

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

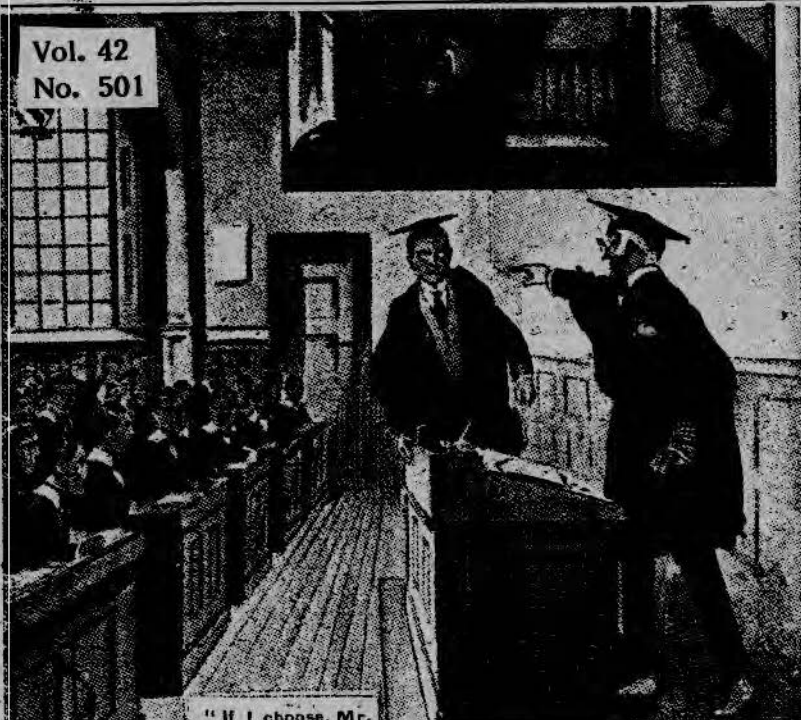
Given Away—PLATE OF FAMOUS FOOTBALLER & "NIPPER'S MAG.!"

NELSON LEE 2^a

No. 339.

December 3, 1921.

Vol. 42
No. 501



"If I choose, Mr. Crowell, I shall dismiss you on the spot!"

SEPTEMBER 1988

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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The Editor's Chat



SPECIALS AND ANNUALS

First of all I must thank the many C.D. readers who have written to say how much they would welcome a Summer Special. In fact, because of pressures of time and schedules, this has not after all been possible this year so I intend instead to bring out a Spring Special in 1989. Meanwhile I must apologise for raising expectations which are to be delayed in their fulfilment!

However, I am happy to announced that this year's Annual is now in preparation, and that contributions on hobby and allied subjects will be welcomed. It is especially helpful if these can

reach me in the fairly near future (by, say, the second week of October) to save the great rush to get the Annual printed, bound and despatched in time to avoid the Christmas mail delays.

Our order form for the Annual is enclosed in this issue, and, as you will see, despite rising costs we have endeavoured to keep the price as low as possible, and close to that of last year.

RUPERT, BIGGLES, WILLIAM & CO.

It is pleasing to see that, as well as the meetings of Old Boys' Book Clubs throughout the country, other celebratory events in honour of our childhood reading heroes are frequently taking place. There is to be a Rupert day at Brighton this month, a Biggles/W.E. Johns day at Nottingham in October and a Just William lunch at Northwich in November. (Richmal Crompton's popular character also, of course, has his special whole day event in April of each year.) As a non-driver, I sometimes wish that I could be transported to these and other book events by one of Rupert Bear's flying laundry-baskets or a Percival Gull piloted by Biggles! Nevertheless I manage pretty well with British Rail's inter-city services, and the Ford Escort driven by my long-suffering husband.

Happy travelling - and, of course, happy reading!

MARY CADOGAN

* * * * *

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Boys' and adult school stories - Autumn catalogue now out. Includes several out-of-print Howard Baker Volumes as well as the usual assortment from Avery to Wodehouse. SAE please. Robert Kirkpatrick, 244 Latimer Road, London, W10 6QY.

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* * * *



"YES, HEADMASTER"

by C. H. CHURCHILL

Dr. Malcolm Stafford, the venerable Headmaster of St. Frank's, must have been the most ill-used of any of his contemporaries in schoolboy fiction. The extraordinary problems he had to cope with from time to time and the dangers he faced in various episodes of the St. Frank's saga were enough to tax the courage and ingenuity of any normal human being. We were introduced to him in the first St. Frank's story, N.L.L. No. 112 28/7/17 in chapter six. Nipper said:-

"but when I got to the Guv'nor's study I found Dr. Stafford there. The Head was a kindly old gentleman with a grave, lined face. He looked up at me and smiled as I softly closed the door behind me."

The Head was immensely popular with all the boys (excepting a few cads of course), the teaching and also the domestic staff. One reason for this was that he always tempered justice with mercy. Many times he showed great generosity. In May 1919 when Nipper was expelled for allegedly attacking Starke, the Head, who was most doubtful of Nipper's guilt despite the evidence, allowed him to stay on at the school for a few days so that he (Nipper) would have a chance to investigate. This was prevented by the boys, or rather the cads, who literally kicked Nipper out of the school.

Then, in February 1922, the Head befriended John Martin, who had dragged him from the danger of a falling tree in a great storm. Martin was supposedly an orphan, so the Head arranged for him to stay at St. Frank's with the idea of making John his ward. Martin however turned out to be John Willard, son of the builder of the "Folly" on Willard's island. At Christmas 1923 when a small party of boys were stranded at St. Frank's owing to their holiday being cancelled at the last minute, The Head invited them to remain at school for Christmas and furthermore insisted that they stay in his own house. These were the things that endeared Dr. Stafford to his boys.

The Head's popularity was shewn in good measure in the autumn series of 1919 when the school was transferred to the Turret College in London. The events leading up to this were as follows: a new boy called Titus Alexis, a Greek, came to St. Frank's and proved to be the most vicious newcomer ever. He was entirely out of his element at an English public school and his bad nature came to the fore. Nipper was ragged by Fullwood & Co. and left bound up in the vault

under the old ruins beyond the Triagle. Alexis came along and subjected him to a severe beating. As a result Alexis was expelled. However, that night before leaving he set light to the College House, which was burned to the ground. Trouble then arose for the Head as the ancient Governors of the school blamed him for the disaster. They considered that he had been lax, and that a new Headmaster would take over on the move to London. This caused a furore throughout the school and a demonstration took place. In short, after much trouble, Dr. Stafford was reinstated for the move to London. He was cheered to the echo by all the boys.

On the school's return to the old site after the rebuilding of the College House Dr. Stafford was again "sacked", and replaced by Mr. Howard Martin. This led to the "rebellion" series of Oct/Dec. 1919 in Nos. 229/236. At the end, with Mr. Martin's departure, Dr. Stafford again returned to a tumultuous reception. This was not the only occasion the Head was "sacked". He had the same treatment in the Cyclone Smith series, Mar/Apr. 1924. Smith replaced him with Ponsonby Small, but, of course, justice prevailed and Dr. Stafford duly returned to the, by now, usual ovation.

The stresses and strains he endured during his Headmastership were many and varied. Examples are the spring 1920 series when all the servants went on strike. They wanted better wages and the Head was definitely on their side and had many verbal struggles with the chairman of the governors, Sir Roger Stone. Then there was the case of Miss Jane Trumble in early 1923. This worthy (or unworthy) lady became chairman of the governors. Calling at St. Frank's one day she found the Head engaged in flogging one of the bullies. She immediately insisted on all corporal punishment ceasing, and so undermined the Head's authority that he felt compelled to resign. Naturally all came well at the end after another Barring-out series and Dr. Stafford returned to his usual acclaim. Then in May 1925 St. Frank's was partly destroyed by an explosion. More worry for the Head! However, in the autumn all was well again with the school rebuilt and enlarged with five houses now.

