

STORY PAPER

# COLLECTORS'

JANUARY  
1990

# DIGEST

VOL. 44.

Nº 517.



79 P

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I WISH ALL MY COLLECTORS/FRIENDS ALL THE VERY BEST FOR THE NEW YEAR.

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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W.H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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HERBERT LECKENBY

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*from* **YOUR Editor to YOU**



**A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

Despite the fact that Bunter and his friends are coming to grief on the ice, Henry Webb's cover picture this month strikes a festive note to mark the beginning of a new year and, indeed, the last decade of a century! I send warmest greetings to all C.D. readers for 1990 which I hope will be a good year for you personally, as well as for the world in general. Our diarists Danny and 'Denise', fifty years on from the beginning of the

Second World War, naturally make passing reference to some of its events. It is good to reflect so long afterwards that some of the people who were allied to us during that war now seem, at last, to have achieved the political freedoms for which they then fought bravely but in vain. After so many years of apparent eclipse, freedom is now surging triumphantly across eastern Europe. All this, surely, suggests that 1990 will be a year rich in positive achievement.

## THE ANNUAL

As I write this, those who have seen our Annual have been full of praise and enthusiasm for its many entertaining articles, stories and pictures. Those who felt bereft when Les Rowley's atmospheric story concerning the history of a nameless (but so well-known!) school ended, will be pleased to see that he has written a sequel which begins as a serial in this month's C.D. I for one felt that I just had to know what happened to the unfortunate and haunted Septimus Clarke, and I'm sure that you will all share my satisfaction that Les has continued the story.

## BOOKS - AND WRITERS

Nostalgic publications abounded over Christmas, and we are delighted to learn that Howard Baker has prepared another programme for our delight for 1990. (One of his beautiful 'Specials' is reviewed in this issue of the C.D.) Rupert Bear now not only warrants his regular Annual but a reprint of one of his Annuals from the 1930s (also reviewed in this issue), while, as you will see, Hawk Books seem to be going from strength to strength in covering a wide range of hobby interests.

Books, of course, demand not only imaginative and enterprising publishers but talented writers, and it is with great pleasure that I now mention the success of two of our C.D. readers and contributors. In response to Victor H. Brown's article on Dixon Hawke in the August 1989 C.D., they contacted D.C. Thomson (who are still regularly publishing stories about the dauntless and resilient sleuth), and submitted tales of their own which have now been accepted and published.

Happy reading - and happy writing!

MARY CADOGAN

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## AROUND THE WORLD WITH SEXTON BLAKE

by J.E.M.

The Baker Street-pipe-and-dressing-gown image of Sexton Blake sometimes makes us forget that our favourite detective's fight against crime was not confined to this country. Exotic cases often meant exotic places.

A new series will take a look at a number of Blake's adventures in foreign lands and if these brief glimpses send you back to the original tales they will have served their purpose.

Most of the stories referred to are by G.H. Teed and this, of course, is inevitable. A far-travelled man himself, he had no equal as a Blakian author of the distant scene. And he was ever well-served by the superb illustrations of Eric Parker.



## NUMBER 1

Some of the saga's most memorable tales took Blake to the Far East, so let's kick off this series with a journey - or rather two journeys - to China, along with author G.H. Teed and illustrator Eric Parker. In *The Street of Many Lanterns* (U.J. 1064), Blake encounters both the lovely Mlle Yvonne and his old enemy, the sinister Wu Ling. This episode took place back in 1924 and our first illustration shows Wu temporarily at the detective's mercy.

Eight years later in *Sexton Blake in Manchuria* (U.J. 1494), the tables are turned and, in the second drawing, we see Blake, clad Chinese fashion, in the hands of the criminal warlord himself. Our detective, of course, not only escapes but manages to foil the latest schemes of the evil Wu who is trying to exploit to his own advantage the then current Japanese invasion of China. (In addition to excitement and entertainment, we also got a few Political Affairs lessons from the saga!

Both stories are rich in atmosphere, with Teed impressively airing his first-hand knowledge of the Orient and Parker capturing the scene with his usual skill. But note the development in Parker's work, the second drawing has shed the slightly wooden style of the earlier one, though of course both are a delight to Parker enthusiasts.

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## THE ART OF ST. FRANK'S

by Ernest Holman

Would I be correct in stating that the St. Frank's stories featured more artists than one usually associates with Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood? The former would really suggest Chapman (with all due respect to Shields); St. Jim's, of course, would be MacDonald and Rookwood undoubtedly Wakefield.

Which foremost name could one apply to Nipper and Co? Really, as the 'longest man' of sketches, it would probably have to be Arthur Jones. From very early days - for ten years or more - his was the hand that portrayed the Nelson Lee characters. Then, suddenly, a new brush took over - and here I have to reveal ignorance. The artist from (about) Castleton, Walter Church mystery, time was - well, who was he? I confess frankly I do not know - what was more, there never seemed to be any indication of name, or even initials - neither can I remember recognising his work in any other publications. I began regularly reading the Nelson Lee when this 'unknown' was in harness - and only in back numbers did I meet up with St. Frank's as seen by Jones. I was, therefore, pretty well brought up on Jones' successor - and it was quite a shock when the Detective Academy started off with a new illustrator.

This was, of course, Savile Lumley - a pretty regular contributor to many weeklies, monthlies and Annuals. Then along came Kenneth Brookes, at about the time that St. Frank's underwent some changes with the return to school (Parkington & Co. from Carlton, Mr. Wilkes with family, and so on). Brookes was still there when the final N.L. series was launched in 1933.

It will be seen that much of the above is based on a fair amount of memory, as well as on recent extensive reading from Bill Bradford's Library offerings. It seems, then, that there were not 'so many' different artists - but St. Frank's appeared in other publications besides the Nelson Lee. In early Boys' Friend monthlies (artist not known to me); in that same publication, plus the weekly Boys' Realm, when Nipper and Co. were featured in Blue Crusader yarns - here, the artist was mostly Ernest Ibbotson. In the S.O.L., however, we again meet up with Savile Lumley, who illustrated almost all of the St. Frank's repeats in this monthly.

It is interesting to reflect a little on the style of the artists. Jones was always able to convey an air of mystery (he was a first-class choice when the Thriller weekly came along). Sometimes his faces seemed a little larger than life (not an uncommon fault in some of the Companion papers) and he had one oddity in company with C.H. Chapman - if fags, or juniors, were shown 'en masse' with adults, the lads were all of equal height, with the 'old' men almost towering over them!

My unknown 'middle Nelson Lee' artist does not appear to have any obviously noticeable aspects in his work - although many of his characters always seemed to be taking life so very seriously (to make us readers do the same, perhaps?). Kenneth Brookes was, for want of a better expression, the 'clearest' of the St. Frank's artists. If I remember Brookes for anything, it would be because I saw some similarity to Rookwood's Wakefield - especially in the faces.

Ibbotson's illustrations were always of the 'dramatic' kind - even if in the yarn the event depicted was of an ordinary nature. Lumley I would criticise for one thing only - all his characters looked 'scruffy'. In an overseas setting or on the sporting field, this did not matter a lot - but at other times, everybody seemed to be of an untidy appearance. (I would contrast Lumley's people as the extreme to the 'clean, clear, neat' look of the Cliff House girls by Tommy Laidler).

How well, really, were Nipper and Co. portrayed - and who 'hit them off' best of all? If you are thinking of answering, please include the name of my unknown 'middle-period' chap, will you?

## HOW TO STICK TO YOUR GUNS ALMOST UNTO DEATH!

by Ray Hopkins

Handforth is so thrilled at the tremendous bargain he has obtained from a travelling fishmonger outside the gates of St. Frank's that he can't resist undoing the parcel - six succulent kippers for only a tanner - and exhibiting his pride and joy as he enters the lobby of the Ancient House. De Valerie fans himself, Sir Montie backs away from what he calls "this frightful odour", Somerton holds his nose, and Pitt collapses dramatically in the doorway and calls faintly for water.

