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STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

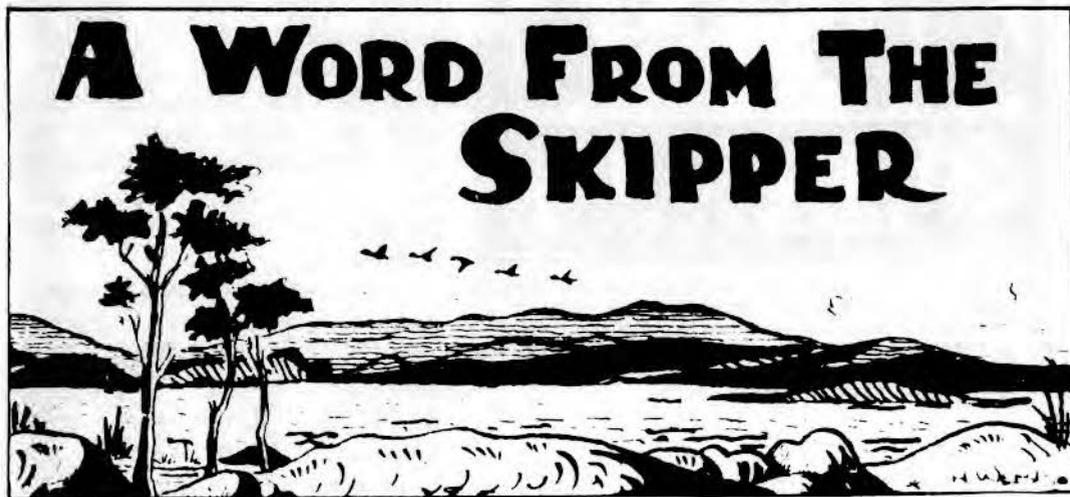
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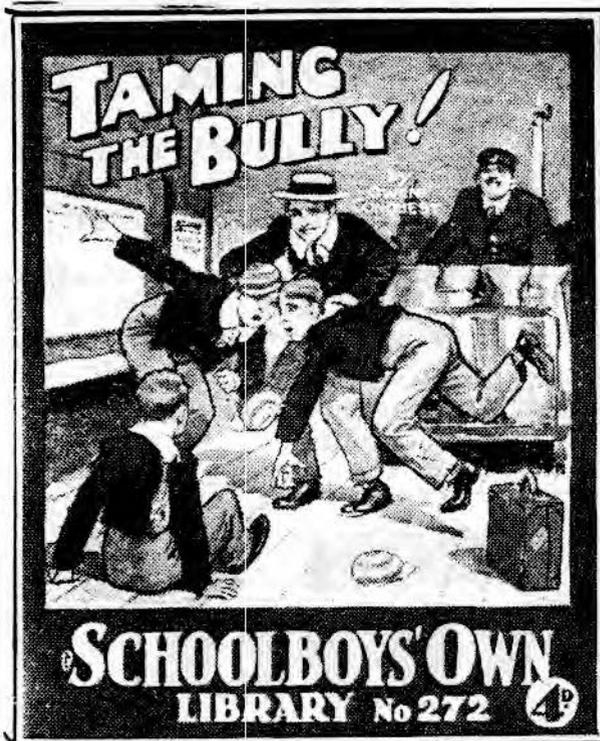
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AND OTHER STORIES

Fifty years ago our Danny was enjoying a Rookwood S.O.L. entitled "Taming the Bully". It is an excellent book for the Rookwood fan and for the student of the early Rookwood, but, paradoxically enough, it also displays something of the little weakness inherent to the medium.

The bully of the story is Higgs, who arrives as an immensely strong new boy. But the Higgs section of the volumes occupies



Jimmy Silver & Co., the cheery chums of Rookwood, are here once more to entertain you with their exciting and humorous adventures. You can't be dull in the company of the irrepressible Fistical Four, and you'll vote this sparkling yarn of their escapades one of the best you've ever read.

with a title of its own. It would have avoided the slight feeling of unreality which one sometimes experienced with the S.O.L. when passing from the main story on to something which had been tacked on. This is particularly apparent with most Rookwood S.O.L.'s, from the fact that the stories were mainly short, while series rarely ran to any great length.

It would have been of great assistance to the researcher, many years later. Probably it never occurred to the powers-that-be at the Amalgamated Press that there would ever be research into their publications. I wonder whether it ever occurred to Charles

less than half of the whole book. There then follows on a section about the arrival of Billy Bunter at Rookwood - he has travelled without paying his fare, and he is accompanied to Rookwood by an official of the railway. Then comes a section of an adventure with Beaumont, the early Rookwood's type of Loder-like prefect - he was later expelled. Finally there comes another section concerning the arrival at Rookwood of Van Ryn, one of the Colonial trio, and he turns out to be a ventriloquist, though his art faded from the Rookwood scene as time passed on.

Surely it would have been better to have entitled this S.O.L. "TAMING THE BULLY" AND OTHER STORIES. Each new section could have been headed

Hamilton himself. Almost certainly not.

The previous month Danny had been reading another S.O.L., "Japers of St. Jim's", which comprised a handful of brilliant St. Jim's "singles" from the mid-twenties. The title of the book over all was a bit of a misnomer. When I was browsing over the story for the purpose of adding the few notes we always append to Danny's famous Diary, I discovered that this volume contained the splendid little single story "Glyn, the Gold-Maker". I doubt that I ever realised before that this single had been republished, or, at any rate, I had long forgotten it. In my view it would have been far better to give the S.O.L. the title of "GLYN, the GOLD-MAKER" AND OTHER STORIES, giving their own titles to the different sections which made up the volume.

I love the S.O.L. I have scores of them bound in my bookcases and they make delightful volumes. It was just a slight pity that so many of them were mildly marred by inexpert editing.

HALF A TUNNEY OF COAL!

All our lives we have thought, taught, and bought in tons and hundredweights. But now, have you noticed, they don't spell it ton any more? It's tonne in the papers and on TV. Presumably it's a bit more of that wretched metrification, but I am a bit dazed as to whether a ton and a tonne are the same amount. Maybe it's just a change of spelling for the sake of change. Is a tonne 20 cwt, or is it not? No doubt the erudite know.

I wonder how they pronounce tonne. It is "ton" (after the Old English school)? Or is it "tong" (after the Mardarin Tang Wang)? Or is it "tunney" (after the famous boxer)? That ship displaces a thousand tunneys? Half a tunney of coal, please Mr. Bloggs?

Napoleon and Hitler each tried to continentalise these tight little islands. Neither succeeded. The do-gooders and those who seek to ring the changes among us seem to have got away with it without trying all that hard. Personally, I shall never buy half-a-tunney of anything just as, pigheadedly, I still ask, in the shops, for an ounce of tobacco.

PRIDE GOETH BEFORE A FALL (Nearly!)

Last month I blew our own trumpet. I bragged that our Ruby Jubilee is coming near - forty long years - and I added, tempting fate, we have never missed an issue. I didn't make allowances

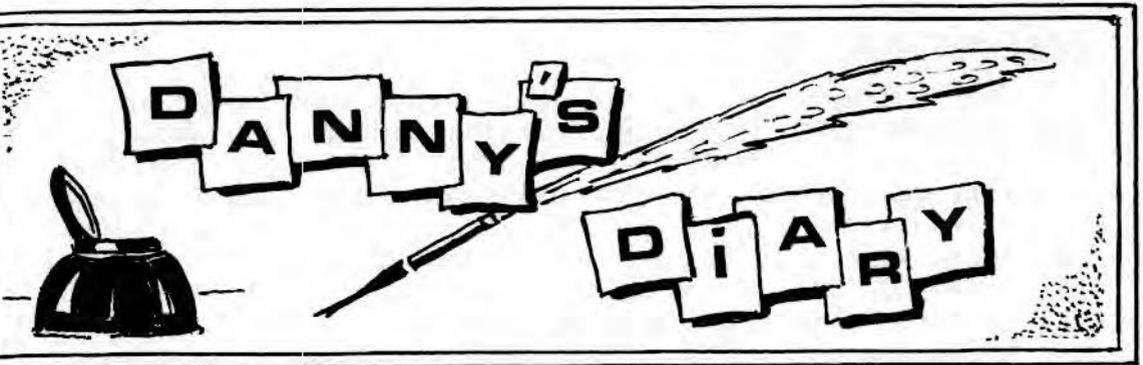
for the vagaries of the Post Office. The very issue which contained my bit of bragging was held up by the postal strike in the north. As it was, the parcel bringing the C.D.'s to Excelsior House was held up for 11 days by that strike.

