."

Mrs. Meadows sighed. "I'm afraid your little stray has been dumped out of a car somewhere and found his way here. I do hope your own dog turns up soon."

With goodnights and thank yous and many warm Christmas greetings being exchanged, the gathering broke up and the Merrythorte party made its way home, Laura becoming concerned about the lateness of the hour for her young guests.

"Christmas only comes once a year," laughed Mabs, "and we're not a bit tired."

"You will be in the morning," their hostess smiled, "if you don't---" her voice faded away as her husband gave a sharp exclamation. "What is it, James?" she cried. "What---?"

"We've had burglars! Look! The side window's broken." He gestured to them to stay back, but they crowded to his side, ready to be a match for any unwelcome visitors.

But their first instinctive fears were unfounded. Nothing seemed to have been disturbed in the house, non-one was lurking within, nothing seemed to have been taken, except for one thing.

The little stray had gone.

* * * * *

Christmas morning dawned frosty and bright. The only sleepy head was Bessie, but the mouth-watering aroma of traditional English breakfast wafting up from the kitchen soon banished sleepy dust from Fatima's eyes. Then there was much laughter and much excitement over the eternal joy of opening presents and many squeals of delight over gifts that emerged from gaily coloured wrappings.

But thoughts of the little animal they'd rescued and lost again kept surfacing. Had the unpleasant youth been responsible for the break-in on Christmas Eve? Why was he so eager to claim the dog? For his manner betrayed anything but affection for it. And surely a professional thief would have stripped the house of as many valuables as he could carry. Unless the little dog had made so much noise that he had flown, and the little dog had then made its own escape to search for its owner.

James, who was wise and logical, spelled it out when Clara suggested a visit to the youth's home. They had no proof that he was responsible for the break in; the dog was not the girls' property; nothing had been stolen from the house. He was reporting the incident to the police, and any rash accusations were not advisable. Meanwhile, they would all keep eyes and ears open and get on with Christmas.

The girls saw the wisdom of all this, nevertheless they retired to their rooms to don outdoor wear and then set out for a walk---to get up an appetite for Christmas Dinner. They left Bessie happily scoffing chocolates and a tin of shortbread, and soon found the shabby, run-down place where Mrs. Amos and her uncouth son lived. The two Alsatians mentioned by

Miss Johnson heard the girls' approach and gave voice. The big cur wasn't far behind. Closer investigation within the rackety old gate did not seem inviting. There was no sign of Mrs. Amos or Josh, and for a moment the girls listened intently, wondering if they were imagining a fainter sound of another dog's bark behind the racket of the three brutes leaping at the gate, and the added protest from a scruffy lurcher which had appeared from the back of some outbuildings.

The chums turned away reluctantly, Jemima pausing to pick up what looked like an old coin half buried in the dirt track leading to the smallholding.

"Treasure?" asked Clara, but Jemima shook her head as she dropped the coin into her pocket. She moved on ahead, her expression enigmatic as ever, and they ambled back the way they came, pausing to look at a large attractive old house that stood back in its own grounds not far from where the Amos track diverged from the main road into the village. Two light creamy cats surveyed the scene from one window, looking, from the distance, like a pair of sleek skinny bookends until one abruptly disappeared to investigate something of greater interest in the interior.

"And that must be the local celebrity's country pad," observed Mabs. "A producer - someone called Tom - James said. Seems quiet enough now."

The chums returned, bright-eyed and rosy from their walk, and were not really surprised when Jemima began to burble over a film magazine, then murmured something about a spot of showering before dinner and disappeared upstairs. The chums grinned at one another, knowing that Jimmy would keep her own counsel until she had worked out whatever was simmering in the old brainbox.

Christmas Dinner lived up to everything one could wish of a Christmas Dinner; even Bessie admitted to feeling full, which caused Clara to fall about in a mock swoon. There were crackers, and candles and paper hats and guessing games and the old favourite, Consequences. Suddenly Jemima turned to her host. "May I borrow the old blower---mustn't forget to wish the Guv compliments of the season and all that?"

"Of course you may." James smiled his permission. There had been quite a lot of phoning home, just to make sure parents and loved ones were surviving without their daughters, and Jemima went whistling into the snug to make her call.

She was quite a long time in returning, so long that Clara muttered a hope that Jimmy had remembered a contribution to the telephone box, and Bessie had had time to get peckish again and staved off starvation with a couple of mince pies, a bunch of grapes and a few peppermint creams. But Jemima's enigmatic silence infuriated the chums. After a brief consultation with Laura and James, after which they began to look somewhat intrigued, she remained calmly deaf to the chums' blandishments and protests and would say only that she was waiting for another phone call and then all would be revealed.

But although the phone rang a couple of times late that Christmas night neither of the calls was for Jemima, who murmured tersely, "Stiff upper lip, old Spartan---there is always tomorrow."

Tomorrow suddenly seemed a long time in coming, and when Boxing Day dawned Jemima's tension was discernible behind the unflappable facade the chums knew so well. Her restlessness communicated itself to the chums and at last Clara burst out: "Whatever it is you've got buzzing under your bonnet it's not worth staying in for. Who's for a race round the village?"

Jemima shuddered. "Can't risk missing anything important."

"Like what?" Clara snorted. "You're not infallible, Jimmy, old thing. And if you won't tell us..."

Jemima was not listening. Her gaze had gone past Clara towards the window, where Bessie, her cheek swollen over a large lump of toffee, said indistinctly: "Somebody's coming."

"What? Who?" They crowded to the window, then swooped after Jemima into the hall. Laura and James were already at the door and suddenly there was a great deal of confusion, voices, excitement and ecstatic barking.

Mabs gave a squeal. "It's Gyp!"

Babs cried: "It's Amber Ginette!"

"It isn't!"

"It is!"

The confusion began to resolve into a vivacious, golden-haired girl, a tall burly man getting out of a sleek silvery-blue Citroen estate, a white and patch dog that was trying to tie itself into contortions in Laura's arms, and the Merrythorte party. The vision that was famous screen star Amber Ginette looked at the chums. "Jemima...?" she queried anxiously.

"Ahem." Jemima adjusted her monocle and stepped forward.

"You think you know where Chippy is?"

James broke in. "Let's go indoors and have coffee or a drink or something," he shook his head. "I can't believe we've got Gyp back, or what has been happening."

"No doubt Jemima will tell us," said Clara sarcastically."

When they had settled with their chosen drinks and had completed introductions, they began to piece together the mystery of Gyp's disappearance. While Amber was staying with the party at the local celebrity's home she had had Chippy, her own dog who was very like Gyp, and Mandy, her young secretary-cum-maid-cum-assistant, with her. Amber was flying to Paris the following morning and had left very early. It was Mandy's job to collect the rest of her kit and take Chippy to Ken, the vet who knew the dog and boarded him when Amber was out of the country. Somehow the roving Gyp had been in the grounds, terrified the two aristocratic cats, and been grabbed by Mandy and carted up to London. "I knew nothing of this," said Amber dramatically, "until I received *this*!" She brandished a grubby sheet of notepaper and held it out to James. He passed it round.

It read, in blotchy badly printed characters:

"If you want your dog back it will cost £1000. You'll be contacted agin. Be reddy."

"I was astonished," said Amber. "It was late Christmas Eve when I got back from Paris and there was a mountain of post, with this in it. Then I played back my answering machine and there was a rough voice instructing me to go to Potts Field and leave the money in an old bag that was lying under a broken tractor. Then I'd get a message to tell me where to find the dog." Amber paused. "But I though Chippy was safe at Ken's. Then there was a message from Ken, asking me what I menat by sending him a strange dog instead of Chippy. He thought Tom must have laid on some real strong stuff at the party. I was petrified by then and phoned Dad and begged him to come down. I didn't know what to do. He'd just got to me when you phoned, Jemima." Amber turned. "Can you take us to this place where you think they've got Chippy?"

"It's almost next door to where you were staying." Jemima stood up. "Let us go forthwith, friends and---"

"Just a moment," James broke in. "Before we go barging in with accusations I think we should let the Law make it official."

Amber giggled. "But we've got the law---Dad's a Superintendent with Carberry Police!" She looked fondly at the big man who had said very little since his arrival.

Everyone insisted on going, except Laura who felt that Gyp, now restored to her, needed her reassurance that he was truly home. After all, he'd journeyed all the way from Canada, spent six months in quarantine, been freed only a few days before being snatched up and deposited with a strange vet. He was a very traumatised little dog, Laura said.

They approached the Amos place cautiously, but for once the aggressive canine guards seemed to be shut up somewhere. Mrs. Amos came to the door and regarded the party of schoolgirls and adults with wary eyes. Jemima, coached by Amber's father, said politely: "Mrs. Amos, we've heard that your son found a dog recently. Little, white, with black and brown patches. Could we speak to Josh, please?"

It was all over very easily and quickly. Mrs. Amos said, "Wait a minute. Josh is out but I'll see..." She partly closed the door and vanished inside.

Certain sounds of altercation began within the house. A boy's gruff voice protesting, shrill tones of female invective, then an exclamation of pain followed by the strong curt tones of matriarchal authority. Presently Mrs. Amos returned to the door, grim of visage, holding a struggling terrier in her arms. "That lad of mine watches too many horror videos, gives him ideas," she said somewhat cryptically.

The length of chain dangling from Chippy's neck told its own story and Amber's father took the dog, removing the chain before he handed the frightened animal to Amber. Then he said coldly: "Thank you, Mrs. Amos. There is no reward, except this, and some advice." He handed the crude ransom note to the woman. "Tell your son never to write anything like this again. It would save him a great deal of trouble in future. Goodbye."

"But what I want to know," said Amber, "is how everybody seems to have got my phone number and address."

They were all back at Merrythorte, after collecting Amber's friend Tom, the local celebrity. Amber added, "That number on the disc you found, that had come off Chippy's collar, was Ken's number."

"Jemima has her contacts," laughed Babs. "That's why she was so long on the phone. She rang our chum Leila, who is spending Christmas in London with her father. He's a film producer so he has access to the entertainment grapevine."

"I see," nodded Amber, "but how did that frightful boy get my address?"

"Because he's forever snooping round my place," said Tom. "I caught him rummaging through a box of old papers I'd put out for the refuse collection. He must have found one of your letters and---"

"Watched a horror movie about kidnapping and thought he'd make a spot of easy money," said Janet.

"Yes, quite dreadful," sighed Tom. "Wotan and Brunnhilde are simply terrified of him. I think we'll have to move house again."

It was the happiest of Boxing Days. Amber and her father had accepted Laura's invitation to stay for a couple of days. The two dogs were

playing happily. The chums were eager to hear the fund of show biz gossip told so amusingly by Amber. Bessie was making the most of a never ending supply of goodies. The candles and the firelight glowed softly on happy flushed faces and illuminated the warm colours of Christmas in tree, fruit, holly and bright baubles, all the spilling gaiety of the festive season, while Jemima glanced at her film magazine, at the full page photograph of Amber playing with Chippy.

Jemima relaxed serenely and closed her eyes; all was solved. After all, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without a little mystery for Jemima!

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* *

Happy Yuletide to all hobby pals, especially "Ye" editor, Mary, and previous editor, Eric Fayne.

STUART WHITEHEAD, HYTHE

* *

Could anyone find me a copy of "Neighbours" by H.L. Gee. Thanks. Greetings to hobby friends.

JACK HUGHES
2 DIPROSE, PIMLICO, 4812, AUSTRALIA

* *

Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year to all members.

VIC HEARN

* *

Greetings from our Storytellers

"Unaccustomed as they are to public speaking," these hitherto anonymous authors of ours say "a few well-chosen words."

Hearty greetings to all friends of UNION JACK who, by the link of Sexton Blake, are friends of mine and in my thoughts this Christmas.

Gilbert Chester

May Sexton Blake help you to track down and arrest all thoughts of criminal gloom and worry this festive Yuletide season.

Here's wishing you a hilarious Xmas (with the accent on the X when there's mistletoe about).

Gwyn Evans.

"The good reader makes the good book," said the poet Emerson. To all you "good readers" who are responsible for "U. J.'s" popularity year by year, my sincerest greetings.

Again, Christmas! But this time with a difference for me—the chance of greeting "U. J." readers with my most sincere compliments of the season.

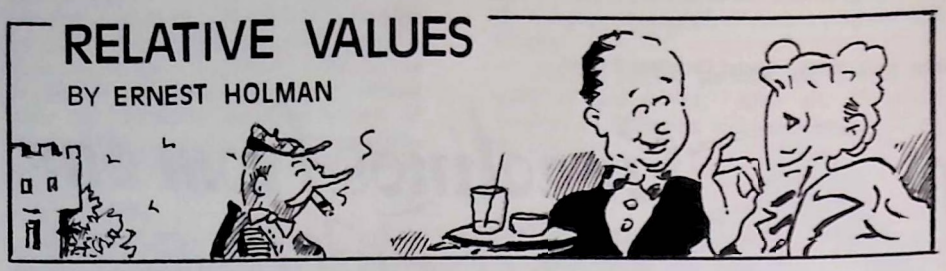
Anthony Skene

Thousands of words have I written for you in the past; in the present I write these words to you, and with even greater pleasure: "A very happy Xmas."

Robert Murray

RELATIVE VALUES

BY ERNEST HOLMAN



It is not the thought of them, Bertie Wooster once opined (on the subject of aunts) but the courage one brings to them. Courage was certainly needed in Bertie's case, although - except at isolated times - this commodity was usually conspicuous by its absence!

Unlike some of Bertie's contemporaries - the Emsworth Clan springs readily to mind, where the Earl's nephews find themselves up against a large gaggle of aunts - the last of the Woosters had only two such relations to cope with.

Very different in temperament, mind you - but each powerful personalities in their own right. The two sisters of Bertie's late father entered his life more than a little. Dahlia was the softest of the two - if soft is a word that can be used to describe a woman who, in her hunting days, could be heard across a couple of ploughed fields and a spinney. She it was who had married, *en secondes noces*, a merchant prince named Tom Travers. Bertie is not quite sure when this event took place. At one time he stated that it was during the year when Bluebottle was disqualified for boring in the Cesarewitch; on another occasion, he believed it was about the time that Bluebottle won the Cambridgeshire. She could be and, generally, was of the jovial aspect and Bertie was very fond of her.

Agatha, however, was a very different kettle of fish. Mrs. Spencer Gregson was known as the Pest of Pont Street and Bertie was convinced that she chewed broken bottles and conducted human sacrifices at the time of each full moon. This formidable relative came into Bertie's adult life at a very early stage of the Wooster Saga. On this occasion she despatched him to the United States to prevent his cousin marrying into vaudeville circles. (Later, Bertie often went abroad, usually to New York, on his own account, whenever he noted an undue liveliness in his aunt's manner, thereby executing a strategic withdrawal.) Bertie was not successful in the mission with his cousin, who ended up by going on the stage himself. Doubtful about his reception if he returned as an ambassador of failure, Bertie sent Jeeves out to unearth apartments in New York where they could stay until matters had cooled down at home.

It was quite a lengthy stay; eventually, however, Bertie received a letter from Aunt Agatha which showed some slight trace of the milk of human kindness. From this Bertie began to hope that his self-imposed sentence might be remitted to some extent, in order for Jeeves and himself to return in time for Ascot.

Returning to the homeland offered only a brief respite. Agatha told him that it was time he married and started to breed children. This made Bertie shift about rather uncomfortably; he knew that his aunt belonged to several Women's Clubs, where a 'spade' was always called by that name! Bertie found himself with her in France, where he was palmed off on to the daughter of a clergyman.

"She is just the right type for you," Bertie was informed. Fortunately, no impending doom materialised, as the girl in question turned out to be the decoy of a bogus clergyman - a noted jewel thief known as Soapy Sid. Thanks to Jeeves, Bertie was able to recover his aunt's pearls, which Sid had lifted. Agatha, meanwhile, had been making life a perfect Hell for the hotel staff, with accusations flying right and left. So upon this one occasion, Bertie found himself in a strong position - and he let his aunt have it 'hot from the griddle'. It was, undoubtedly, one of the highlights of the Wooster career!

When we come to Aunt Dahlia, we have to be aware of the fact that, pleasant by nature as she often was, she could be quite a formidable character. When Bertie informed her that he could not join the yachting cruise that she and her husband were taking, she ventured the opinion that she supposed he was making himself a fool over some girl. When told that the girl's name was Gwladys, she shrieked. "Listen to me, Bertie! I'm an older woman than you - well, you know what I mean - and I can tell you that no good ever comes if you get mixed up with Gwladys, Ysobel, Ethyl, Mabelle or Kathryn." She further informed him that she was quite confident in Jeeves' ability to break the thing up - "and, what's more, he will turn up with you on the day the boat sails!" She was right on target - Jeeves did deliver the goods!

Agatha, however, had got over the setback and before long was telling Bertie that she had

found just the right type for him, this time. She turned out to be a girl named Honoria Glossop, the daughter of a noted Alienist (to Bertie, at all times, he was just a 'loony doctor'). "She has twice the amount of brains of any other girl, which will be the right balance for the two of you." Jeeves took a little time to get matters sorted out correctly but, eventually, with the help of a supply of fish, several cats and a few other items, Jeeves was able to convince Sir Roderick that Mr. Wooster was an unsuitable mate for his daughter!

Bertie had always credited his aunt Agatha with being responsible for broadening his mind, by causing him to seek foreign parts in order to escape any forthcoming unpleasantness. After one unfortunate episode, he was informed by Jeeves that "Mrs. Gregson had been telephoning, sir". That did it - ho for the open spaces, thought Bertie and told Jeeves to book up for a trip to New York. Of course, Jeeves had already done so!

Aunt Dahlia had a younger son, from her previous marriage, who went by the name of Bonzo. As with Ginger, the henchman of William Brown, no one ever heard either of them called by any other name, not even by their parents. What their actual names were never has been revealed - but in those days it is doubtful if the names Bonzo and Ginger would have been accepted at the Font!

Aunt Agatha also had a young son, one Thomas, a proper juvenile thug in Bertie's view. One day, whilst arriving for a stay with Aunt Dahlia, Bertie was shocked to find not only Bonzo and Thomas there, but also a horrid creature with golden curls, who went by the name of Sebastian. Bertie saw storms ahead, but all was well- due to the purifying effect of love! Their devotions were spread out over such ladies as Greta Garbo, Clara Bow and so on. In the end, the storm did break, because one had spoken disparagingly about another's favourite. "Golly, Jeeves" said Bertie when it was all over. "These kids today are hot stuff!"

Agatha was soon back again, with a story to tell. It seemed that Bertie's cousins, Claude and Eustace, had been expelled from Oxford and found positions in South Africa - the right place, reckoned Agatha, for such wild spirits. Bertie's task was to put them up in his flat until the boat sailed. Bertie did so, but - in truth - he had to 'Put Up' with them. Wild spirits the cousins certainly were - they entered into the night life of London with a vengeance and, it seemed to Bertie, never wanted much sleep. It was when Bertie was thinking about banging his head against the wall that he realised the boat sailing was very close at hand.

The boat sailed on time - but without the cousins. They had each met and fallen in love with a musical comedy actress. They stayed on with Bertie, spending their time trying to cut each other out of the girl's affections.

It was, thought Bertie, only a matter of time before Claude and Eustace would be spotted by someone who knew them. Then, once Agatha learned the news, Bertie knew he would be for it! In fact, his Aunt did turn up - to tell him that Bertie's uncle thought he had seen Claude and Eustace. Something, decided Agatha, must have happened to them on the boat and they have come back to haunt us!

Jeeves, as always, came to the rescue and soon Bertie was able to settle down peacefully once more after what he always reckoned was 'a time to remember'. He also carried the memory of seeing his Aunt not looking her usual aggressive self but a very disturbed woman indeed. He probably hoped that years would have been taken off her life!

Dahlia soon bobbed up again, with a request for Bertie to visit a certain country residence and pinch someone's cow creamer. This, it seemed, was something very much coveted by Dahlia's husband Tom: (in Bertie's opinion Uncle Tom had a collection of old junk that he would never have been found dead in a ditch with!). Dahlia, herself a great believer in the art of blackmail, threatened to apply sanctions on Bertie if he failed to help her, but blackmail can cut both ways and Dahlia soon found herself in the position of the victim. However, the prop of the Wooster establishment was able to enable Bertie to get away with the object in question, but it must have left him thinking hard thoughts of his 'nice' Aunt Dahlia!

Another of Bertie's Uncles - of some age, it seemed - had fallen in love with a girl (of not very much age) who resided in East Dulwich. Bertie was given the task of 'buying' the girl off. In the event, the Uncle found that the girl's Aunt was an old flame! "It seems" said Aunt Agatha on the telephone to Bertie "That the money won't be needed. Your Uncle is going to marry a Mrs. Wilberforce. There are several Wilberforce families, and some cadet branches, throughout the Country" she said. "In East Dulwich," murmured Bertie, but his aunt did not catch the words. Saved again from the scaffold, thought Bertie, not for the first time.

Aunt Dahlia was at her most forceful when she told Bertie he was to sing 'Sonny Boy' at a concert. Bertie was aghast - this was a song, he considered, that should only be rendered in the confines of one's bathroom. Auntie, however, again applied sanctions - her love of blackmail still much to the fore- so Bertie had to send Jeeves out to buy a copy of the sheet music. It was to be one of Bertie's memories in his list of 'Blows of Fate' when he learned that, before he himself had given his performance, two others had presented the same tune. He marvelled that he had managed to get away with his life. It

was, he decided, his first and last public appearance!

Things were not going too well at Brinkley Court, Dahlia's country home, and she called upon Bertie to come and rally round. She flattened him somewhat when she said that it was good of him to want to try and help but, of course, Jeeves was the man really required! Still, Bertie decided to try and help things get right again and relegated his manservant to the role of a 'looker-on'. Eventually, when matters had reached a crisis, his 'jovial' Aunt turned on him. "I knew something ghastly would happen if you managed to wriggle your way in here" was her remark. She went on to call him many names for the trouble he had caused by 'trying to be helpful' - one description was that of a 'hornswoggling highbinder' and she requested him to find a piece of string and a brick, to tie them round his neck and then jump into the lake. She wanted, it seemed, to fish him out some days later and dance on his remains. It seemed, as Bertie mentioned to her "that you are somewhat peeved with Bertram". Her reply was long and involved, but Bertie was not the person to be beaten. He assured his aunt that he would put everything right. "It needed but that" was her reply, with a sigh and an air of resignation. "I shall take a morbid interest in seeing how you can make matters even worse than they are."

It was entirely due to Aunt Dahlia that Bertie was soon to be faced with quite an ordeal. He was told to go on a mission, at dead of night, on a shaky bicycle with no light. One more long-lived memory for Bertie to recall in later years. He zig-zagged for miles, feeling the effects in his billowy portions and generally right up against it. He must have thought very hard thoughts of his loving Aunt as he rode along, perhaps consoling himself with the one fact that she was not Agatha. At which time, he received a shock. Stopping to consult a sign post, there - perched on top of the post - WAS his Aunt Agatha! Quite some minutes elapsed before he realised that, in actual fact, he was looking at a large owl!

During Bertie's absence, Jeeves had solved all problems and when the battered cyclist returned, he found jollity and gaiety reigning supreme, without a single thought apparently directed to him. Bertie was in no state or mood to join the festivities and wearily took his bruised muscles and soul to bed - no doubt to undergo a nightmare in which Aunts would be playing the roles of the Heavies!

These events portrayed are merely a tithe of Bertie Wooster's encounters with his two aunts. There were plenty of these episodes to come along and subject him to lots of 'snootering by relatives!' He summed it all up once when he asked Jeeves if he knew what the trouble was with aunts. When Jeeves expressed ignorance, he was told that aunts were not gentlemen!

A Happy Christmas Letter

—from Hilda Richards.

THE SCHOOLGIRL *Office,*
Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
E.C.4.

My Dear Girls,—It's lovely to be writing a little letter to you at this most wonderful season of the year. You know just what I want to say to you all, don't you? And you know how very, very sincerely I mean it when I say

A VERY HAPPY AND LOVELY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!

If only I had space to convey as many good wishes as you, my dears, have sent to me! Your very precious cards and letters of good cheer have assured me in the loveliest way of a wonderfully happy time this Christmas. And I can only hope that for you, too, this will be the most perfect Christmas you have known.

My pet—Juno—and I are going away to the sea for a few days, where we shall have lovely scampers, and Juno, with her big paws, will do lots of digging. It looks to me as if I shall have to buy a new ball for the occasion, and put it in the toe of her Christmas stocking!

Again, I want to thank you all for your sweet wishes and charming thoughts of me. You do know that I shall think of you all most affectionately this Christmas, don't you?

Juno sends you lots of Christmas paw-shakes, tail-wags and snuffles, and I, my love.

HILDA RICHARDS.

ELSIE OXENHAM - A ROMANTIC WRITER

BY ANN MACKIE – HUNTER

Elsie J Oxenham is widely regarded as one of the 'big four' writers of school stories (the others being Angela Brazil, Elinor Brent-Dyer and Dorita Fairlie-Bruce). She did indeed write some school stories, but it is for her Abbey books, and their connectors, that she is collected today and it is my contention that these are not school stories but romances. There are over forty books, spanning a period of over twenty years, which tell the story of Joy and Joan Shirley, their friends and family. Only a small part of the action takes place at Miss Macey's school in High Wycombe which two generations of the Abbey girls attend. The lasting appeal of the series is multi stranded but the school element is only one aspect and not the most important.

The series began with *Girls Of The Hamlet Club* published in 1914. In this book Miss Macey's School is divided into two camps with the wealthy students refusing to accept the poorer scholarship girls who come from the surrounding hamlets. The snobbish students form clubs with high subscriptions which the others cannot afford. Cicely Everett, athletic, out going, and strong willed comes to the school and finds this situation intolerable. Although of a well-to-do background her first acquaintance was with the scholarship girls whom she likes and admires and she will have nothing to do with the elitist clubs.

