

Reflections

A Literary Supplement to the C.S. Forester Society Newsletter



Number 3: February 2003

John Forester on *Long before Forty*; some World War II stories; *Barbary Pirates*; authenticating *The Dissection*; four toasts to *Horatio Hornblower* – and two to *his creator*!



Correspondence

The Turn of the Tide

After reading *The Dissection* in *Reflections 2*, I have found what I regard as conclusive proof that it is in fact by CS Forester, by following a lead identified in another of the articles in that issue.

The proof is in the story called *The Turn of the Tide*, which is referred to in Martin Edwards's article on *CSF and Crime Fiction*, and which I've just read in Don Congdon (ed), *Stories for the Dead of Night* (Dell, New York, 1957), pages 243-254.

The Turn of the Tide, which first appeared in 1934, has obvious links with both *Payment Deferred* and *The Dissection*. A debt-ridden solicitor seeks safety through murder, then struggles with problems of disposal of the corpse, before coming to grief in a wholly unexpected way - all in the style of William Marple. The parallels with *The Dissection* are that the murderer has a conveniently deaf landlady, is affected by the *post mortem* behaviour of the corpse, and seeks to dispose of it on a dark and lonely night, - not in the river but in the sea.

If any other reader of *The Dissection* was struck, as I was, with the notion that the corpse floating gently down to the Thames to the sea evoked burials in the Ganges, there is an explicit reference to India in *The Turn of the Tide*.

The Turn of the Tide also seems to have parallels, perhaps unsurprisingly, with *Plain Murder*. Together, then, it and *The Dissection* might be very important keys to the evolution of the young CS Forester. It may also be interesting that the anthology juxtaposes (though without comment) *The Turn of the Tide* with Edgar Allen Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, a classic whose own parallels with *The Dissection* may not be entirely imaginary.

Paul Ellison Hunter, Philadelphia.

Colin Blogg found the unsigned story *The Dissection* in the 1918 *Guy's Hospital Gazette*. He made the case for Forester's authorship by highlighting parallels with the early novel *Two-and-Twenty*, and statements by CSF in *Long before Forty* and by his son and biographer John that he wrote "humorous articles" for the *Gazette* as a medical student in 1917-19.

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The Dissection is a gothic fantasy about a student who is set upon the ultimate anatomical experiment. It could certainly have come as a surprise to readers of *Reflections*, who would have received it while the news of Gunther Von Hagen's sensational exploit of last November was still fresh.

Hunting the *Bismarck*

One year ago (almost to the day) the C. S. Forester Society was kind enough to put me in contact with his England agent with regards to his *Sink the Bismarck*. We are now going to contract for a U.S. edition of the book to be published under our *ibooks* imprint next autumn. We hope to obtain the UK rights as well. I fear I must impose on you with another request.

The review quotes we have unfortunately are from publications that no longer exist. My searches for new ones have proved unavailing. I am hoping that you might have a favorable quote from either a famous person or from a publication such as the *Times* (or even a US publisher --you cannot imagine how difficult it is to find such things!). I'm afraid I do need the information rather quickly -within the next two days. Any help you can provide will be deeply appreciated.

Kindest regards,

Dwight Jon Zimmerman

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The difficult we achieve immediately, the impossible takes a little longer, as someone said! Trawling the net yielded two links that could be useful. You may well be aware of this material, and of most things I could tell you, already. However...

The book first appeared in America as *The Last Nine Days of the Bismarck*. The title *Sink the Bismarck!* came from the 1960 film, which seems to have had more long-term impact in Germany and Italy than the UK. This film title is now echoed by two of the many books which have appeared in recent years, probably in response to the Ballard expedition and the more recent exploration of the wrecks of *Bismarck* and *Hood* sponsored by Channel 4.

The book's title in England was *Hunting the Bismarck*. It can be assessed as literature and as history. It could bear literature comparison as literature with *The Good*

Shepherd and Randall and the River of Time. As history – well, I've read Mullenheim-Rechberg, Ludovic Kennedy and Robert Ballard, so where can CSF have the edge? Maybe in his hints about developments at that precise time in Crete. A display at the aerodrome at Maleme explains that the Royal Navy was unable to effectively defend Crete for operational reasons, which just might mean because Force H had had to be sent from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic!

The best on-line source for the Bismarck, but not for Forester's book, is José Rico, webmaster of the **Kbismarck.com** site in Spain (see above). This site has the Bismarck's War Diary for 24-31 May, 1941, and the Report of the Scouting and Search for Bismarck by Ensign Smith, which may be of particular interest to American readers. Smith was the American observer who was piloting the Catalina flying boat that sighted the Bismarck on the morning of 26 May 1941.

More about the Eagle Squadron

[Further to the piece on The inspiration for Eagle Squadron in the February 2003 Newsletter] The blundering Luftwaffe pilot story appears in *Flight Journal*, February 2003, vol 8 no 1, pages 72-80, in an article by Peter Gosling; *The Raffwaffe*. The Luftwaffe lost several planes in this way, landed on English fields or in the countryside through navigational misjudgement. The reason for Faber's mistake was *reciprocal heading*. That is, one flies one course going out, then adds 180 degrees for the return. Sometimes, under stress, even qualified people forget to add the 180 degrees. Faber spotted the airfield (at Pembrey, in Wales), did a victory roll over it to celebrate downing two Spitfires, landed, and was very surprised to find himself confronted by a very large RAF sergeant armed with a pistol.

CSF might have got hold of some account of the RAF's desire to capture enemy planes for examination. That is a rather elementary deduction. So he might well have invented the Eagle Squadron plot. I doubt that the RAF was motivated by his story to plan its attempt.

I do not know the publication histories of the stories in *Gold from Crete*, or *The Man in the Yellow Raft*. CSF told me that *Eagle Squadron* was specifically written for film, as part of the British propaganda effort. The other film was *Commandos Strike at Dawn*. Most of the other stories appeared in magazines of the time, *Saturday Evening Post* and others whose names I have forgotten. *If Hitler had Invaded England* was not published at the time; not really suitable for the purpose needed, and, to my memory, not written until years afterward as part of a strategy discussion.

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Consider CSF's words from *Long before Forty*:-
 "Those hours of violent rushing about saw my brother properly outfitted, and he was off with his Regiment to defend the East Coast against the invasion which people so unreasonably expected. We – the family – expected no such thing. We had worked out too many strategical problems between us, and had conducted too many paper campaigns, to expect Germany to throw good troops away in an invasion without holding the command of the sea; we had always hooted in derision at such books as William le Queux's *The Invasion*, and Childers' *Riddle of the Sands* because of the unnatural way in which the authors dodged the all important impediment of the British Fleet. And I, who had read naval histories in dozens, was one of the few who felt no surprise when it was discovered that the German Navy had no intention of coming out to meet destruction, and that the hardest naval problem to solve would be how to induce it to do so. I had always experienced a sense of amused superiority when reading the grotesque naval strategy outlined in the opening chapters of H. G. Wells' *In the Days of the Comet*." (*Long before Forty*, page 64)

If Hitler had Invaded Britain sprang from this interest. Probably, when CSF wrote it, the subject was no longer of interest to editors. So it got tucked into *Gold from Crete* as something that, in the context of that anthology, had reason for being.

John Forester

Six of the nine stories in *Gold from Crete* appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1941-1942, as follows:-

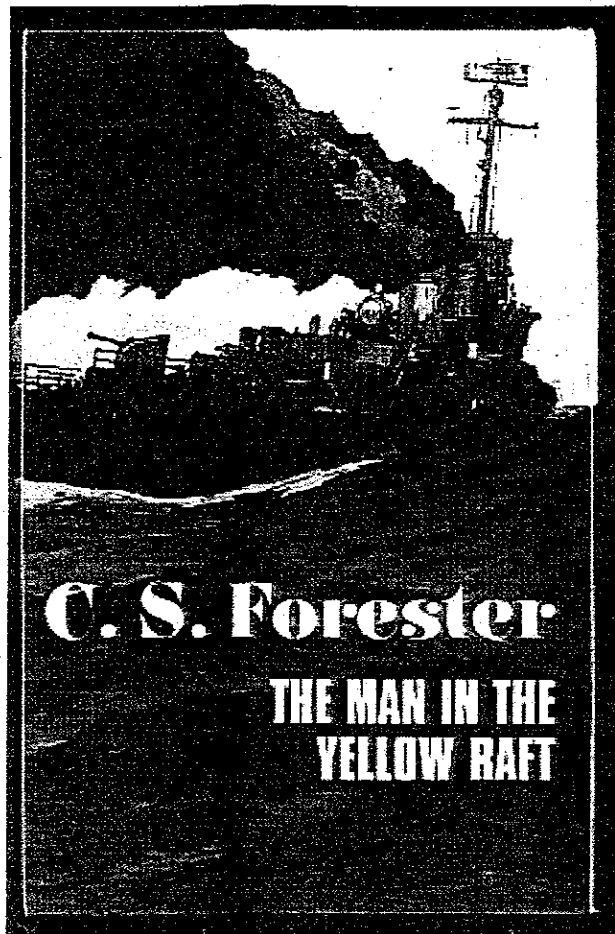
▪ An Egg for the Major	13.12.41
▪ Dawn Attack	21.02.42
▪ Night Stalk	21.03.42
▪ Depth Charge!	25.04.42
▪ The Dumb Dutchman	11.07.42
▪ Intelligence	24.10.42

If Hitler had invaded appeared in three episodes, on 16, 23 and 30 April 1960. Besides *Eagle Squadron*, the other absentee from this list is *Gold from Crete* itself, suggesting it too may have been retrospectively written.

