

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.51

No.607

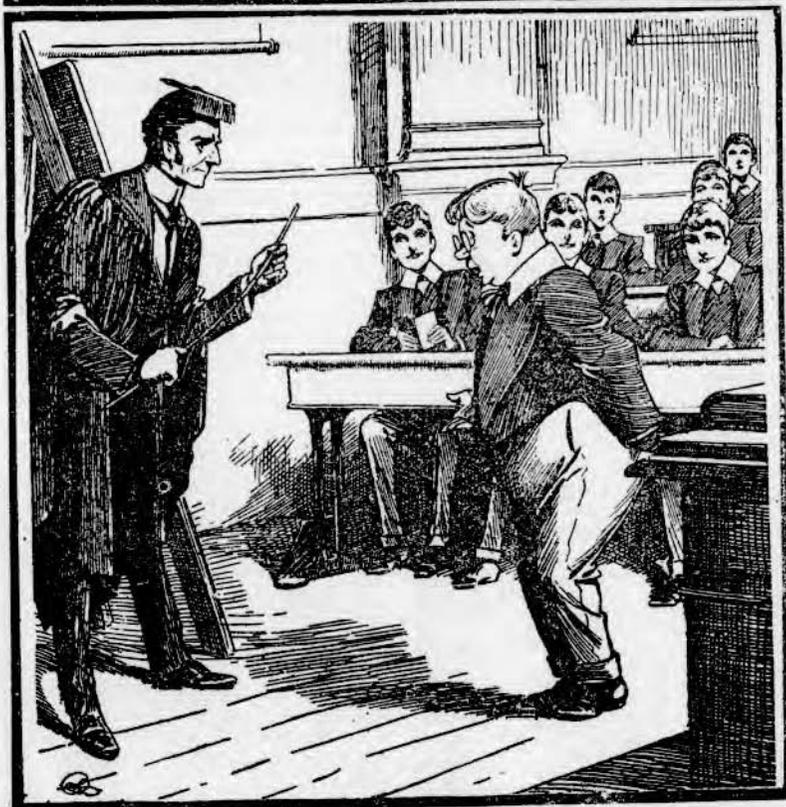
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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Between Friends

SPECIAL DAYS



In April I attended the Just William /Richmal Crompton day at Grantham when I spoke on *WILLIAM - and Some of His Literary Contemporaries*. The event was organised by David Schutte, and everyone present thoroughly enjoyed the talks, quizzes and participation in one of the radio *Just William* plays, produced by Richmal Crompton's niece and namesake, Richmal Ashbee.

June was marked by two authors' days. First the Enid Blyton Centenary gathering arranged by Norman Wright at the Gade Theatre, Rickmansworth - a fine venue for a very happy and well-attended occasion. I felt privileged to be one of the star-studded cast of speakers which included Enid's elder

daughter Gillian Baverstock, her biographer Barbara Stoney, the author of *The Blyton Phenomenon*, Sheila Ray - and several of the actors who have portrayed her characters on stage and on TV.

Next came the first Jennings day, arranged by Darrell Swift and the Northern Old Boys Book Club at Leicester. This meeting had a very special quality because we were able to meet and pay tribute there to a living author - Anthony Buckeridge, who of course is the creator of the famous and resilient Jennings. Speakers included Anthony's wife, Eileen; David Bathurst, the author of *The Jennings Companion*; David Schutte, Anthony Adamson and 'yours truly'. The meeting's high-spot was a Question and Answer Session with Anthony Buckeridge himself.

What a delightful idea these literary days are! Later this year we shall have the W.E. Johns and the Rupert meetings and, of course, the various

Old Boys Book Clubs find something new to say every month about books, authors, story-papers and collecting.

A rich hobby indeed!

ERIC FAYNE: I am receiving many tributes to Eric, some of which appear in this month's C.D. Others will be published later on, and I shall pass all the tributes to Eric's family.

BILL LOFTS: Several of you have written to Bill Lofts c/o my address. At the time of writing this Editorial, he is still in hospital and, I understand, his health is slowly improving. We all send him our loving greetings.

MARY CADOGAN



THEMATIC VARIATIONS by Derek Hinrich

I think anyone would agree that if, in the days of capital punishment, they should have entered into a wager to spend the night in a waxworks exhibition's "Chamber of Horrors", they would have found it a little disconcerting, to say the least, for the effigy of a recently-executed murderer to come to life and assault them. This is the initial arresting premise of Gwyn Evans' *Union Jack* story "The Great Waxworks Mystery" (UJ No. 1143 of September 5th 1925). It was a good idea. So good, in fact, that Evans elaborated it into "The Great Waxworks Crime" (SBL 2/357 of November 1932).

There are differences, of course. In the short story, the vigil is kept by an artist, Anthony Blair, and the waxworks is in the northeastern seaside resort of Normouth, from whence the action presently moves to North Wales. In the novel, it is a young lady reporter, Hazel Somerfield, a protégé of "Splash" Page on the *Daily Radio*, who is prevailed upon to spend the night in a similar establishment in Westbourne-on-Sea on the south coast as a "silly season" stunt, with a similar untoward experience. Both Waxworks are destroyed by fire the same night and the half-strangled victims barely escape with their lives. Sexton Blake is soon interested in these strange events and finds the solution and the dead man's hidden loot which lies at the heart of it all.

Evans was not alone in refurbishing his plots from story to novel. Sometimes the traffic was in the other direction. According to *The Sexton Blake Index* G H Teed, for instance, condensed SBL1/360, "The Case of the Jade Handled Knife", of 1924 into UJ 1172, "The Clue of the Cracked Footprint", of 1926.

I think the palm for recycling must, however, rest with Pierre Quiroule (W W Sayer). According to the *Index*, he revamped at least five of his *Union Jack* stories for the Sexton Blake Library (which in turn he probably de-Blaked for Wright & Brown: he used the name Barnaby Grayle for his Blake character in those books of his which they printed).

He must in particular have had an affection for the plot which formed the basis of "The Clayton Moat Mystery" (UJ/1103 of December 1924). He had first used it as part of SBL2/432 (and, under the title "The Case of the Bismark Memoirs", was reprinted by W Howard Baker as SBL5/28 - the only "Golden Age" Blake reprinted in the Mayflower-Dell series - and also in his *Seventh Sexton Blake Omnibus*).

But that is not the end of it. Dorothy L Sayers arranged for a Sexton Blake story to appear in *The Evening Standard* when she was editing its daily short story. The tale which appeared, and which Jack Adrian included in his superb anthology of "Golden Age" Blake, *Sexton Blake Wins* (Dent 1986) was "Sexton Blake Solves It", in fact an abridgement of "The Clayton Moat Mystery". Thrifty Mr Sayer!



J'ACCUSE . . . EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

by Mark Caldicott

It has taken some time for this thought to grow and take shape, but here it is: I don't like Edward Oswald Handforth.

Let's look at the evidence. One of the better-known series featuring Handforth as the central character concerns the "death" of Walter Church (NLL INS 76-79). Here we find all his usual irritating personality traits on display.

From the opening chapters we can see that Handforth is unable to appreciate a joke, and threatens violence even to his closest friends if they attempt even the friendliest of jibes. We see that he is domineering in his views and in his demands of others. He does not listen to other points of view, however rational, and is willing to use violence to enforce his unilateral opinions and decisions. He has an inflated sense of his own importance. And the following conversation reveals that Handforth lacks both intelligence and self awareness:

[Irene Manners]: "I think it's awfully exciting to have one's fortune told. I expect Zuma will tell me to beware of a dark boy who will cross my path sometime next week."

"He's far more likely to tell you to beware of a big, burly fathead, with a rugged face and a loud voice!" said Church solemnly.

Handforth stared.

"Why should he tell Irene to beware of a chap like that?" he asked, without in the least realising that his own description had been given. "There aren't any fellows like that about here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the giddy joke?" demanded Handforth, tartly.

As Church succumbs to his "illness", he is difficult to wake. McClure has to prevent Handforth from plunging a cold, wet sponge into Church's face with witless cruelty. As Handforth sets out to cure Church, we are told that he, Handforth, has a kind heart and has

the best of intentions. However, these good intentions take the form of borrowing money from Archie Glenhome which is then wasted on the purchase of a totally excessive number of pills and medicines which are forced down the throat of the now severely-weakened Church with the result that his condition is exacerbated by biliousness.

Handforth has the clue to Church's illness, and his potential cure, but he does not recognise its importance, and only Nelson Lee's careful questioning reveals Handforth's knowledge.

When Church is incarcerated in the sanatorium, Dr Brett quite correctly feels that he should be allowed quiet and has locked the door. Any reasonable friend would recognise the locked door as a precaution, but not Handforth.

Handforth had apparently forgotten that a patient desires quietness and peace. He brought his fist down on the door panels with thumping force. He was indignant because the door was closed, and he was intent upon letting the sanatorium staff know that he was seeking admittance.

"Better go easy, old man," said McClure. "All this noise, you know"

The door suddenly opened and Dr. Brett stood there.

"What is all this?" he asked sharply. "Handforth, are you responsible for this disgraceful hammering?"

"We want to come in, sir," said Handforth. "We want to see Church"

"If you have any consideration whatever for Church, you will moderate your conduct!", interrupted the medical man curtly. "I am surprised at you, Handforth. You know well enough Church is ill, and yet you come here thumping on the door in the most reckless fashion. There are other patients in the sanatorium, too, and the noise is most disturbing."

Handforth stared at the doctor with sudden realisation.

"Oh, I say!" he blurted out. "I'm awfully sorry, Dr. Brett! I - I'd forgotten for the moment!"

Handforth's behaviour soon becomes obsessive. He gets one of his stubborn notions that Church is not dead. This is true, of course, but what reason other than his propensity for leaping to ill-considered conclusions, and sticking to his own opinion in the face of any rational argument, can be given for his view? Are we supposed to believe he was telepathic, or possessed some kind of psychic link with his close friend? If so then why was there no previous evidence of his sensitivity to the thoughts of his friends? No, the truth is he would have behaved in exactly the same way if Church had actually been dead.

