PHOENIX

67

DRAYTON MANOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL

PHOENIX 1967

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Thirty-four years ago, readers of *PHOENIX*, the new school magazine, were greeted with these words:

"When the Editor asked me to write a paragraph for this magazine, I consented with pleasure, for I am very glad that the school is to have this record of its doings." So wrote Sewell Allenby, and, with this approval, the *Phoenix* was born.

This year, in keeping with the fable of that immortal bird, a new *Phoenix* has arisen from the ashes of the old. As a direct result of many lengthy meetings, the Editorial Committee decided, at great risk to their previously unblemished characters, to provide the school with two magazines - one literary and artistic, and the other a school review. The pressures of editing a combined magazine have, this year, led to the work's being spread out, and the editing of the two magazines can thus be given greater attention, and can be done altogether more efficiently. The success of this venture will naturally depend on you, the reader, but I can personally guarantee that, if work-rate is anything by which to set a standard, then the level of excellence of previous editions of *Phoenix* will be maintained.

Through no fault of our own, the first *Phoenix* this year contains at least two specific themes. It should be made clear, however, that these are gatherings of ideas which can be used to compare insight into these subjects.

At this point I feel I must express the gratitude of the Editor, the rest of the Committee and myself, to Mrs Andrews and her faithful band of typists, who, by their efforts, have helped to reduce the trouble usually encountered before the magazine is offered to the Printers.

Finally, a word to all those who give criticism to the magazine committee after each publication. This year, the Committee has been given possibly the greatest freedom ever assigned in the history of *Phoenix*, but comparatively little can be done until talented writers, especially in the Upper School, overcome a terrifying reluctance on their part to make their material available for publication. So, until complete co-operation between these students and the Committee is obtained, non-constructive and thoughtless criticism will not be entertained. However, this should not deter any pupil whatsoever from coming forward, if he or she has good, constructive criticism to offer.

Alan Brace.

Front cover designed by Douglas Fowler, L.6.
Back cover designed by Nigel Wake, 3.C.

"THIS WAY TO THE EXIT"

John Myers walked slouchingly out of the cinema's brightly-lit foyer and stood for a moment watching the passers-by. While he was inside, it had been raining, and the pavements glistened brightly, reflecting the lights from the shops and street lamps. Slowly John started to walk towards the main street, hunching his shoulders even more and feeling the wind through his thin jacket.

In the anonymous darkness of the cinema there had been security. He had sat well away from anybody, and he felt —safe. He had dreaded the time when he would leave the warm darkness and go out into the hell of the open city, with people and traffic bustling about aimlessly.

He felt thirsty, terribly thirsty. He had some money; a pub seemed the best idea. He wandered, looking into pubs, but they were all full of smoke and the stench of old beer, and nameless, faceless people; jostling, drinking, shouting with laughter. They seemed happy, but it was only the alcohol taking effect.

Sickened and disheartened, he turned away and began to walk aimlessly around, several times crossing the street to avoid people coming towards him. He could not return to his home.... the crummy little room with the gas ring in the corner and piles of books and magazines that he had never read, and never intended to .....

He couldn't go on. Life must come to a standstill.

He could not stand another night. To John the night brought no peace, only terror. In his dreams were people: men, redfaced, with foul smells about them; women, beautiful and obscene. They filled the room, pressing in on him, sometimes almost touching him—until he screamed, hitting the air in his agony.

Slowly, as he walked, John's thoughts turned to the unknown, utterly empty world that would bring his release. Some people called it Death, but to him the word had no meaning at all... He was passing the station, and, after hesitating, he went down the steps and plunged into the dim, clanging world of the Underground.

It was cold on the platform; he longed for the warmth of the waiting room. But where he stood the platform was empty, so he stayed. A train roared in like a great steel monster, vomiting out people and swallowing more through its many mouths. The doors slammed shut, and the monster moved on its way.

The dull, closed-up faces of his fellow travellers floated through a haze of stale tobacco smoke. The awful nearness of people made him feel ill. His heart pounded and he moaned softly to himself.

"You all right, mate?"

John looked up. The man sitting next to him was staring at him with frank curiosity.

"Let me be."

"What? I only aked if you ...."

"Leave me alone," John shouted, "for Pete's sake leave me alone!"

He got up and lurched out as the doors opened. He stood on the strange platform and took deep breaths. People stared at him. Uncaring, he went up the steps and into the night.

John walked for hours, seeing nothing but the stupid, staring, inquisitive face of the man in the train. At last he stood on Putney Bridge. The night around him blended into a chorus of screaming cars and myriads of blurring lights.

"All right!" he shouted to the stars, "I'm coming."

He clambered on to the parapet and leapt out into space. The waters opened with a mighty splash to receive the hurtling body, then closed again and ran silently onwards.

Fourth Former

Z. SIKULJAK, 5.B.

JANE (A Ballad With a Moral)

Listen to the tale of Jane,
Sad, though somewhat silly.
She was once a charming child,
Gentle smile and manners mild.
Now she's just a kicking, wild,
Cow-hocked little filly.

Jane was in the Upper Fourth,
Quiet and law-abiding.
She could talk of this and that,
From Moses to Jehosaphat,
From Everest to Ararat —
Till she took up riding.

Then a metamorphosis
Completely o'ertook her,
She was interested no more,
Whether two and two made four,
History? Latin? Just a bore!
The thought of Physics shook her.

Julius Caesar left her cold,
Shakespeare made her shiver.
BUT the name of Alan Oliver
Like a shot from a revolver
Caused her ears to shoot upright
And her nose to quiver.

Then she turned from proper meals
Seated at the table;
She would push her plate away
Whinnying aloud for hay,
Till they let her have her way
And fed her in the stable.

Soon she could not laugh or sing,
Talking was a labour,
Till there came the dreadful day
When in the Hall she answered, "Neigh!"
To her name she shied away,
Cow-kicking her neighbour.

Then at last, the limit reached,
Action swift was taken:
Firmly with a halter tied
She was quickly led outside,
Where she kicked and plunged and shied -
Considerably shaken.

Now she's turned out in the rough
With no bed to rest on.
When the snow is on the ground
Under the trees she can be found,
Rugs (New Zealand) wrapped around
But — no winter vest on.

Elaine Tombs, 2.C.

THE BANANA MAN

Johnny walked up the High Street at a leisurely pace. Here he stopped to kick some coloured tinsel, there he paused, eyes bright, mouth open, to gaze into the brightly-lit shop windows.

He was a small thin boy; his eyes, round and grey like marbles, stared confidently out at the world from a smooth pink face. Only six years old, he was wise with the wisdom that only negligence and hunger can bring.

He knew that the gaily-coloured toys and gaudy baubles so temptingly displayed were not for him. No fir tree dressed up in cotton wool with gifts peeking here and there through multi-coloured lights would adorn the twelve-by-twelve room in the crowded tenement he called home.

He suddenly remembered that he was hungry. It was now six o'clock—six hours after he had eaten that cold school dinner, paid for by the National Assistance. That had been his first meal of the day. This morning he had got up too late to have any breakfast, and when he looked in the saucepan there was left only the scrapings of yesterday's heated-up porridge. After all, his mother could not be expected to be able to fill all of her eight children's stomachs in the morning. Somebody had to be left out. Today, Johnny was the 'somebody'.

This evening he would go the long way home, to pass Mr Grey's shop and ask him for any bruised bananas that he had to give away.

He hastened his step and pushed his frozen fingers up the sleeves of his 'new' duffle coat. Johnny thought how lucky he was to have the duffle coat. His mother had bought it for two shillings at a jumble sale. It was made for a nine-year-old, but in only three years it would fit him perfectly—and what was best was that no-one in his family had ever worn it. It was his, and he would wear it for as long as he could.

Mr Grey gave him two bruised bananas and an orange. As there were no customers in his shop he took time to ask Johnny what he'd done at school.

"Oh, we learnt how to spell THINK and CHRISTMAS," he replied. "And then Miss Simmons told us to think about Christmas ....."

"And what did you think?" enquired the old man.

Johnny hesitated: "Oh, I didn't think much - only that the big shops get all prettied up and we have a holiday from school. That's all, isn't it?"

"Well," said Mr Grey slowly, "It's a bit more than that, sonny ....." but he did not have time to say how much more because another customer came into the shop, and Johnny went home while he was serving.

Johnny crawled up the ten flights of stairs to his home. "Mum," he yelled, "I'm home."

His mother was at the far end of the room, washing some dirty dishes. He ran in and thrust his arms about her waist.

"Hello, Mum," he said, still with his arms about her. She pushed his arms away, not even looking at him. He sat down at the little table, waiting for her to say something. He waited and then said slowly: "Mu-um?"

"Yes," she snapped. "Hurry up, I haven't much time to listen."

"Mum," he said, "Can Mr Grey be our dad?"

