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PAPER

COLLECTORS DIGEST

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59^P



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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BETWEEN OURSELVES



EASTER GREETINGS TO ALL C.D. READERS

I join with Weary Willie and Tired Tim in Henry Webb's engaging cover for this issue of the C.D., and send you all warmest wishes for Easter, and the Spring days which we hope now to have. This season didn't always receive the attention it deserved in our story-papers, although the comics used to give us plenty of celebrations with chocolate eggs of all sizes being featured in the picture-strips and stories. It would be interesting to hear from readers of any favourite stories on Easter themes.

EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF "THE SCOUT"

You will see that this month we are marking the eightieth anniversary of "The Scout" with an article on this paper by Bill Thurbon, a member of the Cambridge Club and a mine of knowledge

about scouting. It is interesting to reflect on the resilience of the great movement founded by Baden Powell, and of its continuing interest in today's society. Another fact which intrigues me is how important the year 1908 was for juvenile literature; it saw the publication, amongst other books and papers, of Baden Powell's "Scouting for Boys"; of "The Scout"; "The Magnet"; L.M. Montgomery's "Anne of Green Gables" and Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows". Surely there must have been some spirit in the air then which was extremely sympathetic towards children and young people!

Scouting and guiding, of course, were to provide lively and attractive themes for several of the story-papers as well as the official publications of the movement. My own favourite story in this connection is the 1909 "Gem" which featured a tale called The Boy Scout's Rivals, in which Cousin Ethel had joined the then unrecognized Girl Scouts (despite D'Arcy's fears that these were equatable with the Suffragettes in their militant moods). Ethel looks very fetching in the illustrations, wearing a "wideawake" hat and carrying one of those very long staves which were all-purpose tools and gadgets for the early scouts and guides. Readers may remember that she challenges the St. Jim's juniors to a scouting contest with the girls of her Curlew Patrol, and Gussy, who at first thinks the idea of "Gal Scouts" is "Wathah howwid" is soon converted to enthusiastic appreciation of them.

Although I greatly enjoyed reading Girl Guide stories, I have to admit that I never joined either the Brownies or the Guides, preferring to spend my few pennies a week pocket money on tap-dancing lessons, and, of course, on comics and story-papers!

As always, I have to thank you all for continuing to send me lots of lovely, interesting letters, and to say how sorry I am not to be able to answer them all. Your ideas and comments are always welcome, as I'm sure you know.

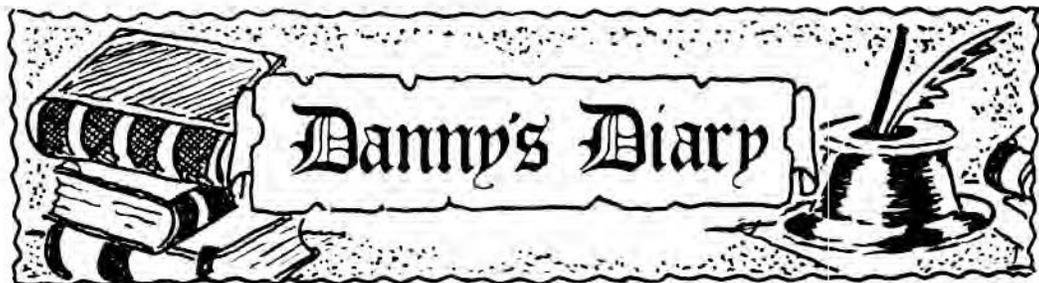
Happy Browsing!

MARY CADOGAN

PHYLLIS GODSAVE - A TRIBUTE

We have just received the news of the passing of Phyllis Godsava of Leytonstone, the widow of Reuben. (Reuben of course was a member of the London O.B.B.C., a great enthusiast of the "Nelson Lee" and a regular contributor to the C.D.) On very many occasions Phyllis was hostess to the London Club, and the pleasure of those meetings, with generous refreshments taken in Reuben's and Phyllis's lovely, large garden, will long be remembered. After

Reuben's death a few years ago, Phyllis kindly continued for some time to host our club meetings, and she always remained a loyal supporter of the C.D. She will be much missed, and we send our deepest sympathy to her family.



April 1938

A good month - really exciting - in the Schoolboys' Own Library; a nice month in the Sexton Blake Library; but not so cheerful in the Boys' Friend Library of which I was only moved to buy one this April.

A magnificent Greyfriars tale in the S.O.L. - "The Downfall of Harry Wharton". Tales starring Wharton are always tip-top, but this one is really exceptional. Harry Wharton and the prefect Loder are old enemies, but this time Loder manages to contrive matters so that Harry is on bad terms with his form-master, Mr. Quelch. A dream of an opening story that I expect will go on in the S.O.L. for some months to come. The St. Jim's S.O.L. is "The Mystery of Holly Lodge" and it is a truly excellent tale. Tom Merry and his chums go to spend the Easter vac. at Holly Lodge where Lowther's uncle has mysteriously disappeared. Then, to add to the mystery, Monty himself vanishes into thin air. Tom Merry and Manners are baffled until Arthur Augustus comes on the scene - and then the sparks fly. Great! The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "The Crook School-master". This carries on the strange tale of cunning Mr. Foxe, the College House master. He meets his match in Nelson Lee. Good stuff!

The one B.F.L. I had this month was "The League of Bullies" which is the second story about the twins who changed places and went to each other's schools. Last month it was the story of the decent twin. This month the rotter is at his brother's school.

In the S.B.L. I had "The Riddle of Big Ben" by Anthony Parsons. A man disappears, and the only clue is his hat which is found stuck on pinnacle of Big Ben. Interesting tale. I also bought "The Case of the Murdered Postman" by Rex Hardinge, a tale set in England and in South West Africa. Very readable.

This is the 90th year of the University Boat Race, and this year Oxford beat Cambridge.

Modern Boy has taken on something of a new lease of life with the return of King of the Islands. It is all about a search for pearls on the long deserted island of Kohu. Ken King has taken aboard a waif named Peter, which is all they

know about him, and he seems to have the secret of the hidden pearls. Captain Van Duck, of the boat Sunda, is a Dutchman who is also after the pearls. This month's stories are entitled "Boy Without a Name", "Bully of the Sunda", "Ken King Hits Back", "Fire Ship", "Van Duck's Vengeance". Lovely adventure stuff.

The Captain Justice series about the amazing invention of the Pirate Globe from outer space has gone on all through the month - it's a very long series. April's Justice tales have been "Captives of the Colossus", "Flasnagel's Secret City", "Pirate Globes Raid Paris", "Battle of the Sound Waves", and "Pirates of the Planet".

A truly marvellous month in the local flicker palaces, which is what Dad calls our cinemas. A great film is "It's Love, I'm After", starring Bette Davis and Leslie Howard, who play two much loved stage stars who quarrel like mad in private. A great, great film is "The Life of Emile Zola". This is a true story about the author, Zola, who intervened in the case of Dreyfus who was unjustly condemned to Devil's Island. And George Formby was at the top of his form in "Keep Fit". I laughed my head off. A bit third-rate was "Ever Since Eve" starring Marion Davies and Robert Montgomery, about a man who falls in love with a pretty girl, not knowing that she is his own plain secretary in disguise. A bit daft, this one.

Towards the end of the month we saw "The Firefly". I enjoyed it - and Doug says it is "sooperb"! The star is Jeannette Macdonald who plays a Spanish senorita who is a spy in the Napoleonic war. A nice story and some lovely songs, especially from Allan Jones who sings a delicious song called "The Donkey Serenade". Quite unforgettable. Finally a fairish British musical, "The Sky's the Limit" starring Jack Buchanan.

