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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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Between Friends

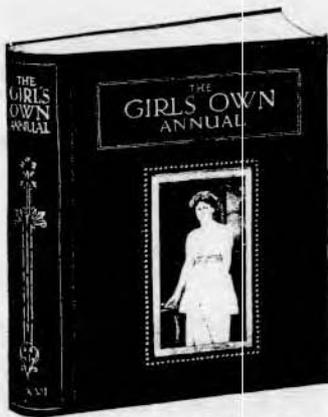


OUR ANNUAL

As usual when September comes around I am requesting contributions for the C.D. Annual which, from your letters, I understand is always a much appreciated publication: indeed, readers often comment that Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without it!

I have already been sent some extremely interesting stories, articles, poems and pictures for it, and I look forward to receiving further contributions during the next few weeks. Please put your pens, typewriters and word processors into prompt action so

that this year's issue will turn out to be as comprehensive, lively and entertaining as all its predecessors.



In next month's C.D. I shall begin to 'trail' the Annual's contents. Contributions so far received deal with Greyfriars, Biggles, Morcove, one of E.S.B.'s other detectives and a wide range of hobby interests.

Enclosed with this September C.D. is an order form for the Annual. I have, as always, tried to keep the price as low as possible, and I hope to receive lots of orders for this year's 'bumper' book.

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

I am grateful to our contributor, Len Hawkey, for reminding me that Nelson Lee's centenary should be marked this month (see our NELSON LEE AND E.S.B. feature) and further cause for celebration comes in the truly fine selection of recently issued nostalgic publications which we are reviewing in this issue.



THOSE HALF-REMEMBERED STORIES...

Requests for help in identifying books and authors from long ago continue to come in and, happily, it seems that C.D. readers are often able to provide the information that is so fervently required (see 30 - 32pp)

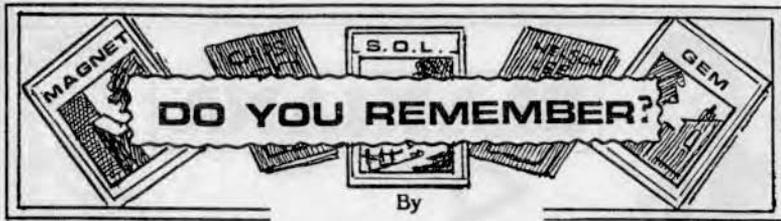
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MARY CADOGAN

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By
ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 247 - Magnets 1285-96 - Second Wharton the Rebel Series

Many years ago when I was corresponding with Charles Hamilton about the relative merits of his stories, he had a good deal to say about the two Rebel series. To quote a part of his comments, "With regard to the 1925 and 1932 series, probably it is a matter of taste, but I certainly think the second the better of the two: in actual fact, the second series came to be written because, looking over the first, it seemed to me that the idea could be worked out in a different form." Perhaps the most obvious difference is that, in the second series, Harry Wharton was only suspected of the offences that he actually committed in the first series.

The year 1932 was at the heart of the Golden Age, and one can only admire the consummate skill with which the opening was constructed. Events on the first day of term all conspired to put Wharton in the wrong, and ranged against him were Mr. Quelch and Loder who both continued implacable throughout. Nevertheless, the drama depended not just on unfortunate circumstances but upon the characters of the main protagonists. Wharton's pride led him into stubborn mistakes, Loder's villainy led him to plot against Wharton, and Mr. Quelch was only too ready - and at times too hasty - to believe the worst and to make snap judgements. Loder was true to character, but both Wharton and his form-master showed up badly on occasions. There were times when Mr. Quelch judged too hastily, and the calm Dr. Locke discovered the truth. Even so, Mr. Quelch could see only too clearly when Wharton succeeded in scoring off authority.

It is difficult to select the finest moments in the series: there are too many of them. Some of the more memorable ones include Fireworks Night when Wharton was heard to say he had crackers in his study, but they were biscuits; when Wharton pretended to leave the dormitory but hid under a bed to mislead Loder into thinking he had broken bounds; and, best of all, when Wharton cut detention and managed to save Sir Hilton on a runaway horse, and deliberately played the Head and Mr. Quelch on a string until Sir Hilton arrived. But though Wharton had his moments of triumph he had his disappointments as well, and it was obvious that he was on a downward course that must end in tragedy.

Equally clear was the fact that his relationship with his friends began to deteriorate as well, a process accelerated by misunderstandings. To aggravate matters, when one party offered a reconciliation, the other felt too deeply hurt to accept it. Mauleverer was Wharton's last friend, but eventually he quarrelled with him as well. In the last number Wharton was expelled, and ran out of gates. Mr. Quelch pursued him, and eventually they were both trapped by the tide in Seagulls' Cave, and spent hours on a rocky ledge, a time when all misunderstandings were cleared away. Though this might be criticised as too facile, it is difficult to imagine a different resolution to such an intractable situation.

Perhaps the most telling points in this series that mark it out as a Golden Age classic are the novelty of all the incidents, the progressive nature in which the plot developed, and the astonishing clash of personalities. Open it where you will, you will never fail to be entranced.



WHAT A PANTOMIME!

by John Bridgwater

I cannot recall Sexton Blake ever appearing in a pantomime. However the last time he was on television was in Simon Raven's serial "Sexton Blake and the Demon God". This was later written up in the last new Blake story to be published. The paperback carried the same title, John Garforth was given as the author and the publisher was Mirror Books, year 1978. This story has many of the ingredients required for a traditional pantomime. There is the maiden in distress, the valiant and virtuous hero, the evil plotting baddies, the harem with its giant eunuch keeper, the genie in the bottle, a long journey to the east by an updated magic carpet, temples, strange religious rites, mysterious caves where lie untold wealth and power. If you discount the snake charmer, only the popular music is missing. The whole thing is strongly reminiscent of Aladdin, with a touch of the Mummy's Curse for good measure.

This story is something of an odd one out in the Blake saga. Unlike many of the stories it has some deliberate humour and some of what is now referred to as the "adult" treatment. Blake himself is described as having "arrogant features" which at one point "... curled into an expression of disdain". He does not look quite like our Sexton Blake!!

This is the only Blake story I know of which starts in Biblical times. We see the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and the Captain of the pursuing Egyptians fall from his chariot, a fall which saves him from drowning as the waves roll back. He stumbles into a cave where he finds a "marvel". A demon god imprisoned in a massive, bejewelled, hideous gorgon mask. The Captain is charged by the god with the task of preserving the location of the marvel for some future generation when the "Chosen One" will seek out the marvel. The Captain now passes into history and prominently features in the rest of the story as a mummy with a curse of death on all who tamper with him, or the scrolls which go with the mummy, excepting the Chosen One. Sometime just after World War I Hubba Pasha believes he is the Chosen one. He thinks that possession of the marvel will give him power to rule the world. By this time the mummy and scrolls reside in a London museum. Hubba has the keeper of his harem of five, the giant eunuch Abdul, steal the scrolls and mummy. Abdul is careless and leaves a golden mummy mask behind. Hubba also purchases a virgin, Zigiana, for sacrifice to the god. A snake cult has grown up about this god and Hubba intends the snake shall sacrifice Zigiana.

Blake is called in by the museum authorities to recover the mummy and scrolls. Knowing that the thief will return for the golden mask Blake stations Tinker in the mummy room. Tinker is no match for the giant Abdul who throws him into a crocodile pool containing live crocs. An interesting exhibit in a mummy room; a pool full of (as Blake corrected Tinker) alligators. A dual of wits between Blake and Hubba ensues in which Blake is pushed down a lift shaft, assumes several disguises, discovers the snake temple and recovers the scrolls. The professor he employs to translate the scrolls phones Hubba in

the hope of getting backing for an expedition to Peru. Hubba comes round and takes the scrolls back but not before the curse has killed the professor.

Zigiana slips away from the harem and comes to Blake for help.

Blake, needing a spy in the enemy camp, manages to substitute Tinker for Zigiana just as Hubba and Co. leave for Greece. Hubba's first wife, Cassandra, discovers that Tinker is not Zigiana but, being a kindly soul, mothers him and keeps him well fed on the train journey. Whilst Hubba is trying to make the French railway officials route his private train to the destination in Greece without telling them where he wants to go, Tinker sends a message to Blake giving the destination, written on a luggage label, via a French wine porter.

After some delay Blake gets the message in a telegram. He leaves at once for an airfield at Camberley where gets an old war comrade, who is pioneering civil aviation, to fly him to Greece in a Tiger Moth aircraft. This tiny, frail, open cockpit plane carries the pilot and two passengers (Zigiana had insisted on going too) from England to Greece with only a 15 minute stop at Zagreb for food, in plenty of time for Blake to get hot on the trail of Hubba's party the same day. Civil aviation was certainly delivering the goods in those days!

When Blake and Zigiana catch up with Hubba they are immediately captured. Tinker's disguise is penetrated by Maremma Bey, Hubba's cousin and second in command. Blake saves them all from the snakes by telling Hubba that he has the secret of the mummy in the professor's notes which Hubba had left behind. Hubba's experts had failed to translate the scrolls so Blake is set to work on the mummy. Maremma, overhearing what Blake told Hubba, decides to double-cross his cousin and attempt to get the secret first. He is killed by the curse. Blake finally cracks the mummy's code giving the location of the cave. Hubba sends Blake into the cave alone deciding that if anyone is to be killed it might as well be Blake.