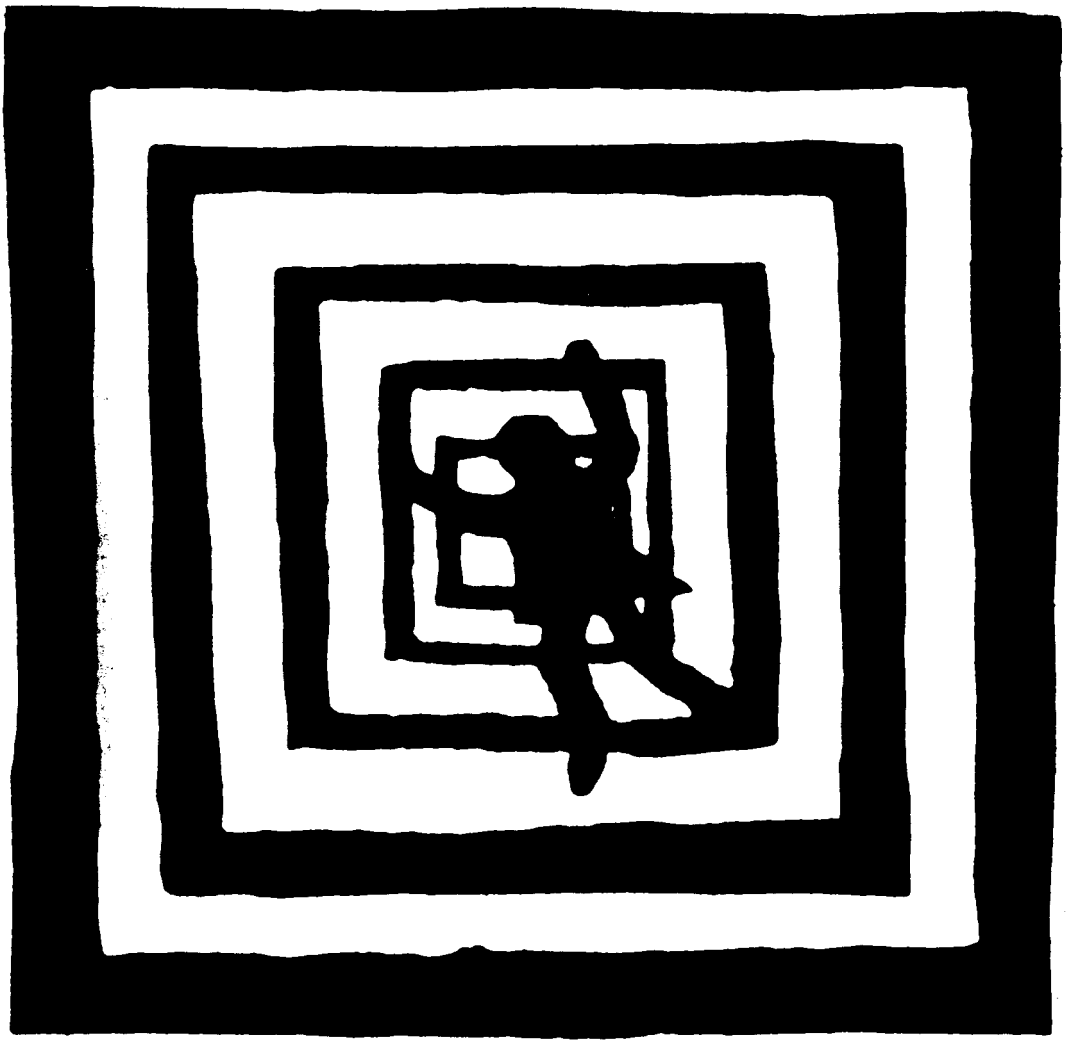
"Don't talk silly nonsense," she said angrily and impatiently.

He added, "Well, Mr Grey hasn't got a wife, and you haven't got a husband any more."

"Oh go away," she snapped. "Stop asking silly questions. Go and play with Pete."

"Pete's gone out," he wailed, but as she didn't hear (nor did she want to hear), he went.

The next day, coming home from school, Johnny went to see Mr Grey again. Mr Grey was pleased to see him. Johnny was glad that somebody was.



He decided to ask Mr Grey and see what he thought. After all, Mr Grey was the wisest and kindest man that Johnny had ever known. Surely he would know what was best.

Johnny took a deep breath and asked away. "Mr Grey," he said.

"Yes, Johnny?" said Mr Grey.

Johnny thought for a while, for he didn't know how to phrase the question. Then he said, "Will you be our Dad, Mr Grey ..... Will you?"

Mr Grey let out a great snort of laughter. But Johnny continued: "Well, you haven't got a wife, and my Mum hasn't got a husband now."

"Oh Johnny," said the old man, snorting still, "there's a bit more to it than that."

Johnny looked up at the old man, his chin quivering.

"Here's a banana," offered Mr Grey. "You're a bit too young to understand yet."

"Yes," said Johnny. "Thanks very much," and ran out of the shop. He raced down the street to the big stores, staring, glassy-eyed, at the gaily-coloured toys and gaudy baubles so temptingly displayed; and realising that they were not for him.

Margaret Bromley, 4A.

DESTRUCTION

The world was inky black. The bright and winking lights of the Embankment had been cut out. The gentle lapping of the water was the only sound; the regular slap-slap-slap of waves against a small boat. The silence was frightening, instilling a perfected horror as the numbness wore off, the numbness caused by the disaster. It had been short, rapid, noisy and unheralded. No-one had known about it; it was so terrifyingly disgusting it could not be believed.

I glanced around, my senses deadened by the fell swoop; I thought not for myself, but for the unbelievable suddenness of it all, the treachery, the murder.

Twelve million people had been cancelled out like flies in a fly-killer spray, exterminated by a flick of a switch. London! The businessman reading his paper, the shopping, suburban housewife, the flurried city typist; they would laugh. It was literally ridiculous, this situation. They had gone; they laughed no longer. The subject of their amusement had been their downfall.

The bomb was but an unconsidered threat in the minds of most people, something to be forgotten, pushed away like a memory best ignored, something that did not concern them. How foolish they were! They had taken no precautions, but had laughed it off. Was that the English fashion? They laughed, they shrugged it to the back of their work-a-day minds, and it had killed them.

I wondered where they were. Somewhere, out there; London was no more. I mused upon the thought. Had St. Paul's crumpled like a pack of cards? Had Nelson toppled from his glorious column? Had lights gone out, and people screamed, running, lost, bewildered? Had music stopped, and cigarettes fallen unnoticed? Like tortoises upturned or moles exposed to light, had London's people tripped and fallen in the dark? They would never rise again.

Had buildings collapsed about the ears of the coffee-drinking Londoners? Clubs upturned about the whisky-smothered gentlemen? I did not know.

I sat upon a park bench, watching all the lights twinking and their reflections in the swirling depths of blackness. The lights had gone. I thought how many problems it had solved. Black and white had gone together, both people helpless, stricken by the same blow. The gamblers with their drawn, white faces no longer wondered where the next week's rent-money was coming from. Dying people no longer lay listless in their beds.

I stood up. I could see nothing. There was no hum of traffic and blare of horns. There was no sound but the wind and the water. Standing there, I could have been standing on a lake-side bank in the centre of a great, desolate, uninhabited place. The wind blew past, laden with

dust and bits of brick and mortar. They caught in my blowing hair. They were the remnants of somebody's home. Rich, poor, how was I to know?

I suddenly wished that I had died. It would have been quick. I would not have faced the aftermath alone. I would not have thought about the poor, grovelling dying people in the ruin of their homes. My friends, my enemies, people I did not know, all linked in an instant, by death. I was the stranger. The password to the 'en masse' out there could be, "Who are you? Are you one of us? Are you dead?" Dead. Were they? Did they rise, their spirits, and converse? Were they watching me, and did they know my thoughts? How tortured and distorted was my mind! Crippled and disabled by a voiceless hate. There was me only in this city. They were gone, as were the buildings they had made and the traffic they had grumbled about and driven in. They were no more. London was dead.

Susan Batten, 3.C.

DEATH OF A NEIGHBOUR

Has he gone?
It seems but yesterday that he was here.
Has he gone?
For yesterday he walked and talked with me.
Where's he gone,
The man who lived across the street? It's queer.
Where has he gone?
It seems so strange that he has ceased to be.

So suddenly
A man who lives with family and schemes
Is suddenly not there.
A snuffing out of things of everyday.
They're finished,
Those ordinary unimportant dreams.
Why has he gone?
'Not easy to explain a death away.

Peter Lockett, 4.A.

TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

The half-light was just beginning to creep into the carriage, and I realized that it would soon be dark. I gazed out of the window. The window-pane was splattered with rain, a thin, driving rain that still fell, its sound obscured by the endless clackety-clack, clakety-clack of the train wheels. I felt rather miserable. The bleak view didn't help. Never had I seen such desolate wild landscape, flat and windswept and grey in the winter rain.

