George Hutchinson, a Canadian Illustrator of Robert Louis Stevenson’s Treasure Island

• Wendy R. Katz and Lilian Falk •


Summary: Nova Scotian artist George Hutchinson illustrated a serial version of Treasure Island, the first to be illustrated by a single hand, for Chums magazine in 1894-95. This largely overlooked version, containing eighteen drawings, is noteworthy for its careful attention to the story's narrative point of view. Of further interest is the nature of Chums itself as a home for Treasure Island. Also of special note is the Nova Scotia background of Hutchinson, who worked in London as an illustrator and there attracted the attention of writer Israel Zangwill, who used Hutchinson as the basis for his novel The Master.

The work of Nova Scotian artist George Hutchinson appeared in one of the earliest illustrated versions of Treasure Island and the first one to be illustrated by a single hand. Hutchinson’s illustrations accompany the serialization of Treasure Island in Chums magazine from August 29, 1894 to January 2, 1895, almost eleven years after the first serialization of Treasure Island in Young Folks. The drawings in Chums, eighteen in all, two of which appear as covers for their relevant numbers, trace with care the narrative point of view of the story, including the first-person narrative shifts from Jim Hawkins to Dr. Livesey and back again to the boy. Published during the last year of Stevenson’s life, the illustrated serialization concluded just weeks after the author’s death. A death notice follows the last instalment in the January 2, 1895 number. Hutchinson was a Nova Scotian who became a successful illustrator in London in the 1890s, producing illustrations for books and

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Jim peering tentatively round the inn door.
periodicals, for general readership as well as for young readers. The discus-
sion that follows will examine the *Chums* illustrations as they follow the
narrative point of view of *Treasure Island*, present a brief account of *Chums* as
an appropriate home for *Treasure Island*, and shed some light on the mystery
of George Hutchinson, a largely forgotten illustrator, himself a treasure "not
yet lifted."

**The Illustrations**

omits Hutchinson's illustrations from among his representative pieces for
*Treasure Island*. The omission is understandable: with a rich variety of illus-
trations to choose from, Scally has had to be selective. However, he also
attempts to develop a chronological record of pictorial interpretation, and in
the interest of such a record, the omission of Hutchinson seems something of
an oversight. In his brief introduction to the *Treasure Island* illustrations, Scally
declares, "It was not until 1899 that *Treasure Island* found its first single
illustrator, Walter Paget" (26), a statement not strictly accurate. Even allow-
ing that the *Chums* 1894 illustrations appeared in a serialization rather than
a single volume edition, and its unsigned initial letter pictorials may have
been done by a house illustrator, the eighteen illustrations (approximately 6"
x 8" each, extended over three columns of print) were executed by a single
hand. Moreover, Hutchinson's illustrations show an artist interested not
simply in the piratical cutlass-and-bottle-of-rum brand of illustration but
one who seems to have made a considerable effort to translate into visual
images the narrative shifts in the text.

Initially, Hutchinson takes on the job of establishing Jim's presence
in the illustrations as a visual guide, the first-person narrator made visible.
In the text itself, Jim Hawkins begins as an observant eye witness rather than
a full participant in the adventure. His presence as spectator is captured in
Hutchinson's first illustration of Billy Bones chasing Black Dog out of the
inn, accompanied by the caption "The Captain aimed ... one last tremen-
dous cut" (Stevenson 4). As the pirates flash their swords and catch the eye
of the reader, they also catch that singular eye of Jim, here only a head peer-
ing tentatively round the inn door (fig. 1). Also captured here are the details
of Black Dog's mutilated three-fingered hand, Billy Bones's scar, and the
notched frame of the inn sign that has caught Bones's cutlass and thus
saved Black Dog from being "split ... to the chine" (50). The internal strife
among the pirate gang is yet another observed feature of this illustration, as
is the pirates' ferocity: Black Dog's cutlass is thrust, as it were, into the page
itself. The pirates are the organizing centre of the illustration, but Jim is
essential as a narrative guide.
Fig. 2
Jim identifies Black Dog
In subsequent illustrations, the narrative point of view is carefully developed as Jim is gradually absorbed into the adventure and claimed by the pirates. In the second picture, for example, Jim is seen holding the wrist of Billy Bones while both figures watch the departure of the morally and physically blind Pew, who has just delivered the black spot. The physical connection between Jim and the pirates is made throughout the text as Jim is drawn to them and into their story. Still, Jim is observing rather than participating, as Hutchinson also shows us in the third illustration, that accompanying the death of Pew. When curiosity urges Jim to creep back to the bank to see what is going on at the inn in chapter 5, he sees the death of Pew, still another consequence of those internal quarrels among the pirates. Pew’s fatal encounter with the horse riders is shown from a long view over Jim’s shoulder. Hutchinson insists on Jim’s being in the picture, but solely as an observer, peering over the bank.

