

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 49

No. 578

FEBRUARY 1995

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT



FRIENDLY GATHERINGS

Soon after the C.D. came into being in 1946, the Old Boys Book Clubs began. It has often been said by their members that these are 'the friendliest clubs of all', a description with which I heartily concur. In this issue of the C.D. you will see that both the Northern and London Clubs, who have prepared very appealing programmes this

year, are inviting enquiries and membership applications from C.D. readers. I feel sure too that the Cambridge, Midland and South Western clubs will always be pleased to hear from readers in their localities. Despite inevitable changes in personnel over the decades, the chummy-study-tea atmosphere of all the clubs survives and flourishes. Programmes of talks, discussions, games and quizzes provide lively stimulation as well as happy nostalgia, and members come from almost all age groups.

THE NINETEEN FORTIES

Because 1995 will mark the 50th anniversary of the ending of the Second World War, there is bound to be much personal and public looking back to the



Oliver Rokison as William Brown (*photo, BBC*)



Listening to Churchill (*photo, Hulton Deutsch*)

'forties. The spate of books, articles and radio and T.V. features about this period has already started and it will be intriguing to see how authentically the real mood is recapitulated. I hope and believe that the long held media tendency to look back with jaundiced and sneering hindsight has recently begun to change, so that a more true picture of the aspirational nature as well as the turbulent challenge of the 1940s might now be recorded for a new generation. (It is interesting to see, from the pictures adjacent, how the Royal Festival Hall's publicity for its *Voicebox* 1940s programmes uses both past and recent images. You will see that I have been invited to speak on children's books of the period.)

I was struck by Mark Taha's question in last month's C.D. about what we read after favourite papers such as the *Magnet* folded in 1940. As well as the *Girls' Crystal*, which carried stories from the same group of writers as the *Schoolgirl* (whose demise I so much lamented) I turned to the *Girl's Own Paper*. This was initially because of W.E. Johns' serial WORRALS OF THE WAAFS and its equally addictive sequels, but I also enjoyed its stories and real life features about teenage girls' adventures on the Home Front. I maintain that the G.O.P., in print and pictures, provides a fuller record than any established historical account of what it was like to grow up during the Second World War.

I hope that other C.D. readers will respond to Mark Taha's request for information about their wartime reading. For many of us, of course, the forties marked the change from juvenile to adult reading... but to whom and to where did we move on immediately after Greyfriars and Cliff House?

As always, I look forward to your comments.

MARY CADOGAN

IN PRAISE OF ROOKWOOD

by Geoff Lardner

(With acknowledgements to The Museum Press's Charles Hamilton Companion No. 5, to which I owe most of the factual information in the following though not, even where they coincide, the opinions expressed.)

Rookwood stands third in the order of the many schools originating in the fertile brain of Charles Hamilton and thus probably fourth of all the Amalgamated Press schools, St. Frank's exact place among the leaders being a matter of personal choice.

Rookwood actually received its first mention in *Magnet* No. 357, of December 12th, 1914, when Bob Cherry stated that, while out on a bike ride, he had seen the junior football team practising. The fact that Greyfriars was in Kent and that Rookwood was subsequently found to be located in Hampshire owes more to the elasticity of Charles Hamilton's Geography than to Bob's prowess as a cyclist!

The first story appeared in *Boy's Friend* No. 715 (February 20th, 1915) and the series continued until No. 1298 (April 24th, 1926). Many were reprinted in the *Popular*, as were

some in the Gem, where a few new stories also appeared, and many in the Schoolboy's Own Library.

In the first story "The Rivals of Rookwood", a new boy, Jimmy Silver, met the three Tommies, Dodd, Cook and Doyle, on the train. Rookwood has two sides, Classical and Modern - sides rather than houses, because whereas at St. Jim's the houses are simply where the boys live, at Rookwood they also follow different curricula. The three Tommies were Moderns and Jimmy was going to be a Classical, so there was a fight - a common situation with the introduction of a hero to a Hamilton school. (In Magnet No. 1, Harry Wharton fights with Frank Nugent on the train on his way to join Greyfriars.) On arriving at Coombe station Jimmy Silver drives a horse-brake to school in a manner reminiscent of Lord Mauleverer's arrival at Greyfriars in Magnet no. 184.

There were many other repetitions of plot, and indeed Rookwood was on several occasions used for a trial run of a plot which was to appear later in one of the two senior schools. Nevertheless, once the pattern settled down and Jimmy Silver took his rightful place as leader of the lower school, Rookwood assumed a distinctive character of its own, one which I have always found very much to my taste, preferring these stories to all save the best of the Greyfriars series and to pretty well all of St. Jim's.

In characterisation, Rookwood falls short of Hamilton's highest achievements - Wharton, Vernon-Smith, Quelch - but nevertheless has a number of distinctive characters. Of the three best known junior leaders, Harry Wharton is a very strongly drawn personality, with considerable depths, but he is often far from likeable, while I have always considered Tom Merry a failure as a credible character. No boy could be as perfect in all ways as he. But Jimmy Silver is just the sort of chap that one would like to be oneself: a fine games player, a born leader and a genuine wit with a great sense of fun.

It is interesting that when the new school was first discussed the editor, H.A. Hinton, wanted the hero named Jack Fisher. Charles Hamilton, who had a sure touch with names, would have none of it and we can reflect on whether Jack Fisher could ever have been quite the man that Jimmy Silver was.

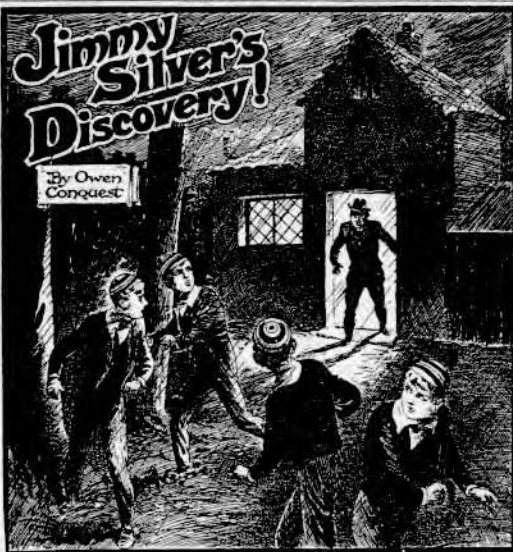
The other principal Rookwood characters are also particularly well-drawn. There are not as many of them as in Greyfriars and St. Jim's so that Charles Hamilton gave himself more room, as it were, to concentrate on a few. Also, mistakes he made in the other two schools - having two St. Jim's Junior leaders in Blake and Merry, and cluttering up the Remove at Greyfriars with a host of minor and often unlikely characters such as Dupont, Wun Lung, Squiff, Delarey, Morgan, Kipps, Rake, Russell, etc., who could be used only very rarely in the stories - probably taught him to be more careful in selecting and developing his prominent characters when he set about his last major school.

The "Co." of leading juniors, the Fistical Four, included, apart from Jimmy Silver himself, Arthur Edward Lovell, George Raby and Arthur Newcombe.

Lovell is Silver's best chum and his No. 2. Stubborn and pig-headed and sometimes failing to see the obvious, he has less common sense than Johnny Bull, who some say was the model for him, but more initiative, often following his own line rather than just grumbling. He has much more sense and is a far better games player than Coker, with whom he is also sometimes compared. He is in fact a very credible character, often getting himself into humorous scrapes but much more than a simple figure of fun.

Raby and Newcome are less well-drawn but still clearly defined characters. Raby is stolid, not particularly bright but loyal and pugnacious, while Newcome is quiet, thoughtful and capable.

The central character in many stories is Valentine Mornington, the Vernon-Smith of Rookwood. Mornington, unlike Smithy, is an aristocrat, but they have a great deal in common - recklessness, bravery, a disregard for authority and a taste for the seamy side of life. Each is proud and contemptuous of weakness and each has a pal who acts as a conscience: Vernon-Smith has Redwing and Mornington Kit Erroll. Each has a good side



(Artist: G.W. Wakefield)

to his character which, when motivated, will do the right thing without regard for the consequences. Mornington's greatest moment comes when he befriends a waif, 'Erbert, only to discover that he is the long-lost heir to the Mornington fortune. After a struggle with himself he does not in the end suppress the news but forfeits all his money, deriving much sardonic amusement from the desertion of the toadies who have surrounded him till now.

Except for Tommy Dodd, the Modern side junior captain, there are few other permanently prominent characters in the Fourth Form. The black sheep, a necessary part of any Hamilton school, Peele, Lattrey, Gower, Topham and Leggett, do not any of them compare in sly cleverness with Harold Skinner, one of the most interesting members of the Greyfriars Remove in my view, or in viciousness with Cecil Ponsonby, while the fat boy, Tubby Muffin, lacks Bunter's devious cunning and overbearing cheek and never dominates the stories in the same way. There was an attempt to introduce a Grundy/Coker figure to Rookwood in Peter Cuthbert Gunner, who arrived in Boy's Friend No. 1088, the last Fourth-former to appear, but the attempt was never really successful. Teddy "Putty" Grace - so called because he is soft - a great practical joker, occasionally figures in a story.

