

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS

NOVEMBER 1994

DIGEST

VOL 48
No. 575





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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



FROM RICHMAL TO ROMANCE

From items in this month's C.D. you will see that two new books by me are now available. **AND THEN THEIR HEARTS STOOD STILL** deals with the love-story in a very wide variety of forms and **JUST WILLIAM THROUGH THE AGES** is a study of Richmal Crompton's saga of her small-boy 'Frankenstein's Monster' showing the social changes in William's world over the fifty years during which the stories were created.

Both my books were satisfying to research and write, and I hope that my enjoyment is reflected in each case in the finished product. At one time I was writing them in parallel, and switching from vivid expressions of the tender passion to William's anarchic exploits was sometimes quite a challenging business! I hope that C.D. readers will, after reading Margery Woods' and Brian Doyle's reviews, feel inclined to buy (or borrow from their public libraries) these fresh fruits of my literary labours.

OUR ANNUAL

Last month I wrote about some of the contents of the forthcoming Annual and, as promised, I now 'trail' some more of its offerings. Una Hamilton Wright has contributed an article about her celebrated uncle and 'The Birth of the Magnet', Roger Jenkins tells us about Mr. Quelch's responses to several difficult situations and Donald Campbell sets out Dr. Nandu Thalange's diagnosis of Bunter's true medical condition. Dennis Bird reflects on the friendship and rivalry between two of Morcove's most interesting characters while Bob Whiter recalls some long ago Christmas meetings of the London O.B.B.C. The early days of 'the wireless' and its charms are well represented, with Ray Hopkins writing about some jolly 'radio uncles', Ernest Holman remembering 'The Wireless Bands' and Brian Doyle reminding us of the notable radio sleuth, Paul Temple. Marion Waters takes another look at Secret Societies while E.G. Hammond reflects upon the delights - and dangers - of nostalgia. And there is still more (see next month's editorial).



If you have not yet reserved your copy of the Annual, please let me have your order soon. The price, including post and packing, is £9.50 for U.K. readers and £10.50 for those living overseas. Remember - as Roger Jenkins' article in this issue of C.D. might remind us - that Christmas is not so far away.

Happy Reading.

MARY CADOGAN



NELSON LEE - AND ESB

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION (in The Nelson Lee)

by Len Hawkey

Although generally regarded as a school-story magazine, the Nelson Lee Library had, from its inception in 1915, been closely associated with detective fiction. Indeed, as its name implies, that had been its original function. However, even after issue No. 132, late in 1917, when most of its 44 pages were devoted exclusively to St. Frank's, a detective serial, or short story - often with Nelson Lee and Nipper - occupied its last few pages.

The ramifications of the Amalgamated Press, prior to 1940, anyway, are like the pieces of some giant jig-saw puzzle, and one which may well never be completed. Of this, the Nelson Lee Library forms only a small part, but now and again one comes across a small piece to fit in, and such a piece was

EVERY WEEK—TWO GRAND COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORIES !

No. 15. PRESENTED WITH "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY." March 17, 1923



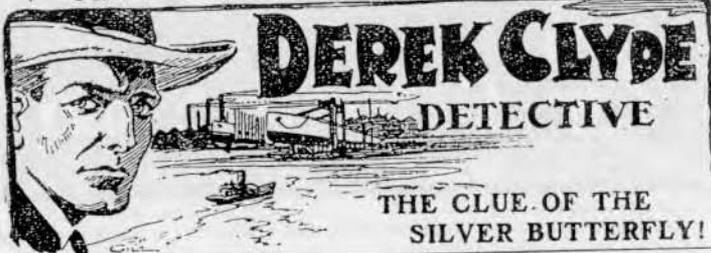
ABEL LINK'S QUEST

A Thrilling Long Complete Mystery Story of
Abel Link, the famous detective.



The CASE of the
**RETIRED
OFFICER**

The Strange
and Remarkable EXPLOITS
of **CAREAX BAINES**



DEREK CLYDE DETECTIVE

THE CLUE OF THE
SILVER BUTTERFLY!



The Case of the
Empty Cab!

*The Adventures of
GORDON FOX, DETECTIVE.*

supplied by Betty Hopton in her report on the Scottish detective, Derek Clyde.

Like several other boy's papers - presumably to add variety and increase circulation - the Nelson Lee, for many years, included a "supplement". For quite a while, this was called "Nipper's Magazine", but in December 1922 this was replaced with "Our Detective Story Section" - twelve to sixteen pages in the centre of the long St. Frank's yarn were given over to two short stories. One normally featured Nelson Lee and Nipper, operating from their original home in Grays Inn Road, while the other was centred on a less familiar detective. Betty Hopton's "Derek Clyde" was one of these, - and others were "Gordon Fox", "Mervyn Hume" - (a news reporter-sleuth) - "Abel Link" and a "globe-trotter" detective, "Carfax Baines".

These tales occupied 4 or 5 pages of small print, not more than 5000 words, on average, and the 'tecs were all the creations of the prolific William Murray Graydon, with the exception of Mervyn Hume. His exploits, stemming from his post on the "Daily Wire", were by S. Rossiter Shepherd, who was himself a well-known figure in Fleet Street. As it is pretty certain that the Link, Fox and Clyde stories were all reprints from other A.P. periodicals, it is fairly safe to infer the same of those about Baines and Hume, although the writer has not, so far, established where or when they first appeared. In our May 1992 issue, Betty Hopton outlined Derek Clyde's earlier history. Gordon Fox originated in the Boys Herald, in 1904 (illustrated by Harry Lane) - he also figured between 1905 and 1911 in the Boy's Friend (depicted usually by Willis Reading) - transferring in 1912 to the Dreadnought (F. Anderson illustrations) before finally surfacing in the Nelson Lee in 1923. In their Detective Story Section "GIL" (G.J. Gillingham) supplied all the illustrations, although the Nelson Lee tales usually had artwork supplied by E.E. Briscoe, who also did the weekly heading. Abel Link was the oldest practitioner, created for the green Boys' Friend, back in 1899. He also appeared briefly in "The Boys Herald" in 1903, depicted by "VAL" Reading and Vincent S. Daniel, respectively. Incidentally, none of the Clyde titles mentioned by Betty Hopton appeared in the Nelson Lee, although there were 12 or so in all, starting with "The Case of the Sekunda Gold-mine" (a tale to really wind its readers up!) and ending with "The Man from Australia".

From which of the earlier papers - if any - these stories were taken, one cannot be sure. They weren't nearly as long as those in the "Glasgow Weekly Record", evidently, but of course they could have been abridged. Inspector Murdoch appeared in nearly all of Clyde's exploits, but I don't recall his servant being mentioned. It would be interesting to know if there were any illustrations in either the Detective Library or the Glasgow paper, and if so, by what artist.

Eventually the Detective Supplement was reduced to a single tale - in fact a fairly long serial in which Nelson Lee battled with his old adversary, Mark Rymer. Then, in November 1923, it was replaced by the "St. Frank's Magazine", and never reappeared.



A SERIES THAT NEVER WAS

by Derek Hinrich

Every successful Sexton Blake author of the Golden Age desired two things, firstly to create his own particular master criminal to pit recurrently against the great detective and secondly to contrive from time to time a series, usually of from four to six stories, for the *Union Jack*, each tale complete in itself, but each recounting one round of a continuing encounter. Such series abounded, but there is at least one occasion where a situation for one was apparently set up but it failed to develop.

Many of Blake's regular opponents were adept in disguise but none equalled the skill of the former actor, Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer. Masters of disguise were fairly commonplace then in mystery and adventure fiction: Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake himself, and Sir Percy Blakeney (a strange skill in an 18th Century BBN - or "Baronet of British Nation", as Arthur Orton, the Tichborne Claimant, called himself) even Bulldog Drummond (though he seemed to get distinctively bigger and more cheerfully ugly as his adventures progressed). But what was new in Kestrel was that the disguises were such that no-one knew his real features - except, I suppose, his confederate and mistress (that part of her role is of course not mentioned in the UJ!), Fifette Bierce. This was surely new when Kestrel first appeared in 1915. There may be some doubt as to which came first, the mandarin Wu Ling or Dr. Fu Manchu as the Yellow Peril personified, but the only fictional criminal I know of to match Kestrel in the totality of disguise definitely came later - Edgar Wallace's Henry Arthur Milton, alias The Ringer. E. Phillips Oppenheim (1866-1946), a prolific author of spy stories and other thrillers, wrote a novel in 1905 called *The Master Mummer* but I have never seen it and do not know if its eponymous character bore any resemblance to Kestrel.

