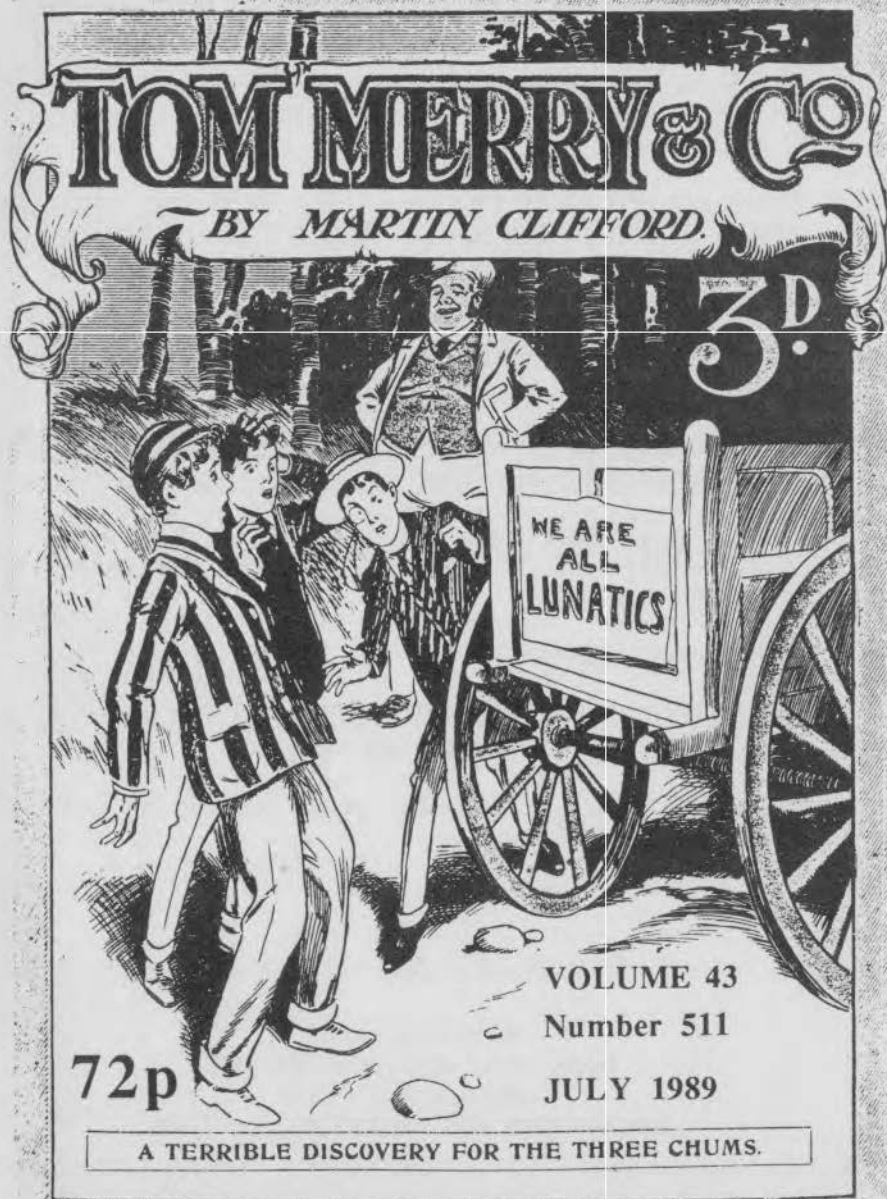


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VOLUME 43

Number 511

JULY 1989

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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FICTION AND HISTORY

It may seem a far cry from old boys' books, but the French Revolution, whose bicentenary is marked this month, was of course featured in several of the adventure stories which many of us enjoyed in pre-war papers and magazines. Watching the recent TV adaptation of Charles Dickens's *A TALE OF TWO CITIES*, in which one self-sacrificing Englishman, Sydney Carton, cheats Mam'zelle Guillotine of her anticipated prey, I was inspired to look again at a book which has been a favourite of mine ever since my childhood. This is Baroness Orczy's resiliently exciting and romantic saga of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, in which another intrepid Englishman, Sir Percy Blakeney, outwits the revolutionary mob and deprives the executioner of victims, times without number.

C.D. reader Mrs. Beryll Cholmondely, of Yetminster, Dorset recently wrote to me about the possible connection of fiction and fact in the *Scarlet Pimpernel's* adventures. She comments that although Baroness Orczy claims in her 1947 autobiography *Links in the Chain of Life* to have created this 'demmed elusive' and remarkably attractive character, suggestions have been made that her books 'merely fictionalised a legend which had been floating round in England for nearly a century' that such an Englishman, with a league of dedicated helpers, really did exist.

Baroness Orczy first brought Sir Percy to life in the play *The Scarlet Pimpernel* which she co-authored with her husband, Montagu Barstow, in 1903 (before she embarked upon the series of *Pimpernel* novels). There have been rumours that one of her husband's ancestors, John Barstow, was

involved with the original league of rescuers. I wonder if any C.D. readers can shed further light on this subject:

Re-reading The Scarlet Pimpernel for the umpteenth time, I still respond to Sir Percy's charisma, and to the sharp mind and great courage concealed beneath the foppish manner (surely a pattern for many popular fictional heroes who were to follow). The stories are intensely atmospheric, with their vivid contrasts between the rabble-ridden, blood-running and squalid streets of revolutionary Paris and the glittering splendours of the court of King George III in England. Sir Percy Blakeney seems to have been equally at home in both, ringing the changes from appearing at London balls and supper-parties as one of the Prince of Wales's favourite cronies, to disguising himself as a 'loathsome-looking' old tradesman, or some smelly market-hag or fisherman in order to whisk innocent potential victims away from the fury of the French mob.

It is not surprising that this appealing story has been the subject of stage, film, radio and TV dramatizations. I believe that Fred Terry originated the part of the Scarlet Pimpernel in its first stage production at Nottingham in 1903. I never saw his portrayal (Baroness Orczy claimed that he was the best exponent of her beloved aristocratic creation), but I was thrilled by Leslie Howard's interpretation of the role in the 1930s' Alexander Korda film. (I also thought that Anthony Andrews did a splendid job with the part in the fairly recent TV production.)

Several of the books in the series are still in print, including one in a children's classics series. Also the saga has recently been the inspiration for 2 or 3 novels by C.G. Clayton which are not so much send-ups as 'black' versions in which (if I remember correctly) the theory is propounded that the Scarlet Pimpernel was really a woman! Oh dear - where does that leave his beautiful wife (shades of the magnificent Merle Oberon!), Marguerite St. Just, the French actress of such great accomplishment and charm.

I'll stick to the Leslie Howard image and Emmuska Orczy's heroic creation.

MARY CADOGAN

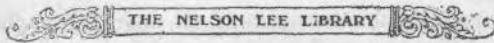
The
**SCARLET
PIMPERNEL**
**BARONESS
ORCZY**





THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCOUTING.

By Jack Greaves



The SCOUTS of ST FRANKS

or,

THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!

Although the modern Boy-Scout's uniform has been used for quite a number of years now, I'm sure most C.D. readers will associate this movement with the days when scouts had the large hat as worn by its founder, Lord Baden Powell. The illustration above typifies the era, and although modern scouting still appears to be a very worthwhile hobby, particularly in these times of violence and soccer hooliganism, etc. I still cannot get used to the modern style of dress. This is particularly noticeable after reading E.S. Brooks' excellent Scouting series in the old series of 1925 under the following titles: 523 The Scouts of St. Frank's, 524 The Tiger Patrol, 525 The Spectre of the Sea, 526 The Lost Patrol, 527 The Lighthouse Scouts, 528 Saved from the Sea.

Prior to this series, however, the first instance when Scouts were mentioned was in O/S 235, VICTORY FOR THE REBELS. In this story Jim Blundle plays an important part.

Jim was the senior boy of the Bannington Council School, described as a good natured hulking sort of a fellow with red-hair and ample features. He was also the leader of the Bannington Scout Movement and he and his members numbering about 200, were on parade, passing St. Frank's School during a visit by the Chairman of the school governors, General Ord Clayton. His visit was in relation to the barring out revolt by the ancient House Remove Form against the tyranny of the new headmaster Howard Martin. The general managed to obtain the help of the scouts, who were able

to break down the barricades which the Remove had placed in the West wing of the Ancient House. The scouts, however, had been given false information regarding the reason for the revolt, but when Nipper explained fully the scouts decided to leave and the barricades were replaced, and the revolt continued.

