

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 54

No. 640

APRIL 2000



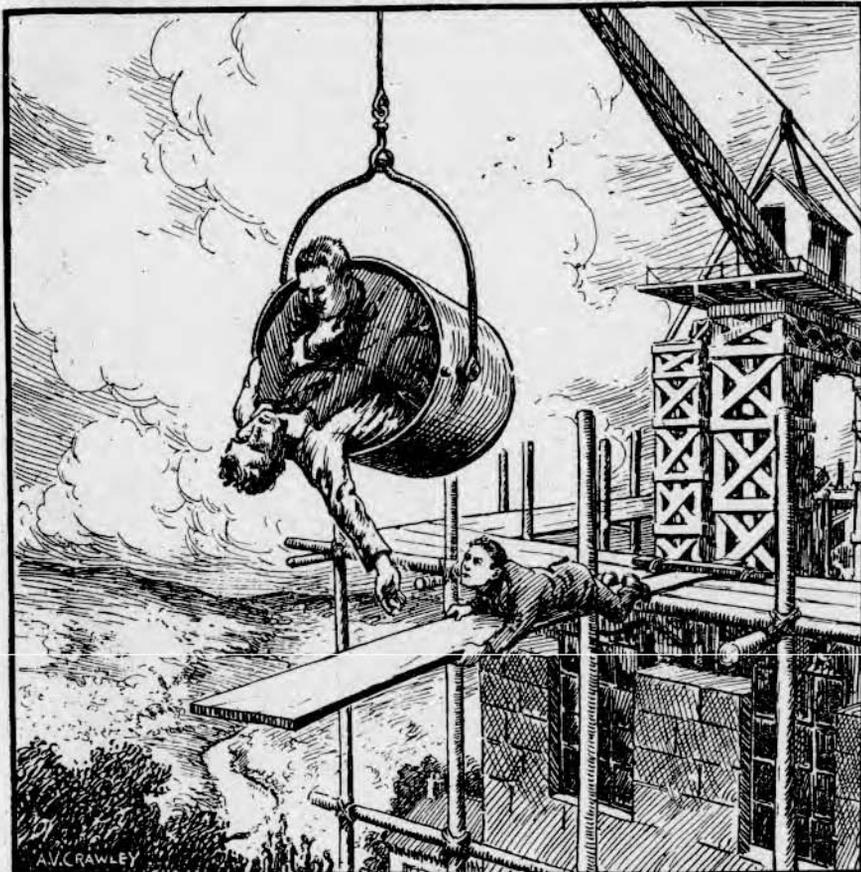
THE PAPER FOR ALL BOYS

THE SCOUT

FOUNDED BY SIR ROBERT BADEN-POWELL, B.T.

No. 745. Vol. XVII. Official Organ of the Boy Scouts. JULY 22, 1922 Registered for transmission in Canada. Price Three Half-Pence

1½^d



Roy carefully crept along the plank to the detective's assistance. Would he be in time to prevent a tragedy?

EASTER GREETINGS FROM YOUR EDITOR

THE FUNNY WONDER—EVERY SATURDAY.

5

MARMADUKE AND HIS MA

MARMY FAIRLY TAKES THE BUN AT THE EASTER FAIR!



1. Ma took Marmy to the fair on Easter Monday, but Marmy took a bob from his pocket and took himself off. "So long, mum," he chorled. "I'm going to see if I can run across a hot cross bun man! Shan't be gone more than an hour or so!"



2. But Marmy ran across a Hot Cross Bun man sooner than he expected to. He sprinted round the fence, ran across the old lad's feet, and dropped his bob, which did the disappearing trick in a pond near by. "Coo! That has done it!" he cried.



3. "And serve you jolly well glad for running away, my lad," said ma huffily. "You shan't have any more money for being so careless! I'm going to enjoy myself all by myself now. You can do a bit of fishing—try fishing for your money!"



4. Ma did a girlish gurgle when she saw that try-your-strength machine unattended and grabbed the mallet. "I must have a smack at this!" she cried, as she laid it on nice and heavy. "Huh! She'll make a hash of it!" grinned the bun man.



5. Sure enough, ma did make a hash of it! The mallet smote the bun man's tray, tipped it up, and sent the whole collection of hot cross buns whizzing over the fence. "Ow! Now then, careless!" bellowed the bun purveyor. "What's the game?"



6. It was no game for ma, because she had to pay up for the buns. But Marmy, on the other side of the fence, saw the funny side of it, cause he got all those buns. "Ho, ho! Happy Easter, mum!" mumbled Marmy, with a mouth full of bun.

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

S.P.C.D. Edited and Published 1959 - January 1987 by Eric Fayne

VOL. 54

No. 640

APRIL 2000

PRICE £1.50

The Editor's Chat



As I write this editorial the sun is shining, daffodils in the garden are in their full blaze of glory and Spring is even lovelier than expectations. This issue of the C.D. carries my good wishes to you all for a happy Easter and for everything that this festival means in terms of life-giving renewal. Strangely perhaps, although the stories in our favourite papers so often follow the seasons, I cannot recall many celebrated series with Easter themes. (Readers will now probably draw my attention to many such!) I am grateful to Reg Hardinge for sending me the

'Marmaduke and his Ma' **Funny Wonder** Easter episode which we have reproduced on page 2.

I am glad to be able to report that I am now receiving more articles for Blakiana and the ESB sections of the C.D. However, it is always good to have pieces from a wide range of contributors and I hope that some readers who have not written for us might be tempted to do so. Short features are always particularly welcome – possible, for example, items on 'My Favourite Character' or 'My favourite Story' in Hamiltonian, Blakian, Brooksonian and all other areas of our hobby.

Brian Doyle reminded us last month that **The Scout** was the longest ever running boys paper, so I have used it for our cover this month. Do any readers have memories of this paper to share with us?

Happy Easter browsing.

MARY CADOGAN

THE LIFE THAT LED TO BUNTER

by **Una Hamilton Wright**

In 1901, when Charles celebrated his twentieth birthday, he was a short-story-writer much in demand. He wrote for boys, stirring tales of adventures at sea, stories of the Wild West and detective yarns. 1901 was the year in which Queen Victoria died and her son Edward VII came to the throne. The Boer War was nearly at an end and an age of opulence and expansion was ushered in. The brakes and restraints of the Victorian age finally came off. Charles Hamilton's upbringing and apprenticeship had been in the Victorian age, with its strict set of values and moral code. Charles matured as a writer just as more liberal ideas began to be accepted. The young had more freedom and women were establishing a claim to be people. Charles always adhered to the Victorian moral code both in his life and in his writing, but he presented youth – of both sexes – in a freer context than would have been possible in the preceding generation. He did receive some help from an old contemporary – Baden Powell and his Boy Scout Movement widened boys' horizons and gave youth a chance to develop new skills and the freedom to use them. They too were bound by the Victorian moral code and they learned to use freedom with discipline. It is interesting that *The Magnet* and *The Scout Movement* both began in 1908!

So what was Frank actually **doing** in 1901, the year of this twenty-fifth birthday? He was still writing adventure stories for boys and very much in demand. On the 3rd May, 1902, his earliest extant school story was published in *BEST BUDGET* by Arthur Pearson. At this time the younger of his Dyson cousins were still at Dulwich College and he and his sister Dolly frequently visited them during the school holidays. These four boys enjoyed their schooldays very much and their enthusiasm for football as well as school itself no doubt impressed Charles. He took an interest in their schoolwork and when any of them wrote poems or essays at school they always showed them to Charles and asked for his opinion. For Charles had already earned the respect of his family as a writer.

During these early Edwardian years, before the birth of the *GEM* and *MAGNET* in 1907 and 1908, Charles was also writing for adult magazines such as the *STRAND* and the *RED MAGAZINE*. When required, he produced a love story, but he had no feeling for this genre and though polished, his love stories appeared to be formally constructed rather than narrated. He also wrote light verse for publication and delighted in making up verbal puzzles and, later, crossword puzzles. It was a period when he expanded his range of interests, new enthusiasms which remained with him permanently.

Charles's homelife had never been tranquil. One of a family of eight he came to treasure peace and quiet – commodities very hard to come by. When he was sixteen his widowed mother had moved (after frequent house moves all through his childhood) to Mill Hill Park, Acton, West London where the family remained for eleven years, and it was here that Charles's writing life began. It was his mother's favourite house and the family was happier in it than in any other of their homes. In its leafy back garden Charles had enjoyed his twentyfirst Birthday Party. In the same year his young sister started to attend the Royal Academy of Music to study singing and thus serious music was introduced to him. Songs from the music halls had been brought home by his brother Dick and they had sung them together but it was the first time that the house had echoed to the strains of Grand Opera. Charles was prospering, his writing had earned him a camera – he developed his own plates – and he bought himself a typewriter, and bicycles for himself and sister Dolly. Meanwhile Dick married and moved to Coventry and Charles would

— A GRAND SEA-STORY BY CHAS. HAMILTON.

THE UNION JACK

16 PAGES ILLUSTRATED

1d
2

A COMPLETE BOOK EVERY FRIDAY.

LIBRARY OF HIGH CLASS FICTION

Bold British Boys!



There stood the would-be murderer, knife in hand.
He was caught. No lie could save him now.