In the early stories Jimmy Silver had to wrest the junior captaincy from Adolphus Marmaduke Smythe, the leading "knut" of the Shell - a character based on Cecil Reginald Temple with a touch of Cecil Ponsonby added. These stories echo the rivalry between the Upper Fourth and the Remove at Greyfriars and also Harry Wharton's early rivalry with Bulstrode for the captaincy of the Remove.

The captain of the Fifth, Edward Hanson, is also a useful plot-creating character. Again, like Cecil Reginald Temple, he has a high opinion of himself and from time to time has to be taken down a peg by his fourth-form enemies.

In the Sixth Form Bulkeley, the captain, is, like all Hamilton's captains, a splendid example of young manhood and a model for the rest of the school. His friend Neville, like Gwynne of Greyfriars and Darrell of St. Jim's, is cast in the same mould, while the rascally and vicious prefects so necessary for the stories are Knowles, the Captain of the Modern side, his friend Catesby and Carthew of the Classical Sixth.

Some of the masters are especially interesting. Considering the number of schools he invented, Charles Hamilton developed the characters of surprisingly few masters. Quelch, of course, Prout and to a much lesser extent Hacker, at Greyfriars, had clearly delineated characters to the extent that they were often leading figures in the stories, but this was not so at St. Jim's, where only very rarely did a master move out of the background. Even Ratcliff was more of caricature than a character, and not particularly believable.

At Rookwood, however, one or two of the masters are unique. Mr. Bootles is perhaps the nearest thing Charles Hamilton ever did to a real schoolmaster of the best type. Kindly, even gentle in his outlook, he is nevertheless quietly firm and very much a man of principle. There was a famous story in which Dr. Chisholme sentenced Jimmy Silver, on circumstantial evidence alone, to a flogging. Mr. Bootles told Jimmy, before the assembled school, not to go up for his flogging. On the Head demanding Mr. Bootles' resignation, all the masters went on strike. It was sad when Charles Hamilton was forced to write Mr. Bootles out of the stories because, it was said, there was a character at St. Kit's named Bootles and the editor thought this might lead to confusion. His replacement, Dicky Dalton, although supposedly very popular with the boys, never made a significant impact in the stories. The method of writing him out was ingenious. He inherited a fortune and resigned to lead a life of leisure.

Dr. Chisholm is also unique amongst Hamilton headmasters. Drs. Locke and Holmes are men of tremendous dignity and stature, almost perfect in their detachment from human shortcomings. Dr. Chisholm, however, whilst sharing their scholarly gentlemanliness, is also somewhat short-tempered and arrogant on occasions, causing him to convict a boy on unsatisfactory evidence or to persist in a wrong-headed view in the face of all arguments to the contrary. Anybody who has ever had close dealings with a headmaster will recognise this as a much more believable portrayal.

The stories themselves gain by usually being shorter than those of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, perhaps six or seven chapters compared with sixteen to twenty in the Magnet and Gem. Although Charles Hamilton wrote English prose of a consistently high quality unapproached by anyone else who wrote in quantity for the juvenile market, he did often fill out his longer stories with a certain amount of repetitive detail. D'Arcy choosing a tie, the Famous Five discussing football or Coker being ragged would often account for half

Tubby slipped his fat fingers up the sleeve and jerked the card down. Mr. Dalton stared at the fat junior. "Stuffin!" he thundered. "What is that in your hand?"



Picture by Savile Lumley

a chapter and slow the action considerably. But in the Rookwood stories there was no space for padding and they moved much more rapidly. In particular, when a series was repeated as one story in a single issue of The Schoolboys' Own Library, it tended, without any abridgement, to pack in more action than a Magnet or Gem reprint of comparable length.

Because they are shorter they lend themselves well to humour. Many Rookwood stories are light-hearted, giving scope for some of Charles Hamilton's wittiest writing, and it is here that Jimmy Silver's wit and Arthur Edward Lovell's pig-headedness show to best advantage. On the other hand, when adventure and mystery were the order of the day the shortness of the stories gave them punch.

I am not old enough to have read The Boys' Friend. It ceased publication as a weekly paper when I was about four years old, some eighteen months after the last Rookwood story (although a monthly small format fourpenny version continued through the 1930's, similar to the Schoolboys' Own Library but tending to concentrate on adventure stories). Apart from a very small number written for the Holiday Annuals, as serials in the Gem or for the post-war Mandeville publications, no new Rookwood stories were written after 1926. Thus my own acquaintance with them came from Holiday Annuals, the Popular, the S.O.L. and, more recently, Howard Baker reprints. As a result I visualise the characters as portrayed by Savile Lumley, a fine artist; the older stories are always slightly spoilt for me by the drawings of G.W. Wakefield, which I find rather reminiscent of "Chicks Own".

It is part of Charles Hamilton's genius that each of his many schools has its own distinctive identity in spite of many obvious similarities. The Rookwood stories may lack the immortal episodes and characters of Greyfriars or St. Jim's but they possess a charm and wit all of their own and are well worthy to stand alongside them.

FAREWELL TO OLD FRIENDS

We have been saddened recently to learn of the passing of C.D. readers and hobbyists Mabel McKay of New Zealand, John Bartholomew of Australia and Clarence Raven, of Ulverston. Our sincere condolences to their families, and we are grateful to Darrell Swift, Bob Acraman and Betty Hopton for informing us about their passing. There is no doubt that they will all be much missed by family, friends and members of our collecting circle.

WANTED: Boys Friend Paper (Rookwood) Nos. 1124, 1125, 1126, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1130, 1131, 1132. Also S.O.L. No. 138. John Gibbs, Wells Cottage, East Combe, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset. TA4 3H4.

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.



ROBERT W. STORY (Mississauga, Canada): I would like to say that I find the 1994 C.D. Annual the very best C.D.A. I have ever received in all my many years of receiving very nice annuals. This, without detracting in any way from the previous lovely issues, is quite the best.

PAT SIMONSON (London): Having very much enjoyed all the annuals I have received so far, I thank you for yet another lovely edition. I do particularly enjoy the childhood Christmas memories like the first item in the annual, DEEP AND CRISP AND EVEN, and overall it was the usual good mixture.

MARTIN WATERS (Wellingborough): We really enjoyed the annual which was truly first rate, the items that we particularly enjoyed are: Memories of the 'Eagle' by Norman Wright, Sexton Blake as 'Cupid' by Bette Colby, 'The Decision' by Tony Cook (possibly the best item in the whole book), 'Quelch at a Disadvantage' by Roger Jenkins and 'Father Christmas Where Are You?' by Margery Woods. We particularly like the illustrations of 'Teddy Tail' and his pals.

(Editor's Note: I am glad to note that our Annual seems to have struck a happy note with many readers.)

DARRELL SWIFT (Leeds): Re. the letter from Gordon Hudson in the January C.D. concerning the publisher Merrett with whom we associate the Sparshott series by Frank Richards.

I have in my collection similar publications in the same style by Merrett being: Headland House Series; Detective Series; Romance Series. All the books I have are written under one pseudonym or other of Charles Hamilton but I have never seen any other author's work issued by this publisher.

LESLIE LASKEY (Brighton): In the January C.D. Peter Mahony enquired which story chronicled the departure of Jack Drake and Dick Rodney from Greyfriars. The Greyfriars stories featuring Drake and Rodney were written for the BOYS' HERALD (the paper formerly called the "GREYFRIARS HERALD"). Jack Drake first met Ferrers Locke in issue no. 89 when the detective visited Greyfriars. On the same day Drake unwittingly became involved with two jewel thieves while he was out of gates. His astute reactions helped to have the thieves arrested. Ferrers Locke was sufficiently impressed to invite Drake to visit him in London at some time in the future, if he cared to do so. It was in the next issue of the paper that Drake learned that his father was financially ruined and that he would have to leave school. He travelled to London and called on Ferrers Locke. Following a testing interview Drake became the detective's assistant. The subsequent stories dealt with crime.

Jack Drake, of course, was reintroduced to Greyfriars readers in the "MAGNET" in later years in his new capacity as a detective. Frank Richards found no new role, however, for Dick Rodney. Readers of my generation did meet him when some of the old "HERALD" stories were reprinted in the "GEM" in 1938/39.



THE TRIBULATIONS OF AN EDITOR Part I:

by Bill Lofts

Many readers think that editing a boys' paper was easy just sitting behind a desk in a large, comfortable arm-chair; accepting various authors' manuscripts, subbing them, then simply handling them over to the printers; letting his sub-editor sub the proofs, as well as answering readers' letters. Having a most reliable artist - such as Eric Parker and that was it!

Probably of all editorial offices at The Amalgamated Press the *Union Jack* in pre-war days was the most difficult to manage because the stories had such a great number of contributors. The editor was H.W. Twyman, whom I met quite a few times in the late fifties and sixties. (In issues of the *Collectors Digest* I have already written several stories of incidents relating to that accepted Golden period of *The Union Jack*.)

As fate would have had it, no less than three of his star writers one could call wayward and colourful, to say the least. Gwyn Evans was slapdash, and his stories needed an awful lot of rewriting. At times there was more revision than type. (A full account of this was given in C.D. 136, April 1958 in my article 'Don't Forget the Chef'.) There were problems also with the real top writer, G.H. Teed, but for different reasons.

He just used to disappear for months on end, usually to Paris, where, being a French Canadian, he could speak French fluently. Often he was in trouble with the authorities, when Twyman was sent over the water to pay a fine, and bail him out. So great an attraction were his stories to the *Union Jack* readers that A.P. would do this.

