

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

VOL. 45

No. 535

JULY 1991

"THE HEROISM OF PHILIPPA DERWENT!"

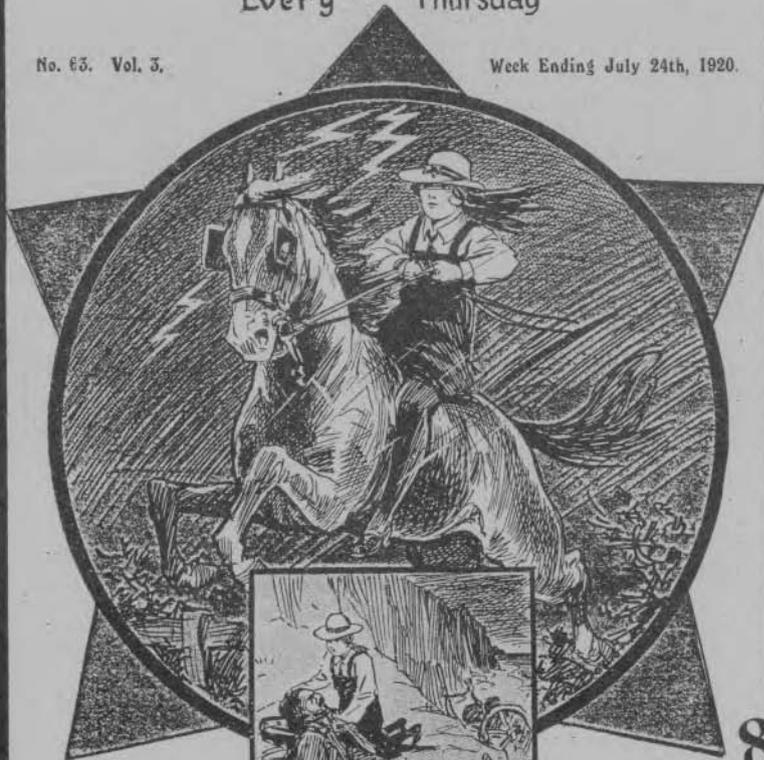
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No. 65. Vol. 3.

Week Ending July 24th, 1920.



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save a life—

Whilst Phyllis Howell
stays behind and tends
the injured man.

86p

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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The Editor's Chat



THE MAGIC OF PICTURES

This month's C.D. contains an obituary tribute by Brian Doyle to D.L. Mays, a wonderfully talented illustrator of many books and papers. His passing has caused me to reflect on how much our hobby owes to its artists, as well as its authors. Some, of course, became inextricably associated with certain fictional characters (Chapman and Shields with the Greyfriars boys, Paget with Sherlock Holmes, Thomas Henry with William, Tourtel and Bestall with Rupert, etc.), but others, like Mays, cropped up here, there and everywhere. It becomes a particular pleasure when one admires an illustrator to spot his or her work whenever this hits the eye as one browses through some book or paper from the past. And how prolific so many of them were! It is also interesting that illustrative talent seems often to have run within families - the Brocks, Wakefields, Parletts, and others - whose work has been particularly evident in juvenile publications.

As my personal tribute to D.L. Mays I am including in this editorial one of his illustrations to the first publication, in serial form, of W.E. Johns' *Worrals of the W.A.A.F.S.* Taken from the August 1941 issue of the *Girl's Own Paper*, this picture is almost exactly fifty years old. It

comes just over half way through Mays' long and productive life. We have recently published other, slightly earlier illustrations by him in Dennis Bird's fine series of articles about Dorothy Carter's stories of the girl flyer, Marise Duncan.



"Do you want to kill the lot of us?" shouted Worrals

A further tribute to Mays appears this month in Len Hawkey's *Random Jottings*. It is interesting to learn from this that Mays had contributed to the *Beano* and *Dandy* as well as to papers in which his work was so well known.

As a final thought on illustrators, it intrigues me that two of the most famous fictional schools - Greyfriars and Cliff House - were depicted with great success by more than one artist. In the case of the former, of course, the length of the series and the tremendous amount of work involved necessitated more than one hand. We are fortunate that the two regular illustrators, Chapman and Shields, co-operated and complemented each other's work so well. In the case of Cliff House two extremely different styles emerged. G.M. Dodshon's pictures during the 1920s in *The School Friend* were attractively designed (see this month's C.D. cover) but his girls were far from pretty, and sometimes verging on caricature. In the 1930s, in *The Schoolgirl*, T.E. Laidler portrayed Barbara Redfern, Majorie Hazeldene, Jemima Carstairs and their chums (even the notorious Bessie Bunter!) as glowing with vitality and charm. Illustrated here is my all-

time favourite at Cliff House, Clara Trevlyn, seen through Dodshon's and Laidler's eyes. For me, a nineteen-thirties schoolgirl, Laidler's version seemed the authentic one. Nevertheless Dodshon's is fascinating too, in its way.

Happy Holiday Reading.

MARY CADOGAN

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE FOR SCHOOLGIRLS.



No. 101 (New Series). Vol. 4

Week Ending February 12th, 1927.

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BAKER, BALLINGER - AND THE MAVERICK IRISHMAN

by JACK ADRIAN

Mark Taha (C.D., June) asks whether 'W.A. Ballinger' was Howard Baker. The answer is yes -- and no. It's a pretty complicated, not to say byzantine, business.

It's well known by now that Bill Baker wrote Blakes as 'Peter Saxon'. In general those Blakes he wrote under his own name and the Saxon pseudonym were hard-boiled thrillers. But Bill also had his more humorous side. The first Blake he wrote which featured this lighter approach was *Murder With Variety* (4:387) under the name 'William Arthur' (his real Christian names, incidentally; the 'Howard' was in fact tacked on because he liked the sound of it). When he wanted a new pseudonym he used his own initials, 'W.A.', and then, casting around for a suitably 'hard'-sounding name that would complement them, came up with 'Ballinger', which indeed has all kinds of resonances. I once put it to him that he'd swiped it from the American thriller writer Bill S. Ballinger, and he chuckled and said "I admit to nothing!" But he didn't deny it either.

His first two Ballingers were tough detective stories with an espionage theme; most of the rest were much more comic, at times farcical, in tone. However, another author was involved in some of the Ballingers: the maverick Irish writer Wilfred McNeilly, who had a hand in *A Corpse For Christmas* (4:514) and the final *SBL* from Fleetway *The Last Tiger* (4:526). As well he probably wrote a good deal of *Down Among the Ad Men* (5:45) -- I qualify that because I believe I see the Baker touch in some of the descriptive writing and dialogue; advertising was in any case one of Bill's favourite butts.

Here, of course, we have reached the complicated, not to say byzantine, bit. Bill Baker was a great believer in the 'house-name' system, whereby (particularly in the case of the *S.B.L.*) usable plots could be salvaged from otherwise unusable



W. HOWARD BAKER

manuscripts via drastic revision, either by Bill himself or a small army of dependable writers such as McNeilly, George Mann ('Arthur Maclean'). Philip Chambers, James Stagg, et al., the result issued under an editorially created name. Thus who actually wrote what is at times highly problematical.

Some years ago Bill Lofts and the late Derek Adley managed to extract from Bill Baker a partial list of those who, for instance, hid under the names 'Desmond Reid' and 'Richard Williams', and the indefatigable Steve Holland has codified and updated the result into a checklist published by the equally indefatigable (but unrelated) Richard Williams of the Dragonby Press. But there still remain gaps and what one might well describe as 'iffy' titles which, now that Bill Baker has passed on, will probably never be sorted out satisfactorily.

