

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 46

No. 541

JANUARY 1992

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THE YOUNG FAGS WEEKLY



16. Vol. I.

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AUGUST 3, 1907

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96p

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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W.H. GANDER

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



A HAPPY NEW YEAR

As 1992 begins I send you all my warmest wishes for a year of peace, happiness and prosperity. I hope that it will bring you good things, both inwardly and outwardly. It is, of course, the time for resolutions, so perhaps I can ask some of you Sexton Blake enthusiasts to put pen to paper or fingers to typewriter and from time to time throughout the

year send me an article about your favourite character. As you will see, there is no Blakiana this month: now that J.E.M.'s very attractive series about the illustrations has ended I have no material to hand. Please don't forget to send something - I know that many C.D. readers are Blake fans, so it is up to you to keep the super sleuth's flag flying.

One or two recent passings have robbed us of some regular Nelson Lee contributors and, although I have a small store of suitable material, this will rapidly run out. So, all you Lee-ites, get busy with your contributions now.

I am never short of Hamiltonian features, I'm happy to say, and a wonderful variety of articles about other authors, as well as illustrators etc., continues to arrive at my small and already overflowing-with-books-and-papers home, so there will be plenty of vitality about the C.D. in the forthcoming months. Jennifer Schofield, who is better known as Piers Williams (co-author of 'By Jove, Biggles', the biography of W.E. Johns) has

written a mini-series for us on the famous flying hero which begins in this issue. I would also like to 'trail' an article which will appear next month giving information about the hitherto rather shadowy author, Ethel Talbot. Under this name she wrote excellent school, adventure and Guiding stories for girls over many decades, and as E. Talbot she wrote for boys. Another prolific author about whom not much has been previously known is Bessie Marchant, so I was delighted to read more about her in the current (Winter 1991) issue of the magazine *This England*. Interestingly, both Ethel and Bessie are mentioned in an article recently received from Ray Hopkins, which is published in this month's C.D.

Reverting to the subject of New Year Resolutions, could I ask all contributors to resolve when submitting articles to me to type **with double spacing between the lines and with wide margins**. Please, especially when sending me handwritten scripts, **make sure that all names of schools, characters, titles and series are absolutely clear**. Your consideration in these matters will save time not only for your Editor but for the very helpful ladies who type and prepare the printing of our magazine.

Once again, a very happy New Year to you all!

MARY CADOGAN



E.S.B. AND THE H.A.

by E. Grant McPherson

The 'Holiday Annual', excellent book that it is, has always been the organ of Charles Hamilton, and his allies Messrs. Richards, Clifford and Conquest, and a very good organ too, as hundreds of readers, young, and old, will testify, yours truly being numbered among them.

When I was 8 years old, an uncle of mine presented me with a copy for Christmas, which I read almost from cover to cover. The few odd stories, other than the school ones, never interested me much, with the exception of the motor racing one, that all the earlier annuals, contained. This was always my first read, as even in those far off days I was 'Car Crazy'. It was years however, before I really got the hang of the trilogy, and Charles Hamilton, and how Frank Richards could turn up at Greyfriars etc.

The years passed, and then came 1932. By then the format had changed; the pages were much thicker and I must confess that I thought it had lost a lot of its charm. There was no motor racing story either, but turning the pages, I came upon a story by Edwy, a thing I had certainly not expected in the stronghold of Bunter, entitled "The Rivals of St. Frank's". Without further ado, I read it there and then.

Alas, it was not one of Edwy's best efforts. The yarn was of the early 30s period when the poor old Lee was struggling. It opens with Handforth receiving a huge hamper from his Pater, who is celebrating being made a Privy Councillor. While the removites are carrying the hamper to the school, they are ambushed by the 'Red Hots' led by one Kirby Keeble Parkington, known as K.K. who is a comparative newcomer to St. Frank's. During the ensuing battle, the hamper is left at the side of the lane, where, hearing the noise, Willy Handforth and some of his chums find it, and promptly cart it off.

Irene Manners, Handy's girl friend, and some of her pals from the Moor View school now arrive on the scene, and promptly tell off the removites for acting like hooligans and brawling in public. Leaving the boys reeling from the verbal castigation, they walk off with their noses in the air. They have not gone very far, when they hear voices in the wood at the side of the lane, and espy Willy and Co. unpacking the hamper. Creeping up on the unsuspecting fags, they, in turn, annex the hamper, and take it back to their own school, where it is rapidly disposed of.

A day or two later, the River House school enters the story. Irene and Co. are taking some cakes that they have made to some of the old folk in the village, when Brewster and some other juniors from the River House school arrive on the scene. Spotting the parcels of food, they tell the girls to hand it over, or they will take it by force. Just then Nipper and a number of removites appear. The girls, of course, call for help, but the St. Frank's boys just raise their caps politely, and pass on, telling the girls that they are not in the habit of brawling in public.

The River House boys take the food to the old people of Belton, just as Irene and Co. had intended, and the girls and boys all see the funny side of the whole episode, and harmony is restored once more.

Needless to say, after this break with tradition, I looked very carefully though the H.A. for 1933, but no story by Edwy appeared, nor in fact in '34 or '35, and then, when I had almost given up hope, the Holiday Annual for 1936 turned up trumps.

Once again it was a new story entitled "Handforth's Windfall", a much better yarn than that in the '32 annual. It opens in study D, where Handy, as usual is having a row. This time it is with Bernard Forrest, and although Forrest gets the worst of it, during the scrap, the poor old study suffers most, ending up in a complete shambles. So Handforth writes to his father, Sir Edward, and asks for some more furniture to replace the stuff he has damaged.

A few days later, Forrest, is sent on an errand by his form master, Mr. Crowell, which causes him to cross the triangle. Whilst doing so, he spots the carrier's lorry arriving, loaded with cases. Thinking perhaps it is Handy's furniture, he follows the lorry to the back of the school, where on its being unloaded he sees that it is addressed to Mr. Pycraft. Hurrying back to his study, he quickly makes up some labels with Handforth's name on, and returning to the cases tacks the new labels over the old ones. Back in the classroom, he is told off by the master, but says that he had been unable to locate Mr. Stokes whom he had been sent to find.

Some time later, Teddy Long, who had as usual been prying, comes rushing up to the chums of study D, and tells them that Handy's new furniture has arrived. Most of the removites think that someone has been pulling his leg, so they accompany Handy and Co. to the rear of the premises, where they discover the packing cases addressed to E.O. Handforth. All the boys immediately begin to unpack the boxes, and find they contain some really expensive goods. There is a very nice roll top desk, a carpet, some first class chairs and a table.

Handy, seeing all this lovely furniture, thinks his Pater has really turned up trumps, and tells the rest of the fellows that if any bits of the old stuff are any good to anyone, they are welcome to these. They all return to study D, to clear it out ready for the new furniture.

Meanwhile Forrest, as soon as they have left, pulls off the labels that he had put on, thus exposing those addressed to Mr. Pyecraft, and goes to find him, telling him that Handy and Co. have opened all the cases of his furniture.

Hearing this, Mr. Pyecraft dashes off to the yard, just as the removites arrive to carry off the furniture. He starts to berate Handy for interfering with his things, whereupon Handy asks what it has to do with him, as they are his. Then, when shewn the labels actually addressed to Mr. Pyecraft, he does not know what to say. Nipper tells Mr. Pyecraft that he actually saw the labels bearing Handforth's name, and many of the juniors present back him up. Just then someone calls out that there is a case addressed to Handy. All the crowd immediately rush over to him, leaving the master fuming over his furniture.

Handy and his chums soon have the new case opened, and much to the disgust of E.O.H. all it contains is one very ancient old armchair. The leader of study D is so enraged that he starts to tear the old chair to pieces, turning it upside down and jumping on it, in his fury. Suddenly there is a tinkling sound, and a coin drops out. He picks it up and examines it, and it turns out to be a gold sovereign. On further searching, they discover 15 of them altogether, so the chums really can refurnish the study after all.

That was the last of the St. Frank's stories in the Holiday Annual, but they were a most welcome relief to me from the established order of things. Uncle James, I quite enjoyed, "Gussy" was a good character, and in a lot of ways a pattern for anyone to look up to. However, I thought Tom Merry was a little too much like "Eric" in the famous novel, whilst for "Bunter's Weekly" I have no comment.

But, having said that, I am sure most readers will, like myself, mourn the passing of the 'Big Four', so more power to the elbows of folk like the late Howard Baker, and the editors both past and present, of such publications as the C.D., for helping to keep our heroes alive.

