

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Vol. 29 No 341

MAY 1975

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Norman Shaw

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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GROTESQUE, MY DEAR WATSON!

I hope I am not developing mannerisms, but in the past year or two, since we were landed with our system of decimal currency, not to mention our new coinage, I have made use of the word "grotesque". And last month I applied that effective adjective to the recent increase in postal charges.

In case you haven't realised it, I was inspired by Mr. Quelch, who used it many times in his verbal exchanges with Mr. Prout. I confess that I have echoed Mr. Quelch, who, I am quite sure, would have regarded our metric madness as grotesque.

But Sherlock Holmes made some grotesque utterances long before Mr. Quelch adopted the word. In "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge", a story which appealed to me on account of its settings in Esher and Oxshott, a district I know very well, Holmes asked Watson: "How do you define the word 'grotesque'?"

"Strange - remarkable," suggested Watson.

"There is something more than that," said Holmes. "Some underlying suggestion of the tragic and the terrible. If you cast your mind back to some of the narratives with which you have afflicted a long-suffering public, you will recognise how often the grotesque has deepened into the criminal."



And, at the end of the story:

"It is grotesque, Watson," Holmes added. "But, as I have had occasion to remark, there is but one step from the grotesque to the horrible."

Was Holmes able to peer into the future as well as having the gift of reading the signs about him?

ENID BLYTON

I have never read any work of Enid Blyton, who was born in Josie Packman's East Dulwich, spent many of her formative years in Mary Cadogan's Beckenham, and took a post which provided her with four immensely happy years in my own Surbiton. Following which she became one of the most prolific and influential writers of stories for young children.

A biography by Barbara Stoney (Hodder & Stoughton: £3,25), recently published, is rather a sad little tale. It is well-written and fascinating, and the writer is on Enid's side, but one wonders whether it is quite fair to publicise the private lives of famous people in a way which, inevitably, removes much of their gloss. Not that there is anything particularly sensational in Enid's private life story.

Enid Blyton, Richmal Crompton, and Charles Hamilton have much in common as literary figures. They have all been dearly loved by generation after generation of the young and the not-so-young, and they have each suffered denigration, due, maybe, to some people's envy or political bias. And each has been the victim of dotty librarians who came to the ludicrous decision to ban these ever-popular writers in case their work should harm children in the permissive sixties and seventies. No doubt the banners would raise their voices in horror at any suggestion of curtailing liberty by censoring dirty films.

It must have provided a hearty chuckle for the pornographers on their way to the bank.

EDGAR WALLACE

It is just about a hundred years since Edgar Wallace was born, destined to become one of the most famous thriller writers of the century. I, personally, never cared a lot for his books, though I enjoyed many of

his plays. I fancy he was not very closely connected with the old papers which receive most of our attention now. I have a volume of the Royal Magazine, dated 1917, in which he contributes war stories, and he featured in the Thriller, contributing the opening tale "Red Aces".

He was ahead of his time. His gangs of criminals, his violence which was never distasteful somehow, and his kidnapping, were not really part of the stable and law-abiding England of his lifetime. Though he didn't know it, he was writing of an England of forty years or so later. All the same, in the world of Edgar Wallace, Right was Might and decency won in the end. Today Might is Right and the bullies always win.

Edgar Wallace is assured of a star place among those writers who meant so much to us when we were youngsters.

THE EDITOR

DANNY'S DIARY

MAY 1925

Mr. Horace Greely, the master of the Fifth at Rookwood, has already fallen foul of the Headmaster. Now, in "Dismissed from Rookwood" (in the Boys' Friend), Mr. Greely gets a damaged face from defending Sir George Hansom against thieves in the woods - and, without any enquiry, Dr. Chisholm dismisses Mr. Greely. In "Standing By Greely", Dr. Chisholm is sorry - but his regret comes too late. Sir George buys Coombe Manor House, to turn it into a school which will rival Rookwood, Eton, or Harrow, with Mr. Greely as the Headmaster.

With the departure of Mr. Greely, the Rookwood Fifth gets out of hand, and this is related in "The Fighting Fifth". Still more trouble with the Fifth in "By Order of the Head" (the order puts Mr. Greely's school out of bounds). Last of the month "The Fifth Form Rebellion". Mr. Quail, the new master of the Fifth just can't keep order, poor man. Finally the Fifth walk out, leaving Rookwood in order to join Mr. Greely's school. Great goings-on, and I hope it goes on for a long time yet.

The St. Kit's serial has ended in the B. F., and there is a new

series of tales about the Boys of the Bombay Castle.

The Wembley Exhibition has been opened for a second year. The King and Queen performed the opening ceremony. An additional attraction this year is to be a searchlight tattoo.

The big cricket series has continued in the Nelson Lee Library. Fenton, the school skipper, at the suggestion of William Napoleon Browne, the new leader of the Fifth, has decided to select his First Eleven players from anywhere in the whole school. In "The St. Frank's Test Match", three fourth-formers are selected to play against Redcliffe. They do well, and in "Playing for the First", Willy Handforth gets his chance. And, in the background, there is the mysterious Goolah Kahn, the rajah of Kurpana.

Next, "Out for their Colours". Nipper, Dodd and Kahn have played well, but the seniors are jealous, and a row develops between the Ancient and Modern Houses. Next week, in "The Three Substitutes", it is that fascinating character, Browne, who outwits the Modern seniors. By the end of the month, with "Buried Alive", things get very dramatic indeed. The Modern House gets blown up, but luckily the Whitsun holidays are at hand.

Two Schoolboys' Own Libraries again this month: No. 3 is "The Greyfriars Business Man" and No. 4 is "The Fighting Form at St. Frank's". The first stars Fisher T. Fish; the other one stars Willy Handforth.

At the pictures this month we have seen Betty Balfour in "The Spitfire", Norma Talmadge in "The Only Woman", Tom Mix in "Teeth", Thomas Meighan in "The Alaskan", and a very good British film telling the story of "Lorna Doone".

Cricket is in the air in all the papers. The opening Magnet tale of the month was "Playing the Goat", which was what the Bounder was doing. Harry Wharton dropped him from the junior cricket team, and so he joined Temple's team and played for the Fourth. But the Bounder found things far from his liking when the conceited Temple was his skipper. The curious thing about this fine tale was that it had a plot which was wasted in a single story. It should have been a short series.

Incidentally, the next one "Buck Up, Bunter" was No. 900 of the Magnet. Fancy, 900 weeks of Greyfriars. This was an amusing tale

with lots of laughs. Mr. Bunter is not altogether satisfied with William's progress. By a freak chance, he manages to win his father's good opinion. After this, "Pep for the 'Friars'" was a very silly affair. In order to let Dr. Locke have a holiday by the sea the school is put in charge of an American Headmaster, Mr. Hiram K. Parks. Mr. Parks has hustling methods, but it bored me to tears.

"The Feud With Cliff House" was mainly the result of a trick of Skinner. Lastly, "Sports Week at Greyfriars" was, well, just another sports week. It introduced Lord Mauleverer's cousin "Jimmy" who was a very energetic young lady and also a rather tiresome one.

Mr. Alan Cobham, the famous flier, has flown from Croydon to Zurich and back (1,000 miles in $13\frac{1}{2}$ hours) at the incredible speed of $74\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour.