No. 274

cycle up there to see him and they had several cycling holidays together. Charles loved the exercise and the fresh air as an antidote to sitting indoors writing. He believed in having a second string to his bow and during this pre-MAGNET period he attended art classes at a London Art School studying black and white illustration. He did occasionally get drawings accepted for publication.

Languages came to his attention during this period. His sister introduced him to an elderly lady living nearby who was proficient in Italian and French and also Latin. Brother and sister learned Italian which was essential for Dolly's singing studies. Charles also confided his love of the Latin language to the kind friend who was delighted to read the classics with him and discuss the philosophy involved.

But such idyllic happiness did not last long unbroken: in 1902, Charles's younger brother, Douglas, died of tuberculosis. It developed very suddenly and the family reeled under the shock. It is particularly poignant that Douglas contributed a certain foppishness to the character of Arthur Augustus Darcy, and also the languid calm of the puzzle-solving abilities of Lord Mauleverer. Douglas was also hard of hearing, a trait inherited by Tom Dutton of the Greyfriars Remove. Charles could not bear to continue living in the house after his brother's death and he persuaded his mother to move, this time to a larger house in Chiswick near Kew Bridge. Nearly two years later his mother married again, only to be widowed the following year.

Charles and Dolly had to find somewhere to live! She entered a boarding house run for students of the Royal Academy of Music in Upper Baker Street while Charles found various digs and stayed with this two elder brothers either in Coventry or in Essex. Finally, Charles and Dolly decided to get a flat together and in early 1907 they moved to 7 Dorset Square, just near Baker Street. I believe the building subsequently was to house the Chevron Club. It was in this flat that the GEM and the MAGNET were born. Eighteen months later they moved to a larger flat in Hampstead, Antrim Mansions, and stayed there until Dolly married in 1911. In the summer of 1908 Charles bought his first property, a bungalow on Canvey Island, near to the home of his elder brother Alex. He enjoyed holidays there, playing with Alex's young children.

Meanwhile Dolly was starting to go abroad for her holidays, first in 1905 to Grindelwald, Switzerland, and in 1907 to Norway, with quick trips to Paris in between. She tried to enthruse Charles into coming with her. He did come to the Isle of Man and found he was a very bad sailor. Eventually she persuaded him to come to Paris for a week-end. His first long trips, to Paris and then to Nice were in 1909, rather later than the period we are considering.

Dolly always took a great interest in her brother's writing and so, when he was asked to write a school story, he came home to the flat in Dorset square quite devastated. "They want me to write a story about a school, Dolly. What **can** go on in a school?" he complained. She found him later pacing up and down the dining-room like a caged animal. She gently explained to him that schools were made up of groups of people like any other people - different characters interacting with one another. The characters' motivations would be familiar, only the settings would be different. She finally soothed him and with the aid of a wet towel round his head he wrote his first instalment of a school serial.

A little earlier, Charles had his thoughts about the Billy Bunter character. He sketched out some notes and showed them to an editor who turned the idea down as not being likely to catch on. It was some years before it surfaced again. Having launched St. Jim's school in THE GEM and having been asked to launch another school in the MAGNET, which was to be started in order to accommodate it, the author thought he would try out the Bunter character. Success was immediate and his belief in his idea was vindicated.

From then on the story is well known, how these two papers dominated the boys' fiction market until paper shortages of the Second World War finished them. The author went from strength to strength, although when he had been asked to write a long serial instalment each week in a school setting he was at first dumfounded, and then anxious, fearing that he could not sustain the output, week in, week out. And a year later when he was asked to double up with **another** school and **another** paper he still suffered anxiety although the GEM was doing so well. He need not have worried, circumstances beyond his control had changed the direction of his writing life and kept him so busy that he no longer wrote to live but lived to write.... for another 53 years. I am sure that when he was twenty-five he had no idea of the success and renown that were to follow.

(Copyright Una Hamilton Wright)

REPRINT REQUEST :

John Graham – Leigh writes: One of the funniest sequences in CD appeared in nos. 327, 328 and 329 (1974) – “The Man that I Marry” by Marjorie Hazeldene, a reply by Harry Wharton and “The Lady’s Last Word”. Did you write the Harry Wharton piece as well as the other two? If not, do I detect the style of Les Rowley ? – I always enjoy Les’s pieces. Reprinting these three items together looks a good idea – any chance?

(Editor’s Note: The articles which are reprinted were originally published in 1974, during Eric Fayne’s Editorship. Although two of the pieces were written by me, the middle one, by “Harry Wharton”, is unattributed. It could well have been by Les Rowley, as John Graham – Leigh suggests...)

THE MAN THAT I MARRY

by Marjorie Hazeldene
(as reported to Mary Cadogan)

From time to time there has been discussion in COLLECTORS’ DIGEST about my relative feelings for Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. Indeed at Cliff House too I have learned to live with constant teasing from Clara Trevlyn and Dolly Jobling on this subject. (Clara doesn’t understand what I see in boys at all, as she considers girls infinitely superior in every way: Dolly is still so pre-occupied with trying to find a recipe for making decent toffee that she’d probably rather spend time with that odious Billy Bunter discussing culinary skills than give attention to Bob and Harry’s attractions.)

Perhaps C.D. readers may like to hear how I really feel about these two intriguing Removites. I must admit that in the early days of my relationship with the Greyfriars’

boys, Harry seemed to stand head and shoulders above all comers. Possibly I idealized him then, because he seemed to embody the (many) manly qualities which my poor brother Peter has always so sadly lacked! I am not ashamed to confess that time was when I thrilled to every admiring glance from Harry's dark and lustrous eyes, and no girl could help liking such a strong, resourceful and chivalrous young man. But occasionally Harry's moodiness put me off – and I learned to hate his stubborn, angry pride.

With Bob things were so different. First of all he was just a background member of the Famous Five – genial and trusting, and not too bright. But suddenly I began to realize his importance in my life. Bob, awkward and inarticulate, nevertheless made no secret of his feelings for me: they were written all over his sunny face whenever we met, and I just **had** to respond to his rugged warmth and integrity.

George Bernard Shaw – who has said some intelligent as well as many stupid things about women – made his CANDIDA eventually choose the man who needed her most. And Harry, though he admires, doesn't **need** me, as Bob does. Harry will one day be a famous leader of men – with or without help from whoever becomes his wife, while Bob may attain no greater career than games-master at the local grammar school. But to me he will always come first, cheering my moments of doubt and depression, and confirming my faith that – on the whole – men are good and honest, and can still live up to the high standards of dear old Greyfriars.

(Perhaps we should remember that it is a woman's privilege to change her mind, so the last word on this subject may not yet be spoken! Mary C.)

THE MAN THAT I MARRY

Harry Wharton pens a reply
to Marjorie Hazeldene

The totally uncharacteristic confiding by Miss Hazeldene to Mrs. Cadogan under the above heading has caused no little embarrassment to Bob Cherry and myself.

Perhaps neither of these ladies realise that 'Collectors' Digest' is widely and avidly read at Greyfriars and that both Bob and I have, as a result of the publication of these confidences, suffered much at the hands of our school-fellows. Skinner, who has been particularly offensive, is now nursing a black eye and a damaged nose. Doubtless we shall deal just as emphatically with anyone else who finds this situation funny, but fisticuffs alone are insufficient not only as a deterrent but as an indication of what Bob and I feel about what Marjorie has to say. I feel that the record should be set straight.

No fellow likes to be reminded of the weaknesses in his character and I am no exception. I do not question the truth in Marjorie's criticism of my failings, but I am very, very surprised that she should have seen fit to have voiced it to such a wide audience. It is unlike her to cause hurt to others and I feel, that on reflection, Marjorie will regret having caused hurt to me. I find, too, that she has been perhaps less than circumspect in her assessment of her brother. Can this really be the Marjorie that was always so loyal to her brother? Loyal regardless of his many weaknesses and ever ready to excuse him his faults, or so it was until she chose to compare him unfavourably with his school-fellows. I hold no brief for Hazel and we differ in many ways and it may be all very well for myself and others to call him a fathead, but blood, Miss Hazeldene, has previously been thicker than water. What has made you change?

Bob, poor old Bob, is skulking in the box room above the Remove corridor. When last I saw him, his face was as red as beetroot. He has stopped coming into Study No. 1 or into any other study including his own. We have appointed Mauly as a kind of ambassador to try and bring Bob round. He is badly needed when we meet St. Jim's next Wednesday, but how am I going to persuade him to put in an appearance for practice let alone the match itself.

Old Inky who often utters more sense than the rest of us put together opines that "Silence is the cracked pitcher that goes often to the well." I feel he means that so serious a subject as marriage should be discussed when, and only when, the time is ripe. That time, Marjorie, I feel is not yet. The world in which you, Bob, and all the others, including myself, have our beings, is a world in which little alters. We are good friends and I hope that it will always be so whether you or I are proved wrong.

THE LADY'S LAST WORD

by Mary Cadogan

When Marjorie read Harry's telling reply in the April C.D. her response was a suspicious moistening of limpid eyes, accompanied by the fervent exclamation "OH HARRY!"

Clara, however, threatened to storm across to Greyfriars immediately and drag Bob out of the box-room and down to practice – "Only a boy would let such piffing rot interfere with games!" At the same time she was looking forward with relish to blacking Skinner's other eye, and banging a few heads together.