Cicely forms a secret club, The Hamlet Club, and teaches folk dancing to the poorer students. The club's name may seem self evident but it has a deeper meaning which permeates the entire series and is expressed in the motto, *To be or not to be*. On a number of occasions the characters, beginning with Cicely, are asked to make decisions which involve putting their own needs second to those of others. The members of the Hamlet Club, putting their own feelings aside, come to the rescue of the School's reputation when the dramatic club cannot put on a public performance they have advertised. The club stages its Mayday celebrations which feature throughout the series with many of the Abbey girls being chosen as May queens. The descriptions of the queens with their handpainted trains and flowers are some of the most attractive passages in the series.

It is possible that no sequel was intended, for *The Abbey Girls*, which introduces Joy and Joan, was not published until six years later in 1920, although less than three years have passed in the story. In is in this book that we first learn of the ruined abbey of Grace Dieu in the grounds of an Elizabethan mansion, Abinger Hall. It is Grace Dieu which gives the series its name and it plays a far more important role than the school in Wycombe. The two properties belong to Sir Antony Abinger and it is he who has restored the abbey which had been despoiled during the reign of Henry VIII. The church is no longer standing but much of the Cistercian monastery remains. The description of the Abbey was based on Cleeve Abbey near Minehead in Somerset which Elsie Oxenham visited on more than one occasion.

The girls, who are cousins, are living with Joan's widowed and impoverished mother in converted rooms in the Abbey as Mrs Shirley is the caretaker. However, owing to her mother's ill health it is fifteen year old Joan who often acts as guide. Joan has a deep love and knowledge of the Abbey while orphaned Joy, spoilt and self centred, goes her

own way, interested only in music and exploring the Buckinghamshire countryside. It is now that the element of romance enters the series.
Cicely and her friends visit the Abbey while on a ramble and take a great liking to Joan. It is Joan's deepest wish to be able to return to school and complete her education so she can train as a PT teacher. Cicely offers Joan the scholarship funded by the Hamlet Club - the clubs are now open to everyone with pupils from all social classes belonging . However, Joan persuades Cicely to offer the scholarship to Joy whom she believes has the greater need.

The fairytale element strengthens and Joy is chosen as May queen . Joy and Joan practise the dances Joy learns at the Hamlet Club and while the girls are dancing a minuet on the garth they are unknowingly observed by Sir Antony, He is elderly and ill and alienated from both his son and daughter. Joan has already gained his favour due to her love of the Abbey, which is his passion, displayed when she showed him around the Abbey unaware of his identity. We learn that Joy is his grand-daughter and his son having died, Joy inherits the Hall and his fortune and Joan the Abbey with funds for its upkeep.

It is the Abbey and the Hall that provides the setting for the series rather than the school and the link to the school is through the Hamlet Club which plays a far more prominent role than the school activities. The school is mainly important as a venue for widening the range of characters, for many of them are school fellows of Joy and Joan. The series is essentially a family story although those who come to be known as the Abbey Clan are in many cases linked by ties of friendship rather than those of blood.

Jen Robins is the third of the original Abbey Clan and she comes to Miss Macey's as a boarder from her Yorkshire home. The climate at Wycombe, which lies in a valley, does not agree with her initially, so Joy invites her to live at the Hall and travel to school with them. Jen comes to share Joan's passionate love of the Abbey and is responsible for finding many of the Abbey treasures which were hidden at the time of dissolution. Again we find the romantic element: the finding of hidden treasure.

Another romance is introduced: the story of Ambrose and Jehane. Ambrose was a Cistercian lay brother at the time of the suppression of the monasteries. He loved the Lady Jehane and she him but it was undeclared for they knew that nothing could come of it. We read of Ambrose and his lady meeting in the garden among the roses and the lilies. Jehane died young but Ambrose lived to a great age and it was he who hid many of the Abbey treasures so they would not be either stolen or destroyed. Ambrose lived in the gatehouse where he made friends with all the small birds and animals, who became known as Ambrose's little ones. He was befriended by Jehane's nephew, the lord of the manor, who made sure he wanted for nothing.

Joy, Joan and Jen see themselves as the inheritors of the monastic tradition of Christian hospitality and charity. Joy invites her caretaker's niece to live at the Hall when it is explained that Maidlin's father was a rich Italian aristocrat. As all her paternal aunts, uncles and older cousins have died Maidlin inherits the family fortune. Maidlin herself has grown up on a Cumberland farm and her caretaker aunt asks Joy to provide the background which will prepare Maidlin to take her proper role. Like the younger Joy,

Maid is very musical with no outlet for her talent. Once again the romantic element appears and many years later is intensified when Maid becomes a world famous concert singer who marries her conductor and renounces her fortune to avoid disparity between them.

Rosamund, a new boarder at the school, who like Jen finds the valley climate trying, is invited to live at the Hall to be company for Maid. Very different in background and personality, the two become close and devoted friends. It is Rosamund who provides the balance to Maid's volatile temperament. Joy calls them both her adopted daughters despite her being only five years older.

There is also a romantic tale awaiting Rosamund. The Hall remains her home but some years later she acquires a baby brother after her father's remarriage to a mercenary woman who is the same age as Rosamund. When her father dies there is little money for Rosamund who fights for custody of her brother knowing how his mother will neglect him. Wishing to be independent she opens a craft shop in conjunction with her stepmother's sisters who unlike their sister are thoroughly nice people.

Roddy, the baby, is now found to be the heir to the earldom of Kentisbury following the death of the old earl, his two sons and his grandson within a short period. Rosamund, had always known of the relationship but it was not of importance to her . The baby now has to go to live in more fitting surroundings and Rosamund meets her much older invalid cousin, Geoffrey, the new Earl of Kentisbury. In true romantic tradition Rosamund nurses the Earl back to health and marries him. She bears him seven children, four of them being two sets of twin girls born within the space of a year. Rosamund knows she may lose her husband if his health fails again which is why she has her children so quickly. Both she and Maid continue the Abbey tradition of hospitality in their own homes: Kentisbury Castle and The Pallant.

Joy's major character flaw is most evident in her relationship with Maid whom she clearly favours above Rosamund who is equally devoted to her but is reserved about her emotions unlike the passionate Maidlin. Joy has little understanding of others and frequently hurts those closest to her because of her thoughtless behaviour. Nonetheless, it must be said she is always remorseful and willing to be guided by Joan and Jen who both possess the insight she lacks.

Joy is generous and uses her fortune to help those less fortunate than herself. In the those days before the introduction of welfare benefits there was great hardship. Joy founds a babies home and a holiday home for poor city working girls in her local village of Whiteleaf. She is also active in village affairs. Before her marriage she made weekly trips to London to take poor crippled children for rides into the country.

The series tells the tale of Joy's courtship and marriage to her neighbour, the famed big game hunter, Sir Andrew Marchwood. Tragically, less than a year after her marriage Joy is widowed and the news of her husband's death brings on premature labour resulting in the birth of twin daughters. As a result Jen's husband, Kenneth Marchwood, inherits the Manor and she is not only Joy's sister but also her neighbour. Had Joy borne a son, Jen and Kenneth would have returned to Kenya where Kenneth

farmed. In fact Sir Andrew was not the eldest son which is why he took little interest in the estate. He inherited as a mature adult following the death of his brother. As we can see the romantic aspect is still present. Jen marries her husband not long after the death of both her parents within the space of a few months of one another.

During the seven years of her widowhood Joy relies heavily on Jen as Joan was firstly living in Malta with her naval husband and then in Sussex. Joy remarries, her second husband being the famed conductor, Sir Ivor Quellyn. The courtship shows the worst aspects of Joy's character as she turns on her much loved Maidlin believing that it is she whom Ivor loves. Maidlin, heartbroken, flees to France but in the classic romantic tradition all ends happily.

Our understanding of the books is heightened by some knowledge of Elsie Jeanette Oxenham herself for there is no doubt that the books reflect much of her character such as her love of folk dancing and her devout Christian faith. She is the daughter of John Oxenham and took his pen name: the family name was Dunkerley. Elsie Oxenham was a talented folk dancer and member of the English Folk Dance Society founded by Cecil Sharp. She attended a number of classes and vacation schools run by the Society. *The Abbey Girls Go Back To School* is a completely accurate portrayal of one of these schools and although the names are changed the leading members of the EFDS are easily recognisable: *The Prophet* is Cecil Sharp, *Madam* is Helen Kennedy North, *The Pixie* is Daisy Daking. EJO also includes herself, she is *The Writing Person*.

The folk dancing is a prominent part of the series. It is portrayed not only as very enjoyable but also as a life enhancing activity. One of the characters is Mary Devine. Forced to live in reduced circumstances with a difficult younger sister, Biddy, and lacking close male relatives since the loss of her brothers in the Great War, Mary is old before her time. She escapes the daily drudgery by creating an unhealthy fantasy world. Jen comes to Mary's rescue and introduces her to the world of folk dancing. Renamed Mary-Dorothy after the dance, Mary develops a more healthy attitude to life, eventually becoming Joy's secretary and an integral part of the household, not to mention a well known children's writer.

It is the Hamlet Club with its folk dancing which retains the link with the school and their old school friends. At the vacation school described in *Go Back To School* both Cicely and Joan meet their future husbands. The Pixie had met them both in France during the Great War where she organised folk dancing classes which were a great morale booster to the weary troops on a short break from the horror of the trenches. It must be remembered that Daisy Daking did indeed perform this much appreciated activity in reality.

The Dunkerleys were a devout Christian family and the Christian message of faith in adversity, forgiveness and charity is an integral part of the books. When Jen loses her mother shortly after her father's death, a new friend utters a profound message of comfort, "*You do believe that Nancy?....It's the only thing I'm hanging onto just now. I mean that Mother would find Father. waiting for her...*" Nancy replies, "*I can't believe there could be such a craving all through the world unless it could be satisfied. It would be too cruel. Do you believe God is like that? Would you make*

people, and put that craving into them-the longing that we'll know our friends again-and not mean to satisfy it? Would you make a world like that?" "No. No, I wouldn't," Jen said slowly. *"Then God couldn't. I see..."*

Elsie Oxenham has a gift for describing the beauties of peaceful, unspoilt, pre-war, rural England and her description of the beautiful Buckinghamshire countryside and its tiny hamlets is lyrical in its quality. *"It was a very little inn. The walls were whitewashed, but nearly hidden by the great leaves of a vine, whose strong brown branches encircled the lattice windows. The thatched roof hung over the windows in long eaves, and was broken by two sharp little gables. The sign, "The Old Beech Tree" swung above the door. Two great beeches, with smooth grey trunks and a golden glory of autumn leaves, shaded the courtyard, and beneath them the ground was thick with leaves and ruddy shining nuts."*

Illustration by Arthur A. Dixon
from *The Abbey Girls*

There are many reasons why the Abbey series is still read and collected today, not least the fact that EJO was a very good story teller. Most importantly, however, in our modern, increasingly frantic, over industrialised and commercialised mundane society she has created a timeless world. She captures the essence that is the heart of England, a world of hamlets, bluebell woods, May queens, folk dancing, ancient houses, and ruined abbeys where people display kindness and compassion. It is the world of Rupert Brooke's *"Grantchester"* where *".....and stands the church clock at ten to three and is there honey still for tea?"*

The quotations are taken from *The Abbey Girls Win Through* and *Girls Of The Hamlet Club*

Anyone wishing further information on Elsie Jeanette Oxenham and her books should contact Monica Godfrey, 30 Sidford High Street, Sidford, Devon, EX 10 9EL who runs the UK EJO appreciation society, *The Abbey Chronicle*, which issues three newsletters a year. There are also societies in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

ANSWERS TO GUESS THESE HAMILTON DOMESTICS

1. John Mack - porter and lodge-keeper, Rookwood.

2. Either Martha Taggles - tuck-shop proprietress or Ephraim Taggles - porter and lodge-keeper, St. Jim's.

3. Fred Trotter - page-boy, Greyfriars.

4. Mrs. Kebble - Matron, Greyfriars.

5. William Gosling - porter and lodge-keeper.

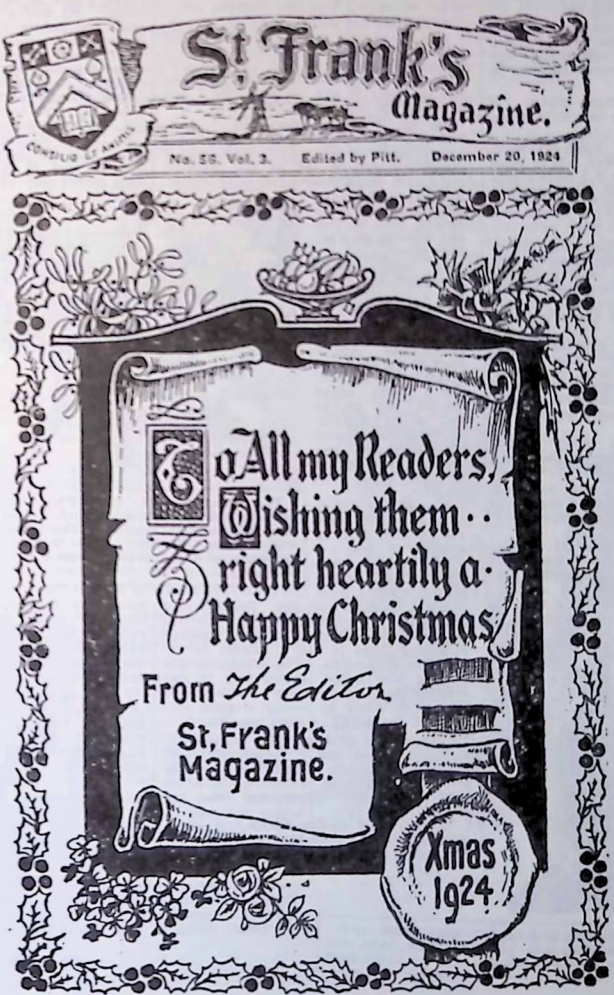
6. Larkin - butler to Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith at his house in Courtman Square - also at Seahill Park, Sussex.

7. Toby Marsh - page-boy, St. Jim's.

As a boy of eight or nine I read the "Nelson Lee" avidly, my Mother having introduced me through a copy of the 'Boy's Friend' that she had seen in a second hand book shop, and from that moment on, I was a confirmed Nelson Lee-ite.

Of course a lad of that age is fairly gullible and, to me, the characters of 'Nipper' and 'Handy' etc, were real people. This was especially so when, having read the main stories, I turned to the extra bits, and the odd articles were named as the work of the various Removites. I really believed that this was so: to me, they were the authors.

So, Dear Reader, please read on, and join me in a flight of fancy, returning to those early halcyon and rekindling the thoughts of youth.



The Phantom Cavalier!

A Christmas Adventure at Grey Towers.
By JACK GREY.

PART I.

"GHOSTS?" I said thoughtfully.

"Well, I had a queer experience at home last Christmas, now you come to remind me——"

"Let's have it!" interrupted Reggie Pitt, settling himself more comfortably in his chair. "You've told me the yarn before, Jack, but these others haven't heard it at all. It's well worth re-telling."

We were sitting round the fire in the big lounge at Glenthorne Manor. It was Christmas time, and it seemed natural that some of us should turn the conversation on to the subject of ghosts.

"Go ahead!" said Handforth briskly. "If the yarn's all right, you can write it up for the Mag."

"Thanks!" I grinned. "But it's up to Reggie to decide that. Well, you've asked for it, so don't blame me if I make a hash of the thing. I'm not much good at spinning yarns. Here goes!"

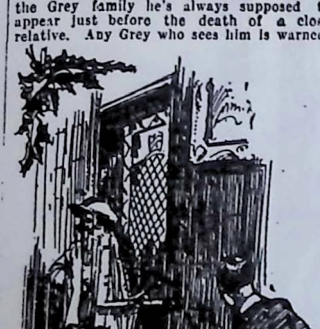
"Good!" said the others.

It happened some little time before Christmas (I began), when I was home for the holidays. Grey Towers was practically empty. Dad and I had the place to ourselves, except for the servants. We were expecting whole troops of guests to arrive in a day or two's time.

But until then things were dull. My father, I remember, was telling me all about the family ghost. Every old country mansion, I suppose, has got a spectre of some kind—it's really part of the place. An historic mansion without a ghost is unheard of.

Well, we'd been sitting in the library, and my pater had told me the full story of the famous Grey Cavalier. There's no need for me to go into that now—you wouldn't be interested, anyhow. But I can tell you I was feeling pretty nervy when I went to bed.

There's one thing I've got to say, though—about the Phantom Cavalier, I mean. In the Grey family he's always supposed to appear just before the death of a close relative. Any Grey who sees him is warned, and so, naturally, the ghost isn't exactly a popular figure at any time.



I stood there spellbound, and my heart nearly stopped beating.

I went to bed feeling restless. Some of you fellows have been to Grey Towers, and you know what the bedrooms are like—big and stately, with great four-poster beds and panelled walls. I couldn't sleep for the life of me, although I tried hard enough.

Being alone had something to do with it, I dare say. After spending months in the Ancient House dormitory, it was a bit of a change to have a great room all to myself. And there was that yarn the pater had told me, too. It was the first time I had heard the full story of the Cavalier.

I'm not a nervous chap—and I don't believe in ghosts, anyway. I kept telling myself that I was a silly idiot—that I should look washed out in the morning, and that I didn't deserve anything better. But it made no difference. I kept turning over in bed, and listening to every little sound.

A board would creak now and again, and a rustling sound would come from the fireplace, as the wind whistled over the chimney-pots. And a piece of creeper would slither across the window. Every sound brought me up in bed, sitting forward, startled. I don't mind admitting I was scared. I expected to see the ghost any minute.

I heard two o'clock strike in the hall, and I was just as wakeful as ever. I decided to go downstairs into the pater's library, where I knew it would be warm and cosy. Besides, he'd just installed a glorious five-valve wireless set, and I knew how to work it. Instead of tossing about in bed, I decided to try and tune in America. Two o'clock in the morning here means nine o'clock in the evening in New York or Pittsburg. I thought it would be rather a good idea to catch the KDKA evening concert.

I jumped out of bed, quite enthusiastic at this new idea, and I forgot all about ghosts and nerves. Tuning in America seemed the very thing. I dressed, shoved on some slippers, and slipped out into the corridor.

"Now for the elusive KDKA," I murmured softly. "I shall have a surprise for dad in the morning if I manage to——"

I broke off, starting. For at that moment a figure had appeared at the end of the corridor. It made no sound—in fact, I didn't know it was there until a movement caught my eye. I stood there, spellbound, and my heart nearly stopped beating.

The Phantom Cavalier!

Yes, I saw it as clearly as I can see you chaps. He was a grim, indistinct figure in grey, and before I could make any outcry, or move an inch from the spot, the apparition turned aside and vanished.

And as he did so the spell seemed to break. I stood there shivering, and I could feel a clammy sort of perspiration on my forehead. But I wasn't frightened—I didn't get into a panic, or anything like that.

In fact, I rushed forward, hoping to find out where the figure had gone. But there was no sign of it left. All the corridors were empty and silent. I went back to my bed-room in an uneasy, alarmed state of mind. I didn't care about wireless any more.

The memory of the Phantom Cavalier flooded into my mind. The still, half-buried figure in the snow was my own father! And the appearance of the Cavalier was a sign of death!

I didn't get to sleep for a long time. I couldn't help remembering that the appearance of the Phantom indicated a death in the family. Superstition, perhaps, but at the same time I was deeply concerned.

I went to sleep somehow, but I was up well before breakfast. My father hadn't appeared, so I went out for a stroll in the snow—hoping to get a little peace of mind. I wanted to kill the absurd fears that were gripping me.

It was snowing hard, and I trudged down the drive, and into the lane. But I had hardly gone another hundred yards before I ran forward with an exclamation of astonishment. There was a figure lying in the snow—half-buried, in fact.

I bent down curiously, and then I turned as pale as chalk, and the memory of the Phantom Cavalier flooded into my mind. The still, half-buried figure in the snow was my own father! And the appearance of the Cavalier was a sign of death!

PART II.

"DAD!" I muttered huskily.

I dropped on my knees in the snow, horrified at seeing the still, silent form of my father in that dreadful attitude. And again I remembered that the appearance of the Grey Cavalier meant a death in the family.

"Dad!" I repeated. "Oh, he's dead—he's dead——"

I broke off, and my heart seemed to stop beating. For my father had stirred slightly, and a few seconds later he opened his eyes and looked at me with recognition

"Why, Jack, my boy," he breathed, "what—what has happened? Why am I lying here? I—I seem to remember falling down——"

His voice trailed away, and at that moment two of the Grey Towers grooms came in sight round the bend. They must have guessed that something was amiss, for they broke into a run, and came up breathless.

I was glad of their arrival, for they lifted my father out of the snow and carried him to the Towers. Until the doctor had come, and made his examination, I was filled with terrible doubts.

And then I found that I needn't have worried at all. The pater had merely suffered from a slight heart attack, and was in no danger at all. The doctor ordered him to give up all thought of Christmas festivities, and to keep to his bed.

But the pater scoffed at such instructions, and the same evening he was downstairs to dinner. And he wanted to know why I had been so horrified in the morning. He had seen more than mere concern in my eyes.

So, of course, I had to tell him about the Phantom Cavalier—how I had seen the ghost the previous night, and all about it. I reminded him that the spectre was a sign of death.

He didn't exactly ridicule the story, but it was clear that he thought I had imagined the whole thing. And it made me a bit wild. I was as keen as mustard to get some kind of proof—so that I could convince him.

But where could I get the proofs? Ghosts don't leave footprints or finger-marks, and I couldn't see any sense in watching for the Phantom again. Family ghosts don't appear twice in succession. Sometimes there's an interval of ten or twenty years between the visitations.

All the same, when bed-time arrived, I found it almost impossible to close my eyes. I just lay there in the darkness, staring across the bed-room, expecting to see the Phantom every minute. It was the same as on the previous night, only twenty times as bad.

But this time I didn't think about listening in on the wireless. I had an awful premonition of impending disaster. And at last, thoroughly scared, I decided to hurry to the pater's bed-room, to see if he was all right.

Perhaps I had delayed too long—perhaps I ought to have gone sooner. The thought made me break out into a cold perspiration. I didn't wait to get dressed—I just slipped on my dressing-gown and ran out.

Something seemed to tell me that I should see the Phantom Cavalier again in the corridor. But there was nothing unusual. The whole house was quiet and undisturbed.

I crept into the pater's room, found him calmly reading a magazine in front of a blazing fire, and enjoying a final cigar! And this on the top of his doctor's orders not to smoke! I felt an absolute ass, and escaped in no time— after telling my father that I just wanted to make certain he was all right. The very laugh he gave sent wriggles down my back.

I went back to my own bed-room thoroughly cooled. And I had just turned the last corner when I came face to face with the ghost! The meeting was so sudden and so unexpected that I literally jumped.

There he was—the Grey Cavalier!

The moonlight shone upon him in a ghastly fashion, and he advanced towards me with one hand outstretched. I backed away blindly, a kind of panic taking possession of me. For I had a swift fear that I was the member of the family who had been marked down to die!

My back crashed against something hard. Without knowing it, I had flung myself backwards against a casement window. The catch gave way, the window flew open, and I toppled clean out, backwards.

It was a horrible sensation. I could feel myself falling—dropping like a stone to the ground. And during those few fleeting seconds all terror left me, and a flash of clear understanding came.

I was to die—and this accident was to be the cause of my death! So the Phantom Cavalier had appeared to some purpose, after all. Then I hit something with a slithering, jagging thud.

Great masses of iciness buried me and hemmed me in. It took me about half a minute to find out the truth. I had fallen headlong into a deep snowdrift—a piled-up mass of snow which had heaped itself against the side of the house. And, remarkably enough, I wasn't hurt.

As soon as I realised this, I fought my way out, and stood there, breathless. The night wind was cutting through me like knives. And it seemed that I should never be rid of that awful apparition.

For there stood the Grey Cavalier again—right on the terrace, facing me in the moonlight. I don't know what made me do it, but I rushed straight at him, fiercely determined to send him away out of my sight.

I crashed into something solid, and felt two arms gripping me.

"Steady, Master Jack—steady!" said a familiar voice. "I'm glad to see you active—I thought you'd killed yourself, sir! And it was my fault, too—I scared ye."

I stared at him dazedly.

"Peters!" I muttered huskily.

"Yes, Master Jack," said the apparition. "I didn't mean to frighten ye like that—I'll swear I didn't!"

Peters! The head footman! I stared at him in the same dazed way as before. Then, in a couple of sentences, he explained the truth. They were getting up some amateur theatricals in the servants' hall for Christmas, and Peters was cast as the family ghost! He'd simply been doing some late rehearsals with the rest of the company!

A bit tame, eh? Well, I can tell you it wasn't tame to me at the time. And it only proves how simple and easy it is to imagine all sorts of dreadful things without any real foundation.

Take my advice—if you see a ghost this Christmas, make certain he's a real ghost before getting scared!

The catch gave way, the window flew open, and I toppled clean out, backwards.

THE CHRISTMAS TURKEY

With Apologies to
"WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN?"

By Clarence Fellowe

"Who'll carve the turkey?
Who'll carve the turkey?"
"I," said the Host,
"It's the job I like most—
I'll carve the turkey."

"Who'll have a wing?
Who'll have a wing?"
"I," said Sir Montie,
"That's just what I wantie—
I'll have a wing."

"Who'd like a leg?
Who'd like a leg?"
"I," said old Handy,
"But not if it's bandy—
I'd like a leg."

"Who wants some breast?
Who wants some breast?"
"I," said McClure,
"But please mind the skewer—
I want some breast."

"Who'll have some stuffing?
Who'll have some stuffing?"
"I," said old Fatty,
"When I've done this patty—
I'll have some stuffing."

"Who'll try a rib?
Who'll try a rib?"
"I," said Jack Grey,
"I'll not say you nay—
I'll try a rib."

"Who's next for gravy?
Who's next for gravy?"
"I" said young Willy,
"Tho' it does look like skilly—
I'm next for gravy."

"Who wants the fat?
Who wants the fat?"
"I," said Reg Pitt,
"I'd like pints of it—
I want the fat."

"Who'll risk some giblets?
Who'll risk some giblets?"
"I," said Guy Pepys,
"Please give me heaps—
I'll risk some giblets."

"Who'll have the skin?
Who'll have the skin?"
"I," said old Buster,
"Tho' it's tough as a duster—
I'll have the skin."

Handforth's Christmas Entertainment!

