

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.51

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JUNE 1997

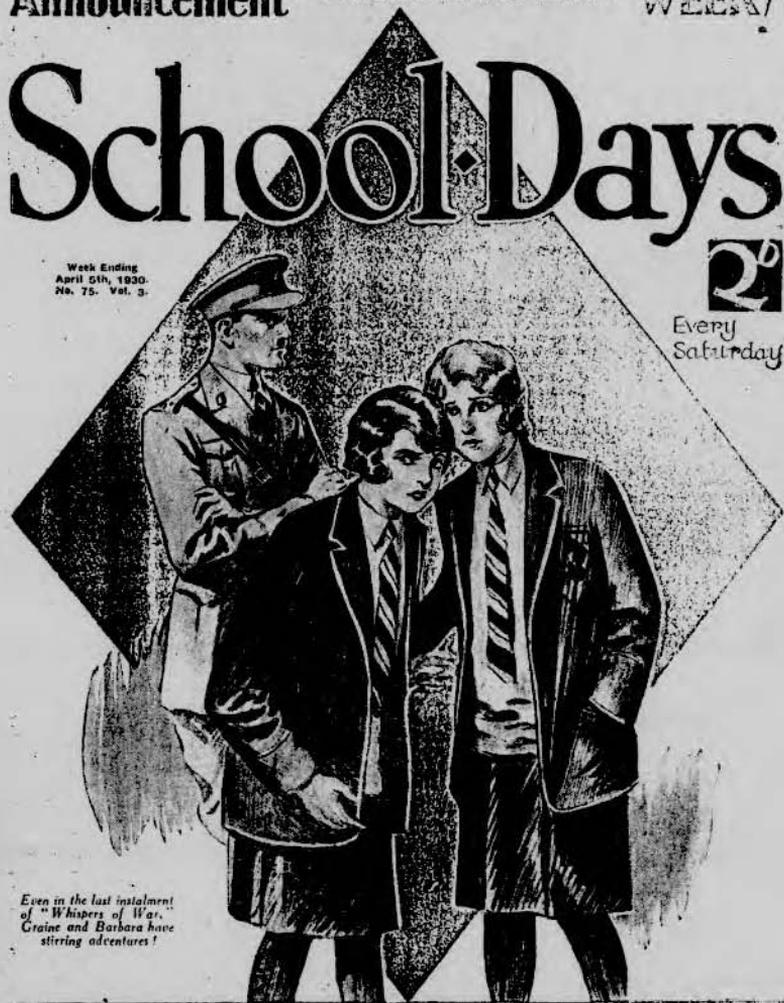
GREAT *for* **ALL READERS** **THIS**
Announcement **WEEK!**

School Days

Week Ending
April 5th, 1930.
No. 75. Vol. 3.

2^o

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"GOODNIGHT, SWEET PRINCE,
AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS SING THEE TO THY REST!"

Hamlet, v.ii.

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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FAREWELL TO ERIC FAYNE

As we announced last month, our very dear and long-standing previous editor, Eric Fayne, passed away on 2nd May at the age of 92. Elsewhere in this issue of the C.D. you will find several tributes from readers: these reached me within days of Eric's dying, and no doubt there will be many more.

Eric's achievements have been outlined in some of these tributes, so in this editorial I am sharing with you only my personal recollections of him. He was the first editor of any paper or magazine to publish my work, and I shall never forget his kindly, gracious encouragement. He was also my first personal contact with the hobby and, again, I still remember his friendly welcoming attitude, and of course his unlimited enthusiasm.

He told me once that he had achieved his two greatest ambitions - to be Headmaster of his own school, and to edit a magazine. As well as this, his musical talents brought their rewards, both private and professional. His piano-playing enhanced his enjoyment of light, popular music, and he had the joy of playing the music for the Bunter plays which were staged in London over a long period. (I also have a tantalising half-memory that when I first went to work in the BBC Variety Department in the mid-1940s Eric might have been, for a short time, one half of a piano-duettist act known as

Sennington & Fayne. I asked him about this once, and his reply, mysteriously, was 'Well, that might have been your friend ...').

We always think of him as Eric, but he was actually Ralph George Page (surely a fitting name for an editor!). However, like other teachers in those long-ago years he probably decided that he was well advised to use a different name from his own for activities outside his profession. I understand that he chose 'Eric' because of his admiration for Dean Farrar's resilient but often maligned book, *Eric, or Little by Little*. In C.D. 288 he wrote about his fondness for this story: 'Even today, despite its blatant preaching and sentimentality, it is easy to see why it was a best-seller for many years ... it contains much pleasant prose, and, in pathos, those old writers were onto a winner Whether Dean Farrar had a message is doubtful, unless it was that the good die young - which is dismaying for the good.'

Well, our Eric was indeed good, and we can rejoice that he did not die young. My husband and I attended his funeral on 9th May at Fleet Baptist Church. Roger Jenkins and Eric Lawrence from the London Club were also there: Ian Whitmore, who is not only a C.D. reader but one of Eric Fayne's former pupils, came as well (there were several others in the church who had attended Eric's Modern School in Surbiton). I hoped that my presence represented all C.D. readers, and also that, as a member of the London, Northern and Cambridge Clubs, I was helping to represent them too.

I am very glad to be able to reproduce once more on page two Bob Whiter's picture of Eric which, specially drawn for an earlier C.D., so well conveys his alert and kindly essence.

Although it is over ten years since Eric gave up the Editorship of our magazine, his thoughts were still frequently with us all. He ended the article which he wrote last year for *S.P.C.D. The First Fifty Years* by saying:

"THANK YOU, my old readers, for your affection and friendship; thank YOU for being YOU."

I feel sure that we shall continue to make the C.D., which he loved so much, a vibrant mouthpiece for our hobby, and, indirectly but potently, a real and lasting memorial to dear Eric.

MARY CADOGAN

BILL LOFTS

C.D. readers will be sorry to hear that Bill Lofts is at present in hospital, suffering the effects of a stroke.

We understand that he is recovering, and, of course, we send him our warm and affectionate wishes for his well-being. We do not yet know how long he will remain in hospital, but any letters sent to Bill care of my address will be forwarded.

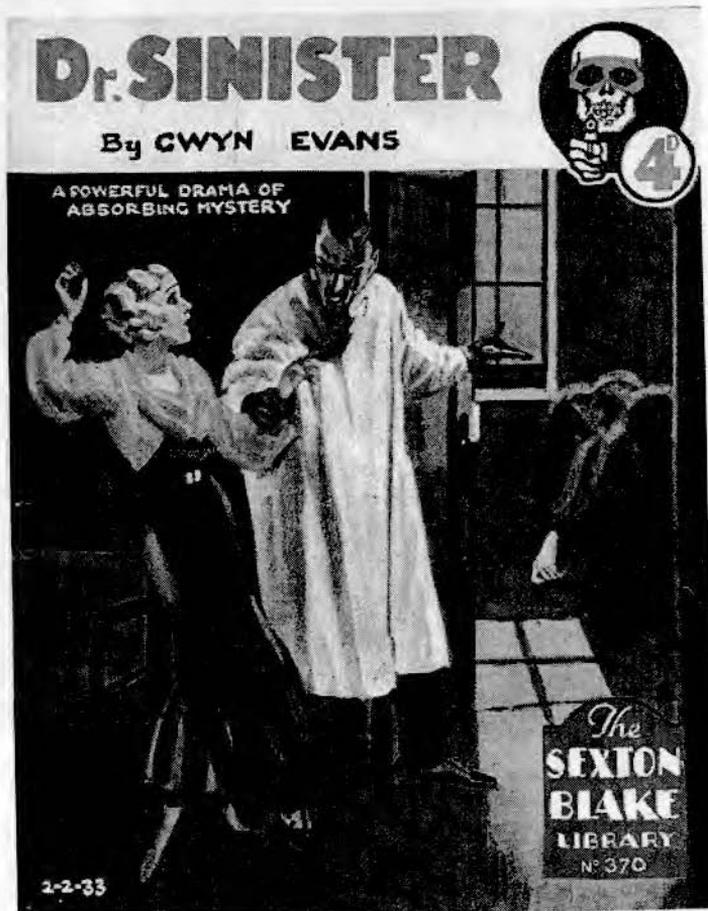
MARY CADOGAN



THE NAME'S THE SAME by Derek Hinrich

Given the number of Sexton Blake cases recorded by his devoted band of chroniclers - over 1,500 issues of the *Union Jack* and more than 1,700 issues of the *Library* - it is probably not surprising that - quite apart from any re-issues - certain titles were repeated: thus Greek met Greek in the *Union Jack* in both 1913 and 1916 (on one occasion these Hellenes were Mlle Yvonne Cartier and Dr Huxton Rymer) and stories entitled "The Coffee Stall Mystery" appeared in the same journal in 1912 and 1928 respectively.