Referring once again to O/S 523-528, just before the Whitsuntide holiday there had been an unprecedented disaster at St. Frank's. A mighty explosion had occurred down in the disused quarry workings near the School.

The effect had been so shattering that the modern House had entirely collapsed, and was now a heap of ruins. Over half the School had been wrecked. The greater part of the Ancient House remained standing and the Headmaster decided to transfer all the seniors to this house, and all the juniors of both houses to other schools while repairs were carried out to the modern House.

The juniors were not looking forward to this arrangement, so, mainly through the influence of Nelson Lee, 3 Troops of Scouts were formed to go under canvas on the peaceful downs some little way beyond Shingle Head Lighthouse where this part of the coast was quiet and uninhabited. No. 1 Troop was in charge of Nelson Lee, and consisted of 7 patrols from the Ancient House (Fourth form). 1. The Lions, 2. The Hawks, 3. The Tigers, 4. The Bears, 5. The Curlews, 6. The Foxes, 7. The Eagles. No. 2 Troop was led by Barry Stokes and was made up of 6 patrols from the Modern House Fourth Form. 1. The Wolves, 2. The Buffaloes, 3. The Beavers, 4. The Rhinos, 5. The Otters, 6. The Elephants.

Finally came the Third Form under the heading of the 3rd Troop, led by Harold Clifford, which had 5 patrols. 1. The Panthers, 2. The Rams, 3. The Badgers, 4. The Owls, 5. The Ravens.

This series proved to be quite an entertaining group of stories on what must have been in 1925 a very popular theme, as there were lots of the Nelson Lee readers who were boy-scouts themselves.

Even now, many years later, this series can be read with great pleasure, with nostalgic memories of the old days of scouting and of course the "OLD" uniform.

Happy Reading!

HOLIDAY ANNUAL HOSPITAL: Wanted, Holiday Annuals in both good and poor condition. Incomplete copies required for spare part surgery. Early editions of this Annual are now O.A.P.s and, like some of us, need a little help! A good home assured. Also vacancies for Magnets, Bunter Books, etc. Contact COLIN CREWE, 12B Westwood Road, Canvey Island, Essex.



DID THEY WRITE OF SEXTON BLAKE? - Part Two
by W.O.G. Lofts

Arthur Kent was a writer of the 'New Look' Sexton Blake Library. A big man, he was unfortunately handicapped by being born with only one arm. On a visit to his home once at West Hampstead I was amazed how quickly he could type with one hand. His full-time occupation was as a reporter on The Daily Express - almost opposite the Codgers Public House where I used to meet so many authors, editors and artists through the years. One day Arthur told me that a colleague on the newspaper by the name of E.S. Brooks had revealed to him that he had written a few Sexton Blake 4d Libraries in the thirties. At first I was astonished to say the least that the creator of St. Frank's was still working, but it turned out eventually that it was another author with the same initials but with an 'e' in the surname. Ewart Stanley Brookes, to give him his name in full had won some fame with his novels about the sea, and especially the Merchant Navy.

When I phoned him about these stories, he confirmed that he had written several, and remembered the magazine, because the editor had originally given him a copy as some sort of guidance on the style and portrayal of Blake required. He could not recall the titles, so yet again one can find no trace of them - as in the case of Horace Phillips. It could be that they were rewritten by another writer, whose name appeared on the cover, but we will never solve this mystery now.

Whilst on the subject of the surname Brooks, it is worth repeating the astonishing story of our famous Edwy Searles Brooks and his brother Leonard Harold Brooks. In the twenties especially, Edwy, on delivering manuscripts to Fleetway House to either the editor of The Union Jack or Sexton Blake Library, used to produce a story which he said had been written by his brother Leonard. Both Twyman and Pratt, editors respectively of the publications involved, knew full well by the excellent style that Edwy had written them, but as he was such a star author they just let it stand, and paid for the stories to Leonard.

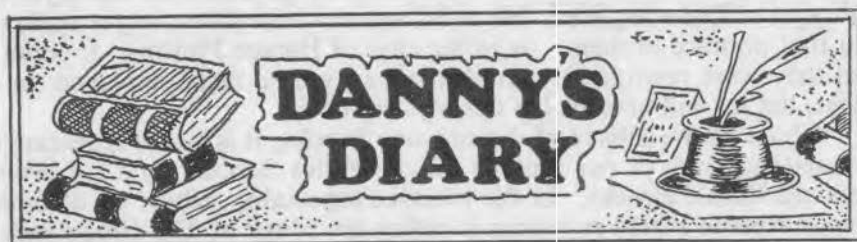
Many years later when I met the late Mrs. Frances Brooks, she told me that Edwy had indeed written all the stories, to help his poor brother who was always in financial difficulties, and who met a tragic end in 1950. The late Bob Blyth in his excellent Nelson Lee Catalogue decided quite rightly

that all the Leonard H. Brooks stories should be credited as having been written by Edwy.

Warwick Reynolds was, according to editors, and a number of artists I have met (including Eric Parker), probably the most talented artist the old Amalgamated Press ever had, being held in esteem like the great Tom Browne. His work should not be judged on drawing Tom Merry & Co. in The Gem during the War years but in the glossy magazines where his animal drawings were superb. When I was able to study the official records of The Sexton Blake Library, and especially to see who had written the many anonymous tales before 1930 with no set characters, I was astonished, to say the least, to find that the fee for No. 316 "The Mawpeth Millions" (First Series) dated January 1924 had been paid to Warwick Reynolds!

Indeed, I was so surprised that I made a double check, and there was no doubt that Warwick Reynolds was credited with writing the story. I must confess that it was a 'run-of-the-mill' tale featuring an Inspector Melville. Certainly this was the first and only time that I have seen him named for the written word. His art work was in such great demand, with very high rates, that there was no need at all for him to supplement his income in this fashion, unless he had written the story for a bit of fun, or a friend had written it. Warwick Reynolds certainly knew Len Pratt who in his early days was an editor on some groups of papers he was illustrating.

Warwick's father of the same name, the Victorian artist, was also a writer of many stories including a novel which he illustrated, so it may be doing Warwick junior an injustice to say he could not have written a detective story.



JULY 1939

It has been just a slightly disappointing month in the Fourpenny Libraries, though there have been some excellent patches. The Greyfriars story in the Schoolboys' Own Library is "The Greyfriars Hikers", and that is fine. The first half of the book is set at the school in term-time. A smash-and-grab raider had done his job on some valuable jewellery at a shop in Courtfield; he hides the loot; and the secret of the hiding place is

put into a Holiday Annual owned by Bob Cherry. And Ponsonby of Highcliffe is after getting hold of that Annual, and so are a couple of other individuals. Then, in the second half of the book, the chums, with Bunter, start off on a Holiday hike in England, which is very warming to the heart. And the party is trailed by the criminals, and Pon, anxious to get hold of that mysterious Holiday Annual.

The second S.O.L. was a waste of money for me, really. It is "The School Squadron" by someone called Eric Roche, and it is about Selborough School where a school flying-corps is formed. I don't know where this one came from originally, but I feel sure it wasn't Modern Boy. The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "The Schoolboy Crusoes". The St. Frank's chums are on holiday, and they get shipwrecked in a hurricane and cast up on a desert isle in the Pacific. Lovely for those who like adventure tales.

There was nothing this month to attract me in the B.F.L., but I had a Sexton Blake Library "The Tour of Terror" by Mark Osbourne - a tec tale set in the Lake District - which was pretty good.


The Country is getting very conscious about DEFENCE, for the dictators in Europe are still ranting and raving, and one wonders what they will do next. All over Britain people are giving or lending money for a hasty re-armament. Lord Rothermere has given £50,000 towards the cost of it all.

In the book world a new writer has come on the scene. His name is Richard Llewellyn, and everybody is raving over his first novel which is entitled "How Green Was My Valley!" Dad has brought it for Mum, and she is digging into it and loving it.

