COLLECTORS DIGEST ANNUAL
CHRISTMAS 1986.

FORTIETH YEAR.

EDITOR: ERIC FAYNE, Excelsior House, 113 Crookham Road,
Church Crookham, Nr. Aldershot, Hampshire.

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Forty years ago, in the glow of the warmth accorded to the monthly Collectors' Digest, newly born, Herbert Leckenby produced his first Collectors' Digest Annual. Is it an exaggeration to say that it has become the most loved Annual in the World? I think not - in our little World, at any rate.

Herbert can surely never have dreamed that the Annual - an ambitious undertaking then, and even more ambitious today after millions of words on the hobby have flown into it down the years - would still be going strong 40 years later.

This is my own 28th edition of our Annual. All 40 of them, beautifully bound, stand proudly in a long line on a shelf in one of my book-cases. In a way there is something astoundingly magical about them all.

28 years is a long, long time. 28 years ago I was a bit of a strapping "youngster" - well, in the prime of life, at any rate - bubbling with enthusiasm. An enthusiasm which has never waned. Truly, I have grown "old on my job". That is a term which sounds a bit derogatory, I realise ruefully. But perhaps it isn't! A long, long memory is useful in our hobby. In fact, memories make the hobby.

I could not do it alone, of course. I have a marvellous band of supporters. I take this opportunity to thank all our gifted band of supporters. I take this opportunity to thank all our gifted contributors who, year after year, have unselfishly given of their finest talents to provide articles and stories for the Annual. I am lucky to have the happy and glorious support of such fine artists as Bob Whiter and Henry Webb. Most of the art-work in this Annual comes from the highly-skilled brush of Henry Webb, who has been wonderful in the way he has responded to my constant requests for this, that, and the other.

My thanks go, too, once again, to the Management and Staff of that superb firm, York Duplicating Services, who have printed both the monthly and the Annual almost from the very beginning. There is something rather heart-warming in the fact that C.D. and the Annual are Edited in the South and Printed in the North.

Finally, my love and thanks go to my loyal readers who are the backbone of it all. No man in the whole wide world has ever had a more splendid band of friends. God has been so good to me.

I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas, and Good Health and Prosperity throughout the coming year. God bless you all.

Your sincere friend,

Eric Fayne.

CONTENTS

Page	1	Foreword	
Page	2	Contents	
Page	3- 6	A Greyfriars Phenomenon	Edward Baldock
Page	7- 12	Fingerprints	Harold Truscott
Page	13- 20	Three Smart Girls	Esmond Kadish
Page	21- 24	My Correspondence with Frank Richards ..	Rev. J.P.H. Hobson
Page	24- 26	No Tuck for Turkey	Frank Richards
Page	27- 28	Lucky for Some	William Lister
Page	29	Guess these Rookwood Characters	Bob Whiter
Page	30- 36	Close of Play	Leslie Rowley
Page	37- 43	The Early Days of Cliff House	Roger M. Jenkins
Page	44- 53	"Merry Christmas Mr. Buddle!"	Eric Fayne
Page	54	Happy Hours Unlimited	
Page	55- 61	Richmal Crompton - the Woman behind William	Mary Cadogan
Page	62- 65	Morcove Abroad! Turania Again	Ray Hopkins
Page	66- 67	Criticism	Jim Cook
Page	68- 73	One Step Ahead of the Yard	Leslie S. Laskey
Page	74- 79	Chills and Thrills with those Cliff House Spook Hunters	Margery Woods
Page	80- 83	Wonders of Wodehouse	Ernest Holman
Page	84- 85	I Also was There - or Thereabouts	Ronnie Hunter
Page	86- 90	The Year 1918	
Page	91	Annuals from the House of Shaw	O. W. Wadham
Page	92- 95	The Yellow Phiz!	
Page	96- 98	You Never Read These Stories..	W. O. G. Lofts
Page	99-108	Mr. Crayford Passes By	Eric Fayne
Page	109	Reformation and Transfer	H. Heath
Page	110	Cutting Down The Army..	John Bridgwater
Page	111-112	Plagiarism	George Beal
Page	113	Eighty Years of Pluck (An Editorial Item of a Dozen Years Ago)	
Page	114	The Rivals of St. Winifreds	
Page	115-117	Characters in the Sexton Blake 3d Library ..	Ronald Rouse
Page	118-120	Ralph Reckness Cardew	Edward Baldock

A GREYFRIARS PHENOMENON

BY EDWARD BALDOCK.

In attempting a pen portrait of Horace Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars School, one is at once presented with a series of formidable obstacles. There is so much to be commended and, alas, so much to be deplored in this headstrong and complex fellow. Good, and absolute idiocy are so inexplicably mixed in his makeup that one needs to tread very carefully indeed to do anything approaching justice to the great Horace. That he is at heart a good fellow is undeniable. Bearing this always in mind, one may forge ahead.

Coker has large feet. Rumour, that fickle jade in most things, has it that they are the biggest extremities in the school. On this point one can only say that there is more than a modicum of truth in the rumour. To be kicked by Coker is by no means a pleasant experience, quite the reverse in fact, as Bunter and certain other unfortunate fellows can heartily confirm. Thus it will be very circumspect of me to choose my terms of reference with some care as I proceed.

The Fifth Form at Greyfriars is by tacit and unwritten law exempt from corporal punishment. Being senior 'men' it is accepted that they possess (or ought to possess) the dignity and deportment natural to such an elevated status. Sadly it must be recorded that there have been occasions, few it is true, yet none the less distressing to the aforementioned dignity of the form when Prout has been literally driven to the extremity of patience and has had to resort to physical methods in an attempt to penetrate the obtuseness of the one member of his form who, strangely enough, considers himself its natural leader. For Potter and Greene, his bosom pals and study mates, one may have a genuine feeling of sympathy - indeed sorrow. To be talked at by the great Horace almost incessantly must be tiresome in the extreme, especially if by some unfortunate chance one of them should attempt to remonstrate or, fearful thought, differ upon some point with the great man.

'Shut up Potter'
'But.....'
'Shut up Greene'
'Look here.....'
'Shut up.'

Coker's conversations with his pals were always of a brief, succinct nature, and alarmingly to the point. They inevitably terminated in the complete verbal annihilation of the latter. The above exchange more or less sums up the usual length to which they are allowed to proceed. It says much for their patience and self-control that they have not long since fallen upon their friend and strewn his remains all over Kent and adjacent Hampshire. One feels deeply for them.

When one sees Coker together with his friends setting forth after innumerable delays and false starts caused by Coker's bull-like obtuseness, on a cycling tour of the home counties, commence by taking a wrong turning and thus

proceeding merrily on their way by a series of wrong roads, one cannot help feeling there must be something nearly approaching Homeric in the forbearance and patience of Potter and Greene. Burke tells us that there is a limit at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue. Coker's bosom pals seem determined to disprove this theory which would seem to indicate that they are quite exceptional fellows.

One of the great pleasures in the lives of Potter and Greene is the not infrequent arrival of gargantuan tuck hampers from Aunt Judy for her nephew. These are no ordinary hampers, being large and sumptuous in every respect. They could (and do) contain everything from pineapples to outsize fruit cakes, from prize hams to endless varieties of fancy pastry. They are indeed worth waiting for, and worth tolerating a good deal in terms of chin activity from Coker for the joy of participating therein. Generous to a fault Coker always shares these good things with his study mates, in fact he tends to place rather less interest in the contents of these hampers than do his friends. But everything has to be paid for one way or another in this world, and Potter and Greene have to bottle up their impatience, their ire and finally their scarcely concealed rage and listen to the endless tirades of their leader before participation can proceed. These hampers have in the past been the prime target of interest to William George Bunter who possesses certain in-built mental mechanisms which apprise him of their arrival at Greyfriars. From this moment it is a question of total surveillance, of study doors and equally strong locks, of constant vigilance, for Bunter once upon the trail of tuck (anybody's tuck) is a fiend incarnate, more or less. In the past Potter and Greene and Coker have suffered sad losses through lack of adequate precautions of this nature.

Over the years the relationship between Harry Wharton and Co. - indeed the Remove as a whole - with Horace Coker has been of a rather tumultuous and chaotic nature. Coker as is well known has a 'short way with fags' which he is never tired of applying, with sadly, mediocre success. The usual termination of such experiments being that he is forcibly, certainly not gently, ejected from Remove territory in a considerably delapidated condition. Yet, such is hisconfidence in himself that he never assimilates the lesson. If Coker lacks many admirable facets of character, one cannot number determination among them. Even Wingate the popular captain of the school has a healthy respect for Coker's elephantine prowess, which may be described as rather bull-like in physical strength and somewhat windmill-like in application. In a fracas, should one of Coker's mighty swings find a billet, there is little doubt of the result. However, skill will usually triumph over uncontrolled hammer power.

If Coker has a soft spot in his rugged makeup it is reserved for his guardian, the redoubtable Aunt Judy. In his eyes she is all that a guardian should be; in her's, Horace is the epitome of all that is desirable in a good nephew. The admiration and worship is mutual. One feels that Aunt Judy would be quite at home in any of Mrs. Gaskell's novels; in particular she would, I am sure, be perfectly at ease with the Cranford ladies. An endearing soul, firmly rooted in the Victorian era with all its mannerisms and customs retained intact, she is perfectly oblivious of the manifold shortcomings of her nephew Horace. It is pleasant to record that the great Coker would rush in his usual bull-headed manner, through fire and water for his beloved Aunt. A very happy and satisfying relationship.

Even Dr. Locke the headmaster views Aunt Judy with a certain awe, while Coker's formmaster has been known to exhibit uneasiness in her presence. History has recorded, I believe, incidents wherein her parasol has been put to

"Which of you men is going to stand out in this match against Rookwood and make room for a better man?" said Coker irritably. "Don't both speak at once!"

uses other than those for which it was intended, hence Prout's (and others) wariness. Legend has it, not without a modicum of truth that upon one memorable occasion Aunt Judy demanded and obtained an interview with Dr. Locke to press her claim for Coker to be elevated from the Fourth to the Fifth form, not apparently because of any intellectual ability, but rather on account of size. But 'humanum est errare', Aunt Judy felt that her nephew should naturally fill a place in the higher form, he being such a big boy. History records also that Dr. Locke - poor gentleman - was actually intimidated to such a degree by the aggressive attitude adopted by Coker's aunt that he, perhaps for safety's sake, acquiesced. During the entire course of the interview not once was her parasol laid aside; rather she is recorded as having emphasized her points by vigorous motions with this article. Thus was Dr. Locke, against his better judgement, over-ruled, thus was Mr. Prout inflicted with an outsize in problems, and thus did Coker's head swell to almost twice its normal size at being elevated to the status of a senior 'man'.

Less satisfying is the relationship between Coker and his form master Mr. Prout. That the pupil is exasperating and the master pompous to a degree is a recognised fact of life. It is no easy path for Prout to tread in attempting the extremely difficult task of trying to impart crumbs of knowledge to such an unpromising member of the Fifth, particularly as that member is under the erroneous impression that he is a scholar of no mean achievement, and Prout

his mentor is somewhat lacking in understanding the brilliance of his pupil. It is a difficult problem viewed from any angle and has in the past led to many clashes of personality between master and pupil. As a last resort, on rare occasions. Mr. Prout has had to resort to extreme measures among which is included his authority to administer corporal punishment. From the records we may read that the spectacle of the burly Horace bending over never failed to titillate the members of the Fifth Form despite the serious nature of the proceedings. As for Coker one can only feel deeply for his outraged dignity without in the least sympathising with him.

Yet Coker is anything if not loyal. Let no-one deride Mr. Prout or Dr. Locke: 'Don't let me hear you say anything derogatory about Prout, Greene, or you Potter unless you want your heads knocked together. Prout may be an old ass, but he is my form master'. Dr. Locke may be quite oblivious of the genius blossoming beneath his very nose, but it is a sad fact that Coker's genius seems to blush unseen by the powers that be. Yet he is steadfast in his loyalty to both Mr. Prout and Dr. Locke. Thus Coker: that he is an exasperating dunderhead there is little doubt, but would the Greyfriars' scene be half as endearing without him? A priceless phenomenon indeed - one of Hamilton's best.

* *

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL HOWARD BAKER PRESS READERS. REMEMBER -- DESPITE PROBLEMS WITH THE STANDARD VOLUMES -- THE GREYFRIARS BOOK CLUB SERIES CONTINUES ...

W. HOWARD BAKER

HOWARD BAKER PRESS LTD., 27A ARTERBERRY ROAD, WIMBLEDON, LONDON, S.W.20

Seasons Greetings to all hobby friends.

RON, KIT, NEIL, SUSAN AND DAVID BECK

Sincere Regards and Christmas Greetings to all readers, writers, illustrators, and advertisers, involved with both Collectors' Digest and Annual. Above all Congratulations and Grateful Thanks to Eric on the occasion of this fortieth edition.

REG MOSS

KHANDALLAH, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

EACH YEAR I PEN A POEM,
I ADMIT THEY'RE JUST NOT CLEVER,
SO THIS YEAR I SAID "HANG IT,
JUST HAVE THE HAPPIEST XMAS EVER."

JOHN BURSLEM

FINGERPRINTS

By HAROLD TRUSCOTT.

Ever since Sir Francis Galton published his epoch-making book, Fingerprints, in 1892, it has been a sort of bible for the police. So that the detecting of crime, real and fictional, from not long afterwards, hinged frequently (and still does, where the wary criminal has not learned to wear gloves) on fingerprints. One remark in particular in Galton's book has been accepted as absolute gospel truth: "The broad fact remains that a complete or nearly complete accordance between two prints of a single finger, and vastly more so between the prints of two or more fingers, affords evidence requiring no corroboration that the persons from whom they were made are the same". No one these days doubts that fingerprint evidence has been extremely useful in detection, and that its study quickly became an important science in police work; but "requiring no corroboration" is extreme. Yet it has become an article of faith.

One man who was not convinced by this absolute dogma, who was, in fact, extremely worried by it and its general acceptance, was Dr. Richard Austin Freeman, the creator of Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke, the detective who was a medical jurist, a sort of combined doctor and lawyer, a forerunner of the real life Sir Bernard Spilsbury. In the second of his Thorndyke novels, The Red Thumb Mark, which appeared in 1907, three years before Spilsbury burst upon the scene with the Dr. Crippen case, Freeman not only wrote an outstanding detective story but also questioned the absolute authenticity of fingerprints. Based on Freeman' own medical experience and love of practical experiment of all kinds, together with his study of the books on medical jurisprudence and toxicology by Alfred Swaine Taylor, a leading figure in forensic medicine of the late nineteenth, century, Thorndyke was, to a great extent, a projection of Freeman himself.

The novel centres round a little book called the Thumbograph, in which one could record the thumbprints of one's friends and relations. About ten years after the publication of The Red Thumb Mark Freeman wrote: "At that time the 'Thumbograph' was on sale at all railway bookstalls and I obtained a copy by purchase or gift, I forget which. As my observations in the Fingerprint Department had convinced me that fingerprints could be quite easily reproduced, I regarded the 'Thumbograph' as a rather dangerous publication and I projected this story as an instance of its possible misuse. But I tested my thesis that fingerprints could be fabricated by making a set of gelatine stamps from my own fingertips and with these I was able to make quite good prints".

The story concerns two cousins, Reuben and Walter Hornby, and a parcel of diamonds that has been entrusted to their uncle, John Hornby, and placed in his safe. In the morning they are gone, and all that remains in the safe is a piece of paper with a bloody thumbprint. Both nephews had access to the safe and both are suspects to the police. But the old man strenuously

refused to allow his nephews to have their fingerprints taken, considering this an unnecessary indignity. Later, old Mrs. Hornby, who wants the matter cleared up to remove suspicion from her nephews, shows the police a Thumbograph, which Walter Hornby had given her some time before. Naturally, among the prints recorded there are those of her nephews, and Reuben's thumbprint is found to check with the print on the paper. Thorndyke is approached, and after hearing Reuben's solemn assertion of his innocence agrees to see into the matter. But he warns them that he is only interested in finding the truth, which, if he should arrive at it, will be turned over to the police, no matter what it is.

He discovers that, although the thumbprint in the Thumbograph is undoubtedly Reuben's, he did not place it upon the piece of paper found in the safe. At the time Reuben recorded his thumbprint in the little book he had a scar on his thumb, from a fresh cut. By now, at the time of the robbery, that scar has quite gone. But it is present in the print on the paper. The inference is clear. His print has been fabricated from the Thumbograph and placed artificially on the paper. In court Thorndyke maintains his contention of the forged thumbprint by an experiment which the judge allows. But first he explains the two possible methods by which this can be done. One is to make a cast from an actual finger or thumb, by a method which he explains; but this would not be much use to the forger since the necessary finger or thumb would not be conveniently present for him to use. "The second method", he says, "which is more efficient, and is the one, I have no doubt, that has been used in the present instance, requires more knowledge and skill. It involves the photographing, on a reversed plate, of a genuine print. The negative so obtained is exposed to light, while in contact with a plate of gelatine which has previously been treated with potassium bichromate. Such gelatine is soluble in hot water until it is exposed to light. Thereafter it is not soluble. Thus, the exposed gelatine plate, after careful washing, provides a pattern of raised ridges which correspond with parts of the negative through which light has passed; that is, with the dark parts of the original print, assuming it to have been a dark print with a light surface. Hence the forger has provided himself with a quite serviceable stamp. If an inked roller is passed over this relief, or if the relief is pressed lightly on an inked slab, and then pressed on a sheet of paper, a fingerprint will be produced which will be absolutely identical with the original, even to the little white spots which mark the orifices of the sweat glands. It will be impossible to discover any difference between the real fingerprint and the counterfeit because, in fact, no difference exists."

Then the experiment proceeded. The two fingerprint experts, Singleton and Nash, were asked to retire, a piece of paper ruled into twenty squares was produced, the judge directed which squares should have Thorndyke's forgeries and which Reuben's genuine thumbprints. The experts were recalled, given a photograph of a genuine Reuben thumbprint for comparison, and went to their task, each in turn. Their decisions were quite in accord, and they were all wrong. The judge, indeed, remarked "When they are quite certain they are quite wrong, and when they are doubtful they incline to the wrong conclusion. This is a very strange coincidence, Dr. Thorndyke. Can you explain it?" "I think I can, my lord", Thorndyke replied. "The object of a forger in executing a forgery is to produce deception on those who shall examine the forgery," "Ah!" said the judge; and his face relaxed into a dry smile, while the jury broke out into broad grins. "It was evident to me", continued Thorndyke, "that the experts would be unable to distinguish the real from the forged thumbprints, and that being so, that they would look for some collateral evidence to guide

them. I, therefore, supplied that collateral evidence. Now, if ten prints are taken, without special precautions, from a single finger, it will probably happen that no two are alike; for the finger being a rounded object of which only a small part touches the paper, the impressions produced will show little variations according to the part of the finger by which the print is made. But a stamp such as I have used has a flat surface like that of a printer's type, and, like a type, it always prints the same impression. It does not reproduce the fingertip, but a particular print of the finger, and so, if ten prints are made with a single stamp, each print will be a mechanical repetition of the other nine. Thus, on a sheet bearing twenty fingerprints, of which ten were forgeries made with a single stamp, it would be easy to pick out the ten forged prints by the fact that they would all be mechanical repetitions of one another; while the genuine prints could be distinguished by the fact of their presenting trifling variations in the position of the finger.

"Anticipating this line of reasoning, I was careful to make each print with a different stamp and each stamp was made from a different thumbprint, and I further selected thumbprints which varied as widely as possible when I made the stamps. Moreover, when I made the real thumbprints, I was careful to put the thumb down in the same position each time as near as I was able; and so it happened that, on the sheet submitted to the experts, the real thumbprints were nearly all alike, while the forgeries presented considerable variations. The instances in which the witnesses were quite certain were those in which I succeeded in making the genuine prints repeat one another, and the doubtful cases were those in which I partially failed."

Obviously, it would all have been much more satisfactory if Freeman had been able to reproduce in front of actual fingerprint experts the test Thorndyke applied in court. The challenge was there, and one might think that it would be taken up. But it was not. Scotland Yard, and their Fingerprint Department, were quite satisfied with themselves, and were obviously not going to allow some petty writer of detective stories to disturb them. But there were occasional rumbles from elsewhere, which may or may not have been caused by Freeman's novel. In a trial in 1909, in which a candlestick figured that had on it the accused man's fingerprints, the verdict was guilty. There was an appeal, and the Lord Chief Justice, sitting with two other judges, denied the appeal, and so confirmed the opinion that fingerprints could be considered conclusive evidence without corroboration. It was precisely to offset this fixed idea that Freeman's novel was written. He returned to this theme in three other stories, and in the preface to one of them, The Exploits of Danby Croker, he wrote: "Those who are familiar with the practice of the Court of Criminal Appeal may find in Chapter XII something reminiscent of an actual case that was once heard in it. More than this, I suppose I had better not say; but I may be permitted to express the hope that those who are concerned in the administration of the law will subject to the most jealous and searching scrutiny of all fingerprint evidence that is not fully corroborated".

Thinking about this whole matter, it strikes me that Freeman was in somewhat of a dilemma. Believing, as he did, and from the strongest practical evidence, that successful and probably quite undetectable forgery of fingerprints could be achieved, was he right in showing so completely as he does in The Red Thumb Mark the method by which this could be done? Of which, obviously, the more intelligent criminal could well take advantage. I have no doubt that he weighed very carefully the pros and cons, and at last decided that the warning was needed, and went ahead. At any rate, he seems to have done no harm.

No one seems to have taken him seriously, among those on the side of the law, and, maybe, because of this, no one in the criminal community; at least, in this country.

In 1938, G. W. Wilton, in a book called Fingerprints: History, Law and Romance, wrote: "a fingerprint cannot be forged, at least not successfully"; but he does not explore this any further. Also in 1938 there was a case in which it was suggested that "forged" fingerprints could be planted at the scene of a crime. The Times commented "fingerprint experts are not disturbed by the suggestion". And in a letter to the editor a few days later Nigel Morland wrote that forged fingerprints were out of the question. He added "A more absurd fallacy could not exist". In 1942, in another book, Practical Fingerprints, published in New York, B. C. Bridges, described in his book as an internationally recognised expert on identification, suggests all sorts of reasons why successful fingerprint forgery is impossible and, apparently, quite destroys Freeman's contention.

In 1954 Douglas G. Browne and Alan Brock, in Fingerprints: Fifty Years of Scientific Crime Detection, also published in New York, although definitely fans of Thorndyke, deride Freeman's claim that fingerprints can be forged. They write: "In The Red Thumb Mark he employs his specialised knowledge to expose a conspiracy based on the fallacy that fingerprints can be forged". They add: "He must have been better informed about the efficiency of the Fingerprint Branch (of Scotland Yard). But he was following the tradition, established by Poe, adopted by Conan Doyle, and not yet outworn, of the brilliant amateur who must always score off the police". Here they contradict themselves. They have already praised Thorndyke as "the first truly scientific detective in fiction, a medico-legal expert who in technical attainments, extreme thoroughness, lucidity of mind and speech, and even physical appearance, foreshadowed the late Sir Bernard Spilsbury". (Spilsbury first became a notable figure in 1910, in the Dr. Crippen case.) So Brown and Brock really knew that Thorndyke was no brilliant amateur, and if they followed his relations wth the police, they knew that the last thing in Thorndyke's mind was to score them. This contradiction in the Browne and Brock book is a point Norman Donaldson does not make in his interesting book In Search of Dr. Thorndyke, to which I am indebted for much factual material in this essay.

In spite of all this adverse criticism, no one did challenge Freeman to prove his point. If the experts were so sure of themselves as all the comments I have quoted indicate, surely it would have strengthened their own case immensely to confront Freeman and see him fail. On the other hand, it may have been that they could not be bothered with a writer of detective stories making such an absurd claim; or, could it even be that they did not want to take the risk of being publicly proved wrong?

Nonetheless, vindication came; was coming, in fact, even while the experts were denying Freeman's claim - without reference to Freeman, and from an unexpected quarter. In 1934, Harold Cummins wrote an essay called Counterfeit Fingerprints in which he asked "Are the experts really justified in their insistence that a fingerprint forgery would not escape detection?" Cummins worked in the Department of Anatomy at Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans, and was a respected authority on finger-, palm- and footprints. He prepared an experiments in which a zinc cut, made by a commercial engraver from the original print, and at exactly the original size, was pressed against dental wax and a gelatine cast made from the resulting wax mould; counterfeit prints were made from this gelatine dummy, which had a flesh-like consistency.

"A card was prepared which had a row of four prints of the same digit (a right index finger), two of them being genuine and two counterfeit, this card then being examined by eight workers successively and independently. All were fingerprint experts, all had long experience and high standing." So, thirty-two decisions were made. They turned in twenty correct answers, eleven incorrect and one doubtful. It is not surprising that five of the experts refused to allow their names to be used. Incidentally, the experts were told to look for forgeries, and these were not fuzzy, partial or otherwise imperfect, as prints left at the scene of a crime could well be. Cummins' conclusion was: "The results of this trest point against acceptance of the common dictum that a counterfeit fingerprint would be inevitably recognised as such. The conclusion is conservatively phrase, so as to leave open the possibility that some experts (perhaps especially those having comprehensive experience in manufacture of counterfeits and their study) may be able to make reliable judgments in at least some of the cases presented to them".

It is interesting that the editor of this journal submitted the test-card to "six qualified individuals, one of whom is in charge of a fingerprint bureau, and the percentage of accuracy approximatesto that obtained by Dr. Cummins".

In the same journal C. D. Lee, who was Captain of Detectives of the Police Department in Berkeley, California, wrote: "It is with considerable reluctance that fingerprint experts have come to realise that fingerprints can be forged, and to have to admit as much when testifying in court". His conclusion is frightening: "It is submitted that the basic idea unlying penal law is the protection of society, that the interests of society are paramount as against those of the individual, and that if an occasional individual's liberty or even his life is sacrificed in war or in peace for the welfare of his country or of society, the sacrifice is not in vain". It staggers one to try to imagine what would have been Freeman's reaction to that! Captain Lee seems to have overlooked that fact that society is not one amorphous thing, but is made up of the individuals he rates so cheap.

Since the war which ended (?) in 1945 another and much easier method of duplicating fingerprints has arisen. Readers of Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason stories may remember that on various occasions he refers to a method used by American fingerprint experts of "lifting" prints, so that they can be studied in more favourable surroundings. Powder is blown on to the print with an insufflator, the excess blown off and sellotape stuck across the print and then carefully peeled off, the print coming with it. This can then be deposited on another surface. Now, this was not imagination on Gardner's part. This practice really is used; whether or not it has penetrated to the British Fingerprint Departments I do not know, but I should think so. Just imagine what a criminally minded individual could do with that. But Freeman saw the dangers (and proved them) as far back as the very early years of this century, when no one would take him seriously.

I will end with two quotations from Raymond Chandler, a writer as different from Freeman as he could be. He wrote to his English publisher, Hamish Hamilton, in 1949: "This man Austin Freeman is a wonderful performer. He has no equal in his genre and he is also a much better writer than you might think, if you were superficially inclined, because in spite of the immense leisure of his writing he accomplishes an even suspense which is quite unexpected. The apparatus of his writing makes for dullness, but he is not..." The second Chandler extract compares Thorndyke with Spilsbury: "The great scene would have been a courtroom battle between Thorndyke and Spilsbury, and for my

money Thorndyke would have won, hands down".

* *

Greetings to all my customers/friends. Still the largest stock at your disposal. Top prices for Collections, etc.

NORMAN SHAW

84 BELVEDERE ROAD, LONDON, SE19 2HZ

Warm Season's Greetings to all my friends in the London OBBC. Wanted: 'Inspector Higgins' detective novels by Cecil Freeman Gregg, and Richmal Crompton's last book "William the Lawless".

BRIAN DOYLE

11a CLARENDON DRIVE, PUTNEY, LONDON, SW15 1AA

Hamiltonian Library Catalogue sent for two First-Class stamps.

ROGER JENKINGS

8 RUSSELL ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS., PO9 2DG

Compliments of the Season.

FROM

THE WHITER FAMILY

Seasonal Greetings and Warmest Thanks to the Editor and Contributors. Some HB Specials still required.

ANDREWS

80 GREENWOOD AVENUE, LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY, WILTS.

Season's Greetings to all Friends. Always interested in exchanging Pre-War Duplicate Boy's Papers.

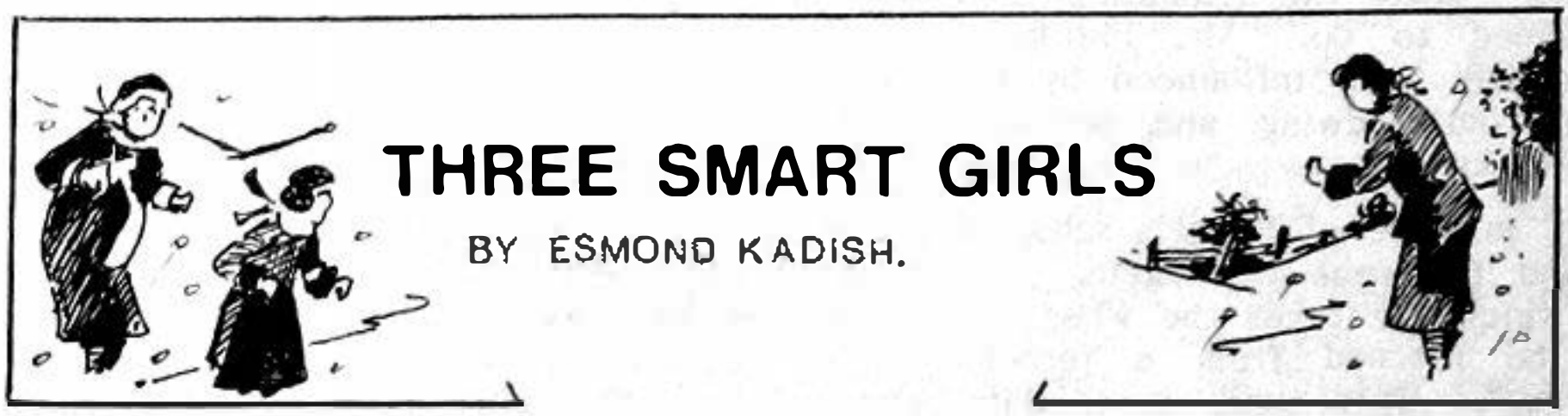
KEN TOWNSEND

7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE6 6EA

Happy Christmas Everybody. Wanted for my collection: W. E. Johns Books, Modern Boys' containing Biggles stories, The Boys' Friend Library Numbers 469, 501, 610, 614, 617, 621, 625, 630, any other Johns Items. Howard Baker Facsimilies, Gazettes Catalogues, to start collection. ALL LETTERS ANSWERED.

P. GALVIN

2 THE LINDALES, POGMOOR, BARNSLEY, S. YORKS. 0226 295613



THREE SMART GIRLS

BY ESMOND KADISH.

In Charles Hamilton's school stories, it was frequently the character who kicked over the traces from time to time, who stimulated our interest, and even excited out admiration. Mornington of Rookwood, Cardew of St. Jim's, and, above all, Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars, fit into this category, each a happy and intriguing blend of good and bad qualities - at least, for the reader! No doubt, in today's "realistic" world, where - as the song says - "anything can happen and it probably will", Smithy's nocturnal expeditions to the Three Fishers, his smoking and card playing, and his betting on the "gee-gees", might barely occasion the raising of a single disapproving eyebrow. It was not really the activities of "The Bounder" which attracted us as youngsters, however; it was more a case of what he seemed to represent. Smithy, and his fellows, did what we dreamed of doing, but rarely, or never, dared - he broke the rules, and flouted authority.

Hamilton never got the opportunity - and perhaps he never had the inclination - to create a female counterpart to Smithy at Cliff House. As is well known, he wrote only four or so tales for the SCHOOL FRIEND, and it was left to his successor, Horace Phillips, to introduce the first wayward schoolgirl character into the saga in "Only a Scholarship Girl" (No. 21). The title actually refers to Peggy Preston, who has come "all the way from the North" - as she says in answer to Bessie Bunter, who has arrived at the station in the hope of scrounging a free feed from the new girl. Peggy's arrival at Cliff House is closely followed by that of the haughty Augusta Anstruther-Browne, whose entrance into the tuckshop, presided over by "Uncle" Clegg, is impressive:

> "A tall figure, very expensively dressed, a thin face that looked very pale and cold, gloved hands, the flash of a diamond brooch - and then this vision of grandeur had passed into the shop."

Augusta proceeds to make her presence felt. After announcing that "the family name is hyphenated", she stands treat to the Cliff House girls, and puts the tuckshop keeper in his place with a few well-chosen words: "My man, you must keep a civil tongue in your head, or you will not have my patronage!". Reaction amongst the girls is mixed; Bessie, of course, is delighted with the free feed, but Barbara Redfern pronounces it "swank!", and there are similar caustic remarks on Augusta's airs and graces.

Augusta and Peggy inevitably start their careers at Cliff House as enemies. To Augusta, Peggy is a despised "scholarship girl", and when the pair are placed in the same study, Augusta throws Peggy's bags into the passage. Perhaps equally inevitable is the subsequent act of reconciliation between the two girls, after Peggy has rescued Augusta from the perils of a blazing dormitory, in which she has been trapped. A wet muffler wound round her mouth, Peggy staggers out of the burning room with Augusta lying "limp and helpless" in her

arms. Thus, the friendship of Peggy and Augusta blossoms, as it was clearly destined to do. Mr. Phillips, (writing, of course, as "Hilda Richards") has obviously been influenced by the example of Vernon-Smith and the sailorman's son, Tom Redwing, and, perhaps, by that of Valentine Mornington and Kit Erroll at Rookwood.

In spite of Peggy's subsequent stabilising influence over her, Augusta seems bound to break out again. She does this in "Missing from School" (No. 29), in which she takes the wheel of a car, and the vehicle crashes. She also has to be rescued from a ferocious tiger, escaped from "Samway's Celebrated Circus". This time, it is Babs who obliges. She raises a chair, and brings it down "full on the brute's forehead". Naturally, it "cringes", lifts the "huge paw" with which it is pinning Augusta to the ground, and backs away, emitting a "sullen muttering growl".

This, however, seems a trifling escapade compared to the trouble Augusta incurs when she is befriended by the aptly-named Sybil Spender. The Spenders are described as "county-folk", but have "a reputation for being rather too go-ahead". Augusta feels the need to "keep up with the Spenders", so to speak, and "borrows" several pounds as expenses, from the collecting-box of a fund, of which she is the treasurer (No. 69). In this series, her behaviour goes from bad to worse under Sybil's influence. She takes a leaf out of the Bounder's book by playing cards for money, schemes to get Barbara Redfern expelled, and even cuts off a chunk of poor Bessie's plait in a fit of temper. "She's cut all my lovely hair off!" wails Bessie. "She's spoiled my bub-beauty for life!".

There is, of course, no real answer to that, but readers were no doubt relieved to learn that Bessie's famous plait was actually only six inches shorter. Augusta is duly sentenced to be expelled, but the overbearing Mr. Anstruther-Browne confronts Miss Primrose to inform her that, as a new school governor he has the power to replace her as headmistress, unless his daughter is allowed to stay. There follows a change of regime at Cliff House, and a "barring-out" by the girls, before Miss Primrose is reinstated and Augusta expelled. This, though, marks the beginning of Augusta's reformation. On her way home, after being expelled, she learns, from an evening paper, that her father has lost all his money in a stock-market crash. Repentance sets in, and Augusta returns to Cliff House - improbably - in disguise as "Olive Wayne", complete with bobbed hair, tinted glasses, and even a limp! As "Olive", she wins her way back to favour with Peggy's help, and her real name is eventually "re-entered on the school register".

In a 1922 series (Nos. 142-5), Augusta, no longer "vain and reckless", faces expulsion again, and ends up (a crowning humiliation this!) in cap and apron, as a lowly servant at Spender Court, the home of her erstwhile friend, Sybil. She crops up from time to time - rather less colourfully, as she has now reformed - in subsequent tales by Mr. Phillips and Reginald Kirkham. She was also featured occasionally by L. E. Ransome, in the second series of the SCHOOL FRIEND, which commenced in 1925. Incidentally, the illustrations for the Cliff House stories, throughout the paper's ten-year run, were done by Mr. C. Dodshon. Augusta is pictured in the early issues, as rather thin-featured and hard-looking, although her appearance improves later. The final verdict on the reformed Augusta should, perhaps, be left to Miss Bessie Bunter (assisted by Reg. Kirkham?). In a special number of "The Cliff House Weekly", Bessie contributes a "yewlergy" to "Orguster", and suggests that, amongst her many accomplishments, she is "a fine orl-rounder at krikket, and in the field

at deep mid-slip point she is only to be beaten by one girl I know". Guess who!

When John Wheyway took over the writing of the Cliff House tales in the SCHOOLGIRL in 1932, he dropped Augusta and created his own rebellious schoolgirl character - Rosa Rodworth, the "Stormy Petrel" of the Fourth Form. Described as "raven-haired" and of a changeable disposition, Rosa satisfactorily enlivens the Cliff House scene until the arrival of Diana Royston-Clarke towards the end of 1933. Diana's temperament is what popular novelists might describe as "mercurial", and, as a character, she possesses all the essential qualities for causing trouble at one of our fictional schools:- she is rich, wilful, spoiled, and ruthless. Like Rosa, her moods are unpredictable:-

> "Diana was like that - angry one minute, angelic the next, moody and morose one moment, laughing, jolly, good-tempered the next."

Diana arrives in "The Firebrand of the Fourth" (No. 224), accompanied by her father - "a rather grizzled man with a clipped moustache and a keen, businesslike type of face". Diana dubs him "Curmudge", and he seems "completely under his daughter's thumb". Unlike Horace Phillips, who comments, somewhat disapprovingly, that Augusta might "spoil her looks by needless attentions", John Wheway has a shrewder idea of what his young, school-uniformed readers might want to know about Diana:-

> "From the dainty velvet fez on her head, decorated with a solitary diamond clasp, to the toes of her extremely shapely and expensive high-heeled shoes, she seemed to breathe opulence and expensive tastes."

Not your average Cliff House schoolgirl, evidently! Strangely, Wheway makes no initial mention of the mop of brushed-back, "platinum blonde" hair which was to become Diana's trademark, and make her look like a junior version of film star, Jean Harlow, although Mr. Laidler illustrates her as such right from the start.