The most striking duplication, however, at any rate for the art work the title inspired for the covers (both by Eric Parker) is, I think, that shared by SBL 2/370 and SBL 3/50, *Dr (or Doctor) Sinister*, by respectively Gwyn Evans and Gilbert Chester. There is no doubt



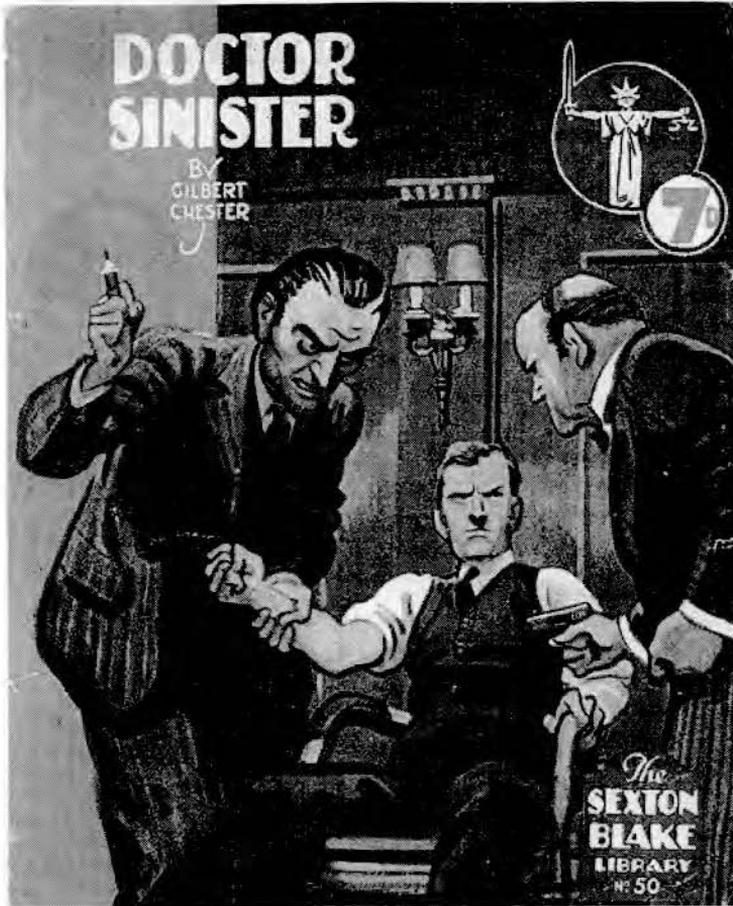
at all from the covers that the two eponymous medical men in question intended fully to live up to their sobriquets.

Gwyn Evans' villain is an Egyptian or Levantine physician with a chain of clinics in various capital cities through which he directs an international drugs syndicate. He is of course adept at murder by subtle means, has a taste for operating (unsuccessfully) on his

victims or enemies in his clinics when he has done with them, and has a large collection of venomous snakes on which he dotes. A pretty typical 'twenties or 'thirties super-villain, one might say, of the type who eventually comes to a sticky and poetically just end ("hoist-petard-wise", perhaps, in cablese).

Gilbert Chester's medico is quite another matter. This doctor could "put the murderous Machiavel to school" as he masterminds an intricate plot replete with murder, blackmail, and personation.

A young merchant sailor and his friend, just arrived



in Liverpool at the end of an arduous voyage in convoy to Murmansk and back, in the course of which they have been torpedoed and rescued, are on their first night ashore lured to a night club where they are drugged and separated. The young man wakes from his stupor to find himself locked in the bedroom of a young woman who appears to have been strangled. Thereafter, while still partially under the influence of the drug, he is persuaded to go to a very large but remote country estate with a crumbling great house where he is informed that he is the heir to this entailed property and forcefully reminded of his apparent plight.

His shipmate meanwhile wakes to find himself destitute and robbed of his identification papers, in London. At a loss to know how he got there and concerned for his friend, he consults Sexton Blake. Blake, though reluctant and suspicious at first, eventually agrees to investigate. He traces the young man to the Hall and soon finds sufficient evidence to warrant his further involvement. Inspector Coutts appears on the scene upon another matter, an unidentified body in a river. Is it connected? A voluble and temperamental Argentinian lady arrives in the village saying she is the young seaman's - or somebody's - wife. Someone's aplomb is severely shattered when he finds Sexton Blake interesting himself in matters. Soon an attempt is made on Blake's life and meanwhile he carries out some very pretty detective work.

Presently all is resolved. But what is "all"? The story moves at a great pace and the plot twists like the proverbial corkscrew. And yes, the cover does not lie. The butler did do some of, well, something, you must make his closer acquaintance to find out what.



IN DANGER AT ST. FRANK'S (Conclusion)

by Ray Hopkins

The concluding episode in this series jumps another issue and appears in No. 118, 8 Sep 1917, "The Verdict of the School". Sadly, both Tregellis-West and Watson join the rest of the form in not speaking to Nipper when Fullwood, Gulliver and Bell hasten back to speak more calumny when they observe him leaving the King's Arms Inn - "A very respectable place" in the words of Nelson Lee - who had told Nipper to meet him there where he and Detective-Inspector Morley from Scotland Yard are to concoct a plan to capture the pair who Lee feels sure are still in the vicinity ready to make another pounce on Farman.

Nipper cannot explain to his two chums why he visited the Inn but tells them they will know everything in a day or two, but this doesn't satisfy them and they refuse to regard him as a friend.

Farman is still recovering in the school's hospital but the following day, during the afternoon, while everyone is at lessons, a junior with his head heavily bandaged and one side of his nose covered in plaster leaves the school and makes his way to Bellton Wood, meandering slowly in the direction of Bannington Moor. He appears to be expecting to meet someone but teatime comes and goes and it begins to get dark. But the boy continues to wander slowly about.

Then it happens! The two men Farman has encountered on two previous occasions step out from some bushes and confront the junior. The American urges him to come quietly. He also apologises for the injuries caused by the Chinaman's cudgel on the last occasion. The bandaged boy takes a step backward, quickly pulls a small revolver from his trouser pocket and aims toward the sky. Two loud reports awake the echoes.

The American curses and throws the junior to the ground. The boy will not escape them a third time. Two men crash through the undergrowth: Nelson Lee and D.I. Morley.

Lee and the suddenly energetic junior tackle the American and quickly overpower him while Morley in less than three minutes is fastening handcuffs on the Chinaman. During the fight the junior loses the bandage and the plaster on his nose and the American for the first time gets a good look in the dusk at the boy he had presumed was Justin B. Farman. There are no injuries whatever on his face; they are in fact still on the features of the boy in the hospital. The carrot dangled in order to capture the two men was, of course, Nipper in disguise.

D.I. Morley tells the American, who gives his name as Cyrus Butler, that he is to be charged with the kidnapping of Mr. Thorne, conveying him to a cave at Caistowe Bay and treating him with such brutality that he is still in a nursing home, very ill. He will also be charged with the attempted kidnapping of Justin B. Farman. All five return to St. Frank's where Cyrus Butler prepares and signs a statement. It is a fascinating story he has to tell.