On getting to the marvel Blake discovers that he is the Chosen One. He staggers out with the massive mask which Hubba uses to hypnotise Tinker into trying to kill Blake with Abdul's scimitar. Lashing about with it Tinker smashes the mask, releasing the god. Hubba falls dead - and that is more or less that.

There is a quirky theme surfacing now and then which has Blake tying Tinker to a kitchen chair so he may practice his escaping skills. Doing this just before a meal time as an incentive to get on with it. During the story Tinker picks up some "funny" knots from Hubba's staff which he has not had in his training from Blake. Hoping Blake has not come across them before he challenges Blake to get out of them. Of course the master gets out of the bonds in minute and a half. He had previously boasted he could get out of any knot in thirty seconds. Tinker is duly impressed, and Blake tells him he had not done badly after all.

Mrs. Bardell is in good form, only one malapropism though, and she keeps Tinker well supplied with sandwiches for the night watch in the museum and the train journey with Hubba. Kippers, eggs, bacon and toast come in piles at other times. The good lady strongly disapproves of Zigiana's flimsy harem dress. Blake sends her out to shop for more suitable clothes and she returns with a ".....stunning new evening gown.....a little black number, an autumn costume in tweed and a comprehensive back-up wardrobe of smalls and not so smalls to meet every occasion." Well, well! Mrs. B. is nothing if not thorough, but that "little black number"!

If you include complete suspension of disbelief among your skills you will find this story quite entertaining. But what a way to end the saga. The last pages of the last chapter, "In which some loose ends are tied up", have Blake and Tinker tying each other up to a kitchen chair.... What a pantomime!



NELSON LEE - AND ESB

THE ILLUSTRATORS OF NELSON LEE

by Len Hawkey

"The setting-up of private detectives was a major industry during the 1890s": so says E.S. Turner, in his amusing and affectionate survey of boy's periodicals, "Boys will be Boys" (Michael Joseph 1948). With a whole chapter devoted to Sexton Blake and best part of the next to Nelson Lee, this book is an excellent "starter" for anyone new to the subject. Collectors who have only a few volumes of magazines published in that era - juvenile or adult - will know the truth of his statement.

Most of the intrepid sleuths whose adventures were recorded so long ago have passed as shadows in the night, but Blake and Lee, at least, are still remembered today. It was, perhaps, inevitable, as their careers largely ran parallel (and as, indeed, they were both rivals and friends) that comparisons would be drawn. For the most part this has been in respect of their case-books and methods. The artists who depicted their exploits, giving life and substance to the authors' words, have had scant attention.

Due praise was given to Sexton Blake's illustrators in a C.D. Annual some years back and Eric Parker's work is often mentioned, but in the light of Nelson Lee's Centenary some recognition might be given to those who decorated *his* adventures. In fact, they number scarcely a fifth of Blake's tally, which, with post-war artists, comes well over one hundred.

Stories of the Baker Street detective admittedly covered a much longer period. Nelson Lee's "Life", from his first recorded case on Sept. 19th 1894, more or less ended with the demise of The Nelson Lee Library in 1933, spanning barely 40 years. There were some Nelson Lee/St. Franks tales in "The Gem", after this, but only for about a couple of years, since when one has had to rely on "fond memories".

Nelson Lee's illustrators would seem to be - alphabetically:-

C.G. AMBLER	Fred BENNETT	C.H. BLAKE
E.E. BRISCOE	Kenneth BROOKES	Tom BROWNE
Arthur H. CLARKE	J. Abney CUMMINGS	G.M. DODSHON
G.J. GILLINGHAM	T.W. HOLMES	Bernard HUGH
Arthur JONES	Harry LANE	H.M. LEWIS
Savile LUMLEY	R.J. MACDONALD	"Val" READING
Willis READING	J.H. VALDA	

Not having seen any copies of the Detective, Nugget and/or Prairie Libraries, it is of course possible that I may have missed one or two others.

To start with, Lee fared better with his illustrators than did Blake. The writer has never been able truly to identify the original Blake artist, and would be glad to learn if anyone *has*, but Tom Browne himself started Lee's career, only a year or two before he invented those immortal tramps, Weary Willie and Tired Tim. He went on to depict the detective in one or two further stories: unfortunately the quality of reproduction prior to 1900 was pretty poor and unless they signed their work, it is no easy matter to identify

artists in many of the old "1/2d Marvel" and "Union Jack". After 1900 this was easier, thanks to improved processes of reproduction which even seemed to induce better work!

Arthur H. Clarke, later to portray Billy Bunter and Greyfriars, in "The Magnet", was always excellent, and he illustrated several of Maxwell Scott's serials about Nelson Lee in the "companion papers" edited by Hamilton Edwards. Over the years, from 1901 to 1915, Harry Lane, "Val" Reading, Macdonald, Briscoe, and H.M. Lewis all portrayed the detective, but by far the best, in the writer's opinion, was Fred Bennett, with his seemingly effortless style, impeccable line, always brimming with action.

Almost as good, although he only drew one serial, ("Nipper at St. Ninians" in the Boys' Friend, c.1913) was J. Abney Cummings. It must have made a change from his long association with "Jack, Sam & Peter" in the "Marvel" and other papers. Others on the Amalgamated Press staff who were used for N.L. yarns, included T.W. Holmes, Dodshon, and C.H. Blake. These were all in the years prior to 1915, and the launch of "The Nelson Lee Library". Why Arthur Jones was chosen to embellish this new weekly is one of the many mysteries of the A.P. organisation. He was apparently (according to a brief biography in Union Jack No. 533) a young, new recruit. It is said he was self-taught, which may well be true, as his work often appears rather crude, poor in anatomical accuracy, as well as perspective and proportion. He was good when a comic element was required, and often conveyed a sinister, brooding atmosphere (as in the Karnak stories) quite well, but with all the talent at their disposal (even allowing for its depletion during the Great War) it is puzzling that the A.P. did not entrust illustration of a new magazine to more experienced hands. It is not as if Jones were entirely reliable. It has been rumoured that he often lived beyond his means, and was fond of a drink too many. Over the years, however, his sketchy drawings became quite addictive, and despite adverse criticism, one looks back on them with some nostalgic affection.

Maxwell Scott (Dr. J.W. Staniforth) had ceased writing many years before his death in 1927, and the character of Nelson Lee had been taken up by other authors, G.H. Teed, Andrew Murray, and Sidney Drew amongst them. However, from 1915 onwards, over ninety per cent were by Edwy Searles Brooks, and these naturally included the St. Franks stories in "The Nelson Lee Library". In 1927 (Issue No. 76, 1st New Series) Arthur Jones was at last replaced as artist by C. Gifford Ambler. This was a slight improvement though Ambler's true forté was portraying animals, at which he was excellent. One publisher claimed he was the successor to Cecil Aldin! His general work was sound, although his individuals often seemed curiously stooped and fore-shortened.

He was replaced, in turn, by Kenneth Brookes, a good all-round artist, and long-time member of the London Sketch Club. Stylistically, Brookes was akin to D.C. Eyles, or even, sometimes, Eric Parker, but neither he nor any of his predecessors established an "authentic" appearance for Nelson Lee, as Parker had done for Sexton Blake, or Paget for Sherlock Holmes.

This lack of any clear characterisation is borne out by the examples from various artists, which accompany this survey. Arguably, the most talented of the latter-day illustrators, was J.H. Valda, but his connection with the Lee saga was really limited to the 19 "Monster Libraries", and one or two contributions to a series of short Lee tales in the N.L. Library around 1924/25. This series also employed Bernhard Hugh, G.J. Gillingham (who often signed merely as "GIL") and Willis Reading, brother of "VAL". Savile Lumley supplied covers for several "Schoolboy's Own Libraries" and other tales of St. Franks, some in "The Gem", also, but whether he ever actually depicted Nelson Lee is uncertain. Additionally there were a few others who contributed to "The Union Jack" prior to 1918, when the sleuth from Grays Inn Road occasionally gave assistance to Sexton Blake and Tinker. Apart from "Val" and Jones, these also included C.H. Blake and Harry Lane: most of these had been in used in earlier years.



1 HE HEARD THE PANTING OF THE FOREMOST BLOODHOUND AT HIS HEELS. AND, TURNING SWIFTELY ROUND, HE FIRED A COUPLE OF SHOTS INTO THE ANIMAL'S FACE.



