

STORY PAPER

COLLECTOR'S DIGEST

December
2000

VOL 54

No 648



ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER

STILL — WILLIAM



THE MOST POPULAR
William
BOY IN FICTION

JUST HIS LUCK!

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W.H. GANDER

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Once again the festive season is upon us and, as always, I have put together with great pleasure this seasonable issue of the C.D. It is, as you will see, an enlarged number, and the extra pages are my Christmas present to all you loyal and supportive readers.

I think you will agree that it is full of good things, and I hope that it will add to your enjoyment of Christmas. By the time you receive this issue, you will probably also have received your copy of the Annual. I have already "trailed" most of the contents of this: it is a really outstanding volume and, if you have not yet ordered a copy, I hope you will do so without delay. (The cost is £12.50 for UK readers and £13.50 for those who live abroad.)

This is the season when we particularly remember absent friends and think of the pioneers of our magazine, the Clubs and our hobby. It is also a time to thank all our wonderful contributors who keep the C.D. going with such

vitality and strength I am grateful to them, and also to the hard-working staff at Quacks, our printers, for all that they do to help with the production of the C.D. Of course, my thanks and appreciation are also due to all subscribers to the magazine, which depends upon your great and sustained loyalty and support.

I hope that the true spirit of the Season will bless you and yours. May peace, joy and goodwill surround you, in abundance.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL.

Mary Cadogan

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

For some time now I have been struggling to fulfil the onerous task of bringing out the C.D. every month. I have managed to do so for thirteen years, but the time has come for re-organization of the magazine's schedule.

To safeguard my health, and to have more time for my family and friends, my own writing and other interests, I have decided that from the beginning of 2001 the C.D. will be a QUARTERLY magazine and no longer a monthly. I feel sure that readers will understand that I need to arrange things in this way, and I hope that you will all continue to support the C.D.

There will be four issues each year, in March, June, September and December. Each issue will be DOUBLE the present size – that is 64 pages instead of 32. This means that during the year you will receive the *equivalent* of 8 C.D.s (of the *present* size) rather than 12.

All subscriptions will be adjusted accordingly. Whatever you have paid will be used for the new format magazines and you will, of course, find that the subscriptions you have paid will now cover a longer period.

I know that many readers will be sad no longer to receive a monthly C.D. However, we all want our magazine to continue, and I am sure that to make it a quarterly is the only way forward. – M.C.



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OLD JOYS by Ted Baldock

Fine old Christmas, with the snowy hair and
The ruddy face, had done his duty that year in the
Noblest fashion, and had set off his rich
Gifts of warmth and colour with all the
Heightening contrast of frost and snow

George Eliot. *The Mill on the Floss*



The day is approaching. The exact date is known. Have we not marked it with red ink on our calendars long since? The day when 'IT' is published. There lies the all-significant clue.

It could be a book, a paper, a journal or a proclamation – anything. It is more important and of far greater moment than any mere book or magazine.

Books are good friends whose constancy and loyalty are accepted naturally. Our anticipation is not for a book in the accepted sense, yet it is something of equal importance with our most favourite of books. It is nothing less than the Christmas number of the *Magnet* looked forward too with such anticipation for weeks past.

The Christmas number of the *Magnet*. What magic there is in that one short sentence. A bumper double issue, twice its normal size. An extra long main story of Harry Wharton and Co., involving a mystery and much fun over the holidays, together with numerous other seasonable articles, the cover fringed with holly depicting a festive scene at snow-bound Wharton Lodge. There is a roaring fire blazing in the wide grate. The groaning board is heaped with rich fare and is surrounded by happy faces prominent among which is that of William George Bunter with the broadest of smirks upon his fat features, with his spectacles gleaming. He is in his element with a large wedge of cake in one hand and a brimming glass of ginger 'pop' in the other – the very epitome of smug contentment.

In the background is standing a smiling and portly Wells, who is responsible for the splendid spread. A glimpse through the leaded window reveals that it is snowing heavily. It is obviously one of those old fashioned Yuletides when it never failed to snow at the right time. It is a scene redolent of another age, perhaps a less sophisticated and simpler age when it was easier to amuse more imaginative youthful readers.

This glorious issue will convey, among a host of other joys, laughter, adventure, midnight alarms following the telling of ghost stories, feasting and most probably, night-time expeditions by Billy Bunter in the area of the kitchen. There will also be snow-fights, and skating on the lake which never fails to freeze to the required density over the festive season.

All these things we expect to finding this great issue – and never are we disappointed.

If there is an outdoor scene, it may depict a cold and whirling night of wind and storm. A dark, sinister-looking house with no lights visible, surrounded by wind-tossed trees. In the foreground, gazing upon this dismal scene, a group of well coated figures wearing Greyfriars caps, with Bunter being evident once more and looking less than happy on this occasion. Mystery and adventure are in the air. How we long to make a start on chapter one! Such was the attraction of those wonderful old Christmas numbers.

On a Christmas Eve some hundreds of years ago, the wicked Earl of Reynham was found murdered! According to legend, the phantom of the wicked earl haunts the castle—and it is death to meet him! Plucky as they are, the thought of the ghostly vision is unnerving to Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, who are spending the Christmas vacation at the castle.

The Wraith of Reynham Castle!



Johnny Bull stepped behind the ghostly figure in the doorway, a thick stick gripped in his hand!



Billy Bunter lighted up—puffing out smoke with a great air of enjoyment. "Dash it all, put on a smoke, you fellows!" he said. "Quelch hasn't got his eye on you now! Be men for once—like me!"

It is memories like these that enable senior 'Boys' to look back and ponder and re-live once more their youthful enthusiasms. It has been truthfully said that the boy is father to the man. In the make-up of most of us this boy has been carefully nurtured and not allowed to fade or diminish with the passing years. Sympathy must go to the man who has, at some point along the road, lost this 'Boy', the fellow he once was. He has indeed lost something very precious.

Finger-tips red and frozen from recent snow fights were not too cold to turn the pages of this fascinating Christmas number which was read as we sat by a blazing fire, with the cheery and 'eloquent' rattle of cups and saucers from the direction of the kitchen giving timely hope of tea in the offing.

Those were pleasures to be treasured in the memory, to be brought forth again and again in later years, and held in very special regard and affection.

That the *Magnet* was a brightly burning light throughout our boyhood – and beyond – there is little doubt. It is also certain that much of the aura of those now far distant days is reflected yet in our general outlook and attitudes.

Greyfriars 'Men' are a unique breed. Circumstance, age or change cannot alter their perpetual enthusiasm for the joys of yesteryear. They are an evergreen species, a special band of brothers who, each year on the anniversary of the cherished 'Christmas Number', do not fail to raise a brimming glass of Mrs. Mible's 'best' to the memory of Charles Hamilton – the founder of the feast.

CHRISTMAS AT THE THEATRE

BRIAN DOYLE looks at some of the many plays produced to entertain children at Christmastime - but *not* at pantomimes (since they would make an entire article in themselves!).



When you think of children's theatre entertainment at Christmas, that exciting and heady annual treat for so many youngsters over the years, you often think of pantomime, with its gawdy glitter, bright lights, noise, comedy slapstick, 'in-jokes' about TV soaps, pop-songs, a bit of dancing and audience 'participation' singalongs; and lots of rather broad, often 'adult' humour, all too frequently unsuitable for children. All very well and traditional in its way, of course, but....

Here, I'm going to talk about Christmas *plays* (sometimes with music) for children (and for any ages too!) – stories of fantasy and magic and whimsy and enchantment, without a comedian in sight (or sound) and where the only sound of 'pop' was connected with coloured balloons, and where *Top of the Pops* meant a favourite ginger-flavoured soft drink.... The 'straight' play, in other words, told simply and often delightfully without any vaudevillian distractions or music-hall mayhem.

I hope that some of the titles, artistes and stories might revive a memory or two; and, even if you never saw any of them yourself, you may have heard your mother or grandmother, or aunt or uncle, remembering them nostalgically.

So, as I said, I'm not including pantos, or such memorable productions as *Where the Rainbow Ends* or *Bluebell in Fairyland* (I covered those two comprehensively in the *SPCD* in the issues of December, 1993 – January, 1994, and October-November, 1994 respectively), or even productions of *Peter Pan*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Toad of Toad Hall* or *A Christmas Carol*, because they have been (until fairly recent years anyway) regular annual presentations and could have a whole article devoted to each of them!

I have spotlighted ten of the most popular and acclaimed Christmas plays for children from 1908 to 1947, where I have 'drawn the line'. Later, of course, came the popular 'Billy Bunter' plays (1958-63), *Noddy in Toyland*, Rupert, Winnie-the-Pooh, The Famous Five (*Blyton's not Richards'*), *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, even *Larry the Lamb in Toytown*, for a year or two, plus many others.

Pinkie and the Fairies by W. Graham Robertson received only two productions at His Majesty's Theatre, London – in 1908 and 1909, but was quite famous and fondly remembered for many years afterwards. Presented by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's renowned stage company, it was about a little girl and her adventures in Fairyland. It became such a much-loved play that it's a mystery why it was never ever revived.

Maeterlinck's famous fairy story *The Bluebird* was produced at London's Haymarket Theatre for three years' running – 1909, 1910 and 1911. It was an allegory of the search for the 'bluebird of happiness' by a woodcutter's children and had a moral or two – or three. Their search takes the children into the past, future and to the Land of Luxury – but they eventually find what they are seeking in their own backyard! A revival was produced in the early-1920s and another around 1960. The story was filmed in Hollywood in 1940 and starred Shirley Temple. A much bigger-scale picture was made in Russia in 1976, with an all-star cast, including the-then 8-year-old Patsy Kensit – now 3 times married and divorced at 32! Presumably, she's still searching for her own personal 'bluebird of happiness'...