Apart from December 6th (SEP, 23.05.42), much of the *Yellow Raft* collection seems to date from the 1960s. *Rendezvous U-295* appeared in *Argosy* (UK) in June 1963, after three other stories had been published by the (American) SEP, as follows:-

▪ Dr. Blanke's First Command	29.07.61
▪ Counterpunch	19.08.61
▪ The Man in the Yellow Raft	07.10.61

❖ This is obviously not the whole story, and more information may be forthcoming.



BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Christopher Smith

C.S. Forester knew a thing or two about war. So he would not have been surprised to find history repeating itself. The tech may get higher, but humanity does not change. Napoleon declared that any army marched on its stomach. You don't have to have to be medically qualified to know what consequences follow.

Take the short story *USS Cornucopia*, - one of the tales in *The Man in the Yellow Raft*: a series of evocations of the United States' naval achievements between Pearl Harbor and the final act on the *Missouri* that aptly symbolised a triumph of sea-power. Forester's focus in this story is not on great battles or personal derring-do. Instead, he writes about a submarine depot ship, and his theme is the astonishing and highly complex feats of logistics required to support the fighting fleets.

USS Cornucopia is perhaps "the ugliest ship that has been designed since Noah went into business". But stores were not piled in two by two. Far from it. And with an inventory of no fewer than twenty-six thousand items,

she carried a more varied cargo than any toddler even dreamt of for the Ark. With his love of technical precision, Forester enjoyed the detail. The list covers "things anyone could think of, like battery acid and fuel oil and torpedoes and shells, like baking powder and preserved milk and canned fruit". That, though, is by no means all. There were also "recondite things like 'Hinges, Butt, Marine-use Type B 2030 D (full surface fast)' and Salinometer Pots". Having dazzled us with his specialised knowledge, Forester wins back his readers' attention by artfully adding some explanation. Submarines, he points out, must take care not to betray their presence by throwing rubbish overboard. Instead, they bundle it up in "burlap bags", and these might fail to sink to the bottom if *USS Cornucopia* did not provide a stock of lumps of concrete to weigh them down.

So much for background. Forester shows signs of being aware he has delayed introducing a human element. It comes in the shape of a supply officer. He takes pride in being able to cope. He knows - and does not mind telling us - that he has been making a vital contribution by ordering what would be needed and, no less important, remembering just where it has been stowed.

"All hands man battle stations!" Things just couldn't work out without a hitch, either in real warfare or fiction. *USS Cornucopia* resists gallantly and beats off the enemy. The damage report was not too alarming. A single cannon shell from a Japanese plane had pierced the unprotected side "just above the water-line close to Frame 84". There "as luck would have it," a fire was started in "a compartment crammed with highly combustible stores". The fierce blaze was soon controlled.

Though the damage was slight, there was some loss of precious stores, and the supply officer was the butt of "the recriminations of the submarine captains when their requisitions could not be filled." Some talked "in a lofty tone" about morale; others "merely cursed on the grounds of their own personal inconvenience". The supply officer simply could not help. In the middle of the Pacific in war-time, there was no way he could conjure up "twelve thousand rolls of it". That is, "four hundred miles of toilet paper."

The story ends at this point. Under the headline "Marines Caught Short", *The Times* of 19 February 2003 carries a report of preparations for action in the Middle East. The defence editor assesses the problem: quartermasters are being "forced to ration loo rolls to get a proper sense of proportion". *Plus ça change...*



- CSF writing at the table of his parents' home in East Dulwich, around the time of *Payment Deferred* (1926). If *Long before Forty* was written in 1930, it was also written there – despite its assertions that its author had now achieved independence and prosperity. With thanks to John Forester for the photograph.

The *Long before Forty* Controversy

Long before Forty is an obviously incomplete autobiographical memoir, covering most of CSF's first thirty-one years, which Michael Joseph published in 1967, implying it was CSF's long-lost legacy to the world. CSF's elder son John was one of the few people who had known of the existence of this text before 1967. He discussed it in his biography *Novelist and storyteller: the Life of CS Forester*. His main points were:

- CSF had written *LBF* not for publication, but for his own purposes, as a record of the elaborate and inaccurate account of himself that he had told to the promoters of his first successful novel, *Payment Deferred* (1926).
- *LBF* was finished, or rather abandoned, in 1930 - in more or less its present form. Some 600 words

were later deleted from the conclusion, and so omitted from the Michael Joseph edition. The expurgated passages were about John and his mother, CSF's first wife Kathleen ("Kitty") Belcher, culminating in an account of a canal trip by the three of them in the glorious summer of 1930.¹

The controversy began with *Long before Forty – revelation or enigma?*, an article by David Stead in the previous issue of this bulletin. The main purpose of the article was to test the positions of John, of the publisher and of literature professor Sanford Sternlicht against the text of *LBF*.² David believed that text and commentaries did not match, and proposed alternative explanations:

- CSF wrote *LBF* for publication by John Lane.
- He broke off at a date after, or even well after, 1930. David felt that this obliged him to account for non-publication, and he drew attention to two hitherto-unremarked events of the 1930s, which might be relevant:
- CSF changed publishers, from John Lane to Heinemann, in 1933-1934;
- CSF was left high and dry as *PD* brought Laughton fame and fortune in America, from 1931-1932.

CSF so resented this that in later years he pretended he had gone to Hollywood with Laughton, and eventually allowed publishers to divulge this misinformation.

John sent a 1.5 column interim letter on some of David's points, with the promise of a full response. The interim reply brought two new considerations into play:

- a project (whether serious or not) for a piece of tandem writing on autobiography or family history by CSF and his brother Geoffrey Foster-Smith;
- suggestions that in his 1940s table-talk, CSF had asserted that he had already made arrangements for an autobiography to be published after his death.

David viewed these new factors with mixed feelings. The table-talk seemed a serious blow, but he felt some of the rest actually supported his case. He mailed back a 1300-word restatement of his own position, again responding "in a provisional rather than a definitive way". John's full response then arrived: a 2500-word article covering points made in *Revelation or Enigma?* and in David's provisional response, with an in-depth defence of the case made in *Novelist and Storyteller*.

❖ *John's article now follows.*

¹ John Forester, *Novelist and Storyteller: the Life of CS Forester* (2000), pages 744-746, restores these passages.

² David Stead, *Long before Forty – revelation or enigma?*, *Reflections* 2, pages 13-15; John Forester, pages 771-778.

Dating *Long Before Forty*

John Forester

In his article *Long Before Forty - Revelation or Enigma?*, David Stead asks, "Why was *Long Before Forty* written? When was it written? Why was it never published?" He has sent correspondence that suggests further debate. His answers are somewhat different from mine, as given in *Novelist and Storyteller* and amplified herein.

1. Why was *LBF* written?

David makes two points about CSF's intent to publish *LBF*. He argues that both I and Sternlicht were misled, "from the fact of the posthumous discovery of *LBF* to an assumption that CSF never intended or even envisaged publication." He then offers wordings from *LBF* that implicitly disclose CSF's intent to publish *LBF*. I stated in *Novelist and Storyteller* that in 1946 CSF had informed me of the existence of his autobiography. This was shortly after CSF's eldest brother and his wife, Dr and Mrs Geoffrey Foster-Smith, had visited us in Berkeley, the first time that I had seen them since 1939, before we left England after the start of World War 2. CSF told me then that he had asked Geoff, obviously some unknown time before, to write some opening material about the family to be included in CSF's autobiography, but that Geoff's writing was too dull to be useful³

The existence of his autobiography, to be published after his death, was no secret. I don't recall how many people knew it. I have just asked two of my college friends of the time whether CSF had said anything about an autobiography when they knew him. Noble Melencamp (State Department retired., short time White House Office Manager in Nixon's administration) remarked that his conversations with CSF, 1949-1951, were too general and too public to get into such matters. Arthur C. Turner (Prof. *Emeritus*, History, UC Riverside) remarked that he was quite skeptical of the tall tales that CSF had told him about himself, but he hadn't heard that one.

David offers a quotation that explicitly states CSF's intent to publish *LBF* in the near future. "By the time the publication of this book arrives, even, I may be either a wealthy man or a pauper."⁴ I won't dispute that, for a time, CSF had the intent of writing for publication, but that probably wasn't the initial motive and it certainly didn't last.

