The Story Paper

Collectors' Digest

VOLUME 46
No. 545

MAY 1992

96p

The following SECOND HAND but in AS NEW CONDITION: Howard Baker - Sexton Blake, Union Jack, Lee Omnibus volumes, also H.B. Annuals - Greyfriars Holiday Annuals - pre 1973 - ALL AT £6 each, out of print volumes a bit dearer.

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL, A PROSPECTUS, £3 each.

The First Boys Paper Omnibus, as new, £5 each. Other H.B. Omnibus vols - new £12.95, second hand, as new £8. Book Clubs, new £18, s/h as new £9. No. 41 Book Club.

CHAMPION 1973 onwards.
TRIUMPHS from 1932 - '38 £3 each.
LION complete run from No. 1 1952 to end 1974, 1200 copies. Will separate.
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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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The Editor's Chat

THE END OF A QUEST!

I am delighted that, as a result of requests in my recent editorials, I have now received from a C.D. reader the very last Annual (*The Popular Book of Girls' Stories 1936*) which I required to complete my set of Amalgamated Press girls' annuals. This has, I realize, taken me nearly a quarter of a century of collecting - at first random and spasmodic, and recently serious and intensive. I little realized when I bought my first second-hand copy of a *Schoolgirls' Own Annual* in Horsham in 1968 what that modest purchase would lead to! When we moved to Beckenham later in that year I asked my husband to put up a small shelf in the spare room for my old children's books - which then numbered five. Soon one wall of that room became covered by shelves and books; these then overflowed into other bedrooms, over doors in hallways, into the lounge and even the downstairs 'loo' (where my *William* and *Jane* collections are neatly housed). Last year we managed to expand our living space by a garage conversion which gave me a new (and of course book-lined) study. All wonderful and extremely satisfying for me - and I would like to thank again the many friends and C.D. readers who have over the years helped me to build up my collection.

It seems rather greedy to mention just one more book which has eluded me for decades but, as it is the last one I require to complete my collection of

books by the big four 'schoolgirl' writers (Brazil, Bruce, Oxenham and Brent-Dyer), I will hopefully mention that I still seek *Mistress Mariner* by Dorita Fairlie Bruce. I think, however, that this will remain the ever elusive book for me. Another recent collecting joy, by the way, was an Ovaltiney rule book which yet another kind C.D. reader sent me.

FRANK RICHARDS

BUNTER ROLLS ON

It is excellent news that Hawk Books are now launching another batch of Bunter books following the success of the first four published by them last autumn. The newly released facsimiles are BILLY BUNTER AND THE BLUE MAURITIUS, BILLY BUNTER IN BRAZIL, BILLY BUNTER'S BANKNOTE and BILLY BUNTER AFLOAT. Produced to the same high standard as the earlier Hawk titles, these books are excellent value at £8.95 each. The same publishers are producing a new volume of Dan Dare reprints, which will be reviewed in next month's C.D.

Happy Reading!

MARY CADOGAN

* *

WANTED: Modern Boy 324, 335, 337, 338, 339. Any reasonable price paid. ROY PARSONS, 'Foinaven', Church Hollow, West Winterslow, Salisbury, SP5 1SX.

* *

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"A TRAUMATIC EASTER HOLIDAY"

by C.H. Churchill

We have read and seen "on the box" so much lately about the troubles in the Balkans that I have been reminded of the short Easter holiday series in the N.L.L. O/S Nos. 303/311 around April/May 1921. What E.S.B. wrote then is very reminiscent of today's events in that area.

A St. Frank's party was spending the holiday with Dorrie at his house in Suffolk (Dorrie seemed to have houses all over the place). They were invited to go on a trip in an airship owned by Sir Gregory Tweed, a friend of Dorrie's. Most went, little knowing what they were in for. The craft had an accident and the steering was smashed. As a result the airship drifted for days over Europe, eventually coming down in the Adriatic. An unmanned ship turned up and the party managed to get ashore. This was in Mordania, a small country reigned over by a King Boris. At this time he had been ousted by a band of revolutionaries under a Kol Polok. Our heroes managed to aid the King with the help of loyal Mordanians. Kol Polok was killed when he attacked the capital, Ludari. The St. Frank's party then managed to get to the border and on their way home.

All this time people in England were mourning the loss of the airship and passengers, as in those days there was no wireless on the craft. Things were like that then. However, they all arrived home little knowing that a member of the Polok band was on their trail, one Ivan Grezzi.

He trailed them to St. Frank's and attacked them with bombs, etc. As a result the boys were sent home. In the final story "The Hounds of the Tagossa", which was one of the most dramatic stories ever in the Lee, Grezzi organised letter bombs and so on for each member of the party. He trapped Nipper in Grays inn Road and tied him up and set a bomb to explode when Nelson Lee returned.

All came well in the end, of course, and Grezzi was tracked down with the help of Tinker and Pedro. A jolly good series and well worth borrowing from the Nelson Lee library run by Roy Parsons. I can thoroughly recommend it.

IN ROTARUA, NEW ZEALAND, WITH NELSON LEE

by Bob Acraman

In January this year we visited New Zealand, as part of our 'Round-the-World' tour, where Jim Cook had invited us to visit him in Auckland. We had a most enjoyable time with Jim and his hospitable son and family.

Next morning we set off in our hired car to go to Rotarua, some 120 miles away, to see the hot springs, geysers and pools of boiling mud at the Te Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve and Hell's Gate from the safety of the paths around them. This is really fascinating, and a sight not to be missed. You are walking over the soft crust of an

active volcanic area, where one step off the footpath would cause you to fall through into the boiling mud.

It was with interest, therefore, that on re-filing my Nelson Lee Library on our return home I came across Nelson Lee New Series No. 150, dated 16th march 1929, with a pictured cover of an exploding geyser under the heading 'St. Franks in New Zealand'. What a fascinating read it was! It described in some considerable detail the visit of the school, under the supervision of Nelson Lee and Lord Dorriemore, to the very spots which we had visited. Even more interesting was the description of Handforth stepping off the path between the geysers, falling into a hot mud pool and being rescued by the other boys, for exactly the same thing had happened when our son Roger visited Hell's Gate in 1990. A girl walking in front of him stepped off the path and fell into a pool of boiling mud. Roger jumped forward to rescue her and managed to pull her to safety, burning his own hands and losing his video camera in the mud. Luckily, Roger's burns soon healed but the girl had to be treated in hospital for some time. She subsequently visited Roger from her home in Ireland, to thank him and let him know that she had made a good recovery.

Edwy Searles Brooks has given a vivid description of Rotarua; of Maoris swimming in the lakes; the Maori village, where geysers with steam issuing forth are in the front and rear gardens of the houses; women cooking in the hot pools (all of which we saw there), and the smell of sulphur in the air. One feels that he must have actually visited the area and written from personal experience, so graphic are his descriptions.

* *

SEXTON BLAKE - MARK 3

by Alan Pratt

I was born and brought up on the 3rd series of the SBL and find them, nowadays, charmingly nostalgic and generally of a pretty high standard.

It was with great interest, therefore, that I recently read the original reviews of many titles that I possess, in a batch of old C.D.s from the period 1952-56.

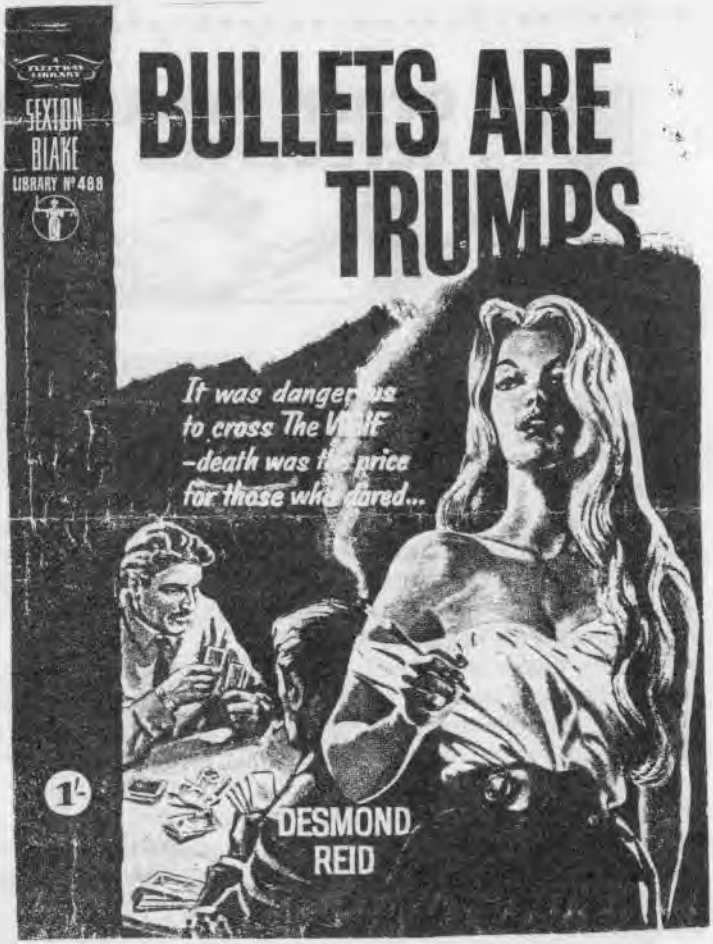
Most of these were unfavourable. Stories were described as "awful", "absolute rubbish" or "tripe" and, on one occasion at least, reviewer Josephine Packman declared that she "did not think the last 4 issues worth commenting on". From letters and articles published, it would seem that some C.D. readers shared this view and there were a number of comments on the influence of American fiction with its emphasis on sex and gangsterism.