On several occasions Dr. Stafford was under physical threat. In the Hunter the Hun series of spring 1918 he was returning from a visit to London to see the governors about getting rid of Hunter when he was lured by the rascally Housemaster into a cavern under the river Stowe and held captive. Hunter wished to keep him out of the way while he completed his plans. Luckily the Head was rescued by Nipper & Co.

In February 1919 Dr. Stafford was really in danger. He was arrested for the murder of Colonel Clinton, Housemaster of the College House. I think this was one of the finest series ever penned by Mr. Brooks. Full of drama and much comedy as well. Of course, the Head never murdered Clinton, and Nelson Lee was able to clear up the misunderstanding in due course.

Another great series from Brooks came in autumn 1921. In this the Head faced one of his most trying ordeals. This was the "Trenton" affair. Hugh Trenton tried to cause Dr. Stafford's dismissal by dosing him with a drug named Zaxzol which turned him into a veritable savage for a time and caused him to act the brutal schoolmaster. This was a fine series in which Armstrong and Tucker also starred. The boys seized control of the school and endeavoured to run it on communist lines. Naturally they failed and Nelson Lee succeeded in foiling the schemes of Trenton and his confederates.

No. 191.—MAGNIFICENT SCHOOL AND DETECTIVE YARN!
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The next second Christine was sent reeling and spinning across the thin ice, propelled by all the strength of Dounell's great arms.

DR. STAFFORD'S ORDEAL!

In spring 1924 Dr. Stafford was invited by Sir Crawford Grey to join him on a trip to the Sahara desert as he was taking his son and Reggie Pitt with him. The Head accepted. After a while, however, the party were reported missing. This caused Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore to organise a party to be formed to go to the rescue. Naturally a number of St. Frank's stalwarts were invited to go as well and this led up to the summer holiday series. Those who were missing were, in due course, discovered. So the Head had an exciting few weeks! While he was away his place was taken by Dr. Beverley Stokes. In the autumn after St. Frank's was rebuilt, Dr. Stokes became Housemaster of the Ancient House, as Nelson Lee and Nipper left the school to resume their activities at Gray's Inn Road. This was another editorial disaster as they had to be brought back to St. Frank's fairly soon by readers' demands.

I am unable to touch upon many other episodes of the Head's trials and tribulations as they were too many to relate (for example, when the Hon. Douglas Singleton bought a school near St. Frank's and set up in opposition!) If it were possible for Dr. Stafford to ask me if I thought he had carried out his duties in a just and fair manner my answer would surely be a fervent "Yes, Headmaster".



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

by WILLIAM LISTER

"See that your clothes are brushed, teeth clean, hair brushed and above all shoes cleaned and polished"; so said my mother, as I was going for my first job interview at the age of fourteen. She added "People go by their first impressions."

I suppose, in a measure, they still do. I was never conscious that I did until...

I read "The Savage Squeeze" just recently. A Mayflower-Bell 5th series Sexton Blake Library No. 12, by Arthur Maclean.

I never read many of the later Sexton Blakes, mostly they destroyed my image of him, with his big office and his dolly-bird secretaries. So when I saw "The Savage Squeeze" at an Oxfam Shop at 6 pence, I walked away, and then walked back... I'm glad I did! I figured that it would at least be worth 6p.

As I began to read it my first impression, by the end of three pages, was that this was not the Sexton Blake I knew.

How would you feel if you read the following opening words? "Sexton Blake found a seat for himself in the half light. He took a seat on the strip club's centre gangway. He couldn't keep calm at a time like this, his nerves as taut as piano-wires. His hand rested on the curve of his jacket just beneath his left armpit, he felt the shape of his Luger beneath the cloth" (shades of James Bond). Well now! he was sitting (of all places) in a STRIP CLUB, the name of which would even upset Mary Whitehouse, to wit, THE PEEPERAMA CLUB. We are told that even Blake, amid the shouts and whistles of the excited audience, couldn't help admiring the graceful stripper as she shed her feathers. "Here we go", I said to myself, "What if my old teacher caught me with this. What would she think? And where were my first impressions taking me? Oh, Mr. Maclean - how could you?"

My first impression was taking over; I ought to dump it now before it destroyed my image of Sexton Blake forever... I am glad I didn't!

I read another chapter and another chapter and another; I couldn't put it down; here indeed was the real Sexton Blake, complete with Tinker, Pedro, Mrs. Bardell and Splash Page.

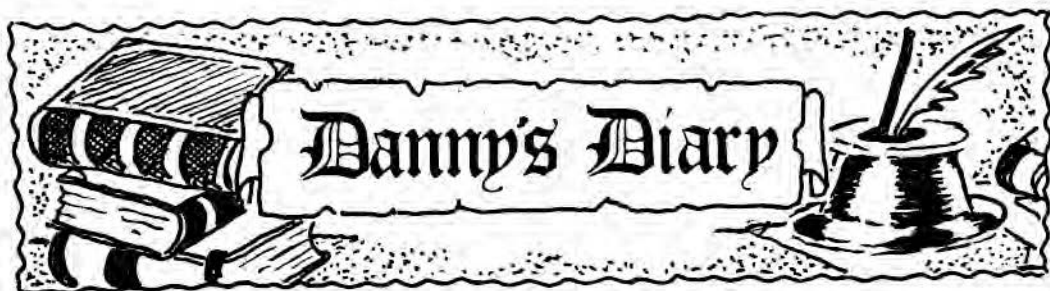
The opening pages were to impress the modern reader; they were but a sprat to catch a mackerel. Here are real villains: thugs, prostitutes, drug-takers, black-mailers. You name it and "The Savage Squeeze" has it. However, all under the umbrella of a genuine Sexton Blake author, Arthur Maclean.

I put the book down, reviewed the situation, and decided I had had a rattling good sixpenny worth. How did the editor sum it up? This way...

"The man who kidnapped Rilla Kirly's small son knew all there was to know about violence... nor was this all, he was quite ready to kill if he had to....and Sexton Blake was grimly aware of the fact....this is Blake plunged into one of the most vicious and nerve-racking cases he has ever encountered: a race against time. It would help if he could find a motive....at first it looked completely straight-forward. Just money. But soon, very soon, it was clearly not that simple....there were deeper, hidden motives....political motives....and about them the scent of extremism". (End of editor's quote.)

It does contain violence, but only the violence we knew of in 1957 when it was first published, as the 'MASK OF FURY'. The edition I have was published in 1965 in a slightly enlarged and expanded form with additional material by PRESS EDITORIAL SERVICES

So it doesn't always pay to go by first impressions, mother dear!



September 1938

Excuse me while I take my gas mask off. It has been a month and a half in real life, with the clouds of possible war with Germany filling the newspapers. Old Hitler assumed command of the German army and marched them into Sudetenland wherever that is. And civilian gas masks have been issued to every civilian over here in the tight little island.

Then, at the end of the month - on 28th to be exact - our Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, along with Mr. Daladier, the Prime Minister of France, flew to Munich for an interview with Hitler and Mussolini. Hitler says he has now got all he wants, and Britain and France agreed that he shall keep everything he has pinched so far, so long as he is a good boy in future. And Adolf has promised that he will be just that.

On the last day of the month, Chamberlain flew back to Britain, and there was a big crowd to welcome him when he landed at Heston Aerodrome waving the "no war" pact.

"It's peace in our time", said Mr. Chamberlain, and we hope that he is right as we put our gas masks away carefully.