David considers *LBF* to be far too long for the 250 words that a publicist would need. In *Novelist and Storyteller*, I quoted CSF's own words about what he told the publicists. CSF first replied "I wrote back and said that the only details of my life which would interest anyone were those which I would not have published at any price." He then decided to tell: "They got out of me all about my early life and that sort of thing, and my early struggles. They simply loved the story about our being wrecked in the river and having to come home in our socks, and about the rat in the cider and so on. ... they buttered me up no end about the book, and noted down all my views about life in the suburbs and that sort of thing. ... I am going to drop in there once a week or so and let them have any news about myself that has either happened or that I can think of." The publicists promised him "paragraphs about in the gossip pages of all the papers and my photograph in John O'London and most likely in the Sketch and Tatler as well and so on." At least some occurred: "There was quite a nice paragraph about me in John O'London's."⁵

CSF's concern about hiding his private life from his publishers shows up again when he worries that his father will want to contact his past and present publisher, Methuen. "Perhaps after that he might like me to put in a word for him at Methuen's, and in that case I don't know what the devil to do; I don't want him to know any more about Methuen's or Methuen's to know any more about me than I can help, and he is such a terrible old gossip that he is sure to give things away right and left."⁶ In contrast, Geoff writes of their father, who died in 1947: "He had had a full life and had received the order of the Medjidieh from the Khedive, the order of the Nile from the Sultan after the British had made Egypt a Protectorate, and the M.B.E. for his services in the war." (Geoff Chapter 44).

CSF obviously did not want his publishers to discover the family into which he had been born. Therefore, what he told the publicists for John Lane was not true. We know that CSF had long been concealing his family, his parents, of whom he was ashamed, from all outsiders. Since he wanted never to be known as Cecil Smith, he had to have not a pen name, but a new name, for which he had to create a background and history. I suspect that the sessions with the publicists were the first time that CSF had had to put together in connected form all the stories that he had been telling. That is just the kind

³ John Forester, *Novelist and Storyteller*, page 491.

⁴ CS Forester, *Long before Forty*, Michael Joseph (1967), page 171.

⁵ John Forester, *Novelist and Storyteller*, pages 147-149.

⁶ *Novelist and Storyteller*, page 150.

of creative activity that best suited him. So he unified his stories into one history, and it suited him to write this down. At one time, he had the inclination to try to get it published, but later gave that up for the final plan to have it published after his death.

2. When was *LBF* written?

David has produced a theory from a few facts, just as literary theorists have produced theories about other literary figures about whom there is as little information as David used. However, David's theory does not fit the other facts that we know. I here give the appropriate chronology (see table on right).⁷

David erects a different chronology on the basis of a few words. CSF refers to the postman's delivery, six weeks before, of the contract for the rewritten dramatic production of *PD*. Since *PD* played in May, 1931, David places the ending of *LBF* at about that time. However, we don't know how long it took to get *PD* produced. Then, David inserts a second motor-boat trip down the Loire in 1931, after the ending of *LBF*, just because CSF wrote that that was his plan. There was no second motorboat descent of the Loire. CSF, Geoff, and their sister Grace descended the Loire by kayak in 1938, CSF to collect information for *Flying Colours*. David refers to CSF's statement that John Lane (not specifically named) had "published a dozen books for me since that date," referring to the acceptance date of *PD*.

I think, David, that you were had, believing in CSF's literal accuracy when we know he hadn't any.

David is equally misled about the time at which CSF stopped work on *LBF*. He suggests that the deletion of the last few pages, describing the English canal trip with Kitty and John, occurred at the time of his divorce, in 1944. I compared the U Texas typescript to the printed *LBF* from England, and they were identical, so far as I remember, except for the last pages of the typescript that were not published. That deletion was the only revision made; no signs of other work, no signs of anything done after 1930, in either published version or typescript. U Texas acquired the typescript in 1963, from Frank Hollingsworth, a dealer. Hollingsworth is probably no longer in business; Google Search turns up no such dealer. Probably, the deletion occurred at time of publication, by Dorothy or Peters, or both of them, for reasons which are obvious.

⁷ Events firmly dated and mentioned in *LBF* are in regular font, unindented. Details supplied by John and/or in *N&S* are italicised and indented (editor).

The Key Dates

April, 1926: *Payment Deferred* was published
Sometime here, Long Before Forty gets started

3 August 1926: CSF & Kitty get married secretly
December 1927, January 1928 approx:
CSF & Kitty announce their marriage to his parents (hers already knew) and live with her parents.

Spring 1928: CSF & Kitty purchase the outboard-powered camping boat *Annie Marble*.

Summer 1928: CSF & Kitty take *Annie Marble* through rivers and canals of France, ending up by descending the Loire.

Fall to Spring, 1928-9: CSF & Kitty live in the attic of his parents' house. *Damnably cold, said Kitty.*

Summer 1929: CSF & Kitty take *Annie Marble* on a tour of the German Lakes, taking in the international power-boat races at Potsdam with CSF as an accredited correspondent for *Motor Boat*. I am along, in Kitty's womb.

7 Oct 1929: I am born. *My birth certificate gives my birth residence as the home of CSF's parents.*

Winter 1929-30: CSF, Kitty, & John spend winter in Corsica

Summer 1930: CSF, Kitty & John travel English canals, going all the way West over the monumental Pont Cysyllte aqueduct on the borders of Wales. *The boat is not Annie Marble, (I never learned what happened to her) but a different boat with a minute Turner-Bray motor. CSF described this motor to me as about the size of a 2-lb coffee can.*

Fall 1930: CSF, Kitty, & John move into Gothic Lodge at the corner of Lordship Lane and Mount Adon place.

LBF was completed about the end of 1930.

Circa end of 1932: CSF, Kitty, & John move to 36 Longton Ave, Upper Sydenham.

25 Feb 1933: George Forester born.

David mixes up two more entirely different events. One was Geoff's preparation of some family history to serve as the opening of *LBF*, which was probably about 1930. This is what CSF told me in 1946 or 1947. CSF was not discussing his autobiography, but informing me of the great difference between the talented writer, such as he was, and the average would-be writer, which he worried that I thought I was. He would not have broached this subject to me in 1960, when I was an engineer in aerospace, living in Southern California, clearly not a poverty-stricken would-be writer. The second event is Geoff's start at writing his own autobiography, during the

homeward voyage after visiting CSF again in Dec 59-Jan 60, and which he showed to me in 1962. David uses CSF's description, in a letter to Frances Phillips, that Geoff had started his memoirs during his voyage to England, to support his argument that this was because CSF had asked him to do this. However, CSF never told Frances, to whom he told everything literary (and much else besides), that he had asked Geoff to do this, and had never told her of any plans for an autobiography. All he told her was that Geoff had started to write his memoirs, which he thought dull.

I conclude that Frances did not have the typescript of *LBF*, for two reasons. If she did, as she had CSF manuscripts, she would not have sold it at that time. If she had, and had sold it, she knew enough to go direct to U Texas, rather than through a dealer. With less certainty, I think that the typescript did not come through my mother. She never told me she had, and she would have, because she tried (being ignorant of copyright law) to ensure that I had the rights to CSF's letters to her when she sold them to U Texas.

In 1960 Geoff was 70, had partially retired, and had time for such an activity. He then, I think, revised his text after he moved to live with his daughter, Kate Mulham, in Australia. She typed the present version, of which I have a faded thermofax copy. I have made an electronic copy from that.

"We all had tickets at the Public Library which we used very fully and at that time, at least, it wasn't true that Cecil had all the tickets and used them to the exclusion of the rest of the family. This is because, as I have often said, he is a better novelist than historian." (Geoff ch 11)

3. *Publication Deferred?*

There is a real enigma. Why would CSF ask Geoff for information about the family history and then complain that Geoff's contribution was dull? This is an enigma because the whole point of *LBF* was to conceal CSF's family identity while magnifying it to far more than CSF actually thought it was. There is also the lesser problem that, however dull Geoff's contribution might be, CSF could summarize it as he chose.

David argues that *LBF* was not published when written for two reasons: CSF was upset about not being included in the tour of the dramatic version of *PD*, and CSF had changed publishers. The first argument pertains to CSF himself, the second to his new publisher's postulated refusal. I regard both as unlikely.

In those days, playwrights didn't travel with their plays. In any case, the dramatic *PD* had been grossly altered from CSF's story by Jeffrey Dell. As for Heineman's postulated rejection, it would be a feather in their cap to have captured an author with such a prior reputation, a reason to boast, not to conceal.

I maintain that the most likely reason for the start of *LBF* is to be a record of the stories that CSF had been telling people, for his own purposes. This progressed; he was impelled to finish the job simply because he was a storyteller and this was his own intimate fiction. At some time, he might well have decided to publish it, or to pretend in writing to decide to publish it, just to make it more credible in itself. However, he still faced the problem that if he did publish it at that time, people who knew the facts would be inspired to come forward and tell them, disclosing exactly the information that he had been so careful to hide in *LBF*. Any publication of *LBF* would have to be so late that revelations would not matter. That is, when either the possible revealers or CSF himself were dead. So *LBF* got put away.

