

STORY PAPER  
**COLLECTORS  
DIGEST**

DECEMBER  
1984

VOL 38  
No 456



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# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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## Round The Yule - Log With The Skipper

CHRISTMAS 1984

"Whatever else is lost among the years  
Let us keep Christmas -  
Its meaning never ends ....  
Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears -  
Let us hold close this day -  
remembering friends."

Those were the words on my personal greetings card some Christmases ago, and it has always been my favourite. For the real meaning of Christmas is about the only thing in this old country of ours which does not change as the years go by. So far, no Bishop has suggested that the baby Jesus was not born on Christmas Day.

It may come yet, but we can only hope not.

So now we are in December. The carol-singers are out warbling the lovely old Christmas hymns; the shops are full of life; the garlands of lights, strung across the streets of towns, are twinkling, and Christmas is in the air.

My favourite carol, from along ago boyhood, days, has always been "Softly the Night is Sleeping". It is, I believe, a Salvation Army carol. Whenever I see the Salvation Army band playing in the streets at Christmas time, or when they come round the lanes to play and sing near my home, I always ask them: "Will you play 'Softly the Night?' - and invariably they do.

I first knew it as a child at school, when the visiting singing-master, a Mr. Moss, always had it in our repertoire as Christmas neared. And later, in my own school, we always sang it at Christmas time. You have a sentimental old editor.

This has been a sad year, in many ways, in hobby circles. Many of the most lovely and the most loyal have been taken from us during the course of 1984. It will be a very, very quiet Christmastide for me. I shall be sad, but I shall also "count my blessings, name them one by one..." I reckon I may take down "The Mystery of the Painted Room" and the "Bunter in the Attic at Wharton Lodge" series, and read them over the days of Christmas. Like the lines which head this editorial, and the carol, they are old, old favourites of mine.

I daresay I may pause, now and then, to think of the author who was taken from us at Christmas time over twenty years ago.

I wish you all a very, very Happy Christmas among your loved ones, and know that the real meaning of Christmas will be alive in your homes. God bless you, every one.

### TIMES HAVE CHANGED

"Ah, senhor, but this country is not England."

Recently, that line, which opened a Sexton Blake novel, caught my eye. The story was "The Case of the Five Dummy Books", originally published in 1923, and then republished over eleven years later in December 1934, exactly 50 years ago.

"Ah, senhor, but this country is not England."

The speaker was a Portuguese. "This country" was Portugal. The listener was an Englishman named Granite Grant. The speaker was pointing out that Portugal was a country of riots, crimes,

violence, and assassinations. A place where anything might be expected to happen, and usually did. He was comparing dangerous Portugal with peaceful, law-abiding England, where anybody could walk the streets in safety, where anybody could go to bed in the knowledge that the British bobby was walking his beat and so break-ins and robberies were rare, where not even the most vicious thug would dream of carrying a gun. An England that was proud of its traditions and was happy to say of events in other lands: "It could never happen here."

At the end of the chapter the speaker had been proved right. A riot had broken out, there was a spurt of flame, and the Portuguese speaker lay dead.

It was all cosy and reassuring for the British in 1923, and was still so in 1934.

Something has happened since then. I'm sure that the story must be dated in 1984. Positions seem to have been reversed. How ever has it happened? When did we lose our way?

## THE ANNUAL

All being well, the new C.D. Annual will be following close on the heels of this issue of C.D. I hope that you are all going to enjoy our latest Annual. I have a feeling that you will.

May the Annual help to give you a Very Happy Christmas.

THE EDITOR

\* \* \* \* \*

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WRITE ERIC FAYNE.

No reply if items already sold.





# DANNY'S DIARY.

(OUR DANNY AT CHRISTMAS)



## December 1934

Another tip-top month in the monthly Libraries. In the School-boys' Own Library the Greyfriars story is "The Phantom of the Cave" which re-introduces that fine character Soames, and is an echo of the time when the Greyfriars chums went to the South Seas.

The St. Jim's story has Tom Merry accused of theft, and the result is "A Christmas Barring-Out". Actually, a barring-out is not really the ticket for Yuletide, but it's a well-written yarn which will continue next month.

In the Boys' Friend Library is a Captain Justice tale "Soldiers of Fortune". Also in the B.F.L. there is an Edwy Searles Brooks tale "The Crook of Mosquito Creek" which is a detective tale starring Nelson Lee and Nipper.

In the Serton Blake Library there is another grand tale by Pierre Quiroule entitled "The Case of the Five Dummy Books" which introduces Grant and Julie and is about a bank robbery. How the bank robbers got away with their loot is a big puzzle for all, though the title really gives some of it away.

There has been an alarming disaster in Liverpool. At a Church School, where the pupils were giving an end-of-term concert to parents and friends, the floor suddenly collapsed, and 200 women and children fell 20 feet into the basement. One woman was killed and a hundred were injured, some seriously.

There is another new book out by Agatha Christie. It has been a prolific year for her. The new book consists of short stories under the title "Parker Pyne Investigates". I bought it for 7/6 for Doug's Christmas present, and I read it first, and think it's terrific. I hope there will be some more about Mr. Parker Pyne.

There is a new Biggles series in Modern Boy. The opening tale is "Biggles and the Flying Camera". Next "Biggles Sky-High"

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Spy". Then, in the Bumper Christmas Number "Biggles' Xmas-Box". Next, "Biggles' Christmas Tree". Final of the month, "Biggles Carves the Turkey" Quite a collection of Christmas cheer.

Ken King has been going strong. "Phantom Gold" tells of Ken and his former mate, Kit Hudson, joining forces in a bid for the Crakerjack's Sunken Sovereigns. Next, "Danny the Diver", when only the fat cooky-boy can solve the mystery of the Treasure.

Finally, in the Christmas Number, the last of the present series of King of the Island tales: "The Cooky-Boy's Haul", with the promoted Danny rifling Davy Jones' Treasury. A surprise ending, too.

Grey Shadow and Captain Justice have been pegging on all the month (Justice is in the bowels of the earth) and there is a new series "Percy in Search of America" by Jack Holt. (I wonder if he is the film star.)

A regular Air Mail service has started between Croydon Airport and Australia, so this will speed up the posts.

A pretty good month in the local cinemas, considering that you don't usually get much on in the weeks before Christmas.

Joan Crawford was good as "Sadie McKee". She is a maid who doesn't know whether to marry a young ne'er-do-well, played by Franchot Tone, or an elderly millionaire, played by Edward Arnold.

James Cagney and Bette Davis are good in "Jimmy the Gent", about a gangster who provides people to claim themselves as heirs to various estates.

Very spectacular is "Cleopatra", played by Claudette Colbert, who, after Caesar's death, turns her eyes on Mark Antony, played by Henry Wilcoxon. One I much enjoyed was "Manhattan Melodrama" about two slum boys. One, William Powell, grew up to be District Attorney; the other grew up to be a gangster, played by Clark Gable. Also in the film is Myrna Loy. Lovely.