The Gem opened well with "Gussy's Speculation." It was a warning to everyone not to have anything to do with the Stock Exchange, and it was interesting as well as amusing. Gussy came on a brochure for Jolly Roger shares, a brochure thrown away by Mr. Selby. And Gussy decided to get rich quick, so he got in touch with a "pusher", Mr. Blum. Luckily Gussy had his pals to look after him.

Then "The Dark Horse" was Mr. Lathom's nephew, Marmaduke, who put in a week or two at St. Jim's on his way to Eton. Marmaduke Muggleton was a great cricketer.

"Glory for Grundy" saw Mr. Linton causing Grundy to be the new cricket captain. "The Third Form Adventurers" was about Wally D'Arcy and his friends in search of a treasure. Last of the month was "D'Arcy's Dilemma", rather an odd tale. Gussy is out of money and Lord Eastwood has disappeared. Gussy has a sale of his clothes and his valuables, and Mellish spreads the tale that Lord Eastwood is bankrupt. But the earl turns up at last. He has been in Egypt, exploring the tomb of Tutankhamen. Hm!

The King has opened a wonderful new road - the Great West Road. The King performed the ceremony at Brentford. The new road will be the highway to our dreams and everything will be able to go there at double speed. The undertakers are very pleased indeed.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 3 was a hybrid of Magnets Nos. 381 and 383. S.O.L. No. 4 was apparently a rarity - a story specially written for the S.O.L.)

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

This month there is a nice article from Mr. Churchill, who, although a Nelson Lee man, has a "sneaking regard" for our Sexton Blake. He has given permission for me to add to his article anything which I may think relevant, so I will just say that there are a few stories in the Union Jack where Mr. Brooks introduced Nelson Lee and Nipper. For the sake of those good friends who may not have the information, here is a list of these tales: Union Jack Nos. 768, 771, 774, 777, 781, 784, 786, 788, 793, 796, 799, 810, 859, 870. With regard to the Sexton Blake Library tales which appeared in the later Nelson Lee Library, these were definitely reprints with the names of Nelson Lee and Nipper substituted for Blake and Tinker. None of them were by E. S. Brooks, the majority were the work of Andrew Murray. No wonder the A. P. waxed prosperous with all this "free material" available.

SEXTON BLAKE IN THE NELSON

LEE LIBRARY

by C. H. Churchill

Although E. S. Brooks wrote a large number of Sexton Blake stories published in the S.B. Library and the Union Jack, he never introduced nor mentioned Nelson Lee and Nipper in any of them as far as I am aware. However, in his earlier stories in the N.L. Library, he did occasionally bring in Sexton Blake and Tinker even if only a mention of them was made.

The only time I recollect they both appeared in a story was in OS No. 226, "The Mystery of Reed's Wharf" dated 4.10.19. In this tale Nelson Lee was investigating the disappearance of Tregellis West and succeeded in getting himself captured by the crooks. This was while St. Frank's was temporarily transferred to the Turret College in Holborn. Nipper, rather at his wits end, appealed to Sexton Blake for help so the Baker Street detective, with the help of Tinker, gave Nipper a hand in the matter. This resulted in their taking part in an exciting chase down the river Thames on a police launch in pursuit of a tug drawing a barge on which were Nelson Lee and Tregellis West

imprisoned in packing cases. Naturally all came right at the end.

A little later, in OS No. 236, "Exit the Tyrant", dated 13.12.19, Tinker paid a visit to St. Frank's and took part in the final episode of the exposure of the infamous Mr. Howard Martin. The following week in OS No. 237, "Dorrie's Xmas Party", it was stated that Blake and Tinker had been invited by Dorrie to join his party for Xmas at Cliff Castle. They never turned up and the reason was not given.

In OS No. 311, "The Hounds of the Tagossa", 21.5.21, Nelson Lee "borrowed" Tinker and Pedro from Blake to enable him to get on the track of Ivan Grezzi, the renegade member of the Tagossa, who was endeavouring to wipe out the members of the St. Frank's party who had recently returned from Mordania. Why Pedro was needed when Lee and Nipper already possessed their own dog, Boz, an able tracker, seems strange but perhaps he had been left at St. Frank's!:

There were two Sexton Blake serials in the Nelson Lee, both by Sidney Drew. "The City of Masks", running from OS Nos. 537 to 552, Sept./Dec. 1925, and "The Calcroft Case", OS Nos. 557 to 567, Feb./April 1926.

In the second new series of the Nelson Lee about twenty S. B. stories, rewritten, appeared, presumably to try and boost circulation. This was during 1932 and January 1933, when the poor old Lee was on the decline. I have none of these at hand, but presume the names of Lee and Nipper were substituted for Blake and Tinker. This idea did not save the situation and the Lee "passed away" in the August.

COUNT IVOR CARLAC

by S. Gordon Swan

One inevitably associates the name of G. H. Teed with the grand Double Numbers produced by the Union Jack in the days before the Great War, and it is true that this prolific author was responsible for many of these splendid issues. But credit must be given to other writers who wrote some of these extra-length stories before the advent of G. H. Teed ... notably W. Murray Graydon, Michael Storm and Andrew Murray.

One such instance is to be found in the Christmas Double Number for 1912, being U.J. No. 478, dated 7th December, 1912. The title of this tale was "The Mad Millionaire" and it had one of the old-fashioned sub-titles "or, Delivered from Evil". This was a yarn of Sexton Blake,

Tinker and Pedro versus Count Ivor Carlac and was written by Andrew Murray.

The mad millionaire of the title was, needless to say, an American named Sheldrake Emerson, who had become estranged from his son "because he insisted on marrying a brainless chit of a girl in Chicago". Sheldrake Emerson, junior, travelled to Mexico to seek his fortune there and was reported killed in a revolution. His wife and baby son went to England and to that country the millionaire also retired, buying a castle in Cornwall and living in semi-feudal style.

Emerson senior offered his son's wife a hundred thousand pounds if she would hand over to him his grandson and renounce all claim on the child. When she refused, he employed Count Ivor Carlac to kidnap the boy. The master criminal did this in characteristic ruthless fashion by setting fire to the house in which Miriam Emerson lived, rescuing the boy and leaving the woman to die in the flames.

But Miriam Emerson did not die and, having made the acquaintance of Sexton Blake on a previous occasion, she sought the great detective's help, believing as she did that her son was still alive. Blake made an examination of the scene of the fire and came to the conclusion that it was the result of arson and that the child's body was not among the ruins.

The result of Blake's investigations led him to seek an interview with Sheldrake Emerson in Cornwall. The outcome of this confrontation was that Blake was ordered out of the castle. The detective determined to get in the grounds again and find out if the boy was in the building. In this enterprise he was aided by a local character who knew of a secret way into the estate by means of an old smuggler's passage through the cliffs.

Prowling round the grounds Blake encountered a bearded stranger who turned out to be Sheldrake Emerson, junior, who, having failed to make good in Mexico, had allowed his death to be presumed so that his wife could live on the insurance money. On the tramp through England, he had come to the place where his father had settled down and was playing an ironic joke on the millionaire by living on the eggs from his fowl-house, the butter from his dairy and the bread from his bakehouse.

