

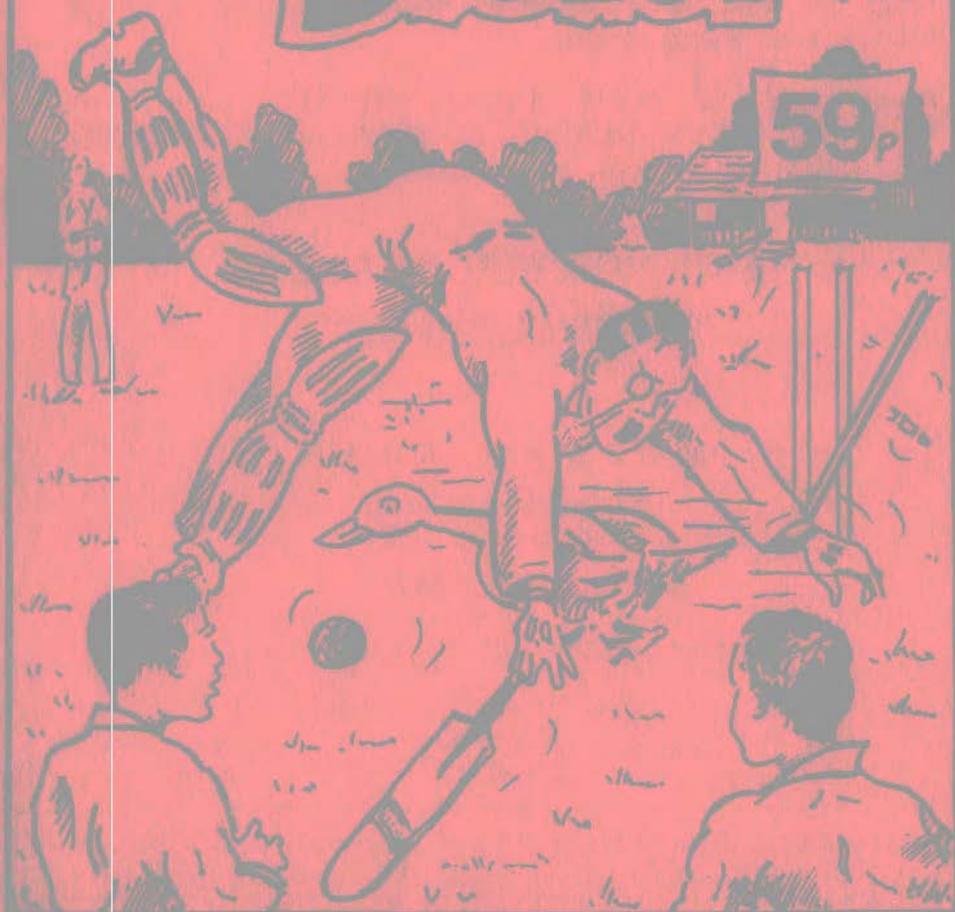
STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS

VOL 42
No 497

DIGEST

MAY
1988



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BETWEEN OURSELVES

LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN

It was a very great pleasure to attend the unveiling of the plaque to commemorate Frank Richards' birth and achievements. Several members of the Old Boys' Book Club, and some C.D. readers joined the group who watched T.V. personality Chris Serle (THAT'S LIFE! and IN AT THE DEEP END) unveil the nicely proportioned and beautifully lettered blue and white plaque. This is fixed to a brick pillar, as nearly as can be estimated on the site of 15 Oak Street (now of course demolished), where Frank was born one hundred and twelve years ago. His niece Una Hamilton Wright and two

of his great nieces attended the ceremony, as well as Mr. Hamilton Wright and other members of the family. The Ealing Broadway Centre, which houses the plaque, is a vast but impressive covered shopping complex with attractive domed glass roofs which put one in mind of the old Crystal Palace.

The day was wet and windswept, but we were all undercover, and the weather did not dampen our spirits. Stephen Goddard and Bill Bradford, both members of the London O.S.B.C., in co-operation with the Ealing Centre manager, Mr. A. Bilham, were the organisers of this happy occasion. After the unveiling we visited the nearby public library which contained four large cases of Hamiltonian books and papers (a mouth-watering collection!) which had been arranged by Bill Bradford. Several of us went on to his home for coffee and sandwiches afterwards.

The day started early for me because I was asked to talk about the event, and Frank Richards' work, in an L.B.C. broadcast (at 8.15 a.m.). Several papers publicized the event, sensibly and favourably, but an article in The Observer struck a sour and silly note. (We can comfort ourselves that the young reporter who produced this fact-twisting, anti-Greyfriars tommy-rot will, one feels sure, never have admirers of his prose travelling long distances to pay him tribute, as they did at Ealing this month for Frank Richards)

I think I must have mentioned before to C.D. readers that, like Charles Hamilton, I was born at Ealing and later settled in Kent! Revisiting Ealing for this unveiling gave me a sense of pride to have been part of his home town, which was now giving him recognition, even though I left it when I was only six years old.

Several of us will be paying tributes too to another (fictional) famous man - or rather boy - when we go to Chester on April 23rd for the annual JUST WILLIAM day.

And, back in the world of fact, this issue of C.D. contains, in Bill Lofts' BLAKIANA contribution a well deserved note of praise for someone who has proved a tremendous stalwart of our hobby - W. Howard Baker, without whose work on the Sexton Blake Library, and splendid boys' paper facsimile publications, we should all be much the poorer.

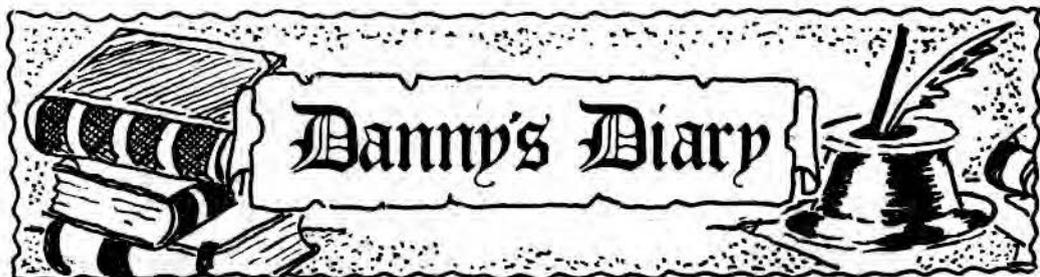
AND FAMOUS WOMEN TOO!

The lady pictured in the editorial chair at the beginning of this article is 'Hilda Richards', through the eyes of one of the artists of The Schoolgirl of the 1930s. Although I know now that 'she' was originally Charles Hamilton, and then one or other of his various

male successors, such as L.E. Ransome and John Wheway, I still enjoy seeing the pictures of 'her' in her smart 1930s dresses and, when pictured out of doors, in the nifty pill-box hats and swagger coats of the period.

Happy reading!

MARY CADOGAN



MAY 1938

The Fourpenny Libraries have been abso-golly-lutely lovely this month. Couldn't be better.

The Greyfriars Schoolboys' Own Library is "Harry Wharton Declares War" and it continues the tale of Harry Wharton as a rebel. Wharton is at odds with his Form-master, with Loder, the prefect, and even with his own pals - and Wharton is determined to have his revenge on Loder. And the rift between Wharton and his old pals is widening all the time.

The second S.O.L. this month is a Rookwood one called "Under False Colours". Victor Gaston comes to Rookwood as a new French master, little guessing that he will be recognised, by Mr. Greely, as Felix Lacroix, a notorious French burglar.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. is an adventurous affair. The St. Frank's chums are swept away from England in a stricken airship which plunges into the Adriatic Sea, and the boys find themselves in a small kingdom where brigands hold sway. "The St. Frank's Castaways".