2



3



4

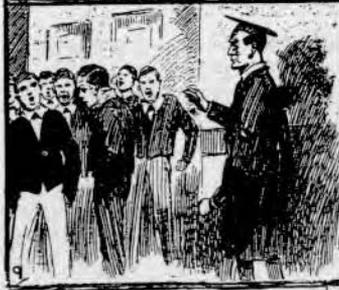


5



6

1. ARTIST - TOM BROWNE
(1/2d MARVEL 1894)
2. } ARTIST UNKNOWN
3. } N.L. as a 'Nigger Minstrel' and as a
Tramp (1894/5)
4. ARTHUR H. CLARKE
N.L. As a Country Landowner
(Boys Friend 1905)
5. R.J. MACDONALD
N.L. As a pensive sleuth
(The Jester 1906)
6. FRED BENNETT Nelson Lee at bay!
(Boys Realm 1903)



7. VAL READING Nelson Lee (standing) with Sexton Blake (Union Jack No. 688-1916)
8. ARTHUR JONES Lee and Nipper in consulting room (U.J. No. 799-1919)
9. ARTHUR JONES Nelson Lee - St. Frank's Housemaster (Nelson Lee Library 1924)
10. J.H. VALDA Lee (on left) plays card with prisoner (Nelson Lee Library - 1924/5)
11. BERNHARD HUGH. Nelson Lee apprehends villain (Nelson Lee Library - 1924/5)



As depicted by
ARTHUR JONES in
CHAMPION ANNUAL
1924

With hindsight, it seems a great pity that Nelson Lee never had someone like Eric Parker to establish a definitive picture in our minds. Generally speaking, one's image of Lee is of a sturdy, well-built man, around 35 to 40 years old, slightly shorter than Blake, and with more hair which is often a trifle wavy over the forehead. He is squarer of face than his rival, but possessed of the same steady, perceptive gaze, even temperament, and athletic ability. But no such definitive illustrator emerged. On the contrary, Nelson Lee artwork went downhill after his own magazine was established. Who knows? Might the "Nelson Lee Library" have lasted longer if the editors had at least shared out the work with as well as Jones the likes of Parker, Valda, and Fred Bennett?

SUMMARY

Marvel, Pluck, Union Jack 1894/1899. Tom Browne, and others (not identified - see footnote).

Boy's Friend, Realm, Herald & U.J. 1901/1918. A.H. Clarke, F. Bennett, Harry Lane, C.H. Blake, "Val", Macdonald, H.M. Lewis, Briscoe, J.A. Cummings, G.M. Dodshon, T.W. Holmes.

Boy's Friend Library, Schoolboy's Own - 1906/1940. As above, plus Savile Lumley.

Monster Library (as with S.O.L., mainly St. Frank's) - 1925/1927. J. H. Valda.

Nelson Lee Library (inc. St. Frank's) and Gem 1915/1935. A. Jones, C.G. Ambler, K. Brookes, "Gil", Valda, Lewis, W. Reading, Lumley.

Detective, Nugget, and Prairie Libraries 1919/1921. Not known by writer.

Footnote: These might well include Rowland Hill, Wm. Dewar, Albert Morrow and/or Geo Gatcombe, who, along with Tom Browne, were named as 1/2d Pluck/Marvel" artists in 1894/5. In an article by Jack Wood in C.D. Annual, 1954, D.D. Fitz and R.H. Eyles (?) were also mentioned, but the writer knows nothing about them.

MANDY AND MARK

We send our love and congratulations on their recent marriage to Mandy and Mark O'Sullivan, who have just returned from their honeymoon in the Caymen Islands. Mandy is Sales Manager and Desk Top Publishing Expert at Quacks, our Printers, and one of the ladies who regularly, efficiently and always helpfully types and generally prepares the C.D. text for printing. We wish Mandy and Mark great happiness in their future life together.



"EVEN IF YOU FORGOT THE LINES I GAVE YOU — DO NOT FORGET TO ORDER YOUR 'COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL'."

Conquest in Command?

by Norman Wright

It was good to see mention of that enduring desperado, Norman Conquest, in Mark Caldicott's entertaining piece, "Fun at the Park Plaza Hotel", in the July issue of *Collectors Digest*. I have to say that I agree with Mark's opinion of the film "Park Plaza 605." Released in December 1953 it was a typical B feature of the period and, despite four writers being involved in producing the screenplay, it was a poor effort. Tom Conway was adequate as Conquest but rather mature in years to play the role with the verve and vigour required by the character as depicted in the books. Conway's Conquest strolled through the part, a cardboard character with little of the banter and drawl of the genuine article. By 1953, incidentally, the actor seems to have had something of a monopoly on playing 'deperadoes', his role as Norman Conquest coming a few years after he finished playing the part of The Falcon in the series of 1940s B features (taking over the role from his brother, George Sanders), and The Saint on American radio during the early years of the 1950s. I was never very keen on The Falcon pictures - the character being virtually a carbon copy of Charteris' haloed hero - but, having recently heard some of his Saint radio shows, I find that he did make a very believable Simon Templar. Joy Sheldon was not a very exciting 'Pixie' Everard and I am afraid that I will never find her convincing in any role other than that of PC 49's girl friend, Joan Carr! And Sidney James, of course, played Sidney James (and who really would want him any other way! - except perhaps in the role in this particular film!). Despite its short-comings it is a pity that further Conquest films did not follow. The character was popular in other parts of the world and, had a little more thought and money been put into the production, the resulting picture could have been very acceptable. In the USA the film was released as "Norman Conquest"; such a shame that there was never a "The Return of Norman Conquest"!

I see that Mark refers to my comments, made half a dozen years ago in these pages, that I regard the Conquest stories of the late 1950s and 60s as unsatisfactory. I still hold to that view and could never concur with his opinion that ESB was enjoying a 'golden era' during that period. Brooks was at his peak, at least as far as his detective and thriller writings were concerned, during the period 1933 to about 1950. The pressures of the *Nelson Lee Library* had gone and he could concentrate on the detective genre. His Sexton Blake stories had always been amongst his best work, but from the moment he was able to develop his own characters for *The Thriller* his work really took off. As Butler points out, in "The Durable Desperadoes", Brooks had virtually created the desperado character single handed in the person of Waldo. Over the years he had refined the character and with the coming of *The Thriller* he had an opportunity to present the public with a fully fledged clone of the Wonderman in the person of Norman Conquest. 1066, 'Ironsides' and 'The Grouser' were all excellent characters and during the period 1935 to 1945 Brooks seems to have given his novels that extra polish. "The Grouser Investigates", published by Harrap in 1936, was one of his most accomplished thrillers, while the first dozen Conquest and Ironsides novels had pace, crisp dialogue and plenty of action. Some of them, the Conquest novels in particular, were often 'over the top' but they worked and the reader could suspend his disbelief long enough to reach the end of the book and still want more. In some of the later books this did not happen. When he tried to up-date his characters during the 1950s, and introduced an element of sex appeal into the Conquest stories, he found himself out of his depth, a novice in a strange world. The Ironsides novels did not suffer the same fate and remained enjoyable to the end.



BILLY BUTTONS THE PAGE BOY DETECTIVE

by Bill Lofts

Billy Buttons was a very popular type of detective. When disguised as a page, he was able to keep an eye on any suspicious characters that were staying at London's latest luxurious hotel, The Astoria. He was actually assistant to the more experienced detective and resident at the Hotel, John Perkins. Billy, however, played the leading role, particularly as John Perkins was often away. The stories appeared in the popular mauve-coloured comic *The Monster* in 1925. The comic had quite a good run of about eight years, having four different publishers. Taken over by A.P. in 1928, it finally closed in 1930, with a run of 383 issues.

THE MONSTER 1d. COMIC.

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Part 4 Glenda Gives An Encore!

Despite having been marched away in the custody of Mabel Lynn's detective brother, Austin Lynn, Glenda Mayne was not yet through with Cliff House. She soon escapes, to where the girls do not know, and only Babs is still beset occasionally by uneasiness whenever Glenda invades her memories. For the girl crook had written to Babs, a mocking letter of congratulations "from the vanquished to the victor" in which she tells Babs not to think that she has seen the last of her, that they shall meet again, perhaps sooner than Babs thinks!

No wonder Babs experiences foreboding. Of all the girls, and adults, at the school Babs is probably the only one who knows that Glenda Mayne is quite audacious enough to return to the area, indeed, the school, should it suit her plans and be worth her while. And Babs' foreboding proves fully justified in *THE SHADOW OF GLENDA MAINE*, a single story in *SCHOOLGIRL* 557 of March 30th, 1940, some four months after the first series.

Mabs, as all readers knew, came from a theatrical family. Her father was a famous playwright, her elder sister was a Shakespearean actress of repute and her Aunt Mary was a star of comedy and involved in the production side. So there was great excitement at Cliff House when Mabs received word from her aunt to say that she was coming to the school to coach her young niece in the juvenile lead in one of Major Lynn's most successful plays, which was to be revived in the West End. There was a possibility that Mabs might get the part. Miss Primrose had given permission, so it is not surprising that the school was agog. Nor is it surprising that Babs was cried down when right from the start she suspected that "Aunt Mary" was actually Glenda Maine in yet another of her skilful disguises.

Even though Mabs has not seen her aunt for nearly three years they have corresponded regularly, and the personal belongings with initials, photographs and family knowledge are all there, even to the scar on her shoulder from a car accident in which she had been injured. Babs' popularity ebbs rapidly after she forces a showdown and the triumphant Glenda quite willingly reveals the scar on her shoulder to the assembled girls. No doubt it is make-up, but how can poor Babs prove that? Then she sees someone signalling in Morse from the roof of the school one night and when she races up there in the hope of confronting the signaller she is locked out by the trapdoor being closed. Babs, of course, is a thoroughly resourceful girl and she is able to pick the old lock and force the bolt, but by the time she gets back into the school it is only to find that Glenda has apparently been with the stage-struck girls long enough to establish an alibi.

Of course the big problem for Babs is answering her own question; why? What is Glenda's motive? Why has she returned to the school? The dot-dot-dash of her signalling has laid the false lead of spying, and the discovery of a yacht out in the bay underlines, but does not solve the mystery of the connection with Mabs.