The first week of the month in the mighty Magnet has brought the end of the Carter series. Carter has been trying for ages to disgrace Billy Bunter who is his rival to inherit the moneybags of their uncle Joe Carter. This last tale is "Good-bye, Greyfriars"! It is Carter who says Good-bye. He is expelled, and at the finish Bunter boasts that he, Bunter, will be inheriting oodles of money. I have enjoyed each story in this series, yet the plot has really never got anywhere and it has gone on for too long.

And now Harry Wharton & Co. are ready for the Easter holidays - in Texas. Seems a long way to go for Easter. Mr. Vernon-Smith owns a ranch out on the rolling prairies of Texas, and the Bounder invites Wharton & Co. to go there with him for the vac. They evidently have longer Easter hols than I get at my school. Bunter, of course, wangles his way into the party. But Two-Gun Sanders tries to stop the trip. In New York the Bounder is handed a letter with a last warning: "You won't get further than New York. So hit that steamer home". The opening tale is "Bound for the Wild West". Then comes "On the Texas Trail" with bandits holding up the train. Next, "Harry Wharton & Co. in Texas". Two-Gun Sanders is determined to stop the party from reaching the Kicking Cayuse Ranch. But luckily the Bounder has become an expert with a six-gun and a lariat.

To wind up the month came "The Schoolboy Range-Riders", and we reach the ranch and its foreman, Barney Stone, plus Mexican Joe, and an Indian named Running Water who saves the Bounder from a nasty finish in a quicksand. The series goes on next month. I think I'd rather have a series set in the school, but I'm quite enjoying the trip to Texas.



The Greyfriars juniors were bound securely, and then a lariat was run from one bronco to another securing the party in a string to the foreman of the ranch!

My Dad has bought me a new bike, and I am very proud of it. It is a Hercules, and it cost £4-17s-6d. It goes like a dream.

At the end of the month I bought another Boys' Friend Library. It is "The Cruise of the Condor" by Capt. W.E. Johns. It is a Biggles story, set mainly in Brazil. Pretty good, though I prefer school stores.

A nice lot of single tales in the Gem this month. The opening tale is "The Boy from South Africa". He is named Sidney Clive. Sefton, the prefect, plays a big part in the tale, and, at the end, Sefton is expelled from St. Jim's. A good tale, but why yet another new boy? Next came "Levison's Revenge". To get his own back on Mr. Ratcliff Levison puts a rude limerick about the House-master in Tom Merry's Weekly. Lots of good fun in this tale. Then "They Thought He was a Rotter". The chums discover that Gussy has sent £1 to Mr. Banks and is going to see him about a horse. Great fun. Of course, it turned out to be not Banks, the bookmaker, but Banks, an old soldier fallen on hard times. Gussy helps him with a bit of money, and, through Lord Eastwood, provides a horse so that the old soldier can go round with a horse and cart.

Next "The Price of Silence". St. Leger of the Fifth is caught gambling by Major Stringer, a governor of the school. St. Leger arranges a fake alibi with Trimble - and then finds himself under Trimble's thumb. Last tale is "The Schoolboy Band-Conductor". He is Herries, who starts a school band. Billy Bunter of Greyfriars comes into this one.

At the back of the Gem the old Greyfriars stories are fascinating. One

of them this month is "The Remove Welcome". A new girls' school is being opened near Greyfriars. It is named Cliff House, and the lady in charge of it is a Miss Penelope Primrose. One of the girls at the new school is Marjorie Hazeldene, whom some of the boys know. So Harry Wharton and his friends arrange a nice a little welcome for Miss Primrose and her girls. One of those girls is Clara Trevlyn, who is a tomboy.

In the next tale, which is entitled, "The Remove Goes Gay", Miss Primrose shows her appreciation by arranging a dance at Cliff House to which the Greyfriars boys are invited.

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

S.O.L. No. 331 "The Downfall of Harry Wharton " was the opening spasm of the second Wharton the Rebel series. This S.O.L. comprised the first 2½ stories of the 12-story series from the Magnet of late autumn, 1932. In a competition which we ran in C.D. long, long years ago this 2nd Rebel series was voted the most popular Greyfriars series of all time. It was, of course, a re-run of the theme which had been used in the 1st Rebel Series of 1924-25. Which was the better of the two series, for both were magnificent? We discussed the two series in a Let's Be Controversial article long ago.

The 2nd series was the most popular without any doubt. The reader was more in clover all the time. The 1st series was by far the more powerful, with most remarkable character studies. In the 1st series Wharton was actually guilty of some of the blackguardly conduct of which he was unjustly suspected in the second series. The 1st Rebel series was, in my view, the most powerful school story ever written by anyone, but there were many uncomfortable moments for the reader. So the 2nd series won in the popularity stakes.

S.O.L. No. 332 "The Mystery of Holly Lodge" was one of the finest St. Jim's S.O.L.'s. The main part of the book comprised two stories which formed the Easter Holidays for 1925 in the Gem. The pair made a typical Hamilton mystery thriller, but it is no less delightful for being "typical". The book opens with a 1st April romp which had appeared in the Gem two weeks earlier in 1925, and this inclusion was really a mistake, for it unbalanced the S.O.L. All the same, for the inveterate St. Jim's enthusiast it was a fine S.O.L.: 1925 was a year when sub stories were very, very prominent, and at that time the Hamilton yarns must have shone with greater brilliance than usual.

The Boys' Friend Library story "The League of Bullies" by R.W. Comrade (Brooks) which Danny bought in April 1938 must, I think, have been the second of the stories of the Fenwick identical twins, who changed schools. I mentioned this last month. Brooks used the same theme in one of his sub St. Jim's series in the Gem, with one twin going to St. Jim's and the other to St. Frank's.

In Danny's 1938 Gem, "The Boy from South Africa" had been "Kildare's Enemy" in the autumn of 1916. This was the tale which introduced Clive to an already overcrowded St. Jim's. Yet another new boy seemed pointless, and the only feasible purpose was to get a representative at St. Jim's of all the British dominions. To the best of my memory Clive never starred in another Gem story, though he remained as dead wood to form, later on, another Co. - Levison and Co.

In "The Boy from South Africa" (Kildare's Enemy") Sefton, the blackguardly prefect, was expelled at the end. Years later, Hamilton forgot that he had expelled Sefton, and we found him still with his blackguardly tricks on the St. Jim's stage. From time to time, authors DID forget things that had happened years earlier. One can find instances of this sort of thing in Agatha Christie, for those well acquainted with her stories of Poirot.

"Levison's Revenge" had originally been "Levison on the Warpath", a month later in 1916. "They Thought He Was a Rotter" had been "D'arcy in Disgrace" in late November, 1916. For "The Price of Silence" they went back to the Gem's summer of 1916 when the tale had been called "Too Clever By Half", an excellent tale in the middle of the Great War. Finally "The Schoolboy Band Conductor" had been "Herries's Orchestra" at the end of the year 1916. And this last Gem tale in Danny's April was a sub story.

"Ever Since Eve" was Marion Davies' last film and the end of her screen career.



SMALL GIANTS OF ST. FRANK'S

by Ernest Holman

A recent comment by Bill Lofts that many readers of the S.O.L. St. Frank's stories were unaware of their origin, regarding them as 'new', set me thinking about just how many St. Frank's stories were reprinted. Many yarns made their second appearance, in fact - and some even a third.

With the odd exception, stories mainly from the first half of the Nelson Lee original series (the Nipper-related yarns) made their appearance in 1925/6 in the Monster Library. There were nineteen of them altogether. St. Frank's moved to the back of the Gem in 1933 when the N.L. packed-up, and continued for about two years.

Towards the end of 1936, St. Frank's took regularly to the S.O.L. There was never a month without a St. Frank's, until the publication ceased in 1940. At first, about half of the Monster reprints appeared again. Then, when the end of the Monster reprints was reached, the S.O.L. carried on from that point, with occasional 'order shifting' of stories. In all, the S.O.L. had taken the early

stories from about mid-1919 (the Great Fire) to mid-1923 (Caravanning), with only the odd series omitted.