Leon Kestrel's heyday in the saga of Sexton Blake ran from 1918 until about 1923. Thereafter his appearances became spasmodic but his impact in that time was considerable. When Dorothy L. Sayers at the beginning of her detective story writing toyed with the idea of producing a Sexton Blake story she read several volumes of the SBL. It appears she was impressed by the Mummer, for there are several affectionate references to him in the course of her own first Lord Peter Wimsey novel. *Whose Body?* (1923).

Kestrel's last regular appearance was in UJ 1099 of 1st November 1924 in *The Law of the Claw*. This is a gripping tale and promises further adventures which for some reason did not materialise.

Kestrel appears suddenly in a new guise and engaged in a new enterprise. On a whim, he has metamorphosed himself and his syndicate into "The League of Summary Justice", dedicated to the assassination of those persons he deems to threaten the peace of the world.

The League, it transpires, has murdered a Glaswegian demagogue and strike-leader, Robertson, and has published a (premature) notice of the demise of an anglophobe French journalist, M. Rapport, in the Deaths Column of a national newspaper. Rapport is in London covering a conference on reparations and has been vehemently attacking British policy in his paper.

These events arouse Blake's interest, though he does not know of Kestrel's involvement at this stage. He soon becomes aware of this, however, when an old friend - "Fuzzy" Montague, an Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office - consults him and shows him a copy of the death-threat to Rapport from the League on paper bearing the emblem of a Kestrel's claw.

Rapport is found dead in mysterious circumstances, similar to those in which Robertson's body was discovered. Neither corpse displays any obvious cause of death and no trace of any known poison is found by autopsies.

The pace quickens. Further "executions" are threatened by the League. Two more victims are found murdered in the same mysterious way but Kestrel and two of his confederates - Lessing, the scientific instrument-maker and master-forged, and Madrano, the Spanish steeple-jack - are nearly taken and only escape by the skin of their teeth. One of the gang, however, is killed while attempting to escape when Blake shoots away the top of the rope ladder to which he is clinging. The dead man is the sadistic Dr. Ramenef, the inventor of the fiendish electrical device with which the hearts of the League's victims have been stopped beating.

But the League is still active and threatening the death of Fi-Chi-Ling, a Chinese multimillionaire merchant from Canton, lately arrived in Britain who is now placed under Blake's protection.

The story ends with Sexton Blake looking forward to a settlement of accounts with the League when Kestrel attempts to carry out his threat against the Chinaman.

Here is the obvious cliff-hanger for a continuation of the battle with the Master Mummer but after that, nothing. There is no sequel. Nothing is heard of Leon Kestrel for two years, when he appears in UJ 1204 of November, 13th 1926 on quite another criminal enterprise in *The Mysterious Affair of the Vanishing Stones*. All very odd really, but perhaps Jack Lewis had got bored with the idea. A pity, though, I think.



JACKO THE DETECTIVE

by Bill Lofts

Some members of the Ape family can do incredibly human-like things. I should know, because until my retirement I worked on the administrative side of the Brooke Bond Monkey T.V. advertisements. I also once saw a film in which an orange fur orang-u-tang did the most astonishing things such as smoking a cigar like a human, and, dressed as a waiter, pouring out drinks correctly to people at the bar. Yet none of these could have matched 'Jacko' the Gorilla Detective, whose feats as assistant to Victor Brand, famous sleuth of London, were almost breathtaking.

Commencing in the comic *Merry and Bright* in 1911, Jacko lived with his master and other pets (including a canary, a large cockatoo, a brown owl and a black cat that curled up on a cushion by the fire).

So gifted was Victor Brand with them that at home, when dressed in a fur lined dressing gown and smoking a large long cigar, he could apparently make them all understand everything he said. Apart from using 'Jacko' in investigations, such as breaking in and climbing into houses and capturing criminals, all his pets were put to some use, one way or another.

Jacko's most amazing feat was his ability to play all the 'classics' on the violin perfectly, taught by his master. A blissful expression would come on his face when playing, when the music was far superior to that of Sherlock Holmes in his meditation moods!

Jacko also acted as his master's driver. To stop fellow drivers from having a heart attack on seeing his face, he wore a large cap, thick goggles, and extra large overcoat. One wonders how he passed his driving test! Certainly Brand never had any problems over wage disputes as he rewarded Jacko with a banana. In his leisure time, Jacko liked nothing better than playing with children in the local playground.

The stories ran for about six years, and towards the end Victor Brand seemingly had found fresh interest in the form of a lady love, whom he eventually married in the final tale. Of Jacko and the other pets, there was no mention. It would perhaps have been nice to have seen Jacko as best man. Let us hope that he went back to the jungle, where he could entertain his fellow apes on his favourite violin.

The author was A. Donnelly Aitken, whom I knew quite well until his death at Brighton in 1968. He told me that of course the stories were absurd, but then readers loved them as shown by the huge postbag. He was later editor of *Chums*, and later still on the editorial side of *Titbits*.

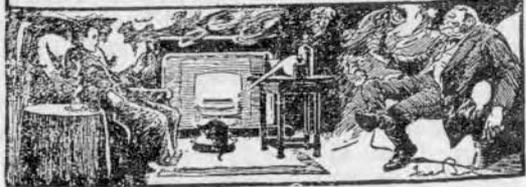
TOM MEX - NEWSPAPER REPORTER AND DETECTIVE

I cannot help feeling that the author's Netley Lucas' had almost taken the name from the famous cowboy film-star Tom Mix who appeared in over 400 low budget Westerns. I believe he died in a fire in 1940 whilst trying to save someone from death.

This near namesake, from the artist's portrayal, seemed to look more like Harold Lloyd, complete with glasses and a loud suit!

The Enthralling Adventures of

Victor Brand Detective and
Mystery Expert.



THIS WEEK:

HIS LAST CASE.

*If you want adventure ; if you crave the thrills of crime-investigation, meet Tom Mex,
on his eternal trail for crooks.*



TOM MEX

REPORTER — DETECTIVE

BY
Netley Lucas
AUTHOR OF
'The Borstal Boy'
AND
'Crime Club,'
Etc., Etc.



Being Episode One of the amazing adventures of Tom Mex, Reporter-Detective on a powerful London newspaper. Here are mysteries and baffling crimes galore—the battling with gangs of dangerous criminals, and in this astounding thriller you will read how Tom Mex, "Star" Reporter of the "Daily Crier," runs neck and neck with the sleuths of Scotland Yard in the tracking down of clever crooks in all parts of the country.

Tom Mex was star reporter on the 'Daily Crier', having his own quarters at Jermyn Street, Piccadilly. He co-operated fully with Scotland Yard around 1927/8 and later on he married the daughter of a well known forger. He then formed a detective agency called 'Clues Ltd', though this was a completely different organisation which was featured in the comic 'Merry and Bright'.

THE MAGNET AT CHRISTMAS TIME

by Roger M. Jenkins

The custom of having a Christmas story in the Magnet went back almost to the beginning of its run and, though the Double Numbers sometimes concerned events that took place entirely at school, these enlarged issues still retained the familiar red cover for some years. In 1913, however, the Christmas Double Number sported a white cover with illustrations in red and blue, and this continued until the paper restrictions began to bite a few years into the war. A Double Number re-appeared in 1921, for the last time, with "The Mystery of the Christmas Candles".

Despite the fascination of the Double Number, it is not these extra-long issues that fire the imagination: it is the Christmas stories in the days of the coloured cover that bring back such nostalgic memories. In those wonderful days, snow always fell at this season, and the Christmas series invariably had a prelude at school on the last day of term. There would be snow-fights, and Mr. Quelch might inadvertently step on a slide and find his long legs whisking away from him. To Bunter, these were matters of no importance: what occupied his mind was the problem of how to insinuate himself into someone else's house party at Christmas.

It has to be admitted that there were some glorious Christmases spent at other venues, particularly Cavandale Abbey and Mauleverer Towers, but the firm favourite that never lost its appeal was of course Wharton Lodge. At this point it is relevant to consider why the Gem could never match the Magnet at Christmas time, and the secret probably lies in terms of size and personality. Laurel Villa, where Miss Fawcett lived, attended by the faithful Hannah, never made much impact on the reader, for who would want to spend Christmas in a villa presided over by a fussy eccentric? Eastwood House, despite the famous story of the painted ceiling, was so large that it seemed as impersonal as a huge hotel, and the only resident clearly visualised was Lord Eastwood himself, whose Yuletide celebrations were overshadowed by more than one private secretary plotting against him.

