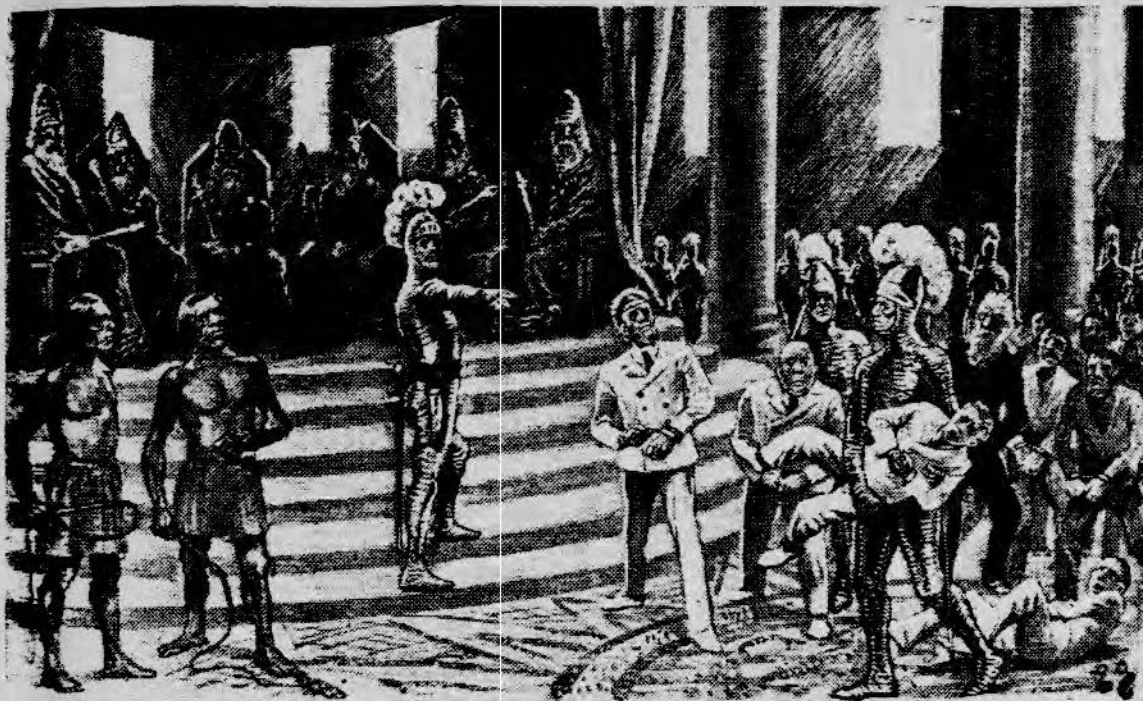


STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 38

No. 445

JANUARY 1984



A giant soldier suddenly sent Len Connor flying and whipped the startled Midge off his feet—and two huge natives sprinted round from the back of the dais, armed with long, heavy whips.

CAPTAIN JUSTICE in SLAVERY!

One of the Captain Justice stories which were appearing in Modern Boy 50 years ago

34P

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AUTHORS - PAST AND PRESENT

I rarely read modern fiction, but recently one of my nephews brought me a little present. He said: "I read a review on this book, and it struck me as being just what you would like. So here you are".

It was a story, just published in paperback, entitled "The False Inspector Dew" by Peter Lovesey. It is set in the year 1921, which makes it rather unusual, and most of the action takes place on the liner "Mauretania".

Inspector Dew, as students of old classic real life crimes will remember, was the Scotland Yard officer who caught Crippen and Ethel Le Neve when they fled across the Atlantic. Dew

travelled on a faster boat, and was awaiting Crippen and Le Neve when their ship docked.

In the story we get a brief prologue when the Commissioner of Police in London, in 1921, finds a message on his desk from the Master of the Mauretania, saying that a murder has been committed on the liner and the matter is in the hands of Inspector Dew.

Scotland Yard is puzzled, because Dew was reported to have retired years earlier, after the Crippen case.

It is a fast-moving story, with all sorts of unexpected twists and turns throughout, and a big surprise in the final chapter. The setting of over sixty years ago is entirely fascinating, with all sorts of little nostalgic reminders to stir the memory. I learned what I had not realised before, that the Mauretania was a sister ship to the ill-fated Lusitania.

There are one or two spots where one ponders. The Lusitania is said to have been carrying a great deal of explosives for the war effort, and the second explosion which finally sank the great ship is described as not being due to a second torpedo but to flames reaching the ammunitions dumps. I know that was the excuse made by the Germans for the sinking of a passenger liner in 1915, but I do not ever recall reading that she was actually carrying explosives.

In another place we are told that performances at Richmond Theatre started nightly at 8.30. Well, I did not know Richmond so long ago as 1921, but I would be dubious whether the evening show ever started so late as that. 7.45 I would think more likely, for Richmond Theatre drew large numbers of patrons from as far afield as Kingston, Surbiton, Leatherhead, and so on - people who would need to catch a last bus home.

It's a fascinating yarn, and one I recommend to anyone who enjoys a really excellent mystery. I had not heard before of the writer, Peter Lovesey, but my friend, Roy Parsons, tells me that Lovesey is well-known and has written a number of popular novels.

Many of us, in the thirties, enjoyed the stories of Inspector French by Freeman Wills Crofts. They make excellent reading, even though some tend to be a trifle too technical, due probably to the fact that Crofts was also a railway engineer. False alibis play a big part in the Inspector French tales.

Another was John Rhode with his tales of Dr. Priestley. All immensely readable, though the style is a little pedantic.

Of immediate post-war writers, a firm favourite of mine is

Andrew Garve. He must be an elderly man now, and it is a couple of years or so since I have come across a new Garve. His plots are ingenious and immensely varied. There are no two plots alike with Garve stories. He has two literary mannerisms which are mildly irritating. He uses "M'mm!" - possibly to show the character contemplating - too often, and I would not like to count how many times the endearment "darling" turns up in his characters' dialogue.

Still, those are minor details, and he is a superb writer. I doubt whether any finer thriller-type novels have ever been written than Andrew Garve's "A Hero for Leanda", "The Sea Monks", and "The Ashes of Loda". But every Garve story is tip-top.

SCHOOL CAP

A letter in my national newspaper caught my eye this morning. From a South London reader, it ran as follows:

"What has become of the school cap? It was an excellent form of uniform that kept us dry in the rain, warmer in winter, and smarter all the time. The sight of damp-headed scruffy schoolboys is all too frequent these days."

We, too, are saddened at the passing of the school cap. It featured prominently in all the school stories of our youth - at least, if we are over 35 in years. Loyalty to one's school, when we were boys, was a way of life. The majority of youngsters wore their school uniform with pride. My view is that only a very small percentage would have liked to see it scrapped. Yet, like so many other things made precious by tradition, it has practically disappeared and only memories remain. In our youth, and much later, we would have thought it quite impossible for British tradition to be scrapped deliberately before the tanks of the minority who yap so glibly.

More, the school cap was a symbol of discipline. That could be, just possibly, the reason it has all but gone in this violent, sex-riddled, dangerous, and scruffy age in which we now live.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Another New Year for us all. And Story Paper Collectors' Digest embarks upon its 38th year. At 38 we're no longer young, are we? In fact, we're very definitely middle-aged. How has it happened? Well, I don't know. A little mag, which should have packed up years and years ago as steam-pipes got cold - it just goes on and on. And readers still seem to love it, if their letters

are anything to go by.

My good friend, Mr. Phil Harris, often sends me the Church magazine which he edits in Canada, and, reading a copy in the run up to Christmas, I was much impressed by a little piece which I think you will all enjoy. So, without his permission or the permission of whoever composed the lines (I hope they will forgive me in seasonal friendship), I print them here, with New Year 1984 - and C.D.'s amazing 38th year-in mind:

"Do not count the years, but count the blessings they've bestowed - and the many friends that you have made along the road. Do not count the birthdays, let them come and let them go. Time is not an enemy unless you make it so.

Do not count your troubles when you're looking back today. Count the joys, anticipating good things on the way. Make a friend of TIME and it will bring its best to you: comfort and contentment, hopes fulfilled and dreams made true."