Robert Murray Graydon, son of the more famous William, was a different kettle of fish, as he was simply lazy in writing his stories. He created *The Criminals' Confederation*, *Dr. Satira*, *Paul Cynos*, *Mr. Reece*, and *Detective Inspector Coutts of Scotland Yard*. (It is worth recording that his father

'Lewis Jackson'



Criminals' Confederation, Dr. Satira, Paul Cynos, Mr. Reece, and Detective Inspector Coutts of Scotland Yard. (It is worth recording that his father created Mrs. Bardell and Pedro.) Readers could not get enough of stories with these characters. Twyman had to keep sending his junior sub-editor down to Brighton to speed the author up with his long overdue stories. Graydon, who died at Brighton in 1937 aged only 47, was later found to have had a serious illness, so there probably was some excuse for him; likewise Evans who had a terminal illness and died when only 39 in 1938.

On the other hands there no question that the star of punctuality was E.S. Brooks. He was always months ahead with stories, beautifully typed by his wife Frances, which needed hardly any revision. The same applied to the *Nelson Lee Library*, the author being months ahead of schedule. There was never any trouble with Eric Parker, who supplied the weekly Blake covers at about four a time. For the S.B.L. monthly Eric told me that more often than not he used to deliver six at a time. However, there was some difficulty regarding the illustrator, Arthur Jones, not because he was lazy, but simply that he was unable to deliver copy. His absence from home meant that he was confined somewhere in North London, where a messenger was sent from Fleetway House to collect this material.

Other problems involved some of the old writers, such as William Murray Graydon and W.R. Home-Gall (father of the famous one in the *Champion* and *Triumph* field). Both had been writing almost from the beginning and were now very old fashioned for the mid-twenties readers. Despite instructions to modernise their style, they simply could not do so. Loth to discard such loyal writers for the firm, the Editor eventually had to drop them and several others, because younger, fresh writers were appearing all the time.

One writer who could be said to be an old stager, was Jack Lewis whose character was The Master Mummer, and who kept up to date with things. Unfortunately, and as always, there was a big snag concerning his output. Details of this, and a probable answer to Derek Hinrich's recent article in *Blakiana*, will be given in the second part of this article.

ORIGINAL MAGNETS REQUIRED: 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 417, 421, 424, 426, 427, 430, 432, 436, 437, 438, 440, 443, 444, 445, 448, 449, 451, 454, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 462, 464, 549, 550, 552, 557, 562, 564, 565, 566, 588, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 616, 621, 639, 640, 642, 643, 647, 650, 653, 654, 668, 659.
ALSO FOR SALE: in good condition but minus dust-jackets; Howard Baker Magnet Volumes number 10, 11, 15, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28. Also G.H.A. 1978 and 1981, and H. Baker H.A. 1974.

DAVID BALL

42 BARNWELL, MELKSHAM, WILTS, SN12 7DG.

WANTED: Sexton Blake 5th Series in Mayflower Paper Backs. Numbers:- 7, 12, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 27, 30, 31, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43. J. Ashley, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants. PO15 5AH. Telephone 0329/234489.



THE COMIC GENIUS OF EDWY SEARLES BROOKS by Ray Hopkins

I was tempted to change the above working title to something less extravagant but, after a re-reading of the story under discussion, I mean to leave it at the masthead, its message blazing away to all and sundry.

E.S.B. is very proficient at inventing oddballs and in "The Secret of the Old Mill" he has created a real chortler in Professor Sylvester Tucker, the uncle of another cuckoo, Timothy Tucker of the St. Frank's West House Remove. But, before I come to him, I must refer to another character who has long been a member of the cast of St. Frank's and is one of Brooks' most superb laughter raisers. Mention his name and the inevitable smile will crack even this elderly gent's straight face.

This story opens - nothing could put one in a better mood for what is to follow - with one of Edwy's classic confrontations between Handforth Minor and his Housemaster, Mr. Beverley Stokes: Willy being outrageously cheeky and Mr. Stokes enjoying his performance and finding it difficult not to laugh out loud. I have come across these two-handers before and always give myself a mental hug when I realise I am about to encounter another. This one is well up to standard.

The Housemaster is asking Willy about an imposition due to him and being re-herringed off the subject by the introduction by Willy of a squirrel, a ferret and a rat, a veritable natural history session, each creature having its own Christian name, and all, as Mr. Stokes points out to their saucy owner, *persona non grata* in a St. Frank's study. One wonders if Mr. Stokes takes every opportunity to award Willy lines knowing he will not receive them at the time ordered, thus giving him the chance to trot along to Handforth Minor's study in high anticipation of enjoying yet another session of silent inner laughter at the lad's comic ripostes.

The first time I studied the cover of NELSON LEE LIBRARY OS 494 (22 Nov 1924) and realised it was the doughty Willy Handforth I was gazing at, hair standing on end, open-mouthed with terror at the spectral hairy arm clutching at him through the trapdoor, I heard myself singing (Heaven help us all!) Ann's (later Mrs. Kipps') song, "I don't believe a word of it, a single, blinkin' word of it." Why, you ask shuddering, and not only at the singing. Well, what I know of good old Handforth Mi., he'd be more likely to give the arm a swift tug and jump out of the way grinning as the owner took a header through the trapdoor. "Gotcha," Willy would cry triumphantly. But this would have revealed the identity of the mystery man too soon. A brave lad is our Willy (not to be confused with the comic, bucket-squatting Scots lad, "Oor Wullie") and he would surely have that attribute from the example of his older brother, E.O., both at home and at school. Who could be more aggressive and defiant than Edward Oswald?

Why does the mention of him conjure up shadowy figures which remind us (before the punching stops) of Coker and Co. in the MAGNET and Grundy and Co. in the GEM? Is there a threesome, the leader being an aggressive numbskull, in earlier hardback school stories? I have never come across any myself. ("I have, I have!" a waving hand signals from the back of the class. Tell us about it, Brian, please.) Also, do they give the

impression of not appearing to be as on the "qui vive" as their muscular leader, except in their rather greedy acceptance of his largesse in the form of massive "feeds"?

I have commented before on E.S.B.'s spectacular comic success with grotesques. He and Frances (he dictating, she typing) must have had a high old time detailing the introduction of Prof. Tucker into the St. Frank's saga. When the kindly guard at Bannington Station tells him he must change here, the Prof. believes he is being told to change his clothes, a dismaying suggestion as he has no others to change into. When the change is explained to him as a change into the local train for Bellton, the station for St. Frank's, he does so but loses himself in his book on Astronomy. Thus, when the train is backed into the local with more vigour than the driver intended, the absent-minded one is flung forward and, believing he has arrived at Bellton, leaves the station and stops a passer-by, fortunately a patient one, because the Prof. cannot recall who he is, where he is and where he has to get to. He seems to remember that he was going to a school but has no idea of its name. Luckily the passer-by realises he must mean St. Frank's and directs him to go straight ahead in one of those so familiar directions we've all been faced with. "You can't miss it," is implied, if not actually said.

Prof. Tucker finds himself lost on Bannington Moor, confronted by an old mill which reminds him of Astronomy and that he will be enabled to observe more clearly any active stars if he ascends to the top, remembering for once that he has his telescope in his bag.

The odd-looking person he encounters when he reaches the summit of the mill tells him he will be pleased to conduct his visitor to the library, if he will just provide him with his favourite dish, two fried eggs. Not knowing he is addressing someone who appears even more demented than himself, the Prof. gives the man his name and tells him he is the new science master at St. Frank's, and doubtless he is addressing the headmaster. Demented he may be, but the strange looking individual has a much better memory than Prof. Tucker and races down the ladder and out of the mill, bound for St. Frank's, resulting in further jollification for the reader.

There is a parallel scene of inspired comic lunacy when the gentleman from the top of the mill arrives at St. Frank's. Phipps, Archie Glenthorne's valet, who also doubles as a sort of butler in the Head's household staff, announces him to the Head, thus:

"I do not mean to imply, sir, that Professor Tucker is an anti-Prohibitionist. Not at all, sir. But he has apparently met with some misadventure. He is appallingly muddy, and his general condition of untidiness can only be described as acutely distressing."

To say the least! The pseudo Prof. may not be drunk but he is unkempt and filthy to the point of being unpleasantly odiferous to approach. He, however, addresses Dr. Stafford but ruins the effect of his cultured accent by requesting "a bag of monkey nuts and a couple of buns." The Head hastens him away urging an immediate bath. The supposed Professor, while not completely metamorphosing into an animal, immediately drops into an all fours position and in this manner follows Dr. Stafford upstairs. He is later locked in the punishment room where he is discovered asleep on top of the wardrobe.



Professor Sylvester Tucker is under the impression that he has arrived at Bellton.

He is, in fact, an escaped lunatic from Helmford Asylum, and the Bannington Gazette reports he is quite harmless. Any information as to his whereabouts will be rewarded by Ten Pounds, a fact bringing a gleam to the eyes of Reggie Pitt, Handforth and Co., Willy, and sundry others who track down the looney to the old mill and think they've found him until they bump into Timothy Tucker who welcomes the supposed escaped lunatic as his uncle, the new Science Master.