Each week Modern Boy has a variety of stories, mainly adventure tales, and there are plenty of interesting articles which appeal to the more intelligent readers. (I'm not one of them.) For me, the best tales are those of Captain Justice, and this new series is about Kolensky, who is trying to bring down Britain and the British Empire with a crash. This month's Justice tales are "The Wolf of Kabul"; "Three in a Trap"; "Invisible Fog" which was Professor Flaznagel's latest invention, only it falls into enemy hands; "North Sea Raid", with the British fleet finding itself in a field of mines laid by Kolensky; "Black-Out" with even Justice taken by surprise by Kolensky. This continues next month.

The Magnet has been gorgeous this month, carrying on with the long series about the Bounder's double. In the month's first tale, "The Prisoner of the Turret", one of the Bounder's foul tricks recoils upon himself, and he finds himself a prisoner at Lantham Chase, the home of Bertie Vernon's uncle. Next comes a thrilling tale "A Double in Trouble". Captain Vernon has withdrawn his nephew from Greyfriars, but

This Story Will Grip You - Too!



THE SCHOOLBOY CRUSOES!

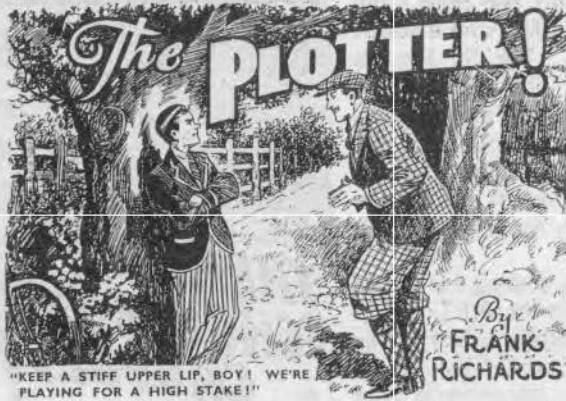
No. 378 of **SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY**

Shipwrecked in a hurricane and cast away on a desert isle in the Pacific! The grand holiday cruise of the chums of St. Frank's has a disastrous end. But are the schoolboy Crusoes down-hearted? No! Read all about their thrilling adventures at sea and on the lonely island. There's not a dull moment in this great yarn.

actually Bertie is there, pretending to be the Bounder, the son of the millionaire. And somehow Redwing doesn't seem to like his old pal so much as he used to.

The theme is carried on in "The Greyfriars Imposter". The poor distant relation has become the millionaire's heir. Next, the nerve-tickling title, "The House of Dark Secrets". And now both the real Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing are prisoners in that turret room at Lantham Chase. Final of the month is "The Plotter". "Keep a stiff upper lip, my boy," says the rascal, Captain Vernon, to his worried nephew who is pretending to be Vernon-Smith, "we're playing for high stakes." This grand and long series carries on next month.

GREAT GREYFRIARS YARN STARRING HARRY WHARTON & Co. and
introducing—



This has been one of those months when there have been 5 issues of all the papers. It happens like that, now and then. For as long as I can remember, for all my life - and I am quite sure for all their lives, too - the chapters of the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories have always been numbered. Now, with the 4th issue of the month in both the Magnet and the Gem, they have stopped numbering the chapters - and I suppose they will go on like this from now on. They still give a sub-title to head each chapter, but no longer are they numbered. I suppose, in a way, it's a small thing, yet it makes me sad after all the years. Why on earth has it been done? There seems no reason, except for the sake of making a change for no reason at all. It is almost as bad as if the mint ever went mad and stopped issuing half-crowns and tanners!

Some good flicks at the pics this month, as Doug says. "Topper Takes a Trip" is a cheerful ghost story, starring Constance Bennett, Roland Young, and Billie Burke. Another pleasant little affair was Jessie Matthews in "Climbing High."

Mum enjoyed "A Stolen Life" starring Elisabeth Bergner, a British film, but it was rather hard-going for me. A man's wife changed identities with her dead twin sister.

But I loved a simply terrific British film in technicolour, "The Four Feathers" about the war in the Sudan in late Victorian times. Ralph Richardson was in this one, plus the grand C. Aubrey Smith. And another truly lovely one, American this time, in technicolour, was "Sweethearts" starring Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy, full of splendid songs and a good story.

Yes, a great month in the local cinemas.

St. Jim's has been tip-top all the month. The first 4 tales deal with the business about the secret passage which Figgins & Co. had discovered, giving them a way into the School House so that they could play all sorts of jokes on the School House chaps. In "Gussy on the Warpath" Gussy tried to cope with the matter, and came a cropper. Plenty of good cricket stuff in this one. Next tale is "Grundy Gets Going", and now it is Grundy taking a hand - and he, too, comes a cropper..

Then "The Man in the Night", and a tramp named Nosey Panks sees Figgins & Co. slipping into the secret passage - it goes from the crypt under the old tower - and so Nosey starts his own raiding, and it causes complications. Finally "Figgy's Last Raid" which brought the series to a close, and it is with this tale that they dropped the numbering of the chapters. I have greatly enjoyed this novel series.

The month ends with the start of what is obviously going to be a travel series. I enjoy them, but a bit woefully I think there are just a few too many of these adventure tales. The opening story is "The Man from Brazil." Lord Conway, who is out in Brazil, has disappeared, and Gussy receives a strange letter from him. It just says: "Do you remember a trick I showed you last Christmas? I hope you do. Keep this letter." And that was all. Gussy was amazed to get such a weird letter from his brother. And a sinister man named Rabeira comes on the scene. At the end of the tale Tom Merry & Co. set sail for Brazil, aboard the Blue Star, to look for Lord Conway. A promising start. The series goes on next month.

Also in the wonderful Gem we have, of course, the Cedar Creek tales. In "Foes of the Foothills" we find Frank Richards & Co. getting on with their holidays in the Cascade Mountains. The holidays seem destined to be marred by Handsome Alf, the "bad hat" of the mining camps, but Alf has reckoned without little Yen Chin, the Cedar Creek Chinese. In the next story, "The Menace of the Mountains", wicked Alf is still dangerous.

Then, in the next tale, "Rounded Up", Handsome Alf is finally sent packing by the Cedar Creek boys. This is followed by "The Stranded Schoolboys" when the party comes across Gunten and Keller, the two black sheep of Cedar Creek. And Gunten and Keller prove themselves treacherous guests.

Still on holiday, in the month's final story, "The Schoolboy Gold-Seekers", the chums strike gold, but the gold dust is stolen by Yen Chin, who finds himself banned from the party. This long holiday series goes on next month, I expect.

And, in the marvellous Gem, we have too the Benbow tales. The month opened with "Tuckey's Black Day" in which the boys of the Benbow visit the Great Pitch Lake of Trinidad - and it turns out to be a very black day for Tuckey Toodles. Next came "The Hurricane", and Jack Drake & Co. are in the thick of it.

Then comes "A Schoolboy's Temptation" in which the reformed Daubeny is tempted by Egan to go to the racecourse. Then "His Own Enemy" continues the theme of the back-sliding of Daubeny. And the plot is carried further with the month's final tale "Daubeny's Debt."

And that's my Diary for July. How the months fly by! Now for tea. We have a cottage loaf for tea. With a cottage loaf the top is lovely and crusty and the bottom is fine for toast. In most baker's shops you can buy a top and a bottom separately if you want to. A top is 2½d and a bottom is 3½d. After the tea I'm off to play cricket. It's not my evening to go to the pices.

ERIC FAYNE comments on this month's DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 376 "The Greyfriars Hikers" comprised 3 stories from the Magnet's Hiking Series of the Summer of 1933. This opening edition from the series reads well enough, but it is slightly scrappy, with a good deal of pruning of the original and one story "Down on the Farm" being omitted entirely. Maybe this was omitted as being slightly dated, dealing as it does with the "Tithe War" on a farm. More likely, perhaps, it was more convenient to take 3 stories for each S.O.L. from the original length of 10 stories. The introduction of the Holiday Annual into a Greyfriars series seems a bit incongruous, and a minor weakness to the credibility of the stories.

The Cedar Creek tales in Danny's 1939 Gem were: 5 consecutive stories from the Boys' Friends, starting at the end of August 1918. All bore the same title on both occasions except for "The Menace of the Mountains" which was entitled "Danger Ahead" in 1918.