Thank goodness there has been a lovely lot of stories in my favourite papers to take our minds off the flavour of war.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library, the story has continued about the Greyfriars chums in Kenya. Vernon-Smith is kidnapped and in danger of being sold into slavery, when he falls into the hands of a villainous slave-trader seeking revenge. And Harry Wharton and Co. go to the rescue. The title: "The Slave-Trader's Vengeance".

The second S.O.L. is "Chums of the Open Road" with the Rookwood pals on a cycling tour, led by Lovell on an old motor-scooter which he bought for £9.00. It's all great fun. The affair ends up back at Rookwood, where they find that a dubious character, Sir Harry Rutland, whom they met on their tour, is a new senior in the Fifth Form. Lovely tale.

The 3rd S.O.L. is "The Mystery of Roaring Z Ranch". The St. Frank's chums, along with Nelson Lee, are on vacation in Montana. There is a mystery of course. Cattle are constantly disappearing, and nobody knows how the rustling is carried out.

In the Boys' Friend Library, I had "Captain Justice's Airway", which was pretty good. In the Sexton Blake Library I had "Dangerous Money" by Rex Hardinge,

which is thrilling.

At the end of the cricket season Yorkshire is top of the championship table. And the town of Chingford has been made a borough.

I have had the "in between" sized Modern Boy all the month. My Gran pays the newsagent for all my books. The main news about Modern Boy is that a new series of Captain Justice stories started in the third issue of the month. The first tale is entitled "The Loot of London". Our great metropolis, struck by some invisible power, has come crashing to a standstill. Millions of people unable to move an inch. So the call goes out: "Send for Captain Justice". The second tale in this series is "Men of Fire". Captain Justice and helpers go to London mounted on insulated stilts. It's awful tripe, really, but the reader can't help getting interested. The writer is Murray Roberts and the stories are illustrated by Ernest Ibbetson.

Our Queen has been at Clydebank and has launched the biggest liner in the world. It is named the "Queen Elizabeth".

Though two long travel series are one too many in the Marvellous Magnet, I must confess that I have enjoyed this latest series about the chums, along with Lord Mauleverer, in the South Seas. The opening tale of the month is "Adrift on the Pacific", which is exactly where they all are for most of the story. Then a Dutchman named Van Dink, with piggy eyes and podgy hands, comes on the scene. And they land at last on a cannibal island.

Next comes "Big Chief Bunter". For some reason the cannibals like the look of Bunter, and they make him their chief. Then "The Castaways of Cannibal Island", and at the finish of this one they are all on the high seas once more. Final of the month is "The Man Behind the Scenes". We find out that Ysabel Dick, the beachcomber, is really Brian Mauleverer for whom they have been searching, and he has been the hidden hand behind all their troubles. This long series continues next month.

A pretty good month in the local cinemas. We started with "The Drum" which is a British film in technicolour. It stars Sabu, and is about the British army helping an Indian prince to deal with his usurping uncle. With this one there was a pleasant little British musical entitled "Melody and Romance" which stars Hughie Green and his band.

Fairish was "Mannequin" with Joan Crawford and Spencer Tracy. I greatly enjoyed "A Yank at Oxford" starring Robert Taylor, Vivienne Leigh and Maureen O'Sullivan, about a cocky American at our University. It is the first film, made in England, by a new Anglo-American company. Great stuff.

Another very pleasant British film is "Owd Bob" with Will Fyffe, about a farmer's faithful dog which is accused of killing sheep. Quite a neat comedy was "Tovarich" starring Claudette Colbert, Charles Boyer, and Basil Rathbone, about a royal Russian husband and his wife who flee from the revolution and take jobs as servants in a weird household in Paris. But a bit stodgy was Wallace Beery in "Port of the Seven Seas", set on the waterfront of Marseilles. But rather delicious was Jessie Matthews in "Sailing Along". Another British film this one. Lots of home grown films this month.

And last, but not least, I come to the Gorgeous Gem. Most of the month the St. Jim's chums have been going on with their caravanning holiday. First of the

month is "Charley's Champion". Charley Chipps, a homeless waif, joins up with the caravanners, and Gussy is his champion, in spite of Charley's mysterious conduct. Then, "Stranded" in which the caravan gets stuck after the heavy rain. And the party meet up with Coker of Greyfriars, and play a cricket match against Coker's eleven. And then the final of the holiday series, "Rivals of the Road". Now the party is in Devonshire, and there is great fun and games when they meet up with their old rivals, Figgins & Co.

To end September, they are back at St. Jim's, and there is a new boy in the story "Levison Minor". Everybody supposed that the brother would be a black sheep like Levison of the Fourth. But Frank proves that he's as straight as his major is crooked.

The Cedar Creek stories are "The Cedar Creek Sweepstake", in which Kern Gunten, the rotter of the school, thinks he can wangle the sweepstake so he will be the winner; "Schoolboy Justice" in which the Cedar Creek pals set out to punish a heavy-handed farmer, but Frank Richards saves the farmer's little son from injury, and so saves himself and his friends from the results of dealing with Mr. Grimm. (I remember the same plot in a St. Jim's story once.)

Then "A Cockney in Canada" which introduces a new boy, Harold Hopkins, to Cedar Creek. And finally "For His Father's Sake", about Beauclerc and his shifty father.

The Benbow tales have been "From Foes to Friends" in which Drake is beaten in a fight with Rodney, and then the two became great pals, followed by "Tuckey Toodles' Tuck-In" in which Daubeny tries to make trouble for Drake and Rodney, and the result is a feed for Toodles. Then "The Shadow of Disgrace" in which a bookmaker rings up Drake on the Head's phone, followed by "Caught in His Own Trap" with Daubeny finding himself the victim of his treacherous scheme against Drake. The Gem is just great from start to finish these days. I hope it goes on for ever.

Just before I went back to School, Dad treated us all to a visit to the Duchess Theatre in London to see a new play by Emyln Williams entitled "The Corn is Green". It's lovely!

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

S.O.L. No. 346, "The Slave Trader's Vengeance", comprised the second set of 3 stories from the 9 story Kenya series of the Magnet of 1931. S.O.L. No. 347, "Chums of the Open Road" consisted of the 6-story hiking series of Rookwood, plus the two following stories which formed a sequel to the series (8 stories in all) from the Boys' Friend of the summer and early autumn of 1924.

From Danny's Gem in September 1938, "Charley's Champion" had been "Charley and the Caravanners" in the 1919 Gem; "Stranded" had appeared under the same title in 1919; "Rivals of the Road" had been "Ructions on the Road" in 1919, the last of the series. This had been an 11 story series in 1919, but two stories were omitted in 1938. The omission of these two stories may have been due to the very early "post war" subjects in these two tales. For instance, "A Midnight Mystery" dealt with an underhand farmer who was "food hoarding" and evading the regulations of the period.

The 1919 stories had been the perfect length for the 1938 Gem which carried a heavy supporting programme. But, after the 1919 Caravanning series, they presented "Levison Minor" which had originally appeared at the end of 1916 when the stories were much longer. In consequence, "Levison Minor", which bore the same title in 1916, was drastically pruned in 1938.

The September 1938 Cedar Creek stories in the Gem had been 4 consecutive stories in the Boy's Friend in October 1917. All the titles were changed. "The Cedar Creek Sweepstake" of 1938 had been "The Rogue of the School" in 1917; "Schoolboy Justice" had been "Trouble for Three"; (the Gem story which Danny recalled as having the same plot as this one was "The Scamps of the School" in the 1913 Gem, reprinted as "Getting Even With Ratty" in 1937); the two final Cedar Creek tales mentioned by Danny had appeared under the same titles in 1917.

The Benbow tales of September 1938 had been 4 consecutive tales in the Greyfriars Herald of the last 3 week of 1919 and the first week of 1920. "From Foes to Friends" had been "A Fight to a Finish" originally; "Tuckey Toodles" Tuck-In" had been "A Pig in Clover"; "The Shadow of Disgrace" had been "Under the Shadow"; and "Caught in his Own Trap" had been "Light at Last" in the first week of 1920.