There could have later been some project for a different autobiography, one that told the truth, at a time when CSF was so famous that the truth would not hurt him. Not only is there no evidence of that, but there is contrary evidence. The last CSF work published in his lifetime was the *Hornblower Companion with Some Personal Notes*, published in 1964 approximately at the time of his debilitating stroke. (My copy is signed with his post-stroke scrawl.) Those personal notes concern his relationship with Hornblower. Only four personal matters intrude: buying copies of the *Naval Chronicle* in 1927, his return voyage from Hollywood that started Hornblower in 1936, his arteriosclerosis in relation to writing *The Commodore*, and his heart attack that inspired writing *The Even Chance*. CSF told nothing of the events in *LBF*. It is pretty clear that he had no intention of doing so.

Why publish *LBF* at all? CSF certainly thought of himself as outsmarting the world, and, maybe, as David suggests, as wanting to demonstrate how much smarter he was than Geoff. CSF certainly didn't give a damn about most of what might happen after death. I used to think that he didn't give a damn about his reputation after death, only about making sure that his reputation served his own purposes while he was alive. But, considering that he showed flashes of great ego (Lillian, for example, noticed that in the 1920s), and had periods of considerable gloom, it is quite possible that he saw *LBF* as his last way of outwitting the world.



In the wake of the *Witch of Endor* Richard Miller

Some years ago I had the pleasant experience of a voyage to The Solent in the lighthouse tender *Atlanta*, a pretty, grey, yellow-funnelled, diesel-electric vessel, her crew comprising former Royal Navy officers and ratings. Naturally her calling required skilled seamen; masters in the handling of boats in the wild Western Approaches. We sailed in waters very well known to our hero, Horatio Hornblower. Land's End on our port bow, Bolt Head, Torbay and Plymouth with The Needles Channel ahead.

The *Atlanta* was a handsome craft, her modern lines far removed from the fighting ships of Hornblower's navy, yet she had something of their charm: workmanlike, tough and well used to stormy weather, with true sailors on board. A Royal Navy cruiser helped to garnish my avid appetite for nostalgia as she appeared up over the horizon to starboard. Horatio was very well acquainted with this stretch of sea, for the crews of *Justin*, *Indefatigable*, *Renown*, *Hotspur*, *Atropos*, *Lydia*, *Porta Coeli*, *Sutherland* and *Nonsuch* had all gazed upon this lovely English coast. And it is natural that I should call my musings "*In the Wake of the Witch of Endor*" for it is certain that she had often battled her way off the beloved headlands, bays and beaches. It is an intriguing exercise to visit the scenes where history has left its imprint; assuredly it is an even yet more enjoyable pastime to saunter down the lush lanes of fiction whose tracks have cut deep ruts into the laneway of history.

Portsmouth, Plymouth, Torbay - the homes of the Royal Navy - have indeed left their marks upon the history of England. They have also imprinted themselves in the fiction which has thrilled our hearts and made us long to tread the paths where heroes, albeit fictional creations of a master storyteller, have put their own stamp. But Portsmouth, a city beloved by sailor men was not the signature tune to the Navy; that honour was claimed by the hum of a westerly gale in a warship's cordage and the steep breaking seas far out of reach of England.

Portsmouth was whither the Admiralty Telegraph transmitted orders from Whitehall. Cracking lined paper demanded seamen to attempt the impossible, but the men of the Royal Navy did all this.



Horatio Hornblower knew all of these things and all of these places very well indeed. The youth joining his first ship had sampled the queasy delights of a boat passage to Spithead. He had known the darkness of early morning when he had attempted his epic duel, perhaps on Southsea Common. Doubtless he had savoured the solid comfort of the gaming house; and he had been assailed by doubt as he and Maria had pledged their troth in the Church of Thomas à Becket.

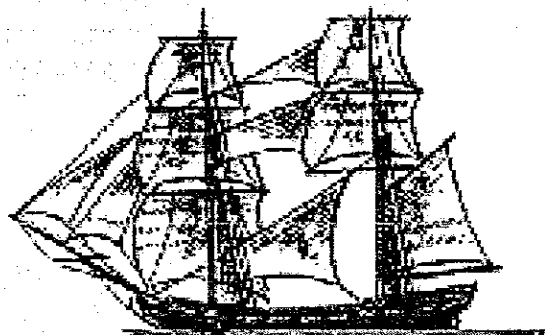
And there was the dockyard gate at Plymouth where had bade her farewell on route to the Admiralty, having come ashore from the water hoy *Princess* with stupendous documents removed from the *Guèpe*.

But it was Portsmouth that he remembered with pride and anguish, landing following his acquittal for the surrender of H.M.S. *Sutherland*. He had ordered the postillion to stop at the church and, with Hookham Frere fidgeting by his side, he had paid homage to Maria at her lonely grave. She had loved him before all others; that he felt unable to repay that love split his heart asunder.

Had it not been for these locations the character of Hornblower might not have been so deeply etched. Some years ago, when visiting the famous town, I tried albeit in imagination to see some of the places he had

known. The High Street, the Hard, the Dockyard, the Sally Port and the Church of Thomas à Becket. A sensitive, self-doubting man, fearing the worst, impelled by honour, duty and courage, he overcame his fears and has left his indelible stamp on all he achieved.

Horatio Hornblower had forced himself to do not only what duty demanded but that which rebelled against his common decency. To him the Navy was bigger, oh so much bigger than all its multitudinous parts and if nothing more his story has made it incumbent upon us to honour the glorious Royal Navy in the age of sail.



Richard writes more, about *Horatio Hornblower's Shipmates*, on page 13.

The Church of St Thomas à Becket, where Commander Hornblower married his landlady's daughter Maria Mason, stood on the waterfront at Portsmouth, and supported the last of the line of telegraph stations which allowed the Admiralty rapid communication with its most important base. Although Forester does not tell us as much, that was certainly how Admiral Cornwallis knew that the moment had come to send *Hotspur* to observe the French in Brest.

Two years later, after *Hotspur*'s action with the *Félicité*, it was to *Plymouth* that Hornblower was sent to refit, and it was there that Maria awaited him. She was still there when he returned from the wars again, with Bonaparte's dispatch, captured from the brig *Guèpe*.

That dispatch, of course, sent him off on a new mission, as post captain and secret agent. The result, though never disclosed, has been much guessed at. The mission began with another agonising boat journey to Spithead. Or it might have done, had not others travelled the Portsmouth Road first...



The Truth about the Letter

Adrian Taylor

THERE WAS THICK IVY adorning the porch to the parsonage of the Church of St Thomas à Becket in Portsmouth. A portly gentleman strode with a purposeful air up the gravel path which led to the front door. He knocked with some authority. After a few minutes the door was opened to him by a neatly attired housekeeper.

"I wonder whether the present incumbent is available, my good lady." The visitor had the merest suggestion of a French accent.

"Whose name shall I give, sir?" It was evident from her manner that she was used to asking this routine question.

"William Wilson, madam."

"He's in his study, sir. Perhaps you would be kind enough to step in."

She had presumably decided that this respectable-looking visitor would be no threat to their life or limb. William Wilson duly entered the pavement-tiled hallway. On one of the walls there was a portrait in oils of a horse-faced gentleman; the dog collar suggested that he was a past incumbent of this Plymouth parish. The visitor spared it no more than a cursory glance.

Soon there came echoing footsteps from the passageway and there appeared a white-haired gentleman well past middle age. From a cord around his neck there hung a pair of *pince-nez*. He smiled benignly at his visitor.

"And how can I be of assistance to you, my good sir?"

"My name is William Wilson and I am employed by the naval authorities to enquire into the background of one Horatio Hornblower. He is on the navy lists and there is some possibility that he will be used in some irregular capacity in the present war against the French. As you will understand, his *bona fides* will have to be unimpeachable."

"I see," replied the parson. "Horatio Hornblower?" He seemed to be savouring the alliteration as if it were a boiled sweet. "The name seems somehow familiar."

William Wilson cleared his throat sepulchraly.

"Our records show that Mr Hornblower was married in your church a few years ago to one Maria Mason. Would it be at all possible for me to study the relevant section of your parish records to ascertain that this was indeed so?"

Now it was the parson's turn to clear his throat, though perhaps not so sepulchrally as his interlocutor.

"Indeed you can, Mr Wilson. I keep them in my study. If you will just follow me."

Some half an hour later William Wilson's footsteps were crunching down the gravel path, away from the ivy covered porch. Nestling in an inside pocket of his jacket was a piece of paper upon which he had made a copy of the signature of Maria Hornblower, *née* Mason. He had been quite free to make the copy as, while he was studying the documents, the goodly parson was fiddling about with some papers which were presumably related to a private project – probably next Sunday's sermon. It may be stated that William Wilson was an excellent forger of handwriting, though his work was perhaps not

quite in the same class as his mentor and fellow francophile Dr Claudius.

In the early evening of the same day as his visit to the parsonage, William Wilson travelled by *post-chaise* to London from Portsmouth. He was feeling decidedly pleased with himself that so far this ruse had proved to be a success.