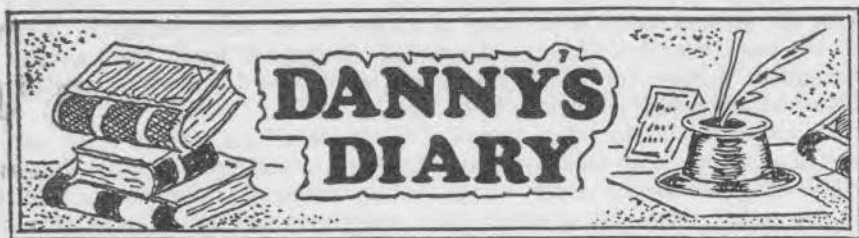
In Study D, Church and McClure are preparing a frugal tea consisting of bread and butter and one jam tart between the three of them. They brighten up when Handy enters with his "ripping" kippers, but are loath to let him cook them in their new 3/6d frying pan, when they get a whiff of them. Two kippers, sizzling merrily in the pan,

fill the air of Study D with thick fumes. Church opens the window. Pitt, passing outside, staggers and falls to the ground. He is carried away tenderly by several fellows. A watching audience roars with laughter. Handy keeps a very straight face and almost decides to not eat the kippers after all. However, they smell so different when they are cooked that he changes his mind.

Church and McClure are waiting outside ready to catch their leader as he staggers, fainting, from the study. Nipper tells Watson it'll be a shame to lose Handforth but bad fish can kill people very quickly! He'll be gone before bedtime! Handy calls out to his studymates to come and fry their kippers; he's going to start eating his two. Handforth eats part of one kipper then says he's full up but pushes down several slices of bread and butter. Later, Church and McClure go for a stroll and, returning, find Handy lying full length on the study couch. He says he has a headache and no, it isn't the effects of the kipper.

Two hours later, sallow and pale, Hanforth enters the junior common room. The fellows note his heavy eyes and think he looks bilious. Pitt suggests he be carried up to bed but Handy's punch sends him flying. Ominously, he is missing from the supper table later that night, but he lives to be stubborn another day. (From NLL O.S. 222, 6 Sep 1919.)

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## JANUARY 1940

Mr. Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, has just returned after visiting and inspecting the Maginot Line. He expressed himself as well satisfied with it. He could not have been so satisfied with events over here at home. For he found that the Boys' Friend Library has changed its name.

All my life - and for as long as almost anyone I know can remember - there has been the Boys' Friend Library in the shops. Now, for no earthly reason visible to mankind, they have dropped the name. Two issues are called the Knock-Out Library and two issues are called the Bullseye Library. It just doesn't make sense. Stupid people just have to change everything, and it makes me mad.

Nothing in these new books appeals to me, and I haven't had even one of them. Who wants to buy "Steamboat Bill" or "Trail of the Flying Bomb"? Well, I don't! This month all the Libraries have gone up a halfpenny to 41/2d which doesn't matter nearly so much as changing the name.

I break off to mention that Food Rationing started on the 8th of the month. So now we change coupons for grub.



Back to the Four-penny-halfpenny Libraries. The Schoolboys' Own Libraries have been excellent. The Greyfriars one "The Dupe of the Underworld" is tip-top. Jimmy Valentine is a boy criminal known as Dick, the Penman. He is an expert forger. At the end of the Christmas vac he renders a great service to Mr. Quelch. The schoolmaster is interested in the boy, and also grateful to him. When he learns that the boy is an orphan, Mr. Quelch takes responsibility for him, and enters him as a schoolboy in the Remove at Greyfriars. But the criminal world does not intend to lose the boy forger, so they decide to get him back at all costs. A magnificent story, which will go on next month I expect.

The St. Jim's S.O.L. "A Gunman at St. Jim's" is fine reading, but it is a bit episodic. I should think it was pretty obviously 3 separate tales in the Gem. Actually the "Gunman" of the title does not come into it until the last third of the book. It starts off with a story about Gussy who has expressed a desire to throw ink over Mr. Railton. And then somebody does it. In the middle portion of the story, Figgins for some reason (sh! It's Cousin Ethel. Me-ow!) refuses a challenge to a fight from Trimble. And, in the third part, an old acquaintance of Talbot's, Rogue Rawdon, turns up and is the "gunman" of the title. Good stuff.

The St. Frank's S.O.L. is "Petticoat Rule at St. Frank's: in which all the masters in the school are replaced with mistresses. It's amusing, but very far-fetched, surely.

I had two grand Sexton Blake Libraries (also 4/12d) this month. One is "The Case of the Shot P.C." by Anthony Skene. It introduces Zenith, the Albino, and is great. There hasn't been a new Zenith tale for ages. The other S.B.L. is not quite so good, but quite nice. It is "The Mystery Militiaman" by Ladbroke Black. It is about a young man who is "called up", but gets mixed up in a fiendish plot.

Some good stuff at our local cinemas this month. We had a good start with Gary Cooper and Ray Milland in "Beau Geste", a lively tale of the Foreign Legion. Somebody has stolen the family jewels, and we don't know till the end who did it. With this one we also saw Micky Rooney in "Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever". I always enjoy the films of the Hardy family.

I found "The Lion has Wings" a bit dull, though Ralph Richardson and Merle Oberon were good in it. It was more like a history lesson, telling what led up to the war. Fairish was "Maisie" with Ann Sothorn as a chorus girl with Robert Young as her

Read what happens when Women Teachers take over St. Frank's!



Teacher-  
book-length  
papa got  
will enjoy -  
No. 394 -  
A Dupe of the  
Under-  
world  
No. 395 -  
A Gunman  
at St. Jim's

Famous public school taken over by women! Mistresses replace masters! Sensational things are happening at St. Frank's, and the whole school is in a state of great excitement. How the amazing change-over comes about, and how Nipper & Co. fare under petticoat rule, makes a ripping, book-length yarn that you simply mustn't miss!

**No 396 SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY**  
IF YOUR NEWSAGENT HAS NOT A COPY IN STOCK ASK HIM TO ORDER ONE FOR YOU! **4/12d**

boy friend. Also fairish was "Invitation to Happiness" about a haughty lady who married a prizefighter. Here we had Irene Dunne and Fred MacMurray.

I enjoyed "Five Came Back" with Lucille Ball, about a plane loaded with passengers which crashed in a jungle. And absolutely tip-top is "Come On, George", with George Formby, about a nervous stableboy who rides a nervous horse to victory in the Grand National. Mum liked "Daughters Courageous", a kind of a follow-up to "Four Daughters". It was the same girls in it, but about a different family. I loved Spencer Tracey in "Stanley and Livingstone", about a writer who went to find a lost explorer in the days of Queen Victoria. And a real rib-tickler was "The Frozen Limits" with all the Crazy Gang joining in a gold rush to the Yukon.

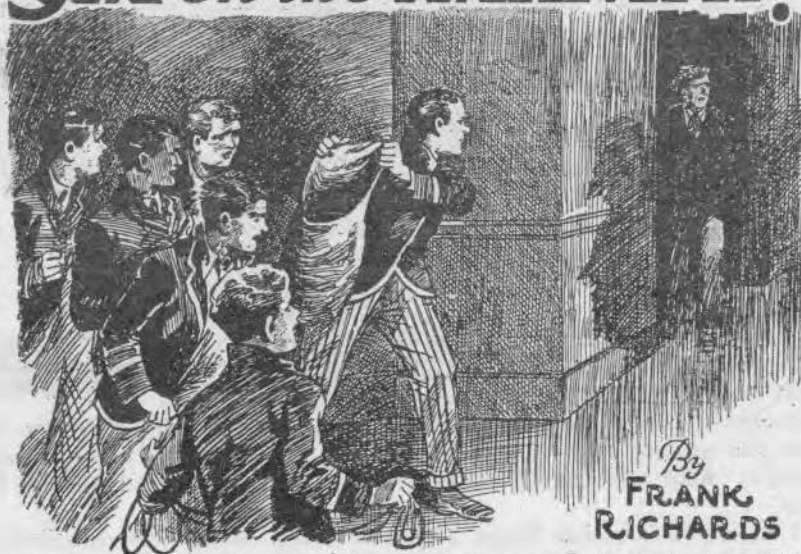
So. A mixed month at the cinemas, but a relief from the black-out.

Early in the month it was just a hundred years since the Penny Post was introduced. And Mr. Scatterby at school reminded us that it was started by a gent named Rowland Hill. Of course, in that hundred years the cost of posting a letter has doubled. I expect in the next hundred years it will double again, so in 2040 the people about then can expect to put fourpence on their letters.

