

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Bob Whiter



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the piles of volumes by my beside (and indeed all over the house) continue to grow, and I fear more strongly than ever that I would need two lifetimes to read everything that attracts me. However, one book which I feel sure will be read without much delay by C.D. subscribers is our Annual, which is now in the course of production. It will contain many good things, and as appetite whetters I'd like to mention Les Rowley's scintillating story 'The Bounder's Christmas Present!', an intriguing tale by George Beal about an encounter between some 'real life' schoolboys and someone of very special interest to us, and a gorgeously atmospheric article by Esmond Kadish which explores the nautical adventures of the girls from Cliff House, and Morcove Schools. Roger Jenkins writes persuasively about some of the minor characters in Hamiltonia, Bill Lofts lifts the lid on new facts about Richmal Crompton's Just William stories, Marion Waters tackles Secret Societies, Ernest Holman dips into Wodehouse, and Jim Cook and others fly the flag for the Nelson Lee and the Sexton Blake sagas. (More trailers next month!) Many of you have already completed your order forms for the Annual, but this is a reminder to readers who have not yet ordered it that it is very helpful to me to know without too much delay how many copies should be printed. If you have mislaid your order forms, I should remind you that the price, including postage etc., is £6.95 for the United Kingdom and £8.55 for readers abroad.

With autumn and winter reading still in mind, I would like to mention that my book on Frank Richards will be published by Viking at the end of this month. Called FRANK RICHARDS: THE CHAP BEHIND THE CHUMS it is a celebration of the author's life and works. Naturally it deals a great deal with the Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and other school stories, but I have attempted also to examine his achievements as a writer of maritime, detective and western tales. Literary assessments are linked by a biographical thread, and FRANK RICHARDS: THE CHAP BEHIND THE CHUMS also contains a bumper collection of illustrations from the old papers, and several previously unpublished photographs. Writing the book has been the fulfilment of a long cherished ambition, and a labour of love. (Next month's C.D. will include a full review of it by Geoffrey Good.)

MARY CADOGAN

MARY CADOGAN
FRANK RICHARDS

THE CHAP BEHIND THE
CHUMS





SOME EXTRA SPECIAL CHARACTERS

by C.H. CHURCHILL

As the saga of St. Frank's unfolded in the pages of the Nelson Lee Library many new characters were conceived in the fertile brain of Edwy Searles Brooks and introduced to us for our enjoyment. At the start, of course, E.S.B. had to invent a whole canvas of characters to start off the picture as it were. The majority of these stayed with us to the end although many of them gradually slipped into the background with only an occasional mention. This, too, happened to many of the new faces introduced over the years. They were in the limelight for a while on their arrival and then faded away, such as Dick Goodwin, Solly Levi, Dodd etc. etc.

A few new characters, however, became leading lights in the Lee stories. I am thinking of six altogether who were really outstanding ones. They were Archie Glenthorpe, William Napoleon Browne and Willy Handforth who were supreme, followed by Reggie Pitt, Buster Boots and Vivian Travers. Pitt became a sort of second Nipper. Buster Boots was a real live wire but I never liked him very much. I preferred Bob Christine as leader of the Monks as he once was. Travers always seemed to me to be a cross between De Valerie and how Reggie Pitt was featured after his reformation until he had thrown off all his old bad habits.

Archie and Browne were unique, of course, and as a pair were unbeatable in schoolboy fiction. Willy Handforth was an amazing little character but to me he always seemed a little overdrawn. Only about thirteen or so he was shown to do rather too much for a lad of that age. Nevertheless, I always thought his exploits made very entertaining reading.

The above were all schoolboys and I have not mentioned any of the different masters that appeared on the scene from time to time. They were a varied lot too. Many very good creations. There was also Phipps, Archie's valet and guiding spirit. Over the years Phipps showed many unsuspected qualities, as in the 1922 holiday series of adventures on "Lagoon" island. Later on he was often of use to Nelson Lee in his detective activities. He was prominent in the "Death of Church" series when Lee used him in important duties such as guarding Church from his enemies

I mentioned above Pitt's reformation. In the Annual I wrote of Fullwood's change of character and said I could not accept this, as Ralph Leslie was such a cad for round about eight years of Lee stories. Too long I think easily to accept such a change. Pitt, however, was only featured as a cad for one series,

eight stories, and then turned a new leaf through having sent Watson into a house which caught fire. Seeing Watson in peril, Pitt dashed in and saved him from certain death. Quite a good reason for causing Pitt to come to his senses and realise how bad his previous behaviour had been. The same applies to De Valerie. He was known as the Rotter on his arrival. He gradually improved over a fairly short period so to me his reformation is acceptable.

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



WILLY HANDFORTH.

The cheery and audacious leader of the Third Form, which he rules with a "rod of iron." Is the younger brother of the celebrated Edward Oswald, from whom he makes a practice of extracting "five bobs." Shrewd and quick-thinking, good at sports, and a passionate lover of animals.

**POISON!**

by Raymond Cure

NASTY STUFF - POISON! It needs careful handling at any time. There are so many ways of being poisoned too. The first examples that spring to mind are cases where somebody has deliberately poisoned another. Then there is food poison, or accidental drinking from the wrong bottle. Then standing on a rusty nail! One could fill a page or more with such cases.

You don't always get a chance to see the poison label on the bottle or the packet. At least, Mr. John Perris didn't, and he was well and truly poisoned. Thereby hangs a tale, a very good tale too, in the Union Jack, No. 1293, July 28th, 1928. Written in the style of Gwyn Evans or Edwy Searles Brooks, this is racey and full of human emotion, with characters that live and die before your very eyes. By law (in case you happen to be deceived into recognising some acquaintance in the story) the editor has to say (on page 19) "The characters in this story are entirely fictitious and are not intended to refer to any living person." Forget it; in this tale they live alright!

John Perris, Mrs. Julia Perris (his second wife), a daughter Nellie, a lover from the past, Philip Moreland, Sexton Blake, Tinker, Splash Page and Inspector Coutts, not forgetting Jack Sanderson (Nellie's boyfriend), all play a full part, with their characters forcefully impressed on the readers' minds, the mark of a good tale.

Don't miss the prologue. You are led gently into the events that shake a whole village. Let the author explain: "Saxenham Village drowsed in the golden warmth of June sunshine, a pretty, ivy-clasped, rose-bowled hamlet, withdrawn and secluded from the ceaseless traffic of the main road. Few can penetrate the winding, leafy lanes which linked the village with the outside world.

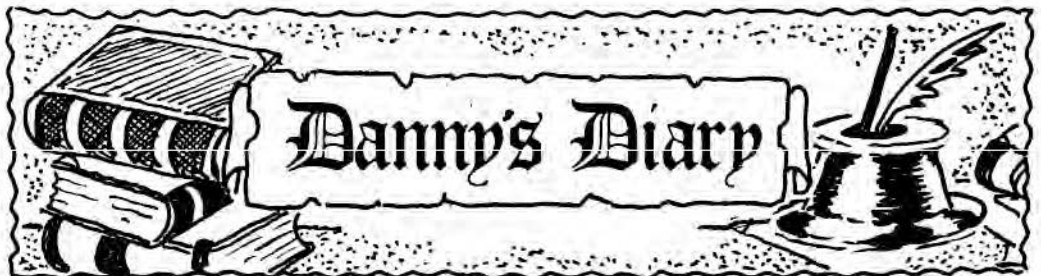
Picturesque, remote, unflurried Saxenham was far removed from the bustle of modern life, retaining its old world charm, unsoftened by the jerry-builder and the ubiquitous petrol pump. Straggling

hedgegrows fragrant with Mayflower and honeysuckle. Neat white cottages trellised with roses, in the distance the pointed steeple of a grey old church, displaying an ancient weather-cock."