His first amazing statement is that he is, in fact, Justin B's uncle! A revelation which explains why Farman had refused to give any information as to the identity of those who had attempted to make off with him. Farman's father is the brother-in-law of Cyrus Butler and President of the Kingswood, Lawson and Pacific Railroad. Butler runs a real estate office in Long Gulch and a proposed railroad loopline passing through would make Butler a rich man because he owns much of the adjacent property. However, Farman's father decides to relocate the rail loop further south through Red Creek, a move which would ruin Butler. Justin was abducted from the school he attended in Southern California by Butler, his kidnapper anonymously letting Farman Sr. know that his boy would be returned immediately the new loop line was reinstated through Long Gulch. This clever plan failed when a detective agency located the kidnapped boy and freed him. This was the reason Justin B. had become a pupil at St. Frank's.

Mr. Thorne, it appeared, was about to be dismissed from St. Frank's and apparently would be rascal enough to fall in with Butler's plan to kidnap Farman when he arrived at the school. Butler and the Chinaman had arrived in England prior to Farman. But Thorne, offered £100 to administer a harmless drug to the boy and conduct him to Butler, flatly refused to have anything to do with the plot. Although "slack and bad all round" he had a high sense of honour. This interview took place in the cave where Mr. Thorne was found, bound and weak from hunger. Butler had no intention of leaving Thorne more than the following day, hoping he would have changed his mind by then. But he was involved in an accident with a bus and his rented car was damaged to such an extent that the injuries he obtained meant that he was kept in hospital for a week. By the time he got out and returned to the cave, Thorne had disappeared.

His story leaves his hearers feeling some sympathy for him, but D.I. Morley tells him he will have to "make his defence in a criminal court" if only for the unfortunate happening to Thorne. Butler visits his nephew in the hospital and Justin who, despite all, has a genuine regard for his uncle and sympathy for his plight regarding the railroad deal, tells him he will intercede with his father to do his best to get him off lightly.

By the time Nipper returns to the common-room believing that what the Head plans to tell the school in Big Hall will make the form consider him with its former high regard, it is to find that Fullwood and Co. have been adding embellishments to the story of his visit to the King's Arms Inn. He had not only been seen in conversation with a shady bookmaker, but had been drinking whisky and smoking a cigarette at the same time! They, in fact, want to bar him from the common-room. Fullwood says the Head is calling the meeting to publicly expel Nipper.

The Head, of course, does nothing of the kind, but reveals that the attackers of Farman have been arrested and are in Bannington Police Station. The leader has confessed and Farman is no longer in any danger. The Head also stresses the point that Nipper (who is, of course, still referred to by everyone as Bennett) played a huge part in the capture of the

miscreants, leading them into a trap so that a Scotland Yard D.I. could arrest them on the spot. "I have reason to believe," the Head continues, "that he has been shunned and avoided, owing to the false rumours that have been circulated. That injustice must not continue."

And so, in conclusion, as another of our favourite authors would say, "everything was calm and bright."

GEOFF LARDNER

It is with deep regret and sadness that we report the death of Geoff Lardner, of Littledean near Cinderford, Gloucester.

Geoff loved all of the old hobby papers and his knowledge of them all was extremely vast.

Geoff was the Chairman of the Midland Old Boys Book Club, a role that he filled so well. Whenever the club seemed to be flagging a little, he would come up with a new idea and worked hard to think up fresh puzzles and games etc. to keep us on our toes.

Whenever a member presented a quiz of any kind, Geoff would almost always come out with top marks, he seemed to have all the answers at his fingertips.

Geoff would never miss a meeting without a very good reason, and would make the long round trip to Birmingham every month, without fail, from the Forest of Dean.

He was also a very enthusiastic member of the Weston Super Mare OBBC and regularly attended the meetings.

Geoff Lardner had many friends in the hobby and he will be sadly missed, the world of the Old Boys' Book Clubs will be all the poorer for his passing.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow PEARL and all the family in their very sad loss.

BETTY AND JOHNNY HOPTON

THE RELUCTANT DRAGON

by Donald V Campbell

Those of you who know these things will recognise that it was Kenneth Grahame who wrote "The Reluctant Dragon" - it appears in his collection (published 1898) "Dream Days".

I read it and enjoyed it in the forties in that book of books (for me, that is) *The Favourite Wonder Book*. Because I saw a modern version available in the library in Junior Fiction I thought I would have a fresh look at the old story. Interesting to say the least. And much less of a "culture shock" than I thought it might be.

Just as with my original fare the story was isolated from its initial publication format. *Favourite Wonder* gave it a few pages to itself, employed E.B. Thurstan to illustrate it and there it was. *Young Lions* (Collins) - 1972 also gave it the "singleton" treatment but in the form of a small (74pp) paperback. They employed an artist - Peggy Fortnum - and there it is. I think that we often argue to ourselves and others that past was best but is it, was it so? For "The Reluctant Dragon" the answer is: "Yes, the past was excellent, and yes, the present is good too".

The Odhams Annual from 1940s gives us the story "complete": that is, it is a story told within a story. Two "modern-day", ie 1898, children - "Charlotte and I" - see some traces of large footprints in the snow - what can they be? The story teller is asked (he is "the Circus-man") and he recounts to them the charming and amusing story of *The Reluctant Dragon*. The *Young Lions* book picks up the story without the involvement of the modern children; it launches straight into "Long ago - it might have been hundreds of years ago..." The story is, thankfully, unabridged. So, Kenneth Grahame has been well enough served in both situations.

The illustrations are another matter. Thurstan has a quite "sketchy" style, but compared to Peggy Fortnum, he crams his pictures with detail. His drawings are full of



Thurstan



character and humorous - the dragon, when having a beer with the villagers, offers us all a large wink! The crowd scenes are lively and interesting.

The modern book is a different kettle of dragons.

Here we see "sketchiness" brought to a fine art. And fine art it is. Although rather simplistically "cartoonish" the later illustrator creates some joyful and witty images. Despite this sketchiness there is little doubt that the villagers are from mediaeval times.

How close together the two illustrators may be seen at the end, where St George - that well known dragon-slayer and saviour of many a distressed maiden - and the boy, take the dragon arm-in-arm back to his cave to rest. (The dragon has imbibed too much of the local beer.) Both pictures have an instant ability to communicate the end of the story in a most satisfactory manner.

The big disappointment and total anachronism occurs with the rankly BAD cover illustration. It looks rather like another's hand. It depicts a typical seventies lad with



flares, double stitched jeans and a baseball or American football style T-shirt with a "cartoon" genre dragon reading a book with pince-nez on his nose. But, they tell us, it is the cover that puts books into the hands of the young reader these days.

A peep at the publication details gives the answer - Peggy Fortnum's drawings were copyrighted by *The Bodley Head, 1959*. Collins have obviously added the cover for their own marketing purposes nearly twenty years after the original commission. That their purpose serves the contents of the book badly we are supposed to ignore.

Conclusion: How could I ever forget E.B. Thurstan in the *Favourite Wonder Book*? I don't propose to but I enjoyed the re-read in its more modern guise and thoroughly approve of the internal

art-work. Most of all I welcome my discovery of an excellent illustrator (Peggy Fortnum) to add to my list of favourites.

TOM MERRY'S DESPICABLE DOUBLE

by Ray Hopkins

This being, in the pages of the C.D., the year of the *Gem*, it may be appropriate to insert inputs with episodes from this well-loved paper which chronicled Charles Hamilton's first major school. *Gem* readers, who like to think of themselves as St. Jim's Old Boys, here is your opportunity - a brief one, so grab it! - to show *Magnet* supporters that theirs is not necessarily the favourite Quad to wander in.

The following is derived from a famous *Gem* series of April 1914, felicitously repeated (otherwise I would never have encountered it) in May 1937.

The title character is discovered by Gordon Gay and Co. Sitting on a stile smoking and reading a sporting paper. The dissipated look might have told them, and certainly the ill-mannered way he addresses them is a clue, that the smoker is not the sunny-natured and smooth-faced Captain of the Shell. They rag him, tie him up in a flour sack and run off laughing.