You can guess that I breathed a sigh of relief when eventually I saw the postman staggering up the drive with the big parcel. I had started to fear that, due to circumstances beyond our control, we might be going to miss an issue.

So this month I will only whisper it with my fingers crossed. Come November, God Willing (and, of course, the Post Office), C.D. will reach its Ruby Jubilee - 40 years, and, we hope and pray, will never have missed an issue.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *



JULY 1936

What on earth has happened to English cricket? Beaten by the West Indies in the West Indies, licked by the Australians and licked by the South Africans on our own pitches - that's our awful record in recent Test Cricket. And now India has sent a team over to see if she, too, can hit us for six after six. And this All-India Eleven is about to start on us in the first of three Test Matches, the first to be played this week at Lord's.

Led by the Maharah Kumar of Vizianigram, these Indians seem to be a splendid team all round. Major Nayadu and Wazir Ali are the leading batsmen. Hindlekar is a brilliant wicket-keeper, and Mohammed Nissar, who is said to weigh 15 stones, is one of the

fastest bowlers in the world. And to back him up there is a battery of good fast and slow bowlers. Well, we can only wait and see what is going to happen. Surely things will turn England's way one day.

There is a rather weird new serial in Modern Boy. Entitled "The School for Kidnapped Boys" it is written by George E. Rochester. I have read a bit of it, and it is certainly unusual. Twelve boys are held to ransom in the world's most amazing school.

Also in Modern Boy, the Captain Justice stories continued. First Justice tale of the month is "Spies' Penalty", in which Justice and his comrades are doomed to face the firing squad. Then came "Lair of the Mystery Man", and we find Justice manacled and helpless bound for that very "lair". This is followed by "The Last of the Robots", when luck changes at long last. Final of the month is "Midge to the Rescue" in which the red-haired boy goes grimly on with his effort to save Captain Justice. The series continues next month.

Other offerings in Modern Boy are a series of motor-racing tales by Alfred Edgar, plus the Jagers of the R.A.F. series. And next month will bring Biggles back to Modern Boy. It's a pretty good paper just now, even though I prefer school stories.

The giant German airship Graf Zeppelin is carrying air mail over the world, and some of the countries served by the airship have issued special Graf Zeppelin stamps.

A rattling good month in the Monthlies. The Greyfriars School-boys' Own Library is "The Terror of the Tong" and continues the China series. The Greyfriars chums are on their way to China with Wun Lung, the Chinese schoolboy who is threatened by the tong of the Mandarin Tang Wang. A glorious tale.

The other S.O.L. is a Rookwood one, consisting of a goddly number of what are obviously very early Rookwood stories. The volume is entitled "Taming the Bully". First of all it tells of the arrival of Higgs, who proves to be a bully of considerable strength. He rules the roost till Jimmy Silver beats him in a fist-fight. Then came a bit about Beaumont, the rascally Rookwood prefect of those days, trying to make the juniors fag for him. Then Billy Bunter pays a visit, but has travelled on the railway without paying his fare. The final section tells of the arrival of the new boy from South Africa, Van Ryn, who turns out to be a ventriloquist. It is a smash-hit tale all the way through.

There is no Pierre Quiroule novel in the Sexton Blake Library



Who's for big-thrill adventures en route for China with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars? Join up with them to-day and follow their exciting experiences in protecting Wun Lung of the Remove from the vengeance of the Mandarin Tang Wang, a "tong" leader seeking his life!

an excellent mild type of thriller is "Kind Lady" which starred Aline Macmahon as the trusting old lady, and Basil Rathbone as the villain who thrust his way into her home. A daft but delightful musical was "Anything Goes" starring Bing Crosby and a host of others in romantic adventures on an ocean liner.

Mum and I enjoyed "Ah Wilderness", a charming story of a family at the turn of the century, and starring Wallace Beery, Lionel Barrymore, and Mickey Rooney. Pretty good was "Splendour", about an aristocrat who married a girl of poor family, starring Joel McCrea and Miriam Hopkins. A kind of a western picture was "Annie Oakley" starring Barbara Stanwyck. A fairish affair was "Klondyke Annie" starring Mae West and Victor McLaglen, but Mae West isn't one of my favourite ladies. Rather heavy-going was "Next Time

this month, but there is an engrossing tale by John G. Brandon, entitled "The Girl Who Knew too Much" featuring the adventurer, R.S.V.P. Purvale. In the Boys' Friend Library there is another Captain Justice tale "Jungle Castaways", which may have been a series in Modern Boy. Captain Justice and his friends find themselves marooned in the African Jungle with nothing but pyjamas and parachutes.

Some rather sad news from London. The famous Alhambra Theatre in Charing Cross Road is being demolished, and they are building a new Odeon Cinema in place of it. The Alhambra was such a lovely theatre, and it is sad to see it go this way.

Another good month in the local cinemas. An

We Love", starring Margaret Sullavan.

I enjoyed Charlie Chaplin in "Modern Times", though it is a silent film so far as speech goes, with music fitted to it. Not so funny as Charlie's short pictures, but it has its jolly moments. His leading lady is Paulette Goddard.

Finally, one that Mum liked a lot but which left me a bit cold - Marlene Dietrich and Gary Cooper in a romantic comedy entitled "Desire".

We hear a lot about Lord Nuffield these days. He is a wealthy man who is a philanthropist and always giving away large sums of money to good causes. I wish I could catch his eye.

A splendid month in the Gem. We kicked off with "Tom Merry's Bodyguard". Tom is out one day with Miss Fawcett, and Tom has his fortune told by a spiteful gipsy woman who predicts great danger for Tom. So Miss Priscilla insists that he has a detective at school with him as a bodyguard.

Next "The Curlew Patrol Wins Through", a yarn of scouting and rivalry between St. Jim's and the Grammar School. Then came "The Mystery of Tom Merry". Tom begins to get a bad reputation, but it is due to another boy, Clavering, who is Tom's double and who is staying in Rylcombe. Farfetched, but jolly good. Last of all came a real rib-tickler "Gussy, the Ventriloquist". Gussy decides to take up the art, and engages Billy Bunter of Greyfriars to teach him the art. He is not a success, and the tale is hilarious.

All month the serial in the Gem, "Harry Wharton's Challenge" has continued. It comes from the very early Magnet, and this month Hurree Singh comes to Greyfriars as a new boy. Great stuff.

The British Open Golf Championship has taken place this month, and the final winner was A. H. Paggham of Great Britain.

This month the trial has taken place of a young woman named Charlotte Bryant who was accused of murdering her husband in Sherborne in Dorset. She was found guilty and sentenced to death.

The Magnet this month has brought a new circus series. This time it is Muccolini's Magnificent Circus. Frank Richards must have loved circuses. The opening story of the series is "Bunter the Lion-Tamer". Our Billy gets the reputation of a hero, especially when a lion ventures into the precincts of Cliff House School.

Next came Billy Bunter's Bunk". The porpose piles up so much trouble for himself that he runs away from Greyfriars and joins the circus. He feels sure that, with his ventriloquism and

his way with lions, he can be a big noise and a great gun in the circus. Next, in this gorgeous series, comes "From School to Circus". Having given Marco, the famous lion-tamer, the idea that he, Bunter, is a real plucky chap, he, Bunter, has a wonderful chance of throwing his weight about - and Bunter manages to get a hold on Signor Muccolini, the owner of the circus.

