

Reflections

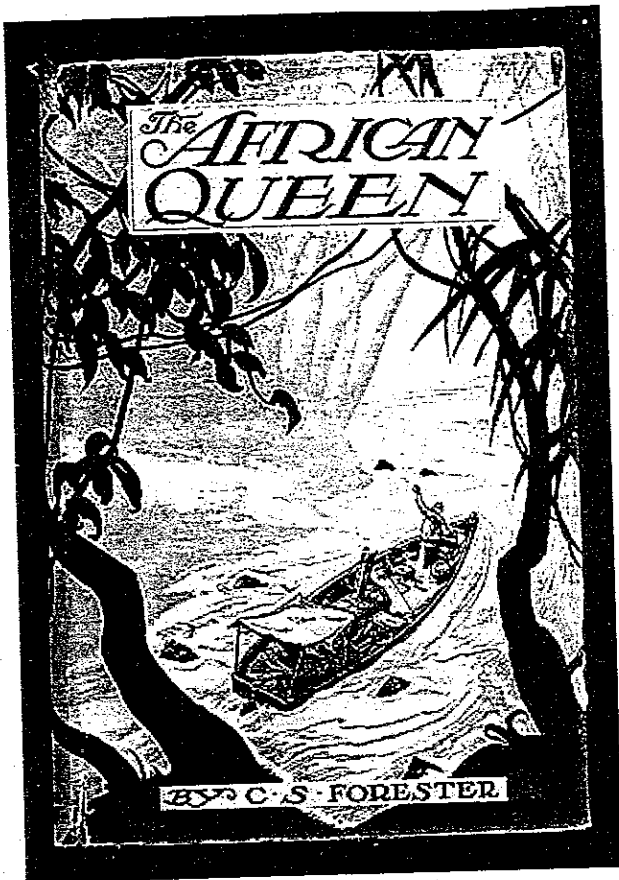
A literary supplement to the C.S. Forester Society Newsletter



Number 2: November 2002

A Gothic Horror - CSF's first publication?
Payment Deferred and crime fiction
A Pawn among Kings Long before Forty
Parallel courses? - *The Wreck of the Abergavenny*

In the Wake of *The African Queen*



JOHN FORESTER writes:-

I have never read the *News Chronicle* version [of *The African Queen*]. The extracts in *Reflections* are illuminating. Incidentally, during the time that I remembered him, CSF's father received the *Daily Mail* (rather conservative, appealing to a retired member of colonial government society), while CSF, in the later 1930s when I remember this, received the *News Chronicle* (middle of the road). Also in the 1930s, probably when I asked about a current general election (date anyone?) CSF told me that he voted Liberal.

I enjoyed reading of the linkages between CSF and the film world. I had not traced that Irwin Shaw had co-written *Commandos Strike at Dawn*, and I knew nothing of *Forever and a Day* (and still know nothing of the film). And Peter Viertel's *White Hunter, Black Heart* sounds very interesting; I will have to read that. Viertel, of course, was born into Hollywood; his mother was a screenwriter.

I knew the details of the history of the AQ herself only from a few newspaper reports. Those came to my notice simply because her continued existence was the first contradiction of CSF's lie to me that she had had to be sunk at the end of the picture. That was the excuse he gave to me for the failure to deliver her to me once the picture was over, which is what he promised me had been stipulated in the contract. (I did not see the film when it was first exhibited, as I

Reflections 1 generated a fair amount of correspondence! Some of it appears below, some of it – comprising significant articles – has been held over for a future edition, which could well be devoted to *The Queen* alone!

ARNOLD ROMBERG has written with "two minor suggestions for improvement of future issues. It would be nice to have a brief caption for each photograph or illustration appearing. It might also be good to give the author's name for each selection, either at the beginning or at the end; in most of the selections the author's name is mentioned, but it would be nice to have it given specifically and not just in a subheading".

(L): The first American edition of *The African Queen*, with the shorter, "tragic" ending - Boston Little, Brown 1935. This copy was inscribed: "Sigfrida and Dagmar with best wishes from C.S. Forester. Feb. 1939." It was then re-inscribed, probably at a later date: "To Sigfrida with more love still from C.S. Forester." Exceptionally scarce inscribed, perhaps unique inscribed twice – according to the sellers, *Between the Covers Rare Books Inc.* Contact: Dan Gregory, 35 W. Maple Avenue, Merchantville, NJ, U.S.A., 08109 Email: books@betweenthecovers.com #59837
But who are "Sigfrida and Dagmar"?

was in the Navy. By the time that I did see it, some number of years later, I was naturally most interested in the ending, unreal and physically impossible though it was. I concluded that the floating wreckage was of course a fake, and that no director would risk sinking his prize character, just in case some more shooting was necessary. But I had troubles of my own throughout those years, without considering the extent to which I had been lied to. That consideration did not reappear until after the facts that surfaced after his death.) I intended to see the AQ on several summer trips to the East Coast when she was working out of Connecticut, but the first time she was delayed on her passage north from Florida by bad weather, the second time she was in London on tour.

ADRIAN TAYLOR writes about Forester's statement that *Randall and the River of Time* was to be the first of a series of novels set in modern times.

"In connection with CSF's statement on the dustwrapper, it says on page 606 of John Forester's biography: *Originally he had thought of the book in two halves, the first part occurring in England and the second in a wider cosmopolitan world, reflecting his own life story. At this time (Feb 1950) he discarded the second part, saving it for a second volume, if he ever wrote one.* Perhaps there were plans though for a more extensive series as the term 'other novels' is employed on the dust-wrapper, One wonders what the truth of the matter is – is there indeed any unpublished material relating to this? *There is indeed, though not much at present. Perhaps there will be more, for the proposed Into the New World issue!*

C. S. Forester and Crime Fiction

Martin Edwards

It is strange that historians of the genre have been slow to acknowledge the notable contribution made to crime fiction by Cecil Scott Forester (1899-1966). In part, this lack of recognition may be due to the fact that Forester, whose real name was Cecil Lewis Troughton Smith, moved away from crime early in his writing career, and became celebrated as the author of books such as *The Gun* and *The African Queen* as well as the series of historical seafaring tales which featured Horatio Hornblower. It may also be because, even when creating his masterpiece of suspense, *Payment Deferred*, Forester evidently regarded himself as producing a "straight", realistic novel rather than as blazing a new trail for the heirs of Poe, Collins and Conan Doyle. Yet today few would dispute that he was ahead of his time in the criminal field and perhaps it is not too fanciful to argue that modern chillers such as *Deep Water* by Patricia Highsmith and *One Across, Two Down* by Ruth Rendell - to take examples almost at random - fall within a tradition first established by Forester's short but remarkable debut in the genre.

Payment Deferred was first published in 1926. That was also the year in which *The Murder Of Roger Ackroyd* appeared, giving rise to a fierce debate, which now seems rather quaint, as to whether Agatha Christie had "played fair" with her readers; at the same time, *The Benson Murder Case* launched Philo Vance on his extraordinary career to much acclaim from enthusiasts for classical detection. Meanwhile in his preface to an anthology entitled *Crime And Detection*, E.M.Wright was saying, "What we want in our detective fiction is not a semblance of real life ... but deep mystery and conflicting clues!"

Seen in its proper historical context, Forester's achievement seems all the more impressive. In his (posthumously published) memoir *Long Before Forty*, he provides an interesting account of how, as a young man who had already begun to make a little money out of writing, he came to write a doom-laden story about the downfall of a suburban murderer and thereby to establish himself as an author of note. Although in *The Singing Bone* (1912), R. Austin Freeman had devised the "inverted" story in which the murderer is seen at work before the detective commences his investigation, with *Payment Deferred*, Forester struck out in a fresh direction.

The plot-line of the book is simple. William Marble is a middle-aged bank clerk with an extravagant wife, two

children and a host of debts. When a rich nephew from Australia pays a visit to the Marbles' little house in Dulwich, the clerk's desperation is such that he robs and kills the stranger, burying him in the garden without alerting his wife's suspicion. A profitable speculation on the fortunes of the franc soon means that Marble becomes very rich. But he is haunted by his crime and, in an excellent final twist, ultimately suffers an ironic fate.



