STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

No. 64. Vol. III. Week Ending December 5, 1914. One Penny.

Recent purchases include more POPULARS, MAGNETS, GEMS, BOYS FRIEND WEEKLY (with Rookwood), RANGERS. More CHAMPIONS, some pre-war.

THOMSONS story papers - large stocks, but getting low in the '50s, although now lots more late '40s and '50s; a smaller number pre-war.

DANDY and BEANO COMICS, SOME IN THE LATER '40s, '50s and '60s in stock.

Worth mentioning - PILOT, SCOOPS, SPORTS FOR BOYS, BOYS CINEMA, TRIUMPH, BOYS REALM, CHUMS (most volumes), extra recent additions.

ALL HOWARD BAKER FACSIMILES and BOOK CLUB SPECIALS available; also HAWK BOOKS and MARY CADOGAN titles.

So many things! Well worth a visit - keen prices! Have done well for collections this month. Prices in some cases have to go up, but still reasonable. I operate on a small profit margin.

VISITORS ALWAYS VERY WELCOME; just a ring first, please, to arrange a time. It can be weekends as well - but not Tuesdays.

LOTS OF BARGAINS!

STOP PRESS: Additional Greyfriars Holiday Annuals. Also many exciting things in the pipeline. Keep in touch. Your wants lists appreciated.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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W.H. GANDER

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Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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Between Friends

HOLIDAYS IN FACT AND FICTION

As I write this the rain is pouring down, but it is summer and the time to think of holidays. My husband and I have enjoyed a wonderful trip to Spain (our first), followed by a touring holiday in England, and fairly soon I shall be off for a two week stay on the island of Crete, with which I fell in love a couple of years ago.

A major factor for me in any holiday is the reading matter which I choose to take with me. I like to read one of the holiday series from the old papers - probably featuring Barbara Redfern & Co. (who are, as you will see, on their travels in this month's C.D.). Of course it is often the Greyfriars chums who accompany me in one of the wonderful MAGNET series.

Although almost everyone I know in the hobby prefers the school series to the holiday adventures (with perhaps the exception of Christmassy tales), it is still exhilarating to visit many far away places, as well as lusciously verdant British locations, with our heroes and heroines.

I wonder which are the most popular summer holiday stories? It intrigues me that whenever I go to foreign countries which are featured in MAGNET series, strong elements of the local atmosphere created by Charles Hamilton seem to be there - despite the fact that he never actually visited, say, India and Canada, which are the settings for some of his most memorable tales. (I have never visited China, South America or the South Seas, so cannot vouch for his accuracy in those regions!)

THOSE OTHER DETECTIVES

You will see that our new feature on fictional sleuths is launched this month by Dennis Bird (whose attractive *Denise's Diary* feature sadly came to its natural end last month). He is focussing on one of my own favourite detectives, Noel Raymond, who was the long-running star of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

I have received a large response from readers - and writers - to the idea of this new feature, and feel it would be helpful to list below the names of sleuths on whom I have already been sent articles. This will help to avoid duplication and disappointment. (However, even when one article has been published on a particular crime-solver there is no reason why a different contributor should not, a little later on, add his or her own views to those of the original item.)

Contributions already received feature J.G. Reeder, Jack Keen, Ferrers Locke, Slade of the Yard and Colwyn Dane. You may remember that in my last month's editorial I mentioned Sexton Hyde and his Four Girl Detective Assistants (from MERRY AND BRIGHT) Bills Lofts has gone one (or several!) better and come up with 'Martin Steel and his Twelve Lady Assistants' from the early COMIC CUTS!

I look forward to your contributions. Snippets, pictures and notes as well as comprehensive articles are always of interest.

Happy Holiday Reading!

MARY CADOGAN

* *

WANTED: Modern Boys, bound or singles. Bound vols. of The Gem, Nelson Lee, Biggles and Captain Justice, Boys' Friends Library. Other bound volumes of Story Papers for my collection. Many Howard Baker volumes required. P. GALVIN, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks., SY5 2DT. Tel. 0226 295613.

* *

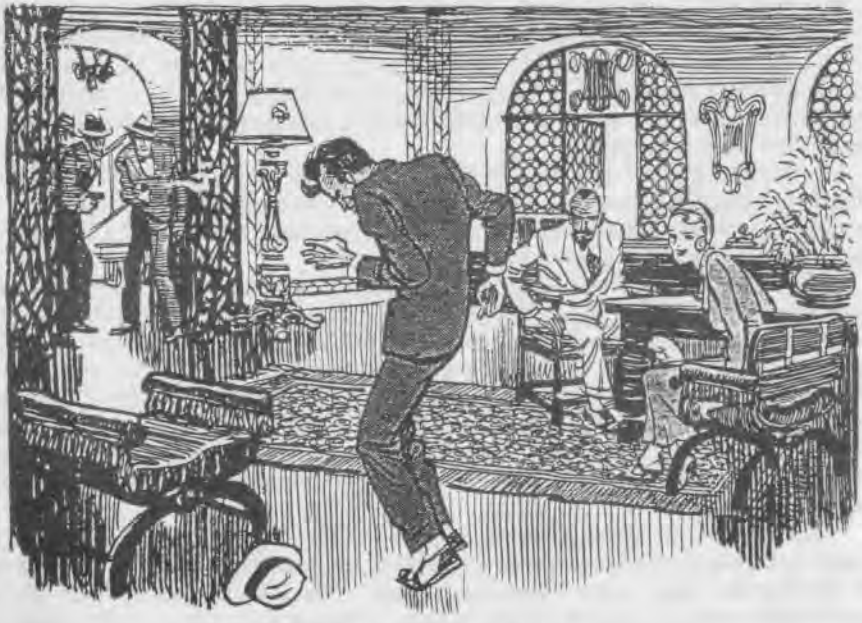
HAMILTONIA ALL TYPES: WANTED especially Holiday Annuals all years, Howard Baker Press and Club volumes, Dustwrapped Biggles, Bunters, Williams, Enid Blyton, Malcolm Saville, Jennings. Generous prices paid. Contact: COLIN CREWE, 12b Westwood Road, Canvey Island, Essex. Tel. 0268 693735, Evenings 7.15 - 9.30 p.m.

* *

AROUND THE WORLD WITH SEXTON BLAKE
Number 8

by J.E.M.

The 1930's saw the heyday of the American gangster film and its popularity soon found a reflection in the stories of Sexton Blake. *Gang Girl* by G.H. Teed (UJ 1458) manages to embrace both gangsterdom and the home of the gangster film itself. Muriel Marl, dubious "star" of this tale, is gang girl **and** Hollywood film actress! She teams up with Blake's old foe, Marsden Plummer, in a fast-paced story full of the film idiom of that time. If it seems a little old-fashioned today, it is hardly more dated than some of those classic gangster films we still treasure like *Scarface* and *Little Caesar*. And how memorable and authentic are Eric Parker's brilliant illustrations. This drawing, which inevitably suffers through reduction in size, is still distinguished by the superb detail of its background. Has the home of a Hollywood film star ever been more convincingly portrayed in pen and ink?



Muriel Marl flashed an order to the ready gunman. Too late Connor realised he was trapped.

THE YOUNG YVONNE

By Len Hawkey

It has, for a century or more, been a favourite gambit of many authors, once having established a character popular with the reading public, to shift him, or her, to and fro in time, especially to their younger days.

Thus we find in the old periodicals "Tinker's Schooldays" - and Nipper's, and Jack Drake's, and even Frank Richards's own improbable youth at Cedar Creek. Austin Freeman took Dr. Thorndyke, if not back to school, at least to his days as a young medic., - and Conan Doyle had Watson recount many of his great detective's early cases.

So it is not surprising to find G.H. Teed, himself the creator of many memorable characters in the Sexton Blake saga, recounting some of Yvonne Cartier's youthful experiences - tales of life far removed from that of the "Femme Fatale" who bewitched the great detective, and allied herself with Huxton Rymer and others to become a thorn in his side.

One reads very little nowadays, even in the good old C.D., of the rather short-lived "Boy's Journal", but it was in No. 59 of that paper that the first of Yvonne's adventures appeared. A fortnight earlier, on October 17th, 1914, a Sexton Blake v Plummer serial had started, but the two events were unconnected, and, of course, Yvonne had already made her first appearance in print in No. 485 of the "Union Jack" almost two years previously.