ACCUSED OF HIS DOUBLE'S CRIME, TOM MERRY FINDS HIMSELF IN THE SHADOW OF EXPULSION!

TOM MERRY'S DOUBLE!



"If Tom Merry were disgraced and expelled from St. Jim's," said Goring, "I should become a rich man!" "Oh, rot!" said Clevering. "I can't swallow that." "I've got certain information," went on Goring, "and with your help as his double we can work it between us!"

The previous term this look-alike had turned up in Rylcombe just after he had been sacked from school. He had been notorious for his drinking and gambling and St. Jim's had become aware of him when he tried to become friendly with Cousin Ethel. She had responded at first, mistaking him for the real article. Ethel was saved from his unpleasant attentions when the real Tom Merry turned up and licked him. His name is Reggie Clavering and he is back in the Rylcombe area at the behest of a rascally friend of his, the

one, in fact, who caused him to tread the downward path and eventually be expelled for his misdeeds.

Gerald Goring would have been made heir to his father's millionaire partner in South Africa had he not got into disgrace at college. Tom Merry's father, who was killed by the Afghans in India, was a long time friend of the wealthy Mr. Brandreth who has made Tom Merry his heir after Goring's fall from grace, but only if it can be proved that Tom is not disgraced and expelled as he was. In that case, Goring will be reinstated as the rightful heir. This is the point on which the whole plot hinges and Clavering's startling resemblance to Tom Merry, added to the fact that he is unscrupulous and totally dishonourable, is what makes him a necessary ingredient to Goring's plan.

In the first move in the plot to discredit Tom Merry, Clavering goes to the Grammar School, picks an argument with Gordon Gay over the previous day's ragging and, during the ensuing fight, strikes Gay over the head, knocking him out with a concealed weapon. Tom has been successfully decoyed away while this is happening by a fake telegram from his old governess, Miss Fawcett, asking him to meet her in Wayland. The Grammar School Head calls on Dr. Holmes, and Tom Merry, who has no witnesses to back up his story, is told he will be severely flogged and expelled from St. Jim's for the dastardly attack on Gordon Gay. Tom is too dazed to do anything positive and it is Monty Lowther who remembers the incident the previous term involving his double. In a previous scene, Tom himself is mistaken for Clavering by, of all people, the chums of Study No. 6 who see him coming out of the Green Man where he had been searching for his double. Blake and Co. refuse to listen to Tom's cries that he is the real McCoy and throw him in the horse trough. This leads to Tom's getting a very heavy cold, which fact aids him when Dr. Holmes contacts the Grammar School and a witness to the Gay/Merry fight tells him that the boy who bludgeoned Gordon Gay definitely did not have a cold. So the first act in the plot to disgrace Tom Merry fails.

Tom, Blake and Figgins with their three Co's discover Clavering drinking with Goring outside the Feathers, a riverside inn near St. Jim's. Tom asks his double why he is trying to disgrace him and Clavering fobs him off, saying it was just a lark and there was no other reason. He refuses to fight and the three Co's rag him and end up by throwing him off the towpath and into the mud at the river's edge. Clavering, trembling with rage, tells Goring he's ready to do anything to get even with Tom Merry. Goring realises his catspaw is in his hands at last since, after the attack on Gordon Gay, Clavering had refused to do anything against Tom Merry.

During the night, Goring enters the Shell Dormitory, chloroforms Tom and carries him outside. Clavering changes clothes with the insensible boy and goes to the dormitory wearing Tom's pyjamas and Goring drives off to Luxford, 20 miles from St. Jim's, where Tom is imprisoned in a lonely house in the country.

During the ensuing week, Clavering gradually changes Tom Merry's image to that of a smoker, gambler and drinker. He alienates all his friends. Manners and Lowther wonder at Tom's change of nature but, believing that his double has left the neighbourhood after the last ragging, cannot conceive that the descent into blackguardism they are witnessing can be portrayed by anyone other than the real Tom Merry.

Clavering threatens to quit the masquerade unless Goring tells him exactly how much money he will come into upon Tom's final disgrace. When Goring tells him it is £50,000, though it is actually very much more, Clavering, who has been promised £500, demands £5,000 and unless he gets it, he won't go on with the plot.

After Clavering is discovered by Kildare and Mr. Railton drunk in his study, Dr. Holmes plans to flog and expel him the following morning, but overnight has second thoughts about the effect this will have on Miss Fawcett. Clavering, bitterly disappointed that he has been given yet another chance, and dying for his uncomfortable impersonation

to come to an end, decides to commit one last despicable act, one which is repugnant to him but must be done to put him out of his misery. He decides to be branded as a thief and, during a cricket match when the players' clothes are at his mercy in the pavilion, he steals a postal order from Blake's coat and Kangaroo's wallet containing £2. Dr. Holmes decides to expel him that same night and Clavering breathes a sigh of relief.

Meanwhile, Tom, at Luxford, feeling weak from lack of exercise, cannot understand why he hasn't been missed from school and searched for. Puzzlement and desperation causes him to use a chair leg as a club and he manages to knock out the man Goring has employed to take him meals and see he doesn't escape. Tom encounters Goring on his flight from the lonely house but Goring mistakes him for Clavering and asks him what he's doing away from St. Jim's. Tom realises his double has taken his place at St. Jim's and his horrified expression tells Goring that he is facing the real Tom Merry. He eludes Goring's frenzied grasp by striking him across the face with the chair leg.

Tom arrives at St. Jim's by taxi, climbs over the wall and races into Big Hall just as Dr. Holmes is pronouncing sentence of expulsion on Clavering. He proves he is the real Tom Merry by answering questions to which his double does not know the answer. The police haul Clavering off who is incarcerated in a reformatory and Goring, escaping to the Continent, is arrested at Dover and jailed for three years.

In a sequel to the previous events, the millionaire Mr. Brandreth comes to St. Jim's to inform Tom Merry that he is now his heir. But Tom coldly refuses the bequest because he feels insulted by the terms which imply he could turn out to be the same sort of rascal as the other beneficiary. However, he regrets his reception of his father's old friend when it is reported in the newspapers that Mr. Brandreth has, in fact, lost all his money and is being hounded by his creditors. So that he can lie low somewhere in England until he can escape to South Africa, Tom arranges with Brooke, the St. Jim's day-boy who lives nearby, to hide Mr. Brandreth in his rambling old home. Tom and Co. hold a sale of their most treasured possessions and raise £25 for Mr. Brandreth who, touched beyond measure, tells Tom that the report that he had lost all his money was false and he instigated it to test Tom. Tom is furious but relents when the old man tells him his ruse has proved to him that Tom is honourable and true and he asks his forgiveness saying he has seen too much of the seamy side of life to retain much faith in his fellow man. "Let me be your friend as I was your father's friend", implores Mr. Brandreth. Tom Merry accepts Mr. Brandreth's generous offer and becomes his legitimate heir at last.

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FRIARDALE LANE

by Ted Baldock

There is a lane I know so well,
 A shady bosky way,
Upon it I am wont to dwell
 When my thoughts slowly stray.
Much trodden by the monks of old
 From Greyfriars' quiet retreat.
Faint shadows stray there still, I'm told
 In cowls and robes complete.
A man called Quelch, another Prout,
 Are oft seen pacing here
One very lean, the other stout,
 Great friends though, 'tis quite clear.
The ringing of the Greyfriars bell
 When vespers time is nigh,
A world at peace and all is well
 Beneath a Kentish sky.
Rich echoes borne along the lane
 When shadows nightly creep,
For centuries it has been the same
 In this quiet green retreat.
Now, laughing chatter fills the lane
 As fellows hurry on,
And yet the place is much the same
 A thought to dwell upon.
And though the centuries blend and blur
 Here little change is seen
The wind through ancient oaks still stirs,
 Our lane remains supreme.



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BOOK REVIEW

"True Tilda" by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Hodder Children's Books, paperback, 1997, £4.50).

It has always rather irritated me when someone mentions a 'forgotten' book, or play, or film, or whatever, because what is being referred to has often not been 'forgotten' at all, and is perfectly well-remembered by many people, including myself.