** ** *

But actually Miss Primrose has The Last Word:

CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL, KENT

1ST April 1974

To The Editor,
Story Paper Collectors' Digest.

Sir,

Miss Connie Jackson, one of my prefects, has drawn my attention to some correspondence which you have published, concerning one of my pupils, Miss Hazeldene, in your magazine. This magazine was in the possession of one of my junior girls named Marcia Loftus, who, quite rightly, passed it on to the prefect concerned.

To say that I am horrified and astounded is to put it mildly. I presume that you are a man of years, which should have brought you common sense, but I am amazed at the lack of good taste which has allowed you to pillory one of my young ladies in this way. I may add that Dr. Locke, the Headmaster of Greyfriars, is horrified, too. So we are all horrified.

I am asking a member of my staff, Miss Bullivant, to call upon you to seek assurance that this shocking matter is now at an end.

Yours faithfully, PENELOPE PRIMROSE (Headmistress)

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: We regret that we have distressed Miss Primrose. We would not like to trouble Miss. Bullivant, and we assure Miss Primrose that the matter is now closed.)

MORCOVE'S FARM MYSTERY

by Ray Hopkins

The owner of the farm near Hadway, just prior to his death, had bequeathed his property to the two men who had worked longest for him: equal halves for Mr. James and Mr. Craven. This had seemed a satisfactory arrangement and the men at first got along adequately, though were never close friends. As the years passed they each had a daughter, Gladys James and Josanne Craven who sadly, thrown together as they were, did not hit it off so well.

One summer, Gladys invited her cousin Polly Linton of the Fourth Form at Morcove, to enjoy a holiday "down on the Farm" and the journey involving several changes by train, meant that Polly, inevitably accompanied by her Study 12 chums, did not arrive at Hadway Station until late afternoon. During the journey Paula could not resist taking out of its box and admiring an apple-green poke bonnet to which she treated herself. "I wather flattah myself that it is just the thing," she remarked. "It'll be all right," mused Polly, "if the cows don't happen to suffer from weak hearts, dear."

THE "MORCOVE" GIRLS ON HOLIDAY.



A Magnificent New
Long Complete Story
of Betty Barton & Co.

BY

MARJORIE STANTON.

Gladys was to have met them with the motor van upon their arrival but, to Polly's surprise, Josanne is there with her father's magnificent car saying she has come in the place of Gladys as she has had to go to town. Knowing how much Gladys and Josanne dislike one another, Polly is very puzzled by this turn of events and even more so when Josanne tells them they are invited to Craven Towers for tea. Their stay at the Towers, however, is short for Gladys turns up saying she has been delayed by a puncture and Josanne passed her on the road which must have given her the idea of picking up Polly and Co. The comparison between the broken-down motor van and her father's magnificent car stresses the point that Joanne's father is doing considerably better at farming than Polly's uncle.

Polly hears angry voices from an adjoining room and, recognising one of the voices as her uncle's, realises there is a quarrel in progress between the neighbouring farmers. "This persecution cannot continue. You are trying to ruin me, but you shall not succeed!" Polly's uncle shouts. Mr. Craven sneers in reply, "I never fail!" Josanne's father has persuaded Farmer James' workers, now that harvesting is due, to go and work for him for more money.

Back at his own farm, Gladys' father tells the Morcovians that he can manage to get the harvest in himself if he has six people to help him. "You want good loyal helpers – people who aren't afraid of work, and who have your interest at heart," cries Polly and,

indicating her chums and herself, says they will bring in the harvest. Morcove to the Rescue! And Betty clinches it with her oft reiterated maxim, "We'll manage!"

And manage, they do, though they have to overcome some diabolical acts of enmity on the part of Mr. Craven. First of all, the horses needed to pull the haycart are stolen, Gladys suggests the motor van can be used but they find that someone has been inside the garage deflating the tyres and damaging the valves. Gladys finds the sparking plugs have been removed and a message left on the engine stating, "No blacklegs wanted here" The girls take the place of the horses and pull the haycart.

At five the next morning, Paula announces that she will feed the cows. Gladys tells her they will feed themselves in the fields but they will have to be milked. She hands Paula a milking stool. "All you have to say is 'Woo-moo.' Then the cow will sit down on the stool." She then leaves Paula to get on with it. Paula feels the stool is too small for the cow to sit on but continues to encourage it. Gladys, chuckling at her little joke, comes back and shows Paula how it should be done.

Gladys discovers that the horses have been hidden in an old barn and gets Tess, Polly and Paula to go with her to retrieve them. They are just in time to see Mr. Craven going to the barn with one of this farm workers. Now they can catch them both with the horses and accuse Craven of having been implicated in the stealing of them. But when they open the doors it is to find the interior of the barn un utter darkness and no sign of horses or men. The doors are suddenly slammed and bolted behind them. Gladys and Co. are prisoners.

To their amazement they are released by Josanne who says she was driving past and heard their cries for help. Gladys cannot believe she is hearing correctly when Josanne expresses concern at their being locked in and regrets her father's action. She further amazes Gladys by saying she wishes Mr. Craven would stop persecuting Gladys' father. Gladys wonders at this volte-face on the part of Josanne but hasn't time to ponder on the amazing state of affairs as Josanne tells her there are two horses loose in a neighbouring field and wonders if they are the ones Gladys is looking for.

The four girls find the horses and are thanking Josanne for her help when Mr. Craven appears through the trees and upbraids his daughter for having anything to do with Gladys and her friends. Gladys, Polly, Tess and Paula ride off on the two horses feeling they have done a grave injustice to Josanne as they hear her telling her father he is not being fair to Farmer James. But the atmosphere changes when they are out of sight. "No sooner had the sound of their horses' hoofs died away than Mr. Craven's anger died with a surprising suddenness, and he had chuckled in his peculiar way, a chuckle that was well matched by his daughter's none too pleasant smile."

Apart from the old woman who helps in the farmhouse and who is often alone there while the girls are helping Farmer James with the chores, it becomes apparent that someone else is gaining entry, but for what purpose is a mystery. Books are removed from the bookcase in one of the downstairs rooms and there is strongly scented grey powder on wood surfaces. Returning to the farmhouse for a jug of cold tea, Polly glimpses a veiled woman through the sitting room window but when she throws the door open the room is empty. The old woman tells her that nobody had called while they were all out. Later that evening they hear a noise from the next room. They have a fleeting glimpse of the veiled woman before the lamp goes out. When they relight it the window is still closed but the room is empty except for the startled girls. Farmer James thinks these mysterious visits

must be connected to the scheme to ruin him. But how does the woman appear and disappear so mysteriously?

Paula Creel, who generally is portrayed as a lovable duffer in the Morcove stories, "simplering and putting her hair to rights", in this series is more wide awake than usual, possibly because she is the first to suspect that Josanne, despite her apparent disapproval of her father's actions, is up to no good. Following Josanne into James' farmhouse where she had gone to get a drink of water, Paula is unable to find her in the kitchen where the water would be available but discovers her in the dairy doing something with one of the floorboards. Paula, incredibly less ineffectual than usual, orders her out of the farmhouse.

It is Paula who, being sent by Farmer James into the town for some replacement sparking plugs and tyre valves and offered a ride there by Josanne, observes that the cunning girl is not taking her in the right direction. Paula switches off the engine while Josanne is looking elsewhere and dashes into a garage she has spotted just ahead and gets her order filled while Josanne wonders what had caused her car to slow down and stop.



THE "TOO FRIENDLY" JOSANNE!

"Fancy YOU being in a hurry, Paula!" laughed Josanne, as she lolled by the car and affectively barred the way. "I AM so pleased to see you!"

The morning after the sighting and mysterious disappearance of the veiled woman, Betty and Co. pretend that Paula's complexion has become copper coloured from the sun. Polly says she will cover Paula's face in cold cream telling her to keep her eyes closed, but actually covers her cheeks in a reddy-brown greasepaint. Not wishing Gladys to see her hidden behind a cover of white cream, Paula hides beneath her bed while the rest of the Morcovians, chuckling, troop downstairs to breakfast. She hears a sharp click in the silence and sees a long grey robe gliding along the floor. The veiled woman! Paula must capture her! She creeps from beneath the bed snatching up a blanket to throw over the interloper. As the woman turns and sees what looks like a fierce Red-Indian confronting her she utters a loud shriek, one which is echoed by Paula who finds herself staring at what looks like a deathly visage in grey powder behind the veil.

Hearing the shrieks, Betty and Co. race back upstairs only to discover Paula on the floor wrestling with an empty blanket. They think Paula imagined the confrontation. All except Madge Minden who, looking closely at the dishevelled Paula, sees that the dress is covered in grey powder. Also present is the scented smell which accompanied the other sighting of the veiled woman.

Madge covers a piece of brown paper in chalk and leaves it in front of a panel she suspects to be hollow. Later, she finds a heel mark with its back to the panel thus proving that someone has stepped through. While they are attempting to open the panel they hear footsteps approaching from inside the wall and range themselves on either side to catch the person coming through. But it is Paula who appears through the panel and tells them that the veiled woman had entered her room for a second time but turned and fled when

she saw Paula was there. Paula just manages to catch the edge of the panel before it closes.