The clouds were low and grey on the dim horizon, and rolled threateningly over the sky. I remembered that I had no umbrella. I looked at my watch, and glanced up at the luggage rack opposite. There was my case, jogging and rattling against the wire netting of the rack. I chewed a broken fingernail absently, and thought about the case. It was squat and brown. I did not like it much. How miserable this was. I looked at my watch again, and then out at the rain-misted countryside. The rain and clouds and soaking grass and stunted trees were all merging together under cover of darkness in that wet, cold twilight. "Just as well," I thought. My eyes crept

around the carriage. There was a carton on the floor, a discarded orange carton that some child had left, thoughtlessly, squashed in the dust. How dirty the floor was! I looked up at the ceiling, and sighed. The corners of the carriage were fading away in the dusk. There was a suitcase next to mine. I regarded it with a new interest, a better respect. I stared at it. It was large and blue, and .... pompous-looking, yes, that was it, really pompous-looking. The catches were still quite bright and yellow. It must be new. It was a nice blue, but all stuck-over with large labels. I craned my neck, but instead of reading the fussy-looking handwriting, my eye fell upon the quivering, jolting, nervous streak of a feather under the luggage rack, and I subconsciously followed that obstructive quill, down, past the little hat, planted askew on a mass of yellow curls, to the face of my fellow passenger.

I shrank back further in my corner and looked at her hard. It was rude, I knew, but I was so intrigued by that pink moon of a face that I could not take my eyes off her. She was very fat, that was my first reaction, and very pink (that was my second). Her hands were quite huge, but her feet were like plump little trotters squeezed into tight black furry court shoes. They looked expensive.

She was chewing. I could smell it from here— butterscotch, I think it was. Her large pink jaws chomped noisily on her sweet, and the saliva dribbled down her chin unchecked as she enjoyed it. I glanced apprehensively at her eyes. They were small, quite tiny, and bright blue. She had not looked at me.

I retired still further into the gloom, knowing that it would cover my untimely inspections. Still she did not look at me, but appeared to be reading the notice on the wall to which I had my back. It was a very dull notice, for there was one opposite me, too, which I had already read several times. She must use a lot of powder. It was salmon-pink, I think.

I saw her in her camel-coloured suit with her new blue suitcase and her tottering furry shoes, arriving at a small country station, and gazing about her rather distastefully. She must surely be a Londoner. I could even hear her voice, too loud, and always talking, a stream of endless noise into the ears of friends, relatives—anyone who could not tell her to stop. I wondered what her husband would be like. She had one, or was divorced, because even amongst the many catchy gems I could see a wedding ring.

I found myself playing a new and amusing game, delving rudely and brazenly into people's lives. What could be done in the mind! Such characters created, and such pleasure and nobody need ever know. Her husband would be short, doubtless bald, of course; they all were, these types. They would live very stylishly, in a flat no doubt. There would be no children, naturally. The very idea made me want to laugh. I looked out at the rain until the desire left me; I had no wish for everyone to think me mad. She was the boss, the organizing type. Mrs So-and-so's garden party on Wednesday, and the W.I. on Thursday, the theatre on Friday evening and the Whatnots' for dinner on Saturday. High-pitched laughter, gossip, cigarettes and swaying champagne in the proper glasses; and all the while the quiet, bald, short figure passing drinks and chocolates.

The lady with the doubtlessly double-barrelled name suddenly held no more interest for me, and I started building pictures around the figure in the furthest corner.

He was drunk. "Probably Irish," I thought. The black stubble of a couple of days' beard appeared on his chin, and a greasy, rolling chin it was too. It simply disappeared inside a grubby scarf wrapped tightly round his throat. He was asleep, or befuddled.

I shuddered a little, and read the notice once again. I did not really want to spin the yarn of this nobody. He was slouched in a curious way, his face against the glass, jogging to and fro with the movement of the train. I realised what the rank, peculiar smell was now, and lowered the window, despite the cold and rain. His mouth was open. The teeth were black, and half were

missing. He must have been in a fight; there was an ugly, yellow bruise mounting on one cheek. He probably had a horde of children somewhere, a turf-cutter's cottage in the homeland, with a donkey stationed at the door, and a crying baby, or a dirty terraced or council house in Liverpool. I felt uncomfortable, but I had to follow up the train of thought. As I looked at his heavy boots and dirty raincoat I thought of dark, narrow alleys and street fights, broken glass and bad language. By then I felt positively sick, but still the unsavoury huddle brought on new ideas. There was a dimly-lit, frozen back room, greyhounds or horses, and old newspapers. There were empty beer bottles, and a crowd of rowdy singers on a street corner in the early hours.

With relief I looked at my third travelling companion. She could have been a Russian peasant, or a Czech, or a Hungarian possibly. Her face was wrinkled and brown, and her staring eyes were sad. She was thin, wi th legs like two sticks in wrinkled black stockings and worn out shoes. The hands that clutched at a nondescript shopper were thin and brown. I felt very sorry for her. Perhaps her life was not as I imagined, but my impression was one that disturbed me even more than the shifty Irishman did. I saw her as a young woman standing with her hair blowing over her face, a face with the beginnings of marked tragedy slowly appearing on it, and in her grey eyes. Her black skirt blew in the wind, and a child clung to it, crying.

There was fighting in her life, and grief and pain. I wondered where she journeyed, and if, in the rattling impersonal train carriage, she thought of those tangled years at home and what she had known. I saw her, clearly, coming to England, a foreigner, alone, seeking jobs, but not being able go speak the language and too proud for charity. I saw her growing old, getting grey hairs, and lines on her face, and darning her clothes under a low-watt bulb in a bare, cold bedroom. She was a silent figure, wrapped in a cloak of misery and bewilderment. Her eyes were so shadowed; the past for her lived on, for her alone. How could I, the unconcerned passenger out for some sport, guess what she was thinking? What went on in her mind was not for me to discern; very troubled, I turned away, my game no longer bringing satisfaction.

Susan Batten, 3.C.

THE FORGOTTEN CEMETERY

As day turns to night, month to year,
The cemetery stands still in time;
The world hurries by in chaos,
But here life is still for eternity.

Gothic writing on the stone,
Now no-one is able to claim the tomb;
As one head-stone bows its weathering head
It is greeted by the weeds, craving for life.

A worn-out shovel lies on the ground;
How many victims has it claimed?
Leaves bury leaves, a carpeting roof;
The floor deep down is earth, and still.

Elaine Mayhew, 2.A.

PAT THOMAS, 5.C.

THE NEW RED BALL

There it lay, on the ground,
Red and shiny and new,
Enticingly gleaming and proudly glinting,
Crouching in expectation
Like a runner at the blocks —
Waiting for the gunshot
That would trigger him off.

Quickly but deliberately
The boot sent it up in the air,
And as it soared through the sky
Houses and trees passed underneath,
And clouds raced by above.

Then it curved downwards and sped to the earth;
The muddy field loomed up in front,
Splat! It landed and mud sprayed around
As it jerkily rolled along,
No longer shining and gleaming and new,
But bedraggled and muddy, with broken pride.

Linda D'Oliveira, 2.C.

ONE DAY TO LIVE

"You have only a week to live." These were the words which have echoed in my mind all week. How can you be happy if you know you're going to die? Well, this week has gone pretty fast and now I feel frightened as I've never been before.

As I lie in my bed I think about my baby brother, Nigel, so innocent, so small, so ..... I can't help crying. Self pity. Why, I don't know.

Then slumber, sweet slumber until — morning. I wake at eight o'clock. My father is going to take me to school so I need not hurry.

My heart doesn't want to beat anymore, my mind doesn't want to think anymore.

With an affectionate 'good-bye' I leave with my father for school — but I can't help crying.

At school nobody knows, not even my best friend. But today I want my virtues to show and even a few of my vices. I want to be pally, "to end on a happy note."

Against my wishes the day goes fast. My head's in a whirl.

Our first lesson is art, a double period. I want to finish my painting but to my disapproval I mess around and make myself a nuisance by making too much noise.

At break I spend two shillings in the tuck shop.

I find myself thinking about religion, God, and life after death. I do not go to Church regularly and I am not an angelic, saintly person, and although I have not thought much about God I find myself hoping I have not offended Him, whom I don't believe in. I also think about life after death, which, as I don't believe in it, has possibly led to my disbelief in God. But as I am so near to death I begin to hope that there is life after death—not heaven and hell, for I might go to hell.

Although my religious views are views which I do not think many people have, I would hope God would accept me in His heaven.

My next two lessons, French and English, seem to go slowly,but as I look back on them I do not realise that I have taken part in these lessons. Although people say that your mind follows your heart, my mind wanders frequently during the morning and it has to be called to attention.

The lunch, I find, is most unappetising and for this reason I partly wish that I had spent my last day at home.

After lunch I go to the library and try to think and concentrate, but my friends come up and we get thrown out for being noisy.

Somehow I just want to cry and cry but do not want to let my friends know. For I think I have lost all my self pity and find myself pitying everybody who has to live with the world.

In form period my form teacher gets on my nerves. I know it is near;"Time and tide wait for no man"keeps echoing in my ear as I wish time would stand still.

But soon Form period is over and then — music.

Music, singing, movement and chattering all buzzing round in my head. I can't stand it any longer. The lessons whizz by as teachers shout at me: "Don't let your mind wander, girl!" "Keep awake!" But this doesn't matter anymore; I know I won't be alive at five o'clock.

School ends, the bustle and noise are all in the back of my mind. My friend helps me out of school to the car where mum and Nigel are waiting.

