

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 2004

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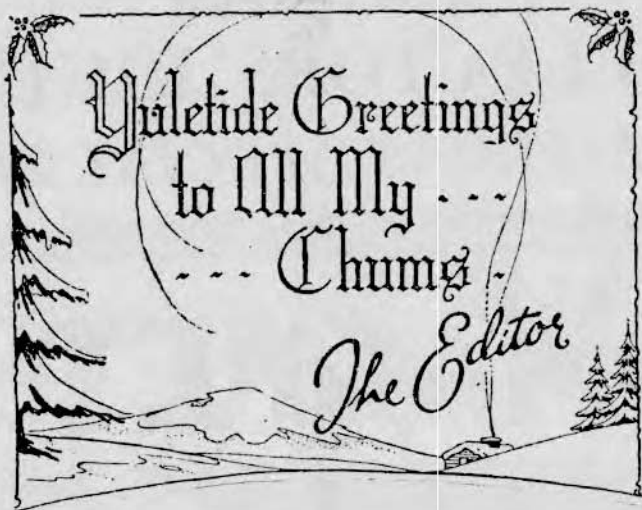
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MORCOVE'S CHRISTMAS PROBLEM!

AN EARLY
ADVENTURE OF
BETTY BARTON & Co

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COLLECTORS' DIGEST CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 2004

Editor: MARY CADOGAN



Once again it is my pleasure to present this C.D. Christmas Special. I hope you will agree that it conveys all the warmth and goodwill of the festive season, as well as evoking nostalgia for our much-loved story-papers and the characters featured in these.

I am sure you will agree that our contributors have once more 'turned up trumps' in covering a wonderfully wide range of appealing subjects from Ruritania to radio adaptations of some of our favourite films: from Greyfriars and St. Jim's to *The School Cap*, and from *Stalky* to *Sherlock Holmes*.

For this Christmas hamper of happy reading, and for maintaining the flow of interesting articles throughout the year, I would like to express my thanks to our contributors. Also, of course, to Mandy and all the helpful staff at Quacks, our printers, for the sterling work they do on our behalf.

Last, but never least, I send my warm thanks to you, the *Collectors' Digest's* loyal and always supportive readers who have made possible the long continuation of our magazine for over five decades.

To you all I send the traditional greeting - A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS AND (dare we hope) PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.

Mary Cadogan





RURITANIA



Some Reflections by Dennis L. Bird

THE AUTHOR

Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins (1863-1933) was a barrister who added a new word to the English language - a word which conjures up images of a romantic mid-European country "from that now mythic time when history wore a rose and politics had not yet outgrown the waltz". In short: Ruritania.

Born in Clapton London, he was the son of a schoolmaster, the Revd. Edwards Comerford Hawkins. Through his mother Jane Isabella Grahame, he was a first cousin of the author of *The Wind in the Willows*, Kenneth Grahame.

Educated at Marlborough College, the young Hawkins then had a brilliant career at Balliol College, Oxford. A considerable athlete and sportsman, he played rugby for his college, became President of the Union, and obtained a first-class degree. Having decided to become a lawyer, he was called to the Bar by the Middle Temple in 1887. He practised for some seven years in the same chambers as Herbert Henry Asquith, who was to become Prime Minister. He also became keenly interested in politics, and as a Liberal stood unsuccessfully for South Buckinghamshire in the General Election of 1892.

By this time he had also begun another career as an author. He wrote short stories for various magazines in the late 1880s, and in 1890 published his first novel, *A Man of Mark*. In 1893 his light Society sketches *The Dolly Dialogues* appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*; they were a series of conversations between Dolly, Lady Mickleham, and a Mr. Samuel Carter.

In 1894 he took the bold decision to forsake the Bar and become a full-time writer, and for the next thirty years, novels poured from his pen. He had also loved the stage since childhood, and at one time had thought of becoming an actor. In 1898 his first play *The Adventures of Lady Ursula* was produced, and others followed in 1900 and 1903.

Also in 1903, aged 40, he married an American, Elizabeth Somerville Sheldon, who lived until 1946; they had two sons and a daughter.

On the outbreak of war in 1914, he was over 50 and too old for military services. However, he played his part by joining the Ministry of Information, and was engaged in producing propaganda material for the Allies. It was for this work that he was knighted in 1918. In later years his health deteriorated. He published an autobiography, *Memoirs and Notes* in 1927, and died six years later, aged 70.

THE PRISONER OF ZENDA

On November 28, 1893, Hawkins' future was decided for him: author, not lawyer. On that afternoon, after winning a case in the Westminster County Court, he walked back to the Temple and turned over in his mind some thoughts about a foreign

country. The Latin phrase "Rus rur" came to him, meaning "countryside", as opposed to "urbs" (city). A usual suffix for a country was "-ania" (Rumania, Lithuania, Albania) - so why not "Ruritania"?

It was during this walk that he also noticed two men who passed him by, one after the other, who were uncannily alike. He suddenly wondered if one might perhaps pass himself off as the other.

Always a quick writer, he set to work at once. By the end of that evening he had roughed out the plot of *The Prisoner of Zenda* - the novel that was to make him famous. Writing two chapters a day, he had finished it by December 29. It was published in April 1894 under the name of "Anthony Hope", and it was an instant success.

Rupert of Hentzau



The full title is *The Prisoner of Zenda: Being the history of three months in the life of an English Gentleman*. It is a clever and ingenious tale full of adventure, pathos, and romantic appeal - not least because it is told in the first person by a debonair and charming socialite straight out of *The Dolly Dialogues*. Rudolf Rassendyll, aged 29, is the indolent younger brother of the Earl of Bursledon. It is his disapproving sister-in-law Rose who begins the story with the acid query "I wonder when in the world you're going to do anything, Rudolf?". She wants him to take up

an appointment in the Diplomatic Service, but instead he proposes to go for "a ramble in the Tyrol".

Rose is embarrassed by the skeleton in the Rassendyll cupboard. And it is indeed surprising that in the strict moral climate of Victorian England, Anthony Hope should have based his novel on the outcome of an illicit liaison in the 18th century.

Rassendyll describes for his readers how in 1733 the then Crown Prince Rudolf of Ruritania came to the English Court, and fell for the lovely Countess Amelia, wife of "James, 5th Earl of Buresdon and 22nd Baron Rassendyll". A few months later she gave birth to a son, later the 6th Earl - who was distinguished by red hair, a pointed nose, and blue eyes. Such were not characteristic of the Rassendylls - but they were the unmistakable hallmarks of the Elphbergs of Ruritania. They also recurred in the person of the young Rudolf Rassendyll, and thus enabled him to carry out an amazing imposture.

The plot of *The Prisoner of Zenda* is so well known, from the book and the various film versions, that it needs only a brief summary. Rudolf goes on holiday to Ruritania, and by chance meets two men walking in a forest: Colonel Sapt and Count Frits von Tarlenheim. The colonel is struck by Rassendyll's resemblance to Ruritania's King Rudolf V. "Shave him, and he'd be the King!"

The monarch himself joins them, and they have a convivial evening in the royal hunting lodge. But the King's jealous half-brother Black Michael, Duke of Strelsau, has sent a bottle of drugged wine - and the King is due to be crowned in Strelsau next day.

He is kidnapped, but the resourceful Colonel Sapt has an idea: "Fate sends you now to Strelsau". Rassendyll is to impersonate the King at his coronation. There is an amorous complication: the King's cousin Princess Flavia and the impostor fall in love.

After many vicissitudes, the King is rescued from his imprisonment in the castle of Zenda. Duke Michael is killed by the leader of his own bodyguard "The Six" - the charming but villainous Count Rupert of Hentzau. The King is restored to his rightful throne and will marry the Princess. Rassendyll and his lady-love must part forever, it seems. There will be just one link: each year Fritz von Tarlenheim meets him in Dresden and gives him a box in which reposes a rose and a message: "Rudolf - Flavia - always".

So ends Rassendyll's chronicle of his amazing brief reign. It is beautifully told, in elegant phrases illuminated, with flashes of wry humour. It is full of quotable remarks. Rupert of Hentzau says "Why, it's the play-actor". The King to Rudolf: "You have shown me how to play the King". Flavia tells Rudolf of her love: "It was always you, never the King". Colonel Sapt: "You're the noblest Elphberg of them all". And Fritz von Tarlenheim, as Rassendyll takes his leave: "Heaven doesn't always make the right men Kings!"

THE HEART OF PRINCESS OSRA

The tremendous success of *The Prisoner of Zenda* encouraged. Anthony Hope to

write again about Ruritania in 1896. This was *The Heart of Princess Osra*, short stories about her nine suitors. Osra is the 21-year-old sister of the 18th-century Prince Rudolf who had seduced Countess Amelia; he becomes King Rudolf III on the death of his father King Henry the Lion.

The Osra stories are a sad disappointment. They are trivial and unconvincing, and written in a mock-archaic style which soon becomes tedious. Most of the Princess's would-be wooers end up dead for no good reason, and she herself is a mere pasteboard figure, cold and disdainful. She at last finds true love with a young student, whom she marries. He turns out to be the Grand Duke of Mittenheim.

The book's only interest is in its incidental information about Ruritania and its aristocrats. The first story features Countess Hilda von Lauengram; "the house of Lauengram was very noble". Decades later another Lauengram was one of Black Michael's notorious bodyguard, "The Six".

Count Nikolas of Festenburg abducts Osra, and is killed by Rudolf III; he gives the Count's estate to Francis of Tarlenheim. The Bishop of Modenstein rescues Osra; he is Frederick of Hentzau. "Some of the Hentzaus have been good and some have been bad; and the good fear God which the bad do not; but neither the good nor the bad fear anything in the world besides."

The Prince of Glottenberg woos Osra half-heartedly - Glottenberg was a princely German state in Hope's 1893 book of short stories *Sport Royal*.

RUPERT OF HENTZAU

Happily, the Osra book was not the last we hear of Ruritania. Rudolf Rassendyll returned there in 1898 in a brilliant sequel to *The Prisoner of Zenda*. This later book took its title from the knavish survivor of the earlier adventure. Count Rupert. The narrator this time (for reasons which eventually become apparent) is not Rassendyll but Fritz von Tarlenheim. The first-person technique is effective in that it gives immediacy and personal feeling, but it is disadvantageous when (as very often) it recounts events at which Fritz was not present. He purports to recount what others have told him - but who remembers the exact words of a conversation?

Nevertheless, this is a powerful and dramatic story fully worthy of its predecessor. It takes place three years after *The Prisoner*, and it all stems from the unhappy Queen's decision to write a last letter to her love. Locked in a loveless marriage, "worse than widowed," she wants to pour out



For three years the Princess Flavia had been Queen



See page 198

'There, man, I'm ready for you'

Rupert and Rassendyll

her feelings to Rudolf. She entreats her "dear friend Fritz" to carry the letter safely to Rudolf, and to bring back his reply: "I must have his goodbye to carry me through my life".

Wise old Colonel Sapt has deep misgivings. "A letter's a poor thing to risk the peace of a country for.... Is he (Rassendyll) going to waste all his life thinking of a woman he never sees?" Sapt's worst fears are realised, and the Queen's rashness leads to the deaths of almost all the main participants in the enterprise.

Fritz takes the letter to his annual tryst with Rudolf, accompanied by a new servant, "a stolid, somewhat stupid fellow" - a Swiss whose name, Bauer, indicates his peasant origin. Fritz later regretted "how that stout guileless-looking youth made a fool of me". For Bauer was in fact in the service of the banished Count Rupert of Hentzau, who was desperate to persuade the King to let him return to his estates in Ruritania.

The plot moves fast. Fritz is waylaid, the incriminating letter stolen. Hentzau tries to show it to the King, who pulls a gun on him. More or less in self-defence, Rupert shoots the King dead. Rassendyll pursues Rupert, retrieves the letter, and in turn kills him in a duel.

The people of Ruritania know nothing of these dark deeds, and Rassendyll's wily English servant James propounds a startling plan: Mr. Rassendyll resume his imposture as the King and live happily with his beloved Queen Flavia.

All through this saga, the Queen has been troubled by a strange dream: "Rudolf, last night I had a dream about you... I seemed to be in Strelsau, and all the people were talking about the King... You seemed not to hear what we said." Later she had the same dream again: "He seemed to me to be the King...but he did not answer or move."

Rudolf has to decide whether to accept James's plan and undertake a life of deception as the husband of the Queen, or whether to take a strict moral line and renounce her forever. He walks alone in a moonlit garden, trying to decide. Suddenly "a man sprang out of the dark line of tall trees ... A shot rang out ... Mr Rassendyll sank slowly to his knees."

The Queen's bodyguard Lieutenant von Bernenstein cries out "Bauer! By God, Bauer!" and his sword splits Bauer's skull. No question of a fair trial for the assassin! The death of Rudolf is of course the explanation of why he could not be the narrator of *Rupert of Hentzau*.

Rudolf is buried with regal splendour in the Cathedral of Strelsau. As Fritz von Tarlenheim wrote afterwards: "As a King, Rudolf Rassendyll had died, as a King let him lie... At a mighty price, our task had been made easy; many might have doubted the living, none questioned the dead."

By command of the Queen, a stately monument was erected, with an emotive Latin inscription translatable thus: "To Rudolf, who reigned lately in this city, and reigns forever in her heart. - FLAVIA REGINA."

And what was the decision that Rudolf made in the moments before his death? - for Fritz had seen that "the question had found its answer". Anthony Hope gives us a clue, even though Flavia says "He didn't tell me". As Rudolf lay dying, Fritz

addresses him as "Sire". "Well, for an hour, then", he murmured. That does not sound as though he had intended to be King.

Rupert of Hentzau has inconsistencies and improbabilities, but I have always found it strangely moving ever since I first read it as an impressionable 12-year-old in 1943.

Incidentally, regarding the theme of Flavia's ominous dream, I wonder if Hope knew of an event in the life of Abraham Lincoln? Some 30 years earlier, America's greatest President dreamed that he was looking in a mirror and saw a double image of himself - the second fainter than the first. He interpreted this to mean that he would be elected to two terms of office, but that he would not survive the second. Sadly, his dream came true; like Rassendyll, he fell to an assassin's bullet.

DRAMATISATIONS

The success of the *Zenda* novel was so great that, not surprisingly, it was soon turned into a play by Edward Rose. It was put on at London's St James's Theatre in 1896 with the actor-impresario Sir George Alexander as the Rudolfs. It was enthusiastically reviewed by George Bernard Shaw, no less.

Many other stagings followed, culminating in Chichester Festival Theatre's version 90 years later by Warren Graves, in 1986. The Rudolf roles were performed by Christopher Timothy, best known for *All Creatures Great and Small*, the TV series about a veterinary surgeon. Mr. Timothy inauspiciously told the Brighton *Evening Argus* that "we're playing it (*Zenda*) as a comedy". But it only really works in our cynical age if it is played absolutely straight, conveying a message about duty and honour. The Timothy approach was not entirely successful; the *West Sussex Gazette* wrote that he "looks as baffled at times as if dealing with Tristan in the surgery".

The first film versions (silent, of course) were made in 1913, 1915, and 1922 - the last with Ramon Novarro as a ruthless, dandified Rupert of Hentzau. Lewis Stone was the two Rudolfs; 30 years later he was the Cardinal in the Stewart Granger film.

The finest screen version was produced in Hollywood in 1937. The abdication of King Edward VIII in the previous year, a few months before his Coronation was to take place, focused attention on the role of monarchy in Government, and David O. Selznick made the most of it. He assembled a superb, mainly British cast. Ronald Colman, the archetypal English gentleman, was Rudolf, the beautiful Madeleine Carroll his Flavia. David Niven was Fritz, and the gruff but loyal Colonel Sapt was played by a former Sussex cricketer and England Test captain, Sir Charles Aubrey Smith. He had turned actor in 1896, as Black Michael in Edward Rose's *Zenda* play, and had subsequently appeared in so many other productions that he once said he had played every part in the story except that of Princess Flavia.

Douglas Fairbanks, Junior (later an honorary Knight of the British Empire) was a debonair Rupert of Hentzau, and the Canadian actor Raymond Massey made Duke Michael satisfyingly sinister. Mary Astor was the tragic Antoinette de Mauban. Professor Jeffrey Richards wrote in the *Radio Times* of October 15, 1981, that the film was "a wholly satisfying blend of mediaeval chivalric romance... with a contemporary

setting”.

Fifteen years later the death of King George VI precipitated another Coronation, and Hollywood scented further profits from the Hope novel. As Professor Richards noted, “when Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer decided to re-make the film in 1952, they paid the previous version the compliment of producing an exact replica (using) the 1937 screenplay almost word for word...and Alfred Newman’s glowingly romantic score”.

The new Rudolf was the suave, golden-voiced Gainsborough film star Stewart Granger, with Deborah Kerr as his Princess. There was an American Colonel Sapt in Louis Calhern; he had been the Cardinal in 1937.

Robert Douglas was miscast as a too stolid Duke Michael, and James Mason played Hentzau as a grim German auditioning for a future role as “Rommel, Desert Fox”.