Two simply gorgeous novels in the Sexton Blake Library I had this month. The author, Pierre Quiroule, is back with a splendid tale entitled "The Mystery of No. 7 Bitton Court" which introduces Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie. Set at home and abroad, this one has quite a big part for our favourite dog, Pedro. My second S.B.L. is "The Prisoners of Peru" by Gwyn Evans. This one introduces Splash Page, the Fleet Street journalist. And I had no less than 3 Boys' Friend Libraries this month. Good job my Gran sent me a hefty tip to pay for them. All of these B.F.L. tales came originally from Modern Boy, but I was glad to read them again. The first is "Biggles Flies East". This one is partially set in Russia. It is, of course, by W.E. Johns. The second B.F.L. is "Captain

The ST FRANK'S CASTAWAYS

by *Edwy Searles Brooks*

Swept away from England in a stricken airship—plunged into the Adriatic Sea—and cast ashore in a small kingdom where brigands hold sway! Such are a few of the thrilling adventures which befall the chums of St. Frank's in this powerful tale. It's much too exciting to be missed!



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SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

Justice on Thunder Mountain". In this one the adventurers go to China in the giant airship, Silver Cloud. Final S.B.L. - the best of the lot - is "Pals of the Pacific" with King of the Islands in a grand tale set in the South Seas.

In real life there has been a terrible accident on the London Underground. Two trains crashed between Charing Cross and Temple stations. 6 people have been killed and 40 injured. This is the worst accident ever on the Underground. It is exactly 31 years since a passenger was killed on the Underground of London.

Somehow I'm not all that keen on the new big size Modern Boy. Even the print seems to be a bit smaller and squashed-in than it is in my other weeklies. Still, King of the Islands is still going strong. The first tale of the month is "Rivals of Pearl Island". Ken meets up again with the mystery boy, Peter, and Barney Hall and Van Duck are in deadly combat. Then came "Surprise Attack" in which Ken KING is trying to re-gain possession of his boat, the Dawn, which has been stolen by the pearl thieves. Followed by "Dutchman's Prize", continuing the story of the pearl island. Then the last of the month, "Rescue Under Fire" with Van Duck

determined to get the secret out of Peter, and Ken trying hard to rescue the boy. The series continues next month.

The Captain Justice tales have been "Space-Rocket Raiders", "Into Thin Air", and "The Runaway Planet", which brings to an end the present Justice series, with victory for Flaznagel the Wizard.

Hitler, with his awful Nazis, has marched into Austria. Old Adolf seems out to conquer the whole of Europe. It all looks a bit ominous for people on the continent. Good job we haven't ever built a Channel Tunnel, or he'd be turning a fishy eye in this direction. Wow!

There is a new Hercule Poirot novel by Agatha Christie in the shops. It is called "Appointment with Death". Doug bought it for 7/6, and he let me read it in return for my doing a bit of fagging for him. It is a lovely tale, set in Palestine. There is a lady member of parliament in it, and Doug says he reckons she is based on the real life lady M.P., Lady Astor. Be awful if my brother gets sent to gaol for slander!

Agatha Christie has given an interview in the Daily Mail this month, and she says she wishes she had never created Poirot. Now I'll tell one! He is the best 'tec character in the world, only just short of Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake.

A mixed bag in the Gem this month - some part of it very forgettable but some part quite unforgettable. The month's first tale is "Tom Merry & Co's Dog Show" which, very obviously, is not by the real Martin Clifford. It is a confusing affair and very scrappy. Cousin Ethel asks the chums to help an old chap, John Palmer, who is down on his luck. Talbot recognises Palmer as a sneak-thief he once knew. The chums put on a dog show to raise money. The dogs run wild in the school. Palmer disappears with the money. Then Cousin Ethel turns up with the real John Palmer. Oh, what a mix-up. Then came "Skimpole the Sportsman". Skimpole plans to reform a shady bookmaker by winning all his money. Good typical Skimpole fun. Then two lovely tales. Two of the best St. Jim's stories ever written. "The Funk of the Fourth" is a new boy named Valentine Outram. He is so scared of everybody that the fellows, all except Gussy, despise him. It seems preposterous when Levison claims that the new boy is really a very strong fellow named George Purkiss, who was sent to Hillstall Reformatory for nearly killing a man on Brighton seafront. And nobody believes Levison - and Outram carries on as an out-and-out funk. The next tale is the sequel, "The Boy Who Betrayed Himself". To save his only pal at St. Jim's, Outram, the funk, betrays his own strange secret. A magnificent Gem pair. They would make a splendid S.O.L. one day. I wonder whether they will. The Greyfriars tales at the back of the Gem are this month about the Greyfriars fellows and the Cliff House girls getting shipwrecked, and cast on a deserted isle.

As usual I have been a good customer at the Pictures this month. First film we saw was "Stella Dallas" starring Barbara Stanwyck. A rather coarse woman marries a very high-class man, and he is embarrassed by his wife's antics. Too sad for me, but Mum loved it. But I much enjoyed a story of stage life entitled "Stage Door" which starred Ginger Rogers and Katherine Hepburn. A lovely one was "A Hundred Men and a Girl" with Deanna Durbin and Adolphe Menjou, all about a girl who found a job for her father and his orchestra. But rather weak was Eddie Cantor in "Ali Baba Goes to Town", and not much better was "The Return of

the Scarlet Pimpernel", a British film with Barry K. Barnes and Margaretta Scott. Mildly entertaining was "The Varsity Show", a musical with Dick Powell, but "Dead End", starring Humphrey Bogart was right up my street. A gangster film, this one.

In the Magnet the series has gone on about the Greyfriars chums in the Wild West. Sad to set down, I'm not really all that keen on it, though it has its moments. The scene is Mr. Vernon-Smith's ranch near Packsaddle -- I hope that the awful crowd and the weird Headmaster from the Gem's Packsaddle series are not going to come into it. First tale of the month is "Ructions on the Ranch". The crook foreman, Barney Stone, is nervous that the Bounder is going to get wise to the foreman's dirty work. In the next tale "A Prisoner in the Desert", Vernon-Smith is carried away by Indians. The Bounder is saved, and Barney Stone is put in the calaboose. Then "The Raid on Kicking Cayuse Ranch". Not all that surprisingly, the Rio Kid now comes into the series. I love the Kid, but somehow this lot seem so artificial and not quite the Kid we know so well. Mule-Kick Hall, captain of the Texas Rangers - well-known in the old Rio Kid tales - is also on the scene. Final of the month is "The Man with the Hidden Face", which also has the Rio Kid well to the fore. And the Bounder has developed into a seasoned cow-puncher. The series goes on next month. It's getting a wee bit tedious. I suppose Harry Wharton & Co will go back to Greyfriars one day.

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

S.O.L. NO. 334 "Harry Wharton Declares War" comprised a further 3 stories from the 2nd Wharton the Rebel series of the Magnet of the Autumn of 1932. (What a wonderful year 1932 had been in the Magnet!). S.O.L. No. 335 "Under False Colours" was a 4-story series which had appeared in the Boys' Friend in June 1924. It slotted beautifully into the medium, and made a perfect S.O.L.