With those words I conclude my first Editorial for 1984, and wish my readers, all over the world, a Happy, a Peaceful, and altogether splendid New Year. God Bless you.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

JANUARY 1934

1934 came in with most of us not being able to see very far. A dense fog enveloped London throughout New Year's Day, and it stretched all over the southern counties. There were any amount of accidents, and a number of deaths as a result of the fog.

In Modern Boy, the new series about King of the Islands has continued, and the stories are great reading. Opening tale of the year is "The Atoll of Mystery". Ken, looking for the wonderful pink coral, comes on a mystery. On the island, which is supposed to be uninhabited, there are hidden watchers.

Next, "The Secret Men of Tunaviva". It is the loneliest island in the world, yet the bullets are flying around. In the third week there is "Ken King's Defeat". Ken King is the pluckiest chap in the South Seas, but not the luckiest - and luck goes against him in this story. Finally, "Koko's Great Fight". Koko

is Ken King's bo'sun on the "Dawn", and he dearly loves his white master. And this week Koko's loyalty is tested and not found wanting. Just great. The series goes on next month.

Also in Modern Boy there is a new series of air tales, entitled "The Flying Comedians" by Gerald Magnus. The Captain Justice series has continued all the month, and there is a motor-racing serial "Thunder Ahead" under the name of Sir Malcolm Campbell.

There is a new invention just marketed called Polythene. It is a kind of see-through, waterproof material, handy for protective wrapping and the making of bags (wrapping bags, not trousers). Dad says it's only a freak affair and won't last for long. A craze like Yo-yo, says Dad. My Dad's a genius.

The notice about the amalgamation with the Nelson Lee Library has now been dropped from the Gem headings, though the Nelson Lee serial continues every week. At St. Jim's, the series about Tom Merry being down on his luck has now ended, and I have enjoyed it very much. First tale of 1934 is "The Boy from the Underworld". Mr. Poinsett has turned up at long last and set Miss Fawcett's affairs right again. But Tom doesn't forget the little waif, Joe Frayne, with whom he was friendly in the slums of London. Tom Merry decides to bring Joe to St. Jim's, and Dr. Holmes accepts Joe as a pupil in the Third Form. Then came "Not Wanted at St. Jim's" which is the final story in the series. Joe Frayne has a hard time in the St. Jim's Third, but he wins through at last, and Wally D'Arcy becomes his firm pal.

Then came "St. Jim's in the Scrum". Tipton School plays Rugger, and challenges Tom Merry's players to a game. But St. Jim's plays Soccer, so Tom Merry turns down the challenge. However, Blake gets up a Rugger team which includes a number of Greyfriars Rugger players - Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, Tom Brown, and David Morgan - and the combined Fourth Form team beats the Tipton lot. Final of the month is "The Worst Boy at St. Jim's". He is a new boy named Albert Clyne, and he is put into Study No. 6. He turns out to be a bully and a rascal. He is expelled at the end. So-so.

For Londoners there is a new telephone number which they can use if they want help from Scotland Yard in double-quick time. The number is Whitehall 1212. I must try it one day and see what happens. I forgot, we haven't got a telephone.

In the Boys' Friend Library, there is a story entitled "The Correspondence Course Cowboy". It's about Horatio Hayweed, and

the stories are part of a series which ran in Modern Boy not long ago. It was a farcical affair, and I didn't like it much.

Two good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. The Greyfriars one is "Billy Bunter's Convict". £50 reward is offered for information leading to the capture of Convict 19. Bunter has seen that convict - and a new master just like the convict comes to Greyfriars. The other Schoolboys' Own Library is a St. Frank's one entitled "The Boot-Boy Baronet". Two new boys at St. Frank's. One's wealthy; the other is a bootboy who is really a baronet.

A new Odeon Cinema opened this month on the Kingston by-pass at Tolworth, and Doug had two tickets for the opening night, so we went by train and bus. The ceremony was conducted by Sir George Penny, and the big opening film was Eddie Cantor in "The Kid from Spain". It was fairly good, about a weedy chap who is mistaken for a famous bullfighter.

At the local cinemas we have seen "Gold Diggers of 1933" starring Warren William, Ruby Keeler, and Joan Blondell. The title is a month out of date, but it was a good musical with some grand songs including "We're in the Money". Jose Collins and Stanley Lupino in "Facing the Music" was fairish. Ronald Colman and Kay Francis were in "Cynara", about a married man who has a girl friend. It was very sad, and Mum wept while I yawned a bit. John Barrymore and Diana Wynyard in "Reunion in Vienna" was romantic but a bit overdone, and Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn in "A Cuckoo in the Nest" was an amusing British film.

One night Dad took us to Holborn Empire for a splendid variety show. On the bill were Alexander and Mose, blackfaced comedians; the New Trix Sisters who sang and danced; Billy Bennett who is Almost a Gentleman; and, top of the Bill, Elsie Carlisle and Sam Browne. Elsie Carlisle is terrific. She sang "Home, James, and don't spare the horses", and "No, No, a thousand times No".

There has been an earthquake in India, with 500 dead and thousands injured. And Lord Nuffield has given £45,000 to Guy's Hospital in London.

A first-class month in the Magnet. The opening story of the year is "Bunter, the Crasher", the final tale in the Christmas series. Still hiding in the attic at Wharton Lodge, Bunter is the means of catching a burglar at Wharton's home, and after that he is an honoured guest. One of the best Christmas series ever.

Next, "Billy Bunter's Diamond". Bunter buys a hundred pound diamond tie-pin for a shilling. Then the sequel, "The Profiteer"

of the Remove". Fishy buys Bunter's diamond tie-pin for 50/-, and is very happy till he finds out where the tie-pin originally came from.

Last tale of the month starts a new thriller series. First of the series is "Kidnapped from the Air". Bob Cherry is whisked away from a football match in an aeroplane. An Old Boy of Greyfriars named Krantz is at Greyfriars again, and he is rather a mysterious character. I wonder what he's up to. The series goes on next month.

They are giving away bars of toffee with the Magnet and my copy of the paper was all messed up with the stuff. I took back the Magnet, but as I had eaten the toffee, the newsagent wouldn't give me an exchange copy.

- - -

NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S "DANNY'S DIARY"

S.O.L. 211 "Billy Bunter's Convict" was a 3-story series from the Magnet very early in the year 1928. S.O.L. No. 212 "The Boot-Boy Baronet" was a 3-story series, introducing Vivian Travers as a new boy in the Nelson Lee Library of the year 1928.

Gem stories at this time were being selected from all over the place, and it was far from satisfactory. The two stories which brought Joe Frayne to St. Jim's, "The Boy from the Underworld" and "Not Wanted at St. Jim's" had been, respectively, "Tom Merry's Return to St. Jim's" and "No Class!" (lovely title, the latter) in early 1911. "St. Jim's in the Scrum" was originally entitled "The Rugger Fourth" in the early autumn of 1910. In passing, my personal view is that this tale was not written by Hamilton - not on account of its Rugger theme, but because of its candyfloss, flimsy construction and its rambling sections of dialogue. It has all the hall marks of a C.M. Down story. "The Worst Boy at St. Jim's" had originally been "The Cad of St. Jim's" and they went back to early in 1909 to pick up this one. Editorial policy, at the moment, was inexplicable.

* * * * *

BELATED GREETINGS to All Our Friends and to all O.B.B.C. Members.
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* * * * *

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by Josie Packman

By the time you all read these few words Christmas will be over and I hope you had a lovely time with lots of food, presents and reading matter, including the Annual. May I take this opportunity of wishing everyone a Happy New Year and perhaps they could find time to write a little article for Blakiana.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

by John Bridgwater

When I first read Arthur Paterson's Krock Kelk stories in Union Jacks Nos. 1288, 1295, 1304 and 1316 I did not particularly like them and thought what a ridiculous name to give a master criminal. That the series was so brief could have been because Kelk was not popular. However, I did not like the name, it reminded me of the yapping of a nasty little lap dog, possibly Kelk's high falsetto voice was responsible for this. The name seemed very inferior when compared to George Marsden Plummer, which has a majestic ring, or Dr. Huxton Rymer, or Leon Kestrel, names which are worthy of the master criminals to whom they belong. Even Mr. Smith seemed far superior to my young mind.