The Anglo-American company which started off with "A Yank at Oxford" which Danny saw in his local cinema in 1938, went on to make the enormously successful smash hits "The Citadel" and "Good-bye, Mr. Chips" before the war finished the company off.

The delightful "Owd Bob" was made again years later as a Lassie film using the same plot, but I forget the title now.

WANTED: Bullseyes. Swop prewar Chums, Champion Annuals, Hamiltonia: Ron Swift, 10 Kingsway, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside. Telephone 051 608 8427.

WANTED: Poor Dear Esmé, by A.M. Burrage. Details to D.J. Adley, 22 Scott Crescent, South Harrow, Midx.

FOR SALE: Captain 1905/6: Chums 1913, 1916, 1917, 1920, 1922, 1931, good condition. B.O.P. 1924 mint condition. Schoolgirls' Own Annual 1934. Offers to 10 Runsam Close, Runsam, Barnstaple, Devon, EX32 9ES. Tel: 0271 - 43918.

Your Editor says—



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"A GAME OF BILLIARDS, WHARTON OLD MAN?"

A Few Thoughts from BARRIE STARK

The summer vacation weather was turning out to be enjoyable, clear and sunny, no wind to speak of, and no rain. Just the sort of weather that everyone home from school wanted for outdoor activities, and a blessing to harassed parents and others who had been hoping hard for good weather, trying not to be pessimistic the while.

At Wharton Lodge Wells ordered the household, thankful that conditions were favourable to the staff and the work (things weren't what they were, y'know); the Lodge would soon be empty except for dear Madam, Miss Amy, who was no trouble, so that staff would be able to get on happily and in peace. And then Wells frowned. Oh dear, yes there was one snag. There's always a woodlouse somewhere in the woodpile, to be sure. Upstairs there was activity, banter and good humour with running comments on the intentions for the day, for much could be done even though things were behind time.

"Right, I'm ready" observed Wharton, and seeing that his friends were too, he led the way down to the hall. Then came the cold douche - "Where's Bunter?" they all asked as they came to a halt. "Ye Gods" breathed Cherry, giving it all the meaning he could, "Yes where's Bunter?" growled Bull, "we can't go without him, especially as we've promised the Colonel faithfully to get him out of the way. What a blessed nuisance he is" continued Johnny quite put out, his complaint supported by all.

Wharton clicked his teeth "I shall have to go and find him. You chaps wait in the hall. I'll be as quick as I can, but you know what Bunter is - and I do hope that he's had breakfast". "In the plural you mean" qualified Cherry, adding with emphasis "Oh blow!"

Aunt Amy smiled benevolently at her nephew as he walked past in a determined manner. Always a leader, she thought, and ready to do a good turn for anybody, little realising that he was about to do someone a good turn-out when he could be found!

Wharton tried the bedrooms, expecting to find a snoozing Bunter in one of them; then the dressing rooms and even the wardrobes. Downstairs, Wells responded that he had not seen Bunter and had been somewhat mystified at his absence, leaving Wharton to do the rounds again, without success.

Then it came to Harry - a recollection of Bunter taking the newspaper almost from under the Colonel's nose, and remarking about something "on" that morning, as he noisily rustled through the daily, looking for the entertainment pages; yes, the one place Wharton, hadn't

tried, and indeed, where he had not expected to have to look was - the staff-room in the attic which housed the T.V., a new arrangement the Colonel had made since Wells had suggested it.

Wharton pushed open the door not too gently to find, surely enough Bunter sprawled in a chair, intently watching the championship Snooker match, which had now reached a critical point. But it wasn't the champion who was playing, for in Bunter's mind he had superimposed his own fat figure and play onto the slim player on the screen, and it was Bunter for whom the applause sounded after yet another clever and successful shot.

Bunter warned Wharton strongly - "Quiet!", but then added (the stricture for silence forgotten) "Care for a game afterwards? I'm a dab hand now y'know." Then "Grrrurgh!" quite unintentionally as Wharton yanked him out of the chair. "You fat freak - I've been looking everywhere for you, you know we're going out. And what are you doing here anyway!". With that, Wharton switched off the television, and somehow propelled the protesting Bunter through the door, down to the hall to be dealt with summarily by the waiting chums, before being spruced up and marched outside to participate, unwillingly, in their activities.

Snooker today, Billiards yesterday, and it's the latter which often features in the Greyfriars stories (and elsewhere). Bunter, even without T.V., is as good (or bad) a player as he always was, and boastful enough to take on anybody for a stake, never expecting to pay out. Blessed is he who receives, thinks Bunter, with high hopes, of course, of being twice blessed!

If it isn't Bunter then it's Loder, or Smithy, or Skinner and his lot, or Ponsonby & Co. who make for the Billiard table, sometimes in doubtful surroundings, like The Cross Keys.

Billiards, however, is an honourable game, and a popular alternative to some other less wholesome activities. As well as in special Billiards Clubs, the game was often played in Temperance Halls in pre-war days, and, as far as I am aware, may have been played more often than the now fashionable snooker. That sometimes games were played for a stake, and that dirty deeds were plotted in the Billiards rooms, is likely, but I don't think that the game quite deserves the overall disreputable taint that Frank Richards somehow managed to give it. According to him, nobody played the game for pleasure, but for gain. I suppose that this was in accord with the high moral tone of the stories, so much a feature of the story-papers, which generally promoted the philosophy of healthy outdoor pursuits and adventures. By contrast,

an indoor game of Billiards, usually in shady circumstances, could be used as a pointer to ruination and Hell Fire, while the alternative was the highly moral but straight and narrow path to an ever elusive goal.

But tainted Billiards is not; ah me, Mr. Richards, what have you done? A cold tub sir? No thanks! Billiards, or Snooker, yes rather - any time!

CAPTAIN W.E. JOHNS

by GEORGE BEAL

I must express admiration for Jack Adrian's expertise and tenacity in discovering the original publication date of Captain Johns' novel Mossyface. In their biography of Johns, Peter Berresford Ellis and Piers Williams quote the first publication date as 1932, and no doubt will be grateful for Jack Adrian's research. It will be interesting to learn what he discovers from his future search through the files of the Weekly Telegraph.

To further the fund of knowledge on the subject of 'Biggles', may I mention that Ellis and Williams give a bibliography of the works of W.E. Johns, although they do not claim it to be complete. I myself published at least four 'Biggles' short stories when I edited the Daily Mail Boys' Annual in the mid-fifties under the pseudonym 'John Bellamy'. So far as I am aware, the stories have not been published elsewhere, and I list those which I know:

- The Man Who Came by Night** (1956)
- The Case of the Two Bright Boys** (1957)
- Biggles Lays a Ghost** (1958)
- Dawn Patrol** (1959)

BIGGLES
Lays a Ghost



By Captain W. E. Johns

All these stories were illustrated by the late Eric Parker. I left the Daily Mail in 1960, so there may have been others published later.

DAWN PATROL

A Biggles Story

BY CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS

POLICE Pilot "Ginger" Hebblethwaite stepped down from the cockpit of the Auster aircraft used for daily patrol work, and after a brief "She's Okay" to the senior maintenance mechanic, who was standing by, strode briskly to the Operations Room.

Biggles, officially Air-Detective-Inspector Bigglesworth of the Air Police looked up from the desk at which he was working, and after a glance at the clock remarked: "You're back early. Engine trouble?"

"No, the machine's all right, but I've seen something you should know about. It may turn out to be nothing irregular but I didn't feel like handling it on my own."

"Tell me," requested Biggles, putting down his pen and reaching for a cigarette.