The long views that separate Jim from the pirates become slightly more complex when Jim meets the deceptively pleasant-tempered Silver. Hutchinson shows the back of Jim again in the first illustration to include Long John Silver, set in Silver’s Spy-glass tavern, that “bright little place of entertainment” (58). With its windows and open door, the “Spy-glass” is a great place to “see,” remarks the observant Jim, and it is here where he recognizes the pirate Black Dog, a customer seated “at the far side” (58) of the tavern, whom he last saw fleeing from the wrath of Billy Bones. In the text, Silver takes Jim’s hand (making another piratical claim upon the boy), and it is precisely at this time, when Jim and Silver are physically touching, that Jim identifies the “outsider,” Black Dog, and sees him make his escape (fig. 2). Hutchinson chooses not to show the two holding hands because he needs Jim’s right hand to point the reader in the direction of Black Dog and he also needs Jim’s back so that the scene can be examined from over Jim’s shoulder, from Jim’s point of view. Nonetheless, he groups Jim and Silver together as a couple, with Jim’s body slightly superimposed on Silver’s to establish their intimacy, however short-lived, and he continues to distance Jim from the figures of the more unambiguous pirates, in this case by using the inn door as a visual partition.

Three illustrations that follow Jim’s chance intelligence-gathering in the apple barrel appear finely sensitive to the changes in Jim’s character. The first depicts Jim as the familiar eye witness, reporting the news of the planned mutiny under Silver’s leadership to Livesey, Trelawney and Captain Smollett. Jim’s back is once again to the viewer so that we look, like Jim himself, at the three adult men in the cabin receiving the news. Although the perspective separates Jim from the adult listeners, there is no spatial gulf, no rift. All three keep their eyes fixed on Jim, as the text demands, and as is required for the reciprocity of feeling demanded by their relationship. The second illustra-
Jim witnesses the murder of an innocent hand
tion in this group, which became the cover for the October 10, 1894 number of *Chums*, shows Silver’s murder of Tom, one of the innocent hands (fig. 3). It is this event, of course, the murder of an innocent man, that turns Jim’s world upside-down, an event after which, he says, “the whole world swam away from before me in a whirling mist; Silver and the birds, and the tall Spy-glass hilltop, going round and round and topsy-turvy before my eyes” (99). Hutchinson’s picture shows Silver seizing the branch of a tree to maintain his balance as he hurls the deadly missile of his crutch to murder the innocent man. With Spy-glass hill in the background, the reader/viewer regards the scene of murder over Jim’s shoulder, his back once more to our view. Significantly, Jim’s figure is more prominent than those in the murder scene, forcing our gaze to return to him. The picture’s perspective thus transposes the victims of the event by directing our focus on Jim, reading the murder scene predominantly for its having registered a seismic blow to the boy’s consciousness. In the third picture of this sequence, Jim meets the maroon, Ben Gunn. The new Jim, the Jim who has seen the murder of an innocent man, “a human life cruelly cut short” (99), is now the Jim who can be drawn with a pistol in his right hand as he meets this strange new terror: “As soon as I remembered I was not defenceless, courage glowed again in my heart; and I set my face resolutely for this man of the island, and walked briskly toward him” (121). It is Ben Gunn on his knees to Jim that Hutchinson offers in the illustration, and even though we see Jim again from the back, he is clearly no longer the same boy.

