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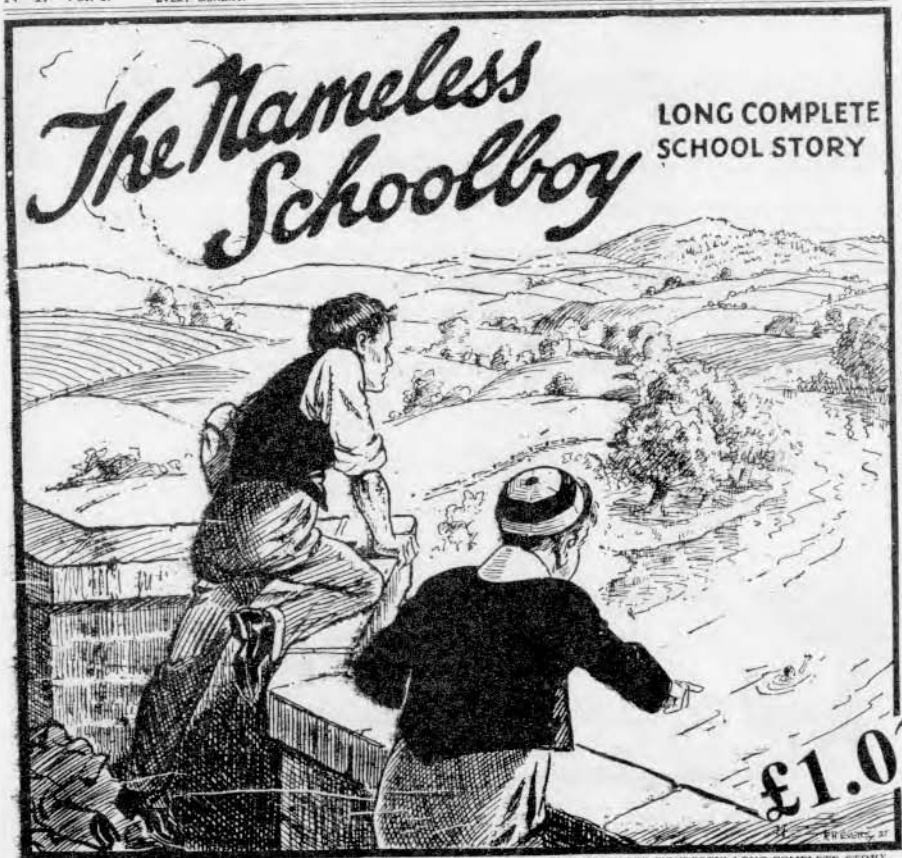

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The Editor's Chat

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

You will see that this month's C.D. includes the second contribution to this new series, which has been suggested by Mr. John Geal whose name, unfortunately, was inadvertently not credited against the first of these 'Gems', which appeared in our April issue.

FINE FEATHERS

Jack Adrian, who has often contributed to the C.D., deserves our warm thanks for his services to the hobby over many years. Many C.D. readers will recall his articles on a wide range of authors and story papers, and his anthology SEXTON BLAKE WINS (1986) is a particularly popular collectors' item. His Rafael Sabatini collection, THE FORTUNES OF CASANOVA AND OTHER STORIES, is reviewed elsewhere in this issue by Brian Doyle, and I have been browsing with much pleasure through another of his recently published anthologies, FINE FEATHERS, which features stories by E.F. Benson from 1894 to 1931. Published by Oxford University Press, it contains 31 stories taken from magazines such as *The Tatler, The Queen, Windsor Magazine* and *The Storyteller*. Most of these tales are now appearing for the first time in book form and are grouped under intriguing headings ('Sardonic', 'Society', 'Crook', 'Crank' and 'Spook' stories). These sparkling offerings from the author of the 'Mapp and Lucia' novels feature, as Jack

Adrian says in his introduction, 'astringent stories, frothy comedies, ironic and deflatory small sagas, two strange tales ... as well as an amusing weird squib ... which stars Benson himself...'.

FAR FLUNG STUDY FEEDS

Bunter's name is often given to restaurants and other establishments concerned with 'comestibles'. Northern Club members Keith and Margaret Atkinson have discovered a café in Filey called 'Bunter's Last Fling' and fellow-member William Hirst has reported finding a 'Billy Bunter's Restaurant' in Nepal. Betty and Johnny Hopton's picture of 'Billy Bunter's Bakehouse and Deli' near Morpeth graced the cover of the Midland Club's newsletter a year or two ago, and Johnny Burslem of Wickford has sent me a copy of the menu of 'Quilters Skool Dinners Restaurant' in Billericay which offers several substantial dishes under the name of 'Bunter's Delight', 'Bunter Burger', etc.

SUMMER TRAVELS

We are now entering the season of summer (although as I write this we have been enduring many wild, wet and windy days). Last month I revisited Paris, which I hadn't seen for some twenty years, and had the added joy of another trip to California. The month of May will take me on further travels as my husband and I plan a visit to the Loire Valley then. I do my best to see that the C.D. comes out regularly and on time - but I ask readers to forgive me if my trips abroad, which I relish, cause occasional delays in the printing and posting schedule.

I hope that you will all have good holidays and happy reading.

MARY CADOGAN

* *

BRANDS FROM THE BURNING

by Peter Mahony

Part 10: Herbert Vernon-Smith (3)

In Magnet 517, Smithy went sailing on Pegg Bay in bad weather. Wharton & Co. saw him in difficulties; he was blown off-shore, out of their sight. Down the coast at Hawkscliff, Tom Redwing spotted his danger, swam out, took charge of the boat, and managed to get them ashore. The Bounder, realising that his life had been saved, wanted to show his gratitude in practical terms. Redwing, poor but proud, rejected any such idea. Smithy returned to Greyfriars, chastened and subdued.

Redwing, eager for an education, then fell in with Leonard Clavering, a new boy bound for Greyfriars. Clavering, an orphan from overseas, was keen to 'join up'. (It was 1918, remember.)

It did not take long for them to change places. Redwing, whose father had been lost at sea, was without any family ties. He arrived at Greyfriars, posing as Clavering. Smithy, amazed by the impersonation, kept 'mum' - a small return, in his view, for Redwing's greater service to him. Of course, it couldn't last. Ponsonby got onto the 'con' and, though Smithy

headed him off from exposing Redwing, the impostor 'came clean' and left Greyfriars. By this time, he and Vernon-Smith were firm friends.

Smithy's next ploy was subtle - and philanthropic. He persuaded his father to endow a scholarship (anonymously); then he encouraged Redwing to enter for it. Tom duly won the award and returned to Greyfriars in his true identity.

Having got his new friend back, Smithy's next move was to get rid of his old pal, Harold Skinner. Redwing had been placed in Study No. 11 with Snoop and Stott. Skinner, used to the crumbs from the rich man's table, refused to vacate No. 4. The Bounder laid a deep plot and forced Skinner to agree to exchange studies. It was a typical example of Smithy's nefarious streak - and Redwing would have nothing to do with it. Rebuffed, Vernon-Smith reacted evilly - taunts were uttered - Redwing was deeply offended. Mr. Vernon-Smith took exception to Redwing giving Smithy the 'marble eye' and the truth behind the scholarship was revealed. Redwing promptly gave that up as well. The Vernon-Smiths, confronted by a noble, honest spirit, were all at sea. For once, money did not 'make the mare go'. The mere idea that a poor lad should reject obvious advantages because "they weren't quite straight" bemused them - particularly Mr. Vernon-Smith. (I imagine Redwing derived a certain satisfying amusement from their confusion. It's always fun to see 'fixers' unfixed.) Eventually it needed 'Old Smith' to become (apparently) bankrupt, before Redwing was ready to patch things up with Smithy and agree to 'come off the high horse' and remain at Greyfriars. From then onwards, the Bounder, conscious in his heart of hearts of Redwing's moral superiority, was never quite so unprincipled. His conscience was always liable to be stirred uneasily by Redwing.

Smithy's prominence at Greyfriars abated somewhat during the next decade (1918-1927). This was the period when nearly half of the Magnet yarns were written by substitute authors. There was a clash with Skinner (Magnets 613-15) when Smithy countered sharp practice with even sharper practice - and found that Redwing (on whose behalf the clash had occurred) was distressed because Smithy's methods could not bear the light. The Bounder then became "supporting cast" until Ernest Levison's (first) return to Greyfriars (Magnets 793-98). Levison, now reformed, found that his 'bad name' was still remembered at Greyfriars. He got mixed up in some of Hazeldene's murky misdemeanours and found himself in debt - as well as in danger of exposure for gambling. (Hazeldene, of course, washed his hands of the affair, leaving Levison to pay the piper.) Vernon-Smith, mindful of the good turn Levison had done him in the past, paid the bill; then he went on to save Levison's bacon by confronting Dr. Locke with Mr. Mulberry (the card-sharper in the case). Levison was exonerated and - for once - Hazeldene had to carry the can.

A year later (Magnets 858-60), Smithy's other side appeared. His cricket form was poor (he'd been at the smokes again!) and Wharton gave Redwing the bounder's place for the Rookwood game. Smithy took it badly: he fell out with Redwing: then Wharton & Co. gave him 'six' as a warning to keep the peace. Seething, Smithy travelled to Rookwood as a reserve and contrived to make Redwing lose the train. The Bounder, with an innings of 75 not out, won the match for Greyfriars. Redwing, deeply hurt, moved out of Study No. 4, but he kept Smithy's duplicity dark. The Remove were suspicious and Peter Todd, in his best legal style, got at the truth. The Bounder was banned from the cricket. In retaliation, he formed a rival XI; then he had a fight with Frank Nugent, which crocked him for the cricket; after that he locked Wharton in a box-room on the morning of the Highcliffe match. Quelch became involved; Smithy was caned; Redwing started worrying about him. Skinner was helping the bounder along the primrose path. Redwing decided to patch things up; Smithy, inwardly ashamed of his behaviour, accepted the olive branch. Rather tritely, the rift was mended and Skinner's machinations were thwarted.

