

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS'

Vol. 42

DIGEST

No. 495



BOB WHITER.

MARCH 1988

59P

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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

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST: Edited and Published
(1959 - January 1987) by Eric Fayne

VOL. 42

No. 495

MARCH 1988

Price 59p

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

FOR ERIC - A WELL DESERVED AWARD

I am delighted to be able to inform C.D. readers that our dear Editor Emeritus, Eric Fayne, has been awarded the Silver Cross of This England (a beautifully produced magazine, which many of you will know). The award is made for dedication and achievement in keeping alive the best traditions of England (I think in our minds we can broaden this to "Britain"). It is much deserved, and I was delighted when This England announced it in their Spring 1988 issue. This is now in the shops, and many C.D. readers may wish to buy it for the tribute to Eric which it contains, as well as for its many other attractive features.

Eric was nominated for this award by Norman Wright, a popular C.D. contributor and hobbyist. He made the nomination last

year, when he was Chairman of the London Old Boys' Book Club, and the Club hoped very much that this award would be made. So many readers have written to me asking whether some special recognition might be given to Eric for his services to the C.D., and I am happy now to be able to tell you all about this.

There are many points in This England's tribute to Eric which C.D. readers will appreciate; the following is an example:

He recognized how the children's story-papers had been an important influence on the lives of countless young people, playing a vital part in setting them off on the right road in life, and through the pages of his magazine he crusaded tirelessly to keep their ideals of decency and understanding alive, extending the sphere of the journal beyond the bounds of mere book and story-paper collecting...

We all offer Eric our congratulations on the Silver Cross Award, which confirms what we have known all along, of course, that he is a splendid and inspiring embodiment of everything that is truly the best of British. As well as our congratulations he commands our deep affection and gratitude.

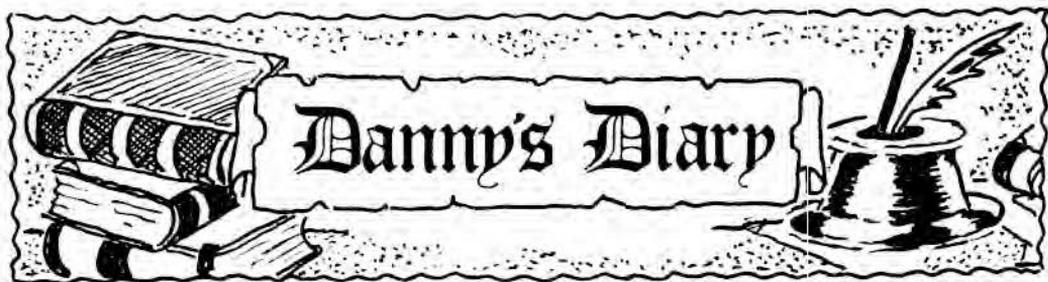
THE NELSON LEE RIDES AGAIN!

I am very pleased to be able to inform readers that the response to my appeal for more Nelson Lee articles has been excellent. The column is now once more alive and kicking - and I trust that all St. Frank's enthusiasts will ensure that we keep it that way.

A TRAVELLING EDITRESS

If this issue is a little delayed, it is because my work took me away to Switzerland (to the beautiful snow slopes of Gstaad, in fact), so the C.D. schedule was put slightly back. This year is going to be yet another globe-trotting one for me, with business trips to California, Canada and Spain already planned, plus of course my own holidays, when I shall be visiting Crete, and thus fulfilling a long-held ambition. Rest assured that the C.D. will continue to appear each month, and I shall do my utmost to avoid delays, but should these occur I trust you will understand that as the entire staff of the C.D. is myself (Editor, proof-reader, packer, distributor, etc.) our little mag. might make slightly late appearances from time to time. Here I would like to express appreciation of the great help given always by York Duplicating Service, those most reliable and co-operative of printers.

HAPPY READING to you all. **MARY CADOGAN**



MARCH 1938

A pretty good month in the Fourpenny Libraries, though not quite up to the very high standard of the past few months.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library, "Detective Bunter" is the third and final story in the long one about Flip. In this one, Flip finds his father at the finish, and the father turns out to be a police officer, Inspector Brent, who plays a big part in this final tale. All rattling good stuff.

The second S.O.L. is "The Rebellion at Packsaddle", a series from the Packsaddle tales which appeared not so long ago in the Gem. In this one the cow-town Headmaster, Bill Sampson, gets the sack, and his pupils, Dick Carr & Co, rise in rebellion on his behalf. Reminds of the Cedar Creek tales I once read, when Miss Meadows got the sack, but Packsaddle has always been too farcical for my real liking.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "The Housemaster's Revenge". Mr. Smale Foxe has waited for years to have his revenge on St. Frank's, from which he was once sacked. And now, as Housemaster of the College House, his chance comes, and he sets out to disgrace St. Frank's.

In the Boys' Friend Library the star turn is "The Haunted Island,". This is a lovely creepy tale about Ken King of the Islands, his ketch "Dawn", and his mate, Kit Hudson. Lovely.

Another B.F.L. I had and much enjoyed is "The Impostor of the Fourth" by Robert W. Comrade. Twin brothers are returning to their respective different schools. One suggests that it will be a gorgeous jape if they go to one another's schools, each pretending to be the genuine pupil at that school. And they do this. But the brother who made the suggestion had got himself into bad trouble the previous term, and he wants to land that trouble on his unsuspecting brother. This story tells what happens to one brother. Next month there will be a sequel to relate what happened to the other brother at the other school.

In the Sexton Blake Library I had a story called "The Black Ace", written by someone called George Dilnot. He is a new writer to me, and I cannot remember hearing his name before. It's a good tale set among the crooks in the West End of London.

Rather a sad month for me, for I love trams. Trolley-buses have replaced trams on no less than 7 routes north of the Thames.

In passing, one of the Modern Boys this month carried a long article about how trolley-buses work.

There is another little change in life which is just mildly a bit sad. When the postmen left letters he gave a rat-rat on the door. If he wanted an answer - for instance, if he had a parcel to deliver, he gave a double rat-rat --- rat-tay-, rat-tat. Those knocks are no more. It seems the postman's knock has startled old folks or nerry ones. So letters will be delivered silently - and, if he wants the door opened by someone, the postman will give just a normal little knock. The trams are going, and the postman's knock has gone.

A lovely month in the Gem. The present series about Gore is one of the most powerful and touching I ever remember. In "The Thief" last month, Gore got into debt to Tickey Tapp who runs a gambling-den. Gore was sent to the Head's study. The Head wasn't there, but the safe was open, and Gore pinched fifteen pounds. This month's first tale is "Talbot Takes the Blame". Gore confesses to Talbot about the theft, so Talbot says he will put the money back in the safe after the whole school is asleep. The Head comes in and finds Talbot with the opened safe. So Talbot is sent away from St. Jim's in the middle of the night. And Gore is stricken by conscience.

Then came the final tale in the series, "The Circus Schoolboy". Talbot joins Chungum's Circus. Back at St. Jim's, Gore has had a nervous breakdown under the strain of it all, and he is delirious in the sanatorium. Nurse Marie Rivers call the Head, when she hears what Gore is babbling. So, in the end, the clouds roll by, and Talbot is back where he belongs. A lovely series.