Katherine Hepburn is good in "Spitfire" about a gypsy girl who thinks herself a faith healer and so she is driven away from her tribe. Robert Young is in this one. Perhaps the best of the month is William Powell and Myrna Loy in "The Thin Man", with a lovely little dog. A tingling mixture of thrills and fun. Great!

Our own Gracie Fiels is great fun in "Sing as we Go" about an unemployed mill-girl who takes all sorts of jobs to keep the wolf from the door. The wolf, mayhap, is John Loder. Some lovely songs.

Finally another British film which I enjoyed: Betty Balfour and Gordon Harker in "My Old Dutch".

On New Year's Eve we saw a good variety bill at New Cross Empire. Top of the bill were Hutch, the coloured baritone; Tex McLeod, spinning ropes and yarns; and Noni, the French clown.

There has been a fascinating murder trial at Lewes Crown Court. Tony Mancini was accused of murdering Violette Kaye and leaving her in a trunk at Brighton. He was defended by Norman Birkett, the great counsel, who showed that the lady could have come to her death by falling down the area steps at the house. Mancini was asked why, if that were so, he did not call the police. He replied "What! With my record!" He was found not guilty. A big triumph for Mr. Birkett.

Another trial took place when the fascist leader in Britain, Sir Oswald Moseley, was found not guilty of causing a "riotous assembly".

An excellent month in the Gem. The Congo series, which started last month with "Under Sealed Orders" continued this month with "The St. Jim's Explorers". A great story, which continued next week with "Tom Merry's Cannibal". The Congo series ended and Tom Merry went home, taking with him his black "slave", M'Pong. But M'Pong couldn't settle down at St. Jim's, and at the end went back to Africa.

Then the lovely Christmas Number, which brought us "The Spectre of St. Jim's". Mr. Selby has a strange guest, a Dr. Wynde, and, at the same time, the White Monk makes a number of startling appearances in the school precincts. Next "The Outsider's Enemy" in which it is ironic that Lumley-Lumley forfeits his good name as a result of a good deed. The snake in the grass is that young scoundrel, Ernest Levison. Finally "D'Arcy's Double", a roaring tale of rivalry with the Grammar School.

There is a new S. Frank's serial in the Gem entitled "Handforth, the Ghost-Hunter".

1934 has been an exceptionally sunny year, but one of the worst years ever for drought.

There is a new cinema opened in Mayfair. It is most luxurious, and unashamedly caters for the rich. Its cheapest seats are 3/6 and its dearest 8/6. It shows unusual films. It is called The Curzon.

In the Magnet the series has continued with Mr. Prout as Headmaster and Loder as School Captain. This is really a tip-top series, but I feel it is just a wee bit spoiled for me by introducing into the tales the rather weird free gifts which are being given away each week in the Magnet. For me, at any rate, it spoils the illusion

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a little. Still ---

First of the month is "A Traitor in the Camp". Bunter thinks he is in clover when by chance he discovers the identities of the Greyfriars Secret Society. But he is checkmated when he is made to take part in the activities of the Secret Seven. Next week "The Schoolboy Sleuth". Mr. Prout thinks that Loder is an ideal school captain, but Vernon-Smith proves otherwise.

Next week the series ended with "Putting Paid to Prout" when Dr. Locke arrives back just as Mr. Prout is about to expel Wharton and flog the others. And Dr. Locke soon puts things back to normal. A slightly abrupt ending to the series, probably because Christmas is so near. I wouldn't think, with all those references to the free gifts of the moment, that they would ever be able to reprint this story in the S.O.L. later on.

Then the Christmas Number with "Christmas at Hilton Hall". Somehow, not the right place for a Magnet Christmas, and a convict in the background escaped from prison does not make for a Merry Christmas. Finally, last tale of the year brings "Hunted Down", with the capture of the convict. But someone has freed the convict again, and Hilton suspects the butler, Walsingham. The series goes on in 1935. I have known brighter Christmasses in the Magnet, mayhap. Still ---

Doug gave me the new Holiday Annual for Christmas. Best story in it is "The Stony Seven" about St. Jim's, and nearly as good is "The Footprint in the Sand" about Greyfriars. The Rookwood tale is "The Boy Who Wouldn't Budge" starring Mornington.

Not one of the best Annuals. There is a lot in it which doesn't catch my attention, though I shan't tell Doug.

On Christmas Day the King broadcast from Sandringham, and we all listened to it. It is wonderful to have the King in your sitting-room at Christmas.

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### NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 233 "The Phantom of the Cave" was the 3-story Christmas series of the Magnet at the end of 1928. S.O.L. No. 234 "A Christmas Barring-Out" comprised the first four stories of the Christmas series of nine stories in the Gem of 1922.

The 1934 Sexton Blake-Granite Grant story "The Case of the Five Dummy Books" had appeared under the same title in the S.B.L. of the summer of 1923.

In the Gem of December 1934 "The St. Jim's Explorers" had been "The Schoolboy Explorers" near Christmas in 1911. "Tom Merry's Cannibal" had been "Tom Merry's

Slave" the following week in 1911.

"The Spectre of St. Jim's had been "The Ghost of St. Jim's" in the Christmas Double Number of the Gem in 1911. A lovely piece of restrained writing which was reprinted on a good many occasions. It suffered too much pruning in 1934. "The Outsider's Enemy" had been "A False Chum" just before the Christmas Number in 1911. "D'Arcy's Double" had the same title in the following week in 1911. A fine collection of tales from the Golden Age of the Blue Gem. The Holiday Annual tale "The Footprint in the Sand" had appeared under the same title in the Magnet of 1929. "The Stony Seven" was part of a 3-story series from the Gem of 1922.

The Rookwood tale "The Boy Who Wouldn't Budge" is a flimsy, unconvincing affair, probably sub-written. I cannot trace it in the Boys' Friend, and think it was probably one of a number of sub-written new Rookwood stories which appeared for a brief period in the Popular in the early twenties. A pointer to the date is that Mr. Bootles is still at Rookwood. As Danny comments, an uninspiring and unexciting Holiday Annual.

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# BLAKIANA

"E.R.P."

(by J.E.M.)

There can't be many Blakians who won't recognise the man behind our title; and to be identified by nothing more than one's initials is fame indeed. Eric R Parker, or ERP as he signed his work, was of course the artist who brought Sexton Blake to life for us. It is rightly said that his style is unmistakeable. Yet every artist, through training and practice, absorbs other influences and Parker was no exception. It is, therefore, worth taking a closer look at his work.

Blakian expert Christopher Lowder once suggested to me that illustrator Fred Bennett and comic artist Tom Browne had been important inspirations for ERP. This is a valuable judgement. Parker's drawings certainly echo both the boldness of Browne's style and the fluid, 'excited' line of Bennett's work. But other influences also touched his art at different times.

For instance, on a number of occasions, Parker abandoned his straightforward pen-and-ink drawings in the Union Jack for half-tone wash drawings of the kind then popular in women's "romantic" magazines. Examples of this area are his illustrations for some of the Nirvana stories by G. H. Teed in 1925 and the Girl of Destiny series by Lewis Jackson early in 1928. Here, the similarity of technique to the heartthrob mags was no doubt appropriate, since both these series seemed to be as much concerned with alluring females as

with crime and detection!