WANTED: by Collector. JOHN HAMILTON: Pre-War hardbacks, any title with or without D/W, including the 'Ace Series', 'Airmans Bookcase', 'Flying Thrillers' Sundial Mystery' and Adventure Library, and Airmans Bookclub editions in dustwrappers. W.E. JOHNS: Any Pre-War hardbacks, with or without D/S and Paperback editions of 'MOSSYFACE' (by William Earle) and any 'BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY' Editions, any condition considered.

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21 YEARS OF NORMAN AND HENRY BONES

by Brian Doyle

Gordon Hudson's item in C.D. about these popular boy detectives of yesteryear, Norman and Henry Bones, will doubtless have brought back memories for many, so I thought I might add fuel to the embers of nostalgia by recalling a few details about 'dem Bones...!'

Anthony C. Wilson was a teacher at Feltonfleet Boys' Preparatory School in the early-1940s when some of his pupils asked him to tell them a story. They were out on a country walk at the time and Wilson thought he would try to make up a story, so he began "Well, once upon a time there was a boy who was very keen on detective work and his name was... Norman Bones." That very first yarn, entitled 'The Holes in the Garden', proved so popular with his boys (as did several subsequent ones) that Wilson decided to turn them into radio plays. They were at once accepted by the BBC's famous Children's Hour programme and the first one was broadcast on July 17th, 1943. It was an instant success with young listeners and Wilson was to write over a hundred subsequent radio plays featuring his youthful heroes.

Norman and Henry Bones were cousins who lived in the village of Sedgewick, in Norfolk. Norman was 16 or 17 (his age seemed to vary) and had black hair and alert, intelligent features; cousin Henry was 14¹/₂, with a mop of fair hair, a snub nose, and blue eyes which often twinkled mischievously. On radio, Norman was played by Charles Hawtreay throughout, and Henry (apart from in the first two episodes) by Patricia Hayes (who seemed to specialise in playing boys' roles on BBC radio at that time - I remember she was a memorable Kay Harker in the wonderful Children's Hour serials of Masfield's "The Box of Delights" and "The Midnight Folk").

Norman and Henry solved their mysteries, which frequently involved smugglers, spies, burglars and other assorted crooks, not to mention eerie old houses and dark woods, by sensible deduction and observation, combined with intelligence and persistence. They had a good relationship with the local police, who weren't above asking for their help in particularly baffling crimes. As author Wilson once said, the boys' secret was "observation, perseverance, a good general knowledge and a fair share of luck!"

Their little Norfolk village of Sedgewick was on the borders of the River Wash, some 45 miles west of Norwich and many of their adventures took place amidst the desolate Fen country, though they also investigated many mysteries that occurred in other parts of Britain while they were staying with friends or relatives. There was little mention of their school and they always appeared to be on holiday and fancy-free! The Boys' Own Paper once remarked, in a review: "Scotland Yard must be counting the days until they leave school and join the Force".

Anthony C. Wilson wrote his Bones plays for the BBC's Children's Hour all through the 1940s, 1950s and early-1960s - until, in fact, Children's Hour was 'killed

off in 1964 - a dreadful and controversial act that caused questions in Parliament and many thousands of protests from listeners of all ages. Six new Bones plays were broadcast during the last few weeks of the programme.

Wilson was nothing if not prolific. He wrote, at various times, that "50 Bones plays had been broadcast by 1950, 80 by 1959 and 93 by 1961". Another report said that by 1964 and the end of Children's Hour, 130 Bones plays had been transmitted. It's a wonder that Wilson ever found time for teaching at Feltonfleet!

The inevitable books followed the success of the radio plays, and Wilson enlisted the help of well-known children's writer (and one time Editor of Puffin Books) Eleanor Graham to help him turn his radio plays into narrative book-form. Each of the books contained three or four separate adventures and they were published as follows: *Norman Bones, Detective* (1949); *Norman and Henry Bones, the Boy Detectives* (1952); *Norman and Henry Bones Investigate* (1953); *Norman and Henry Solve the Problem* (1957); *Norman and Henry Follow the Trail* (1959). All were published by Methuen and illustrated; they were also re-issued in a Uniform Edition in 1959. In 1957 Puffin Books (Penguin) issued a paperback original titled *Four Mysteries Solved by Norman and Henry Bones*.

I personally always enjoyed the Norman and Henry Bones radio plays, and later the books, very much, although my enjoyment was often slightly marred by the boys' habit of addressing one another by their names at the end of almost every sentence. "What shall we do now, Norman?", "I haven't quite decided yet, Henry." "Why don't we call the Colonel, Norman?" "Yes, that's a good idea, Henry!" That sort of thing. Strangely, the books repeated the habit too.

In spite of this - and the fact that Norman and Henry never ever failed to solve a mystery - 'dem Bones' were **never** dry...



By

ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 242 - Schoolboy's Own Library No. 214 - "The Toff's Sacrifice"

In 1943, a schoolboy just about to be called up, I paid my first visit to the British Museum Library. The bombing of London having ended and the buzzbombs not then heard of, no objections were raised to my staying with relatives in Wimbledon. I had to be careful about money, and so I waited for the first Cheap Mid-day tram which cost, with a transfer to Bloomsbury, threepence each way, and lunch was available in a Lyons teashop for a shilling. For the daily expenditure of what is now 7½p the doors of the treasure house were opened to me.

When I arrived, the Principal Secretary looked quizzically over the top of his spectacles at the callow youth he beheld, but he acknowledged that nowhere else could I consult the Magnet and the Gem, and he allowed me a ticket for a week. There were wartime problems with the Reading Room and so I was allotted a small room to myself with a table and a chair. The Magnets were not bound but roughly tied up in yearly bundles of thick brown paper (no wonder Magnet No. 1 was missing), but the Schoolboy's Owns were in a pristine state, bound four to a volume in marbled covers. The first one that I read was "The Toff's Sacrifice".

The story was based on the two cousins, Talbot and Croke, and their differing attitudes to their uncle, Colonel Lyndon. Apparently Croke owed Bill Lodgey £50, which must have been a record debt in Hamiltoniana for a schoolboy to owe to a bookmaker. Croke begged Talbot to ask Colonel Lyndon for the money without mentioning his name but, before Croke knew the result of Talbot's application to their uncle, he seized the opportunity to take £50 from Mr. Railton's desk. As Trimble overheard part of Talbot's conversation with Colonel Lyndon, it seemed to be a possible connection with the missing money, and thus the stage was set for a fine imbroglio.

It may well be that Talbot was used too frequently, especially with allusions to his disreputable past, but I was then in no position to realise this. What astonished me at the time was the maturity of style, the complexity of the relationships, and the range of characters. I had been brought up on the reprint Gems, and this Schoolboys' Own, which was dated 1934, provided important parts for two juniors - Talbot and Trimble - who had not then arrived in the Gem, and I wrote to Charles Hamilton soon afterwards about the discrepancy in the characters and the quality of the writing. As I sat in that dusty little room in the British Museum, I devoured more and more of the Gem reprints, trying to catch up with a glorious past I then knew nothing about. That was the week, that was!

LITERARY LADIES IN DISGUISE

by Ray Hopkins

It is interesting to ponder on the fact that, while the gentlemen who wrote for the AP girls' papers hid themselves behind female nom-de-plumes, the ladies who wrote hardback books for boys disguised themselves by using what sounded like male names but, in some cases, were merely to transform their feminine Christian name into an initial. The lady who wrote as Kent Carr used her middle name, probably her own maiden name, and invented a surname which completely hid the fact that Mrs. Gertrude Oliver was writing boys' school stories.

From 1900 to 1912, Mary Fletcher Kitchin published four school stories for boys using the byline of Meredith Fletcher. The British Museum Reading Room has copies of these four. A fifth one which is not listed in their catalogues is "The Pretenders" and the illustration used as a frontispiece in the OUP reprint of 1924 looks very like one that might have originally appeared when the book was first published. It is interesting to note that the illustration pictured was by Harold C. Earnshaw who, Brian Doyle's very well-thumbed reference book tells me, was married to Mabel Lucie Attwell whose



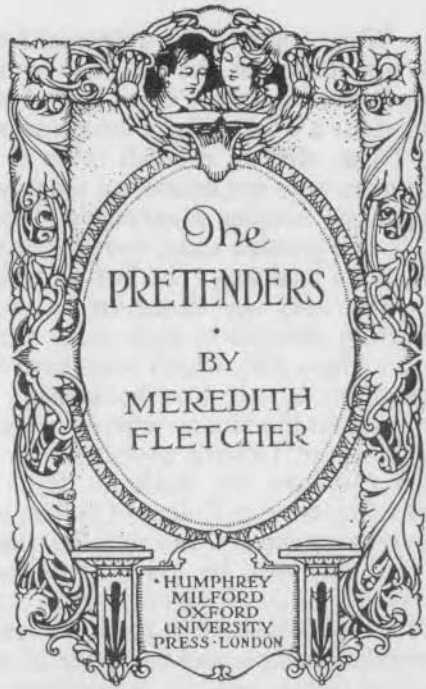
It was the collar I had taken off in Peter's room



THE THREE STARED AT EACH OTHER.