The first "Boy's Journal" story was "The Lust for Gold", with illustrations by "Val" Reading. Born on the Binabong Estate in central Australia - which her father, John Cartier owned and managed - Yvonne, aged 17, was usually to be found in "out-back" riding habit, plus a rakish Stetson hat. Somewhat of an Australian "Annie Oakley", in fact, already a crack shot and a great horsewoman. Teed describes her thus:- "Her years may have been 17, but her manner was that of 24... still a happy child of the bush, though the capable management of the great station was in no small degree due to the keen brain in her shapely head". In addition she was no mean detective, and it is her ability in this direction that is the basis of these tales of her youthful exploits.

In the first story - "The Lust for Gold" - Yvonne's smart detective work foils a treacherous employee who intends to steal gold which he has accidentally found on the Cartier's range. Several staunch old employees help her, and they reappear in the second yarn which appeared a few weeks later.

This records a feud which had grown up between her Binabong Station and the adjoining Wollamoola Range. The latter is supervised by Bob Wilkinson, a rather unsavoury character who has a somewhat predatory eye on his pretty young neighbour. Again, thanks to Yvonne's instincts, and investigations, he is unmasked as also being behind several bank-raids and hold-ups in the area, which locals had attributed to the "Black Edwards Gang". Yvonne is able to reveal that Wilkinson and Edwards are the same person, and she is toasted as a heroine by all the out-back farmers, especially as most of the stolen loot is recovered. Thus ends "The Bushranger's Secret".

About a month after, in the third yarn - "The Pearl of Samu" - Teed again makes good use of his far-travelled experience and excellent powers of description, by moving the scene to the "Solomon Islands". The Lamports from Brisbane, are pearl-traders and also friends of the Cartiers. Yvonne joins them on their schooner "The Aomaru", when they are going to collect a consignment of pearls from the

little island of Samu. She quickly discovers that a white supervisor at the trading-post is defrauding Capt. Lamport by switching some of the larger gems for smaller ones. Some of the natives are in league with him, and one of these men attacks a young girl, whom Yvonne rescues. She hands to Yvonne a large smooth stone, which turns out to be "a huge pearl, large as a pigeon's egg, and flawless as the fresh driven snow!"

The villain of the piece had intended to make off with this - and others - but Yvonne unmasks him, to earn the undying gratitude of Capt. Lamport. Three more stories soon followed, and these were linked together as a short serial "The Lone Horseman". In this longer yarn Teed was better able to build up characterisation and plot. In a remote corner of the Binabong Station, known as Death Valley, almost a thousand intruders have gathered... There are a few women and children, but mostly they are Chinese who are being trained secretly by German officers eventually to carry out a surprise takeover of the sub-continent (on behalf of the Kaiser, naturally, as at this time the Great War was raging in Europe).

For some distance the horses raced neck to neck—then, ever so slightly, Yvonne drew ahead.

Yvonne learns of this secret enclave by following the "Lone Horseman", and manages to get word of the mystery back to her father. After several skirmishes with the enemy, she is captured by the German leader, Captain Morgenfelt. Whilst a prisoner, she discovers the true reason for the military training of the "Celestials". Meantime John Cartier has rounded up a lot of his stockmen, and a battle with the intruders takes place, during which Yvonne escapes. She and her father capture Morgenfelt, and he and his "troops" are handed over to the authorities.

This last recorded adventure in the life of the young Yvonne coincided with the closure of "The BOY'S JOURNAL". The editor's announcement in that last issue

has to be read to be believed - even allowing for the comparative naiveté of young readers in those days, it is an astounding farrago of rubbish! The next week it was absorbed into "The DREADNOUGHT", which itself fairly soon became another casualty of the War.

Although he had not long been a professional writer, Hamilton Teed must have approached the task in a pretty methodical manner. He had created Yvonne Cartier only a year or so before these stories appeared, and in his second "Yvonne" yarn - "The Mystery of Walla-Walla" (Union Jack No. 528 - 22/11/1913) Sexton Blake goes to Australia and follows Yvonne to her Binabong Ranch - she is by then about 24, and her father has died. The out-back estate has fallen on hard times, but several of the "Boy's Journal" characters appear. So, assuming Teed did write these a year or so later than his U.J. yarn, he must have kept careful notes as to his creation's antecedents! The Yvonne exploits were to go on for another 20 years or so. One wonders if some learned Sexton Blake enthusiast can tell us if she - or the great detective - ever went back to Binabong again!

* *

THE SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD

by Jim Sutcliffe

It was Archie Glenthorne's 15th birthday but it did not get off to a very auspicous start. First there was a slight difference of opinion with his valet, Phipps, over a pair of rather lurid striped pyjamas. Also, shortly afterwards, wearing a brand new suit for the special day, Archie was passing Study D in the Remove passage, a well known danger spot, when it seemed to him that an avalanche struck him. Actually it was only Handforth being forcibly ejected from the Study by his long-suffering studymates Church and McClure.

After morning lessons Archie returned to his own study for a nap on his couch and found a parcel marked "a birthday present from two friends in the Fourth". This contained a leather bound book, old and worn, entitled "Glimpses into British Ancestry". Archie languidly turned the pages "The good old families of Britain, What?" He observed. "Hallo, the Glenthornes appear to be in full force". Archie had reached a chapter headed "The Fighting Glenthornes - Some Remarkable Records of their Line", and he was particularly interested, finding that it dealt with a lot he had never heard of despite the fact that he had always boasted he knew his family tree to its very roots. "Good Gad!" Archie sat up, for as he read a kind of horror came over him. As long as he could remember he had always been told there were no skeletons in the Glenthorne cupboard and now there was one General Jasper Glenthorne, described as a soldier who fought valiantly in battle, but was also a scoundrelly drunkard to whom at least three murders could be traced and who ended his days hanged on Tyburn Tree alongside a notorious highwayman.

It occurred to him that the book might be a cheap sensational one, but a glance at the title page told him that the author was an expert on historical matters. Tyburn tree of all things! It might not have been so bad to have had an ancestor who had earned the monarch's displeasure and ended his days on the chopping block at the Tower of London. The book went on to say that a legend existed that the third son of the tenth generation on his 15th birthday could develop the habits of General Jasper and this could only be averted by hard work and strenuous exercise. Archie sat stunned as the awful truth sunk in - he was the third son of the tenth generation and today was his 15th birthday - he could end up on the gallows unless he changed his lazy habits!

ARCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK GLENTHORNE.

Known as the "genial ass" of the Remove. On the surface would seem to be a slacker, yet when required be can be as energetic as anybody. Always perfectly dressed, and one of the wealthiest boys in the school. A credit to the Remove.

The whole hilarious story of the complete change it brought to Archie's life style, until he found out that he had been spoofed by Buster Boots and Bob Christine who had paid two pounds to have the fake Glenthorne Chapter inserted into the book, can be read in N.L.L. Old Series No. 493 "Archie's Awful Ancestor", and if you do not possess this copy yourself it can be borrowed from Bill Bradford, the Nelson Lee Librarian.

E.S.B. AND THE BLUE CRUSADERS

by Ernest Holman

The weekly 'Boys' Realm' was, by the late Twenties, feeling the effects of lost circulation. For some time, stories of the Blue Crusaders Football Club had been appearing in the pages and Edwy Searles Brooks was asked to take over the stories. Originally started by Arthur S. Hardy, the team had grown from a Northern Works Club into members of the Football League.

Edwy soon got to work - at St. Frank's, in the 'Nelson Lee', arrived the new, youthful owner of the Crusaders - one Lionel Corcoran, ward of Lord Shevingham, whose son 'Tich' Harborough was the schoolboy winger of the Club. 'Tich' also joined St. Frank's, presumably with permission to train and play with the team. (He certainly never replaced Reggie Pitt as the junior's right winger!)

Now came a joint series in 'Nelson Lee' and 'Boys' Realm' - brief mention of certain incidents were 'footnoted' in each paper as being described in full detail in the 'other' paper. (Whether this resulted in increased sales for 'Realm' can only be conjectured - it was at least accepted on my father's weekly paper account!)

This series - around the adventures of School and Club members in preventing Goalie Fatty Fowkes from being arrested for the 'murder' of Simon Kenmore - was followed by a 'Realm' series introducing Professor Zingrave into the affairs of the Club - assisted by an old 'favourite', Ezra Quirke. Some St. Frank's boys turned up in the series, although most of the Remove stalwarts were en route by then for an educational visit to Australia - and the Ashes series!