Worse, however -- in the 'who-wrote-what' sense -- was to come when Bill left Fleetway and set up his own Press Editorial Services syndicate which, during the mid- to late-1960s, poured out all kinds of genre fiction for the publisher Mayflower Books under a variety of editorially created names -- such as 'Petrina Crawford', 'Josephine Lindsay', and 'Marion Lang' (ho, ho). More familiar names appeared in the Mayflower lists as well: Bill himself as 'W. Howard Baker', McNeilly, 'Martin Thomas' (Thomas Martin), 'W.A. Ballinger', 'Desmond Reid' (Westerns mostly), and 'Peter Saxon' -- but not all the Saxons were by Bill alone and certainly not all the Ballingers.

Probably -- probably -- Bill's closest co-writing cohort in those days was McNeilly. They shared a capacity for hard graft when it was needed, as well as a considerable capacity for Irish whiskey -- the latter, alas, indirectly leading to an acrimonious rift between them. In his cups McNeilly was wont to boast that books published under certain of Bill's pseudonyms had in fact all been written by him. This was a wild exaggeration but it appeared as hard fact in print on a number of occasions and was subsequently included in certain reference works -- the next edition of Al Hubin's mammoth *Bibliography of Crime Fiction* (due in a couple of years) should contain as much of the truth as can now be identified: which, unfortunately, is by no means the whole.

As far as author-attribution goes, with the non-Blake Ballingers and Saxons we are in very muddy waters indeed, and Bill's habit of putting an extra editorial gloss on a finished manuscript before it went to the typesetters doesn't help matters. A dab hand at the 'narrative hook' he quite often tacked on a couple of hundred words of atmospheric scene-setting to the start of a Chapter One if he didn't think the original writer had written a compelling enough opening.

When Bill began publishing under the 'Howard Baker' imprint he issued a number of occult thrillers about 'The Guardians', all under the Saxon name. These certainly have the Baker feel to them, and yet McNeilly later swore -- to, amongst others the researcher and bibliographer Mike Ashley, whose *Who's Who in Horror and Fantasy Fiction* (1977) is an immensely readable guide to the genre -- that he had written them. What is more likely is that they were co-written: Bill wasn't that much interested in horror whereas McNeilly was -- he later (1973-75) wrote a not bad six-novel series of pulp horror stories for NEL under the somewhat bizarre pseudonym 'Errol Lecale' (*The Severed Hand*, *Castledoom*, *Zombie*, *Blood of My Blood*, etc.). It's probable McNeilly alone wrote a well-regarded war-in-the-air trilogy, beginning with *The Unfeeling Sky* (1968), for Corgi Books as 'Saxon'. On the other hand some of the other Saxons don't read particularly like either Baker or McNeilly.

There are similar problems associated with the Ballingers of this period, of which *Call It Rhodesia* (the book remarked on by Mark Taha) is one. Once again some read like Baker, others don't. The sole 'Dangerman' Ballinger *The Exterminator* (1966) is thumpingly Bakeresque, in tone, style and plot; on the other hand those Ballingers issued by mainstream publishers such as Corgi, Michael Joseph and NEL in the period 1969-1977 aren't. A good many of these Ballingers aren't thrillers at all but straight -- or at any rate straightish -- historical or adventure sagas, and these are certainly by McNeilly with very little editorial tinkering, if any, from Bill.

The fact was Wilfred McNeilly yearned to be viewed (and reviewed) as a serious novelist rather than a pulp-writer; the fact also was that he was an excellent pulp-writer but had been writing readable junk for just too long, and the habits of the pulp-writer -- the need for action every chapter, the striving after ever more extravagant similes, the adjectival diarrhoea, the uncontrollable urge to pop into the narrative flow every so often single-sentence paragraphs consisting merely of subject, verb, object -- clung to him like fingers of steel (you see what I mean?).

Nevertheless he didn't make a bad fist of it, all things considered. The McNeilly Ballingers I'm pretty well certain of are: *Rebellion* (1966), *Call It Rhodesia* (1966), *Women's Battalion* (1967), *The Green Grassy Slopes* (1969), *Congo* (1970), *The Shark Hunters* (1970), *The Carrion Eaters* (1971), *The Waters of Madness* (1974), as well as the extraordinary picaresque and fantastical linked pair of adventure novels *The Voyageurs* (1976) and *There And Back Again* (1977: there is supposed to have been a third in the series but I've never come across it and suspect McNeilly never got around to writing it, though I may be doing him a disservice).

All of the above are well worth seeking out as examples of a Blake writer trying, and in most cases succeeding, to be a non-Blake writer.



NOSTALGIC MEMORIES OF 1933

by Jack Greaves

1933 was a sad year for the dedicated readers of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, for after a run of 18 years we were informed by the editor that it had been decided to cease publication of our beloved paper, and to amalgamate it with the GEM. Of course the writing must have been on the wall for sometime, but it was quite a shock when first announced.

In retrospect, I find the OLD series my particular period of enjoyment, mainly because of the two-house system, but must admit the first New Series had some excellent groups of stories. I think a lot depends, however, on when one first began reading this excellent paper.

IMPORTANT NEWS FOR ALL READERS WITHIN!

THE
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LIBRARY

This Magnificent Working Model
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To Every Reader!



1st PART GIVEN with THIS ISSUE!

New Series No. 25. OUT ON WEDNESDAY. August, 1933.

The Nelson Lee in its final year did have a couple of enjoyable series, for we were able to find out what St. Frank's was like in its early days through the reprints of Nipper's arrival at the school, and also the barring-out of the Ancient House against the tyranny of Mr. Kennedy Hunter.

Unfortunately these Old Series reprints were not to continue and it wasn't long before the blow struck and the paper disappeared for ever.

Fortunately, through the efforts of many Nelson Lee enthusiasts who, throughout the years, have contributed numerous articles, the memories of the old paper have lived on, as the late Bob Blythe would have wished.

1933 however, was an excellent year for British Dance music, both from a broadcasting point of view and the issue of recordings of the many popular tunes of the day. Some of the most popular broadcasting dance bands at this time were AMBROSE, ROY FOX, LEW STONE, HARRY ROY, HENRY HALL and CARROL GIBBONS.

Perhaps the best one from a musician's point of view was Ambrose, who always demanded a high standard from his members, who were among the best in the country. Throughout 1933, he recorded about 90 titles, many with vocals by Sam Brown.

The other Orchestras mentioned were also busy in the recording studios. AL BOWLLY, recording with Lew Stone, was also making many broadcasts that year, and even today one can often hear him on recordings singing on various light radio programmes. He had a superb voice and was a great hit with the ladies!

Al also did quite a lot of recording with the House Band of the H.M.V. Studios, which was assembled by Ray Noble. This was known as the new Mayfair Dance Orchestra.



AMBROSE

During 1933 alone, Bowly sang on over 70 titles recorded by this orchestra which consisted of personnel from the well-known orchestras already listed.

What, then, were the popular tunes of 1933? Perhaps our readers will remember some of the following:

Fit as a Fiddle, Try a Little Tenderness, Stormy Weather, Learn to Croon, Lazy Bones, I cover the Waterfront, Don't Blame Me, It's the Talk of the Town, The Last Round up, Night and Day, My Hat's on the side of my Head, Close your Eyes, Did you ever see A Dream Walking? Play to me Gipsy, Wagon Wheels, You Aughter be in Pictures, Young and Healthy, We'll all go riding on a Rainbow, Isn't it Heavenly?, Thanks, How could we be wrong?, Have you ever been lonely?, Did my Heart beat, Did I fall in love?, Play Fiddle Play, Roll along Prairie Moon, Dinner at Eight, Brother Can you spare a Dime?, Remember my Forgotten Man.

