

Story Paper Collectors

VOL. 41 No. 483

MARCH 1987

Digest



*The
"Punny"*

52P

Bob Whiter '87

Recent purchases include 480 bound volumes of the Magnet, Gem, Modern Boy, Union Jack, Thriller, Dreadnought, and others. Some curiously bound with numbers missing or minus covers. Going cheap!

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STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

A VERY BIG 'THANK YOU'

So many wonderful letters of support have come to me that I am almost overwhelmed. Eric Fayne has often said that the C.D.'s readers are the most loyal and enthusiastic in the world, and I now feel sure that this is so. Please forgive me for not attempting to answer all your letters personally, much as I would like to, and

rest assured that all your comments and suggestions are considered, even if not acknowledged individually. Thank you too for the big batch of articles that I have received, and all the promises of more.

THE WAKEFIELDS - FATHER AND SON

Several readers have said how pleased they were to see the page of Rookwood illustrations in our last issue. These, of course, were the work of George Wakefield, whose visualizations of this school in the Boys' Friend always had their own special sparkle. Many of us also grew up relishing his pictures in Film Fun and other comics, particularly his long-running front-and-back-cover Laurel and Hardy strips. His son Terry Wakefield carried on the series for a period after the Second World War with equal flair and exuberance, and for most of us the drawings of father and son are so alike that we cannot tell them apart.

Terry has very kindly designed and drawn for the C.D. the heading to our page of book reviews, and I know that readers will be delighted to see this happily nostalgic picture of two long-lasting favourite characters. It is lovely, too, that a link with the Rookwood illustrator is made in this way in our C.D.

BOOKS FOR BORROWING AND FOR BROWSING

Some of our new readers (and possibly some 'old' ones too) may not be aware that it is possible to borrow copies of story-papers from the Clubs. The range of the London O.B.B.C. libraries is indicated in the announcement on page 31, and I understand that these facilities exist not only for readers in London but elsewhere.

A letter from Myra Stewart of Burnham-on-Crouch illustrates yet again the adage about the good that can come from an ill wind - or rather, in this instance, a fall of snow. She and her husband Alan, and their travelling companion Les Rowley, were forced to abandon their planned visit to an O.B.B.C. meeting in January because Burnham-on-Crouch was then covered in six inches of snow, while dire warnings about the hazards of icy roads came from the radio. Myra writes that although she was sad to miss the exchange of news and sharing of laughter of a visit to the club, 'this particular snow cloud promised the proverbial silver lining' in the shape of a free day - for reading! So the day 'turned up trumps', after all. She ends her letter with a quotation which, I am sure, is known to many of us. But neither she nor I can find its source, though Myra thinks the author is John Wilson. Can anyone provide chapter and verse, I wonder?

"Oh for a book and a shady nook, either indoor or out;
 With the green leaves whispering overhead, or the street cries
 all about.
 Where I may read all at my ease, both of the new and old;
 For a jolly good book whereon to look, is better to me than
 gold."

MARY CADOGAN

OBITUARY:

We are very sad to have to report the passing of Mr. Joe Wark of Kilmarnock, who was a supporter of our hobby and the C.D. for many years. Although blind for some years before his death, Joe corresponded with other collectors and enthusiasts by tape-recordings, and many of us will miss his cheery and interesting taped letters. He was also a great football enthusiast. His widow, Mrs. May Wark, informs us that Joe passed away in October after six months in hospital, during which time he displayed his customary fortitude and courage.

JUST - WILLIAM AND CO.

By Darrell Swift



1983 saw the very first gathering of fans of Richmal Crompton's ever popular 'William', in Leeds. The original group of 16 rapidly grew; in 1984 we went to Nottingham, and Hemel Hempstead was the venue in 1985, and Stafford in 1986. April 25th, 1987 will see the 5th gathering of William fans, this time near Banbury, Oxfordshire, and it is already lining up to be the most successful one yet. Speaker to be with us include Richmal Ashbee (the niece of Richmal Crompton), Mary Cadogan, the script-writers for a T.V. series of William grown-up (to be played by the original T.V. William, Dennis Waterman), and representatives from Macmillan, the publishers. There will be a further intriguing thesis from one keen member doing extensive research into the location of William's village! There are just a few places left for this meeting. If you are interested to receive details of it, and a report of the last gathering, please contact me at 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds, LS16 6BU.

Danny's Diary



March 1937

Australia has won the Ashes, in spite of the good start that England made by winning the first two games of the series. This early success did not last. Australia won the next two games, and now they have won the final Test, played at Melbourne, by an innings.

A good month in the monthlies. The Greyfriars tale is "The Swot of the Remove", which is the sequel to "Harry Wharton's Rival" which appeared last month in the Schoolboys' Own Library. Wharton has taken offence because he thinks that his uncle has written about him to someone, calling him a "burden". Wharton decides to sit for the Founder's Scholarship so that he can pay his own fees at Greyfriars. He sells his bike, so that he need not ask his uncle for pocket-money.

Vernon-Smith, now Junior Captain, buys it for much more than it is worth, to help Wharton, but Harry is furious. Harry decides not to go to Wharton Lodge for the Easter holidays. Bunter takes a hand, and finally the misunderstanding is cleared up and the clouds roll by.

Stories about misunderstandings can be a bit irritating, but this one is pretty good. The end of the story is set in the Easter holidays at Wharton Lodge. The Bounder has a party in a bungalow in the same district, and one of the Bounder's guests is a bank robber named Paget. Finally, the Bounder arranges for his Highcliffe cronies to beat up Wharton - but it is Redwing who gets beaten up by mistake.

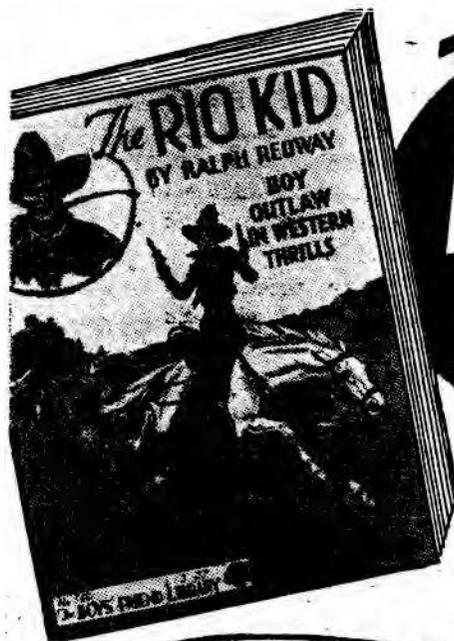
In the end, the Bounder is so remorseful that he gives up the captaincy. I don't think the story ended in this way in the Magnet

a few years ago. But I enjoyed it all.

The St. Jim's S.O.L. is "For Honour's Sake". When Tom Merry & Co. first met Len Lee he was a homeless waif. When he turns up as a new boy at St. Jim's he has become Len Pomfret, the grandson of a very wealthy man. Very dramatic and mysterious. Good tale.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. this month is "The Boy Who Bought a School". It carries on with the theme of the Hon. Douglas Singleton, the spendthrift of St. Frank's. When the Head tries to curb his spending, Singleton buys a school so that he could run it as he wanted to. A bit far-fetched, but good fun.

In the Boys' Friend 4d Library there is "The Rio Kid" by Ralph Redway. It is a lovely tale with some of the early adventures of this great cowboy character.



The RIO KID

For no fault of his own, this cheery youngster, expert shot and horseman, finds himself on the run. Up against an unscrupulous enemy, who has the sheriff in his pocket, the Rio Kid fights alone and single-handed. This yarn of the Wild West is a winner all the way through.

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY No. 566 of

Also in the B.F.L. there is a lovely Captain Justice story entitled "Captain Justice on Secret Service". A foreign power is all set to over-run Justice Island and to capture the gallant Captain and his loyal little band.