By JACK GREY

HANDFORTH has had one of his usual brainwaves. This time, unfortunately, other people besides himself have suffered. His idea was that the Remove should give a special entertainment on the last night of the term.

He first looked up Nipper in Study C, and after a bit of jaw got his support and that of Sir Montie and Tommy Watson. After that he and Church and McClure canvassed the other members of the Remove. And the result was that it was arranged that they should give a variety entertainment in the large Lecture Theatre, to which Nelson Lee and Mr. Crowell and other big people were to be invited.

Now there was nothing against the idea. Some of the chaps could sing and recite a bit. It seemed quite all right. Nipper and Watson and Tregellis-West and Pitt offered their services, and most of the chaps in the Junior Forms were going to turn up. Also some of the Fifth and Sixth.

Personally, I was all for the idea, except—well, except for the fact that old Handy was running it. And not only that, but because he and his brother Willy were going to do turns. Handy was going to do some conjuring tricks, and Willy was going to give a ventriloquist show.

I told Nipper that these two were enough to ruin any programme, but Nipper only laughed. Anyway, the show was held, and this is what happened.

There was a very crowded attendance at eight o'clock when the show began. Everybody was there. The Head would have come but he had a previous engagement.

We had rigged up a small stage, and Clarence Fellowe had come forward as a pianist. The piano, a jolly good grand, was just under the stage—from where Fellowe could see all that was happening.

The first turns were quite good. Nipper gave a monologue. Watson, Pitt, Sir Montie, and Bob Christine did their bit, and the show was going with a swing. It was then Archie appeared. Handforth announced that he was

going to sing a sentimental song entitled "An Old-Fashioned Town." (Loud applause.)

Fellowe played the opening chords on the piano, and Archie appeared, looking a complete nut in evening-dress and his eye-glass. Archie bowed, and the opening chords were played again. Then Archie opened his mouth and began in a nervous voice:

"There's an old fashioned mouse in a——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Somebody giggled in the front row. Archie blushed and started again:

"There's an old-fashioned street—I mean to say, an old-fashioned house in an old-fashioned pair, so to speak, in a——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poor old Archie was utterly mixed and upset.

"You silly fathead!" roared Handforth from the wings. "You've jolly well ruined the show!"

"Not a bit!" cried a voice from the audience. "Go on, Archie!"

"I'll begin again," said Archie, "if Fellowe will play the opening music."

After the laughter had died down, Fellowe began again and Archie took a pace nearer the edge of the stage. He cleared his throat.

"There's a pair of old-fashioned," he warbled, "streets in a—absolutely not. I can see their two faces, so to speak, and I love every winkle——"

"My—ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold me up, someone, I'm dying!"

Chaps were rolling in their seats with laughter. Archie looked haughtily through his eyeglass, but Fellowe had stopped playing. Nevertheless, the genial ass went on:

"And though I must go, if you follow me to and fro through the world, and all that rot, I—Yeeeeeeeep!"

The last expression was not in the song. It was caused by Archie suddenly and unexpectedly tripping over the edge of the stage in his excitement. The next moment he pitched head first on to the piano.

The piano was pretty strong, and didn't like Archie's circus performance. It must have given him a push, for he rolled off on top of Clarence Fellowe, who wasn't nearly so strong. The two, clasped in each other's arms, slithered to the floor with a thud that shook the hall.

"Good gracious me! They will both be killed!" cried Mr. Crowell in alarm.

But they weren't killed. They picked themselves up, to the enthusiastic shouts of the audience.

This next moment he pitched head-first on to the piano.

"Encore! Encore!" yelled the Removites. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie refused to give an encore, and the next turn was quickly ushered on. This consisted of Willy Handforth. He brought with him a dummy figure representing a sailor. Willy put the figure on an armchair.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced confidently, "I will now proceed to hold a conversation with my friend, Sailor Jack. In reality, he is not alive. He is——"

"He's made out of my bolster!" piped a treble voice from the back of the hall.

"Shut up, young Owen!" hissed Willy. "I'll jolly well biff you when I've done. Ladies and gentlemen," he went on, in a louder voice, "my friend, Sailor Jack, is in reality only a dummy figure, but I will make him speak to you."

Willy bowed to great applause, and there was a silence as everyone waited for the great performance to begin.

"Hallo, Jack!" began Willy in his normal voice. "How do you like being on the stage?"

There was no immediate reply. Then a voice came from the middle of the hall.

"He's gone to sleep, Willy. It's a shame to keep him out so late."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Willy took no notice. He screwed up his face and tried to speak as though he were not opening his mouth.

"I like it very much, sir," came the reply in a husky squeak.

"I thought you would," replied Willy again in his usual voice. "But why have you left the sea?"

"Because it made me sick," mimicked the voice from the middle of the hall.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Willy began to get annoyed, and determined to get his own back.

"Who is the silliest fathead in the room?" he shouted at the silent figure of Sailor Jack.

"Your major!" came the voice from the middle of the hall, like lightning. By this time all the chaps were shouting with mirth. Willy lost his temper completely.

"All right, young Owen," he bellowed; "I know it's you. Take this, then!"

As he spoke, he picked up Sailor Jack and hurled him into the audience. The dummy shaved past Mr. Crowell's head and caught Owen minor full in the chest. Then Willy dashed down after Sailor Jack.

But stout hands caught him, and he was calmed down. Not for soon, for it was seen that Handforth was shouting hard words from the stage. When order was restored, Edward Oswald came forward and made his announcement.

"Now you'll see something!" he roared. "I'll jolly well whack my minor for ruining the show. But if you will kindly give me your attention for one moment, I will give my performance of Conjuring Magic. Allow me to introduce my two assistants."

At this moment Church and McClure were pushed on to the stage from the wings. They looked very downcast. Church brought in a small table, and McClure carried a Union Jack flag, a glass, a bottle of water, and a top hat. Church put down the table and took the other things from his assistant. Then McClure departed and came on again, walking sideways, with his hands behind his back.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said Handy, "I will show you the most wonderful trick in the world, and which has never been produced before in this or any other country."

He moved to the table and stood by McClure.

"I proceed to put a little water into this glass," he announced, picking up the jug. "As you see, there is absolutely no deception."

He held up the glass in his right hand, and smiled at the audience.

"I now put the glass on the table and proceed to cover it with the Union Jack given to me by my assistant."

Church handed over the flag.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, I am simply going to pass my hand over the glass three times. I make three slow passes, and at the end of the third pass I will produce for you, out of the glass, a real melon!"

Sensation!

"One!" Handforth passed his left hand across the top of the glass. His right hand was by his side, almost touching that of McClure.

"Two!" continued Handy, and he added in a whisper: "Pass along that melon, the moment I say 'Three.'"

"Three!" said Handforth. "And now, ladies and——"

Bumpety—bumpety—bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At the critical moment, McClure had dropped the melon he had been holding behind his back! It slipped from his hand and rolled leisurely towards the edge of the stage. McClure's expression looked like that of a man who has seen a ghost.

The audience was convulsed with laughter. It was the funniest conjuring trick they had ever seen. Handforth glared for a moment at the shouts of laughter. Then he turned on his assistant.

"Arnold McClure, I'll teach you to drop my melon and spoil the finest conjuring trick in the world!"

In a moment he had turned up his sleeves and aimed a terrific blow at McClure's head.

"Shurrup, you fathead!" shouted McClure.

At the same moment Church caught hold of his leader's arm.

"Don't be a fathead!" he hissed. "Get on with another trick!"

"Oh, very well!" Handy agreed.

"I have here upon the table," he said, "an elegant top-hat. I shall put it upon my head to show that there is no deception. I shall then," Handy proceeded loudly, "hand it to one of my assistants, who will then hold it brim downwards in his right hand. You will then be most surprised to see emerge from the empty hat——"

"I know, a melon!" yelled a voice from the back of the hall.

"No, you fathead!" bellowed Handy, very much annoyed. "A real live rabbit!"

He leant forward, and took the hat from the top of the table.

"I will proceed to put it on my head, to show that it is empty," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! We know your head's empty!" cried the voice.

Taking no notice, Handy suddenly lifted up the hat and set it on his head. Then next moment he let out a yell of anger. For out of the hat poured an avalanche of soot.

The audience roared. But Handy was furious.

"That soot was the next trick, you fathead!" he roared. "My—my hat! McClure. You've done it now!"

As he spoke he let out at McClure's head. "Here clear out of it!" yelled the latter.

He dodged the blow, and jumped lightly down to the floor. After him came Handy. That finished the show. Handy had forgotten Nelson Lee, who grasped him firmly by the shoulders.

"That'll do, my boy," he said. "We'd better sing 'God Save the King,' and get off to bed."

"But I've got ever so many more jolly good tricks to do!" gasped Handy. "That was only one of the simplest ones."

"I think it was quite hard enough for you," observed Nelson Lee drily, and Fellowe began to play the well-known strains of the National Anthem.

Handforth's Christmas entertainment was over. It will be a long time before it is forgotten—especially by McClure and Willy!

"All right, young Owen!" he bellowed. "I know it's you! Take that, then!" As he spoke, he picked up Sailor Jack and hurled him into the audience.

Sir Anthony - Crook!

by Norman Wright

I have always enjoyed stories of gentlemen cracksmen: Blackshirt, The Baron, The Saint, and, of course, A.J.Raffles and the like. I thought I was fairly well versed in the genre and aware of all the major exponents of the gentle art of crib cracking while attired in cape and opera hat. But I recently discovered a character whose existence had previously escaped my attention. I bought a little pile of *Boys Friend Library* issues and amongst them were two tales, "The Mystery Man of Mayfair" and "Sir Anthony - Crook!", both of which featured a very interesting cracksman named Sir Anthony Charters. The books looked very promising with the cover of the latter depicting a gentleman cracksman, resplendent in the best that Saville Row could provide - and a silk mask, about to commit an act that, while socially unacceptable, would, if successful, add considerably to his bank balance. Both *Boys Friend Library* issues carried the by-line 'warder Lynk' and, not having come across that particular pseudonym before, flicked through Lofts and Adley's invaluable, "Men Behind Boys Fiction", to find out the author behind the 'Lynk' pseudonym. I discovered the writer to be Gerald Bowman, an author whose adventures of "Baldy's Angels", written under the pen-name Captain Robert Hawke, I thoroughly enjoyed. I completed my initial investigations with a perusal of Lofts and Adley's "Boys Friend Library Index" wherein I established the fact that the Warder Lynk stories had originally appeared in *Ranger*, a fairly scarce, and, I feel, somewhat neglected and under-rated, story paper. Bowman seems to have written the bulk of his 'boys paper' output for *Ranger* for it was within the pages of that weekly that his gritty and authentic Western Front flying stories of 'Baldy's Angels' had appeared. Thus with the author's pedigree established I put the two libraries on one side to read and enjoy over the Easter holiday.

The opening chapter of "The Mystery Man of Mayfair" is quite interesting. The story in those first few pages is related by Warder Joe Lynk to his young grandson, Fred, (who becomes Tom in the second Boys Friend Library) who is asking for another story about Sir Anthony Charters. It is made very clear to the reader at this point that Sir Anthony, despite the glamour and excitement of his double life, is a criminal and that like all criminals he has, in the end, received his just deserts - incarceration. The stories of the young aristocrat's lawless exploits have been gleaned from Sir Anthony's valet and partner in crime by Lynk. Sir Anthony is spoken of in the past tense and in the opening chapter of the second *Boys Friend Library* chronicling his criminal adventures we learn why Warder Lynk, had a particularly soft spot for Sir Anthony. For the cracksman lord had, at the cost of his own life, saved Lynk's granddaughter from a runaway lorry, He explains to his grandson, "Life's a queer thing.....Sir Anthony Charters was a brave man - brave to the day of his death, when he ran out of a convict working party and saved your little sister from being killed by a runaway lorry! He flung his

life away then, in order to save another! And so for all his faults, I shall always bless his name."

But what of the characters and the stories themselves? We first encounter young Sir Anthony in a swish London hotel about to steal the valuable pearls of an American lady with the improbable name of Mrs. Hiram C. Baggs. He actually purloins the necklace under the noses of a large gathering of guests, including Commissioner Wilton of Scotland Yard the policeman whose life he plagues throughout his adventures. At the start Wilton is unaware of Tony duel identity and knows him only as an eligible bachelor invited to all the very best society functions. Little does he realise that very few bank notes stand between Sir Anthony and insolvency. As the stories progress Commissioner Wilton begins to suspect that Sir Anthony is not all that he seems and, considering the number of jewel collections that get stolen at parties attended by Sir Anthony, it is little wonder! On one or two occasions Wilton is within a hairs breadth of getting his man but by some novel twist Sir Anthony always manages to evade detection. Despite the fact that the stories are quickly churned out, ephemeral pieces the author skillfully manages to introduce many new and original twists and turns to his plots. They are very well told and deserve a better fate than to be hidden away in an obscure boys' weekly.

The third regular character in the stories is Yogi, Sir Anthony's Japanese valet, confederate and general factotum. Yogi is an interestingly drawn character showing more resourcefulness than the average cracksman's sidekick. The author avoids the pitfalls of making Yogi the bungling nitwit, so beloved of Hollywood second feature detective dramas, and instills him with many useful and believable qualities, not least of which is his quick thinking when the pair find themselves in a tight corner. In a number of their adventures it is Yogi's astute thinking that saves the day. One occasion that particularly springs to mind is the adventure in which the pair steal a bullion train, divert it down a disused section of track and run it into a disused quarry in order to smash open the strong-box. They try to cover up their tracks by painting the rails of the side line with a paint that resembles rust. Sir Anthony, who at times seems to be Commissioner Wilton's shadow, happens to be on the scene when Wilton discovers the ruse and discovers the remains of the smashed train. On the scene of the crime the Scotland Yard man finds a set of keys with a fob similar to the one he knows Sir Anthony carries. When Tony fails to find his keys Wilton claps on the handcuffs and sends Yogi up the line to a station to fetch a couple of burly constables to accompany them back to London to test the keys in the locks at Sir Anthony's West End apartment. As can be imagined Sir Anthony's spirits are at low ebb at this point with discovery and jail apparently unavoidable. On arrival in London a bunch of keys are discovered on Sir Anthony's dining room table and none of the keys on the bunch discovered by Commissioner Wilton fit any of the locks in the flat. At that point it was difficult to decide who was most surprised - Wilton or Sir Tony! The Scotland Yard man offers profuse apologies for his mistake and the relieved Tony accepts them with

alacrity and offers the embarrassed Commissioner a drink which the latter declines. When Wilton has departed Yogi explains that on the way up the line to fetch the constables he telephoned Benny Rosenbloom, their 'fence' and friend, and arranged for him to take every locksmith he could lay his hands on round to Sir Anthony's flat and change every lock in the place. After such a nerve-racking day Sir Anthony needs a drink and it is at this point that he discovers that the one lock they forgot to change was that on his cocktail cabinet. If Wilton had accepted a drink the deception of the changed locks would have been discovered!

There is no doubt that Bowman based his character on Hornung's Raffles, but he added refinements of his own that gave the character quite a marked individuality. A favourite ploy throughout the series was for Sir Anthony to send Commissioner Wilton a note telling him not only what he intended to steal, but also giving him the date and time at which the crime would take place. With such knowledge at his disposal the author and his character had to continually come up with ingenious methods of purloining pearls and scooping sapphires. Throughout the stories in the first *Boys Friend Library* collection the notes to the Scotland Yard Commissioner are signed 'The March Hare'. In "Sir Anthony - Crook!", the second *Boys Friend Library* collection, the notes are signed 'The Mystery Man'. I was recently able to look through a number of copies of *Ranger* containing the original publication of the stories and discovered that throughout the run of Warder Lynk stories in that story paper the 'March Hare' signature was always used.

Bowman may have based his stories on Hornung but he added twists and refinement of his own that make the stories thoroughly enjoyable and entertaining. The plot of at least one of his Sir Anthony adventures was used, almost word for word, with the names of the central characters changed, by Richard Gordon (real name Adrian Murray) in one of his 'Laughing Buccaneer!' stories in *The Pilot* in January 1937. Purusing other copies of *The Pilot* I discovered another 'Laughing Buccaneer' story that had a beginning suspiciously similar to the beginning of a Leslie Charteris Saint story. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then Adrian Murray at least, put the Bowman Sir Anthony Charters story on a par with Charteris' Saint stories - and in the literature of gentlemen adventurers that is about the highest accolade one can have!

A THRILL-PACKED STORY OF THE WORLD'S CLEVEREST CRACKSMAN. Related by WARDER LYNK.

REG KIRKHAM'S LOST GIRLS

BY

RAY HOPKINS

Reginald S. Kirkham, to give him his full moniker, had the happy ability of being able to create attractive, young female characters whose personalities were such that they were suitable protagonists to be the leading characters in light-hearted mysteries enlivened by slapstick and comic repartee. Several of these characters must have taken the fancy of the editor, perhaps jogged by readers clamouring for more of the same, and so appeared more than once. Jill and Phyl Greenhill, Kirkham's famous twins, appeared in no less than eleven serials in THE SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY between 1925 and 1935, all reprinted in the SGOL. This attests to great popularity and is a tribute to this author's ability to produce durable "laughter" stories. Other young characters made one appearance only and three of these early ones are the "lost girls" of the title of this article, and are given a "re-showing" as it were, as being perhaps lost but not entirely forgotten.

After four successful serials featuring the famous Greenhill twins, Reg Kirkham apparently decided to write a humorous story utilizing the talents of a solitary girl, with no particular attributes such as the twins had of creating havoc among plotters because the belief was that there was but one. Beryl Penrose in BERYL AND THE BOARDERS (1925) is a young person of no great ability but nevertheless enlists the sympathy of the reader because she is a good-hearted girl who is prepared to give her all to aid the lady she works for who owns the Seaview Boarding House in Tornessa. Mrs. Stacey employs Beryl as her general assistant and, in order to create laughter, Beryl is given the misfortune of being very clumsy which, though an attribute unwanted by the holder, gives rise to many comic scenes and through which she falls foul of Silas Moove, one of the boarders. He, the villain of the piece, makes no secret of the fact that he wants to buy the boarding house from Mrs. Stacey and will stop at nothing to get rid of her boarders so that she will be forced to sell to him.

Mrs. Stacey wishes that she had the gumption to stop at nothing in order to make Mr. Moove move, and she cannot leave herself, being forced to stay at Seaview because her younger daughter Daisy is an invalid recuperating after a long illness and, on doctor's orders, must not be moved away from the vital sea air.

Because Silas Moove is very objectionable to the other boarders to the extent that they find they can't stand him and move out, Beryl tries to think of a way to eject Mr. Moove but her clumsiness is against her except when she inadvertently trips coming down the stairs and cannons into Moove, knocking him flat on the floor. His ultimatum to Mrs. Stacey is that if Beryl isn't sacked then he will leave But this is mere persiflage on his part. Mrs. Stacey refuses to dismiss the sturdy and willing Beryl but despite this Silas Moove stays put.

When Daisy needs Beryl's help, she tinkles a cup in a saucer and apologises for making her run upstairs just to pick up a book which she dropped. Beryl tells her that's nothing, she almost dropped the best aspidistra that morning!

Polly, Daisy's elder sister, arrives home from boarding school and proves to be a great asset in the fight against Mr. Moove. One thing that gentleman does constantly is to play his gramophone loudly for his own visitors, two dark-skinned men who are supposed to frighten the other boarders. But Beryl gets her feet entangled in the hose while watering the lawn and the water shoots into the room where Moove and the two dark men are making a lot of noise and the two visitors are revealed to be white men wearing dark make-up.

Beryl, returning from a visit to the doctor to ask him to come and see Daisy, bumps into Silas Moove outside the surgery who drops some papers he is carrying. One is a photo of Seaview, the other a plan of the sea front and jetty, Seaview's location lined in red, and a double black line leading to the red square through the valley that lies behind Seaview. Beryl thinks this may be a clue as to why Silas Moove wants to buy Seaview and races away on her bicycle taking the papers, with the unpleasant boarder in hot pursuit on the running board of the doctor's car. Moove snatches the papers from her. Later she draws the plans from memory but neither she nor Polly can figure out what the double black line means.

There are eleven other boarders at Seaview and Silas Moove gradually instigates unpleasantnesses of various kinds to get rid of

them. This will, he thinks, force Mrs. Stacey to sell the boarding house to him. When he is the only boarder left, Beryl decides to help Mrs. Stacey by taking on an extra job and so engages the admiration of the manager of the town Pierrot troupe in her comic possibilities that he says he will use her as a performer in the audience to act as a foil to himself as chief comedian on the stage, and if she is extra good at the repartee he will increase her wages at the end of the week. Beryl promises to send the audience away doubled up with laughter and enquires whether she will get overtime pay if she has to help them if they can't straighten up. The manager, Jack Jover, tells Beryl the Pierrot troupe aren't very comfortable at their lodgings and can she recommend somewhere else. Thus, Beryl is very pleased to tell Mrs. Stacey that the eight Pierrots will be moving into Seaview.

The Pierrot troupe has a thought reader as one of the acts and in front of Mr. Moove Beryl shows him the rough drawing she had made from the plan and asks him what it is. Moove recognises Beryl's drawing and leaves the room quickly in case the thought reader reveals what he, Silas, is thinking.

Beryl is able to decipher what Silas Moove has written with a hard pencil and a heavy hand on a telegraph form at the post office and so is secreted at the rendezvous, a half-ruined old house, when Moove meets his accomplice and tells him that £3,000 is the most the railway company will pay for Seaview (he has offered to pay Mrs. Stacey £1,500 for it). "The railway company can cut their new line through the valley and pull down Seaview to make way for their new station and through line on to the jetty they're going to build." Moove and his accomplice catch Beryl as she tries to leave unseen by them and lock her in a room with a barred window.

In half an hour Mrs. Stacey will be signing the agreement to sell Seaview to Silas Moove and Beryl knows she cannot warn her in time not to sign. But her warm feelings for the Staceys force her into a hazardous climb out of the room through the chimney and she bursts into Seaview "black from head to foot, and her coat nearly torn to shreds" and tells what she heard the plotters reveal as to Silas Moove's real motive in buying the boarding house.

The railway company offers Mrs. Stacey £3,000 for Seaview and its goodwill and she decides to take the four of them off on a wonderful holiday before they return to buy another boarding house and start all over again. That is to say Mrs. Stacey, Daisy and Polly. Beryl asks who is the fourth? Mrs. Stacey tells her, "Nothing but your love for us all could ever have made you climb that terrible chimney. You are coming with us, Beryl." As the ship steams away from Tornessa, Polly waves good-bye to Seaview. "You've been a fine home and friend to us as well. We've only one finer friend and she's with us." Impulsively she hugs Beryl who lives up to her reputation for clumsiness and drops the binoculars on to the deck.

BERYL AND THE BOARDERS was written under the Kirkham byline of Joan Vincent. We know now that Reg Kirkham is both Joan Vincent and Hilary Marlow but at the time these stories were published in THE SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY this was a deep, dark secret. It is amusing in view of what we now know, to read the comments of the Editor of the SW about the "opening chapters of a splendid new serial entitled THE GUARDIANS OF THE CASTLE. It is by a writer new to our pages, named Hilary Marlow. When I asked Miss Marlow to write this story for you, I told her that she had a very difficult task, inasmuch as she would be following one of the most successful stories I have ever published. However, when I had read the first instalment of THE GUARDIANS OF THE CASTLE I came to the conclusion that Miss Marlow had achieved the seemingly impossible and had written a story worthy in every way to follow THE TWINS ON THE FILMS." This was the fourth Jill and Phyl Greenhill comedy. The above extract from the Editor's Chat only goes to prove that there was just as much fiction paraded in its columns as there was in the body of the serials and completes in the SW's regular reading programme.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE CASTLE (1924) introduced that popular pair, May and June Reece. Their love of dressing up, very often as quaint and eccentric ladies of uncertain vintage, although they had a sideline in modern American "flappers" that was rather endearing, made for some five hilarious full-length serials (of thirteen weeks' duration each). The eleven months separating the older, cautious June from the younger, impetuous May often caused laughter and much suspense as June, disguised, sets out to save May, also disguised, from her predicament, into which she has unthinkingly rushed. The five serials and two long series of consecutives completes, twenty stories in the SW and 18 in THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, made May and June far from "lost" after only one outing.

Following the debut of the Reece sisters, Kirkham invented another single heroine in the person of Chrissie Bentley whose one and only comic adventure is related in LOOKING AFTER THE PRINCESS (1925). The Princess is one Princess Panzee from Tolivio and she is content to leave her own country and go into business in a foreign land because her Uncle has taken over the government of Tolivio and is a well-respected, benevolent ruler. But inevitably as in all Ruritanian countries, there is a rebellious opposition and they want to depose Panzee's Uncle and place her on the throne as

Queen as being more easily manipulatable. The three representatives of the rebellious opposition are difficult to take seriously because they are presented as musical comedy foreigners, by name, Mingo Tut, Tolivio Army Commander, Chancellor Prantz and Bomo, the dialogue of the last named consisting of never more than "Ush!".

Chrissie Bentley runs a Rock Stall on the beach at Cliffthorpe so, as Panzee has bought up all the stalls on Chrissie's part of the beach, she is now an employee of the Princess. Chrissie's rocks are not the polished kind used as ornaments but the long, pink-covered, sticky short-broom-handle sweets where the name of the seaside cleverly runs from top to bottom of the white inside portion of the rock. The three foreign comic villains are aided and abetted by Chrissie's rival stall holder, Mrs. Tattles, on the other side of the breakwater which is not owned by Panzee, and her wares are ice-creams.

Mingo Tut and Co. are indefatigable in their activities to put the Princess out of business and it is Chrissie's lot to foil their plans, which she does with much resource. When they try to chase the customers away from the beach by dumping large crabs into the bay to bite the bathers, Chrissie sees what they're up to and uses a motorboat to pull their rowboat right out to sea and makes them throw all the large crabs overboard. Princess Panzee buys a new motorboat for patrons to ride around the bay but finds that water has been added to the petrol and the engine stops, what time Mrs. Tattles harangues Chrissie and Panzee and causes trouble with the other passengers. The Princess' deck chairs are treated with acid to make them split when sat in. Mrs. Tattles is again around to shout the odds and make sure the customers blame the poor management of "the foreigner".