Gurgling streams, ivy-covered bridges, a mill-wheel and a quaint old inn, you name it, and Saxenham village has it! Plus - strolling down the lane you meet Sexton Blake and Tinker. Need I say more! No doubt many readers will know the old hymn which, after describing all the beauty of nature, ends by stating "and only man is vile". There's a touch of that in this village and it's left to Blake and Tinker to sort this out, after the detective explains that the spreading of gossip by wagging tongues is more poisonous than the actual poison.

This is where I leave you, right at the entrance to this gorgeous village, with Sexton Blake and Tinker walking towards you. However, here is a clue. If you have not got a copy of POISON (Union Jack 1293) you can borrow it from the Sexton Blake Library run by Mr. Chris Harper. The copy is 60 years old, and frail. Take care of it, it's too good to lose. (I don't know who the author is. Perhaps a C.D. reader can enlighten me?)

* * * * *



October 1938

My first Schoolboys' Own Library this month is "The Schoolboy Slaves". This is the final tale of Harry Wharton & Co. in Kenya, and the chums have been sold into slavery by a rascally slave-trader in darkest Africa. What a year this has been for foreign holidays. Too many, I think, though they are all great reading matter. The second S.O.L. is "Grundy Takes the Lead" which is a wash-out for little me. I don't care much for Grundy at the best of times, but this one is the worst of times for it is not even written by the real Martin Clifford. Awful waste of fourpence. The S.O.L. "The Valley of Gold" has the St. Frank's chums coming to the end of another of their foreign holidays. They are in Athabaska, Canada, where they can pick up handfuls of gold, once a savage tribe of Indians has been beaten off.

An interesting month in the Sexton Blake Library. "Three Frightened Men

by Berkley Gray is the story of the serial of the same name which has been running on the radio. I am not sure whether the story is written from the radio serial or whether the radio serial is taken from the Sexton Blake novel. Either way, it's good. Also in the S.B.L. I have read "The Mystery of the Film City" by G.H. Teed. This is set in Hollywood and Los Angeles and introduces an old favourite in George Marsden Plummer. In the Boys' Friend Library I have had "The Mystery Planet", which stars Captain Justice and his pals. It originally appeared in Modern Boy.

A new kind of fountain pen has been invented and I like it very much, though we are not allowed to use them at school. It has a ball point instead of a nib, so it writes more like a pencil. It is the invention of a man named Biro. There is also a new weekly picture paper in the shops. It is called Picture Post and it is put out by a firm named Hulton's. Mum is having it every week. There is a new Biggles serial in Modern Boy. It is entitled "Biggles' Rescue Flight." The Biggles stories are not my cup of tea, but some of the chaps at school dote on them. The Captain Justice series has continued through the month in Modern Boy. Justice is fighting an amazing metal monster which causes the ground to shudder with every step it takes. And there is a villainous inventor named Schliegal. The monster has attacked London and then it turns its attention to Manchester. This month's stories are "The Walking Terror", "The Battle of Manchester", "The Stolen Submarine", "The Sea of Ghosts", and "Undersea Citadel". Very exciting, but all very unlikely, I suppose. Maybe more likely in about 50 years time - say the year 1988.

Turning to present day matters, Hammond finished the cricket season at the top of the bowling averages, and Bowes was the star bowler. Mum has joined the W.V.S. which has just been founded. I expect she will do a lot of good deeds. My Mum always does.

And at last, in the first week of October, the Magnet has come to the end of its holiday series about the Greyfriars chums in Southern Seas, searching for Mauly's lost relative, Brian. It is a surprise to Lord Mauleverer, but not to us readers, when it turns out that the enemy of the party, Ysabel Dick, the beachcomber, is actually the lost Brian Mauleverer. In this final tale of the series, "Saved by a Foe", the chums are helpless in a yawl wrecked on a coral reef. And Brian saves his young cousin from certain death. To add to the surprise, who should come on the scene in the closing chapters but Ken King of the Islands from the Modern Boy. And Ken takes the party from the desert isle on to his ship the "Dawn" - and saves them. Which is proof, if any of us had any doubt, that Charles Hamilton who writes the King of the Islands stories is also Frank Richards who writes the Greyfriars tales. This last story ran to 21 chapters - cover to cover - and I found it just a wee bit "wordy", though I enjoyed the series.

So, in the second week of October, back to school. At least, the second story, "The Boy Who Wouldn't Be Tamed", starts at Wharton Lodge where the chums meet Gilbert Tracy. Colonel Wharton asks his nephew to befriend Tracy, who is going to Greyfriars. Tracy is a thorough rotter, but his father was an old war-time friend of Colonel Wharton, so the Colonel wants to help the boy to make good. Unfortunately, Tracy doesn't want to make good, and he determines to get himself expelled. Next one in this series is "The Rat of the Remove". "I hate

Greyfriars and I won't stay" says Tracy. But Mr. Quelch has undertaken to keep the new boy at Greyfriars. Who will win? The rat or the schoolmaster? Next, "The Runaway". Gilbert has tried without success to get himself kicked out, so now he runs away. And finally came "Tricky Tracy", with Tracy still at Greyfriars, and still trying to be expelled. The series continues next month. I like it a lot.

With the autumn here they are showing much better pictures in the local cinemas now. Early in the month we had "Night Must Fall" with Robert Montgomery and Rosalind Russell, about a young murderer who attached himself to a wealthy old lady (the old lady was played by May Whitty). Tip-top thriller, though, perhaps, not quite so good as the play which we saw a bit back. Quite a good musical is "Sally, Irene, and Mary", starring Alice Faye and Jimmy Durante, about three girls who try to break into show business. Simply terrific is "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", a long Disney cartoon. This is the first time there has been a full-length cartoon - it ran for nearly 1½ hours, and I thought I might get bored, but I didn't. It is in technicolour. Really tip-top is "In Old Chicago", a very spectacular affair leading up to the great fire, which is breathtaking. It stars Alice Faye and Tyrone Power. Very good, if not quite so funny as his usual films, is Will Hay in "Convict 99". A seedy schoolmaster (shades of Mr. Quelch) finds himself a prison governor. Moore Marriott is, of course, also in this. A bit solemn is "The Girl of the Golden West" with Jeannette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy. This film is in sepia, which I don't like a lot. About a girl of the backwoods of Canada who falls for a bandit who is being trailed by the Mounties. Another good one was "Three Comrades", who are Robert Taylor, Robert Young, and Franchot Tone. This is set in Germany of the twenties, and shows how the nasty Nazis came to get power. A lovely month at the flicker palaces.

And so to the Gem. With its programme of St. Jim's, Cedar Creek, and the Benbow, it just is the finest paper in the shops today. I'll kick off with the St. Jim's stories, where the Levison brothers have been well to the fore all month. As a starter, "The Rylcombe Recruit". The St. Jim's juniors always regarded their match with the Rylcombe villagers as a walk-over. But this time they reckoned without Rylcombe's recruit, who was Ernest Levison. He played against his own school, and Rylcombe won. Next came "The Toff's Enemy". Talbot's cousin, Crooke, has greedy eyes on uncle Colonel Lyndon's will, and Crooke sets out to disgrace Talbot. An awful scheme is foiled by the new boy, Frank Levison. Then "To Save His Brother". Young Frank clings to his belief in his older brother, and is ready to sacrifice his own honour to save Ernest from disgrace. Next "Sherlock Grundy Esq.". Someone has written an insulting anonymous letter to Mr. Linton. Who was it? Grundy thinks he knows how to find out. Finally "A Lesson for Levison" which is a lovely tale. "What's good enough for you is good enough for me," says young Frank to his elder brother, copying his major's shady ways. Actually Gussy has put Frank up to it. Clever Gussy!

