STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 43
NO. 506

72p

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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FUTURE PLANS

The New Year is now well under way, but perhaps it is still in order to think about new starts, and fresh ideas. Our Christmas Annual brought me an even bigger than usual post-bag. It seems that our contributors sounded the right note once again; your letters have been extremely appreciative, and I think every article and story in the Annual came in for its share of praise. It seems invidious, therefore, to single out any particular item for special mention as 'Top of the Pops', but perhaps there was most emphasis on Leslie Rowley's 'The Bounder's Christmas Present' and on E.G. Hammond's 'A Foreign Country'. To quote from another of our much appreciated contributors, 'J.E.M.', '...how brilliantly Les Rowley catalogues so many of Smithy's misdeeds and their redemption'; 'J.E.M.' also echoes the views of many readers when he says of E.G. Hammond's article: 'This is one of the most brilliant and memorable evocations of childhood I have ever read: a total and moving delight'.

I have also been most gratified by readers' response to the higher than usual increase recently in our subscription rate for the monthly C.D.

Typical comments are those from Mr. R.J. McCabe of Dundee and of Mr. J.H. Saunders of London:

'As long as the monthly keeps appearing and gives us so much pleasure, the price increase doesn't matter. So keep our grand little magazine turning out.'

'The mag. is worth double anyway. Thank you for a most wonderful Annual.'

Of course, as well as appreciation, I have received several suggestions about the future content of the C.D. It is always difficult to please every single reader because, for example, there are some who would like each page of the C.D. to be devoted to just the one author who is their particular favourite! However, all suggestions and comments are considered, and I would particularly like to receive the response of readers to the following:

'Can an EAGLE corner be slotted into C.D. each month, or is the fifties Eagle Weekly too young for the mag! I hope not'.

It is Dr. Steven Jackson from County Down who has written this, and during the past twelve months several other readers have asked for EAGLE contributions. Other regular requests come for items on W.E. Johns' Biggles, and for more of Richmal Crompton's 'Just William'. I feel that although it is of course extremely important to maintain the traditional pillars of the C.D. (Hamiltonia, Blake and the Nelson Lee), it is important that we also provide a platform for those who appreciate some of the more recent papers. What do you think? I look forward to hearing your views.

Mr. Ivor Skeet of Burgess Hill has already made his wishes clear to me. He feels that the C.D. has been neglecting the Gem, and I must say I rather agree with him. He comments that the GEM STORY by John Wernham and myself, published by the Charles Hamilton Museum Press, continues to give him pleasure and 'is an ideal bedside companion'. He then remarks that Eric Fayne, writing in the Charles Hamilton Companion, Volume 1, 'put it beautifully':

'Wonderful, wonderful GEM ... Incomparable GEM ... Charles Hamilton's GEM stories early or late are as fresh and entertaining today as when they were first written... Tom

Merry, Gussy and St. Jim's will never die while we remain who loved the GEM so much'.

I agree with Eric's comments, but must emphasize that the C.D. is totally dependent upon its readers for contributions and can publish only what you all manage to provide. So get your imaginations, pens or (preferably) typewriters busy, and send me contributions about your favourite school or author - about the established 'greats' (Hamilton, Brooks and the Blake writers; the various 'Hilda Richards' and 'her' rival/companion writer, 'Marjorie Stanton') - but also about the wide and wonderful range of other authors. Britain has an unquestionably unique heritage of children's story-papers, magazines and comics (and indeed of children's books). Let us not forget this, and let us keep faith with all those writers, artists and editors who gave so many generations pleasure and enchantment.

As your Editor, I relish the thought of contributions pouring in. And I really do intend this year to bring out the Summer Special that I planned (but did not manage to bring to fruition) last year.

MARY CADOGAN

* *

Your Editor says—

It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc., in it. The rates are 4p per word: a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.

NAMES TO CONJURE WITH

by Jack Greaves

When travellting by coach or car, particularly in country areas, I always find it fascinating to make a mental note of the names of the old inns and pubs on the journey, particularly in the summertime. Nowadays, of course, with the increased road traffic in the areas of these licensed premises, they are much busier than those mentioned by E.S. Brooks in his excellent Old Series school tales. However, one can still see the 'locals' partaking of a well earned drink, wearing their working clothes, busily chatting and discussing problems and news of the day.

Here are the names of some of the fictional pubs and inns mentioned by Brooks:

THE JUMPING FOX (376); THE KING'S ARMS (Bannington Road - 118); THE BLUE PETER INN (Caistowe - 496); THE BLUE DRAGON (Bannington - 300); THE FOX AND HOUNDS (295); THE LEAPING FOX (376); THE PLOUGH (Edgemoor - 541); THE MARINERS COMPASS (Tremley - 344); THE BUSHWICK ARMS (Market Bushwick - 418); THE THATCHERS ARMS (Little Haddow - 383); THE SIX BELLS INN (Caistow - 212); THE RED LION (Caistowe - 212); THE RED LION (Great Rapley - 145); THE WHEATSHEAF HOTEL (Bannington - 398); THE FOX INN (Edgemoor - 209); THE KING'S HEAD (Helmford - 356); THE GEORGE INN (Bellton - 192); THE FOAMING BOWL INN (Bennington - 276); THE FISHERMAN'S ARMS (Caistowe - 386); THE BLUE BARGE INN (Tilbury); THE WHITE LION (Bannington - 291); THE BLUE LION (Tregellis - 290); THE GREYHOUND HOTEL (Streatham - 358); THE BLUE PITCHER (Pellton - 186); THE WHITE HARP (Bellton - 112);** THE BLUE HOTEL (Bannington - 180).

** THE WHITE HARP in Bellton is featured many times when Fullwood & Co. and other dubious characters such as Grayson, Kenmore and Starke would make their way there after lights-out to play cards, etc., sometimes narrowly escaping detection as they made their way back into the school.

NINE OF THE BEST

by William Lister

If anybody asked me how many Sexton Blake tales I had read in my life-time I would be hard put to tell them. If they went further and were so keen to know the correct answer that they offered me one of those new cars that T.V. games shows, Readers' Digest, travel agents and jam factories might put before my dazzled eyes, I still could not reply. And if it was suggested that I would receive a year's free petrol supply to stimulate my memory into picking nine of the best stories, by nine separate Blake writers, I would still be at a loss. The magnitutde of the task would overwhelm me.

That's not to say I wouldn't try. Probably I would come up with nine stories by my favourite author, Edwy Searles Brooks, or nine of those delightful Christmas yarns that appeared down the years. But that is not to answer the qestion of the nine best tales by different authors, so my car and my year's free petrol would disappear over the horizon.

Had the question been 'Could I point them to a source that would provide this information?' I would now possess those wonderful gifts on offer. I would have pointed the enquirers to one of the books in the CLASSIC THRILLER series published by J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., a book of 460 exciting pages depicting the adventures of Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro the bloodhound, in good clear print which I enjoyed even with handicapped sight. Not, I hasten to say, by one author only, but by nine different writers bringing out the highlights of Blake's personality to the full. It will be enough simply to give the names of the nine writers for C.D. readers to visualize the feast of detective lore provided in this book by Sexton Blake with his friends and enemies. Here then are the authors, and they deserve a big hand:

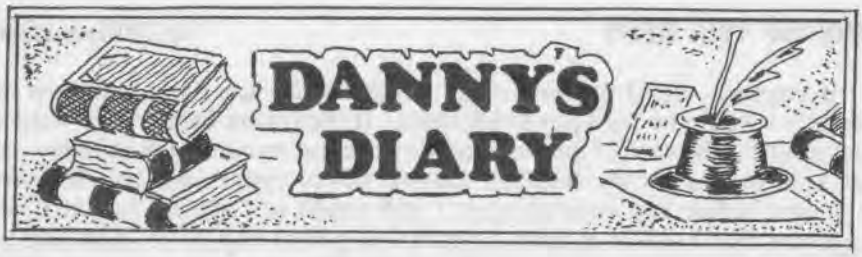
Gwyn Evans, G.H. Teed, John Hunter, Rex Hardinge,
Donald Stuart, Anthony Parsons, Anthony Skene,
Robert Murray and Pierre Quiroule.