Even ERP's more familiar line drawing was itself variable: sometimes very bold and heavy, sometimes with a distinctly lighter touch. In the late 1920s, in fact, his style seemed to catch a hint of the Thomas Henry school, especially in depicting the fair sex. For a classic example look at page two of UJ No. 1305 ("Poisoned Blossoms" by G. H. Teed). The girl in the drawing could easily be one of those saucy "flappers" from the old Happy Mag or The Humourist - or even from one of Thomas Henry's "William" illustrations. Later, Parker's work resumed its heavier line and carried an even greater vigour.

Purely technical factors also left their mark on him. One such development was his use from around the mid-1920s of "mechanical tint", as it is known in the business. This is the screen of tiny dots which can be added to parts of an ordinary line drawing to give depth and variety of tone. By its use ERP's work has changed fairly dramatically. He could now give "colour" to his work without the use of cross-hatching or heavily-inked backgrounds. As examples of this change, compare the drawings in UJ No. 1064 ("The Street of Many Lanterns" by G. H. Teed) with those in later issues of the UJ.

In the UJ's successor, Detective Weekly, Parker's work was also affected by printing considerations. Because of the DW's size, his drawings were larger than in the earlier paper and emphasised the boldness of his style. Josie Packman used to say she found Parker's work in the DW far cruder than his UJ illustrations and this may well be explained by the size his drawings were reproduced.

A last word on the subject of reproduction: The cover of the UJ was, in its later years, printed by the two-colour half-tone process, usually in red and dark blue, though other combinations like black and orange, blue and yellow, etc., were also used. With such modest resources ERP achieved some unforgettable effects. At the same time, his covers for the monthly Sexton Blake Library were printed in three colours, no doubt to compensate for the smaller format of the library which had to compete for readers' attention on crowded bookstalls. Here again some striking work resulted.

For collectors lucky enough to possess them, those old UJ and SBL covers still sparkle today. They are mementoes of a man whose work, through all and every change, retained its own vital character. ERP will surely be recalled as long as Sexton Blake himself is remembered.

Walking down Haymarket on the left-hand side from Piccadilly Circus, I decided about halfway down to cut along Panton Street again on the same side to get into Leicester Square. About halfway along once again on the left I saw Sexton Blakes Restaurant with its brown painted exterior. Unfortunately it was closed in late afternoon, but there was a large menu hanging from the front door window. No Marston Plummer Pie, or Tinker's special. Looking into the window I could not detect any original Eric Parker covers adorning the walls - or indeed a Sexton Blake Bust maybe on the centre of every dining table.

There has been a Sherlock Holmes Pub, hotel, and even cinema I believe - plus several Billy Bunters Restaurants and Cafes - but this is the first place I have known to be called after the great Baker Street Detective. He did have a card game in the thirties, and a race-horse over the last decade that unlike the Billy Bunter greyhounds had some distinction. But the big question is whether this place was really named after our favourite sleuth? I have a feeling that with the name pluralised - plus the fact that nearby is a shop titled 'The Cockney' that the title means in cockney jargon 'Fakes' (Sexton Blakes - fakes-in rhyming slang). Perhaps a novel way of naming a restaurant.

Billy Bunter would soon solve the problem about the name and that would be to go in some time and have a meal. That is what I will have to do some time when entertaining visitors to London.

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# Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By an Old Boy

Some weeks back I had occasion to mention that S. Frank's was up for sale. But it was a silly rumour brought about by one of the fags who had heard Dr. Stafford say to Mr. Lee that "the school had to be told". Nipper tracked down the source of the rumour by asking Nelson Lee and the schoolmaster detective quickly supplied the misinterpretation.

It reminded me of the old story during the war of the system of passing messages by word of mouth from front to rear, so that "send reinforcements, we are going to advance" would end up as



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"send 3/4, we are going to a dance".

When I arrived at Belton it lay dreaming in the late summer heat of the Sussex Downs. There's nothing more rural than your English country village on a summer afternoon. I sometimes wish I could collect the scene and take it back home with me.

It is difficult not to visit St. Frank's without learning something new. For instance, I didn't know - or rather I wasn't aware of - that all our literature is written with 26 letters, and all music with 7 notes. And that in the Gaelic language there is no "no"... the Gaels are the only known race who have no word for NO. Evidently the atmosphere at St. Frank's has an erudite influence'

I am always impatient to get to St. Frank's... to get away from my usual every-day world and go back in Time. One can enjoy this "difference" even stretching as far as Bannington and Helmford on the one hand and up and over the Bannington Moor on the other. It is only when I leave these places and get into the big cities and towns that St. Frank's is a lost horizon.

Perhaps I should say a few words about the St. Frank's juniors whom I met. Generally visitors to the old school aren't very numerous. Except on such days as Foundation Day and Parents' Day and the odd days when a parent is summoned by the Head for consultation.

But these visitors just come and go and have no point in my referring to them. But it is when Lord Dorrimore and sometimes Umlosi are at St. Frank's that I like to record their visit.

For Dorrie's visit can mean a holiday trip abroad; a plane trip or a sea-going adventure to any part of the world. The last time I met Lord Dorrimore in Nelson Lee's study was the prelude to an exciting adventure in Africa which has been set down as a narrative by another hand.

While it is always easy to enter St. Frank's to write about their latest reports which Nipper is always so ready to give to me, yet it is a little more difficult to know what is happening at the Moor View School for Young Ladies. I found I had to get special permission from Miss Charlotte Bond, the headmistress, and I have yet to obtain it.

But I mustn't be impatient: who was it who said... 'because of impatience we were driven out of Eden: Because of impatience we cannot return?'

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CLEARING UP A POINT OR TWO

By Bill Bradford

"Danny's Diary" for November 1934 refers to B.F.L. "The School-boy Republic" by Edwy Searles Brooks.

Thus was No. 455 but it had previously appeared in September 1927, under the same title, as B.F.L. No. 110. However, it originated as a serial in the Boys' Realm (2nd series) Nos. 332-339 in 1925.

"Nipper of St. Frank's" in B.F.L. (1st series) No. 514 is the only St. Frank's story I can trace that Brooks had published under the nom-de-plum of Robert W. Comrade. Indeed, he rarely used this name after 1921, although in 1955 Rich-Cowan published a novel "Ghost Gold" by R. W. Comrade. This was based on a Nelson Lee series in 1st Series Nos. 171-174, but then credited to Edwy Searles Brooks.

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THE MAGNET AT CHRISTMAS

By Roger M. Jenkins

Statistical evidence tells us quite definitely that snow rarely falls at Christmas, but the Magnet relied upon traditional associations, not logic, and the readers would have been intensely annoyed if snow had not fallen at least one week before the holidays and lasted until the new term at Greyfriars. Snow-fights, slides and snowmen were all part of the tradition and, as we turn the pages of the Magnet now, the Yuletide atmosphere comes over in all its seasonable warmth of spirit.

