

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL 48.

No 576.

DECEMBER

1994

Funny

WONDER





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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON

It is always a very special pleasure to prepare our December issue and, as ever, it carries my warmest Christmas greetings to all readers and contributors.

This is, of course, the season for memories. Appropriately you will see in this issue that my Christmas Book Choice reflects this mood of past times. 1994 has in fact produced a bumper crop of nostalgic publications and, as well as books, some fine videos of films from long ago have recently become available. These include one for which in a sense I have been waiting for 46 years! This is Walt Disney's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS. I was absolutely enchanted by it - and its 'spin-offs' - when it was first shown here towards the end of the 1930s and, over subsequent decades I've seen it again with enthusiasm whenever it has been re-released in the cinema. As a schoolgirl in the 1930s, to own a copy of SNOW WHITE and be able to view it at will would have seemed no more than an ecstatic dream. But that dream has now been fulfilled - and happily this movie's original magic still remains.

OUR ANNUAL

From the number of orders I have received for this year's C.D. Annual I gather that the articles I have so far 'trailed' have struck the right note with readers. I now list some further goodies from its contents.

Norman Wright discusses 'Post War Prosperity and the "Eagle" Influence', Bob Whiter contributes another of his Hamiltonian picture-puzzles, Alan Pratt describes 'The Aldine Buffalo Bill Adventures', Donald Campbell recalls the Daily Express Annuals, Bill Bradford writes about The Detective Weekly, Peter Mahony remembers the Arkubs, while Ian Bennett and Ronald Hibbert have added a postscript to their last year's Captain Justice article.

Something for everyone, as I am sure you will agree. For most of us the C.D. Annual has become an essential part of Christmas reading. Also of course we all have favourite stories which we regularly savour during this festive season.

I like to read at least one MAGNET series, preferably with a Wharton Lodge setting, and one from THE SCHOOLGIRL featuring the Cliff House girls. I generally dip again in Charles Dickens' THE CHRISTMAS CAROL and try to find time to take in one or two of "Just William's" seasonable escapades. I also enjoy looking through Christmas numbers of old magazines, the current Winter edition of THIS ENGLAND and the Christmas book which Tommy Keen and I wrote for the Museum Press some years ago, FROM WHARTON LODGE TO LINTON HALL. This, of course, features Yuletide stories and snippets of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Cliff House and Morcove - and in this December C.D. I am reprinting one of its Morcove Christmas features. As ever, Leonard Shields' pictures are a delight.

I send special thanks at this time to Mandy, Debbie and all the most helpful staff at our printers who do so much to keep the C.D. flag flying high throughout the years. I also pay tribute to all the wonderful work of Eric Fayne, our past Editor, who still provides us with support and encouragement. Absent friends and founders of our Clubs and of the C.D. are also recalled with warmth and gratitude.



I send to you, dear readers, the age old but ever new greeting - A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PEACEFUL, PROSPEROUS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Mary Cadogan



Illustration by Arthur Rackham



ALWAYS BY THE DOZEN

A Curious Trait of Charles Hamilton Examined

by Una Hamilton Wright

Recently I have been delving into the history of my uncle's family. Despite having a family Bible dated 1809, with 'Griffith Jones' inscribed in it and a male chauvinist porcine family tree (which entirely omitted mention of females(!)) in my grandfather's handwriting, I have found Hamiltons thin on the ground and difficult to pinpoint. However, on the other side of the family, that of Charles Hamilton's mother, Marian Trinder, there is a very different story. I had always felt that the Trinders had influenced the young Hamilton children more than the Hamiltons themselves and it was very interesting to find out a probable reason.

The Trinders went forth and multiplied. They started from a village outside Oxford - I have traced them back to 1635 - and from the 1770s onwards they had generation after generation of large families - nine children then ten and ten again and finally eight, of which Charles was the sixth child. These Trinders settled in Ealing, then a village west of London, and by the time Charles was born his mother's generation numbered only eight - his Uncle Steven, the eldest, and seven sisters, of whom his mother was the third. Uncle Steven remained a bachelor, saying he hadn't time to marry as he had to look after his seven sisters. Yet all his sisters married, some of them twice. I feel this tells us something about Uncle Steve, and I am sure he was the male role-model for his nephew Charles. Charles wanted to take on family responsibilities, but not of the matrimonial sort. Steven Trinder

had the reputation of being very good and kind and always ready to help a sister or a niece or nephew who needed assistance. He found jobs for young nephews and houses for his widowed sister - Charles' mother.

Uncle Steve, as he was known, was a successful local businessman. Four years before Charles' birth a London Trades' Directory lists him as having no fewer than six businesses - a furniture warehouse, an ironmongers, a house agents' business, an agent for Prudential Life Insurance, a Printers and the Publisher of the Ealing 'Indicator' and a Bill-posting business. Earlier he had had a booksellers and stationers' business in the High Street which he ran with his partner, John Hamilton, Charles' father. He later turned his attention to advertising which became his main concern and his house agents' developed into property development in the rapidly expanding village of Ealing, thus he could always find a house for sister Marian when the needs of her family changed. He also could accommodate nephews with temporary jobs when they left school and were deciding what to do. Charles and his immediate elder brother, Dick, gained their first experience in journalism on the family paper and the interest took a lifelong hold of Charles. His eldest brother Alex helped on the sign-writing side of the advertising concern, and was started in his own separate business by his uncle in which he could offer employment to Charles, and Douglas, the youngest brother.

Charles was glad to help Alex as he was free in the evenings to write stories, but his one ambition was to be able to afford to break free of Alex and devote his days to writing instead of the evenings.

Charles was impressed by and grateful for his uncle's generosity and he longed to be in a similar position himself, able to give way to generous impulses and help people. But he did not want to enter the business world. He appeared to hate and despise it, as is borne out often in his stories. Nevertheless he had inherited the impulse to do things in a big way and to have a multiplicity of interests all striving for his attention. He mirrored his uncle's outlook in declaring he had not the time to marry. Actually he never felt sure of being able to support a woman continuously at the level she was used to as he did not regard writing as a financially secure profession.

When I discovered the repeated large families in the Trinders I was puzzled that the last male Trinder had not married and that the yield of cousins in his generation was poor at only seventeen when eight of them belonged to my grandmother. Again Charles' choice of the single life is not what I would have expected after the family achievements of his forebears. Because there were so many Trinder aunts living near it was easy to understand why the Trinder influence had been so strong. They were practical, cheerful, sociable people, much in demand at parties. Their looks ran to a type, with pink and white skins and sparkling blue eyes. Charles was always a loner and became a recluse, yet given the right audience - his intimate family - he was as sociable and sparkling as the others and a good deal more witty. But on the surface he did not appear to be a typical Trinder.

When as a child I was getting to know him, certain traits of his character stood out. He always appeared to be surrounded by plenty. Whatever he had, there was more than one of it. Nothing was too much trouble: he had no built-in resistance to answering a letter straight away, to going to the telephone and ordering something that appeared necessary, even having to make long and detailed enquiries by phone - he soon gave up going in person to the shops.

When I first remember him I noticed that he had several homes: a little house in Hampstead Garden Suburb, a cottage near Aylesbury, Clyde Cottage in Hawkinge and a cottage called 'Messina' one and a half miles from Hawkinge. Soon there followed Rose Lawn at Kingsgate, and Appletrees was built in the grounds of Messina, which fell or was pulled down. Meanwhile, he possessed on the Continent a cottage at Wimereux, near Boulogne, called 'Les Trois Courlis' and a house at Menton. When the two latter were sold

I can remember their furniture arriving at Kingsgate. Even though not much more than a toddler, I was impressed. He progressed to different properties, like Queen Elizabeth the First, as a way of taking a holiday. After World War I he had grown too shy to have the courage to stay in a hotel.

Possessions also appeared in spate - he had a typewriter in each of his homes and one at my parents' house in Hampstead. Fountain pens seemed to have been bought by the dozen. He was always trying new ones. He liked the idea of a broad nib and so mother and I had to have one each, even though they were not to our taste. He had a bicycle at Hawkinge and one at Kingsgate. When he lived on the Continent, he had one sent over there. In his houses, reading-lamps and bookshelves peopled every room. His clothes came in large consignments from a firm in Bond Street, and my mother commented that he appeared to be getting ready for a siege. He very kindly had an additional garden made at Kingsgate so that he could build me a pond with an island, and *four* boats appeared on the water, to the delight of just one little niece.

Charles was very successful in catering for the entertainment of that one little niece: dolls appeared in spate - at least twelve stuffed models with human hair, exquisitely dressed and made by Chad Valley. Woolly animals and teddy bears galore appeared from the local Bobby's store. He was on very good terms with the nice young lady who headed the toy department! He believed girls should also enjoy playing with boys' toys, and dinky toys and model aeroplanes appeared and not one fort with soldiers but two forts arrived, so that we could have 'a proper war!'. Beach toys, dolls house toys and boxes of games - Uncle enjoyed ordering them on my behalf, and if another child was staying with me, she had the same as I did. To distribute largesse was so obviously his great happiness. To my mother's great concern, a dozen boxes of sweets arrived, and extra little friends also arrived as though drawn by a magnet. Not for nothing did my friends ask me if my uncle would be at our Christmas party. Invariably he was.