The 1941 edition - on the elephant's back!

Although the book sold well, and has often been reprinted, it has seldom attracted the interest of the critics. In the first full-length survey in England of crime writing, *Masters Of Mystery* by H. Douglas Thomson, *Payment Deferred* is not mentioned. In the same year (1931) the more perceptive Dorothy L. Sayers bracketed it with *Malice Aforethought* by Francis Iles in her introduction to Gollancz's second series of *Great Short Stories Of Detection, Mystery and Horror*. Describing the two novels as "interesting studies in murder rather than detective stories", she forecast that before long a formula for combining the two types of story would be discovered by somebody.

The prediction was borne out sooner even than Sayers can have anticipated with the publication, again in 1931, of *The Glass Key* by Dashiell Hammett. But it seems clear that Hammett and his successors in America developed the crime novel without paying much, if any, regard to the parallel movement towards realism in the UK and in his much-admired *Murder For Pleasure*, Howard Haycraft was able to provide an account of the first hundred years of crime fiction without referring to Forester once.

The uncertain way in which the commentators have treated *Payment Deferred* is reflected by the way in which our most celebrated critic of crime, Julian Symons, has wavered in his assessment of the book. He thought it merited inclusion in the list of the 100 best crime books which he produced for *The Sunday Times* in 1959, but on reflection decided that it did not qualify for a mention in the first edition of his history of the genre, *Bloody Murder*, which came out in 1972. The central

About the Author



Martin Edwards was born at Knutsford in Cheshire (the setting for Elizabeth Gaskell's "Cranford") in 1955. Educated in Northwich and at Balliol College, Oxford, he then trained as a solicitor in Leeds and moved to Liverpool on qualifying in 1980. He published his first legal article at the age of 25 and first text book - on the legal aspects of buying a business computer - at 27. He became a partner in the firm of Mace & Jones in 1984. Married with two children, he is now living in Lymm.

His writing falls into four categories: legal writing; the editing of crime anthologies; studies and reviews of crime fiction - and crime fiction of his own. He has published seven novels about the Liverpool solicitor and amateur detective, Harry Devlin. The first, *All The Lonely People*, was published in 1991; the latest is *First Cut is the Deepest*. Short stories about Harry Devlin have appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and in various anthologies and he has also used the short form to experiment with a wide variety of other types of crime story. He completed the late Bill Knox's unfinished novel *The Lazarus Widow*. His own latest novel is *Take My Breath Away* - a psychological thriller set in London.

theme of that work was that "the detective story has changed into the crime novel" and Symons depicted a more or less clear historical progress, including the rise of the detective novel in the early years of the present century, the "Golden Age" of the Twenties and Thirties and then rebellion against amongst both British writers and their American counterparts. Amongst the British rebels he numbered Richard Hull, C.E. Vulliamy, F. Tennyson Jesse and Raymond Postgate, but his starting point - having quoted from the well-known preface to Anthony Berkeley's *The Second Shot* (1930) was to say: "The promise of a 'novel with a detective or crime interest' made by Anthony Berkeley was fulfilled by his alter ego Francis Iles. Symons continues by describing both *Malice Aforethought* and the second book which Berkeley (A. B. Cox) wrote under the Iles name.

Yet it is plain that in *The Second Shot* Berkeley is describing the changing nature of the crime writer's concerns at that time, rather than making a forecast. *Malice Aforethought* boasts a final surprise which is, in fact, very similar to that at the end of *Payment Deferred*. It is easy to believe that the earlier novel exerted a considerable influence upon his approach, although it should be added that the best of Berkeley/Iles books display a dry wit which Forester rarely attempted.

Intriguingly, the major change to the structure of *Bloody Murder* in the second edition of 1985 has seen Symons relegate the British "rebels" of the Thirties to the section in his chapter on the Golden Age of the decade which discusses achievements and limitations in that period; Hammett, Chandler and company are dealt with in a separate chapter on "The American Revolution". This time, Forester does rate a mention, albeit in the midst of a variety of "curiosities and singletons". "Low-toned but compelling" is the description which Symons applies to *Payment Deferred* and the other crime novel which Forester wrote, *Plain Murder*.

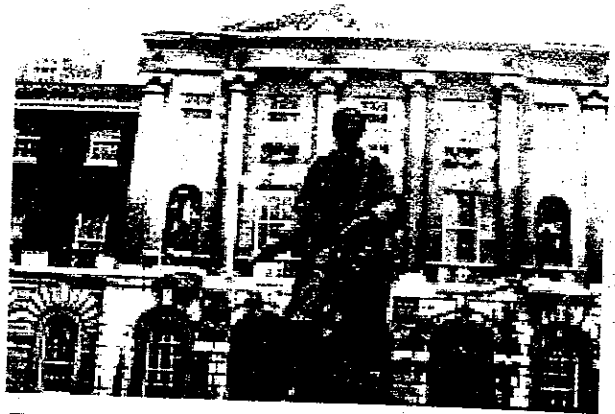
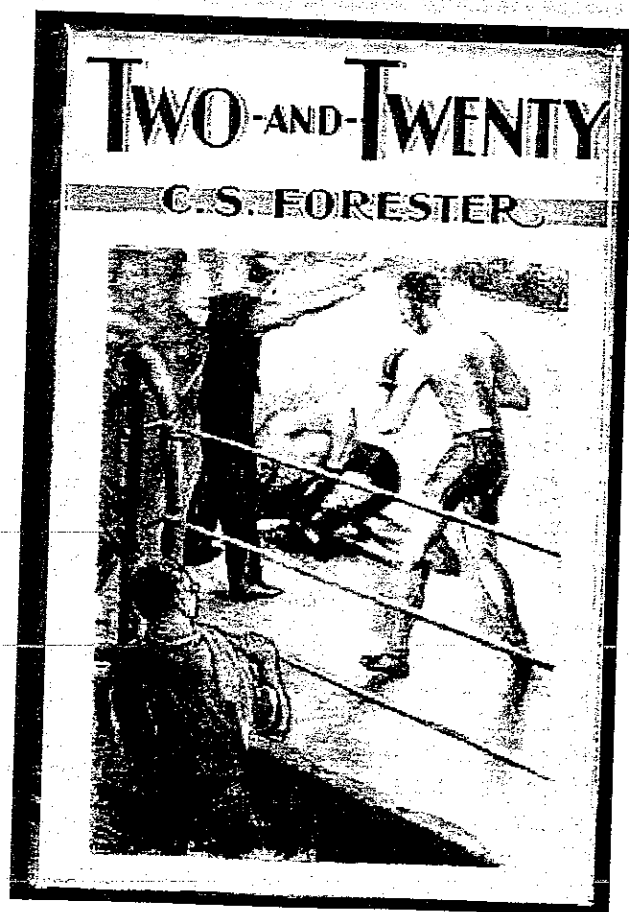
Plain Murder came out in 1930, again before *Malice Aforethought* and it is clear that, although it is an excellent story told with considerable style, the latter did not have as much originality as has often been claimed. Having said that, one must admit that in *Plain Murder* Forester did not do much more than repeat himself. Three advertising men resort to killing a colleague as a means of avoiding dismissal and the grim prospect of joining the dole queues. The ringleader, Morris, acquires a taste for crime, but eventually gets his come-uppance. Once again, the book displays Forester's gift for conveying the despair of the lower middle class at a time of economic crisis and the circumstances in which that despair can lead to murder. His description of the world of advertising, too, bears comparison with the pictures created by Sayers in *Murder Must Advertise* and by Symons in *The 31st Of February*.

Perhaps Forester felt that he was not able to contribute much more to crime fiction; for whatever reason, he turned his attention to other subjects. A couple of his short stories, "The Turn Of The Tide" and "The Letters In Evidence", still crop up occasionally in anthologies and show that he also had a talent for the short form; the latter story is one of the few epistolary tales of crime, the best known example of that sub-genre being Sayers' novel *The Documents In The Case*.