The Windmill Man was written by Frederick Bowyer, who was probably best-known for his popular musical comedies, and for his music-hall songs for such stars as Marie Lloyd. It has eleven consecutive productions in London, as well as several tours in the provinces and suburbs, beginning in 1921. The story was about a young Prince and his sister, a Princess, who learn to do better after being punished by their toys. Many of their adventures take place in Toyland, which is reached through a magic door in a windmill. The Windmill Man is the Ruler of Toyland and has magic powers. I happened to see a production of this play (with music and songs) at the Lewisham Hippodrome, in South London, in 1948, guest starring George Robey, then nearing 80. When I asked for his autograph at the stage door afterwards, he winked and drew me a self-portrait, duly signing that for me. I remember that he had a hoarse voice, rather like that of Leslie Henson. Robey was knighted in January, 1954, and died later that same year. There was a book-version of *The Windmill Man*, adapted from the play by Audley Hay Johnston and illustrated by Cora E.M. Paterson.

I first heard of *Buckie's Bears* in Angus Wilson's short story *A Little Companion* included in his book *Such Darling Dodos* (1950), in which it was mentioned, with *Where the Rainbow Ends* as a 'must-see' at Christmas. It was very popular in its days (the mid-1930s) and received 4 consecutive productions in London. It was written as 'a play for

children' by Erica Fay and Harry Buffkins (who sounds rather like a character in the play himself!). The curious thing is that 'Erica Fay' masked the identity of Dr. Marie C. Stopes, the well-known pioneer in the fields of birth control, family planning and sex education! Her famous and controversial book *Married Love* had been published in 1918. (You are now entering a 'No Puns, Please' Sector...!) The music was by Eric Grittin. 'Buckie' made his bow at the Playhouse Theatre, London, in 1933, and the characters included (apart from Buckie, the small-boy hero himself), a Fairy Queen, Buckie's mother and father, a whale, a zoo-keeper, a baby polar-bear, and a policeman. The play was revived at various London theatres over the next three years. The 1935 production at the Garrick was of particular interest since it saw the professional debut of child actress Glynis Johns (later a major British movie star, of course) as 'Ursula'; Buckie's Mum was portrayed by Alma Taylor (a one-time silent film star).

The Magic Marble, a children's play with music, by Tom Macauley, was presented at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London, in 1935. The cast included Audrey Cameron, who was in later years to produce the popular *Just William* series on BBC Radio, and also Rosamund Barnes, who was to play 'Ethel Brown' in the same series (she played the little-girl heroine - 'Tumpy').

The Boy Who Lost His Temper, a fantasy by Rica Bromley Taylor (with music), made the first of its three consecutive Christmas appearances at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, in 1936. This was especially notable for the portrayals of Miss Tripaway and Mr. Teachem by a new young comedy player named Arthur Askey. After his second appearance, in the 1937 production, he went on to 'make his name' in the popular landmark BBC Radio series *Band Waggon* in 1938, after which he never, as they say, 'looked back' - not even, presumably, at *The Boy Who Lost His Temper*.

J.B. Fagan's adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (first produced in 1922) was at the Savoy Theatre, London, in 1937 and again in 1938. In the latter production, Long John Silver was Malcolm Keen, and pirate Israel Hands was his real-life son, Geoffrey Keen (later seen in many British films and TV productions). Young hero, Jim Hawkins, was played by Kenneth Connor, later a star of numerous 'Carry On' films!

Many Christmas presentations of *Treasure Island* followed over the years; in more recent times, the Fagan version was succeeded by the Bernard Miles version, at the latter's Mermaid Theatre, in London, with Miles himself as Long John Silver (when he received his peerage, Miles became known among fellow-actors as 'Lord John Silver').

Now here's a highlight of the list! And I can vouch for it since I saw it myself, as a 14-year-old schoolboy! Robert Donat produced and presented *The Glass Slipper*, a fairy-tale with music, written by Herbert and Eleanor Farjeon, music by Clifton Parker, at the St. James's Theatre, London, in 1944. Donat originally wanted Deborah Kerr to play the role of Cinderella (called simply 'Ella' here), since she was a close fiend of his at the time, but she wasn't available and one Audrey Hesketh played it. The handsome Prince, who fell in love with Cinders, was none other than a youthful Michael Anthony, who in later years put on (with his actress-wife Bernadette Milnes) all the 'Billy Bunter' Christmas plays in London. This was a straight presentation of the 'Cinderella' story, and quite lavish, with 16 beautiful sets, the Ballet Rambert, and a full orchestra. Clifton Parker, who wrote the delightful music, became well-known for his scores for many

British films, including *Blanche Fury* (1947), Disney's *Treasure Island* (1950), *Sea of Sand* (1959) and *Sink the Bismarck* (1960). He also married a leading dancer in the show!

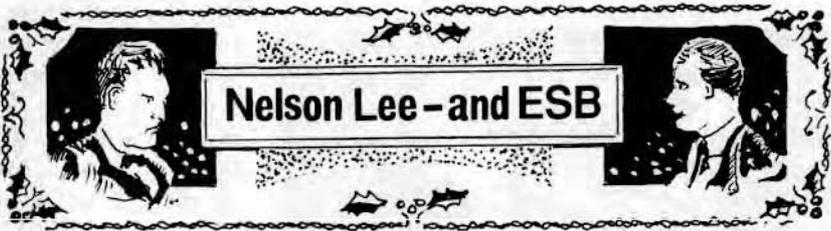
The Glass Slipper was revived in 1945, with lovely Sara Gregory (from Australia) taking over as Cinderella. She was pretty and acted and sang well; I wonder what happened to her? Maybe the Ugly Sisters finally caught up with her. Again the critics loved the show and Robert Donat had hopes that it might become a Christmas perennial, like *Peter Pan*. But it was not to be. Laurence Olivier's production company bought the rights, but never produced it. These two versions were the only ones ever seen, sadly. A book version, written by Eleanor Farjeon and illustrated by E.H. Shepard, was published in 1945, and an MGM film version (differing wildly from the original play) and starring Leslie Caron and Michael Wilding, was released in 1954; it was not a success.

The Land of the Christmas Stocking, a fantasy play for children by Henry D.G. Ford and Mabel Buchanan, with music by the latter, appeared at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, in 1945. The story was about two children, Tilly and Tom, and their nurse, who do not believe in Father Christmas. When the white-bearded one hears about this spot of disbelieving sacrilege, he has them transported to the Island of Nursery Rhymes, where rhyme is all and reason naught. You could write it yourself from then on, couldn't you? Lots of loveable and off-beat characters and some catchy songs, by all accounts. An old friend, Richard Goolden (forever identified as 'Mole' in the many productions of *Toad of Toad Hall*) put in an appearance as 'An Odd Man'. Revivals followed in 1946 and 1948, and a book version, by Mabel Buchanan, illustrated by A.E. Bestall (of 'Rupert' fame) was published in 1948.

Our old friend 'Just William' made his stage debut in 1946 at the Granville Theatre, Walham Greene, Fulham, London, with the full BBC Radio cast from the extremely popular series, including John Clark as William. The production subsequently toured, and I not only saw this presentation but also the one at the Lewisham Hippodrome in South London, when I was lucky enough to meet and chat with both John Clark and Jacqueline Boyer (who played Violet-Elizabeth). The next time I met Jacqueline, funnily enough, was on the Elstree set of a film I was working on. Ken Russell's *The Boy Friend*, in which she played a small part. We spent a long time reminiscing about 'William'...! *More Just William* was at the London Palladium, in 1947, with one Billy Nelson Jnr. as the eponymous hero. The small story must have been lost in that vast theatre, which has the second-biggest seating capacity of any London theatre (the biggest is the Coliseum). In a Christmas production of *Treasure Island* in London in 1947, young Jim Hawkins was played by – John Clark!

And now, as I said earlier, I'm going to draw the line at December, 1947, not because Christmas plays for children came to an end then (there were many more), but because one has to draw the line somewhere, or we'll be here all night (as the great Arthur Askey used to say at the end of his famous and hilarious 'curtain speech', which he tacked on, as a sort of marvellous bonus, at the end of all his shows).

And we don't want to be here all night, do we? Happy Christmas!



Christmas Day - 1931

by Mark Caldicott

Terry Beenham's recent question regarding E.S. Brooks' residence at Halstead has prompted this seasonal review of the year 1931. For on Christmas Day of that year Brooks was indeed at his Halstead home and, remarkably, was busy writing to his readers.

Writing from Barton House, Halstead, Essex (telephone no: Halstead 75) on 25 December 1931 Brooks wrote to Master H.J. Sutcliffe, c/o Plant, Milton House, South Benfleet, Essex:

Dear Jimmy

Thank you very much for your nice card, to hand on December 19th.

The bulk of the seasonable greetings which I have been privileged to receive have come from my readers. These have delighted me more than I can tell you. It is good to know of the links of friendship which have been forged through our mutual interest in St. Frank's and its characters. I shall cherish the hope that these links may always remain unbroken.

That the pages of the Old Paper may afford you weekly good company, and keep you and I always good companions, are among my foremost wishes for 1932.

Cheerily,

Edwy Searles Brooks

This is such a warm and friendly letter to a correspondent who, from evidence of his other correspondence, was quite demanding of ESB's time. (At one point Brooks' was forced to write: "Your hope that you're not putting me to a lot of trouble is all in vain. You are; so it's no good pretending you are not.") His interest in, and the time and considerable trouble devoted to, correspondence with his readers seems to have been an industry in itself. Given the extent of his literary output one wonders how he had time to fit it in - obviously working through Christmas was one way to do it.

And what were the chums of St. Frank's up to while ESB was catching up on his letter writing?

Christmas Day, 1931 finds the usual St. Frank's party along with the girls of Moor View School having a wonderful time at Tregellis Castle (NLL 2nd NS 99, 12-Dec-31). Of course, the Christmas holidays are never without intrigue and mystery for Nipper and his friends. This year it is Jimmy Potts and his Uncle Ben who are the root of the problem. Uncle Ben, we are told, is a wealthy resident of China who is paying Jimmy a visit. Unfortunately Uncle Ben has developed the enmity of the Mandarin of Shan-Si who, it seems, has sent his agents to follow and murder Uncle Ben.