And now to Cedar Creek. In "The Schoolboy Author", a newspaper is offering a prize for the best story submitted by one of its readers. Frank Richards submits a story, but Gunten wins the prize. His father is the local postmaster, and Gunten has swiped Frank's tale and sent it in as his own. Next came "Wanted

by the Mounties". Mr. Slimmey is assistant master at Cedar Creek. His identical twin brother is a scoundrel sought by the Mounties. So the rotten brother kidnaps Mr. Slimmey, and takes his place as master at Cedar Creek. Then the sequel, "The Schoolboy's Show-Down" (rum title!) in which Frank Richards accuses Mr. Slimmey of hiding his brother from justice, Frank not realising that he is not talking to the real Mr. Slimmey. Good couple of tales. Next a powerful tale "There's Danger on the Trail". It is about Beauclerc (they call him the Cherub) who realises that it is his father who is leading the gang of three that hold up Frank Richards and Bob Lawless on the trail. And the Cherub has a gun, and threatens to use it, even though he knows that the masked man is his father. Finally "The Bad Man from Bando" in which a ruffian named Long Bill has amused himself with shooting-up the citizens of the mining camp of Bando. And then he comes to Cedar Creek to repeat the performance.

And now to the Benbow. The first 3 tales concern Daubeny as a rotten junior captain. Opening tale is "Captain and Slacker". Then "The Slackers' Eleven". Drake and Rodney threaten Daub's slack footer team with a fearful ragging if they are beaten by Highcliffe. And Highcliffe, led by Frank Courtenay, win 6 - 0. The theme carried on in "Daub's Way Out". Then came "Toodles, the Magnificent". Toodles is popular when the "nuts" think he is receiving £50 from an uncle. But Raik has faked the postcard, promising the £50 present - and it is only £1 that Toodles received. Finally, "Rivals of the Race" in which Drake nearly wins the cross-country race, but Daub plots for someone to flick a branch under Drake's feet as he nears home - and down goes Drake with a crash. Gorgeous old Gem.

My Gran read my Diary and she says I am a live wire. Well, if you're a "live wire" nobody will step on you.

ERIC FAYNE Comments on This Month's DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 349 "The Schoolboy Slaves" comprised the final 3 stories of the Kenya series of the Magnet of the autumn of 1931. S.O.L. No. 350 "Grundy Takes The Lead" comprised 2 connected sub stories from the autumn of 1927, a period when the sub writers had almost completely taken over St. Jim's. Why sub stories should have been published at all in the S.O.L. is a mystery to most of us. Clearly the editor of the S.O.L. did not know his Hamiltonia so well as we did. For instance, two famous Hamilton themes - the Outram pair and the Captain Mellish pair - never featured in the S.O.L. Yet they republished this sub. Grundy rubbish!

The 1938 Gem story "The Rylcombe Recruit" had been "A Surprise for St. Jim's" just before Christmas in 1916. "The Toff's Enemy" had been "Levison Minor's Luck" at the end of 1916. It originally had a marked war flavour which was skilfully pruned away in 1938. "To Save His Brother" of 1938 had been "For His Brother's Sake", the first Gem of 1917. "Sherlock Grundy Esq." had been "Grundy's Guile", an unusually good Grundy story in January 1917. Danny's last Gem's story for October 1938 "A Lesson for Levison" had been a splendid school story "The Wisdom of Gussy" early in 1917. This one was arguably the finest story that Hamilton wrote in all the war years. All the October 1938 Gem stories were heavily abridged from the originals. They had been pretty long in 1916-1917.

Now to the 1938 Cedar Creek tales. These 5 stories had run consecutively in the Boy's Friend from November 1917. "The Schoolboy Author" bore the same

title in 1917. "Wanted by the Mounties" had been "A Borrowed Identity" in 1917. "The Schoolboy's Show-Down" was originally "Laid by the Heels". "There's Danger on the Trail" had been "Saved from a Crime". Finally, a bit of a mystery for the Sexton Blakes in our midst to solve. "The Bad Man from Bandog", which Danny read in 1938, had been "The Bad Man from Boot Leg" at the end of 1917. The mystery! Why was the name of the town, shot up by the Bad Man, who then came on to Cedar Creek, changed from Boot Leg in 1917 to Bandog in 1938? I puzzled over it. Of course, Wildrake of St. Jim's had been the boy from the Boot Leg ranch. It is the only reason I could see, but it is a thin one. After all, it was many years since Wildrake had featured in the Gem stories, and they were still a good many years, in the reprints, distant from the time when Wildrake would come on the scene as a new boy. Ah, thought clever Me. These Gem Cedar Creek are taken from the Popular reprints and not from the Boys' Friend originals. Wildrake, clever Me argued, came on the scene in the Gem in 1921, and this Cedar Creek story appeared in the Popular in 1923. So - they changed Boot Leg to Bandog in 1923 for the Pop reprint. To satisfy myself that I was clever I looked up the story in the Popular of 1923. Only to find that I wasn't clever at all. He was "The Bad Man from Boot Leg" in 1923, just as he had been in 1917. Yet, fifteen years on, in October 1938, he became "The Bad Man from Bandog". I suppose it must have been due to Wildrake coming from Boot Leg - but why should that matter? Anybody got a solution of the mystery?

Finally, the Benbow. The 5 tales ran consecutively in the Greyfriars Herald from January 1920. "Captain & Slacker" had been "Up Against Daubeny"; "The Slackers' Eleven" had been "The Highcliffe Match"; "Daub's Way Out" had been "Called to Account"; "Toodles the Magnificent" had been "Great Expectations", and "Rivals of the Race" had been "The Cross-Country Race" in 1920.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

by Tommy Keen

As a schoolboy, I loathed football (and still do), disliked cricket intensely, and in fact the mention of any sport in which I might have to participate filled me with alarm and nausea. I also disliked Meccano sets, Fretwork sets, model engines and anything else which (according to my two elder brothers) should have appealed to me.

Consequently I turned to reading. Beginning with comics, I savoured the delights of the Bruin Boys in "RAINBOW" and "TIGER TIM'S WEEKLEY", and then, much to the derision of my sister, became enraptured by "ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND". Alice's world was my world A dream world - always summertime. The White Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat, the March Hare and the Mad Hatter; how I longed to meet such characters. I then became aware that weekly papers were issued for boys and girls, comprising school, adventure and detective stories. The MAGNET and the GEM for boys, and the SCHOOL FRIEND and the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN for girls. My elder brothers, long finished with school, almost bullied me into reading the MAGNET and the GEM, hoping perhaps that I should lose interest in the girls' papers, as read by my sister and which I was already enjoying. After an indifferent start with the MAGNET and GEM to my amazement the boys of Greyfriars and St. Jim's Schools developed such a hold over me, that I continued

reading the stories for years (but not forgetting Morcove and Cliff House). Then I discovered Richmal Crompton's "WILLIAM", and my family gazed at me in perplexity, tinged (I suspect) with pity, as I sat there giggling merrily away at the exploits of William and his Outlaws.

My other delight of boyhood was collecting cigarette cards, a marvellous collection, all beautifully arranged in albums. I adored them. "Cries of London", "Bygone Beauties", "Roses", "Characters from Dickens" and "Old English Garden Flowers", these were the types I liked, tending to ignore the more useful sets, such as "Do You Know"? "First Aid" and "Flowering Culture in Pots". I was still, definitely, a dreamer.