Meanwhile Glenda has pulled out all the charm stops, and even Bessie gets the acting bug, providing the light relief and the occasional setback by popping up everywhere in a new disguise, quoting *Macbeth*---dead unlucky!---and cutting up a fur coat for one of her costume improvisations. Then Babs gets the breakthrough she needs when "Aunt Mary" tells Mabs that Mr. Gillespie, the producer she works with, owns Warren House, which has a small theatre within its walls, and wants Mabs to go there, made up and costumed for the role, to do the audition.

No Babs knows. For Warren house is old, dark and sinister. Why take Mabs there? And the yacht is anchored very near. So Babs follows and knows her suspicions are justified when she sees two seafaring men lurking nearby with coils of rope. Mabs is to

Happy Hours of Reading for Every Schoolgirl!



be kidnapped. Why, she does not know, but she is determined to foil the plan. She rushes onto the little stage, knocks over some scenery and seizes Mabs, dragging her forcibly out of the house. Of course there is an awful row. "Aunt Mary" plays hurt/reproachful, Mabs is bitterly disappointed that the audition has been ruined by her best chum, and the girls are frankly scornful of Babs and her crazy suspicions. But these become even stronger and more alarming when Glenda tells Mabs that Mr. Gillespie has been very understanding and will give Mabs another chance. As before, she is to don her make-up and costume before leaving the school and then accompany her "Aunt Mary" to Warren House for the audition.

Babs is appalled, positive now that Mabs is to be kidnapped, and decides that desperate diseases need desperate remedies. She lures Mabs to a box room on a flimsy pretext after making an emotional plea to Mabs to renew their friendship, then locks Mabs in. After scribbling a note of her intentions, Babs dons the costume and proceeds to play Glenda at her own game. But once inside Warren House Babs is seized, bound and gagged and thrust into a room for a brief time, during which she manages to scrawl a message to give a clue to her possible whereabouts. Her suspicions are now proved beyond

doubt when she is taken to the yacht and finds Glenda waiting--the old Glenda, smoking a cigarette and smiling mockingly. The girl crook's motive is at last clear, and how she has carried out the subterfuge so successfully.

Glenda has actually worked for a short period as personal secretary to the real Miss Mary Lynn, when she was able to "borrow" some of that lady's personal effects and discover that Mabs' father owned hundreds of poundsworth (for today's values read thousands!) of bonds, and Glenda intends to have them. So with her accomplices she plans the whole manoeuvre, and now all she needs is a signed note from Mabs to ask her father to do as her kidnapper orders.

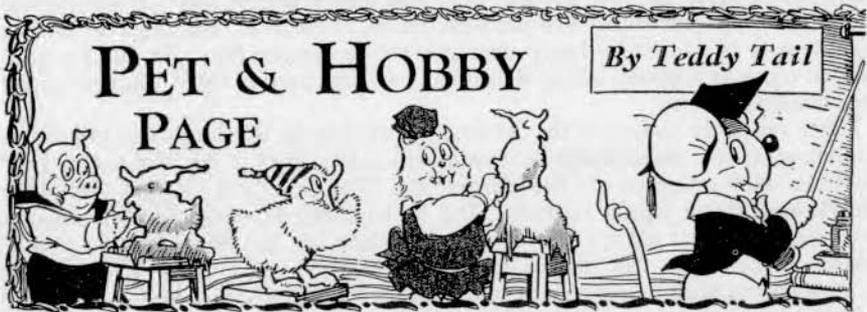
Although Babs knows her own danger she enjoys her moment of triumph when she picks up the pen and signs her own name on the document and reveals her true identity.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, so to speak, the girls are listening to a broadcast from a troop concert for which Lydia Crossendale's cousin is the announcer. Mabs has just been released by Bessie and discovered what Babs has done, and tears into the Junior Common Room in time to hear the broadcast and her own Aunt Mary's name being announced. Now she and the girls realise that Babs was right all the time.

The story races to its climax with the arrival of Major Lynn, thankful to discover his daughter is safe at school, because he has just received a tip-off that there is a plot afoot to kidnap her.

The cavalry arrives just in time to rescue Babs as the yacht has set sail and Glenda has announced she will keep Babs prisoner until she can reformulate her plans. But instead Babs is restored to her chums and Glenda and the gang are arrested. Needless to say Glenda escapes from prison disguised as a nurse, and Babs can't help surmising that they have not seen the last of Glenda Maine. She wonders in what guise Glenda will next arrive on the Cliff House scene. Alas, this promise was not to be fulfilled: a few weeks later the SCHOOLGIRL and all in its ken paid the price of war.

Next month: Mistresses of Cliff House who became victims of crime.



TRIBUTES TO FRIENDS AND FELLOW HOBBYISTS

SIMON GARRETT

(by Tim Salisbury and Laurence Price,
South Western Club)

We are very sad to report the passing of Simon Garrett who died on Good Friday, 1st April, 1994 having contracted pneumonia following a major operation last Christmas. Simon was a founder member, with his friend Tim Salisbury, of the South Western Club in 1979.

Simon was also a founder member of the Eagle Club, a comic which he particularly loved and he was a great Greyfriars fan too. He always looked forward to a chat with Bill Lofts on this train journey home to Bath following our meetings. His other interests were cricket and croquet.

His gentle ways, cheerful disposition and sense of humour will be much missed by all of us who knew him. He is survived by his elderly parents for whom he gave up his job so that he could care for them. Such was the selfless nature of the man who was Simon Garrett.

PETER CUSHING

by Brian Doyle

The sad death of Peter Cushing at the age of 81, in August, should not go unmentioned in the pages of the SPCD.

Apart from being a wonderful actor in a wide variety of roles on screen and in the theatre, he was also 'one of us'. He had avidly read and enjoyed the stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's in *The Magnet* and *The Gem* in his youth and, indeed, for many years afterwards. He once said that *The Gem* helped to keep him on 'the straight and narrow path' as a youngster, and that for many years he tried to live his life as his favourite hero, Tom Merry, might have done. "Would Tom Merry have done that? I would ask myself," recalled Cushing, "and if the answer was No, then I wouldn't either.....!"

I had the pleasure of knowing Peter Cushing briefly when I worked with him on two films ("*Star Wars*" in 1976 and "*Top Secret!*" in 1983) and found him a charming, quiet and deeply religious man. He once told me, as he told others, that he was 'just waiting' for the time when he could join his beloved late wife, Helen, 'in Heaven'. Her death, in 1971, after nearly 30 years of a blissfully happy marriage, had devastated him. He said he now just worked as much as possible, taking almost any part that came along, to keep busy and try to keep loneliness at bay.

I once raised the subject of the old boys' papers and he was fascinated to learn that I was a fellow-addict. He said that he occasionally read copies of the "Collector's Digest", possessed a small collection of "*The Magnet*" and "*The Gem*" and also had several copies of the Howard Baker reprint volumes. Did he have any favourite or well-remembered series, I asked? "Oh, I always enjoyed the ones where our heroes got into hot water," he chuckled. "There was that famous series, I remember, when Harry Wharton was in disgrace with practically everyone, rowed with his friends, and was very nearly expelled from Greyfriars; and there was that marvellous long-standing feud between Tom Merry and Cardew at St. Jim's too. Wonderful stuff!" He also recalled that he bought a lot of the old papers from the leading dealer of the 1940s and 1950s, Bill Martin (no doubt well-remembered by veteran collectors in the OBBC field!). Cushing told me he had amassed a fine collection of model soldiers too, as well as having 'a few hundred' cigarette cards.

Mention of the latter reminds me of one thing I shall always remember about Cushing - he smoked cigarettes and wore a special white glove as he did so, to prevent the nicotine from staining his fingers, he explained....!

Cushing's career is probably too well-known to reiterate here. But, in addition to his association with horror and macabre films, was *the* top television actor of the mid-1950s, winning several awards for this work (his Winston Smith in the original TV production of George Orwell's "1984" will be well-remembered by those who saw it).

He also appeared in several productions of interest to SPCD readers. After his film debut in Hollywood in 1939 (when he doubled for Louis Hayward in "The Man in the Iron Mask"), he followed it up in the same year with a role in "A Chump at Oxford", with Laurel and Hardy! Not as an extra, as some recent Obituaries have wrongly stated, but as the leading Oxford University student (wearing a mortar-board!) taunting the unhappy pair (in fact, he received 6th billing). He was in the film version of "Biggles" in 1985, played public schoolmaster Crocker-Harris in a memorable TV production of Rattigan's "The Browning Version" in 1955, played Sherlock Holmes in Hammer's "The Hound of the Baskervilles" in 1958, and played the great sleuth again in the BBC TV series in 1968; he also played Sherlock again (though rather too old for the role by them) in a TV film "Sherlock Holmes and the Masks of Death" (with an even more venerable Sir John Mills as his Watson) in 1984.

I never heard him say a bad word about anyone. And he was a very sympathetic and thoughtful man. While chatting on the set of "Top Secret" at Pinewood Studios one day, he mentioned his late wife and I told him that, sadly, I had lost my own wife three years earlier. He expressed his regret - then, two days later, I received a long, handwritten letter from him at my home address, offering me further condolences and comfort.

Peter Cushing will be much-missed, both by those who knew him on-screen and off. Tom Merry would have been proud of him.....