Uncle Ben had arrived at St. Frank's just as term was ending. An attack on Uncle Ben's life by a Chinaman prompted Nelson Lee to offer his help, but the result was that Lee himself was knocked out and bundled into his own car, which was then sent crashing



over the cliff at Shingle Head. Lee, of course, survived the plunge but decided to remain "dead" to all except Nipper. Jimmy has already accepted Handforth's invitation to Travis Dene, the Handforth country residence. The invitation was extended to Uncle Ben. At Travis Dene, however, there are strange happenings and threats to the life of Jimmy Potts. It seems that the Chinamen are now turning their attention to Uncle Ben's relations as well. In order to get Jimmy and Uncle Ben away from danger, Handforth suggests that the party accepts an earlier invitation to join Sir Montie Tregellis-West at his family home, Tregellis Castle. Nipper and Co were already at Tregellis castle with Sir Montie when Jimmy and the rest of Handforth's party arrive.

The increased numbers add to the festive

spirit, and Christmas looks like being the best ever for the St. Frank's and Moor View chums. To add to the pleasure, snow begins to fall heavily. Going out with his torch to take a closer look at the snowfall, however, Handforth spots a dark figure in the trees, apparently climbing towards Jimmy's bedroom. The strange old man is captured and tells them he is Zacchi the fortune teller and asks to be allowed to stay in the castle. However, the police arrive and Zacchi, breaking away, makes his escape. Nipper, following his footprints, finds that they suddenly cease and that Zacchi has disappeared into thin air. The mystery is deepened when the policeman tells them that Zacchi, a well-known figure in the neighbourhood, was thought to have drowned in a pond several weeks earlier.

The following day is Christmas Eve. The sun is shining and the snow is lying thick over the terrace and lawns of the castle and over the whole countryside. The St. Frank's

boys and Moor View girls spend a happy day tobogganing and engaging in snowball fights. Fatty Little is rolled in the snow and sent hurtling down an incline, reaching the bottom in the form of a large snowball. Fatty consoles himself with numerous mince-pies and other eatables.

Following the exertions of the day, the party revels in the warmth of a great log fire after an excellent dinner. They sit in a semi-circle in the real old-fashioned Christmas style and tell each other yarns. Being Christmas, the subject of ghosts arises, and the story of the ghost of Tregellis Castle – the cloaked cavalier – is told. The cavalier is said to swallow up his victims in the folds of his cloak.

That night, as may be expected, Jimmy awakes to a mysterious clanking sound. A figure suddenly appears in the deep recess between the fireplace and the outer wall, "the figure of a man in picturesque costume, with flowing cloak, top-boots, and a wide hat with a great feather in it. The cloaked cavalier of Tregellis!" Jimmy's cries for help awake Uncle Ben, who is sharing the room, and also arouse the others, who lose no time coming to see what the fuss is about. Uncle Ben is struggling with the assailant, only to find that he is mistakenly struggling with his own faithful servant, Yen. Strangely enough, Jimmy also thought he had seen another figure outside the window during this episode – the mysterious Zacchi. Both Zacchi and the cloaked cavalier, however, have disappeared.

The next day is Christmas Day, a clear crisp day with plenty of snow for winter sports. All this activity creates enormous appetites for Christmas luncheon and, despite the excitement and possible danger to Jimmy, this is turning out to be one of the best Christmas holidays the chums can remember.

Tregellis Castle was wonderful on this most wonderful of all days.

The decorations were elaborate; there were myriads of fairy lights everywhere. Gay laughter rang out continuously. Great log fires burned in the hall, in the fine old dining-room, in the drawing-room and in the ball-room. No matter where the young guests went, there was life and warmth and happiness. It was a Christmas party to dream about.

Later on there was to be a grand masquerade dance, but first there is the crowning glory – Christmas dinner at Tregellis Castle. The dinner lives up to all expectations, with Fatty Little setting new records for the consumption of festive grub. A special Christmas pudding has been prepared for Fatty's consumption alone. Unfortunately having collected it from the



Based on the story of the cloaked cavalier of Tregellis Castle.

butler Fatty is startled by the unexpected noise of a cracker and the pudding ends up distributed liberally over Handforth's head. Everyone knows that Handforth is a pudding-head, but the fact is now demonstrated literally.

After dinner, Uncle Ben announces he has brought a present for Jimmy. Jimmy rushes to his Uncle's car to get it but on the way hears whispering voices and sees, hovering above him, a great shape – the figure of an old-time cavalier. "Beware the Curse of Tregellis" says the voice, and the figure comes lower, opening its cloak to swallow its victim. Jimmy screams for help and is on the point of collapse when he is caught by an unknown figure which appears out of the darkness. Potts recognises him as Rutley, the recently-appointed butler of Travis Dene. Rutley was suspected of having been behind some of the mysterious happenings at Travis Dene which led to the chums' move to Tregellis Castle. Having helped Jimmy, Rutley turns and speeds away "with the ease and grace of an athlete, which was in direct contradiction of his apparent age and bent figure."

From the direction of Rutley's escape there comes a scream. Upon investigation, they find the unconscious body of Yen, Uncle Ben's manservant. Recovering, he tells them of an "Evil Spirit" which has fell upon him from the sky. Rutley is then spotted and discovered to be in possession of a huge box-kite draped to resemble a cavalier. He is turned over to the police.

The masquerade party resumes and is a huge success. Parlour games are pursued with reckless abandon and all enjoy a wonderful time. Thus Christmas Day at Tregellis Castle draws to a close.

Boxing Day is traditionally the time for handing out presents, and Jimmy is presented with a pair of gleaming new ice-skates by Uncle Ben. He immediately dashes away to try out his skates and, at Uncle Ben's suggestion, skates to the far end of the lake. On his way back he plunges through a hole in the ice and is in great danger of drowning when a man appears, his face covered by a scarf. He dives into the hole and rescues Jimmy and, after making sure that the incident has been seen and help is on its way in the shape of Nipper, Handforth and Co., takes to his heels. Nipper, who knows that Nelson Lee is alive and working behind the scenes suspects who the mysterious figure may have been. This is confirmed when Lee draws Nipper into an unoccupied room in the Castle. It has been decided that the party will accept the invitation of Lord Somerton to join his gathering at Somerton Towers. Uncle Ben, however, intends to return to London with Jimmy. Lee's instruction to Nipper is that he persuade Jimmy and his uncle to go instead to Somerton Abbey. Jimmy agreed but Uncle Ben declares his intention of proceeding to London.

The party therefore takes its leave of Tregellis Castle. More adventures are to follow, of course, before the mystery is untangled. Anyone who is interested in the solution to the mystery is invited to seek out *Nelson Lee Library 2nd New Series, Nos. 100-101.*

It cannot be denied that in among all the strange, intriguing and dangerous adventures, Christmas at Tregellis Castle must go down in the annals of St. Frank's as one of the most splendid ever.



ADIEU NIRVANA

by Reg Hardinge

The Adventure of the Two Devils (UJ No. 1208) was the final chapter in the sublime love saga of Tinker and Nirvana, the young and beautiful ballet dancer. Unlike the recent terminations of the lives of Inspector Morse and Victor Meldrew, Nirvana was simply written off, alive and well and devoted to her beloved Tinker.

Christmas was imminent, and Mrs. Bardell had put up the festive trappings of holly and mistletoe in the Baker Street consulting room. A telegram for Sexton Blake from the Viguier of Andorra announcing the arrival of Count Canigou at Victoria the following day was handed to him by his housekeeper, the petite and dainty dancer's long lost father, who was totally blind, was coming from the Little Mountain state in the Pyrenees, and Blake was requested to meet him.

Nirvana was staying with mademoiselle Yvonne Cartier at Queen Anne's Gate. The annual charity ball in aid of the Waifs and Strays of London was being held at the Albert Hall that evening, and Blake had booked a box for his party. Blake had elected to go to the masked, fancy dress affair as Mephistopheles, and Tinker as Harlequin. The pair proceeded to Yvonne's flat for cocktails followed by dinner. Their hostess looked distinctly rakish and most provoking as a Parisian Apache, while Nirvana was quite delightful as Columbine with a blue, silk cap showing off her golden hair. Yvonne's Uncle, John Graves, in brocaded silk breeches and coat looked imposing enough as a courtier of the French King Louis XIV. The party was driven to the Albert Hall in Yvonne's spacious limousine by her trusted chauffeur Alec.

Soon they were mingling with the motley throng of dancers. Two bands, one at each end of the floor, played alternately. Nirvana was as good at ball-room dancing as she was in her intricate ballet expositions, and Tinker was well up to standard too. His intention was to spring a Christmas surprise on her by telling her about the arrival of her father. The couple was closely watched by a male clad in a crimson, satanic costume identical to that of Blake's, who was standing behind a pillar. Eventually Tinker and his partner made for one of the artificial arbours that dotted the sides of the floor. There he revealed to her that her father was arriving at Victoria Station soon after ten the next day. Nirvana was thrilled at the news. Her father, a Basque, came to England as a Law Student, and met and secretly married her English mother, who was on the stage. But things did not work out, and he returned to Andorra to assume the ancient, hereditary title of Count of Canigou. Every word of their conversation had been overheard by the tall figure in the Devil-costume who had been eavesdropping at the rear of the alcove. Tinker and Nirvana took to the floor again, this time to perform the Charleston. Nirvana glanced at the couple

The **COMPLEMENT** of the Season—

THE

SPECIAL XMAS NUMBER

THE ADVENTURE
OF THE
**TWO
DEVILS**



A Specially written
Xmas Story of
NIRVANA
TINKER and
SEXTON BLAKE

No. 1,208.

EVERY THURSDAY.

December 11th, 1926.

alongside them. The male was wearing a costume similar to Blake's. The hand of his partner on his shoulder displayed a ring set with two square emeralds. Nirvana gasped as the female smiled mockingly from behind her mask. She was Marie, her elder sister, and her partner was Philippe the Fox, a member of her gang. Harlequin and Columbine rejoined Blake and the others. Nirvana decided against telling Blake and Tinker about her encounter with Marie, which was a big mistake.