How odd, I thought, when it appeared that this NELSON LEE contained illustrations by two separate artists. I had no trouble discerning those done by resident artist Arthur Jones, but a larger one with a splendidly detailed picturization of the mind-losing Professor Tucker seemed not to be done by him. His crinkled-up forehead, his improperly buttoned overcoat pointed to a more careful delineation than one found further along in the story. But, to my surprise, a faint A.J. on the drawing seems to prove that Arthur Jones did indeed do this one as well. Were the initials appended to just this one drawing but not to any of the others, put there to let Mr. Jones appear to be saying, "See, I can do it when they give me enough time. The trouble is they're always in such a rush....."



THE SOOPER

by Ian Godden

The Sooper was another Edgar Wallace policeman who deserved a dozen or more novels. Supt. Patrick J. Minter was an eccentric very much in the mould of Elk whom he resembled in many ways. He was, "...tall and angular and very untidy. His suit had been old in pre-war days, and now, cleaned and turned, was a mockery of clothes." What a sight he must have been when he turned up for dinner with the lawyer and criminologist Mr. Cardew in BIG FOOT, "...the ill-fitting dress-suit he wore must have been bequeathed to him by a long-dead relative, or possibly purchased from a waiter when it was long past restaurant use." However the Sooper carries himself like an aristocrat even if, "the tie about his collar had worked itself round half-way to his ear."

Sooper is in charge of 'I' Division, a then rural area of London, on the border with Sussex. At the start of the book we are told that Sooper had been transferred to this bucolic backwater because, "...he was a source of constant irritation to headquarters. He respected nobody...he was polite to nobody. He wrangled, he argued, and occasionally he defied." Later on, one of the Deputy Commissioners reveals that the Sooper had requested the transfer and had not been exiled at all.

Sooper is uncouth, boorish, speaks with many errors of pronunciation and generally acts like the village idiot but most of it is a pose because he has a twinkle in the eye and, indeed, does his best laughing with his eyes. So, old Sooper is a bit of an actor; for all of his posing and posturing he is as shrewd a policeman as one could want.

He is, naturally enough, a bachelor and lives in a police cottage next to the station. Apart from his chickens, his pride and joy is his extremely noisy motorcycle, variously known as Firefly or Hawk. Anyone up to mischief has plenty of time to clear off because this awful machine can be heard for miles; how the neighbours put up with it is a minor mystery.

Who would have thought that the cynical old Sooper would have become a writer of stories about his police exploits? It was a splendid idea to have the Sooper write the four stories in THE LONE HOUSE MYSTERY. They are just what we would expect from him, written in a terse prose with lots of the dry Sooper humour. I wish that Wallace had used him more often but I'm glad he used him at all.

MORCOVE MUSINGS

No. 3 of an occasional series

by Dennis L. Bird

(NEW READERS BEGIN HERE)

In the October 1994 "CD" we read of the poverty-stricken Barton family in Lancashire. Joe Barton was a mill-worker crippled by unsafe machinery; his wife had to become a charwoman to provide money to keep the family going - for there were three children as well, Betty, Doris, and little Joe. The wealthy but unpleasant Grandways family were the cause of all the Bartons' ills: Mr. Grandways owned the factory, and charged exorbitant rent for the Barton hovel, while Mrs. Grandways paid only a pittance for her cleaning. Their two girls Cora and Judith lost no opportunity to make the Bartons feel inferior. Then everything changed as if by magic. Mr. Barton's brother, who had emigrated to Canada, returned a rich man; he bought a fine house for the family, and paid for Betty to go to renowned Morcove School in North Devon. NOW READ ON.



If Betty thought her new life would be a happy one, she was soon disillusioned. On the day of her arrival at Morcove, Miss Redgrave took her to study No. 7, which she was to share with two other girls. And who should they be? None other than Cora and Judith Grandways, suddenly transferred from Ribbleton's Private Academy for the Daughters of Gentlefolk.

The Morcove author "Marjorie Stanton" (Horace Phillips) soon showed what a sturdy character he had created in Betty Barton. She valiantly held her own when the Grandways revealed to the rest of the form that she was "Our charwoman's daughter at home." Even more damning, apparently, was their disclosure that Betty had been to a Council school. "I say, you know, a jape's a jape; but don't carry it too far," said one girl. "She can't really be a Council school girl. Why, her face is clean!"

In the 1990s that dialogue must sound pretty unconvincing; class distinctions matter so much less nowadays, thank goodness. Yet those of us who grew up in the 1920s and 1930s can recall the social barriers of the time. To the middle-class parent, a Council school was only one degree better than a Borstal. The thought of a girl from there going to a famous public school and mixing with their own well-brought-up daughters was horrifying.

Horace Phillips handles this scene well, bringing out the seemingly unbridgeable differences between Betty and her new form-mates. She combines humility with a proper self-respect, in a rather fine speech:

No. 1 OF A NEW PAPER! GRAND PLATE GIVEN FREE! OVER £100 IN PRIZES!

The Schoolgirls' Own



NOT WANTED! "You can clear out, Betty Barton!" exclaimed the snooty girl. "We've no use for Ormsall School kids here." (See "Scorned by the School" in this issue.)

2^D

No. 1, Vol. 1.] PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY. (Week Ending February 5th, 1921.

"I haven't come here with any big ideas about myself. I'm a new girl, and I expect to be sat upon a bit, like a new girl anywhere. But I've got a bit of pride.... I and my people are as good, any day in the week".

"What utter rubbish!" shriled Cora Grandways. "Our people have been rich for years!"

"And how have you used your riches all that time?" flashed back Betty. "What about all the slums in Ribbleton that your father owns - the slums that helped to make his fortune! Has he ever used his riches to make others happy? For all their poverty, my parents have given far more pleasure to other folk than yours ever have, and I'm proud of them."

That is strong stuff - quite political, too - for a schoolgirl's story paper. It shows how deeply Phillips identified himself with his characters and their problems. Writing within a strict stylistic formula that inevitably seems rather dated, he nevertheless engenders real feeling.

After that first dramatic clash with her fellow pupils, Betty was summoned to see the Form captain. In view of later developments (Betty herself was to fill that position for most of the next 17 years), this was a curious meeting.

Betty optimistically thought that this girl must be a scholar with "a sense of fair play, a sporting spirit, and a fineness of character that was above paltry snobbery."

She was, of course, in for a shock. "She saw a tall, slim girl lolling on a couch, with a very bored look in her eyes, the lids of which had a languid droop." For those readers who know only the latter-day Morcove stories of the '30s, there is piquancy in the captain's name. For she is Paula Creel, of the unpronounceable "r"s ("Bai Jove! I want a stwong girl, don't you know"). This is not the "beloved duffer" of the late stories, who by then had become a devoted friend of Betty; the early Paula was a much less amiable personality. She showed her spiteful nature by pretending to believe that Betty was a new school servant, sent to spring-clean her study. Sharply corrected by Betty ("I'm a new girl"), Paula lamented that Morcove's headmistress Miss Somerfield was "jolly democratic, and this is what comes of it" - a washerwoman's daughter joining the form.

Poor Betty! That first long instalment of February 5th, 1921, ended with her firm Churchillian resolve: "Let the whole term go by, without bringing me a single friend! I'll manage - alone!"

"ZOUNDS" QUOTHE HE! a look at Jeffery Farnol

by Donald V. Campbell

Jeffery Farnol specialised in period, and modern, romantic adventure fiction. He is, by any standards, a sentimentalist and a provider of "happy" endings, or, at least, "moral" endings. Much of his output was historical and revolved around piratical buccaneers or highwaymen as in *Black Bartlemy's Treasure*, *Martin Conisby's Vengeance*. *The Broad Highway*. His collected short stories followed a similar pattern best seen in *The Shadow & other stories*, and *A Matter of Business*.

The dustwrapper "blurb" for some of his stories can place him best - *The Amateur Gentleman - a tale of the Regency*. *The Loring Mystery - a mystery of "Merrie England"*. *Black Bartlemy's Treasure - a stirring pirate story*.

Born in England in 1878, Farnol wrote his first book, *The Broad Highway*, in between painting scenery at the Astor Theatre in New York. The Americans rejected the book as "too English" but it was eventually published by the London house of Sampson Low in



1910. As was the fashion in those days many of his books carried not only finely painted dustwrappers but were illustrated in colour or line within. *The Broad Highway*, already mentioned, was particularly well endowed with pictures. His usual line artists were one or other of the Brock Brothers who were noted for the accuracy of their illustration of period costume. Farnol's novels were strong on adventure although romantic - the hero of *Black Bartlemy's Treasure* and *Martin Conisby's Vengeance* was locked into two romantic affrays - this despite being marooned on a desert island! (For those who are interested in radio drama both these novels were well produced on Radio 4 but with a "real-time" gap of a year between the first and second parts; this meant that the hero, Martin, was languishing, both in the story and on the air-waves, in a state of abandonment. Waiting for the second part of the story to turn up was rather like listening out for the second shoe to drop.)

Nevertheless these two (along with *Adam Penfeather, Buccaneer*) give a good indication of Farnol's direct and adventurous storytelling. He was also a capable short-story writer with a bias towards the "twist-in-the-tail" denouement.