When he heard from Blake that the detective believed his son was hidden in the castle, Sheldrake Emerson, junior, resolved to take on

himself the task of finding out if this was so. After Blake had gone he broke into the castle and found his son, but was shot in the leg by his father while escaping. He managed to make his way through the passage to the beach and there met the poacher who had shown Blake the secret way. The poacher took him to his cottage to attend to his wound.

Meanwhile Carlac was not idle. He had already formulated a plan for stealing the child away from his grandfather, who had formed an attachment for the boy, and demanding a huge ransom for his return. Carlac flew a monoplane to Cornwall, landed on the roof of the castle and kidnapped the child again. Blake, searching the grounds again for Sheldrake Emerson, junior, was captured by the millionaire's security guards and brought before Emerson senior, who immediately accused the detective of stealing the boy away and made Blake a prisoner in the dungeons.

In London, Tinker's independent investigations had led him to discover Carlac's connection with the affair and took him down to Cornwall, where Pedro struck Blake's trail. Tinker broke into the castle and he and Pedro were in time to save Blake from being shot by the mad millionaire. Pedro knocked Emerson down and rendered him unconscious, after which Blake took control of affairs. On the roof in the snow Blake found the tracks of the monoplane which Carlac had used in his assault on the castle.

How Carlac was eventually tracked down, how the kidnapped boy was rescued, and how Carlac adopted a desperate expedient to escape the clutches of the law -- all these events made up the remainder of the story, which had a Christmassy ending, with the millionaire being reconciled to his son and daughter-in-law and writing out a cheque to recompense the defrauded insurance company.

Incidentally, admirers of Mrs. Bardell would be startled to read in this story that she was a shrewish, bad-tempered old dame. No doubt Andrew Murray based this description on Murray Graydon's original conception of Betsy Bardell as an eccentric, rather cantankerous character.

Regarding Count Ivor Carlac, this criminal of huge physical proportions and ruthless methods was featured in no less than four different periodicals -- The Union Jack, The Sexton Blake Library, The

Dreadnought and the A. P. Nugget Library. In The Dreadnought he appeared in a serial entitled "The Great Conspiracy" in conjunction with two other notorious characters, George Marsden Plummer and John Marsh. This story was probably written by Norman Goddard, as it also introduced Inspector Spearing. In the A. P. Nugget Library there were several stories of Kew and Carlac opposed to Nelson Lee. Whether these were originals or converted Blake stories the present writer does not know.

For many years Count Ivor Carlac was associated with Professor Kew, who had been head of a London hospital (shades of Professor Moriarty!). The two met in prison and thereafter worked in conjunction in many stories. In 1926 Gilbert Chester wrote four tales about Kew; in the fourth of these he re-introduced Count Carlac. That was the last of this notorious criminal whose exploits were thus recounted by three different authors.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANKS

by Jim Cook

After making a small purchase at Mr. Binks I left the village tuck shop in a rather pensive mood and not a little puzzled.

Old Binky, as he was affectionately known to the boys at St. Frank's, had asked me to return a camera that had been left on his counter by two Chinese schoolboys from St. Frank's.

I was paying another visit to the old college after leaving London that was enjoying a very benign Spring morning. And so, I found, was Bellton. In fact the old village was looking at its best and even the old houses seemed to colour the joy of departing winter.

As I made my way up Bellton Lane and towards St. Frank's, my thoughts went back to the time the first Chinese schoolboy came to the school and the subsequent events that followed. That exciting period has already been recorded in detail and nothing quite so thrilling has occurred since, although life at St. Frank's continued to be surprisingly stimulating. Yung Ching brought with him all the ingredients of high

adventure that included a sea chase to China; a shipwreck and life on a desert island that was totally destroyed and later exploring a new world at the South Pole.

Thus my journey to the school was rather in haste, and arriving to see old Josh Cuttle gazing heavenwards in silent appeal, I ignored his call and entered the ancient house in search of Nipper.

I eventually ran him to earth in the Junior Common Room, where he was discussing the coming cricket season with several juniors who it seemed, fancied their ability to be capable of playing what Kipling described as 'casting a ball at three straight sticks and defending the same with a fourth'.

When the tumult and the shouting had died down I managed to speak to the Remove captain about the new Chinese boy and who had joined the ranks.

But Nipper shook his head.

He said there was only Yung Ching there and if any new boy would be arriving he would be the first to hear about it, which, of course, was true.

However, he suggested we visit Chingy and make a few enquiries. Arriving at Study R in the West House, we found Yung Ching alone, ensconced in an easy chair, his impassive features giving no hint of his thoughts.

I presented the camera to him which he admitted was his and we had to curb our impatience as he expressed his gratitude in true Oriental fashion for the recovery of the camera he did not expect to see again.

After which we began to solve the mystery of the other Chinese schoolboy.

Because Greyfriars College and St. Frank's are situated in different counties it is not surprising that contact between the two schools is seldom made owing to the sporting fixtures being confined mainly to neighbouring schools only. Greyfriars though did on one occasion visit St. Frank's for the final Round of the Dorrimore Cup in a football competition.

Greyfriars, like St. Frank's, can boast of one Chinese schoolboy and Chingy explained that he had invited Wun Lung, from Greyfriars, to

a Chinese meal in Study R for a Chinese New Year celebration.

They had met at Bellton station and on the way had called in at Mr. Binks for rice. Binks, who had twenty years of schoolboys, was very familiar with their needs and the goods he sold were weird and varied.

Later a meal was prepared which Chingy hosted his Greyfriars compatriot and also his study mates, Scott and Doyle.

According to Yung Ching both Scott and Doyle had declared they had never tasted food so delightfully appetising. And Wun Lung had departed for Greyfriars with a feeling within him that comes after eating in the style favoured by gourmets.

Evidently we had missed an exotic meal seldom seen at St. Frank's.

I saw Nipper scrutinising the menu card with interest. Chingy had set out the courses as only a restaurateur might. Nipper asked the Chinese junior the meaning of the figures "6 and 3" after 'Sour pork' and 'Chow Mein' and again after 'Fried rice'. But all Chingy would say was "Ting hao!" - very good!

It appeared Chingy wanted to regale his fellow countryman, Wun Lung, with a dish reminiscent of Old China and flavours in cuisine handed down through the centuries.

Thus in deference to his study chums Chingy had not written in English on the menu what Wun Lung would certainly understand. The figures 6 and 3 add up to nine. And in Cantonese the words "nine" and "dog" sound the same.

It was just an old Chinese custom and Yung Ching in his quaint table etiquette tried to impress the Greyfriars junior by a reminder of old delicacies.

Of course, the meal did not include dogflesh; at least I don't think so. Nipper found his dog, Boz, in the best of spirits. Perhaps the St. Frank's Chinese junior will now pay a visit to Greyfriars and participate in Birds' Nest soup and snake broth!

Made me think of Fatty Little and his enormous appetite. But I think Fatty would jib at dog and snake food. The fattest junior at St. Frank's has been known to "eat anything" eatable.

It has been stated the Eskimos have fifteen different names for Ice. Fatty Little has only one for food -- Grub!