Mother or I had only to express a liking for a certain type of biscuit or cake and it would appear in triplicate, so much so that one became guarded about what one liked. My uncle had lived with us until I was about seven, then he settled in Thanet. To lessen the shock to me of his absence he used to send me a parcel every week with a little present in it - little toys and later on little trinkets or curios. This all seemed to me perfectly natural but to others he seemed a very strange and wonderful uncle. My mother used to call her brother 'Eustace' after the genii in H.G. Wells' 'Alf's Button', who satisfied his master's demands on a similar grand scale.

Now I have found out more about my great uncle Stephen Trinder I begin to understand uncle Charley's excessive generosity. In his amazing ability to keep three magical school serials running concurrently plus other commitments such as Ken King in the *Modern Boy* I see the Trinder 'family' gene showing itself. He kept his schools separate and never mixed his characters or details, just as a parent of a large family would never dream of mixing any of the members up. He listed his characters of all his schools and took the complications in his stride. Descriptions of the hampers of goodies purloined by Bunter were on the same exaggerated lines, as also the Christmas feasts at Wharton Lodge and other desirable venues.

Again, this quality of multiplicity reveals itself in his hobbies. All his life he was an avid reader and a great memoriser. He went on cycling holidays as a youth. He learned to sing and enjoyed opera very much. Languages drew him - Latin, French, Italian, German and Esperanto. Russian unfortunately defeated him. He attended an art school in his youth and drew for pleasure all his life. In old age he tried to write music, not very successfully. And in wartime he spent his unaccustomed spare time digging for victory.

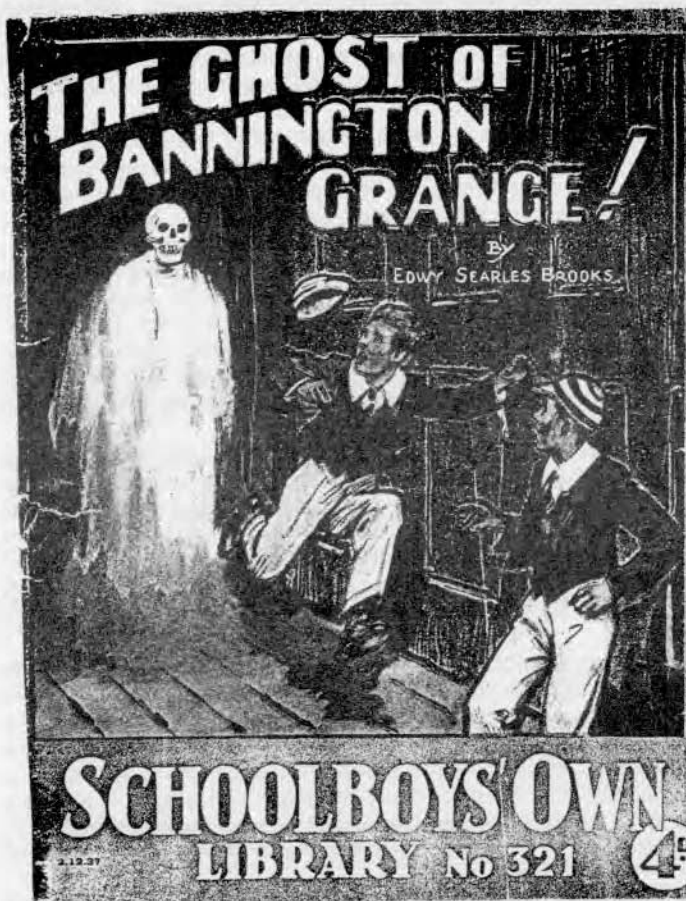
Even as the bachelor uncle Steven Trinder had 'fathered' his many businesses so the bachelor nephew Charles had 'fathered' his fictional characters in a wealth of settings

amongst unlimited opulence. Charles Hamilton's fictional family was as real to him as genuine flesh and blood children and supplied him with the same satisfaction and pleasure.



GHOSTLY GOINGS-ON AROUND ST. FRANKS

by Mary Cadogan



THE GHOST OF BANNINGTON GRANGE by E.S. Brooks (SOL No. 321) is accurately described in its introductory 'blurb' as 'A Powerful Long Story of Christmas Thrills, Fun and Holiday Adventure, Featuring all the Favourites of St. Frank's'. As its title suggests, it also offers ghostly chills and excitements.

The story begins in that expectant run-up to the Christmas hols that we find in so many of our popular school story-paper series. Before getting into fully festive mood the St. Frank's juniors have to deal with a local problem. The Bannington cinema, which is apparently a flea-pit that provides only films of poor quality and taste, has been banned by the Head.

Slackers and bounders such as Owen major, Hubbard and Fullwood are smouldering with resentment about this decision. Decent chaps like Nipper and Pitt, and Handforth & Co. agree with the Head that this particular cinema is a place to be avoided - but nevertheless they would like the opportunity to go to the movies occasionally.

The enterprising Removite, Solomon Levi, comes up with the astounding idea of buying a large, uninhabited house (Bannington Grange) which stands in the middle of the High Street, and having it converted into a picture palace. It is at first hard to believe that a

building on such a promisingly commercial site could have remained unoccupied, or that a group of junior boys could have the wherewithal and initiative to acquire and convert it. However, with his usual aplomb, Brooks makes all things seem possible and feasible. The House has been deserted for years because it is reputed to be haunted by something horrific, and Solomon Levi, far from being an impractical youthful dreamer, has already been working on the scheme and persuaded his immensely rich and business-like father to invest in the cinema project. The St. Frank's juniors are encouraged to participate by purchasing, for a nominal price, shares in the new picture-palace. All thus seems set for the realisation of this thrilling plan.

But, of course, they then suffer some set-backs. The villainous owner of the established flea-pit, Mr. Webb, foreseeing his business crumbling in the face of respectable competition, conspires with another baddie, the brashly entrepreneurial Mr. Hooker J. Ryan (there is no doubt, of course, about the country of *his* origin) to foil the juniors' plan and to take over their idea of acquiring Bannington Grange and making it into a super cinema.

Webb and the American are completely unscrupulous. They bribe Fullwood to aid and abet their knavish tricks - but find that Levi and his father are always one step ahead. The baddies try to scare the Removites away from Bannington Grange by 'hauntings' (which Brooks describes with relish, even to the truly awful ghostly odours which permeate the place).

These spectral mysteries are soon investigated and explained by Nelson Lee, but he and the juniors still have a fierce battle ahead to keep control of the project and to save Bannington Grange from falling into the hands of the conspirators.

Even when the holidays begin matters are not finally settled. This does not, of course, prevent the juniors from having a rollicking time at Tregellis Castle. Seasonal props abound, from lashings of lovely grub, carol-singing and high jinks to plenty of snow which is 'coming down in one continuous sheet, and a blizzard is raging'.

Despite the kidnap of Solomon's father, and his finding and release by Nelson Lee and a party of boys, a grand Christmas is had by the St. Frank's party who, needless to say, eventually give the villainous Webb and Hooker J. Ryan their come-uppance.

It all makes for an unusual and engaging Christmas adventure.



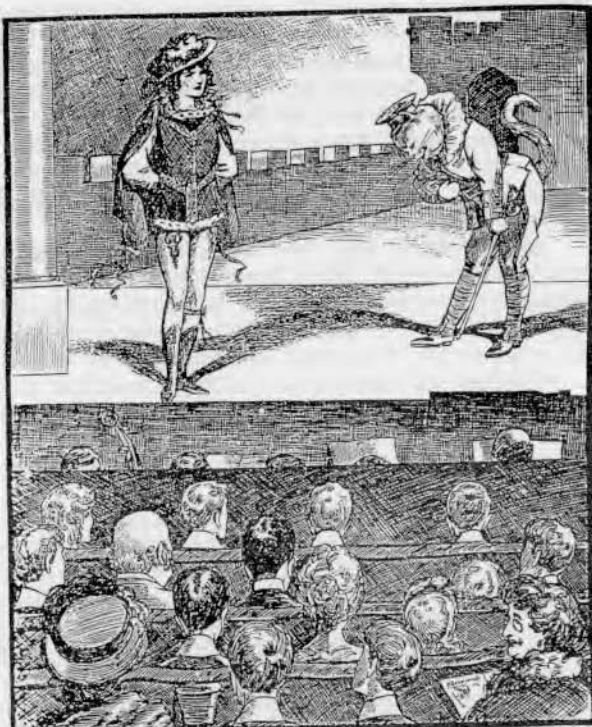
Margery Woods takes

A SEAT AT THE PANTOMIME with..... GREYFRIARS!

In HARRY WHARTON AND CO'S PANTOMIME the boys plan to spend a working Christmas helping the war effort, as their parents are all involved with various service duties. Through one of Skinner's japes they are called out on the last night of term to dig out an army lorry supposedly overturned in the heavy snow, and instead find themselves rescuing a theatrical impresario, Mr. Montague Montmorency Whiffles, which leads to their involvement in the magnificent new pantomime, Puss In Boots, at the Theatre Royal in Lantham.

Mr. Whiffles is in a rage because he has lost half his cast, including the actor who was to have played the leading role of the Marquis of Carabas. Harry lands this role and the chums chorus parts. They are jubilant. If they are thrifty they can manage on pocket money saved and contribute their panto earnings towards parcels for the troops and Red Cross.

