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No. 709. Vol. XXII. Week ending Aug. 26th, 1923.

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VOL. 43

No. 514

OCTOBER 1989

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

VOL. 43

No. 514

OCTOBER 1989

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ANNUAL DELIGHTS



The very hot weather has departed, the evenings are drawing in and the mellow autumnal mood is appropriate for the preparation of our 1989 C.D. Annual. Since my last editorial I have received a further batch of fascinating and entertaining articles. More are promised, and I think that we shall, once again, have an Annual which will be second to none. As promised, I now give details of some of its contents.

Les Rowley's *Christmas Interlude* is another of his atmospheric and evocative Greyfriars articles; it has both a school and a Christmas house-party background. *A Rift in the*

Lute by Esmond Kadish explores some temporary estrangements of chums at some of our favourite fictional boys' and girls' schools.

Maurice Hall provides Brooks and Hamilton enthusiasts with lively food for thought in a comparison of Coker and Handforth, David Schutte brings the colourful world of Just William to us in a very enjoyable pastiche, and E.G. Hammond continues the story of his real-life boyhood (the earlier part of which was much admired when published in last year's Annual). Jack Greaves has dipped into the Nelson Lee for our delight, and Bill Lofts amusingly explores some eccentric leagues and societies. And there is much, much more. Further

appetite-whetters will be provided next month. There is still time for those of you who have not already done so to order your copies of the Annual (£7.00, including post and packet to any address in the British Isles, or £8.50 for anywhere overseas).

CHIN UP, CHEST OUT, JEMIMA!

Your editor has been busy producing another book which deals nostalgically and affectionately with childhood reading. This month **CHIN UP, CHEST OUT, JEMIMA!** will be available, and, as its title suggests, it is a celebration of schoolgirls' fiction. It covers both story-papers and hard-back books, and also contains some articles about real-life schooldays. As well as my own articles, the book features stories by classic authors in the genre, and contributions by Arthur Marshall, Terence Stamp and Denise ('Daisy Pulls It Off') Deegan. It is reviewed elsewhere on these pages; I hope C.D. readers will enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing and compiling it. (Remember that authors like to get their books into libraries as well as bookshops - so don't forget to request it - if you feel you'd like to read it - from your public library. Of course, I'm happy if you buy it, as well!)

CHARLES HAMILTON MUSEUM

I mentioned the Charles Hamilton Museum at Maidstone in **FRANK RICHARDS: THE CHAP BEHIND THE CHUMS**, and it has been pointed out to me that I didn't make clear that the Museum was privately run, and not open to visitors except by appointment. In order to save anyone having a wasted journey, I should explain that the Curator, Mr. John Wernham, should be contacted in advance of proposed visit and the date discussed. The address is the Charles Hamilton Museum, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8RT.

Happy Reading!

MARY CADOGAN

Sadly, we have to report the passing of three members of our circle, Mr. Harry Evans of Monmouth, Mr. J.R. Murtagh of Hastings, New Zealand and Mr. S. Kelvie of Crawley, West Sussex. We thank Jim Cook for telling us about Mr. Murtagh, who will be much missed by friends, family and collectors. Of Harry Evans, C.H. Churchill writes:

He was very fond of the pre St. Frank's stories in the Nelson Lee Library. He said these early Lees became very popular with the troops in the first war in Flanders, where I believe, he was. In his younger days, after the war, he became a Referee for the Football League. He had to give this up when he injured his leg. This injury gave him much trouble and pain in his late years.

He told me his cousin, Gwyn of Sexton Blake story fame, often said that he (Gwyn) thought that E.S. Brooks usually had the best plots of the Union Jack writers.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to Mrs. Kelvie and the families of Mr. Evans and Mr. Murtagh.



WHEN BLAKE'S AWAY.....

By John Bridgwater

For reasons best known to the editorial staff of the Detective Weekly, Sexton Blake ceased appearing in that paper in August 1935 and did not return until December 1937. This was not a complete break with tradition, however, and a rather indirect and intermittent contact with The Saga was kept up from time to time. Because Blake and Tinker were given an enforced holiday there was no reason why some of his most popular adversaries should not do a stint now and again. During this period Blake himself did actually slip in for a while, almost unnoticed, disguised as Marcus Max, but he only managed to fill a couple of pages per story with echoes of long ago from the days of Penny Pictorial.

The star billing went to Waldo the Wonder man twice and to Zenith the Albino three times:-

Waldo:	No. 145 of 30.11.35	The Mystery of the Man in Mail
"	No. 201 of 26.12.36	Ten Minute Trap
Zenith	No. 152 of 18.1.36	The White Trinity
"	No. 166 of 25.4.36	The Secret of the Six Locks
"	No. 177 of 11.7.36	The Clue in the Blue Sampler

Although it seems a little odd to read about Waldo and Zenith without Blake putting in an appearance, these stories are well up to the standard expected from E.S. Brooks and Anthony Skene. On reflection, I did not really miss Blake at all. In fact I liked Zenith better in this type of story when he did not have to keep on trying to kill off the "dear detective".

In neither of his stories is Waldo concerned with a project of his own. He just becomes involved in other people's troubles out of the kindness of his heart. In "The Mystery of the Man in Mail" he is driving towards London one evening when he spots a "...man's foot crashing against the inner side of the saloon window..." of a car going in the opposite direction. Having nothing in particular to do and feeling that this was decidedly "...funny business...", he turns round and follows the other car. Later in the evening he fishes the man out of a castle moat, seriously wounded, dressed in a suit of armour and left to drown. This leads on to Waldo rescuing a young woman from a "mind blowing" predicament. She has awakened from a drugged sleep to find herself in a strange house, dressed in strange clothes and apparently a completely different person from that of her last memory of herself. On going to her father's flat she discovers that he has vanished, and a strange man is

in possession who claims he has lived there for months. After sorting out her problems Waldo rescues her kidnapped father from the torture chamber of the castle, with a little help from an old friend, Chief Inspector Lennard. The connecting link between these odd events is an ingenious plot ending with Waldo having "fun" in his own suit of armour and handing a badly shaken batch of baddies over to Lennard.

The "Ten Minute Trap" is a double frame story. Waldo is walking down a side street to his parked car when he sees a man lurking with a gun in his hand and is just in time to prevent a shooting. Waldo takes charge of the man, whose name is Stanton. He is wanted by the Police for robbery. Stanton had struck it rich in Africa and brought his diamonds to an old friend, Paul Venner, in London hoping Venner, now a successful business man, would turn them into cash. To get the diamonds for himself Venner frames Stanton for robbery. Waldo devises a plan to frame Venner for a fake murder during a dinner party, at which the Chief Constable is a guest, and recover Stanton's diamonds in the process. This involves Waldo disguising himself as another victim of Venner who has apparently committed suicide. Thus a body is available for Venner to be accused of murdering. It gets rather complicated when Waldo acts as the victim and also the doctor who pronounces the victim dead, necessitating split-second timing for the substitution of the body. Waldo carries it all off in great style.

In the three Zenith stories Zenith is teamed up with Princess Astra and Prince Oscar of Millenia. Having rendered that central European country a "signal service" he has been given a "clean slate" by this country. Princess Astra is a ".....peerless woman in late twenties whose remarkable ash-blond hair framed a pale face distinguished by lustrous greenish eyes". Prince Oscar is ".....a short man with a large head.....profuse curling hair, bushy brows.....a pointed beard.....all completely and beautifully white". This striking trio is called The White Trinity. In spite of being very hard-up, they take up residence in the Princess suite at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Only Zenith appears to appreciate that money will be required for hotel bills etc. and he looks to Prince Oscar to provide him with an enterprise worthy of his attention. The three stories set out to fulfil these requirements.

In "The White Trinity" they decide to steal an ancient Egyptian crown, "studded with a great many precious stones". Unfortunately they become involved in the murder of one of the plain clothes policeman guarding the crown whilst it is on public exhibition. At the time of the murder the crown mysteriously disappears. Both events happen when the exhibition is crowded with people including the White Trinity, Zenith's prey literally being swiped from under his nose. He does succeed in getting the crown afterwards, but has to give it back eventually and be satisfied with a mere reward. Along the way there is plenty of action with the sword-stick, an unexpected kidnapping, a bit of blackmail, some electronic spying and the unlikely spectacle of Zenith "assisting" the police to capture two very nasty criminals.

At the beginning of "The Secret of the Six Locks" Zenith receives a key cut in the form of a leopard from an inmate of a Hong Kong jail. The messenger bringing it is murdered and dumped in Zenith's bedroom. A note wrapped round the key takes Zenith to a Chinese gangster with whom he has to form an uneasy partnership to locate hidden treasure. The treasure came from a temple during the war, and has been hidden in a cellar guarded by a man who has, over the years, become a living scarecrow. Before the treasure chamber can be unlocked another gang arrives to

hijack the treasure. There is a gang massacre and the hijackers are themselves killed by the secret of the locks. Zenith is left to solve the puzzle of the leopard key. He just opens the treasure chamber when the police arrive to take charge of the treasure. However, the adventure does turn out to be profitable for the White Trinity in the end.