At this stage of the text, as Stevenson reveals in “My First Book,” the narrative ran into an impasse. Stevenson was stumped and could take the story no further until he shifted the narrative point of view from Jim to Dr. Livesey, a shift which allowed Stevenson to return to the time of Jim’s leaving the ship. Hutchinson, not about to offer illustrations without the figure of the boy, gives only one for this new narrative sequence. When Livesey, still narrating at the end of chapter 18, sees Jim climbing over the stockade, Hutchinson seizes the opportunity to bring back the boy, seen from the perspective of Livesey. The reader/viewer now looks at Livesey from the back and observes Jim from over Livesey’s shoulder. The illustrator has thus subtly drawn the reader’s attention to the pivotal narrative shift.

Hutchinson continues to show his sensitivity to the text when, in chapter 19, Jim resumes his hold on the narrative. No longer an observer but a full participant in the action, Jim emerges, if not from obscurity then from relative seclusion, to become the lead actor. Hutchinson’s illustrations record this change: the reader/viewer has no further vantage point from over Jim’s shoulder. Even though Jim continues to mediate the action as narrator, Hutchinson visually relocates him to a different space and presents a longer view of the boy. This has the effect of drawing him into more intimate rela-
Fig. 4
Silver seated with Jim alongside
tions with the pirates and removing him to a sphere too perilous for close contact.

Hutchinson's next task, not altogether successfully executed, is to represent the heroic and fearless Jim as he moves steadily away from a position of safety into the reaches of combat and eventual capture. The illustrator selects for depiction the pirate attack in chapter 21, specifically the image of Jim with his cutlass up, face to face with the pirate Anderson. A picture of Israel Hands approaching Jim with a dagger as the boy momentarily lets down his guard and another of Jim trying to escape up the ship's shrouds are attempts, however static, to place the boy precisely at the edge of heart-stopping danger. Finally, when Jim is captured and becomes the prisoner of Silver and his mates, Hutchinson gives us a fearless young prisoner, straining in the enemy's grasp as he confronts Silver and the other pirates just moments before he defiantly takes credit for the failure of their mutiny.

Hutchinson's final task is to re-establish visually the relationship between Jim and Silver. When the pirates give Silver the Black Spot, Silver is seated with Jim alongside, very much a pair whose shared space is set against the space occupied by the pirates and divided pictorially (recalling the illustration at the Spyglass tavern), by a door (fig. 4). In the subsequent illustrations of Jim with Silver, Hutchinson continues to pair them and separate them from the rest. In one of these, based on one of the most interesting incidents in the text, Silver leads Jim on a rope, ostensibly to secure the prisoner while on the climb to reach the treasure. The ascent is a struggle for the one-legged Silver, and as the hill becomes steeper and stonier, Jim has to "lend him a hand, or he must have missed his footing" (266). It is this supportive Jim, pushing Silver up the hill, that we see in the illustration (fig. 5). The brutal Silver must be made vulnerable in order for the reader to accept the Silver who is allowed to escape.

The last picture of Silver takes place at the end of the climb as Silver and Jim look across at the pirates who see that the cache of treasure is gone. Silver has already passed Jim a pistol: "Well, there we stood, two on one side, five on the other, the pit between us, and nobody screwed up high enough to offer the first blow" (282). The viewer looks over the shoulder of Jim and then across a divide. It is this picture of the pirates on one side and Silver and Jim on the other, regarding each other from across a gulf, that visually settles the question of which side Silver is on.

The Chums readers whom the Hutchinson illustrations were meant to please would doubtless have admired them less for their illumination of the Stevenson text than for their intrinsic visual appeal. But the success of the illustrations, as our discussion has shown, depends to a significant degree on their thoughtful interpretation of the text. Unfortunately, Stevenson's opinion of the Hutchinson drawings remains unknown; we have been un-
Fig. 5
Jim pushing Silver up the hill
able to uncover any reference by the author to either the Chums serial or its illustrations. However, in an appreciative note on the Treasure Island illustrations of French artist George Roux, probably written in 1885 but unpublished until 1982 (see Carpenter), Stevenson makes clear his views of book illustration in general and provides some evidence that he would have approved of Hutchinson's efforts. "A picture in a storybook," Stevenson writes, "... should narrate. It should be the handmaiden of the text, competing with it upon equal terms, telling the same story in all its typical moments, with another accent and the stamp of a different mind" (Carpenter 323). Hutchinson's work duly narrates, and in so doing reveals both a respect for the integrity of Stevenson's text and an ability to translate this regard into a sustained series of images, a complementary visual reading of the story that truly helps the Chums readers to "see."