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 128 - Gems 148 - 153 - Downfall of Tom Merry Series

Tom Merry was the first of Charles Hamilton's schoolboy heroes to suffer a change of fortune. Unlike Harry Wharton, he had no noticeable defect in his character, and so his downfall was entirely the result of external events over which he had no personal control. Even so, the series in Gems 148 - 153 was written with a sense of high drama, and it is one which has perhaps been unduly neglected in the St. Jim's saga.

The first story, "The Fatal Telegram", introduced a mystery which was not elucidated at once. It later transpired that Crooke's father, a financier, had induced Miss Fawcett to invest her fortune and Tom Merry's in an enterprise that collapsed, leaving them both penniless (but not Mr. Crooke - "I understand he has not lost any money. He sold out his shares before the smash came. It was fortunate for him, Tom, and I am glad he did not suffer as I have done."). Perhaps the most interesting social comment is the first of Charles Hamilton's reflections on the value of a Public School education: despite Tom Merry's academic and sporting achievements he was quite unfitted for the battle with life. Binks the page, who had just become rich, was behaving idiotically, but the juniors wondered if they would be just as idiotic if they suddenly became poor.

The series had the merit of presenting continually novel ideas each week, though the individual stories were linked together well. We were invited to sympathise with Miss Fawcett who had to move to a humble cottage with only three bedrooms and a single servant, and when she fell ill Cousin Ethel arrived and eventually took her to Eastwood House. Tom refused all offers of help and went to London to seek employment. Gem 150, "The Search for Tom Merry", presented the seamy side of London in a story that was Dickensian in its picture of squalor and mean crime. It is difficult to understand how Tom Merry could have become so utterly degraded in the course of a single week, and as it was admitted that his fees at St. Jim's had been paid in advance to the end of the term, it was all quite unnecessary anyway. In London he met Joe Frayne and Jack, Sam and Pete, one of the rare instances when Charles Hamilton borrowed someone else's characters. Tom was eventually found and taken back to Eastwood House for Christmas.

After that the series continued on a more even note, with Tom playing football for Wayland Ramblers and eventually becoming installed as master of the Third Form at St. Jim's. The behaviour of the fags towards their new master was described with an authenticity that still bears the stamp of truth today. Mr. Poinsett (said to be Tom's guardian's brother) arrived from his ranch in Arizona just in time to witness a fight in the form-room. After that, the financial troubles were over.

Of course, the series had a number of defects. The parts dealing with Miss Fawcett were extremely sentimental and made one wonder why anyone in his right mind would trust her with anything at all. The reader must have lost count of the number of times the juniors accompanied Tom Merry to the railway station to say goodbye to him. Again, it is difficult to see why Dr. Holmes and Mr. Dodds could not have placed Tom in some respectable employment instead of allowing him to sink to the lowest depths in London, and one wonders why it was Monty Lowther and not Miss Fawcett who wrote to Mr. Poinsett. When all these adverse comments have been duly considered, it must still rank as one of the most impressive of the early Gem series, portraying as it did a determined, proud, honest lad who refused to give up despite all adversity. As he later said to Joe Frayne, "Never lie, never steal, and never break your word." It is a pity that such basic honesty is no longer so widespread as it used to be.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 201. AN HOUR TO PLAY AND THE LAST MAN IN

Fifty years ago there appeared in the Magnet an excellent school and cricket story which provides us food for thought all these years later. It had the rather inelegant title of "Playing the Goat", and it starred Vernon-Smith.

One puzzling aspect of the story is why it was not extended into a series. There were all the ingredients for a good dramatic series. Yet today it seems to us to be an example of plot wastage such as is a striking factor of, in particular, many of the most outstanding tales of the blue Gem. Twelve years earlier, "Playing the Goat" would have

been typical of the best single stories of the period. Twelve years later it would have been extended into a long series with its plot stretched wafer-thin to cover, probably, too great a number of stories.

Some of the plot was familiar, but it contained much that was original. To start with, the reader's memory is carried back pleasantly to the startling and unforgettable rebel series of a few months earlier. The Bounder suddenly decides to believe that Harry Wharton's reformation is only make-believe. The Bounder is going for a merry time at "The Feathers" up the river, and he asks Wharton to accompany him. Here, in passing, we get the only slightly sub-standard writing in a generally beautifully-written tale. "You don't seem to realise that you have insulted me," says Wharton, with a pompous smugness which would have provided lovely fuel for the Tom Merry denigrators had the hero of the Shell made such a comment.

And when the Bounder issues the same invitation to Redwing, the sailorman's son turns crimson, and some of the standers-by look disgusted.

The Bounder is dropped from the cricket eleven, and "signs on" as it were with the Upper Fourth and with Temple as his captain. Clearly it could have made a great little series, but the main potentials of the plot were never exploited.

At once, Temple is shown as an utter fool. He refuses to play Wilkinson, who is a good cricketer, because he does not like Wilkinson. He doesn't use Vernon-Smith at all as a bowler. Then he sends in the Bounder ninth-wicket down, and, though the Bounder is capable of making a century, at that stage of the game there is nobody to keep the other end open. As a result of this one game, the Bounder's eyes are opened, and he returns to the Remove cricket fold.

If Temple (and, dare we add it, the author) not been so incredibly stupid, we could have had a marvellous series. It is surely very unlikely that Temple would have jumped at the chance of acquiring the star batsman and bowler of the Remove and then refused to use him in any capacity. What was wanted here was for the Bounder to succeed for a time in his treacherous purpose, and for Temple's initial delight at the success of his recruit to gradually become soured by jealousy.

So it would be silly to pretend that "Playing the Goat" could not

have been greatly improved by skilful extension, while at the same time we recognise it as a delightful tale and outstanding as it was.

A few comments from Temple highlight one aspect of Frank Richards's Greyfriars.

Says Temple to Harry Wharton: "You call yourself captain of the Remove; you've had the cheek to form a separate cricket club in the Lower Fourth. You fix up matches with outside schools, just as if you were a school eleven, and not a dashed Form eleven. Wingate, as head of the games, oughtn't to allow it, but he does."

So Frank Richards put into the mouth of Temple the very argument which would be used by anyone trying to prove that the games arrangements at his Greyfriars were a little absurd.

We had the First Eleven, skippered by Wingate. So far so good. But there is no mention of a Second Eleven and a Third Eleven, as there certainly would have been at a school like Greyfriars. Instead, the only other Eleven, playing outside fixtures, was the Remove Eleven which played all the junior games with other schools.

In real life, Wharton would probably have skippered the Third Eleven, and that would have comprised players from two or three junior forms when other schools were encountered.

Certainly, more believable was the arrangement at St. Jim's where Tom Merry's team comprised juniors of the Shell and Fourth and of both Houses.

Drawing up and arranging the fixture lists would not have been Wharton's responsibility. That would have been the pre-season work for the Games Master. And the skipper would almost certainly have selected his team under the guidance of the Games Master.

Most of us would not have had Greyfriars any different from what it was. But Temple's comment in this delightful single story should not be overlooked, for it provides material for much discussion.

* * * * *

WANTED: Union Jacks, Union Jack Supplements (both before the year 1926); Sexton Blake Libraries up to No. 85, Third Series; early Champions; Nelson Lee Library up to No. 92 (old series only).