The title of the book, of course, is SEXTON BLAKE WINS - and every tale IS a winner.

Now for the bonus! Each story is prefaced by an introduction about its author. And now, as Charles Dickens might say, 'Who is the founder of this feast?' Who on earth went to all the trouble to bring this book to life,

this book which every Blake fan will be pleased to own; this book that will make new readers of the Blake saga cry 'More! More!' It is none other than Jack Adrian who made this marvellous selection of Sexton Blake stories, and whose ten-page foreword to the book is a masterly summing up of the saga. Great stuff this, and excellent for raising any spirits that are temporarily flattened in the post Christmas weeks of anti-climax.

* *



FEBRUARY 1939

For this reader the Fourpenny Libraries have been back on absolutely top form this month. Some great yarns to take one's mind off all the squabbles in Europe.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library the gorgeous tales about the Courtfield Cracksman have continued with "The Master from Scotland Yard". He is, of course, Mr. Steele who has replaced Mr. Quelch as master of the Remove. The Courtfield Cracksman continues to make valuable hauls, and, where the police have failed to get their man, Vernon-Smith is determined to succeed. It's terrific - and it hasn't finished yet.

Second S.O.L. is "Manders on the Spot", a long Rookwood tale, with plenty of fun and excitement, and with Mr. Manders, Lovell, Tubby Muffin, and a grimy individual called Slog Poggers in the limelight.

Also great stuff, in the S.O.L. is "Nelson Lee's Come-Back". Nelson Lee and the Headmaster are both sacked from St. Frank's, and Mr. Trenton, the new man who wants to become Head, is behind the trouble. But Nelson Lee is wise to him, and prepares a big shock for Trenton.

I had two mighty fine tales in the Sexton Blake Library. That wonderful writer, Pierre Quiroule, is back with "The Riddle of Ugly Face", which introduces Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie in a fine yarn of the Secret Service, with Blake, Tinker, and Pedro involved. Another tip-top S.B.L. this month is "The Case of the Missing Musician" by Rex Hardinge. A big London Hall is packed to hear a recital by Max Cordosi. Suddenly Richard Thorpe gets up and walks out of the Hall. And Cordosi is apparently taken ill on the stage. He puts on his hat and

coat, goes out into the fog, and disappears. Sexton Blake, just then, was busy on a murder case in Bognor Regis, and had no idea that he would become concerned with the Cordosi disappearance.

In the B.F.L. I had "The Bullies of the Bombay Castle" by Duncan Storm. This is about Dick Dorrington & Co. of the school ship, Bombay Castle, and it's too farcial for me. Also on board the ship are Cecil, the orang-outan, and Horace, the goat. Doug says this is a very old tale which was a serial in the Boys' Friend long ago. Another B.F.L. I was tempted to buy - but didn't - is called "The Wolf of Texas", and apparently it is about Ferrers Locke and his assistant, Jack Drake, solving a case in the Wild West. It might be interesting, but it seemed odd to publish a story about Drake as a tec's assistant while stories of him as a schoolboy are appearing in the Gem. And it is written by someone called Steve Rogers, who is a new writer to me. So I didn't buy it. I wonder if I've missed anything worthwhile.

Out in the real world, which is far more tedious than the fictional one, Britain and France have recognised the government of General Franco in Spain, though the Civil War there is still going on at the moment. Ominously, air-raid shelters are being issued in Britain, starting with the London area. The very first shelters have gone to Islington.

The new stories about King of the Islands have carried on in Modern Boy for most of the month. They are about the villainous Wolf on his desert island with his own cannibals, with the "Dawn" heading for the island, and a quarrel brewing between Kit Hudson, the mate, and his skipper Ken King. The tales have been entitled respectively "Man from the Sea", "The Word Was 'Danger'", "Master of Mystery Island", and "Shark Bait", the last one being the end of the series for the time being. A splendid series, but all too short. I hope that Ken King will soon be back.

I should have given up Modern Boy, I think, now that Ken King has departed, but with the last issue of the month a new series of Captain Justice started with "City of Secrets", so I shall carry on with it. It is interesting to note that the very first Captain Justice tale (it was called "Captain Justice - Modern Pirate") was published in Modern Boy in November 1930. And that is almost 9 years ago.

One evening early in the month my brother Doug took me to Chiswick Empire. It is a lovely variety theatre. We sat in the 3/- stalls. Doug always likes the best sets in any theatre. Top of the bill was Lily Morris. She sang "Don't Have Any More Mrs. Moore" and "Why Am I Always The Bridesmaid?" and several other screamingly funny songs. Also in the programme was Freddie Forbes, a kind of pseudo aristocrat. He had with him a sleek lady named Angela Barrie, and he called her "Chromium-plated Fanny". Lovely show.

The mighty Magnet gets better and better. All this month the series has continued about a horrible Old Boy of Greyfriars, who has set up near

the school as a boot-repairer. And in Greyfriars itself there is some mystery person who goes around commiting foul deeds.

This month's first story is "The Mystery Man of Greyfriars". Loder has been brutally attacked, and Vernon-Smith is suspected, but he swears he is innocent. Next comes "The Hoaxing of Hacker". The Acid Drop has got it in his head that the Famous Five are a shady crowd, and Bob Cherry leads the supicious master up the garden path. Great stuff.

Next story has the quaint title "Sexton Blake Minor". Nobody seems able to find out the identity of the midnight prowler who is causing so much havoc in the school. But Coker fancies himself as a detective, so he takes a hand, with hilarious results. Finally comes "Duffer or Detective?". The sinister prowler has had a long run, so Mr. Quelch decides to call on the help of Ferrers Locke's assistant, Jack Drake, who was once a student at Greyfriars. Drake comes to the school as a new boy, calling himself James Duck, and disguised as something of a Skimpole. We first meet Drake, as "Duck", in this story, sitting in a railway carriage reading the Gem. A bit odd, that, really. So Drake, reading the Gem, could read about himself as a schoolboy on the "Benbow", before he went to Greyfriars, and long before he became a detective's assistant. Yes, a bit odd. But a grand series. And the sinister Crocker is hovering in the background. I wonder whether James Duck will track down the "prowler". The series continues next month.

A nice month in the one-and-three's at the local cinemas. An excellent crime comedy is "The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse", starring Edward G. Robinson and Humphrey Bogart. A happy little film had Shirley Temple as "Little Miss Broadway", about a small orphan girl who is adopted by some people who run a residential hotel for show people. Right up my street was "Spawn of the North" with George Raft, Henry Fonda, and Dorothy Lamour, about fishermen in Alaska long ago and Russian poachers who come to steal their fish. "Old Mother Riley in Paris" was good fun (Lucan and McShane, of course), while "Sing You Sinners", starring Bing Crosby and Donald O'Connor, was a lovely film about an amusing family of folk who own a racehorse. Last of all, "Men With Wings", in technicolor, with Fred Macmurray, was a bit disappointing. About boyhood friends who went into the Air Force together and then fell out over a girl.