COLLECTORS CLEARANCE: all items Very Good or better except where noted otherwise. 62 Nelson Lees 1931 to 1933 range £55.00. 51 Nelson Lees (reading copies only) £20.00. 19 Sexton Blakes 1930/34 range, occasional sellotape reinforcement to top and bottom of spine £50.00. 43 Adventure March '51 to April '52 punch holes top/bottom of spine not affecting text £25.00. 29 Adventure April '50 to May '51 £20.00. 15 Hotspur 1951 £10.00. 59 Rover Sept '50 to January '52 £40.00. 56 Adventure - run 1280 (July '49) to 1336 (Aug. '50) lacks 1308 £45.00. 127 Wizard broken run 1180 (July '48) to 1324 (June '51) £75.00.

The above D.C.T. comics are mostly VG/Fine - odd copies have tears/creasing/age, darkening from storage and 'lots' are priced accordingly.

Professionally bound volumes. Magnets. 16 (issues (1643 - 1658) £35. 12 issues (1573-1584) £25. 26 issues (1585-1611) £50. 26 issues (1617-1642) £50.

Sun Comics 256 (Jan. '54) to 281 (June '54) £35. **Chick's Own** January to June 1956 (probably publishers file copy) £35. Please add £1.00 per 'lot' towards postage, but orders over £100 post free. John Beck, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, Sussex, BN7 2RU.

**From JOHN GEAL
Gems of Hamiltonia No. 7 Horace Coker MAGNET No. 1085.**

(Coker up for expulsion - has locked himself in his study)

Heavy footsteps came along the Fifth-Form passage. There was a buzz of voices. Blows rang on the stout oak door. "Go it!" shouted Coker savagely. "Break it down! I've got a stack of stuff behind it! And a poker! I'm sorry for the first cheeky cad that shoves his nose in here." Crash, crash, crash!

Coker gave a jeering laugh.

From the voices, he knew that a lot of the Sixth were outside. The Head had called in the aid of the prefects to secure this rebel. Wingate and Gwynne, and Loder and Walker, and some more. They seemed to be beating on the door with heavy sticks. If the silly asses thought they were going to break down the door by that means, it only showed what silly asses they were, in Coker's opinion. Nothing short of a pick-axe, such as Gosling had suggested to Mr. Prout, or a sledge-hammer would have done it. Greyfriars had been built in ancient days, before builders had had the advantage of a modern education. The doors, consequently, were doors; just as the walls were walls. In those primitive simple days, builders had built stoutly, using materials that were likely to last: believing, in the innocence of their simple old hearts, that a day's pay was worth a day's work. Getting at Coker was therefore a task much more hefty than it would have been in a modern building constructed on the latest scientific principles.

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The Hamiltonian Library of the London Club possesses over two thousand original Amalgamated Press publications: Magnets, Gems, Populars, Plucks, and monthly Boys' Friends and Schoolboys' Owns. Borrowing charges have remained unchanged for decades - a penny for a weekly paper and two pence for a monthly one.

The approach of autumn may incline you to start reading once more. If you would like a copy of the catalogue giving full particulars of the postal borrowing service, please send two first-class stamps to me - Roger Jenkins, 8 Russell Road, Havant, Hants. PO9 2DG.

BRANDS FROM THE BURNING by Peter Mahony

Part 13: Herbert Vernon-Smith (6)

The reform lasted nearly three years. Smithy made his usual contribution to the Popper's Island Rebellion and the Greyfriars Secret Society series. He played a minor role in the Stacey saga, saving Harry Wharton from the scheming of his devious 'double'. At Portercliffe Hall, he used his brains to unmask the villain who was after a hidden hoard of sovereigns. This summer holiday series was followed by a Christmas adventure at Polpelly of much the same type - ghosts and galleon gold. Then came the Tuck Shop Rebellion, where Smithy's methods with 'Acid Drop' Hacker added considerably to the gaiety of the hostilities. Still, apart from these predictable - though interesting - involvements, the Bounder had not 'starred' in a series for 150 issues of the Magnet.

Hamilton then gave him a brief run. In Magnets 1522-25, Smithy was, initially, at odds with his father again. 'Old Smith' was the target for a mysterious gunman. Bunter butted into an ambush and saved the millionaire. Naturally grateful, Mr. Vernon-Smith allowed Bunter to wedge in at Seahill Park for the Easter holidays. Smithy was not pleased. Ponsonby & Co. were his chosen guests and a high old time was planned. Bunter would be definitely *de trop!* The millionaire pulled rank and insisted that Bunter should be invited.

Trouble, of course, ensued. Apart from Pon & Co. squabbling with Bunter, the villainous gunman appeared again. He attacked Mr. Vernon-Smith in a train and later in his study at Seahill Park. Smithy foiled the first attempt. Bunter the second: the Bounder was kidnapped. The Famous Five became involved and the series developed into melodrama. Pon & Co., surprisingly, provided the light relief. Of course, the villain - an Italian, Nessuno, who was after the "N'gombo Concession" in Kenya - was apprehended and tranquillity was restored. Nevertheless, the Bounder's vicious, surly streak had been much more in evidence than for some years past.

This unpleasantness surfaced again in the 'Skip' series (Magnets 1545-55). Skip, a waif pickpocket, was admitted to Greyfriars under the auspices of the Cokers. He aroused the Bounder's animosity by sticking up for himself when a ragging was scheduled. Generally speaking, Vernon-Smith came out at 'the little end of the horn' in his clashes with Skip. These included a splendid episode when Miss Bullivant, the formidable games-mistress at Cliff House, waded into Smithy and Ponsonby. They had set on Skip - four to one - and tossed him into a muddy pond, when "the Bull" happened along. She whacked Gadsby and Monson with her walking stick. They promptly legged it; then she collared the other two. They both ended up in the pond!

Smithy's worst inclinations were aroused. He accused Skip of stealing twice; and was flogged for bringing unfounded charges. He set out to gag "the Bull" on bonfire night - and ended up being gagged himself. He searched Skip's belonging for Ponsoby's missing watch - and found it. After he had roused another furore it transpired that Bunter had borrowed Skip's coat, found the watch, slipped it into the coat pocket - and then forgotten about it. The Bounder's suspicions of the waif were based on wishful thinking - a latent streak of unpleasant snobbery had been aroused.

Later, Vernon-Smith ragged M. Charpentier. He hid a '*billet de banque*' in Mossoo's 'Henriade'. Skip was accused and found guilty of theft. After a struggle with his conscience, Smithy confessed - and Skip was exonerated. Peeved with himself, the Bounder set out to identify the female original of a picture which Skip carried in a locket. With Hazeldene's help, he traced it to Miss Bullivant. Thinking that Skip had pinched it - throughout this series, Smithy allowed bitter animosity to colour his usual keen judgement - he informed "the Bull". She was shocked - but for an entirely unexpected reason. The

locket and picture had belonged to her lost brother! Skip, from being a friendless waif, suddenly acquired a formidable big sister. Seeking to do his enemy a bad turn, the Bounder had inadvertently changed his life for the better. Egg on Smithy's face - and thoroughly deserved.

The high points of Vernon-Smith's reform were now well past. The Smedley series had seen a deterioration in his attitude towards authority, both parental and scholastic. These more recent episodes showed a further decline. Arrogance, snobbery and now mean-mindedness were uppermost. The long-suffering Redwing was no longer an important influence. Smithy often took a snide delight in scorning his chum's feeble attempts at remonstrance. It was high time for Hamilton to revive the Bounder's better nature.

This was achieved in the Carter series (Magnets 1561-1572). Arthur Carter, a young reprobate came to Greyfriars with the aim of blackening the character of Billy Bunter, his relative and rival for their uncle's will. Smithy, who had been down that road himself, came to the fathead's aid. Several times he used his cunning to outfox the wily Carter. Eventually, with Wibley's help, he managed to expose the villain to the authorities. Vernon-Smith as Bunter's Guardian Angel takes some believing; but it actually brought out traits in the Bounder's character that had lain dormant too long.

Almost immediately, Hamilton ruined the effect. Vernon-Smith took a party to Texas for the Easter holidays - yet another of his father's overseas business interests. In a Western setting similar to a Hopalong Cassidy movie, the Bounder went right over the top. He was soon out-drawing and out-shooting the 'baddies'; and in general behaving like Billy the Kid in his cups. Wharton & Co. were, quite frankly, embarrassed by their host's behaviour. Even the Rio Kid, Hamilton's own Western Outlaw, found Vernon-Smith 'an ornery cuss'. It was quite a relief to get him back to Greyfriars before he had several killings under his belt. It all went to show how unprincipled and reckless Smithy could be when no authority existed to retain him. Quelch did a sterling job of containment - but that's all it was really. Reform and good behaviour were only skin-deep with Smithy now.

For nearly a year, Vernon-Smith faded into the background. He was briefly suspected of being the Greyfriars Prowler (the Crocker series, Magnets 1615-25). Then he played a dirty trick on Bunter and the Famous Five by landing them on an almost deserted island for the Easter holidays. Estranged from his father - again! Smithy fell foul of a scheming estate-agent, Rance. (For all his business acumen, Mr. Vernon-Smith was no great shakes at choosing subordinates. Soames, Barney Stone, Rance etc... - the list is an impressive testimony to the millionaire's gullibility. How he retained his fortune is a puzzle - he was always employing people who sought to relieve him of large chunks of it.) Bunter, Redwing and the Famous Five came to the rescue and harmony was restored - but not for long.