Meanwhile, Bunter is sticking to them like the proverbial leech. All attempts to dodge him have failed, so he is told unceremoniously that he will have to be the maid-of-all-work at the digs they have booked into near the theatre. His disgust when he sees the place, threadbare carpet, views of washing lines and rooftops, not at all the luxury a Bunter expects, meets with no sympathy from the juniors, only hilarity. The breakfast menu of one kipper and bread and margarine appalls the fat and famished Bunter, he says he is not going to stand it, which horrifies Bob Cherry. "Don't say you're going to leave us! Anything but that!" Great hilarity, especially when Bunter does depart, until they discover he has taken the housekeeping money with him.



Winton advanced from the wings. There was a murmur from the audience as he appeared. He heard it, with the understanding that it implied admiration and approval, for he cut a very handsome figure as the Margate of the White. (See Chapter 10)

The chums take to theatre life with their usual enthusiasm, except for Frank

Nugent. The pangs of jealousy beset him, jealousy of his great chum, Harry, because Harry has to dance with beautiful Conchita, who plays the Fairy Queen, and Nugent is experiencing the pangs of first love. And Conchita, despite her friendship with Mr. Badger, the stage manager, seems to have taken quite a shine to Frank.

Despite the one-kipper breakfasts, the dingy digs and no hot water, and Bob Cherry's weird and wonderful home-made Christmas pudding, the chums thoroughly enjoy their Christmas Day and the dinner cooked for them by the kindly landlady. The opening night begins a highly successful run during which the boys acquit themselves as well as any pros, and Nugent recovers from his lovelorn state when he discovers that the gorgeous Conchita is actually thirty-seven years old and engaged to the irascible Mr. Badger.

A delightfully light-hearted story which proved that a wartime Christmas could still be a happy one.

But George Wingate's involvement with Little Red Riding Hood was a much more serious affair, and his pantomime romance brought heartbreak.

In *WINGATE'S FOLLY* the Captain of Greyfriars has to escort the juniors to a matinee performance at the Theatre Royal in Courtfield. Although the theatre somewhat belied its name the panto company gave of their best and the audience responded to the age-old panto traditions, especially to the charm of the young girl playing Red Riding Hood. Wingate was instantly smitten, and so it seemed was the unpleasant-looking stranger up in Vernon-Smith's box.



Wingate's Folly

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

Illustrated by ARTHUR CLARKE

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

Specially Written for this
Grand Double Number of
The "Magnet" Library.

Wingate has actually met Paula, the girl playing Red Riding Hood, briefly some time previously. Now he persuades Courtney to escort the juniors back to Greyfriars while he goes to renew his acquaintance with the delectable Paula, a tender meeting rudely broken up by the advent of the fat man from the box, who is Mr. Vernon-Tracy, a relative of Vernon-Smith. He speaks sarcastically of "his little bird" no longer finding suppers with him after the show acceptable.

Naturally Wingate fears the worst, but his disillusion is banished by Paula's denials, and suddenly he and Vernon-Tracy are fighting --- a fight that doesn't last very long and ends with Wingate felling this "Piccadilly Johnny". But this makes matters worse for Paula. Vernon-Tracy is a friend of the manager, and has some influence. Paula is also worried about Wingate. But love has the effect of making Wingate arrogant.

He says simply: "I am head of the Sixth and Captain of the School. I can do pretty much as I like!" when he is arranging to meet Paula away from the theatre.

He is unconcerned about making an enemy of Vernon-Tracy, who spies on that meeting with Paula. This is unwittingly seen by Wharton and his chums while they have a go at the Courtfield lads; they turn their attention to the unpleasant Vernon-Tracy, effectively warning Wingate and Paula.

There is no danger of the chums betraying Wingate, even as their concern grows when his studies and sport suffer. He has to be badgered into playing in the Westmoor match only to play so badly that Greyfriars loses. Challenged and lectured by Courtney, Wingate turns snappy and announces that he is thinking of resigning his captaincy. When Courtney accuses him of going to the dogs for the sake of a girl who probably doesn't care twopence for him, Wingate promptly thumps him. Later, Wingate descends to the kind of behaviour he has always despised, breaking out at night, and is waylaid by Loder. Wingate thumps him as well. The only good thing to come out of the situation is Harry Wharton being given a chance in the 1st Eleven and making a very good contribution towards winning the match, meanwhile the lovesick Wingate, who admittedly is any girl's young dream, has reached the

stage of trying to suggest a future understanding with Paula, whose refusal is definite. It has not yet dawned on Wingate that he presents a wonderful change from the awful men she has to deal with in the theatre. Wise beyond her years, she does what is best for him and refuses to see him again.

Wingate returns at midnight in a black and desolate mood to find the Head waiting for him. The Head has had a visitor that evening; Vernon-Tracy has attempted to put the boot in. But the Head is much more discerning than many of his pupils realise. After a long talk with Dr. Locke Wingate admits that he loves Paula but knows that parting from her is the only answer. He is given permission to see her once more when the pantomime ends its run, but before this Wingate is waylaid by a vicious Vernon-Tracy armed with taunts, threats and a heavy cane. Wingate lets him make the first move before he wades in and gives Vernon-Tracy the thrashing of his life, cheered on by bystanders and several members of the Red Riding Hood cast who have no cause to love the unpleasant Johnny.

Wingate makes his sad farewell to Little Red Riding Hood and returns to face up to school life and his responsibilities, knowing that his memories of a very sweet and honourable girl would remain an influence for good upon his whole life.

Wingate had grown up.

A PHANTOM OF THE PANTOMIME..... with *SEXTON BLAKE!*

Sexton Blake, with Tinker and faithful hound Pedro, are spending a few quiet December days at Wrensham-on-Sea. Although the summer days are long gone the town is bright with preparation for the festive season. But festive hardly describes the feelings of the Randall Repertory Company when they see the ruination of a theatre which their advance manager, now among the missing, has booked for their Christmas season.

The only inhabitant of the dilapidated place seems to be Slype, the sinister old stage-door keeper of death's-head appearance, who is not at all welcoming. The theatrical landlady at their digs soon enlightens them with the ghastly ghostly tale of old Silas Henton, the former owner of the Palladium, who was found hanging from the gallery rail, of his missing wife, and his missing wealth, thousands of pounds withdrawn from his bank a few days before his death and never found. Now the theatre is said to be haunted.

John Randall refuses to be daunted by all this and decides to risk the remains of his capital in sprucing up the theatre and getting it into working order in time to start rehearsing a play written by his leading actor. They have the bright idea of billing it as *The Vampire Man*, at Wrensham's Haunted Theatre. For Christmas week they will present the spectacular pantomime *Ali Baba And The Forty Thieves*.

There is still a great mass of old stuff hoarded under the stage and signs that a set of forty large jars could be among this vast jumble of old scenery and props. But someone else is interested in these old Ali Baba jars.

Strange and frightening things start to happen. Floating death-heads in the gloom, icy blasts cutting through the place, and skeletal hands imprinting fingers of blood on the leading lady's face. Now comes the cue for a coincidence.

The *Vampire Man* production needs a large hound. Slane, the actor-author, sees Sexton Blake on the sea front with Pedro and asks if Pedro can appear in the show. About to refuse, Blake recognises Slane and remembers help he gave during a case some time previously. Yet he is sure that the name of the young actor was not Slane. However, he gives permission for Pedro to take part and finds himself with a new case on his hands.

The play is a great success -- until the actor who plays the part of the Bat crashes to his death as he makes his spectacular flight across the auditorium on to the stage. The wire on which he flies has been partly sawn through. Blake has seen a shadow high in the theatre and sets off in pursuit up through a trapdoor into the roof space. But his quarry

eludes him. Meanwhile someone has discovered that the Ali Baba jars have concealed cavities in their bases. The sinister old Slype is working his way through the theatre in search of them all, convinced that Silas Henton's wealth is concealed in one of them.

Blake is beginning to put the puzzle pieces together and begins a midnight vigil to try to trap the murderer. But in the darkness he stumbles and is struck down by his quarry. When he comes to he is lying in mud in what seems to be a circular brick chamber. Then he discovers that it is actually a well, and he has company; the skeleton of Silas Henton's long missing wife.

Fortunately for Blake, Pedro has missed his master and drags Tinker out in the night in search of him. After his rescue Blake insists that no-one must be told, the murderer must believe that Blake is lying dead at the bottom of the well. Now Blake is the one to assume a disguise, that of the ghost of Silas Henton.

In the gloom beneath the stage Slype has at last found the jar containing the money, but his cackles of triumph are short-lived as the ghostly figure of his former employer appears. Blake maintains the deception long enough to hear the gibbering confession before he begins to strip off his make-up and beckon to the police inspector who waits in the shadows.