It is small wonder, then, that readers of St. Frank's during 1936-40 were, as Bill points out, quite ignorant of the original yarns - for there was never any mention that 'these are early adventures of the School' - and, at times, especially during the War years, additions were inserted to indicate 'present day' events.

The Monster had ensured that an eight-week series pretty well fitted into the large Monthly. Although there was some abridging and omission in some of the S.O.Ls, nevertheless three consecutive issues often contained nearly as much as a Monster. Most S.O.Ls of St. Frank's were, in fact, three volume series; there were some of only two volumes; one, though, of four consecutive issues.

I often think of the Monster and S.O.L. publications as 'Picture Post' and 'Lilliput' During the war, the large Weekly sometimes advised readers to buy their 'small Giant' each month. So Lilliput's description does not seem to come amiss when one refers to the St. Frank's S.O.Ls.

INTRODUCTION TO ST. FRANK'S

Leslie S. Laskey

The autumn of 1937 saw my introduction to "The Schoolboy's Own Library". As a result I read, for the first time, a story of St. Frank's and of Nelson Lee, the schoolmaster detective. Hitherto I had not been able to afford to buy any monthly Libraries. I had been taking "The Magnet" regularly for about five months. I had read a "Gem" and enjoyed it; also I was already familiar with the stories in several other weeklies such as "Adventure", "The Wizard" and "Film Fun".

However, a third of my sixpence per week pocket money went on "The Magnet". The remaining four pence were required for other pleasures. Various juniors from my school habitually visited a news-agent's and confectioner's shop after school hours, where we drank Tizer ("The Appetiser") which was dispensed by the newsagent's wife at the price of one penny per glass. Then there were the blandishments of sherbet fountains at a ha'penny each, Sharps' "Mickey Mouse" toffees at one penny per ounce, and aniseed balls and bullseyes which were even cheaper. The remaining fourpence of my pocket money didn't last long there.

An increase from sixpence to one shilling per week made a great difference. A rise of 100 per cent might sound rather inflationary today. Well, it wasn't. There was no inflation in 1937. The sum of one shilling bought exactly twice as much as sixpence

had done previously. And it continued to do so in 1938. Now I could buy "The Gem" every week - and the "Schoolboys'" Own Library" as well.

My introduction to St. Frank's came as the story of Dick Goodwin was being republished. The boy from Lancashire, who possessed a streak of inventive genius, was pursued by crooks determined to rob him of the results of his work in order that others could gain the profit from it. Related through two monthly issues, this story took all sorts of twists and turns. There were dramatic events in a disused windmill and at a lighthouse. Dick Goodwin was kidnapped.

I soon grew to expect tense and gripping mysteries from Edwy Searles Brooks. I had always liked school stories ever since I had read "The Shadow on the School" by Frank Elias when I was about nine. Now I had discovered school stories which were also tense crime mysteries.

While there is no doubt in my mind that Charles Hamilton was the better all-round writer, Brooks nevertheless excelled in his own particular field, the mystery story, as readers of his work in "The Thriller" could doubtless testify. He lacked the polished prose style and the spontaneous humour of Charles Hamilton. However, I didn't read Brooks for humour, I read him for drama and excitement.

He was a good storyteller. That was what really mattered.

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Offers please. Collectors' Digests: Nos. 20 - 23, 25 - 75, 77 - 92. C.D. Annual 1951. SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUALS: 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1936, 1938. SCHOOLGIRLS OWN ANNUALS: 1925, 1929, 1930. Post War Charles Hamilton books: D'ARCY IN DANGER. Mascot Series: Schoolgirl Series 1, Pamela of St. Olaves, 2, The Stranded Schoolgirls; 4, St. Olaves Sweepstake (all three by 'Hilda Richards').

Girls' Friend Library No. 353. SGOLs 689 Alone at Morcove; 725 Too Much of a Madcap. SCHOOLGIRLS: 443, 503, 515, 520, 522. Mrs. E. Cooke, 28 Bourne Avenue, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9XN, Tyne & Wear.

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WANTED TO PURCHASE: Biggles, Bunter, William, Brent-Dyer hardbacks. Howard Baker volumes. Comics Annuals: Tiger Tim, Rainbow, Film Fun, Radio Fun, Knockout, 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.

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FOR SALE: "Collection of World War 1914-1918, a Pictorial History" in 55 parts published by Alalgamated Press starting 5-11-1934. A. May, 67 Stanwell Road, Ashford, Middx.



SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY EDITORS. No. 3. Leonard Ernest Pratt

by W.O.G. LOFTS

Leonard Ernest Pratt was an Eastender. Born at West Ham in 1889 he had an ordinary education, leaving school at 14, joining the Amalgamated Press as office boy in 1903. On the Marvel-Pluck group of papers, by the time the First World War started in 1914, he had progressed to the position of a Chief sub-editor. Serving right through the War in the Rifle Brigade, on his return to Fleetway House in 1919 he was put in charge of a group of new small size papers entitled The Robin Hood, and Prairie Libraries. H.W. Twyman, who later edited the Union Jack, edited the other The Detective Library which featured Sexton Blake at Kingswood School - based obviously on the successful Nelson Lee at St. Frank's series.

With the papers ceasing in 1921, Len Pratt then went on to The Sexton Blake Library, whilst, as stated, Twyman went to edit The Union Jack. 'Pratty', as he was known, was certainly in those days competent as editor. During his long period in that post he had the cream of the writers at his disposal: G.H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, Anthony Skene, Pierre Quiroule, E.S. Brooks, Gerald Verner - or Donald Stuart (who was greatly influenced by Edgar Wallace and Sax Rohmer) Gilbert Chester, Lewis Jackson, and so many more.

Unfortunately, 'Pratty' strongly believed in keeping his authors strictly anonymous, and could have been an asset to D.C. Thomson and their Dixon Hawke Library, as he flatly refused ever to give any data about them! It was only several years after the Union Jack had given names that he started to put them on his S.B.L. covers (probably on instructions from higher authority), and even then showed little respect for them. Much to the annoyance of W.W. Sayer he spelt his pen-name of 'Pierre Quiroule' wrongly at first - not even knowing it meant 'The Rolling Stone' in French. Sharp readers who bought S.B.L. No. 354. 2nd series would have been

puzzled to find on the cover "by Paul Urquhart, but seeing the real name of the writer, Ladbroke Black, inside! "Pratty" was then very fortunate also to have the services of that great artist Eric Parker, whose brilliant scenes on the cover must have sold the Library just as much as the author's work.

Whilst mistakes can be spotted today, by collectors versed in detective literature, it must be said that the market the Sexton Blake Library was aimed at was the adolescent and cheap popular one, with no claim of being in the Agatha Christie or G.K. Chesterton category, nor would Len Pratt have ever called himself an expert.

In 1928 he was also appointed editor of the Thriller, where the real top class writers of the day were to produce stories, including the great Edgar Wallace, and Leslie Charteris (though from what I have gathered from meeting some of them, they dealt directly with the chief controlling editor Montague Haydon, whilst 'Pratty's' job was mainly to put the paper together for the printers. E.S. Brooks once stated that it was Monty Haydon who gave him the idea of the characters Norman Conquest, and Ironsides).