Lastly, a glorious month in the Gem, the oldest school-story paper in the world. St. Jim's opened with "Manners' Feud", continuing the series when Manners has a grudge against the new boy, Roylance, from New Zealand. Then the last of this series, "From Foe to Friend" when Manners discovers that Roylance had saved his, Manners', brother's life. Next, "Gussy's Big Gamble" in which Gussy put a bet on a horse with Mr. Banks, to try to raise money for the Cottage Hospital; finally "They Called him a Duffer", which is a story about the gentle Clarence York Tompkins. All lovely stuff.

On to Cedar Creek. Month started with "The Truthful Chinee" in which the chums cure Yen Chin of lying, and find he is even more annoying when he tells the exact truth; next "Flooded Out" when the Creek near Cedar Creek school overflows its banks; then "The Rustlers of Thompson Valley", an adventure with horse-thieves; and finally a good drama, "The Shadow of Fear" in which Beauclerc sets out to join his relatives in England, but, before he boards the ship, an uneasy feeling makes him go back to his father, and he is just in time to save his father's life.

Now to the Benbow. "It All Depends on Tuckey" tells of the re-run of the election for the new junior captain. Drake and Daubeny are the candidates, who finished equal in the first election. Now, in the re-run, Tuckey is bribed to vote for Daubeny, so Daub wins; next, "The Troubles of Tuckey" in which Tuckey finds himself barred from is study as a result of his treachery; then "Jack Drake Gets His Own Back", with Drake up against the bullying prefect, Ransome; finally "The Rebel of the Benbow" continuing the feud with Ransome.

A Magnificent Month in the Gorgeous Gem!.

ERIC FAYNE Comments on This Month's DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 361 "The Master from Scotland Yard" comprised the second set of 3 stories from the 9-story Courtfield Cracksman series which graced the Magnet in the early months of 1930. S.O.L. No. 362 "Manders on the Spot" comprised a 10-story series (not a serial) which featured in the Gem in early 1936. As I have mentioned before, Mr. Hamilton, in a letter to me, stated that he wrote none of the Rookwood stories which appeared in the Gem. I am inclined to think that he DID write this Manders serial, and I believe that this was the only Gem Rookwood tale which was genuine.

The Sexton Blake story "The Riddle of Ugly Face" was one of the handful of new Sexton Blake novels which Pierre Quiroule wrote on his return to the S.B.L., as a result of my own efforts.

In Danny's Gem of February 1938, "Manners' Feud" had been "Foes of the School House" at the start of 1918. The sequel "From Foe to Friend" had appeared under the same title the following week in 1918. "Gussy's Big Gamble: had been "The Plunger" many months later in 1918, and "They Called Him a Duffer" had been "The Triumph of Tompkins" just 2 weeks later in 1918.

The Gem's 4 Cedar Creek stories had run consecutively from mid-March 1918 in the Boys' Friend. "The Truthful Chinee" had been "Yen Chin's Reformation" in 1918; "Flooded Out" had the same title on both occasions; "Rustlers of Thomson Valley" had been "The Parting of the Ways" (lovely old familiar title of earlier days) in 1918; and "Shadow of Fear" bore the same title each time.

The Gem's four Benbow tales had run consecutively from early May 1920 in the Greyfriars Herald. "It All Depends on Tuckey" had been "The Importance of Toodles" in 1920; "The Troubles of Tuckey" had been "Barred by the Study"; "Drake Gets His Own Back" had been "Fagging for Ransome" in 1920; and "Rebel of the Benbow" had been "Up Against the Prefects".

But stay! In Danny's last Gem for February 1939, there was something which, for us 50 years later, is even more exciting than the stories of St. Jim's, Cedar Creek, and the Benbow.

There was a photograph of a schoolboy, one Robert Whiter of Wood Green, N.22, reading his favourite paper, the Gem. It was just under ten years later that I met the subject of that photograph; no longer a schoolboy but now a handsome and charming young man, worthy of his Gem upbringing. It was a momentous occasion - the second meeting of the Mother Club of the Old Boys' Book Club. It was held at the home of one Robert Whiter of Wood Green N.22. I met Robert, and, of course, his splendid brother, Ben. We became great friends. It meant a lot to a youngster like me. Youngster??? Well, after all, it was 40 years ago. And, incidentally, I am deeply proud of the fact that the next meeting of the Club, the third, was held at my own home at the Modern School, Surbiton. And our Bob was there, of course.

And Bob's friendship has been one of my most valued assets down the long, tumbling years. The Gem was lucky to have a reader of the quality of our Bob; the Old Boys' Book Club has been lucky to have a member of such sterling enthusiasm as Bob; and I - well, I am very lucky indeed to be able, as the years have tumbled past, to be able to call our Bob my pal.

And our mutual pal, all our lives, has been Danny's Gorgeous Gem!

****

NORAH NUGENT

by Tommy Keen

The MORCOVE MINIATURES have now had quite a run, so perhaps it is time they came to a halt. There are still two or three of the main batch of chums who have been ignored, namely Naomer Nakara, Judy Cardew and Bunny Trevor. Also some baddies like the vicious Cora Grandways and the sneaking Ursula Wade, who appeared in the stories for most of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN's long run. Naomer, to me, was an irritation. Judy Cardew became just another of Betty Barton's chums, having been far more interesting when she had been known as Judith Grandways, the sister of the notorious Cora. Bunny Trevor arrived too late in the saga for me to be interested in her.

However, as at Greyfriars and St. Jim's, there were also many lesser known members of the Fourth Form at Morcove. Some, such as Etta Hargrove, Grace Garfield and Diana Forbes were featured occasionally, but many were ignored completely. One of the lesser known girls did, however, star in two series; this was Norah Nugent. Both series were

interesting, and, re-reading them in later years, one senses that perhaps they were not written by the real 'Marjorie Stanton' (Horace Phillips).

The first of these series (164 to 169) begins with the dramatic title of THE MYSTERY OF NORAH NUGENT, in which Norah is stated to be the richest girl at Morcove. At a tea party held in her study, she recounts to Betty & Co. a strange story (the theme of which we may have heard before). As a child, she was involved in a boating accident in which her parents were drowned, but she was washed ashore, believe it or not, just a few miles from Morcove. Rescued by a fisherman, she was later handed over to a Mr. Nugent who became her guardian. Norah informs Betty & Co. that she will become an heiress when she reaches the age of twenty-one, but there is trouble in store. Another girl turns up at Morcove, claiming that she is the real Norah Nugent. Our Norah is taken away by the fisherman (shady character this), and becomes a household drudge. Oh dear, it is all very complicated. She escapes from the fisherman, bobs and dyes her hair, puts on some spectacles, and returns to Morcove School as Miriam Gay. I'll leave it here, and say that the original Norah regains her proper status.

THE FOURTH FORM REBEL! "Betty, I've finished with you!" exclaimed Norah Nugent. "And the Form had better look out for a new captain!"

Several months later (196 to 199), she is again featured in a series which has a well known theme. A child is saved from the sea by a Morcove girl, but as the heroine (Norah) does not admit to being the rescuer, another Fourth-former decides to claim the honour. This is Grace Garfield, always a rather doubtful character. In time Grace realises that she has involved herself in a mystery concerning jewel thieves, and a most objectionable man who is a dwarf. Meanwhile Norah is helping a beautiful princess to regain jewels which have been stolen. Enough said, except that there was a secret society ('The Indita') involved; that Grace at last owns up to not being the heroine; the princess regains her jewels and Norah becomes the heroine of the school.