Fellow Press.

p. 107.



The
PRETENDERS

BY
MEREDITH
FLETCHER

HUMPHREY
MILFORD
OXFORD
UNIVERSITY
PRESS · LONDON

FELLOW FAGS

BY
E. TALBOT

FRONTISPIECE BY P. WALFORD

LONDON
THE SHELDON PRESS
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C. 2
NEW YORK AND TORONTO: THE MACRILLAN CO.
Printed in Great Britain

drawings are familiar to us from annuals purchased by relatives before we reached the age of nine or ten. I still have my childhood copy of "Peter Pan" which she illustrated.

I have only one book by E.M. Green, the initial E. standing for Edith, and this is a 1915 boys' school story entitled "The Dampier Boys". I made a note of only five stories by her which sounded as though they were written for boys but she, in fact, has 24 titles listed in the BM Catalogues.

As Noel Hope, Sarah L. Morewood wrote mostly religious books but she also has six books for boys written between 1904 and 1929. "A New Tommy Don't Know" (1907) and "Roger the Dodger" (1929) are two of her titles.

M. Harding Kelly wrote seven stories for boys, the titles of which sound like school stories, between 1905 and 1933. The initial M is to hide the fact that her name is Minnie, but her full listing contains 24 titles, including adult romances and religious works. "Boys of Gresham House" (1928) and "Tom Kenyon, Schoolboy" (1913) are two of her boys' school stories.

Between the Twenties and Forties, Jane Paterson Milne, using the shortened byline of J.P. Milne, wrote several boys' school stories, "The Boys of Moorfields School" being issued no less than four times from its initial appearance in 1929 to its final reprinting in 1944.

K. Wallis Coales, whose Christian name is Kathleen, wrote several Scouting hardback stories for boys in the Twenties and Thirties. She was also gifted in another way as she not only wrote the stories but illustrated them as well. "The Wharfbury Watch-Dogs. A Scouting Story" (1930) and "The Monkey Patrol" (1932) are typical titles.

A writer of an earlier period (her stories appeared between 1881 and 1930) is Ismay Thorn whose real name was Edith Caroline Pollock. She wrote at least two boys' school stories, "Captain Geoff" and "Geoff and Jim", neither of which appear in the BM Catalogues.

One wonders if, never having seen any to confirm this, the famous Bessie Marchant became B. Marchant on the spines and title pages of her several boys' books. She invariably appended subtitles making it easy for prospective readers to know at which group the tale was aimed. Typical titles are "Redwood Ranch. The adventures of a boy lost in a Californian Forest" (1911) and "Rolf the Rebel. Adventures and Escapes in Cuba" (1908).

Finally, there is Ethel Talbot, a very prolific writer with 108 titles to her credit, better known for her girls' school and Guiding stories but who also wrote school and Scouting stories for boys. Typical titles are "Fellow Fags" (1925) and "Billy of the Wolf Cubs" (1930). However, the byline on the latter is always firmly E. Talbot, with no indication that an Ethel is the hand hitting the typewriter keys. This possibly gives the clue as to why all these ladies, when writing for boys, used what sounded like male names or shortened their own Christian names to an initial, perhaps believing that schoolboys would refuse to read stories about themselves written by persons who had never been boys themselves.

WANTED: Monster Library No. 2. S.O.L.'s Nos. 4,27,54,56,120,216, Union Jack, Thriller, Detective Weekly, B.F.L.'s, Sexton Blake Library (all by E.S.B.), Nelson Lee. Also, early Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn's. Swan's Schoolboy Pocket Library. A. McKIBBIN, 1 Hudson Close, Lammack, Blackburn, Lancs., BB2 7DQ. Tel: 0254-54731.

THEY WERE GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS!

by Eric Fayne

In a recent month we referred to the period when "The Greyfriars Herald" first appeared as a separate entity from the Magnet. So perhaps it will not be inappropriate if I spend a few minutes now in browsing over that delightful little paper.

It seems to have been the brain-child of Mr. Hinton, who was the Editor of the Companion Papers at that time. The first issue was dated 20th November 1915, a time when our beloved country was well into the first Great War with the Kaiser's Germany.

Each issue cost a halfpenny, and comprised 20 pages, slightly smaller than the Gem and Magnet format. And it really gave the impression of being a real school magazine, with all the contributions being credited to named characters from our favourite school stories.

On one occasion the cover bore the heading, in large black type, "Most Novel Paper Published!" And that was true, without doubt. In another issue the heading proclaimed "Edited by Boys For Boys!" and that, of course, was a wee bit false, if we had bothered.

Throughout, the Herald was printed in black ink on white paper. And there were no advertisements. All these years later we think "How on earth did they make it pay?"

The Editorial Staff was made up of Editor: Harry Wharton, Sub-Editor: Mark Linley, Art Editor: Frank Nugent, Sports Editor: H. Vernon-Smith, Fighting Editor: Robert Cherry.



Harry Wharton wrote his Editorial on page 2. He completed his first Editorial with the following: "Let us, in spite of the fact that wars wage without, put our shoulders to the wheel and make this paper popularity itself, abounding in good and manly features, so that the generations of the future, on peering back at these numbers, may say of us with perfect sincerity: 'THEY WERE GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS!'"

And, dear friends of the C.D., surely that - about 75 years later - is EXACTLY what we DO say.

Every front cover carried a competition in picture form, the earlier ones being short topical letters to be solved, and the later ones some famous fables in puzzle form. The first prize was One Pound, and there were six consolation prizes of "hampers crammed full of most delicious 'tuck'".

I very much wanted a Tuck Hamper. My Mother used to send in an entry, in my name, most weeks. In No. 16 the competition told, in puzzle pictures, the fable of the Hare and the Tortoise.

By the time the result was announced, the Herald had finished, but the results were subsequently announced in the Boys' Friend. My Mum, in my name, won the first prize. Her stupid little lad was excited, but a wee bit disappointed. I wanted a Tuck Hamper.

(My Mum was always keen on competitions. The periodical, John Bull, came regularly to our home. Mum loved it, and was a great admirer of the wily editor, Horatio Bottomley. She entered almost every week for the John Bull "Bullets"

competition, and though I recall her efforts as witty and often clever, she never won more than a few bob down the years. and, I fancy, the entrant had to send a sixpenny postal-order with every two entries submitted. She certainly paid out heaps more than she ever got back. Bless her wonderful memories.)

Back to the Greyfriars Herald. The most popular and most memorable of all the regular features was the series under the title "The Adventures of Herlock Sholmes", by Peter Todd. Charles Hamilton told me once how very much he enjoyed writing them.

They were brilliant, hilarious little tales. I often wondered whether they did not infringe some form of copyright, for the characters - Herlock Sholmes, Dr. Jotson, Mrs. Spudson, Inspector Pineye, and Professor Hickory-Chickory were all skits on Conan Doyle characters, and the stories themselves were good natured mockery of actual stories of the Holmes of fiction. For instance "The Bound of the Baskervilles", "The Sign of Forty-Four" and the like.

The illustrations to the Herlock Sholmes tales were brilliant. I have often wondered who the artist really was, and have tried, unsuccessfully, to link the drawings with one or the other of the splendid little group of A.P. artists.

A serial was "The Pride of the Ring", by Mark Linley. A tale of professional boxing, it was probably good, but I do not recall that I ever read any of it.

"Letters to the Editor" came from "celebrities, nonentities, and others" - all people connected with the Hamilton stories.

A page of comic pictures, relating a comic story, was "The Rollicking Revels of bubble and Squeak, the Terrible Twins", drawn by Frank Nugent, with his initials F.N. in the corner of the last picture on that page. I have an idea that Bubble and Squeak may have pre-dated the more famous characters, Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred, in a national newspaper, but I may be wrong.

Johnny Bull did "Our Weekly Cartoon". "Police-Court News at Greyfriars" appeared "with profuse Apologies to the Daily Papers".

And each week there were several short stories of the schools, written ostensibly by the boys of those schools.

It was a weekly delight for those of us who were very young at that time. No. 18, dated 18th March 1916, bore the following sad words at the top of the front cover: "Au Revoir, But Not Good-bye!"