By 1941 when the 3rd New Series had commenced at the height of the Second World War, unfortunately a number of the star writers had either passed on or retired from the field. G.H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, Robert Murray Greydon, and John G. Brandon (who had contributed 57 tales) had all died so Pratt had to make do with a varied assortment of writers. However by the time the S.B.L. had cut its pages from 96 to only 64, he had gathered around him his own personal circle of contributors which included Anthony Parsons, John Hunter, Rex Hardinge, Walter Tyrer, Gilbert Chester (who later dropped out) and John Drummond with the occasional story coming from Martin Frazer and Warwick Jardine. Indeed, so much did Len Pratt rely on these authors, that he took a lot on trust, never even bothering to read the scripts for revising or subbing. Consequently some authors, knowing this, were quite happy to type out all sorts of hack stuff, sloppy themes that were quite rightly panned by the reviewer in the C.D. at the time. There was once a classic case where Walter Tyrer handed in by mistake a story intended for one of the Woman's Libraries, when only the sharpness of a sub-editor, who noticed the absence of Sexton Blake, enabled the detective somehow to appear in the published version! That there was a closed shop regarding authors can be established: George E. Rochester, Derek Long, and even the famous John Creasey told me that they found it impossible to get a regular stint on the Library, so found markets elsewhere.

Some of the themes and titles speak for themselves: "The Headmaster's Secret" No. 232, where a floozie from a night-club marries a man akin to Dr. Locke of Greyfriars! So it was no wonder that sales declined to an all-time low around 1954 (when Len Pratt had completed over 50 years service with the A.P.). He still at this time flatly refused to give any data whatsoever about his authors or stories, and was quite content to smoke his woodbines and drink his pint of bitter in the Fleet Street taverns.

Len Pratt retired in early 1955 to Rochford in Essex. Despite a severe snow storm he went out to his local tavern one evening, caught a severe chill, and died in 1966, aged 76.

* * * * *

Cliff House Corner

by Margery Woods



Cliff House school held over two hundred pupils, and the famous Fourth Form usually comprised just over thirty girls. With so many characters, plus the mistresses, assorted subsidiary personalities and the new arrivals who cropped up every so often it must have been quite a task for the authors regularly to star the many popular members of the school as often as their devotees no doubt wished.

Babs, Bessie and Clara held leading places in the popularity stakes. Jemima, in her enigmatic way, was an effortless contender for star billing, never very far behind the leaders, Diana always fought for the limelight and usually succeeded, Marjorie, in her gentle way, was a much needed contrast to her more turbulent schoolmates and was always popular. Mabs had a loyal following among young readers fascinated by acting skill, and the more unlikely candidates for popularity had a certain magnetic draw, boulderesses like Lydia Crossendale,

slightly shady young ladies like Rosa Rodworth, the arrogant types like the great Augusta (who did reform!), the inimitable Dolly Jobling, who could never quite get it all together, and the diminutive appealing mites like Doris Redfern and Dolores Essendon; all claimed their share of interest, if not entirely the approval of all readers down through the happy years of the storypapers. Inevitably, there were the characters who ought to have had more limelight yet somehow didn't. One of these was Janet Jordan.

When the requisite introductory paragraph of each week's story listed the members of the Co. (this had to be done each week in very encapsulated thimble-sketch style for the benefit of new readers to whom Cliff House was new territory and its pupils strangers) Janet's name was usually there, especially during the holiday series when she was almost always a member of the vacationing party. Yet somehow she did not seem to enjoy the prominence she might have done. She was a loyal member of the Co., a close friend of Tonboy Clara with whom she shared a study, was excellent at most sports, a champion swimmer and had a background which should have given her a head start in adventures both colourful and loaded with intrigue: for Janet's father owned Jordan's Gigantic Circus.

The circus provided the setting for two major Cliff House series of excitement for Babs and Co. The first (SCHOOLGIRLS OWN LIBRARY 524) was BABS AND CO'S CIRCUS TASK and certainly entailed many tasks for the chums when a strike meant they had to rally round to keep the show going. We met the tragic, sadly abused Doreen, who was really Fay Chandler, later to become a member of the Upper Third at Cliff House, and many personalities including Sheila, Janet's older sister who is a talented performer and assists Mr. Jordan with the running of the circus. But it is strange how little Janet herself features in this series as Babs inevitably takes the lead and Mabs and Bessie and Clara seem to be more to hand to support. The sequel, set in the vicinity of Cliff House during term instead of holiday, again features Fay/Doreen and her adorable St. Bernard, Bruno. (BABS & CO'S CIRCUS QUEST SGOL 645) but still Janet did not play the more prominent role a reader might have expected in the circumstances.

It was not until later years that Janet was given her own feature stories.

In JANET JORDAN'S ORDEAL (SCHOOLGIRL 378 OCT 24th 1936) the circus is back near the school, with the inevitable trouble-maker trying the old ruin-the-owner business. This story is strong on the conflict ploy of divided loyalties, in this case Janet's faith in the old clown, Joey. Joey is suspected of causing a fire in which Janet at last is allowed to lead the chums in rescuing the ponies. Interwoven with the circus thread is a big swimming match in which Cliff House has entered a team for which the girls have to vote in their captain. Janet has a rival here in Florence Ellison of the Fifth, who has eavesdropped on the heated conversation between Janet and her father when Mr. Jordan has forbidden Janet to see or speak to Joey again on pain of having Joey arrested. Florence immediately sets out to discredit Janet and gain the captaincy of the swimming team. However, the girls vote Janet in with a big majority. Meanwhile, Joey has discovered that the real troublemakers at the circus are the ringmaster (a trusted friend of Mr. Jordan's) and his niece Beatrice, who is a pupil at Courtfield Girls School, against whom Cliff House is matched in the swimming gala.

This point leads to a somewhat thin spot in the plot when Janet decides she can't take part in the swimming gala because Beatrice will recognise her and betray to Mr. Jordan that Janet has been visiting Joey and his wife, thereby getting Joey arrested and preventing Joey producing evidence which will in turn betray them. Perhaps it was stretching credulity to expect the reader to consider that the ringmaster's niece and the owner's daughter, both of them pupils at close-neighbouring schools, would not be able to recognise one another unless introduced at the swimming match. Especially as the ringmaster is a close and trusted colleague of Mr. Jordan and knows Janet very well. But on this somewhat shaky premise depends the dramatic work-out to get Janet to the gala and the winning of the trophy for Cliff House.

Despite this, it's a good yarn. There is so much pace, appeal and high standard of construction in these stories that it seems unfair to pick out the occasionally weak link.

More Janet stories are: SUCH AN AMAZING JANET. SGL 510 May 6th 1936 in which Janet has a very startling change of character, and JANET WAS TOO TRUSTFUL SGL 475 Sept 3rd 1938.

Janet was described as: Her skin glowed with perfect health, those olive cheeks of hers were flushed prettily, and very trim and sturdy she looked in her neat blue bathing suit on which was embroidered in gold the Cliff House crest.

She has a pet toy Pomeranian called Gyp, whose favourite occupation is hiding anything he can get his mischievous paws on, regardless of who it belongs to, and of course he was once a trained circus performer.

Janet was always one of the best-liked members of the chums, and many young readers keen on aquatic sports must have identified with the Fourth Form's attractive and expert swimmer.

Janet Jordan's ORDEAL



**"THE SCOUT" -
EIGHTY YEARS ON!**



Bill Thurbon has written a full and fascinating account of the Boy Scout movement and its publications, which will appear in this year's Annual. We include here some part of this, to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the launch of The Scout, with one or two editorial linking pieces.

A Man and a Vision

Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden Powell was an unconventional soldier. In India he first displayed his interest in scouting and reconnaissance, and there he later wrote a small book for his soldiers, Aids to Scouting.

He campaigned in Africa against the Zulus. In 1895 he took part in a campaign against the ashantis of the Gold Cost, his task being to organize a column of natives to act as pioneers and scouts... When the Boer war broke out ... by bluff and courage B.P. defended Mafeking during the siege that lasted 217 days... When, late in the evening of 18th May, 1900 the news of the relief of Mafeking arrived it caused great rejoicing, probably not equalled until Armistice Night 1918. In the closing years of the Boer War, B.P. formed the South African Constabulary; then the War Office offered him the post of Inspector of Cavalry for Great Britain and Ireland, with responsibility also for Egypt and South Africa.