Vernon-Smith's neat 'starring' role was in "Playing the Goat" (Magnet 899, 1925). Dropped by the Remove XI, he signed up with Temple & Co., intending to put it across Harry Wharton in a Form match. Temple (one of Hamilton's well-drawn minor characters) failed to use Smithy effectively and the whole scheme came a humiliating cropper.

Another excellent 'single' was No. 973 (1926, October). Smithy and Angel of the Fourth had been betting on the form match (football, this time). Wharton and the Bounder clashed; Smithy was dropped. Hazeldene was due to keep goal; he was seduced from his duty by Angel; got into debt with Joey Banks; was baled out by Smithy; played well in the match; Angel lost his shirt.

Good as these singles and short series were, Charles Hamilton needed a broader canvas for portraying Vernon-Smith. The inner psychology of his complex character required 'meatier' plots and greater scope for 'in-depth' treatment. From April 1927 to the end of the Magnet (May 1940), Smithy's appearances were much more frequent - and extensive. The first of these - the Paul Dallas series (Nos. 997-1004) - was a snorter.

Paul Dallas, an orphan, was befriended by Mr. Vernon-Smith (occasionally, "Old Smith", like his son, would have bursts of philanthropy). The Bounder, unreasonably envious, behaved abominably. He enlisted the aid of Ponsonby & Co. (always a sign of moral decline!) in the ensuing feud; fell out with Redwing; was barred from the family home during the holidays, and generally went to the dogs in his most vicious style. Quelch, who had to deal with a lot of the consequences, became thoroughly fed up with the Bounder. Dallas' father turned up; Smithy, belatedly realising his mistake, apologised; but the rifts with Redwing and Quelch were not healed.

The Bounder's bacon was saved by a fortuitous occurrence. A Captain Spencer arrived at Greyfriars as Dr. Locke's guest. There had been a bank robbery at Lantham: Smithy, on the run from detention, hid in Lantham Wood and saw the robber removing his disguise and hiding the loot. After the villain had gone, Smithy 'lifted' the loot and used it to bail himself out of trouble with the Head. Later, he saw Captain Spencer and recognised him as the bank robber. He accused the Captain : no-one believed him : it was thought to be another specimen of malicious trouble-making. The Bounder was locked in the punishment-room to consider the error of his ways.

Meanwhile, Bunter, by accident, stumbled on the truth about Spencer - no-one would believe him either! Smithy gave an undertaking to Quelch which got him out of 'punny'; then he set himself to shadow Captain Spencer. Eventually, with the Famous Five's help, he foiled another robbery, at Courtfield, and Spencer was arrested. The Bounder was restored to credibility and favour with the Head - but not with Quelch. Poor old Henry! He got rid of Smithy a few times, but he always returned - the proverbial bad penny!

In the next pair of stories (Magnets 1012-13) Vernon-Smith went further downhill - not entirely through his own fault. The tiresome Hazeldene for once had money to burn. Good naturedly, Smithy tried to prevent him from gambling it away. The Remove misunderstood his motives; being Smithy he refused to enlighten them and was ragged. This aroused his animosity against Wharton - he planned a scheme for annoying Wharton, using Quelch as a Catspaw. (Smithy was ever ready to sail close to the wind!) Because of Bunter's interference, the scheme failed; the Bounder was flogged.. In an episode similar to the Mornington/Jimmy Silver one, Vernon-Smith arranged for Wharton to be waylaid by thugs. Conscience got the better of him at the last minute and he raced to Wharton's rescue. A confession was made : the hatchet was buried : but Smithy was still in Quelch's bad books.

Soon afterwards (Magnet 1015) Tom Redwing returned. He wrote to Vernon-Smith, extending the olive branch : the Bounder, still feeling guilty about his behaviour during the

Dallas interlude, accepted it eagerly. Hamilton had cleared the way for his next watershed series.

The South Seas Series (Magnets 1017-1026) was important for several reasons. First, it cemented the friendship between Smithy and Redwing. Secondly, it developed Redwing's placid character into a tougher, more assertive personality. Third, its outcome provided Redwing with the financial independence needed to resume his Greyfriars career unbeholden to the Smiths. Finally, it introduced one of Hamilton's deepest-dyed villains - James Soames. (Soames always reminds me of a grown-up, impecunious Vernon-Smith, a stop-at-nothing rascal, and what Smithy may well have become of Greyfriars hadn't toned him down.) The whole series was rip-roaring, perhaps too much so towards the end. Nevertheless, it achieved Hamilton's object - to establish Redwing as a permanent 'Good Angel', keeping the Bounder's future excesses in check.

(To be concluded)

* *

THE LONE WOLF RIDES IN

by Alan Pratt

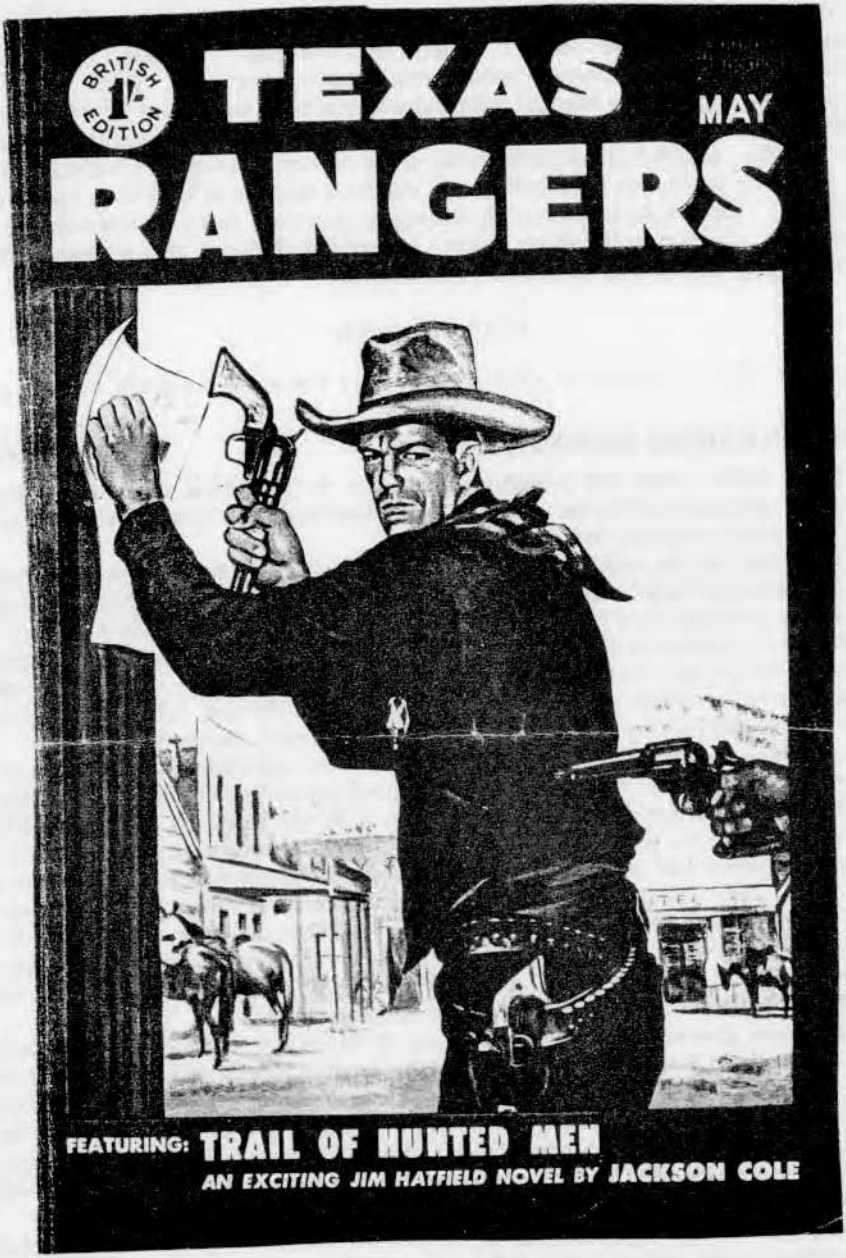
In the 1950s Atlas were probably best known for publishing sixpenny reprints of American Superman and Batman comics and an ill-fated series of "horror" publications that were very quickly outlawed in the U.K.

What may be less well known is that Atlas published a whole series of reprints of different American "pulp" magazines, one of which was Texas Rangers. I have no accurate information as to how long this particular title ran in the United States. All I can say with any degree of certainty is that it dates back to (at least) the mid '30s, was being reprinted here in the forties, and remained available until the late fifties. Sparse information indeed, based entirely on crumbs gathered from my personal collection, reference books and articles on "pulps" proving to be singularly unhelpful as regards this particular title.

It must be said, of course, that westerns generally are considered somewhat passé and it is indisputably true that western titles are very much less collectable than those containing horror or science fiction stories. Magazines such as Weird Tales and Astounding Stories are much sought after, not only as sources of early material from writers such as Asimov, Heinlein and Lovecraft, but also for the imaginative and colourful artwork to be found on their covers. The westerns had contributions from top quality writers also, (the names of W.C. Tuttle and Max Brand spring immediately to mind) but, of course, the western did not enjoy the revival experienced by the science fiction/fantasy genres in the 1970s. Indeed it may be that knowledge has died with interest but if any SPCD reader has access to a source of rich information I would be delighted to hear from him or her!

The main attraction of each monthly issue of Texas Rangers was a "long complete novel" by Jackson Cole featuring Jim Hatfield, a fearless ranger, and his beautiful sorrel horse, Goldie. The relatively few reference books on western fiction that I have access to make no mention of Jackson Cole and I can only assume that this was a "house name" employed by the original publishers. Indeed, although one style of writing is apparent in the majority of stories that I have read, occasional variations suggest that the Cole output was the work of more than one person.