The 1938 Gem story "Tom Merry & Co's Dog-Show" had been "By Cousin Ethel's Wish" just before Christmas in 1916. It was a sub story. (Actually this was the second sub tale republished in the course of a week or two. I began to sit up and take notice and think thoughts.) "Skimpole the Sportsman" had appeared under the same title in May 1916. The following two weeks in 1916 also provided the next two stories for Danny in 1938. These two linked tales made a wonderful pair. "The Funk of the Fourth" of 1938 had been "Under Gussy's Protection", which is notable as the last issue of the Gem with blue covers. It was dated 12th June, 1916. The next story in 1938 "The Boy Who Betrayed Himself" had been "A Strange Secret" in 1916, the first white covered Gem. A lovely couple of tales. Danny wondered whether they would make, one day, a magnificent S.O.L. They never did. But, a long, long time ago, under the title "A Strange Secret" they formed the first lovely book in John Wernham's splendid Maidstone Museum Press publications. I'm not sure that I was not the one who suggested to our John that this fine Gem couple should be his opening offering. Perhaps he may remember.

So it was in 1938 that Agatha Christie made the quaint claim that "she wished she had never created Poirot". Some years later Richmal Crompton was to make the equally preposterous statement that she wished she had never created

her most famous and popular character William. When, later on, I told her I took it with a grain of salt, she agreed with me. She loved William.

"Appointment with Death", the Christie novel, was dramatised (I believe by Agatha herself) and the play was staged at the Piccadilly Theatre in London just after the war.

Mary Clare played the star feminine lead in it. Poirot was not in the play, and the murder was committed by a different person from the book, so clearly the play could not have been very pleasing to those who were acquainted with the novel.

The Rio Kid was an anachronism with the Greyfriars schoolboys of 1938, in the same way as he had been misplaced in the Hollywood of Talking Pictures in a series in Modern Boy a few months earlier. With the progress of communications and transport, an outlaw of the Kid's type could not have been riding the ranges long after the first dozen years of the century.



THE ST. FRANK'S SERIALS IN THE GEM.

by Betty Hopton

My first serious introduction to the delights of St. Frank's College was not through the pages of the Nelson Lee Library, but through the Gem. Since then, my interest in the Nelson Lee has been helped along enormously by information from my good friends Mr. Charles Churchill and Mr. Jim Cook and Mr. Bill Bradford, the Nelson Lee Librarian.

Like many Gem enthusiasts I was guilty of ignoring the serial at the back of the paper, but, when reading Gem Number 1388, for some reason I started reading the serial. It was the first episode of a new story about St. Frank's, and I found the title quite intriguing. Entitled "The Ten Talons of Taaz", this was an original tale which had never appeared in the Nelson Lee Library. I was absolutely enthralled, and overnight became an E.S. Brooks fan.

This serial occupied the latter part of the Gem from Number 1388 to Number 1398. The chums of St. Frank's, in trying to help save the priests of Taaz from drowning, had unfortunately, gazed

upon the sacred face of the High Priest, named Raa-ok, and broken the sacred laws of the Temple of Taaz. The punishment for this was instant death, but as the boys had come to do the priests a good turn, Raa-ok spares them for the moment. The boys are told that the Great Taaz, the Vulture God, must be appeased, and, in order to go on living, each boy must undergo an ordeal, a test of valour, and anyone who fails will be killed instantly.

The boys return to St. Frank's, to await the call of Taaz; the first boy to be called is Travers, but all ten of the chums are summoned in turn, including Nipper. The boys all know when one of their chums has been summoned by Taaz, as the victim seems to be in a semi-trance and not in control of his own will, and his legs automatically take him to wherever the yellow men are waiting. Handforth, in his usual forthright manner, says that he is not a bit afraid of the Priests of Taaz; in fact he does not care two figs about those yellow fiends. Poor old Handy has grossly underestimated the ruthlessness of the priests, and as a result he very nearly loses his life. Eventually Nelson Lee arrives at the scene to put things right.

This tale was also published in Film Fun in 1961. There are several other original St. Frank's serials in the Gem and if they are all as good as the above, they will be well worth reading. In my opinion, the "Ten Talons of Taaz" is among the best of all of Mr. Brooks' writings. Unfortunately, it appeared after the Nelson Lee Library had ceased publication. This splendid tale fully deserved to be published as a Monster Library, or as two issues of the Schoolboys' Own Library. It is a dreadful shame that such a superb series was only used to fill up space in other story papers.

ST. FRANK'S FRAMEWORK.

by Ernest Holman

Completing the reading of an S.O.L. from Bill Bradford's well-stocked Library, I was interested to see an addition to the copy. This was a portion of an issue of Story Paper Collector, for January 1960, No. 72 Vol. 3.

This was my first glimpse of Bill Gander's noted publication - started in 1941, it would by 1960 have been running alongside C.D. prior to its eventual incorporation therein. The portion in question was an article about St. Frank's, entitled 'Babblings on Brooks' by Berenice Thorne.

In this article, Ms. Thorne gave her viewpoint of certain of the St. Frank's characters. In a few cases, she suggested an 'origin'; in others, she raises aspects that I think might interest

today's Leeites. I only intend to touch briefly on the writer's remarks here - I wonder how many readers may, perhaps, be in possession of the full article?

Starting with Nipper, this character is described as self-righteous, with a conceit and 'holier than thou' attitude exhibited to his companions. We are also asked to accept that, in the time of 'self-narration', Nipper played a passive role, hovering in the background but rarely appearing in the limelight. Later, the writer contends, when E.S.B. was the narrator, Nipper becomes an unpleasant character. E.S.B. is likened to Baron Frankenstein, unable to control his own creation.

Handforth comes next on the list, described as an overbearing bully and braggart. His treatment of his chums, it is believed, justified a term in Borstal. A comparison is made with Greyfriars' Coker, pointing out, though, that the latter was by far the more dense. E.O.H. is depicted as having been heavily overdrawn.

Archie Glenthorne also qualifies for this latter 'picture' and is mainly dismissed as an unbelievable person. He originated, it is stated, with P.G. Wodehouse, but as a caricature. William Napoleon Browne is also credited to Wodehouse, but not as a caricature. He was, though, a character spoiled by his polished egotism.

Vivian Travers, Berenice assures us, earned E.S.B. his greatest laurels. He is considered to have a touch of Glenthorne, Browne and - from St. Jim's - quite a bit of Cardew. Of all the characters discussed in this article of nearly thirty years ago, Travers is stated to have been Edwy's greatest invention, with a comment that it was tragic that he arrived so late in the saga.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was mentioned as a good example of the over-worked stratagem of 'reform' merely for the sake of writing a good series. Ms. Thorne adds that she believes the reform of Fullwood was E.S.B. acting on the whim of readers. Reggie Pitt is also included as part of this reform policy - the point being made that the Serpent had great potentialities and his reform did them less than justice.

Finally, as far as members of the Staff were concerned, Dr. Stafford was reckoned to have been the best of all St. Frank's Headmasters, with no one else ever achieving his 'Spirit of St. Frank's' outlook. Barney Goole is merely another freak, Pyecraft worse than St. Jim's Ratcliff, and Alington Wilkes was a loveable character unlikely to have been seen at a school like St. Frank's.

Let it also be mentioned that the writer of the article in question expressed herself as being no admirer of Nelson Lee; Edwy Searles Brooks is regarded as having drawn most of his characters on the 'hit or miss' method.

Now, let me be honest. I have extracted only what I regard as a 'framework' from quite a long article - which, believe me, is very well written. Whether it would be within the sphere of 'practical politics' to be able to publish it some time in the future - the Annual, perhaps? - I am unable to say. I am also refraining from making comments of my own - not through unwillingness but because the Nelson Lee Column has its real, efficient, expert contributors. They might like to take up the matter; some may even have the article in question, or access to it.

