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VOL. 48

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR  
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## The Editor's Chat



### ROOKWOOD ...

Charles Hamilton's third most famous school is often somewhat neglected by collectors and commentators, although the stories that feature it have plenty of zest and character. I am delighted to see that **ROOKWOOD**, a bibliography prepared by Bill Lofts and the late, much missed Derek Adley, is now available. It lists with appropriate cross-references all the Rookwood tales in the *Boys' Friend* weekly, the *Penny Popular*, *Gem*, *Holiday Annual*, *Boys' Friend Library* and *Schoolboys' Own Library*. It also covers the stories in later publications such as *Mandeville/Spring* books, *Tom Merry's* and *Billy Bunter's Own* Annuals - and the *Knockout*.

As Bill says in his introduction: 'Let us remember one of the finest schools in fiction, not forgetting the delightful artist, G.W. Wakefield'. Naturally this Rookwood Index includes some of Wakefield's illustrations: it is a most useful volume which complements the Lofts/Adley Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Cliff House bibliographies, which many of us already possess. It can be obtained direct from Happy Hours, 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds, LS16 6BU at £3.00, which includes postage charges.

## ENID BLYTON'S MAGAZINE...

Another indefatigable contributor to our hobby, Norman Wright, has - in co-operation with Tony Summerfield - produced an index which many collectors will warmly welcome. Entitled *ENID BLYTON'S MAGAZINE 1953-1959: An Index* it is a comprehensive bibliography of the stories that appeared in this attractive and much sought after magazine. The illustrators' names are also given wherever possible. This Index covers not only Enid Blyton's many and varied stories for the magazine - from Brer Rabbit and Josie, Click and Bun to the Famous Five and Secret Seven - but also lists the first appearance of every advert for a Blyton related toy or game. Its *Introduction* provides an interesting history of the magazine which for most of its readers fulfilled the promise which Enid Blyton made in its first issue:

'It is all my very own and in it you shall have all the stories you love best.'

This excellent Index can be obtained at £3.50 (which includes postage costs) from Norman Wright, 60 Eastbury Road, Watford, Herts, WD1 4JL.

Happy reading.

MARY CADOGAN

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## NEW BOYS AT ST. FRANKS

by E. Grant-McPherson

### No. 3 Larry Scott

Archibald Winston Glenthorne was returning to St. Frank's College by foot, and was most unhappy; the night was very dark, and a powerful gale added to his discontent by blowing in his face. The reason for his walking was that a landslide had blocked the railway line between Bannington and Belton.

As he wended his weary way, he suddenly heard a crash, followed by a plaintive cry. Hurrying onward, he saw a tree lying across the road. As he got nearer he could see a figure under the branches. Managing to drag the body free he realised that it was a boy, about his own age, and that his face was covered in blood. Archie, finding that the lad was still conscious, helped him to his feet and half carried, half dragged him on through the storm towards St. Frank's.

Archie himself is just about at the end of his tether when they see a light through the trees and approaching it, come to a cottage. Knocking on the

door, Archie is surprised to find that the occupants are a party of 'bloods' from the College, engaged in playing cards. However, he impresses the urgency of the matter upon them, and they take the now almost unconscious stranger and Archie in. They undress them, wrap them in blankets and sit them in front of the fire. Kenwood, who appears to be in charge, gives the stranger a sip of brandy, which seems to do him a bit of good and returns a little colour to his face.

The party-goers then find some water, and after cleaning the blood from the lad's face and bandaging his head, return to their game of cards, leaving the two in front of the fire. At this point, Archie, being very tired and feeling a bit dizzy from his exertions and the fumes from the fire and cigarette smoke, drops off to sleep.

After a while, Archie wakes up and, finding that his clothes have dried in front of the fire, dresses himself and prepares to leave. At this point Fullwood, who has just left the card table, notices him, still looking a bit unsteady, and tells him to take it easier with the champagne next time, saying "that he had drunk a whole bottle himself".

At this statement, Glenthorne begins to worry as he does in fact still feel quite dizzy; but he says nothing, and, seeing the other lad is still asleep, leaves the cottage. The storm by now has abated considerably. He is able to return to St. Frank's with no great trouble and Phipps manages to smuggle him up to his bedroom.

The following morning, Archie discovers that the lad whom he had met the previous night is, in fact, a new boy, named Larry Scott who is destined for the remove.

Scott causes quite a stir when he talks to some of the juniors, and to Handforth in particular, Handy, in his usual blunt way, wants to know all about Scott, who counters by telling Edward Oswald Handforth that he is quite the ugliest boy that he has ever seen. After Church and McClure have succeeded in restraining Handy's attempts to punch Scott's nose, Handy decides that he will 'let him off this time' and peace is restored, Nelson Lee arrives and, after welcoming Larry Scott, tells him that he is to join Singleton in study N.

When Larry gets to the study, Singleton tells him that "he's not coming in this study, and that he can tell Lee to 'go and eat coke'". Later on Mr. Lee happens to meet Scott and asks him how he is getting on with Singleton. The new boy tells the Housemaster that the Hon. Douglas would not let him in, Lee asks if that was all he said, and Scott gives him the message about 'Eating Coke' whereupon he is told to return to study N and take up residence.

After the removites realise that the new junior is incapable of speaking anything but the truth, many of the more caddish juniors get a lot of fun from asking Larry questions, many very personal, about his early life, which he, of course, always answers truthfully, until the practice becomes known to such stalwarts as Nipper and Handy. Then the fun becomes mixed with thick ears and black eyes.

When Scott is asked about his arrival, so late at night, the story of how he and Archie arrive at the cottage comes to light, and naturally most of the removites immediately assume that Archie became a member of the party. Later Lee hears the rumours and gets the whole story from Scott.

Archie is, of course, exonerated from any blame, and in fact is highly praised for his courageous action while the actual partygoers are found and punished.

Larry Scott appears a few times after this, but never again takes a leading role.

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## MARTIN SPEED

by W.O.G. Lofts

Martin Speed was publisher Gerald Swan's donation to the realms of detective fiction. Stories of this sleuth appeared during the Second World War in various publications under a number of different names.

In an interview with Gerald Swan fully reported in C.D. November 1970, he told me that he created Martin Speed as he saw no reason why his firm should not have their own detective - almost every other boys paper and comic had one. Making up a bit of background, he then commissioned various authors in his stable to pen the yarns. He remembered that Rex Hardinge and William J. Elliott wrote some, and possibly E.S. Brooks.

Martin Speed lived in a very large flat in Russell Square, London. It was so large that it served as his office as well. His assistants were actually his cousins, twins Sam and Sue Spry. Sam was officially his main assistant, whilst Sue was his secretary and typist, though both were involved in his numerous investigations. Housekeeper was Mrs. Daisy Duncan, a very strict and dour person.



Speed was nicknamed 'The Playboy Detective' being very slapdash with everything except criminal investigations and having a number of friends at Scotland Yard.

Stories appeared in many Swan publications, mainly in the boys paper 'Scramble' as well as its yearly Annuals. There was also a short lived Martin Speed Library that ran for ten issues.

"George Elliott" was almost certainly W.J. Elliott, whilst one would have to select from 'John Norman', 'G.H. Lister' and 'G.M. Byrne' as to which name applied to Hardinge or E.S. Brooks. One author's name on a number of stories, Maurice G. Hugi, was believe it or not his real name. Born at my own birthplace, St. Marylebone, he died quite young in the late forties.

Whilst other writers used different foils to Martin Speed at Scotland Yard, his own was, believe it or not, someone of the name of Detective Inspector Bunter of the C.I.D. described as a portly man with a plump red face! Obviously Hugi was a former Billy Bunter and Magnet fan.

The Margin Speed adventures were mainly short. They reminded me of those in the Dixon Hawke Case-books of D.C. Thomson. There were also several series in 'Scramble' towards its end. Although not having such a long run as the more popular detectives, Martin Speed at least to me brings back very happy memories of living only a stone's throw away from where they were all published.

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## APOLOGIES TO SEXTON BLAKE - EVERY ONE OF HIM! by J.E.M.

I first met him around 1930 and, through the pages of UNION JACK and DETECTIVE WEEKLY, enjoyed his company for two or three years before moving on to other kinds of reading. More than three decades later, I renewed his acquaintance, courtesy of the DIGEST, and have never been out of touch since. If my relationship with the great detective was an interrupted one, it has clearly been something more than a brief encounter. But while so many attractions of the celebrated casebook never, for a moment, lost their grip, the standing of Blake himself for me suffered a great many ups and downs. This was due largely to the multiple authorship of the saga. I often felt that Blake's colourful adversaries - Marsden Plummer, Kestrel, Zenith, Waldo and a score of others - remained convincingly the same because they were exclusive to their creators. By contrast, every Blakian author seemed to have a different idea of the sleuth's own character; and these conceptions were pretty varied. For example, G.H. Teed's two-fisted globe-trotter, regularly turning up in every latitude from Alaska to Australia, appeared a very different Sexton Blake from the more thoughtful and homely (not to say Holmes-y) creation of Gwyn Evans. And so the comparisons could go on.

However, after many long years, I feel I owe Blake and his chroniclers an apology. It has at last dawned upon me that *of course* there was more than one Sexton Blake - just as there is more than one you or me - and we were lucky to meet them all. For how could any one recorder of his exploits reveal the whole of such a dynamic personality? In this regard, perhaps Blake had a great advantage over his progenitor Sherlock Holmes whose entire character and exploits were seen only through the eyes of Dr. Watson (alias Dr. Conan Doyle).