In the Sexton Blake Library I had "The Case of the Man who Never Slept" by Gwyn Evans. Doug bought me this one. It is about a young millionaire who is given only six months to live, and he means to make the most of every minute of the time left to him. Disaster comes to him, and it brings Blake into the novel. Good stuff!

After 13 defeats on the trot for 13 years running, Oxford has won the Boat Race, beating Cambridge by 3 lengths.

In Modern Boy there is a story in pictures - a serial - entitled "Mystery of the Bar Z Ranch". It is the story of the Paramount film which stars Jack Oakie and Fred MacMurray. But it leaves me cold. I hate stories told in pictures.

The Captain Justice series continued for the first two weeks of the month. The opening story was "Yellow Sea Raiders". Aboard the Flying Cloud, Captain Justice & Co. are bombed from the air by their merciless enemies. Then came the final story of this particular Justice series - "Ghost from the Sea". Captain Justice, a prisoner on his crippled airship, is saved by a "Ghost". Wow! And that was the end of the series, but the editor announced that Murray Roberts is busy on a new series, so Captain Justice will be back.

The programme in Modern Boy, at the moment, apart from the awful serial in pictures, is a series about the two adventurers, Christopher and Columbus; a series about Jaggars, the detective-pilot of the R.A.F.; a spy series entitled "King Alaric's Sword"; and a farcical series of stories under the title "Told in the Tuckshop".

Just at the moment, I don't find Modern Boy worth buying, but I reckon it must improve.

The trial has taken place this month at Warwick Assizes of Frederick Nodder, accused of abducting a little girl named Mona Tinsley, who disappeared on her way home from school in January. A number of people, including a bus conductor, came forward to say they had seen the child with Nodder, but he declared he had put her on a bus to go to see her aunt. The judge sentenced Nodder to seven years long imprisonment, and he told Nodder that "Time may reveal the dreadful secret you carry in your breast and you may come before me again".

As usual, some good films in the local picture palaces. At the Gem we saw "To Mary With Love", a light comedy starring

Warner Baxter and Myrna Loy. At the Super we saw Cary Grant in "The Amazing Quest of Ernest Bliss", about a millionaire who bet he could live without his wealth for a year. This is Cary Grant's first British film since he became a big star. At the Plaza we saw Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in "Swing Time"; the songs and dancing were good though the story is a bit thin. At the Majestic we saw Cary Grant and Jean Harlow in "Suzy", an American film for Grant, in which an air ace of the Great War marries a showgirl and then they find out her husband is still alive.

Robert Montgomery was good fun in "Piccadilly Jim", Robert Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck were good in "His Brother's Wife", though the film was a bit stodgy. "The Great Ziegfeld" starring William Powell and Myrna Loy lasted for 3 hours, and it was much, much too long, though it was spectacular in places. The best full-length picture of Laurel and Hardy was "Our Relations", and I enjoyed every minute of it.

Fairly exciting was Randolph Scott in "The Last of the Mohicans", and I quite enjoyed Joan Crawford and Robert Taylor in "The Gorgeous Hussy". All told, not a bad month at the cinemas, but I've seen better.

The marvellous Magnet has been almost magnificent this month, as nearly always. The month started off with a couple of single stories which made a pleasant change from the long series. Opening story is "Coker, the Kidnapper". Wingate refuses to play Coker in the St. Jim's match, and is kidnapped by Coker as a result. A typical Coker romp. Next week came a story with the startling title of "The Man with the Glaring Eyes". Wanted by the police and with thousands of pounds in stolen banknotes in his coat, a distant relative of Mr. Quelch, a man named Philip Darke (he is a hypnotist) calls on the Remove master, seeking a hiding place at Greyfriars. The title about the glaring eyes strikes a topical note. In real life a man with glaring eyes figured in the papers.

Then came a new series, starting off with "The Ananias of the Remove" who is, of course, Bunter. There is a rib-tickling sequence when Bunter tries to get a buckshee holiday on the grounds that his uncle is ill and asking for him. Finally came "Ponsonby pulls the Strings". Bunter played a trick with a gold chain belonging to Mr. Quelch, and Frank Courtenay, visiting Greyfriars, is accused of theft, owing to the treachery of Ponsonby who has got hold of that gold chain. I am much enjoying this latest series.

There has been a train smash at Langley in Buckinghamshire.

The engine and 3 coaches came off the lines after a collision with a goods train. 7 people were injured.

One evening Mum and I went to the first house at the Hackney Empire and saw the magical revue "Sim Sala Bim" starring the magician, Dante. It was very good.

Last but not least I come to the gorgeous Gem. Three of this month's stories have featured Talbot, who, in one of last month's stories, was granted the King's Pardon for saving a troop train when a Spanish spy tried to wreck it. The first tale this month is "The Toff's Chance". Talbot comes back to St. Jim's as the New House boot-boy, but he falls foul of snobbish Mr. Ratcliff. However, at the end of the story, the school governors award Talbot the Founder's Scholarship, which means 3 years free tuition at St. Jim's plus a grant of money.

Next came "The Shadow of the Past". Talbot falls under suspicion when a thief steals the funds of the Fifth Form Football Club. However, Levison, to whom Talbot did a good turn, exposes Tresham of the Fifth, a pal of Cutts, as the thief. So Tresham is expelled. So Cutts has lost two members of his little clique, for another one, Prye, was expelled not long ago.

Next week brought "The Secret of the Cipher". Tom Merry & Co. are puzzled one morning when they find chalked numbers on the School House door. What do they mean? Only Talbot knows the answer. The Toff had not forgotten the secret code of the gang of Cracksmen of whom he used to be one. The man who is trying to contact Talbot is named Hookey Walker.

Finally came "Standing By Their Skipper". Cutts has gone on the tiles at night wearing a paint-splashed coat belonging to Kildare - and the juniors believe that their skipper is on the road to ruin - but they stand by him.

At the back of the Gem the early story about the Faddist Form-Master has ended. A new one entitled "The Mystery Raider" has started. There is a mystery at Greyfriars when someone unknown makes a midnight raid on the school pantry and scoffs a large pie.

ERIC FAYNE COMMENTS ON THIS MONTH'S "DANNY'S DIARY"

S.O.L. No. 292 "The Swot of the Remove" comprised the last 3 stories of the Wharton series of the Magnet of early 1932. This one is not a good example of the S.O.L. Though it probably reads well enough for anyone not acquainted with the original, the third Magnet tale here is very drastically pruned, only retaining a few chapters of the original. It tended to be a slightly episodic

series all through, and heavy pruning does not help it here.

S.O.L. No. 293 "For Honours' Sake" comprises the 4 story Len Lee series of the Gem of February-March 1924. By contrast, these 4 Gems slot beautifully into the medium, and make a perfect S.O.L.

In a way it was rather curious that the story entitled "The Rio Kid" should have appeared in the Boys' Friend Library of 1937. It comprised, of course, a good number of early Rio Kid stories - the ones which introduced the series to readers of the Popular at the start of the year 1928. But the same novel, under the same title had appeared before in the B.F.L. in 1930.

It has always seemed odd to me - and a pity - that the Rio Kid tales have never been republished for adults today. "Westerns" have always been popular, are rarely if ever "sexy", and, in my opinion, no better western tales have ever been written by anyone.

The 1937 Gem story "The Toff's Chance" had been "Working His Way" in late 1914. "The Shadow of the Past" had been "Saving Talbot" of the same period in 1914, and "The Secret of the Cipher" had been "Captured by Cipher" a fortnight later in 1914.