Unhappily for the Crusaders, their attempts to obtain promotion to the First Division of the Football League were not to continue. At least, not in print. The 'Boys' Realm' became a Film Magazine and, gallant as Edwy's efforts had been, the old type of stories faded right away. Just for a brief flash, a serial appeared for some weeks in the Nelson Lee 'end-of-the-paper' spot - about the Blues and the new attraction of 'Dirt Track' racing.

Repeats of most of Edwy's Crusader yarns - albeit, abridged - bobbed up later in the monthly 'Boys' Friend' Library. Unfortunately, the Author's brief flirtation with the Club was insufficient to engender more reader power. It certainly wasn't the fault of E.S.B., for his stories of the Blues were quite up to his expected standard. Looking back, I nowadays think it is a pity that 'Nelson Lee' did not follow the early Thirties trend of a larger format, a size similar to 'Gem' or even 'Thriller'. Separate stories of School and Club might have 'done the trick'.

At the very least, E.S.B. should have been given one more opportunity - that of allowing readers to be with him as he steered Blue Crusaders into the top Division!

* *

WANTED by Collector: Pre-1970 Williams, Bunters, Blytons, Biggles, Brent-Dyers, in dustwrappers. Also Rupert and other Annuals, Comic giveaways, Original artwork, associated Ephemera. High prices paid, or exchanged. JOHN BECK, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, Sussex.

* *

NOEL RAYMOND

by Dennis L. Bird

Noel Raymond will soon be 80. The debonair young detective whose adventures thrilled "Girls' Crystal" readers between 1935 and 1951 must now be a very old man.

He was described as "24, and comparatively fresh from college" when he made his first appearance in the new story paper - originally called just "The Crystal" - dated 26th October, 1935. His first name suggests that he was born at Christmas time, so we can probably assume a birth-date of around 25th December, 1910. We learn nothing of his family; the one definite piece of genealogical information comes in October, 1937, when we meet Noel's "14 year old niece....June Gaynor was the daughter of Noel's married sister."

Noel presumably left University about 1932, having by then learned several useful accomplishments such as boxing, swimming, mountaineering, rugby football, riding horses, playing the piano and the violin, tennis, dancing, and ice skating (there was a rink at Oxford but not at Cambridge). He had also mastered the use of firearms and had gained a private pilot's licence.

We are never told how or why he became a detective, but by 1935 "he had already made a name for himself as a private investigator." His reputation must have received a considerable boost from his dramatic conflicts with the resourceful girl jewel-thief Rosina Fontaine; he first crossed swords with her in 1937.

He could afford to live in style in a comfortable London flat (various scraps of evidence point to somewhere like Marsham Court, near the Tate Gallery) and he employed a valet, the ever-loyal Parker. In his early years Noel had a good deal in common with Lord Peter Wimsey, even to the dropping of a final "g" ("That's interestin"). "Languid, Noel might appear at times," says the very first story - "but not when action was called for."

The Second World War saw a sterner and more resolute Noel Raymond. He was not called up for military service - he was too useful to the authorities. There are many references in 1939-45 stories to his war work on behalf of Scotland Yard, the Secret Service, the Home Office, and "Government business" generally. He was often engaged on counter-espionage, and in one memorable case his old adversary Rosina co-operated. In October 1940 she gave up a chance to escape to America in order to thwart a German spy. "It was the only way... England is at war. The handcuffs, please, quickly!"

Their old antagonism soon resumed, and in fact continued until 1948, when, in their last known encounter, Rosina joined forces with another of Noel's most redoubtable foes, Ralph Danesford ("The Jackdaw") in "The Case of the Two Imposters."

After the war, June joined her uncle as his partner, and in 1947 they went for several months to Baycroft Holiday Camp while Noel wrote "an important book dealing with detective investigation" (a strange place to choose for peace and quiet!). In 1948 they went to Hollywood "where Noel had been engaged to act as an expert adviser on a new film dealing with Scotland Yard." That was almost the end of his recorded career. There were a few more "long complete stories" a couple of serials in 1950, and a final adventure dated 26th May, 1951.

There were more than 550 Noel Raymond stories, of which those published between 1940 and 1944 were by far the best. They had a freshness and a vitality which replaced the somewhat naive style of the early adventures. Sadly, by 1950-51 the tales had become stale and ineffectual.

It has to be admitted that throughout the whole series there is a heavy reliance on stereotyped phrases. Ejaculations or stifled cries are always being torn from people's lips; a clenching of hands represents all emotions from anger to fear, and Noel invariably forms "strange, incredible theories" which he is "anxious to put to the test." The stock characters - the grizzled attendants, the pompous businessmen, the timid elderly ladies - run so true to their two-dimensional type that we can accurately guess their reactions to any set of circumstances.

The creator of Noel Raymond was "Peter Langley," in reality Ronald Fleming, who also wrote under the names Renee Frazer and Rhoda Fleming. His gallant young detective was his finest inspiration. Noel was clever, courageous, and decisive; but unlike many other fictional enforcers of the law he was also kindly, friendly, humorous, and likeable. And the most unusual feature of all - probably unique in the story papers - was the element of mystery. The identity of the wrongdoer was almost always withheld until the last moment - and sometimes there was a real surprise.

The plots were often over-elaborate and unrealistic, but the narrative swept the reader along with a panache worthy of Conan Doyle himself. Noel Raymond was an unforgettable figure to those who knew him when they were young, half a century ago. Happy 80th Birthday, old friend!-

From GIRL'S CRYSTAL, 7th December, 1940

* *

A QUESTION OF INTERPRETATION

by E. Baldock

Horace Coker of the fifth form at Greyfriars school has received a hamper, an 'Aunt Judy Special', infinitely out-doing all common or garden hampers both in size and variety of contents. William George Bunter is cognizant of the fact. How is immaterial! The Owl is gifted with an in-built mechanism which never fails to keep him *au fait* with such events. Under the premise that thine might well have been mine under more favourable circumstances, it is but a small step in Bunter's fertile and aquisitive brain to accept this as a reality.

Whether he be tramping - or rolling - along a snow-bound Friardale Lane with up-turned coat collar against a biting wind, or proceeding at a snail's pace along the shady towpath by the Sark, perspiring freely in the heat of a blazing summer afternoon, it may be considered as fairly certain that one thought alone would be dominating the fat mind. Tuck, where to find it and, having located it, how to appropriate it for himself should it be, as is only too probable, the property of some other fellow. How to insinuate his podgy presence into the gathering at a picnic or a tuckshop gathering, and thus partake of all the good things going. One may be fairly certain that such thoughts will be occupying the fat cranium. It

might almost be thought that Lowell, had the times been concurrent, had the fat Owl in mind when he wrote in his 'Fable for Critics': 'Not a deed would he do, nor a word would he utter, till he weighed its relation to plain bread and butter'. One has but to substitute plum cake and doughnuts for the staff of life and here is our Billy, crumbs and all.

Looking back to those long ago years of the first world war, and recalling the frequent exhortations in the columns of the 'Magnet' to 'Eat Less Bread', one cannot help feeling that it must have been an extremely traumatic and trying time for the Owl of the remove. Rationing, in any form, must have been to him the ultimate and most exquisite form of torture. Small wonder that his notorious tuck raiding propensities were so highly developed and seemingly unextinguishable.

Bunter's guiding maxim would appear to have been, 'Make merry while you may and eat while the viands are extant', which, considering all aspects, is not such a bad philosophy after all, providing one (unlike the Owl) preserves moderation, and a due respect for other fellows' tuck.

In Bunter's defence however, taking his rather limited intellect and countless other shortcomings into consideration, plus his apparent inability to distinguish between the not unimportant implications of *meum* and *teum*, one is inclined to be tolerant and

Greyfriars Champions

BILLY BUNTER

(Champion Feeder)

Of all the folks who feast and feed
And love the "flesh-pots" dearly,
The portly Bunter takes the lead:
The champion feeder, clearly!
His appetite is keen and good,
His study-mates inform us;
In fact, we've always understood
That it is quite enormous!

He often lacks the wherewithal
To satisfy his cravings;
He scans the post rack in the hall
With ragings and with ravings.
No postal-order ever comes
From Auntie Maud or Mabel;
And Bunter has to seek the crumbs
Shed from the rich man's table!

But if, by some amazing luck,
He finds himself with money,
He revels in a realm of tuck—
A land of milk and honey!
"In life, there's nothing half so fine,"
Said Billy once to Sammy,
"As Mrs. Mimble's tarts divine,
And doughnuts, sweet and jammy!"

"Eat not to live, but live to eat,"
Is Bunter's favourite maxim;
Whether it's muffins, rolls or meat,
No food can overtax him!
Perched high upon the tuckshop stool
We see his ample person;
The greatest gorger in the school,
Bard ever vented verse on!

dwell only upon his good points, infinitesimal though these are.