Harry Wharton, the Editor, promised that it would re-appear after the war in all its glory. The serial "The Pride of the Ring" was transferred to the Magnet. Bubble and Squeak went into Chuckles, the popular halfpenny comic, and the Tuck Hamper Competition went into the Boys' Friend.

And in that 18th and final issue, Dick Penfold, who had contributed heaps of grand verses as the weeks passed, contributed the following:

Farewell, my merry little mag,
 My comrade and adviser!
 You've got to stop and shut up shop,
 Through that confounded Kaiser!
 My manuscripts are drenched with tears,
 My heart is heavy-laden;



I feel as if I've had a tiff,
With some angelic maiden!

Farewell to you, friend Herlock Sholmes!
Adieu, dear Doctor Jotson!
It must be odd for Peter Todd
To have no plans or plots on!
Farewell to Wharton's good advice!
Farewell to Squeak and Bubble!
The whole wide world, it seems, is hurled
In boundless seas of trouble!

And so on, for 2 more verses.

THE ADVENTURES OF HERLOCK SHOLMES.

No. 1.
THE ADVENTURE OF THE
DIAMOND PINS.

CHAPTER ONE.

SHOLMES was examining attentively, under a powerful microscope, a leading article in the "Daily Mail," when I came into our sitting-room at Shaker Street. He looked round with a lazy smile.

"I have surprised you, my dear Jotson," he remarked.

"You are always surprising me, Sholmes," I replied. "May I ask what you hope to discover by a microscopical examination of a daily paper?"

He yawned slightly as he laid down the microscope.

"Merely an amusement, Jotson. It may not have occurred to you that by a careful examination of the type in which an article is printed, much may be learned of the man who wrote it; in fact, his age, form, and starting-price, with sufficient care and attention. A simple amusement for an idle moment, my dear Jotson."

"You amaze me, Sholmes."

"Not at all, my dear Jotson. I do not say that this theory is widely known. Scotland Yard would smile at the idea." Herlock Sholmes shrugged his shoulders, as he frequently did at the mention of Scotland Yard, and changed the



HERLOCK & HOLMES.

Written by
PETER TODD.

subject. "I see that you have not shaved this morning, Jotson."

"Sholmes, how could you possibly know—?"

He laughed.

"Is it not a fact?" he asked.

"It is a fact, certainly. But how you guessed—?"

"It was not a guess, Jotson," Sholmes frowned a little. "I never guess. I leave guesswork to the police. It was a simple deduction, Jotson, simply explained. After shaving, your

face presents a smooth and newly-mown appearance. I have observed this on innumerable occasions."

"True. But—"

"At the present moment it presents a rough and hairy appearance. To a trained eye, my dear Jotson, the conclusion is instant and obvious. You have not shaved."

"It is simple enough now that you explain it, Sholmes, but I confess it would not have occurred to me. Yet I have endeavoured to study your methods."

"Rome was not built in a day, my dear fellow," said Sholmes, with a smile. "You must take time. It would amuse me to test your progress. Look at this, and tell me what you deduce from it."

He took a large pistol from a drawer, and handed it to me. "I



There was a desperate struggle. In the midst of it the door was flung open, and Inspector Pinkie rushed into the room. (See Chapter 2.)

A is for ALONZO, the Duffer so mild,
Who aims at redeeming the ways that are wild.

B is for BUNTER, in need of a muzzle,
Who eats not to live, but lives just to guzzle.

And in his Editorial, Wharton announced: "You will all be delighted to hear that an occasional issue of the Greyfriars Herald will be published in supplementary form in the "Magnet" Library. It is proposed, in fact, to include one with the next Double Number of that famous paper."

So Editor Wharton obviously had a bit of a "pull" with Editor Hinton.

There is no doubt that this earliest issue of the Greyfriars Herald was a genuine victim of the paper shortage caused by the War. There is proof in the fact that at the start of November 1919, when the world was getting back to normal, the Greyfriars Herald, as a separate entity, was back each week on the book stalls. Maybe our C.D. Editor will let me browse over the early post-war Herald in a coming issue of our wonderful little mag.

CLIFF HOUSE ANNALS

by Margery Woods

A GOOD YEAR FOR CLARA

The Cliff House Annals in the guise of Hilda Richards were usually scrupulously fair in the proportion of story content allotted to the many and varied characters who made up the cosmopolitan world of Cliff House School. All had their turn to be featured, from young Boker, the school pageboy, through junior and senior favourites to Miss Primrose herself. Naturally Barbara Redfern and Co. received the most limelight, with popular and striking characters like Diana Royston-Clarke, Dulcía Fairbrother, Rosa Rodworth and the many newcomers who entered the school from time to time to provide conflict, being close runners up.

Occasionally one character tended to dominate several series throughout a year, usually a very strong and turbulent personality, as in the many series featuring Diana. One senses that these dominant characters could possess the author's writing spirit so strongly that the story was swept along to completion with compelling force, a very satisfactory writing state for most authors. But Diana wasn't the only girl to come into this happy category. Jemima Carstairs and Bessie Bunter could carry a long storyline quite easily on their young shoulders, and so could the immensely popular tomboy of the fourth, Clara Trevlyn.

Clara was born for trouble and conflict. She was stubborn, tactless, honest to the point of bluntness, fiercely loyal, energetic and passionately fond of animals. Credited, perhaps a little unkindly, with clumsiness and large feet, Clara abhorred meanness and injustice. She would die rather than let her



TEMPESTUOUSLY the Tomboy tore the card into pieces. "And that," she announced grimly, "is what I think of the Secret Society."

friends suffer at the hands of unscrupulous trouble-makers, and this courage, coupled with her headstrong nature, ensured the kind of story guaranteed to keep the reader's emotions swinging from laughter to tears very quickly, and often with impatience, for one could always see ahead of Clara and know that she was about to plunge those feet of hers straight into trouble.

The year of 1933 was a particularly exciting year for Clara.

In CLARA MAKES HER CHOICE we find her in stubborn contention with most of the form, especially Frances Frost, over a cricket match to be played against the Friardale boys' team. This match was an annual fixture, during which the boys handicapped themselves by playing left-handed! But Clara has decided recklessly to challenge the boys on level terms, to the dismay of the Fourth, many of whom believe they are bound to be defeated.

Frances stirs up antagonism against Clara and challenges her for the Junior Sports Captaincy. But Clara knows that Frances has reasons of her own, unknown to the form. Frances has boasted to her parents that she is captain of sports, and now her parents have suddenly decided to visit Cliff House to watch their daughter captain the team against Friardale. Meanwhile, Clara has suffered a heart-rending episode when her beloved Alsatian Pluto has been dangerously ill and Oswald Musgrove, a local boy artist who is earning his school fees and helping support a father who is ill, has virtually saved Pluto's life. He loves cricket, and Clara, daring the Friardale boys to play level with Cliff House if they will give Oswald a place in the team, has set in motion the criss-cross of motives which dictate the storyline. Bounds, and a window, are broken. A lot of treachery is plotted. Bessie goes in to bat! Clara has to resign, and a lot of trouble is in store for her before the final events work out happily for her and the Junior School cricket team.

A few weeks later the Tomboy is back in the limelight again, this time in CLARA THE UNCONQUERED, in which she goes to the Fair, strictly against Primmy's orders, where she manages to land in danger from which she is saved by a little fairground dancer waif.

Soon Clara is deeply involved in Thelma the dancer's problems, at the inevitable cost to herself. There is the usual brutal-parents-and-thieving-sister syndrome, except that of course Thelma is really lost to her own family through the villainy of an uncle who has inherited the property which should be hers. Thanks to the loyalty, compassion and courage of the Tomboy local robberies are solved and Thelma is restored to her aunt and her rightful inheritance.

Less than a month later, in November 1933, Clara takes the stage again in THE CLASH OF THE CAPTAINS.

This time she challenges the Firebrand herself. Diana, having collared Barbara Redfern's captaincy, now turns her greedy ambition on Clara's. But Clara is as tough in her own way as, and more than a match for, the platinum blonde Diana.

Whereas Diana had a hold over Babs, she has no weapon with which to lever Clara out of office. This does not stop her using every trick she can think of, which at first seems to promise success. While the three girls battle it out, their respective fathers are also locked in business wrangles. But Diana does not give up easily. Soon Clara is on the brink of expulsion, Babs' authority is lost, and Diana is about to gain a great prize, her 1st Eleven colours. Unfortunately for Diana her schemes have all cost money, she is threatened by a writ against her father who refuses to settle her debts and breaks the news to her that he is no longer wealthy and is about to leave the country. It is difficult to feel any sympathy for the Firebrand! Then Clara, feeling she has little to lose, for

once resorts to cunning and manages to lead Dianas so far from the school she misses the vital match, thus losing her chance of her much coveted 1st Eleven colours.