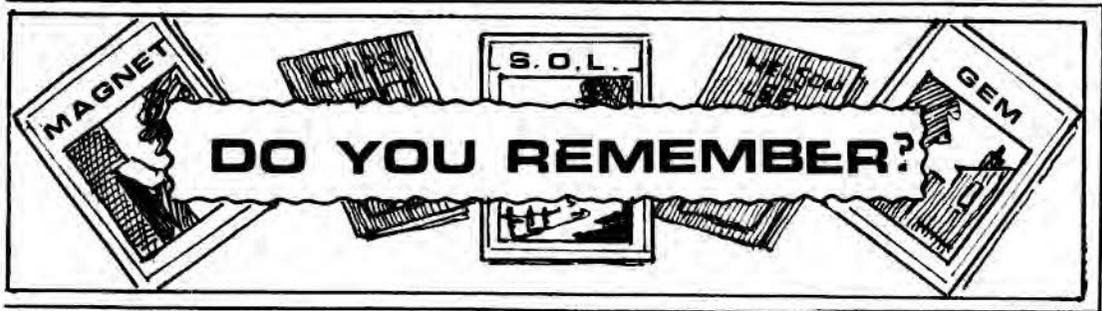
"Standing by Their Skipper" which had appeared ahead of "Captured by Cipher" in 1914, appeared one issue later in 1937. In 1914 it was entitled "Keeping it Dark."

The Editor's Chat page to this latest Gem in 1937 contained a letter from a reader, T. Hopkinson, who wrote in to praise the Gem. 50 years ago Tom Hopkinson was a loyal reader of the Gem. In 1987 he is - and has been for very many years - a loyal and enthusiastic reader of C.D. Mr. Hopkinson lived in Cheshire in 1937. He still does all these years on.

The film "To Mary With Love" starring Warner Baxter and Myrna Loy, which Danny saw 50 years ago, was made again, starring Mary Cadogan and Eric Fayne, in early 1987. This was a S.P.C.D. Production with an all-star supporting cast of hundreds!

SALE: H. BAKER volumes No. 3, 6, 9, 1, £6.00 each. Billy Bunter Own Annuals 1950's £4.00. Modern Boys' Annuals 1935 and 1936 £5 each. Tom Merry's Own Annual £3.00. Mickey Mouse (1949) Annual, Felix the Cat Annual both £6 each. Reprint Magnet No. 1079 - 50p. The Coronation of their Majesties, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, Official Programme. King George Jubilee Trust Official Programme. Offers please. Magnets from 1933 to 1940, good condition. £1.75 each. Postage to be added. Please phone Frinton (98311) or send S.A.E. to Mr. W. Watson, 'Olympus', 1 Cartbridge Close, Walton-on-Naze, Essex. CO14 8QJ.

FOR SALE: Early rare Horror collections (stories). Biggles books in D/W. William books. 1950's Comic Annuals. 'Swan' Albums. Approx. 50 copies (rough bound) of Film Fun, Radio Run, Knockout, Playbox 1946 - 47. Very early edition of Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (Newnes) dark green cover. Larry Morley, 76 St. Margaret's Road, Hanwell, London, W7 2HF. Tel: 01 579 3143.



No. 221 - Magnets 1536-40 - Wibley-Popper Series

by Roger M. Jenkins

If Charles Hamilton's style of writing had lost some of its freshness and originality by 1937, he had certainly not lost his ability to construct ingenious plots and devise comic situations. The summer term series in Nos. 1536-40 abounded in humour as well as unexpected twists and turns to nearly every situation. As a bravura display in the autumn years, it still has the power in parts to astonish the reader with its pyrotechnics.

Monsieur Charpentier had caused Wibley to be caned by Mr. Quelch, and Wibley dressed up as the French master to provide an entertainment in the Rag, partly to gain some revenge by the parody. Unfortunately, Mr. Quelch and the real Mossuo arrived and Wibley was unmasked. Mr. Quelch urged the Head to regard this as an unthinking act of folly rather than intentional disrespect, but the French master threatened to resign if Wibley stayed, and he was accordingly expelled.

What Wibley did next was rather like a conjuror throwing objects into the air and hoping that they do not all fall down together. He telephoned his father saying he was staying on at Greyfriars while the matter was under reconsideration, and he telephoned Mr. Quelch, imitating Sir Hilton Popper's voice, stating that his nephew Archibald was, after all, coming to Greyfriars. He then disguised himself and arrived as a new boy for the Remove, all in the hope of finding Mossuo in a good temper and pleading with him to recommend his return to Greyfriars.

Wibley's ability to disguise himself was hardly credible, at the best of times. The French master's beard and whiskers and short stature were no doubt possibilities, but stage make-up looks very odd indeed in daylight. To disguise himself as a different-looking

schoolboy was an extremely hard task. We were told that he wore a dark wig, and had given himself a pasty-looking complexion with dark eyelashes and eyebrows. He wore elevators in his shoes and a little padding in his clothes. There is no doubt that Charles Hamilton was at this point skating over some very thin ice. Wibley had to undress and wash in the dormitory, and it would be impossible for his disguise not to be noticed. For the sake of the plot, all these difficulties had to be glossed over.

It was well worth forgetting reality, for the plot proceeded with remarkable verve. To his annoyance, Wibley discovered that the Removites were determined to rag Mossoo even more, because of his expulsion, and the chances of finding the French master in a good mood seemed highly remote. Eventually, more and more Removites got to know who he really was, and they began to cooperate, but every scheme went hilariously awry. Just as it seemed that the conjuring trick was about to fail, with the Head receiving curious communications from Mr. Wibley and Sir Hilton Popper, Wibley's very last device failed but a real opportunity arose to save Mossoo from a vicious attack by a tramp, and all was forgiven.

The series has a number of special aspects. Because members of staff were heavily involved, the adult touch helps to make the events more interesting, and because all the incidents were completely novel it is impossible to foresee the outcome of any particular situation. Even the cover-to-cover length of the stories does not detract from the amusing and absorbing narrative. The Magnet readers of nearly fifty years ago could have had little cause for complaint.

Your Editor says—



It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc. in it. The rates are 4p per word; a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.

* * *



Nelson Lee Column

ABOUT ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook



It is reported that the late Elvis Presley saw the film "KING SOLOMON'S MINES" 60 times. Although I cannot claim to have read some stories about St. Frank's as many times as that, there are some that have appealed to me so strongly that I read them again and again. I will not name them here for my choice may not coincide with that of other readers. But the fact that the tales of St. Frank's are still being read today, and just as much sought after, must be a true measure of their popularity.

With nearly a thousand stories of St. Frank's written in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY alone, some remain in the mind so frequently that they become highlighted when certain situations arise. Like the one where I was travelling over Southern India on my way back from a visit to London. Having a window seat I was able to watch the sub continent drift very slowly by, and it was somewhere over Mysore that a St. Frank's Holiday Party series came instantly to mind, I saw in the clear atmosphere below a pinnacle of rock very similar to that described by Edwy S. Brooks in the TYRANT OF RISHNER series. Whether Edwy ever saw this tall pencil-like rock in a dream, to make it the basis for a fine story is very doubtful, for Brooks never went to India; but there it is, a legacy for one of the finest yarns in the St. Frank's saga.

Again, living as I do not really very far from the South Sea Islands in the South Pacific, and in close contact with people from those Islands, I can appreciate the vivid description of a cyclone and volcanic eruption Brooks gives in the 1922 South Seas series.

On another occasion, when visiting London our plane was scheduled to stop at Rome and re-fuel. Before that, we flew over Brindisi with the Adriatic Sea on the starboard side. The MORDANIA series then came to mind, for the ill-fated airship in the story was reported in that area before it finally fell into the sea.

In my wanderings around the world many places evoked memories of incidents in which the St. Frank's party were involved ...such is the impact these grand old stories have on my mind. But perhaps best of all are my memories of the Sussex town of Seaford where many years ago I spent some time in a Convalescent Home. I used to watch from the large window the children from private schools and their crocodiles ...marching as perhaps the juniors at St. Frank's would in similar surroundings. For Seaford is my nearest approach to the St. Frank's scene, and has very similar environs.

It is perhaps no wonder that many readers were misled into thinking St. Frank's was a real school. The pity is that we had to grow up and come face to face with realities. Yet do we need to, where St. Frank's is concerned? After all, there still remains Gray's Inn Road, and that's real enough. And Seaford is still there with its private schools and the Sussex Downs which can remind us of Bannington Moor and the Moor View School for Young Ladies.