* *

THE MARCH OF THE CENTENARIANS

BRIAN DOYLE glances at a few writers who were born around 100 years ago and who continue to give us pleasure today...

Centenaries come and go each year, making a hundred years since the birth of a writer or illustrator in our field, or since the publication of a well-known book, but they are rarely mentioned in the pages of the Collector's Digest.

So, to redress this omission in a small way, may I draw your attention to a few 'Centenarians' for 1988, last year, and this year, and also perhaps revive a few pleasant memories at the same time...

1888 saw the birth of H.C. McNeile, better-known as 'Sapper' (since he served with the Royal Engineers from 1907 to 1919, winning the M.C. and eventually becoming a Lt. Colonel). He wrote BULLDOG DRUMMOND in 1920, following it with several sequels about the action-packed exploits of demobbed Army officer Hugh Drummond and his friends, not forgetting his girl-friend Phyllis (who was forever getting herself kidnapped or tied to a chair or both). They were the basis of several films and at least one stage play. 'Sapper' also wrote other novels, and numerous short stories, including many tales set in the First World War, of which he had first-hand experience. He died in 1937.

Sydney Horler was also born in 1888, and became very popular for his many boys' stories and more than 100 adult novels, comprising thrillers, detective stories, mysteries and humorous yarns. His best-known hero was Tiger Standish and his most successful sporting story was probably GOAL! His publishers usually publicised him with the phrase 'Horler for Excitement'. He died in 1954.

Gilbert Chester was another 1888 man. He is the holder of the third-highest aggregate for writing Sexton Blake stories: 176. He was at his peak between 1925 and 1935, his work appearing in UNION JACK, DETECTIVE WEEKLY and SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY. He also turned out many Dixon Hawke yarns and much fiction for women's magazines, writing under several pseudonyms. His real name was Harry Gibbons. He was at St. Paul's School, London, where his contemporaries included Field Marshall Viscount Montgomery, and school story writer Hylton Cleaver. He died in 1958.

Another prolific Sexton Blake author was Anthony Skene, who was born 'around 1888'. His real name was George Norman Philips and he wrote around 125 Blake stories, creating the popular 'Zenith the Albino' in his very first Blake yarn in the UNION JACK in 1918. He wrote much other material and books of all kinds, eventually retiring in the 1940s and returning to his normal full-time job as a quantity surveyor.

H.A. Hinton was also born in 1888 and was Editor of the MAGNET, GEM, BOYS' FRIEND, and other companion papers around the 1912 period. He was author of the first known MAGNET 'substitute' story, "Billy Bunter's Windfall", in 1909, and subsequently wrote others. He died in 1945.

The final 1988 Centenarian I shall mention is H. Mortimer Batten, who was one of the best-known animal and nature story writers of his time, writing for several

magazines, including BOYS' OWN PAPER, CHUMS and THE CAPTAIN. He also wrote many books and was a regular broadcaster for BBC Radio, starting with their original 2LO station in the early-1920s. He led an adventurous life in Canada (serving with the Canadian Police Force for some years) before serving with distinction in the Great War, and being awarded the Croix de Guerre.

The most popular Centenarian for 1989 was, of course, Edwy Searles Brooks, creator of Nelson Lee and St. Franks, who needs no summing-up here.

Also born in 1889 was A.M. Burrage, son of another prolific boys' writer, A.S. Burrage, and nephew of yet another, Edwin Harcourt Burrage. He contributed to nearly 150 publications, writing all types of stories (including Sexton Blakes) and is perhaps best-remembered for POOR DEAR ESMÉ!, an amusing and unique yarn about a schoolboy masquerading as a schoolgirl in a girls' public school; it ran as a serial in both CRUSOE MAGAZINE (1924) and MODERN BOY (1930) and was published in book-form around 1925.

Maurice B. Dix was another 'eighty-niner'; he wrote several stories for the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY, the first in 1936, and created the airman-crook Punch Bennett. He also wrote 20 novels and contributed prolifically to newspapers and magazines, latterly living in Canada for several years.

Also in this group of those born in 1889 was Gerard Fairlie, probably most famous for being the original of Sapper's Bulldog Drummond; he carried on writing Drummond novels after his friend Sapper's death, previously co-authoring a stage play called BULLDOG DRUMMOND ON DARTMOOR. He was something of a glamorous figure, writing movie scrips in Hollywood, successful West End plays in London, and publishing several thrillers. He wrote for the THRILLER and UNION JACK and published an entertaining autobiography, WITHOUT PREJUDICE, in 1952.

Another 1889-born man was the enormously-prolific Stanton Hope who, as well as being on the editorial staff of THE MAGNET, GEM, BOYS' FRIEND, etc. in his early-career, also wrote over 30 million words in more than 20,000 published stories and articles, including 14 Sexton Blake stories for the SBL. He went around the world several times and was probably best-known for his many fine sporting tales.

1889 also saw the first publication of Jerome K. Jerome's humorous classic THREE MEN IN A BOAT; the birth of best-selling novelist Howard Spring, and the deaths of ALICE illustrator Sir John Tenniel, and novelist Wilkie Collins, famous for THE WOMAN IN WHITE and THE MOONSTONE.

What of Centenarians for 1990? There appears to be only a trio, so far as I can discover so far. Richmal Crompton, author of all those wonderful WILLIAM books, of course, and of many excellent adult novels too. Our esteemed Editor, Mary Cadogan, has commemorated this Centenary with a new book of her own, THE WILLIAM COMPANION, so keep a look out for that!

Another writer in this group is Robert Murray Graydon, better-known as 'Robert Murray' and 'Murray Roberts'. Under the first name he turned out well over 100 Sexton Blake stories (his father was William Murray Graydon, who wrote at least 260 Blake yarns, plus much else), and under the second name he created the popular 'Captain Justice' saga, which ran for years in MODERN BOY. He was a professional writer from the age of 16, when his first story appeared in CHUMS.

And probably the most popular and successful of all mystery writers, Dame Agatha Christie, was born on September 15, 1890 (**not** 1891 as some reference books mistakenly have it) and she is as widely-read and best-selling today as she ever

was. And her play, THE MOUSETRAP, continues to run in London's West End after 38 years...!

Well, there they are - just a selection of writers in our reading and collecting field, who have been recent Centenarians. A hundred years since they were born, but they left hundreds of wonderful memories for us still to enjoy...

* *

SPLENDID MORAL CODE?

by Mark Taha

"He taught a splendid moral code, without the slightest suggestion of preaching or priggishness" Bill Lofts wrote recently about Charles Hamilton. Well - did he? I must, to start with, admit that my views on such matters as gambling, smoking, "pub-haunting", and the more recent "permissive society" are as poles asunder from those of Hamilton and, I suspect, most Hamiltonians. I am myself only 30, which may account for it. But what lessons did readers learn from Hamilton, and were they good or bad?

Smoking, drinking, and gambling were of course constantly condemned, in fact, overcondemned; no one seems to have drunk after the early years (although I'd have thought the Sixth formers, at least, would have indulged in more than cards at a pub!) but I found the incident in Magnet 234, when Bolsover mistook Vernon-Smith for Coker after a couple of glasses of champagne, ridiculously overdone.

Hamilton was, of course, speaking from experience when he wrote of people who thought they could pick winners and who fell into the grip of gambling fever; but didn't anybody at Greyfriars or St. Jim's ever back a winner? And I'm inclined to agree with the view of the 1908 Levison (reforming whom was the worst mistake Hamilton ever made, in my view); a master who smokes a pipe himself and canes boys for smoking is being hypocritical, unless he admits to being addicted.

Hamilton was certainly a cynic (the most splendid part of his moral code, perhaps). He didn't think much of journalists, tax men, city people, lawyers or politicians. Remember such gems (no pun intended) as "Billy Bunter had a vivid imagination, worthy of a novelist or a newspaper reporter" (some things never change: would he have grown up to be a reporter for the tabloids?); and the following hilarious episodes:

From *Magnet* 859. Vernon Smith: "'We all know Toddy will be a great lawyer some day, proving the innocent guilty and the guilty innocent, according to the fees he gets.' ...The Bounder's description was not Peter's idea of a legal career. Peter, of course, was young yet.'

And, from *Magnet* 1348. Bunter: "'Suppose you're paid to defend a chap. Would you tell the court you believed him guilty, if you did?" Peter did not answer that. "Or if you were paid to prosecute him", went on Bunter, "would you say you believed him innocent?'"