H. W. VERNON

5 GILLMAN ST., CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3192.

CONTINUING YOUR TERM AT ROOKWOOD under Mr. Greely,
FIFTY YEARS AGO.

LOVELL'S REVENGE

Jimmy Silver came out of the school shop with Raby and Newcome, and glanced round for Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell had left his chums in "quarter" to take a book back to the school library in Little Quad; and they had expected him to join them in the tuck-shop. He had not turned up.

"Seen Lovell, Morny?" asked Jimmy Silver, as Valentine Mornington of the Fourth came along.

Morny grinned.

"Yes - he's been taking a wash in the fountain. He looked cross when I offered to fetch him some soap." And Morny went into the tuck-shop, grinning.

"Something's happened to old Lovell," said Jimmy Silver.

The three juniors hurried away towards the fountain. There they discovered Arthur Edward Lovell.

He was dabbing at his face and hair with a crumpled handkerchief, and his wet face was crimson. His cap was floating in the big granite basin.

"What on earth --" began Jimmy Silver.

"Where have you fellows been?" hooted Lovell. "Leaving a chap on his own to be ragged by a gang of Modern chumps!"

"Oh, you've been ragging with Moderns, have you?" said Raby. "I say, it's rather thick, ducking a chap's head in the fountain."

"Too thick!" agreed Newcome.

"Well, I jolly well punched them,"

said Lovell. "I fancy Tommy Dodd will have a prize nose to take into his dashed science class, and Cook and Doyle got some knocks."

"But why?" asked Jimmy Silver. "What had they done all of a sudden?"

"They cackled,"

"Mustn't a fellow cackle?" asked Raby with an air of quiet enquiry.

"Look here, Raby --"

"We'll look for them after class," said Jimmy Silver. "Moderns mustn't cackle at Classics."

"It was that old ass, Greely --". Lovell dabbed his face and panted. "That priceless ass, Greely."

"Old Greely butting in again?" yawned Newcome. "Well, he's always fussing somehow. What did Greely do?"

Lovell, in tones of thrilling indignation, explained. To his surprise and wrath, the three Classics grinned.

"Oh, you think it's funny, of course," snorted Lovell. "But I can tell you I'm fed-up with Greely - fed right up to the chin! Can't Dicky Daiton manage his own form without Greely's help? He's always gassing and butting in. He told Selwyn of the Shell the other day to give more attention to deportment - deportment, you know! Who but a priceless old ass like Greely ever used such a word? I wouldn't even put it in a crossword puzzle. And now to talk to me about slacking - me! Am I a slacker, I'd like to know?" hooted Lovell, with a challenging glare at his comrades.

"Nothing of the kind, old fellow," said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "Anyway, it's no business of Greely's."

"Well, he can jaw the Fifth as much as he likes, but he's not going to jaw me," said Lovell. "Nexttime he butts in, I shall tell him what I think of him. Who the thump is Greely? Priceless old ass!"

"What?"

It was a deep, fruity voice behind Lovell.

Lovell spun round.

Mr. Greely, purple and indignant, stood there, within a yard of him, fairly glaring.

"Lovell!" he gasped.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" mumbled Lovell.

"You were alluding to me?"

Lovell wriggled. Certainly he would not have told an untruth; equally certainly an untruth would have been futile.

"Yes, sir!" he gasped.

"Follow me, Lovell!"

With a lofty gesture of command, Horace Greely sailed towards the House.

Lovell looked at his chums.

"Better go, old chap," said Jimmy Silver uneasily.

"He's not my Form master."

"Better go, all the same."

Lovell nodded; he realised that he has better go. Reluctantly he followed Mr. Greely towards the House, like a little skiff in the wake of a stately galleon.

Mr. Greely did not head for his own Form-room; he sailed ponderously into the Fourth-room, where Mr. Dalton was busy with papers at his desk.

"Mr. Dalton!"

The Fifth Form master's deep, fruity voice echoed through the room, and along

the corridor outside. The fellows in the corridor grinned, and even winked at one another. Disrespectfully, Hansom of the Fifth remarked to Talboys that old Greely had his rag out. In such terms did Edward Hansom allude to his Form-master's stately wrath.

Richard Dalton, master of the Fourth, glanced round with surprise.

"Well, Mr. Greely?"

"This boy" -- Mr. Greely indicated Lovell with a plump forefinger -- "this boy of your form, Mr. Dalton -- this junior --"

"Dear me! What has Lovell done?" inquired Mr. Dalton, with just the slightest shade of impatience.

"I regret, sir, to have to make a serious complaint," said Mr. Greely. "I regret it very much. You will remember, Mr. Dalton, that as an older master, more - ah - experienced than yourself, I have sometimes advised you to --"

"Please come to the point, Mr. Greely. My class will be waiting for me --"

"Very well, sir -- very well!" said Mr. Greely with dignity. "I am not here, sir, on this occasion to offer you advice, much as I may think it needed. This boy Lovell alluded to me, sir, in my hearing, by an opprobrious epithet."

"Surely not!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"I have not taken his punishment into my own hands," said the Fifth Form-master. "I am reporting him to you. But I consider --"

"Lovell, have you been impertinent to Mr. Greely?"

"Hem!"

"What expression did you use, Lovell?"

"I - I -"

"Answer me at once!"

"Priceless old ass, sir!" gasped

Lovell.

Mr. Dalton jumped, and Mr. Greely turned more purple than ever.

"You - you applied such an expression to a Form-master at Rookwood?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"You - you see, sir --"

"How dare you, Lovell?"

"Mr. Greely was butting in, sir."

"Upon my word! Silence! Mr.

Greely, I apologize most profoundly for this insolence on the part of a member of my form," exclaimed Mr. Dalton, looking more perturbed and annoyed than he had ever been seen to look before.

Mr. Greely waved a gracious fat hand.

"I accept your apology, Mr.

Dalton. I leave the matter in your hands with confidence - will full confidence."

"Remain a few moments, Mr.

Greely, while this impertinent junior receives his punishment," said Mr. Dalton, taking up a cane. "Lovell, bend over that desk."

Mr. Greely looked on with plump approval, while the Fourth Form-master laid on the cane.

Six successive whacks sounded like pistol-shots through the Form-room.

Lovell wriggled and writhed and gasped.

"Now, Lovell, you will apologize to Mr. Greely."

"I apologize, sir," mumbled Lovell.

"I trust, Mr. Greely, that you are now satisfied?" said the master of the Fourth.

"Quite, sir!" Mr. Greely was gracious. "I fully approve. I do not always approve, as you know, of --"

"Exactly! Good-morning, Mr. Greely!"

"Good-morning, sir!" said Mr. Greely rather stiffly. And he rolled out of the Fourth Form-room.

(CARRY ON WITH YOUR TERM AT ROOKWOOD NEXT MONTH)

* * * * *

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 14. DYNAMITE - & THE GIRL IN THE MOON

Something happened this term to make me realise that the days of the silent cinema were running out. In the middle of the term I had a M. C. M. film booked: "Dynamite" starring Charles Bickford, Conrad Nagel, and Kay Johnson. It was a long film, running for over two hours. It was a talking picture, and, naturally, we were playing the silent version.