The 1939 Gem's Benbow tales had originally appeared consecutively in the Greyfriars Herald from the start of October 1920. "Tuckey's Black Day" of 1939 had been "A Black Day for Toodles" in 1920; "The Hurricane" had been "Lost on the Sea"; "A Schoolboy's Temptation" had been "Daubeny's Temptation"; "His Own Enemy" had the same title on both occasions; and "Daubeny's Debt" had originally been "For Daubeny's Sake" in 1920.

The film "Sweethearts" was probably the best of all the Macdonald-Eddy films. Compare the lovely theme song "Sweethearts" with the racket in this year's European Song Contest. PROGRESS!?

In passing, I had some fascinating echoes from my comment last month on the Boys' Friend Library story "The Schoolboy Magician" which Danny had been reading. It purported to be the schooldays of Houdini. Not only did it set the memory buds tingling for my old friend, Mr. Dennis Hilliard of Stapleford. He actually sent me the copy, a gesture I deeply appreciate. I hope to get the cover photographed, and you may see it in C.D. one day soon.

Another old friend, Mr. Tom Johnson of Neston remembered the Houdini serial "The master Mystery", and sent me a number of details from it plus some nostalgic pictures from that lovely old magazine "Pictures and Picturegoer." My thanks to all those who contacted me and joined in the fun of looking back to those grand old days.

ALWAYS WANTED: Singles-collections: SOL's, SBL's, Beans. Dustwrapped Biggles, Bunters, Williams, Enid Blyton, Malcolm Saville. ALL original artwork. Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Hertfordshire.

COLLECTOR wishes to purchase William, Bunter, W.E. Johns, Jennings, first editions in dustwrappers. Also bound volumes of the Modern Boy. Also will pay £3.50 for H. Baker Press volumes, £7.00 for Club volumes, Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks, SY5 2DT. Tel. (0226) 295613.

'TALES FROM THE TRIGAN EMPIRE' illustrated by Don Lawrence. Published by Hawk Books Ltd. at £17.95. Review by Norman Wright.

The Trigan Empire existed on one of those fantastic worlds where high tec' aircraft flew alongside horse drawn wagons, and an adversary was as likely to thrust you with a sword as he was to burn you with a blaster. It was a cross between John Carter's Mars and Hans Solo's "Star Wars". The fierce Zargot, a beaked and winged dinosaur type creature, much used in gladiatorial contests, was one of the many savage creatures that roamed the deserts and forests of Elekton, home planet of The Trigan Empire. Its seas, likewise, teamed with weird beasts; fanged monsters, their mighty bulk capable of scuttling the timber hulled pirate galleys encountered on Elekton's oceans. The empire was ruled by Trigo, a wise and forward looking emperor who sought peace but had the knack of plunging headlong into adventure.



"The Trigan Empire" began as a two page, full colour strip in the first issue of "Ranger" in September 1965. After the paper's untimely end, in June 1966, after a run of only forty issues, "The Trigan Empire" continued in "Look and Learn", where it remained until the final issue, almost twenty years later. From its inception, until 1975, the artwork was painted by Don Lawrence. His work for the strip was imaginative and rich in detail. The pages were excitingly laid out and often action packed. Such a world of sword, sorcery, robots and spacecraft, gave the artist almost limitless scope for designing machines, armour and weird wildlife. In an interview published in "Art" two years ago Lawrence commented that the scripts, by Mike Butterworth, gave little indication of the action required in each frame and that he more or less had a free hand.

"Tales From The Trigan Empire" comprises seven adventures, two of which have previously appeared in "The Trigan Empire", published by Hamlyn in 1978. It is a pity that the present volume could not have contained all previously uncollected material. Never-the-less the chosen stories do showcase the artist's talents. There are battles a plenty yet they don't dominate or detract from the more tranquil moments. The plots of many Trigan Empire strips were embroiled in treachery and intrigue. Trigo was a little too trusting and seems to have surrounded himself with ambitious men eager for an opportunity to seize his power. Such plots allowed for plenty of action and scenes of brooding mystery. The backdrops to many frames are buildings, and in my opinion no other British comic artist can draw massive castles and seemingly endless cities half as well as Don Lawrence! They are not obtrusive but supplement the action rather than dominate it. Looking through the book at so many pages of finely detailed frames it is difficult to believe that the artist had a weekly deadline to meet, week in week out. Such work deserves to be well printed and Hawk books are to be congratulated on the high quality of the colour reproduction in this book.

Don Lawrence gave up drawing The Trigan Empire for I.P.C. in 1975. Since then he has been concentrating on another character named Storm for a Dutch publisher. For many years only one of the Storm titles was available in English. But now, as a new generation of comic enthusiasts begins to appreciate the unique quality of Don Lawrence's art, other Storm titles are being published in English. "Tales From The Trigan Empire" is a timely volume giving enthusiasts the opportunity to own a beautifully produced volume of the artist's earlier full colour work.





TERRY JONES (Gloucester): I think that reprinting Eric Parker's superb drawings from Sexton Blake's adventures with explanatory notes is an excellent idea. Keep it up. (Editor's note: J.E.M., please note.) Also I find the mysteries of Cliff House very interesting. I never had the nerve to buy the girls' mags when a lad, but I would have loved to have followed the adventures of Babs & Co. Chaps with sisters were lucky. They could borrow their copies - or could they? I had a crush on Marjorie Hazeldene for years. Whenever a Magnet appeared featuring that schoolgirl beauty, I was into it at once. Come to think of it, I still have crush on her now I'm 66!

BRIAN DOYLE (Putney): In answer to Leslie Susans' query in the May issue, THE LIVELIEST TERM AT TEMPLETON (not 'Team') was written by Richard Bird. Originally serialised in THE CAPTAIN magazine in 1923, it was published in hard-covers in 1924, with illustrations by H.M. Brock. 'Richard Bird' (it was a pseudonym) was a real-life

schoolmaster and published over 20 school stories before 1915 and 1934. He was a first-class writer and always turned out an excellent and authentic story.

I have just discovered some hitherto unknown facts about his life and career, in fact, and hope to write a feature on him for the SPCD very soon.

BILL LOFTS (London) adds: One of Richard Bird's books was entitled 'The Wharton Medal' in 1925, and I can well remember getting a query about it - whether it had any connection with our Greyfriars. Of course it had not. He wrote about 30 novels all told including an Omnibus of his main stories.

RICHARD JACKSON (Edinburgh): May's Sexton Blake Gallery tells of George Marsden Plummer's ally Vali Mata-Vali. I have some postcards of the early 20th century actress Miss Vali Vali, who played inter alia, in Queen of Hearts and, with Lewis Walker, in The Dukes Motto. Does anyone know anything about her?

TOMMY KEEN (Thames Ditton): For the information of "Denise" (May C.D.) the first SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY appeared in November 1922, the story entitled "The Schoolgirl Outcast", but, if I remember correctly, no author's name was given. The heroine was May Pendleton, very similar to Betty Barton's characterisation, and, with the cover illustrated by Leonard Shields, it looked almost a Morcove story. The school concerned was Rockcliffe, and this again featured in S.O.L. No. 2 - "The Rockcliffe Rebels", but from then on, Rockcliffe was heard of no more.

BILL BRADFORD (Ealing): In Danny's Diary for May 1939, there is reference to a Boys' Friend Library called The Schoolboy Magician. This was B.F.L. No. 670 and first appeared as a serial in the Pilot, entitled "Houdini Magic Maker No. 1" between June 1937 and January 1938 (issues 92-120) It was written by Edwy Searles Brooks and I hold the original manuscripts and a copy of BFL No. 670 in the Nelson Lee Library.

R. HARDINGE (Wimbledon): I was most interested to read both Danny's and Eric Fayne's Comments on Houdini. I can remember THE AMAZING EXPLOITS OF HOUDINI, THE MASTER OF MYSTERY! WRITTEN BY HOUDINI HIMSELF which appeared weekly in THE KINEMA COMIC from 1922 until his demise in 1926. The stories most probably, were ghost-written.

Houdini appeared in two silent films for Paramount Pictures. The first THE GRIM GAME (1919) was billed as being a drama of miraculous escapes. The second, TERROR ISLAND (1920) was described as an adventure thriller.

In 1953 came Paramount's HOUDINI which starred TONY CURTIS with JANET LEIGH (then his wife). The film dealt with Houdini starting out as a fair ground conjuror in the 1890s and gradually developing in to an escapologist. But he tried one stunt too many in 1926 and perished.