Both the 1937 and 1952 films had spectacular Coronation scenes, with the Ruritanian national anthem prominently featured. For many years I thought it had been specially composed; not being a lover of Handel, I did not realise it was *See the Conquering Hero Comes* from his oratorio *Judas Maccabeus*.

The latest film version is best forgotten. Peter Sellers’ abysmal spoof of 1979 was a deliberate attempt to ridicule Hope’s romantic novel, and it completely wasted the talents of gifted actors like Simon Williams, John Laurie, Jeremy Kemp, and Lionel Jefferies.

There have been some TV versions, most recently in 1984 with a largely unknown cast: Malcolm Sinclair, Victoria Wicks, Jonathan Morris, John Woodvine. Scenes were shot in Lincoln and in Castle Coch near Cardiff - a fascinatingly realistic Castle of Zenda. TV also gave the only screen version of *Rupert of Hentzau* in 1964, with Peter Wyngarde in the title role, Barbara Shelley as the Queen, and George Baker (later “Inspector Wexford”) as the Rudolfs.

There was a particularly good radio adaptation of both books in 1973 - so good that it was repeated on BBC Radio 4 in 1978 and 1984. These had a fine cast: Julian Glover as Rassendyll and the King, Nigel Stock (also familiar as Dr Watson in the Sherlock Holmes series) playing Sapt, Hannah Gordon as Flavia, and a future *Just William*, Martin Jarvis, as Rupert.

ENVOI (or POSTSCRIPT?)

There is an undying magic about the Ruritania novels. They have inspired numerous parodies and up-dates. For instance, in 1981 “John Haythorne” published a novel entitled *The Strelsau Dimension*, in which Ruritania had become a People’s Socialist Republic and member of the Warsaw Pact. The diplomatic implications were authoritatively handled, for the author was in fact Richard Parsons, our Ambassador in Madrid. The Amalgamated Press’s weekly story-papers sometimes made use of the theme. The *Girls’ Crystal* writer Leslie Swainson did so several times under his pen-names of “Margery Marriot” and “Doris Leslie” (*Princess on Probation*, *Princess to Save Leiconia*, *Guardian to the Royal Fugitives*). And the Morcove girls visited the middle-European country of Turania.

Rupert of Hentzau

BEING THE SEQUEL TO A STORY BY THE SAME WRITER
ENTITLED 'THE PRISONER OF ZENDA'

By ANTHONY HOPE



With four colour plates and line drawings in the text by
MICHAEL GODFREY

Like the Sherlock Holmes stories, the two Hope novels have prompted much scholarly research by writers who take them seriously. One such was the former Foreign editor of *The Times*, E.G. Hodgkin. In a lengthy article on July 31, 1976, he endeavoured, to locate Ruritania geographically. He concluded that it was in fact Austria, partly because of the recurrence in its history of the name "Rudolf." He detected an echo of the real-life Mayerling tragedy of 1889, in which Crown Prince Rudolf ("unstable, easily-swayed, well-intentioned, and too fond of the bottle" - just like the King of Ruritania) murdered his mistress Marie Vetsera at his hunting lodge, and then committed suicide.

Mr Hodgkin was fascinated by the name "Zenda". Pointing out that Anthony Hope was interested, in comparative religion, he speculated on whether it was "an abbreviation for Zend-Avesta, the sacred writings of Zoroaster". And he was amused to note that "there is a place actually called Zenda in Kansas, presumably settled by Ruritanian emigrants to the New World".

The Hodgkin article prompted as many as 18 letters to *The Times* variously locating Ruritania in Rumania, Bavaria, Silesia, and (G.B.S.'S choice) Mecklenburg on

the Baltic.

Mr. Hodgkin's final contribution to Hope studies was to suggest that (like Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*) "the whole Ruritanian canon is based, on a game of chess... Rassendyll's own description of himself and the others (is) as 'pieces in Black Michael's game', and Bauer, Rassendyll's eventual assassin, is the German for a pawn in chess as well as for a peasant".

By 1980 *The Prisoner of Zenda* had "become such a literary classic that the publishers Longman issued a volume of students' notes by Professor John M. Munro of the American University of Beirut. He analyses every chapter in detail, gives character sketches of the most minor figures such as Lord Burlesdon and Marshal Strakencz, and even includes some examination questions and hints on how to answer them. His most curious omission is any discussion of the all-important sequel; he dismisses it in a single line: "Anthony Hope was so fascinated with Rupert's character that the novel he wrote after *The Prisoner of Zenda* bears his name."

A writer who studies both books is Roger Lancelyn Green (father of the Sherlock Holmes expert Richard Lancelyn Green, who died in mysterious circumstances in May 2004). Roger wrote a lengthy introduction to J.M. Dent's 1966 "Everyman" edition combining the two.

Our own editor Mary Cadogan devotes several pages to the saga in her book *And Then Their Hearts Stood Still* (Macmillan, 1994). As she says, it is "shot through with idealism, strong concepts of honour and chivalry, and triumphantly swashbuckling high adventure which is matched by compelling characterisation... Even today, when its idealistic romanticism seems over the top, it still charms and inspires".



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THE SAVING OF THE GRANGE



by Robert H. Whiter

Jack Anderson was busy wood-carving. His elder brother Ben was supervising. The project was an elaborate model bridge which was to embellish Jack's requirements for his Webelos craftsman's activity badge. The boys, both in scouting, were in their den; a room full of items which suggested a mutual love for scouting and the great outdoors.

Jack paused from his labours. He was a sturdy boy of ten, three years younger than Ben. The bridge was progressing quite well, and he cast a favourable look on his efforts.

"I'll finish it tomorrow with luck, Ben," he said.

"I should think so," answered Ben, perhaps a little dubiously, "but I reckon you're done enough for today, Jack".

"Let's go out and play catch, I'm afraid we shan't have the garden much longer." He further suggested.

Jack sighed and turned away to the window, gazing out at the lovely grounds and garden. The Grange was indeed a beautiful old place, and the two boys were full of sorrow thinking that in a short time they would probably have to leave their fair domain.

"It's a rotten shame," said Ben. "But it can't be helped. Poor Dad has had such bad luck lately, that he's talking of selling this big place; as a matter of fact he is seeing an estate agent today."

"I can't bear to think of leaving the Grange," said Jack sadly.

"Likewise" announced Ben. "Our father most of all, but it's no good crying over spilt milk, we've just got to make the best of it."

Ben helped his brother clean up the working area. With brush and dustpan they swept up the wood chips. Jack lifted his nearly completed model on to the huge carved mantelpiece.

"The guy who made that, sure knew how to carve," he remarked.

Ben regarded the artistically carved mantle critically. "He sure did," he agreed. "It's a swell piece of work: I wonder who did it and when. I guess you know that this is the oldest part of the house, Jack."

"Yeah, but I reckon there are some even better - remember those we saw in Europe?" answered Jack reminiscently.

Ben didn't reply, his hand was touching a particularly fine piece of work. At length he spoke. "This bunch of fruit is super. But wait! This part seems loose, I shall have to glue it."

The lowest part of the carving, a cluster of cherries, seemed to move under his fingers.

And then a most surprising thing happened! The great carved pillar on the right hand side of the fireplace swung out and away, disclosing an opening. Just over a foot wide, it was nearly five feet in height. The two boys looked at each other in amazement!

"This must lead to the secret room," said Ben, trying to keep the excitement out of his voice.

There was an old story, that the Grange had a secret room, though all traces of it had been lost. The rest of the story concerned a certain Captain Anderson of the Confederate army, who had evaded capture during the Civil War by hiding in it from the armed forces. It had always been supposed that during the various decorations, painting and papering, the entrance had somehow been sealed up.

"Let's explore!" cried Jack, his eyes shining with excitement.

"You bet! Where's my flashlight?" answered Ben.

Moments later, with flashlight at the ready, both boys had squeezed through the narrow opening. They found themselves in a musty passage. With careful steps, owing to the state of the old and uneven floor, the boys, Ben leading, made their way. Before long they came to a door, its massive lock, complete with key, covered with a thick layer of rust. Both boys took turns in an effort to turn the key, without avail.

"Hold on Jack," exclaimed Ben, "let me go fetch the oil can". Jack stayed at the door and directed the beam of the flashlight along the passage to light the way for his brother. It wasn't long before Ben was back with the oil can, which he then used to lubricate the old rusty lock. Even so, it took several minutes of their combined efforts to turn the key. Suddenly it yielded with a loud screeching sound. The door slowly opened. After the musty passage, the comparatively fresh air that greeted them was surprising, as the boys found themselves in a small panelled room. Hanging on one of the walls was a faded picture of Robert E. Lee, while standing in the corner was a cavalry standard looking very forlorn and dusty.

"Can't you picture Captain Anderson hiding here?" cried Jack, "But I wonder where the fresh air is coming from?"

"Why — over there," replied Ben pointing to a broken part of panelling, through which a streak of daylight was shining.

"How strange" said his brother, "there doesn't seem to be anything outside the woodwork there". By standing on a chair, which he placed beneath the aperture, Jack was able to look through.

"I get it," he exclaimed after a little thought, "this leads to the well behind the house. There are probably steps cut in the side of it and it was a way to escape. We shall have to explore that from the top".

Ben did not answer for the moment, his eyes were on a huge oak chest, standing in the corner. Jack looked at his brother and then followed the direction of his eye.

"I wonder if it's locked" he queried.

The chest had no lock, but had a heavy lid and the hinges were so rusty, that the oil can had to be pressed in service again, before it could be lifted. Inside there appeared at first to be nothing but a collection of garments of the Civil War period, including a moth-eaten grey uniform, with its brass buttons and gold lace almost

The Saving of the Grange



black with age.

Turning them over, the boys soon became aware that underneath was a large brass-bound box. With Jack's help, Ben lifted it out of the chest and on the floor. Again, with difficulty, they succeeded in raising the lid. Both boys gave forth a cry of astonishment, for the box was full of gold coins. Eagerly the boys examined their great find.

"These are gold spade guineas — see the imprint of George III — tons of them! Our fortunes are made my lad!" exclaimed Ben, "no wonder the Union forces were after the Captain, this must have been part of the confederate war chest."

"Let's take them out and count them," suggested Jack, trembling with eagerness. Soon each boy was busy counting and making neat piles of the coins. Suddenly Ben stopped.

"That's funny, we seem to coming to the bottom of the box," he said, "but it looks much deeper on the outside".

"It is strange," agreed Jack. "Let's just take out the rest of the coins without counting them and see what's underneath."

The boys removed the remainder of the coins, taking them out by the handful. It soon became apparent that the box had a false bottom. More by luck than design, Ben touched the hidden spring and it slid open disclosing a tray filled with a collection of antique jewels! Rings, necklaces, brooches and bracelets lay there; the multi-faceted gems still flashing with fire despite the grime from the passing of the years.

"I guess I'm no jewel expert," remarked Ben, "but I reckon this alone is worth almost as much as the Grange!" And he held up a long rope of perfect, pinkish-tinted pearls.

"Are you sure, Ben, and are they real?" asked his brother dubiously.

"Of course they're real, silly — and worth tons of money, otherwise they wouldn't have been hidden here."

"How is it that someone hasn't found them before?"

"I guess nobody could find the secret entrance — after all we only found it by accident," replied Ben thoughtfully. "Perhaps after the Captain escaped no one knew the secret of this room. They say he never returned and died abroad; so perhaps he wasn't able to tell his family where the treasure was hidden."

"What do we do now?" asked Jack.

"Well, this stuff will be safe enough here - it has been since the eighteen sixties," replied Ben. "One thing is certain, there'll be no selling of the Grange now, Jack. It's saved!"

On hearing his brother's remarks Jack cavorted around the room until he stopped for want of breath.

"What a pity Dad can't know until this evening," he panted.

"Don't worry," said his brother. "Dad left the realtor's business card on the bulletin board. Let's go and call him right away".

A few minutes later the boys, a trifle dirty and breathless, succeeded in getting through to the estate agency. Luckily their father had only just arrived and Ben was

able to tell him the good news.

It is doubtful whether the good man fully understood all of the excited boys' story; but he promised to get home as soon as he could. Both boys were outside the Grange, waiting in the driveway, when their dad drove up in the family car.

Once again Ben, assisted by his brother, poured out the amazing story.

"So you won't have to sell the Grange now, Dad — it's saved!" wound up Ben.

And so it proved, the war chest of the ill-fated captain was worth as Ben had said, "tons of money." Needless to say, the model bridge was finished and duly placed in the position of honour at the next pack meeting. Jack added a shiny hammer to his Webelos badge colours.



SOUNDS SUCCESSFUL

by Ernest Holman



During the 1940s, whilst WW2 was in progress, there appeared a series of plays on USA Radio, based on noted films of the past. The main point about these broadcasts was that, in most cases, the original artistes were able to recreate their roles. A few years ago, cassettes of these performances were issued in Britain, under the title of *Hollywood Playhouse*. They were available by mail order from an organisation known as Mr. Punch. There were a large number of these 'radio films' on sale then - I am devoting this article to those which I found most worthy of selection. Unhappily, Mr. Punch seems to now have 'vanished' from possible access. (*Editor's note: Not so- they have recently become available again.*)

The recordings need, of course, the memory of the originals for one to enjoy them - and although they are, in the main, 'potted' versions of the films, they do, nevertheless, come over very well. So here is a brief look at them.

First of all, perhaps one of the finest films to come from Hollywood, is the war-time epic, *Casablanca*. Both Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman recreate their original parts. It must have been no mean feat on the part of the producer to get them together again - their period of association during the original filming having been, to all appearances, not a friendly one. The drama of the film is well retained in this brief recording. Humphrey also appears in the sound version of the *Maltese Falcon*, with Mary Astor, Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre well to the fore. When the statue is revealed NOT to be the valuable capture as wished, the Police Chief asks 'What was it made of?', to which Humphrey as Same Spade, replies 'The stuff that dreams are made from!'

Laurence Olivier appears on two of these presentations. With Vivien Leigh in the nameless role as the young wife of Olivier's Max, the full drama of *Rebecca* is expertly conveyed. Olivier also appears in a recording of *Beau Geste* but here none of the

original players is featured. Olivier plays, not the name role, but that of the younger brother John. Beau is performed by, of all people, Orson Welles. In the part of the tyrannical Sergeant, Noah Beery, brother of the more famous Wallace, gives a first-rate performance.

Mrs. Miniver is able to muster, for their original roles, both Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon. Susan Peters plays the tragic daughter, whilst - on war-time leave from the Marines - Henry Wilcoxon plays the Vicar. In many instances, just a few short words manage to convey a wealth of meaning.

Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson repeat their famous characterisations from *Brief Encounter*. In *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, there is a change of cast, however. The best voice ever from the 'Talkies', that of Ronald Colman, takes on the original Robert Donat part. There is a very good performance by the actress who plays the wife - but for some reason no credit is given to her.

Horror is not missing from these recordings. Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman play Mr. and Mrs. Anton in *Gaslight*. The 'feeling' engendered by the original film is very well conveyed.

The one recording, above all else, that I felt came over wonderfully well was the role of Sir Percy Blakeney, played once more by Leslie Howard. Howard made several war-time trips between Britain and the U.S. This particular recording was almost his last performance, as not long afterwards, like so many others, a wartime flight never reached its destination. In the film of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, I always felt that Merle Oberon was 'somewhat lacking' in the role of Lady Blakeney. In this radio version, the part comes over remarkably well through the voice of Olivia De Havilland. Dennis Green gives a vigorous performance as the frustrated Chauvelin.

I have to confess that my favourite of all these recordings is that of Judy Garland replaying the role of Dorothy in *Wizard of Oz*. Perhaps she is not at this time quite the 'young child' - but all the same she plays the role excellently. None of the remainder of the original cast takes part, but everyone is more than adequate. I think this is my favourite for the simple reason that I always want to remember Judy as the youthful Dorothy.

The last of my collections may seem, at first thought, an unlikely one to convey the drama - it is that of *The Third Man*, with Joseph Cotton playing his role of Holly Martens. Other performers take the various roles, with Evelyn Keyes as Anna. It may be wondered how the ending can be presented on radio, for who can forget the lonely walk of the girl down the lane from the Cemetery, with the leaves falling from the trees, to the accompaniment of *Under the Linden Trees*. The silence of the ending of the film is, believe it or not, indicated quite simply by Joseph Cotton.

Were these recordings successful? Sounds like it!





CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER



(via *Ted Baldock*)

I say, you fellows, I have been asked to send you Yuletide greetings and I have - as always - been fearfully busy in the hectic round of social activities at Bunter Court. Having so many obligations to attend to is one of the penalties, I suppose, of being so popular. I feel I cannot disappoint or let you down.

Wherever you may be spending the festive season, under whatever circumstances, I hope the commissariat will adequately allow for substantial snacks between meals. This is most important, you know.

I am hoping to escape from the festivities at Bunter Court and spend a few days at Wharton Lodge. The Pater has begged me to stay on at our place to help with the entertaining. He relies on my good taste and expertise in making our many titled relations perfectly at ease. But I was adamant and refused to yield under pressure. "No, Pater", I said. "My old pals come first - I promised that I would be joining them at the Lodge and I cannot disappoint them, they count on me, you know."