Adapting from Band Wagon's Syd Walker, may I ask "What do you think, chums?"



SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY EDITORS, No. 4.

William Howard Baker

by W.O.G. Lofts

William Howard Baker was born in Ireland in 1925, the eldest son of British parents. One could say that he had a very early association with Amalgamated Press Ltd, when a favourite Aunt used to buy him weekly coloured comics, The Rainbow and Tiger Tim's Weekly.

So by the time he attended Infants School he had a big advantage over many children, already being able to read and write.

Later he attended a private school. It was here in the middle and late thirties that he and his school friends read and discussed the magic world of Greyfriars in the school breaks, and at weekends. All stories were read alike with the same great interest, whether set at school, abroad, or in the English countryside. The Christmas series represented some of his favourite reading, and some of his original copies are still in existence - rather tattered, but still highly prized. By the time he had reached Fifth and Sixth Forms, he was editor of the school magazine "The Centaur"

The middle of World War Two saw him in the armed forces; after his demobilisation he travelled a great deal in Australia, Asia, North Africa, Central America and on the Continent as a free-lance writer, contributing many articles for popular magazines. Later he settled in London, as London correspondent for a group of European papers, and later he became editor of Panther Books.

By about 1954, The Sexton Blake Library was in a very bad way, so much so that it looked as if it would be axed, once the editor Len Pratt had retired. Sales had been slipping for years, until its circulation was at a record low. However, it was decided to give it a last chance by complete modernisation of its format, bringing it up-to-date for the current readership. P. Montague Haydon, then Director of Juvenile Publications, had read some of Bill Baker's work and liked what he saw. Consequently, after a meeting with Leonard Matthews - the Managing editor - at the Press Club, it was agreed that he would take on the editorship of The Sexton Blake Library.

Until he was able to take over, a top editor, David Roberts, acted as 'caretaker'. P. Montague Haydon and Leonard Matthews were greatly enthusiastic about the 'new look' Blake, giving ideas, and suggestions for the new format. Indeed P.M. Haydon had the idea of getting his friend Ian Fleming of James Bond fame to write a story of the great detective, though this never materialised. In fact quite a few well known writers later were interested in penning the revived Sexton Blake stories, including Len Deighton of 'The Ipress File' fame, as well as John Creasey. Unfortunately nothing came of it, due to the low budget that was allowed for the Library.

On the other hand, unlike W.B. Home-Gall, W.H. Back, and Len Pratt, the previous editors, W. Howard Baker was also a fiction writer, so was able to contribute many fine stories for the new saga.

In fact, it must be recorded that he went to great lengths to try and please the old guard of readers by re-introducing some of the traditional characters, as well as having Eric Parker illustrate special stories. The main thing was that the circulation rose, with the bulk of readers enjoying Blake's being in his new, plush offices at Berkeley Square, with his new attractive assistants, Paula Dane and Marion Lang, not forgetting the up-to-date Tinker, and Millie the office-cat!

Unfortunately the Daily Mirror group took over Fleetway Publications when the demand for higher circulations caused the great Library to finish in 1963. Even then it carried on in better format (thanks to the great enthusiasm of W. Howard Baker) in the shape of the Mayflower Books. These lasted for another seven years, ending in 1970, in hardback form.

It was whilst at Fleetway House in the sixties that Mr. Baker, knowing the scarcity and value of Magnet No. 1, suggested the idea of a facsimile copy in a souvenir edition. Priced only 1/6d it probably was the best bargain of all time. With an enormous print run, and even then a reprint, it possibly also started a trend and a spate of similar projects in future years.

Later, when running his own publishing business in Bloomsbury, Bill Baker decided as an experiment and for a bit of fun to publish a facsimile volume. He well remembered buying the last Schoolboys' Own Library in 1940, when, after reading the first two issues comprising Wharton & Co's. adventures in the Land

of the Pyramids, he was frustrated at the non-appearance of the S.O.L. which would have contained the last part of the series. This, of course, was because of the wartime paper shortages. (He was only able to read the conclusion of the series later on when, at Fleetway House, the file volume of Magnets containing these stories was available to him.) His original 5000 run of his facsimile Egypt Series was soon sold out, and reprinted several times before finally going out of print. Other facsimile volumes followed, including the Greyfriars Book Club editions. The rest is history!

For over almost twenty years now, he has received tens of thousands of letters from grateful subscribers from all parts of the world. Many extoll the great service he has rendered to the saga of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. This was echoed by Sexton Blake enthusiasts, when he kept the Sexton Blake Library running for another decade for readers.



JEMIMA IN THREE PARTS !

BY MARGERY WOODS, TOMMY KEEN
AND ESMOND KADISH,



PART III:

by Esmond Kadish

Characters who are not quite what they seem to be on the surface, are always intriguing. As a youngster, I was fascinated by Jemima Carstairs, when I first encountered her in the SCHOOLGIRL, in the summer of 1932. She was standing, eton-cropped and D'Arcy-like in appearance, and with monocle a-gleam, at the top of the gangway to the Mediterranean-cruise liner, "Plathian", waving a greeting to the Cliff House girls, who were just about to go abroad. The moment she addressed Bessie Bunter: "'Tis indeed a pleasure to see thee, Fat One'" I knew that here was a character who promised to be quite unlike the others.

So indeed, she proved to be. Perhaps it was the notion of that keen brain ticking away behind the inane exterior which attracted me. Or maybe the humorous, nonsensical comments hiding the fact that she was such a shrewd judge of character. I was pleased, too, to learn, later, that she was born - like myself! - under the astrological sign of Scorpio. Whatever the reason, she became a favourite.

Someone once suggested that she may have been inspired by

character actresses, Heather Thatcher, or Beatrice Lillie, in the twenties. Certainly, by the time John Wheway had reintroduced her into the Cliff House tales in the thirties, her famous eton-crop had become a shade demodé. Not that it mattered - she is the kind of character who surmounts fashion. She was created by L.E. Ransome in 1925, for a Morcove series in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, when Horace Phillips was taking a holiday. Subsequently, Mr. Ransome transferred Jemima to his Cliff House stories in the SCHOOLFRIEND, where she became a popular character.

But, for me, it is in Wheway's Cliff House tales for the SCHOOLGIRL, that she really seems to come to life, although it is nearly a year before he features her in a series of her own. In "Baffled by Jemima," (201), in which issue, by the way, a "glossy photocard" of Jemima is presented, she and her "guv'nor", Colonel Carstairs, pit their wits against the "international crook", Alphonse Duprez. The colonel - formerly of the Secret Service - is off to Nigeria, and bids farewell to his daughter:

"A final kiss, a last firm handshake, and Colonel Carstairs stepped into a compartment. Then for the first time, Jemima's lips did tremble.

Outwardly her spirits were as high as ever. Inwardly she felt that a great gap had been torn in her heart.

'Oh, chin up - chin up!' Jemima muttered fiercely. 'Chest out, old thing! Remember the old bulldog spirit. You're getting weak and girlish!'

"Jimmy" was one of only two Cliff House characters - the other was Diana Royston-Clarke - whom Wheway honoured by making the heroine of a serial of her own*. In "Jemima in Command", (302-15), Jemima takes charge of a village store, run by some distant relatives of hers, the Marshes, whose small business is being threatened with a take-over by the unscrupulous John Loftus, and his daughter Marcia - recently expelled from Cliff House. When confronted by Mr. Loftus, Jemima plays for time with some typical Carstairs burbling:-

"Observe in me", she added seriously, 'a girl at the jolly old cross-roads of life. Faced with dilemma on one hand, crisis on the other. Deadlocked and checkmated, and tied up in the jolly old cleft stick, what?'"