One recurring complaint was that the stories no longer contained exotic villains like Waldo the Wonder Man and Zenith and Albino; that they were less sensational and that Blake and Tinker were now depicted as "pretty ordinary". Well, be that as it may, I

help feeling that it is always pretty difficult seeking to compare apples with oranges. If one dislikes oranges, the apples will always come out on top but should not be considered a better fruit for that reason alone.

Of course there was an even bigger outcry when the New Order came into being (circa 1958?) and Sexton Blake Investigations was formed, complete with sexy female assistants and swish offices in Berkeley Square. From letters published in those later editions, it would seem that arms were thrown up in horror and, again, there were cries for the return of the old authors, the old villains, and illustrations by Eric Parker.

In recent years, I have read a large number of Blake stories from most periods of his "career" and, in my humble opinion, there were good and bad in each of them.



In the formative years, for example, many of the ideas for story lines were genuinely original but the style of writing often ponderous and heavy. In the later "golden age" there were, of course, many wonderfully exotic characters, and no-one can deny the skills of Teed, Graydon et al whose style of writing was perfect for that period. But let us not assume that every story that appeared was a masterpiece. As with every long-running saga, some entries were pretty dull and even the "great" writers sometimes had an off-day.

As the Third Series progressed, it was clear that, once again, the editorial policy had changed. Whilst it could be argued that the absence of "super-villains" resulted from the deaths of their creators, I think it is pretty clear that a decision was made to update the series, presumably as a means of survival. There were still plenty of good stories around (and some duff ones!) but they were very different from what had gone

before. The same applied to the New Order Blakes, some of which (particularly those by Jack Trevor Story and Rex Dolphin) I think are excellent. I would dare to suggest, also, that, although Eric Parker was unarguably **the** Blake artist, some of those later covers depicting glamorous and busty young ladies were very easy on the eye!

I suppose it all seems pretty different now, some 40 years down the track - what was revolutionary then is nostalgia now. I would, however, urge any Blake fans who dismissed the 3rd series as being of no consequence, to try again.

They may find some delightful gems of which they were hitherto unaware.

* *

DEREK CLYDE, A SCOTTISH DETECTIVE

by Betty Hopton

I have recently had the pleasure of reading about a detective that I had not previously encountered. His name is Derek Clyde. His chambers are situated at St. Vincent Place in Glasgow, where he is waited upon by his faithful servant, Jock Nicol.

The first Derek Clyde tale to appear in the Detective Library was "The affair of the Purple Scar", but I do not know who wrote these excellent stories, as I have been unable to find the name of the author.

Derek Clyde did not have an assistant, but from time to time he did come into contact with Inspector Murdoch.

Derek Clyde was a tall, well built man, with a rather long clean shaven face. His eyes were of a peculiar blue-grey colour and he had an almost colourless complexion. There was also an artistic side to his nature; he was a keen literary critic, a connoisseur of pictures and also a brilliant violinist.

His method of solving crimes was most ingenious. One excellent tale was entitled "The Affair of the Floating Face". In this, the appearance of a seemingly horrible apparition in the shape of a floating face, outside a window, had the effect of frightening a man to death. Derek Clyde, however, found that the trick had been perpetrated from an empty house across the way.

In a story entitled "The affair of the Dreadnought Plan", the detective saves secret plans from falling into the hands of a foreign power. A new battleship is about to be launched which is going to break all speed records of its class. The secret plans, however, fall into the hands of the enemy but at the eleventh hour, in Berlin, Derek Clyde manages to save the day and get the plans restored to their designer at the shipbuilding yard at Glasgow.

Around the year 1919, Derek Clyde appeared weekly in the "Glasgow Weekly Record" in a complete 10,000 word story. The people of Glasgow, in those far-off days, possibly did not realise how fortunate they were to have such a treat lined up for them.

Although my acquaintance with Derek Clyde has been but brief, he has firmly established himself as one of my favourite sleuths. I hope that in the future I will come across some more stories of "The Great Detective Derek Clyde".

* *

SECOND ATTEMPT?

by Reg V. Moss

The world of Hamiltonia is enriched by the varied assortment of cads and slackers it portrays. There are cads who are not slackers, slackers who are not cads, and that always intriguing group who rejoice in being both cads and slackers.

It is perhaps in the stories of Greyfriars that we find the outstanding examples of these three categories. In all instances the representation consists of exceptionally strong characters.

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott are undoubtedly the leading examples of the cads who are also slackers. These three are an exceptionally grand effort by Charles Hamilton. He is most successful in giving to each one of them his own particular personality. There are differences in their individual caddishness and slackness, and over the years these variations are highlighted. It is only when they are viewed as a group and working in unison that they are simply a trio of cads and slackers.

In the other Hamilton schools the cads who are also slackers seem to fail to capture the imagination in the same way. Even where they associate as a pair or a trio, there is not the same interaction of character as perceived in the Greyfriars trio. Nevertheless they all contribute to many hours of happy reading.

When we think of the cads who are not slackers, then Herbert Vernon-Smith must be the crowning achievement. Certainly he is not always a cad, but from time to time this aspect of his personality surfaces. Without this, Greyfriars would be so much the poorer. Yes! He can play the slacker when his mood so dictates, but this is a form of rebellion, and we know that it will not last for long. In a sense the Bounder is acting a part, which will eventually disintegrate under the pressure exerted by the other side of his character. Even his slacking can be described as 'active', because anything passive, including slacking, is contrary to his nature.

With the slackers who are not cads, one name surpasses all the others, that of Mauleverer. Like Vernon-Smith and Skinner, one of the great Greyfriars' characters, and among the finest of Hamilton creations. These three, among others, add tremendous variety to the Remove. In their different ways they are an antidote and a contrast to relatively 'straight' members such as Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull and Tom Brown. Mauleverer is indeed a fine creation, the slacker supreme. But is he the subject of a second attempt by the author. An attempt to create a really fine upstanding junior, whose only failing is his lassitude.

It is a fascinating occupation to read the old Magnets in their consecutive order, and to endeavour in so far as it is possible, to eliminate from the mind the memories of the Greyfriars of the 'twenties and 'thirties. Also, to forget the notes recorded against various numbers in the 'Magnet Companion', and any other background material.

In the process of time one arrives at Magnet 184 entitled 'The Schoolboy Millionaire', and a peep ahead discloses that 185 is 'The Slacker'. Presumably a two part story dealing with the arrival, introduction, and early days, of Mauleverer the Slacker, at Greyfriars. But is it so obvious? There is quite a surprise in store for the expectant reader. While it does introduce Mauleverer, one is surprised at references in 184 to a certain Carlton. This is a new name in the Remove, but is used as if Carlton is a long standing member. But the real surprise is that this Carlton is evidently the slacker.

Now the third chapter is headed "Lord Mauleverer Arrives in Style", and there is no doubt about this. In fact in a coach-and-four with Mauleverer himself holding the reins, and driving into Greyfriars not only in style, but in an apparently reckless manner. There is a complete absence of the slacker and languid Earl. It seems that Mauleverer only objects to such physical activity as walking when other means of transport are available, and he is in the fortunate position of being able to pay for the very best.

We later read that "Lord Mauleverer passed his first night at Greyfriars sleeping soundly, undisturbed, and awoke fresh and cheerful at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning". Then the story continues as Mauleverer "hopped out of bed quite actively". This is certainly not 'our' Mauleverer.

But Carlton was still in bed. He was supposed to be even lazier than Billy Bunter. In fact he "had reduced slacking to a fine art". Bob Cherry produced a dripping sponge to good effect, but was soon engaged by Carlton, who when he exerted himself was very strong, and it ended with Bob receiving more than he gave.