Then as a teenager, the Film Star craze hit me. We were all Film Star mad, and I idolised Joan Crawford. Scrapbook after scrapbook was completed with pictures of this glamorous Star, and to me she has always remained the perfect film actress of all times. Meeting Miss Crawford many years ago, and sampling her magnetic personality only strengthened my feelings.

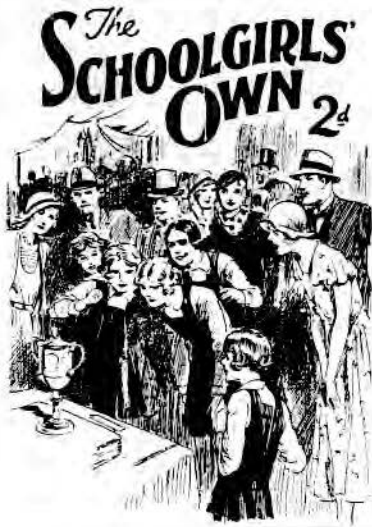
But when I was still a teenager, I was to find myself drawn to another woman, and even more so, to this woman's voice: a voice, which even to this day never fails to captivate me (forgetting her comedy stuff) - the voice of Gracie Fields. Records, pictures, articles and news items, sheet music, everything concerning her I collected (and still possess), but now Gracie has been dead for several years, and maybe I should have forgotten all this nostalgia many years ago.

Yet I can still, if and when I wish, read a story of Betty Barton & Co. of Morcove School; of Barbara Redfern and her chums at Cliff House; of my favourites at Greyfriars, Tom Redwing, Vernon-Smith, Mark Lindley, and Harry Wharton; of my particular favourites at St. Jim's, the superb Reginald Talbot, and Levison, Cardew and Clive. I can reach for a copy of "ALICE" (preferably illustrated by Arthur Rackham) and I can still chuckle over William's mischievous adventures. I can still be mesmerised by a set of cigarette cards, an album of Joan Crawford material, and, should I ever have the time, to listen again to over 300 Gracie Fields records, and to wade through 60 or so Gracieana albums, marvelling that this great woman had been singing "Sally, Sally, Marry Me Sally" to the rest of the world for half a century, and only realising in her last decade or so that it should have been sung by a man. Who cared! She held some kind of a record, by appearing at a Royal Variety Performance in 1928, and again 50 years later (1978).

So now, when boyhood and youth are far behind, I find I am not alone in my interest in the things of the past. Through reading a letter published in the "Evening News" (1973/4) by a certain Bob Blyth, and meeting him a few weeks later, I became aware of the Old Boys' and Girls' Book Club, meeting, through Bob giving me a certain telephone number, a lady we all know - Mary Cadogan. And back into the past I joyfully went.

Now I know that people are still interested in Alice, in William, in cigarette cards, in Joan Crawford and Gracie Fields, I know that perhaps my youthful fantasies were not so stupid after all.

Lovely, unforgettable, nostalgia!



Vol. 2, Three Halfpence. Week ending December 6th, 1919



Gracie Fields



BABS AND CO AND THE GROTTO OF MYSTERY:

PART THREE

By Margery Woods.



The chums were hot, tired and thirsty by the time they reached Chelcombe, and somewhat dispirited when their inquiries led nowhere.

The ticket office clerk at the station was quite positive that no girl matching their description of Anne Bonnard had travelled on the only morning train. They had half an hour to wait for the little bus to arrive before repeating their enquiry and drawing another blank, nor had the postmistress and owner of Chelcombe's one village shop seen Anne. And the good lady knew everybody in the neighbourhood. She produced glasses of lemonade and home-made currant buns, and proved more than forthcoming over Lincroft Hall.

It had been in the ownership of a family called Hayden for as long as anyone could remember. Not Bonnard? No, she couldn't recall anyone of that name there. Plenty of money, though, if not much happiness. Two world wars had robbed the family of sons, there'd been at least two family splits, first between two brothers at the turn of the century, then one of the girls had gone off later on and never been seen again. Left a lot of bad blood. At the finish there was only the old man left. The place had been shut up ever since he died nearly a year ago. Nobody seemed to know who it belonged to now. A couple of strangers had come nosing around just after Christmas, and a posh looking chap in a big car had arrived the week before Easter. But nobody had been able to find out anything about him. "He didn't even stop in the village", the post-mistress ended indignantly.

Babs thanked her and the girls began to retrace their steps. At least it seemed certain that Anne had not left Chelcombe of her own accord. But where did they look next? When they neared the mysterious old house they slowed. The temptation was very strong, and while the hesitated in the shade of a huge old oak by the roadside they heard the sound of a car approaching. Instinctively they drew farther back into the shadows as the red car appeared at the drive gates then pulled out into the road and drove off towards Merrycombe. Mabs clutched at Babs arm. "It's the same car---and I'm sure those two people were in it". The girls looked at each other, and in tacit, determined accord made their purposeful way up the drive to Lincroft. Even if they had to break the law they were going to get into that house somehow.

* * * *

"Oh crumbs", moaned Bessie, "I'm tut-tired. Where are we?"

"I don't know," Clara said tersely. "You were the one who saw the lane turning off the road and decided it was a short cut."

"Well, it went downhill and I could see the sea."

"And so could the Navy," Clara sniffed. But she sounded slightly distracted. Bessie's short cut had brought them to the head of one of the many little coves that bit into the coastline of that area. There was no sign of habitation, and

the narrow stony track leading down to the beach was rutted and steep. But the focus of the tomboy's interest was a small red car parked in a rough natural clearing about two thirds of the way down. Unless Clara was much mistaken it was the same car they had seen outside Lincroft Hall. But where were the occupants? The beach was quite deserted. A plump hand caught Clara's arm.

"You're not gig-going down there?"

"I won't be long---you can wait here for me."

"But---Ow-wow!" Bessie, trying to tug Clara away, had slipped on a loose stone and sat down hard on the unfriendly ground. "Now look what you've made me do!" she cried wrathfully. "I think I've bib-broken my ankle. And I've---"

"Oh come on, Fatima." Clara, losing patience, caught the plump duffer's hands and heaved her, protesting volubly, to her feet. "You're too well padded to come to much harm."

Headless of Bessie's indignation, Clara determinedly steered her back to the more familiar road to Merrycombe. There could be no investigating done until Bessie was parked in a comfortable armchair with suitable provender for parking within that occupant.

Although Clara wasted no time it was still over an hour later when she got back to the little cove, to exclaim with annoyance: the car had gone, and a hurried but thorough search of the cove revealed nothing to tell her where the sinister couple had gone or the reason for their visit. The tomboy stared round her, then out to sea. Mordant's Isle loomed there, black and unwelcoming as ever, and suddenly Clara came to a decision. More and more she was positive that out there were the answers to the mystery.

* * * *

Lincroft Hall certainly had one answer---it was intent on repelling invaders.

Most of the windows were heavily shuttered and the three doors seemed impenetrable until the resourceful Jemima found the old dairy with its meshed window that gave to determination and Marjorie Hazeldene's nail file. Now the chums were standing in a large, musty-smelling bedroom on the first floor, staring at the shoe Mabs had spotted lying between the side of the bed and a small bedside cabinet. A neat dark brown brogue with an unusual green suede bobbed tie: a shoe they had last seen gracing one of Anne Bonnard's slim young feet yesterday.

"So she was here," breathed Mabs.

But certainly she was not here now. Of that the chums were certain. They had been right through the old house, trespassers' guilt and the chill damp of the place sending shivers along their nerve-endings. Some of the rooms were locked, others shrouded in dust sheets, every clock stopped at a different hour. The only traces of recent habitation were in what looked like a house-keeper's sitting room near the kitchen. A man's anorak hung on a peg behind the door, a paperback novel lay on a chair and a black shopping bag had been left on a whitewood table. Beside it lay a creased headscarf patterned in dark red flowers of no recognisable genus. But of Anne Bonnard there was no further trace.