The famous actor and film director, Orson Welles, once addressed an audience which he found disappointingly small. After reminding it of his own many impressive talents, he asked, "Why are there so few of you and so many of me?" Sexton Blake, had he not been a more modest man, might well have echoed these last words - though not the earlier ones, since, in his day, he never lacked an audience.

It is worth noting that Blake's most famous illustrator, Eric Parker, also captured the many moods and characteristics of our detective and, if Parker's own work is nearly always instantly recognisable, it is never stereotyped. The accompanying little gallery covers only a fairly short period but shows that Parker, like his celebrated subject, was a man of many parts, too:

Reading anti-clockwise, No. 1 shows man-of-action Blake face to face with the villainous Wu Ling in *The Street of Many Lanterns*, a G.H. Teed story from 1924 (UJ 1064). From the following year, drawing No. 2 gives us the cool, keen-brained thinker from Anthony Skene's *A Problem of Proof* (UJ 1128). In No. 3 we find a surprisingly tough-looking, cigar-chewing Blake from *Hunted Down*, a 1930 Teed adventure (UJ 1388). Back to 1928 and in illustration No. 4 we meet a sharp-faced, animated Blake in an incident from *A Million in Gold*, one of the great Paul Cynos stories by Robert Murray (UJ 1297). Drawing No. 5, from 1932, depicts an urbane, man-about-town Blake enjoying an evening meal just before getting involved with *The League of the Onion Men* by Gwyn Evans (UJ 1481). No. 6, also from a 1932 story by Evans, pictures an alert but concerned Blake being asked for help by one of the many ravishing young ladies we regularly encountered in the great casebook. This one appeared in *The Masked Carollers* (UJ 1521).



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## HAMILTONIAN IMPERSONATORS

by Roger M. Jenkins

In the last Annual, Peter Mahony provided an extensive review of impersonations in the three main Hamilton schools, and this article is not intended to cover the same ground. The question to be considered here is just how feasible such pranks could possibly be. It is one thing to don make-up and other forms of disguise to appear on stage ("The Lure of the Footlights" to use an old Gem expression), but the effect in broad daylight is rather a different kettle of fish.

Frank Monk was the original impersonator at Rylcombe Grammar School but when Gordon Gay arrived he took over that function as well as others. On one celebrated occasion, Gordon Gay arrived at St. Jim's disguised as D'Arcy and committed some minor outrages, like pelting Knox with eggs. In that famous tale "Bought Honours", Levison disguised himself as D'Arcy and sat a Greek examination for him. It seems incredible that anyone could impersonate the one and only Gussy: a monocle and elegant clothes could not possibly suffice. One has only to think of height, colour of hair and eyes, and shape of head to realise that a daytime impersonation of another boy was practically impossible.

Similarly, the impersonation of adults, whether real or fictitious, raises innumerable questions. Could the smooth skin of a boy, even if partly concealed by whiskers, be made to resemble the wrinkles of middle age? This applies not only to any of Wibley's disguises as Monsieur Charpentier, but also to Ponsonby's pretence as Mr. Buncombe, the new Head of High Oaks. Wearing a beard and glasses, as well as padding and elevators in his shoes, Ponsonby would find that disguise for any length of time would be rather uncomfortable, even if it could be thought practicable.

Prolonged impersonations were of course quite unbelievable: Mornington as Sandy Smacke, Wibley as Popper, and Drake as Duck were disguises that could not possibly be sustained when it is realised just how little privacy there is for juniors at public schools. Wigs could fall off in bed, and how could the impersonators wash and have baths in front of the others without being recognised? Of course, the make-up would be washed off anyway. In addition to all this, there must be a time limit beyond which they could no longer speak in unnatural tones.

This point gives rise to another problem. It seems that the breaking of boys' voices has been occurring earlier and earlier over the centuries. At what age did voices break in the 1920's and 1930's? We know that Bunter's voice had not broken, but, assuming that Wibley's had, he might well be at that awkward age when bass occasionally changes to treble. This would cause particular difficulties with impersonations of adults.

It is true that many boys are good mimics and even Bunter could achieve this effect over the telephone, but impersonations in public required far more than mere vocal agility. It seems that, in this respect, Hamilton was seduced by the prospect of a good story, with the result that he was led into situations that appeared highly improbable, to say the least. To use his own words when I met him (though in connection with another type of story) "I had to skate over very thin ice indeed."

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## THE TRANSFORMATION OF ELIZABETH GERTRUDE BUNTER

by Margery Woods

The Most famous fat girl in fiction arrived at Cliff House School on May 17th 1919 to embark on a twenty-year educational stint during which time she would be depicted by at least seven authors, perhaps more.

There is a strange alchemy in fiction writing which will bring a strong and interesting character to life on the page, as opposed to stock stereotypes who invariably tend to be cardboard in substance, and lack the gradual revealing of hitherto unknown facets of their nature. This aspect is enhanced when more than one writer works on the same cast of characters. Any good and conscientious writer, despite sticking to the basic character line set out by the originator of the theme, will imbue something of his own creative instinct, even if subconsciously rather than deliberately, into his version of the story. Opportunities for study of this particular aspect of writing are not so widely found today, at least in the printed word, because the stress has shifted to audio-visual with the advent of television which has replaced the mass market heyday of magazine fiction with its abundance of popular series and serials.

The Cliff House saga is one instance which shows how character build-up can mutate over the years as the authorship changes and social changes are reflected in the characters who in themselves do not age with the passing of time. Perhaps the most striking metamorphosis of all happened with the one and only Bessie.

Like her even more famous brother, Bessie first saw the light of print as an obese, greedy, rude, selfish, arrogant and thoroughly unlikable character, to whom the entire world was out of step with herself. She was dense in all matters of scholastic learning though possessing much cunning where the acquiring of grub and an advance on account of a mythical postal order were concerned. She was lazy, demanding, querulous, and had the ability of a first class limpet to attach herself to her long-suffering form mates when vacation times came round.

After an extensive build-up by Frank Richards in the first four pages of the first SCHOOL FRIEND Bessie made her debut accompanied by "a fat green parrot with an evil red eye" which promptly bit Clara, causing her to drop the cage and eliciting no sympathy at all from the newcomer, who added insult to injury by reciting Brother Billy's opinion of Miss Trevlyn. "...feet as big as a boy's... hair always untidy..." all of which does little to endear Bessie to her new school-mates.

No attempt at all is made by Richards to disguise the obvious, that Bessie is simply a female clone of her brother at Greyfriars. "...indeed, if Billy Bunter had dressed in girl's attire with the



"You weren't going to have these sardines for tea?" asked Bessie Bunter. "No," replied Barbara Redfern. "Good!" said Bessie, proceeding to open the tin. "I'll eat the lot, as you don't want them."

addition of a cable plait he would have looked exactly as Bessie looked."

She is quite prepared to bilk the taxi driver, then shift the blame to Clara and tell Miss Primrose airily that she is prepared to let the matter drop, somewhat to that august lady's astonishment.

So Bessie's advent is not exactly auspicious, and the chums are aghast when she is placed in Study 4, where she proceeds to eat them out of house and home, so to speak, until a desperate Barbara Redfern bribes her with a shilling to take herself elsewhere, unluckily for Clara, Marjorie and Dolly, on whom she descends in their cosy Study 7. However, they take instant action, with a mad jape that sends Bessie haring back to Study 4, now prepared to overlook the "...mean and suspicious natures of Babs and Mabs." So she makes a permanent abode with the long-suffering inhabitants of Study 4 at Cliff House.

But, as is well known now, the readers did not take to an obese, objectionable schoolgirl character who was a figure of ridicule as well as fun, and editorial policy gradually altered Bessie until a more acceptable character evolved to carry on the famous name of Bunter.

By Christmas of that year Bessie had managed to inveigle herself into the festivities at Holly Hall, Babs' home, though sadly her manners left much to be desired and the Redfern servants soon tumbled to this fat visitor's taking ways where food was concerned and discussed her without inhibition, unaware that Bessie was hidden behind a screen, hearing these unflattering home truths.

Any great improvement in Bessie's nature was still far distant. It was more that the chums had got the measure of their not very loveable form mate and gave her back as good as she sent as they became somewhat more immune to her objectionable traits. But the humour she provided was invaluable, as was the endless potential for scrapes and situations in which the chums became involved.

Towards the end of the first series of SCHOOL FRIEND the dramatic content of the stories had greatly increased. The school had taken on a life of its own independent of Greyfriars, and characters like Peggy Preston, Phyllis Howell, Marcia Loftus, Vivienne Leigh and the great Augusta Anstruther-Browne had developed and were providing conflict that greatly strengthened the story power, but which left rather less space for the extended raggling sequences and long sections of slangy backchat. Bessie did not feature quite so prominently by then.

March 7th, 1925 saw the SCHOOL FRIEND adopt a new format and in the first story in the new series Bessie was scarcely mentioned. But the mention betrayed the way Bessie was to go. ... "At the present moment Bessie was sitting most contentedly in the armchair, her round fat face shiny and her eyes gleaming happily through her large round glasses. 'I sus-say, Babs!...' She is feeding her face, of course, but in the deceptively simply paragraph a more settled, beginning-to-fit-in Bessie is established. She still has lapses, she still can't be trusted within a mile of anyone's tuck, she still scrounges and she is still as thick as the proverbial plank, but the subtle transformation is under way. By 1926 Bessie was accepted into full membership of the chums, thus, in MARJORIE OF THE KIND HEART:- "I'm ready," said Bessie. "You?" Barbara looked at her fat friend and smiled. "Yes, me," nodded Bessie, "if you're a girl short I'll play centre forward." Barbara laughed merrily...