My form Quelch, will be days over the Vac. Colonel Wharton. Greyfriars for the a strong hope of the gathering. He me that the Colonel disappointed if I come. "He always seeing you and he deal on your excellity in entertaining holidays." He naturally assert a ence over Harry's them within certain know. You will make day."

I recall with years the welcome to me by Wells the footman. My



master, Mr. spending a few with his old friend Before we left hols he expressed seeing me among then confided to would be most were unable to looks forward to depends a great lent taste and abil- the party over the added, "You quite steadying influ- friends and keep limitations, you your mark one

pleasure from past always extended butler and John, arrival was always

the signal for much excitement below-stairs. The cook is never above taking a few hints from me concerning special tips for certain dishes. On one occasion she was heard to remark "You know, Mr. Wells, that Master Bunter is a real young gentleman. He is always so modest and unassuming", which comment may be taken to suggest that breeding and class will always be recognised.

There have been occasions in the past when Wells and John, the footman, have been less than gentlemanly in their conduct towards me, but I am confident that in this season of good will they will see the error of their ways and recognise - and adhere to - our differing social positions. I spoke to Colonel Wharton concerning this little matter. Sadly he seemed to be singularly unimpressed and quite unresponsive.

Once again I wish all you fellows the jolliest of times over Christmas. The Mater and Aunt Amy have reminded me to ask you not to forget to give a quiet thought to the originator of all our celebrations at this time, and as 'Tiny Tim' said on a certain long ago Christmas - "God bless us, everyone".

I hope to see you all next term

(Note: Certain grammatical adjustments in Bunter's unique style, and one or two corrections in his somewhat original spelling, have been made.)



BETTER LATE....

By Patrick Morley



I came to Greyfriars late. It was Christmas 1939, the first Christmas of the war. What war, I was tempted to ask at the time. Since Mr Chamberlain had made his speech on the wireless telling us we were at war with Germany very little had happened. I was just nine and had imagined it would be exciting, like Errol Flynn and Dawn Patrol. But it wasn't. We'd had the Battle of the River Plate in which the Royal Navy had seen the end of the German pocket battleship Graf Spee. But our army had sat around doing nothing at all, according to my brother who was a soldier with the British Expeditionary Force, the BEF, "somewhere in France". So along with my school pals I had turned my back on this boring war and involved myself in other interests.

This was when I learned of the existence of Greyfriars. At the bookstall I regularly visited in the great Victorian covered Market Hall in Derby, where I was brought up, I came across a handy sized booklet with a cover illustration that appealed to me. It showed a fat schoolboy, loaded with obviously ill gotten piles of food, creeping up the staircase of a mansion, with an impressive suit of armour at the top. It was a lively tale of mysterious Yuletide adventures involving a group of schoolboys of whom the boy on the cover was one. His name, I discovered, was Billy Bunter. I suppose I had vaguely heard of him but this was the first time I had encountered him



at first hand. I was taken with him and his schoolpals and wanted more. The booklet I had bought (or got my mother to buy — at the age of nine I had no pocket money of my own) was *THE MYSTERY OF WHARTON LODGE*, No 391 of the *Schoolboys' Own Library*. That came out once a month but I discovered there was a paper that appeared every week, featuring Bunter, Harry Wharton and all the rest. And so I became a regular reader of *The Magnet* though not, as it proved, for long.

Through the *Schoolboys' Own Library* I became aware of *The Greyfriars Holiday Annual* and prevailed on my sister to buy it for me for Christmas. By Christmas Eve, to my intense disappointment, it had still not arrived. But in those days, we actually had a post on Christmas Day war or no war. And sure enough, on Christmas morning there came a knock at the door and there was the postman with a parcel containing my *Holiday Annual*. Who could have devised a better present at a more timely moment. And to my delight, it contained another story of ghostly Yuletide goings-on at a stately home, this time Mauleverer Towers with a spectral figure in armour haunting the schoolboy lord. The annual had a bright and lively cover showing

a group of boys and girls on a sledge careering down a snow-covered slope. It was particularly appropriate since it began to snow soon after Christmas and then we too were out sledging in the nearby park.

The back cover of the annual was even more pleasing in a different way. It had a recipe for one of my favourite dishes — Roly Pudding. It showed a pudding oozing with strawberry jam. What could be more likely to whet a schoolboy's appetite not only for the pudding but for the contents of the annual itself.

The Magnet continued to arrive every week and my other regular comics, the *Rover* and the *Hotspur*, took a back seat as a result. The *Hotspur* did have a regular school story in it, concerned with the doings at Red Circle, but that was no match for the much longer and far more absorbing school tales in the *Magnet*. All the more so, when the boys of Greyfriars got themselves involved with Nazi spies. How I envied them, living so near to the coast with the likelihood of German agents landing at any time. Then suddenly, without a word of explanation, the *Magnet* stopped. I couldn't believe it when the man at the bookstall said there wouldn't be any more. No, he didn't know why but presumed it was the paper shortage: quite a few magazines had already disappeared. After a week or two I wrote off to the Amalgamated Press, whose address appeared in the paper. But I got no reply, not even an acknowledgement of any sort.

Fortunately, the second hand bookstalls, of which there were several in the open market in the town, had plenty of copies of back numbers I hadn't read. But gradually these dried up and I was forced to fall back on the *Schoolboys' Own Library*. Again, there were plenty of these to be had and they contained complete stories, unlike the odd back numbers of the *Magnet* which had series some parts of which were missing. I built up quite a collection and when finally the supply of second hand ones ran out, I read them over and over again.

Then one day I went to the cupboard where I kept them safely stored — and found it was bare. My mother had given them all to one of the scrap paper salvage drives we had regularly. "You've had them for ages: you must have read them a dozen times," she said. "Anyway, waste paper helps the war effort so you shouldn't complain." I did, though, and for several days was inconsolable. My mother saw how upset I was, and no doubt smitten by conscience (despite the war effort), bought me a consolation present.

It was a large heavy volume called *Chums Annual*. It had a dark red cover showing a cowboy on a bucking bronco. It was packed with stories — stories that schoolboys love to read. The adventures of pirates and highwaymen, knights of old, the men of the Foreign Legion, fighter pilots in the First World War filled its pages. There were school stories, tales of the Wild West, the Mounties in the frozen north, the French Revolution. It had any number of well-drawn pictures and coloured plates and it gave me many happy hours of reading. My mother found me other *Chums Annuals* in the second hand bookshops and they were some consolation for the loss of my precious *Schoolboys' Own Library*.

She also discovered another treasure trove of stories, this time the *Boy's Own*

Paper. Copies of Victorian editions of the annual were not difficult to find and they too had plenty of good yarns in them as well as interesting articles on a wide range of subjects: great railway accidents, mining disasters, natural wonders, practical hints on everything from sketching to ventriloquism. And of course sport. There was even a series on noughts and crosses which, schoolboy though I was, hardly seemed to me to be sport or to merit such detailed analysis. The Victorian authors could hardly be called squeamish and I recollect one adventure serial set in the Wild West which described an horrific scalping and also some traitorous villain being pegged down on an ant hill to be eaten alive!

The illustrations were good. One that moved me particularly was a bugler on his knees in the snow, clearly dying as blood seeped through his uniform. And the caption: True Till Death.

It was through one of the *Boy's Own Paper* annuals that I made the acquaintance of Talbot Baines Reed and his school story *Master of the Shell*, serialised in weekly parts. Only much later did I discover that the opening chapters in the BOP differed markedly from the published volume. It was not quite Greyfriars but for the time being it was an acceptable substitute. The annuals had several hundred pages in them and when I had finished reading my favourite stories for the umpteenth time I turned them into scrap books. Given the wartime paper shortage these no longer existed so I filled the pages with newspaper cuttings of our modern day heroes, the men of the RAF and the Royal Navy. The Army I'm afraid hardly ever figured because all they seemed to do in the first three years of the war was to finish up on the losing side.

As I grew older, I went searching the second hand bookshops for Greyfriars stories but it was not until nearly ten years after the war had ended that I came across a pile of them in a junk shop in London where I was then living. They were on sale at five shillings each which was pretty pricey at a time when I was only earning £18 a week, and that before tax. But I lashed out and bought the lot. And so once again I could feast myself on the doings of Bunter, Harry Wharton and Co and all the other old favourites. My wife was disgusted at how much I had spent, more than a week's rent as she tartly pointed out. "And they're schoolboy stories at that. Some people just never grow up." I had no answer — but no regrets either.



Season's Greetings to all from
 MERYL WITTY, SUNNYBANK, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA.

A Happy Xmas and best wishes for 1905 to friends and hobbyists everywhere.
 BILL BRADFORD.



THE SOCCER STAR'S SCHOOL CAP

By Brian Sayer



***The Magnet* and *The Gem* were early casualties in the battle against Hitler although commentators have observed that shadows had been gathering around St Jim's because of falling circulations.**

Years after the end of the Second World War, Frank Richards told me that he did not believe it possible for school story papers like *The Magnet* and *The Gem* to exist any more.

Before that observation, there appeared in the early 1950s a new magazine for young readers. Its main attraction was a series about a public school and its various characters.

Alas, Frank Richards was correct. The school had only a short term.

Doubtless inspired by the great pre-war story papers for boys and girls, the new juvenile school story magazine appeared on August 8, 1953 with the clever title *School Cap*.

It was published fortnightly by Charles Buchan's Publications Ltd, Strand, London WC2.

Its appearance might well have been intended to continue along the golden trail led by *The Magnet* and other publications in pre-war decades.

Unfortunately, the trail did not lead very far.

Page one of the first editions of *School Cap* had a part yellow wash. From number four the colour was changed to red.

The inside illustrations were mono and, in my opinion, rather basic.

The magazine carried a message from Charlie Buchan, heralded as "the celebrated broadcaster and former Arsenal, Sunderland and England soccer star".

He also published a sports paper. Charles Buchan's *Football Monthly* was trumpeted in *School Cap* as "the world's greatest soccer magazine".

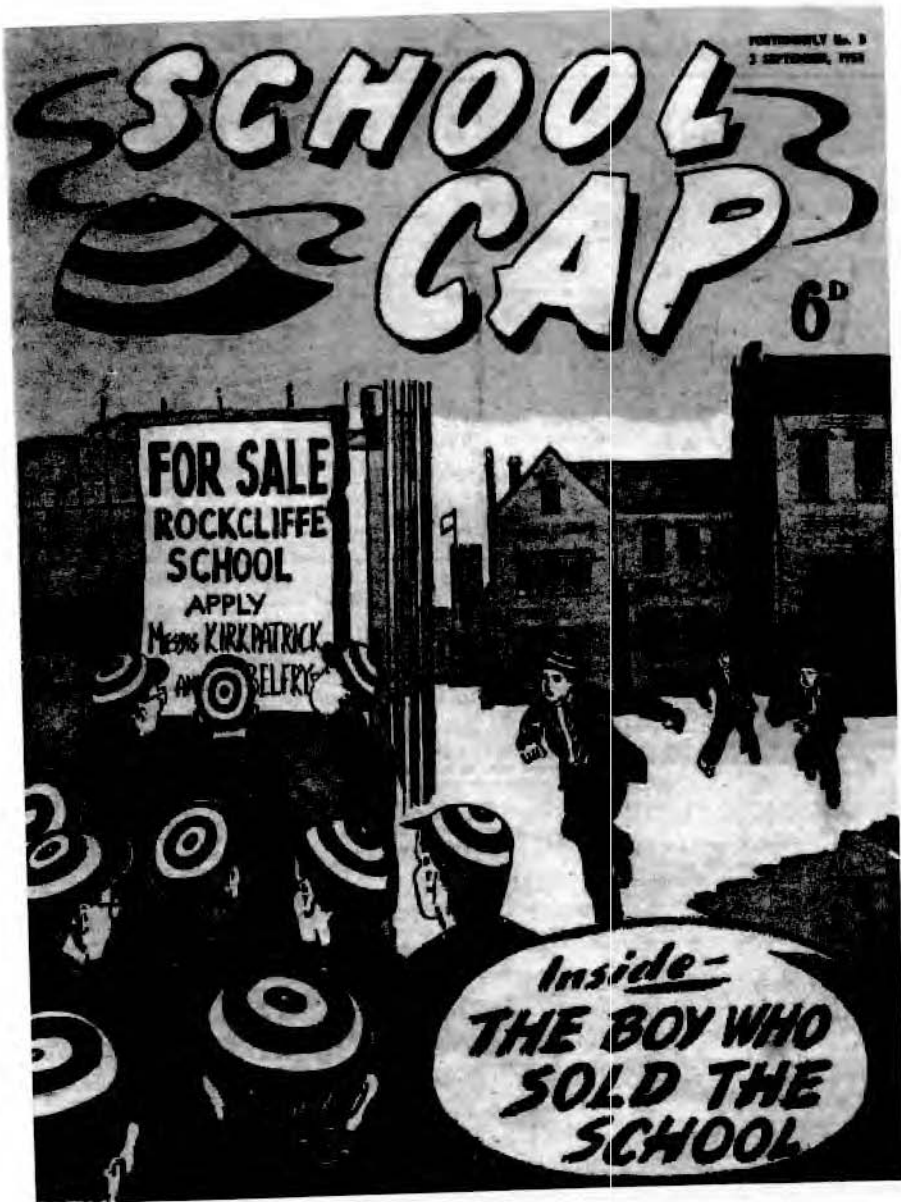
As well as the series of long complete school stories about the same group of boys there was a spaceman serial. The author of the school tales was Basil Storey. He was also "your editor pal".

The excellent guide to authors. *The Men Behind Boys' Fiction*, by Lofts and Adley, records that the aptly surnamed Mr Storey was a sports journalist who was born in 1909 in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Basil was his second name, his first being William.

He was a speedway correspondent and ice hockey reporter for the Daily Express.

Lofts and Adley credit him with launching *School Cap* as well as a number of speedway magazines. I was told that he wrote for a publication called *Speedway Gazette*.

He also contributed to a *Tom Merry's Annual*.



The tales in *School Cap* were padded with short features, jokes and "items of interest" framed by old-fashioned printer's lead borders. There were 32 pages.

The story paper has a somewhat cheap and quaint appearance. Perhaps it was intended to resemble a school magazine.

Yet sixpence would have put it at a dearer end of the children's papers market. A 'tanner' was then the average price of a quarter pound of sweets. *The Champion*, one

pre-war boys' story paper that was still going strong, cost threepence.

The decision to produce a paper like *School Cap* is intriguing in view of the soaring success of the brilliant *Eagle*, which took flight in April 1950 for threepence (and contained a regular school story).

Later editions of *School Cap* carried banners proclaiming it as "The World's Greatest School Story Magazine".

No lack of modesty there!

However, a girl reader wrote to the editor saying that her local newsagent had not heard of it.

The story paper's school was Rockcliffe and one of its prime pupils was an aggravating American called Bats Belfry (although the name is imaginative).

The scholars included an aristocratic "immaculate dandy of the Fourth".

In one story, the wealthy dandy - he usually drawled "in his characteristically lazy manner" - persuades an aspiring Rockcliffe actor to ask a Thespian friend to pretend to be the bragging Belfry's outlandish Wild West grandfather.

At Rockcliffe, I sometimes felt, as it were, that I was in familiar territory. Here, from *Kick Me Out - I'm Crackers!*, is an example of the humour.

"It was at that moment that Mr Tobias Tring stepped into the room. Several fellows made desperate signs to Belfry to shut up, but Belfry ran on.

'Well, I'm going to the pictures. If that rotten beast butts in I shall jolly well tell him what I think of him, that's all! You fellows hear that? I'm jolly well going out, and if that cheese-faced rotter Tring tries to stop me, I shall look him in the eye and say - Yaroooooh! Leggo my ear, you fathead!'"

The master, of course, is the ear nipper and says he has heard Belfry's statements.

"'I-I-I never said anything, sir!' howled the unhappy Belfry. 'I w-w-wasn't speaking at all, sir! I-I-I didn't say a word, sir! Just ask these other fellows, sir - they all heard me, sir!'"

One band of boys was dubbed the "famous Four Aces" (not to be confused with the same-named early 1950s popular pre-rock male group from Philadelphia, USA).

A typical edition of *School Cap* opened with *A Message from Charles Buchan* and then *A Chat with the Editor*.

The fill-in features ranged from *Dick Turpin, romantic rogue or common cuitpurse?* to *Phantom Ships* to *Houdini - Prince of Escapologists* and *Famous Soccer Clubs*.

One article was *Collecting Matchbox Labels*. This was a popular and cheap hobby for children in the Fifties.

Towards the end of its run the magazine began a "Swop Shop". In the final edition it filled two pages with 99 percent of the swaps entered by boys. This was an excellent idea and would probably have proved highly popular had *School Cap* continued.

A boy in Kenya (so the magazine travelled) wanted to exchange a crimson Biro

SCHOOL CAP



pen in perfect condition for a stamp album (not torn, he stipulated).