A modern dress example of the unexpected is the sentimental but moral short-story of the gangster, Spider Molloy, in *"The Quiet Exit"*. Spider Molloy is on the run and takes rooms with a widow who has a little girl. Spider is both attracted to the woman and finds fatherly love for the girl. He forswears his past and is ready to settle down to a life of goodness (yes, it is a trifle cloying) but he still worries about those hunting him. All seems well but he drops dead when the girl playfully sticks a toy gun in his back and shouts "bang!" He had a weak heart!

Two things perhaps work against Farnol today. His sentimentality, as evidenced above, and his ponderous use of "Mummerzet" dialect coupled with an over-reliance on too many "quothe hes", "zounds", "thankees" and "begads" which, for example, clog up *Beltane the Smith*. His invention of *Jasper Shrig. Bow Street Runner* is a fair example of an "Early" detective but he, poor chap, also suffers from language problems:

"...*A desprit willam! Votever you hear, votever you see, don't speak 'til I give the word.....Ecod. Dick...I'm diddled again, by Goles I am!*" *Character painting by words?* You can pick up Farnol up, fairly cheaply, at bookfairs and second-hand bookshops. Save him for a dark, cold and windy night and light the candles.

HAMILTON'S COLONIALS by Peter Mahony

A Strong feature of Charles Hamilton's school stories was the inclusion of Colonial characters. Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood each had several scholars who originated from the outposts of the British Empire. Nearly all of them were boys of sporting ability and, though most settled into secondary roles in the sagas, one or two became definite 'leading lights'.

First on the scene (Magnet No. 6 - March, 1908) was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. Originally a student at Herr Rosenblau's foreign academy, Beechwood, 'Inky' soon transferred to Greyfriars, where he became an indispensable member of the "Famous Four." (Johnny Bull, who converted the four into five, came along at a later date.) At first Hurree Singh suffered 'stick' from Bulstrode and Skinner - chiefly on account of his complexion, but also because of his 'terrific' English. Interestingly, aspersions cast on his oral mauling of the language offended him more than the insult 'nigger!' Throughout the Greyfriars canon, Hurree Singh persisted with his flowery speech - he never descended to the terse dialogue of the natives! (When, as a teacher, I began to deal with Commonwealth immigrants during the 1970s, I realised how apt Hamilton's rendering of 'Inky' English was. Many immigrants, particularly the Hindus, displayed a wider, quainter vocabulary than their English counterparts. Try reading 'Inky English' aloud in the slightly lilting sing-song tones of an Indian. It sounds remarkably authentic.)

Hurree Singh had several excellent qualities. He was keen-witted and shrewd; courageous and determined; tolerant and good-humoured. As a cricketer, he was formidable - only an average bat, but a demon bowler. He also played football, developing into a speedy left-winger; and he could hold his own in rough-and-tumbles with the best of them. Through most of the stories, he was the epitome of the anglicised Indian, ever ready to 'play the game' and uphold the British way of life. In some respects, he appeared more English than the English.

However, 'Inky' possessed some well concealed Indian traits. In the 'India' series (Magnets 960 - 970) he surprised his friends by his implacable reaction to the designs of Baji Rao on the throne of Bhanipur. Wharton was quite shocked when Inky made it clear that he, Hurree Singh, ruled in Bhanipur and was quite ready to inflict the death penalty on his enemies. Certainly, Inky was the one of the Famous Five most ready to fight fire with fire. Several times during their adventures, his ruthless streak got them out of trouble. Sparing enemies was not his forte. At the other end of the scale, his appreciation of his friends was lavish. Even Bunter benefited from his generosity.

There are solid grounds for assuming that Hamilton based Hurree Singh on the great cricketer, Ranjitsinhji. The Jam Sahib of Nawanager was educated at Rajkumar college (a westernised Public School) and at Trinity College, Cambridge. He played cricket for the University, Sussex and England during the period 1893-1912. His fame and opulent lifestyle must have been well-known to Hamilton by the time the Magnet was launched. A cricketing Nabob provided a picturesque element to the rich panoply of Greyfriars characters.

The first St. Jim's Colonial was not a Hamilton creation. In a 'substitute' story (Gem No. 57 March 1909) Editor Percy Griffith introduced Clifton Dane from Canada. Dane, part Red Indian, had hypnotic powers, but Hamilton never developed the character. He preferred to leave Dane in a minor role as a long-suffering study-mate of Bernard Glyn, St. Jim's flamboyant inventor.

It would seem, however, that Griffith had stirred Hamilton's imagination. A few weeks later (Gem 69, 5th June 1909) Harry Noble arrived. Noble, nicknamed 'Kangaroo', was not particularly welcomed by Tom Merry & Co. A good deal of conniving took place to avoid having the newcomer billeted in various well established studies. Noble, a resilient youth, transferred from School House to New House and from Shell to Fourth form studies without appearing unduly mortified. In each new setting, he contrived to keep his end up, scoring emphatically over the rather patronising old hands.

For a start, Noble emerged from Rylcombe Station leading a kangaroo! The animal, in transit to a private zoo, was quite tame, but Merry, Blake & Co. were disconcerted when Noble seemed ready to take it to St. Jim's. They were somewhat 'miffed' when they realised he was pulling their legs.

At St. Jim's, George Gore indulged in some offensive remarks about "Bushrangers". He was taken aback when he received some Australian plain-speaking. Words turned to blows - and Gore finished flat on his back. Later, Noble was allocated to Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three objected and Monty Lowther undertook to eject the intruder. A brief tussle ended with Lowther sprawling in the corridor! Manners tried his luck - with the same sad result. Tom Merry, always reluctant to row, then took Noble on and a battle royal ensued. Mr. Railton broke it up and removed Noble from the study. Alterations to a spare room (later to be Study No. 11) were incomplete, so the Australian had to endure temporary sojourns in the new House (with Figgins & Co.) and then in the celebrated Study No. 6 with Blake & Co. In each refuge his Australian 'bounce' upset the old inhabitants.

With the cricket season in full swing, Noble was quick to show his prowess. By the end of the second story (Gem No. 70) Kangaroo was well-established as a stalwart of the Junior XI. From then on he faded into a supporting role - always to the fore where games were concerned, but otherwise simply acting as a stabilising influence on Bernard Glyn.

It is interesting to note that at the time of Kangaroo's debut, the real-life Australians were touring England under the captaincy of Montague Alfred NOBLE! Hamilton certainly kept abreast of sporting matters in those early years. The main difference between "Mary Ann" (the real Noble's nick-name) and "Kangaroo" was their state of origin. Monty hailed from New South Wales; Harry from Melbourne, Victoria. Both were tough characters - and great cricketers.

Next on the scene was Tom Brown from Taranaki, New Zealand (Magnet 86, October, 1909). Hamilton was certainly catholic in his choice of colonies. 'Browney' made a robust arrival, joining vigorously in a running battle between the Remove and the Upper Fourth. Scoring a goal with a captured football on the features of Henry Samuel Quelch was not an auspicious entry for the New Zealander at Greyfriars!

Brown had trouble with Bulstrode into whose study he was placed. Like Noble with Gore, he kept his end up against the bully, and was soon accepted into the normal life of the Remove. His cricketing ability was unquestioned, and, though his favourite winter game was Rugby, he soon adapted to Soccer. Throughout the saga, Brown was a regular member of the Remove XIs.

An interesting side-light on Brown is that he avoided becoming involved in the complicated affairs of Peter Hazeldene. Like Bulstrode, Brown generally gave Hazel short shrift. Perhaps, as Hazeldene's study-mates, they had a clearer insight into that young rascal's deviousness. Certainly, Brown showed no inclination to make the kind of allowances which Wharton & Co. made. Even Marjorie's charms seemed to have little effect on him.

Later in the stories, Browney became a 'radio buff'. His fearsome wireless, which rarely functioned properly, became almost as renowned a menace as Johnny Bull's concertina. Whether the New Zealander really understood the workings of his radio is a moot point. Nevertheless, it had its uses as a disseminator of national news when Hamilton wanted to push his plots along.

For most of the saga, Brown was confined to a minor role. However, he had his 'crowded hour of glorious life' during the Stacey series (Magnets 1422-33, 1935). Harry Wharton, due to Stacey's plotting, resigned the form captaincy. Then, to thwart Stacey's designs, he persuaded Tom Brown to run for office. Supported by the Famous Five, Brown beat Smithy and Stacey and became Captain of the Remove. Under his command the Remove's record was maintained, and he handled the friction between Wharton and Stacey rather well. Their feuding was not allowed to hamper the team's chances unduly. Tom Brown, like his more famous namesake, had leadership qualities which Hamilton, perhaps, failed to exploit. He also missed a trick by not basing a holiday series in New Zealand - or Australia, come to that. Brown's home in Taranaki could well have supplied a wealth of incidents to add to the Magnet's catalogue.