A short time ago my opinion of the name was changed by what I read in Geoffrey Grigson's fascinating book "The Englishman's Flora". Whilst hunting through the masses of information on common and dialect names looking for another name by which Jew's Mallow is known I came across Kelk. Curiosity prompted a full investigation of all the entries under this name. The results were as follows:-

Kelk = Charlock in Wilts., Sussex, Kent and Surrey. "The weed Charlock ... a vicious pest ... a vegetable rat ... with a rat's individuality and lack of charm."

Kelk = Cow Parsley in the same counties plus Yorks., Durham and Northumberland. "To most of us an innocent-seeming plant ... but it was connected with the Devil ... many of it's names are applied as well to the ultra poisonous Hemlock." The deadly nature of this plant needs no further comment. Also "Fools Parsley for those who mistake it for genuine ..." is known by the same name.

After the above discoveries it was a natural follow-up to see if Krock had any associations. The nearest I could find was Croc

or Crock - a hook or crook and synonymous with worthlessness or folly - related to Crook in the Oxford Dictionary. The English Dialect Dictionary does not help with Krock but gives additional information on Kelk which in northern dialect means to beat severely and hit roughly with hand or fist.

So the name Krock Kelk is not so ridiculous as I first thought, but, this knowledge does not make me like him any more than I did before.

THE STORY OF TINKER (continued)

And so to Tinker's Schooldays - what schooldays they were too!

At Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood - and to a rather lesser extent, St. Frank's - school life was gay and carefree, but it did have its serious moments. At Telford College, however, it seemed one long round of hilarity from rising bell to call-over, with juniors appearing to go to bed dreaming up the most original japes they could devise and then spending their waking hours in putting them into execution.

Like nearly all new boys, Tinker was subjected to a certain amount of 'ragging', the raggers, in this instance, being the three leading lights of the junior school, Maxwell, Orford and Micky Doran, known as 'The Three Musketeers'. That Blake's cheery young assistant was something out of the ordinary in new fellows the japers quickly discovered, and so impressed were they by Tinker's fistic qualities and his very obvious ability of being able to take care of himself that they invited him to become one of themselves. Thus they came to be known as 'Four Musketeers' and as a result, life at Telford became more hilarious than ever. Tinker became installed in Study No. 5 which he shared with the other Musketeers, and in accordance with what must now be regarded as the usual order of things, soon found himself in a fistic encounter with the black sheep of the Form - in this case, one Langton Mainwaring, an out and out cad, with the dandified lack of manners reminiscent of Aubrey Racke of St. Jim's.

The four juniors became inseparable, and even during the vacation when the fellows dispersed to the various homes, there was no breakup in the combine. Where one Musketeer went the others went too. When Sir Charles Orford invited his son and his three friends to stay at Orford Hall for the holidays, it was not long before he was mentally kicking himself for his rashness, for even

out of school Tinker and his chums found it impossible to refrain from practical jokes. When Sir Charles found a four-pound pike ogling at him out of his bath-water, and Major Wetherby, an explorer, discovered a couple of grass snakes taking refuge in his shooting boots, both elderly gentlemen thought it high time they got a bit of their own back. Consequently, when Tinker retired that night he found the snakes tucked up comfortably in his bed.

Back at Telford the fun waged fast and furious in that most unusual of scholastic institutions. When the Four Musketeers, walking through the village near the school, spied a circus pitched on some waste ground, Tinker was struck with the germ of an idea at sight of an elephant, picketed to a stout post. What followed after Tinker had indulged in a most interesting conversation with the owner of the elephant caused Telford, used as it was to the most unusual occurrences, rock back and forth in its foundations in a sensation never before experienced in its unique history.

Those humorous youths, well-known to readers of the "Gem" and "Magnet" Monty Lowther, of the Shell at St. Jim's and William Wibley, of the Remove at Greyfriars, often had their schoolfellows in convulsions of mirth at the originality of their japes, but there were some things at which they drew the line. For instance, they would never have thought of bringing into the school a circus elephant; but that is exactly what Tinker did, and when that outsize in beasts came lumbering into the Form-room, 'Rosie', as Mr Rose, Tinker's form-master was nicknamed, nearly threw a fit, as the elephant became jambed in the Form-room doorway.

When Tinker left to rejoin Sexton Blake, Telford College was never quite the same, a matter of much regret by Tinker's pals certainly not shared by the masters. Harrassed frowns on learned countenances suddenly become careworn were gradually smoothed out; masters whose figures had been seen to slither furtively and dejectedly along corridors, fearful of booby traps, or similar appliances beloved of the irresponsible schoolboy, braced wonderfully at the exhilarating tonic of Tinker's departure, and if Dr. Telford, the Headmaster, and Mr. Rose were seen to shake hands silently, the reason for their solemn congratulations was not difficult to guess at.

To be continued.

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S ...

by an Old Boy

There is no dearth of talent at St. Frank's. That it is confined mainly to the Lower School is evident; although when one thinks of the Fifth it is to Horace Stevens' ability in the Thespian art and to William Napoleon Browne for sheer nerve.

But it is to the juniors where one finds the extraordinary gifts nature has bestowed. Take Jerry Dodd, cricketer extraordinary, plus his clever pony. The Trotwood Twins; Nicodemus and Cornelius ... the latter with the fantastic memory. Nipper, the born leader; Stanley Waldo, inheritor of his father's prowess; Reggie Pitt, next to Nipper the best leader ever; Johnny and Bertie Onions, of Circus fame. Billy Nation, able to quote the poets at any given moments; Timothy Tucker, with his 'gift of the gab'; Edward O. Handforth, who so easily makes his presence 'felt'.

But I mustn't forget to mention Mr. Nelson Lee. If when talking about talent then the famous schoolmaster-detective outshines them all. But one would expect it of this extraordinary man. It is not given to any type of school-master to fill in the role of Headmaster, but Lee has always been capable and has actually occupied that position.

I have written about the Onions' brothers. If you love the Circus you will delight in reading of their past exploits in the Ring. Johnny is an expert at almost every circus act. Bertie's flow of spoonerism is unequalled. In fact, Bertie just cannot forget to talk naturally. He has mastered the art of spoonerism he uses it in conversation. It is very annoying at times, but amusing. You have to think to transpose the initials of the words he uses to get the drift as it were.

One day he asked me to take the fleas of the cat to his London home. It took me a few moments to translate and understand he wanted me take the keys of the flat!

And it is very catching-contagious in fact! It is liable to get you into all sorts of trouble. Yet you cannot but like the Onions and especially Tess Love whom they regard as their sister. Tessa is an extremely clever circus performer, and is at present at the Moor View School for Young Ladies. Some time ago, Johnny and Bertie Onions owned a circus and Tessa was the niece of the

manager, a man named Snayle. But when the circus fell on hard times the boys of St. Frank's rallied round and made it viable again. They 'took over' the management and got it going again.

The history of the Circus and the boys of St. Frank's have been recorded in O.S. 464.

It is interesting to note that with the arrival of the above mentioned Trotwood Twins a very strange character came at the same time; he was Col. Clinton, M.A., D.S.O.

When Mr. Stockdale, the Housemaster of the College House was skating during holidays, he was ass enough to go to a weak part of the ice, and he fell through. Consequently, he was unable to carry on his duties and a temporary master was found. Col. Clinton turned out a remarkable man with remarkable ideas for a Housemaster. But of this I will write about another time.

Suffice to say at this point in time that Col. Clinton's methods resulted in a Barring Out... one of the outstanding Revolts the old school had known.

There are a few lesser talented boys at St. Frank's. Chief of whom is Jimmy (Fatty) Little. Fatty suffers from Bulimia... just can't stop eating. He refers to his 'talent' when I asked him ... so I thought I would include it!