A Smethwick reader had a complete set of "William" books, 28, to sell for £2 5s 0d. Alternatively, he was willing to exchange them for *Magnets* or *Gems*, four to a book.

A number of other readers were seeking *Magnets*, *Gems* and issues of the *Schoolboys' Own Library*.

At this distance I find that interesting. I was wearing a school cap myself in 1953

and was unaware of other boys having an interest, like myself, in story papers that had ceased before we could read.

The serial was *Streak Storm Space Detective* by Clive Benton – identified by Lofts and Adley as Basil Storey.

The setting is Mercury and Storm has to grapple with invisible foes called the Shadow Men, a renegade Englishman and a master race of flying ants (no Nippon pest destroyer available it seems).

The ants plan to conquer Earth. Storm and a young friend are anxious to warn their planet of a likely attack.

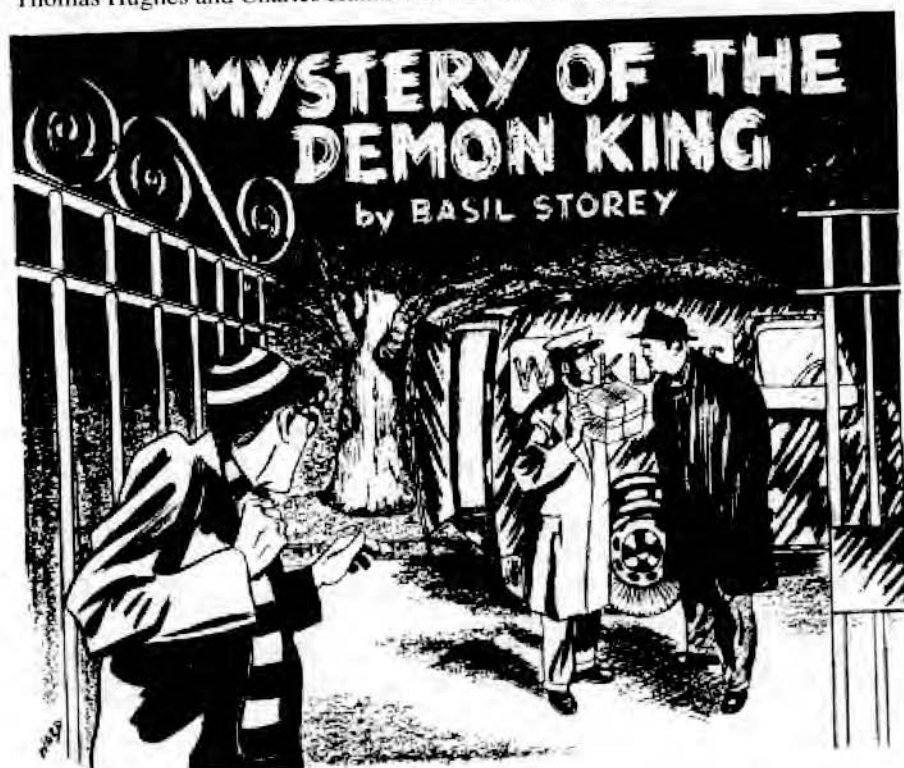
Titles in the mini-saga of Rockcliffe included *Bats Belfry's Pop-gun Gran 'pop*, *The Boy Who Sold The School*, *The Man from Atlantis*, and *Bats Belfry the Film Star*.

The star school story in the issue of December 12, 1953 was *Mystery of the Demon King*.

Charlie Buchan commented in his column: "I say without hesitation that *Mystery of the Demon King* ranks with the greatest stories for boys that has (sic) ever been written".

The former soccer star confided that when he read the manuscript on his tube journey he was so engrossed that, for the first time, he missed his regular stop.

A story ranking alongside the works of Talbot Baines Reed, Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hughes and Charles Hamilton! This had to be read.



The masterpiece opens with a Rockcliffe boy's scheme to phone the local emporium and pretend to be his Headmaster, Professor Arbuthnot Phoenix, ordering a Christmas pudding.

The junior plotter is Kirkpatrick, an Irish boy known as Shylock of the Fourth. His habit, one reads, is to buy various articles from his schoolmates and sell them at a handsome profit.

The famous Four Aces utter exclamations such as "Holy smoke!" and "Galloping corkscrews!" when informed of the plan to land the Head with a two guinea bill for Kirkpatrick's feed.

The Irish boy's suggestion to have the pudding delivered to one of the four results in the trickster being turned over and walloped with a cricket stump.

"Beasts!" he gasps after his beating. "The rotten, ungrateful beasts!"

Later, nine invitations turn up for a "Christmas vacation" at Starlight Castle.

"Pickle me a pom pom!" gasps Joey Lauderdale. (I expect he meant a pompon and not a quick-firing gun.) "These are from Bats Belfry's father - Kit Belfry the fiction writer!"

There follow some fashionable Fifties swipes at dollar-rich, no taste Americans. Unlike the famous Four Aces Bats Belfry falls in with Kirkpatrick's pudding plan.

Kirkpatrick's phone call to the big store is a cue for various misunderstandings. His request for a two-guinea pudding is misinterpreted as guinea pigs and he is put through to the pets department.

So it goes on in similar vein.

At one point, Kirkpatrick, evidently a *Magnet* reader, exclaims: "Go and eat coke!"

At least, somehow, it made more sense than his snarling "Pummel me with a parsnip!"

The Rockcliffe scholars are remarkably inventive with their exclamations. "Galloping cockroaches! Diddle me a doughnut! Saddle me a saucepan!" are more samples.

The Head is content to utter, "Bless my soul!" in the manner of Dr Locke.

The pudding ordered, Belfry lingers by the school gates in the December dusk for its arrival and is approached by a tall, sinister-looking man with a long, waxed moustache. He is entirely in black, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and an opera cloak.

Incredibly, Belfry believes the stranger to be a detective on the trail of the deception and so when the store's van driver arrives with the pudding the schoolboy denies his identity.

However, Belfry is left with the pudding and the man in black hands him a card bearing a 'Merry Christmas' message.

After his scare, Belfry is eager to get his teeth into the pudding but Kirkpatrick announces that he intends to auction it.

There is a struggle during which the pudding takes flight through a window. It lands on the head of Professor Phoenix who has returned to school earlier than expected.

The tale continues: "The sound of Christmas pudding smiting the cranium of mortal man coupled with a sound made by mortal man whose cranium is smitten by Christmas pudding can, ironically enough, be described as giving 'food for thought'.

"That the powerful brain of Professor Arbuthnot Phoenix was in need of gastronomic stimulus, particularly a two guinea Christmas pudding served from dizzy heights, is, of course, a question open to considerable doubt.

"Let it suffice that the venerable Professor, like Gideon of old, was sorely stricken and cast down."

Well, hit me with a cross-eyed cucumber!

The pudding incident causes only a minor official stir and Belfry and Kirkpatrick go carol singing to raise the money to pay for the ill-gained dessert.

The mysterious black-garbed stranger turns up and gives the annoyingly stuttering Belfry another card and three quid.

"Stuff me an owl!" gasps Kirkpatrick.

Later, the boys find that the card reads A. Demon, Esq.

Breaking-up day arrives and boys set off by train for the Belfry estate.

As the train rattles along the rails the man in black appears yet again and performs some inexplicable tricks, which include cracking an egg over Belfry's head.

Then a bogus ticket inspector joins the party, produces a gun, and demands to know which boy is Belfry. The man in black outwits him.

The curious conjuror's departing words to Belfry are: "Your Dad will explain something about this to you this evening".

Then it was heigh-ho for Starlight Castle and the Christmas hols, leaving this reader struggling to extricate himself from loose ends.

I wish Belfry's father could have explained it all to me!

I wondered if the theme was to continue but the story concluded with "The end". Indeed, it was the end entirely!

School Cap did not wear well. A researcher confirmed to me that the magazine's run concluded with number 10.

Fortnightly publications probably put strains on readers' loyalties. More than that, they could buy the cheaper, super, space-age Eagle, with its outstanding artwork and Dan Dare. I certainly did!

I doubt if any Hamilton aficionado would regard Rockcliffe as a rival to Greyfriars. I have never heard of the fictional school since the end of *School Cap*. If Rockcliffe crumbled I hope that Bats Belfry was well buried under the rubble.

Nevertheless, *School Cap* was a praiseworthy attempt to keep the school bell ringing in juvenile publications and it merits a place in hobby history.

Basil Storey wrote *The Tough Guys of Sport* in the first Mandeville publication of *The Tom Merry's Own*. It is an interesting, well-written piece about 1940s Australian speedway star Vie Duggan and others whose determination against the odds made them famous riders.





CRAZY WEEK AT ST. JIM'S!

By MONTY LOWTHER

"Why not a crazy week at St. Jim's?" says the humorist of the Shell. But after reading his startling suggestions we think he's crazy!

GENTLEMEN, chaps and fellows, I've got the brightest notion that's struck me for at least five minutes.

Crazy Week at St. Jim's!

Why not? Dash it all, we spend nearly forty weeks out of the year in sombre and sober sanity, hedged round with rules, restrictions and respectability. Why not go "goofy" sometimes, for a change? It would do us all good!

Just imagine a whole week of carnival, with all the fellows doing exactly what they pleased! Whoopee!

Lessons would be optional, of course. But with lickings and lines barred and no restrictions on behaviour there'd be a full attendance—it would be too good to miss!

In the Shell, we'd pelt Mr. Linton with chalks and erasers as he came in—inkpots would be barred by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Schoolmasters, I'm afraid! And

when he remarked, as he sometimes does, "Let me see, first lesson is English History," we'd yell back "Rats! You mean funny stories!"

Questions would naturally be answered in the crazy way. "When did Henry IV come to the throne?" would draw the reply "Some time before Henry V, I fancy, old bean!" The answer to "Where were the kings of England crowned?" would be "On their nappers, of course!" and so on.

When we got bored by lessons, we'd buzz off and leave Linton to carry on to the empty desks. If the Fourth were still in class, we might liven things up by paying them a visit and indulging in an ink-pellet battle—with perhaps Mr. Lathom standing in the middle to see fair play!

Dinner in hall would be a regular riot. Beaks would be inconspicuous and prefects would lie low and say nothing—or take the consequences! The menu would be varied and liberal

—as seaside landladies tell you prior to serving up small portions of beef and spuds for a fortnight! Ginger-pop and chocolates and rare and refreshing viands would be available in unlimited quantities, and what was left over would be used as missiles to be hurled at inattentive waiters!

After dinner the time would be devoted to amusements forbidden in normal weeks, such as playing footer with the Head's best topper, decorating the busts of Cæsar, Eutropius & Co. with prefects' clobber and false beards and specs., and turning the fire hose on Mr. Ratcliff! All this would be awfully jolly!

Just to give the poor, oppressed fellows of the Fourth and Shell a treat, all juniors between the Fifth and Third Forms exclusive would be promoted to the rank of prefect. Prefects, on the other hand, would be reduced to the rank of fags. The new prefects would, as a matter of course, be allowed to administer punishment to the new fags with implements provided for that purpose. Just light, inoffensive weapons, of course—say a couple of sjamboks and a cat-o'-nine-tails to each man!

One of the great features of Crazy Week at St. Jim's would be the



The new prefects would be allowed to administer punishment to the new fags with an inoffensive weapon like a cat-o'-nine-tails!

decorations. If I had my way, there'd be so many decorations you wouldn't be able to recognise the old place! Flags would fly and pennants proudly flutter all over the place.

Calling-over would be abolished and juniors would be allowed to stay out half the night if they wished. For the benefit of those who felt like staying in, there would be theatrical performances, boxing displays and film shows in the dormitories as long as they were required. These arrangements would ensure a perfect end to a perfect day for everybody!

That, briefly, is my idea of a Crazy Week for St. Jim's. I don't expect everybody to agree with it at once. I shall be very much surprised, in fact, if the Head hugs me affectionately as soon as he hears about it and cries "Lowther, my boy, it's the wheeze of the century—let's start Crazy Week right away!" Still, I hope to convert the Head—in time.

Once Dr. Holmes agrees, the rest of the masters will soon follow his lead; so the time may come when Crazy Week at St. Jim's is a regular annual institution.

On the other hand, it may *not*!

THE END



Leisure time would be devoted to amusements forbidden in normal weeks, such as playing footer with the Head's topper!





BRIAN DOYLE WRITES:

I seem to recall that some time ago in the *SPCD* you bemoaned the fact that you had no photographs of the late, great W.O.G. Lofts. I've just come across this one which I hope may be of some future use.

It was taken in 1968 when Bill and I were invited to a special Reception at Fleetway House in London to announce and launch the new revival of Sexton Blake in the *Valiant* boys paper as a picture-strip. I don't recall who the lady is standing between me and bill, but I think she was an editor or editorial assistant with Fleetway, who was working on *Valiant*, etc. I remember that it was this picture-strip that once introduced a couple of characters named 'Lofts and Adley' ...! as a little 'in-joke'. As you see, from the folder the lady is holding the 'promotional line' seemed to be 'It's Sexton Blake for 1968' - which doesn't even rhyme, but there you go...!



A SEASONAL PHENOMENON

by Ted Baldock



I clasped the phantoms, and I found them air.

Young. Night Thoughts

Groan an old phantom, do your best
I'm tired and quite replete,
You will not disturb my rest
Why do you not retreat
Back to the shades where you belong
Back o'er long weary years
You've done your best but we are strong
And laugh at spectral fears.



A snow covered countryside, silent but for the southing of a bitter east wind sweeping over the grey plough and woodland. A December mist predominates. A day to keep within doors, with draught-excluding devices in place, doors closed and a bright fire crackling, and the knowledge and anticipation of Christmas in the near offing.

Another year gliding silently over the grey roof and chimneys of Wharton Lodge. One more occasion for Wells, the butler, to perform his traditional duties to ensure the smooth running of the forthcoming festivities. For the ever-hopeful John, the footman, to entice the not over reluctant housemaid, Mary, to the vicinity of a substantial branch of mistletoe hanging in the hall.

Another year hoping that William George Bunter will not materialize although the realization of such an event is held in some doubt at Wharton Lodge. For this is the season of good will and it will be honoured when he *does* turn up. Even Colonel Wharton will 'bite on the bullet', or more probably his cigar, and with military gruffness extend a welcome to the Owl. And Wells with his usual sagacity will not forget to see that the pantry is securely locked – just in case.

The 'Co', with the exception of Harry Wharton (he being 'host'), will threaten Bunter with dire consequences should he fail to 'play up'. All of which is a wonderful evocation of the *Magnet* Christmas number to which we looked forward – and which never disappointed – over the years.

It had been a pleasant evening for the juniors who gathered round the fire at Wharton Lodge recalling bygone holidays and competing in the telling of ghost stories. It was all very seasonable and filled with expectancy – for this was Christmas Eve. Billy Bunter had, as usual, supped not wisely but rather too well for his peace of mind. Later he lay in his bed in the dim panelled room allotted to him. Wells had long since made his last round of inspection, assuring himself that all was secure.

The wind was moaning not unlike a chorus of lost souls – so thought the Owl – round the chimneys and roof of the old Lodge, one more of the many Yuletides



Frank Richards and his most famous creation portrayed by
Magnet illustrator C. H. Chapman.

experienced by the ancient building. The long shadowy passage upon which the bedroom of Billy Bunter opened seemed to be the furtive playground of soft creakings, equally soft footfalls and occasional 'bumps' which caused him no little distress, and made him swiftly draw the blankets over his fat head. And this was not all; there were continual sibilant whispers just outside his door which caused much uneasiness in his fat breast.

How much all this may be attributed to an over-active imagination and over-indulgence at supper is conjectural. Perhaps he should have refrained from taking a second wedge of pie, followed with a final fair-sized slice of pineapple. In any case, these items do not seem to be on very amicable terms with each other at the moment.

Slumber was therefore somewhat tardy in closing the Owl's eyelids. His wooing of Morpheus was lacking its usual verve and success. The god of sleep was certainly playing 'hard to get'.

A particularly gruesome ghost story which Colonel Wharton had related earlier in the evening kept recurring in his fat mind, the particulars of which he could not dismiss. The memory of this tale made his imagination over alert and anxious to do what he would to wipe the lurid details from his mind.

For once Bunter's vibrant and resonant snore was silenced. It was an uneasy Owl who quaked beneath the blankets, fearful and listening. Meanwhile, along the passage in their respective rooms, Harry Wharton and Co. were sleeping the sleep of the just, oblivious of creaking floor boards or any groaning which may have been in progress in the shadowy passages and landings of Wharton Lodge.

So the slow hours of the long winter night glided on, measured by the sonorous ticking of the ancient grandfather clock in the hall below. An ideal time and place for the dismal manifestation and lamentations of spectres should they choose to visit.

The Lodge sleeps, above and below stairs most rooms are wrapped in slumber. Preparations for the morrow have been made to that degree of perfection insisted upon by Wells.