Hamilton's next Colonials were three more Australians. Gordon Gay, Wootton Major and Wootton minor made their debuts in the short-lived Empire Library in February 1910. Writing under the name of Prosper Howard, about Rylcombe Grammar School, the prolific Hamilton introduced an excellent character in Gordon Gay. His good-humoured leadership put him in the Tom Merry /Jimmy Silver class and he had the added attraction for overseas readers of being a Wallaby. Indeed, the trio became known as the "Three Wallabies." The Woottons, Jack and Harry, never rose above the Raby/Newcombe style of supporting roles, but Gay was of greater calibre. As an amateur actor/impersonator he was in the Wibley/Kerr class - one or two of his impersonations were wildly audacious, in the manner later carried to extremes by 'Putty' Grace of Rookwood. After the demise of the first Empire Library (October 1910), Gay & Co. made fairly regular appearances in the Gem. Rivalry with St. Jim's was an ever-present vein which Martin Clifford tapped into from time to time, usually with exciting results. The Frank Monk, Lane and Carboy trio had to yield pride of place to the Wallabies and Rylcombe Grammar School became a much tougher

rival for St. Jim's than Highcliffe, for example, ever was for Greyfriars. The Saints did not always vanquish the Grammarians for Gay was a redoubtable leader.

Hamilton's cosmopolitan interests were again illustrated by his creation of the Woottons. In the horse-racing world of Edwardian times an Australian family was very much to the fore. These were the Woottons - father Richard, a leading trainer, and his two sons, Frank and Stanley, front-rank jockeys. 'Old Man Wootton' was the plaintiff in a notorious libel suit of the time - he received one farthing damages when he won the case against Bob Sievier! Frank Wootton was the Champion jockey of 1909, 1910, 1911 and 1912 - between the ages of 15 and 19! His career was almost parallel to the fictitious Woottons; he was easily the finest boy jockey between Fred Archer and Lester Piggott. Once again, Hamilton (Prosper Howard) had 'lifted' good characters from real life.

(To be Continued)

'POLITICAL CORRECTNESS'

Norman Wright has written the following arising from his review in last month's C.D. of the facsimile edition of the 1942 MORE ADVENTURES OF RUPERT:

I sent a copy of my review to the publishers (Pedigree Books) and had an interesting letter back from them regarding my comments on censorship.....They say "Your point on censorship is a good one, and currently forms part of a discussion we are having with Express on future "facsimile" publications. Until now both Express and we have taken the view that potentially offending copy should be edited out or replaced. Your and other comments on the matter have certainly caused me to rethink that decision."

(Editor's Note: To comment further on this question of so-called political correctness and the censorship that derives from this, I have received from an American friend a copy of an article by Jonathan Wilson in the NEW YORKER of 23rd January. It is called BUNTER, and the author describes his young son's discovery of and fascination with some of the Hawk reprints of the Bunter books. His son 'like a few million kids before him' found the books funny and frequently laughed out loud while he was reading them. The boy, apparently 'is no egghead' and 'like most Americans, he prefers talking to reading'. However, despite his delight in these ever intriguing stories by Frank Richards, when he was due to make an oral book report in class he felt unable to talk about them. When his father suggested this, the boy 'turned white and said "Are you crazy?"' Evidently 'he would rather take the consequences of seeming to have read nothing than risk coming off as "insensitive" in front of his classmates and teacher by promoting a book that was hard on the abdominally challenged'. The author of the article deeply deplores this kind of censorship, of course - but that is the situation. In the end, in class his son discussed instead a book which had bored him, and which had 'caused a furor in Oskaloosa, Kanas, last year, on account of its bad language... As Bunter himself might have put it, Oh, crikey!

WANTED: Complete serials in pink BOYS' REALMS with *Hal Read, the Running Man* and *Web of the Spider*. Robert Story, 3733 St. Laurent Court, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5L4T3.

Part 8. The Crypt and the Secret Societies.

The series featuring the Society of Justice could scarcely fail to intrigue, either plotwise or in emotional appeal. The criminal elements are principally theft by one party, impersonation for the purpose of fraud and further theft by a second party. Stir in rebellion, tyranny and a spot of sadism and is it to be wondered that the Chums decide they must take the law into their own hands?

The first victim is Miss Primrose herself at the hands of a power seeker in a reworking of the same theme in an earlier series in THE SCHOOL FRIEND during 1920 which featured the dismissal of Miss Primrose by the power seeking father of one of the pupils, who buys his way into governing authority and indulges his spoilt daughter, Augusta Anstruther-Browne, and appoints a new tyrannical headmistress. (See C.D. July 94) When this new series adds Diana Royston-Clarke (who could buy Augusta at one end of the street and sell her at the other, so ruthless is she) we know we are in for fireworks and we are not disappointed. But there are two additional elements in this later series: one, the introduction of a secret society formed by the Chums, the only method they can think of with which to defeat the appallingly powerful trio of Miss Talmar Taylor, Mr. Royston-Clarke and the arrogant, triumphant Diana, and secondly the lode star of treasure trove (yet another one!) concealed in the Crypt at Cliff House.

Diana was in top form in this series, early in her time at Cliff House before John Wheway managed to discover one or two hidden facets of slightly more likeable character deep within her spoilt nature. We meet her at the beginning of the first story when Stella Stone, the captain of the school, summons Diana to the Head's study where she is to be formally expelled. Diana emerges and the girls gasp.

'...They just couldn't help it. for there stood Diana, calm, cool, perfectly poised as usual, her rich carmine lips parted in a faintly scornful smile, the wealth of her fair, wavy hair brushed back like a silver mop from her serene brow. But it wasn't at Diana that the Forth Form stared. It was her clothes!..... Diana in a polo jumper of vivid yellow, in flannel trousers, in black shoes with square toes and flat heels, and with a brown tweed sports coat, cut in at the waist, giving to her very modern shoulders a squareness that was obviously of the smartest Bond Street cut.... Never, never, had a Cliff House girl dared to appear in public in such breath-taking attire!'

When the girls recover their breath they decide that Primmy will eat her. But not so. A bombshell awaits Miss Primrose in the shape of Mr. Royston-Clarke, who has bought heavily into Cliff House shares from the financially disadvantaged Sir Willis Gregory. He decides his daughter must not be expelled. In fact, she must be allowed to do precisely as she wishes while she works on some private business at the school on his behalf, and perhaps it would be better all round if Miss Primrose were to resign.

The Head faces the unthinkable choice; lose her authority by allowing Diana to remain and the new dictator of Cliff House to wield the whip hand, or resign from the school she loves so dearly. Sadly, Miss Primrose makes the dreadful choice.

The school is in an uproar. Bessie has done her usual accidental-on-purpose eavesdropping act outside a certain door and is the herald of the shocking news. And to impart further moving-the-story-on information to the reader, Babs herself accidentally overhears something both startling and puzzling between Diana and her father, which suggests that half a million could be at stake, the real reason behind his buying out of Sir Willis Gregory's Cliff House interests.

A petition is got up to restore Miss Primrose, which at least succeeds in installing her as Fourth Form mistress (during the convenient absence of Miss Matthews), much to the horror of the new Headmistress engaged by Mr. Royston-Clarke. Diana starts as she means to go on----right over the top!---- by slapping the face of Stella Stone and giving

Babs and Clara the push so that she can install herself as Form Captain and Sports Captain. And Miss Talmor Tylor immediately proves herself a tyrant in the making. Unknown to anyone she is not the person she claims to be, and even that most obtuse of schoolgirls, Bessie Bunter, says she doesn't think Miss Tylor is a headmistress after all! "Her voice is so common!"

A third case of eavesdropping becomes necessary so that the bogus Miss Tylor, who originally just wanted the job and the money and is terrified in case Miss Primrose recognises her, now overhears how Diana, amusing herself one day by searching for secret passages, had found a niche containing some jewellery. One of the many previous owners of Cliff House had been an old miser whose reputed hoard of wealth had never been discovered. But Mr. Royston-Clarke had found an old map of the school and hoped to trace the rest of the hoard.

The SPY in the SECRET SOCIETY!



The Society of Justice versus the Tyrant and the Firebrand of the Fourth! Babs & Co. are having a hard fight to combat the reign of terror that clouds the lives of the girls of Cliff House School, and when a spy attends one of their meetings it seems that the Society's identity must be revealed. But must it?

By Hilda Richards

Miss Tylor is very interested. It does not take her long to find the map in Diana's study and make a copy of it. Her new power and the thought of this wealth rapidly go to her head. She will brook no defiance and introduces caning. Diana is quite prepared to assist in this and rebellion possesses the girls. Babs forms the Society of Justice. It consists of herself, Mabs, Clara, Jemima, Leila, Marjorie, Janet, Marcelle and Jean. The H.Q. is the old chapel in the Crypt, and the aim to fight tyranny with tyranny.

There follows the delight of schoolchildren of that era; the passing of cryptic notes, the members known only by numbers, the donning of mysterious dark robes, of hoods and masks behind which eyes glitter with purpose, and a flickering lantern throwing shadows against the ancient walls and archways of the chapel in the Crypt. A solemn oath is sworn to overthrow the tyranny now ruling over Cliff House. For the girls have the wisdom to

foresee how the future of the school is in jeopardy. Girls will leave, standards will fall, and the once proud school could even face bankruptcy.

The secret society's first task perhaps seems simplistic in its aim to destroy Miss Tylor's stock of canes, but the success of this leads ultimately to the downfall of all three tyrants. While the society is meeting in the Crypt they hear noise and hammering and confront Miss Tylor herself with hammer and chisel in her hands. That lady is terrified out of her wits at the sudden hooded apparition looming in front of her and she flees, leaving the society with much food for thought. To this is added the astonishing result of the raid on the cane during a sadistic attempt by Miss Tylor, aided by a vicious Diana, to cane Bessie. The hooded figures burst in, free Bessie, dump Diana in the fireside, and lock the tyrants in while making an escape. When Babs snaps the cane in half, intending to send it back to Miss Tylor with a suitable communication, she finds the copy of the map concealed in the hollow stem.