Final of the month is "The Circus Schoolboy". Ever since Bunter joined the circus he has been a source of trouble to the proprietor, but the fat Signor dare not kick him out. For Bunter has seen the sinister Muccolini in the vicinity of the Wapshot Air Camp, with a camera, and it looks as though the circus man is a spy. Great stuff and it continues next month.

To wind up, a word about the weather. All summer there has been so much rain, and it keeps as cold as charity. This year so far has broken all records for its lack of sunshine. Where, oh where, has our Summer gone.

And England beat India by 9 wickets at Lord's.

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

The 1936 Gem story "Tom Merry's Bodyguard" has been "Trouble for Tom" early in 1914. "The Curlew Patrol Wins Through" had been "The Rival Patrols" in the same period of early 1914. "The Mystery of Tom Merry" had been an earlier story "Under a Cloud" in the summer of 1913. (Why on earth did they dodge about like this with the reprints?) "Gussy the Ventriloquist" had been "D'Arcy the Ventriloquist" early in 1914.

S.O.L. No. 271 "The Terror of the Tong" comprised 3 more stories from the Magnet's China Series of 1930. S.O.L. No. 272 "Taming the Bully" comprised 6 Rookwood stories (not consecutive) from the Boys' Friend of the summer of 1916.

The Barbara Stanwyck film was, years later, transferred to the stage as a musical entitled "Annie Get Your Gun", and was also made into a film starring Betty Hutton.

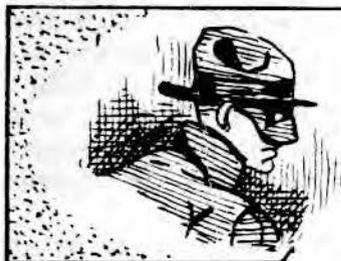
And now history repeats itself, in the 1986 cricket not to mention the weather.

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BLAKIANA



AN EXCELLENT SEXTON BLAKE STORY

by W.O.G. Lofts

The extra long Xmas and New Year holidays one gets these days, has its compensations. It enables one to catch up with their reading; which in our hobby is mainly what it is all about. For a change this year, I thought I would re-read one of the old Sexton Blake Libraries, that I had probably first read some now unbelievable forty years ago! This was when I had returned from the Far East, and was collecting numbers prior to 1946 - then the current issue. The tale I had chosen was No. 725 "The Mystery of the German Prisoner" by Martin Fraser, and dated August 1940. It was also interesting to note that the price was 4½d in those days. The odd halfpenny was worth something then!

The scene on the cover, was of course by Eric Parker showing an escaped German prisoner armed with a large spanner in the undergrowth, crouching down waiting to attack an English sentry. It reminded me sharply of a similar position I was in once, though this time I was the English soldier ready to attack a Japanese sentry guarding an oil dump in Burma. I started to read the tale, which briefly was about an escaped Nazi prisoner of War, who was formerly a crook in London, belonging to 'The Circus Gang', a group of criminals who operated near Oxford Circus hence their name. After some crime he had been forced to flee England for Germany, where he had become a German citizen, been called up into the Nazi Party, captured and imprisoned in England, on escaping was trying to discover the whereabouts of some loot that had been hidden, stolen from some Mayfair Mansion during his criminal activities.

The more I read into the story, the more I was impressed with its plot and painstaking care into details of locations and plot. For instance he had travelled from Ruislip station, mentioning that it was above ground, and the journey to Baker Street. Even to the extent of walking from the exit from the station to the incline

to the street where a newspaper pitch was situated - which even today is still there! At the end of the tale, I put it down with a sigh of satisfaction. It was so unlike many of the old S.B.L.s I read today, full of errors of fact, though these days I do so much detective work in various fields, that maybe to the average reader, many of the blemishes pass by, like they used to in my own reading years ago.

Like the Magnet/Gem/Nelson Lee stories that had a best period. In my own estimation the old S.B.L. stories were in the mid-thirties till about 1950 when the rot set in, until the New Look came in. Of course there were excellent stories and writers before this date, especially Gwyn Evans, E. S. Brooks, G. M. Teed, W. W. Sayer, Anthony Skene, etc. - though some pot-boilers were also in evidence from a number of minor writers, that always seemed to pick up in my collecting of S.B.L.s.

In fact I could claim to have discovered the identity of 'Martin Frazer' which was reported fully in C.D. dated August 1958. The same name had been appearing on a long running series of school stories of St. Clements in the Knockout Comic, so one only had to find his identity to reveal the man behind the Sexton Blake stories. "Why that is old Percy" exclaimed one editor at Fleetway House. A very tall, well built editor with a very friendly disposition, who was then working on some of the yearly Annuals prior to his retirement. Thanks to the co-operation of Mr. W. Howard Baker, I was shortly afterwards able to have an interview with him in his office, where I met Percy A. Clarke - who turned out to have an enormous output of stories under his own name, plus many nom-de-plumes.

In fact, he had had only seven Sexton Blake stories published from the first in April 1935, No. 524 (Second Series) "The Crime of Crown Inn" to the last No. 272 (Third Series) "The Case of the Dope Dealer" in April 1952. There were two reasons for his small output. Firstly, Len Pratt the editor had his own group of regular writers, such as John Hunter: Rex Hardinge: Anthony Parsons: Walter Tyrer: Gilbert Chester: Lewis Jackson: and John Drummond: consequently it was very hard indeed for any other writer to get established, or to be able to write to any schedule for a regular living. (This was actually confirmed to me by John Creasey, George E. Rochester, George Rees, and Derek Long). They were simply not encouraged or given any enthusiasm to write further.

Secondly, he had so many other irons in the fire. In his early days he poured out love stories for the Sunday papers, and womans' magazines, but then switched to boys' fiction. "Vernon Neilson", "Steve Rogers", Peter Parry, Charles Wentworth, John Martin, James Martin, St. John Watson, as well as Martin Frazer were just some of the names used.

He was once editor on The Boys' Friend Library, where he revealed a lot of information about those mysterious 'John Andrews' and other names, which were reprinted stories by other writers, and where even the detectives name had been changed (e.g. from Sexton Blake to Ferrers Locke, etc.) to suit their purpose. Though in this respect I wish I could meet him again, as in recent years and attempting to clarify all the stories in The Boys' Friend Libraries two series, some baffling problems remain containing his own stories.

Editor for a time of Jack and Jill as well as Knockout Comic, he also had a number of hardback stories published by Wright and Brown under the names of 'Dane Lander' and Jane Lytton' these being Western and Romances.

He lived with his wife near Barnet, Hertfordshire, and not far from the late Walter Bell, the children's comic artist, but if still alive would be now over 90, as he retired from Fleetway House some twenty five years ago.

One great pity about all this, is that it was a shame he did not write more full length Sexon Blake Libraries, as he was really an excellent writer. He provided me at least, with a couple of hours of delightful reading, during the otherwise long boring holidays at Yuletide.

* * * * *

Enthusiast seeks items of SEXTON BLAKE memorabilis - particularly a bust and colour plate originally presented with the Union Jack - Best prices, as usual, for SEXTON BLAKE library books 1st/2nd series.

TERRY BEENHAM, 20 LONGSHOTS CLOSE, BROOMFIELD, CHELMSFORD, ESSEX, CM1 5DX. TELEPHONE 0245 443059 (evenings)

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WANTED: SGOLs by Gertrude Nelson (John W. Bobin): No. 39 "The Mystery of Deepmarsh Farm"; No. 94 "A Voyage to Fortune"; No. 100 "The School on the Veldt"; No. 186 "Rivals of the Veldt".

RAY HOPKINS, 18 FOXHUNTER DRIVE, OADBY, LEICS., LE2 5FE.