In a typical Hatfield adventure, our Jim will be despatched to some remote border town perhaps on the trail of a particularly evil gang of outlaws or maybe to follow up on a request for help submitted to the chief ranger Captain Bill McDowell. Jim is known



Cover of May 1952 edition

throughout the State of Texas as The Lone Wolf, this nickname deriving from his penchant for working alone. Consequently, he will often conceal his identity as a ranger and may even take on a different personality altogether as he sets about infiltrating the local community. He is likely to meet an honest but tired veteran lawman, a grizzled and cantankerous old rancher with a pretty, spirited daughter or niece, and a number of local business men one of whom will be wooing the pretty and spirited one to the chagrin of an upright but humble cowhand with no prospects. Jim will hear about the terrible things that have been happening in the vicinity masterminded by some mysterious Man With No Face. The reader knows, of course, that his identity will be exposed later in a thrilling climax. Having established local credibility (typically by sorting out a few of the town's more obvious bully boys) Jim will set about following up on his original mission and will face all kinds of danger until the final showdown when all is resolved and he rides back to Ranger Headquarters.

That is the formula. What makes each story so eminently readable is the string of variations built around the theme. Like all good pulp heroes Hatfield is larger than life and the "Wild West" in which he operates is an almost surreal world. Here one is apt to find a mysterious lost city in the middle of the desert: ghostly horsemen may gallop across the starlit prairie shedding spectral light and "invisible" outlaws can be heard but not seen as they make their way along a brushy trail. One especially memorable yarn features a sort of Garden of Eden flourishing inside a dormant volcano, maintained by the master villain through the use of slave labour. And even in the more conventional stories there is always a wealth of atmosphere as changes are rung on the traditional western themes. From time to time, for example, the adventures transfer from land to water in tales of drug smuggling and illegal immigration, but it is the land - the wide open spaces - that really captures the imagination. The west is shown as a huge, sprawling mass of canyons and ravines where mist swirls between strange chimney-like rock formations and where one never knows who is watching from high up on the mesquite and boulder strewn slopes. Exciting stuff by any standards and calculated to appeal even to those who would not normally read westerns.

The Hatfield adventures are also action packed. There are fist fights and shoot outs a-plenty but the deaths (and as is the case with westerns there are a few) tend to be bloodless rather than graphic. There are also floods, fires, landslides and stampedes and all are powerfully described. All in all, a cracking series of stories: I just wish I could identify the authors of the work!

As well as a Hatfield adventure, each issue of Texas Rangers contains a few short stories, occasionally by well known writers (but more often not). There are sometimes snippets about life in the west or notorious real life outlaws and occasionally even an appropriate poem. Sadly, there are very few illustrations in the magazine and those that do appear are somewhat "blotchy" resulting, no doubt, from a combination of cheap printing and poor quality paper. The magazine covers are generally quite colourful but not especially imaginative in concept. And yet, despite these shortcomings, the mag, like "The Mousetrap", ran and ran! A tribute indeed to the unknown writer or writers who, as Jackson Cole, continued to thrill a public sated with westerns who wanted just a little bit extra for their money.

Texas Rangers certainly provided that extra and left us with a legacy of thrilling adventures some of which can now be found via large print hardback editions in your local library. Like the "old soldier" in the song, Texas Rangers never die!

* *

THE PAINTED DOG

by Ian Godden

Many writers have used Dartmoor as a setting for their murder mysteries and thrillers and it is a background that I always enjoy. ESB used this location many times and always to good effect. Nelson Lee readers will recall No. 419, part of the Remove On Tour series, when Handforth, disobeying instructions as usual, goes out onto the moor at night looking for an escaped convict, meets him and gets a crack over the head for his trouble.

THE PAINTED DOG takes its title from an inn of that name located on the fringes of the moor near the village of Moreton Abbott and not far from Tavistock. This Victor Gunn novel tells the story of the murder of the landlord of the inn, a reclusive old man named Charlie Widden who is thought to have a secret hoard hidden away in the room where he spends most of his time.

The story is told from the point of view of Reggie Laker, a young Londoner, who is camping on the moor and taking his meals at the inn. He has taken a great liking for the attractive young daughter of the lady who manages the inn for Old Charlie. A rival for the affections of the girl is Tony Bellamy son of the local squire Sir Richard Bellamy - no doubt a relative of the famous Bellamys of Eaton Place as seen in Upstairs, Downstairs. Young Tony celebrates his birthday at the inn by concocting a potent punch in the inn's kitchen. Everyone drinks this brew except Reggie Laker who is not invited. When he goes to the inn next morning everyone is still sleeping as some form of drug has been put in the punch. Old Charlie is found murdered in his room.

Before the day is out Chief Inspector Cromwell & Sgt. Johnny Lister arrive from Scotland Yard to take over the investigation and are confronted by a very tricky problem - how the murder could have been carried out in a locked room. The astute Cromwell soon works that one out and is then able to turn his attention to finding out who murdered Old Charlie. There are, of course, several suspects, the hard-up Tony Bellamy, a couple of odd-looking hikers staying at the inn, the old handyman and even the local doctor.

The story takes an interesting turn when fingerprints reveal that Old Charlie was a murderer in an unsolved crime some 35 years earlier and this startling news is followed by other revelations from the past. A clue to the apprehending of the killer is provided by the green paint which is found on a dog that belongs to the young daughter of the manageress of the inn.

This is a really first class murder mystery which holds the attention of the reader all the way through and serves to show that ESB was at his best when handling the detective story.

* *

A BLAKE BY ANY OTHER NAME

by Derek Hinrich

When I started to collect Sexton Blakes about ten years ago I also became intrigued by the process of de-Blakeing. I wondered at first if this might be similar to the way Raymond Chandler combined some of his novelettes for the American "pulps" to produce three of his Marlowe novels, but I soon found that it was a simpler process which so many authors of the great man's Golden Age undertook. Nevertheless, whenever I find, when browsing in a second-hand book shop - a favourite pastime of mine - a volume by a Blake author, which has all the appearance of having been de-Blaked, I snap it up and try and see if I can identify its Blake original.

Sexton Blake and Tinker adopted a variety of disguises and aliases in the course of their careers. Apart from those in their adventures proper, they also became:

Grant Rushton and Tony Fairways;
Commander Chester Brett and "Ginger" Mullins;
Ruston Carr and George Mansell;
and Major Moffat and his son Dan

in novels by G.H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, Anthony Parsons, and Rex Hardinge respectively.

It is pleasant, I think, to see that three of the authors retained the cadence of a two syllable forename and a single syllable surname.

I have one book by Evans, two each by Hardinge and Parsons, and three by Teed.

The two by Hardinge are *Murder on the Veld* and *The Secret of the Sheba*. Apart from a couple of introductory paragraphs explaining who Major Moffat was (ex-army, formerly chief in turn of three colonial police forces, and a spell as Assistant Commissioner in charge of the CID at Scotland Yard, before turning private detective), the first of these is a straight transcript of SBL 3rd No 137, *The Secret of the Veld*. I have been unable to identify *The Secret of the Sheba* but I suspect it may be a version of SBL 3rd No 165, *The Case of the Stolen Mine*, which I do not possess.

Ruston Carr and George Mansell, we are told, were Detective Inspector and Detective Sergeant respectively in the CID who resigned together to set up as private detectives in the Parsons books, *Death on the Mall* and *Murder at the Red Cockatoo*. *Death on the Mall* is one of Parsons' Indian stories, but I do not possess the original. The other is of course a reprise of SBL 3rd No 167, *The Mystery of the Red Cockatoo*, and apart from the explanation of Carr and Mansell's antecedents, and renaming the sublime Venner and Belford, Vizard and Bedford, is word for word the same.

All these hardback editions were published by Wright & Brown. Both Hardinges were issued in 1954 and the Parsons in 1947 and 1955 respectively.

The Teed volumes are rather more interesting as exercises in the gentle art of De-Blakeing. *Murder Ship* (Stanley Smith, undated but about 1935-6, I think) takes place at

sea partly aboard a new ocean liner the *Corsair* and is concerned with a project to build a floating aerodrome to serve as a mid-Atlantic refuelling post for aircraft (shades of the old German film *FP1* shown recently on Channel 4). Another ship being used to repatriate a few hundred assorted European criminals *en masse* from various South American countries also figures in the plot.

This has all the appearance of being originally a Blake story, although there is no Tinker figure in it, and Rushton is married off in the last chapter, a fate Blake was to avoid for many a year! I do not know from which Blake this derives, if derive it does.

But a bachelor Grant Rushton was on the scene in another couple of cases a year or two later from a different publisher, Columbine. *Crooks' Vendetta* is *Rogues of Ransom* (SBL 2nd series No 384 of 4th May 1933) de-Blaked, and de-Plummered too. "Flash" Brady is listed in the Sexton Blake Index as one of the many characters created by G.H. Teed. Although I have a goodly number of Teed stories in my collection, both SBL and UJ, I have not come across Brady in any of them, but in Teed's de-Blaked works his name does duty for that of George Marsden Plummer. Teed was the third author to continue Plummer's career after the disappearance of his original creator, Michael Storm. No other adversary of Blake's has had such a long life through so many hands and his name was presumably changed because he, too, was so much a part of the continuing cycle of Sexton Blake, but "Flash" Brady seems to me a very sad and down-market substitute for the former aspirant to the earldom of Sevenoaks!

By the way, in one of my early, pre-1914, *Union Jacks* there is an advertisement for, I think, *Pluck*, referring to detective stories starring Plummer before he went to the bad. Does anyone know about these, please?