They open the door; I sit down. "Oh God, this is the end!"

Second Former.

His father was furious now. His orange bald head turned bright scarlet, and so did his face. He ran his large fat hands through what little hair he had on his head. To give him the strength that he needed for what he wanted to say he picked up the bottle of whisky and swallowed what little there was left. He slumped into an armchair; the bottle slid from his hand and smashed to the floor. His head fell on to his shoulder, and his eyes closed. His anger had passed

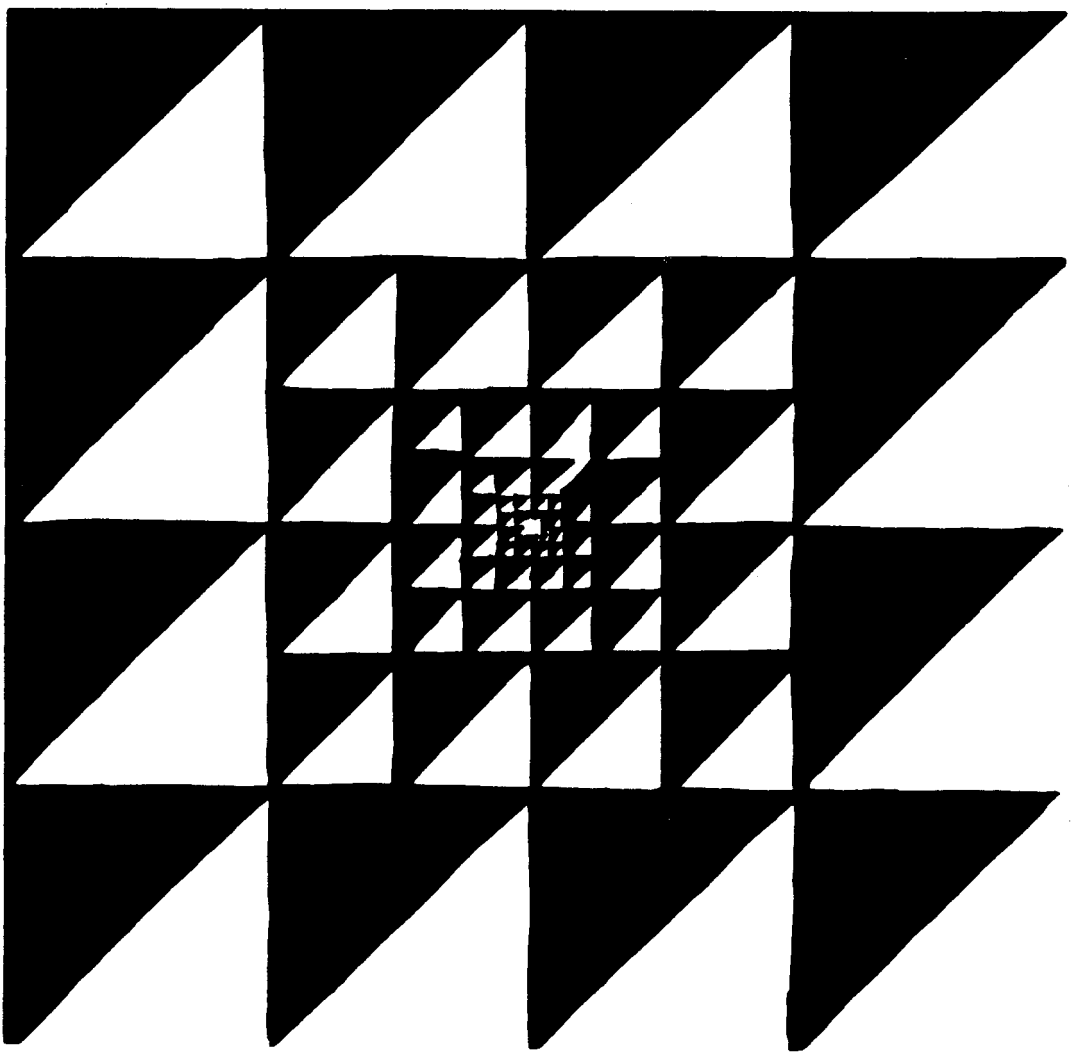
Jim realised that he had to do something. There was no food in the house and no money either, and there would not be any until he himself would get it. He picked up the crude fishing rod that he had made himself only that afternoon. He ran his hand down the length of bamboo cane that served as a rod. Would it work? It should. After all, he had followed the instructions carefully. Yes, he thought, as he looked at his father in the chair, it should work. Well, if he was going to get any supper that night it would have to work.

Then, as he looked at the rod, he began to feel pleased with his work—even proud of it. Of course the thing would work.

Still holding the rod, he picked up his coat, a washing-up bowl, a tine of wriggling worms, and set off down to the river.

It was afternoon, and the river was beautiful. The sky was a pale grey, and the sun just caught the frothy torrent, as it tumbled into the valley. And yet so softly and graciously, and with such an easy flow did the river approach the valley as it rolled along the plateau above, lapping at the roots of a brawny oak, or a slender silver birch, rolling over and chattering with the smooth rounded stones, which had made their beds in its path, drowning the mountain grasses that struggled to survive on the rocky earth. But all this was before it reached the edge of the plateau and plunged into the valley below.

Jim reached the edge of the river, just before it thrust itself into the valley. Old Sam had told him that this was by far the best part for salmon fishing. You caught 'em with a net just after they reached the top, "Only mind Lord 'Arry don't ketchyer there or you're for it." But, as he had no net, Jim used a rod.



At the river's edge Jim struck for salmon, expertly flicking the line so that it floated downstream and enticed the fat metallic salmon to wriggle after the bait.

It was a good rod—even better than Sam's—yes, it was the best rod that he had ever touched. By his feet, in the gaudy bowl, the silver scales took up more and more room. Without realising it, he caught more fish than he needed.

Jim was too engrossed in the play of his line to notice the big black clouds that were billowing up from behind the mountain, and the sheets of water that poured on the head of the river, swelling the flow to lash and tear at the mountain bed, bounding and sweeping, smashing and rending at old and weak trees, tearing up the river banks, and plunging into the valley below.

Jim was resting on the bank on his coat, with the rod held between his fingers and feet. He was drowsy from the sun, and not for some time did he feel the heavy drag on his line. He sat up.

Far up the river he heard a low roar. In his short lifetime he had never heard the roar of heavy water, and did not know what to make of it.

The river was flowing faster and faster and it was now impossible to fish. He reeled in the line and sat for a while gazing at the black sky. Then, realising, he looked around for the bowl of fish. It was gone. He had placed it by his feet, but it was not there now. To his surprise he found that his feet were surrounded by water; he had not been able to feel it because he was wearing rubber boots. He looked across at the river; it tore at the bank he was sitting on. Near the middle of the river was the gaudy washing-up bowl, still containing the fish. It was caught in the branches of an uprooted tree.

Jim thought of his stomach. He grabbed at the rod, and waded into the river. The water tore at his clothes, it filled his boots, his eyes, his lungs. He waded further and further in. The water came up to his waist and pulled him nearer and nearer to the edge of the plateau. But he thought not of the waters crashing down to the valley. His mind was on the yellow plastic bowl only six feet away. He reached out with his rod and it hooked on to the side of the bowl. He pulled the rod. It did not come away. He waded in further, so that he was almost touching the huge trunk of the tree.

Another tree trunk floated down the river and bumped into the first one. Jim felt something pushing him over; he fought to stand up, but his strength was gone - and then, in the space of the blink of an eyelid, Jim disappeared.

No-one knew what had happened to Jim. His body, dead or alive, was never found. His father was convinced that he had run away, and refused to let anyone speak his name, and swore that if he ever came back he would beat him to death.

Margaret Bromley, 4.A.

MY FRIEND

My friend, Fred,
Smoked Consulate in bed;
It went to his head,
And now he's dead.
"Cool as a mountain stream"
Was all that he could dream,
As the flames licked up between
The pillow and his head.

David Carpenter, 4.A.

THE WORST EVENING

"No, you can't go," my father shouted at me. "You're always going out. What do you think this is, a hotel?"

"Why can't I go?" I asked. "Everyone else is going. I'll be the only one not there." I had begun to shout and it only made my father worse.

"I've said 'no' and I mean 'no'," he said. "You're going to spend an evening at home for once."

I looked appealingly at my mother but I got no help or support from her. She was going to remain neutral.

Feeling that I could no longer control myself, I dashed out of the room. As I got to the bottom of the stairs I looked back and shouted, "Thanks—for nothing." I thumped upstairs, flounced into my room, and flung myself on my bed.

I lay there sobbing and thumping the pillows with my fists. I muttered, "The injustice of it all!" to myself and wondered how my parents could be so unreasonable.

"It's not fair, it's not fair," I muttered over and over again. "Why me? Why me?" I asked. "Why should I get parents who are so awkward?" I cried until my head ached and my eyes were red and sore. I got up from my bed, went over to the window, and leant my head on the cold windowpane.