The Genesis of an Idea

(Soon after his return to Britain, B.P. had contact with William Alexander Smith and the Boys Brigade, which he had founded. B.P. was impressed by this organisation and by boys' response to it, but the military aspects of the training bothered him; he thought the movement would have ten times the number with more variety in training. Smith agreed when B.P. suggested this, and added that this might be achieved through a boys' version of B.P.'s Aids to Scouting. This exchange of ideas led to B.P.'s vision of the Scout Movement, as well as of a publication for boys on scoutcraft.)

B.P. spelled out his aims in a book, and approached the publisher, Pearson. Arrangements were made for the book to be published in weekly parts, and B.P. also agreed to make a weekly publication by Pearsons the official organ of the Boy Scouts.

Part 1 of Scouting for Boys appeared on the bookstalls on Wednesday, 15th January, 1908.

There was no mistaking the name of the author. The letters B.P. dominated the right hand corner. The cover drawing showed a boy hidden behind a large rock on a sandy shore watching a ship. The boy wore shorts, beside him lay a staff and a broad brimmed hat. Inside, the various articles and stories were written in a series of "camp fire Yarns".

Under the "sugar coating" stories were the items that counted: the meaning of being a scout, the challenge to the boy's sense of honour, the scout promise, the scout motto "Be prepared", the tests for badges, the uniform, the patrol calls. The next four parts appeared on every other Wednesday during January, February and March. The last part appealed to young men of all kinds, each man training a group of boys.

Within a fortnight of the last issue of Scouting for Boys came the launch of the weekly The Scout. No. 1., volume I, is dated 18th April, 1908. The watchful scout, behind his shelting rock, appears as a heading. Then came the first of the long series of "The Chief Scout Yarns" - "How I started scouting by Lieutenant General Baden Powell". Encouraging messages appeared from Lord Roberts and others. Then came the first story: "The Phantom Battleship" by Rupert Chesterton. A sequel to this appeared after the Great War. Another series which ran for very many years was "Things all Scouts should Know". Also a long running series "The tightest corner I was ever in", by frontiersmen, soldiers, explorers and other travellers. Then the first of very many stories of "The Mounties", and a number of short articles. B.P. wanted a scouting



Portion of Inside Front Page, The Scout No. 1, April 18th, 1908

serial. He asked a well known boys author, E. le Breton Martin to write one. Breton Martin went off to read Scouting for Boys; not only did he write the first two scout serials: "The Otter Patrol" and "Otters to the rescue." He also became a scout commissioner. (Scouting, and The Scout, were well and truly launched.)

(Illustration on page 20)

* * * * *

LETTERS FROM THE GREYFRIARS ARCHIVES (III)

Selected by Les Rowley

From Sir Hilton Popper, Bart... to Dr. Locke, The Headmaster, Greyfriars School.

Dear Headmaster,

Not for the first time have I occasion to draw your attention to cases of trespass on my property by the boys of my old School. During the past week there have been two more instances, one by Vernon-Smith of the Remove and the other by Coker, a Fifth Form boy.

Vernon-Smith, who was apprehended on the Popper Court game preserves, had a lighted cigarette in his mouth which, on being told he would be reported, he removed and blew a cloud of smoke into my face. To this insolence he added the further one of saying "Go and eat coke, you old goat!" Is it possible that even today, when the standards of education are on the decline, that the Chairman of the Board of Governors may be so addressed by a young ruffian?

Coker, who was found trespassing on the island in the Sark, had the effrontery to question my authority, and resorted to fist-cuffs when my man Joyce tried to remove him. This boy continued to resist whilst being conducted by four gamekeepers to the mainland.

It had been my intention to demand the expulsion of both these boys but I am not a hard man and have decided that floggings, very severe floggings, will suffice. I hope that I shall learn in the near future that both sentences have been rigorously carried out.

I am & c

Hilton Popper Bart

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READERS FROM THE CHIEF SCOUT!



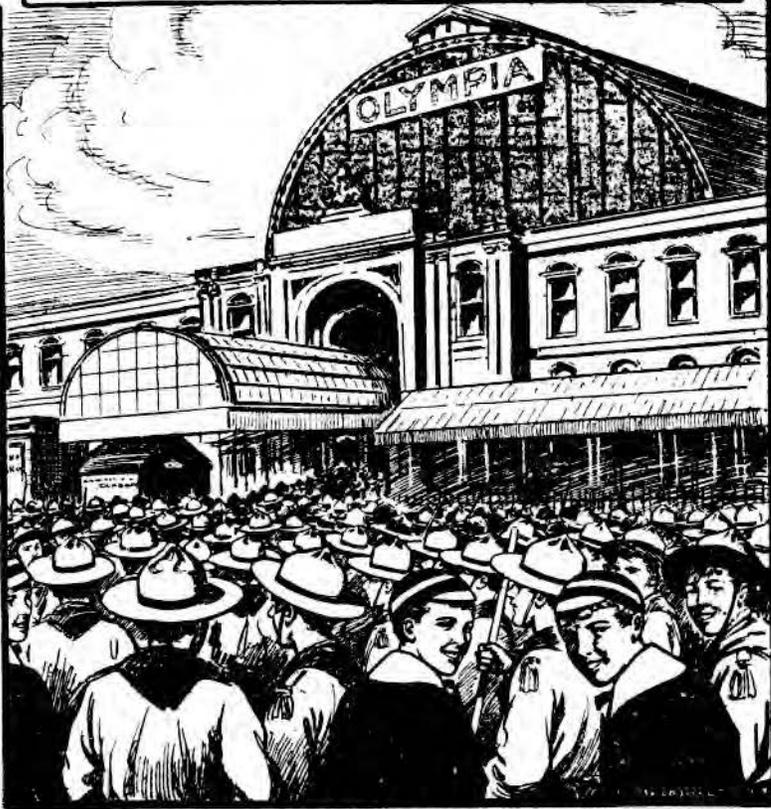
Great "Jamboree" Number.

The BOYS' FRIEND ^{1st}/₂

SPECIAL COMPETITION FOR SCOUTS. SEE PAGE 324.

No. 1,000. Vol. XX. New Series. | THREE HALFPENCE. | Week Ending August 7th, 1920.

**JIMMY
SILVER & CO.
AT THE
"JAMBOREE."**
A Magnificent Long
Complete Story of
-- the Chums of --
Rookwood School.
BY
OWEN CONQUEST.



The 1st Chapter.
Getting Ready for the Jamboree.
 Jimmy Silver was seated at the table in the study, thoughtfully gazing the end of a stamp of paper. A sheet of paper before him was covered with what looked like a mixture of Morse code with arithmetic and algebraic symbols.

Jimmy was making calculations. He was too deep in his calculations to look up when the fat face of Tubby Muffin of the Fourth looked up on the doorway. His chums, Lorry and Bally and Trevanion had come along and had been not allowed to interrupt his calculations, so Jimmy Silver was not aware he looked almost like a madman. He dashed down some rough scribbles and was a minute or so later, when Muffin stood and looked at him.

"I say, Jimmy--"
 Jimmy scribbled.
 "Get a minute to spare, Jimmy?"
 "No."
 "It's rather important."
 "None."
 "About the Jamboree?"
 "Get off!"
 "At Olympia?"
 "No answer."
 "I want to discuss it with you, Jimmy," said Tubby Muffin. "As I'm going with the sextant."
 Jimmy Silver, without speaking, looked round him as if in search of something.
 "Looking for a washing?" Jimmy asked Tubby Muffin.
 "No."
 "What do you want?"
 "Something to throw at you!"
 "I say, Jimmy, don't be a beast, you know! I suppose you want to come with the sextant, don't you, for the big Jamboree?"
 "No."
 "I really wish you wouldn't joke about it, Jimmy, when the matter's so important," said Tubby Muffin, presently. "We ain't to be at Rookwood when it comes off, as it's in the holiday, you know, so all arrangements got to be made before we break up."
 "I shall break you up, Tubby,"

All Roads Lead to the Boy Scout "Jamboree"!
JIMMY SILVER & CO. ARRIVE AT OLYMPIA!
A Stirring Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Story in This Issue.