In March this year, a Disney T.V. movie about his early career entitled YOUNG HARRY HOUDINI was screened on ITV.

Editor's Note: The Danny's Diary reference to "Walk-er!" seems to have intrigued many readers. We give below two further interesting and well documented comments on this. I think we can then say that as far as the C.D. is concerned, the matter is closed!

M.S. FELLOWS (London): I have discovered the following in the 24th Edition of THE DICTIONARY OF PHRASE & FABLE by The Rev. E. Cobham Brewer, LL.D. (No date given).

"Hookey Walker. John Walker was an out-door Clerk at Longman, Clementi & Co.'s Cheapside, and was noted for his eagle nose, which gained him the nickname of Old Hookey. Walker's office was to keep the workmen to their work, or to report them to the principals. Of course it was the interest of the employees to throw discredit on Walker's reports, and the poor man was so badgered and ridiculed, that the firm found it politic to abolish the office; but "Hookey Walker" still means a tale not to be trusted. John Bee."

Presumably, when the boy in A CHRISTMAS CAROL says "Walk-er!", he means - I don't believe you - or "Garn!"

I hope that this is of some interest to Colin Partis (March, 89) and Edward Murch (May, 89).

GEORGE BEAL (Surbiton): Mr. Edward Murch in your issue of May, 1989, raises the question of the origin of the word *walker* in its slang use. The full *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1st edition, says:

'More fully **Hookey Walker**. It is not unlikely that *Hookey Walker* may have referred to some hook-nosed person named Walker; but the various stories told to account for the origin of the expression have probably no foundation'.

Be that as it may, but E. Cobham Brewer, in *The Reader's Handbook* [Chatto and Windus, 1892] gives the following anecdote:

'Walker, (Hookey), John Walker, outdoor clerk to Longman, Clementi, and Co., Cheapside. He was noted for his hooked nose, and disliked for his official duties, which were to see that the men came and left at the proper hour, and that they worked during the hours of work. Of course, the men conspired to throw discredit on his reports; and hence when any one draws the 'long-bow', the hearer exclaims "Hookey Walker!" as much as to say, "I don't believe it." Brewer gives no reference for his story, and since most modern lexicographers are extremely reticent about the origin of *walker*, it seems fair to say that no one really knows!

Incidentally, Oxford's reference to the year 1811 is does not necessarily imply that the expression was unknown before that date. The word, in its slang meaning, was to be found in the 1811 edition of Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, so obviously the term is even older.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM MATT R. THOMPSON

I am sitting here on a chair in the bay window, my elbows on the table, chin resting in my hands, feeling slightly glum. I am not always feeling that way, sometimes I feel just plain miserable. Today's mood is quite a big improvement, if you knew the depths of glumness I *can* reach. Mind you, when the table is creaking with the weight of food I'm in Seventh Heaven.

One of the reasons I cannot stand Bunter is because of his enormous input. I try my best, but my best is far from his achievements. I'm a failure! It sickens me to see him guzzling away an enormous amount of one of the pleasures of life, and keep on going after I have collapsed into a bundle of tortured swelling around the stomach regions.

I am not a glutton, I just do not know when I overstep the mark. If I knew where that mark was, I might do something about it.

Apart from that I'm feeling glum. It seems quite a while since I had my breakfast, at least, half an hour ago. I could, of course, bring lunch-time forward by 3 hours. No, I suppose not. It doesn't seem right to have my mid-day meal at 8.30 a.m.

May I repeat, I am still feeling rather glum.

I glance out of the window and I see the postman open the gate, walk up the drive, on to the path up to the front door, and I hear the sound of the letters falling through the letter box. And, with the regular inflow of bills, that is not always a noise I appreciate. I'm certain the postman leaves his own bills with mine. However, I collect the envelopes, drop them on the table, push aside those that appear unimportant. At the bottom of the pile, lo and behold, the envelope I am looking for. You've guessed it - COLLECTORS DIGEST. My face lights up; aches and pains vanish in a tick and I am young again (actually I'm 39, and have been so for quite a number of years).

Sanity has returned, Heigh Ho the Holly this life is most Jolly.
Happy Days.

JULY 1939

By this time, war was very near, but to an 8-year-old boy the political situation did not mean much. At this distance in time, 50 years after, I have only hazy recollections - perhaps of headlines about King Zog and his glamorous wife, the pregnant Queen Geraldine, who had had to flee their Albanian palace when the Italians invaded. As for the Germans, I can recall nothing specific, other than my continuing interest in the Luftwaffe and its aircraft such as the wicked-looking Messerschmitt 109.

This was the year of two famous films which I think I saw about now: Walt Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and David O. Selznick's "The Prisoner of Zenda." The Disney cartoon made a double impact; there was the visual charm of Snow White herself, the eccentricities of the dwarfs, and the black menace of the Queen. And of course there was the music; we were all singing "Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it's off to work we go," and "Whistle while you work." Some schoolboy wit turned the latter into a topical verse:

Whistle while you work.
Mussolini is a twerp.
Hitler's barmy.
So's his army.
Whistle while you work!

The Ruritanian epic, with Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, and Raymond Massey, inspired in me a lifelong love of Anthony Hope's famous book and its much-too-neglected sequel "Rupert of Hentzau". The music of the grand Coronation scene was, I firmly believed, the Ruritanian National Anthem; it was not until many years later that I discovered it to be "See the conquering hero comes" from Handel's oratorio "Judas Maccabeus."

The four Schoolgirls' Own Library books were published on July 6; they were:

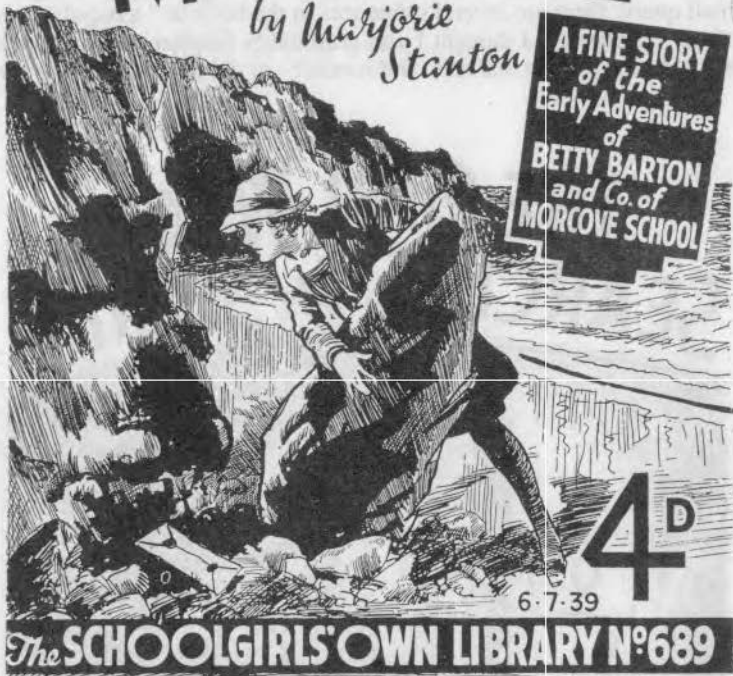
- No. 688 "Babs & Co. in Egypt", by Hilda Richards
- No. 689 "Alone at Morcove", by Marjorie Stanton
- No. 690 "Her Strange Task at Sandcliffe", by Joy Phillips
- No. 691 "The Girl Who Searched in Secret", by Renee Frazer.

Nos. 688 and 690 I was never able to obtain. The Cliff House one might have been particularly interesting, because 13 years later I went to live in Egypt for 21/2 years, serving in the Royal Air Force. All I know of it is the cover, which shows Barbara Redfern and three of her chums shining a torch on a mummy in an old tomb. I am equally ignorant of the Joy (Horace) Phillips book, described as "An Exciting New and Original School Story" and therefore, presumably, not a reprint of an earlier serial like most of the SOL books. The cover shows a girl in a smart frock (rather old for a schoolgirl - probably a junior mistress) looking apprehensively at a classroom window through which a dusky face is peering.