Bottom of Suez (Columbine, 1938 or '9, I think) is a rather odd kettle of fish. This is a revamp of *The Great Canal Plot* (SBL 2nd No 19, reprinted as No 590), originally published in October 1925 and republished in 1937. This is a story bursting with plot and characters. It concerns a plan of Prince Menes to sabotage the Suez Canal and, with this end in view he enters into a conspiracy which engages nearly every major villain in Teed's repertory at that time, with the exception of Dr. Huxton Rymer who is, however, mentioned in passing along with Mlle Roxane Cartier. Otherwise they are all there - The Black Eagle, Prince Wu Ling, Plummer, The Three Musketeers, Prince Menes, Madame Goupolis, Mathew Cardolak. All bear these names in *Bottom of Suez* with the exception of Plummer who once again becomes "Flash" Brady. I have the 1925 edition of *The Great Canal Plot* and apart from the removal of some then topical references (to the murder of Sir Lee Stack, for example) the text of *Bottom of Suez* is identical, though it has been re-paragraphed, with the exception of the last four chapters which are an addition. Whether these were included in the 1937 SBL edition I do not know as I have not seen it. The effect of them, however, is to ensure that the book ends in a double anticlimax, since, as is customary in Blake stories of that period, the master criminals are defeated but escape to plot another day, and this now happens twice within a few pages.

I have kept the most curious of these de-Blaked volumes, *The Clue of The Missing Link* (Wright & Brown undated), by Gwyn Evans, till last. This consists of two novelettes. The title story is the slightly re-titled *The Case of The Missing Link* (UJ 1167). In this Blake becomes Commander Chester Brett, late of Naval Intelligence and "now an eminent criminologist"; Tinker, "Ginger" Mullins; and Inspector Coutts is rechristened Inspector Barker but all the other characters, including "Splash" Page are unaltered. The second story - and the oddity - is called *Mystery of the Painted Slippers* and features Huxton Rymer and Nirvana. Although I have not seen the original, this is obviously the story of the same name by G.H. Teed in UJ 1161. The book is dedicated "To George Teed H. Who understands."

He must indeed have been very understanding for this looks not so much like plagiarism as wholesale theft!

* *

JUDBUD, REEDER, PREED AND DOVE

by Len Hawkey

"In days long past, we used to read
Of Judbud, Reeder, Dove and Preed -
Such times are gone, alas, like many another love,
And gone are Reeder, Judbud, Preed and Dove."

These names have the sound of an old-fashioned firm of musty solicitors - or even, perhaps more appropriately, of discreet Enquiry Agents - they are names which Beachcomber himself may have dreamed up. Actually, one, at least, *was* a solicitor.

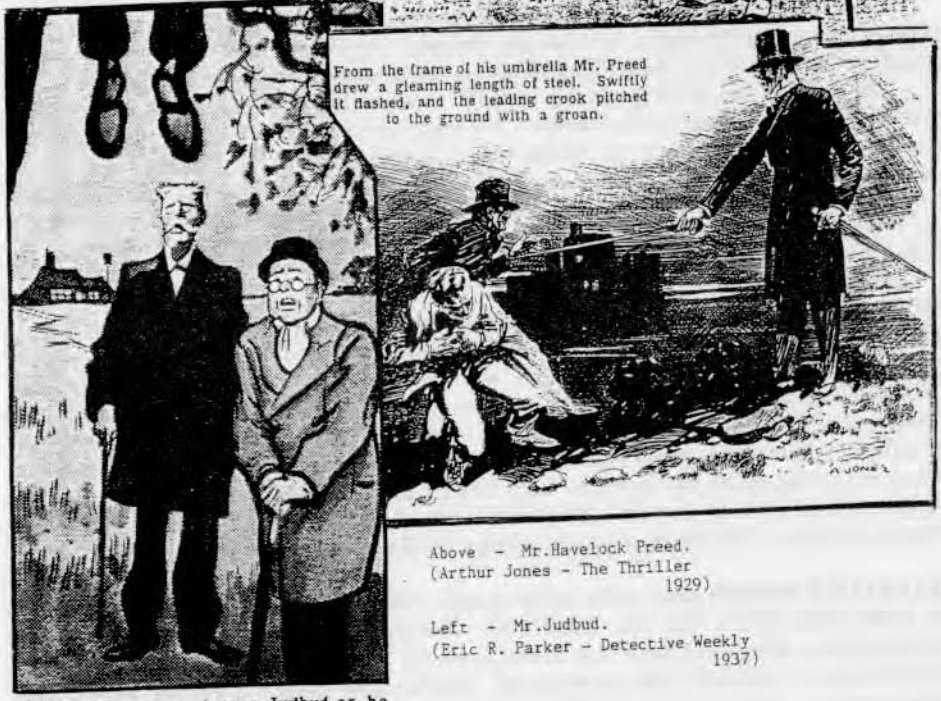
Mr. Holman has recently written with the same nostalgic affection the writer feels, about Edgar Wallace's Mr. J.G. Reeder - we hardly need the cover of a yellow jacketed Hodder & Stoughton, nor even an Arthur Jones illustration from "The Thriller" to envisage that deceptively venerable figure. In C.D. No. 507 (March 1989) my good friend J.E.M. - commenting on an excellent article by John Bridgwater, two months earlier, concerning a certain Havelock Preed - drew attention to similarities between these two characters. This called to mind at least two other detectives of a similar type.

MR. REEDER must be deemed the most important. Somewhat timid, and of late middle-age Reeder had been connected with Scotland Yard, then the Banker's Trust, and latterly the Public Prosecutor's office. Smallish, with "mutton-chop" whiskers, he wears steel rimmed pince-nez, an old-fashioned flat-topped derby-hat, and at all times clutches his furled umbrella, which in fact conceals a knife blade in its handle. He has a "photographic" memory for faces, and prides himself with being able to think with a "criminal mind". When not at his office, he seems to have resided in a modest suburban property in the Brockley Road in South London. Most of the officers at "The Yard" appear to treat him with great respect. His first appearance in Edgar Wallace's stories dates from 1924.

HAVELOCK PREED came on the scene around 1929, and was comprehensively covered by John Bridgwater in the Jan. 1989 C.D. Briefly, he was a middle-aged solicitor, operating from offices in Lincoln Inn Fields, normally attired in a long morning-coat, dark striped trousers, with stiff collar and bow-tie. Outdoors, he sported a top-hat, often a long black overcoat, and he carried a tightly rolled umbrella in his gloved hands - concealing a deadly sword-stick, in use of which Mr. Preed was exceedingly adept. Like J.G.R., Preed possessed a keen analytical mind, and, thanks in part to his profession, an acute insight into criminal activities.

Above - Mr.Dove.
(Harry Lane - Penny Pictorial 1907)

Right - Mr.J.G.Reeder.
(Arthur Jones - The Thriller 1929)



Above - Mr.Havelock Preed.
(Arthur Jones - The Thriller 1929)

Left - Mr.Judbud.
(Eric R. Parker - Detective Weekly 1937)

Sudden horror swept over Judbud as he saw the thing that swayed in the darkness overhead. He knew now the answer to the riddle of the howling dog!

MR. JUDBUD - a creation of Anthony Skene in the mid 1930s - seems to have been of independent means - leastways, no certain occupation is mentioned, nor any Christian name. Again, a little man, of middle-age, he may have been a retired clerk of some sort. He resided at Mrs. Clobb's Boarding House, in the St. Pancras area of London, along with his close friend Superintendent Bragg of Scotland Yard. Through books and newspapers, Judbud studied every sort of criminality and had an enormous knowledge of police procedure and court cases of all descriptions. He and Supt. Bragg solved many cases together, Judbud supplying his acumen and deductive ability, Bragg the practical "know-how" and assistance of Scotland Yard. In one such case Judbud adopted - to the horror of his landlady - a huge Great Dane, Peter, who proved a great help on many occasions. Judbud, also, wore spectacles, sported a bowler hat and carried a rolled-umbrella!

MR. DOVE, like Mr. Judbud, seemed to have no other name. He lives in a neat little house, called Aston Villa (tho' there is no suggestion he was a football fan) in the South London suburb of Surbiton. He is a keen gardener, has a maidservant, Bessie, and a wire-haired terrier. Although getting-on in years, he is a highly placed Scotland Yard official, albeit his exact position is never stated. A smallish man, of unobtrusive mein, he has white hair and side-whiskers, but is otherwise clean-shaven. He wears a pair of slightly tinted pince-nez, and a stiff "wing-collar" with a bow-tie. His general appearance is somewhat Victorian, with a flat-topped Derby hat and rolled up umbrella - sometimes a walking-stick, if the weather is fine. Middle-aged, mild-mannered, timid almost, Mr. Dove was in fact possessed of a razor-sharp mind, and an unlimited knowledge of villains and villainy. Cecil Hayter introduced Mr. Dove in the old "Penny Pictorial" in 1907, although he possibly appeared in other A.P. magazines. Like Mr. Preed, two decades later, he also was a good friend of Sexton Blake.

Having then described these four detectives, much as their authors had described them, we come to the "nub" of this little piece. Others have already remarked on the similarities between Mr. Reeder and Mr. Preed - what then of Judbud and Dove? Are not the likenesses much the same? It is probably not unfair to Messrs Black and Skene to imagine their basing their characters to some extent on J.G. Reeder. He was a fairly original type, and Wallace's books were very successful - moreover, he had died in 1932, well before Judbud came into print.

What, though, of Reeder himself? Cecil Hayter and Edgar Wallace were not only virtual contemporaries, but had similar backgrounds. Each had well-established newspaper experience, both in South Africa and in London. Each was well-travelled and Hayter, albeit not as famous as Edgar Wallace, was a well-known and prolific writer of the day - they surely must have read some of each other's work. With hindsight, Mr. Dove seems almost to be a template for Mr. Reeder. The more so if one takes the artists' interpretations of them, over 20 years apart! Arthur Jones in 1929 is hardly likely to have seen Harry Lane's illustration of 1907. Hayter had died, alas, in 1922, two years before Reeder first appeared. One will never know if Edgar Wallace knew of Mr. Dove, or whether Reeder's resemblance to him is sheer coincidence!

* *

THE THRILL OF THE CHASE

by Donald V. Campbell

Why does the chase figure in so many classic stories?

What is it about the hunted and the hunter that conjures up excitement for the reader or the listener? Is it some kind of masochism? Do we place ourselves in the role of the hunted hero and duck and weave, wriggle and wander, puzzle and peruse with him? Yes it is usually a "him".