The rascally solicitor with an unpleasant-sounding name (Sarle, Gedge, etc.) was a stock Hamilton character, of course. His opinion of City gents appeared to mellow with age. Mr. Vernon-Smith, the only one to make recurring appearances, was depicted as the vulgar, purse-proud, swindling "Cotton King" in 1910 but, in the 1939 Bertie Vernon series, it was stated that "the Smiths had gone out and done things for themselves while the Vernons had sat around thinking how superior they were". Hamilton's own political beliefs were, I would say, Socialist as a young man

(I doubt if he ever voted Labour, though) and Conservative as an old one. I suspect he'd have agreed with Eric Fayne's Leslie Chadley (*CD Annual*, 1959) that "the only man ever to enter Parliament with honest intentions was a Mr. Guy Fawkes". Certainly, he was given to asides like (*Magnet* 1086) "If the Sixth Form debate had been a Parliamentary debate, it could not have been conducted with more disregard for reality", and (*Magnet* 1325) "Mr. Hicks was one of those men born with a natural disinclination to work... he might have been a Cabinet Minister, or an ornament of the Diplomatic Service".

He had, of course, no time whatsoever for hypocrites. I may instance the 1916 *Gem* in which Mr. Selby's enthusiasm for conscription was tempered (putting it mildly!) by a fake news item which seemed to make him eligible for it, and another *Gem* of that time in which Skimpole remarked to the same gentleman "No doubt you are very keen on the war, like many gentlemen over military age".

Another splendid part of his moral code was his obvious and utter loathing of cruelty to animals; I may instance a 1911 or 1912 *Gem* in which featured a friend of Mr. Selby's, a "cruel vivisectionist" who'd been driven mad by his experiments although he'd stayed within the law, from which we can infer Hamilton's opinion of that law (shared by me 100%); his depiction of villainous characters like Heath (*Magnets* 173-174) and Bright (1028-1034) as cruel to animals, and his obvious disapproval of Sir Hilton Popper's main occupation in life (apart from meddling in other people's business), "killing his hapless furry and feathered fellow creatures". As an anti-vivisectionist and opponent of blood sports myself, I'm glad to see that Hamilton's heart was in the right place.

As we all know, anyone accusing him of snobbery or racism wouldn't be even close, as the Americans say; to put it crudely, the only snobs and racists were the cads. Only the Bunters and Skinners of this world (apart from occasional lapses by Vernon-Smith, Cardew, and, on one occasion, Lowther) referred to "factory cads", "niggers", or "Sheenies". A minor flaw in Hamilton. He made the good chaps too good and the cads too bad, again putting it crudely.

I would argue that his attitude towards bullying was too soft; while he obviously condemned the Ponsonbys and Loders (his most realistic Sixth-former, in my view), he seemed to approve of Peter Todd's mistreatment of Bunter, and the Famous Five's heavy-handed treatment of so-called "slackers", not to mention their hounding of Fisher T. Fish. I always rather liked him (more than Johnny Bull, easily my unfavourite Removite), and what's wrong with slacking at games, anyway? Mine is, I admit, a prejudiced view. I'm proud to say I did! I've always believed that all physical education should be voluntary. As for the argument about a captain's duty, no one has to become a prefect or form captain, has he?

Furthermore, although I appreciate that he could hardly write from a "pro-schoolboy rebel" viewpoint in a pre-war boys' magazine, I believe that Hamilton was too "soft" on masters. I do not care for "collective punishments" (unless the culprit owns up, the whole Form will be kept in) and don't believe that they should be permitted. And, in the "Wharton the Rebel" series, my sympathies were entirely with Wharton on both occasions. Not only do I disagree entirely with the *Magnet* Editor's view that Wharton "deserves everything he gets" (*Magnet* 886), and Hamilton's that Wharton deserved to be expelled (*Magnet* 887), but had Quelch magically appeared in front of me at the end of that series, I'd have knocked his nose through the back of his head. This may sound harsh, but he came across in the series as another Ratty, almost: a cold-blooded ramrod with a rule book for a heart. I refer to the episode in *Magnet* 887 which led to Wharton's expulsion. He was gated

because Quelch "couldn't trust him" (the previous half-holiday, he'd been accused, wrongly, of breaking bounds, and had succeeded in making fools of six prefects!) and was caned by Loder for saying (not to Loder) that he was going out anyway. Wharton broke out at night, and found the prefects on watch. I could only see that as a deliberate plot by Quelch, the act of a cad.

"Bend over that armchair, Todd!" ordered Mr. Quelch. "Oh dear!" gasped Peter. Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack! Toddy squirmed and wriggled as he received "six."

Furthermore, I believe that Smithy should have been pardoned in *Magnet* 1321; I know he'd been breaking bounds at night, but he had saved Lascelles from having his head busted. And there were precedents for letting off breakers of bounds. And, in his "Grimslade" stories, Hamilton made a hero out of a sadist. The genial flogger Sammy Sparshott, a "great believer in whopping", was to me a thoroughly unpleasant character, almost an athletic Ratty in his "flog anything that moves" philosophy. How would I deal with a rebellious pupil who didn't want to be at my school, if I were a Headmaster? I wouldn't admit him in the first place.

One might also say that Hamilton believed in environment as a cause of criminal behaviour; this is a pompous and partly humorous reference to the "schoolboy criminals" (Lancaster, Talbot, Flip, Skip) who reformed under the influence of Greyfriars of St. Jim's. I must admit to never finding that entirely convincing, despite Lancaster always being one of my favourite series. I wonder, what if a "boy burglar" had gone to Highcliffe?

So, did Hamilton teach a splendid moral code? On the whole, yes. His readers would learn to be against snobs, bigots, bullies, vivisectionists, hunters, and hypocrites, and to be cynical about journalists, city gents, taxmen, politicians and lawyers. That must surely be a good thing!

* *

OUR BOOKSHELVES

"THE SAINT" by Tony Mechele and Dick Fiddy. Published by Boxtree at £12.95. Large format paperback. Reviewed by NORMAN WRIGHT.

As a guide to the television interpretations of Leslie Charteris' enduring character this book is first class; as a book dealing with the literary appearances of Simon Templar it leaves much to be desired. In fact reading through it I got the distinct impression that it began life as a television episode guide and had the chapters on the books and comics added as an after-thought.

For the money one would have expected a few pages in colour but all the illustrations are, in fact, in black and white. During the 1930's, '40s and '50s the hardbacked Saint books bore some splendid jackets and any book on the hero with the halo should have shown at least a few of them. As it is all of the book-covers illustrated are of paper-backed editions, and tatty ones at that. They look as if they have been found on the 'all books 10p' shelf of the nearest charity shop! The THRILLER does get a mention but the issues shown are for non-Saint stories. The comic section does include some covers from 1950's issues but the section is let down by the fact that the authors have their facts wrong regarding the number of issues of SUPER DETECTIVE LIBRARY containing Saint strips.

So it's low marks as a work dealing with the Saint books, but nine out of ten for the long reference sections on the films and television episodes.

(**P.S.** I'm still desperate for a copy of "Crooked Gold", the only Saint story in the B.F.L., for my own collection. So if anyone has got a copy they are thinking of selling, think of me, I will pay a very good price!)

A.A. MILNE. HIS LIFE. By Anne Thwaite. Faber and Faber (£17.50). Reviewed by BRIAN DOYLE.

Many people think that A.A. Milne became famous almost overnight after publishing his quartet of now-classic children's books about Christopher Robin and Winnie-the-Pooh, but Milne was a popular and well-known writer long before he wrote them. He had published 16 books before all **that** success came to him - novels, essays, humorous pieces, parodies, verses, plays. He was assistant editor of PUNCH at 24 and responsible for several successful London plays, including MR. PIM PASSES BY, THE DOVER ROAD, MICHAEL AND MARY and MAKE-BELIEVE, as well as a popular detective novel, THE RED HOUSE MYSTERY.

Then Rose ("There Are Fairies At the Bottom of My Garden") Fyleman stepped in and invited Milne to write some verses for her new children's magazine MERRY-GO-ROUND. He sent her THE DORMOUSE AND THE DOCTOR, which she

received with delight (she sounds such a **gushing** lady, does Rose) and urged him to write a whole book of similar verses.

