

TELLING TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

Chris Lowe and friends

Number 26

Bookworm

Schools everywhere employ a small army of support staff, including classroom support staff, office staff, premises management, and technical assistants. Schools have their own procedures for making support staff appointments but they are likely to include letters of applications and some kind of testimonial.

A memorable application arrived one day on Marcus's desk - for a post as part-time school librarian. It was not the usual sort.

Dear Sir (or Madam),

I am applying for the job of Library Assistant advertised recently in the local newspaper.

I am, sir or madam, a young-looking 40 year old, single, presentable, and unmistakably male, but currently unemployed.

I have had considerable recent experience of working in libraries as I find them warmer to read in than my digs. I also had experience of working in a library while at school, partly because I was often sent to work in the library by my class teacher, and once, when I was caught reading a novel in a Maths lesson, I was made library monitor for a week. This will undoubtedly be an invaluable experience in outwitting any your more devious pupils.

I am what some people call a book-worm. I have over 1,000 books on my shelves – most of them my own. I am, therefore, extremely knowledgeable. I am also big enough to prevent any pupil or teacher taking a book out of the library, if they dared to try.

I would like this position as it would enable me in the comfort of your library to continue my study of the Bible (King James version, Revised, New English and Douai). I am doing this with the local congregation of a small but joyful sect of Wonderful Worship Witnesses. By comparing what they teach me with the various Bible translations I am convinced that they are correct in their understanding of the prophecies. I fully intend, Jehovah permitting (Psalm 83 v18 King James version, of course), to be confirmed into their faith.

This will entail lots of study, which your job will not interfere with, in order to obey the instructions of Jesus in Matthew 28 vv19 and 20 – which you being a Headteacher will know is part fulfilment of His sermon on the mount (Matthew 24, especially v 14), which should be obligatory for anyone wishing to become a disciple, or a library assistant.

Therefore, I would be earning my keep as a Christian should, while carrying on with my studies – all in the sanctified calm of your library.

Incidentally, can you tell me if it is a warm library.

I am yours Psalm 8 vv 2 and 3. 'Let my prayer come before thee and incline thine ear to my prayer, for my soul is full of troubles and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.'

(signed)

Mr. B. Braddock

Well, thought Marcus, I cannot ignore that final flourish. So he sent a request to his referee for a character reference, and received the following reply.

Reference

Dear Headmaster,

I am sure Mr Braddock is not suitable for this position. He is a mountain of a man, better suited to kick-starting Boeings at Heathrow than stamping books. He could do well as a scene-shifter or furniture remover. He would certainly be able to shift bookcases around a library, but not keep them properly filled, I expect - or at least not with the right books.

Why he cannot find employment is a mystery. Perhaps no-one wants anything shifted these days, or he applies for the wrong job.

He has some vary dubious friends, but as you are not employing them I will say no more.

He would be a very good disciplinarian, I think. At least, none of your pupils will hang around long in the library while he is there. He will be excellent at stopping children getting near the books, if that is what you want.

I have looked carefully at the details of the post and consider that it is a position that would suit me very well. Could you send me an application form.

(signed)

Marcus did not interview either of them.