Later in the story Mauleverer's guardian puts him to a test. This is to see whether he can cope with adverse financial circumstances. Mauleverer is successful and so gives proof of a steady, brave, and noble character. This ends the story of the arrival of Mauleverer, while also introducing us to Carlton, the 'Slacker of the Remove'. So it is quite obvious that Mauleverer is not the slacker, and presumably not intended to occupy that position in the future.

Magnet 185 commences with a typical Mauleverer situation, but it applies in fact to Carlton. Carlton is too tired to arise. As may be expected it is Bob Cherry who applies the jug of water.

This Magnet No. 185 is not only of great interest because of the story of the 'temporary' slacker, but also because there must have been some space available. So the opportunity was taken to include without any apparent connection the epic fight between Bob Cherry and the Remove bully, Bolsover. The bully had at last met his match, and Bob became the foremost fighting man of the Remove.

The slacker story now continues with what can only be best described as a coincidence. Carlton finds that he faces a financial crisis, just as Mauleverer had in the previous Magnet. But unlike Mauleverer, this is not a test but a fact. His mother explains that if he is to stay at Greyfriars he must pass a scholarship examination. With the assistance of Harry Wharton & Co., Carlton is kept up to the mark. Bob cherry even keeps Carlton awake in the examination room, by means of a peashooter operating through the open window. Carlton is successful, and celebrates by having a lengthy sleep in a hammock in his study.

What finally happened to Carlton? His name occurs in Magnets 186 and 187 and then disappears from the Greyfriars' stories. This, despite the fact that he has been clearly established as the 'Slacker of Greyfriars'. Why did Carlton disappear and his mantle fall upon Mauleverer?

Carlton and Mauleverer have one thing in common, in that they are intended to belong to the 'good' side of the Remove and so are friends of Harry Wharton & Co. Evidently Charles Hamilton had two 'decent' prospects in view. One is the 'Official Slacker', the other is the 'Wealthy Lord', a somewhat leisurely, dandified figure, but capable of a more exuberant approach to living, and certainly not the complete slacker. Since they are both introduced in the same issue of the Magnet it is clear that Mauleverer was not intended for the part of the slacker. That is unless it was a very devious plan, to feature Carlton as the slacker, and if not satisfactory, then transfer the slacker aspect to Mauleverer. Whatever happened, this was in fact the end result. The Remove was already well populated, even over populated, but it did lack a slacker and a titled member, both fairly stock figures.

Did the story of "The Slacker" in the following issue cause a problem? It ends with a scholarship slacker, almost a contradiction. It is a good one-off story, but leaves little room for further development in the future. Stories featuring a scholarship slacker must be fairly limited, and perhaps this was immediately perceived. In the very next Magnet, No. 187, and despite Carlton's name being mentioned in a group scene, Mauleverer is already being groomed for the part of the Slacker. As early as the first chapter we read:'

'" Hallo, dear boy!" said Lord Mauleverer, looking up lazily from a heap of cushions upon which he was reclining on a sofa under the window.'

And so Mauleverer the Slacker supreme came into being, it would seem, as an amalgam, a combination of two personalities. The extreme laziness of Carlton is transferred to the somewhat indolent but non-slacking figure of Mauleverer, who now sheds the more exuberant side of his character. That is except for those special occasions when he will show that he can rise to the full effort demanded of him.

Another interesting fact is that Greyfriars already had one scholarship boy in the Remove, namely Mark Linley. If Carlton had been intended to be a second scholarship boy, then the loss was only temporary because a few issues later (No. 194) saw the arrival of Penfold, a scholarship boy, who, because of his local background, provided some material for future stories. Certainly more than could have been expected from Carlton, the Scholarship slacker.

Is this the only instance of Charles Hamilton producing a scholarship slacker? If so he evidently realised it was a very limited theme. Fortunately for Greyfriars, the end result was the magnificent character of Mauleverer, whom we all enjoyed reading about,

one of the best loved members of the Greyfriars Remove. But is it due to a grand second attempt by our beloved author?

* *

LITTLE FOLKS

by Mary Cadogan

Browsing through my collection I am often drawn to the excellent children's magazine LITTLE FOLKS. I do not have a particularly long run of this, but my bound copies range from Victorian to 1930s issues, so that I can savour the magazine's changing moods, and the work of a fairly wide range of authors and illustrators.

I think its long run began in 1871; a high spot was its fiftieth anniversary edition (the 'Jubilee' volume) which contained congratulatory messages from the then Prince of Wales and other distinguished personalities, as well as a splendid variety of stories, pictures and poems. One of the paper's joys, in retrospect, is its provision of photographs of authors editors and artists: through LITTLE FOLKS I was able, for example, to find out what Dorothea Moore, Christine Chaundler and Lord Northcliffe looked like.

It was, of course, a monthly publication and many of the issues which have survived are in bound volumes. Unbound copies are good to collect because of their full colour and extremely attractive covers (generally lost when bound). It was always a 'quality' magazine, chunky and fairly expensive and more likely to be bought by parents for their offspring than by children with their own pennies. Papers like the MAGNET, GEM, NELSON LEE or SCHOOLFRIEND cost twopence a week but LITTLE FOLKS - in the 1920s - cost a shilling.

The great variation of its stories and pictures suggests that it was indeed a magazine for the whole family; it catered for the tweeny-weenies, for schoolchildren and for youngish teenagers. Possibly that is why it is not collected so addictively as the papers which youngsters of the 1920s and 30s spent their own pocket money on. Whereas one would read every word of a twopenny story paper it would be accepted that some of the tales in LITTLE FOLKS were pitched for readers younger - or older - than oneself. This, of course, makes the magazine particularly interesting for the nostalgic adult reader who is likely to turn with delight from fairly and nursery pictures by Florence Anderson and Mabel Lucie Attwell to stylish school story illustrations by H.M. Brock, Thomas Henry and others.

Amongst the delights of just two whole-year bound volumes taken at random are stories by Dorita Fairlie Bruce, Ethel Talbot, Christine Chaundler, Violet M. Methley, Dorothea Moore, Gunby Hadath, D.H. Parry and Alfred Judd, with pictures by Harry

Rountree, C.E. and H.M. Brock, Mabel Lucie Attwell, Fred Bennett, H.R. Millar, Hilda Cowham, George Soper, Rosa Petherick, Treyer Evans and Warwick Reynolds.

As well as splendid, book-length serials there were lots of short stories, plays and poems. Popular fictional subjects were school-days, fairies, animals and a great breadth of stirring historical and contemporary adventure.

LITTLE FOLKS was well known for its charitable activities; as well as supporting a children's ward in a London hospital it maintained a convalescent home for children - the Little Folks Home.

I'm sure that some C.D. readers know a great deal more about LITTLE FOLKS than I do and have large collections of this magazine; it would be good to hear more about it from them.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCE OF WALES

H.R.H. the PRINCE OF WALES has graciously sent the following message on the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the starting of the work of the Little Folks Ward and Little Folks Home:

"I send my best birthday wishes to the Little Folks Home, and hope that throughout the coming year the readers of 'Little Folks' will not forget their less fortunate brothers and sisters who, but for their kindness, would never enjoy the happy life at Cooden."

St. James's Palace, S.W., February 24th, 1921.

Photo: C. Vandyk, Ltd.

From an Old Reader

LORD NORTHCLIFFE *writes:*

"I was brought up on 'Little Folks,' which appeared when I was six years old, and which I well remember. I rejoice to see its present flourishing condition. It must have given pleasure to millions of children.

"NORTHCLIFFE."

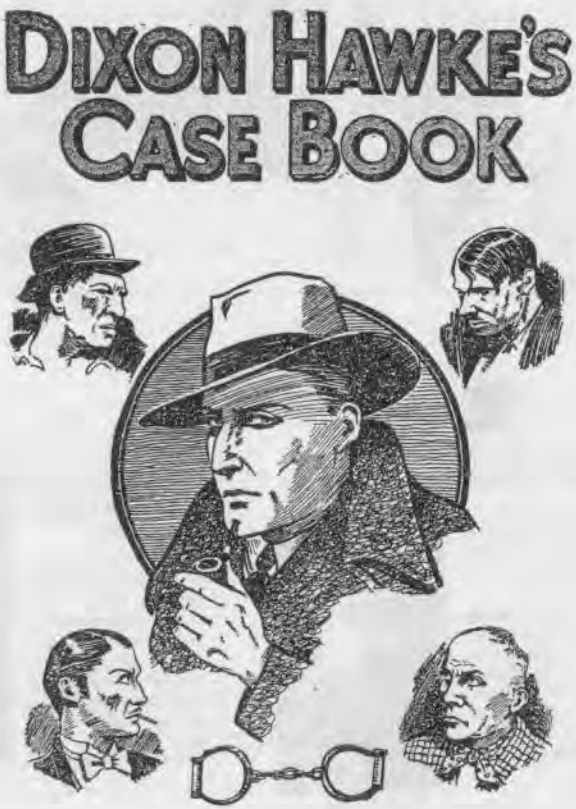
Photo: Hoppé

* *

THE CASE OF THE VANISHING DETECTIVES

by Ray Moore

In the last six months or so it has been my pleasure and privilege to help fellow enthusiasts Colin Morgan and Derek Marsden to compile 'The Wizard Index 1946-1963' and 'The Adventure Index 1946-1961'. My particular brief being to name the artists responsible for illustrating the papers within the given periods and also to trace any picture strip adaptations or reprints of the original prose tales in the later D.C. Thomson boys picture papers, Victor, New Hotspur etc. It was while performing the latter task that it struck me that very little work had been done on analysing the success or otherwise of the Thomson story paper heroes in the age of the picture paper and that it might be of some interest to carry out just such an analysis not only for individual heroes but also for whole story genres be they sport, war, school or whatever. With this in mind I decided to turn my attentions first onto the picture paper fate of the Thomson detectives.