But in all their forays against the Princess and Chrissie's business acumen it is obvious that Mingo Tut and Co. are not undermining her ambitions as much as they hoped. So they buy the lease of the other beach across the breakwater, employ Mrs. Tattles' husband, another trouble maker, as their manager, and hope this will finally put Panzee out of business and force her to return to Tolivio as its Queen.

Chrissie engages Massa Sampson, "the strongest man in all de world," who also leads a jazz band, to add weight to Panzee's staff and their first job is to perform on the Tattles' side of the breakwater, making such a horrendous noise that all the customers flee to Panzee's beach. Mingo Tut is running out of money and realises he must force Panzee to close up shop and return to Tolivio within two weeks. The plotters and Mr. Tattles have a confab and decide they must put Panzee's motorboat out of action and insert carborundum to put the engine out of action for that length of time. Mr. Tattles says he will take care of this job but Chrissie has overheard all their plans and, dressing herself in a tiger skin, raises up and roars when he climbs into the boat.

Finally, Mingo Tut and Co. kidnap the Princess and drive off with her in the back seat covered by a tarpaulin. They plan to put her in their boat and row her to a waiting vessel on which they will all travel back to Tolivio. But Chrissie with the help of Sampson arrives in time in Panzee's motorboat and the strong man throws all the plotters into the sea. Mingo Tut and Co. return to Tolivio alone and the Tattles leave Cliffthorpe. The Princess' beach business, with Chrissie's aid, prospers.

The next Marlow offering CUSTODIANS OF THE CAVES (1926) sounds at first as though it may have been a May and June follow-up to THE GUARDIANS OF THE CASTLE, but the Reece sisters are having some time off after their long (Feb. to Jul. 1926) stint in their twenty-week series of short stories and so the custodianship of the caves goes to Dolly Daventry, who is ably backing up a sun-bronzed girl who has been in Canada for the past six years and has all the papers to prove that she, Katie Wilson, is the owner of the stretch of cliffs and the bit of land on top and she's here to take charge of it. Here enters one of Kirkham's comic English villains (in this case rather dim and inept) with a funny name, Ephraim Snookes, who appears to want to keep people from "poking about" in the caves. His daughter, Caroline, dresses up in a sheet to frighten people who venture inside.

Katie tells Dolly that the inheritance of the apparently worthless caves seemed absurd to her father, still residing in Canada, but she feels there is a strong reason and that something to the advantage of the Wilson family will be found therein. Katie has a map of the caves and one is marked with a cross. She is keeping the map with her at all times because she thinks the Aunt and Uncle with whom she is staying, Mr. and Mrs. Willicks, may be in league with Ephraim. They have searched her possessions and Snookes has run off with a bag belonging to her. Dolly retrieves this for Katie by substituting another similar looking bag filled with bricks. Ephraim almost expires hauling it up to the top of the cliffs. The Willicks tell Katie that they can't have her wasting her time by opening up the caves and charging 3d a time for visitors, because her uncle is out of work and they need more money, so they obtain a job for her doing housework for a Mrs. Pettifer.

Dolly's own thoroughly decent Uncle Jim, who is an adept do-it-yourselfer, repairs the iron gates at the mouth of Katie's caves and uses his old car-lighting set to illuminate the interior. He also provides a "brilliantly painted board proclaiming the marvels to be seen within" above the mouth of the cave. Everything is set to make Katie's caves a grand tourist attraction.

But the one damper on the horizon is that Katie does not own the adjoining caves whose entrance is guarded by Ephraim and he is apparently being paid to see that no one passes through that entrance.

Ephraim's plots continually foiled by Dolly are some of the best comic moments encountered in this "what-is-behind-it-all?" amusing tale. Ephraim manages to barricade himself inside Katie's cave and pretends to be an unkempt, bearded wild man who has been shipwrecked on an island. Dolly enlists the aid of her Uncle Jim's forty-strong Tradesmen's Association to apprehend the "wild man". When captured, Ephraim tells them his name is Oliver. "Oliver Cromwell?" says Katie. "No! Oll-of-a-tremble!" says Dolly. Later, Ephraim reappears clean-shaven and Caroline introduces him as her Uncle Nathaniel. Dolly, pretending to take it all in, tells Nathaniel some home truths about his brother, Ephraim. "He's a rascal, he's lazy and he never washes his face."

During the course of the plot, Dolly realises that Katie is not just up against the Snookes but that the Willicks' and the Pettifers' are also involved. She also hears clanking sounds from deeper inside the caves and realises that they hold rather more than the possible hidden treasure that Katie is expecting to find.

It appears that Mr. Pettifer is a counterfeiter, in fact, he says he is the best there is and has made so much money he is now going to retire. All this is revealed to Dolly when the plotters, realising that she is on the verge of finding out their true endeavours, capture her and carry her to the cave from which emanates the clanking sound: the counterfeiting machine. But Dolly also sees, piled at one end of the cave what is undoubtedly the treasure that Katie had come from Canada to claim. Antique furniture and books!

Katie enlists the aid of two policemen to help her find the missing Dolly to no avail until she remembers the cross marked on her map and realises that portion of the map must be an inner part of the cave which Ephraim had been detailed to guard. Using a secret way through from her cave via a rock that moves to one side when pushed, Katie and the policemen confront all the plotters whom Dolly has just got through breezily telling of the doom that awaits them all: "handcuffs, police vans and the ship they have lying offshore being pursued by the Navy - with large guns!"

The Pettifers, the Willicks and Ephraim are all put on trial and flung into prison. Katie's caves are opened for visitors properly and are a tremendous tourist success. Katie's parents are on their way home from Canada and Dolly tells her the whole thing has been a glorious, ripping adventure.

And there were more great serial characters to come, serial in the sense that they appeared in more than one tale and were not "lost" after only one appearance. Laughing Lily Lane, the schoolgirl ventriloquist (1927) and Pen Holliday, clever illusionist and sleight of hand artiste (1929), daughter of a famous father of like talents. And then in 1936, Binnie and Billy Telford, whose comic adventures were retailed in twenty-four consecutive short stories. These were, in fact, the final appearance of Reg Kirkham's comic work in the weeklies, and the last time his two most well-known bylines were seen therein.

Did so-called "laughter stories" suddenly fall out of favour in the mid-thirties or did the author himself desire to switch his writing talents into another direction? As Bill Lofts has informed us earlier this year that Reg Kirkham died as recently as 1956 it is a pity he was unable to be discovered and interviewed while he was still available for comment. He would have been thrilled to know that his jolly characters invented thirty years earlier were still remembered with affection and reminiscent chuckles.

Vogue and Harper's required 1920-1945 only, any condition.

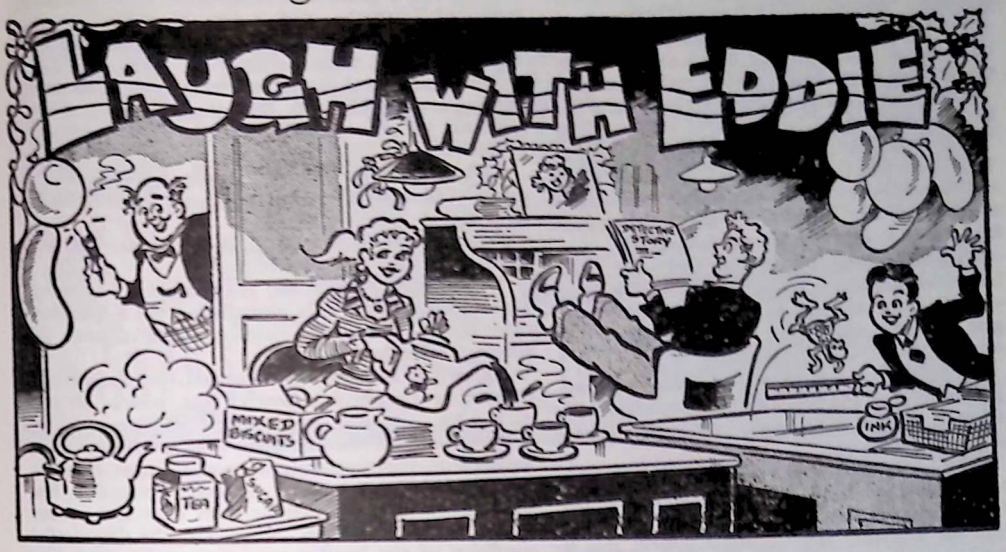
B. CHOLMONDELEY
THE LAURELS, YETMINSTER, DORSET

* *

Best wishes to Bill, Brian, Eric (the two of them), Roger, Mary and all members of the O.B.B.C.

LARRY MORLEY

* *



TED THE 'TEC !

Hallo. Folks. This is Eddie calling. Film Fun's outer office is always a hive of activity, and, when I sailed out of my private sanctum one morning shortly before Christmas, I found all my staff deeply engrossed in their various tasks.

Young Jimmy Binks, our office-boy, was trying to teach his pet frog to jump over a ruler, while Betty Bounce, our blonde typist, had finished filing—her fingernails—and was making the tea. I expected to find Ted Morris, the chief sub, filling in his football pools as usual, but on this occasion just for a change he was reading a detective story.

"'Who Ruined The Baron's Heir?'" I said, glancing at the title. "It sounds like an exciting yarn, Ted. Have you solved the mystery yet?"

"Naturally, boss," replied old Ted calmly. "The man who ruined the Baron's heir was obviously the Baron's barber. I had deduced that by Chapter Two. In fact, I find most of these whodunnits quite elementary. I'm beginning to think that I have the makings of a great detective."

I could hardly believe my ears.

"You—a great detective? Why, you couldn't find an elephant even if you were shut up with one in a telephone-box," I chortled. "Yesterday afternoon, you spent ten minutes searching for your hat. You might still have been looking if I hadn't come in and told you that you had it on your head."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy and Betty, and Ted went a trifle red about the ears.

"That's right—laugh!" he yammered huffily. "Every great genius in the world has been ridiculed at some time or another. But, if you will all step over to the window, I will endeavour to give you a glimpse of my truly amazing powers."

We joined him at the window, where he surveyed the people passing by with his eagle optics.

"That man in the striped suit is sorely worried and perplexed," he said, at last. "He didn't know if he was coming or going when he dressed himself this morning."

"How on earth do you know that?" exclaimed Betty.

"He's wearing his waistcoat back to front," replied Ted. "That's elementary Miss Bounce."

Ted looked down at the street once more.

"See that fat man over there?" he burbled. "In a flash, my trained eye has gleaned the full details of his history. He is a confirmed vegetarian who has recently returned from foreign parts. He is a lonely man with no family, and, from the fact that he is chewing gum, I deduce that he is a non-smoker."

"But I know that chap. He's our butcher," cried young Jimmy Binks. "He's never been out of the country in his life, and they say that he eats a pound of steak for his supper every night. His wife is friendly with my Ma, and I used to go to school with his six sons and three daughters. And look—he's just lighting a cigar."

I laughed so much that I nearly split the seams of my waistcoat.

"Well, never mind, Ted," I wheezed. "You said that he was fat and that he was a man—and you were right on both these points."

"Jeer, if you feel you must," yapped Ted. "I know that I have it in me to become a great detective, and you're all going to feel pretty silly when I solve a big case one of these days."

After that, Ted took to smoking a meerschaum pipe and carrying a magnifying glass; and, when he tracked down a box of paper clips that had been missing for a month, you would have thought—from the song and dance he made—that he'd recovered the crown jewels.

A day or so before Christmas, however, I noticed that old Ted was looking a trifle worried.

"You know my girl-friend, Mary Hammond, boss," he burbled. "Well, I have a strange sort of suspicion that her father doesn't really like me."

"And what leads you to believe that?" I inquired.

"He kicked me out of his house last night," said Ted. "He said that I was a mutton-headed goop, and threatened to set the dog on me next time I called for Mary. This has led me to deduce that his feelings towards me are not friendly."

"I think you may be right, Ted," I agreed. "Perhaps Mr. Hammond has had a little too much of your detective nonsense lately. If I were you, I'd give it a rest, old man. It gets a little boring sometimes."

Before Ted had time to reply, his telephone rang. He picked it up and held a short conversation, and, when he replaced the receiver, his eyes were gleaming with excitement.

"That was Mary, boss," he cried. "A burglar broke into her house last night, and stole her father's musical cigarette-box which his wife gave him for a present last Christmas. Well, this is my big chance. Come on, boss. Let's go!"

AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE !

WHEN we arrived at Hammond Hall, Mrs. Hammond, a large and somewhat formidable-looking lady, seemed far more perturbed than her husband about the theft in the night.

"The thief stole the musical cigarette-box which I gave my husband for a present last Christmas," she cried. "It was a beautiful thing. Every time you raised the lid, it played the tune 'Cockles and Mussels' in a loud and clear tone. My husband treasured it greatly—didn't you, Horace?"

"So, according to you, I'm an ancient, scruffy bighead!" roared Horace Hammond.

"Eh? Oh—er—yes, certainly," yammered old man Hammond, with a start.

Ted heard nothing of all this. He had been peering around through his magnifying glass, and suddenly he pointed dramatically at the drawing-room window.

"That's where the thief made his entry!" he cried. "How do I know? Because the window is still slightly open."

Before anyone present could comment, Ted had dashed out into the garden.

"The fool!" snorted old Hammond. "I opened that window myself this morning to get a breath of air. We know how the thief got in and out. He forced the kitchen door."

Following Ted into the garden, we found him examining an ancient bowler hat which he had picked up.

"See this hat?" he burbled. "It is size 8½, which means that the man who owned it must have an exceedingly large bonce. I have noticed a few white hairs inside which denotes that the wearer was a man of great age. Moreover, the disgraceful condition of the bowler proves that the man who wore it was extremely scruffy."

Old man Hammond nearly exploded.

"And so, according to you, I'm an ancient, scruffy bighead!" he yelled.

"I'm talking about the burglar," gurgled Ted. "This hat must have fallen from his head when he climbed out of that window."

"Oh no, it didn't! That's MY hat," bellowed old Hammond. "When it got too old to wear, I threw it out into the garden for my white cat to play with. That's where the white hairs come from, you dolt."

"It's a good job I telephoned for a real private detective," murmured Mrs. Hammond.

"You did what?" gasped Mary's Pa.

"When you wouldn't have the police, I telephoned for a private detective," repeated his better half. "He should be here at any moment."

After this, you might have thought that old Ted had had enough. But such was not the case.

"I'll show 'em yet, boss," he muttered. "Come on. We'll go and take a look round the rough quarter of the town."

We were in Tuffnut Terrace when we heard the strains of "Cockles And Mussels" wafting clearly from the window.

"Success! Our man's in there, boss!" yodelled Ted. "You watch the front door. I'll make my entrance at the back and catch the villain red-handed."

I waited outside until the music stopped, and then looked in through the front window. Inside, Ted was having an argument with a large gent who had been practising on his xylophone.

"What do you mean by bursting into a man's house like this?" roared the enraged musician.

"I'm very sorry," gurgled Ted. "You were playing 'Cockles and Mussels' and I——"

"'Cockles and Mussels!'" shouted the musician, rapping Ted's bonce with his hammers. "I was playing 'The Last Rose Of Summer', you insolent puppy!"

He broke off, and made a dive for the door as the musician rushed at him.

"'Cockles and Mussels!'" thundered the big bloke, rapping a tattoo on top of Ted's head with his two xylophone hammers. "I was playing 'The Last Rose Of Summer', you insolent puppy. I'll teach you not to come in here and take the mickey out of MY playing!"

But even this misfortune didn't deter Ted. Before we had gone another hundred yards, he spotted a man following another who was carrying a case. As we stood watching, the first man suddenly pounced on to the back of the second.

"A footpad! A thorough crook!" gasped old Ted. "Just the sort of man who might have broken into old Horace Hammond's home."

Rushing forward, Ted pounced on his quarry and dragged him away from the man who was carrying the case.

"I'll hold him! You fetch the police!" he yelled, as he forced his captive to the ground.

The chap with the suitcase grinned, and leapt on to a passing bus. As the bus sped away, we heard the strains of "Cockles and Mussels" coming from the suitcase.

"Great Scott! We've nabbed the wrong man!" gugled Ted. "Old Hammond's musical cigarette-box was in that suitcase."

"Of course it was!" bellowed the chap he was kneeling on. "Get off my back, you idiot. I'm a private 'tec hired by Mr. Hammond to recover his property. I was just about to arrest the thief when you butted in, you fool."

"Oh, dear! I'm very sorry," bleated Ted.

"You'll be sorrier!" shouted the 'tec. "You're coming along with me to explain things to Mr. Horace Hammond."

Mrs. Hammond was out when we returned to Hammond Hall, and old Horace Hammond saw the three of us in his study. Old Ted looked woe-begone as the 'tec explained exactly what had happened.

"So, but for Morris, I'd have had my cigarette-box back, would I?" said old Hammond to the 'tec. "Well, it's not your fault, my dear fellow! Here! take your fee, forget the cigarette-box and consider the case closed."

As soon as the 'tec had gone, Horace Hammond jumped to his feet and let out a yell of joy.

"Well done, Ted, my boy!" he warbled, shaking my chief sub by the hand. "I loathed that cigarette-box. I'm not fond of music, you know, and I simply detest shellfish. It was sheer torture to me to have to listen to 'Cockles and Mussels' every time I wanted a fag. It nearly made me give up smoking."

"But why did you hire a private 'tec?" I gasped.

"I couldn't let my wife know I didn't want the thing back," warbled old Hammond. "But it's gone for good now—and I'm absolutely delighted."

Ted Morris said nothing. But he threw his meerschaum pipe and his magnifying glass on to the fire.

"Splendid, Ted," chirruped Mr. Hammond. "And now I'd like to ask you and your boss to spend Christmas here with us. Bring the rest of the Film Fun staff with you. The more the merrier, you know."

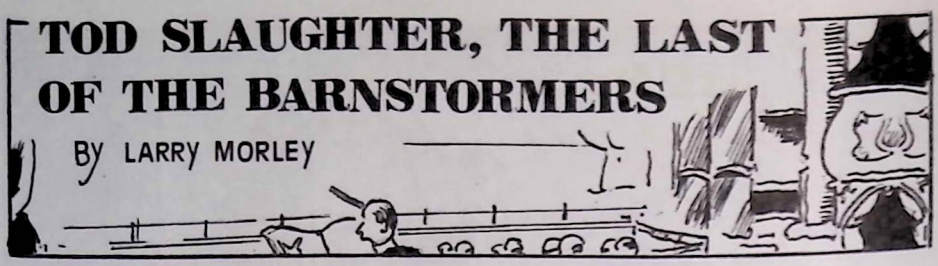
So, like the monkey who climbed up his own rudder, I've come to the end of my tale, folks. Now let me seize the opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Until we meet again, yours very merrily,

Eddie, The Happy Editor

FROM FILM FUN ANNUAL 1959

TOD SLAUGHTER, THE LAST OF THE BARNSTORMERS

By LARRY MORLEY



"So you want to be a bride do you?" hissed Tod to a betrayed housemaid.

"So you shall be a bride of death", and he proceeds to drown her in the lake.

This was my first introduction to Tod on the cinema screen, in a film called *Crimes at the Dark House* loosely based on *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins.

It was made in 1940, pretty lurid stuff for a lad of 14. I remember hurrying home through the blacked out war-time streets, glancing into every alleyway and "Jinnel" (and there were plenty in our pit village in Derbyshire). N. Carter Slaughter was born in March 1885 at Newcastle on Tyne. He died in February 1962 while on tour, his last appearance being at Derby.

He was married to the popular and lovely stage star Jenny Lynn for a number of years. His first stage part was at the Grand Theatre, West Hartlepool in a play called *A Wrecker of Men*. Afterwards he toured all over the British Isles in this production.

In 1912 he commenced the policy of performing West End plays twice nightly around the suburbs, and in 1913 became the lessee of the Hippodromes at Croydon and Richmond. (Do any of our older members remember them?)

During World War One he served in the R.F.C., then the R.A.F. He was demobbed in January 1919 and then took over the Theatre Royal, Chatham, remaining there for four years and subsequently taking over the Elephant and Castle Theatre - where he revived the old melodramas *Maria Marten, Sweeney Todd, Jack Sheppard*, etc. which achieved record runs there. From 1927 on he appeared on the greater London Theatre circuit playing all the old favourites, as well as *Spring Heel Jack* and *The Face at the Window*. 1931 to 1932 saw him appearing at the New Theatre in such gems as *The Crimes of Burke and Hare*, as Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*, and at the Kingsway he played Sweeney Todd again.

All through the thirties he appeared in nearly every town in the British Isles, a very busy actor with a full date-book. No "resting" for him by gad!

What must have been the most interesting part of his career came in 1944 when he appeared at the Granville, Walham Green, in a *Grand Guignol* series of plays including *Jack the Ripper* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

During his working life he appeared in over 500 plays and sketches, a record any actor would be proud of. In 1935 he made his first film, the old faithful *Maria Marten*, produced very cheaply as indeed were all British "B" movies of the 1930s. It was produced and directed by film veteran George King. The film must have been something of a success and shown a profit because in the following year, 1936, he made *Sweeney Todd*, another George King movie-production.

1938 saw him in *Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror* - (he played Michael Larron "The Snake", a supposed philatelist who is really a master criminal) based on a story by Pierre Quiroule.

My own personal favourite films are *Crimes at the Dark House* (1940), *The Face at the Window* and *The Greed of William Hart* (1948).

I suppose in these enlightened days it is quite easy to laugh at the acting styles of these old films - but remember Tod played all the roles with tongue in cheek. We will not see the likes of him again. Together with Robert Newton, Donald Wolfit and, according to legend, Sir Henry Irving, he was one of the great "over actors" of our time.

Check List of Tod Slaughter Films:

Maria Marten (1935), *Sweeney Todd* (1936), *The Crimes of Stephen Hawke* (1936), *Sons of the Road* (1937), *Darby and Joan* (1937), *It's Never Too Late to Mend* (1937), *Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror* (1938), *The Face at the Window* (1939), *Crimes at the Dark House* (1940), *Bothered by a Beard* (short film, 1946), *The Curse of the Wraydons* (1946), *The Greed of William Hart* (Burke & Hare, 1948), *King of the Underworld* (1952) and *Murder at Scotland Yard* (1952).

All small budget films, which showed in production values, apart from *Crimes at the Dark House* which went out as the main feature.

MORCOVE, MAUDSLEY AND CLIFF HOUSE, A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

BY DENNIS L. BIRD

It really all began with Thomas Hughes in 1857. He was an Old Rugbeian, and he wanted his son to follow him at that famous boys' public school. To give the lad some idea of what to expect, Hughes wrote a novel: "Tom Brown's Schooldays". It initiated a literary genre which was to last almost a hundred years - the school story. Incidentally, one wonders what Tom Brown - and Flashman - would have thought of Rugby in 1995, when the joint Head of School is a girl, Louise Woolcock.

The school story had many inbuilt advantages over other kinds of juvenile fiction. As John Rowe Townsend points out in his book "Written for Children" (1965), "School is a self-contained world in which boys - or girls - are full citizens. At home, a boy is only a subordinate member of his family... but at school the boy is standing on his own two feet... And school is a world in which personal politics are always in full swing. Leadership and discipline and rivalry are the everyday issues of the school story. Who is to captain the team? Is the unruly group to be brought under control, and, if so, by whom? How is the odd-one-out to be fitted into the community? The clash between authority and the individual is the stuff of a great deal of drama... School life is full of live moral issues: the familiar problems like bullying, cribbing, and sneaking, and the less familiar but more interesting ones that arise out of conflicting loyalties to the group, to one's friends, and to oneself."

Many writers followed Thomas Hughes' example and made school a microcosm in which great human crises could be played out in miniature. Among them were Dean F.W. Farrar, Talbot Baines Reed, Angela Brazil, and perhaps the greatest of all, Charles Hamilton ("Frank Richards").

Most of these writers concentrated on boys' boarding schools; day schools and Council schools featured hardly at all. And girls were largely ignored, apart from Charles Hamilton's occasional introduction into his Greyfriars stories of characters like Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn.

But after World War I the girls' school story rose to equal prominence with the boys', partly through the establishment of new weekly papers ("The School Friend", "Schoolgirls' Own", "The Schoolgirls' Weekly") and partly through the emergence of authors like Elinor Brent-Dyer and Elsie Oxenham.

Three writers in particular deserve study: Horace Phillips, Dorita Fairlie Bruce, and John Wheway.

HORACE PHILLIPS was editor of "The Scout" and other journals at the beginning of the century. He received his greatest opportunity in 1921, when he was invited to write a series of girls' school stories for the new "Schoolgirls' Own" weekly. The result was Morcove, and under the pseudonym "Marjorie Stanton" he wrote the school's history for the next 17 years. Phillips was born in 1881: the exact year of his death is unknown but seems to have been some time in the 1960s.

DORITA FAIRLIE BRUCE (1885-1970) was a true Scot - the "Fairlie" in her name is the Ayrshire seaside town where William Fife designed his splendid yachts. For all that, she was born at Palas in Spain, where her engineer father Alexander Fairlie Bruce was working at the time. Her birth certificate describes her as "Dorotea Morris Fairlie Bruce", but she later adopted the more familiar spelling of her first name. After writing poetry and short stories for women's magazines before the First World War, she published her first girls' school novel in 1921. It featured her best-known character, Daphne Isobel Maitland ("Dimsie") at boarding-school. And then, in 1925, she began a new series about a day-school girl, Nancy Caird, at Maudsley Grammar School.

JOHN W. WHEWAY, who was born in 1897 and died in the early 1970s, was one of several writers who, under the name "Hilda Richards", developed the saga of Cliff House School. The first mention of that distinguished academy came in 1909 in Charles Hamilton's Greyfriars stories in "The Magnet". In 1919 Hamilton created Bessie Bunter, and in the new "School Friend" weekly her adventures were recounted, first by Hamilton himself and then by Horace Phillips, Reginald Samuel Kirkham, Lewis Carlton, and Eric Lyth Rosman. "The School Friend" ended in 1929, and so it seemed would Cliff House. But it was revived in 1932 in a new paper, "The Schoolgirl", which ran until the wartime newsprint shortage forced its close in May 1940. The new Cliff House stories

included contributions by N. Williams, Will Gibbons, Stanley Austin, Cecil Graveley, and Stewart Pride, but the great majority were written by John Wheway - who was also "Hazel Armitage" of the "Girls' Crystal".