The Magnet has reduced in size from 28 pages to 24 pages, including covers. The Editor forgot to draw our attention to it.

**GERALD LODER, THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE SIXTH, IS ASKING FOR TROUBLE AGAIN! AND THE FAMOUS FIVE AND VERNON-SMITH ARE ONLY TOO WILLING TO OBLIGE! BUT THEY BLUNDER—AND BLUNDER—BADLY!**

## **SIX on the WARPATH!**



*By*  
**FRANK  
RICHARDS**

**In the blackness of the night the door of the lobby opened and a figure stepped out. Armed with an open sack and a coil of rope, the Greyfriars Removites waited!**

The mystery series about the criminal Slim Jim has continued all through the month. The first tale this month is "The Hooded Man". The chums are finishing off their holidays at Wharton Lodge, and Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake are there also. Of course, Mr. Quelch has disappeared, because he was the only person who had seen Slim Jim without his mask on - and Slim Jim, the Hooded Man, is the only one who knows where the Remove Master is hidden. Next came "Smithy's Secret Weapon". Back at school, Mr. Lamb, the gentle new master of the Remove, smacks Smith's head. And Smithy's secret weapon against the master is Bunter's ventriloquism. For some reason Mr. Lamb is very disturbed when the voice of Mr. Quelch is heard all over the place.

This is followed by "The Bounder on the Trail". The Bounder - and Ferrers Locke - are puzzled as to why Mr. Lamb is wide awake and keeping watch in the middle of the night. It's exciting reading. Last of the month is "Six on the Warpath". This time it is Gerald Loder who is in the wars. The famous Five and Smithy are waiting for Loder with an open sack and a coil of rope - but they blunder, and get Mr. Lamb in the sack instead. It is becoming a very long series and goes on next month.

Excuse me while I put a couple of logs on the fire. It is a bitterly cold winter, and at the end of the month the freeze is terrific, as Inky would say. There is snow everywhere. Trains are marooned all over the place. And the Thames has frozen over for the first time since the year 1814. Brrrrrrrrrr!

Maybe tomorrow I'll go snowballing.

It has just come over the wireless that Mr. Hore-Belisha has resigned as War Secretary, and he has been replaced by Mr. Oliver Stanley. The news is as cold as the awful weather.

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

As Danny entered in his Diary, the sudden change of name for the Boys' Friend Library, in the first month of 1940, seems inexplicable. I'm not sure whether the word "trendy" was in use 50 years ago, but it seems evident that somebody at the top thought that a more "trendy" title might be more attractive for the youth of 1940. I very much doubt whether it pleased many readers.

S.O.L. No. 394 "The Dupe of the Underworld" comprised the first three stories of the Jim Valentine -

Dick, the Penman series which commenced its 11-story run in the two closing weeks of 1932. Entertaining throughout, and immensely readable, it was probably slightly over-long, as some series were at that period. The opening 3 stories, in Danny's S.O.L., made an excellent and, at times, touching little volume.

No. 395.—THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY.



## A GUNMAN AT ST. JIM'S!

By  
MARTIN  
CLIFFORD.

A Thrill-Packed Story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, with Reginald Talbot, the one-time boy cracksman, taking the leading rôle.

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S.O.L. No. 395 "A Gunman at St. Jim's" was slightly unsatisfactory as one complete volume, dealing as it did with 3 contrasting themes. It comprised 3 stories which came from the Gem of late 1930 and early 1931. The opening part had originally been "George Washington Junior", the last issue of 1930. This concerned the inking of Mr. Railton and starred Gussy. It was pruned. The second part had appeared as "Figgins in a Funk" 6 weeks later in the year 1931. This featured Figgins, Cousin Ethel, and Trimble. This one also was pruned. The final part, oddly enough, had appeared one week earlier than the "funk" tale, and had been "The Man From Angel Alley", a tale of Talbot's past. It escaped the pruning pencil.

But happily enough, it was entirely Hamiltonian. In a period of well over a year there had been only 4 genuine tales in the Gem. The compiler of this particular S.O.L. had managed to pick out 3 of them and put them together in the one volume. So let's give credit where credit is due.

The film "Maisie" which Danny saw in January 1940 proved to be the first of a series of Maisie films which were in the cinemas in the next half-dozen years or so. Each was unremarkable but passed a pleasant hour for cinemagoers.

So Danny reckoned then that postage would be fourpence a letter by the year 2040. Of course, the thought of decimal currency had never occurred to him in those days.

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## DID GREYFRIARS HAVE ITS ORIGINS IN THE PENNY DREADFUL?

by John Springhall

Two thirds of the way through Edwin Harcourt Burrage's *Tom Torment: or, The Lads of Laughington School* (c. 1880), the eponymous hero, after adventures at Laughington College and St. Aldate's, is sent to Grey Friars College, at Crassbury, whose flogging principal is Doctor Wartley. Here Tom meets scholars like orphaned charity boy Clancy, new boy Whopfield Widdles, an alderman's snobbish son, Goggles and Bobbles, typical mischief makers, and masters like Mr. Harley, alias old Grampus, and the blushing usher Mr. Green. What follows at this early Grey Friars exemplifies that peculiar blend of waggish jocularly, crude slapstick, suspense, violence, and hero-worship which made up the typical 'penny dreadful' school story. *Tom Torment* is labelled a penny dreadful because it first appeared as a serial in Charles Fox's *The Boy's Standard* (1875-92). Fox also brought out, from his office in Shoe Lane, near Fleet Street, such late Victorian shockers as *Sweeney Todd*, *Three-Fingered Jack* and *Spring-Heeled Jack*.

Articles about penny dreadfuls, by Tom Hopperton, John Medcraft and Charles Wright, were a regular feature of *Collector's Digest*, *Story Paper Collector* and *Collector's Miscellany* up until the 1960s. Interest in pre-1914 boys' weeklies which came into this category sadly waned with the departure of a generation of scholarly collectors who had themselves read such 'forbidden' literature as boys. 'Penny dreadful' was really a composite term, attached indiscriminately to both penny-part novels and boys' weekly

periodicals, illustrated with lurid front page engravings and devoted mainly to sensational tales of melodramatic adventure. They were published from the 1860s onwards by small Fleet Street publishing firms, like the Emmett brothers' Hogarth House, Charles Fox and Edwin Brett's Boys of England Office, for the amusement of largely working-class youth, lingering on until the collapse of the Aldine Company in the early 1930s.

Popular serial stories written for the 'dreadfuls', by 'hack' authors such as Vane St. John, Charles Stevens, George Emmett, Harcourt Burrage and W. Thompson Townsend, dealt with highwaymen, pirates, boy sailors, historical adventurers and low-life criminals. Titles range from *The Wild Boys of London* (1864-66) to Samuel Bracebridge Hemming's Jack Harkaway stories, from Brett's journal *Young Men of Great Britain* (1868-69) to the Aldine *Boys' First Rate Pocket Library* (1887-1905).

A reputation for vulgarity and incitement to crime, epitomised by the 1870s term 'dreadful', was much exaggerated and tells us more about middle-class distaste for commercial entertainment than it does about the publications themselves.

The literary ancestry of *The Gem* and *The Magnet*, according to George Orwell in his tendentious essay on 'Boys' Weeklies' (1940), could be partially attributed to the school story writers who were flourishing on their first (1907-08) appearance; such as Gunby Hadath, author of the popular 'Sparrow' stories, and Desmond Coke, author of *The Bending of a Twig* (1906), a story of Shrewsbury school. In his famous reply to Orwell, Hamilton claimed only to have read Desmond Coke in the 1920s and expressed total ignorance of Gunby Hadath. Orwell attributed the main influence on Charles Hamilton's prolific output to Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899), which met with an equally firm denial. Orwell's essay makes no reference to the serial fiction printed in penny dreadfuls, whose major influence on the popular school story has been long forgotten, apart from an illuminating series of articles by Tom Hopperton in the 1962 *Story Paper Collector*. The young Hamilton, growing up as a journalist's son in the London suburb of Ealing, was just as likely to have read 'pernicious' weeklies in his teens -- surreptitiously perhaps -- as more sedate papers like *The Captain* and *Chums*, which ran Gunby Hadath's early school stories.