The trip to Victoria Station was an abortive one. Firstly, the Grey Panther's progress was delayed by the deliberate blockage by a black limousine cutting in ahead of it on Buckingham Palace Road. Over ten minutes were lost, and when Blake and Tinker reached the platform the boat train from Dover was already in and had discharged its passengers. Blake questioned the courier who had accompanied the blind Count Canigou on the journey and learned that a person calling himself Sexton Blake had met the Count, and that the pair had gone off together. It was now that Nirvana told Blake about seeing her sister the previous night. Undoubtedly the man who had impersonated Blake was Philippe the Fox, and her father was in the clutches of the evil Marie. She was utterly unnatural, having a consuming hatred of her parents who had deserted their children, of her brother whose life she had ruined, and of Nirvana who had been a member of her gang but had broken away from a life of crime to concentrate on her love of ballet. Blake insisted that he would locate the Count before any harm was done to him.

Nirvana received a letter from Marie saying that if she wished to see her father she should come to the Green Parrot Club off Tottenham Court Road. And so it was that Nirvana and Tinker walked into the trap that Marie had laid. The pair were lured into a back room of the Club to find themselves in the power of an old and sinister adversary of Blake's, Dr. Jourgens, a Scandinavian, known as the Black Magician of Ghent, who was now working for Marie. An exponent of the Black Arts with a Master Command of Hypnotism, this fiend incarnate rendered Tinker and Nirvana completely harmless by indulging trances which created deep sleep.

Blake, Yvonne and their associates, stormed the club, put Marie and her accomplices to flight, and revived Tinker and Nirvana. Blake also followed Marie, to find and rescue the blind Count from her lair. The Count and Nirvana were then taken to a cottage in a South Coast Village where his wife was convalescing, and a happy reconciliation took place. Nirvana presented Tinker with a small ivory plaque attached to a gold chain. "A King's amulet for a brave Knight" she murmured.

And so Nirvana was air-brushed from the author G.H. Teed's portfolio of characters. There were thirteen episodes altogether in the Nirvana saga starting with *Tinker's Secret* (U.J. no. 1149). Teed continued to introduce new players like June Severance, Roxane Harfield and Muriel Marl in his writings until the demise of the *Union Jack* in February 1933.

NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE C.D. FROM 2001
Please read the IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT
on page 4



A Cliff House Dream Christmas!

by
Margery Woods

Bessie Bunter was deliriously happy.

She raised one plump hand to straighten her slightly lopsided crown and furtively wiped a dribble of gravy off the ermine trimming on her velvet robe. Then a beatific smile broadened her fat face.

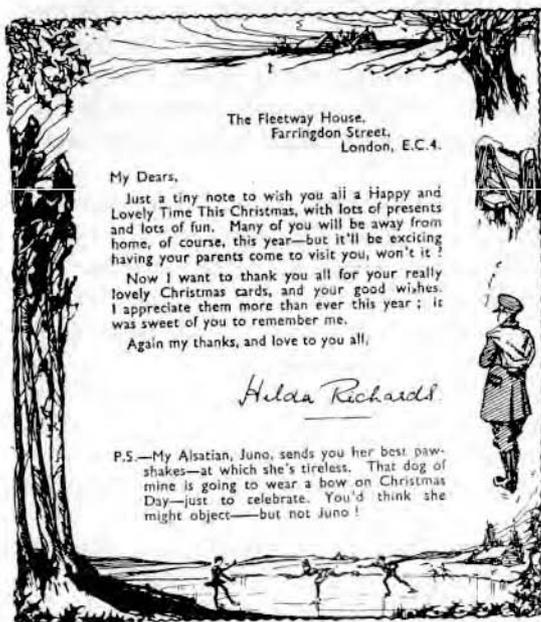
"Eat up, girls," she bade the assembled company. "Those mince pies are scrumptious!"

"They must be---seeing that you've eaten half the plateful yourself," teased Clara Trevelyn. But the rest of the company did not hesitate. Never had the usually impecunious fat duffer of the Fourth hosted such a fabulous spread---and invited half the school to feast with her. Even Miss Bullivant was there, smiling benignly on Bessie as she accepted her fifth mince pie and dolloped it liberally with thick rich cream.

Bessie was in her element. This was something like Christmas. Never again could any of those cheeky cats accuse her of raiding tuck or scrounging a loan until her postal order arrived. Those days had gone for ever now she had won the National Lottery. Her fist swollen with a huge shiver of Christmas cake, Bessie swanned down the great hall, bestowing largesse on the girls and mistresses. There was plenty more where that came from, she assured everyone and pointed to the wide archway that opened into the side annexe where long tables groaned under the weight of yet more comestibles piled upon them. Billy and Sammy were stuffing themselves with sweetmeats but Billy glowered at her. "You haven't paid me back that fiver you borrowed off me at Easter."

"Shan't!"

"Yes you will!" Billy made a lunge at her but unfortunately young Sammy got in the way, staggered, and fell headlong into the great marble pool at the end of the annexe. The mermaid statues ignored his cries and the big dolphin switched itself on and sprayed its fountain of scented water over him. Bessie giggled and gave Billy a push. In he went to join Sammy, and Bessie waved imperiously to a squad of footmen who rushed to obey and dived into the pool to haul out Bessie's dripping brothers. Completely unmoved by the sight, or her mother's horrified cry as she rushed into the room, Bessie filled yet another golden platter with mouth-watering goodies and sank down on a gilded *chaise longue* to indulge in a little snack. After all, this epicurean life was quite exhausting.



The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.

My Dears,

Just a tiny note to wish you all a Happy and Lovely Time This Christmas, with lots of presents and lots of fun. Many of you will be away from home, of course, this year—but it'll be exciting having your parents come to visit you, won't it?

Now I want to thank you all for your really lovely Christmas cards, and your good wishes. I appreciate them more than ever this year; it was sweet of you to remember me.

Again my thanks, and love to you all,

Hilda Richards

P.S.—My AIsatian, Juno, sends you her best paw-shakes—at which she's tireless. That dog of mine is going to wear a bow on Christmas Day—just to celebrate. You'd think she might object—but not Juno!

Bessie's eyes closed blissfully, then she sat up with a start. Someone was missing. A large marzipan fruit found its way into her mouth as she frowned. Yes, where was Diana? Bessie half rose to go and find Diana, then she sank back again. She'd invited the Firebrand personally. So where was she? Bessie gave it up and reached for another marzipan fruit. Blow Diana!

Bessie, however, was far from the missing Diana's thoughts. Diana had her own problems, problems that frightened her, that she did not know how to escape. And she was so cold. And the water was freezing. She had to break ice on it, and the horrible yellow slabs of soap refused to lather. And she was late.

The stone floor was frozen as well, so cold it burned her feet and she couldn't find her slippers. There were cries around her, little cries from small frightened voices. They called her on, down, down, down the gaunt draughty steps, down to the dark gloomy hall where no daylight penetrated at seven a.m. on a winter's morning. Rows of white, pinched little faces turned towards her from their places along the bare grey boards of the tables. Grey bowls, empty, were stacked at each end and there was the tall grim figure of Miss Bullivant, switch in hand, waiting, and beside her the mean, lanky figure of her assistant, Connie Jackson, and they were mouthing angry words at her and pointing. Diana realised that she had forgotten her apron, the long drab garment of sacking. The children were clamouring and the two older children beside the big black cauldron on the side table were brandishing ladles. Diana ran. She had to marshal those pitiful children into an orderly line, each bearing one of those grubby grey bowls, to receive a meagre ration of the nauseous content, as grey as the bowls, from the black cauldron. There were baskets of bread crusts and one of fruit, but what fruit! Squashed, mouldy and discoloured, it looked unfit even to be swept up from the grounds of the Covent Garden fruit market at the end of the day, yet the children fell on it, squabbling over the more edible morsels. Then one tiny boy who at last fought through to the basket and found it emptied tried to snatch the bruised apple from his neighbour.

Swish! The arm of Miss Bullivant rose and fell, the switch lashed the thin, raggedly clad shoulders of the child. Diana screamed and held out her arms to the children. As one, they surged towards her. She grabbed their hands and rushed forward. Stools, benches, tables crashed over. Miss Bullivant and Connie Jackson brandished switch and cane, to no avail, they were overwhelmed as the crowd of orphans followed Diana in a

mad flight from the grim orphanage. So angry, so desperate was the crowd that they scarcely heeded snow and ice beneath bare feet. Diana knew only that somehow she had to find her father. He would help them, but where would she find him? The East End streets looked so strange. Where was the traffic? Where were the crowds scurrying for morning trains? Why were the streets so dirty, so alien, why were passers by in fancy dress? But there was someone she knew. A tall, dark-haired girl in hoped skirts and an expensive fur-trimmed jacket and a fur muff.

It was Lydia Crossendale. The woman beside her raised her hands in horror as Diana and the children ran to them. Lydia backed away, drawing her skirts fastidiously away from any contact with those ragamuffins and the woman with her began to scream. Then came whistles and angry voices and pounding feet. Policemen converged on Diana and the children from all sides, grabbing them, dragging them away towards the menacing figures of Miss Bullivant and Connie Jackson. Shouting all the time. The harsh voices beat against Diana's ears. She put her arms over her head, trying to shut out the noise, trying to escape from the rough hands clutching at her, trying to...

"Di!" The hands still clutched her shoulder. "Wake up! Whatever's the matter?"

"Nightmare!" scoffed the familiar voice of Clara Trevlyn. "What did you have at that study party of yours last night?"

"Diana." The voice of Barbara Redfern was gentle. "It's all right, old thing."

The silky blonde head of the Firebrand emerged from the coverlet still clamped to her face. She peered out, still caught in the horror of that heartbreaking dream. Her eyes widened. "Babs," she whispered uncertainly. "Pinch me--tell me I'm really awake and not in that appalling orphanage."

"She's been reading *Oliver Twist*," Clara taunted.