It would be regrettable if commentators and historians were to continue, by and large, to overlook *Payment Deferred*. It is more than simply a remarkable effort by a young, inexperienced writer. Its publication was a landmark and, unlike many detective stories of the time, it remains splendidly readable today. The neglect into which it has fallen is, one might say, as baffling as it is criminal.

Acknowledgements

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Forester and *Frankenstein*?

Planning this issue of *Reflections* had already made several false starts when Colin Blogg told me of his discovery, in the *Guy's Hospital Gazette*, of what could well be a piece written by CSF as a student. It seemed imperative to make yet another editorial plan, as with this piece - and Pete Tessier's article on *A Pawn among Kings* - to add to Martin Edward's case for *Payment Deferred* as an archetypal crime novel, there was enough material for a thorough reappraisal of Forester's first years as a writer.

On the next page, Colin Blogg argues the case for the young Forester's authorship of *The Dissection* from, among other factors, its close parallels with another little-known early work, the largely autobiographical *Two-and-Twenty*. This short article derives from my own reactions to the text of *The Dissection* before I had seen Colin's commentary.

The first was the notion that the piece was a parody of *Frankenstein*. But whereas Mary Shelley has her anatomist-turned-creator commit his transgression a quarter-way through her book, and drags out the suspense for 150 pages, *The Dissection* labours too long over setting the scene, only to squander the psychological opportunities available after the deed. In his early novels (*Payment Deferred* and *Plain Murder*) and in a mature short story (*The Head and the Feet*, from *The Nightmare*) Forester proved more than capable of effective suspense. Another factor, to which the writer of *The Dissection* draws such attention that it must be intentional, is the irritating way that much of this text - sometimes almost entire paragraphs - scans as sub-Shakespearian verse.

1918 was the centenary of the first publication of *Frankenstein*. Did the students of Guy's plan some kind of commemorative skit? And if so, was what appeared in *The Gazette* a harbinger of things to come, or a relic of a project that had already come to naught?

David Stead.

The Dissection - CSF's first publication?

Colin Blogg, MB, BS

Among the mysteries surrounding CSF's life is, What did he really do while he was a medical student? It appears from his autobiography, and from his son's biography, that he attended Guy's after being rejected, on medical grounds, for military service in World War I. With most fit males already in the services, this academically-gifted student would have been a welcome candidate. It is likely that he entered Guy's in October 1916 at the age of 17, to embark upon the first MB course (Physics, Chemistry and Biology). Having successfully completed that year, he would have begun the course for the second examination, which mainly comprised Anatomy, Physiology and *materia medica* (Pharmacology). He had no difficulty with Physiology and Pharmacology, but found Anatomy incomprehensible. It involved dissecting "parts" of the body, probably as one of a pair of students, and took up most of the working week. He failed 2nd MB in Anatomy and had to re-do the course. Meantime he indulged in some boxing for sport and began his future career by writing "humorous articles (God forgive me!) for the hospital Gazette."

The *Gazette* is proud of being the oldest medical school publication and took its role as the vehicle for campus news seriously. There were reports of rugby matches against the finest teams in the land. Rolls of Honour listing war fatalities of Guy's men dominated the pages but there was still room to record exam successes - CSF is not included, though his brother is mentioned three times. Descriptions of new medical advances vied for space with reports of tedious lectures. The occasional article still catches the eye - such as *Thyroxine for the treatment of the undescended testicle!* But there was little room for "humorous articles". I have scoured the *Gazettes* of 1917-1919 but found only two which could possibly fit the bill. Of these, *The Dissection* seems the more likely to have fallen from CSF's pen.² It tells of a medical student obsessed with dissecting who embarks on the ultimate dissection - of a living human. He entices a young girl to his top-floor lodgings in the High Street. He anaesthetises the girl in a manner showing complete lack of knowledge of the art.

Novels about murder became part of CSF's early stock-in-trade: *Payment Deferred*, *Plain Murder*, *Randall and*

the River of Time. The form of *The Dissection* as tightly-constructed short story, with a rather contrived ending, is not special to CSF but typical of much of his writing where he delights in an unexpected twist - in this case, the suicide of the villain. Other clues to the author's identity are hard to find. But I believe that one clue lies in the author's habit of apparent self-deprecation by falsely claiming a bad character trait which *he* sees as a virtue. He claims to be "cursed with a preternaturally acute sense of rhythm", an ability derided by his peers. At this time, CSF was writing sonnets (paying more than mere verse) for publication. And there is a comparable statement in *The Hornblower Companion*. Literary ability "is a curious ability to be born with. Like the freaks in the circus side-shows, I earn my living by my freakishness".³

CSF's fees at Guy's were paid by his elder brother Geoffrey, a doctor now posted as a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps to Egypt. Their father still had some influence there, and persuaded Geoffrey to call himself Foster-Smith for that reason. It is not certain what surname Cecil adopted - "Smith", "Foster-Smith" or "Troughton-Smith". He was called Cecil Lewis Troughton on his birth certificate, but never used that name. The fact that *The Dissection* was not signed perhaps lends support to the case that CSF was its author, as he did not adopt his definitive surname until required by his first publisher to adopt a *nom de plume* in 1922.

CSF's futile struggle with Anatomy is taken up in the largely autobiographical *Two-and-Twenty*. Cyril Leigh, CSF's *alter ego*, also chronically fails Anatomy. And like the narrator of *The Dissection*, Leigh lives on the top floor of lodgings off the [Borough] High Street, and has a fascination for the anatomical dissection. His crime is celebrating a Black Mass in the dissection room, for which he is sent down. He then scratches a living writing poetry and boxing for cash prizes. He meets and marries a physiotherapist, realises that he does not possess the poetic talent attributed to him by the sycophantic critics, and abandons literature for medicine.⁴ Could *The Dissection* be a coded message from a discontented student, reluctantly toying with a medical career when he was, thankfully, far better suited to writing?

¹ CS Forester, *Long before Forty*, Michael Joseph (1967), page 108; John Forester, *Novelist and Storyteller: the life of CS Forester* (2000), page 49.

² *The Dissection*, *Guy's Hospital Gazette*, 10 August, 1918, pages 255-258; cf. *Long before Forty*, page 94.

³ CS Forester, *The Hornblower Companion*, Chatham Publishing (1998), page 134; cf. *Long before Forty*, page 249.

⁴ CS Forester, *Two-and-Twenty*, The Bodley Head (1926); John Forester, *Novelist and Storyteller*, pages 221-224.

The Dissection



I was a student at Guy's Hospital and my favourite subject was anatomy. Dearly I loved it and carefully I studied it. I had been there three years, and already the Proficiency Prize was mine, and mine the prize dissections. How diligently I laboured, and with what care did I dissect; no artery so small as to escape me, no nerve too delicate to be cleaned by my discerning scalpel. The loud-voiced demonstrator never helped me with my work, but rather came and stood to watch me as I toiled, or to consult me on some trivial point he had forgotten. Always the first to come, I used to lose my sense of time and place, and labour on until at last Handcock, the dissecting-room attendant would come and touch me gently on the shoulder, telling me I must go, as it was time he locked the room and went away.

I think the lecturers must have feared me. Many a time I have stood up, a pale and dishevelled figure, at the back of the theatre and told them they were wrong in what they said, and they could not gainsay me, for they were only surgeons, and had not my detailed knowledge of anatomy, a knowledge only vouchsafed to him who loves the subject for its own sake.

I think the other students thought me mad; for apart from my anatomy, my only recreation was in verse. I am cursed with a preternaturally acute sense of rhythm, and even as I write these pages, try as I may, some of the lines *will* scan, or to my senses seem as if they did. I had no friends, I had no time for friends. I played no games, I never joined the luncheon parties to the "Bridge House", nor drank punch down at the "George", indeed, since I began dissecting, I took no mid-day meal, I could not spare the time, for as it was, the time was all too short. And it was always with a smile I lovingly unwrapped my part, and with a sigh I tenderly rewrapped it. In the evenings Gray's Anatomy was my sole companion and the lonely nights were only relieved by the thought of tomorrow's work.