And there's a "Shingle Head" and a "Caistowe". You will need to go opposite Seaford if you would like to see another Bellton. So you see, St. Frank's is everywhere.

ST. FRANK'S ON THE SPREE

by William Lister

Readers of 'Collector's Digest' are familiar with St. Frank's. Quite a respectable school, forsooth!

So it came as a surprise when I consulted the Concise Oxford Dictionary regarding the word SPREE, which can be a 'lively frolic' or a 'bout of drinking'. One can rule out the latter; St. Frank's on a bout of drinking? You must be kidding!

So, in the nature of things one could be sure, in connection with St. Frank's that it would be right and proper to take the former meaning of spree, a 'lively frolic'. More in keeping, wouldn't you say?

However, you can put that idea out of your head, as life is full of surprises. When Brooks agreed to the title 'St. Frank's on the Spree' he was thinking more on the lines of a spree in the form of a bout of drinking!

St. Frank's on the booze? As a St. Frank's fan, you could say I was amazed; mortified maybe. Still, it's no business of mine. If St. Frank's goes in for the drink racket you can blame E.S.B. and not me.

It all started with the coming of a new house-master. A certain Mr. Smale Foxe. I asume all my readers know what happens when

one bad apple gets into a barrel of good apples. Well! Mr. Smale Foxe is certainly a bad apple so far as St. Frank's is concerned.

If there's one thing I appreciate about E.S.B. it is the names he picks for his villains. Whether writing in his own name, or as Victor Gunn or Berkley Grey; any of the villains depicted have suitable names. Take Mr. Smale Foxe. He's bound to be a villain. Or is he? It turns out he has a twin brother by the same name who is just as good as his brother is bad. Fortunately for St. Frank's a few of the boys refused to respond to the leadership of Mr. Smale Foxe (No. 1) and along with Nelson Lee and Mr. Smale Foxe (No. 2) the true life of St. Frank's is restored to normal.

There is a background story running parallel with this one, as the 'Spree' idea is not good enough for a full-length Monster Library tale.

Ernest Lawrence, a new boy, is a good boxer, and hearing that the boxing booth manager is offering twenty pounds to anyone who can beat Lightning Left Ned, he volunteers. I am afraid this background tale appealed to me more than the title story. I am not a boxing fan, as such, but in my youth I was a fairground worker and came up against lots of these boxing booths.

One thing that turned the clock back for years, and was a great thrill (as far as I was concerned) was the left-side panel illustration on the first page. This was the drawing of the flare-lamp, cone-shaped, with the paraffin-pipe from the bottom taking a U turn, which when lit produced light and heat. My boss's arcade, 24 ft square, had 18 of them. My, how warm they were, I've not seen one for years, not even a picture of them. No doubt friends of my age will have seen them. To sum up, 'St. Frank's on the Spree' seemed to be disjointed to me, and not one of the best stories. But that flare-lamp - it made my day! (MONSTER LIBRARY No. 16).

FOLE SALE: MAGNETS, odd copies 1929 - 40. 80p plus postage.
S.E.A. Mervyn Lewis, 35 Wear Bay Road, Folkestone. CT19 6BH.

WANTED: Story Paper Collector By Bill Gander. All numbers
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THE 'UNION JACK' IN 1920

THE FIRST COLOURED COVERS

The first coloured covered Union Jacks contained probably some of the finest stories written for that paper.

Let us take a look at the first few. Lewis Jackson was the first on the scene (No. 886) in a Leon Kestrel story, the illustrations being drawn by H.M. Lewis. Robert Murray followed with a Criminals Confederation yarn, the illustrations this time supplied by 'Val'. Next came one of E.S. Brooks's Rupert Waldo stories, illustrated by Harry Lane. This was followed by a fine effort from the pen of Anthony Skene, featuring Monsieur Zenith, with illustrations by E.E. Briscoe. Lewis Jackson then turned up again in the following two issues, both of which were kestrel episodes, teaming up with H.M. Lewis in the first and Arthur Jones in the second. Another Brooks' Waldo yarn was the next on the programme, this time illustrated by E.E. Briscoe. This was followed by another Robert Murray Confederation story illustrated by 'Val'. The Skene/Briscoe team then produced another Zenith yarn, after which came yet one more R. Murray/H. Lane Confederation effort. The next was a non-featured story. Written by Cecil Hayter and illustrated by Sid Pride, it is a very good yarn - as one would expect from the pen of such a fine writer. Jackson-Kestrel-Lewis, Skene-Zenith/Briscoe followed, and then came an Andrew Murray yarn featuring Professor Kew, illustrated by C.H. Blake.

Thus, in the first fourteen coloured issues we had four by Lewis Jackson (Kestrel), three by A. Skene (Zenith), three by Robert Murray (Confederation), two by E.S. Brooks (Waldo), one by Andrew Murray (Kew), and one 'odd' one. The illustrations were provided by seven different artists.

Here then, was a selection to suit all tastes and catering for

each individual featured-character supporter; and if that wasn't enough, the succeeding months produced even more favourites such as Granite Grant, Losely and Lobangu, Nihil, Ferrers Lord, The Raven, The Black Duchess and Yvonne.

Truly it can be said that the first year of the coloured covers was one of the best periods in the life of the 'Union Jack'.



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THE ERIC FAYNE COLUMN

I have been very, very deeply touched by the great mass of letters which have been coming through to me from readers since our January issue was published. Letters have been coming in constantly from readers at all points of the compass, and the great wave of genuine affection has almost overwhelmed me.

I could have suffered from a swollen head, but, actually, it has all made me feel humble and deeply grateful. I realise, though I have known it for a long time, that S.P.C.D. has the most loyal band of readers in the side, wide world.

I thank, from the bottom of my heart, everybody who has written. I shall hope to drop a few lines to everyone in time, but the sheer quantity of letters means that I cannot reply at once. But please understand that my gratitude to you all is deep and heartfelt.

The following is an extract from a letter, which I received recently from Miss Barbara Reeve of Hereford. I wonder if anyone can trace the Annual to which Miss Reeve refers?

'I have been meaning to write to you for a long time concerning the very interesting and most evocative article by Graham McDermott entitled "An Annual Delight" printed on page 31 of the June 1984 issue of the C.D. Your retirement from editorship of the Digest has prodded me to put "pen to paper" at last.

How I agree with Mr. McDermott's sentiments. I took "The Schoolgirls' Own" until its demise, and then changed to "The Schoolgirl". But I never lost

my deep love for Betty Barton, Polly Linton, Tess Trelawney, Pam Willoughby (she who walked so elegantly that her stockings wore thin where her knees rubbed together - I tried to emulate her without much success) and all the others. I had only one "Schoolgirls' Own" Annual - either 1932 or 1933, but I think 1933. The title of the Morcove story was "The Girl who Stood Aside", and I can remember most, if not all, of the other stories - "Fiary Fingers", about a girl who played the piano to a sick girl and brought her back from death's door, for example. I could go on The number of times I read that annual from cover to cover is nobody's business, and I would have been either eight or nine when I had it. I loved it, as of course I loved my weeklies. I also coveted "The Magnet" whenever one of my brothers had a batch given him by a friend. Unfortunately (for me) the annual, together with my cherished copies of the weeklies, was sent on to cousins by my mother, an anti-hoarder if ever there was one. I have quite decided that I must write to your regular advertisers in the hope that one of them may have a copy of the annual for whichever year it was.

A small point about Mr. McDermott's article: "The Schoolgirls' Own" lived beyond 1929, the date he gives of its demise, when I would have been five years of age. I did not start reading it until at least 1932 but cannot remember how long I took it before having to change to "The Schoolgirl".