The next tale brought back on the scene a St. Jim's character that older readers remember. In "Money-Bags Minor", Aubrey Racke, the son of a millionaire, comes as a new boy, thinking that money can buy anything. He finds it can't buy the friendships he wants.

Last of the month is a Grundy tale, "He Thought He Was A 'Tec" (rotten title). Somebody has apparently stolen Manners' valuable camera. And Grundy thinks he can be a Sexton Blake and trace it.

I can't get used to the new style, big-sheeted Modern Boy. I was just toying with the idea of saving my weekly tuppence on it when something lovely happened. In the last issue of the month, Ken King of the Islands is back with the start of a new series. The opening tale is entitled "King of the Islands", and it's about pearl-divers. So my tuppence will continue to go to my newsagent, Mr. Bragg, for Modern Boy.

The Captain Justice stories continue with some good unbelievable stuff, all about the Captain's war with the "globe pirates". First tale is "Stratosphere Patrol" with a fight going on ten miles up in the air. Then "Television Triumph", with the Captain watching what's going on, on his black box.

Then "Runaway Sky-Giant" with Prof. Flaznagel, in his massive flying globe, hurtling towards the skyscrapers of New York. Finally "Ten Mile Voice". All fearfully far-fetched, but good reading.

The Biggles serial "Biggles on the Treasure-Trail" must be getting towards its close now.

Some good films in the local cinemas this month. One I enjoyed a lot was a British production "Action for Slander" starring Clive Brook. An army officer was accused of cheating at cards, and took his accusers to court for slander.

Sounds dull, but it was great. A lively musical is "The Broadway Melody of 1938", with a host of stars including Robert Taylor, Judy Garland, and Sophie Tucker. A kind of back-stage story.

The cinema is going in a bit for ice shows. Sonja Henie was in her second American skating film "Lovely to Look at". I found it a bit dull, but I'm no skater. Jessie Matthews was good in a little British musical "Gangway".

A lovely one - the best of the month - is "A Star is Born", with Janet Gaynor and Fredric March. A lovely, lovely film in technicolour, in which an unknown actress marries a big Hollywood star, and then she becomes very famous as his glory fades.

Finally my pet aversion was jolly good in a nice film entitled "Heidi" in which a little orphan girl goes to stay with her crusty grandfather. Shirley Temple, of course. I think it is a well-known children's tale, but I hadn't heard of the story. I must ask my Gran if she knows it.

I wonder why I always leave the marvellous Magnet till the last of the month's entries in my Diary. Like the music halls. The star turn is always the closing act in the programme.

I love the Magnet, but I must say that, for some time now, most of the series have gone on for a bit too long. The present series about Bunter's relation, Carter, has been running since just after Christmas, and here, at the end of March, it has not ended yet. Every tale is tip-top reading, of course, and I like them very much, but the Carter tale is not really a serial - it's a collection of tales all harping on the same plot, with no advance of any kind. In each tale, Carter tries to get Bunter disgraced and expelled, and at the end of each tale Carter fails.

It's really very different from the lovely three story series in this month's Gem, about Gore and Talbot.

This month's stories in the Magnet are "Billy Bunter's Dead Cert", "Carter Takes the Count", "Bunter Gets the Boot" (but in spite of the title, Carter failed again at the end of the yarn), and "Billy Bunter's Twin" (the twin is Wibley, and Bunter's bacon is saved yet again at the end of the story).

The series continues next month. All lovely reading, of course, but I hope they will soon change the record.

ERIC FAYNE Comments On This Month's DANNY'S DIARY

I am intrigued this month to read Danny's references to a story in the 1938 Boys' Friend Library entitled "The Imposter of the Fourth" by Robert W. Comrade. "Comrade" was a pen-name of Edwy Searles Brooks. I have in my possession two very old B.F.L's which I greatly enjoyed as a child. Time-worn now, I still have a soft spot for them. They are entitled "Scorned By The School" and "The Cad of the School". They were published anonymously, but I knew that they were by Brooks. They are printed sideways across the pages, thus allowing for 3 columns to a page, so they obviously date from some period well on in the First World War.

In the stories, identical twins named Fenwick go to each other's schools when a new term starts, each posing as the other. A plot on the part of the bad twin to land his troubles on his brother. From what Danny says of "The

Imposter of the Fourth", it is one of these stories, and I fancy we shall find that the other tale may come in April 1938. Our Brooks fans can perhaps tell me for certain whether these 1938 tales are reprints of those very old war-time tales which I still possess.

Brooks used the same theme again in 1927 in his stories of the Castleton twins, one twin going to St. Frank's and the other to St. Jim's. The series ran in the Gem and in the Nelson Lee Library.

S.O.L. NO. 328 "Detective Bunter" comprised the last two stories of the Flip series of the Magnet of very early in 1932.

The 1938 Gem "Talbot Takes the Blame" had been "For Another's Sake" in the Spring of 1915. "The Circus Schoolboy" of 1938 had been "The Hero of the Hour" in the following week of 1915. "Moneybags Minor" had first appeared under the same title in the autumn of 1916. "He Thought He Was a 'Tec" had been "Grundy, the detective" a few weeks later in 1916.

The Sonja Henie film "Lovely to Look At" had been entitled "Thin Ice" in the States. The lovely Gaynor-March film "A Star is Born" was made again some years after the war, with Judy Garland and James Mason - a re-make which was nearly twice as long and not half as good. Such is progress.



SEXTON BLAKE IN "TIT-BITS"

by John A.C. Bridgwater

From recent correspondence with Chris Lowder arising from my advert in January C.D. it seems that it might not be widely known that Sexton Blake appeared in "Tit-Bits", Chris really was surprised. I have looked in the Sexton Blake catalogue and no mention of "Tit-Bits" appears there. So it may be of interest to Blakians if a note were inserted in Blakiana somewhat as follows:- Three Sexton Blake serials appeared in "Tit-Bits" in 1965. Each serial ran for 3 or 4 weeks and they appeared consecutively without a break from April 1965 to July. The serials were reprints from the 4th series of Sexton Blake library.

No. 524 "The Girl Who Saw Too Much" was first. Next No. 508 "Moscow Manhunt" and finally No. 456 "Hurricane Warning". All were illustrated with photographs. Blake is shown as a younger man than I visualised him but then I first met Blake in the very late 1920's. I wonder who represented Blake in the photographs?

Craille is also shown in the second serial's photographs. In the third serial the photographs remind one of James Bond in showing Blake struggling with

an armed and scantily clad girl. I have a complete run of the second and third serials but unfortunately the first one, which I also had complete, went missing when we moved sometime ago. (Probably in packing the china!)

EDITORS OF THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

by W.O.G. Lofts

No. 2. Willie Bollingbroke-Home Gall.

Willie Bollingbroke Home-Gall was born at Charlton, near Woolwich. London in 1894. A short time afterwards the family moved to Hampton, Middlesex, an area in which he was to live for the rest of his life.

The son of boys' writer William Reginald Home-Gall, who poured out stories and serials for the Amalgamated Press and other publishers under his own name and that of "Reginald Wray", Willie attended Hampton Grammar School. Probably due to the influence of his father he was able to obtain a position as junior sub-editor on a group of papers at Fleetway House. His younger brother Edward Reginald joined him in 1914, where many years later, and like his father, he poured out stories for the Champion/Triumph group under the "Edwin Dale" and "Rupert Hall" pen-names. His output was almost as big as the fabulous Charles Hamilton.