Five or six years earlier Barbara would not have been laughing merrily in quite the same way! Indulgence as well as acceptance has entered the stories and Bessie is responding. She still tries to shift the blame for her misdeeds on to the nearest innocent shoulders; she is still greedy, conceited and irritating, and she remained all these things right up to 1940 and the end of the Cliff House saga. But by then the influence of the

# In BESSIE BUNTER'S CARE

*Hilda Richards*



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the ever-popular chums of  
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Chums had brought out the better side of Fatima's nature. Although still greedy for tuck she was also generous on the occasions when she had a windfall; she had learned to share. Probably for the first time in her life Bessie began to realise that her own personal welfare was not the one thing of prime importance on the planet. She was still conceited enough to believe she could do anything --- even hockey on ice! But she was now thinking of others less fortunate than herself.

There was unashamed sentiment in many of the later stories of Bessie, and there was hilarity too when she got going on her good deeds, as when she started a firework fund for needy children, and when she helped a stowaway girl in OFF TO HOLLYWOOD. In PAGEBOY BOKER TO THE RESCUE we find Bessie smothered in boot polish, happily cleaning shoes to help the popular Boker through yet another Cliff House crisis. This would have been unthinkable during Bessie's early days, when a servant was merely someone to be bullied and reported and sacked for not dancing promptly enough to the Bunter tune. She even gave away part of her windfall, in BESSIE BUNTER'S LONE BATTLE, to help an unfortunate family through troubled times. So Bessie becomes loyal,

good-tempered, kind-hearted and always willing to help. In short: Bessie became a thoroughly loveable character.

The transformation of Elizabeth Gertrude Bunter was now complete!

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## FORUM

### For the exchange of Readers' views

**From BILL LOFTS:** I think Brian Doyle hits the nail on the head, when he says he never had a T.V. set when the 'ghost' William series was on in 1956, to remember it. Neither did the majority of viewers then as Commercial T.V. only started September 1955, when wages were low, and to have a T.V. set capable of receiving it considered a luxury. Unlike today when often or not people are able to have a set in every room!

Derek Adley and I had hundreds of letters pertaining to the William Index, yet not one reader mentioned the omission of mention of this TV series. Neither did anyone at the William Conventions, not even Mrs. Ashbee, the copyright owner of the William stories, in correspondence or conversation.

Certainly the cast of the show is mysterious in itself as, apart from a slight memory of Cavan Malone, I've never heard of those names before. It would be unfair to judge the series, without seeing it, but it does not seem to have enhanced any of the actors to reach star status.

Thanks are due to Brian for writing this up, so that it is now recorded for future enthusiasts of the William saga.

**From ROY WHISKIN:** Frank Richards finally gets a mention in the Broadstairs guide - I'm not too sure about the reference to Port Regis Preparatory School, however. From *Busy Broadstairs* 1994: "Billy Bunter", the fat boy of Greyfriars, was created by Frank Richards - the pen-name of Charles Hamilton - who lived in Kingsgate for many years. He is said to have based "Greyfriars" on Port Regis preparatory school. John Buchan wrote "The 39 Steps" while living at St. Cuby on Cliff Promenade. The staircase still remains opposite the house, providing a private access to a small beach, but there are actually twice as many steps.

**From BRIAN DOYLE:** Re. Martin Waters' article on "The RAF Career of Capt. W.E. Johns" in the February issue, and his comments on the slow promotion of officers: During my National Service for two years in the RAF, 1949-51, I was posted for a few weeks to the Fighter Command Station at Detling, Nr. Maidstone, Kent, before my permanent posting to Biggin Hill (where I stayed for 17 months) arrived. Our C.O. at Detling (quite a small station then admittedly) was a Flying Officer (that's one step up from the lowest commissioned rank of Pilot Officer). He must have been in his 'fifties, had white hair, and was very eccentric, shouting everything out *twice* and always bad-tempered (hardly surprising seeing that his RAF career had slowed to tortoise-like promotion speed). I recall him now as a very thin, rakish version of 'Victor Meldrew' in the TV series "One Foot in the Grave". I think he probably retired as a Flying Officer...!

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**Part 9: Herbert Vernon-Smith (2)**

For the next five years, Smithy's performances were very 'curate's egg'. One of his recurrent grievances - and quite a justifiable one - was his exclusion from the Remove XI. Several times he had proved his playing ability, but Wharton refused to pick him - on spuriously high-minded grounds. (Apparently, it was O.K. to select a scapegrace like Hazeldene but not one like Vernon-Smith! Wharton's unforgiving streak often led to trouble. That's why I rate him as an inferior skipper to Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver. St. Jim's and Rookwood nearly always fielded their strongest teams - Greyfriars often didn't.) This problem surfaced in Magnet 273 (May 1913). The cricket XI to visit St. Jim's included Ogilvy, Nugent, Penfold and Micky Desmond - all players inferior to Smithy.



"You can't do as you like here, so throw that beastly thing away," said Harry. "I'm Wharton, Captain of the Remove."

*Vernon-Smith's first appearance*

The Bounder made Bulstrode and Desmond lose the train and wangled himself into one of the vacancies. Nemesis - in the form of Fatty Wynn - overtook him and he bagged a 'pair'. Wharton saved the game, and Smithy's claim to a permanent place came a cropper.

The problem arose again over football. This time Smithy accepted his exclusion and went off to play successfully for Lantham. As a result he was given a place in the Remove side. He promptly 'blew it' by pursuing a vendetta against Her Gans (the German master)

which netted him detentions for every half-holiday. For the away game at St. Jim's he cut detention and dodged Quelch. At St. Jim's he bribed Levison (the old-style, unreformed edition) to head Quelch off - which was duly achieved. (This was an excellent yarn - Magnet 297 - with Vernon-Smith and Levison at their respective worsts.) The Bounder scored the winning goal - then returned to face the music. Quelch, naturally, demanded his expulsion - and got it. Smithy did not go home, but camped out in the old tower. Quelch discovered him, but came to grief when the ancient stairs collapsed. The Bounder risked his own neck to save Quelch - and, of course, was reinstated.

A few weeks later he was expelled again. This time he had been sent to 'Coventry' for mucking up a football match at Courtfield (left out for 'blagging', Smithy had enlisted Ponsonby & Co. to help disrupt the game - shades of modern football hooligans!). Resenting his ostracism, the Bounder sent a £20 'reward' to Dr. Locke for the "brave" Removite who had saved the life of a "Colonial traveller". The Head swallowed the bait, asked for the brave lad to come forward - and was confronted by four rival claimants! Skinner, Snoop, Bolsover and Bunter - complete with scars on their arms - told widely varying stories of derring-do. Dr. Locke bowled out Bunter and Snoop, but he was having trouble deciding between Skinner and Bolsover when Smithy revealed it was all a hoax. Floggings all round for the claimants; a red-face for Dr. Locke; and the 'sack' for the Bounder. The school broke up for Christmas. Bunter went skating and fell through the ice; Smithy came to his rescue; Colonel Wharton interceded with Dr. Locke. Once again, the Bounder's luck held (Magnet 305).

A snow fight with Highcliffe resulted in Mr. Mobbs being hit by a stone. Snoop did it; but Smithy, among others, was questioned. He refused to sneak and expulsion loomed again. Fortunately, a passing witness was found who identified Snoop. Snoop was flogged, though why Vernon-Smith should be threatened with expulsion for refusing to sneak while the real culprit only merited a thrashing is hard to understand. Perhaps Dr. Locke was looking for an excuse to get rid of the Bounder! It's not surprising.

Magnet 323 found Smithy breaking out again. A clash with Loder led to the Bounder 'braining' the prefect with a cricket bat. Thinking the worst, Smithy bolted from school. Pursued to the coast, he actually tried to drown himself rather than face trial; of course, it all turned out satisfactorily - Loder was not badly hurt - but the Bounder collected another flogging. (This is the only yarn where the Bounder's famed 'nerve' cracked. Even Smithy quailed at facing a capital charge.)

Smithy's better side was in evidence several weeks later. The leading characters 'tripped' to France on Founders' Day. This time it was the Bounder who was hit over the head - by Hazeldene, who wanted the contents of Smithy's wallet as a stake for the casino! It was all hushed up - for Marjorie's sake, of course.

Shortly afterwards, Vernon-Smith's sins came home to roost in the shape of Jerry Hawke. He blackmailed Smithy with an old letter. The Bounder retaliated by socking Hawke with a loaded stick and then keeping him chained in the old tower on bread and water until he stumped up the letter. Mr. Hawke was a chastened character after that experience!

Hazeldene went 'blagging' again (Magnet 340) with Ponsonby & Co., who relieved him of his loose change with the help of marked cards. The dear lad put his sister's valuable watch ("borrowed" without her permission) into the 'pot' and lost that too. The Bounder joined in at this stage; rooked Pon & Co.; and retrieved the watch. Marjorie was "very kind".

These Hazeldene episodes put Smithy on a run of good behaviour. He spotted a scheme of Ponsonby's to land Nugent with a stolen tie-pin; then he joined Peter Todd in an

expedition to Belgium, looking for Alonzo (WWI had broken out while 'Lonzy was on the continent). In a very melodramatic yarn, the two searchers nearly had to face a German firing-squad! After that narrow squeak, the Bounder took a dim view of Bunter's claim that his "uncle" was a wounded hero. Smithy put Wibley up to impersonating "Captain Bunter", who visited Greyfriars and embarrassed William George (as far as that was possible). When the truth was revealed, Wibley and the Bounder got a form ragging for "a tasteless hoax". (Rather hard lines, I feel - but Wharton & Co were prone to occasional attacks of priggishness.)