Serials about school life in penny dreadful weeklies were at the popular end of a genre more readily associated with parent-approved publications, like the Religious Tract Society's *Boy's Own Paper*, which had set out to destroy the former. 'It was with the founding of the *Boy's Own Paper* in 1879 that the whole genre of middlebrow and popular school fiction had really begun, with [Talbot Baines] Reed's stories as their model', writes Isabel Quigly misleadingly in *The Heirs of Tom Brown* (1982). The school story had actually become a staple of the weekly serials appearing in the much-despised (by adults) penny dreadfuls over a decade earlier. The 'popular' school story not only owed its inception but also its first models to these unjustly neglected periodicals.

School stories featured prominently among long-running serials in the 'dreadfuls' from the late 1860s onwards. The most popular were removed and sold separately by Hogarth House or the Boys of England Office (later Harkaway House) in penny weekly parts, later in sixpenny or shilling one and two volume complete novel form with chromographed wrappers (all labelled 'dreadfuls'). In 1900 the Edwin Brett firm's Harkaway House list of sixpenny reissued novels boasted a total of twenty two school stories, an equal number of historical tales and forty five general romance and adventure yarns.

In these weekly serials, with their absurd facetiousness and generally melodramatic framework, authors were allowed to explore areas in school life totally undreamt of by muscular Christian Thomas Hughes, whose 'Tom Brown' was the inspiration for nearly all of the more respectable Victorian hardcover school fiction. The hacks who wrote the widely read 'dreadful' serials also pioneered a popular formula in which a charismatic schoolboy hero, such as Jack Harkaway, Dick Lightheart, Tom Wildrake, or Tom Floremall, was to find post-school employment pursuing various adventures around the world in the company of former school companions.

The first genuine school story ever to be written for a boys' weekly periodical was George Emmett's mould-breaking serial, 'Boys of Bircham School', which opened on 8 June 1867 in *The Young Englishman's Journal*. Dr. Bircham was the first in a long line of headmasters whose onomatopoetic names were indelibly linked with corporal punishment. The story takes place in a small private boarding school where Bircham is judge, mentor and friend to his pupils, albeit with a pronounced enthusiasm for flogging bullies and rule-breakers "You come here", he would say, "to become worthy of your parents, worthy of yourselves, worthy of your name as young Englishmen. I ask you is this the way to become so?.....Do you think that when you grow to be a man, an Englishman, that you can fight the hard battle of life without using a little self-denial?".....This speech reminds us of Thomas Hughes's patriotic apotheosis of Dr. Arnold in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1856),



although Emmett chooses to ignore most of the precedents set by that archetypal novel.

The plot of Emmett's school story focuses on Bircham's employment of a highly unpopular French master, Monsieur Jean Gaillard, or 'Frenchy', who becomes the butt of a series of practical jokes which escalate in outrageousness. The hated Frenchman attempts to supplant the young school usher, Philip Randall, in the affections of Eleanor, daughter of an old seadog, Captain Oakplank, who lives at nearby Woodbine Cottage. "That is one of the prettiest of the English girls I have beheld since I became a resident in this land of fogs", says the comic foreigner to himself. The school's pupils, admirers of the usher, determine to prevent the Frenchman's courtship being successful, employing various sadistic pranks that leave little to the reader's imagination, and whose repeated outcome is the total humiliation of the school's foreign language teacher.

Edwin Brett, George's Emmett's bitter rival, long remained dubious about the potential of the school story and so it was not until over a month after Bircham School, in number thirty five of *Boys of England* on 20 July 1867, that W. Thompson Townsend's much reprinted serial 'The Captain of the School' made its first appearance. This was followed by the hiatus of another fifty numbers before the publication of the same (unacknowledged) author's 'Unlucky Bob; or, Our Boys at School'. Townsend makes great play with the missing heir or stolen will plot in these stories, apparently more at ease with historical drama than with the broad comic brush strokes of the new-fangled school life story. Charles Hamilton used similar plot devices for his own school stories a generation later.

'The Captain of the School' opens with a cricket championship played between two rival schools in the town of Riverdale, testifying to the centrality of school sports as a plot device in boys' periodical fiction long before the advent of the *Boys' Own Paper*. Dr. Placid's well-behaved school eleven, the 'Hearts of Oak', are pitted against the Revd. Dr. Rodwell's more aristocratic and conceited team, the 'Nil Desperandums'. The snobby school, led by their villainous trainer, local poacher Abel Slinker, are not above resorting to foul play to assure victory. School bullies from the opposing side manage to injure the bowling arm of the captain of the rival school, Rupert Ingleby, 'a fine-spirited, noble lad', who nonetheless wins through at the crucial match. The vital cricket match whose outcome is delayed by skulduggery was, of course, to become a stock ingredient of Charles Hamilton's school stories.

Edwin Harcourt Burrage (1839-1916) firmly established the school story in the penny dreadful weeklies when, in 1871, he took over 'Tom Wildrake's Schooldays', George Emmett's highly popular successor to the Bircham School serial, running in the Emmett brothers' weekly *Sons of Britannia* (1870-77). Bracebridge Hemyng's rival 'Jack Harkaway's Schooldays' appeared in Brett's *Boys of England* (1866-99) five months later, rapidly increasing its circulation, and a long-running formula had been firmly established. Jack Harkaway could lay claim to being the best

# TOM TORMENT;

OR,  
THE LADS OF LAUGHTINGTON SCHOOL.



"SO I'VE CAUGHT YOU AT LAST," SAID PRESTON. "I THOUGHT I SHOULD SOME TIME OR OTHER."



WADDY'S WEAPON STRUCK PRESTON HEAVILY ON THE FOREHEAD AND HE FELL LIKE A LOG OF WOOD.



known schoolboy hero since the creation of Tom Brown himself. Accordingly, editors sent Jack, Tom and the rest around the world, once schooldays were over, in pursuit of long drawn out ethnocentric adventures. Hemyng's lively sequel was called 'Jack Harkaway, After Schooldays: His Adventures Afloat and Ashore' (1872-73).

These penny dreadful serials have been sadly overlooked by historians of the public schools in English fiction, although their poor survival rate and relative inaccessibility may have contributed to this modern invisibility. Nonetheless, the importance of such popular fiction for anyone investigating the literary antecedents of Charles Hamilton's Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories in the *Gem* and *Magnet* is clearly considerable. There is little indeed in the pre-1914 Hamilton school stories that cannot be matched from the penny dreadful boys' papers of the 1860s onwards except, of course, his marvellous comic and story-telling flair.

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**CLIFF HOUSE DIARY** January. Edited by Barbara Redfern  
(and Margery Woods!)

Happy New Year, everybody!

Well, we're all back at school after a simply splendid Christmas up in the Highlands at Glengowrie with all the traditional joys of the festive season, not least the wonderful hospitality of Jean Cartwright's uncle, the Laird of Glengowrie. We all voted it the best ever, even Bessie was never peckish!

For our Bess it was a real ripping time---literally! There was loads of gorgeous crisp white snow and brilliant sunshine, perfect for tobogganing and skating, and Fatima decided to demonstrate how NOT to set a bob sleigh record! In true Bunter fashion she set off in fine flying style---until she got a little confused, too much exhilaration on top of plum pudding, no doubt, and managed to turn left instead of right at the first bend. Bessie went one way--- left instead of right at the first bend. Bessie went one way--- over the hedge!---while the sleigh went the other. Fortunately Bessie wasn't hurt but her new red ski top was. It caught on a branch and just couldn't sustain the braking power needed to stop Bess landing in a snowdrift on the far side. if only you could have seen poor old Fatima reclining indignantly on that great billowing white eiderdown of snow. Bessie has decided to withdraw her application for a place in the British team at the next Winter Olympics.

We've all been making good resolutions.

Clara has vowed to make the junior eleven so super it will win every match, and, especially, whack Courtfield hollow. Clara refuses to listen when we suggest that Courtfield may also be making resolutions...



Janet is determined to make sure Cliff House wins the County Swimming Shield from those insufferable swanks at the Courtfield Swimming Club.

Jemima says she is going to try to finish the TIMES crossword at least once this term. She gave a very long-suffering sigh as she made this announcement, which made Mabs and me giggle, because Jimmy is quite capable of finishing any crossword if she really wants to; the trouble is, as she is wont to express it, her brainpan does tend to suffer from day-starvation by the time she reaches the third clue down.