Charles Hamilton's success in writing Christmas stories for the Magnet was unequalled anywhere else in his work. We can all recall a favourite Christmas story at Eastwood House, the Priory, or Cedar Creek, but in no other paper was there a whole succession of Christmas stories as there was in the Magnet. There was something special about Greyfriars, and it is partly because Harry Wharton's relatives and even the butler at Wharton Lodge were distinctive people in their own right: without being freakish, they were memorable as individuals. Equally important, the number of guests at Wharton Lodge was well within reason.

After the days of the Double Number, Charles Hamilton began writing longer accounts of the Christmas Holidays. Occasionally, Christmas formed part of a much longer series, like the first Rebel series (Christmas at Nice), the Loder Captain series and the Court-field Cracksman series (both at Wharton Lodge), the Compton series

(on board the Firefly), or the Lamb series (Wharton Lodge again). On most occasions, however, the Christmas series was a self-contained unit and would possess a plot in itself. Murder or kidnapping might be in prospect, as at Holly House, the Phantom of the Cave, Cavandale Abbey, Mauleverer Towers, or Reynham Castle. There might be a search for something such as buried treasure at Polpelly or the silver cigarette case. There might be a vague mystery and a sense of unease, as at Lochmuir or Hilton Hall. Finally, there might be just plain good fun, as when Bunter camped out at Wharton Lodge without the knowledge of its occupants.

It is impossible to declare that a particular type of Christmas series was better than the others, since each type had good and indifferent examples in its class. If I were to express a personal preference, my vote would be for a series that included all the following items: cosiness, comfort, merriment, and a sense of mystery. Lochmuir and Polpelly, with their ghosts, would rank highly for mystery but were low on the other items. Freakish extravagances, like Benevolent Bunter, scarcely make the grade, whilst searches for kidnapped people are hardly festive occasions. Most collectors would probably grant pride of place to Wharton Lodge as a venue, with a benevolent glance on Cavandale Abbey and Mauleverer Towers as worthy runners-up. The trouble is that, with so many to select from, one is spoilt for choice. Certainly no Magnet Christmas is a complete disappointment, and even the less inspired series were enhanced by the illustrations and special feature items in the paper. Open those pages once again and let the special magic of Christmas take control. In the present age of uncertainty and unrest, it is all the more rewarding to catch another glimpse of a happier and more settled world, where no wrongdoer went unpunished and where traditional values flourished. Bunter might yawn when Colonel Wharton was coming to the most thrilling part of his ghost story, but minor peccadilloes could be forgiven, and it was the generosity of spirit, as well as the material comforts, that gave such vicarious pleasure to the reader. Charles Hamilton said that his stories depicted life as it ought to be, rather than life as it really was, and in these Christmas stories, especially those at Wharton Lodge, that ideal was presented in its most acceptable form. At this time of the year in particular, no old reader can ever fail to recall with added pleasure those Magnet Christmases of yesteryear.

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TOM MERRY CAVALCADE

(Serialised from a Long-Ago C.D. Annual)

20 Years Later

Up on the platform, Mr. Prong, the auctioneer, rapped sharply on the desk with his hammer. The Spring morning was warm, sales had been disappointing, and he was anxious to get home to the well-cooked lunch which his dutiful wife would have prepared for him.

"We now come to the last lot of the day - a large collection of old boys' books", he said.

There was a movement for the doors. The crowd in the hall had not been large all the morning, and now it thinned considerably. The majority of those who remained did so out of curiosity.

Mr. Prong leaned across the desk, poising himself on his fingertips.

"Most of you know the Supermarket in Castle Street", he said, brightly. "Some of you will remember the cinema which was demolished in order that the Supermarket could be erected on the site. Few of you, perhaps, will recall that adjoining the old cinema was a small shop - a newsagent's shop".

More people left the hall. Some of those remaining yawned or started to chat among themselves.

"That shop", went on Mr. Prong, "was opened by a man named Chadley, about the turn of the century.

He was a tradesman in this town for many years, and was a respected citizen".

"Come to the point", called out someone.

Mr. Prong ignored the interruption.

"The paper I am about to offer you was called the - er - 'Gem'. Yes, the 'Gem'. Mr. Chadley appears to have saved every copy of this - this intellectual paper for the young. The rare collection on display in this hall covers a period from 1907 till the end of 1939 - a total of about seventeen-hundred copies. Such an amazing collection will be a fabulous acquisition for any connoisseur". Mr. Prong cleared his throat, and continued: "Mr. Chadley has been dead many years. His widow, a dear old lady, is still living, but in straitened circumstances. Only as a last resort has Mrs. Chadley been persuaded to part with this prized collection, which her husband amassed with such loving care. I shall invite you, ladies and gentlemen, to bid generously, and thereby do a charitable act as you acquire this remarkable - this fantastic collection".

There was an uneasy stir in the audience, and a few more slipped away. They had not come to the Auction to bid charitably.

"These - er - 'Gems' are dis-

played in piles of about two hundred copies per pile, on the table below this platform. I request you to glance over them before making your bids", said Mr. Prong.

A dozen or so people moved over to the table and strolled round it, one or two whispering one to the other.

Three teenagers - a youth wearing soiled jeans, soiled shirt of violent check pattern, and who seemed to have forgotten the existence of the common-or-garden barber; another youth whose hair was made alarming by a crew cut; a girl who wore a tight black jumper to accentuate her figure and pink jeans which passed tightly over plump hindquarters and stopped short at her calves - gazed with lack-lustre eyes at the blue-covered papers on the left of the table.

"Tom Merry's Legion of Honour", read out the girl, with some difficulty. She glanced up into Crew Cut's spotty face. "What's a Legion of Honour, Perce?"

"I haven't a clue and I couldn't care less", replied Crew Cut.

"No int'rest to me", said the young man who disdained barbers, a soggy cigarette wobbling between his lips. "I only read pitchers".

Mr. Prong banged on the desk with his hammer.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I now invite you to bid for this unique Lot."

"A dollar", called out a humorist, and there was a titter.

"Two pounds", said a pompous little man.

"That's the bloke from the second-

hand book shop", whispered the young lady in the tight jumper.

"If you like to split the collection, I will offer three pounds for the items with blue covers", called out a florid man in a grey suit.

Mr. Prong rubbed his chin. He said: "I do not wish to divide the collection, if possible. It is obviously worth more as a complete unit."

"Four pounds for the lot."

"Four-ten."

"Five."

Bidding became brisker, though the increases per bid were small. At twelve pounds, bid by the pompous little man, it hung fire, and he looked around him, a triumphant gleam in his beady little eyes.

"Gentlemen", said the auctioneer, helplessly, "there is no reserve, but I hope that this sale may bring something fairly substantial to this elderly woman who needs the money."

"Fourteen pounds!"

The pompous little man leaped on to the platform. Raising a hand, he called out: "Make your best offers, any of you, and I will top it. I intend to have these old papers. I am a sentimental man, but don't waste time." His voice rose: "Twenty pounds! Top that!"

He descended from the platform as the auctioneer eyed him with grim disapproval.

"Twenty pounds, I am offered."

"Guineas!"

"Twenty-five pounds!" shouted the pompous little man.

"Twenty-six!"

"Thirty!" called out the little man.