From Dr. Locke, The Headmaster, Greyfriars School to Sir Hilton Popper, Bart.

My Dear Sir Hilton,

Thank you for your further letter of complaint in which you allege trespass on your property by boys of the School. I have investigated both cases and the following are my findings.

Vernon-Smith admits both the trespass and to smoking but has said that his insolent remarks were uttered under duress as you were thrashing him with your riding crop at the time. He has mentioned to me that he may intend informing his father of this so that proceedings may be instituted against you for common assault. I would add that there was adequate support for his story when I examined the marks on his arms and shoulder. I myself am of the opinion that this boy has been punished more than enough for his offences and since you, a Justice of the Peace, would not welcome unpleasant court proceedings, I am sure you will share that opinion.

Neither do I intend to take any further action with regard to Coker, and although I cannot condone violence I must make allowance that Coker was entitled to act in self-defence against superior force. Although the island is commonly known as "Popper's Island" this is no confirmation of titular right to possession. On the contrary, ownership has been in serious dispute for many years and, indeed, the sole reason for the island being placed out of bounds was to avoid petty complaints about trespass - be they real or imagined.

In regard to future cases may I, with respect, insist that you do not take the law into your own hands? Complaints of real substance will always be carefully considered by.

Yours &c

H. H. Locke (Headmaster)

* * * * *
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.

* * *

AMELIA EARHART - A FOOTNOTE

by Barrie Stark

In Danny's Diary for July 1987 (C.D. no. 487), he mentions the disappearance of Amelia Earhart whilst on a flight round the world, and this reminded me of a post-war search, though regrettably I cannot give the full details of the book concerned.

(Editor's Note: Perhaps one of our readers can enlighten us on this?)

"The Search for Amelia Earhart" is by an American who had heard rumours of Earhart's survival, and this interested him so much that he set out to solve the mystery of her disappearance. At first he met extraordinary opposition, in effect being 'warned off', but he persisted, and, eventually, though not easily, was given approval to go ahead.

His findings suggested that Earhart had loaded her plane (or rather it had been loaded for her) with more petrol and equipment than she needed, and that she had flown close to Japanese occupied territory (some remote fortified islands) where, unluckily, she had made a forced landing and was imprisoned. He alleges that she died in captivity in 1942, and also suggests that the U.S. Pacific Fleet had been deliberately sent in the wrong direction, though the flight path must have been known. An interesting and very absorbing account, showing how determination and painstaking work apparently succeeded in solving an intriguing puzzle.

(Editor's Note: It is sad but interesting that both Britain's most popular girl flyer (Amy Johnson) and America's (Amelia Earhart) should have disappeared on wartime flights without full details being known at the time. At least the fictional heroine of the skies, W.E. Johns's Worrals of the W.A.A.F. in the "Girl's Own Paper", had a more satisfying career during the war, surviving her struggles with the dreaded Germans and the Japanese. I always felt that she, and the teenage girl aviators in the A.P. papers, sprang from the inspiration provided by our "Amy, Wonderful Amy".)

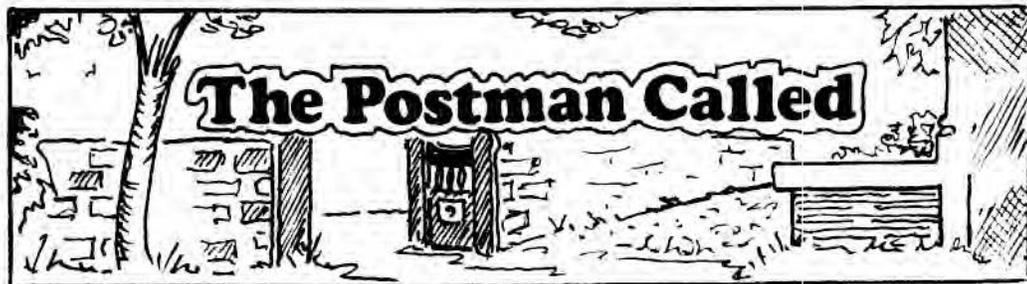
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E. KADISH (Hendon): Like Mr. Lofts, I too considered Jimmy Silver my favourite among the three junior captains in the Hamilton schools. Neither as "sunny" in disposition as Tom Merry, nor so prone to fly off the handle as Harry Wharton, he seemed shrewder, and more canny, than either. As a character, Wharton was, perhaps, the more interesting and complex, but Jimmy Silver seems the more likeable. I've forgotten who it was who said of him that he had - like Betty Barton of Morcove? - "an old head on young shoulders", but it seems fair comment. It was not for nothing that he was dubbed "Uncle James". Certainly he needed all his avuncular qualities of firmness and patience to deal with the impossible Arthur Edward Lovell, who is frequently a tiresome character. He doesn't have the excuse of being a well-meaning duffer like Coker, or a rugged individualist like Handforth; he doesn't even possess the I-told-you-so, somewhat self-righteous, commonsense qualities of Johnny Bull. Lovell is just plain obstinate and pig-headed. How Silver, Raby, and Newcome ever put up with him is a mystery!

H. TRUSCOTT (Deal): In the piece called Trimble's Articles, in the January C.D. Roger Jenkins writes: "One curious feature of the Gems of this period - and it also applies to the Christmas Barring-Out series which followed soon after - was the detective element involved". I cannot agree with him about the 1922 Barring-Out series. Mystery, yes; I have always noted that this series is one of the Hamilton stories in which no knowledge of the real culprit is apparent until near the end. But the solution, when it comes, is not due to detection, but to sheer accident; the accident of Kerr, Figgins and the rest having a rough-and-tumble with Jem Gadgett, and some sovereigns accidentally falling from his pocket. It was Kerr telling Inspector Skeat about this that set the Inspector on to Gadgett; but it was not due to detection.

With reference, also, to Mr. Jenkins' descriptions of Hamilton,

in Magnet stories, giving a full account of what the culprit is doing, so that the question is not "Who was the culprit?" but "How will the culprit be caught?", I have often wondered if Hamilton caught this idea, of centring interest on how the villain is going to be found out, from reading the series of five stories, published in 1912 under the title of one of them, The Singing Bone. They were by R. Austin Freeman, and featured his medico-legal detective, Thorndyke, solving the case in the second part, the readers having been shown what happened in the first part. They were known as inverted stories, and this method has been copied in various ways since by many writers. But Freeman was their inventor.

ANNE CLARKE (Wandsworth): I had no idea there were so many Crusoe stories! The first of that type I remember reading was Ballantyne's "Coral Island" - 3 boys shipwrecked in the South Seas. Captain Marryat wrote another besides "Masterman Ready" - "The Little Savage" (which was finished by his son after Captain Marryat's death). It was about a boy born on an island after a shipwreck and living there alone after the other survivors died. I suppose the St. Frank's island stories wouldn't count because there were so many people on the island in each case. There was a BFL called "The Island of Pleasure" - I can't remember any details of it.

M. TAHA (London): Eric Fayne's article in the Annual on the end of the Rio Kid series with the Kid playing himself in a Hollywood movie, made me wonder - did Harold Robbins ever read Hamilton? No, I haven't gone off my rocker! In "The Carpetbaggers", one of the heroes is named Nevada Smith. He becomes a movie-star, playing the role of an outlaw called Max Sand, who'd "vanished into the hills" a long time before. "Nevada Smith" had himself started out as - yes, an outlaw called Max Sand. In short, he was, unknown to anyone else, playing himself in a Western! I wonder ...