Editor's Note: Yes, the two stories mentioned by Miss Reeve are included in Schoolgirls' Own Annual 1933, and each is about a talented girl pianist. 'Marjorie Stanton' (Horace Phillips) of course wrote the Morcove story, which featured Madge Minden and the day-girl Dolly Delane, while Fairy Fingers was written by Lilian Slatcher. I wonder if Bill Lofts can tell us anything about 'her'? Both stories are dramatic, touching and on the theme of self-sacrifice. The same annual contains a chatty feature about the Morcove girls, mentioning Pam's (to me, strange) habit of rubbing her knees together when she walked! Distinctly uncomfortable, and hardly elegant, I should have imagined. However, Morcove's Matron smilingly comments that the holes and thin places in Pam's stockings are the result of the graceful way in which she walks. 'You'd think she'd practised all her life with a book on her head, as the gentry used to do in our young days. But I believe with her it's natural.' The weekly Schoolgirls' Own ended on May 23rd, 1936, and Morcove serials in the Schoolgirl went on until the beginning of 1938. The last Schoolgirls' Own Annual to contain a Morcove story was the one dated 1939.

STILL WANTED: Sexton Blake Second Series No. 411. Tragedy of West End Actress and No. 453, On The Midnight Beat. Both by John G. Brandon.

J. ASHLEY, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants, P.O. 15 5AH. Telephone, Fareham 234489.

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WANTED: Buzzer (1937) No's 8,10,11. Magnet, No. 1558. Ranger (1931) No. 27. Must be good - very good.

Please write: W. Bradford, 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing, London. W5 3XP.

CLIFF HOUSE CORNER

By MARGERY WOODS

* "Well, here we are!" announced Babs, pausing in front of a study door numbered 4.

Smilingly Babs swung the door open; and then, for a moment stood sniffing appreciatively at the mingled odours of frying sausages, browning toast and crumpets which appetisingly drifted out to assail hungry nostrils.*

Yes, the famous Chums were stoking the inner woman again.

Winter usually brings a certain sharpening of the appetite along with a disinclination for the chillier lighter fare of summer's salad days. But a prodigious amount of unofficial cooking went on at Cliff House all the year round. Come tea-time and the more spartan repasts of the dining hall were spurned by all except the unfortunate impecuniates ---or those waiting anxiously for a postal order ---in favour of the tasty nosh-ups round the study fire. Even the little third formers, who complained bitterly about not having studies, gathered round their common-room fire and got busy with their respective menus, when, according to young Doris Redfern, nobody minded if somebody's sausage dropped into somebody else's pan of toffee. It was difficult with up to a dozen kids jostling for cooking space!



Today's health food fanatics would surely be horrified at the dietary extras of our Chums. Sardines, sausages, jam tarts, cream buns, plumcake, doughnuts and a variety of sandwiches seemed to provide the foundation of these teas, topped up with cream meringues on special occasions, and washed down with liberal quaffings of tea or lemonade.

The Fourth Form corridor must have reeked like Sid's Corner Caff when all those frying pans got going ---to say nothing of the fire hazard. Though of course our Chums were thoroughly sensible and responsible young people. But one suspects that a Home Office enquiry would be demanded today were such practices discovered in today's safety conscious schools.

The campfire way of life was taken for granted, and, looked back on from an adult angle, provides a small pointer to the true identities behind the feminine pseudonyms which fooled me and I'm sure many other young readers as to the gender of the authors. For what headmistress of that era would have permitted those daily cooking sagas by children without adult supervision? This aspect is not so often found in the stories by female authors. Here, the consumption of tuck is usually limited to cold fare partaken in great secrecy and great daring during midnight dorm feasts. Often in the books of Brazil and Co. food is scarcely mentioned; possibly because of a subconscious antipathy in the authors to any relating of their characters to the dreary cook-and-wash-up routine that fell to most women in those days. But Babs and Co. made it all seem natural and great fun.

During the early SCHOOLFRIEND days of Cliff House the Chums even formed a society devoted to the furtherance of the art of the sweetmeat rather grandly entitled The Cliff House Confectionery Club. Again, all meetings and experiments took place in Study 4.

And now, something for which all sweet teeth among our readers must have longed. At last! The famous recipe for Jobling Toffee. (Always in season.)

* Ingredients: $\frac{1}{2}$ lb treacle. $\frac{1}{4}$ lb brown sugar. A small lump of butter. A little water.

Place all ingredients in a small saucepan (a frying pan will do) and boil slowly. Take a drop in a spoon or on the end of a penholder and allow it to drop into cold water. As soon as a drop turns brittle the toffee is done. Pour into greased tins and allow to cool.*

(N.B. COLLECTORS' DIGEST admits no liability for possible consequent damage to saucepans, cookers, walls, curtains (and fire brigades

called to deal with same), damage to persons adhering to chairs or and other, indignant cats adhering to floors, infants adhering to toffee tins, or dental expenses incurred for cracked crowns, lost fillings, or fractured dentures.)

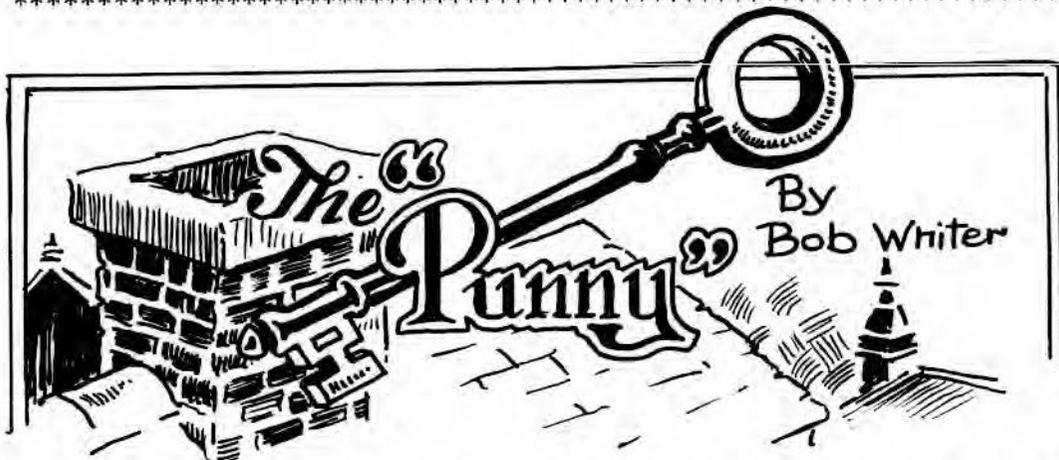
Happy Chewing'

* Quote from Girl Who Puzzled the Fourth. SCHOOLGIRL 479

* SCHOOLFRIEND 48 Vol. 2.

Answers to last month's Cliff House anagrams.

1. Marjorie Hazeldene.
2. Rosa Rodworth.
3. Jemina Carstairs.
4. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.
5. Mabel Lynn.
6. Clara Trevlyn.
7. Dinaa Royston-Clarke.



Although certain aspects of the description tend to vary, i.e. whether the iron bars across the window were inside or outside the glass, the general location is pretty common in most of the stories. From Mr. Quelch's study:- "Mr. Quelch led him up the stairs and turned into a long passage that Pop had never traversed before. But he was aware that it led to the punishment room" (Magnet 1168 July 5th 1930). On, "Harry Wharton followed the Remove master from the study. They passed down the broad corridor through a gazing crowd - But at the foot of the staircase..." (Magnet 888 February, 14th 1925).

Then, when the Head's study was temporarily occupied by Mr. Prout:- "And in that iron grip the Bounder of Greyfriars was marched up a back staircase and along the passage leading to the isolated punishment - room" (Magnet 1397 November, 24th, 1934). Also: "Where he was taking him Gilbert could not guess - at first But when they turned into a long corridor at the top of a back staircase he guessed He had never seen the punishment-room at Greyfriars, but he had heard it spoken of, and he knew that it lay at the end of that corridor" (Magnet 1601, October, 22nd, 1958). And finally: "Smithy was locked in the punishment-room, high up in a remote corner of the ancient pile of Greyfriars" (Magnet 161, February 4th, 1939).