"One thousand pounds!"

A new voice, quiet but clear, came from the rear of the hall. Dead silence fell for a moment, and then every head was turned to look at the new bidder. He was a man of about sixty, tall, grey-haired, neatly-dressed, ascetic. He had stood at the back ever since the sale opened, two hours ago, but this was the first time he had spoken.

"Wotseemuckinabartat?" demanded Crew Cut.

"A fahsand quid for a stack of ole books without pitchers?" muttered the youth with the long hair.

"Candidate for the looney-bin!" said the jean-clad young woman.

Mr. Prong gazed doubtfully down the hall.

"You at the back! I did not catch what you said. Will you kindly repeat your bid?"

"One thousand pounds!"

"Is that a serious bid? It is not a hoax?"

"It is a serious bid."

The few dozen people made for the door; the pompous little man

stamped away, red with anger.

"One thousand pounds I am offered. Going for one thousand pounds. Going -- going --"

The tall, grey-haired man walked up to the platform, and Mr. Prong regarded him thoughtfully.

"This is generous", murmured Mr. Prong. "Do you happen to know the vendor, sir, may I ask?"

"I knew her, very many years ago."

The grey-haired man drew a cheque-book and a card from his pocket. He said:

"The papers, carefully boxed and insured, are to be sent to this address." He placed his card before the auctioneer. "I will add five pounds to my cheque, to cover packing, carriage, and insurance. Is that satisfactory?"

"Very satisfactory, sir!" said Mr. Prong, rubbing his hands.

The grey-haired man wrote out his cheque, took his receipt, and then slowly left the deserted hall.

"Now who the hell is he?" muttered Mr. Prong.

He eyed the cheque he was holding. It was signed: "Christopher Venner".

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CHRISTMAS comes but once a year. And so does the Collectors' Digest Annual.

Have you ordered your copy yet?



REVIEWFROM WHARTON LODGE TO LINTON HALL

Mary Cadogan; Tommy Keen  
(Hamilton Museum Press)

The yearly productions from the Hamilton Museum at Maidstone have always been full of charm, and this one is no exception.

This veritable Christmas Stocking covers the main Yuletide stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Cliff House, and Morcove. The writers relate those stories with loving concentration, and revive old memories. Much of it, of course, is very familiar to the fans of the particular schools, and probably none the less welcome for that.

Lavish is the only word to describe the various pictures from the Christmas season down the years. And the reproduction of various tit-bits from here, there, and everywhere in the old papers at the Christmas season will surely be enjoyed by all.

This book is £5 which includes post and packing. It cannot be ordered from book-shops. The Hamilton Museum Press is at 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone.

BEARS ARE BEAUTIFUL!

By Mary Cadogan

A HUG OF TEDDY BEARS (Herbert Press £6.95) by the late Peter Bull (an actor whom many of us will remember with affection), is a celebration of Teddy Bears - not only our cuddly, cosy, nursery companions, but the beloved Teddy Bears of popular fiction like Rupert, Winnie-the-Pooh and Paddington. (Sadly I didn't find in it any reference to Bobby Bear, one of my favourites from the 1930s.) Bears these days are not only beautiful - but **Big**. There are, apparently, Teddy Bear rallies held regularly on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as Teddy magazines and Teddy hospitals. Peter Bull, who died just before his book was published, was the proud possessor of an impressive collection of bears, including Aloysius, who was one of the stars of the ITV production of Evelyn Waugh's BRIDESHEAD REVISITED.

The ever resilient RUPERT ANNUAL (Express Publications) is now once again in the shops. It is, as usual, in full colour, and with 92 pages at £2.25 it is very good value when one considers the average book prices of today. The Annual has departed somewhat from tradition over the last five years, with a bigger page size but fewer pages. Alas, in this year's edition I couldn't spot any new work from A. E. Bestall, who was Rupert's traditional illustrator for several decades from the mid-thirties, and is now 92 years old. Until recently he has drawn something new, perhaps just a title page, for each annual. However several of his picture-stories from the past have been included, and these reprints contain all the old familiar village, country and fantasy magic. There are five stories altogether in the Annual, and I found the work of the newer artists and author also very pleasing, and in keeping with the Rupert traditions.

Winnie-the-Pooh, though not quite so long-lived as Rupert, is, of course, another literary bear who seems destined for immortality. A. A. Milne's original stories and poems about him have been reprinted and revamped in many forms. The latest offering is WINNIE-THE-POOH: A POP-UP BOOK (Methuen £6.95), which is an absolute delight. The pop-up scenes are drawn after the style of E. H. Shepard, the original illustrator. They are detailed and complex, but work well, and are backed up in every case by a Pooh story or interlude. The Pooh and Christopher Robin books have always had their own special exuberance, and in pop-up form this seems to grow not only in physical dimensions but in those of the imagination.

It is a strange fact that the older I get the more I seem to be attracted

to books like this -full of pictures or pop-ups - designed, I suppose, for the very young' Perhaps this is also why I found Colin White's THE WORLD OF THE NURSERY (Herbert Press £14.95) tremendously intriguing. This is a superbly produced book by any standard, with 224 large pages, containing 40 full colour and hundreds of black and white illustrations. It is a seriously researched but blissful dip into the nostalgia of our childhood days. Almost everything is there - from the pictures (by Mabel Lucie Attwell, Margaret Tarrant, Louis Wain and Arthur Rackham) that adorned our bedrooms, to the characters from our favourite nursery books (Alice, Brer Rabbit, Peter Pan, the animals of Beatrix Potter and Walt Disney, etc.). THE WORLD OF THE NURSERY is not cheap, but it offers so much that it is well worth begging, borrowing or buying a copy, if one possibly can. It is an ideal Christmas present for a special friend or relative, and most of all, perhaps, for oneself'

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# News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

## MIDLAND

October 1984

A very hot wet night and other factors brought our attendance to a new low, only six members attending.

We welcomed Gerald Price, whom we have not seen for some time.

At the start of the meeting we stood in silence as a token of respect for Ted Sabin who has passed on since we last met. He will be sorely missed. He never missed a meeting, although 82.

Joan Golen as usual did us proud on the refreshments and Ivan Webster paid for the tea and coffee.

Tom Porter was missing, as was Christine Brettell. With both chairman and vice-chairman missing your correspondent took the chair.

A quiz of 13 questions was set by the chairman. I thought they were easy and made them up out of my head. I was surprised when Geoff Lardner, who won it, only got 10 correct. I suppose it's true that the greatest fool can ask questions the cleverest people cannot answer. I revived an old custom by giving a prize (a facsimile red Magnet, "Greyriars v St. Jim's").

In a discussion on the merits of the Magnet, Gem, Boys' Friend Popular, Nelson Lee and S.O.L., I was in a minority in liking the S.O.L.

Our final item was a discussion on visits to dealers - Norman Shaw was warmly praised for his reasonable prices and hospitality.

Tom Lambert and Bill Martin were mentioned with varying degrees of approval or disapproval.

The next meeting is the Christmas Party, 18th December. An invitation is extended to all O.B.B.C. enthusiasts. We guarantee you a good time.