Things get worse. If Handforth had been a reasonable person then Nelson Lee would have been able to confide in him the fact that Church was alive. It was necessary to keep this fact a secret to prevent further attempts on Church's life by his mysterious assailants. But, of course, Nelson Lee could not tell Handforth because Handforth did not have sufficient wits or self-control to keep a confidence. So Lee finds himself having to dissemble in his dealings with Handforth - and this winds Handforth up into new heights of stupidity. His behaviour on the day of Church's supposed funeral when he forgets to act in mourning is deeply upsetting to, and shows a disregard for the feeling of, the others of St Frank's who believe that Church is dead. Time and again he acts against all advice he is given in his attempts to go against Nelson Lee's wishes, and, although it is portrayed by ESB as a kind of loyal kind-hearted crusade on behalf of his friend, it is, in the cold light of day, just a further manifestation of Handforth's manic and pathological obsessiveness.

All right, so in the end he has a bit of good luck and saves Church's life. But with such irrational behaviour this can only be regarded as luck. The whole thing is pretty irritating.

That's it, I've said it. I feel better now.

It has been a suppressed feeling, and I think I know why. It is because I knew I was supposed to like Handforth because Brooks himself so obviously had a soft spot for his creation. Brooks named him after his eldest brother Edward Oswald Brooks, and it is clear from letters ESB wrote to his brother that he was always anxious to gain Edward Oswald's approval. After a period managing a cinema, Edward Oswald had gone to America to work in the film industry, and was obviously therefore ideally-placed to be the idol of the younger brother Edwy, who had ambitions to write for the cinema. In the event, these ambitions fizzled out, and it is easy to imagine that when ESB created his cast of characters for *St Frank's*, he would have wanted his brother to see that his name had been attached to one of the author's most cherished characters.

Okay, I'm not really being all that serious. I thoroughly enjoyed the "death" of Walter Church series, and recognise that the plot only works if Handforth, as a comic character, exaggerated and overdrawn as he is, is allowed to act in this way.

However, Brooks himself admits that over-promotion of Handforth as a central comic character by Alfred Edgar when Edgar took over as editor of the Nelson Lee Library in the mid-twenties caused readers to become tired of the character. As a result of this the Library began its slow downward slide into obscurity.

Interestingly, Edgar was trying to sell Handforth as a comic character to challenge the success of Billy Bunter in the Magnet. But Billy Bunter is an entirely different kind of comic character. He is not as well-meaning as Handforth, of course, and the road to Bunter's hell is certainly not paved with good intentions. But we are allowed to dislike Bunter as intensely as we like without Frank Richards telling us every two minutes what a jolly decent fellow he is, and (perhaps this is the crux of it) we are allowed the catharsis of our ill-feeling when Bunter gets his come-uppance. Most of all I am allowed to dislike Bunter without that feeling of guilt I get for feeling so irritated by one of ESB's most cherished creations.



PETER PAYNE - THE "AGONY" DETECTIVE

by Bill Lofts

Like most comic paper detectives, Peter Payne's personal details are very scanty. Living in London, he was a striking man, easily his most striking feature being his raven-black hair. It was marred however by a vivid white streak in the front brought on, it is said, by the extreme shock and horrible experiences he endured on numerous cases. He was also nicknamed, for obvious reasons, "Agony Pain".

He first appeared in the opening numbers of *Cheerful Comic* in 1928 and the stories could easily have been a reprint of any earlier serial in *The Monster Comic*. It has been proved that the comic-strips were. The serial was entitled "The House of a Hundred Horrors" and it certainly lived up to its name.



The series was in fact by two writers. "Arthur Gwyn" (real name Gwyn Evans - a top Sexton Blake writer) and "Henry Valentine" (actually R. Heber Poole whom I suspect was the editor). *Cheerful Comic* was one of a group of comics that ran for only 28 issues (in the British Library collection) though there is proof of a

longer run as number 50 has turned up.

Another interesting fact is that the publisher was Charles Arthur Ransome, who was once traced as being the first known Old Boys Book Collector. He once in pre-war days met Derek Adley's father, who was a chief accountant at George Newnes, to discuss the possibility of using their presses for some future project. Ransome died at Wimbledon in 1939 leaving not only a house full of books, but also a fortune in the millionaire category. There was certainly a fortune to be made in the selling and publication of cheap comics in pre-war days!

A ST. JIM'S "BOYS AND MEN" QUIZ

by Peter Mahony

All these titles are *Gem* stories written by the authentic MARTIN CLIFFORD. Identify each character.

		Year
1.	The Man from the Front.	1916
2.	The Man from Angel Alley.	1931
3.	The Boy Who Couldn't Be Sacked	1934
4.	The Boy Who Defied his Form	1935
5.	The Mystery Man of St. Jim's	1935
6.	The Boy with Big Ideas	1936
7.	The Boy from the East	1936
8.	The Boy They Betrayed	1937
9.	The Boy from South Africa	1938
10.	The Boy Who Betrayed Himself	1938
11.	The Boy Who Knew Everything	1936
12.	The Boy from New Zealand	1939
13.	The Man in the Mask	1939
14.	The Man in the Night	1939
15.	The Man from Brazil	1939

(Answers on page 23)

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MABEL LYNN'S BROTHER - A THIEF!

by Ray Hopkins

The Archer-Shee case, famously used as the idea behind Terence Rattigan's "The Winslow Boy", raises its unhappy head again in the Cliff House saga. It had already been used with a Greyfriars background in *Magnets* 173/4 (1911), reprinted in the 1920 *Holiday Annual*, involving Bob Cherry and a crooked new boy named Heath. In *The School Friend* 171/3 (1928), this dramatic series hails from the days when L.E. Ransome was chronicling the doings of the Cliff House Fourth Formers in tandem, we are told, with Reg Kirkham. The latter has a way with witty repartee as well as a tendency to have his characters, when in conversations with sisters or close friends, insert the word "dear" (often sardonically). The following is from "Their Caravan Holiday" (SF 137, 22 Oct 1927), in which Kirkham writes under the name of Joan Vincent:

"I'm going to be the umpire, for a start," said Hilda. "You would be," said Agatha. "You always accuse me of being lazy but I expect it means you sit down." "It's marvellous how your jealous mind always lights on the truth, dear," said Hilda sweetly.

I missed this sort of badinage in the Mabel Lynn series, and suspect that this is probably by L.E. Ransome. Another clue is that Jemima Carstairs has an important role in the dénouement, Jemima being one of Ransome's most famous creations.

Bob Lynn, brother of Cliff House's Mabel, under sentence of expulsion at his school, runs away with the intention of going to sea to escape the disgrace. A money order for ten pounds had been stolen; the recipient's name had been forged and the money order cashed at the post office by a schoolboy with a bad cold. Bob was identified as the illegal casher because he was the only one with a cold at the time of the investigation. More positive proof that he was the thief is that he is fag to the money order's owner and that a firm from whom he had impulsively ordered a tennis racket had received three pounds from him. His letter to them had contained only ten shillings on account when it left his hands! Bob tells his sister he's pretty sure the culprit is the only boy who knew about the racket and who, in fact, had insisted on loaning him the ten bob to send to the suppliers. The only problem is that the other boy had been due to change schools and in fact has transferred to his new school, which is Lanchester College near Cliff House. His name is Gerald Stone ... at which point Mabel is convinced that this Stone is indeed the guilty one, for his sister Helen, also in the Fourth Form at Cliff House, had intercepted a letter of Mabel's which in fact was the one in which Bob had informed her he was running away to sea! Mabel thinks Helen had hoped to get some information from the letter as to whether he suspected her brother Gerald. But Helen wanted it for a more sinister purpose. The letter is non-committal, however, but did say that Bob would contact his sister before leaving England.

Mabel convinces her brother that she is sure she will be able to do something about establishing his innocence. This will mean her choking back her fury and pretending to be cordial towards Helen in order to take the promised food to Bob at the Old Priory. Mabel has no intention of going to the dance with Gerald, but she has to pretend she will when Helen discovers her checking on the window by which she plans to leave the school. She carries on the pretence by laughing with Helen over which dresses they will wear to the dance, and they are overheard by Barbara who determines that Mabel will not leave the dormitory that night.

When Mabel and Helen tiptoe to the dormitory door after dark they find it locked and the key removed. Both girls return to their beds, but Mabel, after a long wait and assuring herself that the form is now all fast asleep, dresses and climbs out of the dormitory window on to the sill. She feels her way in the dark to the next sill, which is one of the Fifth Form dormitory windows. Then out in the passage and down the stairs, retrieving Bob's parcel

of food which she had hidden in the grounds, she climbs over the wall and races madly to the Old Priory.

Mabel is so much later than she promised that Bob has become unnerved. He is desperately thinking of running away and not waiting for her any longer when the sound of a motorcycle engine startles him and he hides in the bushes. But the headlights show up his white face and the rider, startled in his turn, accidentally swerves and smashes the cycle into a tree. He is knocked out by the machine, and Bob is horrified to find that the rider is Gerald Stone.

Gerald is taken to a doctor in Friardale by a passing motorist, saying he will return for Mabel, who has also arrived in time to witness the accident, to take her home. Gerald is finally taken to the Sanatorium at Lanchester where he bluffs everyone into thinking that he has lost his memory. While there, he copies Bob's handwriting from an earlier letter stolen by his sister Helen so that he can write a letter of confession, allegedly from Bob. He has also been writing out Mabel's address at Cliff House for the envelope but is interrupted by

the matron. The paper falls to the floor where it is noticed by Mabel when she visits him. Realising what it is and how it will incriminate Gerald, she manages to pick it up unseen. His handwriting towards the end more and more resembles Bob's own handwriting.

Mabel tells Bob she believes that Gerald was intending to write to her, pretending to be her brother, and confessing that he had stolen the money order and cashed it. She is confident now that she will be able to trap Gerald into confessing.

By the time Mabel and Co. visit Lanchester for a return tennis bout a newspaper report has been circulated of Bob



The stranger glanced at Mabel Lynn. "This is the girl who was with the youth at the time of the accident," he said. "I presume she had been riding on the pillion." There was a breathless hush, while every eye was upon Mabel.

Lynn's running away, together with a photo of him as the alleged thief. Their feelings softened towards Gerald because of his accident and loss of memory, Barbara, Marjorie Hazeldene and Jemima Carstairs, together with Mabel, pay a call on Helen's brother with a bunch of flowers. Jemima asks the invalid if he would like to see Bessie Bunter as well and Barbara, remembering Gerald's scathing comment on Bessie at Cliff House, notes the flash of dislike that crosses his face. Mabel also observes it and realises this is further proof that there is nothing wrong with Gerald's memory.

There is a shock for Mabel when a policeman arrives, together with the man who had driven Gerald to the doctor after the crash. The latter immediately recognises Mabel as the girl he had seen at the scene of the accident. This surprises all others present, none more so than Gerald who had not realised that Mabel was anywhere near but knows that it was her brother whose face he had seen peering through the bushes. Mabel throws Gerald a glance of triumph. He may suspect that contacting her brother was the reason Mabel was in the vicinity but cannot say so without revealing that his loss of memory is only assumed.