Wharton Lodge, on the other hand, was perfectly realised, the characters of Colonel Wharton and his sister, Miss Amy Wharton, being familiar to Magnet readers, not only at home, but frequently referred to in term time, and the Colonel was in addition a Governor of Greyfriars. Wells the butler was a wonderful creation, and his reactions to Bunter's offers of allowing him the privilege of lending money to the Fat Owl were a delight to read. The geography of the house was finely etched as well, with the large hall and banisters on the landing above, from which vantage point Bunter could look down on the celebrations below. Above all, there was Wharton's den, where the Famous Five and Bunter often gathered, not forgetting the balcony and the stone steps leading down to the garden. Undoubtedly, it was Wharton's den that epitomised the essential intimate cosiness that made Wharton Lodge superior to all other venues. Dr. Locke or Mr. Quelch might be highly-esteemed guests of the Colonel's, but in the den the juniors could enjoy a private retreat from the august company downstairs, and the reader was thoroughly happy to join them there. This was assuredly the unique quality that constituted the magic of Christmas with the Magnet.

WANTED: ENID BLYTON, W.E. JOHNS, CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers and ALL ephemera related to these authors. ANY original artwork related to Bunter, Blyton, Biggles, Eagle or other British comics and boys papers. ALL Boys Friend Libraries by W.E. Johns and Rochester. Many "Thriller" issues and first editions in wrappers by Charteris required. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel. 0923 232383.

WANTED: To buy or borrow: the edition of CHUCKLES containing cut-out model of Greyfriars School (most likely for 11th August, 1920) referred to on cover of Magnet 652. G. Good, 147 Thornes Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshrie, WF2 8QN. (Tel. Wakefield (0924) 378273)

BOOKS

AND THEN THEIR HEARTS STOOD STILL by Mary Cadogan
(Macmillan £16.99) Reviewed by MARGERY WOODS.

In her latest exploration of story-telling and its authors, **AND THEN THEIR HEARTS STOOD STILL**, Mary Cadogan takes us on a vivid journey through the world of romantic fiction, from its early roots in bodice-rippers like that of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and its Gothic foundations in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* down through two palpitating centuries to the present day's multi-faceted version of the oldest theme in history--- meeting between man and maid.

The light-hearted title of the book belies the expertise and the immense amount of research behind its pages. Examples are quoted from several early and long forgotten novels which, read in today's context, seem to point uncannily to how little human nature and the basic problems faced by women have changed, even though their methods of dealing with these no longer need be beholden to male decision. The author injects many amusing little items concerning authors, as, for instance, one concerning the uninhibited Marie Corelli; this lady imported a gondola from Venice, plus a gondolier in full regalia, to shuttle her up and down the Avon while she was living in Stratford.

There is much else in this entertaining book to bring smiles of reminiscence, if not nostalgia, to readers who dip into the brief but telling encapsulations with which the author brings back to life the stories and classics which could pass many an engrossing hour, during which the reader could escape from the cares of everyday living to the different cares found within the pages of romance.

There is expert analysis of writers and their methods as well as their stories and we may well view these earlier classics with fresh insight. Fortunately Mary Cadogan spares us indulgence in the psycho-sexual clap-trap so beloved by many authors and biographers today and keeps a light yet thoughtful touch throughout this well documented book.

Her humour is witty without ever being cruel and she does not fall into the unrealised trap that claims many a would-be elitist in the media. It has long been fashionable to dismiss romantic fiction as hack pulp best fit for servant girls and virgin maiden aunts---if they are extant today!--- and what matter how cheap the sneer if it raises a smirk from the luvvies and the trendies, giving little thought to what these gibes are actually implying: are millions of readers all over the literate world lacking in taste, intelligence and discrimination, simply because they enjoy escape into a world of romance where dreams can come true at the turn of a page? As Mary Cadogan rightly points out: 'Men have always had their equivalent literary fantasies, from Cowboy and Indian sagas in the 1930s to today's hard-hitting war and espionage tales of torture, violence and brutalised sex, which do not receive such blanket dismissal.'

The chapter headings provide a foretaste of what is to be found within: Sahara Sands to Shangri-La, Regency Romps, Governesses and Gothics and others equally evocative of the many spin-offs from the romance genre. We may smile at quotes from dialogue that now seems stilted, extravagant, or even ridiculous, but the author is scrupulously fair in



reminding us of the mores of the times when these were penned, mores and convention which had to be considered by all those who wished to attain published status. And we may even experience secret pangs of regret for the lost world of innocence evoked for us in this beguiling survey, which is without sentimentality yet affectionate in its treatment of a long derided genre.

Without it, who knows how many hearts may have stood still in a distinctly different sense, the hearts of publishers, printers and the rest of the vast industry which could have been very much diminished in size and jobs without the enormous demand worldwide (Mills & Boon are reputed to sell one book every two seconds!).

One criticism; an index would have been very acceptable. This tome is scholarly enough to merit one.

It is not possible in a brief review to touch on more than a few aspects of AND THEN THEIR HEARTS STOOD STILL. There is much, much more in this fascinating read. I would recommend it to all gentlemen of all ages who still have a secret spark of romance in their hearts; do buy a copy to put in your lady's Christmas stocking.

THOUGHTS BY JOHN BRIDGWATER ON A BOOK ENTITLED "Romantic Egotist - an Unauthorised Biography of Jack Trevor Story" (by Brian Darwent)

After reading several stories by the same author one begins to form some sort of picture of what that author may be like. Usually one has little opportunity to find out how accurate that picture may be. Very little was ever published about our favourite writers. This deficiency is to an extent made up for by various series in the C.D. Very few of those authors have been honoured by a full length biography, however. One of that few is the Sexton Blake author, Jack Trevor Story. The biography has been given the title which heads this article. It was written by Brian Darwent and is published by Minerva Press in paperback, priced £7.99.

The inclusion of the word "unauthorised" is a little odd as the book is heavily based on conversations with JTS and he seems to have actively encouraged the writing of the book, but he insisted on the inclusion of the word in the title. (More on this point later.) Sadly JTS died before the book was published.

Jack Trevor Story wrote 19 SBL's in the 4th series, some with eye-catching titles:- "Home Sweet Homicide", "Assault and Pepper", "She Ain't Got No Body", and "Collapse of Stout Party" (an echo from the old Punch jokes). Two of his SBL's reappeared as Howard Baker hardbacks and some others deBlakenised for use in more "classy" books. His output was prodigious including some 35 novels in addition to the SBL's, a successful play, "The Trouble with Harry", which was filmed by Alfred Hitchcock (who treated JTS rather badly), a long running column in "The Guardian", numerous Film and TV scripts, and he also appeared in his own (short lived) TV series. Although Sexton Blake only figures in a small way in the biography he is given credit for saving JTS from giving up authorship for good after years of failure. To quote from the book:- "1954 was the year Sexton Blake saved him from ignominious return to Marconi's.....". (JTS was an electronic engineer) JTS met Howard Baker when HB was taking over the SBL as the Amalgamated Press wanted to "relaunch" it. Brian Darwent writes that HB was good at indoor scenes in stories but not outdoor ones and JTS was good at outdoor ones and not indoor, so they decided jointly to write SBL's, dividing the work, each doing what he as best at. Darwent continues that Agatha Christie, Leslie Charteris and Edgar Wallace wrote SBL's; also that HB and JTS had only one Blake story by Rex Stout about gypsies and kidnapping with "...two characters called Pedro and Tinker" to go on to give them ideas of

how to write SBL's It would seem that JTS, being a very good story teller, told some to his biographer: may be that explains that word "unauthorised".

Brian Darwent's book is a plain, straightforward story of the events in JTS's life. That life was far from straightforward, however. JTS's family life was extremely complicated, and his health was a constant trial to him. In spite of all these troubles he produced much excellent work, travelled widely and was still working to the end.

