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VOL. 41

No. 485

MAY 1987

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



during the 1920s, and as a very occasional Magnet 'substitute' writer). All of us, of course, have passed the age when we could look like the lively Lulu, or any of her contemporaries, but our interest in them is, I am sure, a signal that we are at least still young at heart! And our hobby helps to keep us this way.

MAYTIME MEMORIES

Danny reminds us this month that the coronation of King George

YOUNG - ANYWAY, AT HEART!

I hope readers will not think that I imagine I look like the schoolgirl who is so enthusiastically 'pecking' at the typewriter in the above illustration! I just love the gymslip and the machine, and the period which they evoke. The girl is, in fact, one of my favourite characters from The Schoolgirl of the 1930s, Happy Go Lucky Lulu, a creation of L.E. Ransome (better known to many of us as Ida Melbourne, as Hilda Richards

VI and Queen Elizabeth took place on 12th May, fifty years ago. It seems so much closer in time than this. I remember my parents taking me to see the coronation procession. The crowds were truly vast, but my brother and I, with lots of other children, were brought to the very front, so that we could have a good view. And it was magical - truly like something from a fairy-tale. To this day I recall the intensity of the colour and pageantry - the brilliance of the golden coach, the dazzling robes and, my most vivid memory of all, the pink and white complexions of 'the little princesses' who waved and smiled so radiantly to us all. (By the way, many of our favourite characters from the old papers were featured in stories celebrating public events and festivals; we are hoping soon to publish an article about these exhilarating and wonderfully nostalgic tales.)

The month of May has its own special flavour, and will always be associated for me with early days of reading the Magnet and Schoolgirl. Then, installed in a deckchair in the garden, I savoured with delight the almost unbelievably sweet scent of the May blossom growing thick around me whilst I wallowed in the adventures of my schoolboy and schoolgirl favourites I wonder if C.D. readers have special associations, concerning our papers, which are linked to certain months, or certain special public occasions?

OVERFLOWING

Discussion of the old characters and papers continues unabated, not only in the pages of C.D. but in national periodicals. Happily, too, the articles in question are not only interesting but accurate (which cannot always be said of press items on the hobby). The Spring EVERGREEN contains a tribute to Charles Hamilton and, as our regular contributor Mr. William Lister points out, the Spring THIS ENGLAND (from the same publisher) includes an excellent item on some favourite comics. Both of these publications are finely produced and illustrated. The DAILY TELEGRAPH on 23rd March produced an interesting article on the influence of the contemporary Grange Hill school stories compared with that of Greyfriars. Greyfriars is way ahead...

MARY CADOGAN

* * * * *

Danny's Diary



MAY 1937

The big event of the month has been the Coronation. On May 12th, King George the Sixth and Queen Elizabeth were crowned in Westminster Abbey. My Mum and I, and Auntie Gwen who is staying with us, went up to London to watch the procession, and in the evening we went and stood as near as we could get to the gates of Buckingham Palace. It was a dull day, so far as the weather went, with grey skies, but nothing could mar the wonderful colourful spectacle and the joy of the huge crowds. Long live the King and Queen.

The whole thing was filmed in colour (the lovely film has been showing in the cinemas ever since) and the new Television service sent out some wonderful pictures according to reports.

Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, who, everybody agrees, did wonderful work at the time of the abdication of the previous king, has now resigned. King George VIth has conferred an earldom on him. He is now Earl Baldwin of Bewdley.

It has been another good month in the Fourpenny Libraries, and, as Auntie Gwen presented me with half-a-crown before she went from us, I had no difficulty in buying what I wanted.

The Greyfriars S.O.L. is "The Boy with a Bad Name". He is Ernest Levison who was once expelled from Greyfriars. He went back there because his young brother was there after running away from St. Jim's. But Levison helps a black sheep, Hazeldene, who has got himself into trouble, and Levison's old bad ways are remembered.

The second S.O.L. this month is "The Live-Wire Head", by Charles Hamilton, a story of High Coombe, the School for Slackers. Jimmy McCann is the new Head who sets about getting the dry rot out of his school. I am not all that keen on this one.

The Third S.O.L. is "The Mystery Master of St. Frank's". There is a new master for the Remove at St. Frank's, but his odd behaviour provides a puzzle

for Nipper & Co.

Yet another Rio King novel in the Boys' Friend Library, and, as always, it is great stuff. It is "The Rio Kid's Revenge". A simply marvellous collection of tales of the Wild West.

Also in the B.F.L. we find another Captain Justice tale, "The Raiders of Robot City". A group of scientists are imprisoned by an unknown tribe of blacks in a hidden place called Science City. Justice and his band of adventurers set out to find them.

In the Sexton Blake Library I had "The Coronation Mystery" by Gilbert Chester. A criminal plot that could only happen under cover of the Coronation festivities, it gives Blake and Tinker a problem to solve.

There has been a big bonfire in the United States, though I must not joke about it for it is a tragic happening. The German airship "Hindenberg" crashed on landing at New Jersey, and burst into flames. 35 people were killed in this terrible accident. I wouldn't want to go in an airship.

All my papers have had a Special Coronation Number in the middle of the month, helping to celebrate this wonderful Royal Day.

My favourite stories in Modern Boy at present are those of Len Lex, the Schoolboy Detective. They are a bit unusual on account of the crime detection element in each one, but also the stories are set round the Fifth Form at Oakshott, so the boys are rather older than those in the Gem and Magnet. It really makes them more true to life if we paused to think.

The first three Len Lex tales are "Pie on the Warpath", "The House of Mystery" and "The Kidnapped Fifth-Former". These continue the story of Eric Tunstall, who was expelled from a Yorkshire school and wangled into Oakshott. If Tunstall should be expelled from Oakshott he will lose his inheritance. Yet this new fellow in the Fifth is trying hard to be expelled, so Len Lex decides he is not Tunstall at all. In fact, he is Tunstall's cousin, Varney.

The last two Lex tales of the month are "The Hold-Up Man", in which a masked and armed villain holds-up a bank and then gets away into the woods, followed by "Mystery Master" when a new sports master, Mr. Young, comes to Oakshott to replace Mr. Bullivant for a few weeks. It's a bit familiar when a disagreeable new master turns up at a school after there has been a bank robbery in the town. Maybe there will be an unexpected twist.

Other present series in Modern Boy now are a flying lot about Scotty of the Secret Squadron; circus tales about High-Dive Don, and African jungle stories about Tabu Dick.

There has been a bus strike going on in London. The men are demanding a 7½ hour day instead of an 8 hour day.

A lovely month in the Gem; the best for quite a while. Four of the stories form a series about Tom Merry, who has been much neglected lately by Martin Clifford. The opening tale is "Tom Merry's Double".

"If Tom Merry were disgraced and expelled from St. Jim's", said Goring, "I should become a rich man." "Oh, rot! I can't swallow that", said Clavering.

Clavering is Tom Merry's double. He is seen hanging about the Green Man public house, and so Tom begins to get a bad reputation.

HEIR TO MILLIONS



Fatty Wynn gripped the ball hard, took his run, and then sent the leather down like a shell! Clatter! The wicket was down! Last man was out, and St. Jim's had won!

In the second story of the series "Tom Merry-Kidnapped", Goring kidnaps Tom, and Clavering takes his place. St. Jim's is amazed at the sudden change in "Tom Merry's" behaviour, and at the end of this second tale, the double is expelled - as Tom Merry.