The Morcove story has some similarity to the one I wrote about last month ("When Pam Made Morcove Wonder") in that it too features a feckless brother and sister in their 20s who have a much more admirable younger sister. But in "Alone at Morcove" the situation is intensified by the youngster actually becoming a pupil at Morcove and (through no fault of her own) driving out a much-loved friend of Study No. 12. The tale begins with Dolly Delane breaking the news to Betty Barton & Co. that she must leave Morcove; her father, a tenant farmer, has been given notice to quit,

ALONE at MORCOVE

by *Marjorie Stanton*



and can no longer afford the fees. His farm is being let by the landlord to Dick and Margaret Marshall, and the landlord is also paying for their young sibling Althea to come to Morcove. Poor Althea is naturally treated like a pariah, a cuckoo in the nest, and, as the Delanes move into a cottage nearby, Dolly's presence serves as a constant reminder of the landlord's unjust actions. The rather intricate plot eventually turns on some missing papers which prove that Mr. Delane after all had rights to the farm out of which the landlord and Dick Marshall defrauded him. Naturally, all comes well in the end for Dolly, she returns to school, but Althea has to leave to re-build her life as best she can.

"The Girl Who Searched in Secret" is by "Renee Frazer" - Ronald Fleming, the author who, as "Peter Langley", also created the dashing male detective Noel Raymond. He had a real gift of story-telling; even when his plots creak dreadfully, the sheer pace of narrative is compelling. I have probably not read this book for 50 years, but when I picked it up intending to skim through it making notes for this article, I found myself reading on - and on. I do not know if this was originally a serial, but I imagine it was; some of the chapters end at suitably cliffhanging moments. The title-page has drawings in the unmistakable style of the artist who illustrated the Valerie Drew stories, and the heroine is an intrepid Valerie-like figure who disguises herself to go back to her old home town to seek the proof of her dead father's innocence of

crime. (In this respect, the story has some similarities with "The Shadow of a Stranger", discussed last month; in fact, most of the SOIL books rely on one or other of about a dozen basic plots.) There are a good many rather unlikely coincidences - overheard conversations, the heroine's boy chum miraculously turning up at the right moment not once but several times. On one occasion she is saved from discovery by a seagull's sudden cry distracting attention - at night! Do seagulls fly - and cry - at night?

A small query: there are several references in the book to "a popular tune: 'Miss Mystery from Nowhere.'" I thought I was reasonably familiar with the songs of the war years, but I cannot place that one. Did it exist? - or did Ronald Fleming invent it?

THE GIRL WHO SEARCHED *in* SECRET

by Renee Frazer



An
ENTHRALLING TALE
of MYSTERY
and ADVENTURE

4^D

6-7-39

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY N°691

I am a rare Hamiltonian. I'm against public schools for various reasons. Leaving this aside, I've often wondered, could he have written a day-school series of Greyfriars or St. Jim's calibre? It's certainly been tried, and tried well. The 7 "Jim Starling" books, by E.W. Hildick, are unfortunately out of print (first published between 1958 and 1964) but well worth reading. I own four, two remaindered library books and two from second-hand book shops. The four heroes, members of the "Last Apple Gang", are described as "Ready for anything Jim, detective Terry, animal-lover Goggle, knowledgeable Nip" (Jim Starling himself, his best friend Terry Todd, Goggles Grimshaw, and Nip Challons).

They attend Cement Street Secondary Modern in the Northern town of Smogbury. Jim lives with Aunt Julie, a likeable worrier, Terry's from a broken home (no great loss!), Goggles' family seems to change with the series, Nip is small and well-dressed.

The first book, "Jim Starling", is more serious than the rest, and an excellent read. Jim is suspected of slashing coats in the school cloakroom. Terry starts to investigate the case, finds himself suspected, so runs. The culprit and villain of the piece is "Big Smig", an older pupil and out-and-out thug working with some crooks outside school. We meet several recurring characters: Mr. Pickwith, ("Picky"), their form-master, whose bark's generally worse than his bite: Mr. Chuffley, the fat and genial Headmaster; Sergeant Kelly of the local CID: and "Bush" Tickersall, the amazing local museum curator.

The second book, "Jim Starling and the Agency", set a month later, features their setting up a detective agency, and giving it up after various misunderstandings. We meet their school rivals, Butcher Baker & Co.

The third, "Jim Starling's Holiday", features them going to stay at Nip's uncle's cottage for a week and finding him not there. They naturally (well this is a book) decide to stick it out on their own.

The fourth, "Jim Starling and the Colonel" is my own favourite. A pompous Colonel attacks modern youth and modern education on Speech Day, unfavourably comparing the latter with a 19th century boy who performed various feats. So Jim naturally shows him by performing the feats!

The fifth, "Jim Starling Takes Over" features all the boys of their form being given money to start their own businesses, with consequent misadventures.

The sixth and weakest, "Jim Starling and the Spotted Dog" is a short novel of the Gang looking for a pensioner's lost dog and finding an escaped Borstal boy in the process.

The last, "Jim Starling Goes to Town" features them in London, being conned by ticket forgers at the Cup Final, and naturally getting their own back. It's a nice ending.

All in all, I highly recommend this series. While Hildick's no Hamilton, he can write a good story. Indeed, he's an ex-teacher who wrote the books because he felt it was time there were school stories set in a secondary modern. Hildick is certainly better than Grange Hill (yes, TV producers, I am dropping hints!).



No. 232 - Magnets 779 & 781-4 - Jim Lee Series

by Roger M. Jenkins

1923 was a season of freshness and innovation for the Magnet, with its new orange and blue covers and 28 page issues. The Greyfriars stories ran to only ten or eleven chapters, owing to the extraneous items and their demands on space, but at least the main school story was not so short as in contemporary Gems.

Magnet 779 got off to a good start with Bunter bilking the railway company by hiding under a carriage seat, a manoeuvre that was always puzzling since the amount of space there, even in the days of steam trains, was somewhat limited. From this vantage point, Bunter heard Ulick Driver discuss with his young cousin Jim Lee the fact that he was expected to show a profit for the school fees that Driver was regarding as an investment. Later, when they were alone in the visitors' room at Greyfriars, it was spelled out clearly that Jim was expected to make friends with the richest boys in the form and get invited to their homes so that Ulick Driver's gang could have inside information about valuable items. Jim was aghast at all this and determined he would make friends with no one.

Of course, events conspired to cause several juniors to make overtures of friendship, all of which were deliberately rebuffed, and Lee became known as the hermit of the Remove. When he saved the unconscious Bob Cherry from a ledge on a cliff, it was Bunter who took the credit, and indeed Bunter played a large part in this series, though at this time he was in his most unattractive phase, being presented as utterly despicable. Nevertheless, the series moved at a good pace with one development of the plot succeeding another so quickly that the reader was caught up with the

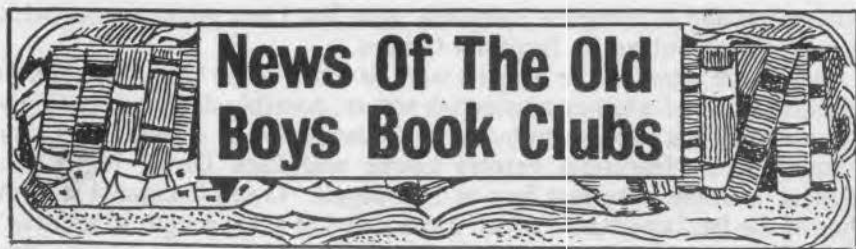
tide of events and in complete sympathy with Jim Lee's predicament, which was eventually resolved by Inspector Grimes.

Four inside pages of the Magnet were devoted to the Greyfriars Herald, with illustrations of a rather amateurish nature, possibly deliberately to give the impression that it was run by the boys themselves. A long short story (in small print) featuring Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake by "Owen Conquest" occupied the last four or five pages. Owen Conquest was the author of the Benbow series which I examined at some length in an article on Jack Drake in No. 63 of the Story Paper many years ago, and it seems that Charles Hamilton wrote the Ferrers Locke stories in Magnets 770-773, but thereafter they were taken over by another author, possibly Hedley Scott. The style of writing of these detective stories was somewhat different from the manner of writing school stories, and the change of authors was not all that apparent. All in all, the reader who invested his pocket money in the Magnet in 1923 must have been well satisfied with his purchase.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Norman Shaw is a good friend to many C.D. readers, who will wish to send him condolences on the recent passing of his mother. Those of us who visited Norman's home and wonderful treasure-trove of books were aware of his great and moving devotion to his mother, especially during the last year of her life after she had a bad fall, and fracture. We understand that Norman's mother was in her late nineties, and his devotion must have given her much strength and happiness. We are grateful that, despite all the extra nursing and domestic duties he has undertaken so diligently in looking after her, Norman has still managed to carry on finding books for so many of us. Despite great tiredness he has managed to give his customers the warm helpfulness that we always associate with him. We send him our deep thanks, and most sincere sympathy in his loss.