It has been said that there is always an exception to the general rule. If this be so, surely one of the wakeful shades most likely to hover over the Yuletide celebrations at Wharton Lodge would be a smiling and benign skull-capped figure quietly observing the activities of all those children of his own creation.

Who does not recall with nostalgic pleasure the groaning board on these occasions surrounded by happy faces, Billy Bunter's beam being extended almost round to the back of his fat head. To him this is little short of paradise. Wells will be advancing, bearing an enormous Christmas pudding suitably garnished with a sprig of holly, followed by John with all the necessary accompaniments. And in the background beyond the window snow will be falling in heavy silent flakes.

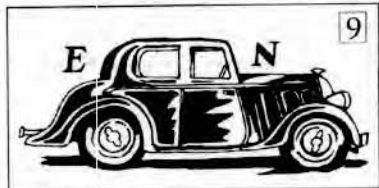
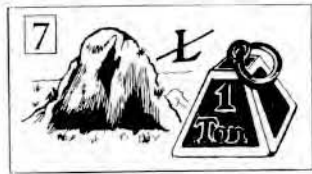
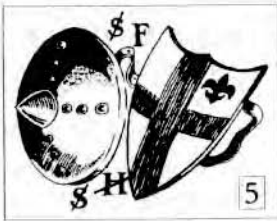
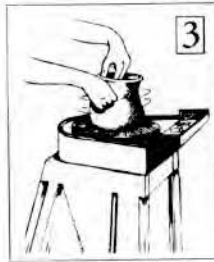
A glorious vision which made a lasting impression upon so many 'Old Boys and Girls' and which will never completely fade away.



by Bob Whiter



Answer this Greyfriars Quiz.



Answers on page 67



Stalky & Co.

by Andrew Pitt



Rudyard Kipling is the author of *The Jungle Book*, the *Just So* stories, *Kim*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, the nation's favourite poem *If*, and *Stalky & Co.* On the LP record *Floreat Greyfriars* Charles Hamilton mentions *Tom Brown*, the books of Talbot Baines Reed, and to use his words 'Stalky of course'. The Kipling Society has made a great song and dance about a newly discovered *Stalky* story. Actually it is in very early draft form and is far from the finished product. Kipling's *Stalky* stories were originally published as magazine short stories between 1897 and 1926. As the book *Stalky & Co* was published in 1899, to read the full collection you need the *Complete Stalky* published first in 1929. Unfortunately current day editions often just reprint the original short collection.

But I warn you: *Stalky* is an acquired taste (and not to everyone's taste). And that goes for Kipling too. *Stalky* is a book with an edge. I like books with an edge, just as I like people with an edge: there are always likely to be sparks as the edges grate. Kipling is still a controversial figure: how pleased he would be. It is said that after the Bible and Shakespeare, Kipling has minted more phrases for the English language than anyone else. In 1914 he said 'The Hun is at the Gate'; in invoking what happened to the Roman Empire, he effectively asks the question, 'Is it to happen to the British Empire?' and for the War 'the Hun' became the derogatory name for the Germans. Kipling always found the words, unpleasant though some of them are to modern sensitivity. At the end of the Great War it was Kipling who thought of what to put on the graves of men whose identity was unknown: 'A Soldier of the Great War, Known unto God'

Analysis of the *Stalky* stories has concentrated on what is seen as the didactic purpose of Kipling. Isabel Quigley in her book *The Heirs of Tom Brown* refers to *Stalky* as 'The School Story as Imperial Manual' and Jeffrey Richards in his book *Happiest Days* entitles his chapter on *Stalky* as 'Soldiers of the Queen'. Kipling writes a number of stories in *Stalky* that invite that treatment, not least '*Slaves of the Lamp Part I*' set at school, and '*Slaves of the Lamp Part II*' set on the Northwest frontier of India with the boys now in the Army. So is 'Kipling Imperialist' what the stories are all about? It is not untrue, but it is not the whole truth. And if your view of Kipling is of a frothing-at-the-mouth imperialist, think again. One of the stories in *Stalky* is *The Flag of their Country* where an MP comes down to lecture the boys about patriotism and at the end he literally waves a Union Flag at them and expects a rousing cheer. There is complete silence. These sons of army and naval officers are unimpressed. Kipling says that they know the truth of war. They have their patriotism alright: they are their fathers' sons; 'Deep calling to deep' is a Kipling phrase and there are some things which are too keenly felt to be spoken of. Kipling as an Imperialist was merely a man of his time: almost everyone was an Imperialist; even Liberals were: the opportunity to do good by 'civilising' the natives was irresistible—we are still at

it today! But Kipling had no such illusions: 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. The stories do have another purpose.

The point about this school, a school specifically set up to prepare boys for Sandhurst and other military academies, was this: it was no invention of Kipling's: he attended it. It was the United Services College at Westward Ho!, North Devon. The boys, the masters, all existed, under different names. Kipling was to some extent just doing a spot of journalism. If nothing else, the stories tell us a great deal about the making of Rudyard Kipling. His parents were in India for most of his childhood and he only saw them for a couple of months every few years. His first years in England were unhappy, but then in later years this school became his substitute parent. The United Services College was a cut-price public school set up by army and naval men to educate their sons. Someone had built 12 boarding houses at Westward Ho! in a failed attempt to create a resort, and the new school picked them up for a song. It was a most unusual school. There was no fagging. Boys in the 6th form were allowed to smoke, though not in the 5th form which Stalky & Co. adorned. There was no cadet corps; only drill as a punishment.

It had a most unusual headmaster, Cormell Price: unusual because he was not in holy orders and because he was a political radical, who in the 1880s attended demonstrations protesting about unemployment: a curious choice for a group of Army officers. Kipling wasn't destined for the Army but the headmaster was a school chum of Kipling's relative, the painter Burne-Jones. Kipling always valued the man rather than a man's politics throughout life. What he detested was politicians - when asked to comment on his cousin Stanley Baldwin the Conservative Prime Minister, he said, 'Just another kind of Socialist', which was outrageous for its time. For Kipling was not a compromiser-and he refused knighthoods, orders of merit and poet laureateships several times. This independence is crucial to the stories and to Kipling. At Westwood Ho! Kipling formed an alliance with two other boys, Dunsterville and Beresford, called Corkran and M'Turk in the stories and nicknamed Stalky and Turkey. Kipling's nickname in the stories was Beetle. Dunsterville was their leader and was called Stalky because in college slang it meant astute and cunning.

Kipling's stories show Dunsterville in action and he says that Stalky will be a great man. Kipling's prediction came true. Dunsterville joined the Army and was very successful with irregular forces. In the Great War he led a daring raid on the Azerbaijani oilfields. He ended up as a lieutenant general; perhaps he would have gone even higher had he been more conformist. That's the point of these stories: the boys are all non-conformists, individualists as it were. Mr Prout their housemaster did not like them. I quote: 'He had heard M'Turk openly deride cricket—even house matches. Beetle's views on the honour of the house he knew were incendiary and he could never tell when the smiling Stalky was laughing at him.' It is these battles with the masters that the stories are all about. These boys reject absolute conformity; they think for themselves. Critics have remarked how grown up the boys appear. 'Like little men' the critic Edmund Wilson complained. In fact if you look at a form photo with Kipling in it at age 15, there is something remarkable about it. There seems to be

a man standing in the middle. It's Kipling and at age 15 he has a bushy moustache. Stalky was considered subversive in its day; public school masters called for it to be banned. It's ironic that Lindsay Anderson's film *If* assumes that it is sending up Kipling's world. Kipling was there before it with Stalky. Kipling was no friend of the Establishment: he was its critic but perhaps coming from a different direction than most of its critics. Kipling at school was very clever with words; he was always making up little cheeky rhymes about the masters which he taught to other boys and somehow this got through to the masters. This bookish humour runs through the stories; in *The Satisfaction of a Gentleman* one boy, finding his study fire out, goes to a study upstairs and carries downstairs a shovel of burning coals, but he unexpectedly meets his housemaster coming up and the shock of it causes him to drop the coals on the housemaster's feet and there is some dancing. Next day the housemaster is taking English, they're doing *Paradise Lost* and they come across the line 'Satan treading on burning marl' and Kipling or Beetle as he's called in the story bursts out laughing and the others then see the joke. The masters were very important to Kipling. Kipling did a restricted curriculum, and the Headmaster and Mr Crofts (who is disguised as King in the stories) the Classics master let him have complete run of their very extensive libraries and that is what he spent his time doing. The Head may have been a bit of a radical but he wasn't a softie. Detention took place on games day, which meant that you missed games, for which offence you were then reported for further punishment. Someone suggested that this was unfair and the Head replied that the sooner boys realised how unfair life was, the better. As an example in the story *In Ambush* when two masters pursue the three boys whom they suspect of breaking bounds, the boys contrive to have the masters arrested as suspected poachers. They arrive back at the college in high spirits but the Head is equal to them.

'Good evening' said the Head when the three appeared before him under escort. 'I want your undivided attention for a few minutes. You've known me for five years, and I've known you for twenty-five. I think we understand each other perfectly. I am now going to pay you a tremendous compliment. ('The brown [cane] please, Sergeant. Thanks. You needn't wait'.) I'm going to execute you without rhyme, Beetle or reason. I know you went to Colonel Dabney's covers because you were invited. I'm not even going to send the Sergeant with a note to ask if your statement is true. (You can take off that virtuous expression, M'Turk or I shall begin to fear you don't understand me.) There is not a flaw in any of your characters. And that is why I am going to perpetrate a howling injustice.....I'm going to lick you'. [And he does.] 'And this I think,' said the Head 'covers the situation. When you find a variation from the normal — this will be useful to you in later life— always meet him in an abnormal way. And that reminds me. There is a pile of paperbacks on that shelf. You can borrow them..... I don't think they'll take any harm from being read in the open. They smell of tobacco rather.'

Perhaps the Head meant that they smelt of tobacco already. The three decide to leave it there with the two masters. But a week later at a cricket match, the two masters (one of them Mr King, the Classics master) are in earshot and Stalky says to Beetle: 'I say, Beetle, "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" ["Who guards the guards?"]' And M'Turk says, 'Let's go over to Colonel Dabney's and see if he's collared any more poachers.' One story in *Stalky* is called *Regulus*. Regulus was a Roman general captured by the Carthaginians, who then freed him so that he could go to Rome and put Carthage's insulting peace package forward on condition that he should return with the answer. At Rome he argued against Carthage's proposals and then amazingly returned to Carthage and flung the answer in their faces in the most obnoxious way, knowing that they would kill him. The message? In effect, this is the calibre of enemy you're up against. The story appealed to Kipling, and to Horace, who wrote an ode about it. In the story we meet the fifth form and Mr King the Classics master going through the *Regulus* ode. It may be that only those who have experienced being taught Latin by someone like King can appreciate the full force of the *Regulus* story and that the nuances are lost to others but I assure you it is magnificently faithful. I give one extract-edited a good deal-to give you a flavour of Mr King. Regulus is speaking in the ode and one boy translates 'scilicet' as 'forsooth'. 'Regulus,' comments King, 'was not a ...writer for the penny press, nor for that matter was Horace.' King then tells Vernon to translate, whose rendering of the passage beginning 'O magna Carthage probrosis altior Italiae minis...' brings this comment from King:

'I am painfully aware that I cannot give you any idea of the passion, the power, the essential guts of the lines which you have so foully outraged in our presence.... But so far as in me lies, I will strive to bring home to you, Vernon, the fact that there exist in Latin a few pitiful rules of grammar, of syntax, nay, even of declension, which were not created for your ...sport.... You will therefore, Vernon, write out and bring to me tomorrow a word for word translation of the Ode, together with a full list of all adjectives-an adjective is not a verb, Vernon—all adjectives, their number, case and gender. Even now I haven't begun to deal with you faithfully.'

'I'm very sorry, sir' said Vernon.

'You mistake the symptoms, Vernon. You are possibly discomforted by the imposition, but sorrow [pre-supposes] some sort of mind, intellect... Your rendering of probrosis alone stamps you as lower than the beasts of the field. Will someone take the taste out of our mouths? And talking of tastes....' There was a distinct flavour of chlorine gas in the air. 'Mr Hartopp's science class next door, sir' said Malpass.

'Oh yes, I had forgotten,' says King, 'Our newly-established Modern side of course. Perowne, open the windows. Winton, go on'.

'And hastened away,' continued Winton, 'surrounded by his mourning friends, into illustrious banishment. But I got that out of *Conington*, sir'.

'I am aware' said King, 'The master generally knows his ass's crib. How do you render obstantes?'

'Mightn't obstantes and morantem come to about the same thing, sir?'
'Nothing comes to about the same thing with Horace, Winton.... Beetle, give me the meaning of tendens.' ...

'Stretching away in the direction of, sir,' says Beetle.

'Idiot. Regulus was not a feature of the landscape.... Atqui sciebat... can't you hear the atqui cut like a knife.... That is why Horace out of the whole golden Latin tongue chose the one ..word tendens, which is utterly untranslatable' said King.

Kipling then remarks on Beetle's feeling of the gross injustice of being asked to translate it but King has buried his nose into his handkerchief again.

'They've broken another gas bottle next door, sir,' said Howell.

'Well, I suppose we must be patient with the Modern Side.... Vernon, what are you grinning at?'

'The last two lines of the tenth ode, sir' was Vernon's amazing reply.

'What?' said King, 'Non hoc semper erit liminis aut aquae caelestis patiens latus? ['This side will not always be patient of rain and waiting on the threshold'] Was that done with intention?'

'I thought it fitted, sir.'

'It does. It's distinctly happy. What put it into your thick head, [Vernon]?'

'I don't know, sir, except we did the ode last term.'

'And you remembered? The same head that minted probrosis as a verb? Vernon, you are an enigma. No! This side will not always be patient of unheavenly gases and waters. [Vernon,] I remit you your accrued pains and penalties in regard to probrosim, probrosis, probrosit... I oughtn't to do it but this side is occasionally human.'

That is Mr King in class. The rest of the story concerns Winton who insists on being punished for his misdeed of introducing a mouse into the drawing master's class, even though he could technically get out of it. This amazes the school. But what kind of leadership, what kind of example is it, for a senior boy to get out of it on a technicality? What is Kipling trying to get over with the Regulus story? It is later that evening and King and Hartopp the Science Master are arguing over the value of Latin. Through the open window comes the sound of the boys returning to the House and the banter between them. Stalky says to Winton, 'Night, Regulus'. 'You see,' says King to Hartopp, 'It sticks. A little of it sticks among the barbarians.'

Current generations probably wonder why there was so much concentration on Latin and Greek in education in the past. It must be a complete mystery to people as those subjects have now virtually disappeared. Was there any point to all those hours spent at Greyfriars in the Remove form room? The answer is: first we learn about grammar. English grammar is never taught; one is just expected to pick it up; Latin is impossible without grammar. Secondly we learn what real work is. It's tough in King's class; he will pounce on you at any moment; it's like a one to one verbal

examination every lesson; you'll have difficulty not doing any work. Third, precision: you won't very far in Latin without precision, and in fact in any other subject, but it is not always so obvious. Fourth, it gives us a glimpse, though through a glass darkly to some of us, of what real scholarship is; the boys are not scholars, but King is. Fifth, and most important, those boys learn that the world did not begin on their birthdays, and that men had been putting their minds to complex questions for thousands of years; it gives people a healthy scepticism. How complacent for any generation to look on the misdeeds and foolishness of the previous generation, and to think that now this age, my age, will of course be different. The purpose of education in short is not to produce people to increase the output of UK plc and blindly follow the party line. The Roman Empire rose and fell. At the time *Regulus* was written, the British Empire was at its zenith. In his great poem. *Recessional*, Kipling warned:

'Far called, our navies melt away; on dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre!'

Regulus isn't a typical *Stalky* story, but I picked it because it concentrates more than most on schoolwork. There's plenty of 'knockabout' in the other *Stalky* stories, but in all the stories the masters play some part or other. And now we come to what *Stalky* is about. We all owe a debt to our teachers. It may be that we never acknowledge it; perhaps because we don't even realise it; we've got over Life's hurdles and it's nice to think we did it all ourselves!

Yes, the purpose of Kipling in writing *Stalky* is above all else a tribute to Kipling's teachers. He knew, more than most, what they had given him. I remind you that for most of his childhood his parents were hardly on the scene. *Stalky* does not just consist of short stories. They begin, end and are interspersed by little bits of verse. The first words of *Stalky & Co* are a bit of verse: 'Let us now praise famous men' and among the words are:

'This we learned from famous men,
Knowing not we learned it,
Only, as the years went by-,
Lonely as the years went by-,
Far from help as years went by,
Plainer we discerned it.'

Perhaps you think it strange that Kipling should be at odds with the masters while he is at school and writing a tribute to them after he has left. I don't think so. The adversarial nature of the relationship is all to do with age. To be at school and to write an essay 'How wonderful my teachers are' would be unnatural, creepy. Later we discern it. The word 'famous' was meant to be ironical because countless schoolteachers to whom we all owe something will by the nature of the job never be famous.

But let us remember them.