The blue sampler of the title "The Clue in the Blue Sampler" is one item in a lot purchased at an auction sale by Prince Oscar after hearing a man behind him being instructed to buy it at any cost. A gang leader named Bawch calls on Zenith to offer a partnership and receives very rough treatment, getting a broken knee. From this interview Zenith learns that the sampler is "...a key to El Dorado". Bawch knows where to look, and the sampler gives the exact location. Zenith shadows Bawch in an attempt to discover where, and is nearly blown up in an explosion aimed at him by Bawch. Astra and Oscar both become Bawch's prisoners. Zenith solves the sampler puzzle and gets what is hidden, but gives it up to the police to gain time to rescue Astra and Oscar. This he succeeds in doing but gets seriously wounded in a gun battle with Bawch's men who are killed. Bawch himself, now in a wheel chair because of his knee injury, arrives after the battle is over and thinks he has beaten Zenith. A final effort by Zenith causes Bawch's wheel-chair to run away with him and fall from the ninth floor of his headquarters. Zenith is taken away by Oyani to his secret hide-out to "...travel forward into life or backward into the shadows. To him it did not matter which". There have been no more Zenith stories since, so we can only fear the worst.



JIM THE PENMAN, EXPERT FORGER AND MASTER OF DISGUISE

by Betty Hopton

Nelson Lee had many enemies, but one of the cleverest and most ruthless and also the most fascinating was, without doubt, a character named Jim the Penman. Jim's real name was Douglas James Sutcliffe and he was a solicitor, gone to the bad. We first meet Jim in Nelson Lee Old Series Number 39, in a story entitled "The Lightning Clue", and in this tale Nelson Lee finds out the true identity of Jim the Penman.

Jim was such an expert at both disguise and forgery that even an astute detective like the great Nelson Lee was often unable to see through the disguise, even when standing close to Jim. The forgeries were so good that Jim's victims would not spot the difference in the handwriting. There

was one man in the world whom Jim really feared, one man who managed to see through his innumerable tricks and forgeries and put paid to them, and that man was Nelson Lee. Jim really hated Lee, and swore that he would get him. On many occasions Jim the Penman thought he held the upper hand and that Nelson Lee was finished. Jim was quite ruthless and pitiless in his methods, and Nelson Lee and Nipper were often left to await a horrible death from which there seemed to be no possible way of escape, although somehow, at the very last minute, they would find a way out of their dilemma.

There were also some occasions when Jim was captured and seemed to be safe, but he always managed to outdo his captors with his extreme cunning and get away once more to carry on his evil career.

In Old Series Number 49, "The Forged War Orders", Jim was all set to betray his country for a large sum of money. I was very disappointed to think that even such a base villain as Jim could sink so low as to betray the country that had given him birth, but in spite of his greed and rascality there must have been a little good in Jim, for when it came to the crunch he abandoned his plan and the money. I could not help but admire Jim at this time, that he could not bring himself to be a traitor to his country, as it must have been a very difficult decision for a man of his calibre to make. Even Nelson Lee himself felt a grudging respect for Jim at that moment, because in this tale Jim's actions had also saved both Nelson Lee and Nipper from being shot by the Germans.

In Old Series Number 78, "A Christmas of Peril", Jim the Penman joined forces with the rascally Zingrave, in order to cheat a young woman who had lost her husband, but, thanks to Nelson Lee and Nipper, the plot failed. Some tales of Jim the Penman also appeared in Nugget Weekly and the Detective Library, but I have not been able to find any of these. The last complete story of Jim the Penman appeared in Old Series Number 99, "The Mystery of the Grey Car". In this tale Jim was badly injured in a crashed plane, and after recovery he was sent straight into penal servitude. Nelson Lee could not help wondering whether he would remain there.

Nothing more was heard of Jim in the Nelson Lee until 1924, when Jim appeared in a tale which ran as a serial, starting with Number 489, Old Series, when Jim was assisted in escaping from Portmoor prison by the Criminal Zingrave.

Jim the Penman's time in prison had not, unfortunately, made a reformed character of him, and he soon went back to his wicked ways, until, in Old Series Number 496, he was again captured and sent back to prison.

Did Jim the Penman escape once more? I sincerely hope so, as perhaps someone, someday may yet again put pen to paper, so that we may read once more of the thrilling adventures of Jim the Penman.

FOOTNOTE

There was once, in real life an original Jim the Penman. He was a barrister who also went to the bad, and became associated with an organisation of criminals. His name was James Townsend Saward and he was an expert forger, both in Britain and abroad. In the course of his criminal career his forgeries netted him over a hundred thousand pounds. he evaded capture until 1857 and finally died in prison, having been sentenced to penal servitude for life.

HOW TO ARRIVE IN STYLE AND ALIENATE ALMOST EVERYONE.

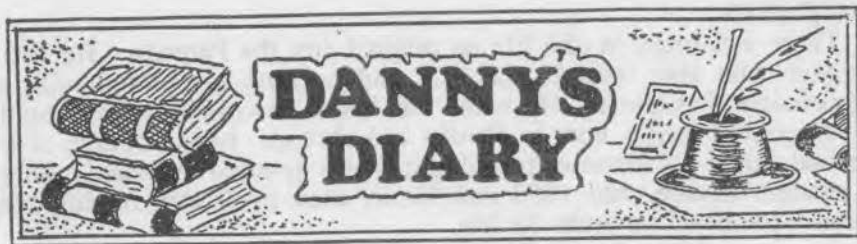
by Ray Hopkins

The arrival of the Hon. Douglas Singleton was a real chuckle time for the reader but rather less than funny for everyone else, including the snobbish and bigheaded Singleton. His entrance was greeted with enthusiasm as he rolled into the Triangle in a "magnificent limousine glittering with nickel-plate and highly polished coachwork", but his first utterance rather put the fellows off when he corrected Nipper who called him by his surname. He was, he said, "the Honourable Douglas Cyril Singleton". Nipper told him titles were ignored at St. Frank's. Sir Montie complimented the new boy on his elegant attire and introduced himself as Tregellis-West. Handforth couldn't resist adding Montie's title and first two names, but the baronet stopped him revealing them all.

Singleton told Perkins, his chauffeur, to take the car round to the garage. Nipper asked who was calling for it. The new boy informed him the car was his own property and he would need a garage for it, a room for his chauffeur and probably three rooms for himself. A swanking ass was Handforth's opinion. The bystanders' roars of laughter brought Nelson Lee on the scene. He introduced himself to Singleton who caused another gasp from his fascinated audience when he addressed the Housemaster by his surname only. Nelson Lee corrected him and said he must also call him "Sir" and obey his Housemaster when he is given an order, the order being to send the car home and follow Nelson Lee to his study where the facts of Public School life would be explained to him. Singleton's attitude to Lee's summons, antagonistic and insolent, causes Nipper, who had tended to make excuses for the new boy's handling of the situation because of his spoiled upbringing, to say a flogging wouldn't hurt him and would knock some of the swank out of him.

Tommy Watson considers the affluent new boy is not only showing off but wasting money to boot when he tosses Warren, the school porter, a pound note to carry his luggage into the building. But the porter, at least, was pleased to see Singleton, and touched his cap respectfully twice before carrying off his luggage. Warren hopes for more expensive pieces of paper to be tossed carelessly at him in the future.

(From N.L.L. O.S. 240, 10 Jan. 1920)



DANNY'S DIARY

OCTOBER 1939

Last month I wrote in my Diary that I hoped the coming of WAR would not cause any trouble among my weekly papers. After all, most of them carried on right through an earlier war when my Mum and Dad were youngsters. Hardly was the ink dry in my Diary before a grand old paper died. Modern Boy!

"NEWS! NEWS! NEWS! Next week's issue will contain an important announcement you cannot afford to miss!" So said the Editor in the issue of Modern Boy which came out at the start of the month. Barely 4 weeks after the start of the war. And with the next issue came the announcement that Modern Boy is amalgamated with "Boys' Cinema" - so ask for Boys' Cinema next week. It's pretty clear that it is too early for Modern Boy to be called a war casualty. It would have ended in any case. -

I'm awful sorry, even though I liked it the least of the papers I buy every week. Lately there have been too many farcical tales, like "Wobbling Wings", the tale of a flying bicycle; "Thermos, the Hot-Stuff Joker", a tripey affair; "The Boy Balloon" about a magic potion which made you lighter than air - the kind of stuff which leaves me a bit cold.

With the two final issues of Modern Boy, the Captain Justice series with Justice and Co. saving the world from invasion from the inhabitants of an unknown planet, ended with "Through the Tunnel" and then the final, "Alone in Space". The Biggles serial, "Castle Sinister" ended - followed by the announcement that a new Biggles serial "Biggles' South Sea Adventure" will start next week IN THE GEM. IN THE GEM! It sent a shiver all over me. What is going to be left out of the Gem in order to make room for long instalments of a Biggles serial?

I bought the "Boys' Cinema" the next week. It has a picture of Gary Cooper as "Beau Geste" on the cover. I shan't have it again. I like a magazine like "Pictures and Picturegoer" with news of the film world - but I don't want to read stories of the films written up for Boys' Cinema. So Good-bye Modern Boy!