WANTED: 1900's 1/2d/1d Marvel, singles/complete years. Also 1940/50's Captain Marvels. Dave Westaway, 96 Ashleigh Road, Exmouth, Devon. Tel: Exmouth 275734.



News Of The Old Boys Book Clubs

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

In the absence of David Bradley, Darrell took the Chair and welcomed the thirteen assembled. We were delighted to welcome Robin Oliver-Tasker who had made the journey specially from Grantham and it was good again to see Keith Normington from the Midland Club.

Arthur Fortune presented a trilogy of light-hearted items, a recorded excerpt from radio comedy of the 1950's, followed by a cassette recording of Martin Jarvis reading "William Makes a Day of It", which was as amusing as the other readings in the series. To conclude, a quiz based on T.V. theme tunes which caused great hilarity.

After refreshments, Darrell presented "Hobby Ephemera". He commented that many people collect give-away and spin-off items in relation to their hobby. To illustrate this, produced model vans bearing the name Chunkley's Store, Courtfield (specially made by a fellow hobbyist), advertising leaflets for the new season's annuals, and a copy of Radio Times from the personal collection of Frank Richards, showing the very first Billy Bunter T.V. play of 1952. In addition, a music copy of "Tell Me, What Is Love", written by Frank Richards. Other items were produced and caused much comment.

Our next meeting is an informal summer break with barbecue at the home and library of our Secretary, Geoffrey Good, on Saturday evening 8th July. Please contact Geoffrey on Wakefield 374009 if you would like to attend.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

O.B.B.C. WESTON-SUPER-MARE SECTION

Ten of us were in attendance on 16th April at the home of Tim Salisbury, with Bill Lofts was our always welcomed guest speaker. Bill opened the meeting on an unhappy note, informing us that two of our regulars would no longer be with us. Sadly, Ron Nicholls from Bristol and Eric Illing from Weston-Super-Mare had both died. They would be greatly missed.

On a brighter note, four new faces were with us. The youngster by far was Tom Penn, still at school and a very enthusiastic reader of the writings of the world's top author of school tales. Tom had come with his father. Also present were Joe Brickell and his wife, and Geoff Lardner from the Midland Club on his first visit to us. Bill Lofts spoke about the Holiday Annual, which was launched in September 1919 and became the most popular annual of all until its last issue in September 1940. This Holiday Annual, dated 1941, is now a collectors' item and very difficult to come by. Bill also told us about his guest spot on the BBC Radio 4 programme Keep the Memory

Green, in which he talked to G.A. Henty about the Greyfriars saga. This resulted in many letters to Bill from 'old boys' of Greyfriars and St. Jirn's.

Terry Jones followed Bill Lofts. His talk With Full Supporting Cast was about the minor characters that make the Magnet's famous school so rich in local colour. This was followed by a six minute tape of a broadcast by Terry on BBC Radio Gloucestershire on the subject of his schooldays and the Magnet characters he lived with.

As usual, a super study spread was laid on by Mr. and Mrs. Salisbury. It was a shame that W.G.B. had not been present because there were so many good things left over on the table. A big thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Salisbury and Tim for a most enjoyable afternoon.

TERRY JONES

MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

There was an attendance of 9 at the May meeting, quite surprising after the farce of the April session. The May meeting was the A.G.M. but little time was spent on the election of officers, who were the old team, and discussion of finances (£92.50 in hand). The meeting was dominated by the change in the club brought upon us by low attendances. The new idea is that we should meet at selected venues and have an afternoon session to last 4 hours. Geoff Lardner, our acting chairman, will check by post those who are willing to come. Such meetings will take place twice a year, and we hope to decide in June on a venue for the first of these meetings. We hope to get well-known speakers, with games, puzzles and quizzes to fill in.

We enjoyed the goodly spread very generously provided by the Lovejoys, Christine Brettell, Joan Golen and Ivan Webster. Entertainment from Vin Loveday took the form of a dramatized dialogue, with members taking part, of the very funny episode of Gosling entering the matrimonial market with a 'widder and a public house' in view. The dialogue was very funny. Gosling was like the frog in the fable, and it turned out that the advertisement he had responded to was a confidence trick.

JACK BELLFIELD

O.B.B.C. LONDON

The May meeting was held at the popular Walthamstow venue. Bill Bradford read from Queer Face by Gerald Verner. We had to listen with great attention as questions were asked! Top of the class was Phil Griffiths, who then read from William and A.R.P. Your scribe produced a news cutting from the Guardian of 24th April featuring a photograph of Bill Lofts reading the same volume, and reporting on the recent Norwich William Day. After tea, kindly organised by Audrey Potts, Roger Jenkins set a word puzzle which was won by Alan Pratt.

The June meeting was held at the Wokingham home of Eric and Betty Lawrence. Despite the long journey there was an encouraging attendance of 12, including R. Matthews from Australia, and our hobby's elder statesmen, Eric Fayne.

Eric Lawrence read an extract from Ironsides of the Yard by Victor Gunn, and drew attention to the similarities in characterization to Charles Hamilton's Bunter. Mark Jarvis read further research by Arthur Edwardes on the early political career of H. Quelch. Eric Fayne organised a Consequences Quiz which was won by Roger Jenkins, with Norman Wright coming second. Bill Bradford gave the Memory Lane

reading, and then Phil Griffiths read from William and The Band of Hope. Eric Lawrence set a Quiz based on titles which could be seen in his extensive library of detective fiction, and Mark Taha, Phil Griffiths and Don Webster were declared equal winners. Bill Bradford then led a discussion on the lesser-known 'Library' style publications, illustrated by items from his own wide-ranging collection. July meeting: at the Burnham on Crouch home of Alan and Myra Steward. There will not be the hoped for minibus, but there are good trains from Liverpool Street. We propose to start at around 2.30 p.m. Phone Alan and Myra on 0621-784179 for details.

MARK JARVIS

Cliff House Corner

by Margery Woods

CLIFF HOUSE TYRANTS - Part 2

The reign of Miss Norah Harper and her unpopular niece, prefect Connie Jackson of the Sixth, began in SCHOOLGIRL 197 on May 6th, 1933 and ended a month later, much to the relief of the entire school. The four long stories altogether were roughly equal to an average length novel of sixty to sixty-five thousand words and were re-issued a few years later, slightly abridged, in SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY 591 under the title: WHEN CONNIE CAPTAINED CLIFF HOUSE.



This strong series was only one of many examples of the skill displayed by the storypaper authors in setting up a dramatic plotline containing the essential elements of genre fiction, especially that slanted to the juvenile market. There was no room for a long leisurely setting of scene and atmosphere, the story had to grab the reader right at the start, more as in the short story format---to which category Cliff House and Greyfriars stories hardly belonged. Identification with central characters had to be instantly established, a sympathetic partisanship engaged, and, most important, at least from the proprietor's angle, the desire instilled to go on turning the page. Because of the youthful nature of the storypapers' readership all this had to be achieved with a deceptive simplicity and tight construction yet without appearing rushed, not forgetting the yards of badinage which were part of the charm of these school tales. Not very easy, especially with such a large cast of characters to handle without risking the confusion of who said what. Most adult readers have at one time or another experienced mild irritation while trying to sort out the cast at the beginning of a particularly complicated novel.

Consider the first short chapter of the first story. Ten characters are introduced with dialogue, nine more are mentioned; the main threads of the story line are carefully laid, the emotional angle is prepared, the necessary information is woven into this and the promise made of a lot of tense, dramatic story to follow.

The promise is certainly kept.

Once again Miss Primrose has to be absent from the school and a temporary headmistress engaged to take her place. The girls are aghast when Miss Harper proves to be the aunt of Connie Jackson. For Connie it seems like a dream come true. She has always yearned for power and the most prestigious role a Cliff House girl can aspire to, that of Head Girl, an honour held at that time by Stella Stone. Long before, the close of the first story Connie has achieved her aim, not only that, her headmistress aunt has cancelled all captaincies and prefects' offices which have been the results of a ballot. Gatings, lines, punishments rain on the girls, and then Connie decides the Fourth shall fag for her and her cronies.