Diana captivates the Form with her charm, although Babs finds her "overwhelming", and tomboy Clara Trevlyn, who dislikes "ostentation", finds Diana's clothes in "bad taste". Later, when the girls turn against Babs because of Diana's scheming, Clara castigates them as "a pack of silly, idiotic jellyfish!" - not to mention "a weak-kneed crowd of sheep!". Like Smithy, Diana loves the limelight, and has to be the centre of attention at all times. Her plotting forces the resignation of Barbara as Form Captain, and she then determines to become

Games Captain in place of Clara. Of course, she overeaches herself in the final yarn of the series, "Diana Dared Too Much", and Babs and Clare are restored to office.

Although, like most such characters, she commences her school career by playing a totally unsympathetic part, she is always interesting and attractive, even in this first series, and quite different from Faith Ashton, a doll-faced, baby-voiced schemer whom Wheway introduced a few years later. Faith repels with her duplicity, and one yearns to see her bowled out, but Diana always had character, and for all her faults was "of the type that goes down fighting". Even Diana's "dirty tricks", such as launching herself over the side of a quarry, in order to accuse Clara of deliberately pushing her, are committed zestfully, rather than slyly:-

> "Here goes a jolly good tunic, to say nothing of odds and ends of other clothing Hey, presto!" And Diana levered herself forward".

Like Smithy, Diana may smoke and break bounds, (although not to the Three Fishers!), but she "had qualities which were to be admired" by her form-mates:- "her undoubted courage, her cool insolence at all times, her seeming indifference to the opinion of other girls".

Diana is sentenced to expulsion, but does not leave the school because her father is abroad. Her second starring role occurs in 1934 (Nos. 240-44), in one of those unlikely plots which involve a temporary headmistress and a secret society formed by the juniors to fight "tyranny". Diana - this time attired in a "polo jumper of vivid yellow, flannel trousers, and a brown tweed sports jacket with square shoulders" - learns that "Curmudge", who has made "heaps of money" on the Continent, is now Chairman of the Board of Governors, and that she can act pretty much as she wishes. There follows a period of turmoil for Cliff House, with the secret society formed by Babs and Co. battling both Diana and the temporary headmistress, Miss Tylor. In the end, Diana is routed, and leaves Cliff House in a hired Daimler, as "coolly insolent" as ever:-

> "'Cheerio, Babsie darling!' came the light-hearted reply. 'I may be seeing you again sometime. Who knows?'"

They do, in fact, see her again at a "roadhouse", called "The Gay Buccaneer", which has been built in the neighbourhood (absolutely no resemblance to the Three Fishers or Bird in Hand!). There are facilities for swimming and dancing, a rifle range, amusement hall, cinema, and library - and all this at "popular prices". Bessie's eyes are glistening, when the chums arrive to inspect

it, because "tea is now being served". Diana, clad in white flannels, and smoking a cigarette, saunters forward to greet them, and announces that, as she is the hostess of the roadhouse, their presence is unwelcome. Fortunately for Babs and Co., the real manageress of the place, a young woman who is a sister of one of the Fifth formers, welcomes them in.

It is in this series that Diana, still at loggerheads with Babs and Co., begins to show the better side of her nature. In the final story of the series, "With the Help of the Firebrand" (No. 255), Wheway uses the familiar device of having her rescue someone (Bessie) from a burning garage. She emerges, supporting Bessie, minus some of her hair and eyebrows, and with Babs and Co. now ready to accept her. But Wheway doesn't make the mistake of "reforming" her completely, and when Babs offers her friendship she replies:-

> "I don't know, Babs I think I prefer you the other way. We have fights, and it's not always I who win."

Asked about her plans, she says that she might even come back to Cliff House and help Babs "solve more mysteries. What things we could do together, enemy-friend of mine!".

It seems to me that Wheway strikes just the right note for his young readers with that expression, "enemy-friend". A little friction between the characters always makes them more interesting to read - and to write - about.

Diana did not actually return to Cliff House until early in 1936, and her place as the school's resident "difficult" type was taken by Rosa Rodworth - a good character in her own right. In a 1935 series (Nos. 301-4), Rosa wins a Silver Jubilee competition at the "Gay Buccaneer", for the "prettiest school-girl", in "When Rosa's Head was Turned". A caricature of her, drawn on the formroom blackboard by the malicious Lydia Crossendale, with the accompanying couplet: "I am the Queen of Beauty; Don't I look a stuck-up cutey?", sends Rosa into a typical temper tantrum. Meanwhile, Wheway had not neglected Diana, and wrote a serial featuring her, entitled "Diana the Good-Time Girl" (Nos. 285-299). Diana learns that "Curmudge" is to be made Mayor of Lantham (one of the Hamilton place-names retained by Wheway) and, as he is a widower, she expects to be made mayoress and act as hostess. However, the normally indulgent Mr. Royston-Clarke considers Diana too young, and puts her nose out of joint by giving the job to her aunt. Of course, Diana as a society hostess, wearing elegant thirties evening gowns, and looking about twenty-five in the illustrations - nicely drawn by someone other than Laidler - is scarcely more credible than the gun-toting Smithy, galloping about the Texas ranges in the 1938 "Packsaddle" series. Diana redeems herself by her affection for her gentle and musically-talented cousin, Madge, and experiences a spot of hardship when she runs away to London to earn her own living, and stands in for a flower seller who has fallen ill.

It is in this serial that she meets Margot, "the daughter of Lord and Lady Lantham", and when she returns to Cliff House (her expulsion having been rescinded because of her rescue of Bessie), Margot accompanies her. In "The Girl who Outshone Diana" (Nos. 337-41), Margot commits the unforgivable sin of attracting more attention than Diana, and of being better at hockey too! Diana's jealousy turns everyone against her, before remorse sets in, and she is reconciled with Margot. The latter plays the Peggy Preston role - but a well-heeled and aristocratic version. When the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ceased publication in May 1936, and was incorporated into the SCHOOLGIRL, Wheway featured Diana again in a series set in the local Enterprise Film Studios. In

"The Firebrand's Feud" (Nos. 357-61), the Scottish junior, Jean Cartwright, is Diana's rival for the leading part in a film. By this time, the Cliff House tales were of shorter length, and complete weekly stories would be the order of things in 1937. Unlike Hamilton, who was often at his best with single stories, Wheway seems to me to be happier with a short series in which to develop his plot and characters. However, Diana remained a "star" right up until the SCHOOLGIRL became a war casualty in 1940, and it is little wonder that the flamboyant "Firebrand" was said to have been Wheway's favourite Cliff House character. What writer wouldn't enjoy creating and developing such a striking personality?

At this point, I have to confess that, as far as the writings of Horace Phillips are concerned, I much prefer his Morcove tales - written as "Marjorie Stanton", and started in 1921 for the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN - to those of Cliff House, which he contributed to the early SCHOOL FRIEND. (To be honest, it's not always easy to tell just which Cliff House tales he did write, but his style in the Morcove stories is quite distinctive, and it's much simpler to guess which occasional series was contributed by Mr. L. E. Ransome.) It isn't just that the Cliff House stories attributed to Mr. Phillips are sometimes criticised as being "old-fashioned" and too earnest; so, too, are the Morcove tales, but these remain totally enjoyable, and still very readable. No doubt it was natural for him to have a greater interest in his "own" school - Morcove - and more affection for the characters he created for it - Betty Barton and Co. Like Hamilton, Horace Phillips had a flair for establishing and describing the environs of his school: readers of the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN could conjure up the quaint old market town of Barncombe, or the gorse-laden Devon moors which surrounded Morcove, as easily and vividly as readers of the MAGNET might visualise themselves cutting across Courtfield Common, or rowing down the Sark to Popper's Island.

Although he made a colourful character out of Cora Grandways, she remained an out-and-out "baddie", the arch-enemy of Study 12, and the bane of Betty and Co.'s existence. Generally, Phillips preferred characters who were either good or bad; even one like Augusta was rather improbably reformed. The nearest approach to a complex character like Diana was Pat Laurence, and the unique fact about her was that she was a perfectly honest girl who also happened to be proud, prickly, and independent. Pat never schemed to get what she wanted: things just naturally seemed to happen to her.

Pat Laurence arrived at Morcove in 1930, in "Study Against Study" (Nos. 473-8). She is first seen in Barncombe High Street, as she brings her motor-cycle to rest outside the Creamery ("the town's best teashop"), exhibiting a "boyish freedom and strength" in the process. (I don't know why Phillips has her arriving on a motor-bike - perhaps it symbolises her independent nature - but, in any case, we never hear of it again.) She looks "the type of girl who never knows a flagging spirit". A brush with a dilatory waitress in the teashop causes Pat to storm out of the place, and the loaded tea-tray to crash - an incident which is to have repercussions at Morcove:-

> "If there was one thing more than another that Pat was quick to resent, it was impudence from an 'inferior'. She had been reared in a home where the servants had shown a meekness that was early Victorian."

She also had a chip on her shoulder, having left her last school under mysterious, but unspecified, circumstances.

At Morcove, she does nothing to court popularity, but rather seems to

have it thrust upon her. She seems "careless as to whether people looked at her or not. If they did, they were bound to think her attractive. If they didn't, well, they needn't'". She goes up in the estimation of the girls when she rejects the fawning attentions of the Form's toady. Ursula Wade, but "the three E's", Eva Merrick, Etta Hargrove, and Ella Elgood - nice girls, and no sycophants - soon fall under the new girl's spell. Betty and Co. are less enamoured with her, and the feeling is mutual, except in the case of Pam Willoughby, "the little lady of Swanlake", with whom Pat feels some affinity.

The first sign of friction between Pat and Study 12 is when Betty tells her that the Creamery waitress, with whom she had clashed, has been sacked, because of the incident, and asks her to intercede. Pat refuses, saying that it "served her right". (You can tell that this happened in pre-war days; if this were the eighties, the Creamery staff would probably be picketing Morcove School). When it later transpires that Pat has, after all, ensured that the waitress keeps her job, by phoning the manageress, Betty asks why she had said nothing. Pat replies - quite understandably - that Betty should not have taken it for granted that "I was as heartless as all that".

Pat's popularity grows as that of Betty and Co.'s wanes. Matters come to a head when Ursula Wade removes a note, which Betty has left in Pat's study asking her to remain within bounds, as the headmistress, Miss Somerfield, wishes to call a spcial assembly of the form. Thus, Pat leaves school bounds in all innocence, and is in hot water when she returns. Her determination not to be victimised nearly causes her to be expelled. Betty insists that she did leave a note, and resigns as captain when the Form sides with Pat. An election for the captaincy is held, which Pat wins, but her reign is short-lived, when the odious Ursula sidles into her study seeking favours for services rendered. She admits having taken the note which had caused all the trouble, and Pat is furious, calling her "a hateful, mischief-making, deceitful creature", and "a snake". Being an honourable girl, she immediately writes a letter of resignation, explaining that she has been tricked. Betty is restored to the captaincy, and Study 12 to favour.

Betty and Co. behave throughout this series in their usual impeccable manner, but there's sometimes a hint of self-righteousness, too, as when Betty, in a well-meaning, but ill-advised gesture, refuses an invitation to Pat's "spread", unless she makes it "all right" for the sacked waitress. Perhaps there's more danger of this creeping into a girls' school story than the boys', but Mr. Phillips is always at great pains to avoid any suggestion that Betty has an officious streak in her make-up, and writes, elsewhere in the Morcove saga, that Betty "scorned to wear her captain's sash". (I should hope so, too - the thought of Betty, tripping into Study 12 to greet the "chummery", sporting her "captain's sash", might have put me off Morcove for life!) However, she is a level-headed lass, with no trace of "side". She certainly needs a sense of humour, too, in this series, with Pat's supporters altering her election slogans from, "None better than Betty" to "None battier...".

This excellent school story - reprinted in August 1939, in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY, as No. 693 - was followed by another featuring Pat Laurence (Nos. 479-82). Using that most popular of all schoolgirl themes, a wedding - Pat's wealthy aunt and guardian is to be married - it concerns her quarrel with two mischief-making sisters. In this series, she is "Backed up by Study 12", and has a reconciliation with Betty and Co. which I find quite unconvincing, especially in view of her remark, at the end of the previous series, that Study 12 "are not my sort".

Thereafter. Pat becomes a mere background character - which the original, strong-willed Pat would never have allowed herself to be. She turns up, for instance, in the 1934 SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL, doing a rather miserable and uncharacteristic piece of cheaing in an Arts and Crafts contest. Horace Phillips had, in fact, created an excellent, but complex, character with whom, I suspect, he doesn't seem to know quite what to do. The slightly arrogant Pat Laurence of the original series would never really fit into the Study 12 coterie under Betty's leadership. True, she resembles Pam Willoughby, "but whereas Pam was a thoroughly good sort, there was something about this girl that suggested she could, if she chose, be just the opposite". Still, while Pat is taking a brief, but leading, role on the Morcove stage, she is interesting and unusual, and one can only regret Mr. Phillips's reluctance to develop her as a character.

Here's to our three unusual heroines, then - Augusta, Diana, and Pat - each in her turn helped to brighten the Cliff House and Morcove scene!

* *

Thank you Eric Fayne, Ben Whiter, and Roger Jenkins for keeping me "in touch" during 1986.

JAMES HODGE

Seasonal Greetings and Best Health to all "C.D." Friends.

LEN HAWKEY

3 SEAVIEW ROAD, LEIGH-on-SEA, ESSEX, SS9 1AT

Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all, with a special thanks to Eric Fayne and Norman Shaw.

D. BLAKE

THAMES DITTON

Happy Yuletide to Eric, Snowee, and all Hobby Friends. Good Luck to the "Digest" in its next forty years!

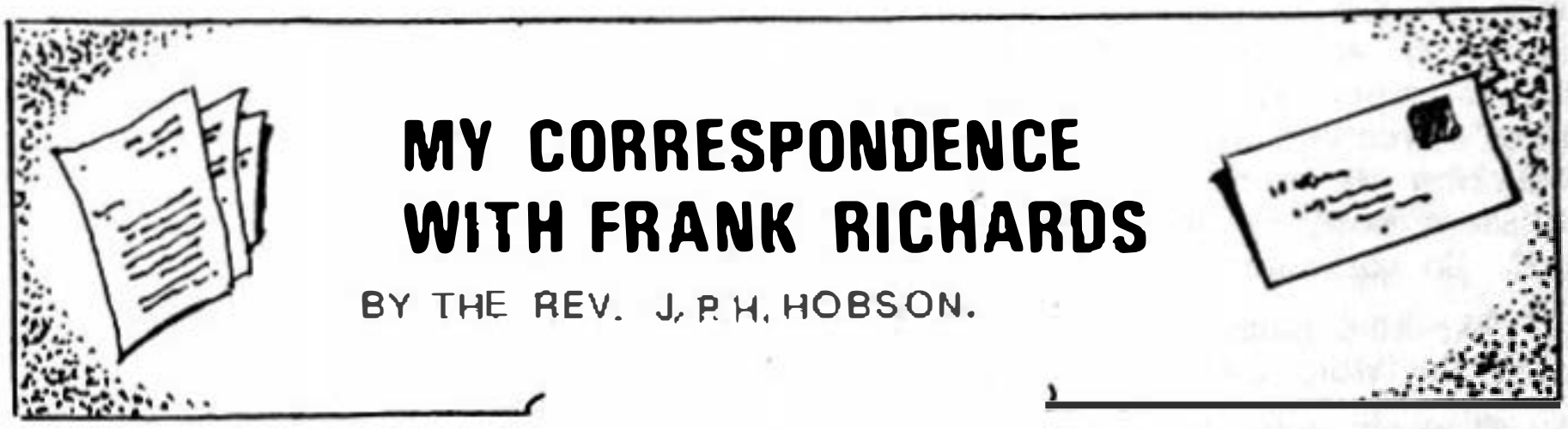
ESMOND KADISH

18 GROVE GARDENS, HENDON, N.W.4

WANTED: SEXTON BLAKE SECOND SERIES No. 453 and 572. 'Crime in the Kiosk' and 'On the Midnight Beat' both by John G. Brandon. Your price paid. Wanted to complete set of J.G.B. Best Wishes to The Editor, Norman Shaw, etc. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to All.

J. ASHLEY

46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM, HANTS., PO15 5AH



MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH FRANK RICHARDS

BY THE REV. J. P. H. HOBSON.

Christmas Day 1930 was a very important day for me because among my Christmas presents was a copy of the Holiday Annual 1931 and through that wonderful book I was introduced to Frank Richards' wonderful world of "Greyfriars" and "St. Jim's". I treasured the book greatly, as I still do, and very soon afterwards I started to take the Magnet and the Gem.

Like many of you I find that the friends I made at "Greyfriars" seem more real to me now than many of the friends that I had at school and I owe this to the genius of Frank Richards.

I went to a public school myself before going to Oxford and, although I soon realised that real public school life was rather different from the life depicted at "Greyfriars" and "St. Jim's", I have always been fascinated by the stories and, above all, by the characters so brilliantly portrayed by the master of boys' literature.

As a school-master myself, so often I see something of the characters of the "Greyfriars" boys in the boys of my school. I was a House-Master in a boarding school when the hard-backed Bunter books were introduced in 1948 and it was my great pleasure to introduce Greyfriars to a new generation of boys by reading a chapter a night in the dormitory to the boys in my house. A few weeks ago one of the small boys to whom I had read these stories and who is now a well-known M.P., told me over dinner at the House of Commons, how much he had enjoyed listening to the Greyfriars' stories and that only recently he had bought a Bunter book for his library! As I had been his Classics Master I was very pleased the next day to send him a copy of "Ultio Bunteri!".

When I became a Headmaster in 1950 in Surrey it occurred to me to write to Frank Richards (I always think of him as Frank Richards and in all his correspondence with me he always signed his name in that way) to thank him for all the pleasure he had given me and to tell him that I had put copies of the Bunter books in the school library and that they were being enjoyed by the boys.

I said how much I hoped it would be possible to have the Magnet reprinted or a boys' paper containing his stories. In his reply he wrote "there seems to be a general consensus of opinion that it must be books or nothing and the publishers have the last word! but it does amaze me sometimes when I receive the report of the sales of the Bunter books. One volume alone has run to 40,000 copies and is still re-printing. Of course, this makes me very happy but I don't think that I shall ever cease to be surprised".

He went on to say: "So you remember the story of Bunter as an African King? That is another continual and very pleasant surprise to me, the way

old readers recall old stories. I almost rubbed my eyes when I looked at my Times on 8th November (1950) and found Harry Wharton in the fourth leader. The writer actually quoted an incident from a Magnet story published in 1909! What a memory! I shall certainly act on your suggestion of reviving Billy Bunter's ventriloquism in the books. But in these days of slow and difficult production we work a long time ahead. There are four Bunter books with the publishers now, of which three will appear in 1951, and the fourth at Easter 1952! So our plump ventriloquist will have to wait a little.

"At the moment I am busy revising by Autobiography, which was written during the War, and must be brought up to date for publication next year.

"I don't quite know how to express my appreciation of the very kind things you say about my writings. You must take the speech as read! I don't need to tell you that any writer for young people regards apppreciation from a schoolmaster as a feather in his cap.

"I should very much like you to accept the enclosed copy of my latest book. to add to the Bunter books. It is about a new character called "Jack of All Trades", and is the first volume of a new series. And you may be interested to see the cutting from the Evening Standard referring to it, a picture of the oldest and the youngest inhabitants of this quarter."

In December 1950, in answer to my letter thanking him for the book "Jack of All Trades" which he had sent he replied:

"Many thanks for your letter of the 1st. Your description of Form III's reaction to the book is extremely interesting to me. And I was very interested indeed to read that you were preaching in Canterbury Cathedral on Sunday. It occured to me that you might like to see something I have written quite other than school stories though, I hope I may venture to say, with the same end in view, of keeping the young mind on the right path. I enclose a copy of a local Church Magazine, containing some extracts from my little book called "Faith and Hope". The book is not yet published, but I hope to see it out next year.

"Certainly, I shall be very glad to see you if you will call when you come this way in the Spring. It will be a real pleasure."

I wrote to him on the 1st October, 1952, to say how I had appreciated his autobiography and I was able to put him in touch with the Secretary of the Lutterworth Press regarding his book "Faith and Hope" and I enclosed a copy of our school magazine. In his reply of the 9th October, 1952, he wrote:

"Many thanks for your very pleasant letter, and for the copy of the school magazine which accompanied it. This, I need not say, interested me very much, and I thank you most sincerely for your kind remarks on page 15. I was very interested to find the name of "Coker" among your seniors -- no resemblance whatever, I am sure, to Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars! -- and still less between Skinner and the Captain of Searle House and the bad boy of the Remove who bears the same name!

"I am glad that you liked the autobiography. To tell the truth, I was in some doubt about publishing it at all, but so many readers have since written such kind letters about it that I venture to be reassured.

"Faith and Hope" is not yet published. The publishers do not seem to regard it as a 'seller', and perhaps they are right. They must, of course, consider this aspect, in these days when so much capital is involved in the

production of even a small book. However, I hope that some more optimistic publisher may materialise sooner or later -- being a good deal of an optimist myself!"

In my letter of October 13th, I was able to assure him that both Coker and Skinner were quite unlike their more famous counterparts at Greyfriars but occasionally I cast my gimlet eye upon them, just to make quite sure!

Later in October, I asked him if it would be possible for him to write a special story for the next issue of our school magazine and I remarked that I should be proud to be included among hiseditors! To which he replied:

"Now about the school magazine. I should be very pleased to write the short story you suggest; but agreements with publishers bar Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood. I would write a "Carcroft" story if you like. If you think the boys would like a spot of "Carcroft", just let me know about what time you would require the typescript."

I sent him a copy of J. B. Phillips' translation of the Gospels which had just been issued, in which my name was mentioned in the foreword and he wrote back saying that the new translation had given him great pleasure. His letter continued:

"I must apologise for not having sent you the short Carcroft story earlier: it is Billy Bunter's fault; that "fat villain" having been in possession of the typewriter. But I have much pleasure in enclosing it herewith", and he enclosed the short story "No Tuck for Turkey" which we printed in the special Coronation edition of the School Magazine in 1953.

I wrote to him in March sending him a copy of the School Magazine and he replied:

"Many thanks for your letter and the "Gateway". Yes, I like very much the way in which it is printed; it is a pleasure to read in such beautifully clear type. I am glad to hear that the boys liked the little Carcroft story and glad that the "perfect Billy Bunter" is like W.G.B. only in appearance! Billy Bunter is, so I am told at least, amusing in fiction; but a real live Bunter would, I fear, soon cause his school-fellows to repeat Queen Victoria's famous remark.

"Faith and Hope" has not yet found a publisher. One of this fraternity gently counselled the author to follow the cobbler's example, and stick to his last! Perhaps he is right.

"The Bunter books appear twice a year as usual, but this year it is to be June and October. Perhaps you may be interested to hear that Bunter is to have an Annual all to himself, which will keep company with Tom Merry's Own next Christmas. It is to be called "Billy Bunter's Own". I have just finished writing "Billy Bunter's Christmas Box" for it, and Sister Bessie is now in possession of the typewriter as she will also appear in the annual.

"It has indeed been a long and hard winter, and I am glad to see the last of it. But the lovely sunshine we are getting now was worth waiting for. Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by the sun in Kent, as Shakespeare so nearly said."

I then sent him the text of one of Cicero's books which he said that he would like to have and I continued my correspondence with him the following year and sent him another copy of our school magazine and asked him if he would write another story for us which he agreed to do. In August 1954 he sent the story "Turkey's Misfortune" and in his letter he wrote:

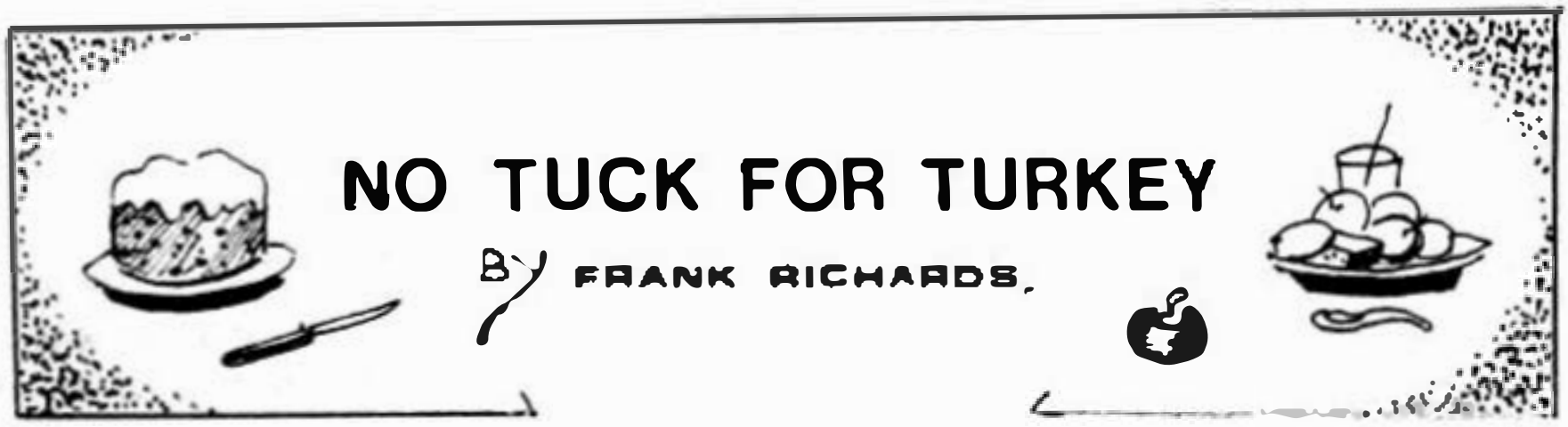
"Many thanks for your letter of June 29th, and the school magazine, which does indeed interest me very much. I delayed replying till I had written a "Carcroft" story, which I enclose -- not too late, I hope! As it happens, I have a series of Carcroft stories now running in a periodical at Sydney, N.S.W., and they tell me that Turkey is becoming quite popular at the Antipodes.

"About paying me a visit, much as I should like to see you, do you mind leaving this open for the present. To tell the truth, I am not just now quite so fit as I was at this time last year. Not a case of "pallida More pulsat" of course but Plancus, alas! is no longer consul, and the years do accumulate."

Although he does not mention it in any of his letters I like to feel that it was as a result of my correspondence with him that, in his book Lord Billy Bunter (on page 160) published in 1956 he states that Bunter Villa was in Reigate, Surrey, and I believe that this is the only time that the situation of Bunter Villa is mentioned.

It was a great pleasure to me in August last year to be a guest at the London Old Boys' Book Club held at the Charles Hamilton Museum in Maidstone and to give a talk about this correspondence and to show the originals of the letters and the stories to the President, Mr. John Wernham, and the members of the club and also to see the old type-writer on which these very letters were typed over thirty years ago. Below is the first story he wrote for me reprinted from the Gateway School Magazine of St. Mary's Preparatory School, Reigate.

* * * * *



NO TUCK FOR TURKEY

By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Seen Turkey?"

Turkey Tuck jumped.

Bob Drake asked that question, in the Fourth-form passage, just outside the doo of the corner study. Just within that door, Turkey heard it. Only the old oak door was between them.

Turkey, of course, had no business in the corner study. It wasn't his study: it belonged to Drake and Conroy and Lee. But it was not uncommon for the fat Turkey to be found where he had no business.

It was the first day of term, and Carcroft fellows were coming back. On the first day of term, there was often an unusual supply of sticky things in the study cupboards. Turkey, sad to relate, was not particular whose sticky things he devoured, so long as he devoured them.

But he had had no luck in the corner study. He had found the cupboard, like that of the well-known Mrs. Hubbard, bare. And he was about to emerge, to seek fresh woods and pastures new, as it were, when Bob Drake's voice outside the door halted him quite suddenly.

Turkey did not want Bob Drake to discover him there. He did not need telling that Bob had the heaviest foot in the Carcroft Fourth. He knew that by experience. And if Bob was coming in ...!

"Anybody seen that fat ass Turkey?" called out Bob, again.

"Up in the studies somewhere, I think.", came Harry Compton's voice.

"Never mind Turkey", called Dick Lee, "Let's get out."

Turkey Tuck, inside the door, listened breathlessly. If the Carcroft Co. went out, he was all right. But the next moment he heard Bob's voice again:

"Wait a tick ..,I'll leave this tuck-parcel in the study."

"Oh, scissors!" breathed Turkey.

Bob was coming in! The door-handle was turning!

Turkey Tuck's fat brain did not always move swiftly. Indeed it often seemed not to move at all. But peril sharpened his wits. Swiftly, he backed behind the door as it opened. The fattest figure at Carcroft School was out of sight, as Bob Drake tramped in.

Turkey hardly breathed. Fervently he hoped that Bob wouldn't shut the door. That would have revealed him at once.

But Drake did not shut the door. He slammed a parcel on the study table, and then tramped out again, quite unaware of a fat and palpitating Turkey in the room. He shut the door as he left, with a bang. Then Turkey heard footsteps receding down the passage to the stairs.

He grinned.

It had been a narrow escape. But he had escaped. And he was left alone with the parcel Bob had slammed on the table. Why Bob had been inquiring after him, Turkey did not know: unless it was to make sure that the fat junior was not in the offing when he landed the tuck-parcel in the study. He had landed it fairly into Turkey's plump paws!

A fat hand was stretched out to the parcel. But Turkey paused. It was altogether too dangerous to linger in Bob Drake's study while he dealt with Bob's tuck-parcel. He picked it up, put it under a fat arm, and turned to the door.

But at the door he paused again. He did not want fellows in the passage to see him emerge with Bob's parcel under his arm. Turkey revolved on his axis and crossed to the window. It was quite easy to drop the parcel from the window, stroll out of the study empty-handed, and then cut round the House and collect the parcel.

He leaned from the window and looked round. There was no one at hand. Taking the tuck-parcel by the string, he dropped it: and it "plopped" on the earth below.

Then he cut across to the door again, and strolled out of the study.

It was a grinning Turkey who hurried along to the stairs. It would take hardly more than a minute to reach the spot where the parcel had dropped. And then, in some hidden corner, there was going to be a feast.

At the foot of the staircase, he almost ran into three juniors: and Bob Drake shouted to him:

"Here, Turkey...!"

Turkey Tuck certainly heard: but he heeded not. He cut past Harry Compton and Co. at a run, and disappeared out of the House, leaving them staring.

A minute more, and he would have been collecting a parcel. But Turkey's luck, hitherto good, failed at that point. Gates of the Sixth, with a bag in his hand, called to him.

"Here Tuck! Take this bag to my study, will you?"

Turkey breathed hard. Gladly he would have told Gates of the Sixth where he could get off. But he did not venture to do so. With deep feelings, he took the bag, and hurried away to the Sixth Form studies with it. Five precious minutes were lost, before Turkey was able to cut round the House, to retrieve the parcel he had dropped out of the window of the corner study. And then...!

"Oh, crumbs! gasped Turkey.

He gazed at the spot where the tuck-parcel had dropped. That spot was bare! Not a sign of a tuck-parcel was to be seen. There had been nobody in the offing when the parcel dropped. But during those five lost minutes, somebody evidently had passed that way. Somebody - Turkey could not begin to guess who - had picked up that parcel and walked off with it.

Not that it would have comforted Turkey to know that Shooks of the Second Form had been amazed and delighted to find a tuck-parcel, apparently unowned, lying about the quad: and was even at that moment

standing an unexpected and glorious spread to his fag friends in the locker-room!

Turkey gazed at the spot where that parcel should have been, but was not! He had arrived with a grin of happy anticipation on his fat face. But there was no grin - not the ghost of a grin - on that plump countenance as he rolled slowly and sadly away.

* * * *

"Here, Turkey!"

It was Bob Drake's cheery roar.

He had "snooped" Bob's tuck-parcel in the corner study, and not so much as a plum or a crumb had been his reward. But the penalty for snooping tuck in the studies was a booting: and it looked as if Bob had missed his parcel, and guessed: for he left his friends, and came towards Turkey at a run.

Turkey ran for it. A booting, after somebody else had annexed the tuck-parcel, was altogether too much of a good thing. Turkey flew.

"Stop, you fat ass!" shouted Bob.

Turkey was not likely to stop. He put on speed. But his little fat legs had no chance in a race with Bob's sinewy ones. A hand dropped on a fat shoulder and spun him round.

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Turkey, "It wasn't me..."

"You fat duffer, what are you cutting off for?" exclaimed Bob, "I've been looking for you ever since we got in. I've brought something back for you from home."

"Eh?"

"Wouldn't you like a tuck-parcel?" asked Bob.

"What? Oh! Yes..."

"Well, I've brought you one ..."

"Oh scissors!"

"I couldn't find you, so I've left it in the study..."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Cut up to the corner study, and you'll find it on the table", said Bob. "You can sit in my armchair there, if you like and scoff it. That's all."

"Oh, jiminy!"

Bob Drake walked away to rejoin his friends. Turkey gazed after him as he went. Then he groaned.

He had snooped that tuck-parcel... for somebody else's benefit! And it was his own! ...Bob had brought it back for him after the hols! Had he not snooped it, he might now be sitting at his ease in the corner study revelling in its contents! And now...!

Turkey did not cut up to the corner study as Bob had bidden him. It was not of much use cutting up to the corner study now! He stood gazing after Bob, with an expression on his fat face, compared with which that of the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance might have been called a cheery smile. He did not speak. He couldn't! Only a deep groan could express his feelings.

Turkey just groaned!

* *

LUCKY FOR SOME

BY WILLIAM LISTER.

One of the inconviences of a house fire is in having to be rooted out of the old homestead. I can think of nothing worse!

After considering the loss in general such as contents, clothes, television set and articles of sentimental value, you receive the final indignity when you are told "Can't stop here tonight, for the structure is unsafe".

If you are well insured the blow is softened as regards the contents, but from there you are on your own.

There you are, stood on the kerb with scarcely a tooth brush, and the prospect of living with relatives or digs or even a Salvation Army Hostel, which is bad enough if you are one on your own, but worse if you have a wife and six children to house.

Unlucky? of course you are, but cheer up. Even in cases where your living quarters are razed to the ground, it still can be lucky for some.

It was lucky for the boys' of the college house of St. Frank's, after a fire had partially destroyed it.

The school govenors, guided by the infinite wisdom of the headmaster and Nelson Lee had fixed it that a building in the Holborn district of London would be suitable as a school until further orders.

1937 ... London, the Mecca of the holiday world. In those days it was a case for every true Britisher to see London and die.

If you happened to live in Leeds or one of those (then) faraway from London places you looked in awe at someone who had been to London. The only Houses of Parliament one was likely to see was on a bottle of H.P. sauce.

Times have changed, I have met people that in those days, have been to the four corners of the earth, but have never even stopped for a week in London, and in any case you can see the Houses of Parliament every other day on television.

So unless you lived in the early thirties you will not understand all the excitement as a double-decker bus drove through the streets of London, packed with schoolboys displaying a sign 'St. Franks in London' and cheering wildly.

They were expecting excitement and they got it, due to the pen of Edwy Searles Brooks.

Hardly had the dust of St. Frank's settled around their feet than Fulwood and Co. (the bad lad's of St. Frank's) stole out of bounds in search of the night life.

They soon found out that night life isn't all honey. Beside the trouble

they got in with the school authorities. They were confronted one night by a hideous looking Chinaman who had appeared like an apparition out of the dark.

At their age they got the wind up; come to think of it, at my age I would have got the wind up.

And there's more ... raids on gambling dens. Nipper visits Baker Street and links up with Sexton Blake and Tinker.

Sexton Blake's brains and Handforth's brawn combine to solve a problem. The thrills of their overcoming the villains and opening the large packing case expecting to find a drugged and unconscious Nelson Lee, only to find it empty; and of their combat with the drug traffic and the Chinese drug smugglers.

All making gripping reading.

And there's more ...

A skeleton appears in the attic of the temporary school - a living skeleton!

Now none of my readers would fall for that. As the scared schoolboy runs from the pursuing skeleton (see excellent cover illustration N.L.L. No. 282), you tend to think, what a silly billy he is falling for that trick, "It's a man in black tights painted with a luminous skeleton".

However the bravest among us, given the right setting, can have a scare.

"Can we go in the Haunted House, Grandad?" queried my then 12 year old grandson, as we toured the Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

It was a beautiful day of very bright sunshine. So in we went. You know the score. It's going to be dark. You'll come up on grottoes dimly-lit containing models of ghostly figures, nothing to fear.

The bright sun outside made it doubly dark inside as we groped our way along. And then ... 'Look Grandad' half screamed my grandson as two living skeletons appeared out of the dark. I could feel the pull of my grandson's hand. He was pulling me back to the entrance. "Let's go home" he said.

For a moment I felt myself hurrying after him. Then my Yorkshire blood showed itself. I'd paid for this show and 'by gum' we were going through with it. By then we'd got accustomed to the dark and it was clear the skeletons were faked, even to my grandson. Two hired hands gliding around in the dark.

I mention this in case you think E.S.B. was stretching it a bit. Surely nobody could be fooled by that.