Strange nights I sometimes had, strange nights, full of weird fancies; long lines of spectral forms would pass my bed, the first a stooping man all arteries and veins twisted and bent; the second, clanging bones and creaking ligaments crowned by a skull from whose black sockets glared such hideous eyes - I dare not look - then next a heavy convoluted brain supported on long

thread-like limbs; and last and worst of all, a moist and yielding mass of muscle, seething and twitching as it passed my bed. Again I dreamt that I was at a ball, and that the girl I loved was there, and I would gently take her hand in mine, then drop it with a shriek, finding it all neatly dissected out. And so I used to pass the weary nights.

Oh! how I hated the dreary Sundays with nothing to do but go over my "bones" again and again trying to conjure up mental pictures of the surrounding structures. Sometimes I would wander out into the streets and watch the passers-by, and as I watched, decide what muscles they were using and what structural variations altered their carriage and appearance; it is surprising how expert I became. Which of your surgeon-anatomists could tell as I could what muscles are brought into play when a bus-conductor clips a ticket, or a lady smiles? Dearly though I loved my anatomy, I was not wholly happy when dissecting; I could not forget how dead it all was, with its silent heart and bloodless veins. How different it must look when it was all alive and as it should be. How often have I pictured it, the rhythmically throbbing arteries, the sluggish flowing but distended veins, each holding as it throbs the warm life blood, the ever-watchful nerves, alert to flash a lightning message to arouse the strong but sleeping muscles. Oh! what would I not give to dissect a part like that - to feel the warmth of life, not chilly death, - to clean and follow out and artery when one small slip would flood your work with living torrents of the red life blood. Ah! That were real, real skill; that were excitement meet for the mighty gods, would I might taste such joy, bliss unalloyed, joy of immortal Zeus.

Perhaps you will say that surgery would satisfy my craving, but you are wrong. A surgeon has one fixed thing to do and does it in the shortest time, disregarding and ruthlessly cutting through all those minute blood vessels and nerves that are the delight of the true anatomist. He has none of the scientist's spirit of patient enquiry, and the dissector's love of vessels perfectly cleaned and displayed. No, - surgery would be no good to me; I must and would dissect a living part. You, who have not the scientific spirit may wonder that I could wish to dissect a part that really lived. But it is simple. The scientist, but more especially the surgeon, when at his work must learn to banish completely the human side of his nature. Every surgeon realises this, and rightly refuses to operate on a near relation. The surgeon must regard himself simply as an engineer, called in to repair the most efficient and intricate machine in existence, and if he take up and more personal attitude, *ipso facto*, he

becomes a bad surgeon. So it was with me, my emotional side was banished absolutely, and I knew I could dissect any living part with steady hand. Having come to this momentous decision, I set about my preparations with the careful caution that becomes a scientific man. Slowly, by degrees, I collected the apparatus for administering the anaesthetic, and the hundred and one other odd things I might require, not forgetting the long high table for the subject. I needed no stool, as I always stood to dissect. Indeed, I believe my back is permanently bent with the long hours of stooping.

I lived in two large rooms at the top of a decrepit old house in a little alley off the Borough High Street. My landlady, a deaf woman, lived in the little kitchen at the back of the ground floor, and I was the only lodger, the rest of the rooms being used as a warehouse for furniture. Luckily my room, being at the top of the house, had a large skylight, so that there was excellent top-lighting for my work. When everything was prepared, I waited and watched for my opportunity. Weeks I waited for the great day, for I knew it would be the height of folly to spoil everything by undue haste. How excited I was as I watched! How I longed for my opportunity to come; but the hour that the heavens had appointed was not yet. I waited three long weeks before the great day came. . . .

It was a lovely spring morning, and I felt instinctively that my day had come at last! Silently, I went down the rotting stairs and stood peering up and down the cobbled alley, it was as I had expected. Not a soul about, only that one little girl sitting on the kerb, gaily laughing at a sparrow splashing about in a saucer of dirty water. She was a perfect subject, thin and underfed, but with a colour that spoke of a sound heart and excellent health. Smilingly I approached her, smilingly she greeted me. "Will you come and tidy up my room for me if I give you sixpence?" I asked.

She was delighted, and gaily chatting, followed me up the creaking stairs to the place that was prepared for her. She suspected nothing, and was soon inhaling the anaesthetic confidingly. Indeed the gods were kind! . . .

The dissection was a picture; I had decided on the left leg and foot and I worked perfectly. Never, no never! shall I forget those happy minutes; the warm flesh, the distended veins, the breathing arteries, and over all that sweet sick smell Ah! The joy of it, such joy as comes but once! Yes, 'twas perfection! It was Paradise! But presently I paused, I could not keep this child unconscious long; soon she would come to life; and she would see all I had done. At the thought, back surged the dead emotion of my heart, and all my scientific senses rose in one last clamorous outburst and were gone, leaving me in a state of palsied fear.

Yes. She would wake and torn her wondering eyes first to the wretched thing that I had done, and she would see her softly-moulded limb a shredded mass of lacerated flesh. And then the wondering eyes would turn on me, me who had done this thing. And she would see me shiver as she gazed. And all the wonder in her eyes would turn to scorn and hate. And I should feel those eyes burn to my soul. And all the soul I had would shrink and crack. Oh, save me! Oh, my God! At length I see. For paltry science I have sold my soul; and science is but curiosity!

What could I do? If she awoke I felt that I was lost. There was but one solution, she must never wake. Yes, it was hard, but she must never wake. She never did. So I escaped the scorching horror of her gaze. . . .

That was two days ago. All yesterday she lay stretched on the long high table, and her dead lips smiled. She smiled at me, it was a dreadful smile; as if she knew the heavens held some appalling punishment for me which would repay her for her outraged limb. My God! My God! I could not bear that smile, it burnt my brain, it beat against my throat, it thrust me back. I screamed, or tried to scream. I could not close my eyes. I could not breathe. My very blood stopped in its twisted course, my heart ceased from its throbbings and I sobbed aloud. My God! My God! O save me from this hell which is a smile! But no one heard my prayer – I was alone – alone with the deathly smile. I beat my way back to the living corpse. I tried to smother it, that scornful smile pregnant with doom. I piled the moistened rags high on her mouth. I cast sheet after sheet over the mocking face. It is no use, the smile pierces them through. Ah! shall I ever lose that haunting smile? One thing, I know I dare not spend another night in the same room with it.

And now, I sit and write these, my last words, and the great horror of the smile seems to diminish; as I pen this, my confession, maybe she feels it to be some recompense. But be that as it may, I sit and wait the coming of the night. And when night comes, and it is dark and late – it must be late, so that the little children are in bed, because I dare not meet another child, - then I shall gently wrap her in a coat, and I shall take my burden to the bridge; right past the corner where the old white-bearded man sells lemonade, and down the shallow steps whose feet stand in black water. Then I shall give my bundle to the Thames, and send it floating down the soft and silent waters to the sea.

And I shall watch the smile drifting away, then I must follow it into the Thames, for I must know the reason for that smile.⁵

⁵ *The Dissection* is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor, *GKT Gazette*.

A Pawn among Kings Pete Tessier

I approached this book with as open a mind as I could muster having earlier read Forester's own thoughts in *Long Before Forty*. He was not encouraging. "I had not learned how to use material. I never bothered to stop and think out important details until I had actually reached the point when they arose." Or this. "My theme had carried me away on this occasion. In my anxiety to develop the plot – I made a lamentable hash of what might have been quite a good book."¹

Historically, *A Pawn among Kings* was the third novel that Forester penned but the first to be published, in 1924. Having obtained a copy of my favourite author's first published work and mindful of Stevenson's "It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive" how could I not read it?