THE TOP CHRISTMAS TEN AT GREYFRIARS

by
Margery Woods



As Christmas approaches the annual battle begins to be top of the pops with the hit single topping sales Christmas week. In a less publicised scene the toy manufacturers have their battle to produce the toy that keeps the tills rattling and outsells every other toy offered.

So what about Greyfriars?

How many of us have our top ten Christmas stories, the favourite read that comes off our shelves every year when the cards and gifts are done and it is time to relax in a peaceful corner while the inner man deals with the turkey and Christmas pud and the mince pies? How better to recapture lost youth with those wonderful nostalgic Yuletides with Greyfriars? So which one would you choose?

Over the years there was a wonderful choice. High contenders for top places would be those from the solidly constructed and plotted series containing all the elements of a traditional Christmas. Lovely old panelled homes, great log fires, carols, snow, holly, spooky ancestral corners, a spot of mystery, villainy, a ghost or two, excitement, camaraderie, and a festive board to satisfy even a Bunter. A seasonal mix at which Frank Richards excelled and which inspired other writers and schools within the old Amalgamated Press. But there was one certain ingredient, without which a Greyfriars Christmas would not have been quite the same. Yes, the presence of William George Bunter.

No matter how much he irritates, infuriates and holds up the action while the reader is hanging on the finger nails of suspense to see what happens next, when Bunter blunders in the laughter has to start. This was one of Frank Richards' great skills; he knew the exact moment to switch from drama to comedy and Bunter was the motivator. So, would the favourite Christmases been the same without Bunter? Some readers may disagree but try imagining no battle to keep Bunter away, and no Bunter to overhear a vital clue to the mystery.

A couple of really cracking Yuletides came with the Courtfield Cracksman series and the Moat House mystery. Similar plots, new Remove masters, new chauffeurs, and Bunter and the Bounder getting involved, with Christmas set centre at Wharton Lodge. Little need be commented, both are well known, proven favourites with all Greyfriars addicts. As is the great Cavandale Christmas.

Bunter has been boasting about his friendship with Lord Cavandale, who, claimed Bunter, had dandled him as a baby on the aristocratic knee. (The mental picture of this occasion causes shivers in the imagination.) Lord Cavandale is seen at the station as the chums await their train and they challenge Bunter to introduce them. Bunter promptly disappears into the crowd. But fate, as usual, comes to Bunter's aid on the train when a ruffian attacks Lord Cavandale. Bunter, under the seat where he

THE MYSTERY OF CAVANDALE ABBEY!

Christmas Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.

The **MAGNET** 2°



The Bullet That Missed!

hopes to avoid having to pay his train fare, manages to stop this, causing an uproar, and faints, coming round to fuss and gratitude from Lord Cavandale, and is invited to Cavandale Abbey.

Bunter is fixed for Christmas, and he is determined to fix it for the Famous Five as well. There is mystery at Cavandale Abbey, where Lord Cavandale seems to live alone apart from staff and a certain Captain Lankaster. There is a very famous racehorse, Maharajah, involved, and the car had not reached the Abbey before yet another attempt was made on Lord Cavandale's life. Soon Bunter is really spooked and begs Wharton to come to the Abbey. The supercilious Captain Lankaster has warned Bunter that the mystery man who has made two attempts on Lord Cavandale's life may decide that Bunter is in the way, and may decide to dispose of Bunter. Wharton is persuaded, and welcomed by Lord Cavandale. Fortunately for Bunter, when another attempt is made on Cavandale's life, which Bunter, more by fortune than intent, once more prevents, this time he is believed. The Captain is beginning to show an evil temper where Bunter is concerned, and when Harry is attacked outside he knows that all Bunter's wild claims about an accomplice within the Abbey are not as unfounded as the unpleasant Captain Lankaster would have them believe. But the police have been unable to trace the assassin, and Lord Cavandale decides to call in Ferrers Locke.

Next the old familiar legend is introduced; the ghost of the Abbot who appears to forewarn of the death of the head of the family. Sure enough, the phantom Abbot walks, but walks in Bunter's room.

The ramifications at Cavandale Abbey proved more complicated than the boys had realised. Apart from Lankaster, the most likely suspect and the unknown sniper taking pot shots, plus the Phantom Abbot who was certainly in the business of murder, there was a third hidden dimension behind it all. There was money, gambling money at stake should Lord Cavandale's wonder horse, Maharajah enter, a big race in which the ruinous kind of money was involved. They couldn't get at the heavily guarded horse so they would get at his owner, whose demise would mean the horse being withdrawn.

Ferrers Locke soon trapped Lankaster, plus the ruffian he'd hired, but knew there was still menace within the Abbey. He got Lord Cavandale secretly away to safety and impersonated him to draw the killer into the open. The plan succeeded, and a quiet little bespectacled researcher who was cataloguing the Abbey library shocked everyone by proving to be the Abbey killer. He also had heavily backed Black Prince and this was his motive for trying to take a life.

There is really little classic Christmas atmosphere about this series but the humorous situations featuring Bunter are irresistible and keep the suspense going from beginning to end.

Bunter had a taste for living in style and his escapades in this direction featured in at least two other Yuletide tales. In his Christmas Carol he actually reforms; the Remove can't believe it. Bunter has received a copy of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and despite his initial opinion is drawn into the magic of Dickens' story-telling. He begins doing good deeds, helps a poor old man by lending him his umbrella and

gives him his watch saying he has no cash with him but the watch would fetch some money. The old man in worn clothes proves to be a millionaire philanthropist and proceeds to install Bunter in his Park Lane mansion and enlist Bunter's aid in philanthropic work.

After the pleasure of lording it over the disapproving staff, plus the millionaire's nephew, who is much concerned about the rate at which the family's inheritance is vanishing, Bunter begins to revert to normal, especially after having to hand over his overcoat and boots to a ragged urchin and walk back to Park Lane through the snow. However, perhaps fortunately for Bunter and the family inheritance, the old millionaire catches a severe cold after that little episode and is persuaded to retire to the south of France for the sake of his health. Alas, as soon as this happens Bunter's day is over and the staff can't wait to apply the order of the boot.

His other happy Christmas of lording it in luxury comes in the Reynham Castle series. His opportunity comes yet again as he tries to bilk the railway by hiding under a seat and so manages to save Sir Peter Lanchester from assault by villains. One thing leads to another and Bunter ends up at Reynham castle impersonating the young Lord Reynham who is under threat of kidnapping. His guardian, Sir Peter, wants a Greyfriars boy, "some strong, sturdy courageous boy to play the part", and consults Mr Quelch on this matter. Mr Quelch does not approve of this plan, unaware that Bunter is hiding in the cupboard overhearing all this. Bunter promptly writes to Sir Peter and offers his services. And so the merry tale of fun and danger rolls on. Bunter does enjoy himself, and being able to invite his form mates, until the final reckoning when he is drugged and kidnapped by the young lord's cousin who is next in line for the inheritance and sees no reason why he should not have it and the title. Luckily for Bunter, Harry Wharton has guessed what is happening and challenges the cousin to deny it. Sir Peter is aghast, but the cousin Rupert's appalled white face betrays the truth. Under threat of police and prison Rupert agrees to restore Bunter and leave England, never to return. So the real young Lord Reynham arrives the next day and Bunter, none the worse for his kidnapping, has to return to reality. Still, there's always Bunter Court!

Horace James Coker was also kidnapped one Christmas. After being advised by an unpleasant secretary of his uncle's not to come to Holly House for Christmas because his Uncle Henry is not in good health, Coker phones Aunt Judy who tells of her distrust of Poynings, the secretary although her brother Henry has total faith in him. Horace announces he is arriving for Christmas and will bring his friends with him. Then Coker vanishes. All attempts by police to find him fail and Aunt Judy arrives at Greyfriars asking the Head if the boys can stay on at school and search for her darling nephew who may be lying unconscious at the foot of some cliff. As Coker had recently plunged into the river to rescue Bob Cherry after a tree branch had broken and deposited Bob in the water — Bob can swim well, Coker can't but thinks he can, so it was brave of Coker to jump in to "rescue" Bob. — the Famous Five agree to Aunt Judy's plea and, putting together a few suspicions about a mysterious bungalow nearby, investigate and find Coker. Aunt Judy is overjoyed and Coker invites them to spend Christmas at Holly House. The chums agree, with reservations.

Coker is vowing vengeance on this new secretary his uncle has employed and when Coker is on a vengeance trail anything is liable to happen. Potter and Greene had showed no inclination to join the search for Coker; their affection for Coker was strictly of the cupboard love variety so they had quietly left the scene.

In the final story of the series Bunter arrives, the luxury of Bunter Court and the company of sister Bessie and little brother Sammy having somewhat palled. He arrives to a house filled with turmoil, Poynings is ordering the Famous Five to leave and Uncle Henry is very ill, even Horace is ordered to depart. But Coker demands to know why Poynings seems to be ruling the house and at last Uncle Henry admits he is being blackmailed by Poynings. Years ago Henry had helped a bankrupt city swindler to leave the country to escape the police. Henry believed him to be honest. Now Poynings has got hold of a letter referring to this.

Coker is enraged. He vents this by kicking Bunter out but Bunter is penniless, as usual, and manages to sneak back into the house. There, in true Bunter style, he hears Poynings threatening Uncle Henry and sees Poynings taking a phial from his pocket and adding something from it to the sick man's medicine. Even Bunter can recognise evil when he sees it. Bunter emerges from hiding and tries to escape to give the alarm. But the secretary turns on him and the table with the medicine is knocked over. Bunter's howls for help bring Coker who then kicks Bunter out for the second time. Bunter has had enough and announces that he'll be back for the inquest.

At last Bunter tells what he has seen. Coker and the Five collar Poynings and remove the phial from his pocket, suggesting that if it's as harmless as Poynings protests he won't mind a dose of it himself. Coker demands the return of the letter and with six determined schoolboys holding him prisoner with his own poison, Poynings is forced to yield. To their surprise Uncle Henry insists on letting him go, much to Coker's disgust, but after all, it is Christmas. So that Christmas Poynings receives the treatment sometimes meted out to Bunter, well and truly kicked out with bag and baggage into the snow.

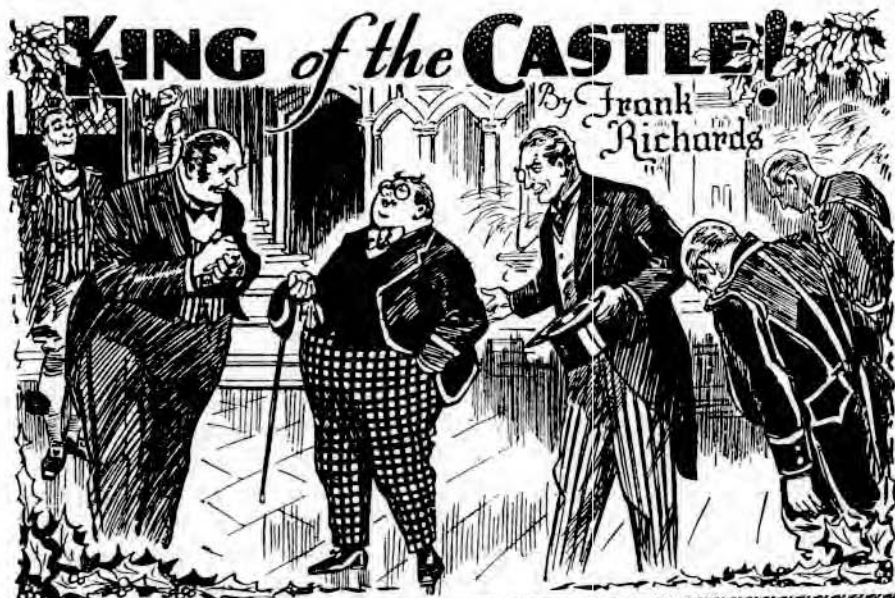
The dark shadows lifted, Uncle Henry recovers quickly. Bunter is invited to remain and a very merry Christmas is enjoyed by all.

But not all the Christmas tales of Greyfriars were told with the Dickensian trimmings. One very early one concerned the school captain, Wingate, when he fell in love with girl who played in the local pantomime and was menaced by the unwelcome attentions of a relative of Vernon-Smith, a thoroughly unlikeable type of a stage-door johnny. To make things worse this forty-year-old Vernon Tracy is a friend of the company manager and has permission to come backstage. The manager sees Wingate let fly with a fist and later speaks to Paula, though not entirely without sympathy. Richards expresses it delicately when he has the manager tell Paula: "Don't let him punch Tracy any more, Miss Bell, I can't afford it". She tells the manager: "Mr Vernon-Tracy was insulting". The manager agrees "But things like that have to be put up with, you know. Girls can't be kept in cotton-wool in a panto show."

Wingate's love is doomed from the start. His work suffers and Paula knows that there is no happy outcome for herself and the schoolboy who loves her. At least Wingate has the satisfaction of thrashing Vernon-Tracy before the Head summons



BY FRANK RICHARDS.



A Magnificent New Long Complete Christmas Yarn of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of GREYFRIARS, starring BILLY BUNTER as My Lord of Reynham Castle.

Bunter the Benevolent!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, featuring Billy Bunter, the fattest and funniest schoolboy in the world.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



"I fear that your boots let water, my good lad," said Mr. Skelton, peering at the ragamuffin's footgear. "Gallons!" said the youth cheerily. "William," said the millionaire, turning to Bunter. "Give this good lad your boots!" Bunter groaned, but he obeyed the order.

him and the inevitable questions are asked. Wingate explains quietly that he loves Paula, and to his surprise the Head is kindly and understanding, talking to him like a father. He gives Wingate permission to see Paula once more as the pantomime company leaves Courtfield. There is a sad little exchange between boy and girl with vows never to forget their friendship, before Wingate returns to get on with school life.

Although this story is seasonable it is really a romance, written with great tenderness and appeal yet kept within the confines of school life. Many authors would have written it with sentimentality, even mawkishness, but not Frank Richards.

Greyfriars' own lord had a couple of Christmas offerings at his stately Mauleverer Towers. The first of these, in 1922 was a single story, very atmospheric, based on an ancient legend concerning a suit of armour worn by a very early Mauleverer who was only a lord before the earldom came along. Before a death in the family this suit of armour would cast a gauntlet before the doomed victim-to-be.

The Famous Five were guests of Mauly's that Christmas when the suite of armour began its haunting of poor Mauly, a sort of softening him up for the final *coup de grace*. The first time the chums found Mauly in a state of shock they searched his suite and found nothing to indicate an intruder and the suit of armour was empty. (What a companion to have in one's bed chamber!) Wharton stayed with him for the rest of that of that night and there were no further disturbances.

The atmosphere has not exactly been helped by the arrival of Brian, a wastrel cousin of Mauly, newly out of prison, who recites the old legend with relish, but Jack Drake, the boy assistant of Ferrers Locke, is joining them the next day and no doubt will be keen to join in any ghost hunt. That night the ghostly armour strikes again, hovering over Mauly's bedside with the gauntlet at his throat. Again the chums searched the room and found no trace of an intruder.

The only shortcoming in developing this story was it being a single and there being only one possible suspect; Brian. But how had he escaped so quickly with the boys alert for any sounds from Mauly's room? But Jack Drake does not take long to solve the mystery. There were two suits of armour in Mauly's room. When the boys had checked old Sir Fulke's armour from which the gauntlet had fallen the "ghost" had simply slipped into the other set of armour.

But can one slip quickly and quietly into a suit of armour? Has any reader ever tried this? However, the cousin wanted the earldom and everything that went with it, so poor Mauly had to go, by fair means or foul. Here the reader has to suspend disbelief— unless lulled by a cosy log fire, a box of choes or a plate of mince pies and a glass of something sustaining...

The second Mauleverer Towers story also contains a ghost, this time a certain Red Earl. This ghost is bent on obtaining money with menaces from Mauly, and as this story is a three parter it leaves plenty scope for his machinations. Bunter is involved again, having managed to sneak his way into the Towers after falling into a well and discovering an ancient passageway that eventually lands him in Wharton's bedroom. When the shock has abated Mauly, too languid to argue, allows Bunter to stay the night, promising to see him back to his home next morning. After a decent supper Bunter is not worried; Bunter has had long practice at sticking power. He does

not know that the chums are already preparing a ghostly visit of the Red Earl to Bunter's bedside. Bob Cherry is the ghost clad in armour, good strong clanking armour this time. Bunter is petrified, reaches for a pillow defence and Bob crashes over, unable to get up. Round one to Bunter.

Round two. Bunter is like the invaders of old; lives on the land and loots where he can. In this case, Mauly's wardrobe. The slimness of Mauly was no bar to his clothes fitting Bunter. Waistcoats could be slit up the back, likewise trousers and shirts and pyjamas. Socks were okay, and ties and scarves. While bound on this raid Bunter only just escaped bumping into James Orris, Mauly's valet, but did not manage to avoid Porson, the butler. Porson stared and Bunter promptly dropped half his haul. Such was Bunter's *sang-froid* (or insolence) he simply ordered Porson to pick them all up.