Chums, An Illustrated Paper for Boys

Chums itself, subtitled "An Illustrated Paper For Boys," was just that; it included a great number and variety of illustrations, chiefly of soldiers, seamen, and sportsmen. Published by Cassell's from 1892 to 1934 and first edited by Sir Max Pemberton, Chums was a perfect home for Treasure Island. It emphasized action and adventure and liberally dispersed throughout its pages various scenes of fighting. When Chums, under the 1894-1907 editorship of Ernest Foster, began the serialization of Treasure Island, the magazine was in its third year of existence. Foster had taken over from Max Pemberton and was evidently determined to steer the enterprise to success over the stormy seas of formidable competition. Chums was dedicated to one principle over all others: popularity and sales. "Price One Penny" stated on top of the cover of each issue performed the crucial task of enticing customers and ensuring continued prosperity.

The aggressive sales tactics of Chums are evident in the pitch of one or two issues. Each issue promises even more exciting reading matter than the last, but the most concerted effort to bring in new readers is made at the start of a new volume, when readers are urged to invite their uninitiated companions to begin reading the new serials being launched: "Now is the moment to grip them by the scruff of the neck and to make them happy," the Editor exhorts his faithful friends in the August 29, 1894 number, the one with the first instalment of Treasure Island (Foster [? ] 13). Chums medals are awarded to those "workers" who enlist the greatest numbers of new readers. Various competitions were regularly announced, and results duly published. Readers were invited to comment frankly on the quality of the magazine. Prizes (guineas, silver watches, cricket bats, pocket knives, and a pneumatic-tire bicycle) were awarded, even for the most cutting criticism. Readers were also...
encouraged to write to the Editor on every topic of interest. The Editor engaged in exchanges with the forthcoming correspondents, who regularly saw their names in print.

But beyond mere sales, these tactics had yet another consequence, one that has strong bearing on the readers’ perception of, and reaction to, the reading-matter itself. Unlike any reading taught in school, reading in Chums was a matter of pleasure. In addition, it was offered for a candid evaluation of its merits. Thus, even if the readers could not communicate their pleasure to, say, Robert Louis Stevenson directly, being invited to communicate it to the eager Editor was surely not without satisfaction.

A deft stratagem for involving the readers in the world of Chums was the name itself. By a clever piece of linguistic manipulation, the name signifies both the readership and the name of the magazine. The readers of Chums are, of course, themselves “chums,” and the Editor is their friend. The masthead of the magazine offers a striking pictorial representation of these relationships (fig. 3). The two boys on the left are on “the outside” and the “inside” at the same time. One boy, seated, dressed in a school uniform, holds an open issue of Chums on his knee; the other, standing, and dressed for the outdoors, looks on attentively. The circle is thus complete; the picture is doubly self-referential: two chums are reading Chums together. The readers and the reading-matter are merged.

Serialization was essential to the survival of this magazine, as it was to many others. Two serials were begun in each new volume, but they did not end simultaneously. A new serial would begin to fill the place of the one that had just ended. Treasure Island was a splendid choice for Chums. The author was famous, the book already renowned. The division into sections of two chapters at a time was perfect: the story progressed significantly in each instalment, and yet fresh suspense was built up. Here is an ending which will make it hard to wait a whole week until the next issue: “Perhaps I had heard a creak, or seen his shadow moving with the tail of my eye; perhaps it was an instinct like a cat’s; but, sure enough when I looked round, there was Hands, already half way towards me, with the dirk in his right hand.” This, from the 21 November 1894 instalment (III, no. 115), is followed by the tantalizing “To be continued” (202).

Treasure Island had all the hallmarks of a Chums adventure. The action was removed in time and place, the narrative was delivered in the first person, the hero was a young boy, just a little older than the average reader, but not over the threshold separating boy from man. Yet the young hero was admitted to the company of adult men as a near-equal. The hero can perform many acts of physical bravery on the same level as the adults, but he is more nimble, more curious, more hot-headed and ready to take risks. He still evokes paternal concern in his adult companions. But he is clearly on his way to full
acceptance in the adult world, even if that world is one where grown men are willing to abandon their normal duties and to risk everything, to kill and be killed, for the sake of riches amassed by acts of lawlessness and violence.