"Strange," murmured Jemima.

"What?"

"That it should be a shoe."

"You mean where's the other one?" said Janet.

"But we had a jolly good hunt," Mabs reminded them. "There was no sign of any of her clothes, or suitcase, or anything."

"No," Jenima wore her most enigmatic expression, "I was thinking of the other shoe, but not that one."

They stared at her, and she bestowed a smile on them. "Come my infants, remember: the Walrus knew what he was talking about. Of shoes... and ships...and sealing wax..."

* * * *

Clara drew a deep breath and gave a sigh of satisfaction: she had known there was a way in from the sea-ward side. And she knew where the sinister couple had been while their car was parked above the cove. Clara was standing on an extremely narrow and slippery ledge within the cave that dipped under the rock of Mordant's Isle. Outside the cave was an ancient ring to which Clara had moored her boat, only a few feet distant from the great whirlpool that made the mouth of the cave impassible by boat. Within the cave itself was a sight to make the eyes widen with wonder. A great expanse of mirror smooth green water fringed by strange rock shapes wrought by aeons of time and reaching up into a vast vaulted roof like some fantastic underwater cathedral, aglow with constantly shifting luminescence playing on its walls.

But Clara had no time for the beauty of the mysterious grotto. Before coming to the island she had rowed round the headland until she reached the little cove, and at a spot out of sight of its beach she had discovered a small inlet, probably inaccessible at high tide, where a small boat was moored. The shipped oars, still wet, told Clara what she wanted to know. The couple had been rowing, and where else except Mordant's Isle? She moved cautiously along the ledge, a treacherous journey, for it was almost high tide and in places the ledge was lapped by a few inches of water. At the far end of the grotto was the foot of a distinctly uninviting flight of steps. Clara hesitated. She knew she should go no farther, that it would be wiser to return to the manor and await the return of the others. But Clara hated waiting. Softly and silently she ascended those worn steps, and at the top she gave a great cry. Before her was a high opening, barred by a strong iron grille, and within was a grim cell hollowed in the rock. And springing to her feet, unbelievably, was Anne Bonnard.

Clara rattled at the bars. "I knew you had to be here...I had a hunch. Oh! the brutes have padlocked it." She was gabbling with urgency now. "I'll have to go back for a crowbar...but we'll have you out, don't fear."

"But, Clara..." Anne looked distraught, "you must bring the police--there's a child here---somewhere up there," she gestured upwards to a grating high above from which the fast fading light was percolating. "I think she's been kidnapped. She dropped her shoe down to me this morning and asked me to send it with a message to her mummy to come and save her. I flung it down into the water but there's no hope of anyone

finding it or knowing what it was for. She's just a tot, Clara, just a baby."

"I'm on my way---I'll take care of it all!"

"Oh no, you're going nowhere, you interfering chit."

Something dark and stifling and smelly dropped over Clara's head, blotting out the harsh voice behind her and Anne's scream of warning. The warning that came seconds too late for Clara.

* * * *

Bessie had recovered by the time the chums returned. She was waiting, self important, with a message to say that Major Lynn had been called up to town. Mabs' mother had gone with him, and they'd be back on the late train. There was cold chicken and salad for the girls, and should anything untoward occur Mrs. Logan, the housekeeper, could be found at her cottage just down the lane.

Mabs nodded. "Where's Clara?"

Bessie looked blank. "Isn't she with you girls?"

"Bessie---you chump! Count us! We're not hiding her."

"Have a heart," Janet chortled. "Don't strain Bessie's mathematical genius."

Babs did not join in the laughter. She felt inexplicably afraid for Clara. When questioned more closely Bessie said Clara had gone straight out again. Something about a red car and the cove where Bessie had suffered severe damage to her anatomy. The chums went uneasily to wash and tidy themselves, trying to reassure themselves that Clara had gone rambling and lost track of time. The clock hands dragged round and the sea took on the leaden hue that sometimes comes with dusk. Still Clara had not returned. Now the chums were desperately worried.

"We should have gone out to look for her straight away. Where on earth has the chump got to?"

"Do you think she went to meet us coming back from Lincroft?" hazarded Marjorie, now pale with fear for her chum. "Look---I'm going to walk along and see."

"Not on your own," said Babs, and gave her golden-haired chum a grateful look as Mabs exclaimed, "I'll go with her," and hurried after Marjorie.

Then Bessie remembered something else. "Clara was asking Mrs. Logan about the island, you know, girls. And Mrs. Logan said it was very dangerous to try to get into the grotto unless you know the way."

"Oh, Bess!" groaned Babs, "why didn't you tell us this before?" She glanced round. "Where's Jemima?"

"Adsum, fair Babs." Jemima sidled in through the french window. "Yes, methinks a spot of midnight rowing practice is indicated." She held out the tiny shoe Clara had found, and a crumpled handkerchief bearing the initial A. "I've been down to the beach, and the small boat is missing."

Fingers of dread gripped Babs' heart as she moved to Jemima's side and stared at the darkening silhouette of Mordants Isle. But there was no time for dithering. Quickly the girls made their preparations. They needed torches and warm wraps, and to leave a written note for Mabs and Marjorie. Fortunately there were lanterns in the boathouse, and thoughtfully Jemima stowed a couple of grappling hooks and tow-rope aboard. Very soon Babs, Jemima and Janet were rowing as fast as they could for Mordants Isle.

There was no sign of the unpleasant old crone, before they passed the landing beach and cautiously approached the rocky seaward side. The tide was dropping now, and a rising moon came to their aid, revealing the boat still moored by the entrance to the grotto. The sight gladdened their hearts; at least they were on the track of their missing chum. It all came more easily than they had anticipated. Within minutes they had negotiated the ledge and the steps, and made the joyous discovery of their missing chum--and an overjoyed Anne Bonnard.

"You lot took your time," grumbled Clara. "Didn't you guess I'd be here?"

"Don't waste time talking," urged Anne. "We've got to get out before that old hag brings my food down. We've got to get that kiddie.

This was the first the chums had heard of the child apparently kept against her will somewhere on the island. As Anne said, they had to find out, but first they had to get the barred door open.

Jemima's foresight proved, as ever, invaluable. Frantically the girls worked at the padlock and the big hinges, fortunately rusted and aged, and after what seemed an interminable time they felt the lower hinge give slightly and grate in its socket. Babs looped the towrope through the bars and the girls brought their combined weight to bear on it. Clara and Anne forced the door from inside, and the strength and determination of five girls finally won. With a sudden groaning rattle the hinge gave way and a wedge-shaped gap formed below.

"That'll do!" cried Clara. "I can wriggle through there. Come on, Anne!"

Anne was not loathe, and somehow the two girls, heedless of torn dresses and scratched limbs, squeezed and writhed their way to freedom. Anne was filling in the gaps in the puzzle as they made their way to the boats, telling them of the quarrel they'd already heard about from the postmistress that day. Of how her mother, who had died in a car accident when Anne was ten, was the estranged daughter of old Mr. Hayden, who had strongly disapproved of her marriage and emigration to Canada. However, ten year-old-Anne's sad little letters to the grandfather she had never seen, because he ought to know her mummy had never stopped loving him, had stayed in his heart. He had left everything to her, with the stipulation she must be living at Lincroft by a certain date. That date was the following day. If she failed to do this the inheritance went to two distant cousins. "And no need to ask who they are," she laughed, adding, "They didn't really intend to hurt me, they only wanted to keep me out of the way until midnight tomorrow. But they sure surprised me last night. I'd just kicked off my shoes to put on my sneakers when they burst in. But it's that kiddie I'm worried about."