Fagging never really became an accepted tradition at Cliff House. The small girls ran errands and did simple duties for the prefects, but the general impression came through the Cliff House stories that it was a practice that one day Miss Primrose would get around to abolishing altogether. But now Connie gloats maliciously at the prospect of humiliating Babs, the Captain of the Lower School.

Although the girls bitterly resent this latest order by the hated Connie, Babs has a much more pressing worry on her mind. Secretly she is typing for her form mistress, who depends on the additional income she can earn by writing stories to help her



"THE Editor wants this story before three o'clock," Miss Matthews said. "Oh, Miss Matthews, let me take it," Babs pleaded, quite forgetting in her enthusiasm that she was gated for the afternoon!

mother financially. Miss Matthews has eye trouble, which she has neglected and is now in danger of losing her sight unless she has treatment very soon. Babs is determined to do everything in her power to help, even though it means defying Connie.

All is not threatened tragedy; the girls manage to extract quite a lot of fun from the situation as they become quite openly defiant towards Connie and her tyranny. Having deprived Babs of her captaincy, Connie starts appointing new captains for the Fourth, with inauspicious success. Rosa Rodworth reigns for a brief spell, followed by Lydia, followed in turn by Nancy Bell, Brenda Fallace and Freda Ferriers. Brenda lasted two hours and Freda did not even accept. Connie is baffled for a while, then has a brainwave; she will appoint Marjorie Hazeldene, surely the Fourth will accept her, especially as Connie considers Marjorie to be weak and easily dominated.

But Marjorie is not the weakling that many believed her to be, confusing gentleness and a love of peace for lack of courage. Marjorie has been quietly pursuing a project of her own, to help a young couple in Friardale with whom she has been friendly for some time and when the call comes from Connie, Marjorie is breaking detention. Connie however, turns this to her own advantage by threatening trouble for Marjorie's friends if she doesn't take on the captaincy and persuade the girls to obey Connie. It all seems a deadlock.

Meanwhile, Sara Harrigan has got herself involved in a matter of vases. Four antique curios which she has acquired from an unscrupulous friend and which by rights belong to Marjorie's young friends in Friardale. Marjorie has recognised the vases in Sara's study and told her so, whereupon Sara panics and hides them in Connie's study. The chums, bent on mischief in Connie's den, find them, along with other goods which Connie has confiscated, and remove them, unfortunately leaving one behind, leading to Sara finding Connie with it and the ensuing delight of thieves well and truly falling out without honour.

The threads draw together in the final story with Miss Harper proving she has a heart of some kind deep within her forbidding exterior when she realises how serious is Miss Matthews' eye trouble and how sound had been Babs' reasons for helping her. Miss Matthews' new story brings a very welcome cheque and she departs to have her eye operation. Sara and Connie indulge in a hilarious vase throwing battle and Babs makes a marvellous catch of the vital one, to complete the four which belong to Marjorie's friends, and Sara and Connie proceed to round two of their bout, which ends with Connie in very muddy water and Sara endeavouring to persuade an antique dealer that her parcel of old shrimp paste jars are indeed valuable antique vases.

Of course Babs and Co. had got there first---they usually do---and so all ends happily as the best stories do. Once again Connie escapes with a mere soupcon of admonishment, but after all, could Cliff House do without its characters like Connie?

**'FISH'S FAG AGENCY': Reviewed by Eric Fayne.
Frank Richards. (Howard Baker Book Club Special: £18.00)**

The latest volume in this magnificent series of Book Club Specials comprises 5 Magnets, all resplendent with the lovely red covers of those days, of the start of the year 1913.

The programme opens with the story of the volume's overall title. For those of us who knew Mauleverer in later years it is heavily dated, but none the less attractive for that. Mauly, always tired and lazy, needs people to work for him - to clean his shoes, brush his clothes, and the like, and he confides to Fishy that he might be able to manage with just 8 fags. Which gives Fishy an idea. He puts up a notice: "Fags required at once! Good wages for good workers. Apply to Fish's Agency". Fish charges Mauly half-a-sovereign for the service, and all goes well till the fags expect to be paid. Not a memorable tale, but plenty of heart-warming old-fashioned fun.

1913 was a year when any amount of new boys came on the Greyfriars stage. Most of them remained without ever again being much in the limelight. Such a one is found in "Rake of the Remove" who arrived in time to frustrate a shady plot of Loder and Carne.

Next, "Left in the Lurch" with some amusing situations and unbelievable moments. The domestic staff goes on strike, so the boys take a hand at filling their jobs. Which is not exactly novel (even in these later progressive times we often hear of wildcat strikes) but the picture of Mr. Prout, in cap and gown, dealing with a frying pan at a stove in the kitchen, is very far-fetched indeed.

Next, "Harry Wharton & Co's Rescue" is a sub story, which is quite good as sub tales go. The Bounder and his friends rent a place away from the school, and run their own club house, where they can follow their own shady pursuits without being overlooked. Then Wharton & Co. take a hand, and the plot comes to a halt with a big fire in the club house.

Finally comes "Scorned by Greyfriars" which is possibly the best tale in a lovely little nostalgic collection. In class Mr. Quelch makes the astonishing announcement that a new boy, coming in the Remove is an ex-workhouse boy who has rendered a service to the Marquis of Ferndale who is showing his gratitude by sending the boy to Greyfriars. Which makes Mr. Quelch sound a most unusual schoolmaster. Later we find Mr. Vernon-Smith, Mr. Stott, and Mr. Snoop joining forces to protest at such a boy coming to the school, which makes it appear that unpleasant children must have equally unpleasant parents. The snobbery theme is, of course, heavily over-played, but it all makes gorgeous reading.

The Magnet at this time has several pages devoted to comic pictures which are fascinating and rare. Even the Sidney Drew serial "Twice Round the Globe" has a heading which touches the heart-strings of those who recall the old days. I fancy that the serial was reprinted from the early Hamilton Edwards paper "The Boys' Herald". The main character, Ferrers Lord, was familiar long ago, and appeared regularly in the Herald.

Another superb treat for all who love to look back.

ST. JIM'S THE MUSICAL! or Willy Wally's Wheeze!

by Ray Hopkins

Arthur Augustus discovers that he is the possessor of a "wemarkable tenor voice". Wally tells his brother what a ripping top A he has and Gussy, preening himself, says he's thinking of giving a concert. Wally urges him to practise by giving a rehearsal in the Third Form Room - the fellows never get the chance to hear any good music and it would be as good as hearing Caruso. Curly Gibson does the Bridal Chorus from 'Lohengrin' on paper and comb, but it wouldn't be a patch on what they would hear if Gussy would only sing to them! The Third needs lessons in taste and musical feeling, says Wally, and Gussy is the one to give it to 'em. Gussy wonders, knowing the Third, how Wally is going to make them all turn up to a concert of classical music when they'd probably rather hear 'Bill Bailey'. Wally, who has been leading up to what he thinks is a great wheeze, tells Gussy no-one will stay away if there is a "bit of a feed". The only thing is he is stony, and most of the fellows are on the rocks. Gussy lends him a sovereign for the grub and Wally tells him to come along to the Third Form Room in half an hour.

When Wally tells the Third that his plan to provide them with a free feed has materialized, they are jubilant and think a few tenor solos a small price to pay for a good blow out. Wally tells them the feed won't last long anyway and they don't have to listen if they don't want to.

D'Arcy is ten minutes late arriving and the fags have eaten through a lot of the food. His opening speech with Shakesporean allusions is drowned by loud requests from the feasters to pass the sardines, jam and pickles, cream puffs and scones. Gussy uses a tuning fork to get his note and launches into the Flower Song from "Carmen". He rather expects that when the fags hear his lovely voice they will forget the food and listen in open-mouthed admiration, but the loud calls to pass this and that comestible continue until the food has all gone. As Gussy reaches the top note - B flat - signalling the end of the aria, a dead silence falls. He expects that loud applause not to say huzzas will follow, but the Third Formers shriek and bolt out of the room. Gussy's plan to bring culture to the young rascals of the Third has failed. (From GEM 56, 6 March 1909).

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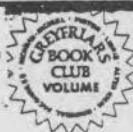
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