They are interrupted by a knock at the front door. An apparently agitated Josanne, in her surprising new friendly role stands before them. She breathlessly warns them to keep a watch on the horses as she has overheard plans to interfere with them again. She also tells them that as she approached the farmhouse, a strange woman dressed all in grey, ran past her almost knocking her over. Madge, looking closely at Josanne, tells her the woman must have had a lot of grey powder on her apparel as some had wiped itself on to Josanne. Josanne, startled, raises her hand to her face. But Madge, observing her nervous movement, had meant the powder was on her clothes, not her face.

The Schoolgirl's Own



THE VEILED LADY!

A surprising incident in this week's new long complete story of the holiday adventures of Betty Barton & Co.

2nd

Josanne hurries away and Madge tells the others that her close observation of Josanne's face had shown her that the powder was on Josanne's face up near her hair line. Also, the same pervasive scent smell they had noticed on previous visits by the mystery woman was obvious as Josanne stood at the door.

"A rumbling cart was carrying away the last result of their efforts, and they watched its retreat with glad smiles. They had worked hard, all of them; but they were glad, not merely because the voluntary work was finished, but because the harvest was in as the farmer wanted it to be."

Which is how the author celebrates the conclusion of the gladly performed farming chores which meant so much to Farmer James. And now they can concentrate their energies on solving the mystery of the powdered woman in grey. Madge is sure she knows the identity of their mystery visitor but knows the problem will never be solved until they can discover the purpose of the woman's secret visits to the James' farmhouse.

Joanne returns to the farmhouse with another warning of unpleasant happenings to come: she has overheard her father instructing his henchman Higgins to set fire to the hayricks sometime after eleven o'clock that night. Grateful for the information and for the fact they now seem to have an able spy in the enemy camp, Morcove wait up in ambush determined to catch the marauder in the act. Higgins, in fact, does not turn up until half-past three but the girls are wide awake and prepared as Josanne has come on ahead to let them know his is on the way.

When Higgins arrives he is successfully ambushed by Gladys, Betty and Co. who push him down the slope into the pond. Seeing Josanne apparently witnessing his discomfiture with undisguised pleasure, he threatens to tell her father that she is consorting with the enemy but Mr. Craven, arriving at this moment, overhears Higgins' threat. He brands his daughter a traitor. "Do not call me father; you are not worthy to use that name." He shouts. And he forbids Josanne to ever come home again.

Polly's uncle comforts the stricken Josanne by telling her that her father will forgive her and come round in the end but for the time being she had better come and stay at the farmhouse. She is given a small room at the top of the house to herself and appears tearfully grateful to Farmer James for his kindness.

Madge, suspecting that the mystery woman will make another attempt to find what she is searching for, rigs up a warning light so that they will know if anyone attempts to use the secret panel in the room where the veiled woman always appears. Madge feels there must be a connection between the books that are taken out of the bookcase and the fact that the veiled woman always makes for that room but is always interrupted before her quest is finished.

When the light goes on during the night, Madge, Betty and Polly enter the secret passage from the bedroom and surprise the woman preparing to destroy a paper with a lighted candle. The paper, a will written by the original owner of the farm, leaves all his property to Mr. James. It supersedes that which had been previously acted upon in which part of the property was left to Craven. This gratifying surprise comes to them after they whisk off the heavy veil and discover that it covers the contorted furious face of Josanne. This final disclosure is no surprise to the sagacious Madge after she whom she suspected as the intruder was given the run of the house.

One disconcerting feature of this series is that nowhere does the author indicate how the mystery woman appears inside the farmhouse without her approach being observed. Surely one of the many inmates would have seen her! One idea I toyed with was that she entered via a trapdoor in the floor of one of the outbuildings leading down to a tunnel which ended beneath the farmhouse, thus making it possible for her to gain access to the secret passages. But the author never suggested this or any other method of ingress. And what would a plot involving a missing will do without secret passages, one wonders?

(This series is contained in *THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN* Nos. 131 to 134, August 1923, reprinted in *SGOL 201*, May 1929, "Morcove on the Farm").

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

The Northern Old Boy's Book Club

Golden Jubilee Celebrations

Saturday, 14th October, 2000

We welcome members of other clubs and readers of *The Collectors' Digest*
to join us in our

Celebrations of our 50 years' existence, with lunch at

The Hotel Metropole

Leeds city centre

Our Honoured Guest will be our president MARY CADOGAN

Other guests at the moment include Gillian Baverstock (daughter of Enid Blyton)
and Willis Hall (of *Billy Liar* fame)

Our evening meeting will be at the usual club venue with Mary Cadogan,
and Betty and Johnny Hopton speaking about *Our Friend Noddy*

Limited places for lunch

If you require further information re cost, hotel accommodation etc., please contact

Mr. D. Swift – 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU

Telephone 0113 267 1394

COLIN CREWE CATALOGUETTE . NUMBER 4.



BOYS' AND GIRLS' STORYPAPERS, COMICS AND BOOKS,
THE SECRETS OF THE SHELVES AND BOXES REVEALED
MONTHLY IN STORYPAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST.
12B WESTWOOD ROAD, CANVEY ISLAND, ESSEX SS8 0ED
TELEPHONE: 01268-693735. 9AM - 9PM DAILY



A MILLENNIUM CELEBRATION: TO COMICS OF THE 20th CENTURY. I salute them with this Grand List. Presenting for your pleasure: Chips, Jester, Firefly, Favorite, Funny Wonder, Pluck, TipTop, Playbox, Jingles, Eagle, Beano, Dandy, Film Fun, Radio Fun, KnockOut, and many others. You are cordially invited to sample these legendary Bobby Dazzling delights of yesteryear.

EAGLE COMIC 1957/1958. (DAN DARE). Approx 50 vg issues available. ea £3

KNOCKOUT COMIC 1960/1962. (BATTLERBRITTON) (BILLY BUNTER).
Approx 60 vg issues available of this class comic from Amalgamated Press. ea £4

KNOCKOUT COMIC 1972. 20 vg issues of this jolly comic available. ea £3

PUCK COMIC ONE PENNY 1915/1916. Charming comic of long ago with covers in full colour. 14 enchanted issues, appealing stories, sparkling strips. Good/very good. ea £6

MERRY AND BRIGHT 1927/1929. (LARRY and LEN) Just 4 good issues. ea £5

JINGLES 1946/1947. Coloured covers feature (DREAMY DENNIS) just 4 vg issues ea £5

COMIC CUTS 1948/1950 (SAMMY and SHRIMPY) Rollicking comic of yesteryear, 7 only vg ea £5

CHUCKLES 1919. Just 4 issues in splendid condition of this historic comic ea £6

LARKS 1929 (MERRY ADVENTURES OF DAD WALKER AND HIS SON WALLY) 20 issues of this scrumptiously enjoyable comic, good condition ea £5

BEANO COMICS OF 1947 (SPREAD THE NEWS!) Condition of comics is superb. They do not appear to have been read. ISSUES: 301,302,308,309,310,311,312,313,314, 315,317. The glory days of Big Eggo covers. ea £25

DANDY COMICS OF 1947/1948 (SPREAD THE NEWS!) Condition of comics is near new. If you do not believe me contact Korby the Cat for a second opinion. ISSUES: 337,338,339,340,341,342,343,344,345,346,347,348,349,350,351,352,353,354,356,357, 358,362,363,364,365,366,367,368,369,370,371,372,373,374,375. Korby the Cat, Desperate Dan, Danny Longlegs and Co. will enchant you. ea £22

FILM FUN COMICS 1951/1955 (STAN and OLLI WELCOME YOU ABOARD) ISSUES: 1648,1650,1651,1652,1653,1654,1655,1656,1658,1660,1663,1665,1726, 1732,1734,1739,1741,1744,1745,1747,1748,1749,1754,1755,1756,1762,1763,1765,1766, 1767,1769,1792,1793,1795,1796,1797,1798,1799,1800,1803,1812,1866,1867,1868. 90% vg copies ea £5

RADIO FUN COMICS 1950/1954. THE HALCYON DAYS OF STEAM RADIO when Big - Hearted Arthur ruled the Air Waves. ISSUES: 612,613,616,618,619,620, 621,627,628,629,630,633,634,635,693,696,699,705,707,708,709,711,712,714,717, 718,719,721,723,724,725,741,743,745,748,752,754,763,765,768,770,780,782,784, 786,801,814. A glorious cavalcade of stars from those early post-war days. Vg copies. ea £5

PLAYBOX COMIC (COMPLETE YEAR 1941 EVERY FORTNIGHT). 26 issues of this much remembered heartwarming comic of the early second world war years in splendid condition. Price for half year £65. Price per whole year £100.