B. BRADFORD (Ealing): Commenting on Danny's Diary for March 1938. Eric Fayne refers to BFL's 403 "Scorned by the School" and No. 405 "The Cad of the School" which were written by Edwy Searles Brooks under the pen name of Robert W. Comrade and published in Nov. and Dec. 1917.

Both stories were reprinted in 1938 in BFL 615, "The Imposter of the Fourth" and BFL 619 "The League of Bullies", and were just slightly abridged with a few minor alterations.



JEMIMA IN THREE PARTS !

BY MARGERY WOODS, TOMMY KEEN
AND ESMOND KADISH,



PART II:

By Tommy Keen

JEMIMA CARSTAIRS was probably the most unusual character ever introduced into the Morcove stories. Her stay at Morcove, unfortunately, was so short, that she had little or no time, owing to the strange events in which she was involved to become on close friendly terms with Betty Barton and Co.

Jemima arrived at Morcove a month before Christmas 1925 (rather an odd time during term to start), and, to welcome Jemima to the school, Betty Barton, and her chum Polly Linton, were sent to Morcove Road Station to meet her. A surprise was in store for them!

From a first class compartment stepped a smartly dressed 'young woman', dressed in the modern style, with beige coloured stockings and shoes, a well cut coat, and a cloche hat that fitted snugly to the sleek, obviously shingled head. Even to Betty and Polly, who were used to seeing girls in regulation school uniform, the attire would not have been too startling if that had been all, but the two chums positively gasped when they noticed the horn-rimmed eyeglass, through which she nonchalantly surveyed the two girls, and the Station in general. Her mode of speech was equally startling. "Strange though it may seem, I, Jemima Carstairs, am bound for Morcove, that seat of learning".

So Jemima arrives at Morcove, and in spite of her quaint mannerisms, Betty and Polly rather like her. They are completely shattered, however, when Jemima tells them that she already has a friend at the school, Ursula Wade of the Fourth Form. Ursula Wade, the most disliked girl in the Fourth - a sneak, a cheat, a toady, and on two or three occasions, even a thief!

Apparently, Jemima's father, a famous playwright, is a friend of Mr. Wade, so Jemima is all set to be a good friend to Ursula, and, in spite of Ursula's cheating in class with a crib, to Betty and Co's. annoyance, Jemima appears to be as friendly with her as ever. So for a time, Jemima Ursula are sent to Coventry. Jemima is not at all concerned, and in fact Betty receives a post card, posted in Coventry: "Weather nice, although the atmosphere seems a little chilly, LITTLE US."

Actually Jemima (or, Jimmy, as she likes to be called), trusts Ursula not at all, knowing that Ursula is trying to steal the manuscript of a new play, which Jemima is typing for her father. There are lots of misunderstandings, not only with Betty & Co., but with Jemima's father, Captain Carstairs.



The final story of the series ends with Ursula and Mr. Wade being shown up in their true colours, with Captain Carstairs realising he has misjudged his daughter, and Jemima, at last, becoming friendly with Betty, Polly, Madge, Paula, and the rest.

But alas! This very loveable character, after only this very brief stay at Morcove, informs the girls she is leaving. Such a pity... she made quite an impression, helped considerably by Leonard Shields' attractive illustrations. His illustrations of Jemima were perfect, they were the real Jemima!

Maybe Jemima helped to modernise Morcove. For after the Christmas holidays, Paula Creel, Polly Linton, and almost the entire school became bobbed or shingled.

Morcove lost Jemima for ever, but its loss was to be the gain of Cliff House in the SCHOOL FRIEND, for in a fine holiday story, Jemima was there, with never a mention of her stay at Morcove.*

At Morcove she was a delight. At Cliff House, partly due to the SCHOOL FRIEND illustrations, for me the interest waned, but there she remained for the next fourteen years.

(*Editorial Note: L.E. Ransome, deputising for Horace Phillips, had introduced her into the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN. Realising she was too good a character to lose, he quickly transferred her to Cliff House, as he was then the regular "Hilda Richards" on the SCHOOL FRIEND. Our picture shows the Leonard Shields Morcove version of Jemima.)



The Greyfriars Book Club

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MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

Only 7 members put in an appearance at our February meeting which was disappointing, but a most enjoyable evening took place, the highlight being a splendid talk on the subject of "Star Trek" by Christine Brettell. I was very fond of the programme on TV and Christine had on display a large number of books dealing with the theme by several writers, and was a mine of information on the subject. She had also baked a cake for refreshment time with the caption of a Magnet cover with Billy Bunter receiving his postal order, priced $\frac{1}{2}d$. I wonder what $\frac{1}{2}d$ is worth now? The other refreshments of their usual high standard were provided by Betty Hopton and Ivan Webster.

Your correspondent gave a quiz of 15 questions on quotations by Charles Hamilton from classical and English authors. It has been said that his works were an education in themselves. Win Brown was given the prize because those with top scores already had a copy of the book awarded. Win, our longest standing founder-member, well deserved this. Geoff Lardner introduced two quizzes: Take A Letter, and one which very much resembled a crossword puzzle. We had a good time despite concern over the small attendance.

JACK BELLFIELD

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Roy Whiskin's Linton home was the venue for our monthly meeting in March. Roy with the help of audio tape examples, talked about that marvellous BBC wireless programme, Children's Hour. Memories of their programmes were kindled by hearing again the voices of David Davis and Uncle Mac, and the sounds of Toytown, Norman and Henry Bones, and Jennings. 1922 saw the start of the

programme which lasted over forty years; with local, regional and then national programming spawning such stories as dramatisations of Winnie the Pooh, Biggles, Clara Chuff, Rosemary Sutcliff's Eagle of the Ninth, Noel Streatfield's ballet stories and Angus MacVicar's tales of the Lost Planet.

Keith Hodgkinson then told us about the novelist Lord Tweedsmuir, John Buchan. A well-educated, well-connected man, he studied law before he became an MP in the Twenties. His main recreation seems to have been writing, but exactly when he started to be paid for it is not aided by his providing an extremely unhelpful autobiography. Certainly his most well-known work, The 39 Steps, was published just before the Great War, other Richard Hannay stories appearing in the twenties.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Fourteen people assembled at "The White Horse Hotel" in Wakefield for lunch on 12th March, our special guest being Mary Cadogan, our Club Co-President. It was, without doubt, a cheery party, and a delightful lunch the size of which would have made even Bunter decline further helpings! Then followed a visit to Secretary Geoffrey Good's extensive library housed in an establishment which is not unlike the legendary "Wharton Lodge".

A total of nineteen attended our evening meeting, including newest and youngest member, twelve-year-old James Lamb. William Hirst had done even more work on cataloguing our Club Library: a splendid effort from another of our young members.

Chairman David Bradley introduced Mary Cadogan who enthralled us with anecdotes and snippets she had acquired concerning the life of Frank Richards. Letters and photographs were shown.

After refreshments, for the second part of the programme, Mary had the use of a slide projector and screen, provided by Keith Smith. The theme was "Detectives in Fiction", and Mary showed some fine slides of covers and pictures from papers and books featuring detectives, some famous and some not so well known, including Sherlock Holmes, Nelson Lee, Dixon Hawke, John Buchan, Miss Marple and Bulldog Drummond. Mary gave brief histories of the characters and/or authors. Keith surprised us all by stating that G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown was based on a local Roman Catholic priest with whom Chesterton stayed, the parish being at Heckmondwike, near Leeds.