Loftus, of course, thought her a fool, but we, who knew her better, could positively hear those wheels going round in the "jolly old brain-box". Thus, Jemima continued on her imperturbable way in the SCHOOLGIRL, until the end of the Cliff House saga in 1940.

I must say it was a delightful surprise to renew her acquaint-

tance, when Mary Cadogan selected a tale from the 1939 SCHOOLFRIEND ANNUAL, "Jemima Gets Them Guessing", for the radio programme, "Story Time", in May 1985. I thoroughly enjoyed it - as I did the other tales in the series - although an indignant letter writer to the "Radio Times" appeared to consider Wheway's portrayal of Jemima as an affront to womanhood in general.

"Jimmy", one feels, would simply have smiled, and polished her monocle reflectively!

*(Editor's comment: These were serials in The Schoolgirl in addition to the weekly complete or series stories.)

NUTWOOD NOSTALGIA

by George Sewell

How many characters through the years have shown the durability and resilience of Rupert Bear? It is nearly seventy years since the Little Bear first made his appearance in the Daily Express in November 1920 and he has been an ever-present fact of British life since. His popularity shows no sign of diminishing and, if anything, is on the increase. Mary Tourtel, his creator, drew Rupert for almost sixteen years and during this time he also appeared in book form and in the Little Bear Library. Mary Tourtel's Rupert dwelt in a world of fantasy, compared with today's character; knights in shining armour, damsels in distress, evil warlocks, witches, malevolent gnomes and goblins were often the order of the day. However Mrs. Tourtel did provide the basic foundation for Rupert and also portrayed three of his friends who still feature in the stories today, Bill Badger, Edward Trunk and the Wise Old Goat.



Illustration copyright
Express Newspapers

When failing eyesight forced her to cease her drawing activities, the task of continuing Rupert fell to Alfred Bestall, already an established artist. Alfred brought to Rupert a freshness that at once charmed his original followers and gained him new ones. He built upon the Tourtel foundations, and was able to create one of the most successful fictional environments of the twentieth century.

His talent in establishing Nutwood and its neighbourhood equals, in my opinion, that of Frank Richard and Greyfriars. His creation of new characters without damaging the original story fabric was a masterpiece.

One facet of Rupert is that he is not a character easily defined; he is not a cartoon animal, merely for humorous entertainment. Neither is he, in the strictest sense, a story paper creature; in my opinion he should be classified as a pictured character. The reader is able immediately to identify with Rupert and his pals, and to join in their adventures. Rupert is a complex personality and, perhaps, even a microcosm of everyone's childhood dreams and fantasies. He embodies a Dr. Doolittle ability to converse with the birds and the animal with the facility to slip into a time warp wherein he encounters pirates, smugglers and South Sea Natives. He has the ability to indulge in scientific activities, usually being just the right size to try the latest invention of the Professor or the Inventor. On a lesser level he also proves a more than willing assistant to Bingo the Brainy Pup.

In this scientific setting Alfred was at his best in developing autogyros, diving bells, helicopter-powered backpacks and others too numerous to mention here. His crowning achievement was the magnificent apparatus which allowed the Wise Old Goat to convert the sun's rays into liquid sunshine which he was then able to bottle! One of these, delivered by Rupert, enabled Mrs. Bear to recover from a bad dose of influenza and the winter blues. The elves and imps provide a "behind the scenes" look into the mysteries of Nature. One memorable story explained the reason for fog occurring; it provided the trees with a "Natural Break", they were able, in the mist, to turn upside down and thereby rest their aching roots.

Amongst the elves Rupert was able to attempt some novel modes of transport; my particular favourite was the railcar that was finally 'arrested' in its mad career by a large hook suspended from the ceiling of a cavern. Another memorable underground journey was made in 1953 when Rupert had been to the Coronation and then returned to Nutwood via the Animals' Underground; this marvellous service is reputed to run beneath the actual Human version using a conveyor-type system of rippling carpets as transport; entry and exit are by convenient manhole covers.

I count myself fortunate that I have been able to follow Rupert's adventures in the Express and of course in the most excellent Annuals. I only lack the 1942 and 1943 annuals from my own collection, but I still have some way to go to collect all the published Rupertiana.

Two sources have increased my enjoyment; firstly the superb Rupert Index by Bill Lofts and Derek Adley and, secondly, George Perry's Rupert, A Bear's Life. Many Rupert aficionados are instantly recognised by the distinctive scarf knotted about the throat. In Summer of course identification proves slightly more difficult.

The sensible franchising of products by the Express group has not led to a flooded market situation and many collectors do purchase 'ephemera' as well. The only items, non-book, that have tempted me are the jigsaw puzzles and, most recently, the excellent plates produced by Wedgwood for The Daily Express. The first shows Rupert on a swing, this is a picture from the 1961 Annual, the second is the lantern-lit, snow scene from the cover of the 1949 Annual. These are hopefully the first of many.

After Alfred Bestall, the drawing was taken over by Alex Cubie and John Harrold, and the latter has now assumed the responsibility for the portrayal of Rupert's Adventures. It is a challenge as the hero in question is a national institution and any artist's particular ideas have to be affected slowly. Thankfully John Harrold is basically content to follow the dictates of Rupert and so are many thousands of folk to whom Rupert has given, and will continue to give, so much pleasure.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The ever resilient Rupert's name crops up with growing frequency in my mail from C.D. readers, some of whom may like to know that there is a Rupert club - "The Followers of Rupert" - which issues an excellent quarterly journal called "Nutwood". (Enquiries to Tony Shukker, 35 Hollingbury Park Avenue, Brighton, BN1 7JG.)

FOR SALE: Union Jack Xmas Double for 1916 "The Blue God" £2.00. Union Jack No. 643 (Feb. 1916) "In Darkest London" (rough but rare copy) £1.00. Modern Boy No. 66 (1929) with King of the Islands: very nice copy £2.00. Aldine "O'er Land & Sea Library" No. 200 (collecting novelty) £1.00. S.O.L. No. 204 "Missing Schoolboy" (St. Jim's) nice copy £2.00. Hardbacks: Anstey's famous Victorian school story "Vice Versa" £2.00. "Jimmy" (Richmal Crompton) £1.00. "The School Jonah" (St. John Pearce) £1.50. Rare bundle for collectors of Boys' Friend: 1 halfpenny issue; plus 7 penny issues dated early in the century, plus 4 from 1924, these 4 containing Rookwood. Total of 12 Boy's Friends £12.00. P.&P. extra on all items. Write: Eric Payne, Excelsior House, 113 Crookham Road, Church Crookham, Hampshire, GU13 0NH.

WANTED! 'Boys Cinema' Mags. 1930 to 1940, preferably certain single issues with the film story titles identified on covers and within. Contact Mr. A. Broadbent, 8 Oatland Gardens, Leeds, LS7 1SL.

MORCOVE MINIATURES



HELEN CRAIG

By TOMMY KEEN



Helen Craig did not appear in the Morcove stories until after the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN had celebrated its third birthday. Then, in the first story a new series - "The Return of Cora Grandways" - Helen was introduced. The title alone must have sent many of the readers' hearts beating with excitement, for Cora Grandways, the one-time black sheep of Morcove, who, with her sister Judith, had left the school some fourteen months earlier, was evidently due to make a come-back.

Suddenly, she and her sister are back in Barncombe, Morcove's nearest town, staying with an Uncle Luke and Aunt Becky in a very large, old, dilapidated house, which Uncle Luke is hoping to sell to a Mr. Craig.