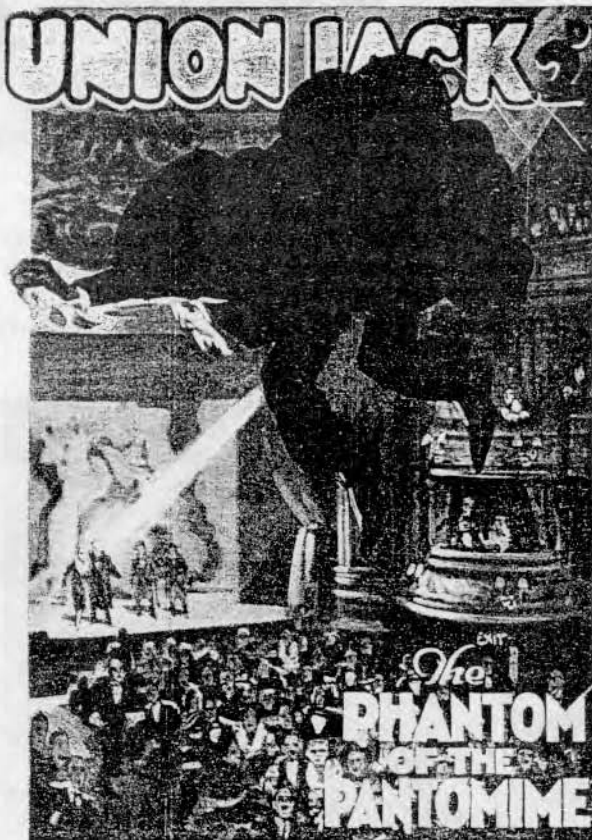
The old theatre is no longer haunted. Ali Baba is a great success, as is the Christmas party laid on at the theatre for the needy children of the town. Blake now remembers the real name of Ralph Slane, who is a nephew of the murdered Mrs. Henton, and will inherit the money.

Pedro, a great hero, for once is allowed to eat as much as he wants of Christmas fare.

A truly ripping yarn, just right for reading at the witching hour, all alone, with the shadows flickering and the wind wuthering, and the clock ticking the Christmas hours away...

Sexton Blake, Detective,

in a Seasonable Mystery-Thriller, specially written for this ENLARGED XMAS NUMBER. An all-Blake issue, and an extra-length story for READERS OF ALL AGES.



No. 1-175.

EVERY THURSDAY.

December 5th, 1931.



OTHER FAVOURITE DETECTIVES

INSPECTOR STANLEY

by Gordon Hudson

Radio Fun, like many other comics, had its own resident detective. However, unlike most of them, he was not a private detective, but a Scotland Yard man, Inspector Stanley.

Stanley had his own special assistant, the portly Sergeant Horace Bloom who dropped his aitches when he spoke.



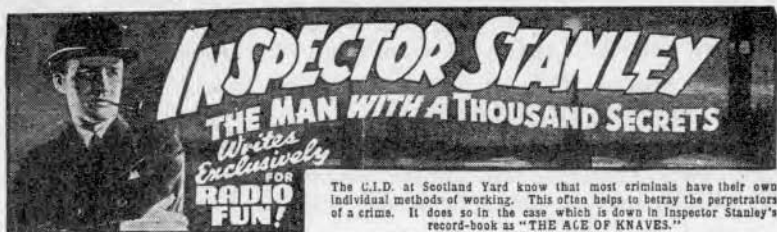
"This is what I want!" says the inspector, reaching out for the ornamental shield.

The series ran for many years and was headed "Inspector Stanley the Man with a Thousand Secrets". It went on to say "he writes exclusively for Radio Fun". This seems to imply that the stories were written in the first person, but the only ones I can refer to are in the third person. So far as I can recall the author's name was never given, presumably one of the reasons being that the

detective himself was supposed to be writing about his own cases. The stories in the Radio Fun were always very short. I have, however, two Radio Fun Annuals for 1953 and 1958 in which they are of a reasonable length covering several pages. In the 1953 annual the story which is called "Ace of Clubs" commences with a murder being committed at an underground station where Sergeant Bloom and his wife Mrs. Fanny Bloom are waiting for a train. This was probably the only time she ever had a part in one of the stories.

As with most of these very short stories, there was no time to develop a plot, and the solution usually depended on a single clue which the detective, in

this case Stanley, was able to spot. Nevertheless, they must have been quite popular otherwise they would not have run for so long.



CHRISTMAS BOOK CHOICE

by Mary Cadogan

THAT'S JENNINGS by Anthony Buckeridge (Macmillan £8.99)

The publication of a new Anthony Buckeridge book is always a welcome event and his latest chronicle of the exploits of Jennings and Darbishire is as exuberant as ever. As usual, despite his good intentions, Jennings manages to cause some chaotic moments at Linbury Court School. Things begin to go awry when Jennings decides to give the decent but slightly fiery Mr. Wilkins a 'get well' gift after a brief period of sickness. By mistake he presents him with a potted rhubarb plant while the 'get well' card which Darbishire has rather hurriedly selected carries the hardly gratifying message 'Happy 80th birthday, Grandad!'. Before the dust has settled on this apparent practical joke against 'Old Wilkie', Jennings and Darbishire become involved in a bizarre 'treasure hunt' - under the cover of forming a bird-watching society.

With his customary deftness Anthony Buckeridge manages to maintain pace and sparkle throughout this engaging addition to the Jennings saga. It is satisfying to know that, in the 1990s, at least one series of boys' school stories remains alive and kicking with gusto.

SIX OF THE BEST! by David Bathurst (Romansmead Publications, £5.00)

Jennings stars again, in company with other fictional juveniles, in this lively celebration of the school story from pre-Greyfriars days to Grange Hill. David Bathurst



"How should I know which card to choose?" said Darbishire.

devotes one chapter to each of his chosen 'Six of the Best'. He starts with Harold Avery, follows with Charles Hamilton, Angela Brazil, Elinor Brent-Dyer and Anthony Buckridge, and ends with Phil Redmond. Chapter headings such as *What an absolute Cad!*, *I say You Fellows!*, *Jubilate!* and *Crystallised Cheesecakes* convey the lively mood of the book, as also do the many well selected pearly quotes, of which a few examples are given below:

"Isn't it withering?" she remarked ... "I do call it the most wretched luck! I'm a blighted blossom!" (Angela Brazil)

Billy Bunter liked jam. In fact, he loved it, with a faithful and abiding love. But the course of true love never did run smooth. Bunter did not meet the object of his affection nearly so often as he wished. (Frank Richards)

Anyone who wishes to join 'The Raiders' can meet me in the cellar after dinner, and sign the roll in his own blood. There will be a small charge of sixpence entrance-fee to cover the secretary's out-of-pocket expenses. (Harold Avery)

SIX OF THE BEST provides us with much to chuckle over but it is also a serious commentary on this ever-intriguing genre. David Bathurst splendidly recreates the mood of the books that he discusses, as well as exploring their ethos, resilient appeal and the lives of their authors. (I was especially pleased to read his comments on Harold Avery, whose first stories were published just about a hundred years ago. He was one of my father's favourite writers and, at the time when I began to be fascinated by THE MAGNET, Dad gave me his school prize copy of Avery's THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE - which I loved then, and still cherish.)

SIX OF THE BEST is a 'must' for your bookshelves. Privately published, it is obtainable by post from Romansmead Publications, 46 Mosse Gardens, Fishbourne, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 3PQ.

STARS IN OUR EYES by Jeffrey Richards (Lancashire County Books, 143 Corporation Street, Preston. £3.50)

Jeffrey Richards is known already to many C.D. readers as the author of HAPPIEST DAYS, his wonderfully comprehensive study of boys' school stories. He now deals with a very different subject. Subtitled 'Lancashire Stars of Stage, Screen and Radio', STARS IN OUR EYES begins by exploring general images of Northern England and of the Music Hall and Cinema. Longer sections assess the careers of George Formby and Gracie Fields, Frank Randle and Norman Evans, Hylda Baker and Thora Hird, Al Read and Les Dawson, as well as other stars of film and radio. (There is an interesting account of Mancunian Films, 'the only film company and film studio operating outside the south east of England'). The book is well illustrated with evocative black and white photographs, and Jeffrey Richards adeptly weaves social commentary through the aspirations and achievements of these widely assorted and talented entertainers.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL: The Unsung Story, by Brian Sibley (Lion Publishing, £14.99)

As mentioned in my editorial, THE CHRISTMAS CAROL is one of my perennial favourites - from the original narrative to the Mickey Mouse and Muppet versions on film and video. Brian Sibley has now produced a splendid celebration of Dickens' 150 year-old masterpiece. He gives us the story behind the story in Dickens' own time and in the decades that have followed the book's first publication. The author's life and compassionate social concerns are sympathetically explored: the original text with John Leech line engravings is reproduced in full, and almost every transmogrification of the story 'from TV commercials to

Hollywood movies, religious tracts to postage stamps' is exhilaratingly charted and discussed. This well produced volume is illustrated with a great variety of drawings and photographs, from a Marvel Comic Book strip cartoon to the television spoof version, 'Blackadder's Christmas Carol'.

Just the book to dream over during the Festive Season as we once again derive inspiration from the classic story and its closing words from Tiny Tim: 'God Bless Us, Every One!'.

THE OXFORD BOOK OF HISTORICAL STORIES. Edited by Michael Cox and Jack Adrian £17.99)

THE OXFORD BOOK OF MODERN WOMEN'S STORIES. Edited by Patricia Craig £17.99)

Readers who, like myself, enjoy a good short story will find much to savour in these two large and luscious selections.

The HISTORICAL STORIES range in time from pre-history to the French Revolution, taking in the ancient Greeks, Regency and Edwardian England and medieval Europe on the way. Contributions have been chosen from authors as varied in style and approach as Rafael Sabatini, Baroness Orczy, Georgette Heyer, Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy and Aldous Huxley.