"Oh, I hate home," I whispered to myself. "I think I'll leave." I glanced at my watch. The time was a quarter to seven. My friends would be almost ready to go out now and I wasn't going.

A Saturday evening at home! The thought horrified me. The family would be there, —nothing to do. Ugh! I turned on my radio and sat down on my bed. The radio did not come on. The batteries were flat. "Oh, trust the batteries to run out now," I shouted.

I looked round the room for something to read but there were only old magazines which I had read dozens of times before. I sat in my armchair and looked at the wall. I had nothing else to do.

I glanced at my watch again. My friends would be on their way now. How slowly the time was passing by! I stayed upstairs until it was completely dark outside and then I crept downstairs. I went into the dining-room. All the family were there and I threw a thunderous glance at my mother.

I sat down on a chair that was outside the circle of the chairs of the rest of the family. None of the family spoke to me and I said nothing either. I picked up the paper to see what was going to be on the television. A political programme—that was more than I could bear!

I sat there, sighing deeply just to let everyone know I was there, and I kept making marked glances at the clock. Mum had a bag of sweets and she offered a sweet to everyone. When it came to me I looked at her defiantly and said as icily as I could, "No thanks." She took no notice of me and I was rather disappointed.

I deliberately tried to look as bored and angry as I could and when anyone said anything to me I replied as briefly and as rudely as I dared.

At half past nine I got up and left the room.

"Goodnight," called my father as I walked out of the room. I made no sign of having heard the remark and did not reply. I went back up to my room and decided to go to bed, even though half past nine seemed like the beginning of the evening to me.

I got into bed thoroughly convinced that no-one else could have parents like mine and absolutely certain that I had never spent such an awful evening in my life—and never would again, I hoped.

Eileen McGreal, 5.C.

DEATH-HOUSE BARGAINS

"He died last night,
So Mrs Smith said,
(I rather fancy that old camp bed)."

"The Postman found him
About three hours ago,
(I rather fancy the clock, you know)."

"He died of a heart attack,
So they say,
(I rather fancy his silver tray)."

"Thought he'd go soon,
He wasn't half frail!
(I rather fancy the old kitchen pail)."

"Quick, out of the window,
Don't want to get caught,
Into my house and we'll see what we've got."

"Got some good stuff here,
Much better than paying,
Ted Jones is near dying, so they're saying."

"We'll pop over to his house
When he's gone —
Doubt whether we'll have to wait very long."

Christopher Vosper, 4.A.

HIS TRUE VOCATION

Mr Bird, nicknamed 'Old Birdie' by his pupils, sat on the edge of his chair nervously twisting his hands, making extreme efforts to understand what the discussion was about. He was well used to attending staff meetings and hearing the Headmaster and senior teachers considering the merits of various educational programmes and formulae, but despite over thirty-five years as a woodwork master he always felt ill at ease, and was glad to get back to his musty workroom, and impart some of his knowledge to the mass of industrious youths who regularly attended his classes. Sometimes he wondered why he had ever taken up teaching; he had no confidence in his ability to teach his love of creating shapes from wood, and often wished he had stayed in the carpentry trade. After all, he would be earning more money by now, although he had been glad enough to take the job of teaching when it was offered to him in the 1930's.

The Headmaster was speaking about the Annual Speech Day, and one of the 'old boys' was going to attend and make a subscription to the School's finances. This particular 'old boy' was the managing director of a firm which made furniture, and apparently he remembered his school days with some affection.

'Old Birdie' vaguely remembered the 'old boy's' name. He must have been good at woodwork, he thought, and he made a greater effort to listen to the discussion regarding the Speech Day arrangements.

"Everything must be done properly to satisfy our guest," said the Headmaster, "Otherwise he might not feel disposed to donate any money. I shall rely on the maths teachers to ask sensible questions about business procedure."

The meeting broke up, and 'Old Birdie' wandered back to his workroom and decided to prepare the tables for his next class.

On the Speech Day the Main Hall was crowded with pupils. The School Governors, honoured guests and masters sat on the platform, in rows, listening with some interest to the old pupil's speech. He had already asked for the pupils of the school to have a half-day's holiday, he had mentioned his gift to the School, and was commenting on his schooldays. 'Old Birdie', in his well-worn navy-blue suit, had been placed at the back of the platform. He had understood little of the speech by the Headmaster concerning Higher Education. The 'old boy' spoke quietly but with confidence, and 'Old Birdie' felt himself listening even though speeches usually bored him. The speech was now about how he had built up more factories and how much he owed the School for his education. He went on to say that, above all, there had been one master who helped him choose his career, and that master was on the platform today. The older masters stirred cautiously in their seats, and the rest of the assembly waited expectantly.

"I refer," said the speaker, "to Mr Bird, who showed me the delights of woodwork."

There was a gasp from the assembly, the masters turned in astonishment and stared at 'Old Birdie'. Suddenly the whole hall erupted in a flood of cheers.

'Old Birdie' felt embarrassed, then happy, and with a rush of emotion realised that he had indeed found his true vocation.

Pat Brake, 4.A.

I saw a blind girl walking
With a stick, white and tapping,
But always praying.

Moving so slowly onwards
And always knowing something
Was there, but where?

Something was there but not seeing it
Only knowing it, was believing it:
So she died a believer.

Michael Dodd, L.6.

THE SMALL HERO

Horace, the worker ant, scuttled hurriedly along the path. Every minute he rested because he was carrying back to the nest a huge bluebottle fly. He was making it harder work for himself because instead of travelling in a straight line, he travelled in a kind of zig-zag.

"Oh! the Queen will be pleased with me. Fancy finding a dead fly of that size and carrying it back to the nest all by myself."

Horace had spoken too soon though. Just as he was about a foot away from the nest he met Hercules, the strongest worker ant in the nest.

Horace tried his hardest to avoid Hercules but it was no good.

"Hello, Horace," said Hercules, "Would you like any help, Horace? After all you are a bit too weak to carry a huge thing like that."

"No, I wouldn't like any help at all," replied Horace in a rather offended tone of voice.

Hercules wouldn't take no for an answer. He asked Horace again: "Please let me help."

ADRIENNE POND, 4.A.

"No, Hercules. For once I want to do something all by myself."

Horace in all his ant life, which was only four months five days, had never found any food to take back to the nest. Either Hercules or another worker ant had always beaten him to it.

That was why it was so important to him to get the fly back to the nest all by himself. He would be able to prove to the queen that he was not weak and cowardly.

Hercules was getting rather annoyed at his boldness. He always liked to take all the praise for himself. Hercules confronted him. By the way he looked at Horace it was easy to tell he was quite angry.

Horace became weak and cowardly and scared. He dropped the blubottle in front of Hercules.

Hercules picked it up as if it were a grain of sand. He entered the nest. The corridors were dark and dry. At the far end of the main corridor was a group of ants repairing some damage caused by a human being. "Good morning, Hercules," they said, pausing from their work for a moment.

"Morning, you lot. What are you doing?"

"We're repairing the roof. One of those blasted humans put his foot through it. I wish they would keep their feet to themselves. I say, you've got a whopper there."

"I know," replied Hercules in a rather big-headed way.

"Be careful. It's so big that it may damage our ceiling."

Hercules turned a corner and entered a stately chamber in which the queen lived most of her life. Nurse-maids hurried to and fro with the eggs.

"Hercules, you have a large fly there. How clever of you to find one like that," said the queen.

"I know," said the big-headed ant, "I am rather clever, come to think of it."

Hercules left the chamber and caught sight of an upset Horace hurrying along.

"Tough luck, Horace," said Hercules looking at him leeringly.

Horace took no notice of him. He entered the queen's chamber.

"Ah, Horace, what have you found today?"

"Nothing, your majesty."

The rest of the day went uneventfully for Horace. As night drew close Horace, who wasn't on night shift, was settling down for a rest, when a messenger ant came in making an awful fuss. He went straight to the queen's royal chamber.

"Your majesty, an army of ants is marching this way," said the messenger.

"What ants?" she demanded.

"Red ants," he replied.

"Oh!" she said as if she had had an awful shock. "They are our old enemies. - We have no soldiers. They are at the other end of this garden."

The garden was certainly a large one. It backed on to an enormous house called 'Green Acres'.

The soldier ants had been called away to another spot a long way from the nest.

"Horace, I want you to travel along as fast as you can and find our soldiers," said the Queen. "Hercules will be needed to fight them off."

Horace, not knowing what to say, quickly set off on the long journey. He went a long way round so as to miss the fearsome red warriors. He knew he had a long way to go. He had to be quick because the survival of the nest rested on his shoulders. He had been going for about fifteen minutes nonstop, when a loud booming noise rang out. He knew what this was. He hurried down a crack and watched whilst a pair of human feet passed over.

"Wretched things," mumbled Horace. Horace travelled on. He had been going for an hour. He was exhausted. He was badly tempted to sit down and rest, but he thought of the nest being

attacked. Quite soon he came to a stretch of grass. He liked travelling through grass because he was well hidden.

Suddenly everything was black and he felt something treading on him. It was Bobby the black toy poodle.

Luckily for Horace he did not leave his paw there for long.

Horace was badly shaken up but he continued the journey audaciously.