Diana, believe it or not, has made a serious resolution to work harder this term and behave herself. Cries of derision all round. But the Firebrand has had a fright during the hols. Her father, of whom she is very fond, had a heart attack on New Year's Eve and had to be rushed into hospital. It proved not as serious as they feared, something the doctors called "a warning" and Mr. Royston-Clarke is recovering very well, but Diana is more subdued than anyone can remember seeing her. For how long, though, only time will tell, knowing our Firebrand.

Now wait for it! This is the most stupendous resolution of all time. Guess! Bessie is going to slim! She swears she is going on a strict diet. No puddings. No iced buns. No jam tarts. No chocolates! The scene in Hall or Auntie Jones tuckshop is going to be worth watching during the next few days!

#### A NEW ADVANCED COOKERY COURSE by Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter

Now pay attention you girls. I'm going to elucidate some of great problems of cooking for you. One of the greatest difficulties is found with the making of the successful Soufflay. (And I can see I shall have to do something about successful spelling! Editor.)

Now providing you follow my tested recipe and instructions you will be able to produce a superb soufflé which has risen beautifully, all golden brown on top and featherlight savoury within.

The ingredients and method:

A rounded tablespoon of plain flour.  
1/2 an ounce of butter  
1/4 pint of milk.  
Dash of pepper,  
Pinch of salt.  
A spot of made mustard.

Mix and heat gently in a saucepan, stirring all the time, until mixture thickens. It should just start to leave the sides of the pan. Remove from the heat.

Separate two eggs. (No, Clara, you idiot. You don't put one egg at each end of the room! You separate the yolks from the whites.)



Beat the two egg yolks into the mixture, then stir in 4 ounces of grated cheese. Mix well. Beat the egg whites until they are stiff enough to form peaks and fold gently into the mixture. Put it into a greased soufflé dish (or an oval pie dish of earthenware, not tin) Place on centre shelf of oven heated to 400°f. or regulo 6. Takes about 25-30 minutes.

The important thing is to make sure everyone is ready to eat their meal the moment the soufflé is taken out of the oven. Soufflés will not hang about waiting while people scoff wine and gossip. This amount should serve four people. (As long as E.G. Bunter isn't one of 'em! Ed.)

Think that's all for this month, except that we have two new girls this term. No one seems to know much about them. Their names are Julia Frankland and Hilary Gaynor. They are both in the Fourth, although Julia is fifteen and a bit and might go into the Fifth next term if she's scholastically able. She's quite tall, very slim, has long dark smooth hair and dark eyes. Her colouring is pale, and Diana says a touch of discreet make-up would really transform her, but, as Diana ought to know, make-up is definitely taboo. But Julia shows no inclination to be friendly and I'm sure it's not shyness. She's more of a loner, but there is something about her that puzzles me, though I can't think why. She was distinctly stand-offish when Clara started to quiz her about what games she had played at her last school. Hilary is more approachable, quite attractive with light brown hair, worn in a short casual style. She has blue eyes, pretty colouring, and is of sturdier build though not as tall as Julia. She says she played centre-half at Hockey at her last school, so Clara is going to try her out on Saturday. But Hilary also has something reserved about her, a sort of closing off as soon as anyone asks questions. Usually new girls are either shy and nervous at first, which is natural, or they are over confident. These two are unusual in that they seem quite indifferent as to what anyone thinks of them. And Hilary seems to watch Julia closely when she thinks nobody is noticing, yet they are apparently strangers to one another. I suppose they'll shake down in time.....

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## "THE GREYFRIARS TREASURE SEEKERS"

Chroniced by Leslie Rowley

"I wonder what Quelch wants". There was a note of apprehension in Harry Wharton's voice, as he and the other members of the Co. made their way to Masters' Passage. It was the first day of term, and he wondered whether news of a certain hectic incident at Courtfield Junction had already reached the majestic ears of the master of the Remove. An impromptu game of footer with the silk topper belonging to Coker of the Fifth, and the rather strenuous mêlée that had followed, was such a first-day-of-the-term occurrence that the Removites regarded it rather in the light of a hallowed tradition! Quelch, himself, was rather a whale on tradition, though it was doubtful, extremely doubtful whether he was likely to regard the ragging of a senior on the platform of a railway station as such!



"I didn't notice any beaks at Courtfield", replied Bob Cherry, divining the cause of Wharton's concern. "and Coker, frabjous ass that he is, is not a fellow to sneak. Perhaps 'Old Pompous' had got wind of the matter and complained. If so, look out for squalls!"

"The squallfulness will be terrific if the esteemed and ludicrous Prout has reported the ragging of the fatheaded Coker", added Hurree Singh, to which Johnny Bull contributed an expressive grunt as the Famous Five reached the door of Mr. Quelch's study and Wharton tapped thereon.

Much to their relief, no cane lay in readiness on the form-master's desk, in fact there was quite an amiable expression on the usually severe countenance. It seemed certain that intelligence of the Coker incident had not yet reached the Quelchilian ear. The chums of the Remove assumed their most respectful expressions as though any words with which the master of the Remove addressed them were pearls of wisdom and priced beyond rubies. There came a further tap on the door, and the little party was joined by Lord Mauleverer, Herbert Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing. Outwardly cool, the Bounder had been asking himself if he had been spotted making a call at "The Cross Keys" on his way back to school that afternoon. Sins of omission and commission seemed to have been practised on more than one occasion on that January day!

"My boys, I trust that you have all returned, refreshed from the Christmas vacation, and imbued with the intention to work hard in the term that lies before you. I shall expect signs of improvement from all of you, not only in class but in the way you spend your free time." A steely glint came into the gimlet eyes as they turned, momentarily, in the direction of the Bounder. "It is on how you spend your free time that I now wish to speak. When I last saw some of you, at Wharton's home at Christmas time, I had with me a gentleman who had been assisting me in making good the damage that some wretched boy had done to my manuscript of a history of this School. Whilst carrying out some research in the Library, that gentleman came across a document in the School archives that I thought of sufficient interest to bring to the notice of Colonel Wharton as a Governor of the School. At the Colonel's request, the existence of the document was kept secret until such time as he could lay it before the full Governing Board for discussion as to further action. The Board of Governors met a few days ago, and I am now acting on their behalf by speaking to you on the matter." Mr. Quelch, noting the rapt attention of his small audience, found himself wishing that they displayed such an attention when he was holding forth in the form room on the delights of Roman History or English Literature!

"That document", Mr. Quelch continued, "was part of a fuller one, and was in the hand of Dr. Hugo Catterhall, Headmaster of Greyfriars at the end of the eighteenth century. In it he refers to a certain Septimus Clarke, a boy of much the same age as yourselves, who had repeatedly claimed to have witnessed the apparition of Prior Anselm who was executed at the time of the Dissolution. It appears that Septimus Clarke so persisted in this story that it was reluctantly decided that he should leave Greyfriars for another School or be committed to an asylum. That much is known; what follows is conjecture to which I do not necessarily subscribe. The legend of Prior Anselm, and his concealment from Thomas Cromwell's commissioners of a treasury of gold and silver plate, is common knowledge. What historical fact originally existed has long since been coloured by the passage of time and the imagination of man. Nevertheless the Board of Governors are interested in the matter and wish further investigation to be made.

Your past experience in the vaults and secret passages may be of some help in putting this matter to rest, and I have agreed to your participation, providing you obtain the consent of your relatives and guardians. Let me put any illusion you may entertain of this releasing you from your form work and preparation at rest. It means no such thing - in fact I shall expect your work to show a gratifying improvement. If the permission from your parents and guardian is forthcoming, you may embark on this dubious project in your own free time. Wharton, as my Head Boy, I will expect you to be in charge of the others. All of you should bear in mind that with the slightest infraction of any of the school rules, or of any instruction I may issue, the matter will be immediately brought to an end. You are in no way obliged to undertake what I consider to be a rather harebrained scheme!"

The eight juniors looked at their form master with something like incredibility on their faces. If Quelchy thought, for one moment, that they were going to pass up such an opportunity as this, then Quelchy had another thought coming! Hidden treasure, watched over by a spectred presence from long ago, held more appeal for fifteen year old imaginations than they did for more academic reasonings of fifty year old form masters. Even Mauleverer who, during Quelchy's long discourse, had looked asleep on his feet, joined in, enthusiastically, with the others as they indicated their wish to take part in the endeavour.