The event of the Great War put paid to any promotion ambitions for Willie Home-Gall, as he served in the Royal Fusiliers right through the 1914-18 period. On his return, however, with numerous other staff a position had to be found for him. A ready one was in Willie Back's department, where as explained in my previous article he had been running the Libraries single-handed during the severe shortage of staff, and so Willie Home-Gall in 1919 saw himself as editor of what was to prove in later years one of the most popular publications in the world - The Sexton Blake Library.

Having the top writers of the day at his disposal, and indeed a job for life (like his successor) he found it rather hard going, and simply was not cut out to deal with stories of crime and mystery. Consequently he was in 1921 replaced, and demoted to a less important position, though he was at one stage to be in charge of The Boys' Friend.

He also wrote stories, but they were very few and far between, under the names of "Reginald Bollingbroke" and "Will Young" - he also penned some football yarns for Aldine Publishing Co. under the clever pun of his own name "Home-Goal". But somehow he lacked the inspiration and creative ability of his father and younger brother, being quite content to plug along holding minor editorial jobs, until probably his most important post which was editing the last few years of the Chums Annuals after they had been taken over from Cassells.

During World War Two he served in the R.A.F. when, on demobilisation, he found that, unlike after World War 1, there were now simply no boys' papers to come back to. They all had practically vanished due to the severe paper shortage. Picture strips were completely out of his range, so for a few years he edited the R.A.F.A. magazine "Air-Mail", then after this had ceased, turned his back completely on writing and editorial positions and went into engineering.

It was in the early sixties when I tried to contact him, as for a short period he was in charge of my favourite Sexton Blake paper, and I hoped that

some inside stories would be revealed. Most unfortunately, I was doomed to disappointment. His place of work was only five minutes from my home in St. Marylebone, where I found, not all that surprisingly that he was not an engineer at all, but held some very humble position indeed. I invited him to come round for a cup of tea or snack during his lunch hour, but he declined, saying he would much prefer to meet me in Woolworth's in Edgware Road! As I worked only round the corner from there as a carburettor engineer, I knew the place well. It was packed out with all the seats full from mid-day until mid-afternoon, as well as being the most unlikely place to hold any type of conversation, so I declined.

When I suggested visiting him at his home in Middlesex he declined, with the excuse that a 'relative' was ill, and that he really did not see any point in us meeting. So the whole idea of an interview just petered out.

Many years later, a colleague at work showed me an article about him in his local paper, where he seemed to have mellowed about his editorial posts and writing, but, as this did not reveal any more data than I already knew, I did not bother to try and contact him again.

Willie Bollingbroke Home-Gall died at Kingston-on-Thames. Surrey in early 1982 aged 88, having at least had the honour of being editor on one of the most popular boys' Libraries of all time.



HOW TO GET AWAY WITH HALF AN IMPOT!

by Ray Hopkins

Handforth Minor can't resist climbing up the ivy on the Ancient House wall in pursuit of a particularly large specimen of spider he says is "a real beauty". Not being as dedicated naturalists as their leader, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon deride Willy for making such a fuss about a spider but promise to call "Cave" if anyone appears in sight.

Unfortunately, in the excitement of watching Willy's big game hunt, they forgot to keep their eye on the corner of the building and so miss the sudden onset of Mr. Beverley Stokes. He orders Willy to descend at once. Willy, startled, jerks the ivy causing it to give way and festoon itself about the master who is knocked to the ground by the descending Third Former. After they extricate

themselves, Mr. Stokes awards Willy 200 lines to be delivered that evening.

But Willy only does 100, hoping Mr. Stokes, who will have regained his usual genial outlook by that time, won't notice. And Mr. Stokes doesn't. However, he does observe that Willy appears overjoyed about something, which makes him look through the lines more carefully. Willy pretends surprise and says he thought 100 was the required amount. The Housemaster orders Willy to do him another 100 as soon as possible. Willy sees him throw the first 100 into the wastepaper basket.

Outside the study, Willy has a sudden idea and waits at the end of the passage having decided to retrieve the first 100 and present them as the second 100 lines. Mr. Stokes leaves his study soon after and Willy, waiting until the coast is clear, snatches the first 100 and goes to leave the room.

But Mr. Stokes is on his way back to the study and not alone. Dr. Stafford is with him! Willy just has time to dive beneath a table in the corner which has a deep flap hanging down hiding the Third Former.

Later, when Willy hands Mr. Stokes that which he believes to be the second 100, the Housemaster checks to see there are a 100 lines and cautions Willy never to try to get out of an imposition again. After Handforth Minor leaves, Mr. Stokes tosses the impot into the watepaper basket and then has a sudden thought and rummages, naturally not finding another 100 lines.

Mr. Stokes can't help laughing at the way the Third Former has tricked him and decides to let Willy get away with it this time, but if it ever happens again....

(From NL OS 487, 4 Oct. 1924)

"A GREAT PARTNERSHIP"

by C.H. Churchill

Given the task of writing adventures of Nelson Lee and Nipper (pre St. Frank's) starting in No. 16 N.L.L. "Twenty Fathoms Deep" dated 29/5/15 E.S. Brooks made a superb job of it, or so I think. The slant he gave to the relationship of these two was most interesting. There was trust and affection on each side and on the part of Nipper also great respect for his "Guv'nor", although at times he became wild with him when Lee refused to confide his theories to him.

I could write reams about this relationship, quoting from endless Lees but I would require a book the size of the C.D. Annual or more to cover all the variations. I will just mention three of these as examples.

A playful episode between the two occurred in Lee No. 97 "The Manor House

Mystery" 14/4/17. While in Bristol during a heat wave the pair were lazing in deck chairs on the veranda of their hotel. Lee requested the lad to fetch cooling drinks and when Nipper refused Lee tapped the rear portion of Nipper's deck chair and the lad landed on the floor, to his disgust.

An opposite example took place in the autumn of 1921 during the Dr. Stafford's madness series. Owing to the Head's behaviour most of the boys turned against him, under the leadership of Armstrong and Tucker and styled themselves "Rebels". Nipper and his close friends however, were loyal to Dr. Stafford and decided to form a group called the "Loyalists". This was really instigated by Nelson Lee, who knew that a group of people were plotting to get rid of the Head and get their protegee installed as Headmaster, Mr. Hugh Trenton of course. Lee told Nipper much



"Guv'nor, it's a go!" I said keenly. "I'll do it!" And we shook hands on it.

of this and appealed to him to do everything he could to gain support for Dr. Stafford, whose ill natured actions were brought on by drugs administered in secret by Trenton. Nipper agreed to do all he could and they shook hands on it. This took place in N.L.L. No. 340 "Loyalists and Rebels" 10/12/21.

This little episode is well illustrated in the accompanying sketch which appeared on page 25 of that issue. I think it is the best drawing of our two favourites (appearing together) that was shewn in any N.L. Library.

Nipper's affection for his master is well illustrated in many stories. Especially so were the cases when Lee disappeared while investigating on his own. "The Mystery of Reed's Wharf" No. 226 dated 4/10/19 is a good example. When Lee went missing Nipper enlisted the aid of Sexton Blake and Tinker, being greatly worried and upset over Lee's prolonged absence. Further instances were recorded in several of the Circle of Terror stories when Lee fell victim of the notorious Professor Zingrave. In many of these cases Nipper was instrumental in Nelson Lee's rescue.