I know of no reason why I should exclude Solomon Levi. He has a talent for almost anything. Mainly business acumen. It's a great pity there aren't a lot more Solomon Levi's in this world. We could soon reduce the National Debt. Solly has ideas... but who will listen to a schoolboy.

HANDFORTH MINOR

by R. J. Godsave

In the October of 1922 E. S. Brooks departed from his usual series of eight Nelson Lee Libraries and wrote some seventeen single Lees. This in itself was unusual and No. o.s. 386 was even more so. This Lee introduced in a rather casual way Handforth Minor or Willy Handforth as he became to be known. The front cover of No. 386 shows Edward Oswald Handforth speaking aggressively to a boy of about 12 or 13 years of age attired in a dark-blue velvet suit and upon his head was a kind of sailor hat. For a junior to come to St. Frank's in that get-up was frightful. Etons being the thing for St. Frank's the fags regarded Willy Handforth with contempt. He was, indeed a wash-out.

It appeared that he had attended an elementary school near London called Sellcombe. Fullwood and Co. being in Caistowe on

the afternoon of Handforth Minor's arrival, and meeting some Yexford College boys of similar habits happened to mention that they were expecting Handforth's younger brother to join St. Frank's as a scholar. According to one of the Yexford juniors, who was struck by the unusual name, informed his companions that a young Handforth had been sacked from Sellcombe for cribbing answers from exam papers. This information was a great lever to Fullwood who had no great liking for the elder Handforth. Back at St. Frank's Fullwood actually received £2 from Handy in order to keep quiet and keep the whole affair secret. Edward Oswald soon recovered his senses and forced Fullwood to return the £2. On being questioned by his major Willy Handforth admitted that he had been expelled from Sellcombe for cribbing. Now that Willy's lapse would soon be common knowledge at St. Frank's, Handforth began to spread the news which to his surprise was received by the decent fellows with little difference to their usual attitude to Handy. Unfortunately, there were quite a few fellows who were only too eager to seize upon a piece of such news as was now being circulated.

In the Third Form Willy Handforth was going through it properly. Owen Minor had heard the news in the tuck-shop while purchasing some rolls for tea, the cash being supplied by Willy. The result of Owen Minor's discovery was that Willy was to be tried by a Third Form 'Court'. On being found guilty Willy was given the option of being ragged and sent to Coventry or of fighting him with or without gloves, that is the judge - Owen Minor. Should the unexpected happen and Willy win the fight then he would be free of the ragging and being sent to Coventry. Having inherited Handy's warlike activities Owen Minor was soon reduced to a pitiful wreck. In so doing Handforth Minor automatically became the leader of the Third Form. It was obvious that no fag of the Third could hold a candle to Willy in the matter of fighting. Apart from his fighting abilities Willy had a good head on him in other matters. Hewas responsible for six small box rooms being turned into studies for the Ancient House Third Formers. The College House fags being less lucky in their choice of a leader. Naturally permission had to be given by Mr. Nelson Lee, their Housemaster who insisted that the project should be treated seriously or he would ban the whole affair. The fags themselves would have to make the necessary furniture.

As readers of the Nelson Lee were to find out Willy Handforth

being such a resourceful youngster and rather out of the ordinary was destined to be one of E. S. Brooks' great characters in the future of the Nelson Lee Library. It would appear that had Brooks featured Willy in an eight Lee series it would have been very much to the detriment of the Remove juniors who were the centre of the Library. With regard to Willy's expulsion it was true, excepting that it only lasted three days while the real culprit was caught red-handed. Willy could have explained to his brother and the Third Formers, but chose not to do so, which in effect proves his independent nature.

WHERE DID THE BULLYING STOP?

by Tommy Keen

Harry Wharton was in dire disgrace. He had dared to cut Richard Lancaster of the Sixth Form (the 'Greyfriars Pretender' series of 1931) in full view of almost the entire schoolboy population of Greyfriars. Of course there was a reason, and Wharton's troubled conscience could let him do nothing else. His special chums, the rest of the members of the Famous Five, were horrified, and in fact the entire Remove were all angry and contemptuous.

The Fifth showed their feelings more physically.

'Some Fifth Form men came towards Wharton, and Blundell kicked him hard. Potter followed it up with another kick; Greene kicked him in his turn, and then Coker, and then Bland.

Harry Wharton was left gasping.'

Then, even Sykes of the Sixth kicked him. In this instance, with six seniors kicking one junior, a feeling of cruelty is involved. One could laugh, and supposedly many readers often did, at the repeated kickings of Billy Bunter, but Harry Wharton, the Captain of the Remove, being repeatedly kicked in the quad was not credible, especially if Bob Cherry and Co. were looking on.

Kicking other boys was evidently a popular form of amusement at Greyfriars, Fisher T. Fish was receiving the boot on the cover of MAGNET No. 328 (1914), and thirteen years later, he was still sampling the boot leather of his form mates - MAGNET cover No. 1003.

But worse than kicking, was the head bashing. Pause... and imagine your head being forcibly crashed against another skull. Not very pleasant... and decidedly dangerous, but this also was

a popular pastime at Hamiltonians' favourite school.

Wingate, the Captain of the School, who really should have known better, had the two helpless Bunter brothers in his grasp - MAGNET No. 927 cover - whilst their heads met with a resounding crash. Maybe an amusing illustration, but, by such an impact. And in another MAGNET, Potter and Greene of the Fifth were suffering the same fate from the hands of the hefty Horace Coker.

Did the creator of these famous characters chuckle gleefully to himself as he wrote of these head crashing incidents?

For not only did heads meet, in the case of a lone cranium to be violently bashed, there was always an accommodating elm tree nearby... failing which, the study wall. How many times were Bunter's, Skinner's, or any other rascal's heads cracked against a tree or wall?

We expected bullies in our Greyfriars - Bulstrode and Bolsover, Loder and Carne, were all accepted, but they were not always the cause of the sadistic streaks which sometimes crept into the stories.

In the very early days, brutality was even more rife. On the cover of MAGNET No. 241 (1912) Coker Minor is being savagely beaten by Hobson of the Shell - a dormitory scene, with Reggie Coker only wearing a night shirt.

And the cricket stump thrashings! Not even flexible, a few bashes (they could hardly be called cuts) by a cricket stump could, surely, cause serious damage, but through the years, poor Bunter was lammed unmercifully with a cricket stump, usually wielded by his study mate, Peter Todd.

Were girls just as brutal? Evidently so, for on the cover of the POPULAR, No. 248, Miss Clara Trevlyn of Cliff House School, is lashing the unfortunate Billy Bunter, (and not at all playfully) with a whip.

Who are bullies, and who are not? If Ponsonby and Co. of Highcliffe were fortunate enough to come across a lone member of Greyfriars, and ragged him unmercifully, they were scorned as cads and rotters, but Harry Wharton and Co., and sometimes with the help of the entire Remove, could rag and chastise Coker of the Fifth. In this case, it was high spirited fun.

With outcasts having to run the quantlet in dormitories, kickings, beatings, whippings, floggings galore, maybe our school-boy heroes would thoroughly enjoy themselves at today's atrocious and frightening football matches.

TOM MERRY CAVALCADE (Serialised from a Long Ago C.D. Annual)

1908

The buxom young woman with the threadbare coat, which she has fastened high in the neck to keep out the chill October wind, placed a penny on the counter.

She said: "I've called for Master Christopher's 'Gem', Mr. Chadley".

The blue-covered paper was placed before her, and Chadley said: "It's called 'D'Arcy Minor' this week Lizzie. Gussy's young brother has come to St. Jim's".

"That Gussy!" Lizzie giggled. "I love him. He'll be the death of me. The way he talks, too."

"I thought the 'Magnet' was your paper, Lizzie."

"Oh, yes, I buy the 'Magnet' myself, but I read young Master Chris's 'Gems'. I really like the 'Gem' best, Mr. Chadley, but I can't afford to buy a penny weekly. Not on £15 a year, living in!"

Chadley shook his head, in silent agreement.

"Course, £15 a year is not to be sneezed at, Mr. Chadley", went on Lizzie. "Mrs. Venner's a nice lady to work for, too, and the kid's not too much of a handful. The Major's a bit of an old faggot, but he's away in India. He's coming home next year."