George Hutchinson

If *Treasure Island* was a natural choice for *Chums* serialization, was George Hutchinson a good choice for its illustrator? The requirement was that the illustrations should make the most of the action and drama of the story. George Hutchinson, then at the height of his popularity as illustrator, capable, imaginative, and a good draughtsman, was quite able to deliver what was needed. His illustrations were important in their own right, recreating the excitement of the story in visual terms and offering their own intrinsic pleasure and artistic appeal. They are subordinate to the text, but they maintain an autonomy at the same time, at least in the sense that they superimpose an interpretation that must take on a life of its own: if Jim has his hair tied back with a ribbon on his first appearance, the ribbon must be present throughout.

If the drawings often occupy only about half a page, they loom much larger, and dominate the page — the print is arranged to accommodate them. Moreover, the pictures, which come on the first page of an instalment, often illustrate lines on the next page. When an illustration begins on a recto page, the textual lines it illustrates often appear on a verso page. In many cases, then, the pictures and the text could not be seen at the same time, building suspense and urging the reader on. All illustrations, whether of an interior or exterior scene, are carefully detailed, all human figures fully realistic in their stance or motion. That is, they are realistic as figures, not as characters. Jim has no distinctive features apart from being an average British boy. He is, if not Everyman, then Everyboy, with whom the *Chums* readers can easily identify. Billy Bones is as ferocious as the stroke of the artist’s pen can make him. Long John, the one-legged man, is pleasant and smiling. It is difficult to suggest latent treachery in his appearance, but it is possible to show how everyone was taken in by his deceptive looks.

Who, then, was the illustrator commissioned to provide these illustrations? He worked in London, producing cartoons and illustrations for various periodicals such as *The Illustrated London News* and *The Idler*. He was versatile and a good worker; it appears that he produced commissioned work on schedule, unlike many others. He had a wife and family, and was always eager for commissions. When they came, bills could be paid and some small luxuries indulged in. In between commissions, he tried to do portraits. When things went well, he could even afford to travel back to Canada for a visit. For this man, who was so good at depicting the British at
their favourite and perhaps to him occasionally bizarre pursuits, was really a Canadian.

George Hutchinson’s home was in Great Village, Colchester County, Nova Scotia, a place known to literary historians as the childhood locale of poet Elizabeth Bishop. Bishop, Hutchinson’s great-niece, lived intermittently in Great Village with her maternal grandparents, Elizabeth Hutchinson Bulmer, Hutchinson’s sister, and her husband William Brown Bulmer. Born in 1852, Hutchinson left the village as a young man, went to London, and studied at the Royal Academy from 1880 to 1885. He was the winner of a £50 prize in 1885, presented by the Academy’s President, Sir Frederic Leighton. Notably, it was he who did the illustrations to the first edition of Conan Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet* in book form (1891 by Ward, Lock and Bowden). In the early 1890s he was “discovered” by the novelist Israel Zangwill, who engaged him as illustrator for Zangwill’s own humour magazine, *Ariel*. When the sometime Canadian Robert Barr (educated in Canada, he left at the age of 26) and his British friend Jerome K. Jerome started *The Idler* together in 1892, both Zangwill and Hutchinson became important contributors. Hutchinson illustrated some of Zangwill’s most successful works, such as *The Bachelors’ Club* (1891) and *The King of Schnorrers* (1894), where the illustrations fully match the humour of the written work. He also illustrated many of the articles which appeared in *The Idler* as part of the series “My First Book.” He did not illustrate Stevenson’s “My First Book,” but did an excellent job on Israel Zangwill (*The Idler*, 1893).

Hutchinson is listed in Canadian references as a Nova Scotian painter of modest output. In British references he is listed as an English cartoonist and illustrator. That the two artists were really one and the same person was a happy discovery attendant on a work on Zangwill’s half-forgotten novel *The Master* (Falk 1993). In the novel, Zangwill depicts the life of a young boy who grows up in Nova Scotia, but goes to London to study painting and becomes a successful artist. Once thought to be based on the life of Nova Scotia artist Gilbert Stuart Newton, the novel was evidently based on the life of George Hutchinson, the last illustrator to furnish a pictorial interpretation to *Treasure Island* in Stevenson’s lifetime.