The Bertie Vernon series (Magnets 1631-1642) was a snorter - the best since Smedley, and in some respects even better. The plot was a variation on Dumas' "Man in the Iron Mask", but infinitely more entertaining. Bertie Vernon, Smithy's cousin and double, was a decent chap. Unlike Stacey and Clavering who behaved villainously towards Wharton and Tom Merry, Vernon had no desire to 'do Smithy down'. Unfortunately, Captain Vernon his guardian, had (like Aramis) other intentions. Smithy, through indulging his reckless spite, played into the Captain's hands.

Vernon was sent to Greyfriars to improve his education. Actually, Captain Vernon was giving his ward an opportunity to acclimatise himself to Greyfriars and Smithy's background before he launched his plot. The Bounder - that snobbish streak again - resented his poor relation and proceeded to make himself as obnoxious as possible to the unfortunate Bertie. A series of clashes occurred: Vernon, rather like Wharton and Tom Merry with their doubles, found himself unable to keep his end up against Smithy's rascality.

Tom Redwing, conscious of his chum's deteriorating character, began to take a more positive role.

The Bounder, who had worked the 'Double' dodge for all it was worth, now went too far. He visited Captain Vernon, posing as Bertie, and tried to persuade him to let him (Bertie) leave Greyfriars. The captain, wise to the imposture, imprisoned Smithy: then he dashed to Greyfriars and removed Bertie from the school. Later the same day, Bertie returned to Greyfriars, posing as Herbert Vernon-Smith. He salved his conscience by reflecting that Smithy was (a) his implacable enemy; (b) a thorough blackguard; (c) an unworthy heir who would fail to use his wealth and position to good purpose. Three potent censures - all thoroughly justified in the light of the Bounder's behaviour towards his poor relations.

The one weakness in the plan was the Bounder's friendship with Tom Redwing. Vernon passed muster with everyone else, but Redwing knew Smithy too well to be deceived for long. He went seeking Smithy at Lantham Chase - and was snaffled too by the unscrupulous captain. A bogus message made Quelch believe that Redwing had gone to see his father. Later, a letter from Mr. Redwing gave Vernon the clue that Tom had been imprisoned along with Smithy.

Honesty prevailed. Vernon set the prisoners free; then persuaded his uncle to leave the area. The Bounder, for once chastened and ashamed of himself, agreed to keep the whole murky business dark. As so often in life, a nobler character was left to struggle against disadvantages, while a flawed one - Smithy - recovered his position of affluence and privilege. Hamilton knew a thing or two about the unfairness of existence.

The Bounder's escape did not keep him straight for long. At the beginning of the following term, he was in trouble for causing a riot at the railway station. Coker, at odds with Prout, set out to ship Prout's study at night, got into a muddle in the dark, and wrecked Quelch's instead. Vernon-Smith was accused; his denials were not believed and he was expelled. Coker owned up of course, and Smithy was reprieved, but not without a severe lecture about his lack of trustworthiness.

That didn't do much good either, a couple of weeks later, the Bounder cooked up a scheme for humiliating Wingate, who had punished the dear lad and aroused his resentment. Bunter, locked in Quelch's study, imitated his master's voice and gave him a thorough dressing-down. Then things went wrong. Bunter couldn't get out of the study; eventually he was rumbled. The Bounder had to own up - Wingate, very charitably, minimised his offence. Another shaming episode for Smithy.

All of which brings us to Vernon-Smith's last fling. The Lamb series (Magnets 1660-75) is much under-rated, partly because it was rather prolonged (16 issues). The very believable feud between Smithy and Mr. Lamb, the new master of the Remove, provided most of the fireworks of a thrilling saga. It was the Smedley business over again - but with an added dimension. Smedley was a rascal trying to capitalise on Smithy's rascality - one unpleasant blighter versus another. Lamb was a vicious criminal and his treatment of the Bounder, in the initial clashes, was born of a vindictive, sadistic temperament. Smithy responded in kind, but the readers' sympathy was with him throughout. All the yarns were of high quality, but several were among Hamilton's best work.

To select just two: "The Japer of Greyfriars" (No. 1668) showed Hamilton's funny vein at its most acute. Smithy acquired a lifelike, stuffed bulldog from Fisher T. Fish. He planted it in the form-room and bribed Bunter to ventriloquise the growl. The fearsome animal kept Lamb and the Remove out of class for a considerable time. Eventually the irritated Lamb lost patience and swiped the dog with his cane. The consternation when the 'live' animal's head fell off was a masterpiece of description.

Funny, but not excessively so. In Stan Laurel fashion, Hamilton milked more hilarity out of the same gag. Smithy spent a few days cultivating the tolerance of a real bulldog -

an unpleasant, grumpy beast. Then he worked the same prank. Lamb, confronted by the growling cur, assumed that the dummy had been refurbished and promptly slashed it with his cane. Mayhem resulted - exit Lamb, running for dear life. The bulldog got him - by his coat-tails - just as he scrambled up a tree. Game, set and match to the Bounder. Greyfriars - and the readers rocked with laughter. Sandwiched between the dog episodes was a gorgeous side issue. Fish, on the make, heard of Smithy's plan and got in ahead of him by buying the stuffed dog from Mr. Lazarus in Courtfield. Then he upped the price to Smithy - good transatlantic business. When Lamb made inquiries, the purchase was traced to Fishy - who collected a record thrashing that was really due to the Bounder. So much for wise guys!

Another superb story was "Vernon-Smith's Last Fling" (nos. 1673 and 74). Smithy, having at last been expelled (he had broken into Lamb's desk to retrieve an incriminating letter), resolved to go "with his ears up". He sauntered along Masters' Passage - whistling loudly. All the staff emerged to express disapproval.

He was beautifully rude to Prout and Hacker (home truths are so painful). Then he barged Lamb back into his study, turned the key and bolted with it. Lamb was late for class.

When they eventually started lessons, the villainous master was pelted with school-books - by the Bounder, who was camped on top of the form-room cupboard. Lamb had a terrible time before Smithy departed - in haste - and Greyfriars thought it had seen the last of him.



Whiz! Vernon-Smith flung the school-book and caught Mr. Lamb on the side of the face. The art master tottered and lost his balance. "He, he, he!" gurgled Bunter. "Watch him bump!"

A series of unexpected rags followed. Coker's latest hamper from Aunt Judy was plundered. Bunter was the natural suspect, but there was no proof. Lamb's art-work was disfigured; Bunter got the blame! A boot, thrown from a Remove window, hit Lamb on the head. Skinner & Co. were punished for that. Coker's blankets disappeared - another mystery. Lamb's study was painted green.

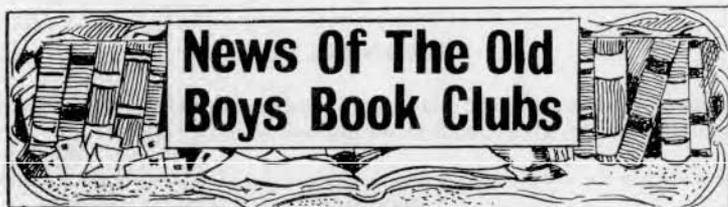
Bunter, who had snaffled the paint because it was in a crate marked "JAM", was accused of the offence and given the benefit of the doubt. Then he swanked about being a bold, bad ragger. Lamb heard about it and marched the Owl off to be sacked.

Smithy, who had been camping in an attic, had, of course, perpetrated all these 'crimes'. Grudgingly, he emerged from hiding, and saved Bunter's bacon. This time, Dr. Locke made sure he departed from the school. The rapid flow of events, all thoroughly plausible, made these two Magnets among the most readable that Hamilton ever-produced. The fallen Bounder, indulging his defiance to the full, but pursuing a just aim to bring down the criminal cracksman.

Lamb, was never more vividly portrayed. It was a pity Smithy had to go.

Of course, he didn't go permanently. In a final episode, Smithy cracked the secret of Slim Jim, the cracksman (Lamb), rescued the imprisoned Quelch and was reinstated - "for services rendered". At the end, courage and brains made up for wilful insubordination. Herbert Vernon-Smith finished his Magnet career on the side of the angels; the most charred of Hamilton's brands to be plucked from the burning. What a character! What a writer! What more can one say!

(End of Series)



LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

A highlight of the July meeting at Chingford was a slideshow and talk by Clarissa Cridland, a member of the Friends of the Chalet School, about Eleanor Brent-Dyer and the Chalet School.

Mary Cadogan talked about Detective Stories in general including the period from 1925-40, "The Golden Age of Detective Stories".

The August meeting was held at the home of Roy and Gwen Parsons in West Wintersetlow.

Roy set a musical quiz. 9 pieces of music were played, members having to identify the composer in each instance. One letter from the name of each answer was taken to form the name of a Hamilton character. Ray Hopkins came in first with the correct solution. Alan Pratt then gave a short talk on the Hardy Boys stories by Franklin W. Dixon.

Following a sumptuous tea Bill Bradford read from Newsletter No. 262 reminding members of the August, 1974 meeting and Roger Jenkins entertained us all with a reading

from Magnet No. 1289, part of the Wharton the Rebel series. Members then discussed, at some length, proposals for changes in the format of club meetings. Finally, a huge vote of thanks was given to Roy and Gwen for their kind hospitality.

The next meeting of the club is a "special" luncheon party to be held at the Caernarvon Hotel in Ealing on Sunday, 11th September at 12.30, members returning to Bill Bradford's Ealing home after the meal.

Future meetings include a talk in November by Lt. Col. Murphy on P.G. Wodehouse.