Without doubt in terms of longevity and individual tales published Thomson's greatest detective was, and is Dixon Hawke. Created in 1912 for Thomsons 'Saturday Post' and being popular enough to gain his own pocket library series in 1919 and annual casebook series in 1938 Hawke was first presented to a more generally youthful audience in the first issue of *Adventure* in 1921. *Adventure* was to be a regular outlet for Hawke's exploits for forty years and indeed his final prose serial for the paper 'The City of Frightened Men' did not reach its conclusion until Adventure's penultimate issue before its amalgamation with *Rover* in January 1961. With this sort of pedigree it would have seemed likely that Dixon Hawke would have been snapped up by one of Thomsons boys comic paper editors as a candidate for presentation in the comic strip format but surprisingly this was not the case.

During his association with *Adventure* Hawke had already appeared in two picture series. The first in 1949 titled 'Dixon Hawke and the Yellow Ghost' and the second in 1951 featuring individual tales with individual titles. Drawn by James Malcolm and Calder Jameson respectively these were to be the detectives' only forays into the realm of the picture strip as the later picture papers, with one rather humiliating exception we shall mention shortly, totally refused to visit his rooms in Dover Street for a consultation. Dixon Hawke remarkably, still continues to appear each week in *The Sporting Post* but for over-thirty years the Thomson boys papers have chosen to do without their own rival to the great Sherlock Holmes.

Perhaps the Wizards most famous detective was the ex-inspector of the Indian Police, Paul Terhune. Terhune first appeared in the *Wizard* in 1941 in a series titled 'The Unseen Strangler' and this was followed by six further, equally exciting, series culminating in the 'Circus of Sudden Death' in 1949 after which, strangely, nothing was heard from Terhune for fifteen years. In 1964 a full year after the *Wizard* lost its separate identity as a boys story paper following its amalgamation with *Rover* Terhune re-emerged in the newest of Thomsons boys picture papers, the *Hornet*. He did not re-emerge as a picture strip character however. Instead the editor of the *Hornet* Alex McIntosh chose simply to reprint the original stories in their original prose format with new heading block illustrations supplied by Fred Sturrock. The reprints began with the last story originally published 'The Circus of Sudden Death' and in the next five years a further seven Terhune or ersatz Terhune reprints followed. They comprised five more of the original 1940's series 'The Unseen Strangler', 'The Secret of Dr. Cabras', 'Was it the Gorilla?', 'Who Killed the Handcuff King?' and 'Paul Terhune in Queer Town', and these were supplemented by two series 'The Tec' on the Whisperers Trail' and 'Beware of the Black Terror' which had originally been adventures featuring other detectives now attributed to Terhune by the simple process of name substitution. In fact 'Beware of the Black Terror' had originally been published in 1954 as a case for Dixon Hawke and as mentioned earlier this incognito appearance as Paul Terhune turned out to be Dixon Hawkes's only appearance in the boys picture papers. A rather ignoble end to an illustrious boys paper career. Still, Dixon Hawke may have gained some small degree of retributive pleasure when the last of Paul Terhunes series from the 1940's not reprinted in the *Hornet*, 'The Invisible Bullets from Nowhere' turned up as a prose reprint in the *Victor* in 1966 with Terhune being re-named Paul Tranter.

Two other detectives who made it into the pages of the 'Victor' from the boys story papers were 'The Tec' Nobody Knows' from the 'Rover' and Craig Crane the star of 'The Raven Talks' series in the *Wizard*. 'The Tec' Nobody Knows' was in fact a misnomer because we actually knew he was John Martin of Scotland Yard's ghost squad. John Martin, who specialised in tracking down missing persons first appeared in the

Rover in 1949 and featured in three series within eighteen months followed by a number of one-off appearances well into the 1960s. A short series of John Martin prose reprints appeared in the *Victor* in 1963.

Under the titles 'The Raven Talks' and 'The Raven Talks Again', Craig Crane the bearded British scientist and his talking raven Blackie had appeared in two series in the *Wizard* in 1944 and 1947 with a third series 'The Menace Comes on Fridays' following in the *Rover* in 1955. Once again sticking to the prose story format the *Victor* editor Bill Mann reprinted the 1947 series 'The Raven Talks Again' as 'The Raven Talks' in 1962 and followed this with a reprint of 'The Menace Comes on Fridays' in 1967. The original 1944 series 'The Raven Talks' with its story basis of war-time firebugs and black-marketeering no doubt being deemed too time-locked to warrant a revival. Craig Crane finally made his swan-song in the newly revived *Wizard* in 1974 when the 1947 series from the original *Wizard* was once again reprinted as 'The Raven Talks'.

So far we have seen that the editors of the Thomson boys picture papers showed a marked reluctance to turn the detectives from the old prose papers into picture-strip heroes which was surprising when you consider how successful picture strip detectives were being at rival publishers Fleetway in the 1960s. *Valiant* contained Jack o'Justice, his direct descendant Jack Justice and, thanks to a television revival 'Sexton Blake', *Lion* contained 'Bruce Kent' and 'Rory McDuff', *Smash* contained 'Cursitor Doom' and *Buster* contained 'Maxwell Hawke' (presumably no relation to Thomson's denizen of Dover Street) all these Fleetway characters conforming more or less to the image of the classic detective.

Ultimately Thomson's only adaptation of a detective hero from the old boys papers who had a reasonable picture strip run turned out to be a humorous one, namely 'The Big Stiff'. 'The Big Stiff', not to be confused with the popular schoolmaster of the same name who appeared in the *Hotspur* in the 1930s, first appeared in the *Wizard* in 1958. His real name was Det. Sgt. Jim Ransom of the C.I.D. who found himself in the United States on a police exchange programme. Large of frame and sporting a bowler hat, many U.S. crooks humorously paid the price for assuming Jim Ransom was as dumb as he looked. 'The Big Stiff' appeared in four series in the *Wizard* between 1958 and 1962 and all these were adapted into the picture strip format in the *Hornet* between 1965 and 1971 under the title 'The Big Polooka'. The artwork for the *Hornet* adaptations being provided by Pete Sutherland.

Why Thomsons chose to generally ignore the detective genre in picture strip form is difficult to understand because when they put their minds to it they showed a considerable talent for adapting the old prose stories. For instance one of the best mystery stories they ever published 'The Goalmaker' which involved a good deal of genuine detective work was very happily transferred to the picture strip format in the *Victor* in 1962 but sadly adaptations like this were few and far between. It seems they thought that the detective story worked best in the prose format, hence the direct reprints in the picture papers but even so I think they could have given their detectives a little more scope to show off their talents in the more modern idiom of the picture strip. After all, today, long after the demise of even the Fleetway picture strip sleuths one of British comics most popular characters is still a detective of sorts, namely that feared lawman of Mega-City One, 'Judge Dread'. The only difference being that sadly the 'street cred' of Judge Dread is no longer the 'Dover street cred' of Dixon Hawke and his ilk.

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Editor's Note:
In the April C.D. the Northern Club report mentioned the reading of an article by Herbert Leckenby, the Founder-Editor of our magazine. I am reprinting this item from a long-ago C.D. Annual as I am sure that all readers will be intrigued and moved by it.

HOW MY FIRST COLLECTION STARTED

by Herbert Leckenby

Someone once said I was born with a "blood" in my hand. Like the once reported death of Mark Twain that was an exaggeration, but I shouldn't be surprised if I wended my way to my first day at school with a comic in my pocket, for, with almost all my recollections of those distant days the boys' weeklies played a part.