TIP TOP BOUND VOLUME JAN-JUNE 1953. Issues 654-679 inc. Terrifically vg. £75

TIP TOP BOUND VOLUME JAN-MAY 1954. Issues 706-727 inc. Charmingly vg. £65

PLAYBOX BOUND VOLUME JULY-DEC 1951. Issues 1089-1101 inc. Scrumptiously vg. £40

PLAYBOX BOUND VOLUME JAN-JUNE 1952. Issues 1102-1125 inc. Sparklingly vg. £70

PLAYBOX BOUND VOLUME JULY-DEC 1952. Issues 1126-1151 inc. Deliciously vg. £75

PLAYBOX BOUND VOLUME JAN-JUNE 1953. Issues 1152-1177 inc. Rollickingly vg. £75

- PLAYTIME BOUND VOLUME OF YEAR 1923.** Contains 35 issues of this early comic for young readers all with splendid covers (The Field Folks Frolics) in full colour. Many famous illustrators including Leonard Shields and R J Macdonald (Long Len Hawkey Analysis). £120
- THE WONDER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, 1913.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth binding and contents very good. A Leonard Shields cover, Dork the Dog Detective, The Winged Man, A Football Serial and Harold Hood the Convict Early. (Len Hawky Analysis). £95
- PENNY WONDER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC 1912.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding and contents very good. Adventures of Marmaduke Maxine Boy Inventor. £95
- FUNNY WONDER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC 1921.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding and contents very good. Charlie Chapling – King of the Kinema. £95
- CHIPS. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JAN-JUNE YEAR 1911.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding and contents very good. Weary Willy and Tired Tom, Homeless Hector, The Flying Detective (contains Len Hawkey's Analysis of Illustrators). £95
- COMIC LIFE, HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC YEAR 1921.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding and contents very good. Delicious covers are full colour featuring Pimple – Britain's Foremost Film Comedian. Appealing stories and strips. £95
- JESTER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC 1920.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding little tatty, comics very good. Slim 'Jim', Freddy the Flunkey etc. £75
- JESTER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC 1911.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding and contents very good. Illustrators include C.H. Chapman, H.S. Foxwell and Warwick Reynolds. Enjoy Constable Cuddlecook, Lottie Looksharp (Len Hawkey Analysis). £95
- JESTER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JAN-JUNE 1917.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding and contents very good. Foxwell illustration (Len Hawkey Analysis). £95
- JOLLY JESTER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC 1921.** Amalgamated Press own file copy. Binding and contents very good. Charming stories – superb strips (Len Hawkey Analysis). £95
- JESTER. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JAN-JUNE 1920.** Mint cherry red binding. Comics very good. Cover strip Harry Coe, The Priceless Old Bean and Brucie his Bonnie Batman. £95
- PUCK. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC 1912.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding very good – comics near mint. What words can tell the news of these glorious Puck comics with delightful covers in full cover (Long Len Hawkey Analysis). £120
- FIREFLY. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JAN-JUNE 1916.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding and contents very good. Cover: Syd Chaplin The King of Keystone Comics. £95
- BUTTERFLY AND FIREFLY. HALF YEAR BOUND VOLUME, JULY-DEC 1921.** Amalgamated Press own file copy red cloth. Binding very good. Comics near mint. Be young again! read on with Marmaduke Marzipan, Butterfly Bill, Cheerful Charlie-Brown, Beatrix Buttercup and Co. £95
- FAVORITE COMIC. FULL YEAR BOUND VOLUME 1911 (VOL 1, ISSUES 1-50)** Brown cloth binding and contents very good. Another historic volume from Len's splendid collection. P.C. Duddle'um, Bertie Brightboy, Artful Alfred and Dorothy Dare the gay girl scout will entertain you. £165

TERMS: PAYMENT ON YOUR SATISFACTORY RECEIPT OF GOODS
PLUS POSTAGE AT COST. 4 ROOMS OF STOCK.
VISITORS MOST WELCOME BY APPOINTMENT. YOU WILL BE AMAZED.



FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

by Mark Caldicott

Enthusiasts of the St. Frank's or Greyfriars stories, happening upon J K Rowling's Harry Potter adventures, will (so I claimed last time) be struck by the similarity in form and feel of the old and the new. Having made that assertion, however, it is interesting to examine the differences between the two, for while it is true that the fundamental approach of the Harry Potter stories carries forward the tradition, and with it the attraction, of the old school stories, there is much, much more to their remarkable success than simply rediscovering St. Frank's or Greyfriars. This, I think, was a point missed by previous commentators in the Collectors' Digest.

Although the fundamental form of the stories is similar to the stories in the old papers, they are at the same time fused with a more recently successful genre of children's stories which we do not find in the traditional school or adventure stories of the Amalgamated Press. I am speaking, of course, about stories which take place in a fantasy world.

There is something of C S Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* here. There is also a debt to the stories of Terry Pratchett. And there is a strong element of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Indeed, the sense that there is a powerful evil force in the world against which Harry must exercise his bravery reminds me of Tolkien's evil Sauron, Lord of Darkness.

In this aspect, stories featuring the threat from a powerful outside force there is both a similarity and a difference between the Hogwarts and St. Frank's stories. In Brooks' tales, on many occasions the everyday stories of life at St. Frank's are interwoven with an account of the fight against an external force for evil – the Fu Chang Tong and other mysterious Chinamen or Indians, the Green Triangle, the Circle of Terror, and so on. This situation – where everyday school life has, at the same time, a driving theme of the fight against an external force for evil – is one of the strong similarities between the two and which draws a closer parallel than with the Greyfriars stories. By having this external and evil force it is possible to add the element of mystery and detection to the school story. Thus St. Frank's has its Fu Chang Tong or its Professor Cyrus Zingrave while Harry Potter has his Voldemort.

The difference is one of degree. Because Harry Potter's world is a fantasy world not bound necessarily by natural laws it is open to J K Rowling to develop a sense of evil from a more powerful external force than Brooks can call upon. As with Tolkien's Sauron, the character of Voldemort emanates very dark and powerful form of evil, more so, perhaps, even that the dreaded Fu Chang Tong which caused Lee and Nipper to fear for their lives and to take refuge at St. Frank's.

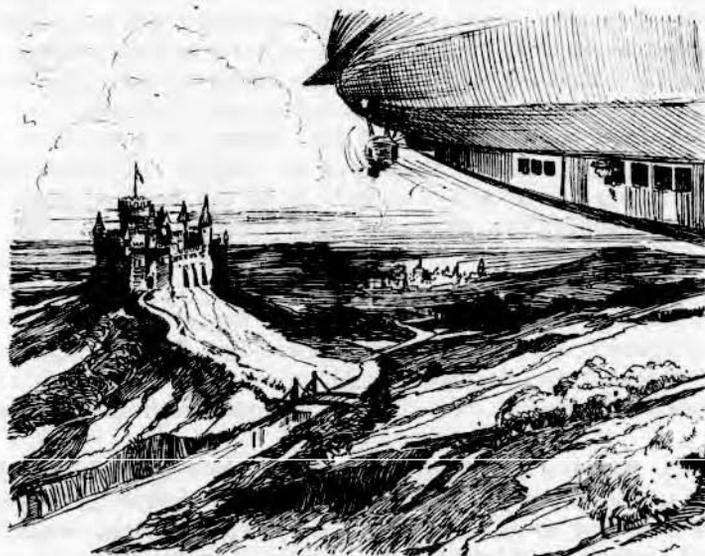
It is possible that the fantasy genre allows more scope for the development of really evil characters who can be literally inhuman. In "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of

Azkaban" (1999), for instance, there are prison guards called Dementors, cloaked and hidden figures who are:

"...among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope and happiness out of the air around them. Even Muggles feel their presence, though they can't see them. Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory, will be sucked out of you. If you can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself – soulless and evil. You'll be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life."

These are bleak, inhuman beings, more disturbing both to young and older readers than any I can recall in Brooks' yarns.

One could, of course, argue that there was fantasy in the old school stories. If Hogwarts is a parallel universe, then could we not find parallel universes in the St. Frank's yarns? Yes, of course. When, for instance, Lord Dorriemore sets out in an airship to fly towards the North Pole in search of a lost airman, Nelson Lee, the boys of St. Frank's and girls of Moor View accompany him. The airship is set adrift by storms and passes through a ring of huge volcanoes in the Arctic Circle. ("The Knights of Northestria", *Nelson Lee Library*, 1st New Series, 36, 08-Jan-27). By a miracle the airship is not destroyed, but drifts into the oasis at the centre of the volcanoes. He the land is kept warm by the surrounding volcanoes. These permanently flood the oasis with diffused



As the great airship drifted lower, a strange building was clearly revealed. "Great pip! It's an old Norman castle!" yelled Handforth. "Like the eddy old tower of London, with turrets, a keep, and— by Jove!— a moat and drawbridge!" The St. Frank's party seemed to have dropped suddenly into the Middle Ages.

radiance which, deflected into the basin, gives the effect of subdued sunlight. As a result the country is temperate and bears some resemblance to summer in Britain. The travellers are astonished to discover that the land is inhabited by people who must be descended from Goths and Anglo-Saxons. Because they have lost contact with the rest of civilization, evolution has halted and the lifestyle is exactly that of the middle ages, with moated castles, walled cities and knights in armour. Feudal lords hold sway with the peaceful Northestrian lords swearing allegiance to the Princess Mercia.

Nelson Lee and company find themselves assisting the princess in the defence of her country against Kasskar the Grim and his savage Gothlanders whose lands are divided from Northestria by an inland sea which stretches for thirty or forty miles. Lee and Dorriemore prove their worth by rescuing the Princess's captured brother from Kasskar, and Lee is put in charge of the Northestrian forces, fighting a successful campaign by introducing modern weapons of war converted from parts of the wrecked airship and its armoury.