The policeman questions Mabel and presumes that, as she was not on the motorcycle herself, it must have been the sudden sight of her at the roadside that caused Gerald to skid and hit the tree. Miss Matthews, the Fourth Form mistress, who has accompanied the girls to Lanchester College, reports all the foregoing to Miss Primrose upon their return to Cliff House. Mabel feels that nothing can save her from expulsion now: out of bounds with the intention of attending a forbidden dance with a boy - Miss Primrose cannot possibly forgive her these transgressions.

But Jemima, renowned as the astute solver of puzzles, who has been listening carefully to all the evidence and studying the facial expressions of both Mabel and Gerald, has thought of a possible explanation for Mabel's appearance at the scene of the accident. She and Barbara leave the school for the Old Priory to see if her guess is the correct one.

Miss Primrose, because of Mabel's previous exemplary record, feels she cannot expel Mabel outright, but her punishment is severe. She must be sent home for a period thus giving up the delights of the summer term. She must miss the cricket festival, the regatta and the tennis tournaments but will be allowed to return in time for the examinations. To this end she must study hard at home and post weekly records of the work accomplished to the school. Her father will be instructed to see that Mabel must not regard this as a holiday. All Mabel can think of is the disgrace and heartbreak it will bring to her parents, and the fact that she will no longer be able to help Bob by keeping him fed and hidden at the Old Priory.

But Bob Lynn, hearing from Barbara and Jemima that Mabel is bound to be expelled for breaking bounds on his account, comes to the school and informs Miss Primrose of Mabel's true movements. On his way out he just has time to tell Barbara he is off to Lanchester to pummel Gerald. Only just evading the policeman who has arrived to arrest him, Bob makes his getaway on the policemen's bicycle, hotly pursued by Mabel who has learned from Barbara where her brother is heading.

Arrived at Lanchester's Sanatorium, Bob finds his own Headmaster at Gerald's bedside. The shock of seeing Bob makes Gerald forget his loss of memory act. The Head accuses him of playing a trick but Gerald counters this by opening his suitcase and showing a sheet of paper on which Bob's apparent writing gradually slides into that of the boy whose postal order was stolen.

Gerald states that he pretended memory loss in order to shield Bob's sister. Mabel, arriving at the juncture and saying he wasn't shielding her but himself, pulls open Gerald's suitcase before he can stop her and shows them the letter Helen had stolen so that Gerald could copy her brother's writing. She also pulls out the sheet she had previously removed from Gerald's bedside. A perusal of the watermark reveals it to be the same as the other papers in Gerald's suitcase.

"It was Helen's idea ... Helen made me do it!" cries her despicable brother. The Head tells Mabel, "You are a very brave and wise girl," and informs Bob, "It is she who has saved you from disgrace."

Later, reunited with her chums, Mabel is congratulated by them on her superfine acting which she had carried on throughout her long ordeal and which led them to believe she liked Gerald as a friend. Her punishment has been minimised by Miss Primrose to a mere two hundred lines; Gerald is to be expelled from Lanchester and Bob is to be reinstated at his old school. But ... had Jemima and Barbara not gone to Bob and explained to him that Mabel would be expelled, things might have ended very differently.

BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle

"The Luck Stone" by P.G. Wodehouse (writing as "Basil Windham"). *Galahad Books, London, 1997.* (Introduction by Tony Ring). Limited Edition of 250 copies at £40.00 each. (Obtainable through Nigel Williams Rare Books, 22 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road, London WC2N 4HE).

The publication of 'The Luck Stone' is something of a literary event. It is the first appearance in book-form of a major (formative and fascinating, anyway) work by the late and great P.G. Wodehouse. It originally ran as a full-length serial in the famous and long-running boys' magazine *Chums* in 19 instalments in 1908-09, and was credited to "Basil Windham" (which hid the identity of Wodehouse, with a small 'assist', as PGW later put it, from his friend and fellow-writer, W. Townend).

It was one of the first stories written by Wodehouse and he was only 27 at the time. It came soon after he had finished one of the greatest school stories ever written: 'Mike'. For some inexplicable reason it was never reprinted between hard-covers and this is its very first appearance since it first saw the light of day in the pages of *Chums* nearly 90 years ago.

Also running in that classic *Chums* volume, by the way, were at least two other superb boys' adventure serials: S. Walkey's memorable pirate yarn 'Yo-ho for the Spanish Main' (almost in the 'Treasure Island' class) and Frank Shaw's remarkable 'The Secret of the Sargasso Sea'. Both surely well worthy of reprinting too

So what exactly is 'The Luck Stone' and was it worth all the time, trouble and expense (after all, £40.00 is quite a sum to pay for a book of 257 pages)?

It was P.G. Wodehouse's only story for *Chums*, though he wrote many yarns for its rival *The Captain* (including 'Mike' in serial-form), despite the fact that he had been an avid reader of the magazine in his own youth. *Chums* wanted a blood-and-thunder serial - and the young Wodehouse gave it to them, at full-throttle and no-holds-barred. As Richard Osborne said in his excellent book 'Wodehouse at Work' (1961): "... he had read acres of catch-penny fiction, had enjoyed it all, and knew all the tricks of it. 'The Luck Stone' shows that he could imitate it too, at the rustle of a cheque." And, as Barry Phelps said in his recent biography of PGW: "Read it and enjoy the free-flowing prose of an apprentice genius at work."

Wodehouse himself later described it as: "A school story full of kidnappings, attempted murders, etc. and rather a lurid plot" He wrote it in two months (May-June, 1906).

The story is what might have been summed up in later years as being in the 'Bulldog Drummond' tradition, with plenty of action and skullduggery, allied to farcical school scenes. It is a school-and-mystery adventure tale about a mysterious stranger from India, a priceless talisman stone, an odd new master, sundry crooks, lots of assorted schoolboys (including one, Ram, who bears a striking resemblance - speech-wise at any rate - to Greyfriars' Hurree Jamset Ram Singh) and is largely set at Marleigh School.

The schoolboy hero is one Jimmy Stewart, whose father is Colonel Stewart of the Indian Army, but he's been away shooting big-game in Africa for several months when the story begins. Young Jimmy is given the Luck Stone for safe-keeping and takes it back to school with him. It's quite an object, apparently, also being called 'The Tear of Heaven', "for it is as blue as the skies and misty as a tear", and on it are the words 'Allah is God'. £30,000 is mentioned as its value at one point, and a cool quarter-million at another - either way, a considerable fortune back in 1908 and equivalent to many millions at today's prices. "The Sacred Stone itself" breathes new housemaster at Marleigh, Mr Spinder, in some excitement when he spots it. Spinder just happens to be a leading authority on Indian life, lore and valuable stones, and may well have private plans to become a Big Spinder

Not unnaturally, more than one avaricious gent is anxious to get his hands on this rolling stone but it doesn't get much of a chance to gather any moss as it rapidly passes from one hand to another as the plot thickens. There is much creeping about at night after 'lights out' in the school, but I haven't the space to go into many plot details.

To off-set the many (too many?) frankly slap-stick interludes in the classroom (mainly featuring a German master whose English isn't, to put it mildly, any too fluent) there is a murder and an exciting climactic car-chase in which all the villains perish.

"Hullo!" says Colonel Stewart at one point. "Revolvers! This won't do." Indeed it won't - not at an English public school. There is a limit, you know. Later the Colonel "looks stern and his face sets". The villains' car has crashed; after inspecting the damage, he says: "The car is smashed to pieces - they must have been travelling at 35 miles an hour! The villains are all dead - it's not a fit sight for you." The Colonel later says to his son: "It has given me a shock - it is a horrible sight." (And this from a man who has just spent nine months hunting and killing animals in Africa.)

The local village policeman is informed of the crimes and the carnage. "You can leave the matter in my 'ands, sir," he says deferentially to the Colonel, adding as an afterthought: "You'll leave your card, sir?" Later, the Colonel's eyes "flash with approval". "Jimmy," he says to his son, "you're a brick." "Thanks awfully, father" mutters Jimmy, and blushes to the rots of his hair.

Wodehouse's writing is not quite as smooth and witty as it was later to become, but his style is as readable as ever, and the story rushes you along with it.

Two criticisms of this new edition, one large, one small. It reproduces seven of the many illustrations done by Gordon Browne for the original serial in *Chums*. But though Browne (apart from being the talented son of the famous Hablot Knight Brown ('Phiz') the original illustrator of several Dickens novels) was one of the most distinguished and prolific artists of his time, he receives no credit whatsoever in this book. A curious and regrettable omission. And, surely, this reprint, expensive as it is, could have run to a dust-wrapper to protect its excellent and attractive red cloth binding

'The Luck Stone' is a rare treat and every page has at least two or three joyous 'Wodehousisms' to savour and re-read. This is a publishing landmark in its way. After all, it's not often you get a 'new' Wodehouse book these days

All credit to Galahad Books for making the whole thing possible. Readers everywhere will surely be, as PGW might have said, decidedly grunted

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.

Part 6 Iniquity - and Chivalry



Aficionados of the cult *Star Trek* series will recall one episode in which two halves of an entity became separated and pursued each other in endless battle through space. This carried the split personality theme to an extreme, yet undeniably the condition exists in varying degrees, albeit still contained within one single human frame, in us all, and the entire moral wellbeing of society depends on the ability to control the dark side of human nature. The Bounder had much darkness in his nature and, it seems, little in his early

upbringing to teach him to control the darkness that consumed him whenever he was denied the desire of the moment. He was fifteen before Greyfriars endeavoured to instil in him a code of living that would take him into the adult world with the realisation that he was but one of myriads of human beings who were all in pursuit of their share of the oyster. Fifteen was a difficult age to begin this lesson, hence the many battles he faced - and fought. And yet he fascinated, in spite of his black moods, foul temper and evil ways, to the extent of inspiring admiration, even devotion, as the dark side gradually yielded to the more decent part of his personality.