"Very well!" There was the trace of a smile on the crusty visage of the Remove master. "One final word! I charge you to keep your own counsel in this affair. It should not be discussed, either among your schoolfellows or elsewhere. It may be difficult to observe such discretion, but you must overcome that difficulty for it is very undesirable that the matter be noised abroad." Mr. Quelch picked a small sheaf of papers from his desk. "Here are your copies of the document to which I referred. On one side appear the comments of Dr. Catterhall; on the other is a sketch, a very roughly drawn sketch that may possibly have some connection with what Dr. Catterhall has to say. That is all, except to remind you to obtain the written consent of those at home. You may go!"

The eight could barely contain themselves as they walked down the length of Masters' Passage. The idea was attractive to the Bounder because of the thrills and possible risks that might be involved. The others were swayed by the thought of adventure that opened before them. Only Mauly looked preoccupied. As they reached the Remove passage, Wharton touched his lordship on the arm.

"Penny for them, Mauly."

"Well, for one thing", answered Mauleverer languidly, "I'm wondering how we are going to keep this thing a secret from Bunter. For another, I'm wondering what ever happened to Septimus Clarke after he left the School. Still, after Quelch's jaw, it's too much of a fag to think too much about anything. Far better if all you chaps come to my study and get tea for us all. There's plenty in the cupboard if Bunter hasn't managed to pick the lock!"

That stipulation proved to be well-founded when Mauly threw open his study door. There was a startled squeak as a fat figure turned from the cupboard, a chisel dropping from a podgy hand.

"I say, you fellows, I thought I'd come along and get the spread ready whilst you were with Quelchy. Save you time, you know how considerate I am!"

"Will one of you fellows help Bunter on his way? I'd do so myself, but the jaw with Quelch has made me rather tired."

"Leave it to me", grinned the Bounder, "this way fatty. Open the door you fellows." His grip on Bunter's collar, Smithy swung the would-be tuck raider round. The door was open, the way was clear, as the Bounder kicked for goal!

"Plenty more where that came from", warned Smithy ominously before closing the study door. A yell of defiance floated back from the passage outside, but Bunter did not venture to re-open the door. There was a pain on his person that Bunter did not wish to be repeated! But, if his gluttony could not be satisfied, he felt that his curiosity should. Stealthily approaching the door again, Bunter bent and applied a plump ear to the keyhole. So intent was he on his information gathering, that he failed to observe the angular figure of his form-master as it appeared above the Remove staircase. But, if Bunter did not observe Quelch, Quelch certainly observed Bunter! That fat ornament of his form had been given two hundred lines for inattention in class, and those lines were now overdue. Mr. Quelch had come in search of those lines and of Bunter, and he had thoughtfully brought a cane with him. With both ear and attention glued to the keyhole, Bunter remained blissfully unaware of the Remove master's approach as he strained to hear what was being said in the study!

Swipe!

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter's terrific yell and a cloud of dust from his trousers ascended simultaneously as result of that terrific swipe. Mr. Quelch opened the study door and looked in at a surprised tea party.

"My boys, I have caught Bunter in the act of eavesdropping. You should be aware of the matter and will, I hope, counsel him with a view to seeing the errors of his ways. Bunter! As you have not brought me your lines, they are doubled! You will now follow me to the form-room, where you will be detained until your imposition is completed. I am aware that it is time for tea in hall, but that need not interfere with your detention. Now follow me!"

"But, sir! I've had nothing to eat since dinner. I'm starving! I say..."

"Nonsense! Another word, Bunter, and I will cane you severely!" said Mr. Quelch leading the way, a dolorous Bunter in tow.

Not for the first time in his fat life, did Bunter realise that the way of the transgressor was hard and, as he bent over his lines in the deserted form-room with the thought of missing tea, he felt like the biblical lady of old who mourned for that which was lost and could not be comforted!

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**WANTED:** To exchange my cigarette cards for your old boys books. I want many H. Baker Volumes, dustwrapped, W.E. Johns, Bunters, Williams, Modern Boys, singles or bound. Other bound Story Papers. Anything considered.

MR. P. GALVIN, 2 The Lindales, Pogmoor, Barnsley, S. Yorks. Tel. 0226 295613.

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**GEMS STILL REQUIRED:** Nos. 1647, 1652, 1653, 1654, 1659, 1660. Also various copies of THE SCHOOL FRIEND, SCHOOLGIRL and SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY. **SPECIALLY WANTED:** Girls' Crystal Annual 1940: Popular Book of Girls' Stories 1935, 1936, 1941. **OVALTINEY RULE BOOK** also wanted. Good prices paid. **MARY CADOGAN**, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY

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## "DENISE'S DIARY"

JANUARY 1940

by Dennis L. Bird

A new year, a new decade - four months into a war that had still not really begun, except at sea and in Finland. Rationing of butter, sugar, and bacon began on January 8, and statistics showed that nearly twice as many Britons had been killed in accidents in the blackout as had died by enemy action. To heighten the misery, this proved to be one of the coldest Januaries on record, with 50 degrees of frost in some parts of Europe and snow and ice everywhere in Britain. At Rickmansworth on January 13, on outdoor ice, Freddie Tomlins was able to set a new 220-yard record for speed-skating - a remarkable achievement for a figure-skater who had been runner-up for the World championship in Budapest a year earlier.

Skating also featured in one of this month's SGOL books: No. 715, "The Winter Sports Revellers" by Sylvia Macrae. The cover depicts several girls in a race - improbably speed-skating on figure-skates. I no longer possess it, and have no recollection of it except that it took place in Switzerland at "St. Lauritz", a thin disguise for St. Moritz. I wonder why the SGOL authors were always so reluctant to set their stories in real places?

Nor do I still have No. 713, Elizabeth Chester's "The Jungle Hikers", billed as "An Enthralling Story of Two English Chums' Adventures in Africa with a Quaint Native Girl as Guide". My only memory of it is one of the English girls being bitten by a snake and her friend trying to suck out the venom.

Another of January's stories was also set in Africa. This was certainly Overseas Month for the readers. No.

714 was "Morcove Marooned", following on from an earlier adventure there in which "things did look a bit ugly for us"; now the Study 12 girls, their boy chums from Grangemoor, and assorted parents are on their way home from M'Geya in Central Africa in a specially-chartered four-engined airliner ("the huge machine had made a splendid take-off"). Their pilot was their headmistress's explorer brother Jack Somerfield. A storm blows them off course into the Gulf of Guinea "after nearly twelve hours in the air" - the aircraft must have had remarkably large fuel tanks for the 1930s. Engine failure forces them down in the sea near a small island. Just before this misadventure they had seen a parachutist descend from another aeroplane flying near them. This turned out to be a girl named Muriel (we never know her surname) escaping from kidnappers. They all end up safely on the island,



but there are many skirmishes with the villainous Dulip Khan and his yacht's crew before they are rescued by a British cruiser, appropriately named HMS Retriever.

Perhaps the main interest of the story is in the interplay of characters far away from their accustomed claustrophobic surroundings at boarding-school. The boys are naturally prominent in the more adventurous episodes with fire-arms, but the girls play their full part. So do the adults - "Airman Somerfield", Mrs. Cardew, Mr. Minden, Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby. Pam's father had previously crossed swords with Dulip Khan in India, and he, his wife, and his daughter - disguised as Hindus - daringly board the enemy yacht in order to send a radio SOS.

The Cliff House story (No. 712) was "Diana the Undaunted". I had not read it for 50 years, and I had not remembered what a totally incredible portrait it gives of the Firebrand of the Fourth, Diana Royston-Clarke. Frankly, I think the girl needs to see a good psychiatrist; her behaviour is consistently and crazily unreasonable, with bewildering and instant changes of mood.

A close friend of hers - Margot, daughter of Lord Lantham - becomes a fellow-pupil, and immediately becomes popular with Barbara Redfern & Co. She is picked for the hockey team in preference to Diana, who becomes insanely jealous. Diana's lying and cheating are all designed to destroy the prestige of her erstwhile chum; she even fakes a telephone call to Margot ("Your father - he is seriously ill") to decoy her away from a vital game. Incidentally, one of the best features of the book is its vivid descriptions of various hockey matches.