The third tale "He Wanted to Be Expelled" (this is the Special Coronation Number of the Gem), the Head gives the double another chance, and substitutes a flogging for expulsion, much to the double's annoyance. However, he persists, and at the end of the tale, Clavering, as Tom Merry, is finally expelled. And the school is assembled for a public expulsion. However, the real Tom Merry, who is a prisoner in a lonely house at Luxford, manages to escape at last. The real Tom Merry arrives in Big Hall just as the false Tom Merry is being expelled. This is the most thrilling chapter I have ever read in the Gem.

Next week brought "Heir to Millions", in which we meet Mr. Brandreth,

who was a great friend of Tom Merry's late father. It is Mr. Brandreth who has made Tom his heir, but if Tom should disgrace himself, the heir will be Goring. And Brandreth's solicitor told Goring what was in the will. Tom tells the millionaire where he can put his will. However, later in the tale, the millionaire aids Brooke of the Fourth, Tom softens his heart, and the clouds roll by.

The final story of the month is "The Mystery of Levison", and it is an echo of the Tom Merry series. Levison begins to get a bad reputation, and he spreads the rumour that he has a double just like Tom Merry had. But Levison, the scamp, isn't so lucky.

And Levison, of course, is in the lovely old Greyfriars tales at the back of the Gem. I thought this might be the tale where Levison was originally expelled from Greyfriars, but it wasn't. At the end of it Wharton rescues Levison from Black Pike, and, back at Greyfriars, Levison seems to be showing signs of better things. The next Greyfriars tales at the back of the Gem are "Bunter, the Hypnotist", and "Bunter, the Thought-Reader". Gorgeous reading.

There is a new Agatha Christie book in the shops this month. It stars my favourite detective, Hercule Poirot, and it is called "Death on the Nile". Doug bought it for 7/6, and he has let me read it. Doug has a lot of Christie books in his bedroom now.

In the local cinemas we started off the month with Douglas Fairbank Junr. in "Accused" and George Arliss in "His Lordship".

A Musical I liked a lot was "The Big Broadcast of 1937". It was only a slight plot on which is hung a good many American variety stage acts including Jack Benny, George Burns and Gracie Allen. One that I found rather heavy-going was Richard Tauber in "Land Without Music".

I went with a school party to see "Romeo and Juliet" but I found it a bit dull. It has a huge cast of famous names, with Leslie Howard and Norman Shearer who were rather old for playing the title roles. But it was better than class.

"Sanders of the River" with Paul Robeson was pretty good, and an exciting little thriller in the same programme was Warner Oland in "Charlie Chan at the Race Track".

One that Mum and I both enjoyed very much was "Craig's Wife" starring Rosalind Russell and John Boles, about a very house-proud woman who put her home before her husband. But only mildly interesting was "College Holiday" which had a few good songs and starred, once again, Jack Benny with Burns and Allen.

Early in the month a crowded train from the Cup Final was in collision with a goods train at Millers Dale, Derby. A few people were injured in the smash which might have been much worse.

The first three weeks of the month in the marvellous Magnet carried on with the series about the holiday at Seahill Park, with a rascally Italian out to get the N'gomo Concessions from Mr. Vernon-Smith. In the opening story "The Bounder's Peril" the Bounder is kidnapped, and the price of his life is that Concession which the murderous Italian is seeking.

The series continued in exciting strain in "The Trail in the Sand", which really winds up the story, but there is a truly delightful sequel to it all in the story in the Coronation Number entitled "Billy Bunter's Coronation Party". Bunter is boasting quite untruthfully about "his friend, Lord Trant". But nobody

is more astounded than the Owl when Bunter is invited to take his friends to Lord Trant's party to celebrate the Coronation - and Bunter is the guest of honour. This one is a truly splendid Magnet tale.

Then came a rarity these days - a single story. "Coker the Conqueror" is a Coker romp of high quality with Coker bending over in the quad to take "six" from Wingate.

Final of the month "The Feud with Cliff House" is the start of another new series. This one concerns a row which develops between the Famous Five and their girl friends at Cliff House. It is a big shock for Harry Wharton & Co. when the girls pass them in the street with their noses in the air.

And that's the end of my Coronation month. God Save the King.

- - -

ERIC FAYNE comments on this month's DANNY'S DIARY

Schoolboys' Own Library No. 298 "The Boy with a Bad Name" comprised the second half of the 7-story Levison Minor series in the Magnet of the early summer of 1923. S.O.L. No. 299 "The Live-Wire Head" comprised about half a dozen stories of the School for Slackers series from the Modern Boy of June and July 1935.

B.F.L. No. 574 "The Rio Kid's Revenge" came, of course, originally from the Popular of 1929. It had been published before also in the B.F.L. in June 1931. It is ample evidence of the popularity of these Wild West stories.

"Tom Merry's Double" of the Gem in 1937 had been "A Dangerous Double" in April 1914. The next story of the series, "Tom Merry-Kidnapped" in 1937 had been "A Change of Identity" in 1914. The third tale, "He Wanted to be Expelled" in 1937 had been the lovely "Brought to Book" in 1914.

"Heir to Millions" in 1937, the final story of the series, had been "Heir to Millions" in 1914, when it had been separated from the main series by a single story on some other theme. Final of the month in the 1937 Gem, "The Mystery of Levison" was an echo of the Tom Merry series. It was entitled "Levison's Double" but it did not appear in the blue Gem till a year later, the Spring of 1915.

I recall a little episode in connection with "He Wanted to be Expelled", the blue Gem story published in 1937. It was the Coronation issue of the Gem. I bought it on Surbiton station on the Tuesday, 11th May - the Gem came out early that week owing to the Wednesday being Coronation Day. That Tuesday evening I went to the Tocadero Cinema at Elephant & Castle, with a friend, and with that Gem in my pocket.

On the stage there was a mind-reading act - worked by some clever type of code, of course. The man in the act came and took things from people in the audience, and the girl on the stage, by her "mind reading" called out what they were. I gave him my copy of the Gem. "What have I here?" asked the man. "Child's paper!" came the immediate reply from the stage. I remember blushing. "Ask her what the paper's name is", I said to the man. "What is the name of the paper?" he called out. "The paper is named the Gem", came the reply from the stage.

So it is 50 years since the airship Hindenberg went up in flames on trying to land at New Jersey. About ten years ago the event was dramatised in a rather poor film "The Hindenberg" in which the cause of the disaster was sabotage. So far as I am aware, there was no suggestion of sabotage in the real life event.