Not long afterwards, Smithy taught Bunter another, more benevolent, lesson. The Owl was, for once, in funds and he was looking for a 'flutter' at the Cross Keys. The Bounder gambled with him in the study, and spent an hour relieving him of his new-found wealth. Having made him a sadder but wiser Bunter, Smithy refunded the stakes - and Bunter did not go on the 'razzle'. A valuable lesson for a would-be blade.

Unfortunately, Smithy had not learned the lesson himself. A week later, he 'plunged' at the Cross Keys and landed himself in debt to a Mr. Falke (who had an eye on Johnny Bull's uncle's wealth and wanted to cut Johnny out of the old boy's will). The price of the Bounder's I.O.U.s was the disgrace of Bull. To make matters worse, the two boys were at loggerheads and came to blows. Then, just as Smithy was hardening his heart, Dr. Locke preached a sermon which pricked his conscience. (This shows how deep the Bounder's change of character was going - the original scapegrace wouldn't have listened to the sermon at all!) Vernon-Smith made a clean breast of things to Quelch who took the matter in hand. Herr Falke came a cropper - and Quelch gave Smithy another reprieve.

Several more escapades followed similar lines. Cecil Snaith (a nasty bit of work) tried to blackmail Smithy - the Jerry Hawke plot again - but Quelch turned up trumps once more. Then a burglar named Slippery Jim visited Greyfriars, masquerading as Inspector Flick of Scotland Yard. Smithy bowled him out, saving the school from burglary, and winning golden opinions. His reputation was still good when Lord Mornington (the old, reprobate Morny) visited Greyfriars and taunted the Bounder into visiting the Three Fishers, with Ponsonby & Co. in tow. Inevitably, they fell out and the vindictive Mornington 'shopped' Smithy to Quelch. Fortunately, Wharton & Co. were able to furnish an alibi (Mornington had claimed that Vernon-Smith was tipsy in the grounds of the inn. Actually, the Bounder had cleared off and joined the Famous Five on a picnic). Quelch believed Wharton; but Smithy felt that he was still "a dog with a bad name".

This episode made Vernon-Smith restless and dissatisfied. The 'straight and narrow' was difficult enough without being suspected of back-sliding every time a dubious situation occurred. He began to feel that he may as well 'have the game as the name'. In a fine short series (Magnets 487-490), Vernon-Smith kicked over the traces again in something approaching his old style. Skinner, his study-mate at this period, left a packet of fags lying about in the study. Quelch spotted them and suspected Smithy, especially as Skinner denied all knowledge of the cigarettes. Resentful, Smithy broke bounds on the night before the cricket match against Redclyffe. He played poorly; the Remove lost; Smithy was blamed. (There was not a lot of the "sporting loser" about the Greyfriars Remove in many of these yarns. Defeat was not accepted philosophically; scapegoats were always being sought.) He lost his place for the St. Jude's match; quarrelled with Rake, his replacement; and in the ensuing fight rendered Rake unfit for cricket.

Ogilvy was the next replacement. The Bounder tried the same dodge and, when Wharton & Co. stopped him, he arranged with some of the Cross Keys toughs to keep Ogilvy and Bob Cherry away from the match. Wharton, short-handed, had to fall back on the Bounder. Smithy played a 'blinder' with bat and ball; Greyfriars won easily. When

Cherry and Ogilvy returned, the truth came out, and Smithy collected a heavy hammering from Bob. He also lost his place in the team again.

Their next opponents were St. Jim's. Smithy, determined not to be left out, arranged with Temple & Co. to take over the fixture. With the help of some hired bargees, they kidnapped the whole Remove XI and went to St. Jim's instead. Temple, captaining the side with his usual swank, soon gave St. Jim's the initiative. Smithy's good batting was neglected until 6 wickets had gone for 8 runs! Fortunately, Scott defended stoutly while the Bounder counter-attacked. Greyfriars totalled 120, Smithy 105! (Incidentally, the Greyfriars Remove XI would have been more strongly representative of the school if Scott and Hobson of the Shell had been included. Carrying semi-passengers like Hazeldene would not have been necessary, if Wharton & Co. had been less insular.) St. Jim's scored 130; then Smithy notched another 'ton'. The Bounder bowled like a demon - Temple, at long last realising that victory was possible, gave him the lion's share of the attack. Greyfriars won by 2 runs, but Vernon-Smith was booked for a scrap with Wharton.

Perversely, Smithy dodged the fight. He went out of gates when it was due; then he 'sporting his oak' when the Remove came looking for him. Cornered in the dormitory, the Bounder refused to fight Wharton but willingly took on the belligerent Johnny Bull - and licked him! Bolsover, ever-ready to butt in, challenged Smithy for the following Monday, two days later. Still suffering the effects of the Bull fight, the Bounder collected a hammering. Quelch broke it up and the battered Bounder went out of gates to rest in seclusion. Marjorie Hazeldene encountered him and gave him some good advice - and got him to promise to 'keep an eye on Hazel'. (Marjorie always extracted her quid pro quo!)

Hazeldene was on the gamble again. Vernon-Smith tried to talk sense to him; then, when the scapegrace broke bounds, he locked him in the wood-shed until it was too late to visit the Cross Keys. Hazel retaliated by telling lies which led Wharton to believe that Smithy had led him astray! The Bounder contemptuous of himself for "do-gooding", did not deny it and collected another hammering - from Wharton this time. Going straight always came out crooked for Smithy at this period!

They were both detained for fighting. Smithy, in an excellent chapter, took Wharton to task for: (a) believing Hazeldene's story; (b) keeping Hazeldene in the XI despite evidence of his 'blagging' - after all he was excluding Smithy on the same grounds; and (c) for assuming that Hazeldene was a weak fool, easily led, rather than a vicious young rascal. They came to blows again - and Quelch caned them, as well as detaining them for the next half holiday - the day of the Highcliffe match. Meanwhile, Hazeldene had 'plunged' with £5 borrowed from his sister. He lost, dunned Wharton for help; then appealed to Smithy for the balance. Eventually, he confessed to his lies about the Bounder; Wharton apologised to Smithy; the Bounder then informed Quelch that he had provoked Wharton into fighting. Wharton was let off detention and played against Highcliffe; so, ironically, did Hazeldene who had been bailed out of his financial problems by Smithy. The series finished enigmatically with the Bounder, in detention, playing banker with Skinner and Snoop, while the 'creep' who had landed him there took his place in the XI. The way of the transgressor is hard: Smithy probably felt that "doing good by stealth" was a thankless task.

Between them, Wharton and Marjorie, by treating an unworthy scapegrace with excessive care and concern, had discouraged a much stronger but more reticent character from genuine reform. Smithy, feeling that no one cared enough, retreated into his old sardonic persona unless it suited him. Never again would he follow the 'straight and narrow'. "In and out running" was the order of the day - until Tom Redwing arrived and created for the Bounder a new watershed.

(To be continued)

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# BOOK REVIEWS

BY BRIAN DOYLE

**THE OXFORD BOOK OF SCHOOLDAYS**, Edited by Patricia Craig. (Oxford University Press, 1994, £17.95)

Well, were they? The Happiest Days of Your Life, I mean. I refer to schooldays. We've all known them, enjoyed them, endured them, suffered them, or revelled in them. Many hated them, others loved them. To most people, I suspect, their own schooldays were a kaleidoscopic mixture, a combination of good and bad, funny and sad, indifference and boredom.

Now, Patricia Craig presents us with THE OXFORD BOOK OF SCHOOLDAYS, and its 450 pages range from the 16th Century to the present and her many excerpts are drawn from fiction, autobiography, memoirs, letters and poetry, and all concern schools and schooling, schoolboys, schoolgirls and schoolteachers. The book is divided into 11 sections, with such headings as Schools and Schoolmasters, Friends and Enemies, In the Classroom and so on.

Pat Craig - who has previously co-written with our worthy Editor, Mary Cadogan, such excellent and entertaining books as "You're a Brick, Angela" and "Women and Children First" - has chosen well, if in a rather limited way (more of that later), and memorable quotes leap out from the page as you browse through.

"Public schools are the Nurseries of all Vice and Immorality. All the wicked Fellows whom I remember at the University were bred at them." That's Parson Adams talking to the eponymous hero of Henry Fielding's novel "Joseph Andrews" (1742).

"There's no rule, that I've ever heard, against trying on new corsets in the lower music room." From Dorita Fairlie Bruce's "Dimsie Intervenes" (1937). Corsets? On young schoolgirls? Whatever next! I have a feeling that the late and much-missed Arthur Marshall would have loved that one.

"Are you the Bully, the Pride of the School, or The Boy Who Is Led Astray and Takes to Drink in Chapter 16?" Psmith politely asks Mike Jackson on first meeting him at Sedleigh, to which the latter sensibly replies: "The last, for choice, but I've only just arrived, so I don't know." That's from P.G. Wodehouse's early novel "Mike" (1909), one of the finest school novels ever written, though Ms Craig attributes it to a 1953 reprint of the second half of this book, published under the title "Mike and Psmith".