THE MAGIC OF EZRA QUIRKE

by William Lister

The reader has probably heard of Ezra Quirke, and even read about him, or perchance the name of Ezra Quirke is totally unknown to you. If you have read the series in the 'Nelson Lee' concerning Quirke, you are most fortunate. If you have only heard of him you are less fortunate and if you tell me you have never heard of him that's sad, very sad!

I admit that certain books or fictional characters can have a tremendous effect at a certain period in life, but later one finds one has outgrown them.

One doesn't outgrow Ezra Quirke, if it's only the name you remember. There's magic even in the name; it hints at the unknown.

Older fans of the 'Nelson Lee' will remember the year 1925 as it was the year Ezra Quirke came into our lives; in 1986 series one and two are still in demand.

Queen Victoria is not the only one that has had sixty glorious years.

If you are captured by a character in your youth, there is a good chance that he or she will stay with you for life.

Readers of 'Collectors' Digest' are in two groups when it comes to Ezra Quirke. There are those who became acquainted with him in the far-a-way days of 1925, while others are comparative new-comers, though both are united in their praise of Quirke.

One can read of him today in old copies of Nelson Lee or in the excellent Howard Baker bound copy of the eight stories under the title 'The Haunted School'.

In 1925 I was thirteen. The series of eight tales provided

reading for two months. The tales were gripping, read during the long winter nights, where in those days there was no T.V. and for many - no wireless.

For myself, and for others, the build-up of surprise over eight weeks was unbelievable, waiting as we were for the solving of the mystery of Ezra Quirke.

Today, the situation is somewhat different, whether you choose to read old copies of the 'Nelson Lee' or the Howard Baker publication of 'The Haunted House'.

Unless you are a very slow reader you have no need to wait for eight weeks for the final unveiling of the mystery. Possibly, this could take a slight edge off the suspense created over eight weeks of build-up, as only Edwy Searles Brooks could create.

On the other hand you now have the whole eight compact novels complete, the whole 300,000 words before your very eyes. So it's up to you.

I simply cannot resist quoting the blurb given by Howard Baker to this series.

"This volume incorporating the famous Ezra Quirke collection of novels is undoubtedly the best series which ever flowed from the pen of Edwy Searles Brooks.

In this story magic, mystery, humour, sport and detective adventure are all represented, but the central figure - the mysterious schoolboy, Ezra Quirke - is always lurking nearby."

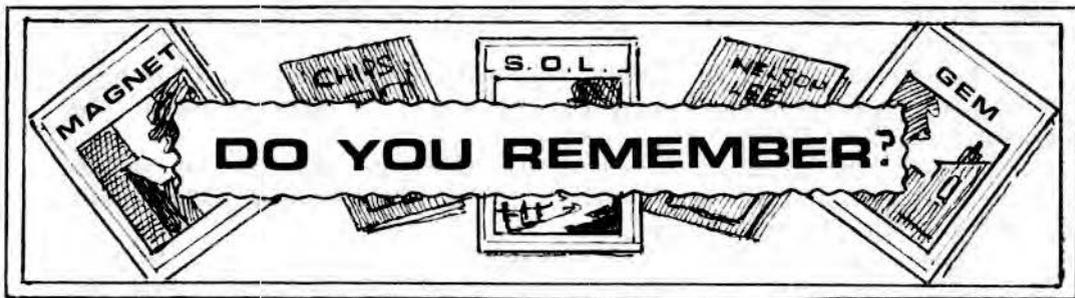
Is he a trickster - or does he really possess occult powers and a knowledge of Black Magic?

Supernatural 'happenings' will cause the most sceptical of readers to glance over his shoulder long after he has finished reading. If you like having a spooky time - why not try 'The Haunted School'? or Nelson Lee's (Old Series) No. 542 to 549.

* * * * *
WANTED for own collection: C.D.'s and C.D. Annuals; many numbers wanted. W.P. 12p + 1.50. W. E. Johns books first editions in dust wrappers: many wanted.

MR. P. GALVIN, 2 THE LINDALES, POGMOOR, BARNSELY, S. YORKS., SY5 2DT, OR 'PHONE BARNSELY 295613.

* * * * *
 GREYFRIARS PRESS/Book Club Volumes; many out of print. S.a.e. wants to: LAURIE YOUNG, 211 MAY LANE, KINGS HEATH, BIRMINGHAM, B14 4AW.



NO. 26 - Magnets 1599-1608 - Tracy Series

by Roger M. Jenkins

The theme of the boy who wanted the sack had been used in the Gem in the Angelo Lee series, but Lee was a youth with some sense of humour, and his object in being expelled was to enable him to pursue a career elsewhere. The theme of the new boy who set himself up against his form-master was touched about in various places in the Magnet: perhaps the most memorable was Carboy, a practical joker with no malice, but he was no match for Mr. Quelch. Gilbert Tracy was a very different kettle of fish.

Gilbert's father, Captain Tracy, was ill with a recurrence of war wounds, some ten years after the first World War! In the meanwhile, Gilbert was being looked after by his uncle, Sir Giles Oakwood, who was quite unable to handle him after he had been turned out of several schools. Mr. Quelch kindly offered to vouch for him at Greyfriars, and to ensure that he was not sent back to his uncle's again. Of course, the Remove master believed very strongly in the efficacy of corporal punishment.

Although Gilbert was good at football, he was something of a hard case, prepared to smoke and gamble, tell lies and play malicious tricks, even attempting to inculcate innocent parties. He was quite clearly an unsympathetic character, but he managed to get away scot-free on a number of occasions. When it became clear that Mr. Quelch was not going to let him leave Greyfriars, he started playing tricks in a cap and gown, throwing a firework at Prout from Quelch's study window and squirting ink at Hacker and Capper. amusing as it was, it appeared more sinister when it became apparent that it was part of a plot to get Quelch dismissed as mentally unhinged. Equally amusing was the time when Quelch and Bunter

got locked in the punishment room and, some weeks later, when Tracy was locked in for a week but was able to emerge at night to play fantastic tricks on Quelch in absolute safety since he had managed to acquire a duplicate key to the punishment room. The only tinge of uneasiness here might be felt by the reader who did not like seeing Mr. Quelch at a disadvantage or putting himself in a false position. Tracy's tricks also showed Whartn at a disadvantage as well, which must be another cause for disquietude.

Gilbert Tracy's reform was a slow one, begun by the influence of Marjorie Hazeldene, and there were some relapses afterwards, especially when Mr. Quelch continued to suspect Tracy of all misdeeds even when he was innocent, but by the end of the series his father had recovered and came to take him away to spend Christmas on the Riviera. Presumably he never returned to Greyfriars, though no mention was ever made of his further education. Tracy was a vehicle for Charles Hamilton to explore some novel situations, and there was a powerful story line that Charles Hamilton mastered until the end of the Magnet, but there was little entertainment in the style of writing, and the humour lay in the practical jokes. If the Tracy series was not in the top flight of Magnet series, it did at least contain some highly amusing episodes and, more importantly, it never outstayed its welcome.

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Young Britain No. 123 (1921) 80p; Sports Library 208 (1913) 80p; Magnet No. 1422 £1.25; Plucks 127, 133, 135, 139, 143, 145, 147 (1907) 365, 373, 452, 466, 467, 468, 469, 477, 479, 480 (circa 1913). Halfpenny Union Jack containing "Sunk at Sea" by Chas. Hamilton £2; ½d Union Jack 401 £1; True Blue (Aldine 1905) £1; Marvel 284 (1909) 80p; Boys Cinema 360 (1926) £1.
Write ERIC FAYNE. (No reply if items already sold.)

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THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

I don't hurry home these warm nights. It is very pleasant lying under the bushes, and sometimes there is a field mouse in the grass. My man calls me in the early hours, from all points of the compass. After an hour, I stroll in, and find him waiting in the hall, often in his blue and white striped pyjamas. He isn't angry. Just reproachful. Maybe to-night I'll go home as soon as my man calls me. Give him a surprise.



FAIR PLAY

A Splendid School Tale.

By CHAS. HAMILTON.