As to the room itself: "The window was small and barred with iron. The floor was bare, the furniture meagre, a chair, a table, a bestead... He went to the window. It was high up but by standing on the chair he was able to look out of it... He tested the bars with his hands and found them as he expected, quite immovable" (Magnet 1168).

Those iron bars must have been re-installed, albeit much stronger, because in Magnet 888 we read "He approached the window and tested the bars with his strong grip. It was not difficult to displace one of the old bars - they had rather the appearance than the reality of security. He wrenched out a bar, and put his head and shoulders from the window, and looked out". In this particular story Wharton effects his escape by means of this window, with the help of plaited and knotted bedsheet strips. So although the window was small, it was not too small for a fifteen year old boy to climb through.

However in the "Secret Seven" series, we learn: "Herbert Vernon-Smith stared from the window of the punishment-room in the morning sunlight with a scowling face. He had the window open, but the bars outside, across the deep embrasure, prevented him from putting his head out." In fact, later on in the story, we hear he is only able to put his hand out to drop the pieces of paper with the all important secret message on. We also learn in the same story, "The Brotherhood of Justice" that there is a door in the corridor that leads to the "punny", so that unless a person had the punishment-room key in his possession (apparently the same key fitted both doors), it was not possible to speak to the prisoner. In other stories the staff were very lax and didn't bother to keep the corridor door locked.

Nothing was said about the fireplace or chimney being small; on the contrary we read: "The chimney was an old fashioned one, built in the days when chimneys were chimneys. It belonged to the period when chimneys were swept by small boys who clambered up into them from below. There was room for a climber - if a climber cared to face the horrors of the ancient soot, and the danger of emerging on the roof from the wider-mouthed, old chimney-pot" (Magnet 1168).

Then we have: "He had stamped out the fire in the old grate under the vast, old-fashioned chimney to keep open a line of retreat, if it came to that. It was a line of retreat that few fellows would have fancied" (The Mystery Man of Greyfriars). At least 2 fellows did use the chimney to escape. I refer to Cecil Popper (Pop of the Circus, Sir Hilton Popper's nephew) and the Bounder. To the former it was no great thing, as Pop was a performer on the high trapeze, so the sixty feet high roof held no terrors for him.

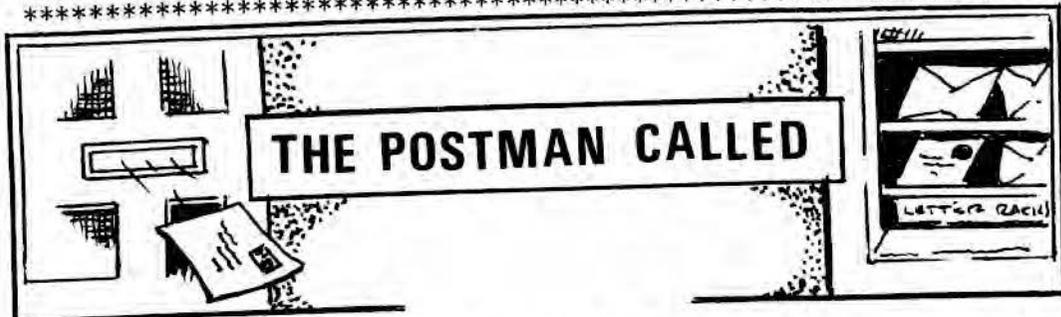
With Vernon-Smith, of course, it was just a case of his well known cool nerve. Whilst on the subject of Smithy's escape, I always find it amusing that the moment of his emergence from the chimney should co-incide with his father's arrival at the school. "The Chimney" ejaculated Mr. Vernon Smith, when told of his son's escape from the punishment-room. "And remained at the summit, sir ---" "Good gad! I -- I saw someone as I arrived - I supposed that it was a chimney-sweep... Good Gad!".

We mustn't forget the occasion when Gilbert Tracy locked both Mr. Quelch and Bunter in the punishment-room. The only way they were found was when Bunter, finally receiving Mr. Quelch's permission, lighted the fire, breaking up the

Windsor chair to do it, and, cramming on too much fuel, set light to the chimney. The ensuing smoke and sparks showed the searchers where they were.

Whilst on the subject of the fireplace, it is interesting to note how it varied over the years in the illustrations. In "Call of the Circus", Sir Hilton Popper is shown looking up the chimney with a bricked over canopy, the whole chimney-piece standing out from the wall. On the cover of the "Runaway", the fireplace is shown as a normal Victorian type, with a squared aperture. The "Mystery Man of Greyfriars" has an inside picture of Mr. Quelch staggering back from the fire place, covered in soot. The design of the fire place is almost the same as in the previous story, with one exception; the top of the aperture is rounded! The chimney itself, where it sticks up from the roof, also changed: compare Pop sticking his head out in 1930 with the picture of Smithy waving from it, nine years later.

What a pity they couldn't have had a model of the famous pile for the artists to have worked from - In sure this would have pleased all our Greyfriars - loving hearts! But in spite of the former observations, the punishment-room remains just one more exciting facet of the world of Greyfriars which, speaking as an "Old Boy", still compels me to read and re-read as much today as it did when I first entered the portals of that illustrious establishment. Yes, I've always loved stories that featured the "Punny".



JACK HUGHES (Queensland, Australia) In the January C.D., Danny writes of the cricket tests in Australia in 1937. He mentions the first Test at Brisbane. For one day of that match I was there. Vividly I recall my dad and myself arriving at the turnstiles at the main entrance of the Woolloongabba Ground and looking for the correct gate so that we could join the jumble of people seated on the grass of The Hill. I was just 13 years of age. Another memory is of Don Bradman striking out and I still see him running between wickets. But I only attended that one day, as I suffered extreme sunburn to arms and legs, painful for some days thereafter.

BILL LOFTS (London) I was most interested in J.E.M.'s piece in Blakiania regarding 'Lewis Jackson' as he was one of my favourites writers in the 3rd series of the S.B.L. I can well remember travelling from London all the way to Peaceheaven (just along the coast from where J.E.M. lives at Brighton) to meet him in the fifties - only to be told that he had been rushed to hospital, where he died. A very big man in later life he resembled Sydney Greenstreet, with the build of

Colin Milburn, the bigger hitter of balls in cricket than even Ian Botham. His output in various papers was really large, contributing serials for the coloured comics including Rainbow. His service in The Royal Navy during the First World War stood him in good stead, as he was able to write with some authority on tales with this theme. Recently it was discovered that he had penned the 'Captain Custard' stories in the comic Chuckles. "Lewis Jackson" was a pun on his real name Jack Lewis. He had a son and brother, both editors at Amalgamated Press Ltd.

J.E. MILLER (Brighton) In the February C.D., I much enjoyed Tommy Keen's piece! Though my contact with Morcome has, alas been only slight, I was always intrigued by the complex personality of M. Minden. More character sketches of this kind will no doubt be welcomed by all. I also enjoyed the Wakefield composite drawing of Rookwood characters on p.31. More such graphics please, if poss!

EDWARD RAKE (Bristol) I would like to see a little more about Greyfriars. But I know you have to cater for all tastes. I do enjoy very much the contributions on Greyfriars by Edward Baldock, which are very fine.

MARK TALIA (London) As one of the younger 'Hamiltonians', I'm often struck by the way these old stories still sometimes seem 'relevant' to the world of today. For instance, I recently read a 1911 Gem (number 197 - 'The Ghost of St. Jim's') which featured a friend of Mr. Selby (the kind of friend he would have had!) whom even Selby called a 'cruel vivisectionist', and who had been driven mad by his experiments.