He was not looking where he was going and he then found himself in a web.

It was only a small spider, but he handled the struggling Horace with great strength. Horace was caught and it seemed his end had come, when he felt something pick hold of him and place him on the ground. It was the little girl, Mary, who lived at 'Green Acres.'

She talked to him but all he heard were horrible loud echoing noises.

"Poor little ant. The spider nearly had you for dinner till I came and saved you."

It took Horace a minute until he found his sense of direction again. He waved his antennæ left and right as he went along.

Fifteen minutes later he sensed the soldier ants somewhere near by. He hurried along. There was no time to lose.

"Look it's a worker ant from our nest. I wonder what he wants," they said as he approached them.

"The red ants are attacki....." Horace could say no more.

The soldier ants got the message and went off in a homeward direction. When they arrived back at the nest the battle was nearly at an end, with the red ants winning. Luckily the Queen and her eggs were still safe and closely guarded. From the moment the army of black ants arrived the battle went in their direction.

"It's all thanks to Horace we won," said the Queen triumphantly. "Where is he though?" she inquired.

"He died the moment he reached us," they all answered.

"What a shame," she replied. "He died the death of a hero, and I am very proud."

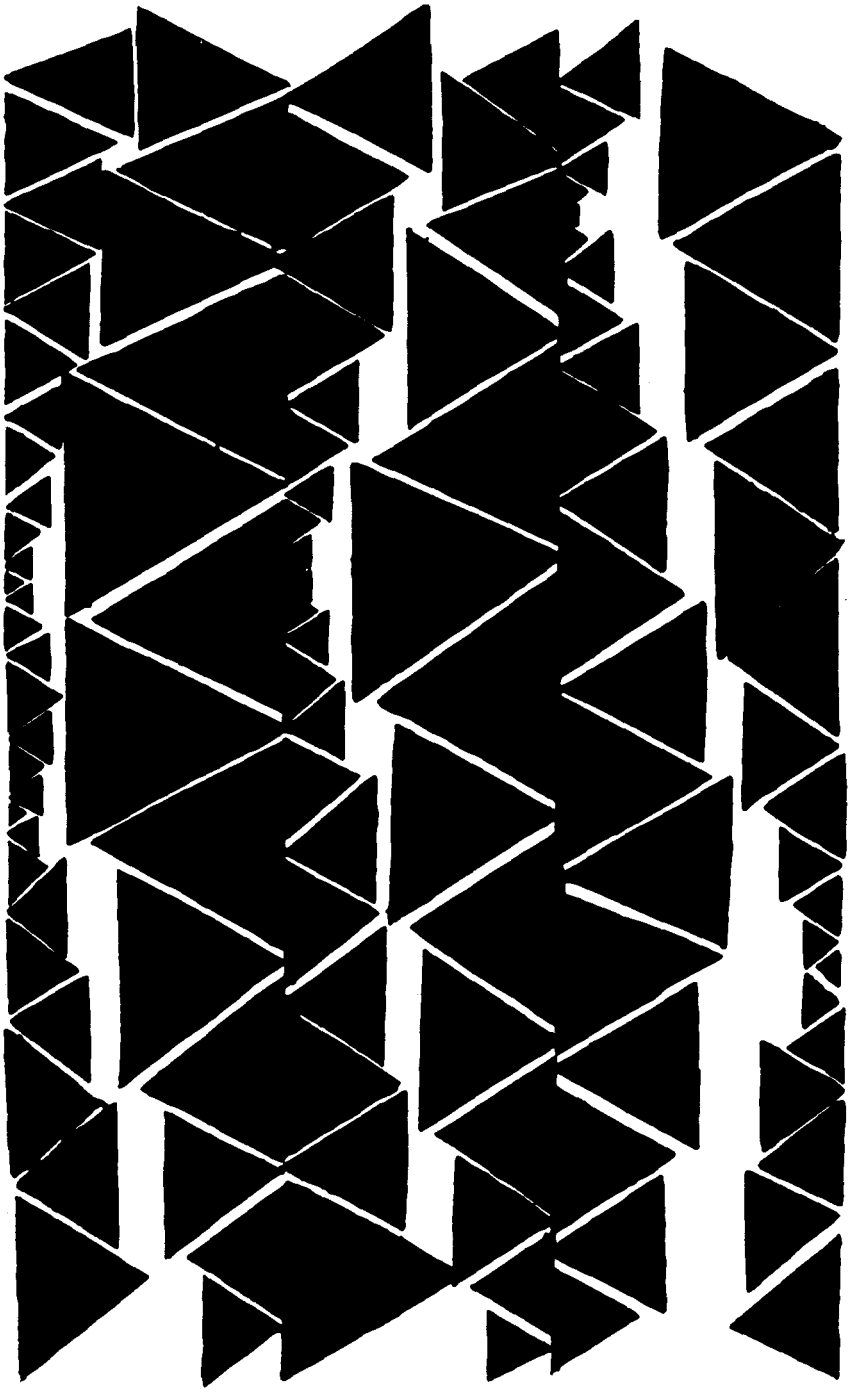
No more was Horace remembered as a weak cowardly ant, but as an ant who acted bravely and efficiently. Hercules later suggested that he should be remembered as Saint Horace.

Brenda Stone, 2.C.

FISHING

I sit beside the river bank
And wait and wait and wait.
Won't that monster of a Pike
Ever take the bait?
Six hours later my reward —
At last I'll get the loot;
I fight and fight, now here it comes —
A great big Hob-nailed Boot.

Alan Smith, 2.C.



G. CARTER, 3.A.

RAIN

Like a black stain on a blue cloth
The clouds begin to appear.
The sun is blotted out like an ember dying.
People scurry like ants to the nest,
Windows are shut, the birds disappear
As the rain begins to fall,
As though some giant gardener were watering the earth
From a giant watering-can.
Slowly at first like the patter of feet,
Gradually increasing until the noise of the rain is supreme,
Drowning the tapping of a loose piece of board.
Water streams down the pane,
Blurring colours and distorting sights.
Dry leaves and twigs are swept down the guttering
Like ships before the waves;
Puddles appear on the pavement,
Like ever-growing lakes.
At last the rain ceases to pour,
And drizzle like a fine mist surrounds the town.
Soon the clouds move away east,
As though drawn by invisible strings;
The only sound is the drip of water from a sill.
Umbrellas go down, the birds reappear,
The earth soaks up the moisture,
The sun dries the pavements,
And all is as it was before.

Brian Gasser, 2.C.

THE CONQUEST OF THE AIR

At the beginning of the twentieth century man conquered the air, and everybody believes that the very first aeroplane to fly was constructed and flown by the Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur. However, two brothers flew before the Wright Brothers, although the majority of people are ignorant of this fact.

In 1876, In Ireland, the O'Conmy brothers, Sean and Patrick, built and flew an aeroplane which was financed by a local insurance company. Their father, the Honourable Lester O'Conmy K.G.B., had died early in March 1875, leaving all his wordly possessions to himself. As no such testament could be accepted, the two brothers received an equal share of the money. Sean O'Conmy was a godless man and squandered his share of the money on wine and women.

When asked by the local clergyman to name the last time he had been to church, Sean bluntly replied, "I don't rightly know, Father, but it's on my baptismal certificate."

Patrick, on the other hand, invested his money in a local bank and took a Degree in Aerodynamics at Dublin University. He was promptly expelled for possessing obscene photographs. The Dean had spent the whole of that night processing another hundred photographs, and, disguised as a spiv, he had sold them to American sailors with the caption, "Genuine night life in Dublin."

In November, 1875, the two brothers decided to build aeroplanes, and the materials were to be provided by the local insurance company. Their first attempt, early in 1876, had resulted in failure. The plane had exploded and Patrick had badly hurt his thighs. For weeks he was unable to stand up. Even worse, he was unable to lie down. However, the two brothers persevered and by March the second aeroplane had been built. A rough airstrip had been hastily constructed on Donelly moor. The local villagers had hauled the plane to the end of the airstrip, and waiting for them were cups of hot coffee and several anti-rupture devices.

The scene was set. It was a perfect day. Sean climbed into the cockpit, after taking a handful of Doctor Pim's little liver pills. The village priest performed the last rites on Sean (who, incidentally, was the worst Catholic since Genghis Khan) and to the cry of "Chocks Away" Sean started the engine.

The plane shook like a tormented soul in the agonising throes of constipation. Suddenly it moved, gaining speed at an incredible rate. Then it was airborne, steadily climbing to a height of ten, twenty and then thirty feet, still rising. There were gasps of amazement and fear from the audience below. One old lady crossed her heart and fell backwards into the priest's arms. Patrick was jumping up and down waving his arms about.

The plane landed ten minutes later. That night there was a grand celebration. Patrick O'Conmy was presented with a cheque for £30 by the head of the insurance company. That night, Patrick O'Conmy fell into a deep thirty-pound sleep and died at two o'clock in the morning. Sean O'Conmy drifted into obscurity and was never heard of again. Twenty-seven years later the first official flight in a man-made machine was accomplished by the Wright Brothers.

David Morris, 5.C.