There are only a sample of the many tunes recorded during 1933, and I have mainly listed the sentimental ones. There were dozens of comedy items which were always popular features during their broadcasts and variety performances.

Although 1933 was a sad year for Nelson Lee readers, as already mentioned, some of our older C.D. Subscribers will have pleasant memories of some of the lovely tunes I have listed.

Happy listening and reading!

19/33 THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY
IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

THIS IS THE
LAST ISSUE of "NELSON LEE"

But our Clums of St. Frank's and Your
Editor Invite You to Meet Them Again
Next Week in "THE GEM"

FROM NOW ON

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NEXT WEEK!



YUNG CHANG, THE CHINESE DETECTIVE, AND OTHERS

by R. Hardinge

In 1938 there appeared in *The Jolly Comic* a serial entitled *SPIDER'S WEB* which featured a Chinese lad who was described as 'small', 'cheery' and 'little', and named Yung Chang. Endowed with skill, nerve and boundless guile, this juvenile sleuth was a dreaded hunter of criminals. It was these very qualities that induced the notorious crook named the Spider to blacken Chang's name in an attempt to force him to join his gang. So, framed by the spider, Chang was believed by Scotland Yard to have perpetrated a crime which had actually been committed by the Spider himself. Detectives with whom Chang had worked loyally in the past were now hunting for him high and low. The young Chinese fugitive, displaying indomitable spirit, pitted himself against the Spider and his gang in an effort to clear his name.



Yung Chang took one flying, headlong leap off the narrow sill.

It was highly unusual, even in fiction, for a mere boy to exercise his talents as a loner in the field of crime detection. Invariably a youngster worked with a senior partner: Tinker with Blake, Slick Chester with Colwyn Dane and Billy Williams with Harold Hood, etc.

The most famous of all Chinese detectives was undoubtedly Charlie Chan, who appeared in *THE HOUSE WITHOUT A KEY* by Earl Derr Biggers which was serialised in *The Saturday Evening Post* and then published as a novel in 1925. Chan was born when Biggers spent some time in Honolulu convalescing after an illness, and the character was based on actual

members of the Hawaiian Police Department. Biggers died in 1933, having written six stories in all about this famous detective. Various script-writers have had a hand in no less than 49 films starring Charlie Chan. Warner Oland and then Sidney Toler were the most memorable Hollywood actors in this role.

James Lee Wong was another Chinese investigator, created by Hugh Wiley. His exploits were published in Colliers Magazine. Between 1938 and 1940 Boris Karloff took the part of Wong in five films.

John Phillips Marquand wrote eight books featuring the diminutive Japanese detective, Mr. Moto, an expert in Ju Jitsu. Peter Lorre played the part in all the films made between 1937 and 1939.

One of the most interesting and popular fictional sleuths is the gentle, diffident but tenacious little Indian, Inspector G.V. Ghote of the Bombay C.I.D. (The 'G' stands for Ganesh.) It is quite remarkable that the author of his adventures, H.R.F. Keating, wrote nine novels about his creation before setting foot in India!

So vivid and true to life were his descriptions of the people and places in that part of the sub-continent that it is difficult to believe that he had never been to Bombay before starting to record the Ghote saga. Ghote has been portrayed by Sam Dastor on T.V. and is well known to millions of viewers worldwide.



By
ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 239 - Magnets 1510-15 - Tuckshop Rebellion Series

If 1937 was not one of the peak years in the Magnet, there was nevertheless plenty of evidence that the master hand had not lost all its cunning. The Tuckshop Rebellion series began with the customary scenes on the first day of term, first at Lantham Junction, with subsequent changes to Courtfield and Friardale Station. Cleverly interwoven into these railway episodes was the ill-tempered Horace Hacker, who succeeded in finding fault with a number of Removites at different stations. Equally, Carne was also brought into prominence and his support for Mr. Hacker was to have important consequences. When Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch were involved

in an accident, the Governors (remembering Mr. Prout's disastrous Headship of 1934) asked Mr. Hacker to take over. It was a fateful decision.

Magnet 1511 began with the famous remarks of Bunter - "Hacker's Head... it's come off" (a misunderstanding rivalling the classic telegram in Magnet 1161 "Keep Tabs on Fisher. Tough bunch aiming to cinch him" which Dr. Locke, despite his erudition in various languages, was totally unable to interpret). Mr. Hacker put Carne in charge of the Remove, and it was not long before they rebelled against him and then against Hacker himself. After a stay-in strike in the classroom, which was literally a wash-out (thanks to the use of a hose), the tuckshop barring-out commenced.

The typical format of a Hamiltonian rebellion was strictly adhered to, with the prefects, then P.C. Tozer, and finally a gang of roughs all trying to subdue the rebels. But the format, although used successfully in the past, could not in itself guarantee success. In fact some of the details showed a sad decline: for example, Mr. Hacker went to the Fifth Form room and reminded Mr. Prout, in front of his class, that he was dismissed; Mr. Hacker shoved Sir Hilton Popper, who then punched him on the nose; and in the final number the rebels made Hacker do the washing-up. The high drama of the Brander series had now degenerated into regrettable knockabout farce.

Yet, to be fair, some flashes of brilliance remained, and those that stay longest in the memory are Mauleverer's leadership and the visit of Mr. Vernon-Smith who was asked to take home his expelled son and who ended up by instructing him to remain. Mr. Hacker's character was naturally given close examination, and a picture of a stubborn tyrant emerges, a man who persisted in a disastrous course of action because he was convinced he was right. Some collectors may prefer the Wilmot series as a finer, more subtle portrait of Horace Hacker, yet no one can deny that the Tuckshop Rebellion series, however flawed it might be, undoubtedly contains some passages of compulsive reading.

WANTED: DCT Red Arrows and Vanguard's, also certain numbers pre-war Hotspurs and Skippers. Other Thompsons available for exchange. Also wanted, American Big Little Books. BEN BLIGH, 55 Arundel Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire, SK7 5LD.

DEATH OF A MUCH-LOVED ILLUSTRATOR & CARTOONIST

One of the finest and most distinctive illustrators and cartoonists of the past 60 years died on May 19th aged 90. He was D.L. Mays and either signed his work thus or simply as 'Mays'. He originally studied at Goldsmith's College in the early 1920s under the great Edmund J. Sullivan (one of the best illustrators TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS ever had) and he later worked prolifically for PUNCH between 1932-54, specializing in gently-humorous drawings of children and their parents in domestic situations; Mother was invariably attractive and the boys and girls (usually under the age of 16) good-looking and remarkably pretty (the girls, that is). He modelled them all upon his own four daughters and on his own wife, Janet.



He was also widely-known in the field of children's books and did early work for the HOLIDAY ANNUAL and various other Annuals. He illustrated many children's books, including some by Angela Brazil, Nancy Breary, early titles by Percy F. Westerman and Noel Streatfeild (including her best-selling TENNIS SHOES, 1937, and CURTAIN UP!, 1944). He also illustrated 11 Jennings books by Anthony Buckeridge, from 1958 to 1970.

Douglas Lionel Mays also exhibited paintings and did many wonderful colour covers for the old JOHN BULL magazine, again usually depicting the scenes from middle-class family life for which he will chiefly be warmly remembered. The 'Mays children' were the ones we would liked to have had (perhaps we did) and liked to have been ourselves (and maybe were).