The MODERN WOMEN'S STORIES cover a different but equally wide range of moods and settings. There is passion, challenge, humour, irony and zest in selections from the fairy tale and ghost story to domestic dramas. Olivia Manning, Elizabeth Bowen, Katherine Mansfield, Jean Rhys, Fay Weldon and many other compelling writers are represented.



Dickens the conjuror of Christmas. A drawing by Kyd (Joseph Clayton Clarke) from 1905 edition of *The Dickensian*



SALE: William books, early Enid Blyton books, Gerald Swan items, film books. L. MORLEY, 76 ST. MARGARETS ROAD, HANWELL, LONDON, W7 2HF. Tel. (081 579 3143).

FOR SALE: Complete set of Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 22 volumes. Offers to ROY PARSONS, 'FOINAVEN', CHURCH HOLLOW, WEST WINTERSLOW, SALISBURY, SP5 1SX.

(Editor's Note: This issue of the C.D. has already made mention of Anthony Buckeridge's *Jennings* books. We are extremely pleased to be able to publish the following review by him, written especially for the C.D.)

MUD PIES & WATER BOMBS. WAKE UP, IT'S MIDNIGHT! (Macmillan Children's Books - Piper, £2.99 each) Reviewed by Anthony Buckeridge.

These two books represent the start of a series, since the action in both concerns the activities of two rival gangs of children: one good, philanthropic and with a well-developed sense of justice while their rivals possess the opposite qualities to the *n'th* degree. Indeed, the latter seem to represent a future Mafia-like gang to whom repentance would be a foreign word.

Both books are centred around a mystery which is ultimately solved and brings well-deserved glory to the good group - the Naitabals. The plots of both books are worked out with mind-boggling precision and no *i* is left undotted and no *t* uncrossed. The narratives make compulsive reading: once started, the reader is hooked until the final denouement is reached.

Reflecting the tradition of Ballantyne and R.L. Stevenson in the Nineteenth century, the adventures of the Naitabals take place among imaginary islands. These islands have been ingeniously created by the children's fantasy from the block of neighbouring houses while the surrounding gardens form the seas in which the islands stand. All are appropriately named to reflect the character of their inhabitants - *Boff Island*, for instance for Boffin and *Sea of Debris* for Mr. Elliott's tip-like garden which is almost a prototype of many such builders' yards we all know so well.

This islands concept is dear to most children's fantasies and the Naitabals are faithful followers of this tradition. Their secret language is wholly logical and not at all difficult for the reader to follow, although I felt that it was leaning towards the over-complicated by the end of the second book, *Wake Up, It's Midnight!*

There is no doubting the impressive skill of the Naitabal group, but if I have a caveat it is the fact that any necessary tool or needful piece of equipment is never beyond their reach. It is true that Mr. Elliott's tip of a garden would be the place to find virtually everything they require, but I could not help feeling, for instance, that if the *drill* had been so readily available in the tip, it would, in real life, be lacking the concomitant *bit*. Also, I felt that near-criminal activities such as the deliberate 'accident' to Mr. Elliott's van should have been reported to the rightful authorities rather than dealt with by the children. It is true that the Naitabals' code stands for justice, law and order and they are quite capable of devising punishments to fit the anti-social crimes of their repellent rivals. But in today's climate of political correctness is there not a danger of this really nasty gang

Perfect XMAS PRESENTS for 8-12 yr-olds! **The Naitabal Mystery Series by David Schutte**

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| NAITABAL: | a wild species of human, aged about ten. |
| Habitat: | Found in most British gardens all the year round, sometimes as an unexpected visitor. |
| Nesting: | Mainly in trees, often in a tree-house. |
| Feeding: | Eats anything, except what its parents want it to. |
| Song: | Loud (irritating to adults), with its own secret language. |
| Recognition: | You'll know one when you've seen one. |

Join them in their first two exciting mysteries:

MUD PIES AND WATER-BOMBS: To ordinary people she's Miss Coates, but to the Naitabals she's the old enemy battleship the SS Coates. When Ben Tuffin wakes up in the Naitabal tree-house at midnight and sees her disappearing down the well in her garden, the mystery has only just begun. Tree-houses, spy-holes, midnight vigils, rival gangs (and mud pies and water-bombs) are just some of the ingredients in this exciting adventure novel.
ISBN 0-330-32627-9 Pan Macmillan Children's Books £2.99

WAKE UP, IT'S MIDNIGHT! The mysterious motionless Mr Maynard hasn't moved for two days. Beneath that hairless head and ferocious scowl, his evil brain is plotting - but plotting what? A secret drawer, an empty house at midnight, a missing manuscript, spying, cheating - and a mysterious lady in black - are just a few of the obstacles the Naitabals must overcome to solve the mystery. Wake up, it's midnight! Join the Naitabals in another breathtaking adventure!
ISBN 0-330-33338-0 Pan Macmillan Children's Books £2.99

If you like these, look out for No.3: *Dark Woods, Wild Children*, and No.4: *Dirty Rotten Cheats* - both due out in Spring 1995!

being regarded as some sort of role model? Let us hope not! Even in *Lord of the Flies* the boys are faced with a return to mature judgement at the end of the story.

That said, both these books provide a really enthralling read from start to finish. Once in the Naitabals' thrall, it is difficult to put down either of this author's stories until the last page is reached. Congratulations, David Schutte!

MORCOVE PUTS THINGS RIGHT (Extract: FROM WHARTON LODGE TO Schoolgirls' Owns 151, 152, 153, 154, (Dec. 1923-Jan. 1924) LINTON HALL)

This is not only one of the most spellbinding of the Morcove Christmas series, but it boasts some of Leonard Shields's most attractive illustrations of Betty Barton & Co. Every picture is beautifully designed and, as the girls are so often depicted in party dresses - even when scouring the snow-covered grounds for an on-the-run convict! - they look particularly fetching. (This series, of course, comes early on in the Morcove saga, before any of the girls have gone in for bobbing or shingling, and Shields makes the most of their long-tressed coiffures in his pictures.)

The girls cut it fine to catch their train from nearby Barncombe Station to Hillchurch Manor, where they are to spend the holidays with Madge Minden's aunt, and her cousin Kyra. So they take a short cut through the woods. In the town, newspaper placards have blazened the news that a convict has escaped from the local prison on the moor, and in the woods the girls briefly encounter the fugitive. He seems to be following them - because it soon becomes apparent that he is lurking in the grounds of Hillchurch Manor. The girls are torn between doing their civic duty of helping to get the convict re-arrested, and pity for the poor, hunted creature who is out in the Christmassy - but nevertheless cold, cold - snow!

Their compassion is further extended to Miss Lillian Sands, Kyra's somewhat elderly-looking governess. Kyra is spoiled, and utterly contemptible in her leering, bullying treatment of Miss Sands. Obviously Kyra, although so closely related to the



2nd

What the Footprints Told!

A dramatic incident from the 2014-15 long complete Christmas story 1st issue

impeccable Madge, has had a very different upbringing from her cousin. Horace Phillips puts this down to the fact that Kyra's mother has been far too engrossed with her books and writing (she is an author), to pay much heed to her daughter's character. This seems a tough indictment of literary ladies from a literary gent whose alter ego was, of course, that of a female writer - Marjorie Stanton.

The chums befriend the downtrodden governess: "I'm wather fond of Miss Sands, y'know," Paula remarked. "I wegard her as a wippin' governess for Kyra, and my only wegwet is that Kyrwa tweats her with such gwoss wudeness." Betty begins to realize that Miss Sands has more on her mind than her charge's chivvying and unpleasant behaviour; she is in some way linked to the convict. When the girl surprise the fugitive in the grounds, he gets away, but they find the hat he is wearing, which is marked 'L.S.' - the initials of Miss Sands. Then, when Kyra tries to grab a photograph over which the governess is having a quiet weep, Betty retrieves it - and observes that, though taken a long time ago, it is a portrait of the man who is on the run. He turns out eventually to be Miss Sands's brother. Betty saves him several times from recapture by a strangely disguised man, staying in the house, who the girls decide is a detective. (Actually he is the villain of the piece, the swindler of whose crimes Miss Sands's brother has been wrongly accused and convicted. The escaped convict is now trying desperately to prove his own innocence, and to place the blame where it belongs.)

Hillchurch Manor is a wonderful setting for a Christmas holiday, and for hiding a fugitive. It is riddled with secret passages, and concealed doors in the old, oak panelled corridors. Eventually Betty has to bring Madge into the secret of the convict's true identity, and the girls contrive to keep the police off the trail, until Sands finds the crucial piece of paper that clears him and puts the real culprit in the clink!



HAD SHE A SECRET? "You're thinking of someone you've lost—I understand," said Betty Barton, holding the frail figure of the governess tightly. "I'm sorry I butted in like this, only I—I thought I heard voices!"



WAS IT THE TRUTH? "It must have been the convict," said Polly. Miss Sands started, then laughed in a strained manner. "It was not the convict! It was I!" she said.

The story has several high-spots of suspense. When, for example, Polly dresses up as Father Christmas, another mysterious Santa figure seems to materialise. In a game of Hide-and-Seek, the blindfolded Paula catches someone and stretches out her hand to identify her prisoner by touch - but finds her fingers resting 'not on the smooth cheek of one of her friends, but on the rough, unshaven cheek of a man!'. Horror! Or - as Paula, the shocked discoverer of the intruder, might say - HOWWOWS!