BEHIND THE SUNSHINE - Gary Morecambe and Martin Sterling (Robson Books, 1994) Reviewed by Mark Taha

The names Morecambe and Wise will bring back memories for almost all readers - happy ones of the best comedy double act this country's ever produced. This could be termed their fifth biography or autobiography - co-written by Eric's son. Anyone expecting or fearing a "Daddy Dearest" with revelations on the lines of exposés of Joan Crawford or Bing Crosby will be disappointed/relieved; Eric and Ernie emerge as a couple of genuinely nice guys, always the best of friends with few arguments. It seems that Eric was an obsessive perfectionist, always anxious about both the present and future and a born worrier - like many comedians. However, he was no "sad clown"; on the contrary, in the words of Bryan Forbes, "Compared to a lot of other comics, Eric and Ernie were different.... I remember Ericcoming to lunch.....we just laughed all the way through the meal.....it was obvious they enjoyed what they did and enjoyed life."

It seems that Eric might well have retired or at least semi-retired had he lived on, settling down to the life of a writer rather than a performer; according to his wife "I certainly believe he would never have made another series of the Morecambe and Wise shows."

The book gives the story - a familiar one to many - of how they met, teamed up, and rose to the top with the occasional setback (query to older readers - was "Running Wild" really that bad?). It's never dull and well worth reading; in fact, if we can't see them at Christmas, why not at least read about them?

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.

IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR 'BLUEBELL'..... (Conclusion)

by Brian Doyle

In 1906, Hicks built another London theatre, again in association with Frohman, which he called, appropriately, the Hicks Theatre, and it stood (as it still stands, though now called the Globe) in Shaftesbury Avenue. He was also associated with the management of the Princes Theatre (now the Shaftesbury), which he opened in December, 1916, with yet another revised production of - yes, you've guessed it! - "Bluebell in Fairyland", though this time he re-titled it "Dicky and the Sleepy King" for some reason, with Hicks himself again playing his original roles of Dicky and the King.

Seymour Hicks was knighted, for his services to the Theatre, in 1935, when he was as busy as ever. He wrote several books and still more shows. He appeared in the silent film version of "Bluebell" in the 1920s, and was still appearing in British films as late as 1948, when his last picture was "Silent Dust". It was also Hicks, by the way, who was credited with originating that old, well-known remark that you knew when you were growing older, when all the policemen you saw seemed to be getting younger!

Going back to that very first production of "Bluebell" in December, 1901. Around the turn of the century, both Hicks and Terris had gone into management at the Vaudeville Theatre, and "Bluebell" followed several successes put on by the pair, including "Scrooge" (with Hicks in the title-role, of course) and the previously-mentioned "Alice in Wonderful", with Terris in the title-role of that ('she stepped straight from a Tenniel drawing' enthused one London critic). Then came "Bluebell".

In that first show were the then-unknown 11-year-old Phyllis Dare as 'Mab' and the 13-year-old Hugh Wakefield in a tiny part. Both later became major stars. At Christmas 1905, at the Theatre Royal in Colchester, Essex, the later great Dame Gladys Cooper made her stage debut as "Bluebell", on her 17th birthday. The distinguished ballet-dancer and choreographer Anton Dolin, (then called by his real name of Patrick Healy-Kay,) made *his* stage bow as 'Peter the Black Cat' in the December, 1915, production of "Bluebell" at the Shaftsbury Theatre, London (for the princely sum of £2.00 per week). Dolin was later to become closely associated for many years with that other perennially-popular Christmas play, "Where the Rainbow Ends", both as producer and in the key role of St. George. In that 1915 production of "Bluebell", Seymour Hicks produced and his wife, Ellaline repeated her performance in the title-role (even though she was now 44!)

Another actor who became popular in later years and who made his London stage debut in "Bluebell" was Charles Hawtrey (remembered for his comedy roles in the Will Hay films and in all those 'Carry On' pictures) who played both the White Cat and a



shoeblack in the Christmas, 1927 production at the Scala Theatre. Another point perhaps of interest is that the small role of the Kite (bird) in the very last London production of "Bluebell", at the Peoples' Palace, in December, 1937, was played by Ysanne Churchman, who gained national notoriety in 1955 when, as poor Grace Archer in the BBC daily radio serial "The Archers", she perished in the flames of a fire whilst trying to rescue her horse. And on the very evening that commercial television started in Britain too! In this final production of "Bluebell", by the way, the title-role was played by Doree Gabelle (who evidently failed to find lasting fame in the glittering but sometimes fickle world of the theatre) and Dicky and the King were portrayed by Leslie French.

"Bluebell in Fairyland" was produced a round dozen times in London: 1901 (Vaudeville Theatre), 1905 (Aldwych), 1915 (Shaftesbury), 1916 (Princes), 1917 (Alhambra), 1919 (Metropolitan), 1923 (Aldwych), 1925 (Chelsea Palace), 1927 (Scala), 1935 (Scala), 1936 (Scala) and 1937 (Peoples' Palace). Plus at least two provincial productions: 1902 (Liverpool) and 1905 (Colchester). There may well have been other productions, but it's not easy to track these things down. But so far as I can discover, the above list of London productions is certainly complete. And, as a matter of interest and record, other 'Bluebells' over the years included Phyllis Black, Lorna Hubbard and Ella Drummond, and an actor who played Dicky/The King in at least two productions was John Denis.

It has already been mentioned that Sir James Barrie wrote "Peter Pan" after seeing "Bluebell in Fairyland" in 1901. What may not be generally known is that he wrote the key roles of Captain Hook and Wendy specifically for Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terris, after so enjoying their performances in "Bluebell". He duly offered them the roles when the original production of "Peter Pan" was being prepared at London's Duke of York's Theatre, in 1904. But sadly previous contractual obligations prevented them from appearing and their roles were played by, indeed created by, Gerald Du Maurier and Hilda Trevelyan. But Hicks eventually did play Hook, in the 1938 production of "Peter Pan" at the London Palladium, when Peter was played by Jean Forbes-Robertson and Wendy by Pamela Standish. It was said that Hicks mildly burlesqued the role, setting the pattern for most later Hooks, who played for laughs rather than terror!

Sir Seyrnour Hicks died in 1949, at the age of 78, whilst his devoted wife, Ellaline Terris, Lady Hicks, lived on to the ripe old age of 100, eventually dying in 1971. I remember watching her "This Is Your Life" tribute-programme on television in 1959, when one of the 'surprise' guests was Anton Dolin, and they both reminisced over their roles as 'Peter the Black Cat' and 'Bluebell' all those years ago.....

So what was the secret of "Bluebell's" great success? From all accounts I've read, it seems that there was so much going on all the time that there was no time to be bored! It was a regular 'plum-pie' of a show - the audience of Jack Horners put in their thumbs, as it were, and pulled out any number of entertaining plums. There was a delightful story, unusual, often bizarre, characters, songs and dances and comedy routines and jokes. At one point, apparently, Hicks would literally stop the proceedings while he did a 10-minute 'act' in which he impersonated and parodied a string of well-known leading actors and music-hall performers of the day!

There was lots of humour, I gather, but since it was primarily a 'nice' Christmas play with music, for young people, it never descended to the level of some pantomimes and 'off-colour' jokes were definitely 'out'. Hicks, the author, and Terris, his wistfully pure and beautiful wife, made sure of that. There was nothing 'blue' and certainly only one 'belle' in this show and she was Ellaline Terris.

"Bluebell in Fairyland"..... one of the most famous and successful Christmas shows of the first half of this century. And boasting one 'knock-out' perennially-popular song ('The Honeysuckle and the Bee') that is still known today after over 90 years.

It wasn't as long-lasting and successful as "Peter Pan" or "Where the Rainbow Ends" perhaps, but it was well-remembered and well-loved by two or three generations and for very many years.

Remember.....

"You are my honey, honeysuckle,

I am the bee...."

And I bet the bee stood for "Bluebell".....!

CRIME AT CLIFF HOUSE by Margery Woods

Part 6 CRIME IN THE CRYPT

Devotees of Cliff House will be familiar with its history, originally as a monastery, later a private residence and comparatively recently as a girls' public school. Its monastic antecedents proved a splendid advantage for successive Hilda Richardses, especially as so much of the original building had survived. The crypt played a leading part in many of the chums' adventures, its ancient stones, many nooks and passages, its deliciously spectral gloom and hints of so many secrets awaiting discovery made it a perfect atmospheric setting for dark deeds and dank mystery.