Mays died at Kingston-upon-Thames, where he was born on August 4th, 1900.



BRIAN DOYLE

"Could I please sit next to the turkey, Mummy?" a D.L. Mays drawing for Punch, 1948.

(Apparently this picture portrays Mays standing by the mantelpiece in front of one of his paintings.)

CLASS OF 90 by Ernest Holman

The first School novel by P.G. Wodehouse came out in hard-back in 1902. It had previously been serialised in the 'Public School Magazine'. So 'The Pot Hunters' was the first of its class to reach publication, ninety years ago. How, one could ask, would publication fare today for this and subsequent P.G.W. Schools? Fine, actually, as many of you will be aware and which I shall refer to later.

When this first serialised School story became a hard-back, the Publisher was Black. The book was bound in blue cloth, with silver lettering. There were 272 pages and ten illustrations. Following 'Pot Hunters' other School yarns appeared in fairly regular sequence over the years, most of them having been previously serialised in the above-mentioned Mag. or in 'The Captain'. Plum wrote eight School yarns in all, before he left the Classroom behind.

Wrykin featured in three stories; St. Austin's in two books; other Schools were Beckford, Eckleton (featuring a Jimmy Silver) and Sedleigh. Cricket and Rugby formed quite a large part of the background. Outlines of the stories are unnecessary - they have, indeed, been described in C.D. over the years.

There were some well-remembered characters, of course. Charteris, nicknamed the Alderman (long before Test Match Special's Don Mosey) was the proud Editor of a publication called 'The Glow Worm'. There was also a Reginald Farnie, who arrived as the (younger) Uncle of the Head of one of the Houses. Also notable was the coward, Sheen, who redeemed himself by winning the Public School Lightweights for his School.

Some characters appeared both as scholars and, later, as old boys - back for the usual Rugby or Cricket encounter.

Most notable of all, of course, would be Mike Jackson and Rupert Psmith (the 'p', explained the latter, should be given the 'miss-in-baulk' - e.g. Ptarmigan). One of the most memorable of the adventures of these two worthies was a cricket House match, featuring an unpopular Master. Mike, egged on by a deck-chaired Psmith, batted all day. With an occasional change of partner, Mike's team kept the opposition in the field throughout the match. These poor unworthies, including the Master whose bowling had been well and truly flogged, saw their participation in the score book as 'did not bat'.

So - what about these stories in today's reading climate? Plenty! Take a look around the shelves of any reputable Book Store and there, amongst the numerous Wodehouse paper-backs, you will find two Omnibus volumes containing six of these early School yarns. You will also notice a separate 'Mike and Psmith'. There has been virtually no updating, other than a change of name for a 'person' of the earlier times, notably cricketers. That there cannot be any dating can surely be realised by the following rhyme from one story:

A dashing young Sportsman named Pringle
On breaking his duck (with a single)
Observed with a smile
"Just notice my style
How science with vigour I mingle"

Those Classes of ninety years ago are still with us - in the present nineties. Class of 90 indeed - and how very true to quote "The more things change, the more they stay as they are!"



CHRISTINE BRETTELL (West Midlands): Have just read the June C.D. I agree whole heartedly that much can be gained from reading purely for pleasure; not only is it relaxing but can be very informative. I am doing an O.U. degree at the moment so have to do some really serious reading, but I escape with all kinds of 'light' reading from Greyfriars to gory thrillers and don't feel guilty at all.

NAVEED HAQUE (Ontario, Canada): Just a few weeks ago, I went on a brief holiday to the Bahamas, and read the India (Magnet) series, for the very first time. I really enjoyed it, especially the humourous episodes thereof. Bunter travelling on the Indian railway, and the previous incident in Delhi (of Bunter's topee) were amusing, to say the least.

I finally had the pleasure of meeting Mook Mookerjee, if only for a few pages! I believe that the India series is one of our Editor's favourites. No doubt it must be popular, as the volume seems to be one of the most difficult to come by. In fact the 'out-of-printfulness is truly terrific'.

KEN HUMPHREYS (Nottingham): Sad to see so many Stalwarts passing from the scene. 'What's not destroyed by Time's devouring hand?'

Herbert Leckenby used to ring me three or four times a week - usually at lunch time mid-way through the meal - bless him. I had to struggle to understand what he was saying, for not only did he speak in a broad Yorkshire accent, his speech was guttural, and punctuated by pauses as he dealt with his switchboard duties. And colder and colder went my rice pudding!

I met him once in York and we went to the theatre. I forget what the play was, but I know one of the actors mentioned Billy Bunter.

BILL LOFTS (London): I greatly enjoyed Len Hawkey's article on Det. Will Spearing in the May C.D. I think the reason why he has not been mentioned in C.D. of late is that many collectors who read about him have long since died off. Certainly many other writers wrote about his adventures, including 'Pierre Quiroule' (see Men Behind Boys Fiction). A full list would be in the late Derek Adley's record books. Derek's records and files are simply so astonishing and detailed that I might write about them later on. He had a complete index listing of all C.D.s and Annuals, plus every single copy of every collecting paper issued since 1917!

IRENE WAKEFIELD (Twickenham): Thank you again for the C.D. I do so enjoy getting it, and lap up the contents! And how nice it is to see that Terry (my late husband) is 'gone' but not forgotten! I was interested to spot on the cover of the May issue the name of the artist Harry Lane. We knew him quite well. He came to our

wedding in 1935. He as quite an amusing fellow. Richmal Crompton's letter in reply to Nick Peel was extremely interesting.

J.P. McMAHON (Hailsham): The May C.D. was a winner. All items therein are greatly appreciated, and to single out one would mean to specify them all. Nevertheless, John Geal's letter was especially appealing, particularly his sudden 'fit of madness'. Also 'A Mystery Solved', and the facsimile of the original letter by Richmal Crompton.

H. HEATH (Bexhill-on-Sea): Further to Mr. Beck's letter in the May C.D., there were two more publications in the series concerning Sparshott School: No. 5: The Hero of Sparshott, No. 6: Pluck will Tell.

RANDOM JOTTINGS ON THE JUNE C.D. by Len Hawkey

Our Magazine might well be sub-titled (to use John Donne's phrase) "the memory of yesterdays pleasures". Many of us must find each issue poses several intriguing and, as yet, unanswered queries, or else sets the "bells of recollection" ringing loudly. Leslie Vosper's reverie of his days with the "Boys Magazine" certainly sent me to my bookshelves. I, too, look back on "the little pink 'un" with great affection. I took it weekly from 1923 until 1930, which was over half its lifetime (1922 to 1934).

It was "The Raiding Planet" that first "hooked" me - it ran from February to September of 1923, and started my lifelong fondness for Science-Fiction. Little seems to be known about its author, Brian Cameron, but to refresh Mr. Vosper's memory, the Professor was Gregory Smyth, and thanks largely to him and his young nephews, Britain repels the invaders from Thor, which seems to be a planet capable of moving itself around in space! In fact the British carry the war to Thor, and are victorious! The evil Emperor of Thor (why did I almost call him Ming?) is killed by one of his own "paralysing-pistols", and peace reigns supreme. Those of a nervous disposition can feel re-assured, because although written in 1923, the action was set in 1987, so the danger has passed...! The vivid illustrations were by Inder Burns, a good enough artist, more at home really in the pages of "Punch" or "The Passing Show".