A touching thread that runs through this excellent series is the girls' very real concern for Miss Sands. This is illustrated by the care with which they select and wrap a Christmas gift ('a well-made leather writing-case') for her:

'Tess, the artist of the party, found pen and ink and, in a delightful manner, drew holly and robins all round the edge of the card. Then, with great care, she printed a really warm Christmas message from the Morcove girls.'

Needless to say, the Governess is deeply moved, and the affection of the chums contributes greatly to her Christmas happiness.



PUCK 1937-1940

by Peter Mahony

Puck was both a comic and a story paper. When I began reading it in 1937/38, it gave me an ideal transition from the picture comics, like *Chick's Own* and *Rainbow* to the story papers, *Magnet*, *Gem*, *Rover*, etc.

PUCK
THE TUESDAY TREAT 2d.

HOLIDAY FUN FOR EVERYONE

PUCK

DON AND DORIS HAVE ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR. [August 5th, 1939.

1. I DON'T FORGET, my sister wanted to go to the fair so, think I'd like to, but as fast here would have it on my side, I'd suppose to spend between us. Well, while we were sitting on a bench, we're talking up our minds.

2. Along came our cousin Gladie, and in my own best on a helping hand, you may be sure. "If you're going to the fair, why don't you push off?" he giggled, suddenly getting a pink in the back and sweeping us off the seat.

3. Oh, we were upset! "I suppose you think that's funny? But you said!" "Ferdal. Ha, ha! Thanks for going!" "Inghel Gladie." "Now I can sit down!" But just as he was going back to his seat, I had fixed up my sack basket.

For most of this immediate pre-war period, *Puck* provided varied, but stable fare. There were 6 pages of comics - Don and Doris, Captain Moonlight, Rob the Rover, Tex Ranger, Little Miss Nobody, and Tom-All-Along. There were also 6 pages of stories - Val Fox, detective, Whirlpool Island, Rin-Tin-Tin, Pip, Pop and the Pup, the Mystery Schoolboy, and No. 9 Queen Street. It was a large production, 15 inches by 12, with a technicolour front

page; red-based drawings for pages 4, 5 and 12; black and white sketches on pages 7 and 9; and 4 closely printed columns on pages 2, 3, 6, 8, 10 and 11. Each of the printed pages must have carried 3000-3500 words. The comics pages had 12 pictures apiece, each with a 4-line caption. A wealth of material for 2d, 20,000 printed words, plus 72 illustrations.

The features were mature and thought-provoking; the pictures were very well drawn, with the regular characters consistently portrayed. At least 5 of the features were of excellent quality; the only reservation I remember having was the similar 'orphan' themes of Pip, Tom and Little Miss Nobody. The "Knock, Knock" jokes at the top of the title page provided thousands of schoolchildren with excruciating material to pester unsuspecting adults.

"Don and Doris", a brother and sister act, were always at odds with their bossy Cousin Claude and their obnoxious next-door neighbours. These neighbours rejoiced in the emotive names of EZA Grumble and CORNEY Crosspatch. Don was resourceful but rash; Doris, a cheerful tomboy. They owned a mischievous mongrel named 'Pickle'. Invariably they came out on top - often after some quite comic adventures. They always got Puck off to a bright start.

Captain Moonlight (really Martin Strong, the local blacksmith) was a gallant highwayman, dedicated to righting the wrongs committed by Sir Richard Stonyheart, a villainous eighteenth-century landowner. Each of Moonlight's adventures lasted no more than 2 or 3 weeks. His clear-up rate was impressive, but further helpless victims - boys, girls, old people - appeared in a never-ending stream to keep the series going. There was plenty of duelling; many narrow escapes; and a lot of hard riding astride his magnificent horse, Blackie.

Moonlight was also a thinking man. Many of his ploys to escape capture, to outwit the crooks, or just to avert disaster in dangerous situations were brilliantly resourceful. The Moonlight yarns were definitely among the best I ever read in picture comics.

Another epic picture-show was "Rob the Rover". Rob, clean-cut, athletic and English, was a fore-runner of Dan Dare. His magnificent aeroplane, "The Flying Fish", was the real star of a slightly futuristic series. The 'Fish' could be concerted to a submarine, a sea-plane, or an auto-gyro at the push of a lever. It was far superior to any other aircraft then conceived, and was much coveted by Rob's enemy, the Sky-Pirate, otherwise the "Hawk".

The Hawk once contrived to capture the 'Fish' by use of an extremely powerful Magnet which pulled the metal aircraft down to his island base. Rob and his companions managed to neutralise the Magnet and escape - but the Hawk pursued them with radio-controlled flying bombs! This was in 1938 and I can clearly remember my father condemning the episode as "too far-fetched". Six years later the 'doodle-bug' and V2 rocket were bestowing their attentions on London! So much for "far-fetched"! The writers of Rob the Rover knew their stuff.

The third adventure strip was "Tex Ranger and the Golden Arrow". Tex and his side-kick, Johnny, befriended a Red Indian maiden, Silver Moon, who possessed the Golden Arrow - a key to a vast treasure. A wicked Indian Chief, Hawkeye, made weekly attempts to steal the Arrow and the trio had some desperate adventures in the style of the latter-day Indiana Jones. These included being catapulted across a ravine onto soft bushes; blundering into an underground stream where the water began to boil, eventually blowing them out of the cavern on a steam-spout; and crossing a chasm by a horizontal ladder which broke when they were half-way over. The three clung to the 'safe' half of the ladder, leaving their enemies on the wrong side! (I reckon Stephen Spielberg read this and used it in his "Temple of Doom" film!)

The main disappointment of the 'ranger' strip was that the artist was changed half-way through. The rugged Tex, boyish Johnny and patrician-featured Silver Moon changed overnight into a trio of look-alikes - two brothers and a sister of American small-town cut.

A pity, for it spoiled the authenticity of a good story. Of course, once the arrow had been used to open the treasure cache, the series ended.

These three fine comic strips were matched by the "Whirlpool Island" stories. John Lincoln, an English boy, was shipwrecked on Whirlpool Island in the South Seas. He met Lorna, English born, but resident on the island since early childhood. The rest of the population were native islanders who provided most of the comedy and some of the villainy of a consistently enjoyable series. Written by Victor Henley, the stories were generally light-hearted, but, occasionally, a more sinister theme would be used.

The characters were rich and varied. There was TALOO, the great chief and witch-doctor, who was wise and tolerant. Torquil, the young warrior, was John's friend - though with a hint of rivalry in his attitude. (Henley did no more than suggest a budding love affair between John and Lorna; Torquil sometimes showed a jealous interest in the girl.) Molo and Dori, a young boy and girl, were favourites of Lorna's. Young Molo was mischievous and cheeky, particularly to OGONI, the fat chief who was Keeper of the Sacred Cavern. OGONI was a sly, greedy buffoon, whose downfalls figured frequently in the comedy stories.

On the darker side, there was KAARD, a renegade Whirlpooler, who sided with the people of Kaluma, an enemy island.

Another villain was LOBO, a bumptious warrior who was outfought by John Lincoln. In revenge, he doctored a spear and poisoned John by "accidentally" scratching his shoulder. The antidote was at the bottom of the Whirlpool which gave the island its name. Lorna, with a rope round her waist, dived into the whirlpool and retrieved the antidote; the noble Torquil hauling her out of the vortex in the nick of time.

The stories lived up to Whirlpool's other name - the Isle of a Thousand Adventures. There were floods, typhoons, fires and even marching ants to contend with - Henley always had another sensation up his sleeve. Man-eating baboons, mischievous monkeys, vicious sharks, Sea Wolves (roving pirates), water spouts, mighty apes, even a sea-lion, all turned up at various times. The whole series was delightful and could well have been adapted into a full length novel. Whirlpool Island makes good reading even now - 60 years later.

Another good series was "The Mystery Schoolboy". Northfield Priory School was situated next to a ruined Priory, where "MISTER E", a fugitive from the police, was in hiding. Four boys believed in his innocence and helped him to avoid capture time and again. The four were Jack Onslow, 'Fatty' Stokes, Phillip Smithers and Dickie Chalmers. Onslow was a Jack Blake type; 'Fatty' a genial duffer; Smithers a languid 'Toff'; and Chalmers, known as 'Professor', a quick-witted, resourceful lad. Two of Northfield's Masters - Messrs Hewer and Blusterly - were regular members of the cast. However, a lanky wimp, and Blusterly, a pompous coward, often came close to discovering Mister E but they were always foiled - usually in embarrassing circumstances. The series continued for a long time, but eventually Mister E was cleared. Not in the Whirlpool Island class, but nevertheless a good set of yarns.

The Val Fox detective stories were not so entertaining. The stories were too brief to give proper scope to the crimes Val was required to solve, particularly as a lot of space was consumed by the ramblings of "Uncle Pat", the detective's pet parrot. Fox also had a monkey, Micky, who was a useful aide in tricky situations, but the series lacked the appeal of Puck's other features.

The Rin-Tin-Tin stories were also second-rate. Perhaps if I had seen the wonder-dog on the films, he may have appealed more, but a dog which was considerably smarter than the succession of humans who made up the numbers was a bit too good to be true.

Tom All-Along (except for his terrier, Tim) was tramping round England, seeking his fortune. His adventures were 'samey', often involving the foiling of criminals and the

receiving of small rewards which tided Tom through to the next week. This was a picture series and it lacked the 'bite' of Captain Moonlight and Rob the Rover.