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH was the very first Greyfriars character created. Here we bring you the very first chapter of the very first Hurree Singh story ever written, 80 years ago. The Nabob was even ahead of Tom Merry, though Jack Blake, Figgins, D'Arcy, Kildare, and a few other St. Jim's characters were ahead of Inky.

FAIR PLAY

Owen Redfern, of the Third Form at Netherby, closed his Virgil. There was a buzz of talk in the Third Form room, and Redfern hard at work in the midst of it, had found it distracting.

The Third Form room was never very quiet, except when a master was present, but just now it was a little more noisy than usual. Some extremely interesting topic was being discussed by a dozen juniors, and Redfern, now that his work was done, was curious to know what it was. He joined the group by the fire, who were surrounding a slim, fair-haired youth, who appeared to be in possession of exclusive information. They were plying him with questions, and Redfern

stopped to listen.

"He's really here, then, Knowles?"

"Yes, I saw him."

"Where is he now?"

"In the Head's study."

"How do you know he's coming into our form?"

"I happened to hear --"

There was a general laugh.

"You often happen to hear things, don't you, Knowles?"

"Oh, all right!" snapped Knowles.

"If you don't want to hear --"

"But we do. Go on."

"Well, I heard the Head say to Mr. Lumsden that the chap was coming into the Third. Old Lummy's with them now, in the Head's study."

"That settles it. My hat!

This is a go!"

"Who and what's in the Head's study, Knowles?" asked Owen Redfern.

"The new kid."

"Oh, the new kid. Nothing remarkable about that, is there?"

"There is about this one."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Nothing, only he's a nigger."

"A nigger!" ejaculated Redfern.

"Well, an Indian", said Knowles.

"It's much the same thing, ain't it?"

"You've got a lot to learn, my son, if you think it's much the same", said Redfern sententiously. "You really ought to know better than that, Knowles."

"Oh, rats!" said Knowles "I don't care whether he's brown or black. I think it's a howling cheek of them to stick him in our Form."

"Rot!" said Redfern. "What's his name?"

"Oh, I've got that down fine!" grinned Knowles. "Hurree Jamset Ram Singh! How's that?"

"Well, there's enough of it. But look here, you kids", said Redfern seriously, "don't you start chipping the new chap. He's bound to feel a bit queer at first, coming here from such a distance, and it would be only decent to let him down light."

Knowles sneered. He was not such a good natured boy, and he generally acted in opposition to Redfern. Redfern was cock of the walk to the Third Form at Netherby, a position disputed only by Knowles. And the latter often contrived to make himself unpleasant, though he avoided coming to open fisticuffs with his rival.

"Oh, you'd better shove him into a handbox at once, Redfern!" he exclaimed. "I don't see what you want to take a blooming nigger under

your wing for."

"Of course, you don't see it", agreed Redfern. "I shouldn't expect you to, Knowles. You don't see why a chap shouldn't be a cad! You never did."

Some of the juniors giggled and Knowles turned red with anger.

"Look here, Redfern, if you're going to set up as a champion for that confounded nigger, you'll have your hands full. It's like his cheek to shove himself in here, and if we can get any larks out of him - ----"

"Oh, shut up, you make me tired!" said Redfern. "The new kid's nothing to me, but fair play's a jewel. It's a cad's game to chivy a foreign chap who doesn't know the ropes. And I tell you plainly that there's going to be no bullying or ragging while I can stop it."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Redfern", said a voice in the doorway. The juniors swung round with startled looks, for the voice was that of Mr. Lumsden, their Form-master. Redfern coloured with confusion. He had not, of course, had the least idea that the master was there, and the fact that the sentiments he had just given expression to were calculated to find favour with a master, made him feel all the more awkward. He had all a healthy boy's horror of appearing in the slightest degree priggish.

Mr. Lumsden was a stout little gentleman, with a sententious way of speaking. He wagged a fat forefinger at the juniors as he went on:

"I hope the--ah--attitude Redfern has taken up will be imitated by the rest of this Form. Redfern, I have frequently had occasion to find fault

with you for--ah--carelessness, and a too--ah--pronounced disposition to frolic, but I'm glad to see that you are--ah--sound at heart."

This eulogium made poor Redfern absolutely scarlet.

"Come in, Huree Singh", continued Mr. Lumsden.

The portly form of the Third Form Master nearly filled the doorway. He advanced into the room, and the lad who was behind him followed him in. Then the curious Third Formers got a good look at him.

He was a youth of medium size for his age, slenderly built, with a skin of deep olive, and very large and brilliant black eyes. He was dressed in Etons, and wore a very large flower in jacket. His dusky face was not exactly handsome, but there was an expression of good-nature and simplicity about it that favourably impressed the beholder. He carried himself very elegantly, and his manner was of the most agreeable politeness.

"My boys, this is your new Form-fellow, Huree Singh", said Mr. Lumsden, with a wave of the hand. "I trust you will give him a kindly welcome to Netherby. In saying this, I address myself more particularly to you, Redfern."

"Yes, sir", said Redfern.

"This boy comes from a very distant part of the--ah--Empire, and you will all do your best to make him feel at home", said the Form-master. "You may find some of his ways, and perhaps--ah--his English, a little peculiar at first, but I am sure you will not take any advantage of his strangeness to his surroundings. You will accord him--ah--a friendly welcome. Again I more particularly address you,

Redfern."

"Yes, sir", said Redfern inwardly chaffing.

Mr. Lumsden marched out of the room. The Indian boy was left alone with his new Form-fellows. Naturally, he was surrounded at once by eager seekers after knowledge.

"I say, Inky, where did you come from?" asked Knowles.

The Hindoo lad looked puzzled.

"My name is not Inky", he said, in excellent English. "My name is Huree Janset Ram Singh."

"Ah, my mistake!" said Knowles blandly. "Lemme see--what is it? Hurry Jampot Run what?"

"Oh, shut up, Knowles!" said Redfern.

"Rats! I say Jampot, what part of India do you hail from?"

"Bhanipur", said Huree Singh.

"And you're a prince in your own country, of course."

"Yes, a nabob", said the Indian simply.

Knowles laughed.

"My hat! A blooming nabob! Do you want us to swallow that?"

"My ludicrous friend-----"

Knowles stared.

"Your what, you brown bounder!"

The Indian made an apologetic gesture.

"Please do not take offence", he said, in his soft voice. "I speak English with the complete facilitation of the highly educated, but it is a difficult language, and I may have with inadvertence used an incorrect expression, but I shall communicate with you more freely when I become accustomed to the idiots here."

"The--the what?"

Redfern gave a howl of laughter.

"The idiots", he giggled. "You're one of the idiots, Knowles. Perhaps

he means idiom, though."

Hurree Singh looked distressed. "Am I guilty of another inadvertence?" he murmured. "I am truly regretful, my respectable schoolmates. I am far indeed from terming this boy an idiot, for I have been warned to be careful to avoid judging by appearances."

The Third Formers giggled joyously. Knowles had started to make fun of the Indian but it seemed somehow to be working out the other way.

"Look here, you nigger!" exclaimed Knowles.

"Dry up, Knowles!" said Redfern sharply. "Don't be a pig!"

"Dry up yourself!" retorted Knowles. "What's it got to do with you?"

"Nothing only-----"

"Redfern", said Knowles, imitating the sententious manner of Mr. Lumsden, and wagging his forefinger in the Form-master's way, "I have --ah--frequently had occasion to --ah--find fault with you for meddling in matters that don't concern you."

The juniors giggled.

"Little boys should mind their own business", continued Knowles. "In saying this, I--ah--address myself more particularly to you, Redfern."

"Oh, shut up!" said Redfern uncomfortably.

"As for Inky Darkness here", resumed Knowles, "I shall say what I like to him. I think it will do him good to put him through a bit. And a blooming nigger---"

Hurree Singh flushed indigantly under his dusky skin.

"If you are not more respectable, my friend, I shall be compelled to administer the castigation!" he exclaimed, with dignity.