Chadley opened his mouth to make a comment, but the garrulous young woman gave him no chance. "The Missis is so pleased the Liberals are back in power again, Mr. Chadley. 'Dear Mr. Asquith', she says, all the time, 'dear Mr. Asquith!' Are you a Liberal, Mr. Chadley?"

Chadley, said, diplomatically: "That's a leading question, Lizzie. I always say the only man who went to parliament with good intentions was a Mr. Guy Fawkes".

Lizzie looked doubtfully at him for a moment, and then burst into a peal of laughter. "You're a proper caution, Mr. Chadley. Is young Ronnie better? He's had measles, hasn't he?"

"Whooping cough! Yes, he's better now, Lizzie. He didn't mind staying at

home from school. It gave him time to read his old Tom Merry tales over again."

The incandescent gas burner over the counter flickered as the door opened and another customer entered. Lizzie turned away.

"I must be off, Mr. Chadley. I shall get the sack if I stand here talking to you. Good night, Mr. Chadley."

Another moment and she was gone. The latest customer stared at Chadley grabbed up the blue-covered paper, dashed round the counter, and tore the door open.

"Lizzie", he shouted, "you've left 'D'Arcy Minor' behind."

1909

Major Venner strode into the newsagent's shop. He was a tall, thin man, sporting a small black moustache. The way he wore his curly-brimmed bowler hat, perched on the back of his head, suggested that he was unaccustomed to wearing such mundane headgear.

Mary Chadley was in charge of the shop this morning in mid-summer, and she looked enquiringly at her customer.

"I am Major Venner. I understand that you supply the newspapers to my home in the Avenue."

"Yes, sir." The newsagent's wife smiled politely. "You have called for your small son's 'Gem'? Here it is, sir. One penny."

"I have not called for my small son's 'Gem'", said Major Venner, grimly. "My son will be reading no more blood and thunder rags. I have called to instruct your husband that if I ever learn that he again sells periodicals of this class, either to my son or to any member of my family, we shall cease to be customers at this shop. Will you kindly make that clear to your husband?"

Mary Chadley stood in silence as the Mayor turned away. But only for a moment. Her indignation got the better of her.

"Really, sir!", Mrs. Chadley bristled. "The 'Gem' is not a blood and thunder paper - it is a good-class magazine. My husband encourages our own son to read it, and we know it does him nothing but good."

"What is adequate for your son, madam, is not good enough for mine", said Major Venner.

"Your wife has always approved of the paper, sir."

"With all respect to you, madam, women have no literary appreciation. You know my wishes - my commands. You will carry them out, or lose the custom of my family."

As he turned away, Mary Chadley said: "Major Venner, have you ever read the 'Gem'?"

"Read the 'Gem'? Certainly not!"

Mrs. Chadley sighed deeply. She said: "Gentlemen have a sense of justice - that is why they are so superior to weak women. I know that you, Major, would never condemn a paper unless you had read it".

"I have already told you, madam, that I have never read a paper of this description."

"But you will read it, Major."

Mrs. Chadley fluttered her eyelashes in a way that had conquered stronger men than Major Venner. "You are fair and honourable and you believe in justice. You will read the 'Gem', and if you like it, as I believe you will, you won't prevent your young son from enjoying it. But, if you don't like it, I promise you that we will never supply it again to any member of your family."

Major Venner breathed hard.

Before he could speak, Mrs. Chadley placed the blue Gem on the counter before him.

He read out the title of the story: "The Terrible Three's Air Cruise". He glanced at her sharply. "The Terrible Three! What are they? Brigands? Cut-throats?"

"No, no, sir. They are schoolboys, and real terrors they are in a way, though they are the soul of honour. Really fine lads, just like Master Chris will be when he reaches their age." Mrs. Chadley continued, drawing freely on her imagination: "The 'Terrible Three's Air Cruise' is topical, sir. You know a Frenchman flew the Channel yesterday ---"

"Bleriot? Of course. People are talking of little else."

"The 'Gem' is always topical, sir, so boys who read it learn a lot while enjoying a first-class story. Actually, my husband does not think that the regular writer, Martin Clifford, wrote that tale. I suppose even authors have to take a rest sometimes, though they do their work sitting. But I have here a copy of last week's story, 'Skimpole's Discovery'. That is more like the usual run of story in the 'Gem'. Please take them both, Major, with our compliments."

Major Venner placed two pence on the counter.

"I will take them both, madam, but not with your compliments --- and if I do not like them, madam ---"

"You will!" Mrs. Chadley said, demurely. She fluttered her eyelashes again, and the army man's face crumpled into a crusty smile as he left the shop.

* * * * *

Next Month: 1910

* * * * *
 The First 29 WILLIAM books in exchange for GEMS needed; fifteen are 1st and 2nd ed. Dymocks; the rest Newnes. All dustjacketed.
 S. SMYTH, P.O. Box 366, Mona Vale, N.S.W. 2103, Australia.

REVIEWS

"BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS"

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £15)

This volume is one of the Limited Editions, in soft cloth covers. Of reprints of early Howard Baker volumes now long out of print. Six Magnets of the Golden Age are included, and four of them make up the Cavandale Abbey Christmas series. This is one of Hamilton's finest Christmas series, and, arguably, the very best of all.

As with most Hamilton mysteries, the reader has a very sure idea of the identity of the criminal (part of the charm, of course), though it takes Ferrers Locke, the detective, quite a long time to put two and two together. The series is beautifully written throughout, and a pearl beyond price in Magnet history.

The volume is completed with two single stories. "The Champion Chump" is, of course Coker, at his most chumpish and most entertaining, - plus "Billy Bunter's Bunk", in which Bunter, so infamous for his untruths, is not believed when he tells the truth. For once, the reader sympathises with the "old fat man", and, in fact, we have one of the pleasantest Bunter-solo tales of all time

Lovely set of stories for all and everyone.

- - -

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY"

Martin Clifford
(Howard Baker: £7.50)

This happy volume contains 7 Gems from late 1931 and early 1932. The copies, with one omission, run consecutively. All the St. Jim's tales come from the halfpenny Gem of 1907, with the advantage that none suffered the attention of the pruning pen of whoever was in charge of it at the Fleetway House in the early thirties.

The first three stories in the volume tell of the birth and early vicissitudes of "Tom Merry's Weekly", Charles Hamilton's first fictional school magazine. The idea of a school magazine being a "weekly" was a bit of an absurdity, but why bother. The yarns - and they were legion as years passed - concerning school mags are, perhaps, an acquired taste, but, personally, I always liked them.

The 1907 titles of these three were "Head Cook and Bottle Washer", "Tom Merry's Weekly", and "By Order".

Next comes "Lovelorn Gussy" (named "D'Arcy's Romance" in 1907) which may have been Gussy's first love affair. This time he fell in love with Ethel Courtney, the Head's niece. Gussy loved a number of Ethels in his time, though whether this was a Gussy oddity or an example of the author's penchant for duplicating names it is hard to say. This tale is an old lavender treasure.

"The Mystery of the Hut" is an early Ferrers Locke tale with Tom Merry and Co. assisting the detective. Originally entitled "Stoney Broke". A pleasant little bit of Gem history.

"Puddings and Pains at St. Jim's" had been "Figgin's Fig Pudding" in late 1907. Figgy makes a fig-pudding with syrup of figs as his main ingredient. For some reason this seems to have been an immensely popular story in early days. At any rate, readers advertising for back numbers, throughout white cover days, often asked for this one by name.

"Tom Merry the Second" in this volume had been "Tom Merry's Double" in 1907. Tom is detained, which means he can't play in the Frampton match. His place in detention is taken by the impersonator, Kern. Good fun, with Kildare in a slightly unbelievable role.

The cover of the story "Tom Merry - Editor" has been tampered with. An original inset

of the new Holiday Annual of the day is replaced with a string of Greyfriars juniors, which strikes an incongruous note on a Gem cover. But publishers who try to please everybody are likely to end up with stomach ulcers.