When it arrived, I carried it away to the re-wind room to prepare it for screening.

I found, when going through the first reel, that it had single perforation splits occurring every few yards of footage. All a single perforation split needed was a slight nick to be made with scissors, leaving a neat 'V' in the film edge, and this would pass easily through the film gate when the picture was screened. It wasn't necessary to cut the film and make a splice.

But my examination showed me that these 'V's' were necessary through the length

of the entire film (about 13,000 ft.). In fact, it struck me as quite impossible, and that the copy was worn out.

I rang the dispatch department of M. G. M. and complained. "Please accept our apologies," they said. "We will put another copy on rail to you at once."

When the second copy came in, I found that it was in exactly the same condition as the first one. Again I rang M. G. M. "Please accept our apologies," they said. "We will put another copy on rail to you at once." When the third copy came in, I found that it was in exactly the same condition as the other two.

It was obviously useless to complain again. Here I was with three giant cans of "Dynamite", and not one of them fit for screening. I had to decide whether to cancel the programme or not. It was clearly impossible to spend hours clipping 'V's' through an entire film. Yet every single strained performance - and there must have been scores of them - might cause the film to tear and break, or just jam in the gate. I decided to play the film and hope for the best.

I expect I used the first copy, on which I had already done a good bit of work. I stood by in readiness, throughout the screening - and it went through perfectly without the slightest bit of bother, much to my surprise and relief.

This sort of thing was quite unlike M. G. M., who had invariably sent out beautiful copies of their films. When they came direct from the dispatch department, each reel was carefully bound in a manilla ring which was sealed until the latest operator broke that seal.

Clearly the company was only

making a very small number of silent copies of their talkies, and these few copies were being worked to death. After the end of that term's bookings, there was quite a lapse of time before I booked from M. G. M. again.

Other M. G. M. films that term were William Haines, Karl Dane, and Anita Page in "Speedway"; "The Valley of Ghosts" which was a British Lion film released by M. G. M. as Exhibitors' Quota, and it was probably a "quickie" which I booked because it was an Edgar Wallace thriller; and two more M. G. M. quota films, Gibb MacLaughlin in "The Woman from China" and Bob, the British dog star, in "Scrags". Also Joan Crawford and Anita Page in "Our Blushing Brides", silent version of a talkie, which was the third of a trilogy of films to which I have already referred. It was dull and slow, I think, and nothing like so good as the earlier ones on the same theme. It was the last of them.

By far the most interesting film we played this term was "The Girl in the Moon". This was a German film, a UFA production, released in this country by Gaumont British. It had played a successful season at the New Gallery Cinema in London. At that time, the critics considered German films the elite of the film world. Artistically, according to the critics, they were miles ahead of any others.

"The Girl in the Moon" was on super production lines. I forget the story, but it had rave notices from the critics, the only mildly adverse comment being that, though it took over half the film arranging for the departure to the moon, when it came time to return they accomplished the return take-off with no trouble at all.

From First National came Doris

Kenyon and Warner Baxter in "Mismates"; Colleen Moore in "Twinkletoes" with Kenneth Harlan; Lloyd Hughes and Mary Astor in "Forever After"; Dorothy Mackaill, Jack Mulhall and William Collier, Jr., in "Just Another Blonde"; Alexander Carr and Ben Lyon in "Potash & Perlmutter"; Corinne Griffith in "Infatuation" (from the stage play "Caesar's Wife"); Colleen Moore in "It Must Be Love"; Billie Dove, Lewis Stone, and Lloyd Hughes in "An Affair of the Follies"; Alice White and Jack Mulhall in "Reckless Rosie", and Marie Prevost in "The Wanters".

From Universal came Ken Maynard in "Song of the Caballero", and from RKO-Radio came an Ideal production,

Syd Chaplin in "Charley's Aunt".

We had two new Laurel & Hardy releases: "Liberty" and "Wrong Again". A newcomer to our screen was Mickey Mouse. Our first M. M. cartoon was "The Plowboy", and other Mickey Mouse cartoons this term were "When the Cat's Away", "Karnival Kid", and "Mickey's Follies". Also two Silly Symphonies: "Hell's Bells" and "El Terrible Toreador." At that time, and for a great many years after, Disney films were released in this country by RKO-Radio.

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN
THIS SERIES SOON)

* * * * *

(Interesting items from the
Editor's letter-bag)

C. WHITE (Newbury): This year I paid 18p for four so-called hot cross buns. That is nearly a shilling each for a bun about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the size of the old penny currant bun. The 1975 buns, of course, were made from the usual formula of putty, shredded rubber, and sawdust. How different from the old days when I was a youngster lying in bed in the early morning of Good Friday, listening to the baker's boys chanting "One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns."

Happy days! How I loved Easter eggs, hot cross buns, fireworks, those Christmas stockings of net from a penny upwards, full of wonderful little toys. Marbles in the big ring in the road. Tops: carrot, turnip, mushroom, and then the big boy's top - the peg-top. And in the evenings, gas-lit streets, playing hide and seek, and "Dicky Dyke, show your light". And the comics - Chips, Butterfly, Jester and then Gem, Magnet, Cheer Boys Cheer, and Union Jack. I used to spend Easter and summer holidays on the farm out in the centre of Dorset - and, before leaving home I used to leave a long list of papers I wanted my mother to get and send to me. Breakfast on the farm was at 7.30, and I was

finished and waiting for the postman every morning.

All this was, of course, before 1916. The world has never seemed the same since. Sorry to have rambled on so - all over a Hot Cross Bun.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: By a coincidence, Mr. White had come across a letter of mine which was published in a national newspaper two years ago. Then I was complaining about those buns at 3p (7½d.) each. We don't pay a shilling for sawdust and a couple of hard currants. This year we made our own buns.)

BILL LOFTS (London): Whilst the majority of Boys Friend Libraries have been traced as reprints from earlier serials, a few still remain to be solved.

Unfortunately the A. P. records for B. F. L. are far from complete, or else all the mysteries would have been solved by now. Congratulations to S. Gordon Swan in probably solving one of the missing puzzles. I will at a later date try and find the exact authorship of the 1913 Boys Friend serial to establish beyond all doubt that it was by G. H. Teed. Why the B. F. L. should be under the name of 'Peter Kingsland' only the editor could answer. It seemed the practice to mask completely the previous authorships - in many cases which I would not care to elaborate. Certainly some weird, mysterious, and strange things went on in the B. F. L. at times, none more so than an anonymous story entitled 'Crooked Gold'. This was not only the very first Saint story (Meet the Tiger) but Leslie Charteris had never seen it before, nor received payment when questioned on the matter.

J. TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): The film article this month pleased me very much as there were two mentions of Anita Page. I saw her first in 1929 in "The Broadway Melody" and, later on, in "Our Dancing Daughters" in which she had an unsympathetic part. I also saw her later in "Navy Blues", mentioned in the article. From 1929 I had quite a crush on her and would go to any lengths to see a film when her name was in the cast.

MARY CADOGAN (Beckenham): Congratulations on this month's C. D. Lovely to see Bessie on the cover - and Augusta Anstruther-Browne at her most spiteful! And Leonard Shields pictures on the back cover -

so that brother and sister Bunter were both featured in this issue. It is good too to have a Rookwood story now - and of course all the regular features.