* * * * *

Morcove, Maudsley, Cliff House: where were these three popular girls' schools?

We can locate Morcove exactly, for its creator explained to a schoolgirl fan on February 15, 1938, in a letter which Mary Cadogan eventually published in the 1976 "C.D. Annual". From his home at St. Margaret's Bay near Dover, Phillips wrote to young Elizabeth Blenman:

"You deserve to be told something about the origin of the word 'Morcove'. I made it up as a kind of variation of the place-name Mortehoe, in N. Devon."

Mortehoe is a tiny village on a bleak, grey, rocky headland at the extreme north-west corner of Devon. The Ordnance Survey Leisure Guide to Devon (1988) describes it as "sheltering just under the brow of the ridge that forms Morte Point, the northernmost horn of Morte Bay... scarcely protected from the fierce westerlies... The coast here is scattered with treacherous rocks."

This is just how Phillips describes the scene over the years. Mortehoe is near two big towns: Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. He amalgamated them into Barncombe, with its famous Creamery beloved of Morcove pupils.

He used another local name in his stories. Twenty miles away, out in the Bristol Channel, is remote Lundy Island. That is the name he gave to the lord of Barncombe Castle, the Earl of Lundy, whose daughter Lady Evelyn Knight was a good friend to Betty Barton & Co.

So much for the siting of Morcove. Maudsley Grammar School is much more difficult. In the five books about it, Dorita Fairlie Bruce sets it vaguely in "Roseburyshire", presumably somewhere in the Home Counties. Other names she mentions are Fernglade, Woodridge, and the cathedral city of Rosebury.

Only once does DFB give a clue, and then not in one of the Maudsley books. But in "Nancy at St. Bride's" (1933) - about Nancy Caird at school on the island of Great Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde - her aunt writes a letter from "Fernglade, Woodridge, Nr. Maudsley, Surrey."

Is Maudsley in Surrey? It is true that the county has a cathedral city: Guildford. But the cathedral was not built until after World War II - and DFB is writing about the 1920s.

There is no "Maudsley" in the gazetteer. There *is* a "Mawdesley", but that is spelt differently, and it is in Lancashire, a few miles west of Chorley.

So whence came DFB's inspiration? The name "Maudsley" is well known in another context: the Maudsley Hospital in Denmark Hill, London. It was named after the Victorian psychiatrist Dr. Henry Maudsley (1835-1918). Did the author, in her Roehampton days, have some connection with it?

Mary Cadogan has a theory that Maudsley was in Oxfordshire - based partly on the fact that the Maudsley books were published by the Oxford University Press, also because she had an aunt in that county who gave her her first DFB book, and because 'Maudsley reminds her of Oxford's Magdalen College. But personally I plump for Surrey. So too does Edith Cairns, a C.D. subscriber and a member of the DFB Society, who says "I am fairly certain it is Farnham."

The whereabouts of Cliff House School, too, are uncertain. We know it is somewhere in Kent. Charles Hamilton, its originator, lived at various times in different parts of that country (notably Kingsgate), so he set both Greyfriars and Cliff House in the Garden of England. Nearby villages are Friardale, Courtfield, and Pegg, and it is tempting to identify Pegg with Pegwell Bay, near Ramsgate. But the geography does not fit. My guess is that the Bunters' schools were somewhere near St. Margaret's Bay and the White Cliffs of Dover.

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The precise location of the schools is less important than what happened there. In considering the plots, the different contexts of the stories are significant. Dorita Fairlie Bruce was writing five novels and a few short stories about Maudsley; the Morcove and Cliff House writers had to provide a new tale every week for a decade or more.

DFB's characters went to a day school, so we observe Nancy Caird and her chums in the domestic sphere as well as the scholastic. Nancy goes home every day to her grandmother and her Aunt Elizabeth; she is able to develop contacts with neighbours like Angela Stephen and Lord Woodridge, as well as taking a very active part in the church-based Girls' Guildry.

Morcove and Cliff House, on the other hand, were boarding-schools, and their pupils were cocooned for weeks on end in a confined world of lessons, games, and teachers. No wonder that "Marjorie Stanton" and "Hilda Richards" seized every holiday opportunity to take their characters to the Mediterranean or Egypt, the Sahara or the Pacific or a romantic corner of Europe called "Turania". Sometimes these out-of-school adventures were in less exotic surroundings; one of the best Morcove stories, for instance, is "The Legend of

NANCY DASHED FORWARD IN TIME TO CATCH AND STEADY THE STEPS

Nancy and her grandmother - illustrated by R.H. Brock from "That Boarding-School Girl" (1925)

Swanlake", when the chums spend a mysterious Christmas at Pam Willoughby's home.

The need to provide a fresh story every week put enormous pressure on the Amalgamated Press writers. Bill Lofts and the late Derek Adley listed 798 Morcove instalments in the "Schoolgirls' Own" and a further 89 in "The Schoolgirl"; there were 977 Cliff House stories by half a dozen authors. It is hardly surprising, then, that there are repetitions of plot and some far-fetched fantasies!

Dorita Fairlie Bruce's task, in contrast, was somewhat easier. As a result, her story-lines are simpler and more realistic. At book length, she was able to focus on a single major issue. In "That Boarding-School Girl" (1925), for example, a prefect (Phyllis Bainbridge) enlists Nancy Caird's help in ending an ancient feud between Maudsley GS and the neighbouring Larkiston House School. "The Best Bat in the School" (1931) focuses on Nancy's efforts to clear the name of Rosalind Blackett.

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Other contrasts emerge between DFB on the one hand and the Morcove/Cliff House writers on the other. DFB gives multi-dimensional views of a situation. We are told what Nancy and her friends think, but we also know how it looks to the seniors and the prefects. Sometimes, too, we get a view from below: Miranda Blackett and the Third Form also have their say. This gives DFB's plots a satisfying depth. At Morcove and Cliff House, however, we generally hear only about the Fourth Form.

What about the teachers? Here the balance shifts in favour of the weekly writers. DFB tells us next to nothing about the staff at Maudsley GS. Miss Margaret Hale is the kindly headmistress; but who else do we know?

But we learn a good deal about the staff at Morcove and Cliff House. When that arrogant pupil Gail Greeves Gregory attempts a putsch ("She Meant to Rule Cliff House") we share the thoughts of the austere Miss Bullivant and the approachable Miss Charmant; at Morcove we fear the forbidding Miss Massingham and share the problems of Miss Everard and her young sister.

* * * * *

Another major difference between DFB and her rivals is the little matter of wrongdoing. There are virtually no villains in DFB; the nearest is the malicious gossip Joan Moss in the 1930 story "The School for Scandal" - and she reforms in the end. Everyone else at Maudsley acts with the best of intentions, even though this often leads to misunderstandings and quarrels. In literature, vice is usually much more interesting than virtue, and it is a tribute to DFB's skill that she makes all her well-meaning girls so convincing.

Villainy abounded, however, at the boarding-schools. The dishonest sneak Ursula Wade appeared in the second instalment of Morcove in February 1921, and continued in her evil ways to the very end in 1938. Why ever was she not expelled? And Diana Forbes, Cora Grandways, Theresa Tempest, Audrey Blain, Hetty Curzon all set a consistent standard of appalling behaviour.

Cliff House too could match this black record. Barbara Redfern was the school's heroine - but she had a deceitful cousin, the inappropriately-named Faith Ashton. There were also Marcia Loftus, Leatrice Storm, Connie Jackson, Sarah Harrigan, Lydia Crossendale, Glenda Maine. One girl - Diana Royston-Clarke - was so bizarre in her iniquity that she was an obvious candidate for psychiatric treatment. And then there was Thelma Warrington, "The Mischief-Maker of Cliff House", a miscreant with a gallantry and charm which compelled a reluctant admiration.

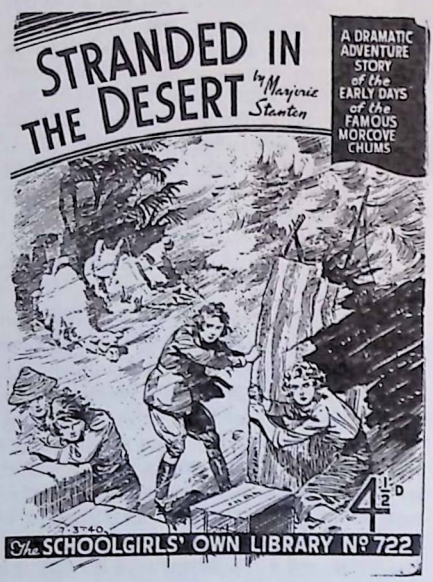
* * * * *

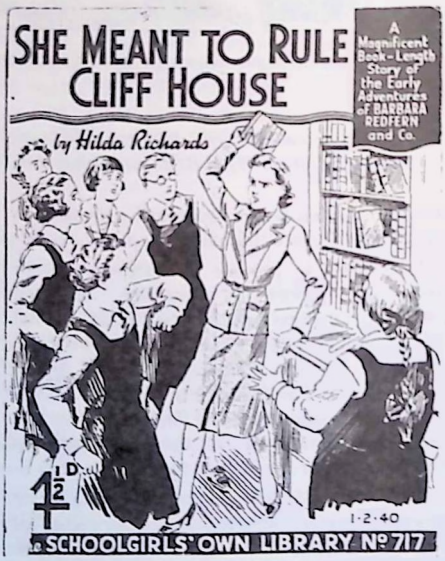
There is one last difference to note. What happened to all these girls in later life? "Marjorie Stanton" and "Hilda Richards" are silent - partly because their stories were brought to a premature end. Horace Phillips, much to his regret, was told in 1938 that there would be no more Morcove stories. As he wrote to Elizabeth Blenman: "If you are going to miss Betty Barton & Co, then how much more am I likely to miss them!" And the outbreak of war killed off Barbara Redfern's set.

Only Dorita Fairlie Bruce was able to carry on writing until 1961. She provided two glimpses of Maudsley girls grown up. In "Toby at Tibbs Cross" (1942) the prefect Charity Sheringham is "doing her bit" for the war effort, running a farm in Sussex. And in "Nancy Calls the Tune" (1944) that engagingly independent girl has graduated from the Royal College of Organists and has taken up an appointment at the kirk in "Easterbraes" (Blairgowrie). She marries her Minister, Revd. Angus Macrae - and Charity weds Miles Haydon, a veteran of Dunkirk.

* * * * *

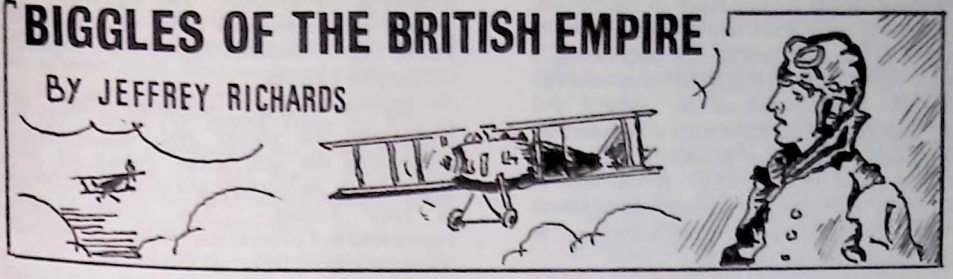
Which kind of story is more satisfying - the fast paced, inventive weekly instalments of the Amalgamated Press writers, or the more considered, in-depth works of the novelist? Both contribute greatly to our enjoyment, and I pay equal allegiance to Horace Phillips, Dorita Fairlie Bruce, and John Wheway.





BIGGLES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BY JEFFREY RICHARDS



This article is based on a talk originally give at the Oxford University Commonwealth Seminar in 1992. We are grateful to Linda Shaughnessy of A.P. Watt for permission to quote from the Biggles books.

Popular fiction is one of the ways in which society instructs its members in its prevailing ideas and more, its dominant role models and legitimate aspirations. It both reflects popular attitudes, ideas and preconceptions and it generates support for selected views and opinions. So it can act - sometimes simultaneously - as a form of social control, directing the popular will towards certain viewpoints and attributes deemed desirable by those controlling the production of popular fiction, and as a mirror of widely-held popular views. There is a two-way reciprocal relationship between producers and consumers. The consumers, by what they buy, tell the producers what they want. The producers, aiming to maximise profit, seek to avoid controversy by dramatizing what they perceive as the dominant ideas and headline topics of the day.

Popular fiction is selective in what it chooses to show. It provides images of society, constructed of selected elements and aspects of real life, organized into a coherent pattern governed by a set of underlying presuppositions. The process of selection confers status on issues, institutions and individuals which regularly appear in a favourable light. It legitimizes, glamorizes and romanticises particular mindsets. Generic literature, relying as it does on the regular re-use of the same elements, characters and situations, functions as a ritual, cementing the ideas and beliefs of society, enforcing social norms and exposing, labelling and isolating social deviants. As Joan Rockwell has written: 'Fiction is a social product but it also 'produces' society... It plays a large part in the socialization of infants, in the conduct of politics, and in general gives symbols and modes of life to the population, particularly in those less-easily defined areas such as norms, values and personal and inter-personal behaviour'.

Popular fiction has been peculiarly potent because it feeds the imaginative life of the reader, and thus may have more immediate, more emotional and arguably longer-lasting impact than any number of school lessons, political speeches or church sermons. It provides a sediment in the mind, which it requires a conscious intellectual effort to erase. Since the majority of people are not intellectuals, it follows that only a minority will for a variety of reasons make this effort.

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth imperialism was the dominant national ideology, transcending class and party divisions. Britain was saturated in the ethos and attitudes of empire, its nature and impact charted in the many volumes of the series *Studies in Imperialism* edited by my college John MacKenzie. Popular imperialism comprised, in MacKenzie's words, an ideological cluster in which empire, crown, race, armed forces and nation became synonymous. Linked to this was a definition of masculinity which combined sportsmanship, chivalry and patriotism. These ideas inspired an entire school of literature. This school has been rescued from the comparative obscurity into which it was thrust by largely left-wing Little Englander Eng. Lit. intellectuals by Martin Green who in his pioneering work *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (London, 1980), established a 'great tradition' of adventure, robust, masculine and direct, as opposed to the essentially feminine, delicate and refined 'great tradition' of F.R. Leavis. Counterpointing Leavis's choice of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and D.H. Lawrence, Green selects Daniel Defoe, Walter Scott, Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. The countervailing images speak for themselves. Put very simply, it is the primacy of action as opposed to the primary of feelings, and moreover action which is frequently imperially-based as opposed to specifically England-based. It exalts the warrior-explorer-engineer-administrator imperial paladin at the expense of the sensitive provincial spinster. Green sees the writers of his 'great tradition' and a host of minor writers in the same vein energizing and validating the myth of empire as a vehicle for excitement, adventure and wish-fulfilment through action. Juvenile literature operates on the lower slopes of this Parnassus of adventure, and was

therefore steeped in every aspect of imperialism. It functions not just as a mirror of the age but an active agency constructing and perpetuating a view of the world in which British imperialism was an integral part of the cultural and psychological formation of each new generation of readers. The aim of juvenile literature was clearly stated for a century. It was both to entertain and to instruct, to inculcate approved value systems, to spread useful knowledge, to provide acceptable role models.

The world of adventure is a world that is ageless, changeless and timeless. It is a world of secret missions and narrow escapes, breathless encounters and desperate journeys, fierce fights and dramatic rescues pitting the hero against wild animals, powerful human opponents and the forces of nature. The young reader is carried along on a whirlwind of action. He is not preached at or talked down to. But he inevitably absorbs along with rich dollops of action the underlying ethic, that this adventure is the testing ground for character where the young British boy fulfils his destiny to become what the philosopher George Santayana significantly called 'the schoolboy master of the world'.

The form of manliness promoted in boys' fiction remained constant - it was chivalry : one of the key cultural and ideological themes in 19th century thought. It was deliberately promoted by leading figures of the age to produce a ruling elite both for the nation and the empire, inspired by noble and selfless ideals, and to propagate in the whole male population a common code of manliness that would counteract the Regency definition of manliness which involved physical prowess, courage and endurance but also celebrated drinking, gambling and brutality. The image of the gentleman was reformulated as a latter-day version of the medieval knight, the embodiment of the virtues of bravery, loyalty and courtesy, modesty, purity and honour, and endowed with a sense of *noblesse oblige* towards women, children and social inferiors. By the middle of the 19th century the language and imagery of chivalry had been too far absorbed into the fabric of Victorian life and thought that it was automatic to see the gentleman, the hero and the soldier exclusively in terms of the medieval paladin.

Dedicated imperialists invested their empire with chivalric imagery. Queen Victorian inaugurated orders of knighthood for her imperial servants, the Order of the Indian Empire, the Order of the Star of India, the Royal Victorian Order. [In 1917 the Order of the British Empire was founded.] The Primrose league used chivalric designations for its various levels of membership. Baden-Powell originally planned to call the Scouts 'Young Knights of the Empire' and constantly invoked chivalric imagery in his writings. The organization to promote greater imperial unity was called The Round Table. Imperial heroes were regularly compared to knights.

But if chivalry remained firm and unchanging, the empire and the nature of imperialism did not. The nature of both changed over the century and this was reflected in boys' fiction. The evangelicalism, commercial and cultural imperialism of the mid-Victorian period, 'informal imperialism' as it is sometimes called, characterized the work of the most popular mid-century writers like R.M. Ballantyne and W.H.C. Kingston, whose novels dramatized trade, emigration, exploration, missionary work and maritime activity. But in the last decades of the 19th century they were eclipsed by writers like G.A. Henty and Gordon Stables as the evangelical impulse became secularized and fed into full-blown imperialism, which became in many ways a substitute religion blended of the Protestant work-ethic and the public school code. The Empire was equated with military expansion and aggression and the army moved to the centre of the mythology. This changed again after World War One, which was the culmination of that phase of imperialism, and the Empire after the war was promoted as a bulwark of peace, geared to the maintenance of the rule of law and the enlightened and equitable administration of colonies and protectorates and League of Nations mandated territories. Empire now emphasized commercial development (as seen in the Wembley Empire Exhibition and the establishment of the Empire Marketing Board) and the mass communications of 'nation speaking peace unto nation', expressed in the Empire service of the BBC and the development of Imperial Airways. It is the latter which gives us the link to W.E. Johns, who was in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, to juvenile literature what R.M. Ballantyne and G.A. Henty had been to previous generations, and whose centenary is being celebrated this year.

The air, airmen and airways were the key themes of the interwar years. 'Airmindedness' was the term current in the period, first coined in 1928 according to OED (Cunningham 167). And as Valentine Cunningham tells us in his magisterial survey of 1930s literature, 'Never before (or since) have poetry and the novel been so obsessed by the action, the clutter, the machinery, the terminology, the termini of travelling by air'. Heroism continued to attach to World War One flyers who had been spared the terrestrial hell of the trenches and no-man's land and had soared above it all fighting chivalric duels with gallant opponents. Flyers male and female were the heroes of the interwar period: Charles A. Lindbergh, Amy Johnson, Amelia Earhart, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. The air appealed to Right and Left: in H.G. Wells' *Things to Come* the airmen are the

saviours of the war torn world regressing to barbarism ('Wings Over the World'): the Communist poet Christopher Caudwell, killed in the Spanish Civil War, wrote air novels under his real name Christopher St. John Sprigg; on the other hand the British Union of Fascists started its own flying clubs and promoted flying in its magazines, and Rex Warner in his novel *The Aerodrome* saw and feared the airmen as the vanguard of a Fascist take-over.

The air and speed - not just airplanes but motorbikes and racing cars - were synonymous with modernity. It is no coincidence that Johns wrote his air stories for the magazine *Modern Boy*. The cinema was the other prime symbol of the modern age - "airmindedness and film-mindedness" were linked by the report of the Commission on Educational and Cultural films in 1932 - and cinemas were full of films of flying from *Hell's Angels* and *Wings* to *Air Mail*, *The Dawn Patrol* and *Only Angels Have Wings*.

The publishers' blurb for Johns' 30s novels read: 'It is only natural that the boy of today should look upward for his ideal hero. Blackbeard and his pirates, Dick Turpin, Robin Hood and Buffalo Bill - these may still stir his imagination but in his heart he knows that they belong to the past. Galleons, quarterstaffs and tomahawks have been relegated to the museums. But the aeroplane is a thing of the present; it offers to the modern adventurer his greatest opportunity; and Biggles, with his courage, his audacity, his resourcefulness, symbolizes the spirit of the new age'. Fascinatingly many of the elements that Cunningham identifies as characteristics of modern literature in the Thirties are to be found in Johns: concern with borders and thresholds, mountains, flying, youth, all-male groups, the use of schoolboy slang, the sun, figure throughout Johns' work. Although he doesn't go in for the heroization of the proletarian, he does conspicuously include an indisputable proletarian, Ginger Hebblethwaite, son of a Durham miner, among the chums as protégé of Biggles. But Johns is not putting his services at the cause of the Left like much of 'highbrow' or 'serious' literature.

The crucial factor about Johns' work is that within this world of flying and the trappings of modernity he was giving a new lease of life to imperial sentiment in the postwar world. Although Captain was a title he awarded himself, he never actually rose above Flying Officer. But he was one of a host of World War One serving officers who transmuted their experiences into heroic fiction, often in the imperial context, in the interwar years. Captain Frank H. Shaw, Captain Oswald Dallas, Major Charles Gilson, Major Lionel Metford, Air Commodore L.E.O. Charlton, Lt.Col. F.S. Brereton and Admiral Lord Mountevans, among them.

The early years of the Empire and in particular the mid-Victorian period had been dominated by the Navy and naval heroism, notably the work of Captain Marryat, W.H.G. Kingston and R.M. Ballantyne. The last decades of the century had seen the Army move centre stage in the work of Henty, Stables and Manville Fenn. After World War One, aerial heroes took over from the military and naval ones. Lloyd George had called the young pilots of the Royal Flying Corps 'the cavalry of the clouds ... the knighthood of the war' just as Churchill was in World War Two to compare their R.A.F. successors to the knights of the Round Table and the Crusaders. The technological excitement of speed, the freedom provided by the air, the chivalric imagery all combined to receive instant mythologization in the work of the new generation of boys writers, notably W.E. Johns, Percy F. Westerman and George E. Rochester. The values running through the air stories are exactly those of the naval and military stories: manliness, patriotism, chivalry, service, sacrifice, comradeship and courage.

Johns made no secret of the didactic objective behind his writing, declaring: 'I teach a boy to be a man, for without that essential qualification he will never be anything. I teach sportsmanship according to the British idea... I teach that decent behaviour wins in the end as a natural order of things. I teach the spirit of teamwork, loyalty to the Crown, the Empire and to rightful authority.' He defined the basic principles of decent behaviour as 'courage, loyalty, fair play, knight errantry.' In promoting these ideals he locates himself squarely in the tradition of Henty.

If you look at many of the interwar novels, he is in fact cleverly refurbishing classic children's literature stories and genres within the air age. *Biggles Flies West* (1937), which in its serialized version was called *Biggles' Treasure Island*, is a reworking of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic, with Biggles and Co. taking off for the Caribbean in a flying boat to help 15 year old Dick Denver locate the treasure map left him by his father. There are several parallel episodes and several textual references to Stevenson's novel, with Biggles explicitly comparing himself to Captain Smollett, Dick to Jim Hawkins, Algy to Squire Trelawney and Ginger to Dr. Livesey. Biggles and Co. end up defending a stockade on Treasure Island, dressed in 18th century costume.

Biggles Flies North (1939) is a classic western (claim jumpers, gold theft, saloon confrontation, lynch mob), the kind of story usually about rival stagecoach lines but here about rival air freight companies significantly in the dominion of Canada rather than the USA, giving it an imperial dimension. The inspiration for *Biggles flies South* (1938) with its lost race

and hoard of jewels in underground caverns is Rider Haggard and specifically *King Solomon's Mines* and *Allan Quatermain*. Biggles and Co. join Kadar Alloui Bey, an Egyptian historian and archaeologist, in search of a lost Libyan oasis and the fate of the army of the Persian King Cambyses which vanished in the desert in 525 BC. They are captured by descendants of the lost army, who revere an ancient Gagool-type hag who protects the treasure in the tombs of the dead. Biggles is to be sacrificed to the sacred crocodile and is led out singing 'Rule Britannia' but succeeds in blowing up the crocodile and rescuing his chums, who escape with a store of uncut jewels.

Biggles Goes to War (1938) is Ruritanian romance, the genre founded by Anthony Hope in 1894 with *The Prisoner of Zenda*, which inspired a whole raft of mythical Balkan kingdoms. Johns' contribution is Maltovia, a small, peace loving kingdom threatened by a neighbour Lovitzna (backed by an unnamed great power, which is clearly - from internal evidence - Nazi Germany). Biggles and Co. are called in to organize an Air Force for Maltovia and become involved with the classic Ruritanian elements: beautiful princess, kidnapped statesman, ambitious general, remote hunting lodge, and characters who are precise analogues of Hope's Black Michael (General Bethstein), Princess Flavia (Princess Mariana), Col. Sapt (Count Stanhauser) and Fritz von Tarlenheim (Lt. Ludwig Stanhauser). Biggles and Co. bomb the main approach from Lovitzna, rescue the kidnapped Minister of Defence, foil a coup and organize the Maltovian Royal Air Force.

Biggles and Co. (1936) looks for its inspiration to Sapper and his stories of Bulldog Drummond, another former officer at a loose end during peacetime. Biggles and Co. are recruited to fly gold bullion shipments to the continent. The shipments are highjacked by crooks working for the German Government. Individual chapters are called 'First', 'Second' and 'Third Round', like Drummond's first adventures and encounters with his arch-enemy Carl Peterson, who is here transformed into Biggles' arch-enemy, Erich von Stalhein. The code under which our heroes operate is always chivalry.