But when "True Tilda" was referred to in this manner, when it began its recent BBC TV six-part serialization on Sunday early-evenings, the description was for once justified. This children's novel by distinguished writer and man of letters, Quiller-Couch (often known under his pseudonym 'Q') was certainly published as a book (in 1909), but then apparently disappeared off the face of the earth. It is not mentioned in any books about children's literature, or indeed in writings about 'Q', with the exception of A.L. Rowse's 1988 biography of the author, in which Rowse says: "In 1909 came the delightful 'True Tilda', a favourite with me. Why has this never been made into a film? all fantasy and fun with plenty of visual appeal". Precisely.

But now - and thank goodness - "True Tilda" has been 'rediscovered' for its TV incarnation and for the benefit of modern readers. And it's a delight through-and-through, full of Dickensian characters, descriptions and humour.

Tilda is a tough little 'street-wise' 9-year-old Cockney orphan girl who is a child acrobat and bare-back rider in a travelling circus in the early 1900s. "Tilda who?" she's often asked. "That's what they all arks - I dunno - I'm nobody's child - I'll make up a couple of names to please you" she answers defiantly.

In response to the plea of a dying woman she sets off to find a small boy named Arthur Miles and rescues him from the local hell-hole which is an orphanage, presided over by the evil Rev. Glasson, who dresses entirely in black. The two children set off to find Arthur's family, his destiny, and perhaps his fortunes. There is a long journey, mainly on a canal-boat and on caravans, through the summer lanes and waterways of middle-England (passing

memorably through Stratford-upon-Avon amidst many Shakespearean allusions and quotations) until an exciting climax. On the way, they encounter many wonderful characters who help them along ('and all the time the children were showing them the way').

For me, and doubtless many others, the story is virtually stolen by the Mortimers, husband-and-wife travelling actors, with Mr. Stanislas Mortimer himself often holding centre-stage: "Like all actors he loved applause, but unlike the most of them, he was capable of supplying it when the public failed; and this knack of being his own best audience had lifted him, before now, out of quite a number of Sloughs of Despond and carried him forward singing." 'Q's' descriptions are sometimes reminiscent of Charles Hamilton's: "Like the sunset, Mr. Mortimer's mood was serene and golden".

The whole enchanting story is a joy from start to finish. The book is as good as the TV serial - and vice versa. As Tilda herself might say: "Cor, what a mouthful!" But what a mouthful. Beg, buy or borrow this one - it's a fair treat

ERIC FAYNE: A Tribute from Roger Jenkins

Eric always used to tell me I was his oldest friend. In the sense that I used to see him regularly over a period of nearly fifty years, and having regard to the fact that he had out-lived most of his older friends, I imagine that there was some truth in that flattering remark.

Eric Fayne was not, of course, his real name: it was a pseudonym adopted because he was a headmaster and proprietor of a very successful private day and boarding school in Surbiton, called the Modern School. He was born Ralph Page, and his stepmother, Mrs. Page, was always called Madam at the school, a name which stuck when they both retired to Fleet.

I first met Eric at a London Club meeting held at his school house in Kingston Road. I was a little early and we chatted: I was surprised at his amazing knowledge of Hamiltoniana, and the way in which he could contrast the working of identical themes at the three schools. After the meeting, during which I won a cake baked by Madam (a rare treat in those days of rationing), we all walked to the other school house in Grove Road for the customary cinema show which ended all Surbiton meetings.

Eric's first love was the *Gem*. His sister used to read him blue *Gems* when he was not able to read well, and those were the ones etched in his memory. Early in the 1930s he persuaded the editor to reprint the blue *Gems*, and always succeeded when he asked for issues that had been overlooked. He it was who then asked the editor to persuade the real Martin Clifford to write new stories for the *Gem*, which duly appeared in 1939. It is surprising what a knowledgeable and persistent reader could achieve in those days.

Eric was always very cagey about his age. He would merely tell people that he was an ancient monument, but he was actually 92. Increasing deafness proved a problem at meetings, but I always got him to come with me to the Wokingham meetings, where he would present puzzles to perplex us, and reward our efforts with Schoolboys' Owns. Recently he had suffered much pain from an arthritic hip, but, by a bitter irony, he died from anaemia a few weeks before the hip operation was scheduled.

It would be wrong to end on a note of sadness. Eric led a long and active life in his own home, surrounded by his enormous and unique collection, including complete runs of the *Magnet*, the *Gem*, the *Modern Boy*, *Schoolboys' Owns*, and the *Rookwood Boys' Friends*. Of course, the triumphant 27 years as Editor of the *Collectors' Digest* are the permanent monument to his astonishing qualities, as he took over the magazine from Herbert Leckenby, maintaining its traditions, improving its quality, and putting it on an even keel financially. In addition to all this, he was a talented musician, and he used to compose musicals for his pupils to perform at the end of term at the Modern School. Furthermore, he was always at the piano at the Victoria Palace when the regular Christmas Bunter Shows

were being staged. Eric was the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic proponent of all aspects of Hamiltonia that I have ever been privileged to know. We shall never see his like again.

RECOLLECTIONS ON MY HEADMASTER by Ian Whitmore

My first meeting with my Headmaster, Ralph George Page, was in April 1939. Before I was accepted for admission to The Modern School in Surbiton, Surrey, I had to be presented for inspection by my mother.

As I was just coming up to five at the time I have only hazy memories of the interview. My father had deserted us two years earlier so contact with a father-figure was limited. I do, however, recall Mr. Page as a pleasant and kind man who easily put me at my ease. He was a tall, lean and imposing man with a magnetic personality and, whilst he spoke gently and politely, he was firmly in command of the interview.

I was in some awe of him but I felt perfectly comfortable in his presence, and a week or two later I duly entered the school of some 250 pupils and joined the kindergarten section. A happy time all too soon ended by the outbreak of war, when I was evacuated first to Blackpool and then to my grandparents' home in Oxford.

My mother remarried, and after one or two house moves returned to Surbiton. By 1944 I had attended five other schools, none of which I particularly enjoyed, and I was coming up to the age of secondary education.

A year earlier I had bought, in a second-hand bookshop, a dozen *Magnets*, which needless to say I thoroughly enjoyed, and my enduring memory of The Modern School was Mr. Page, who I thought was the spitting image of Mr. Quelch. I identified with Greyfriars and longed to be one of the boys in the Remove.

Imagine my delight when my mother and stepfather asked if I would like to return to The Modern School. Again I was presented for interview by Mr. Page, who assured me that he remembered me well and would welcome me back.

He set me various tests and expressed surprise that I had already mastered appropriate levels of Maths, French and English Language despite my lack of enthusiasm for my other schools. He said that he proposed to place me in the Remove a year earlier than normal. The significance of the word 'Remove' was lost on me at that time.

My early terms at The Modern School were happy and contented, and I could not believe the comparison with all the other schools I had been to. We had a House system (Goths, Saxons and New House) and I had been placed in the Goth House. Tokens were awarded for academic and sports achievements and these tokens were totted up at the end of each term to establish the 'Cock House'.

We worked hard and played hard, and there was a tremendous sense of loyalty to the school and to the house. We had house matches and school matches involving cricket and football for the boys and rounders and netball for the girls. These were all well supported, and at all times Ralph Page was there cheering and encouraging us.

In the classroom he demanded and got the best out of everyone but he never pushed any of us beyond our capabilities.

In 1946 our tuckshop opened, although, with continuing severe rationing, foodstuffs were limited. However, imagine my astonishment to see pinned by the windows stacks of *Magnets* and *Gems* selling at tuppence each. I very soon added considerably to my small collection.

My joy was unbounded after I plucked up the courage and spoke to Mr. Page about the old papers. I told him that I had earlier acquired some *Magnets* and said how much I enjoyed them. To my astonishment he ushered me into his study and showed me his collection, beautifully bound, and allowed me to browse through this.