But there were to be many relapses. One came after the Bounder played badly at cricket, was dropped from the side and replaced by Redwing. This was the first time Redwing had seen the really evil side of the friend whose life he had saved and who had responded with a friendship, loyalty and generosity few would have ever have suspected in the Bounder. Redwing was shocked, and the Bounder's snarling attack on Harry Wharton resulted in Harry inflicting six of the best and then locking the Bounder in the box-room until his temper cooled. Wharton was concerned. He had not forgotten the time when the Bounder was his bitterest foe, but Smithy seemed unnaturally calm when released, which worried Wharton even more. Skinner and Co. decided the Bounder had gone soft, but he was plotting a most despicable trick on the boy who was his only real friend in the Remove. He left Tom stranded at Ashford station and then went on to play in the match and become hero of the day. He knows there will be a price to pay on the return to school but what the price will be he has yet to discover. In the study he shares with Tom things are missing, the small personal belongings and books of Tom's have gone; Tom has removed himself to No. 3 study. The friendship is over. The Remove does not know and Tom is telling no tales. The Bounder pretends to be in high spirits the rest of the day, until night, and he wonders if Skinner was nearer the mark after all. Now he knew at last just what he'd lost as he lay sleepless with remorse and regret.

Redwing refuses to heal the friendship and the Remove exacts a tough price. The old hatred of Wharton begins to return and the Bounder starts a rival team. This leads to a row between Smithy and Nugent, which comes to blows. Nugent starts it, but he is no match for the Bounder. Pride takes over and Nugent refuses to give in when Wharton arrives and announces that it is his scrap. The scene which follows is an excellent lesson for would-be writers in how to make characterisation dictate plot. The Bounder does not really want to punish Nugent. He begins to hold back, defending only, and bringing down a certain amount of derision on his efforts. Nugent is too proud to step back and allow Wharton to take over because of the inference that he is unable to take care of himself. The most cruel but perceptive observations come from Skinner when he says: "Look at Wharton. He'd rather be getting all those jolly old thumps himself ... he winces every time you hit Nugent! It's entertaining to watch his face."

"Is it?" said the Bounder.

"Oh, no end," said Skinner. "I fancy he'd give a term's pocket money to take Nugent's place, if the obstinate ass would let him."

"Something like a pal," said the Bounder, who then goes on to reflect he had no-one now who would stand by him in a tight corner.

In this quite short scene the characters of the participants and the nature of their conflicts are accurately and skilfully drawn, as well as sheer schoolboy savagery.

The mini-massacre of Nugent is broken up by Wingate who dishes out lines and a reprimand to Wharton for not stopping the row, and six to each of the culprits. Then the Bounder suddenly claims that he started it all and suggests that Wingate inflict the second six on him instead of Nugent. Wingate, who after one glance at the state of Nugent, certainly doesn't want to add to Nugent's anguish, stalks out. Smithy's iniquity has twisted into a strange chivalry.

He had once set up a club for those inclined to indulge in forbidden pleasures. Perhaps it was as well that it didn't survive for long once he got bored with it. Like so many of his darker deeds and the emergence of the good deeds, of which he was still rather ashamed, it had been simply another manifestation of his need to shock and show off, and in that lay the true cause of much of his appalling behaviour. For Smithy was discovering that much of what is good in life can't be bought and that giving of oneself brings its own reward. Smithy in secret wanted affection and trust as well as admiration. Few people can progress through life without the unselfish love of at least one person who can be trusted and confided in and who will share the bad times as well as the good. Smithy's father was undoubtedly very fond of his son but a power parent of his nature could never cross the generation barrier to become a confidant. Tom Redwing came the nearest to the friend Smithy needed but he too was independent, stubborn and proud, while Smithy's pride, egoism and arrogance threw up a barrier that few possessed the patience, the courage, or the insight ever to attempt to breach.

One such could have been Wharton. From the early days, after Smithy had been shown, as far as it were possible! the error of his ways, there had been a guarded acquaintanceship, not exactly friendship, merely recognition, that veiled the spark that might have flared into closer friendship. But only dire emergencies got through the guard, as when Smithy was believed drowned and was rescued by Tom Redwing. When Smithy is brought back to the school Wharton is unable to hide his shock and emotion, while Smithy, acutely perceptive as ever despite being half drowned, looks at Harry's white quivering face and his own softens as he murmurs: "Wharton, old chap, I - I didn't think you'd care much about it."

But those two were too much alike in temperament, while Wharton was already close and safe in his friendship with the chums and the Bounder had too many battles to fight, against the effects of his upbringing and inherited traits and the less salubrious influences he met at the school and nearby. Wharton was terrified of showing emotion, and, while the Bounder was usually quite prepared to apologise if he'd been in the wrong, both boys lacked trust in one another and dreaded a rebuff. Smithy's jealousy of Wharton's power and standing in the Remove was another formidable obstacle to a closer friendship while Wharton was possessed of an over florid imagination that could turn a small suspicion into a frantic dread that drove out all sense of logic. Wharton could also be extremely surly. Witness the case of the bicycle auction.

Cause: Bunter, abetted by Skinner, borrowed Wharton's bike. Wharton promptly borrowed Skinner's, ran into Ponsonby and the Highcliffe hooligans and was ragged. The rag included the bike, which wasn't much good afterwards. Wharton is only saved from a four to one beating by the arrival of the Bounder and Redwing, who were quite happy to get a few in on the Highcliffe rotters. Skinner is now landed with a repair bill and demands that Wharton foot it. Concurrent with this event is the news of Colonel Wharton's financial difficulties, and a visit from him, during which he loses part of a letter in No. 1 study. This letter contains a very upsetting reference to a man's worthless and selfish nephew.

Thousands of astute readers, having picked up the clue planted in the earlier scene, know instantly that it is some other nephew, but Harry is convinced it is himself and without heed to the efforts of his chums to persuade him he is wrong announces that he is never going back to Wharton Lodge, will never inflict his selfish worthless self on his uncle, and that he'll enter for a scholarship for Greyfriars.

Meanwhile, there is the bill for the cycle repair and Harry is broke. He has also had another row with the Bounder. However, the Bounder realises that something is very wrong. When the chums organise an auction for Harry's own bike to raise the money for the repairs to Skinner's bike, the Bounder and Mauly, who has already tried in his diffident way to offer help to Harry only to be snubbed for his pains, bid against each other until the Bounder wins with a bid of eighteen pounds, more than the bike is worth.

But Wharton is furious when he finds out. He storms along to the Bounder's study and practically throws the money back at him accompanied by some suitably surly comments. The Bounder is naturally upset, he had meant well, and his old grudges return. There is an election and he wins the captaincy. At one point he and Wharton fight, with the Bounder coming off worse. Some very unhappy weeks follow until break-up time, when Harry has chosen to stay at school rather than face his uncle. By now his chums are starting to tell him a few home truths, and Mauly, usually the one for the life of least resistance, also delivers a stern lecture to Harry, particularly concerning his attitude to the Bounder. At last Harry begins to see sense and goes to apologise. For a moment the Bounder softens, then hardens his heart. Had Harry spoken weeks before it would have been different. So the old classic ploy, hurt, and hurt back, is not broken. All that remains is for the truth to come out about the letter, which it does, inevitably through Bunter.

The roads to hell at Greyfriars all commence at a station named Bunter and are rapidly paved by the pride and the prejudice of the victims who tread them. At last the weeks of misery are over for Harry, but not for the Bounder. The rift is deeper than ever.

There were holiday incidents, the Bounder and Redwing staying at a bungalow not far from Wharton Lodge, where Ponsonby and Co. honour them with a visit. Inevitably Wharton and Smithy meet for yet another fight - the two idiots had knocked the stuffing out of each other (more out of the Bounder) at least three times in as many weeks - and the evil side of the Bounder is now in full command. He arranges one of his ambushes, for Ponsonby and Co. to waylay Wharton, tie him up and strand him for the night on Monk's Island. Unfortunately they get Redwing instead, who suffers after a night in pouring rain on the inhospitable island. Now the Bounder's mood swings to intense remorse and he devotes the rest of the holiday to caring for Tom.

Back at school the feud still simmers and Bunter decided he will have his personal twopennorth of revenge on the Bounder. One night when Smithy breaks bounds Bunter locks the box-room window to prevent him getting back into the school, thus ensuring his expulsion. But Harry wakes up when the vengeful Bunter returns to the dorm and is instantly suspicious. He gets up and steals to the box-room where the shadow of the despairing Bounder is outlined against the window. Harry lets him in but is not in the mood for thanks. The exchange between them is curt, but Smithy knows Harry has saved him from expulsion.

The ambush was a revenge to which the Bounder descended on several occasions. None was more iniquitous than the time he hired a couple of Joe Banks' thugs to rough up Wharton one night as he returns on a late night pass. Then that sadly abused conscience of Smithy's takes over as he lies in bed imagining the scene, Harry walking along the lonely wooded path and the two thugs waiting ...

Out goes the Bounder, rushing through the night, knowing he would rather die if evil results from his action. He reaches the scene just in time, and with Wharton banishes the thugs who had not expected this violent retaliation. Then the Bounder confesses.

It becomes a touching emotional scene and Harry asks if they can't be friends instead of enemies and wash out the past. In his mood of shame and remorse the Bounder has no hesitation in sealing that pact of friendship. Of course it couldn't last. The ongoing feud between this pair adds too much conflict and excitement to the humour, the japing and the badinage of day to day school life. The Bounder and Wharton sharing a cosy friendship would rob tremendous strength from the stories.

But good continues to struggle free in the Bounder. He is well aware that he does not rank very high in Marjorie Hazeldene's estimation but he has changed completely from the young foppish cad of earlier days, and is known to colour at the mention of her name. Where once he influenced her brother for the worse he now determines to save her being upset by yet another shady exploit of Peter Hazeldene's. After teaching Hazel a disdainful lesson in gambling, Smithy is told by Wharton that he is mean, rotten and cowardly and he is to leave Hazel alone. Smith's response is to set up another little ambush for Hazel to prevent his joining a card game, losing his money and then sponging off his sister. The ambush is highly successful, and for this spot of secret chivalry Smithy is derided and despised as a traitor to the school, gets six from Wingate, suffers a form ragging and is sentenced to Coventry for the rest of the term. The truth only comes out when Skinner, who considers the whole business hilarious, blurts out the story and mockingly dubs the Bounder "the guardian angel of the Remove", and all for the sake of Marjorie Hazeldene!

Smithy's good turns become more frequent, one being to save Bob Cherry a great deal of anguish and disgrace over the Paul Tyrrell affair. Wingate also has cause to be thankful for the Bounder's intervention in Wingate minor's shady little activities, thus getting the child out of trouble and saving the school captain from the reflected disgrace caused by his young brother.