The above will probably give any reader of this reason to appreciate that E.S. Brooks developed the two characters in an excellent manner and built on that introduced by their creator, Maxwell Scott very successfully.



JEMIMA IN THREE PARTS !

BY MARGERY WOODS, TOMMY KEEN
AND ESMOND KADISH,



EDITOR'S NOTE: A Little while ago I received three articles about Jemima Carstairs in the same week, from three of our loyal and regular contributors. Fortunately, each article covered a different phase of "Jimmy's" life, so I have, as you will see, decided to publish each part as an instalment.

PART ONE:

HOW JEMIMA GOT HER MONOCLE?

by Margery Woods

The Schoolfriend Annuals, especially those of the years 1927-1930 and 1934-1935, contain lots of material, apart from the stories, of interest to anyone wishing to research Cliff House. Babs, Mabs, Bessie, Clara and Marjorie are well represented in the many vignettes by and about the girls, but there is not quite so much to be found on the subject of that very fascinating character Jemima Carstairs.

Perhaps this was editorial policy to ensure that she retained her enigmatic quality. However, in the 1929 Annual we are given an account of Jemima's Birthday Tea and a description of her: "Doesn't she look quite the Society hostess in that little wisp of a black velvet frock with the pink flowers and her sleek hair gleaming in rivalry to her shining monocle?" It is observed that everyone is excited except Jemima Herself. Someone muses: "I wonder if Jemima ever does feel all bubbly over anything. I doubt it".

Later at her party Jemima gives an exhibition Charleston while the girls provide an impromptu band. "Jemima certainly can dance, and wasn't even puffed afterwards". The tea itself is a positive banquet! Lobster, chicken, foie gras sandwiches, trifle, and lots of other creamy things. Apart from iced coffee, the nature of the liquid refreshments was kept a dark secret! Those Cliff House girls did themselves rather well, didn't they?

In the 1935 annual there is an article by Jemima herself, recounting her earliest experience. This took place while she was in her pram---a snappy new one with ball bearings in the wheels--when Jemima was three, or four, or perhaps seven months old, she

MEMORIES

by E. Rake

What memories the article by J.E.M. in the November issue of C.D. evoked in me! How well I remember the sixpenny Readers' Library series with their maroon covers, gilt lettering and attractive coloured dust covers - just as J.E.M. describes them. I bought them and I was also given them as presents.

They were excellent value but for one thing. In some of these books the pages were stitched and in others they were stuck in. You had to be careful you didn't open the latter books too wide otherwise the pages would pop out! Two titles in the series stand out in my memory - Black Beauty, by Anna Sewell and Call of the Wild, by Jack London. I still see the odd copy of Readers' Library in second-hand bookshops and markets here in Bristol.

In the January issue of C.D. D.V. Withers writes about Free Gifts in the old papers and wonders if other readers have memories of them. I can remember having some informative Booklets and glossy cards of sportsmen as free gifts from papers like The Rover, and Wizard, and Adventure, and Champion. I don't remember ever having any gifts from The Gem or The Magnet, but I know they did give them away.

One gift I still have over all these years was presented free by The Boys' Magazine. It is made of copper (I think) and was designed to be worn in the buttonhole. It bears the words "Boys Magazine League" and the head of an Indian.

* * * * *

FOR SALE. Magnets 1599, 1606, 1610, 1616, 1637, 1645, 1653, 1655, 1661, 1670, 1675, 1678, 1679, 1683, you pay the postage. OFFERS. Wanted Schoolgirl's Own Annuals 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1938. Schoolfriend Annuals 1929, 1930, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939. PAYNE, 69 High Street, Headcorn, Kent, TN27 9AQ.

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FOR SALE: 227 Sexton Blake novels between nos. 234 to 476 most in good condition. Offers. Purchaser to pay carriage. Firth, 13 Station Road, Retford, Notts. DN22 7DE.

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THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY CATALOGUE

A must for all collectors of this famous Library.

Lists not only both series of titles and authors, but contains the origins of the stories, as well as pin-pointing the original tales, also indicating famous characters such as Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee, Ferrers Locke, Ken King, Jack Sam, Pete and others. "OUGHT TO BE ON EVERYONE'S SHELVES" (Jack Adrian, C.D. review). Available only from: W.O.G. Lofts, 56 Sheringham House, Lisson Street, London, N.W.1 5NY. Price £4 post free, 80 pages.

No.1 of

BY
BOB WHITER

The

HOTSPUR



I well remember buying the first Hotspur. It was in September, 1933, and I was already a voracious reader of several of the boys' papers. When I saw No. 1 lying on the counter of the newsagent, I just had to have it! There it was, with the huge eagle swooping down on the airman, colourfully depicted in red, white and blue on the cover. Not only did it appear to contain some jolly good yarns, but the publishers, D.C. Thomson, were giving away with No. 1, a black mask. We had a lady, a Mrs. Escount, staying with us at the time when her small son saw me wearing the domino; of course he had to have one! My mother, bless her, gave me the necessary two-pence and sent me to purchase another Hotspur and mask for master Escount.

Let me see if I can remember some of the features that that first edition had to offer. In writing this from memory, so please bear with me. In common with the other four Dundee papers, the "Hotspur" had a comic strip entitled "Silas Snatcher the truant catcher". This strip incidentally was in accord with the stouids, they were all school orientated.

There was a story of an American boy, who is sent to a posh British School. I believe it had as title "The Kid from Colorado" - later on he was the subject of one of the covers. Held in place with a wall atlas, he was shown sleeping on the dormitory windowstill. The premise being he was so used to the wide open spaces, that to sleep in a room was too confining! Next on the list was "Buffalo Bill's Schooldays". This was bound to please me. From an early age, my father never tired of telling me about the celebrated plainsman. Part of my father's uncle's business was a corn exchange and when the great scout brought his Wild West Show to Britain, he got the contract to feed all the animals i.e. Horses, cattle and bison. My father was lucky enough to shake hands with Buffalo Bill and saw the show several times. Next we had "Son of Scarface". A gang of crooks whose leader had died, came to the college that the son attended. They expected him to be their new leader. "Traitor to the Team" was about a football team and one of the supporters, with the aid of gas, dopes the players, so that they aren't at their best when playing against other teams.

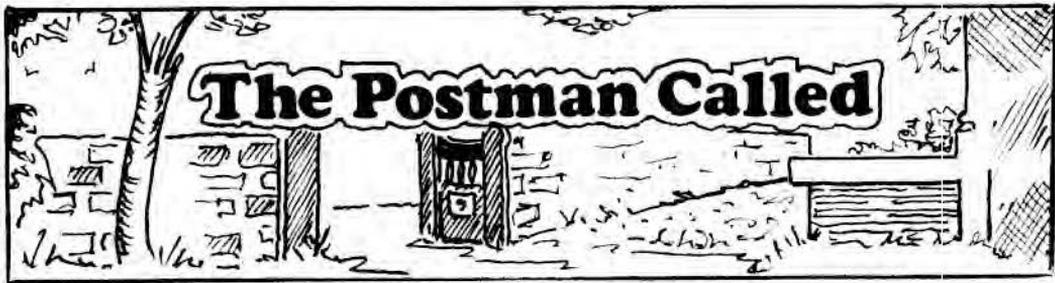
Another story introduced a character destined to become famous in the history of the paper. I am referring to Semptiminus Green - better known as "The Big

Stiff"! How I, along with most of my friends wished that we had him as our teacher!