"That kiddie is probably the kidnapped millionaire's child," said Jemima. She gazed at the ring of faces, all expressing their usual reactions to Jemima's often surprising pronouncements. "I read the report today on the Times front page while you were quizzing the postmistress. The millionaire has a luxury holiday pad a few miles up the coast. The little girl was snatched two days ago, but the police believed that she'd been taken to London."

"We'll soon find out," said Clara grimly, as she nosed her craft alongside the landing stage and leapt on to the beach. "I've a score of my own to settle--and surely we're a match for that old crone and her half-witted son."

It wasn't so easy as that. The crone and her son, and another man burst from the cottage and wild scrimmage began.

"Get rid of their boats---blasted interfering kids!" yelled one of them. Clara closed with him, Janet rushed to help, and the ruffian found himself in the water. Then Babs screamed: "They've got Anne!" Jemima was wielding one of the boat hooks, trying to clear a way for Anne to carry the crying, bewildered child to the boat. Despite her struggles, Anne was being dragged back to the cottage while the crone snatched the child. And then suddenly there was the roar of a powerful boat and voices across the water. Major Lynn and his friend, who turned out to be a retired police inspector, were speeding to the island.

It was all over very quickly after that.

And what a wonderful party they had at Lincroft Hall, and yet another by the millionaire a few days later, to celebrate the successful solving of their mystery at the Grotto.

OUR BOOKSHELVES



Reviewed by Mark Taha

THE BOY WHO SHOT DOWN AN AIRSHIP by Michael Green (Heinemann).

This book is subtitled 'The First part of an Autobiography', and I can't wait for the second! My opinion of Michael Green's writing abilities can be summed up by the fact that he's now written 23 books, and I've read 18 of them. I may add that, unless you have no inhibitions about bursting out laughing in

public, you shouldn't read them on a train. I speak from experience. This book, his memoirs of growing up in the 1930's and '40s is, quite simply, excellent. His mentions having read the Magnet, Skipper and Hotspur, with a joke lifted from the Skipper! He also mentions having worked on the same newspaper as two of the Beverley Sisters at one time, and having almost encountered Princess Elizabeth in 1945.

He makes me feel extremely glad that National Service has been abolished; older readers might be able to confirm his view that King's Regulations simply meant whatever officers meant them to mean!

All in all, read this book! And if you can get hold of any of his other books, read them too.

Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

LORD'S AND COMMONS by John Bright-Holmes (Andre Deutsch £12.94)

The season must be over, but in a sense the great game is ever with us, and many C.D. readers will enjoy injecting Autumn days with a touch of summer nostalgia by browsing through this broad selection of examples and extracts which focus on cricket and are drawn from novels and stories. The book is divided into three sections: Lord's and other first-class occasions concentrates on Test and County cricket (with stories by Jeffrey Archer and Ian Peebles, and classic gems from Ted Dexter and the Frys, amongst others); then Willingly to School provides glimpses of heroic and hilarious adolescent games (with contributions from, for example, Talbot Baines Reed, P.G. Woodhouse, E.W. Hornung and Frank Richards); lastly The Village green and other commons tackles the game at its grass roots (dipping into Charles Dickens, George Meredith and other distinguished novelists). This lively anthology also provides the bonus of Gerald Brodribb's checklist of cricket in fiction which, though not exhaustive or complete, will be of interest to readers whose appetite for cricketing stories will be whetted by LORD'S AND COMMONS.

FOR SALE: MAGNETS 1599, 1606, 1610, 1616, 1637, 1645, 1653, 1655, 1661, 1667, 1670, 1675, 1678, 1679, 1683, £1 each; original G Holiday Annuals 1925, 1927, 1928, £8 each; Billy Bunter's Own £1.50; Tiger Tim's Annuals 1946, 1947, 1948, £1.50 each; Trouble for T. Merry (Spring Books, no DW) £1; postage extra. Wanted, SCHOOLGIRLS OWN ANNUALS 1931, 1932, 1934, 1938; SCHOOLFRIEND ANNUALS 1929, 1930, 1932, 1933, 1934. Will consider swop. PAYNE, 69 High Street, Headcorn, Kent.

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FOR SALE: Original Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, most years. James Gall, 49 Anderson Avenue, Aberdeen, Scotland, AB9 2LR. Tel. 0224-491716.

ALWAYS WANTED: Rupert Annuals pre-1970 and one shilling adventure series. William Books in dustwrappers. Please offer to John Beck, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, East Sussex.

LAUGHTER AND THRILLS No. 4: "Thriller Comics" Part II.

by Norman Wright

Robin Hood made his debut in "Thriller Comics" number 4. Of all the legendary heroes featured within its pages he remained with the comic longest, outlasting Dick Turpin, Rob Roy and Claude Duval. The best of the Robin Hood strips were drawn by Pat Nicolle. Two of his long strips "Bold Robin Hood" (no. 74) and "Robin Hood Rides Again" (no. 80) were reprinted from "Sun", but other shorter strips were often drawn specifically for "Thriller Comics". His work always displayed his specialised knowledge of medieval weapons and armour. Unfortunately Pat drew relatively few strips for the comic, his commitments elsewhere limiting "Thriller Comic" work to reprints and the odd original strip.

The regular Robin Hood artist was Reg Bunn. His work was far from brilliant, his figures always instantly recognisable by the peculiar slant of their hands. In spite of his strips not being artistic masterpieces, as a boy I learned more of medieval feudalism from his "Thriller Comic" work than I ever did from history text books.

Towards the end of the comic's run many of the Robin Hood strips were drawn by foreign artists who had little knowledge of, and even less feel for, medieval England. One late Robin Hood strip worth a mention is "Robin Hood and the Giant Catapult" in issue 255. It was the only Robin Hood strip by John Millar Watt, famous for his daily cartoon character "Pop", whose misadventures appeared for decades in the "Daily Sketch". Millar Watt painted covers for Robin Hood issues of the library, as well as the covers and colour plates for the 1959 and 1960 issues of the "Robin Hood Annual".

Dick Turpin, always a popular hero with Aldine and Newnes, had a long series of adventures in "Thriller Comics" beginning in issue 2, which reprinted Eyles' superb "Ride to York", together with two other short Turpin strips. Three more Turpin strips formed issue 8. As mentioned in part one of this article, H.M. Brock's Dick Turpin strip "Breed of the Brudenells" was reprinted in issue 9. A short Turpin strip from his brush formed a third of issue 22, the other two thirds of the issue made up of strips by Stephen Chapman.

The next Turpin strip did not appear until issue 85, but "For Justice and the Right" was worth waiting for. It was drawn by C.L. Doughty, the artist who was to draw more Turpin strips for the comic than any other artist. His style was admirably suited to the subject. He captured the feel of 18th century England - crisp crock coats, mail coaches on the turnpikes and the narrow streets of London - to perfection. The tales were in many instances based on plots from the old Aldine Turpin libraries and featured, in addition to Turpin, Tom King and the rest of the gang from those publications. Doughty's second Turpin strip followed seven issues later. One of his best was "The Secret of Wolf Castle" in number 101. Though Turpin strips were drawn by other artists, including Hugh McNeill and Fred Holmes, it is Doughty who will be remembered as the definitive Turpin artist for the comic. The last Turpin issue was number 247, "Dick Turpin and the Castle of Peril", a much redrawn reprint of an old "Sun" strip by Hugh McNeill.