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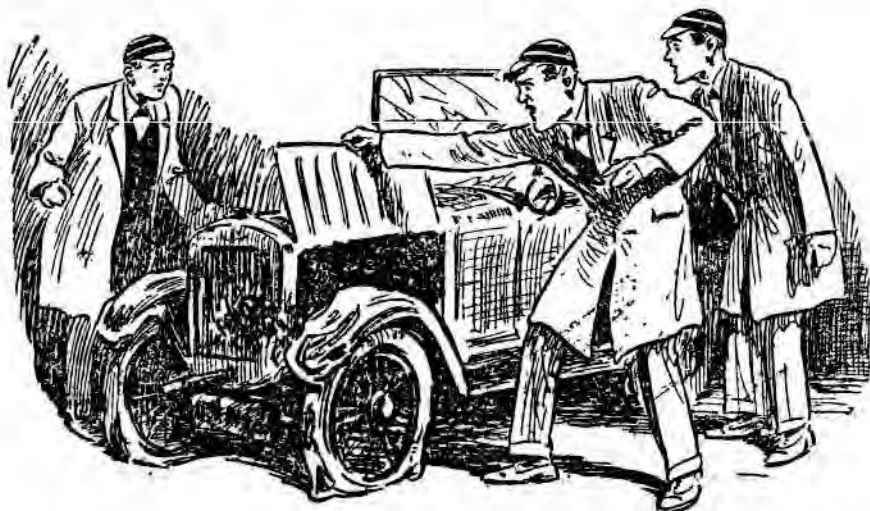


ALWAYS THE BRIDESMAID - BUT NEVER THE BRIDE?

by W.O.G. Lofts

Part 9

The character and popularity of Edward Oswald Handforth, I have always found intriguing, and I once wrote for Fleetway House the whole history of the junior. Even amongst St. Frank's fans it seems a case of either one liking him, or not. The late Jack Wood, a former editor of this column, told me years ago that he detested the Remove junior, and it was in his opinion his dominance in the stories that gradually killed the Lee off. On the other hand the late Mrs. Ross Story doted on 'Handy'. In her view the 'Walter Church' series 76-79 was one of the most moving and touching series ever penned by a writer of school fiction. As a Greyfriars reader, I must confess that he always reminds me of Horace Coker of the Fifth. He was big and something of a blundering chump. He was fond of punching noses, had a loud voice, and had two chums (like Potter and Green) in Walter Church and Arnold McClure. He was described as being ugly, and aggressive in nature. On the other hand he had good qualities, being kind and generous (as Potter and Green would agree - about Coker). However, unlike Coker, who could not play marbles or know one end of a cricket bat from another, Handforth could play games with some degree of skill, and was goalie in the Remove Eleven. Again, like Coker, he always thought he should have been Captain of his Form - instead of 'Nipper'. However to be fair to Edwy Searles Brooks he did in



Handforth raised the battered flap of the still more battered Austin Seven. Next moment he uttered a terrific roar. The car's engine was conspicuous only by its absence !

time develop the character more and more away from the 'Coker' image – until he became more like a normal boy in the St. Franks Remove.

Alfred Edgar did not stay editor of The Nelson Lee Library for long. Far from happy with disputes of policy with Edwy Searles Brooks, he was never at ease or all that familiar with school story writing (one of the few types of fiction he never wrote) and so, in 1930, he was transferred to the paper 'Pluck'.

The next editor is believed to be H.T. (Jimmy) Caudwell, when, by this time, The Nelson Lee Library never had an office to itself. H.W. Twyman remembers Caudwell editing it, with a single desk in an office, and pushed up against a corner of the room along with other minor papers. According again to Twyman, 'Jimmy' was glad when shortly afterwards he moved over to the firm of Odhams, where later on he created and edited the 'Modern Wonder'.

RANDOM THOUGHTS ON PEN-NAMES

by C.H. Churchill

In the January C.D. I observed in the notes on the Midland Club meeting that Charles Hamilton was reputed to have used ten pen-names in his writing career. This caused me to wonder about

E.S. Brooks, so I resorted to our late friend Bob Blythe's Bibliography of his writings. I see that Bob listed twenty-one names used by Mr. Brooks, in addition to which he wrote thirty-four Gem stories under the name of Martin Clifford, and eighteen Magnet ones under the name of Frank Richards. The Gem tales were published between 1910 and 1930, while the Magnet ones appeared in the period 1913 to 1917. Many of these stories were repeated in the Popular from 1917 to 1924.

In addition to the above there was an odd case in Gem No. 343 dated September 5th, 1914, "The Housemaster's Bodyguard". This was commenced by Charles Hamilton and finished by E.S. Brooks. Bob, apparently, never found out the reason for this queer affair. Did Hamilton become ill and unable to complete the story in time? I presume we shall never know now.

Turning again to E.S.B. and his pen-names, the main one used was, I presume, Robert W. Comrade. Many stories in the second new series Lees were credited to this name. Not that they were St. Frank's yarns, at least not all. Two of them from the Cub Detective Agency series were by R.W. Comrade, and were later rewritten and published by Collins in paperback and hardback issues under the name of Victor Gunn, "Nice Day for a Murder" in 1944 and "The Borgia Head Mystery" in 1951.

The former had a queer history. First of all it was issued as mentioned above in N.L. second new series No. 10 in January 1930, entitled "The Fateful Wager", and then repeated in Dixon Hawke No. 301 in June 1931 under the title of "The Circle of Silence". As to the "Victor Gunn" version in 1944, I would say that in this form I consider it to be the best of all the Victor Gunn stories, whether originals or those written up from previous stories in the U.J., etc.

I like finding out "odd" things, so here is another one. In 1920 D.F. Library 4d. issue (monthly ones) No. 514 contained a story of St. Frank's by R.W. Comrade entitled "Nipper at St. Frank's". Why, oh why? It was advertised at the time in the Nelson Lee issues. It seems so odd, as if the publishers did not know what they were doing. Perhaps they didn't!

To me, to use many pen-names seems unnecessary. I suppose the big noises thought readers might get attracted if they thought stories were by new writers, but surely if readers liked authors well enough to buy their stories they would be attracted to other papers if their favourite authors were contributing to these. I

know Mr. Brooks used Victor Gunn and Berkeley Grey for his post war books, but he felt that adults would probably not buy these if they thought the author was just known for boys' papers stories. I think otherwise, as I would have rushed to buy anything by E.S. Brooks, and I would not have been alone, I'm sure.



THE LADIES - BLESS 'EM!

by J.E.M.

No-one could say that Sexton Blake was opposed to sex equality. Over the years, his case-book introduced us to a veritable legion of the fair sex, and their numbers must surely defy any complete catalogue. However, from my own reading and the researches of others, I have drawn up what I think is the most extensive list to appear in the Digest so far. (Needless to say, it covers only the "Golden Age" up to World War Two. The so-called "New Look" Blake of the post-war years occupies different territory - an area for somebody else to explore!)

Rich or poor, the Blakian ladies form a pretty exotic gathering. There are very few homely names among them and most Blakians will notice at least one striking omission, about which more later. Here then, in alphabetical order of surname, is that magnificent, if not monstrous, regiment - well, anyway, company:

La Balafree; Fifette Bierce; Biwi; Yvonne de Braselieu;
 Lossie Cameron; Nita Caraccio (Red Nita); Ruth Carstairs;
 Yvonne Cartier; Mme Clothilde; Mercedes Dahn; Helen Dal;
 Miss Death; Claire Delisle; Gloria Dene; Alysia Dennison;
 Camille Despart; Lady Marjorie Dorn; Lais Dowson; Denise
 Drew; Doreen Elliot; Kathleen Farland (Kitty the Moth);
 Farina; Isabel de Ferre; Julia Fortune; Marie Galante;
 Glory Gale; Mme Goupolos; Eileen Hale; Roxane Harfield;
 Mlle Julie; Conversation Kate; Nhin Kee; Elsa von Kravitch;
 Princess Lara; Fay Linder; Fay Lorne; Roma Lorraine;
 Kathleen Maitland (Broadway Kate); Judith Major; Muriel
 Marl, Vali Mata-Vali; Lady Molly Maxwell; Mlle Miquet (The
 Butterfly); Olga Nasmyth; Nirvana; The Orchid, Thirza von

Otto; Lillie Ray; June Severance; Jessica Slessor; Sandra Sylvester; Mary Trent; Cora Twyford; Lady Emily Westonholme; Sonia Yoseff.