The tide is turned and the truth of Diana's many schemes emerges. She is almost expelled but not quite! What would Cliff House have done without her to supply such strong conflict? Babs and Clara are reinstated, Christmas is on the horizon, and for a while peace reigns in the Fourth Form. Clara is happy and that is what matters most to the legion of admirers of this plucky, lovable girl.

BIGGLES AND BOOKS

by Jennifer Schofield

When Biggles was ordered by his doctor to take a sea voyage as a rest-cure, he also sampled the restorative powers of reading - but not for long. Stretching and yawning, he flung his book onto the deck of the ship and made no attempt to save it as it slid towards the rail, its pages fluttering in the wind. Algy pointed out that it would soon go overboard.

'A watery grave would be too good an ending for such balderdash', Biggles retorted coldly.

Ginger protested that he had been told that it was a good book but Biggles was adamant in his opinion. 'The fellow who told you that ought to be made to eat it.'

Happily, a few minutes later, the ship came under aerial attack and Biggles, together with his friends, was far too busy swimming ten miles to the shore and getting involved with the Spanish Civil War to feel bored any more. The volume - whatever its title - sank without trace. Still, it had played a unique part in the series in provoking the hero to make his only recorded comments as a literary critic.

At first the incident might seem to typify Biggles' attitude to reading - a dull activity to be abandoned with relief - but this was not the case. As a teenager, he was subject to recurring fits of fever, the legacy of his childhood in India, and long spells in bed meant that he had plenty of time to read. By the age of fourteen he had read a number of books in advance of his age and had developed a taste for accounts of travel and exploration and for history, although he also admitted to a liking for detective stories.

Nor were the Classics neglected. As a schoolboy, Biggles amazed his chum, Smith, during a discussion about dealing with a bully by remarking, 'when an inferior force meets a superior one it must use its head.'

'Who told you that?' gasped Smith.

'Herodotus.'

It seems unlikely that Biggles continued to keep up with such scholarly reading habits as an adult, but his boyhood studies always stood him in good stead. His geography was excellent and he was seldom at a loss for some erudite piece of

BIGGLES GOES TO SCHOOL

THE STORY OF BIGGLES' EARLY LIFE
AND SCHOOL DAYS

BY
CAPT. W. E. JOHNS



HODDER AND STOUGHTON

information, excelling himself in 'Biggles Sets a Trap' (1962) by knowing all about a meeting *sub rosa*, under the rose of secrecy, and proving to be perfectly at home in a feudal world of heraldry, curses and croaking ravens. We know that he had a very good memory for the lessons of his schooldays, for in 'Biggles and the Leopards of Zinn' (1960) he was able to demonstrate the presence of bauxite in the area by means of an experiment he had seen in the lab at Malton Hall.

As a young officer in the RFC, Biggles' reading was frankly escapist. In the Mess at 266 Squadron, Maranique, he perused 'La Vie Parisienne' but he also enjoyed a good, old-fashioned adventure story. In an early RFC tale we catch a glimpse of him on leave in England, clad in grey flannels and a sweater, whiling a way a foggy day with a book by the fire. His choice was a novel by Rafael Sabatini, an author noted for his dramatic historical romances.



Biggles carefully stuck a pin into the big atlas that lay open on the table

The boy who loved distant places, brave men, the secrets of the past and the crimes of the present was truly father to the intrepid pilot, adventurer and Air Detective. Lastly, how alike Biggles and his creator are! In this matter, as in so many others. In describing the airman's choice of literature Captain W.E. Johns was telling us about his own.

It is when it comes to writing books that the picture changes, although Biggles had at least one work to his credit. Not all readers may know that he was the author of a handbook entitled 'Crime and the Aeroplane' intended for the new Air Police Force, and presumably published about 1949. No doubt it was first-class of its kind, accurate, hard hitting and to the point, but as far as we know, the experiment was not repeated. After his RFC and RAF days were over, Bill Johns opted to live a life of the imagination

A romantic work of fiction of a more lurid kind was to feature in an episode set in the period between the two World Wars. Biggles and Algy decided to do the British Secret Service a good turn by temporarily removing a Russian agent from circulation whilst some delicate negotiations were going on in the interests of Britain. They marooned the unlucky Nikitoff on an uninhabited island in the Persian Gulf, with some stores, and a book entitled 'Three Weeks' to indicate to him how soon he would be rescued. Johns did not see fit to inform his young readers that 'Three Weeks' was the most famous effusion from the pen of Elinor Glyn, best-selling author and one-time mistress of Lord Curzon, an erotic novel of purple patches, passion and love-making on a tiger-skin. Had Biggles ever read this story, or did he choose it entirely for its title? We may also wonder what Nikitoff thought of it.

As we consider Biggles' books, certain factors stand out. It is splendid to know that the hero of so many stirring tales enjoyed sitting down with a ripping yarn himself. Then it is fascinating to see how well Biggles' tastes in reading fit in with all we know about him.

whereas Biggles lived a life of action. But if Johns wrote book after book, creating an unsurpassed world of adventures, Biggles was the unsurpassed hero of that same world, and so if not alike they were complementary.

And now, only two questions remain. What was that book Biggles despised so much on the sea voyage that ended so abruptly? Did he ever read Elinor Glyn's throbbing tale of love and passion (and a tiger skin)? I can never prove this, but in my own mind I am perfectly certain that the book Biggles sent to the bottom of the ocean was - 'Three Weeks'!

LEVISON'S LAST MATCH PART I

by Peter Mahony

Ernest Levison shrugged his shoulders. The overcast skies outside the England dressing room were typical of his luck. He wondered gloomily whether his last Test would be a wash-out.

For once, he had arrived early at the ground. In his hey-day he had been noted - or was it notorious? - for his careless approach to the game. With a wry grin, he recalled an appearance at Melbourne in full evening-dress, fresh - if that was the word - from a night out at the Wombat Casino. Mason, England's skipper of the time, had thrown a pink fit. Levison, disgruntled by a losing streak and suffering from a champagne hangover, had found solace by aggravating the situation. Mason had stormed out, lost the toss, and returned seething. By that time, Levison had managed to change and was looking forward to a spell in the dressing-room, sleeping it off. Instead, he had been required to stagger onto the field and tackle Australia on a shirt-front. Angry and resentful, he had taken it out of the Aussies. Five for thirty two before lunch; seven for fifty three in the innings; Australia all out 147. How he had done it, he didn't know - even now. Nevertheless, it had saved his place for another few series.

Now, he was at the end of the line. Though his form was still good - only last season he had captured his four hundredth Test wicket - the Press and the Media had been hinting for some time that younger blood was needed. That hadn't bothered him - he was used to a bad Press; but this time the selectors had taken the hints. The invitations for the West Indies' tour had been issued - and he had not been included. For eighteen successive years, he had wintered abroad, living at England's expense. But, now, the horn of plenty was running dry.

Morosely, he assessed his future prospects. The income of a Test cricketer, particularly in recent years, was lucrative - and, by thunder, he had needed it. Ever since his schooldays at St. Jim's, he had lived beyond his means. The high-life, fast cars, faster women - above all, the gambling - had got rid of the money faster than he had earned it. Indeed, but for the pavilion 'card schools', he would have frequently been on his 'uppers'. The wet, blank days of each season had always brought welcome replenishment to his exchequer. Sardonicly, he reflected that today, with several new 'caps' in the side, he probably stood to make some pickings. Somehow, though, he didn't want that this time. He would much prefer to go out in a blaze of glory, knocking over Australian wickets. The door opened and a number of players entered. Tom Merry, England's skipper, tossed his bag into a corner and looked grimly at Levison.

"You're here then, Lev? What happened yesterday?"

Levison shrugged - a habit which always succeeded in irritating his captain. Perhaps that was why he did it. Carelessly, he replied.

"Couldn't make it. The car packed up on me. Didn't you get my message?"

"Yes. I got it." Tom's voice was quiet. "I got it at quarter past three, just as we were finishing."

"That late? I can't imagine why it took so long. Don't tell me I was missed."

"As it happens, you were. Still..." Merry broke off, deciding that the subject wasn't worth pursuing. After all, the fellow was at the finish. He had never known Levison to be keen on practice. It was a bit late to expect anything different from him now. For years they had been contemporaries. First, at St. Jim's; then, briefly at University; finally, as cricketers. After graduating, Merry had spent several years in the States. He had come relatively late to the first-class game. Fit, strong and a fine batsman, he had soon made his mark. Within a season, he had been capped. A year later, he was leading England. Levison, already an established Test player, had not been an enthusiastic subordinate. For several seasons, now, an uneasy truce had existed.