Algernon Brown, known as Bertie,
Was sent home from school for being dirty.
"Go at once," the teacher said,
"You've got mud all over your head.
I'll write to your mother, it's a disgrace;
I've never seen such a dirty face!"
Bertie really did not mind at all —
The next lesson was P.T. in the hall.
But his mother was very angry and cross;
Poor Bertie was at a terrible loss,
"If your face is not clean by half-past three
I'll send you to bed without any tea."
Bertie sat in a corner shaking with fright.
Now what would make his face really white?
Perhaps some detergent, kept under the sink,
Would make his face white, quick as a wink.
With a rag and Ajax, ammonia plus,
He rubbed at the mud without a fuss.
But, alas, this was no game;
His muddy face remained the same.
He tried Persil and Omo, that wash much whiter,
But still his face did not get any lighter.

Perhaps some soap, Bertie thought right away,
So on went Lux and Pink Camay;
No difference at all, this just wasn't right,
So Bertie grabbed everything in sight:
Square-deal Surf, Daz, Dreft and Tide —
Was there anything he had not tried?
Hoping for whiteness he rinsed off the soap,
Looked in the mirror but he had not a hope,
For he had forgotten what everyone knew,
That whiter than white is really blue!

Pat Brake, 4.A.

READ THIS!

I went to work
by the tube train.
These things I saw
on my way down the lane:
placards with advertisements
by the mile,
toothpaste's sexy grin,
soap's cool, calm smile,
the front teeth of a Cadillac,
the transparency
of the plastic mac;
but I saw one saying,
"Drink this, it's not against the law."
So I drew up by
a liquor store;
once inside
I took the risk
and a little man
made me buy Smith's crisps.
Outside again
I smelt my breath —
it was like a bullfrog
close to death.
Sensuous breath deodorant
filled my mind,
I felt a tingling down my spine.
Heart on fire
I went and bought.
The placard said;
"That's a good sport!"
A large blue notice
stopped me and said:
"Why not be a radical?
You're so easily led.
Come and buy our oriental tea,
and don't brood about
the outrageous fee."
So I got me some;
(Oh! and it's good to know
about Stork margarine
and Fairy Snow!)
And when I got to the station
I stopped to see:
"Cause a sensation!"
(Man! that's for me.)
So I got their clothes,
patterned
with large green tulips
and a big red rose.
The train cards they said to me,
"Your kid has a need for toy guns,
and plastic dollies
and sticky buns;
come to us,
these things you will find
in Chester Street,
Number 49."
I have no kids
but I went to buy —
Advertisements!
They hypnotise.
Disillusioned by the things I had
I took some notice
of another ad.
I went and bought myself a gun
to end it all;
life's not much fun
so I loaded up,
pointed the pistol at my brain,
and pulled the trigger
waited for the pain.
Soon it was I realised —
the bloody thing!
it hadn't fired.
Advertiser,
You're a damn liar!

Martin Glover, 4.A.

THE GHOST'S SHADOW

Eleven p.m. chimed from the hall clock downstairs. When the sound had died away, all was quiet save for the sound of writing on paper. In the room upstairs it was almost dark, but in one corner a small lamp cast a feeble light over what appeared to be a desk, and cast shadows on the wall. Seated at the desk was a young man of about twenty-five. But already wrinkles showed on his face. Blue-black marks under his eyes standing out against the pale skin showed that he needed a rest. Only his right hand and arm moved. Eleven-fifteen struck. With a sigh he threw down the pen and leant back in his chair. He rubbed his eyes and tilted the chair back on two legs. Then he picked up several sheets of paper and began to read them.

For half-an-hour he remained thus, then picked up his pen and began to write again. He turned his head toward the wall and regarded his shadow. But he didn't really see it, for he was thinking of what to write next. Suddenly he stiffened in his seat. The pen dropped from his fingers and rolled to the floor. But he heeded it not. On the wall, slightly above his head, was the shadow of two hands descending slowly towards his neck. The sight seemed to fascinate him – he couldn't tear his eyes away from it. He opened his mouth to scream, but no sound would come. He trembled all over and a clammy sweat broke out on his face. Just as the armless hands appeared to reach his neck he leapt up, knocking the chair flying, and bounded across the room. But his foot trod on something which caused him to fall heavily against a bookcase. He lay on the floor with his hands over his head for what seemed to be an eternity. Then he ventured to look up. Everything was as it had been before - the chair lying on the floor, and a round, long object by his feet, lying in a blue pool. He picked it up. It was his pen. It was broken down one side, and the ink had leaked out and formed the puddle. He righted the chair and sat on it. He buried his face in his hands and tried to slow his quick breathing and pounding heart. Then he laughed hysterically. He had been seeing things. Of course he had been seeing things. Still trembling he got into bed – but no sleep came that night .....

He was trapped. On all sides the smooth steel walls hemmed him in. The hands approached him, looking very odd floating in mid-air. No matter which way he turned they relentlessly followed him, getting nearer every second. He screamed and screamed until he was hoarse, but no-one heard him. With every second the hands came closer. Suddenly he heard voices. Looking up he saw the faces of old friends and acquaintances, his parents who had been killed in a train crash three years before, his boss, an office mate, and the faces of clients whom he had defended in court; they were all laughing at him. They still laughed when he shouted to them. The hands clutched at his throat. Cold nails pierced his skin. He screamed and shouted until .....Bump! From his position on the floor he looked round. It had all been a dream. It was the next night after the incident when the shadow of the armless hands had almost clutched his neck. He had been in bed only about two hours before the dream, or rather, nightmare, had begun. By his watch the time was two-fifteen, but he was too shaken up to go back to bed, so he made his way to the bathroom for a drink of water. He was sipping it when he happened to glance into the mirror. Slowly descending towards his neck were two furry hands floating in space. With a yell of terror he spun round and flung the glass at where the hands had been. But the glass merely broke into a thousand pieces on the door. There were no hands there at all!

About nine o'clock he set off in his car for the doctor's surgery to have his eyes tested. The road followed the coast-line for most of the journey of three miles, so he had to be careful not to go over the edge of the cliff. At that hour and place there were few cars or pedestrians about, so he was going at about 50 m.p.h. Being a good driver he continually looked in the driving mirror to see if any car wished to overtake him. He had covered about half the distance to the doctor's, when he saw in the driving mirror the same two hands descending on to his neck. He panicked as he had never panicked before – perhaps it was the feeling of being in a small

R. COSFORD, 4.B.

enclosed space – and the car swerved about for a few seconds and then hit the wooden barrier running by the edge of the cliff. As it did so the door burst open. The barrier broke and the car seemed to hang half on and half off the edge. Then with a deliberation which was horrid to watch it plummeted towards the rocks beneath, spinning slowly as it fell. There was a terrific explosion as the car hit the rocks and the petrol tank exploded. The man, who was falling more slowly than the car, fell into the blazing inferno.

The mysterious hands had claimed their victim – if they ever existed anywhere but in his imagination.

Brian Gasser, 2.C.

FIRST BOMBING MISSION

The engine purred,
The pilot slurred
His orders to the crew:
"Come on, you lot,
And don't forget
To bring some fags with you."
"We're coming, Max,
Just you relax,
It's only ten past two."

The three climbed in
The plane, and Tim
Asked, "Your first time then, Joe?
Not to worry, lad,
It ain't so bad,
You just let the bomb go."
"But all the people
They look so feeble
Waiting down below."

"Don't talk like that -
Well come on, Max,
We've a mission to be done."
"We're on our way!"
"I wish I'd never come."
"Oh shut-up now,
I know just how
You feel, but forget it, son."

"I suppose you're right ....."
"We're in full flight!"
Said the pilot, "so get to your place."
"Hand round the fags,"
Said Max as he dragged
At his own with a solemn face.

Five minutes passed
And Joe sat cast
Deep in thought; staring blankly ahead.
The rest of the crew
Talked of the news
Then repeated what they had just said.

Joe sighted the place.
The end of the race
Was near for the people who lived there.
The sweat on his brow
Ran down, as he now
Whispered for those people a prayer.

All that was there
Was rubble, and the air
Was clouded with the smoke of explosion.
The plane flew back home,
The day's work was done,
And Joe awaited his second mission.

Linda D'Oliveira, 2.C.