More terrible war news. H.M.S. "Royal Oak" has been torpedoed by a Hun submarine. And that awful slimey chap on the German wireless keeps pouring out his drivel. The papers laugh about him and call him Lord Haw-Haw.

But it's not all bad news by any means. There have been some splendid tales in the Fourpenny Libraries. In the Schoolboys' Own Library I had "The Tough Guy of Greyfriars" who - surprise, surprise - is Alonzo Todd. He becomes friendly with

a weird scientist named Professor Sparkinson, who gives Alonzo some red fluid which, when sipped, gives him the strength of Hercules and the punch of Joe Louis. It's fantastic, of course, but it is so well-written that one loves it all with its lovely characterisation. Yesterday's weed with all sorts of fads and fancies becomes a tyrant in furthering his fads and fancies when he gets the power.

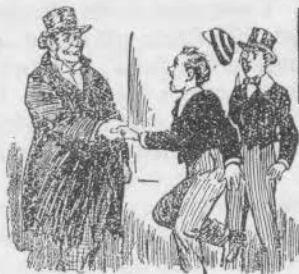
The St. Jim's S.O.L. is also great. It is "Put To The Test". It stars Clarence York Tompkins, whose frowsy and poor old uncle turns up from Australia. But uncle is actually a rich gent who is testing his nephew to see whether he is a heartless snob. The second part of this S.O.L. deals with damage to a valuable copy of Virgil belonging to Mr. Lathom. The damage is done by a cheap pen-knife known to belong to Gussy. So Gussy is blamed for the spiteful act.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "The Secret World". The chums find themselves in a secret world in the Arctic, inhabited by a tribe of white men descended from people who settled there hundreds of years ago.

In the Boys' Friend Library I had a Captain Justice story "The City of Secrets". This one is set in Africa, where a renegade American American and an Arab chief are out to conquer the white world.

A lovely new Pierre Quiroule story "The Mystery of the Missing Envoy" in the Sexton Blake Library starts with a diplomat setting off for a conference in Rome to decide whether there should be a war or not. He stops in Marseilles - and disappears. This is a Secret Service tale with Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie, Sexton Blake and Tinker soon come on the scene. Great stuff. There has been a terrible railway accident at Bletchley. The second part of an express crashed into the first part. Four people are killed and 36 injured badly. Dad thought we needed cheering up, so on Mum's birthday he took us all to the new show at the Palladium. We went to the matinee. The show is "The Little Dog Laughed" and it stars all the Crazy Gang. Gorgeous. I laughed my head off.

386.—THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.

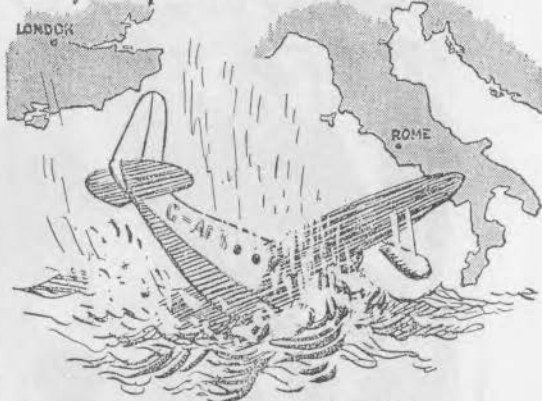


Put to the Test!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

An Exciting Long Complete Story of School Adventure, Starring TOM MERRY & CO., the Cheery Chums of St. Jim's.

The Mystery of THE MISSING ENVOY



By PIERRE QUIROULE.

A tale of SEXTON BLAKE, TINKER and PEDRO, introducing GRANITE GRANT, King's Spy, and MADEMOISELLE JULIE (of the French Secret Service).

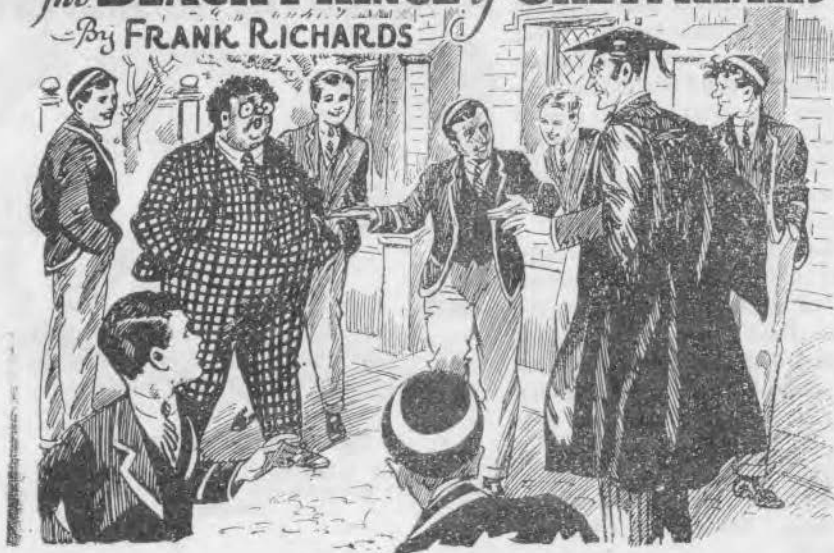
The Magnet has been a bit old-fashioned this month. Every story has been a single tale. Not part of a long series as they are usually nowadays. The first yarn is "Condemned Without Evidence". The new term has started at Greyfriars, and somebody has "shipped" Mr. Quelch's study. Vernon-Smith is blamed, his guilt taken for granted. But actually the sinner was Coker, who had meant to ship somebody else's study, and got mixed up. A master, Mr. Woosey, comes into this tale in a minor part. I remember a Mr. Woose in a series some time ago, and I suppose Frank Richards, like Coker, got mixed up and forgot what he was about.

Next came "Grunter of Greyhurst", in which Wibley acts the part of a double of Bunter in a play - and it causes confusion. Then came "The Bounder's Dupe". Vernon-Smith, at daggers drawn with Mr. Quelch and Wingate, enlists the help of a ventriloquist - Billy Bunter. Finally "The Black Prince of Greyfriars". A bit daft this one. A tomato is thrown at Mr. Hacker. Bunter is blamed, though he is innocent. So he decides to run away from Greyfriars. Then a black new boy Prince Bomombo from Bongoland - fat and wearing specs - arrives to take his place at the school. Surely the masters would have known if a Black Prince was coming to the school. Then Gosling confesses. He threw the tomato out of the window of his lodge. All pleasant reading, but not quite out of the top drawer.

Some enjoyable hours spent at the local cinemas. I loved "Son of Frankenstein" with Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff, and Bela Lugosi. This is the third of the Frankenstein films, and they

**THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER! ALL SORTS OF FELLOWS COME TO GREYFRIARS,
BUT PRINCE BOMOMBO, FROM BONGOLAND—WHO DOESN'T SPEAK ENGLISH—
IS THE WEIRDEST NEW KID OF ALL!**

The **BLACK PRINCE** of **GREYFRIARS!** *By* **FRANK RICHARDS**



"Meet the esteemed Prince Bomombo, sir," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with cheerful coolness. "A very old acquaintance of mine!"

have all been excellent. A fairly lively British comedy is "The Gang's All Here" starring Jack Buchanan. Lots of fun in "Ask a Policeman" with Will Hay, Moore Marriott, and Graham Moffatt, about a bungling copper who gets on the track of a gang of smugglers at the seaside. Pretty good was Don Ameche in "The Three Musketers", a musical burlesque of the famous story. Really delightful is "Gunga Din" with Cary Grant and a big cast. About three lively veterans who meet up with all sorts of fun and adventure on the North West frontier. And I loved "The Oklahoma Kid", a cowboy film with my favourites, James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart. Yes, a good month at the Super, Majestic, Odeon, and Co.

And so to the Gem. A piece of bad news - for me - came in the very first issue of the month. The Cedar Creek story in this one is "The Rebels' Victory". Cedar Creek has been holding a barring-out because their Head, Miss Meadows, was sacked and replaced by Mr. Peckover. The rebels win their fight and that brings to an end the series about this rebellion. And editor tacks on an unwelcome - for me - announcement: "Well, we say au revoir to the Cedar Creek chums for a time. Next week you will meet new pals - Biggles & Co. Don't miss the opening chapters of our great new serial." I reckon that Capt. W.E. Johns, the Biggles author, had written a new story to be serialised in the Modern Boy - and Modern Boy has given up the ghost, so the serial lands in the Gem. Personally, I would have preferred them to stop the tales of Jack Drake at Greyfriars and kept on with Cedar Creek, but the Cedar Creek tales are longer, and I expect they wanted more space for long serial instalments. The new serial is "Biggles' South Sea Adventure."

And now to St. Jim's. The series has continued with Mr. Silverson, the rascally schoolmaster who has replaced Mr. Lathon. Silverson wants to inherit Miss Fawcett's moneybags, so he is all out to get Tom Merry disgraced and expelled. The month's first St. Jim's tale is "Checkmate to a Crook", with Silverson plotting with a boozey rascal named Mulligan, but Manners gets a snapshot of the two men together.