Round three. Bunter, smartly clad in Lord Mauleverer's tweed suit, outstared the butler, then Orris the valet, and after a wander up to the turret where he had made his entrance from the secret passage then went to join his host and the Famous Five. There he endeavoured to warn Mauly that an attempt was to be made on his life. After enduring the familiar disbelief he produced a crumpled paper from the pocket of Mauly's tweed jacket. In capitals, it read: Lord Mauleverer. Place a thousand pounds on the old sundial or prepare for death.

Disbelief continued, followed by a bumping: Bunter had told whoppers too often. A hilarious skating episode follows, then another discovery by Bunter; a bill from a turf accountant addressed to James Orris. Disbelief for the second time when Mauly refuses to look at the letter and returns it to his valet.

Round four. Bunter decides to keep watch over Mauly. Gives a terrified alarm when the masked figure in black appears. Cavalry appear, see the fleeing masked figure. Find Mauly insensible after being chloroformed. Bunter is believed—at last.

Round five. Bunter is definitely staying, endeavouring to make himself irresistible to Marjorie and Clara from Cliff House who are staying over Christmas. Mauly is watched carefully, but the night the valet is on watch is the night Mauly is taken in the night and cannot be found. Orris claims to have slept and known nothing until the chums found him with the scent of chloroform hanging over him. Police arrive and discover the clues laid outside that suggest Mauly has been taken away by car. The boys and the Cliff House girls go out to try to search. Bunter, too lazy for extended walking scrambling through woodland, goes in search of Orris to demand the luxurious fur coat belonging to Mauly, and can't resist letting the valet know how much he, Bunter, knows about him. Bunter ventures out, is followed by Orris who pushes him down the well and shovels masses of heavy snow down on the hapless Fat Owl. But Bunter has fallen soft and knows the way out. And the way out up to the turret room with the sliding panel. Alas, the panel is locked. Bunter seeks another turn in the passage and finds Mauly imprisoned in the ancient cell where the first victim, the Red Earl, was cast to die centuries ago. Bunter and Mauly await the arrival of the masked man to demand that Mauly sign the money over to him and Bunter manages to slip out and find help. At last Mauly is freed and the villainous Orris is unmasked and handed over to the police. Yet again Bunter is the hero of the hour, smiled on by

Grand Christmas Number

The Magician



The Spirit of Poverty!

No. 1,453. Vol. XLVIII.

EVERY SATURDAY.

Week Ending December 27th 1936

Marjorie and Clara and fed to bursting point as the Christmas party got under way at last.

There were so many wonderful Christmas series during the decades of THE MAGNET. Many very dramatic, mixed in with long series as in several of the Wharton Lodge stories. The Cruise of the Firefly, The Phantom of the Cave with Vernon-Smith's old enemy, Soames. And the wonderful Polpelly series, complete with galleon gold to discover and the evil Count Zero; a spartan Christmas in an ancient bleak, storm-strewn house on the edge of a cliff. Bunter was not impressed but all were rewarded at the end by the luxury of Smithy's town house.

But Smithy did not always know luxury at Christmas. Christmas 1926 saw a very different MAGNET cover of Yuletide. The Grand Christmas-week number depicted Vernon-Smith shivering in virtual rags on the London Embankment, penniless with nowhere to sleep except a bench, while back at Greyfriars Tom Redwing lay unable to sleep worrying about his chum, little guessing that within hours Smithy would be in prison accused of theft.

This Christmas offering was written by S. Rossiter Shepherd, a very experienced journalist, editor and critic, and though dramatically appealing in its grim experiences of the reckless Bounder, has probably met disapproval from the purists. But remember, without the substitute writers there may have been a serious absence of MAGNETS, at Christmas or otherwise. Also the Bounder had not a few admirers among the girls who read the MAGNET. A rake will always hold a certain fascination for many women, who tend to believe that they alone hold the key to bringing about his reformation. Smithy was so skilfully characterised by Frank Richards, showing his good side as well as the bad, that there were probably quite a few young female hearts aching for Smithy in his dire London predicament, Christmas or no Christmas.

So choosing the top ten from this wonderful treasure chest of Greyfriars at Christmas, plus all the others that space does not allow a glimpse of here, is no easy task.

Here is my choice. But spare a moment as you read down the years of memory lane and make yours. Happy Christmas!

Top Ten of Greyfriars Christmas Classics

- 1 The Moat House Mystery 1939
- 2 Cavandale Abbey 1930
- 3 Polpelly 1936
- 4 The Ghost of Mauleverer Towers (2nd) 1931
- 5 The Courtfield Cracksman 1929
- 6 My Lord Bunter. 1937
- 7 Bunter's Christmas Carol 1927
- 8 Coker's Christmas at Holly House 1926
- 9 Wingate's Folly 1911
- 10 From Greyfriars to Borstal 1925





Bulldog's Christmas Hampers by Ray Hopkins



"Claud Allister!" Basil Marlowe bubbled with laughter as he uttered the name. But his chum evidently wasn't so 'up' on film trivia and frowned in puzzlement. "You remember, Algy Longworth!" said Basil. The ridges on Ken Claverley's forehead deepened. Basil clicked his tongue in exasperation. "In Bulldog Drummond!" was his final clue. Ken's eyebrows shot up and his mouth fell apart. "I see what you mean! Yes, he does! Looks just like him! Sounds like him, too! Haw, Haw by Jove! Eh, wot!"

They were upstairs in Basil's room at Grey Gables Hall in Cheshire having met the film-actor look-alike when they arrived from Harrow School. Colonel Marlowe suppressed a chuckle as he introduced him as 'Lieutenant Bertie Addlestone of the Fusiliers'. Perhaps he saw the likeness, too. The other guest's style of speech sounded reminiscent, also. "Oh, by Jove, yes! How are you?" piped the subaltern, screwing in an eyeglass as he advanced to meet them - the perfect 'nut', from his sleek head to his patent leather shoes. "Bob told me he had a bwuther at Hawwow. You're awfully like him, you know!" And he extended a beautifully manicured hand, held very high, which Basil promptly grasped and jerked down to his own level. Basil's older brother Bob, also a Fusilier, had been prevented from coming home for Christmas. He had had to take the duty when the assigned officer had been thrown off his horse and hospitalised.

In discussing the rather comic Fusilier guest it didn't take long for the chums to come up with a new name by which to refer to him. No less than "Mr. Addleplate of the Few-silliers!" They made sure the sleek Lieutenant wasn't in hearing distance when they referred to him thus. Despite the young officer's being what could in their current slang, be termed a 'silly ass', their good manners forbade them to hurt his feelings. Mr. Addlestone also revealed that he was the possessor of a loud, cackling laugh. "Like a Hyena", said Basil. "He ought to go back to the Zoo." This jarring noise occurred frequently in dining room conversation, especially when the young officer twice dropped his monocle into the soup. By this time the houseparty had been joined by Basil's older sister Diana and her chum Dorothy from their school in Cheltenham. Basil caught the eye of Martin, the new footman, who was waiting at table. Martin looked like a good sport to the boys. He hid his answering grin by hurriedly leaving the room.

Later, on a tour of Grey Gables, Ken was thrilled by all the armour-clad figures in the gallery upstairs and the two wooden horses ridden by effigies in the centre of the room. "It's like the Tower of London. I could spend hours here", he told his chum. Basil said, "Not now. There are the secret panels, the hidden staircase and the Priest's Hole to see as well!" "I feel as though I'm in the Christmas Number of the GEM!" said Ken. "And that's not all", Basil chuckled at the delighted enthusiasm of his school chum. "Wait until you hear my Dad tell the story of the family ghost. He does this as

a regular thing every Christmas Eve.”

After dinner, the revellers sat around the log fire. Moving shadows sent patterns around the oak-panelled hall. “I must warn you”, said Colonel Marlowe, “if you make a sound when the spectre appears, it will immediately vanish”. Nobody present had ever seen the ghost. It has only materialised itself upon two occasions to an old retainer now deceased. The Colonel began: “Sir Charles Marlowe garrisoned his moated home for the King against Cromwell’s men and held it for four months. But a servant he trusted turned traitor and let the Roundheads in. The thing was fought to a finish up and down the staircase, and on the very spot where we are now sitting.” Ken nervously scanned the oak flooring for bloodstains. The Colonel continued: “Traitor and loyal Cavalier met in the gallery just above our heads. A pistol ball sent Sir Charles’ rapier flying from his hand. The scoundrel’s long sword sliced deep into the brave Cavalier’s body.” Diana and Dorothy winced and grimaced. The Colonel concluded: “The treacherous attack took place on Christmas Eve, and tradition has it that the spectre of Sir Charles comes down the broad oak stairway searching in vain for his weapon, his right hand swathed in a laced kerchief, stained with his own brave blood.”

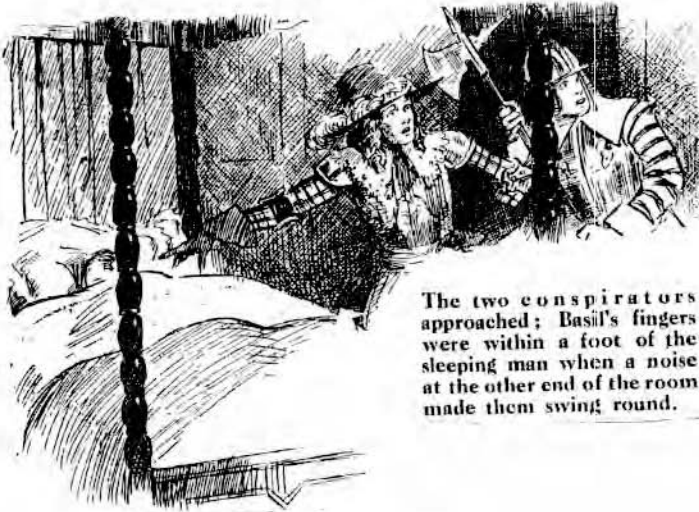
As midnight approached, the flames in the fireplace died down, casting a curtain of dusky gloom throughout the old hall. The Colonel whispered, “Remember! Not a word, or we shall see nothing”. Dorothy apprehensively clutched Diana’s hand. Ken slid down ever so slightly in his chair as he felt the hair begin to stand up on his scalp. Basil grinned as he noted his chum’s grim expression.

The loud bongs from the tall Tompion clock in the corner coincided with a sudden bright flair from the large fireplace which sent everyone’s eyes to the top of the staircase. Black shadows appeared to move there. Was it some unearthly being preparing to come silently down the staircase? Eleven bongs came from the clock and they all jumped in alarm as the Lieutenant’s strangled voice cried out at the same time as the twelfth crash, “By Jove, he’s spoofed us after all. Oh, I say, I’m most fearfully sorry, don’t you know. I *am* a priceless ass. I must have miscounted.” Once again, good manners forbade Basil from shouting angrily in agreement. But after everyone had gone to bed he told Ken, “The ghost *shall* walk. I’ll give that interfering Addeplate the fright of his silly life!”

Half an hour later a Cavalier in half-armor and a Roundhead pikeman in corselet and iron pot helmet left Basil’s bedroom and slid back the noiseless panel that communicated with the bedchamber of Lieutenant Bertie. Stretching out their arms, they were almost within touching distance of the sleeper’s head that showed upon the down pillow. But the two old-time figures stopped, gasped and swelled their heads as a slight noise came from behind them. It was a sibilant “Shssh” uttered by a human voice.

A tall man stood there in a familiar tan trench coat, a grim smile on his face and a Browning automatic in his right hand aimed directly at them. Both boys recognised him immediately. “Crikey!” said Basil. “Not Algy at all. Bulldog Drummond himself! In person!” The man they considered a silly ass grinned at the comment. Placing a

CHRISTMAS EVE AT GREY GABLES.



The two conspirators approached; Basil's fingers were within a foot of the sleeping man when a noise at the other end of the room made them swing round.



They saw the man they had come to rag with a grim smile on his face and a very suggestive Browning automatic in his right hand.

finger on his lips, he whispered, "I'm really Detective Inspector Gibson from Scotland Yard. You've got yourselves mixed up in a hazardous conspiracy to arrest a gang of gun-carrying thieves who plan to raid the silver in the strong room". Both boys gasped, "Oh!". Gibson laid his finger on his lips again. "Everyone is in bed and, I hope, asleep except my men and the helper of the criminal Mace. You know him as Martin the new footman. He'll let Mace and the gang in by the hall door at one o'clock." Both boys thrilled at the detective's next words. "I want you to help me. Take that secret passage you came in by and return to where you got those disguises at the armoury door. When you hear me shout "Now!" jump to it. You've five minutes to get in place before Martin lets in the gang."

Minutes later, from where the boys stood to attention at the armoury door, they watched Martin, whom they had considered such a pleasant fellow, disguised in a tweed cap, his face covered by a muffler, withdraw the well-oiled bolts on the front door. Seven men slipped in quietly, then disappeared from sight beneath the gallery on their way to the strong room in the butler's pantry.

A sound behind them made Basil and Ken turn their heads. They gasped again as Detective Inspector Gibson emerged from the armoury, his automatic at the ready. He paused, to once again place his finger over his lips as he glanced at the boys. Fortunate that he did so, because they would surely have exclaimed in shock as their eyes fell upon eight knights in shining armour. Their ungaunleted right hands gripped Browning automatics at the ready as they disappeared down the stairs and beneath the gallery.

A perfect fusillade of shots clinking on metal as they struck the knight's armour and the angry shouting of many rough voices rose to the boys' ears. Martin suddenly came into view, his tweed cap missing. White and desperate, he bounded up the staircase firing back at his armour-clad pursuers. Martin's gun emptied and, cursing, he flung it to the ground. Basil heard Gibson shout, "Now!". The footman turned to run along the gallery and found himself facing an eighteen-foot pike levelled at him by the Cavalier who had stood at the armour door. "Great stuff, Ken!" the Roundhead (Basil) congratulated him. Martin's foot slipped on the gallery floor. Both boys flung themselves forward and pinned him down until two knights ran up the stairs and replaced them.

Noise from the butler's pantry had quietened down, bullets pinging upon armour had ceased, angry voices were muted into a sullen murmur when Colonel Marlowe, bursting upon the scene of battle, cried, "What is happening? Who are all these people? And what are you doing out of bed, Diana?" Ken and Basil looked up in surprise at the dainty figure of Basil's sister as she emerged from the butler's pantry, following the rest of the knights guarding the seven gangsters and, good heavens, where had these fresh arrivals come from: a large group of the local constabulary who had securely handcuffed the thieves and were gripping them by their collars!

"Crikey," said Basil. "How did you get in on the act, Di?" His sister blew on her fingernails, polished them on her dressing gown and remarked casually, "I let the constables in through the garden door in the north wing. Mr. Gibson asked me to."

"Great Scott!" Colonel Marlowe was further stunned when one of the knights stepped forward and lifted his visor. "Bob", cried Basil in pleased surprise as he saw his older brother's flushed and grinning face. "How...?" "Good old Gibson again. He asked me to, as well." Ken nudged his chum. "Did you ever! What a family."

Inspector Gibson snapped the bracelets on Martin's wrist. The footman, his peaceful carer curtailed, in a disgruntled voice said, "And how much will I get for this little job? We didn't get the silver. Too much tin tocking about." "No," answered the detective, "But you may get seven years for helping Mace. Lucky for you and your pals the tin was bullet proof. Otherwise you'd all of you swing!"

The local policemen and the gangsters departed the hall. The Scotland Yard police sergeants divested themselves of their armour. The costumes of the Cavalier and Roundhead were returned to the effigies guarding the armoury door. The front door closed for the last time and the Colonel, Basil, Bob, Ken, the Scotland Yard sergeants and Inspector Gibson all sat down in the hall emitting many a "phew". The latter whistled and another figure who had been one of the knights stepped forward. "Now who is this come to join the cast of thousands?" Basil enquired. Bob said, "I'd like you to meet the real Bertie Addlestone, my pal and helper". The real Bertie said a few words. All his 'r's' were in place and his vocal tones in a lower register were definitely not those of Algy Longworth. "Not quite Claud Allister", said Ken. Inspector Gibson said, "As you can see and hear, my impersonation was slightly awry. I apologise to the real Lieutenant Addlestone sincerely".

Diana and Dorothy came into the hall pushing metal trolleys, their shelves holding cups and saucers and two large containers of steaming coffee. "And chocolate-covered digestives. Oh, joy!" said Basil.

Loosely based on "Christmas Eve at Grey Gables", by D.H. Parry (aka Morton Pike) in HULTON'S ADVENTURE STORY ANNUAL. This budget of good stories in undated, but circa 1924 according to the hand-written dedication: "To ARTHUR from MAM and DAD".



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all hobby friends.
REGAND MAUREEN ANDREWS, LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY.

Christmas Greetings to all hobby friends.
JOHN BECK, 29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX, BN7 2RU



CATCHING A RAT OR STARTING A HARE?

by Derek Hinrich



Of all the cases of Sherlock Holmes, mentioned but unrelated by Watson, two in particular have recurrently attracted the attention of students and of pasticheurs: the disappearance of Mr James Phillimore, "who, stepping back into his own house to get his umbrella, was never more seen in this world"¹; and the case of the Giant Rat of Sumatra.