Surely we have all been subjected to one of those time-honoured nightmares: running down an endlessly curving corridor with no exit ever in sight; falling down or over into some horrifying abyss; or - and possibly worst of all - suddenly appearing naked in a normal world?

If such dreams are a part of human existence then possibly the writer is latching on to and using our innermost fears and fancies to draw us into the world of the thriller and the chase.

As already noted it is usually the male who is both hunter and hunted. In "Rogue Male" - Geoffrey Household's classic hunter and hunted tale - the hero, Sir Ben, suffers many indignities including torture, drowning (well almost, first in a boggy marsh ground and then in a cattle wallow), being chased through Germany by the Nazis, a nightmarish enclosure in a ship's water tank and then, willingly, in an underground "animal-hide" of his own making. The hide is both claustrophobic and filthy - so filthy that the "Rogue Male" cat will no longer visit Sir Ben.

Richard Hannay, in the archetypical chase story of all time, has the skills of Peter Pienaar to call on as he threads his way across Galloway with rather more human contact than Sir Ben managed. The characters are memorable - the road mender, spectacled, drunk and crotchety but with a heart of gold; the pompous and outrageous Marmaduke; Sir Harry and his terminally boring inconsequential and inept political speech; and, finally, the horrifying figure of the grotesque villain who can "hood his eyes like a hawk".

When Hitchcock commandeered "The Thirty Nine Steps" his chance of finding an actor who could satisfactorily "hood his eyes" was probably negligible so the villain was given (!) a missing finger to parade.

It is Buchan who gives another memorable chase in another Hannay story - "The Island of Sheep" - but reserves the thrills to an ageing city man and his rescue of the young boarding school girl who is whisked up THE GREAT NORTH ROAD in an enormous car chased, the while, by an American "Stutz" filled with villains. The chase ends - again - in Galloway but the story moves on to the mysterious Island of Sheep for its denouement.

John Mair's thriller "Never Come Back", written in the 1940s but re-discovered by Julian Symons a few years ago, has the unusual (for then) anti-hero on the run from an organisation of "almost fascists" who are as about as likely as chocolate fire screens. A good chase nevertheless.

Lord Archer is sometimes reviled both as writer and politician but he has carried on the tradition of the chase in "A Matter of Honour" with a spectacular race across Europe with the hero picking up a lady cellist on the

way. The whole is slick and fluent and is as good as anything that author has produced.

If we are stimulated into enjoyment of the chase by our subconscious fears or desires is this also true of the "locked room" mystery - the unsolveable puzzle which is mirrored in the chase. For the chase is also a puzzle - how can the hero escape the clutches of the villain and deliver the vital clue to Scotland Yard or the Foreign Office or wherever? How can he overcome the disbelief of the world and triumph over the sinister? What further unlikely adventures are in store for him?

Or her, for in Nicholas Blake's "The Smiler with the Knife" it is Georgina Strangeways who escapes the clutches of the organisation and flees across country to save the nation.

For puzzlers and dreamers (and collectors) the chase gives excitement, pleasure and an exceptionally high "tingle-factor". Enjoy!

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DAILY MAIL BOYS' ANNUAL

by George Beal

I was very interested to read the comments by Laurence Price under the heading 'Rediscovered Treasures' in your February issue.

It is gratifying to hear someone refer to an old *Daily Mail Boys' Annual* as a 'rediscovered treasure', since I edited and produced the book back in the 1950s. I was then obliged to adopt a pseudonym – 'John Bellamy' – for the book, since I was also responsible for other, quite different titles, such as the *Daily Mail Year Book*, for which I used yet another pen-name!

The 'Biggles' story was written especially for the Annual by W.E. Johns, and so far as I know, it never appeared anywhere else. Indeed, we ran a series of these in the annuals, all illustrated by Eric Parker. Eric was a friend and neighbour, and we often travelled up to town together on the old steam train from Mill Hill to Farringdon Street. Eric was then employed at Fleetway House, full time. He hated the travel and restriction of being in a day job. I must say I agreed with him, but I was then a wage-slave like so many others, instead of begging my bread as freelance, as I later became.

I knew most of *Annual*'s contributors and artists personally, for it was very much a personal undertaking. I think we did about four or five annuals before I left the *Mail* to join the staff at Fleetway House. I continued to contribute to the annuals afterwards, but I have no record of what I did! Most of my work was under various pseudonyms.

There were other annuals, too. *Teddy Tail* (the artist was then Bill Glenn), and various titles tied to the *Daily Mail* or the *Daily Sketch*. My colleague 'Susan French' (Frances Gartland) edited some, including the *Daily Mail Girls' Annual*. She also took over the boys' Annual after my departure.

I have not seen the Annual to which Mr. Price refers since the days of its production, and it is pleasant to reminisce over it now. It was great fun, and a very rewarding task.

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CHASING AWAY THE HOME FRONT VIEWS

by Mary Cadogan

(As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of D Day I reprint this article as a tribute to some of the entertainers who helped to keep up our spirits during the war. It was originally published during the 1980s in BILL'S AMUSEMENT ALLEY, a magazine edited by Bill Wright which some C.D. readers will remember. Sadly both Arthur Askey and Webster Booth are now, of course, no longer with us.)

For many of us at the time, danger, boredom and austerity seemed to sum up the long years of the People's War. But there was, of course, a different and a stronger mood - a strange mixture of solidarity, exhilaration and bloody minded determination to stand out against Hitler to the very end. Winston Churchill, pugnaciously V-signing in his siren-suits and growling out his galvanising, patriotic speeches symbolised this feeling.

So, too, at another level, did a host of bright and beautiful celebrities who entertained us throughout the war - bringing welcome touches of humour and romance into our restricted lives. From this galaxy of stars, I'd pay a special tribute to Arthur Askey, who has continued to entertain us ever since, and whose 80th birthday has been marked earlier this year by TV, radio and press coverage. The big-hearted, little man mirrored the popular mood in his snook-cocking renderings of songs like "We're Going To Hang Out The Washing On The Siegfried Line" and "Adolf, You've Bitten Off Much More Than You Can Chew". Among the many claims to fame that his long career has brought, Arthur was put on the notorious Nazi black list for dubbing Hitler, 'Old Nasty', and, presumably, for his indefatigable efforts in helping to keep up Britain's national morale.

Laughter, of course, was Arthur's forte, and we would never have survived without humour in those grim and grisly days. Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth, two other favourite wartime entertainers, kept our spirits up with performances of a different kind. As soon as they stepped on to a stage, or sang over the radio the opening bars of their signature tune 'Only A Rose', audiences were transported wholesale into a magical world of music and melody and, above all, of romance. Arthur, Anne and Webster were brought together again on TV in a recent 'Looks Familiar' programme, and it was satisfying to see that Arthur's wit still sparkles, whilst Anne and Webster are still a charming duo. The three of them appeared together in several wartime broadcasts, and in one of these Arthur joined Anne in a send-up duet of 'The Keys of My Heart'. Arthur, of course, is primarily celebrated for his comedy gifts, but he has a good baritone voice, and music has been important to him since childhood, when he used to listen avidly to his father's 'bathroom ballads'.

He soon became a choirboy, and at amateur concerts, entertained wounded soldiers during the Great War. By 1939, he had already become a national institution; he and Richard Murdoch had blazed a new radio trail in 1938 with

'Band Waggon'. This was the first real radio fantasy and the first comedy series. Arthur, as we all know, was billed as the resident comedian, and took this literally by setting his sketches with 'Stinker' Murdoch against the background of a flat they were supposed to occupy at the top of Broadcasting House (one of their 'jobs' was to polish the 'pips' for the time signal).

The disruptions of war prevented 'Band Waggon' from running as long as it would otherwise have surely done, Arthur and Stinker, with Gracie Fields and Maurice Chevalier, went to France to entertain the troops in the early months of the war. Soon afterwards, Richard joined the R.A.F., and Arthur kept us giggling in films, theatre and radio shows as well as in E.N.S.A. and factory concerts.

Anne and Webster reached the pinnacle of their radio popularity during the war; and also they scored one of their greatest stage successes then in a beautiful revival of 'The Vagabond King'. (I went four times to see this!!) Their performances were delightful and not entirely escapist. Anne and Webster were not only a romantic partnership on the stage, but in real life, and they have been married for over forty years. Somehow they managed throughout the war to overcome the atmosphere of austerity, and to embody a glittering elegance. They were a kind of Prince and Princess - Anne's delicate crinoline-style gowns and shining blonde coiffures were dramatically set off by Webster's tall, dark, evening-suited handsomeness. And their voices blend superbly to this day.

I've had the joy of broadcasting with Arthur Askey on a programme about the 40th anniversary of the start of the war and also of interviewing him in his Kensington home. I've also been in touch with Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth since they returned to this country from South Africa, where they had stayed for 20 years or so. Writing to me about 'The Vagabond King', Anne says 'it was a lovely, happy show, and one we both look back on with great pleasure'.

And we can well look back on, and also happily forward to, many great performances of the Royal Couple of Romantic Song, and the King of Comedy.

* *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA - No. 2. Mr. Quelch MAGNET No. 1135
By John Geal

Mr Quelch receives a 'phone call from Snoop's uncle asking to speak to Snoop.

"If there was anything the Remove master disliked more than an interview with a parent, it was being rung up on the telephone by a parent. Parents, of course were necessary evils in the life of a schoolmaster. They were a worry, but a worry that had to be tolerated somehow. Obviously, without parents there would be no pupils; and without pupils a schoolmaster's occupation, like

Othello's, would be gone - so parents had to be borne with as much equanimity as possible.

But Mr. Quelch's considered opinion was that there ought to be a limit. Parents ought to be satisfied with regular interviews and regular reports. They ought not to ring up a form master on the telephone. And even if parents did, uncles ought to draw the line. Parents were enough - if not too much. Uncles were entirely superfluous. Mr. Quelch's leisure hours were scanty. He had little time for parents. He had none at all for avuncular relatives."