There was an occasion, for instance, when I could be not more than seven. A girl cousin, several years older than myself, had come to stay at my home for a few days. I was blissfully unaware of the reason, but she was one of my favourite cousins, for at her own home they had quite a number of the comics. One afternoon I was packed off to a friend of my mother's with instructions to return early in the evening. Before I set off, however, I learned my cousin was returning to her own home for an hour or two, so I got her to promise to bring me back some comics.

Back home in the evening she prepared me for bed and as she tucked me in I asked, "Did you bring me those comics?". She replied, with a smile, "Yes," then added, "You've got a new brother." "Oh," commented I, "How many are there?" "Why, one of course," she replied with a laugh. "Pooh, is that all?" I grunted, then settled down to sleep.

Next morning she handed me the comics, five of them. Yes, I remember the exact number to this day. My face beamed; it was more than I expected. "O-oh thanks," I said, "but, here, why did you say last night there was only one?" She looked at me, and then, oh how she laughed, for of course there had been a little misunderstanding, for to me what was a mere addition to the family compared with an anticipated supply of my beloved comics?

I saw that cousin not long ago, now a grey-haired grandmother. I asked her if she remembered that little incident of the long ago. Of course, she didn't; yet it has remained vivid in my memory to this very day.

I recall another happy experience some three years later when a youth, elder brother to a friend of mine, thrust into my arms to my delight a pile of Big Budgets, Chips, Comic Cuts and, oh quite a lot of others. Oh what a wonderful surprise. Problem was where to keep them. I had just found a temporary resting place for them in a store cupboard, when I was urged by my mother to go in search of my brother, whose advent into the world I have just mentioned. Now three years old, he had strayed off somewhere. Snatching up a Comic Cuts, I set off, one eye on the look-out, the other following the adventures of Chokee Bill and Area Sneaker. I found the wanderer eventually, and clasping his hand made for home still engrossed in the "comic". Now once again why do I remember that little incident, when far more momentous events in my life which happened long afterwards have been completely forgotten?

However, it wasn't until I was twelve years of age that something happened which brought me what I have always looked upon as the start of my first collection. It was an experience which brought joy to me out of sorrow to someone else - a sweet-faced, gentle lady. One day there came to the school I attended a new boy, a shy, pale-faced

delicate looking boy with large spectacles, and with a distressing impediment in his speech. Poor lonely kid! I often had an urge to try and chum up with him, but I was a somewhat bashful, keep in the background sort of boy myself, and I kind of sympathised with him from a distance; sympathised because there were foul little swines who thought it funny to imitate his stammer.

One afternoon going home from school I saw a little ahead Victor (pathetically inappropriate name for such a boy) standing by some railings, and a big lout barring his progress. This fellow was grinning and mimicking the younger boy's speech. Victor's lips were quivering and there were tears in his eyes behind those big glasses. As I have said, there was no Bob Cherry about me. I don't think I ever had a real fight in my life, but at that moment something happened to me. The dormant blood of some long dead ancestor must have stirred in my veins for instinctively I hit out with a half-bunched fist and caught the tormentor on the nose, drawing blood. I waited anxiously for him to retaliate, but to my surprise, and I must confess relief, he simply muttered, "I was only teasing him," and slunk off, hand clasped to nose. Victor gave me a pitiful little smile, and we walked on together, with maybe my chest sticking out a little more than usual, for the role of protector was something entirely new to me.

From then on Victor and I used often to go to and from school together, and I learned from him that his father, a regular soldier, had been killed in the early days of the Boer War, and that he, an only child, lived alone with his mother. We found, too, we had something in common, a love for reading, with the result that we started swopping our weekly papers. Mine, of course, were Marvels, Boys' Friends, and the like, creased and crumpled through reposing in the pockets of my Norfolk jacket. Victor read the Boys Own Paper and Chums, and they were always so immaculate and virgin clean that I almost feared to handle them. Victor never seemed to make any other friends; he usually was waiting for me at a corner, and I grew to have a great affection for the lonely boy.

Came a day, just before the Christmas holidays, when he wasn't at the corner, neither did he turn up at school, and I later learned to my dismay that he was very ill. Despite our friendship I had never visited his home. I often felt I would like to, but there was a certain reserve about him and I never ventured to suggest it.

The school broke up for the holidays and all Christmas Day Victor was seldom out of my thoughts. The following morning I made for the street in which I knew he lived. I asked a boy if he knew where Victor Tyler lived. The boy looked at me and said, "Victor Tyler! Did you know him? If you did, didn't you know he died on Christmas Eve? He lived there." He pointed to a house across the way - a house with drawn blinds!

Whether I ever answered the boy I never knew but as I turned away I heard him say, "Funeral's tomorrow." That was my saddest Boxing Day: all that night I was haunted by the pale, delicate face of the little friend I should never see again.

The following afternoon I watched him set off on his last journey, a pathetic little procession of hearse and a single carriage, in which I caught sight of a lady clad in black. The tears ran down my cheeks and a great lump rose in my throat, for death was something strange and terrifying to me. I felt a little gulpy, too, on making my way to school the first morning after the holidays, with no Victor waiting at the usual corner. In the afternoon, whilst bending over my exercise, I gave a start as the teacher, standing behind me, tapped me on the shoulder. He said, "Victor Tyler's mother wants to see you after school, and you can take a note from me with you."

The moment school was over I set off for Markham Crescent, wondering why Victor's mother wished to see me. In response to my timid knock the door was opened by a sweet-faced lady - in her thirties as I see her now. With a kindly smile she bid me enter; and I handed her the note, which proved to be one of sympathy. She had tea ready and in a minute or two she had made me feel at home. She told me Victor had often mentioned me and said with a sad little smile, "You stood up for him one day when a boy was teasing him, didn't you?"

When tea was over she cleared the things away and then she said, "And now I've something for you." She left the room, returning a moment later with two huge books in her arms. She laid them on the table side by side. I can see them now and that gentle lady standing there though years and years have sped - the Boys' Own Annual for 1990 and the scarlet-clad "Chums" for the following year. Then as though in a dream I heard her say, "Victor asked me to give these to you just before he died, for he said you were the only friend he had at school." I stammered out my thanks and watched her, fascinated, as she thoughtfully wrapped them up separately in brown paper. As she bid me goodbye, I saw her cheeks were wet. Poor, lonely lady!

I made for home, a parcel under each arm. My feelings were mixed, joyful at the thought of my good fortune and the feast of reading in my arms, sorrowful as I realised that they had come to me because a boy had died, leaving a lonely mother to mourn.

At home my late arrival was soon forgiven when I explained the reason, and proudly displayed the gifts. As I have told before, the boys' weeklies were generally frowned upon in my home, but who could object to bound volumes of the B.O.P. and Chums, especially when they were the gifts of a dying boy?

For years they held an honoured place in a book-case until they fell to pieces through constant turning of the pages, by many hands.

Oft-times as I browse over some papers in my possession my thoughts travel back through the years to that winter's afternoon when I had tea with a sweet-faced lonely lady, and sometimes when I hear in a music-hall, or on the wireless, an alleged entertainer adopting a stammer, I feel an impulse to rise in protest or hurriedly switch off, for I see before me the quivering lips and the tears in the eyes of a sensitive, pale-faced boy who died in the long ago.

* *

COLLECTORS' ITEMS

by Tommy Keen

Recently, and at random, I reached for a Greyfriars Club Volume from my bookshelves,to glance again through, and read extracts from the stories therein, hopefully thinking it might prove to be a Blue and White cover volume... and, it was. Though the blue and white covers of the MAGNET and the GEM had ceased quite sometime before I became the avid 'fan' of so many of the Greyfriars (and St. Jim's) characters, through being able to possess the Howard Baker Volumes I became absolutely fascinated by C.H. Chapman's glorious, old fashioned, cover illustrations, especially during World War I, and into the early 1920s.

However, to move on. In the volume in question, after reading The Editor's Chats, the Brief Replies to readers (quite hilarious some of them), and chuckling over the old time pictures of various readers, a certain announcement rather intrigued me. This was that if the reader at that time

would complete the MAGNET's printed form, giving the names and addresses of three new readers, plus the names and addresses of the newsagents to be concerned, four post-card portraits of members of Greyfriars would be sent. The choice of the four pictures was left to the reader, to be selected from the following:-

Harry Wharton	H. Vernon-Smith
Frank Nugent	Horace Coker
Bob Cherry	Billy Bunter
Hurree Singh	George Wingate
Johnny Bull	Lord Mauleverer
Mark Linley	The late Arthur Courtney (Oh dear!)

Surely somebody connected with this peculiar hobby of ours, **must** have a few tucked away - they would be very rare items, as possibly a certain amount of bribing or wrist twisting would have been involved to obtain the necessary names of three potential new readers!