Some people hated school: "School to us was a place to get away from as soon as possible and for as long as possible. Everything exciting, mysterious, adventurous happened outside its confines, not within them. We were poorly taught, admittedly, and lacked utterly the team spirit. Our South London Cockney grated sharply on the ear. No group photographs of us were taken. We had no blazers or gilded caps. We were urchins of the suburbs. Looking back, I feel grateful that it should have been so. On the whole, the more boring and flat education is, the better. Glamourising it constitutes a kind of brain-washing." That was, surprisingly perhaps, Malcolm Muggeridge reminiscing about his 'Happiest Days'!

Other people loved school: "Not even the horrors of 'North and Hilliard' could significantly diminish the peculiar sensation of being happy at school. I set off unnecessarily early each morning... I looked forward to seven out of the day's eight lesson periods. And I thought of the staff as my senior friends to be treated with a fraternal respect... I had become a far greater success in lessons than I had ever been on the playing

field and I had to adjust my life accordingly." That's Roy Hattersley, later to become Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, and latterly a rather good novelist, writing in his "A Yorkshire Boyhood" (1983).

Some people (many, it seems) were very unhappy at school: "I was now fifteen, dirty, inky, miserable, untidy, a bad fag, a coward at games, lazy at work, unpopular with my masters and superiors, anxious to curry favour and yet to bully whom I dared... I got a bad report and was described as 'cynical and irreverent'". From "Enemies of Promise", by Cyril Connolly (1938).

Social codes at public schools were very important: "The social code of Charterhouse rested on a strict caste system... a new boy had no privileges at all; a boy in his second term might wear a knitted tie instead of a plain one; a boy in his second year might wear coloured socks; the third year gave most of the main privileges - turned down collars, coloured handkerchiefs, a coat with a long roll, and so on; fourth year, a few more, such as the right to get up raffles; but peculiar distinctions were reserved for the bloods. These included light-grey flannel trousers, butterfly collars, jackets slit up the back, and the right of walking arm-in-arm." From "Goodbye to All That" by Robert Graves (1929).

One could go on quoting endlessly; there is much to amuse and divert and even instruct in these scholastic pages. Many famous and well-known authors and characters are here - Squeers, Tom Brown, Eric, A.J. Wentworth, Winston Churchill, David Copperfield, Dylan Thomas, Shakespeare, Alice, Phillip Larkin, John Betjeman, William, Angela Brazil, George Orwell, Talbot Baines Reeds, C.S. Lewis, Graham Greene...

The funniest piece - about a multitude of boys named Smith, all at school at the same time - is by a writer new to me: Richard Curtis, and appeared in "The Independent" newspaper in 1991.

There are around 400 excerpts in the book and this huge number tends to give a rather 'bitty' effect; pieces range from 4 lines to 3½ pages. Personally, I would rather have seen fewer but longer extracts.

In her interesting Introduction, Pat Craig apologises in advance: "I am sorry if some obvious or very apposite accounts of schooling have been overlooked..."

This is all very well but, despite her 450 pages and 400 excerpts, Ms. Craig has 'overlooked' and omitted many of the best and most memorable pieces of writing about school life and characters in the entire genre - pieces and books which should have surely 'picked themselves' and which are truly 'conspicuous by their absence' in such a book as this.

There is nothing whatsoever from James Hilton's "Goodbye, Mr. Chips"; or from Compton Mackenzie's "Sinister Street"; Eric Parker's "Playing Fields"; Shane Leslie's "The Oppidan"; John Van Druten's "Young Woodley"; G.F. Bradby's "The Lanchester Tradition"; E.W. Hornung's "Fathers of Men"; Beverley Nicholls' "Prelude"; John Connell's "Lyndesay"; Wynne Willson's "Early Closing"; Ernest Raymond's "Mr. Olim"; Balaam's (G.F. Lamb) "Chalk in My Hair" (and its sequels); Hugh Walpole's "Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill"; R.F. Delderfield's "To Serve Them All My Days"; or Ian Hay's "The Lighter Side of School Life", to name but a few classic 'adult' books about school life.

And surely, amidst all these pages, Ms Craig might have found room for a few lines from such popular boys' school story writers as Hylton Cleaver (whose housemaster 'Mr. Dennett' of Greyminster one of the great fictional portraits of a public schoolmaster - and based upon a well-remembered real-life master at St. Paul's), Gunby Hadath, Desmond Coke, Richard Bird, Warren Bell, Jeffrey Haviton, Harold Avery, R.A.H. Goodyear and, perhaps most of all, from Eden Phillpotts' series of "Human Boy" books, which contain some of the finest, truest and most entertaining tales of school and schooldays ever written.

Why, even 'Molesworth' is absent from these pages (one can almost hear him screeching "Down with Skooldays!" from behind the bicycle sheds...).

And, before I'm accused of being sexist, where are the samples from such girls' school story authors as Elsie J. Oxenham, Elinor Brent-Dyer (and her very popular 'Chalet School' books), L.T. Meade, Mary Harris and Christine Chaundler?

Readers of the 'SPCD' will be pleased to know that Ms Craig includes one 3½ page Greyfriars extract from a 1936 "Magnet", involving Mr. Quelch, Bunter *et al* in a Remove classroom scene. And that is that! Not one word more from probably the greatest writer of school stories of all time. Nothing from the dramatic series, nothing of the Mr. Quelch-Mr. Prout feuds, nothing of Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry or Lord Mauleverer, or that truly great character, Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of the Remove. You'll also look in vain for even a mention of St. Jim's or Rookwood. Edwy Searles Brooks doesn't get a look-in either, so no St. Frank's. They've all been expelled, the whole lot of them; the Punishment Room must be bursting at the seams...

In her Introduction, Pat Craig states that both the "Magnet" and the "Gem" ceased publication in 1940. Wrong, Ms Craig. The former did finish in 1940, but the latter stopped in 1939. The book's Index is hardly satisfactory, including, as it does, just names; it might have been helpful also to include actual titles of books, stories and articles referred to. And, incidentally, was it really necessary to include the 'F-word' no fewer than three times in one excerpt from a 1989 book by an author I, for one, have never heard of?

On the credit side, Pat Craig's book is entertaining, amusing and often surprising: an ideal bedside book for the dorm! Some of its extracts about school life over the years are real eye-openers. Nostalgia abounds and the book will certainly arouse memories (good or bad) of one's own schooldays and school friends of the years gone by.

As Charles Lamb wrote: "I have had playmates, I have had companions,

In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays.

All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

And as Mark Twain once said: "I never let schooling come between me and education..."

### **"THE ENDURING GAME: An I-SPYclopaedia 1948-1993," by Francis Hertzberg. Reviewed by Dennis L. Bird.**

Published by Roots (The Redskin Press), 48 Shalmarsh Road, Prospect Hill, Hill, Higher Bebington, The Wirral, Cheshire. Price: £5.25.

Do you remember the "News Chronicle" and Big Chief I-Spy? It was through that newspaper column that I first became aware of the I-Spy movement. What I did not know until I read this book is that it continued after the "Chronicle" closed in 1960, and in fact is still very much in being after more than 45 years.

"I-Spy" was the brainchild of a most remarkable man, although the actual name was suggested by his wife - a much more vivid title than the original "Learn from Life." The founder was Charles Warrell, head-master of Pleasley Hill Senior School in Mansfield, Notts; born in 1889, he was still going strong 103 years later. He was an admirer of Ernest Thompson Seton, the British-born naturalist who in 1910 became the first Chief Scout of the USA. Pre-Baden Powell, Seton founded the Woodcraft Indians in 1902, an organisation designed to teach young Americans about wild life and the tracking methods of the Red Indians.

Charles Warrell similarly wished to make young people more aware of the world around them - not just in nature, but in science, technology, history, music, literature. He was a great believer in "the fun of finding out," and as an adviser to the Home Office on

teaching in Borstal institutions, he was concerned to turn young minds in healthy directions. From 1940 he produced a series of little ninepenny "I'll Teach You" booklets, sold in Woolworth's. This and other enterprises led to his great idea in 1948: the "I-Spy" books ("I spy, with my little eye..."). These would guide youngsters on what to look out for, scoring points which could be added up, verified by an adult, and at a total of 1,500 sent in to Mr. Warrell himself, who would reward the claimant with a badge. A simple idea, but most effective.

As examples, the book on cricket describes Test match grounds, then says "Which grounds have you visited? Score 70... What is the name of your county side's scorer? Score 120." The Classic Cars book describes Morris cars, then asks "What was Alec Issigonis's most famous design? Score 5." And so on.

Following Seton's example, Warrell called himself "Big Chief I-Spy", and he ran things from 1948 to 1957. From 1949 to 1951 the "Daily Mail" gave him space for a column in their paper; he was not entirely happy with them, however, and soon transferred to the pages of the "News Chronicle". There were two other Big Chiefs after him: Arnold Cawthrow (1957-1978) and Robin Tucek (1978-1982). Then the famous botanist Professor David Bellamy took over as just "Chief I-Spy," from 1982 to 1987, after which the appointment seems to have lapsed.

The "News Chronicle" published the little books until its own demise. Since 1960 there have been four other publishers, the most recent being the Michelin tyre company of France; they took over in 1991 and gave the booklets a much glossier appearance, with colour photographs instead of drawings. They are still modestly priced (£1.25) and cover an enormous range of subjects, from Aircraft to Zoos, and including Castles, Dinosaurs, Inn Signs, London, the Night Sky.

Mr. Hertzberg (Little Chief Wily-Feather) has been an I-Spy enthusiast since 1951, when he was 11, and his "I-SPYclopaedia" contains, under alphabetical headings, everything anyone could possibly wish to know about "the enduring game" of looking around. There are many illustrations, and Professor Bellamy contributes a foreword. Mr. Hertzberg's labour of love has produced an unusual - indeed unique - and fascinating book.