J. F. BELLFIELD - Correspondent

### CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the home of Edward Witten on Sunday, 4th November, 1984. Bill Lofts talked on "The Thriller", an interesting publication that began in 1929, and became a casualty of the War in 1940. It resembled the Union Jack in size and appearance, but cover pictures were drawn by well known artists, particularly Arthur Jones.

The "Thriller" started with a first issue story by Edgar Wallace, who was paid £500 for a story written for the Thriller; other writers, such as Leslie Charteris, received around £50 per story. Apart from a number of Sexton Blake authors, most of the well known writers of the 1930's appeared in the "Thriller", including Sydney Horler, Oppenheim, W. E. Johns and Agatha Christie. Bill said Edgar Wallace first wrote of his famous "Mr. J. G. Reader" in a "Thriller" tale.

Vic Hearn commented that though the "Thriller" was felt by schoolboys to be rather too adult, it had a high value in "Swaps". Bill Thurbon, who had read many of the early "Thrillers" recalled one by Leslie Charteris that was later published as a "Saint" story, after more amendment to the ending.

While Edward entertained members to tea there was a wide ranging discussion on many subjects, including some interesting anecdotes!

After tea Bill Lofts again entertained members with another of his interesting collection of "Eccentrics". Your scribe will not however steal Bill's thunder by expanding this, since Bill will no doubt wish in turn to tell it to other clubs, but it caused great joy to the Club and brought the meeting to an hilarious close, with a warm vote of thanks to Edward for his hospitality, and to Bill for his entertaining talks.

### LONDON

The November meeting was held at the Walthamstow rendezvous and there was a good attendance.

Roger Jenkins stated that there will be an up-to-date catalogue

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of what he has for loan. Advance copies of the 7th volume of the Hamilton Companion were on show and Mary Cadogan stated that there will be copies available at the Ealing Christmas meeting. The title of the Companion is "Wharton Lodge to Linton Hall".

Mary Cadogan then spoke of the new editions of the William books that have been published and exhibited the William Club wallet and badge that can be obtained by those buying copies of the William books. Both the Christmas number of the Illustrated London News and winter number of Punch carry articles on the William books.

Brian Doyle read the Dylan Thomas story entitled "The Fight".

Don Webster's quiz on the juniors and seniors of the main schools was a four way tie. Larry Morley, Brian Doyle, Eric Lawrence and Laurie Sutton all had correct answers.

Winifred Morss read Roger Jenkins' piece on Horace Coker that was printed in the Story Paper Collector in the year 1954.

Finally Bill Bradford read a John G. Brandon story entitled "Joy Ride".

Next meeting is the Christmas one at Bill and Thelma's Ealing home. Full tea provided but kindly inform hosts if intending to be present.

BEN WHITER

### NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 10th November, 1984

We had ten members present. Our youngest visitor, Robert Kay brought along a number of collectors' items - Biggles, Rupert and Jane books, that he had recently acquired.

Keith Smith and Darrell Swift had spent the day at the Manchester Book Fair and had met a number of hobby people from the other side of the Pennines.

We were sorry that Jack Allison was not with us. He is still getting over the effects of his recent fall, but we are pleased to report that he is improving.

A sample cover of the latest Museum Press publication "From Wharton Lodge to Linton Hall", was passed round for inspection. Members are eagerly awaiting copies of their books.

For "My Choice", Harry Blowers brought along his favourite book - "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. Many editions had been published over the years and the copy Harry had brought along

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was an intriguing book from Odhams Press. Everyone knows the story of Dickens' famous work, but Harry did read some excerpts from it, just to remind us. He then commented that Frank Richards was possibly been better at creating a Christmas atmosphere and to prove his point, he read from "Bunter's Christmas Carol". Nobody present could deny that Charles Hamilton was the master of creating atmosphere in Christmas stories of the boys of Greyfriars. Harry was thanked for his offering.

Our next meeting will be on Saturday, 8th December, 1984. This being our Christmas party, we commence at 4.30 p.m. for 5.00 p.m. We are especially pleased to welcome visitors on these occasions. Our venue is Leeds Parish Church, Kirkgate, Leeds 2. You can find us in The City of Leeds Room - we look forward to seeing you, if you care to join us.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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# The Postman Called

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

ROGER JENKINS (Havant): "Coming Thro' the Rye" also raised a memory of a British film of the 1950's, where a couple inherited a cinema which turned out to be a fleapit. One day, when the cinema was not open to the public, the projectionist, Peter Sellars, played a silent film, to a piano accompaniment, and the film was "Coming Thro' The Rye".

(Editorial Comment: I think the film to which Mr. Jenkins refers is "The Smallest Show on Earth".)

BILL BRADFORD (Ealing): Owing to the reticence of D. C. Thompson, we know very little about the authors who wrote for the Dixon Hawke Library which ran from 1919 until 1941, with a total of 576 issues. The last 166 issues each contained two separate stories. The late Bob Blythe established that Edwy Searles Brooks wrote at least 26 of these and it is almost certain that other contributors were Gilbert Chester, John G. Brandon, D. M. Cumming-Skinner, J. C. H. Jacobs, Richard Goyne, Anthony Skene, Jacques Pendower, John Creasey, Pierre Quirroule, and Francis A. Symonds.

I also suspect that R. G. Thomas, G. H. Teed, Walter Tyrer and Francis Warwick were involved.

Because few collectors have very many issues in their possession and since this Library did not seem to bring forth the best in its authors,



identification is difficult. I would greatly appreciate any information, however limited, that readers can supply. Perhaps if we pool our knowledge we may partially solve a long outstanding mystery.

CYRIL ROWE (Church Crookham): This story is not recorded in the Blake Catalogue or Supplement. In the Thriller No. 525, Feb. 25th, 1938, appeared a serial "The Trail of the Missing Millions". It was a Blake tale which had run for some instalments in the Wild West Weekly, which had been incorporated that week with the Thriller.

It seems patent to me that it had only been introduced in W.W.W. as a sort of hinge between the tie-up. I do not know if it had ever appeared before in any other guise or under a different title, and no author was named. It finished in No. 528 or 529.

A simple tale. Blake seeking an innocent Roger Quinton, suspected of murder in the United States, is opposed by Roger's cousin, Hugh Crayle, whose cousin, Sydney Crayle, was the murdered man. Hugh Crayle is claimant to £100,000 if Roger is hanged. Another character is gang leader, Smiler McGuire of New York.

Blake is helped by Inspector Goodfellow, and the Phantom Sheriff, and an old fellow named Parker, an old retainer of Roger's family. After various hold-ups and frustrations, Sexton Blake, of course, wins. The names I have mentioned may help in identifying the tale if it is a reprint from elsewhere.

RICHARD DAVIDSON (Sheffield): Last year's C.D. Annual was the first one I have read, as I am a newcomer to old boys' books. But it was a great pleasure to read. Thank you for all the hard work you put into it, and not only in the Annual but all through the year with Collectors' Digest.