I am at present revelling in the BBC Fred Astaire series, on radio and television. Some of those old films - and stars - are like Charles Hamilton, in that we loved them as children, and in maturity find their charm even greater. How rare it is to find an equal sense of joy in many modern films or books!

JIM COOK (Auckland): I have a suggestion to make about the C.D. Annual. Could it be dispatched so that it would reach all overseas readers around Christmas? I shouldn't think there would be any necessity for it to have a deadline as late as it seemingly does now for providing you have the copy it can be published as early as September and posted off to long distant readers. Airmail rates being too costly, we who live so far away rely on seal mail and, in my case, I am lucky if I get my copy early March. The U.K. readers would still get their copies for the Yuletide since there would be no need for them to be posted until much later in the year.

Will you please consider this suggestion?

TOM PORTER (Cradley Heath): I was struck by Danny's remark on p. 8 - "It is a splendid novel which has everything a good detective story needs" -- reflected, "What does a good detective story need!" I thought of some ingredients and shall probably think of others after I've posted this letter. I would say that, amongst other things, a good detective story needs a gripping start that holds your attention at once and continues to hold it; a well-made plot with artistically constructed incidents; consistent and strongly-defined characters; atmosphere; tension gradually escalating to a climax with the identity of the culprit/s hidden till the last moment; and a thrilling finish.

* * * * *

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing same of BOYS' FRIEND - issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256. Good copies essential. Also Dreadnoughts, preferably bound volumes.

ERIC FAYNE

EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

Twelve members and a guest attended the March meeting to take time off from making the world a better place for machines to live in and turn to the delights of the Hobby.

Following club business and conversation of a general nature the members moved their attention to refreshment. Coffee drunk and a selection of sweetmeats, comfits and an Easter egg respectfully negotiated, everyone settled into their study chairs in a state of pleasant anticipation and well-being.

The second half of the programme included a reading by Ivan Webster from 'Billy Bunter's Hat Trick' and a recitation (from memory) by chairman Warwick Setford from an early red Magnet. Tom Porter of melliferous voice, passed around the eagerly awaited Anniversary Number (Gem 1623, twenty-six years old to the day, 'Glyn's Hair Raising Invention') and Collectors Item (the latest HB volume) for everyones delighted gaze.

Next meeting, last Tuesday of the month at Dr. Johnston House, Birmingham, when more books and papers will be on show and more good comradeship born of the Hobby will be evident.

- - -

LONDON

The zenith of the Kensal Rise meeting must surely be the two very fine talks by Leslie Morss and John Cox. The former gave a superb one about publishers and book publishing, which, at its conclusion, gave rise to a lengthy but enjoyable debate. John Cox explained his Three Desert Island Books. First choice was "William and the Evacuees", second one was the Bunter Court facsimile reprint and the third was E. S. Turner's first edition of "Boys Will Be Boys". John's introduction to the Magnet was the Bunter Court series and getting in touch with the Northern O. B. C. he was able to obtain the late Herbert Leckenby's copy of the Turner book. He particularly liked the Orwell

paragraph about the ageless Greyfriars saga and likened it to Jimmy Iraldi's piece in an issue of the Story Paper Collector entitled the Greyfriars Scholastic Shangri-La. Another fine debate followed this talk. On the whole, two fine efforts.

Back from location in Marrakesh, Morocco, Brian Doyle exhibited an Arabic Magazine with a coloured cover depicting W. G. Bunter.

Bob Blythe's 22 Voices Music Quiz was won by Norman Wright and Larry Morley. The former, however, got the anagram correct which was C.D. Annual. A most successful meeting for Larry and Gladys Peters, plus helpers. Next meeting at Sam Thurbon's residence at 29 Strawberry Hill Road, Twickenham. Phone 892-5314. Inform and bring cup or mug. Sunday, 18th May.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

- - -

NORTHERN

Saturday, 12 April, 1975

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened this our 300th meeting and Annual General Meeting of the Northern OBBC.

We have now sampled a variety of the rooms in the Swarthmore Centre and this evening we were in the French set room. One almost expected Monsieur Charpentier to walk in at any moment!

We began with the election of officers who, after thanks had been given, were elected en-bloc. And, in addition, our Vice-chairman, Harry Barlow, was elected 'Biscuits Secretary' (work that one out!).

The meeting evolved into a formulation of plans for our Jubilee Dinner to be held at the Mansion Hotel, Leeds, on Saturday, 7 June.

We take this opportunity of reminding our members and friends that applications for tickets should be sent in before (or as soon as possible after) 7 May. Please consult last month's C.D. (page 30).

* * * * *

ENQUIRY

The Vice-President of the Society of Automotive Historians is seeking an article on bicycle racing technique, written by C. S. Rolls (later of Rolls-Royce fame) which appeared in a publication named OUR BOYS' NEWS in 1896. Can anyone help?

WANTED: for own private collection - St. Frank's Monster Library, Nos. 5 and 11, to complete set. Good prices paid.

J. BERRY, 8 ABRAMS FOLD, BANKS, SOUTHPORT.

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EXCHANGE: Beezer No. 1. Wizard 2 (1937), 7 (1938), 10 (1939); Hotspur, 6 (1940); Adventure, 7 (1940); Skipper, 4 (1938); Rover, 1 (1937); Vanguard, 4 (1923-1926) - THESE FOUR ARE ROUGH COPIES.

WANTED: Dixon Hawke Libs.

MCPMAHON, 54 HOZIER CRES., TANNOCHSIDE.

FLOWER PATCH MAGAZINE: No. 17, now available, includes: W. H. G. Kingston - Hero of The Boys' Own Paper. How we started "The Gollywog News"; by Fay Inchfawn. 'The Clarion' Newspaper Story (Robert Blatchford & Co.). 17p from

ANNE LAZELL

127 TOWER ROAD SOUTH, WARMLEY, BRISTOL, BS15 5BT.

(Send 25p - and we'll send the John G. Wood Crystal Palace Lecture issue, too.)

FOR SALE: Popular No. 493: 50p. Gems Nos. 1092, 1093, and 1094: 50p each. Magnets 693, 1146 (excellent copy), and 1220 'Speedway Coker': 80p each. Magnet No. 469 (coverless and time-soiled) 25p. No. 1453 (rough) 40p. Stiff covers: Manisty of the School House (A. L. Haydon): 30p; A Schoolboy's Honour by E. Lindsay: 20p; Sir John Magill's Last Journey by Freeman Wills Crofts: 15p; Study No. 11 by M. Kilroy, 15p; Henshaw of Greycotes by I. S. Robson: 10p; Miggs Minor by P. Martin: 15p. Schoolgirls' Own Library No. 132: "Her Dancing Days in Mexico", by Denise Cowan: 15p.