"At six-five I was cruising on a course due West, keeping an eye towards the coast on the routine Kent to Devon run, when I heard London Airport Control in a proper flap. There was a fair amount of cloud drifting up so I'd tuned in to keep clear of cross-Channel traffic. It gathered some fool was barging about in a light machine right across the course of a Viscount coming in from Nice with a full load of passengers. They could see him on the screen but they couldn't make contact to tell him to get out of the way. Either the fellow at the stick wasn't fitted with radio, or wasn't listening, or maybe his equipment was out of order. I don't know about that, but the Control Officer was nearly in hysterics."

"So was the Captain of the Viscount, I'll bet," put in Biggles, sympathetically.



*After a brief "She's Okay",
he strode briskly to the
Operations Room*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC PARKER

* * * *



DO YOU REMEMBER ?

By

ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 229 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 332 - "The Mystery of Holly Lodge"

Monty Lowther was not, perhaps, a very attractive character. His puns and verbal quibbles made his companions groan, and his jokes were usually far from amusing. In addition, like so many other pranksters, he never appreciated a joke against himself. He was, on the whole, a strange sort of person to qualify to be among the leading juniors in the Gem, but of course it must be remembered that in the beginning Blake & Co. were the heroes of St. Jim's. Monty Lowther's prominence came about as a result of an accident of history after the closure of Clavering College.

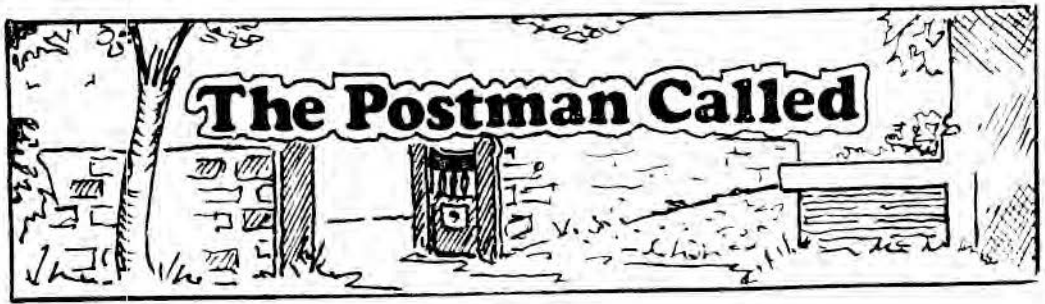
The first Gem story reprinted in this monthly library was about Lowther's April Fool's jest that went badly wrong, with the result that the intended victims - Blake & Co. - were the ones who scored. Nevertheless, this was an appropriate entry into the main story, a pair of Gems about the mysterious disappearance of Lowther's uncle and guardian, Mr. James Lowther, J.P., M.P., from his home at Holly Lodge in Hampshire. Mr. Lowther was acknowledged to be a "crusty old bird" but, as Charles Hamilton remarked, goodness of heart is sometimes accompanied by crustiness of temper, and certainly Monty Lowther was genuinely upset to learn about his uncle's disappearance. He insisted that Tom Merry and Manners spend the Easter holidays at Holly Lodge, as arranged, with the new intention of searching for his uncle, despite the disapproval of the housekeeper, Miss Skeene, and the secretary, Mr. Bosanney. The net result of all this was the disappearance of Monty Lowther as well.

The Gem featured a number of cases of mysterious disappearances over the years, and again a number of these were multiple disappearances, but the Holly Lodge mystery had the unusual feature that the place of imprisonment was never traced by those who were searching: the arrest of the guilty party caused that person to reveal the place

in order to avoid being hanged. On balance, it would be fair to state that the Holly Lodge episodes were quite novel though the series was somewhat brief, as were all the individual St. Jim's stories in the nineteen-twenties.

It was D'Arcy who was able to solve part of the mystery, and it was again appropriate that the last Gem in the Schoolboys' Own Library should feature him. Mr. Selby had received a circular from some share-pushing swindlers, and in a fit of irritation he crumpled it up and threw it out of his study window, accidentally knocking off Gussy's topper. After the indignant junior's unsuccessful attempt to extract an apology from Mr. Selby (all he in fact secured was a caning from Mr. Railton), the remainder of the story dealt with Gussy's naivety in attempting to purchase some shares, and this indeed constituted a truly hilarious ending to a highly entertaining volume of the Schoolboys' Own Library.

* * * * *



ERIC FAYNE (Crookham): I was interested in Simon Garrett's review of the Mastermind programme on TV in which a Mr. Foss answered questions on Frank Richards.

I very much doubt whether any of us would have done much better, though Mr. Foss was disappointing. I know that I would not. The trouble was with the questions asked.

I pride myself that there would be few questions on Frank Richards' stories in the Magnet which I could not answer, but the questions in Mastermind were taken mainly from the post war Bunter books and the Frank Richards' Autobiography.

I have, of course, all the post war Bunter books on my shelves, their dust jackets gleaming with their pristine freshness. I read them all as I bought them, and have never read any one of them since. I could not answer questions on the plots of those stories, and I imagine that Mr. Foss was in the same boat.

I fancy that Mr. Foss might have excelled himself had he stipulated that the subject should be "Frank Richards in the Magnet".

R.J. DRUMMOND-SMITH (Newton Abbot): Re. "Salute to the Sleuths" CD July, I recall that Dixon Hawke stories appeared each week in the 1920's and 1930's, and perhaps later, in the "Sporting Post", which was the Saturday evening sports edition of the "Dundee Evening Telegraph", one of the many newspapers and publications of D.C. Thomson (for whom, incidentally, my father, brother and self worked as reporters over a joint period of some 40 years).

I think Dixon Hawke had an assistant, whose name might have been Tommy, and each story occupied a page towards the back of the paper. Sorry I cannot recall more, although memory (which is ever fallible) indicates that there was a Dixon Hawke Library in small paperback format.

I hope that some of your readers will be better informed than I, so that I can read about a boyhood detective favourite in a future edition of CD.

H. HEATH (Bexhill-on-Sea): A story concerning Jack Drake, Dick Rodney & Co. of the Benbow is featured in the Holiday Annual of 1921. Were the chums of the Benbow featured in any other Holiday Annual? I should add that my query is solely concerned with the Benbow/St. Winifred's theme and not Greyfriars.

A.N. GODFREY (Harbury): Particularly enjoyed Jack Adrian's "Mossy Face" piece in the latest issue. I've still never managed to track down a copy though one'll doubtless come my way with time. The points raised concerning the Clinton K. Stacey publication are very relevant and I'm glad they were raised. On purchasing the volume I made note of over 30 errors - some quite glaring - and I'm far from being such an expert on Johns' works as is Jack Adrian. Mind you I have been reading them on and off for over twenty years now.

BILL LOFTS (London): The mysterious Greyfriars story "Rolling in Money" that appeared in The Gem in 1938, was almost certainly the story "Bunter's Cheque" that was in the small Boys Herald in 1921. This short tale was also reprinted in The Holiday Annual as "Chequemate" in 1929. I was a bit surprised to read in Danny's Diary that almost all the contents of the first 18 issues of Greyfriars Herald were penned by Charles Hamilton. It has long been established that G.R. Samways was the main writer. Perhaps a slip of the pen from the usually so reliable 'Danny'?

The date of "Mossy Face" in No. 121 Weekly Telegraph Novels, believed the first contribution by W.E. Johns, can be dated as 23rd September, 1922. Certainly as Jack Adrian remarks, the weekly copies of the main paper make very interesting perusal with all sorts of famous names cropping up. What is remarkable is the number of Sexton Blake authors with Joseph Stammer, and L.C. Douthwaite contributing, as well as Thoms Henry, the famous, lovable William illustrator.