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Seventeen members attended our August meeting, despite its being holiday time. David Bradley reported on the forthcoming "Rupert Meeting" which three members from northern Club were attending. We discussed the forthcoming October luncheon and look forward to having our President, Mary Cadogan, present. We are also hoping that our Vice-President, Anthony Buckeridge, will be with us on that day. Anthony's new Jennings book is due for publication during October. All non-members of Northern Club will be very welcome to join us for the day whether or not they attend the luncheon in Wakefield. Further details may be obtained from Darrell Swift, 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU.

As this was our "free and easy" meeting, members provided their own items. Chris Scholey read from GEM Number 33 Original Series an amusing piece on the production of "Tom Merry's Weekly" showing Hamilton's early and developing style and sense of humour. Geoff read two pieces from Magnet 874 - an amusing interview between Bunter and Dr Locke and then incidents resulting from a telephone call between the Headmaster and Mr Bunter concerning W.G.'s absconding from Greyfriars. Frank Richards at his best!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

MIDLAND CLUB

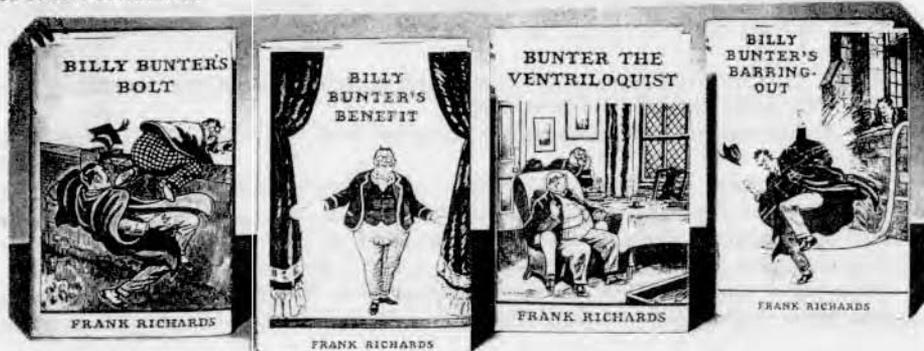
The Autumn meeting will take place on Saturday, 8th October, at 2.30 p.m. in the Blackheath Public Library. Una Hamilton Wright will be the speaker.

GEO. LARDNER

BOOKS

Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

This month we have a really bumper bundle of collectors' books for review: it is extremely gratifying that so many authors and publishers are producing nostalgic volumes of such excellence.



BILLY BUNTER'S BOLT, BILLY BUNTER'S BENEFIT, BUNTER THE VENTRILOQUIST AND BILLY BUNTER'S BARRING-OUT (£14.95 each) represent the latest bunch of facsimile Bunter books from Hawk Books. These splendid editions have all the magic of the original Skilton/Cassell series plus the attraction of being in mint unfaded condition with glowing colour covers and strong, clear print inside. All the stories are by the genuine Frank Richards; **THE VENTRILOQUIST BOLT** are illustrated by Chapman, while **BENEFIT** and **BARRING OUT** carry R.J. Macdonald's pictures. As always in re-reading these book-length stories. I am impressed by the way in which Frank Richards so skilfully adapted his work to this format after many decades of writing series and serials which demanded frequent 'cliff-hanging' intervals, and, of course, provided long texts for the development of his characterisations and relationships. The Bunter books are gems in their field, dealing with well-used but somehow ever-fresh Hamiltonian themes.



From the same enterprising publisher comes another volume of full colour **DAN DARE** facsimile strips from the *Eagle*. This large format book, **DAN DARE - TERRA NOVA TRILOGY** (£18.95), is the ninth of Hawk Books' Dare Dare collections (some of the earlier series are still available) and it comprises *Eagle* reprints from January 1959 to March 1960 of three series - *Safari in Space*, *Terra Nova* and *Trip to Trouble*. The illustrations are as brilliant and inventive as ever, although it was, apparently, during the run of these stories that Frank Hampson ended his work with *Eagle* and Frank Bellamy took over the strip. Connoisseurs might possibly be able to spot exactly where and when in the action this occurred.....

The Bunter books mentioned above and the Dan Dare volume can be obtained through book shops as well as direct from the publisher: Hawk Books, Suite 309, Canalot Studios, 222 Kensal Road, London, W10 5BN.

THE UNFORGETTABLE FIFTH AT TREBIZON by ANNE DIGBY (Straw Hat publications). Anne Digby has achieved the remarkable distinction of creating and maintaining a long series of single-sex boarding-school stories during a period when critics, reviewers and social historians have frequently suggested that this genre is defunct, with no relevance to today's children. Her success gives the lie to this. **THE UNFORGETTABLE FIFTH AT TREBIZON** is the fourteenth in her series of books about Trebizon School: the first was published in 1978 and girls (as well as women) of widely assorted ages have been and are still reading them with relish. Their settings are contemporary, but the overall mood has much in common with the traditional boarding-school tales of classic writers in the heyday of the genre (Brazil, Bruce, Brent-Dyer and Oxenham). In fact the Trebizon books themselves seem set to become classics; as well as appearing in both hardback and paperback some of the early titles are now collected into a large 'gift-book' from the publisher Dean under the title **ADVENTURES AT TREBIZON**.

Anne Digby also manages to harness the pace and sense of excitement that characterised so many tales in the schoolgirls' story-papers of the Amalgamated Press. This is not surprising as before beginning to write about Trebizon she worked as an editor

on these papers at the A.P. and feels that she learned there a large measure of her story-spinning skills.

The series traces the exploits and aspirations of Rebecca Mason and her friends from their early schooldays until this present book finds them in the Fifth form. (Happily we can also look forward to their adventures continuing in future volumes into the Sixth.) THE UNFORGETTABLE FIFTH is one of the best - and most challenging - books of the run, for writing about teenage girls is notoriously difficult. Rebecca is a convincing, engaging fifteen-and-a-half-year old, whose natural concerns about doing well in her GCSEs do not eclipse her exuberance and originality. This story satisfyingly blends drama (can Trebizon buy Mulberry Cove, one of the school's favourite haunts, and prevent it from falling into the hands of brash developers or pop-stars?) with the problems and fulfilments of personal relationships (what makes Rebecca's visiting French pen-friend, Emmannuelle, suddenly begin to behave in an extraordinary way, and does Rebecca really have to settle for Cliff as a boy-friend when she much prefers the dishy and deeper Robbie?). Such themes could easily misfire, but in Anne Digby's deft hands they are persuasively dealt with. There is little doubt that just as ten and eleven-year-olds in the 1930s and '40s liked to read about their heroines at Cliff House and Morcove who were several years older than themselves, today's main body of Trebizon fans is likely to consist of readers from nine to thirteen. Therefore the romantic touches in these books are suitably muted. (Shades of Marjorie Hazeldene and Bob Cherry, perhaps?) As well as providing us with a jolly good read, Anne Digby has painted the book's dust-jacket too.

Earlier stories in the series are available in Puffin paperbacks, and THE UNFORGETTABLE FIFTH AT TREBIZON, which normally costs £8.99, is on special offer to Collectors' Digest readers at £6.99 (which includes postage and packing) if ordered direct (with cheque enclosed) from Combined Book Services Ltd., 406 Vale Road, Tonbridge Kent, TN9 1XR (please mention Collectors' Digest when ordering).

YOUNG BIGGLES: *The Early Life of W.E. Johns in Hertford* by Margaret Collins. This is 40 page booklet will greatly appeal to all admirers of the creator of Biggles. Written by his niece and illustrated with a wealth of family photographs, it describes the first eighteen years of Johns' life in Hertfordshire. We are presented with insights into the Biggles author's close relationship with his brother Russell, and with his parents, Elizabeth (a Master-butcher's daughter whose maiden name provided W.E. Johns' second Christian name of 'Earl') and Richard William Eastman, Johns' ('Will'), who ran a successful tailoring business.

The text and photographs endorse the lively nature of the young William Johns and the fact that, like several of his colourful characters, he had a larger than life quality. (At birth he apparently weighed eleven pounds and he soon afterwards showed signs of the determination and exuberance that remained with him throughout his life.)

We can be grateful to Mrs. Collins not only for fleshing out biographical details concerning her uncle but for giving us atmospheric and well illustrated glimpses of late-Victorian and early-Edwardian country boyhood.

This entertaining book can be obtained from her at 284 Ware Road, Hertford, Herts, SG13 7EX at the following rates (all prices include postage and packing): for U.K. £5.00; for the rest of Europe £5.20; for North American £6.10 and for Australasia £6.40. Cheques should be made out to M. COLLINS.



*Young
Biggles*



The Early Life of
W.E. Johns in Hertford
by his niece
Margaret Collins

MAGNET AND GEM FACSIMILE EDITIONS by George Beal (£4.50) (This book is obtainable from Quartermain Publications, 48 Kings Drive, Berrylands, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8NQ.)

This Guide and Catalogue covers all the Howard Baker Greyfriars Press Omnibus Volumes and Book Club Editions. It is remarkably clear and comprehensive, and many readers will find it most useful when they wish to locate a particular story or series in the vast Howard Baker canon.

It provides an alphabetical index and list of titles of all the Howard Baker Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake stories (as well as a separate list of those which have NOT been reprinted.) Descriptions of each Omnibus, Annual and Book Club volume give details of the original Magnet number, as well as helpful outlines of the tales which make these quickly recognisable. The book includes a Price Guide of these Howard Baker editions - which possibly contains some surprises. However, it is emphasised that this list only reflects general trends, that prices may fluctuate and are based on those for books in perfect condition.