Helen Craig arrives at Morcove as a new girl in the Fourth, being described as very beautiful. She immediately becomes friendly with Betty Barton & Co. Her father is a widower, who is considering buying the house in Barncombe - Watermoor Grange - in which Cora's uncle and aunt are living. Cora, pleading remorse for past misdeeds, is allowed by Miss Somerfield to return to Morcove, her uncle agreeing to pay the fees. Uncle Luke has a reason! He wants Cora to become friendly with Helen, for the sole purpose of urging her to persuade her father to buy the house. Judith remains at the Grange as a house-maid. There is much scheming by Cora and her relatives, as the house is unsafe, floors collapsing and walls and ceilings dropping, but through some useful investigation by the intrepid Betty and Co., Helen and her father are warned, and, to solve all problems, Watermoor Grange goes up in flames. Cora, however, remains at Morcove, where she is joined by Judith. Her friendship with Helen abruptly finishes.

Mr. Craig's permanent residence is in London's fashionable Park Lane district, to which Betty & Co. are often invited. (They stayed there during their Wembley Exhibition holiday.) During the

Christmas holidays of 1926, Helen remains at Morcove, realising that her father is in financial trouble, but not knowing where he is. Meanwhile Betty & Co., with Betty's parents, sail for Canada, and the Wild West. Then a telegram arrives for Helen from her father. He is in Canada! In a rather incredible series, Helen stows away on the liner in which Betty & Co. are spending Christmas, but of course, unbeknown to Helen. She crosses Canada by herself, and, would you believe it, arrives at Golden Valley, the very place where Betty, Polly, Madge, Paula, Tess, and Naomer are staying. Not only does she meet her chums (without too much surprise), but also, with all financial troubles solved, her father.

Four years later, Helen's father is in Mexico, again in some sort of trouble, and Helen befriends a girl called Muriel Lane, who is being forcibly held by a Mexican couple, Jose and Andro Garcia, near Morcove. Muriel runs away, and Helen, knowing that Muriel is in danger, hides her in a barn at Dolly Delane's parents' home. In time, all problems are solved, Helen's father returns from Mexico, and Muriel goes away, to live happily ever after.

On her arrival at Morcove, Helen first shared a study with Paula Creel, and they were later joined by Naomer Nakara. Later she joined Dolly Delane and Trixie Hope, and, for a while Madge Minden and Tess Trelawney, but, with the arrival of Pam Willoughby, and until the end of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, Helen and Pam were usually referred to as study-mates.

Perhaps with no special talents, although on one occasion she did write the Fourth Form's Christmas Play, Helen is a friendly, intelligent girl, who, almost immediately after her introduction to Morcove, became one of the Study 12 coterie.

* * *



ALL ALONE! With just one light switched on, Helen Craig sat down in the lonely study. How her chums must be enjoying themselves this evening! she thought.

LETTERS FROM THE GREYFRIARS ARCHIVES (IV)

Selected by Les Rowley

From Inspector Grimes of the Kent Constabulary to Dr. Locke, The Headmaster.

Dear Doctor Locke,

You will have learned of the successful apprehension of the criminals known as 'Jimmy the Gun'; the 'Dodger'; 'Arnold the Otter' and 'Gelignite Charlie' and will have my satisfaction in knowing that these gentry will not be at large for many years to come.

Although the credit for the arrest of these criminals can rightly be laid at the door of the police forces under my direction, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the assistance rendered to the investigations by some boys of Greyfriars School. I shall be grateful if you would pass my personal thanks on to the boys Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull and their Indian friend whose name I cannot recall. They are a credit to their School.

I am respectfully,

J. Grimes (Inspector)

From 'Jimmy the Gun', HM Prison, Wormwood Scrubs, to Master Harry Wharton.

Master Wharton,

Without interference from you and your friends that fool Grimey would never have put us away. But don't rest too easy in your beds! You'd better think again if you reckon me and the rest are put away for years. We'll be seeing you all again soon and then you'd better watch out. Your own friends won't know you when we've done with you and perhaps next time you'll not poke your noses into other people's business.

See you soon,

Jimmy the One.

From the Area Head Postmaster to the Headmaster of Greyfriars School.

Dear Headmaster,

Over a period of some considerable time my officers have been much exercised in trying to trace a number of postal orders that have been allegedly mislaid in transit by mail to a boy at your school. A Master Bunter is the instigator of these enquiries, the volume

of which has now reached nuisance proportions.

I shall be most grateful if you would see the boy and advise him that he should contact the senders of these remittances (some of whom I gather are titled) and enquire if and when the remittances were despatched. On receipt of this information I shall be pleased to cause further investigation to be made.

I shall be further grateful if you would counsel Master Bunter to the effect that should his complaints be found to be of a frivolous or fictitious nature steps may be taken to obtain from him compensation for waste of Post Office time.

I am &c
Area Head Postmaster

From the Headmaster, Greyfriars School to the Area Head Postmaster.

Dear Head Postmaster,

Thank you for your letter regarding Bunter of this School and the complaints that this boy has made in regard to missing postal orders.

I am concerned that a boy of this school should be the cause unnecessary endeavour by the gentlemen under your supervision since the missing postal orders appear to be a figment of the boy's imagination.

On his behalf I ask you to accept apologies for the inconvenience caused.

Certain action has been taken in the matter and I venture to predict that you will be given no cause for further complaint.

I am &c
H.H. Locke (Headmaster)

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.

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.

OUR BOOKSHELVES

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES", by Frank Richards.

(Howard Baker Book
Club Special £18.00)

Reviewed by ERIC FAYNE.

This lovely volume contains 6 consecutive Red Magnets commencing from mid-February 1915. Apparently it was a time when the threat of "paper shortage" was not so acute as it had been feared it might be. Earlier the number of pages in the Magnet had been reduced from 32 to 28. The opening issue in this volume is a 28-pager, but with the next week, without any blowing of trumpets, the paper returned to 32 pages for a time. Furthermore there are advertisements of new periodicals starting, and of some of the others giving specially enlarged issues. Pro tem, the idea of a paper shortage went into retirement.

Of the stories, though they make pleasant and, indeed, fascinating reading, there is nothing memorable. All are by the genuine Frank Richards, but somehow early 1915 was a period when the Magnet was really "marking time". Bunter's father has been making money from lucky speculating on the Stock Exchange, and unusual cash tips come Bunter's way, making him slightly more a blackguardly character and rather less of a loveable "fatty". The first tale in the book introduces this theme, which lingers on and blooms again in "Bunter's Banknotes" which is the final yarn in the volume.

The most outstanding treat comes in two linked stories, "The Last Plunge" and "Captured at Last". Vernon-Smith is well to the fore in this excellent couple, but Johnny Bull is the star. A man named Falke, who is the secretary of Johnny Bull's rich uncle, is sent from Australia to report on Johnny's character. In the second tale, Johnny leaves Greyfriars to join his uncle in Australia, and Johnny suggests that Squiff should take his, Johnny's, place in that celebrated group, the Famous Five. And, for a while, that was done, not particularly happily, I would think. "Tom Dutton's Triumph" is a rarity, being a tale of skating, and bringing a minor character into the limelight. Finally "Through Fire and Flame", a readable enough piece in which Bunter, still acting the "blade", carelessly starts a fire in the woodshed. So a number of rival fire-brigades are started at Greyfriars, the climax coming with an heroic rescue of Mark Linley by Harry Wharton and the Remove Brigade.