It helped to kick off in fine style the return of Cliff House in weekly long complete stories in THE SCHOOLGIRL of April, 2nd 1932. Entitled BESSIE BUNTER'S SPECTRE, the story began with Barbara Redfern regaling the Fourth, after lights out, with a tale from an old book, Ye Legend of Ye Crypt of Cliffe House Monastery, which told how the body of Lady Charmian was buried in the crypt and how the ghost of her lover, Benedict, haunted the crypt at the time of full moon searching for his lost Charmion.

All this talk of ghosts made Bessie feel a trifle peckish, and did not deter the usually nervous duffer from setting forth through the ancient whispering and creaking corridors in search of the jam tarts she knew Clara had in Study 7. But instead of jam tarts Bessie finds a spectre there, weird and glittering in the moonlight shining through the window. The uproar Bessie makes brings the girls hotfoot to the rescue----and, unfortunately, Miss Bullivant!

Thus begins the mystery of the crypt and the chums' ghost hunt. They keep discovering sequins (shed by a somewhat careless ghost!), and are greatly perplexed by the strange behaviour of Janet Jordan, always a loyal member of the Co. and ready for adventure. Various items disappear from the studies, the spectre makes another appearance, is pursued by Babs, who is knocked flying and only recovers in time to confront a blank wall.

Janet continues to behave oddly, and the girls are as yet unaware that she is hiding her sister, Sheila, in the school. In the meantime the chums have rescued a dark, gypsy-looking girl called Mina after she has had an accident and fallen off her bike. They bring her back to the school, apply compresses to the sprained ankle, and make her comfortable in Study 4 while they depart elsewhere. Of course she has vanished by the time they return, and has made a beeline for Janet's study.

The girls are puzzled but the crypt awaits, the exploration to be fuelled by a food hamper, which draw Bessie like a magnet, to the girls' dismay; there is no hope of silence and secrecy with a fat and frantic Bessie around. Then they hear a movement and glimpse Janet and her sister. They exclaim aloud and the sibilance of sound in the tunnel scares the wits out of Fatima. She yells blue murder, flees towards the steps, and crashes headlong into another mysterious figure skulking round the corner. The chums catch up with her and find she's made a capture. There is no hope of the captive escaping, not with the weight and girth of Bessie pinning her down and yelling "Gug-ghost!" at the top of her voice.

*THE FIRST of a Splendid New Series of Long Complete Tales,
featuring Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House School*

By
HILDA
RICHARDS



BESSIE BUNTER'S 'SPECTRE'

This is a splendid story of Cliff House School. In it you will make a host of new friends—Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, Bessie Bunter, Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie Hazeldene, and many other jolly Fourth-Formers. Join with them in all their fun and all their adventures; help them to solve a mystery—the mystery of Bessie Bunter's 'Spectre'!

This ghost proves to be Mina, the gypsy girl, miraculously cured of her bad ankle, who turns out to be the daughter of Joseph Smith, the partner of Mr. Jordan, father of Janet and Sheila, of Jordan's Circus. And now the villainy is revealed.

Sheila had discovered that Joseph Smith, in Mr. Jordan's absence, was involved in a crooked deal to sell the circus and make off with the proceeds. Sheila had managed to get hold of the deed of sale and hurry to Cliff House, the Smiths in pursuit, and hide there while she got word to her father. Hence Janet's mysterious perturbation. So Mr. Jordan arrives that night, the Smiths find themselves in Friardale Gaol, and the mystery of Bessie's spectre is solved at last.

There was no shortage of weird old ruins in the area round the school, and not long after this Bessie managed to get herself entangled with some more crooks who were intent on robbing a safe full of jewels at the home of a Mr. Hurst who had recently died and whose will was in dispute. The genuine beneficiaries were a father and daughter, and the daughter, was almost the double of Bessie, which caused a great deal of confusion and led to our Fat One being pursued, caught in a landslide, and imprisoned in Hermit's Nest, a dilapidated old place tottering right on the brink of the cliff. Bessie's mishaps were further complicated by the arrival of her Aunt Annie, probably the only member of the Bunter clan with any wealth, a somewhat irascible lady about to depart to Australia. For a while it

looked as though she might have to go before bestowing a parting gift on her plump and ever hungry niece.

But as ever, the chums came to the rescue. Aunt Annie laid on a spread, the thieves were arrested, Bessie's doppelganger and her father came into their rightful inheritance and Bessie found herself the heroine of the hour, a situation of which she made the most as she preened herself during the fuss and the press interviews. That was quite an eventful Spring for our Bess.

The old crypt certainly provided many hiding places for intruders, stolen goods and documents which would prove the innocence of some unfortunate victim, and clues to lost inheritances, as in Clara's family. With its honeycomb of secret passages and doors, no kidnapper needed to go far in search of a place to hide his or her victim, and it is still doubtful whether all its buried treasure troves have yet been discovered!

It has served other strange purposes, as when Princess Naida of Luxor Hall came to Cliff House to escape the enemies who would steal the Sacred Scarab. One enemy, naturally, succeeded in inveigling herself into the school, but Babs and Co. did not take long to thwart the attempt to purloin the Scarab, even when Naida was persuaded to feast by candlelight in the crypt----next door to the mausoleum! and the tomb of Charmian?---- but again, Babs and Co. got there in time.

Then there was the great Crossendale frame-up.

The crypt's potential was fully utilised in this story, MYSTERY MISTRESS AT CLIFF HOUSE, (THE SCHOOLGIRL, 400 27.3.37) in which the Fourth's beloved Miss Charmant has to go away for a while and a temporary mistress is brought in to replace her.

Miss Dora Gilbey is genuinely pleasant, young and instantly liked by all the girls, with one exception; Lydia Crossendale. Lydia seems determined to do everything she can to discredit the new mistress and soon succeeds. Early in the story we meet Norma, older sister of Lydia, who was a pupil at Cliff House six years previously when she was determined to become School Captain. However, Norma apparently leaves before the accusations start flying about the new mistress having been expelled from Cliff House when she had been a pupil there, and that Gilbey was not her real name. She produces her birth certificate to a suspicious Miss Primrose, and for a brief moment Lydia subsides. But not for long.

There are comings and goings in the crypt, further persecution by Lydia, and at last Miss Gilbey tells Babs the truth. Some of Lydia's accusations are true.

Miss Gilbey *had* been a pupil at Cliff House, under the name of Durrant, the name of the man who was her guardian. And yes, she had been expelled after being on the verge of ousting Norma Crossendale as favourite for the captaincy. She had been studying some very old and rare documents from the Cliff House library while she researched the school's history for a series of articles she was writing for a local paper. Then the valuable documents disappeared and Norma accused her of burning them. As they could not be found, Norma's word was taken against Dora Durrant and Dora was expelled. To earn her living, Dora reverted to her birth name of Gilbey and managed to get supply teaching jobs, until another girl with whom she had kept in touch told her that in a fit of confidence Norma Crossendale had told her the truth about the missing documents and how she had hidden them in the crypt. So Dora decided she would search while she was replacing Miss Charmant and try to restore the missing documents. But Lydia had told her sister, and there was another complication. Norma had won a prize during that last year at Cliff House, a prize that carried a life annuity of one hundred pounds a year. If it was discovered that a winning pupil was disgraced the annuity would be forfeited; it was vital that Lydia prevented Dora Gilbey, or anyone, from finding those documents.

Lydia is not easily beaten; inevitably she succeeds in locking the chums in the crypt, and it is only thanks to Bessie's unbearable hunger pangs that set the duffer on the trail of sustenance, during which trail she manages to set off the fire alarm and rouse the entire school, that Lydia is caught red-handed. Bessie does have her uses!

Historical documents were not the only valuables to sink without trace for years in the old crypt. Exam papers, school reports and a silver casket lay in the dank gloom, waiting until the guilty were drawn back inexorably to try to remove the traces of that guilt.

The crypt also had another function, one for which it was ideally suited: that of headquarters and meeting place for the secret societies Cliff House harboured at one time and another. The Red Triangle, The Black Diamond, and the Society of Justice, a tremendous series, this last one, starring not only the chums but Diana Royston-Clarke, a cache of treasure----and the never to be forgotten Miss Taylor, one of the worst tyrants ever to be headmistress of Cliff House. But these deserve an account of their own!