Whilst it has a cast of thousands there are three main characters: Napoleon; his lifelong Corsican enemy, one Count Andrea Pozzo di Borgo, and the 17-year-old "pawn", Marie de Berzeny – a displaced Hungarian orphan in the manipulative hands of the other two. Again I turn to Forester himself for the basis of the plot. "When I was a small boy, my attention had been caught by three remarkable incidents, all of the same character in Napoleon's career, which had never been properly explained – occasions when his volcanic energy deserted him and he delayed with fatal results just at the moment when he should have been most active."²

For the "pawn" to be effective Marie has to endure a number of epic treks across vast expanses of Europe just to be in the right place at the wrong time. Having arrived Forester conveniently places her in Napoleon's path. During one of a series of lectures at the National Maritime Museum a few years ago it was suggested that Forester's one weakness was in his depiction of women as the love interest in novels. Whilst his consistency starts with this novel I wonder whether he is merely a product of his time being judged by those of us from a more open society.

Forester's strength has always been in his ability to draw the reader into the heat of battle. Without doubt this book is worth reading for that alone; if only to discover that an influential factor in the majority of the campaigns was mud, glorious mud.

¹ C.S. Forester, *Long before Forty*, Michael Joseph (1967), pages 128; 129.

² *Long before Forty*, page 127.



Does Forester utilise the "pawn" to explain events? Let the author persuade you.

"He almost decided to call upon his armies and himself for one last effort and fling himself upon his foes, but he wavered. The one tiny, unassertive fact swayed the balance towards delay – and towards ultimate defeat. Marie was with him, and he yearned inexpressibly for a few days peace with her."³

A summary is provided by one of the peripheral characters, Colonel d'Evrigny.

"You have sucked the blood of the whole Grand Army. Through you, half a million men died in Russia. You stayed the Emperor's hand at Dresden. You drove him mad at Leipzig so that the brave boys died in the stinking mud of the Elster. Now the Bavarians have turned against him. Must you keep him in thrall until you have seen the last of his power and strength?"⁴

³ C.S. Forester, *A Pawn among Kings*, Methuen (1924), page 154.

⁴ *A Pawn among Kings*, pages 186-187.

I enjoyed this novel but thought that the last chapter was a superfluous historical gloss in an effort to avoid a questioning reader considering Napoleon's fate. Forester noted that the early reviews "were tepid – the kindly sort of review dealt out to a first novel written by an obviously earnest beginner" And "the sale of a first novel which did not succeed was not fifteen hundred copies at all, apparently; only five hundred".⁵ *A Pawn among Kings* is, therefore, not commonly available – but worth a read if you can find it.

By way of a postscript, in *The Hornblower Companion* Forester observes, regarding an initial stimulus for a book: "It sinks in the horrid depths of my subconscious like a waterlogged timber into the slime at the bottom of the harbour... sooner or later, some timber is found with barnacles growing on it".⁶ When reading *A Pawn among Kings*, I came across this. "MacDonald is the man I am surest of – give him Yorck's Prussians and Grandjean's Swiss. With them he can move on Riga and guard our left from any action those cursed English may take in the Baltic."⁷ It would appear that this barnacle resurfaced some twenty years later. "The commodore was not the cause of all this [the discussion, after a century-and-a-half of silence, of adultery in the *Post*], but he certainly was the *Saturday Evening Post's* first adulterer".⁸



⁵ *Long before Forty*, pages 154; 156.

⁶ C.S. Forester, *Some personal notes*, *Long before Forty*, Michael Joseph (1967), page 177; *The Hornblower Companion*, Chatham Publishing (1998), page 73.

⁷ *A Pawn among Kings*, page 38.

⁸ *Some personal notes*, *Long before Forty*, page 222; *The Hornblower Companion*, page 111.



The *St James's Theatre* at 23-24 King Street, where *Payment Deferred* played in 1931. The venue had been constructed as an aristocrat's town house in 1695. In 1776-1811 it was the original site of a *Nerot's Hotel*, whose patrons included Horatio Nelson and Edmund Burke. The house eventually became derelict. It was demolished and replaced by a theatre in 1835, by John Braham (originally Abram) who had enjoyed decades of success as a tenor after his debut in 1787.. In the closing years of the 19th century, it staged Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windemere's Fan* and *The Importance of being Earnest*.

The *St James's* was managed 1919-1954 by Gilbert Miller, an American. During the 1920s, the theatre had experienced mixed fortunes. Gerald du Maurier and Gladys Cooper had had a run of successes with *The Last of Mrs Cheney*, *Charley's Aunt* and *Interference*, before coming to grief with *SOS* (with Gracie Fields, 1928) and its sequels. A.A. Milnes's *Michael and Mary* was a big hit in 1930, to be followed by several unsuccessful productions: *A Murder has been Arranged*, by Emyln Williams; Sheridan's *A Trip to Scarborough* - and, between them, in May 1931, *Payment Deferred*, by C.S. Forester!

In April 1932 the theatre re-opened for a season of Shakespeare: *Othello* flopped, but *The Merchant of Venice* was a huge success. Later that year, Van Druten's *Behold We Live* started a run of 158 performances and audiences again filled the theatre for du Maurier and Gertrude Lawrence. Miller, meanwhile, had taken *Payment Deferred* – but not its creator – to Broadway.

PARALLEL COURSES?

THE CAPTAIN WROTE HOME in January 1805. The main news was that his ship had safely arrived at Portsmouth and that prospects bade fair. After nearly two decades of yeoman service he now saw the chance of a voyage that would bring in enough money to ensure a comfortable future for himself and the relations from whom he had recently parted. Life had been quite a struggle so far. To the usual perils of long sea voyages in the age of sail were added the dangers of seemingly interminable wars with the French. Recruiting experienced officers was no less of a problem than finding able-bodied men, whether trained or not, at a time when press-gangs were active and mutiny was always a threat. The captain had, however, proved himself equal to emergencies. For his part in beating off an attack by a French squadron off the Malay Peninsula, the Patriotic Fund had presented him with a sword. The honour had been made all the more acceptable by the grant of a gratification amounting to less than 500 guineas.

The captain was, however, anything but a bluff sea dog. Dealing with the authorities in London who controlled his destiny required the skills of a diplomat, as well as a certain readiness to pull strings in a system that was shamelessly corrupt as well as heartlessly demanding. On board he maintained discipline, with the lash if need be. Yet he was soft-hearted too, protective towards his brother and hesitant in his relationships with girls back home. Country life appealed to him, though he was always anxious to find employment at sea. Professional studies did not mean he had no time for poetry. It was not just a question of remembering passages of verse that he had learnt when a youngster either. His reading while at sea included Shakespeare and even Spenser, as well as more modern poets.

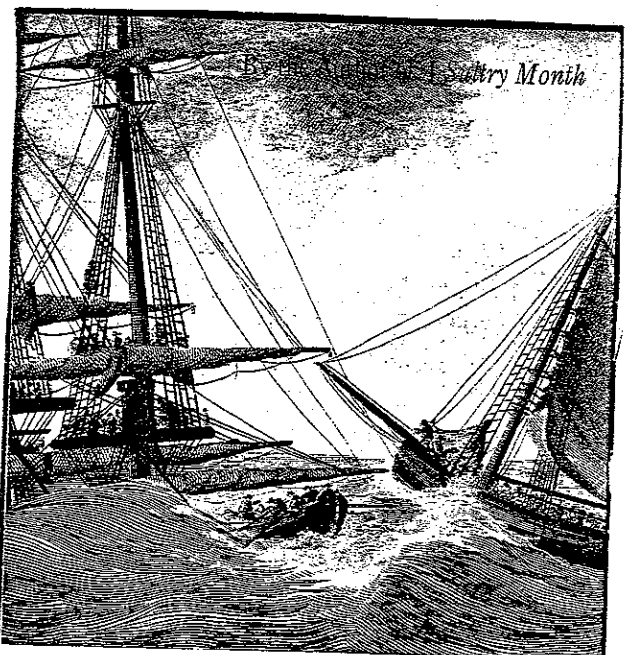
The proposed voyage would be a long one, to Canton by way of Bengal. It held out great opportunities for making money. Despite earlier disappointments, the captain apparently had little difficulty in persuading stay-at-home members of his family to join with him in a private speculation that was condoned in the service. So the ship was loaded with a great miscellany of goods intended for trade in the East, as well as a large sum in silver coin. A detachment of soldiers had also embarked and a number of civilians of both sexes, whose passage money was another of the captain's perks. In all, there were some four hundred souls on board, not to mention the cattle and poultry intended to supplement preserved provisions.