Basically he was a schoolmaster with unorthodox methods of teaching. He had the knack of getting the best out of the most unruly boys. One picture showed him breaking up all the canes. At first he met with lots of opposition, but the proof of the pudding was in the eating and when the powers that be saw the result, it was soon a case of a horse of a different colour! If my memory serves me correctly he finished up as a school inspector. There were probably other stories, but the only others that stand out in my memory were without a doubt the most well known in the animals of the Hotspur. These were of course the Red Circle School stories. The title received its name from the red sandstone school buildings, that were situated in a circle around the quadrangle. In a rather novel form, these buildings housed boys from all over the world and were divided into regional houses. Thus we had the "Home House", which contained lads from the United Kingdom. It had as Captain Tubby Ryan. The Trans-Atlantic House (nicknamed the Tank House) Captain Cyries Judd, was inhabited with boys from the U.S.A. and Canada. Finally we had "Conk House", Captain Kit Delaney which housed boys from the British Empire (excepting of course Canada). The rivalry between these houses formed the basis of many of the plots. Another novel idea of the stories was that the boys did grow up and leave the school. One famous character Deadwidge Dick, who was a junior when the saga started, eventually became Captain of the school, before leaving to join the Royal Navy. One youngster, whose name escapes me, was in some ways like Fisher T. Fish, without the unpleasant traits. He was known as the business junior and referred to his study as his office!

There were some interesting masters, such as Mr. Wagstaff and Mr. Dixie Dean. But probably the most famous or (infamous?) was the unpopular Mr. Smug. Whilst none of these or any of the other Thomson stories possessed the literary merits of Charles Hamilton, they certainly had a different twist to them! I have a soft spot for the old Hotspur. It was the first publication to use art work from yours truly. D.C. Thomson held a competition to find fresh artists. John Jukes, good friend that he was, urged me to enter. I duly sent in the opening of a picture story about pirates. After a short time I had a letter from R.D. Low, the Art Editor asking me to call at their London Offices. I was shown into a room, around which were seated several men, who after bidding me to be seated asked me all sorts of questions. I had read most of their papers and started rattling off parts from the stories (I had a good memory in those days). This caused Mr. Low to remark - "If we don't employ you as an artist - I think we'll retain you as our reference library". The upshot was that they bought the Pirate story and a page I'd drawn entitled "All about the Cowboy's Kit". The sad part was I emigrated to the U.S.A. soon after and apart from a page of "Pistols Past and Present" in the Knockout Annual I didn't submit any more artwork. The Hotspur was first published on 2nd September, 1933 and ran for 1,197 issues ending on 17th October, 1959. It was suspended by the New Hotspur, a picture paper, until 9th February, 1963 when it again became just plain Hotspur.

* * * *



W.O.G. LOFTS (London): In reply to E. Holman's interesting article on Jack Drake, in The Story Paper No. 63 (1967) Roger Jenkins wrote a really first class article on the career of Jack Drake which was complex, to say the least, as Drake had three different types of personality during his career from The Benbow/Greyfriars to assistant to Ferrers Locke. When the powers that be decided to end the Herald Series, seemingly Charles Hamilton had a number in hand, when they were used up in Holiday Annuals (Drake being changed to Dick Rake on one occasion); there was confusion no doubt amongst readers at the time of Magnet and Holiday Annuals - especially when Dick Rodney dropped out completely from the Magnet. According to Frank Richards 'he had outlived his usefulness'. The St. Jim's story in Holiday Annual 1920 was, as far as I know, specially written and long before the confusion started, I actually have in my collection the whole series of stories - some never reprinted, and Frank Richards at his very best with powerful writing of Vernon-Smith's feud with Jack Drake when he first arrived at Greyfriars.

ALAN R. CAPON (Ontario): Recently I was reading Spycatcher, the book on M15 that I believe is banned in Britain. I was surprised to find a couple of references to a M15 agent called Harry Wharton. Now we know where he ended up!

LEN WORMULL (Romford): D.V. Wither's discovery of free gifts in the loft brought to mind a collecting experience. Some years ago I bought from an antique dealer a large collection of Boys' Friend Weekly. Many were from around the turn of the century, among the stories being Nipper's early days at St. Ninian's. Of especial interest to me, and my reason for buying, was a long run of Rookwood tales. Imagine my surprise to find copies containing free gift booklets, as new as the day they were issued. The books, I was told, had been taken from a loft in a house clearance.

Easily the best free gifts I ever received were given away

comprising 28 booklets. I have a complete list of the titles (but no longer the goods, alas), the following being those of the first set: Modern Marvels, Conjuring, Railways of the World, Wild Animals, Outdoor Secrets, Bunkum Book, Flying, Grins and Groans, Ships, Traps and Teasers, Motor Cars, Limericks.

Going through papers in the British Library, I often came across free gifts. Mostly of the sticker kind.

R.E. SWIFT (WIRRAL): As a schoolboy, growing up in the 20s and 30s, and being an avid reader of comics and Boys Papers, be them Thomsons or Fleetway publications, I was aware of two main things to be thankful for. The first was the fact that they helped my spelling, increased my knowledge of the meaning of words, and the second was the appreciation of the power of descriptive passages in the stories. When Frank Richards/Charles Hamilton, wrote of an English Summer's Day. You could hear the Bees Buzzing, you could see the dusty roads, the cool woods, and you could practically nod off in the classroom as Quelch droned on and the sun streamed through the windows'

Winter was just as enjoyable. The snow was cold, deep, and you could join in the snowballing of Coker with the same gusto as did the Famous Five. You felt the rain, the heat, the joy and despair that flowed from the pens of the writers, there at the scene of the action. I have always been thankful, and mindful of the fact that I was a boy who grew up in the golden age of Boys' Fiction. Be it the Magnet, Gem, Rover, Skipper, Hotspur or many others, in all these papers, good always triumphed, gallantry had its own reward, and fair play was a jewel. I was taught these things at school and home, and Boys' Fiction confirmed and consolidated these beliefs. The writers were gifted, and my generation at least, is beholden.

* * * * *

WANTED: Pre 1965 comics and annuals e.g. Beano, Eagle, Knockout, Sparkler Comet. 2nd series SBL's, Thrillers. Children's badges, card games, toys of characters e.g. William, Biggles, Dan Dare etc. Original artwork from comics/papers i.e. Shields, Chapman, Valda etc. Good Price paid. Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD1 4JL.

* * * * *

WANTED TO PURCHASE: Biggles, Bunter, William, Brent-Dyer hardbacks. Howard Baker volumes. Comics Annuals: Tiger Tim, Rainbow, Film Fun, Radio Fun, Knock-out, Champion, Wizard, Rover, Adventure, Hotspur, Magnet, G.H.A.'s, S.O.L.s, Beano, Dandy. Some duplicates for Sale. Please state titles wanted. Contact: Colin Crewe, 12B Westwood Road, Canvey Island, Essex. Tel. 0268 693735 after 7.30 p.m.

LETTERS FROM THE GREYFRIARS ARCHIVES (II)

Selected by Les Rowley

From The Hon. Secretary, The Courtfield & Friardale Discussion Group to Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout.