If I could have chosen four picture cards, I would have opted for Harry Wharton, Mark Linley, Hurree Singh and H. Vernon-Smith.

Nostalgia satisfied for a couple of hours, the volume was returned to the bookshelves, and the memories came flooding back.

* *

BIGGLES CARRIES ON! AND ON - AND ON .....

by Jennifer Schofield

"Can you fly a helicopter?"
Biggles smiled. "I think so. I've done it before..."

To some readers, Biggles will always be flying a Sopwith Camel; others are happy for him to adventure in the assorted flying-boats of the inter-war years, or lead 266 Squadron into battle in a Spitfire or a Beaufighter. But a **helicopter**? Stiffen the crows!

Yet Biggles' statement that he was used to such an aircraft is a genuine quotation from "Biggles and the Penitent Thief" (1967). Many of us will never forget the excitement that Biggles brought to our childhoods, and if we are honest I think that we will admit to a gut feeling that the series went downhill as soon as we stopped reading it! For us the saga ended in the Thirties or in 1945, and we do not want our golden memories intruded upon by the 64 Air Police titles published from 1947 to 1970. Then there are those of us who have sampled the later books but find them not in the same league as the earlier ones.

But although I sympathize with both these points of view, I think that if we leave the matter there we are missing out. The Air Police tales are an amazing achievement in a number of ways. It is true that they lack the immediacy and authenticity of the Royal Flying Corps stories, which many of us regard as Johns' greatest achievement, or the spell-binding thrills, humour, horror and speed of the inter-war yarns, but they have their own strengths.

It was one of Johns' characteristic strokes of genius to get Air Commodore Raymond to set up a squad of Special Air Policemen - that is, Biggles, Algy, Ginger and Bertie - to combat aerial crime in 1945. The force was attached to Scotland Yard, and

was soon established with its own budget, aircraft and accepted field of operations. The two World Wars were history and the airman and his friends would have looked absurd if they had tried to revive their Thirties exuberant lifestyle. Now they were assured of plenty of stirring action in a realistic context for the rest of their lives.

Many of the Air Police books have well-made plots that would put Ian Fleming to shame, and although they may be more restrained than their predecessors, they still provide vintage moments. In "Biggles' Second Case" (1948) the airman faced a firing squad for the third time in his life, in the course of his efforts to arrest a U-boat Commander, who had escaped to an island in the South Indian Ocean to recover a cargo of looted gold:

"Would you like a bandage over your eyes?" sneered von Schonbeck.

"No," answered Biggles evenly. "There's nothing a Nazi can give me that I can't take."

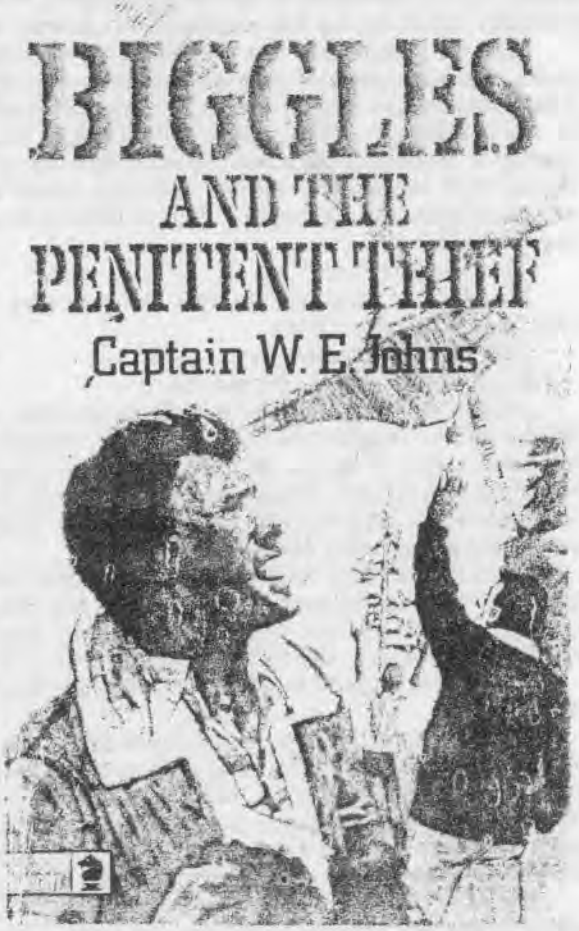
Von Schonbeck raised his hand.

The rifles of the firing party came to their shoulders.

The crash of an explosion shattered the silence.

Biggles stumbled and fell flat.

End of chapter! Luckily, as in former days, Ginger was at hand, this time armed with a harpoon gun, but it was a close thing.



There were perils too, at more than a personal level. In "Biggles Cuts it Fine" (1954) the Air Police, again in the Indian Ocean, discovered "a military secret the importance of which could hardly be estimated", a secret Russian cache of deadly weapons, a find that could easily precipitate the Third World War. In "Orchids for Biggles" (1962) (surely one of Johns' jokes - when was 'No Orchids for Miss Blandish" published?) Biggles and Bertie tracked down a treacherous scientist who had hidden himself in Peru with stolen military documents that would rock Britain's reputation internationally, and "tear the country wide open" if they were to become known.

A very cogent reason for reading the Air Police stories is the fact that they form a fascinating continuation of Biggles' life-story. Von Stalhein features in a number of

tales; when the war ended, after freelancing with various disreputable organisations he went over to the Communists, and many of his confrontations with Biggles were as gripping as ever. Finally, in "Biggles Buries a Hatchet" (1958) the German's masters distrusted him, and he was imprisoned on the desolate island of Sakhalin off the coast of Siberia. At the instigation of the Air Commodore, who thought von Stalhein might be politically useful, the Air Police mounted an operation to rescue him.

This Air Police story is a compelling novel, and as good as any of Johns' best works. The atmosphere of gloomy mountains, chilly pine forests and grim prison camp is brilliantly evoked, and the last bottle of wills between the old adversaries is masterly. To the last, Biggles did not know if the German would allow him to rescue him or whether he would drag the airman down to share his own living death in the slave gang. The ice-cold von Stalhein did not flicker an eyelid when Biggles, hiding near him, whispered plans for his escape. At last, filled with awful doubts, the Air Detective Inspector asked:

"Do you understand?"

Von Stalhein spoke for the first and only time. And he did not waste words. "Yes," he answered succinctly.

That was all. He passed on.

Biggles began to count the minutes...

Another book that must be read by anyone who wants to know the full story of Biggles' life is "Biggles Looks Back" (1965). Biggles and von Stalhein, now friends, combined forces to rescue the airman's long-lost love, Marie Janis, from Bohemia, behind the Iron Curtain. Biggles had never forgotten the beautiful German spy who had won his heart in 1918, but with touching realism, Johns made his aging detective stare uncertainly when he first saw her again.

Could this be Marie Janis?... When for a short while their paths had crossed in the turmoil of war she had been young, attractive and vivacious. Here was a slightly built woman getting on in years. She looked frail. She wore glasses, although this may have been only for reading. Her hair was streaked with grey...

The reunion between Biggles and Marie is sensitively handled, tender without being ridiculous.

There are such a number of air Police Books that it is very difficult to make any more recommendations. The range is so wide - there are secret service missions, cops and robbers episodes, treasure hunts and searches for villains or victims - and the settings range from the tropics to the Antarctic. Most of us who have read the series agree that they vary enormously in merit, but fail to agree as to which the best ones and the worst ones are! I can only suggest you make your own assessment.

The main characters in the Air Police books are as ebullient as ever, and Bertie makes a splendid addition to the pre-war team. Only Biggles ages, becoming more cautious and crusty as the years go by, but he changes remarkably little in essentials, remaining brave, practical, charismatic and generous. In this final phase of the Biggles series, now and then some fudging goes on about the past. Either Johns' editors or the author himself must have decided that young readers would feel confused if they realized just how long ago their hero learnt to fly. Sometimes there are references in the stories to Biggles' days in the RAF although the events in question occurred during the First World War.

It is therefore especially satisfying to find, in the very last book of all, "Biggles Sees Too Much" (1970), a direct allusion to the airman's service in the Royal Flying Corps. The smell of castor oil took him back to "the old days":

"I used to stink of the stuff myself when I was flying Camels. The left shoulder of my tunic was black with the oil chucked back by the engine. That was because, like a lot of pilots, I always flew with my left elbow resting on the side of the cockpit, so that I could get a clear view in front...

Biggles never retires (although there was talk of this) and never dies; he flies on for ever, in whatever plane you like to find him in, in the books you like best. The Air Police tales are an integral and successful part of the Biggles story, not just a long appendage - and a remarkable feat on the part of Johns. Surely no other series for children can equal this one, and no other hero, having played a valiant part in two World Wars, has gone on for a quarter of a century to enjoy a triumphant third career as an Air Detective Inspector.