Whether or not in full uniform – blue cloth coat with black collar and buff silk lining, white silk stockings and cocked hat – the captain was entitled to feel that he had already achieved a lot even before setting out.

by **Christopher Smith**

Any sense of satisfaction quickly evaporated. The plan was to form a convoy, with H.M.S. *Weymouth*, a 44-gun frigate, in support. But a collision caused delay, the captain was unhappy about the commodore's choice of what he regarded as the more dangerous option of a course through the Needles Channel, and foul weather cast the squadron into total disarray. That was not all. While under the direction of an unskilled pilot, the ship ran on to the Shambles, off Portland, at five o'clock on the evening of 5 February.

Through the long, dark night every effort was made to save the ship, but in vain. Many lives were lost, and the captain was among the dead. Reports have it that he had lost heart when his ship ran on to shoals. "Oh! pilot! pilot! You have ruined me!" he cried, and at the final moment, "It cannot be helped. God's will be done" were his words. Both exclamations may well have been invented by pamphleteers to give dramatic force to their narratives of the disaster, but they are not out of character. Shipwreck seemed all the worse because it occurred at the very outset of the voyage to the East and because the vessel sank in shallow waters not far from the shore.



THE WRECK OF THE ABERGAVENNY

One of Britain's Greatest Maritime Disasters
and its Links to Literary Genius

ALETHEA HAYTER

THE CAPTAIN was not, of course, Horatio Hornblower. As the description of his uniform will already have revealed to some readers, he was an officer in the employ of the East India Company. His ship was *The Earl of Abergavenny*, a well-founded three-masted vessel. The story of her sinking is related by Alethea Hayter in a study that focuses on the disaster largely because the captain was John Wordsworth, the brother of William. By 1805 the poet was making a reputation, and the financial difficulties that dogged his earlier years had become less pressing. Now he had to mourn a dearly loved younger brother and regret the loss of money that he could hardly afford. The blow was bitter, and the experience of tragedy added a dimension to his poetry at this stage in his development.

Though Alethea Hayter's interests are primarily literary, her study contains much that will appeal to readers who enjoy C.S. Forester's evocations of Nelson's time. They will be fascinated by an abundance of detail about victualling a ship for a long voyage and about ship handling, by reminders of the stench of an overcrowded vessel as well as the tang of the salt sea. How was it best to trim the sails when *The Earl of Abergavenny* ploughed into the shoal? Could the ship's boats have been handled better? And, as in the Hornblower novels, descriptions of private and public life on shore in Georgian England, like political developments in Europe, provide the backcloth to endeavour on the seas. Above all, there is the intriguing contrast between a tough, strenuous life and a sensitive and engaging personality.

Alethea Hayter is an authority on the Romantic era, and her account is a scrupulously researched work of factual scholarship. She has, however, the confidence to write in an attractive, swift-moving style, dispensing with footnotes yet providing a useful bibliography. She has too the imagination to illustrate her account with comparisons with characters in Jane Austen. It says a lot for the sureness of C.S. Forester's sense of period that parallels with his fictional hero and his world will also spring to mind time and again. Hornblower fans will, to coin a paradox, enjoy *The Wreck of the "Abergavenny"*.

Alethea Hayter, *The Wreck of the "Abergavenny"* (London: Macmillan, 2002), £14.99

Further information – the Weymouth Diving Club
web site - www.weymouthdiving.co.uk

The Wreck Detectives

To date, the wreck of the *Abergavenny* has given up only some of its secrets, like the East India Company badge found by the Weymouth Diving Club two years ago



Salvage work on *The Earl of Abergavenny* began at once, and continued until the end of March 1806 when, having recovered most of the cargo, the wreck was blown up. In the last three decades, the wreck site has been subjected to systematic investigation, using modern technology and techniques, by the Weymouth Diving Club and its predecessor, the Chelmsford Underwater Archaeological Unit. An enormous amount of data is therefore available on the WDC web site. This is also to be made available on CD-ROM and in a forthcoming book by Ed Cumming of the Diving Club.

One 20th-century wreck detective's life reads like a novel in itself. Margaret Siriol Colley was evacuated in 1940 to Canada, where she began her medical education. She was then a GP in Nottingham for 35 years. In retirement, she took up scuba diving - with sharks in the South China Seas, with sea lions off the Galapagos Islands. Her marine archaeology has taken her to the German High Seas Fleet, scuttled in Scapa Flow, as well as to the wreck of the *Abergavenny*.

The Earl of Abergavenny was just one of an estimated 1330 Indiamen which traded during the lifetime of John Company. A new generation of historians is addressing the British Raj, but one of their predecessors was C Northcote Parkinson, author of *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower* - and of *Trade in the Eastern Seas, 1793-1813*, Cambridge (1937). John Wordsworth, of course, is the captain we know most about, because of his famous brother. Much material on the Life and Times of William Wordsworth is to be seen at the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere, and at Gallows Hill in Brompton-by-Sawdon, between Scarborough and Pickering, where he married farmer's daughter Mary Hutchinson just 200 years ago. Many of the Wordsworth's family and business letters have also survived and there is more in the India Office Archives. Further information about the *Abergavenny* - and Weymouth's many wrecks, most of which ended up on Chesil Beach west of Portland - is to be seen in the Portland Museum and the Brewer's Quay on Weymouth waterfront. Highly recommended - like the website below, which nows reveal that the wreck of the *Earl of Abergavenny* will be one of eight programmes to be featured in a series called *The Wreck Detectives* - to be shown on Channel 4 and The Discovery Channel next spring.

David Stead

Long before Forty – revelation or enigma?

David Stead

"On C.S. Forester's death, the archives of his bank revealed the autobiography of his first thirty-one years." It was, according to the publishers, a godsend to fans and an inspiration for would-be authors. Perversity – or folly – prompts further questions. *Why* was *Long before Forty* written? *When* was it written? And why was it never published? It was obviously never *finished* – which answers one question, only by raising another!

Two published works offer explanations. John Forester *retrospectively* reports that CSF "felt impelled" to write two books: his very first novel, and *The Nightmare*. He suggests he was also impelled to write *Long before Forty*, because the book has little other reason for being. Sanford Sternlicht had suggested a reason in 1981: *LBF* was a legacy, or rather a trap, for biographers! John riposted that CSF's only concern had been with immediate credibility. In 1926, he had spun a web of lies around his own life, so elaborate that he then needed a prompt sheet to avoid being trapped over details!¹

John's *initial* discussion of *LBF* had set it against the backdrop of *Payment Deferred*. Hitherto, Cecil had been happy if friends and neighbours talked (at least as he thought) about "Cecil Smith – the novelist who writes as C.S. Forester". When the publisher hired an agency to promote the novel, and needed a brief biography, he was horrified that legions of new fans would realise that their idol was really only Cecil Smith, with Cecil Smith's humdrum background! So, he "started writing down the account of his life... as a record of what he had told people, in particular those who had prepared the publicity for *PD*, so that he had a consistent life story and would not be tripped up by contradictions".²

Now, one of *LBF*'s obvious aims is to present a picture of a near-genius: brighter than his accomplished elder brother, creator of *Payment Deferred* at the age of just 23! John cites the private correspondence to nail *that* lie – of which a variant is, remarkably, still doing the rounds. But *PD* accounts for well under 10% of *LBF* – so what about the rest? And does "the truth" about a writer or artist matter? When I first met *Mr Midshipman Hornblower*, it was vital to know, for different reasons, that Eric Blair lurked behind "George Orwell", and that "Ringo" was really Richard Starkey. But from another viewpoint, such "truth" is irrelevant. I found only recently that Elizabeth MacKintosh was Gordon Daviot before she became Josephine Tey – and that CS Forester was really CLT Smith! No publicist needs 50,000-words on a

client's early life – rather a fact or anecdote or two that can be spun into 250. The trouble with the autocue hypothesis is that *LBF* could hardly serve such a purpose. Far from being glib, it verges on incoherence; it is a labyrinth, rather than a set of signposts.