It so happened that that night Horatio Hornblower was staying at *The Saracen's Head* and he was plagued by those doubts regarding his possible employment as a spy. William Wilson had arranged to meet a certain Nicholas Shaver in a back room of that very hostelry on his arrival in London.

Shaver was to bring with him paper, pen, ink and envelope – it was no use relying on the landlord to provide such materials – and a letter would be written which would send Horatio Hornblower back into his wife's arms and thus away from his meddling in the affairs of state. During the day just past, it had transpired that Dr Claudius had been saved from the gallows by Hornblower's intervention. Now the devilish Doctor of Divinity was free to work his evil ways with his faithful band of confederates – of whom Wilson and Shaver were merely two – and, most importantly, the powers at Whitehall were in ignorance of the French sympathies of Dr Claudius.

It is small wonder, perhaps, that there was a self-satisfied smile upon the well-fed face of William Wilson as the *post-chaise* clattered over the cobbles on its way to that rendezvous at *The Saracen's Head*.

Such was Hornblower's exhausted state – he had had little sleep in the course of his restless night – that he slept on until well past midday, despite the to-and-fro of London street life that continued without. The landlady, who came to his attic room to wake him at eight o'clock in the morning, took pity on her guest who was sleeping like a babe and she decided not to disturb him. When Hornblower answered the knock of Shaver, he did not realise the lateness of the hour – perhaps the dullness of the day (there seemed to be thunderstorms in the offing) was a contributory factor – and he even returned to his slumbers – indeed it was a clap of thunder which awoke him not long after.

And so it had been about the lunch-time hour that the silent emissary stepped quietly up the corridor that led into the room in which Horatio Hornblower lay in his rejuvenating sleep.

Hornblower's Shipmates

Richard Miller

Had our hero possessed a flimsy character perhaps he would have attempted to cast off the King's coat, tried to make his way ashore and forsaken life afloat forever. Once ashore he would have tried to trade his ill-fitting uniform and thus with coins in his pocket hoist an oar upon his shoulder and walk so far inland that it was not recognised as a sailor's tool. Indeed this might have happened if Hornblower, a stubborn youth, had succumbed to the brutality of Midshipman Simpson. The crew of HMS *Justinian* presided over by Captain Keene, a sick man, were not fire-eating sea dogs, but sea dogs whose kennel was moored at Spithead,

Totally different were the crew of HMS *Indefatigable* who, led by the intrepid Captain Pellew, drove barb after barb into the French and Spaniards. It is exceedingly interesting to observe the close friendship of Horatio and Bracegirdle, a friendship later renewed when Bracegirdle, now Flag Lieutenant to Earl St Vincent, stood in the way of Hornblower's attempting to retrieve his watch from the handle of Lord Nelson's coffin. Bracegirdle remarked, "There are easier appointments. I'd exchange for the command of a powder hulk in Hell". By this time Hornblower had developed into a prime seaman who weighed his own merits against his own severe standards.

He led men: Oldroyd, Jackson, Finch - and was influenced by Hales's death, which had forced him to subordinate his own fear. On becoming lieutenant, Bush had become a friend, but a friend who had to suffer the lash of Horatio's tongue.

Captain Sawyer of HMS *Renown* was a sadist whose persecution of Wellard revolted Horatio. *Renown's* stranding, the attack on the fort with the powerful Silk smashing the sallyport door, as well as the use of red hot shot - not to mention the delicate repair of the unbushed gun by gunner's mate Berry - are descriptive masterpieces.

The capture and recapture of HMS *Renown* and Sawyer's death are all steps leading to Hornblower's promotion. Maria Mason, shortly to be his wife, had served to bring him gentleness, and following his return from Marmorice Bay the death of little Horatio and little Maria had increased his compassion.



DRAWING
BY

Robb

Commanding HMS *Hotspur*, his skill in the art of navigation had free rein. This combined with his understanding for his terrified steward Grimes who had hanged himself, Hornblower reporting that he had died in action, as solace to his dependents.

The most flattering experience Hornblower had ever known was when little Horatio, his face lit by a smile, bounced up and down in his chair and waved the crust he held in his fist, and later down on the floor pursued by Hornblower, such delightful pleasure. Assuredly Horatio was an enigma.

Two men named Charlie appeared at strategic points of Hornblower's life. The grim-visaged, sardonic Captain "Black Charlie" Hammond who was one of his examiners when he was a candidate for lieutenant on board the *Santa Bárbara*. The other, the postillion of the passenger barge *Queen Charlotte* who through frequent quaffing of his black bottle and consequent injury had necessarily persuaded Horatio to help in crewing the craft. Thus earning the rebuke, "You learn to move fast in a canal boat, Captain. Two dozen for the last man off the yard! None of that here on Cotswold, Captain, but a broken head for you, if you don't look lively". Followed later by the remark by a lock keeper's wife, "Eeee, man, you know little about boats". Later, to placate Maria, he did his utmost to consume a heavy meal, made her comfortable and assured her of his supreme comfort while he endured cramp in a stuffy cabin.

Horatio Hornblower was a man of action. HMS *Lydia* gave him that a-plenty off South America. *Lydia's* men fought, died and served their stern Captain, who had become a hero in the eyes of Midshipman Clay by declaring, "I always maintained that a rat who had the run of the bread-locker all his life made a dish fit for a king, let alone a midshipman". Clay died, so did Galbraith, and many besides.

It was during an interval in the engagement with the *Natividad* that Bush uttered the classic remark, "Black as the Earl of Hell's riding boots".

Lady Barbara had become a longed-for forbidden companion and her marriage to Admiral Leighton a constant source of unease.

HMS *Sutherland* brought many shipmates together again. Midshipman Savage, who had been Clay's friend, yelling for the Afterguard whilst his head ached after a night of debauchery.

Bush, Gerard, Raynor, Crystal – all skilled officers. Harrison and oh so many other petty officers and men. However it is Brown, the stalwart, reliable coxswain, who is perhaps the one who epitomises the true British seaman.

Captivity, escape and recapture of the *Witch of Endor* give us a rich serving of adventure, not to mention the charms of *Comte de Graçay* and his daughter-in-law.

Acquittal for the surrender of HMS *Sutherland* laid the rungs in place for Hornblower's climb to the top. Maria was dead, Richard his son with powerful Wellesley relations and Lady Barbara soon to become his wife.

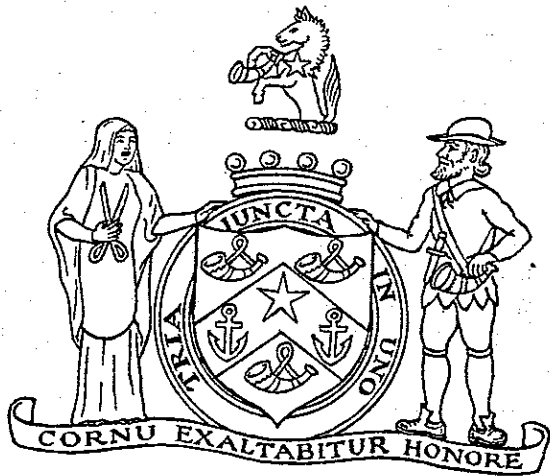
Tactics in the Baltic. The one-legged Captain Bush and HMS *Nonsuch*. The captivating, enthusiastic, youthful Lieutenant Mound of the bomb ketch *Harvey*, who liked to stand with his hands in his pockets, and who increased his precious place in Hornblower's heart by explaining that the Carpenter's Mate, Wilson, had devised an ingenious method of steering. Mound too died. Hornblower could have had such a son as he.

Horatio returned to England a sick man. A titled, wealthy landowner, yet one still a useful tool of the Navy. He was the man to deal with the mutiny on board HMS *Flame*. Freeman, the *Porta Coelli's* captain, and Harding, who had taught Horatio long splicing off Ushant were both pleased to see him on board.

More adventure, more moulding of men to do his will and assuredly more tough, ruthless action. The white haired mutineer Nathaniel Sweet had to die. So, too, Marie de Graçay had died. Sorrow and duty rode knee-to-knee with Hornblower. Carrying out Horatio's orders, Bush had also to pay the price.

Life was not dull for Hornblower in the Caribbean, hoodwinking the French, outwitting the pirates and striving not to offend Captain Feil of HMS *Clorinda* in his lust for wealth. A hurricane, Barbara's help to a zealous Royal Marine bandsman, all are there, but best of all her love for Horatio.

Little Midshipman Longley, strutting the deck, ducking as shot flew overhead. "I'm not frightened, I'm not frightened", he had said. "No sonny, of course you're not", said Hornblower. Longley died. Hornblower in his life had known fear, so too had his men. But courage is not *not* being afraid but carrying on regardless. Hornblower and his shipmates did exactly that.