Despite their differences, Tom had a healthy admiration of Levison's skill. Pace bowlers were the work-horses of the game. They came and went - bursting with energy at first; then injury-prone; finally, burned-out, they departed the Test scene after three or four seasons at the most. Levison had somehow avoided all that. His wiry frame, with its narrow shoulders seemed tireless; his sallow complexion, indicative of late nights and dissipation, never altered; yet his naggingly accurate bowling, delivered at a lively pace, was always competent and often devastating. The greatest weapon in his armoury - a genuinely quick leg-break - had brought him a rich haul of wickets. England's attack would be vastly poorer without him.

Nevertheless, the retirement was inevitable. This season, Levison had gone too far. At Lord's, there had been trouble over the 'card-school'. Howarth of Downshire, a disgruntled loser, had created a 'scene'. Levison's calculated insolence, on being reproved by Stangate, chairman of Selectors, had not helped matters. Howarth, a good bat, had been dropped, and it had taken all Tom's tact and influence to persuade the selectors to retain Levison for the rest of the series.

In the event, Tom's objective judgement had been fully vindicated. One down after Lords, they had levelled the series at Old Trafford with barely ten minutes to spare. Even then, Levison had 'made waves'. Before play commenced, he had been asked to confirm his availability for the West Indies' tour. His cool demand for a 'differential' of £3,500 as an inducement to make the trip had outraged the authorities. Then, he had gone out and taken 6 for 110 to show exactly why he was worth it.

Tom, with other matters to worry about, dismissed Levison from his mind. He went out, saw the umpires, chatted to Kit Conroy, the Australian skipper, and looked in on the Selectors. When he returned, the 'card school' was in full flow. Levison, the inevitable cigarette dangling from his lips, was dealing. A small pile of money was in the 'pot', including several bank notes. Compressing his lips, Tom crossed to the table and said: "You've started early!"

Levison nodded shortly. The others, all established Test men, looked slightly uncomfortable.

"The rain's stopped," observed Tom. "I'm due to toss up soon."

"Go ahead, skipper. Don't mind us." Levison's flippancy was only thinly veiled.

"But I do mind! I want to talk to you and Stan. Finish that hand; then knock it off."

"To hear is to obey." Levison tossed a fiver into the pot. "That covers the raise. I'll see you all."

There was a show of cards. The pot fell to Levison. Carelessly, he gathered in the spoils, slipped them into his hip pocket and looked inquiringly at Tom.

"The umpires hope to start at twelve. Come and have a look at the wicket."

Levison followed Merry and Lorimer (the vice-captain and star all-rounder) onto the field. The outfield squelched under their boots. Lorimer pulled a face.

"I wouldn't fancy fielding on this," he remarked. "It'll need a good couple of hours to dry."

"That's not on," said Tom. "I want to win this match. The sooner we get them out here, the better. The point is - will there be any help from the conditions?" He glanced hopefully at Levison.

"In the old days, when we didn't cover the wickets, I'd have been keen to bowl at them. Could have cut and skidded it quite a bit. Now, all we'll get is some swerve while the air's heavy. And the run-ups'll be slippery. Still, if you want to win" He shrugged again - his usual method of showing indifference.

"What about you, Stan?"

Lorimer grimaced. He did not fancy the prospects, but pride deterred him from labouring the point. If the 'old devil' was prepared to bowl, how could he - in the strength and flush of youth - refuse? Reluctantly, he nodded.

"O.K. skipper! We'll do our best.

"Good. Now, it's up to me to win the toss."

(To be continued)

ANSWERS TO MARGERY WOODS' SEASONAL ANAGRAMS IN LAST MONTH'S C.D.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Angel Chimes | 6. Jemima Carstairs |
| 2. Valerie Drew | 7. Madge Minden |
| 3. Betty Barton | 8. Party Crackers |
| 4. Horace Coker | 9. Magnet and Gem |
| 5. Pantomime | 10. Herbert Vernon-Smith |

WANTED: ENID BLYTON/W.E. JOHNS/CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers, all pre 1960 ephemera. £20 each offered for Biggles "Boys Friend Libraries". £5 each offered for "Thriller" nos. 88,116,157,176,280,286,392,393,469,583,586.

NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, WD1 4JL. Tel: 0923 32383.

"WILDINGS - THE SECRET GARDEN OF EILEEN SOPER" by Duff Hart-Davis. Published by H.F. & G. WITHERBY LTD. at £14.99. Reviewed by Norman Wright.

Eileen Soper's work as prolific illustrator has been well loved by generations of children, yet of her private life little has been written. This book, by Duff Hart-Davis, helps to redress that balance. Through the pages of his book he takes us through Eileen's youth, when she studied under her father, George Soper, and on to her later years when she became a virtual recluse in Wildings, the family house near Welwyn where she spent nearly all of her life. We learn of her great love for the wild things around her and of her rejection of most of the outside world.



The book is beautifully produced with well over one hundred illustrations, many of them in colour, of Eileen's superb wildlife paintings and drawings. Although her main commercial work was book illustration, her passion was for the teeming wildlife that lived and flourished in her extensive wild garden and it is on this aspect of her work that the book concentrates, with only passing references to her book illustrations. In fact the author mistakenly attributes her work on Enid Blyton's Famous Five series as beginning in 1944, when in fact she illustrated the first 'Fives' book in 1942, but this is a minor grouse.

Most of the illustrations in this book are taken from the original artwork and the quality shows through in the beautifully reproduced colour pages, making it a joy to look

through time and time again. Many of Eileen Soper's paintings were recently on display at the Wildlife Gallery in Lavenham where they proved very popular with customers. For those who cannot afford to buy an original, this book is the next best thing.

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club. Volume No. 1 'The Worst Boy at Greyfriars', No. 2 'Loder for Captain', No. 3 'The Making of Harry Wharton', No. 4 'Harry Wharton & Co. in India', and No. 6 'Paul Dallas at Greyfriars'. Must be in fine to very good condition. State your price please.
W.L. BAWDEN, 14 Highland Park, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 2EX.

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

By W.O. G. Lofts

"Danny" in the July 1991 C.D. raises the interesting point as to why no one has so far written about The Empire Library. The main reason I should think, is that issues have always been extremely scarce. I've only seen a few odd copies in all the time I have been in the hobby. Apart from this, it is difficult to write about a paper that only contains a single story and serial. "Danny", I thought, had missed out a very important feature as I will relate later on.

Indeed, there are far more interesting details behind the scenes of the Empire Library than in it, according to the former Gem and Magnet editor C.M. Down, the old Amalgamated Press official records, as well as Charles Hamilton himself, as I will reveal.

Following the highly successful launch of The Gem and The Magnet related by "Danny", there was no doubt that Percy Griffith now had a star author in his stable. In those days editors got commission on sales, so obviously Griffith was a very happy man. It has been said that Charles Hamilton had actually written an odd full length story featuring Rylcombe Grammar School which, again as "Danny" states, had appeared at odd times in The Gem. He had submitted this to the editor under his real name for him to place somewhere in one of his papers.

Percy Griffith went even one better, as here was a golden opportunity to launch another paper (with more commission) with his star writer (in today's terms Frank Richards would be a megga star writer). The paper would be called The Empire Library to cater for the readers in the Dominions as well as in Great Britain. The school would also feature an Australian boy to give more flavour.

Most unfortunately, and before the first copy had appeared, Charles Hamilton had had some dispute with Percy Griffith, with the outcome that he flatly refused to have anything more to do with it, so consequently the paper was doomed from the start. Mr. C.M. Down who was on the staff related this to me in letters, adding that he and H.A. Hinton (having already penned some substitute tales for the Magnet and Gem) had to write the opening stories.

This was confirmed by the official A.P. records when perused some years ago. Nos. 1-7 were written editorially; 8, 9 and 10 were penned by Alfred Barnard, who had around the same time written Gem No. 120 "The Terrible Three's Committee". "Danny" queries who he was. He had written a lot of stories and serials up to 1911, but then left Amalgamated Press and became editor of several magazines, one of which he owned. He was also at one time a features editor on The Daily Mirror. He had two sons, both writers, one of whom wrote a few substitute yarns in Magnet, and was killed later in the Black and Tans conflict.

The rest of the stories in the 1st series featuring Gordon Gay were seemingly penned by the Hinton/Down combination, but with one exception. No. 32. "The Grammar Schools Great Jape", was the only genuine yarn in the series. The fee for that was paid to Charles Hamilton. One can perhaps assume that this was his original story, which the editor felt he might as well use.