He often talked to me about Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and introduced me to Herbert Leckenby and the Collectors' Digest. Several other pupils at the school started collecting and a healthy swap system became established. One of the senior boys dressed as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at the 1946 Fancy Dress Ball - needless to say he won first prize. A photograph duly mounted and framed was sent to Frank Richards which I understand adorned his study wall until the time of his death.

Magnets and *Gems* continued to adorn the tuckshop regularly until I left The Modern School in 1951. I was privileged to have been made School Captain in my last term and to lead the Goths to be Cock House on my last day at school. Like most of my friends there I entered adult life with a good School Certificate and wonderful memories of a unique school and a wonderful Headmaster.

Ralph Page wrote in one of the school magazines about his own headmaster thus: "My Head taught me that boys have individual personalities; that it is good for them to express themselves and develop these personalities; that a school is a place where a boy should laugh and be happy as he works, and not be merely a name, a number, a cog in a machine, or if he is not brilliant, he need not be lost in the backwash of his more brilliant companions. He taught me that a school should be a place of learning for a boy, but more than that - it should be his youth club as well In short, I hope that in years to come my boys will think of me with the same love and gratitude that I have today for my Head." My Head was Ralph Page to his family - to me he will always be 'Sir' - to his friends reading this he was Eric Fayne.

Thank you, Sir, for happy memories - may you for ever rest in peace.

GOODBYE OLD FRIEND by Eric Lawrence

I first met Eric and Madam at a Surbiton OBBC meeting about forty years ago, but it was not until he retired from teaching and they moved to Crookham in 1971 that we began a friendship that developed over the next twenty-six years. They came to some of the OBBC meetings at Greyfriars, Wokingham and Madam would invite us to Excelsior House. The journey took only twenty minutes so we were able to visit quite often.

After Madam's sad death in May 1984 our trips to Crookham became more frequent. Betty and I would pick up Eric once every few weeks, usually on a Monday, and take him for lunch at The Hampshire Arms in Crondall, a village about four miles away, where he would always choose their steak and kidney pie, a home-made dish which was one of his favourite meals. Then we would return to his house where two vases of fresh flowers were always in his lounge.

The next couple of hours were spent chatting on boys' papers, books in general, cricket, films, music and piano playing. He was a great lover of cricket and he knew most of the popular songs written prior to World War Two. The waltzes "Always" and "Because I Love You", both by Irving Berlin, were two of his special favourites.

By about 4.30 on these afternoons Eric would declare that it was time for tea and we knew from experience that his would be of Bunterish proportions. He wheeled in a tea trolley laden with two kinds of cake, mince pies, jam tarts, chocolate biscuits, a large bunch of bananas and there would be two pots of tea. Then we were told: "Now you youngsters have good appetites so I want it all eaten". By the time we returned home we would feel that we had had more than enough food to last us for several days.

From 1984 onwards I cannot remember him missing any of the OBBC meetings at Wokingham except for October 1996 when he was in such pain from a worn-out hip joint that he could not face the short journey. He would bring a puzzle or game along to add to the programme and always enjoyed the afternoon. With his unflinching courtesy he would

send us a letter of thanks which arrived on the Tuesday and always commenced:- "Dear Eric and Bettina". Betty has now adopted this name as a pseudonym for her poetry writing.

We have both lost a very dear friend and will always remember him with love and affection.

A RARE 'GEM' OF A MAN by Brian Doyle

What was the Mystery of the Painted Room? Arthur Augustus D'Arco Solved It—and then Completely Vanished!



This Macdonald illustration is from one of Eric Fayne's favourite series.

produced in the late 50s and early 60s. His knowledge of the old boys' papers was deep and legendary, and the 'History of the Gem and Magnet' (which he wrote with Roger Jenkins), and also his contribution to the Memorial Edition of Frank Richards' 'Autobiography', were fine examples of his writing skills. He was probably the authority on *The Gem*, was an expert on all the writings of Charles Hamilton, and possessor of probably the largest collection of Hamiltoniana in the world.

Everyone knows, of course, that Eric edited and published the 'Collectors' Digest' from the end of 1959 to the beginning of 1987, and did so brilliantly. He kept the 'C.D.' flag flying high and triumphantly (as our Mary does today) and we all admired, and indeed, loved him for it.

In person, Eric was an enthusiastic talker about the old papers and books, putting his own views and opinions firmly, but always being happy to listen to your own. He had a unique, exuberant and emphatic way of speaking, was always cheerful and smiling, usually dressed in colourful and casual clothes, and forever looking far younger than his years. He was, if you like, the eternal schoolboy, a rare 'Gem' of a man, a dear friend who will be sadly missed, but never forgotten.

I first met Eric over 35 years ago and we corresponded spasmodically over the years, and also talked animatedly at London OBBC meetings. The annual meetings (usually in the summer) at Eric's 'Modern School' (of which he was Headmaster) at Surbiton, were always a highlight of the year in the old days, and many photographs were taken on the expansive lawns at the back of his building, showing members and their friends and families, which doubtless many readers may have seen.

I recall that Eric played the piano in the orchestra-pit of London's Victoria Palace, when the 'Billy Bunter' plays were

ERIC by Bill Bradford

I only encountered Eric Fayne after joining the London Club in 1976, so there are others better qualified than I to speak of his outstanding contribution to the hobby and the lives of so many people. I merely wish to pay tribute to a dear friend, who, directly and indirectly, brought much pleasure into my life.

Our first actual meeting was when Thelma and I were invited to tea, one glorious summer afternoon; this in the garden, with Madam providing her usual repast. In later years I have joined Eric and Betty Lawrence in lunching out with him, usually about twice a year. Whereafter we would return to Excelsior House, ultimately to be confronted with a spread worthy of Study No. 5. Woe betide us if we did not scoff it all - "You have got to eat it all, I certainly cannot!"

This past year, while awaiting a hip replacement that was not to be, Eric Fayne often wrote for my advice or opinion, knowing that I had had both hip joints replaced. Latterly he was in great pain and mainly housebound, so I must regard his passing as sad rather than tragic.

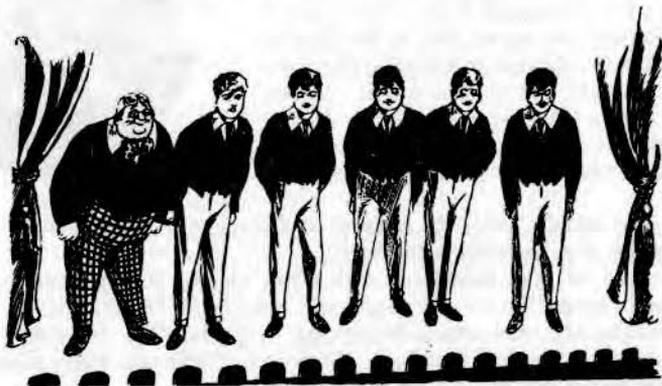
Truly a man of a gentle and caring nature, with a strong character, not easily diverted from the path he chose. Few people are remembered with the love, respect and esteem that we all felt for Eric Fayne.

FOND MEMORIES OF ERIC from Les Rowley

It is in the nature of things that we should grieve for the passing of dear friends and try to find our solace in laughter and memories of long ago.

Better pens than mine will recall visits to Surbiton and Fleet, and the chats about our favourite schools while the delightful lady we all knew as Madam poured the tea and passed the cakes. A purr of condescension would be our reward from the resident cat as we took our leave at the close of a visit.

When I commenced this letter I felt content to leave the tributes to those better versed to write them, and then, idly turning the pages of "Collectors' Digest - The First Fifty Years", I came to page 331. Another old and dear friend, Bob Whiter, had drawn there a head-and-shoulder sketch of Eric. Bob's skill had captured all the happiness and laughter of Eric which we had shared with him for so many years. I am so indebted to Bob for conveying in his draughtsmanship what my own words would not have succeeded in doing. There will be many occasions when I shall return to that picture and rejoice in having both the artist and his subject as my very dear friends.