As a sideline, the advertisements in this volume are of

exceptional interest. Two papers, the Dreadnought and the Boy's Friend, had come under the editorship of Hinton, the editor at that time of the Companion Papers. To boost the Dreadnought, Hinton introduced the early Greyfriars tales into that paper. They were to run for six months, in fact, before the paper folded. Years earlier, when the Penny Popular had started, the early St. Jim's reprints had appeared therein, proving that St. Jim's was more popular than Greyfriars then. Now, in 1915, the Greyfriars tales went into the Dreadnought. They did not save the Dreadnought. But the Penny Pop, with St. Jim's carried on. Makes you think'. More important, Hinton introduced a new school - Rookwood - into the Boy's Friend, and that was a roaring success. Hinton knew the pull and power of his star author.

Well, there we are. Another lovely Howard Baker volume, superbly bound as always, with 6 tales to intrigue the historian - and some fascinating advertisements of other joys for the youngsters of 1915.

DIPS INTO NOSTALGIC DELIGHTS

Reviews by Mary Cadogan

Two of the most popular children's books of all time are now celebrated in sumptuous and splendid publications.

Gollancz have published a large, beautifully printed edition of Anna Sewell's **BLACK BEAUTY** (still surely the best horse story ever written) with illustrations in colour and black and white by Charles Keeping, which, as well as conveying the vigour and magnificence of Beauty, are wonderfully atmospheric of late Victorian England. At £8.95 it is a book for the whole family to treasure.

Kenneth Grahame's **THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS** must be one of the most joyous books in the English language. **MY DEAREST MOUSE** (Pavilion Books £15.95) comprises Grahame's letters to his small son Alastair (known as 'Mouse') during the summer of 1907, when the boy was away at the seaside with his governess. These letters are continuations of the animal stories which Grahame had been telling his son (at bedtimes) 'about moles, giraffes and water rats'. They create a



vivid cast of animal characters, including Toad, Ratty, Badger and Mole, and are thus a spontaneous first draft of THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, which was to be published in the following year. The letters are reproduced in facsimile, and the book is illustrated by many of Arthur Rackham's and Ernest Shepard's pictures of Grahame's animals in both vibrant colour and black and white.

LONDON'S RAILWAYS THEN AND NOW by Edwin Course (Batsford £10.95) teems with fascinating facts and pictures for anyone interested in old trains and railway architecture. It is a history, which captures the excitement of the early days of railway expansion, 'the race to reach the green fields of Ealing', for example, and the development of rail links around social events like the Epsom Races, the Crystal Palace Exhibitions and the rugby matches at Twickenham. It makes one think of the times described in our old papers when the trains never seem to run late!

Lastly, I must confess to a special personal interest in NATTERING IN PARADISE by Daniel Meadows (Simon & Schuster £12.95), as it contains a chapter entitled 'Mary Cadogan, juggling at parties'. It is an extremely sympathetic study of life in a contemporary suburb which, although not named in the book, is that encompassed by the Bromley, Beckenham and Chislehurst area. It is a celebration of the community life of the suburbs, and, after many writers have set out to condemn suburbia, it is refreshing to read a book produced by a writer and photographer of distinction who tackles his subject with a new eye and an open mind. (The Old Boys' Book Club gets a mention in the M.C. chapter, which deals with my love of books as well as my feelings for the area in which I live.)

Your Editor says—



It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc. in it. The rates are 4p per word; a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.

EVERY MONDAY—MY FAVOURITE.—PRICE 2d.

STRONGHEART THE TRACKER

An exciting long picture-story of JIMMY DAUNTLESS, detective, JOHN MANLEY,
and STRONGHEART THE SECOND, The Wonder Dog of the Films.



Norman Wright's interesting article on SPARKLER (C.D. March '88) set me on the browsing trail in search of SPARKLER and MY FAVOURITE, another of A.P.'s golden-age publications. MY FAVOURITE was the fore-runner of SPARKLER, and the final issue on October 13th, 1934 blithely announced its change of name and all the goodies in store the following week when SPARKLER made its debut.

Yes, Strongheart certainly was a wonder dog! For he was the only survivor of MY FAVOURITE. I wonder if he survived CRACKERS!

MARGERY WOODS

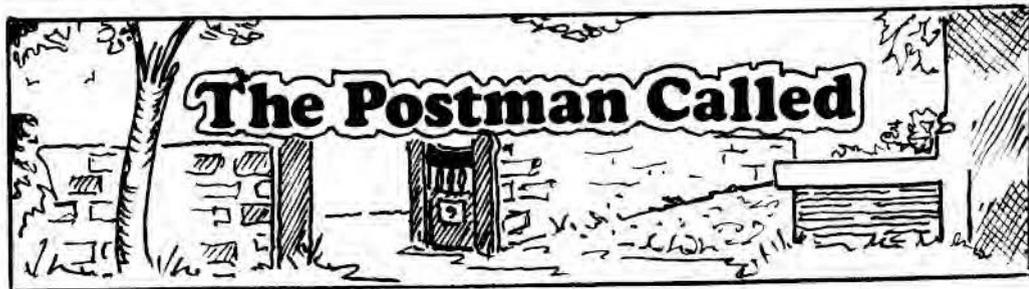
GREAT NEWS FOR YOU!

From to-day a wonderful new change is coming to "MY FAVOURITE." It will not be called "MY FAVOURITE" any more. Its bright and jolly new name will be

THE NEW
PAPER TO
ASK FOR
NEXT
MONDAY.



THE NEW
COLOURED
COMIC AND
STORY PAPER
YOU WILL
LOVE.



H. HEATH (Bexhill): I was interested in Eric Fayne's reference in the March C.D. to a story in a 1938 B.F.L. entitled, "The Imposter of the Fourth", written by Edwy Searles Brooks under the pen-name of Robert W. Comrade.

This story was contained in no. 615 and concerned Leonard Fenwick's adventures at Sandcliffe School, and was followed by no. 619 of the B.F.L. entitled, "The League of Bullies", dealing with David Fenwick's activities at St. Otwells.

The two titles were reprints from the two B.F.L.'s (1st Series, nos. 403 and 405) which were published in 1917 under the titles of "Scorned by the School", and "The Cad of the School".

The story of the identical Fenwick twins first appeared in the "Dreadnought" in November, 1912 (nos. 25 to 48).

C.H. CHURCHILL (Topsham): Re. Eric's B.F.L.'s printed "sideways" across the pages giving three columns of reading matter, a lot of B.F. Library stories were printed in this way around the year 1917. I have No. 417 in hand printed this way. This is a repeat of the first eight stories of the Cedar Greek Saga. It was priced at 4d. but I believe earlier numbers were priced at 3d.

WILL LOFTS (London): I greatly enjoyed the articles by Bob Whiter (Hotspur) and Norman Wright's (Sparkler) in the March C.D. The former brings back great nostalgic memories when I bought the first issue on my 10th Birthday. Actually Derek Adley and myself have a large collection of Hotspurs - probably 80% of the set, and wonder if any collector has the complete run of this fine paper. There was an earlier Sparkler comic than the one Norman describes which I remember, produced by Provincial Comics in the West Country in 1931, running for about 20 issues. This was a rather crude penny effort, yet as a boy I loved reading through them. Whilst the A.P. Sparkler had some really brilliant comic artists including Bert Brown,

G.W. Wakefield, as well as Roy Wilson, it simply did not sell all that well, I can well remember an old A.P. Comic editor telling me at Fleetway House that he doubted if children really appreciated good art-work, when they could buy and enjoy such crude artists employed on some non-A.P. comics.