Thomas Henry Scott wrote 6 books of fiction, and another about ships. He had a short life as a novelist, all being in the 1931/5 period.

Lastly, contrary to rumour, I certainly did not compile the questions in the Greyfriars Mastermind! I am given to understand that the Mr. Foss involved has already joined one of our organisations.

JOHN T. ROBYNS (Hayle): A recent *Danny's Diary*, together with Eric Fayne's comments, revived memories of long ago in reference to the late Pearl White. I therefore hope that this ancient print of her may bring back further memories of the great and much loved serial artiste whom I met in Paris in 1934. Pearl appeared in person at the Lyceum Theatre in September 1925.

Bob Whiter's clever drawings of the famous detectives are wonderful.

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BUNTER!

A musical play based on the characters of Frank Richards,
Book and Lyrics by John Judd, with music by Paul Knight.

(Reviewed by Edward Murch)

This new musical in two acts, loosely based on the 1934 Magnet Smedley series, received its first performance at The Northcott Theatre, Exeter on 21st June, 1988, and ran for four weeks.

There was an original opening: on stage a proscenium-high facsimile of the front cover of a 1930's Magnet opened slowly, and then, quite literally, Billy Bunter leapt from the inside pages to greet us. The subsequent sets were splendid: the quad, the studies, and the form room recreating the atmosphere of the old school as I remember it; and the cricket pavilion scene which opened the second act, with masters and boys in white flannels and straws, justifiably drew spontaneous applause from the appreciative audiences.

The cast was excellent; the characters for the most part looking like those pictured in the Magnets of the 30's. My one criticism was that the part of Mr. Vernon-Smith (well played by John Hart Dyke) had been written as that of a cultured gentleman with absolutely nothing of the self-made man about him. Of the Famous Five, Huree Singh (Michael J. Unwin) and Johnny Bull (Michael Winsor) came over best to me. Bruce Morrison was a convincing Vernon-Smith. Larry Lascelles (Philip Tsaras, who also played M. Charpentier) and Mr. Quelch (John Griffiths) were well in character. Patsy Rowlands was superb as Mrs. Kebble who, believe it or not, had a "quiver for Quelch"! The versatile and experienced David Timson was an admirably definitive Bunter. There was a zany performance by Martin Wimbush as Smedley. He played him as a sort of academic pantomime Demon King, and was appropriately hissed now and then by the junior members of the audience and by some of their seniors too. Elena Ferrari who had played a greying Mrs. Mimble in Act One gave a sparkling performance as Bessie Bunter in Act Two. Gosling played by Crispin Harris was almost Gosling to a T (but definitely not a TT).

The musical numbers were well arranged and well staged. "Greyfriars", "Nasty Habits" (Smedley's number: who else?), "My Flexible Friend" (Quelch's serenade to his cane), and "True Team Spirit" stay in the memory; but the pick of the numbers for me was "For All The Wrong Reasons" beautifully rendered, as you would expect, by Patsy Rowlands.

I found this a most agreeable entertainment, so much so, that I saw it three times, and if it were still running I'd gladly do the round trip of sixty miles (passing Hilton Hall on my way) to see it again.

A word of praise to the Front of House Staff: the Foyer had been suitably dressed as part of a school. The Manager's Office had become the "Headmaster's Study", "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" were now "Girls" and "Boys". The souvenir shop was the "Stationery Store" where copies of the Howard Baker volumes were on sale, and being sought by some of the young entry. The souvenir programme in Magnet format was a joy to behold and read. The tuck in the "Tuckshop" was good too.

John Judd and Paul Knight are to be congratulated on their writing and direction. I hope now that their work will go on to be seen by a wider (not in the literal Bunterian sense, of course) audience. Certainly from my own experience and observation it is a work that brought back a gleam of lost youth to ageing Greyfriars eyes; and it could well be the means of bringing the magic of the old school for the first time to a whole new generation.

As Horace Coker once said: "There's no school in the country like Greyfriars. Fellows talk about Eton and Harrow and Winchester and Rugby; but that, of course, is only because they haven't been to Greyfriars and don't know the real goods. You can take it from me that Greyfriars is the pick of the basket".

And, for once, who shall gainsay him?

* * * * *



The Greyfriars Book Club

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OUR BOOKSHELVES

"LORD MAULEVERER'S BEWITCHMENT"

Reviewed by Eric Fayne

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Book Club
Special: £18.00)

The overall title to this volume does not sound like Frank Richards, and, in fact, it isn't - but the story, to which the title refers, IS - and that's the main thing. After all, what's in a title?

And, much more important, it's a superb volume. It contains, in the usual immaculate bindings of these lovely books, 6 Red Magnets consecutive from the early summer of 1915.

There is no famous Magnet story in the book; nothing really memorable at all; yet it is tingling with nostalgia for those who love the Magnet, Greyfriars, and Frank Richards. There is a charm in reading the work of the author when he was comparatively young, and everything was new and it is fascinating to compare his early Greyfriars with the stories from later on when he was at the peak of his powers.

The opening tale, "Fifty Pounds Reward" is full of originality and fun. Gobbey's Ginger Beer offers £50 reward to anyone who can prove that there is anything impure in the beverage they sell. Bunter and Fish get the idea to add impurity of their own - and claim the reward. Fish says they can add quinine or salt to some bottles, and then claim the £50 reward. Makes you wonder whether Fish and Bunter would not feel more at home at Borstal than Greyfriars. A joy in its way; typical of the Fish tales of early days.

"The Scouts' Victory" has a decided war flavour. Bunter befriends a hapless Belgian refugee, to prove that he, Bunter, is a good scout. Unfortunately, the waif turns out to be a particularly villainous German spy.

"The Old Boys' Challenge" is a sub story from Samways. His youthful exuberance and lack of experience show in a story which is interesting as an early sub effort. The plot takes some swallowing. Colonel Wharton, on leave from the Front, comes to Greyfriars with a team of Old Boys. Mr. Prout, of all people, challenges them to a cricket match, and Mr. Prout opens the innings together with Paget

of the Third form, an absurd incident which is delightfully pictured on that week's red cover.

"Mauly's Flirtation" has Mauleverer falling in love with Miss Bella Bunbury from the bunshop. A romance of the type which featured now and then in the early Magnet and Gem but disappeared in later times.

Very interesting is "The Schoolboy Lawyer" with Peter Todd in the role. Peter has inherited a good knowledge of the law from his solicitor father. In later times Peter's legal knowledge featured in the stories occasionally, and this seems to have been the start of it all.

Finally "The Mystery of the Gables" is a sub story, probably by Brooks. It is quite well plotted and told, its only drawback being that it did not come from the creator of the characters.

All in all a beautiful volume. Another treasure for every connoisseur to own with pride.

STATELY HOMES AND SUPER SLEUTHS

by MARY CADOGAN

The English Country House: A Celebration by Fred J. Maroon (Pavilion Books £16.95) is a sumptuous production of large page colour photographs of a fine selection of homes in the Mauleverer Towers bracket. As well as interior and exterior shots there are short but informative linking texts, so that the visual splendours of Halls, Long Galleries, Drawing Rooms, Chapels and Gardens are enhanced by intriguing glimpses into the history of these great houses, and into the lives of their residents, both past and present.

Super sleuths from the Golden Age of the genre continue to enjoy their 'come-back' in S.S. Van Dine's The Benson Murder Case which features Philo Vance, and Mr. Pottermack's Oversight by R. Austin Freeman, in which the redoubtable Dr. Thorndyke is the star (both published in the Hogarth Crime series, at £3.95). Wonderfully nostalgic and atmospheric reading: brain-sharpening too - what more could one ask?