FLICKERING MEMORIES

by Ernest Holman

The recent Anniversary of our hobby magazine caused me, not surprisingly, to turn back to other items of past days. I found I was thinking of many of those old black and white films of 'those' days. The 'flicks', as they were once called, advanced eventually into the talking era and, I suppose, gradually from 1930 onwards into the war years, one can recall lots of favourites. I am about to recall some - my own preferences, in fact - of those films that I count as my most remembered pleasures.

I shall not attempt any form of chronology, but merely select as I go along. I would say I have two especial favourites and they each featured Ronald Colman. I refer to 'Lost Horizon' and 'Prisoner of Zenda'. Recently, 'Lost Horizon' has been increased in length by the discovery of some lost footage, and in one part, which shows only a still, there is about three minutes' dialogue to be heard. 'Zenda' I shall always remember for its marvellous sword fight between Colman and Fairbanks Junior. Aubrey Smith made an excellent Colonel Sapt and Raymond Massey a most sinister Black Michael.

If, however, I was to select the film I consider to be one of the best that I ever saw, this would be 'Casablanca'. The cast alone was enough to make the mouth water as it included Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Conrad Veidt, Peter Lorre, Sidney Greenstreet, Claude Rains as well as Dooley Wilson's revival of an earlier song, 'As Time Goes By'. If the palm should be handed to anyone for a superb performance, it should go to Claude Rains as the corrupt police official. Filming, it has later transpired, did not make easy going between Bogart and Bergman and there were a few adjustments to meet certain 'eventualities'. Bogart's final line, spoken to Claude Rains as they both disappear into the darkness, was added as an afterthought, following the making of the film!

Other favourite films that spring to mind, without going into details, include the young John Wayne in 'Stage Coach' (with a splendid portrayal of Dallas by Claire Trevor), Irene Dunne, Paul Robeson and Allan Jones in 'Show Boat', Cary Grant in his marvellous comedy performance in 'Arsenic and Old Lace', 'Random Harvest' with Colman and Greer Garson (a happy weepie at the end!), and let us not overlook Charles Laughton as Papa Barrett of Wimpole Street. Coming into the land of fantasy, there must always be the tender memory of fifteen-year-old Judy Garland and 'Over the Rainbow' in 'The Wizard of Oz'. (That is how I shall always wish to remember Judy.) Personally I think Frank Morgan stole the picture as the Pseudo Wizard, with an Hon. Mention to Margaret Hamilton as the school mistress and wicked witch! By no means least comes Disney's wonderful 'Snow White' (true, the last two films mentioned were not b. and w.) with its nine songs. (Can you name them all?)

We must also include under the heading of fantasy, I feel, the epic of 'King Kong' (filmed with the aid of an eighteen inch model!)

The great epic of 'San Francisco' with Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy and Jeanette Macdonald stands almost on its own under the heading of 'spectacular'. The true-life scenes of the earthquake were almost frightening - especially the first time I saw it, on a very enlarged screen at the Stoll Cinema in Kingsway. Gable was badly injured by falling bricks during the production and filming was held up a bit.



So far I have stayed across the Atlantic but British films were ever to the fore. Some great pictures were turned out in the 1930s. I suppose the one that springs to mind firstly would be 'Henry VIII'. Charles Laughton at his best and with well supported cast. The two short comedy scenes with his hairdresser were no small part of the entertainment!

One very great favourite with me is 'Rome Express' with, I should say, pretty nearly every known British cinema name - with Gordon Harker dropping his Cockney role for that of a typically inane British holiday-maker abroad. Conrad Veidt was splendidly evil throughout the film. For laughs, I always welcomed the film versions of the Walls/Lynn farces - I can still remember a frightened Robertson Hare belting down the stairs having seen a ghost in 'Thark'. Still, Will Hay had one of the best in 'Oh, Mr. Porter' - remember Moore Marriott reciting the ghost legend, which ends 'At Midnight is seen' and Will Hay adds 'With his earhole painted green!' Robert Donat's 'Thirty-Nine Steps' was very entertaining, even if it wandered far from the original Buchan story. The war-time romance of Noel Coward's 'Brief Encounter' struck an emotional note and still stands up to present-day viewing very well. (As, in fact, do most of the films mentioned herein.)

Well, merely a list of old films, nothing more. Memorable to me - and, yes, I know there are many that I have not included, so perhaps a reader or two would like to add their own film memories. I would love to read such items. Of course, they will no doubt recall to me many films that I have, in fact, actually forgotten.

Well, film memories do flicker, don't they?

FOOTNOTE

My own memory has done quite a bit of flickering as I tried to remember the nine songs mentioned above in 'Snow White'. Anyway, here they are (in film order): 'Wishing', 'One Song', 'Smile and a Song', 'Whistle While You Work', 'Dig, Dig, Dig', 'Heigh-Ho', 'Dwarf's Washing Song' and their 'Yodelling Song' and, finally, 'Some Day My Prince Will Come'.

'Third Man' songs were: 'Harry Lime Theme' (of course), 'Café Mozart Waltz' and (surprisingly, as it is by no means well-known) 'Under the Linden Trees', played at the end of the film as the girl walks slowly down the long road.

EDITOR'S NOTE: So many of Mr. Holman's choices are my favourites, too!

A ST. JIM'S "SCHOOLBOY" QUIZ

by Peter Mahony

The following titles of stories written for the *Gem* by MARTIN CLIFFORD (no substitute authors included) contain the word "SCHOOLBOY". Identify each character.

	<u>Year</u>
1. The Gipsy Schoolboy	1911
2. The Schoolboy Nihilist	1912
3. Schoolboy and Gentleman Boxer	1913
4. The Schoolboy Hun	1918
5. The Schoolboy Lion-Hunter	1921
6. The Schoolboy "Pug"	1923
7. The Circus Schoolboy	1933
8. The Schoolboy Hypnotist	1935
9. The Stage-Struck Schoolboy	1935
10. The Schoolboy Cracksman	1936

(Answers on page 30)

FORUM

FROM the Revd. D.H. Sweetman:

Through the Collectors' Digest I have purchased a few back numbers of the *Gem* and *Magnet*. It was a thrill to read once again the St. Jim's story 'Under False Colours'.

Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake will for ever be associated with solving great mysteries; their very names are synonymous with 'detection'.

Can anyone shed light on how Arthur Conan Doyle and Hal Meredith came to give these illustrious gentlemen such apt names?

Although I do not smoke a pipe or play the violin, I have often sat, wearing an old dressing gown, and pondered this intriguing question.

From Des O'Leary:

In the April C.D. I particularly enjoyed Donald Campbell's article on 'Secret Gardens' and Bill Lofts' on 'Film Fun'. Brian Doyle on Raffles was first-class, but I would prefer Anthony Valentine on TV to David Niven on film as my favourite portrayal. Valentine had an edge of nastiness which Niven lacked, I thought, and very appropriate too.

From Geoff Kay:

In a recent issue of "C.D." John Hunt wishes to know the complete lines of a verse, half-remembered from 1948-53. This verse was taught to me by my cousin at least 10 years earlier than this, in the late 1930s, and it goes thus:-

There was a little swallow
Flew all the way to Spain,
And when at last he got there,
He flew home again.
But on the homeward journey
He met a great big hawk
Who plucked his feathers, one by one,
And said "Walk, you b, walk!"

I have often reflected that the rhymes, songs, chants, verses etc. of my childhood (and others) were not quite so innocent when viewed as an adult years later. Off-hand I can think of one or two that had meanings in them that we didn't catch on to in our innocence, probably because they originated from much older children or adults. Nursery rhymes are a good example of this, where real events are recalled in a watered-down verse. The Great Plague, or Black Death, of course, is remembered by "Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses".

Wanted: All pre-war Sexton Blake Libraries. All Boys Friend Libraries. All comics/papers etc with stories by W.E. Johns, Leslie Charteris & Enid Blyton. Original artwork from Magnet, Gem, Sexton Blake Library etc. also wanted. I will pay £150.00 for original Magnet cover artwork, £75.00 for original Sexton Blake Library cover artwork. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, WD1 4JL. Tel: 01923 232383.