Mention of artists brings me to the pictures on pages 6 and 7 of the June issue. One wonders why two illustrators should work on one story. Ernest Ibbetson on the cover and H.M. Lewis inside. Both had worked in the "Union Jack" in earlier years, and Lewis, who had done a lot of "covers" would have probably made a much better job of depicting Blake and Tinker!

In Squadron-Leader Bird's articles on the Dorothy Carter books, the artist D.L. Mays is mentioned several times. Douglas Lionel Mays died, alas, on May 19th last, at his birthplace, Kingston-upon-Thames. Aged

FOUR FOOTER PHOTOS FREE INSIDE.

Boys' Magazine

2^D
EVERY SATURDAY



Jack Trevor jerked an electric pistol from his pocket . . . A vivid tongue of fire shot out and struck the Thorian in the Chest.
(See "The Raiding Planet," page 3.)
Vol. III—No. 53—Feb. 24, 1923. (INPER BURNS)

90, he was one of the last top-class pre-war illustrators. Apart from the "Marise" books, he had drawn "Jennings" and "Worrals" and had worked on innumerable magazines and annuals since the early 1920's. Even, at one desperate time, for the "Beano" and "Dandy"! His best work, however, was in the better adult mags., especially, from 1933 until the 1950s, for "Punch". He possessed a clean, firm, line, an elegant style, and a wonderful aptitude for depicting young children, and the "fair sex." generally, recalling the delightful work of Claude Shepperson and Lewis Baumer earlier this century.

Lastly, a thought on Losely and Lobangu. I always enjoy J.E.M.'s Sexton Blake items, particularly as they usually include Parker illustrations. Rex Hardinge took over these characters from Cecil Hayter, who died in 1922, and I have not as yet compared their styles - probably Hayter's would prove to be a bit dated. I was intrigued to find, however, that he had used Losely and Lobangu in "non-Blake" tales, possibly even

before they came to the "Union Jack". One such Haggard-like saga was "The Search for the City of Gold" in "Cheer, Boys, Cheer" (1912). This may well have been a re-write of an even earlier "Boys' Realm" or "Herald" serial. Sir Richard Losely, by the way, acted as Blake's fag in "Sexton Blake in the Sixth" ("Boys' Herald" 1907/8) - the old A.P. were certainly adept at making good use of any popular character, or author!

BOYS' MAGAZINE EASTER NUMBER.

THE FATE OF THE FLEET.—Travelling under-sea to Tilbury, and unaware of the Peril above water, the British Fleet begins to rise to the surface. Meanwhile Frank Trevor seeks to warn the Flagship. Go right ahead with these Magnificent Chapters.



By
BRIAN CAMERON

MEET THE "FIGHTING SCIENTIST"
AND HIS NEPHEWS, JACK AND
FRANK TREVOR, FELLOWS, IN
THIS HURRICANE WONDER-SERIAL
OF WORLD-WAR.

First Chapters.

1923 - An Inder Burns picture

WANTED: Edwy Searles Brooks material written under his own and his various pen-names. No offers made. Please state total cost A. McKibbin, 1 Hudson Close, Lammack, Blackburn, Lancs. BB2 7DQ. Tel. 0254-54731.

MISS BULLIVANT'S BROOCH

by Marion Waters
(Illustrated by Ruth Owers)

A previously unrecorded adventure of the Silent Three

It was a pleasant spring day during the early 1950s. Miss Mary Evelyn Bullivant was touring Island School in company with Miss Garfield, its headmistress. Miss Bullivant had been granted leave of absence from Cliff House School, and was acting as an inspector for the Ministry of Education. She had first met the headmistress some twenty years previously when both ladies had resided in Manchester, and had heard good reports of Miss Garfield's school which was a relatively new foundation located on an island off the North Yorkshire Coast. Miss Bullivant was impressed by what she had seen, and she hoped that her official report would be a favourable one.

That evening she dined with Miss Garfield and some of the school governors. She was staying as a guest in the Head's private house which was located on the edge of the school grounds. As she prepared to retire for the night, Miss Bullivant carefully removed her brooch and placed it on the dressing table. The government inspector was an austere looking woman, who wore little jewellery. The brooch was an old-fashioned one, the gift from a young man killed in Flanders over thirty years previously. The young man had not been Miss Bullivant's fiancé, but, as a woman who had never made many friends, the lady held fond memories of him, and still treasured his gift. Miss Bullivant had mellowed considerably over the years. She had narrowly escaped death during an air raid in the last war; during the aftermath of this incident she had received much kindness, and had also been required to show kindness herself.

It had been a long day, she had dined well, and she was looking forward to a good night's sleep. Miss Bullivant rose early the following morning. It was her intention to take a walk along the cliffs before breakfast. After she had washed and dressed, she looked for her brooch. To her horror it was missing! Miss Bullivant immediately reported the matter to Miss Garfield and a thorough search was made, but without success. Miss Bullivant was both upset and puzzled by the loss of her brooch; like her hostess she found it very hard to believe that it had been stolen, but there appeared to be no other explanation. The rotund headmistress was greatly upset by the incident. She had been looking forward to a good report on her school, what would HM Inspector think of a school that contained a thief?

Miss Garfield was unusually gloomy at morning assembly, a fact that did not go unnoticed throughout the school. A very thorough search had been made for the brooch, but without result. There was a rather tense atmosphere that day as Miss Bullivant continued her inspection. The loss of the brooch did not go unreported in certain quarters. Elsie, Miss

Garfield's maid, was on leave, and her place had been taken by Rose Molloy, one of the school's maids. Some months previously, Rose had been dismissed from her post having been falsely accused of theft. Her innocence had been proved, and a scheming mistress exposed, by the activities of a secret society which sometimes operated at Island School, known as the 'Silent Three'. The activities of this secret group had often mystified the school, but only Rose knew their identities.

During morning break, Rose made her way through the main school buildings. She soon spotted Betty Roland, who was a tall, attractive looking girl with fair curly hair. Without a word, Rose pressed a folded note into Betty's hand. The note read, 'Please meet me at Dolphin Rock after lunch'. At the appointed time Rose met Betty, in company with her chums Joan Derwent and Peggy West. Some years previously while at another school the three girls had formed the secret society known as the 'Silent Three' to curb the activities of a bullying prefect. Since then the girls had taken part in a number of adventures.

Rose greeted her friends warmly and explained what had happened at Miss Garfield's home.

"Do you think that the brooch was stolen?" asked Betty.

"It must have been", replied Rose quietly. "We've turned the house upside down, and we can't find it."

"But why?" exclaimed Peggy, "it seems so pointless".

"It would appear that someone is trying to embarrass Miss Garfield in front of the government inspector and school governors" said Joan thoughtfully. "We know that the school stands on valuable land, and that attempts have been made in the past to close it so that the island may be used for a hotel". Betty looked thoughtful, and then said to Rose. "Who was present in the house last night besides the Head and Miss Bullivant?" Rose listed the various members of the school's governing body who had been present; it was the usual cross-section, - the wife of a local landowner, a clergyman, a retired officer, and a distinguished old girl, all of impeccable character. "Why should a school governor try to close the school?" asked Peggy, "it doesn't make sense". Rose looked thoughtful and said, "The only clue I can give you is that Mrs. Hawkser was among the guests last night. I've never liked her, and I understand that her family once owned the island on which the school stands. She is a grasping type and she might have reasons of her own for wishing to see the school fail". Betty raised her eyebrows at this piece of news, and Peggy gave a low whistle.

"Could Mrs. Hawkser have stolen the brooch?" asked Joan.