Dear Mr. Prout,

Thank you for your recent letter in which you request payment of a fee for the talk you gave last month.

Our usual practice is to take up a collection at the close of a meeting and, from such funds, pay a nominal sum to the guest speaker. On this occasion it was impossible to follow this procedure as most of the audience left during the first hour. It is true that two gentlemen did remain until the close but, as both had slept during the major portion of your talk, it seemed unfair to approach them for a contribution.

Although no funds are available for paying a fee on this occasion I am sure that you will feel rewarded by the interest aroused by your discourse on hunting and shooting in the Rockies.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours & Co.

I. Boreham (Hon. Sec.)

Mr. Joey Banks c/o. The Three Fishers Inn, Friardale to an Unknown Addressee.

You Young Rip,

Think I don't know your game? You owes me fair and square ten quid which you placed on Gay Goldfish in the 3.15 at Lantham last Saturday since when I got not a word from you about settling.

Well, no one welshes on Joey Banks as you'll soon find out. You'd better be at the Prior's Oak on Saturday at three - with the cash - or else your schoolmaster will be the next one to hear from

Joey Banks

(N.B: this document was annotated by a more scholarly hand, see below)

Wingate: This note was found by Mr. Prout in the neighbourhood of the Fifth Form passage. I very much desire to learn for whom it was intended, so kindly enlist the help of Loder, Carne and Walker in making enquiries.

H.L. (Headmaster)

From Cecil Ponsonby Esq., Highcliffe School, Courtfield to Mr. Harold Skinner.

Dear Skinner,

Gaddy, Monson and I intend having a little game in the study tomorrow afternoon after tea, and wondered if you would care to join us. Stakes will start at two bob a trick but the sky's the limit thereafter. You can let me know by ringing Mobby's number (it gives him quite a kick to think his phone is used by the nephew of a Marquess).

Expecting to hear from you,
PON

From Mr. Harold Skinner to Cecil Ponsonby, Esq., Highcliffe School, Courtfield.

You Benighted Idiot,

Quelchy caught me reading your note in class and I had to give it to him. Thanks to you, I've had a record licking, have been given a book, and am detained for the rest of the halfers this term. I hope you lose every penny you've got at your measly game.

Yours & c.
H. SKINNER

* * * * *

FOR SALE: COLLECTORS DIGEST Numbers 64 (APRIL 1952) to number 405 (JANUARY 1981) 314 copies in all. Complete run except for 27 copies.

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031 669 1290 EVENINGS/WEEKENDS.

SALE: Nos. 13 and 30 Greyfriars Book Club, Mint condition. Half Price. £8.00 each. J. Thompson, 122 Chapelhill Road, Moreton, Wirral. Tel. 051 678 4484.



SOUTH WESTERN CLUB

Next meeting of S.W. Club is on 17th April. Ring T. Salisbury, Weston-Super-Mare 26032 for details.

MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

Ten members attended our cheerful and enjoyable first meeting of the New Year in January. There was an apology for absence from Tom Porter our absent Chairman, and Geoff Lardner took over as acting Chairman. He had a letter from Bill Lofts saying that he had heard that some of the hardback Bunter books published soon after the Second World War were fetching £30 each!

The eatables were provided by Betty Hopton, Christine Brettell and Joan Golen, and Ivan Webster provided tea and coffee. The rest of the evening was taken up by games and quizzes. Geoff Lardner introduced a successful and entirely new game based on the idea of Crosswords. One of our favourite games was a version of Greyfriars Bingo, invented by Tom Porter, who made the set. Very great credit goes to Christine Brettell who produced a new set for us, which undoubtedly took up hours of her time. We really enjoyed playing our old favourite.

Your correspondent introduced a more general quiz of 15 questions, with Christine being the winner.

As this was the first meeting in 1988 we were fairly pleased with a double-figure attendance and hope it will continue. Best wishes to all O.B.B.C. enthusiasts everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

We held our February 1988 meeting at the new home of Bill Thurbon in the City. Bill presented a paper on the history of scouting, mentioning the movement's military origins with Lt. General Baden-Powell in the early years of this century, Scouting publications and the vast number of stories that were based on its practice - observation and deduction - in our story-paper literature. BP's 1908 arrangements with Pearsons Publishing were seminal as regards growth, and some of the difficulties he encountered with the fledgeling boys — only movement were discussed. Members talked about the long-term effects that scouts (Guides), Wolf Cubs (and Brownies) (and now for the real youngsters, the Beavers) had upon them.

Bill Lofts then gave us an extract of his "Publicity or No Publicity" talk - an analysis of the good and not-so-good effects of this upon our hobby. Publicity in the media is so often accompanied by a price rise and an influx of investors who are usually not-really-that-interested. A lively discussion followed Bill's talk.

A.B. PERKINS

LONDON OBBC

Twenty-one members were welcomed, by our new Chairman Phil Griffiths, to the meeting at the Horticultural Hall, Chingford on St. Valentine's Day, when we recalled that this was not only the 80th anniversary of the Magnet but the 40th anniversary of the London Club itself. Brian Doyle conducted us on a brief commemorative visit to the past and led us in our thanks to those pioneers of our Club. Norman Wright read out a letter from Eric Fayne dealing with his award of the Cross of St. George from the publishers of "This England", and all applauded Eric's award.

Treasurer's Report, and those of the three Librarians having been given, we settled down to hear Don Webster's choice of books for a Desert Island sojourn. An enthralling reading from Gem Nos. 84/5 on the expulsion of George Gore was given by Graham Bruton and was followed by a Quiz on lesser known characters and schools by Mark Taha. Bill Bradford read Newsletter No. 214 of September 1970. Norman Wright dwelt on the famous Greyfriars Hiking series - a talk which promoted much spirited discussion.

The meeting closed with expressions of our hearty appreciation

for our kind hosts, Tony and Audrey Potts and their friends we enjoyed, not only the use of a very fine hall, but a truly lovely tea.

Next meeting is on Sunday, 13th March, 1988, at 342 Hoe Street, Walthamstow. Tea will be provided but please bring your own food.

LESLIE ROWLEY

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

We had a good attendance of sixteen at our February Meeting. It was good to see Geraldine and John Lamb back with us all the way from Macclesfield: John had recently spent some time in hospital but we were all pleased that he was now fully recovered.

William Hirst had started to catalogue our Club Library - an onerous task, as it is so large - and showed us the results of his placing all numbers of the library's Magnets on his home computer; a splendid printout had been prepared. Eventually, a full listing of all papers and books in our library will be to hand.

Our presentation for the evening, was the item entitled "Book Preservation". Mr. Mike Parsons of Northern Library Services, had come along to give us the benefit of his knowledge of book and document preservation: something we should be all concerned about if we are keen to preserve the literature of today and yesterday for future generations. Mike's talk was professionally delivered, with plenty of humour too. It became obvious that, although we all thought we were making our little contribution to preserve our papers and books to the best of our ability, it was just not enough and, indeed, we were in some cases, actually accelerating their demise. It certainly was an alarming revelation. After refreshments, it had been planned that Paul Galvin present his item on "The Modern Boy", but at his kind suggestion, he stood down to enable our speaker to continue his talk, and enabling our members to ask questions and seek professional advice. A most interesting and essential meeting on a subject that perhaps other clubs might think about very seriously, for Mike Parsons is the ideal person to have along.