The most obvious arena for demonstrations of chivalry is the war stories and chivalry can be seen in action both in World War One and World War Two. In *Biggles Flies East*, a story of First World War espionage in Palestine, Biggles shoots down a German pilot Leffens but lands to see if he is injured; 'The thought occurred to him that the German pilot might not have been killed outright and the idea of leaving a wounded man in the waterless desert filled him with horror'. Leffens is dead, but later when Biggles, posing as a German, is flying with a pilot Mayer and they are shot down by a British plane, Biggles insists on carrying the injured Mayer to safety. When the man Biggles is impersonating actually turns up, he goes to great lengths to get him away unharmed, for 'to murder a man in cold blood was unthinkable', although it was the obvious and most convenient thing to do. Biggles here first encounters the man who is to be his arch-enemy, Hauptmann Eric von Stalhein. Later he meets him again working for the German government in the 1930s, hijacking gold shipments, in *Biggles and Co.* Stalhein's men capture and prepare to shoot Ginger, when Biggles appeals to Stalhein's chivalry: 'We've fought in the past you and I, but we fought fair, even in the branch of the service we were once engaged (i.e. espionage) there were certain rules. Kill your man in a fight, yes, but even at war we did not murder unarmed men'. He urges him to halt the execution and 'I'll come down, unarmed, alone and discuss the position as between gentlemen', which is exactly what happens. The same mindset and code of conduct can be seen operating in World War Two, in for instance *Biggles Sweeps the Desert* in which parallel desert encounters to *Biggles Flies East* occur.

What of Biggles and the Empire? I have examined in detail the interwar adventures to set him in some sort of imperial context. The name of Biggles himself, Squadron Leader James 'Biggles' Bigglesworth, is said to be based on either real-life World War One ace, Air Commodore C.G. 'Wiggles' Wigglesworth or Air Commodore A.W. Bigsworth or a combination of the two. The actual World War One adventures and atmosphere are clearly based on those of Johns and his R.F.C. comrades. But what of Biggles' appearance? When I first began reading the books as a boy in the 1950s, I pictured Biggles as a tall, dark, clean-cut, square-jawed, keen-eyed, archetypal hero, and was surprised to learn that in the earliest stories he was rather different. He is described in the early story *First Time Up* as follows:

> There was nothing remarkable, or even martial, about his physique; on the contrary, he was slim, rather below average height, and delicate-looking. A wisp of fair hair protruded from one side of his rakishly titled R.F.C. cap; his eyes, now sparkling with pleasurable anticipation, were what is usually called hazel. His features were finely cut, but the squareness of his chin and the firm line of his mouth revealed a certain doggedness, a tenacity of purpose, that denied any suggestion of weakness. Only his hands were small and white, and might have been those of a girl.

Also he is capable of bursting into tears, as he does in *Biggles Flies East* when he realized

Algy is not dead as he had feared and in *Biggles-Air Commodore* when a young seaman, machine-gunned by the Japanese, dies in his arms.

Who can be the inspiration for this highly strung, undersized, fair-haired, delicate-featured hero? Who else but T.E. Lawrence, the most recent example of an imperial hero, and one who in the interwar years became an aircraftsman, under the names Ross and Shaw, and who was in fact first admitted to the RAF by W.E. Johns, then a recruiting officer, in 1922. (*Editor's Note*: Later on, however, Johns recorded that he had taken 'an instinctive dislike' to Lawrence. Nethertheless in his romantic novel *Desert Night* he makes extremely positive references to Lawrence.)

As for the fictional Biggles, he has a four-square imperial pedigree. Born in India in 1899, son of the Assistant Commissioner, United Provinces. He is the son of a service family (his uncle a Brigadier General; his elder brother Major Charles Bigglesworth of the Rifle Brigade was killed in action in 1918). He was educated at Malton Hall Public School where he underwent a Tom Brown style initiation into manhood - *Biggles Goes to School* (1951) has episodes clearly inspired by Thomas Hughes' classic. He joins the R.F.C. at age 17 and by the end of the war was a Major, a DSO and MC and an air ace. He had fallen in love with a Belgian girl Marie Janis, who turned out to be a German spy.

After the war, he is at a loose end and he and his chums are in search of adventure. Biggles' chums are his cousin Hon. Algy Lacey and Durham miner's son, Ginger Hebblethwaite; they are later joined in 1942 by monocled silly ass aristocrat Lord Bertie Lissie, who together make up the co. This all-male group is the classic imperial and public school fiction group. In the Greyfriars stories of Frank Richards, it is Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Banipur, the famous five, and their sidekick, the apparently "silly ass" Lord Mauleverer. In Sapper's Drummond stories, Captain Hugh Drummond D.S.O., M.C. of the Royal Loamshires, knocks about with a group including Peter Darrell, Toby Sinclair, Ted Jerningham and monocled silly ass Algy Longworth. In the *Sanders of the River* stories, Commissioner Sanders has two sidekicks, Captain Hamilton and Lt. Augustus 'Bones' Tibbetts, a monocled silly ass. Even in Haggard, Sir Henry Curtis goes on safari with grizzled old hunter Allan Quatermain and monocled silly ass Captain John Good R.N. The schoolboy gang becomes the all-male service unit in war and peace. Johns is the only writer to have an unambiguously working class member of this group in Ginger Hebblethwaite.

The context in which they function is frequently imperial. *Biggles Flies Again* (1934), a collection of short stories, demonstrates this. Biggles, Algy and Sergeant Smyth, their mechanic, hire out their services to various concerns all round the world and we see a world of commercial exploitation in which the British Alluvial Company is panning for gold in New Guinea, the Oil Investment Company is seeking oil in British Guiana, the British run Nile and North African Aviation Company is transporting freight in North Africa. It is also a world in which Britain is acting as a global policeman, with British naval patrols pursuing Chinese pirates in the Indian Ocean and Arab drug-smugglers in the Red Sea, while Biggles and Co., acting as freelances, rescue the kidnapped daughter of the Bolivian president from bandits. The stories incidentally also highlight the diaspora of Great War pilots throughout the Empire in the interwar years: Sandy Wyndham runs a coconut plantation in Tonga, Pat O'Neilson is working for British intelligence in India, 'Wilks' Wilkinson is a pilot instructor with the Bolivian air force but later founds his own air freight company, Arctic Airlines in Northern Canada in *Biggles Flies North*; Colonel Grivin is running the Nile and North African Aviation Company. The English are everywhere, as neatly demonstrated in one story in which our heroes make a forced landing in the middle of the Burmese forest, encounter centipedes, crocodiles, leeches and a giant python, reducing them to the edge of terror, at which point an Englishman in full evening dress emerges from the trees, to claim the python as a pet and conduct them to his nearby plantation.

Why do Biggles and Co. take up the adventures they do: partly for excitement and something to do in the way of wartime officers who find peacetime boring (Bulldog Drummond being a classic example and, after World War Two, Dick Barton); partly out of a sense of chivalry and national decency (Biggles explains why he undertakes to help set up the Maltovian Air Force; 'We are doing it because there is in us, as there is in most Englishmen, a love of justice, a sense of right and wrong, and sympathy for the underdog'); but also partly out of a sense of duty to the Empire. The question of imperial defence was clearly in Johns' mind and features in two interwar stories. *The Black Peril* (1935), which might more appropriately have been called *The Red Peril*, is effectively Johns' reworking and updating of Erskine Childers' classic novel *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) in which two Edwardian yachtsmen uncover a plan for a German invasion by barge across the North Sea. In this story, Biggles, Algy and Ginger (making his first appearance) uncover a Russian plot to invade England across the North Sea by flying boat, and succeed in foiling it. *While Biggles-Air Commodore* (1937)

centres on Biggles, seconded to the RAF with the temporary rank of Air Commodore, called in to solve the problem of an unnamed foreign power which is sinking British cargo ships carrying munitions and airplanes to Singapore, Shanghai and Australia, to reinforce imperial defences. The unnamed foreign power is clearly Japan - since their agents have yellow faces and come from "islands in the China Sea". Biggles and Co. succeed in tracking down and destroying the enemy base. After they return home, there is discussion of a reward and Biggles comments: 'You've got something better than that. Your name is down on the Imperial Archives for having rendered the state a signal service, and one day that may stand you in very good stead. When you've worked for the government for as long as I have, you'll know that virtue is expected to be its own reward'. Even *Biggles in Spain*, which plunges Biggles and Co. into the Spanish Civil War, has an imperial element. The central running theme - what Hitchcock called 'the maguffin' - is that Biggles and Co. are entrusted with a secret document for the Foreign Office by a British agent who tells them 'It doesn't matter about me but the paper has to go. It may mean life or death to the Empire. It's as important as that'. Both sides try to get hold of this document but Biggles eventually gets it safely to London. We never learn what it is but Biggles says: 'It's just because any Britisher would do what we've done that the old Empire goes on. I've done what I set out to do'.

When discussing Johns' work, it is impossible to avoid the question of race and racial attitudes. Since the 1960s Johns has been the object of increasingly vociferous attacks, library bans and censorship on the grounds of racism, sexism and violence. The two latter charges can be easily dismissed. There is comparatively little violence in Johns, certainly by comparison with the ultra-violent films and comics to which children are exposed today. A swift upper cut to the jaw is usually the extent of the violence or an aerial machine gun duel - though there are a few exceptions. As to sexism, boys' books in Johns's era simply did not include girls and certainly not sexual encounters. Johns complained that his editors eliminated some elements of World War One realism - girlfriends, drinking and swearing - from his early stories. Johns did include adolescent crushes on girls for Ginger and the early unhappy love affair of Biggles, and he created an entire series about a female Biggles, Worrals of the WAAF. (*Editors Note:* Worrals can be seen as an early feminist role-model.)

The question of racism is the most serious. One of the most ferocious - but not untypical - attacks is by Bob Dixon in *Catching Them Young*, which is a systematic attack on most pre 1960s children's literature as racist, sexist and fascist. He gets particularly hot under the collar about Biggles, thundering:

"The characters are wretched stereotypes: Biggles (the racist whom the reader's meant to identify with...) is the calm, unruffled hero joking grimly in the face of danger; Bertie is one of the 'monocled ass' variety; while the others are caricatures... The villain is ritually reduced to sub-human status. This process nearly always includes racial elements and has the purpose of making it easier for the reader to accept whatever happens to him. Johns' fixation on race is quite abnormal." And he goes on to cite examples from half a dozen books of racial attitudes.

This is taken up by Johns' biographers Piers Williams and Peter Berresford Ellis who admit that the racism question is crucial and also that "there are some racist remarks and comments - but they are scattered pretty thinly. A handful of books are the culprits; in most of the tales there is nothing to object to at all. The critics who have judged the series adversely seem to have done so on very little reading and highly selective quotations. If Johns' work is to be assessed responsibly, it should be remembered that the books were written over a period of thirty-six years, times of tremendous political and social changes. Johns' stories should be seen in relation to the events of the day and the attitudes prevalent when they were written."

They go on to point to attacks on exploitative imperialism in *Biggles in the South Seas* and *Biggles and the Leopards of Zinn* (1960) and to the fact that in the unfinished book he was working on at the time of his death Johns introduced a 'half caste Indian' as Biggles' friend and successor - designate as head of the Air Police. They also tackle Dixon's claim that he has a large number of half-caste villains by pointing to 6 in the 15 adventure tales of the 1930s and 1940s but only 2 in the 82 tales in 1950s and 1960s, as compared to 31 British, 12 German, 11 American and 33 'assorted miscreants'.

In fact both sides protest too much and both are playing 'the political correctness' game and implicitly endorsing that intellectual dogma which is a denial of scholarship...

As the great Russian medievalist Aron Gurevich writes: 'One of the principles of historical analysis is that each period and civilization must be judged by its own standards and we must not apply our own values or inappropriate criteria to other ages. This is especially important when we are faced with problems of historical psychology'. The job of the historian is to seek to explain and understand the past and not to sit in judgement on it. 'The past is another country. They do things differently there', as L.P. Hartley memorably said.

Let us look at the subject dispassionately. Biggles' own creed was 'While men are decent to me I try to be decent to them, regardless of race, colour, politics, creed or anything else'. However there is no doubt that Johns and therefore Biggles were racists - but then so was almost everyone else then. Johns was not 'abnormally fixated on race'. He merely shared the views and prejudices of contemporaries. Williams and Ellis are right about that but on the other hand in seeking to apologize for or explain away imperialism are also becoming trapped in the p.c. business. Imperialism was the dominant ideology in Britain from the 1850s to the 1950s; virtually all the most popular fiction of the period was steeped in imperialism and imperial assumptions. People made no distinction between nation and empire: the two were interchangeable. The fact that Johns attacked some aspects of imperialism is no more remarkable than that G.A. Henty did so. But both began from a position of belief in the innate superiority of the British and the concept of a worldwide responsibility for the maintenance of law, order, justice and fairplay; Biggles and Co. did this as freelances between the wars, under arms in World Wars One and Two and in the Special Air Police after the war.

The superiority of the British implied the inferiority of everyone else and there is abundant evidence of this assumption in what one might call the casual racism. There are many throwaway references to other races, European and non-European: 'His eyes moistened with shame, as only those of a Latin can' (*Biggles Fails to Return*); 'It doesn't take much to get a Greek excited' (*Biggles in Spain*); 'a typical German of the military type, brutal by nature and a bully to those who were not in a position to retaliate' (*Biggles Flies East*); 'as cunning as only an Oriental can be' (*Biggles in the Orient*). The term 'nigger' is used throughout the interwar adventures to describe coloured races: in *Biggles-Air Commodore* Ginger seeing leering yellow faces in the jungle exclaims: 'Niggers! Savages!', in *Biggles Flies Again*, debating what to do with the flying boat, Ginger suggests flippantly 'Joyrides for niggers'. As a variant on nigger, Biggles in *Biggles-Air Commodore* urges; 'Keep your eyes skinned for wogs' and Johns adds a helpful footnote 'Wog - RAF slang for natives, normally Arabs'.

Biggles in Africa (1936), the perfect opportunity to study Biggles racial attitudes in the classic imperial setting, has Biggles and Co. hired by a Birmingham motor-cycle magnate to find his son, lost on a solo flight from London to Capetown. Biggles and Co. follow the Imperial Airways route and eventually rescue Harry Marton, who is being held prisoner by a gang of drug smugglers led by a renegade French pilot and a Greek entrepreneur.

The Africans, referred to throughout as 'niggers' or 'savages', are in the pay of the crooks and are given short shrift. Biggles deals with them as briskly as Sanders of the River.

Encountering some Africans when he and his chums are attempting to make off with the villains' plane, Biggles rejects their demands to leave it alone:

> Biggle's eyes glinted and his lips came together in a tight line. 'You insolent rascal; you talk to me like that and I'll thrash the skin off your back. Be off, and sharp's the word.'
>
> The savage did not move a muscle.
>
> 'Did you hear me?' cried Biggles, in a voice that cut through the air like the crack of a whip.
>
> The savage stood his ground. He did not answer, but some of the others began to mutter amongst themselves.
>
> 'Give me that rifle, Ginger' ordered Biggles quickly.
>
> Ginger leapt out and put the weapon in Biggle's hands.
>
> 'Now!' snapped Biggles. 'Perhaps you've heard it said that Englishmen always keep their words. Think hard on that, because in one minute by my watch, I'm going to shoot at any one I see within spear-throw.'
>
> Some of the savages began to back away instantly, while the leader, clearly torn by indecision, looked at them and the white men in turn. Finally, finding himself alone, he turned and followed the others in the slow, insolent, provocative manner sometimes employed by small children when made to do something against their will.
>
> Biggle's eyes narrowed, 'You cheeky swine' he snarled, and throwing up the rifle, sent a shot whistling in the direction of the cause of his ire. The natives' post of indifference disappeared in a flash. Bending low and zigzagging like a snipe, he ran for his life until he disappeared from view behind a slight rise in the ground a quarter of a mile away?

On the other hand, the African under British leadership is capable of good things. Biggles and Co. are about to be executed when 'Out of the darkness into the ruddy glow of the fire marched a line of uniformed men. They were black but [and note the but] they walked smartly, with military precision, and at their head in khaki drill tunic shorts, and a topee strode a white man with a walking stick in his hands.' [It is Captain Collison of the King's

African Rifles to the rescue. The sentence says it all.]

But even worse for Johns are undoubtedly half-castes, a view in line with much imperial literature and many films of the time. Biggles explains his view of half-castes to Dick Denver when they arrived in a Central American port in *Biggles Flies West* (p.78):

'The more native blood white people get into their system the more they delight in letting people like ourselves see that they are as good as we are.' 'Aren't these people white?' asked Dick, in a rather surprised tone. 'About one in a hundred are pure white' returned Biggles, as he prepared to follow that boat. 'It's the same in all these Central American towns. After the great days of Spanish colonization were over in these parts the settlers seemed to go to pieces, and now they are so mixed up with the natives and the negroes, who were originally imported from Africa as slaves, that it's hard to tell which are white, which are half and half, and which are natives. Most of them are a mixture of the lot, as you can see from the colour of their skins, which can be any shade between black and white.'

Half-castes are certainly prominent among the villains of the adventure tales. The villain of *Biggles Flies West*, the Long John Silver equivalent though infinitely less attractive, is a hulking animalistic half-caste called Deutsch, whose gang include Frisco Jack, a New York gangster, Harvey, a drunken Englishman and Martinez - 'a nigger' and the 'slimiest thug who walks on two legs'. Deutsch is described as follows:

> In stature he was short, but broad, and obviously of great physical strength, an impression that was emphasized by arms that hung nearly down to his knees, like those of a gorilla. Indeed, he was not unlike a great ape, for the backs of his hands ... were covered with downy red hair. His face, like his body, was short and broad, with a wide, thin-lipped mouth that was not improved by a large, semi-circular scar'. He also had eyes 'that slanted upwards at the ends in a manner that suggested remote Oriental ancestry'.

So here we have a part Oriental gorilla called not coincidentally perhaps Deutsch (German), who had been first mate on Dick's father's ship and now tries to obtain the treasure.

In *Biggles in Africa* the most prominent villain and one who makes several attempts on their lives is Luke Sarda, 'clearly a half-breed'...

Then in *Biggles Flies South*, there is Fuad Zarwan, a fat middle-aged half-caste, who supplies liquor to the natives and seeks to sabotage the expedition. He is treated with contempt by the heroes. 'Why didn't you knock the oily-faced hog into the road?' asked Algy. He employs Tuaregs against them ('black devils' according to Biggles; 'ignorant savages' according to Algy). They are captured by the lost race ('pigfaced Persians' Ginger calls them; 'ignorant savages' according to Johns)...

But against this Johns is able to make fun of racial assumptions, as in *Biggles Flies Again*, when Biggles picks up a Chinese man in the sea, Algy says: 'he's a chink';

'Well, we can't help that' says Biggles.

'Speakee English, eh' he enquired.

'Not that sort', replied the exhausted man in a cultured voice, 'I was at Oxford.' It is in fact the notorious pirate Li Chi who subsequently outwits Biggles; but in a later story *Biggles Delivers the Goods* (1946) Biggles and Li Chi join forces to fight the Japanese in Malay. Li Chi is an example of a good foreigner, so too is Kadar Alloui Bey, the erudite Egyptian archaeologist and historian whom they assist in *Biggles Flies South*. There are even good half-castes, like Prince Lalla, half caste son of the English planter Major Marling and his Indian princess wife, who is portrayed in the most dashing and romantic terms and eventually joins the RAF. Biggles' designated successor in the Air Police was eventually to be a "half-caste Indian."

Clearly Johns' attitudes do not remain static. *The Boy Biggles* (1968) shows Biggles learning his courage, coolheadedness and leadership qualities in India as a boy. It also emphasizes his sense of responsibility as he goes hunting for a tiger, crocodile, bear, leopard, buffalo, panther, mad dog, in each case an animal menacing an Indian community or an individual, for as Johns makes clear: 'He never went hunting for sport, or for the 'pot'. The idea of killing something simply to put its stuffed body in a glass case made no appeal to him. He realized that everything had the right to live.' The boy Biggles is also on 'the friendliest terms with the Indians he knew, no matter what their caste might be'; speaks Urdu and Hindi; has a best friend, the Indian boy Habu Din, whose life he saves on several occasions. He reprimands an American biologist for declaring of a village headman: 'He's only an ignorant native', 'These people may be ignorant according to university standards but they know all there is to know about conditions where they live; and that's as much as they need to know for their own good, which is more than can be said for some white men'.

It is worth noting that in *Biggles and the Black Raider* (1953), the word 'nigger' nowhere appears. It does however take a strong line on African revolutionaries. Biggles of the Air Police is assigned to hunt down Cetezulu, the self-styled King, Lord or Emperor of Africa. This African raider has adopted a name that is a combination of Cetewayo and Dinizulu, the two

great Zulu leaders, claims descent from Charka (Shaka) and he wears Zulu warrior's dress. His 'avowed intention is to make himself master of Africa' says Air Commodore Raymond, 'In that respect he may be genuine. Dictatorship has become a sort of epidemic. The world is full of people who think they were born to run, first their own country, then the continent, and ultimately no doubt, the universe. Here we have a black man bitten by this bug'. Later he adds: 'It is said he is forcing men to join him - black men, of course, holding out the promise of a black African empire for the Africans'. But as the book makes it clear this political agenda merely masks 'a career of wholesale murder and robbery', as he moves across Africa through different colonial territories plundering, murdering and burning indiscriminately, whites and blacks alike. 'He has killed hundreds of Indian traders and labourers. He seems particularly to hate them' - a hint of black racism here.

Biggles in the South Seas - a story with elements of Ballantyne's *Coral Island* - demonstrates the kind of paternalistic imperialism Johns advocated. Biggles and Co. fly to the South Seas to help Sandy Macaster, one of Biggles World War One squadron, to dive for pearls. They are helped throughout by two Polynesian natives, Shellbreaker and Full Moon, who are cheerful, amiable, resourceful and who are almost the leading characters. Full Moon saves Ginger's life and he falls for her. Biggles and Co. intervene to save them from ill-treatment. Their enemy is 'a dirty little Corsican' 'a crooked foul-mouthed swine', Louis Castanelli, with a crew of 8 native boys who had 'all done time in Australia for cannibalism'. They trade in spirits to the natives (which is illegal), use kidnapping and murder to get the pearls. Sandy laments the dimunition of the island population by illness: 'A hundred years ago there were more than ten thousand people on this island; now there aren't more than two hundred. The rest have died from the diseases white men have brought, like consumption or from leprosy bought by the Chinese. A few years more and all the natives will be gone; a tragedy for they are just big loveable children'. He also laments the corruption of the natives with worthless western trinkets. So there is a kind of sentimental concern, an opposition to cruelty and Europeanization but at the same time the whites are still exploiting the pearls.

Conclusion

Although I have concentrated on the interwar novels, there can be little doubt that in the 96 books published between 1932 and 1970 featuring Biggles and Co. the core values remained consistent. The stories are structured on manliness, sportsmanship, teamwork, courage, fair play, knight errantry, and loyalty to Crown, Empire and rightful authority. What is more this appealed to successive generations of boys all over the world, so much so that as late as 1964 the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook reported that Biggles was the most popular hero in the world to schoolboys.

Editor's Note: The question of which real-life hero may, or may not, have inspired the creation of Biggles will probably - like the exact location of 'Just William's' village - remain forever unresolved and open to speculation. Jennifer Schofield (who, as 'Piers Williams', co-authored the biography of W.E. Johns) takes the view that Biggles was Johns' attempt at a fictional embodiment of the many flying-heroes of the R.F.C. and the R.A.F. during the First World War. Certainly, whether right or wrong, Jeffrey Richards' linking of Biggles and T.E. Lawrence caused much interest in the media and amongst fans during Captain Johns' Centenary Year (1992).

Seasonal Greetings to all readers.

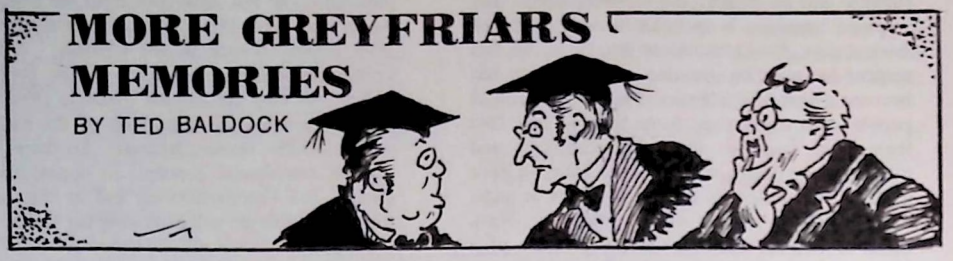
MAURICE KING
27 CELTIC CRESCENT, DORCHESTER, DORSET, DT1 2TG

* *

Season's Greetings everyone. Still collecting Schoolgirls' Own Libraries, Rupert, Biggles, Zane Grey.

GEORGE SEWELL
27 HUMBERSTONE ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 13D

* *



DREAM

At the dead of the night a sweet vision I saw,
And thrice ere the morning I dreamt it again.

Campbell. Soldiers Dream

A windswept hill, a country lane,
The river flowing swift,
We're back at Greyfriars once again
Oh, how our spirits lift.
The grey old pile is standing yet,
The elms sway as of yore,
A hundred things we won't forget
A host of memories more.
The years may pass and cramp our style
We feel a twinge or so,
No more can we complete the 'mile'
Old time has made us slow.
An angular shade goes drifting by
An eye gleams in the dusk,
There comes the echo of a sigh
My 'prep' is good I trust!
There are so many memories here
Each form-room has its tale
They all return so crystal clear
Long may the dream prevail.
The summer suns of other years
Here shine for us once more,
The echoes and the laughter ring
Long silent voices rise and sing,
The panoply of things long gone,
Before you pass, pause, shadowy throng,
Then quietly fade .....

RED LETTER DAYS

Study feasts. 'Spreads' in the dormitory after lights out. Surreptitious parties in the box-room at the end of the Remove passage. Picnics on Poppers Island and along the river. Buns and ginger beer at Uncle Cleggs in Friardale. 'High Teas' at certain favourite venues within cycling distance of the school. These have always been a *leit motiv* in the Greyfriars sage. Chunkleys of Courtfield holds a very special niche in the 'feasting' hierarchy, and there is a slightly lesser yet still popular port of call for Greyfriars 'men' at Lantham: the not inglorious Pagoda Tea

Rooms - scene of some splendid spreads in the past.