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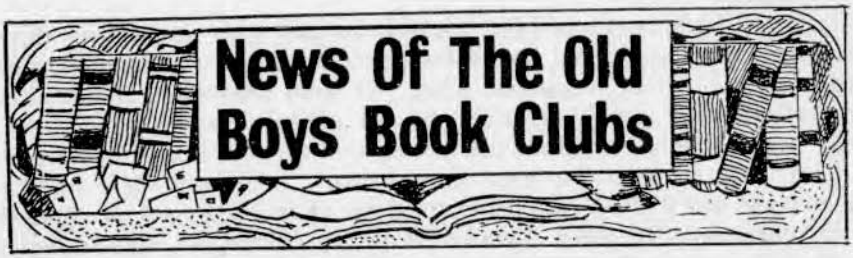

LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

Sixteen members gathered at the home of Bill Bradford in Ealing for the April meeting. Norman Wright showed two pieces of original artwork which related to Peter's talk last month on Matt Marriott and Lucky Lannagan.

Ray Hopkins read from a twopenny *Popular*, "The Freak of St. Freda's" by G.E. Rochester, which introduced Posher P. Posh. Roger set us to work on an eliminator quiz with the letters - B, J, D, S and R.

Bill Bradford spoke about the second series of the Boys' Friend Library and showed some of his collection.

The next meeting on Sunday, 8th May will be at the home of the secretary in Loughton.

SUZANNE HARPER

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A welcome was given to the seventeen present and we were delighted to have with us Mike Billington from Manchester, our guest speaker.

Our informal evening dinner (two weeks earlier) had been very successful, with nine attending.

Our main item for the evening was Mike's excellent presentation "An Introduction to Rupert". All members were keen to hear about the society "The Followers of Rupert". Mike showed us various early children's annuals, a small number of which had Rupert stories. The first newspaper Rupert story appeared on 8th November, 1920 drawn by Mary Tourtel. Alfred Bestall succeeded her, and many Rupert aficionados regard his work as the best. The first Rupert Annual appeared in 1936 and we were shown how the styles have altered. In 1948 "Rupert Adventure Series" came on the scene and 50 of these were published up to 1963. When Alfred Bestall was unable to produce more Rupert drawings

because of ill health, John Harrold came to the rescue. His work is proving to be very popular.

Delicious refreshments were provided by Joan. Catherine Humphrey then reminded us how competitive sport in schools was now to the fore, and read from a Jennings book in which Darbishire had the misfortune of not being able to disentangle the laces of his football boots which had been tied together so they could be carried around the neck.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

We gathered at the Duston, Northampton, home of member Howard Corn for our April meeting.

Paul Wilkins introduced a tongue-in-cheek video which was a celebration of Superman on his 50th Anniversary. The BBC had broadcast this programme in 1988.

Howard, using a great many examples, presented an analysis of the *Swift* comic. Hulton Press designed this late addition to their stable of juvenile publications to appeal to children in the 5 to 7 age-range. Having established *Eagle*, *Girl* and *Robin*, Hulton launched *Swift* in March 1954 with Editor Vanora MacIndoe.

The publication, which lasted for 477 issues, is best remembered for its long-running character, Nicky Nobody (an orphan befriended by a wealthy family), an advertising strip for Ladybird Clothes, a juvenile version of 'Dan Dare' and, mostly in the sixties, a host of quite unsuitable features for the intended age-range.

ADRIAN PERKINS

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THE REDFERNS WHO CAME BEFORE

by Ray Hopkins

The surname in the title will inevitably cause the reader to think that this article concerns Richard Redfern of the St. Jim's Fourth Form and Barbara, Fourth Form Captain at Cliff House; however, those who came before actually pre-date these popular characters by several years. They are, in fact, Sidney and Arthur Redfern of St. Dorothy's.

Sidney is the 'Redfern Minor', the title character of Charles Hamilton's serial in THE BOYS' REALM nos. 370 to 391, July to November 1909. Ten years later, it was reprinted in BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY 479, October 1919.

Basically, it is the story of a weak, easily led Sixth Former (Arthur) and his younger brother who is a lad of real grit, determination and unswerving loyalty. It is his arrival at St. Dorothy's with which the opening chapter deals, detailing the acute disappointment he feels at his brother's not having taken the trouble to meet him at the station. It is also the first clue to the weak character of the older brother, generally admired by the rest of the school because he excels at sports.

The author goes to some pains not to wear out the reader with retailing all the hectic rivalries of the Fourth Form at St. Dorothy's. After a particularly verbose session between Classicals and Mods - the soundtrack would be deafening if this were a film - this is followed by a scene with only two characters, often speaking in subdued tones: Redfern Major and his friend Ransome, the tempted and the tempter, or the two brothers, the younger trying not to lose entirely his wavering faith in his brother; the older feeling a heavy collar has been flung around his neck and is weighing him down because his true nature must not be revealed.

Arthur Redfern cannot be bothered with the arrival of his younger brother because he is deeply worried by the badgering of a local bookie to whom he owes ten pounds lost on a

horse race (another of those 'certs to win' in school stories, which never do!). Ransome also owes ten pounds to the same man. The bookie threatens to come up to the school. Ransome advises the bookie to bet on the next big St. Dorothy's cricket match against the Lexham First Eleven, a very strong side, in which Arthur will be playing. He will play the game of his life, Arthur tells Ransome, but he can't be certain his efforts will result in a win for St. Dorothy's. Ransome says he can get a good price on a bet if it is laid on Lexham. "The result of a race is often certain before the race is run," he says and goes on to say that there is no way they can be sure St. Dorothy's will win, but they can make sure that it will lose. Redfern suddenly realises that his friend is proposing that he plays in such a way that this important First Eleven match will be lost. At first he refuses with angry vehemence. Ransome tells him it would be madness for them both to be expelled for the sake of a game.

On the day of the Lexham match Redfern does rather well - 80 runs out of a total of 170 - and Ransome realises that he will have to urge Arthur to play less well as the game progresses. He tells him that the bookie is at the match and will lose a hundred pounds or more if St. Dorothy's wins. Cunliffe, the bookie, has told Ransome that he will expose Redfern before the crowd regarding his racing debt and make his report to the Headmaster. Expulsion will be bound to follow. Redfern gets the Lexham skipper out for no runs with his third ball. Ransome's warnings however are beginning to have an effect on Arthur's playing. "His bowling, from the most dangerous on the field, became the most harmless."

The agitated conversation during the game between Redfern and Ransome is overheard by a junior who passes its import on to the younger Redfern. Sidney, unaccustomed to speaking to his brother, ever his boyhood hero, in any but a devoted way, tells him he knows why he is losing the match and he mustn't let "that cad Ransome" influence him like this. Arthur, enraged by the fact that his actions are being commented on by the lower school, strikes his brother across the mouth when he persists in trying to stop him from losing the match. The St. Dorothy's captain, Lunsford, who has observed the cowardly action with incredulity, accedes to Redfern's request to remove him from the bowling. Lexham succeeds in winning the match for eight wickets: "The Lexham match had been lost and Arthur had lost it."

Ransome tells Arthur he had put money on the match and he has twenty pounds in winnings to divide, so they can both pay off their debts to Cunliffe. At first Arthur refuses to touch the money but Ransome reminds him that he sold the match to avoid ruin so he will be foolish if he is ruined all the same. Redfern agrees to accompany Ransome to Cunliffe's place and pay him the ten pounds he owes him. Also, as Cunliffe will probably be a bit drunk it would do no harm to have a little flutter with the cards and clear him out of some of his winnings. Incredibly, Arthur is led into temptation once again by his depraved friend. Sidney Redfern sees them leave and guesses where they are going.

That night, it is Redfern Major's job, as duty prefect, to see that the Fourth Formers get to bed at 9.30 and, as he doesn't turn up to usher them to their beds, the Mods and Classicals forget about bedtime and indulge in a noisy football match in the Fourth Form room. Dr. Cranston, the Head himself, interrupts their game and sends them to bed, enquiring who is the duty prefect. Sidney, knowing that this will mean the school will be searched for his brother, breaks bounds and makes his way to Cunliffe's place. Just before he leaves the school he overhears the Head, unable to find Redfern Major, telling Lunsford to wait up until eleven. If the boy hasn't returned by then, the Head will await Redfern Major himself. Sidney reaches Cunliffe's pub, the Green Man, at twenty to eleven and urges his brother to return to the school at once. Knowing he can never make it on foot by eleven o'clock, Arthur borrows a bicycle from one of Cunliffe's customers and leaves his brother and Ransome to make their way back on foot. Sidney hastens after his brother and leaves

Ransome to follow more slowly. Back at the school, Sidney discovers the window through which he departed locked and, when he taps on it, it is opened by his Form Master who had seen him on the road in the lights of the trap he was driving. The Fourth Form Master takes Redfern Minor to the Head. Dr. Cranston, getting out of the junior that he had been to the Green Man, says that unless he can explain why, he will be expelled. Redfern Minor remains silent and is placed in solitary confinement. Arthur visits the punishment room but they are interrupted by the Head who has discovered the key to be missing. Later, Redfern Major tells the Head that he believes his brother may be shielding another boy and Dr. Lunsford, feeling this to be the only explanation (he has a very high regard for Redfern Minor) changes the threat of expulsion to a flogging. This isn't the end, however, and before the final curtain Redfern Minor saves his brother who is again in debt to Cunliffe to the tune of twenty pounds.

There is an interesting addendum to this story. Charles Hamilton wrote what sounds like a sequel following hot on the heels of the earlier story. 'Arthur Redfern's Vow' appeared in THE BOYS' REALM nos. 391-404, Nov 1909 to Feb. 1910, reprinted in BL 494, Feb. 1920. I know none of the events in this second tale but the title possibly is a clue that the sequel to 'Redfern Minor' may be a story of reformation and reconciliation between the brothers Redfern.