Coming forward from the 1920s and '30s to the '80s, one of my favourite modern detectives is Kate Fansler, a Professor of Literature who finds herself called into a New England women's college to investigate the murder of a noted historian and novelist. Murder mysteries which have to be unravelled in the close confines of school or college communities are always especially satisfying, and Sweet Death, Kind Death by Amanda Cross, which chronicles Kate's investigations, is no exception (Virago £4.50).



SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.

Come and meet MARY CADOGAN who will be the guest speaker at our next meeting on SUNDAY, 25th SEPTEMBER, 1988 at 2.30 prompt. BILL LOFTS will also give his usual interesting talk. All are welcome but please notify TIM SALISBURY, 20 Uphill Road South, Uphill, Weston-Super-Mare (Tel. W.S.M. 26032) if you are attending.

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

There was a lower than usual attendance of 12 at the August meeting because of the holiday season. We were delighted to welcome Keith Normington from the Midland Club.

Joan Colman announced that Geraldine and Bruce Lamb now had a baby daughter (Christine Helen Rose), and congratulations were sent from the Club.

Paul Galvin reported on the forthcoming W.E. Johns Meeting to be held in Nottingham in October at which at least 30 people would be present, including a group of fans from Holland. Darrell Swift gave a progress report on the Just William Meeting, to be held in Norwich in April 1989. Our Club Dinner will be held on Saturday evening 17th September, 1988 at The Stansfield Arms, Apperley Bridge (between Leeds and Bradford), and all hobby friends and guests are invited to be with us at this informal evening.

Keith Atkinson showed us a Charles Hamilton quiz which had run for three nights in a local paper. Margaret Atkinson presented her authors' faces game into which she had put a lot of thought and effort, taking a year to assemble the collection of authors' pictures. Joan Colman was the winner.

Keith then presented one of his ingenious puzzles, and three members tied for first place. To conclude, Keith read an amusing excerpt from Gem 1295 in which bulldog Towser and Mrs. Mimms' cat encounter each other in the middle of the night, with expectedly dramatic results. Keith was warmly applauded for his hitherto unsuspected animal impressions. NEXT MEETING AT OUR USUAL VENUE is on 10th September: "Written Off In The Prime of Their Lives" will be the theme from Michael Bourne, our guest speaker, with Paul Galvin presenting an item from "Library Corner".

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

LONDON O.B.B.C.

Don Webster, deputising for the Chairman, welcomed nineteen of us to the August Meeting on Sunday the 18th, at the hospitable, Loughton, address of Chris and Suzanne Harper.

The formal business out of the way, we settled down to unravel an anagram quiz set by Graham Bruton and won by Roger Jenkins and Mark Taha. This was followed by a reading from the Ravenspur series in the Magnet by Tony Potts. Tea time allowed us to circulate or sit pleasantly in the garden as we partook of the good things provided by our hosts. After this, Bill Bradford took us for the customary trip down Memory Lane by reading our own Newsletter No. 221 of April, 1971. Duncan Harper gave us a reading from a story from a 1938 "Thriller" entitled "Enter The Shadow" and, just to ensure that we had been paying attention, followed this with a Quiz on points from the story. Yours truly followed by reading two entries in a recent Club competition - one by Frank Westaby, a postal member, and one by Don Webster. Others entries will be read at future meetings. The Meeting was then thrown open for informal discussion on flaws in some of our favourite stories. The meeting closed with the usual hearty vote of thanks to our hosts.

Our next meeting will be held on the third Sunday in the month instead of the second. The date, the 18th September, 1988, the venue, the Chingford Horticultural Society's Hall in the Larkshall Road, North Chingford. The proceedings will start at 2.00 p.m. and there will be a buffet provided at 5.00 p.m. (approx.)

The cost is £3.50 per head, payable to Mrs. Audrey Potts who is arranging the Buffet. If you have not already informed Audrey you are attending this celebratory occasion, please do so as soon as possible so that she knows the numbers for whom to cater.

Audrey and Tony Potts' telephone number is (01) 529 1317.

LESLIE ROWLEY

BABS AND CO AND THE GROTTO OF MYSTERY:

PART TWO

By Margery Woods.

Babs sense of unease still troubled her next morning, that first cloudless holiday dawn with its promise of heat to come, and Babs knew her unease would not go until the afternoon brought the visit to Lincroft. Meanwhile, there was new territory to explore and a glorious air of freedom in which to revel.

"I vote we go out and explore that island," suggested Clara. The chums were down on the beach in the little private cove belonging to the house. The



island had intrigued them all since their first glimpse of it that morning. Gaunt and rugged, crowned by what looked like the ruin of some ancient fortress, it reared out of the sea some half mile or so from the shore.

"Does anyone live there?" wondered Janet.

"I don't think so," Mabs responded. "Daddy was interested too, he rowed out just after he got here but it seemed deserted. It's called Mordant's Isle, and was supposed to be a smugglers haunt long ago. But there's only one place you can land, and the seaward side is very rocky."

"Did you say there were two row-boats?"

Mabs nodded. "But one is very small."

"Not big enough for Bessie?"

"Bessie's going rowing in a deckchair," chuckled Clara, and Bessie, settling herself comfortably after a very satisfying, Bunter-sized breakfast, glowered indignantly then elevated her snub little nose.

So it was Clara in the small boat and Babs and Janet and Jemima who eventually set off for the island, leaving Mabs to complete a promised task for her mother, Marjorie to write a letter, and Bessie happily snoozing in the sun.

It was a glorious morning, the kind of morning when the whole world should be at peace to enjoy it. The sea sparkled like a sheet of blue crystal, catching a myriad sun-diamonds on each ripple. But as they neared the island they all sensed a slight chilling in the atmosphere, metaphysical rather than climatic, as though the island sought to repel unwelcome visitors. Babs rested on her oars, watching Clara, who had pulled on ahead. Obviously the tomboy intended to land if she could. Janet glanced enquiringly at Babs, and for a moment their boat bobbed peacefully on the gentle swell. "Shall we?" Janet's raised brows signalled and then as Babs prepared to move there was a sudden yell from the direction of the island. Once again Babs turned her head, just as Jemima exclaimed: "I swear it's old Sal!"

"It cant! be!"

Babs stared at the figure of the old woman who had appeared on the small strip of shingle below the ruin. She did have the crone-like look of their old enemy at Pegg, but a second scan told them that this was a stranger, though no less unpleasant and no less vituperative.

Brandishing a heavy stick, she advanced to the shore edge, threatening Clara in no uncertain terms what would happen if Clara dared to land.

"You're trespassing!" she shrieked. "This be privately property. Clear off, do you hear!"

Clara wore her most mutinous expression, and for a moment Babs thought she was going to defy the evil-looking old crone. Then reason prevailed, and reluctantly Clara fended her boat away from the rickety little landing stage. She rowed with strong angry strokes until she was alongside Babs. "Miserable old witch," she muttered. "Come on, let's have a look round the far side."

But there was little to invite when they rounded the jagged easterly side of Mordant's Isle. A couple of ancient sea-stained buoys warned of rock or shoal hazards, and there was no sign of any landing place, only sheer rock rising from dark, choppy water. The only consolation---if it could be termed as such---was a more comprehensive view of the ruins. Part of the old fortress had collapsed entirely, but a section of it appeared more or less intact, and at the far end

a smaller building, perhaps originally a cottage, had been added at some later date.

"That old woman might be squatting there," surmised Janet."

"I think there's a cave." Ever the adventurous, Clara sculled over to investigate. "There is---it's huge but it's jolly rough."

"Splice the sextant, sound the mainbrace," piped the irrepressible Jemima. "Methinks it's a perfect day for a shipwreck."

"Are you coming?" yelled the tomboy.

"We'll let you go first," beamed Jemima, relaxing back in languid fashion, then wincing as Janet inadvertantly shipped a feathering of briny over the elegant one's natty white linen slacks. "Tut-tut! That's the trouble with the sea, you know."

