

## The Friars' Chronicles

### LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL – IN DEFENCE OF FISHER T. FISH

He was, in his early days, a comic braggart who was firmly convinced that anything anyone else could do he could do better – but a friend of Wharton and Co. In *Magnets* 173-4, based on the real-life Archer-Shee case (remember 'The Winslow Boy'?), he was one of those who refused to believe Bob Cherry guilty of theft. With the First World War, he degenerated into a money-grubbing profiteer and remained one, albeit a comic character, afterwards. His conversation was generally confined to money and the superiority of the United States over all other countries – although a 'Greyfriars Herald' item in 1932 (non-Hamilton so shouldn't really count) said that he was a clever tap dancer who gave impromptu performances in the Rag.

So why do I want to defend him? For one thing – I believe in free enterprise and he had the entrepreneurial spirit and ideas. For another – he was a victim of bullying, interference and hypocrisy. That he was lending money at interest was no excuse for the treatment he received. I might instance the Popper Island rebellion (1374 -82), which was started by Field throwing his account book out of the window and its falling into Prout's hands – and Wharton and Co. made him drop it into the Sark at the end. No.1497 saw Wharton getting the whole of the Remove to kick him round the Rag until he agreed to sell Nugent minor's camera at the price he'd paid for it. The Tuckshop Rebellion saw Mauleverer kicking his account book out of his hands and having it burned. Bull and Field bumped him into asking Nugent to share their study in 1925. What were they but bullying of the worst kind?

Regarding his "tuck hoarding" in 1655 - wasn't that saving up for a rainy day and an eminently sensible precaution?

To throw down a gauntlet – what was wrong with moneylending? A Removite paid say a shilling an hour to hire a boat. Surely someone who borrows from a moneylender is hiring his money and the interest is the hiring fee? I favour a ceiling on interest and would appreciate a logical answer to my question rather than a Greyfriars one (boot, fist or fives bat)! His other business activities generally consisted of buying things and selling them for more than he'd paid.

His study-mate Bull – easily my unfavourite Removite, a self-righteous prig and bigot – was heir to a factory in Yorkshire. I assume that they purchased raw materials with the intention of turning them into something else and selling them for more than they'd paid for them. In short, to make a profit!

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Colonel Wharton, in 1932, said that his shares could only be sold at "rubbish prices." I assume that meant less than he'd paid for them with the intention of eventually selling them at a – profit? In short – Fishy was not harming anyone. He did not force anyone to do business with him. So why couldn't self-righteous prigs like Wharton, Bull, and – I'm tempted to add Wingate, Quelch and Locke! – have left him alone? After all, his business acumen was going to be more useful to him than the Classics!

Finally – one of Hamilton's reasons for turning him into a villain was presumably America's refusal to get involved in the First World War before 1917. Was it his fault that President Wilson had more sense than the statesmen of Europe?

**Mark Taha**

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"I'll mention that skating is just where I live," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'll be sure pleased to show you guys a thing or two." "Go it!" said Bob Cherry. Fisher T. Fish went it. He slid, he slipped, he gyrated on one leg, and he yelled: "Aw! Give a guy a hand--wake snakes! Yaroooh!"