"She left the house before Miss Bullivant retired for the night", replied Rose. "But she is staying on the island, so she could have returned secretly to the house later". It was time for afternoon lessons, the chums said goodbye to Rose, who returned to her duties.

During the remainder of the day, the Silent Three kept a close watch on Mrs. Hawkser, who was staying in the school's guest accommodation. The lady in question was tall and smartly dressed, with a rather haughty manner. After lessons, the three girls decided to miss tea in order to continue their observations. Mrs. Hawkser went for a walk along the cliffs on the seaward side of the island. She walked slowly, and it was obvious that she was waiting for someone. The Silent Three followed as closely as they dared. When the girls found a sheltered spot they quickly slipped into their robes to conceal their identities if they were spotted. Soon the Silent Three were robed in the attractive green silk garments; hoods were drawn up, and masks adjusted.

While the girls watched, Mrs. Hawkser was joined by a seedy looking young man, who they later learned was her nephew.

He handed a small item to Mrs. Hawkser, something that flashed in the rays of the sun - the missing brooch! "Here is the brooch, auntie", said the young man. "I took it while the old hag was asleep".

"Excellent", replied Mrs. Hawkser. "Its disappearance has already caused plenty of trouble". While the conversation was taking place, Peggy was starting to edge forward with a view to seizing the brooch. Betty, their leader, gently restrained her. "Our chance will come later", she said quietly, her face grim beneath her mask.



The following day was a half-holiday, so the Silent Three made their preparations for recovering Miss Bullivant's brooch. The girls obtained one of the school's boats and made their way across to the mainland. Betty steered the dinghy past the village of Robin Hood's Bay towards Fyling Creek. The girls travelled the creek until they reached the vicinity of Fyling Hall, which was the residence of Mrs. Hawkser. The boat was left concealed beneath some trees and, wearing their robes, the girls made their way up the steep path to the house. A preliminary reconnaissance showed that Mrs. Hawkser was relaxing in the garden of her home, while her housekeeper was busy in the kitchen. With a soft rustle of silk, the Silent Three made their way into the house through a French window. While Peggy kept watch, Betty and Joan began to search for the stolen brooch. They searched several rooms without success. Suddenly they heard the sound of an owl hoot.



"Our danger signal", said Joan, "Peggy must have spotted something". "Into the dressing room", said Betty. While the girls remained hidden, hardly daring to breathe, Mrs. Hawkser came into the room. She tidied her appearance as if intending to go out. The woman was just about to leave when she returned to the dressing table, and pressed a corner which caused a concealed drawer to open. "The brooch is still safe", she said to herself. Watching from the dressing room, Betty and Joan gave a sigh of relief.

Betty quickly retrieved the stolen property, and undetected the girls made their way back to their boat and thence to the island. On Mrs. Hawkser's desk, Betty had left a message -- 'The stolen brooch has been returned to its rightful owner, beware, your treachery is known - The Silent Three'.

That evening, Miss Bullivant was taking a walk amid the roses of Miss Garfield's garden. The inspector was impressed with Island School, but dismayed by the theft of her brooch. Suddenly a quiet voice called out: "Miss Bullivant". The lady spun round and was amazed to be confronted by a slim figure clad in a green silk robe and hood.

The upper half of the girl's face was covered by a black mask. Miss Bullivant became aware of two more hooded figures close by. "Your brooch", said Betty. "It was stolen by persons plotting against the school". Miss Bullivant stammered her thanks. "Please tell me who you are?" she asked. The leader of the group smiled. "We are the Silent Three", she said. With a swish of silk the robed figures vanished into the twilight.

"Well I never!" was all Miss Bullivant could say.

THINNING COLLECTION. Red Magnets, Blue Gems, Rare Items: Hinton's "School and Sport" 1-24 (£60). Superb bound Gems (125-151) 1910, with spotless blue covers - includes "Death" of Lumley (£100). Talbot Gem originals. SPC (1-95). C.D. Annuals, 1949 onwards. Hamilton's Own Signed Opera Librettos. BFL CH's "Football Fortune", "After Lights Out", "Pride of the Ring". Selection of "Free Gifts" from 1920's-30's. SOL's. Bunter Hardbacks (1st Editions). Send wants. S.A.E. Lists. Laurie Sutton, 73 Lancing Road, Orpington, BR6 OQU. (U.K. ONLY PLEASE).

WANTED: The Gem No. 57, The Ranger - 1931, The Thriller 1937-38, The Champion 1940, The Triumph 1940, Girls Own Paper 1940-1947, Collins Magazine for Boys and Girls 1950, The Junior Mirror 1954-1956:- PAUL MARRIOTT, 8 The Heath, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 7HL. Tel. 0525-382669

EASTER IN PARIS

by Des O'Leary

This Easter in Paris I had a lovely time looking around the bookshops. In the famous Shakespeare and Co. I picked up a copy of "*THE AIR RECORD BREAKERS*" by J.F.C. Westerman. Then in a large store dedicated to comic strip albums - a field in which the French are the pioneers - I found *BIGGLES ET LE CYGNE JAUNE*, a pictorial version of *SERGEANT BIGGLESWORTH C.I.D.* This is promised as the start of a series, so I have alerted my daughter, who lives in Paris, to keep an eye open! I noticed some variations from the England version which I must look at more closely when I have the time. I also noted that *SLAINE* (from 2000 A.D. Comic) featured prominently.

In a huge modern store, F.N.A.C., I found a number of *WILLIAM* paperbacks, a couple of which I bought. These were *WILLIAM LE HORS-LA-LOI (The Outlaw)* and *WILLIAM LE CONQUERANT (The Conqueror)*. Comparing the French translations with the Macmillan paperbacks I find lots of re-arrangement of stories; for example, the opening story in *WILLIAM LE CONQUERANT* is Chapter 9 in *WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR* - "The Philanthropist". Chapter 3 in the French, 'Georgie et les Hors-la-Loi' is taken from *WILLIAM THE OUTLAW* 'Georgie and the Outlaws', etcetera.

The stories are often abridged and number only three or four per volume. The names, of course, vary a bit: Ethel is Ethel but Robert becomes John-Robert, Violet Elizabeth becomes Marie-Violette and, worst of all, the beloved Jumble appears as Pudding!

The translations by Pascale Jusforgues seem lively and the illustrations by Tony Ross are excellent, comic line-drawings full of wit. Nothing can replace Crompton's gentle irony, of course, nor Thomas Henry's illustration, but these little paper-backs do a good job in presenting William to French youngsters, I think. Another four volumes appear in the series.

Also in the Children's Book Section in F.N.A.C. were shelves of Enid Blyton and, naturally all the great classics of English *TREASURE ISLAND*, *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* etcetera: (What a treasure English has in these books, as my German friends point out to me frequently.)

And I spotted another series about an English school-boy! I was puzzled by his name, Bennett, until I looked at the small print to find that he was a certain 'Jennings' in Anthony Buckeridge's original stories! I bought one, *BENNETT AU COLLEGE*, a translation of *JENNINGS GOES TO SCHOOL*. I presume Bennett is an easier name for French kids to pronounce.

WANTED: £20 each offered for "Boys Friend Libraries" featuring BIGGLES. £15 each offered for 1950's Biggles and Famous Five jigsaw puzzles. £3 each offered for "Happy Mags". £15 offered for B.F.L. No. 204 "Crooked Gold". Original artwork of Bunter, Tom Merry etc. always wanted. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL.