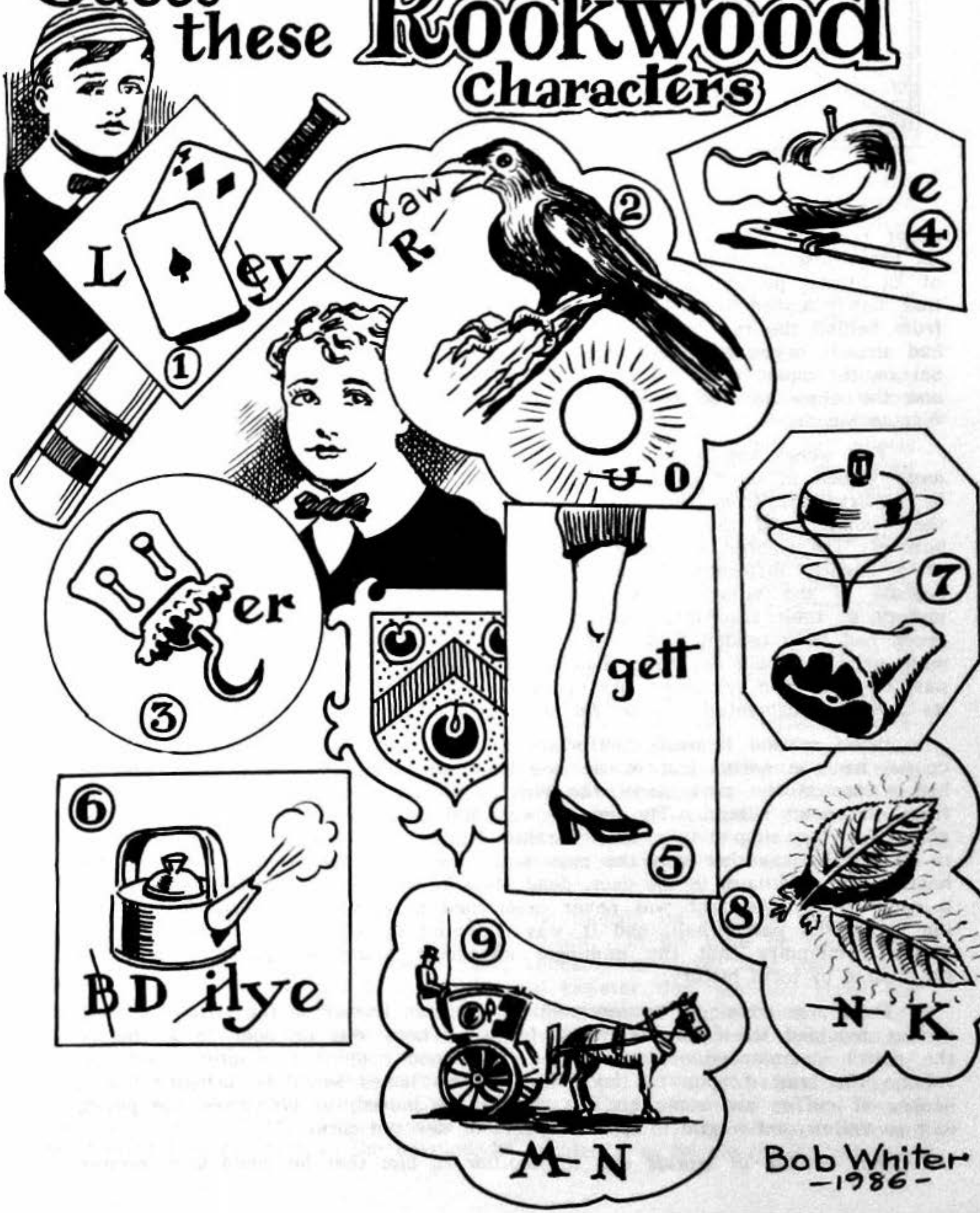
But given the right circumstances my experiences tell me you easily can be.

Warmest Seasonal Greetings to our esteemed editor, bless him, to Tom and all Midland Club chums, to Uncle Ben and London Club members. To my old friend Cyril Rowe and especially to Henry Webb and Family.

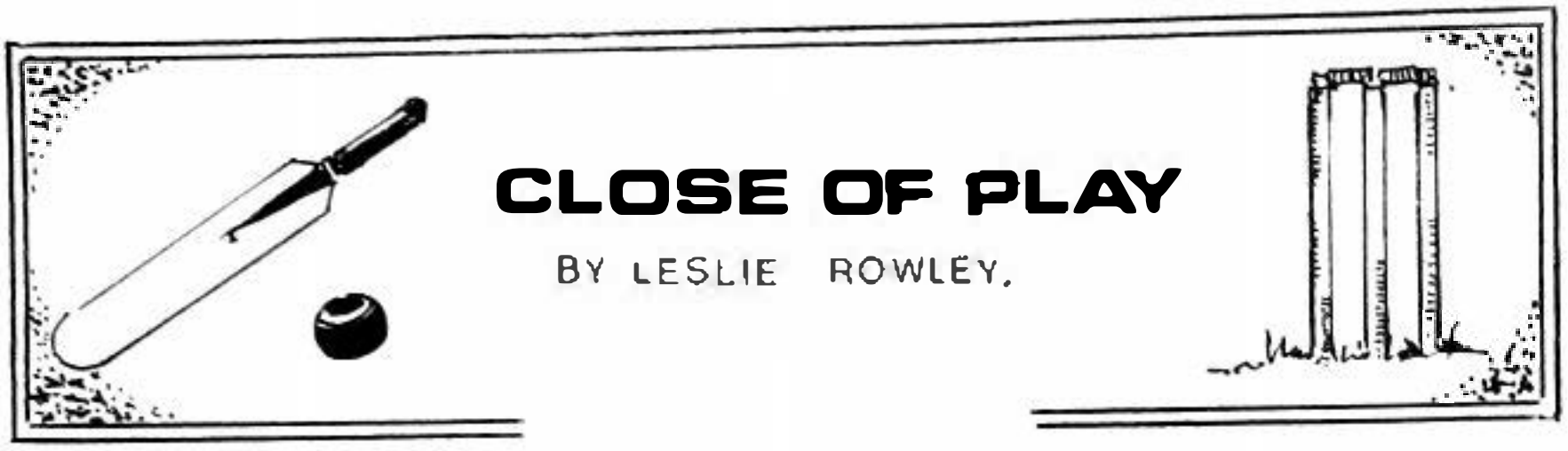
STAN KNIGHT

CHELTENHAM

Guess these Rookwood characters



Bob Whiter
-1986-



CLOSE OF PLAY

BY LESLIE ROWLEY.

Brian Baxter was breathing heavily as he bent to erect his deck chair under the friendly, leafy, shade of the oldest and largest oak that stood, with its three lesser fellows, at a corner of the village green. Overhead, the blue of an almost perfect sky was relieved by the feathery white of drifting clouds that slowly moved like grazing sheep in an azure pasture. The sun, rising slowly from behind the red brick and white window frames of the Georgian Vicarage, had already begun to caress the branches of some distant elms that stood sentinel to the squat tower of the Saxon church of St. Mary. Between the oaks and the elms lay the verdant sward that was the pride of all who dwelt in Wexton Magna.

For weeks the villagers had prayed for good weather for this, the date most valued in their calendar. They had been urged on to this laudable end by exhortations from the pulpit of the church that registered their comings, their goings, and the marriages and christenings in between. Nor had mine host of "The George and Dragon" lagged behind the vicar, with his congregation of a slightly different character, for Mr. James, the licensee, was also the captain of the village cricket eleven and wished to steer Wexton Magna to victory in their traditional encounter with the side from Barnhill Ridge. The green had been tended with loving care by its small army of voluntary groundsmen, until it would not have shamed those of more exalted grounds. The small pavilion had been repainted, its changing rooms aired; its tea urn polished and its crockery augmented to cope for any increased demand for refreshment.

Brian settled himself comfortably in his deck chair. He was early, of course he was early, just as he had been early for the many years that he had witnessed the prowess of the Wexton Magna men against their opponents from the next village. The match was always played on the Wexton village green for the simple fact that Barnhill Ridge had no green at all on which to play. Perhaps that was the reason for the long succession of wins for the home team. Perhaps, in the dear, dead, days beyond recall, Barnhill had enjoyed a win. If so, the fact was never mentioned in either the saloon bar of the inn or in the parish hall, and it was accepted by all sections of the Wexton Magna community that the imminent encounter would see no deviation from the course of local history.

There was an air of contentment about Brian Baxter as the strong, striped, canvas moulded itself to his heavy frame. There was an hour to go before the match commenced - time to get in a good couple of chapters from the volume that rested upon his lap. One of the ladies would be bringing him a beaker of coffee and some biscuits shortly, he mused, as he turned the pages, now so yellow and fragile in spite of years of devoted care.

That volume of stories was so familiar to him that he could have recited

whole passages from memory. Yet he still relished every word as though he was reading each story for the first time. The magic of the author would reach out from each printed page to embrace him in an aura of enchantment, an enchantment that he had first known over sixty years ago. As word followed word, and chapter followed chapter, Brian would allow himself to be transported from vacilating shades of reality to the more pleasing ones of fiction.

In fact, Greyfriars School didn't seem like fiction to him at all! In the tremendous game of make believe there is an almost inperceptible margin between ourselves and the characters and the background in which they act out their comedy and drama. So Brian Baxter had found from an early age. Almost as soon as he had learnt to punt his small boat through the pleasant reaches of the Wex to where Hayman's Ait lay placidly midstream and there to tie up, and read, as he sprawled on the grassy banks, of that other river known as the Sark and that other island, the disputed property of Sir Hilton Popper! Had he been asked when he had commenced this second life into the world of another man's imagination, he would have been hard put to name a precise date. And to him it did not matter for his happiness had known no limit to the vagaries of space and time.

His love for King Cricket had developed with his love for the stories, as earlier he had first known his love for the village he was fortunate to know as home. But his greatest love of all was his beloved Margaret, who had shared one of his earliest cricket matches with him. She had come and sat quietly next to him, pushing her wayward pigtails over her shoulders, her blue eyes fixed more steadfastly upon his young profile than upon the white-clad figures in crease or field. From that day, had he but known it, she had marked him for her own. It was to be some time later before he reciprocated. A day, never to be forgotten, when - for some minor infraction of behaviour at home - he had been deprived of his pocket money and thus unable to buy his weekly story of Greyfriars School. Like a conjuror more orthodoxically producing a rabbit from a hat, she had, as suddenly produced the current issue of "The Magnet" from some safe haven in her gym tunic. She handed the prize to him, knowing surely that her conquest of him was complete from that moment on. He remembered that number of "The Magnet" well, for the story it contained was "A Dog With A Bad Name" and featured not only Herbert Vernon-Smith, one of his favourite characters, but a thrilling game of cricket between Greyfriars and Rookwood. From then the acquaintance blossomed into something more than friendship. Some time later, he asked her if he could call her Marjorie, and it was some time later still when she realised that she had been bracketed with Marjorie Hazeldene. She clasped the opportunity firmly, becoming a subscriber to "The School Friend" so that she could follow more accurately on the chosen original!

Brian thought on these things now, as he thought on them on every anniversary on which this cricketing duel was fought. In his time he had played for the Wexton eleven and he wore, now, beneath his blazer that masterpiece of cable stitching that had been the knitted sweater that she had given him on the eve of his first match. He heard the sound of approaching footsteps, silent though they were on the deep green velvet, and tilted his battered panama so that he could look up at the kind soul who had brought him his coffee. It was old Miss Potter, ninety summers or more and a veritable fund of anecdotes about the Wexton Magna Cricket Club. They exchanged a few words and then she left him to peace and his coffee. As his shaded eyes followed her halting progress back to the pavilion, he wondered, as he always did, whether

she had ever known someone called Coker. A smile came to his lips as he thought of the Fool of the Fifth and that fathead's many and varied efforts and entreaties to persuade Wingate to give him his rightful place in the Senior Eleven.

As he sipped his coffee, he could hear an increasing chatter in the distance. The fellows from Barnhill Ridge were being greeted by their hosts, and he closed his eyes and imagined that these were not the voices of men in their maturity, but the excited chatter of Harry Wharton and Co. as they welcomed Tom Merry and the men from St. Jim's.

The chatter died as the home and visiting sides passed into the pavilion, and Brian's thoughts returned to the subject of Horace James Coker. There had been that truly awful occasion when Coker had very nearly played in the Greyfriars side against Rookwood. By promising Bunter what amounted to a season ticket of tea-time spreads, Coker had persuaded the fat Owl to telephone Wingate using the voice of Lascelles, the Games master. On taking the call and learning that Lascelles wanted Coker to play in that all-important fixture, the feelings of the Greyfriars captain can scarcely be imagined let alone described. It was recorded that Wingate tottered from the prefect's room, looking as though the sun had ceased to shine forever and, as he passed on the ghastly news, a fat young rascal dodged out of Prout's study and grinned as he made himself scarce. Coker had rejoiced, but in the rest of Greyfriars "as by the yellow Tiber in days of old, there was tumult and affright". Fortunately, all was well that ended well excepting, perhaps, for Coker and Bunter. There being no place in the side for Coker, there were no spreads in Coker's study for Bunter. Instead, there was a fives bat, and as he recalled that event, Brian wished that he had been present in order to give Bunter a few more whacks when Coker had finished with him. Putting down his now empty coffee cup, Brian turned the pages of the volume of 'Magnets' that lay on his lap.

Ah, there it was. "Coker's Cricket Craze" had taken place more than fifty four years ago.

There was more of the same vintage. A later chronicle in the same year told how The Remove had been in detention under the watchful eye of Gerald Loder, who mysteriously received a telegram telling him that he was wanted to play in the Senior Side First Eleven side at an away match at Lantham. Loder departed for Lantham and, under the temporary captaincy of Vernon-Smith, the Remove team departed to fulfil a fixture at St. Jude's. Unfortunately for them, they were not the only visitors to St. Jude's that day! Henry Samuel Quelch, proud author of an article in "The Public School Review", had been invited by the Headmaster, Dr. Wyatt, to call and discuss many points raised therein. It was a happy Quelch who responded to such distinguished bidding, but the happiness faded like a ghost at cockrow when the Remove master espied members of his form, who should have been in detention at Greyfriars, playing cricket on the playing fields at St. Jude's! Having held forth to Dr. Wyatt that a judicious firmness never failed to keep order in the unruliest of forms, Quelch must have wished for better auspices under which to demonstrate the efficacy of his claim. Nevertheless, deal with it he did. The game was abandoned, and the Remove returned to Greyfriars in disgrace. The incident brought to a close the Bounder's captaincy of the Remove - a temporary office into which Vernon-Smith had managed to cram all manner of novel interpretations of his responsibilities. Still, Brian was happy to reflect, at the end Smithy had acted in a characteristically sporting way.

From the tower of St. Mary's came the chimes for eleven o'clock. The same chimes had sounded on his wedding day and, across the years came the memory of them leaving church under an archway of cricket bats. Not many in that guard of honour were left today, but his mind was diverted from a mental roll call as white-clad figures appeared from the pavilion. The visitors had won the toss and had elected to put Wexton Magna in first, and Brian cast a critical eye over the field placings. Before he had time to form an opinion, the first ball was bowled and had been hit for six by James, the Wexton captain. A man of great muscular build, the local innkeeper watched with pride the meteoric flight of his first shot. Perhaps he was not quite so proud as a smashing of glass indicated that the ball had found its billet through the first floor window of one of the hostelry's bedrooms.

There was an interval whilst the ball was retrieved, during which Brian allowed his eyes to return to the printed pages of the volume in his lap. He came across some paragraphs that brought a smile to his face. They dealt with the time when Richard Lancaster was dividing his extracuricular activities between the glorious game of cricket in the afternoons and the relieving the local landed of their treasures during the nights. A master cracksman, who couldn't be all that bad because he was a master cricketer as well! Greyfriars, Brian mused, had had its fair share of such gifted gentry!

The Wexton men had recommenced their batting, but that initial 'six' was not repeated. Runs, when they came, came in the odd single, and Brian found his attention returning to those entrancing paragraphs.

It was Rookwood Day, Brian read, and most members of the Remove were excited and impatient to witness the great Lancaster pile up the runs. No one was more excited and impatient than Bob Cherry and, when Henry Samuel Quelch came into the form room, Bob eyed him hopefully.

"It's Rookwood Day today, sir, and we'd like awfully to see the game."

"You will be free to see the cricket this afternoon, Cherry, as it is a half holiday." Quelch replied. "That is, of course, if - by careful attention to your lessons - you avoid detention this afternoon!"

"I-I-I was thinking of the morning, sir."

"The morning?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

His eyes took on the gimlet look his boys knew so well. Some of the Remove grinned. They did not think that the hopeful Bob would have much luck.

"You would be prepared to give up classes for the day, Cherry, in order to watch a cricket match?" asked the Remove master with genial sarcasm.

"Y-y-yes, sir."

"No doubt it would be a sacrifice on your part?" suggested Mr. Quelch, "but you would make it in order to encourage the senior cricketers with your presence?"

"Oh! Um! Yes, sir. I think so! I-I-I hope so! stammered Bob.

"Is it your opinion that you have made such progress this term that you can neglect your lessons today?"

"I hope so, sir."

"You hope so, Cherry? Obviously you have a hopeful nature", said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry to say that I am less sanguine. I should be very glad, Cherry, had you made such progress. But your hopeful nature deceives you. You have not made such progress, Cherry. Far from it!"

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"Very far indeed from it", said Mr. Quelch, still genial and still sarcastic. I regret, therefore, that I think it necessary for you to give me what little attention you can this morning, in spite of the greater attraction of cricket. We will now proceed!"

The little interlude between boy and master had brought a reminiscent smile to Brian Baxter's cheeks, but he was not to allow it to divert his attention wholly from the game that was unfolding before him. The Wexton openers had settled in and runs began to come more quickly, the click of ball meeting bat more frequent - too frequent for the peace of mind of the skipper from Barnhill Ridge. He called over a dusky skinned young man from the outfield and tossed the ball to him after the end of an over in which Wexton had added three boundaries and a six, bringing their total score to fifty three.

Brian watched the new bowler with great interest. It had been rumoured, over the frothing tankards in "The George and Dragon" that Barnhill had a surprise packet in a young Indian that had recently joined their side. Those rumours had been scoffed as being without foundation. But there were no grounds for scoffing now as the slim figure in white transformed himself in what appeared to be a human catherine wheel. This time it was not the bat that stopped the ball, for the ball carried on leaving a shattered wicket behind it. Only a moment before, Mr. James had been confidently guarding his wicket. Now he was on his way back to the pavilion, no doubt to assuage his disappointment over a glass of his own ale.

The publican was not given time to drink alone. The Wexton man who

had succeeded him had received the same treatment this time without troubling the scorers. Two minutes later came the applauding yell "Well caught, sir" as the young bowler triumphantly held up the ball that he had a second before delivered. It was the hat trick, and Barnhill men were celebrating by applauding their new recruit. But there was cause for their applause not being prolonged. That bowling marvel held up his fingers for his skipper's inspection. Was it a bruise? a sprain? or had he split the skin?

Brian found himself wondering whether the Barnhill side called the new chap Inky, like his counterpart at Greyfriars. He doubted it, but the parallel was intriguing with an incident at another St. Jude's match, when the Bounder had, seemingly deserted his side. He had done so to go to the aid of Nugent minor. He was sure that the story was called "The Deserter", and made a mental note to check the matter when he reached home.

Home! The house with the thatched roof and diamond paned windows that he and Margaret, no, Marjorie, had discovered soon after they had married. It was a little gem and, like all precious jewels, it had a price. A price sneered at their bank account, but he had gone, with slow and flagging footsteps, to a dealer and raised the difference by parting with his collection of "Magnets". Only when the contracts had been exchanged did he let Margaret - that is Marjorie - learn what he had done. She had told her father and, on Brian's birthday there had been a present from his father-in-law. A hefty, cumbersome present covered by masses of brown paper and tied with limitless string, that Brian could not trust his eyes to believe when he had unpacked the collection that he had committed to the cherished roof over their heads.

Nearby, the match had continued to unfold. Wexton men had come and Wexton men had gone until only the tail enders remained at lunch, with the score a not immodest one hundred and forty five. He reached for the packet of sandwiches in the bag beside him, as landlord James came across the green with a tankard of ale for him. The two men chatted for a while. Brian and the publican's father - the keeper of "The George and Dragon" before him - had gone off to war together in the crimson and gold summer of 1940. The war that brought with the urge to "dig for victory" and the transformation of this most beautiful of village greens into allotments! Then peace, thankfully came, it had taken two years' hard slog to get village green to its present pleasing aspect. War had taken its toll, as it had everywhere, but Wexton was never short of men, and women, ready to toil until the sahdes of dusk had fallen so that matches, including the traditional one with Barnhill Ridge, could once more be played as they had before.

His collection of "Magnets" had been consigned to the loft for the duration, safe from the threat of salvage collectors. It had been like re-discovering treasure of old, as he and Marjorie had sat so close together as they turned each precious page. The paper had gone forever from the bookstalls and news-agents, a fact that made the stories more valued than ever.

They had furnished their home, taking Rupert Brooke as their guide and choosing each item with care and with love. It was the same this very day as it was on that dark and quiet day when Marjorie had been taken from him. Friends and relatives had suggested that he might move, but he had stayed, knowing with a greater wisdom of the warmth, of laughter and love, that those four walls embraced.

Lunch over, the visiting side speedily demolished the remaining Wexton wickets at the cost only a further five runs. One hundred and fifty one to

win and make local cricketing history. They'll never get it, Brian confidently told himself. What happened next soon shook the local side - and Brian - out of their complacency.

The number one Barnhill batsman was a blacksmith, one of a declining breed now that the world depended on a different type of horsepower. He possessed massive arms and a sharp and certain eye. Like his Wexton opposite number, he started his innings with a terrific six. Unlike the Wexton opener, he followed it with another six and a four, adding a risky single so that the batting would remain with him. This mighty hitter of boundaries was dropped in the slips when the innings was still young, and the reprieved man went on to reach his fifty. But time and toil still managed to take their toll, and some more accurate bowling ensuring that the visiting middle-order collapsed when the score stood at one hundred and thirty. But the opener was still there, cajoling and threatening each successive partner that came to the crease. He was going to be first in and last out, or else he would want to know afterwards. Anxiety was already showing on Wexton faces long before the tenth man was called. Brian could feel the tension though no-one was near him. Were the visitors to be allowed to leave for home, bragging as they went, that they had settled Wexton's hash?

Barnhill Ridge needed just six runs to win when their principal run scorer, with a crack that could be heard in the public bar "The George and Dragon", sent the ball dramatically on its way. All necks were craned to follow its flight as it sped through the summer air. Suddenly, as though from nowhere, a slim, lithe figure in the outfield leaped with hand upraised to bring off the catch of the day. Just like that picture of Frank Nugent, thought Brian, as he called to mind, once again, the yarn entitled "The Deserter". He settled back into the deckchair to allow the anguish and anxiety drain away from him. The final tally had been Wexton Magna's one hundred and fifty against the Barnhill knock of one hundred and forty five. A win, a very narrow win, but a win, none the less!

What a super day it had been, he thought, as he closed his eyes. From the distance a mumble of voices came to him. At first he could not make them out and, when he did, he knew that they were not the voices of a triumphant Wexton field or those of despondent Barnhill batsmen. The voices were younger than those of mature men. Strange voices but familiar.

At last, those voices became distinct. They belonged to an exultant group of schoolboys.

"Tea in Study No. 4, you men!"

"Count on us, Smithy!"

"Talk about corn in the lean years. Much better than tea in Hall!"

"The betterfulness is terrific!"

"Come on then. Let's get to the tuck before Bunter does."

Recognition slowly dawned, like clouds lifting at the break of day. But there came another voice that Brian knew even better, a voice that came from his side. A voice so close that he could feel the gentle pressure on his arm as it whispered words of persuasion.

"You heard what they said, Brian dear. We're invited to a spread. Let us hope that Bunter hasn't got there first." ●

* *

THE EARLY DAYS OF CLIFF HOUSE

BY ROGER M. JENKINS.

Marjorie Hazeldene made an appearance in the Magnet a year before she joined Cliff House School. As early as Magnet No. 5 she was playing the title role in "Kidnapped", when gipsies seized her on her way to visit Greyfriars. This was done to enable them to rob her of her jewellery and clothes. Marjorie was described as being an attractive fifteen year old with a bright face and eyes that always seemed laughing. Hazeldene was proud of his sister, and his behaviour was, for once, unexceptionable. Even Bob Cherry admitted that for the first time no one felt inclined "to wring Vaseline's neck". This charming family idyll did not, unfortunately, last very long: Hazeldene's admiration for his sister waned and Marjorie's eyes lost their laughter.

The arrival of the aliens occupied a number of the following issues, but Marjorie had tea in No. 1 Study for the first time in Magnet No. 14, and it was becoming very evident that Bob Cherry was very much smitten with her charms. The story ended with Harry Wharton declaring that it had been a jolly afternoon:

> "It has", said Bob Cherry, with a half sigh. "I say, Hazeldene, when is your sister coming again?"

In the Gem, it was Figgins who seemed to be smitten with charms of Cousin Ethel, just as Bob Cherry was with Marjorie, but it was always suggested that Ethel was fond of Figgins, whereas Marjorie always turned to Harry Wharton for help.

Marjorie played a small part in "Wharton's Operatic Company" the following week, but it was not until No. 17 that Bob Cherry confided in Harry Wharton how much he admired Marjorie and that she never seemed to take any notice of him when Wharton was around. She came to watch the French boys challenge the Removites to a cricket match a fortnight later, and it was Bob Cherry who accompanied Hazeldene home to fetch Marjorie.

Another function for Marjorie to perform was to act as deus ex machina, and correct errors and misunderstandings. In No. 58, Mark Linley was unjustly suspected of having been guilty of sneaking and was sent to Coventry. Marjorie had a word with Mr. Quelch after speaking to Mark Linley, and the matter was put right at once.

On this occasion, Marjorie was visiting Miss Mollie Locke, and it may well be that she would, like Cousin Ethel, have remained an intermittent visitor to the school, had not a girls' school been established in the neighbourhood to allow her to remain permanently in the vicinity. Cliff House School was first mentioned the following week, in No. 59 entitled "The School Dance":

> The Greyfriars juniors received with mixed feelings the news that a girls' school was to be opened at Cliff House, almost a stone's throw from Greyfriars. Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, had declared his intention of making things

unpleasant for the new neighbours of Greyfriars, but the greater part of the Lower Fourth followed Wharton's lead, feeling that they were called upon to be civil, at least, to the newcomers.

The discovery that Hazeldene's sister Marjorie was one of the pupils of Miss Penelope Primrose made a difference, too.

In this number Wharton prepared to present a bouquet to Miss Primrose who was leading a crocodile of girls, but Bulstrode had prepared a rival offering - fireworks. Wharton fought Bulstrode to prevent this, and Miss Primrose and her girls arrived to witness the scrap. Naturally enough, they did not know the circumstances, but Wharton was embarrassed and it was left to Bob Cherry to present the bouquet.

Clara Trevlyn appeared for the first time in this issue, described as "a golden-haired, blue-eyed, rather a mischievous look". She was one of the many who enjoyed the Cliff House fancy dress ball, the mere thought of which threw Miss Primrose into a flutter. Miss Locke, however, was made of sterner stuff and had a great influence over the Head. Billy Bunter was appropriated by a fat girl, Wilhelmina Limburger, who was of course German. Her thick accent and the fact that she was named after a cheese all helped to make her something of a caricature.

Two weeks later, the juniors seemed to have forgotten that they opposed the idea of making things unpleasant for the new-comers, when the Cliff House girls claimed the right to bathe in the pool in the River Sark, hitherto the preserve of Grey-friars. A compromise was suggested by Cliff House author-ities, that the schools should use the pool on alternate days, but this was not acceptable, and the girls were frightened away by a floating monster fashioned by the Removites and sent down the river to the pool. They must have been hardy young people in those days in 1909 to want to bathe in a river in the month of April!

Having founded a new girls' school, Charles Hamilton tended to make full use of its inhabitants, and in No. 64 Marjorie and Clara watched a cricket match at St. Jim's where Greyfriars juniors were playing, and Cousin Ethel joined them and they soon became good friends. This rather cosy atmosphere tended to conceal the fact that the girls had no real part to play in this story, and they were really dragged in just as ornaments. It was one of the author's weaknesses to indulge in a get-together merely for the sake of assembling a large cast on occasions.

One of the most bizarre stories was "Harry Wharton's Ward" in No. 67. Marjorie had left behind a women's magazine, and Harry noticed an advertise-ment inserted by a local woman offering to sell her child for £10. The juniors went along and bought Toddles, and Marjorie managed to soothe him when he

became fractious. Toddles, who was said to be three or four, had a very small vocabulary and apparently still used a feeding bottle; yet his mother later said he had been at a boarding school and sent home because his fees were unpaid.

The feminine qualities of the Cliff House girls were brought into even greater prominence the following week when it transpired that the new school had been built on shaky foundations. The girls were to come to Greyfriars and were to share lessons with the Remove, an arrangement which called into question both the size of the Remove and the number of girls at Cliff House. Marjorie arrived with her friend Clara Trevlyn and Alice Lake. Milly Brown, Norah Flynn, and Wilhelmina Limburger were also mentioned. This issue of the Magnet dealt very largely with the manner in which they contrived to drive Mr. Quelch frantic in class. Afterwards they picked some flowers from the Head's garden to present to Mr. Quelch:

> "Mr. Squelch will be very pleased, although he doesn't deserve it after his conduct this morning."
> "I think he did his best, dear", said Marjorie gently.
> "Then he didn't manage it very well. He made Milly cry."
> "But Milly was talking in class."
> "I was only saying to Alice that her hair-ribbon was undone", said Milly. "Mr. Quelch wouldn't want Alice to have her hair-ribbon undone in class."

The following week the girls decided to have a dormitory feast, and in order to get food they broke bounds, using the tree by the school wall. Marjorie was bunked up and Clara grasped the tree but put her boot on Milly's hat:

> "My hat is spoiled."
> "Help me! Quick!"
> "You've disarranged all the flowers -"
> "Oh dear! I know I shall fall!"
> "And the trimming is torn, I think."
> "Oh dear! My goodness!"
> "And the crown is quite knocked in. I shan't be able to wear this hat again. It was very cruel of you, Clara!"

When Clara eventually fell, she spoilt her frock, and blamed Milly for that, and quite a bitter quarrel ensued until they made it up and kissed.

It is difficult to know what girl readers of the time would have made of all this, since it seems a deliberate parody of the exploits of the boys but still amusing. The boy readers would not doubt have been confirmed in their male prejudices about girls, but it is important to note that Marjorie was exempted from the satire, and in this extract she was also literally above it all, since she was sitting on the school wall. She alone went to buy the tuck, was confronted by a tramp. and rescued by Harry Wharton, who had just paid a nocturnal visit to Toddles. Another serious matter was Hazeldene's debt to Mr. Lazarus for refurnishing his study after the fire at Greyfriars. The interest charges on the unpaid instalments were so high that Hazeldene persuaded his sister to let her have the ring her mother had given her, in order to raise money on it - a glimpse of the Hazeldene of the future. Wun Lung came to the assistance by arranging for the tarring and feathering of Mr. Lazarus, helped by Bob Cherry and Hazeldene, a proceeding which might not have been thought of in years to come. Finally in No. 70 it became known that there was nothing wrong with the foundations of Cliff House at all - Clara blamed it all on male ignorance - and the girls went back to their own premises. Miss Primrose in an antique hat presided over a garden party to which all the juniors were invited, and D'Arcy brough Cousin Ethel as well, but it was all

something of an anti-climax because nothing really happened at the party, which was just another cosy get-together.

Marjorie was not to be forgotten at Christmas time, either. In No. 47 she was invited with her brother to stay at Wharton Lodge, at the Colonel's request, and in No. 98 Marjorie and Clara were staying nearby and seemed to spend a great deal of their time at the Lodge, skating and entering the Christmas pudding competition that they won hands down. In later years they were not so often on the scene at Christmas time.

After Cliff House was established, Marjorie and Clara sometimes encountered the Removites by chance, as they did in No. 77 when they came across Bob Cherry's bun fight, which Clara pronounced to be "spiffing". Sometimes the juniors even went out of their way to meet Marjorie, as they did in No. 78 when they had a Bank Holiday trip to London and decided to go to the Crystal Palace just because they knew she was there with her brother. At other times their meeting was pre-arranged, like the picnic by the Sark in No. 90, which was also attended by D'Arcy and Cousin Ethel, but in none of these stories did the girls seem to take any initiatives or do anything but comment on events. In fact, apart from Clara's rather tomboy manner, the presence of the girls made very little impact on the reader, and generally speaking they contributed practically nothing to the development of the plot.

"The Dandies of the Remove" in No. 101 referred to the juniors in evening dress attending another dance party at Cliff House, but practically all the action of the plot took place at Greyfriars. An interesting item of note was that Miss Primrose and Miss Locke had invited more boys than necessary, and consequently unpopular boys like Bunter got no dances at all, though he managed to drown his sorrows with Wilhelmina Limburger in the supper room. Marjorie played a much more enterprising role in No. 106 when the Removites were producing 'Julius Caesar'. She had discovered that they thought girls couldn't act, and, to establish her claim to the role of Portia, she dressed up as an old sketch and went to Greyfriars pretending to be Nugent's aunt. This was really a surprisingly bold enterprise on her part, and seemed more appropriate for Clara than the demure Marjorie, and her action in swiping Ionides across the back with her umbrella was most uncharacteristic. Equally untypical was Marjorie's challenge to Vavasour that the girls would beat Highcliffe in a football match in No. 109. In the end, the Removites dressed as girls and Marjorie's team won seven nil.

The first ill-feeling between Greyfriars and Cliff House was dealt with in Nos. 112-113. Bunter had sent Marjorie and Clara a spoof invitation in Wharton's name to have lunch with them, as an April Fool's trick. Wharton & Co. managed to rustle up a feed, and then Bunter revealed the truth. The Cliff House girls felt awkward, and said that Harry Wharton should have told them. When, the following week, the Removites tried to make it up, they encountered difficulties:

> "You see, we ducked him in the ditch", said Nugent eagerly. "He was smothered with mud when he came out, and it took him an awfully long time to get clean - as clean as he ever gets, I mean. You see -"
>
> "How cruel!" said Miss Clara.
>
> "Eh? What?"
>
> "Poor old Bunter!"
>
> The juniors gasped. Sometimes they flattered themselves that they understood girls, especially Marjorie and Clara. But at other times they realised that feminine nature was a deep mystery to which they possessed no clue.

This exchange between Frank Nugent and Clara Trevlyn places the boys and girls on an equal footing. Clara seems to get the better of the argument, but also seems inconsistent in her approach: indeed, before the spoof invitation, Bunter had invited Marjorie, Clara, and Wilhelmina to have a feed with him at Uncle Clegg's and Marjorie had been forced to pay the bill. Nevertheless, Charles Hamilton was feeling his way towards a better balance of viewpoints. The ill-feeling was in fact ended by another feed - a hamper sent to Cliff House to help them entertain visitors from St. Jim's.

"The Cliff House Guest" in Magnet No. 140 was, surprisingly enough, Billy Bunter. Miss Primrose was giving an evening party for parents and relatives, and Bunter was to give a ventriloquial entertainment. It was an era when Bunter became his least attractive, and Skinner managed to ensure that the entertainment never came off at all, which was poetic justice in view of his bad behaviour throughout the story. It was a curious title for the Magnet tale, since no scenes took place at Cliff House on this occasion.

Charles Hamilton reverted to the inconsistency of feminine attitudes in No. 151, "The Girls' School's Challenge", the story which saw the arrival of Johnny Bull, who played quite a prominent part in the story. Marjorie, Clara, Wilhelmina, and Maud ambushed some Greyfriars juniors in Friardale Lane and pelted them with snowballs. Harry Wharton & Co. scaled the snow bank to

wreak revenge and were surprised to see that it was the girls who had launched the attack:

> "You think you have beaten us this time, I've no doubt!" exlaimed Miss Clara.
> The juniors stared.
> As they had invaded the defences of their assailants, and had forborne to 'wallop' because they were girls, they did not seem to be in much doubt that they had won in that little contest. But there is no following the mysterious workings of the feminine mind.

Marjorie sent a letter to Harry Wharton challenging him to a snow fight with twenty on each side. The challenge was duly accepted, but somehow Marjorie was less than pleased by that acceptance.

> Now as the Cliff House girls had put their pretty heads together to concoct that challenge to Greyfriars, it might have been supposed that they would expect a reply to it, accepting the challenge.
> But, with the sweet inconsistence which belongs to the feminine mind, they did not expect anything of the sort.
> It had seemed to the girls that in sending the challenge they had put the Greyfriars juniors in their place, and the acceptance of it came as a surprise.

Quite clearly, Charles Hamilton was attempting to provide the girls with an active role in the stories, instead of the mainly passive, decorative part to which they had been formerly assigned, but this led to difficulties in the handling of Marjorie's character. In this particular instance, though Greyfriars won the snowfight, Harry Wharton convinced the Cliff House girls that they had really won because Greyfriars had only defeated the Courtfield County Council School boys who had dressed up as girls to help out Cliff House, and in this tactful manner harmony was restored.

In No. 160, Bunter lost his memory and Marjorie felt quite sorry for him, and so did Clara after she had tested him out by asking about the five shillings she owed him, but Bunter failed to claim repayment of this mythical debt. Three weeks later Bunter pretended to have a relapse, and again the girls were most considerate and refused to accept the fact that it was a mere pretence:

> "I should not like to believe that, even of Bunter", said Marjorie.
> Wharton smiled in a hopeless way. Marjorie would not like to believe it; therefore she would not believe it! That was feminine logic!

After she had treated Bunter to feeds, he repaid her by taking her hand and trying to kiss her, whereupon she slapped his face. Even so, she asked Wharton not to punish Bunter for his action.

From this time onwards, the plots of the Magnets became much more tightly constructed and much more dramatic in quality and, indeed, the period from mid 1911 to mid 1913 was the most impressive achievement of the red Magnet era. As a result, the Cliff House girls tended to appear less and less frequently, with the stories centred mainly upon Greyfriars, with Highcliffe as an added dramatic interest. Of course, Cliff House was to play a part again in future years, and it is well known that the more famous Magnets of the 1930's allowed Marjorie & Co. to play important roles. The separate existence of Cliff House in the School Friend has been thoroughly explored by Mary Cadogan in the fourth number of the Charles Hamilton Companion, but it is in these very early Magnets that the foundation was laid, and the charm of these rather inconsequential tales is greatly enhanced by the feminine presence of Marjorie and Clara. It is an interesting point that all the subsidiary schools near Greyfriars - Cliff House, Highcliffe, and Courtfield County Council School

- came to life and had separate existence of their own outside the pages of the Magnet, and it was only Cliff House that lasted the course and indeed that school turned out very differently from the original conception of Charles Hamilton. In the Magnet, at least, the girls were viewed mainly through masculine eyes, as a subsidiary to the boys, and no doubt out allegiance to Greyfriars makes it difficult for us to see Cliff House in any other way. This glimpse into the very distant past brings out all the charm - and illogicality - of the girls of Cliff House. And who would wish it otherwise?

* *

Christmas and New Year Greetings to all Collectors' Digest readers.

FROM LESLIE KING

CHESHAM, BUCKS.

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to our Editor, Norman Shaw, and Alan Cadwallender.

PETER LANG

ELLEN COURT, JARROW

Still Wanted: Gem No. 1345 to complete long run. Please!! Season's Greetings and Best Wishes to all Fellow Hobbyists.

KEITH ATKINSON

20 CARLISLE TERRACE, BRADFORD

H.B. Press Volumes from No. 1. All Annuals, all "Pies", most modern authors. All mint. Mint D./J.'s. Offers and 'Wants' requested. Happy Christmas and New Year to all.