The Pagoda, although having no pretension of being as opulent as Messrs Chunkleys restaurant, is still very well patronised by Greyfriars fellows. A longish cycle run from the school, it is a favourite *rendezvous* for Harry Wharton and Co. - when they are in funds. The manageress, a buxom lady with a shrewd eye to business, softens considerably when she observes them in the offing, being assured of a good round 'order' especially if they are accompanied, as they frequently are, by a rotund figure in large round spectacles.

A table in close proximity to the fire on a cold January day after a long cycle ride presents a desirable haven of warmth and rest, with the immediate and jolly prospect of toasted muffins followed by a cake and other sundry delicacies. Needless to record all these preparations put William George Bunter in a most expansive and cheery humour. Silent now the groans and mumbles concerning aching legs and the awful prospect of the long grind home. The Owl, perhaps not unwisely, lives for the pleasures of the moment and the enjoyment thereof. A selfish attitude possibly, yet not a terribly bad one. His spectacles gleam with appreciation and anticipation at the appearance of the muffins.

"I say you fellows, this is prime. I say, pass the raspberry jam, will you, Bob old fellow." Bunter is in his element. There are certain moments in life when everything seems to fall into place; glorious moments, and this is one of them. This is no *ignis fatuus* - this is the real thing. Those muffins are as substantial as the Pagoda itself and the Owl is duly grateful.

Indeed the Famous Five are well satisfied. Appetites stimulated by the long grind up-hill and down-dale are about to be appeased.

The muffins vanished it seemed in a trice and a fresh supply was called for. The group exuded contented *bon homie*, which appeared to extend itself to the busy waitress who was kept in constant motion supplying the feast. Supplying Billy Bunter and five other hungry fellows was no mean task, and that particular waitress was justified in feeling that she was really earning her salary, as well as the substantial tip which she knew from past experience would be left at the end of the feast.

For the juniors, this was one of life's pleasant moments, a sunlit oasis in their school routine. Mr. Quelch was far away at Greyfriars. Even his gimlet eye, piercing though it was, could not penetrate ten miles or so of countryside. Unwritten impositions were for the blissful moment banished from the mind. High tea was the order of the day, dismissing all problems. Muffins and cake, jam rolls and biscuits ruled the immediate present. Bunter, of course, was supremely happy. Everything in the garden, or rather the pagoda, was perfect.

Moments of pure bliss are they
In Pagoda's cool retreat,
With no pre's to say us nay,
And tables laid complete.
Jellies, tarts, and rich plum cake,
With buns and ginger beer,
Oh, what feasting we must make
We'll manage, have no fear.
With Bunter's help we'll win the day,
The Owl won't let us down,
Yet when there is a bill to pay
He's no where to be found.

THE GYMNASIUM

Worthy fellows; and like to prove most sinewy.
Shakespeare. *All's Well that Ends Well*

Frequent reference has been made in the past to Greyfriars fellows repairing behind the Gym to settle differences in the time honoured British fashion. Seldom have we been privileged to enter that popular and well used amenity devoted to the arts of physical well-being.

The gymnasium at Greyfriars; a large, airy and well equipped building: the scene of much strenuous endeavour. A favourite and much used *rendezvous* by Harry Wharton and Co. and other fellows of a like persuasion. Johnny Bull - among others - may be seen daily performing girations with Indian clubs with great panache. The other members of the Co. are no less active with dumb-bells and wall-expanders, for this popular retreat is nothing if not well organised although it may not possess the sophisticated apparatus of many gymnasiums today.

Parallel bars, vaulting horses and wall-bars are in constant use, while the ropes suspended from the high rafters are under constant pressure from climbing 'fags' and other enthusiasts.

Boxing tournaments have long been a feature of life at Greyfriars although they have not figured prominently in the unfolding saga of the school. Each year as the time approaches for the competition great activity manifests itself in the Gym. Hopeful fellows may be observed energetically pursuing the exercises required as a preparation for boxing. All under the watchful eye of Mr. Lascelles, who sees that enthusiasm is kept within bounds. Although certain bruises and shadowy eyes are sometimes in evidence during the run-up to the contests, the competition is always voted a great success - especially by the fortunate visitors.

Prominent among those seeking fistic fame is - not un-naturally Horace Coker of the fifth form. Nature has bequeathed to Coker a fine and well developed physique. That ever munificent deity may have faltered and fallen a little short of generosity in dispensing intellect where the great Horace is concerned, but it has

certainly made handsome amends in matters muscular. It is an experience not to be missed to witness Coker pounding and punishing a punch-ball. Being Coker he quite often misses it altogether - and is suitably rewarded by the stinging recoil.

This means little to the rugged Horace as he thumps and drives with left and right as though his life depends upon its total annihilation, and possibly he may have a mental image of some rival or opponent. He could well be trying - and not so badly either - to emulate Don Quixote by attacking windmills, so incessant are his swings and hooks upon the bag. What Coker lacks in scientific pugilistic skills he makes good with wild and wonderful 'Hay-making' methods which, should they connect, would undoubtedly cause considerable damage. Happily when dealing with fellows of average boxing skills this very seldom occurs. Despite all his failings old Coker would be a very useful and comforting chap at one's side in a tight corner, always with the proviso that one managed to keep out of range of his flailing fists.

Potter and Green, his bosom pals, are eminently qualified to give pointers in this area although, sadly be it said, their usual technique is to disappear round the nearest corner when trouble looms and leave Horace to what almost seems his predestined fate - to be strewn over a considerable expanse of the quad or wherever battle has been joined. But, being Coker, he never fails to come up strongly for the next round or encounter. Fools rush in ... But would we have old Coker other than he is?

The lordly sixth form is represented by George Wingate, a recognised 'all rounder', and his chum Sykes - both firm disciples of *'Mens sana in corpore sano'*. They may be seen clad in heavy sweaters pounding purposefully round 'Big-side' before repairing to the Gym for 'work-outs'. The presence of these great men' of course lends a distinct air of dignity to the general hub-bub of organized boxing bouts.

The accumulation of years together with their attendant twinges and stiffening of joints has rendered the Gym a building - for all practical purposes - out of bounds for the majority of the teaching staff. Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout, although always assiduous in preaching the gospel of 'fitness' to their respective forms, are seldom to be seen in the vicinity - time having taken its inexorable toll. However it should not be overlooked that the Remove master is still a formidable walker despite the passing of the years and the fact that gymnastics for him now belong to the 'dear and distant' past. A fast receding time upon which both he and other members of staff take no small pleasure in reflecting, at considerable length and perhaps rather too frequently, in Masters common room.

Gymnastic endeavour at Greyfriars is not prominently touched upon, yet it is relevant when one views the excellent physical condition of the majority of the fellows. Needless to recall there are some (Bunter, Harold Skinner and co., etc.) happily only a small minority, who regard the concept of 'Keeping fit' with abhorrence and have to be forced into the Gym on compulsory days.

Although the part played by the Gymnasium in the daily life at Greyfriars is not strongly emphasized in the 'Magnet', the ethos of physical fitness looms large in the curriculum as is illustrated by the doughty deeds of the Famous Five.

We'll swing on the rings, and vault over the horse,
Like monkeys we'll climb up the ropes.
All to get splendidly fit of course,
Our minds filled with victories and hopes.
We'll win the cup for the best house of all
Whatever the fellows may say,
For one final effort we'll answer the call,
And strive till the end of play.

THE GENUS BUNTER

The plumpest hand at Cliff House established sudden contact with the fattest head at Greyfriars school.

"Yaroooh" roared Bunter.

Billy Bunter had not expected that. Really, he might have - but he hadn't. But expected or unexpected, he had had it.

He roared.

Frank Richards, Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School

Mr. Samuel Bunter, the portly leading ornament and figure-head of this illustrious family, may be classified as an impatient and somewhat irascible gentleman, particularly so when demands are made upon the extremely delicate area of his pocket. More especially so when these requests originate from his family, as his eldest son William George can well testify.

Mr. Bunter has an office in the city to which he peregrinates each day together with some thousands of other gentlemen similarly situated (and similarly attired). Each and all we may suppose in search and hope of attaining that elusive crock of gold traditionally said to be located somewhere towards the end of the rainbow - or at least somewhere in the purlieu of Threadneedle Street.

That he is 'something in the city' there is little doubt. That he is engaged in the pursuit of wealth (of a currency nature) may be taken as read. One may assume that in the pursuit of this worthy end he has - along with many others - experienced certain setbacks. This may in some

small way account for the irascibility in his otherwise plump and comfortable nature.

His office is located somewhere in the smoky recesses of the city, which is periodically substituted as a sword of Damocles and poised above the fat head of Billy Bunter as an awful alternative to the serener shades of Greyfriars if certain improvements are not immediately discernible in his scholastic attainments. A stool in a dingy office in the city: the ultimate misfortune. By sheer good luck and amazing coincidence Billy has thus far managed to avoid this dreadful fate.

On one occasion at least has he been threatened with the prospect of being placed with his Uncle Carter, the proprietor of a boarding-house establishment-cum-hotel at Folkstone, to, as he put it, 'help to run the place'. This task had resolved itself in the harsh light of fact into the tedious yet necessary chore of washing dishes in the kitchen, an occupation from which the fat Owl had recoiled in horror, having a natural antipathy to any form of work. He had concentrated all his wits, which could be amazingly sharp and alert on such occasions of crisis, in seeking a way of urgently circumnavigating such a dire fate. Needless to say circumstances had intervened as they so often do in the fortunes of the Greyfriars fellows. Bunter had 'lived' to fight (or slack) another day!

It is a far cry from the hard and profit-grubbing city to the quiet academic backwater of Greyfriars school where Mr. Bunter's two sons, William and Sammy, are in the process of being educated - a monumental task for the authorities of this ancient seat of learning as can be eloquently testified by Mr. Quelch and Mr. Twigg, their respective form-masters.

It is frequent requests of a pecuniary nature from these two hopefuls together with similar pleas from his daughter Bessie at Cliff House School which give Mr. Bunter much serious food for thought and which, no doubt, are instrumental in keeping his nose closely applied to the profit-seeking grindstone in the city. Bessie, of course, has the doubtful distinction of being almost an exact replica of her two brothers in terms of plumpness and Owl-like gravity, and possesses the same insatiable longing for foodstuffs.

Back at home in the respectable yet very ordinary 'semi-detached' villa somewhere in Surburbia (usually referred to as Bunter Court by Billy) presides Mrs. Bunter. The mother of this illustrious family, we may gather from the all too scant references made about her, seems rather a dear person who is inordinately fond and tolerant of her family, from Bunter *père* downwards. Billy has a very special regard for her if we read correctly the all too few passages between them. This says a great deal for the fat Owl who, in so much else, is selfishness personified. Be this as it may, to the fond mother forgiveness has always been the order of the day, especially where William George is concerned.

Thus we see the family unit. A plump circle seated round the tea table, the three offspring beaming behind three pairs of identical spectacles, tucking into the good things beneath which the board is groaning. They converse but little during this important ceremony (no time for such niceties here). Mrs. Bunter beams on her family from behind the teapot. Mr. Bunter, lower waistcoat buttons loosened for greater comfort, partakes with equal gusto as his children. A happy scene. Not even the ominous request, "William I shall require a word with you in my study after tea," has any perceptible effect on Billy's gastronomic performance. Probably, like the soldiers of the great Napoleon who were said to march upon their stomachs, Bunter felt that he could overcome any little unpleasantness which might lie in the offing so long as he took sufficient sustenance aboard. In any case there was always the good old Mater to leap to a fellow's defence.

Thus does the Bunter clan proceed from one minor crisis to another, riding each wave of fickle fortune with that buoyancy one would expect from such a collective bulk. Long may Mr. Bunter manage to keep his head above the floods of uncertainty which so frequently assail the city. Long may he avoid serious savaging from both Bulls and Bears which are said to haunt those elite but dingy precincts. And one day - who knows - what tide of fortune may not fall to his lot. Billy, the ever hopeful may yet receive a really whacking postal order, the genuine article, with similar joys for both Bessie and Sammy. Then indeed will the flag be run up from the highest tower of Bunter Court.

COKER'S CONDITION

BY
NANDU THALANGE
AND
DONALD V. CAMPBELL

Frank Richards gave us numerous and unforgettable characters with many clues as to their general physical and medical conditions. He was marvellously consistent with his personality paintings. This makes it nicely straightforward to analyse and discuss a character's potential or possible underlying physical or mental conditions.

The ascetic and often acerbic Quelch might be a suitable case for treatment. Might be - but as he is often referred to as "that kindly old gentleman" his problems may arise from old age and the harrying of Old Father Time.

Instead, and with nary a backward glance, we move on to some diagnostic speculation about that colourful character Coker. That Horace Coker suffers from something there is little doubt. He can be perversely stupid and that might give us a clue. How daft is he? Argument might rage as to whether he is *as* deficient, *more* dense, or *equally* as daft as Bunter.

But the "beaks" and others are well aware of his quirks and oddities. He is abnormal in a multitude of ways. As Dr. Locke, Mr. Prout, Sarle the lawyer and others recognise:

> 'His ability to grapple with subjects that some of the fags could tackle filled him with a comical despair. He said, with some justice that it was rotten for him to have to stick among the juniors till he was a bearded man because he hadn't a taste for any language but his own and liked cricket better than maths - not that he was especially good at cricket or football either.'

Dr. Locke on Coker and his Remove

> 'Coker was the despair of the Shell-master, who would have been glad enough to see him removed into the fifth; but Mr. Prout, the master of the fifth, was by no means eager to receive a pupil with Coker's reputation. Dr. Locke looked long and hard at Coker. He wondered whether he would be justified in giving the densest slacker at Greyfriars a sufficiently hard push to send him into the fifth. After all, what purpose was served by keeping him in the Shell? So far as his attainments went, he might as well have been left in the Fourth Form. But a fellow in tail coats in the Fourth would have been ridiculous. But he was a little less ridiculous in the shell, with a moustache beginning to appear on his upperlip. Perhaps it would be no worse for him to be a fool in the Fifth than a fool in the Shell. That was how the Head put it to himself. Needless to say, he never thought of putting it like that to Miss Coker.' (Coker Gets His Remove, Magnet 145, Nov. 1918)

> Prout had found the Fifth form rather trying, especially Coker who was a pupil who might have turned any Form Master's hair grey.'

> *Mr. Prout has just boxed Coker's ears.* "Look at my ears", said Coker. That injunction made Potter and Greene wonder for a moment if it was Coker who was mad, but they looked at Coker's ears which were certainly large enough to be seen. Those ears were red and burning.'

> *Sarle, the shady lawyer has no respect for Horace:* "How anyone could like that stupid, clumsy, overgrown, overbearing hobbledehoy is past my understanding. I have never been able to account for Miss Coker's attachment to him.". "The old cat", agreed Caffyn.

> 'Vernon Smith took hold of his ears with a firm grip. They were extensive and gave a good hold. Gripping those large ears the Bounder proceeded to tap Coker's head on the floor.

> *The Head and Prout are of a mind over his general stupidity as Coker struggles to account for his handling of an insulting notice penned about Prout by Billy Bunter.* "Coker," articulated the Head, "If , as you say, you found that paper on Mr. Prout's table why did you meddle with it?" "I wasn't going to let a cheeky fag cheek my Form master like that." "Why did you not tell Mr. Prout so?" gasped the Head. "Did Mr. Prout suppose that I had written it?" asked Coker, as if this was an entirely new idea to him. "Certainly he did. What else could he have supposed in the circumstances?" "Oh, crikey! Was that why you smacked my head, sir?" "Why else did you think I boxed your ears?" gasped Prout. "I thought you'd gone mad, sir."

> "Enough!" exclaimed the Head hastily. "Mr. Prout. It seems that a mistake has been made owing to this boy's almost incredible obtuseness, and I am prepared to believe that Coker's unexampled stupidity has led to a mistake."

So, in the light of this, what might his curious condition be? If we suggest that it is none other than *Martin-Bell Syndrome* then we must hasten to add that this has nothing to do

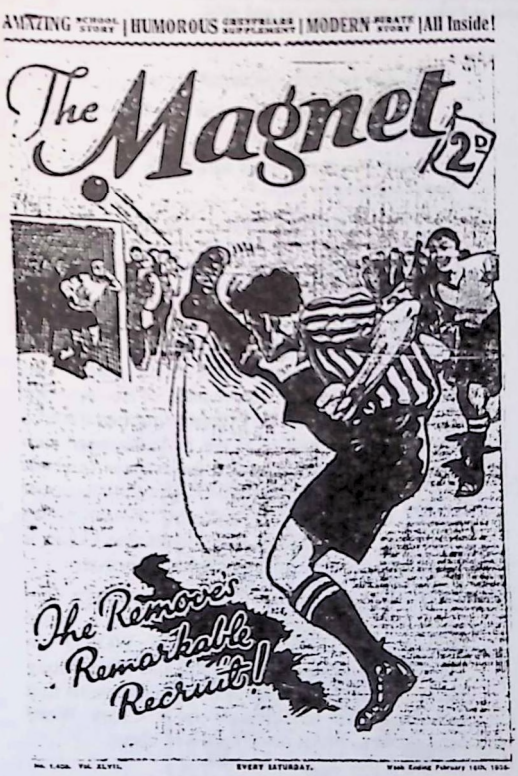
with that newsreader's predilections towards "good news before bad".

No! *Martin-Bell Syndrome* was the name given to the condition discovered by Doctors Martin & Bell in the 1940s. This lamentable predicament concerns intelligence and the inheritance of a faulty chromosome - *THE "X" CHROMOSOME* - none other.

The suggestion that Coker is suffering from mental retardation might seem unkind but there is something afoot. Let's have a look.

What Martin & Bell discovered in 1943 became known as *Fragile "X" Syndrome* and is to do with the mysteries of the genes. In particular, the way that the "X" chromosome is passed from generation to generation.

A short (and easy, we hope) medical tutorial: Most of us would hardly recognise an "X" or a "Y" chromosome if it was placed in front of us. But, none of us can do without one, or the other, or both! If male, we have an "X" and a "Y" chromosome. If female we have an "X" and another "X" chromosome - or to put it anther way: two "X" chromosomes. A male child can get either of his mother's "X" chromosomes. It is possible for mother to have one "duff" "X" chromosome and so it may be passed on to the male of the species. It is this "duff" little devil that causes the problems for the male of the species.



Inheritance of such a "duff" chromosome must lead the recipient - if a boy - into learning difficulties because of low IQ. Coker, along with his rather obvious low IQ, demonstrates some of the other quirks of the "Fragile 'X' Syndrome" sufferer. The reverse applies to his younger brother Reggie. Reggie garnered the sounder of the two genes from Mum. His brilliance in the Sixth is at the expense of Horace and demonstrates the fifty/fifty chance of the passing on of either of the "X" chromosomes. The gifted yet weedy and brainy Reggie got the better half of the deal. His deal includes being looked after by his parents who just could not cope, we assume, with the slowness and vagaries of Horace. Aunt Judy is oblivious to Coker's difficulties - which is her god fortune as well as Horace's good luck!

In support of the premise that Coker has indeed inherited a duff "X" chromosome we might consider the list of classic identifiers:

* Subject retarded - modern day Political Correctness might persuade us to refer to this as "developmental delay"
* Hyperactivity.
* Short attention span.
* Difficulty in both accepting and understanding disciplining.
* Frequent temper tantrums.
* Poor motor co-ordination.

From this list we can highlight the problem that Prout has with the disciplining of Coker. Coker just never learns and certainly regards disciplinary acts as unjust, unnecessary and undeserved. Horace on the sports field is an unlikely hero. He is quite unable to kick a football or strike a cricket ball. This lack of motor co-ordination also gives rise to his dreadful handwriting. To this must be added the situation observed when he attempts to ride his motor cycle - *he can't.* Nor can he repair the machine when it is faulty - not even a puncture repair is possible for him. His close matching to the list may also be seen in his temper tantrums. Never averse to solving a problem with his fists he "loses his rag" both frequently and easily.

Coker's lack of footballing skills are nicely pictured on the cover of Magnet 1409. The goalkeeper is in no fear f having to stop the ball and Coker obliges with a skier over the bar. Large feet, jutting jaw and his unmistakable nose are all to be seen.

Further weight can be given to the diagnosis by looking at the physical attributes of a Martin-Bell Syndrome sufferer:

* *Long, wide or protruding ears.*
* *Long face with possibility of a square and prominent "lantern" jaw.*
* *Flattened nasal bridge.*
* *Macrocephaly normally present - "big head" to most of us.*

Fish started to dance in front of Coker, his thin face twisting into weird expressions. The crowd roared at his antics, but not Coker. He just glared at Fishy, his rugged jaw set and grim.

To take macrocephaly first - we can agree that Coker has a big head in any sense of the term. He has a spectacular and recognisable flattened nasal bridge. If we put it politely he is always pictured with a heavily "retrousse" nose. Further evidence comes from his ears. Wharton - and others - have been known to take Coker up by the ears and bang his (big) head about mercilessly.

Coker is frequently in trouble. His troubles are often of his own fashioning. His genetic make-up fixes this virtually inevitably. If Coker has got such an "X" chromosome it *must* have come from his mother His mother had to be endowed with the wobbly gene which could account for her own lack of control over little Horace. At what age he was handed over to Aunt Judy we can not say but the guess must be that it happened once the brightness and relative ease of care of Reggie was recognised by mother. Her inability to cope with Horace might have stemmed from her own lack of brightness - *some thirty per cent of what might be called "X" chromosome "carriers" re, themselves, seen as being "on the slow side"*. This combination of factors may have led to the early "hand-over" to Aunt Judy. Reggie, on the other hand, got the "perfect" gene and also got to stay at home.

Coker is nicely pictured for us:

"Nothing ever occurred to Coker's mighty brain until it was too late."

and: "Coker wore a large size in boots. He had large feet in them."

Further bodily evidence can be found in his attempt to star at a church fete as "Ram Daz Coker - INDIAN SEAR". The caption highlights his "rugged jaw".

The heirloom that is a faulty "X" chromosome leads the recipient towards coarse features, ungainly and large body parts along with poor motor co-ordination. So we find constant references to Coker's "rugged face" - sometimes attached to it we find: *"a huge pair of goggles"*. If we compare these ideas (and the fine footballing illustration of Horace) with the various indicators for *Fragile "X" Syndrome* we can come to the certain conclusion that Coker is indeed a sufferer from this genetic disorder.

Mr. Prout despairs of his unruly charge - not more so than when he administers a sharp beating over "COKER'S CROSS WORD" in The Magnet, 893, 1925. Coker has slaved long and hard over the production of a crossword that will earn him ten pounds in a Cross Word competition. Prout discovers it in class:

"YOUR CROSS WORD PUZZLE!" Mr. Prout articulated those words as if each was a bullet.

"That's it, sir", said Coker.

There was silence in the fifth Form room. The Fifth did not dare to laugh, the expression on Mr. Prout's face was too terrific for that. They sat and waited for the earthquake.

It was not long in coming.

"Coker! You incredibly stupid boy!" roared Mr. Prout. "Sir!" "This-this-this rubbish - this foolery -this-this childish absurdity! You speak of this as an article, value ten pounds! I fear that you are not in your right senses, Coker!"

"Mr. Prout!"

"Unaccustomed as I am, Coker, to inflicting punishment in this form room, I feel that nothing but a caning will meet this case," Mr. Prout grabbed up a pointer. "Bend over that form!"

Coker gasped.

How incredibly stupid Coker is may be gauged as you try his very own CROSS WORD. But, he warned, not only can he not spell the questions correctly - his answers are a travesty of English as well.

ACROSS

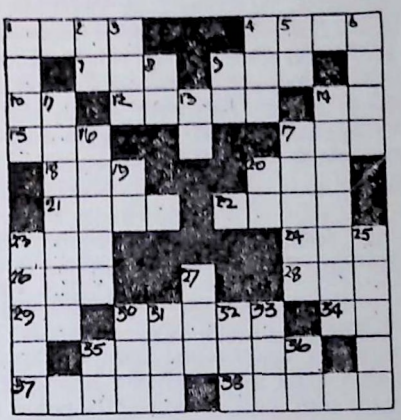
1. A kynd of dogg.
4. A trubble in the chest.
7. A serial.
9. A mettle.
10. To be in dett.
12. A noyse.
14. A prepposition.
15. Mastycate.
17. The atmosfear.
18. Deffinite artikle.
20. Part of a shipp.
22. A linneal mezure.
23. Sownd made by a catt.
24. A nortical term.
26. Paynting or skulptewr.
28. To kause inkonveenience.
29. A vurb.
30. To lesson.
34. Thuss.
35. Opposit to lyes.
37. A konkave spaice.
38. A weppon.

DOUNE

1. Fruntt part of a shipp.
2. Intransytive vurb.
3. A vaper.
4. A kynd of fish.
5. A prepposition.
6. Shawt for telefone.
8. Anuther prepposition.
9. Saime as insyde.
11. Temperatewers.
13. Plooral prownoun.
14. Peeple who rite books.
16. A mental prowess.
17. Part of the legg.
19. A mezure.
20. Indeffynite artikle.
23. Froots.
25. Aggrement.
27. To tare with the teeth.
30. Saime as 26 akross.
31. A wajer.
32. Poassessive prownoun.
33. Artikle.
35. Prepposition.
36. Thuss.

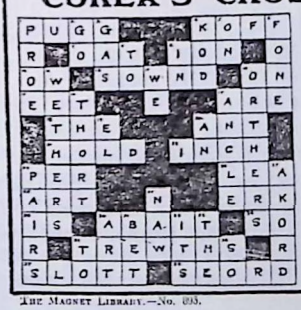
He does manage apostrophes, full stops and numbers quite well! Have fun with Coker!

COKER'S CROSS WORD PUZZLE!