A better series with a similar theme was 'Little Miss Nobody'. This was pure Cinderella. Tessa, an orphan, lived with her Uncle Ezra and Cousin Tilda. These two nasty pieces of work actually 'made' the series. Ezra, with his flowing beard, top-hat and shabby tail-coat, was a pinch-penny miser, exploiting the long-suffering Tessa as a skivvy. He spoiled Tilda, who was always dressed in the height of fashion. She was an arrant snob into the bargain. Their weekly 'come-uppances' were usually hilarious and frequently put the old tight-fist to considerable expense. The artist (unknown) had a good line in facial expressions - particularly of the baser emotions. The four-line captions under each picture had a witty 'mickey-taking' style.

A small strip, at the bottom of Miss Nobody's page, was Dr. Jolliboy's School. The stars were Tubby and Sammy, pupils clad in top hats and Eton jackets, who invariably scored over authority in 'Comic Cuts' styles. Inconsequential but amusing.

No. 9 Queen Street was the abode of the Dooleys - father Pat, a newspaper reporter, and his children, Jim and Joan. The house had been used as a hide-out by Nick Cadby, a notorious crook. The stories were taken up with the Dooley's attempts to lay Cadby by the heels. Jim seemed much more resourceful than his father and it was largely due to his efforts that Cadby's criminal activities came a cropper. Joan's function, like many a heroine of those days, was to endure hardships and imprisonments until the boys got around to rescuing her.

The final feature was another 'waif' story. Pip, with his donkey, Pop, and his dog, the Pup, lived in a cabin on a farm owned by the Beckleys. He worked for his keep, but went to school with the Beckley children - Dick, Vicki and Molly. His enemy, Wilfred Crompton, was a nasty piece of work, but his petty persecutions never bothered Pip too much.

The series had a 'nature' background. Pip and his girl friend, Vicki Beckley, were great roamers of the countryside. The author usually packed in plenty of details about wild life and flowers - a process which was enhanced by Pip's talent for drawing. Often his drawings would be included as part of the centre-piece picture which accompanied each story. A good smattering of 'country lore' could be acquired by reading these pleasant yarns thoroughly.

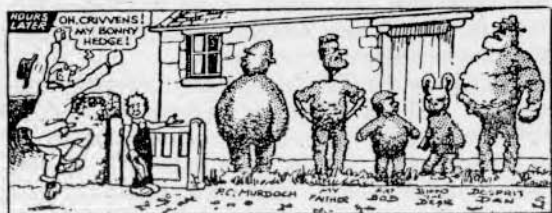
Pip, capable and determined, was obviously going to make his way in life. Vicki, too, was a lovely character - full of energy and good-nature - if Pip didn't marry her when they grew up he needed his brains tested! All in all, this 'natural' series was the nearest of Puck's features to true life. Well worth a read, because Pip & Co. went from week to week experiencing nothing sensational, but living the kind of routine lives that so many children do.

So, there it is. Puck in its pre-War splendour. For quality and variety there was not a comic/story paper to touch it. Its demise is yet another sin to lay at Herr Hitler's door. The Amalgamated Press produced many jewels in its time. None shone more brightly than Puck.



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 Road, Watford, WD1 4JL. Tel. 0923 232383.

Most C.D. readers will be aware of the prolific artist Dudley D. Watkins as the originator of Dandy favourites, Desperate Dan, Lord Snooty et al; however, this appreciation is directed towards those North-of-the-Border stalwarts, "Our Wullie" and "The Broons".



Wullie's "Desprit" topiary (1954)

My association with these wonderful creations began while holidaying in Rothesay in 1973. A copy of 'The Sunday Post' newspaper was bought for its ultimately useless weather forecast (cloudy/rain! I thought this was a Scottish generalisation). My father handed me the "Fun Section" and I thoroughly enjoyed the jokes, and the riddles, and was intrigued by the dialect-bound comic strips "Oor Wullie" and "The Broons".

On my return to home in Leeds a visit to Almar Books in Kirkstall was rewarded with the discovery of the 1959 "Oor Wullie" and the 1964 "Broons" annuals (10p and 30p respectively). I bought the Wullie immediately with my week's pocket money (I should point out that I was eight at the time!) and returned seven days later for the Broons.

I seemed to spend the remainder of the summer



"Inner cover 1959 showing Wullie's patent dish drying machine"

hols translating the stories into English.

What struck me at the time was the incredible detail in the artwork - whether it was the hilly countryside surrounding the Broons' "but & ben" or the streets where Wullie would play "fitba" with Fat Bob and Soapy Soutar.

My grandfather used to save the "Fun Section" for me, and, although I enjoyed these, even at that age I was aware that they weren't drawn by Dudley D. It turned out that although he died in 1969, the annuals used almost exclusively his superior stories until 1976, before switching to the current unsigned pretenders.

Since 1973 I have sought out these books, gradually collecting the more recent DDWs (from the mid 60s up to the 1976 cut off) paying no more than £1.50. Following a house move my beloved 1959 "Oor Wullie" vanished. One can imagine my chagrin at finding it at the Pudsey Book Fair in *reasonable* condition: a snip at £75.00! I'm sure most C.D. readers have similar stories with so called "dealers" bumping up prices in total disproportion to the book's worth. I have always found that, be it Magnets, Howard Bakers or Cassells/Skiltons, perseverance pays off. A genuine bookdealer in Bradford contacted me following a house clearance and offered me nine Wullies and Broons - dating from 1949 to 1962 - for £85.00; including the "lost" one!

The great thing about this annual (1949) was that, although not having read it for around ten years, the stories and artwork were as detailed and "depthy" as I'd remembered. The only thing that had changed was that they were funnier! As is common throughout the history of children's books and comics, it is now a shock to read a story based on the antics of escaped "loonies" and, of course, the odd "darky". Dudley happily abandoned these subjects after about 1958. As is the case with Frank Richards, the Christmas stories are always a delight - I must be totally honest and admit that with *every* annual I have zipped to the last three or four pages to enjoy the Snowy/Christmas Eve/Day/New year's strips!

In the twenty years of my association I have altered my preference from Wullie to the Broons and back again.

One must bear in mind that Wullie is "just Wullie" whereas there are "eleven braw Broons" each having a very definite character allowing a far greater scope for plots to evolve. The eternal youth of "Granpaw"; the sturdy "maw"; frumpy-dumpy "Daphne"; glamour-puss "Maggie"; and, of course, the clever-beyond-her-years "baim" - I've always wanted to know her name.

Likewise the twins (actual facsimiles of Wullie).

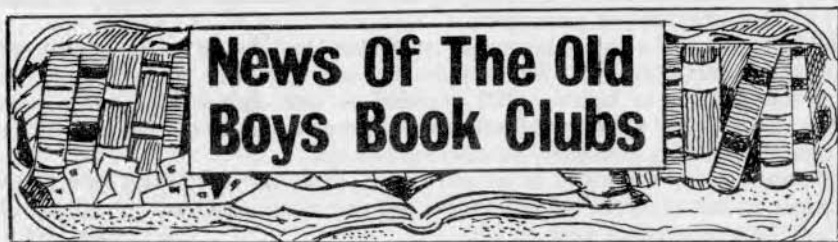
To end with (I could go on forever!) a reproduction of the only Dudley D error.



"The Broons - Minus Granpaw plus one extra twin." (1963)

Twins? Make that triplets!

(Pictures copyright D.C. Thomson)



LONDON OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

Twenty five members gathered on Sunday, 13th November to hear Lt.Col. Murphy speak about P.G. Wodehouse. We followed Col. Murphy on his detective hunt through the English countryside to places which had been familiar to P.G. Wodehouse and which had subsequently been used in his books. Col. Murphy's talk was full of amusing quotations from the books, and slides of building and streets mentioned were shown.

After tea, Roy Parsons presented his year by year Nelson Lee quiz which was followed by a Greyfriars word-search from Roger Jenkins.

The December meeting on Sunday, 11th will be at the Ealing home of Bill Bradford, unless the N.H.S. requires Bill's presence. Please check with the secretary as the alternative venue is Eltham.

SUZANNE HARPER

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

Our November meeting was held on a very inclement autumnal evening and being the A.G.M. was very much a business affair.

All officials agreed to continue in their posts with the addition of our youngest member, Eleanor Caldecott who was appointed Children's Book Reviewer.

Paul expressed concern about the Club Library which is very extensive but has very few regular borrowers (even though we have a complete catalogue of the library contents).

The programme for next year was discussed: some interesting speakers will be with us and we feel the programme will be as good as ever with some social activities thrown in.

Our President's and Vice-President's new books were on view and for sale and both notable in that they have been dedicated to our Northern Club! Copies of a new publication "The Best of British" were available, the first issue of which contained an article about our Club.

Margaret Atkinson provided some of her ever-popular home baking for refreshments.

Next meeting: informal Christmas party to be held on 10th December at our usual venue.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our November meeting we gathered at the Willingham village home of Keith Hodkinson.

Our guest speaker was Ely - born Michael Selwood who provided us with an audio-visual experience by way of an introduction to the world of travelling fairs. Many of the 200-plus fairs arranged in England have medieval backgrounds involving Royal Charters. The talk, of course, focused around the major events of the Showman's Guild calendar such as Cambridge's Midsummer Fair - the fourth largest in the country - and dealt with the construction of some of the rides (such as the 'Ben Hur' roundabout and the dodgems) that form the backbone when several large fairs combine at such venues to provide over 40

rides. In Cambridge the fair is personified by the showground rides of Stanley Thurston - a family business of at least six generations.