L. S. ELLIOTT - 01-472-6310

FOR SALE: Golden Annual for Girls - 1931. The Penguin Book of Comics. Valiant Book of TVs Sexton Blake. Book and Magazine Collector Nos. 1 to 24. Sexton Blake paperbacks 1965 onwards. Nos. 1 to 45 inclusive. (Nos. 42 and 43 not numbered.)

THOMPSON

4 WYVERN SQUARE, SUNDERLAND, TYNE & WEAR, SR2 9HD

Wishing Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the Editor and all Readers of Collectors' Digest.

HARRY MARRIOTT

27 GREENVIEW DRIVE, NORTHAMPTON

A Very Early Adventure of Mr Buddle

"MERRY CHRISTMAS, Mr. BUDDLE!"

BY ERIC FAYNE.

There was that end-of-term feeling in the air in the Lower Fourth form-room at Slade. In less than a week the school would be breaking-up for the Christmas vacation: the end of term examinations had long ended, leaving in their wake a mild interest as to what the results would be: for the pupils of Slade, almost to a man, it was a period of marking time.

That peculiar apathy which descends upon schools during the closing weeks of term was evident in Slade now. Even the masters had not escaped its lethargic spell, though it attacked some more than others. Mr. Drayne, who led or was led by the Third Form, always boasted that it took his boys two weeks to settle down at the beginning of term and then two weeks to break-up at the close of term. The period in between was devoted to hard work, with the exception of the week necessary to get acclimatised to a forthcoming half-term holiday and the week necessary later to get over that half-term holiday.

Mr. Buddle, the master of the Lower Fourth, who also taught English to other forms, was a man cast in a different mould from Mr. Drayne. Mr. Buddle was acutely conscientious and really believed that his pupils should be at their very best in the closing weeks of term. With such a belief at his heart it was quite amazing that Mr. Buddle had escaped duodenal ulcers. It was not surprising that, as end of term drew near, Mr. Buddle's temper became more tart, his patience more frayed, and his nervous system more severely tried.

So, although end-of-term drowsiness was evident among the pupils of the Lower Fourth at Slade that morning, it found no reflection in the master of that difficult form. Mr. Buddle was a whale on duty.

"Pilgrim, recite!" said Mr. Buddle.

Pilgrim stood up to recite from memory. He was an average scholar, but he was also the keen captain of Lower School sports at Slade. There was still one fixture to be played on the football pitch before term-end - an important one - and Pilgrim did not intend to risk detention falling to him for Wednesday afternoon. He hoped that all the members of his team would be equally careful.

Pilgrim recited:

"Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought.
I stay too long by thee, I weary thee.
Dost thou so hunger for my empty chair,
That thou wilt needs invest thee with mine honours
Before thy hour be ripe?"

"Good!" said Mr. Buddle. "Very good! You may be seated, Pilgrim! Brazenbean, continue!"

Brazenbean rose to his feet, rubbed his little snub nose, and screwed up his eyes in an effort of memory.

"O foolish youth..." said Mr. Buddle.

"I'm not foolish, sir. I'm just trying to remember."

There was a titter in the class. It died away as a ferocious gleam shot into Mr. Buddle's eyes. Pilgrim looked round anxiously.

"Foolish", said Mr. Buddle, "would be a euphemism if applied to you, Brazenbean. I was prompting you, crass boy. O, foolish youth --"

A happy smile overspread Brazenbean's pimply visage.

"Oh, yes, sir, thank you, sir."

He plunged on:

"O foolish youth! Thou seekest the greatness which will overpower you --"

"Overwhelm thee!" snapped Mr. Buddle.

"Yes, sir. My wind is weak, my day is dim, you have sealed up my expectations, you have a thousand daggers in your thoughts --"

Mr. Buddle sighed.

"I accept that, Brazenbean. In view of your abysmal laziness and your limited brain capacity, it is something to find that you have recalled the gist of a few of the terms used by Shakespeare. Be seated!"

Brazenbean gasped with relief and sat down.

"Meredith!" said Mr. Buddle.

Pilgrim's anxiety intensified. Meredith seldom shone in class, at any rate as a scholar, but on the right wing he was indispensable to Pilgrim's team on Wednesday. There were occasions when the Lower Fourth found Meredith vastly entertaining in class. Pilgrim hoped against hope that this was not one of those occasions. Mr. Buddle, like the great Queen, did not look in the mood to be amused.

Meredith rose to his feet. There was no guile in those honest, innocent blue eyes.

"Thy thoughts are wet." announced Meredith.

Stifled chuckles sounded all over the room. They died away as Mr. Buddle's brows knitted ominously.

"Meredith!" said Mr. Buddle in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir, I'm trying to remember. Thou hast whetted --"

Meredith paused, looked up at the ceiling, and licked his lips. Several more faint chuckles sounded in the class. Pilgrim glared round in exasperation. Mr. Buddle sat in stony silence.

Normally Meredith was an artist. He knew just how far to go. On this occasion, encouraged by the faint sniggers and the grinning faces, his sense of artistry deserted him. He rushed to his doom.

He lifted a hand and brushed back his mop of golden hair.

"Thou hast whetted --" he

said again, enunciating each word with staccato effect. Then again, as though striving to remember, he gazed up at the ceiling.

The chuckles were more pronounced. Even Pilgrim was grinning.

Mr. Buddle rose to his feet. As his gleaming eyes swept the form the grins vanished from every face.

"Meredith", said Mr. Buddle softly, "for now a time is come to mock at form."

Meredith stared at him innocently.

"Oh, no, sir, that comes further on, I'm sure."

"Quite so, Meredith", said Mr. Buddle with fiendish geniality. "It comes further on as you are well aware. But the quotation is apt. For are you not mocking the form of which you are a dishonourable member? Are you not --" Mr. Buddle's voice rose. "Are you not mocking - actually mocking - your form-master?"

"Me, sir? You, sir? Me mocking you, sir? Oh, no, sir! It's just that I'm no good at learning Shakespeare, sir. Isn't it awful, sir? I just can't learn Shakespeare, sir. I can read the play, sir, with real relish, sir, but I can't learn the lines."

"You have had exactly one week in which to learn that famous speech of King Henry the Fourth", said Mr. Buddle bitterly. "Clearly you have made no effort - no effort at all - to learn it. I will not be mocked - I repeat mocked - in my own form-room, Meredith. This college breaks up for the Christmas vacation on Friday next, but today is only Monday. I am determined that between now and Friday next you shall all do credit to every master who has instructed you throughout this term. In the closing days of term you should all be at your very best. And --" Mr. Buddle thumped his desk. "And you shall be! You hear me! You SHALL be"!.

Meredith stood with his hands at his sides, his eyes downcast.

"I shall waste no further time on you, Meredith", said Mr. Buddle.

"Oh, sir!"

"No further time at all. You will be detained on Wednesday afternoon. You will come to this form-room and write out this glorious speech of Henry the Fourth which I could recite before I was eight years old. You will write it out five times, Meredith, and you will then not be allowed to leave the form-room until you can recite it to me without one mistake. Enough! Be seated, Meredith! Garmansway, proceed!" Mr. Buddle waved a hand in the air, thus dismissing the subject.

Garmansway rose to his feet, but Meredith did not sit down. His bright, boyish face was the picture of woe.

"Oh, sir, I can remember it now. It's all come back to me, sir. Thou hast whetted on thy stony heart, to stab at half an hour of my life --"

"Silence, Meredith!" thundered Mr. Buddle. He had sat down, but he leaped to his feet again. "I will not hear you now. I am not surprised that you have remembered now that retribution has overtaken you, but it is too late. Too late! I decline to hear you. Your time has passed!"

Mr. Buddle spoke with a majesty and bitterness which would have done credit to Henry the Fourth himself.

Meredith, in his turn, was understudying the repentant and tearful Prince Hal. His gentle blue eyes were pleading.

"Oh, please, sir, let me say it. My memory's a bit erotic, sir. You prompted me, and it's all come back. I can't be detained on Wednesday, sir. I'm playing football, sir - the last match of the term, sir --"

"Ha!" said Mr. Buddle, still performing Henry the Fourth. "You have already played your last match of the term, Meredith. On Wednesday next you will be in detention from two till five - or six - or seven o'clock if necessary. Sit down and be silent!"

"Sir!" It was Pilgrim now. He stood up though he felt the effort hopeless. "We need Meredith, sir, on Wednesday. We're playing St. Martin's. Please, sir, could you flog Meredith instead?"

Meredith looked at him indignantly, but Garmansway and several others took up the chorus.

"Please flog Meredith, sir, and let him play football on Wednesday."

Mr. Buddle's eyes glittered over the class.

"Silence! I will not flog Meredith. To do so would be to exhaust me uselessly, for no strokes of the cane would penetrate his thick and nauseating skin. Meredith is detained on Wednesday afternoon."

"Oh, sir, the football, sir--"

"If", said Mr. Buddle ominously, "any obscene boy makes further metion of football in this room this morning, the entire class will be detained on Wednesday."

No obscene boy made any further mention of football in Mr. Buddle's form-room that morning.

. . . . . .

"You stupid, horrid-minded little pig!" said Pilgrim.

"Oh, skip it! The Gump picks on me!" grunted Meredith, sulkily.

Morning classes were over and the two boys were strolling together in the misty Close. Meredith was woeful, Pilgrim a picture of tense exasperation.

"You had to pick this morning, of all times, to nettle the Gump!" said Pilgrim in disgust. "You're warped! That's what's the matter with you! You're warped!"

Meredith grinned faintly.

"The Gump made a sitting target. I couldn't resist it." He wrinkled his brows. "You know me, Pil. I never give up hope. I might be able to work it."

Pilgrim stared at him.

"How could you possibly work it?"

"Well --" Meredith drew his school muffler a little closer round his throat. "You remember last term? The Gump bottled me for the cricket against Sutherby - but I played in the end. I worked the oracle."

Pilgrim snorted.

"You blackmailed him! If you think you could get away with that dodge twice, you're even wetter than you look."

Meredith chuckled softly.

"I'm going to give the Gump a Christmas present."

"A Christmas present?" Pilgrim came to a standsill, and gaped at his companion through the mist. "Last time you blackmailed him - this time you think you can buy him. You lunatic, it would never work."

"You think the Gump wouldn't

accept a Christmas present from me?"

"Of course he wouldn't! He'd see through your slimy mind at once. You'd get six on the behind as well as an afternoon in bottle."

"If the luck of the Merediths does not desert me, my posterior will be unscarred - and I shall not spend an afternoon in bottle", said Meredith airily. He jerked some loose change from his pocket and scanned it. "Lend me a couple of coppers, Pil."

"What for?" Pilgrim drew several pennies from his pocket and passed them to his friend.

"I am going", said Meredith, "to ring up my old man. I shall reverse the charges, but I need the coppers to get the Exchange. My old man is going to send me the Gump's Christmas present."

"You're right up the pole!" muttered Pilgrim. "In any case, will your old man be at home at this time of day?"

Meredith smiled ingenuously.

"If my old man isn't there, my Mummy will be. Won't that be nice!"

Pilgrim shook his head in despair, and they entered the school building. Meredith took possession of the telephone cabinet just within the big doors, and lifted the receiver. He dropped pennies into the coin box.

With anxious brow Pilgrim stood and watched him for a few moments. Then the harassed skipper of Lower Fourth games joined a group of fellows, and sauntered away with them.

. . . . . .

Mr. Buddle spent Tuesday evening at a club meeting in the village of Everslade. It was nearing ten when he returned to the school and entered his study. He turned on the light and then crossed the room and switched on his electric fire. Divesting himself of his overcoat, Mr. Buddle entered his adjoining bedroom and hung the coat behind the door. Then he returned to his study where he expected to find a thermos flask of cocoa which the school housekeeper always left for him on his table on any evening when he missed supper in the staff dining-room.

His flask was there as usual, with an attendant cup and saucer. Beside the flask lay a large white envelope.

Mr. Buddle picked up the envelope and read the inscription thereon. Written in a clear round hand was the following:

A Small Gift to Sir
with best wishes from C. Meredith.
Merry Christmas, Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Buddle grunted with annoyance.

"What an abysmally stupid boy!" he observed aloud.

He poured out a cup of steaming cocoa which he placed on the low table beside his armchair against the fire. Then he took up the large white envelope again and sat down in the armchair.

Once more Mr. Buddle scanned the inscription in the boyish hand.

"Ridiculous youth!" muttered Mr. Buddle. "Inane adolescent!"

He dropped the envelope on the floor. Frowning, he sipped his cocoa. Replacing the cup in the saucer, Mr. Buddle addressed the bust of Shakespeare on his mantelpiece.

"Obviously a subterfuge by a cunning lad!

A trick to escape his detention.

What audacity! What barefaced audacity! I will return it to him unopened."

Mr. Buddle finished his cocoa. He yawned. Once again he grunted. Once again he picked up the large white envelope.

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Buddle!" he read aloud.

He wondered what the envelope contained. There could, of course, be no harm - no loss of dignity - in opening it.

Slowly Mr. Buddle inserted his thumb in the flap of the envelope and prised it open. He drew out the contents.

It was a copy of the Gem. Mr. Buddle knew the Gem well. For a long time now Mr. Buddle had received the Gem regularly. Hidden within his "Times" it was delivered to him by his newsagent every Wednesday morning. Mr. Buddle read, enjoyed, and loved the Gem. It was his secret shame. Mr. Buddle had suspected more than once that Meredith knew his secret. Meredith had a way of finding things out.

But this copy of the Gem "with best wishes from C. Meredith" was something exceptional. It was a gem among Gems. It was such a copy as Mr. Buddle had never seen before. It was a huge issue. It had a gorgeous coloured cover. Across the top of the cover were the words CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER.

"Goodness gracious!" murmured Mr. Buddle.

It was truly a magnificent issue. It glistened with pristine newness as though it had only recently come from the printing machines. But Mr. Buddle knew enough about the Gem to appreciate that this could not be the case. Much water had flowed under the bridges since that copy of the Gem was in the shops. It was a copy which someone, somewhere, had preserved with loving care.

Mr. Buddle turned over the pages almost reverently. It comprised no less than 52 pages. Mr. Buddle had never seen a Gem of such magnitude.

He finished his cocoa. He leaned back and gazed at the title of the story - "The Mystery of the Painted Room". It was described as a 50,000-word Christmas story of Tom Merry & Co.

Yet again Mr. Buddle addressed Shakespeare's bust.

"Am I doing that gross boy an injustice? Is it possible that he has been moved by the spirit of Chrismas? Can I accept this wonderful book in the spirit with which it has been given to me?"

The bust of Shakespeare looked dubious. The eyeless sockets did not flicker.

"I would dearly love to retain this superb copy. Could I, in all dignity, do so?" Mr. Buddle shook his head involuntarily. "No, a thousand times, no! I could not accept a Christmas present from Meredith without cancelling his detention for tomorrow afternoon. That revolting boy is guilty of a heinous scheme. He shall not suceed. Discipline must be maintained. This Christmas gift must be returned to him." Mr. Buddle sighed, closed his eyes, and murmured:

"Oh, calamity! Oh, disaster!"

He opened his eyes again, adjusted his spectacles, and regarded the Gem. A thought occurred to him. There was no reason at all why he should not read, say, the first chapter --.

Mr. Buddle drew his chair a

little closer to the fire. settled himself happily, and started to read.

It was a wonderful story. Tom Merry and his friends had gone to Eastwood House as the guests of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for Christmas. But Lord Eastwood, the father of Arthur Augustus, had vanished. Had he gone of his own free will, or had some nefarious hand engineered the kidnapping of the Earl?

A youth named Kerr was suspicious of the butler, a stout but powerful man of the name of Pilkington. Mr. Buddle, too, suspected Pilkington. With such a problem Mr. Buddle was in his element.

Half-way through the story, Arthur Augustus was alone, late at night, in the Painted Room. On the ceiling was an ornate carving of Bacchus, the god of wine. As Arthur Augustus looked up at Bacchus, he was horrified to see a glitter in the eye of the inanimate god.

"It's alive!" panted Arthur Augustus.

The next morning he, too, had disappeared.

"Goodness gracious!" breathed Mr. Buddle. He looked around him nervously. Then he glanced at his clock. It had turned midnight.

Mr. Buddle grunted, rose to his feet, switched off his fire, made his way into the adjoining room, and went to bed. He took "The Mystery of the Painted Room" with him.

In his bed, with his hot water bottle between his knees, Mr. Buddle read on. Not since he first met Tom Merry & Co. in a story called "Baffled" had Mr. Buddle enjoyed himself so much.

It was half-past one when Mr. Buddle, tired but content, finished reading the story. He had thoroughly enjoyed himself. He sighed, closed the paper, and looked at the picture of Arthur Augustus in the sinister Painted Room on the cover.

"I would", murmured Mr. Buddle, "dearly love to retain this wonderful story. It cannot be. Discipline must be maintained."

He placed "The Mystery of the Painted Room" on his bedside table, switched off the light, and nestled down to repose.

After so much enjoyment Mr. Buddle's mind was made up. Meredith's Christmas gift was a deep-laid scheme to avoid discipline, and Mr. Buddle was determined that, for once, Meredith was not going to get away with it.

. . . . . .

The next morning Mr. Buddle rose at seven. After performing his ablutions and dressing he placed the precious Double Number of the Gem in its white envelope. The white envelope he deposited on the table of his study.

Then, as was his custom, Mr. Buddle went for a brisk walk in the misty Close. Mr. Buddle enjoyed excellent health, and he attributed that fact to the lengthy perambulation which he always undertook before breakfast, rain or shine.

At eight o'clock the breakfast bell rang, and Mr. Buddle made his way to the dining hall to enjoy his own meal and to supervise his form in the enjoyment of theirs.

Breakfast over, Mr. Buddle rose to his feet.

"You may disperse", he said genially. "Meredith, you will remain."

With a clatter the Lower Fourth dispersed, with the exception of Meredith. That angelic-looking youth stood in his place half-way down the long dining table.

"Come here, Meredith", said Mr. Buddle.

Meredith went there, and Mr. Buddle regarded him thoughtfully. It seemed impossible to believe that behind those honest blue eyes could be crocodile tears; that beneath that mass of golden hair there could be a brain worthy of Machiavelli. But Mr. Buddle knew his Meredith - or thought he did.

"Last evening, Meredith", said Mr. Buddle, "I found upon the table in my study an article which you appear to have intended as a Christmas present for me."

Meredith smiled.

"Yes, sir. I hope you like it, sir. I wish you a very Merry Christmas, sir."

"Thank you, Meredith." Mr. Buddle frowned upon the golden-haired youth. "It was a kindly thought I am sure, Meredith, but it is quite impossible for a form-master to accept a gift from a pupil, even at Christmas time."

"Oh, sir!" Deep sadness came into the clear blue eyes. There was a wealth of disappointment in his voice. "Oh, sir!"

"Quite impossible!" repeated Mr. Buddle firmly.

"I understand, sir", said Meredith soulfully. "I knew, of course, sir, that you would not suspect me of any interior motive. I mean, sir, that just because I gave you a tiny Christmas present, I did not dream for one minute that you would think you had to let me off detention this afternoon, sir."

"I should", said Mr. Buddle, "be averse to suspecting any boy in my form of chicanery."

Meredith sighed.

"You would have loved that story, sir. I wish you could have read it, sir. Did you read it, sir?"

Mr. Buddle cleared his throat, and stirred uneasily.

"I am a busy man, Meredith. I have but little time and little taste for light literature.

"Of course, sir!" Meredith smiled bravely, though his innocent blue eyes were moist. "I expect I shall be the same when I grow up like you, sir, and reach adultery --"

"What!"

"It stands to reason, sir", murmured Meredith.

"The word you wish to use is adulthood - or possibly adultness", snapped Mr. Buddle.

"Yes, sir, I'll remember, sir. In any case, you couldn't have read the story, sir. I mean to say, sir, you wouldn't read a Christmas present and then give it back, sir --"

"Quite!" said Mr. Buddle. He blushed. "I appreciate your kind thought, Meredith, and there the matter must end. You will now follow me to my study, and I will return your Christmas gift to you."

Meredith followed Mr. Buddle to that gentleman's study. When Mr. Buddle entered the room he came to a sudden stop - so sudden that Meredith collided with his form-master's rear.

MR. Buddle had placed the large white envelope on his table to await his return. It was no longer there. The surface of the table shone with polish but with

nothing else.

In the doorway Meredith stood with his hands behind him.

Mr. Buddle looked under the table; he scanned his bookshelves; he glanced into his bureau. With a grunt of annoyance he wandered round the room, lifting cushions, sorting over loose papers, searching behind chairs - but all to no avail. There was no sign of the large white envelope containing "The Mystery of the Painted Room".

Frowning darkly Mr. Buddle whisked into his bedroom. A couple of minutes later he whisked back into his study.

For a moment he stood staring at Meredith. There was a pink spot on each of Mr. Buddle's cheek-bones. Meredith regarded him woodenly.

"I placed your gift on my study table when I left this room an hour ago. It is no longer here. Some person has removed it."

Mr. Buddle compressed his lips.

"I see, sir."

The boy spoke in subdued tones. Mr. Buddle found something vaguely disturbing in the accusing gaze from the honest blue eyes.

He breathed hard with intense vexation. After a moment he said:

"Go to the housekeeper's room, Meredith, and tell her that an envelope has been removed from my study table. You can describe the envelope. Ask Mrs. Cleverton to enquire as to whether one of her staff may have taken it away in error."

"Yes, sir."

Meredith sped off down the corridor. Mr. Buddle glanced at his clock. It was nearing time for morning classes.

Ten minutes later Meredith returned. He came empty-handed.

"Mrs. Cleverton says that Agnes made your bed some time ago, sir, but Agnes says she only brought away some rubbish from your room. It went into the incinerator, sir."

"What imbecility!" yapped Mr. Buddle. "I placed the envelope on my table - and now it has gone. Somebody has removed it."

Meredith stood in silence, his face expressionless.

"It appears, Meredith, that I am unable to return to you the copy of the periodical which you wished to give me as a Yuletide gift."

"I see, sir."

Meredith spoke respectfully.

Mr. Buddle's chagrin got the better of him.

"You are an utterly absurd boy, Meredith. Your intention of giving your form-master a Christmas present was ridiculous buffoonery. You have placed me in an intolerable position."

The innocent blue eyes were raised in reproach.

"I'm sorry, sir. Please forget it, sir. It was only a very small gift in any case, sir. As you've lost it, you can't give it back to me, sir. May I go, please, sir? I shall be late for class."

Mr. Buddle stood in indecision. At last he said:

"You may go, Meredith."

"Thank you, sir."

Meredith turned away. His head was drooping a little. In the doorway he looked back at his form-master.

Mr. Buddle felt himself invid-

iously placed. He made up his mind.

"Wait, Meredith. Do you think that you could now recite the passage of Shakespeare which is the subject of your detention this afternoon?"

"I could try, sir."

"Commence!" snapped Mr. Buddle.

Meredith commenced:

"Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought --"

Mr. Buddle interrupted him.

"Very well, Meredith. Under the circumstances your detention this afternoon is cancelled."

A smile of gratitude overspread the bright, ingenuous countenance.

"Oh, thank you, sir. How kind you are, sir!"

Mr. Buddle extracted his handkerchief and blew his nose.

"That will be all, Meredith. I think you meant well, though your action was misguided. I appreciate your thought in giving me a Christmas gift. You may go."

So Meredith played in the St. Martin's match that afternoon, and his agility on the wing enabled Slade to hold a rather heavier team to a one-all draw.

That evening, before lights were extinguished in his dormitory, Meredith sat up in bed and re-read the letter which he had received from his mother:

> Darling Ceddie,
>
> I am sending you the copy of the Gem which you wish to show to your prefect. You must take great care of the paper, for it is one which your father values very highly. When you come home on Friday, place it flat in the bottom of your suit-case, in order that it may not get creased in any way.
>
> In great haste, darling, to catch the post,
> Your loving
> Mumsie.

On Friday, when Mr. Buddle watched the boys leaving for their Christmas vacation, it did occur to him to wonder whether, just possibly, "The Mystery of the Painted Room" might be lying uncreased in the bottom of Meredith's suitcase.

Mr. Buddle dismissed the thought at once as unworthy. He was not a suspiciousman.

* * * *
* * *
* *
*

---

* *

Best Wishes for Christmas and 1987 to Eric, Chris, Norman, Laurie, Les, Bill, Mac, and all Hobbiophiles everywhere. Still hoping someone can help me find or copy U.J. 177 or Penny Popular 31.

JOHN BRIDGWATER

5A SAULFLAND PLACE, HIGHCLIFFE, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET, BH23 4QP

= =

RICHMAL CROMPTON - THE WOMAN BEHIND WILLIAM

BY MARY CADOGAN.

"If you'll give me two shillings," said William, "you'll never see me again after I'm twenty-one."

Richmal Crompton's wonderful William stories, after having been out of print and out of fashion for some time, were successfully revived in 1983, when Macmillan's decided to republish the whole series, in both paperback and hard-covers. Now they have reprinted the first twenty titles, and it seems that they will be able to find sufficient new readers to complete the series. In spite of the prophecies of some reviewers that the stories were out of date, out of keeping with present-day children's experience, and that the author's language was too demanding, the books are selling extremely well to children of the 1980s, as well as to a large band of nostalgic adults. William once again has come into his own; indeed he is becoming something of a cult figure, with celebrities from all walks of life making him top of their personal pops when they select children's books which they enjoyed in their own young days, and which they recommend for contemporary reading.

Despite William's fame - or notoriety - little has been published about Richmal Crompton. The woman behind William kept what is today called 'a low profile' during her lifetime; outside of our collecting circle there are still people who, because of her unusual Christian name, think that William's originator was a man! It was a great joy to me to be asked by the publishers Allen & Unwin to write a book about the talented, witty and endearing lady whose books have given such tremendous pleasure to so many people. I enjoyed researching RICHMAL CROMPTON: THE WOMAN BEHIND WILLIAM (which was published in October of this year), and I decided that I would try to make the book a celebration of Richmal Crompton's life and works, and a portrait in depth rather than a detailed biography. Like so many prolific authors (Charles Hamilton is another example), Richmal spent a great deal of her time writing. Her life was, on the surface, uneventful, although I hope that I have been able to convey some of the richness of her multi-faceted personality.

Readers of the Collector's Digest have already been given insights into Richmal's life, in her own words, in one or two fascinating articles (see especially Collector's Digest Annual 1962). She wrote in MEET WILLIAM about her feelings for her most famous character, and indeed for boyhood in general:

'... beneath his tough exterior, he is sensitive, generous and affectionate, though he has, too, a pride that makes him conceal these qualities. You can hurt him desperately by a careless word, but you will never know that you have done so. Moreover, despite his outrageous appearance and behaviour, he has a strong sense of dignity that you affront at your peril.'

The point is, of course, that William is rarely a 'bad boy' by design. The chaos that he heaps upon his family and other adults often springs from the best of intentions on his part; indeed, it arises from a literal acceptance of some of the values that grown-ups try to impress upon him, but which they did not in fact live by. The story 'William's Truthful Christmas' is a splendid instance of William's honesty running riot through adult hypocrisy. Lady Atkinson's idea of a good Christmas gift is a large signed photograph of herself, patronizingly bestowed upon her underlings. After she has smugly soaked up the general (and dishonest) murmurs of admiration and gratitude, she turns to William who, inspired by the vicar's sermon on how untruthfulness spoils the holy season, has been implementing veracity - with disastrous results - all through Christmas Day:

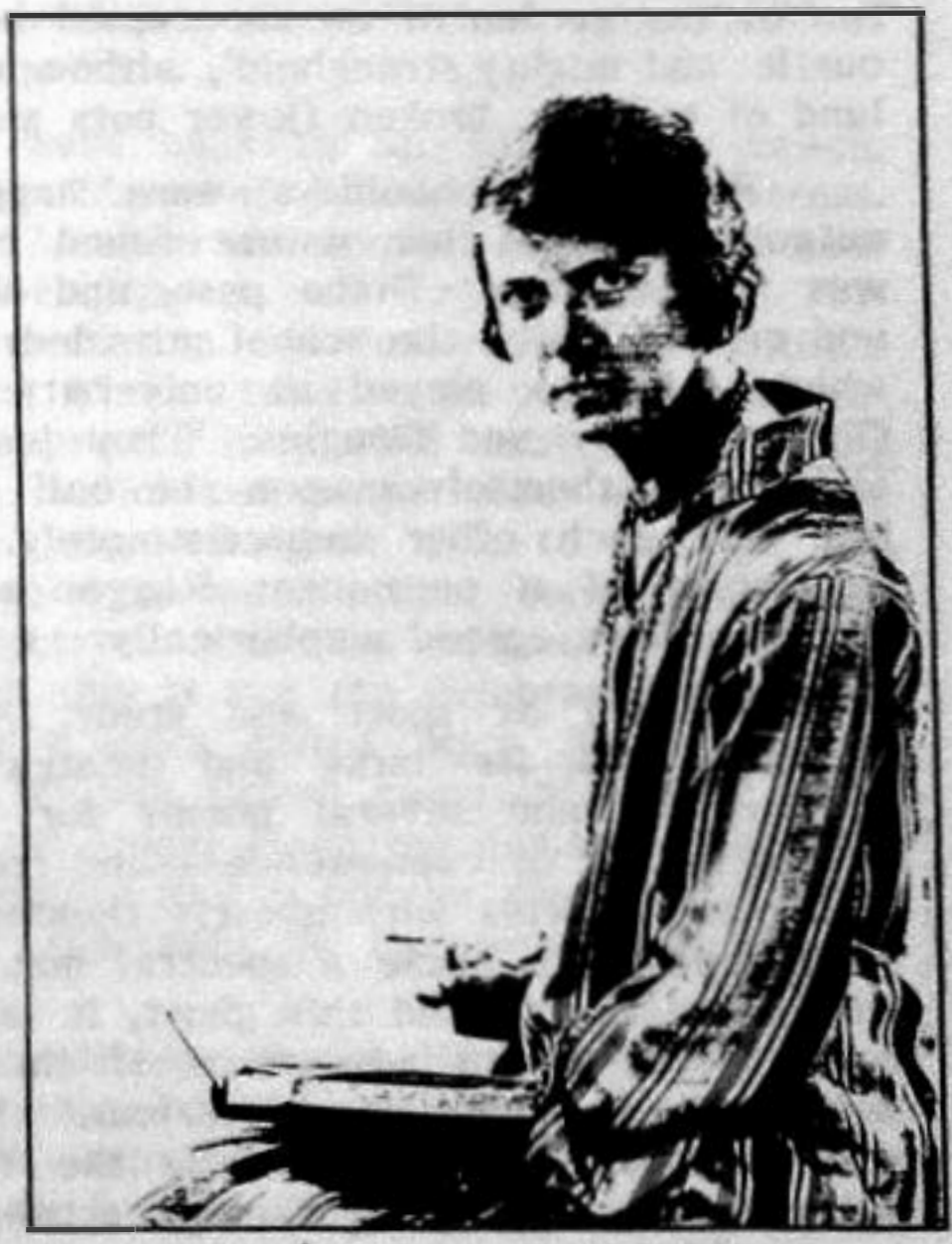
'You ... little boy ... don't you think it's very like me?'
William gazed at it critically.
'It's not as fat as you are', was his final offering at the altar of truth.

Like her brainchild, Richmal was an essentially straightforward person who had no time for humbug or hypocrisy. This is about the only way in which she and William resemble each other. She was studious while he was intellectually lazy ('I'm jolly well sick of wastin' my time in a stuffy old school. Let's be outlaws ...'): she was socially co-operative while he was obstructive ("'Do you mean to tell me you want to be paid for doing a little thing like that?' ...'Yes', replied William simply"); she was politically conservative while he was anarchic ('I don't want to be a civilized yuman bein'. I'd rather be a savage any day') - and so on and on. The list of contrasts between them is endless.

Richmal Crompton Lamburn (to give her her full name), was born on 15th November, 1890, in Bury, Lancashire. She was the second daughter of the Reverend Edward Sewell Lamburn, a clergyman/schoolmaster, and Clara, his capable and energetic wife. From her early childhood, Richmal was

devoted to her parents, her sister Gwen, and especially to her younger brother Jack, who was to become the original inspiration for William.

Edward taught at Bury Grammar School. With a degree in Latin, Maths and French he was determined that his two daughters, as well as his son, should have the benefits of a good education. It turned out that both the girls were infused with his love of learning - but Jack wasn't particularly interested in school work or private study. He attended Bury Grammar School, where he was constantly under Edward's eagle and elevating eye. However, he was later to repudiate the career in the church planned for him by his parents and to take up work of which William, his fictional counterpart, would have thoroughly approved. Jack joined the Rhodesian Mounted Police in 1913. Some years later he travelled and traded in China (where he was once captured by bandits). Then, as John Lambourne he became an author of successful adventure stories. He serviced in the R.A.F. during the second world war, and eventually became an authority on insects, producing books on these in the name of John Crompton.



RICHMAL CROMPTON

Richmal and Gwen went to St. Elphin's, a boarding-school for clergy daughters, situated at first in Warrington and then in Darley Dale, near Matlock. Inspired by stories of Greece and Rome with which Edward regaled his family, Richmal had developed an early passion for classics. She proved an excellent scholar, and won a Founder's Entrance Scholarship to Royal Holloway College. She also acquitted herself so well in the Cambridge Higher Local Examinations that she could have had a place at Newnham. However she had by then already decided to accept the London University scholarship. She obtained her B.A. degree in classics in October 1914 and, according to the college's senior staff tutor in classics, was 'the best candidate of her year'.

From childhood Richmal had enjoyed writing. She had been forced to lie for periods on a backboard, as her parents nurtured the then common fear that their rather delicate-looking second daughter might otherwise develop a curvature of the spine. As she couldn't be running around the fields near her home (on the outskirts of Bury) with Jack, she made the best of these times of enforced rest by reading, and dreaming up stories and poems of her own. She edited a magazine which she called 'The Rainbow', the circulation of which was confined to two, her small brother and her beloved rag doll, Lena, who had the magazine read to them in the secrecy of the attic. This attic retreat was the first of Richmal's secret worlds. Throughout her life she sometimes found the need to withdraw into some secret refuge or other. When she was at boarding-school and occasionally found life 'so noisy, one couldn't read or think', Richmal travelled outwards in her imagination to enticing locations - from classical Greece, which endlessly

intrigued her, to the 'fairy-like' fields she used to play in with Jack and Gwen. She also looked inwards for escape, in secret dreams or fantasies. In her first novel for adults (The Innermost Room, 1923), the heroine, Bridget, as a young girl has an image of herself as a series of rooms 'beginning with an ante-room and ending with a small innermost room'. For William and the Outlaws there is, of course, the haven of their headquarters, the old barn. Their places of refuges are more likely to be expedient hide-outs from angry or exasperated adults than secret, romantic settings: 'The ill-timed and tactless interference of parents had nipped in the bud many a cherished plan, and by bitter experience the Outlaws had learned that secrecy was their only protection ...'.

William's secret world of imagination, however, is as high-flown as anyone's. Whether he is retreating into lurid daydreams inspired by a sudden infatuation for some fanciable female, whether he is mentally running away to sea, or rescuing someone from brigands, pirates or wild beasts, he invests his secret worlds with colour and deeds of derring do. When, for example, he has the run of the garden of an unoccupied house next door, it becomes his 'magnificent castle and mighty stronghold', although in fact it is nothing more than a waste-land of old tins, broken flower pots and other pieces of rubbish.

Richmal's schooldays were happy and, as well as her dreaminess, the outgoing side of her nature found expression at St. Elphin's. The backboard was now a thing of the past, and she plunged herself into the hockey, tennis and cricket which the school provided. She became particularly adept at hockey, which she also played at university (and which much later inspires William, Ginger, Henry and Douglas: 'They leapt and yelled and brandished their sticks, and hurled themselves upon the ball and tripped each other up and kicked the ball and each other indiscriminately. To an impartial observer it was more suggestive of a permanent Rugger scrimmage than anything else, but it was - the Outlaws agreed emphatically - a jolly good game...').

As well as sport and study, Richmal enjoyed the lively companionship of school life, its 'larks' and theatricals. She wrote plays for her schoolmates to perform, and several poems for the St. Elphin's magazine, which showed a high degree of competence - and frequent touches of humour. She also wrote one or two stories with ghostly themes. The St. Elphin's building at Warrington was supposed to house a spectral nun. (It had once been a convent.) Although Richmal never sighted this ghost, it laid hold on her imagination, and throughout her life she wrote adventures of the supernatural. In her serious books these were truly murky and mysterious. Mist (1928), a collection of short stories is particularly atmospheric. In the William stories, of course, ghostliness was funny rather than frightening, arising usually from skulduggery on William's part, rather than from the supernatural. One can be sure than whenever a horrified house-parlour-maid hurtles across her mistress's drawing-room burbling about 'vishuns' or 'hastral bodies' William is somehow at the bottom of her optical illusions!

Richmal's appreciation of her schooldays is summed up in the following poem which she wrote for the St. Elphin's Magazine in 1907:

S. Elphin's.

S tand up for S. Elphin's, ye old girls and new,
A nd keep its name sacred whatever you do;
I t's a name whose traditions are sound and intact,
N ever sully or stain it by word or by act.

T hrough school life and after let this be your rule—
E 'er to cleave to your motto and honour your
school,
L earn to fight with a will and you're certain to
win,
P lay up for S. Elphin's through thick and
through thin.
H er honour is sacred and true, every bit;
I n everything show her you've courage and grit,
N ever forgetting the time-honoured call—
S aint Elphin's for ever!—the best school of all!

—*R.C.L.*

There are touches in this of the spiffing schoolgirl spirit ('all grit and grind, blade-straight to the narrowest edge', and charged with esprit-de-corps) that Angela Brazil began to immortalize around the time that Richmal's poem appeared in print. And Richmal was, in fact, one of that generation of boarding-school girls which inspired Angela's stories.