More to come in New Year.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HORACE HENRY SAMUEL
QUELCH, M.A.? by Reg Hardinge

The recent excellent series *Whatever happened to.....?* imaginatively written by Adrian Mourby and broadcast on Radio 4, dealt with the afterlife of some memorable characters from children's fiction such as the Famous Five, Popeye, Cinderella's Ugly Sisters, Dr. Who's granddaughter Susan, and Little Lord Fauntleroy. The offering on July 2nd, 1994 was an update of the activities of several Greyfriars notables after their schooldays were over, including the bizarre affair of Mr. Quelch, form master of the Remove or lower fourth, and his involvement in international matters of the gravest import.

In the early thirties Britain had alleged plans for the invasion of the United States. The Digby Squirrel column in the "Telegraph" it was whispered, contained coded messages which for four years relayed vital information to the Americans. Ed, the Mongoose, and the nasty ravens who rebuilt their nests, were some of the characters introduced into this regular feature to convey such news across the Atlantic.

Mr. Quelch was suspected of being the author of the column and Major Herbert Vernon-Smith of M15 was assigned to investigate these rumours. Sir Johnny Bull, former Greyfriars 'cricket captain and editor of the daily telegraph" flatly denied the allegations. Vernon-Smith sought the opinions of several of Quelch's ex-pupils including back bench M.P. Harry Wharton, Lord Bunter of Hove, property tycoon, at his beachside bungalow in the Seychelles, and Alonzo Todd in France. Quelch, it appears, was a pacifist and in contact with the C.I.A.

Vernon-Smith's enquiries took him back to Greyfriars. Gosling by the way, was still there but going blind. Finding the Digby Squirrel manuscript in Quelch's desk Vernon-Smith used it to blackmail Quelch into sending false information to the States in further articles. Brief mention was made of Frank Nugent who was involved in left wing theatre group activities, and of Inky who was assassinated. In the end Quelch died, of course, but when, nobody knows. One wonders how he ever got involved in espionage, poor chap!



FORUM

(Editor's Note)

Martin Water's request last month for information about the actor Kynaston Reeves, who played Mr. Quelch in Greyfriars TV programmes of the 1950s, has brought several detailed replies.

REG HARDINGE writes: I was a great admirer of this polished character actor who always added something extra to a film or play in the small but significant roles he was called upon to play. Born in Hammersmith on May 29th, 1893, he was in his heyday in the 1950s performing on the screen in numerous cameo parts such as General Sir Henry Ponsonby in *THE MUDLARK*, and a Schoolmaster in *TOP OF THE FORM*. Other appearances were made in *THE TWENTY QUESTIONS MURDER MYSTERY*, *CAPTAIN HORATIO HORNBLLOWER R.N.*, *TONY DRAWS A HORSE*, *PENNY PRINCESS*, *BLACK-OUT*, *LAXDALE HALL*, *TOP SECRET* and several others.

BRIAN DOYLE adds: He was educated at Beaumont College. After serving in the Army in World War One, he studied at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and then made his stage debut, touring the provinces, in 1920, in "Betty at Bay". He appeared in countless stage productions throughout Britain and in London's West End, over the next fifty years or so. He enjoyed a particularly long run (nearly a year) playing a leading role in "The Affair" at the Strand Theatre, London, 1961-62, later repeating his performance in New York. He made his bow in films in 1919 in the silent days and appeared in numerous pictures, including "The House master", "The Citadel", "Sixty Glorious Years", "The Prime Minister", "The Stars Look Down", "The Young Mr. Pitt", "Dead of Night", "Vice Versa", "The Guinea Pig", "The Mudlark", "Top of the Form", "Brothers-in-Law" and "School for Scoundrels". There were many others, plus numerous TV productions. He was, of course, as Mr. Waters reminds us, a memorable Mr. Quelch in the Greyfriars BBC TV series in the 1950s. His favourite recreations included swimming and 'country life'. He died in 1971. If Mr. Waters cares to consult the 14th edition (1967) of "Who's Who in the Theatre" (possibly available at his local public library) he will find therein no less than 120 lines detailing Mr. Reeves' stage career.

RON QUIBELL and **JEFFREY RICHARDS** gave further details, **PATRICIA FAHEY** also added to the list and like **STAN PLATTS**, mentioned that his real name was Philip Kynaston Reeves. Apparently he appeared in 70 films, between 1919 and 1969 when he made his last one *Anne of the Thousand Days*. (I have forwarded the correspondence to Mr. Waters.)

* * * * *

There has also been a vigorous response to Peter Barnicott's query about a 1930s boys' paper featuring a trip to Mars.

J. McMAHON writes: I think he will find it to be 'THE PASSING SHOW.' I recalled it because of the striking illustration of the Martian machine creature accompanying the serial. The paper was very slightly shiny and had an elusive, pleasing smell of printer's ink. Only when Peter Barnicott began to describe the Martians, did I get this long forgotten image.

Here is the information. *Stowaway To Mars* (formerly *Planet Plane*) by John Beynon Harris (now known as John Wyndham): leader of the expedition was DALE. 1936 *PASSING SHOW* serial.

John Beynon's first, and earlier book length story also appeared serially in the 1935 'PASSING SHOW', wonderfully illustrated by FORTUNINO MATANIA. 'THE SECRET PEOPLE', A story about hidden land beneath the Sahara. Another book by JOHN BEYNON HARRIS called 'SLEEPERS OF MARS' deals with additional tales of Mars.

Most of all of these would appear under JOHN WYNDHAM'S name now. I would think most active, second-hand paperback shops may well have copies.

IAN BENNETT adds that the story *Stowaway to Mars* was reprinted in *Modern Wonder* "with the stowaway (a girl!) being charged to a chap called John, I seem to recollect, for the benefit of the *Modern Wonder* readers who, presumably, were thought to consider *all* girls as variations of the Violet Elizabeth model."

TONY GLYNN also remembers that this story was in the *Modern Wonder*. He adds: Many thanks to Ray Hopkins and Dennis Hilliard for the information on H. Taprell Dorling, particularly to Ray for his very detailed account of this author's career. As soon as I saw the title, "The Boy Castaways or Endeavour Island", I fairly jumped out of the chair and gurgled: "Yes, that's the one!" I'm not sure it would be to my taste today, but I enjoyed it very much as a youngster. I feel my edition was later than 1915, however; it had that very substantial and cleanly-designed look of juvenile books published by people like Blackie and Nelson in the twenties and thirties.

While on the subject, do you remember the series from that time which went under the title of "The Big Budget for Boys" and the "Big Budget for Girls"? Or am I correct in thinking the word "Big" was there? Maybe it was just "The Boys' Budget" etc., anyway, I was always intrigued by the use of the word "Budget" because I understand that had something to do with the Chancellor of the Exchequer who was somebody or other involved in the baffling adult world. Does anyone recall the "Buzzer"? I'm fairly sure that it was launched about 1939.

JOHN WARDLAW writes: Bill Bradford (Ealing) once confirmed my memory of The Thriller cover of The Second Victim by Leslie Charteris, issue No. 58. My interest lies in wondering if this issue is available.

RON GARDNER comments: When I was on holiday, I was fortunate enough to find and buy a pre-war copy of a 'Triumph' Annual in fairly reasonable condition. Glancing through it, I came across a story of Victor Gaunt, Master Spy, entitled 'The Gorilla Man of Penhu,' which is quoted as being 'the sinister rebel town in the heart of the wild Khyber Mountains, which white men were forbidden to enter under penalty of death'. The author of this story was Edwin Dale. Another story in the Annual by Herbert Macrae, stars another secret agent, John Silence, King of Spies. It's a WW1 story, called 'The Prison Camp's Mystery man'. Both Victor Gaunt and Captain Silence work alone, but in Jack Maxwell's story, 'The Case of The Spectral Speedboat', the hero is Clipper Craig, the Speedboat Tec and he is assisted by 'Bosun Barnack-generally known as "Barnacle"'. Added to all this, there are also stories about Mad Carew, Rupert the Robot and Catapult Cowboy Kit Green! All in all, the 'Triumph' Annual certainly gave value for money.

JOHN NICHOLLS says: I have enjoyed all the articles about half-remembered stories. I have found nearly all my childhood memories with the exception of one which I remember as an annual size book, cardboard type papers, about a village of animals - the concluding story being the building of a boat, a sea voyage, a wreck and a journey home swimming on the backs of jungle animals.

J.E.M. writes: Please publish my gratitude to Ray Hopkins for tracking down details of the Herbert Strang volume I am hunting.

As ever your book reviews both enlightened and entertained. I am intrigued by the publication of the William Diary. As you say, a brilliant idea - and quite irresistible.