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**WANTED:** ENID BLYTON, W.E. JOHNS, CROMPTON. First editions in wrappers, and ALL ephemera related to these authors. ANY original artwork related to Bunter, Blyton, Biggles, Eagle or other British comics and boys papers. ALL Boys Friend Libraries by W.E. Johns and Rochester. Many "Thriller" issues and first editions in wrappers by Charteris required. NORMAN WRIGHT, 60 Eastbury Rd., Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel.(0923) 232383.

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BOUND VOLUMES of "MARVEL" Nos. 415 to 440. January to June 1912, Nos. 441 to 460. July to October 1912, Nos. 832 to 857. January to June 1920. "CHAMPION" bound year volume 1949, Nos. 1405 to 1457. Bound year volume 1950, Nos. 1458 to 1509. Few bound volumes of B.F.L. 1st and 2nd series. Loose copies of NELSON LEE LIBRARY, S.B.L. 3rd series, S.O.L. various others. Offers, or would exchange. **WANTED:** S.B.L. 2nd series, DIXON HAWKE LIB, etc. K. TOWNSEND, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE65 6EA. Tel. (0283) 703305.

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# The Postman Called



**MARK TAHA (London):** Victor Colby's article in the March C.D. inspired me to start reading the stories he mentioned. I've read the first two and was struck by the facts that Blake used an assumed name as a warder but his own surname as a soldier. I suppose that Sherlock Holmes would have been like Blake if he'd appeared weekly, thus inevitably diluting the quality, as it were - and didn't Blake and Tinker once feature as schoolmaster and pupil on an undercover mission?

**EDWARD RAKE (Bristol):** I particularly like reading articles in the C.D. in which the writer tells of how he or she manages to come across - sometimes in very odd circumstances - a long sought edition of a book which means so much because it is very full of deeply loved childhood memories.

**TERRY JONES (Gloucester):** In a world surrounded by trash reading it is amazing that a little magazine, can appear every month devoted exclusively to the quality literature of our childhood. It must be the only one in the world.

Where else can one visit Wharton Lodge at Christmas? Where else can one narrowly miss Coker charging down on you on a blazing summer's day so many years after he spread fear and rage on the River Sark?

The *Collector's Digest* is unique in bringing to us all a warm glow with memories of the past. Long may it continue to be with us.

**TED BALDOCK (Cambridge):** I much enjoyed Ray Hopkins' 'The Reward' in the March C.D. My first reaction upon reading it was to search along my shelves to locate my own copy of - I knew I had one somewhere - Yoxall's exciting tale, 'Nut-Brown Roger and I'. A great story by a comparatively little known author, although Ray Hopkins has happily now provided us with information about him.

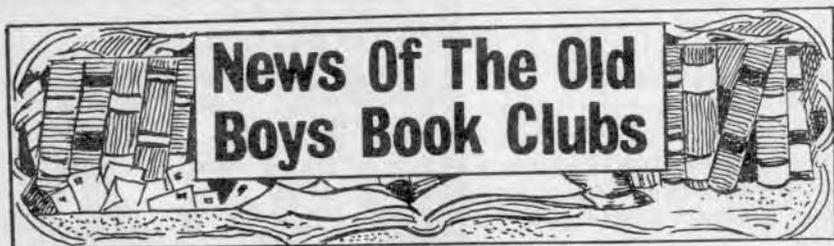


The late 18th century atmosphere of bustling wayside inns, the clattering stage-coaches and horsemen are all brought vividly to life. Highwaymen and foot pads (a subtle distinction here) abounded, while not infrequently at lonely cross-roads was to be seen a solitary gibbet outlined against the sky; also not infrequently this might be occupied. It was in many ways a fearsome and rumbustious age.

I think a fitting companion to Yoxall's book could be 'Cecily's Highwayman' by Dorothea Moore. Here again, although set a little earlier in the century (1750-60) is all the activity of life on the great roads, very few of which existed (and these were very roughly constructed) in that period. Among Dorothea Moore's fine works, many of which are historical, one remembers 'Captain Nancy', set in the 1745 uprising, 'Brown, a story of Waterloo', and certainly 'Terry the Girl-Guide'. The latter had a foreword by Agnes Baden-Powell. The 'Schoolmaster' in its review stated, "It would take a remarkable Boy Scout to outshine Terry, who is a really charming creation ... the finale is most exciting..."

**(Editor's Note:** Amongst my treasures is a copy of *Cecily's Highwayman* inscribed by Dorothea Moore. *Terry the Girl Guide* (1912) was one of the first Guide novels to be published and gives a lively picture of the early days of the Movement. However, Charles Hamilton (as Martin Clifford) wrote even earlier about the 'Girl Scouts' in *Gem*, vol. 3, no. 78 (1909). The story, called *The Boy Scouts' Rivals*, featured Cousin Ethel. The earliest story of girls' involvement in Scouting which I have come across was a serial called *The Girl Scouts*. By Evelyn Yates, it began in the *Girls' Reader* in July 1909 - a month before Hamilton's *Gem* story.)

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

It was good to have an attendance of 19 at our meeting. Our guest speaker was Russell Dever, of Irwin Jorwik Publishing of Leeds.

Comment was made on the excellent presentation of Gillian Baverstock, daughter of Enid Blyton, when she spoke about her mother at a recent meeting at a Leeds school. Six members of our club had attended, so we are quite well represented.

Russell Dever pointed out that really he was a publishers' "packager" as opposed to someone who actually published books for sale in book shops. He creates ideas and presents them to potential publishers - and this can be achieved by attending book fairs such as Bologna and Frankfurt. We were told of some very amusing incidents that had occurred on his travels.

Since the communist countries had opened up their market, people there had seen quality children's books after many years' denial. Britain produces more books for children than any other country in Europe and produces many of these in languages other than

English. If a child is still reading books at 15, then it is quite certain that child will continue reading well into adulthood. On the technical side, Russell showed us how a book was created - from the beginning with the commissioning of a writer to the final product. Russell's presentation was informative, entertaining and very professional and we look forward to his visiting us again.

Margaret came along with some of her home baking - now becoming a very popular feature of our refreshment time!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

## CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our March meeting we gathered at the Linton village home of Roy Whiskin. The afternoon's proceedings began as Bill Lofts delivered a talk on *Hotspur*. He traced its progress - No. 2 in the 1938 best seller list for D.C. Thomson text comics - and its characters, from its launch in September 1933 to its demise in 1959. As *New Hotspur*, this boys paper continued with picture strips until the early 'eighties. The activities at the Red Circle school were undoubtedly the abiding memory from *Hotspur*.

Then Roy explored the 'Classics Illustrated' series: these were cartoon strip format versions of stories by some of the world's greatest authors. These had started in America in 1941 entitled *Classic Comics*, and were, years later, widely distributed in the UK. Roy provided a great many examples of the Classics Illustrated comic books, and showed us some modern versions of the concept.

Keith Hodgkinson later told us about the Victorian author, Talbot Baines Reed. Just like Charles Hamilton he never attended a Public School although he wrote stories about them with an intimate knowledge, notably in *The Fifth Form of St. Dominic's*. Many of his works were published by the *Boys Own Paper*, and Keith circulated examples of these, together with some of his stories published in book form.

ADRIAN PERKINS

## LONDON O.B.B. C.

There were 22 participants at the March meeting held at the Eltham home of Peter and Dorothy Mahony. Brian Doyle presented a quiz where members had to supply the titles and authors of books after hearing the first line. Chris came first followed by Mark, Mary and Alan Pratt.

Peter Mahony introduced us to Lucky Lannagan from the Western Library and Matt Marriott from a comic strip in the Evening News from 1955 - 1958. Bill Bradford presented his "Mixed Bag" quiz, starting off with "Who published the Scout?" Norman came first with Roy and Peter second. Roger read an extract from a Greyfriars story involving Mr. Quelch and Vernon Smith and asked us to consider what the piece told us about Mr. Quelch.

The meeting on April 10th will be at Bill Bradford's Ealing home. Members are asked to confirm the meeting place with Bill on Wednesday, 6th April in case the N.H.S. requires his presence. The alternative venue will be Eltham.

SUZANNE HARPER

## Number Four: THE SKIPPER BOOK FOR BOYS 1941

I was too young to have known the SKIPPER story paper (1930-41) but as I started to read story papers later in the War I came across a number of SKIPPER ANNUALS from the thirties. They were eagerly exchanged and discussed in the Junior School playground along with other pre-war Thomson annuals. Although some annuals did appear during the War, they were scarce and any reading matter was in short supply. It must have been several years after publication that I swapped something or other for this one, doubtless attracted particularly by the intriguing cover.

The SKIPPER followed the Thomson formula of vivid covers and fast-moving adventure stories. It differed somewhat from the rest of the "Big Five", that is the ADVENTURE, WIZARD, ROVER and HOTSPUR. It featured series and complete stories rather than serials and, for one reason or another, seemed to come up with fewer "super heroes" than its stablemates. It produced no Strang the Terrible (ADVENTURE), Wilson (WIZARD), the Black Sapper (ROVER) or Iron Teacher (HOTSPUR). The only characters that come to my mind are "Mustard" Smith, the schoolmaster and Big Bad Wolff, the reformatory school warden.