It was the Bounder who found Tom Redwing's missing father and spiked the guns of the drink-sodden longshoreman impostor who claimed to be Tom's father, and it was the Bounder who played a major part in the downfall of Stacey, Harry Wharton's enemy. Then there was his loyalty to Valentine Compton and his silence over the young drug smuggler, because Smithy knew that there was a great deal more yet to be told.

So many times the Bounder was content for these good turns to remain anonymous and unthanked.

Were these acts of chivalry enough to balance or outweigh the iniquities of the dark half of the entity that was Herbert Vernon-Smith?

Only the individual reader can answer this question to his or her own satisfaction. Whatever the answer Greyfriars would never be the same without him.

(To be concluded)

Bound vols. of Marvel, 1912. Nos. 415 to 440, Nos. 441 to 460

Bound vols. of Champion 1950, Nos. 1458 to 1509.

Duplicate Sexton Blake Library 3rd series (some 2nd series).

Boys' Friend Library, few bound vols. of 1st and 2nd series, 3 to 7 copies in each, plus single copies.

Various other duplicates. Offers, or would prefer to exchange.

K. Townsend, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE65 6EA. Tel. (01283) 703305.

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

Telephone: 0161-483-7627.

Tribute to Eric Fayne by Norman Wright

My introduction to the world of *Magnet* and *Gem* came about through Eric Fayne's long postscript to the 1962 Memorial Edition of Frank Richards' autobiography. I wrote to Eric, care of Charles Skilton, publisher of the book, and was soon a subscriber to *Collectors' Digest*. Being one of the youngest readers of CD at the time my letters to Eric invariably plied him with all sorts of questions regarding the pre-war papers and stories. However complex my queries he always managed to give me a full and interesting answer.

My very first published article appeared in print between the covers of *Collectors' Digest*. When I posted it to Eric I had misgivings about its quality but Eric not only printed it but also encouraged me to write further articles for the magazine and Annual. His encouragement was one of the greatest influence in the development of my writing and for that I will always be grateful.

Not only did Eric do a first class job in bringing out *Collectors' Digest* every month - a daunting task on its own - but for years his own writings formed the mainstay of each issue. Every month when the magazine arrived I always turned first to "Let's Be Controversial". Eric's articles were not only well written but always thought provoking. "Let's Be Controversial" and its "Echoes" gave the Digest a great vigour that kept everyone on their toes and ensured that fresh ideas were continually being viewed. Another of my favourites was "Danny's Diary" and this long running series was, once again, was from Eric's pen.

In 1988 Mary Cadogan and I wrote to *This England* magazine recommending Eric Fayne for their Flag of St. George award, made to people who are deemed to have helped keep alive the old spirit of England. Eric was selected for the award and I still have his letter thanking me for proposing him. The last line of his letter ran thus: "I have never been one to seek or to welcome publicity, but I must confess that this little event has warmed my ancient heart." Eric was a great character whose love of country and fellow man shone through in his writing. Through *Collectors' Digest* he brought a great deal of warmth to hundreds of others. God bless you Eric.

FOR ERIC

Readers and hobbyists all round the world will be mourning the death of Eric Fayne, greatly loved editor for many years of C.D. Much more than an editor, Eric was a friend to us all, a friend who drew each of us into his own family, sharing with us his beloved Madam and that appealing feline correspondent, the Princess Snowee, and all the while giving generously of his abundant knowledge to all who sought it. Journey in peace, dear Eric, as you are reunited with your many loved ones. We shall never forget you.

From Margery Woods

I was very sad to learn of the passing of our old friend, Eric Fayne. Like many others who felt a special affection for him, I never actually met him, though over nearly thirty years we exchanged a good deal of correspondence and I spoke to him frequently on the telephone.

In every way a most remarkable man - his long editorship of the Digest speaks for itself - he seemed never to have lost his youth, or at least his youthfulness. This makes his death so much more poignant.

We are incredibly fortunate in his successor as Editor but his passing surely marks the end of an era in the story of our wonderful magazine. Goodbye, old friend. From J.E.M.

A great loss to all collectors. He will be sadly missed.

From Ernie Carter

It was with a deep sadness and a great sense of loss that I learned of the death of Eric Fayne.

Spanning almost 40 years our pen-friendship began when he took over as Editor of the C.D. We had many mutual interests and his letters and cards shared so many of his stimulating activities with me and my family, and later, my husband Victor.

Eric seemed forever young in his photos, an impression fostered by his enthusiastic writing covering so many subjects. I admired his selfless devotion to our hobby, and his cheery letters will be greatly missed.

The fond memories of an old friend will be cherished by one who was privileged to know him.

From Bette Colby

FORUM

From Mark Caldicott:

You already know that Northern OBBC is on the Internet. Anyone around the world can use what is called a "search engine", which is really a massive index of all the web pages, including our own. The result has been that I have been receiving E-mails from all over the world - several about Greyfriars, others about Brooks, Sexton Blake, William, Jennings etc. - from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, San Francisco, London, the Netherlands, and even Costa Rica. The latter was an interesting enquiry from a girl who was a follower of the Spanish versions of the William books (known there as Guillermo) asking for information on Richmal Crompton.

From Laurence Price:

On the Origins of Sherlock Holmes - A Three Pipe Problem?

In answer to the interesting enquiry from the Revd. D.H. Sweetman about the origins of the name of Sherlock Holmes there are a number of sources from which Conan Doyle may have gained inspiration.

The author claimed that he took "Sherlock" from a bowler at the M.C.C. but he was sometimes a little careless with his facts and it was likely that bowler was actually called Shacklock; Doyle didn't meet him until 1890, four years after "A Study in Scarlet". Recent research has revealed that a mother of one of his aunts was called Jane Sherlock Ball. Another source might be an 18th century theologian, a Thomas Sherlock. Or it may simply be that Sherlock was a common Irish name and the DoYLES were of Irish descent.

Holmes is most popularly believed to originate from Oliver Wendell Holmes, the American doctor and author of "The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table" (1858). Other sources are fellow students at Edinburgh University where Doyle trained to become a doctor, such as David Holmes who became an M.B. in 1877 and James Holmes who became an M.D. in the same year. There was also a physician friend and neighbour of Doyle called Holmes.

Yet another possibility may be Timothy Holmes, a surgeon, who edited "A System of Surgery" in four volumes, with which Doyle would have been familiar at Edinburgh

University through his lecturer, the surgeon Dr. Joseph Bell, M.D. It was the amazing deductive powers of Bell that inspired Doyle to model his famous detective on his teacher.

From original notes by Doyle for "A Study in Scarlet" we know that he intended to call his great detective Sherrinford Holmes. Poor Watson was originally intended to have been Ormond Sacker from "the Soudan" - that would certainly have required some sleuthing for origins!

From Brian Doyle:

In the May issue of the C.D., J.E.M. asks: "Did Frank Richards invent Bunter's famous check trousers or were they introduced by his great illustrator, C.H. Chapman?"

I can supply the answer in Chapman's own words, as he personally told me all about it, when I interviewed him for the "C.D." on the occasion of his 90th birthday in April 1969 (those interested can refer to the actual article I wrote for issue No. 268).

I specifically asked Mr. Chapman about those infamous check trousers, and he replied: "Billy Bunter appeared in a minor role as a rather silly fat boy. Then he gradually wheedled his way in, and I gave him glasses, parted his hair in the middle and supplied those famous check trousers. Why the check trousers? It was simply to make Bunter immediately distinguishable from his fellow-pupils, especially from Johnny Bull who, in those days, was a lot plumper than he later became."

Chapman joined the *Magnet* in 1911, taking over the Greyfriars illustrations from Arthur Clarke, who had died, continuing his work for nearly 30 years until the paper ceased publication in 1940. He was joined, of course, by Leonard Shields in the 1920s.

From Mark Taha:

I remember Greyfriars abolishing Etons at the beginning of 1930, during the Courtfield Cracksman series. A *Gem* story of, I think, the 1920s saw them being abolished at St. Jim's - but when original stories resumed in 1930, they were back in Etons.

In answer to Terry Jones, the post-war St. Jim's books, both Mandeville and Gold Hawk, were original stories.

From J.E.M.:

Special gratitude this month (May) for Una Hamilton Wright's absorbing piece on her uncle, and Peter Mahony's lovely account of "Gussy the Masher". Great stuff.

REG HARDINGE WRITES:

Film Fun was, no doubt, the best example of a cinema-based cartoon-strip paper produced for the amusement of adolescents as well as for children. I found Bill Lofts' account of its development most entertaining, sprinkled, as it was, with several new (to me, that is) facts.

One aspect, however, has always intrigued me, and it's what I term "the Conklin conundrum". Who was Charlie Conklin? Chester Conklin? Yes, he was a good comedian who developed into a fine character actor. Heinie Conklin? Yes, he was part of the Mack Sennett Keystone Cops set-up. But Charlie? The perplexing thing is the complete absence of any details about him, and I cannot ever recollect having seen him in a film. Not under the name of Charlie Conklin, anyway.

But the mystery thickens! The front cover of *Film Fun* No. 15, April 24, 1920 (on which date, incidentally, *The Kinema Comic* No. 1 was published) is devoted to the activities of the mirth-provoking duo of cross-eyed Ben Turpin and Charlie LYNN.

A reference is also invited to page 17 of C.D. February 1997 for a comparison of the two *Film Fun* covers which are separated by ten months. The next question is, who was Charlie Lynn? Perhaps some silent-film buff has the answer.



No. 15. Vol. 1.

(Every Tuesday.)

April 24, 1920.



Ben Turpin AND Charlie Lynn

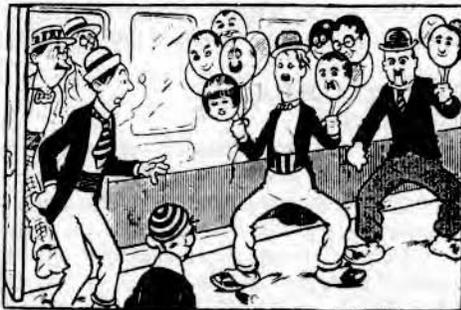
HEROES OF THE
Paramount Mack Sennett Comedies



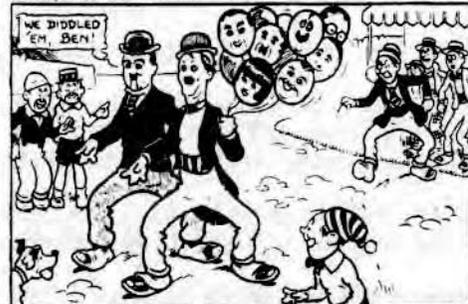
This week's Film:—"A-TENT-ION TO BUSINESS."



