

# LETTER OF THE MONTH

DEAR SIR,

As a professional writer, I have been uncommonly interested in the great controversy on Boys' Weeklies, but both Orwell and Richards miss a main point. Current in Fleet Street there is a very simple and credible explanation of why *The Magnet* and *The Gem* give such a scant reflection of the modern world and seem scarcely to have changed in thirty years. It is due, it would seem, neither to the vile machinations (? casual control) of a Tory millionaire on the one hand nor the alleged out-datedness of Mr. Richards on the other. It is merely that, so editorial gossips tell me, *The Magnet* and *The Gem* stories regularly revolve in an eight-year cycle. Every eight years, so they say, the old stories are touched-up and painted over, to appear again with fresh gloss and entertain a new generation of boys.

I have not the time necessary for research to confirm this. Mr. Orwell has obviously missed it, but what does Mr. Richards say?

If the stories are recurrent, much is explained. It fully shows why they smack of 1910, clears up Mr. Richards's otherwise inexplicable literary output, and puts boyhood on its proper level of timelessness.

Besides, I much prefer the picture of Mr. Richards touching up his past work to the awful ordeal of an author condemned to inventing new Greyfriarsiana every week for life.

Yours sincerely,

HAROLD A. ALBERT

*In reply, Mr. Richards writes:*

Mr. Harold A. Albert tells us that he is a professional writer, on gossiping terms with editors who in their gossipy moments appear to have been pulling his leg to a considerable extent. I prefer to take this charitable view rather than to believe that Mr. Harold A. Albert is an unsuccessful scribe whose way to the editorial sanctum is barred by some inexorable Cerberus, and who, consequently, like so many other disappointed Peris at the gate of Paradise, allows his judgment of those within the magic portals to be clouded by his irritation. In either case, Mr. Harold A. Albert is talking nonsense.

Mr. Harold A. Albert states that it is 'current in Fleet Street' that *The Magnet* revolves in an eight-year cycle, and that at these regular intervals old *Magnet* stories are touched up and reprinted; which, says Mr. Harold A. Albert, explains 'why *The Magnet* gives such a scant reflection of the modern world'—an utterly unfounded statement, by the way. Mr. Harold A. Albert must have provided himself with an Ear of Dionysius, seventy-seven times amplified, to hear even a whisper of such gossip in Fleet Street. He tells us

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that he has had no time to confirm this. Mr. Harold A. Albert's time no doubt is extremely valuable, but a few precious moments should have been sacrificed to confirming such a statement before chucking it at the public. It would have been easy to examine an old file of *Magnets*, which would have led Mr. Harold A. Albert to the startling discovery that every *Magnet*, from the first issue, has contained a new and original story. The same characters, certainly, appear each time, but the plots are infinitely varied, many of them connected with current events that could not possibly serve a second or third time. And—though I do not expect Mr. Harold A. Albert to understand it—*The Magnet* gives a faithful reflection of life at the very hour of printing. *The Magnet* author knows his business so well, that every number is right up to date, the fact that the characters have been before the public for thirty years making no difference whatever to this.

There were strikes, slumps, unemployment, Socialism and Communism, and other blunders and imbecilities, before 1910, and Frank Richards left them alone then, as he leaves them alone now, because they are not proper subjects for healthy young people to contemplate. The Human Boy is Frank Richards's subject, and except for 'light externals', the Human Boy has not changed since Tom Brown went to school. Frank Richards keeps a careful eye on those light externals; for the rest, he is content with human nature, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Frank Richards will write of Socialistic schoolboys, or Communistic schoolboys, or schoolboys deeply concerned with the influence of blue in the arts, when he finds such schoolboys in actual existence. So far, he has never had the misfortune to encounter any such young asses.

### MUSIC REVIEW

We must apologise to the publishers of *Music Review*, which was noticed in our May issue. The price of this review is 4s. per copy, and not 1s. as stated in that notice.

### 'L' OCA DEL CAIRO'

The first performance in England of Mozart's opera will take place at the Sadler's Wells Theatre on Thursday, May 30th, at 8.30 p.m., and on Saturday, June 1st, at 2.30 and 8.30 p.m. The musical adaptation is by Dr. H. F. Redlich. The performance is in aid of the County of London and the County of Middlesex British Red Cross Society.

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# **'WRITING FOR THE PRESS'**

THIS publication should be in the hands of all who are considering the possibilities of writing short articles or stories. It contains much useful information on this subject—some of its chief contributors being well-known editors and journalists who are, of course, qualified by their experience and knowledge to speak with authority. They give many valuable hints to the new writer and show how wide is the field of opportunity which awaits the newcomer into the literary sphere.

A large part of 'Writing for the Press' is devoted to a description of the work of the London School of Journalism, which was founded in 1919 at the instance of the late Lord Northcliffe. It is the only School of its kind which enjoys the patronage of great newspaper proprietors and editors, and has won a unique reputation as an attractive centre of instruction in story and article writing. Its range of subjects (taught by correspondence) include:

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## COMMENT

SIX numbers of *Horizon* have now appeared. Six more may reasonably expect to see the light; let us consider, at this half-way house, how our policy is shaping. It is a literary policy, and nothing more, and therefore meets with opposition from the non-literary, and unsleeping criticism from those within the ranks. Mr. Priestley, for example, says we have too much poetry; it is no longer, he claims, a cultural export, and should be treated as a literary by-product. In fact, we are inundated with poems, not only by professional poets, or even amateur ones, but in many cases by people who have never written a poem before, and yet find it come to them as naturally as blowing out a paper bag. Poems arrive on regimental notepaper, or on the shoddy white foolscap (used only in communicating with their equals!) of our suave bureaucracy. We have had poems sent from schools and prisons, and even from large country houses. From these amateur poets we can learn one important fact. Poetry is still the natural national form of self-expression, the one to which we take most readily. It is neither artificial nor decadent, and as the volume of poetry written would appear to have increased since the war, so the likelihood of great poetry being written in this country—which possesses the language and the emotional reserves necessary for it—must increase, particularly when it is taken into account that the poetry of to-day is classless and is no longer the preserve of the educated and leisured. From the professional poets another fact can be learned; that a fascinating struggle is going on between the technicians (the ‘poets’ poets’, the ‘avant garde’) and the traditionalists. It is a struggle rather between technique and imagination, and *Horizon* has tried to give expression to both. Thus, in this number, we have a long poem by William Rodgers, an Ulsterman of thirty, which is dependent entirely on its technique, its inner rhymes, dry assonances, practical images, all, of course, in their turn proceeding from the solid thought