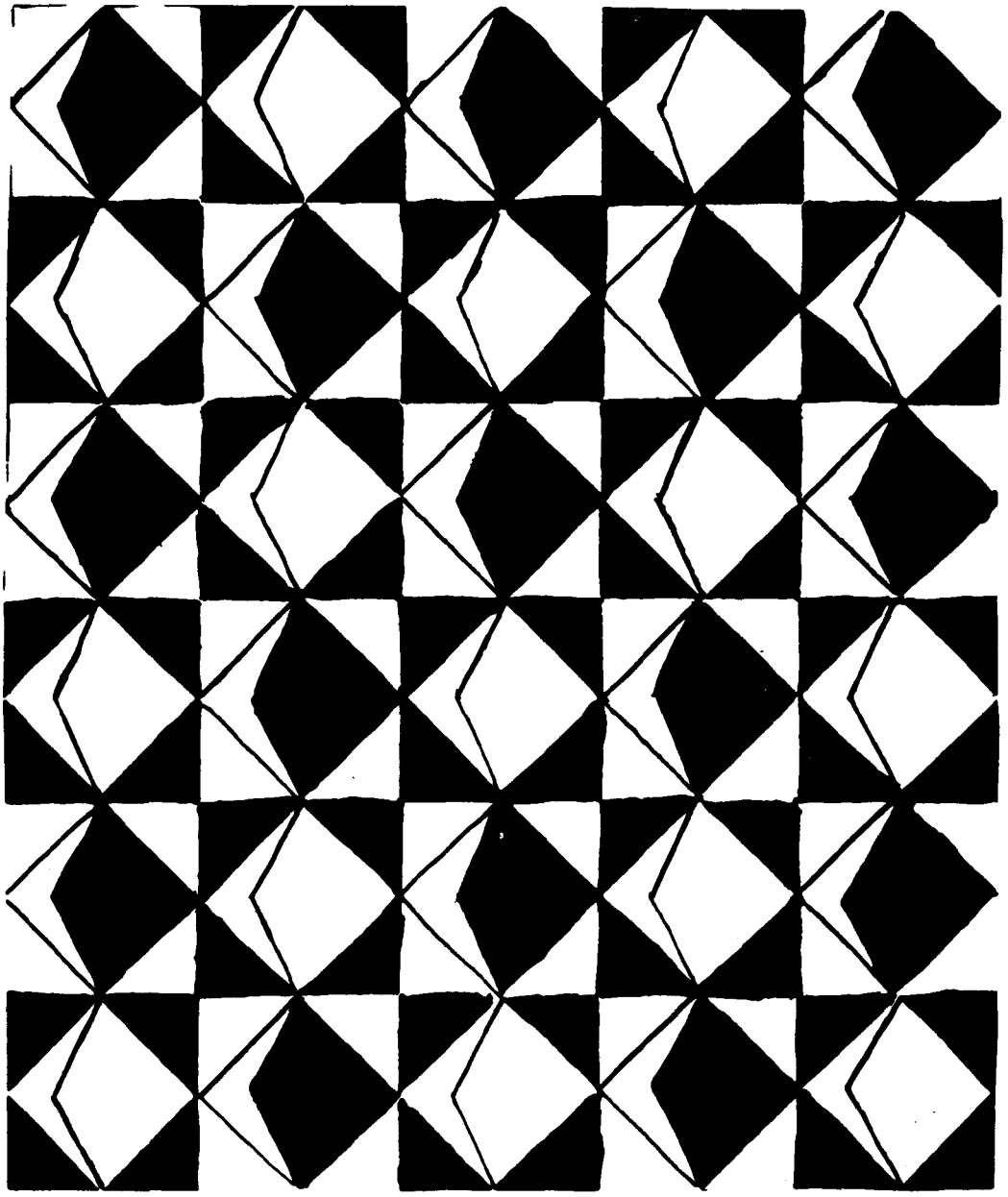
THE BATTLE IS WON

Battle had commenced ten years ago, when a new road had been laid next to a small wooded area on the outskirts of London. The battle was not nations against nations or families against families, but men against nature. The men had come and dug into the grass and had removed some of the trees, covering the remains with a black sticky tar that tortured the remaining trees with its fumes. At first the trees and plants could not retaliate; their counter-attack was slow but effective.

Under cover of earth the trees' root forces dug dark tunnels towards the enemy's line of attack. Slowly they forced their way along and met with the hard paving stones. The enemy was caught unawares and suddenly to their dismay they found large cracks in their pavement. The trees' forces were hunted out and destroyed and another line of paving stones was laid. The trees decided to adopt new tactics and began to shed leaves to block the enemy's drainage system. They were successful but the enemy survived and no severe damage was sustained.

Then the enemy tried new methods of fighting which the trees had never before experienced. One of the enemy would stagger along the pavement and then toss beer bottles up which would smash on the tree-trunks. Though only inflicting minor injuries, the bottles battered the bark armour. The enemy would then attack under cover of darkness. They would drive up in big lorries and push wrecked motor cars over into the trees from the backs of the lorries. The trees would sag backwards under the weight, but not fall over. They were strong, but 'operation dumping' gave them quite a battering.

The trees had many allies, such as the grass, the united weeds' forces, the wind and the rain. The grass and weeds helped in sabotaging the road and probably sustained more injuries than the trees themselves. The wind and the rain helped to slow the enemy up and prevent them from repairing sabotaged areas.



ÉLISE KILLE, 4.C.

As time passed,the grass allies began to advance into the enemy's front line, the pavement, pushing up between the paving stones. The dandelion and chickweed sprang up to aid the grass and their underground root movements pushed the paving stones further out of place.

One by one the enemy began to fall. High heels caught in between the paving stones and toes struck the protruding edges and the enemy fell. At last nature was gaining territory.

Then one day the enemy struck back. Armed with sprays and heavy pounders, they sprayed the weeds with poison and pounded the paving stones back into position. Once again nature had lost.

The final blow came when the enemy decided on a large scale invasion plan to overthrow nature. It came along with large machines and mechanical saws which sliced through the trees, slaying them mercilessly, and churned up the land around them. The trees stood bravely to the end and fell nobly. The enemy dragged them away and later burnt them.

The once wooded area was now flat, and black sticky tar had been poured, covering the remains of what was once a fighting force.

Christopher Vosper, 4.A.

DEAD CAT

Grey and mouldy.
Like a deserted house with paint
Blistering on the walls.
A tail at the back, very stiff and mast-like,
The tall grass waving around it.
Like a boat marooned in weeds.

David Bromley, 2.C.

IT'S FREE!

A holiday for two in Spain
When you next clean out your drain;
Use Drainol
Clears out clogs and smells just right,
So enter now, for that holiday flight.

Sixpence off so come and buy;
Get one free with your first try.

A ring at the bell one Friday morn,
And there before me was a babe just born;
He said, "I arrived all soft, not hairy,
Because my mum used liquid Fairy."

Sixpence off so come and buy;
Get one free with your first try.

Judith Gamble, 4.A.

A BEGINNING

Lucy walked out of the gate, struggling with a large heavy suitcase, and looked wistfully back at the house. No-one had even offered to help her to the station. She glanced at the neighbour's house and saw a face hurriedly withdrawn behind the lace curtains. Then she started to walk slowly and with difficulty the long distance to the station. She saw a group of her friends coming towards her. Her heart beat faster. She knew the sort of reception her greeting would have. When they came nearer she put on a friendly smile and said, "Hallo." They walked past as though she were not there. Then she heard them sniggering.

At last she reached the station and purchased a ticket for Wallington. The train drew in and a porter placed her case in the rack of an empty compartment while she sat in the corner by a grimy window. At last the train drew out of the station and she remembered vividly what had occurred the evening she told her parents she was expecting a baby. The first time she told them they did not realize what she had said, and replied, "Are you, dear? How nice for you." She repeated herself: "I am going to have a baby."

Her mother stared at her with a shocked expression on her face. Her father began to shout at her furiously. He said he disowned her and that no daughter of his would do such a thing. When he calmed down he ignored Lucy and would have nothing to do with her. He made it clear that she was not going to stay in the house much longer. She would have to go away, have her baby and stay away. Although Lucy's mother was very shocked and upset she sympathised with Lucy and tried to make things better and to protect her daughter. She helped Lucy make clothes for her baby. She made arrangements for Lucy to have the baby in the Wallington hospital and to live in a room in the centre of Wallington near the office where she was to work as a secretary.

Although her father tried to keep it quiet the neighbours still spread the scandal about Lucy. People ignored her, even her own friends.

Then the train pulled into the tiny station of Wallington. She had to ask a passenger to help her with her case. She was feeling happier. In a town she had never seen before she would be able to make friends with people who didn't know what had happened. But even among people she didn't know she received strange looks (or so she thought). She realized then she was rejected by society, and it was difficult to be accepted back.

She was shocked when she saw the room in which she was to live. It was small, dirty and damp, with wallpaper peeling off the walls. But she made the best of it as she could not afford anything better.

Soon after her arrival she went into hospital, had her baby, and not long after started work, paying a woman to look after her baby. Even at work she was ignored and laughed at. It was difficult to escape from the fact that she was an un-married mother. She barely managed to feed herself as she spent most of her wages on food for her baby and the rent.

She had no-one to turn to. No-one to help her. No-one to bring her out of this nightmare. No-one to relieve her misery. But couldn't she end this nightmare herself and make everything perfect and happy? Then she would be as carefree as she was as a child. It would be quite painless. She opened the small oven door and rested her head on a pillow inside it. She turned on the gas and began to drift into a deep, happy sleep. At last she was free. But what was that? It was crying. A baby was crying. Her baby. Her David. She must stop him crying. Make him happy. She could not leave him alone. She could not deprive him of life. She turned off the gas, opened the window, and ran unsteadily to comfort her baby. She rocked him gently in her arms and realised she had to live for her baby, whatever happened to her.

Bernice Clare, 4.A.