Alfred Barnard had also penned the Jack Rhodes series, about City Life, that was mingled amongst the Gordon Gay tales. "Lawrence Miller" was a pen name of E.W. Alias, whilst "Jack Lancaster" who wrote the Panther Grayne detective stories, was none other than A.M. Burrage the famous Victorian writer.

If ever proof was needed that Charles Hamilton never wrote the Empire Library tales (with one exception) it comes from the great man himself. Readers of the C.D. who have fairly early copies will find a number of references by him denying that he was "Prosper Howard" of the stories. All he knew about the name was that in 1912 H.A. Hinton, who had then taken over the editorship from Percy Griffith, had requested him to write a serial for The Gem featuring Rylecombe Grammar School which would appear under the "Prosper Howard" pen-name to give the real author a leg up! Charles Hamilton had then no idea who he was, but was later surprised to learn that it was Hinton himself. The Gem serial entitled "The School Under Canvas" was reprinted in the Boys Friend Library a year later.

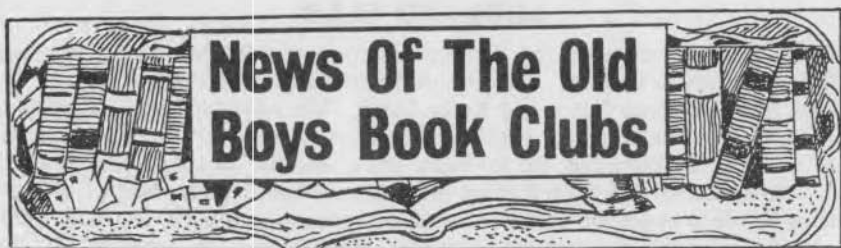
On one occasion I sent my own copy of The Empire Library to Charles Hamilton for his comments about the Rylcombe story. He most kindly commented, and pointed out odd words and phrases that he would never use. Some of the sentence constructions were also far longer than he would have ever used.

One of the best features of The Empire Library was the brilliant of illustrations by Warwick Reynolds, especially in the first issue. Figures seemed drawn from true life, and not a bit overblown like so many obviously hurried pictures in the First World War Gems.

The Empire Library which ran to 36 issues was certainly a hotchpotch affair; according to C.M. Down the staff never knew what would appear until the last minute. Towards the end of its run Hinton had taken over the full editorship, and, giving it a last chance, started a new series in large format with a white cover. This was to avoid it being confused with The Boys Realm. Alas, the mixture was no better than before, and the Gordon Gay tales were reduced to mainly one page efforts. After 28 issues it was amalgamated with Boys Realm Football and Sports Library. Curiously this paper, launched two years earlier, had started off with Pelham School with Jack Noble & Co., a creation of Charles Hamilton, but later tales were written by a host of sub-writers. A case of history repeating itself!

Various pre-war duplicate Boy's Papers: Nelson Lees, S.O.L., B.F.L., S.B.L. (3rd series) - exchanges preferred. Hutchinson's "Animals of all Countries". 50 fortnightly issues. Complete edition. 1923/24. Coloured plates. 2,344 pages. Hitler's "Mein Kampf" 18 weekly parts, 200 full page plates. 584 pages c.1939. Would exchange for pre-war Boys' Papers. K. TOWNSEND, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE6 6EA. Tel. Burton-on-Trent 703305.

WANTED TO PURCHASE: Pink Boys' Realms in good condition, either singly or bound, preferably featuring the complete stories of: "Hal Read, The Running Man", and/or "The Curse of the Curzons", and/or "The Web of the Spider". Please quote price, if available. ROBERT W. STORY, 3733 St. Laurent Court, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5 L4T3.



SOUTH WESTERN CLUB

The front room of No. 20, Uphill Road, was pleasantly full on the afternoon of Sunday, 22nd September. The nine people present were: Simon Garratt, W. Grant McPherson, Una and Brian Hamilton-Wright, Geoff Lardner, Bill Lofts (in the chair), Tom Penn, Mrs. Radford and our host, Tim Salisbury. Alan Cooper and Terry Jones sent apologies.

The main speaker was Mrs. Hamilton-Wright, who fascinated us with her account of "A Day in the Life of Frank Richards", based on her childhood memories of her uncle.

She is Frank Richards' niece and god-daughter. Because, at about the age of four, she suffered from chestiness, he chose a house near the sea - Rose Lawn, at Kingsgate - for himself to live in and for Una and her mother to spend their holidays. Later her mother bought Mandeville, opposite to Rose Lawn.

Thus as she grew up she spent a great deal of time with her uncle and his personality and life-style were absorbed into her memory in great detail. Her account of these memories took us into his family circle and gave us a rounded picture of Frank Richards the man.

She described his appearance - stocky, with broad shoulders and small hands and feet - and outlined the pattern of his day, from making early morning tea through to "Lights Out" at 11.00. Normally he would work in the mornings and afternoons but when she and her mother were there he would stop at lunchtime in order to devote the rest of the day to them. To compensate he would have written in the evenings during the preceding few weeks and thus had stories in hand.

Bill Lofts continued the meeting by telling us of the time when he was asked by the editor of the Fleetway Record, the house magazine of Fleetway House, to write a series on some of the characters from the Fleetway House publications.

In the last few minutes Geoff gave a short account of the pleasure he had gained as a boy from reading and re-reading Mark Twain's "Adventures of Tom Sawyer". This was based on the author's own boyhood in the little town of Hannibal, on the west bank of the Mississippi in Missouri State. One of the most memorable occasions in Geoff's life occurred when, in 1976, he visited Hannibal and amongst other things, stood in front of the fence said to be the successor to the famous one for which Tom sold off the painting rights to all his friends, and visited the cave where Tom and his sweetheart Becky Thatcher were lost, and where the murderer Injun Joe met his end.

The next meeting has been provisionally arranged for Sunday, 26th April, 1992.

GEOFF LARDNER

MIDLAND CLUB

Nine members attended the Autumn meeting of The Midland Club, held at Blackheath Library in October. Once again the meeting opened with memorial tributes - to Jack Bellfield, Joan Golen and Bruce Lamb. We were pleased to welcome Una Hamilton-Wright whose talk, entitled 'One Foot in the Cradle', gave a fascinating insight into Charles Hamilton, the favourite uncle, and life in Hampstead and at Rose Lawn. Much discussion followed about the homes he had lived in, Edith Hood and the problems involved in getting back his characters, schools and even pen name, after the war. High tea brought the meeting to an end. Provisionally the next meeting will be held on 28th March, same venue.

CHRISTINE BRETTELL

LONDON O.B.B.C.

The Christmas meeting of the London Club was held at Bill Bradford's home in Ealing. Brian Doyle kicked off with Part 2 of his reminiscences of 35 years in the film industry. Another excellent presentation with lots of interesting anecdotes to delight the many film fans present.

Tea followed, a first-class spread worthy of 'Bunter Court'!

Roger Jenkins then gave us his traditional Christmas reading, this time the very funny sequence from Magnet No. 1191 in which Lord Cavandale naively agrees to let Bunter stay with him for the Christmas holidays.

Larry Morley's "variety" quiz proved to be a real brain-teaser and there were no really high scores, although it was thoroughly enjoyed by all present. Roy Parsons secured first place, followed by Brian Doyle and Don Webster, second and third respectively.

Mark Taha brought the meeting to a close with a reading of three extracts from the Greyfriars Herald section of Magnet No. 1296, top of the bill being 'Billy Bunter's Christmas Ball'.

Warm thanks were expressed to our host, Bill Bradford, for his kind hospitality.

The January meeting will be held at Chris and Suzanne Harper's home (23 Algiers Road, Loughton).

ALAN PRATT

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

Chairman Joan welcomed the twelve members present on a fine December evening - a stark contrast to last year when deep snow on the ground resulted in our having to cancel our Christmas party.

As is now tradition, the food table was groaning with foodstuffs provided by those present (with some appropriate beverages that should not have graced the study tables of Greyfriars!). Being a social occasion rather than business, just a little time was spent on discussing the new Club Library Catalogue devised by Paul Galvin and Mark Caldicott. Geoffrey had printed this long awaited edition and it was greeted with enthusiasm and appreciation to all who had been involved. It certainly revealed the extensiveness of our library. This A4 size catalogue and details of library facilities are available at £2.00, including postage, from Paul Galvin, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

Joan presented two novel and hilarious games - a one-sided telephone conversation where we had to try and guess the caller. Her footprints game proved to be a great

success, with a number of members making notes for their own Christmas parties at home! Geoffrey then presented a delightful reading from the Cavandale Abbey series. A most successful party enjoyed by all, and we look forward to a further year of interesting meetings at Northern Club.