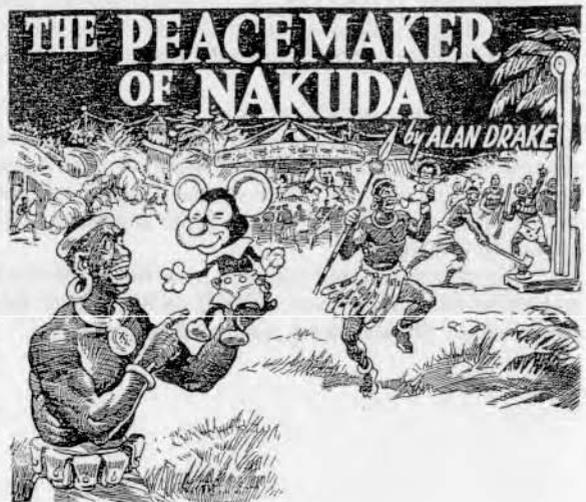
It was the only one of the "Big Five" to cease publication in the Second World War. Perhaps a smaller circulation made it the obvious target for sacrifice, thus conserving scarce paper supplies for its more popular companion papers?

But why then choose to publish a SKIPPER ANNUAL for 1948 and not one of the existing, and flourishing, other story papers? Truly, D.C. Thomson is a firm full of mysteries!

THE SKIPPER BOOK FOR BOYS was published in the autumn of 1940. It cost five shillings, twice as much as previous SKIPPER annuals. It was new bigger format (eight and a quarter inches by ten and three quarters) which had started the year before. There were 141 thick pages and a coloured frontispiece (illustrating the story THE TIN-CAN

TOTEM). There were ten stories, five double-sided photo features, two single-sided photo features and a double page game, "Round the Horn". The front end-papers and rear end-papers were typical Thomson odd facts with titles like "Snakes Alive", "Marvel Marksmen" etcetera. The photo features also dealt with odd or interesting facts; "Queer Classrooms", "Ski-high" are instances. The stories varied in length from fifteen to eight pages and were all accompanied by full or partial page illustrations in black and white. Here is a summary of the stories:

Roll up! Roll up! O warriors of Gubowala! All the fun of the fair at Commissioner Maddon's Monster Jungle Carnival! Bring your rifles, machine-guns and ammunition—you'll need 'em!



1. THE PEACEMAKER OF NAKUDA by Alan Drake

A Kenya District Commissioner has to deal with a native uprising fomented by Nazi-supplied weapons. Unfortunately, his urgent plea for arms and ammunition to arm the loyal natives is met by the mistaken dispatch of a load of carnival equipment. But ingeniously, the Commissioner sets up the fair and proceeds to charge the rebellious natives for admission to the rides - in guns and bullets! Finally, he gives the fair to the rebel chief for his own village in exchange for a peace treaty.

2. THE ISLAND THAT WASN'T by C.V.L. Cunnison

Lionheart Logan of the Mounties solves the mystery of a disappearing island and rescues an innocent man from lynching.

3. THE FIRE-FLYER OF TOBO by Leslie Grant

Young Mick Stewart finds his model aeroplanes very effective in saving an airman who's crashed among the head-hunters of Papua.

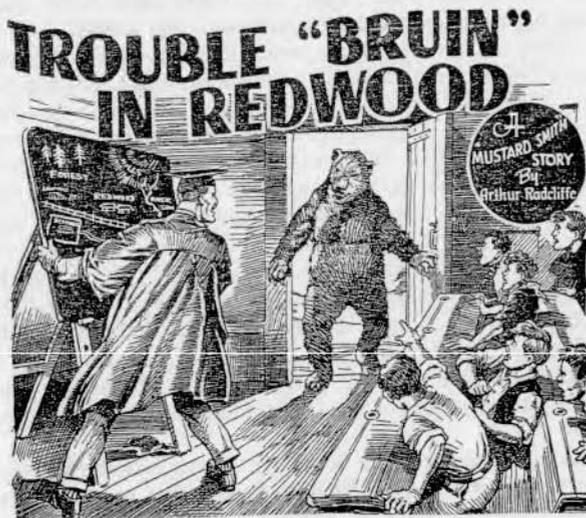
4. THE DUKE'S CHAMPION by C.L. Spiers

Redgauntlet, Champion of the Duke of Burgundy, travels to the realm of the treacherous Duke of Orleans in search of his long-lost brother. Forced to fight a duel against Orleans' champion, he finds that he is fighting his own brother! United, they return to Burgundy.

5. WHEN TULLY DROPPED A BRICK by K.G. Stevenson

A story of life in an Oregon lumber-camp where "Half-a-tick" Tully refuses to kowtow to bully "Tombstone" Hogan. When Hogan tries to follow his usual custom of setting a murderous work pace for his partner, Tully matches him load for load in piling the heavy green timber. Moreover, Tully infuriates him with his cheerful banter. The inevitable fight leads to their sacking and then Tully finds himself "framed" for causing a fire. He redeems himself by the brave and skilful demolition of a dangerous factory chimney. Hogan finally confesses his guilt and Tully is rewarded with his job back plus a big bonus.

Mustard Smith was "hot stuff," no doubt about that. But he could bearly—that is to say, barely have succeeded in saving Redwood School if it hadn't been for Sam—that is to say, Sebastian.



6. PEA-NUT PETE - NUT CRACKER by J.C. Chrystal

The small but deadly Deputy-Marshall Dolan, known as Pea-nut Pete because of his size, unmasks the mysterious leader of the castle-rustling White Owl Gang.

7. THE TIN-CAN TOTEM by G.N. Garry

Explosives expert "Blast" Benton ensures peace with the ferocious New Guinea head-hunters by persuading them that a redundant radio-mast is a superior totem to worship after he is forced to destroy their old one.

8. TROUBLE "BRUIN" IN REDWOOD A "Mustard Smith" Story by Arthur Radcliffe

A friendly brown bear, quite tame, unexpectedly joins the class of "Mustard" Smith in his school hut in Redwood in the Canadian Rockies. Apart from delighting his pupils, Sam the bear proves invaluable in thwarting attempts to close the school. And when Sam's school proprietor arrives, he is delighted to give Redwood a reward which ensures the future of the school.

9. BY THE SKIN OF HIS TEETH by Gordon Drew

Son of a circus acrobat, Jimmy Radley suffers from snobbery in his "posh" school. But when he carries one of the snobs to safety from a burning building, supporting his unconscious burden with his teeth, most of the school rally to him. But the supercilious Head-boy still "cuts him dead".

Years later, in the Amazon jungle, Jimmy finds himself repeating the feat, now rescuing that very Head-boy. Finally, he, too, recognises his rival's real worth.

10. WHEN PENANG PETERSON "TOOK THE CHAIR" by Arnold Hill

Mutineers aboard a ship bound for Java find they've bitten off more than they can chew when they come up against "Penang" Peterson and his friend young Jim Winslow. Although "Penang" is confined to a wheelchair he has not lost his pugnacity nor shooting skills. First terrifying the mutineers by impersonating a ghost, the gallant two end up fully in control of the ship.

With regard to the stories, I must say that many seem to me of less interest than those in many Thomson annuals. Certainly, some of the stories, "The Duke's Champion", "Peanut Pete", and "By the Skin of his Teeth", make little impression. "The Duke's Champion" recalls the Thomson papers' interest in historical themes, particularly those connected with Sir Walter Scott. (They ran, for example, a series of stories about the Scottish Bodyguard of Louis XI, France's "Spider King" which owed much to Scott's "Quentin Durward".)

"Peanut Pete - Nutcracker" reminds me of the feeblest of B Westerns, such as we watched on Saturday mornings. Only feebler. "The Tin-can Totem" features an explosives expert who, like the more familiar Thomson figure Dynamiter Jim, is distinguished by a ruthless disregard for natives that get in his way. "By the Skin of his Teeth" rather overdoes coincidence when the hero rescues both his main tormentors over a span of years and by similar means!

So why do I choose this annual as one of my favourites? The eye-catching cover must be one reason. Then there are familiar names like Lionheart Logan and "Mustard" Smith. The familiar punning titles which boys like (for years the heading "trouble bruin" was a favourite phrase of mine). The attractively varied settings of the tales: Africa, New Guinea, the Wild West, medieval France, etcetera; the light-hearted offerings of bizarre photos and facts which ensured that generations of Big Five readers grew up possessing a vast store of useless information!

Not all the stories, of course, were below par. "The Island that Wasn't" did have a genuine puzzle for Lionheart to solve. "Penang Peterson" was a lively mutiny adventure

with a "ghostly twist. "Trouble Bruin in Redwood" had in "Mustard" Smith a most likeable figure, a firm but sympathetic teacher who can cope with a bear in his classroom or crooks trying to scare him off.

But of all the stories I would choose "Tully Drops a Brick" and "The Peacemaker of Nakuda" as the best.

"Tully" is that rare thing - a story about work where the setting and work processes are essential to the plot and succinctly explained. The page illustrations, too, are good enough to add to the text's impact.

We accept the tough world of the lumber-camp where the just but irascible boss makes fighting a sacking offence, where the men are strong and hard-working but unable to cope with the camp bully until the indomitable newcomer bests him at work and in a fight. All this makes a convincing and authentic background.

The plot, too, is well-crafted. Tully's habit of breaking spent matches to check possible fire danger seems eminently sensible for a lumberjack but also supplies the villain with an easy way of laying blame on him. And Tully's angry remark that the boss will be sorry for firing him seems evidence of malicious intentions although, in fact, he was referring to the amazing amount of work that the two men had got through before Tully turned the tables on Hogan's attempt to work him into the ground. Such a convincing portrayal of a working environment is not common in adult fiction. In boys' fiction it is rare indeed.