The notable absentee from this roll-call is, of course, Blake's lovable housekeeper, Mrs. Bardell. One of the longest-running stars of the Sexton Blake show, she was undoubtedly in a class of her own, and differed from other female characters in almost every way. Most of the ladies in my list were young, fatally attractive to men and generally in possession of very high IQ's. A few were the victims of villainy, one or two were allies or agents of the law, but many - and usually the most interesting - were crooks, or the accomplices of crooks, or what used to be called "adventuresses". And they came from every class and climate. Some (Lady Marjorie Dorn and Lady Molly Maxwell) were clearly



"If you had a chance to run straight, would you take it?" demanded Blake. Nirvana leaned across and caught her brother's hand. "Yes - yes, he would!" she said earnestly.

very much out of the top drawer. Others, like the famous demoiselles Yvonne Cartier and Roxane Harfield, were fabulously wealthy (female "yuppies" of their day!). But the poor and oppressed were also in evidence. Nhin Kee was a half-caste of dubious background from Saigon, while Biwi was a poor Hindu girl, rich only in her devotion to Sexton Blake. And, of course, she was only one of his admirers. So many of these ladies, in fact, were attracted to Blake (and he to them), it is truly a thought to be pondered that he remained a bachelor for so long.

The sad thing for me is how relatively few of these fascinating females I have actually read about at first hand, and this is probably true for most Blakians. How many present-day Digest readers can claim to have directly encountered more than a dozen names in our glamorous roll-call? The reasons for this comparative ignorance are clear enough. Many of the girls belong to the earliest days of the case-book or, perhaps, appeared only once or twice.

Most Blakians will be familiar with long-running stars like Yvonne and Roxane, or even with some of the short-lived ones like June Severance, Olga Nasmyth ("The Girl of Destiny") and the unforgettable Miss Death. But what about the French spy, Roma Lorraine, or Iossie Cameron, the tough Scottish lass who got the better of Tinker in physical combat? And who was Nita Carraccio or Red Nita: some sort of anarchist? One would also like to know more about the exotically named Orchid. Without the valuable researches of some older and now sadly departed hobbyists, I at least would never even have heard of some of these characters. Only with access to full runs of the SBL, UJ and DW could we make contact with the earliest stars and starlets and, in practice, this must mean that many of them will be for ever lost. So we shall just have to make do with ladies like Yvonne, Roxane, Nirvana, Vali Mata-Vali and a handful of others. And surely they will be more than enough for any of us. They often came near to being too much for Sexton Blake!

(References: The Sexton Blake Catalogue. Personal correspondence from the late Josie Packman. Blakiana in Digests 331, 371, 385 and 398. Walter Webb also made at least one contribution on this topic to CD or the CD Annual but I have been unable to track this down.)

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WANTED: Books by Berkeley Gray featuring Norman Conquest and by Victor Gunn featuring 'Ironsides' (Collins), also the 'Grouser' books by E.S.B. (Harrap). P. GRIFFITHS, 21 HARCOURT FIELD, WALLINGTON, SM6 8BA.

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Original Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 1921, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1937, 1939 - £10.00 each, great condition.

Original Champion Annuals 1925, 1938 - £5.00 each, 1949, 1952 - £4.00 each. £1.00 for postage. Many Magnets at £1.00 each. Send S.A.E. to WATSON, OLYMPUS, 1 CARTBRIDGE CLOSE, WALTON-ON-NAZE, ESSEX, CO14 8QJ. Phone Frinton 78311.

PHYLLIS HOWELL - A FAVOURITE IN BOTH THE SCHOOL FRIEND AND THE MAGNET

by Tommy Keen



Phyllis Howell.

When I first read the SCHOOL FRIEND, way, way back, I was already a staunch admirer of Betty Barton & Co. of Morcove School, whose adventures were chronicled in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, but even in those early days, I found few of the Cliff House girls really appealing. Barbara Redfern was quite a good character, and the most suitable to be Captain of the Fourth. But Mabel Lynn (Barbara's chief friend), Marjorie Hazeldene, Dolly Jobling, and Clara Trevlyn were not by a long way as fascinating (to me) as Betty Barton, Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney, and the

other Morcove girls. A poor scholarship girl from Lancashire - Peggy Preston - appealed, and Augusta Anstruther-Browne, a real bitchy snob, was interesting, but the two girls who really became my favourites were Phyllis Howell and Philippa Derwent, Phyllis being my No. 1 charmer by a short leap.

She was a bright, vivacious girl, not so boisterous as Clara Trevlyn, but far more attractive. Personally, I found Clara an extremely boring character in both the SCHOOL FRIEND and the MAGNET. Phyllis was the Fourth's best all round sportsgirl, brilliant at hockey, cricket, swimming, and especially tennis. She did not star in many of the stories, but featured prominently in a few, especially in the SCHOOL FRIEND'S New Series (March 1925). Later on, she also even flourished as an artist!

Now for the big Phyllis Howell surprise. I had become an avid reader of the MAGNET, GEM, and SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY. As well as the shock of reading of Marjorie and Clara in the MAGNET, I found that Phyllis Howell's name cropped up occasionally, more so in the GREYFRIARS HERALD than in the Greyfriars story. Now, many years later, the mystery of Phyllis Howell has been cleared for me. She was initially invented by George R. Samways (as 'Frank Richards') in a BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY of 1915, the very famous story "School and Sport", and was then brought into the MAGNET stories. According to the

Readers' Letters of that period, she became an immediate favourite, and although a sub writer's character, was occasionally brought into Frank Richards' own stories (probably a little wrist-twisting here by J.N. Pentelow). During the 1920s however she only appeared in sub writers' stories, and by the time Frank Richards was back in his stride again towards the end of the 20s and during the 1930s, Phyllis was heard of no more in the MAGNET.

When the SCHOOL FRIEND finished in 1929, and the SCHOOL-GIRL began, Phyllis (with Philippa Derwent) was still at Cliff House, but now the setting, and players, were quite different and, therefore, for me, the charm of Cliff House vanished. I understand however, that during the run of the SCHOOLGIRL, Phyllis Howell and Philippa left Cliff House.

With her pleasant personality, long fair hair, and firm friendship with Philippa, Phyllis was always my favourite of the Cliff House girls. Thank you Mr. Samways for introducing her into the stories.

* * * * *

"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS". Reviewed by Eric Fayne

(Frank Richards, Howard Baker Book Club Special: £18)

This superb volume - a heart-warming item for any fastidious Collector - comprises 6 consecutive Red Magnets from the Summer of 1914. The First World War was only just round the corner, which adds poignancy for the reader.

What particularly strikes one is the great variety present in the six yarns - ample evidence of the amazing versatility of the world's greatest writer of school tales.

The title story is the opening one in the book. The reformed Vernon-Smith - he would never again be quite so attractive in Greyfriars history - invited the Famous Five, Hazeldene, and several of the Cliff House girls, to a day's outing during which they would cross the Channel to Boulogne. A beautifully-written story, mainly about Peter Hazeldene as a compulsive gambler - this time at the casinos at Wimereux and Coin. There is fascinating descriptive writing of the casinos and of the game being played - this time Petits Chevaux.

In the 1984 C.D. Annual, Roger Jenkins wrote a splendid appraisal of this tale, in a general survey of Hamilton's various stories on this type of casino gambling. After reading "The Greyfriars Trippers", the reader should turn to Mr. Jenkins's excellent article on the subject.