1. Ho, what a crowd! All the funny old Film Fun favourites off to the briny for a spell. And they just filled up a carriage nicely, thank you. All the whole shoot of them. And, of course, everybody cried: "No earthly! No room in there! All the Film Fun's fiberts have it! They win!" So they popped off and got in anywhere they could. Guard's van, cattle trucks, or any old where. And that was that.



2. HEEL HE! AT THE OTHER END.—Ho, what awful young chaps are Ben and Charlie! Wouldst believe it? They'd got a lot of air balloons, and painted the faces of all the favourites on them, and held them up against the windows of the carriage! No wonder that the lads at the other end were wild! "Diddled!" they cried. "Done! Packed like sardines, and these nuts have done it on the cush!"

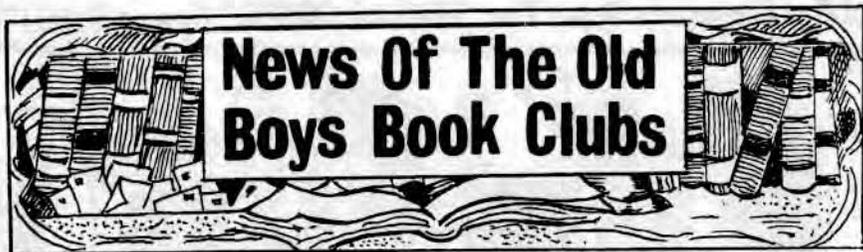


3. But merrily laughed Ben and Charlie as they legged it off out of the station with the air balloons, bearing the faces of Ambrose, and Baby Marie Osborne, and Patty Arbuckle, and all the stars, on those balloons. And merrily they cried: "Aha! Trach-la! We diddled 'em!" 'Rot little they knew that the other young chaps were up and doing! No!



4. But one of those hearty roysterers had borrowed a hat pin from the lady who purveyed part-worn buns in the refreshment-room, and he slipped up and punctured the old balloons, much to the dismayment of Ben and Charlie. "Pop! Pop!" went the balloons, to the loud and hearty chords of "Ha, ha's!" from the villagers up stage.

(Continued on page 20.)



SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.

Ten members met for the May meeting at the house of Tim Salisbury in Uphill, Weston-super-Mare.

Una Hamilton-Wright began with "The Colour Purple", a consideration of whether Charles Hamilton was a "political animal". Laurence Price read an extract from "The Job I'd Like Best" on William Brown on politics, followed by "A Golden and Centenary Celebration" on Sexton Blake, a part autobiographical article by Bill Lofts, sadly absent through illness.

Tim Salisbury provided a good extract from the Bunter BBC TV series, involving Bunter and "The Crimson Comic", which put us in the mood to enjoy the always excellent tea.

The closing talk was an extract from a proposed book on the history of 19th-century science fiction which Laurence Price is currently writing.

Laurence Price

LONDON O.B.B.C.

May Meeting

The meeting on Sunday 11th May was at West Winterset, the home of Roy and Gwen Parsons, who not only provided a most excellent lunch but generally entertained us in all ways. Twelve members made the journey, in very mixed weather, including Patrick and Audrey Morley, from Axbridge, whom we had not met before.

Duncan Harper spoke of the death of Eric Fayne and reported that Bill Lofts had suffered a stroke. He also gave an account of John Wernham's 90th birthday dinner at Leeds Castle, on the 2nd, attended by 9 members of the London Club.

Financial reports were satisfactory and the programme included an item on Bulldog Drummond, from Brian Doyle, a Quiz from Roy, a *Gem* reading (No. 1247) by Ray Hopkins and the reading of a newsletter covering the May 1977 meeting at Twickenham.

Bill Bradford

June Meeting

A jovial crowd assembled at the Wokingham home of Eric and Betty Lawrence on Sunday 8th June.

With official business over, we had one of Eric's tricky but highly entertaining musical quizzes as he tickled the old ivories. This was followed by Bill Bradford sharing new research on the Chums Supplement published in the late twenties and early thirties. Lively discussion followed.

Roger Jenkins then taxed our minds once more with one of his legendary Greyfriars word puzzles and Duncan Harper presented us with his profile of Sexton Blake's personal secretary, Paula Dane.

The next meeting will take place at the home of Bill Bradford on July 13th. Please telephone at least a week in advance to confirm your attendance on 0181-579-4670. Please bring along any donations of books, annuals, papers, comics or magazines for the September Auction.

Vic Pratt

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

May Meeting

There were eleven members present and we all expressed our sadness on hearing the news of the death of Eric Fayne. He was such a well respected and important figure in our hobby and will be sadly missed. We had reports on the Just William meeting and a new Bunter restaurant.

Our resident surfer on the information superhighway has been busy receiving and sending E mails. The club page on the internet has attracted interest from New Zealand, Costa Rica and the USA.

Chris Scholey then gave us an excellent talk titled *Pidgin English*. In some of the *Magnet* stories foreign characters were used to pronounce English in an incorrect fashion for comic effect. We all knew about Huree Singh but what about Chunder Run, Mr Jarram, So Fat, Honesty Ibrahim and Hassam the Dragoman?

Finally, we watched a video of *Secret Lives - Enid Blyton*.

Paul Galvin

June Meeting

The holiday season was well in evidence as a small number assembled at the home and library in Wakefield of our Secretary, Geoffrey Good for our Summer Break and Barbecue. Still, it was a most happy event on a typical British summer evening - i.e. a little on the cool side! We were delighted to welcome Paula Johnson attending her first meeting and making the journey from Middlesbrough. Mark Caldicott showed us an impressive sheaf of papers being records of his dealings on the Internet over the past month. A number of people from abroad were interested in our Club and the hobby in general and Mark had given our C.D. Editor's address to a number of those people as potential subscribers to our magazine.

Darrell gave a report of his recent visit to club member Keith Normington, now living in Thailand, and to C.D. reader Jack Hughes in Townsville, Australia. He also reported that a good response had been made for the very first ever Jennings Meeting to take place in Leicester on the 21st June - 35 people applying. Our next meeting is on 12th July with a Literary Anthology from Joan Colman.

Johnny Bull Minor

ANSWERS TO ST. JIM'S QUIZ

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Selwyn | 9. Sidney Clive |
| 2. Rogue Rawdon | 10. Valentine Outram |
| 3. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley | 11. Fisher T. Fish |
| 4. Eric Page | 12. Dick Roylance |
| 5. Captain Mellish | 13. Pawson |
| 6. Guy Vavasour | 14. Nosey Panks |
| 7. Koumi Rao | 15. Jose Rabeira |
| 8. Reginald Talbot | |

BIGGLES FLIES AGAIN

The Captain W.E. Johns Magazine

Owing to the ending of *Biggles & Co.* following the tragic death of its Founder Editor, John Trender, *Biggles Flies Again* edited by Jennifer Schofield will make its solo flight early in July 1997.

This will be a bi-annual magazine for collectors and all those interested in Captain W.E. Johns and his works. Please contact Marie Scofield, 3 Hunters Way, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 6FL for copies and details.

(Price £8.00 for 2 issues, including p. & p.)

"THE TOFF"

Part One

by Peter Mahony

In July 1914, Martin Clifford introduced a new character to the *Gem* saga. St. Jim's was never quite the same again. Reginald Talbot ('the Toff') brought a more serious - indeed sombre - tone into the yarns which had far-reaching effects. Tom Merry, the carefree leader of the Terrible Three, became careworn when involved with the Toff. Manners and Lowther, like many faithful friends, found themselves of lesser importance when Talbot's troubles took Tom's attention. Levison, a nasty, incorrigible villain - one of Hamilton's 'best' creations - suddenly showed tendencies to remorse and reform. Joe Frayne, a happy urchin hitherto, became worried, gloomy and desperate when Talbot arrived on the scene. Dr. Holmes, a wise and kindly Headmaster, found the even tenor of his existence sorely impaired when he concerned himself with the Toff's attempts to repent and atone. At regular intervals a fresh 'Talbot incident' rocked the tranquillity of St. Jim's.

This far-reaching effect became evident during the initial Talbot saga. In July 1914, he came to St. Jim's as a fully fledged, self-serving criminal, bent on feathering his own, and his cronies', nests - a Saul in Israel, opposed to decency and honesty. The four yarns covering this stage of his story, ran the full gamut of the "Road to Damascus". By the end of the fourth story, Talbot had reformed - even to the extent of thwarting his former confederates.

In November 1914, after a period 'on the run', the Toff turned up again. World War I was in full swing and Talbot (typically) frustrated an attempt by a German spy to blow up a railway line. He was granted a 'King's Pardon' and, eventually, a Foundation Scholarship at St. Jim's. The 'Saul' who had defied rectitude and clean living was now a 'Paul', firmly on the side of the angels, but with a guilt complex which was to prove a distressing burden to himself and his friends.

By January 1915, the forces of evil were heavily arraigned against the 'Toff'. In a brilliant trio of stories, Clifford/Hamilton had Talbot foiling 'Satan' (John Rivers & Co.); then being 'framed' by their plotting; cast out of St. Jim's as an ungrateful reprobate; down and out in London; and eventually reclaimed and restored by Tom Merry & Co. Hamilton's writing took on a more adult style and appeal in these stories - a sure sign of his developing confidence and maturity as an author. (He was in his forties now - a complete master of his craft.) The 'adulthood' of his plots now became the rule rather than the exception. The old 'single' yarns still appeared, but only as 'fillers' between longer series of stories. Themes and characters were more fully examined -



Natty and the Rabbit bolted for the window and tumbled out into the night, but Honkery Walker made a bound for Talbot on the stairs, a jammy raised in his hand. "You first!" snarled the ruffian. "You traitor—you first!"

often with a view to getting a 'message' across.

I have likened the Talbot saga to St. Paul's, because there are clear parallels for any convinced Christian. Hamilton was, indubitably, a 'Christian gentleman', and he had a deep concern for the 'sinner' - particularly for repentant ones. So many of his best stories operate at two levels - the surface 'rattling good yarn' with plenty of thrills, drama and fun; and the deeper, underlying theme where goodness and straight-dealing triumph, after many vicissitudes, over evil and selfishness. In these first 'Toff' stories these twin aims were brilliantly achieved.