The third most regular character to feature in the comic was D'artagnan,

who, together with Porthos, Aramis and Athos fought his way through some dozen or more issues of the comic. Most of the Musketeers' exploits were drawn by Steve Chapman, an old hand at drawing comic strips and illustrations for boys' books and papers. His earliest Robin Hood illustrations had appeared in the three large, red covered Robin Hood books that Aldine had issued during the 1920s. The final Three Musketeer strip appeared in March 1958.

Claude Duval, Rob Roy, Captain Kidd and Sabatini's Captain Blood each enjoyed several issues of "Thriller Comics" but were never as popular as Robin Hood or Turpin. As the 1950s came to an end so too did the number of historical strips in "Thriller Comics". They were replaced by "Battler Britton", "Spy 13" and a proliferation of war heroes. The golden age of the British historical adventure strip was over.





To say that Dicky Nugent created and wrote the stories of St. Sam's, and its infamous headmaster Dr. Birchmall, is almost like saying that Dr. Watson wrote the Sherlock Holmes canon. (In some Sherlock Holmes societies they get over this by referring to Conan Doyle as the literary agent!)

But to return to St. Sam's, just how popular were these tales? I always used to read them for a good laugh; nowadays I mostly pick out certain incidents and enjoy a good chuckle. A typical example might be: "Dr. Birchmall galloped down the passage followed by Mr. I. Jolliwell Lickham at a brisk canter, with Mr. Chastiser bringing up the rear with a mere foxtrot!"

Of course the atrocious spelling added to the fun and was enough to make a cat laugh.

During the Magnet's long life the stories didn't run continuously. There were several periods when they didn't appear, even when the Greyfriars Herald was part and parcel of the paper. As though to make up for this, there was at least one Holiday Annual that was graced with a St. Sam's story, H.A. 1932, 'The St. Sam's Propheteer'.

I notice in the author's autobiography 'The Road to Greyfriars' that when George Richmond Samways speaks about the bearded headmaster's school he refers to the captain as Bulkely. Surely he is mixing up his school with Rookwood. In all the St. Sam's stories that I've read, the captain's name was Burleigh, who had as his crony a lad named Talboys. As collectors are aware, there is a Cecil Talboys in the Fifth Form at Rookwood; I wonder if this caused the confusion with Bulkely?

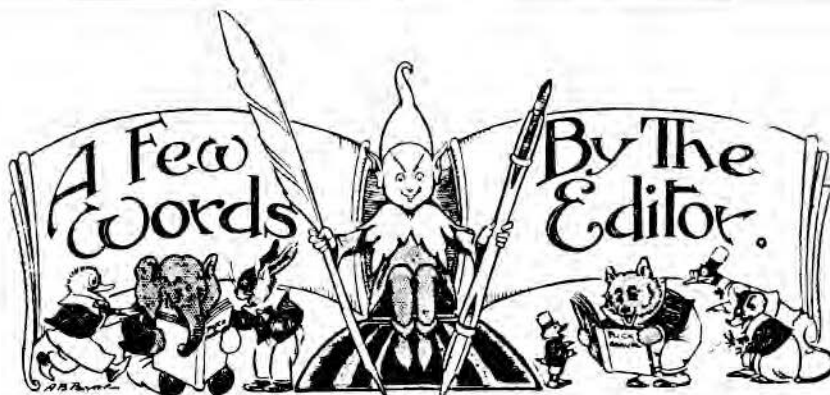
Other characters mentioned in the stories include Molly, the head's daughter, who incidentally is not tarred with her father's brush, and is a great favourite with the boys. The lower school heroes are led by Jack Jolly, whose main friends include Merry and Bright - shades of St. Jim's and Greyfriars, although the two Brights were as different as chalk from cheese. The Greyfriars Bright, Christian name Edgar, was a nasty piece of work and was only at the school during the 'Return of Levison' series. The St. Jim's Merry needs no explanation! Jack Jolly's other friend who was sometimes mentioned was Frank Fearless. Of course, there had to be a fat boy, and what better name to give him than Tubby Barrell! Likewise the genial tuckshop lady, Dame Buxom.

Although most of the stories were illustrated by our old friend C.H. Chapman, it is interesting to note that in the early days he gave Dr. Birchemall a small beard, a mere shadow of what it became later. In my humble opinion it was in the late twenties and early thirties that 'Chappie' was at the height of his powers, and his portrayal of the St. Sam's saga during this period is well worth examining - beautiful control of line and treatment of perspective. I was pleased that during one of my visits to his home Mr. Chapman showed me his portfolio. This contained the specimens of his art work which he would show to new editors. Among other illustrations of the period was the page entitled 'A Few Holiday Recollections' from the 1929 Holiday Annual. There was also a drawing of Dr. Birchemall!

I hope I haven't bored readers with this little dissertation on what I fondly feel to be a part of a great story paper's History (namely the Magnet). I also feel that George Richmond Samways deserves a big 'thank you' for providing such a rib-tickling bill of fare for all of us, not to mention his numerous poems etc. on the other schools over the years.

How I used to enjoy discussing the antics of Dr. Birchemall with my late brother - dear old Ben - I know how he loved them!

(Editor's Note: Mr. Samways' most interesting autobiography 'The Road to Greyfriars' is published by the Howard Baker Press.)



We hear that Jeffrey Richards (author of the very interesting book on public school stories HAPPIEST DAYS) will give a talk based on my book FRANK RICHARDS: THE CHAP BEHIND THE CHUMS on BBC Radio 3 on Sunday, 23rd October (see RADIO TIMES for details, times, etc.).

Two fascinating books of special interest to C.D. readers have just been received here, and will soon be fully reviewed in our columns. These are THE CHILDREN'S ANNUAL by Alan Clark and CRIME AT CHRISTMAS, edited by Jack Adrian.

LONDON OBBC (Hamiltonian Section Library)

The Hamiltonian library of the London Club has over two thousand copies of original pre-war issues - Plucks, Gems, Magnets, Populars, Boys' Friend libraries, and Scholboys' Owns, with dates between 1907 and 1940. A number of the Magnet series and Boys' Friend libraries were Charles Hamilton's own copies, kindly presented to the library by Miss Hood, his housekeeper.

Now that the nights are drawing in, this is the time for reading. Anyone interested in the postal service of the library and wishing to receive a copy of the catalogue should send two first-class stamps to:

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Among other things, Fishy and Bunter are in pursuit of a £50 reward - by nefarious means. And Lord Mauleverer falls for the delectable charms of Miss Bella Bunbury, the grocer's daughter.

THE GREAT GREYFRIARS REBELLION
by Frank Richards (Club Vol. 82)

Publication Date
SEPTEMBER 1988

Magnet issues: No. 389, *The Mysterious Mr. Mahbs*, No. 390, *Sportsmen All*, No. 391, *The Master Who Stayed at Home*, No. 392, *Schoolboys Never Shall Be Slaves (Double Number)*, No. 393, *Fansony's Plot*

A picnic party on Popper's Island for Harry Wharton and Co., plus a surreptitious smoking party on Courtfield Common for Harold Skinner and his cronies - both discovered by the rascable Sir Hilton Popper, new School Governor - lead to hijinks at the school. This volume includes one double sized, colour covered issue. (No. 392) together with a collection of single issues.

AT WAR WITH GREYFRIARS
by Frank Richards (Club Vol. 83)

Publication Date
NOV/DEC 1988

Magnet issues: No. 394, *The Fellow Who Went*, No. 395, *At War with Greyfriars*, No. 396, *Backmy Up*, *Bunter*, No. 397, *Coker's Canadian Cousin*, No. 398, *A Lancashire Lad's Luck*, No. 399, *Champion of the Oppressed*

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C.O.R. IF NO REPLY CONSIDER SOLD.