Next, "Gussy Puts His Foot in It", and Tom Merry finds himself up for the sack owing to Gussy's booby-trap which went wrong. Next, "The Boy Who Vanished". Tom Merry has disappeared. He is becoming a bit of a rebel, like Harry Wharton did once. Finally, "Up For the Sack!" Tom Merry, of course. Luckily he is saved by the French master, Mons. Morny. There's some grand reading in these tales, though the plot is a bit familiar - as if that matters.

The Benbow tales, by Owen Conquest, have become Drake and Rodney at Greyfriars tales by Frank Richards. They are good, too. Opening tale of the month is "The Study-Jumpers". Drake and Rodney claim a study - the one shared by Russell and Ogilvy. In the next tale "The Greyfriars Lunatic", Ogilvy pretends to be a lunatic, thinking that they may scare off Drake and Rodney.

Next, "Coker's Catch", with Drake coming up against Coker of the Fifth. Finally, "Foes of the Remove" with Drake challenged to a fight by Bolsover, the muscular bully of the Remove. More next month. We hope!

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

Oddly enough it is sad to look back 50 years. Yet there would be no sadness in looking back 60 or 70 years. It is pretty clear that Modern Boy was not a war casualty. The end of the paper was announced only 3 weeks after the outbreak of war - and our papers went to press at least 6 weeks ahead of publication date. It had been obvious for some time that Modern Boy was ailing. The change of format 3

times in less than that number of years was a pointer that all was not well in the circulation stakes. The work of Hamilton had disappeared from the paper a considerable time before the end; he was now writing a new long story each week for the Magnet and a new long St. Jim's story for the Gem at the same time. He could have had no time for bringing back Ken King or Len Lex or Oakshott School.

But it had been a grand paper in its time. It started in February 1928, so when it packed up at the start of October 1939 it had been running for nearly 12 years. Comparing the early issues with the later ones brings tears to sentimental eyes. In passing, it is fascinating to observe that, at the start of the "King of the Islands" series in 1928, the stories were credited to "Sir Alan Cobham and Charles Hamilton". They even announced: "Don't miss Sir Alan Cobham's great stories:.. It is most improbable that Cobham really had anything to do with Ken King, apart from the loan of his famous name.

The only time that I ever bought Modern Boy from the newsagent was during the period of a few months when the paper presented a new series starring the Rio Kid. But, some 30 years ago, when I was living in Surbiton, a stranger called one day, accompanied by a huge suitcase. He asked whether I would like to buy the entire run of Modern Boy from No. 1 in 1928 up to the last issue in October 1939. Modern Boy had never really interested me very much. But it occurred to me that the complete run might be of assistance to me in my work for C.D. (I was right. It was!)

I forget what he asked for them, but it was a considerable sum, of course, and he wanted cash. I told him that I did not keep that amount of money in the house. Finally I gave him an open cheque. I told him to take it to my bank in Surbiton, and they would give him cash. Ten minutes later they rang me from the bank to know if it was in order. I told them it was. I had to take his word that every copy was there and that the condition was good. Every one was there, and with two exceptions the condition was excellent. I replaced the two weak copies a little later. Later still, I had the entire run bound in dark green boards by W.H. Smith - 26 large volumes. Those gorgeous volumes grace my bookcases to-day, all these years on.

And now back to Danny. S.O.L. No. 385 "The Tough Guy of Greyfriars" comprised the first 3 stories of the 5-story Professor Sparkinson series of the Magnet of late autumn 1933. A tip-top series with fine characterisation showing how the weedy "reformer" threw his weight about tyrannically when he had the power - and the "fantasy" side does not seem far-fetched in these days when we hear of athletes taking illegal steroids.

S.O.L. No. 386 "Put to the Test" comprised a couple of excellent pairs from the 1922 Gem. The Tompkins couple appeared in the early autumn of 1922, and the pair about Gussy in trouble over a cheap pen-knife appeared just before Christmas that year in the Gem.

"The Mystery of the Missing Envoy" was Pierre Quiroule's last Sexton Blake story. He was a fine writer. I first came across his work when, as a lad, I was going for a day afloat with my father. As we were passing a newsagent's shop, my Dad gave me sixpence and told me to get myself something to read on the bridge. I bought a S.B.L. "The Mystery Box" - and was hooked as soon as I read it. In those days, about 1920, I suppose, all the S.B.L. stories were published anonymously, but I never missed a Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie tale after that date, and later I managed to get the few earlier tales of those characters. It was through me, after Pierre Quiroule (W.W. Sayer) had left the A.P., that they reprinted most of the Grant-Julie

stories, and then, much later still, it was through me that Pierre Quiroule was persuaded to return to the fold and contribute a handful of new Sexton Blake Novels. The author and I became very good friends, and corresponded frequently.

Way back, in the early fifties, I had all the P.Q. Sexton Blake tales bound (three to a volume), and it was my good friend, Roger Jenkins, who got the work done for me by his bookbinder at that time in Portsmouth. I expect that Roger remembers. Those volumes - bound in black boards - 16 of them - are in my bookcase now, warming the heart of this ancient monument.

I doubt whether the average Gem reader can have been very happy when the Cedar Creek tales were replaced, early in October 1939, with the new Biggles serial. Probably the idea was to transfer some of the Modern Boy readership to the Gem. The Gem's last Cedar Creek tale, "The Rebels' Victory", had appeared under the same title in the Boys' Friend at the start of December, 1918.

Finally, to the Jack Drake at Greyfriars stories which Danny was enjoying that far-off October. These 4 stories had originally appeared (with the Owen Conquest byline dropped) in the Greyfriars Herald, consecutively from the start of January 1921. "The Study Jumpers" of 1939 had been "The Fight for the Study" in 1921; "The Greyfriars Lunatic" had the same title on both occasions; "Coker's Catch" had previously been "The Biter Bit"; and "Foes of the Remove had been "Dupont, the Peacemaker" in 1921.

"1042 -- AND ALL THAT" by James Hodge

Stand up those amongst us who, 'twixt the ages of ten and sixteen, even occasionally used the word 'Asseverated' in conversation with our fellows. The up-risingfulness is not terrific, I warrant. Coming across that verb transitive recently, it still had me reaching for a dictionary -- and I am now doddering into dotage. Yet there it is in a Magnet I should have read when I was eight years old had I not then still been in my 'Chips' and 'Funny Wonder' period. The Magnet concerned is 1042 of 1928, "The Fellow Who Wouldn't Be Caned", and you will find 'asseverated' in Chapter 10.

I have read somewhere that Charles Hamilton considered this to be one of the funniest 'singles' he had written. the confrontations between Coker and Prout are indeed classic farce. However, what lifts the story into the realm of pure gold are those long passages between the confrontings, descriptive of Prout's and Coker's attitudes anent the impasse between them -- the mental and verbal soliloquizing, as it were.

The simplicity of the plot might have tempted a lesser writer to give it superficial treatment. Instead, the motives underlying the protagonists' behaviour are dealt with in some depth. As with other examples of Hamilton's work, one is amazed at the high standard in a medium that at the time (whatever our later-day opinions) was a mere tuppence worth of ephemera. As others have pointed out, that same quality contributes to the pleasure we still derive from these tales in our maturity; in our youth much of it must have passed us by unheeded, like "the idle wind".

That last observation reminds me that in this single story I found at least twenty-nine quotations and allusions - "Leaves in Vallambrosa" indeed! Another thing: in Chapter 5 there is a passing reference to Coker's father. I never knew Coker had a father - if you will please not assume an implication where none is intended! Was Aunt Judy Coker's father's sister, or that of his mother?" With a father extant, why was Aunt Judy lumbered with Horace's upbringing?

I must confess that illustrations of Aunt Judy often remind me of Old Mother Riley, and we all know that 'she' was Arthur Lucan. Perhaps.....?

But no, the very idea is preposterous. Still, I wish someone could explain to me about Coker's dad.

'Asseverated'? Look it up -- I had to!

DAN DARE RETURNS **By Norman Wright**

It was just like old times to see Dan Dare - or should I say the original Dan Dare - once more on the front cover of "Eagle". The re-awakening took place in the issue dated August 26th and attracted quite a bit of media attention. Unfortunately, as so often happens in our hobby, the media got many of the facts wrong.

The artwork for the new serial is being drawn by Keith Watson. Keith, as any "Eagle" fan will tell you, kept Dan Dare going throughout the mid and late 1960's, during "Eagle's" fading years. Particularly memorable are some of the splendid covers he painted during the 1963 to 1965 period.

His work for the new "Eagle" is really excellent, showing the artist's love for the character he is helping to perpetuate. In one T.V. news programme he was seen working on the new strip and spoke with enthusiasm of his work on the original "Eagle".

I like everything I have seen in the first three episodes. The uniforms and hardware seem to be spot on, though I am not the sort of fan who counts buttons! Naturally enough the story re-introduces The Mekon who, never seeming to learn from his previous experiences, still hopes to outwit Dan and Digby and wreak a terrible vengeance on Mankind.