"Oh, hold him back!" ejaculated Knowles, pretending to be very much alarmed. "He's going to administer the castigation! Take that for a start, Inky!" And he gave the Indian a playful tap on the nose which made him stagger. Hurree Singh went dark crimson, and, quick as a flash, his hand shot out, and Knowles reeled before a stinging smack.

"You nigger!" yelled Knowles. "I'll pulverise you!"

He leaped forward, and Hurree Singh, who was nothing like a match for the bulkier boy, would have fared very badly had not Owen Redfern chipped in just in time.

"Hands off!" said Redfern. And he gripped Knowles by the back of his collar, and swung him away from his intended victim.

"Let me go, Redfern!"

"Are you going to let the Indian alone?"

"No", howled Knowles, "I'm not! I'm going to massacre him! What are you interfering for, you beast?"

"Oh, just for the fun of the thing!" said Redfern serenely. "You're not going to touch Hurree Singh while I'm around, that's all!"

"I'll wring his neck!"

"You look more like getting your own wrung at the present moment", remarked Redfern, tightening his grip and grinding his knuckles into the back of Knowles's neck. "This is where I shake you!" He suited the action to the word and shook Knowles till the teeth rattled in his head. "Now are you going to drop it?"

"No!"

"Right you are! I'll keep on till you say when."

And Redfern resumed the shaking vigorously.

Knowles struggled desperately to get away, but he was helpless. He threw all his strength into a final effort, but Redfern held on like grim death. Something was bound to go. And something did. There was a sudden, tearing sound, and Knowles's collar came out, and his jacket split, and he tumbled over on the floor.

"Ha, ha!" roared Redfern. "You do look a sight, Knowles!"

Knowles jumped up, red with rage. He was usually too cautious to come to close quarters with Owen Redfern, but he was too furious now to think of prudence. He went at Redfern like a wild bull. Redfern receded a few paces before his rush, but his guard was perfect, and not one of his assailant's savage drives reached his cool, smiling face.

Suddenly he let out his right, and Knowles tumbled over again. He went down with a thump, and sat up looking rather foolish.

"Do you want any more?" asked Redfern genially. "They're my Sudden Slaps for Beastly Bounders, and I keep 'em on tap. Don't be bashful; say if you want any more."

"I'll get even with you for this!" mumbled Knowles. "And as for that nigger-----"

"What?"

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BURROWING DEEPER INTO THOSE "BORING" TALES

by J.E.M.

A mechanical "mole" capable of carrying men anywhere underground seems to have been one invention our old story-paper writers did not steal from more "respectable" sources. I have searched in vain the writings of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and other founders of science fiction for any reference to such a machine. Verne certainly did not employ a device of this kind in his famous Journey to the Centre of the Earth. Who, then, did invent the "mole"?

Redfern looked dangerous, and Knowles shut up promptly. He picked himself up, and without offering to renew the fight, went out, scowling blackly. His pride had had a severe fall, but he was not inclined to push the fight to a finish.

"Good for you, Reddy!" exclaimed Reggie Lawrence - Redfern's chum. "That's what Knowles has been asking for, for a long time. It'll do him heaps of good."

Hurree Singh extended his brown hand to Redfern gratefully.

"I thank you!" he exclaimed. "It is brave to give the helping hand to the stranger within the doors. I would like to be your friend."

"Certainly!" grinned Redfern.

"That is good, and I think we shall be as thick as a thief", Hurree Singh declared. And Redfern laughed, but he shook hands cordially enough with the Indian. Hurree Singh's phraseology was peculiar, but his heart was evidently in the right place.

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(More of this 80 years old story next month)

Many years ago, I attempted (CD 302) to trace the oldest stories with this theme. The earliest I could find was a serial in FUN AND FICTION, in 1912, about a giant iron "beetle" which clawed rather than bored its way under the earth. A genuine boring machine (i.e. one with a drilling head) emerged along with its inventor, Steffson, in The Case of the Human Mole (SBL, No. 91, 2nd Series) written by Houghton Townley in 1927.

I also recounted personal recollections from the early 1930s of a character called Cardova (or Cordova) who appeared, along with his "mole" in, I think, BULLSEYE, though I have never been able to track down the actual issues. My memory is very clear on one point. Cardova not only closely resembled the earlier Steffson but his activities followed similar lines (a rescue from the condemned cell and a plan to rob the Bank of England). There is indeed, as we shall see, every reason to think that this later story was written by the same author, Houghton Townley; Steffson and Cardova being one and the same character.

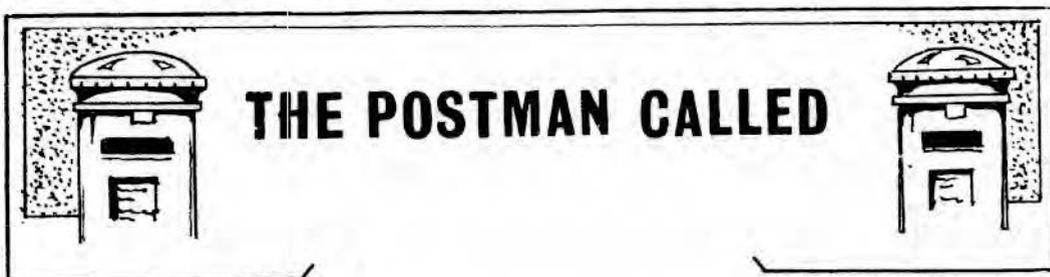
Mr. W. O. G. Lofts has very kindly drawn my attention to a copy of the JESTER for February 1908, containing a story called The Burrowing Machine. This tale contains a now familiar condemned cell entry and a plan to rob the B. of E. And the owner of the mole itself is none other than our old friend Cardova! To clinch the connection, the author of the tale is given as Colin Collins which, Mr. Lofts tells me, was a pseudonym for Houghton Townley. The evidence therefore strongly suggests that the "inventor" of the underground burrowing machine was Houghton Townley and that his early story in the JESTER was used more than once over the years.

Of course, our old papers saw many other mechanical mole stories. Perhaps the best known were the Black Sapper tales in the ROVER, starting in the late 1920s. In 1935, there was a story in the RANGER called The Human Mole by Geo. E. Rochester, reprinted two years later in the BFL under the title The Black Mole. Mr. R. Hibbert once referred in Cd to a 1930's serial in MODERN BOY featuring a mole called the Terribore. But all these yarns came well after Townley's original JESTER tale - some by over a quarter of a century. Finally, it is interesting that, unlike so many marvels predicted by sci-fic writers, a man-carrying mechanical mole has still to surface in reality nearly 80 years after its "invention".

(Sequence of the Cardova/Steffson stories:

- 1908 The Burrowing Machine. Author, Houghton Townley.
Central character, Cardova.
- 1927 The Case of the Human Mole. Author, Houghton Townley.
Central character, Steffson.
- 193-? Story in BULLSEYE (Title probably The Human Mole).
Author not given but almost certainly Townley.
Central character, Cardova.)

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NICK GODFREY (Leamington Spa): With reference to the feature on 'Domestic Staff at Greyfriars':

I was surprised, while recently reading Magnet no. 1540, to come across a reference to Dr. Locke's secretary. This occurred in chapter twelve. Whilst the headmaster of a school such as Greyfriars would obviously have a secretary, I cannot recall ever having seen another reference to one.

What does this seemingly neglected character do? Surely they would be expected to take most of the Head's phone calls, deal with his mail and send assorted mundane memos around the school. However, none of this is ever referred to. Another obscure character remaining in doubtless much-deserved obscurity. I must admit, I can remember little of the secretaries at the schools I attended, other than the fact that they existed, and that if you arrived late in the morning, you had to report to one of them. Doubtless they were very worthy individuals, but they were also eminently forgettable.

I do remember the school bursar. He was very like Gosling in his own way. He was stout, not particularly tall, and encased in a darkish blue uniform. He also seemed to regard all the scholars as an unnecessary hindrance to the smooth running of the school. He lived in a house near the school gates, and organised imperative deeds such as the repairing of the bike shed or the oiling of

door hinges.