CRIME STORIES FROM THE 'STRAND': Edited by Geraldine Beare (The Folio Society) £16.95. Reviewed by E.G. Hammond.

When Sir George Newnes published the STRAND MAGAZINE he started more than just another magazine. He had started an institution. For it was this magazine that maintained the great and one and only Sherlock Holmes. It also nurtured and helped many another Fictional detective find his or her niche in that elusive Hall of Fame.

With the publication of CRIME STORIES FROM THE 'STRAND' many of the best loved tales have found their way into a volume that does them justice. Many of our favourite authors are represented, apart from Arthur Conan Doyle. The list is like a roll call in a crime Valhalla, E.C. Bentley, Rudyard Kipling, 'Sapper', Edgar Wallace, Agatha Christie, G.K. Chesterton, Margery Allingham, Dorothy L. Sayers, Carter Dickson and A.E.W. Mason, plus many more. Most are writing about their own best known creations.

With over 300 pages of first class crime fiction it is a must for the crime enthusiast. It also scores in having been illustrated by David Eccles, who for me, has captured the atmosphere splendidly. I accept that my view will not be universal. After all beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Many will remember the Victorian, Edwardian and later illustrations that graced the pages of the 'Strand Magazine', and may find Mr. Eccles' interpretations wanting.

Speaking personally, as not only an avid reader but also a bibliophile, the volume is a joy. Beautifully produced, as only the Folio Society can for the modest price, it is housed in a golden slip-case, and would grace any book case.

Although it can only be purchased by members, this should not prove to be too much of an obstacle. Any Folio member would be only too pleased to obtain a copy for you.

(Readers who want details of how to obtain this volume may write to Mr. Hammond c/o the C.D.)

WANTED: by Collector. JOHN HAMILTON: Pre-War hardbacks, any title with or without D/W, including the 'Ace Series' 'Airmans Bookcase' 'Flying Thrillers' 'Sundial Mystery' and Adventure Library, and Airmans Bookclub editions in Dustwrappers. W.E. JOHNS: Any Pre-War hardbacks, with or without D/S and Paperback editions of 'MOSSYFACE'; (by William Earle) and any 'BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY' Editions, any condition considered. JOHN TRENDLER, 7 Park Close, Bushey, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD2 2DE. Tel. (0923) 31608.

WANTED: Mascot Libraries (were published 1947) 4½ pence. Will purchase or exchange for S.O.L.s which I have for disposal. J. MARSTON, 168 Newton Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 OTR.

STILL WANTED: GOOD PRICES PAID!

ANNUALS: GIRLS CRYSTAL ANNUAL 1940:
POPULAR BOOK OF GIRLS' STORIES 1935, 1936,
1941.

MISTRESS MARINER by Dorita Fairlie Bruce.

OVALTINEY RULE BOOK

The following copies of THE SCHOOLGIRL (if not for sale, photocopies or loans would greatly oblige).
29 to 34. 39, 40, 41. 52 to 72. 74 to 83. 85, 87, 88.
90 to 115. 119 to 123. 125, 126, 128, 129, 130.

ALSO WANTED: various copies of:
Schoolgirl's Weekly (especially 646 - even a photocopy!)
and Schoolgirls' Own.

MARY CADOGAN

**46 Overbury Avenue,
Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY**

BRUCE LAMB

(A Tribute from Darrell Swift)

We first became acquainted with Bruce at Northern Club when he attended a meeting with his wife Geraldine. He said that he did not particularly express an interest in the hobby but came to support Geraldine. From that time on, he was so thrilled by the welcome and friendliness he received from everyone that there were few meetings that he missed - coming along each month and driving the family over the Pennines from Macclesfield, or making the journey by train with his younger son James.

Bruce took early retirement from his post at the C.E.G.B. A Scot by birth, he lived for a large part of his life in England. When we recently visited his home, he explained how he was going to build up his model railway in the loft, catch up on reading and gardening, etc. It came as a shock to us all to find that he contracted cancer.

Bruce loved his family and he often spoke about them all. He supported the club in all aspects and was always willing to be on hand when needed: indeed, he had compiled our programme for 1991 which had been declared by members to be the best one ever.

Bruce died on Sunday, 5th May. Our Club was represented at the funeral in Chelford, Cheshire, by our Chairman Joan Colman and Darrell Swift. Our sympathy and love go to Geraldine and her family, and the absence of Bruce at our meetings has left a deep void.

(Editor's Note: I must join in Darrell's tribute to Bruce, whose warmth and kindness I will long remember.)

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

(A Further "Echo" of
DANNY LOOKS BACK.)

Comments by ERIC FAYNE

Danny, browsing contentedly over the earliest St. Jim's stories in PLUCK, had come on the rivalry between the St. Jim's fellows and Frank Monk & Co. of the newly opened Rylcombe Grammar School.

Readers of Danny's own time were familiar with Gordon Gay & Co. But Gordon Gay was not there at the Grammar School in those early St. Jim's stories. "Just when did Gordon Gay arrive?" enquired Danny. "Was there a St. Jim's tale in the Gem to relate the arrival of Gordon Gay?" queried Danny.

I have not checked to see just when Gordon Gay was first introduced into the Gem. But he was born in the EMPIRE LIBRARY. I find it suprising that there has been but small mention of the Empire Library in our C.D. Down the long years, I have, on isolated occasions, made a passing reference to the paper, but I do not recall that anyone has ever devoted even a short article to it. This is astonishing, for the Empire was very much a Hamilton paper. And there is certain evidence to show that the publishers intended it to be just that!

Consider for a moment. When Hamilton's story "King Cricket" was run as a serial in the Boys' Realm in the year 1906, his name was not quoted. Each week it appeared with the by-line: "By One of Our Most Popular Authors!" Never again was one of his stories to be published without his own name or one of his famous pen-names. But in 1906 he had no famous pen-names. "Martin Clifford" did not come on the scene until No. 3 of the Gem in the year 1907. It was Tom Merry who laid the groundwork for his real fame. At the end of 1906 he started his series about Jack Blake & Co. at St. Jim's, "by Charles Hamilton". In PUCK. In March 1907 the GEM started, launched as "the new halfpenny adventure paper." At the end of that March Tom Merry came on the scene - a new boy at Clavering School - "by Martin Clifford." It was the first time that the pseudonym Martin Clifford - soon to be famous - was used.

In all, 6 adventures stories appeared in that "new adventures paper". Tom Merry appeared every alternate week, and it was soon obvious that he was a striking success. The GEM was a winner - and Martin Clifford and his Tom Merry had made it so.

So much so that in No. 11, Tom Merry, with his Clavering associates, was sent to St. Jim's. And Tom Merry took over St. Jim's in a way that Jack Blake had never been able to do.

Clearly the Gem was thriving in a way which delighted the publishers. Tom Merry was famous. Martin Clifford was famous.

So! In 1908 the Magnet was advertised as a new school story paper on the bookstalls. The writer was Frank Richards, the second of the famous pen-names. As

years passed, Frank Richards was destined to become the most famous of all, a factor almost certainly due to Billy Bunter. It was Bunter who made F.R. famous.

But, way back before the First War, It seemed to be Martin Clifford who was THE ONE!

The Gem has clearly been a startling success. Did someone - the publisher or the author - envisage the plan of repeating the Gem's success with yet another paper?

The first issue of the Empire Library was dated 19th February, 1910, exactly 3 years after Tom Merry had made the Gem something special. The Empire was a halfpenny paper. It ran school stories every week. The writer of these stories was Prosper Howard, the third of Hamilton's pen-names. He became popular for a time.