To go with the new serial is a cut out section that can be built up into a twenty page booklet entitled "The Complete Eagle Guide to Dan Dare." While not quite in the same league as the old pre war give-aways, when one would have received the whole booklet in the first issue, it will make a very worthwhile addition to my collection of Dan Dare ephemera.

I had assumed that I would be able to walk into the local shop and buy a copy of the comic. But it seems that these days newsagents don't go in much for comics. After traipsing around to seven or so, and finding that they had either sold the two copies they did get or never bothered to stock it in the first place, I nearly gave up. My wife came to the rescue with a copy purchased in Tesco, which must prove something!

(P.S. I have to admit that the rest of the comic left me cold.)

"DENISE'S DIARY"

OCTOBER 1939

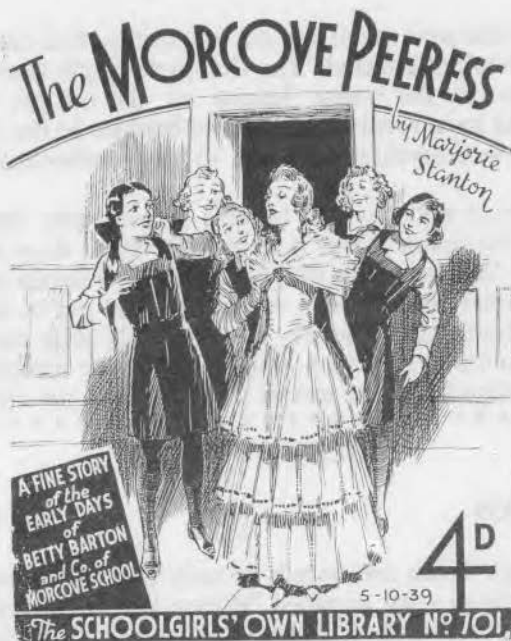
by Dennis L. Bird

After the high drama and tragedy of early September, there followed eight months of anti-climax - the so-called "Phoney War" or "Sitzkrieg." I have no definite memories of autumn 1939 apart from some of the unforgettable hit tunes: "South of the Border", "Roll out the Barrel", Vera Lynn's "Wish me Luck as you Wave Me Goodbye", the ill-timed "We're Gonna Hang Out the Washing on the Siegfried Line" (not for six years we didn't) and perhaps best-loved of all, "Begin the Beguine".

October 5th saw the issue of four more SGOL books, just as though there were no war on. Once I had them all in my collection, but I seemed to have disposed of three of them. No. 700 was "New Rule at Cliff House", in which for some reason I cannot now recall, a tyrannical master joined the staff - a kind of Mr. Quelch for girls. But the was no figure of fun, more a force of pure malignity. I remember his name because he was a part-namesake of mine: Shaw Dennis. The book's cover showed him tearing down a notice from the board while Clara Trevlyn, Barbara Redfern, and Miss Charmant looked on aghast.

"Wyn had Such a Winning Way" (No. 702), by Hilary Marlow, was billed as "A delightful laughter tale specially written for the Library". The laughter was on the level of this kind of dialogue: "He knows, you know!" "Who knows?" "It's not a she-nose!" Enough said. And No. 703, Elizabeth Chester's "At School in the South Seas", has left no trace on my memory.

The Horace Phillips ("Marjorie Stanton") story was rather a good one, and I still have it. This was No. 701, "The Morcove Peeress", which opens startlingly with a letter to Ursula Wade from her Aunt Alicia (her guardian), telling the Fourth Form sneak that she has inherited the title of Lady Ravenscaw, with a castle in Yorkshire and a fortune to match. Not surprisingly, this turns out to be too good to be true for Ursula, who gradually finds that there are doubts and difficulties about this inheritance. Chief among them is a young servant girl at nearby Barncombe

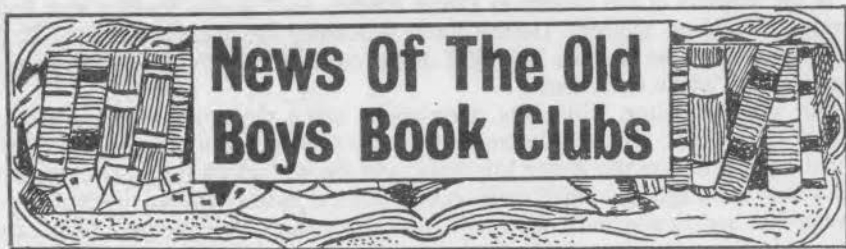


Castle: Muriel Swancrave. It is not long before various people - presumably crossword addicts - notice that her surname is an anagram of "Ravenscaw". To cut a long story short, Muriel turns out to be the long-lost heiress, and Ursula is stripped of her title. She was lucky to escape prosecution, for she had stolen and destroyed papers which proved Muriel's rights.

The tale rattles along at a good pace, with Cora Grandways and Diana Forbes making the most of Ursula's temporary good fortune. But the plot has some fundamental flaws. First of all, peerages normally descend through the male line only - even in these Equal Opportunity days of the 1980s - so one would not expect a girl to succeed. However, there are a few exceptional cases where the Sovereign has specifically granted the title to both male and female heirs (the Mountbatten earldom is the best-known example), and perhaps the Ravenscaw title is one of these. But there is another, greater difficulty: Philip Wade. Old Lord Ravenscaw had no children, so the peerage goes to the line of his late brother. This brother had two sons: Ursula's father and Muriel's father. Ironically, even if the Wade line were the senior, Ursula would still not have become a Lady. For - as we had read only four months earlier in "When Pam Made Morcove Wonder" (SGOL No. 685) - Ursula has a brother, Philip, who was Lionel Derwent's rival for the Belfort Prize examination. By the rules of primogeniture, he would have become the new Baron, even if he was younger than Ursula or Muriel. In fact, Muriel's father (now dead) was senior to Ursula's; he had been wrongly disgraced in World War I, and had changed his name to Swancrave. The book ends with Muriel leaving the service of Lady Evelyn Knight and becoming the real Morcove peeress.

Two other points about the book. The cover picture is misleading: the elegant girl in a ball gown is not Ursula, but Pam Willoughby about to satirise the sneak in Polly Linton's "Fourth Form Frolic", as "Lady Ravenscroak". The other curiosity

is an amazing line from Miss Somerfield. Muriel has had an accident, is concussed, and has lost her memory. She is in the Morcove "san". Doctors are called in, and the headmistress tells Betty Barton & Co. that "They had to do what is called trepanning for the concussion". Trepanning involves making a hole in the skull - but a week or so later, Muriel is fit and well again. Tough girls, these Morcove characters!



O.B.B.C. LONDON

The Walthamston September Meeting had a bumper attendance of 22. Prizes were awarded thick and fast, firstly to Mark Taha, Don Webster and Arthur Edwardes for their success in the Postal competition, then to Norman Wright, Arthur Bruning and Eric Lawrence in Duncan Harper's cryptic clue Sexton Blake quiz.

The C.D. Editor spoke of her recent work and future publishing plans. After tea, Phil Griffiths displayed three recent titles in Dent's Classic thriller series. A casting session for the Club's Christmas Play was held; Bill Bradford recalled the Club Meeting of September, 1969, and Alan Pratt presented a nostalgia quiz won by Chris Harper, Brian Doyle and Roy Parsons. The meeting ended with a "Discussion on my Favourite Series".

Next meeting Sunday, 8th October, Earling Liberal Centre, 3.30 p.m.

MARK JARVIS

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

We held the first meeting of our 1989/90 session at the Cottenham home of our Secretary, Tony Cowley. After a short business meeting, Howard Corn discussed the A.P. Champion, and Tiger. Launched soon after WWI, this sporting and adventure angled text comic seems to have put Frank Pepper (using some of his many pseudonyms) on the scriptwriting map. Several of his best known creations are Rockfist Rogan and Roy of the Rovers, both in the Champion. In 1950 Hulton Press began Eagle - a pictorial weekly - and A.P. answered in 1952 with Lion. In 1954 Champion ceased publication and the new Tiger began incorporating many of its contents (although now in pictorial format). By the 1960s, Roy of the Rovers transferred from Tiger to his own publication. Tiger closed down in 1983 and Frank Pepper, probably a more prolific writer than even Charles Hamilton, died in 1989.

Later we listened to Jack Overhill's 1960s broadcast concerning the escapism provided by Magnets and Gems in his youth. Tony had been able to re-master the original recording Jack possessed.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

In the absence of our Chairman David Bradley and Elfrida Bradley who had recently suffered an accident, Darrell Swift welcomed the sixteen present. Paul Galvin reported on the October 28th W.E. Johns meeting to be held in Nottingham; a good number intend to be there.

Our special visitor, Bill Lofts, then spoke about the holiday series in the MAGNET and GEM. His very interesting talk gave examples of various series and particularly referred to the Water Lily saga, and the trip which he and others had taken a few years ago on a small craft on the Thames. Some striking resemblances between fact and fiction were observed! Bill also spoke about the various library bans which some of our popular books have suffered from time to time. A splendid meeting.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

FRIARS CLUB

A good attendance was recorded at our Chairman's Sutton home, at Wharton Lodge, for the July summer meeting, held on a really typical Hamiltonian splendid sunny day.