The *Chums* serialization of *Treasure Island*, coinciding as it does with the last year of Stevenson’s life, had a special historical significance that the magazine’s editors were quick to perceive when they learned of Stevenson’s death. In the last instalment, the editor appends a note on Stevenson’s death for the information of his readers: “Just before we go to press with the present number of ‘Chums’ — containing the final chapters of ‘Treasure Island’ — the news of the passing away of Robert Louis Stevenson, in far-off Samoa, is flashed to this country; and it is with deep sadness we realise that the incomparable Story-teller is no more” (*Chums* 299). In the 9 January 1895 number of


Chums, the very next week, readers are treated to a reduced facsimile specimen of Stevenson's handwriting from a page of Catriona and are reminded to reread an article on Stevenson's life and work, "The Author of 'Treasure Island'," that was included in the same number of Chums that began the serialization of the book. If Stevenson's death added historical sharpness to the serialization, his prominence added literary lustre to Chums itself. The brief entry for Chums in the Oxford Companion to Children's Literature notes that "In 1894 [Chums] ran Treasure Island (the second time that Stevenson's book had been serialized) 'with new and original illustrations'" (117). Of all the adventures published by Chums, it is the inclusion of Treasure Island alone that is clearly worthy of note in the Oxford Companion, and for its "new and original illustration" as well as for the text. Until now, George Hutchinson's illustrations have been largely overlooked. As an extremely sensitive example of the integration of text and visual image, they deserve to be rescued from neglect and given a recognized place among that group of images inspired by the story of Treasure Island.

Notes

1 In "My First Book," Stevenson remarks on the problem he encountered after a relatively trouble-free, chapter-a-day routine writing Treasure Island: "Fifteen days I stuck to it, and turned out fifteen chapters and then, in the early paragraphs of the sixteenth, ignominiously lost hold" (2:16).

2 Chums ran as a weekly from 14 September to 2 July 1934 (vols. 1-42) but continued as an annual from 1935/6 to 1941 (vols. 1-6).

3 Lilian Falk's "A Nineteenth Century Literary Representation of Nova Scotia Dialect" discusses Israel Zangwill's The Master (1895) and argues that the novel is based on the life of George Hutchinson. The argument appears to find further support in correspondence between Zangwill and Hutchinson preserved in Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem (File A-120). The existence of this correspondence was pointed out to Lilian Falk by Meri-Jane Rochelson of Florida International University.

4 For the relationship between Hutchinson and Bishop, and further unravelling of the Hutchinson mystery, see Sandra Barry's "What's in a Name? The Historic Sites and Monuments Board and the Gilbert Stuart Newton Plaque Error." Further information on George Hutchinson is found in Sandra Barry's Elizabeth Bishop, An Archival Guide to Her Life in Nova Scotia.

5 George Hutchinson is listed in J. Russell Harper's Early Painters and Engravers in Canada. He is also cited in History of Great Village, Nova Scotia, compiled by the Members of the Women's Institute, and in Donald MacKay's Portraits of a Province, an unpublished manuscript. Among the British and American references which list or name George Hutchinson are Algernon Graves, A Dictionary of Artists, 1760-1893; Simon Houfe, The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914; and J. Johnson and A. Greutzner, The Dictionary of British Artists, 1880-1914; Walter...
Klinefelter, *Sherlock Holmes in Portrait and Profile*; and James Thorpe, *English Illustration: The Nineties*. The British and American books refer to Hutchinson's work only, not the person.

6 Kevin Carpenter mentions Hutchinson in the course of his 1982 *Notes and Queries* article, "R.L. Stevenson on the *Treasure Island* Illustrations," which reproduces a hitherto unpublished commentary by Stevenson on French artist George Roux's illustrations of *Treasure Island*. (The manuscript is located the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.) Carpenter concedes, regarding the illustrator of *Treasure Island* in *Chums*, that "Little is known about Hutchinson; he illustrated a number of serials in *Chums*" (323n.). Roger Swearingen, who mentions the *Chums* serialization in his PhD thesis, *The Early Literary Career of Robert Louis Stevenson, 1859-1881*, notes that he did not actually see a copy of the magazine; he makes no reference at all to Hutchinson (420).

**Works Cited**


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