P. & p. extra on all items. Write, with s. a. e. to

ERIC FAYNE

THE PSYCHIATRIST'S BILLY BUNTER

by David Lazell

"If Billy Bunter were in school today, he would certainly be classed as a compulsive over-eater, needing appetite suppressant drugs and tranquillisers", declared Dr. S. Rys-Pudden at the recent seminar on hiccups and associated digestive ailments, held at the University of Slapp Down, near Oslo. "Further, he would certainly need the assistance of a speech therapist. Careful examination of his behaviour shows that, at times of stress, he tends to lapse into a limited vocabulary of words like 'crumbs', 'scissors' and 'oh, lor'. His lack of ambition indicates that

the scholastic system has failed him, rather than Bunter failing the school."

I should explain to readers of this noteworthy journal that the subject under discussion was 'the Bunter syndrome', now observed in many western countries, and consisting of apathy towards studies, constant eating, and complete lack of interest in the opposite sex. However, in Bunter's case, this was not entirely true. To him, the concept of 'woman' was bound up with kitchens, cooking and hot jam tarts. Take, for example, the renowned Rorshash Tests in which large ink blots have to be interpreted by the patient. People suffering from the Bunter Syndrome tend to believe that the blots indicate jam stains, plates of custard, pancakes and dishes of stew. Indeed, according to Dr. S. Rys-Pudden, one psychiatrist was so 'turned on to food' by his encounter with the Bunter Syndrome that he gobbled all the blotting paper bearing the Rorshash Tests (and asked for more),

"Freud may have believed in fairies, but it was left to Greyfriars School to demonstrate that the underlying motivation of mankind is tuck. Bunter's contribution to medical knowledge was profound, and he was, in social terms, more of a success than the so-called well-adjusted students who were so often held up as shining examples," declared the doctor,

Why did Frank Richards, a philosopher at heart, perceive that Bunter had to be a rotund, rambling character - not unlike the fat boys of the Dickensian era? A patriot at heart, it is likely that the excellent Mr. Richards foresaw the new era of self gratification in which we live today. Sad but true. The ideals of manhood preached through the 'Magnet', 'Gem' and other contemporary papers were based on the old Empire mentality. For Bunter, the only white man's burden in which he was interested was the baker delivering buns at the school kitchen. Today, of course, he would spend much of his time before the school television set, tee-heeing at all the food commercials and licking his lips at the thought of sprees ahead. Alas, his long-awaited postal order would have been affected by rampant inflation, and been about as useful as shares in a cuckoo farm in the Arctic Circle. On the other hand, if he ran a mail order catalogue account (as so many people do today) he could avail himself of the HAMPER OFFERS portrayed in gay, alluring colour. As for his mentors ... well, they would have to listen to the

school welfare officer, armed with the latest psychiatric report indicating that Bunter, B. was under severe strain, and that the outlet of his anxiety was over-eating. No punishment, no pieces of chalk thrown across the room when his slumbers became too evident, no threat of lines ... just a recommendation that he keep to the dosage of the tablets prescribed.

In painting his picture of Bunter as a psychiatric patient, Dr. Rys-Pudden almost moved his audience to tears. In fact, he moved them to the canteen, as they rushed out as soon as the tea-bell was heard.

"The trouble with my analysis of Bunterism, is that it makes people think that they are hungry. In fact, like Bunter, they gobble away because the limitations of their intellect give them no other opportunity of expressing themselves. When he pinched other boys' tuck, he was only acting as he was impelled to do. He could not help himself. Poor fellow, he was constantly misunderstood ..." Now that there are proposals to erect a statue of the worthy Bunter at the gates of Eton or some other distinguished academic institution, it would not be amiss to apologise to all the readers of Greyfriars tales who have, alas, considered the fat one as merely idle, scrounging and no example to the younger lads. May we suggest that you start reading the stories all over again, interpreting Bunter as a suitable case for treatment?

Oh, and by the way, Dr. Rys-Pudden also believes that those cow pies were not essential for the diet of Desperate Dan. But the doctors are still arguing over that one!

"SPEAKING PERSONALLY" - P. G. WODEHOUSE - DECCA RECORD
CO. LTD. (ARGO ZDA 166 - £2.26)

"I had always supposed I was immortal - now I see there IS a limit and it will come fairly soon."

So we are told by the voice of P. G. Wodehouse on this record, made about the middle of last year, as he was completing "Aunts Aren't Gentlemen".

And now - well into his last novel (about Blandings and Galahad Threepwood) and so very soon after his recent honour - Sir Pelham Wodehouse has, in what would undoubtedly be his own words, "handed in his dinner pail."

Like the 'death' of Sherlock Holmes, it just didn't seem believable. Immortal? How else can you describe anyone whose one hundred works are always being - and will always be - read and re-read? With his own voice now available for listening at any time we choose, this old 'soldier' can never fade away.

Plum tells us of his own views regarding voice-recording. He is amazed that Edgar Wallace could rattle off so much by this method, when his own attempts were just "too awful. I sounded like a pompous clergyman." This was his own opinion after trying to start a Jeeves' novel in this way. He gave up after one paragraph!

P. G. reckons he started writing at about the age of five - before that "I was just loafing." His chuckles and obvious enjoyment in making this recording are very real indeed. He admits, for instance, his own innocence in telling a girl reporter from a Los Angeles newspaper that he had practically nothing to do in Hollywood. Very quickly, this statement became 'nation-wide.' It did, nevertheless, result in changes, for we are told that, from then on, people had to be at the studio at 8.30 or 9.00 every day. He was equally amazed at the 'trouble' caused by the broadcast from Berlin of his comedy items for American radio.

There are recollections by the score - he refers to his schooldays at Dulwich as "an excellent time"; he remembers his own Mr. Chips' (who has recently died at 96) - "Wapshot, Wapshot ... Wasn't your father in my Form?" "Yes, sir, and my grandfather." In particular, he enjoys the memory of a fellow internee who once followed him and a Reverend Gentleman around a prison camp, in the hope of hearing something of an intellectual nature. For his pains, the listener was treated to a deep discussion by the two men on "those rubber-heeled sausages served up for lunch."

Jeeves was named after a Warwickshire County cricketer (whose Club tie Plum is wearing during the recording session); Conan Doyle is praised for his 'other than Sherlock Holmes work'; Rudyard Kipling once sought Plum's views on the best way to end a novel; a legend was left behind after the young P. G. had left his bank employment, to be remembered always by officials when discussing the inefficiency of clerks - "but you ought to have seen Wodehouse!"

We are told of the work he carried out with Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern; of his lengthy scenarios that had to be prepared before a novel could be commenced; of the day his wife Ethel returned from a walk to say that she had bought a house ("where we live today with six cats and two dogs"); and of a lady seated next to him at a luncheon (whose son "has read all your books") who did not know what her family would say when they learned she had actually met Edgar Wallace!

Just a small selection of the many pleasures in almost an hour of P. G. himself, talking just as he writes, in that one and only style that we love so much.

There is a splendid picture of the author, plus garden and cat, on the front of the record sleeve, with further pictures on the back and on an 'insert'. This latter includes a list of his books, together with a reproduction of Richard Ingrams' contribution to the Barrie & Jenkins book, "Homage to P. G. Wodehouse".

Much obliged, Plum, for leaving yourself with us by "Speaking Personally".

(E. S. H. HOLMAN)

C.H. CHAPMAN The
'MAGNET' Artist absolute
whose breezy illustrations
depicted all that was —
GREYFRIARS

No 8.