Milne had recently scored a hit with his VESPERS ("Christopher Robin is saying his Prayers" - **you** know the one) which had appeared in the American VANITY FAIR in early 1923. Milne set to work on verses based upon his own little son, Christopher Robin, and from memories of his own childhood and produced WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG, in 1924, complete with those perfect illustrations by E.H. Shepard. The book sold out on publication day and 44,000 copies had been printed within eight weeks (a massive number in those days) and it became an astonishing best-selling success both in Britain and America. Fan-letters poured in and even included one from Fred Astaire!

WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG is probably too famous to summarise here - just a small reminder that the delightful little verses were about the everyday doings of a little boy, Christopher Robin, in his nursery, out for walks and play, and with his nurse (or nanny) and his toys (who included one 'Edward Bear'). The background was decidedly upper middle-class (and why not?).

Most people liked or even loved the book, but many loathed it as being far too whimsical and 'twee'. It became so famous that, as is so often the way with extreme success, it wasn't long before certain critics began to attack it and sneer at the cosy, nice world it portrayed so well. Some even probed into possible 'psychological' meanings behind the innocent little verses - so much so that it might well have been titled WHEN WE WERE VERY JUNG...

Christopher Robin Milne is still alive and (hopefully) well and is due to be 70 this Summer. After working for many years as a bookseller in Dartmouth, he has now written several books himself and admitted in the first (THE ENCHANTED PLACES) that he 'quite liked being famous' as a child.

Over the next four years came three further children's books: WINNIE-THE-POOH, NOW WE ARE SIX and THE HOUSE AT POOH CORNER. All were again hugely successful. SIX was similar to the first book in the series, but WINNIE and HOUSE introduced a completely new array of toy characters who were destined to become immortal. With Christopher Robin at their centre, came the lovable Teddy-bear Winnie-the-Pooh, with Piglet, Eeyore, Owl, Rabbit, Tigger and Kanga (with Roo in her pouch). The tales were based loosely on bedtime stories told to Christopher Robin and most of the characters were toys in his own nursery.

The original Pooh-Bear came from Harrod's in London and was Christopher Robin's very first birthday present. These unique tales of a small boy and his make-believe adventures with his toy-animals-come-to-life in an English wood (actually Ashdown Forest in Sussex) touched a magical chord in children and their parents alike and have never been out-of-print since they were published. (In case you were wondering, by the way, Winnie was an American black bear at London Zoo, and Pooh was a swan on a lake in Sussex - both names were adopted by CR for his own

teddy-bear. Nothing at all to do with nasty smells, as the word 'pooh' in this context did not enter the language until the 1930s apparently!)

Ann Thwaite's massive new biography of A.A. Milne (the first to appear), fascinating and very readable though it is, reminds one of the old saying 'using a sledgehammer to crack a walnut'. She tends to recount every tiny detail of family happenings and relationships and the day-to-day life of the Milnes until no pebble, however trivial, is left unturned. There are close on 600 pages in this book ('Now We Are 600...!'). And she does make some curious omissions.

A. A. Milne

In some of the book's photographs, A.A. Milne looks as though he might have made an ideal Sherlock Holmes; this is perhaps rather appropriate since both Milne and Conan Doyle found themselves facing the same dilemma in their writing careers. Doyle regretted having created Holmes and Milne having created Christopher Robin, as both men found that their world-famous characters completely over-shadowed everything else they ever wrote. The other work for which Milne is probably best-known is his stage adaptation of THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, which he called TOAD OF TOAD HALL.

A.A. Milne never really grew up. He was in so many ways the typical upper-class Englishman - pipesmoking, cricket-loving, courteous. He was, too, a pacifist for many years, though he fought on the Somme in the Great War. His marriage to Daphne de Selincourt appears to have been a curious one - they slept in separate bedrooms and she was quoted as being 'anti-sex'. They must have braced themselves on at least one occasion, though, otherwise the world would never have known young Christopher Robin.

Christopher Robin had to grow up in real life, if not in the books. As the nursery grew quiet and lonely, Milne decided to write no more Christopher Robin or Pooh-Bear books.

As Ann Thwaite quotes from the end of THE HOUSE AT POOH CORNER:

"It was time to leave the forest. As Christopher Robin said to Pooh:

"I'm not going to do Nothing any more." "Never again?"

"Well, not so much. They won't let you.""

But as the very last words of that very last children's book by A.A. Milne famously have it:

"... a little boy and his Bear will always be playing..."

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WANTED: £20 each offered for *"Boys Friend Libraries"* featuring BIGGLES. £15 each offered for Biggles jigsaw puzzles. £3 each offered for "Happy Mags". £15 offered for B.F.L. no. 204, "Crooked Gold". Original artwork of Bunter, etc., always wanted. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Telephone: (0923) 32383.

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TERRY JONES (Longlevens): You'll be amused to know that I was passing through Ross in Herefordshire on my way back from the Wye Valley, and there it was! Large as life - a big sign on the side of the Gloucester Road, 'WHARTON LODGE'. Although dusk was very near I just had to back the car and take a photo. Proof indeed! I've no doubt in my mind that a certain Mr. Wells, late butler of Colonel Wharton, is in charge because it is now a hotel!

VICTOR AND BETTE COLBY (Chatswood, Australia): We have now received the June issue of C.D. and, as usual, have found it a real delight. One could go into raptures about all the contents, but we will restrict ourselves to one article in BLAKIANA entitled *'The Disguised Detective'*, by John Bridgwater. In all the years I've read about Sexton Blake I had never realised that the Marcus Max stories in the *Detective Weekly* were derived from Sexton Blake stories from *Penny Pictorial* and *Answers*. We appreciated this article very much.

PHILIP TIERNEY (Grimsby): Christopher Cole asks whether any Greyfriars boy paid his own fees. Tom Redwing certainly did from the time he returned to Greyfriars after the discovery of his Uncle Peter's treasure, and he was then the only one because Charles Hamilton said so at the end of that serial.

In later years the fact that Redwing was fairly wealthy in his own right, and no longer a scholarship boy, seemed to be overlooked. I can't remember any references to it during the last few years of the Magnet or in the post-war stories.

"He hasn't any money" said Bunter in *"Billy Bunter's Christmas Party"* (1949).

But he had. Fancy Bunter, of all people, forgetting!

* *

IS ANYONE INTERESTED in exchanging duplicate O.B.B.s? I have Nelson Lee's O/S, N/S, Sexton Blake Library 2nd (few) and 3rd series. Various others. Also H.B. Magnet vols, early O.O.P. copies. I am interested in most pre-war Boys papers and comics. K. Townsend, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby. DE6 6EA.

* *

WHAT I WANT TO BE!

Amusing Ambitions of Greyfriars Celebrities

BOB CHERRY

". . . . A daring, dashing aviator . . . ."

My ambition is quite a "lofty" one. You see, I want to become a sky-pilot. Not a "sky-pilot" in a clerical collar, but a daring, dashing aviator of the Royal Air Force! I have already taken part, as a passenger, in an aerial trip, and the experience thrilled me. How I envied the pilot for the masterly way he handled the machine! He seemed as much at home in the clouds as on terra firma. I look forward to the proud day when I shall take my pilot's certificate, and when Flying-Officer Cherry will dash fearlessly through the ether in a "Glyn Scout," invented by Bernard Glyn, of St. Jim's!

PERCY BOLSOVER

It is my great ambition to become the Welter-weight Champion of the World. I think I have a fine chance of attaining this ambition, because, even at the age of fifteen, I've the most punishing punch in all Greyfriars. It stands to my credit that no less than five frail fags were knocked out by me in a single day! If I continue in such fine fighting trim, the day will soon come when I shall be able to do battle with the world's best! And when I revisit Greyfriars, bearing my blushing honours thick upon me, I shall be "chaired" through the Close, and triumphantly acclaimed as Pugnacious Percy, the Prince of Pugilists!

". . . Welter-weight Champion of the World . . ."

BILLY BUNTER

". . . A sheff at a first-class hotel . . ."

I should love nothing better than to be a sheff at a first-class hotel. I think the sheff has a topping time of it. He soopervises the soop; he prepares the fish and the joints and the saveries; and he samples every dish in turn, to see that it's properly cooked. Oh, what a lovely life! I once met a fellow who was a certified tart-taster. His job was to visit all the tuckshops in the land, and taste the tarts, to see that they were free from injurious substances. He was the fattest, fittest fellow I've ever seen. If I fail to obtain a job as a sheff, I shall certainly apply for the post of Tart-taster to the Ministry of Food!