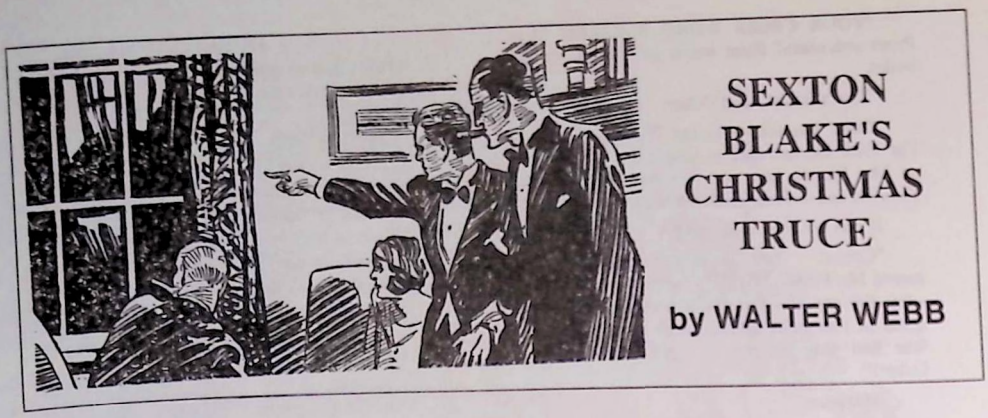


The solution follows.

COKER'S CROSS WORD PUZZLE!



This is a reproduction of Horace Coker's wonderful puzzle. It certainly is wonderful! Note the original spelling:—"Pugg" a "kynd of dogg!" "Ion" a "mettle."



SEXTON BLAKE'S CHRISTMAS TRUCE

by WALTER WEBB

A Christmassy Item from a long-ago C.D. Annual

During its 39 years existence the UNION JACK LIBRARY published many a fine Yuletide story of Sexton Blake, but there were very few to better that which appeared in the year 1924. Then George Hamilton Teed proved, with a grand story, called SEXTON BLAKE'S XMAS TRUCE, that he could write a Christmassy detective yarn quite as well as Gwyn Evans, recognised by popular vote as the best of them all. The days of the double-number issue were already a thing of the past at that time, and the issue in which we are concerned was not even an enlarged one; even so, it is outstanding, not only on account of the excellent story it contained, but because of the splendid coloured cover design by E.R. Parker, work he seldom surpassed in later years. It portrayed Sexton Blake, with Mademoiselle Yvonne at his side, greeting Dr. Huxton Rymer with a cordial handshake. At Rymer's side stood Mary Trent, his young and pretty ally. Both Blake and Rymer had doffed their hats in respectful greeting to the ladies, and on the faces of all four were warm smiles, which simply exuded peace and goodwill. Blake, shown in profile, looked handsome and not unlike John Barrymore, one-time screen idol, in a blue suit, but Rymer and the girls were warmly clad in thick coats, Mary with a fur round her neck, Yvonne with a scarf. Both girls wore a cloche hat, surely the most hideous article ever invented as headgear for the woman of the twenties, and if this fact did strike a somewhat jarring note, the artist, of course, was not to blame for that. The picture was completed with a view of Winfield Grange in the background, with, still further back, one or two gaunt, leafless trees. The wide drive, thickly coated with freshly fallen snow, gave the necessary Yuletide atmosphere, and so, now to the story itself.

It was Tinker who gave birth, and then voice, to an idea which had been nibbling at his brain for several days. Tinker loved Christmas, and having with his master fought crime all the year round, naturally expected to spend his Yuletide in peace. His idea was to shut up the house in Baker Street, pack Mrs. Bardell off to her niece, and insert a notice on the front door, informing the public that they would be in office again on New Year's Day. But Blake, whilst sympathising with Tinker's point of view, pointed out that their position was akin to that of a doctor, or a policeman - they must be on duty at all times. A disgruntled Tinker brightened up considerably when John Graves, Yvonne's uncle, came round with an invitation from his niece to spend Christmas with her at Winfield Grange. Graves suggested that they fix up a truce with the criminal classes over the holiday and even to invite some of them over to Winfield - an idea which Tinker gave his most enthusiastic support. Thus it came about that amongst the dozen, or so, crooks Blake extended invitations to was Dr. Huxton Rymer and his pretty secretary and partner, Mary Trent. As Professor Andrew Butterfield, Rymer was owner of Abbey Towers, a small, well equipped estate, not far from Horsham, in Sussex. Mary, at one time, had been housemaid there, but having discovered the secret of Rymer's livelihood, had soon proved that she could be of far more value to him as a partner. Despite the gulf in years, a deep bond of affection had quickly sprung up between them, then deepened still further into love, with the result that it was only on rare occasions that Rymer moved without either the advice or active participation of Mary Trent.

Rymer was in conversation with a crook named Hermann Klein when he received an indirect message from Sexton Blake, asking him to come over to Baker Street and give his opinion to a proposal which the detective wished to make to him. Klein had two years before attempted to ruin both Yvonne and her uncle in connection with what is recorded in Sexton Blake's 'Index' as 'The Case of the Winfield Handicap'. Klein's plans were foiled by Blake on that occasion, with the result that the crook had been sent to prison. Now he was out again, thirsting for revenge, not only against the detective, but Yvonne as well, and to further that revenge he wanted the assistance of Rymer. It was after seeing Mary Trent that Rymer went to see Blake. The idea of a truce at Christmas appealed to the better side of his nature, and he gave Blake his whole-hearted assurance that he would respect it. On leaving Baker Street, Rymer made his way to the Hotel Venetia, and entering the American Bar, where he had arranged to meet Klein, was staggered to see the latter in conversation with none other than the master-criminal, George Marsden Plummer! The reason for Rymer's amazement needs a little explanation here. In his previous tussle with Blake it was recorded that Plummer had met his death through the medium of the dreaded Death Ray which had come into his possession. The author of that episode was not Teed, nor was it Osborne; the only writer likely to kill off a popular, long-standing character like Plummer would be the man who created him. Therefore I can only assume that Lewis Carlton was responsible. Klein found a very willing ally in Plummer and the scheme which the precious pair had concocted between them included a raid on the Christmas party at the Grange by as many followers as they could rope in, to grab as many valuables as they could lay hands on and make a lightning getaway. On being asked to join in, Rymer, true to his promise to Blake, refused, but because of his friendship with Plummer, avoided telling the detective of his meeting with the two crooks.

John Graves soon began to doubt the wisdom of Blake's move when, whilst out motoring he was shot at, but luckily not hit. When the luggage of Rymer and Mary Trent was searched afterwards the result only added strength to the theory that the shot was fired by Rymer. Blake and Tinker were also the victims of an attack as they were motoring to the Grange. This time it was a dog-faced ape - one of the most savage specimen in existence - which leapt from the branches of a tree and landed on Tinker's shoulders as he was driving. After a desperate struggle, in which the car was nearly wrecked, Blake hit the beast repeatedly with a heavy spanner, until, battered into unconsciousness, it slumped to the floor of the car. It was Christmas Eve when the attacks had taken place, and after dinner that evening the three victims, accompanied by Yvonne, having made their way to the library, discussed what steps they must take in the face of the unforeseen circumstances which then confronted them. Suddenly, Tinker saw a face peering in at them through the window, and recognising the features of George Marsden Plummer, the man both Blake and himself had seen die before their eyes, was so overcome with shock that he was unable to articulate for some minutes, during which time Plummer had time to make himself scarce. Blake was concerned but disbelieving when Tinker managed to tell what he had seen, but when from other parts of the house came feminine screams and revolver shots, then Sexton Blake new that a treacherous attack was being made on the Grange. No doubt remained in the mind of the famous criminologist but that Rymer had double-crossed him. Always resourceful, Yvonne marshalled the lady guests into the music-room, where they were removed from the scene of the shooting. Blake, Tinker, Graves, and the rest of the male guests, having armed themselves with weapons of different kinds, stood fast, grimly determined that the raiders should not attain their designs. It was then that Blake saw, with mingled surprise and gratification, the big frame of Dr. Huxton Rymer, side by side with Graves, beating off the attack of a number of the enemy. When Blake lost his weapon, Rymer coolly tossed him a spare one of his own, and it was that action which proved the turning point.

The bandits were led by an American crook, named Black Gans, a ruthless desperado, who knew only one law - the law of the gun. And it was by the gun - Rymer's - that he died, for Blake, knowing that Gams would take the life of any one of the party without the slightest compunction, shot him through the heart. On seeing their leader go down, and noting the grim, inflexible features of the commanding-looking man behind the smoking weapon, the raiders were thrown into a panic, which resulted in a disorderly retreat. Those captured were soon disarmed and made secure, pending the arrival of the police. The only casualty amongst the defenders was Tinker, who had been struck by a

glancing bullet, but, under the skilful hands of Dr. Huxton Rymer, he was quickly made comfortable, and the last act in the drama took place at his bedside as Christmas Day was ushered in.

Then Rymer explained what had happened after his meeting with Hermann Klein in the Venetia. Both the latter and Plummer had urged him to take advantage of the proposition made to him in order to arrange a big coup at the Grange, but he had refused to commit himself until he had seen Mary. When she talked the matter over with him she would hear nothing of Plummer's plan, but was all for accepting the offer of a truce. As Mary's wishes were more to him than anything else in the world, he consented to do as she desired. In the meantime, Plummer came down to Abbey Towers to lie low, and brought Klein with him, and they again pleaded with him to join in with them; he refused. He had given his word and meant to stick to it. On the day he arrived at the Grange kept a rendezvous with Plummer, and heard of the attempted assassinations on the lives of Blake, Tinker and Graves. There was no hypocrisy in Rymer's attitude; he remained strictly neutral over the whole thing, refusing to join his fellow-crooks, yet not giving them away. The escape of George Marsden Plummer, the master-mind who had organised the whole affair, was satisfactory to Rymer in every way, even though, in that instance, they had been on opposite sides of the fence.

As Sexton Blake offered his hand in apology for the treachery he had thought Huxton Rymer guilty of and in gratitude for the service he had rendered Tinker that night, and found it gripped tightly in Rymer's own, the joyous sound of bells was heard echoing across the frosty air, ringing out that old familiar message - the message of CHRISTMAS.

THE MERRY ADVENTURES OF TOMMY TWINKLE WITH HIS MAGIC SHOES

THIS WEEK:

Christmas Stockings.

"I SAY, granny, just think of it! A Christmas hamper containing a lovely plum pudding, twelve huge mincepies, oranges and apples, a big box of cream chocolates and a box of crackers. All for sixpence!"

"Gracious me! Sixpence?" gasped good Dame Kindly, looking over at our merry little Tommy Twinkle. "Where did you say you could get it, Tommy?"

"I didn't say anywhere!" roared Tommy. "I just said 'Think of it.' Ha, ha, ha! Caught you that time, didn't I, granny! Ha, ha!"

How the good dame did laugh, to be sure, and, almost in the same breath, Tommy had another take-in ready for her.

"How could I get fat, if I wanted to?" he grinned.

"Dearie me, what a boy!" laughed Dame Kindly. "Why, I suppose if you went on eating turkey and Christmas pudding for days together you would get fat. But more likely you would be ill."

"I expect I should," laughed Tommy. "No, you are wrong, granny! The best way to get fat is to buy it at the butcher's. Ha, ha, ha! Caught again!"

"Oh dear!" exclaimed the old dame, pausing in the midst of her merriment. "That reminds me, Tommy. I promised little Betty's mother that you would take the little girl to the big toyshop this afternoon. She is anxious to choose a Christmas present for her baby brother, and Mrs. Dingle is too busy. Do you mind?"

"Of course not," announced Tommy cheerily. "I am always ready to go to the toyshop. I had better go to Betty's now, then, hadn't I?"

So there and then Tommy hurried off, and in a very short while he and Betty were making their way eagerly to the shop. Betty explained that she thought she would like to buy one of those white net Christmas stockings filled with small toys.

"I think they are such fun to open," she laughed. "I'm sure Baby Bob would love one. I—I wonder who makes those lovely stockings, Tommy? I wonder if it's Father Christmas. I have always wanted to know."

"Have you?" murmured Tommy Twinkle with a half-smile. "Then you shall, Betty. Do you see that cave over there?"

The little girl's eyes followed Tommy's pointing finger, and as she turned our little boy softly stamped his right Magic Shoe, which, as you all know, grants him whatever he may wish. Tommy always wears these exciting fairy shoes, and oh, the wonderful adventures they bring him.

"C-cave?" whispered Betty, mystified, for she had never seen a cave in this lane before. Suddenly, though, her eyes opened wide, for, beneath an overhanging bush gleamed an archway of twinkling fairy lamps, framing the entrance to a huge cave! And before Betty could say or do anything else Tommy had led her right into it, whence came the merry hum of dozens of little voices and the bright glow of many lights. A second later the chums found themselves standing gazing at the strangest scene, and Betty knew, without being told, that she was in Fairyland. At one side of the gigantic cave worked dozens of busy little fairies, cutting out scores and scores of white Christmas stockings from a tall, billowing pile of white net bunched up on the floor. Then, as soon as the stockings were shaped, more fairies sat and stitched them up with scarlet thread and oh, the laughing and chattering that went on while they worked.

Betty's eyes were fixed on the fairies, till Tommy pointed to the other side of the cavern.

"Those brownies are making the toys to fill them," he whispered.

"It's Father Christmas! Father Christmas is here!" shouted the brownies joyfully. "Hurry up, everybody! He'll want us to help fill those stockings!"

Tommy drew Betty into the deeper shadow of the cave, and the next moment the big, jovial figure of Santa Claus entered.

"Greetings, everybody!" he cried, drawing off his big furry gloves. "Brownies, I've some cases of dollies, and bouncing balls, and more paint-boxes on my sleigh. Run and bring them in, please, then we must get busy! Ah, splendid! Splendid!" he added, smiling approval at the piles and piles of unfilled stockings standing all ready.

And then followed the most wonderful sight of Betty's life. Helped by the willing fairies and brownies, dear old Father Christmas sat down and filled every one of those jolly stockings with toys and games and presents. On the outside of each one he stuck a merry picture of himself and popped the stocking into his huge wide-mouthed sack all ready for Christmas Eve.

"Greetings, everyone!" cried Santa. "I've brought some more toys!"

Betty nodded and turned to watch a crowd of busy little brownie-men carving and hammering and painting all sorts of lovely little Christmas toys and games. Toy soldiers, wooden dollies, Noah's Arks, ships, toy trains, and aeroplanes, and oh, the dearest little sets of dollies' furniture (just large enough to fit Betty's own dolls' house, strangely enough).

"So this is where they make those lovely Christmas stockings!" murmured the little girl in a tone of wonderment. "Oh, isn't it a jolly cave, Tommy! Look! That little brownie has just finished that toy piano, and he's going to play it!"

A tiny, tinkling tune rang through the cave, and the brownies shouted their applause. Even the busy fairies clapped.

"Bravo, Brownie Tink-a-Tune!" they laughed. "But, hark! Listen!"

A swift hush fell on the enchanted cave, and the sound of the toy piano gave way to the musical notes of distant sleigh-bells, coming nearer and nearer. The heavy thud of hoofs could be heard, too, and Tommy whispered:

"Reindeer!"

"I think these are even nicer than those we made last year," declared a busy fairy.

"I am sure they are!" chuckled a rosy-faced brownie, dropping a fine coloured ball into the toe of another stocking. "If the boys and girls could only see them!"

"They *will*, on Christmas Eve," laughed Father Christmas.

"T-Tommy!" whispered Betty in a sudden, frantic voice. "I—I'm going to sneeze, I think! Quick! Let's go!"

Catching hands, the chums turned and fled, on tiptoe, out of the cave, and up on to the lane again. Softly, while they ran, Tommy tapped his left Magic Shoe, and quite suddenly Betty found she no longer desired to sneeze, and more strange still, the fairy cave had quite vanished!

"So that is how the Christmas stockings are made!" murmured Betty dreamily. "Oh, let's hurry to the shop and buy a nice one for Baby Bob, Tommy! I shall be able to tell him I saw the fairies making them!"

(Tommy Twinkle and his friends wish you all ever such a jolly Christmas, and, remember, he will have another exciting adventure in your PLAYBOX *next week.)*

GREYFRIARS CLUB

THE GREYFRIARS CLUB, now in its' 19th year of operation, and in its' 16th year of the establishment of the FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM & LIBRARY has once again very great pleasure in extending HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all hobby connoisseurs of goodwill and integrity everywhere - and, in particular our C.D editors, past and present Eric Fayne and Mary Cadogan - and all those Club members who have written to us with their news and good wishes through the last year, indeed the past 25 to 30 years.

Whoa ! Whoa !what a lot of congratulations readers have given us for the new full colour copies of the Courtfield Newsletters. Your Editor is blushing ! I must thank all those Club members who have written to congratulate our club on being not only the first club to introduce pictures into our 30 + page Courtfield Newsletters but now being the first club to publish colour photographs in our Courtfield Newsletters ! As announced in the C.D No 579 our very first issue this year contained over 30 historic glossy full-colour photographs and scores of reader's letters and articles about the hobby. It is truly amazing what one can do on a multi-media computer these days !

Now for further good news - the next edition of the Courtfield Newsletter will be available early in the New Year and will again feature numerous colour pictures, previously unpublished letters from Frank Richards, further fascinating extracts from the four volumes of *The Secret Diaries of Herbert Leckenby* (Founder of the C.D) ,and dozens of readers' letters and articles,even another previously unpublished full facial picture of Frank Richards. As many of you who have visited the Frank Richards Museum know, both of our Frank's two working desks have been kept exactly as he left them by both his housekeeper the late Miss Edith Hood, and the Greyfriars Club - with drawer contents packed complete with memorabilia. What was in them ? This will be the subject of another fascinating article in this edition.

As most of you know, from our earlier announcements in the CDA 1991 and before, the Greyfriars Club was established in January 1977 to give more personal direct encouragement and feedback to Howard Baker, the publisher of the beautiful reproductions of the Fleetway House papers (Magnet, Gem and Nelson Lee) by means of club meetings at which members could meet him and discuss further reproductions. For instance, at these Bob Blythe (O.B.B.C founder and Nelson Lee expert) had been able to meet & persuade Howard Baker to publish a number of Nelson Lees. Similarly, in 1979 the Frank Richards Museum & Library was established (See C.D No. 399, and C.D.A 1988 for listed contents) so that devotees could browse among Frank Richards personal possessions. However this has led to many callers, sometimes from overseas, at my residences at Ruislip, Stevenage and Kingsgate Castle arriving without an appointment (sometimes when I was not at home) wanting to see the Museum. Now that the Museum has been open for over 16 years, and we are engaging in frequent long-distance travel round the world (We shall be visiting the Far East & Australasia etc again early in the New Year to visit our son Robert and his wife & baby , and other friends,) we feel that the time has come to make it a purely private Museum available only to personal friends, thus leaving us much more freedom to travel the world over whenever the whim takes us.

Since the previous editions of the Courtfield Newsletter have all been sold out, it is advisable to get your order in early; it will be available to club members at 75p (as previously) or £3.75 to non members.

R.F.Acraman (Chairman/Secretary) 35 Park View. Stevenage. Herts. SG2 8PS

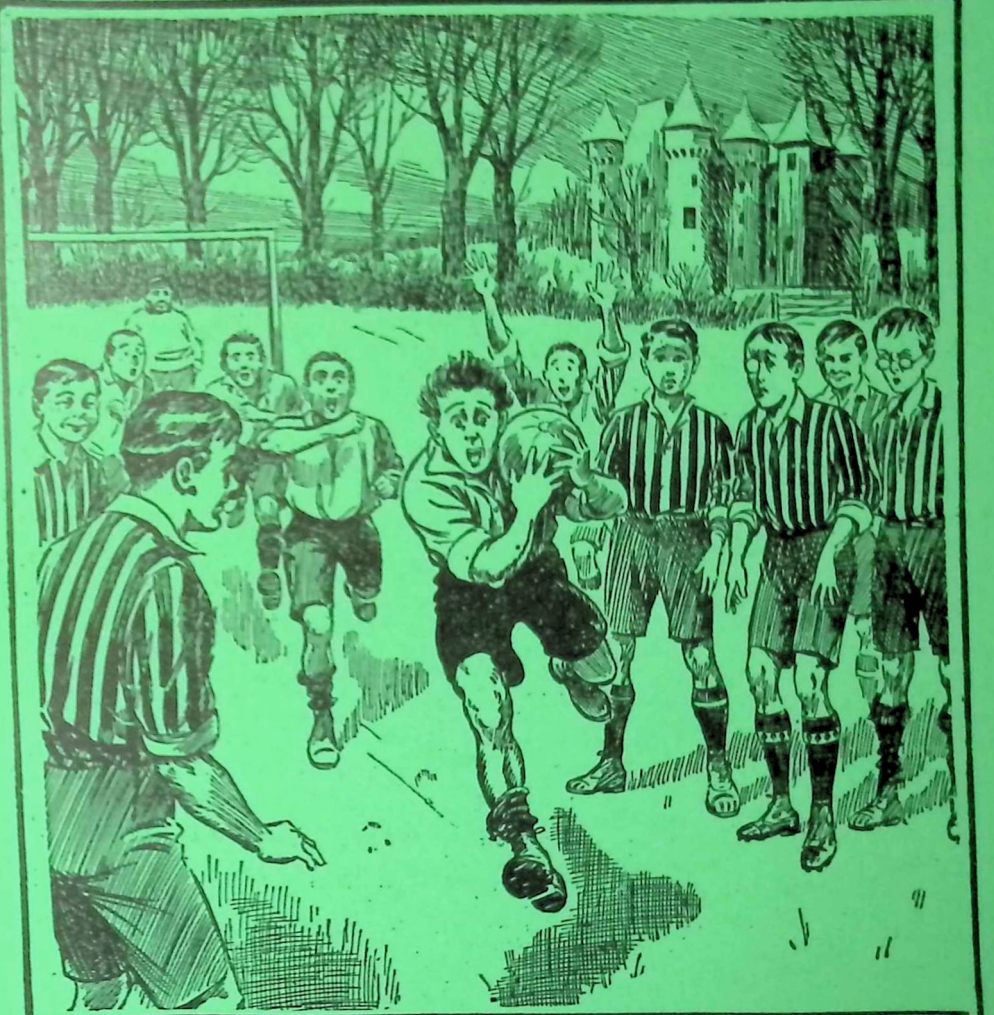
The Terrible Three's Christmas Party

The GEM LIBRARY 2d

Double-Length Story By Martin Clifford.

VOL. 4. NO. 93.

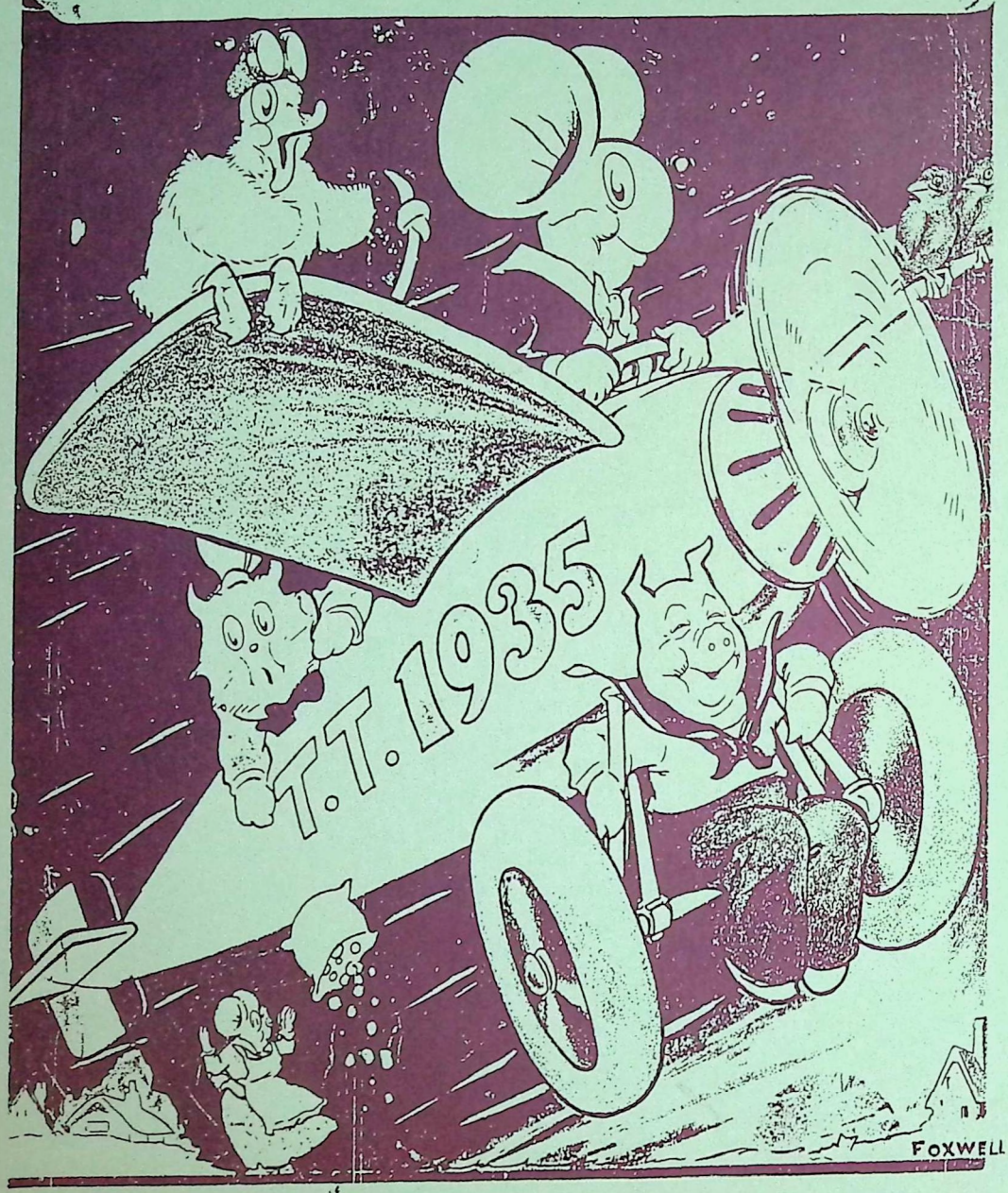
Christmas Double Number.



THE FRANCO-BRITISH FOOTBALL MATCH!

Unheeding the fact that Tom Merry & Co. were not playing, the French team dashed on. Their one idea was to get possession of the ball, and this they proceeded to do, using legs and feet, and hands and arms, and heads and teeth for the purpose!

TEDDY TAIL'S ANNUAL



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