"The Peacemaker of Nakuda", despite its background threat of rebellion and massacre, has a light-hearted air about it. Although the initial events seem to be menacing, the change accomplished by the ingenious Commissioner can be no surprise to the reader who has seen the cover. The ruse that ended with the natives eager to purchase rides on the fair with their guns and ammunition, is, of course, pretty unlikely. But boys could easily accept if it only to enjoy the diverting picture of huge African warriors enjoying the delights of the fair, a world very familiar to youngsters.

This, I think, is one of the very few stories I know in the Thomson annuals in which the illustrations are essential to, and, indeed, superior to, the text. The art work in the Thomson annuals of the "Big Five" is usually far inferior to the text. Here the "Duke's Champion", for instance, has third rate drawings. Only "Trouble "Bruin" in Redwood" has art-work of a comparable standard. Is it a coincidence that both are stories full of humour?

One last thought. Among the odd facts on the inside covers is one which informs us that Noel Coward has a room in his house which he has papered with the first scripts of his successful plays. Not many people know that! It certainly struck me as the only time Noel made the SKIPPER!

*(Illustrations copyright D.C. Thomson)*

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**FOR SALE: COLLECTORS' DIGEST** Nos. 263-278, 280-295, 297-300, 334-444, 447,448,450, 452-455, 457-466, 469. 472-474, 476-478, 481-484, 487, 490-498, 500-509, 511, 513, 515-567. 50p each plus postage. EDWARD ALLATT 130 St. Peters Road, COWLEY, Middlesex. UB8 3SD.  
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**SEARCH ENDED**

At the end of August 1990 I retired from teaching and began the search for a really satisfying hobby. I tried building model canal boats, oil painting by numbers, bird watching and countless other activities but none really gripped me.

I found myself more and more falling back on reading - a passion I've had since I first realised the great joy which can be obtained from the printed word in story form.

At this stage in my reading I was rather ashamed that I was really enjoying "Gimlet" by W.E. Johns and "William" by Richmal Crompton. Surely I ought to be reading Dickens, Trollope, Chaucer and the like?

Then I read "Sexton Blake Wins" - a "Classic Thriller" published by J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. At the end of it I came across the name and address of one Eric Fayne. If I wanted any more information concerning "Greyfriars", "St. Jims", "Nelson Lee", etc. I should write to him.

This I did. Eric very kindly wrote me a long letter and suggested I got in touch with Mary Cadogan and sign up for the monthly paper "Collector's Digest". Mary replied promptly and my subscription was duly paid. "C.D." has arrived faithfully each month for the last 1½ years. Long may it continue.

I still felt rather ashamed of my interest in "Childrens' Literature", more enhanced by the arrival of C.D. To level things out I studied G.C.S.E. English Literature by correspondence. At the same time I found the name of Colin Crewe in C.D. and telephoned him. Colin, for well over a year, has now supplied me with a monthly parcel, consisting mainly of books by W.E. Johns and "Wizard" comics of the '50s.

In June I took my examination in English Literature and the day after it ended the monthly parcel from Colin arrived on the date pre-arranged between us. You can rely on Colin to the letter.

I received an 'A' grade for the examination and I am certain I owe a great deal of this success to this hobby of ours. It gives a correct balance between academic study and something which is literature but light, refreshing, nostalgic and yet fascinatingly interesting and worth studying deeply.

My grateful thanks to Eric, who introduced me to it; Mary who keeps me in touch with it through C.D. and Colin who keeps me reading. I am no longer ashamed of this wonderful hobby of ours. It is good to know that other 'adults' share my fascination for it. My search for a hobby is ended.

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## COLIN CREWE Continued.....

### Vol 45 GUNMEN AT GREYFRIARS

Issue Nos. 1471 to 1478

### Vol 49 THE MYSTERY MAN OF GREYFRIARS

Issue Nos. 1615 to 1622

### Vol 50 BILLY BUNTER'S EASTER TRIP

Issue Nos. 1623 to 1630

### Vol 54 VERNON SMITH'S RIVAL

Issue Nos. 1631 to 1638

### Vol 57 EXPELLED FROM GREYFRIARS

Issue Nos. 1536 to 1540 & 1613 to 1614 & 1560

### Vol 58 BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL

Issue Nos. 1036 to 1037 & 1264 to 1268 & 1276

### Vol 59 BUNTER'S RICH RELATION

Issue Nos. 1561 to 1568

### Vol 60 THE GREYFRIARS IMPERSONATOR

Issue Nos. 1569 to 1572 & 1308 to 1310 & 1160

### Vol 61 THE SCHOOLBOY TOURISTS

Issue Nos. 1312 to 1316 & 1319, 1320, 1132

### Vol 62 THE BIG BAND AT GREYFRIARS

Issue Nos. 1545 to 1552

### Vol 63 BUNTER'S ORDERS

Issue Nos. 1553 to 1555 & 1321 to 1322 & 1221 to 1223

### Vol 64 BILLIONAIRING WITH BUNTER

Issue Nos. 1383 to 1389 & 1042

### Vol 65 GREYFRIARS ON SAFARI

Issue Nos. 1228 to 1236

### Vol 66 RUCTIONS AT GREYFRIARS

Issue Nos. 1237 to 1243 & 1135

### Vol 67 BUNTER AT ST JIM'S

Issue Nos. Magnet : 569 to 572 & 585; Gem: 571 to 574 & 576, 578, 579, 585

### Vol 68 THE ROGUE OF THE REMOVE

Issue Nos. 1129 to 1131 & 1154 to 1155 & 1157 to 1158

### Vol 69 THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS

Issue Nos. 1111 to 1117

### Vol 70 BILLY BUNTER'S CONVICT

Issue Nos. 834, 1035, 1039 to 1041, 1056 and 1057

### Vol 71 THE GREYFRIARS SECOND

ELEVEN Issue Nos. 918 to 922 & 932 & 933

### Vol 72 THE SHYLOCK OF GREYFRIARS

Issue Nos. 1110, 1126 to 1128, 1133, 1134, 1136

### Vol 73 UNDER BUNTER'S THUMB

Issue Nos. 1015, 1050, 1051, 1052, 1068, 1090, & 1137

## GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Here's another clever poem dealing with the popular schoolboy characters of Greyfriars.

No. 4.—BILLY BUNTER.



**T**ELL of Bunter (William George),

The fastest boy in history;

How he contrives to sit and gorge

To surfeit, is a mystery.

Although no genius, he'll display

An infinite capacity

For tucking tarts and buns away

With relish and rapacity!

He talks of tuck, he thinks of tuck,

He dreams of tuck nocturnally;

And often longs to have the tuck

To feast on tuck eternally.

For tuck is Bunter's very creed,

Filling his whole horizon;

He's ever yearning for a feed

To feast his eager eyes on!

"Eat not to live, but live to eat!"

Is Bunter's chery maxim;

No dinner, savoury, or sweet

Could ever overtax him.

Straight to the tuckshop he'll repair,

And drive Dame Mimble frantic

By "clearing" all her choicest fare

With appetite gigantic!

When not engaged in eating pies,

Then Bunter plays the pirate,

By raiding other chaps' supplies,

Making them somewhat irate!

And when they catch him in the act

A five-bat comes in action,

And William George is soundly

whacked,

Much to their satisfaction!

To study doors he gives his ear,

In quest of information;

And many stories, strange and queer,

He puts in circulation.

"I say, you fellows," he will bawl,

"I've staggering news—oh, rather!

And if you'd like to hear it all—"

Bliff! Bunter gets no farther!

Owing to pressure on my space

(As Bunter says when swelling),

I fear that I can find no place

His exploits to be telling.

His deeds and feeds, his smiles and

smirks.

His fatuous hanky-panky,

Are they not written in the works

Of Richards'—genial Franky!

## GEMS OF HAMILTONIA - NO. 1. Mr. Prout (From MAGNET No. 1546)

"Prout leaned back in his chair - and then, in sudden amazement, he gave a start. His eyes fixed on a foot! A foot in itself, was not a startling object. Prout had two of his own, though, owing to an increase in circumference, it was some years since he had seen them. There were some hundreds of inhabitants at Greyfriars School, every one provided with the usual allowance of feet. So it was not the foot in itself that amazed Prout. It was the fact that he saw it under the study table. It was clear, of course that the foot belonged to somebody. It could not possibly be there on its own. It was attached to some person crouched out of sight."



# THE FAIRY CINDERELLA



"I CAN'T go to the Midsummer Ball,"  
Said a poor little Fairy-girl.  
"I have no gems to deck my hair,  
Nor a chariot made of pearl.  
I am only a little Mender of Wings,  
And no one cares about me!  
But I'd love to see the Fairy Prince!"  
And then she sighed heavily.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆  
Then came a sound of fluttering wings,  
And she heard Pixie voices call,  
"You have been kind to us, Fairy-girl,  
Come with us to the Midsummer Ball!"  
They brought her flowers for her hair,  
They said, "You'll be sweetest of all!"  
For her chariot, a rose, and dragonfly  
steeds,  
And off they flew to the Ball!

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆  
And the Fairy danced with the Fairy Prince,  
For he thought she looked so fair;  
"Do stay," he begged, "and be my bride!"  
And how all the fairies did stare!  
"I'm only a Mender of Wings," she said,  
"No matter!" he cried, "Please stay!"  
So the Fairy Mender became the Queen,  
And she reigns this very day!



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