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MARK TAHA (London): Just a quick note to say that I really enjoyed Peter Mahony's story LEVISON'S LAST CHANCE, and hope to see more items like this in print. I especially liked the way Levison was depicted - I've always thought that reforming him was a mistake (I'd rather he'd led his younger brother astray, Frank Levison being one of the most irritating little goody-goodies I've ever read about!) and am glad that Mr. Mahony corrected it.

MARTIN WATERS (Wellingborough): During a recent visit to the British Library, I had reason to examine the file of the 'Bullseye' weekly, published by the Amalgamated Press from 1931 to 1934. I was interested to notice the series the 'House of Thrills' illustrated by George Wakefield. I wasn't around in the early 1930s, but I have memories of reading these same stories in the immediate post-war period. Can any reader state which story paper carried the reprints? 'Champion' springs to mind, but it could have been 'Film Fun'.

Has anyone any recollections of a character in a post-war picture strip paper who travelled underground in a tunnelling machine shaped rather like a 'flying saucer'? I think the main character was a sort of 'Robin Hood' character who dealt with crooked bankers, financiers, etc. He wore white overalls like a scientist, and knocked out his victims with sleeping gas. I would stress that I am not confusing this character with the well-known 'black Sapper' from the Thomson papers. I have mentioned this request to Denis Gifford and a number of other experts on picture strips, but so far I've drawn a blank. Can any readers of C.D. help?

SIMON GARRETT (Bath): I've only just read Mark Taha's excellent introduction to Flashman in the C.D. Annual; delighted I'm not C.D.'s only Flashy fanatic. Flashman contains elements of Smithy, Skinner and Ponsonby, but is very much his own man. His reunions with Tom Brown and Scud East are sheer delight - Flashman is both amused and bemused as they piously try to forgive him for bullying them at Rugby. I don't quite agree he is a coward. He shows coolness and resource in emergencies, admittedly only for self-preservation.

I vaguely remember "Flashman and the Tiger" as a short story in a magazine. Are there any other short stories? Flashman also plays a small part in "Mr. American", along with his suffragette grand-daughter. If the saga continues we must expect to see more of the great man in maturity, for his early years are now almost fully chronicled.

Incidentally, "The Prisoner of Zenda", mentioned by Dennis Bird in the same Annual, is a highly-expurgated version of one of Flashman's early escapades - "Royal Flash"!

RAY MOORE (Prudhoe): Re the Ray Holmes item in the March C.D. I'm sure some subscribers will have noticed that he was in error when he said that Laurel and Hardy continued to appear in 'Film Fun' until the final issue in 1962. In fact the strip was removed from the comic after 15th November 1957 because of Oliver Hardy's recent demise.

* *

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club Volume No. 1 "The Worst Boy at Greyfriars" and No. 2 "Harry Wharton & Co. in India". Must be in fine to very good condition. State your price please.
FOR SALE: Soft cover edition of Volume No. 3 "The Making of Harry Wharton". Your offers please or will exchange for one of the above volumes. W.L. BAWDEN, 14 Highland Park, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 2EX.

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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.

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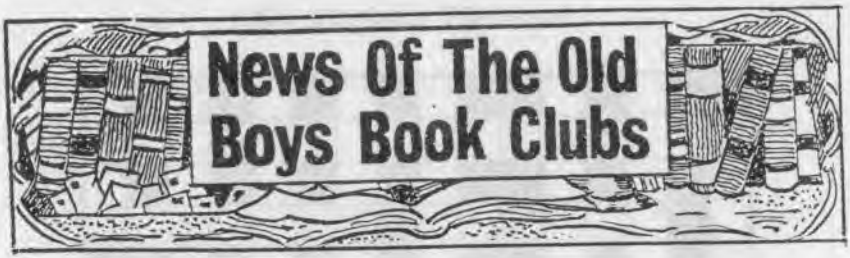

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

The Club's April meeting was held at the home of member, Keith Hodkinson.

Our secretary, Tony Cowley, presented a detailed progress report concerning our 21st Anniversary meeting, just two months away. The main item of the afternoon followed as we then watched as Keith expounded his Desert Island Films - a personal selection of eight best films.

Using video and film extracts the selection comprised: 'Campbell's Kingdom' (1957), 'White Heat' (1949), 'Captain Horatio Hornblower RN' (1951), 'Back to the Future' (1986), '1941' (1979), 'On the Town' (1949), 'Oliver' (1968) and 'Hello Dolly' (1969).

ADRIEN PERKINS

(Because of printing deadlines brought about by your Editor's visit to California, reports from the other Clubs have regrettably had to be held over until next month)

* *

BOYS' SCHOOL STORIES - Summer catalogue available now. SAE please to Robert Kirkpatrick, 244 Latimer Road, London, W10 6QY. Also available - BULLIES, BEAKS AND FLANNELLED FOOLS - AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOYS' SCHOOL FICTION by Robert Kirkpatrick. 120 pages plus 16 page supplement. "An excellent compilation... this bibliography is essential." (International Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship). £8.00 including postage from above address.

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WANTED - Boys' school stories always wanted for regular catalogues. Also POCKET LIBRARIES - e.g. Schoolboys' Own Library, Boys' Friend Library, Nugget Library, Diamond Library etc (school story titles only). Good prices paid. ROBERT KIRKPATRICK, 244 Latimer Road, London, W10 6QY.

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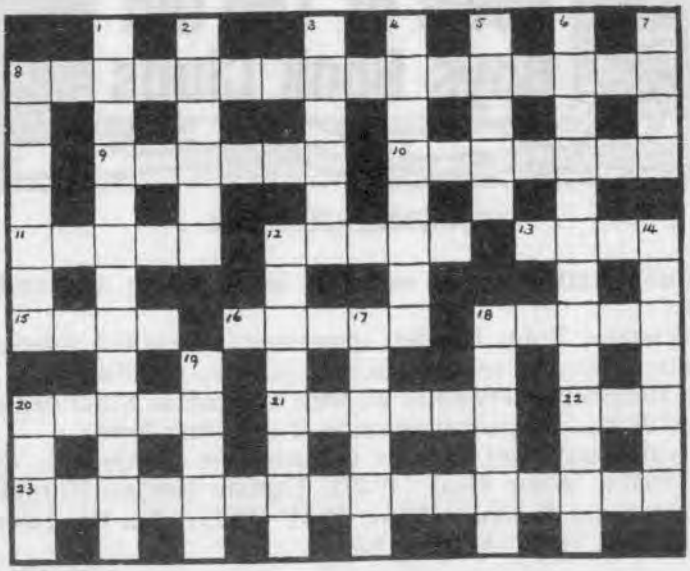
A MAGNET CROSSWORD



by Keith Atkinson

CLUES ACROSS

8. (+ 8 Down and 12 Across) The facial expression of the Lord High executioner, as often quoted by Frank Richards (9 7 7 5)
9. Tune played by Ogilvy or a sound of woe from Bunter (6)
10. Ernest Levison initially disturbs the peace of a member of Study No. 9 (7)
11. Football sides (5)
12. See 8 Across
13. 'A ---- of the Circus', 1926 Magnet title (4)
15. Carried by Bessie Bunter on first arrival at Cliff House (4)
16. Upper Fourth Former makes his bed in the street (5)
18. See 7 Down
20. Another sound of woe from Bunter (5)
21. Bunter is a practised ------ of tuck (6)
22. Japanese sash (3)
23. Greyfriars junior and the title of a 1918 Magnet (5 2 3 6)

CLUES DOWN

1. (+ 3 Down) The Owl..... (7 6 6)
2. ..... and the Pussycat (6)
3. (+ 6 Down) Imposing 1925 Magnet title (6 2 6 5)
4. Description of Bunter's role in a 1921 Magnet (1 3 4)
5. Proprietor of boatyard near Friardale Bridge (5)
6. See 3 Down

7. (+ 18 Across) 'The ---- of the ----- Knife', title of 1928 Magnet (4 & 5)
8. See 8 Across
12. Result of a plastic surgery or a punch from Bob Cherry (8)
14. Junior Captain of Topham School, (1936 version) (7)
17. Mastiff which chased Mr. Quelch onto a barn roof (6)
18. Practical joker and temporary member of the Remove (6)
19. A crooked member of Lantham Speedway (5)
20. 'Playing the ----', 1925 Magnet title (4)

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

* *

TICKET TO READ

By Ray Hopkins

Reading recently about Dennis Bird's experiences of the entry to the joys of looking through long runs of our beloved old story papers at the British Museum Reading Room took me back to the days when I was working in London and able to go inside the portals of the famed building myself. I think it must have been Bill Lofts who first gave me the idea of actually going there to research, for fun and, later, for articles to be written and submitted to the C.D.