After obtaining her degree, Richmal went back to St. Elphin's to teach, honouring a promise she had made to Miss Margaret Flood, the Headmistress. She taught classics there from 1914 to 1917, when she moved south to be near her sister Gwen, who had married, and who had a small son, Thomas. This nephew of Richmal's gave her further inspiration eventually for the William stories. He may also have inspired the first of her tales to be published professionally; this was called 'Thomas', and was printed in a 1918 issue of the Girl's Own Paper. It is about a curly-haired, smock-and-romper-clad boy, who is his Mummy's little darling. However, he longs to 'grow up', to cut off the bubbly coiffure, abandon the girlish garb, and to wear proper boots and socks instead of sandals. He achieves his objectives with the help of an already liberated small boy called William - though this is not the celebrated character of that name. He was first featured in a story called 'Rice Mould' in the Home Magazine of February 1919. Once William Brown came into being there was no holding him back. The editor of the Home Magazine demanded monthly William exploits, and these were soon transferred to the popular Happy Magazine, in which William thrived until the paper shortages of the second world war brought about the magazine's demise.

Richmal obtained the post of classics mistress at the Bromley (Kent) High School for Girls when she moved near London to be near her married sister. Clara, their mother, who was then widowed, kept house for Richmal, who loved her work and, according to several of her former students, was a wonderful teacher. She is remembered as a charismatic person, pretty and charming, with lots of light-brown hair which was always smartly twirled into buns, plaits or 'headphones'. One of her ex-students writes: 'She was most inspiring and enthusiastic - laughter and fun were the essential ingredients of the lessons'. But Richmal also helped to give the same pupil a love of Latin and a passion for English literature. Known at the school as Miss Lamburn (or 'Lambie'), Richmal could also be tough when occasion demanded, 'downright ... standing no nonsense... Of course, we girls had "crushes" on her. One girl used to bring a single rose, and place it on her desk before she came in.' (There are echoes here of the story from More William when, becoming infatuated with his pretty teacher Miss Drew, he tears up every flower from his father's garden and smothers her desk with these before she comes into the classroom.)

The William stories began to be collected into books in 1922 when Just

WILLIAM FELT THE FIRST DART OF THE LITTLE BLIND GOD. HE BLUSHED AND SIMPERED.

- William and More William appeared. Richmal was also writing adult novels, mostly of the family saga variety. She always hoped to make her mark as a serious novelist, publishing in all 42 novels and 9 books of short stories (in addition to the long-running William books). It is true that despite the relish with which she wrote about her eleven-year-old anti-hero, she sometimes referred to him as a 'pot boiler', or as a 'Frankenstein monster', whose neck she would like to wring.

By the summer of 1923, Richmal was more than busy with teaching and writing. Miss Hodge, her Headmistress, was suggesting that she should give up writing to concentrate on teaching. Her editors, on the other hand, were urging her to stop being a school-marm and to give herself entirely to writing. The final decision was taken out of her hands by personal disaster, and the strange dealings of destiny. Richmal suffered an attack of poliomyelitis (then better known as infantile paralysis), which left her without the use of her right leg, which remained immobile for the rest of her life. As soon as she was able to do so, she began to struggle 3½ miles to the High School and back each day, either by taxi or on a bicycle, with her 'dead' leg sticking out at a perilous angle, because she was determined to coach three pupils who were half way through their university scholarship year. As one of them comments, she 'showed wonderful courage', dragging 'her paralysed leg on crutches to a classroom to take Latin with these students for three solid periods, teaching them more than Latin by her courage and cheerfulness'. But in 1924, her doctor urged her to give up her teaching work, and to concentrate on writing. Teaching's loss was literature's gain.

Richmal never married, but was apparently a perfect aunt to her sister Gwen's three children, Thomas, Margaret and Richmal, and to Jack's son David and daughter Sarah. (By the way, the recurrence of the name Richmal was not unusual; it has been in the family for many generations.) She numbered many men as well as women amongst her friends, but seems never to have become romantically involved. Her own independence did not prevent her from writing a great deal about marriage, and relationships between the sexes. She is at her best with this theme in the William books, rather than in her serious novels. William's fatally attractive sister Ethel, of the red-gold hair and dark-lashed violet eyes, ensnares in the course of the saga every unmarried male resident of and visitor to William's surprisingly elastic village. And his brother Robert, a perpetual student but would-be man-about-town, meets with amazing regularity different embodiments of the most beautiful girls in the world,

and has cause to curse his younger brother for frequently ruining his love life by his (generally well-intentioned) interference.

William, despite his protestations to the contrary, is also susceptible to the fair sex. His longest-lasting romantic interest is in Joan, the deliciously dimpled and dark-haired little girl next door. Her greatest charm in his eyes is her constant appreciation of him, and her complete acceptance that he leads and she follows:

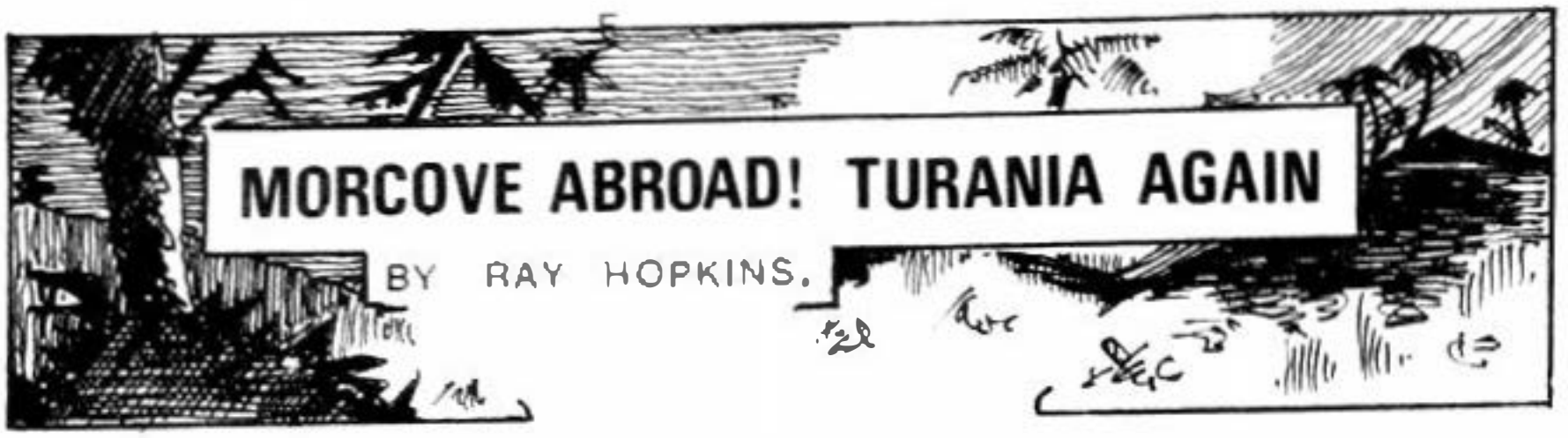
> 'I like you better than any insect, Joan' he said generously.
> 'Oh, William, do you really' said Joan, deeply touched.
> 'Yes - an' I'm going to marry you when I grow up if you won't want me to talk a lot of soppy stuff that no-one can understand.'

"I think yours is the sweetest name I've ever heard," Robert was saying.

However, William - 'pirate, desperado and girl-despiser' - was often put down by Violet Elizabeth Bott, the lisping, lickerish six-year-old who blackmailed him by threatening to cry if she did not get her way, or - worse still - by threatening to 'thcream and thcream' till she was sick!

Richmal remained a staunch member of the Church of England throughout her life, and her religion sustained her during adversities. After the tragedy of becoming paralysed through polio, she developed cancer, and had to have a mastectomy when she was in her early forties. She showed characteristic courage, and when her niece and namesake, Richmal Ashbee, once commiserated with her about her disability, replied that she had led 'a much more interesting life because of it'. Towards the end of her life Richmal Crompton began to be drawn to mystical aspects of religion, and to a belief in reincarnation (something which she had parodied in a very funny episode in an early William story, in which he encounters a Society of Ancient Souls!). She died of a heart attack in January 1969, and up to the day before she died was engaged in writing yet another William tale. (Thomas Henry, the artist who so brilliantly brought her character to visual life, was actually working on a William drawing when he died.) Richmal was greatly mourned by her family, friends and thousands of William fans from all over the world who felt that with her passing they had lost someone they loved. Appropriately, however, some part of her resilient spirit lives on, sealed into the saga of the small and scruffy boy, which started as a pot boiler and has become a classic.

* *



Morcove's third trip to Turania, which took place two years after the second, can be found in THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN, Nos. 654-657 (19 Aug. - 9 Sep. 1933). This is a holiday trip with a difference. Something new has been added: the presence of the opposite sex in the form of boy chums. "That trio of Grangemoor inseparables without whom any holiday for Betty and Co. would have been NOT the same!"

Horace Phillips was very late in jumping on the neighboring boys' school bandwagon. Cliff House had had Jack Tollhurst and Co. of Lanchester College way back in the 1920's and while Jack Linton had been a frequent visitor in the Morcove stories from the early days, it was only recently that a school had been invented to contain him and his chums. So Jack Linton was one of the party and accompanied by Dave Cardew and Dick Cherrol. Dave Cardew had been Dave Lawder until reunited with his long-lost mother and sister. The latter had surprisingly turned out to be the unpleasant Cora Grandways' younger sister Judith, also unpleasant. Judith had reformed and was now known as Judy, and as Dave's sister had become one of Betty's Study 12 coterie. Mrs. Cardew, Betty Barton, Polly Linton, Paula Creel, Naomer Nakara and Pam Willoughby were the remainder of the holiday party.

Pam and Dick Cherrol pair up as special chums and "Betty and the rest were saying: 'Extreme's meet! Whoever would have thought that tall Pam Willoughby, the little lady of stately Swanlake, would have taken such a liking to bluff, forthright Dick Cherrol!'". Dick is poor and has a guardian who is reluctant to give him adequate spending money. He is also extremely sensitive and forever excusing himself to Pam. Pam, quite rightly, ignores this denigration of himself and treats Dick as an equal.

The instigators of this holiday trip are Jack Somerfield and his wife Zora who, "now that she was settled in England with her adoring husband" had decided to sell off all the land she owns in Turania. The hunting-box on the land is called Klosters and here the Morcove holiday party come to stay. The author describes it thus:

> "(It) stood a good way back from the lonely, fern-bordered road, on a steep hillside. Dense woods were behind, and on either side, and a lovelier looking habitation it would have been hard to find. Yet it looked inviting - homely."

This sale has reached the ears of a timber merchant, Rudolf Jetza, about whom the author says, "although he had an office in Suva Pesth - the capital of Turania and a little Paris - he seemed to have originated in Germany. He was very Teutonic in his broken English and his gesturing". He addresses the Morcove and Grangemoor juniors as "Poys and Keis" and they take an instant dislike to him and his overly made-up wife, Elsa. Jetza offers Zora 40,000

Kroner, which he tells Jack is equal to "one thousand pounds in your good English money", and says he wants to buy the estate for the trees it contains. This sounds logical as he deals in timber, but - one of the Juniors comes to believe this is not true!

Dick Cherrol inadvertently becomes the centerpiece of the plot by being present when Jetza pulls a small object from his pocket with his handkerchief which Dick retrieves for him. Jetza says it is anthracite and hopes Dick is none the wiser, but he immediately recognizes it as some kind of mineral substance.

The following day, Betty and Co. go to Suva Pesth and Dick decides to go fishing instead. His real reason for not going with the rest, the author says, is, "he had a good idea what Suva Pesth was like - just a huge temptation to spend more than one could afford. He never did have much pocket money. His guardian uncle was stingy there. Rotten for the others, if he had gone with them, and hadn't been able to spend when they were spending. Make them uncomfortable. He had neither parent nor brothers and sisters, and he knew quite well that they'd sort of got him to come abroad with them for the hols, a good deal out of pity."

At the river's edge, Dick picks up another piece of the same mineral Jetza had dropped from his pocket. It is black and shiny with a greenish look in a certain light and Dick is startled by the realization that the Jetza's don't want Zora's land for what is growing on it but what is concealed within it.

When the Morcovians return from Suva Pesth, it is to find that Dick has not come back from fishing and a search ominously reveals his fishing rod and basket left on the shore of a lake into which the river runs. Nearby there are footprints, much larger than those of Dick Cherrol.

Zora wonders whether bandits have kidnapped Dick. She "could tell of incidents in the past - during her life in Turania, before marriage - that had to do with brigandage and banditry. Some wild, tribal folk lived in the mountains, and they gave trouble from time to time." But when Jetza comes to Klosters and says he will arrange for them to capture the brigand who has kidnapped Dick if they will accept his offer for the land, they are sure that Jetza himself has made Dick a prisoner and has locked him in an empty house not far from Klosters. The entire holiday party led by Jack Somerfield decide to raid the house and rescue Dick. Before they reach there a thunderstorm overtakes them and flashes of lightning illuminate the sky followed by a lurid glow through the trees. The house they are making for has been struck by lightning and as they race toward it in horror the heat from the fire is such that they are unable to approach it closely.

The two Jacks, with Dave and his mother, searching the burnt out ruins of the empty house the following day are "able to prove that (Dick) had smashed out the bars of a window below ground level, then smashed out a grating flush with the ground and so got away".

Dave Cardew feels that Dick must be in hiding from the Jetza's or is perhaps taking a longer way round back to Klosters. This would force Dick to go higher up the mountain and Dave, with Pam and Judy, climb up the mountain to see if they can find traces. They locate one of Dick's cufflinks and, when they look up from the discovery, find they are being menaced by a man with a gun:

> "He was a man they had never seen before, a swarthy giant, gypsy-like in his dress. Gold rings were in his ears, and a black moustache with a peculiar twist in

it added to the ferocity of his looks ... a man of the mountains, an outlaw; nature in the raw."

He is joined by a woman.

"In these first moments of the sensational encounter reality seemed to be at an end. With an effort they had to remember they were in Turania, and that the bandit pair really were flesh and blood. The man with his gun, the woman with a dagger in her sash, they might have been figures seen upon the stage in some colourful opera."

They are blindfolded and led ever upwards to the bandits' lair consisting of a couple of caves and some rough tenting on a plateau the size of an acre. The bandit leads Dave into a cave where, curled up and asleep on the floor is the missing Dick Cherrol. Dick tells Dave he was handed over to the bandit by the Jetzas. He says, "Jetza stands to make a huge fortune if I never get back to Klosters to tell them what I found out the other day. Radium on the Klosters' land! And the secret means such a huge fortune for Jetza it's enough to make him desperate".

At Klosters, when Dave, Pam and Judy do not return, Zora says she is willing to sign away their land to Jetza to get the four juniors back safely. The four, however, don't intend to submit tamely to a man with a gun and a woman with a dagger, as well as their daughter who has a stiletto. Spurred on by the thought that Zora will have to give in to the Jetza's demands in order to get them back alive they plan to make an early escape. Their chance comes when the bandit, called off the plateau by a whistle from the Jetza's, races down the mountain without making sure that he has his gun with him. And so it happens that the brigand's wife finds herself staring at the business end of her husband's gun while the daughter is carrying a cauldron of stew into the cave where Pam and Judy have been told to stay. They attack and subdue the daughter and all stay quietly in the caves. The bandit races back, realizing his gun is not on him and is knocked down and tied up by Dave before he can gather his scattered wits. The girl and her mother are driven before the escapees by Dave flourising the gun.

The only way down the mountain is a "narrow ledge with a precipice on one side". When they reach the narrow ledge, Judy is too terrified to move so Pam suggests Judy's eyes be bandaged while she leads her. However once on the ledge, Pam's nerve gives way and she has to get on her knees and crawl. "Giddy and sick, that was how she felt. Desperately she had tried not to look anywhere except down to the ledge itself, but the very nature of this dreadful experience was to lure one's eyes in a fascinated way - to the abyss." As the two female bandits are ahead of them and out of sight around a bend, Dave lowers the gun and, with him in front and Dick at the rear, they manoeuvre Pam and Judy along the narrow ledge. "Pam shut her eyes and kept them shut. She felt it was the best thing to do now. The horror of it all was entirely due to vision. Yesterday, she and the others had been brought this way blindfolded, and had known nothing of the deadly danger."

As they reach the end of the narrow ledge the male bandit appears at the beginning of it and Dick raises the gun and levels it at him. Dave tells the girls to race back to Klosters. "You may be in time to save Zora from having to sign away her land."

But Jetza is already there and Somerfield tells him Zora will sign over the land to him for the beggarly amount he has offered them plus the information enabling them to recover the missing juniors. Zora picks up the pen but hesitates as running foot-

steps are heard. Judy bursts through the French windows and shouts, "Don't let them have it! The land is worth a fortune, a million - Dick Cherrol says there is radium in the property. It's why this man Jetza kidnapped him. Pitch-blende, that they get radium from..." Jetza attempts to leave but not before Jack Linton sees him to the fishpond and pushes him in, headlong.

When Dick, Pam and Dave return, Jack Linton, who is what used to be known as a caution, quips, "Ladies and Gentlemen! On behalf of those who haven't been kidnapped, may I say what pleasure it gives us to welcome back those who have?".

Zora, in the final speech says, gratefully, "We owe it to you, Dick Cherrol, that we know why Jetza was so keen to get the land. But for you, we would never have known, until too late, about the radium. So it will be only fair if you have exactly half, shall we say, of what the land fetches when sold at its proper value". A heart-warming end to a heart-stopping adventure.

Somerfield tells Dave to take the bandit's gun back to Grangemoor with him and hang it in his study as a souvenir.

* *

WANTED: Rupert - Updated Annuals, 1/- Adventure Series, Early Mary Tourtel Books and original newspaper cuttings - Anything Ruperty. Also Beanos, Dandys Up Dated Annuals and Pre-1960 Comics, William Books in dustwrappers. Will pay high prices or offer exchanges.
Seasons Greetings to all.

JOHN BECK

29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX, BN7 2RU

TELEPHONE EVENINGS 0273 477555

Warmest Deepest Thanks to Eric in this special year for the C.D. Still Wanted: Mistress Mariner, Sally's Sunimer Term by Dorita Fairlie Bruce. Popular Book of Girls' Stories 1935, 1936, 1941. Oxenham, Biddy's Secret, Maidlin to the Rescue. Brent-Dyer, The Chalet School and Rosalie, Girls' Crystal Annual 1940. Will pay £10 per copy if in good condition.

MARY CADOGAN

46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM, KENT.

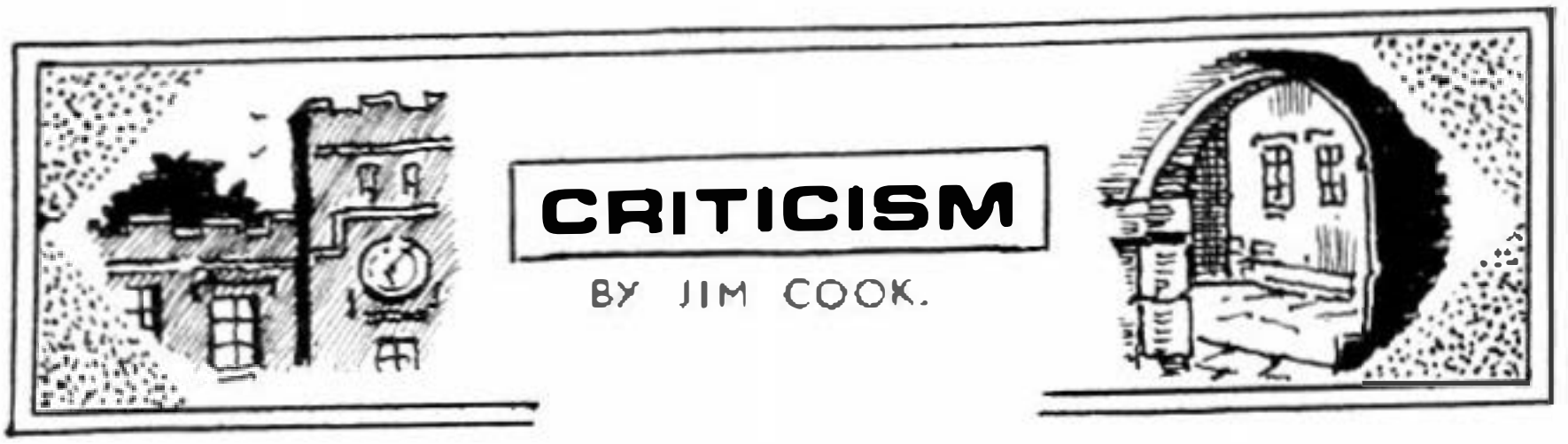
TELEPHONE 01-650-1458

Christmas Greetings and A Happy and Healthy New Year to the Editor, Staff and all Readers of our Story Paper, Collectors' Digest.

From

JOSEPH P. FITZGERALD

OF MANCHESTER



Any silly soul easily can pick a hole... so runs the ancient proverb. And over the years I have received criticism from many sources on the content of some stories about St. Frank's in the Nelson Lee Library.

Edwy Searles Brooks never hoped to please all his readers ...he would have been a strange author if he did. But much of the criticism that found its way through my correspondence over the years might just as well be levelled at other Boys' Papers contemporary to the NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

Several instances of this criticism were due to ignorance of the readers and to the freedom of the purchaser of the papers irrespective of the literacy the buyer may have had.

A lot of scorn was hurled at the EZRA QUIRKE series for its content on the Occult. If those scoffers had only waited a few years and read the late Dennis Wheatley's MEMOIRS they would have read where Wheatly losing heavily at cards "called on the Devil to give me luck". He got wonderful luck at once, but it scared him stiff.

I remember others criticising the African series when the juniors and Moor View girls trudged through the jungles and were upbraided for not wearing Havelocks.

It is true Brooks never did clothe his characters with neck protectors in the heart of Africa, but neither did he provide chaperons for his Moor View girls for his Holiday series abroad.

When Dr. Stafford, the headmaster at St. Frank's, was secretly dosed with a drug that changed his personality into one of a raving lunatic it seemed at the time a very far fetched plot, but subsequent discoveries with drugs proved Brooks was way ahead of his time.

And schoolboy rebellions are not so uncommon today in one form or another. Yet organised mutiny by the juniors was often forced on them by new masters with strange ideas.

Had the St. Frank's continued no doubt we would have seen mixed forms of both sexes and the possibilities of exciting series would have been unbounded.

The William K. Smith series came in for a lot of unfounded criticism. Smith came to Bellton and its environs to create a gigantic plan for factories. And he nearly succeeded when he bought up land and buildings and the River House School.

But such a project is nothing new even today when land is bought and converted for manufacturing purposes. But many were the critics who told me it was a contrived story not worthy of sense. Yet Brooks carried on with

such extraordinary plots for his St. Frank's tales.

The reformation of the cads seemed to bring about sorrow rather than joy to some readers who complained it was very difficult to retain a mental image of Fullwood and Pitt whose advent to the reader stamped them both as incorrigible rotters. John Busterfield Boots was another whom Brooks reformed and mystified the loyal reader.

It is debatable whether criticism in this case was deserving for we had got so used to certain characters that change in style seemed unmerited.

Now that I have time to reflect and with the knowledge that never again will we experience a market for boys' literature such as we had years ago let us sink all doubt and faultfinding about these grand old school and adventure stories.

I have just been reading a Commentary on Sherlock Holmes by D. Martin Dakin. and almost every adventure of the Baker Street investigator as 'recorded by Dr. Watson' has been faulted for minor errors.

Authors are human and liable to err. And I think we owe all writers who so often made our day and lightened the burdens of our young days, we owe them a tribute.

Fair criticism will always be welcomed, but hasty and ill conceived carping by amateur critics of our hobby papers is rather late in the day now and such moaners could spend much better time hoeing the garden. The family life of a fruit fly is slightly more interesting than their captious objections.

However we can take heart in the last item that is still to come out of Pandora's Box... which is HOPE.

I do not absolve myself for my own criticism in the past for when your favourite item threatens to descend to mediocrity it is only natural to complain. But that was then; and now the long journey is nearly over we can look back with pride on a wonderful era of Boys' Papers.

When I met Edwy Searles Brooks some years ago he was a sad and disappointed man even though he had found a new venue for his writings and a successful breakaway from St. Frank's. But the treatment he had received after many years writing for the Nelson Lee Library was still etched in his countenance. In fact when he was shown a Nelson Lee that had been brought he turned aside and left to return with a copy of THE THRILLER that he had written.

Somewhere in that undiscovered country is a gathering of our favourite authors who are even now working out plots for their next story!

So let us honour them who gave us many happy moments ...and still do.

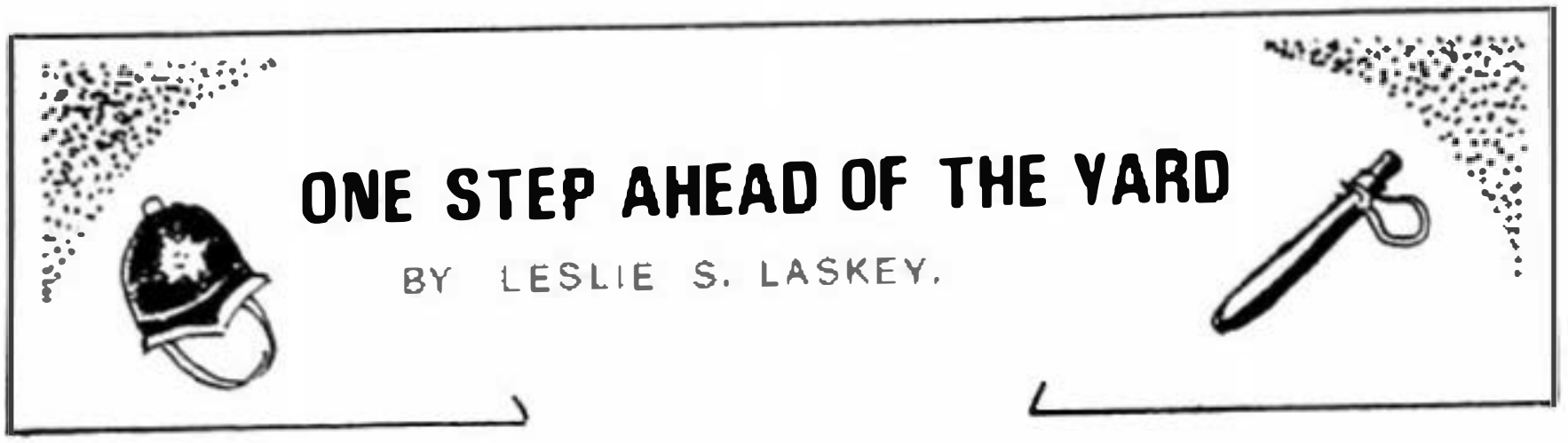
---

* *

Christmas Greetings to South West Club Members. Also to our esteemed Editor and other friends.

C. H. CHURCHILL

TOPSHAM, EXETER



ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE YARD

BY LESLIE S. LASKEY.

Sherlock Holmes reached up to the mantelpiece for the cocaine bottle, a proceeding that was watched by Dr. Watson with stern disapproval.

Whenever he had no current problem to tackle, Holmes needed some stimulant for his brain. He found that the cocaine prevented his mental processes from becoming sluggish at such times.

As a medical man, Dr. Watson was only too well aware of the harmful effects of the drug. However, his protestations had no more effect on Sherlock Holmes than water has on a duck's back.

A stimulating conversation then ensued on the subject of crime detection.

There was no false modesty about Sherlock Holmes. He was a master of the art of detection, and he knew it. He was the only unofficial consulting detective in the world, he remarked to Watson, the last and highest court of appeal in detection. Referring to the Scotland Yard men he had encountered on his cases he said that, whenever Gregson, or Lestrade, or Athelney Jones was out of his depth, then he, Sherlock Holmes, would be called upon to give his opinion.

Holmes added that being out of their depths was the normal state of the three Scotland Yard men.

He did not, apparently, hold a very high opinion of their worth as crime investigators.

Throughout the realm of detective fiction the official police have often been portrayed, at best, as stolid plodders; at worst, as slow-witted blunderers, although, in the case of the latter category, the authors have failed to explain how the detective officers succeeded in attaining their current ranks.

The private detective of fiction has always been cleverer than his opposite numbers, in the police, at solving crime puzzles. His remarkable powers of observation and his skill in sifting through a jumble of incidents and facts, and putting them all together in the right sequence, has kept him a step ahead of the police.

The attitude of the official detective to the private sleuth has frequently been one of condescension. The latter's successes have been put down to "luck", although it is remarkable how often the independent detective has provided his police rival with vital clues, and then allowed him to take much of the credit when the arrest has been made.

On the night that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson visited a large house at Upper Norwood, in South London, they discovered the body of a man who had clearly been murdered. ("The Sign of Four" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.)

By the time the law, in the portly form of Inspector Athelney Jones, arrived, Holmes had been able to ascertain that an intruder had gained access through a window and, moreover, had inadvertently stepped into some spilt creosote. Holmes despatched Watson to fetch a dog from an acquaintance in the neighbourhood.

When the doctor returned with the dog he found the house to be in a remarkably deserted state. Apparently Athelney Jones had, by now, arrested the dead man's brother, plus the gatekeeper, the housekeeper and an Indian servant. In fact, he had arrested the entire household for, apart from a sergeant, Holmes and Watson now had the house to themselves.

Holmes soon set the dog on to the creosote trail left by the intruder, a trail which led them for miles across South London to a Thames-side wharf. Then followed a long and frustrating search for a boat which Holmes's quarry was believed to have taken.

Meanwhile Jones had made no progress whatsoever on his inquiry. He had been obliged to release two of his prisoners, while he had been unable, so far, to bring any charges against the others. He was called in by Holmes, when the river trail was eventually pursued, in order that he could be in at the "kill", so to speak, and be able to take some of the credit for it. Following an exciting chase along the lower reaches of the Thames, the murderer was run down.

It turned out eventually that one of Athelney Jones's remaining prisoners had been an accessory to the crime. Holmes remarked, drily, to Watson that Jones had the undivided honour of having caught one fish in his great haul!

Sexton Blake's keen and incisive mind was such that he could generally provide a lead for the various Yard men he encountered. He worked often with Det. Inspector Coutts. While his deductive reasoning was sharper than the Inspector's, Coutts was nevertheless an accomplished detective with a great tenacity of purpose. Once he got his teeth into a case he would never let go. There were a few occasions when Blake showed a touch of impatience as the Inspector's reasoning led him along the wrong track.

Another Scotland Yard man, Inspector Rollings, had cause to thank Blake for his powers of observation on the occasion of the jewel theft at Sir James Brewford's home. ("The Mystery of the Blackmailed Baronet" by Hylton Gregory.) It was the occasion of the engagement party for Sir James's daughter, Olive, who was to marry the Hon. Algernon Lovell. The latter's mother, Lady Lovell, was wearing the famous Lovell necklace, of diamonds set in platinum, which was said to be worth twenty thousand pounds. Hence the presence of inspector Rollings together with two other police officers, also in plain clothes.

The Yard men had cast their eyes carefully over the guests. Most were members of the two families. There were two men, however, both Americans, and acquaintances of Sir James Brewford, who interested the policemen. Both men were of flashy appearance. The detectives had an instinctive feeling that these two men were crooked.

When the lights went out suddenly, Inspector Rollings reacted instantly.

"Guard the doors, men! Quick! There's something wrong here."

Somewhere a match was struck. After a moment, its faint light was extinguished. There came a shrill scream, in a woman's voice.

"What's that?" came Rollings' voice sharply.

"Oh, I felt a hand!" came the shrill, hysterical voice of Lady Lovell. "A hand at my throat. And - and" - again she screamed. "My necklace - it's gone!

A few seconds later the lights came on again.

Inspector Rollings took complete command of the situation.

He immediately verified that his men had moved to the two doors instantly, when the lights had gone out. One had guarded the main door of the room, the other a small door which led into the butler's pantry. Both men were positive that nobody had passed through the doors. The french windows were shuttered and undisturbed. Therefore the thief had not left the room. The necklace must still be in the room.

The police presence had trapped the thief.

A search of all the guests appeared to be inevitable. Rather to the Inspector's surprise, the suggestion that everybody should be searched was made by one of the two Americans. A lady searcher was summoned from Vine Street Police Station and, in due course, both male and female guests submitted to a personal search. The butler was also searched.

However, the necklace did not come to light.

The butler had been admitted from the pantry. He explained to the police that he had left his pantry, when the lights went out, in order to check the fuses. He had discovered that the main switch at the fuse box had been tampered with, and he had switched the power on again.

Every inch of the room was searched. The furniture and curtains were checked. The carpets were taken up.

At the end of all that, Rollings was flummoxed.

Where else to look?

He telephoned to Sexton Blake.

Luckily Blake was free, and he was on the scene within the hour.

Having been given an account of the proceedings, Blake took a look around. Since the butler had, apparently, been the only servant near the room at the time of the theft, Blake decided that the pantry should also be searched. That search also proved fruitless.

Back in the reception room Blake's eyes scrutinised the vicinity of the pantry door.

He bent down and took a close look at a small electric power point in the wall.

He tugged at it and it came away in is hand.

There was no wire leading to it - just a hole about one and a half inches in diameter.

Sexton Blake rose to his feet.

"There's the smuggler's passage" he said. "The necklace was passed through that hole to someone in the pantry, and the plug replaced before the lights

came on again."

There wasn't much more to be done that night. The necklace was most probably out of the house long before now. Blake's opinion was that one of the Americans was the thief and the butler the receiver.

Subsequent events proved him to be absolutely right.

The necklace, in point of fact, had never left the pantry. It was hidden in one of the bottles of port, on the wine shelf, the bottle having been opened and carefully resealed.

Later that night the butler unlocked the pantry and retrieved the necklace from its hiding place.

Even Sexton Blake hadn't thought of that one.

As a crime investigator. "Bulldog" Drummond was in an entirely different category from Holmes or Blake. Drummond was not really a detective at all. He entered the world of crime by accident. His only previous occupation had been that of a soldier - and Capt. Hugh Drummond, DSO, MC, had served with great distinction in France during the Great War.

Bored with peacetime existence he had advertised, in the Personal column, for an occupation - any occupation - provided that it was legitimate, and offered excitement. Little did he imagine that, as a consequence, he would become involved with a plot, financed by foreign capital, to foment a revolution in Great Britain. Neither could he have dreamt that he would shortly be pitting his wits against the most dangerous criminal in the world, a man who was hunted by the police of four continents, and who was to be paid the sum of one million pounds to organise the revolution.

Drummond's methods of investigation were simple and often startlingly direct. He had his share of luck, but it is said that fortune favours the brave. How Drummond wrecked the carefully laid plans of le Comte de Guy, alias Carl Peterson, made one of the great crime-thrillers of the century. ("Bulldog Drummond" by "Sapper" (Cyril McNeile)) - see footnote below.

A year or so later Hugh Drummond was grappling with another plot for revolution, this time with the Bolsheviks behind it. Scotland Yard were keeping a number of suspected Communist activists under observation. Some of these men began mysteriously to disappear, and the Yard completely lost track of them. Strange tales began to circulate about the existence of a gang of masked men, dressed entirely in black. ("The Black Gang" by "Sapper".)

One group of conspirators were planting explosives in a steel works when the masked gang suddenly materialised. Both conspirators and explosives were removed from the premises, with military precision, by the masked men. A night watchman, who had actually witnessed this bizarre episode, later regaled incredulous newspaper reporters with his story.

Sir Bryan Johnstone, Chief of Criminal Investigation at Scotland Yard, was a worried man. His worries were increased when Zaboleff arrived in England. The Yard wanted this man. He was shadowed to a lonely house at Barking Creek where a meeting of Communists was held. Chief Inspector McIver, with a squad of detectives, was about to raid the house, under cover of darkness, when the carefully planned operation was, in modern parlance, "hi-jacked". McIver found himself picked up bodily by a man of enormous physical strength. He was then chloroformed. When he came to he found himself

propped up against his own front door, with all the members of his raiding party arranged along the pavement beside him.

Zaboleff, like the others before him, disappeared from circulation.

Drummond and Sir Bryan had been friends since their schooldays. Inspector McIver first met Drummond in Sir Bryan's office. While it was obvious to the Inspector that Hugh Drummond was a man of enormous physical strength, the other's airy and flippant style of conversation conveyed the impression that he was a bit of a fool. McIver stiffened with horror to hear Drummond address Sir Bryan by the ridiculous nickname of "Tumkins".

Like many others, however, McIver underestimated Hugh Drummond.

In fact, it was Drummond who discovered the Reds' London headquarters at No. 5, Green Street, Hoxton, a building subsequently wrecked by a bomb intended for Drummond.

The setbacks suffered by the plotters led to their Chief coming over to England, himself, from the Continent.

In the lounge at the Ritz Hotel, Drummond first encountered that benevolent-looking old clergyman, the Rev. Theodosius Longmoor - who was not a clergyman at all. Drummond's attention became riveted when he observed the fingers of the "clergyman's" left hand to be beating a ceasless tattoo on his left knee.

It was an involuntary mannerism that Carl Peterson needed to eliminate.

There followed a tense battle of wits between Drummond and Peterson, which the former lost when the treacherous Peterson tricked him and drugged him in a hotel room.

Hugh Drummond somehow managed to escape alive from the motor "accident" which Peterson thoughtfully arranged for him.

It was Drummond who discovered the Communists' headquarters at Maybrick Hall. The Black Gang cleaned up pretty thoroughly there. Then their leader tipped off Inspector McIver.

The police found a most unsavoury bunch of men at Maybrick Hall - all trussed up. A note from the leader of the Black Gang informed McIver that the rest of the specimens, who had been taken previously, could be found on an island off the west coast of Mull.

Carl Peterson escaped, as usual covering his tracks so well that the police could find no trace of him.

In this affair Drummond's Black Gang had been, not just one step, but whole streets ahead of the Yard all the way along.

Later, Hugh Drummond sat facing Sir Bryan Johnstone in his office.

Sir Bryan had, by now, discovered the identity of the leader of the Black Gang.

He was immensely relieved that the affair had been cleared up. The police, however, do not like vigilante groups who take the law into their own hands, and the activities of the Black Gang had been audacious in the extreme. This had to stop before M.P.s began to ask questions in the House.

Sir Bryan fixed Hugh with a stern eye, much as he had been wont to do in their far-off schooldays when the fourteen-year old Drummond had been his fag.

There was to be no more Black Gang, warned Sir Bryan.

Hugh Drummond agreed, gravely, that there would be no more Black Gang.

FOOTNOTE

"Bulldog Drummond" must have been one of the best-selling crime-thrillers ever printed. It was published in 1920 and my own copy, which I purchased when I was a schoolboy in 1941, belongs to the sixty-third edition.

Sixty-two reprints in 21 years!

Copies can still be found in second-hand bookshops.

Some of the later "Bulldog" Drummond stories are more difficult to find.