FROM JOHN GEAL - Gems of Hamiltonia No. 9 Reginald Coker. MAGNET No. 983.

"Reggie Coker was unlike his burly brother Horace as a fellow's brother well could be. He was slight and youthful and clever, and he was in the Sixth Form, whereas his elder brother Horace was in the Fifth, and ought to have been only in the Shell. Coker minor never found it possible to keep up the dignity of a Sixth Form man. On his attainments, which were really weird and wonderful, he was entitled to his place in the Sixth Form; but physically there were fellows in the Shell who could have handled him with ease. Indeed, Coker minor often thought that he would have found life in the Sixth not worth living, but for the fact that he had a burly big brother in the Fifth always ready - in fact, more than ready - to fight his battles for him. If a Fifth Form man or a Shell fellow cheeked Coker of the Sixth, Coker of the Fifth was on the warpath at once; and, though Coker minor might be despised as a fellow who could not use his hands, it was impossible to despise Coker major, who had a punch like the kick of a mule. Reggie had the brains of the family, and Horace had the muscle, and each of them was satisfied with that division."

* * * * *

(Editor's note: Our reader P.J. HANGER, who commends John Geal's series of *Gems from Hamiltonia* has supplied the following Hamiltonian snippets, focusing on St. Jim's and Rookwood.)

Tom and Manners generally contributed a loyal chuckle when Monty propounded a pun. If they saw the joke it deserved a chuckle; if they didn't it prevented Monty from explaining it!

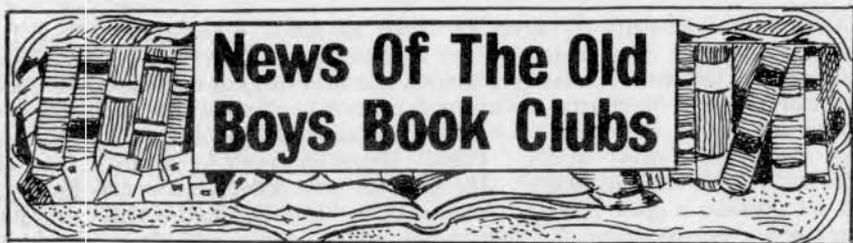
GEM 1629

As a matter of fact much - too much had been heard and seen in the Rookwood Fourth of Reginald Muffin's new gold watch.

That gold watch had been presented to Tubby by his uncle, Captain Muffin. It did not keep very good time, perhaps because Tubby sometimes overwound it, and sometimes forgot to wind it at all. But it was magnificent to look at. It was a large size in watches, it had a tick that could be heard in a thunderstorm, and when Tubby drew it out in the quad it's golden glitter reflected the rays of the sun - and, indeed, almost outshone the solar luminary. The value of that watch, according to Muffin, was enormous - and, indeed, it looked as if it would have fetched a considerable sum sold merely by weight.

Unnumbered times had Tubby proudly displayed that new gold watch and informed uninterested fellows that it was a present from his rich uncle, Captain Muffin. He would draw it out in the quad to compare the time with the time - generally different - indicated on the clock in the tower. He would draw it out in the Common-room, he would offer to time the corridor races for anybody and everybody. In fact, it was impossible to be an inmate of Rookwood School without becoming closely acquainted with Reginald Muffin's new gold watch.

SOL. 380 (The Rookwood Ragers)



SOUTH WESTERN OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

Nine members attended our September meeting including our guest speaker, Una Hamilton-Wright. We were also pleased to welcome our newest member, Louisa Warner, who is a keen Greyfriars fan.

Our meeting was very much Frank Richards orientated and Bill Lofts entertained us with how Frank Richards was 'discovered' by his first post war publisher, Charles Skilton, who had read an article on him in the Picture Post in 1946.

Una Hamilton-Wright talked to us about her late uncle's strongly held views on the art of writing, entitled "All Tales Are Fairytales". It was evident that tact was not his strongest point and that not all his prolific writing came easily, the process sometimes requiring a wet towel on his head!

Laurence Price read some further parodies from the "Complete Casebook of Herlock Sholmes", after which the usual excellent tea was provided by Mrs. Salisbury. A real No. 1 study spread with Bunter thankfully absent!

Bill Lofts once more entertained us with a talk "Author's Licence" on stories far removed from reality. He regaled us with Jacko, the Gorilla Detective, who assisted detective Victor Brand from about 1911-1927. In Holmesian fashion Jacko could even play the violin, albeit perfectly.

Louisa Warner showed us a charming letter she had received from Gerald Campion, and the meeting finished with a brief video clip of Campion as Bunter.

We meet again on Sunday, 4th June, 1955 at 2.30 p.m. at 20 Uphill Road South, Uphill, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset.

LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

The October meeting was held at the Eltham home of Peter and Dorothy Mahony on a warm sunny Sunday. Roger Jenkins told of unpublished conversation with Miss Hood about Charles Hamilton and his relations. Peter Mahony presented a musical quiz with the answers connected to Greyfriars, Rookwood and St. Jim's.

Peter read passages from *Prefects on Strike* and *Willoughby Captains* and related tales from his own youth which had followed on from his first reading of the stories. Mark Taha presented his "girl's quiz" which ranged from the name of Dr. Locke's younger sister to the name of Angela Brazil's last book.

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

A very convivial party of twenty sat down for lunch at Under the Clock Tower Restaurant, Wakefield, in the presence of our honoured guest and president, Mary Cadogan on Saturday, 8th October. A relaxing afternoon was then spent at the home and library of our secretary taking in the delights of Geoffrey's collection, informal chat, the sunny autumn afternoon and Vera's refreshments. A number of new publications on display included Mary's new books "AND THEN THEIR HEARTS STOOD STILL" and "JUST WILLIAM THROUGH THE AGES". The latter has been dedicated to the Northern Club, which we consider a great honour. Another book "THAT'S JENNINGS" by Anthony Buckeridge our vice-president, was also on view and this too is dedicated to the Northern Club.

At our evening meeting, we recorded the apologies of Anthony and Eileen Buckeridge who had been hoping to attend our luncheon.

Our speaker for the evening was Mary, who told us something of the life and works of Enid Blyton. Mary recalled playing the part of the Queen of the Fairies in a school production of a Blyton play. Enid Blyton was a phenomenon and in addition to her tremendous output of books also regularly wrote "Sunny Stories" and made contributions to other publications. She was a natural story-teller whose words just flowed. She had little time for her critics over the age of twelve years and "loved to take the hand of a child of three and walk with it through childhood". Her moral values came across in the books. She had a tremendous range of styles and, for children of all ages, wrote extremely varied stories including those featuring the celebrated Noddy, Secret Seven and Famous Five, as well as mystery and adventure tales and accounts of life at girls' schools.

Mary was warmly thanked for her presentation and the meeting ended at 9.00 p.m. the conclusion of a most happy day.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

FOR SALE: Sexton Blake Library 4 pence, 10 pence and 1 shilling. Most very good. Mostly 4th series. 46 copies for £40.00.

Both volume of Champion Library (bound without covers) containing Numbers:- 91, 92, 93, 94, 101 and 102. Nine copies of Champion Library. One with spine sellotaped others good, Numbers:-203, 210, 222, 228, 234,235, 248, 253, 261, offers.

Bound Volumes Boys Friend Library (Bound without covers) containing 344, 384, 390, 429.

Hardback Books. Damaged Spine 'Sky Bandits. Geo. E. Rochester and Grey Shadow Master Spy. Geo. Rochester.

Offers please. J. Ashley, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants, PO15 5AH. 0329/234489.

FOR SALE: Boys Own Paper - three complete years. 1937-1938-1939. Very sound condition, with binders if required. As singles £4 each. Complete year £40.00. Complete set £110 - Some S.O.L.s. JOHN GIBBS, Wells Cottage, East Combe, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3HU. Tel: 0823-432 998.

FOR SALE: "McCall's Greyfriars Guide", Mint condition. £12.00 including postage. Terry Jones, 43 Brooklands Park, Longlevens, Gloucester, GL2 ODN.

"JUST WILLIAM THROUGH THE AGES", by Mary Cadogan.
Macmillan, London, 1994, (£14.99)

Reviewed by BRIAN DOYLE

Mary Cadogan has become, over the past few years, the chronicler 'par excellence' of William Brown and his creator, Richmal Crompton. In 1986 she wrote the first, and definitive, biography of Crompton. In 1990 she gave us "The William Companion", that incomparable concordance and A-Z to the hilarious and heart-warming saga. And now comes her latest contribution to the growing literature about the most famous and best-loved 'bad boy' in English fiction, "Just William Through the Ages", in which she provides a decade-by-decade account, in words and pictures, of William and his changing world, from the 1920s to the 1960s when the last book in the series was published (in 1970 to be exact but written in the '60s).