Unlike Dennis, I actually went there in person and was interviewed by a grim-faced young woman who was not going to let just any old body in to thumb his sticky way through her catalogues. When I gave the reason why I wanted a ticket (I am speaking of thirty years ago) she threw me a very searching look and told me I should have to get a letter of approval for such activity from my superior at work. This I did, and presented it with my application. I don't remember now, on the occasion of my second visit, whether the straight-faced charmer was the same, but this one rose to her full height behind the high counter which separated us and looked me up and down rather in the manner that Arthur Augustus is described as so doing in the GEM, before she agreed to accept my application. I don't remember having my photograph taken though my last ticket some twenty years later certainly contains one. Another thought strikes me, that, in those days, there was no frenzied searching of bags by officials before I entered the building.

I, too, had great difficulty in getting the bundles of papers that I wanted, though I carefully copied the shelf numbers from the catalogues. I had believed it was going to be like attending a large public library and waiting for a short time while the requested item was brought from the stacks below. However, my first visits were frustrating because I had to wait at least two hours each time and then, more than once, as happened to Dennis, incorrect papers were brought. I was pleased to read of his helpful ladies, all presumably fluent in English. At the time I was researching there, the helpers who descended to the depths all seemed to be very young women with middle European accents (I presumed they were students) who couldn't possibly have been familiar with old English children's periodicals.

Realising that long waits were going to be inevitable every time I went in on the offchance, I decided to make a regular schedule of going every Tuesday and Thursday evening (at that time the Reading Room was open until nine o'clock) and requesting ahead so that the bundles would be waiting for me when I arrived after work. This worked a treat.

My original idea in looking through old story papers was to research ones that were not covered very fully in the C.D., simply because none of the then current contributors had been alive when they were published. They were large comic-size weeklies that my Dad talked of often, with pleasure lighting up his face, and which he had loved in his own boyhood reading, namely THE BOYS' FRIEND, THE BOYS' REALM and THE BOYS' HERALD. His own copies had all been disposed of, without his permission, by an Aunt with whom he had lived as a child. I had thus never seen copies of these papers myself and looked forward with eargerness to perusing them. However, it so happened that these particular story papers were, in fact, kept in the Newspaper Library at the Colindale Branch of the Reading Room. I did make my way up there, way up north as it seemed at the time, from the South East, and began on THE BOYS' FRIEND, my Dad's particular favourite. The copies were bound, and number one was dated 29th January 1895. But, as I opened up the cover, a cloud of what I thought at first was dust (but which I soon realised was disintegrating paper) rose. I had to be very careful in turning the pages lest they became torn. Certainly, the paper on which they were printed gave every appearance of being not long for this world and I wonder now, thirty years later, whether they do, in fact, still exist in a state in which one could research them with ease.

I was also interested in discovering first publication dates of certain hardback children's books, not noted on the reverse side of title pages as they are now, but clearly shown in the catalogues, together with reprint dates.

The story papers I researched at the British Museum Reading Room were all in loose bundles. I recall that I was going through some Thomsons of the war years and just afterwards, looking for evidence that a certain school serial running in the then current ROVER (it began in September 1967) was not "new and original" but had appeared before. Somehow 1967 seemed a bit late for "new" school stories to be appearing. I found an earlier printing of the same serial in the WIZARD beginning May 1947. This must have been an extremely popular story because it was reprinted again, beginning in February 1952, also in the WIZARD.

One particular bundle of WIZARDS was covered in a very tattered piece of brown paper which I brought to the attention of the porter who issued and took back the bundles. When I remarked that the papers would become damaged if not completely covered he startled me by saying words to the effect that he would just rip it a bit more, then "they" would put a new piece of paper around it. Hope springs eternal! Like fun it does! I ordered this particular bundle again some weeks later, only to find that the original tattered piece of paper was still around it. I had suspected this might be the case and had taken a piece of brown paper with me in case, which I used as the innermost sheet. So unless the Reading Room has caught up on its binding, and I can't really imagine that it has, I should think that some of those old story papers we love are in grave danger of becoming damaged to the point where they will be impossible to be bound at all without extensive repairs. And who would have the time to do this unnecessary extra work?

It was good to read that Dennis was able to add to his collection by using a photocopy machine. It never dawned on me that this would be possible: I just went armed with lots of blank paper in order to make copious notes, which I did. Possibly photocopiers were not in use there, or anywhere else, thirty years ago. I don't recall being aware of them there. However, I do remember a room where one could take a portable typewriter and presumably copy out any items one wished. Perhaps this facility was discontinued when superior technology took over.

* *

SPOILT FOR CHOICE

by Frank Unwin

There seems no doubt that, as youngsters, we were utterly spoilt by the quality and quantity of our wonderful juvenile literature. As we avidly devoured the lengthy stories by writers such as Charles Hamilton, Edwy Searles Brooks and the Sexton Blake contributors, for a few coppers every week, did it ever occur to us that we were living in the golden age of juvenile literature, and that we were enjoying vastly more than excellent value for our money. So much more, in fact, that it could not possibly last, and the distinctly inferior nature of boys' and girls' magazines of later years provided a marked contrast with the generous contents of papers like the Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee and Union Jack.

I pose this question because I recently retrieved my Chums Annual of 1927-28 from the loft, and I was staggered by its contents. I made a rough calculation and, believe it or not, this bumper annual contains approximately one million, four hundred thousand words of quality reading. No, I'm not joking, I may even have erred on the lower side. On top of this, there are twelve brilliantly-drawn colour plates.

A glance at the stories and other features makes it crystal clear that chums was intended for highly intelligent youngsters, and there is such an enormous variety of first-class material - sport, adventure and school stories, together with many splendid illustrations. There are several serials, including 'The Man from Arizona' by John Hunter, 'The Iron Pirate' by Max Pemberton, 'The Blue-Eyed Buddha' by John Sylvester, 'The Clue of the Two-Inch Nut' by Ernest H. Robinson, 'The Stars of Doom' also by John Hunter, 'The Dark Horse' by Sydney Horler, 'The Terror of the Bush' by G.R. Lindner Clark and 'The Mystery of Allen's' by Alfred Judd. Legendary cricketer 'Patsy' Hendren weighs in with 'The Final Test' and the equally famous soccer player, Billy Walker, with 'Suspended for Life' (did 'Patsy' and Billy really write these two serials?). 'Carson the Second' is a school serial featuring Greyminster School.

The annual contains innumerable shorter complete stories, many about school-life, and what are defined as 'Series of Complete Stories' by writers such as Robert Harding, Arthur S. Hardy, Reid Whitly, John Sylvester, Michael Poole and Clarence Winchester, not to mention an outstanding school yarn by Burleigh Carew - 'The 'Greenhorn' of Parham'. Thomas Adolphus Baxter is the captain of the Remove Form at Parham School, and his chums and study-mates are Bob Ogden, Billy Bensusan and the Honourable Dudley Edgar Croft - 'The Frivolous Four' of Study G, as the heroes were called. The inevitable fat boy is Fatty Roebuck. The 'Greenhorn' happens to be an extremely unusual new boy named Timothy Greene - 'the dearest and sweetest boy in the world, excepting you, of course, Tommy', as Thomas Adolphus woefully reads aloud to his chums from a letter from his Aunt Rebecca. This yarn is quite hilarious.

No Charles Hamilton, sadly, in this Chums Annual, but who are we to complain? On the contrary, we should consider with astonishment and gratitude the immense amount of excellent reading material in this marvellous annual, and thank our lucky stars that we enjoyed our youthful years in the golden age of juvenile literature. Value for money - that's for sure.

* *

SCRAPBOOK

Sports and Sportsmen

No. 1.—FOOTBALL

The whistle goes—away we rush,
A pack of breathless players,
Forcing our way through seas of slush
And mud piled up in layers.
We love to hear the welcome cries
Of "Goal!" and "Oh, well shot, sir!"
We all laud football to the skies,
A grand game, is it not, sir?

The pace is fast, the game is keen,
It is a thrilling tussle!
The forward play is swift and clean,
And shall commence with muscle.
The half-backs play with might and main,
The backs are strong and steady;
The goalie uses fist and brain,
And he is ever ready.

And so the stirring fight goes on
In manner grim and glorious,
Until the game is fought and won,
With cheers for the victorious.
And those who fought and failed to win
Don't nurse their sorrows after;
They meet reverses with a grin
And leave the field with laughter.

Such is the spirit of the game,
And may it long continue!
And may it ever be our aim
To strengthen nerve and sinew,
By taking part in mirth and frolic,
And rousing football battles,
While schoolmates urge us on with shouts
And whistles, flutes, and rattles!

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