

Editorial

Henry was a man of many parts. I think that anyone with any interest in him must agree with that statement, even if they never come to agreement about anything else about him.

One of those parts, one of the facets of his character, was the 'Till Eulenspiegel' side - the practical joker, the lover of fun, the 'life and soul of the party' side.

There cannot be many authors who could translate such an aspect of their character so exactly into story form as Henry did in *The Scribbling Lark*. This strange, almost surreal, little book tells the story of two talented monkeys, Zig and Zag, who escape from a zoo, taking with them the old carthorse, Prince, about to be doomed to the slaughterhouse.

Their adventures continue, aided and abetted by Tommy Topp, ex-jockey and ex-alcoholic, and his particular friends, Charles James, a fox, and Oocuck, a backwards flying cuckoo. The story culminates in the rollicking farce of the Derby, with Prince transformed by dint of Zig and Zag scribbling all over his wet grey body with purple indelible pencils (stolen from the village school by Oocuck) into 'The Scribbling Lark' (i.e. the purple markings on the greyish egg of a yellowhammer), the most unlikely outsider ever to win this illustrious race, with Zig and Zag jointly acting as jockey; and the happy-ever-after ending of all good fairy tales.

The point of *my* tale concerns Chapter 16 - 'Midnight Party' - where Tommy Topp asks if there is anyone 'who fancies hisself with the ivories?'. Zag, secretly musical, highly artistic, intelligent and sensitive, tentatively begins to play.

His music was a simian rune of melancholy for the forest he had never seen but only felt in his bones and in his blood.

Out of all the razzmatazz and wild hilarity of the rest of the tale, that line stands out as pure poetry, and true pathos. Thus the mystery quotation, which was actually chosen by your President.

I would like to say that we were inundated with your answers. We were not. There was ONE reply - from John Homan, and I'm not sure that it really counts because John admits that he hasn't actually *read* the book, but that he made an intelligent guess based on the clue of 'simian' which means, of course, 'of monkeys'. However, his answer is correct and so a small prize has been sent off to him.

Before I leave this subject, may I point out - lest it be missed - the pun contained within the title, a scribbling lark indeed!

We also asked in the last issue for ideas for an official Christmas card for the Society. Four members sent in entries for which we are very grateful. It is, of course, always difficult to make a final choice among entries of equal merit. But we are happy to announce that we have chosen the design sent in by Eric Butcher; our congratulations to Eric and our grateful thanks to the other contributors.

We all send out Christmas cards and this is a way in which you can *all* support your Society and help to publicise it to others. So, PLEASE support this venture. An order form is enclosed. If you all buy 10 cards that is about 4000 contacts for *your* Society - if you all bought 50 cards

Anne Williamson

ADVANCE NOTICE

It is hoped to make

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a

"TARKA SPECIAL"

to mark the 60th Anniversary
of the original publication.

The Editor therefore particularly
invites your contributions, either
articles, art work (black and white,
please, for ease of reproduction)
letters, reminiscences, etc., on and
around the subject of
TARKA THE OTTER.

This advance information will give
you the opportunity to work over
the winter months.

The Copy Deadline date will be

MAY 1st 1987

However, if you feel you can
contribute to this special issue,
please contact the Editor as soon
as possible with a brief outline
of your ideas.

MYSTERY QUOTATION

chosen by your President
Richard Williamson

"OVER THE HILL AT NIGHT SHONE THE
STARS OF HEAVEN"

Answers to the Editor, please by Nov. 1st.
- Not just which book but its exact
place within that book -

As this is an easy one every member is
expected to send in an answer!