All too soon, it was time for our meeting to end, after thanks to Mary for her two excellent presentations. We are looking forward

to her being with us again - and for those who will be at the "Just - William" Meeting, to be held at Chester in April, there will be a further chance to meet our Co-President.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Our Chairman Phil Griffiths opened the March meeting of twenty members, and everyone present was saddened to hear of the passing of Mrs. Phyllis Godsave who, with her late husband Reuben, had been very active in the Club for many years.

Brian Doyle aroused interest and speculation by showing an advertisement concerning auditions for Greyfriars characters in a forthcoming production. (Editor's Note: We have since heard from Maurice Hall that a musical called 'Bunter' will open at the Northcott Theatre in Exeter on 21st June and that this may go on to Guildford and possibly London's West End. We will keep C.D. readers posted.)

The Meeting was then regaled by a highly amusing reading by Roger Jenkins from the "Diary" of A.J. Wentworth of Firgrove School, from the pages of "Punch". The controversial figure of T.E. Lawrence was the subject of a talk by Arthur Bruning, and which provoked much in the way of debate until tea-time.

Having satisfied the inner man or woman, we were taken for a trip down Memory Lane by Bill Bradford, who read from Newsletter No. 216, of November, 1970, describing a Luncheon held by the Club at the Rembrandt Hotel. In response to a request from Brian Doyle, the Secretary agreed to contact that hotel and enquire the cost of a similar luncheon meeting today.

Duncan Harper gave us his "birthday" choice of the books he would take with him on an enforced stay on a desert island. These included "Union Jack" No. 1174 (Zenith Declares War); "Goldfinger" by Ian Fleming, and the Petticoat Rule series from the Nelson Lee O/S 398-407 and SOLs 396, 399, 402). From all of these Duncan gave brief readings to emphasise the reason for his choice. He was congratulated on a well researched and well presented choice.

There followed a novel Quiz by Myra and Alan Stewart, based on the well-known television programme "Connections" and won by Mark Taha, with Roger Jenkins and Timothy Bruning as runners up.

The Chairman brought the meeting to a close, by reminding us that the next meeting would be at the Liberal Centre, Ealing, on Sunday, 10th April.

LESLIE ROWLEY

FOR SALE: Volume of Boys' Realm, Nos. 222 - 252 - 31 copies including Xmas Double No. Sept. 1st, 1906 to March 30th, 1907; (worth re-binding): £32 plus postage. S.O.L's: No. 178 "The Outcast of Cedar Creek" (nice copy) £2.00; No. 220 "Son of a Cracksman" (Rookwood) £2.00; Nos. 176 "Gussy the Runaway", 180 "Chums Afloat", (sub) 186 "Secret of Drere Manor" (sub) £2.00 each; all nice copies. Early Penny Populars (1913), all with St. Jim's, Sexton Blake, and Jack, Sam & Pete: Nos. 51, 53, 54, 55, 56; all nice copies: £2.50 each. P. & P. extra on all items.

Eric Payne, "Excelsior House", 113 Crookham Road, Church Crookham, Nr. Aldershot, Hants. GU13 0NH. (No reply if items already sold).

11th November 1947 to 17th October, 1959

"Sun" is a fairly elusive 1950's comic. Copies of "Lion", "Beano", "Dandy" and "Eagle" are relatively easy to find, but copies of "Sun", particularly from the years 1951 and 1952 do not turn up frequently on dealers lists.

Early issues of the comic were not particularly appealing. Bob Wilkin, who produced much of the artwork for the first few years of the comic's life had a static, listless style. The content was rather a hotch potch, aimed at too wide an audience and succeeding in retaining too few.

In May 1949 the comic's publisher, J.B. Allen, sold out to the Amalgamated Press. In the succeeding years the quality of the artwork improved immensurably. Many film related 'adventure strips' like "Fighting O'Flynn" and "The Black Rose" appeared. Hugh McNeill's picture strip version of "The Wind In the Willows" commenced in February, 1949. The strip had originally appeared in "Women's Pictorial". McNeill portrayed the woodland characters superbly and the strip's revival in "Sun" was more than justified.

The comic underwent a dramatic change of format early in 1952. Its page count was increased from 16 to 20, its size was reduced to that of the American style 'comic book' and, most importantly its back, front and centre pages were printed in full colour. More space was devoted to 'adventure strips' - westerns and historical swash-bucklers, though for several more years it retained a variety of text stories and serials. Amongst these was a serial by George E. Rochester entitled "My Pal Wagger", a traditional 'boy and his dog alone' nail-biter.

On October 25th, 1952 began "a rattling new school story" entitled "Tom Merry's Schooldays". The first few tales, reprinted from one of the earliest Gems dealt with Tom's arrival at St. Jim's, resplendent in lace trimmed velvet jacket. The St. Jim's stories occupied two or three pages. Once Tom had settled in there followed a series featuring Percy Mellish. This was followed by the arrival of Wally D'arcy and finally a serial concerning a character named Thurnel, who arrived at the school as a junior, but was in reality a grown man in disguise, whose aim was to make off with the St. Jim's plate! The Tom Merry reprints came to an end in issue number 227 on 13th June, 1953.

The quality of the St. Jim's reprints may have left a lot to be desired but I have no doubts about the high quality of some of

the 'adventure strips' that were appearing in the comic at about the same time. "Ivanhoe", based on the MGM film was drawn by Pat Nicolle. His knowledge of medieval weapons and armour gave his historical strips an authenticity found in the work of few other comic strip illustrators. Following on from "Ivanhoe" he drew a sequel entitled "Lord of Sherwood". That in turn was followed by "Robin Hood's Quest", an earlier Robin Hood tale. All three serials were beautifully drawn and excitingly scripted. I regard them as the best Robin Hood adventure strips ever to appear in a comic.

Late in 1954 Derek Eyles' "Dick Turpin's Ride to York" was reprinted. The strip had originally appeared in "Knockout" six years earlier. As an added bonus the serial was considerably extended with Dick encountering many more adventures on the road to York. All of the new artwork was drawn by Eyles.

A long running historical strip was "Max Bravo - The Happy Hussar" drawn for most of its run by Eric Parker. Parker was also responsible for some of "The Terrible Three" picture strips. These were based on early "Gem" stories. Most of "The Terrible Three" strips were drawn by Reg Bunn, a prolific artist best remembered for "The Spider" whose unlawful exploits appeared in "Lion" during the 1960's.

For most of the 'comic book' years the cover character was "Billy the Kid", depicted more as a western Robin Hood than as a cold blooded killer. Billy's adventures were usually complete in each issue and often occupied as many as eight pages. The best of them were drawn by Geoff Champion. Other western strips in the comic included "The Cisco Kid", "Wyatt Earp" and "Wild Bill Hickok". Some of the westerns were reprinted from American comics.

"Battler Britton", a World War Two fighter pilot, made his first appearance in "Sun" early in 1956. By the end of the comic's run he was firmly established as its most popular character. When "Sun" ended, his weekly exploits continued in "Knockout".

A foreboding change occurred in June 1958 when the comic lost its full colour pages and its photogravure printing. A year later it was incorporated into "Lion" after a run of 558 issues.

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OUR BOOKSHELVES

by MARY CADOGAN

One of the most engaging books I have read recently is James Birdsall's *THE BOYS AND THE BUTTERFLIES*, published by Pavilion at £10.95. Subtitled 'A Wartime Rural Childhood' it tells the true story of three young brothers who were evacuated during the Second World War to Hertfordshire. It not only explores the bonds of brotherhood and friendship, but beautifully recaptures the atmosphere of village life in the 'forties, and the wartime intensity which existed there, and elsewhere. It is also a celebration of the attraction of butterflies, which are ardently pursued and collected by the boys. This is the rural England still of the Magnet and Gem, set in its period, yet wonderfully timeless in its appeal. Wonderfully nostalgic!