"You're awake," smiled Babs, and pinched Diana's cheek. "And it's breaking-up day. Four days to Christmas and we're all going to Holly Hall--and if we don't get a move on we'll be late down to breakfast."

"Come on, Bessie!" cried Clara. "Wakey, wakey!"

"Someone make a noise like a mince pie!" suggested Mabel Lynn.

"By the look of our Fatima she hasn't been dreaming about poor starving little orphans," chuckled Janet Jordan. "Just look at her."

Bessie lay there, deep in the happiest of slumber. There was a smile on her plump face and her jaw made slight chewing motions in between occasional snores. "What d'you think she's guzzling?" asked Jemima, who was dressed already, Eton crop brushed to a dark burnished sheen and her monocle nestling against one inscrutable eye.

"Come on!" yelled Clara. "Let's have the mince pie queen out of bed. Tell her she's missed breakfast!"

"W-w-what?" Bessie struggled out of sleep. "Where am I? I--I thought I was at--"

"At Bunter Court, in the lap of luxury," grinned Clara. "You--" There was a sound from the door, a sobbing, and Clara swung round, to see tiny Dolores Essendon, the youngest pupil at Cliff House.

"Hey, kid," exclaimed Clara. "What are you doing here? You're in the wrong dorm."

The small girl ignored her. Tears streaked her face as she ran to Babs, who put her hands on the child's shoulders to steady her. "What's the matter, little one?"

She drew the child down to sit on the bed beside her and the girls gathered around, curious now. Diana, now in a cosy lilac wool dressing gown, sat down on the other side and said sympathetically: "You can't cry at Christmas, you know."

Gradually they drew the reason for tears from Dolores, and the chums began to frown. Little Dolores had gone down early to Big Hall to post a letter and had been stopped and reprimanded by the prefect on duty for coming down in her dressing gown. Connie Jackson, for she it was who was duty prefect that morning, demanded to know what she was posting, not that it was really any business of hers, for the entire school was allowed to post Christmas cards to their friends in the special big red post box put there specially for that purpose. But Dolores wanted the proper post box for outside mail, and Connie had snatched the letter from the little girl's hand, then chortled cruelly.

"To Santa Clause! Lapland! Ha ha ha!"

"I can't post it up the chimney," said Dolores, timidly. "We're forbidden to go near fires and--"

"You silly child. There's no Santa Clause. It's just your parents." Connie broke into more mirth. "Do you still believe that old rubbish?"

But Dolores, after one heartbroken gasp, had gone, seeking the girl she loved best of all in the whole school; Barbara Redfern.

There was a grim silence from the chums and a renewal of something like hatred for the mean-spirited sixth-former, whose duties as a prefect certainly did not include the destruction of an eight-year-old's illusions. Clara muttered: "We've got to do something about that ghastly cat."

"You're insulting cats to compare her to one," Jemima said.

"Listen, Dolores." Babs put her arm round the child's shoulders, "Connie's got it wrong. I'm sure she just thinks of the Santa Clauses in department stores, just men dressed up to play the part."

"No," Dolores sobbed, "she said it was all rubbish."

Above her head the eyes of Babs and Diana met. Babs was thinking frantically, and Diana said: "Santa Claus is more than that, you know. He was given that name by the Americans centuries ago, but he is really a saint. Saint Nicholas, who does give children gifts."

"That's true, kiddy," Babs said softly. "And when Saint Nicholas started the custom of giving gifts to children there wasn't such a big population in the world. Now there isn't time in a night to go to every child because so many children in lots of countries heard about him and started posting their lists up chimneys and hanging up their stockings. So do you know what St. Nicholas did?"

"No." Dolores was wide-eyed now.

"He had to get all the parents and grandparents, and sometimes aunties and uncles to help him to fill all the stockings and make sure the children get their gifts."

"And when you are grown-up, Dolores, and have children of your own," Diana said solemnly, "you'll have to help St. Nicholas every year on Christmas Eve to fill their stockings. In fact," Diana added on a more cynical voice, "I know a couple of grown-up girls in my father's office who hang up their stockings every year for their boyfriends to fill."

“Christmas Day at Christmas Castle!” Grand Story of the Cliff House chums—inside.

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WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED SCHOOL DAYS

No. 231. Vol. 10.

Week Ending December 30th, 1933.



**OLD-FASHIONED FAYRE
FOR A
GOOD OLD-FASHIONED
CHRISTMAS!**

Join Barbara Redfern & Co. in spending the happiest Christmas possible.

Dolores managed a weak giggle, and Babs stood up. "Now run along, infant and forget about the beastly Connie."

"Nobody'll fill her stocking," said Clara disgustedly.

"No, St. Nicholas or Santa Claus never find their way down chimneys to bring presents for girls like Connie," Jemima assured her, and Dolores departed much more happily than when she arrived.

"Brekker bell!" gasped Mabs. "Come on, kidlets."

There was a wild scurry then. Bessie had gone back to sleep in search of her dream Christmas and had to be tipped unceremoniously out of bed, and hustled into her clothes.

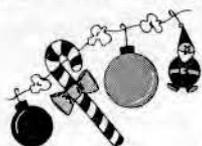
"What a prelude to Christmas," laughed Babs to the clamour of the breakfast bell. "Half of us half-washed, Diana recovering fro the Christmas nightmare of all nightmares. Little Dolores breaking her heart, and Bessie dreaming she'd won the Lottery."

"Ahem, whatever next," wondered Jemima.

"Christmas dreams come true, of hearth and home and loved ones," said Marjorie Hazeldene.

"I'm all for that," seconded Diana, sounding unusually subdued. "And the best dream of all. Peace and goodwill to all men, at all times as well as Christmas."

"Hear hear!" the chums echoed her as they raced downstairs, on their way very soon to another real and wonderful Cliff House Christmas.



ROOKWOOD: CHRISTMAS WITH UNCLE PETER, THE SCOURGE OF THE LOVELLS by Ray Hopkins



Travelling to Somerset by train to spend the hols at Lovell Lodge, Jimmy Silver and Co. have the misfortune to share a compartment with a disagreeable old gentleman who "rags and nags them" and takes umbrage when they answer back, a rather unpleasant slanging match ensuing, Arthur Edward Lovell in particular, the most stubborn member of the Fistical Four, being the worst offender.

Silver, Raby and Newcome are amused but Lovell is appalled to discover that the old gentleman is none other than his own Uncle Peter who is, in fact, spending Christmas with the sister he hasn't seen for the twenty years he has spent in India. There he accrued vast wealth and sent much of it back to England to support his female siblings.

The basically kind-hearted Uncle Peter's bad temper makes it difficult for his nephew to get on the good side of him. Lovell tells the Co. that the only way he can be forgiven and get into his uncle's good books, is by "thinking of appealing to his gratitude." How so? Silver, Raby and Newcome are puzzled. Arthur Edward tells them that Uncle Peter was set upon by dacoits in India intending to rob him of the large number of banknotes he's never without. He's always expecting to be attacked by footpads in England too, this being the reason he never goes out without a heavy, large-knobbed cane. Lovell's plan is for three ruffians to gang up on Uncle Peter so that his dutiful nephew can happen along at the right time and save him, knocking the cowardly attackers

right and left. The Co., however, are not very keen to impersonate ruffians, who may receive punishment!

Almost as though Uncle was giving his nephew a chance to get into his good books, he makes a call on the vicar to see about supplying blankets for the poor, doubtless because he finds English weather a bit nippy himself. His walk back to the Lodge through some woods is a perfect spot for the attack by three not so eager thugs with blackened faces and wearing old overcoats and mufflers, attire quite unlike the schoolboy clobber they are usually seen in.

Inevitably, the assault on Uncle Peter doesn't go quite according to plan. As he approaches the three would-be desperados, Jimmy, unfortunately alone, reaches the alert old gentleman whose walking stick is poised for instant action. Raby and Newcome trip over unnoticed tree roots and flounder in the snow while Silver is holding on to his victim and attempting to miss the swipes of the dangerous walking stick and trying to subdue the victim's cries for help. Uncle Peter also added the terrifying words, "Robbery! Murder!" the while holding Jimmy's head in chancery. Raby and Newcome barely reach the struggling duo before Lovell appears on the scene. He despatches both of them, knocking Raby and Newcome right and left as he had promised, much to their dismay. Jimmy Silver, unable to get away because Uncle Peter's strong grasp is on his collar, is gritting his teeth. "Knowing Lovell as he did from experience any wheeze propounded by Arthur Edward was practically bound to end in disaster!"

The black faces of Raby and Newcome vanish into the night. Jimmy is hauled back to the Lodge, breathless and half strangled by the iron grasp on his collar, struggling manfully to no avail. Uncle Peter tells Lovell how plucky he was to save him. "We shall be better friends after this, my boy." But Lovell doubts this when the erstwhile thief's face is washed. "A Rookwood boy taking to highway robbery - a guest in this house attempting to rob another guest by violence! Upon my word!" is Uncle Peter's *cri de coeur* when Jimmy's face is revealed.

YOU'LL ENJOY CHRISTMAS
WITH THE FISTICAL FOUR
OF ROOKWOOD.

NO LUCK for LOVELL!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.

To be landed with a crusty old uncle at Christmas is not a bright outlook for the Merry Chums of Rookwood. But their effort to alter the prospects, however, meets with disastrous results!



Jimmy, hoping for the best, smiles weakly and protests it was only a lark and Lovell admits he was in on the bit of fun, too. "It confirms the opinion I have hitherto held of you - a silly, impertinent, worthless young rascal," roars Uncle Peter.

Mr. and Mrs. Lovell, by this time, are both convulsed at the idea of their hopeful son convinced he would win his Uncle over by rescuing him from some sort of danger. Uncle, purple with wrath, cracks the heads of Silver and Lovell together and storms upstairs shouting that he leaves first thing in the morning.