CHARLES VAN RENEN (Walmer, South Africa): My eternal gratitude for the unfailing delight this wonderful little magazine brings each month.

LESLIE SUSANS (Gillingham): I was an avid reader of the Magnet and the Schoolboys' Own in the late 20's and early 30's; the Golden Years of the Magnet I believe; and regret that when I commenced to earn my living in 1933 I ceased to purchase those grand old magazines, but I was agreeably surprised to find the Billy Bunter hardbacks published after the war. Like many old Greyfriars fans I purchased most of them and I suspect that the bulk of the sales were made to people in my age group. All the old characters that I had read about in pre-war years were there but I noticed that a new character; at least new to me; had entered the arena. True, he was a minor character and I doubt if he had one line of dialogue in any of the Bunter books, but he frequently received a mention. That was Sykes of the Sixth. I knew all about Wingate, Gwynne, Loder, and his cronies of course, but never Sykes. Did he first appear in the Greyfriars saga in the late 1930s? I note that no mention is made of him in Butcher's Prospectus.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Sykes appeared a few times in the later years of the Magnet. "Butcher's Prospectus" was mainly culled, apparently, from Pentelow's Who's Who of the 1917 Magnet, which is probably the reason it was unsatisfactory to the more knowledgeable fans.)

TED BALDOCK (Cambridge): I much enjoyed Terry Jones' jolly piece in which he dwells upon the therapeutic value of the old companion papers. He has a very valid point here. Looking back over my own juvenile experiences, I can fully vouch for such confidence in the recuperative powers they possessed. I recall them having seen me over (or through) not a few less than happy periods of stress; and to our parents also they were something approaching a blessing in disguise. In my own case, silence (and therefore peace) could certainly be bought for an unspecified time by the modest outlay of two-pence or four-pence. I think our dear, and sometimes long-suffering parents, had a great deal for which to thank Chas. Hamilton and his gallery of splendid characters. The fact that one is able to write so sincerely, after a life-time in the hurly-burly of the world, of these early delights and still experience

an echo of their freshness is surely an indication that they must have possessed some near-magic formula; or perhaps the magic lay dormant within ourselves and was motivated by the regular perusal of the Greyfriars' and St. Jim's sagas. Whichever may have been the case, it has been eminently worthwhile.

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MIDLANDS

After last month's splendid meeting only eight members turned up for the A.G.M. It was disappointing and scarcely representative in a meeting where decisions have to be made for 1986 and 1987.

The various club officials gave their reports of a mixed year with attendances being hit by various factors. Our Chairman, Tom Porter, spent a long period in hospital and is still not well enough to attend. He was, however, elected Chairman, with Ivan Webster and Geoff Lardner offering to deputise for him when needed. All other officials were elected en bloc.

Refreshments were provided by Betty Hopton.

Christine Brettell made a welcome reappearance and had prepared an entertaining quiz, based on characters from the famous series down the years. David Packwood, one of our younger members, was the winner.

Your correspondent followed with one of his now familiar quizzes, full of the quotations at which Charles Hamilton was so apt. There were 15 questions, and the prizes were four very old Collectors' Digests of 1952, Herbert Leckenby vintage. Herbert would be proud of the way his good work has been kept up. He was a decent old chap.

Let us hope that we have a better attendance at our next

meeting. To all members of O.B.B.C., all best wishes from the Midland Club.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

SOUTH WEST

Through the kindness of Charles Skilton, twelve lucky members of our club met at his home, Banwell Castle, set in the rolling, peaceful hills of Somerset. If any building has come to life from the pages of Magnet, Gem, and Nelson Lee, this was it. Although, so far, no secret passages have been discovered we were all sure that they had to be somewhere, and at any moment we expected the butler to swan in, out of Frank Richards' holiday series.

Bill Lofts gave us a delightful talk on Castles featured in Hamilton yarns, and then our St. Frank's reporter, Grant Macpherson followed with a talk on St. Frank's castle adventures. Bill rounded off with a talk about the Hotspur, especially the Red Circle School where, unlike the other schools, there were no Peter Pans.

Tea was taken in the Castle dining room, and Mr. Skilton chatted about the building and about "our Frank". Mr. Skilton is well known to us all as the publisher of the post-war Bunter books.

A big thank you to Mrs. Salisbury and Mrs. Macpherson who provided the cakes and savouries and to Mr. Salisbury who provided the transport for members without cars. The biggest round of thanks goes to Mr. Skilton for giving us such a happy time in his home at our Spring Meeting.

CAMBRIDGE

We met at the home of Tony Cowley on Sunday, 1st June, there was a good attendance of members. Vic Hearn was in the chair.

It was reported that Jack Overhill had presented the manuscripts of his books and diaries to the Cambridge Collection in the City Library. There was great satisfaction that the many writings of Jack would be preserved for posterity in this way.

This being the Annual Meeting, the Secretary, Tony Cowley, reported on the past years' activities, which had been very successful.

The officers of the Club were unanimously re-elected, with warm thanks for their service.

Bill Thurbon had mentioned at the previous meeting that in

the 1960's the Northern Club (of which he was then a postal member) had asked members to submit lists (a la 'Desert Island Discs') of the ten books they would take with them to a desert island (assuming the Bible and Shakespeare were already there. He offered to give the first list and hoped that other members would follow. Bill's list with the proviso that the Bible should be the Authorised version) was:

1. Tolkiens "Lord of the Rings"
2. C.S. Lewis's "The Last Battle"
3. Complete edition of "Sherlock Holmes"
4. "The Eagle of Death" - first Jack, Sam and Pete story in the "Halfpenny Marvel" of c.1900. Reprinted in "Penny Popular" of 10 May 1913.
5. "King Solomon's Mines" by Rider Haggard
6. Erskine Childer's "Riddle of the Sands"
7. Robert Nield's "Mist over Pendle"
8. Dorothy Sayers "Man born to be King"
9. Professor Holt's "Robin Hood"
10. He would toss up between a Kipling short story, Ronald Welch's collected verse of Ogden Nash.

Before and after Mrs. Cowley's splendid tea Roy Whiskin and Tony Cowley gave a wonderfully nostalgic presentation of the radio series "Dick Barton, Special Agent". This had been intended as an ordinary programme, but it was taken over completely by the children en masse, and in consequence, following the then B.B.C. practice, out went Dick Barton's girl friend, and violence was strictly controlled to "a sock on the jaw"! This was a fascinating glimpse of the past.

The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Tony and Mrs. Cowley for their hospitality.

LONDON

A happy and interesting meeting at the Walthamstow rendezvous on Sunday, 8th June, when an attendance of fourteen enjoyed a very entertaining time.

Miriam Bruning read chapters from Magnet 1661, Lamb series, which told of the Greyfriars juniors putting up the Christmas decorations at Wharton Lodge and how Bunter's booby trap recoiled on the "Owl".

Ben Whiter conducted two quizzes. The first one was won

by Don Webster. The second one "Odd One Out" kept the company present deeply thinking and it was Brian Doyle who had the most correct answers. Leslie Rowley followed this up with another couple of chapters from his opus of how the unpublished Magnet stories may have been written.

Then Arthur Bruning took over and rendered a good discourse on the Magnet. At the conclusion of the discourse the plaudits of ail present were accorded to Arthur and he was asked to submit his work to Eric Fayne for possible publication in a future issue of the C.D.

Don Webster proposed thanks to Jean and Miriam Bruning and Myra Stewart for their efforts in the kitchen, ably taking over from the ladies who were unavoidably absent.

Next meeting at the Liberal Hall, Ealing on Sunday, 13th July. Tea provided but bring own viands.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 14th June, 1986.

Chairman Keith Smith welcomed the 16 people present including two visitors, on a pleasant summer evening. A special welcome was given to Bill Lofts, who was spending the weekend in Leeds at the invitation of the Northern Club. The weekend had commenced with an afternoon visit to the splendid home and library of our Secretary. We affectionately refer to the home as being like "Wharton Lodge".