THE FAMOUS FIVE

- a guide to the characters appearing in Enid Blyton's series -

by

David Rudd

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Updated to include 'Five Have a Puzzling Time'



Revised edition with new appendices

Published by Norman Wright

Prices: UK: £4.10 (including post and packing)

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Rest of world: £4.95 (including post and packing)

Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

This 48-page guide to that other Famous Five (Enid Blyton's, of course) is a revised, well produced and very comprehensive companion to one of that prolific author's most popular series. Norman Wright has added several appendices to David Rudd's main text, and the book's easy to use A to Z format is clear and commendable. It seems that every character of interest is included, as well as sections giving extensive bibliographical details on the books' serialisations, the short stories, the 'spin-off' jigsaw puzzles, and stage, film and TV versions of the Famous Five's adventures.

The exploits of this engaging quintet (George, Dick, Anne, Julian - and Timmy the dog) spanned almost 20 years. Their popularity was - and remains - great: this Guide serves Enid Blyton's Famous Five books well.

THIS GUIDE IS AVAILABLE ONLY FROM NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, HERTS. WD1 4JL

THE EAGLE ANNUAL

by Roger Coombes

In the heyday of its nineteen year run (1950-1969) *Eagle* proclaimed itself as Britain's No. 1 National Strip Cartoon Weekly, which is exactly what it was. Created by Reverend Marcus Morris to entertain and educate young boys in a way that adopted the medium but none of the horror and violence of American comics, *Eagle*, with its companions *Girl*, *Swift* and *Robin*, dominated the market throughout its 'golden years' of the fifties. Everyone had his or her favourite strip adventures - P.C. 49, Luck of the Legion, Jeff Arnold, Storm Nelson and top of the list, the legendary Dan Dare. The strip content, in colour and black and white, occupied on average half of the magazine's length, which varied from 16 to 24 pages if one included the 'funnies' like Harris Tweed and advertising strips such as Tommy Walls and Mr Therm. The remainder of its content consisted of features on sport, science, readers' activities and the Special Investigator (MacDonald Hastings). Unlike its D.C. Thomson and Amalgamated Press rivals, therefore, *Eagle* was never a purely strip format comic, even though that is what it is best remembered for.

It is somewhat surprising, then, that, in conversation with fellow *Eagle* enthusiasts, I often find those who express disappointment with the *Eagle Annual* because of its low strip content. The Annuals continued to be produced far longer than the paper itself, and by the mid-seventies when they ceased publication they were much heavier in strip content, albeit that the stories had no link with any comic, least of all the original *Eagle*. The best remembered annuals are the first nine, those with red covers and green cloth spines and the familiar golden eagle logo emblazoned on the front. All except the first had identical dust-wrappers (although these seldom survived) and it is this common identity which remains so nostalgically in the minds of that generation of readers.

Admittedly, for the annual of a strip cartoon weekly, the number of pages given over to strip stories was very low, generally 42 out of 174, an even lower percentage than in the weekly *Eagle*. At the time, however, this reader never noticed such an anomaly. I accepted the Annual for what it was, a treasure-trove of exciting stories and information that could be dipped into at any given moment over the festive season, such as when my parents were watching the Queen's message in those black and white, single-channel, single television set days. True, it was Dan Dare, still in glorious colour, that I turned to first, followed by Luck of the Legion, curiously in black and white in contrast to the colour of the weekly, followed by the other familiar *Eagle* heroes like Jack o'Lantern and Jeff Arnold. There were also the equivalent of the *Eagle* back page, the biographical stories depicted in strip form of such real-life names as Douglas Bader, Abraham Lincoln and Clive of India. Then there were the Annual 'specials', like Waldorf and Cecil, the nomadic tramp and his well-dressed boy companion, whose humorous adventures were never to be seen in *Eagle* itself, yet year by year became familiar friends in my Christmas reading. There were actually more humorous strips in the Annual than in the weekly *Eagle*, for regulars like the aforementioned pair and Harris Tweed were joined by several single line, three or four frame jokes drawn by well-known names.

The rest of the Annual's contents were a mixture of text stories and articles on science, sport, nature, engineering and hobbies. Those indeed were the headings under which everything was neatly categorised on the contents page, and all were profusely illustrated, mostly in black and white, by the likes of Harry Lindfield, Cecil Orr and scores of other artists, many of whom were regular contributors to *Eagle*. These were the features to which I turned when the holidays began to pall (with the Christmas tree needles sticking in the carpet, the snow turning to slush outside and the reaction to another tea of turkey sandwiches!).

Given my mother's nervousness about anything involving water and fire, I could only look at the plans for making your own jet engine to work your models, but I did put the

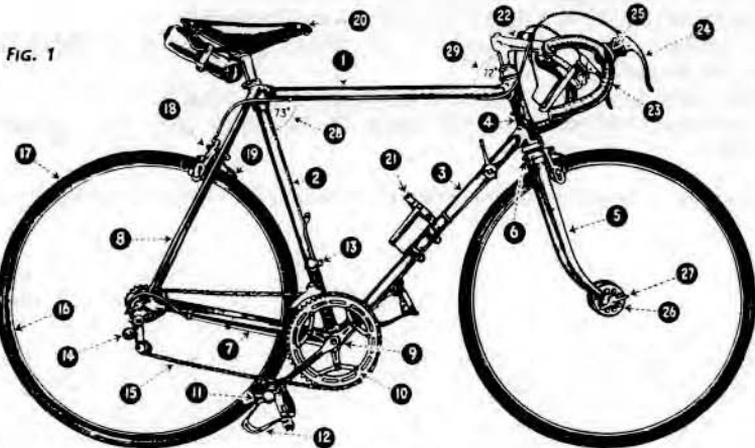
FROM EAGLE ANNUAL No. 5

A rarity - Frank Hampson pictures for a text-story: he did very little work for the Annuals, not even Dan Dare.



As Barnaby scrambled to his feet, the Major shot twice.

From 'How To Look After Your Bicycle'



1. Top tube, 2. Seat tube, 3. Down tube, 4. Head tube, 5. Front fork, 6. Front fork crown, 7. Chainstay, 8. Seatstay, 9. Bottom bracket, 10. Chainwheel, 11. Pedal, 12. Toeclip, 13. Chainwheel derailleur, 14. Rear derailleur, 15. Chain, 16. Rim, 17. Tyre, 18. Brake, 19. Flint catcher, 20. Saddle, 21. Feeding bottle carrier, 22. Handlebar stem, 23. Handlebar, 24. Brake lever, 25. Rubber shock absorber ('climbing rubber'), 26. Hub, 27. Wingnut, 28. Seat tube angle, 29. Head tube angle.

advice on having fun with your tape-recorder (reel to reel, of course) to good use. Also, not being technically-minded, features on how fountain pens and other everyday objects worked fascinated me. All in all, the *Eagle Annual* was an essential ingredient of my Christmases - and its emphasis on textual matter in contrast to the weekly did not worry me, quite the opposite in fact. Although not of the generation which grew up with the story-papers usually celebrated in *Collectors' Digest*, we nevertheless read more novels than today's youth, and enjoyed 'Children's Hour' on the wireless, long before video games and the internet had been thought of. The mix of short stories, articles and strip-cartoons in *Eagle Annual* made the perfect combination for the Christmas holidays. Perhaps that is what Marcus Morris, as Editor, intended.

WANTED: The Hornby Book of Trains, also any Hornby or Meccano literature, badges etc. Bob Bligh, 55 Arundel Avenue, Hazel Grove, Cheshire SK7 5LD.
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ANSWERS TO "SCHOOLBOY" QUIZ

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 'Kit' | 6 Oliver Lynn |
| 2 Ivan Patoff | 7 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy |
| 3 Tom Merry | 8 Horace Barber |
| 4 Paul Laurenz | 9 Monty Lowther |
| 5 Kit Wildrake | 10 Reginald Talbot |

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HENRY IV
PART 2

BILLY BUNTER AS FALSTAFF.

Bunter in unusual garb, as fancifully portrayed by C.H. Chapman
(picture supplied by Bob Whiter).

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by David Jamieson - foreword by Dicky Chipperfield

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