LEN HAWKEY (Leigh-on-Sea) In the January C.D., the notes on 'Danny's Diary' (which always revives old memories) refer to Edmund Gwenn in 'Laburnum Grove', the 1936 Gaumont-British film of the Priestley play. As Mr. Fayne says, it was a superb performance by Gwenn, one of the few actors to whom the adjective 'loveable' could be truly applied. After theatre work in England he entered silent films before World War I, and later 'commuted' between here and U.S.A. Around 1940 he finally settled in Hollywood... In 1947, at the age of 72, he won an 'Oscar' as Best Supporting Actor of the Year for his performance as Kris Kringle in 'Miracle on 34th Street'... He died in Hollywood in 1959.

RON GARDNER (Leamington Spa) At the age of 80, Edmund Gwenn was still a star, playing in the 1955 film 'The Trouble with Harry', based on a Jack Trevor Story screenplay.

PHILIP TIERNEY (Grimsby) Re-reading the Loder - Captain serial recently, I was puzzled, not for the first time, by the introduction of a friend of Loder's called Carford Major. The impression was given that he was a regular Greyfriars character, but I cannot remember ever having heard of him before or since. Or of a Carford Minor either. Their names never, to my knowledge, appeared in those lists of characters in Holiday Annuals. I wonder whether anyone else knows anything about them?

Editor's Notes: There was an absolutely bumper post-bag about Mr. Watson's query on the film of a man-made airport floating in the sea between England

and the U.S.A. To sum up, it seems to have been an English version of a German film called F.P.1 - Antwortet nicht, called F.P.1, or Floating Platform One, made in 1932 or '33. Both English and German versions starred Conrad Veidt, and the English film also feature Donald Calthrop. Mr. J.E. Miller suggests that to buy a copy of this film would probably be difficult, but that the British Film Institute could advise on this. Mr. Esmond Kadish comments: 'If Mr. Watson is interested, there's an L.P. "Movie Star Memories" (World Records SH217) which may still be around, and includes Veidt "singing" a song from the film: 'When the Lighthouse Shines Across the Bay'. Incidentally, this record also contains contributions from John Mills, Evelyn Laye, Binnie Barnes, Renate Muller, Lillian Harvey, Frances Day, and others from early British films.'

Thanks are due to Mr. George Martin, Mr. Harold Truscott and all those other C.D. readers who have sent letters about this film, which must have had tremendous appeal at the time it was distributed.

TOMMY KEEN (Thames Ditton) Through reading so many old Gems from the Hamilton Library, I have been absolutely intrigued by the arrival of various new boys at St. Jim's, who after the initial series (or story) were seldom heard of again. Richard Roylance, Harry Hammond, George Durrance remained at the school, and I wish I could have traced the arrival of Eric Kerruish and Clifton Dane (pity there is no Sub-writers' Library). Personally, I think a few stories concerning these lesser known characters, before the repeat stories started in the Gem, would have been a change from the rather monotonous tales that were so often churned out regarding those rather ghastly characters, Trimble and Grundy. I love the illustration on page 3 of the C.D. Could have been Miss Redgrave of Morcove.

BOOKS



REVIEWS BY ERIC FAYNE and MARY CADOGAN

THE MISSING MASTER

Frank Richards. (Howard Special Book
Club Series: £18)

This lovely, tasteful volume contains 6 consecutive Red Magnets from the early summer of 1914. Apart from the delight of first-class school stories, the period from which they come gives the book a strange, eerie quality all its own - a quality which could not have been present for those in 1914 who brought the Magnet every Monday.

An era was ending. Nothing would ever be the same again. For those 6 weeks there was no sign of the impending change. The Magnet still had its red cover and its 32 pages; it still had magnificently persuasive advertisements; a new Companion Paper - Chuckles - had recently come on the market, described as the only paper, apart from the Magnet, where one would find stories by popular Frank Richards; the illustrations by the young Chapman were large and lavish; there was a "Whit-Monday Number." (If we value tradition, as we must do, we ask ourselves: "What on earth did some stupid government do to our long-established Whit Monday?")

Every one of the stories is by the genuine Richards, though none of the tales is a famous one in Magnet lore. Several themes, which were to appear again much later and be expanded, are given a first airing in this volume. Routine, perhaps, but competent.

The programme opens with "The Uninvited Guests". Mauleverer is offered the loan of a "cottage", complete with servants, so that he can take a party there or a restful week-end. Bolsover and his cronies try to steal the holiday. In fact, Bolsover, who in later times was completely dropped by his creator, was playing a substantial part in Magnet tales at this period.

"Rough on Coker" is a Coker romp, with a convict, complete with "broad arrows" among the supporting cast. (When did convicts cease wearing "broad arrows?") "Cornered" is a Fisher T. Fish story, typical of the Fish tales of the period.

The volume's best tales are "The Boy From the Farm" and its sequel "The Wrong Sort". Sir Harry Beauclerc is booked for Greyfriars, but he wanted to go to Highcliffe where he had friends of his own type. He persuaded a farmer's son to go to Greyfriars in his place, and that boy arrives as "Sir 'Arry". The first story is the tale of Sir 'Arry. In the second tale, the real Sir Harry takes his rightful place, till he is expelled at the end. This pair of Magnet tales made a full-length novel in the S.O.L. in the summer of 1929 under the title "Not Wanted at Greyfriars".

Finally we come to the story which gives the overall title to the volume, "The Missing Master". He is Mr. Lascelles, who, as Larry Lynx, had once been a professional boxer. In this tale he is kidnapped by one of his old cronies, who wants him to return to the ring. This theme was repeated some twenty years later in the Magnet.

Another lovely book to add lustre and grace to your bookcases - and to set the memory buds tingling.

WHO SANG WHAT ON THE SCREEN

by Alan Warner (Angus & Robertson £5.95)

As this book points out, ever since 1927 when Al Jolson declared in The Jazz Singer 'You ain't seen nothing yet', cinema audiences have been hearing an enormous number and wonderful variety of songs. Here is an intriguing dictionary of facts about popular songs (from both musical and non-musical movies). It is copiously illustrated with black and white photographs of the singing and dancing stars and of some of the sheet music of the songs that they made famous. An enjoyable nostalgic browse, marred only by the fact that it concentrates on American films at the expense of our own. Someone ought to produce a similar book for our homegrown stars and songs - for Gracie Fields, George Formby, Jack Burchanan, Jessie Matthews and so many others.

THE NIGHT LIVES ON

by Walter Lord (Viking £10.95)

Subtitled 'New Thoughts, Theories and Revelations about the Titanic', this book is a follow up to A Night to Remember, the same author's earlier study of the sinking of that 'unsinkable' ship. Arguably 'the greatest maritime disaster in the world', the 1912 sinking of the Titanic continues to occupy people's imagination, and this extremely well researched book makes fascinating reading. Walter Lord brings new facts to light, and atmospherically recreates the glitteringly opulent but sadly doomed days of this most celebrated ship. Written after the wreck of the Titanic had at last been located, it is especially interesting to read the author's accounts of the many schemes dreamed up over the years to raise the ship. As he points out, even the most fantasised technology that these schemes envisaged 'fell far short of the intricate combination of wide-scanning sonar, video cameras, banks of strobe lights, and ultrasensitive film... that actually did locate the Titanic in 1985'. The book is illustrated by well chosen and moving photographs (of the ship, its passengers and crew, and those gallant musicians who went on playing to the end), and many diagrams. It gives insights into a lost age as well as into a lost ship.

THE RESILIENCE OF RUDYARD KIPLING

It can hardly have escaped anyone's notice that the works of Rudyard Kipling have now come out of copyright, and that the market is being somewhat drenched in reprints of books by this incredibly talented and multi-faceted writer. He has, of course, survived the period in which it was fashionable to decry him as 'imperialist, out-dated', etc. He gives us so much, and Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work by Charles Carrington (now reprinted by Penguin at £4.95) is a fitting tribute to his genius. Like the author of this admirable biography, many of us grew up on Kipling's Just So Stories and Jungle Books; and we went to school with Stalky & Co., and had history come alive for us in Puck of Pook's Hill and Rewards and Fairies. Then, of course, we went on to enjoy Kipling's poetry, his Plain Tales from the Hills, and other stories. Viking/Kestrel have just reprinted the Just So Stories £7.95 and the Jungle Book £8.95 in editions which are sumptuously illustrated in colour and black and white by Michael Foreman. Penguin have published four volumes of Kipling's adult short stories at £2.95 each: Debts and Credits, Traffics and Discoveries, A Diversity of Creatures,

and Life's Handicap.