Michael Bentley and Darrell Swift reported on their visit to see the film "Biggles". The Johns' characters were extremely well played and the World War I sequences were excellent.

Bill's first talk was without doubt, the most interesting he has presented to our Club. Indeed, time flew for the talk lasted 50 minutes! Bill gave us the history of old papers from the first known "Young Gentleman's Magazine" of the late 1700's. Collecting the old papers is thought to have commenced around 100 years ago. From the list of dates of publications, Bill went on to talk about collectors and dealers - the first dealer known to advertise was in 1880 from Liverpool and in 1900 a fairly local dealer was from

Huddersfield and remarkable in that his handwriting was microscopic. Samples of the handwriting were passed round.

After refreshments, Bill gave his second talk on "Eccentrics

in the Hobby". Plenty of hilarity accompanied the talk and as Bill commented, people would not believe some of the stories were they not aware that there were plenty of eccentrics still living involved in all sorts of hobbies, ours included!

A splendid evening indeed was had - and for those able to finish it off to give it the final touch, seven members (including Bill) went to a local hotel for dinner - meeting finally finishing at 11.30 p.m.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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A WHARTON LODGE WORTHY

by Edward Baldock

Wells the imperturbable butler at Wharton Lodge may be looked upon as a perfect example of a vanishing race. Quiet, discreet, and well trained, the repository, through his calling of all manner of family secrets, and the guiding force behind the smooth and efficient services in Colonel Whartons household. The domestic affairs of the Lodge may well seem to run themselves so unobtrusive are his methods. Herein lies the skill and expertese of the portly Wells; his hand is ever on the tiller; his touch is light but sure; never was better discipline maintained than in this pleasant home. His authority below stairs is supreme without the slightest hint of oppressiveness - he is a father figure. Above stairs, in addition to being the Colonels' butler, he is also a trusted friend within the limits permissible between the old soldier and one whom he probably regards as his Sergeant-Major.

How many times he has aided and abetted Harry Wharton and Co. in ploys which, strictly speaking, lie outside his official sphere of duty, is questionable. The fact that he is regarded by the Co. as a 'good old sport' would seem to indicate that he has been cognizant of and participated in, various small 'affairs' without sacrificing in the smallest degree a vestige of his customary dignity.

If there exists one person who is likely to raise the Wellsian eyebrows in disapproval that person is William George Bunter, a not infrequent (and mostly uninvited) guest at Wharton Lodge. Bunter possesses the unenviable ability of arousing certain emotions in the breast of the usually calm and tranquil Wells who, with a truly masterful control of his feelings (and one suspects his hands and probably his feet) has never been known to be other than exemplary in his conduct towards the fat Owl of Greyfriars. On how many

occasions he has been sorely tempted to administer a severe spanking upon that portion of Bunters anatomy best suited to this purpose will never be divulged. Certain characteristics in Bunter's manner and general attitude towards himself and his staff leave much to be desired. Of course, we know our Owl, and are aware of his monumental limitations and it would be futile to expect any change in his demeanour towards those whom he considers as menials, whose sole existence is to 'on call' and attend to his own lordly requirements.

Having been Colonel Wharton's major-dome for as long as memory serves, not un-naturally Wells is regarded as part of the 'bricks and Mortar' at the Lodge. His relationship with the Colonel's sister, Harry's Aunt Amy is amicability itself, while she with her quiet unchanging attitudes depends a great deal upon his decisions in the smooth running of the home.

My favourite picture of Wells is of the great man in an off-duty moment at the end of the day. These moments are few and thus are treasured by this stalwart old retainer. Here he sits in an armchair in the privacy of his pantry, that sanctum-sanctorum of the butler. Perusing the evening newspaper and comfortably ensconced in a pair of lurid old carpet slippers (which are never - never seen beyond the limits of the pantry) and an equally old and comfortable looking alpaca jacket which always replaced the resplendent 'tails' when he is not 'on parade'. On the green cloth at his elbow stands a small glass containing a golden hued liquid which gives off a pleasantly soothing odour. A silent, relaxed, spectacled figure, oblivious for the moment of the subdued domestic sounds from the kitchen beyond his 'Oak'.

Looking objectively at Wells we may say that he represents a 'still centre' in a rapidly changing universe. His breed gets thinner and scarcer with each passing year - which, by and large, is rather sad, for Wells, to most readers of the Greyfriars saga - although he plays a relatively minor roll - epitomizes stability and staunchness, admirable characteristics which seem to occupy a less prominent place in the hierarchy in these later days.

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Tom Merry's Own 1957. Good £2. (2) Captain Vol. 2-3 1899-1900. N. mint £4 each. School Girls' Own Annuals 1923-24-26-28. Good. £3 each. Schoolgirls' Own Annuals 1926, poor end boards, contents V.G. £1.75. Playbox Annual 1922. Good. £3. Pending of; a Twig. Coke. V.G. £2.50 School in Space. Reg. brown. E.S.B. N. mint. £2. Lost World of Everest, Berkley Gray, E.S.B. H.B. £1.50. Boys will be Boys. N. mint. H.B. £2. F. Richards, Autobiography. Mint. H.B. £2. School-girl Rivals, Brenda Page, Col. frontis. 1st ed. 1927. V.G. £2. C. S. RAVEN, 46 TROUGHTON TERRACE, ULVERSTON, CUMBRIA, LA12 7LE. C.O.R. Post extra. If no reply consider sold.

SLIM JIMS

by Ernest Holman

I do hope your Middlesbrough correspondent will permit me to adopt a Monty Lowther style when I say that his remarks about the Goldhawk Series are Sturdy ones! I have always liked those post-war two-a-month paper backs of St. Jim's.

In size, they were slightly wider than the average paper back and of the same height. Compared with the S.O.L., the latter were also of similar height but about an inch wider than the Goldhawk. I suppose Goldhawks were, near enough, post-war S.O.L.s. The first two issues came out in August 1952; they continued at two per month until December, when only was was issued. Nos. 10 and 11 came out in January 1953 - and that was all. They were priced at 1s. 6d. The Publishers (presumably unrelated to the Author) bore the name of Hamilton and operated from Goldhawk Road in West London.

Illustrations were few - in the early books, just the cover, by 'an artist'. Later, when C. H. Chapman came in, the title page also carried a picture. Here was an oddity, indeed - for whilst Chapman was portraying St. Jim's, at the same time R. J. MacDonald was doing the same thing for Greyfriars!

The stories were longer than Gem length (probably about 30,000 words); they could hardly be called vintage; there was, in fact, nothing new in any of the stories from Gem days. They did, however, have the interesting theme of continuity. A new story often referred back to earlier incidents; there was even a new arrival (Blake's cousin) who remained at the school, albeit as a member of the 'chorus'. The person Danny would refer to as the real Martin Clifford seemed intent on producing a long run of St. Jim's yarns - even within the limits of single stories, there appeared possibilities for the future. Nos. 7 to 11 all carried the name D'Arcy in the title, as though hoping that it might 'catch on' in the manner of the 'Bunter' books. Regrettably, the purchasing public did not respond and No. 11 was the last issue.

All the yarns were extremely readable and, most important, capable of standing up to repeated readings over the years. In addition to the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. the stories featured such personalities as Skimpole, Kildare, Talbot, Cardew, Racke - and also Henry Quelch of Greyfriars. Each story was a typical Hamilton 'piece of work' - they are best read in sequence to appreciate the full flavour of what might have been. They are still purchasable, I believe, from noted dealers, in this year of 1986 - eighty years after the very first St. Jim's story appeared!

I commenced with a Monty Lowther effort; perhaps I can keep the St. Jim's spirit going by finishing in similar vein. Looking back to the 1940 disappearance of the Magnet, one feels the same sense of disappointment when realising that the Goldhawks also received the 'knock-out'!

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