Is this not fantasy? Brooks, in these adventures of the St. Frank's Remove, is happy to take his plots to the very edge of reason. Nevertheless, the difference between Brooks' and Rowling's approaches is that while Brooks' tales are fantastic they are nevertheless based on the premise, however tenuous, that the situation he is describing could happen within the natural laws. Brooks is happy to speak of "freaks of nature" but he does not cross the line where wizardry, magic and other devices beyond the laws of nature are introduced. In that sense it may be that I could call Brooks' creations science fiction rather than fantasy.

Brooks' characters often have seemingly fantastic or magical powers. When Sexton Blake encounters Waldo the Wonder Man, readers know they will be entertained with incredible feats. But Waldo's superhuman strength, immunity to pain and to high voltage electrical currents are all qualities explained not as magic but as freaks of nature. Brooks will even go so far as supplying footnotes to explain that these qualities, for instance the immunity to pain, are ones which have been reported in scientific journals.

St. Frank's school has its own magician, Ezra Quirke. He arrives at St. Frank's, complete with owl, and startles the school with his wizardry. He gathers together a following who believe that his powers are real. In the end, however, all the magical things he does are demonstrated to be trickery, sleight of hand and misdirection.

Brooks never allows real magic as a departure from natural laws to enter his stories. Faced with a Dementor, Nelson Lee would have fearlessly ripped away the hood to expose the charlatan beneath, since in Brooks' world they could be nothing else but human. In a magical world Dementors are not human. Harry's defence against the evil Dementors is through magic, developing the skill to use his wand to conjure a difficult and very advanced Charm which creates a barrier between himself and the power of the Dementor.

And perhaps there is a reason why Brooks, despite his willingness to explore any avenue for the sake of a plot, never does stray into fantasy. It could be that it is part of the value system which these stories espouse, that of the public school ethic, which demands that an English gentlennan would never credit such mumbo jumbo, and therefore such plot devices were taboo in St. Frank's and the other public schools.

Fantasy was not a genre which found popularity in the old story papers. Why is it, then, that these stories are so popular today? We should recognise that now for young people fantasy is not simply a literary genre. It is also the world of some of the more popular computer games such as Zelda and Final Fantasy, a form of adventure which has developed with the technology into a totally new realm of entertainment which competes with the written words. It is to Harry Potter's credit that he can persuade young people to set aside their hand-held computers and instead to hold and become absorbed in that increasingly strange phenomenon called a book.

Like Rowling, Brooks absorbed and developed his ideas from the story-telling traditions of his own time and was responsive to the demands of his readers of yesterday. Joanne Rowling has had available to her a wider range of influences. The fact that she has managed successfully to combine the two major genres – fantasy, which is so attractive to today's youngster's and the traditional adventure story so attractive to yesterday's youngsters – is possibly the key to her outstanding success. The plots have a linear development which encourages modern children, whose attention span has been shortened by modern forms and approaches to communication, to hang on in. Incidentally, as I have said, the stories also happen to be exceedingly well written, the plots beautifully constructed and then developed with an unflagging pace. She may have been influenced by many other writers but these books are still entirely her own.

It helps the C.D. if you advertise your "For Sales" and Wants in it. The rates are: 4p per word, £5 for a quarter page, £10 for a half page and £20 for a whole page.

UNBOUND MAGNETS WANTED: 64 91 95 110 204 207 215 217
219 220 221 223 227 229 230 231 253

G Good, Greyfriars, 147 Thornes Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 8QN.
Tel: 01924-378273.

WANTED: The Eye of Suda by Major Charles Gilson. Please contact John Hammond, 49 Beckingthorpe Drive, Bottesford, Nottingham, NG13 0DN. Tel. 01949 843171.

WANTED: THRILLER No. 578 and War Thrillers. Also Jigsaws depicting aircraft, wood and card. Marie Scofield, tel. 01245 460416.

WANTED: American or Canadian glossy colour comic 1940/1950? called "Freelance". Contact Johnny Hopton, Greyfriars, 6 Wellfield Road, Carmarthen, West Wales, SA31 1DS. Tel. 01267 232659.

DARRELL SWIFT WRITES:

Reading the tribute to Alan Stewart (February C.D.) brought back a happy memory when Myra mentioned that visits had been made to Jimmy Iraldi in New York.

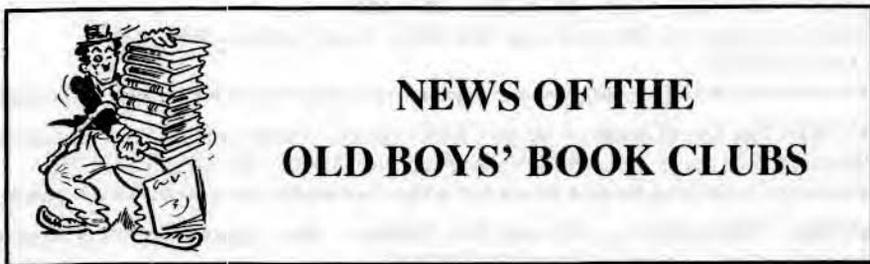
I recall with affection, the occasional letters I received from Jimmy. I cannot recall how we began our correspondence, but it must have started through our advertising for some book. At all events, he invited me to pay him a visit when I was visiting friends in the Philadelphia area.

I set off one morning by train to New York and then subway/overhead train to his local station where he met me. We had a most enjoyable afternoon at his apartment, both he and his wife making me very welcome. Naturally, there was lots of chat about the hobby! I well recall Jimmy's wife making a splendid chicken dinner before I left.

That was my first and only meeting with Jimmy, but it was a lovely occasion. I have a single sheet insert (perhaps from a C.D. Annual) of O.B.B.C. Collectors in Canada and the U.S.A. which shows pictures of collectors who had been well known in our hobby including Jimmy Iraldi as a young man and Bill Gander.

I was fascinated by Bob Whiter's article in C.D. 639 "Forever Hamiltonia". Those of us who know Bob, know that his cheery attitude is still very much to the fore and he has carried on the tradition of being a Bob Cherry look-alike, as depicted at the age of 16 in the article.

Bob did mention that he wished straw boaters had not gone out of fashion. On a visit to Andrew Miles (C.D. reader in Sydney, Australia) I went with him to the school at which he is a teacher. I was surprised to find that quite a number of the pupils (or should it be students?) both male and female, wore straw boaters as they were leaving their school. Apparently, it is not uncommon for high school students to wear such headgear. This is one up for Australia – seems they have a tradition that we in Britain have foregone. Seemingly, it is long gone in the U.S.A. where Bob lives.



LONDON O.B.B.C.

A large group of members assembled for the meeting at the London O.B.B.C.'s popular Chingford venue on March 12th 2000.

Alan Pratt examined the atmospheric "Walt Slade, Texas Ranger" series by Bradford Scott; Roger Jenkins dusted down a vintage Greyfriars word puzzle; Bill Bradford quizzed members on characters from boys' papers; Mark Taha read from a "Flashman" novel; Roy Parsons presented a wide-ranging film quiz; Bill Bradford led us down

Memory Lane and members reminisced about memorable O.B.B.C. meetings of years gone by.

As you can see, there was a lot going on!

VIC PRATT

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

11 members attended, with a number of apologies for absence.

Mark Caldicott gave a report on the recent e-mails received with regard to the Club's web site. An amazing number of enquiries had come from Norway concerning E.S. Brooks.

We decided that our informal Club dinner would be on Saturday evening, 15th April.

"Arthur Ransome – Part 2" enabled Paula Johnson to continue her talk she began in January. Arthur Ransome was of particular interest to us as he was born in Leeds. Paula told us how the books in the "Swallows and Amazons" series could be read as an individual story but it was better if possible to read the books as a series. By doing so, it was possible to see how characters were built up and were changed. "Pigeon Post" won the Carnegie Medal. Extracts were read and Paula also had on show various books about the Swallows and Amazons and the Lake District in which the stories took place, along with some Arthur Ransome Club literature.

Chris Scholey presented "Len Lex – Schoolboy Detective" who appeared in 24 issues in all of "The Modern Boy". The plots were familiar to Hamilton readers and Hamilton's habit of using identical names in his stories came through. After all someone by the name of Silverson had to have a dubious character. Being Hamilton stories, they were immensely readable and Chris had all the *Modern Boy* issues in which the schoolboy detective appeared. A very entertaining talk whetting our appetites to try and find the Len Lex stories to read for ourselves.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE CLUB REPORT

For our March 2000 meeting we gathered at the Linton home of Roy Whiskin.

After our usual short business session – which included the AGM for the Club's previous season – Roy told us about the legally-complex world of the American superhero, Captain Marvel. Maybe not to be taken too seriously by adults in this country despite the fact that the cartoon strip displays a distinctive whimsical humour – even apart from the fact that he appeared in US comic books. Created and initially drawn by C.C. Beck, Captain Marvel first appeared in 1940 in Fawcett Publication's Whiz Comics, and then from 1941 contemporaneously in Fawcett's Captain Marvel's Adventures.

The concept is simple: A crippled newsboy, Billy Batson, upon speaking the magic word Shazam [an acronym of Greek god names – Soloman, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles, Mercury] becomes Captain Marvel, an invincible superhero. Later Captain Marvel was successful enough to be given a whole Marvel family for the scriptwriters to use – more cynically one might say that because of their lack of depth the publishers sought variety of character, in this move.

Captain Marvel bore some resemblance to another, slightly older, superhero Superman, and thus became the subject of a lawsuit brought by National Publications (later D.C. Comics); this was contested for many years until, for financial reasons, Fawcett capitulated in 1953.