Hornblower's Heraldry

C W Scott-Giles, OBE

Fitzalan Pursuivant of Arms Extraordinary

Readers of the late Mr CS Forester's narratives concerning Sir Horatio Hornblower, KCB (1776-1857), who became Lord Hornblower, of Smallbridge in the county of Kent, and an Admiral of the Fleet, are grateful to Dr C Northcote Parkinson for a biography of this great quasi-historical character. In *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower*. Dr Parkinson gives much information from records which have come to light since Mr Forester's death. In dealing with Hornblower's family background he affords a clue as to his armorial bearings.

"Early in the 15th century one Nicholas Horneblowe held enough land in Aylesford to justify his application for a coat-of-arms," writes Dr Parkinson. "The escutcheon he was granted bore: Sable, on a chevron argent between three horns proper a mullet azure. He could claim no other achievement, however, and his descendants, as undistinguished, were not even freeholders. The first Hornblower to make any sort of name for himself was Jeremiah (1692-1754), Corn Merchant of Maidstone, whose will provided a local charity under the terms of which poor orphans might be apprenticed to a trade."⁸

⁸ C. Northcote Parkinson, *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower*, Sutton Publishing (1998), pages 17-18.

There is no record of a grant of arms to Nicholas Horneblowe. Possibly he obtained a certificate of arms from some herald before 1417, when Henry V instituted greater control over the use of armorial bearings, but in the absence of evidence we must regard the grant referred to by Dr Parkinson as a matter of family tradition, the credibility of which must be examined. The arms he quotes closely resemble those of the Kentish family of Horne, and were borne by various branches with differences of tincture, one version being: Sable, on a chevron argent between three bugle-horns or as many mullets pierced gules. There is no traceable connection between the Hornes and the Hornblowers accounting for the similarity in their heraldry, and it appears that one of these families must have assumed arms based on those lawfully borne by the other. Of the two alternatives I think that the probability is that the Hornblowers derived their arms by adopting a differenced form of the Horne coat, but I question whether this took place in the fifteenth century. More probably it occurred late in the 17th or early in the 18th century, when the heralds had ceased the periodic visitations in which they reviewed arms and corrected those unlawfully used. I suspect that it was Jeremiah Hornblower who first used the arms quoted by Dr Parkinson and invented the story of a grant to Nicholas Horneblowe to give his assumed escutcheon the semblance of authority and antiquity.

No doubt Horatio Hornblower was aware of the traditional arms of his family, and probably he had no reason to doubt their authenticity until he had occasion to register them at the College of Arms when he became a Knight of the Bath in 1811. The heralds then found that the coat used by the Hornblowers not only too closely resembled that of Horne, but also might be taken for a differenced form of the arms of Thurston of Cranbrook: Sable, a chevron between three bugle-horns stringed or. Consequently, while granting Sir Horatio arms based on the traditional Hornblower coat, they made a distinctive and significant addition, namely two anchors on the chevron. They also granted Sir Horatio the crest of a demi-horse holding between the forelegs a bugle-horn and charged on the shoulder with a mullet.

My evidence for Horatio's arms and crest is an achievement, sketched in pencil and with no indication of tinctures, found between the leaves of a copy of Debrett's Peerage, 1816. (The illustration accompanying this article is a copy). The shield, bearing on a chevron between three horns a mullet and two anchors, is within

the circlet of the Bath, ensigned with a baron's coronet, and accompanied by supporters. I was unable to identify this achievement until I found the clue to it in Dr Parkinson's book. Then it became apparent that the shield he gives for Horneblowe, with the addition of two anchors, borne by a baron who was a KCB, could only be that of Sir Horatio Hornblower after he received his peerage in 1814. However, it is possible that the sketch does not represent the final form of Lord Hornblower's achievement. It is too rough to be a College of Arms drawing, and I think it may be the work of some amateur with whom Hornblower discussed the supporters he should ask the Kings of Arms to grant him. When the design was submitted to the Kings of Arms they may have made changes in it.

While the tinctures are not indicated, heavy pencilling of the anchors may mean that they are sable. Perhaps the demi-horse in the crest is from the Kentish emblem, in which case it is argent, and the horn and mullet may be "as in the arms", i.e. proper and azure respectively.

The dexter supporter is a female figure holding a pair of shears, clearly representing Atropos. It will be remembered that this was the name of the first ship which Hornblower commanded as a post-captain. In Forester's *Hornblower and the Atropos* we find that "at her bows was a crude figurehead of a draped female painted in red and white; in her clumsily carved hands she carried a large pair of gilded shears." Presuming the colours of the figurehead were reproduced in the supporter, we may take it that the latter was vested argent mantled gules, with the shears or.

The sinister supporter, having a horn slung by a baldric, is evidently an allusion to the name Hornblower, but by a happy chance we may blazon the figure as a forester and regard it as an unintended reference to Sir Horatio's first biographer. (A better known instance of supporters based on ship names is found in those granted to Sir John Jervis, Earl of St Vincent: dexter, an eagle grasping in the sinister claw a thunderbolt all proper, and sinister a Pegasus argent, wings elevated azure, thereon a fleur de lis or. These arms allude to the fact that when in command of the *Foudroyant* Jervis captured the French ship *Pégase*.)

The motto is from Psalm 112, 9, "His horn shall be exalted with honour." A shortened form, *Cornu eius exaltabitur*, appeared in an inscription on the memorial to Richard Horne, temp. Henry VI, in Lenham church,

Kent. (Weever's *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, 1631, p. 278.)

When Hornblower became a peer, the office of Garter King of Arms was held by Sir Isaac Heard, who had himself served in the Royal Navy, 1745-51, and may have shown special interest in grants to distinguished naval officers. "As a herald he was largely responsible for the 'landscape' and similar coats and augmentations conspicuous in the grants to Lord Nelson and other heroes of the Napoleonic wars." ("The College of Arms," London Survey Committee, 1963). Heard's taste for spectacular heraldry is shown by the arms he had granted to himself in 1762, featuring Neptune issuing from a stormy ocean, grasping the head of a ship's mast appearing above the waves as part of a wreck. This, with the motto *Naufragus in portum*, commemorated the fact that when a midshipman in the *Blandford* Heard was washed overboard during a tornado and saved from drowning by his shipmates. When the draft of Lord Hornblower's achievement reached Heard, was he content with its relatively modest character, or did he itch to embellish it with some picturesque seascapery? Perhaps Dr Parkinson could be persuaded to search the Hornblower papers for any correspondence there may be between Hornblower and Garter; or perhaps some reader of *The Coat of Arms* can throw light on the final form of the achievement.

It was beyond the scope of Dr Parkinson's book to inquire into the bearers of the name Hornblower in an earlier age, but in the hope that it may lead some Tolkien scholar to seek a connection between the Hornblowers of the Shire and the famous Horatio, let me recall that "Tobold Hornblower of Longbottom in the Southfarthing first grew the true pipe-weed in his gardens in the days of Isengrim the Second" (*The Fellowship of the Ring*), and that Tanta Hornblower was one of the great grandmothers of the famous Frodo Baggins (*The Return of the King*, Appendix C.)⁹

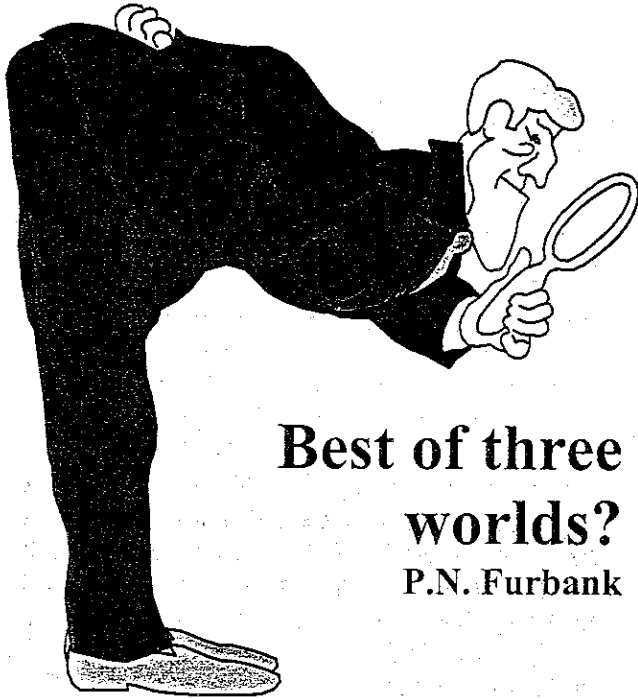
Further Reflections

Articles and letters for future issues, suggestions for future themes or offers of help should be sent to:

Reflections, c/o David Stead
151 Walkley Crescent Road,
Sheffield S6 5BA, United Kingdom

- or by E-mail to david-stead@lineone.net

⁹ From *The Coat of Arms*: an heraldic quarterly magazine published by *The Heraldry Society*, volume XII (1971).



Best of three worlds?