Those attending were Brian Simmonds (Club Secretary), a new member Andrew Morton from Surrey, John Nicholls from Sussex, Bill Lofts, Colin Cole, Martin and Hazel Trowse, Arthur Edwards and Maurice Hall. Two talks were given, one by Bill Lofts which included an interesting thought. Did the Holiday serials that occasionally lasted over eight weeks (without the Famous Five being called over the coals on their return to school) lose some of the realism built up over the years in the Magnet or did we not notice this as children?

The second talk by John Nicholls was about his collection of hardback stories of other schools than the established Greyfriars, St. Jim's, St. Frank's etc, that existed in the 1920's and 1930's. He had amassed a total of over 70 different schools, many of which were probably one-off stories.

A Greyfriars quiz set by Maurice Hall sorted out the members who could recognise a Removite from his initials plus three 'wild cards' ie TF = Three Fishers. The winner was Bill Lofts and the runner up Colin Cole. Prizes were awarded. A healthy Bunter meal was provided, followed by a showing of video extracts of the Bunter musical (by permission of John Williams) which was staged at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter, 1988.

BRIAN SIMMONDS

FROM BRIAN DOYLE:

After I wrote my recent article about school story authors Richard Bird and Jeffrey Havilton, I received a long and interesting letter from a Mr. Richard Smith, who was taught by both men when he was a pupil at Glasgow Academy in the late-1920s-early-1930s. It enables me to supply a few extra facts which to supplement my original piece.

Walter Barradell-Smith (Richard Bird) was born in 1881 in Seaton Carew, Co. Durham. He was happily married to an American wife and had identical twin sons, Richard and Arthur, and a daughter, Elizabeth. The twins attended Glasgow Academy, where they were taught by their father during English lessons, and Elizabeth followed in her father's footsteps and became a schoolteacher in England.

B.G. Aston ('Jeffrey Havilton') joined the staff of Glasgow Academy in 1925, eventually retiring after war service in 1965. The story goes that 'Havilton' started writing after commenting to 'Bird' one day that he thought it must be easy to write for boys! Slightly nettled, 'Bird' challenged him to write one himself and get it published. The result was a 'Kiplingesque' tale of adventure in India and Nepal called *THE GREEN EYE OF THE LITTLE YELLOW GOD*, which appeared under 'Havilton's' real name of B.G. Aston. Later came his school stories under his pseudonym of 'Jeffrey Havilton'.

Interesting, these 'bet's authors used to have. In a rather different field, H. Rider Haggard once bet his brother a shilling that he could write an adventure story just as good as Stevenson's *TREASURE ISLAND* (then, in the 1880s, a current best-seller). The result was *KING SOLOMON'S MINES* (1885). And Haggard won his 'bet for a bob'.....!

In his letter in your August issue, Mr. Pope says he has been trying to trace the author of a book called *SALE'S SHARPSHOOTERS*. This is one of the many books (mainly school stories) by Harold Avery (1867-1943) and was published by Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. The actual date of publication is not mentioned in the book but, after some 'detective work' pertaining to other books advertised at the back of my copy etc., I have worked out that it probably appeared shortly after the Boer War (1899-1902), since this is mentioned many times as a recent event during the story. So I believe it was published in the early 1900s (the illustrations also bear this out); my copy is a reprint in the popular red-bound 'Nelson's Library for Boys' from around 1919.

SALE'S SHARPSHOOTERS is sub-titled 'The Historical Records of a Very Irregular Corps' and is about a group of schoolboys who form their own little Regimental Army 'Corps' and have 'battles' with the enemy 'Boers' in the countryside around their homes at 'West Heath' they are all day-boys at a local grammar school and number girls among their friends too. It is not a school story, as such. The story and its telling (in the first person) are reminiscent of E. Nesbit.

In 'Blakiana', also in your August number, Bill Lofts mentions an Irish writer named 'Flan O'Brien'. This is actually spelt 'Elann O'Brian' and his real name was Brian O'Nolan (O'Nuallain in Irish!). His best-known works are probably two very unusual, satirical and comic novels titled "At Swim-Two-Birds" (1939) and "The Third Policeman" (1967). He was born in 1911 and died in 1966. I'm afraid I cannot throw any light on his authorship of Sexton Blake stories.

On yet another topic: Bill Thurbon, in his letter in the same issue, mentions 'Captain Kettle'. The author was not Cutcliffe Haine but, in fact, C.J. Cutcliffe

Hyne (it all sounds like something out of 'Beachcomber'!). Kettle first appeared in a serial in "Answers Magazine", but the best known appeared in the pages of "Person's" and later in a series of ten books. They were graphically illustrated by the superb Stanley I. Wood.

REVIEWS

by NORMAN WRIGHT

"THE GIANT HOLIDAY ADVENTURE COMIC ALBUM" / "THE GIANT HOLIDAY FANTASY COMIC ALBUM" published by Hawk Comics at £2.99 each, reviewed by Norman Wright.

Chunky comic albums always had a comfortable feel when I was a boy and handling these two publications from Hawk Comics gave me the same sort of feeling. Each one is packed with re-printed material from the 1950's and 60's, and even if the quality of the printing does leave something to be desired 288 pages for £2.99 is terrific value for money.

The longest offering in "Fantasy Comic Album" is "Return of the Claw", a rather horrific tale. More action and less horror can be found in two "Thunderbolt Jaxon" strips. I am often asked about "Maxwell Hawke", and fans waiting for a chance to catch up on that particular childhood hero can do so here. Another much loved hero was Robot Archie and he crops up here in an adventure entitled "Robot Archie and The Mole Men". But the highlight of the book as far as I am concerned is the sixty four page reprint of "Men From The Stars", from an early issue of "Super Detective Library".

The "Adventure Comic Album" cannot fail to please anyone with an interest in the adventure strips of the 1950's. Apart from a selection of shortish strips it offers three really super reprints: "The Island of Fu Manchu", "Dick Barton and the City Under the Sea" and "Dick Turpin and the Secret of Wolf Castle". All three are reprinted in their entirety, Barton and Fu Manchu from "Super Detective Library" and Turpin from "Thriller Comics Library". Shorter offerings in the book include "Robin Hood's Merry Jest", drawn by my old friend Pat Nicolle, "Sexton Blake and the Lock Kyle Monster", and a short Buck Jones strip reprinted from "Cowboy Comics".

You don't need a bank loan to buy these books, so rush out and get copies now while there are still some left on the shelf!

THEIR HOLIDAY MYSTERY AT BLACKWATER PELE

by Margery Woods

Part 3: Chapter 5

The Pele felt more unwelcoming than ever after the departure of the ill-tempered Greg. He left behind a sense of chill menace that subdued all the girls. Even Bessie forgot her ever present need for sustenance and tended to huddle near to Babs. But somewhat to the girls' surprise Babs' young protege from the bus journey had not forgotten them. Some fifteen minutes later, as the girls were endeavouring to shake down an apology for sleeping accommodation, she tapped softly at the outer door before entering with a large tray and a heavy basket looped over one arm.

"Here---let me help you with that". Babs rushed to help the girl. Bessie was lifting the white cloth that covered the tray's contents and exclaiming with beaming delight over the piles of sandwiches, savoury rolls and delicious looking chocolate cake revealed beneath the linen. The basket held two large flasks of tea, a bottle of lemonade and a packet of biscuits, and it was Babs turn to give an exclamation of delight! "You thoughtful girl." She smiled at the timid youngster, who seemed ill at ease. "What is your name?"

"Judith---but my friends call me Judy." She gazed round the circle of friendly schoolgirls and obviously longed to stay and talk. But something like fear made her shake her head. "I must get back to the house---before Greg misses me. He--he doesn't like me out alone after dark."

This was so patently an excuse that Babs and Jemima exchanged glances, but before they could protest Judy had flashed a nervous smile and slipped out into the darkness. Sympathy rose in Babs' heart and she wondered again why Judy was so frightened of her brother. Didn't she have parents? And why was she here? Did she work with the unpleasant Greg, assisting him with the decor design business he apparently ran?

Similar questions were in the minds of all the chums as they finished the unexpectedly satisfying repast for which they had Judy to thank and then attempted to settle themselves as comfortably as possible for what promised to be a Spartan night. The pallets --a legacy from the field study centre the Pele had been a few years previously ---were hard and narrow, the blankets distinctly damp, and the atmosphere oppressive with the weight of grim history. The girls did not even think of undressing, they huddled down with no expectation of cosy sleep, yet sleep they did, tired after the journey and the day's uncertainties. A steely moon rose and gleamed between clouds, its silver stream reaching the wall above Babs' bed. Suddenly she was wide awake, seeing Jemima silhouetted against the tall window.

Babs sat bolt upright. "What is it, Jimmy?" She slid off her pallet to join the most enigmatic member of the Fourth Form at Cliff House.

"Look" Jemima pointed.