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FORUM

For the exchange of Readers' view

From DENNIS BIRD:

I was glad to get the March "C.D." the other day. I was particularly interested in Margery Woods' excellent article on Reginald Kirkham. She covered aspects of his work which were entirely new to me. For instance, I had not realised he was "first reserve" as Hilda Richards, as long ago as 1919. I did know his lighter, more humorous stories, written as "Hilary Marlow" and "Joan Vincent". I particularly remember the Marlow story "Wyn had Such a Winning Way" (Schoolgirls' Own Library No. 702, October 1939); at the time I thought the dialogue hilarious. ("He knows, you know!" "Who knows?" "*She* knows!" "It's not a she-nose!")

But what surprised me most about the Kirkham article was that Margery made no mention of what for me will always be Kirkham's greatest achievement: his re-creation of the girl detective Valerie Drew. She was a heroine of my childhood, created originally by John William Bobin in 1933. Bobin died two years later. From 1937 her adventures were recounted by "Isabel Norton" (that is, Reginald Kirkham), first in the "Schoolgirls' Weekly" and then (1939-40) in "The Schoolgirl".

Between 1935 and 1937 there were also 116 Valerie Drew stories by an anonymous author. I firmly believe that this was also R.S. Kirkham. My argument runs thus: In 1937 "Isabel Norton" (whom we know was Kirkham) wrote some Drew stories featuring the French jewel thief Marcelle Dauphine. Marcelles also appears in three of the anonymous stories: ergo, the nameless

writer was also Kirkham! Anyway, those later Valerie stories were some of the best, and she was one of the most charming characters in all schoolgirl fiction. Nor must we forget her engaging canine assistant, the redoubtable Alsatian Flash - and Kirkham's humour often surfaced here, in his description of that intelligent dog's thoughts.

From LAURENCE PRICE:

I enjoy the variety offered in CD 566, including the controversial article from John Springhall about horror comics.

I personally think in the 'anything goes' climate of the nineties there is a need once more for such an act as the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Bill, with the unwholesome trash that is freely available to young people,.everything from "Viz" to teenage horror books. Oh, for the return of Eagle and adults who cared about the protection of children, not the 'politically correct' liberality of 1994. I wonder if anyone else things the same?

From J.E.M.:

It may provide wry amusement for the cynics - perhaps even for John Springhall himself - that some of the horror comics placed in The House of Commons Library for MPs to ponder at that time actually disappeared! It might be said that a taste for the decadent is not, alas, confined to our own day!! (I am not, by the way, an unreconstructed puritan!)

From Edward Rake:

I have just finished reading Frank Richards' 'Ragged Dick' series in the Magnet and as usual after finishing a Frank Richards' story I am very much aware of the *jigsaw nature* of his work! Now I hasten to assure you that I mean this in no derogatory sense. I enjoyed the story of 'Ragged Dick' and, thinking it over, I realised once again the inevitability of how all the characters and incidents in a Frank Richard's story *click into place like the correct pieces in the pattern of a jigsaw*. They all fit together to make ultimately a satisfying whole. I am, of course, aware that popular stories are based upon this cause and effect technique. But somehow when I read a Frank Richards' story I am very much aware of the 'machinery' working in the background, and yet this does not detract in any way from my interest in the story. On the contrary, it fills me with admiration of the skilfulness and craftsmanship of the writer.

I wonder if other readers of the CD have felt this way about Frank Richards' work and if they too, have experienced the superb jigsaw effect of his delightful stories?

Often when I read about the talks given by members at the meetings of the Old Boys Book Clubs I wish it was possible to write up and print them in our CD mag. But of course there would be difficulties. Some of the talks sound so fascinating.

From DES O'LEARY:

The *Independent* recently had an article on comics and storypaper prices (nice illustration of a 1946 Hotspur!). It had a priceless quote from Danny Posner of the Vintage Magazine Co: "In ten years' time, no one will want to know about Billy Bunter. Those who bought him will all have snuffed it." Want to bet?

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE FORTUNES OF CASANOVA, AND OTHER STORIES, by Rafael Sabatini; Selected and Introduced by Jack Adrian; Foreword by George Macdonald Fraser. (Oxford University Press, 1994, £15.95.)
REVIEWED BY BRIAN DOYLE

Rafael Sabatini was once a name to conjure with; the author of over 40 books and 6 plays, the acknowledged Master of the colourful, swashbuckling, action-packed, romantic historical yarn, and one of the most popular, best-selling writers of the '20s, '30s and '40s. Several of his best-sellers were made into highly-successful, blockbusting motion pictures, including 'Scaramouche", "Captain Blood", "The Sea Hawk" and "The Black Swan". A critic once dubbed him 'The Prince of Storytellers' and the description stuck, appearing in numerous advertisements and on the dust-jackets of his books.

But, after his death in 1950, Sabatini's glittering star faded and his books gradually went out of fashion and out of print. People seemed to have grown tired of reading about swashbucklers and pirates, adventurers and rogues, highwaymen and swordsmen, vagabonds and romancers. For over 30 years, his heroes' swords and his villains' pistols and cut-throat knives had excited and captivated millions of readers throughout the world; now the blades were rusting and the guns silent as other modern best-sellers took over his throne, writers such as Nicholas Monsarrat, Alistair MacLean and Ian Fleming.

In the most recent edition of the standard "Oxford Companion to English Literature" (1985), the name of Rafael Sabatini does not even appear, although other popular authors roughly in his genre and period do - Weyman, Farnol, Orczy, Wren, Hope, Buchan are all there. Why not Sabatini? (This somewhat inconsistent publication, incidentally, includes Charles Hamilton, but excludes Richmal Crompton!)

Sabatini's novels have been out of print since the mid-1960s, when Pan books admirably re-issued several of his most famous best-sellers in handsome paperbacks.

Now, Jack Adrian (well-known in our field) has stepped splendidly into the breach, answered the SOS ('Save Our Sabatini') and edited (or 'selected and introduced' as the title-page has it) "The fortunes of Casanova, and Other Stories", which contains 20 tales, only 3 of which have appeared in book-form before; all originally appeared in popular British magazines between 1907-37. There are 11 stories under the appropriate heading "Rogues' Gallery" and 9 in the Casanova series, plus an illuminating critical and biographical Introduction by Adrian. There is also an enthusiastic Foreword by George MacDonald Fraser, best-selling author of the 'Flashman' series of historical adventure novels.

Sabatini's stories were entirely in the historical genre (he wrote no modern tales, as far as I know) and spanned the French Revolution, the Reigns of James I and II, Elizabeth I, Charles II, the Renaissance, the 30 Years War, and many other periods, and were set in as

many different countries, though his favourites were probably Italy, France and England (plus, of course, the High Seas!).

He was fond of writing about rogues and scallywags, swindlers and scoundrels, pirates and duellists, spies and secret agents, thieves and con-men, tricksters and sword-fighters; and many of them had charm and wit, audacity and elegance, a way with them - and, of course, a way with a pretty woman... For he wrote of romance in both senses of the word. It was said that he had as many women readers among his admirers as he had men.

Rafael Sabatini (known to his friends as 'Raffles') was born in 1875, in Italy, of an Italian father and a Lancashire-born mother, both of whom became popular operatic singers, who later ran their own voice-training school in Portugal, where Sabatini Snr. at one time taught the young 'Count' John McCormack, the famous Irish tenor. They toured the theatres of the world, too, and Sabatini Snr. was subsequently knighted by the King of Portugal (we already seem to be in a Sabatini novel, but *this* was all fact!).

Young Rafael grew up mainly in Liverpool, where at 17 he worked for a firm of coffee importers, spoke 6 languages and began to write for local newspapers in the 1890s, and then for such magazines as "Harmsworth's", in which his first story appeared in 1899 - an historical tale, of course... His first novel came along in 1902 but he later disowned it, describing it as 'very bad'. In 1904 came his first 'official' novel, "The Tavern Knight", involving Charles II, Oliver Cromwell and the Battle of Worcester.

Then he published a book a year for 15 years, all serialised in magazines before book-publication. His novels during this early period included "Bardelys the Magnificent" (1906), "Love-at-Arms" (1907), "St. Martin's Summer" (1909), "The Sea Hawk" (1915), and two biographies of men who have been described as 'among the wickedest and cruellest men of all time' - Cesare Borgia (1912) and Torquemada (and the Spanish Inquisition) (1913). Sabatini was also said to have worked for British Intelligence during World War One, but in what capacity is vague.

In 1921 came the book that changed his life and turned him almost overnight into one of the leading international best-selling and popular authors of his generation: "Scaramouche". It created sales records in Britain, America and Europe; it sold 863,000 copies in one year alone (123) in the United States, and over 1½ million over the next years, again in America (and all hardbacks). These were huge figures in those days. Over 50 editions were published in the next 40 years. Several of his earlier books were reprinted on the heels of this success, and "The Sea Hawk" was 9th in the American best-sellers list for 1923. Similar figures might be quoted endlessly for his subsequent novels.

The opening sentence of "Scaramouche" was oft-quoted (and is still remembered today by some): "He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." 'Scaramouche' was the nickname of Andrew Moreau, a French lawyer during the French Revolution, who turns intriguer and brilliant swordsman to discover his true identity, reveal his enemies and to avenge the murder of his best friend. 'Scaramouche' arises when he joins a band of travelling actors and assumes the role of the Clown, 'Scaramouche', with great panache and success; as Sir Percy Blakeney became 'The Scarlet Pimpernel' so Moreau became 'Scaramouche'.

Many more successful novels followed: "Captain Blood" (1922) (and two successors: "The Chronicles of Captain Blood" (1931) and "The Fortunes of Captain Blood (1936)); "Fortune's Fool" (1923); "Bellarion" (1926); "Scaramouche the Kingmaker" (1931), "The Black Swan" (1932); "The Sword of Islam" (1938), "Columbas" (1942); and his last book "The Gamester" (1949). Sabatini died at 75, in Switzerland, in 1950, still writing...