The Gem's supporting programme of the period comprised short Rookwood tales from a sub writer, and a series of adventure tales under the overall title "The Puncher Pals" by one, Charles Wentworth, whoever he was.

But the supporting programme means little to most of us. It's the main dishes that count. And the main dishes - these early Gem stories - are first-chop. Another heart-warming volume of nostalgic treasures.

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

November 1983

The attendance was again disappointing with only nine members present. It was nice to see Win Brown after a long absence.

Our usual items were on show - the Anniversary Number was Nelson Lee Library No. 234 (o/s) "The Siege of the West Wing", part of the series about Howard Martin, the tyrant Head, in 1919. It was reprinted in the Monster Library and Howard Baker produced a facsimile of it. Collectors' Items, displayed by Tom Porter, were some S.O.L.'s and B.F.L.'s and a long forgotten paper "Boys' Favourite Library" No. 1 - "The Railway Rovers" by E. Home-Gall.

Joan Golen and Vince Loveday provided the eatables. Liquid tea or coffee was paid for by the writer of these notes, as he had promised last month.

The club is passing through a difficult time with newsletter problems. Geoff Lardner produced one newsletter by computer, but this month it broke. He was able to get a spare part so the October newsletter was produced.

There were four rounds of the game "Take a Letter" and Geoff Lardner won them all. He also broke the code in an intriguing game.

Time flew and 9.30 was upon us, so, as in Macbeth, we stood not upon the order of going but went at once.

A Happy New Year to all members of the O.B.B.C.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

CAMBRIDGE O.B.B.C.

A small but cheerful gathering met at the home of Edward

Witton on 4th December, for the Christmas meeting of the Club.

The Chairman drew attention to the showing at 3.15 of the Laurel and Hardy film "A Chump at Oxford", and it was unanimously agreed to commence proceedings by watching this. Much added amusement was provided by a more or less running commentary by Edward. After the film we broke for tea. In the interval of serving this Edward ran a quiz, mainly on pantomimes, the result of which was like that at the caucus race in Alice in Wonderland.

Bill Thurbon read a paper on Red Indian and Western tales, illustrated with books ranging from the old Dime Novels to Clarence Mulford and Zane Grey. Tony Cowley played Neville Wood's ghost story taped for a Christmas meeting in the 1970's. Keith Hodgkinson read an item from a 1903 "Pearson's Magazine", giving opinions of Christmas from people like H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. Vic Hearn followed with a highwayman Christmas story from the Puck Annual of 1939.

Roy Whiskin recalled the birth of his daughter, a premature baby, and the wonderful experience of finding that she had been taken from the incubator for the first time on Christmas morning. Jack Overhill then, in his own inimitable way, told a true story of Christmas from the time when he was a young boy. Jack has a wonderful sense of recall, and, as ever, entranced his listeners.

Edward recalled a Christmas Eve dash for a doctor, when his mother was accidentally poisoned, which saved her life. Bill Thurbon recalled how, during the war, he was part of the black-out patrol on four war-time Christmas nights. Tony Cowley remembered Christmas 1951, when he was living at Walton-on-Naze, and his mother decided to recarpet the house.

The meeting broke up about 7 with cheery exchanges of Christmas greetings, and thanks to Edward for his hospitality.

LONDON

There were 36 present at the 36th Christmas meeting which was held at the home of Bill and Thelma Bradford. The Yuletide spirit of good-will was greatly in evidence.

Bill Lofts gave an excellent talk on the Gwyn Evans' Christmas stories in the Union Jack and to round this item off, Josie Packman read a chapter from the Gwyn Evans' story "Guns is Guns" which featured Ruff Hanson.

Roger Jenkins' reading was from Magnet 776 entitled "The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers".

Tommy Keen's reading was from the 1921 Christmas number of the Schoolgirls' Own and which featured festivities at Linton Hall and was entitled "One Xmas Night".

Roy Parsons exhibited the November 16th issue of Punch that contained a posthumous story about William, the author being E. S. Turner of "Boys Will Be Boys" fame. Eric Lawrence was the winner of Roy Parsons' Magnet quotations quiz and also the joint winner with Roger Jenkins of Roy's Anagram quiz.

Mary Cadogan exhibited the Dictionary of British Illustrators and this contained some of the famous old boys' books artists.

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Bill and Thelma for their lavish hospitality.

Walthamstow, Sunday, 8th January, 1984, is the venue for the next meeting.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 10th December, 1983

We had thirteen present for our Christmas Party - the first one held in our new accommodation.

The games played were not energetic, but provided plenty of fun. One of the most amusing and interesting, was one of Jack Allison's original offerings. He had devised a game based on snooker. A red "ball" could be potted by answering correctly, a hobby related question, and the colours could be potted by answering a question in a group pertaining to that colour in question. The game took almost one hour to play. The team captained by Geoffrey Good won the "frame" - only just though. The group led by Harry Barlow were good losers.

Keith Atkinson, is getting quite a dab-hand at acrostics and other puzzles (he has a puzzle in the latest C.D. Annual) and had recently had a puzzle published in a national magazine.

Plenty of time was available for chat - and we were pleased to welcome three visitors to us that evening. The food was superb - as it always is - and so it was a very happy crowd that departed for home after a meeting that had lasted for five hours. However, we could not leave until we had heard one of the superb Magnet readings from Geoffrey Good. To conclude, Geoffrey gave his best wishes on behalf of the Club to all Members for Christmas and the New Year. All Members of the Northern Club reiterate

those sentiments, to all readers of the Collectors' Digest.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

The Postman Called

(Interesting items from the Editor's letter-bag

E. GRANT-McPHERSON (Wells): I read with much interest Mr. Godsave's Lee article, and found it good. But he did not do his homework properly. He stated that a map of the St. Frank's countryside was promised but never appeared. He is wrong. A countryside map appeared in o/s No. 294. As a matter of interest it was reprinted in Bob Blythe's excellent guide to the Nelson Lee Library. Also, a map of St. Frank's College appeared in o/s No. 537.

BEN WHITER (London): Peter Hanger was correct about R.A.F. Squadron being stationed at Manston, Kent, during the 1930's as that was the period that I was employed at Ye Olde Charles Inn, Cliftonville, where all the officers used to meet in the lounge. I knew most of them and my boss, an old Flying Corps Officer, used to change their cheques, a job I had to undertake when he was not present. The other squadron at Manston in those far off days was 400 Bomber Squadron. These two units must have been what Frank Richards heard flying over in practice.

Squadron Two had the Hereward the Wake rope on their crest.

MISS JUNE ARDEN (Leeds): I still enjoy the C.D. tremendously. My heart still goes out to Greyfriars and those joyous days when I opened the door of the Newsagent, and literally smelled those glorious papers, all arranged so neatly on the counter.

CHAS. VAN RENEN (South Africa): Another year of delightful nostalgia just ending in C.D. Isn't it strange how one's thoughts tend to revert more and more to the past as one approaches the sere and yellow leaf!

TOM PORTER (Cradley Heath): The year 1983 draws inexorably towards its close, but SPCD continues on its triumphant progress. I read the most recent issue (as always with SPCD) with the keenest enjoyment. It is full of variety - sufficient at any rate for me - to satisfy a width of very differing interests. Sometimes I hear comments like "I wish there were more of so-and-so and less of such-and-such. In fact Eric could cut out altogether pages

so-and-so and put in more of such-and-such". I am afraid, if you did, circulation of SPCD would soon dip, and that would never do. Best leave it to the Editor who appears to me always to be impartial and well-balanced in his judgments.

NORMAN KADISH (Edgware): I take the opportunity to tell other hobbyists how E.B.B.'s descriptions in his South Sea Islands adventures (529 - 536) have intrigued my imagination. Especially is that so in his description of the pre-state of nature before the oncoming of the tornado - the menacing silence. I have been reading the Magnet and Gem in portions weekly, yet E.S.B.'s well-handled language can still set an old codger like myself on the suppressed fire of anticipation. The sort of thing a boy loves. I value both authors for their individual genius in writing for juveniles, but I still think Brooks is under-estimated. The reason may be that his stories are often fantastic and escapist. The British often don't like hyperbole in any shape or form, - but how well the author handles it.