Hoping that the irascible Uncle will depart rapidly, the Rookwooders, the following morning, repair to the flooded meadow at the back of the Lodge, now a sheet of ice, upon which they construct an enjoyable slide. Uncle Peter hears their joyous voices and calls loudly to his nephew. Arthur Edward affects to not hear him and slides rapidly in the opposite direction. Uncle, enraged at being ignored, runs to the edge of the ice, steps on to the slide and is promptly whirled along in the wake of Jimmy and Co.

Perhaps Uncle Peter just wants to bid him goodbye, thinks Arthur Edward and, having had his ears blasted already that morning by his loving parents, he doesn't want another harangue from Uncle.

Amazingly, Uncle Peter stays upright to the end of the slide, then finishes up head-first in a mound of snow. The boys gather round and congratulate him on his performance as though Uncle Peter had meant to do it deliberately. A jolly good show indeed for one so old! But, far from being flattered at this fulsome praise, Uncle Peter astonishes them all by accusing Arthur Edward of being more than gratified had he been seriously injured. Upon being told that they thought he was joining in the game for fun, Uncle Peter raises an angry arm which doesn't connect because he skids and promptly falls into a snowdrift. The chums decide to not help him up again and race away, staying away from the Lodge all day to give Lovell's uncle a chance to cool down.

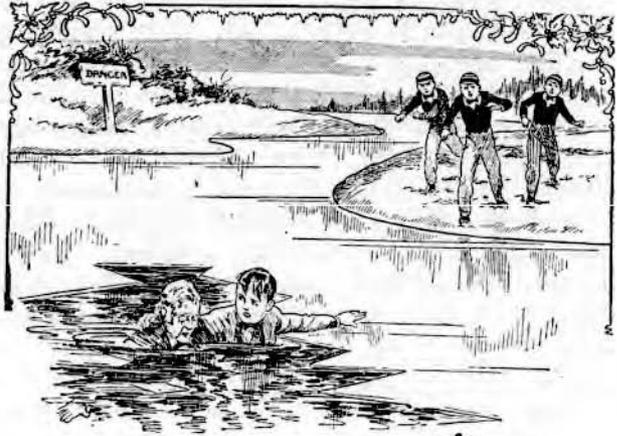
Evidently Uncle Peter had not learned his lesson, for the following morning finds him planning to ice skate on his lonely own on the frozen River Froode. The Co. suggest they go in the opposite direction, but Lovell is adamant that he is going to make life unpleasant for his bad-tempered Uncle. No one will know as he will be in ambush hidden among the frosty trees and bushes lining the Froode and he will buzz snowballs at uncle, who will think the village kids are cheeking him.

The Co. leave Lovell banking up plenty of ammunition having failed to make the stubborn Arthur Edward change his mind and leave his victim to enjoy his skating unimperilled by hurled missiles. Uncle Peter, "wrapped up against the cold as if he were going on a polar expedition," arrives later, having had a lie-in. Lovell is extremely gratified to see that, apart from himself and his elderly relative, the area contains no other living person.

But fate had other plans for them both. Arthur Edward, having a snowball in each hand at the ready, turns to hurl them at the skater. But of that worthy there is no sign. All of Uncle Peter's fourteen stone has totally disappeared from sight!

Fear gives Lovell the strength to tear the top rail from a nearby fence and run with it across the ice toward a large, black area through which Uncle Peter's arm and terrified face are protruding, having resurfaced from the icy depths. His waterlogged clothes make it impossible for him to pull himself on to the ice and, in fact, the ice edge breaks every time he tries. Lovell keeps his uncle's face out of the water by grabbing his collar but he

hasn't the strength to pull him to the river's edge, and finally he too descends into the murky depths and can only foresee them both drowning. Uncle tells Lovell to save himself but he clings on to the water-soaked collar yelling for help the while, but nobody heaves into sight. They are doomed but Lovell will not relax his hold though his head is swimming and his eyes are beginning to mist over.



Out of the murk a hurdle is pushed across the opening in the ice. The three other Rookwooders had decided to return and talk Lovell out of the snowballing. They found the hurdle in a field which they had to traverse to get to the river, and with this invaluable instrument of rescue the two waterlogged relatives are supported and eventually dragged across the ice to the river's edge.

Neither of the rescued suffer long term effects, which says much for the good state of health both are in. However, the Doctor keeps Uncle Peter in bed for a week where he fumes at all the fuss. Lovell didn't even catch a cold, but what he *did* receive pleased him much. "You're the right stuff and your Uncle's proud of you." Uncle's vigorous grip as he shakes his nephew's hand makes Lovell cringe. And the rest of the Christmas hols passes in a riot of cheer and good nature which pleased Jimmy Silver greatly. Jimmy is one of those warm-hearted people who is never happier than when he is surrounded by people enjoying one another's company.

(The above jolly romp first appeared in the weekly BOYS' FRIEND 1281 to 1283, Jan 1926 and was reprinted in the POPULAR 569 to 571, 2nd Series, Jan 1930. The illustrations by G.W. Wakefield are from the POPULAR reprints.)

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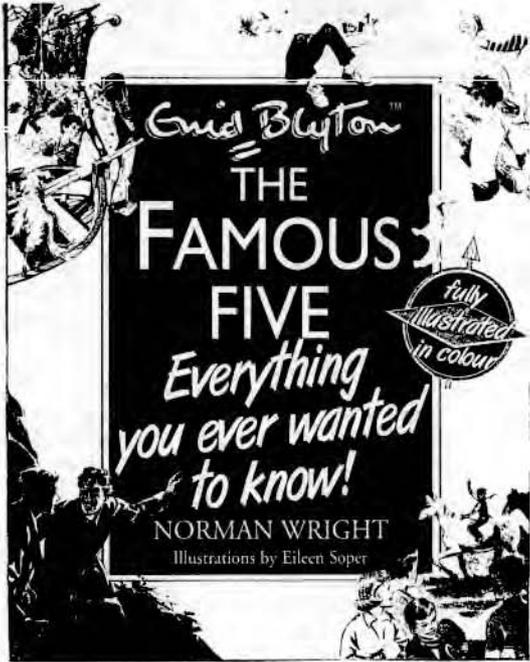
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BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS – AND AFTERWARDS

Reviewed by MARY CADOGAN

A good starting point for this selection is *The Famous Five – Everything You Wanted to Know!* by Norman Wright (published by Hodder, £14.99 hardback, £7.99 paperback). Let me make clear immediately that this extremely well researched and readable *Who's Who*, *What's What* and *Where's Where* deals with the Famous Five of Enid Blyton, and not the celebrated Co. created by Frank Richards.

This is a valuable companion to Enid Blyton's long-running and popular series. Designed ostensibly for young readers it will also, without doubt, appeal to adult Blyton enthusiasts, as it is so rich in details about the books and characters, and the backgrounds to their creation. It is generously adorned with full colour pictures



by Eileen Soper, the regular illustrator of the series whose work is a perfect complement to the narratives of the Famous Five's adventures.

The book's chapter headings give an idea of its wide range: these include amongst others, *Meet the Famous Five*, *A Tour round Kirrin*, *Where was Kirrin Castle? And Other Locations in the Famous Five Books*, *Friends and Allies* and *The Baddies*. To test your wits and knowledge there is a Quiz Section, and a special section to help new, and established, collectors of the Famous Five series.

C.D. readers will already be aware of Norman Wright's erudite and enjoyable approach to popular fiction: this book lives up to our high expectations of anything from his pen (or, to be precise, his word-processor).

Another meticulously researched book is *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* by Michael Paris (published by Reaktion Books, £25.00, hardback).

Michael Paris is Senior lecturer in the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Central Lancashire. C.D. readers may already have come across his books *The First World War and Popular Cinema* and *From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun*.



53 Title illustration from 'A Planet at War', *Chums*, 1932.

This assessment of ways in which popular literature, films, games and advertisements have presented, strengthened, ennobled and reconstructed attitudes to wars and conflicts is serious and thought-provoking. The author's use of a great variety of pictures, from real-life photographs to advertisements, cartoons and book and magazine illustrations, adds to the richness of his text.

I found the chapter *Fighting the People's War 1939-45* of particular interest, but every period on which the author focuses is equally well researched, and his views are always persuasively expressed. It is good to see popular papers such as *Magnet*, *Gem*, *Hotspur*, *Boy's Own Paper*, *Champion*, *Modern Boy* and others frequently mentioned and quoted. However, *Warrior Nation* is far from being a cosily nostalgic book. Michael Paris examines the promotion of war as high chivalric adventure and as a necessary rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. He asks serious, often disturbing, questions about both the past and present conditioning effects of much of our popular culture.



60 Lord Sooty and the Casworks Gang help Winston. From *Beano*, 1942.

There is, now as always at Christmas-time, an abundance of excellent children's books in the shops. One of the most rewarding and attractive is *Fairy Tales*, told by Berlie Doherty and illustrated by Jane Ray (published by Walker books, £14.99 hardback). This is a large and truly lavishly illustrated collection of retellings of some of 'the loveliest stories in the world'. It is a delight to read, and to look at. Every page is a small work of art, and *Fairy Tales* is a volume which both children and adults will love and treasure. An excellent Christmas present to buy for the whole family – or just for yourself!

Now we come to the *Encyclopaedia of School Stories*: Vol. 1, *Girls' School Stories* by Sue Sims and Hilary Clare, and Vol. 2, *Boys' School Stories* by Robert Kirkpatrick (published by Ashgate at £35.00 each, hardback).

This two-volume Encyclopaedia is, without question, a *tour de force* which provides satisfactions not only for serious students but for enthusiasts of the genre. The range of stories and authors discussed is vast; both volumes are well organised, comprising alphabetical studies of individual authors plus a series of essays on 'General Topics' from Adult School Fiction, Annuals and Evangelical School Stories to Plays and Films, and 'Penny Dreadfuls'.

For the girls' volume, most of the critiques and bibliographies are written by Sims and Clare, and, for the boys', by Kirkpatrick. However, for each volume, authorities on particular authors and subjects have contributed specific, signed entries. (I wrote those on school story papers for both volumes!) The Encyclopaedia's co-editor, Rosemary Auchmuty, has provided informative prefaces. She makes the point that, because there has been no sustained tradition of research into school stories, this Encyclopaedia has 'huge gaps' and can to an extent be regarded as a work in progress. Kirkpatrick echoes this in his Apologia for the boys' volume.