This series, I am almost certain, was written by the Morcove 'sub-writer', L.E. Ransome, who introduced Jemima Carstairs to the school a year later. The writing of both series is in very much the same style. But

back to Norah. In the very early days of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN she, like most of the girls in the Fourth, was for many terms either against Betty Barton, or for her. As our picture shows, she is for the moment against our redoubtable form captain! After the two series which I have mentioned, Norah's name cropped up occasionally, but apart from being the temporary editress of the MORCOVE MAGAZINE in 1926/7, whilst Betty was away, she then almost vanished from the Morcove scene.

* *

WILL HAY - THE FILMS AND THE FICTION

by Alan Pratt

An eminent critic once observed that the majority of films bore little resemblance to the books upon which they were based. He went on to say, however, that this hardly mattered to film fans as they did not read anyway. This, he declared, was the nature of the beast!

Whatever truth there may have been in his statement, it certainly does not apply to followers of the hobby, many of whom talk with real affection of the great (and not so great) cinema stars of days gone by. Readers will be aware of the strong links between the popular cinema and boys' papers over the years, and copies of FILM FUN, KINEMA COMIC, BOYS' CINEMA, etc., are eagerly sought by collectors today.

With some entertainers, notably those whose style was essentially unsubtle, the transposition from the screen to the printed word or comic strip was almost entirely successful. Understandably less success was achieved in trying to reproduce on the printed page the style of an artist like Will Hay. It was, of course, simple enough to create the setting and the situation (after all, inefficient headmasters had been a staple ingredient of boys' fiction for years) but not at all easy to capture the widely varied levels of comedy in Hay's unique performances. Whether as schoolmaster, police sergeant, prison governor or fire chief, Hay played the incompetent blusterer who knew little of his subject, relying almost entirely on his wits to see him through. His morals were always dubious and he was easy meat for the unscrupulous enemy ready to bribe, corrupt or blackmail. Hay was generally considered to be at his best when teamed with Moore Marriott and Graham Moffat, and few would deny that the likes of OH MR. PORTER, ASK A POLICEMAN and WHERE'S THAT FIRE? are comedy classics. The interplay between the three stars was a masterpiece of overstatement, funny because it was but an exaggeration of real life. Hay would 'lead' in a self-important bumbling way, and hope for (though not expect) support from his followers. Moffatt in his lazy fat boy role usually knew a little more than Hay about what was required but was far too idle to put his knowledge to use, resorting instead to challenging Hay's authority. Marriott, as the senile old-timer, often had little idea of what was going on and behaved in an absurd manner calculated to exasperate Hay and yet, at the same

time, to reassure him that perhaps he was still in command after all. These were wonderful scenes of incompetence, made funnier because they were so essentially British! I honestly believe that there is a little of Hay, Moffatt or Marriott in all of us, and have often chuckled silently in business meetings as similar relationships have been inadvertently recreated.

What then were the boys' writers to make of such a team? Certainly they were handed no easy task in being asked to transfer this type of humour to the pages of a weekly. Whether in comic strip format (as for example in the PILOT) or story form (C.D. readers will know that Charles Hamilton himself wrote tales of Will Hay as headmaster) the unique essence of Hay's humour was, unfortunately, lost. This is hardly surprising, and reflects in no way on those responsible. After all, boys' writers were paid essentially to write stories rather than examine personal relationships and although Hamilton, at least, had the capability it was not surprising that his finest efforts were channelled into his own creations.

Perhaps the fairest way of assessing the stories is to dissassociate them entirely from the films. They were different, but still good in their way. Which, perhaps, brings us back to our starting point, but in reverse. Or, in cinema parlance, 'this is where we came in!'.

* *

LETTER FROM A YOUNG ENTHUSIAST

Dear Mr. Wernham,

My name is Llewelyn Thomas and I am ten years old. When I was eight I was looking around in the school library and discovered a Bunter book which had an interesting cover, it was called BILLY BUNTER AND THE SCHOOL REBELLION. From then on I became a Billy Bunter Fanatic.

It is practically impossible to get hold of Billy Bunter books in shops or libraries, in fact only one library in Kent has a Billy Bunter book. While searching for copies in a second hand book shop... I was told of your collection of Bunter memorabilia and was fascinated. I would very much like to join your Billy Bunter appreciation society. Please could you send me details of it. I hope to hear from your very soon.

Yours sincerely, LLEWELYN THOMAS

P.S. I bet reading Billy Bunter is more exciting than looking at bones!

(EDITOR'S NOTE: As most C.D. readers will know, John Wernham, to whom this letter is addressed, is the Curator of the Charles Hamilton Museum at Maidstone and also the President of the London Old Boys' Book Club (which is not, of course, just a 'Billy Bunter appreciation society'). He is also an osteopath! It seems a very great pity that so few libraries now have copies of the Bunter books. We have told Llewelyn about the excellent Howard Baker facsimiles which, happily, are much more widely available.

Books

Chalet School Series: The School at the Chalet; Jo of the Chalet School; The Princess of the Chalet School; The Head Girl of the Chalet School
Elinor M Brent-Dyr
Re-issue of a classic series for young girls – exciting, unusual stories set in the Tyrol. Beautifully presented editions containing the full text with reproductions of the original jackets.

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By Mary Cadogan

Elinor Brent-Dyer's Chalet School series, which ran from the 1920s until her death at the end of the 1960s, has been mentioned several times in our columns. As far as girls' school stories are concerned, the series is unique; it has never been out of print, and seems to appeal as much to girls of the 1980s as to those of the '20s and '30s. For the last two decades, it has been possible to buy these super stories only in paperbacks (issued by Armada). These are still going strong, but the original publishers of the series, Chambers, have now reissued the first four Chalet School titles in first edition facsimile format. They are gorgeous! It is a joy both to handle and read these beautifully produced books, which of course offer the advantages of the original bold type, thick pages, full colour dust-jackets by Brisley and that wonderful new-paper-and-printer's-ink smell which, alas, our much thumbed original editons of so many of our favourite school stories have long, long since lost!

From the beginning there was a touch of glamour about the Chalet School tales. Founded by Madge Bettany, a young, resourceful and impoverished Englishwoman, the school was an unusual one. Madge established it in the Austrian Tyrol, mainly because Joey, her younger sister, was delicate and would benefit from clean mountain air. Once she lived amongst blue lakes and snowy peaks Joey went from strength to strength; so did the school, which became truly international, combining exotic foreign elements with utterly British grit and common-sense! The scene for this resilient series is well and truly set in these first four books, with lots of pacey excitement (girls falling into icy streams, or being

stranded on hazardous mountain-sides, etc.) and interplay between believable and charismatic characters. Nostalgic delights indeed!
(Available from bookshops, and Happy Hours Unlimited, 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds, LS16 6BU.)

* *

DICK RODNEY RETURNS TO ST. WINIFRED'S by H. Heath

(Conclusion)

III

Dick Rodney was in a very happy frame of mind. After two pleasant interviews, first with Dr. Goring the Headmaster, and then with Mr. Packe, the Master of the Fourth, he had been the Fourth's guest of honour in Study No. 8, his old study.

The Fourth had rolled up in strength and had so crowded out the study that Newson in Study 7 had taken the overflow. Even Vane, Chetwynd and some more of the Bucks had come along.

Estcourt, Sawyer major, Tuckey Toodles, Furly, Conway and Norman were still there. Tuckey, who had been on his own in Study No. 8, was plainly in his element, and was still doing justice to the foodstuffs that remained on the table.

"It's great to have you back", said Sawyer major gleefully, for the fourth or fifth time.

"I've really missed you, old fellow", said Toodles, as he started on yet another large slice of cake.

"Rodney must have missed quite a few invitations to Toodles Towers", grinned Estcourt.

"That's why he's come back", chortled Sawyer major, amidst a roar of laughter.

"It really is splendid to be back; simply great", said Rodney, his eyes glistening.