The Gem had thrived on stories of a school established elsewhere, but made famous when Tom Merry arrived. St. Jim's!

The Empire was expected to thrive on stories of a school established elsewhere - Rylcombe Grammar School - but now a boy, Gordon Gay, arrived and took over. The similarity of the facts are striking. Look, for instance, at the similarity of the names. Tom Merry! Gordon Gay! Surely it cannot all have been mere coincidence. It seems to me that Gordon Gay was intended to be another Tom Merry - and the Empire was to repeat the success of the halfpenny Gem.

Gordon Gay was an Australian. He was often referred to as the Cornstalk - a term which seemed to be lost later on. He was keen on amateur theatricals. He was also a brilliant impersonator, a bit reminiscent of Kerr of St. Jim's. Some of his impersonations were incredible, if youngsters really bothered about credibility, providing the tales were expertly written.

(The Empire had 20 pages, including pink covers. In the last page or two there was a serial, "The Mystery Man" by Laurence Miller, whoever he was. Soon this was replaced by "a wonderful serial of school life 'The Rivals of St. Kit's' by Charles Hamilton." And the latter was a serial which had run in Pluck several years earlier.)

The first Prosper Howard tale was "Gordon Gay's Company". He produced a pantomime, though he had only been at the school for 3 weeks then, so we were told. Frank Monk, the previous leader, became part of the supporting cast, just as Jack Blake had one at St. Jim's

In the third story "Gordon Gay's New Chums" two more Australian boys - the Wootton Brothers - arrived, so we had a new Co. They were called "The Three Wallabies", the title of the tale in No. 5. (Shades of the "Terrible Three" of St. Jim's?)

For 4 months the stories of Gordon Gay carried on week by week. They were mainly light, with a good many concerning impersonations. Tom Merry & Co of St. Jim's were often introduced. There were two girls - Miss Phyllis and Miss Vera - who often looked in, rather reminiscent of Miss Marjorie and Miss Clara in the early Greyfriars tales in the Magnet. Miss Phyllis was the cousin of Frank Monk.

Then came the first shadow of doubt. In No. 16 the school story was missing. We were introduced to Jack Rhodes, in stories of city life. But we were given the welcome news: Next Week, "Ginger!" a story of Gordon Gay & Co. For a while the school tales alternated with Jack Rhodes stories, the latter by Alfred Barnard. (Whoever he was!). Then, with No. 36 came the announcement that the Empire Library was to be ENLARGED. Actually it was a change of format to Boys' Friend size. Same Price - One Halfpenny. Many new features, promised the Editor, including "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" - a Magnificent New Tale of Tom Merry's Chum. By Martin Clifford.

Soon I will wander through the second and final period of the Empire Library. It was still to be very much "a Hamilton paper."

In passing, - what masses of wonderful facts Charles Hamilton *could* have given us in his Autobiography! How we would all have revelled in the real story of "his writing life!" He never chose to do so. We were not really interested in accounts of his travels. But how we would have loved masses of details of that "writing life".

It is too late now. We can only make assumptions based on, well - The Gem, The Boy's Friend, The Magnet, The Empire, Pluck, The Boys' Realm, The Popular, The Boys' Herald, The Greyfriars Herald, The B.F.L., The S.O.L., Modern Boy - and another side-line or two.

THE "EMPIRE" LIBRARY NEXT WEEK. "THE NEW MASTER."



One
Halfpenny.

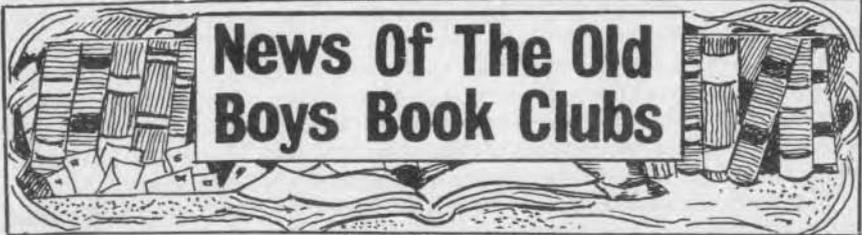
A COMPLETE STORY-BOOK THAT IS READ ALL OVER THE WORLD.



*Gordon
Gay's Play*

A Splendid, Long, Complete
Tale of Gordon Gay & Co., at
Rylcombe Grammar School.

By
PROSPER HOWARD.



**News Of The Old
Boys Book Clubs**

MIDLAND CLUB

There was another good attendance at the Spring Meeting of the Midland Club with 16 making the journey to Blackheath Library on 6th April. Bill Lofts was guest-speaker and very special guests were Una Hamilton-Wright and her husband, making a return visit after many years absence.

Before business commenced respects were paid to those lost to the hobby since our last meeting - Tom Porter, Maurice Hall, W. Howard Baker and Derek Adley.

A short business meeting followed to regularise the positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer - Geoff Lardner, Chris Brettell and Ivan Webster being elected.

Bill then spoke about names in Hamiltonia, most notably at Greyfriars. It was fun to think of a Welsh Quelch (spelt Cwelch, of course) or to equate Horace Coker with Disney's Horace Horsecollar. Mrs. Hamilton-Wright was able to throw some light on her uncle's thoughts and ideas. She will be guest speaker at our next meeting in October.

After a short T.V. film on Tom Porter's collection and its auction, tea was served. The Meeting ended at 6 p.m.

CHRIS BRETTELL

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For the final meeting of our 1990/91 season we met at the Duston, Northampton home of Howard Corn.

Howard presented a detailed examination of the Fifties 'Girl' comic-using No. 2 as the initial (standard) issue. He outlined some of the consequent cover redesigns and page layout changes this Hulton Press publication underwent during its lifetime. Amazingly the back page feature was always voted the most popular feature the title carried. How embarrassing for Marcus Morris!!

Later we watched a videotape of 'Comics: The Ninth Art' an episode dealing with cartoon strips during the Fifties. Our interest in this series finished with this sixth episode.

Afterwards Robert Smerdon provided a general knowledge quiz for us with topics ranging over the years and medias.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman Joan welcomed those present on a very untypical June evening of wet, windy and cold weather.

News concerning the Howard Baker programme was that the completion of "THE MAGNET" run in facsimile form would not continue: a disappointment to some members but it was understood not to be a viable project.

Mark Caldicott was congratulated on his production of the comprehensive Club Library Catalogue. It was now just a case of deciding the type style and format of the booklet before it went to print. For the first time, the Club will have a complete list of all books and papers in the library. Paul Galvin and Mark had worked together very closely on this project.

We are to continue with the barbecue at the home of Geraldine Lamb and family at Macclesfield on July 13th. This will be a pleasant summer break for the club, a social occasion and a chance to see the family's wonderful collection of books.

Catherine Humphrey spoke on the Jennings, and read the story from "JENNINGS GOES TO SCHOOL" in which, through his enthusiasm to be as realistic as possible, Jennings calls the fire brigade during the school fire practice. However, as usual, it all turns out right in the end! The story was from the paperback reprint of the original story published in the early 1950s and revised by Anthony Buckeridge himself to bring it up to date.

"With Great Pleasure - My Books" a talk by Joan Colman, had to be postponed owing to lack of time, but she had put on display a varied collection of books from her own library consisting of titles ranging from the classics to the modern.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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THE KIDNAPPING OF THE KING



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Len Hawkey sends us this C.H. Chapman 1906 picture which suggests that our present Prime Minister is far from being a "grey personality"!

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