The problem with John's retrospective explanation is – what is meant by "impelled"? A young wannabee novelist may well bash out an incoherent, implausible and near-unreadable penny dreadful. But this is a very different scenario from that of an accomplished professional writer, lured by the incentive of subject matter that will sell, challenged by bizarre realities that surpass those of the imagination, and addressing an obligation to humanity; one is *compelled*, not impelled, to discharge a moral duty. To me, all John is saying is that *LBF* exists because CSF wrote it! The reason why remains to be addressed.

Sternlicht's hypothesis lacks *evidence* that CSF *intended* posthumous publication, as he certainly did with *The Last Encounter*. But both Sternlicht and John Forester argue from hindsight – from the *fact* of the posthumous discovery of *LBF* to an *assumption* that CSF *never* intended or even envisaged publication. Three passages show that, far from indulging a time-consuming whim, he looked forward to the book taking its due place in print.

That hope was never realised. *LBF* breaks off before reaching its stated goal, with one appended chapter to explain why. The last paragraph says that not everything from "thirty-one years of a man's life" is there. For 1926-1930, there is indeed much left out. Not the *Annie Marble* voyages, alluded to here, as described in two separate volumes. But *Brown on Resolution*, *Plain Murder* (a second successful crime novel) and, in effect, *Nelson* (the crowning glory of the biographies, only casually mentioned). To claim such omissions were unavoidable, as the book was already too long, was idiotic. The published text is 166 pages, the discarded passages – recovered by John – perhaps two more. If the missing years had been given comparable treatment to those included, the work might have finished near 200 pages, a perfect length. It would have been, even more self-evidently, a substantial work of some literary merit. And had the publishers not rushed into print in 1967, they might have reinstated a more adequate conclusion – and an important admission that the work was written tongue-in-cheek, so pre-empting many misconceptions about its purpose.³

¹ John Forester, *Novelist and Storyteller: the life of CS Forester* (2000), pages 777-778.

² *Novelist and Storyteller*, pages 65-76.

³ CS Forester, *Long before Forty*, Michael Joseph (1967), pages 167; 172-173; cf. *Novelist and Storyteller*, pages 744-746.

When, therefore, was *LBF* written? John Forester says 1930, but this is difficult. It may contain earlier material, from a proposed volume on the writer's craft, rejected by Methuen in the spring of 1927. References to "the security of the 1930s", and the Foresters having enjoyed 8 years without financial embarrassment, are hardly compatible with the beginning of that decade - and a deleted passage refers to "years of knocking about in Europe" after the *Annie Marble* voyages.⁴ The best pointer is the statement that Lane had published "a dozen books" since accepting *Payment Deferred*. To us, the 12th book in a list that includes *PD* is *Death to the French* (1932), the 12th book after *PD* is *The Gun* (1933). If, however, *LBF* is included in the catalogue, and CSF means that as *I write these very words*, Lane has already published a dozen books, then he is writing in 1932 or 1933! Conclusive proof comes in another passage: *Napoleon and His Court* will not be found "in the list of my books which prefaces this one"! Why not? Because *Napoleon* was published by Methuen before I signed for Lane, *the publishers of the book you are now reading!*⁵ And herein may lie the explanation of why *LBF* was never published: it may not have been ready when CSF, for whatever reason, parted with Lane after the 14th book, *Nurse Cavell*, for two years with Heinemann.

If so, why was *LBF* not ready? The answer may emerge from the odyssey of *Payment Deferred*, from page to stage to screen. The book came out a week before the General Strike began. Six weeks before, CSF had received documentation for the play, about to go into rehearsal at St James' Theatre. Once its run began, he was off with his motorboat to the Loire. By the time [*LBF*] was published, the play might have made his fortune. Or not. If the worst came to the worst, his bloated body would be floating down the river, as his spirit enjoyed a bizarre resurrection in the wings! A problem remains - but here is the third proof of intent to publish *LBF*.⁶

Payment Deferred made the career of Charles Laughton (1899-1962). He was the son of a Scarborough hotelier, who turned to drama in the 1920s. His rise was rapid. He joined RADA in 1925, and won a gold medal. In 1926 he appeared in *The Government Inspector* in London. In 1928, he played Hercule Poirot in Agatha Christie's *Alibi*. By 1931, he was appearing in *Payment Deferred* in New York. The play moved straight from the West End to Broadway - not, apparently, on account of its merits.

Payment Deferred was adapted for stage and screen by Jeffrey Dell, who evidently tried to improve upon the plot, with dubious results. Marble's problems include not just butcher's bills, but the costs of his daughter's secretarial

⁴ *Long before Forty*, pages 167; 172-173; *Novelist and Storyteller*, pages 190; 744-745.

⁵ *Long before Forty*, pages 143; 169.

⁶ *Long before Forty*, page 171.

C.S. Forester

LONG

BEFORE

FORTY

course, and an ultimatum from his employers. Medland is Marble's stalking-horse in the financial scam, and falls victim when he refuses to share the proceeds. Winnie discovers her father's affair with Rita Collins, and tells her mother to get revenge after a family row. Marble's denials are believed, until Annie catches him paying Rita off, and takes the fatal dose. If this is bad enough, the coda is worse. Winnie visits Marble in prison, finds him a changed man: a repentant sinner, at peace with himself and the world, reconciled to his deferred but thoroughly-deserved imminent hanging, and apparently reconciled to the wife who awaits him in heaven. Though public executions have long ceased, their traditions live on!

The play opened in New York on 30 September, 1931, at the original Lyceum Theatre on West 45th Street, built in 1903 and now Broadway's oldest theatre still in use. The length of its run is unknown, but it brought success to Miller, to Dell, - and of course to Laughton, who went on to Hollywood. He had already appeared in several silent films, and married his co-star Elsa Lanchester. His first Hollywood film was *The Old Dark House* (1932). That same year, he played Nero in De Mille's *The Sign of the Cross*, and Dr Moreau in *The Island of Lost Souls*. Laughton famously remarked that he had "a face like the behind of an elephant." But this was no handicap. He starred as the archetypal Englishman in a run of literary

adaptions by MGM. Dissolute monarch in *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), respectable father in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (1934), psychopathic captain in *Mutiny on the Bounty*, unflappable butler in the comedy *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1935), and original choice as Micawber in *David Copperfield*. At the head of this list stood MGM's *Payment Deferred*, released in 1932.

That was the year in which CSF – allegedly – went to Hollywood for the first of many times, in Laughton's *entourage*. John Forester demonstrates incontrovertibly that CSF's *only* pre-war trip to Hollywood was at Christmas 1935, but the origin of the Laughton story is a little blurred. It was one among many of the fables which CSF concocted "in later years" – discussed together, and retrospectively, from the perspective of the late 30s or 40s, perhaps conflated with the 1985 reminiscences of CSF's long-time buddy Niven Busch.⁷ These fables stood more chance of belief if there was a gap between the time *when* and the time *about* which they were told wide enough for people to have forgotten the truth – if in the meantime, CSF had achieved fame and fortune, or World War II had utterly transformed their perceptions.