* * *

DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM by Arthur Edwards. The story of Greyfriars at Dunkirk. Fully illustrated. Price £2.50 inclusive.

THE FRIARS LIBRARY

47 THE TERRACE, WOKINGHAM, BERKS., RG11 1BP

= = = = =

Sincere Thanks to our Editor and Co. for another year's efforts.
Yuletide Greetings Everyone.

GEOFFREY CRANG

BRIANNECK, INDIAN QUEENS, CORNWALL

= = = = =

To London and South-West Clubs our Seasonal Greetings.

VALE AND JOYCE

33 IVY HOUSE, PARR HENLADE, TAUNTON, SOMERSET, TA3 5HR

= = = = =

Still seeking Thompsons 1930-1934 (not "Rover, "Skipper"). Cash or "Magnet", "Gem", "Rover", "C.D." and miscellaneous for exchange.

MARTIN

3 SOMERSET ROAD, ORPINGTON, KENT. (33564)

= = = = =

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the London O.B.B.C. Friends and loyal readers of the Nelson Lee Library.

BILL BRADFORD

= = = = =

Chills and Thrills With Those Cliff House Spook Hunters.

BY MARGERY WOODS.

One of the most deliciously creepy pursuits at any age is to curl up in a cosy armchair, after closing the curtains against the wild winter night, with a log fire throwing mysterious shadows into the dark corners of the room, and open the covers of a hair-raising ghost story. Reach for the chocolates, wine, cigars, crisps, whatever your inclination, and try to ignore that loose bit of a creeper --- is it a bit of creeper? --- playing skeletal fingers down the window pane. Oh, those shivery memories of childhood, and then the fearful backward glances as the cold darkness of upstairs awaited one's by now highly charged and receptive imagination.

Our favourite storypapers never failed to provide an ample procession of suitable companions for those long dark evenings: spectral monks, ghostly cavaliers, luminous phantoms, grey ladies and strange things from the sea. There was never any nonsense, either, about macabre visitors being too scary for timid little girl readers. The valiant chums of Cliff House were quite aware that things that go bump in the night were invariably the dastardly, often inept doings of some nefarious plotter. And the Cliff House girls were quite prepared to deal with said plotters --- luminous paint and all.

The earlier ghosts of Cliff House made little pretence at spectral grue. Bessie's cries of "Gig-gig-ghosts!" became almost her cliche as she imagined each shadow in the gloom to be her personal ghastly fate. She appeared with one of these phantoms in grey shadowy detail on the cover of number 27 of SCHOOL FRIEND in November 1919 complete with the caption that surely laid the foundation for all the countless future teasings of poor old Fatima.

Despite the cover, there was really little spectral activity in this story, which mainly concerned a missing ring belonging to Miss Bellew, then mistress of the Fourth Form, and various other items which disappeared. Bessie decides to play detective but finds this plays such havoc with her appetite she simply must have a little snack during the night to keep her detective instincts well sharpened. Soon she is regretting her nocturnal tuck raid when she sees the misty form draped in spectral white moving along the corridor. Needless to say, the terrified Bessie receives little sympathy and after a few more puzzling events the story is wound up rather suddenly with hurried explanations when Marjorie Hazeldene is discovered to be responsible for the mysteries, owing to a bad cold which has resulted in her taking to sleepwalking and moving things.

A few weeks later we are spook hunting with the chums at Holly Hall, the home of Barbara Redfern, when a very wilful Doris Redfern essays a spot of chimney climbing and is rescued by the ghost --- which turns out to be none other than the long estranged brother of Mr. Redfern who has been living for several days in a secret room within the old house. This story was probably

"THE RIDDLE OF THE FOURTH!"

A Magnificent New 20,000-Words Story of the Girls of Cliff House — Complete in this issue.

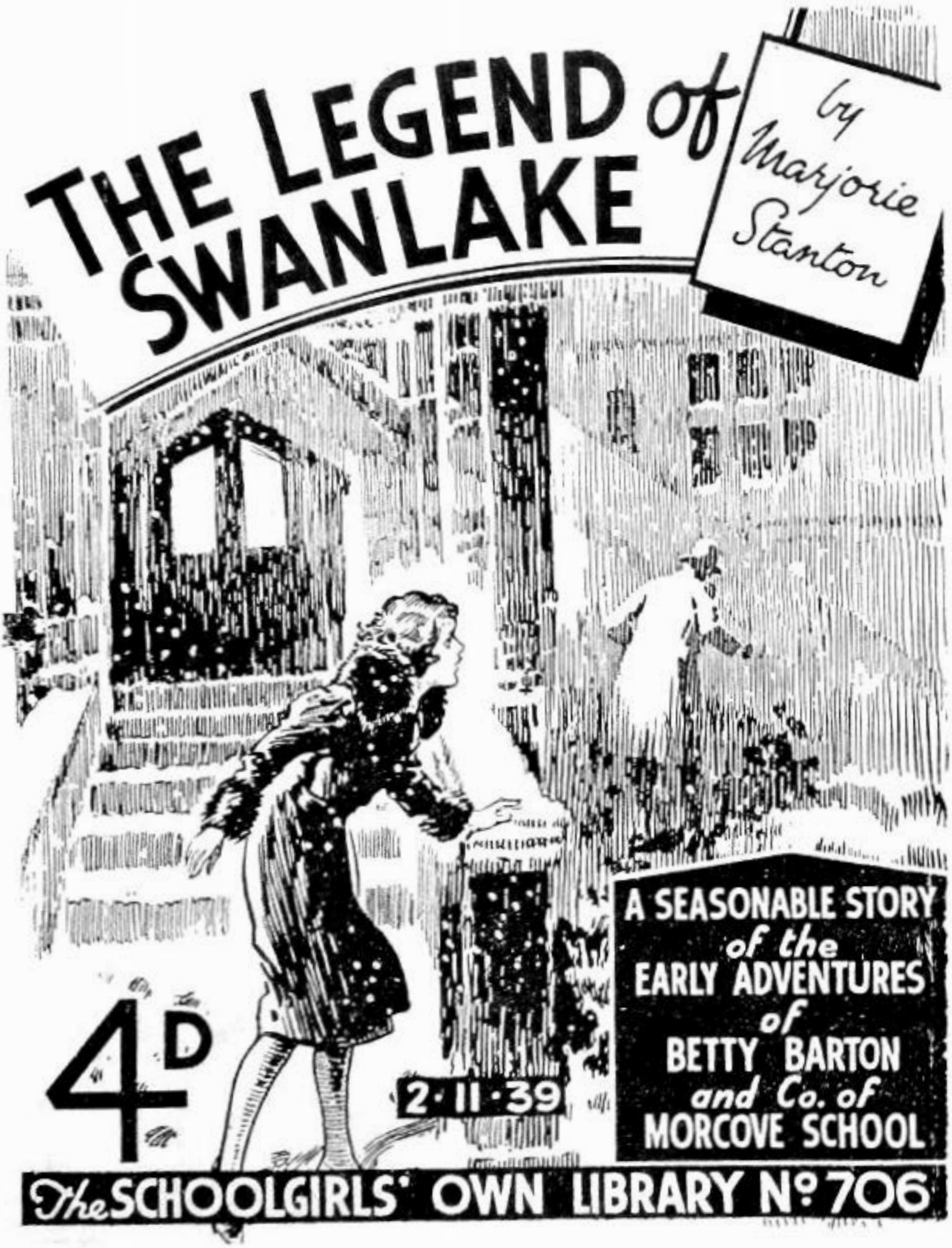
THE SCHOOL FRIEND

Every 1½D. Thursday

No. 27. Vol. 2 — Three-Halfpence. — Week Ending November 15th, 1919.

"THE GUG-GUG-GHOST!" STUTTERED BESSIE BUNTER.

[A dramatic incident from the splendid long complete tale of the Girls of Cliff House, contained in this issue.]



one of Horace Phillips', who wrote many of the early Cliff House stories, and an interesting parallel can be found in a later Morcove story, THE LEGEND OF SWANLAKE in which Phillips elaborated the same theme of the long-missing wastrel brother, who this time has wife and daughter with him when he takes up residence within a hidden room at Pam Willoughby's beautiful old home. He appears to Betty and Co. as the Grey Man of an old legend in the Willoughby family history, and seems to fulfil the old rhyme of foreboding: When 'tween the trees Grey Man is seen, Woe to Swanlake on Christmas E'en. Phillips excelled at atmospheric stories with an underlying hint of tragedy never far beneath the light-hearted banter of Betty and Co., and the Swanlake Christmas

story stressed these two levels in his writing, particularly so in the characterisation of Pam, which lifted the story well out of the more usual run of schoolgirl Christmas frolics.

Another unusually atmospheric variation on the bogus spook theme came in the Christmas 1924 SCHOOL FRIEND story entitled AT SCHOOL FOR CHRISTMAS. Flap Derwent has to spend the holiday at Cliff House with only the company of Miss Steel, the Fourth form mistress, Mrs. Pickes, the housekeeper, and the dour Piper.

Although no attempt is made to delude the reader into speculation as to the possibility of any actual haunting the atmosphere throughout is decidedly chill and scary, graphically and emotionally conveying the strangeness, the loneliness and the sheer emptiness of the great school once the girls and staff have departed. The reader is with poor Philippa all the time as she endeavours to fill the long, un-festive hours of day and night. There are two shock scares, one for Miss Steel and one for Flap herself, but apart from these and a brief glimpse of the chums happily enjoying their Christmas holiday at Clara's home, a good half of the story is spent in thread-laying and atmospherics, and the story is none the less suspenseful for this before the speed-up into the final unravelling.

Cliff House, incidentally, possessed its own ghosts. Benedict, the Black Monk, and Charmion, the White Lady, said to roam the school on stormy nights and ride a spectral steed between the ancient school and Monk's Folly. Theirs was a very sad tale of unrequited love, but after all, what can a monk expect who breaks his vows...? So far, I have not located a Cliff House series featuring Benedict and his lady, but it is quite possible such a series exists. Most of the spectres dwelled in the respective ancestral homes of the girls and thus provided a suitably myserious background to the cosy Christmas festivities.

Jemima Carstairs once played ghost in her own special enigmatic way (THE HAUNTED STUDIO), all in the best of causes, of course, and Babs and Co. would not easily forget an invitation they accepted to spend the most lavish of Christmas vacations as the guests of none other than Bessie Bunter --- or would it be more accurate to say as guests of Bessie's lavish imagination? For the fabulous Bunter home owned by Bessie's uncle proved to be a sort of stop-gap holiday school for girls unable to spend holidays with their own families. Far from luxurious, Gelden Park proved more like a reformatory than anything else and the martinet in charge, Miss Turner, had no intention of letting the chums go free and thus risk losing any profit. When the moanings and groanings and eerie clankings of chains began to haunt the midnight hour Babs and Co. began to be suspicious... The noisy "spook" was cleared out pretty smartly, the chums got their gorgeous Christmas after all, and poor starving Bessie was re-united with grubbikins in abundance.

The ghosts tended to vary, of course, in conviction and ingenuity. Of all the Cliff House girls' Christmas adventures the Robin's Roost series (BABS & CO'S LONDON CHRISTMAS) was really special, embodying everything in the fantasy-fulfilment aspect that any reader could wish for in a Christmas tale. Ye olde-worlde panelled house, secret passages, leaping log fires, convivial company, carols and Christmas pud, two very appealing waifs, a phantom monk, thrills and mystery and all the trimmings of the festive season in John Wheway's inimitable style. For good measure, he throws in two very evocative pictures of London at Christmas, first with all the bonhomie of the Chums' arrival, and then later, the flip side, with the Christmas spirit somewhat diminished

when the Chums are lost, cold and tired, and suddenly the London transport system just doesn't seem to have room for them.

The quaint old former inn, Robbers' Roost in olden days, empty for years and reputed to be haunted, has been bought by Janet Jordan's author Aunt Anice, who promptly throws a Christmas house-party, complete with Indian entertainer, the inscrutable Gunda Lal who is conjuror and fortune teller --- much to Bessie's delight. Babs becomes suspicious of Gunda Lal when the scary happenings and ghostly visitations threaten to ruin their Christmas, but her carefully built up case against him collapses when he confides to her that he is actually Radcliffe Wynne, the famous criminologist, in disguise, brought in by Aunt Anice to solve the mysteries disturbing her new home.

Clara plays an important part in the series and shows tremendous courage

when the White Monk appears in the mist as the chums explore a grotto in the grounds of Robin's Roost. The sight of the menacing figure through the eerie mist is terrifying but Clara raises an oar (they are in a boat at the time) and cleaves the ghost from head to toe. Later, she actually walks through the phantom, and finally, inside the house, makes yet another brave attack which at last betrays the human element in this ghost. The chums bring about the downfall of the gang of thieves who have used Robin's Roost as their headquarters for so many years.

The two waifs, Audrey and Jim, are the victims of the classic frame-up, and unwittingly Tomboy Clara is responsible for its success. Gunda Lal is of course their sinister Uncle Leopold (what befell the great Radcliffe Wynne is not recounted, alas --- the only weakness in this plot) but with Bab's help the imposter is unmasked and Christmas reigns happily.

Whether a ghostly picture could be successfully projected out-of-doors, utilising the mist as a screen is something I can't answer. Perhaps some of our readers can. But it is certainly a most ingenious theory, as was the idea of using stilts painted with dull black paint to enable the ghost player in his luminous robes to appear to be walking on air when he makes his appearances indoors.

Not a Christmas ghost, but surely Wheway's star spook of all time must have been his ghost ship, in an early series featuring Celeste Margesson who became a close chum of the Cliff House girls. A great glowing yacht, fit to take on the Dutchman himself, and a handy secret cave into which the craft could "disappear" and lie concealed in readiness for all the nefarious machinations of the plot. Until Babs and Co. take a hand...

Happy, happy haunted days!

●

* *

St. Frank's wishes you all A Very Joyous Yuletide and Happy New Year from

JIM COOK

NEW ZEALAND

Season's Greetings to Everyone. Have Bunter, Biggles, etc. Wants Lists welcomed.

GEORGE SEWELL

27 HUMBERSTONE ROAD, CAMBRIDGE

Best Wishes to Bill and Thelma, Eric, Roger, Brian Doyle, Ben, and all Members of the O.B.B.C.
P.S. If visiting Kent watch out for Footpads.

LARRY MORLEY

WONDERS OF WODEHOUSE

By ERNEST HOLMAN.

More than one P.G. Wodehouse character expressed dissatisfaction with the type of story that "shows the Secret Service Agent about to be dropped through a trap door of a cellar into the river, then immediately turns up as the life and soul of the Embassy party".

Plum never committed such an offence; no story of his, short or long, ever finished without all the events dovetailing into a near whole. What he did do, however, was to leave one wondering, just occasionally, about some past events - the few that were mentioned but never recorded. PGW had this great 'knack' of giving everything and still whetting the appetite for more; and the "mixture before" always came up. Nevertheless, there were some odd items that made one wonder.

The foremost of these items must surely be an unwritten story that could have been entitled "Uncle Fred Goes to the Dogs". Frederick, Earl of Ickenham, became the subject of a statement by a thoughtful member of the Drones. (Uncle Fred's nephew, Pongo Twistleton, was a Drone and never failed to broadcast his lamentations regarding his relative to whoever would listen!) The aforementioned thoughtful Drone was a little doubtful whether his listeners were acquainted with the word "excesses". Apparently, he told them, those were what were committed by Pongo's Uncle Fred. This Uncle lived, most of the year, in Hampshire but, from time to time, had a habit of slipping his collar and descending upon Pongo in London. Every time this occurred, the poor young blighter was subjected to some soul-testing experience. "You must get Pongo to tell you about the visit to the Dog Races!"

Pongo obviously only told his fellow Members, for the story was never related elsewhere. Neither Uncle Fred nor Pongo ever spoke of the details of that day; the nearesr Pongo ever got was to say "You're not getting me to the Dog Races again!". Fortunately, on that score at least, Uncle Fred had learned his lesson. All he would say about it was that, in his view, a wiser Magistrate would have been satisfied with a mere reprimand. The incident was brought home to them both at a later date, when Constable Potter met up with the two again, recognising the older George Robinson and the younger Edwin Smith, both of Nasturtium Road, East Dulwich. Which was rather awkward, as at that time, Pongo was having difficulty in establishing himself as himself, whilst Uncle Fred was carrying the alias of Major Brabazon-Plank. Even then, the previous meeting was never detailed. All that Uncle Fred exclaimed was "Don't tell me you're the Copper who pinched us at the Dog Track?".

It can only be wondered just what "excesses" were committed that June evening in a London suburban Greyhound Stadium. "A mere reprimand" was Fred's idea of a suitable sentence; a large fine resulted, in reality. It may

not have been anything very serious, of course - except that the two had only been at the Races for ten minutes before being scooped in by the constabulary. Just what "excesses" did Uncle Fred actually perform in the short space of ten minutes?

Still with the peerage, it does not come amiss to bring in George, Lord Uffenham. Although not nearly as well-remembered as Ickenham, Emsworth and others of similar category, this pear-shaped Earl was featured in two of the Wodehouse stories. Firstly, he was masquerading as the butler, Cakebread, then alternating as himself. Uffenham was always an original thinker. He would sit silent for long periods, then come up suddenly with views on anti-disestablishmentarianism; as most of his Club members had been assuming that the still body in his chair had quietly passed away, this abrupt intrusion was startling. Equally so, in the middle of a conversation about the weight of Jack Dempsey prior to his battle with Gene Tunney, this very individual peer would proceed to inform fellow-conversers of facts regarding the weather. "Yer counts the number of chirps a cricket makes, add forty, and there you are." Not always practicable, of course, unless one had a cricket handy!

Uffenham's most noted act, however, was his belief that he could drive on the right. An orthodox lorry driver, proceeding normally, was unable to avoid the resultant mix-up. Both drivers were eventually discharged from hospital, the Earl with a certain lapse of memory at times. One such lapse included the complete black-out of knowledge as to where he had cached the diamonds. As these constituted the entire family fortunes - "Don't believe in Banks, yer know." - a variety of useless searches throughout the Country Seat followed one upon the other. Joining the fray were Soapy and Dolly Molloy. In the end, Dolly made off with Uffenham's tobacco jar, under the mistaken impression that it contained the diamonds.

This tobacco jar cropped up in a subsequent adventure and proved once more to be the ideal instrument for laying-out young men, thus collecting the sympathy of their disenchanted ladies. Once again, Lord Uffenham appears in his dreamy-eyed, unblinking manner; and it is this description that comes into mind when the circumstances of the tobacco jar are looked at closely. It is never related how the jar got back into the possession of his Lordship. Dreamy-eyed, original in mind, how on earth did he manage to recover the object from, of all people, the hard-boiled Dolly Molloy. Here is undoubtedly a missing story ("A Jar for Dolly"; "Lord U. on the Warpath"). One fraught with interest and, obviously, action. In the end, one has to take a second look at this pear-shaped Peer of the Realm - no mean performer, after all, this Uffenham!

There were so many stories of Bertie and Jeeves, all of which could be easily cross-referenced, that it would seem that there cannot be a missing story anywhere. Wait, though - let's wonder again. What price Pauline Stoker? Who? Oh, yes - wasn't she the girl who turned up late one night and, when Bertie entered his bedroom, was revealed as sitting up in his bed, wearing his heliotrope pyjamas with the old gold stripe? That's it - you've got her! Bertie reckoned he had an old Puritan strain in him and glanced at her sternly - admitting, however, that his pyjamas suited her general colour scheme.

There is no need to continue that episode - it is recorded elsewhere in Bertie's archives - and, no doubt, in the Book at Jeeves' Club. What is necessary is to look backwards. For Bertie relates only sparsely his previous acquaintanceship with Pauline. It had been in New York. Her beauty, he states,

maddened him like wine! After a fortnight, he proposed and was accepted. But - he says - mark the sequel. Within 48 hours, a monkey wrench was bunged into the romance and the whole thing was off.

Bertie apportions the blame to Sir Roderick Glossop, the celebrated Loony Doctor. This worthy, happening to be in New York then, read of the engagement in his breakfast newspaper and, without even stopping to wipe his mouth, was on the 'phone to Stoker senior. He revealed all there was to know about Wooster - and Pauline's parent immediately put the bee on the proposed wedding. That is all one can learn from Bertie. Could he have told more? Was there more to tell, in fact? Yes, there most probably was - for where was Jeeves during all this time? Did he not come to the rescue of the young Master - or was HIS really the hidden hand in the matter? No doubt, Jeeves realised only too well the unsuitability of such a union - Pauline herself later admitted that it had only been a certain "woollen-headed duckiness" about Bertie that had made her accept him in the first place!

Jeeves was also well acquainted with Old Pop Stoker's Manservant and would have learned only too well what a fire-eater Stoker was. So - did Jeeves 'contrive' to get Sir Roderick to New York at the appropriate time, knowing what the outcome would be? Jeeves always moved in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform; and he was seldom, if ever, lacking in success. So yet another lost story here, no doubt suitable to go under the heading of "No Wedding Bells for Bertie".

One has to be careful in selecting 'missing' stories. The three quoted are perhaps reasonable examples. It would be easy to 'contrive' others - but then no useful purpose would be served, anyway. The only item I shall 'consider' as falling between likely and unlikely events would be that of Rupert Baxter's behaviour. Originally introduced as Emsworth's most efficient Secretary, as well as being 'Stage Manager' of Blandings Castle, Baxter gradually falls from grace. A mix-up in a darkened hall with a tray of food, awakening the whole Castle, first put doubts into Emsworth's mind. When, at a later date, he is awakened by missiles entering his bedroom window in the early hours of the morning, he looks out rather tentatively. He sees a lightly-clad Baxter hurling a sequence of flower pots at him and decides, not unreasonably, that "the man's potty". Not even Lady Constance can prevent him from giving his Secretary notice of dismissal.

Rupert Baxter, however, is a sticker. He turns up again and again; he is found guilty of stealing Empress of Blandings from her sty; he is brought back yet again by the Duke of Dunstable to once more steal the pig. He even returns as Tutor to George, Emsworth grandson. It is only after collecting more shot in his seat than can be delicately indicated that he departs - this time, never to return.

There may or may not be a story to envisage here - but there is sufficient of a mystery to suggest that perhaps some ingredients are present. For - the big question, really - why did Baxter keep returning to Blandings? Each visit turned out to be worse than the previous one - yet he seemed to be attracted there as by a magnet. Had he 'hidden the body' somewhere and feared discovery? Like Lord Uffenham, had he secreted valuables somewhere - during, say, a flower-pot phase - and forgotten the place? Did he know of buried treasure? Was he, even, an enemy spy, sent to find a convenient HQ for his operations? Well, who knows? All the same, I believe there was some sort of a story there. ("Baxter Tries Again".)

Finally, of course, there is the missing part of PGM's very last story. Published as "Sunset at Blandings" it contains only sixteen chapters, even those considered to be 'not in final form'. Copious Wodehouse notes and corrections are presented with the unfinished story and, with a little working out, the remainder of the yarn could be 'outlined'. Was this unfinished part of the Blandings Saga an intentional act? Plum had once expressed the belief that he was immortal - but eventually he admitted that there must be an end. So did he feel that he could leave his readers 'wondering' - knowing that no hard feelings would ever be directed at him? He must now be very thankful that no one left behind dared to complete his last offering - a fate not always given to departed writers!

So there we have him - P.G.W. looking down from his own Sunset, indulging in quite a chuckle. He knows that we, down here, will go on reading him and will be spending time in wondering, as well. In fact, when one thinks of some of the stories that never made it, surely a quote from the Master himself will show just how much "the imagination boggles!".

* *

Season's Greetings to All and Thanks for Happy Memories.

ERIC AND BERYL WAFER

Season's Greetings readers. Wanted: S.O.L.s 94, 145, 147, 191, 193, 258, 283, 308. Sales: S.O.L.s 217, 219, 223, 228.

MAURICE KING

27 CELTIC CRESCENT, DORCHESTER, DT1 2TG (0305-69026)

A Happy Christmas and New Year to Eric Fayne, Norman Shaw and all readers.

H. HEATH

Seasonal Greetings to all O.B.B.C. Members from

DON AND ELSIE WEBSTER

Jack Hughes wants No. 1 Beau Peep; No. 37. Fred Basset.

JACK HUGHES

P.O. BOX 92 HOME HILL 4806, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Greetings for a Happy Christmas and Good Health to our Editor and all C.D. readers.

FROM

NEIL LAMBERT

I ALSO WAS THERE - OR THEREABOUTS.

BY RONNIE HUNTER.

Eric Lawrence's interesting article "I WAS THERE - FIFTY-ONE YEARS AGO" in last year's C.D. Annual took me back with quite a jerk to an almost identical - and equally thrilling - experience involving the 1934 Australian cricket touring team, which I enjoyed at around the same time and on the same hallowed turf where Eric witnessed his own particular brand of magic.

This occurred on Friday, the 22nd of June, 1934, the first day of the Second Test Match at Lords, when a little lad - none other than yours truly - sallied forth from his parents' home in West London, in the small hours, to walk all the way to Lords (a trek of, I suppose, about one- and- a- half hours - perhaps more) and duly take his place in the queue forming outside the main gates of the two-shilling entrance as dawn was breaking.

Once admitted and after an almost unbearably long wait on a hard - and as Frank Richards himself might have said - "Unsympathetic" - wooden bench, the show at last got rolling, but the start was an anti-climax. For, like so many others, I had really come to see Don Bradman & Co., perform wonders with their bats and this was exactly what did not happen. Instead, England batted first and I thus had to content myself, perhaps a little impatiently, with glimpses of Bradman fielding along the boundary line in his usual brilliant style, Captain Woodfull moving quietly, but authoritatively nearer the wickets and hopeful expectations - by now rapidly revised in favour of the Mother country - of a display of fireworks from England's leading batsmen. But, alas, I was again doomed to disappointment, for England's elite in that department spent the first few hours play merely scratching around. They poked, they prodded, and they "hung their bats out to dry", (if I may borrow an expression now in common usage amongst modern sports writers), with stalwarts like R.E.S. Wyatt, Herbert Sutcliff - even the great Walter Hammond - all being pinned down by O'Reilly & Co., and in turn, dismissed for small scores.

All this with not much more than a hundred runs or so on the board. All very thumbs down stuff. But suddenly, around mid-afternoon, something like a miracle happened. Abracadabra!

Enter the jovial, stocky, ruddy-faced Yorkshire tyke, left-hander Maurice Leyland - surely England's most consistent, most reliable number five sheet - anchor batsman all through the nineteen-thirties - to take the bowling apart and rattle up about fifty or so runs almost quicker than you could say "Jack Robinson". (Would that we had a batsman of Leyland's calibre and sheer consistency in the England side today.)

Leyland was eventually out for 109 on the following (Saturday's) day's play - which I did not see - and thanks largely to him, plus splendid support from C.F. Walters and the ever reliable Leslie Ames (who also scored a century), England finally mustered the respectable total of 440 runs for their first innings.

With rain falling over the intervening week-end, Australia were unluckily, but fatally, caught on a wet wicket on the Monday. Failing by just 7 runs to avoid the follow-on, they were twice dismissed on that same day by Hedley Verity playing the match of his life (15 wickets for 104 runs), and England wound up winning by an Innings and 38 runs after only three days' play. A result which few, if any, of those who watched the first few hours of the first day's play would have imagined either likely or even remotely possible. The scorecard of the first day's play of that remarkable 1934 Lords Test match (with my pencilled hieroglyphics upon it) was hoarded and treasured by me for many years. It survived the last war and my ten years at sea from 1937 to 1947. It even survived the first few years of my postwar working career in Brazil from 1948 onwards.

But eventually, with the very many moves both abroad and in this country which my family and I have made over the years, it went the way of many other souvenirs, mementoes, and knick-knacks of long ago and, regretfully, I now no longer have it. I have, however, managed to hang on to a cutting from the front page of I think it was - the London "Evening News" dated the 22nd June 1934, depicting the queue forming outside Lords' two-shillings' entrance on that memorable Friday morning.

The little lad (minus a hat) standing against the wall is none other than yours truly. This is the first time that I have ever graced the front page of a national evening newspaper and I am going to do my very utmost to see that it does not happen again.

Best Wishes Stan, Ben, Brian, Bill, Thelma, well everyone.

CYRIL ROWE

Merry Xmas to You All. May the Lanterns shine down on you. Best Wishes.

NICK GODFREY

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year for 1987, to all Hobby Friends.

JOHN BARTHOLOMEW

NORTH ROCKHAMPTON, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Welcome back to Christmas. Season's Greetings to all.

WILLIAM LISTER

CARTER, 3/41 FLINT STREET, HILLSDALE, AUSTRALIA 2036

needs N.L. 1st series 27, 31. Will buy or swap two for one: 47, 48, 62, 63, 66, 68, 77, 78, 79, 86 V.G.: 65, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 99, 100, 102, 104, 105, 106, Reasonable condition, suitable binding.

THE YEAR 1918

THE LAST OF THE WAR YEARS

(From our Let's Be Controversial series of 20 years ago)

Nearly seventy years ago the Great War had just ended. The end seems to have taken everybody unawares. It is interesting to look back on the year 1918 and see what effect it had upon the Hamilton papers.

It is a year which perplexes the student of Hamiltonia. The key to the mystery lies, without doubt, mainly in the acute shortage of staff in the editorial departments of the Amalgamated Press, and, of course, the shortage of authors.

Pentelow found himself in charge of the Companion Papers, with precious little overlooking or guidance from the top. The publishers did not bother so long as the papers could be kept going at all in such difficult times. So Pentelow probably had greater powers than any editor had before him or was ever likely to have again. One can hardly blame Pentelow for making hay while the sun shone, and I think that there can be little question that a mild little racket went on for a time.

If we know the period thoroughly, we can only decide for ourselves whether Charles Hamilton was a victim of the racket or whether he was part and parcel of it and, with the editor, making hay.

I have used the term "racket", and I haven't much doubt that there was a racket. But the word "racket" suggests something of doubtful morality, and there is another side to the matter. It must have been enormously hard to keep the papers going at all in the conditions existing then, and it should be possible to come to the conclusion, however grudgingly, that the editor and the author did a grand job in actually keeping the four schools on the market. For my part, I cannot now see how this could have been brought about at all, had not Hamilton and Pentelow worked together as, in my view, they very obviously did.

And now let us look at that very curious year, 1918. Not the least curious item was that there was no Christmas Number of any of the Companion Papers that December.

Hamilton's best work in 1918 went into the Boys' Friend. He wrote all but two of the Rookwood stories that year, and every one of the Cedar Creek tales. He wrote two-thirds of the Greyfriars tales in the Magnet, and just half of the St. Jim's tales in the Gem.

It was due to Hamilton's allegiance to the Boys' Friend that so many Magnet and Gem tales had to come from the stand-in writers.

Some of the most famous Rookwood stories of all time appeared in 1918. There was the "Blind Mornington" series and the resultant barring-out over Lattrey. This lot, despite some rather blatant melodrama and theatrical contrivance, still make a fine school story even seventy years on. Hamilton never really surpassed, of its type, the long caravanning series of that summer. In the autumn a truly novel set of tales showed Rookwood under canvas as a result of the bomb on the school buildings. And he wound up the year with the kidnapping series, perhaps the most famous Rookwood series of all, and always regarded as something of a classic of its genre.

In the Magnet it was Redwing's year. Introduced as the New Year came in, he starred in several beautifully written series which will always be memorable. There was little else of any consequence during the year, but one recalls the little gem about Hoskins and Hobson which gave promise of things to come.

In the Gem there was nothing outstanding. Hamilton's fifty per cent of the material was competent, and sometimes dull and hackneyed. The Gem tales were very much of the pot-boiler class. It would obviously be absurd to suggest that a nail was driven in the Gem's coffin in 1918, but it is equally obvious that the Gem was put into the background, and it never regained the lead and the glamour which it had once known.

Just why did Hamilton concentrate so markedly on the Boys' Friend stories, and neglect Greyfriars and St. Jim's. Clearly it was intentionally done. It could be that, for some reason, Pentelow was anxious to make a success of that paper, but such an argument does not hold water. It could be that the sly old editor, for some fell purpose of his own, sidetracked Hamilton's work into Rookwood and Cedar Creek. That, too, does not make sense. I am quite sure that Hamilton wrote what he wanted to write and that he drove himself to the limit.

Rookwood fans might like to suggest that Hamilton had an especial love for Rookwood, so he concentrated on that school, and threw in Cedar Creek for good value. I wouldn't believe that for a minute. I have said before that I feel certain that sentiment never had the slightest part to play in deciding what he wrote.

Clearly, less harm would have been done had the substitute writers taken over a great deal more of Rookwood. In any case, the Rookwood stories were always too short for characterisation to be a major consideration. Again, Rookwood was only one item among several in the Boys' Friend programme. Yet the author concentrated on Rookwood and Cedar Creek, and neglected the more important schools of St. Jim's and Greyfriars.

It is a cynical view, possibly, but I think the only reason can have been that the writer found it much more profitable financially to write two short stories each week plus one long story (with an additional short time that could be devoted to a few thousand words towards another long one), rather than to write two long tales (St. Jim's and Greyfriars) regularly.

St. Jim's was sacrificed at the altar of Rookwood and Cedar Creek in 1918, as, later on, it was to be sacrificed at the stake of the Rio Kid.

1918 was also the year of the Greyfriars and St. Jim's Galleries. The Greyfriars series ran too long; the St. Jim's series was cut short in its prime. Pentelow is credited with the writing of both, though there was a considerable

difference in style. The Greyfriars articles were more factual; the St. Jim's articles much more abstract and rhetorical. Each was worth while in its own way, but, for some reason, the Greyfriars series made the greater impression at the time.

- - - - -

THE SAILORMAN'S SON (from our Let's Be Controversial Series)

It is nearly 70 years since Tom Redwing was created and introduced to Greyfriars.

Redwing was, thank Heaven, the last prominent character to take his place in a permanent capacity. During the war years there had been a glut of new characters at the Hamilton schools, particularly at St. Jim's, and the Gem never really recovered from it. Possibly, in creating new members for his cast, the author was taking the line of least resistance. The serious fault lay in the fact that he did not remove these new creations when they had served their purpose. Hamilton did not make the same mistake when the Magnet reached its Golden Age.

Maybe the only new permanent character after Redwing was Angel, who featured in one or two series down the years, but, not being in the Remove, he did not obtrude too much on the normal stage.

Redwing, however, was a star. In the matter of importance, he ranks with Cardew of St. Jim's.

Erroll of Rookwood was the prototype of Redwing. Both were extremely attractive characters, though Greyfriars owed more to Redwing that Rookwood owed to Erroll. Erroll played a star part in many fine series in the three years after he was created. Then he was allowed to slide into the background. No such later neglect was to be the fate of Redwing.

Redwing, right from the start, was a cleverly constructed character, offering far more scope than Erroll ever did, even though Erroll started off on similar lines. Redwing, with his seafaring background and his cottage home at Hawkscliff, was picturesque with a tang of the sea. He was poor, which made him a tremendous contrast to Vernon-Smith whose great friend he became. Charles Hamilton never failed in presenting an attractive study of Redwing, the steady, decent type, of high moral fibre, always free from mawkishness and always winning our sympathy. Make no mistake, Tom Redwing was a good character study, beautifully portrayed.

It was inevitable, of course, that the substitute writers should seize upon Redwing. The ideal friendship between the millionaire's son and the poor sailor boy offered the chance of treacly sentimentality which lesser writers could not resist. Fortunately, there was not too much of this, probably because Hamilton himself always kept Redwing well to the fore. And Hamilton himself was too great a writer ever to allow sentimentality to mar his stories in the slightest. I very much doubt whether sentiment as such had any place at all in the personal character of the creator of Tom Redwing.

So Redwing never suffered at the hands of the substitute writers in the way that Talbot of St. Jim's did. Talbot had great potentials which were never fully exploited by Charles Hamilton. Other writers took over Talbot and Marie Rivers and overwhelmed them with sentiment. But neither they nor even Charles Hamilton himself could often conceive Talbot other than involved with some

tedious, repetitive echo from his past.

The sailor's son was on an even keel from the start and throughout his long history. It is, perhaps, uncertain whether Hamilton recognised the potentialities of Redwing at the time of creating him. If he did, then the Clavering series was the result of an extremely clever piece of thinking. Before the Bounder of Greyfriars could become the close chum of the poor sailor boy, that same poor sailor boy had, in some credible way, to become a Greyfriars man. So the Clavering series provided the means of bringing the young sailor into the Remove at Greyfriars.

Clavering, who looked much older than his years, wanted to join the army, but his guardian had destined him for Greyfriars. He happened to meet Redwing, who was anxious to have the benefit of a good education. The two boys changed places. Clavering went into the army as Private Redwing, and Redwing went to Greyfriars and became Clavering of the Remove. This was a delightful, well-balanced series with nothing to strain the credulity. By 1918, the army was not particular as to the men it received; there was no bothering about credentials. And Redwing's father was away, probably lost at sea in a torpedoed vessel. There was nothing far-fetched in the exchange of identities. By the time the series had run its course, the Bounder was devoted to Redwing in his own rather tortuous way, and the millionaire's son was able, by methods cleverly thought out by the author, to ensure that the sailor's son was a fixture at Greyfriars.

The series, as time passed, about the scholarship which, anonymously, Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith founded, with conditions favourable to Redwing's winning it, made fascinating reading. And, inevitably, the time came when the volatile Bounder flung the facts into the face of his sensitive sailor friend. The Bounder redeemed himself, and saved the friendship, in a splendid tale, little-quoted today, entitled "Fallen Fortunes".

The history of this remarkable and endearing friendship was thorny. Early in the Golden Age of the Magnet came the wonderful South Seas series which brought the superb Soames into the saga. With an overture of what looked like a final quarrel between the millionaire's son and the sailor boy, Redwing set off in search of a treasure which had been bequeathed to him by a distant, roving relative. And when he found the treasure, he was, at long last, able to pay his own fees at Greyfriars.

A sequel to the South Seas series was told at Christmas time, with the Bounder and Redwing kidnapped and held in a cave - stories which were well-told, colourful and exciting, but which lacked the real Christmas atmosphere.

A decade and more passed before the Bertie Vernon series graced a golden summer. This one has not the same appeal as some of the others, though it was carefully planned and told. The Bounder was too callous to win any sympathy by this time. His brittle harshness irritated, and marred the stories. But Redwing was portrayed brilliantly, and he alone placed the series in the above-average class.