Next came "The Dark Horse" - in its day, one of the most popular and most remembered of all Red Magnet tales. This is the one which introduces Wally, Billy Bunter's Double, for the first time. Years later, the theme was to be extended into long series in both the Magnet and the Gem.

"The Shadow of the Past" - lovely old-fashioned title - brought the Pounder into the limelight yet again. The Bounder's "past" catches up with him in the

shape of Jerry Hawke. The sleazy bookmaker wants to keep his former dupe on the hook, as it were.

"Looking After Uncle" is amusing, but a little too farcical. Maybe Hamilton had been seeing too many Keystone comedies. The Todds' Uncle Ben comes to Greyfriars. He intends to select one of his nephews to accompany him on a European tour. Peter wants Alonzo to have the treat, but he has an idea that Uncle will select him, Peter, to accompany him. So he sets about proving himself a veritable thorn in Uncle Ben's side. In the end Alonzo gets the trip. Uncle Ben is fed up with Peter, just as Peter intended he should be. "Wun Lung's Wheeze", familiar to hardly anyone today, was quite a famous tale for a time. This is the one, with some quaintly eerie undertones, where Wun Lung is carried away into the sunset hanging on to an oriental kite with which he was experimenting. Entertaining, if unbelievable, especially if you can take seriously the artist depicting a Chinese boy with a pigtail and wearing eastern flowing robes, in an English public school.

Last on the bill comes "My Lord Fish", which introduces Mr. Hiram Fish, our Fishy's father, to Magnet readers for the first time. The Fish family is portrayed very much on the lines of the Music Hall stage American. In fact, the author was harmlessly anti-American until, years later, he met up with his Rio Kid.

A gorgeous volume. Everything about it - (the stories, the illustrations, the advertisements, the bits and pieces) - is lovely. And how one sighs when one comes to the end of it.

MAGNETS WANTED. I'm painfully trying to again collect a complete set of The Magnet, which I sold in time of hardship many years ago.

Should anyone have any copies, bound volumes, or even whole (small) collections for sale - particularly early issues - I am prepared to pay a good price. I must emphasize that I am buying for myself, not for resale; your treasures would be going to a good home!

DUNCAN LANGFORD, 11 HILLVIEW ROAD, CANTERBURY, CT2 8EY, KENT.

WANTED WANTED WANTED: Card Games of 'Biggles', 'Dan Dare', 'William', 'Secret Seven', 'Riders of the Range', 'Find Out', 'Sexton Blake', 'Noddy', 'Wizard of Oz', 'Gullivers Travels', 'Snow White', 'Dumbo', 'Pinnochio', other Disneys, etc., £5 each offered if complete with box and rules.

Pepys Party Games of 'Dan Dare', 'Biggles', 'Famous Five', £5 each offered.

Pre 1950 Comics 'Beano', 'Dandy', 'Eagle', 'Sun', 'Comet', 'Knockout', 'Thriller Comics', 'Super Detective Library', 'Picture Epics'.

Write to NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 EASTBURY ROAD, WATFORD, HERTS, WD1 4JL.



CLIFF HOUSE

By MARGERY WOODS

The question: What shall I be when I grow up? occurs to us all at some time during childhood, and no doubt it gave much cause for deliberation at Cliff House.

Some of the future careers of the Chums seem almost predestined. One of the most certain that of Mabs, within the world of the theatre, as an actress and possibly a dramatist.

Janet Jordan and Leila Carroll also would appear to have futures in entertainment, Janet with her father's circus and Leila in the film industry. Yet neither girl has the least ambition to seek stardom — Janet does not even wish any job connected with the circus. Despite this, Leila could be drawn into the exotic world of the movies, possibly as part of her father's production team, or in fashion design where her excellent dress sense would be a great asset.

Marjorie? Will the gentle member of the Fourth choose marriage, into the clergy, where her special skills and understanding would make her the ideal solver of the human problems brought to a vicarage in a busy parish? Or will Marjorie surprise everyone by emerging as a go-ahead career girl?

One thing is certain, our Bessie will be into something to do with grub. And it won't be anything so ordinary as practical catering. Bessie will become a creator of heavenly gourmet dishes. She will have her own TV series and become a cult figure. Her best-selling cookery books will be heavily hyped each year at the festive season and her cookery column will be syndicated to most of the leading magazines in the western world. Do I hear someone whisper that Bessie is incapable of spelling c.a.t. let alone cookbook? Bessie's snub little nose will turn up scornfully as she informs us: "What are editors paid for, but to iron out the insignificant details like an odd spelling mistake that may escape

the great author's eye of genius? So there!". So there indeed! But what of the others?

Babs, although she is a talented artist, could be attracted to design or publishing. One feels that Babs has other skills still latent.

Clara is not easy to predict. Her lack of tact could make enemies in some occupations. She would make an excellent games mistress, perhaps an Olympic coach, or she may choose to work with animals, for, despite her faults, Clara has a great love and compassion for all living creatures and she would battle fiercely against the perpetrators of animal suffering. Greenpeace could well find a staunch ally in Clara.

The enigmatic Jemima would have many options open to her and she would be capable of making a success of virtually any career she wanted. Intellectually, she is probably the most brilliant girl at Cliff House, and the only thing she would need to guard against is a slight lack of motivation which is brought about by a superb intelligence that is well aware of its own capabilities -- and also knows it does not need to perform tricks like qualifying for Mensa to prove itself. Research, politics, investigative journalism, medicine, forensic science, even the Law, are all careers which spring to mind for Jemima, but far out in the front line of choice must be the Corp Diplomatique. Either of the two great plums could await her. Washington? The thought of American reaction is quite intriguing. But even more potent is the speculation: whatever would the Soviets make of Jemima?

As for Diana! What does the future hold for the Fourth's Firebrand?

Surely she is born to be a Soap Queen. She possesses the looks, the determination, the abilities and above all the sheer glitz needed to star in her own top-rated series, where she could fulfil all her fantasies of power, glamour and high-powered stardom. She would almost certainly wreck several marriages on her headlong way, for if Diana wanted a particular man the fact of his already having a wife would be unlikely to worry the Firebrand. Diana's strange brand of logic would always justify her actions. Yet Diana's future could depend on her father's possible decision to seek a political career. He wouldn't be the first businessman to get the political bug, and being Mayor of Lantham could well give "Curmudge" the taste for power in a larger sphere. In which case Diana could find herself drawn along paths she had never dreamed of treading. Only one thing is certain; whichever path Diana chooses will lead to sunshine and storm, laughter and heartache and the centre of life's stage. For Diana will never stand in the wings.

There are so many more, Phyllis, Jean, Marcelle, Phillipa... and all their compatriots over at Morcove. I wonder what they became...

* * * * *

WANTED: Pre-War Thomsons, anything, exchanging Hamiltonia, Biggles and many others. Your terms met. Lists gladly sent.

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REVIEWS BY

MARY CADOGAN

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Some of the beautifully produced and extremely enjoyable books mentioned below might be beyond the purchasing reach of some of our readers. They are, however, well worth reserving from the public library if this is the case.

VICTORIA, Biography of a Queen by Stanley Weintraub (Unwin/Hyman, £17.50) claims to be the first life of this charismatic monarch to be published for a quarter of a century. As well as describing the complexities and development of Victoria herself, it conveys the historical sweep of her era, and a galaxy of luminaries bursts from its pages - Melbourne, Palmerston, Gladstone and Disraeli; her 'wicked uncles' from Hanover; her nephew Willy, the German Kaiser, and her wayward son - 'Edward the Caresser', amongst many others.