Next meeting: 12th March, when we are delighted to welcome Mary Cadogan. We meet at 1.00 p.m. at "The White Horse" in Wakefield for lunch with Mary, then adjourn to the library and home of our Secretary. Our evening meeting is at the normal venue: S.P.C.K. Bookshop/Cafe, Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds 1. Please feel free to join us for lunch and/or the meeting. We should be delighted to welcome you. Arrangements for a get-together and lunch on the Sunday will be announced at the Saturday meeting.

JOHNNY BULL, MINOR

"LAUGHTER AND THRILLS" Number one - "Sparkler" 20th Oct. 1939
5th Aug. 1939. by Norman Wright.

The first requirement for a successful publication is an eye-catching cover. However boring or exciting the inside pages may turn out to be it is the cover that catches the eye and tempts the reader to peep inside. The representative selection of "Sparkler's" in my collection certainly hold their own when spread out with other comics of a similar vintage. As a child I would not have been tempted by the drab covers of "Chips" and its like. As an adult I find the tinted paper used for such comics quite off-putting. "Sparkler" on the other hand begs to be picked up and perused. Its full colour covers, usually bubbling with humour and brimming over with characters, are irresistible. A large number of the comic's cover strips were the work of Roy Wilson, the Amalgamated Press's maestro of the humorous comic strip. His earliest "Sparkler" covers featured "The Ups and Downs of Tuffy and Tim". This was followed by "Captain Skittle and Bossy the Bos'n", "Jolly Roger and Captain Daring" and "Muffin and Crumpet", the last mentioned being a highly inventive strip relating the misadventures of a pair of crackpot clowns. As with all of Wilson's work it was full of characters and side plots all beautifully executed with superb layout and composition. My favourite Wilson cover character was "Robin Hood". All the familiar characters were there, and as always the sheriff came off worse in all of his encounters with the hilarious heroes.

Internally the contents of "Sparkler" were similar to those of most of its Amalgamated Press contemporaries, a mix of picture stories, comic strips and the obligatory twelve pages of text stories.

"Without A Name" was a sober serial concerning two waifs in search of their true parents, the organ grinder who had brought them up having died as he was about to reveal their true parentage! Each week some unknown hand strove to prevent them attaining their desired goal.

It is surprising just how often such Dickensian plots turned up in the comics. The "Lost Heir" theme had been played for all it was worth in boys' papers of the Edwardian age, but it was the comics that were mainly responsible for carrying in on into the 1930's. Other stories in "Sparkler" included "Val the Winged Detective", (one of a whole host of young detectives with some special skill) "Hal of the Forest", "Zip Conway Boy Detective",

and "Dick O'the Dock", another waif in search of home. The "Adventure Boys", a story that appeared towards the end of the paper's run, had spot illustrations drawn by H.M. Brock, one of the famous family of Cambridge illustrators. Brock drew a school picture story for the comic in 1937 entitled "Mystery of Study 13". (Brock's comic strip work for the Amalgamated Press will be featured in a future article in the series.) Another exciting school picture story, "The Secret of Starcliff", was drawn by C.H. Chapman. The characters looked very like Greyfriars boys and the plot was decidedly Hamiltonian in flavour, concerning as it did a night-prowling master.

One of the longest running picture strips in the comic was "Strongheart", a 'Rin Tin Tin' inspired wonder dog. Though not the regular artist, H.M. Brock contributed a few episodes.

An artist whose work appeared regularly in the comic was the prolific Stephen Chapman, an illustrator who contributed to dozens of papers throughout his long life. Even if the name is not familiar to collectors I am sure that his style would be familiar to most. For "Sparkler" he drew several adventure strips as well as many spot illustrations.

The comics back cover often carried an historical adventure strip. One of the earliest was an interesting oddity entitled "Beric The Briton", possibly based on Henty's novel of the same name. One of the last adventure strips to grace the back page was an awful foreign reprint of a Robin Hood Adventure.

The last issue of "Sparkler" appeared in August 1939; after that it was incorporated into "Crackers". The only survivor of the merger was "Strongheart", which only goes to show what a wonder dog he was!

* * * * *

SALE:

Nelson Lee Library. O/S. 200 copies. 1st N/S numbers 51 to 194. 2nd N/S number 1 to 101. Various odd numbers. B.F.L. S.O.L. Few other duplicate O.B.B.s H.B. Magnet volumes. Early O.O.P. copies. Offers, or would exchange for pre-war Sexton Blake Papers, Thomson Publications.

Further Details (stamp appreciated):-

KEN TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE6 6EA.

Telephone: Burton-on-Trent 703305.

SPARKLER IS THE SATURDAY TREAT

The SECRET OF STARCLIFF



Roy, Meg, and Roley are boys at Starcliff School. A mystery surrounds Mr. Farrow, a new master, whom the boys saw acting suspiciously one night on the cliffs. The next morning a message is thrown into the Form-room.



THROUGH the window of the Form-room had crashed a stone wrapped in a sheet of paper. Mr. Farrow, the mysterious new master at Starcliff, had read the words on the paper, and he had showed signs of alarm and dismay. But quickly he recovered himself.



2. He made a dash for the window, and Roley and some of the other boys also stared out. They were just in time to see the figure of a man running away. "Shall we go out and catch him, sir?" asked Roy. "No!" snapped Mr. Farrow. "I'll attend to that."

DOMESTIC GLIMPSES

BY E. Baldock

Henry Samuel Quelch M.A. A doyen among masters. A virtuoso of the sharp and acid phrase, the gimlet eye, the sinewy and flexible wrist, the impeccably applied 'cut' with the ash. How would Greyfriars fare without him? It would surely be a greyer and less exciting place. Can one imagine Dr. Locke minus his vigourous - though ancient - right hand man? Is he not the real power behind the throne? Consulted (and his judgements carefully weighed) always by his venerable chief on the multiplicity of problems which naturally beset the steering of a great public school through the snags and shallows which are the lot of every large institution.

It would be difficult to compute the number of "six's" handed out by the remove master during the course of his long career in charge of that lively form. Indeed to narrow the field considerably it would be interesting to learn just how many "whacks" have raised the dust from the tight trousers of William George Bunter. It may be safely assumed that he would lead the field as the principal "whackee" and would therefore be the best authority to vouch for the expertise and accuracy of the ash wielded by an expert in this particular sphere.

Visualize Mr. Quelch in his extremely rare leisure moments engaged over the chess-board with the Friardale vicar with whom he has had for many years past a weekly engagement. These tussles over the chess-board accompanied by a glass of vintage port and equally (no doubt) vintage conversation constitute one of the very rare outside social activities he allows himself. Or again, possibly closer to his heart, incarcerated in his study deeply immersed in research among obscure and yellowing old parchments preparing the ground for his one great love, his magnum opus - the History of Greyfriars. Here one may catch a glimpse of Mr. Quelch in his ultimate element, for a brief period away from the Remove fellows. Blissful moments these, when the very existence of Billy Bunter, together with all his fatuities, cease to exist; when the sporadic warfare of daily life in the formroom is distanced to the point of making it appear mellow and - almost - acceptable.