Bill Lofts provided a fascinating insight into authors' breaches of reality in a talk entitled 'Jacko - the Gorilla Detective'. Basically this is where legitimate tales of science fiction become too fantastic to believe. Bill provided us with numerous examples from the literature of our hobby where belief had to be suspended, and tales written for youngsters were classified as likely or unlikely by today's grown ups.

Bill, on request, was asked to deliver a short paper on the 1950s/1960s Children's Newspaper, its last editor, Bob Bartholomew, and one of its contributors, Frank S. Pepper. The Eagle/Lion connections were stressed. ADRIAN PERKINS

I RAN into the Gregfians Ghost outside the Remore Down. Last night - in fact, I ran through him before I noticed he was there. A deep groan apprised me of his presence.

"Tut-tut!" I said hastily. "I beg your pardon for running through you. I was in a bit of a hurry."

The ghost groaned again. "What I see is this here," he replied. "You needn't apologise. I got used to being run through in my time. If I 'appened to lock the gates on some young 'rip in the Fifth after six o'clock, he'd like enough run me through with his sword when he got in - me, a man old enough to be his grandfather!"

"Great Scott!" I cried. "Why, I thought you were the ghost of an Abbot!"

"A haddock?" groaned the spectre. "Look 'ere, you young 'rip, if you try to insult me, what I see is this here - I'll report yer!"

"Not a haddock - an Abbot! Aren't you the ghost of some giddy old Abbot who lived here in the year dot?"

"Not me! I was a porter, I was. My name was Hugh de Goslyng. It still is, as a matter of fact."

"But you're wearing a coat," I objected.

"That was because of me pipe," replied the ghost. "They weren't used to tobacco in the Good Old Days, so when I started smoking a pipe, the Abbot up and sees, sez he, 'If this man seems to lorn 'imself into a chimney,' sez he, 'he must be fitted with a coat, because the wind do blow 'is smoke into our eyes something 'orrid.' So they clapped this 'ere coat on me 'ead."

"Was the Abbot strict with you?"

"He was that!" groaned the ghost. "Many a time he's said to me, 'Goslyng, if I miss any more bottles of sweet wine out of the cellar,' he sez, 'I shall consider it my painful dooty to give you the pish."

Ghostly Gossip.



Our Special Reporter, TOM BROWN, has a few words with a Phantom.

And I sez, 'Say not so, for it wasn't me, but a young 'rip of a Friar named Banderer of the Remore.'

"And did he believe you?"

"No, 'e did not," replied the ghost sourly. "He said I carried the evidence of my evil ways in my own nose, which shinneth like a bronco. I could 'ave told 'im that at any rate I didn't sneek off down to a low tavern called the Three Fishers, like some of the brethren in the Remore."

I nodded sympathetically. "How did you become a ghost?" was my next question.

The spectre snorted. "Worked myself to a shadder and fided away," he replied.

"Do you mean to tell me you never died?"

"Not me! There wasn't enough of me left to die, time I'd finished

me day's work. What with acceptin' and polishin' and vingin' the resin-bell and lockin' 'up at night, I never 'ad a minute to call me own. So when I'd wear out me flesh and blood and 'ad become a mere ghost, they said they'd pension me off. Well, I'm still 'ausing this school lookin' for me pension, and I ain't found it yet. You 'aven't seen it lyin' around nowhere, I suppose?"

"Prait not. How long have you been haunting us now?"

"Three 'undred and fifty years," replied Goslyng's Ghost. "And between you and me, I'm gettin' a bit dis'ordered. Seems to me I ain't goin' to get that pension."

"Did you like your work at the manatory here?"

"No, I did not, except now and then, when one of the brothers 'ad to be flogged. Then the Abbot would send for me and say: 'Take him hup, Goslyng!', while he got busy with a birch-staff. The yells of the victims sez moosie in me ears."

"I suppose you quite liked reporting the brothers for being late?"

"Dooty being dooty," replied the ghost, "I did. If a Friar tried to sneek in after lockin' I reported 'im, and he got 100 lines of manuscript to write. Served 'im right. All Friars oughter 'ave been drowned at birth, that's what I see."

"From something in your conversation," I murmured, "I have an idea that William Gosling, our present porter, must be a relation. How you his great-grandfather?"

"Me?" shrilled the ghost indignantly. "Certingly not! Wot if yer mean? He's MY great-grandfather! He look on the job when I fided out!"

At which I gave a start, and woke up to find myself in bed.

The ghost had vanished - probably to look for his pension. And if the ghost's great-grandfather reads these lines, I shall have 100 more to do when he reports me!

WANTED DESPERATELY by Margery Woods, Harlequin Cottage, South Street, Scalby, Scarborough, YO13 0QR. Tel. 0723 365876: "GLOOPS, THE COMIC CAT".

(**Editor's Note:** There is no FORUM this month but I thought readers would like to see this letter from our (possibly) youngest reader, Richard Burgon, of Alwoodley, Leeds.)

I love the Collectors Digest. I don't really like the articles that tell of "the second Wharton the Rebel series" though. This is because I think it takes the stories and re-writes them. It's a bit like reading a children's version of "A Midsummer Nights Dream" - not the same.

I love "Gems of Hamiltonia" - it makes me really laugh! I also like the readers' opinions and letters and I really loved the recent articles on "Dr. Who" as I am a big fan of the programme.

Your column is really warm and friendly but I don't like the picture of the typewriter you use - I much prefer the girl reading in front of the fire (much more friendly than the austere old typewriter). That is just my opinion though...

Do you know anything about Richmal Crompton's other schoolboy creation? I think his name is Jimmy. I would like to know more about the character and why Richmal Crompton created him, and the success rate of the "Jimmy" stories.



"EVEN IF YOU FORGOT THE
LINES I GAVE YOU —
DO NOT FORGET TO ORDER
YOUR 'COLLECTORS DIGEST
ANNUAL'!"



FROM JOHN GEAL

Gems of Hamiltonia No. 10 Mr. Prout MAGNET No. 1170

(The Headmaster had been attacked, was now absent, and the school needed a new Temporary Head.)

"Mr. Prout did not look exactly, as pleased as punch. But there was undoubtedly a new loftiness in his manner, a new pompousness in the carriage of his head, a complacent smile on his fat features.

More and more it had been borne in on Mr. Prout's mind that the sad and regrettable late occurrence had opened a path for him, in which he was destined to exhibit his true greatness of character.

All Mr. Prout had ever needed, in order to show what a great man he was, was opportunity.

Now it seemed that the opportunity had come. In the list of great Headmasters, the name of Paul Prout was going to shine like a bright particular star; at least, Mr. Prout hoped so.

The Headmastership of Greyfriars was a much sought-after post. The emoluments were very generous; it was one of the richest "plums" in the scholastic profession.

But Mr. Prout, to do him justice, was not thinking of that aspect of the case, though that aspect, of course, was gratifying.

He was thinking of the wider stage on which he would be able to display his powers and gifts. He had been, he felt, an unusually strong Form master. But a Form master had only a limited scope. As a headmaster - and Head of such a school as Greyfriars - Prout would be in his proper element. His career, he was sure, would be a remarkable one.

There had been great headmasters before Prout; just as there had been great generals before Agamemnon. But the greatest of them was going to fade into insignificance in comparison with Prout.

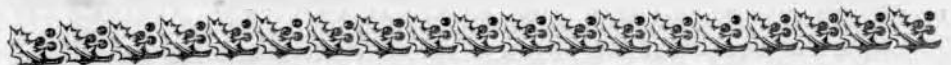
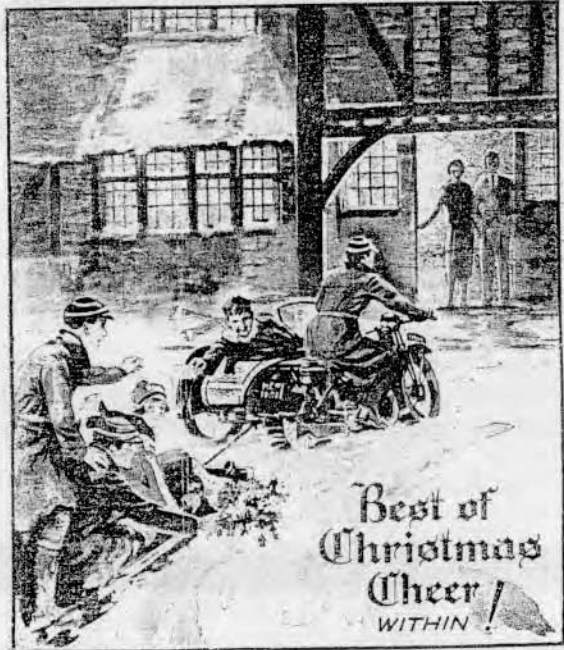
So it was no wonder that, deeply as he sympathised with the Head, Mr. Prout smiled an ineffable smile.

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The MODERN BOY

EVERY MONDAY. No. 143.
Week Ending December 13th, 1932. Vol. 6.

2



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THE SCHOOLGIRL

EVERY SATURDAY

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No. 282. Vol. 11.

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