Babs stared through the window. Night and the moon had coated the sleeping countryside with the luminance of ice and indigo, unreal and strangely beautiful. Then she saw the white van parked on the driveway between the pele and the house. Three men stood beside it, seemingly in argument, and one of them was easily recognisable as the unpleasant Greg. Jemima glanced at her watch. "Ahem, delivery wallpaper and paint, dost thou think."

"At midnight?" Babs exclaimed.

"Night is as day here," Jemima sighed, "judging by the odd noises coming from below." At the query in Babs' glance, she added, "I went down for a sip of that lemonade---the old tastebuds being dry, y'know---and heard what must be honest hardworking activity in the nether regions. I'd have gone to help", Jemima said sadly, "but the door to the cellar seemed to be struck."

So Jemima had done a spot of nocturnal exploration! Babs chuckled. "Shall we test the night air?"

"I hoped you'd say that, Babs mine!"

"Without me?"

Both girls started violently. Clara stood behind them, her shoes ready in her hand and her jacket over her arm. "Clara---you idiot---what a fright you gave me" Babs protested. The three girls tiptoed from the room, trying not to wake their

sleeping chums, although, Jemima observed, anyone who could sleep through the snores that reverberated from Bessie was not likely to hear them! Once outside, senses sharpened by the keen night air, the girls moved warily until they reached the point where the drive forked, the right leading to the front of the main house, the left curving sharply to peter out at various outbuildings. The white van still stood there but the men had gone. Then suddenly a flare of amber light spilled from the opening doors of the nearest building. Just in time the girls shrank back into the inky shadows of the trees. Two of the men emerged, one jingling keys in his hand. he looked back over his shoulder: "Mind, it's got to be tomorrow night, Greg, or it's all off", he called.

"Yes, keep your voice down!" came the irritable tones that were instantly recognisable as those of Greg. He appeared in the rectangle of light. "Those blasted kids 'll be gone in the morning, don't worry." He began to swing the doors shut. "Drop the outside bar before you go, Nick", he instructed.

The man called Nick obeyed, dropping a heavy bar into place across the doors and clamping a padlock through the hasp before he crunched over the the gravel to his companion and a dark car scarcely discernable in the shadows. It slid away very quietly, without lights, along the drive past the house. The chinks of light visible round the garage door blinked out and there was silence.

"Our bikes are in there", muttered Clara. "I could just see one of them". She wandered over to the barred door while Babs turned to Jemima.

"What do you make of that little lot?"

"Not very much---yet, but I don't like it one little bit so far", said Jemima grimly.

"And what has to be tomorrow? It sounds very susp---

"Hey---we're in!" hissed Clara, "the padlock hadn't locked properly". The tomboy had the bar free and the door open instantly. Without waiting for Jemima and the torch she blundered in and promptly tripped over something tinny and noisy.

"Careful!" Babs shot a steadying hand. "There's a connecting door over there---it must lead into the house. Come on, let's get the bikes out." She began to wheel out the first of them. "If we can manage two each, I'll go first and come back for the last two".

"Look---there's a funny little staircase here", the tomboy called.

"Well don't disturb the poor thing", Jemima said dryly, "come and help with these blessed bikes."

Babs set off as quickly as possible, reaching the pele and stowing the bikes inside before hurrying back towards the garage. Strange! Babs frowned as she reached the fork: she should have met Jimmy and Clara by now. Her heart began to beat uncomfortably fast as she instinctively drew under the cover of the trees, then her nerve endings froze as she saw the dark shadow by the doors. It was Greg. He was slamming that bar across, securing the padlock, and making no mistake about its being locked this time. She hered him mutter an imprecation as he swung round and strode along the side of the house. He vanished from sight, a door slammed, and silence returned.

But where were the girls?

Chapter 6

In retrospect Babs remembered that night like a nightmare. Trying to open those doors, trying to call to her missing chums, receiving no response, then rushing back to the pele to rouse Mabs and Janet, and Leila, who was already awake. Marjorie stayed behind in case Bessie awoke and panicked at finding herself alone, while the chums hurried back to the outbuildings, hoping against hope at least to hear their friends' voices. But instead hearing the scared whisper of Judy, who, from her bedroom window, had seen the men depart and the girls arrive, and then their attempts to get the cycles.

"I'm sure Greg wouldn't deliberately lock them in," she faltered, staring at the grim expressions of the chums. Babs was not sure about this somewhat charitable reassurance but did not voice her doubt aloud. Judy said her brother had gone through the coach house again to fetch something he'd forgotten and found the outer doors open. He was furious and had stormed back into the house blaming Nick. This certainly tallied with what Babs had seen.

"Then why don't they answer?" Janet said worriedly.

"They might be hiding until they're sure that Greg's out of the way," suggested Mabs.

"He went straight up for a shower, then he was going to bed," Judy told them. "The men came just after ten and I had to make a meal for them then, so Greg just wanted a drink. He won't come down again now."

"Have you a key to this lock?" asked Babs.

Judy shook her head. "Greg will have it." She hesitated, biting her lip, then said, "I--I could take you through the house."

Glimmers of hope and relief lightened Babs' heart. She turned to Mabs. "We'd better not all go trouping through. I'll go with Judy. Youl girls go back to the pele--and for goodness' sake be quiet." Not very happily they obeyed their captain, and Babs followed the slight figure of Greg's young sister to a side door of Blackwater Manor. At any other time Babs would have been interested in new surroundings, especially in such a beautiful old house that a few hurried glimpses revealed as they tiptoed along corridors and through the domestic quarters until they reached a stone-flagged utility room beyond the kitchen. Judy slid the bolt of a heavy door, and opened it, revealing the interior of the old coach house. Babs jumped down the two steps as Judy switched on the light and looked frantically for signs of the missing girls.

"Ah! The cavalry---at last!"

From behind a large crate rose the elegantly cropped hair, gleaming monocle and calm countenance of Jemima Carstairs. At the same moment Clara's somewhat dusty and tousled personage emerged from the well of a narrow stone staircase at the other side of the coach house. Clara's mouth opened, and Babs was so thankful to see the pair of them that she failed to notice to notice the quick dig Jemima dealt the tomboy. It was repeated as Clara said, "But there's---"

"We managed to get ourselves shut in when your brother locked up," said Jemema, rather loudly and planting herself in front of Clara, to the obvious indignation of the Fourth's games captain. "Wasn't that silly of us? Thank you so much for opening up the ancestral mansion, Judy. Now," Jemima gave a rueful, much exaggerated sigh, "it's long past our bedtime, so we'll be off. Oh, don't forget

the bikes, children." Judy, not knowing Jemima's particular brand of burbling, was looking bewildered, but Babs took her cue and began wheeling out a cycle. The care needed to carry them back through the house effectively prevented further discussion, and it was not until they'd bidden Judy goodnight and got back to the pelet that Clara exclaimed indignantly: "Well, may I speak now?" Without waiting for any response she cried, "There're cellars and passages down there, stacked with all sorts of stuff. Silver and antiques, a case of fabulous miniatures, all carefully wrapped in felt. He must be emptying the manor! They'd never store valuables down there permanently. Babs---we've got to do something! He---"

"Whoa," said Jemima calmly. "We don't know anything for certain. We may be indulging our instincts just because we don't like designer Greg. There could be a simple explanation of it all."

"Huh, you don't believe that," snorted Clara."

"True, but I need more information, and I can't get that until the rest of the world wakes up. So," Jemima coolly deposited her slim length on one of the pallets, "I suggest a spot of snooze."

Beyond that, Jemima refused to be drawn, and perforce the girls had to follow her example; frustrating though it was, they could do nothing until day.

To be continued.

FOR EXCHANGE: Nelson Lee's, O/s. N/s. Boys Friend Library. Sexton Blake Library. 2nd, 3rd. series. Various other duplicated Boys papers. Exchange for similar. K. Townsend, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE6 6EA. Tel. Burton-on-Trent, 703305.

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"CHIN UP, CHEST OUT, JEMIMA!" by Mary Cadogan (Jade Publishers/Bonnington Books, card cover, £8.95) Reviewed by Dennis L. Bird.

Christmas seems to have come early this year, for this book is as full of good things as a plum pudding. Our editor, the co-author of "You're a Brick, Angela!" in 1976, has produced another lively and witty study of the girls' school story over 80 and more years, with a title-quote from Jemima Carstairs of Cliff House School. And it is in no sense rechauffe. Even in the chapter on Morcove, Mary Cadogan has resisted the temptation to reprint passages from "The Morcove Companion" that she wrote with Tommy Keen in 1981. All is new, and fresh as springtime.

The tale begins, very properly, with the "founding mother" Angela Brazil in 1906, and surveys in turn the Morcove and Cliff House sagas of the years between the wars, as well as the hardback books of such writers as Dorita Fairlie Bruce, Elsie Jeanette Oxenham, and Elinor M. Brent-Dyer.