There may be external evidence. The cover of a 1955 Penguin claims that "in 1932 Forester was offered a Hollywood contract, and from then until 1939 he spent thirteen weeks of every year in America". But 16 years can be narrowed to 3! The jacket of the January 1952 printing of Michael Joseph's 1950 edition of *The Ship* omits the claim: "his first successful novel, *Payment Deferred*, was written at the age of twenty-four, and later dramatised and filmed with Charles Laughton in the leading role. Many of his most successful novels are sea stories..." This dates from 1952, not 1950: the latest book listed on page 2 is *The Sky and the Forest*, the latest on the jacket is *Randall and the River of Time*. It was written, then, just before the release of *The African Queen* on film! No argument from silence can be final. But it is reasonable to suppose that tales of CSF's first years in Hollywood surfaced at the time of his great Hollywood success.

Forester, then, may have resented the fact that he had been the biggest loser from the filming of *Payment Deferred*. In later years, he asserted that the opposite had been the case. At the time, he had had [one more] reason to all-but abandon a book whose publication, he had hoped, would coincide with his debut as a screen-writer. He had already tampered with the chronology – to make his Loire voyage of 1929 coincide with the staging of *Payment Deferred* in 1931. He may have tinkered with the text after that – remarks that sound like the later 30s, deletions of references to his wife and son, whose logical concomitant was his change of status in the 40s.

⁷ *Novelist and Storyteller*, pages 308-312.

Even then, he could have been considering publication. The *Personal Notes* added to *The Hornblower Companion* began at about the point LBF had broken off, with the *Annie Marble* voyages.

But publication would have required completion and substantial revision, and it was not to be. LBF was forgotten for years, apart from an odd modification of one of its fables, still being circulated by Penguin Books, that CSF wrote *Payment Deferred* at the age of twenty-four.

The General and the Saint

The precocious Otto Weininger (1880-1903) showed his thoughts on *Sex and Character* in imperial Vienna to Sigmund Freud. Freud advised him to learn something about the subject, whereupon Weininger took his own life. But his work lived on: an English translation of 1906 was read, or quoted, with awe by schoolboys: No man who *thinks* about women retains a high opinion of them; the man who does not despise them just hasn't *thought*.

In August 1918, Cecil fled the pains of adolescence – and of academia – for 4 weeks of solitude, in a secluded site beside Brookwood Cemetery. There he communed with the birch and the fir, avoiding all human contact save the intrusions of nosy children and bargees on the Wey Canal, and the necessary forays for food and water.⁸

He may well indeed have lain low, among the camps which stretched from Woking to Aldershot, like Rifleman Dodd amid Masséna's bivouacs in Spain. But he mistook the canal. The Wey Navigation runs south from Woking to Guildford; Brookwood Cemetery is west of Woking, but beside the *Basingstoke* Canal!

If he was there, he may have had his first encounter with a lady recalled decades later in a great short story. In a previous piece (*August with Eliza!* In the December 2001 Supplement) I had opined that CSF probably discovered Elizabeth of Hungary during the *Annie Marble* voyages.

That remains my favourite. But I had also learnt of "20th century" stained glass commemorating her at Eversley, Hants. I still have no confirmation of either notion – but the chronology is possible, and Eversley just a bike-ride from Brookwood, as CSF *could* have found out in 1918!

Another anecdote from *St Elizabeth of Hungary* is now exposed as a myth by historian Peter Hofschroer. Called upon to surrender at Waterloo, the Imperial Guard

⁸ *Long before Forty*, pages 84-85.

commander Cambronne replied with earthy disdain – by most accounts, with a 5-letter word, politely expanded to *la Garde meurt mais ne se rend pas*. Hofschröder, author of several books on the armies of German-speaking states in the Napoleonic Wars, shows Cambronne *did* in fact surrender: The noble sentence was invented by a journalist after the battle, and immediately taken up as fact. *Merde* first appeared in Hugo's *Les Misérables* of 1862. By then, Cambronne himself had offered another variant: "buggers like us do not surrender". Hofschröder does not comment on this *double-entendre*, or mention CSF, who of course did not commit himself on what Cambronne actually said. But the alleged incident and its context do shed light on a novelist's method.

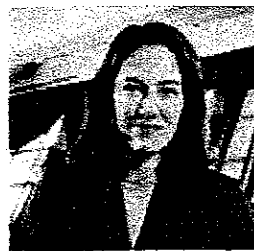
Cambronne (1791-1842) joined the revolutionary army in 1791 and rose through the ranks to become a senior Guard officer. He accompanied Napoleon to Elba, and led the vanguard when the Emperor returned for the Hundred Days. This did not prevent him continuing his career after Waterloo in the Royal Army, retiring to die at home in Nantes in 1842.⁹ Unlike Marshal Ney, whose surrender to Napoleon may have been accepted by *Cambronne*, and whose subsequent execution by a vengeful Louis XVIII is commemorated in an 1844 painting by J-L Gerome in Sheffield's Graves Gallery.

From Hamlet to Hornblower

Alethea Catharine Hayter, OBE, author of *The Wreck of the Abergavenny* (reviewed by Christopher Smith) was – like CSF – born in Cairo, but 91 years ago this month. Educated at Oxford, she was a journalist during World War II, then represented the British Council in Athens, Brussels and Paris. In 1993 she edited *The Backbone: Diaries of a military family during the Napoleonic Wars*, but the main theme of her books is 19th century literature. *Horatio's Version* (1972) is about Hamlet, not Hornblower – but there is indeed much for Hornblower fans to enjoy, in her latest book and elsewhere.

A Voyage in Vain, Faber & Faber (1973), is about Coleridge's journey through storm and calm to Malta in spring 1804. He had just written *The Ancient Mariner*, and was to relive much of it on his 6-week voyage to an emotional and intellectual destination very different from his expectation. This parallels a voyage, ironically called *The Happy Return*, on which the *Mariner* was of course discussed by Hornblower and Barbara. Coleridge's ship was the *Speedwell*. Later, and now loaded with a military chest, it went on to Marmaris Bay, to which Hornblower's *Atropos* followed, seeking that which was lost.

⁹ Peter Hofschröder, *Military Illustrated*, October 2002, pages 40-43.



Lost & Found – the Greatest Briton who (n)ever lived!

Historian Lucy Moore (above), whose previous books include a life of Lord Hervey, a study of the 18th-century criminal underworld, and *Edward VII: Britain's first constitutional monarch*, and whose latest is Indian royal women in the British Raj, argues in a current BBC TV feature that the palm belongs not to Diana, Princess of Wales (or anyone else) but to the man who single-handedly saved Britain from the Corsican Ogre in 1805!

Despite having drawn the short straw – the competition including Cromwell, Darwin, John Lennon and Shakespeare among others – she clearly relished a task which involved filming in Naples and Vienna, and aboard a transalpine express and the Ukrainian clipper *Mir*, as well as rehoisting the "England expects..." signal, being rowed up the Thames in the wake of [Hornblower on] Nelson's funeral barge and reliving her hero's apotheosis in Saint Paul's. Her style and strategy, too, bore comparison with that of Forester, in his *Nelson* (1929) - damage-limitation. Ms Moore's real view of Nelson is unknown; Forester's real view was, perhaps, very different to the case he made.

Coming soon in *Reflections*....

It's not so easy to say. This issue was originally intended to be mostly *Hornbloweriana*. But at an interim stage it looked like having nothing at all - on that greatest Briton who never lived. The Editor is constrained by what is *available* - usually too much, or too little. And fairness to contributors demands that their contributions appear as soon as possible. Hence a dilemma, and a challenge.

At this stage in time, it would seem the next issue could prioritise the latter part of CSF's life. It could include available material on *The Sky and the Forest* – and on *Hornblower and the Crisis*. This could be linked thematically to actual or potential material on *Nelson* and the year 1805, or to possibilities around the genre of sea fiction. If contributions were forthcoming, outstanding material on *The African Queen* could – at least in the Editor's dreams – then be joined to other (notional) contributions on Forester's output in 1927-1935. But the solution is not in my hands alone! Please send suggestions and contributions to the address on the cover – or E-mail them to david-stead@lineone.net.