There are interesting historical notes about the various boys' papers from which the stories have been drawn, and **MAGNET AND GEM FACSIMILE EDITIONS** includes 200 small illustrations (each clearly numbered to relate to the issue in which it originally appeared. As George Beal states in his prefatory note, this Guide and Index is 'something of a tribute' to his (Bill Baker's) endeavours and 'is dedicated to his memory'.

THE WILLIAM DIARY 1995 (Macmillan £3.99)

This first ever diary to star Richmal Crompton's William is a brilliant idea. Its only snag is that ardent collectors will feel quite unable to spoil its pages by recording appointments or events on them, and will therefore have to buy two copies - one to use as a diary and the other to keep in pristine, unwritten-on condition. This 'top secret' (William's spelling of course) volume with its cover in the bold red, yellow and black which we associate with Richmal's young desperado, makes a fitting addition to the series of 38 William books (all of which have now been reprinted by Macmillan).

Traditional diary pages are decorated with enticing quotes from the William tales, with Thomas Henry's pictures - and with William-esque blots. The compiler, David Schutte, has chosen texts and illustrations with a sure and sensitive eye - and it seems likely that this will be the first of a long series of William diaries.

SEXTON BLAKE: A CELEBRATION OF THE GREAT DETECTIVE by Norman Wright and David Ashford. I am delighted to announce that this eagerly awaited volume from The Museum Press is now available, and will be reviewed in detail in our October issue. Meanwhile, to whet your appetites I can say that this large, definitive and beautifully produced book is one which no collector should miss one of its many illustrations are reproduced here).



Our next review is contributed by Norman Wright.

BRITAIN CAN TAKE IT by Anthony Aldgate & Jeffrey Richards (Published by Edinburgh University Press)

The British cinema underwent massive changes during the 1939-45 war and many of the taboos that had held sway throughout the 1930s were brushed aside and a grim, new, realism began to emerge. "Britain Can Take It" is an in depth study of thirteen influential films that played key propaganda roles in the war effort. Some, like "The Way to the Stars", "In Which We Serve" and "49th Parallel", will be very familiar, while others are less well known. The authors offer an authoritative text that considers not only each film in its historical setting but also looks at the impact they made at the time of their original releases. The book is well researched with notes at the end of each chapter detailing the sources from which the authors drew their information. The book was originally published in 1986 but for this new edition two new chapters have been added "Britain Can Take it" is not a light read but it is a fascinating insight into the British cinema of the period.

BOOK AND STORY ELUSIVE MEMORIES QUESTIONS.

From Dennis Hilliard. I do not know the name of the book or the author and I have spent more than 40 years in my search - advertising nationally and locally and through the C.d. Annual. Please could I make one last try through your pages? The book was read by me in 1936 or 1937....It was a treasure-hunt story/set in Derbyshire involving 2 teams of youngsters who travelled there by train from the South and then followed cryptic clues in a journey through the Peak District and the Dales. The first clue led to Dove Holes and was from a photograph in a railway carriage, but other clues led to "Question Mark River" (Wye) and to Bakewell (tarts - "Alice" etc). The youngsters were *not* members of youth organisations.

I long to read that book again and promise a "hobby reward" to anyone who can help....

From Roy Whiskin. Over the years I have found most of the books from my childhood but there is still one that eludes my memory. It was about a tortoise called 'Cunning Chris' who used to hide one of his legs inside his shell to gain sympathy (and possibly money). I can't remember the name of the book or author but the line 'Cunning Chris was soon insight' sticks in my memory! I wonder if any of C.D.'s vast army of experts readers can help?

ANSWERS. From Norman Wright. Re. Paula Newton's query on Enid Blyton's output and the possibility of building up a complete collection of all of her works, Enid Blyton was extremely prolific but there are a couple of points that need to be taken into account when considering the exact extent of her output. Throughout the greater part of her working life she had regular weekly writing commitments. From the early nineteen twenties until 1945 she wrote a regular column or page for Teachers' World. From 1926 until the early 1950s she wrote the entire content of Sunny Stories and from 1953 until 1959 she wrote everything in Enid Blyton's Magazine. About ninety percent of the stories, serials and nature notes that appeared in these publications were later used in book form and many of the short stories - of which there were thousands - found their way into more than one collection.

A fair proportion of Blyton's books were short school readers (well over one hundred) or very simple books for young readers. When these factors are taken into account the number of books she wrote will be seen to be less than some of her critics have claimed.

Probably the best bibliography so far published is that found in Barbara Stoney's biography "Enid Blyton", recently republished by Hodder, where over 500 titles are listed, together with date of publication and publisher. Other, less complete, listings can be found in "The Story of my Life" by Enid Blyton, published by Pitkin in 1952 and now long out of print, "A Complete List of Books by Enid Blyton", published by Menzies in 1950 (listing mainly only her works then in print or likely to be reprinted very soon) and "The Big Enid Blyton Book" published by Hamlyn in 1961. Mason Willey's privately printed bibliography, published a year or so ago, seems to be compiled mainly from these sources. A complete listing of all Blyton's work in *Enid Blyton's Magazine* was recently compiled by Tony Summerfield and Norman Wright who are soon to publish the first of three volumes indexing all her stories that appeared in *Sunny Stories*.

The assemblage of a complete collection of all of Enid Blyton's works, from "Child Whispers" (1922) until the last of the Noddy books, would prove to be a long and costly undertaking. A number of collectors I know have been pursuing it for many years and are still a long way short of their final objective.

FROM RAY HOPKINS. The book that Tony Glynn remembers from his childhood is listed under the name of Henry Taprell Dorling: "The Boy Castaways: or Endeavour Island" with illustrations by William Rainey, published by Blackie in 1915. This author also has a second listing of titles under his pseudonym Taffrail. I am enclosing a short article which may be of general interest. I decided on expanding my minimal knowledge when I came upon more information on this author in WHO WAS WHO. Not all of our old authors can be found in these volumes so it's nice when one encounters this added information.

I also did a check under Herbert Strang to see if I could find an answer to J.E.M.'s query on page 31 (August C.D.). Had a bit of luck here, too. One of the titles listed under Herbert Strang is "By Land and Sea". Edited by Herbert Strang and published by Henry Frowde; Hodder and Stoughton in 1911. I'm just guessing that as Strang edited this particular volume he probably wrote the title story, the others J.E.M. lists being written by other authors. **EDITOR'S NOTE** Dennis Hilliard also supplied some information about

TAFFRAIL who was a regular writer for the *Scout* in the 1930s. He has supplied a list of some of Taffrail's books, which is printed after Ray Hopkins' article, below:

A NAVAL WRITER CALLED TAFFRAIL.

As an old seafaring man (oh, Good Heavens, the Ancient Mariner rides again!) the word Taffrail smacks of something to do with ships though I never came across it while learning the obligatory sailor's rolling gait. My (almost) constant companion, good old Webster, informs me that it is the rail around a ship's stern.

The writer who used as his non-de-plume Taffrail was indeed a Naval man his whole working life and rose to be a Royal Navy Captain. His real name was Henry Taprell Dorling and he was born in Dune, Berwickshire on 8th September, 1883. His Naval education began on the HMS Britannia in 1897 and he served aboard the HMS Terrible in South Africa and China in 1900. World War I found him commanding destroyers during which time he was mentioned in despatches and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). The Swedish Government awarded him a Gold Medal for saving lives at sea in 1917. His Naval career came to a close in 1929 when he retired. However, he was recalled to Navy service ten years later on the outbreak of WWII. He worked in the Ministry of Information and afloat in all types of Warships until 1942. His civilian activities included writing for *The OBSERVER* as Naval Correspondent. He also did a considerable amount of broadcasting and wrote many naval feature programmes for the BBC. Captain Dorling died on 1 July 1968.

He wrote consistently throughout his naval career and after. His earliest listed book in the British Library Catalogues is "All About Ships. A book for Boys" (1912) under his real name, his final work being "Euridice" (1953) issued under his pseudonym. Unusually, when his books were published, some used his real name on the title page and others the name by which he was more widely known: Taffrail. The BL Cats list 25 titles under Dorling and 26 under Taffrail. Only one title is repeated in both listings: "Second Officer. A Novel." (1935). It is difficult to judge by the titles without actually seeing the books whether his books are fiction or non-fiction. I have never come across any in any second-hand book shop hunts. Only a few have "a novel" after the title. One would suppose his books are aimed at an adult audience. Only one sounds like an adventure story for boys and this is "The Boy Castaways: or, "Endeavour Island" published by Blackie in 1915 and illustrated by William Rainey. The listings show no reprint date for this book. Some of his very early works appeared under the imprints of Pearson and Chambers but most of his books were published by Hodder and Stoughton.

I am indebted to WHO WAS WHO Vol. VI for the biographical information in this article. RAY HOPKINS

Some Books by Taffrail

Pincher Martin, O.D.

The Sub

Michael Bray

Shipmates

Pirates

Kerrell

The Scarlet Stripe

Cypher K.

Dover - Ostend

The Man from Scapa Flow

Seventy North

Second Officer

Mid-Atlantic

Mystery Cruise

Operation M.O.

Fred Travis, A.B.

The Shetland Plan

Plus a number of books
on Navel History.

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