A Very Happy New Year to all readers of the C.D.!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

TRIBUTES TO JACK TREVOR STORY

From BILL LOFTS:

The death of Jack Trevor Story on 5th December means that probably the last of the Hobby's wonderful old characters has now left us. He is probably best known to readers of the new look Sexton Blake Library under W. Howard Baker, who first introduced me to him in the fifties. Jack had a great sense of humour, with never a dull moment when he was at our weekly gathering. This was reflected in his stories, which were mainly of a black comedy nature.

Jack introduced me to his wife, Ross, a great Nelson Lee fan, who eventually wrote some fine articles in the C.D. and who died a few years ago. Jack was really a first class writer, with a best-seller to his name, having it later filmed by Alfred Hitchcock. He could have cashed in on his fame, and become a household word, but owing to his erratic life-style ended up impecunious.

I actually helped him with one novel that was adapted from one of his Sexton Blake stories, 'Man Pinches Bottom', based on the happenings of a comic editor I knew. This book is one of the most treasured in my bookcase, dedicated "to WOGL with gratitude for his help and research and happy flow of anecdotes which inspired 'Percy' (the editor) and the men behind the world of Kiddies Comics". Another best seller 'Live Now, Pay Later', is also dedicated to me: 'His favourite cash customer --- and old Boy of Greyfriars'. Jack will be greatly missed.

From JACK ADRIAN:

Though oddly Conservative at heart (politically), pulp-fiction writers tend to lead extravagant and rackets lives. Jack Trevor Story - who died on the 5th December last year - was an exception only in that his politics were by no means right of centre. He was a cheerful anarchist who thumbed his nose at the conventions, determining at an early age never to exist as what one might call *homo suburbicus*, although in later life he periodically found himself stranded in the trim, neat, yet essentially soulless deserts that encroach upon

the borders of such towns as Worthing, Ealing, Welwyn Garden City. Ironically, he ended up in Milton Keynes.

To readers of this magazine, Jack's name is inevitably linked with that of Sexton Blake. Jack wrote pulp-Westerns for his friend the late Bill Baker when the latter was editor of Panther Books and moved with him to the AP when Bill was offered the editorship of the then-ailing *Sexton Blake Library*. Jack always said that, despite his first short stories having been accepted at the end of the War, and despite having had three mainstream novels published by the mid-1950s as well as numerous original paperbacks, he actually learned how to write - certainly how to plot - while hammering out the twenty-odd (some would say very odd) *SBLs* that appear under his name in the reference books.

Jack's approach to the saga was fresh, lively, entirely original. He injected a good deal of high farce and inspired lunacy into Blake's character. Many old-guard readers disliked the Bill Baker 'New Look' Blake in general, positively loathing Jack's unique contributions in particular. Yet he wrote with affection not contempt, and most of his Blakes are not only hilarious but skilfully plotted and surprisingly disciplined. Jack was very good at tying up loose ends in his fiction, if rather less successful in real life.

His private life was at best an extraordinary shambles, in which wives, not-quite-wives, the Inland Revenue, editors, film producers and bum-bailiffs all played their parts - the Revenue, in particular, a leading one. His existence was punctuated by disasters, both emotional and financial, mostly of his own making. At one stage things were so bad that his (admittedly infrequent) letters invariably had importunate PS's tacked on: "Send me all the old copies of my stuff you've got: I can flog them to the Dutch!" When times were good, or at any rate goodish, an absurd and entirely unrealistic optimism would overtake him: after his second bankruptcy discharge, he exclaimed to a hovering reporter: "I must get hold of one of these marvellous credit cards, buy a decent car on HP." He was incorrigible.

He was also the only Blake writer whose name will certainly live on far beyond the confines of pulp fiction, since his best mainstream novels - the *Live Now Pay Later* trilogy, his closely autobiographical 'Horace Spurgeon Fenton' books, and novels such as *Little Dog's Day* and *The Wind in the Snottygobble Tree* - successfully portray, and thus define, an era: mid-20th Century, warts in particular.

Jack's natural state was a kind of exuberant and improvident impecuniosity. If he'd had more discipline, things might have been different - but then he wouldn't have been Jack Trevor Story, who, for all his faults, was generous, splendid company, a laughter-maker and inspirer. Which, when all's said and done, is not a bad epitaph for anyone.

DAN DARE 5: "THE MAN FROM NOWHERE". Published by Hawk Books Ltd. at £12.99. Reviewed by Norman Wright.

Most Dan Dare enthusiasts agree that Frank Hampson and Don Harley were at the peak of their Dan Dare drawing ability between 1955 and 1959, when Hampson was forced to leave the strip. Within that 'golden age' probably their best work of all appeared in the trilogy of stories beginning with "The Man From Nowhere" and continuing with "Rogue Planet" and concluding with "Reign of The Robots" (and the short "Ship That Lived"). Some years ago the trilogy was reprinted by Dragons Dream, who ruined it by messing about with the size of frames, missing out chunks and generally treating the whole strip with a total disregard for its artistic qualities. If you bought the Dragons dream reprints you can now dispose of the first volume and purchase this new volume from Hawk Books and read the strip as it was meant to be read!

In "The Man From Nowhere" Dan, Digby, Flamer Spry and Lex O'Malley encounter Lero, a visitor from the planet Cryptos, who has travelled five light years to enlist the Earth's help in an attempt to save his home planet from the warlike Phants. In the Crypt spaceship the spacemen set off on what turns out to be one of their greatest adventures. "The Man From Nowhere" ends on a real 'cliffhanger' and I don't think we can wait a year to find out what happens next, so let's hope that Hawk Books are able to bring out the next volume a little sooner!!

As with all of the Hawk Books reprints the quality is superb. Image definition and colour saturation are excellent, at least as good as the original comics and, as I always find with these reprints, it is much easier to read and appreciate the quality of the whole thing in book

form than it is trying to plough through a pile of *Eagles*. As an extra bonus two short Dan Dare strips, reprinted from *Eagle Annuals* are included at the back of the volume. As "The Man From Nowhere" is shorter than the previous Dan Dare reprints, Hawk Books have reduced the price of the present hardbacked volume to a very modest £12.99.



CHRISTMAS COMIC POSTERS by Denis Gifford, published by H.C. Blossom, £8.95. Reviewed by Mary Cadogan.

Jolly Christmas Cards to Send to Your Friends

(SEE BACK PAGE.)



Rupert the Chick's Christ-mas Pud-ding—don't you wish you had it?

Unfortunately this extremely attractive Christmas book reached me too late to be mentioned in our Christmas issue of the C.D. However, possibly some of you might feel that buying it is an appropriate way to spend some Christmas book tokens! This large-page volume has full colour illustrations throughout. Each page reproduces the cover of the Christmas number of a different comic and, as you can imagine, these are extremely appealing. The back of each illustration carries a short description of the comic, with some details of its contents, artists, etc. I was rather mystified at the book's title, because I didn't see what these pictures had to do

with posters. However, I think the idea is that each full page illustration could be used as a poster, or Christmas cut-out. I certainly would not want to cut up such a fine book; it is one to browse through every year in December to create the appropriate nostalgic and festive mood.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I am grateful to Mr. L. Hawkey for supplying the illustration for our front and back covers this month.

Our last issue trailed news of further Magnet reprints. So far, the promised details have not reached me but, as soon as I hear more, I will publish this information.

MAGNETS WANTED

Condition g - vg (No sellotaping)

G. Good, Thornes Vicarage, WAKEFIELD,
West Yorkshire, WF2 8DW
Telephone: 0924 374009

43	156	233	263	486	763	845	917
48	169	234	264	487	769	846	931
51	186	237	273	488	781	848	958
60	200	238	275	595	784	854	959
64	204	239	276	615	789	862	975
91	207	242	305	627	795	864	977
95	210	243	357	628	800	865	978
108	215	244	373	637	806	866	984
110	217	245	383	639	807	867	985
112	219	246	392	642	808	869	986
115	220	247	395	650	809	874	988
135	221	248	396	652	811	876	989
137	223	249	412	733	816	877	1061
138	225	253	437	738	824	878	1284
139	226	255	438	748	826	880	1307
140	227	256	441	751	835	883	
143	229	257	455	755	837	886	
145	230	259	460	759	841	888	
147	231	260	470	761	842	897	
148	232	261	474	762	844	910	

START THE NEW YEAR WITH A BIG BANG!

(Pictures by C.H. Chapman, A.H. Clarke, J. Manham,
Louis Gunnis, H.C. Menzies and Arthur White)



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