Still in the realm of the Royals, CROWN AND CAMERA by Frances Dimond and Roger Taylor (Penguin £12.95) takes a look at the encouragement given by the Royal Family to photography in its early days, and at the photographs which they collected. It is a large book of excellent reproductions of photographs, with a lively and informative text, which is designed as a catalogue to the

exhibition in the Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace. It spans the period from 1842 to 1910.

Superb photographs, this time in colour, are also a feature of THE ENGLISH SEASON, by Godfrey Smith, with pictures by Homer Sykes (Pavilion Books £14.95). Godfrey Smith, who has included Charles Hamilton's work in two recent anthologies, has a keen ear and eye for the English scene, which he describes in a witty and affectionate narrative. Next best to being able to attend Glyndebourne, an Oxford Commem Ball, a Buckingham Palace Garden Party, the Wimbledon Tennis Finals or Henley Regatta is browsing through the truly breathtaking photographs in this book. My favourite sections are on cricket at Lords, the Chelsea Flower Show, and the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. Nostalgic, and luscious!

SPORTING LITERATURE: An Anthology Chosen by Vernon Scannell (Oxford University Press £12.50) is an entertaining selection of prose and poetry on sport and Sportsmen covering everything from snippets of school stories (but not any of the Hamilton or Brooks schools) to Shakespeare, Byron, Betjeman, P.G. Wodehouse, Evelyn Waugh, Conan Doyle, Dickens and a host of others. Specialist sportswriters like Ariott and Cardus are also well represented, and the sports covered range from those which can truly be termed bloody to more palatable pastimes like boating, horse-racing, cricket, football, rugby, golf, bowls, tennis, mountaineering and athletics. Like Bunter, I prefer to frowst indoors and to read about all this hearty activity, rather than to join in. And what wonderful browsing it provides!

MYSTERY AND MURKINESS. Classic crime is again well represented in this month's reprints in paperback. Amongst the best of a super bunch of Dent thrillers and 'mastercrimes' are Nigel Balchin's A SORT OF TRAITORS (£3.95), which was originally published in 1949, and is set in post-war London, and Nicholas Blake's END OF CHAPTER from the 1950s (£3.95), which has a publishing-house background and is, in my opinion, one of the most atmospheric and gripping detective stories I have read. Dent also has reprinted as one of its Classic Thrillers THE BEST OF FATHER BROWN £3.95, a bumper selection by H.R.F. Keating of tales of G.K. Chesterton's resiliently popular, short, clumsy, shabby but astoundingly acute priest-cum-private investigator.

The name of Leslie Halliwell, for twenty years Film Buyer for ITV, has recently been mentioned in the pages of C.D. and in correspondence from readers, who may like to know that he has produced a stylish collection of ghost stories (A DEMON CLOSE BEHIND, published by Robert Hale in hardback at £10.95). Used to dabbling in the golden age of films, he now gilds the spectral story with surprise, as well as suspense.

WANTED: Various numbers of The Magnet. Must be in very good condition, not sellotaped or edges trimmed.

FR. G. GOOD, THORNES VICARAGE, WAKEFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE, WF2 8DW.

Tel. Wakefield (0924) 374009.

CAPTAIN W.E. JOHNS

by Paul Galvin

I will probably be proved wrong and I must admit I have not looked through all the copies of the C.D. or the C.D. Annuals, but I cannot remember ever reading an article on Capt. W.E. Johns. Perhaps this is the time to put things right, for certainly he falls into the scope of this splendid little magazine. He wrote extensively for 'The Modern Boy' from 1929 and also had stories published in 'The Gem', 'The Boy Friends' Library', 'The Thriller' and 'The War Thriller', during the 1930s, and 'The Boys' Own Paper' and the 'Girls' Own Paper' in the 1940s.

William Earle Johns was born in 1893 in a suburb of Hertford. On leaving school he got a job as a Sanitary Inspector and later began studying to become a Qualified Surveyor. In 1913 he joined the Territorial Army and had been in it less than a year when war broke out. The King's Own Royal Regiment Norfolk Yeomanry were soon mobilised, and for the next three years he served in the Army, and fought at Gallipoli. In 1917 he was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, he learnt how to fly, and joined 55 Squadron. Later he became a prisoner of war.

After the war, and when he had left the R.A.F., W.E. Jones tried his hand as an aviation artist. His work can be found in the Illustrated London News and The Graphic. In 1928 Amalgamated Press brought out 'The Modern Boy', Johns began to sell his aviation illustrations to the paper, and this led to aviation articles such as 'Our Air Expert' and 'What Plane Was That' by Flying Officer Johns.

His most famous creation was James Bigglesworth or 'Biggles', as he was nicknamed. Throughout the 1930s, the Biggles stories appeared in 'The Modern Boy', either as single stories or serials.



"BIGGLES"

The first few Biggles stories were originally published in 'Popular Flying' and were written for adults, so they had to be toned down a little for 'The Modern Boy'. Biggles could no longer kiss or hold his girlfriend in his arms, and swearing was definitely out! In one adult story Biggles tries to obtain some bottles of whisky from a French hotelier, but in 'The Modern Boy' the whisky became lemonade, hardly the same!

'The Modern Boy' was, sadly, another story-paper casualty of the second world war, but Biggles carried on in book form and occasionally in 'The Boy's Own Paper' throughout the second world war. The stories were so popular that Johns was asked by the Air Ministry to create a character to aid recruitment to the W.A.A.F., and Worrals was born. The first book WORRALS OF THE W.A.A.F. (initially a Girls' Own Paper Serial) was followed by another ten titles, some of which were also serialised in the same magazine.

Even though Johns was better known for the Biggles, Worrals and Gimlet Books he also wrote adult thrillers, romances, a juvenile western, a juvenile S.F. series, a gardening book (The Passing Show) and edited two magazines: 'Popular Flying' and 'Flying'. Johns died in 1968 at the age of 75. He was working on the book 'Biggles does some Homework' but only 12 chapters were ever completed. Rumours had it that Kingsley Amis was going to finish it, but these proved groundless, and the book was never published. He did leave four manuscripts, and the last complete book, 'Biggles Sees Too Much' was published in 1970.

Last year a successful meeting was held in Leeds for W.E. Johns enthusiasts, co-organised by three members of the Northern O.B.B.C. If anyone is interested in attending a proposed meeting later this year (probably in Nottingham), please contact me at this address enclosing S.A.E.: P. GALVIN, 2 THE LINDALES, POGMOOR, BARNESLEY, S. YORKS., S75 2DT.

Bibliography: 'By Jove Biggles' (Ellis and Williams: Now available in a W.H. Allen paperback).

With Reference to W.E. Johns (C. Stacy).

* * * * *

FOR SALE: 11 W.E. Johns hardbacks very good condition but no dust jackets - £12.00 post free. Some Firsts.

H. BLOWERS, 25 CHURCHFIELD ROAD, ROTHWELL LEEDS, LS26 0EJ.



NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

The attendance on 31st March of only 8 members was again disappointing. In 1987 the highest attendance has only been 9, and I appeal to all our members for more support. We also welcome visits from members of other clubs.

It was my birthday, and members sang 'Happy Birthday'. I was deeply appreciative of this token of esteem, but have arrived at an age when birthdays only remind me how old I am!

Correspondence this month was heavy, and Ron Gardner's letter was quite remarkable. We hope to see him in May. Refreshments were up to their usual high standard, provided by Joan Golen, Betty and Johnny Hopton, with Ivan brewing tea and coffee.