DICKY NUGENT

i want to be an enjin-driver bekawse an enjin-driver's life is full of thrills and advenchers. i can picture myself rushing along the Iron Way at seventy miles an hour, surrounded by clouds of smoke and flying sparks. In my mind's eye, i can see myself driving an express-trane from london to glasgo, and breaking all previous time-records! (Our contributor is not likely to see any of these events with any other eye than his mind's eye!—Ed., "H. A.")

". . . An enjin-driver's life is full of thrills . . ."

ALONZO TODD

". . . I shall probably be consumed by cannibals . . ."

My ambition may appear somewhat strange to some folks. I want to take up mission work in the wild and unenlightened places of the earth. Bob Cherry warns me that I shall probably be consumed by cannibals, who are very partial to boiled bishop, or poached parson on toast. However, there is no fear of my meeting such a dreadful fate. I am so extremely slim that no cannibal would look at me twice. But I tremble to think what might happen to my study-mate, William George Bunter, if he paid a visit to the Cannibal Islands!

CLIFF HOUSE HOLIDAY DIARY **August, 1990**

by Margery Woods

Postcards from the Aegean

To Mr. and Mrs. Redfern, Holly Hall, Hampshire, England.

We are almost there! Today we docked at Piraeus to take on fresh supplies and collect Rex Brandon, who is to be Mr. Margesson's new assistant. As Celeste told us, her grandfather will be working while we play. He is doing some special research work on Santos, something to do with an old ruined monastery there. It seems to be a bit hush-hush, even Celeste doesn't know much about it. We didn't exactly take to Rex, he's quite young, almost too good-looking, but rather supercilious and has totally ignored us apart from the briefest introductory civilities. However, we mustn't judge too soon. We had a wonderful voyage, except for the dreaded Bay when we turned a bit queasy, except for Bessie. It takes a lot to put Bessie off her grub, and she reminded us all pityingly that the Gloriana is well stabled. We all laughed so much we forgot the heaving Bay under us. We knew everyone aboard ---Captain Skegs, First Officer Simpkins and that nice Peter Murphy on communications are still there. Mr. Margesson's crew stay loyal to the dear old yacht Gloriana. Only newcomer is Felicity, who is Celeste's latest protegé---you know what Celeste is for collecting lame ducks! Felicity is going to be a sort of Girl Friday cum hostess at the Villa, a job I suspect has been invented for her by Celeste. She is blond, petite, looks about seventeen but I think she could be older, is a bit withdrawn and has a somewhat disturbing habit of starting like a scared rabbit if spoken to suddenly. But I'm sure it is just nerves and shyness. More news as soon as we get there, late tomorrow. Much love, Babs.

To Major and Mrs. Lynn, Lynn's Folly, Essex.

Having a wonderful time, hope you are progressing in peace with the new play. You should be here. It's beautiful. Villa Sandissa is huge and luxurious. It belongs to some shipping magnate friend of Mr. Margesson. Has its own swimming pool, a tennis court, gorgeous gardens in sort of terraces down to a private beach and lovely little bay. No tourists here, there is just one taverna that takes in about four visitors, a small village of

white and pink washed cottages trailing with green and vivid red geraniums, the little main street is stepped all the way down to the harbour where the caiques with their bright sails are moored. You can walk right along the mole, it must be a quarter of a mile at least, and get a marvellous view of the island and the monastery ruins silhouetted against the sky. The voyage was great fun, no real adventures to report except that we lost Clara in Piraeus, she saw someone belabouring a donkey and set about them. Of course Clara is not the best Greek scholar at Cliff House, and the local populace weren't great shakes at English. Janet and I found her and extricated her safely, but she was furious with Rex Brandon. Apparently she'd spotted him with two men---Clara said they were distinctly sinister-looking---coming out of a building and had appealed to him but he simply ignored her and got into a car with these two companions. Later on, aboard the Gloriana, he denied he'd ever seen Clara, said he was somewhere else altogether on business for Mr. Margesson. Clara was not convinced, and I suspect she'll not have much time for the snooty Mr. Brandon. So that's how I didn't manage to get a card off to you yesterday in Piraeus. More later, darlings, love from Mabs.

To Miss Grace Trevlyn, Pellabay Castle Hotel, Pellabay, Cornwall.

Sorry, Aunt Grace, I didn't get a card off to you while we were in Piraeus yesterday but I got involved in something (too long to write about in this space) and missed the postcard session. We got here late last night after a terrific cruise. The island isn't very big but has lovely beaches and wild stretches for rambling. Pluto would adore it, wish I could have brought him. You can snorkel and scuba dive here, I've always longed to have a go at that, and the sea is so clear and calm you can see miles down into the water. Mr. Margesson says there is an ancient wreck under the high cliff, it was supposed to carry fabulous treasure from the east but crashed on a rocky point just below the villa. Alas, the treasure, such as it was, has been recovered by an expedition, about two years ago. It is said to have been very disappointing, apart from one priceless statue and some coins and amphora. so what happened to the jewels and golden things is anyone's guess. It could have been washed away or buried in silt after several centuries. Apparently it has all been explored to extinction already, so there is no hope of magically finding undreamed of loot, but it'll be great fun to dive to the wreck, which is in quite shallow water, we're told. All the chums send their love, and when Mother and Dad telephone you please give them my love and say I hope they are enjoying their touring holiday. Big hugs to darling Pluto, from Clara.

To Miss Jean Cartwright, Glengowrie Castle, Glengowrie, Inverness.

Wish you could be with us, but know how much you love your Scottish Highlands and how much the Laird looks forward to your visiting him. The weather is glorious and we are out from dawn to dusk, except

for Bessie, who likes her snooze after lunch. Janet and Clara have taken to scuba diving like ducks to water, ahem! We tried to get Bessie in but no luck. Celeste is an expert and did not take long to find a fascinating underwater cave. It comes up under the cliff and has rough steps leading into an overhead cleft. Celeste and Clara were all for exploring it but Rex Brandon suddenly arrived on the scene, surfacing out of the water like an inquisitive satyr, and said Mr. Margesson's orders were that we were not to remain out with the scuba gear for more than thirty minutes. Which was a bit different from his instructions to Celeste, that on no account must we remain underwater for more than twenty minutes and never alone. And how did he know about the cave? We'd just found it. So that stopped our explorations today. Thinking of you, love from the gang and kindest regards from us all to the Laird.

To Mr. Carroll and Lady Sutherland, Sutherland House, Devon.

Dear Aunt Una and Pops, I guess you would decide to make a sudden flying visit to England in search of locations for the new film epic. Well, I guess there is one here that would be just to perfect, and the light! You've visited Greece, so you'll know what I'm talking about. But you should see the ruins of the old monastery here, the light and shade! We explored it today and found a wealth of beautiful stonework, not to mention mysterious passageways and cellars. We left Mr. Margesson to his surveying while we went down to the village. Clara was fretting on again about seeing one of the men she had seen with Rex in Piraeus. He was coming out of the taverna, that we forgot about Clara when Celeste came running down to the harbour. She was looking for Felicity. We thought she was still back at the ruins, but Celeste said no. Anyway, we didn't worry unduly until it was nearly time for the evening meal and she still hadn't returned. It was near darkfall by then, you know how it descends almost without warning, so we split up into groups and charged forth armed with torches to look for her. Mr. Margesson phoned the Gloriana to get Peter and a few of the crew over to help in the search. By nine we were back at the villa, still with no Felicity, only this time we'd lost two more of the party: Babs and Clara. I'm finishing this card at midnight and still there is no sign of them. Everyone is worried sick. No more space, will write more soon as we have news. All best, Leila.

* *

FOR SALE:- COLLECTORS DIGESTS. Nos. 193-348 inclusive, also Nos. 373-408 inclusive. Story Paper Collector Nos: 36-95 inclusive also odd numbers. Viz:- 10-20-23-24-25-26-29-30-31-32-33-34. Offers please to: J. Marston, 168 Newton Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 OTR. Phone: 0283-35009.

Our Number Thirteen catalogue of brand-new and second-hand books will be out soon. If you have ordered from our previous edition, you will automatically receive this issue: otherwise, if you send us 4 x 15p stamps we shall ensure you receive a copy as soon as it is ready. Happy reading - and Happy Holidays!

HAPPY HOURS UNLIMITED

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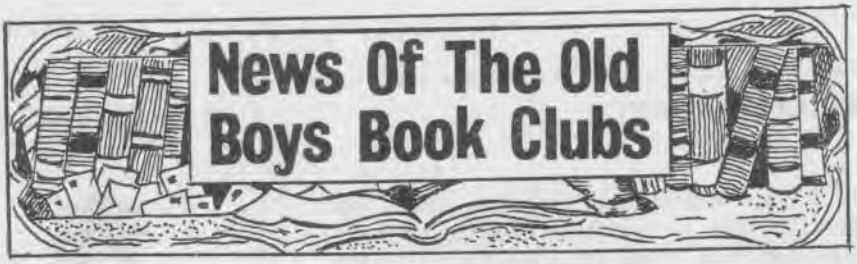


LONDON O.B.B.C.