J.E.M. (Brighton): It was not rare for film editions of silent films to be published. I have a number of such volumes from The Old Readers' Library Series - those lovely dark, maroon, hard-backed editions, complete with stills from the films concerned, purchasable at Woolworths. My own collection, meagre as it is, includes "The Red Dancer of Moscow" (starring Dolores Del Rio), "The Gaucho" (Douglas Fairbanks, "Show Girl" (with Alice White), "Burning Daylight" (Milton Sills and Doris Kenyon) and "Noah's Ark" a Zanuck production starring Dolores Costello and George O'Brien. I suspect there were many more.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I have one of those old, old delightful books from Woolworth's. "The Fleet's In", which starred Clara Bow. This was, I believe, the last silent

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film screened at the Plaza, Piccadilly Circus, just before they went "talkie". I actually played the piano for this film when it was screened for three days at the Court Cinema, Hampton Court, and I fancy I mentioned the occasion in my article "Tinkle, Tinkle, Little Star" in a long-ago Annual.)

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## JEMIMA CAME FOR CHRISTMAS

By Tommy Keen

One of the most popular schoolgirl characters at Cliff House School, first in the SCHOOL FRIEND, and later in the SCHOOLGIRL, was the thoroughly modern Jemima Carstairs, smartly sophisticated, sleekly shingled, and with a gleaming monocle, gazing languidly, and slightly cynically at her schoolfellows, and the world in general.

Jemima however, for four brief glorious weeks prior to her introduction to Barbara Redfern & Co. of Cliff House, had appeared in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, as a new girl at Morcove School in Devon, a contemporary of delightful Betty Barton and her chums of the Fourth Form. Unfortunately, much to Betty & Co.'s dismay, and to the readers of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, Jemima's brief sojourn at Morcove came to an end, but the reader was informed that in the following week's issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND, 'a story featuring popular Jemima Carstairs will appear', and that issue was the SCHOOL FRIEND Christmas Number of 1925, "Her Christmas Mystery".

When the story opens, Barbara Redfern & Co. are experiencing the excitement of breaking up day at Cliff House, due to spend the vacation with Clara Trevlyn at a new home which her parents have just purchased, and upon arrival at the new home, the girls are informed that the daughter of a friend of Mr. Trevlyn will be spending Christmas with them, and so Jemima arrives - literally at the feet of Bessie Bunter.

Bessie, after boasting to Babs & Co. that she could slide gracefully down the bannisters, promptly attempted to do so, shooting off clumsily at the bottom, and colliding with the very elegant young lady who had just arrived. Jemima sat on the floor and gazed in wonder at the plump Bessie. Although almost knocked breathless by Bessie's onslaught, she remained unperturbed, merely remarking "I'm not hurt, I'm tough as leather, and please, do call me Jimmy".

Barbara and her friends, after being rather bewildered by Jemima's mode of speech, realised she is no fool, and soon became on friendly terms.

There was of course a 'Christmas Mystery', in this case, involving Katie Smith, the youngest member of the Fourth Form at Cliff House,

which is solved by the end of the story.

Jemima was evidently too popular, and too unusual, to vanish from the stories, so after the Christmas holidays, she becomes amember of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, with never a reference to Morcove. Pity that! Until the end of the Cliff House saga in the SCHOOLGIRL, she remained one of the leading lights.

Leonard Shields was the first artist to portray Jemima in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, and she looked adorable. C. M. Dodshon, in the SCHOOL FRIEND, did not produce the same charming quality, but in the SCHOOLGIRL, Jemima was splendidly drawn by T. Laidler.

Not quite the female equivalent of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, she was too astute, but monocles often cropped up in those far off days, and Jemima similingly brought a touch of the aristocracy to Cliff House, and for four delightful weeks to Morcove School, and certainly made the Christmas issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND, 1925, one to remember.

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MODERN TIMES

By E. Grant-McPherson

As most of the readers of the C.D. will probably know, I am primarily a E. S. Brooks fan. But, unlike some, I can and do read and enjoy Frank Richards, when the Master is not available.

I must confess I prefer the 'Gem' to the 'Magnet'. I could never understand just why Bunter was so popular, 'the fascination of the horrible' I suppose, put into a modern context he reminds me of Boss Hogg in 'The Dukes of Hazzard' a very good series with built in bits when you can 'get a cuppa'.

But I digress, I started out writing the article to commiserate with the fans of Charles Hamilton. As I said I can happily read C. H. When I have no E.S.B. Whilst in the local public library recently, I came across some of the modern versions of the Bunter stories, there was one there that I had not read in the original so I borrowed same.

How thankful I am that I never paid good 'Gold' for it.

So I say to you happy followers of C.H. who have not yet been defiled by what I can only describe as the most utter rubbish, do not be tempted.

The sketches that inflict themselves upon ones eyes, they can hardly be dignified by the title of illustrations, would have caused Mr. Chapman to have a fit.

But the language! Can Coker really have called Smithy a SQUIT?

Bunter for all his faults would never I feel sure have said "You don't knowno French, you don't know nothing". Surely Smithy would have jibbed at 'I'm dammed if I will'. Was M. Charpentier ever called 'Sharpy', what ever happened to 'Mossoo'?

Bob Cherry had I know, a remarkable fund of invective, but I doubt it ever contained the like of; Dopey Dust Bin, Twit Head, Flabby Fish-cake, and Porkpie not even to the poor old Owl.

My heart goes out to the loyal supporters of Mr. Hamilton when I read the trash that is now paraded in his name. I can only hope that no 'Do Gooder' ever decided to rewrite Edwy.

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"OODUNNIT?" asks Ernest Holman

I am one of those (many?) innocents who never considered the possibility of one man writing stories under different names. Richards wrote for Magnet, Clifford for Gem. That was, in my childhood, all there was to it. Mind you, when some of the writers met each other, played games together or visited schools, I did take it with a pinch of salt. Editors of the time perpetuated the myth, of course -even going to the extent of denying that Richards and Clifford were one and the same. In over thirty years of Magnet and Gem, the pretence was always kept going.

Always, did I say? Well, in actual fact, not always. For I have just received a surprise, one that made me wonder if these old bi-focals were deceiving me. I have recently been reading an early Gem story entitled 'Looking After Mossoo' and on the editorial page at the back of Gem. No. 369 dated 6th March, 1915, I came across the following reply to a Brighton reader: "Both St. Jim's and Greyfriars are purely the invention of Mr. Richards".

Who on earth could have been responsible for dropping that brick? Well, I'm no Bill Lofts - more like a D'Arcy or Skimpole in the detective line. Still, I'll have a shot at answering the mystery.

At this time, Hinton was in charge - he would describe himself as 'Your Editor' and sometimes add (in unconscious humour?) the expression HAH! He must have been pretty busy just then, having recently undertaken the editorship of Boys' Friend. It would certainly seem, too, that war time staffing difficulties were operating; HAH would have us believe (in another Gem at about this time) that a reader visiting him was shown into his office by the Chuckles office boy. Shortage of staff must have caused this beardless stripling to be given the job of answering readers' letters.



What happened then? Was he relieved of his buttons and, surrounded by superiors, driven from the building? Or - did the revelation of this war time secret escape the censors?

If this isn't the correct answer, then who DID release the cat from the bag?