One thing leads to another when Diana, seething after being smothered in soot, confiscates a treasured book belonging to a little Second Former. Babs promises to get it back from Diana's study and while doing so finds the original plan. But the efforts of the Chums are set back when Bessie decides she will have a secret society, which causes various complications and leads to Diana discovering them and the advent of Miss Tylor herself. Bessie's own peculiar spellings have given her away, and Marjorie has managed to drop her bundle of robes right under Miss Tylor's nose, all of which leads to Bessie and Marjorie being up for expulsion. And Marjorie runs away from Cliff House.

At least the form gets a chance to bait Diana at this fraught time and release some of their pent up anger, before the Society members retreat to a secret place in the school that only they know of. Cliff House had been many things throughout its long history; a monastery, a medieval military station, a home, then a hospital, then a home again, and finally a school, and each use had brought alteration to the building's ancient fabric. This particular secret place had been discovered by Janet Jordan's older sister when she was a pupil at the school, and Babs and Co had jealously guarded it, managing even to keep it secret from Bessie. Now, not for the first time, they blessed its experience; here they could meet safe from all prying eyes, and from here they could reach the Crypt, which was now out of bounds, and here they could plan their next move. For it hadn't taken Babs long to suss out the scheme of things after finding the two plans and adding the memory of Diana's father talking of half a million at stake, for which Diana had to remain at Cliff House in order to search. The members of the Society of Justice are agreed: beside the aim of getting rid of Miss Tylor, restoring Miss Primrose to her rightful place and outwitting Diana and her father, they have to get Marjorie back and find this treasure and save it for the school. Quite a tall order! But the redoubtable Chums had always been more than equal to tall orders----and this one proved to be no exception.

However, the treasure certainly goes the rounds! Diana it is who locates its hiding place and does all the hard and dusty work of digging it out of the Crypt, only to have Babs seize it and bear it away to Study 4, where the Chums can scarcely contain their wonder as they open a beautiful golden box full of jewels and discover a bag filled with George IV sovereigns. This glory is not with Babs for long as it is quickly appropriated by Miss Tylor, who is forced hurriedly to conceal it in Marjorie Hazeldine's needlework box. Meanwhile, the strain has caused Miss Primrose to take ill. While visiting her in her sickroom, Babs sees a photograph of the Head taken years previously and is sure that the Miss Tylor on this staff photo is not the Miss Tylor now at Cliff House. But when a letter arrives from the real Miss Tylor, addressed to Miss Primrose, it is intercepted by the imposter and causes her great alarm, for the real Miss Tylor is on her way to Cliff House. To make matters worse, the Chums are now setting Diana and Miss Tylor against one another, and Diana is sure that Miss Tylor has got the treasure. The Firebrand, desperate, ransacks Miss Tylor's study. She does not find the treasure, but she does find the letter, and realises the truth that the Chums have already discovered. There is not much time left for Miss Tylor. Late that

night she goes to Study 7 to retrieve the treasure from Marjorie's workbox, not knowing that Clara is sleeping on the settee there. Clara challenges her, Miss Tylor rushes out and cannons into Diana, who is also on the prowl. And behind Diana is Jemima, who is stalking Diana. When they have sorted themselves out only Miss Tylor and Diana remain --and the treasure has vanished.

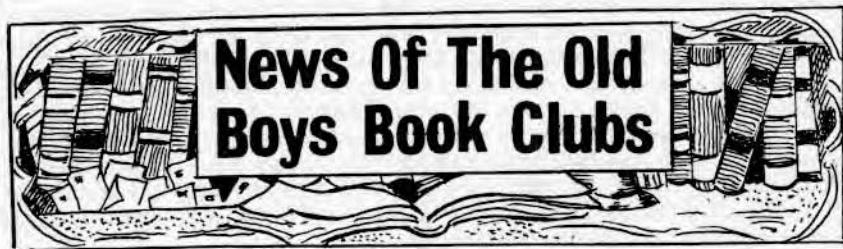
Once Jemima has entered the fray, the action and that treasure move and interweave with the speed of a Whitehall farce. Diana and Miss Tylor have a single thought--to escape with the loot. But who has it?

Jemima has been very busy in Diana's study. She now has part of the treasure and a mad chase through the school rescues a bit more of it, just as Sir Willis Gregory arrives and Diana's father, who is furious. Believing Diana had succeeded he had sold his holding back to Sir Willis, at a loss. Miss Tylor quietly fades away, Miss Primrose makes a rapid recovery, the treasure is given into Sir Willis's safe keeping, and a Daimler arrives the following day to collect the Firebrand, definitely expelled this time but as cool and insolent as ever.

Babs and Clara are voted back into their captaincies, Marjorie is restored to the Fourth, and they wave Diana out of their lives, even as the readers know perfectly well that she will be back!

This delightful series is well and intricately plotted so that everything hangs together like a strong weave, as good fiction should. One little thread is carefully laid but not utilised. This is when it is known that Miss Tylor had previously been at a school called Claverley, supposedly as its Headmistress, which indeed the real Miss Tylor was still. Babs remarks that Mabel Lynn's cousin May was at school at Claverley, thus leaving open the possibility of bringing May to Cliff House to expose the imposter. In the event, this was not needed. But that is how authors work!

(Next month: The Red Triangle Society)



LONDON O.B.B.C.

The A.G.M. and January meeting were held on Sunday, 8th January at Loughton. Norman Wright was elected the Chairman for 1995. The new sundry library made its first appearances with much brisk trading.

Mary Cadogan spoke about Charles Hamilton and the Cavandale Abbey series, while Brian Doyle read an article entitled "Tons of Teccs" which he had written many years ago, as well as an extract of a Richard Curtis item from Patricia Craig's *The Oxford Book of Schooldays*. Les Rowley read from his new Greyfriars story about Bloater Paste and Soapy Sanders.

The next meeting will be on Sunday, 12th February at the Chingford Horticultural Society Hall. The guest speaker will be Cliff Maddock who will talk about Antique Toys. Visitors would be most welcome to join us.

SUZANNE HARPER

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A welcome was given to the seventeen assembled for the January meeting, and especially to new members Regina Glick and Richard Burgon. Richard had made a contribution to the December 1994 C.D. However, at the age of 14, Richard is not our youngest member - that honour going to our Children's New Book Reviewer, Eleanor Caldicott. (Eleanor later made her first contribution to an 1995 programme by reviewing the latest Rupert Annual.)

Seven letters had been received in connection with the article concerning our club which had appeared in "Best of British".

Our main item was the sale (in aid of Club funds) of many items that never appeared to be borrowed from the library. There is a list available of better quality items and this may be obtained from Darrell Swift, 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds LS16 6BU. The club programme for 1995 may also be obtained from the same address. The library sale had taken up much time, but it produced a very convivial atmosphere. After refreshments, Geoffrey delighted us with a hilarious reading from Magnet 1614 - the sad, sad story of Bunter's half-crown. Our two new members certainly enjoyed their first visit!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

Why not Join the Club?

Suggests Norman Wright

One of the great joys of any hobby is to share your interests with like minded enthusiasts and every month that is just what happens at the London branch of the Old Boys Book Club. The average attendance at each meeting is about twenty and amongst that group are collectors of a wide age range with an equally wide range of interests - from the early Magnet to the late Eagle and almost everything in between! The meeting formalities are usually quickly dealt with and then it's down to the entertainment: talks, readings, quizzes, etc. and usually a jolly good tea when members can chat about books, magazine, story papers, comics, films, detective fiction, etc.

Last year a working party put their heads together to see if they could come up with some ideas to make the meetings even more interesting and it was decided to increase the number of guest speakers, introduce some thematic meetings and slightly widen the scope of subjects discussed. The year's programme for 1995 has been drawn up with these in mind and there are some exciting events planned. In February a guest speaker will talk on antique toys, in March Jenny Schofield, co-author of the biography of W.E. Johns, will give a talk and slide show on the creator of Biggles, and in March, Roger Coombes will bring along a selection of original artwork and talk on "Eagle". Later in the year thematic meetings will cover such varied topics as: Detective Fiction, School Stories, and The Wild West.

Why not come along and sample a meeting - and if you like it join the London OBBC. Details of meeting venues can be found in the Club Report in "Collectors Digest" or obtained from either Sue Harper, Hon. Secretary, on 081 508 4770 or Norman Wright Hon. Treasurer and chairman for 1995 on 0923 232383.

BRIAN DOYLE WRITES: THE TEN MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS

In 1961, Eric Fayne, then-editor of "Collectors' Digest", ran a contest in which readers were invited to cast votes for their most popular and favourite characters in the old boys' papers and magazines. These were the results....

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Harry Wharton | 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy |
| 2. Billy Bunter | 7. Tom Merry |
| 3. Herbert Vernon-Smith | 8. Mr. Quelch |
| 4. Bob Cherry | 9. Nelson Lee |
| 5. Sexton Blake | 10. E.O. Handforth |

(Note: Wharton received 905 votes, with Bunter notching up 787.)

THE RUNNERS UP - The most popular characters who came next in order were.....