Eventually, through Diana's fault, Margot falls over a cliff, and Diana at last redeems herself with a courageous rescue. There is a sentimental reconciliation at the end; Margot must be a saint indeed to forgive and forget after all she has suffered.

Re-reading this book was a disappointment. I had remembered "the dazzling Diana" as "cold, haughty, imperious, often malicious" - but not as completely irrational. Perhaps the title should be "Diana the Demented".



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**HAMILTONIA ALL TYPES:** WANTED especially Holiday Annuals all years, Howard Baker Press and Club volumes, Dustwrapped Biggles, Bunters, Williams, Enid Blyton, Malcolm Saville, Jennings. Generous prices paid. Contact: COLIN CREWE, 12b Westwood Road, Canvey Island, Essex. Tel. 0268 693735, Evenings 7.15 - 9.30 p.m.  
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## ANOTHER SPLENDID 'SPECIAL'

"PETER TODD'S CHANCE"

Reviewed by  
Eric Fayne

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

A lovely volume with the superb binding worthy of the glorious contents. A trip back to Red Magnet days, when the Art of School Story Writing was in its youth and reaching its heyday. And we know what that meant to the Youth of our nation - the boys and girls of the period who were to be the men and women of the future. Alas, that there are no Magnets in the shops today.

Here we have 6 consecutive Red Magnets - each is wonderful value with its 32 pages including the glowing Red Cover. We have no famous Greyfriars story here; the days of the great Magnet series were still well away in the future. Yet each of the stories in this book, from the early summer of 1913, is a joy to readers of any age. The variety in theme is striking, and each tale is beautifully told and thought provoking.

The first tale is "Standing by Skinner". Skinner had been absent from the scene for quite a while, having been expelled. Now he turns up again, coming back to the district, as Bulstrode's old pal. (One wonders idly why Bulstrode himself disappeared from the Magnet after being prominent in the stories for several years.) Skinner hopes to wangle himself back into his old place as a member of the Greyfriars Remove. The Famous Five "stand by" Skinner. I won't disclose Skinner's plan, by which he hoped to work the wangle - but it would, one would think, have caused the Famous Five to see that this was still the old Skinner they had known before.

Next comes "Peter Todd's Chance", which gives its title to the volume. Here we come on rivalry in the Remove passage as to which is Top Study. Peter, who recently returned to the school with his cousin Alonzo, intends that No. 7 is the "Tops". He has formed its occupants into the "Impossible four" - the two Todds, Dutton, and Bunter -



A Splendid, New,  
Long, Complete School  
Tale of Harry Wharton  
& Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



and he has decided that the Impossible Four will outshine the Famous Five. So Peter decides to deal with Loder. A gurgle of delight for you from start to finish.

Now we come to "Wun Lung's Secret". he has made a friend of a drug dealer who has supplied him with opium. And despite them being most unlikely in an English Public School, Chapman's drawings of the Chinese, replete with flowing robes and luxuriant pig-tail, strike a nostalgic note. In passing, the Chapman drawings throughout this volume are a constant delight. He was at his best at this time, I am sure.

With "Holding the Fort" we have a tale with Penfold in the lead. The pathos is slightly over done. With Pen's father about to be turned out of his home by the wicked landlord, who turns out himself to be a relation of Mauly's. And the Remove supports Penfold in holding the fort against the wicked landlord. "In Direst Peril" brings a circus - or, at least, Muller's Menagerie - to Courtfield. And a ferocious wild tiger escapes. Finally, and perhaps the finest of a fine bunch of tales, we come to "His Own Betrayer". A new boy, Cleveland, has no interest in sport, and is mildly despised as a rabbit. But Vernon-Smith denounces the new boy as one Hubert Osbourne, who was expelled from St. Wode's for theft. And Osbourne had been a great athlete, and a magnificent swimmer. Nobody believes the Bounder. But there comes a time when Bolsover Minor is in great peril in the turbulent seas beneath the Shoulder Cliff. And in a moment of crises, the new boy becomes "His Own Betrayer". Lovely tale, this one. Hamilton used the same theme a little later in two stories in the Gem (the last Blue Cover and the first White cover) - the Valentine Outram pair. A couple which would have made a splendid S.O.L. - but never did.

So! A gorgeous half dozen tales, so varied in theme that the heart is warmed beyond belief. And, of course, the advertisements are a nostalgic joy. Many Sexton Blake chapters reprinted to advertise the new companion paper, The Penny Popular. (Excuse me while I sigh, for I loved the Popular, whether Penny or Tuppenny, and have them all beautifully bound. David Nixon told me that the Popular was his favourite paper - and, in a moment of weakness, I took him half a dozen loose ones as a gift. He was delighted.) And advertisements for the Silver Jubilee of "Answers". How that carries me back! When I was a child, my Mum had Answers, Tit-Bits, and Pearson's Weekly every week! Anyone know when Answers ended?

Actually, one of these Magnets is unique in having the 25th Birthday Number of Answers on the front cover. And the big illustration for "In Direst Peril" is on the back of that Magnet. Quite an issue. And, truly, QUITE a volume.



The Bounder made good use of the two avenues the round table, and finished up by knocking the new boy rolling into the arms of his second. "Buy us, will chuck it up!" growled Bob Cherry. "I'll fight as long as I can stand!" muttered Cleveland. (See Chapter 24)

## HEROES AND ANTI-HEROES: REVIEWS by NORMAN WRIGHT

**THE RUPERT ANNUAL FOR 1938 (FACSIMILE EDITION)** Published by Express Newspapers plc. at £6.75 plus £2.55 post and packing. Available only from - Rupert Facsimile No. 3. PO Box 7, Manchester, M19 2HD.

The Daily Express have just issued a facsimile edition of the Rupert Annual for 1938 and it looks all set to be as popular with collectors as its predecessors. Once again the publishers have gone to great trouble to make the book look and feel, like the original; it is only the pristine condition and tiny copyright date on the inside of the back cover which distinguish it from an original copy. The early Rupert Annuals have become increasingly popular over the last ten years and a collector would be fortunate indeed to obtain a fine copy of an original edition for less than a couple of hundred pounds. These facsimile editions make it possible for everyone to enjoy some of the best of Alfred Bestall's early Rupert strips at a very modest cost. The annual for 1938 contains eight strips that originally appeared in the Daily Express between 1936 and 1938. Like the annuals for 1936 and 1937 this one is also printed in black and red, and while it lacks the richness of colour found in the annuals published from 1940 it does have a charm that disappeared when full colour printing was adopted.



### RUPERT ANNUAL 1938 – FACSIMILE EDITION

Amongst the strips reprinted in the 1938 volume is "Rupert in Mysteryland", one of my personal favourites; a tale full of mystery and magic and certainly one of Bestall's best early Rupert adventures. It was reprinted in the Annual for 1953 and then again in the second "Rupert Adventure Book". Both reprints were in full colour.

The book cannot be bought from a bookshop. It is only available by mail order from the address given above.

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**DANDY AND BEANO-MORE FROM THE FIRST 50 YEARS** Published by D.C. Thomson at £5.50.

Following the success of the first volume last year, D.C. Thomson have repeated the trick 'by request', with an even more interesting collection of strips culled from the "Beano" and "Dandy" archives. This year the selection is equally wide ranging but has an emphasis on the earlier, pre 1960 material, which will make it of greater interest to the collector. One of my quibbles last year was that too much space was devoted to

'pop-personalities' giving their views on the comics. I am pleased to say that this year less space is wasted on such trivia, allowing most of the book's 144 pages to be packed with humorous and adventurous strips that will delight fans both young and old, and is certain to lead to a lot more requests for a third volume next year.

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**DAN DARE PILOT OF THE FUTURE IN OPERATION SATURN.** (Hawk Books £17.95).

The third volume of Dan Dare adventures from Hawk books is every bit as good as its predecessors. The reproduction is faultless with excellent colour rendition. It's just like reading the strip in "Eagle" only on better quality paper!

The main offering of the volume is "Operation Saturn", a serial strip that originally ran in the "Eagle" from February 1953 until May 1954. This time Dan, Digby, Prof. Peabody, Hank and Pierre are off to Saturn. The evil Vora and his quislings, the forty High Lords of Saturnia, plan to conquer the Earth with the aid of Blasco, a particularly unpleasant scientist who has turned traitor to his fellow humans. Blasco's ambition is to be emperor of Earth, a puppet ruler dancing at Vora's command. "Operation Saturn" is a particularly action packed serial plenty of space 'hardware' and some really good drawing. As a bonus the book also contains "The Double Headed Eagle", an eight page adventure from the third "Eagle Annual".