The Phillimore affair seems to be a variant of "the locked room mystery" so naturally it attracted the attention of Mr John Dickson Carr. Its fascination is readily understood. And it also appears to be, in principle a mirror image of the mysterious sudden *appearance* out of the blue on Whit Monday May 26th 1828 in Nuremberg of Kaspar Hauser, "the child of Europe", a story once recurrently dear to conspiracy theorists².

The Giant Rat is another matter. The date of the case is itself uncertain. It is brought to Holmes's mind by a reference in a letter from a firm of solicitors at the outset of the problem of "The Sussex Vampire". It appears to be one of those matters, "before your time, Watson", besides being, "a story for which the world is not yet prepared". This would suggest that the case probably occurred somewhere between 1878 (after the Musgrave Ritual) and 1881, when Holmes and Watson began to share the lodgings in Baker Street: one cannot be more definite than that. It apparently involved a ship, the *Matilda Briggs*, and that is all we know for certain. Of course ships are notoriously infested with rats, there are stories enough about that, and the possibility that Holmes was referring to the great Sumatran bamboo rat has also been suggested.

But why should the story be suppressed? As far as I can determine from De Waal's *Universal Sherlock Holmes*, most suggestions concerning this case have been connected with rodents. A possible hypothesis is that since it is true that rats brought, or hastened the advent, of the Black Death to this country in August 1348, the threat may have existed that the *Matilda Briggs* could have been bearing a similar deadly pestilence to these shores (perhaps, indeed, the dreaded and obscure Tapanuli fever from that part of north-western Sumatra). Such a threat did not materialise but if it had, there seems to be no reason why any account of such a hazard should not have been published.

I do not, however, believe that rats, or, rather, this type of rat, are involved. Sherlock Holmes was possessed of a dry and occasionally acerbic sense of humour and I suggest that we should look for another kind of rat entirely, and one which could, quite reasonably, by its actions lead to a situation of considerable delicacy where diplomacy might entail the suppression of any narrative by something like the

rules currently affecting the disclosure of state documents at Kew.

I believe this case was one of those early affairs in which Sherlock Holmes was involved before his meeting with Watson and possibly one of those matters (as I have suggested elsewhere³) that was put in his way by his brother Mycroft.

Sumatra was then part of the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch governor would presumably have been assisted by a council that, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, would have been composed entirely of his senior subordinate officials (local chieftains might be consulted, but at that time any real form of local democracy would have been highly unlikely). In Dutch I believe a council is called a "Raad" and a council to a colonial governor might, I suppose, be known as the "Great Council", or "Groot Raad". The word "raad" or a variant of it is common to German, Dutch, and the Scandinavian languages. In German, a language, in which Holmes was apparently fluent, the word is "Rat" and such a body might be the "Grosse Rat", or in ironic half-translation (or a misunderstanding by Watson) the Giant Rat.

Now in what manner of matter concerning a (presumably) British vessel, the *Matilda Briggs*, might the Governor's Council of a Dutch colonial possession become embroiled in the late 'seventies of the nineteenth century?

It must be borne in mind that relations between the two countries and their respective East India companies had on occasion been quite tense, though latterly not approaching the virulence of the Amboyna Massacre of 1623. Moreover, between 1794 and 1814, the Netherlands, whether as the Batavian Republic or as the Napoleonic Kingdom of Holland, had been a French puppet state and its colonies, like those of France itself, had been regarded as legitimate prizes of war by Great Britain ("a policy of filching sugar islands", according to the government's radical Whig opponents at Westminster). In 1816 as part of the post-Waterloo settlement, Java had been returned to the Kingdom of the Netherlands (now under the House of Orange-Nassau) and in 1819, to avoid friction with the Dutch, Sir Stamford Raffles had persuaded "John Company" to transfer its trading post, Fort Marlborough, at Bencoolen, Sumatra, to Singapore, thus giving Holland a free hand in that island.

The late nineteenth century was the time of "the scramble for Africa". Great Britain, France, Italy, The King of the Belgians, and the new German *Kaiserreich*, were busily staking their claims and colouring the map of that continent. A similar competition in the establishment of colonies was proceeding in the Pacific amongst the islands of Polynesia and Micronesia, and in the securing of treaty ports and concessions in China.

Cable communications in that part of the world were still incomplete. It was only fifteen years or so since the sensational case of the mutiny upon the *Flowery Land*. The southern seas were thus a place where maritime crimes could still flourish, which advances in communication have rendered rare today. One recently suppressed crime - slave trading - indeed gained a new lease of life for a time in the islands of the Pacific.

It may well be that some of the officers and crew of the *Matilda Briggs* (*Briggs* by name and brig by nature?) ran the gamut of maritime crime and were involved in

mutiny, barratry, piracy, "blackbirding", and bottomry. Lloyds of London would certainly be exercised about such a catalogue of villainy (especially piracy, barratry and bottomry) and so would HMG be. An energetic special agent to assist the consular and naval staff on the spot could well be required. What better piece of work could the prime minister's righthand man offer his brother?

Such a suggestion, however attractive, does not provide a reason for any involvement by the Dutch authorities, unless the *Matilda Briggs* was either apprehended by them or purchased by a Dutch concern as part of the act of bottomry I have posited. A further source of Dutch involvement at the highest level of government, both in the East Indies and, indeed, at The Hague must have existed, and one may be readily suggested.

As I have said, after 1819 the Dutch were the sole colonial power in Sumatra and they gradually extended their rule over the island throughout the nineteenth century. In 1873, however, they encountered ferocious resistance in the north of Sumatra from the Sultanate of Achin and became involved in a thirty-five years' war to subdue that state. This conflict eventually absorbed all the profit from the Dutch colonies and was also a heavy drain on the Netherlands' domestic exchequer.

The north of Sumatra is but a short voyage from Singapore and the island's coast no doubt has a number of inlets in which a sailing vessel might anchor. A cargo or two of Winchesters or Snyders and their appropriate ammunition would have been worth its weight in gold to the Sultan and yielded a nice profit to an enterprising mariner or his owners. Suppose, however, that after a voyage or two of this type, the *Matilda Briggs* was apprehended by the Dutch navy or even by one of Her Majesty's Ships. The Dutch would of course have been highly incensed by any gunrunning and HMG might well have acted to stop such actions under some legal pretext or other (possibly by use of the Foreign Enlistment Act?). These events would have occurred only a few years after the settlement of the *Alabama* claims⁴ and the memory of that case and the matter of the *Matilda Briggs* itself would undoubtedly have been sensitive. Secret negotiations to limit any damage would have been essential.

Secret diplomacy, however, would hardly be a matter in which Sherlock Holmes, at this early stage of his career would be likely to be involved, so his brief from his brother at this time could only refer to unravelling the criminal history of the *Matilda Briggs* and its crew to prepare for a prosecution.

I am afraid, however, that a search at Kew for details of the case will prove fruitless. In such a delicate matter, the Victorian "weeder" will have been ruthlessly active decades since, firm in the belief that the world could never be prepared for such a narrative.

(This article originally appeared in *The Torr*, the Journal of the Poor Folk upon the Moors, the West Country Sherlock Holmes Society.)

¹ Another case of similar type, as no doubt Mr Holmes observed, is that of Benjamin Bathurst, a British diplomat returning home from Vienna at the time of the Napoleonic Wars. On the 25th November, 1809, he alighted from his carriage at a hostelry in Perleberg, Germany, walked round the horses and totally disappeared without trace. The presumption is that he was kidnapped and done away with by Napoleonic spies, but his valet and secretary who were with him swore they heard nothing. Many have reported upon this mystery, see, for instance, *Cornhill Magazine*, 55-279, *Historic Oddities* by the Rev. Sabinearing-Gould and *Lo! By Charles Fort*, 1931.

² Because some believed he was the rightful Crown Prince of Baden, kidnapped as a baby by conspirators and subsequently murdered by their agents following his escape from the cellar where he had been held since infancy. See, for instance, *Historical Mysteries* by Andrew Lang, 1904; *Stranger than Science* by Frank Edwards, 1959; and *Lo! By Charles Fort*, 1931.

³ In a paper which, at the time of writing (February, 2004), is awaiting publication in *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*.

⁴ Number 290 on the books of John Laird and Sons of Birkenhead was built to the order of the Confederate States of America. She sailed from Birkenhead, just escaping being impounded by the British Government after representations by the USA, and, after fitting out with her armament off the Azores, became the commerce raider, *CSS Alabama*, the most successful ship in Confederate service. She was eventually sunk by the *USS Kearsage* off Cherbourg on 19th June 1864. In 1871 neutral arbitration in Switzerland awarded the USA \$15,000,000 compensation against Great Britain.



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JOHNNY BURSLEM

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Answers to Greyfriars Quiz

Just in case you need them!

No. 1. Sykes, Six Former and a prefect - one of Wingate's friends. Despite quite a little research I cannot find mention of his christian name or study number. The puzzle shows Bill Sikes from Oliver Twist by Charles Dicks.

No. 2. Tom Dutton, Remove member shares study No. 7 with the Todds and Billy Bunter. Rather hard of hearing but a good all round fellow. The puzzle shows a Button.

No. 3. George Potter Fifth-former, Study No. 4 with which he shares with William Frederick Greene and, of course, Horace James Coker. The puzzle shows a potter at work.

No. 4. Horace James Coker, see above. The puzzle shows a Navy Stoker.

No. 5. Samson Quincy Iffley Field. Aussi from New South Wales, Remove Study 14 Nicknamed Squiff by Bob Cherry on account of his initials. The puzzle shows two shields.

No. 6. William George Bunter, Remove Study 7. See Tom Dutton. The puzzle shows a Hunter.

No. 7. Cedric Hilton. Fifth Form, Study No. 6 shares with Stephen Price. Puzzle shows a hill and ton weight.

No. 8. Edward Fry, shares study No. 2, Temple and Dabney Upper Fourth. Puzzle shows sausages being fried or to fry them.

No. 9. Arthur Woodhead Carne, Sixth Former and prefect, friend of Gerald Loden and James Walker. Puzzle shows a car.



Very best wishes as ever.
BARRIE STARK, SUSSEX

Happy Holidays to all and especially Mary. Have lots of items for sale or exchange, namely, Thomsons, Pre-war-, Post-war. Phone 1.516 536 4083, or write: G FISHMAN, 509 Raymond Street, Rockville Centre, NY 11570, USA.



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With a special greeting to Mary Cadogan
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Founder and Chairman of the Greyfriars Club





THE TOBY TWIRL ADVENTURE BOOKS



By Laurence Price

It was a mid-1950s' Christmas when I opened a book-shaped parcel and received my one and only Toby Twirl annual. I grew to love the adventures of the little pig in his patched red dungarees which seemed to have a Rupert Bear feel. One particular story always stood out for me – an exciting Rupert-like strip, but without the rhyming couplets, called “Toby Twirl and the Stolen Jewel” which takes place in India where Toby, assisted by an Indian boy called Tomo, must match his wits against the evil Queen Dragon of the outlawed Dragon Society who has stolen the Jewel. There were few books in the house so both the Rupert Annuals, dating from 1952 and 1953, and *Toby Twirl Adventures*, dating from 1954, tended to get read and read again (and again!).



Sheila Hodgetts circa 1947

Following a move from Bristol to Weston-super-Mare in 1958 the annuals were presumably disposed of by my parents as I was probably considered a bit too old at eight to keep them! I think I was enjoying Dan Dare in the *Eagle* by then and *Beano* and *Dandy* too.

But like the two Rupert annuals I never really forgot the Toby Twirl annual; it was much harder, though, to find a copy of *Toby Twirl Adventures* when I started trying to collect my childhood favourites years later. When I eventually did, and had got over the usual excitement of rereading the stories and enjoying the colourful illustrations. I decided I wanted to find out more about the author, Sheila Hodgetts, and the illustrator, E. Jeffrey - as perfect a team, in my view, as Carroll and Tenniel, Graham and Shephard, or Milne and the same. For several frustrating years I could find absolutely nothing about them, and other Toby Twirl annuals remained similarly elusive.

Then, about two years ago, I belatedly bought a computer, having had a Luddite view of them up until then, and discovered the wonders of ‘surfing the net’. I tapped ‘Sheila Hodgetts’ into the search engine and, lo and behold, got a Press Release dated 29 May 2001 from the City of Wolverhampton College headed “Brand new Chapter for Sooty”.

It read 'Sooty has swapped his magic wand for a keyboard thanks to the woman who chronicled his adventures for more than twenty years.

Sheila Hodgetts, 77, who used to write stories for the glove puppet created by Harry Corbett, is learning word processing at Wolverhampton College.

She first learned to type about 60 years ago but is now bringing her skills up to date so that she can email her granddaughter in New Zealand.

"I thought it was time I bought a computer and learned how to use it," said Sheila, who lives in Tettenhall Wood.

Sheila was invited to write stories for the Sooty annuals after meeting Harry Corbett through her publisher.

She was already well-known as the creator of Toby Twirl, the loveable pig who featured in many books and also appeared in cartoon strips during the Fifties...

What an interesting development, and what an interesting lady! I had had no idea about the Sooty connection but now I knew Sheila Hodgetts was alive and well and learning word processing, at about the same time I had reluctantly decided to join the computer age. Then after this tantalising information the trail petered out again.

Then, some months later, I tapped in 'Toby Twirl' and discovered not only various Toby Twirl sites but one particular one offering a beautifully produced glossy A5 size Collector's Guide to the *Toby Twirl Adventure Books* by Martin Hockley, of which full details are provided at the end of this article. On receipt of the guide I discovered it contained full biographical details about both Sheila Hodgetts and E. Jeffrey from which I will now refer selectively.

Sheila Hodgetts was born on 27 January 1924 in Laindon, Essex, later moving to Eastbourne, Sussex. She attended Brighton and Hove High School for Girls as a weekly boarder. She joined the WAAF in 1941 and met her husband to be, who was serving in the RAF. They married in 1942 and had two daughters and in 1946 moved to the West Midlands where they have lived ever since.

Sheila began writing in 1943 but her first Toby Twirl book was *Toby Twirl in Pogland* published in 1946. She had loved Rupert Bear as a child and her father was then the managing Director of Sampson Low's and he had the Book Rights of Mary Tourtel's Rupert stories. When Mary Tourtel died he asked Sheila to write something in the same vein to replace them. So Toby was born. The books sold very well and continued to be published until 1958. Apart from the Rupert annual size Adventure Books, Toby Twirl appeared in smaller format in very attractive pictorial green covers as *Toby Twirl Tales* - there were eight of these in all. There were little card-covered strip books too, which cost 6d each, in addition to painting and 'magic painting' books, jigsaws and pop-up books. These are now very rare indeed.

Sheila also wrote other children's books, including a series called *Sleepy Time Tales* and the aforementioned Sooty books. Many of these were also illustrated by E. Jeffrey, excluding the Sooty titles.

Edward Jeffrey was born on 17 September 1898 and later studied art at Armstrong College, Durham University and Newcastle upon Tyne. He was an



accomplished landscape painter and exhibited his works at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours and numerous other academies and throughout the provinces. He was already well established at Sampson Low as a book cover illustrator when he accepted the commission to illustrate Toby Twirl. Sheila Hodgetts and he seemed to hit it off as a partnership, and when she visited his Yorkshire home studio, he accepted her suggestion to put a patch on Toby's dungarees rather than the pocket he had first drawn. In 1946 'EJ' and his family moved to a studio in Ravenstonedale in Westmorland (now Cumbria) and it was from this location that he did most of his Toby Twirl work.

From his studio 'EJ' could see out over the Westmorland countryside and he used these views in many of his Toby Twirl drawings. He loved sketching and painting the Cumbrian landscape and in 1972 published *Edward Jeffrey's Lake District Sketchbook*. Despite developing crippling arthritis he continued to paint highly regarded commissions, his diverse talents ranging from greetings cards to pub signs. He died in 1978.

The colour artist, R.S. Clarke, shared the Westmorland house and studio with 'EJ' and his family for a time and coloured the early Toby Twirl work. Rather like Rupert and his famous jumper, Toby began life in blue dungarees but after 1948 started wearing the more familiar red.

I have recently obtained a 1953 Adventure book and *Toby's New Adventures* from 1956, complete with rare dust jacket. E. Jeffrey's illustrations are accomplished and delightful and Sheila Hodgett's Rupert Bear-like stories are whimsical treats. It's wonderful to know, at the time of writing this article, that this delightful lady author is still alive and well and presumably word processing and emailing these days. It would be nice if she is able to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Toby Twirl in 2006!

The Toby Twirl Adventure Books - "A Collector's Guide" by Martin Hockley is available from Toby Twirl Ltd, 2 Abbots Road, Burgfield Common, Nr Reading West Berkshire RG7 3LD or by going to www.tobytwirl.co.uk and costs £9.99 + £1.75 p&p.



TOM MERRY "SACKED" ON THE EVE OF BREAKING-UP

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The

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