"What is?"

"It's so wet."

"Idiot!"

Babs looked at Clara's wildly bobbing boat and called: "I think we should leave it. We don't want to keep lunch waiting."

"You mean Bessie's lunch!"

"I've found something," cried the tomboy. "Stuck in a rock crevice. A little shoe. A child's I think."

"What treasure!" mocked Jemima. "Is there a reward?"

"There's something stuck in the toe---"

"Double the reward." "And the cave looks like a huge grotto---it goes right under the cliff but I think---"

They saw Clara's boat spin wildly and the tomboy suddenly rowing frantically.

"It's like a whirlpool!"

"Come out of it!" called Babs worriedly. "The time's getting on. Don't forget we're going to see Anne this afternoon."

Suddenly there was no more argument about staying to attempt an exploration of the island and its grotto. They were all anxious and curious to see Anne again, and after lunch they wasted no time in changing into pretty summery afternoon dresses and setting out to walk the mile and a bit to Lincroft Hall.

But when the winding lane eventually gave them sight of the Hall in the distance some of the banter died from their carefree chatter. Even Bessie forgot that she hadn't brought her toffees, a sad oversight on the plump duffer's part, and stopped lamenting the fact.

"Doesn't it look lonely?" whispered Majorie Hazeldine. "I don't think I care to spend a night alone there."

"We don't know that she was alone," said Babs, trying to remain logical. "And maybe the living rooms are at the back---people can't always afford to maintain the huge drawing rooms and reception rooms these days."

"Could be," Mabs agreed. "It's an enormous place."

Then they all gave small exclamations of relief. "Look, there's a car at the door. Anne has got friends there, after all," cried Babs.

Laughing now, they quickened their steps, half prepared to see Anne emerge to greet them before Clara tugged at the old bell pull.

For a moment, nothing. No sound, no movement. Then the lock grated within and the door creaked open. Smiles and greetings died on the chums' lips. Not

Anne. Not the Canadian girl they'd all taken such a liking to. Instead, framed in the doorway and anything but welcoming, were the couple from the train. The same man in the same grey suit, his sandy hair brushed thinly back from his brow, and the unsmiling woman with the sallow cheeks and shifty eyes.

"Well?" the man rasped.

"We've---where is Anne?"

"Anne who?"

"Anne Bonnard---she invited---"

"You're at the wrong house. There's no-one of that name here."

The man stepped back, and the door thudded shut in the faces of the astonished and now frightened chums.

"What now?"

Janet Jordan voiced the one thought of each of them as the chums of Cliff House stared their dismay at one another.

Clara Trevelyn, the Fourth's tomboy sports captain, clenched her fists and took a step towards the heavy front door of Lincroft Hall, slammed in their faces only moments ago, and looked as though she was considering a fresh assault on its dark forbidding panels.

Babs shook her head. She had seen a curtain twitch at the nearest window and knew that their movements were being watched closely by that strange, sinister couple who had pursued Anne Bonnard the previous day. But what had happened to Anne, who had walked so blithely and confidently through that same door, watched by the chums only last night? Babs took Clara's arm and said loudly: "Let's go, girls. She's not here."

"But...?"

"Not just now, girls," Babs whispered. "We'll talk later." She set off down the drive, waving her companions to follow her, and not until they were out of earshot and sight did she stop and say: "You recognised them?"

"Didn't you?" Clara stared back, and Babs smiled faintly. "I just wanted confirmation, that's all. And we certainly weren't being fanciful about that awful couple."

"I think we should go back," cried Clara, "and tell them we know they've got Anne in there and---"

"But we don't know for certain, old Spartans," Jemima broke in. "Nor do we know why. Now, the old brain-pan tells me that a spot of elimination and deduction is---"

"Jimmy! Never mind the Sherlock act! Get on with it!" they chorussed.

Jemima afixed her monocle and studied the horizon with a thoughtful gaze. "First, friend Anne does not have her own transport--- unless she has acquired it since last night. Unlikely, wouldn't you say, in a remote spot like this."

"But the car at the door?"

"That, my budding Tinkers, was hired. The little notice stuck in the rear window was of a garage in Redeminster---"

"Where Anne got into our compartment!"

"And where the man and woman were left behind!"

"Exactly." Jemima nodded sagely. "So, instead of waiting for the next train here they hired a car. So, we have three possibilities. Anne left of her own accord. Very unlikely. Or she is still in that house. Or, they have taken her some-where."

"But why?"

Jemima shook her head. "We won't get the answer to that until we find Anne. Now, I vote we make some inquiries in Chelcombe. It's a tiny place. They may remember if she left by train, or took the local bus. Or went into a shop. And I think we might ask a few gentle questions about the ownership of Lincroft Hall."

The plan was enthusiastically adopted. Although they were sure that Anne Bonnard was not the kind of girl to invite guests and then simply disappear before they arrived, they saw the wisdom of Jemima's deduction process.

"Where do we get the bus?" asked Bessie plaintively, as they set off along the dusty road to the village."

"We don't," said Clara unsympathetically. "We get there by Shanks Pony."

"I'm n-not gig-getting on any pony," protested Bessie, and glared as the chums dissolved into mirth. "I m-might fall off and---".

The trek ground to a halt. Bessie was already tired, and the two miles between the plump duffer and Chelcombe seemed to hold no invitation whatsoever. Besides, more important, Bessie was in need of sustenance.

For a moment the chums stood uncertainly. Then Mabs said, "Why don't you go back to the manor and see that tea is ready for us when we get back?"

But Bessie did not want to walk back alone. Babs sighed, then, surprisingly, Clara volunteered to go back with Bessie. "I've a couple of things I want to see to," she said carelessly, "and it doesn't need all of us to ask a few questions."

So Bessie and Clara set off towards Merrycombe and the others began the longer hike towards the village. Only Babs frowned a little; Clara did not like missing anything and it was unlike her to turn her back tamely on a guest. Still...

(To be continued.)

POTENT NOSTALGIA

by MARY CADOGAN

Surely all of us who grew up during the nineteen-twenties and thirties will retain affectionate memories of Mabel Lucie Attwell's exuberant, rosy-cheeked, cherub-like characters in our picture and story-books. A new and excellently produced book by Chris Beetles (MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL, Pavilion Books £12.95) provides a wide selection of her illustrations in full and glowing colour, together with an interesting biographical account of this popular artist. I loved this book - which made me feel five years old once again.

(see picture overleaf)

A ubiquitous heroine in many of the girls' Annuals which I used to read was Grace Darling, whose rescue, with her father, of survivors from the wrecked steamer Forfarshire took place one hundred years ago this month. Her heroic action is celebrated in GRACE HAD AN ENGLISH HEART, a lively assessment of reality and myth by Jessica Mitford (Viking £14.95). Pictures, poems and 'spin-offs' such as Grace Darling chocolate tins and brooches adorn the pages of this most attractive book.



PLEASE REMEMBER—DON'T FORGET!—
NEVER LEAVE THE BATHROOM WET,
NOR LEAVE THE SOAP STILL IN THE WATER—
THAT'S A THING YOU NEVER OUGHT'ER!—
AND AS YOU'VE BEEN SO OFTEN TOLD,
NEVER LET THE "HOT" RUN "COLD":
NOR LEAVE THE TOWELS UPON THE FLOOR.
NOR KEEP THE BATH AN HOUR OR MORE—
WHEN OTHER FOLKS ARE WANTING ONE:
JUST DON'T FORGET—IT ISN'T DONE!—
AN' IF YOU'D REALLY DO THE THING—
THERE'S NOT THE SLIGHTEST NEED TO SING!

MADE
LUCIE
ATTWEL