Another author whose books are being reprinted in bunches is Margery Allingham. The Hogarth Press have recently published The China Governess and Cargo of Eagles (£2.95 each), and Penguin have brought out Police at the Funeral and Sweet Danger (£3.95 each). Rivetting stuff - and so too is The Days of Your Fathers, a new collection of short stories of mystery, espionage and suspense by Geoffrey Household (Michael Joseph, £10.95).

Not a reprint, but just as atmospheric as any crime puzzle from the Golden Age of detective fiction, Simon Brett's What Bloody Man is That? is both extremely witty and beautifully suspenseful. The title is taken from Macbeth, and the murder mystery unfolds backstage during a provincial repertory company's rehearsals of the celebrated 'Scottish play' which is, apparently, considered to bring bad luck, according to theatrical superstition. (Gollancz £8.95)



MIDLAND O.B.B.C.

The attendance of eight for the January meeting was not a very promising opening for the New Year, but there was a warm, friendly and enjoyable atmosphere. News of Tom Porter, our Chairman, was of very little change, and he was cheerful when I had visited him earlier.

An indication of the splendid club spirit is that Stan Knight, who is having trouble with his eyes, could spare us a thought and send a welcome gift of £15 for Club funds. A letter from Pat Hughes was warmly welcomed. There was talk of a T.V. programme on our beloved hobby, but with nothing yet settled.

Everyone expressed gratitude to Eric Fayne for his sterling work as editor of the C.D., and agreed we could never repay him for so many hours of pleasure.

Delicious refreshments were provided by Betty Hopton and Ivan Webster, and Betty introduced a new game. Geoff Lardner won two quizzes, with Betty Hopton as runner-up in one. Ivan Webster gave a very amusing reading on Bunter trying his luck on the football pools. In another quiz taken by Geoff Lardner I got marks out of 20 - so am improving! A splendid meeting, but we hope members will try to achieve better attendances.

JACK BELLFIELD

CAMBRIDGE O.B.B.C.

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Tony Cowley on Sunday, 1st February. Apologies for absence were received from Vic. Hearn, Bill Lofts, Edward Witten and Jack Doupe. In the absence of both chairman and vice-chairman Keith Hodgkinson presided. Arrangements for succeeding meetings were made.

The Club Library was presented with a book on highwaymen to recall a visit made by the Club in the 1960's to Hempstead, the home of Dick Turpin.

Tony Cowley presented an hilarious video programme based on "Fluck and Laws illustrated guide to Caricature". This traced the origin of the art of caricature back to the 18th century, beginning at the time of Gilroy, Hogarth, through Cruickshank, Rowlandson, Daumier, and many other artists on to the 19th century artists and cartoonists, such as "Spy", to the modern artists and cartoonists. The visual impressions made by the modern Television and Video were traced through films, comic papers and strips, to the caricatures which first appeared in the print shops of the 18th century. The covering discussion by Fluck and Law on the caricatures illustrating the video caused great amusement.

An interesting discussion followed the video showing, in the course of which reference was made to an H.G. Wells novel of the early part of this century "When the Sleeper Wakes", which foretold a time when books would no longer be made, but would be replaced by something like the modern video.

After we had enjoyed Mrs. Cowley's delicious tea, Tony showed a programme on the National Sound Archives of the British Library, and explained the procedure for listening to recordings of sounds. We then had a discussion on the Club's general aims and programmes, and the meeting broke up at about seven o'clock, with warm thanks to Tony for a most interesting meeting, and to Mrs. Cowley and Louise for lavish hospitality. So passed one more red letter day in the history of the Club.

LONDON O.B.B.C.

The 39th Annual General Meeting of the Club was held on Sunday, 8th February at the Liberal Hall, Ealing and there was a very good attendance.

Don Webster, the retiring chairman gave a hearty welcome to one and all, including new members, David and Jack Williams. Norman Wright, the only nominee, was elected unopposed for the office of 1987 Chairman, and the other officers of the Club were re-elected en bloc.

Mary Cadogan spoke about the future of Collectors' Digest and the task before her in editing and publishing future issues. She stated that Eric Fayne would still contribute many items for inclusion, and asked members to support the magazine by submitting material, and small 'ads' and thus help to keep the C.D. going.

Bill Bradford read the amusing St. Frank's item about Handforth driving the old Ford car. This was taken from the Nelson Lee Companion.

My miscellaneous quiz was won by Roger Jenkins.

Norman Wright gave a very fine discourse on W.E. Johns' famous character Steeley and illustrated the talk with copies of the Modern Boy and the hardbacks in which the Steeley and the Biggles stories appeared.

Chris Harper gave a reading from the 1932 Greyfriars Holiday Annual which dealt with the Reunion Old Boys' Dinner at Greyfriars.

(continued on page 32)

LONDON O.B.B.C. LIBRARIES

The London Club has an outstanding collection of library books which are so extensive that they have been divided into three sections. They may be borrowed at Club meetings and there is also a postal service available.

HAMILTONIAN SECTION

This comprises mainly MAGNETS, GEMS and SCHOOLBOYS' OWNS. For a copy of the latest catalogue please send two first-class stamps to Roger Jenkins, 8 Russell Road, Havant, Hants, P09 2DG.

SEXTON BLAKE SECTION

For a copy of the latest catalogue of UNION JACK, SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARIES (all series), DETECTIVE WEEKLY and THRILLER, please send S.A.E. to Chris Harper, Sydney House, 23 Algiers Road, Loughton, Essex IG10 4NG.

NELSON LEE LIBRARY

All issues of above, MONSTERS, B.F.L.'s, S.O.L.s and many other works of Edwy Searles Brooks available from Bill Bradford, 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing, London W5 3XP.

Please send S.A.E. for details.

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(continued from page 30)

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the retiring Chairman and to the Club's Officers. The men who made the tea were also suitably thanked.

Next meeting will be held on 8th March at the Ealing Liberal Hall. Tea provided but bring own tuck.

BEN WHITER.

NORTHERN C.B.B.C.

Our February meeting was held on 14th (St. Valentine's Day), and Chairman Keith Smith welcomed the twelve members present.

We discovered that the London hit-show, 'Daisy Pulls It off', would be at the Leeds Grand Theatre in May, and a number of members expressed a desire to see it. Plans were made for our next meeting, when Co-President Mary Cadogan would be with us, including a lunch prior to the meeting to give plenty of time for people to chat informally.

Paul Galvin gave the second talk in his series on W.E. Johns. He provided many details about the Biggles books, pointing out that Biggles, unlike many other characters in juvenile fiction, did 'age', as the books covered episodes from his boyhood, his wartime and post-wars experiences. Paul also put on show a selection of Biggles books - in immaculate condition! He was thanked for his excellent presentation.

Regrettably, Peter Plowman's contribution had to be left over until a future meeting.

We welcome all to our meeting on 14th March to meet Mary. We meet at 6.30 p.m. - 7.00 p.m. at SPCK Bookshop Cafe, Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds 1 - three minutes from the railway station.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

WILLIAM - AGAIN

C.D. readers may like to know that a 45 minute broadcast written and narrated by Mary Cadogan, called Richmal Crompton, the Woman Behind William, will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Tuesday, 7th April at 8.30 p.m., and repeated on Friday, 10th April at 11.03 a.m. It will include several dramatised incidents from the William books, and the recorded voice of Richmal Crompton. Its transmission co-incides with the paper-back publication of Mary's biography of William's creator (Richmal Crompton: the Woman Behind William; published by Unwin/Hyman £4.95).

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