"Here's Daub to see you", called out Norman from the doorway.

Vernon Daubeny looked into the crowded study with a genial smile. Rodney met his gaze with an equally pleasant smile. What he had already heard about the junior captaincy was reassuring. Now he would soon know if the hatchet was well and truly buried.

"Hello!" said Daubeny. "Welcome back!" He leaned forward and stretched his right hand over the shoulder of Furly to shake Rodney's outstretched hand warmly.

"Come in Daub!" said Rodney. "You too, Torrence. Just push your way in."

Daubeny and Torrence did as requested and pushed their way in, and cheerfully joined in the celebration. "How's Drake?" enquired Daubeny. "Seen him lately?"

"Yes. We saw one another over Easter, and we write to each other fairly regularly. He sends you his regards."

"Good!" Daubeny did his best to hide a smile at the thought of the look on Egan's face on hearing that question and answer.

"Egan not with you?" asked Toodles. Sharp as ever, he had not missed the slight smile on Daubeny's face at the mention of Drake's name.

"No, dear boy", drawled Daubeny. "He seems to think that our friend Rodney might want to take over as junior-captain."

"What rot!" exclaimed Rodney. "Does Egan really think I've come back with that in mind?"

"Exactly what I've told him", nodded Daubeny. "I know I'm not the best captain in the business, but at least we've been getting some good results at both football and cricket."

"So I've heard", replied Rodney enthusiastically.

"Of course, it's quite possible that I could get fed up with the job and chuck and whole thing up". Daubeny's eyes fixed firmly on his former adversary.

"No need to do that Daub", said Rodney quietly.

"We'll see. In the meantime, we've got a big match against Redclyffe coming off fairly soon, and your presence will be required."

"Happy to oblige", laughed Rodney.

"See you later then", answered Daubeny agreeably, and with a smile and nod he left the study followed by Torrence.

After the two Shell fellows had gone, Estcourt turned to Rodney. "Well, there it is! Whilst Daub does kick over the traces occasionally with the rest of the Bucks, as regards sport he plays it straight: selection is purely on merit."

"I admit to being a little worried about how he would take my return here", Rodney said reflectively. "Now I know, and it just about makes it a perfect day for me. I feel that I've come home. Now what about the Redclyffe match?"

* *

CAN ANYONE FIND FOR ME an Ovaltiney Rule Book and/or an Ovaltiney badge? Also the following ever elusive books: Girls' Crystal Annual 1940: Popular Book of Girl's Stories 1935, 1936 and 1941: Mistress Mariner by Dorita Fairlie Bruce: Biddy's Secret, and also Maidlin to the Rescue, by Elsie J. Oxenham. Please offer to Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY.

Cliff House Corner

by Margery Woods

THE VALENTINE TOUCH

Come February each year the calendar and the greeting card industry remind us without fail that a certain much loved saint is remembered on the fourteenth of the month. But St. Valentine, perhaps to the disappointment of some of the pre-pubescent young readers, was rarely allowed to bring a touch of his speciality to the Cliff House stories, where feuding and fighting and adventure were more the order of the day, the outcome of which, naturally, always resulted in victory for honour and our true-blue chums.

But occasionally, even if not at the correct time of year as per the calendar, (and the greeting card industry) a gentle touch of romance would tinge the Cliff House skies with a restrained hint of purple. In SCHOOLGIRL 430, Oct. 23rd 1937, we discover Babs and Co. distinctly misty-eyed.

"It will be lovely to see them again."

"Oh, wasn't the wedding beautiful", murmured Marjorie Hazeldine. "Do you remember how Miss Scott looked? White satin, with that lovely orange blossom?"

A Former Cliff House mistress, Miss Eva Scott, and her husband, Peter Gordon, a games coach, have taken a house nearby as Peter is in line for the post of games master at Friardale School.

The lead-up to this story appeared several months earlier, in SGL 406, entitled Wedding Bells at Cliff House, and dealt with the budding romance between Miss Scott and Peter. Unfortunately, Grace Gregory of the Sixth, for selfish reasons of her own which have nothing to do with love, did everything in her power to ruin the affair, efforts which were foiled by Babs and the chums. Now, the happy wedding over, in The Return of The Married Mistress, the couple plan a house-warming and a celebration of Peter's new appointment, which awaits only the official sanction of the board. But many a slip... as the chums discover when they set to work to help Eva get the new home ready. This time Peter's enemy is a prefect at the boys' school. Accusations are made, the job is in danger, and much heartbreak is suffered before the redoubtable Jemima takes a hand and brings about the downfall of the unpleasant Sidney at Friardale.

Hilda Richards, presumably John Wheway at this period, handles the plots of these two stories with his customary skill, and in the earlier one, featuring Grace, shows an unerring perception of the wiles of a teenage girl and how easily she slips into the devious ways of fostering misunderstanding, ways which, sadly, come naturally to most women, even if they do not choose to exploit this feminine skill.

There was also a romance at Trevlyn Towers, scene of the last Cliff House Christmas, but the one great Cliff House tale of a grand passion belongs to the least likely candidate among the chums: Bessie Bunter! We have to go all the way back to March 6th, 1920 when the School Friend thrilled its breathless young readers with Bessie Bunter In Love!

"Oh, Marmaduke!"

"Oh, Bessie!"

At the start of the story Bessie is in her usual state of exhaustion and unable to move one step farther without sustenance. The chums leave her outside Uncle Clegg's tuck shop, wherein she finds his nephew, a most unappealing lad, judging by the author's description, with wild yellow hair, a thin face and a large mouth. But then, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Marmaduke endears himself to Fatima by allowing her tuck on the slate, accompanied by what Bessie imagines are languishing glances of great interest in her. Bessie returns to school in a daze, her head full of daydreams as ridiculous as the story in the novelette in which Miss Bullivant finds her engrossed, instead of prep. After a hilarious discussion on love (a more incongruous pair than Bessie and the Bull for an in-depth exchange of this nature is difficult to imagine) Miss Bullivant refuses to listen to anything more about coral lips and who of Bessie and herself will be married first, and dishes out a stiff impot. Undeterred, Bessie decides to write to her inamorato.

"Dear Marmaduke", she begins: "I am writing you these few lines with a burning heart..."

"I thought you were writing with a pen", said Freda.

"That's only parargorical---I mean allegorical", snapped Bessie. And so on, in this vein. Eventually she completes a poem, which, incidentally, contains an appalling line which no editor today would dare print. It seems surprising that it could be printed in 1920.

Bessie, in detention, sends her billet-doux via Phyllis and Philippa, and is furious when they return minus any reply but with a most disturbing account of Marmaduke's infidelity. The faithless Marmaduke had actually made eyes at them and stood them treat. Bessie's reaction is unheard of in Cliff House history. She actually starts to work, determined to please Miss Bullivant so that she will be freed from detention in time to go and visit Marmaduke the next day. Bessie succeeds and sets about transforming herself into a new Bessie, fondly believing she is going to appear as a dazzling vision of delight.

A centuries old story is sometimes told of the man whose bride vanished. The ardent groom, awaiting the appearance of his bride, finally wearies of waiting and seeks her behind the dressing screen, where he finds all that remains are the wig, false teeth, glass eye, padding, and various other appurtenances. There is an echo of this odd tale as Bessie sets forth the next day She is wearing:

Marjorie Hazeldene's new hat
Clara Trevlyn's boots
Meg Lennox's coat
Bridget O'Toole's hairslide and comb
Phyllis Howell's fur necklet
Philippa Derwent's skirt
Barbara Redfern's gloves
Augusta Anstruther-Browne's vanity bag
Dolly Jobling's scarf
Peggy Preston's umbrella, and various other articles not specified.