The author, in fact, never failed to ring the bell with Redwing, whether the boy from Hawkscliff was wondering whether he was really good enough to fill the place in the team which the Bounder was demanding for him, or whether he was feeling that he no longer liked the fellow who was supposed to be the Bounder but had dropped all the Bounder's old wild habits.

My own view is that Tom Redwing was one of Charles Hamilton's greatest character studies. At the time of his death, the author was half-way through yet another story concerning Redwing and the Bounder. It was not a great one, though it had its moments as far as he went. Just how he would have finished it. not one of us can know. We do know, for certain, that he would never have wound it up in the welter of sentimentality which spread over it in the closing chapters which were tacked on to what the creator of the sailor-man's son had left behind him.

Christmas Greetings fellow collectors. O.B.B.S. Sale. - Wanted. S.A.E.

LAURIE YOUNG

211 MAY LANE, BIRMINGHAM, B14 4AW

Best Wishes to all Collectors. A Special Thanks to Eric Fayne for the C.D. during the past year

R. J. McCABE

DUNDEE

A Very Happy Xmas and Peaceful Blessed New Year to Hobbyists everywhere, especially to ye Editor and Princess Snowee.

STUART WHITEHEAD

YEW TREE COTTAGE, BUTTS ASH, HYTHE, HANTS.

Christmas Happiness to our Dear Editor and all Hobby Friends. Still seeking Schoolgirl Magazine early Thirties. Also S.G.O.L. 402, 293, 495, 535, 574, 575, 599, 605, 637, 656, 712.

MARGERY WOODS

HARLEQUIN COTTAGE, SOUTH STREET, SCALBY, SCARBOROUGH

TELEPHONE 0723 365876

Wanted any Magnet/Gem/S.O.L. Lists.

78 GREENVALE ROAD, LONDON S.E.9

Christmas Greetings from the Friars Club to all Collectors everywhere. For those wishing to join our club the subscription is £4 p.a., which entitles the member to five copies of the Friar's Chronicles with news of meetings, articles, letters, etc. Write to:

MAURICE HALL, TREASURER

74 HILLDALE ROAD, CHEAM, SURREY, SM1 2JD

ANNUALS FROM THE HOUSE OF SHAW

By O. W. WADHAM.

In a parcel of old assorted comics and story papers of the period 1910 to 1917 that I discovered in a Northern N.Z. home recently was one never before mentioned in the COLLECTOR'S DIGEST. It was a 100-page paste-board covered book called LOUIS WAIN'S ANNUAL. The year was 1912, and at that period Louis Wain must surely have been the greatest and most entertaining creator of animal characters in all England. Wain't best-loved characters were cats, but dogs came a big second and poultry and horses also got a look in.

There are over 100 drawings in the Annual, and they are all signed by Louis Wain. They would delight children and adults as well, for many had grown-up appeal in the jokes. There are several short stories and poems by different writers, and when the volume was printed in 1912 it was priced at one shilling.

The publishers of LOUIS WAIN'S ANNUAL were John F. Shaw, 3 Pilgrim Lane, London, and besides many hard-covered books for children, they also published the following annuals: ROYAL ANNUAL, with the best items from the GOLDEN RULE monthly magazine; BOY'S REALM OF STORIES, GIRL'S REALM OF STORIES, and SUNDAY SUNSHINE ANNUAL. There were also two others for very small children called, LITTLE FROLIC and OUR DARLINGS. All the publications mentioned, except LOUIS WAIN'S had about 300 pages, and were issued at the price of one and sixpence in board covers, two shillings in cloth; and some were published with gilt edges at three and sixpence.

There is also a CHILDREN'S REALM mentioned in the Annual list; that is priced at two and sixpence and three and six.

I should say the House of Shaw ceased to function during the first world war, and I am wondering if any collectors possess any of the Shaw publications I have mentioned. The BOY'S REALM OF STORIES could certainly confuse young readers of the 1912 period that the yarns were maybe from the then famous BOY'S REALM weekly.

Seeking copies of - 'Fun and Fiction', January to December, 1912. Also 'Knock-out' Birthday Club Badges, Membership Certificates, etc. Prior to sending, please do drop me a line first. Thanks. meanwhile, I wish all 'C.D.' readers a 'Merry and Bright' Christmas. Cordial greetings too, to Norman, Mary, Jack, Bert, Albert and our esteemed editor, Eric.

BILL WRIGHT
52 LAMORNA AVENUE, GRAVESEND, KENT, DA12 5QE

THE YELLOW PHIZ!

A Magnificent, Long Complete Story dealing with the Further Amazing Adventures of

HERLOCK SHOLMES,

Detective

At a large window a face suddenly appeared, then as we gazed, it was joined by a crowd more, all looking at us as we stood.

CHAPTER ONE

HERLOCK SHOLMES was examining a series of pawntickets, of which he had a large and interesting collection, when a visitor was shown into our sitting-room at Shaker Street.

He was a young man with a somewhat pale and harassed face. It was evidently some deep-seated trouble which had brought him to consult my amazing friend.

"Mr. Sholmes!" he began eagerly.

"One moment!" said Sholmes. He finished his examination of the tickets. "Jotson, three of these are nearly up. Perhaps you will be good enough to see our friend Mr. Solomons in the morning. Now, sir, I am quite at your service!"

The young man plunged eagerly into his story.

"My name is Green", he said. "I live in the salubrious suburb of Peckham. I am sorely troubled, Mr. Sholmes, by a mystery that weighs upon my spirits and disturbs my domestic peace. I have recently ---"

"Married", said Herlock Sholmes quietly.

Mr. Green started.

"How did you know?" he gasped.

Sholmes smiled.

"To a trained eye it is obvious" he replied. "A button is missing from your waistcoat, and your coat-collar requires brushing. It is quite evident that you have no longer the advantage of possessing a careful landlady."

"It is true, Mr. Sholmes. I have married - and when I was united with my dear Sempronia Whilks, I deemed myself the happiest man living! She had every charm that the most sensitive lover could

desire or dream of - a comfortable balance at the bank, a large house standing in its own grounds, two motor-cars, and a relation in the peerage. She was a widow, Mr. Sholmes, the late Alderman Whilks having died suddenly after a dinner at the Mansion House. For three months, sir, I was deliriously happy. But now" - he made a tragic gesture - "now, Mr. Sholmes, my happiness is dashed - perhaps for ever!"

"The bank has failed?" I asked sympathetically.

"No, it is not that."

"The motor-cars have broken down?"

"No, no!"

"The mortgagees have foreclosed on the house?"

"No, no! In all those respects, Sempronia is as charming as ever. But a hidden mystery preys upon my peace of mind."

"Pray give me some details, Mr. Green, said Sholmes. "You pray speak quite freely before my friend, Dr. Jotson."

"From the first week at Whilks Hall, Mr. Sholmes, I became aware that Sempronia was concealing something from me. One wing of that imposing mansion was never opened to me. Sempronia kept the key, and sometimes she would disappear into those deserted rooms alone, and remain for hours. After a time I grew curious on the subject. I asked for an explanation. To my surprise, Sempronia burst into tears, and begged me to trust her. Mr. Sholmes, I would have trusted her with my fortune, if I had possessed one; but I was uneasy and alarmed. That closed wing of the house became an obsession in my mind. I could not find it in my heart to force an entrance there against Sempronia's wish, but I prowled round the place occasionally, looking at the windows. On several occasions I heard cries proceeding from the rooms, yet it was supposed to be untenanted."

"Cries! Of what nature?" asked Sholmes, interested.

"It was somewhat like the crying of infants, Mr. Sholmes. But when I asked Sempronia for an explanation, she trembled and was silent. Mr. Sholmes, I know well that Sempronia loves me. Only this morning she stroked my hair and called me her dusky little Charley. Yet she keeps this weird secret from me. She tells me that if I knew it I should love her no longer. Mr. Sholmes, I can bear it no more. You must help me to penetrate this mystery, for Sempronia's sake and my own."

"I am quite at your service, Mr. Green", said Herlock Sholmes, rising. "We will proceed at once to Whilks Hall. Come, Jotson, unless you have another engagement."

"My dear Sholmes, I had intended to attend the funeral of one of my patients, but I will come with you with pleasure!"

"You have no more details to give me, Mr. Green?"

The young man hesitated.

"I have, Mr. Sholmes, yet it is so extraordinary I almost fear to relate it."

"Pray proceed!"

"In prowling around the ruined wing, a prey to uneasiness and curiosity, I happened to glance at the windows, and I saw" - Mr. Green shuddered - "I saw a face, Mr. Sholmes. It was a terrible-looking face - yellow in colour, and marked with what appeared to be daubs of black and blue paint. A grocer's boy, who was passing on his way to the kitchen door,

saw it too, and ejaculated: 'What a chivvy!'. It was indeed an extraordinary and alarming chivvy, Mr. Sholmes! It disappeared at once!"

"Extraordinary!" I exclaimed.

"Since then", said Mr. Green hoarsely, "I, have seen it again - and others. In all, I have counted fifteen - every chivvy of them a hideous-looking phiz, as ugly and ferocious in expression as the masks used by the boys on the fifth of November. Mr. Sholmes, I am not dreaming. Extraordinary as it appears, it is the fact!"

Sholmes smiled.

"The improbability of your story, Mr. Green, renders it all the more likely to be correct, in my opinion. My system, as you are perhaps aware, is not that of Scotland Yard. But let us go."

And, in a few minutes more, a motor-bus was bearing us to Peckham.

CHAPTER TWO

We arrived at Whilks Hall, one of the finest of the great fashionable mansions of Peckham. As we crossed the extensive grounds, Mr. Green pointed out to me the deserted wing. He gripped Sholmes' arm suddenly.

"Look!" he breathed.

At a large window a face suddenly appeared. I could not help a thrill of horror as I saw it. It was a face that, once seen, could never be forgotten - yellow in hue, with strange marks of red and blue and black - a huge misshapen nose and wide, curling, grinning mouth. As we gazed, it was joined by a crowd more, all looking at us as we stood. Then suddenly a blind was drawn, and the yellow phizzes vanished from our sight.

"You saw them?" said Mr. Green huskily. "What do you say now, Mr. Sholmes?"

Sholmes' look was sombre.

"Let us proceed", he said.

A door opened, and a lady came forth, and Mr. Green ran towards her. It was evidently Mrs. Green, late Whilks. I turned to Sholmes. "Sholmes, what does this dreadful mystery mean?" I murmured.

He shook his head.

"Jotson, I confess I am puzzled. Let us go on."

We hurried after Mr. Green. The beautiful Sempronia was endeavouring to prevent him from entering the door of the deserted wing. She threw herself on her knees.

"It is useless, Sempronia!" said the young man. "Let me pass with my friends who have come to investigate this mystery. Otherwise, I leave this house today, and return to my humble but happy lodging in Camden Town." "Then I will tell you all!" sobbed Sempronia. "But do not forsake your little Sempy! Follow me!"

She swept into the house. We followed, amazed. What strange mystery was about to be revealed?

"Bobby! Tommy!" called out the beautiful Sempronia. "Gladys! Mary Ann! Willy! Herbert! Charley! Frank! Fred! Wilhelmina! Francesca! Rupert! Cecelia! Ethel! Johnny!"

There was a rush of feet. The hideous faces we had seen at the window surrounded us. Even Sholmes stood dumbfounded. But in a moment more the secret was revealed. With a sweep of her hand, Sempronia removed the fifteen Guy FAwkes' masks from the fifteen faces, and fifteen boys and girls of varying ages stood revealed.

"In mercy's name, Sempronia, what means this?" gasped Mr. Green. "Is this place an orphanage?"

Sempronia drew herself up proudly.

"Nothing of the kind, Charles Green! Forgive me! I have always intended to reveal the truth, but always I have put it off, even as one puts off a visit to the dentist. When you met me, you knew that I was a widow, but you did not know that I had fifteen children. I dared not tell you; I feared that it would diminish your love, that it would outweigh, in the balance, the bank-account, the freehold house, and the motor-cars for which you adored me. Forgive me, Charles, and take them to your heart!"

"Sempronia!"

"In my dread that you would see them, and discover my fatal secret, I disguised them with Guy Fawkes' masks", murmured Mrs. Green, "otherwise, the resemblance would have betrayed the secret; but in these masks there is little or no resemblance to my features!"

"None!" said Mr. Green.

His face had cleared, and he drew Sempronia to his heart.

Shoimes and I slipped away quietly. We felt that we should be de trop at that tender scene of reconciliation. As we glanced back from the gate, we saw Mr. Green taking the merry fifteen to his heart, as requested by Sempronia; but, owing to their number, he was taking them on the instalment system!

THE END

* *

YOU NEVER READ THESE STORIES

BY W.O.G. LOFTS.

THE SCHOOLGIRL

Frank Richards created Cliff House School in the early days of the Red Magnet, when mainly Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn featured in the stories of Greyfriars. Bessie Bunter was not created unril 1919 - specially for the new girls' paper The School Friend, though Bessie did appear some six weeks earlier in Magnet No. 582 in a highly amusing story with Frank Richards at his very best.

When the School Friend commenced, our author under the name of 'Hilda Richards' penned the first few tales, then in a move that has been a subject of great controversy, the stories were continued by Horace Phillips, Reginald Kirkham, and, at a later day, by L.E. Ransome. The stories continued until 1929 when the paper was replaced by The School Girl. Surprisingly, apart from two serials, the Cliff House girls were dropped from the paper until 1932, when it was decided to revive them. A competition was held amongst four writers as to who could write the best tale, and this was won by John W. Wheway, as the previous writers were now in other fields of fiction. Wheway was then reputed to have written all the stories till the end in 1940. However, fresh information gleaned has pin-pointed tales penned by Stanley Austin, Cecil Graveley, Will Gibbons, and Stewart Pride, with the strong possibility of odd tales here and there by other authors.

The last issue of The Schoolgirl entitled 'That Elusive African Image' No. 581 dated May 18th, 1940, has the editorial as well as several advertisements giving detals of next week's story that was entitled 'The Feud Between the Prefects' - but obviously hastily inserted in the centre of one of the pages is an important editor's announcement with words to the effect 'that the editor regrets he is forced to suspend publication due to the paper shortage'. So, at least unlike the poor Magnet readers, they were aware of the paper's demise. With the Cliff House tales being complete each week, it was not so bad - though a serial running featuring Valerie Drew by 'Isobel Norton' (An editorial pen-name) was left unfinished.

There were three other stories of Cliff House in hand, all being penned by Wheway - "Miss Bullivant's Secret Sorrow"
"Diana's Terriers Star Cousin"
"Her Pet From the Past" (Altered to "Schoolgirl Circus Star".

The second story was earmarked later for a School Friend Annual, but whether this did appear with perhaps a change of title is unknown at the time of writing.

THE THRILLER

A 7/6d Novel for 6d! "The New Paper With a Thousand Thrills!". So ran the publicity blurbs for The Thriller, a paper that lived up to its name and promise, and yet as a tuppenny book was still destined to be sold on the boys' paper rack. alongside The Magnet, Gem, Hotspur, Wizard, and even the comic papers. The paper has always been a subject of controversy in our hobby - some maintaining that it was not a boys' paper at all, but an adult one. Editorial view was that it catered for readers of all ages, whilst Leslie Charteris, who contributed a large number of Saint stories, was of the opinion that it was read by teenagers upwards.

The first number was dated 9th February, 1929, and contained a serial by the great Edgar Wallace. Such was his fame and popularity at that time, that he was paid about ten times more than any other writer. Margery Allingham, Peter Cheyney, Agatha Christie, Hugh Clevely, Sax Rohmer, John Creasey, Gerald Fairlie, Dashiel Hammett, Captain W.E. Johns, E. Phillips Oppenheim, were only a few of the famous contributors who penned stories or serials in its pages. Apart from the fictional contents there were also a considerable number of articles, covering the whole aspect of crime, its detection, sciences involved and of real life criminals.

The paper, unlike many others, kept a very high standard, though with the Second World War starting in September 1939, the stories and especially serials took on a War against the Nazi flavour. Towards the end of its run, issue No. 579, the paper was retitled War Thriller and as such it remained to the last issue in May 1940.

Like the Magnet there was no indication whatsoever that this was to be the last issue as next week's story was not only advertised, but given blurbs throughout the paper. This was to be 'One Man Blitz-Krieg' by Berkeley Gray, and featuring his hero Norman Conquest. Whilst there were two serials running 'Storm Troop of Baltic Skies' by Captain W.E. Johns (which seemed to be complete in itself each week) the other 'The Brand of the Swastika' by Walter Tyrer' left readers in suspense for all times as to its conclusion.

There were actually four other stories waiting to be published. 'Dr. King Ize' by John G. Brandon. 'Return of the Stranger' (sold to A.P. by Wright & Brown Ltd.) 'Tenderfoot Luck' by R. Coutties Armour, and 'Rogues of the Turf' by C.H. Dent.

The paper was edited by Len Pratt who also edited 'The Sexton Blake Library' - so at least he was not out of a job, when The Thriller finished so abruptly in those dark days of 1940.

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY

The Schoolgirls' Own Library commenced in November 1922, when one could say it was the female counterpart of the Boys' Friend Library and the later Schoolboys' Own Library combined. Apart from many stories being proved to be reprints from earlier publications, it also contained quite a large number of original stories.

Mainly it is collected today for its Cliff House and Bessie Bunter stories by 'Hilda Richards', as well as those by 'Marjorie Stanton' (Horace Phillips) of Morcove School fame.

It was under a completely different editorial department from the Companion

Papers group, but whereas the majority of stories - plus mysteries have been solved in the Boys' Friend and Schoolboys' Own Libraries, the Schoolgirls' Own Library remains mainly unexplored or unresearched territory. This is mainly due to the small number of collectors of girls' material compared with the vast numbers of readers of only The Magnet, Gem, and Nelson Lee excellent school stories. The Library even starts off on a mysterious note, as the opening two issues concern a school named rockville, stories that were anonymous. It was established many years ago when records were available that these were reprinted yarns from somewhere, and were originally by Horace Phillips. But a perusal through most girls papers has yet to bring to light this school of Rockville. In the late fifties - Horace Phillips then down on his farm in Dorset - informed me that every single Morcove story came from his pen, yet No. 4, a Morcove original story, was written by L.E. Ransome - who as the creator of Jemima Carstairs must have written earlier stories, as this fine character later turned up at Cliff House.

Another fact is that some writers used anything up to six pen-names for stories, and some will remain for ever a myster.

Collectors of Cliff House yarns will find curiously long gaps between stories. No. 35, 1924 till No. 176 (an original) in 1828. Then from 315, 1931 to 495, in 1935.

The last issue No. 733 that had a story by 'Sheila Austin' (Stanley Austin) in June 1940 had an editorial notice to the effect that it would be the last issue. One can only conclude that there must have been an order of printing certain papers - and with the boys' periodicals being first on schedule they had no chance to give any warning to readers - like the girls' papers did.

There were actually five stories on hand when the Library ceased publishing. The first four were reprints from Roland Jameson. As he used several pen-names including 'Muriel Holden) one will never know what names they would have gone under. They were as follows:

"The Feud in the Family"
"The Mystery of Martham"
"Their Foe in the Film Girl"
"They Dare not tell the School"

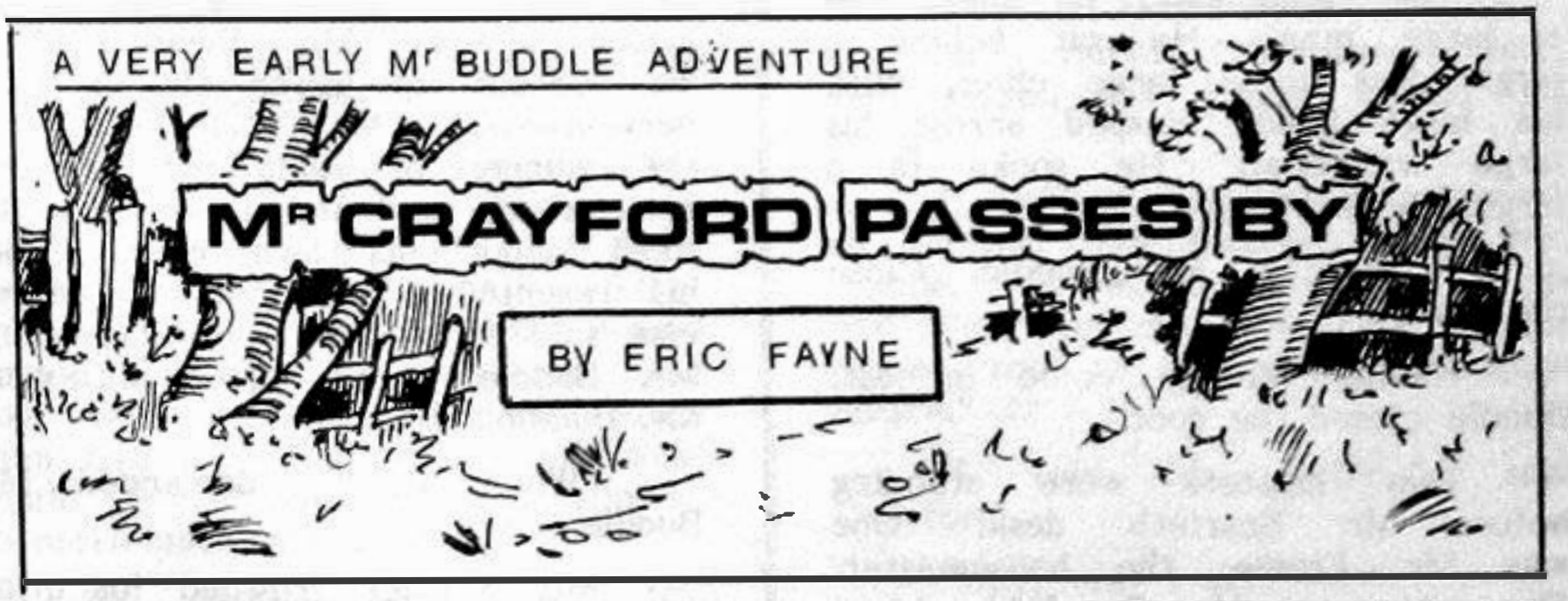
The other story was an original by Reginald Kirkham entitled 'Smiling Through'.

The Schoolgirls' Own Library must have been fairly successful, for when the paper restrictions were lifted around 1946 it was revived. It ran right to 1963 when the picture strips finally took over. Curiously the stories in hand were never used for this new Library, though they may have got lost or destroyed like the boys' outstanding ones. Many years ago now, I bought at a second-hand bookstall about 250 early Schoolgirls' Own Libraries for a penny each - £1 the lot that had mainly yellow covers. People were only interested in Cliff House or Morcove, and the rest I had to eventually give away.

* *

Happy Christmas to Eric and Grateful Thanks for another year of C.D.

JOAN GOLEN



It was early evening at Slade, and Mr. Buddle was seated at the table in his study marking English papers. Mr. Buddle's especial responsibility was the Lower Fourth Form, but he taught English to other forms as well, so a great deal of Mr. Buddle's spare time was occupied with the marking of papers.

How hard a schoolmaster's lot may be depends upon his own conscience and upon how seriously he takes his work. Mr. Drayne, the master of the Third Form, for instance, had plenty of marking to do, but Mr. Drayne seldom bothered to read the work written by his form, and merely contented himself with placing a red ink tick at the foot of each page. It was not exhausting to Mr. Drayne, and it was quite satisfying to his form.

In contrast, Mr. Buddle read every piece of work carefully, and an essay, by the time that Mr. Buddle had finished with it, presented the general appearance of an Ordnance Survey map.

Just as the telephone bell rang, Mr. Buddle was wrestling with an essay turned in by Brazenbean of his own form. Brazenbean had written: "Being a spunge pudding, my sister poured golden siroop over her cooking, for her husband had a sweet tooth in the gas oven".

Mr. Buddle was grinding his dentures and scribbling a comment concerning unattached participial phrases when the telephone bell sounded. With a snort, he grabbed up the instrument.

"Buddle!" he snapped.

A cold voice came over the wire.

"This is the Headmaster, Mr. Buddle. Please make it convenient to come to my study without delay.

Mr. Buddle grimaced. He had been a master at Slade for many years and valued his post, but he often found the Principal of Slade a sore trial. However, Principals, like horses, had to be given their heads.

"I will come immediately, Mr. Scarlet", said Mr. Buddle.

He rose to his feet with a sigh, and stood for a moment contemplating the large pile of exercises still awaiting the attack of his red-ink pen. Then he left his study and made his way down the length of Masters' Corridor. The Headmaster's room was the last on the corridor. Beyond it was the green baize door which led to the Headmaster's private flat.

Mr. Buddle tapped on the study door and entered.

The Headmaster of Slade was a large man. He sat behind a large desk in a large chair, with his large hands clasped across his large waistcoat. He spoke in a large voice:

"Come in, Mr. Buddle. Close the door."

Having already come in, Mr. Buddle closed the door.

Two masters were standing before Mr. Scarlet's desk. One was Mr. Fromo, the housemaster. The other was Mr. Crayford, games master and gym instructor at Slade.

Mr. Buddle looked with some surprise at each of the three masters in turn. Middle-aged Mr. Fromo was gravely dignified. There were spots of high colour in his cheeks which seemed to indicate that he was struggling with some form of suppressed emotion.

Mr. Crayford was a young man in his middle twenties. Handsome and self-possessed, he returned the hard stare with which Mr. Buddle favoured him.

Mr. Scarlet's chair creaked as he threw his weight back on it. He regarded Mr. Buddle severely.

"Mr. Buddle", he said, "a report has been made to me by Mr. Crayford concerning one of your boys. It is quite serious."

"Indeed, Headmaster?"

Mr. Buddle shot a hostile glance in the direction of the games master, and Mr. Crayford's right eyelid closed slightly for a moment.

"Mr. Fromo has, in fact, been calumniated by one of your boys", said Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Buddle drew himself up to his full height, which was not considerable. A gleam of war shone in his eyes. Mr. Buddle was always more than a little scared of the Headmaster of Slade, but any imputation against Mr. Buddle's boys was enough to lessen Mr. Buddle's nervousness. Mr. Buddle, after the manner of some parents, felt entitled to say and think what he liked about his own boys - but his resentment was high if anyone else said or thought the same thing. Mr. Buddle's boys, after all, were Mr. Buddle's boys.

"Which boy?" demanded Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet frowned his disapproval. He said sharply:

"Kindly explain to Mr. Buddle, Crayford."

Gentle mockery showed in the face of the good-looking young games master.

"The boy in question, Mr. Buddle, was Meredith of your form", he said.

"Meredith'" murmured Mr. Buddle. The gleam of war almost disappeared from his eyes.

"Meredith!" agreed Mr. Crayford. "You yourself have often described him as the most offensive youth in the school."

The gleam of war returned.

"Meredith has a hundred good qualities", said Mr. Buddle, momentarily forgetting a hundred bad qualities possessed by the said Meredith.

Crayford shrugged his shoulders.

"I happened to be passing by and I heard Meredith referring to Mr. Fromo in a disrespectful manner. His language was disgraceful. I thought it unseemly that any junior boy should speak in such a manner of the senior housemaster of this school."

"Quite right!" said Mr. Fromo forcefully. "I am obliged to you, Crayford, for bringing the matter

to the light of day."

Mr. Scarlet was regarding Mr. Buddle thoughtfully.

"It appears", said Mr. Scarlet, "that some masters have been vexed by boys who arrive late for their meals in the dining hall. After the last staff meeting, Mr. Fromo posted a notice to state that any boy who presented himself more than five minutes late for any meal would henceforth not be allowed to participate in that meal."

Mr. Buddle nodded a trifle dejectedly.

"Quite so, Headmaster! I approved of Mr. Fromo's action. Some boys at my table have been strolling in to lunch quite ten minutes after the bell has rung. In fact, I believe that I myself broached the matter at the staff meeting."

"You did!" assented Mr. Fromo.

"So some of your own boys were late for meals, Mr. Buddle?" said Crayford gently. "Meredith, perhaps?"

"Meredith, occasionally, certainly."

Crayford smiled.

"I thought it likely. Meredith resented Mr. Fromo's new ruling. It is with reluctance that I repeat the words used by the boy. He referred to Mr. Fromo as old Boko Fromo. He described Mr. Fromo as a - well, as a pompous and interfering old has-been."

Mr. Fromo was red. He stared straight ahead in outraged dignity. Nature had blessed Mr. Fromo with a large nose, concerning which he was sensitive. It irked him that his nose should receive attention in this way.

Mr. Scarlet spoke mildly.

"You will agree, Mr. Buddle, that such vulgar discourtesy must be nipped in the bud at once."

Mr. Buddle breathed hard. He clasped his hands behind his back.

"I deplore discourtesy as much as anyone, Headmaster", said Mr. Buddle. "I would add that it is not clear to me how this matter came to Mr. Fromo's personal notice."

"I told Mr. Fromo", said Crayford.

"Why, may I ask?"

"I thought that the senior housemaster should know how boys of your form were speaking of him", said Mr. Crayford.

Mr. Buddle bristled.

"You mean, Crayford, that it was too good an opportunity to lose. You wished to make mischief, and to wound Mr. Fromo at the same time.

Crayford shifted his feet uneasily.

"Nothing of the sort!" he snapped.

"In any case", said Mr. Buddle, "I presume that Meredith was not talking to you. Almost all schoolmasters acquire nicknames among their boys. We are lucky if we are dubbed with a nickname which is not too offensive. In Mr. Fromo's case --"

Mr. Scarlet lifted a hand.

"That is sophistry, Mr. Buddle. It may be impossible to prevent thoughtless boys from nicknaming their instructors. But discipline demands that action be taken if such nicknames are used in public."

"I agree with you, sir, entirely!" snorted Mr. Fromo.

Mr. Buddle nodded slowly. He glanced at Mr. Crayford. There was a sardonic grin on the games

master's lips. It infuriated Mr. Buddle.

"I do not understand, Headmaster, why you have been troubled in this matter." Mr. Buddle spoke slowly. "Mr. Crayford has used a steam-roller to crack a nut. If he had reported the matter to me, I should have dealt with it as Meredith's form-master, and Mr. Fromo's feelings would have been spared."

Mr. Fromo sniffed.

"I do not like your metaphors, Buddle", he said. "I should hesitate to describe our Headmaster as a steam-roller, and I do not consider this matter so trivial as to be termed a nut."

Crayford spoke smoothly.

"I am sorry that you regard the matter so lightly, Mr. Buddle. In calling upon the wisdom and experience of our Headmaster I felt that I was acting for the best. If he decides that the matter can be handled by the boy's form-master, no doubt he will instruct you accordingly."

Mr. Buddle set his lips grimly. Like many normally meek people he had a well-developed strain of obstinacy in his nature. Furthermore, he disliked Crayford intensely. With his obstinacy and his dislike working in unison, he would not give up easily.

"I can only say", he yapped, "that it seems undesirable to take too much note of conversation we happen to hear between the boys when they are obviously unaware of our presence. You were passing by, you say, Mr. Crayford. You heard these boys talking on the playing fields --"

"It was not on the playing fields."

"You heard them in the gymnasium, then --"

"It was not in the gymnasium."

"Then where was it?" demanded Mr. Buddle, raising his voice.

Mr. Scarlet frowned, and tapped on his desk.

"Let us not forget our sense of propriety, please, Mr. Buddle", he said severely.

Mr. Buddle was quivering with annoyance, but he controlled himself with an effort.

Crayford spoke as though soothing a refractory child.

"I happened to be passing by in the Lower Fourth Form passage. Meredith was in his study with two other boys, Pilgrim and Garmansway. My attention was arrested when I heard Meredith refer to Mr. Fromo by the use of a nickname. He went on, in derogatory terms, to criticise Mr. Fromo's new ruling concerning punctuality at meals."

"The boy - swore!" said Mr. Fromo with relish.

"Swore!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. He stared at the housemaster for a moment, and then transferred his gaze to the games master. "Am I to understand that you claim to have heard Meredith using bad language - swearing, in fact?"

Crayford thrust his hands into his trousers pockets. He raised his eyebrows loftily.

"I certainly heard him use strong expressions. I had no intention of mentioning that point to the Chief or to you."

"Why not - if it's true?" hooted Mr. Buddle.

Colour flooded Crayford's face.

"Certainly it's true! I was

averse to causing you concern at the language some of your boys use!" said Crayford bitterly.

"You were averse to causing me concern, yet you were not averse to causing Mr. Fromo pain. An odd argument!" retorted Mr. Buddle contemptuously.

Mr. Scarlet intervened.

"Slade boys do not use strong language, Mr. Crayford", he said coldly. "Should you be aware of any boy doing so, it is your duty to report the matter to me at once."

"I'm sorry, sir. I intended to remonstrate with the boy myself in private."

"Satan rebuking sin!" muttered Mr. Buddle, and Mr. Scarlet gave him a sharp look.

The Headmaster rose to his feet.

"I think", he said, "that we must send for Meredith. I presume, Crayford, that you told him you would be reporting his conduct to me."

"Certainly I did, sir." Crayford had regained his usual sang-froid. "As soon as I realised the gist of the talk in the study, I opened the door --"

"What?" The word came like a pistol shot from Mr. Buddle. "What? Do I hear aright? You opened the door?"

"Certainly I opened the door."

Mr. Buddle almost panted with emotion.

"Are we to understand that you heard Meredith's comments through a closed door? That you were standing outside the study like a common eavesdropper, listening to the random chatter of the lads within? Good heavens alive --"

Mr. Buddle stuttered into momentary silence.

Crayford's countenance was dark with anger. He took a step towards Mr. Buddle, but Mr. Scarlet's icy tones cut between them.

"That was a most improper observation, Mr. Buddle. I will have Meredith here at once. Crayford, please send Meredith to me."

"Certainly, Headmaster!" said Crayford. He glared at Mr. Buddle.

"I request that Pilgrim be brought here also", said Mr. Buddle. "He is the head boy of my form, and it is alleged that he was a partner in this profane conversation."

Mr. Scarlet nodded.

"Fetch Pilgrim and Meredith", he directed.

Mr. Crayford departed. Mr. Scarlet sat down again at his desk, and waved a hand in the air.

"Be seated, gentlemen. I think I shall not need to detain you long", he said kindly.

Mr. Fromo sat down, a picture of offended dignity. Mr. Buddle moved across the room and stood staring through the window into the darkness without.

Only a short time had elapsed when there was a tap at the door, and Crayford entered.

"Here are Meredith and Pilgrim, Headmaster", he announced.

Meredith and Pilgrim stood before Mr. Scarlet's desk. Mr. Crayford closed the study door, and stood with his back to it. At the window, Mr. Buddle turned round and gazed at his two pupils.

Both boys were wearing the mauve and white blazers of Slade. Both stood with their hands at their sides. Meredith, fair-haired

cherubic, stared in convincing surprise at his Headmaster. Pilgrim, dark, slightly taller, looked in dismay at his form-master.

"Meredith", said Mr. Scarlet sternly, "Mr. Crayford has made a report to me which has shocked me. I learn that you have traduced Mr. Fromo."

"Seduced Mr. Fromo?" Meredith's honest blue eyes opened wide with alarm. "Me, sir? Oh, sir! No, sir.' I don't know what the word means, sir, but I haven't done it.

Mr. Scarlet gave an irritable gesture. He glanced at Mr. Buddle.

"Is this boy of your form mentally defective, Mr. Buddle?" he demanded.

"The boy, sir, is a little simple, and rather innocent for his years", said Mr. Buddle, forgetting for the moment the criminal record of that golden-haired member of his form.

Mr. Scarlet coughed. The boy certainly looked simple and innocent, but Mr. Scarlet had met Meredith before.

"The word I used was traduced", said Mr. Scarlet. "You used an offensive nickname when referring to Mr. Fromo."

"Did I, sir?"

"Did you not?" thundered Mr. Scarlet.

Meredith jumped in alarm.

"Oh, sir! No, sir! Yes, sir! I called him Boko, sir. Everybody calls him Boko, sir. I think it's because of his nose, sir. But I'm always sympathetic, sir. I said 'Fancy having a cold in that!'".

Mr. Fromo rose to his feet.

"This interview is painful to me, Headmaster", he said. "With your permission I will withdraw. I am sure you will deal in exemplary fashion with this uncouth member of Mr. Buddle's form."

Mr. Scarlet nodded.

"I will see you later in the staff lounge, Mr. Fromo, and notify you of my decision in this matter. If, as seems indicated, this boy receives corporal punishment, I think you should witness it."

"Thank you, sir." Mr. Fromo gave a stiff little inclination of his head. "I am content to leave the matter in your hands."

Mr. Fromo, in high dudgeon, withdrew. After the housemaster had gone, Mr. Scarlet concentrated his gaze once more upon Meredith.

"You resented a new ruling made by Mr. Fromo concerning punctuality at meals. In consequence, using disrespectful slang expressions, you abused Mr. Fromo in the privacy of your study, speaking so loudly that you were overheard by Mr. Crayford who was passing by in the corridor."

Pilgrim spoke for the first time.

"Nobody was speaking loudly in the study, sir. We were chatting as we did our prep."

Mr. Crayford addressed the Headmaster. He spoke very respectfully.

"Headmaster, I do not suggest for one moment that either Pilgrim or Garmansway was engaging in a disgraceful conversation. It was Meredith who was shouting out abuse against Mr. Fromo."

"I wasn't shouting", said Meredith sulkily.

"We were quite taken aback, sir, when Mr. Crayford came in", put in Pilgrim.

"When I was talking I didn't

know that Mr. Crayford was outside with his ear glued to the keyhole", explained Meredith.

"Sir --", ejaculated Crayford sulphurously.

Mr. Buddle smiled. In anyone but a schoolmaster it would have been a grin. Whether a smile or a grin, it vanished as Mr. Scarlet suddenly looked up at him.

"Meredith!" Mr. Scarlet's voice was very deep. "I warn you that your punishment is likely to be very severe. Do not make things worse by impertinence to Mr. Crayford."

"Oh, sir!" moaned Meredith. He turned his innocent blue eyes towards his form-master. "Please speak for me, sir. You know me, sir."

"I know you, Meredith!" agreed Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet cleared his throat and said something under his breath. There was a moment of silence, during which Mr. Crayford fidgeted.

"Pilgrim", said Mr. Scarlet at last, "you are Mr. Buddle's head boy. Tell me, is swearing a common practice in your study?"

"Swearing?"

Both boys echoed the word at once. Both turned red.