**THE BIG FAT BUNTER BOOK.** Compiled and designed by Mike Higgs with an introduction by Mary Cadogan. (Published by Hawk Books at £9.95.)

The Big Fat Bunter Book certainly lives up to its name; 290 large pages packed with a varied selection of Bunter material culled mainly from the Post World War II era. Mary Cadogan's introduction gets the book off to a sparkling start as she traces the rise of the Bunter tribe, Billy, Bessie and Sammy from the first "Magnet", through their 'golden years' and on into the comic strip era.

A large part of the book is devoted to the comic strip interpretation of Bunter, an area largely omitted from previous books dealing with the Fat Owl. It really was about

time that someone collected together a representative collection of the Bunter picture strips to enable collectors to re-appraise this neglected area of Bunterania.

During the 1950's C.H. Chapman, one of Bunter's most noted illustrators, contributed long picture strip versions of some of the old "Magnet" series to "Comet". **The Big Fat Bunter Book** reprints "Mick the Gypsy", the first of these. Chapman had certainly not lost his touch, and the 24 page picture strip version of the tale stands up well when compared with the illustrations used in the original "Magnet" version. In many ways they are better than the few 'straight' Bunter strips that Chapman contributed to the first few "Knockouts" back in 1939.

Frank Minnitt, who drew the Billy Bunter strips in "Knockout" for many years, has often been maligned by "Magnet" collectors for converting the Greyfriars stage into a circus. Here readers have the opportunity to re-assess his work in 95 pages of strips that cover a wide spread of his output for "Knockout". While not depicting the Bunter of the "Magnet", his work, in the 1940s at least, was fresh and lively and certainly made me laugh as a child. Minnitt's Bunter became as well known to the children of the 1940s and 1950s as Shields' and Chapman's had been to youngsters of earlier decades.

The Minnitt section is followed by a selection of Bunter strips by other artists, before Bessie Bunter pushes in and hogs 30 pages with her own picture strip adventures.

Apart from picture strips the book also reprints "Thin Bunter" from "Magnet" no 682, and a selection of covers. The two tone colour section reproduces covers from "Magnets", Bunter Books, "Schoolgirl" etc. as well as reproductions of some of the rare trade cards depicting the Greyfriars and Cliff House characters.

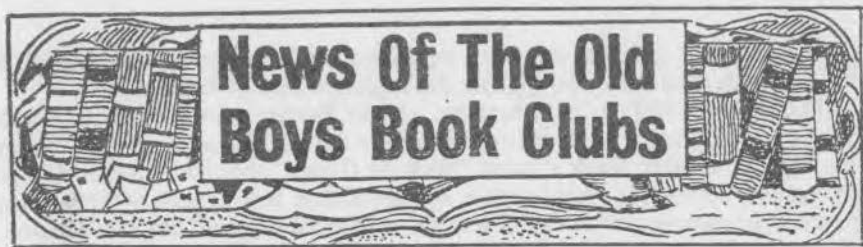
This volume will have a particular appeal to those who grew up with the "Knockout" Bunter of the 1940s and 1950s, but at the same time Mike Higgs has not forgotten the more traditional Bunter collectors and with its reprinted story, "Magnet" covers and selection of interesting illustrations it has something for everybody who has an interest in Billy Bunter.



After wealthy Sir Hilton Popper has been saved from drowning he launders the impression that Billy Bunter is his rescuer, and takes the fat boy to his home to reward him. But when Harry Wharton and his chums arrive at Popper Court with a young gypsy lad, Sir Hilton recognises the gypsy as the boy who saved his life...

## BILLY BUNTER *of Greyfriars*





### O.B.B.C. MIDLAND SECTION

The attendance of 8 members at our December meeting was poor, but even so was an improvement on recent gatherings. This Christmas party was the last of our regular monthly get-togethers and, as Dr. Johnson said, there is always something sad about doing anything for the last time. We go on to have three meetings a year, which will be special with guest speakers and as many other new features as we can arrange - with ample refreshments, of course! The first of these meetings will be held on 28th April, 1990 in Blackheath Library. The problem of getting people to Blackheath on the outskirts of Birmingham by bus, train or car will be solved by Geoff Lardner.

Seasonal greetings to everyone.

JACK BELLFIELD

### CAMBRIDGE CLUB

Our convivial December meeting was held at the home of our chairman/Treasurer, Vic Hearn. Bill Lofts appropriately spoke on the very seasonal topic of Annuals associated with juvenile papers. Almost always it was the coloured comics that produced those avidly read and kept books. Black and white comics often found it difficult to settle into the format of a book. Bill mentioned the hugely popular and collectable Greyfriars Holiday Annual series in the context of the many periodicals which it represented. Vic presented a musical quiz; general questions covering singers and comedians from the nineteen-thirties to the sixties. Finally Club members contributed seasonal theme items which included readings and stories from times past.

ADRIAN PERKINS

### NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

The 'flu bug' gripping the country appeared to have its toll on our December Christmas party with 14 attending. Nevertheless, it was a cheery party that assembled and the table laden with comestibles resembled that in a Remove Form Study - except that our table also held at least three bottles of wine! Quelchy may have frowned at that and one or two boys may have received "six" for their trouble! Quelchy was not around so it did not matter a hoot.

Arthur Fortune presented us with a three part sound quiz causing quite a few furrowed brows and some hilarity. Keith Normington was the winner and he gladly shared around his confectionery prize. Joan Colman presented a superb Christmas Anthology, ably assisted by William Hirst, James Lamb and Bruce Lamb who kindly

interpreted some Burns for us. Geoffrey was the appropriate one to read from Dickens - and certainly not because of his age! A real Christmasy theme with humour, pathos and a few home truths that gave us plenty to think about. A splendid presentation from Joan, who had also iced our Christmas cake, this year with a Rupert theme. It really was a shame to cut into it. Our oldest member Bill Williamson at the age of 88 and our youngest member James Lamb at 13, jointly cut the cake. We stood eating it and drinking sherry as a toast to all our absent friends, and in remembrance of those authors no longer with us, who have given us such pleasure. A toast was also given to our Club, and to the forthcoming year with yet another interesting programme ahead. A very Happy New Year to everyone!

#### JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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**ANNUALS FOR SALE - GIRLS CRYSTAL** 1952 £3, Girl No. 5 £2, No. 8 (D/W) £3, No. 9 (D/W) £3, Lion 1954 £3, 1957 £3. **Playbox** 1948 £2, **Schoolboys Bumper Book** (Collins) £2. **The Boys all-round book** (Nelson c.1931) £3, **Cheyenne** £2 **Temple Houston** £2. Also - **Bunter: Courtfield Cracksman** 14 facsimile issues of the Magnet in slipcase £8, **The D.C. Thomson Bumper Fun Book** £2. Post extra. G. Arthur, 14 Corston Park, Livingston, W. Lothian, EH54 5NT. Tel. 0506 36184.

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**OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE INTERESTING COLLECTIONS:**  
**FOR SALE:** Holiday Annuals 1931/33/34/36, Gems 1929 (3) 1930 (12), 1931 (30) 1932 (46) 1933 (44) 1934 (11) 1935 (28) 1936 (19) 1937 (36) 1938 (22) 1939 (2), Nelson Lees 1919/1933 (58), Practical Mechanics 1934/1943 (25). Detailed lists available (SAE). No selected copies. Also **Hardbacks Trouble for Tom Merry, William the Pirate/Detective/Gangster.**  
**OFFERS TO PETER BARLEYCORN, 120 Buckswood Drive, Crawley, RH11 8JG.**

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**Boys' and adult school stories - Bumper new catalogue** (Spring term 1990) available now. Larg'ish SAE, please, to: Robert Kirkpatrick, 244 Latimer Road, London, W10 6QY.

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**WANTED:** Lloyd's School yarns (1920's). Any/or in series and/or can anyone supply me with a complete list of all the titles in the series? Robert Kirkpatrick, 244 Latimer Road, London, W10 6QY. Tel. 01 229 9782 (Evenings).

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