P.N. Furbank

"My story will take you into times and spaces alike rude and uncivil," says Maurice Hewlett, in *The Forest Lovers* (1898). "Blood will be spilt, virgins suffer distresses; the horn will sound through woodland glades; dogs, wolves, deer and men, Beauty and the Beasts, will tumble each other, seeking like or death with their proper tools..." Most authors of this kind write with some such formula or recipe of ingredients in mind. The charm of the genre lies in its being, to some extent, a charade, the modern bodies and feelings remaining recognisable under the period disguise. The authors often make plots turn on dressing-up. Thus, in an early Georgette Heyer, *Powder and Patch* (1923), the hero, a rugged country-bred youth (a hearty modern boy, as we really feel), despising the effeminacy of wigs and patches, is compelled to make himself into a model gentleman. Jeffrey Farnol's *The Amateur Gentleman* (1913) tells of an inn-keeper's son who studies to impose himself on society. In a similar way, the young republican hero of Rafael Sabatini's *Scaramouche* (1921) makes himself the best swordsman in France, so that he can turn the hated symbol of the *ancien régime*, the duel, against its devotees. This kind of "dressing-up" plot is the most natural way of bringing period stage-properties into the foreground.

The more recent favourites in this genre, like C.S. Forester, have a touch of self-consciousness not present in the full-blooded narratives of Sabatini and the Baroness Orczy, and hint faintly that they are playing at this sort of thing. Georgette Heyer achieves quite a skilful pastiche of a Jane Austen plot and style in *Bath Tangle* (1955), the values and the drift of the dialogue remaining essentially modern, and contrasting intentionally with the well-caught Regency phraseology. C.S. Forester sophisticates his material (and gets the best of both worlds) by making his hero a bluff, hearts-of-oak

seadog straight out of Marryat, who is at the same time a sensitive and self-doubting modern soul consciously impersonating this simple period role. The staple of the Hornblower novels, however, is a loving and extremely technical analysis of nautical operations. This gives a degree of conviction to the odd amalgam, and it links Forester with the "technological" school of Nevil Shute (so that, indeed, he really gets the best of three worlds).

Finally there is the detective story, "use-literature" in its extremest form. Unlike the novels of Wilkie Collins, the modern detective novel is designed to raise and solve its problems without emotionally involving the reader... It makes little difference if the background and characters are taken from life or simply from other fiction, for what happens is not meant to illuminate them, but only to make bewildering use of them. If the motive for a murder turns out to be concealed paranoia on the part of a *Cranford*-esque spinster, the important lesson is that the reader could never unaided have guessed this; it takes the superior intellect of the detective to reveal such things. It is a middle-class art and taste. The problem is set against a background of absolute security; and though this security is momentarily interrupted by violence, order is soon efficiently though miraculously restored... The conventions of the genre are now set and will obviously be fruitful for many years ahead:-

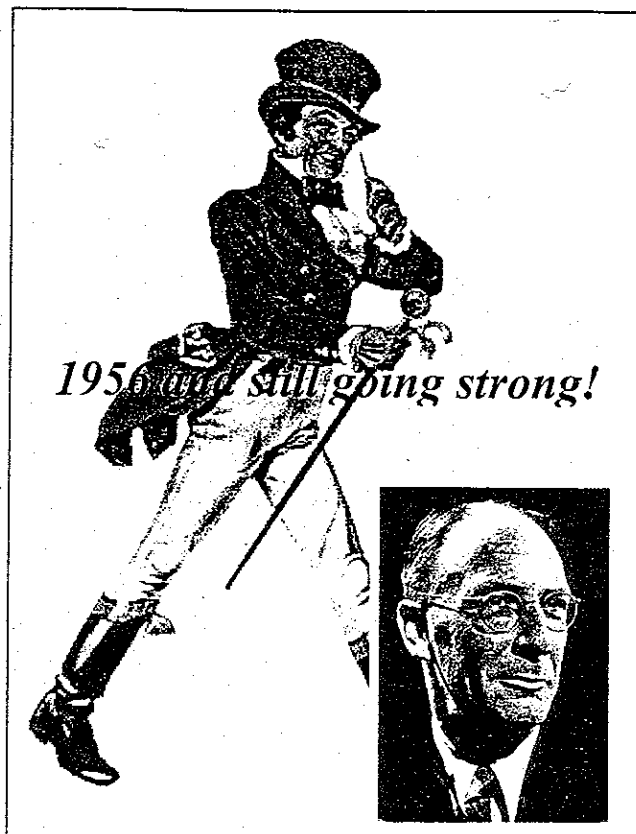
The transcendent and eccentric detective; the admiring slightly stupid foil; the well-intentioned blundering and unimaginativeness of the official guardians of the law; the locked-room convention; the pointing finger of unjust suspicion; the solution by surprise, deduction by putting one's self in another's position (now called psychology); concealment by means of the ultra-obvious; the staged ruse to force the culprit's hand; ... the expansive and condescending explanation when the chase is done!

One should add that the detective novel has the distinction of being the first best-selling genre to celebrate not deeds but human reason. It has handed over its heroic elements (battle of wits with the mastermind of crime) and its atmospheric elements (pursuit and chase in the urban labyrinth) to the thriller, and what it has left to offer is a game or pastime. Its value to its readers (traditionally schoolmasters, clergy-men, lawyers, dons, etc.) is purely therapeutic; and since they form the modern "clerisy", it is fitting that their pastime literature should be a celebration of the intellect.²

CSF, perhaps, turns the detective-story on its head! But any resemblance between its typical readers and C.S. Forester Society members remains hypothetical!

¹ H. Haycraft, *Murder for Pleasure*, N.Y., 1941

² From P.N. Furbank, *The twentieth-century best-seller*, in B Ford (ed.), *The Modern Age: the Pelican guide to English Literature*, pages 440-441. Sent by ADRIAN TAYLOR.



Paperback Writer!

- The article below, from an unidentified newspaper of January 1956, was pasted inside a first Penguin edition of *The General*.
- Nine other books - *Death to the French*; *The Gun*; *Brown on Resolution*; *The African Queen*; *The Ship*; *Mr Midshipman Hornblower*; *A Ship of the Line*; *Flying Colours* and *The Commodore* - were published at the same time.
- *Plain Murder*, *Payment Deferred* and *The Happy Return* were already available in Penguin.

Hornblower and Jeeves are, in the fullest sense of the phrase, fictional household names. They serve in a small picked company with Sherlock Holmes, Captain Kettle and the Scarlet Pimpernel.

If you mention Hornblower among any readers, whatever the height of their brows, the odds are that some at least of his many adventures will be known to those present. That is the test of a household fictional name. It does not necessarily put the author in the first flight of novelists. But it does show that he can create a character and tell a story. The comparative decline of monthly magazines has made it harder, in recent years, for these figures to impress themselves on the public memory. Jeeves did so while the *Strand* still flourished. The first Hornblower book, *The Happy Return*, came out only in 1937.

By then Mr Forester, who is now in his middle fifties, had 20 years of authorship behind him, and a creditable muster of books published. Several novels and historical studies in the early twenties led up to *Payment Deferred* in 1926. The south London bank clerk, Mr Marble, and his wife, Annie, served their author well as, in dramatic form, they were superbly served by Mr. Charles Laughton and Miss Louise Hampton. Mr. Forester returned the compliment to the creatures of his brain by calling the 15ft. dinghy in which he explored the inland waters of France and Germany the *Annie Marble*. He went further, and repeated the formula of *Payment Deferred* by telling, in *Plain Murder*, how another little suburban clerk - this time in an advertising agency - took to murder.

Between 1929 and 1933 he brought off another double. *Brown on Resolution* described how a naval rating, left to his own desperate devices, triumphed, thanks to the saving grace of service discipline in the First World War. *Death to the French* showed a rifleman in the same predicament in the Peninsular War. *The Gun*, another Peninsular story, and *The African Queen*, in the middle thirties, were followed in 1936 by *The General*. He was the forerunner to Hornblower, and some connoisseurs of Mr. Forester rank him higher than his brother officer of the senior service. Certainly a type of Regular officer has never been drawn more patiently or done justice to as a man and a leader of men with less straying onto the far side of idolatry.

By the time Mr Forester has done with Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Curzon, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., he has exposed, almost from the cradle to the Bournemouth bath chair, the generation of cavalry soldiers who saw active service in South Africa and in Flanders. There is something a little cold about the classification, a touch of the entomologist running his pin through a specimen. Not a flutter is left in the wing, but the creature is there, perfectly preserved under its glass case in still life. The Cavalry Club may not altogether like the reflection, but the most hard line lancer, suspicious of writing men, can find few, if any, technical faults in Mr. Forester's treatment, and civilians, whether or no they have been commanded in life by a Curzon, find his story absorbing.

Mr. Forester is, above all, a story-teller. He absorbs technicalities and makes them come alive in a manner that first suggests Kipling - and, then, suggests a doubt. When, in a happy hour, he turned from the Kaiser's war to Nelson's, he set sail on an apparently limitless ocean that he has still not finished charting. Hornblower reappears at all stages of his career, from midshipman to high rank in a bewilderingly casual lack of chronological sequence. It seems as if Mr. Forester asks himself at intervals what period of that eventful career he



has not yet covered and then settles down to make a tale out of whatever has previously escaped him. And every tale holds water. There is not an unreadable novel in the series.