Your correspondent gave a rather difficult quiz, including questions on general literature as well as O.B.B.C. books. Geoff Lardner won the first prize of the Museum Press's From Wharton Lodge to Linton Hall, and some 1962 Collectors' Digests were also given as prizes. Geoff then gave a quiz on the Christian names of parents or guardians of Greyfriars characters, which Betty Hopton won, receiving a prize of an illustrated catalogue of books of interest to our hobby.

We meet again on 28th April and hope for a better turn out. As Carlyle says, 'Hope is never abolished, it is not abolishable'. So we go on hoping!

JACK BELLFIELD

CAMBRIDGE O.B.B.C.

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Keith Hodkinson on Sunday, 5th April, on a beautiful sunny Spring Day. Because of the absence of the Chairman, Edward Witten presided. The next meeting of the club was arranged for Sunday, 10th May, when the club will visit the Northampton home of Howard Corn.

Keith Hodkinson gave an interesting talk on, and demonstration of, stereoscopic photography and 3-D Cinema ("The greatest leap in 3-D History! Myriad wondered clear vision 3-D"), and, supplying the necessary spectacles, ran a series of 3-D films from the past.

After enjoying Mrs. Hodkinson's delicious tea, during which Edward Witten launched one of his theatrical Quizzes, we settled down for the second part of the programme, which was the showing on a silver screen of Keith's long and absorbing film tribute to, and history of the "Boys' Own Paper". Beginning

with examples of the "Bloods", etc., which the "B.O.P." had been set up to counter, Keith paid eloquent tribute to the "B.O.P." from its inception, throughout its long history, until its ending. The film gave the long list of Editors, Authors and Illustrators. Keith included many illustrations of its rivals, noted how it had been affected by wartime paper rationing, and also referred to its sister paper, "The Girls' Own Paper". He was warmly applauded for this splendid item, and congratulated on the great amount of work which he put into this.

The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Keith, and to Mrs. Hodgkinson for her delicious hospitality.

W. THURBON

LONDON O.B.B.C.

There was a good attendance at the Spring Bisley meeting held on 12th April, hosted by Roy, Gwen and Sally Parsons, with Jumble, the doggie in attendance.

Introducing the proceedings, Norman Wright in the chair called on Mary Cadogan to talk on two of the lesser characters of Greyfriars, Russell and Ogilvy. Mary also mentioned that the paper-back edition of Richmal Crompton, the Woman Behind William was now available.

A public exhibition of the works of Hamilton will be on show at the Ealing College of Education.

Chris and Duncan Harper, reporting on the Sexton Blake library, mentioned that several duplicates will soon be available for sale to members.

Phil Griffiths gave an amusing reading of Biggles' First Flight. Mark Taha conducted an excellent quiz, won by Don Webster. Roy Parson's quiz at tea-break was won by Cyril Rowe and Chris Harper. Prizes were awarded to the winners of both quizzes, and a special prize was given to Brian Doyle, on whose book Roy's quiz was based. Desert Island Books by Graham Bruton, was in a new guise, he only elucidating on three books, Guns is Guns, Ezra Quirke - The Haunted School and the Carboy series of the Magnet.

Hearty votes of thanks were accorded to the Parsons family. Next meeting at the Loughton rendezvous on Sunday, 10th May. A full tea will be provided; kindly inform if intending to be present.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman Keith Smith welcomed the fifteen members present on 11th April. A special welcome was given to Adrian Sacks and his daughter Vikki, and Joan Colman, who had visited us in the past and were now official members. Tickets were distributed for 'Daisy Pulls It off' to the ten members who would be seeing it on 23rd May in Leeds. Arrangements were made for a dinner to be held on 27th June; we hope this will be an annual event.

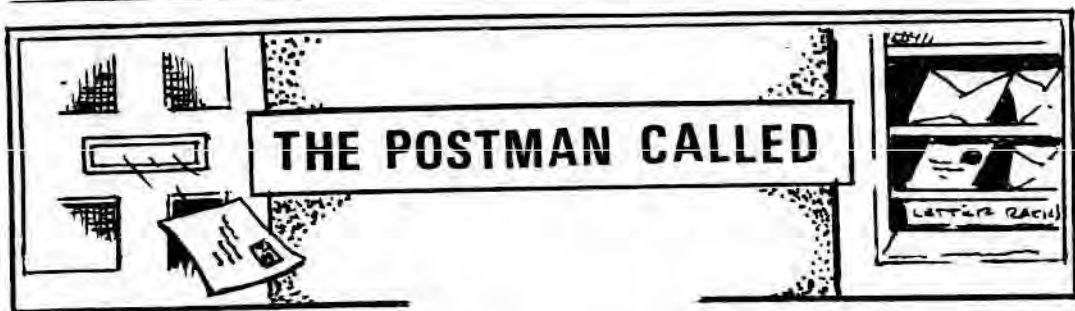
Some superb and now very rare 'giveaway inserts' were on show, from the old papers, including Magnet and School Friend. Darrell Swift reported on the forthcoming William meeting to be held in Banbury at the end of April. Paul Galvin and David Bradley announced that they had organised a further Biggles meeting for 3rd October in Nottingham. Arthur Fortune presented the Club with a recording of Mary Cadogan's recent radio broadcast on Richmal Crompton.

Our Secretary and Treasurer read a hilarious incident from Magnet 407 'The Jape of the Season', to the great amusement and appreciation of the whole club. After refreshments, Peter Plowman presented a novel and well-devised quiz based on the classic literature of our youth which was won by our new member Joan Colman with 100% correct answers! A very good meeting, enjoyed by all. Our full year's syllabus is available from the Revd. Geoffrey Good, Thornes Vicarage, Wakefield, West Yorkshire.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

SCRAPBOOK





BILL LOFTS (London): Curiously I was only doing some research last year on the A.P. Schoolgirls Annuals, and discovered that 'Lilian Slatcher' was the real name of the writer - or at least that was whom the story was paid to. I don't know the slightest thing about her, except that she was one of the lucky female writers who got a tale accepted and used in an Annual. E.L. MacKeag who edited so many girls papers told me that he used to in the course of a year get hundreds if not a couple of thousand manuscripts from would be writers, most from girl readers themselves. Unfortunately hardly any were up to the standard required, and in any case the market was saturated with the established male writers - some using up to a dozen noms-de-plume. He used to store these stories in a spare room next to his editorial office. I hope to enlarge on this in a future article.

Whilst I greatly enjoyed Bob Whiter's article on the 'Punny' for some reason I always thought that this place was somewhat outdated for Greyfriars, belonging to a much earlier era say in 'Tom Brown's Schooldays'. Was there such a room at a Public School? But then old Public Schoolboys say that Greyfriars was nothing like the school they attended. I could imagine a Punishment Room in the days of Judge Jeffery's - but not in the period of The Magnet's run.

IRENE RADFORD (Bridgwater: I liked the cover of the March issue (by Bob Whiter) very much... He mentioned how Smithy and Popper got out of the punishment room by climbing out by way of the chimney, but he didn't mention the time when Quelch did so after being locked in by Smithy.

MARK TAHA (London): I read Bob Whiter's article on 'Punny' with interest, as some of my favourite Magnet episodes involve

the prisoner turning the tables, as it were. Remember Bunter locking in Quelch in 'Bunter's Barring-In' - or Vernon Smith similarly giving him a dose of his own medicine in 'The Impossible Schoolboy'? On the latter occasion Quelch himself escaped from the room by climbing through the chimney - and nearly broke his neck as a result! This is, of course, aside from 'The Champion Chump', in which Coker, planning to lock Blundell in the room, locked in the Head by mistake!