Superhero fiction, a borderline science fiction genre, is a story of supermen invented during the twentieth century for comics – particularly American strip cartoon comics – and since then it has infiltrated the cinema, TV, radio and books. The particular version of the superman theme that established the superhero pattern began with Action Comics in 1938 when the comic book hero Superman made his first appearance.

Superheroes possessing superpowers which were effectively magic abilities, spent much of their time struggling against crime – often crime carried out by mad scientists seeking to rule the world. American superhero comics were very popular throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and retain their popularity today: possibly because the action takes place in a comic-book version of the real world.

In the UK reprints of Captain Marvel from L. Miller & Sons had been reasonably successful despite running some seven behind American publication, thus they warranted continued independent publication. So, with new clothing, new hairstyle and a new magic word, from 1954 until 1963 and with the new character Marvelman, the publishers achieved just this. But even this character ran into further copyright infringement problems – particularly with Marvel Comics, who eventually obtained the Captain Marvel copyright in 1967.

From 1973 the concept has appeared fleetingly in various comic books.

Unfortunately the red-clad, Silver-Age superhero also-ran was eclipsed by other superheroes such as Superman [1938] and Batman [1939], although like them he has been filmed, appeared on radio and TV and been a character in books.

To conclude the meeting, Roy had set up an identity quiz concerning 1958 ITV adverts – consisting of both animation and product logo.

ADRIAN PERKINS

OCCASIONALLY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT:

Some Thoughts on the Life and Times of Mycroft Homes

Part Two

by Derek Hinrich

It is always a golden opportunity for future advancement for any able person to be involved in the beginning of a new organisation and Mycroft Holmes presumably joined E & AD within the first three years of its existence. A well-educated young man of good family with a keen analytical intelligence and a marked mathematical faculty would soon be noticed. Nevertheless, it would still be some years before he made his mark sufficiently to be taken up in the most positive way that a civil servant may be.

The great apostle of economy in government was the Rt. Hon. William Ewart Gladstone who once defined the role of the Treasury as looking after candle ends. There can be little doubt that it was his eagle eye which discerned particularly the talents which Mycroft Holmes so assiduously displayed, the more so, perhaps since Gladstone was in opposition in the latter half of the seventies, when indeed he resigned the leadership of the Liberal party after its defeat in the 1876 election (the PAC is always a powerful tool

of the Opposition which always provides its Chairman from among its more prominent members). After the reversal of fortune at the polls four years later, however, it was manifest that only one man could lead the new government and Gladstone became both Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer in April 1880. So began the "Bellinger" epoch and at some stage thereafter Mycroft Holmes must have been invited to join the Prime Minister's Private Office. At this time Mycroft Holmes would have been in his early or middle thirties.

To be chosen for a Minister's private office, and above all for the Prime Minister's, is to be a man of mark in the Civil Service and in those days there could be no more pivotal position for a public servant. There was no Cabinet Office then, indeed no Cabinet Secretariat until December 1916, so inevitably any central role fell upon the Prime Minister's Private Office.

In common with the rest of the Service then, private offices were small, consisting of the Private Secretary and perhaps two First Class Clerks and, in those days before the advent of typewriters like Mrs. Laura Lyons, a number of copyists – tenpennies⁽⁶⁾ no doubt – though the volume of business could be large: in one week in June 1880 Gladstone's Private Office received over 500 letters.

No doubt Mycroft Holmes's service in the Private Office would have begun in the customary fashion: referring most correspondence to the Private Offices of the appropriate Secretaries of State for reply, drafting on those to be answered from Downing Street or even dealing with some of those which it was decided should be answered officially. Gradually, however, he would have become involved in the digesting of memoranda from the different departments on various problems of common concern to provide the Prime Minister with a summary of the different positions and, at some stage thereafter, have begun to add conclusions and an overview. Thus he might have dealt with a matter concerning the Navy, India, Canada, and the bimetallic question; or perhaps, later, with one involving a politician, a lighthouse, and a trained cormorant. One thing in government is certain: he would have had at his disposal a comprehensive filing system (good old index!) to complement his formidable intellectual powers. He would, however, have had to tread carefully at times for otherwise he might easily have overstepped the fine line between the official and the political: but if he did teeter there occasionally he did not overbalance for after Gladstone left office in 1885, Mycroft Holmes remained to serve Salisbury, Gladstone (again), Rosebery, Salisbury (again), Balfour, and Campbell-Bannerman.

The simplest explanations are usually the best. I suggest that when Sherlock Holmes first introduced Watson to his brother, he described Mycroft Holmes' occupation accurately as he then knew it. His brother was either still employed in the Exchequer and Audit Department and it was not until later in 1882 that he was invited to transfer to Downing Street or – and this is perhaps less likely – he had not yet told Sherlock Holmes of his translation. Sherlock Holmes's remarks in 1895 that he had not felt able to disclose his brother's position fully to Watson as he did not know him well enough in '82 were mere persiflage.

It is striking that Mycroft Holmes should have been content to remain at the same desk in the seat of government – no matter how unique – for some twenty-five years. Other Civil Servants of transcendent ability having proved themselves in Private Offices

move on to higher things, some of them to become eventually the permanent heads of departments (for example, Mycroft's near contemporary, Sir Algernon West)⁽⁷⁾. In remaining in his indispensable position for so long, Mycroft Holmes displayed a degree of altruistic patriotism unique in even the British Civil Service.

But whilst he may not have moved to another office, it must surely be doubtful that he would in fact have been content to have remained on the salary of a 2nd Class Clerk (1st Section) of the Exchequer and Audit Department while sometimes embodying the British Government, even though in Victorian times junior posts carried greater responsibilities than they do today (consider, for example, all those inspectors who consulted Sherlock Holmes: Gregson, Lestrade, Hopkins, Macdonald etc, would now be Superintendents or Chief Superintendents). Perhaps Sherlock Holmes simply did not know how much his brother earned later in his career. Gentlemen, at least in theory, do not talk about such things. After all we know little about Sherlock Holmes's own scale of fees except that they did not vary save when they were remitted altogether. I suggest, therefore, that Mycroft Holmes could not have earned less than a principal clerk in the Treasury (£900-£1200 in 1895) and even this seems little enough but it would put him at parity, or more, with ministers' private secretaries, though given the unique nature of his post, a permanent secretary's stipend would perhaps not have been inappropriate.

Because of Mycroft Holmes's involvement in the Bruce-Partington case there has grown up a general assumption that amongst his manifold responsibilities he acted as the Government's security co-ordinator. This is a plausible but possibly misguided view, at least for the earlier part of his career. The evidence is naturally vague. While his brother's functions as outlined by Sherlock Holmes could be described as of an intelligence nature in the sense of the collection and evaluation of information, his role at that time was rather that of a one man "thing-tank" than of a Security Co-ordinator because in 1895 there was, to all intents and purposes, no security to co-ordinate.

In the 127 years between 1688 and 1815 Great Britain was at war with one or more European power (usually more!) for 66 of them. There was a need for foreign intelligence and for a guard against internal subversion by Jacobites or Jacobins. These needs were met by the employment of spies and informers by the Foreign and Home Offices. Secret Service monies were regularly voted for these purposes (and for the bribing of MPs and electors).

In the long peace following Waterloo secret expenditure declined. Foreign agents were no longer employed to any extent. The Deciphering Branch of the Foreign Office, which had been hereditary in the Willes family since 1703, was abolished in 1844 just as the introduction of modern postal and telegraph services was creating greater opportunities for the interception of messages and the gathering of sigint⁽⁸⁾. With the collapse of Chartism after 1848 counter-subversive measures had also lapsed until the Fenian outrages of the 'eighties had led to the creation of the Special Irish Branch, later the Special Branch, of the Metropolitan Police, but by 1895 this, too, had dwindled to minor importance despite a flurry of anarchist⁽⁹⁾ activity for a year or two in the early nineties. *(To be concluded)*

FOOTNOTES

(6) Griffith p16, "by the eighteen seventies, the general pattern of the Service consisted, so far as recruitment went, of three main divisions: higher, lower, and casual, the latter category

consisting of writers employed at low rates for copying. There were two hourly rates of pay, for boys and for men, and that is why some copyers were called 'fourpenny's' and some 'tenpenny's'. Contemporary accounts show that they were a strangely assorted crew, including an ex-colonel of the Grenadier Guards – 'betting and bad luck had brought him down to the level of a tenpenny'.

- (7) Sir Algernon Edward West (1832-1921), the very epitome of a candidate nominated by "persons of political influence". His father was Recorder of Kings Lynn and his maternal grandfather the second Earl of Orford. After Eton and two terms at Christ Church, Oxford, reading divinity, he was appointed to a clerkship in the Inland Revenue in 1851. He was Private Secretary to Gladstone as Prime Minister in 1868 and Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue in 1881-1892 where he first introduced the use of typewriters into the Civil Service.
- (8) *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* by Christopher Andrew, Sceptre edition 1986, p.24.
- (9) Including "the French anarchist Martial Bourdin, who blew himself up while attempting to demolish the Greenwich Royal Observatory in 1894, (and) provided Joseph Conrad with the inspiration for his novel, "The Secret Agent" – Andrew pp46-47.