DENNIS L. BIRD (Shoreham-By-Sea): Tommy Keen's "Morcove Miniatures" are a delight. I only came to Morcove late in time - through the "yellow books" in 1939-40, in fact. I was therefore very interested in his article on my favourite character Pam Willoughby. In her early days she certainly sounds a bit of a pain! I only recall her as the calm, serene, and slightly mysterious character of the later stories. I first met her in the SOL book "The Legend of Swanlake" which includes the hilarious "Haunted Inn" playlet performed by Betty Barton and Co. I re-read it a few years ago, and it was still funny. But the story-line was memorable in other ways - the haunting figure seen flitting through the grounds, Pam's disappearance, the return of Mr. Willoughby's disgraced brother. I recall it all vividly - it made an impact on an eight-year-old mind.

TED BALDOCK (Cambridge): In his article "A Game of Billiards, Wharton Old Man" (C.D. Sept. '88) Barrie Stark has in the nicest possible way accused Charles Hamilton of writing derisively about the ancient game of billiards. It is true he did tend to equate the game with smokey and dingy atmospheres, with the 'Three Fishers' and similar 'dens', with Joey Banks and Co. Certainly a very seamy and suspect aura. There was a perfectly logical and excellent reason for this when one remembers that Hamilton was, on his own admission, an inveterate gambler and thus fully aware of all the attendant pitfalls... Whatever Charles Hamilton lacked it certainly was not an acute awareness of his own shortcomings and he did his best to sound, through his writings, a warning to his youthful readers... Best wishes and continuing success with the only 'Mag' that really matters.

MARION WATERS (Wellingborough). My husband asks that I mention how valuable was Bill Lofts' article on publicity in a recent issue. My 'other half' has been a staunch railway enthusiast for many years. Thirty years ago, railways seemed a minority interest like story papers are today. Nowadays the railway hobby has blossomed, with vast amounts of published material, and increased facilities of every kind. The hobby is now full of cliques, and people who are more interested in money and prestige! than in railways. It is possible that our hobby could go the same way.

BETTY HOPTON (Burton upon Trent): As one of the "Followers of Rupert", I was so pleased to read George Sewell's lovely article on Rupert Bear in the May C.D. I do not possess as many Annuals as George, but I do have quite a lot of "ephemera", I am definitely one of those aficionados easily recognised in winter by the Rupert scarf that I wear. My Rupert collection includes clock, bedspread,

pillowcases, tea-set, money box, apron, writing material, games and many other things. My most recent "find" is an egg-cup in the shape of a hollowed out tree trunk with Rupert and Bill Badger running around it. My breakfast egg quite definitely has a much improved flavour when it is eaten from my Rupert egg-cup.

JAMES R. THOMPSON (Wirral): Around the time that I became a reader of the Magnet and Gem, changes took place in the two papers. The price went up from 1d to 1½d, and the two columns page became three columns, also the illustrations became smaller. Thereafter I and my boyhood pals used to long for the big pictures and the two columns to return, also the 1d purchase price, but we still went on buying the papers, of course.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): With reference to one of Mr. Churchill's articles earlier in the year, I always wondered why Mr. Brooks never made more use of William Napoleon Browne - perhaps in a detective capacity. With his archaic style of speech and tongue-in-cheek manner, Browne would, I feel, have made an ideal 'tec of the eccentric variety. Possibly Brooks felt that, if he did so, Browne would steal some of Nelson Lee's, or Nipper's thunder. Vivian Travers, who came in almost at the end of the St. Frank's saga, was also potentially a good character in the Cardew-Mornington mould. Indeed, Brooks featured him in an original St. Frank's tale with a cricketing theme, for the B.F.L. (no. 435) in June 1934. This was "The Schemer of St. Frank's", the schemer of the title actually being Bernard Forrest. Of the other St. Frank's regular characters, Nipper seems rather colourless in the later stories, although this seems to be an occupational hazard for form captains, and I arrived too late on the St. Frank's scene to be able to comment on the merits of Fullwood and De Valerie. Willy Handforth, however, has his moments of glory, and the Wodehousian Archie Glenthorne is amusing, but nowhere as complex and multi-faceted a personality as Hamilton's Gussy.



LONDON O.B.B.C.

Twenty five of us gathered at the Horticultural Club, North Chingford, on Sunday, 18th September, for what was a celebratory occasion. Our Chairman, Phil Griffiths extended a warm welcome to our President, John Wernham, and the proceedings went underway and included an address from the President that included a fulsome tribute to Charles Hamilton: a reading from "William and the Sweep" by Phil Griffiths; a Name Maze problem from Roger Jenkins; the reading by Les Rowley of an account of a wartime parting between Lord Mauleverer and Harry Wharton (both grown up and commissioned in the Services) that had been submitted by Bob Whiter. Norman Wright gave us his Desert Island choice of books which included works by Edwin Lester Arnold,

Talbot Munday, Berkeley Gray, Warren Bell, Conan Doyle and Frank Richards.

Phil. Griffiths' review of the ITV Encyclopaedia of Adventure brought us up to the time when we could do justice to a buffet admirably and painstakingly prepared by Audrey and Tony Potts. Not only our hearts were full as we took leave of our President and friends!

Next Meeting will be on Sunday, 9th October, 1988, at the Liberal Centre, Ealing. Tea will be provided, but please bring your own food. If attending please advise Bill Bradford in good time. His telephone number is (01) 579 4670.

LESLIE ROWLEY

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Members met at the Willingham village home of our Secretary, Keith Hodgkinson for the first meeting in our 1988/89 season.

After a short business meeting we heard about the Cornwall of Winston Graham, and his ingenious weaving of local facts with fiction, particularly concerning the area around the mouth of the river Fal. The author, probably better known popularly as the creator of Poldark (BBC 1975), uses his novel "The Grove of Eagles" to display his real knowledge of Elizabethan Cornwall, some pre-Armada Spanish skirmishes and the local people living in Penryn, Arwenck Manor and Pendennis Castle.

Later we watched the spectacular 1926 German Science Fiction film, Metropolis.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Chairman David Bradley welcomed the thirteen present at the September meeting. Our special guest for the evening was Michael Bourne.

Our dinner for the 17th September was discussed, and it appeared that fifteen would be present for the forthcoming social evening at The Stansfield Arms. Paul Galvin reported on the encouraging response to the W.E. Johns meeting to be held in Nottingham in October, and Darrell Swift reported that The Lansdowne Hotel in Norwich would be the venue for the next William Meeting in April 1989.

Members were asked to put forward their contributions for next year's Club programme, which was already taking shape.

"Written Off in the Prime of Their Lives" was Michael Bourne's theme. He had compiled over the years an extremely large list of authors, poets, composers, etc., who had met rather untimely deaths. Natural causes were not permitted in his catalogue of (at times!) somewhat macabre events leading to the demise of writers, both well-known and obscure. Michael made the whole talk extremely interesting and humorous, and was warmly thanked for his extremely novel and original presentation.

Paul Galvin presented his "Library Corner", bringing a selection of Boys' Friend Library items. 1488 of these books had been published, and not all the stories were reprints. The B.F.L. embraced many aspects of fiction - detective stories, school tales, science fiction and adventure. Our Club library has a good number of these books, including some very scarce titles.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR



FRANK RICHARDS

THE CHAP BEHIND THE CHUMS

MARY CADOGAN

Frank Richards was a literary phenomenon. The most prolific writer in the English language, he achieved a published output of at least 72 million words of fiction (the equivalent of 1000 novels) and works under his various pseudonyms are still coming to light. But among westerns, romances, adventures and mysteries, it is the witty and addictive school stories which have become legendary. These were written mainly for the *Magnet* and the *Gem*, weekly newspapers still reprinted and avidly collected for his stories.

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