"No, sir!" said Pilgrim.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Meredith. As usual, when under the stress of emotion, he ran his hands through his mop of golden hair. "Oh, sir, we don't swear, sir. It's bad form, sir. My father says it's a sign of an inferiority complication, sir. He only swears sometimes, sir, like when he gets a puncture, sir. Mr. Crayford only swears at us on the sports field when he's angry, sir - and I always close my ears, sir --"

"Silence, Meredith!" hooted Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Buddle smiled frostily once again.

"I protest, sir!" said Mr. Crayford in a grinding voice. "This boy is a disgusting little liar —"

Mr. Scarlet frowned, and drummed on the desk with his fingers.

"We don't swear in my study, sir", said Pilgrim. "I think Mr. Crayford means a silly bit of rhyme that Meredith was saying. It was just rubbish and Meredith didn't mean anything, but I suppose Mr. Crayford heard it --"

There was the slightest inflection of contempt in Pilgrim's voice, and Mr. Crayford gnawed his lower lip.

"A rhyme?" Mr. Scarlet lifted his hands in horror. "A rhyme? What was this rhyme? Repeat it to me immediately, Meredith."

Meredith turned a look of reproach towards Pilgrim.

"Oh, sir!" Meredith was gazing at the carpet now. "I don't like to tell you, sir."

"You mean", said Mr. Scarlet in terrifying tones, "that it was an improper rhyme - something which you dare not utter in the presence of your Headmaster?"

"You might not understand, sir", mumbled Meredith.

Mr. Buddle was looking grim now. It was Mr. Crayford's turn to smile. He said smoothly:

"The matter is clear, sir. I hope, sir, that you will not compel Meredith to utter such a crudity in your study."

Mr. Scarlet stood up. He clasped the edges of his gown over his chest, and glared down at

Meredith.

"Boy! Unpleasant boy --"

Pilgrim broke in.

"It wasn't what you think, sir. It was silly, but that's all." He jerked Meredith by the arm. "Tell the Head, you clown!"

Meredith raised his honest blue eyes. His golden hair was tumbling across his forehead. He spoke in a low voice.

"Shall I tell you, sir?"

"You may tell me, Meredith, if it will not offend the ears of any decent person", said Mr. Scarlet heavily.

Meredith threw back his head.

"I made it up, sir. I think I can remember it. I didn't mean it to offend any person's decent ears".

He recited:

"You come innee, late for dinnee,
You are likelee to get thinnee.
'Stead of puddee, jollee goodee -
Boko lickee - dammee quickee."

He added ingenuously: "It's kind of Chinese, sir."

There was silence in the study. Mr. Buddle folded his arms and turned away. After a moment Mr. Scarlet sat down. Pilgrim was staring straight ahead. Meredith had turned his sad eyes to the carpet.

Mr. Scarlet looked up at Mr. Crayford.

"That was the - the rhyme you heard, Mr. Crayford?" he queried.

"Something of the sort, sir. It was the expletive which worried me, of course. It was preceded by invective against Mr. Fromo - and the use of the objectionable nickname."

"Quite!" said Mr. Scarlet. He turned his severe gaze upon the two boys. "I am displeased with you, Pilgrim. As Mr. Buddle's head boy you should discourage thoughtless disrespect towards a member of the school staff. However, as Mr. Crayford has made a point of exonerating you and Carmansway, I will content myself with warning you. As for you, Meredith, severe corporal punishment is indicated. In a moment I shall discuss with your form-master as to whether six strokes of the cane may be sufficient."

"Oh, sir!" mumbled Meredith. "I'm delicate, sir. Isn't it awful, sir? My father would be very worried if he knew, sir. If you could content yourself by warning me, too, sir --"

"Enough!" rapped Mr. Scarlet. "You will prepare yourself, Meredith, to receive chastisement within the next half hour. I shall send for you and you will be punished in the presence of Mr. Fromo. You will both now withdraw."

The two boys withdrew. As the door closed behind them, Mr. Scarlet rose. He spoke to Crayford.

"I wish to have a few words in private with Mr. Buddle, Crayford. I need detain you no longer."

"Thank you, sir!" said Mr. Crayford. "I regret to have encroached upon your time."

As he left the study, he shot an enigmatic glance at Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet turned to the form-master.

"You will agree with me that corporal punishment must be meted to Meredith, Mr. Buddle?". His tones were unusually diffident.

Mr. Buddle gave a nervous little cough.

"I suppose so, Headmaster,

but I do not like this affair", he said. "It is rather unsavoury. If boys feel that masters are creeping around with the object of listening to conversations, the relationship between staff and boys is likely to be impaired."

Mr. Scarlet made an irritable gesture.

"There is no question of anything of the sort, Mr. Buddle. I should be strongly averse to any practice of spying on the boys, but that is vastly different from maintaining a strict vigilance. A slack staff, Mr. Buddle - a lack of good supervision - would result in a slack, even a corrupt, school. You must be well aware of that."

"I am aware of it, Headmaster." Mr. Buddle's face was troubled. "Had this conversation been heinous, I would have advocated strict measures, no matter how the information was obtained. But it was innocuous - or at least, typical of schoolboy mentality."

"A school rule was criticised, Mr. Buddle. A master's physical feature was - er - made the subject for jest."

"Generations of Slade boys have used the nickname Boko when referring to Mr. Fromo, and he must be well aware of it", said Mr. Buddle.

"Possibly."

"If we endeavour to stop boys inventing and using nicknames we shall be ploughing the sands", argued Mr. Buddle.

"Mr. Buddle", said Mr. Scarlet with an uncharacteristic show of patience. "We may agree that Crayford was a trifle tactless in handling this matter. It would have been better had he reported Meredith to you, but he saw fit to refer the occurrence to a higher authority, and so I must deal with it. Crayford is young, and he is over-conscientious, perhaps."

Mr. Buddle opened his lips to speak, but closed them again. He knew Crayford rather better than Mr. Scarlet did, but he could hardly claim as much to the Headmaster of Slade.

After a pause, Mr. Buddle said: "In considering Mr. Crayford and Meredith, Headmaster, I think we should not overlook the personal equation."

"The personal equation?" Mr. Scarlet's eyebrows were raised high. "That is a strange remark, Mr. Buddle. I do not follow you. You are not, I hope, suggesting that any member of my staff would be prejudiced by dislike of any lad?"

Mr. Buddle's lips tightened. He was, in fact, suggesting just that, but he saw the impossibility of making his point with the Headmaster of Slade.

"No, sir!" he said.

"Very good! It is your view, Mr. Buddle, that this matter should be overlooked for the reason that it was overheard by accident. I respect your opinions, Mr. Buddle, but this time I cannot subscribe to them. It is imperative, for the sake of discipline, that I support Fromo and Crayford."

"It is for you to decide, Headmaster", said Mr. Buddle stiffly.

"Undoubtedly!" Mr. Scarlet discarded his gown, and turned to the door. "I will now walk to the staff common-room and inform Fromo that Meredith is to receive chastisement. Under the circumstances, it may look better if you accompany me, Mr. Buddle."

"As you wish, sir."

The two masters walked together to the other end of Masters'

Corridor. Outside the staff lounge Mr. Scarlet paused for a moment. Faintly they could hear the sound of someone talking within.

Mr. Scarlet threw open the door and entered. Mr. Buddle followed him.

Mr. Fromo, Mr. Drayne, and Mr. Crathie were seated in armchairs near the small fire which was burning. Mr. Crayford was perched on the large table with his back to the door. Mr. Crayford was talking, and every word reached Mr. Scarlet and Mr. Buddle.

"---And Buddle called the old boy a steam-roller. Not a bad metaphor when you come to think of it. You should have seen Old Pink's face. More like a rhinoceros than ever --"

Crayford broke off. Fromo, Drayne, and Crathie had risen to their feet and were staring at the Headmaster. In surprise, Mr. Crayford slipped from the table and turned round. His jaw dropped. High colour flooded his face.

For a moment or two there was dead silence. Then Mr. Scarlet spoke. His voice seemed to come from a refrigerator.

"Mr. Fromo, I have decided not to punish Meredith. After consideration I agree with Mr. Buddle that it would be unethical to discipline a boy for a conversation accidentally overheard. It is undesirable for the boys to feel that they are being watched and every item of idle chatter noted. I suggest, Mr. Fromo, that it is unwise to be too sensitive over the comments of thoughtless boys. Mr. Buddle, may I trouble you to convey a few words of solemn warning to Meredith of your form and to tell him that, on this occasion, the matter ends here."

"I shall be happy to warn Meredith, Headmaster", purred Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet turned and strode from the room. Mr. Buddle smiled a warm little smile.

"Good-night, gentlemen!" said Mr. Buddle.

Walking with slow dignity, he followed the Headmaster.

Five minutes later Mr. Buddle looked in at Study No. 7 on the Lower Fourth Form passage. Pilgrim and Garmansway were playing draughts. Meredith was sprawling in a shabby armchair, reading.

The three boys rose as Mr. Buddle looked in.

"Meredith", said Mr. Buddle, "I am pleased to tell you that on this occasion your Headmaster has graciously overlooked your offence. You will not be punished. But --" added Mr. Buddle ominously", next time ---"

He left it at that.

Meredith's blue eyes were shining.

"Oh, sir, how kind everyone is at Slade! It's a wonderful school!"

Mr. Buddle withdrew, closing the door. In the passage, he paused for a few seconds. He heard Meredith's voice within the study:

"Trust the old Gump to see justice done!"

Shaking his head, Mr. Buddle walked slowly back at long last towards his study, to the pile of English exercises which was awaiting his return. As he walked there was the sound reminiscent of dried peas rattling in a colander.

Mr. Buddle was chuckling.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

REFORMATION AND TRANSFER

BY H. HEATH.

The Benbow/St. Winifreds series which first appeared in the Greyfriars Herald in 1919 and repeated in the Gem during 1938/39, could never even remotely be compared with Hamilton's three major school creations for either quality or quantity.

However, I place the Benbow series in the same enjoyable category as High Coombe and Oakshott, and certainly meriting recollection. The stories featuring Jack Drake, Vernon Daubeny & Co. were more numerous than those concerning High Coombe and Oakshott. Hamilton wrote sixty-one stories out of which twenty-eight covered the Benbow's voyage to the West Indies and South America. This transfer of environment inevitably involved a change in emphasis from School to Adventure stories.

Daubeny's bitter feeling towards Drake is continued in the Adventure stories, with Dick Rodney, Drake's chum, and Egan a member of Daubeny's clique, playing major supporting roles. The series is notable for the reformation of Daubeny which to me Hamilton succeeds successfully in portraying. How unlike the reformation of Ernest Levison which was as unsatisfactory as his transfer from Greyfriars to St. Jim's

I do not think that Valentine Mornington of Rookwood was ever a fully reformed character, and whether Vernon Daubeny's was in a similar vein remained a question unanswered due to the abrupt ending of the Benbow series with the transfer of both Drake and Rodney to Greyfriars. I suspect that Daubeny's reformation with Egan's bad influence in close proximity, was all too frequently to lapse.

As a lover of both Greyfriars and the Benbow (Goliath and David in stature), as in the case of Levison, I have always been surprised and saddened with the transfer of Drake and Rodney to Greyfriars. The sadness is compounded by the knowledge that the Benbow had reached the end of the sixty-one stories.

As I am not aware that it has ever been satisfactorily explained, a mystery to me is what did eventually happen to Dick Rodney. We know that Jack Drake left Greyfriars to become the Assistant of Ferrers Locke, but what of his great chum Rodney? Perhaps Hamilton thought that the character of Dick Rodney was all too similar to that of Tom Redwing, and therefore decided to drop him from the Greyfriars cast.

I like to think that Rodney returned to the cast of the Fourth Form at St. Winifreds. This step would have been entirely logical and partly have compensated that school for the previous loss of two of its three main characters.

Anyway, Dick Rodney deserved such a satisfactory and happy ending.

* *

CUTTING DOWN THE ARMY

by John Bridgwater

We often complain that reprints of our favourite stories are cut down to fit a particular format. Many "Magnet" and "Gem" stories have suffered in this way to be made to fit in the "Schoolboys' Own Library". Those who remember with affection the "Boys Magazine" (the old pink 'un) may be interested to know that one of the best science-fiction serials printed in it was probably cut more severely than any other story ever reprinted. It was literally cut down to half its original length to be made to fit in a volume of the "2d Flag Library for Boys". A quart put into a pint pot!

The serial was that fine story "The Iron Army or the War of the Robots" by John Hunter which appeared in "Boys Magazine" Nos. 314 to 324 which ran from 10 March to 19 May, 1928. It tells of an attempt to conquer the world with a robot army. The mace swinging robots were controlled by radio and their progress viewed by television. The story reads as well today now radio control and "TV" are common-place as it did 58 years ago. The robots were produced deep in the Ural mountains and the story describes how they were set in motion to march across Europe and how they destroyed great cities on the way crushing all opposition and crossing the Channel to attack London. The army was finally brought to a halt through the efforts of two young men who penetrated the army's stronghold in the Urals to release the inventor of the robots who had been held captive by the evil men who stole his invention and launched the army.

The severe compression necessary to fit the story into the small format was achieved by completely omitting the second instalment of the serial, cutting out parts of instalments 3, 4 and 5, omitting instalment 6, and most of 9, and condensing instalments 7, 8 and 11. These cuts removed much of the journey of the two young heroes from England to the Urals and the attempts of the army to stop them. A fine description of a train wreck is lost as is an exciting escape on a railway engine on to which an enemy robot has managed to climb. Also the sabotaging of the robots power house and resulting blackout is left out and finally the details of the inventors escape and the death of the secret service agent is omitted.

That, briefly, is how the editor got the quart into the pint pot. There is no doubt that the story is much poorer for this treatment but what is left is still enjoyable. One final point, the Flag Library gives the author as John Addiscombe. Is this a pseudonym of John Hunter or is Addiscombe just the editor with the scissors?

* * *

PLAGIARISM

by George Beal

In his piece Plagiarism and Swiping (Collector's Digest No. 477, September, 1986), Jack Adrian professes to clarify what is a somewhat confused conception. Yet what he says could lead us all along dangerous paths, if not into quicksand. Perhaps I err, but my understanding of what he tells us is that it is perfectly normal practice for one writer to take another's work and use those ideas in another work of his own. Of course, such things happen, but that does not legitimize the practice.

'Plagiarism' (from Latin and Greek roots, meaning 'to kidnap') is defined in the Concise Oxford dictionary as 'to take and use another person's thoughts, writings, inventions as one's own'. However, it is referred to in law as 'piracy'. This is a rare flower nowadays, although it was rife in the days before the copyright laws were codified at the Berne Convention in 1911. The previous British law dated back to 1842. Until the 1911 agreement, it was common for British works to be pirated in the United States, and not a thing could be done by a British author. Books would appear under the usual title, often with the original author's name, but no royalties or fees were paid, except in very special circumstances. This is piracy pure and simple.

Less rare are the blooms which grow among the tares. It is commonly believed that copyright is infringed only if substantial passages are copied from one book to another. But copyright protection goes farther than that. There is a provision for such things as 'colourable imitations'. Simply by altering the form of words in the original work, a new work cannot legitimately be published without danger of copyright infringement. This would be a colourable imitation, within the meaning of the Copyright Act.

The real problem lies in distinguishing what is, and what is not a colourable imitation. It matters little whether the new work is better than the old, or whether it covers more ground. The aim of the Copyright Act is to protect the original author. There have been many civil actions on precisely this point. I recollect (probably imperfectly) a case of two plays which were published in the late 1930s. One was called 'Heaven and Charing Cross', and the other was 'The Power and the Glory'. Both were very similar, and litigation took place. The case was not that one playwright had copied the other's words, but that one play was a colourable imitation of the other. I believe the action failed.

That, however, is irrelevant. The point I make is that to take someone else's work and rework it with different words does not absolve the author from action for infringement of copyright. The chances are that no action will be taken, since most authors are far too impecunious to seek justice. Useless the infringed book is a best seller, publishers too are reluctant to take action. Of course, there are old plots, tried and true, and in such cases no

one could argue that one person had stolen the ideas or work of another.

However, we do not have carte blanche to use the ideas of others, although there is an old publishing cliche which says 'there is no copyright in ideas or titles'. Follow that if you will, but try to publish a new newspaper called The Daily Telegraph, and you will be in real trouble.

●

* *

THE GREYFRIARS CLUB established in February 1977 and now at the end of its 10th YEAR OF QUARTERLY MEETINGS (in actual fact averaging out to over five meetings a year - the last two being held on 24th August and 14th November, 1986) wish to advise all members that the next meeting will be held at COURTFIELD (home of the FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM AND LIBRARY see C.D. March 1980 and C.D.A. 1982, page 72) on January 25th, 1987, at 3.00 p.m.

At this meeting the CLUB will wish to express to its PRESIDENT Howard (Bill) Baker and his staff at the GREYFRIARS PRESS our heartiest congratulations on reaching his century 100 not our of his BEAUTIFULLY BOUND 'BOND' VOLUMES of the pick of our beloved FRANK RICHARDS GREYFRIARS SCHOOL STORIES that appeared in the MAGNET 'Storypaper' (thank you Eric for that name). Also to be included are theluxury bound volumes of the associated story papers and books such as the superb CONNOISSEUR EDITIONS.

As always membership of the GREYFRIARS CLUB has always been completely free and once again your COURTFIELD hosts take this opportunity to extend the HEARTIEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS to all hobby connoisseurs of goodwill and integrity, and such members are warmly invited to attend our next meeting subject to the usual telephoned (0895 631025) confirmation of acceptance to your elected chairman R.F. (Bob) Acraman SECRETARY AND TREASURER of the GREYFRIARS CLUB, AND CURATOR OF THE FRANK RICHARDS MUSEUM.

= =

ANSWERS TO "GUESS THESE ROOKWOOD CHARACTERS"

1. LACY, Walter (Modern Fourth)
2. RAWSON, Tom (Classical Fourth)
3. HOOKER, Ernest (Classical Fourth)
4. PEELE, Cyril (Classical Fourth)
5. LEGGETT, Albert (Modern Fourth)
6. DOYLE, Tommy (Modern Fourth)
7. TOPHAM, Harold (Classical Fourth)
8. Sergt. Ben Kettle, Proprietor of Tuck-shop.
9. HANSON, Edward (Classical 5th Form Captain)

* * * * * * * * * * * *

EIGHTY YEARS OF PLUCK

(An Editorial Item of a Dozen Years ago)

Eighty years ago, early in November 1904, the Amalgamated Press introduced its juvenile clientele to a new publication named "Pluck". It ran for 595 issues, and then became a victim of the paper shortage in March 1916. Some four years after the end of the war "Pluck" returned to the bookstalls, but this time it did not seem to capture the fancy of the youth of the nation, for it disappeared after exactly two years.

The wonder of Pluck today is that of so many good Edwardian things - its solid feeling. For years it consisted of no less than 36 pages, including the covers, and the price remained at one penny (the real solid penny) until the war came along to spoil everything.

For the most part there were two long complete stories, plus an instalment of a serial. Charles Hamilton was a regular writer, contributing complete school stories, and any amount of the surnames, later to become very famous for other characters, were given their initial airing. Hamilton's serial "The Rivals of St. Kit's" appeared in Pluck in 1906, and Pluck, of course, was the birthplace of St. Jim's, which is the main reason the paper is recalled so affectionately now.

The bill comprised school stories, detective stories, adventure stories. H. Clarke Hook wrote a long series of tales about Specs & Co. of Lyncroft, tales forgotten today. A Harry Belbin wrote a series about the Captain, the Cook, and the Engineer. Jack North contributed his stories about Wycliffe School, which seem to have been popular at one time. Detective stories, anonymously written, starred Frank Ferrett, detective. Hamilton mentioned him in some early Gem Tales. Detective Inspector Spearing was another 'tec star, and Mark Darran wrote of John Smith, Detective.

The main artists during the Edwardian period were Arthur Clarke, Leonard Shields (who illustrated the St. Jim's stories), and R. Macdonald.

There are a goodly number of Plucks still around, but the copies with the St. Jim's dozen are very rare indeed. Some years ago "The Swell of St. Jim's", the story which introduced Gussy to an admiring juvenile world, filled our "classic serial" slot for a time. It had never previously been republished. Another was "Staunch Chums of St. Jim's", which, in the same way, had never been re-issued. One day, maybe, we will present another of them.

So, Pluck came on the scene, near the turn of the century, eighty years ago, to brighten each week for a distant generation.

Perhaps, in our little circle, there may still be just one or two to whom those early displays of genuine Pluck are a golden memory. If so, they are very, very old memories.

* *

THE Rivals OF St. Winifreds

A FINE SCHOOL TALE.

By

CHARLES HAMILTON.

A Hamilton school story of early in the century when it was run as a serial in the Marvel. The illustrator is the young R.J. Macdonald. Macdonald will always be associated with St. Jim's which was created a year or two later. Mac started his St. Jim's work in 1909, and, apart from a year or two during the war when he was in the Navy, the Gem work being taken over then by Warwick Reynolds, there were but very few St. Jim's stories that Mac did not illustrate.

* *

Christmas Wishes to Eric our Skipper, to W. Howard Baker, Norman Shaw, Darrell Swift, Keith Smith, and all friends in our hobby. Contentment and Peace through the New Year and a thought for Dear Madam.

PHIL HARRIS

MONTREAL

Wanted to complete set - Collectors' Digest Numbers 3, 6, 18, 28, 57, 124, 166, 168, 170.

ALAN CAPON

BOX 2122, PICTON, ONTARIO, KOK 2TO, CANADA

A charming example of the work of the famous artist J. Abney Cummings. He was almost the sole illustrator of the Jack, Sam, and Pete stories of S. Clarke Hook. From very early in the century till his death in 1919. There was great power in his art-work. Our picture is, of course, of Rory, Pete's dog, and it featured on the cover of the Marvel in the summer of 1907.

CHARACTERS in the SEXTON BLAKE 3d LIBRARY

By Ronald Rouse

The Golden Years of the Sexton Blake Library are surely those between 1915 and 1941, and it is very unlikely that we Blake fans will ever have the good fortune to read anything like them again. All those fine characters whose exploits we once revelled in are now, alas, no longer to be found. How eagerly and with what intense interest we used to read of their escapades, either in league with Blake and Tinker or as their most bitter adversaries.

Many of these characters had disappeared by the early 1930's, and quite a few character stories published from then onward to the end of the second series were merely reprints.

Quite a number of these character stories appeared at regular intervals throughout the entire length of the first series and for some years in the second series, including in the latter such as the Hon. Reggie Purvale, created by John G. Brandon, Captain Dack and his first-mate Sam Tench by John Hunter, and the well known Raffles by Barry Perowne.

Leaving this period and returning to the very beginning, let us take a look at the character-featured stories in the 3d issues of the Sexton Blake Library.

The first, featuring Mddle. Yvonne Cartier, was that much sought and very scarce S.B.L. No. 1, "The Yellow Tiger". Ably assisted by Blake and Graves, Yvonne brings to naught the evil machinations of that unscrupulous pair, Wu Ling and Baron Beauremon.

In the very next issue we have Professor Kew and his lieutenant, Count Ivor Carlac, in an exciting story entitled "Illgotten Gains" (or "The Secret of Salcoth Island"). In this story we find Kew and Carlac escaping from Laidstone prison, where they had been confined through the efforts of Blake.

In No. 3 "The Shadow of His Crime" (or "Hounded Down"), we meet that Prince of Spies, Ezra Q. Maitland and his partner in crime and lawful wife, Broadway Kate.

The next issue, "The Rajah's Revenge", finds Kew and Carlac well to the fore in a fine story of London and India.

As the title "Midst Balkan Perils" (or "Sexton Blake in Serbia") suggests, Blake faces many hazards in No. 5, in which Laban Creed makes his debut in the S.B. Library. This story tells of the efforts of Blake to rescue creed's daughter from her evil father's influence. By the time we reach the end of the story, however, we find that his attempts are all in vain.

Incidentally, it may be of interest to Nelson Lee fans to know that in this issue there is also a short Nelson Lee story entitled "The Case of the Shrivelled Fingers".

We now pass on to No. 7 for the next character story, "The Case of Convict 308" (or "The Men who Changed Places"). This deals with a criminal with the uncommon name of Josiah Peak, otherwise Captain Horatio Peak. After a keen tussle of wits, Blake manages to obtain for Peak a small but richly deserved prison sentence.

Following right on the heels of this number, we again marvel at the schemes of that rascally pair, Professor Kew and Count Carlac, and are thrilled by Blake's endeavours to bring them to justice. The story is told in No. 8, under the intriguing title of "Victims of Villainy", the setting being in London and Persia.

S.B.L. No. 9, "The Merchant's Secret" simply oozes with First World War atmosphere. In this story Blake is nearly crushed to death under a huge press, and I am sure he has never been in greater peril than in this rousing battle against that Arch-spy for Germany, Ezra Q. Maitland, assisted by Broadway Kate.

On to No. 11 for our next feast of thrills. This is a brilliant story of Dr. Huxton Rymer and Baron Beauremon, under the title of "The Two Mysteries" (or "The Last of his Race"). This tale features Rymer in a more favourable light than usual - that of helping to save the lives of some of our wounded French allies.

We now pass on to No. 17, to meet that Prince of Adventurers, Basil Wicketshaw, in a thrilling tale entitled "Their Great Adventure" (or "The Mystery of Moorlands Hall"), the setting of which is in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Yet once again, in No. 19, Blake is in the direst peril, in fresh adventures against those inveterate rogues Kew and Carlac. "His Excellency's Secret" (or "The Case of the Black Valley Mine") is set in the South American Republic of Gualador, and the sub-title gives a lucid reason for the depredations of that disreputable pair of crooks.

That famous, or more correctly infamous character, George Marsden Plummer takes his first bow, as far as the S.B.L. is concerned, in No. 24, "The Man with the Green Eyes".

Blake's old adversaries Kew and Carlac turn up again in the very next issue, an exciting yarn entitled "The Secret of Draker's Folly" (or "The Miser's Hoard").

In No. 26 we again meet Basil Wicketshaw in "The Embassy Detective", a story which also features Fenlock Fawn, detective.

Blake has a welcome change of adversary in the next number, for he pits his wits once more against Horatio Peak in "A Case of Blackmail".

S.B.L. No. 28, "Sexton Blake, Special Constable" (or "His Brother's Crime") introduces Aubrey Dexter, another fine character.

In No. 29, "The Catspaw", Blake has his hands full again with Kew and Carlac, but in this story he has the useful assistance of the Hon. John Lawless.

Now we must jump to No. 35 for the next character story, "The Half-Caste", in which the Hon. J. Lawless is featured. Incidentally, we have come to the period of the great paper shortage, the pages now being reduced to 72. (The last of the 120 page issues was No. 30; then followed 96 pages in numbers 31 and 32, and down to 72 pages as from No. 33).

The next character story, "The Diamond Sunburst", is S.B.L. No. 37,

features Yvonne, and to my mind is one of the late G.H. Teed's best yarns. It is to be regretted that there were not more of this author's works in the Library at this early date.

In the next issue, "Vengeance", the Hon. J. Lawless is the character.

No. 39 features Broadway Kate in yet another grand yarn. "A Legacy of Shame".

There is no well known character in the next issue, but in No. 41 we have the first story in the S.B. Library (and the Union Jack Library) featuring Mr. Reece. Entitled "The Mysterious Mr. Reece", it is a most enthralling yarn which also introduces Dirk Dolland (The Bat) and his lady partner Mddle. Miquet (The Butterfly).

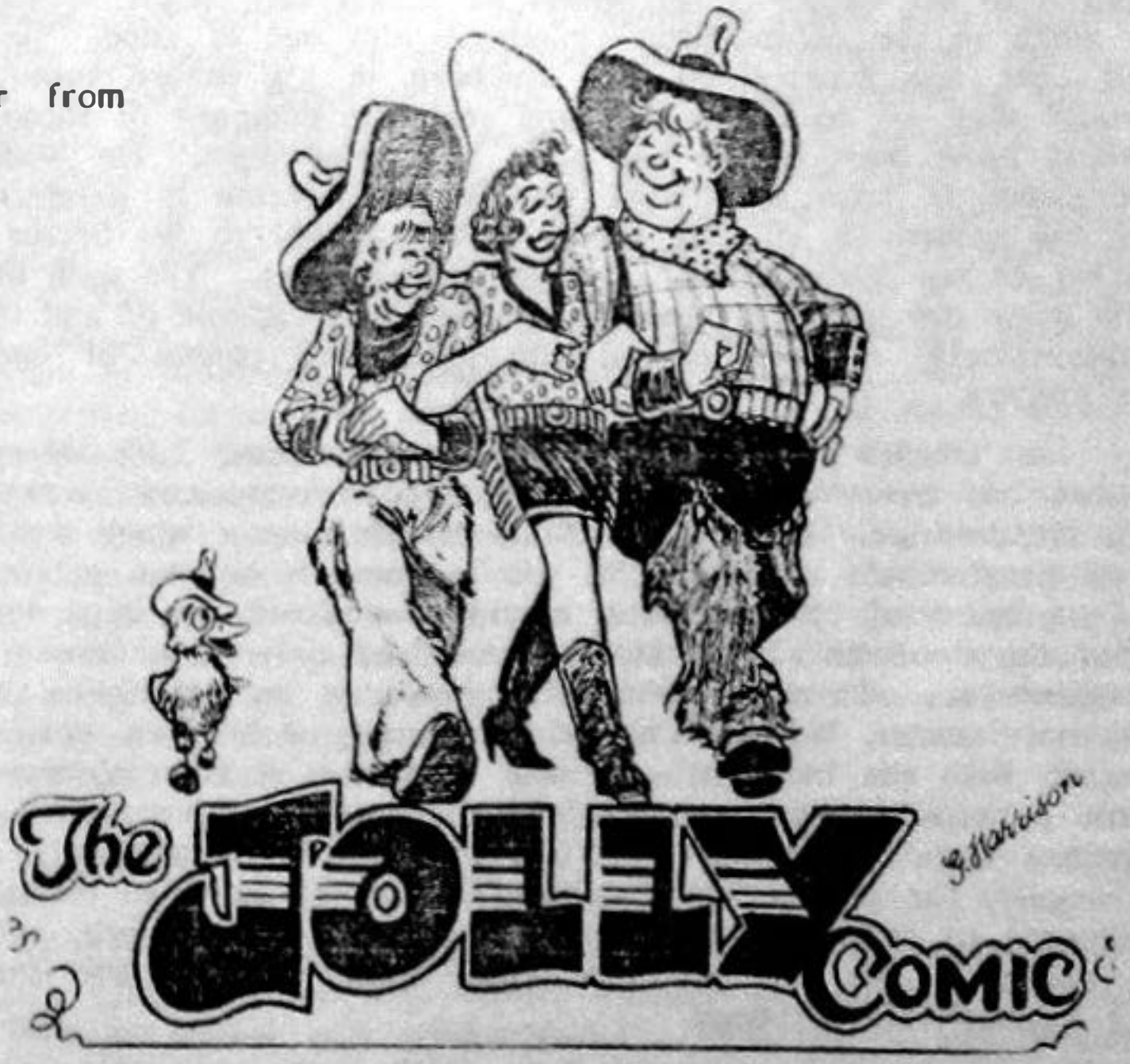
We now move on to No. 43 for the next character story, "The Case of the International Adventurer" (or "An Innocent Accomplice"). This grand yarn features Aubrey Dexter, Broadway Kate and a new character, Gloria Gale.

In the next issue, "Where the Trail Ended" (or "The Shadow on Grey Tower"), Fenlock Fawn gives Blake a helping hand.

No. 45, "The Barrier Reef Mystery", is another fine story of the Hon. J. Lawless, and is also the last well-known character story in the 3d Library which ran to only 46 issues before the 4d Library commenced.

* *

Memorie Teaser from
New Zealander,
Geoff Harrison.



RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW

By Edward Baldock

> Figgins had said that Cardew must have been out of his senses: and it had amounted to that, for that wild savage moment. He had been making his last effort to make good, and Figgins had intervened and put paid to it, and then - for that one moment he had been utterly out of control. The next, he would have given worlds to recall the action - but the next, it was too late.
>
> Extract from 'Cardew's Catch'

Facilis est descensus Averni - but the way to the Stars is less so.

Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth Form and School House at St. Jim's; was he or was he not - in the time-honoured sense of propriety - a cad? Certain aspects of his character would seem to confirm quite literally that he was certainly not a gentleman in the accepted sense of the term. Certain quirks in his nature - for which he presumably ought to have been responsible - when in the ascendency - condemn him out of hand. At these times, when all that was supercilious and stubborn in his nature rose to the surface, he would shun all decent fellows and seek the company of those of whom St. Jim's would have been better had they been elsewhere. He would appear on these occasions to take an almost fiendish satisfaction in exhibiting the darker side of his nature to all and sundry. Any appeal to his better side being met as likely as not with cutting sarcasm and rudeness. Yet soon after, possibly during the same day as his digressions, we find him capable of and indulging in, conduct diametrically opposed to all the recognised canons of caddishness. Here is an enigma.

In 'Cardew's Catch' we find him persuading Tom Merry to return a note, which has been lost, to a Mr. Wottle, a temporary secretary to Dr. Holmes the Headmaster. The note contains certain matter which would swiftly terminate that gentleman's career at St. Jim's should it become public knowledge. Cardew is cognizant of the contents, having committed the unpardonable sin of having read the contents. Tom Merry would certainly never dream of reading correspondence not addressed to himself. However, he undertakes the task of returning the note to Mr. Wottle. Cardew, for reasons of his own, desires to remain unconnected with the incident - for the moment. A keen observer of human nature, with perhaps a leaning towards detecting the flaws in other fellows' armour, Cardew knew his man; Tom Merry would be a perfectly reliable confidante. Strangely, for all his shortcomings, Cardew is quick to recognise the 'true blue' elements in other fellows, those of Tom Merry's calibre, and does not hesitate to use them for his own base ends, while at the same time respecting them - a strange fellow indeed.

It would be interesting and surely very revealing to hear the opinions

of Mr. Bill Lodgey, the frowzy bookmaker cum hanger-on who frequents the 'Green Man' public house in Rylecombe. Inarticulate and evasive they would be as becomes the nature of the man. We would certainly learn much concerning the more shadowy side of Cardew's nature. Yet he is not without certain fine characteristics, and could they be channelled into more worthy pursuits, could lift this strange fellow on to a far more elevated plane than that which he seems destined to occupy. In his relationship with Lodgey it is an intriguing question of who manipulates whom? The seedy atmosphere and general dinginess of tbe 'Green Man' seems to exercise a peculiar fascination, a magnetic pull upon the weaker facets in Cardew's character. He tends unhappily to succumb too easily, and the unforgiving moment having past, thus another step is taken - perhaps against his better nature and subconscious will - upon the downward path. Working upon the premise of treating all men as you would have them treat you, I would be inclined to accept Cardew - warts and all - as an ordinary decent fellow traveller, with perhaps the proviso that should one have to adjust one's opinion for any reason, to allow him to advance on a reasonably broad front and determine to see the worthwhile aspects in him and try to be tolerant with his less happy slidings.

There exists in study No. 9 an uneasy alliance between Levison and Clive with their less than stable companion Cardew. They rub along, as it were, with the occasional outburst of plain speaking on either side. Perhaps Levison and Clive do not fully understand their wayward friend, perhaps they do not possess the necessary depth of perception to appreciate his odd quirks of character; although Levison in particular is far from being unobservant.

On one of his good days, to see Ralph Reckness Cardew clad in the school colours, playing alongside Tom Merry and Co. in a strenuous tussle with Figgins and Co. Here one sees the obverse, the better side of this enigmatical figure. All lesser things are cast aside - Bill Lodgey and the 'Green Man' cease to exist for the moment. Wapshot Racecourse might never have been in existence and betting slips a mere figment of the imagination. Soccer fills the whole horizon. New House must be beaten at all costs; this takes precedence over everything else for the time being. Cardew is an excellent player on his day, when he is able to rise above all the mediocre and narrow vices to which he is so prone to succumb, possibly through boredom, or to afford his odd sense of humour the sardonic satisfaction of rendering his friends anxious for him. But at the moment - glorious moments these - he is covered with mud and racing along the wing with the ball at his feet. 'Fatty' Wynn, in the New House goal is crouching with a fixed expression on his face watching Cardew like a hawk. Yet there goes the ball driven powerfully from far out on the wing, a perfect punt curving gracefully towards the corner of the net. Wynn's clutching hands scrape it in its swift flight - that is all - then it is rasping along the back of the net, a perfect goal. Here is Cardew at his best. Could he be pinned thus at the peak of his perfection at moments like these with the prolonged cheering of his school-fellows ringing in his ears urging him forward; when all baser thoughts and habits are dismissed from his mind in the one great objective, the determination of scoring the deciding goal for his house, then history might have presented us with a very different fellow. Fate, however, has ordained otherwise.

With a fellow of Cardew's calibre there must always be an uncertainty, glorious or otherwise. The question will always intrude itself: 'Will he rise to the occasion?' 'Will his better self predominate?' 'Will he, at the crucial moment revert to something less than that required of him?' One may fully

understand the heart-searchings of, for instance, Tom Merry in his attempts to compile the house soccer eleven for an important fixture. Should he or should he not take the unpredictable chance of Cardew being 'on form'. The slip of paper, the stub of pencil, and the currugated brow so much in evidence at these junctures, are not difficult to understand. It would seem that there must always be a question-mark poised above the head of Ralph Reckness Cardew and this in no way distracts from the fascination of his paradoxical character. But long may forbearance reign - humanum est errare - who is perfect in this far from Elysian universe? Would Cardew be half as interesting minus his faults and shortcomings?

It is an interesting exercise to conjecture and try to visualise the attitudes of researchers into the St. Jim's and Greyfriars' legends in, say a hundred years from now. Will they, with their presumably broader outlook (broader by a century anyway), consider us somewhat naive. As we today look back upon Thomas Hughes, F.W. Farrar and Talbot Baines Reed, so will they look back upon us and the gods we revered and, hopefully say: 'They were not a bad set of fellows even though they were terribly narrow and old-fashioned in their ideas'. As for Ralph Reckness Cardew - what will they make of him?

* *

AT THE END

(John Geal sent us along this lovely piece of verse. He found it at the end of a 1917 volume of the B.O.P John thought it might be nice, to wind up this year's Annual. So do we.)

So let the way wind up the hill or down,
Through rough or smooth, the journey will be joy;
Still seeking what I sought when but a boy,
New friendships, high adventure, and a crown,
I shall grow old, but never lose life's zest,
Because the road's last turn will be the best.

(Dr. Henry van Dyke)