Nothing illustrates this better than Clifford/Hamilton's use of Tom Merry as a model for the Toff to emulate. Talbot's cleverness and sporting prowess are as great as Tom's - some would say even greater. But Tom, like St. John, the Beloved Disciple, is a natural Christian - he feels and does right because he's made that way. Talbot, almost like an 'alter ego' of Tom, appears just as brilliant and even more successful, but his reputation is a 'fraud', founded on criminal activities and cynical deception. Gradually, Tom's - and others' (e.g. Gussy's) - example makes him think and - because his is brainy - Talbot is unable to deceive himself as to the enormity of his conduct. The struggle with his conscience - "If only they wouldn't be so decent to me!" - is protracted but the outcome is inevitable. Like Saul, he was blind, but good example and kindly benevolence make him 'see'. After that, there is only one way for him to go - straight! He sets out to emulate his 'good angels' and, like many a penitent, he finds the going 'tough'.

The cleverness and intellect which made the 'Toff' see the error of his ways become a drawback once he is reformed. Because he has done wrong and been intimate with wrong-doers, Talbot finds it difficult to do the 'right thing' whatever the consequences. His brain can tell him what should be done; his emotions often conflict with his brain (the story of many!)

Again like Tom Merry, the reformed Talbot is keen to help 'lame ducks' - Gore, Levison, even Crooke, spring to mind. Unfortunately, the Toff is often tempted to assist them by dubious methods - or by standing the racket on their behalf. His early training keeps looming up to complicate the issues. Tom Merry, confronted by a tearful Marie Rivers who wants her scoundrel of a father to be set free, is quite resolute that Rivers will get no mercy unless he clears Talbot (*Gem* 363). Talbot, confronted earlier with the same problem, was prepared to 'stretch a point' - even if it meant taking the blame for Rivers' crime. A feeling of guilt can twist one's thinking!

Now to the stories themselves. Talbot's arrival (*Gems* 334-337) shows him as a devious, plausible young villain. (Critics who feel that Talbot, at 16, is too youthful to lead a gang of criminals should think again. As a retired schoolmaster, I can remember several boys in their mid-teens who were depraved young rascals - and, come to that, one or two girls!) He 'cons' Dr. Holmes into befriending him by rescuing the Head from a staged attack by footpads (Hookey Walker & Co). A plausible yarn about being abandoned by his 'uncle' is evidenced by a forged letter. By selling his 'valuables' - which, he says, were gifts from 'uncle' James Talbot, the Toff pays his way into St. Jim's. Mr. Railton, more wary than Dr. Holmes, visits the Luxford Arms, near Abbotsford, to check the abandonment story. Mr. Bowler, the landlord, confirms the situation - though whether he was deceived by Talbot's gang, or was bribed to support them, is not clear.

Talbot is welcomed by Tom Merry & Co. but runs into trouble when Joe Frayne recognises him from Angel Alley days. Talbot bluffs his way out of this predicament. Later, when Joe confronts him alone, he pleads "Give me a chance. I'm going straight."

Tom Merry & Co., including Talbot, fall foul of Mr. Selby. They take revenge by ragging the bad-tempered master, whose collection of valuable coins disappears. It is assumed, even by Selby, that it has been hidden as a joke. Frayne suspects the Toff of thieving the collection. Talbot denies it.

A week later, Talbot blossoms as a cricketer. Visiting Glyn House, where the millionaire is holding a cricket week, Tom Merry & Co. include Talbot in the side. Apart from helping Fatty Wyn to bowl out the opposition, Talbot finds time to 'case' the house and gull Bernard Glyn into showing him the family's hidden safe. He also saves Wally D'Arcy from serious injury when the Scamp of the Third falls from a high branch while watching the game. Talbot, as hero and sportsman, is honoured by his school-mates. Unfortunately, the Glyn safe is burgled that night.

Frayne, grateful to Talbot for saving his pal, Wally, is suspicious of the Toff when he hears of the burglary. Rather than 'shop' him, Frayne runs away from St. Jim's to avoid becoming an 'accessory to the fact' - the first life to be adversely affected by Talbot's arrival.

The Toff's depravity hereabouts is deep and disturbing. He has little pity for Frayne and none at all for Jerry Hutton, a rival cracksmen, on whom he contrives to lay the blame for the Glyn House burglary. Inspector Skeat is put on a false trail by this piece of chicanery and the hapless Mr. Glyn is left to endure his losses.

The third yarn sees matters become very complicated. Talbot dodges a cricket match with the Grammar School to keep a rendezvous with Hookey Walker. The meeting takes place at the 'Blackbird' in Wayland - a disreputable tavern - several points lower than the 'Green Man'. Levison, on the razzle at the 'Red Lion' (another watering-place), hears bar gossip and becomes suspicious of Talbot. He accuses Talbot of visiting the 'Blackbird': the Toff admits it. His 'friend' had set the rendezvous unaware of the inn's reputation. Levison goes prying into Talbot's desk; is discovered by Talbot and is brutally thrashed with a cricket stump. Tom Merry has to put a stop to it and is dismayed by Talbot's loss of control. This, combined with the discomfort caused by Talbot's defection from the cricket, makes Tom vaguely suspicious.

This feeling is deepened when Wally D'Arcy receives a letter from Joe Frayne, hinting at 'underhand goings-on' at St. Jim's. Talbot, when questioned, denies any knowledge of the circumstances surrounding Frayne's departure. Nevertheless, the Toff is keenly aware that his position is becoming precarious.

He eases the pressure by robbing Dr. Monk of Rylcombe Grammar School. 'Tom Merry & Co. jape the Grammarians during an al fresco performance of 'Julius Caesar'. With the Grammar School in a state of hilarious confusion, Talbot 'swipes' Dr. Monk's 'Leonardo' - a valuable painting. Everyone is mystified - except the vengeful Levison, who, eavesdropping, hears Talbot say to himself: "Two thousand pounds! What a haul! If only they wouldn't be so decent to me!"

In the last yarn of this first series, 'The Parting of the Ways', Talbot reaches his cross-roads. He is off-colour through worry: Levison's suspicions are making life difficult; his own conscience is making it almost impossible. Mr. Selby, with some justification, is convinced that the absconding Joe Frayne took his coin collection with him. He demands a police investigation. Talbot, anxious to avoid official eyes, joins a deputation led by Tom Merry which asks the Head to allow 24 hours while the school is thoroughly searched. He 'plants' the coins under the floor in Selby's study and, next day, contrives to extend the search there. The coins are found; Frayne is exonerated; the police are not called; the Toff breathes again.

But not for long. The deep-thinking Levison makes a list of nine circumstances pointing to Talbot as the man responsible for the local crime wave. This episode features some of Hamilton/Clifford's most lucid writing, viz:

"Levison's paper ran:

1. Talbot comes to St. Jim's. Nobody knows where he comes from. Supposed to have lived in Australia, but avoids talking about Australia to any of the Australians here or at the Grammar School. Got the Head to have him here by helping the Head when attacked by footpads - possibly a put-up job.
2. Was recognised by Frayne, who called him the 'Toff'. Frayne came from a slum, from living among criminals. Talbot explained that he met him when slumming in London with his uncle during a visit from Australia. Frayne never said anything on that subject, and refused to answer questions. Why?

3. Some footpads who tried to rob D'Arcy called Talbot the 'Toff' when he chipped in and stopped them. Looks as if he is well-known among Angel Alley sort of people.
4. Has no relations or connections - never receives visits and hardly ever letters.
5. Was called away one Saturday to meet a friend in Wayland. Was seen going into the Blackbird - the lowest pub in the place. Explained that his friend didn't know the place was that sort - arranged the meeting by telegram. I have seen the telegram - there was no mention of the Blackbird in it. Meeting evidently arranged with perfect knowledge of the character of the place. Talbot lied.
6. Epidemic of burglaries immediately after Talbot's coming here. Mr. Selby's collection of coins disappears; supposed to have been hidden by some fag for a joke. Not turned up after several weeks. Worth £500. Followed by burglary at Glyn House. Talbot sleeping there at the time as guest of Glyn of the Shell. Followed by burglary at Rylcombe Grammar School. Talbot there at the time, on a rag with Tom Merry and a crowd of fellows.
7. Talbot has a desk with a patent lock in his study. Secret place in it. Saw him open it and take out something made of steel. Was it some kind of burglar's tool? If all above board, why the patent lock? Cracksmen use steel implements for cracking safes.
8. Frayne bolts from the school soon after the burglary at Glyn House. Writes to D'Arcy minor that something underhand is going on, and he can't be a party to it, but can't give the unknown rotter away, because of a debt of gratitude to him. Frayne full of gratitude towards Talbot for having saved D'Arcy minor's life.
9. Frayne suspected of having bolted with Selby's coins. Talbot suggests delay of twenty-four hours before calling in the police, to give the fellows a chance of finding the stuff. Query: Does he know where it is, and intend to let it be found to save young Frayne from being arrested - to keep the police out of the school at any price?
So ran the paper Levison had drawn up."

This detailed summary shows how precarious Talbot's situation had become. The wily Levison, with his sharply developed vein of cynical suspicion, has made a strong circumstantial case against the 'Toff'. It is only a step to spread that suspicion among others. Levison watches at night. He sees Talbot go out by the hall window; wakes up the Shell; tells them of his suspicions about Selby's coins, Glyn's safe and Dr. Monk's picture. Shock and disbelief are rampant.

Meanwhile, Talbot has gone to see Hookey Walker. He wants to 'go straight'; Hookey is not amenable. Talbot sticks to his decision: the cracksmen's tools are tossed into the river. He returns to St. Jim's to be confronted by Levison in the dormitory. Keeping his 'cool', Talbot shows his desk to Tom Merry & Co. The secret compartment contains no tools! Levison is not believed.

Nevertheless, the story 'gets round'. Mr. Railton hears it; sends for Levison; and dismisses the 9 point paper - not without some misgivings - as surmise.

The rest of the 'Toff's' loot is discovered during a 'Scout run' in an old hut in Wayland Wood. The cellar of the hut was being shown to Talbot (surprise! surprise!) by Tom Merry. Everyone is jubilant - except Hookey Walker & Co. who had expected to share the loot!

Talbot, aware that this has incurred his confederates' enmity, is apprehensive that they will burgle St. Jim's. He keeps watch and surprises them at the Head's safe. They refuse to desist: Talbot raises the alarm. Nobby and Rabbit escape: Hookey attacks Talbot. Railton and the prefects nail Hookey: he 'blows the gaffe' - the 'Toff' is exposed. He admits the whole story but insists that his repentance is genuine - after all he has restored

the loot and saved the school from the burglars. Dr. Holmes, shocked but sympathetic, sends him away before the police are summoned. Talbot vanishes; Joe Frayne returns; Levison is vindicated, but remains unpopular; Tom Merry & Co. are dismayed but still favourably disposed towards the 'Toff'.