With half the Fourth in pursuit, bent on recovering their possessions, and a jape played on the Bull, the outcome of Bessie's jaunt is not exactly a romantic success. But she does not give up. Her next venture is to invite the beloved to tea, after selling some of her old blouses and skirts to raise the cash for the comestibles. The selling of Bessie's cast-offs has a somewhat improbable ring, but the readers seemed to accept this, as they accepted that Mabs could pass herself off as a monocled cousin of Marmaduke and deceive Bessie long enough for the chums' jape to succeed, when they have decided that Marmaduke is quite unacceptable at Cliff House. It all comes over as a distinctly unkind jape from Babs and Co., but we have to remember that at this time Bessie had not undergone the softening and more appealing transformation which Wheway was to effect more than a decade later. The rest of the plot is thin and eventually reveals that Bessie's lover is the despair of his Uncle Clegg and has only

ingratiated himself with the Cliff House girls - no matter how fat and unglamorous - in order to attempt to burgle the school. So Bessie decides to become a man-hater, and gradually the school stops laughing.

No, St. Valentine had a thin time at Cliff House - even if Bessie didn't!

* *

THAT'S LEVISON - ALL OVER by Ernest Holman

The saga of Ernest Levison is a curious one. First, at one school - expelled therefrom. Then accepted into another school (just like that!). Next, returning for a brief spell to his old school (on three occasions, actually) as a most welcome visitor and/or resident. In addition, he had the experience of undergoing two changes of name!

Ernest Levison arrived at Greyfriars in his original shade of black, stayed for about half a year and was then expelled. (Note that fact!) He eventually was accepted as a pupil into St. Jim's. (Note that, too!) There he stayed, as murky as ever. Reform, however, was to be his lot, and came the day when he settled down with Clive and Cardew as the chums of Study 9. Perhaps it is not surprising, after much featuring of Levison in the Gem, that the Editor wisely decided that "enough is enough". Anyway, he shunted three Levison stories into one issue of a monthly publication.

Levison, however, was not to be denied. After a brief re-encounter with an old adversary, Valentine Outram, he went off for a couple of weeks to stay at Greyfriars. (What expulsion?) Whilst in residence, he was able to perform a good turn for the Bounder, which the latter was able to repay during a later Levison visit. Then there was a further eruption in the Levison saga; eruption it was, too, with the grim, "scalded cat" start to the Dirk Power series. Not by any means a comfortable series, it nevertheless "took off" because the yarns arrived after a long spell of Gem sub. stories.

So Ernest continued as a general member of St. Jim's - until his young brother fled. Yes, of course - to Greyfriars: and Ernest followed him. He was welcomed back for some weeks (well, he was!). Even when he returned to St. Jim's he found trouble, eventually clearing his name. From then on, the old order as before - St. Jim's for Ever, and all that. Until - you'll never guess! Back to Greyfriars! Poor old Mr. Levison had yet again struck hard times. (Did any Hamilton characters have YOUNG fathers?) So the Levison brothers must leave St. Jim's, but provision is made for them to be accepted into the Kent school. However, there was a condition. Search must be made, with the full help of the Greyfriars authorities, for a missing will that would put the dear old Dad back on the right road, as well as allowing the lads to return to St. Jim's.

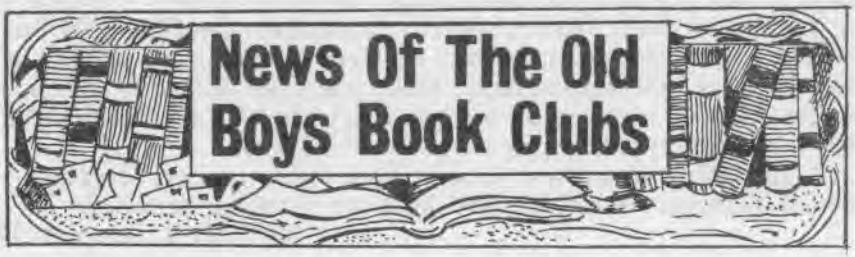
Well, of course, the will is unearthed, and, with hand-shakes and good wishes all round, the Levison lads return to St. Jim's. That about concluded the more extraordinary Levison adventures. Whether it all ended happily, who knows? Anyway, Greyfriars received them no more! However, we have not quite completed our Levison study yet.

Not long before this last visit to Greyfriars, the early Greyfriars stories were appearing in the SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY. The Editor was "up to snuff", however. The S.O.L. stories included the expulsion of Levison, but this (nowadays unmentionable) fact was circumnavigated by the simplest method possible; by naming the character in the S.O.L. Ernest LANGLEY! (When, some time later, this same expulsion story appeared in Greyfriars reprints at the back of the Gem, Levison retained his own name. He was also appearing as such in the same GEM issues of early St. Jim's stories. No doubt most readers worked out some sort of explanation!)

The Editor of the Gem also found that the reprint era had its problems when stories from the past were not taken in original order. Although Levison eventually arrived at St. Jim's, there were some stories featuring him that preceded that arrival. What to do? Simple, really, Change the name. To what? To the most appropriate one of Snipe!

What happened to Snipe after Levison's arrival at St. Jim's was never stated. I would take a guess that he was expelled, wouldn't you?

* *



LONDON O.B.B.C.

Eighteen members attended the Annual General Meeting held at the Liberal Centre, Ealing, on Sunday, 8th January, 1989. Roger Jenkins was unanimously elected Chairman for the year, retiring Chairman, Phil. Griffiths automatically becoming Vice-Chairman and Norman Wright was elected to continue as Hon. Treasurer. Leslie Rowley signified his wish to retire from the Secretaryship at the end of February and Mark Jarvis was unanimously elected as Secretary from the 1st of March. Would members please note that Mark's address is 175 Barcombe Avenue, Streatham Hill, London, SW2 3BH, so all correspondence (excluding subscriptions and other financial matters) should be sent to him from 1st March.

The next meeting will be on Sunday, 12th February, 1989, at the Horticultural Society's Hall, Larkshall Road, North Chingford. A full tea will be provided, but members should give early notice of attendance to our hosts, Tony and Audrey Potts (telephone (01) 529 1317).

Members are reminded that subscriptions (£5) are due in February. These may be paid to the Hon. Treasurer at the meeting or by cheque, made payable to London Old Boys' Book Club, and sent to Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, WATFORD, Herts., WD1 4JL.

LESLIE ROWLEY
(with thanks to Graham Bruton)

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman David Bradley welcomed the nine present, our smallest number attending for a long time, to the January meeting. We sorted out a number of business matters, and our programmes for the year was thought to be very good indeed. It was reported that we also had some items planned for 1990!

Harry Blowers had brought along the latest copy of EVERGREEN in which had appeared a very good article on children's Annuals. Geoffrey Good reported that he had heard the repeat on the radio of Jeffrey Richards' review of Mary Cadogan's book, and a general talk on Greyfriars.

David and Elfriede Bradley presented a GIVE US A CLUE game in which we had to portray through charades the title of a book. Needless to say this caused much hilarity. After refreshments, Geoffrey read from MAGNET 1360 the descriptive and involved episode of the Head's hat being blown off his majestic head, which was Frank Richards' writing at his best. Only he could devote a whole chapter in such a readable way to what would appear to be a very insignificent incident.