It was interrupted by *The Ship* in 1943, which naval officers and men studied with the close amusement of crossword fans in the hopes of catching Mr. Forester out. They are generally agreed that he triumphed. Hornblower is a less searching test, for no salt horses are left to say that matters were ordered differently at Trafalgar. Yet the feat is impressive. After a course of Hornblower a landsman feels that he could find his way blindfold round a Nelsonian ship of the line. But what about Hornblower himself? The shadowy sister of Wellington, whom he marries as his second wife, said of him softly on their early acquaintance, "Bless the man! He was almost human for a while." And readers often echo that sentiment.

The stages of the seaman's life are faithfully depicted. The stresses of the human factor are perceptively weighed. And yet, at times, Hornblower wears the air of being a character in a most accomplished advertisement rather than a once living man. That, like "Johnnie Walker", he keeps going strong is a tribute rather to Mr. Forester's powers of narrative rather than to his gift as a painter of an authentic human being. Readers who were not fascinated by Hornblower would be hard to please. But there is something a little mechanical about him: the warmth of life blood is just lacking.

This may well be in line with contemporary taste. Certainly Mr. Forester has found a way of keeping in step with it. His novels have been widely translated. He has been filmed in this country and in Hollywood, and *The Gun* is now being filmed in Spain by an American company. *The Ship* has been published in Hebrew as a text-book for the Israeli Navy. A Hornblower series is being filmed for television.

The last Hornblower short story has been written and is being kept for posthumous publication. The most critical admirer of Mr. Forester will hope that many years and many stories will come before that one sees the light.



Corsairs' Return?

David Stead

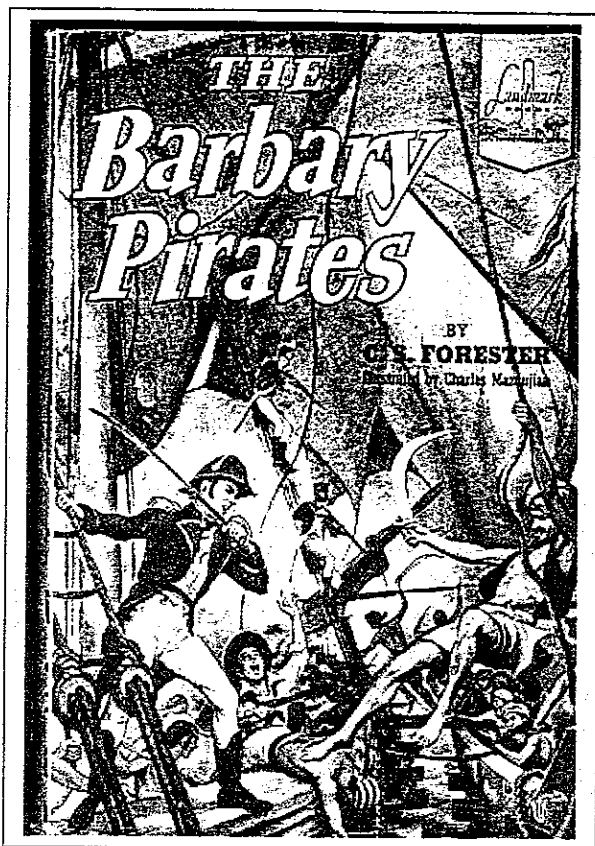
The Barbary Pirates is one of several works that CSF penned about the navy of the young American Republic. A short story – *Hornblower and his Majesty* – appeared in *Colliers Magazine* in March 1940. Within 18 months came a full-length novel – *The Captain from Connecticut*. Their place in the evolution of CSF's fiction – and the humour and delicacy needed to address the events of 1812-1815 in the fraught months before Pearl Harbor – merit discussion in their own right. The same is true of a substantial historical work: *The Naval War of 1812*.³

Barbary Pirates came in between. It was written over two months in autumn 1952, between *Hornblower and the Atropos* and *The Nightmare*.⁴ Its subject had already been included in *Mr Midshipman Hornblower*. English readers then had a long wait, for the meeting of *Hotspur* and *Constitution* at Cadiz, which offered an enigma: the oddly-named Preble, latest in a string of commanders fighting at Tripoli, wherever that was. The reader of *Pirates* will learn the pronunciation of Preble's name, and even what he looked like! There are other long passages in which an aspiring novelist would find their groundwork done for them.

But for more than one reason, the book is neither fish nor fowl. It aims to retell, for the bane and enlightenment of young readers, a story whose main details are assumed to be already known. In that, alone, it would be dated, though the narrative level is usually appropriate. The content, however, is episodic, and it does seem that, were the book slightly less slim, its value would increase substantially. It also seems that CSF's interest is flagging well before the end. So it is, perhaps, a book to complete your collection. For an adequate historical

³ Michael Joseph (1957). Its US title – *The Age of Fighting Sail* – is now taken up by new survey of British and American navies of 1776-1815 by an established historian: Nathan Miller, *Broadsides – the Age of Fighting Sail*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (2000).

⁴ John Forester, *Novelist and storyteller: the Life of C.S. Forester* (2000), page 625.



account, you should look elsewhere: to Nathan Miller; to an imminent book by an Ohio State professor; and to one by an English specialist at the University of Algiers.⁵

One anomaly is *Pirates's* approach to the prejudices and misconceptions with which its subject is encrusted. Apart from its use of the word "Mohameddan" for "Muslim", absolutely unacceptable today but typical of its time, there is the odd way in which CSF swings between saying that the pirates were an intolerable menace to the civilised world and implying that they were no more than typical of their time, and in many ways better than most. We are told at the very start that the "pirates" were really nothing of the kind! But impressionable young people are also told that the Mohammedan Empire, though aspiring to world conquest, was in practice never able to evolve beyond tyranny, red in tooth and claw. That the tyrants were driven to ever-greater excess by pressure from below – fear of assassination if starving and fanatical masses were not appeased with plunder, taken by force or blackmail. And that "finally, France occupied Algiers and then... replaced barbarism with civilisation"! A lot has happened since then. And in truth, as far as England was concerned, relations were based on commercial considerations, and on the need for an ally in the intermittent wars with Spain.

⁵ Nathan Miller, pages 239-257; Robert Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, Palgrave Press (forthcoming) - see also Davis's *British slaves on the Barbary Coast* on the BBC *Timewatch* page: www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/timewatch; Osman Bencherif, *The image of Algeria in Anglo-American writings, 1785-1962*, University Press of America, Inc. (1997), pages xiii-xix; 1-74;

To the Berbers, the tribute was not of course extortion, but a tax giving licence to trade and access to ports. Nor was it all one way: Charles II was offered a menagerie of stallions and lions! And captives in Barbary might well have preferred their lot to that of Muslims taken by Europeans, prisoners on hulks, or transportees, not to mention mill- or mine-workers, let alone those carried off to the West Indies (until 1807) or to the Land of the Free. England enjoyed extensive peace with the Barbary States. When conflict arose, it came for two reasons: an abiding reluctance to give Muslims real parity with Christian allies, and a need to save face. Pellew's bombardment of Algiers in 1816 was a response to scepticism over Britain's abolitionist fever, and to Decatur's exploits of the year before. After 1783, the United States took decades to realise the implications of independence. Accords with Barbary were always possible, though there was room for misunderstanding – as over the *George Washington* affair of 1800, with a hapless captain obliged to transport a menagerie from Algiers' to Istanbul. Accords were in fact pursued, but inconsistently. The alternative, pursued simultaneously, was the Big Stick: the creation – and the preservation – of the proud frigates which were so effective in the War of 1812, was a result of corsair activity. It led, of course, to a string of petty triumphs over 5 years: the recapture of the *Betsey* of Boston; the burning of the lost *Philadelphia* under the guns of Tripoli; an impressive but pointless march across the Libyan desert, a botched attempt to install a puppet bey. "Like so many who have tied their fates to American policy, he was cut loose when the political winds changed. The war in Barbary ended with a whimper rather than a bang."⁶

Humiliated by the burning of Washington, relieved by the Treaty of Ghent, elated by the postwar triumph at New Orleans, Mr Madison looked east once more, to save face. Decatur returned from Dartmoor to *extract* cash and captives from Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. The sum was trivial – even before Decatur was beaten down, and he knew quite well how the Berbers would recoup it.

By 1816, High Barbary was passing away. Its reputation is now being inappropriately revived, in response to the 11 September incidents. *Newsweek* carried an article on Presidents at war, starting with Barbary, and concluding – falsely and dangerously – that US policy has always been to obliterate terrorist-harbours governments.⁷ Interest in supposed Muslim-Christian conflict is enormous. So although the supreme folly now seems unavoidable, a new edition of *The Barbary Pirates* may well also be on the cards.

⁶ Nathan Miller, page 257.

⁷ The US article was apparently in *US News and World Report* – February 25-March 4, 2002 issue, but I have been unable to obtain it. If anyone could help out, I would appreciate it.