DONALD LANG (Glasgow): Part of Christmas for me nowadays is Collectors' Digest, ever since I was fortunate enough to be made aware of our magazine's existence.

BARRIE STARK (Lewes): A while ago you mentioned in C.D. the classic school yarn, The Fifth Form of St. Dominics, and I am happy to say that I have been able to obtain a new copy this year, from someone reducing his stock of books. The book is of modern printing, but, regrettably, is not illustrated inside the book, the only one being on the D.J., so this rather detracts from its "antique" value as it were. Nevertheless I have found it to be an interesting and enjoyable read, not only for its general good standard but also because of the comparison between the Social and Welfare standards, then and now.

When I was a lad - no I didn't polish up the handle of the big brass door - I used to look forward very much to the run-up to Christmas comics, especially the ones specially decorated for Christmas. My favourite characters Weary Willie and Tired Tim usually had an adventure in a haunted castle, and however much the ghosts, the villains, the secret doors and passages tried their very best to scare off our friends, they always ended up safe, jolly and in front of a big meal. You could say that "there was grub everywhere!"

So too, with the Magnet - the best of Christmas stories have

plenty of food in them, which William George does his best to devour much to my present day wonderment and practical view of such gastronomical "goings-on".

JACK MURTAGH (New Zealand): The C.D. is always a welcome guest in our house, and is read from cover to cover as soon as it arrives. The C.D. has been part of my life for nearly 40 years. I don't know how I would ever do without it, so here's hoping that you and me and the C.D. will carry on for many years yet, even though we are all getting older. I'm sure it's our interests and our hobby that keeps us fit and well as old age approaches or is already here, though we are still young in heart.

'MARJORIE STANTON'

by W. O. G. Lofts

'Marjorie Stanton' - otherwise Horace Phillips his real name, died on his farm near Lyme Regis, Dorset in 1972. Born at Camberwell, London, in 1881 this made him 91 years of age. So he deservedly lived a full life after giving many generations of girl readers so much pleasure with his tales of Morcove School, which started in 'The Schoolgirls' Own' in 1921 and had a run of over 17 years.

In early 1961, I was in contact with his son Derek - who worked in the girls' paper departments, and put me in touch with his father - then living in retirement in the deep of the country on an isolated farm.

It has been a great treat I assure you, to hear from someone so expert on the characters of Fleetway House, and especially my school of Morcove. For you to write after all these years, to say that the stories gave so much pleasure, is really more than I deserve. It speaks of a great deal of kindness, and good-will on your part for which I thank you.

Yours sincerely,

'Marjorie Stanton' (Horace Phillips)

We exchanged a number of letters after my initial screed, when he even answered a questionnaire I had sent him about his long career in the juvenile fiction field. Some information was published at the time in 1961 Collectors' Digests - though not all, as well as it being against his wishes, some facts may have upset Charles Hamilton who was also alive at that time. After editing *The Scout*; *Cheer Boys Cheer*; *Boys' Journal*; in the early

days, he was suddenly asked to help solve a crisis. For reasons now well known Charles Hamilton as 'Hilda Richards' had ceased to pen the Bessie Bunter tales in the new SchoolFriend. He was asked to study the previous stories, and try and imitate them to his familiar style. He found this almost impossible as his style was serious in tone - in a way like John Nix Pentelow War-time editor of The Magnet and Gem. He would have much rather created his own school being a creative writer - and made no secret of the fact. His chance came after a year or so when Schoolgirls' Own started in 1921, that commenced the brilliant run of Morcove stories. Determined not to have the same unhappy experience of Charles Hamilton and Bessie Bunter, he insisted in retaining the copyright. Possibly here is the answer why Morcove was never revived after the Second World War like Bessie Bunter and Cliff House, mainly in picture strip form. Morcove was situated in the West Country a place he always loved, and where he was to spend the rest of his days. Horace Phillips had known Leonard Shields the artist for some thirty years, and thought him the ideal man to illustrate his stories - especially Betty Barton with her Northern flavour.

In real life Horace Phillips was an extremely serious person, so much so that he was nicknamed by the Fleetway staff and contributors as the Rev. Phillips - a name really unfair to the jolly clerical friends I have met through the years. His style was very Victorian in tone, but gripping to the reader where emotion was involved. Curiously when I was small in the middle thirties I knew a girl named Betty Barton - the sister of a friend of mine at school. She looked somehow like the Morcove Betty - and indeed wished she could attend such a fine school as the one in The Schoolgirls' Own, as she read the stories avidly of and about her namesake. I wanted to attend Greyfriars of course.

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE AFTERNOON

by Vic Giles

As we all know, Christmas is traditionally associated with ghostly goings on. So, perhaps, it was the approach of this otherwise joyful season that sent my mind back to a somewhat hair-raising experience of long ago - and a certain issue of the Boys' Friend Library.

"Chums of the Stables" was the title, published around 1931 or '32. Of it, I remember little, save one incident, and my

recollection even of that is vague as to detail. It was what happened at the moment of reading that incident that sticks vividly in my memory.

I was about eight years old, and alone in a room of my home in Plaistow, London, reading in the fading light of an autumn afternoon. The plot had reached a point at which a group of people assemble for a meeting in the hall of what may have been the local "haunted house", but they are unaware that someone is climbing down the chimney!

Suddenly, he in the aforesaid chimney gives three knocks, to the consternation of one and all - including me! For almost to the second I heard two firm taps apparently coming from a nearby wall. A pause ... then a third!

I sat frozen in my chair, waiting in horrid suspense! A long minute passed - but nothing happened. Plucking up courage, I tip-toed, book in hand, to the door. Gingerly opening it, I craned forward s-l-o-w-l-y, and warily looked the length of the passage outside. As far as I could see it presented its usual aspect. No phantom figure lurked, ready to spring!

Thankfully, I hurried into a room further along the passage where my mother was quietly knitting, blissfully ignorant of the unease being experienced by her young hopeful! I can't recall saying anything, but dropped on to the sofa, and went on with my reading. However, the door of the room wasn't quite shut, and I remember very well that I read with half-an-eye cocked in that direction. It wasn't so much that I expected a ghostly intruder, I think, but that my imagination was at work on the possibilities! I was only eight after all, and very ready to believe in spirits and apparitions! and I'd recently read, "Lucky for Parkinson"!

Now that is all there is to tell. There was no further "manifestation". A fearless investigator would have read the story again, to check the possibility of a reoccurrence of that odd happening. I'm sorry I didn't, but I wasn't a fearless investigator!

In retrospect, it seems unlikely that any wandering spirit was abroad. If so, it kept remarkably quiet ever after. Even so, assuming those mysterious taps to have had some boringly mundane origin, it remains a strange coincidence, I think you'll agree, that they should have occurred at that particular moment. One doesn't expect an event in a story to suddenly jump off the printed page and become a fact!

Does anyone, I wonder, possess a copy of "Chums of the Stables" that I can buy or borrow? It would be intriguing to read it again. Rational thought notwithstanding, and fifty-odd years on, I fancy that coming to a certain point in the tale my heart would start to beat a little faster, and the suspicion of a chill start to edge down my spine!

YULE-LOG ECHOES

from Irene Radford

C.D. seems to get better every year. I especially enjoyed reading "Round the Yule Log" which brought back happy memories of a Christmas a long time ago. It was the Christmas of 1935. I had recently started taking the Magnet and that Christmas although at the age of 13 years old I had to have mostly clothes for presents, my Mum and Dad had bought me a Holiday Annual for a surprise. I think I was more thrilled with that than many of the children of today will be when they get videos, stereos or portable T.V.'s for Christmas. I still remember very clearly that Christmas afternoon sitting by a lovely big fire happily with my book. I still have that Holiday Annual forty-eight years later, rather battered now but still treasured.