It might well have been titled "Just William Through the Pages", for Mary Cadogan takes us on a leisurely and fascinating stroll through many of the highlights (and lowlights) of William's varied adventures and escapades and, on the way, reintroduces us to the multitude of characters he encounters. She reflects with skill and insight the social and historical contexts of the stories and William's relation to and involvement in them.

In her Introduction, Mary Cadogan says: "Like all great literary characters, William is multi-faceted and 'William Through the Ages' is an attempt to focus on different aspects of his personality, relationships and aspirations over the decades." She points out that the stories "are also rich in sharply observed social comment" and that "William's village is a microcosm of the world at large...."

She is particularly good on delineating some of the class and social conditions and attitudes in William's world. In the beginning, for instance, the Brown's boasted a housemaid, a cook, a charwoman and a gardener; as the years passed by, their domestic staff shrank to a daily 'help' and a part-time gardener. William's house also seemed to shrink accordingly, but the Brown's were always a 'comfortably-off', middle-class family.

Also well-detailed and defined are William's relationships with the various small girls he happens to come into contact with. From the delightful, dark-haired, demure and dimpled Joan (originally 'the girl-next-door'), who adored William and was very much his 'type', to the terrifying, ringletted Violet Elizabeth, the pert little lisper from Hell.

They're all there, everyone you remember from the stories (and some you may have forgotten): Miss Milton, General Moulton, Mrs. Bott (from the 'all'), Hubert Lane, Arabella Simpkin.....and naturally Robert and Ethel, William's elder brother and sister, both forever falling in and out of love with unfailing regularity ("I think you're the most beautiful girl in the whole world....." breathed Robert huskily), and not forgetting William's long-suffering parents.

The social, political and economic issues of the times are regularly reflected in the stories. The influence of films and film-stars, for example. ("I can't understand how I ever thought you looked like Ronald Colman," Cornelia tells a stunned Robert.) And when William takes up the worthy cause of 'Pensions for Boys', he is not best-pleased when he discovers that old-age pensioners receive 10 shillings (50p) a week (a 'fortune' then!) without having "to do anythin' at all for it", while boys who "work all day long, going' to school an' doin' sums and suchlike get absolutely nothin'" except a bit of niggardly pocket-money if they're lucky.

Mary Cadogan is good on her comments on how World War Two is reflected in the saga too. "I can't be bothered with you - there's a war on' was commonly said to William and his friends, much to their disgust. William, of course, does his best to help with the war effort. When he is not discovering unexploded bombs, or that Adolf Hitler himself appears to be staying locally, he is attempting to evacuate all the local children to a place of safety.

JUST WILLIAM

THROUGH THE
AGES



by
permission
of
RICHMAL
CROMPTON

MARY CADOGAN

Richmal Crompton died in 1969 and was apparently writing a new William story ('William's Foggy morning') the day before she died. Her final and 38th William book ('William the Lawless') was published posthumously in 1970.

"Just William Through the Ages" is a lovely book and splendidly produced by publishers Macmillan. There are over 100 illustrations, 34 of them in full colour and all of them (apart from half-dozen or so at the end) by the inimitable Thomas Henry. But surely it's rather naughty of the publishers to state in their 'blurb' that 'most of the colour illustrations were first published in magazines and have not been reproduced for 40 or more years.'; 14 of them comprised the front dust-jacket picture of various hard-cover William books over the years and were still appearing thus in the 1960s....

At the end of the book, Mary Cadogan brings the William story right up to date with mentions of the Centenary William Exhibition at London's Bethnal Green Museum, William's appearance in wax at Madame Tussaud's in London, the William postage-stamp, the William map, and Martin Jarvis's BBC Radio readings, later issued successfully on commercial tapes. But I do think she could also have mentioned the three Crompton biographies (including her own) and her "The William Companion" just to complete the picture and for the information of those who may wish to continue their background reading.

Finally, I must mention the jacket of this new book. Adapted from a 1940s publication, "Just William's Magic Painting Book" it is a full-colour painting by Thomas Henry showing William, his dog Jumble, his family and other characters. The cover - like the book - is a delight. No William fan should be without this smashing new book.....!



"I say you fellows, about the holidays....." In a world of strident voices, ever increasing threats, violence and tensions, one tends to wonder what has befallen that calm old world we once knew. Did it really exist, or was it merely a figment of our imagination, something we dreamt? Was the world of the 'Magnet and the Gem' just a dream which has in some way lingered on in the waking moments of certain adult minds, something which never really happened? A straw at which we grasped in extremity as something tangible to hold for a brief moment in the memory, to try and fix it in the reality of the printed word that it may not again elude us and slip away and be lost.

A Greek poet has told us that "Mankind is divided into three categories - those who think for themselves, those who think as others think, and those who never think at all." It is into this last category we may perhaps with some justification place William George Bunter. Thoughtless he undoubtedly is where other fellows are concerned, less so when his own fat comfort is in question. Yet to accuse this bright ornament of the Remove of selfishness would amaze him, and cause his spectacles to flash with indignation and disbelief. We each in our individual way strive our best to present to the world a credible self-picture. That portrayal, while extremely comforting to ourselves, may possibly present a somewhat different aspect to our friends and contemporaries.

Thus, sadly, must it be said of Billy Bunter. His Form-Master's private opinion of him would be revealing in the extreme, for it may be safely stated that Mr. Quelch, from long experience of his manners and customs, labours under no delusions whatsoever about this member of his form. However, Bunter's friends and form-mates have become so accustomed to his natural prevaricating ways that they accept him, together with all his imperfections, rather as we might accept the necessity of imbibing a glass of noxious medicine. He is an disputable fact. Happily he is the one and only 'Owl' (although he does possess a minor and a sister who run him very close in matters of ambiguity and native cunning).

Yet there have been occasions when these suspect attributes have proved to be of good account, when the more open and guileless natures of his friends might have been taken advantage of. This does not in any sense excuse these unfortunate characteristics, but it *does* illustrate the fact that there is a place in life's scheme of things for even such unpalatable quirks as these. Billy Bunter, it would seem, has fallen heir to more than his share, but fortunately (how and why it is difficult to say) he remains as popular now as in those far-off days when he first burst upon our horizons.

That Bunter made an indelible impressions upon the minds of countless numbers of boys and girls over the years is an indisputable fact. That this impression was carried forward into adulthood is also true. So we are confronted finally by the fact that this fat and less than heroic figure possessed a certain individual charisma. There was nothing in his make-up one would care to emulate, but he managed always to hold our attention. In the quiet world in which he had his being, where violence was limited to the odd frowzy 'gentlemen of the road, encountered in the lanes and woodlands around Greyfriars School, Bunter led a not un-exciting existence. His ideas of 'property' and 'possession' were original, and earned for him a series of raggings, kicks, bumpings, and official whackings, all of which, though of doubtful enjoyment to himself, enhanced our own entertainment. Week by week, for more than forty years he was seldom far from the centre of affairs at Greyfriars, and enjoyed the aura popularis to a greater extent than any of the other fellows. Whatever the plot, whomsoever the characters involved, the fat Owl was sure to play a prominent role in the proceedings, as likely as not being the origin of the welcome oil which eventually smoothed the waters of some ruffled situations.

He has surely become a fixture in our literary annals, together with several other splendid Greyfriars personalities.

ALMA MATER

I see again old Greyfriars gate
 With spreading elms beyond,
I've dreamed about it much of late
 Such is the lasting bond.
The ancient buildings, dignified,
 The playing fields so green,
What worthwhile things they signified
 What great days they have seen.
The years roll by on fleeting wings
 As seasons wax and wane,
From limbo then fond memories bring
 Of 'men' well known to fame.
The corridors of time ring out
 And spring to life once more,
The seniors with decorous shout
 While lesser lights just roar.
One fact stands out crystal clear
 All 'old boys' know 'tis true
A standard's set, bold, without fear,
 These 'men' were all true-blue.

Ted Baldock

An exuberant look at romantic fiction past and present

And Then Their Hearts Stood Still



MARY CADOGAN

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