And there, perhaps, it should have remained. After all, Talbot had earlier crimes to atone for: with the police on his tail there could be little scope to manoeuvre him into normal St. Jim's yarns. But the interest aroused in the character dictated that neither editor nor author could discard him completely.

Fifteen weeks later (during which World War I had commenced), Talbot turned up again. Briefly, he had fled to Germany, but the events of August 1914 brought him back again post-haste. Mr. Fox of Scotland Yard visits St. Jim's seeking information - Talbot has been seen in the neighbourhood. Tom Merry & Co. are not co-operative - but Levison is. The 'Toff', as 'George Brown', is working at Slingsby's Farm, near Abbotsford. Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther encounter him by chance: when Mr. Fox turns up they foil his arrest. The detective, despite the provocation, lets them off - it could have made a sensational story - three 'Saints' in the dock for aiding and abetting a wanted felon!

Tom writes to 'George Brown' inviting him to watch St. Jim's play Abbotsford. Levison wangles a look at the envelope; then he informs Fox about Slingsby's Farm. Talbot is nearly arrested again, but the Saints hide him among the footballers while the Scotland Yard man is searching among the spectators.

On the run again, Talbot runs across Karl Elberfelt - a German spy, whom he had encountered during his sojourn in Germany. (It occurs to me that Talbot's German connections must have been pretty seedy - did he backslide while on the run?) Elberfelt is intent on blowing up a railway line which carries troop trains. Talbot realises this and deliberately seeks out Fox. Together, they foil the German. Talbot seizes the bomb and hurls it from the viaduct into the valley, where it explodes. In the ensuing struggle, the 'Toff' is severely wounded. Fox overcomes the German; Talbot is taken to hospital; his bravery - with Fox's recommendation - earns him the "King's Pardon".

The way is now clear to get Talbot back to St. Jim's. Initially, he takes a job as the New House 'Boots'. He is not popular with Mr. Ratcliff: twice 'Ratty' sacks him - first on an unjustified suspicion; then for 'fraternising' with the scholars on the football field. However, Gussy has prevailed upon his father, Lord Eastwood, to nominate Talbot for a Foundation Scholarship. As a Governor of St. Jim's, Lord Eastwood has little difficulty in working the 'riffle'. Talbot says 'goodbye' to Ratty (with mutual relief) and rejoins the Shell.

The next two yarns (*Gems* 353 and 355) are 'snorters'. The shrewd, scheming Ernest Levison is well to the fore in both. The first story, 'Saving Talbot', involves Cutts & Co., the Fifth Form blades. They - and Levison - are on their uppers, because of horses which 'come in eleventh'. Levison seeks help from Tom Merry & Co. They are not sympathetic - anyway, £5 is beyond their means. Talbot, mindful of his own past difficulties, gives Levison the £5 - his first essay at 'helping lame dogs'. Levison is surprisingly grateful - he already had felt a reproach of conscience for his earlier treatment of Talbot when the 'Toff' saved the troop train. With his financial difficulties solved, Levison decides it is up to him to 'watch Talbot's back'.

It is just as well that he does. Tresham, one of Cutts' cronies, has embezzled the Fifth Form's football funds. To cover his crime, he steals a ten-shilling note from Gore (Talbot's study mate) and plants it in Talbot's Sunday hat. Then he breaks open his own desk (at night) and accuses Talbot of the theft of the funds. An investigation is ordered: Talbot is a 'sitting duck'.

Fortunately, Tresham's less than pure reputation arouses two persons' suspicions. The first, Gerald Cutts, quizzes Tresham (an excellent Martin Clifford passage where,

without wasting a word, he clearly shows the difference between the cowardly villainy of Tresham and the chilling sophistry of Cutts) and becomes convinced that Tresham is guilty - but does nothing about it. The second, Levison, searches Talbot's belongings - at some risk to himself - finds the ten shilling note, and uses his conjuring skills to plant it on Tresham! He then persuades Tom Merry to demand a search of Tresham - "after all what proof is there that the funds were ever in the burgled desk?" The note is found on Tresham; he breaks down and confesses; Dr. Holmes expels him. This very narrow squeak for Talbot results in a peculiar friendship with the devious Levison.

That friendship is of vital importance in the next story - 'Captured by Cipher'. Talbot is in danger from his Angel Alley connections. Levison's sharp intellect - not so long ago bent on exposing the 'Toff' - has to work at full pressure to unravel a series of obscure cipher messages which keep appearing (in chalk) on the School House door. Talbot understands the ciphers: he nips down at night to chalk his replies. Levison tries to 'pump' him - but is coolly rebuffed.

Undeterred, Levison follows his usual snooping instincts - searching Talbot's pockets in the changing-room; raking the ashes of burnt papers in Talbot's study; and pumping the unsuspecting Skimpole. His methods land him 'in Coventry', but he persists in solving the ciphers. The latest one contains a death threat to Talbot: the 'Toff' chalks a defiant reply: Levison later erases it and substitutes a message which lays a trap for the criminal.

With the aid of Blake & Co., Levison captures an old 'friend' - the vengeful Hookey Walker, escaped from prison and murderously inclined towards the 'Toff'. Levison is the hero of the hour - and the seeds of his eventual reformation have been sown - the second 'life' drastically affected by Talbot.

(To be continued.)

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

from Pete Hanger

All that was needed was an excuse for getting out of Form for ten minutes or so. Excuses came easily enough to a fellow who regarded the truth as a stranger with which he had no desire to make an acquaintance.

MAGNET 1568

"And he doesn't seem to see anything wrong in it," said Greene, in wonder. "You heard what he said? Why, if the Head got on to this he would bunk Coker so quick it would make his head swim."

"He's asking for it!" said Potter. "Begging for it - fairly sitting up on his hind legs and begging for it, like a dog begging for biscuits. Blessed if I know what we can do about it."

"Well, what can we do?" asked Greene.

Potter sat down again.

"Let's finish tea," he said.

Really there seemed nothing else to be done. They finished tea.

MAGNET 1262

Evidently there was nothing doing. A bird in hand, as it were, would have corrupted Gosling. But his sterling honesty was proof against the attraction of a bird in the bush - especially such a very doubtful bird in the bush as Billy Bunter's postal order.

MAGNET 1263

A Greyfriars Form-master - a mere nobody, in the lofty estimation of the Lord of Popper Court - had rebuffed him. Instead of accepting the opinion of Sir Hilton, as confirmation strong as proof of holy writ, that Form-master had had an opinion of his own - and acted on it, instead of acting upon Sir Hilton's much more important opinion.

MAGNET 1263

..... Skinner was as full of malicious tricks as a monkey. And he did not like having his head banged, even when he asked for it.

MAGNET 1613

Billy Bunter's weight, according to himself, was nine stones; according to other fellows in the Greyfriars Remove it was nine hundred stone. Probably the truth was somewhere between the two extremes!

MAGNET 1592

Genius can be turned in any direction. Bunter had no doubt whatever that he would have shone in any walk of life. At Greyfriars it had never been hidden from Bunter that he could have run the school ever so much better than Dr. Locke. He never read a book without realising that he could have written it better if he had had the time. He never watched a county cricket match without realising what valuable tips he could have given to batsmen, bowlers and fielders. If a fellow had genius, he simply had to mount it, as it were, and drive it into any direction he liked. Bunter had genius, so there it was! Considering the number of things that Bunter thought he could do, it was sheer cheek on the part of Dance to fancy that he could not manage a circus performance. It was simply pie to Bunter.

MAGNET 1071

"Pewwaps we ought to cut out the match in the circs," he remarked tentatively. "With you feelin' so very wotten, old bean"

"I'm not feelin' rotten," said Cardew.

"You are lookin' dweadfully wotten, old chap."

"You are always so complimentary, Gussy," said Cardew. "Tact is your long suit."

"Yaas, wathah; fellows genewally wegard me as a fellow of tact and judgement," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Pewwaps you do not feel as wotten as you look, old fellow."

MAGNET (Yes! that's right) MAGNET 1074

BILL LOFTS

As this issue of the C.D. was going to press, we heard the very sad news that Bill had died after having a second stroke. His funeral took place in London on July 3rd.

All those of us who remember his great generosity of spirit will miss him greatly.

COKER-NUT ICE

by Keith Atkinson

In a quiet corner of the quad, well screened by leafless trees
The Famous Five had made a slide and braved the wintry breeze.
If Wingate or a master came bad trouble they'd be in,
But when Coker told them to desist, they took no heed of him.

Coker was not a prefect, not in fact, but in his mind
The lofty Coker ruled the roost, authority defined.
He boasted a short way with fags, "Stop that!" he rapped, severe.
Five juniors spun along the slide as if they did not hear.

"You cheeky scoundrels, stop at once!" bawled Coker in a rage.
They whizzed on, still regardless of his lofty personage.
Coker strode towards the slide and nearly took a dive.
The frozen surface was like glass, to balance he did strive.

It was beneath his dignity to slide in swift pursuit.
He walked, but delicately trod, his senses all acute.
The Famous Five had reached the end and came back with a rush,
Then formed a wriggling, squirming heap, with Coker 'neath the crush.

"Oooch! Moooch! Gerroff! I'm squashed! I'm hurt!" gasped Coker breathlessly.
He sprawled face down, they took a seat on his anatomy.
"Dear old Coker," chuckled Bob, "you asked for it, you know."
"I'll smash you!" roared out Coker, as he wriggled in the snow.

More juniors came upon the scene, attracted by the racket,
And Squiff pushed snow in Coker's mouth, and down his neck did pack it.
'Twas then a portly figure dawned with magisterial tread.
"What is all this?" The juniors jumped, and Coker rubbed his head.

"How dare you play these absurd games with junior boys?" Prout rapped.
"Have you no sense of dignity? You, a Fifth Form boy?" he snapped.
"How dare you slide within the quad! Such conduct is appalling.
"You must not join in horseplay and with juniors keep brawling!"

"I didn't - wasn't - never meant," the hapless Coker cries.
"Silence! How dare you contradict the evidence of my eyes!
Your shocking and untidy state is utterly reprehensible.
Five hundred lines you shall produce to teach you to be sensible."

Back Coker staggered to the House, Prout followed him, uptight.
The chuckling chums resumed their slide when they were out of sight.
But when the form of Mr. Quelch was sighted, lank and lean,
Like silent ghosts at cock-crow they all vanished from the scene.

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