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We have several Christmas articles, so here is a Christmas game.



Is Whistling Allowed?

Sue Hoggarth "I had a very strange thing happen to me when I was eight years old. My mum was ill in bed (she had caught mumps from me) and I was quite happily downstairs thinking I was in charge. I was always singing around the house, and suddenly I found that I could whistle, which I had never been able to do before. I was able to whistle any tune that I wanted to and went around the house whistling all my favourite tunes. When I went upstairs to see if my mum needed anything, she remarked that she could hear

some whistling going on somewhere but didn't know where it was coming from. When I told her it was me, she was very surprised because I had never been able to do that before. I carried on whistling all that day. The following day, I got up, thought about the whistling and found that I couldn't manage to whistle anything at all, not even one note. From that day to this, I have never been able to whistle again. I remember that both my mum and myself used to say how strange it was. I am still puzzled about what happened on that one day to allow me to whistle so well."

Tricia Green "Being married to a whistler I'm still used to hearing it. Before we were married he would walk me home whistling a medley of tunes all the way, and he used to be a care worker – residents would know Deryk was on duty by his whistling approach. He was, however, told off for doing it in an office job as it distracted colleagues."

Kit (formerly Christopher) Kidman "However widely condemned, whistling women seem to have a tenacious hold on our interest! I was reading out the most recent entry on this subject to my husband, Fabian, and we were struck by Berenda Haggan's reported bloodthirsty German version of the saying. 'Oh!' he said at once, 'Päifemeedchen, Danzepaf, aus dem Land geschaf!' - which turns out to be a folk saying from....Luxembourg (Fabian's from there) in the local dialect. It translates as 'Whistling girls and dancing priests - send them packing!'"

Susan Barlow "On the subject of 'a whistling woman' etc it was one of my (much hated) grandmother's nasty, ultra-Victorian remarks (perhaps not so surprising - she was born in 1875!) along with the little gem 'be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever'. (Sweet maid? Didn't she know she was talking to Billy the Kid?) I could have pointed out that while being clever but not good is to be a waste of space, to be good without being as



Contrasting Christmases Two Christmases in EBD Lands by Jilly Day

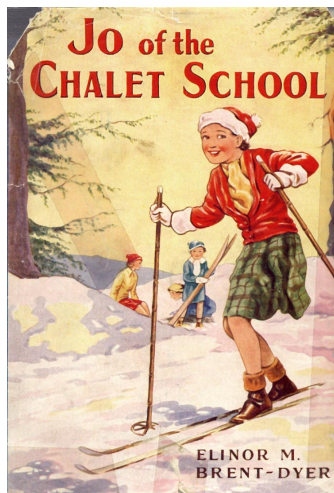
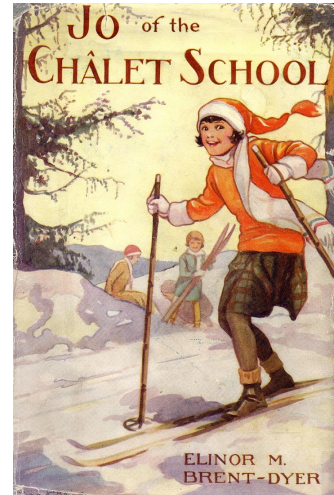
Jo of the Chalet School contains one of the most memorable chapters in the entire Chalet School series. I am of course, referring to the magical Christmas in Innsbruck which was so enjoyed by Madge, Joey and Robin. The happiness of the trio and the manifold goodness of the Mensch family echo down the years and remains a joyous read today.

The festive scene is set in the preceding chapter when the pupils of the Chalet School performed their first ever Nativity Play. *The Youngest Shepherd* was a modest affair but much appreciated by the audience. By a series of simple scenes and the singing of carols, the girls reverently portrayed the story of the first Christmas. The play ended in traditional fashion depicting the Holy Family in their humble stable with Baby Jesus peacefully accepting the homage of worshippers.

The next day Jo, Robin and Madge locked the door of the now empty Chalet School and embarked on their long and icy walk to Spartz. Their boots crunched in the crisp snow as the threesome skirted the frozen streams and now silent sawmill. Finally they glimpsed the twinkling lights of Spartz in the distance. Tiny Robin fell asleep in the warmth of the train but awoke in Innsbruck to be greeted by the Mensch family on the platform. A brief carriage ride whisked the weary travellers and their kind hosts to the Mariahilfer Strasse, where the Mensch family lived in a flat on the third floor.

The Bettany sisters and Robin were to share a typical Tyrolean bedroom. The room was both restful and charming with polished pine walls, floor and simple furnishings. Joey gazed longingly at comfortable beds smothered by “puffy plumeau” and piled with pillows edged with “exquisite hand-made lace.” The sincere welcome from Frau Mensch and Gottfried, and the unalloyed delight of Bernhilda and Frieda in having their friends to stay, made the trio feel completely at home.

Christmas shopping in the festive atmosphere around the Maria Theresien Strasse occupied the following morning; the afternoon encompassed the fun of first skiing attempts by the English girls. In the evening Madge and Jo joined



Conservatoire in Florence and subsequently returns to the Chalet School to teach music, although she would infinitely have preferred to teach PT and games. (During her time as a mistress, Grizel, despite being a former Games Prefect, never seems to have had anything to do with games in the School, although there seems to me to be no reason why she should not have done so, and Adrienne Fitzpatrick has her do so in *The Chalet School Annexe*.) Grizel returns to the School when it reopens in Guernsey and moves with it first to England and then to the Island. She remains a music mistress for over a decade.

In *The Chalet School and the Island*, Miss Norman and Miss Edwards discuss Grizel, with Miss Norman reflecting that Grizel's habitual air of discontent ages her and spoils her good looks. "Does she want to compose music and finds she can't," Miss Norman speculates (*Island*, Armada edition p.77). Incidentally, Elinor Brent-Dyer seems to have regarded the ability to compose as well as to play as a sign of being "especially musical". All three of the School's outstanding musicians – Margia Stevens, Jacynth Hardy and Nina Rutherford – also compose. In *Island*, Miss Edwards says that Grizel's problem is "What it always was (...). She was made to go in for music very thoroughly without being really musical. (...) She's an excellent teacher, and the girls do really well with her, (but) I always feel it's more because they daren't do anything else but work for her." The two mistresses agree that Grizel has "a nasty tongue, on occasion" (Armada p.78). Two books later, in *Carola Storms the Chalet School*,

Grizel, following an accident for which she is responsible, finally gives up teaching and departs for New Zealand to run a music shop with an old school contemporary. Eight years later, exhausted and depressed by personal and professional setbacks, she returns to Europe. At the beginning of *Reunion*, aboard a cargo ship, she meets Dr Neil Sheppard, one of the "two men" referred to in my opening quotation. Readers of *Reunion* know from the outset what this meeting will lead to; the precise chain of events is outside the scope of this article.

Helen Barber, author of five Chalet School "fill-in" titles, with a sixth forthcoming, has, I think, a soft spot for Grizel Cochrane. Three of her books,