A full Club programme can be obtained from our Secretary at Thornes Vicarage, Wakefield, WF2 8DW, on receipt of an S.A.E.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Our January meeting took place at the Trumpington home of Vic Hearn. After a short business meeting, Keith Hodkinson talked about JOHN BULL, specifically on the magazine and its competitors in the years since the Second World War. It was founded in the first decade of this century as an illustrated text publication and gradually altered into an artistically illustrated serializer of complete and abridged novels of the time. Just like some magazines of an earlier age, John Bull introduced a great many authors to the public, such as Nevil Shute, Paul Brickhill and Hammond Innes. During the nineteen-fifties its main competitors were the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, PICTURE POST,

ILLUSTRATED and EVERYBODY'S WEEKLY, the last named two being absorbed by the magazine in the late fifties. JOHN BULL changed its name and appearance in the early sixties.

Vic then produced a musical quiz, featuring unidentified but famous movie stars of the nineteen-twenties and thirties as singers.

ADRIAN PERKINS

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following report's inclusion has regrettably been somewhat delayed.)

SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.

Illness reduced the ranks to ten for our regular autumn meeting at Weston-super-mare, but it was good to see new faces in Johnny and Betty Hopton. Their first visit was a real red-letter day with talks from two distinguished visitors.

Bill Lofts has played a crucial role in S.W.O.B.B.C. since its 1979 launch, regularly enduring the difficult Sunday rail journey from London. He spoke most interestingly on the advertising and merchandising spin-offs generated by the old papers. Blake, Biggles, Bunter and Co. had been surprisingly under-exploited, apart from a few intriguing items like Sexton Blake playing-cards and William jigsaws, and it took EAGLE in the 1950s to show the full potential of modern marketing techniques.

We were delighted to welcome Mary Cadogan for the first (and we hope not the last time), even more so when she produced the proofs of her new Hamilton book. What a mouth-watering sight, and what fun to have a sneak preview! As mainly a literary study of the master, with new insights into his working methods, it should perfectly complement the Lofts and Adley biography, and every true Hamiltonian will want the pair. Mary also touched on the problem of non-Hamiltonians getting a fair share of C.D. space. It seems that the devotees of Lee and Blake are a sizeable minority, but don't contribute a proportionate number of articles.

Tim Salisbury is to be congratulated on building up the scattered South West readership into an informal, but thriving club, no easy task when members come from as far afield as Bristol, Cardiff and London. Many thanks, too, to Tim's mother for yet another superb 'study tea' and to his father for chauffeuring several people to and from the station.

SIMON GARRETT

'LAUGHTER AND THRILLS' number 5: "Slick Fun"/"Coloured Slick Fun" by Norman Wright - June 1940 to January 1951

If any group of comics deserved the label 'laughter and thrills' those published by Gerald G. Swan certainly did. "New Funnies", "Fresh Fun", "Thrill Comics" and "Slick Fun", to name but a few had contents that were virtually interchangeable. Not surprisingly the same artists worked on every title in the Swan stable. They exploited every theme, churning out quantity rather than quality artwork. Yet despite the crude appearance of many of the finished strips the Swan comics had an appeal and charm that distinguished them from other comics of the decade in which they thrived. Though much of the artwork was downright badly drawn, the freedom given to those who churned it out was reflected in the individuality of theme and storyline. Some of the plots were so bizarre that it is difficult to fathom the minds that concocted them! Others were unashamedly horrific and it is a wonder that they did not cause an outcry from parents and teachers. William Ward's "Krakos the Egyptian", in several "Slick Fun Albums", was often horrific and always outlandish in plot. William McCail's "Back From The Dead" would almost certainly have caused eyebrows to be raised had it come under the scrutiny of parents. Luckily (or otherwise) for the young readers, parents seldom saw the 'thrills' tucked away on inside pages. Their eyes only saw the covers, and there 'laughter' reigned supreme.

It is not difficult to see why "Slick Fun" covers were drawn by E.H. Banger. He was an amazingly prolific artist, creating dozens of characters for "Slick Fun" and the other Swan comics. Yet for all of his vast output his work always looked polished. I think it would be true to say that he never drew a bad set. His work always conveyed the humour in a situation. One of his most attractive characters was "Stoogie". Stoogie was one of life's loosers. His actions, usually full of good intent, invariably resulted in painful trouble for him. He was, perhaps, the most popular 'funnies' character in the Swan comics, appearing at some time or other in practically every one of their titles. He replaced "Tornado Tom" as cover character of "Coloured Slick Fun" around issue number 50. Each week he figured in an hilarious situation. Number 53 showed him in the grip of a dinosaur perched on top of a high cliff. Little Stoogie, wielding his stone axe dangles over the edge. He eyes the monster and says 'Let me go or I'll dot you one!". Another shows him walking past two burglars who are busy gathering all of his valuables into a sack. With arms outstretched in front of him he says 'D-Don't take any notice of me I'm only sleep walking!'. Those covers must have been a big incentive to part with ones 3d to buy a copy.

The comic looked at its best during its early 'colour' days, when the cover and six internal pages were printed in full colour. From issue 68 it changed to red and blue throughout. (There was a change of printers as

well.) From number 72, eight of its sixteen pages reverted to black and white.

Many and varied were the characters who teemed through its pages. From Banger's prolific pen came "Tornado Tom", "All At Sea", "Coal Black Jones", "Tiny", "Sammy Specks", "Dozey", "Baffles" and many more. Other 'funnies' strips included "Bilky", "The Biggles Family" (nothing to do with W.E. Johns air hero), "Weary Winkle", etc. etc.

The adventure strips often featured boys with some particular gift or strength. "T.N.T. Tom" had superhuman strength and boundless energy. "The Iron Boy" made a meal of anything constructed of iron, while Tom Dare in "Lord of the Undersea" was able to breath under water without apparatus.

Detectives were always popular. "Slick Fun's" sleuth was Darrell King, Private Investigator and his assistant Tim Dent.

Towards the end of its run Wally Robertson drew a pirate serial strip "Jack Hay's Vengeance".

The first "Slick Fun Album" came out in late 1948. Its bright Banger cover must have caught the eye of many an aunt looking for a present for her nephew, and at 3/6d it was about half the price of most other comic annuals. Its 94 pages were nearly all printed in black and white with just 16 in red and blue. It contained reprints culled from many Swan comics. The album was published for eight consecutive years until the final issue dated 1956. For some inexplicable reason the Slick Fun Albums for 1955 and 1956 both bore identical covers - causing some confusion amongst collectors! The covers depict Stoogie as "Superstooge". A long strip in the final album related how Stoogie received a potion as a reward for doing a good deed. The brew turned him into "Superstooge", with the ability to fly and to possess superhuman strength. With his new powers he set out to right more wrongs. Alas, he made just as big a mess of things as before. The only saving grace was that he was able to fly away swiftly from the disgruntled recipients of his misguided deeds!

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ALWAYS WANTED: Rupert Annuals Pre-1970 and one shilling adventure series. William books in dustwrappers. Please offer to John Beck, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, East Sussex.

* *

WANTED: Magnets 879 to 888 (Wharton the Rebel Series), original or reprint. Roy Parsons, 7 Stuart Court, Prince of Wales Mansions, York Place, Harrogate, HG1 1JB.

Editor's Note: Our attention has been drawn to the above fairly newly formed organization which is concerned with helping fans of radio and television shows to know what tape and video material of their old favourites is available, how enthusiasts can get in touch with each other, etc. A news-letter and get-togethers are planned. The organizers are Denis Gifford, who needs no introduction to C.D. readers, and Eugene Chase, a comedian who runs a comedy club in London called the Chuckle Club. All enquiries should be addressed to Eugene at the address shown above.

* *

The Chums of Greyfriars School broadcast cheery messages to readers.