MISS DEATH

by Reg Hardinge

Crime Fiction with a Yuletide setting has always fascinated me. Agatha Christie's 'Hercule Poirot's Christmas' is one of the finest of this genre, and Gwyn Evans's Christmas specials for the *Union Jack*, are not far behind, starting with 'The Mystery of Mrs. Bardell's Christmas Pudding' (1925) he wrote seven stories in this series, ending with 'The Masked Carollers' (1932).

Gwyn Evans contributed fifty-seven stories in all to the *Union Jack*, plus one serial 'The Next Move', in collaboration with G.N. Philips, G.H. Teed and R.F.M. Raydon. He created five outstanding characters: Ace Fleet Street Crime Reporter, Splash Page; Gun-Toting American Investigator Ruff Hanson; Mr. Mist, the Scientist with the Disfigured Face; Julius Jowes, the Editor of the 'Daily Radio', who employed Splash Page; and Miss Death, the girl with only six months to live.

Evans's racy style was quite gripping. Sometimes he wrote with his tongue in his cheek, but he was imaginative as well, for instance, his special Christmas story 'The Masque of Time' (1929) embraced Einstein's theory of relativity and was developed along the lines of H.G. Wells's 'Time Machine'. His wit was keen too. He described a tubby gentleman as being 'inclined to equatorial plumpness'.

'The Book of Death' (U.J. No. 1323) concerned itself with Diana Temple, a pretty twenty-two year old who exuded a subtle air of distinction with her dark-lashed blue eyes and perfect profile. She had been private secretary to Sir Julius Schonberg, the head of a large clothing firm in Leeds. She suffered from a heart complaint, and a trip to London to consult the eminent Harley Street specialist, Sir Ormond Kent, elicited the fact that she had barely six months more to live.

Diana decided to devote the short time left to her in playing the role of a female Robin Hood – robbing the rich to help the impoverished. So, masking her face with a grinning skull, cunningly constructed of papier maché and calling herself Miss Death, she carried out a series of burglaries. On the last occasion, she discovered in the safe of a blackmailer, a stout, leather-bound, bulky volume, hasped and locked, which contained the names of dozens of well-known society people with scores of unsolved crimes with which they were linked. It was a veritable gold mine which she could use for her altruistic purpose, to benefit the poor and needy, particularly in her native Yorkshire.

Gwyn Evans liked to introduce groups of people into his tales, and in his output we meet the Shadow Club, the League of Robin Hood, the League of Onion Men and the Double Four. Miss Death contacted and induced to come to Leeds, where she had installed herself, a group of some of the most infamous scoundrels of the London criminal fraternity. Inspector Coutts was alarmed at the Northbound exodus of rogues.

Soon Leeds was afflicted by a series of burglaries. When the safe in Sir Julius Schonberg's clothing factory was burgled and £10,000 taken, he engaged Sexton Blake to investigate the matter. Blake and Tinker's enquiries reached a thrilling climax with a gun-battle in which Blake was wounded in the left shoulder. However, many of the crooks were arrested, which annoyed Diana Temple immensely. Blake, recovering from his wound, received a note signed by Miss Death accusing him of interfering with her projects, and ordering him to return to London or else she would take drastic action. His response was to remain in Leeds. Soon he was involved in the next encounter with her, in Sheffield.



The woman had no face! Glaring at him derisively was the fleshless white mask of a human skull.

A FELLOW OF DELICACY

by Ted Baldock

Gradually, however he (Bunter) emerged into the limelight,
and at long last practically 'Stole the show'.

Frank Richards, Autobiography

It is odd that the central theme in many of the Greyfriars stories should dwell upon the of times villainous behaviour of William George Bunter. (Was not the 'Magnet' designated officially for years as 'Billy Bunter's Own'?) It is true that his fearful shortcomings *did* throw into sharp relief the decent conduct of most of the other characters. Yet for years, week by week, we were fascinated and held enthralled by the deceit and quasi-black-guardism of the podgy 'Owl', and it may still be affirmed that we loved him – a strange paradox.

Veracity and Billy Bunter have never been on anything more than tenuously distant nodding terms. Prevarication came naturally to the Owl of the Remove for his desired ends.

One can readily appreciate the feelings of despair and bewilderment of Mr. Quelch when confronted by a fat junior intent upon evading facts at any cost. The Remove master, well known among the members of his form as a 'Wily old bird', was rarely found lacking in perception, hence the many painful episodes in which the official ash and Bunter played a central part.

Billy Bunter and 'Tuck' have long been considered in the same breath! The Owl's ideas of propriety regarding comestibles were extremely vague to the point of being almost non-existent. *Meum* and *tuum* meant nothing to him. Should he chance to discover a cake in another fellow's study cupboard, the die may be said to have been irrevocably cast.

No question of ownership was relevant in such a situation. Bunter had found a cache of 'tuck', therefore that cache became the property of his podgy self. A fact he would proceed to demonstrate with speedy – and furtive – masticatory activity plus a liberal distribution of crumbs.

The Remove fellows knew their Bunter from long and bitter experience. They usually, with commendable forethought, kept all foodstuffs discreetly locked away, but being human they had lapses. A fellow would sometimes forget this very necessary precaution. Woe to that fellow!

Like an ant-eater detecting honey in a tree the Owl would be drawn instinctively to that un-locked cupboard and all would be lost. Having completed his nefarious mission Bunter would fade quietly and swiftly from the scene – to seek pastures new.

Far from being a 'one man band', as it were, Bunter's predatory instincts were not confined solely to the acquisition and consumption of food. His horizons were far wider. As an example, a fellow's wardrobe was never secure should the Owl require the odd garment such as a waistcoat or a pair of trousers.

Here, of course, there would be certain snags. Billy Bunter's circumference, or as he succinctly puts it, 'My athletic figure you know', compared with that of the majority of other fellows, was not entirely compatible. This presented a very tangible problem. Problems, however, with a little ingenuity may be happily overcome. They presented very little inconvenience to Bunter. Take a waistcoat as an example. A neat slit up the

back of the garment would enable the buttons to contact their respective button-holes with little straining. Such methods, of course, presented certain problems for the unfortunately owner later. But this was of no concern to the fat Owl, who, like a good soldier, never anticipated trouble when events were flowing smoothly his way.

Trousers too had their problems. A slit at the back was essential. This would cause them to hang in a somewhat rakish manner which could cause embarrassment, should anything come adrift, but it was a risk Bunter had to take. Also he had suffered agonies with Lord Mauleverer's elegant footwear, and much sharper discomfort when he had eventually been kicked by his lordship who, upon these occasions, became remarkably wide awake – and active.

THE

Magnet

1d
2

LIBRARY VOLUME 3. NUMBER 70.

A Grand School Tale of
GREYFRIARS COLLEGE.

Complete Story for All.

By Frank Richards.



A SURPRISE FOR BUNTER! "You untruthful little wretch!" gasped Miss Clara, breathless with her exertions. "Take that, and that!"

On a kinder note, one of Bunter's few saving graces was his affection and regard for the 'Mater'. Selfish and thoughtless to a degree, yet he was always deeply concerned if he received news that she was unwell or in any other predicament. Any fellow who harbours such feelings of filial concern surely cannot be entirely 'written off'. Within his podgy breast there existed much good, much to be commended. Characteristics which, sadly, were greatly out-numbered and often almost obliterated by his less admirable traits.

The question has been asked why Billy Bunter remains such a popular figure? How is it that having so many undesirable, indeed rascally, characteristics he achieved and retained so much popularity over the years which earned for him the surprising sobriquet 'The Million Pound Schoolboy'. This, after almost a century still seems not to fade.

He was a winner from the word 'go'. Carry on Bunter, you old ass together with your unacceptable habits and ways. A niche is surely reserved for you in the literary hall of fame, where it is to be hoped there will be a tuckshop close by.

We who saw your birth and development are surely privileged to be 'of that time'.

When I glance along the ranks
Of books that I've loved most
There's little doubt I give my thanks
To the 'Magnet' host.
What magic did Frank Richards spin
As weeks went drifting by,
How many hearts did Greyfriars win,
How many hopes held high?
The shade of Bunter lingers yet.

BOOK REVIEW by Mary Cadogan

Mr. Hoopdriver's Honeymoon by Lawrence Price £3.10p, including postage and packing: available from the author at 21 Baytree Road, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset BS22 8HG).

This small (16 pages) but enjoyable book has been written by Lawrence Price, a reader of, and contributor to, the C.D. It consists of two stories about Mr. Hoopdriver, a character originally created by H.G. Wells in 1896 in 'The Wheels of Chance'.

The stories have charm and period atmosphere. The longer one has a Kentish seaside setting: the other is a Christmassy fantasy. Anyone who enjoyed reading Well's original stories about this engaging draper and cyclist will find pleasure in Lawrence Price's two stories which offer warmth, wit and pleasing escapism from the sometimes hectic tempo of the twenty-first century.

WANTED: Video tapes of old films, especially THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI 1919 and FALLING FOR YOU 1933. John Bridgwater, 5a Saulfland Place, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 4QP.



COPYRIGHT. This non-profit making magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents, either wholly or in part, without written permission from The Editor, is strictly forbidden.

Editor: Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 6PY

Printed by Quacks Printers, 7 Grape Lane, Petergate, York, YO1 7HU. Tel. 01904-635967