I also remember another Christmas, many years later, when with my husband and children we spent Christmas with my husband's parents at a little village called Bishops Cleeve near Cheltenham. My father-in-law was the village baker and he too roasted turkeys in the big ovens on Christmas Day for his customers, not to mention the huge turkey which was roasting for our dinner. The big home-made Xmas pudding was lovely and the children were delighted when grandad poured brandy over it and set it alight - happy days.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Early Magnets, Gems, Holiday Annuals, The Story Paper Collector, etc. WANTED: Comics, Rookwood, B.F.L.'s, S.B.L.'s.

Marriott, 27 Greenview Drive, Northampton. Tel Northampton (0604) 711874.

Duplicate "Nelson Lees", Old and New Series. Also few duplicate "Union Jacks". Offers, or would exchange for "S.B.L." pre 1942. Stamp appreciated.

K. TOWNSEND, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE6 6EA.

THE HOUSE THAT
NORMAN BUILT

50 years ago, in January, 1934, the attached picture appeared in Modern Boy, and the editor commented "Well, done, Norman". Could it possibly have been our own Norman?

Well, we don't know whether our Norman ever built a church in matchsticks, like the one in the picture, but we do know that he has built an Aladdin's Cave where one can find all sorts of treasures, and, above all, a helpful friendliness which gleams like a magic candle in the hobby.

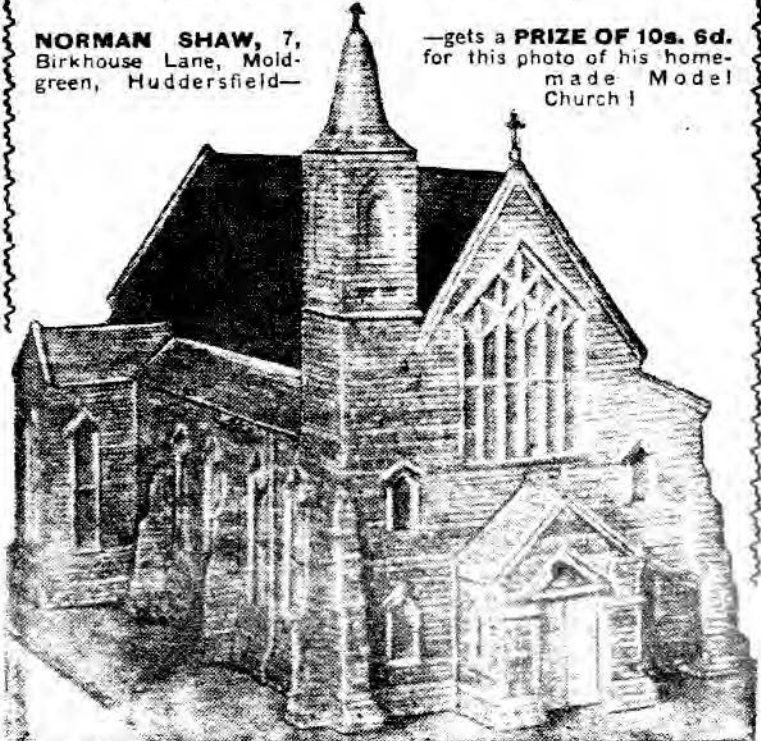
But there is something else, even more important. In the early years of the hobby the very name "book dealer" had an unpleasant smell about it, owing to the activities of a few petty crooks who, with their glib lies and underhand practices, never lost the chance of swindling an inexperienced and, perhaps, gullible collector.

Norman Shaw changed all that. With his vast Aladdin's Cave and his well-earned reputation for fair dealing, he brought respectability to book-dealing. We owe him much for that, for it put paid to the shoddy rogues.

The HOUSE THAT NORMAN BUILT!

NORMAN SHAW, 7,
Birkhouse Lane, Mold-
green, Huddersfield—

—gets a **PRIZE OF 10s. 6d.**
for this photo of his home-
made Model
Church!



MADE entirely of matchsticks, this model church, made by a **MODERN BOY** reader, is twelve inches long, seven inches high to the apex of the roof, and twelve inches to the top of the tower. It took ten months to make, and there are four thousand match-sticks in it, held together by nine tubes of glue. The matchsticks are cut to resemble bricks and tiles, and are built up layer by layer, no framework being used. The doors open and close and the tower is a money-box, threepenny bits placed in the slit in the top sliding down a chute to the porch. Well done, Norman!

So, 50 years on, Collectors' Digest is happy to pay its tribute, and echo that comment of all that long time ago. We say, with full sincerity: "Well done, Norman!"

SILVER SCREEN REMEMBRANCES

by Ernest Holman

Danny's Diary and the History of a Small Cinema in C.D. have presented many screen names of the past. Inside the last twelve months, seven well-known celebrities of such days have passed away.

David Niven made over eighty films and gave many splendid performances, too many to instance but a few here. He appeared in Pink Panther offerings; hobbyists will recall that he was also Bertie Wooster in the 1930's; and he played von Tarlenheim in 'Prisoner of Zenda'. Perhaps his appearance in a very long film, featuring so many past stars, is mostly remembered; he showed the exact touches required as the precise Phineas Fogg travelling the Globe in eighty days. David also made the best-selling book lists - and it was typical that his last gesture was a 'thumbs up' sign.

That fine Canadian actor, Raymond Massey, died at the same time as Niven. He had acted continuously since appearing on the English stage in 1922. When he moved over to the movies, he was one of the first in talking pictures to assume the character of Sherlock Holmes, in 'Speckled Band'. Amongst other roles, he was in futuristic dress in 'Things to Come', wore a Karloff make-up in 'Arsenic and Old Lace' and was also with Niven in 'Zenda', when he played the sinister Black Michael. In later years, he became prominent on the small screen as Dr. Gillespie in the Kildare episodes.

Norma Shearer was 82 when, after many years of illness, she died in Hollywood. She was one who made a successful transition from silents to talkies. Norma was a top star in the MGM firmament and appeared with many actors and actresses of note. Three special memories of her are the emotional 'Smilin' Through', the tragic Juliet and a great achievement in holding her own with Laughton in 'The Barretts of Wimpole Street'.

Another actress who made the change from silent films was Gloria Swanson. She first appeared in 1915, 'retired' in 1928, and then returned in some talking films. She was not too well served in that era, being always remembered as the great star of the early cinema. In 1951, however, she became Norma Desmond,

a faded silent film Queen, in 'Sunset Boulevard' - a role that will be recalled for many a year. One of the most famous of film endings must be her walk down the staircase, in that film.

Buster Crabbe is a name more recently in mind, because of the showing on television of some of his early films. His parts had included Tarzan, Billy the Kid, Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. He was still swimming and making occasional appearances on both small and large screen at the time of his death, aged 72.

The Mexican Beauty is a description that well suited the attractive Dolores Del Rio. Some of her early films introduced long-lasting song hits (Charmaine and Ramona). She was the star of 'Flying Down to Rio', in which two supporting players named Astaire and Rogers appeared together for the first time. Many will remember her native dance, clad in grass skirt and garland, in 'Bird of Paradise'.

George Cukor was the director of many noted films. He made an early study of the film world in 'What Price Hollywood?'; he was engaged to direct Chevalier and MacDonald in 'One Hour With You' - and did so, with supervising director Ernst Lubitsch breathing down his neck the whole time! He was to have directed 'Meet Me in St. Louis' but went into the Army instead. After the war, amongst others he was responsible for 'A Star Is Born' and 'My Fair Lady'.

All seven are gone now, within a short space of time - entitled to an epitaph each would have liked: Remembered with Pleasure!

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FOR SALE: Gems 1557 - 1624 mint £1 each. Rangers: small 35 numbers between 2 - 125. New series: 87 between 3 - 111 majority mint: 50p each. St. Frank's: old series: 176, 177, 263, 312, 314, 329, 331, 335, 352, 355, 475 mint. Nugget No. 35. Schoolboys' Lib. No. 1. S.O.L. 56, 306 321, 336, 393, 402, 408, 411 mint. Boys' Friend Lib: 1st 709. 2nd 441, 447, 451. All £1 each. Fun and Fiction (1911-12) Vol. 1, 3 - 25; Vol 2, 1 - 13; 15 - 20 (mint) £1 each.

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THE EDITOR WISHES HIS READERS, THE WORLD OVER, A HAPPY AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.