There are some bibliographical weaknesses and inconsistencies in both volumes but nevertheless the mix of critiques, biographies and bibliographies generally works well. However, some of the errors and anomalies suggest that the authors' readings of areas of the genre have been superficial. For example, the entry on 'Hilda Richards' classifies Charles Hamilton's only full length novel about Cliff House as a 'compilation' of previously published short stories. Also the essay on girls' Annuals lists those issued by the Amalgamated Press but surprisingly fails to mention the two longest-running and most school-based of these, the *Schoolgirls' Own* and *School Friend* Annuals. Similarly in the boys' volume the entry on W.E. Johns (who wrote only one school story for boys and one for girls) contains a small crop of errors.

Some omissions have occurred because of the genderised division of the Encyclopaedia. What does one do, in a book specifically concerned with girls' – or boys' – fiction about the many fine, often 'breakthrough', stories set in coeducational schools? The authors make the point that these generally are outside the Encyclopaedia's scope, although the boys' volume *does* deal superficially with, for example, Gillian Cross, Jan Mark and Jan Needle. But, unfortunately, one of the best day-school stories ever written (Needle's *My Mate Shofiq*) gets no mention at all. Neither does Gene Kemp's awesome *the Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler!*

To provide adequate coverage of the genre, possibly at least one serious entry on coeducational stories and their authors should be included in any future editions of this welcome Encyclopaedia.

FAREWELL TO A GOOD FRIEND

An obituary tribute to PETER MAHONY
from Mary Cadogan

It was a shock to many of us when Peter Mahony passed away on 26th September. He was for several years a very vigorous and enthusiastic member of the London Old Boys Book Club and an extremely regular contributor to the C.D. He is much missed. We send our love and condolences to his wife, Dorothy, who attended many Club meetings with Peter and who also offered us warm hospitality on several occasions at their home in Eltham.

Peter was a great Hamiltonian. His talks and writings on Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rockwood will long be remembered: he also wrote about his other great love - Cricket - in articles and in two books, *Sundry Extras, England v. Australia* and *Mary Ann's Australians*. He was a member of the M.C.C.

Peter was born on 20th August 1931. He was a staunch Roman Catholic throughout his life and, after attending Catholic primary and secondary schools, he qualified as a Chartered Accountant.

However for most of his working life he was a teacher, in secondary schools as Department Head, and as a lecturer in Accountancy and Business Studies at Colleges of Technology and Accountancy Institutions. Peter was in the Royal Fusiliers, on National Service, between 1950 and 1952. He and Dorothy have three children, Patrick, John and Eileen.

It is good to have this opportunity of saying thank you to Peter and Dorothy for all their help, and support of our hobby.

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FORUM

From HORACE DILLEY: As each Christmas approaches, I am so vividly reminded of those "Grand Christmas Numbers" of the Magnet, Gem and Nelson Lee etc. Issued about a fortnight before Christmas Day, there was something magical about their presentations.



The "snow"-covered lettering on the front page, the adornment of holly, the greetings from the Editor, often with plum pudding, holly and crackers in the frame. And of course, many illustrations with an abundance of snow. More often than not there was "The Ghost", a gristly spectre haunting some otherwise peaceful home where the chums had gathered. Mysteries galore ... it all seemed to happen on Christmas Eve.

Sometimes I tried so hard to keep my Christmas numbers to read on Christmas Day. I never succeeded. I would be tempted to take a peep inside... I had lost the battle!

I still try so hard with the C.D. Annual. Of course, I recognise the envelope. I say to myself "I'm not going to open it until Christmas Day". Once again, I have never succeeded. I really am going to be firm with myself this year. Well, there is a first time for everything, so they say...

From ARTHUR F.G. EDWARDS:

I would thank Ben Bligh for passing on an address for Edwy Searles Brooks. I for one never doubted that he lived in Essex, if not throughout his life, for many years.

One of ESB's strengths was that he minimised the number of locations he had to invent. Once a plot took the action away from the immediate environment of St. Frank's it became centred on real towns and villages. Several times a journey or car chase was made from London into Essex. On each occasion it not only went through towns I knew well enough, but in the right order and near enough the right distance apart. This knowledge could only have come from having made the same journey.

As far as I can remember, the only long journey from real place to real place in England made by Wharton & Co was in the Water Lily series and that route was well documented. Once the Co went abroad, their adventures may have been pure fiction, but it is hard, almost impossible in fact, to believe that Frank Richards had never been to any of the countries involved. On the other hand when ESB took his heroes aboard, with few exceptions, e.g. China and Australia, one never doubted that the locations were fictitious.

To sum up, my assessment is that generally St. Jim's stories were believable, those of Greyfriars stretched credulity to the limit, but not too far beyond. However, one never doubted that St. Frank's stories were pure fiction. Why then did I only take the Magnet and Gem and just get the occasional copy of the Nelson Lee by swapping? The answer is quite simple. My Father, as a youth/young man, before WW1, read the Magnet and Gem and in time bought them for me.

From TED BALDOCK:

I found Beryll Cholmondely's remarks in her letter very thought-provoking. It seems that when we are feeling 'under par' or ill we turn naturally to those books which, when

in happier days we were feeling 'on top of the world', we treasured and read again and again.

When shadows are there, we tend to seek out these lovely patches of sunlight which are found invariably in the books of our youth.

She speaks of her eager anticipation each month for the arrival of the C.D. I fully understand and appreciate this. The Digest is something approaching a lifeline to many readers, I would suggest. A lifeline keeping us in close touch with that wonderful era of discovery – our youth.

The other day I was quizzed by my daughter about what I should most like for Christmas. Could I give a hint or two? Frankly I have everything (almost) I need: thus it is not exactly an easy decision to make. I assured her I would give it deep and serious thought. THEN – the C.D. arrived and with it the leaflet announcing the re-print of your 'Frank Richards'. The situation was immediately saved – and solved. Would that all life's problems have such happy conclusions.

I am looking forward to reading Jennifer Schofield's work in the CD Annual on H.V. Morton. I remember reading his regular contributions to the *Daily Express* many years ago. He is one of my favourite 'reads' and I always linger over his wonderful descriptive pieces. I have most of his books on my shelf, and have recently finished reading yet again *In The Steps of the Master*. His descriptions of life in the Middle East are quite fascinating.

From IAN ANSTRUTHER:

Reading *Eric or Little by Little* recently I came across a case of "our forgetful authors" (do you remember this series in the New Yorker?). Farrar writes on page 283 (2nd edition). "Yes; too late for football, too early for cricket". On page 310 he writes of the same day. "The air was full of peace and coolness, and the merry sounds of the cricket field..."

Remembering the many links between Eric and *Greyfriars*, now pointed out to me, I wondered whether Charles Hamilton ever forgot himself in the same way. Perhaps members of the OBBC might be amused to think about this?

From JACK HUGHES:

Brian Doyle's fine articles on various books and the leading characters of same were a real joy. His DR SYN reminded me of holidays spent in New Zealand with Geoff and Dolly Phillips and of our search to find every used book shop, charity shop etc. looking for books... especially for me the series of DR. SYN. I got them all at last. Then in Christchurch with Don Reed I found a copy of *Dr. Syn Alias The Scarecrow* by Vic Crume. From the film with Patrick McGoohan *The Scarecrow* 1962 which originally was made as a three part series for American T.V. The book, a soft cover is in the Series *The Wonderful World of Disney* published in 1975 by Pyramid Books of New York. The film is based on the book *Christopher Syn* by Russell Thorndike and William Buchanan.

Ted Baldock in his clever poem (C.D. Oct. page 28) asks 'Where now are Quelch... and Bunter with his fears'? An item in a newspaper here a week ago tells of an aborigines' conference held on Wave Hill Cattle Station, Northern Territory. Several

elders addressed the young men. One elder was Mr. Lingiari and the other was 'elder Billy Bunter'.

One of Skinner's sneering remarks was 'there go Old Obadiah and Young Obadiah'. I know there are a number of Obadiah's in the Old Testament... but who were these that Skinner spoke of?

Many thanks too to Andrew Miles for another excellent article. MAGNET - 'What might have been' the further life of Greyfriars. The day I received a note from Amalgamated Press that said the MAGNET might never be published again, as boys' tastes had changed, was sad indeed.

From JIM LAKE:

I would like to say how much I have enjoyed reading cinema memories, written by readers of C.D. No doubt they, like myself, went to Matinees on Saturday mornings when they were younger. One serial I would like information on is a western serial in 12 chapters, titled *The Devil Horse*. As I only saw it once my memory of it is very vague. I would like to know the actors, the actress, and if it was based on any story or comic strip.

If my memory serves me right, the hero was Bob Notton, who taught a boy to talk. It was in the early 'fifties that I saw *The Devil Horse*, but I believe it was made before that, possibly in the 'thirties.

From GORDON HUDSON:

I read Dennis Bird's comments on "Carol - Last of the Lincolns" (November C.D.) but I am not sure whether he is right. The inheritance in "Carol" would depend on when the story was written. Primogeniture was abolished in 1925.

Up to that time, land could not be left by Will and it automatically descended to the eldest son. It could, however, in some circumstances pass to a female descendent if there was no male in the direct line of descent. After 1925, freehold land (real estate) as well as personal estate could be left by Will, or, if there was no will, it would pass to the next of kin; if there was more than one of the same degree of relationship it would be divided equally amongst them, as is still the case today.

It would seem from the reference given that "Carol" appeared during the 1940s and consequently (unless this was a reprint of a very much older tale) both Carol and her cousin would be entitled to equal shares in their grandfather's estate.

Incidentally, I have noticed from time to time that some authors treat the laws of succession with varying degrees of accuracy, and I have sometimes thought of the event related that "it could never have happened like that".