Upon other occasions, again not infrequently, it is pleasant to observe the remove master and Dr. Locke seated on either side of a cheerful fire in the Head's private sitting room, discussing in quite an animated manner, some knotty and certainly obscure passage in Virgil or Suetonius, the outcome of which, although probably contributing nothing to the great sum of contemporary thought, gives them endless pleasure, and deepens even further their bond of mutual interest and friendship. Perhaps the small side table holding a decanter, a water carafe and glasses may be said to help along the maturing process. Close by, quite unobtrusive, Mrs. Locke will be seated, engaged in some genteel domestic task, quite contented and happy to see the venerable doctor and his longtime friend deepening their companionship - and possibly the already extensive knowledge possessed by both gentlemen. For the immediate moment, all is well.

Thus the quiet and uneventful life of Mr. Quelch epitomises in no small way the timeless quality of existence at Greyfriars. Over the years change has been slow and always minute. Small gestures to the passing years may be detected in the continuing story. Regarding material comfort, one observes that the creaky

basket-chair of the pre-twenties has given place to a well upholstered and comfortable armchair in his study, and gas illumination has been replaced by electricity. No longer does Mr. Quelch carry a green shaded oil lamp on his occasional nocturnal visits to the Remove dormitory. In such small degrees has Greyfriars been (we suspect reluctantly) "up-dated". Basically - and happily - it remains the same grand old school of our boyhood memories. Tempori parendum declaim the pundits - but does this apply to Mr. Quelch - does it apply to Greyfriars?

HAPPY DAYS



Sexton Blake



Billy Bunter



Mr. Quelch



Harry Wharton



Tom Merry



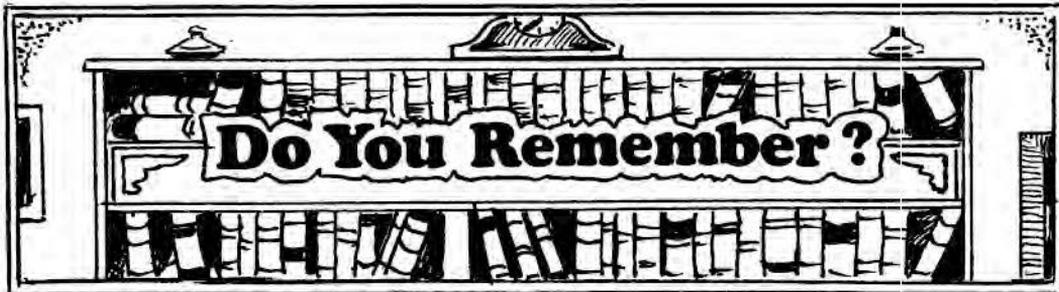
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy



Charles Hamilton

Old Boys remain
Young Boys through
the pages of their books.

Les. M. Gee.



No. 227 - Magnets 1092-1107 - Hollywood Series

by Roger M. Jenkins

Charles Hamilton never wrote a Magnet series longer than the Hollywood series of 1929, which celebrated the Magnet's twenty-first birthday in fine style. Perfection Pictures had announced that they were going to produce a talking film about the English Public School, but to their complete surprise no English Headmaster took up the offer on behalf of his pupils. Accordingly, Mr. Fish arrived in the quad by aeroplane direct from New York and in an amusing conversation with Dr. Locke, who misunderstood some of the American idioms, offered to take a number of Greyfriars boys on an educational visit to America, all expenses paid. He omitted to state that he was a Director of Perfection Pictures, a fact which Billy Bunter happened to discover, and this enabled him to blackmail his way on to the trip.

As with all the holiday trips in the Magnet, the journey out was related in some detail, whereas the return trip was never dealt with at all. So on the way to Hollywood there were incidents in London, on board ship, and in the cities of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, as well as many adventures on the trains. It is possible to trace an item of knowledge derived from "Martin Chuzzlewit" when we were told of the habit of many Americans of giving themselves fictitious military titles, like Colonel Coot who ran the Hollywood boarding house, but the events of the series were all up to date for the late 1920's, with kidnapping, speakeasies, armed bandits, and organised beatings-up. Charles Hamilton's views on the Americans kept coming through, and one of the best was Bunter's unconscious irony when he stated that he wanted to see the Statue of Liberty and the New York slave market.

Apart from Bunter and the Famous Five, the two who played the greatest roles in the series were Coker and Lord Mauleverer. Vernon-Smith was featured in connection with a confidence trickster, but the other two came into prominence again and again. Mauleverer did a good turn to a Spanish American and that was a case of casting one's bread upon the waters, whilst Coker's masterpiece was to black the eye of Myron Polk, the spoilt young man that played Sheik parts on the films. Myron Polk's anger turned later towards Mauleverer and finally in the direction of Wharton, who made two dangerous rides on horseback dressed as a sheik - a stand-in for Myron Polk who jibbed at the danger, though to be

fair it was always acknowledged that he was a skilful actor.

Despite the strange setting, the Hollywood series never became a mere adventure story which overwhelmed the individual characteristics of the boys themselves. So Coker continued to be overbearing and generally mistaken, Mauleverer fell in love with a film star, and Bunter was as full as greed and trickery as ever, even managing to break into the films himself by a mixture of deceit and blackmail. But the main element was the enmity of Polk for Wharton which was aggravated by the actions of third parties that neither knew about. This became the main theme of the later numbers in the series, and there was a splendid climax at the very end. Long though the series was, it never outstayed its welcome: there were no dull moments, there was plenty of convincing background, and a masterly development of plot once they reached Los Angeles. Even today, it is possible to feel that this must have been the authentic atmosphere of Hollywood in 1929. Charles Hamilton might never have crossed the Atlantic, but he must have possessed some reliable source material, as well as a vivid imagination, and in this series his touch never failed him at all.

A LONG TIME AGO IN A WORLD SO FAR AWAY

by Jim Cook

When the Ancient Greeks wanted to drive away pain and sorrow they prescribed a portion of Nepenthe. There is a better method... a visit to Norman Shaw, to browse among his thousands of books and papers that drive away the pains and cares of today.

I glanced at some Nelson Lees I hadn't seen for some seventy years, and the quaint cover illustrations evoked memories that had lain dormant all that time. It is a measure of the attraction these grand old stories once held for us that the sight of them again arouses that interest and love.

A short time ago I wandered through the rooms at the BRITISH MUSEUM, and saw relics that were no doubt of great interest to those people who make a study of such things; but their ancient history could not attract my attention as did those old yarns at Norman Shaw's, for our school and adventure tales were in our life time and we can associate the time of publication with them.

There is a feeling of timeless wonder as you enter Mr. Shaw's treasure-house. Even if your taste is for only a section of our hobby, you cannot fail to admire the papers and books you were familiar with, so long ago when they adorned the shops where the papers were sold.

I suppose the remarkable thing is that readers cherished the papers so much that we are still able today to obtain them... for which many thanks to those old chums.

Norman showed me some parcels he had made up for sending overseas. Quite large parcels too. It would be interesting to know just who reads our old papers around the world, for it is common knowledge that some such folk to remain anonymous. I have often wondered just why, for it is no shame to be seen reading wholesome literature that has withstood the test of time and is a reminder that once, long ago, we were able to purchase decent reading with pocket money we didn't mind parting with.

Make no mistake, you will never see the like of those old papers and books

published again in our life-time. The genre isn't for this age. And the pity is we cannot turn the clock back... although the clock will stop as you browse through Norman Shaw's collections.

Thank you Mr. Shaw... I really enjoyed my two visits to your house during my visit to London.

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