SIMON GARRETT (Bath): It was a great pleasure to read, in No. 495, Roger Jenkins' tribute to the Magnet Hollywood Series; always one of my favourites and, I've often felt, somewhat under-rated.

Mauleverer was in excellent form: immediately identifying the destitute Mexican Valdez as a gentleman, and the matinée idol Polk as a cad. Equally in character was his vain pursuit of a Hollywood starlet. Mauly's courtship was tireless, but so well-bred that the lady was never aware of it!

It's not quite true that the return trips from holidays were never covered. Mr. Jenkins' own fascinating contribution to the Charles Hamilton Companion Volume 1 notes two exceptions. Both the China and Brazil Series devoted an entire issue to the voyage home, the latter acting as a smooth transition to the Putnam van Duck Series. Usually an overseas series was rather casually wrapped up in a brief "Homeward Bound" chapter. Perhaps, having taken seven of the sixteen issues to get his characters to Hollywood, Mr. Hamilton felt enough was enough!

FOR SALE: Magnets good condition £1.00 each. NO TAPE. 1261, 1271, 1272, 1275, 1209, 1309, 1313, 1326, 1331, 1404, 1405, 1406, 1407, 1408, 1409, 1419, 1423, 1425, 1427, 1429, 1431, 1432, 1437, 1432, 1439, 1440, 1441, 1434, 1452, 1558, 1561, 1566, 1571, 1576, 1579, 1583, 1587, 1589, 1592, 1597, 1606, 1626, 1637, 1643, 1645, 1649. 5 VOGUE Knitting Books, 40p each, 1960. Taped Magnets, 40p each. S.A.E. Watson, 1 Cantbridge Close, Walton-on-Naze, Essex. CO14 8QJ.



The Greyfriars Book Club

HOWARD BAKER PRESS LIMITED

27a Arterberry Rd., Wimbledon, London, SW20
Tel: 01-947 5482 Cables: Bakerbook London



MIDLAND SECTION O.B.B.C.

An excellent meeting in March was attended by 9 Members, 2 more than last month. Tom Porter was still regrettably unable to be present, and there were several other apologies for absence. Interesting letters had been received from Darrell Swift, Bill Lofts and Ron Gardner.

Ivan Webster gave an amusing reading from 'Loder as Captain' series describing Loder's efforts to get Blundell to 'bend over'. The much enjoyed refreshments were provided by Betty and Johnny Hopton, Christine Brettell and Win Brown, and Ivan Webster. A number of quizzes followed, with Geoff Lardner's, based on the idea of crosswords, being rather difficult. Keith Normington was the winner of a quiz of 15 short questions based on the Magnet, Gem, and S.O.L., and Christine Brettell gave a quiz in similar style, as well as several rounds of Greyfriars Bingo.

We need to remind all members that their 'subs.' should be paid by the A.G.M. in May - £2 (£1 for pensioners), well within most people's financial resources.

JACK BELLFIELD

LONDON O.B.B.C.

The April Meeting of the Club took place in the Liberal Centre, Ealing, on Sunday, 10th April. In the absence of Phil Griffiths, Norman Wright welcomed an attendance of twenty three members, and official business ranged over the usual Treasurer and Librarian reports to the unveiling of the Charles Hamilton commemorative plaque at Ealing 16th April, the current entry in the Guinness Book of Records about Hamilton's output and the search for a possible venue for a luncheon meeting at an hotel.

In lighter vein we enjoyed a novel quiz, "A Study in Numbers" aptly named and just as aptly presented, by Miriam Bruning. Bill

Bradford gave us a talk, calculated to raise both interest and nostalgia, on "The Modern Boy". Alan Stewart, this month's desert castaway, spoke of the books he would take with him. These were Forester's "Mr. Midshipman Hornblower", Stevenson's "Kidnapped"; various Dick Turpin stories: the "Magnet" Egypt series; "a Gem" series featuring the Toff; the "Modern Boy" numbers 50/55 (Ken King); "Nelson Lee" (St. Frank's on the Congo); and Jack Adrian's "Sexton Blake Wins".

Don Webster read extracts from one of Eric Fayne's popular Slade stories ("Mr. Buddle's Hairshirt" from the CD Annual for 1985). All these items were suitably applauded and there was a vote of thanks to Bill for making the venue arrangements and assuring us a good cup of tea. Norman brought the meeting to a close. The next one will be at the home of Chris and Suzanne Harper, Sydney House, 23 Algiers Road, Loughton, on Sunday, 8th May. Please inform our hosts if you intend being present (Tel. (01) 508 4770).

LESLIE ROWLEY

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Despite a number of our members being absent because of illness and holidays, we had a total of 17 at our 9th April meeting. Chairman David Bradley welcomed Bruce Lamb, and Michael Bentley's teenage daughter Helen, both making their first visits. Members were impressed by our advertisement in the Dutch/English magazine BIGGLES NEWS, produced for all W.E. John's enthusiasts. Paul Galvin and David Bradley are organising the Johns' meeting at Nottingham in October. A number of Northern Club Members would be attending the 'Just William' meeting in Chester at the end of April.

William Hirst, one of our youngest members at 15 years of age, presented a superb paper on Von Stalhein, the adversary who crops up in so many Biggles stories. He first appeared in Biggles Flies East, and is a master of disguise who turns out to be a triple agent. A colourful character, modified after the Second World War for a new generation of readers, Von Stalhein was not killed off, ready for use in future stories. William Hirst's marvellous study resulted in many questions and observations.

After refreshments Paul Galvin presented his item, 'The Modern Boy'. This ran from 1928 until 1939 (610 numbers). Paul gave very interesting details about its stories and contributors, which included W.E. Jones, Frank Richards, Michael Poole and Murray Roberts. He brought along some splendid copies of the paper and

its associated annuals, which created a great deal of interest.

Next meeting: 14th May, when we are visiting Michael Bentley's library and home cinema. Accommodation is very limited for this popular evening, so if you wish to attend please contact Michael Bentley directly on Leeds 570512.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

SOUTH WEST CLUB

At the beginning of our April meeting Bill Lofts gave a tribute to the late Jack Parkhouse, one of our founder members, a great collector of comics and magazines and a good friend, who had died suddenly on 7th December, 1987. Tim Salisbury had had a letter from Charles Skilton saying he had left the West country to live in Scotland, so we shall miss his company. He told Tim how much he had enjoyed joining us at our meetings.

Bill gave a talk on 'Treasures' and had brought along some from his collection, including a framed painting of Billy Bunter and the Greyfriars boys, by C.H. Chapman. Naturally this led to members telling of their special treasures which was very interesting.

After a very good tea Mac spoke on Nelson Lee and St. Frank's from the time Maxwell Scott created the characters until E.S. Brooks took over, and other publications he appeared in. Finally we heard about the Castleton series and Handforth at St. Jim's.

The meeting broke up in the early evening, and it was decided to meet again on 25th September.

TIM SALISBURY

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Our April meeting took place at the Willingham village home of Keith Hodgkinson, our Secretary. To begin a series of personal reminiscences - and the associated mementoes - Bill Lofts told us about some of his personal treasures gathered from our mutual collecting hobby and from his researches connected with Old Boys books and story papers. His treasured items included such wonderful keepsakes as an autographed book from Lealie Charteris, some original Greyfriars artwork and models, a letter from Frank Richards concerning the early - Magnet era, and a 1970's IPC comic wherein Bill and Derek Adley had made an appearance in a cartoon strip. Later, Keith launched another fascinating series of illustrated-by-film talks: this first instalment being an introduction to the world of the early silent Westerns.

ADRIAN PERKINS