24 members were able to attend the Ealing meeting for July. Our guest, Nicholas Bennett M.P. was made very welcome by his old friends and new ones too. Nicholas used to be a club member in the 1960s, and still retains a keen interest in the hobby. With this in mind, the entertainments took on a 'political' flavour. Chairman Brian Doyle read an amusing extract from *William the Bad* entitled William, Prime Minister. Then it was the turn of Roger Jenkins to give us a reading from an early Blue Gem, re the St. Jim's Parliament.

Tea followed in Bill Bradford's garden, with the sun shining very brightly. Bill then carried on the proceedings with his Memory Lane reading from July 1970. A quiz next from Mark Taha, containing 15 questions cleverly associating the political world with that of the OBBC.

Mark once again, this time with a short reading by Michael Green. Brian Doyle then asked us which characters we associated ourselves with from the Magnet and Gem, etc. Some interesting answers here! Finally, Brian passed round those pieces of paper for a game of 'one minute talks'.

Next meeting at the Chingford Horticultural Society Hall on Sunday, 12th August. Please contact Tony and Audrey Potts on 081 529 1317.

GRAHAM BRUTON

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Our Secretary Geoffrey Good and his wife Vera were the hosts to the club's informal barbecue on a warm, sunny July evening, in the grounds of Thorne's Vicarage, Wakefield.

The Famous Five and Bunter would have been proud of the feast, and afterwards there was plenty of time for another look at Geoffrey's magnificent library. The evening was rounded off with hobby talk, and Vera kindly provided coffee and cakes.

Thank you Geoffrey and Vera, from the 16 who attended, for a very enjoyable evening.

Next meeting we depart from our usual topics with a guest speaker talking about Science Fiction.

P. GALVIN

* *

WILLIAM AGAIN

by Bill Lofts

I was interested in Norman's piece on that 'William' competition in *Mine*. Many years ago now I was asked to find out who the actual prize winners were, and what were the slogans. Believe it or not they never gave them! Not in *Mine*, as I perused the run after September 1935, the dead-line date for entries.

It was an awfully dull paper with no picture on the cover - just a few contents. Stephen King-Hall was the Editor whom you might have known at B.B.C. I am looking in *Happy Magazine*,or *Scout* to see if the results were in there.

* *

ANOTHER TREASURE FOR COLLECTORS

"THE GREYFRIARS COLONIALS'
Reviewed by Eric Fayne

Frank Richards.
(Howard Baker Book Club Special: £18.00.)

This beautifully bound volume of nostalgic delight comprises 8 consecutive Magnets from the Spring and early Summer of the war-time year of 1917.

The opening 3 stories complete a series by Pentelow, the two earlier stories in the series having appeared in the previous Book Club volume which we reviewed a month or two back.

Series, as such, were something of a rarity up till 1917, and this may well have been the first one from a sub writer. As I said in my last review, concerning this 5-story series, the plot is a good one, (and there is an abundance of plot in it), so if you like Pentelow's terse style, you will enjoy it. In any case, it is fascinating for the Greyfriars historian. Peter Todd, who has followers, is fed-up with Wharton as leader of Junior School. The South African boy, Delarey, plays a part in the series. Delarey is known as "The Rebel". The Magnet editor tells us that, ever since Delarey first appeared in "The Boy from South Africa", he had been deluged with letters from readers asking for "more Delarey."

As Pentelow, who created Delarey, was also the editor of the Magnet then, we might take that little bit of information with a grain of salt. But it is fascinating for the Magnet historian.

Now the real Frank Richards weighs in with a jolly little period piece, "National Service at Greyfriars." The boys decide to "dig for victory", growing potatoes and the like, with amusing results.

Next "Sir Jimmy's Secret" also comes from Hamilton, and it is an excellent story. Actually it is a sequel to two separate tales from the Magnet of a few months earlier. Bob Cherry's black sheep cousin, Paul Tyrrell, has at last turned over a new leaf, and the army has caught up with him. Unfortunately, Private Tyrrell is suspected of theft, and, inadvertently, Sir Jimmy Vivian helps the real thief, Scaly Bill, for a while. This one is the star turn in the volume.

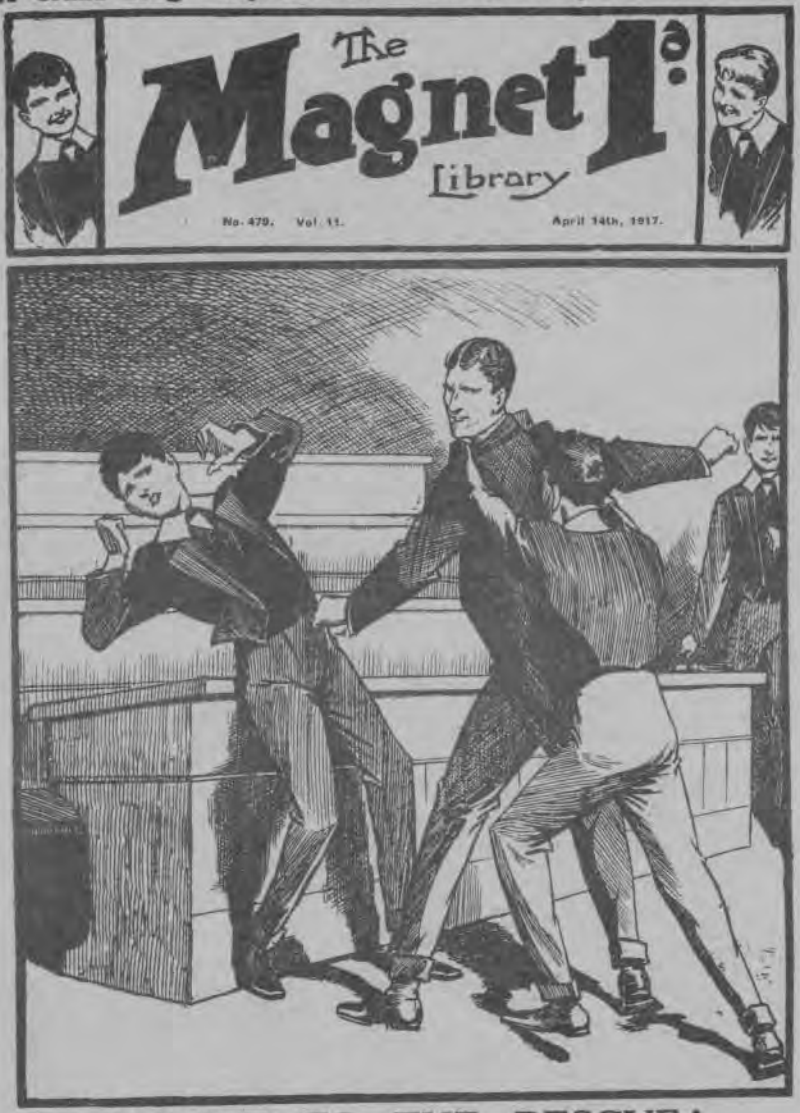
"His Father's Honour" comes from the pen of E.S. Brooks. A new American boy comes to the school, and the Greyfriars chums are asked to be kind to Bernard B. Tracey and not to rag him because America was "too proud to fight". But Tracey is a rogue who blackmails the Bounder on the grounds that Mr. Vernon-Smith was a "hit-and-run" car driver who had not reported a motor accident. A novel little tale, plot-wise. (It is likely that Hamilton, at this time, was busy writing his long St. Jim's tale "After Lights Out" which was shortly to appear in the Boys' Friend Library.) Then Hamilton is with us again in "Two of the Sixth" a neat little tale of errors, the "Two" of the title being Gwynne and Carne.

With the final tale of this volume the size of the Magnet was reduced to 16 pages, for which the Editor apologised, saying that "it couldn't be helped." We agreed with him. The main thing was that the grand old paper carried on, despite the war. The story "Peter Todd's Vengeance" brings Pentelow on the scene again in a sequel to the earlier series about the revolt against Wharton and the election which followed.

All lovely heart-warming stuff, all these years later.

COLONIAL CHUMS!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



SQUIFF TO THE RESCUE!

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