(Editor's note: Ernest Holman's query about Carcroft in the last C.D. has stimulated much response. The first part of Robert Kirkpatrick's letter deals with it, as do the letters from Darrell Swift and Gordon Hudson which follow it:

From ROBERT KIRKPATRICK (author of *the Encyclopaedia of Boys' School Stories*)

In answer to Ernest Holman's query re the "lost Frank Richards Carcroft story *Who Shall Be Captain?*" - this was advertised on the back of the dustjacket of *Rallying Round Gussy*, published by Mandeville Publications in 1950. The blurb said: "Martin Clifford,

who also writes under the names of Frank Richards and Owen Conquest, will be writing for Mandeville Publications in 1950 the following new books: *Jack of All Trades*, *The Rivals of Rockwood School*, and *Who Shall be Captain?*" (Note the mis-spelling of "Rookwood"!).

I am certain however, that the last item was never published. It is certainly not listed in the British Library or Bodleian Library catalogues. Mandeville had already published 2 of the Tom Merry books when *Rallying Round Gussy* was published; *The Scapegrace of St. Jim's* followed, along with *The Rivals of Rookwood* and *Jack of All Trades*, all in 1950. However, the second two "Jack" stories, *Jack's the Lad* and *Jack of the Circus*, weren't published until the mid-1950s, and by Spring Books rather than Mandeville. Indeed, Mandeville published no more novels by Frank Richards after 1950, although they did continue publishing the Tom Merry and Billy Bunter annuals up until 1955.

In answer to Fred Rich's query in the September CD about David L. Smith, the author of *The Reasedale School Mystery* – the David L. Smith who wrote the railway books was actually one David Larmer Smith, born, according to the British Library catalogue, in 1899. All his railways books seem to have been published from the 1960s onwards. My initial reaction was that he was almost certainly not the same author. I couldn't discover anything about the *Reasedale* Smith when I was researching the Encyclopaedia of Boys' School Stories – as far as I could see *The Reasedale School Mystery* was his only book. It was first published by Blackie & Son, undated in 1922, and reprinted, again undated, in 1933. The first edition had 6 black and white plates by H.M. Brock; the reprint only 3 plates.

However, when I pulled my copies down off the shelf recently, I found a note inside one of them from an unfortunately long-forgotten correspondent, who had picked up an inscribed copy which had been addressed to an old school-fellow of the author. The inscription reads:

Dear Tommy,

It is but fitting that you should receive one of my author's copies. In the far-off days of our youth you were the Lieutenant of a bloodthirsty(?) band calling itself "The League of the Red Triangle" which, if its aims far exceeded its achievements, nevertheless provided us with some entertainment, and was the original of "The League of the Red Serpent" in this book. You witnessed the commencement of this story and followed its progress with interest throughout. I therefore ask you to accept this, the finished article, with the very best wishes of

Your sincere friend, David L. Smith."

The interesting thing is not so much the inscription but the address which follows: "Glenmount", Dalmellington. 21st September 1922.

Dalmellington, of course, is in south-west Scotland, and was referred to in the extract from one of the railway books in Fred Rich's query...

If the two Smiths are one and the same, I think it unlikely that he would have referred to "the far-off days of our youth" in his inscription – after all, he would only have been 22 or 23 when he wrote it. It may, therefore, be that the railway author was the son of the *Reasedale* author. As the railway author is clearly fairly well-known, the next step would be to investigate his family.

From DARRELL SWIFT:

Ernest Holman's enquiry in the November C.D. as to the book *Who Shall Be Captain* has been raised before.

As far as I am aware, it was advertised as a forthcoming publications in the list of books on the back cover of the dust wrappers of *Rallying Round Gussy* and *Jack of All Trades* published by Mandeville. I am not aware of its being advertised again in any other publication.

As Mandeville claimed "Martin Clifford, who also writes under the names of Frank Richards and Owen Conquest, will be writing for Mandeville Publications in 1950 the following new books": the implication is that perhaps the manuscript had not been produced. And in the other publication in the same advertisements *Jack of All Trades* mention is made of the forthcoming publications: *The Rivals of Rookwood* and *who Shall be Captain*, and in *The Rivals of Rookwood* mention is made of the latest book *Jack of All Trades* but no mention is made of *Who Shall be Captain*. From deduction – and nothing more – it would appear that *Who Shall be Captain* was abandoned. Now, whether there is a "lost" manuscript or whether it was never written, is open to conjecture. Perhaps Mrs. Una Hamilton Wright can help?

From GORDON HUDSON:

Re: Ernest Holman's query re Carcroft November C.D:

On the back of the dustwrapper on my copy of *Jack of All Trades* is a list of the Tom Merry hardbacks issued by Mandeville Publications, plus news of forthcoming publications. At the bottom of the list the following statement reads:-

"Martin Clifford, who also writes under the names of Frank Richards and Owen Conquest, will be writing for Mandeville Publications in 1950 the following new books: *The Rivals of Rookwood School*, an old favourite revived at the request of many readers. *Who Shall Be Captain?* A story of Carcroft, the new school created recently by Mr. Richards."

Well, the Rookwood book did appear, a solitary issue, but so far as I am aware, the Carcroft one never did. This raised in my mind two further queries: (1) Did Frank Richards ever write and complete this tale, and (2) if so, does the manuscript still exist?

Mandeville were of course not quite right in stating that Carcroft was a "recently" created school. My own introduction to Carcroft was through their previous year's *Tom Merry's Annual*, but the school was originally created for and appeared in *Hutchinsons' PIE Magazine* from 1944 to 1947.

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Chairperson Mary Cadogan welcomed a large attendance at the November meeting in Chingford Horticultural Society Hall.

Our Treasurer reported that we had a healthy balance of Club Funds. It was also reported that a donation had been made by the Club, in memory of Peter Mahony, to his son's missionary fund.

Roger Coombes gave a fine and detailed presentation on the career of Rupert Bear, from Mary Tourtel's early, slightly Gothic fairy-tale style, through the beauty, imagination and humour of Alfred Bestall's work to the present-day craftsmanship of John Harrold. Roger showed us some original art-work as well as Annuals and pictures.

Andrew Pitt, who has just re-published Mary Cadogan's *Frank Richards: the Chap Behind the Chums*, then spoke about his first encounter with Bunter (in an Armada paperback) and how this began 'a thirty-five year addiction'. Andrew read a brief passage from George Orwell's famous essay on boys' weeklies which expressed scorn for the so-called cosy and escapist world of Greyfriars. Andrew's response had been "please transport me to that serene and special world" as soon as possible!

Chris Harper then gave us a Quiz on leading lights in popular fiction.

Norman Wright presented an excellent and fascinating slide-show about the many magazines and papers in which the writings of W.E. Johns had been published. The range of these was an eye-opener to some members, and there were many murmurs of appreciation as covers and illustrations appeared on the screen. VIC PRATT

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

The A.G.M. is not the most popular meeting of the year hence a lower than usual attendance in November.

All Club offices for next year were filled and the Club Programme was circulated. Our Treasurer also reported that, just like Manchester United, we had made a profit this year.

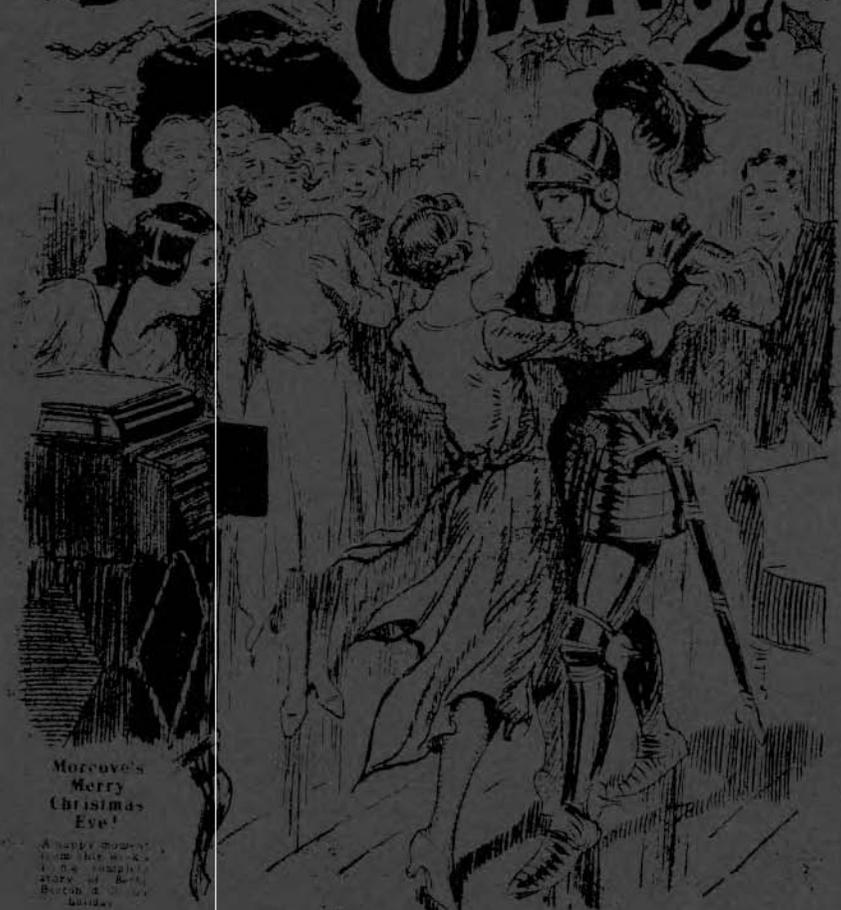
During refreshments we looked at the letters of appreciation and photos from our successful 50th Anniversary Lunch last month.

Afterwards we were entertained by our Secretary, the Rev. Geoffrey Good, who read from *Magnet* 255 in which "Miss Franke" in an encounter with Vavasour "dots him one in the peeper". PAUL GALVIN

No. 321. - THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.



The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d



Moreover's
Merry
Christmas
Eve!

A happy moment
from the school
in the happy
story of Betty
Burch & her
holiday

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