E. BALDOCK (Cambridge): I much enjoyed Bob Whiter's article on the 'Punny'. All stories in which this 'grim and solitary retreat' are featured have always been favourites of mine. I seem to remember one series in which the egregious 'Owl' was incarcerated for his sins. This occurred at a very inclement time during the winter term and 'Punny', cheerless at the best of times was excessively so then - and cold. Among its extremely sparse furnishings 'Punny' was supplied with a few old but 'improving' books, hopefully one may suppose that the current delinquent would 'read, mark and be duly uplifted'. Not so Bunter. He - sadly it must be recorded - committed, the cardinal sin, the intimate sacrilege of wantonly destroying a copy of Dean Farrars 'Eric, or Little by Little' for the purpose of kindling a fire for his own selfish comfort - perfectly in character of course. This was followed I believe by a chair to help the blaze along, which, in its turn, if memory serves, sets fire to the chimney. I was amused by, and much admired Eric Fayne's neatly turned compliment apropos 'To Mary with Love', and felt that as a humble 'extra' in that caste of hundreds I shared a fragment of the reflected glory. Did some misguided person - who really should have known better - once say that the age of chivalry was past?

J.E. MILLER (Brighton): A first-class Easter C.D. - a real 'bumper' issue, to use a phrase much favoured by our old papers! Though it is really invidious to single out any particular contributor, may I say how good it is to see our retired editor still in cracking form with his own column, and Danny as lively and interesting as ever? Increased illustration and the new book feature are also especially welcome.

* * * * *

THE MONSTERS OF ST. FRANK'S

by Ernest Holman

I was very interested in William Lister's outline of the reprinted St. Frank's story in Monster Library No. 16. Thanks to the excellent service provided by Bill Bradford's Nelson Lee Library, I have - after very many years - 'got back' to the Monster days.

It would have been in the later Twenties that I became aware of the Monsters. I was able to read quite a few of them (thanks, of course, to the apparently bottomless (!) parental purse). Unlike other and smaller reprint volumes, which were limited in their content, the Monster was able to take many weeks' continuous N.L. issues at one go. If there was any editing, it was quite unnoticeable (unlike the S.O.L.) and - sixty years on - the larger print is most acceptable.

The two I have been reading are Nos. 2 and 15, telling of the early days of Reggie Pitt and Dick Goodwin. I do not intend to detail the stories - the regular Column contributors have seen and will continue to see to this side of St. Frank's. There is much whetting of appetites in these publications - especially the later ones - when reminders of previous issues are displayed.

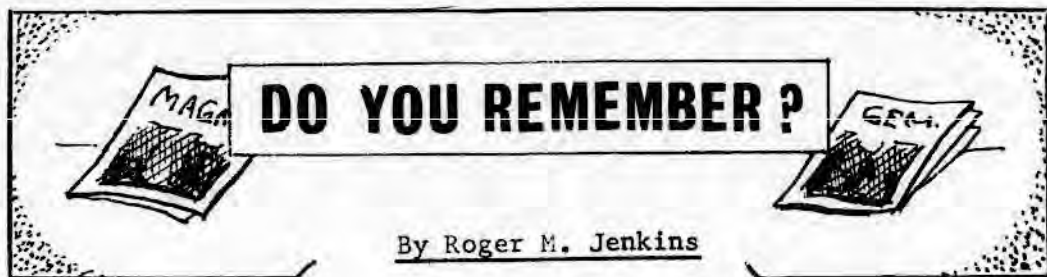
I believe it was Alf Hanson who designed a series of Monster covers based on 'what might have been' had the publication continued. Now that this Member has so sadly passed on, may I urge our Editor, when choosing some of Alf's efforts for republication, to give consideration to these Monsters.

* * * * *

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY - A COMPREHENSIVE INDEX

Our reader and contributor Cyril Rowe, of Church Crookham, has prepared a wonderfully comprehensive index of the Boys' Friend Library (all series). As well as giving the authors and titles of every story, he provides information about the original sources in the various weeklies. Before deciding exactly how this index might be made available, we'd very much like to know whether readers would like to see it printed as part of the C.D. Annual, or, if printed as a separate booklet, if they would buy it. (It occupies several pages of foolscap paper.)

* * * * *



No. 223 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 32 - "A Schoolboy's Temptation"

Mornington's regard for 'Erbert, the waif of the Third Form at Rookwood, was one of his redeeming features. 'Erbert, who was called Murphy on the school books, had been living at Dirty Dick's off the Euston Road when Mornington had come across him and persuaded his guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, to send 'Erbert to Rookwood. Although the waif naturally thought highly of Valentine Mornington, his patron was often forgetful of his protégé for weeks at a time.

Under the influence of Kit Erroll, Mornington began to give up most of his shady habits and took an interest in cricket, but it was too soon for him to change completely. So long as he could shine at cricket practice, taking wickets with his bowling, he was more than content, but when Rawson stolidly knocked his bowling all over the shop Mornington lost his temper and bowled carelessly, injuring Rawson on the shoulder. In the ensuing argument, he called Rawson a poverty-stricken cad.

All this constituted the classical Hubris of a Greek tragedy, the insolent arrogance that invites disaster. Mornington had always been purse-proud, very conscious of the fact that when he was twenty-one he was to inherit an income of £20,000 a year, a vast fortune in the 1920's. His lip curled as he watched Jimmy Silver mending a rent in his pink and white blazer ("Mending' clothes, what?" he asked staring) and he tolerated the company of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood, knowing full well that they cultivated him solely on account of his money. Wealth meant so much to him, and it was ironic that it should be Lattrey, the most evil-minded of the Giddy Goats, who, intensely irritated that Mornington should

abandon them in favour of Erroll and his influence, taunted Mornington with being a beggar and an impostor.

Lattrey's father ran a detective agency and Lattrey had been prying among his father's papers on his own account. Mornington later found out about the possible existence of his younger cousin Cecil Mornington who had been kidnapped by gipsies as a baby (a typical Hamiltonian use of this hoary nineteenth-century device), and Sir Rupert explained that he had employed Mr. Lattrey to seek for this boy, as it was his duty to do, although the Court had declared that Cecil was legally presumed dead. The boy could be recognised by a birthmark on his shoulder, and if he was found he would be the true heir to the Mornington fortunes. When Mornington later saved 'Erbert from drowning in the river, he noticed the birthmark and was immediately aware of the double irony of the fact that he had introduced cousin Cecil to Rookwood and had then saved his life. He was so enraged that he hurled 'Erbert savagely from him to the ground and left without explanation, but Lattrey ferreted out the truth and began to blackmail Mornington into associating with him once again until Mornington felt himself driven to desperate measures. In the end he wired his uncle that Cecil had been found and thus deprived the Lattreys of the reward.

How Mornington became fully aware of the true consequences of being a poor relation, dependent on Sir Rupert's charity and the scorn of his Stacpoole cousins, was related in later stories but, despite all the staginess of a somewhat contrived situation, this Rookwood series was in its way a tragedy of a high order. Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall, as the good book says, but Mornington was seldom wholly unsympathetically portrayed, and certainly the theme was never repeated in other Hamiltonian schools. Missing heirs were not infrequent but they never at any other time deprived permanent characters of their fortune. In this respect, at least, Rookwood was unique.

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