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 11. Nipper | 18. Jack Blake |
| 12. Jimmy Silver | 19. The Rio Kid |
| 13. Ralph R. Cardew | 20. Ken King |
| 14. Reginald Talbot | 21. Buffalo Bill |
| 15. Horace Coker | 21. Dick Turpin |
| 16. Tinker | 22. Arthur E. Lovell |
| 17. Frank Nugent | |

(Note: Nipper received 416 votes, Lovell had 122. The votes were cast in the Contest for characters in a long list prepared by Eric Fayne at the time. It would be interesting, perhaps to discover what the results might be if the Contest was held today!)

(Editor's Note: Readers' views, three-and-a-half decades on, will be welcomed: I suspect that Mr. Quelch may now come much higher up the list. I wonder whether any girl characters will get a look-in, today?)

JUICY NAMES FOR MEATY TALES by R.A.H. Goodyear

Editor's Note: Browsing through some early C.D.s I came across this interesting article in the October 1948 number. Many readers will have read Mr. Goodyear's stories - in magazines and in hard-back.

When my Uncle Elijah left, after having had tea with us I always knew there'd be a threepennybit under my plate. "See that he buys a book with it," he whispered to my father - and the book I invariably bought was a Weekly Budget novel.

I didn't know it them of course, but I was "investing in futures," as they say on the markets. Practically each one of those Weekly Budget tales showed me a return of 100% and a bonus.

Take, for example, "Oriana, or, The Castle of Gold." Oriana was a peerlessly beautiful girl with a sword like, keen edged temper, whose many lovers thought her even more precious than the shining gold of which her father's castle was built. Most of them died fighting for her. Only the bravest and handsomest of the Montezuma warriors mastered and won her in the end.

Where I profited from "Oriana" was in the use I repeatedly made of her lovely name. One in eight of the novelettes I wrote in my 'teens had an Oriana in it. The very thought of her glamorous name inspired me to romantic situations and passionate love passages. Of course I was careful not to send her more than twice in one year to Brett's or Harmsworth's, to whose 'My Pocket Novels' and "Forget-me-not" I regularly contributed under a woman's name.

Two other titles which stimulated me were "Laurie the Liftboy" and "Island of Eternal Ice". Some of the most terrific he-men and the most captivating pin-up girls of that period seemed to use the lift which Laurie worked, and Laurie appeared to be helping half of them in valuable fashion while cleverly thwarting the other half in their projected shootings, stabbings and kidnappings.

I tried to improve on Laurie's breath-catching adventures by including some of them in my own stories for boys. No one could possibly have guessed what good use I was making of him even if they had read "Laurie the Liftboy" at the same time as I did.

"Island of Eternal Ice" was a heartrending story of incredible hardships endured by a dauntless company of Arctic explorers, who apparently lived on air for months after they had killed and eaten all their dogs. I founded half-a-dozen short stories and articles on that particular Weekly Budget novel, so that I made fifteen guineas clear on an expenditure of 3d, so to speak.

With just one other Budget novel I was less successful. I was tempted by its title, "Tattered Tom", to introduce a "Tattered Matty" into a book I wrote for boys. That was the only book I failed to sell. My usual publishers politely declined it and I became convinced that their reluctance to publish it was due to "Tattered Matty", who was a racy and outspoken tomboy and not the sort of character generally associated with "Reward" books, so often presented as Sunday School prizes.

Only twice before had I risked putting a girl into a boy's book and the third venture ruined the manuscript's chances. "Tattered Matty" let me down. Now had I called her Oriana, how different things might have been!

Though so many of the Budget threepennies featured the impossibly dashing feats of Buffalo Bill against the unfortunate Red Indians - as a boy I waved those aside impatiently, not deeming them believable, though I knew Colonel Will Cody to be a brave man in real life - many of the other books, bought with my Uncle Elijah's gift coins, gave me good entertainment and profitable ideas.

There will be amongst the readers of this magazine at least a few last-century veterans who will recall with a reminiscent thrill some of the Weekly Budget novel names, with their rich promise of interest and excitement. I ask you to roll the following titles round your tongue - I think you will find them as appetising as I did: Lost on Mount Magnificent; Reckless Ralph the Ringleader; Marooned Crew of the "Gallant"; Cassandra the Balloonist; Rionzi; the Romantic Roman; Five Years on Blue Water; Fearless Frank's Adventures; The Pirates of Adoration Bay; The Young Fire-Fighters; Bold Bem the Bohemian; Green Rangers of the Forest; Jockey Jim, the Epsom Midget; Tragedy of the Hermit's Cave; Rosina, Queen of Amber Isle; Murder on the Lightning Express; Glen of the Wolf Men; Tragedy of the Hermit's Cave; Maximilian the Magician.

R.A.H. GOODYEAR

I cannot quite guarantee that the above list consists entirely of Weekly Budget titles, because very occasionally I bought an American "threepenny" and two or three pleasing Yankee titles may have slipped in. Alas, that I did not retain the books!

To vegetarian readers I apologise for my own title, "Juicy Names for Meaty Tales". I never touch meat myself, though not a vegetarian in the strictest sense because I have to rely nowadays solely on milk to keep me alive.

FOR SALE: McCall's Greyfriars Guide mint condition £12.00 including postage.
T.V. Jones, 43, Brooklands Park, Longlevens, Gloucester, GL2 ODN.

FOR SALE: Large collection of Champions, Champion Annuals, Thrillers, Rochester Hardbacks and many other items. For full list first class stamp to H.R.D. Parsons, 'Foinaven', Church Hollow, West Winterslow, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP5 1SX.

FROM JOHN GEAL

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 11 (Mr. Brander Temporary Head. MAGNET No. 1171.)

"The new head was busy with a stack of papers on his desk. Mr. Brander was always a very busy man - much busier than Dr. Locke had ever been.

He was, in fact, one of those men who mistook meddling for efficiency and tyranny for firmness. Many things that Dr. Locke had been content to leave to his staff Mr. Brander took into his own hands. Probably he did twice as much work as the late Head; but the results he produced were not half so good.

There was something Prussian in Mr. Brander's nature. He had a love of detail, a desire to keep all threads in his own hands; a determination that nothing, howsoever trivial, should be done without his cognisance.

At the present moment he was correcting papers for the Fifth-Form - a task that might well have been left to Mr. Prout. Any relief Mr. Prout might have felt at missing the laborious task was more than counter-balanced by his deep resentment at having his proper work taken from his hands.

The Fifth liked it still less than Prout; for the Headmaster was a much more severe critic than the Form master.

Probably the burden of overwork, which his system of interference placed on his own shoulders, helped to make Mr. Brander irritable and snappish."

SONG OF THE DANUBE

by Ernest Holman

Memory is a strange affair. As the years progress, certain things of the moment tend to slip from one's mind. Long-stored memories, however, often spring to life from the distant past. One such event occurred recently; it was nothing to do with past publications of stories, etc. but nevertheless seemed to come under the heading of memories of those times. This is not so much an article as a memory requiring elucidation.

Listening recently to the playing of 'The Blue Danube' I found words flitting through my brain to the music. Afterwards I wrote down my recalling of the words and they came out as follows:

Where the Blue Danube flows along
There I first heard your simple song
Out of the blue there came that day
Romance that stole my heart away
Dreams that enraptured you and me
Stirred at that old-time melody
For my love grows like a rose
Where the river Danube flows

Well, they certainly fit the music. From where, however, did they originate? I have heard the B.B.C. Chorus give a rendering of the Blue Danube and also have a record of Richard Tauber singing. The above words, however, were not used on those occasions.

It is very reminiscent of the thirties, typically of the style of ballads of the time. Was it from one of the many Dance Band programmes of those days - was it from a film (this media frequently 'helped itself' to classics and similar items)? Perhaps there was a competition at some time - the weekly Mags of the *Pearsons*, *Answers*, type sometimes went in for that sort of thing.

Well, I just do not know. Anyone with a better memory than mine?

BILLY BUNTER'S SNORE by Keith Atkinson

When night falls over Greyfriars
And the owls hoot in the trees
And the silver stars are twinkling in the sky,
A constant rumble fills the air
Reverberating round
The ancient towers rising up on high.
The distant surf that pounds the shore
Competes with Billy Bunter's snore.

As peace reigns over Greyfriars
In the silence of the night
And the arms of Morpheus hold the world in thrall,
A creeping mouse is startled by
A strange loud grunting sound
As it scuttles round the dark and silent hall.
No mighty lion's jungle roar
Compares with Billy Bunter's snore.

When a storm breaks over Greyfriars
And the lightening rends the sky
And the ancient elms are lashed by wind and rain,
As the tempest and the fury
And the winds which swirl around
Disturb young fags beneath the counterpane,
The crashing thunder pales before
The sound of Billy Bunter's snore.

As dawn breaks over Greyfriars
And the chorus of the birds
Is heard to start without the old grey walls,
Old Gosling tolls the rising bell
And Cherry, with a bound,
Leaps out of bed. In Bunter's ear he bawls,
And dormitory walls no more
Resound to Billy Bunter's snore.



Starting to-day The Return of Dorothy Cheyne by Elsie Oxenham

SCHOOL-DAYS

Week Ending
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Every
Saturday



See Inside Thrilling Article about The Princess Elizabeth

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