As Jack Adrian says: "Sabatini revolutionised - even revitalized - historical fiction with his guileful and swashbuckling rogue-heroes." Indeed, his rogue-heroes were often

misunderstood and wrongly-accused men of good name, who became 'villains' to escape from their invidious position and to prove their innocence - or to prove *something*... For instance, Peter Blood was an Irish doctor who turned pirate, Sir Oliver Tressilian ('The Sea Hawk') was a titled Cornish landowner who turned pirate and Barbary Corsair, while 'Scaramouche' did the same kind of thing.

Sabatini was said to research his historical facts and backgrounds meticulously and painstakingly, striving to get everything just right. But the London "Times" Obituary Notice on him in 1950 said: "...if the result was not history, it was first-class storytelling."

As Jack Adrian says, Sabatini never deliberately aimed his work at a mass audience, although ironically he achieved spectacular popular success. The reading public loved him, but the critics, as is so often the case with popular best-selling authors, virtually ignored or dismissed both him and his work. It was probably these blinkered people that Sabatini had in mind when he wrote in 1934: "...those exalted individuals to whom plot in a story is the sign of auctorial puerility, who deprecate invention in fiction, look askance on the romantic, and for whom no piece of writing can be distinguished if it has the temerity to be dramatic..." That quote does not find its way into Jack Adrian's Introduction, but it is, I think, apposite.

Adrian has made an excellent choice of stories for this welcome new book, but I feel it would have been useful for him to have included a list of Sabatini's books, with dates of publication, at the end. He does not mention Sabatini's work as a dramatist either, though he wrote, or co-wrote, six stage plays, including a theatre version of "Scaramouche".

I'm afraid too, that I personally cannot enjoy Sabatini's prose style, which is verbose and somewhat hard-going to the modern reader. He tends to use long words (and more of them!) when shorter ones would suffice. His characters 'perceive' instead of seeing; a loved one is 'the lady to whose favour he aspired'; I want to talk becomes 'the necessity of discussing'; and how about 'You afford me some hope that we may understand each other without the necessity being thrust upon me of proceeding to harsher measures' (you can work that one out yourself!). 'His departure was arrested' just means that 'he stopped'; and 'you precipitated the inevitable' is just Sabatini-ese for 'it had to happen'. His characters are forever tending to 'sneer', or 'scowl' or 'snarl'. 'Tis , 'T'were', 'ye're' and similar period words abound, as do such phrases as 'Odsbud!' and 'This a scurvy trick!'. I didn't actually spot a 'Gadzooks!', but had the feeling that it was hovering in the wings - as "t'were"! But I suppose you either like this sort of writing or you don't...

All in all, though, it's maybe time for a popular revival of Rafael Sabatini - let's hope that this enjoyable new book will lead to it. Or, as Sabatini might have put it: 'It is to be anticipated that the new volume of words will precipitate the inevitable revival of that master weaver of words historical and descriptive, Mr. Rafael Sabatini, Esquire, whom God protect and save...'

THE REMINISCENCES OF THE HON. GALAHAD THREEPWOOD - Edited by N.T.P. Murphy (Porpoise books, 1993). REVIEWED BY MARK TAHA

Fellow-Wodehousians, our dream has come true. To be more specific - readers of his "Summer Lightning" and "Heavy Weather" will remember Gally Threepwood's writing his memoirs - which he agreed not to publish and which were eventually eaten by the Empress of Blandings. For over sixty years Wodehousians have dreamed of reading them - now, we can.

It seems that Gally rewrote them as a kind of "insurance" for young Sue Brown (his nephew Ronnie Fish's wife and his ex-sweetheart Dolly Henderson's daughter) against his sister Julia - "a tough nut". He lodged the manuscript with his lawyers - "the one thing she can't stand is to have people laughing at her." Now, the elderly Mrs. Fish has decided to publish them.

Colonel Murphy brilliantly mixes fact and fiction. Wodehouse mentioned that Gally was a Pelican, read the Pink 'Un, dined at Romano's. They really existed, and, for anyone fancying a drink and their chances, he offers a bottle of wine to any reader who can fully separate fact from fiction. The offer closes on July 1, 1994 - and if you can manage it, you're a better man than I am, Gunga Din. I suspect that the most improbable stories are the true ones.

I must also issue a warning. Do not, unless you're as uninhibited about convention as Gally, read this book in public. Bursting out laughing on public transport does get one funny looks. The Colonel includes a bibliography at the end for further reading, corroboration and, I've no doubt, entertainment.

To fellow-Wodehousians, I whet your appetites by saying yes, we do get the story of Tubby Parsloe and the prawns. We also find out, to name but two, what Lord Ickenham and his nephew Pongo got up to that day at the greyhound track and what Bertie Wooster's Uncle Willoughby and Lord Emsworth got up to at the Empire, Leicester Square in 1887. And guess who helped persuade a Mr. Gordon Selfridge to open a store in London? It also transpires that Gally knew Bertie's Aunt Dahlia: one of the great man's few mistakes, in my view, was never getting them together. Oh - Gally mentions, more than once, meeting a young chap with clerical relatives who "wanted to leave his bank in the City and become a writer".

To fellow-Hamiltonians, a thought. I've often thought of Bertie Wooster as a grown-up Gussy; could one call Gally a grown-up Cardew or Hilton?

I recommend this book with no reservations whatsoever; Colonel Murphy could probably write Wodehouse pastiches, in the same way as many writers have written new Sherlock Holmes stories. I'll close by regretting that no one ever had the sense, during the sixties or seventies, to make a Blandings TV series starring David Niven as Gally!

* *

FACT OR FICTION?

by Ted Baldock

The Greyfriars legend is neither fact nor wholly fiction. This is a theory which may fairly safely be accepted. Upon this basis it becomes transformed into a modern day quest for something in which we are determined to believe. Byron has said "We had a dream, which was not all a dream". Greyfriars; the deeper we delve into this legend the clearer becomes the reality. From our early days when we were being introduced into the world of the 'Magnet' - and many other delightful worlds - we had reached that stage in our development of accepting at face value that which was presented to us. Thus here was the on-going story of a school, and the adventures of a set of fellows attending it. Greyfriars was for us a real and tangible place. It existed in a real world. Was it not situated near the coast, somewhere in Kent?

We become acquainted with the topography of the area. We were familiar with the names of the villages and towns near the school; Courtfield, Friardale,

Wapshot, and Hawkscliff, to name but four. That we are unable to identify these villages and towns on any map, not even the most meticulously detailed Ordnance Surveys, merely proves that the names of the originals have been slightly disguised, so lending a degree of romance to the legend. This is far from being an uncommon phenomenon in the world of fact/fiction. More specifically we know that Canterbury lies within a radius of twenty-five miles or so, and that the smokey metropolis may be reached well within two hours by the excellent Southern Railway - the terms 'Inter City' and 'British Rail' being as yet undreamt of.

Harry Wharton and Co, together with the entire gallery of Greyfriars characters, are frozen in a time vacuum, looking neither backwards nor to the future. They exist and have their being in the (seen with hindsight) Arcadian world in which much was happening in a quiet, scholastic atmosphere far removed from the harsh and mercenary world beyond the school's gates.

A great empire was sadly in process of disintegration, although there was yet a glorious sunset blazing over those areas marked in red upon the surface of the globe. Being a legend Greyfriars did not concern itself with the break-up of Empire. 'Men' were being prepared and intellectually equipped to go forth to the ends of the earth and sometimes to bring a semblance of law and civilisation to dark places. Such is the stuff of legends.

Upon countless occasions has Billy Bunter been threatened, for his sins, with that direst of all fates, a stool in his father's office 'somewhere in the city'. This, translated into real terms, meant *work*. Yet this fearful circumstance never comes to pass. How could it, without bringing down the entire fabric of a carefully constructed edifice? For the continuance of a legend, this would be disastrous. George Wingate, together with other worthies of the sixth form, have been in their last term at Greyfriars for untold years, and will remain so. To lift the veil and allow them to move forward into the great world beyond, and become lost to us would be akin to removing Sir Lancelot or Guinevere in their heydey from the Arthurian legend. It would be calamitous. They must remain - *semper idem* - for the retention and continuance of 'our' world, for is not Greyfriars as much a reality to us as is Avalon to the legend of King Arthur?

Once we start to have reservations concerning the Greyfriars legend we shall begin to grow old, and life will become several degrees less bright. With which fearful thought in mind it behoves us to 'play up' and see to it that the reality continues to flourish, and hopefully, to expand!

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From DON WITHERS:

I have sets of cards given away with *Champion* and *Triumph* in the mid twenties of 'The Great War' and also 'Speedway Stars'. Also in my collection is a photo of a boxer given away in 1923 by the *Rocket*. Has anyone heard of this publication?

How did I become a subscriber to C.D.? Both Roy Parsons and I worked in the same industry and, when he wrote an article in our monthly magazine about the demise of the *Magnet*, I replied. When I retired he supplied me with details of C.D. and I became hooked. He also kindly supplies me with the old *Nelson Lees* and I am re-reading the stories which I read in my youth. I used for years to walk two miles every Sunday to collect *Nelson Lee* from my cousin. The C.D. has mentioned Dixon Hawke, wasn't Dixon Brett also a fictional detective? Does anyone remember him and the publication which featured him? C.D. also mentioned recently Percy Westerman who lived near here, I believe in a house-boat, but what about Herbert Strang, one of my favourites in those days? He was quite futuristic with his 'Thousand Miles an Hour', also about his boat cum car which was equally at home on water as on land. One publication which came out first in the mid twenties had a pink cover, was about the size of the Nelson Lee and featured a story about a Chinese floating island which wedged in the mouth of Poole Harbour from whence they launched an invasion. Anyone out there who remembers?

(Editor's Note: I'm sure one of our readers will wish to explain the 'Herbert Strang' background. Could the pink-covered paper be *Boys' Magazine*?)

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