There are character-studies of Cliff House's Jemima, Clara Trevlyn (the author's favourite), and the inevitable Bessie Bunter ("her vanity is as inflated as her circumference"). The chapters on the story papers of Lord Northcliffe's Amalgamated Press emphasise the paradox that they were "created and sustained by men" (feminists would not be happy with that to-day), and Mrs. Cadogan points out that these publications, "although designed as ephemera, provide wider and deeper insights into girls' real and fantasy worlds than any formal accounts can ever do." All that changed in 1951 when the prose texts all but vanished and the papers regrettably became picture-strips.

Interspersed with Mary's entertaining narrative are complete stories by some of the writers discussed, as well as contributions by the late Arthur Marshall and by Denise Deegan of 1983 "Daisy Pulls It Off" fame. And - a real scoop - the famous film actor Terence Stamp (Billy Budd, Sergeant Troy) records how his mother introduced him to Dorita Bruce's "Dimsie" (Daphne Isobel Maitland).

Other topics dealt with are Girl Guide stories and "Sex and the 1930s Schoolgirl." Mary includes two pastiche stories of her own, and best of all is her account of her own schooldays' reading. What memories that aroused of my own contemporary experiences!

This book is a real bargain - lose no time in adding it to your library.

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FROM: OPEN UP, CHEST OUT, JEMIMA!



FRIENDS OF MY YOUTH—Where are you?

Probably the above title doesn't accurately apply to EVERY issue of 'Gem' - there were, after all, 'not-so-good' times. If my memory serves me correctly, I believe the Editor's claim was that every story was a Gem - and at the time of the Blue/Green cover days the stories did justify the statement.

St. Jim's, of course, had already arrived by 'Gem' time - in short stories in 'Pluck' by an author shown as Charles Hamilton. When the halfpenny 'Gem' started, Tom Merry made his first appearance - at Clavering. Only Nos. 3, 5, 7 and 9 offered the stories of Clavering, written by an author named as Martin Clifford. With No. 11, Tom Merry moved to St. Jim's - and St. Jim's left Pluck and went into 'Gem'. Martin Clifford took over completely from Charles Hamilton! -- and Tom Merry and St. Jim's ran uninterruptedly from 1907 to the 'Gem' ending at the end of 1939.

'Gem' had many other contents at times; there were some quite-long St. Jim's stories, but at other times, St. Jim's had to share the pages with other items, as well as the usual serial. There was a spell when St. Jim's just about appeared on half of the paper's pages. In the latter days of the First World War, the substitute writers were beginning to show themselves rather frequently; from mid-1919 to early 1921, this spate of 'unreal' authors almost took over. Fortunately, the real writer gradually began to return to the fold more often. Every issue during the 'bad runs' certainly did not come under the heading of 'a Gem' - but the good was beginning to return.

Not for long, however - for from about 1924 onwards, increasingly each year, the 'subs' began to take over again. In fact, from 1928 the real Martin Clifford made only very occasional appearances. All this, during the time of the distinctive red, white and blue covers!

Fortunately, 'Gem' had a Champion in its corner. Eric Fayne was able to prevail upon Editor Down to drop the present stories and start to reprint Clifford's St. Jim's from the very beginning. For the period of about eight years, this procedure was carried out, and only the 'odd-one' ever cropped up as a substitute yarn. However, eventually, due to a certain amount of Editorial 'shifting the story sequences' as well as some lessening of standards (some yarns were sometimes 'adapted', not always skilfully) Eric Fayne was once more able to approach Maurice Down. This time, the request was to get the real Martin Clifford to start writing original St. Jim's episodes again. Once more, the Protector of 'Gem' had triumphed - and for the last nine months of 1939, four splendid series of St. Jim's filled the pages.

As already mentioned, other items appeared in 'Gem' - often more than a single supporting serial or series. True, at times of 'not-so-good' St. Jim's, mainly in the 'sub' issues, these other contents of 'Gem' made up for a lot that was otherwise missing. St. Frank's, after the folding of the Nelson Lee Library, came into 'Gem' here there was a mixture of early stories repeated and original offerings by E.S. Brooks. St. Frank's stayed in 'Gem' for about three years.

The early Greyfriars stories ran for mostly two years, fading out at about the time when 'Gem' grew its 'smaller-mustard-covering'. Jack Drake & Co. from St. Winifred's and their adventures on the Benbow ran for some little time, alongside repeats of the Cedar Creek events. Rookwood had three separate spells in 'Gem' -

mostly the stories were by 'sub' writers, but there were some by the real Owen Conquest.

At the most, this is only a 'potted' version of the Gem's life - produced from information received from Roger Jenkins' Library, as well as by much C.D. writing. If, however, it will help to produce some wider and deeper offerings from C.D. Gemites, then go to it - 'Gem' would never deserve the fate of being forgotten.

"Every one a Gem" - well, obviously not; but the good ones were each worth more than a single jewel in the Crown. Perhaps, therefore, on average, the Editorial claim was not so far out!

HORLER FOR EXCITEMENT! by Alan Pratt

Sydney Horler was one of our most prolific crime writers during the period from the early twenties until his death in 1954.

A former journalist, Horler produced his first thriller, "The Mystery of No. 1" in 1925. This was an instant success and set the scene for Horler's future career as a genre novelist.

Typical Horler heroes were clean cut, well-to-do young Englishmen caught in webs of international intrigue and protecting lovely, but mysterious, young ladies from unscrupulous foreign villains. Heroes and heroines would frequently be employed by (or become involved with) the British Secret Service and face terrible perils with a merry quip and a cast-iron upper lip. And if that all sounds like so much old hat, I should emphasise that Horler was no mere run of the mill writer. He was a master story teller and, at times, his works were exceptional in their creation of excitement, atmosphere and colour. His style was easy and, above all, he was intensely readable.

Nor did Horler confine himself to thrillers. He wrote a number of football stories which were excellent and showed his true appreciation of the game. His humorous novels (from the Wodehouse stable, Herbert Jenkins) were genuinely funny and extremely imaginative. Horler ventured also into the fields of horror, school and historical fiction with apparent ease, and even managed to turn out yarns about cowboys, lumberjacks and boxing for boys papers and annuals.

Critics have been hard on Horler. He has been compared unfavourably with the likes of Edgar Wallace and Sapper, yet such comparisons do not stand up to proper testing. The fact that he acquired Wallace's chair and dictaphone did not justify the criticism that Horler was but a pale imitation. Their writing styles were, after all, quite different and Wallace's output lacked the variety and, for this reader at least, bubbling enthusiasm of Horler's work. Tiger Standish, Horler's best known series hero has been decried as a "poor man's Bulldog Drummond" but any resemblance is purely superficial and symptomatic of the popular fiction of the time. Much as I have always enjoyed reading the adventures of Sapper's super-patriot, he fell somewhat short of Standish who was no mere bully-boy but actually played centre forward, as an amateur, for the England soccer team! Above all else, there was something about Horler's writing that lifted him above most of his contemporaries. I refer to those marvellous cameos of characters barely essential to the plots but littered throughout the pages of his works. The writer's interest in people of all classes and types is shown to effect as he introduces (for passing interest) secretaries, down and outs, barmaids and duchesses *et al* thereby building up a real and complete world that belies the extravagance of some of the story lines.

It may be true as Lachman says that "at present hardly anyone reads Horler" but this cannot detract from his value as an entertainer of the highest order. Hodder and Stoughton used the slogan "Horler for Excitement" on their dust wrappers: this was no idle claim.

FROM BILL LOFTS.

The Adventure of the Renegade Spy (U.J. No. 1021) was almost certainly penned by the creator of Gunga Dass - the Hindo arch criminal - a H. Gregory Hill who died in 1932. Anthony Parsons never wrote any stories for the Union Jack (finished 1932) but took over the character in the S.B.L. first story 1937. I never saw the full Indian rope trick whilst out in India and Burma, but saw the lesser version - sending a sketch I did home to my parents - which I still have. An old regular soldier did tell me that it was done by the boy at the top of the rope making a lightening backward leap behind the fakir and hiding. People looking up into the fierce Indian hot sun would have missed it. You try looking at the sun even here. Danny in his Dairy is quite correct 'John Andrews' was a house name to cover old reprinted stories. There were also non-Blake ones in the Boys Friend Library.

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Mary Cadogan



CHIN UP CHEST OUT JEMIMA!

A Celebration of the
Schoolgirls' Story



This celebration of the girls' school story has been written and compiled by Mary Cadogan, with embellishments from Arthur Marshall, Terence Stamp and Denise ("Daisy Pulls It Off") Deegan. It includes classic stories by Angela Brazil, Elsie Jeanette Oxenham, Dorita Fairlie Bruce, Elinor Brent-Dyer, "Hilda Richards" and "Ida Melboourne"; also pictures by Ronald Searle, R.H. Brock, Mary Reeves and many other popular illustrators. Surely this is the first time that so much "spiffing schoolgirl" talent has come together in one book! The keynote is unashamed nostalgia rather than social or literary criticism. However as well as spotlighting schoolgirl fiction and fantasy, CHIN UP, CHEST OUT, JEMIMA! includes a history of the genre, one or two parodies and some real-life memories which deal with those "jinky stunts" and "grizzly swindles" that blended and blurred during our gymslip days.....

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