G. HUDSON (Chester le Street): I have noticed in the bookshops recently a new series of Margery Allingham's Albert Campion detective stories. The notices attached state these have a new T.V. tie-in... There is a story paper connection with these. I have a copy of The Gyrth Chalice Mystery in which some sort of monster or spirit (the story does not actually reveal which) guards a family treasure. I remember seeing this story serialised in one of the papers, I think it must have been the Union Jack. No doubt some of the readers will remember the details.

BILL LOFTS (London): Marion Waters's query was answered (at least regarding boys' stories) by myself in the September 1980 C.D. under the title 'Why Remove and Shell?". Briefly and for new readers, 'Remove' means simply that one passed one's exams and went into a higher form. 'Shell' derived from a classroom having a shell-like roof, first recorded School of Westminster 1800, though it was then a class between Fifth and Sixth, not as at Greyfriars between Fourth and Fifth. Boys mainly enter a Public School at the age of 14 or 15 after attending prep school so consequently the Fourth was always top heavy, resulting in three Forms - the Shell assumed as the highest. There was a First at Greyfriars in the early days of the Red Magnets, but then one has to give authors licence in the writing of mythical Public schools.

I enjoyed John Bridgwater's article on Mr. Preedy in the January C.D. I feel sure that he appeared in other Blake yarns including No. 305 'Gun Rule', October 1931. There were also two Mr. Preedy hard-back novels published by T. Nelson in 1939. Whether these were original or reprints (without Sexton Blake) needs some checking.

L.S. LASKEY (Brighton): M. Lewis enquired in 'The Postman Called' in the January C.D. whether C.H. Chapman's drawings ever appeared in any paper other than the MAGNET. While Chapman's work in the story papers was confined almost entirely to Greyfriars scenes, the MAGNET was not the only paper in which his work appeared. He illustrated the early Greyfriars stories when they were reprinted in the GEM, beginning in 1936. He regularly illustrated the Greyfriars stories in the POPULAR in the 1920s. Earlier, he had also worked for the DREADNOUGHT. Some of the earliest Greyfriars stories were reprinted

towards the end of the DREADNOUGHT's run. Chapman was engaged on these illustrations when the DREADNOUGHT was amalgamated with the BOYS' FRIEND WEEKLY in June 1915. At that point the Greyfriars reprints ended.

J. WILLIAMSON (Victoria, Australia): Some of my happiest childhood memories are of read the good old MAGNET in front of a coal fire many years ago in Bury, Lancashire.

A. PERKINS (Cherry Hinton): In the December 1988 C.D. there is an article on the 1950s school character Rex Milligan. The origin of this Anthony Buckeridge creation is that in the mid-fifties EAGLE asked him to create a Jennings type schoolboy in a school more appropriate to most Eagle readers than Jennings's. His weekly adventures were eventually collected into the four books summarised by Mark Taha in the C.D. ARTICLE. Rex Milligan was followed in EAGLE by Peter ('Crossroads') Ling's 3J's of Northbrook, which ran for many years and demonstrates that school stories certainly were popular, although the Eagle school was a cross between a boarding-school and Grange Hill (shock, horror!).

EVELYN FLINDERS (Hitchin): Re. 'Do You Believe in Fairies' in the January C.D., I haven't seen any of Margaret Tarrant's work for years, so I'm glad we'll be seeing it again... I was interested to read from the catalogue of the exhibition that her father was Percy Tarrant. The name rang a bell and I realized that he was an illustrator too. I have seven boys school stories, hard backed, by Kent Carr. Two of these are illustrated by Percy Tarrant - the best ones. These stories are really super, and are great favourites of mine. I don't suppose you can get them any more. Kent Carr, by the way, turned out to be a woman.

Have you read any of the modern 'Mediaveal Whodunits' by Ellis Peters? I think many C.D. readers would like them. There have been 13 of them... They are very good indeed. Ellis Peters is also a woman. I must say I like stories written by women.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Miss Flinders, as many C.D. readers will remember, was one of the few women artists to be employed on the pre-war A.P. story papers. As well as taking over the Morcove illustrations when Leonard Shields was away on holiday, she drew a lot for the SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY, and the girls Annuals. After the war, her long running picture strip of The Silent Three in the SCHOOLFRIEND became immensely popular.)

L. HOLLAND (Oldham): In 'Between Ourselves' in the January C.D. you ask whether any readers have favourite New Year stories. This caused me to reach for my typewriter, which I have not often done. Without doubt I have two great favourities from the MAGNET. First by a fair stretch I rate the Courtfield Cracksman series of 1930 and the second one is the Valentine series of three years later. There are certain

similarities in that a criminal background involves the police and Inspector Grimes of Courtfield. In both series some of the action takes place at night, contrasting the cosy warmth of a bed in the Remove dormitory with the frosty darkness of January outside. Vernon-Smith, with his penchant for breaking bounds, figures usefully in both stories. In the earlier one he is convinced for a time that Mr. Steele, temporary master of the Remove, is actually the Courtfield cracksman, whilst rather late in the 1933 series, Jim Valentine incurse his bitter enmity, though at the eleventh hour it is the Bounder who repents of his persecution of a boy who is desperately seeking to leave his past behind, and aids his getaway.

* *

A READER'S QUERY

Mr. Leslie King of Chesham writes as follows: 'Some little time ago I re-read the Greyfriars Secret Society series of MAGNET 1934 vintage, published by Howard Baker. I read it when it originally appeared in the MAGNET and consider it to be one of the best that Frank Richards wrote in the setting of the school itself. In one of the stories Vernon-Smith is set an imposition by Mr. Prout in which the Bounder repeats a quotation from Shakespeare, viz:

> Man vain man dressed in a little brief authority
> Performs such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep ...

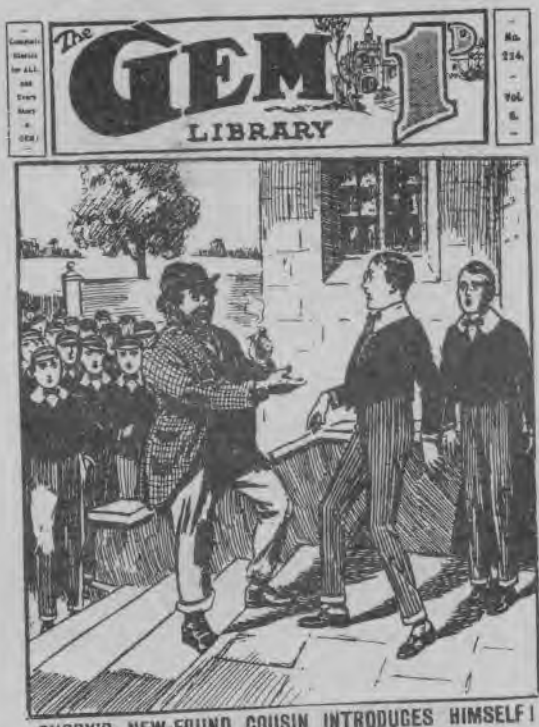
As my Shakespeare is somewhat rusty, to say the least, perhaps you could enlighten me as to the source of this quotation?'

Accordingly I looked this up in THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF QUOTATIONS (an invaluable book, happily available in paperback), and see that it is from MEASURE FOR MEASURE. The quotation is shown as follows:

> But man, proud man,
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
> His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
> As make the angels weep.

I am very pleased to have been reminded by Mr. King and Frank Richards of this wonderful summing up of human pretentiousness.

SCRAPBOOK



CUSSY'S NEW-FOUND COUSIN INTRODUCES HIMSELF!

"What is it, Tinker, lad?" asked Sexton Blake in concern. "What has upset you? Steady on, now, old fellow!" Tinker swallowed convulsively and then burst out: "At the window, guv'nor! At the window——!"

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