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"THE SMELL OF NEWSPRINT"

By Horace Dille

There is something about the smell of newsprint which to me is very pleasant. To go into a newsagents and inhale the print aroma is sweet to my nostrils. An added bonus is when the shop premises are ancient, well cluttered up with all sorts of papers and books, toys and stationary and not too orderly. Dimmed lighting is an additional fascination.

Nostalgically, my mind drifts back to the very early 30's. I left school when I was 14. Jobs were hard to come by and if you managed to get one, you took jolly good care to see that you kept it.

After a lot of searching, at last I was offered a job with a Newsagent at Biggleswade, some three miles away from the village in which I lived.

I had a bike - it cost new £3.19.6 - and each week-day I cycled the three miles, picked up a sackbarrow from the Newsagents and met the 6.25 a.m. "paper train".

The bundles of newspapers and magazines were unceremoniously thrown on to the platform. As I look back, what a pity that so many of the old newspapers and periodicals have gone by the wayside. The sackbarrow was stacked, up the manually operated lift and so to the shop.

Beggars cannot be choosers. I started the job just after Christmas, perhaps not the best of time to face the outside world with the rigours of winter. I seem to remember that the first couple of days were not too bad as far as weather was concerned.

The newspapers were sorted out in the various rounds for the other lads. As I was the "regular", I had to wait last for my bundle, which was the biggest round. A break from 8 to 9. In the meantime, the periodicals had been sorted out and away I went on the shop carrier bike around the town. Some days were not too heavy but others kept me going until at least one O'clock. I seem to remember that Thursdays and Fridays were busy days with John Bull, Thompsons Weekly and the Radio Times.

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Lunch was from 1 to 2. I invariably went home travelling the three miles home and back having my meal in the hour. The weather was pleasant enough during the summer as I embraced the early mellow morning air. But the winter brought along its rains, and winds and snows. Many a time, I have arrived at the shop saturated and on a few occasions, have made the journey on foot when snow had fallen and it was almost impossible to get through on a cycle.

Afternoons were not quite so hectic. I helped in the shop with some of the more menial jobs, and ran errands for all and sundry. The shop seemed to sell almost everything, short of battleships. Perhaps one of my joys was my little bolt hole in a little room at the back, which had been one of the old fashioned kitchens. Here the papers and periodicals which had not been sold were stacked, and it would be my job to sort them and once a week bundle them up for despatch to the "Returns Departments".

I could browse through the papers and books at leisure. I loved the news about Parliament and the weeklies including the Gem, and the Magnet, Nelson Lee, Popular and so on provided a rare feast for my eye. I used to get quite upset if they had all been sold so that I hadn't any to look at.

Although I was growing up, a little look at the Rainbow and other such publications was not below my dignity.

Many a time when delivering a weekly to one of the youngsters, there would be a nose pressed against the front window.

Thursday afternoon was my "half day". I got home around half past one and I recall that every week, I checked over my cycle to see that all was well. Pumping up the tyres, oiling here and there. What was just as important was to see that the lamps were working properly. The oil lamp was prone to cause trouble; the wick would "flare up" and it was not unknown for the lamp to catch alight. I believe that before I left the job after about two years, I was the proud possessor of a carbide lamp.

It was important that lights were kept in order. The local policeman was particularly vigilant about cyclists with no lights. Standard fines were 2/6 for no front light and 5/- for no rear light. Reports in the local press were plentiful. Names and addresses were given with the amount of the fine, to be followed by "P.C. (name) stated the case". Some policemen had a field day and people would be very wary when travelling along his "beat".

And the wages? 10/- per week for the first 12 months; 11/3 for the next 6 months, and then the princely sum of 12/6 per week. An

odd Christmas Box here and there helped.

It was a hard life, but it had its pleasant moments. Braving the weather, dodging the vicious dog now and again, taking a dressing down for being a few minutes late in delivering (and no answering back). Collecting the paper money when some people never seemed to be at home. But I met people, I made a large number of friends, it was a good grounding for later life.

Over 50 years have slipped by ... I can sometimes feel those saturated clothes ... I can see the bounding snarling dog ... my rear sometimes seems to be a little bit sore from that uncomfortable saddle on the carrier bike ... one or two faces loom large who I always dreaded to see when I made my deliveries. I don't think that I would want to do those two years again ... but in a peculiar kind of way I am not sorry that part of my path in life went that way.

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ALFRED JUDD

By E. Baldock

My first encounter with the writings of Alfred Judd took place many years ago with the reading of a story entitled 'Chums of Beechwood' which was serialised in 'Chums' around 1922/23 although my memory is a little vague as to the exact date. It proved to be an introduction into a world of delightful and light-hearted adventure tales, mostly with a public school background. His style was quite distinctive and easily recognisable by the discerning reader. One feature which attracted me was the familiar illustrations of Thomas Henry of 'William' fame. He possessed the happy ability of capturing precisely the right atmosphere of the stories. There were many such successful partnerships of authors and illustrators who cohered and worked together quite naturally. In this context there springs to mind S. Walkey and Paul Hardy, Conan Doyle and Sidney Paget, and of course Charles Hamilton and C. H. Chapman in the 'Magnet' and R. J. MacDonald in the 'Ger.' respectively.

Recently I read again after a lapse of many years 'The Luck of the Lennites', which not unnaturally revived all the old enthusiasms. Here was that magic, yet sometimes elusive world of mystery, adventure and japes, a compilation which Judd was very expert in transmitting. A world in which it was of the utmost importance that the hero was selected for the first XI or XV. That nothing should prevent him from training and playing the game of his career towards the end of the story, scoring the winning try or goal, thus bringing glory to his House.

Such tales engendered a spirit now unhappily largely submerged in our brave new world with its differing standards of thought. Although now long out of print, one does occasionally come upon second-hand copies of his work. Happily for the collector these are, at the moment, very modestly priced. I usually confine my searches to the 20p - 50p shelves in second-hand bookshops. It is here, at the moment at least, that the works of Alfred Judd are most likely to appear. To the enthusiast of course he is priceless, for his work reflects a vanished world, a happy and carefree 'long ago'. This is his attraction for me.

Having sniffed the battle from afar, as it were, nothing would do but to instigate a search for other writings of this author. Repairing to the library suitably armed with notebook and pen I commenced the most pleasant of tasks, that of poring through old book catalogues and lists. My researches were not entirely without success. Alfred Judd, it would appear, was quite a prolific contributor to the world of boys' literature. I found no less than eighteen published titles, (there may be more), mostly published by Cassell, the power behind 'Chums'.

Judd also penned countless complete short stories all in a serio-humorous vein. Originally a bookseller, he decided that authorship appeared to be a more creative, though possibly less lucrative occupation. His first school story 'The Lie Direct', appeared in the Boys' Own Paper in 1913, and although he contributed to a number of other boys' papers, the 'Scout' and 'Boys' Herald' among others, his main work was published in 'Chums' and the 'Boys' Own Paper'. Like many other writers in this genre, he sometimes used a pseudonym, of which two at least are known; thus it is somewhat difficult to assess his entire work.

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